

Ready for battle

- Culloden site in process of being sold to new developer
- Councillor calls for rethink over plans for 16 homes
- Campaign group threatens to take radical action

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THE fight against plans to build homes on the boundary of Culloden Battlefield could be back on after detailed designs for new houses were submitted to Highland Council.

A 16-house development at Viewhill Farm, Balloch, which sparked an outcry when it secured planning permission several years ago, is causing renewed anger among protesters who were hoping it would not go ahead.

David Sutherland, who owns the site at Viewhill, is in the process of selling the land to Aberdeen-based Kirkwood Homes, with the legal proceedings under way.

However, protesters warn if their appeal to the sentiments of the developer fails, they will do everything in their power to tarnish sales prospects by making the idea of buying one of the houses as "ugly" as possible.

And Inverness South councillor Ken Gowans, who led a successful campaign to create a new conservation area after the 16 houses got planning permission to stop more homes being built, said the new owner would have a "moral" duty to rethink the plan.

He said: "The developers are not doing anything illegal so they've every right to build but do they have that right



Site owner David Sutherland is in the process of selling the land.

morally? That is another question."

Mr Sutherland - an Inverness businessman and former boss of Tulloch Homes - believed Kirkwood Homes had dealt with fears "quite sensitively" when putting forward their designs for the homes.

The housing scheme at Viewhill Farm goes back to 2014 when it was granted planning permission from the Scottish Government - despite massive protest locally, nationally and internationally.

The 16-house scheme got permission after Historic Scotland officials decided not to raise an objection,



Councillor Ken Gowans: 'moral' duty to rethink plan.

much to the fury of the National Trust for Scotland, which owns part of the battlefield.

Its then chairman Sir Kenneth Calman demanded planning laws be overhauled in the aftermath.

Cllr Gowans, who helped to lead the scheme to greatly expand the new protection boundary in 2015, said he hoped Kirkwood Homes was fully aware of the planning history of the site.

He said: "I am sure a lot of people see houses on that site as deeply disrespectful. Culloden Battlefield and that greater battlefield area is a very significant piece of land. All we are going to try to do is appeal to their moral compass.

"There will be a lot of very upset people if those homes are built. For all we know we could be building houses on a grave."

Cllr Gowans suspects the new, more detailed, application will gather objections and be brought to the planning committee for a decision.

He said planning permission could not be retracted as that was in place

for perpetuity, but the new application outlining the housing designs could be knocked back if there were significant objections.

George Kempik, founder of campaign group Stop Development at Culloden, which has led protest marches in objection to the homes, said anyone buying one of the houses should be ashamed of themselves.

He said: "The only thing that we can do is try to get the developers to think about the sheer scale of what they are going to be doing.

"We are going to try and make the possibility of buying one of these houses ugly.

"Shame on anyone who buys one of these houses."

And another group, going by the name of The 1745 Association, established in 1946 to study the Jacobite period and endeavour to safeguard the Jacobite heritage, also objected to the current application submitted by Kirkwood Homes.

Michael Nevin, chairman, said the development "could not fail to become the dominating feature of the landscape."

Mr Sutherland said he had not intended to sell Viewhill but plans changed.

"We were going to do it ourselves but I'm approaching the point where I want to retire," he said. "The timetable for the sale is really in their gift, rather than mine, but the legal process has begun."

He mooted plans to sell the land to the National Trust several years ago.

Asked if any of those hopes had materialised for some of the land, he said: "No, they have reorganised so we have not been in touch with them. They're doing other things at the moment."

No-one at Kirkwood Homes was available for comment.



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