

Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council
Craigentinny & Meadowbank
Community Council



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30 July 2015

Dear Sirs

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT TELFERTON

I write on behalf of the Community Councils for Northfield & Willowbrae and Craigentinny & Meadowbank, with the authority of the Chairs of both bodies, in relation to the pre-planning consultation for your proposed development at Telferton. The site lies within Craigentinny and Meadowbank but is very close to Northfield and Willowbrae (and Portobello) and allotment holders both present and on the waiting list come from all three areas.

We have not had the resources to conduct formal consultations of the people of our two areas but there has been considerable interest expressed directly, through social media and in local media. If this consultation led to a planning application then we would expect to conduct a full consultation of local interests.

We attended the useful exhibition held in the Wilson Memorial Church in June. In this response we have attempted to follow the order of the feedback form provided there.

How do you feel about the current use of the site?: Very Happy

Comments

We believe the allotments, totalling 85 plots, provide an essential service to the community. They have been in place for over 90 years, having been provided by benevolent employers for the specific enjoyment of local people, and have been in continuous cultivation for the whole period. They offer:

- the opportunity to grow high quality foodstuffs and flowers
- education – through active engagement with new and traditional horticultural techniques
- improved awareness of environmental concerns and benefits

- social interaction for all age groups, improving companionship, reducing loneliness and improving mental well-being.

They do this in large part because they have been in place so long. Other smaller and more recently instituted local sites struggle to provide these benefits as the soil structure is not yet of high quality, the social engagement has not been built up and they are perceived as alien to the existing community. The Telferton site is well-protected, to some extent invisible except to those who know and overlooked, indeed welcomed, by local homes.

All of the benefits have been recognised by the City Council over many years and, more recently, by the Scottish Parliament in passing the Community Empowerment legislation which will come into force shortly. Allotments have ceased to be a pastime for the elderly but are now embraced by all ages, incomes and outlooks. This is evidenced by the waiting list of people. The City is seeking to expand allotment provision and the Telferton site is ideal for its current purpose.

Do you believe some housing can be accommodated on the site?

No: the allotments occupy virtually the whole 3.36 acres and they should not be displaced or reduced in area to provide building plots. The City has not exhausted its supply of brownfield sites including those currently occupied by redundant buildings. It is unreasonable to take irreplaceable high quality greenspace before sites which need rehabilitation have been addressed.

Do you agree there is a need for additional affordable housing in the area?

Not specifically: There are pressures for more housing of all types, caused in part by the growing prosperity of Edinburgh. This does mean there is a strong demand for more social housing and, for those seeking to own, affordable housing. The Scottish Government has recognised this and required local authorities to identify sites where more homes could be built. However, the same Scottish Government places great importance on communities, greenspace, wildlife and sustainable development. The days of building on any site just to get the numbers of dwellings are over; a more sophisticated approach is needed and is being delivered by the City Council.

Would you like to see allotments retained on the site?

Yes and specifically all the current allotments in their present configuration. It should be for the allotment holders association to institute any refinements to the site.

Would you like to see the standards of the existing allotments improved?

Yes – and it is happening: All gardeners and horticulturalists strive for continuous improvement – it is part of the natural process. The Craigentenny Telferton Allotments is a charity registered with OSCR whose objects are:

- The prevention or relief of poverty
- The advancement of education
- The advancement of citizenship or community development
- The provision of recreational facilities, or the organisation of recreational activities, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the persons for whom the facilities or activities are primarily intended

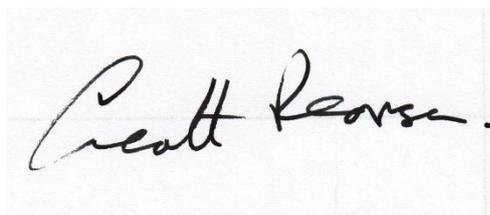
Improvement is thus at the core of its work, indeed a requirement of its charitable status. There is no need for any external agency to seek to impose higher standards. Improvement works will carry a cost but as a charity and registered company the Association is well-placed to raise such funds as it may need.

Do you feel you have enough information regarding the proposal?

Yes: We have not considered in detail the merits of the housing which the developer seeks to provide. The outline information suggests it will be of ordinary design and the quality will be determined mainly by the high requirements of the Building Standards. We recognise that building here would change the community, altering traffic and noise patterns and increasing encroachment in ways which are common across the City.

However, we do not believe the site is suited to nor available for housing. It is currently occupied by allotments which are part of the culture of Edinburgh every bit as much as the grandeur of the New Town or the terraces of the Grange. We are disturbed that this appears to be the third attempt to build on the site – with the allotment holders being yet again under threat by people more interested in profit than progress. We believe the land should be transferred to new ownership, possibly as a Trust, to bring these attempts to an end.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Heath Pearson".

Secretary
Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council