

A decision to give the go-ahead to a controversial housing development in a Kinross-shire village has been branded 'an affront to democracy' by angry residents.

A Reporter appointed by the Scottish Government has said he intends to uphold an appeal by Springfield Properties, who earlier this year were refused permission to build 59 houses and eight flats on land at the Pitdownies in Milnathort.

With just a few days to go before the Reporter, David Buylla, is due to rubber-stamp his decision, local councillor Willie Robertson has fiercely criticised the planning process and members of Milnathort Community Council have expressed dismay at the Reporter's stance.

Unless Springfield fails to comply with conditions laid down by Mr Buylla, the controversial development will go ahead.

Said Councillor Robertson: "More than 160 people objected to this application but their concerns were ignored.

"This is an absolute joke and an affront to democracy. We have no comeback on this decision and there are serious concerns about the impact this development will have on local infrastructure, road safety and the water quality of Loch Leven.

"It seems that the views of local people who have to live with this mean absolutely nothing."

Springfield's application was unanimously rejected by councillors in February after refusal was recommended by planning officials on the grounds of over-development of the site and the lack of a biodiversity report on one particular area.

While planners did not cite any of the objectors' comments as a reason for refusal, elected members were more sympathetic after hearing an impassioned plea by the Pitdownies Action Group. Its members fear that the development will cause chaos on the village's historic streets due to a lack of suitable access and will place a huge strain on local health and education services.

And with another 77 houses currently under construction at nearby Pace Hill, it's estimated that the Pitdownies development will result in almost 300 extra cars being forced to use a single access point that's already a notorious bottleneck.

Malcolm Thomson, chairman of Milnathort and Orwell Community Council, said: "We fought tooth and nail against this development and we are bitterly disappointed that the Reporter upheld the appeal without taking cognisance of the views of the villagers whose lives will be seriously affected.

"There is just one point of access for both these new developments and that's over a narrow bridge originally built for horses and carts.

"While of course we recognise that there is a demand for homes, the location of this development is entirely inappropriate."

In his findings, Mr Buylla concluded that the development would 'complement its surroundings' and that associated impacts on infrastructure and residential amenity could be successfully addressed.

"I am satisfied that phosphorous discharge into Loch Leven is not a reason to withhold planning permission," he said.

"I find that the development would deliver an efficient and attractive solution to a long-standing housing allocation.

"I am satisfied, overall, that it would be in accordance with the development plan and that there are no material considerations that would justify refusing permission."

Ends