

# **Residents of Midlothian village oppose plans to open a café**

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

The proposals for a countryside café at Carrington Mains Farm are recommended for approval by planners at a meeting of Midlothian Council's planning committee tomorrow.

However people living in Carrington village say their concerns about the addition of the retail unit have not been reflected in the report by officers which will go before councillors at the meeting.

And they insist claims the café has had 13 letters of support and only 11 objecting do not represent the village itself.

Community councillor Shona Hamilton said 20 of the 39 occupied households in the village did not support the café with only three households supporting it.

And she says planners have failed to take into account the impact of the café on the village amenities which are enjoyed by all those who live there.

Shona said: "Carrington has 39 occupied dwellings and households in three of them posted supporting comments while households in 14 objected,. An additional two made neutral comments raising issues with the loss of amenity.

“In my role as community councillor a further seven villagers have expressed serious concerns over amenity directly to me. Amenity is subjective and the report (by planners) largely dismisses perceived loss of amenity and its impact on health and well-being.

“We believe that residents are best able to judge loss of amenity given their lived experience in the village. Many villagers chose to live here because it is quiet. A majority of households in the village see this development as detrimental to amenity.”

Mark Smith, who lives with Shona in the village, said people who move into Carrington are aware it has no shops or cafes and enjoy the peace.

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.”

The plans to convert the 200-year-old Category B listed farm workshop into a countryside café B listed building at the farm, near Gorebridge, are said by the applicants to provide local jobs, local amenity and create a haven for cyclists passing through.

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.

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 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 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."

However fellow community councillor Gill Westwood said the village hall already provides coffee mornings and a community hub for residents and the cafe will be surplus to needs.

She said: "We can't see how it will be viable if it relies on local support for custom, there is a lot of concern about what will come next if the café is approved and where its customers will come from. It is just not needed or welcome here."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter