

# Deputations

## Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 12th August, 2021

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

### Deputations

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### Contacts

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### Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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**CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL  
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Item No 3**

**12 AUGUST 2021**

**DEPUTATION REQUESTS**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Deputation</b>
<b>3.1</b> In relation to item 8.4 - Comiston Farmhouse 83 Pentland View - Proposed Disposal	Cohousing In Southern Scotland (written submission circulated)

# CHOISS – Cohousing in Southern Scotland

For Attention of: **Finance and Resources Committee 10.00am Thurs 12 August 2021**

From: **CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland Ltd** Date: 10 August 2021

**Re: Disposal of Comiston Farmhouse, 83 Pentland View, Edinburgh EH10 6PT**

**Responding to City Council Policies:** Page 13 of our [Asset Transfer Request](#) is filled with direct extracts from recent policy objectives adopted by the City Council - including these Local Priorities from the South West Locality Improvement Plan 2017-22:

- Increased supply of affordable and accessible housing
- Communities are placed at the heart of planning new developments
- Local communities understand each other's needs and work effectively together.

**A Housing Cooperative:** Drawing on the Mutual Home Ownership model developed by Low Impact Living Affordable Community - LILAC Cohousing in Leeds- the project will offer homes that are held in perpetuity for public benefit and not subject to private housing inflation - making them progressively more affordable as time goes by.

**Availability of Funding:** While the CHOISS offer is not conventional and relies on goodwill of all the stakeholders in the project, we have found there to be a surprising level of trust and collaboration achieved drawing on the experience of other such initiatives. Over £2million is available from private resources and negotiations under way to bridge with a long term mortgage from Ecology Building Society.

**Neighbour Petition:** 135 residents from the immediate neighbouring streets signed a wet signature petition in ten days in May. This provides evidence of substantial local support for a community led, not-for-profit approach to be taken in deciding the future of this important local cultural heritage public asset.

**Emails of Support:** Please find below the text of 42 emails that were copied to CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland in ten days from 20 - 30 July. Other email responses sent to Commercial Property - under Part 5 of the Community Empowerment Act 2015 - are "stuck in the system" due to the following explanation:

*On Fri, 6 Aug 2021 at 16:41, Brian Paton <Brian.Paton@edinburgh.gov.uk> wrote:  
I require to index and redact the responses received to the site notice before forwarding to you. I am on leave next week and will not be in a position to commence this work until week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> August. You will have 10 working days to respond (should you wish to) and both the representation and any response will be published on our website.  
Kind regards, Brian*

**Brian Paton** | Senior Surveyor | Estates | Sustainable Development | Place Directorate |  
The City of Edinburgh Council | 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BG | Mobile  
07851 384948 | [brian.paton@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:brian.paton@edinburgh.gov.uk) | [edinburgh.gov.uk/commercialproperty](https://edinburgh.gov.uk/commercialproperty)

**We request that the Committee appoints CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland as Preferred Bidder and encourages us to proceed to Stage 2 of a pioneering project for residents, neighbours and for the wider public benefit in Edinburgh.**

**See also 2-page [Comiston Briefing](#) and 12-page [UK Cohousing Network brochure](#)**

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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**From:** Bridie Ashrowan <[bridie.ashrowan@evoc.org.uk](mailto:bridie.ashrowan@evoc.org.uk)>  
**Date:** Friday, 30 July 2021 at 18:26  
**To:** "[Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk)" <[Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse

Dear CEC colleagues, At EVOC we would like to express our support for innovative housing solutions that are community led.

We would specifically like to mention this in relation to **the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse** as a Cohousing Community, and will be offering the support of EVOC to them as a community organisation for their development.

While we cannot endorse this one alone and not others, this approach is much needed.

At EVOC, we can see that this is a community led solution needed to enable community resilience and to address the current housing needs of Edinburgh's communities.

In community building, local people can work together to reduce social isolation and contribute to the city being ready to achieve multiple key strategies, on Net Zero, on 20 minute neighbourhoods, and on Poverty.

Sincerely,

*Bridie Ashrowan, Chief Executive* @Bridie\_EVOC

**New blog: Pram Pushing Distance** Read our blog here for SURF (Scotland's Regeneration Forum, whose objective is to improve the wellbeing of residents in Scotland's disadvantaged communities): [www.surf.scot/scotregen/pram-pushing-distance/](http://www.surf.scot/scotregen/pram-pushing-distance/)

**Empowering Neighbourhoods** Read our blog for the Edinburgh Poverty Commission: <https://edinburghpovertycommission.org.uk/2021/06/10/empowering-neighbourhoods/>

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Hi, I live round the corner from Comiston Farmhouse, at XX Fox Spring Crescent and I would very much like to see the Comiston Cohousing proposal go ahead. It would be brilliant to see a new, innovative way of living in our neighbourhood, and it would be great to secure the buildings and grounds of the historic farmhouse in an area of typically modern housing. The proposals also include a number of neighbourhood amenities and environmental benefits.

When you meet to determine the future of the farmhouse, please remember that these decisions have a lasting effect on local communities, and our opinions must count. We overturned the previous development proposals as a community, and wish to make our voices heard once again.

Kind regards, Mags XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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This is a brief note to say that as residents of Comiston, my wife and I are wholeheartedly in support of developing the above Farmhouse as a Cohousing Community.

Many thanks, J

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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As a long time resident of EH10 I am writing in support of the bid by CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland to acquire Comiston Farmhouse for the purpose of developing a pioneering co housing initiative.

Cohousing offers an exciting and alternative model for the provision of affordable housing. The Edinburgh City Vision 2050 document sets out as one of its objectives the development of Edinburgh as a city which the citizens want and includes within it a commitment to active development of affordable housing. In other policy documents which the city supports, the idea of 20 minute neighbourhoods is also championed.

The Comiston Farmhouse group has done a great deal of work establishing contact with as many as possible of the residents in the immediate area of the farmhouse and they, along with local neighbours, can see that the building and land offer potential to act as a modest community resource centre and focus of community building in an area where there is not a great deal of community focus as yet.

Whilst their initial bid for the property and land fell short of the current successful bid, and maximising income for the city is an understandable aim of city staff, non-financial gains need to be taken into consideration too. There could be advantages in their purchase that would benefit the community locally and could act as a catalyst for change within the housing market in the city as a whole.

For these reasons, and because the group is committed to developing affordable and sustainable low carbon impact homes, I would ask that councillors consider seriously ways in which the Comiston Farmhouse proposal could inspire them to promote new approaches by Council officers and staff to the sale of community assets.

With good wishes, Yours sincerely, Liz

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Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to express my support for the CHOISS initiative for Comiston Farmhouse. My name is XXXXXX and I am a resident of Pentland Drive, EH10 6PX - next door.

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This message is to express my additional support for the Community Asset Transfer Request made by Comiston Cohousing for Comiston Farmhouse. All as permitted by the Community Empowerment Act 2015 and described in the associated community led initiative request for the transfer of the property and grounds.

Robert XXXXXX, Pentland Drive.

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I support the plan to save Comiston Farm House for the many reasons suggested but especially as sustainable carbon neutral affordable housing. This is critical for the young generations and for their lives as future contributors to the well-being of Edinburgh and surrounding areas. Sandra XXXXXXX

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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**From:** Angus Hardie <[angus@scottishcommunityalliance.net](mailto:angus@scottishcommunityalliance.net)>

**Sent:** 29 July 2021 18:08

To the Head of Property Division CEC

Scottish Community Alliance (SCA) draws together many of Scotland's national networks and intermediaries that in turn represent and support 1000's of local self-help groups and community organisations. While the range of interests that these organisations pursue is varied, what they all share is a commitment to deliver increased levels of local empowerment with decision making and control over resources being devolved to the most local level that is practical.

Probably the single greatest challenge that communities in every part of the country face is a shortage of high quality, affordable housing. While the causes of the housing crisis are complex and relate to systemic issues of land supply and the predominance of volume housebuilders in the market, the crisis has been exacerbated by a lack of genuine innovation in the housing model and flexibility within the planning system to support it.

It is for this reason that SCA welcomes the energy and commitment of the group that have come together to pursue a Cohousing project at Comiston Farmhouse. This is a concept that is largely untested in Scotland (although that is not the case elsewhere in the UK and Europe), and as such represents an exciting opportunity for City of Edinburgh Council to be recognised as pioneers by enabling this model of intentional community housing to develop further.

We would urge the Council to support the bid by CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland to acquire this building and thereafter to continue to work to develop further innovations in tenure that meet the widest range of housing needs across the City. It is clear that the current model of housing provision is failing and as such we believe every effort should be made to promote and nurture these innovative and community focused approaches that offer genuine potential to succeed.

We urge CEC to accept the offer of Cohousing in Southern Scotland for the purchase of Comiston Farmhouse.

Yours sincerely

Angus Hardie, Director, Scottish Community Alliance

36 Dalmeny Street, Edinburgh EH6 8RG

[www.scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk](http://www.scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk) -

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I would like to express my support for the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse in South Edinburgh as a Cohousing community. So how can I help?

I am deaf and a BSL user. T.A.

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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To Whom it May Concern

As a local resident I am writing in support of the Asset Transfer Request submitted by CHOISS to purchase Comiston Farmhouse. I would comment as follows:

1. In preparation for Edinburgh 2050 City Vision, the council states that its long-term aim is to create the city that citizens want whilst also reducing carbon impact and ensuring environmental sustainability. The council states that it is '*committed to sustainability*' and to '*making Edinburgh a better city for everyone*'.
2. The proposals of CHOISS to develop a community hub, provide affordable housing and to develop the farmhouse sympathetically and sustainably is in keeping with the wishes of the local community and meets the Choices for City Plan 2030 consultation proposals '*support Local Place Plans to achieve resilient places and support community ambitions*' and '*for all new development be designed in a way which tackles and adapts to climate change*'.
3. In order for the council to meet its ambitious 2050 City Vision, it will have to consider creative options and the CHOISS proposal is a prime opportunity for the council to support and endorse practical action which gives effect to the council's publicly expressed ambition and delivers against both national and local priorities.
4. I am concerned that CHOISS has been advised by a council officer that the sale of the farmhouse will be recommended to a developer who has delivered a more substantial financial bid. The council should not simply fall into the trap of adopting the tired and outdated approach which involves selling the property to the highest bidder without regard to community needs or environmental priorities.
5. Given the strength of opposition by the local community to previous development plans, I am concerned that there has been no consultation with the local community about the plans of the recommended developer.

I sincerely hope that the council's pledge to make Edinburgh a better city in which to live is taken into account when considering the bids for Comiston Farmhouse and would request that the CHOISS proposal be seriously considered as the best option for the community, the council and Edinburgh as a whole.

Yours faithfully

Pauline XXXXXX, Pentland View

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I write as a resident of Comiston to support the CHOISS Asset Transfer Request for Comiston Farmhouse.

As well as providing affordable housing, this group's aims include a shared low-carbon lifestyle very much in line with the Edinburgh City Council's 2030 Climate Strategy. As evidence of how useful this might be to Comiston and surrounding districts as we face the challenges of the transition from fossil fuels, I would point to the LILAC communal housing in Leeds where the residents have been pioneers in creating both a climate change hub and a city farm, as well as providing an exemplar of successful low-carbon living on their own site.



## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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While I appreciate there might be larger bids than that of CHOISS. I would ask you to give consideration to these and other community advantages that have been offered by the group when making your recommendation to the council.

Yours sincerely

Tom XXXXXXXX, Pentland Drive, Edinburgh, EH10 6PX

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Dear Officer

I would like to express my support for the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse as a Cohousing Community. I ask the Finance & Resources Committee to give due consideration to this bid when it comes to their consideration on Thursday 12 August.

The bid incorporates added value to the community and climate benefits including;

- A mini-hub in the City's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network
- A Local Meeting Point, Community Garden, Tool Library etc
- Pilot net zero carbon refurbishment of 150 year old stone dwelling
- Net zero / Passivhaus pilot for affordable new build homes
- Complementing the City's ambitious Social Housing for rent programme
- Empowering a community keen to build affordable homes in perpetuity.

Local support for the bid has been demonstrated with 106 local people pledging support for the Cohousing proposals. Value in the context of housing and community benefit needs not be considered in terms of stark financial arguments. It would be short sighted to go with a slightly higher bidder purely on pounds and pence. This bid represents an opportunity for City of Edinburgh Council to lead the way in much needed innovation in the housing market.

Please consider the added value of this bid and give it your support on 12 August.

Many thanks, June XXXXXXXX

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**To:** Commercial Property <[Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** Scott Arthur <[Scott.Arthur@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Scott.Arthur@edinburgh.gov.uk)>; Phil Daggart <[Phil.Daggart@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Phil.Daggart@edinburgh.gov.uk)>; Jason Rust <[Jason.Rust@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.Rust@edinburgh.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Community-led bid for Comiston Farmhouse as a Cohousing Community:

I am writing to express my support for the appeal by CHOISS - Cohousing in Southern Scotland against the recommendation to sell Comiston Farmhouse to a private developer. I understand that the private developer offered £1.3m compared to the £1m offered by CHOISS. However, I hope that the Finance & Resources Committee will agree that the benefits which the CHOISS cohousing proposal would bring to the community far outweigh the additional money put up by the private developer.

The cohousing project would provide affordable homes for people who may not be able to pay full market prices. It would include a pilot Passive House and a zero carbon refurbishment of a 150 year old dwelling, which would showcase the highest standards of building and refurbishment with the lowest energy needs respectively.

As a nearby resident, I am excited about the proposed community activities, including a community garden. I find that there are very few opportunities to get involved in any community activities in Oxfords (other than activities for elderly people), and this project would offer opportunities not available at present.

I therefore hope that the appeal by CHOISS will be granted.

Yours sincerely,

AE, Oxfords Hill, Edinburgh EH13 9JR

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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I strongly support the proposal by CHOISS – Cohousing in Southern Scotland in applying for ownership of Comiston Farmhouse, 83 Pentland View, Edinburgh EH10 6PT and believe that the Council should back such a worthwhile community led proposal.

The benefits to the local community would be immense, both physical and mental, both encouraging and developing a local spirit with spin-offs including a reduction in local anti-social behaviour.

Local communities need to see power devolved to them and this is an outstanding opportunity for the council to demonstrate empowerment at a local level and prove their support of local communities.

The benefits of this proposal surely outweigh any slight advantage offered by the commercial development proposed.

Edinburgh does not need more commercial housing when such an innovative and beneficial scheme could be supported by the Council instead.

I urge you to give full consideration to the many merits of the CHOISS proposal.

