

Astley Ainslie Place Brief

CONSULTATION DRAFT

September 2026



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Astley Ainslie is highlighted in the Edinburgh City Plan 2030 as a key site for delivering on the aims for Edinburgh set out in the plan. [Place Policy 3](#) outlines Astley Ainslie as a site for housing-led mixed-use development. This should respect the mature landscape setting of the site, whilst also creating a sustainable place, and retaining its special character, through the provision of new connections, open spaces and other community infrastructure.

It is important that any development in the area is carefully considered. The Astley Ainslie Place Brief is a set of principles that express the vision for the development of the area. It is informed by an assessment of the site context and local community aspirations for the area.

The Place Brief is non-statutory planning guidance. The principles set out in the Place Brief will inform future master planning. Future proposals in the Astley Ainslie area should follow the Place Brief. It will be a material consideration in determining future applications in the area.

The Place Brief should be read alongside other relevant non-statutory planning guidance. This includes the [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#) and [Guidance for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas](#).

The City Plan 2030 housing allocation for Astley Ainslie [\[H8\]](#) indicates a potential 500 homes on the site. The partial retention of the site by the NHS will need to be considered through the plan process. The Place Brief will enable masterplanning work that will help inform this in respect of the number of homes that can be delivered on the site.



View along Canaan Lane to one of the entry gates into the Astley Ainslie site

1.2 PROCESS

This Place Brief has been prepared collaboratively, with regular input from the NHS and the Astley Ainslie Community Trust (AACT). There has also been input from consultants appointed by the NHS to advise on the development of the site, including Oberlanders Architects, Land Use Consultants and Goodsons Associates.

The Council advised the NHS on the studies required to inform the Place Brief. This included the following preliminary studies, which were carried out by the NHS appointed consultants:

Studies by Land Use Consultants

- Preliminary Arboricultural Assessment
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Initial Heritage Appraisal
- Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Studies by Goodsons Associates

- Surface Water Management Appraisal

Further studies will be required to inform any subsequent masterplan. For example, studies on height and massing, transport, landscape and phasing/delivery, among others, will be required.

The AACT has prepared a Local Place Plan for the Astley Ainslie site. This was added to the [Council's register of Local Place Plans](#) in January 2026. This was informed by consultation with the community between September and October 2025. This was carried out with support from the Council. This included an engagement event on 27 September 2025 attended by over 320 people, and an online survey completed by 127 people. The Local Place Plan, and associated consultation report, oral history project and young people consultation report have informed the development of this Place Brief.

The Place Brief also builds on previous work carried out by the Council, including the following:

- [Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2014\)](#)
- [Astley Ainslie Development Brief \(2002\)](#)



The Astley Ainslie Local Place Plan was added to the Council's register of Local Place Plans in January 2026



The engagement event held by the AACT on 27 September 2025, attended by over 320 people

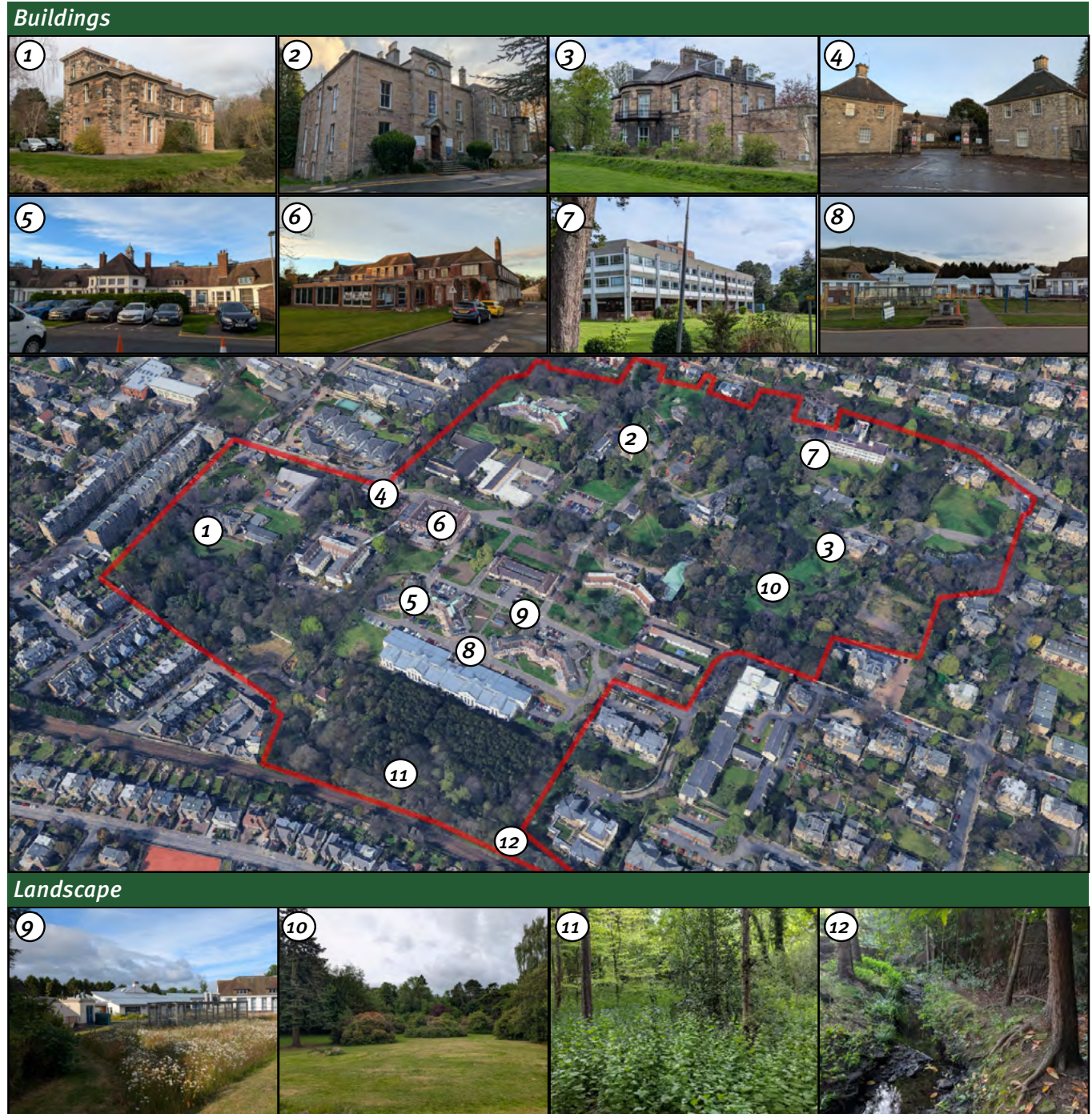
2. SITE & CONTEXT

2.1 EXISTING SITE

The Astley Ainslie site covers approximately 21 hectares. The site slopes to the south. It contains 19th century villas that have been converted to hospital use. There is also a range of purpose-built medical and ancillary buildings from across the 20th and 21st centuries. It also contains the site of the medieval St Roque's chapel.

The site contains large areas of woodland, mature trees and open grassed areas. There are some sites of hardstanding and scrubland that had buildings on them before. Many of the garden walls associated with the 19th century villas remain on and around the site.

The Jordan Burn runs across the southern part of the site. A significant section of this is culverted.



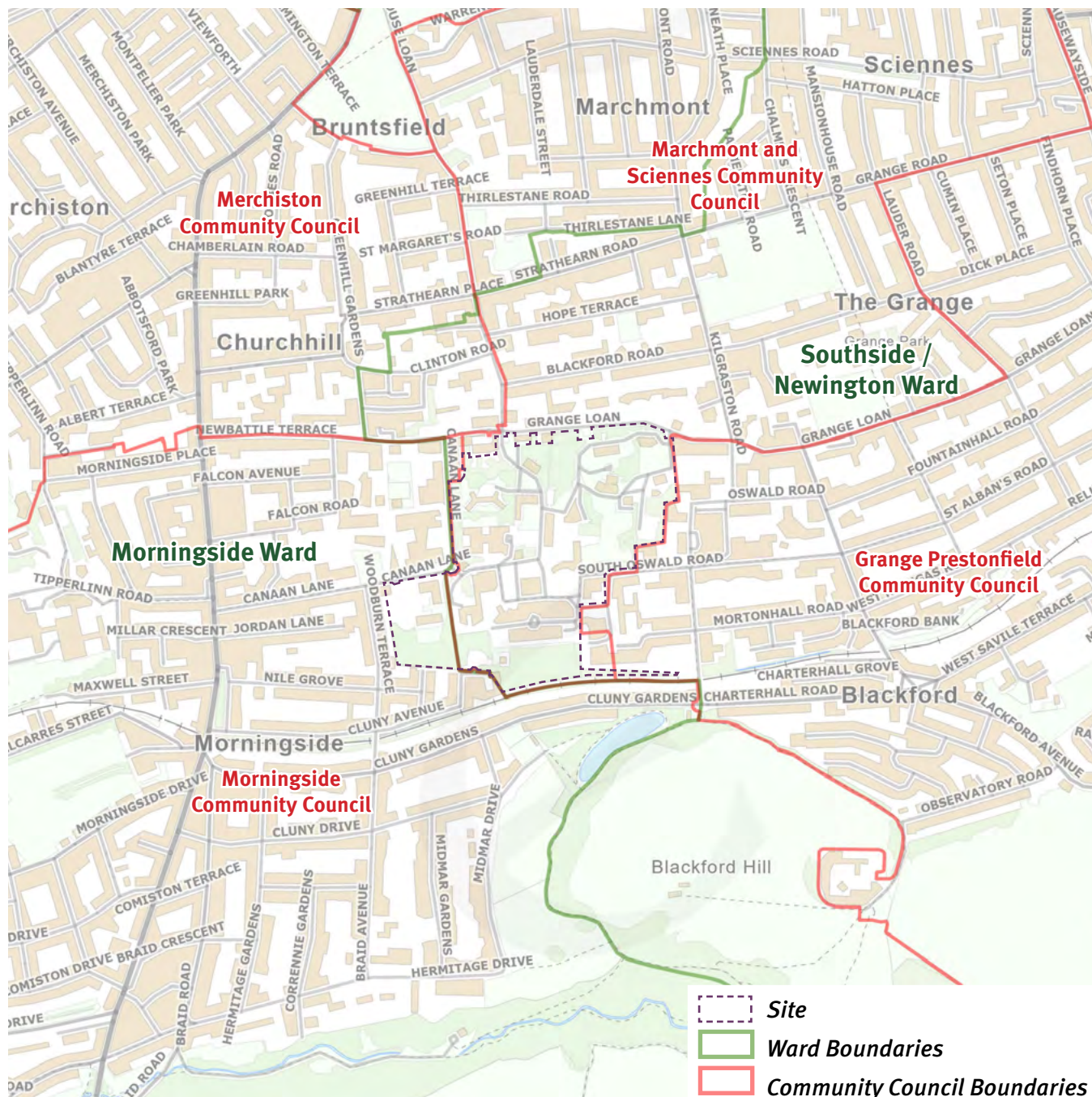
2.2 SITE CONTEXT

The site is located in the southern part of the Grange. Morningside and Bruntsfield are located to the west. Newington and Blackford are located to the east.

The south suburban railway runs along the southern edge of the site. Blackford Hill is located to the south on the other side of the railway and Cluny Gardens.

The majority of the site is located in the Southside / Newington ward and the Marchmont and Sciennes Community Council area. The exception to this is the south-west of the site that contains Woodburn House and the Atos Building. This part is located in the Morningside ward and Community Council area. The Merchiston Community Council area borders the site to the north-west. The Grange Prestonfield Community Council area borders the site to the east.

The nearest town centre is Morningside, located a short walk to the west of the site.



Map of site context including ward and community council boundaries.

2.3 HISTORY & HERITAGE

Site history

16th - 17th Century

The land was part of Edinburgh's Common Good.

A chapel dedicated to St. Roque, patron of plague sufferers, was established on the site in the early 16th Century. Plague victims were housed on the site. James IV visited the site in 1507 and made an offering.

The Canaan Estate was created at the feuing of the Burgh Muir in 1586, and this included the land of the chapel.

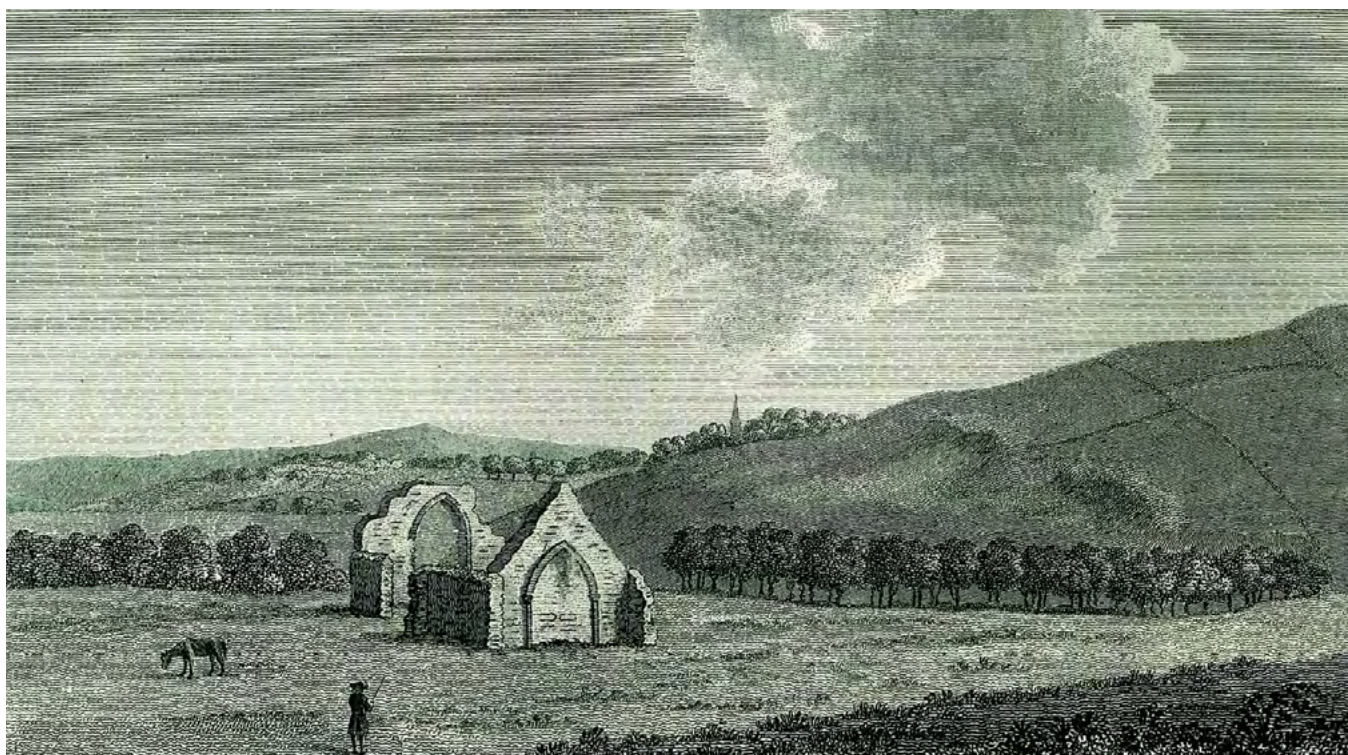
18th Century

The land was continued to be used as farmland.

In the mid-18th Century St. Roque's was partially demolished. An accident on site that killed some of the workmen was viewed as an act of God against the

demolition of a church and the tradesmen refused to complete the demolition.

In the late 18th century the ruined remains of the chapel set within the farmland of the Canaan Estate drew the attention of artists following the 'picturesque' tradition.



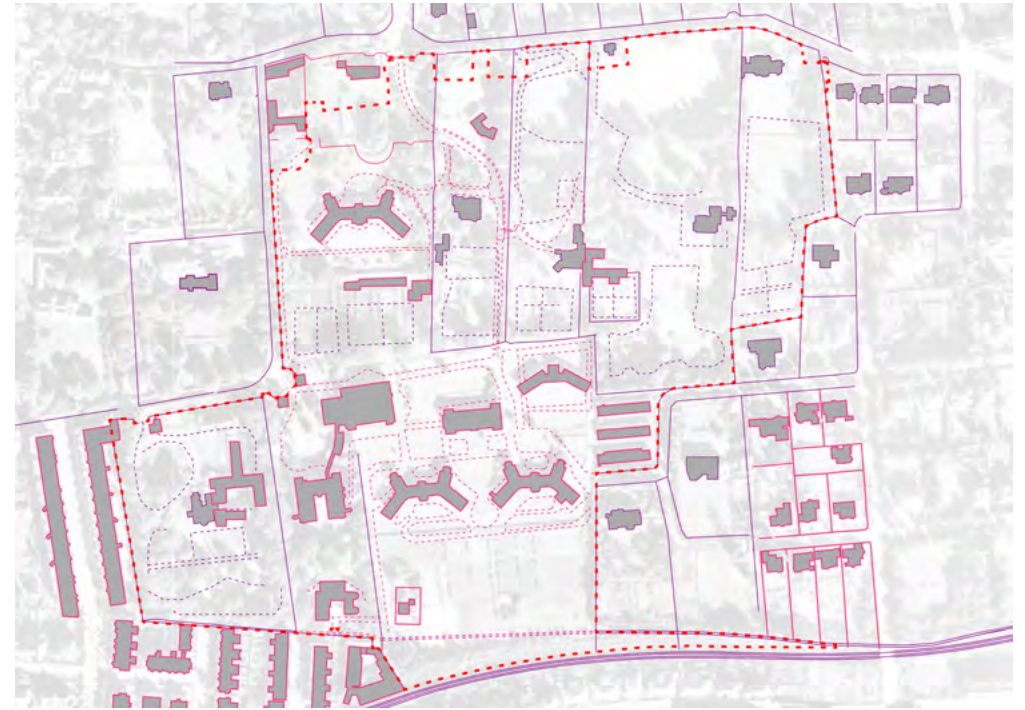
Engraving from Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Scotland*, 1797 derived from drawing by Foster of 1788



19th Century

In 1803 the area between Grange Loan and Canaan Lane was feued into large residential plots. Cottages and villas were built on the plots, set within large gardens. The remains of St. Roque's chapel were demolished at this time.

Many of these cottages and villages remain on the site. This includes Canaan House (1805, initially named 'Canaan Cottage'), Canaan Park (c.1817-45), Woodburn House (c. 1820), Morelands (c.1820s) and St. Roque (1850-52, named after the chapel). The homes were built to take advantage of the southerly sloping site, with large stepped gardens in the grounds. Many of the associated coach houses, stables and historic walls dividing the grounds of the residences also still remain on the site.



Early 20th Century

Many of the villas and a bordering nine hole golf course was acquired under the will of David Ainslie. Ainslie was a wealthy stockbreeder. He had tasked his trustees with founding a convalescent hospital in memory of his nephew John Astley Ainslie. The Millbank and Southbank villas were demolished, but the others were retained and adapted. New hospital buildings were constructed. Many were by prominent Edinburgh-based architects Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. This included distinctive butterfly pavilions for the convalescence of patients. In the 1930s the hospital was extended to include occupational therapy treatment. The site was taken over by the government during World War II. After the war, the trustees bought the houses and gardens of St Roque and Morelands to extend the occupational therapy work.



Late 20th Century

The Astley Ainslie hospital became part of the NHS following its foundation in 1948. The NHS continued and extended the rehabilitation treatment to a wide range of services.

Further hospital buildings were constructed on the site. This included the first purpose-built school for convalescent children. It also included the Children's Unit which is now the Charles Bell Pavilion. This was the first purpose-built rehabilitation unit in Britain for convalescent children. In 1983 the Balfour Pavilion for older adults was completed.



21st Century

In 2007 the South-East Mobility and Rehabilitation Technology (SMART) centre was completed on the southern part of the site. This provided rehabilitation technology services, including driving assessment, orthotics and wheelchair services.

Archaeology

The most significant archaeological consideration is the possible site of St Roque's Chapel and attendant graveyard and leper colony. This is likely located in the north-east of the site. This will inform detailed designs for the area as the remains should be preserved in situ.

There is also high chance of archaeological finds along the Jordan Burn. Potential 19th century and hospital middens have been recorded from the area. The central area of the site has the lowest potential of archaeological finds.

All buildings will need to be thoroughly recorded as part of a wider programme of archaeological works. This needs to be considered across the site holistically, given the linked historical nature of the different elements on the site. This should be considered within the phasing plan.

The reinterpretation of this recording exercise should be explored through both archaeological research and engagement with the NHS community and the wider public. This should be a combination of traditional information but also public art.



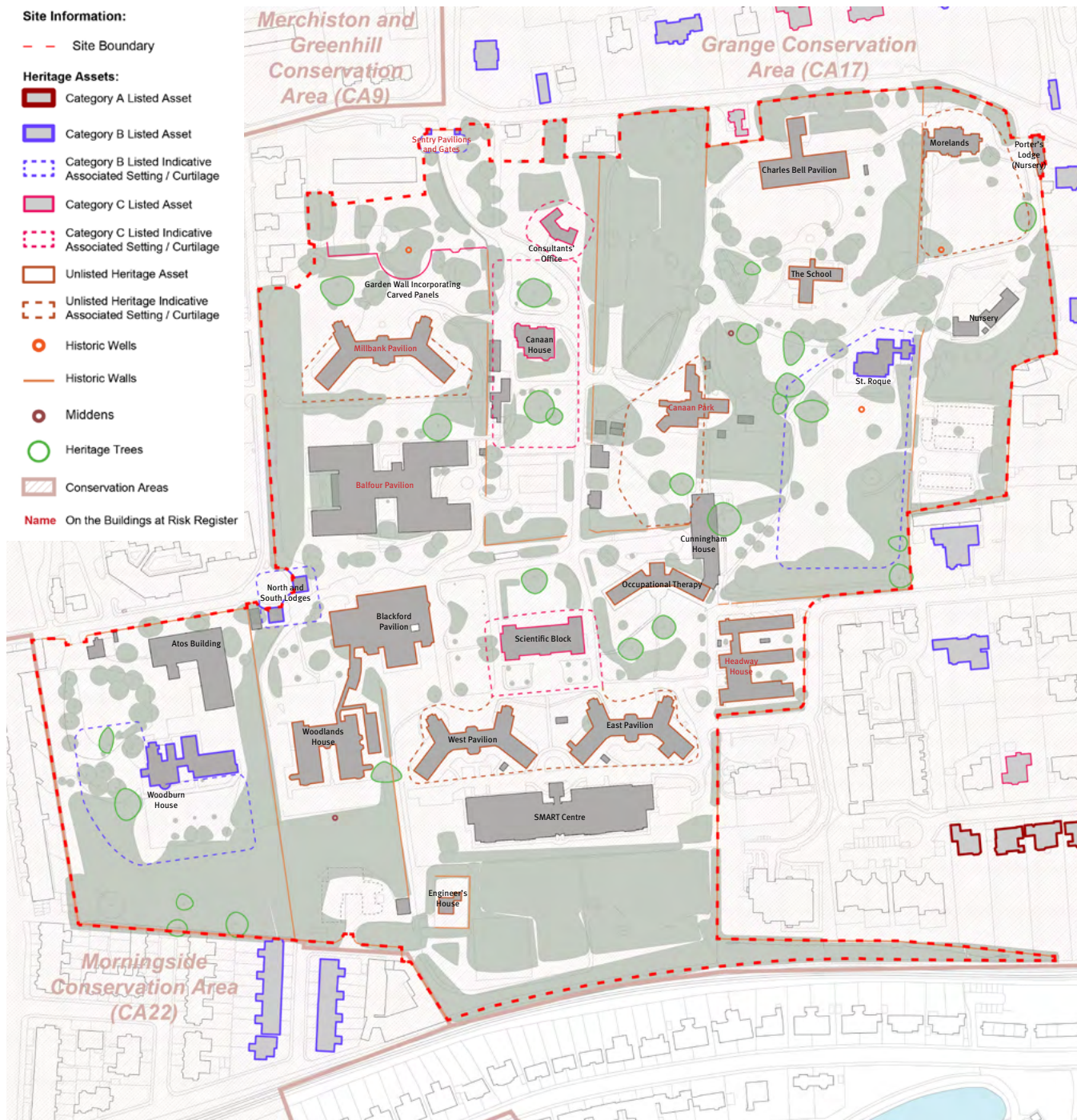
Historic environment

The entire site is located within the Grange Conservation Area. It is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a part of the area with its own distinctive character.

There are no Category A listed assets on the site. There are Category B and C listed assets across the site, including 19th century villas and 20th century medical buildings. There are also unlisted heritage assets which make a contribution to the character and identity of the site and conservation area. There are also historic wells, walls, middens and other features.

There are also many listed assets in the immediate surroundings, including some Category A listed assets to the south-east. The south-west of the site borders the Morningside Conservation Area.

Historic Environment Scotland have included some of the listed and unlisted buildings on the site on their 'Buildings at Risk Register'. This register has not been updated since a review in 2024, but the identified buildings continue to be at risk. This includes Canaan Park, the Sentry Pavilions, Headway House, the Millbank Pavilion and the Balfour Pavilion.



Structures with 16th Century elements



Category C Listed

Garden Wall incorporating 16th C panels

Probably Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built circa 1930. Formal garden wall approximately symmetrical in plan with a large canted recess at south east end and incorporating 16th century carved panels.



Category C Listed

Canaan House

Originally named 'Canaan Cottage'. Built circa 1805. 3-bay, 4-storey classical square-plan villa with 3-storey, 3-bay addition to the west with a small square plan addition to the north west corner.

19th Century Villas



Category B Listed

St. Roque

Designed by Brown and Wardrop. Built circa 1850-1852. 2-storey, 5-bay, L-plan Italianate villa with distinctive engaged pyramidal-roofed 3-storey tower.



Unlisted Heritage Asset On Buildings at Risk Register

Canaan Park

Build date unknown. Sometime between 1817 and 1845. Two-storey Italianate villa with a three-storey glazed campanile-style entrance tower and unusual 45° south-western front/side outshot.



Category B Listed

Woodburn House

Built circa 1820. Two-storey and attic rectangular-plan classical villa with single-storey wing and outbuildings to north. Large single storey modern extension at ground floor to the east.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Morelands

Built circa 1820s with later additions. 2½ storey core villa with south full height canted bay window, lower wings extending to west and a modern extension.

Early 20th Century Medical Buildings



Category C Listed

Scientific Block

Designed by Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1929. Single storey, 15-bay, I-plan symmetrical hospital block with advanced outer bays in a simple modern neo-Georgian style.



**Unlisted Heritage Asset
On Buildings at Risk Register**

Millbank Pavilion

Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1928. Sanatorium designed with sun-trapping angled 'butterfly' plans in matching design to East and West Pavilions. Located in the grounds of the demolished Millbank villa.



Unlisted Heritage Assets

East and West Pavilions

Likely designed by Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1929-1930. Sanatorium designed with sun-trapping angled 'butterfly' plans. The design includes verandas in front onto which beds could be wheeled to expose patients to sunlight and fresh air. Single storey with attic, 1½ storey entrance bay and bell-capped cupola. Prominent in views from Blackford Hill.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Occupational Therapy

Built circa 1930s-40s. Designed with similar sun-trapping angled plans to East, West and Millbank Pavilions but a simplified design. Modern linear extension (Cunningham House) to northeast.



**Unlisted Heritage Asset
On Buildings at Risk Register**

Headway House

Built 1940. Set of three timber huts. Constructed to provide extra ward accommodation when the site was a military accommodation.

Early 20th Century Medical Ancillary Buildings & Structures



Category B Listed

North & South Lodges

Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1930-32. Pair of 2-storey, 2-bay diagonally set neo-Georgian gatelodges linked by curving walls with late 17th century style gatepiers and railings.



Category B Listed
On Buildings at Risk Register

Sentry Pavilions & Gates

Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1932. Pair of single storey square plan neo-Georgian sentry lodges with distinctive key-stoned circular windows.



Category C Listed

Consultant's Office

Auldjo Jamieson and Arnott. Built 1932. Single storey, 5-bay, C-plan neo-Georgian house with a wide swept roof, overhanging eaves and recessed entrance door. Initially Asst. Medical Superintendent's House.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Woodlands House

Built 1930-32, with later extensions. A two-storey and attic, H-plan building. Built on the site of South Bank House. Initially nurse's accommodation.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Blackford Pavilion

2-storey rectangular block with a mansard roof with dormers. Constructed as a central kitchen block. Connected to Woodlands House.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Engineer's House

Built 1930s. Square single storey house with a pyramidal roof.

Late 20th Century / 21st Century Additions



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Charles Bell Pavilion

Michael Laird and Partners. Built 1963-5. Modernist block with pilotis, horizontal windows, vertical fins and sculptural roof protrusions. The first rehabilitation unit in Britain for convalescing children.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

The School

Built 1957. Single storey cottage style block. Built as a school building for convalescent children at Astley Ainslie.



Unlisted Heritage Asset

Porter's Lodge (left) + Nursery (right)

Built circa 1950s/60s. East gate modern square-plan lodge with a copper-clad pyramidal roof. Further nursery buildings in two 1990s single storey prefabricated units within fenced enclosure to south.



On Buildings at Risk Register (West wing only)

Balfour Pavilion

Built in 1983. Single storey brick/concrete building. Deep H-plan with staggered mono-pitched roofs.



ATOS Building

Likely built in the 1990s. Single storey design with an deep L-plan and staggered pitched roofs.



SMART Centre

Built 2007. 1 and 2-storey building with staggered mono-pitched roofs, glazed link blocks and canopies. Located over fall of hillside.

Historic Landscape

The site has a distinctive landscape character as a whole. This is reinforced by the perimeter walls. However, the remains of the villa gardens can also still be clearly discerned. They can be seen through the remaining historic walls and the arrangement of lawns and grassland to the south of villas, surrounded by woodland. The site is part of the non-designated Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) 'Astley Ainslie Hospital Complex / Canaan Lane Villas'.

There are also several historic elements located throughout the landscape. This includes wells, garden features, middens, and garden walls. There is a Cat-C listed garden wall north of the Millbank Pavilion that incorporates 16th Century panels.

There is a walled garden located within the grounds of St. Roque. There is evidence of a formal layout, though it has become overgrown. The garden includes evidence of former growing space, including greenhouses and planting beds.

Art installations are also a distinctive feature of the site. This includes sculptures that enrich their landscape setting.



Garden Wall incorporating 16th C panels (Category C listed)



Pet Cemetery



Walled garden



Garden of St. Roque



Historic well



Bird bath sculpture by Maxwell Allan (circa 1930s)

Character & Setting

The Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies the Astley Ainslie Hospital as a major component in the conservation area. It identifies the hospital site as having its own distinctive character. The site contrasts with the majority of the Grange in both use and character. This is due to it being a large, open, publicly accessible site in healthcare use. It is also due to the significant amount of 20th century architecture, alongside the retained 19th century villas.

The site is secluded and enclosed by boundary walls and formal gates. It has attractive landscaped open spaces. Tree belts run along the perimeter. Internal belts enclose individual buildings. These reflect the historic layout, even when individual trees are of later origin.

The 19th century villas contribute positively to the distinctive character. They are located in the north and west of the site. They are typically 2 to 3 storeys and sit comfortably within their garden curtilages, with retained garden settings. The gardens are mostly to the south, making the most of the sloping site and views across to Blackford Hill, the

Braids and the Pentland Hills. Although not in residential use, they are representative of the wider Conservation Area at its most distinctive. They show evidence of the 1803 estate feuing plan, which also appears to have defined Canaan Lane.

The 1930s medical buildings typically make positive contributions to the distinctive character. This is especially true for those designed by Auldjo, Jamieson and Arnott. The neo-Georgian sentry pavilions and gateway lodges provide focal points at the entries to the site. The butterfly pavilions sit comfortably in the overall landscape structure. The Millbank pavilion sits well in the landscape of the demolished Millbank villa.

The Scientific Block and East and West Pavilions were built on golf course land. This part of the site is more open. The designed ensemble creates a strong symmetry and central focus. This works well with the prominence of this part of the site when viewed from Blackford Hill. It contrasts positively with the more secluded and wooded character of the north and west of the site.



St Roque sits comfortably within its southern garden setting



The lodges simultaneously reinforce the secluded nature of the site and create focal entry points



The West Pavilion sits comfortably within the wider open landscape structure

Woodlands House and the Blackford Pavilion have a different scale and massing to the other healthcare buildings. The original buildings largely sit well in their surrounding landscape. The heights sit below adjacent tree lines. However, later extensions and additions to these buildings do not work so well with their surroundings. For example, the loading bay extension to the west of the Blackford Pavilion detracts from the entry to the site.

The Occupational Therapy Block sits comfortably in its landscape setting. However it is a simplified version of the

other butterfly pavilions that lacks the same level of architectural detailing.

The Charles Bell pavilion has a strong relationship with the gardens to the south. The design is distinctive, but its utilitarian character is incongruous with the other 20th century buildings on the site.

Many of the most recent additions do not compliment the distinctive character of the site. This is often due to material choice or design. Some are rudimentary prefabricated buildings, such as the southern nursery buildings. Others use functional brickwork, blockwork, timber

or render, such as the Balfour Pavilion, Cunningham House and the SMART centre. The design of these buildings pays little consideration to the historic landscape or wider site character. Examples include the way Cunningham House encroaches across the line of the historic walls, or the lack of open landscape setting around the Balfour Pavilion.



The symmetrical assembly of the Scientific Block and the East / West Pavilions creates a strong visual focal point from Blackford Hill. This works well with the more open character of the south of the site.



The Balfour Pavilion is designed to the extent of its plot, with no landscape setting.



The render of the SMART Centre is utilitarian. It is screened to the south by the adjacent woodland

Heritage Summary

The following table considers the architectural and historic merit of buildings/listed structures, their group value and their contribution to the character and appearance of the Grange Conservation Area:

Building/Listed Structure ¹	Listing	Architectural Interest	Historic Interest	Group Value	Contribution to Grange CA	Overall Heritage	Notes
St. Roque	B	High	High	High	High	High	Evidence of divisions of the 1803 estate feuing plan
Woodburn House	B	High	High	High	High	High	Evidence of divisions of the 1803 estate feuing plan
North & South Lodges	B	High	High	High	High	High	
Sentry Pavilions & Gates	B	High	High	High	High	High	
Canaan House	C	High	High	High	High	High	Evidence of divisions of the 1803 estate feuing plan
Scientific Block	C	High	High	High	High	High	
Consultant's Office	C	High	High	High	High	High	
Garden Wall incorporating 16th C panels	C	High	High	High	High	High	Structure in landscape
Canaan Park	-	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium- High	Evidence of divisions of the 1803 estate feuing plan
Morelands	-	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium- High	Evidence of divisions of the 1803 estate feuing plan
East/West Pavilions	-	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium- High	Later extensions detract from building's interest.
Millbank Pavilion	-	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium- High	Later extensions detract from building's interest.
Woodlands House	-	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Later extensions detract from building's interest.
Blackford Pavilion	-	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Later extensions detract from building's interest.
Porter's Lodge	-	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
Charles Bell Pavilion	-	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium-Low	
The School	-	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium-Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
Engineer's House	-	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium-Low	
Occupational Therapy	-	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium-Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
Headway House	-	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
Nursery	-	Negligible	Low	Low	Negligible	Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
Balfour Pavilion	-	Negligible	Low	Negligible	Negative	Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
ATOS Building	-	Negligible	Low	Negligible	Negative	Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²
SMART Centre	-	Negligible	Low	Negligible	Negative	Low	Unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential ²

1 - The table does not cover unlisted structures on site of heritage value, including but not limited to wells, garden features, sculptures, the walled garden etc.

2 - Buildings unlikely to be suitable for refurbishment as residential may be suitable for refurbishment as other uses (e.g. community / commercial use)

This plan maps the table summary from [page 19](#) onto the site. It forms a baseline in understanding what would be lost in terms of architectural or historic interest if a building is changed or demolished and the consequent impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

It is based on assessment to date. It does not include assessment of the social, technological/scientific and iconic/spiritual heritage of the buildings. These aspects also contribute to their overall cultural significance.

Further assessment will be required on the suitability of buildings for refurbishment. This is particularly the case where the use of the building will be changing.

Any proposals for demolition in a conservation area should include a detailed environmental assessment. This should explore alternative options. This should include, but not be limited to, retention, refurbishment, or partial reuse of the existing building. This should include a whole life carbon assessment. The structural condition and cost to retain the building will need to be properly established to enable this assessment.



2.4 TOPOGRAPHY & VIEWS

The site has a slight slope downwards from north to south. This becomes steeper at the southern part of the site sloping down from the SMART centre to the Jordan Burn.

The summit and northern slopes of Blackford Hill and the Royal Observatory building are extensively in view from the site. In some locations the Braid Hills and Pentlands can also be seen.

The site occupies a prominent part of the foreground of protected skyline view S2 from Blackford Hill across the Grange and towards the city centre skyline. It also features in view S6 from Braid Hills Drive East.

The site also falls within the viewpaths of protected skyline views C1 from the Castle Rampart, C2 from the Camera Obscura, C8 from Calton Hill, S4 from Wester Craiglockhart Hill and S8 from Buckstone Snab. However for these views the site is largely obscured by topography, existing buildings or trees.

All development should follow the guidance set out in [Appendix 2 of the Edinburgh Design Guidance](#) for detailed assessment of the impact on protected views.



Internal Views

There are several views of Blackford Hill, the Braid Hills and the Pentlands, including, but not limited to, those below:



Blackford Hill from between the East and West Pavilions



Pentland Hills over the roof of the SMART centre from between the East and West Pavilions



Blackford Hill from the east side of the East Pavilion



Braid Hills from the west side of the West Pavilion



Blackford Hill, the Braid Hills and the Pentlands from the Millbank Pavilion



Blackford Hill from the west side of St. Roque

Local Views

These include views across the site from the north to the south, as well as local views of key entry points into the site:



Local view down Whitehouse Loan across the site to the Braid Hills



Local view down Canaan Lane across the site to the Braid Hills



Views of gates into the site from the west (Left, Canaan Lane)



External Views

The site is in the foreground of protected views from Blackford Hill and the mid-ground of views from Braid Hills Drive:



View S2 from Blackford Hill Crest, with the Astley Ainslie site a prominent part of the foreground



View S2 from further east along the Blackford Hill Crest, near the Blackford Observatory



View S6 from Braid Hills Drive, with the Astley Ainslie site in the midground between Midmar Drive and the Grange

2.5 GREEN & BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

Trees

The Astley Ainslie site constitutes a highly extensive and complete Victorian urban treescape. This consists of perimeter tree belts, internal belts planted to provide enclosure for the original villas, isolated specimen trees planted within villa grounds, either originally or later, and planting undertaken by the hospital authorities to the south. The tree canopy coverage of the site is 41.75%. This forms the basis of a mature landscape structure of heritage, arboricultural and biodiversity significance. Some trees date back to the early 19th century.

The whole site is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), with the exception of the non-native conifer woodland to the south. However this provides screening of the SMART centre. Native woodland understorey is also present in some areas of this non-native woodland, indicating that restoration to native woodland is likely possible.



Green & Open Spaces

The landscape has high heritage significance ([see page 16](#)). The site is also notable for the high level of communal space that has been made accessible to the public by the NHS. This has become an important amenity for the surrounding community, as there is a lack of public greenspace in the wider area.

Popular activities that take place on site include outdoor play for children, picnicking, recreational walking, running, cycling and foraging. This community interest has led to the addition of some features, such as the 'friends path' and the pet cemetery, both located within the grounds of St. Roque.

An orchard has been planted to the north of the Consultant's Office.

There are two brownfield plots, one in the very east of the site that formerly had the East Huts upon it and one in the south-west of the site next to the Cluny Place entrance that previously had the Boiler House upon it.



Biodiversity

The site mainly consists of amenity grassland with broadleaved and mixed scattered trees and woodland interspersed between buildings and hard standing areas.

The amenity grassland has relatively low ecological value due to a low species richness and evidence of a regular management regime. The mixed and broadleaved woodland has a much higher ecological value.

The site contains multiple features that could support roosting bats. There are suitable habitats for badgers on site, and there have been reports of badgers.

Development of the site should conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity utilising an existing tool or metric, to clearly demonstrate biodiversity gain in accordance with Scottish Government Biodiversity Planning Guidance.

The site is a key element in Edinburgh's nature network. There are opportunities to support and improve connections with Blackford Hill, the Braid Hills, Bruntsfield Links and the Meadows.



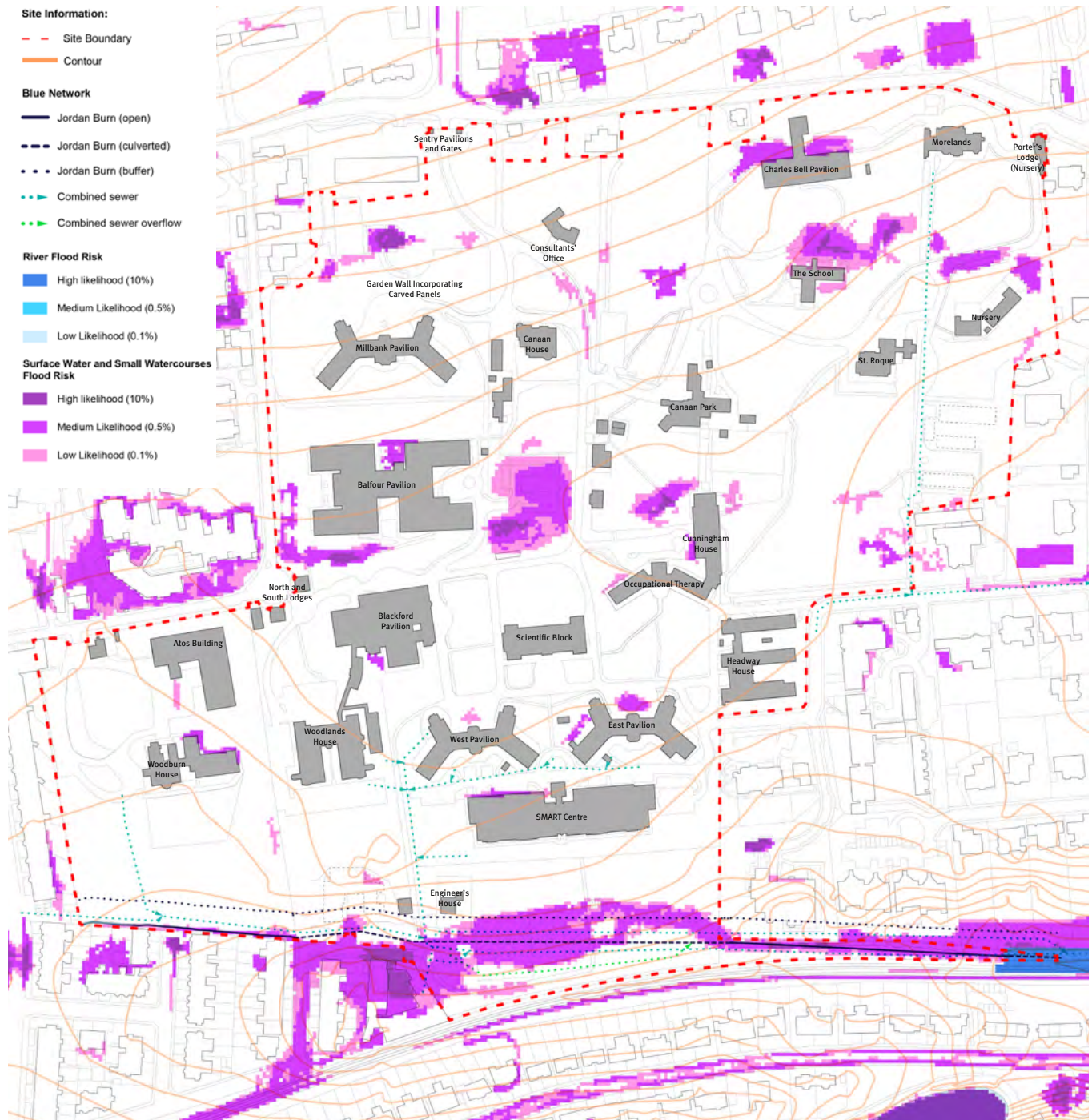
Blue Infrastructure

Flood risk is relatively low across most of the site. It is typically focused around areas of large hard-standing. However, there is significant flood risk located on the south of the site around the Jordan Burn. There is a particular flood risk in the surrounding areas around the site at either end of the culverted section.

Overland flows and sewers are at capacity in the area. Diverting flows into green spaces should be considered for both sides of the Jordan Burn, reducing restriction and enabling development. Development should enable the creation of 'blue corridors' that follow the natural flow paths and convey water into the Jordan Burn.

Daylighting the covered sections of the Jordan Burn would address flood risk and increase the drainage capacity in the area.

Flood risk mapping from [SEPA flood maps](#), used under [Open Government Licence v3.0](#)



access point will also be important for pedestrian access if a future train or tram stop is created on the south suburban line.

At present the public transport accessibility of most of the site is poor. The closest buses to the site are those that run alongside Kilgraston Road, Morningside Road and Cluny Gardens.

Strategic Travel Improvements

Development of the site requires the provision of several pedestrian and cycle routes through the site linking to Canaan Lane, Cluny Place, South Oswald Road, Grange Loan to the east of the site and at Whitehouse Loan, including the following:

- ATPR7: Active travel link and crossing: Cannan Lane to Grange Loan
- ATPR8: New Active Travel route and crossing: Oswald Road to Cluny Gardens/Charterhall Road junction
- ATPR9: New active travel infrastructure: Newbattle Terrace/Grange Loan
- ATPR10: Provide a mobility hub
- PT15: Contribute towards Public Transport Improvements: Morningside Road/ Cluny Gardens



Opening the gate between the sentry pavilions to pedestrians and cyclists would improve the experience from having to pass through the narrow side gate



Bus stop on Cluny Gardens south of the site



Some parts of the site segregate pedestrians with guard railing, forcing pedestrian diversions and creating a hostile environment



The South Suburban railway acts as a barrier to the south, but also allows for the possibility of a future nearby train or tram stop



Gated entryway adjacent to the Headway Huts



There is a high level of carriageway on the site, and some parts of the site lack footways entirely

2.7 COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Community Objectives

The AACT has prepared a Local Place Plan for the site, following consultation with the wider community. This was added to the [Council's register of Local Place Plans](#) in January 2026

The Local Place Plan emphasises the importance that the heritage, greenery and long-standing health role of the site have for the surrounding community.

This has informed the development of this Place Brief. In particular, it has informed Section 3, which outlines the vision for the site. The following page lists the spatial priorities set out by the Local Place Plan. Annotations have been included that highlight how different priorities have informed the Vision design principles set out on [pages 39 - 42](#).



Overarching Community Priorities, Astley Ainslie Local Place Plan (page 20)

Spatial priorities set out by the Local Place Plan include the following:

Natural and outdoor places, education, play, community gardening

- Protect trees, woodland and open spaces and preserve access to nature and green space
- Create space for play and fitness for all ages
- Open up the Jordan Burn to improve drainage and support nature corridors and habitats
- Create space for a community garden and preserve/enhance the orchard
- Consider views of the site from Blackford Hill

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Healthy (p40), Pleasant (p41), Sustainable (p42)

Paths and routes

- Prioritise access for pedestrians, disabled people and cyclists
- Maintain and enhance public access routes through the site
- Ensure paths for disabled access are paved

- Cycle routes should be clearly identified and separate from pedestrian paths
- Maintain vehicular access but limit through traffic

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Healthy (p40), Pleasant (p41), Connected (p43)

Homes

- Align housing with the site's health and wellbeing ethos and deliver social benefit
- Provide a mix of housing tenures, including social housing, housing for midmarket rent, sheltered housing for older people, supported housing for specific needs, intergenerational co-housing, and co-operative housing
- Limit development to the existing footprint of buildings and hardstanding
- Housing development should be car-free in principle
- Ensure the design and quantity of housing respects the conservation area, listed buildings, landscape character and key views

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Distinctive (p39), Healthy (p40), Connected (p43)

Healthcare and wellbeing

- Support a health corridor on site, including GP facilities and a community care hub

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Healthy (p40)

Community hub

Provide a community hub including:

- Flexible cafe and co-working space
- Public toilet facilities
- Community hire space

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Healthy (p40)

Enterprise

- Maintain the on-site nursery provision
- Support small business through access to the community hub
- Prevent major commercial development

These priorities have informed the following Design Principle sections: Healthy (p40)

3. VISION

3.1 VISION OUTLINE

The Astley Ainslie hospital is a site with a rich and layered heritage, and significant extents of woodland and green space that have been enjoyed by visitors to the hospital and the surrounding community. The woodland and green space are also an important space for wildlife.

The site has a strong heritage of supporting health and wellbeing, from the St. Roque chapel for plague victims, to the foundation of the convalescent hospital by David Ainslie's trustees, through to the current NHS site. Development should reflect this identity by creating a residential-led mixed-use area that has health and wellbeing at its heart.

The site should include a variety of homes. This should include affordable housing

and a variety of accommodation types for different needs, such as assisted living, sheltered accommodation and intergenerational co-housing. These should be combined with community, healthcare and local-scale commercial uses to create a neighbourhood that supports sociability, accessibility and local living.

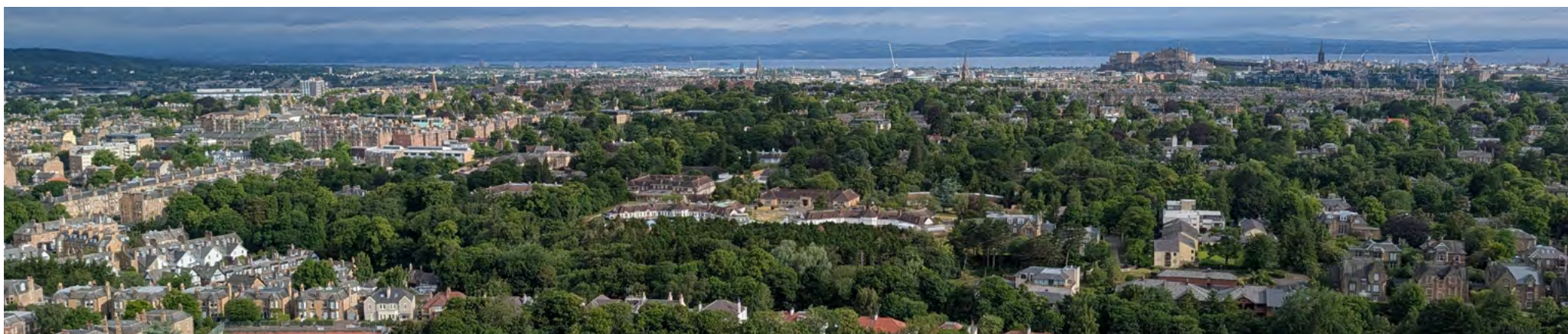
Development of the site should conserve and enhance the built and landscape heritage of the site. This should include the sustainable re-use of buildings that contribute to the character of the area. New buildings should be designed to reflect the distinctive built character of the site. They should respect the landscape character, the setting of historic buildings and views within and across the site.

A clear and accessible network of routes should support access across the site. Access for pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritised, and vehicular traffic limited.

The protection and public enjoyment of green spaces on the site should continue, including spaces for play and recreation and those for tranquillity and access to nature.

Woodland and trees should also be protected. The non-native conifer woodland to the south should be progressively replaced, while maintaining visual screening from Blackford Hill.

Options for daylighting the Jordan Burn should be fully explored to support sustainable drainage across the site and allow for the creation of a wooded wetland habitat.



3.2 VISION DIAGRAMS

Site Information:

- - Site Boundary
- Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

-  Social Focal Point
-  Garden Focal Point
-  Community Corridor
-  Health Corridor

Nature Network

-  Woodland Corridor
-  Wooded Wetland

Movement Network

-  Active Travel Route
-  Vehicle Route
-  Mobility Hub (indicative)

Overall Heritage (see p19 - 20)

-  High
-  Medium-High
-  Medium
-  Medium-Low
-  Low
-  Associated Setting / Curtilage (indicative)



Vision diagram - spatial strategy

Using the vision as a framework, the site is split into four zones:

Central Zone

The social and community heart of Astley Ainslie.

North-East Zone

Residential uses alongside potential community use centred around a community garden and growing space.

North-West Zone

More secluded residential sites.

Woodburn Hub

An NHS community health hub located around the retained 19th century villa.

Site Information:

- Site Boundary
- Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

- Residential-Led
- Community / Local Living-Led
- Healthcare-Led
- Mixed Use - Residential and/or Community / Local Living Use
- Residential or Healthcare Use

- Social Focal Point
- Garden Focal Point
- Eyes on the street
- Active frontage
- Primary frontage for community / local living use
- Communal Greenspace
- Woodland / Trees
- Private Greenspace
- Playspace (indicative)
- Community garden
- Community orchard
- Indicative setting / curtilage of heritage assets

Existing Buildings

- Refurbished building
- Buildings / elements of low heritage value

Movement Network

- Pedestrians
- Cyclists
- Vehicles
- Mobility Hub (indicative)

Key Internal Views:

- Blackford Hill
- Braid Hills
- The Pentlands



Vision diagram - land uses, movement and views

Central Zone

Site Information:

Site Boundary

Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

Residential-Led

Community / Local Living-Led

Healthcare-Led

Mixed Use - Residential and/or Community / Local Living Use

Residential or Healthcare Use

Social Focal Point

Garden Focal Point

Eyes on the street

Active frontage

Primary frontage for community / local living use

Communal Greenspace

Woodland / Trees

Private Greenspace

Playspace (indicative)

Community garden

Community orchard

Indicative setting / curtilage of heritage assets

Existing Buildings

Refurbished building

Buildings / elements of low heritage value

Movement Network

Pedestrians

Cyclists

Vehicles

Mobility Hub (indicative)

Key Internal Views:

Blackford Hill

Braid Hills

The Pentlands

Mobility hub should be located centrally in the site, close to entryway and social focal point

North & South Lodges should be retained and refurbished

Any development or extension to the west, east and/or south of the Blackford Pavilion should be designed to support the active travel links and retain landscape buffers to the West Pavilion / Scientific Block

Blackford Pavilion and Woodlands House should be explored for refurbishment with potential extension

A new pedestrian link could be created for access between the Woodburn Site and the SMART centre and social focal point

Mature woodland to the south provides amenity, ecosystem service and biodiversity value, and should be protected

Development of Boiler House site should provide 'eyes on the street' for the pedestrian link. The design should reflect the urban character of Cluny Place / Egypt Mews

The central zone should be focused on community and small commercial uses (e.g. community cafe/shop/hairdresser/nursery) in the Scientific Block and East/West Pavilions to support local living and create a communal heart to development, centred around a focal 'village green' public space

The Scientific Block could be extended north, subject to detailed assessment of heritage and landscape

Development should reinforce symmetry of central zone by reflecting character and scale of Blackford Pavilion & Woodland House

Pedestrian community corridor between social focal point and garden focal point

Development should support community corridor through active frontages and passive surveillance

Opportunities for biodiversity gain, which could be combined with landscape improvements such as green / brown roofs

Possible future development for residential if SMART centre no longer needed

A defined pathway could be created to southern woodland

Non-native conifer woodland should have phased thinning and replacement with native broadleaved woodland to maintain screening

The woodland pathway route should be retained and improved to support public access to nature

Possible future active travel link to railway or tram/train stop

Vehicular access should be limited to emergency vehicles and deliveries

Options for relocating the substation or otherwise incorporating it into development on the site should be explored

Options should be fully explored for daylighting the Jordan Burn and creating a wooded wetland

North-East

Site Information:

--- Site Boundary

— Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

Residential-Led

Community / Local Living-Led

Healthcare-Led

Mixed Use - Residential and/or
Community / Local Living Use

Residential or Healthcare Use

Social Focal Point

Garden Focal Point

Eyes on the street

Active frontage

Primary frontage for community
/ local living use

Communal Greenspace

Woodland / Trees

Private Greenspace

Playspace (indicative)

Community garden

Community orchard

Indicative setting / curtilage
of heritage assets

Existing Buildings

Refurbished building

Buildings / elements of low
heritage value

Movement Network

Pedestrians

Cyclists

Vehicles

Mobility Hub (indicative)

Key Internal Views:

Blackford Hill

Braid Hills

The Pentlands

Charles Bell subject to
further assessment -
either refurbished for
residential, or replaced
with development in
keeping with character
of wider Astley Ainslie
site.

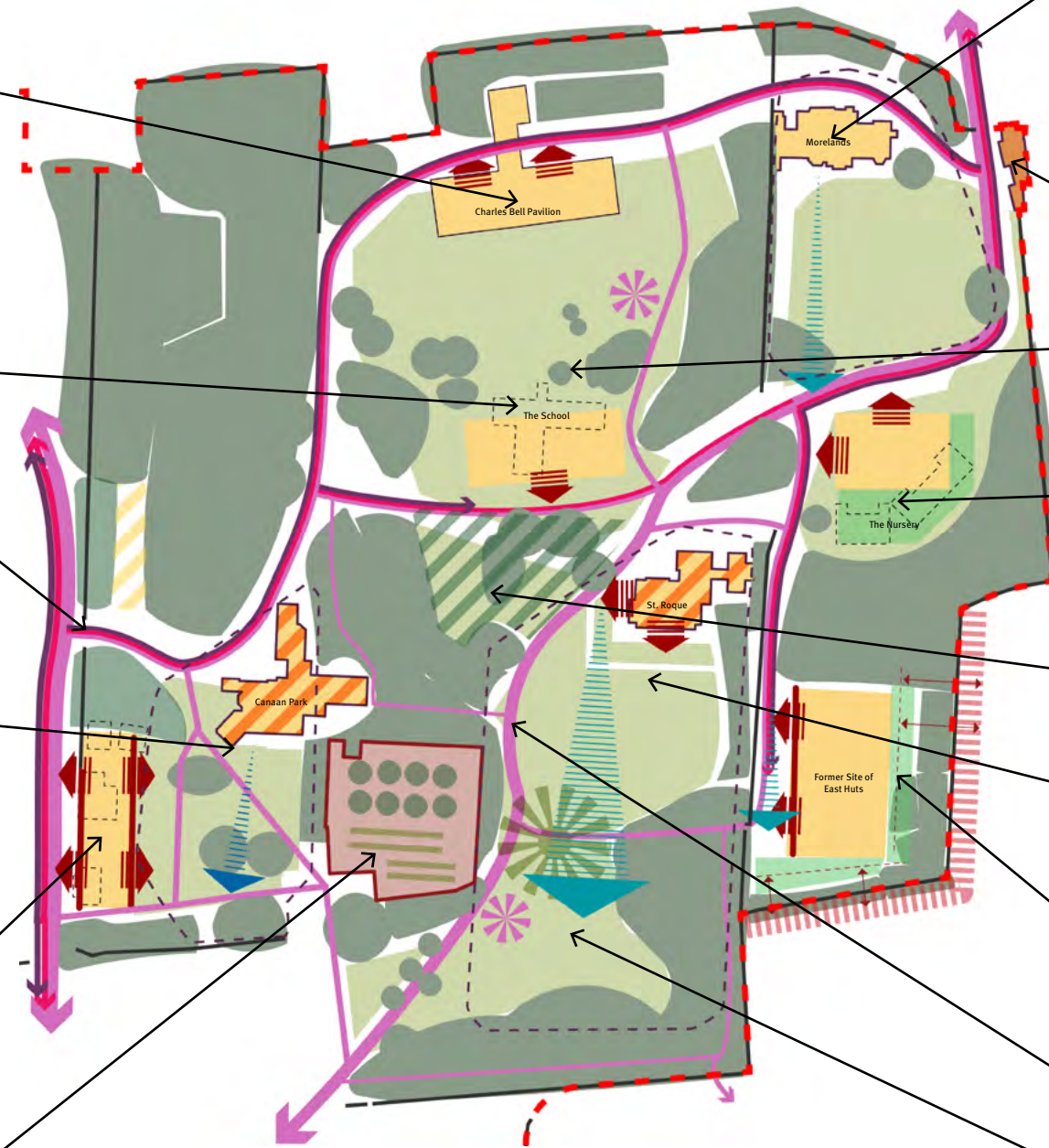
School has social
heritage that should
be recorded and
reinterpreted with
commentary provided
(e.g. by public art)

Option of a stop closure
near Canaan Park should
be explored, which
would limit through
traffic to pedestrians
and cyclists

Relationship between
Canaan Park and
grounds should be
maintained

Potential location
for colony/stacked
flats designed as
'continuation' of historic
wall, subservient to
Canaan Park, while
providing active frontage
to lane and grounds
south of Canaan Park

Walled garden could be
restored as a community
growing space



Relationship between
Morelands and grounds
should be maintained

Porter's Lodge has
good potential for
refurbishment as local
community/commercial
use (e.g. community
café/shop)

Public artwork around
the School should
be retained and
incorporated into any
future design

While the nursery
buildings are of low
value, the use is valued,
and re-provision should
be explored in the
Central Zone

Opportunity to extend
woodland south of
the school should be
explored

Relationship between
St. Roque and grounds
should be maintained

Development plot
should be kept sufficient
distance from site
boundary to protect
privacy of adjacent
properties

Friends path should
be retained as a key
pedestrian-only route
across the site

Potential community
garden location

North-West

Site Information:

- Site Boundary
- Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

- Residential-Led
- Community / Local Living-Led
- Healthcare-Led
- Mixed Use - Residential and/or Community / Local Living Use
- Residential or Healthcare Use

- Social Focal Point

- Garden Focal Point

- Eyes on the street

- Active frontage

- Primary frontage for community / local living use

- Communal Greenspace

- Woodland / Trees

- Private Greenspace

- Playspace (indicative)

- Community garden

- Community orchard

- Indicative setting / curtilage of heritage assets

Existing Buildings

- Refurbished building

- Buildings / elements of low heritage value

Movement Network

- Pedestrians

- Cyclists

- Vehicles

- Mobility Hub (indicative)

Key Internal Views:

- Blackford Hill

- Braid Hills

- The Pentlands

Gates should be opened to pedestrians and cyclists, creating a more welcoming entry into the site

Cat-C listed garden wall should be retained and integrated into design

Options to refurbish the Millbank Pavilion should be explored

Balfour Pavilion could be replaced with residential development. This should be limited to current footprint, but higher than a single-storey. The design should respond to the character of the wider Astley Ainslie site and consider the impact on the Millbank Site.

Sentry pavilions should be used for community / local living use (similar to Edinburgh police boxes e.g. coffee kiosk, pop-up shop, gallery space, storage for community gardening tools etc.)

The community orchard should be retained

The Consultant's Office should be refurbished as residential. Private garden space may be acceptable at rear, providing the design responds to the site character

Opportunity to explore development potential of hardstanding, subject to a detailed assessment of the surrounding trees

Potential location for colony/stacked flats designed as 'continuation' of historic wall, subservient to Canaan Park, while providing active frontage to lane and grounds south of Canaan Park

Balfour Pavilion car park could be developed for residential. The design should reflect the wider character of the site



Woodburn

Site Information:

--- Site Boundary

— Historic Walls

Land & Community Use

Residential-Led

Community / Local Living-Led

Healthcare-Led

Mixed Use - Residential and/or
Community / Local Living Use

Residential or Healthcare Use

Social Focal Point

Garden Focal Point

Eyes on the street

Active frontage

Primary frontage for community
/ local living use

Communal Greenspace

Woodland / Trees

Private Greenspace

Playspace (indicative)

Community garden

Community orchard

Indicative setting / curtilage
of heritage assets

Existing Buildings

Refurbished building

Buildings / elements of low
heritage value

Movement Network

Pedestrians

Cyclists

Vehicles

Mobility Hub (indicative)

Key Internal Views:

Blackford Hill

Braid Hills

The Pentlands

The ring of mature trees to the west of the Atos Building should be maintained

A Health and Community Care Hub should provide General Practitioner (GP) services alongside other healthcare and community services

The southern woodland should be retained and protected in recognition of its high biodiversity value and historic definition as the boundary of the grounds of Woodburn House

Woodland pathway route should be retained and improved to support visitors to the site and the wider public to access nature

Development on the site should not extend further north or east than the existing Atos building to protect the existing trees.

Opportunities to enhance the trees along the east of the site should be explored

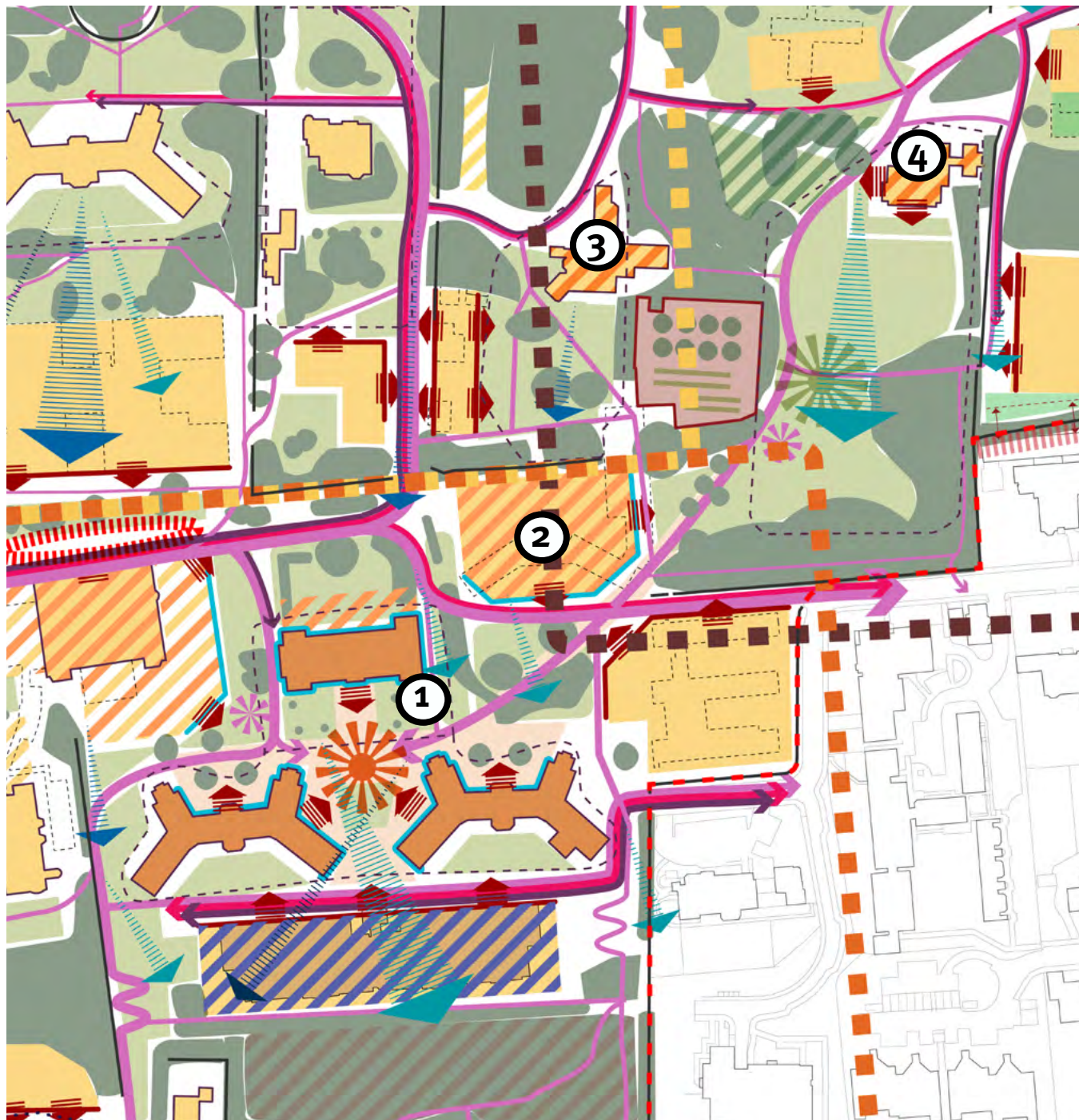
Development should respond appropriately to the design and setting of Woodburn House and the character of the wider context. The design should stay subordinate in scale, height and massing to the main villa.

A new pedestrian link could be created providing access between the Woodburn Site and the SMART centre and social focal point

The relationship between Woodburn House and the grounds to south should be maintained

Community Hub Options

1. **Scientific Block and/or East/West Pavilions** - Pros: Central focal point of site, supports creation of strong focal community space and preserves historic buildings. Cons: Further from community garden, refurbishment of historic buildings may add cost and complexity.
2. **Occupational Therapy Site** - Pros: New build would allow for custom-build to the needs of the community, directly between social focal point and garden focal point, supports creation of Community Corridor. Cons: Lacks identity of a historic building.
3. **Canaan Park** - Pros: Protects unlisted historic building, near to walled garden. Cons: Building in need of repair and likely to add significant cost and complexity, not visually linked with social or garden focal point.
4. **St. Roque** - Pros: Prominent historic building on site, strong relationship with garden to south. Cons: Further from social focal point, refurbishment of historic buildings may add cost and complexity.



3.3 DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Distinctive

Continue the identity of the Astley Ainslie site. Respond to the unique character and heritage of the buildings and landscape. The site character is defined by villas and pavilions

designed as objects within a landscape setting. Buildings have strong relationships with their southern aspect and use the sloping site to provide views across to Blackford Hill, the Braid Hills and the Pentlands. Design should be of the highest quality and materials, reflecting and enhancing these existing characteristics of the site. Flats should be designed as mansion blocks that reflect the character of the villas and pavilions on the site. Suburban and terraced housing typologies are unlikely to be appropriate across most of the site.

Preserve and enhance the historic fabric. Consideration must be made as to how historic elements on the site are included in development, and how these will be cared for and maintained in the future. This includes buildings and their setting, and other structures, including but not limited to, historic walls, wells, garden features and sculptures. Existing buildings should be assessed for retention, refurbishment, or partial reuse. All decisions regarding existing buildings should be mindful of the architectural and heritage value and their contribution to the Grange Conservation Area.

Incorporate, record and express the site's history. The history of the site extends beyond the current buildings, structures and landscape. The design and phasing of any development will need to respond to the archaeology of the site, including potential buried remains. The site of St Roque's Chapel and graveyard will need to be located as this should be preserved in place. All buildings should be recorded, especially where demolition is taking place. The reinterpretation of this recording exercise should be explored through both archaeological research and engagement with the NHS community and the wider public. This should be considered holistically across the site. This should be a combination of traditional information and signage and other methods, such as public art.

Enhance the visual impact of the site. Visual impact assessments and modelling will be needed to inform appropriate heights and massing. These should consider the impact on key views as well as the context and wider character of the site. The site occupies a prominent part of the foreground of views from Blackford Hill. The symmetrical layout and distinctive form of the buildings in the open area to the south provides a focal point. Any design in this area should enhance this. Much of the rest of the site presents a continuous treescape. In these areas development should be kept below this treeline, with only occasional protrusions in justified locations acceptable.



Healthy

An exemplar neighbourhood for health and wellbeing. Respect the long-standing health heritage of the site by designing a place that supports residents, neighbours and visitors

to live healthy lives. This should include designing healthy homes, supporting communal activities and combining homes with healthcare uses and communal infrastructure. It should also promote access to nature and heritage.

Healthy homes for varying needs. Development should provide a range of accommodation that supports people to lead as healthy, independent lives as possible and age in place. This should include affordable housing and a variety of accommodation types such as intergenerational co-housing, assisted living and sheltered accommodation.

Design for accessibility, sociability and a strong community.

Provide a range of supplementary uses on site that support people to easily access their day-to-day needs locally and meet and socialise with others. These uses should be developed through engagement with the prospective and neighbouring communities. Potential uses could include small local shops and cafés, co-working and arts spaces and studios, healthcare spaces, community gathering spaces and the relocation of the on-site nursery.

Support outdoor play and recreation for children, young people and adults. Provide a variety of good quality play spaces for children, including natural and incidental play. Provide outdoor recreational and gathering spaces for young people and adults. This provision should also include the long term management and maintenance of such facilities.

A safe and accessible neighbourhood. Create a safe and accessible environment for people of all ages, genders and abilities, at all times of day. Ensure that key routes and adjacent buildings are designed to provide passive surveillance. Develop a lighting strategy that supports public safety while avoiding adverse impact on the biodiversity of the area.



Pleasant

Protect the public enjoyment of views from and across the site. The summit and northern slopes of Blackford Hill and the Royal Observatory building are extensively in view from the site. The Braid Hills and Pentland Hills are also in view from some parts of the site. The massing of proposals should respond to and incorporate these key internal views.

The Braid Hills and Pentland Hills are also in view from some parts of the site. The massing of proposals should respond to and incorporate these key internal views.

Respect and enhance the historic landscape and setting. All development should take a landscape-led approach. Design should protect, restore and enhance structural/framework planting and features that contribute to the Non-Designated Gardens and Designed Landscape. Development should also avoid impact of the essential landscape setting for heritage buildings. All proposals should be supported by a robust landscape maintenance and management plan.

Continue the communal and biodiversity benefit of the landscape.

An open space strategy that prioritises communal green space is key to maintaining the landscape character and biodiversity benefit of the site. Public access to green space and nature should continue and be maintained for the benefit of all. There should be minimal loss of integrated landscapes and habitats. All design should include a clear strategy for public and private open space that responds to these considerations. Where private amenity space is considered, this should be in the form of balconies or roof terraces.

Avoid adverse impact to trees. The Astley Ainslie site constitutes a highly extensive and complete Victorian urban treescape. Trees on site should be protected for their arboricultural, biodiversity, heritage and amenity value. Where development is likely to impact existing trees, further assessment will be required, particularly where trees have been assessed as groups.

Community garden and growing space. Support the delivery of a community garden and the restoration of the walled garden into a community growing space.



Sustainable

Consider the environmental impact. Take a holistic approach to assessing potential environmental impacts. In line with the scale of the site, any subsequent masterplan will need to be screened to assess if an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

Enhance biodiversity. Provide positive effects for biodiversity on the site, alongside ways to minimise biodiversity loss. This should be considered from the outset. Features such as green/brown roofs should be explored in new development. Development of the site should support Edinburgh's Nature Network, including retaining woodland habitats and converting amenity grassland to flowering meadows to support pollinator pathways.

Supporting sustainable drainage solutions. Options for daylighting the Jordan Burn should be fully explored, with the approach agreed with the Council carried out prior to any development on the site. While some loss of trees may be required to enable this, this should be minimised by exploring the full range of potential methods and deculverting options, including the possible use of specialist methods and equipment. This part of the site should become a wooded wetland to support biodiversity. Any new development should be set back at least 15m from the top of the bank to the Burn. The rest of the site should incorporate the creation of 'blue corridors' that follow natural flow paths into the Jordan Burn.

Take a whole-life emissions approach. Take a sustainable approach to construction. Consider the embodied energy of existing buildings and explore retention, refurbishment, or partial reuse. For the replacement of buildings with a new building of a comparable size a whole-life carbon assessment will be required. Minimise the energy demand of all new buildings.



Connected

Provide safe and pleasant routes for walking, wheeling and cycling. Protect public walking and cycling routes through the site, linking Canaan Lane, Cluny Place, South Oswald Road,

Grange Loan and Newbattle Terrace. Improve active travel access to the site by opening gates to pedestrians and cyclists and creating more welcoming entry points. Provide clear, direct cycle routes that are separate from pedestrian paths.

Enhance access to public transport. Support direct and convenient walking routes to existing bus routes and enhance the safeguarded pedestrian access to the south-suburban railway and potential future passenger train or tram stops.

Support shared transport. Provide a mobility hub and car club spaces on site to enable lower levels of parking while promoting a range of mobility options to future residents. Limit car parking spaces to only blue badge and car club spaces.

A safe residential environment. Limit through vehicular traffic and keep vehicles to the edges of the site as far as possible



Adaptable

Maximise the lifespan of buildings and spaces.

Create buildings and spaces that are durable, easily maintained and can accommodate future alternative uses. In residential buildings

this should include considering changing household needs and supporting people to age in place.

A phased adaptable approach. Develop a phasing strategy that is able to respond to changing requirements and avoid dereliction of buildings. This should include a consideration of temporary meanwhile uses for buildings that would otherwise be empty, such as using them for arts and cultural purposes. A high priority should be placed on buildings that are currently either partially or completely empty, with an assessment of how these buildings may be brought back into active use

Resilient to a changing climate. Design buildings and spaces that respond to changing weather patterns, including high levels of rainfall and heatwaves. Include opportunities for sustainable drainage, passive cooling and water storage.