

Council calls for public consultation – homeless complex plans delayed

At the South East Locality meeting earlier this week a lot of time was devoted to considering the plans for leasing Morgan Playing Fields to Street Soccer, a homeless initiative based around football.

Controversial proposals for a £5 million football-themed homeless complex have been put on hold while “meaningful public engagement” takes place after concerns were raised by a community council.

The development and land lease plans for Morgan Playing Fields on Peffermill Road were set to be decided by the city council’s Finance and Resources committee – but the South East locality committee has called for residents to be reassured, before the scheme goes any further.

Members of Grange Prestonfield Community Council pleaded with the locality committee to gather public views before a funding decision is made on leasing the council land for the project.

The proposals include 32 en-suite bedrooms, communal kitchens and a shared living space – along with two 7-a-side and four 5-a-side football pitches.

Brian Waugh, chairman of Edinburgh South Community Football Club, spoke out in favour of the Street Soccer Scotland plans.

The football club now has 750 boys and girls – predominantly

from the EH16 and EH17 areas. The club currently has to use eight different training facilities across the city to cater for all of its young members.

Mr Waugh said: "We believe that the investment offers huge benefit to the club, but also to the community in general. The facilities are going to offer a platform for many different activities, not just football.

"The proposal is for a much-needed all-weather footprint in the park for the benefit of the community – but also protecting a substantial area of the park for other use.

"We really believe that we have an asset here that can benefit the whole of the community and we will work very closely with Street Soccer Scotland to deliver that."

Councillors heard from the community council that following initial concerns about the plans, residents called a public meeting in June. Residents and businesses raised fears over the loss of green space of a popular park, potential flooding issues, likely car parking and traffic problems, access for the school and whether residents will have PVG (protecting vulnerable groups) checks and the impact on businesses and the community as a whole.

Tony Harris, from the Community Council, said: "We disagree that the parties have consulted widely with the community.

"What we are asking and suggesting is that the Finance and Resources committee, before taking any final decision on the leasing process, is to engage on a further round of public consultation. We would like this to be done by the City of Edinburgh Council."



Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron

Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron, the Vice-Convener of Housing and Economy, called for that committee to scrutinise the homelessness aspect of the project.

She said: “Given that housing and homelessness is such a huge issue for the city, that concerns me hugely.

“We need a citywide consistent approach to this aspect of a very complex set of proposals. We’re a bit all over the place on this and that’s regrettable because I would like to see things progress on this.”

Councillors voted against Cllr Cameron’s proposals – but the Housing and Economy vice convener and the Convener, Cllr Kate Campbell, will be consulted as part of the public engagement.

The committee agreed to continue consideration of the proposals to allow “meaningful public engagement” to take place. The results of that public consultation will come back to a special meeting of the South East locality committee

before the Finance and Resources committee meets on March 7, 2019.