



Our Shared Story

Learnings from the Open Manor project

Al Mathers and Alice Jones, June 2026



COMMUNITY
INTEREST
COMPANY



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This project was made possible with the support of the wider team at The Green Estate, funders the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership and local partners Manor and Castle Development Trust, Welcoming Cultures, Manor Parish Community Kitchen and Manor After School and Kids Klubs.

Executive Summary

This report tells the story of the Open Manor Project - a participatory co-design initiative commissioned by The Green Estate Community Interest Company (CIC) and funded by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership.

Between October 2025 and March 2026, a Community Co-design Team of twelve residents from Manor Castle Ward, Sheffield, worked alongside facilitators, researchers, and local partners to explore what place-based urban resilience means in practice and to shape a Greenprint for a more connected, nature-rich, and resilient local future.

The report documents the full arc of the project: from its origins in The Green Estate's ambition to become a national Place-Based Urban Resilience Demonstrator, through the community stories, experiments, and relationships that emerged along the way, to the practical commitments and shared vision captured in the Open Manor Greenprint.

About The Green Estate

The Green Estate CIC's mission is to grow green and resilient urban places for people and nature to thrive. Founded in 2003 and based in the Manor area of Sheffield, The Green Estate has transformed 42 hectares of derelict land and neglected heritage buildings into a thriving, sustainable landscape. Working alongside partners including Manor and Castle Development Trust, Sheffield City Council, and the University of Sheffield, the organisation is a multiple award-winning example of place-based urban resilience, delivering lasting social, economic, and environmental impact for the local community and beyond.



The Green Estate's ambition is to become a national Place-Based Urban Resilience Demonstrator, learning how this approach is defined and practised globally in order to drive meaningful impact locally. The Open Manor Project is a central part of that journey.

How we worked together

The project was built around three core values: being mutually beneficial, being life-centric, and supporting collective ownership. These were not abstract principles, they shaped every practical decision, from paying Co-design Team members for their time and expertise, to removing financial and other barriers so people could come together at The Green Estate to share food and ideas.

The Co-design Team of twelve Manor Castle Ward residents - selected to reflect a genuine diversity of age, background, ethnicity, employment status, and lived experience - met monthly from October 2025. Facilitated by Alice Jones (The Green Estate's Head of Green and Resilient Communities) and Dr Al Mathers (an independent research consultant), the team was supported throughout by specialist contributions from the University of Sheffield, University of Hull, and creative practitioners from Brazil and Sheffield. The project unfolded across four seasonal chapters - Conditions, Relationships, Experimenting, and Dreaming - each building on the last, and each reflecting the organic, adaptive nature of the work.

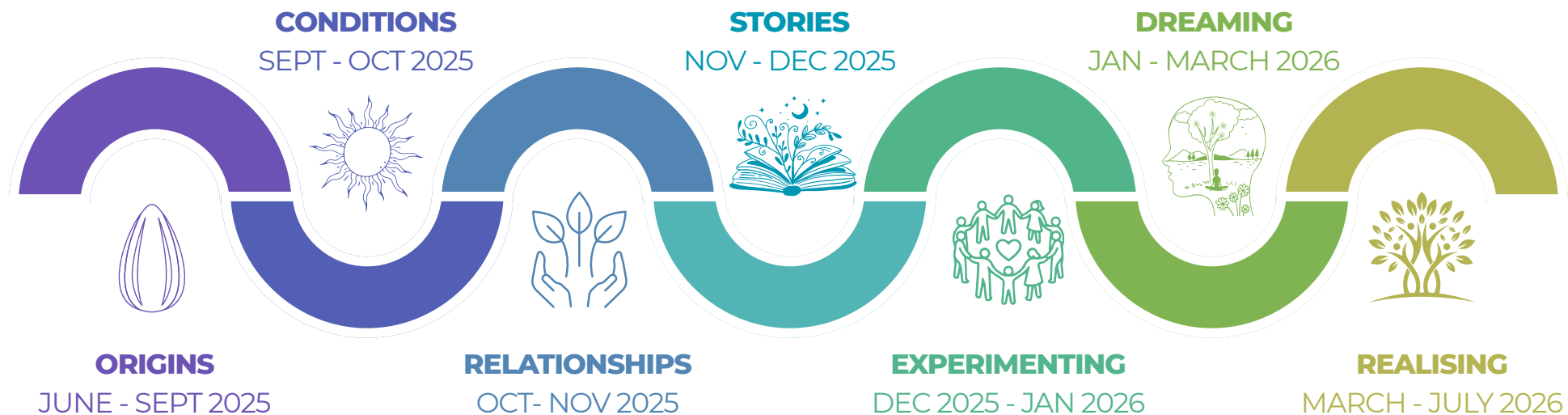


The Open Manor project roadmap

- **Our project values are established:** we agree to be mutually beneficial, life centric, and support collective ownership.
- **We finalise our pattern of project meetings** with the new Co-design Team.

- **Participatory mapping and team fieldwork reveals hidden stories** of social, economic and environmental experiences.
- **These include:** community bonds, representation, affordability, access to culture, use of green spaces by children and young people, and signage barriers.

- **We refine our approach and hold our second Spring Meal** which is attended by a wide range of local residents including children.
- **We focus on what to grow for the future** and use creative methods including collaging, urban archives and zine making to unlock dreams of what this could be.



- **We launch our project at Marvellous Meadows** over 200 people visiting The Barn to share their stories
- **Multi-channel invitations to apply to join the Co-design Team** result in 12 people from the local community joining the team

- **Our first Co-design Team meeting** focuses on contracts of care, building team relationships and revealing local connections.
- **We set up for the Autumn community fieldwork** and our second meeting.

- **We bring experiential methods and design thinking into our meetings** including forest bathing, trust building tools and group brainstorming.
- **We design and pilot our first Winter Community Meal** in partnership with local organisations.

- **Our priorities for change become the Open Manor Greenprint** and accompanying project learnings report.
- **We hold our third Summer Community Meal** in June 2026.
- **We launch our findings** at Marvellous Meadows in July 2026

Executive Summary

What we found

Through self-directed community fieldwork, participatory mapping, forest bathing, urban archive collaging, and community meals, the Co-design Team surfaced rich insight into the social, economic, and environmental realities of Manor Castle Ward.

Key themes included:

- People love the local area and The Green Estate but feel cut off from its potential, due to cost, confidence, unfamiliarity, or simply not knowing what is available or feeling welcome.
- Young people in the local area lack places to socialise with one another, activities designed to support their needs, and opportunities to develop skills and confidence.
- The Green Estate is not currently always perceived as a place for local people, with affordability of eating on site, limited signage, and a lack of a clear community offer cited as potential barriers.
- There is deep community pride and strong bonds, but these are often hidden or undervalued, drowned out by negative narratives about the Manor area, and a lack of effective local communications.
- Green spaces are highly valued as places to meet, escape, and connect but they are not sufficiently integrated into

the everyday culture and economy of the neighbourhood.

- There is a significant appetite for nature-based activities, and intergenerational connection through community meals and food growing, taking place in shared spaces, if the conditions and invitation are right.
- The area is an increasingly diverse community, and so it is important to welcome new arrivals, make it easy to meet people, celebrate creativity and share each others cultures

What we did

The team moved from listening to experimenting, piloting two community meals at The Green Estate in partnership with local chef Sarah Short of Manor Parish Community Kitchen. The meals, held in January and March 2026, were designed by Co-design Team members to be genuinely inclusive: affordable, welcoming, multilingual, and rooted in seasonal, locally sourced food. A total of 62 people joined the first two community meals, which have been a proving ground for something bigger. They tested what it means to open The Green Estate's doors to the immediate local community - not as visitors or customers, but as participants, co-creators, and neighbours. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and The Green Estate has committed to a further Summer meal in June 2026, with funding applied for to sustain the seasonal pattern of meals beyond the project.

Our Future Vision:

A resilient, nature-connected community in Manor Castle Ward where people of all ages and backgrounds have sustained access to green spaces, locally grown food, and nature-based activities, with The Green Estate at the heart of a thriving network of local partners and residents working together.

The Open Manor Greenprint: rooted in place, grown together

The culmination of the project is the **Open Manor Greenprint**, a living framework that translates the Co-design Team's vision into practical, actionable commitments for The Green Estate, local partners, and residents. It is not a plan handed down from outside. It is something planted here, in Manor Castle Ward, by the people who know it best, and grown together, in the hope that it will still be flowering long after this project has ended.

The Green Estate: preparing the ground

The Open Manor project has already influenced The Green Estate's strategy in several ways. The organisation has shifted its goals to focus on increasing access to quality green space, encouraging people to care for and connect with nature, supporting food growing, and using The Green Estate's assets to help young people thrive. The Green Estate is seeking funding to make its site signage and interpretation more accessible and inclusive. Immediate commitments include hosting a Summer Community Meal (June 2026) and the Marvellous Meadows Celebration (5th July 2026) as a launchpad for the longer-term community offer. Steps that can be taken now include developing a clear community offer centred on nature-related skills, establishing affordable pricing for local access to onsite spaces, and creating an evaluation framework. Given the right conditions and resources, the Greenprint also sets out a longer-term programme: recruiting a dedicated community connector, developing a sustainable business plan, finding ways for people to gain health benefits from connecting with nature and green space, e.g. through green social prescribing, and creating a structured offer of nature walks, growing workshops, and food preparation sessions open to all ages.

Local partners: tending it together

The Greenprint calls on *neighbourhood partners* - including local schools, foraging groups, Manor Open Gardens, Park Hill Community Garden, Manor and Castle Development Trust, Manor After School and Kids Klub, Manor Parish Community Kitchen - and *city and regional partners* - such as Sheffield universities and colleges, health organisations, local businesses, Sheffield Foyer, Great Places and South Yorkshire Housing Association, Sheffield City Council and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority - to help to co-deliver activities, provide referral pathways, and contribute to shared communications and outreach across the ward.

Executive Summary

Residents: making it ours

Local residents are not recipients of this vision, they are its authors. The Greenprint invites residents to continue shaping the community offer, take active roles as participants, volunteers, and peer connectors, and share their knowledge, skills, and networks to help grow the reach and resilience of what is being built. This extends to the economic life of the area: The Green Estate's building assets offer a tangible foundation for local enterprise, acting as an incubator where residents and emerging businesses can take root, grow, and reinvest in the neighbourhood they call home.

What we hope to see grow

For young people specifically	• Safe, welcoming spaces where young people can socialise, gather, and feel they belong • Activities and programmes co-designed with young people, reflecting what they actually want and need • Young people building practical skills — in growing, making, building, and caring for the environment • Volunteering, peer connector, and leadership roles that build confidence and a sense of agency
In the lives of local people	• More people taking part in nature-based activities, feeling welcome and at home at The Green Estate • New skills in growing, preparing, and sharing local food • Better health and wellbeing through green social prescribing and time in nature • Stronger bonds across generations, rooted in shared experience • Local people have increased awareness and understanding of the accessible and affordable spaces available for community use at The Green Estate
In the natural life of the neighbourhood	• Local people actively caring for and stewarding green spaces • More growing happening in gardens, on doorsteps, and across surrounding neighbourhoods • Nature connection woven into the fabric of everyday urban life
In the wider story of Sheffield	• A living, replicable model of community-led urban nature that other areas can learn from • Deeper, more resilient partnerships rooted in Manor Castle Ward • A growing body of evidence that tells the story of what's possible • A meaningful contribution to Sheffield's ambitions for a healthier, greener, more connected city

Origins: an introduction to this work

About The Green Estate

The Green Estate Community Interest Company (CIC) is one of South Yorkshire's largest social enterprises. Founded in 2003, their mission is to create green, resilient urban spaces where both people and nature can thrive. Based in the Manor area of Sheffield, The Green Estate - alongside partners including Manor and Castle Development Trust, Sheffield City Council, and the University of Sheffield - has transformed 42 hectares of derelict land and neglected heritage buildings into a thriving, sustainable landscape for generations to enjoy.

A multiple award-winning organisation, The Green Estate has become a leading example of place-based urban resilience, delivering lasting social, economic, and environmental impact for the local community and beyond.

