

# Greenway Microhub Design and Access Statement

July 2025



## Introduction

Wester Hailes Growing appointed Calum Duncan Architects LTD (CDAL) to carry out an architectural feasibility study that would investigate a new Community Hub to the north of the Greenway and adjacent to the existing Community Garden in Wester Hailes. This new facility would serve the neighbourhoods of Murrayburn, Hailesland, and Dumbyden, with the detailed use of the facility being guided by the outcomes of the consultation process carried out by Community Enterprise and Calum Duncan Architects. Following the development of this Community Hub to RIBA Stage 2 design (outlined within this report) and the challenges of achieving full funding for the project, the client wished to develop the workshop element of the site as a phase 1 of the project, with the potential for this element to function as a MicroHub in the intervening period until the whole project is realised.

The site: Adjacent to the Wester Hailes Greenway, between the residential streets of Murrayburn Gardens and Murrayburn Grove.



Neighbourhoods of Murrayburn, Hailesland and Dumbyden (by Atkins)



Location plan with site boundary

## Site History



Extract of 1938 OS map

On the 1938 OS map above, the Murrayburn, Hailesland and Dumbyden area can be seen south of the post-war housing of Sighthill constructed to the north. Historically, The Greenway area is a rural road linking a series of crofts adjacent to the more significant Dumbyden Farm. The Greenway Hub site is likely to be on the line of this central road and close to the Ash Croft or Duncombe.



Housing to the East end of the Murrayburn Greenway 1979 (photo: John Walmsley)

Construction of the existing housing on the site began in around 1967, and as documented by the above image, by the later 1970s, the housing was starting to require repairs.



The Murrayburn Greenway Aerial Photograph, Canmore, 1991



View of the main hub site as existing



Aerial View Before Community Garden Construction



View of the micro hub site as existing

The 1991 Greenway image shows the hard-standing of a pavilion building and its adjacent area, which was of prefab-type construction and served as a community space. During consultations with the neighbouring community, this has been referred to fondly when it functioned as a youth club and for gatherings. The year of its demolition is unknown. This provision is now missed by those who used and remember the building. This is now the location of the community garden.

The current Greenway Hub site is largely unaltered since its construction, a concrete paved space. It is unclear how it was envisaged to be used. We would speculate that it was seen as an open public 'piazza' of sorts or may have been planned to accommodate a non-residential building that did not materialise. However, its existing nature and character is exceptionally underwhelming and unhelpful in terms of circulation, social engagement, character or function.

## Stage 1 Consultation

The methodology and outcomes of the Greenway Hub consultation exercise for this study was led by Community Enterprise (CE) with the input and engagement of Calum Duncan Architects. Outcomes from the consultation included:

The local demographics show a higher than average number of young people under the age of 16, an ethnically diverse and a high number of unemployed people in the community. Feedback from locals revealed there are not facilities which cater for the younger ages or provide support for the diversity of the community, including the unemployed. The CE report describes the demographic and asset mapping for the locality, which has set out the aims for the brief and the feasibility proposals. The vision for the main Greenway Hub is to:

- Provide a welcoming and accessible space for the community to come together and connect around shared activities events and support our community to become more connected
- Join up with other support providers in the area to offer a holistic service to our community, which has a range of needs, with a focus on young people under the age of 12
- Take steps to reduce food insecurity and poverty in our community by helping to improve household finances and providing a venue for community food-based activity and learning
- Promote the health and wellbeing of our community by encouraging and supporting healthy, sustainable living by improving diet and supporting positive mental health
- Encourage and provide opportunities for local people to develop skills and experience that will improve employment prospects.

## Stage 2 Micro Hub Consultation

During the Concept Design development, two user and neighbour consultations have been held to develop the brief for the Microhub building. These focused on brief development, understanding Users' needs, and the flexibility of use and services that the building should prioritise and include. The second user workshop was held to gather feedback on developing design proposals, enabling the shaping and refining of the arrangement and design for Stage 3, leading up to the planning application. The client has also undertaken a community engagement exercise with local residents by physically drawing out the Main Hub building, as an excellent way to allow locals to understand the scale and layout.



Drawing the Main Hub building with neighbours, Users' workshops for the Microhub.

## The Brief for the Main Hub

For context to the proposed Microhub brief, the full Greenway Hub Brief is described as follows. A single-storey community space will function as a 'BASE CAMP' for various uses, with the flexibility to accommodate multiple users of varying ages with a focus on the needs of early years and younger age groups. The primary special facilities within the brief are as follows:

- **Community Space:** As a flexible space for community group activities and meetings and as a community café operating on an intermittent basis. Importantly, this space can function as a 'base' for groups focused on outdoor activities, but presently have nowhere to begin and finish, or use as an indoor space where the activity and weather require this.
- **Pantry:** The space will function using the established scheme as a 'food pantry,' where the local community can purchase a variety of produce at a reasonable price.
- **Teaching Kitchen:** This kitchen, with a strong link to the adjacent community garden, will provide teaching opportunities for cooking and food preparation. It can also serve as a preparation kitchen for a community café.
- **Office:** Building management space with 2 desks.
- **Private Meeting:** A place for various small group meetings and private one-to-one consultations.
- **Makers Workshop:** A workshop space for youth training and making opportunities.

## The Brief for the Microhub

The brief has been detailed and compiled in the form of an Accommodation Schedule, an Appendix to this report. In line with this brief for the Main Hub project, this Microhub is designed to accommodate the same uses, but in 'short-form', without the dedicated teaching kitchen or food pantry. This new single-storey community space will have the flexibility to accommodate multiple users of varying ages with a focus on the needs of early years and younger age groups. The primary special facilities within the brief are as follows:

- **Community Space:** As a flexible space for community group activities and meetings and as a community café operating on an intermittent basis. Importantly, this space can function as a 'base' for groups which are focused on outdoor activities, but presently have nowhere to begin and finish, or use as an indoor space where the activity and weather require this.

This community space will include a workshop space for youth training and making opportunities. Equipment will be cleared and stored when not functioning as a workshop.

Provision of catering in the form of a small tea prep to cater for groups using the space.

- **Reception:** Building management space with one desk informally located within the entrance hall.
- **Long-term consideration:** When the Main Hub building is completed, the Microhub will be available as a desiccated Makers Workshop in accordance with the Main Hub brief.

## Site Analysis



Site analysis drawing

### Location + Services

The site is currently absent of character, function and any particular use. It only serves as a relatively exposed and unwelcoming open space which locals can be seen to negotiate in order to walk between services, housing or greenspaces. Notable local services are few and far between, with only Michael's Shop, being located on the opposite residential corner to the south of the Greenway space. The nearest, permanent non-residential services are the facilities of Wester Hailes plaza. It is evident that with this lack of services, and activity, the locality feels transient in its nature.

### Transport

Pedestrian access is of primary importance to the operation of the Microhub, with its purpose being to cater for the local neighbourhoods, rather than users from afar. The location is excellent, being centrally located within the neighbourhoods it will serve. The building doesn't fall clearly within the local authority requirements for vehicle parking, with the 'community centre' being the nearest building type, but this differs, being a local neighbourhood hub.

The site sits outside the city parking zones. For a new build community centre, this would require 1 space per 40sqm, so 2 spaces for a 62sqm building. The adjacent court of Murrayburn Grove has unrestricted and little-used on-street parking. Given the local nature of the Hub, we don't envisage there to be any dedicated parking spaces other than accessible parking. We would propose

demarcating 1no. accessible spaces to the Murrayburn Grove courtyard parking, but this doesn't need to be dedicated to the Hub. Murrayburn Grove on street parking would also be suitable for deliveries to the building.

Cycle parking will likely be required as 2 for users and 1 for staff by Sheffield bike stand situated locally to the Hub.

### Green + External Space

In contrast to the site itself, there are some promising green open spaces local to the site. Most are not used to their potential, with the exception of the relatively recent construction of the Murrayburn and Hailesland Neighbourhood Garden, within the southern Greenway space established in 2019. The green courtyard space to the north does have the potential for improvements, for which there is the ambition within the wider landscape masterplan (Edinburgh Council/ Atkins Consultants), to introduce an amphitheatre within the grass landscaped area (point 1 on plan below). The immediate adjacent spaces, given the importance of relevant outdoor related uses, are considered so as to make space within the boundary of the building which internal spaces can spill out into, and also bring activity to the wider green space to the south and north.

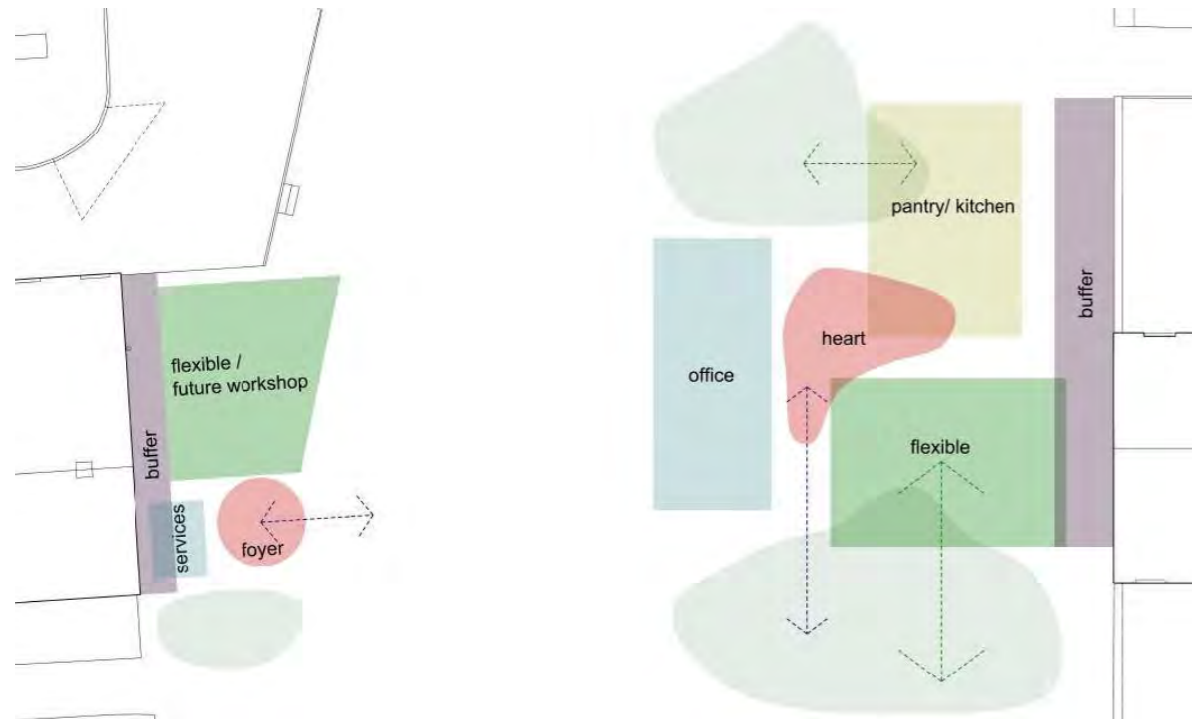


City of Edinburgh Council/ Atkins Landscape master plan extract

## Design Proposals

### The future Neighbourhood Hub Design, for information only

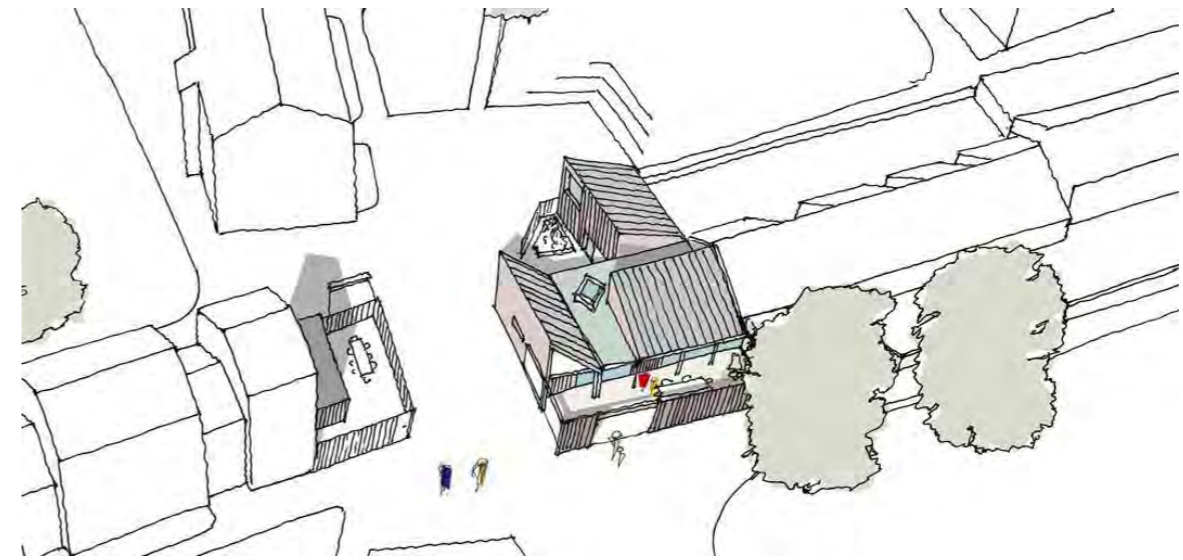
The proposals focuses on the use of the east area of the site for the future main hub, which meets the single-storey residential housing to the east. The Microhub (and future workshop) are located to the west side of the site, to the residential gable. With activity proposed to both sides of the space, this strengthens the north-south circulation between the greenways (to the south), and the landscaped courtyard (to the north). These two uses (Main Hub building and Workshop/ Microhub), being separate, are beneficial to maximise activity, presence and footfall, so challenging the current transient nature. The main elevation to the Hub faces the sunny south-facing Greenway aspect, improving the space as an active frontage.



Neighbourhood Hub Adjacency Diagram

The design proposal organises the uses to reflect the nature of varying and complementary activities, considering need, aspect and orientation around the site. The adjacency of spaces within the main building design are considered to reflect their similar uses and compatibility. The south aspect is primary, in terms of activity, sunny outside space. The main entrance is located on this side, linking to the pedestrian route across the Greenway and providing connections to the Community Garden and Michael's Shop. Creating a secured enclosure to this south elevation makes a usable external space akin to an external room, for learning, play and congregating.

The entrance would give access to a central circulation heart, which importantly can directly give access to the uses of Community space, Kitchen, office, meeting and the pantry. Given the location is relatively quite single storey residential building to the east, a buffer of storage or services is located along the residential gable wall. The pantry function, which operates is a different way to a traditional shop where footfall is primary, works well in this case to the northside.



Sketch of full neighbourhood hub from south



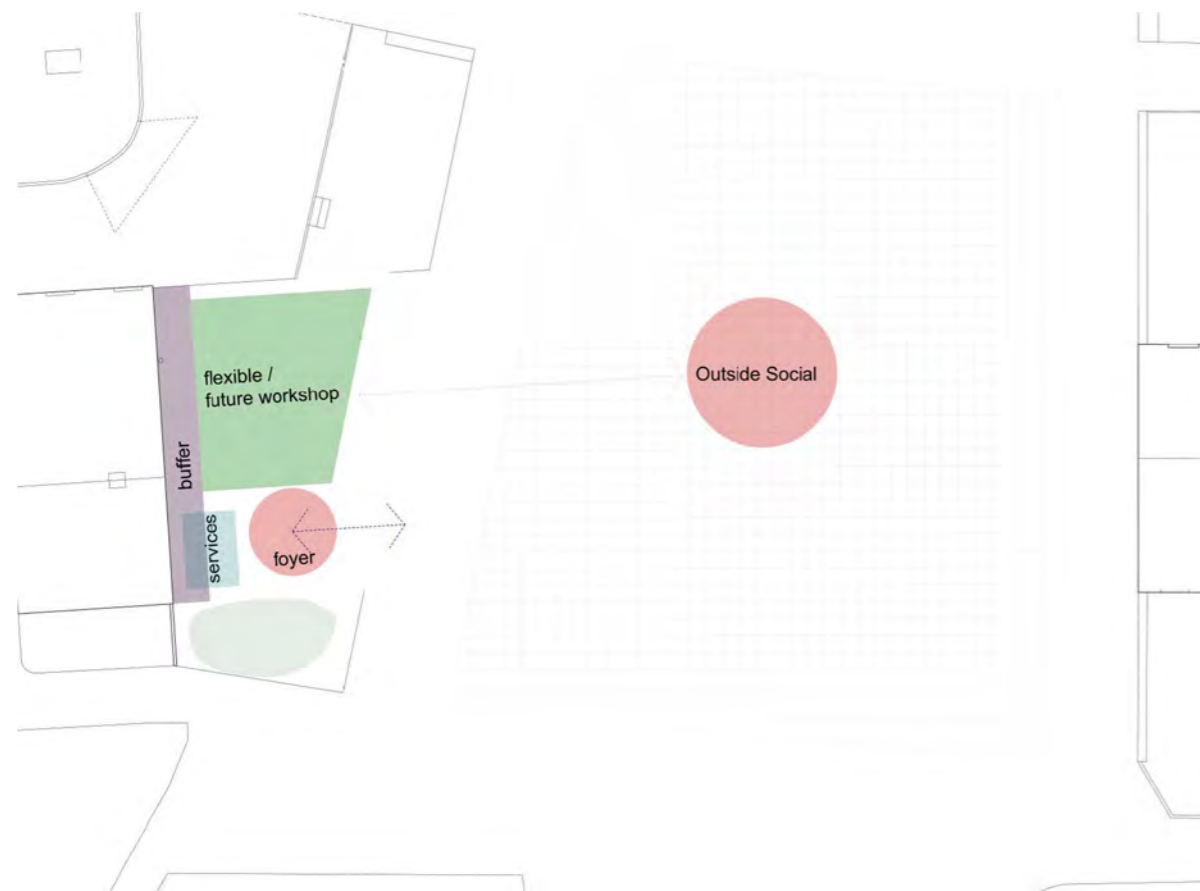
Plan view of Greenway Hub and Workshop



South Sketch Elevation

## The Microhub Design

The design for the 'workshop' site has now been developed to serve as a Microhub. The design requirements are similar to those of a standalone workshop space, except that there are better facilities for catering and WC provision. Additionally, the Microhub will be a fully insulated and serviced building, where a workshop could have been more rudimentary in the design of the building envelope. The adjacent diagram illustrates the optimal location of the entrance, situated to the south, in coordination with the future neighbourhood hub opposite, as well as the community garden. A delivery access is possible from the drop kerb parking area to the north. Visually, glazing to the east complements the activity and connection to the large paved area, suggesting the possibility of creating an external social area.



Microhub Adjacency Diagram

## Massing and Context

The Microhub is proposed to be a single-storey building, allowing all spaces to have direct connections from the outside, making them easily accessible and eliminating the need for a pedestrian lift. The design development has taken into consideration roof shapes, and several relevant requirements have led to the single-pitch proposal. The pitch reflects that of the main neighbourhood hub proposals, which themselves relate to the adjacent housing roof forms. The building's footprint is more generous in the main space and more compact at the entrance, allowing the roof to provide a small external covered area that signals the entrance and promotes good accessibility practices. The high pitch is both useful, as potential material storage at a high level, but also provides some services to the adjacent residential building (described within services later).



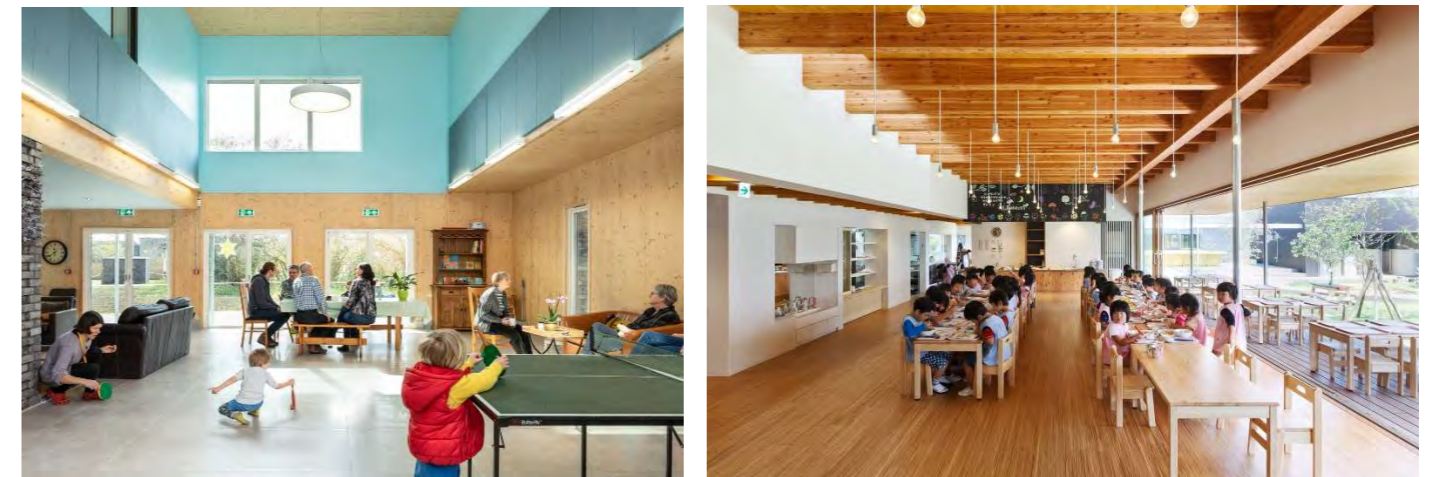
Concept Design stage massing diagram, including Proposed Main Hub opposite

## Sunlight and Daylight

There are no implications or changes to sunlight or daylighting to adjacent properties.

## Accessibility

We recommend, in line with best practice for accessibility, that any additional space created be accessible to wheelchair users and persons with ambulatory disabilities. Unless there is consideration of a lift being installed, this is best done by looking at a single-storey building, and these proposals are based on this principle. Aspects of the design will also consider the needs of neurodiverse users, the elderly, early years and minority groups.



Precedent images for internal space, material and light.

## Material and Detail

The material character is to be visually consistent with the approach of the main hub building: practically appropriate and sustainable in terms of energy efficiency, embodied energy and toxicity.

The ambition for the construction of the external walls is to be in a timber structure within a hempcrete wall buildup. The external wall surface to the hempcrete will be rendered, with areas of timber trellis to encourage climbing plants, appropriate to the adjacent community garden use, which will soften the building, but we hope will also discourage the potential for graffiti, which is always a concern in a public-facing site such as this. IN the instance that a hempcrete construction proves challenging during the detailed design, then a render will still be the external material finish. The colour is to be agreed, but a plaster/salmon tone is envisaged to be different but consistent in texture to the residential render buildings.

The roof is proposed to be a durable profiled metal sheet finish, which is available in a Greencoat colour-coated steel with a 40-year lifespan and in Oxide Red, which the visual image describes.



Precedent images for render, metal roofing and timber trellis

## Sustainability and Passivhaus

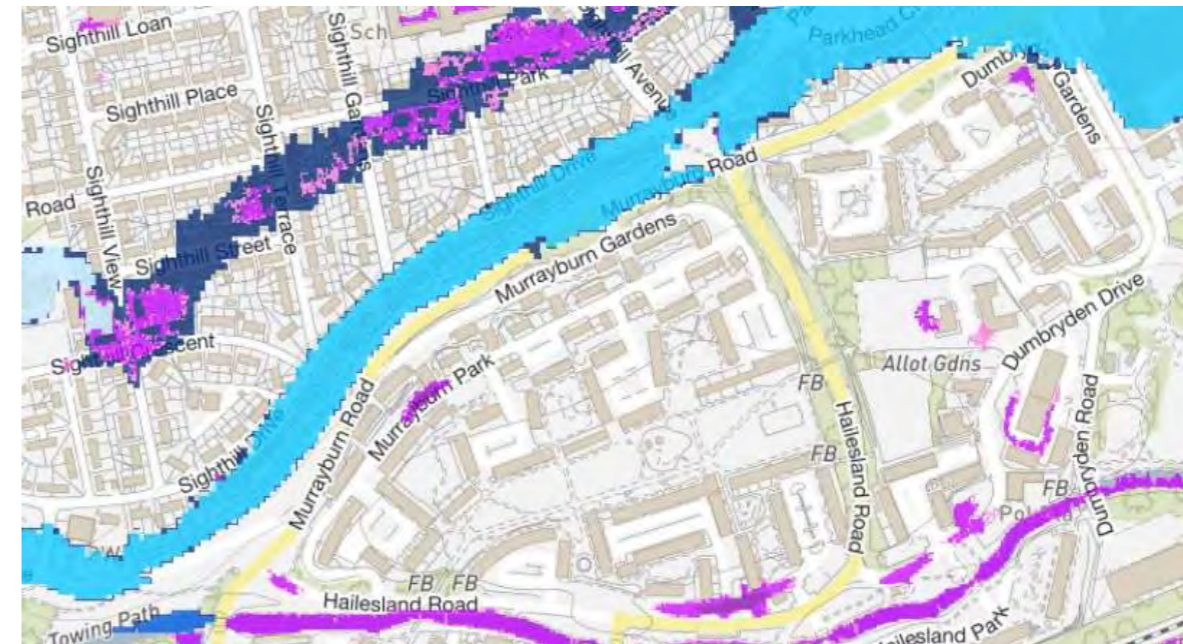
The principle of the methodology is to create an external fabric that is extremely thermally efficient, with thorough insulation, airtightness, detailed construction, and efficient ventilation. This is referred to as a 'fabric first' approach. It would also be recommended that the embodied carbon, toxicity and local sourcing of materials be considered during the detailed design stage, and these considerations have been made within this outline design stage. Where funding is provided, then the ambition is to meet the Passivhaus standard, and the concept design has been developed to consider this, with an MVHR heat recovery and ventilation, and an air source heat pump proposed.

## Council access agreement

The adjacent residential gable has undergone some alterations during the retrofit works. This means there are now external gas supply pipes and boiler outlets to consider. Additionally, the Council require, within the legal deeds for the site, a 2m zone to the gable of the existing housing for future maintenance. This arrangement has been discussed and agreed in principle with the Council. The drainage to the Microhub will comprise one wc and two sinks, and surface water with a new connection to the on-site underground drainage.

## Flood Risk

The SEPA flood risk map does not highlight the site and immediate area to be at risk of flooding, as outlined on the extract below. The nearest risk areas flowing Murrayburn Road (Medium Risk) and following the canal (High risk)



## Summary

By carefully consulting with the local community's needs, continuing to engage during Stage 1-3 design, we have understood and interpreted these needs to design an efficient and functional use, which we strongly believe will add an important facility and resource for a focus on the local neighbourhoods, which are severely lacking at present. The architectural design approach is intended to be both practical and characterful, introducing a new active frontage to this space and making an enjoyable contribution to its context.