Yours sincerely

Andy XXXXX, ex architect, Pentland View, EH10 6PS

+ Follow up email:

I echo my husband's views entirely.

Please, please consider the benefits to the local community and the planet.

Yours sincerely, Jenny XXXXX

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I support Comiston Farmhouse as a Cohousing Community: a pioneering first for Edinburgh.

Please consider the added value to the community, the city and the climate which was outlined in their proposals. These included:-

A mini-hub in the City's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network

A Local Meeting Point, Community Garden, Tool Library etc

Pilot net zero carbon refurbishment of 150 year old stone dwelling

Net zero / Passivhaus pilot for affordable new build homes

Complementing the City's ambitious Social Housing for rent programme

Empowering a community keen to build affordable homes in perpetuity.

The proposal seeks a middle way between the private housing market driven by profit, and the social rented sector for those on very low incomes.

Please give this proposal your sincere attention.

Kind regards.

Beverley XXXXXXXXXX

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you to support the CHOISS bid to develop Comiston farmhouse as a community resource along with affordable housing. This seems to me to be an admirable project with significant benefits for the local Comiston / Fairmilehead community as well as providing affordable, high quality and environmentally efficient housing.

I was delighted that the Council supported the establishment of the St Oswald Centre in Bruntsfield and it seems to me that this is a comparable project. Whilst commercial considerations must, of course, be taken into consideration, other factors that improve our local environment and improve well-being are equally important. We have seen the value of communities in the COVID pandemic and surely it is the role of local government to enhance that value whenever possible.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ian XXXXXXXXXX, Pentland Terrace, EH10 6HF

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As residents of Pentland View, Edinburgh, EH10 6PS for 16 years we support the request of Comiston Cohousing in their bid to buy Comiston Farmhouse as part of an Asset Transfer Request.

Many of the proposals they put forward are beneficial to the local community and the environment and some reflect the City Council's own policies on reducing car usage as parking will be limited to the number of properties they are building on the existing site which is fewer than other past applications have proposed. Likewise affordable housing is complementing the city's social housing for rent programme which is much needed.

It also provides a local meeting point for local residents including community garden and tool sharing which any private development would not do.

Pentland View is already a "rat run" for access from Comiston Road to Oxgangs, Greenbank and further afield including George Watson's school and is extremely busy for a residential street. Likewise parents dropping their children at Pentland Primary by car is commonplace and they use Pentland Drive as a drop-off point. Limiting cars in the street can only be a good thing.

Several previous proposals for this site have fallen through and no doubt the original farmhouse building has deteriorated in the intervening years. Is a new private development likely to succeed through planning while including this important local building in it's plans? The proposal by Comiston Co-Housing appears to have very good local support and objections to their plans would be very much less than to large scale development of the site.

A and L XXXXXXXXXX, Pentland View, Edinburgh EH10 6PS

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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Dear Councillors / Official Representatives,

We are emailing you to encourage you to support the Community Asset Transfer request made by CHOISS in relation to Comiston Farmhouse. As Comiston residents we welcome this initiative, since it has multiple benefits: a responsible approach to environmental considerations; preserving a significant old building; the provision of affordable housing and development of a valuable community hub.

We would urge you to lend your support to this worthwhile initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Prof R & M XXXXXXXXX, Pentland View, Edinburgh EH10 6PY

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Hello, I would like to express my support for the Comiston Cohousing initiative and the required asset transfer request.

The initiative would be a highly valuable addition to Edinburgh and would be a pioneering first, especially within the broader discussion around the need for more creative solutions to the housing crisis (with the associated links with communities and health & wellbeing).

It would align with the Council's ambitions around 20 minute neighbourhood networks and complement the social housing for rent programme.

This initiative would provide a fantastic solution to addressing a derelict building site.

I do hope the Council supports this fantastic initiative.

Many thanks, Matthew

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As a resident in Swan Spring Avenue I want to express my support for the community cohousing proposals that have been put forward in respect of Comiston Farmhouse.

I think that their ideas for the development of this site would be of benefit to the local community as well as providing housing opportunities for a number of people.

I would urge that you consider these proposals when the matter next comes up for consideration and that any decisions that are taken are made on a wider and more balanced basis than purely monetary factors.

Patrick XXXXXXXXX

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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With regards to the above property we would like to thoroughly endorse the plans submitted by CHOISS and reject the sale to a property developer.

As near neighbours in Fox Spring Rise, we believe that the plans by CHOISS in preserving the main building and creating a clean environment which can only be of benefit to the immediate area. The land within has a wonderful biodiversity of life, which we are sure would be maintained if the trees and bushes etc. remained.

The community within would be very much part of the community outside. The farmhouse is the only historical connection to what the land was before the Comiston and Oxcgangs areas were built on for housing. It may not be a listed building, but is by far the most important historical artifact in the immediate area.

The fact that there is very little difference between the bids by the property developer and CHOISS means that Edinburgh City Council can do the clean decent thing by choosing CHOISS as the new owners and enhance the reputation of our area and city with regards to health and wellbeing for all.

