

TOMMY SHEPPARD MP



15 May 2024

Dear Cammy,

You'll be aware that Summerhall is set to be sold by the private Isle of Man based company which owns the site.

This is concerning as the current operators, Summerhall Management Limited, have developed it into a hub of creativity and local business which have made a significant contribution to the local community and Edinburgh as a whole.

I've already been speaking with key stakeholders and I'm aware that there is a very complicated patchwork of legal arrangements in place for the operation of the buildings – with more than a hundred separate leases, some of which have many years to run.

It provides some comfort that the building is being sold with these leases in place as it will prevent the wholesale redevelopment of the site, but it doesn't guarantee Summerhall's future as a centre of the arts in Edinburgh in years to come.

I believe that the council should now step in and take a pro-active approach, rather than potentially waiting to consider prospective applications in a piecemeal way. It is essential that a long term masterplan is developed for the site and I would ask you to convene a group of senior officials with planning, cultural and economic development expertise to begin the process of putting together such a plan with stakeholders and in consultation with the public. This group should marshal all the local authority's existing powers to prevent the sale and development of parts of the site which are incompatible with its overall purpose.

Announcing such an approach and declaring an intention to only consider planning for new developments within this framework would, I believe, dull the attractiveness of the site to speculators and those who may be eyeing it with the intention of making huge future returns on the site at the expense of its current ethos.

I hope you'd agree with me that this is a national asset and I believe the Council has the powers and locus to intervene and make sure there is no threat to Summerhall's use for the decades to come through as the sale proceeds. If your officials determine any constraints to them fulfilling this task and have suggestions of legislation that could be amended in order to reach this goal, I'd be grateful if you could let me know what these are in some detail and I'd be happy to raise this with the Scottish Government alongside Council representations.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tommy Sheppard'.

Tommy Sheppard