

Moredun protest has temporary success

A protest has been staged in the last week on a much-loved green space in the south of the city at Moredun. And today the protest appears to have been successful.

Council officers have decided to postpone site investigations and all their equipment will be removed from the green space. This is however only a postponement and so the residents have vowed to continue their fight to have the land removed from the Local Development Plan (LDP).

When the protesters put themselves in the way of site investigators on two occasions at the end of last week, the workers left the site, but today it appears that they will not be returning any time soon.

The physically distanced demonstration was set up recently to guard the park against a possible housing development. The land remains in the ownership of the council, but it is in the LDP as an area zoned for housing.

One of the local councillors, Cllr Lezley Marion Cameron, has supported the protesters. She said: "I warmly welcome Council officers' decision to postpone the undertaking of six weeks of site investigations of Moredun Green Space.

"The initial fencing off, of the whole periphery of the

Moredun green space, at extremely short notice, caused a great of alarm, stress, worry and anxiety to my constituents.

“Local people in Moredun and Craighour were understandably distressed about this happening during a time when residents who live in the eight x blocks of multi storey flats and the neighbouring housing have been in a period of lockdown and shielding since 23 March. Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre has been closed since 23 March. Schools are now on summer break, and there is increasing social isolation from lockdown and with social distancing guidelines beginning to ease, people want, need and deserve access to their green space.

“The community want, deserve and need to know what happens next. We don’t know as yet, of the timescales for any proposed rescheduling of site investigations, and what additional costs this would incur.

“Ultimately, the community have made clear by peaceful protest and petition their commitment to save, safeguard and improve their shared amenity space and I shall continue to support them to achieve that.”

Cllr Kate Campbell, Convener for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work, said: “We appreciate how important access to outdoor space is for communities. If anything our shared experience of lockdown has made that even clearer.

“These were just preliminary investigations to see if the site could even be developed and what scope there is for wider improvements and landscaping. The intention was to discuss the results with the community and, if development and improvements were shown to be possible, to engage in a detailed consultation with local residents, building on the consultation which took place last year.

“Unfortunately some local people have come to understand that detailed plans are already in place. We’ve decided to postpone the investigations so that we can offer reassurance that

nothing has yet been decided. Any plans that do come forward will be shaped by the local community and will reflect their aspirations for their local area.

“We’ll be writing to residents this week to make this clear and invite them to engage with us and share their views on what their community needs.”



Site investigation work on 2 July 2020 PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

The Moredun Multis and Maisonettes Residents Association (MMMRA) has been active here for the last four years. In 2016 The City of Edinburgh Council included the area of Moredunvale in the Local Development Plan as a site for potential housing.

A public meeting held at that time of over 100 local people gave the council the message that the local community objected. The councillors for the area at that time believed any development would not go ahead.

In November 2019, however, plans resurfaced and on 2 July 2020 a six-week survey, at an alleged cost of £285,000, began to investigate whether previous mining activity in the area renders the group unsuitable for development or not.

Locals and elected members were given just a few days notice of the works which they had been promised would not commence until a three-stage consultation with the community had taken place.

MMMRA Secretary Niel Hansen said: “This is the only green space we have. It is effectively the back garden for over 500 households in the high rises and helps combat social isolation. It’s a well used and much loved park. It’s the only area where the kids can play, exercise and socialise. It’s well used by dog walkers and is used for fun days and community events.”

Campaigners argued that the infrastructure to support such a large influx of new people is not in place.

Mr Hansen said: “Doctors, dentists and schools are bursting at the seams as it is and parking facilities are already woefully inadequate.”



Moredun protesters on 2 July 2020 PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter