



Sustaining our Neighbourhood in 2040

Our Local Place Plan: preparing Merchiston, Fountainbridge, Bruntsfield, Marchmont and Sciennes for a changing climate.

DRAFT: Comments please to LPP@banzaiedinburgh.org.uk by 28 Oct

How to describe our part of South Central Edinburgh? A residential area? A green haven? We ran a community led enquiry to ask our neighbours and the answer was very positive.

Residents and visitors alike value the well established neighbourhood and proximity to the city centre while enjoying access to large parks. The main concern we heard was the lack of preparedness in response to the climate and nature crises. One issue that respondents felt was missing was a **holistic approach**. So, here are our requests:

1. The [City Plan 2040](#) should be radically re-framed as a delivery mechanism for the City Council's [2030 Climate Strategy](#) and [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy](#).

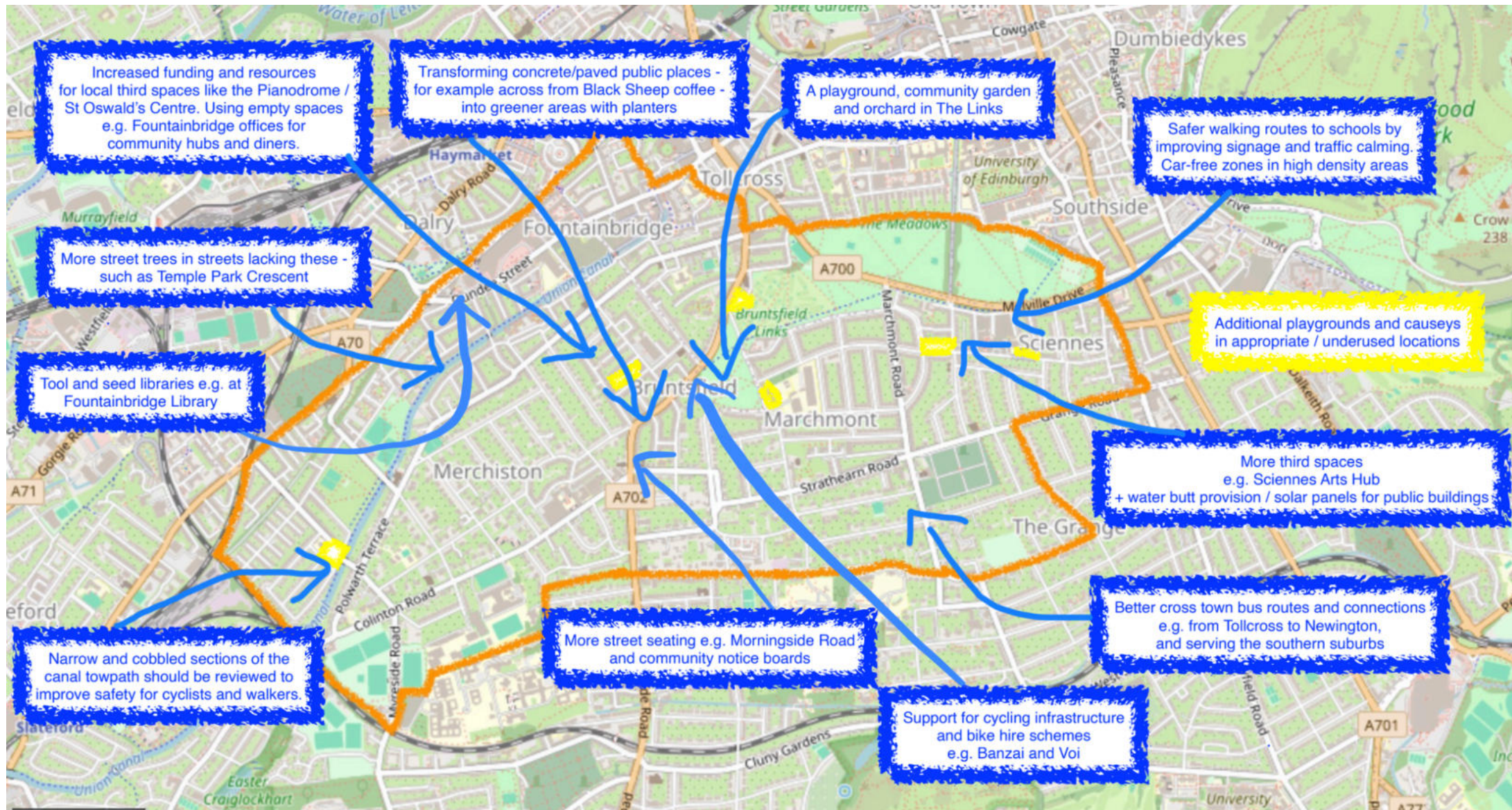
Two major development opportunities exist in the area of our Community Councils:

- What happens to Edinburgh Napier University Merchiston site when they leave?
- What happens to Astley Ainslie after the NHS moves from most of the site?

We urge that the principles emerging from the community consultations are followed in framing both sites' Place Briefs and in all planning decisions in our area:

2. There are few development sites in our area and there was a strong support for zoning these for **affordable housing - perhaps cohousing - and dwellings for older people** NOT for more short term lets, aparthotels or purpose built student accommodation. To make our area climate resilient means permission for **solar panels** on more roofs even in Conservation Areas, preparation for **heat networks** and a **retrofit support hub**.
3. Our traditional, long established **local shops** and leisure facilities are appreciated except that parts of Merchiston are less well served - could this be addressed?
4. Green space is valued - along with access to it. More **community gardens** / allotments would be highly valued. Residents want more **trees**, further greening measures, parklets, rainwater reuse, green roofs and pollinator gardens.
5. There is ambition to see places that are empty used as **public community hubs** - where all groups and ages are to be accommodated and made welcome e.g. **public diners**.
6. People value the **walkability** of the area and access to **public transport**, but desire fewer cars, both for safety and a reduction in air and noise pollution. Improving **connections** between the network of cycle lanes is important to further enhance the area for cycling.
7. We want safe indoor and outdoor spaces for everyone to use as members of an inclusive community, as a reflection of the importance of both physical and mental health.

Our place-based ideas:



Who we are and who was consulted

This Local Place Plan has been developed under the aegis of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 as a community-led document that allows local people to propose how land and buildings are developed in our area. The secretariat was Bruntsfield-based Banzai Edinburgh with Greenlight Funding from Edinburgh Communities Climate Action Network.

We used guidance issued by the City of Edinburgh Council. We are grateful for the advice shared at our first People's Assembly by Councillor Joan Griffiths, convener of Planning, and help from Senior Planning Officer, Anna Grant.

This local community group has led the work of engaging with stakeholders including: Astley Ainslie Community Trust, Boroughmuir High School, Bruntsfield Primary School, Clean Heat Edinburgh Forum, Dig-in Community Grocer, Edinburgh Student Housing Cooperative, Eric Liddell Community, Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust, Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, Grove Community Garden, James Gillespie's Primary School and High School, Living Streets Edinburgh, Morningside Community Council, St Oswald's Centre, The Bike Station and Tollcross Community Council.

In the period from autumn 2025 - summer 2026 the dedicated task group has:

- Distributed 10,000 flyers to households, with details of a survey and in-person events
- Shared a digital survey with over 200 responses
- Run three in-person People's Assemblies, with nearly 100 participants in all
- Presented at Bruntsfield Primary School assembly with over 200 pupils
- Engaged a follow-on classroom project to envision and draw the local area in 2040
- Gathered initial responses and presented these at five local events on display boards
- Received around 300 further comments at the events attended by over 1,000 people
- Presented at Edinburgh Student Housing Coop, inviting feedback and questions
- Circulated this draft to all our local elected Councillors, MSPs and MPs for comment.

Community Councils: working for our neighbourhood

Merchiston Districts Community Council (MDCC)

We are one of the first community councils of Edinburgh - speaking up for over 19,000 residents of Merchiston since the 1980s, with up to 16 members plus eight nominated by neighbourhood associations, traders' organisations, local churches etc. We work, or have worked, in fields such as town planning, law, accountancy, education, healthcare and business, and volunteer our time and expertise. We meet on the third Tuesday of the month to scrutinise planning and licensing proposals and discuss traffic and parking issues and tree cover and green space affecting the amenity of our area.

Ian Doig, Chair: merchistonchair@gmail.com

Marchmont & Sciennes Community Council (M/SCC)

Our patch has a population of around 11,000, and we now meet on the fourth Wednesday of the month to discuss issues relevant to the local area. With up to 14 elected representatives and attendance from local groups like the Grange Association, we recently opened the Sciennes Arts Hub, which we hope will be a central point for the community to come together, share space and enjoy. Our Engagement and Inclusion Officer has been an important figure in developing and delivering this consultation and subsequent report.

Brian Gilmore, Chair: marchmontsciennes.commcouncil@gmail.com

A bit of background

This Local Place Plan is the result of collaboration between Merchiston Districts Community Council and Marchmont / Sciennes Community Council. It was initiated by local community-led neighbourhood group Banzai Edinburgh and grant-aided by ECCAN - Edinburgh Communities Climate Action Network.

Our focus is South Central Edinburgh – including Merchiston, Fountainbridge, Bruntsfield, Marchmont and Sciennes. These areas share a similar heritage of pre-1919 tenement and terraced housing, busy local high streets, and strong community identities.



Because the Astley Ainslie Community Trust has prepared a separate [Local Place Plan](#) for that site we have not included this area.

We value the work of Morningside Community Council and recognise their [Local Place Plan](#) just to the south.

We have collaborated with many local groups and organisations to produce an informed and participatory Local Place Plan. Key stakeholders include St Oswald's Centre, Bruntsfield Primary School and Dig In Community Greengrocer, Edinburgh Student Housing Coop, among many others.



What have we done?

We hand delivered 10,000 leaflets, published an online survey to which we received over 200 responses, held three People's Assemblies in January, February and March - with 100 attendees all together. We then presented our findings on six panels of a pop-up exhibition at



five events over the summer

for further insight - with 300 further comments received. Total attendance at these events was over 1,000 people.



The level of community support has been encouraging over a ten-month period. Consistent themes and requests make us confident in our assertion that this Local Place Plan puts forward the vision of the local community.

As part of the outreach process, we made sure we were reaching a diverse group of people across the area we cover in this plan. To do this, we continually analysed the participant data and made an extra effort to speak to under represented groups.

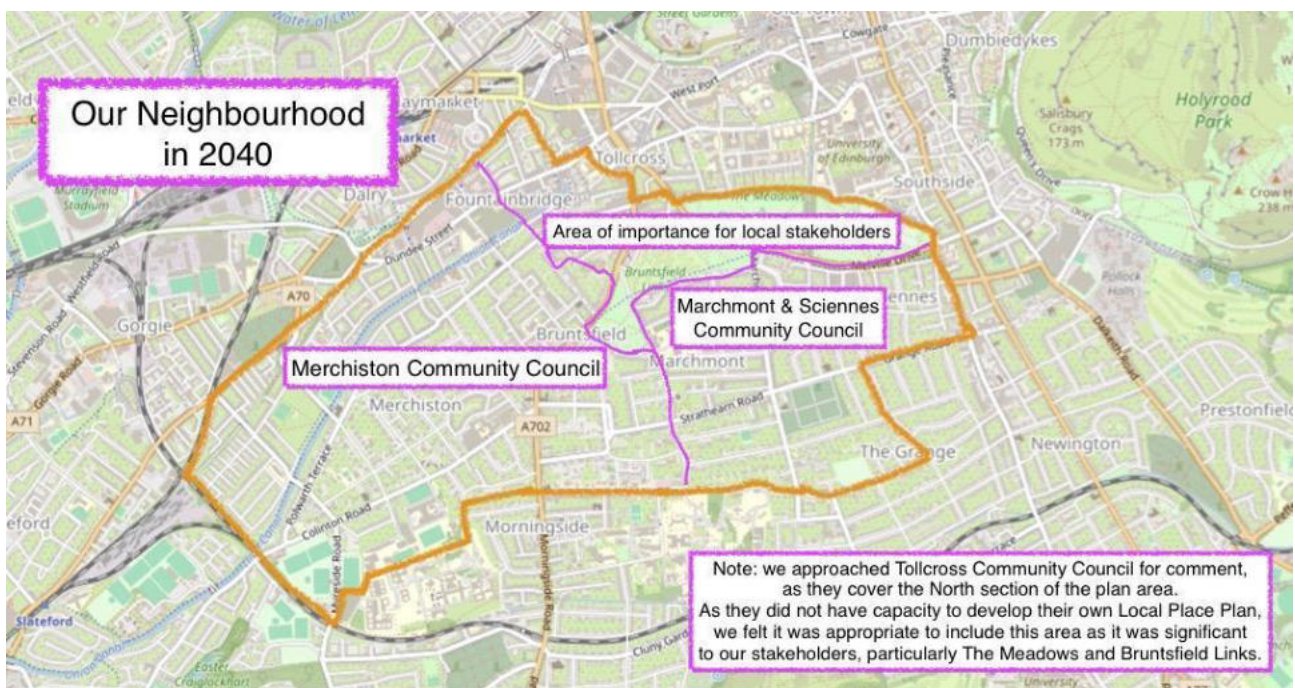
We noticed we weren't getting many responses from younger people, so we went along to Bruntsfield Primary School assembly with over 200 pupils, plus a follow-on classroom project to envision and draw the local area in 2040.

We also met with residents at Edinburgh Student Housing Coop and we targeted advertising on social media encouraging neighbours to respond to our survey.

We contacted organisations run by and working with people of colour, who were less visible in the data. Some of this worked and some of it didn't – but we're pleased to say that the representation in the survey responses is particularly diverse in terms of age, location and length of time in the area. All in all, we engaged with slightly under the city average for disability, ethnic diversity and home ownership.



Our Place



This is the study area chosen for our Local Place Plan. It comprises the areas covered by our two Community Councils. Because residents consider the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links as part of our locality they have been included while the Astley Ainslie site has been excluded because the Community Trust has prepared their own Plan.

Context

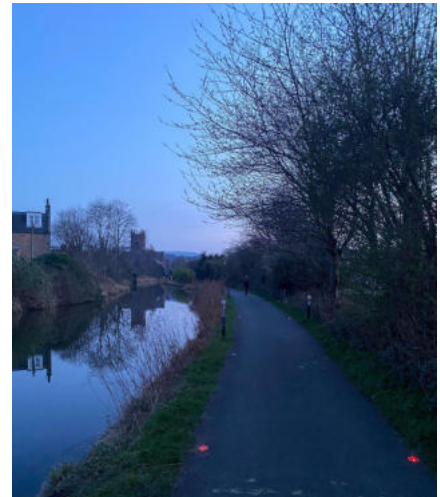


We are a densely populated urban area, with large areas of Victorian and Edwardian tenement flats together with areas of larger villas, 'colony' houses and modern student housing, with a mix of families, professionals and students.

The area has good nursery provision and encompasses several primary schools, state and private high schools and Edinburgh Napier University. Local amenities include many independent shops and businesses.

Green space and play and sports facilities are provided primarily by the Meadows, Bruntsfield Links and Harrison Park.

There are good public transport connections to central Edinburgh, and some good, although patchy, cycling infrastructure. The Union Canal provides an important commuting and recreational route through the area.



BZ Our Neighbourhood in 2040

What should our neighbourhood look like in the future?



HAVE YOUR SAY

SHORT SURVEY**PRIZE DRAW**

www.banzaiedinburgh.org.uk/oni2040

BZ Our Neighbourhood in 2040

Want to decide how your neighbourhood looks in 2040?

JOIN US!

We are hosting three People's Assemblies

Free lunch from 13:00

Discussions 14:00 – 16:00

Saturday 31 Jan – discover, explore (1)

Saturday 28 Feb – discover, explore (2)

Saturday 28 March – refine, validate

@ St Oswald's by the Pianodrome



www.banzaiedinburgh.org.uk/oni2040

What we heard from our consultations and feedback

In our research we drew on the **Place Standard tool** that was developed through a partnership between Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS), the Scottish Government, and NHS Health Scotland (now Public Health Scotland).

We framed our survey questions around six themes drawn from the tool plus one that many expressed concern about. Here are the results under each heading:

1. Climate Resilience

In our initial conversations with neighbours the concern about the gap between policy and practice on issues to do with coming climate disruption was most marked. This was the issue with most negative comments - lack of preparation for retrofitting our homes and insufficient guidance and financial support for home insulation measures and provision of zero carbon alternatives to gas heating - and the difficulty in implementing low carbon improvements like **solar panels, heat pumps or heat networks**.

The concern is that our neighbourhood is not sufficiently prepared for the changes and that there is not enough alignment of the city council's climate adaptation and climate mitigation strategies and primary objectives to ensure compliance with town planning objectives.

Residents responding seek more **joined-up thinking** and application of policies that help achieve **greater long term resilience**.

The [City Plan 2040](#) should be radically re-framed as a delivery mechanism for the City Council's [2030 Climate Strategy](#) and [Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy](#).



2. Housing & Heating

The tenement buildings in Marchmont were built on land feud in 1877, with those built before 1990 and those completed before 1914. These were built for rent to middle class people working in Edinburgh. The housing in Sciennes was mainly spec built for sale, with most housing completed by 1990.

Small hospitals and schools were built into the area. As the council took more control and hospitals became more central, primary schools became more developed. The children's hospital in Sciennes Road was built to replace the Lauriston Lane hospital in 1895 following an outbreak of typhoid five years earlier.

With the growth of Edinburgh University from the 1960's onwards, many tenement flats in Marchmont were bought to house students, either by parents or increasingly by private landlords. In recent years, with the rise of foreign students, there has been a lot of purpose-built student accommodation being built across Edinburgh.



We see the need to make homes warm and dry, well ventilated and heated by non-fossil fuel sources. We hope there will be closer integration between the City Plan 2040 and the updated Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy [LHEES] which envisages heating by Heat Networks / pipes in the street from energy centres capturing waste heat.

We expressed concerns about the restrictions on solar panels in e.g. conservation areas and we urge further relaxation of these restrictions / active encouragement for local facilities like the Edinburgh Community Solar Co-operative panels on public buildings.

Our neighbourhood is characterised by the traditional sandstone tenements of the late 19th century - along with streets of terraced houses built in the same era. With double hung single glazed sash windows and high ceilings these have always been experienced as rather cold and draughty.

An additional challenge is that the traditional construction allows for “air-washing” in the attic spaces behind the lath and plaster and above the ceilings of top floor flats causing cold external air to percolate through living spaces making them frequently very cold.

We urge the establishment of a **Retrofit Advice Hub** for all traditional pre-1919 dwellings like many in our area that is able to formulate sound advice to householders and tradespeople on good practice that reduces the risk of unintended consequences of inappropriate measures. This certainly must include advice of ventilation strategies that recover energy while ensuring the “tighter” homes are sufficiently aired for human and built fabric safety.

There are only few development sites in our area and there was a strong support for these being zoned for **affordable housing - perhaps cohousing - and dwellings for older people** NOT for more short term lets, aparthotels or purpose built student accommodation.

3. Green Space & Nature

We heard examples of the enjoyment neighbours gain from our large public parks at the Meadows, with community support from [Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links](#) (FoMBL) and Harrison Park with [Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust](#) (FCCT).

We wanted more green space and green infrastructure - both **street trees** and rainwater management facilities. Space to sit and enjoy green spaces. The need for increased diversity in green space was recognised and children and parents at Bruntsfield Primary School proposed a **playground in the upper Links**.

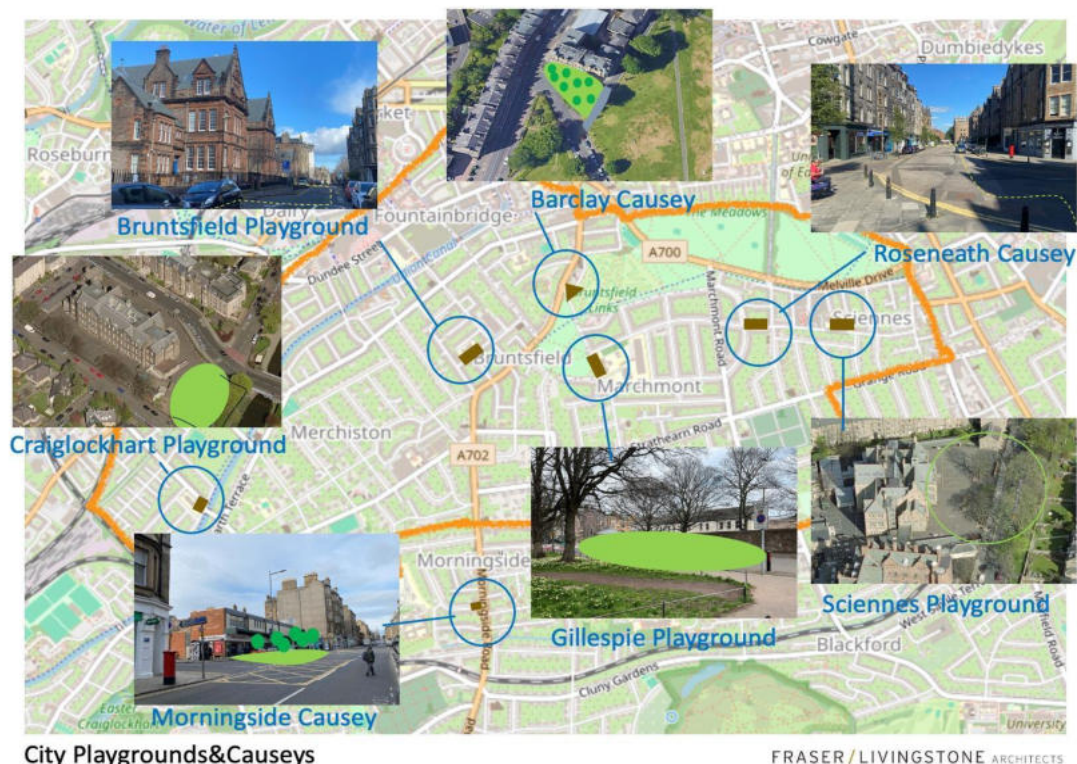
Community gardens, like the one on the north side of the Meadows adjacent to the Tennis Courts, were highly valued with the potential for more space for these on the upper Links along with provision of community orchards within our parks.

Noting the likelihood of more flash floods, rainwater butts for council premises along with encouragement to householders to improve water retention / reduce run-off.

Green roofs, walls and pollinator gardens on top of bus shelters were identified as green infrastructure options for the area - for example on all bus shelters. These improve local air quality and cool the city. Diversity in planted trees is important.

Transforming concrete / paved public places - for example across from Black Sheep coffee - into greener areas with planters or other green infrastructure rated highly in our surveys. Participants in our survey wished the city council would discourage paving over front gardens with resulting loss of green space / increase in stormwater runoff.

Late on in our consultation we had strong support for an idea to establish **playgrounds or causeys** in several areas in our neighbourhood and we hope these might be planned for.



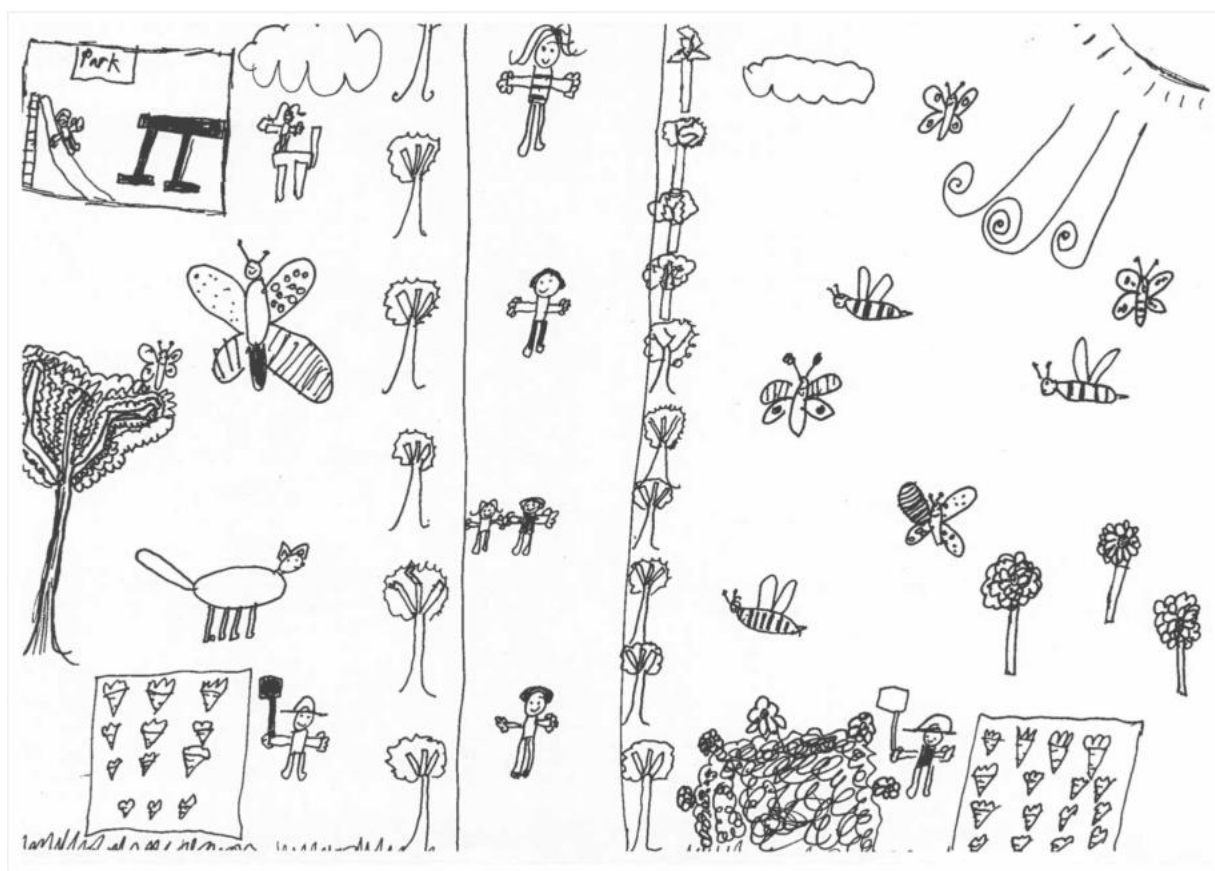
4. Local amenities & services



There was widespread recognition that the different Victorian era neighbourhoods in our area are well served by both local shops and many public services like libraries. We heard that these are highly prized and urge policies that maintain the traditional village centres' continuing liveliness.

There was a call for retention of **publicly accessible spaces and places** that enabled people to meet in a quiet location for rest and recreation. Many of the buildings built as churches and associated halls provide this function and the fine example of the new life for St Oswald's Church - hosting the Pianodrome - and community-owned hall was mentioned as a positive move that should be encouraged.

Recognition of the importance of **public open space** - even quite small ones would complement the bigger parkland areas like The Meadows and Harrison Park which are a feature of the original landscaping from the 1900s.



5. Community & social life



We want to achieve a sense of community and social life that is accessible and inclusive, fosters spaces for neighbours to come together, and tackles climate change.

We want **empty buildings to become community hubs**. Promoting and prioritising these spaces, without there being a paywall attached, will make the local area both supportive of its residents and welcoming to visitors.

We want our community spaces and activities to make every effort to mitigate climate collapse. By making **solar panels** on community spaces a default and enabling residents to buy less by hosting tool libraries and encouraging community food-growing, and by focussing on turning our green spaces into local hubs and places to reconnect with nature.

We celebrate the transfer of St Oswald's Church to a community-led charity - offering space to the Pianodrome.

We also value our local social enterprises and our charity shops, as these are spaces that are not run by large businesses and align well with our community values.

We value inclusivity, accessibility and safety as crucial to having a thriving social scene. This means reducing traffic so that streets can become safer for kids to play, organising intergenerational community events, and having mixed-age community living.

Further, we hope for more **community notice boards** in our local area, so that community activities and information can be accessible to people without having to use social media.

"Third spaces" that are either free or cheap to visit - perhaps introducing **public diners** and cafes, gazebos on our grassy areas, providing street seating, and also increasing the visibility of spaces we already have are just some ways we want to create warm, welcoming third spaces for our residents and visitors.

We value a strong sense of local community and want to engage with local initiatives like having a community firepit and places for community stories to be told - so that we can enable residents to know and trust their neighbours.

We are aware of the amount of space that is taken up by short-term lets or empty offices. We want to improve this, by using these spaces for community building, or encouraging longer term lets to be taken-up.



6. Safety, health & wellbeing

The topic of safety, health and wellbeing means different things to different people. Taking safety as a starting point this could mean personal safety particularly of women at night, which appears to be good. When public spaces are regularly in use they feel safe.

The other safety issues are traffic related, firstly road traffic especially around schools, and anti-social use of ebikes. The trend towards road **traffic reduction** is extremely popular, with a call for more visible community police seen to be applying existing laws.

Both physical and mental health are recognised as of importance across the age range. We value access to high quality outdoor space, with the parks and canal side often mentioned. Seating indoors and out are seen to be essential for the **mental health** benefits of the whole community as well as those less able.

Cost and alcohol free spaces for socialising throughout the day and into the evening should be increased for those across the full age range, and certainly not forgetting young people who it is acknowledged have very few resources available to them. A sense of community is a recurring theme to support safety as well as health, so spaces and events that include all ages and backgrounds are requested.



The community are both safety conscious and aware of the importance of the health of the people within the community being linked to the mental health of everyone. We want safe indoor and outdoor spaces for everyone to use as members of an inclusive community. The parks and canal side are highly valued outdoor spaces.

We see a need for **alcohol-free communal indoor space** available outside of office hours for a wide range of activities.

The community wants to build new, and enhance existing bonds across the community to further develop trust, safety and understanding amongst different groupings within the community.

7. Transport

We want a neighbourhood accessible to all, easy to navigate on foot or by bike and which is well connected by public transport, in line with Scotland's Sustainable Travel Hierarchy. A key theme was the desire for fewer cars generally, especially SUVs; this was consistent across all three Assemblies and the surveys.



We want a **reduction in the number of cars** on local roads to improve safety and air quality and to facilitate active travel and additional community spaces for e.g. playgrounds.

