31 Wester Broom Place

Edinburgh

EH12 7RS

10th June 2022

Chairperson

Corstorphine Community Centre

191 St John’s Rd

Edinburgh

EH12 7SL

Hello Shulah,

I am writing as a local volunteer and activist to express my support for the Corstorphine Community Centre (CCC) application for a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of Westfield House.

As you are aware I am involved in a number of organisations and networks in the Corstorphine and West Edinburgh Area.

I have attended meetings of several organisations when the CCC CAT application has been discussed. At all of these meetings there has been very strong support for your application and a strong opinion that there is an urgent need for a Community Centre in Corstorphine.

In my opinion there are large gaps in the current community provision in Corstorphine and West Edinburgh area. There is no community focus that was previously provided by The Corstorphine Youth and Community Centre when it was situated in the Corstorphine Public Hall.

The Western Neighbourhood Network and the Almond and Western Voluntary Sector Forum have both identified tackling Social Isolation locally as a priority and have come together to work on this.

Several projects have been identified and taken forward. However a major stumbling block on making significant progress is the lack of suitable and available community premises.

Corstorphine Community Centre has made a valiant effort in its temporary premises in St John’s Road to provide a community focus for the wider are but as we all know this accommodation has been completely unsuitable and inadequate to provide and operate a quality community hub with a good range of activities and services.

However, even taking into account its inadequacy, the imminent demolition of this property will leave a massive gap in the facilities available and it is, in my opinion, imperative that a new Community Centre is provided in Corstorphine to service the wider area.

As you know it is almost nine years since the Public Hall was destroyed by fire and there has been a severe lack of suitable accommodation for community activities during that time which has had an adverse affect on the range and number of community activities and services offered within the area. This in my opinion has had a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of many individuals and the general wellbeing of the community.

We are all aware that the council and other statutory organisations are promoting the need for 20 minute communities.

I strongly support this initiative but am concerned whether or not local organisations such as Corstorphine Community Centre will receive financial support from the council and other statutory groups to deliver the required support and services. Hopefully the council will support Corstorphine Community Centre in its work by re-establishing the core grant support it awarded to the Community Centre in the past.

A Community Centre located in Westfield House would allow the CCC organisation, working with the local community in a good quality community facility, to develop a good range of activities and services to fill the gaps currently not being met.

I strongly urge the council to accept the CAT application from CCC as this will allow the organisation (with the support it obviously has from the community) to make a positive contribution to the 20 minute neighbourhood and help maintain and improve the facilities and well being of the community.

As stated on page one there are gaps in the current provision, activities and services available within the community. I have listed below some of the gaps identified:

* Corstorphine lacks a community focal point that acts as a coordinating and networking base that improves the quality and effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector provision.
* There is an urgent need to increase the amount and quality of Youth Work provision currently available in the area.
* There is a need for a small sports hall that is suitable for use for active activities and public meetings, concerts etc.
* A drop in space for general members of the public. This could also include public access to toilets.
* I am regularly approached by individuals, families and organisations asking if there are any befriending services operating in the local area. Unfortunately, currently, there are no organisations offering a community based befriending service. There is a need within all age groups and includes home visiting, carer relief, reengaging with the community and developing confidence.
* There is an urgent need for useable space that other organisations can use as a location for outreach services such as benefits advice, health information, business set up information. A good example of this is the bank information service located in your current premises.
* As in most communities there are people who require support with various levels of Mental Health issues, currently there is no locally based provision offering support. In collaboration with other members of the community I have worked with several organisations which are keen to support provision in Corstorphine. One of these groups is a national organisation that provides peer support for men experiencing mental health issues. All of their groups meet on a Monday Evening from 7-9pm. We have been trying to identify accommodation for 3 months but have so far been unable to identify any suitable accommodation that is available

It has been suggested to use the Drumbrae Hub but as with much of the council provision it has limited opening hours and it closes at 8pm. A community run facility can be much more flexible and be open at times required by the community.

* It would also be a very useful initiative if within the redeveloped Community Centre it is possible to provide a hub for small local businesses to use as a work and networking space. This has been a gap in the community for many years.
* There has recently also been discussion by some groups on the need to work within the community to tackle the increasing issue of Cost of Living poverty which is affecting an increasing portion of the local community. Again the lack of suitable accommodation is limiting the opportunities to progress the ideas and initiatives identified.
* I have recently spoken to groups of people who have asked if I knew if the Community Centre would be able to help provide a facility to further develop a circular economy one-stop shop type idea that encompasses distribution of surplus food, a community fridge, tool library, food bank, second hand local school uniforms and even a skills hub a bit like the Remakery. The groups believed that this type of initiative could help with both cost of living and meeting climate Net Zero challenges too. It also fits in well with the 20 minute neighbourhood concept.

As I have already stated the lack of community facilities in the West Edinburgh Area has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the community and individual residents and in my opinion this will become worse as the large number of housing developments are completed.

I believe that developing Westfield House as a voluntary and locally managed Community Centre will be a tremendous asset to West Edinburgh and the increased community activities and services will be of great benefit to the community and help to tackle some of the gaps I have identified above.

Wishing you and your colleagues well in your efforts to provide an important and necessary facility in our community.

Yours sincerely

Tommy McLean