Yours sincerely,

R and J XXXXXXXXXX

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I am resident at XXX Pentland View, EH10 6PS.

I wish to add my support to CHOISS Edinburgh's community-led initiative for the development of Comiston Farmhouse.

The CHOISS Edinburgh proposal has a number of merits. These are:

**Net-zero carbon refurbishment of the farmhouse.** We have already seen many devastating effects of climate change this year. It is vital that all new developments use zero carbon technologies as a matter of urgency. Scotland is hosting the UN Climate change Conference (COP26) this autumn and should therefore be seen to be taking a lead in such matters.

**Affordable homes.** There is a huge amount of building in the Fairmilehead area, but too much is for expensive housing, whereas there is a pressing need for affordable homes.

**Community facilities.** The proposals include a community garden and local meeting-point which would all contribute to the Council's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network. The site has good bus connections, as well as cycle and footpaths enabling people to access it without the need for cars. Covid-19 and Brexit have pointed up the benefit of gardening and growing produce to which the community garden would contribute, as well as the health benefits this would bring.

The offer of just over £1 million for the site should be taken in the wider context of the above community benefits.

Regards, (Dr) Margaret XXXXXXXXXXXX

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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To: [Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Cc: [ian.perry@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:ian.perry@edinburgh.gov.uk), Steve Burgess <[Steve.Burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Steve.Burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk)>, [cameron.rose@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:cameron.rose@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Subject: Support for Comiston Farmhouse, South Edinburgh as Co-housing Community

I am emailing in support of the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse in South Edinburgh as a Cohousing Community.

My biggest hope was that the pandemic would lead to a new way of doing things, one that isn't just driven by economics and which addresses the more human needs that each of us has.

This is such an opportunity for Edinburgh Council to step out of the box and begin to explore different ways of creating developments. For too long money has talked and that's good for those gaining, but less successful for those still trying to find their way. And in the end, more will be spent on supporting the vulnerable, the lonely, those with mental health, elderly, single parents unless these more creative models are tried and allowed to develop.

Cohousing supports the things that matter (and which became clear during the pandemic): mitigates loneliness and to some extent, mental health issues; creates belonging and things to do so isolation is less; provides support e.g. if someone is ill; shared resources; physical activity e.g. working in the garden; helping people find their gifts which they offer to those around; fun; and inevitably sharing resources. People recognise that community matters, and are also increasingly concerned about the environment. What a potential flagship model for COP26!

Cohousing also offers a more eco way of living: of shared cars, washing facilities, the development of a 20-minutes neighbourhood, growing its own food, a tool library, affordable new build houses built to environmental standards, a meeting place, complimenting the social housing rent programme and developing a model that will be available to those less off in perpetuity.

Be bold and please consider supporting this initiative. These are a group of innovative, committed people with considerable expertise and experience in making sure that Cohousing works so it's an ideal start.

Yours faithfully

Tricia XXXXXXXXXXXXX, Blackwood Crescent EH9 1QX

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I am writing to express my support for the Comiston Farmhouse Community Asset Transfer Request as set out by Comiston Cohousing. Sale of the property to a private developer would be completely contradictory to the council's green ambitions and would add little value to the community. I would request that consideration be given to a bid that will enhance diversity and carbon reduction in the local community.

Yours, Bill XXXXXXXX, Pentland View

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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I have read with dismay that you are not prepared to consider the Community Asset Transfer Request of Comiston Farmhouse and recommend the sale to a developer. This goes against the spirit of the Community Empowerment Act.

It would be lovely to see the building used for the benefit of the community with a meeting point, a hub and a library and protecting the environment with a garden and net zero homes. This would support inequalities in society allowing people from disadvantaged groups the chance to engage and take part and allow affordable new homes. The alternative is a developer who may rip the soul out of the place.

As a local resident I would love to see this property developed for the community and the opportunity for a Community Asset Transfer and would ask that you review your decision and consider the proposal.

Best wishes, Caroline XXXXXXXXXX, Comiston

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Dear Edinburgh City Council, I write with regard to the above to support Comiston Cohousing in Southern Scotland in their endeavour to secure this property for community dwelling rather than it be sold to a developer.

This seems to be a great opportunity for Edinburgh City Council to do the right thing and develop this property for affordable homes for those on very low incomes. This will demonstrate the commitment to empower a community in a sustainable way in a property with a net zero carbon footprint.

We are totally in support of this project and would very much oppose the selling of the Farmhouse to a developer.

We hope that the Council will look favourably on the community asset transfer request and use this unique opportunity to allow the community to be involved at the heart of the development of this farmhouse.

Yours faithfully, AT and WD, Pentland View

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To: [Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Commercial.Property@edinburgh.gov.uk)

I wish to lodge my support for Comiston Farmhouse and the attached grounds to be developed by CHOISS for affordable housing in the area. There is always a shortage of housing for people without the means to buy freehold property and this will be a good opportunity to make a number of properties available for the local community.

There is no reason to refuse a good community led offer for CHOISS to create affordable homes here. The CEC Commercial Property can surely see that this would be a great project providing support and housing for people in the locality.

I ask that CEC Commercial Property look closely at the offer, and not just to go for the highest bid for this location.

Judith XXXXXXXXXX

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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Following the [recommended] rejection of CHOISS's bid to take ownership of the above property I would ask that the decision be reconsidered given the wider benefits which are clearly articulated in the initial bid and could be achieved in both the immediate and wider communities.

A project such as this has the ability to be an exemplar, offering an alternative solution to delivering affordable housing in areas of high demand and high property prices.

The City of Edinburgh Council is known for its innovative approaches to issues around pollution, transport and housing. It is well documented that house prices in Edinburgh are escalating at an alarming rate putting many properties out of reach of economically active individuals and families. Offering this particular asset to a housing developer will do nothing to change that status quo which is clearly not working for the majority.

Supporting this group with its ambitious plans will not only provide more desperately needed affordable homes in the city. It will bring a beautiful existing building back into use, demonstrate the environmental benefits possible around using existing buildings, add to the local community amenity and become a beacon of hope and inspiration to others.

John Forbes, Community Led Housing Coordinator, Communities Housing Trust - a Scottish Charity (SC027544) 07940 751 245 / 01463 233459 <http://www.chtrust.co.uk>

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I am writing to express my support for the Comiston Farmhouse Community Asset Transfer Request as set out by Comiston Cohousing. Sale of the property to a private developer would be completely contradictory to the council's green ambitions and would add little value to the community. I would request that consideration be given to a bid that will enhance diversity and carbon reduction in the local community.

Yours, Bill XXXXXXXX, Pentland View

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I am writing to express my support for the Comiston Farmhouse community-led bid. I am a Buckstone resident, and I'm copying my local Councillor, Scott Arthur.

I support the community bid because I think it will bring rich benefits to people in the Oxgangs and Fairmilehead area. Resources like a tool library will help those on low incomes, as will the opportunity for affordable homes.

Space for use by the community will be well-used, as local centres like church halls are regularly fully-booked (and expensive to hire).

The zero carbon aspect of the renovation is important. I am a member of Fairmilehead Energy Hub, a local group which encourages people to make zero carbon choices.

We get a lot of interest from the local community in this topic, and I believe Edinburgh Council should encourage innovative projects like this as part of its 2030 targets.

I hope the community-led option for Comiston Farmhouse is chosen by Edinburgh. It's an ambitious and exciting project that I believe is exactly what Edinburgh City Council should be encouraging for the benefit of residents and the environment.

Best regards, Katy XXXXXXXXXXX, Buckstone Loan East



## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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Dear Edinburgh Councillors,

I would like to support the Cohousing community's bid for Comiston Farmhouse. I think it's important for the Council to encourage different forms of housing in the city and to give space for pioneering projects to see if they can be successful in meeting the housing and wider goals of the city.

In 2015 the Council took the courageous step of giving Bridgend Farmhouse to the local community in one of the early examples of "urban asset transfer" and this has resulted in the restoration of the building and the establishment of a community hub owned and run by local people. I was one of the trustees of the farmhouse at the time, and indeed I still am, and I have seen for myself how it has helped build a community spirit in our part of the city.

So I would urge you to be courageous again and transfer Comiston Farmhouse to the local co-housing community.

Yours, John XXXXXXXXXXXX, Dinmont Drive

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Dear Council Officials

I'd like to register my support for the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse. This is not just one property; it is a pilot project that would accelerate the growth of this type of housing for Edinburgh.

The competing bid of £1.3m for Comiston will not help Edinburgh Council meet its targets for climate, health. and housing. It won't install a water-source heat-pump in the culvert; it won't improve local mental health and inclusiveness by providing community space; it won't build zero-energy houses; it won't recycle demolition materials into raised beds for food gardens; it won't consider biodiversity.

There have been 2 objections to Comiston being turned into Cohousing. There are many thousands more objections across the city to Edinburgh's housing crisis and our embarrassingly large carbon footprint.

I am currently living in Bruntsfield so I have copied this to my local councillors.

Many thanks, Dr. Alexandra XXXXXXXXXXXX

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Dear Council, given the severity of our housing crisis it is heartening to see innovation in new models of living together, such as the co-operative proposals for the Comiston Farmhouse. I trust you are able to support their efforts on behalf of the people of Edinburgh.

Yours Sincerely, Malcolm Fraser | Director, FRASER / LIVINGSTONE ARCHITECTS  
Buttercup Studios, 48 Warrender Park Road, Edinburgh, EH9 1HH  
0131 228 9606 | 07730059336 | [www.fraserlivingstone.com](http://www.fraserlivingstone.com)

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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I've just sent a letter in and highlighted my support for the request, and how it would help contribute to commitment outlined in the draft climate strategy and net zero targets, as well as the Scottish Gov 2040 Housing strategy and inclusion of Cohousing and housing coops; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-2040-2/>, as well as affordable and environmentally friendly housing targets. Hope that helps, and good luck with next step.

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I am sending this email to appeal against a recommendation of the sale of Comiston Farmhouse to a developer, rather than CHOISS (Cohousing in Southern Scotland). I understand that although the Asset Transfer Request for Comiston Farmhouse, by CHOISS has been validated, you are, apparently, not obliged to consider it because it was received after the property was put on the market.

I believe that the added value to the community, the city and the climate, which were outlined in the CHOISS [proposals](#), may not have been fully considered. These include:

- A mini-hub in the City's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network
- A Local Meeting Point, Community Garden and Tool Library
- Pilot net zero carbon refurbishment of 150-year-old stone dwelling
- Net zero / Passivhaus pilot for affordable new build homes
- Complementing the City's ambitious Social Housing for rent programme
- Empowering a community keen to build affordable homes in perpetuity.

CHOISS seeks a middle way between the private housing market driven by profit and the social rented sector for those on very low incomes.

Scotland, especially expensive areas to live like Edinburgh, needs more projects like this community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse as a Cohousing Community, not less. It's a pioneering first for Edinburgh – just what Edinburgh is so good at, showing everyone else the way. Kind regards, Lorraine XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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Dear Sir / Madam

Under the Community Empowerment Act 2015 I would like to appeal against the proposal to sell Comiston Farmhouse to a commercial developer instead of to a community led bid. I support all proposed aspects of the community bid including;

- A mini-hub in the City's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network
- A Local Meeting Point, Community Garden, Tool Library
- Building affordable homes in perpetuity.

As a resident very local to Comiston Farmhouse I would appreciate the contribution that this would make to a sense of an active community, the increased supply of affordable housing, and the availability of shared resources which are proposed.

I would also support the proposal for environmentally sustainable housing.

Please fully consider the added value to the community, and the city which the transfer of this asset to the community would have.

Yours sincerely, Alan XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, Oxgangs Hill

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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To whom it may concern,

I am living in the neighbourhood of Comiston Farmhouse. I am writing to support the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse.

In the bidding proposal it highlighted the key features including:

- A mini-hub in the City's 20-Minute Neighbourhood network
- A Local Meeting Point, Community Garden, Tool Library
- Pilot net zero carbon refurbishment of 150 year old stone dwelling
- Net zero / Passivhaus pilot for affordable new build homes
- Complementing the City's ambitious Social Housing for rent programme
- Empowering a community keen to build affordable homes in perpetuity.

Please reconsider the bid and hopefully we can be successful.

Kind regards, Dr. L

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Dear Councillors,

I am writing to express my strong support for the community-led bid by CHOISS Edinburgh for Comiston Farmhouse, to develop it as a net-zero carbon community hub and affordable cohousing community.

The last thing Edinburgh needs is more commercial developers taking over land and building the same old style of modern, isolated, urban flats. If Scotland is going to keep its goal of leading the way in green initiatives tackling climate change, as well as tackling issues such as loneliness and lack of affordable housing, then allowing the creation of cohousing communities such as this is essential.

Cohousing communities such as the one proposed are good for the environment, good for the mental health of those who reside in such a tight-knit community with a strong purpose, and good for everyone in the wider South Edinburgh community who would benefit from things such as the community garden, meeting hub, and tool library.

As a long-time resident of Edinburgh (I have lived in the Southside for many years, and now reside in Hillside), Cohousing is exactly the sort of thing I'd like to see more of here, and it's something I would enjoy as a member of the wider community, and hopefully even as a cohousing resident myself someday when the opportunity arises. This is a unique opportunity for Edinburgh and I hope you make the right decision in allowing it to go ahead.

Best wishes,

Dr Jasmeen XXXXXXXXXX, Montgomery St EH7 5JA

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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I am emailing in support of the community-led bid to make Comiston Farmhouse into a cohousing community. This is an important project for several reasons. It will:

- provide sustainable, affordable housing that will remain affordable, lived in and cared-for by residents; it will not become short-term lets, AirBnB rentals etc.
- create a community, and provide benefits to the wider surrounding community (eg. community garden, meeting space, tool library) with all the myriad benefits for mental health and social cohesion
- provide a model and roadmap for other community and cohousing developments, enabling a growing number of residents to become part of the solution to the city's housing needs
- demonstrate that Edinburgh Council prioritises its citizens and our environment.

As we are surely all aware, we need to address serious issues with house prices, the cost of renting, the prevalence of short-term lets and holiday properties, the shortage of social/affordable housing, and the energy inefficiency of the housing stock.

At present, we have people living hand-to-mouth, moving frequently and unable to put down roots, or having to leave the city in order to afford a place to stay. Shared repairs of stairwells become ever-more difficult as there are so few long-term residents.

There are knock-on effects that place further demands on council services: lack of care for the buildings and the neighbourhoods, noise complaints, loneliness, increased commuting, and fewer people to volunteer and organise locally.

A commercial bid for Comiston Farmhouse might be a higher amount up front than the community bid, but we have given commercial developers ample opportunity over many years to offer successful housing solutions in the city and we're not seeing the results we need. It's time to count the value added by community-led projects, and actively prioritise these over commercial bids.

I hope you will give importance to the Cohousing in Southern Scotland (CHOISS) Asset Transfer Request, as it provides a model for the future of housing development, entirely supporting all the council's aims for sustainability and neighbourhood development. I am an Edinburgh resident, and hope to remain so for the long-term, but that will depend on projects like these blossoming.

Yours in hope, Kathryn

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I am writing to express strong support for the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse in South Edinburgh as a Cohousing Community.

This scheme delivers the best value for the neighbourhood and for Edinburgh and the climate.

Dr Alexandra XXXXXXXXXXXX, Reader in Natural Language Processing

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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I wish to support Comiston Farmhouse staying in community hands as proposed by CHOISS, a community led initiative to keep the property in not for profit hands.

Regards, Gordon XXXXXXXXXX

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I would like to express my whole hearted support for the bid being made by the community for the above property to be used as a cohousing community.

I trust this will receive a favourable response for a very worthwhile and thoughtful project.

Kind regards, Ian XXXXXXXXXXXXX.

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I just wanted to email to add my support for CHOISS's bid for Comiston Farmhouse.

The project is EXACTLY the kind of development CEC should be supporting and nurturing - affordable in perpetuity, community owned, net zero carbon.

There is a real opportunity here for Edinburgh to be seen as a leader in moving housing towards the kind of model we'll need to see more of as we attempt to deal with the simultaneous challenges of climate breakdown and lack of affordable homes.

Kind Regards, John XXXXXXXXXXXXX

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I wanted to write to you to support the project for building and creating a community living space in Comiston.

I am a Mum to three children and one thing I have been acutely aware of is the lack of a 'village' in our community these days. I have no family living near by and the struggle of bringing up children, running a home and owning my own business seems incredibly challenging and isolating at times.

This project not only brings people closer together through sharing community spaces and cars but also encourages a more sustainable way of living which is vital given the climate issues we are facing.

This is a pioneering project and represents a leap forward in a very positive direction and I wanted to show my support. Many thanks, Hannah

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I would like to express my support for the community led bid for Comiston Farmhouse in South Edinburgh.

They have identified this site as an ideal one for a Cohousing community, are passionate about providing resources for the local community, providing affordable housing in perpetuity, retrofitting the existing stone building to high environmental standards in order to extend its life and retain the embodied carbon, and to build new homes to Passivhaus standards in order to minimise their operational carbon.

## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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This is a community enterprise to 'build back better' by providing affordable homes and limiting the effects of climate change. The social value of such a development would far outweigh any monetary value. Please reconsider their offer,

Yours sincerely, Sian XXXXXXXXXXXX

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I write to urge you to support the Cohousing Bid and ensure that it is not nudged out by a private development bid at the Finance & Resources Committee of the Council which meets on Thursday 12 August.

The value the Cohousing bid represents for building back better in Edinburgh - and this is a Scottish first so in Scotland too - is clearly signalled by the Cohousing bid. It will model best housing and environmental practice, and will serve a range of urgent local communal needs. The value it will deliver for Edinburgh City will vastly outweigh the one-off sum that a private developer may be willing to offer above the Co-Housing bid.

The Cohousing bid team is well-networked professionally and communally. They will deliver for the city.

Yours sincerely, Dr George XXXXXXXX, Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh Cc Newington Councillors

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## Appendix: Emails of Support for Community Led Bid for Comiston Farmhouse

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From: Jason Rust <[Jason.Rust@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.Rust@edinburgh.gov.uk)>

Date: Tue, 20 Jul 2021, 13:18

Subject: Comiston Farmhouse

To: [Local Constituent]

Thank you for your email. I gather there has been a lot of consultation with the immediate community over a period of years and even think there was an opportunity to feed in to the sales particulars which some neighbours did.

I gather there have been a few meetings attended by some of the neighbours too. Any consultation, informal or otherwise, would be by officers though, as opposed to committee members who make the decision. The sale also came up on various occasions at Fairmilehead Community Council pre-pandemic.

Yes, definitely, I very much agree that Cohousing can have an important role to play in the wider housing market.

Kind regards, Jason

Councillor J G Rust, Colinton / Fairmilehead Ward

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Email to CHOISS

I note your comments and take them on board. Brian [Paton] has been in touch with the ward councillors.

One thing to note is that any recommendations on a CAT would be subject to a decision by a panel including ward councillors. To ensure the process is fair, I would prefer not to make any specific comments on the merit of the proposal at this stage; however, I am content to receive any correspondence on the matter.

Please get in touch with any further relevant information.

Kind regards, Phil Doggart

Conservative Edinburgh City Councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead Ward

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