

## Community Asset Transfer Request

Lochhead Gardens, Lochhead Avenue, Lochwinnoch PA12 4HW (Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust)

### LCDT Response to Representations 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2023

#### Supporting Representations

*Thank you so much for your encouraging statements towards our application for the Lochhead Social Gardens. We really do appreciate your support and we are so thankful for your endorsement.*

#### Opposing Representations

#36	<p>I object to the above proposal on the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is a significant site which is overseen by Renfrewshire Council on behalf of the village. When a future need arises, for more houses or perhaps start-up business premises, there are very few areas available in the village.</li><li>• Lochwinnoch used to have a superb Care Home on Johnshill and now that people are living longer, the village would benefit from a Care Home/sheltered housing in order to free up houses. This is an ideal site for such a venture as it is near the shops, the activities at the McKillop, the Church, the surgery as well as a park.</li><li>• It would also be unwise to commit the Community Transfer lease for 10 years which would mean the site would be unavailable for what might be a more pressing need such as a Care Home.</li><li>• This site is the equivalent of “money in the bank” for the village’s future development. It is important that we do not use green field sites for village expansion.</li><li>• The site in commercial terms must be worth more than £200,000 and it would seem unwise to give this away to any business organization. This would be deemed a significant loss for the village. If the business had financial difficulties, then the organization could sell it to cover their losses.</li><li>• There is plenty of opportunity in the village for such a venture as the Lochwinnoch Development Trust. For example, the food bank could be accommodated in any of four empty shops and this would bring footfall to the center of the village which would help to support the existing shops. Church Street is currently looking extremely sad and would benefit from a new enterprise.</li><li>• The village is also well served with social spaces – Loch Bar Services, Bowling Green, Golf Course, the McKillop, the Masonic Hall, the Annexe, the Calder Church spaces, the Library, the room above the Brown Bull, Castle Semple café, the Primary School as well as a well-furnished play Park. The many activities suggested by the LCDT could be carried out in the above social spaces and would help to make these spaces financially viable.</li><li>• I note that they are proposing markets on the site which would be inappropriate. There is no space for parking the many cars that normally accompany a market. The ideal site for a market would be at Castle Semple or the McKillop where there is plenty of parking.</li><li>• How financially viable is the LCDT likely to be as there does not seem to have been</li></ul>
-----	---

	<p>any widespread publicity of their audited accounts over the last 10 years? The Business Plan seems to rely on grants from many different sources. There is no proof that there will be a direct income stream from the activities designed to sustain all that is proposed. A number of village shops have closed recently due to lack of footfall so this does not bode well for the future of LCDT. Nor do we know from where future funding is likely to come in order to sustain the Trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the last 10 years there have been 27 Directors but 21 of these have resigned which is a concerning factor. Given that this is a community effort, there does not seem to be any publicity of the Minutes of the various meetings which they suggest have taken place.</li> <li>• A few years ago, one of the proposals of the Trust was to create a hydro scheme which came to nothing. They also had plans to maximize the potential of the water bore hole used by the former Struthers company and this too has not materialized. It would appear that this is still on their agenda. There is now talk that they wish to buy out the vacant Church to create an art centre as well as all the other activities on the site at Lochhead Avenue.</li> <li>• To date we are living in difficult times where a well-established and stable organization will have difficulty surviving. It would be unwise to transfer such a valuable village asset when there is a plethora of opportunities currently available to LCDT in other areas of the village. This organization has still to prove itself.</li> </ul>
#46	<p>I object to the above proposal: There has not been a proper village wide consultation on this. I only found out about this through a friend. Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust have not published Minutes of their meetings nor audited accounts. Given the nature of the many proposals which they are suggesting, I do not think this site is appropriate given that it is close to residential property. There are plenty of empty shops and social spaces where they can carry out a wide variety of activities. This piece of land is in the heart of the village and we truly need sheltered accommodation for the many elderly in the village. There used to be a first class Care Home in the village which served the elderly well. This would be an ideal site for sheltered accommodation. I am also concerned that some of the activities of the LCDT are affecting the viability of our local shops because the Larder is drawing the people away from the centre of the village. It would be better if they used some of the many vacant shops and this would draw people into the heart of the village. The site should be held by Renfrewshire Council on behalf of the village so that if there is a future need – we would have this space</p>
#47	<p>I object to this Community Transfer proposal for the following reasons:</p> <p>In terms of good and effective town planning it is important that residential areas are respected. There are many houses in Lochhead Avenue and nearby. Farmers’ markets, BBQs, children’s parties with bouncy castles, etc as suggested by this Development Trust would be better placed in the village park, by Castle Semple or in front of the Mckillop. Some of their indoor activities could be held in the many social spaces available in Lochwinnoch.</p> <p>The former cabinet making factory was on this site and it seems more appropriate to use this space for some form of built environment which would benefit the entire village such as more houses. There are a number of empty sho[s] in Lochwinnoch and this does not add to the attraction of the town centre. Some of the Trust’s activities could be housed in one of the shops.</p>
#48	<p>I object to the above proposal:</p> <p>I live in a residential area and my home is opposite this particular site. The site is inappropriate for many of the activities proposed by the Trust. Foe Example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Twenty market stalls each Sunday. The place for a full blown market is either outside the Mckillop or down by Castle Semple where there is space and plenty parking. These</li> </ol>

