

Lauriston Farm Community Consultation

EAC Response

We were delighted by the response to the online community consultation. To have more than a thousand responses at a time when so many people were grappling with the consequences of the pandemic was more than we expected and we are truly grateful to everyone who was able to complete the survey.

The responses provided us with valuable insights to how people felt about the project. It was encouraging to see how overwhelmingly enthusiastic and positive most people were and to know that many people were as excited as we were with the food growing and biodiversity enhancement opportunities that this land presents and how many people would want to get involved through volunteering and community events. We really appreciated that for many there was a feeling that the project had the potential to become a focal point for bringing people together and building a stronger community.

Whilst there were many positive comments about the project, there were also valuable criticisms, advice and concern which we were glad to receive. We take these on board seriously and the ongoing project design will be developed with these concerns in mind.

Below are our initial thoughts about how these concerns could be addressed:

Increased traffic, parking, congestion and road safety concerns - We plan to encourage and incentivise walking, cycling or using public transport to come to the site to try to minimise traffic congestion.

We understand there are particular concerns about Cramond Road North and South. We would not be using Cramond Road South as a public entrance to the farm and therefore would not be expecting large amounts of vehicle/people traffic here. We will notify the council of the neighbourhood's concerns in particular to road safety issues on Cramond Road North and South. Any public entrance would need to have safety as a paramount concern - we are looking to discuss using the entrance from Toby Carvery car park as the public entrance.

It was great to hear that there was interest in a farm shop on the land, but we understand that this interest would need to be balanced with minimising traffic congestion. We will explore options in having a farm stall near the Toby Carvery entrance and the stall only be open on certain days (perhaps fortnightly) on the farm but we aim to also work with local businesses and community organisations who could sell the vegetables or set up as pick up points in the local area. For any events that are to be planned we will look at the parking/traffic provisions situation carefully and discuss with the City of Edinburgh Council to see if further solutions can be developed.

Vandalism/Fly-tipping/Onsite Security - Plans are already in place for security fencing around the market garden area. Any other infrastructure will need to be designed with safety and security in mind. Key strategies to engage young people to participate in the project may also help to reduce some vandalism.

Long Term Sustainability - *financial viability, planning, staffing etc* - The team is well aware of funding requirements needed and are exploring various avenues and options for funding. A specific financing strategy will be finalised once a lease and the scope of the project is agreed on.

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EAC will promote transparency around finances and ensure that all plans have a long term view and sustainability built in. The team is seeking a long term lease agreement from the council.

Spoiled views - (messy allotments) - There is considerable interest from the community in allotments, particularly from Muirhouse where homes may not have gardens. In order to address the concern that allotments will spoil the landscape, the siting of the allotments could be moved so that they are not directly in the view of housing on Lauriston Farm Road. Our site design was created with a view that it could be adapted as needed to meet concerns of locals as well as the stipulations about the views from Lauriston Castle.

Will pave way for housing development and buildings - Infrastructure on the farm will be kept to a minimum, only having a marginal footprint on the land. This concern is counterbalanced by the people who expressed that a benefit of the project is that it would keep the site green and prevent development.

This concern highlights the need for a long term agreement from the council and project to guarantee that land will not fall into hands of developers. The view from Lauriston Castle is a designated landscape which makes any form of housing development in the future unlikely.

Impact on valuable bird habitat - one of the three key proposal aims is biodiversity with habitat enhancement. Some people raised concern about the impact on existing bird populations, based on this concern, we are considering expanding the area to be managed specifically for coastal birds to include part of the middle field.

We understand the importance of the site for some migratory and waterfowl species and this is a major consideration of our site designs and proposal.

The baseline biodiversity survey carried out shows that the biodiversity on site is poor and the proposal contains actions to improve soils, plant trees and hedgerows, expand wetlands for wading birds and use agroforestry principles all of which will result in significant improvements to biodiversity and habitats.

Project will fail to be inclusive - only for the middle class - Inclusivity is a major driver of the project design. The team has a background of working in communities of multiple deprivations. Further ongoing consultation with those areas will be essential, and coordination and collaboration with community led organisations from Muirhouse, Pilton, Drylaw and Granton will begin early on, with specific interventions to ensure that these communities can engage in multiple ways with the project. The team also plans to reach out to minority communities in the local area, such as the BAME community, multicultural groups, religious minorities, refugees and LGBTQI groups.

Conclusion

An online consultation does not give room for dialogue as an in person consultation event would have, meaning that there are questions and concerns that we have not been able to talk through in detail with the local communities.. We have thought about how these may be addressed and hope that there will be opportunities to chat with people in person about the project in the not too distant future.

We are delighted that a high number of local people participated but we also understand that

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some members of the community will have been unable to participate due to the consultation being online or who would have more happily engaged in person.. Our intention from the outset was to be inclusive and to make sure that there was representation from a diversity of ages, ethnicities and neighbourhoods. We had hoped to go into schools and to engage directly with specific community groups, unfortunately this wasn't possible. We hope to be able to engage more fully once conditions allow.

Through the consultation, several people have been in touch who are keen to get involved either as individuals or with their organisation/school/group; this is great and we look forward to taking up these offers.

The community consultation has been a great first step in gauging the support for our proposal, gaining insight into how people would like to interact with the farm and helping inform the further development of the food growing, biodiversity and community engagement strategies. The response has helped build the team's confidence in the strength and vision behind the proposal, the multiple benefits a project like this could provide and the potential for high levels of community involvement.