

Community Visioning for Astley Ainslie Hospital Grounds, Edinburgh

May 2019



"I am a frequenter of the Astley Ainslie - my son is resident at the Royal Blind on Canaan Lane and we often push his wheelchair around the grounds. My fear has always been that such a large, secluded, green space in a prime location would be sold off to developers. I'd be keen to see that not happen!"

Ian Rankin, 2019



"The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 will help to empower community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings."

Scottish Government

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Context
 - History of the site
 - The site today
 - Planning policy and access to greenspace
 - Astley Ainslie Community Trust
- 3 Engaging the local community
- 4 Future vision for the site
- 5 What next?

Appendices:

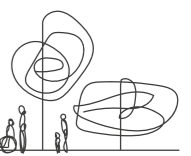
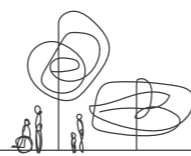
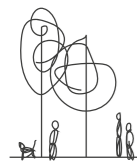
- 1 School pupils' ideas
- 2 Exhibition boards displayed at the Ideas and Vision Days
- 3 Ideas Day: people's favourite places at the Astley Ainslie
- 4 Ideas Day: people's wishes for the Astley Ainslie in 10 years' time
- 5 Ideas Day: individual responses received online
- 6 Vision Day: individual comments on the draft vision and scenarios
- 7 Results of Grange Association questionnaire survey, 2017

Acknowledgements

This report has been published by [Astley Ainslie Community Trust](#), and prepared on their behalf by Nick Wright, an independent facilitator.

The Community Trust would like to thank:

- Volunteers from the local community who helped to make the community visioning a success.
- The hundreds of local residents and other local organisations who engaged in the visioning process, including the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group.
- The Scottish Government's "[Making Places](#)" programme for providing funding to enable the visioning process to take place.



1 Introduction

“Part 5 of the Community Empowerment Act introduces a right for community bodies to make requests to all local authorities, Scottish Ministers and a range of public bodies for any land or buildings they they could make better use of. They can request ownership, lease or other rights as they wish.”

Scottish Government



NHS Lothian has announced that the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Morningside is due to close in the mid 2020s. The 17 hectares (42 acres) of grounds are brimming with nature and history, and are located in the heart of South Edinburgh. [Astley Ainslie Community Trust](#) (AACT) was established in 2018 by volunteer local residents who believe that the community as a whole will benefit from continued public access to, and ownership of, the grounds and buildings.

The Trust has developed a vision for the future of the site based on community aspirations, through a series of public events and other community engagement activities in March 2019.

This report tells the story of that community engagement and the emerging vision for the future of the Astley Ainslie.

The community engagement process was organised by the Trust with a grant of nearly £12,000 from the Scottish Government’s [“Making Places”](#) fund. The purposes of the engagement process were to:

- Understand the local community’s aspirations for the grounds and buildings at Astley Ainslie after the hospital has closed.
- Prepare a vision for how Astley Ainslie could be developed in the future, based on those community aspirations.
- Use that community vision to inform decisions about planning policy for the site and disposal of the land and buildings.

Although the hospital will not close for several years, the City of Edinburgh Council will establish new planning policy about the future of the site in the next year or so in a ‘Place Brief’, and the NHS may start marketing the site to developers at any time. The Community Trust therefore believes it is important to start thinking about the future of the grounds and buildings now.

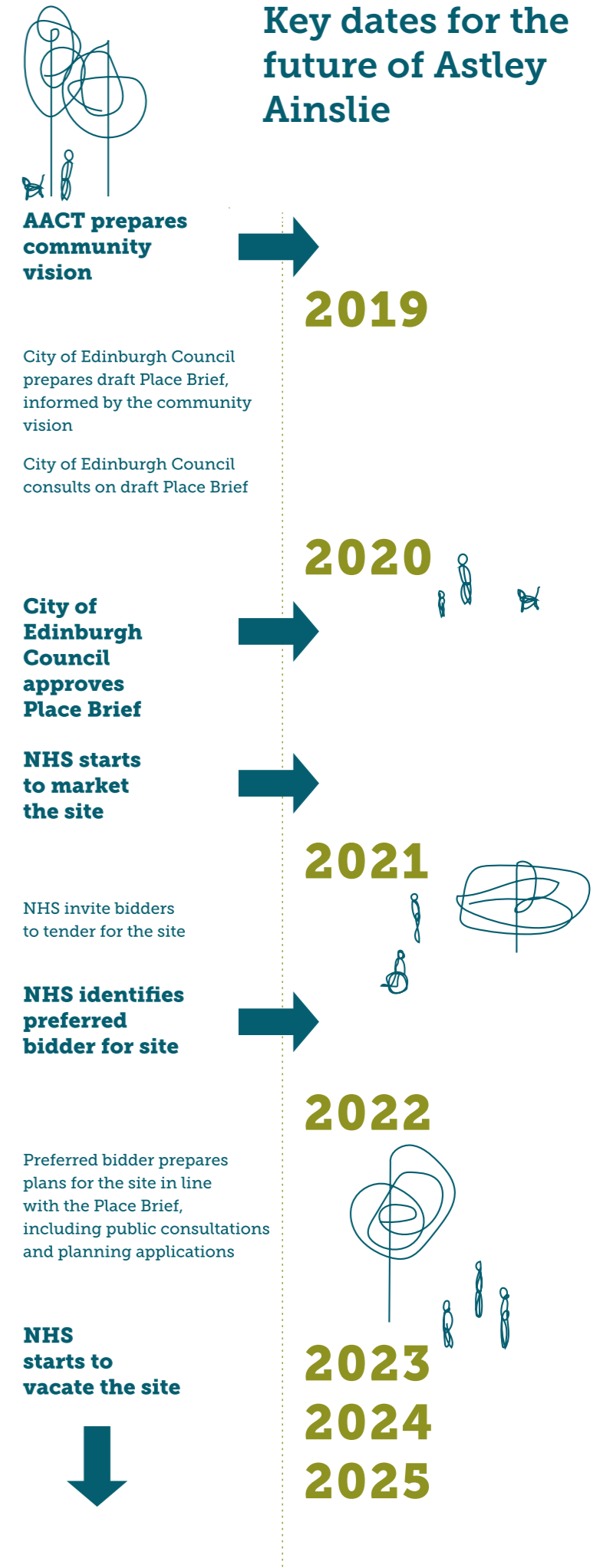
City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian were consulted about the form of the community engagement process described in this report. The City Council has advised that it wishes to use the outcomes of this consultation to inform planning policy for the future of the site, which will be embodied in the ‘Place Brief’ to guide future development of the hospital. The community engagement process and vision described in this report have been designed to support the Council in preparing the Place Brief over

the coming months, and we hope that its contents will be of assistance.

If community ownership emerges as being part of the local community’s future vision for the site, the Community Trust is prepared to lead a Community Asset Transfer for all or part of the site. As well as informing future planning policy, the Community Trust hopes that this report will also help to inform:

- NHS Lothian’s decision-making about future disposal of the site.
- Other funding sources, such as charitable foundations and private gifts.
- Potential sources of funding for Community Asset Transfer such as the Scottish Land Fund.
- Other organisations who may wish to partner with the Community Trust to deliver the vision described in this report.

Key dates for the future of Astley Ainslie



2 Context

Astley Ainslie is publicly owned land, bought in the 1920s by the Trustees of David Ainslie, who left a handsome sum of money to set up a convalescent hospital for patients from the Royal Infirmary. The Trustees subsequently established the Astley Ainslie hospital to assist both the recovery of its patients and the health and pleasure of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The NHS took over the hospital in the 1940s. It is now the last convalescent hospital in Scotland. NHS Lothian is building new facilities at the Royal Edinburgh site, and will dispose of the land at the Astley Ainslie in around five years' time.

History of the site

The site has a fascinating history – supporting Edinburgh's health and well-being as far back as the 16th century, well before the creation of the Astley Ainslie hospital we know today in the 1920s.

In the 16th century, the land was part of the Common Good: Edinburgh's open land that stretched out to the hills. At that time, the city was subject to vicious attacks of plague. The sick were sent out to this site, and a chapel was built here. It was dedicated to St Roque, the patron saint of plague victims, who had himself looked after the sick. Many people died and were buried in a cemetery on the site.

St Roque's chapel survived until the early 18th century, when a Baillie who had bought the land decided to demolish it. The scaffolding crashed, killing a man, and the workmen refused to complete the demolition. The remains of the chapel were finally demolished in 1803. During the nineteenth century, cottages and villas were built on the site with large gardens.

Meanwhile, David Ainslie was a successful stockbreeder who lived near Haddington, winning many agricultural shows in the mid nineteenth century. His brother, John, died in 1849 leaving his new-born son in David's care. Tragically, the boy John Astley Ainslie died aged 26, leaving his uncle David bereft.

On his own death in 1900, David Ainslie had determined to set up a convalescent hospital in memory of his nephew. By 1920 his Trustees had accumulated enough capital to buy the present beautiful site, looking south over the hills. It comprised a number of the villas that had been built in the previous century. The gardens were laid out with the Royal

Botanic Gardens' assistance, and new buildings were designed to accommodate patients from the Royal Infirmary.

In the 1930s, the hospital extended its work into Occupational Therapy, with the help of an expert from Canada called Mabel McNeill Macrae. During the Second World War, the government took control of the site, intending to accommodate wounded soldiers. After the War, the Trustees immediately worked on plans to extend their occupational therapy work, buying the houses and gardens of St Roque and Morelands to do so.

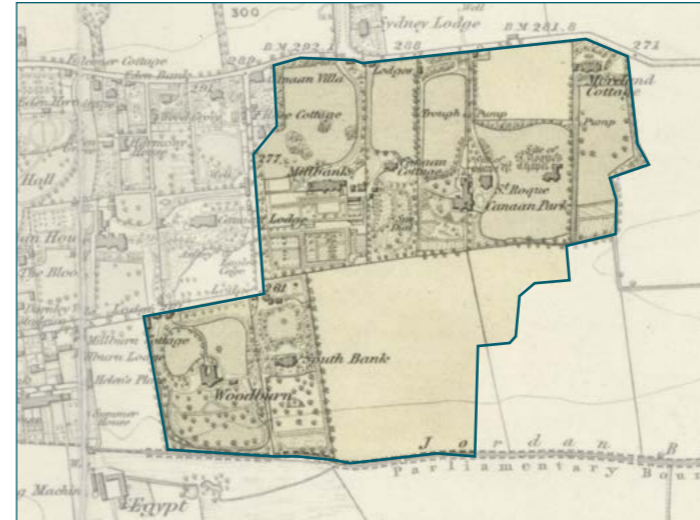
In the late 1940s, the government set up the National Health Service and negotiated with the Astley Ainslie Trustees to take over both the property and the endowment – the largest in Scotland. Since then the NHS has continued and extended the work of the Astley Ainslie through a wide range of rehabilitation services, particularly using physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and psychology, to help patients to reach their greatest potential. In 1976, the Rehabilitation Medicine Unit was established, providing a focus for a range of services including work with cardiac, stroke, brain injury, amputee, chronic pain, and the care of elderly patients. In 1992, the impressive Heart Manual was first published. A state-of-the-art centre was built 12 years ago to provide rehabilitation technology services, including mobility, prosthetic, orthotics, bioengineering, and electronic assistive technologies.

Over the last century, thousands of people have been helped to rebuild their lives at the Astley Ainslie; and many more thousands of families and friends have been cheered by their success.

“Between every two pine trees is a door to a new way of life.”

John Muir, 1911

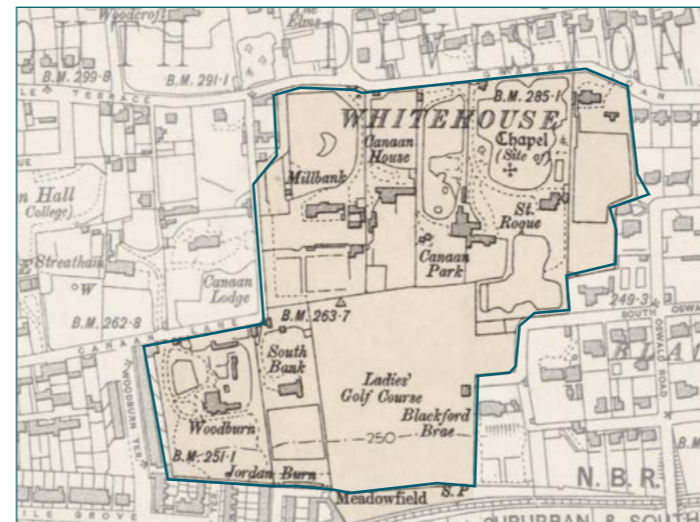
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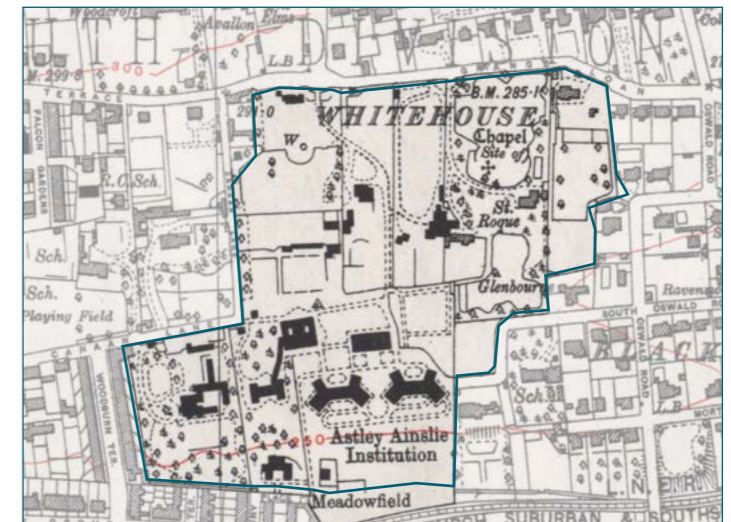
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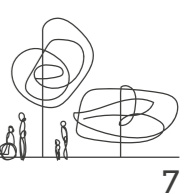
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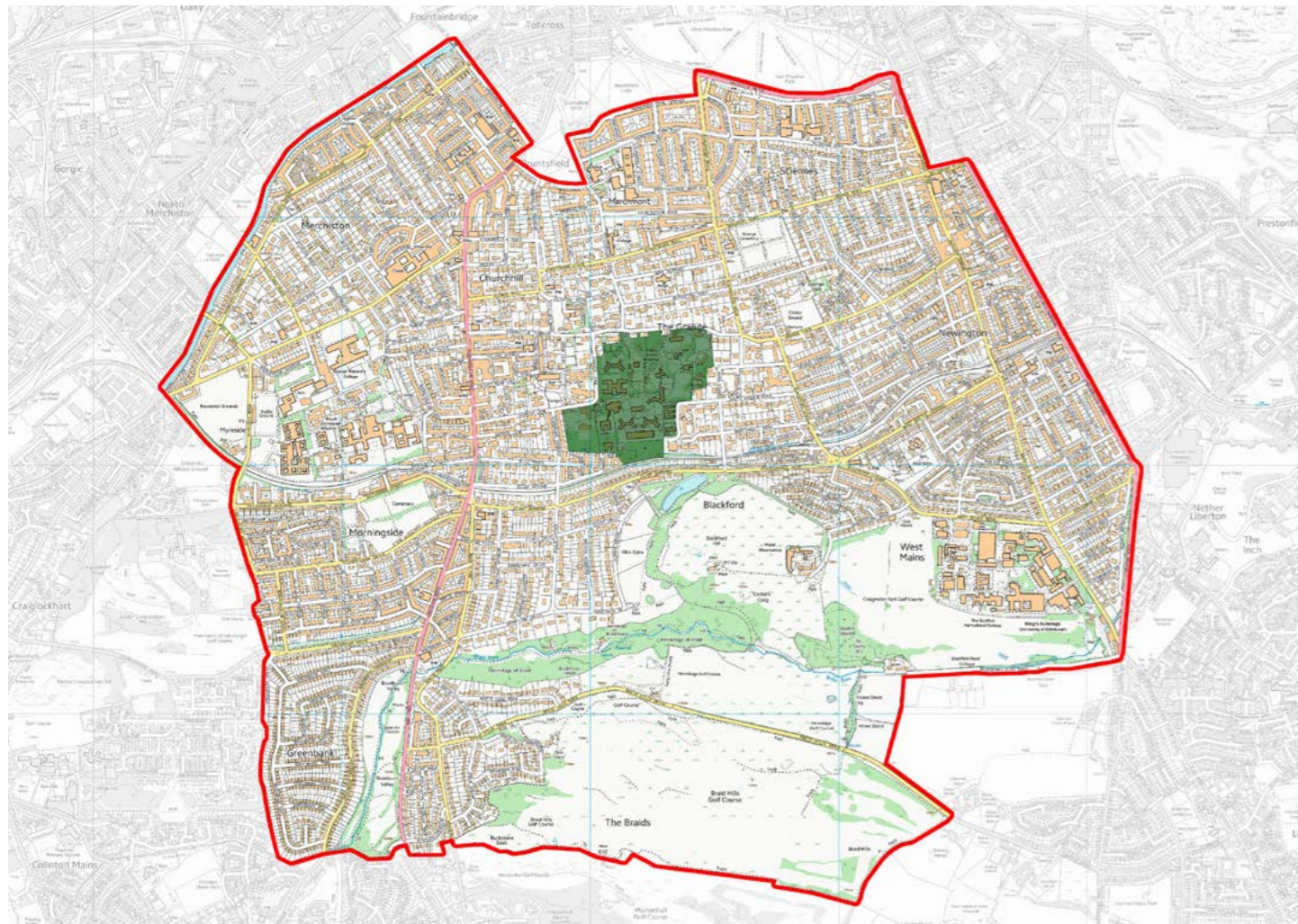


c.1944



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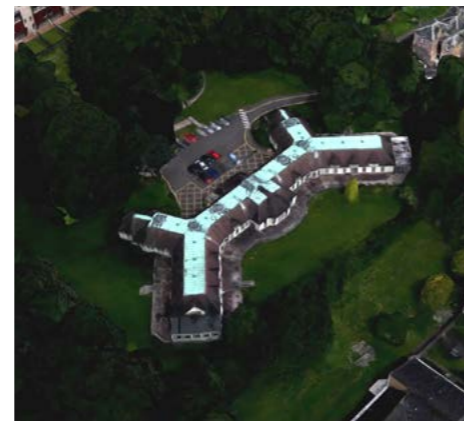




The Astley Ainslie site is shaded in dark green. The area outlined in red indicates the Community Body area of the Astley Ainslie Community Trust.



The Astley Ainslie site, March 2019



The site today

The Astley Ainslie site extends to approximately 20 hectares (50 acres). It is an active site providing healthcare services, a café and a nursery.

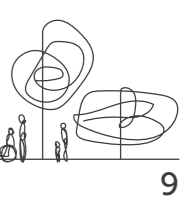
Some facilities are run by the NHS, but not all:

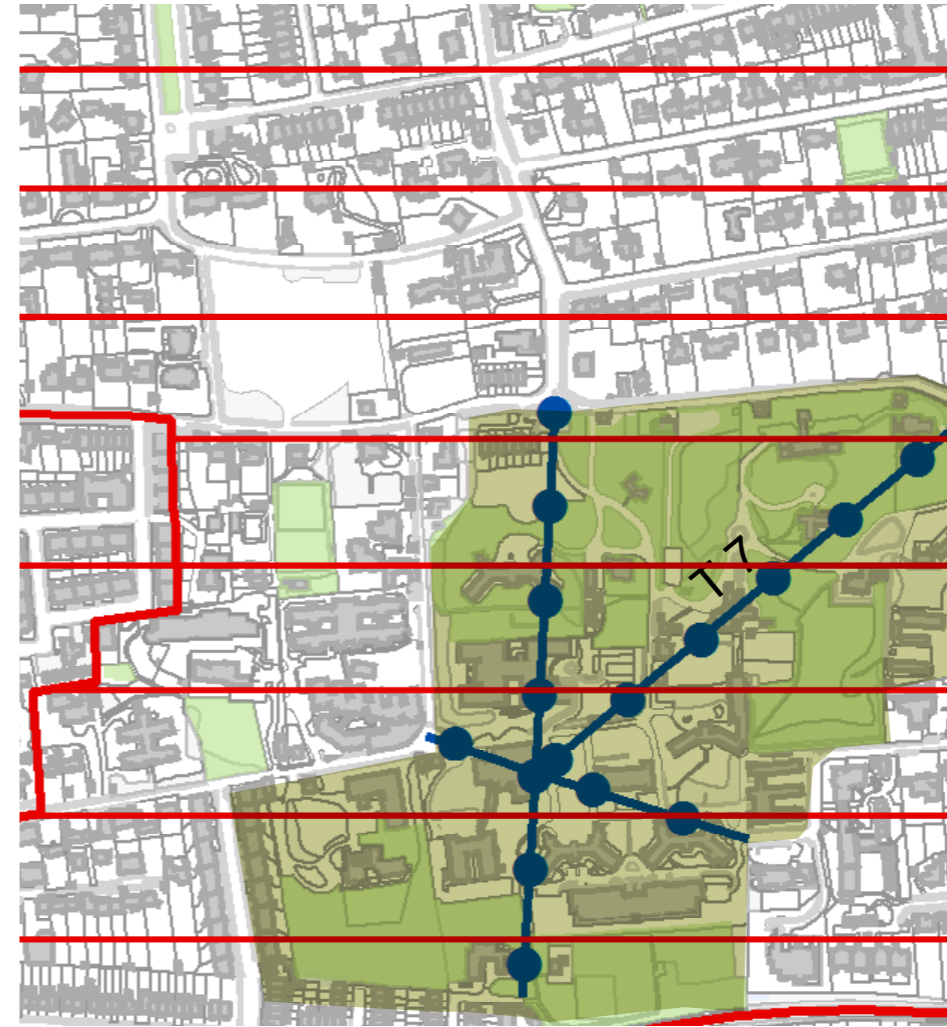
- In-patient rehabilitation services for adults with acquired brain injury, stroke, orthopaedic injuries, limb amputation, and progressive neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis (MS).
- Rehabilitation outpatient services for these patient groups with the exception of orthopaedic patients.
- Outpatient / community services, such as the hydropool.
- Outpatient / community programmes including chronic pain, cardiac rehabilitation and angina management.
- SMART Centre (South-East Mobility and Rehabilitation Technology) provides a wide range of rehabilitation technology services, including mobility and postural services (wheelchairs and special

seating), prosthetics and bioengineering services (artificial limbs and special equipment), a disabled living centre, gait analysis service, the national driving assessment service and an orthotics service for the Lothians.

- Café run by volunteers.
- Kidzcare nursery (non NHS).

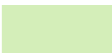


In addition, charitable groups like the Friends of the Astley Ainslie have helped make the site what it is through initiatives like building a walkway around the site to enable patients to move around in the fresh air and in the trees. Many local people take pleasure in the gardens and woodlands of the site, and use it for recreation, as well as walking or cycling through the site every day to get to school, work or the shops.





“Urban trees give us enjoyment and improve health and wellbeing in hard urban environments.”

Forestry Commission Scotland, 2017

-  Open space
-  Designated conservation area
-  Cycleway / Footpath safeguard

Nature and wildlife

The Astley Ainslie hospital sits in a wonderful park-like environment that has contributed to the wellbeing, recreation and convalescence of its patients and the local community for nearly 100 years. The site has nearly 2,000 trees belonging to over 100 species. Many are protected, and have created a natural environment of significant importance that serves people as well as nature.

As part of a larger urban forest stretching from the Grange in the north and east to Braid Park in the south, the trees at the Astley Ainslie are a haven for wildlife. As well as more than 100 kinds of birds recorded at Astley Ainslie, there is also a wealth of other less obvious wildlife including different kinds of snail, wildflowers, mosses, lichens and fungi.

In 2016, members of Edinburgh wildlife group ‘Wild Reekie’ conducted a mini-bioblitz of biodiversity in the Astley Ainslie grounds. In just 2 hours, they noted 66 different species including trees, flowers (including woodland flowers from ancient forests), grasses, birds and small mammals – demonstrating the importance of the site as part of a wider green network across the city for wildlife and people.

“We felt we had a glimpse into a treasury on our doorstep!”

Wild Reekie, 2016

Planning policy and access to greenspace

Any future development or changes in land use at the Astley Ainslie should, of course, be guided by planning policy.

[Edinburgh Local Development Plan](#) (LDP), adopted in 2016, contains the latest planning policy for the site. (A Planning Brief prepared for the site in 2002 by the City Council has now largely been superseded by the passage of time.) The LDP Proposals Map (see accompanying graphic extract) contains three provisions that apply to the site:

- Open space: LDP Policies ENV18 and ENV19 protect against loss of open space or outdoor play facilities in the areas shown in the green on the Proposals Map.
- Conservation Area: LDP Policies ENV5 and ENV6 protect the Conservation Area against inappropriate demolition

and development. All of the Astley Ainslie sites lies within a Conservation Area.

- Active travel: the Proposals Map shows proposed and potential cycle/ footpath links and new access points (marked in blue on the plan extract with the reference T7). LDP Policy TRA9 protects against new development which would prevent implementation of these routes.

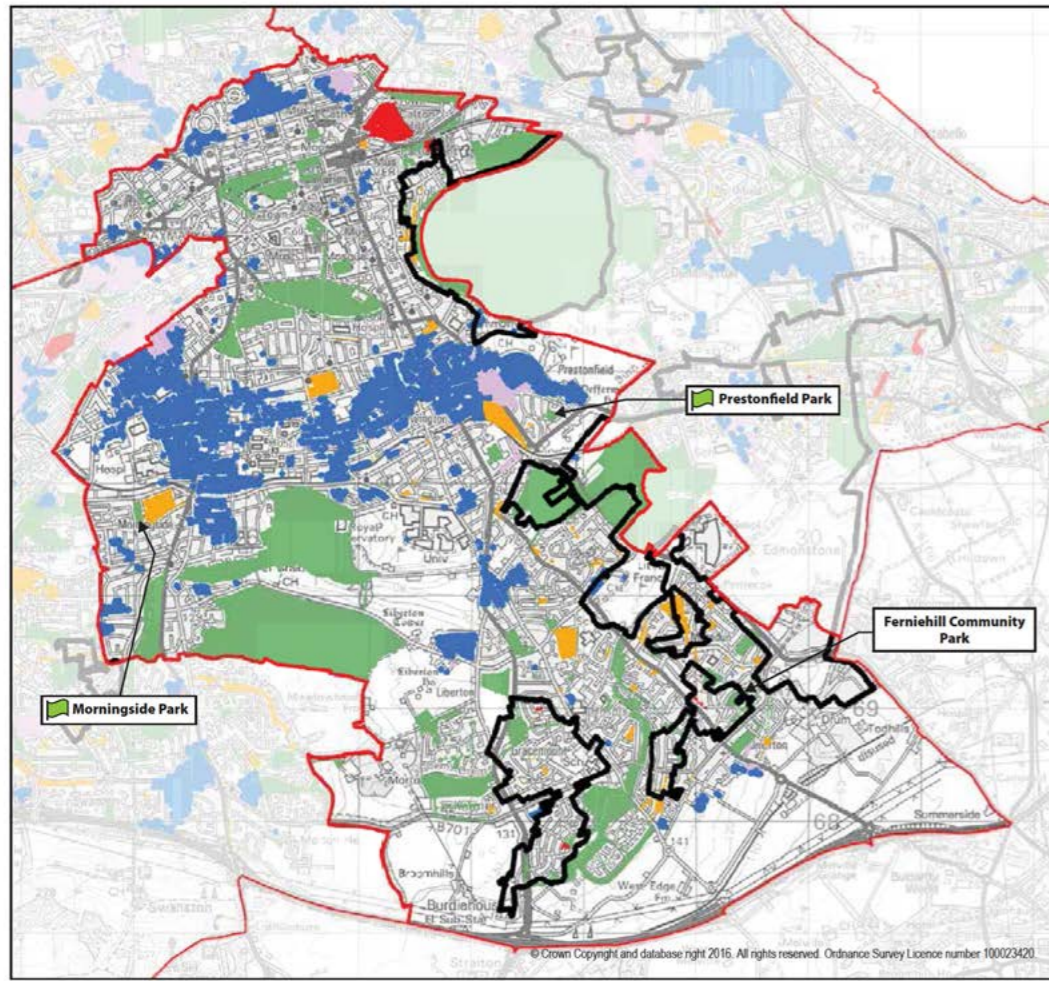
The City Council’s ‘[Open Space 2021](#)’ (open space strategy) was published in 2016. This suite of documents includes the [South-East Locality Open Space Action Plan](#), which demonstrates that the communities surrounding the site fail the Council’s two standards for access to greenspace:

- No good quality local greenspace within 400m.
- No good quality large greenspace within 800m.

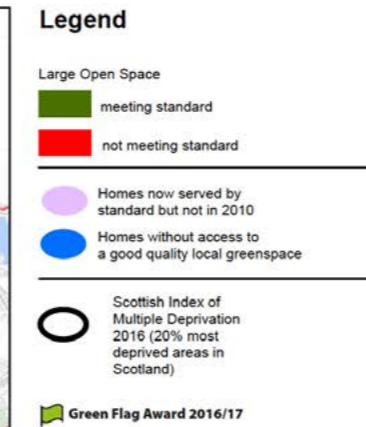
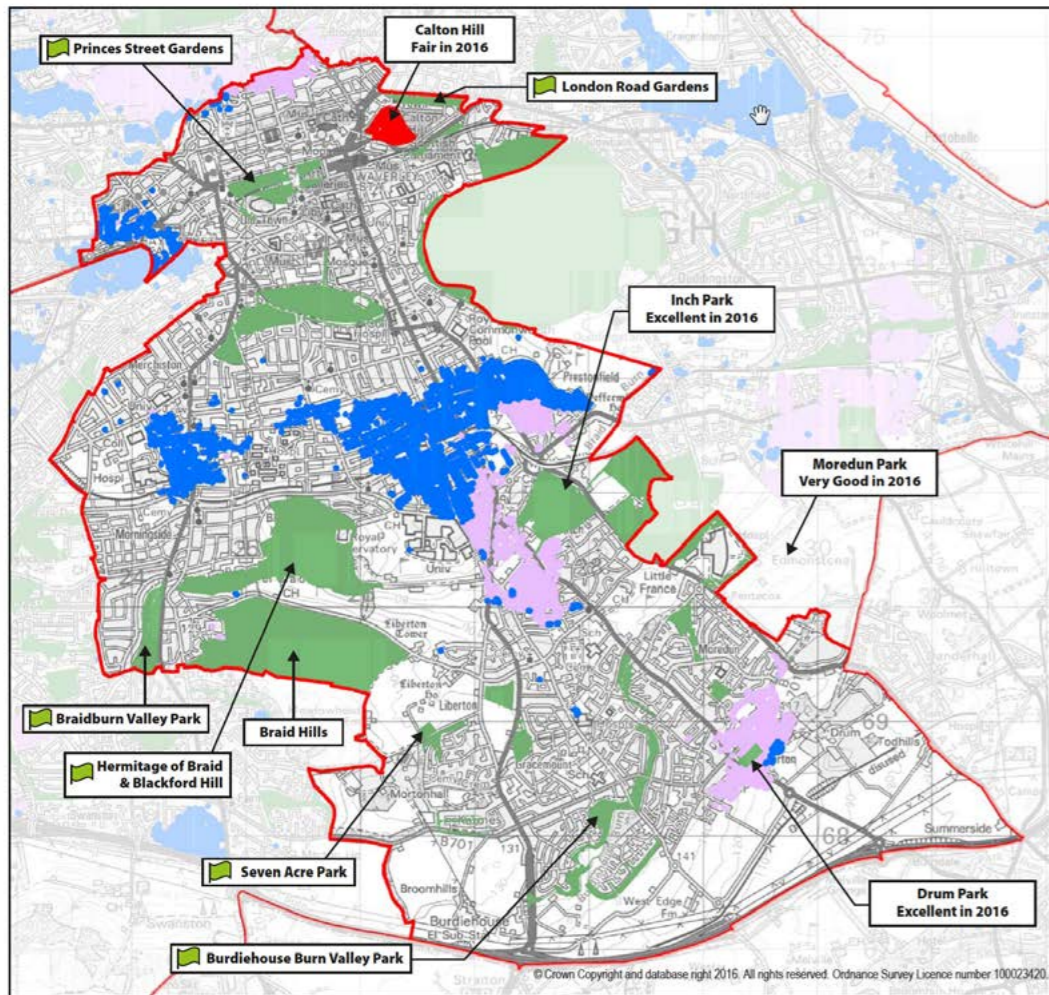
These points are illustrated by the plan extracts from the Open Space Action Plan overleaf.

The absence of good quality public greenspaces in the local area reflects the density and amount of flatted residential property, particularly north and west of the site.

A designated Core Path passes through the site, linking South Oswald Road to the east and Canaan Lane to the west. The Core Path is well-used as a route to schools by local children.



South East Locality Access to Local Greenspace in 2016



South East Locality Access to Large Greenspace in 2016

Astley Ainslie Community Trust

Astley Ainslie Community Trust (AACT) was formed by a group of local residents who have been meeting regularly since early 2018. AACT's constitution states that:

"The aim of the organisation shall be to pursue community ownership on the Astley Ainslie site for the common good, and to provide a forum for all those who wish to engage."

AACT is currently an unincorporated constituted association, and also a 'Community Body' in terms of community empowerment and ownership legislation. If, in the future, AACT wishes (for example) to exercise rights on behalf of the local community under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, we will adapt our constituted status appropriately.

The Trust members have a broad and comprehensive range of professional and personal experience, at the service of the public. Members share the belief that community involvement is vital to the future of the Astley Ainslie.

AACT is prepared to lead community ownership on all or part of the site in order to deliver the vision contained in this report, in collaboration with other organisations as appropriate.

The Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group is a separate body from AACT. The two organisations have distinct roles but maintain close liaison. The Community

AACT timeline

2018

- January**
First public meeting to float the idea of community ownership at the Astley Ainslie.
- February**
First gathering of working groups.
- March**
Constituted as 'Astley Ainslie Community Trust' (AACT). Programme of public talks, walks and research begins.
- March onwards**
Regular steering group and sub-committee meetings throughout the year. Members of AACT also meet with various relevant parties, including NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council Planning department, Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group, political representatives and potential funders.
- September - December**
Successful submission of funding application to Scottish Government Making Places initiative. Independent facilitator and event manager commissioned to carry out community engagement to create a community vision for the future of the Astley Ainslie.

2019

- February**
AACT presents its aims and objectives at public meeting organised by Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group in the Eric Liddell Centre.
- March**
Community engagement events, open to all, to produce a community vision for the site, complemented by engagement with local schools, high street 'popup' events, Facebook, website and online youth survey.

Engagement Group comprises the four surrounding Community Councils – Marchmont & Sciennes Community Council, Morningside Community Council, Merchiston Community Council and Grange & Prestonfield Community Council – together with the Grange Association.

3 Engaging the community

The only way of producing a community-led vision is through good community engagement. This section describes how Astley Ainslie Community Trust engaged the local community through a well planned programme, volunteer commitment, professional expertise and Scottish Government resources.

With the kind support of the Scottish Government's "Making Places" programme, the Community Trust was able to put in place:

- A team of volunteers and paid staff with professional expertise in web design, social media, events manager, facilitation, graphic design, photography/video, health and wellbeing, ecology, forestry, architecture, planning, community development and housing.

- Appropriate venues, equipment, promotion and materials for the consultation activities.

These resources ensured that the various consultation activities that took place during March 2019 were delivered to a high standard. The intention was to meet and exceed PAS (formerly Planning Aid Scotland) [SP=EED](#) benchmarking for community engagement in planning and the Scottish Government's [National Standards for Community Engagement](#).

The community engagement programme was devised by an independent facilitator and events manager working closely with the Community Trust, whose members worked hard to support delivery of the engagement programme whilst taking great care to avoid influencing the vision and outcomes that emerged from the process.

The engagement programme focussed on two high-profile public events on consecutive weekends, each complemented by online engagement opportunities using the Community Trust's website and social media channels. The public events were preceded by a substantial publicity campaign. Separate workshops with local schools ensured that young people's views also fed into the process.



2
high street popups



4
local schools participating



40
event volunteers



300
Facebook followers



400
e-bulletin subscribers



400
participants across 2 public events



500
written comments at events and online



5,000
flyers distributed



Schools events



High-street pop-ups



Ideas Day



Analysis



Vision Day



This report

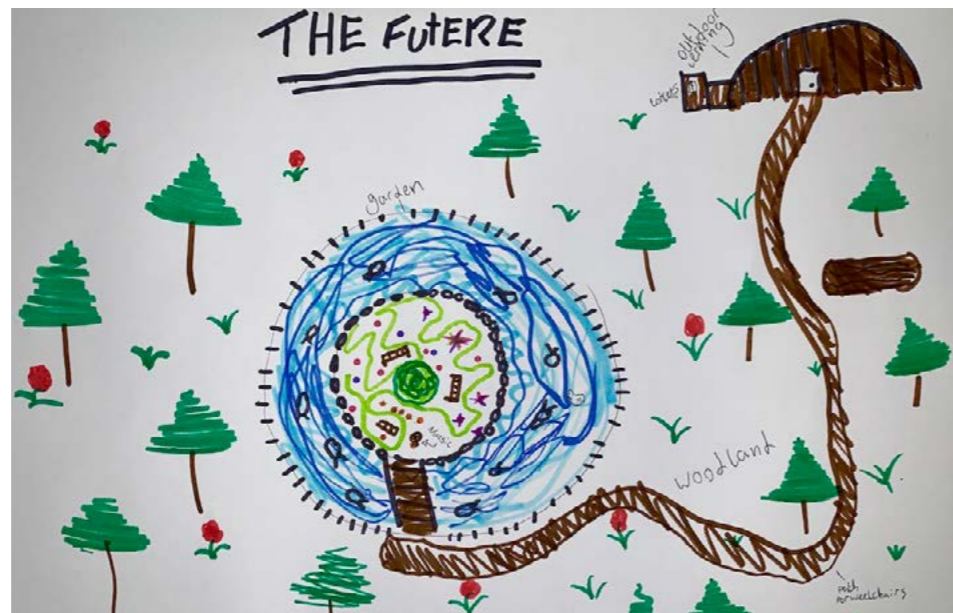


"Quality places are central to community life. A successful place is accessible to all and encourages people to connect with one another."

Creating Places
Scottish Government Policy Statement, 2014

The community visioning process comprised a number of engagement activities in March 2019:

- **Schools sessions** involving pupils from three local Primary Schools (St Peters, South Morningside and James Gillespies) and a local secondary school (Boroughmuir). These were used to understand how pupils used the site and to understand their aspirations for its future. Pupils recorded their aspirations on posters (see Appendix 1) which were displayed at the two main public events and online. [insert 1 or 2 posters or extracts from them]



- **Weekend on-street popups** in Morningside and Marchmont during the fortnight before the public events, to increase awareness.



- **Ideas Day:** the first of two major weekend events and the main focus for gathering community ideas about the future of the site. Over 300 people participated in the event, which took the form of a 6-hour drop-in session at the Eric Liddell Centre in Morningside. As the accompanying double page spread shows (see overleaf), a range of activities, information and materials was organised to make the event as interesting, engaging and relevant to as wide a range of people as possible:

- o Information was available to help people understand the site and context, including display panels (see Appendix 2) and leaflets, a 3D model and giant floor map, outputs

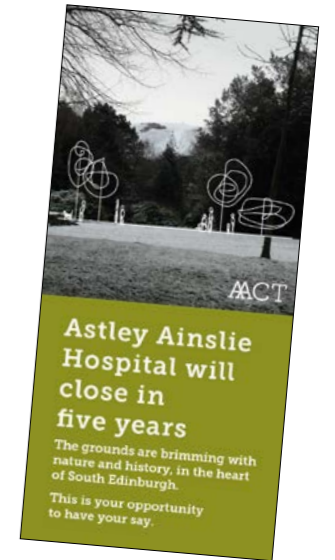


“Great event to get the community engaged. It would be devastating to see such a great, well used space fall to the wrong use. So good luck!”

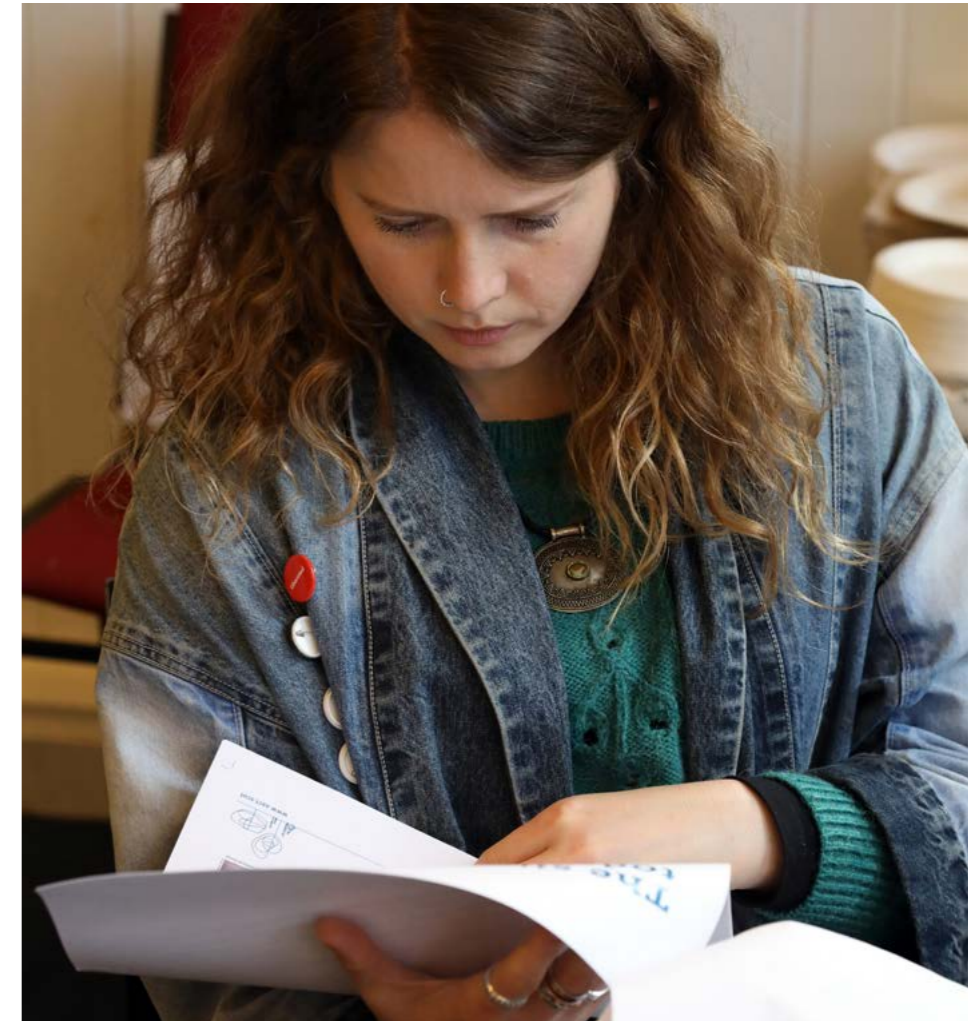
Public comment from Community event

from the schools engagement events, a programme of hourly talks and discussions, site walkabouts kindly organised by volunteers from the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group, and of course plenty of knowledgeable volunteers to facilitate.

- o Ideas for the future of the site were sought using a range of bespoke engagement activities designed to be engaging for the public whilst providing valuable ‘raw material’ or data for the visioning exercise. The primary means of gathering individual comments from people was a set of two specially-designed postcards asking about use of the site now and ideas for its future,



which were also replicated online. A large selection of inspirational images from other places was also available for people to rank, as a visual stimulus about the kind of activities or proposal might be appropriate for the site in the future.



“Much needed exercise, highly informative and much appreciated.”

Public comment from Community event

Information display: professionally-designed display panels provided authoritative information about the site’s history, natural interest and current status, the Community Trust and the visioning process, planning policy, the possibility of community asset transfer, and the likely timeline for disposal of the site. The panels are shown in Appendix 2 and are available on the Community Trust’s website. Relevant information leaflets and documents were also available to view.

One-to-one discussions: throughout the day, plenty of knowledgeable volunteers were on hand to welcome participants, explain the event, answer questions, facilitate one-to-one discussions about the site and – critically – encourage people to leave individual written comments to feed into the visioning process. The overriding aims were to encourage people to avail themselves of the information and discussion opportunities, encourage them to form their own views, and then record those on postcards.



“Super opportunity to have our say.”

Public comment from Community event

3D model and giant floor map: these were specially designed and prepared for the Ideas Day to act as a prominent focus for orientation and discussion in the main consultation space.

Hourly programme of talks: to help people understand both the nature and potential of the site, a programme of hourly talks and discussions was arranged throughout the Ideas Day. The aim was to provide a parallel source of information and discussion to help people consider the site and its future before submitting written comments via individual postcards (see below). Each hourly session had up to three speakers focussing on a different theme – including history, health, nature, people and buildings – with facilitated discussion forming a part of each

session. More information on the programme and speakers can be seen [here](#). Average attendance was 30-35 people per session, many of whom stayed for a number of sessions.



Guided tours of the site: Astley Ainslie Community Group kindly helped to organise a number of guided tours around the site, which was approximately 1km from the event. This proved a very popular and useful way of helping local people understand the scale and nature of the site, particularly those who might not have accessed it previously [see photos from AACEG at <https://opa.cig2.canon-europe.com/s/cp/Ehp8BdY3YmF>, please credit to Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group]

Individual postcards: This was the main consultation method for gathering feedback from participants. Two specially-designed postcards were produced: one asked people for their favourite place on the site now, the other asked for ideas for the site in the future. Participants were encouraged to write or draw their input on the cards. Over 400 cards were completed (see Appendices 3 and 4). A further 25 written comments were contributed online in the days immediately after the event (see Appendix 5).



Inspirational images: to help people imagine what the site might or might not be appropriate for the site in the future, a range of several dozen images were spread out and people invited to place dots on those that they thought appropriate for Astley Ainslie in the future. The images encompassed a huge range of examples from other places, including parks, nature, play, buildings, activities and much more. The primary aim was to stimulate people's imagination, and leave it open to people to consider whether they thought particular images would be appropriate or not.

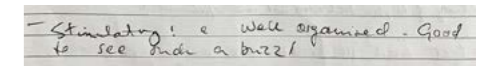
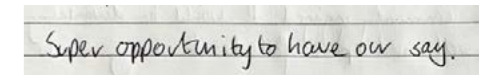
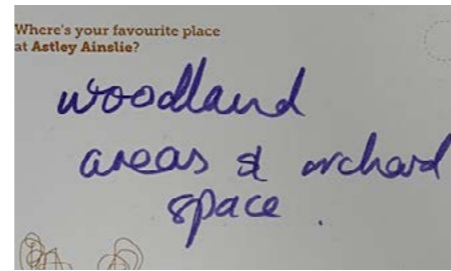
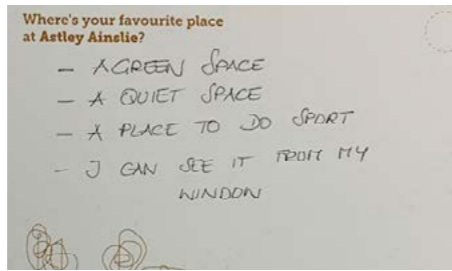
"The Council wants new development to create great places for people to live, work and enjoy."

City of Edinburgh Council Design Guidance

Comments book: finally, participants were invited to comment on the actual event and process. A number of comments were left, all of which were positive and constructive.



Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group



“Stimulating!
Well organised. Good
to see such a buzz.”

Public comment from
Community event

Between the Ideas Day and the Vision Day a week later, an independent facilitator guided eight members of the Community Trust through a facilitated workshop to review all feedback from the Ideas Day, online comments and the schools sessions, and agree through discussion an initial draft vision (comprising things to retain, future uses and principles) and two examples of possible scenarios for the site (professional responses to the draft vision) reflecting community aspirations. The draft vision and possible scenarios were reviewed and agreed by the Community Trust’s steering group for presentation, as drafts, at the Vision Day.

- **Vision Day:** the second of the two major weekend events, comprising a presentation of the draft vision and possible scenarios, opportunity for comment and discussion, and panel discussion focussing on future delivery of the vision. The event was attended by around 100 people. The written comments received can be seen in Appendix 6.
- Promotion of the weekend events (and accompanying online opportunities for information and comment) was undertaken through:
 - A leaflet drop to homes throughout the area covered by the Community Trust.
 - Posters in local shops and public places.
 - Social media feeds on Facebook ([@AstleyAinslieCommunity](#)) and Twitter ([@AstleyAinslieCT](#)), linking to other local social media feeds.
 - Online publicity via the Community Trust’s website [www.aact.scot](#) and e-bulletins to a database of over 400 people.
 - On-street popups in the build-up to the public events (see above).
 - Media releases and articles in the local press and via local organisations



Future vision for the site

This section of the report outlines the draft vision for the site that was presented at the Vision Day, together with two possible scenarios that were presented to demonstrate two examples of how the vision might look on the site in the future.

Vision

The vision for the future of the Astley Ainslie is based entirely on the aspirations received from the local community at the Ideas Day, schools event and online. The vision outlined in this report is unchanged from the draft presented at the Vision Day, because the comments received in response to the draft were overwhelmingly supportive.

The vision comprises three related elements:

- **Future uses:** these are the uses that the local community aspires to seeing at the Astley Ainslie after the hospital has closed.
- **Things to retain:** these are existing uses and activities that the local community aspires to be retained on the site.
- **Overarching principles:** these are the principles that the local community would like to see underpinning any future change or development on the site, whatever the proposals.

In addition, **health and wellbeing** – and the role of nature in supporting health and wellbeing – clearly emerged as being an overarching objective for the site’s future, irrespective of how it develops or changes in the future.



NEW USES & CONTINUING USES

COMMUNITY HUB

- Gathering space
- Cafe
- Hotel
- Restaurant
- Carer's centre
- Occupational Therapy

ENTERPRISE

- Crafts centre
- Workshops
- Studios

HEALTH, CARE & WELLBEING HUB

- NHS wellbeing agencies
- Patient respite centre
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Therapeutic treatment
- Children's hospice
- Research centre

CREATIVE ARTS

- Gallery
- Studio space
- Outdoor performance/event space
- Art therapy
- Bandstand
- Music recording studio

OUTDOOR LEARNING & RECREATION

- Outdoor play: bike trails, camping, adventure play, skateboarding
- Leisure pool
- Forest School

NATURAL PLACES

- Release the streams
- Arboretum
- Enhance wildlife habitats

PATHS & ROUTES

- Walking
- Cycling
- Wheelchair accessible
- Safe routes
- Pathways

HOMES

- Co-housing
- Affordable homes
- Housing for homeless people
- Older people's homes

COMMUNITY GARDENING & FARMING

- Allotments
- Orchards
- Physic garden
- Foraging
- Beekeeping
- Forestry

Things to retain



The spirit of David Ainslie's bequest
Health and convalescence



Greenery and trees
Parkland. Specimen trees.
Woodland and wildness.



History
Memories and stories.
Archaeology. Buildings.
Special places. Landscape.



Wildlife
Space. Freedom. Nature.
Wildness. Views. Open sky.

Principles driving the vision



Biodiversity

Wildlife



Outdoor Education

Green corridors within wider network



Health & convalescence

Inclusive



Intergenerational activities

Intergenerational care



Environmentally sustainable

Renewable energy & energy efficient



Organic



Community ownership - belonging to the people










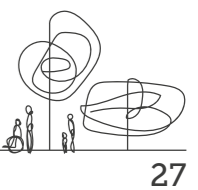
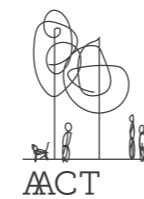
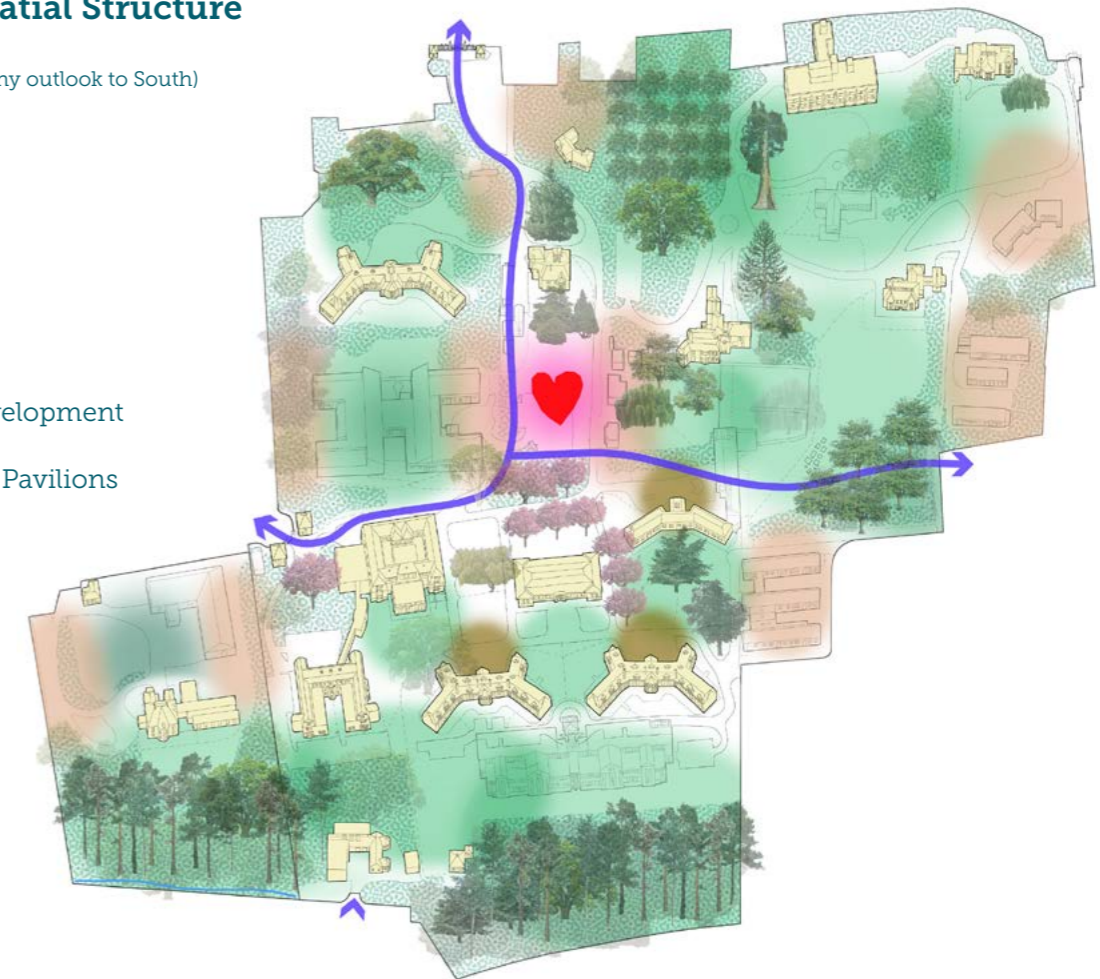
Funding - awareness of need for financial viability

Possible scenarios

The vision, things to retain and principles (see above) are the main output from the visioning process. However, the Astley Ainslie site is unlikely to be large enough to accommodate all elements of the vision. Choices will have to be made on what uses to include or keep, and which to omit or remove. To give an example of how the vision could potentially look when implemented on the site, the spatial structure shown on this page was prepared after the Vision Day to illustrate how the vision might materialise on the site. It important to note that this has not yet been the subject of public review.

Astley Ainslie Spatial Structure

-  Buildings To Keep (sunny outlook to South)
-  Buildings To Lose
-  Parkland Space
-  Principal Routes
-  Heart
-  Areas For Possible Development
-  Extensions to existing Pavilions





Vision Day, 31 Marcy 2019

Public comments on the draft vision

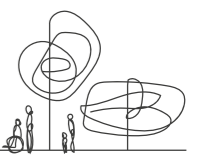
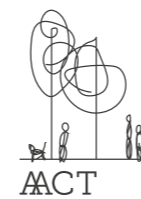
How were this draft vision and possible scenarios received by the local community at the Vision Day? The answer is: overwhelmingly positive, with a few questions about how it would be delivered given the likely value of the site and the scale of ambition. The written comments received at the event and subsequently online can be seen in Appendix 6.

“Need to think about how some land can be utilised for housing – on fringes of site? – in order to finance community projects”

“I think the community vision is fantastic as it is inclusive and ensures that the Astley Ainslie grounds are for everyone, not just the rich property developers.”

“I am very impressed by the draft vision. I support the idea of preserving as much as possible the spirit of the original donor so the therapeutic proposals (community gathering place, community pool, treetop walk, priority to cycling and walking etc) absolutely match with the donor’s intention.”

At a show of hands towards the end of the session, a clear majority of the 100 participants indicated that they support the Community Trust pursuing Community Asset Transfer of all or part of the site in order to deliver the vision.





5 What next?

This report demonstrates what can be achieved through a balanced community-led visioning for the future of an area of land which people cherish, with a focus on health and wellbeing. Astley Ainslie Community Trust is grateful to the Scottish Government's "Making Places" funding for enabling this process. The question now is: how does the local community move from vision to delivery?

The Community Trust has volunteered to continue to work in partnership with others, taking the lead where necessary, to deliver the community vision outlined in this report. There will be a number of actions involved for the Community Trust with relevant partners, with the aim of being part of a co-ordinated future plan for the Astley Ainslie to deliver the community vision outlined in this report:

1. Encourage the City Council to use this document as the basis for future planning policy, through a process of continuing public consultation and for the approval of the Council, to ensure that the community aspirations for the site are respected in future proposals.
2. Continue to work with NHS Lothian as it moves towards disposal of the site, including involvement as a potential masterplanning and developer procurement partner.



Informing future planning policy

In the first instance, the purpose of the community engagement was to co-design a vision for the future of the Astley Ainslie site, which can be used by the City Council to inform preparation of the Place Brief and contribute to NHS Lothian's process of disposing of the site.

It is important to note that the draft vision was positively received by the local community – including the range of potential uses, things to retain and overarching principles.

A number of specific points emerged through the community engagement which we suggest should be translated into the Place Brief and site disposal process:

- Retention of trees, woodland, green spaces and the natural environment is of paramount importance.
 - The focus on health and wellbeing was supported, with a preference for public rather than private activities (for example, community gardening rather than allotments).
 - Peaceful outdoor public spaces were generally favoured over spaces for noisier outdoor activities.
 - Retention of the open aspect of southern parts of the site was supported.
 - There was a general preference for new buildings to be of modest size and ecologically-friendly or timber construction, with a range of views for and against the development of taller buildings on the site. Development of new buildings higher than those currently on the site could provide advantages in terms of achieving a viable quantum of development without unduly reducing the amount of greenspace, but would need careful consideration.
 - A general aspiration for avoiding through vehicular traffic and keeping vehicles to the edges of the site as far as possible, and minimising parking.
 - Supporting public access through the site along both north-south and east-west axes, including safe routes to local schools.
- (It is worthy of note that these aspirations are not dissimilar to the results of a questionnaire survey undertaken by the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group in 2017 (see Appendix 7), which the City Council may also wish to take account of as it prepares the Place Brief.)
- It is suggested that the City Council should require any future development on the site to comply with the vision and principles expressed in this document, through a process of public consultation and for the approval of the Council, to ensure that these community aspirations are reflected in future plans for the site.

3. Continue to co-ordinate activities with the Astley Ainslie Community Engagement Group to ensure that the future disposal and development of the site reflects community aspirations.

In addition, the Community Trust will independently seek to:

4. Approach potential funding and delivery partners, such as the Scottish Land Fund and other funders, to secure support for delivery of the community vision and the Community Trust's role in that. This report is intended in part to support any future funding application a feasibility study and business plan for Community Asset Transfer, putting forward a community vision for the Astley Ainslie site that fits with local/regional plans and has a positive impact on public health and social/environmental wellbeing (and, indirectly, regeneration and economic development).

5. Strengthen the Community Trust itself as an organisation and continue to fundraise and raise

awareness amongst anyone who wishes to play a part in the Trust.

6. Continue to encourage public participation in the site's future through communication and dissemination of knowledge about the site, ideas for its care and future development, and models of good practice nationally and internationally.

