

Community divided over plans to convert farm workshop to cafe

Controversial plans to convert a 200-year-old farm workshop into a countryside cafe are set to be approved despite splitting the local community.

The proposals for the Category B listed building at Carrington Mains Farm, near Gorebridge, could create a haven for cyclists as well as creating local jobs.

Midlothian Council planners have recommended the plans are approved along with an application for Listed Building Consent after Historic Environment Scotland backed the proposals for bringing the building into use and securing its future.

However the applications have been called in by local councillors after 27 representations were lodged with the plans – 13 in favour and 11 objecting with the rest described as neutral.

Some objectors raised issues about road safety, the misuse of a car park for the new cafe out of hours and concerns it would bring a “significant numbers of visitors to the area to the detriment of residents.

Those supporting the proposals said it would enhance the village, create up to five rural jobs and provide amenities for locals and visitors.

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

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

They say: "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 cafe.

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

Planners recommended the applications for change of use and Listed Building consent should be approved saying the cafe would "reuse a vacant category B listed building in poor condition."

They said: "This building, even if its current condition, has a significant positive contribution to the surrounding village, landscape character and historic interest of the area and its retention, repair and reuse is welcomed."

The applications will be decided at a meeting of the council's planning committee next week.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter