

Cafe plan that split opinions given go ahead

A cafe plan which split a tiny rural village has been given the go ahead despite opposition.

Residents in the village of Carrington, which has just 39 households living in it, submitted more than 20 objections and a petition of 30 signatures in an effort to stop the business opening on the edge of the community.

They argued it would ruin the amenity of their home with a car park planned to be built outside some of their gardens and claimed suggestions it would benefit locals were nonsense.

However a meeting of Midlothian Council's planning committee today heard local councillors express their 'disappointment' at the divide caused by the cafe as they insisted it would be a benefit to the village in the long term.

Councillor Ellen Scott told the meeting: "This application has divided the community quite a lot . I have looked at it from both sides and think it will benefit the village."

And fellow councillor Douglas Bowen said he hoped the cafe would become a 'community hub' in the future.

Residents of a tiny village say more than half of households are opposed to plans to open a café in their quiet community.

The proposal for the café at Carrington Mains Farm was recommended for approval by planning officers and supported by Historic Environment Scotland for bring a 200-year-old farm building back into use.

However while a report to committee said the application received 13 letters of support and 11 against, the meeting heard a further 11 objections had been lodged as well as a petition against the cafe with 30 signatures, in recent days.

Despite this planners said the cafe, which will run four days a week, was an acceptable development in the historic village.

Earlier the Local Democracy Reporting Service reported how villagers had been left angered by the proposal.

Local resident Mark Smith said people who moved into Carrington did so because there was no cafe or shop and it was quiet.

He said: "The stress of knowing this café could be coming is already affecting me. I live here because I enjoy coming home and being able to sit in the garden in the peace and quiet.

"I am concerned this café is going to attract tourists and visitors and the noise impact on such a quiet community will be overwhelming.

"The car park proposed for the café is on a field, behind our house and other residents which will be lost as well. It is unacceptable."

His partner Shona Hamilton, a community councillor, said more than half the households in the village, which has not had a new home added in more than 30 years, had objected with only a 'handful' supporting the plans.

She said: "We have a village hall which provides a hub for community events and have no need for this cafe. I can't see how it will be viable if it is the small operation claimed. We fear it is just the start of a new development here."

The plan to convert the 200-year-old Category B listed farm workshop into a cafe was said by the applicants to provide local jobs, local amenity and create a haven for cyclists

passing through.

Carrington Mains Farm was built in the early 1800s by the Earl of Rosebery and helped the surrounding village grow and prosper.

In their application to Midlothian Council, representatives from the estate said it was ideally located to attract visitors and provide locals with a much needed service as well as jobs.

They said: "Due to the proximity to Edinburgh and the wealth of tourist attractions available in Midlothian including designed landscapes and gardens, woodland and riverside walks, the property is in a prime location to change the use to a café.

"Carrington forms part of the Gilmerton to Carrington Circular cycle route and Moorfoot Edge cycle route. Additional facilities will provide existing users of the foot and cycle network an opportunity to extend their stay.

"The café will benefit the local community as it will create employment opportunities, support the local economy and be a great facility for the established community."

The application was unanimously approved.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter