

## APPENDIX 1

### NEAT CONNECTIONS PROJECT:

#### Stage 2: Engagement with Young People, Jan 2023

##### Introduction And Background:

This report details a Stage 2 focused co-design exercise with pupils from Craigrystone Community High School. It was facilitated by A Place in Childhood (APiC) in collaboration with officers from The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), with project partners AECOM attending the final session to explore how to align their concept with the young people's Proposal.

The report begins with some background to the project. It will then set out the young people's final integrated Proposal, followed by an overview of the co-design methodology through which this was reached and agreed.

The stated aims for the project were to:

1. Work with local young people to identify design needs and opportunities in and around the project site.
2. Facilitate high-quality discussion and trustful dialogue on potential design interventions, and potentially engage in co-design sessions with young people and other stakeholders.
3. Co-facilitate with City of Edinburgh Council colleagues, to provide on-the-ground mentorship and guidance on meaningful involvement of young people in placemaking.

The co-design contributes to Stage 2 of a scheme by City of Edinburgh Council and Sustrans to improve an area of North Edinburgh, centring on Pennywell Road. Key roads are highlighted in yellow on the map below.

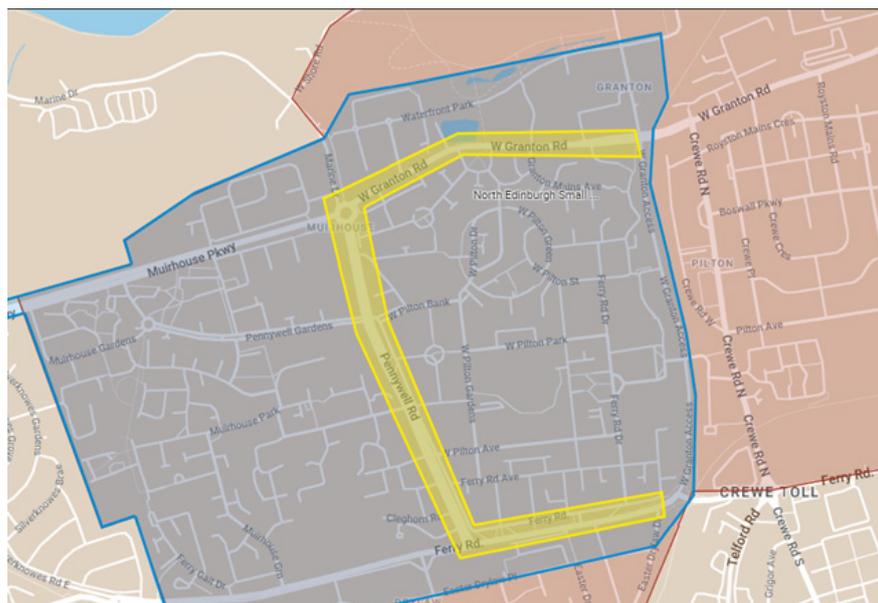


Figure 1 Map of NEAT Connections Project Site

This project involves engagement with local residents and stakeholders around the concept of de-dualling Pennywell Road. The goal of this is to provide high-quality cycling and walking opportunities, as well as placemaking elements to the west of the central reserve, such as benches, greenery, play elements, and artwork.

Following from a Commonplace survey in Stage 1 of this process, the aim of Stage 2 has been to gain a better understanding of community ideas and needs regarding improvements, to be used in the upcoming Concept design stage of the project. This includes this codesign work with pupils from Craigryston Community High School, focusing on two areas of road and greenspace immediately outside the school and much-frequented during break and lunch hours.

Areas 1 and 2 are shown on the map below, which also includes three features referred to during the report: the school, a small playground, and MacMillan Square, where Greggs is a lunchtime destination for many pupils.

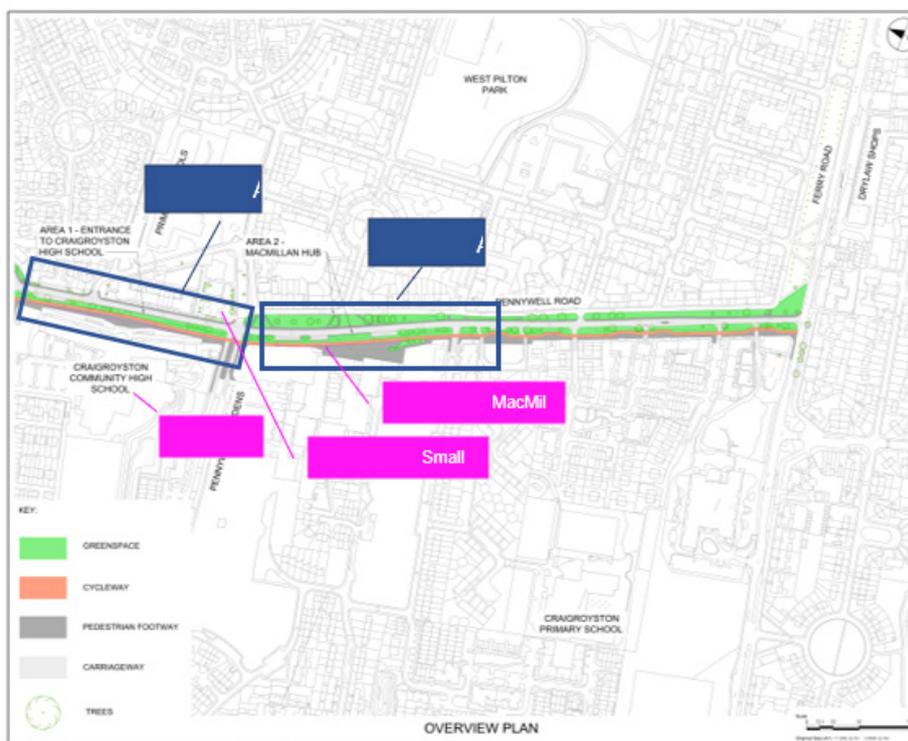


Figure 2 Plan of Areas 1 and 2 for Codesign with Local Teenagers

The opportunity for teenagers to participate in the co-design is invaluable, as their voices and needs are routinely missing from conversations around urban design and improvement. Previous experiential mapping research conducted by APiC in North Edinburgh highlighted the lack of public spaces and facilities for teenagers in this local area, and toxic dynamics related to antisocial behaviour which young people felt were attributed to this.

## The Final Proposal:

### **AREA 1: AN AREA FOR STUDY, SUPPORT AND NATURE**

Area 1 covers a stretch of road immediately outside and along the front of the school. The site visit identified that under the new layout proposed, the co-design was limited in its options and focus to a narrow strip of greenspace between the cycle path and Pennywell Road.

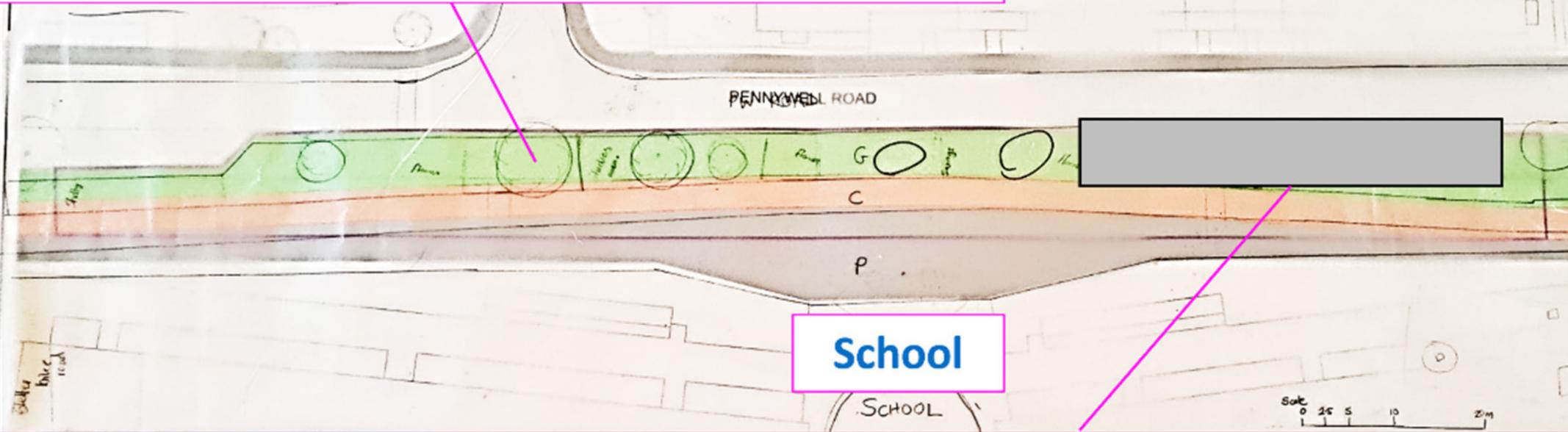
Nevertheless, the proximity to the school is also a golden opportunity. It offers the potential to improve the environment and aesthetic of a building central to young people's lives, while offering a natural space, seating and shelter for the amenity of pupils and the community. The layout of their final proposal for Area 1 appears in Figure 3 overleaf.

The main feature of this co-design was a community shelter. The principal aspiration for this shelter is that it provide a small cosy indoor space booked and accessible by QR code (to avoid vandalism) where pupils could study during breaks and lunch.

At other times, however, it might be made available to small groups to use for community purposes and learning: support for refugees, immigrants, and other vulnerable local groups, an off-site classroom for any local schools, or addressing young gang-related issues. In these cases, participants envisaged that the work of group members might entail the care of Areas 1 and 2 (e.g. planting and litter-picking); assuming co-responsibility for maintenance and upkeep in partnership with the Council, while promoting community cohesion.

In addition to the community shelter, the proposal includes keeping the existing trees along the remaining strip of greenspace but enhancing the richness and attractiveness of the natural environment with flowers, bushes and seating.

Improving the greenspace with trees flowers and swings



Different ideas for a “community shelter”: for study, private QR code access and support



Figure 3 Proposal for Area 1

## AREA 2: THE “FORTH BRIDGE” COMMUNITY PARK

Area 2 provides the main focus of the co-design, which integrates the ideas of different teams under the umbrella concept of a new community park.

Towards the end of the co-design, the idea emerged that a theme for this park with meaning for the whole community might nurture a sense of collective ownership and care over the space. In turn, this might help reduce potential vandalism and littering.

Finding a theme meaningful to such a diverse community wasn't easy, but in the final stages of the last session the young people arrived at the idea of the nearby **Forth Bridge**, which is beloved by all and can be seen from the local area. One of the local primary schools already uses this on their logo.



Figure 4 the Forth Bridge: Inspiration for the Community Park Name

Figure 6 overleaf sets out the features envisaged for this new community park. A first principle for the park is that is a **safe space for girls**. A space much-frequented by families (the “right type of adults”) was agreed to be fundamental to this, and for preventing or regulating vandalism and littering. This determined the second principle of **family-friendliness**, which led to features that would attract and be popular with families (e.g. buggy parking) and accessible to all ages and abilities.

The participants were very clear that there is nowhere currently in the area that is nice to sit

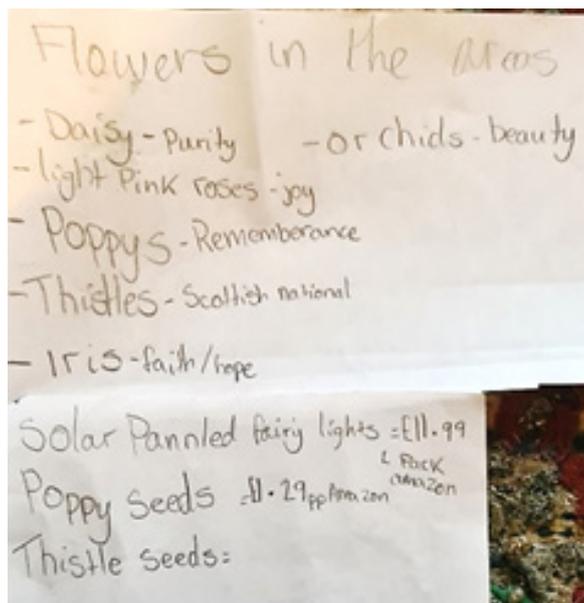


Figure 5 A Plan of Flowers for the Park, and their Meanings

and relax, or safe for girls to go outside alone or in groups. The girls said the local situation is so bad that they will travel to another area of the city if they want to hang out. The general view is that while the community has many positive aspects, it can often be a stressful place to live, and many current parks attract groups that make others feel unsafe. Any opportunity to relax and unwind free of hassle would be welcome to many, while providing a great environment for pupils to sit, socialise and enjoy during their lunch hours and breaks.

Consequently, a successful co-design and collaboration with the community around the project could prove very popular, while meeting core unmet needs, promoting cohesion and potentially mitigating dynamics associated with antisocial behaviour (see “reversing the chain reaction” below).

As can be seen in the figure overleaf, the proposal features **three garden zones** - flowers and colour, natural and biodiverse, sensory and fun. There is also a common desire for food stalls, although consideration of the downsides of this and the difficulty of getting the providers and offerings they most wanted, tempered initial ambitions.

A key emphasis of the co-design is the enrichment and improvement of the natural environment, building on and around existing trees. Participants thought about how the choice of flowers could bring conscious and shared meaning to the gardens (see figure 5). A pond, birdboxes and bughouses, nurture biodiversity, while creating a more interesting and attractive setting for sitting, relaxation and nature connection. One team contributed the concept of a sustainable draining system (SUDS), which could harvest and store rainwater – mitigating surface water flooding on Pennywell Road, while also helping to sustain the gardens and reduce maintenance costs.

Interspersed among, and consciously integrated with this much-improved natural environment are a wide choice of sheltered and semi-enclosed seating areas, and outdoor benches. Standing and seated shelters are particularly important due to the frequency of rain, which presently drives pupils to return to school early or to huddle under overhanging roofs in MacMillan Square. Good lighting was considered very important – particularly for girls and women - to feel safe in the space after dark, and the choices are intended to also enhance the experience and attractiveness of the design and to be low maintenance (e.g. solar-powered fairy lights).



**"Private" Seating Area (with parasol shelter and good lighting)**



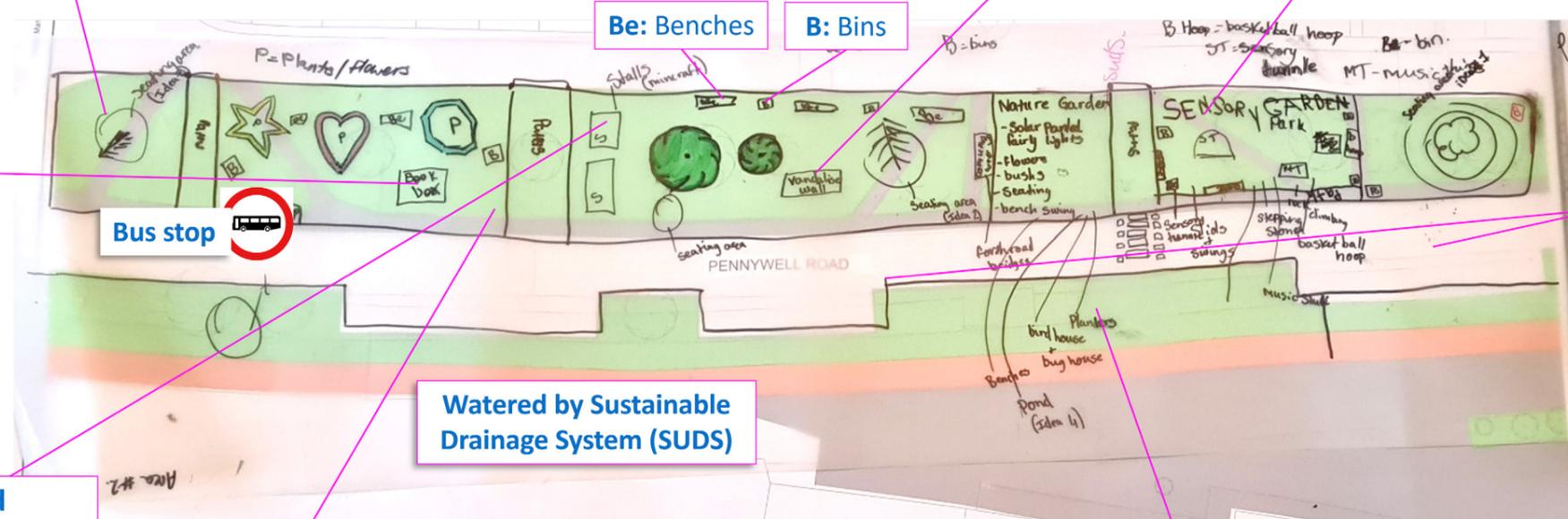
**"Vandalisable" Wall**



**Sensory Play Garden (tree bench swing, basketball hoop, climbing, stepping stones, music features)**



**Book Box**



**Watered by Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS)**

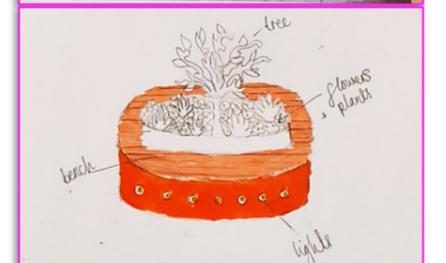


**Food Stalls**



**Flowerbed Area (colourful)**

**Nature Garden: Pond, Birdboxes, Bughouses**



**Seating Areas (integrating nature, shelter and lighting)**



**Buggy Parking**



**Standing Shelter**

Figure 6 Overarching Proposal for Area 2 - Forth Bridge Community Park

The park also provides a range of playful activities, where a basketball hoop, swings, stepping stones, musical and climbing rocks were chosen on the basis that they provide free fun for all ages, and affordances which the small playground doesn't have. They are also inclusive of young children and people with disabilities.

Participants gave much thought and discussion on how to mitigate **vandalism and littering**, which some felt was inevitable and led to apathy about the success of the co-design. A park which looked neglected, uncared for or which showed evidence of antisocial behaviour, would neither feel safe nor attract use by families in the first place, thereby failing core principles. That said, their deep and sophisticated consideration of their experience of these problems during the process are integrated into the Proposal.

As highlighted, the most important of these was to achieve a park popular with families and that feels meaningful to, and owned by, the whole community (to the extent possible). This would lead to the park being "occupied" by the "right kind of adults", where social forces would act to regulate vandalism and littering. Vital to this was local participation in the creation, maintenance and upkeep for the park, where the involvement of local schoolchildren and eco-groups emerged as a particularly strong idea.

In terms of specific features, included are a graffiti wall which invites a positive outlet for vandalism, fun bins which encourage recycling or binning (e.g. pencil bins, bins that talk), CCTV, and vandal-proof features (e.g. anti-vandal paint). Community policing or neighbourhood watch from homes overlooking the park were also suggested, as were ensuring effective consequences for abuses, which might include fines or community service related to the Park, e.g. helping with maintenance or litter-picking.

The way the young people talked about the relationships between all these issues, interventions and key questions which arose during the co-design process, are represented in the figure overleaf through a causal loop diagram. This is called "reversing the chain reaction", coined by a participant as a key focus for the project. He articulated that antisocial behaviour and apathy involved a vicious circle, where the more evidence that people don't care about place, the less people care ("if no one cares, why should I?"). The way to reverse this was by demonstrating care, where nipping the first abuses in the bud was key (e.g. shaming the first person who doesn't put their rubbish in the bin).

The diagram overleaf shows how their many ideas are interrelated and how important a joined-up strategy is for ensuring this is a space that does not invite or condone anti-social behaviour.



## HOW THE FINAL PROPOSAL MEETS KEY PLANNING CRITERIA

In the session immediately prior to the Final Proposal, CEC and APiC asked participants to review their emerging ideas through the lens of 6 key criteria, which would determine the likelihood of a proposal being consented to by the community and local authority.

These criteria, and how the team proposed to have satisfied these through their design are as follows.

### 1. Does the Proposal align with 4 key Council Strategies - response to the climate emergency, improving the environment, enhancing biodiversity and reducing inequality - and if so, how?

- Ideas around community support improve equality because they're anti-racist and provide opportunities and access for disadvantaged people.
- Community shelter and benches for everyone helps with equality.
- Litter picking every week improves environment.
- More trees outside school improves the look and feel of the area.
- Trees and planting enhance biodiversity and address climate change.
- A park improves the natural environment.
- Rainwater harvesting saves water and mitigates surface flooding.
- Reusable water resources are eco-friendly and community friendly.

### 2. Is the Proposal feasible and acceptable to the community, and if so, how?

- Community Shelter addresses issues within the community, such as diverting young people from gangs, or providing opportunities for rehabilitation.
- Providing a relaxing place for everyone to sit, in a place where there are currently none.
- Spaces which are child-friendly and family-friendly
- Safe spaces to spend time with friends and family.
- Design which is inclusive of disabilities and accessible to all, specifically thinking of the sensory needs of children who attend Oaklands School. Eco-friendly design.
- Features and strategies to address littering.
- The public wants more nature.
- SUDS help with flood prevention on Pennywell road.

### 3. Does it meet general community needs?

- A place which supports the people who are most disadvantaged.
- Those suffering deprivation, disability and other vulnerabilities are made to feel included.
- Help centre and community centre address troubles in the community.
- Nice things to look at and place for anyone to unwind in some calm privacy.

- Café and garden to give people more food and drink options in a nice atmosphere. Need to manage people's needs, though as there might be objections from residents of Pennywell Road to having eateries and outdoor eating directly outside where they live – public consultation could be tricky.
- SUDS help with flood prevention on Pennywell road.
- Basketball hoop, while it might be considered an 'exclusive' need, is a training opportunity for young people out of school and for whom travel to the Granton basketball court might be quite far.

#### 4. Low maintenance

- Community Shelter groups could maintain the area by including it in their rehabilitation work.
- SUDS can help to water the plants.
- Linking to local or school eco-groups, and planting, developing, and maintaining the Park in collaboration with them, taking the pressure off the council.
- Running community events and programmes to get local people involved in upkeep of the area: schoolchildren, volunteers, and even reformed gang members.
- Plenty of bins and encouraging their use with fun designs (e.g. pencil or basketball hoop bins) that promote recycling or make it fun or a challenge to remove litter.

#### 5. No vandalism

- A space over which the whole community feels ownership and has shared meaning.
- CCTV cameras.
- Good lighting.
- Graffiti walls so there is an outlet for people who want to tag or spray-paint.
- Anti-vandalism paint on any features and buildings, except for the specific 'vandalism wall' so there is a place for healthy outlet.
- If the place is popular, litter and vandalism is less likely because people will be there and watching.
- Working with residents who overlook the Park on a neighbourhood watch scheme and encouraging the reporting of antisocial behaviour.
- Clear consequences and fines for vandalism and littering.

#### 6. A range of cost options

- All the design features potentially meet these criteria, offering flexibility with budgeting.

### Methodology:

The co-design process took place in early January 2023 over the course of 2½ days, including 3 phases comprised of 6 sessions. The venue for the first 2 days was The Old Kirk and Muirhouse Parish Church, and the last ½ day session was held in the Sports Hall at the West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre.

Participants were young people aged 13-14 years (S2 and S3) from Craigmoynton Community High School, with an equal split of boys and girls. Initially, 20 pupils were recruited by the school based on their interest in urban planning and design, or other capacities relevant to the



Next, the participants were given a brief overview of the process of urban design and the professional roles involved: Landscape Architect, Builder, Artist, Town Planner, Architect and Engineer. This was intended as a tool for them to reflect on their own personal capacities or areas of interest, and the role(s) they might play in the co-design teams which best aligned with these. Participants were asked to venture which of the roles they felt resonated with them as individuals, and this informed the formation of design teams for Phase 2.

Following this, a **site visit** was taken to both areas on the Pennywell Road with facilitators discussing and noting their views and ideas en route and in situ. Following this, these initial ideas were summarised on a map of the area, creating a girl's map and a boy's map.

In the afternoon, girls and boys came together for the third session, where the main design needs and ideas which had emerged from the morning site visits were summarised for each group. At the front end of these we proposed some ground rules for facilitation and discussion, and these were agreed.

#### **Common and gender-specific design themes which emerged at this stage, were:**

- **Shelter and seating**, as this would guarantee use by pupils during lunch and breaks. Currently, they have nowhere to sit other than a small playground, and shelter under shop overhangs or return to school when it rains.
- **Family-friendliness**. The view was that good provision would be a community space that also attracts use by families e.g. mums or dads with buggies, older and younger siblings hanging out together etc. This meets an important objective of increasing usage by the "right people" (see "safety" below).
- **Play equipment for older age groups**, and which is lacking from the small playground. Particular emphasis was placed on swings ('big' or 'basket'), but a good seesaw and flying fox were also mentioned.
- **Looks nice, well maintained and cared for**, and makes us feel good about our place.
- **Measures to reduce littering and vandalism**. There was initially a general despondency that improvements were pointless because vandalism was inevitable. This would immediately ruin something good, and the result would be to make people feel worse about the place they live. Some felt efforts to curb vandalism (e.g. signs) could make it even more likely that it would take place, in that it would act as a challenge or an invitation.

Nevertheless, discussion did lead to a range of interventions which would be needed or that could be done to tackle the problem: CCTV, public or close circuit surveillance, peer pressure, education, and specific features, such as more bins. The young people articulated antisocial behaviour as a systemic issue, and one referred to the aim being to 'reverse the chain reaction' (detailed in the relevant section in the Proposal), with a particular focus on nipping the first abuse in the bud, collective responsibility for this, and the need for effective community policing and clear consequences.

- **Better and cheaper food options**, such as a bubble tea shop, fast food outlets or a nice café (such as at Saughton Park) were all mentioned as desirable.
- **Safer Cycling Options**, such as a bike park, although many participants suggested they don't own their own bikes, so bike hire might be helpful.

- **(Girls) Safety.** Girls expressed their dismay at their lack of feeling safe in the area. They never go out in groups, let alone on their own, and if they go out in groups they go to a different area of the city where they feel safe. They never go out after dark. When thinking about things that make them feel safe, they noted that places populated by the right people and adults, especially families, and good lighting are measures of success for a new park.
- **(Boys) Basketball court.** Boys expressed a desire to have a basketball area to play.

These themes, in turn, gave rise to **3 KEY QUESTIONS** which were held in mind during the co-design process:

- **Who maintains** the area to ensure it looks nice?
- **Who polices** the area to ensure it isn't vandalised?
- **How do we provide for everyone** (space, accessibility, without it becoming overwhelmed)?

It was also agreed that an additional key role should be added to those presented earlier - a **Community Champion**. Their job is communicating and coordinating community involvement, promoting inclusion, and all the time articulating and advocating for local needs. This would ensure these needs are always held in mind, and not downplayed or treated superficially during subsequent stages of design and construction.

Participants were asked to reflect on the process so far, and each was given the opportunity to put forward their foremost individual priority for the co-design, privately and uninfluenced by the group. These were written on post-its and then categorised. In rank order, they are:

- **Enhancing nature** (trees and flowers): Flower beds, more nature, planting flowers and trees, more flowerbeds, trees with leaves (x2).
- **Food:** Bubble Tea Shop (x2); more food choices; food stalls; McDonalds; restaurant or café.
- **Benches:** Benches with shelter, benches; build a seating area; benches please; more seating
- **Art and colour:** More art; more decorative environment; colourful area; colourful and bright.
- **A New Park:** Real park; new park; more parks.
- **Community support:** Day-care (where parents can drop off their kids due to stress and for free); refugee centre for local Somali and Sudanese people (and other immigrants); build a blood and crips centre for rehabilitating gang members.
- **Basketball:** Basketball court, add a basketball court
- **Better lighting:** Lights, more lampposts
- **A safe space:** Neighbourhood watch; CCTV; a girl's hangout
- **Tidiness:** Someone cleans up parks at end of school; no dog poo (only cats allowed).
- **Other:** Animal farm; bandstand; traffic lights; bike park; more stuff at playpark; girls' hangout, ultimate fighting competition; cinema; shopping centre.

While most of the themes from the site visit were reiterated, this also surfaced the personal importance to many of improving the natural environment (now the top priority), as well as for art, and decorative design, and colour. It also introduced the idea of thinking about Area 2 as

a “new park”, which was a concept that might include many of the other features proposed. It was agreed that this concept could provide a good integrative foundation for the Phase 2 co-design activities.

The session ended with facilitators asking the participants their views on how they wanted to carry out the Phase 2 co-design, and what materials and support they may need from us for the process. A number wanted to produce their designs in Minecraft, while others requested drawing, craft and construction materials to manifest their ideas. Five co-design teams were agreed which were informed by and approximated to the professional roles which had earlier interested participants. These were:

- Coordinating the overarching design, budgeting and planning.
- Community Champions, to address social needs and inclusivity.
- Minecraft design and architecture team.
- Landscape architecture team.
- Physical art and design team.

## PHASE 2: CO-DESIGN

Phase 2 took place a week later and comprised of two sessions: a morning and an afternoon. The whole morning session involved a design-jam where teams formulated and constructed their ideas. Due to some of the original group being unable to make it, the five teams envisaged were reduced to four. As most of what was produced found its way into the final proposal, only a brief overview of what each team produced and how this contributed to the Final Proposal follows:

**Table 1: Physical Art and Design:** A range of drawings and designs which contributed, including the sign for a Sensory Park, a rainbow path, a buggy station, and a shelter.



*Figure 9 some physical designs made by one group.*

**Table 2: Landscape Architecture Team:** Many designs for enhancing the natural environment including a pond, a few seating areas which incorporated natural features (trees) and colourful flowerbeds.

**Table 3: Minecraft Design and Architecture Team:** Minecraft designs for a shelter, play features and a design for a full-scale Basketball Court.

**Table 4: Community Champions:** The Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) as well as a layout involving many different seating areas, bins and benches to encourage general use.

In the afternoon session, a City of Edinburgh Council officer who had been co-facilitating gave an overview of 6 planning criteria for the participants to consider, which determine the likelihood of a design being consented to. These were a design which should:

1. **Align with Council strategies**, particularly:
  - Responding to the climate emergency
  - Improving biodiversity
  - Addressing inequality
  - Enhancing the urban environment
  
2. **Be Feasible and acceptable**, particularly, that it is likely to be supported by the Community at the public consultation stage of the planning process, addressing any negative perceptions about co-design by teenagers.
3. **Meets general community needs** – a place for everyone! Incorporating exclusive needs only if a genuine local requirement can be demonstrated.
4. **Low maintenance**, given budgetary constraints for upkeep.
5. **No vandalism**, avoiding cost of clean-ups or repairs.
6. **A range of cost options** for proposed features available, providing flexibility with provision.

Each of the groups were then asked to reflect upon their designs through the lens of these criteria, discuss strengths and weaknesses, and to propose how their design would satisfy them and / or amend their design accordingly. A summary of their responses is given in relation to the Final Proposal.

### Phase 3: Integrating Co-Design Into A Final Proposal

Phase 3 involved a final session of integrating the outputs of the co-design jam into a final proposal for Areas 1 and 2. This split into 3 teams: one responsible for Area 1, another for Area 2 and a final group of boys discussed a joined-up strategy for addressing issues around vandalism and littering.

Two stakeholders representing AECOM project partners were present. The proposal envisaged that the involvement of external stakeholders would be through presentations at the end of the last day of the young people's designs. However, a variance on the proposal was put in place given AECOM's attendance for the whole morning. They were given an overview of the process so far and the ideas for the main proposal, and how these were reached. AECOM expressed a desire not to focus on specific ideas but rather general themes which could contribute to their existing holistic concept.

That said, of the holistic concept AECOM presented, a zone to the north of Pennywell Road called "Community Zone" seemed most appropriate in terms of its objectives and principles to

what the young people had produced, although it didn't approximate to the 2 Areas that had provided the focus of the co-design process. In addition, the young people's overall proposal incorporates some of the activities from other zones envisaged for the scheme.

AECOM seemed motivated in the ideas of involving young people and the community collaboratively in the realisation of the design, and the potential of this to promote a sense of ownership, which might mitigate things like vandalism, nurture a genuine sense of community ownership and ensure the project met the objectives expressed. The day ended with a celebration of the young people's achievements and discussions of next step. Some young people expressed motivation to be involved in elements of the further design and construction, and in the professions they had explored through the process.