	<p>markets attracts lots of cars so where on Lochhead Avenue are they going to park?</p> <p>2. A public toilet that can be used by the general public. This is not the correct spot for a public toilet – we used to have one at the Cross which was very handy for all.</p> <p>3. Children’s parties, BBQs and pizza parties. It is proposed that bouncy castles, trampolines, etc are to be erected for children’s parties but the most appropriate site for such events is the lovely park which the village has and is underused. In the case of inclement weather, we have many indoor spaces in the village which are also underused.</p> <p>4. Village life has taught me that there is an element who will see, if the transfer goes ahead, the potential at this site for rowdy parties, a place to drink and get merry etc. Not ideal in a residential area.</p> <p>5. It is also suggested that vegetables can be grown on this site. This is the site of a former cabinet-making factory so the ground will be contaminated. This is not a good site for growing vegetable or planting fruit trees</p>
#49	<p>I object to this Community Transfer Proposal:  The village does not have many spaces for future building should the need arise. [REDACTED].</p> <p>Lochwinnoch no longer has a Care Home so this would mean we would be moved out of the village where we have family and friends who would visit us. I understood that the idea was to have more care Homes in order to release housing for younger people. This would be a great site for a Care Home.</p> <p>There are many appropriate opportunities for something like the Development Trust – empty shops, an abundance of social spaces in the village for their many activities and a lovely park. There is no need whatsoever to commandeer this site for such a long time – 10 years.</p> <p>This transfer has ben kept quite secret and we do not seem to have had info about it – I found out about it from one of the residents =in Lochhead Avenue who is truly annoyed because the Trust has not canvassed the opinions of all the residents of Lochhead avenue.</p>
#53	<p>I strongly object to the above on the following grounds: • This is a significant site that has been overseen by Renfrewshire Council on behalf of the village. Should LCDT gain ownership of the site, when a need arises in the future for sheltered housing or space for business start-up, there are no other sites in the village that would be suitable. • There is no care home in or near the village anymore. This site, so close to the village centre and amenities is ideal for such or for sheltered housing. There is a real need in the village for such accommodation and providing smaller homes for the elderly would free up the larger homes that they currently occupy. Many wish to downsize but do not wish to leave the village and they have no options at present. • The site is the equivalent of ‘money in the bank’ for the village. Keeping the site in public ownership means that we can prevent the use of green field sites for any housing. • The site is a valuable one, probably worth in excess of £200k. In my opinion it would be very unwise to hand such an asset over to a business organisation which they could sell at anytime for significant profit. • The need for a community larder is questionable. The venture grew out of a food bank that was run during the pandemic and which was used by a maximum of 14 households, most of whom were shielding rather than in real need. The original idea of giving away produce grown in the community garden was a good one, but the larder now goes far and wide collecting food from supermarkets as far away as Stevenston. Their activity has contributed in major part to the closure of the Heritage Farmers market in the village and their plans for expansion (ie a market) pose significant threat to the few remaining shops. • There are plenty pf spaces available in the village. The plans to provide space for social activities will mean that the McKillop and other venues will lose out and could end up closing. • The heart of the village should be the Cross/High Street/Main Street/Church Street. Significant</p>

development will pull footfall away from these areas, something that is already happening. • The LCDT could use one of the vacant shops in the village for their larder and thus bring footfall back to the village centre. • The proposal to expand the site to include markets and social events will lead to significant problems with parking.
---

*Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns over Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust's application for a Community Asset Transfer for Lochhead Social Gardens. We understand that it is an ambitious project, but we are acting in the best interest of the community. We will continue to gather views from local residents about how the site should be used. Our full project plan and business plan can be viewed on our website <https://lochwinnochtrust.org.uk/village-garden/>*

*We have summarised our reply to points brought up in representations #36, 46, 47, 48, 49 and 53 below:*

- Use of Space for a Social Garden: Several representations mentioned the lack of care home in the village and that the Lochhead site is well placed for this amenity. The site remained derelict for 14 years, and the feedback from our consultations has shown that residents prefer that the land be used as a green space. Our plans for the project reflect that the acre of land is being used for the public as a social and growing space. We have undertaken the services of professional soil testers who will guide us on how to safely use the grounds for a community space.

It is important to distinguish that the application for CAT is being made by Lochwinnoch Community Development Trust. The Larder is run the LEAP Project, who are users of the garden. Other users include Evie's Wildcare and Lochwinnoch Force for Nature. The Larder has seen incredible growth, and now have over 400 households as registered members. They have a strong volunteer base supporting the project. The LCDT Board feels the Larder is a good fit with our aim of the social space.

Additionally we understand that there is concern amongst retailers and we are incredibly sorry to see the loss of shops on the high street. As one representation pointed out, this is not just a village problem. LCDT is working in collaboration with local businesses to set up a Business Network. Our mission is to see Lochwinnoch flourish and thrive.

- LCDT's Suitability for Project The Trust has a strong Board of seven Directors and many more voluntary members of management committees via our various steering groups. An average of 2 resignations per year over the past decade is reflected in the fact that Directors have all also been voluntary. Last year, the Trust secured two-year funding for a Development Officer and this has allowed us to spread the workload of the Board and build it up. It is our intention to hire a Project Officer to focus solely on this project's construction and delivery. Board meetings are hosted monthly and we have a public AGM every year which is well attended by the public. Part of our remit is to investigate the feasibility of projects, including the bore hole and the local Parish Church.
- Community Consultation – We have held several community consultations since the inception of this project dealing with the development of this site, as well as two Open Days during this CAT consultation period. The presentation plan for Lochhead Gardens is available in the Workplace on 39 High Street and we welcome conversations with anyone who would like to discuss the plan. Consultation carried out by professional consultants in 2019 identified that there was a lack of community spaces in Lochwinnoch. The full and complete

details can be viewed here in great detail:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qPBbAleCkJoYuQHORcVjMtnxJ36ai6nuPy-LamrLeLw/edit?usp=sharing>

- LCDT and Use of Current Community Spaces The Lochhead Social Garden has been developed to compliment with other community spaces. We value the spaces and we have supported them extensively in our Warm Spaces Network, where £23,000 was allocated to local groups, organisations and venues. It is our plan to continue to support these venues in the future, however there are no other suitable spaces locally for carrying out the majority of the activities planned for the site which provides open, outdoor and social space, which is why the Lochhead Gardens space is ideal.
- Management of Site Safety and security are a top priority for the site. Therefore, we will be implementing a booking system and security procedures to prevent misconduct on the site. We understand concerns with our neighbours who were given an opportunity to opt in to the distribution group by contact made via social media and door-to-door leafleting. Feedback from local residents has helped to shape the plans and considerations for the site, the wider project and proposed activities. Residents also fed back to us that these plans were preferable to the possibility of housing here. We will continue to communicate with them about the progress of the site. We know that parking is a key issue on market days, and we will ensure that this will be managed appropriately.