Infrastructure changes including **car free zones in high density areas** together with **additional traffic calming measures** near schools, especially Boroughmuir High School and the nearby Polwarth Terrace roundabout.

There is concern about the volume of traffic, particularly HGVs, on the North-South routes running through the Merchiston area. The canal limits the number of available routes and these are heavily used.

Good cycling infrastructure and bike hire and loan schemes were highly valued. Encouraging cycling will help to reduce car numbers and can be done by adding to and improving connections between the current network of cycle paths and cycle lanes and improving cycle path surfaces and road surfaces.

Narrow and cobbled sections of the canal towpath - a valued and increasingly busy commuter route - should be reviewed to improve safety for cyclists and walkers. Improving provision for cargo bikes, including provision of secure cycle hangars and parking for larger bikes, will help encourage uptake and reduce car journeys.

The current walkability around our neighbourhood is highly valued. We want to see **safer walking routes to schools, parks, and community venues** by implementing features such as speed bumps, clear signage, and additional crossing signals.

Community-led assessments could continuously refine and improve these routes, based on the experiences of residents. Dropped kerbs and wider and less cluttered pavements will assist wheelchair users and pedestrians.

While public transport, especially buses, was highly rated, suggested improvements included increased capacity on some buses; while more consistency in accessibility, frequency and reliability will encourage more residents to use them.

Better cross town bus routes and connections e.g. from Tollcross to Newington, and serving the southern suburbs, were also highlighted.

Links to planning

The Place Standards topics of interest to our residents, refer to extensive National and Local planning policies. The links highlighted in the table are indicative not exhaustive.

Our Plan is consistent with the following strategic objectives adopted by the City of Edinburgh Council which operates on an interconnected set of strategic plans with local partners to achieve a net-zero, fairer, and thriving capital by 2030:

- **City Plan 2030:** Guides sustainable urban development while protecting green belts and natural heritage.
- **2030 Climate Strategy:** Targets net-zero carbon through building energy efficiency, local heat networks, and public transport decarbonization.
- **Thriving Greenspaces & Open Space:** Enhances parks, urban nature reserves, and community food-growing areas.
- **City Mobility Plan 2030:** Seeks a 30% reduction in car kilometers through active travel and public transit.
- **City Centre Transformation:** Prioritizes pedestrians and cycling on major routes.
- **Our Future Streets:** Removes through traffic and expands north-south tram network.
- **Refreshed Economic Strategy:** Drives a greener, fairer post-pandemic economy via local business collaboration.
- **End Poverty Plan:** Focuses on fair work, poverty prevention, and affordable housing.

Discussion Topic	Relevant CEC / NPF Planning policy	Document and section
Climate resilience	Environment and Design Policies Sustainable Developments Conservation area development Protection of Biodiversity	NPF4 Sustainable places Liveable places Productive places
Housing & heating	Housing policies Housing development Affordable Housing Mixed communities	NPF4 Conserving & recycling assets Local Living
Local community and services	Infrastructure and Transport policies Access to community facilities Loss of community facilities Sustainable Energy and Heat networks	NPF4 Just Transition Local Living Compact Urban Growth Rebalanced Development
Green spaces and nature	Environment and Design Policies Design Quality and Context Green Blue Infrastructure	NPF4 Compact Urban Growth
Getting around and transport	Infrastructure / Transport Policies Provision of Transport Infrastructure Cycle and Car Parking	NPF4 Just Transition Rebalanced Development
Safety, health & wellbeing	Housing, Infrastructure, Transport, Environment and Design Policies Housing development Access to community facilities	NPF4 Just transition Local Living Compact Urban Growth

Registration Checklist [Not be in final document: we'll comply!]

The below checklist details all the information that is required to allow your local place plan to be registered. More information about registration can be found on the [City of Edinburgh Council website](#).

Requirement	Included
Confirmation of the Community Body's status (including contact details)	x
Have 'regard to' National Planning Framework, Local Development Plan and Locality Plan	x
A map that shows land to which the Local Place Plan relates	x
Statement of your proposals as to the development or use of land or building	x
A map showing proposals for development or use of land or building	x
A statement setting out reasons for amending the Local Development Plan	
Before submission of your plan, make sure you have sent an Information Notice and copy of the proposed Local Place Plan to all relevant Councillors and Community Councils. (The period for comments on the plan should be no less than 28 days after the date of the notice).	
A statement on your view of the level and nature of community support for the Local Place Plan	x