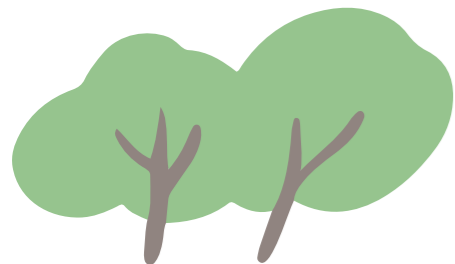
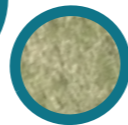




Re-Imagining Victoria Park Bowling Green

Concept Design Report
June 2024





Notice

This document and its contents have been prepared by AtkinsRéalis, and are intended solely as information for City of Edinburgh Council.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Report Title Re-Imagining Victoria Park

Document Type Concept Design Report

Job Number 5227404

Date June 2024

REVISION	DETAILS	ORIGINATED	CHECKED	REVIEWED	APPROVED	DATE
P01	Final Issue	LI	BF	UF	SW	25.06.24



Contents

01 INTRODUCTION	4
1.1. Project context	4
1.2. Our approach	4
1.3. Methodology	5
02 SITE ANALYSIS	6
1.1. Site context	6
2.1. Photographic study	8
2.2. Opportunities and Constraints - Park Wide	9
2.3. Opportunities and Constraints - Bowling green	10
03 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT	11
3.1. Our approach and Design Principles	11
3.2. Stakeholder engagement	12
3.3. Stakeholder survey	13
3.4. Stakeholder survey (continued)	14
3.5. Integrated Impact Assessment	15
3.6. Private allotments vs Community grow space	16
3.7. Zonal plan	17
3.8. Precedents	18
3.9. Precedents (continued)	19
3.10. Concept plan	20
3.11. Visualisation	21
04 GOING FORWARD	22
4.1. Considerations	22
4.2. Next steps	22



Introduction

1.1. Project context

The following proposals come under a wider initiative for transforming unused Bowling Greens in parks throughout the city. Previously under Edinburgh Leisure's stewardship, the bowling greens came to the Thriving Green Spaces Team due to under use. This offers an opportunity to breathe new life into these spaces and to ensure that they are maximising the benefits for both people and nature.

We aim to create spaces that welcome people of all ages and interests. Spaces that provide opportunities to play, learn, socialise and learn. With further opportunities for community events and educational programs.

1.2. Our approach

Community Collaboration: Community input is at the heart of everything we do. We aim to make spaces that reflect the diverse needs of Edinburgh's residents. We have done this through open talks and active participation including in-person consultation events and online workshops.

Landscape Design Excellence: We are using feedback and ideas from the public to inform our ideas from public consultations informing the plans. From lush greenery to modern facilities, every detail will be thoughtfully considered.

Transparent Process: We believe in transparency every step of the way. After the consultations and design phase, plans were advertised on My Engagement Hub for the public to provide feedback on. Next, the plans and their feedback went to Council Committee for thorough review. This ensures that the vision aligns with the community's best interests.



Fig. 1 | Bowling Greens icon | ©City of Edinburgh Council

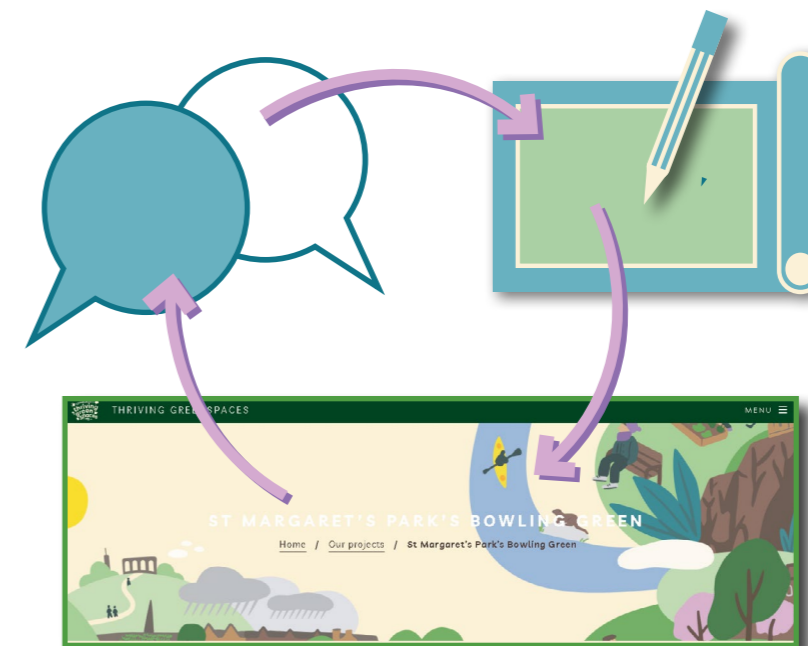


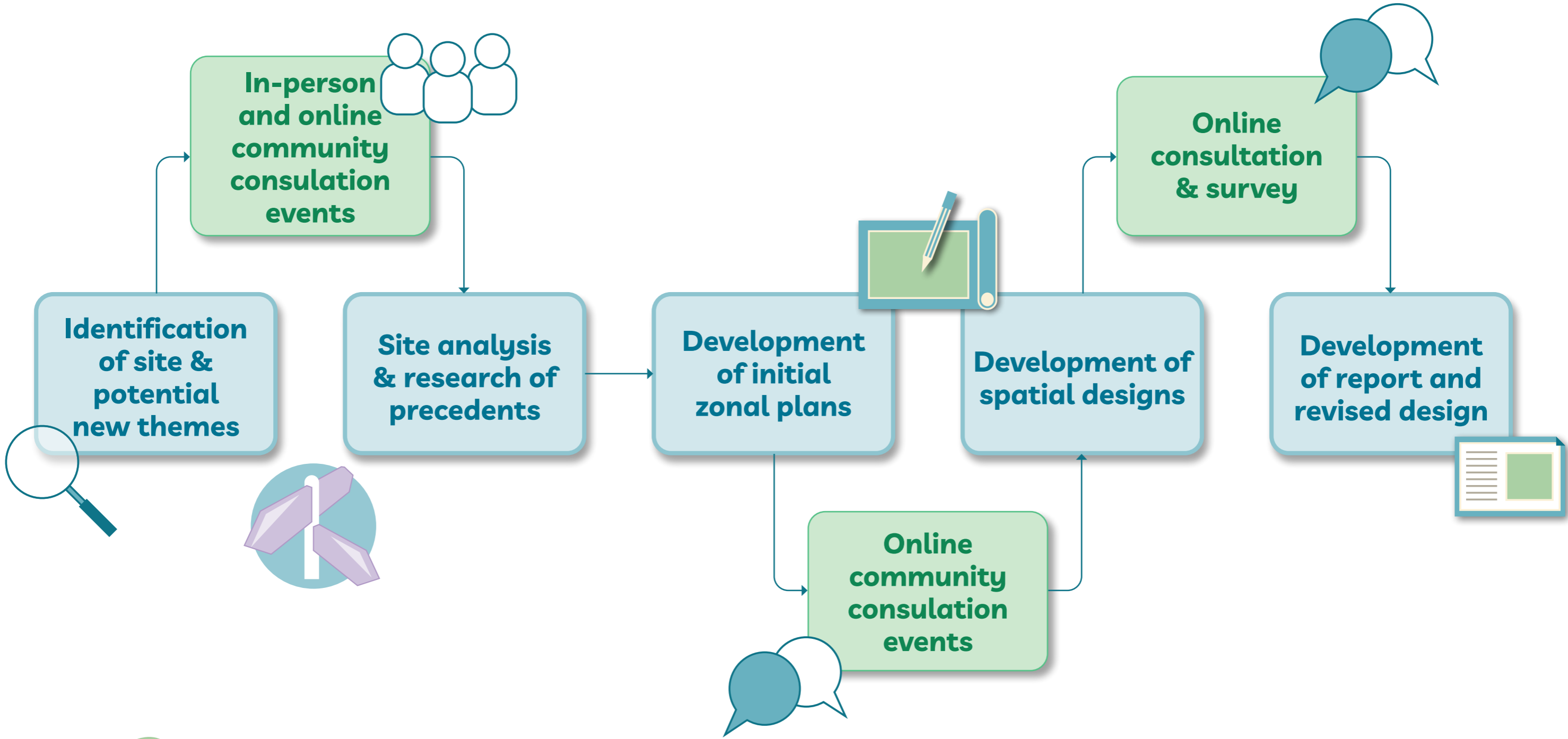
Fig. 2 | Collaborative approach design process



Methodology

1.3. Methodology

The below diagram explains the journey we have been on with regards to developing the design for the Victoria Park bowling greens.



Site Analysis

1.1. Site context

Victoria Park is to the north of Edinburgh city centre and is less than 1km from Newhaven Harbour and is at the heart of the Victoria Park Conservation Area. It is well connected with existing active travel routes, including the Hawthornvale Path (to the north) and National Cycle Route 75 (to the south), which provide onward connections to the centre of Edinburgh and the Water of Leith. These active travel routes are also within areas that have been classified as Local Biodiversity Sites.

There are also bus services which stop along Newhaven Road.

This part of Edinburgh is well served for allotments - with over 6 hectares of allotment space within a 500m radius of the site - including a site directly next door, which was formerly a bowling green. The area is also host to 2 separate bowling clubs within a 250m radius of the site.

There is a primary and a secondary school to the north of Victoria Park, as well as a nursery for infants, and another school to the west. Sports facilities are provided within the park - including hard surfaced basketball and tennis courts, as well as an all-weather football pitch. 2 separate play areas are also present within the park - with the play area directly opposite the site designed for younger children.



Fig. 3 | Contextual analysis of Victoria Park



Site Analysis

1. History

Victoria Park was established in the early 1900s and was bestowed to the Council in 1920. Prior to this, the land was part of the Bonnington Park estate - with Bonnington Park House having been constructed in 1789. Bonnington Park House remains in place today and is host to a pre-school nursery. During the later years of the Industrial Revolution, the area was split by the introduction of the South Leith Caledonian rail link, which opened in 1903. However, following a decline in industrial activity in Edinburgh, and in favour towards automotive transportation, the rail line was closed in the 1960s and eventually removed in 1983. This drastically changed the park and it was subsequently remodelled with new footpaths and features.

Original features from the inception of the park include the bowling greens, the water fountain and the statue of King Edward VII, sculpted by John Stevenson Rhind.



Fig. 6 | Map from the late 19th Century showing Bonnington Park House and Grounds



Fig. 4 | Edward VII by J.S. Rhind



Fig. 5 | Postcards of Victoria Park from the early 20th Century

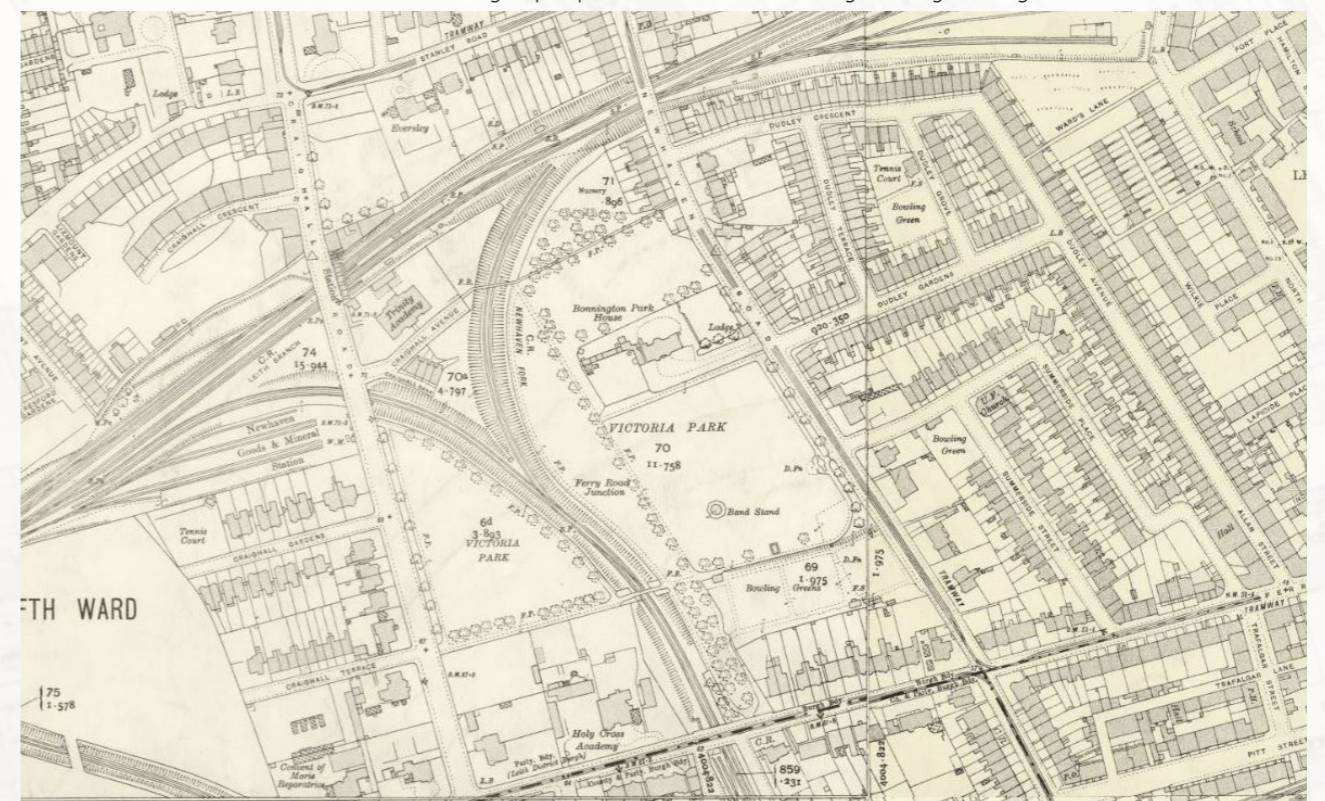


Fig. 7 | Map from the early 20th Century showing Victoria Park, split by the railway junction



Site Analysis

2.1. Photographic study

The bowling green site is open in character, with a cast iron fence surrounding its perimeter. It is overlooked by residential properties to the east along Newhaven Road and is bordered by residential gardens to the south. To the west of the bowling greens is an existing allotment. Mature trees are on the peripheries of the area - mostly to the north, within Victoria Park.

There is a main entrance to the park to the north-east of the greens which suffers from localised flooding during heavy rain events (Images 6 & 7). This is in-part exacerbated by the steep level change between the footpath and the greens. There is also a historic water fountain in this location, however it is only decorative and does not dispense any water at this point in time.



Fig. 8 | Photographic analysis with location plan of photograph locations and view direction.



Site Analysis

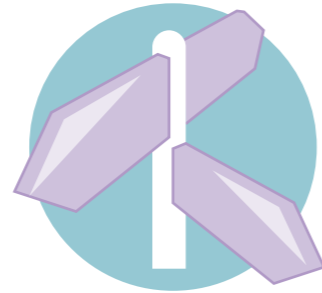
2.2. Opportunities and Constraints - Park Wide



Land use:
Many uses of the space have been identified through consultation and this report contains suggestions for balancing these activities with growing areas to provide a valuable, land efficient asset for the local community.

Access and circulation:

The bowling greens can link into the existing formal paths in Victoria Park to the north of the site boundary and provide a new sensory entrance to the park.



Flood and water management:

Flood issues have been highlighted in extreme conditions around the old water fountain and more frequent, smaller patches within the bowling green boundary. Future designs should seek to minimise surface runoff and promote biodiverse, sustainable drainage solutions.

Vegetation:

The design for the bowling green can take inspiration from the tree lined avenues within the wider park



Key

- Project boundary
- Victoria Park boundary
- Cycle network (existing)
- Park entrance
- Existing path network
- Formal play and sports areas
- Flood areas with potential to introduce sustainable drainage systems with biodiverse planting and natural play



Fig. 9 | Wider park opportunities and constraints plan



Site Analysis

2.3. Opportunities and Constraints - Bowling green

The former bowling green site provides an opportunity to introduce a range of spatial typologies and features that will be unique within Victoria Park. The changes made here could also promote additional benefits beyond its boundary, across the park and wider area.

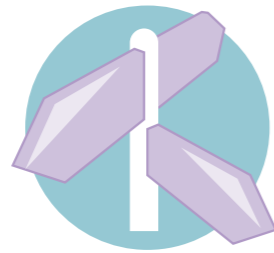


Land use:

We propose that the space is split diagonally to provide 50% dedicated to a Community Grow Space, and the other 50% to become a multi-functional zone, providing a space for community cohesion, natural play, relaxation, and socialising. The clubhouse should also be retained and renovated into a new cafe with toilets.

Access and circulation:

New connections through the space should provide greater levels of access into Victoria Park from the south-east corner and strengthen east to west connections.



Flood and water management:

The area to the north of the space that is prone to flooding should be addressed through the inclusion of a swale feature. This would provide a sustainable way of managing flood water, but also an opportunity for natural play and additional biodiversity.

Vegetation:

The existing trees within the site should be retained and enhanced through the addition of further tree, shrub and herbaceous planting. Plants should be selected on their biodiversity credentials and ability to cope with a range of climatic conditions. Sensory planting should also be included to promote inclusivity.

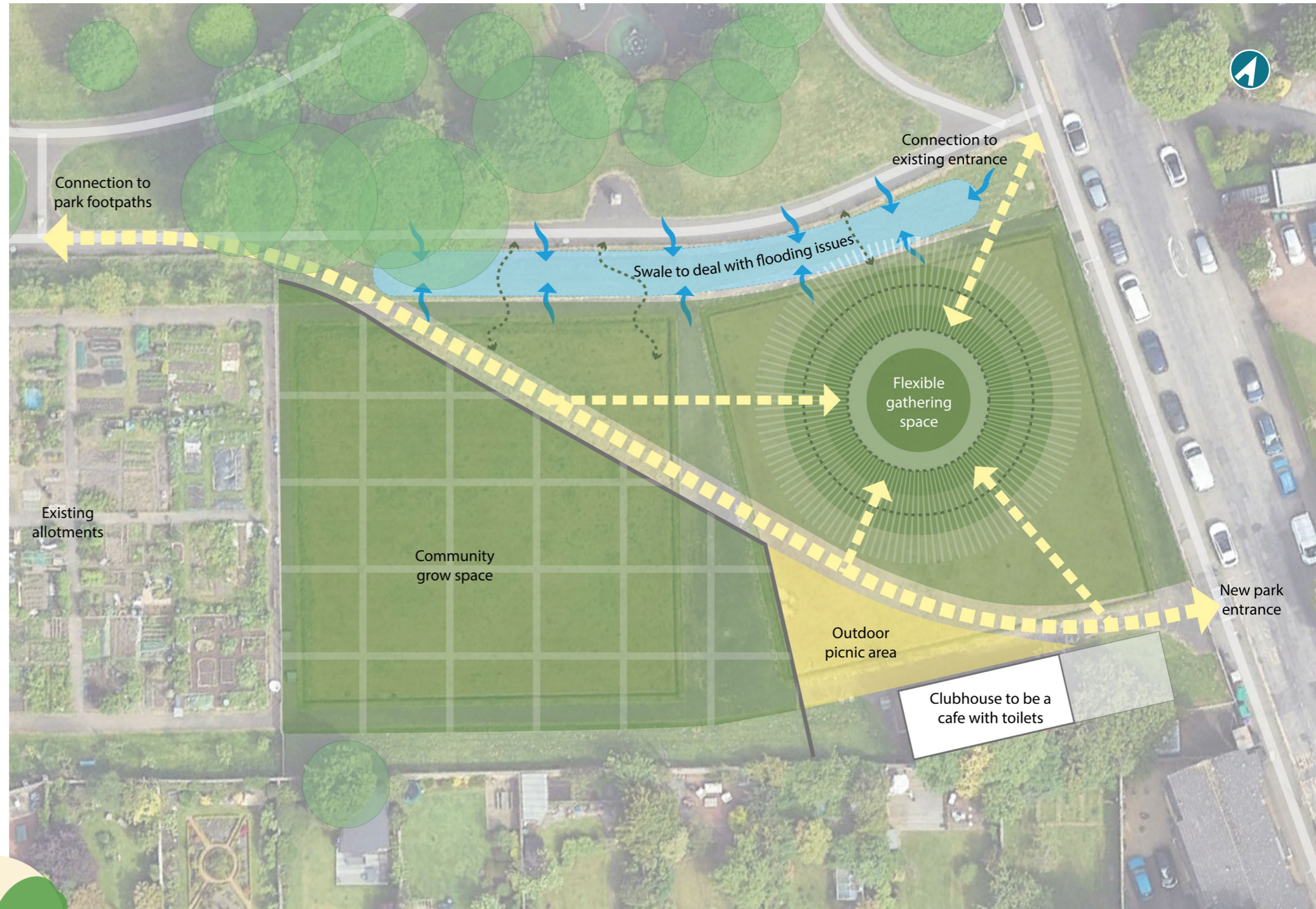


Fig. 10 | Bowling green opportunities and constraints plan



Design Development

3.1. Our approach and Design Principles

Our overarching design principles are split into 3 key themes - Sustainability, Inclusivity and 'Room to Grow'. These themes are summarised as follows:

Sustainability:

- **Environmental Considerations:** Incorporate sustainable landscaping practices such as native plantings, rainwater harvesting systems, using reclaimed materials, and providing composting areas to minimise environmental impact and promote biodiversity.
- **Durability:** Select durable materials for infrastructure such as raised beds, pathways, and seating areas to ensure longevity and resilience to wear and tear.
- **Low Maintenance:** Design the garden layout with low-maintenance features such as drip irrigation systems, self-sustaining plant communities, and easy-to-maintain structures to minimise ongoing upkeep requirements, and to avoid creating additional workloads for council maintenance staff.
- **Funding Strategies:** Integrate aspects which lend themselves to socioeconomic models for community gardening. This may be integrating funding strategies into the design, incorporating space for community fundraisers, storage areas, etc.

Inclusivity:

- **Accessible Design:** Ensure that the garden layout accommodates individuals of all abilities by incorporating features such as wide pathways for wheelchair access, raised beds at varying heights, and seating areas with backs and pads for comfort and support.
- **Universal Design:** Implement universal design principles throughout the garden to create a welcoming and inclusive space for diverse community members, including those with mobility challenges, sensory sensitivities, or other special needs.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster inclusivity through community engagement initiatives, such as areas for hosting workshops, events, and educational programs that cater to a wide range of interests and backgrounds.

'Room to Grow':

- **Educational Opportunities:** Designate areas within the garden for educational activities such as workshops, classes, and demonstrations to promote learning, upskilling, and knowledge sharing among community members.
- **Flexible Spaces:** Create flexible spaces that can adapt to changing needs and preferences over time, allowing for experimentation, innovation, and continuous improvement within the garden environment.
- **Encourage Innovation:** Provide opportunities for community members to contribute their ideas, expertise, and resources to the garden project, fostering a culture of collaboration, creativity, and empowerment.



Fig. 11 | Design Principles



Design Development

3.2. Stakeholder engagement

It has been of upmost importance during this project to engage with the local community to determine what people would like to see happen in this space. As such, there have been numerous in-person and online consultation events. There has also been a survey posted online to collate people's thoughts on the draft proposals that we have designed. The list of key events are listed below:

- **October 2023:** Initial online consultation, with 16 attendees
- **February 2024:** An in-person workshop, with around 60 attendees, and three council officers
- **12th March 2024:** Online consultation call with stakeholders
- **15th April 2024:** Online consultation call with stakeholders
- **24th April 2024:** Online consultation survey opened.
- **8th June 2024:** Online consultation period survey closed.
- Tailored school workshop with Trinity Academy's Enhanced Support Provision
- Outreach to surrounding care homes and medical facilities

During the initial consultation events that were held in March we asked the community to rate a series of features that we believed would be suitable for the space. The results of this consultation was then summarised into the adjacent diagram - reflecting which percentage of people responded positively to each feature. These results helped us to develop our draft design proposals.



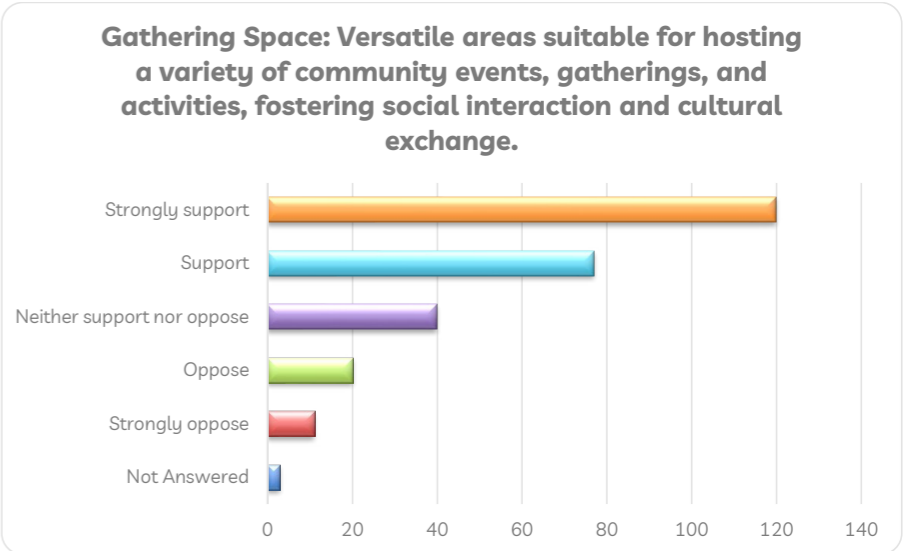
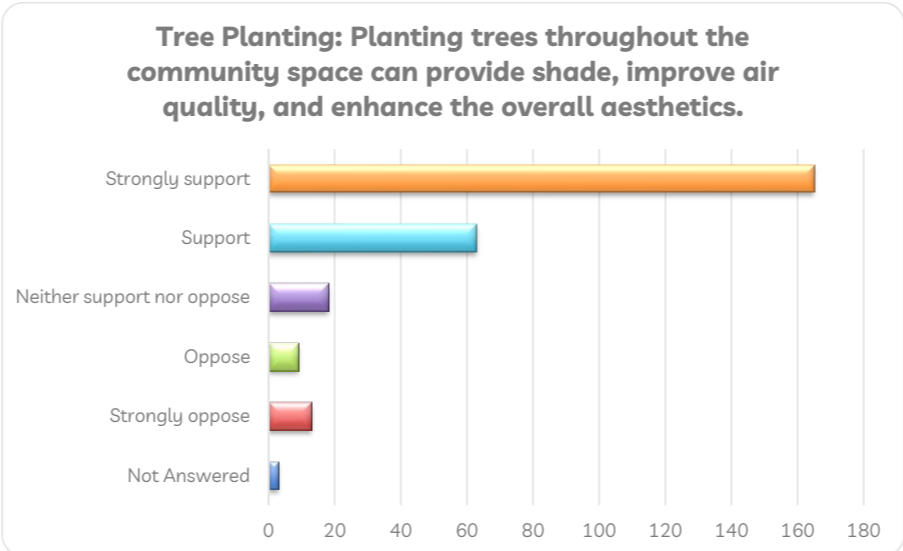
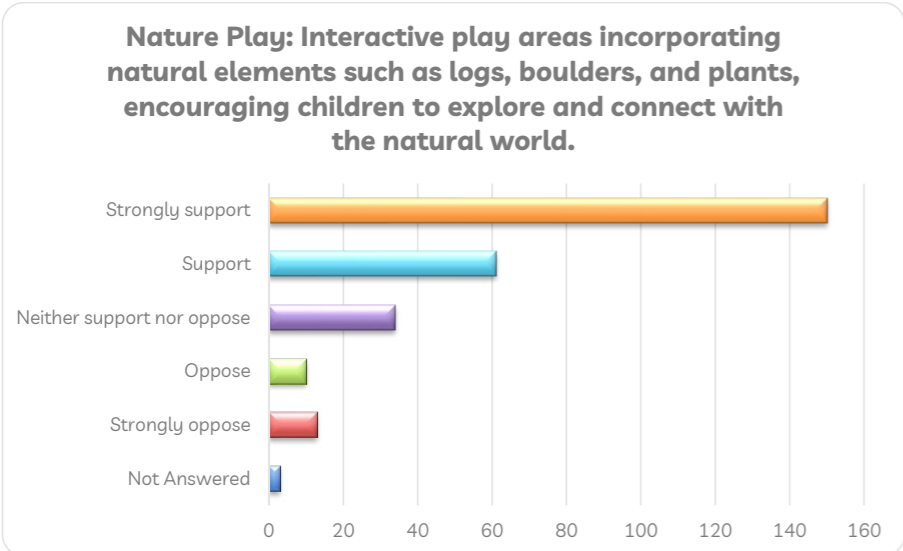
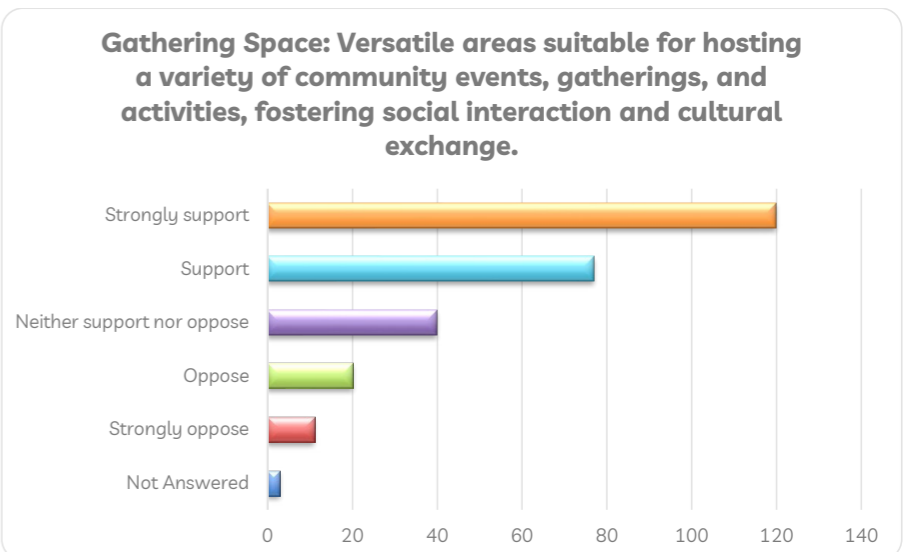
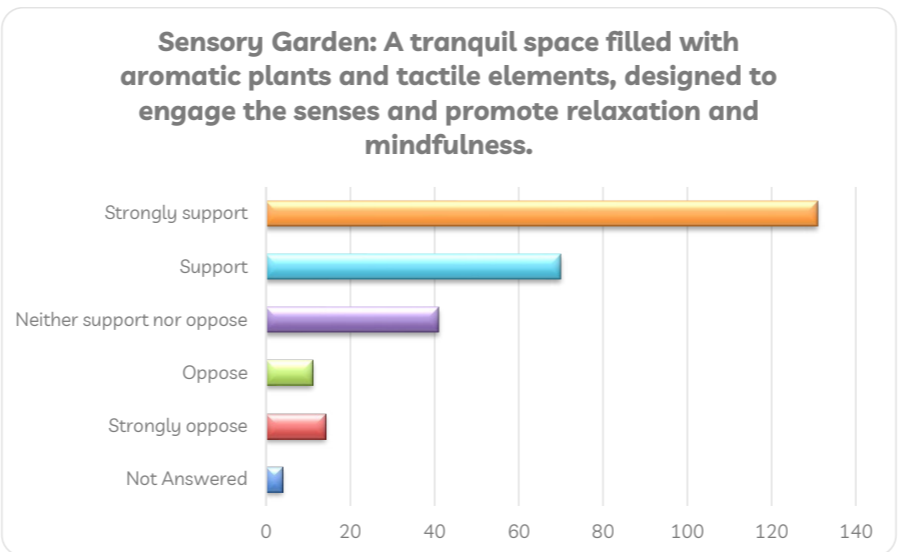
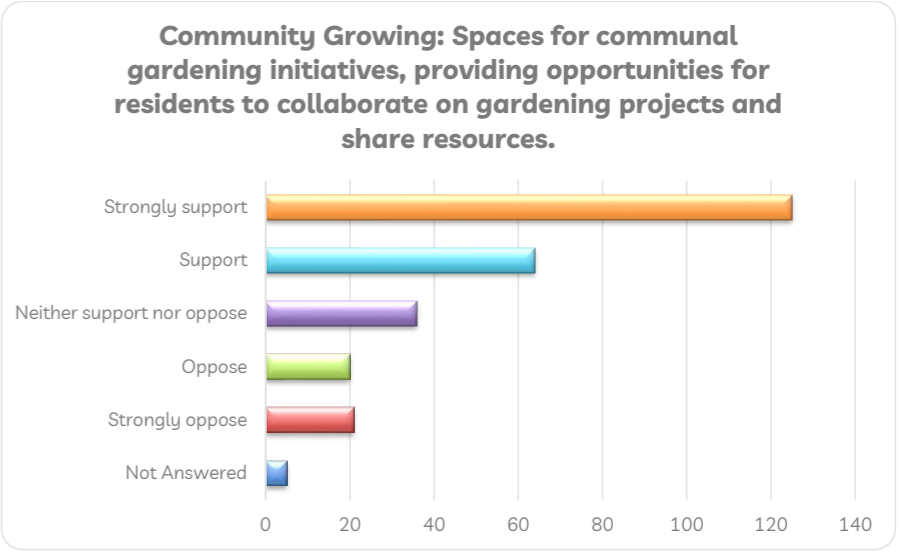
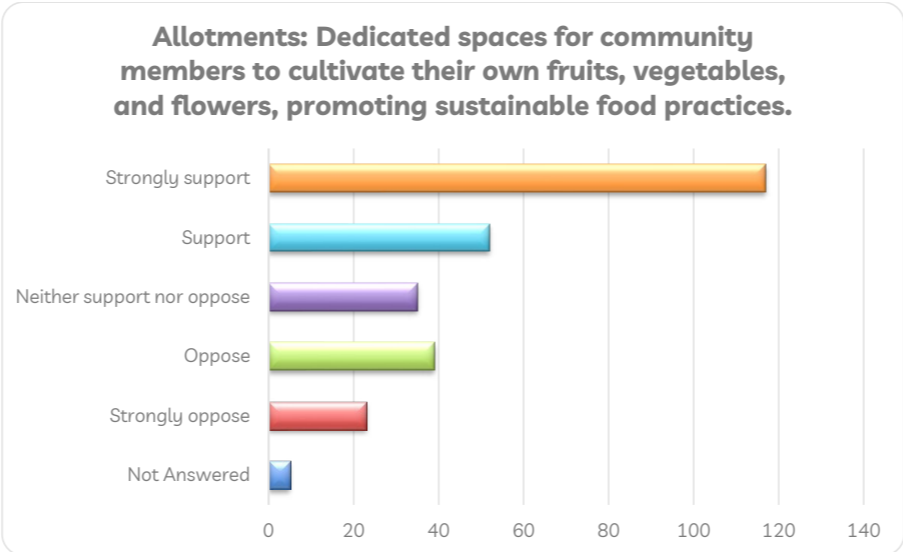
Fig. 12 | Positive responses from the community



Design Development

3.3. Stakeholder survey

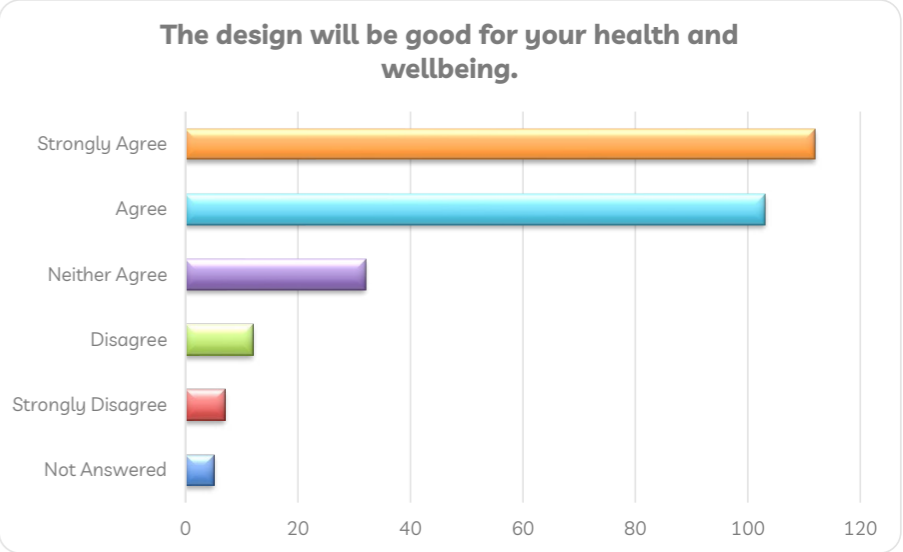
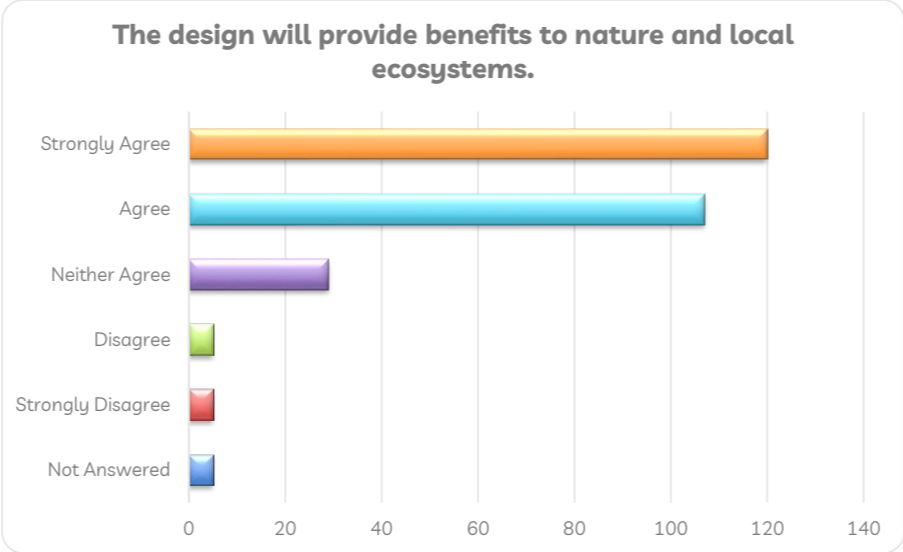
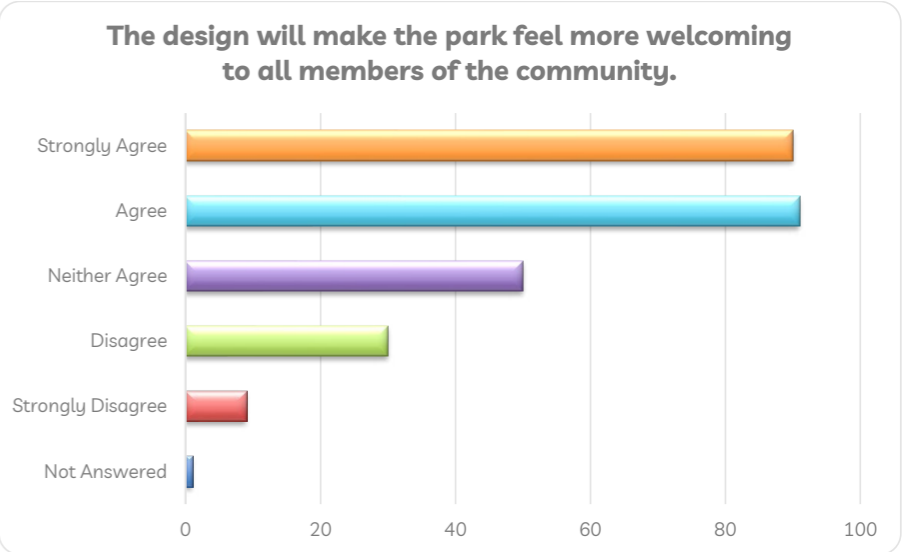
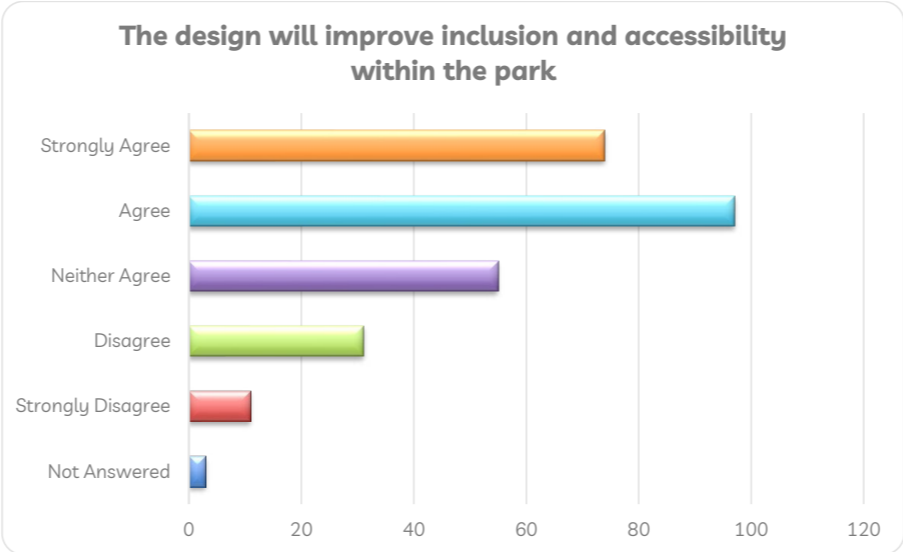
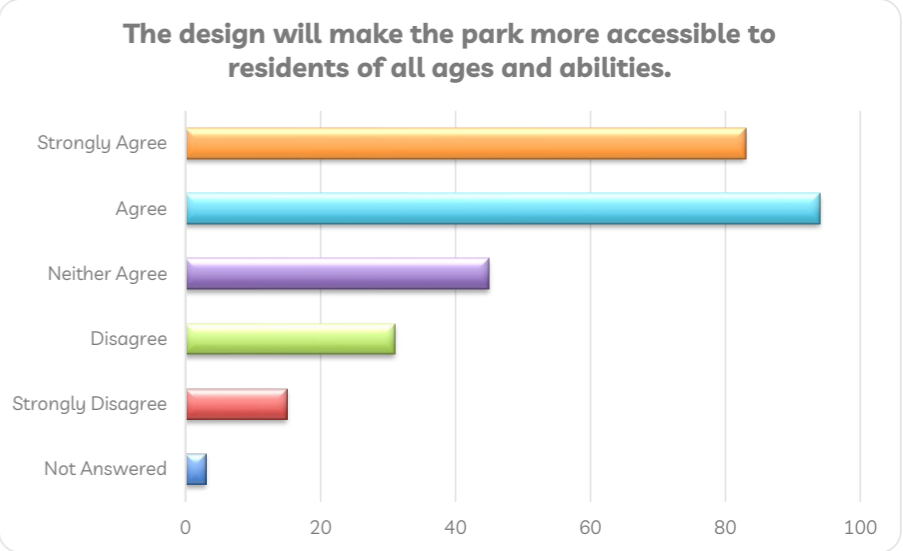
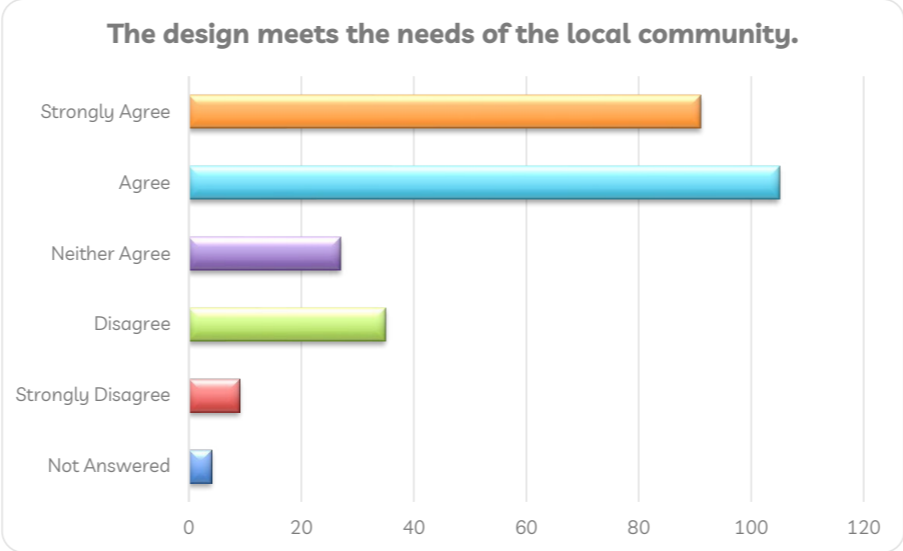
As part of the consultation period the City of Edinburgh Council hosted a survey on the Consultation Hub between the 24th of April until the 8th of June 2024. In total there were 271 responses to the survey. The first part of the survey asked how strongly people supported proposed design features. The answers to which are shown on this page.



Design Development

3.4. Stakeholder survey (continued)

The second part of the survey asked people to judge the design as to how well it met certain criteria. People were therefore asked how much they agreed with a selection of statements. The answers to which are shown on this page.



Design Development

3.5. Integrated Impact Assessment

As part of this project, the City of Edinburgh have produced an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). Within the IIA, this project has been assessed on its ability to meet criteria defined by governmental legislation, such as the Fairer Scotland Duty, as well as local action plans and best practice guidance.

The IIA also assessed the projects impact on the local population and the environment - the outcomes of which are detailed on this page.

For full details, please refer to the IIA document.

Economic

Positive Impacts:

- **Low-Income Families:** Community growing initiatives can help reduce food poverty by providing access to fresh produce, potentially lowering grocery costs.
- **Local Businesses:** Enhanced park spaces attract more visitors, increasing foot traffic and potential customers for local businesses, boosting local economic activity.
- **Job Seekers and Youth:** Improved local employment opportunities, including jobs related to park maintenance and activities, help young people into positive destinations and support people in accessing both paid and unpaid work. Improved facilities and programs can also enhance literacy and numeracy skills.
- **Residents Receiving Benefits:** Maximizing income and reducing income inequality through community support initiatives and accessible services.

Negative Impacts:

- None applicable to this site.

Equality, Health and Wellbeing and Human Rights

Positive Impacts:

- **Children and Youth:** Enhanced recreational spaces with sensory gardens and outdoor education areas can significantly benefit children and youth, promoting social integration, well-being, and educational opportunities.
- **Elderly and Dependents (65+):** Inclusive recreational spaces with social seating, fitness areas, and accessible paths could improve the quality of life for older residents, offering socialization, physical activity, and community engagement.
- **Low-Income and Deprived Communities:** Enhanced recreational spaces in deprived areas can provide free or low-cost activities, educational programs, and community events, contributing to social inclusion.
- **Vulnerable Groups (e.g., Unemployed, Homeless, Carers):** Community gardening and welcoming spaces could support vulnerable groups by providing food security, social support, stability, and community connection.
- **Eliminate Discrimination and Advance Equality:** Improved safety with increased lighting and entrances, along with enhanced access and quality of services.
- **Foster Good Relations and Reduce Status Differences:** Community spaces for events and sensory gardens enhance cohesion, while inclusive community gardens promote skill development and food security.
- **Empowerment and Participation:** Engagement in design processes, ownership of space, and activities foster participation, inclusion, dignity, control, and community resilience.
- **Safety and Healthier Lifestyles:** Improved lighting, CCTV, open access reduce crime; greenspaces offer physical activity, nutrition (via community gardens), well-being, and life skills development.

Negative Impacts:

- **Vulnerable to Poverty (e.g., Unemployed, Benefit Recipients):** Allotment costs may exclude vulnerable groups.

Environment and Sustainability

Positive Impacts:

- **General Population:** Addressing the climate crisis through fuel efficiency, local renewable energy, and low-carbon materials reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Enhanced biodiversity and green infrastructure improve air quality, mitigate heat, and absorb carbon dioxide. Local food production reduces carbon footprints from transportation.
- **Urban Residents:** Adapting to climate change impacts with Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), resilient planting, and greening reduces flood risks, manages surface water, and mitigates urban heat island effects.
- **Local Wildlife:** Protecting and enhancing biodiversity through reduced mowing, tree planting, resilient species selection, and solar lighting considerations promotes habitat preservation.
- **Community and Public Health:** Improved green spaces and public safety measures (better lighting, escape routes, and fencing) enhance the physical environment and reduce pollution (air, water, soil, noise).
- **Local Economy and Resource Efficiency:** Promoting material reuse, procuring recycled goods, selecting local products, and using durable, low-maintenance materials support the circular economy, minimize transport emissions, and reduce waste.
- **Active Travel:** Improved cycle routes in parks encourage sustainable transport and reduce the need for car travel, promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

Negative Impacts:

- **Local Wildlife:** Additional lighting, even if solar-powered, could potentially disrupt wildlife habitats and behaviours. Careful planning and implementation are needed to balance lighting needs with wildlife protection.



Design Development

3.6. Private allotments vs Community grow space

As outlined in the 'Site Analysis' chapter of this report, this part of Edinburgh is well served for private allotments - with over 6 hectares of allotment space within a 500m radius of the site - including the site directly next door, which was formerly a bowling green.

Despite this, the option for having more allotments in Victoria Park was well supported by the local community. However, the idea of having a Community Grow Space was also very popular. Therefore, a decision had to be made on which model to go with for this area.

The bullet points below summarise the pros and cons for each model:

Private allotment pros:

- Provides growing space for residents of Edinburgh
- Reduces the waiting list for allotments
- Less maintenance liability for the council
- Guaranteed number of users
- In keeping with character of the adjacent allotment.

Private allotment cons:

- Allocation of plots is for people at the top of the city's waiting list, not to people immediately local to Victoria Park
- Costs may exclude vulnerable people (as outlined in the Integrated Impact Assessment)
- Only provides growing space for a max of 16 people
- Loss of 'public' space within Victoria Park
- Aesthetic appeal of allotments and their maintenance regime is not guaranteed.

Community Grow Space pros:

- Provides growing space for residents of Edinburgh
- More inclusive for a higher number of people
- Establishes links with community groups, schools etc.
- Provides learning opportunities for all ages and abilities
- Potential to be utilised for mental health treatment
- If this organisational model does not work out then it can be easily reallocated as private allotments or something else.

Community Grow Space cons:

- Ultimate maintenance liability lies with the council - dependent on the organisation model
- No guarantee for number of active users

Based on the analysis and community feedback, it has been decided that having the space as a Community Grow Space is the preferred option. Therefore, the concept design shown in this report has been designed with this in mind.

Community grow spaces have proved to be successful in other locations, such as the Sow And Grow Everywhere (SAGE) scheme in Glasgow (image right). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that with the right organisation structure, this area could be equally successful.



Fig. 13 | Sow And Grow Everywhere (SAGE) scheme in Glasgow



Design Development

3.7. Zonal plan

Informed by our analysis and the feedback from the community, we produced the adjacent zonal diagram to define the basic geometry and uses for the space.

The design provides 50% of the space to be dedicated to a community grow space. The other 50% is dedicated to a sensory trails, a flexible gathering space and a renovated clubhouse building, which will be used as a cafe, with adjacent public toilets. There is also a swale to the north to mitigate localised flooding issues integrated with potential for natural play features.

Within the community grow space there is also an opportunity to have an orchard and nuttery, which will not only provide extra food growing opportunities but will also soften the boundary fence that we recommend should be installed.

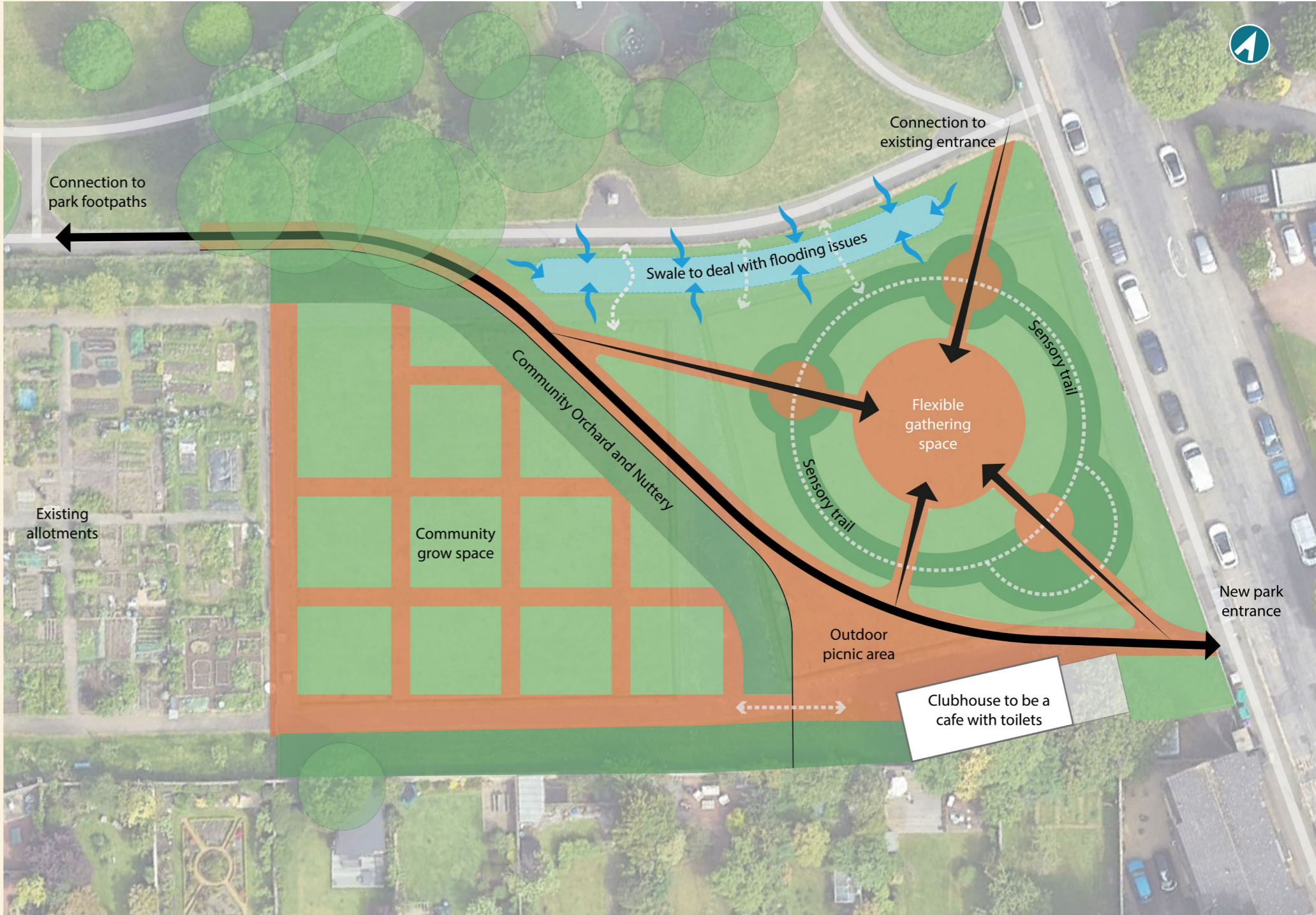
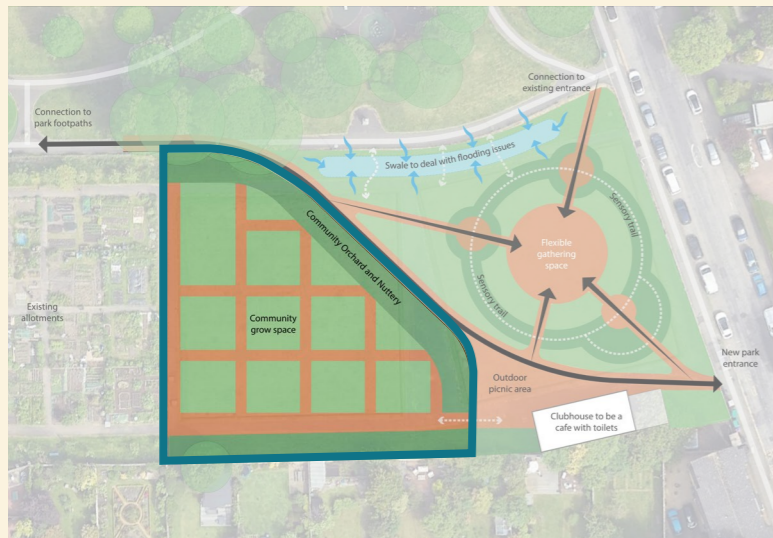


Fig. 14 | Zonal Plan



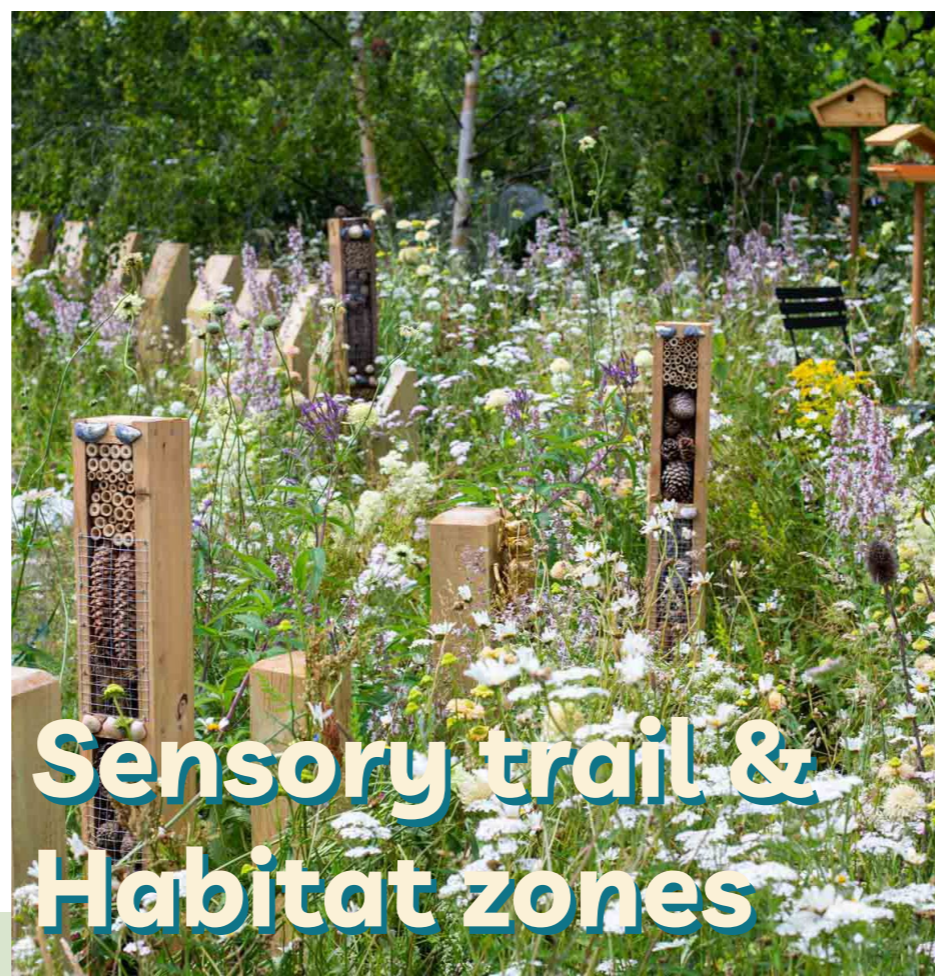
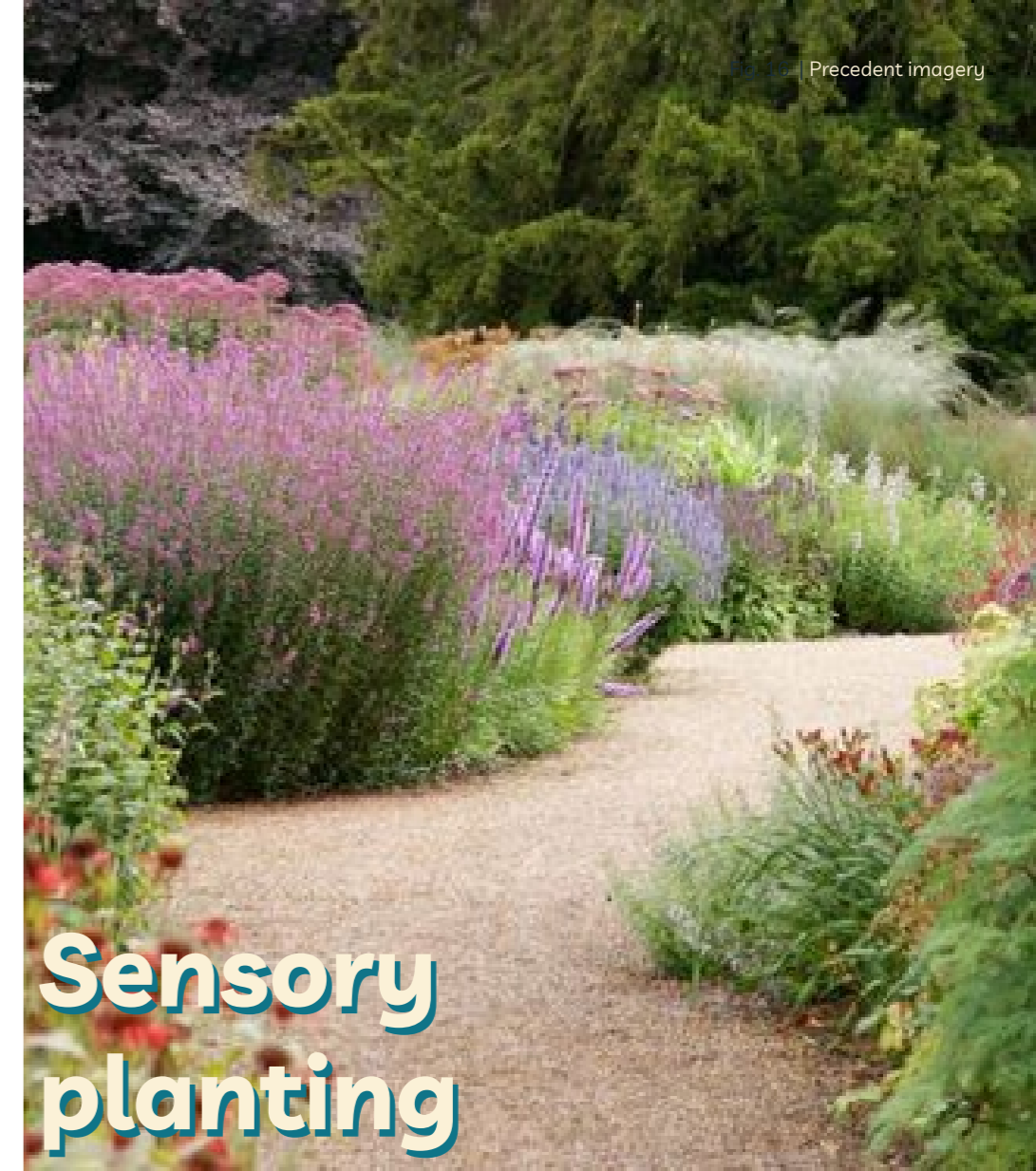
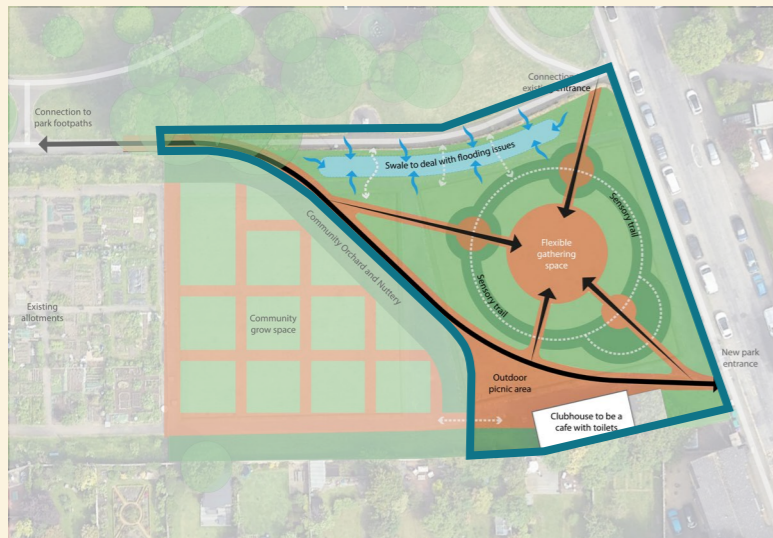
Design Development

3.8. Precedents



Design Development

3.9. Precedents (continued)



Design Development

3.10. Concept plan

The concept design provides an exciting vision for this corner of Victoria Park and creates a new destination for people to meet, relax, play and learn. The overall theme of community cohesion is balance between the growing area and the flexible range of spaces to the east. The new cafe and toilets will also bring much needed facilities to the park and create a new destination in the area.

Key

1. Existing allotments
2. Community Grow Space
3. Fence to protect growing area
4. Existing clubhouse - to be converted to a cafe
5. Public toilets
6. Picnic area
7. Swale with stepping stones and natural play
8. Sensory trail with biodiverse planting
9. Flexible gathering space with seating
10. New entrance onto Newhaven Road
11. Community orchard and nuttury
12. Storage sheds for grow space
13. Polytunnel

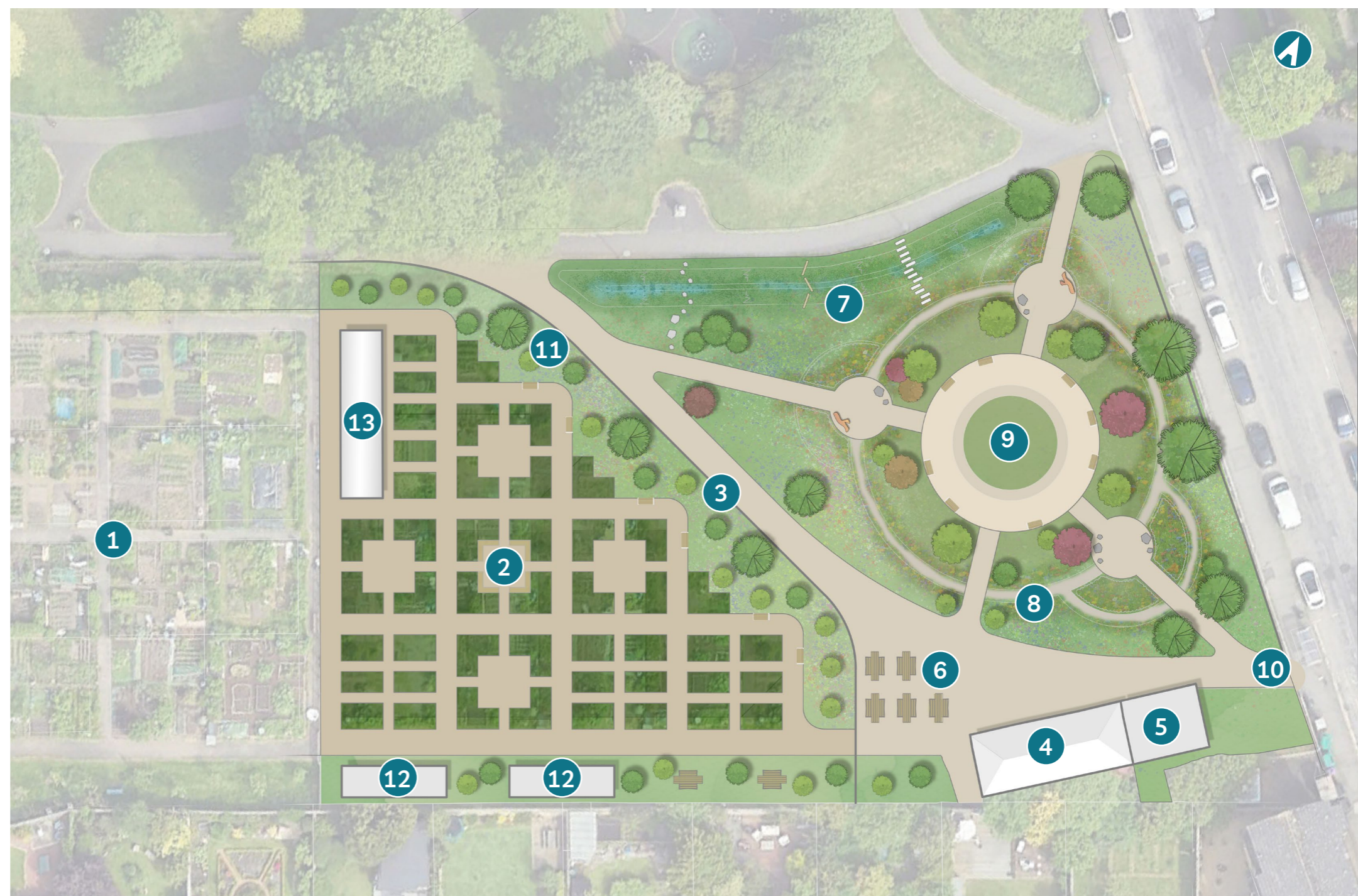


Fig. 17 | Concept Design



Design Development

3.11. Visualisation



Going Forward

4.1. Considerations

Several options were considered before developing early concept designs for re-purposing the bowling greens. The final option, "Developing as a Comprehensive Community Resource," detailed on page 20, reflects the community's aspirations, addressing all requests comprehensively. This plan balances cost, community benefit, and environmental impact to create a sustainable, inclusive space, maximising health, wellbeing, and environmental outcomes.

Option 1: Doing Nothing / Minimal Intervention

Considerations: No immediate cost. No need for planning or construction. No additional benefits to the community. Sites may deteriorate over time.

Cost: Very low

Option 2: Keeping the Sites as Bowling Greens

Considerations: Preserves traditional use. Minimal changes needed. Limited appeal to broader community. Ongoing maintenance costs.

Cost: Low to moderate

Option 3: Developing the Sites into Allotments/Community Food Growing Gardens

Considerations: Promotes local food production. Engages community in gardening activities. Initial setup costs. Requires community involvement and maintenance.

Cost: Moderate

Option 4: Developing Pavilions as Cafes/Toilets with Seating Areas

Considerations: Generates income through cafes. Provides amenities for visitors. Limited green space. Commercial focus might not appeal to all.

Cost: Moderate to high

Option 5: Developing as a Comprehensive Community Resource

Considerations: Broad community appeal. High social, environmental, and economic benefits. Addresses multiple community needs. High initial costs. Longer time to secure funding and complete.

Cost: High

4.2. Next steps

The next steps for this project are as follows:

- We will seek approval from the Culture and Communities Committee to continue development of proposals for the site. This will include exploration of options such as simplified designs and phased implementation to ensure that we optimise the use of available funds while striving to achieve the community's vision for these spaces.
- Identification of funding sources will be crucial to realising these plans. We will explore various avenues such as grants, community fundraising initiatives, partnerships with local businesses, and governmental support and make applications as necessary to secure the required funding.
- Planning consent will be required to change the use of the bowling greens. Once funding is identified, a final detailed design will be developed to support a planning application.
- Once funding has been secured, a development scheme will be implemented.
- We will continue collaboration with local stakeholders throughout the entire process.