The Future Ambition

The Green Estate's ambition is to become a national Place-Based Urban Resilience Demonstrator - learning how this approach is defined and practised globally, in order to drive meaningful impact locally. As a first step, The Green Estate commissioned researchers from the University of Hull in 2025 to undertake a deep dive into place-based urban resilience and develop a working definition. The resulting definition and rapid-review report now provide the foundation for a Greenprint to guide The Green Estate's work and influence wider policy and practice. The Green Estate is committed to refining this definition as the organisation continues to learn and grow alongside others in the years ahead.



Urban place-based resilience

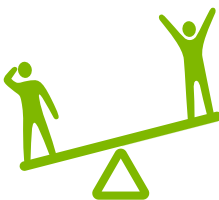
Place-based urban resilience is an evolving and emerging concept, comprised of the following three dimensions:



- **A complex systems approach:** this refers to the capacity and capability of people, organisations and the natural environment within urban areas to prepare for, resist, respond, recover, adapt, learn, and transform to minimise potential adverse impacts and maximise opportunities for a thriving socio-ecological system in the face of future stresses and shocks.



- **Being rooted in 'place':** central to this concept is 'place' which includes the i) physical location, ii) locale or the human-environment and social interactions embedded in space, and iii) sense of place understood as emotional and symbolic attachment that individuals and communities hold towards their urban area. Place-based urban resilience incorporates the identity, solidarity, wellbeing and values of people and place ensuring that the context, characteristics, needs, and priorities remain central in preparing for stresses and shocks.

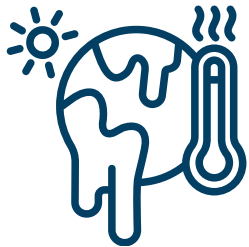


- **Engaging with inequalities:** an important element of the concept is recognising and engaging with the current systemic and power inequalities which adversely impact people and the natural environment within urban places. Place-based urban resilience invites critical reflection, reimagining, and restructuring of urban socio-ecological systems to tackle the intersecting climate, ecological and social injustices.



This emerging definition helped to foreground a rapid review and comparative analysis of existing local and national data into climate risk, vulnerability and opportunity, as related to Manor Castle Ward, Sheffield, which was led by Liz Gadd of Liz Gadd Consulting.

The review took a snapshot in time of secondary data, it is important to note this came with challenges and there was not the scope to integrate community engagement.



Key findings from this rapid review included:

- Climate risks for Manor Castle Ward include heat, air pollution, surface water flooding and drought
- These risks are compounded by existing vulnerabilities such as poor health, disability, ethnic diversity, young community and poverty
- That said, Manor Castle Ward has a higher than average access to green space, lower than average chance of river flooding and a lower than average ageing population



The review found that if action is taken to adapt to and mitigate against the risks identified, there is an opportunity to improve health and wellbeing, lower the cost of living, provide skills and training opportunities, create more and better jobs, deliver improved housing and transport and create a greater sense of community.

Beginnings of the Open Manor project

Data alone only tells one side of the story. The impacts of the climate crisis are not only becoming increasingly visible in daily life, but are being experienced unevenly and falling hardest on those who are already most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

This makes the need for deeper local insight and locally-driven approaches, ones that not only raise awareness but realise tangible action, greater than ever. Addressing this requires equitable partnership working between local communities and wider stakeholders, to build shared ownership and collective care for a future that works for everyone.

Therefore in May 2025 with funding from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership, The Green Estate CIC commissioned a Sheffield-based participatory research consultant (Dr Al Mathers) to bring together a Community Co-design Team from Manor Castle Ward to take this work forward.

Our aim was to understand what place-based urban resilience meant to the local community. Between September 2025 and March 2026, the newly formed Open Manor Co-design Team uncovered and shared local stories, strengthened community relationships, co-designed experiments, and identified a Greenprint for future place-based action in Manor Castle Ward.

This report tells the story of how this approach and work together was developed, what we learned about past memories and neighbourhood connections, how these are shaping people's lives today, and what a collective Greenprint for a hopeful, resilient future for the local area might look like.

Summer 2025



Conditions: designing our project approach

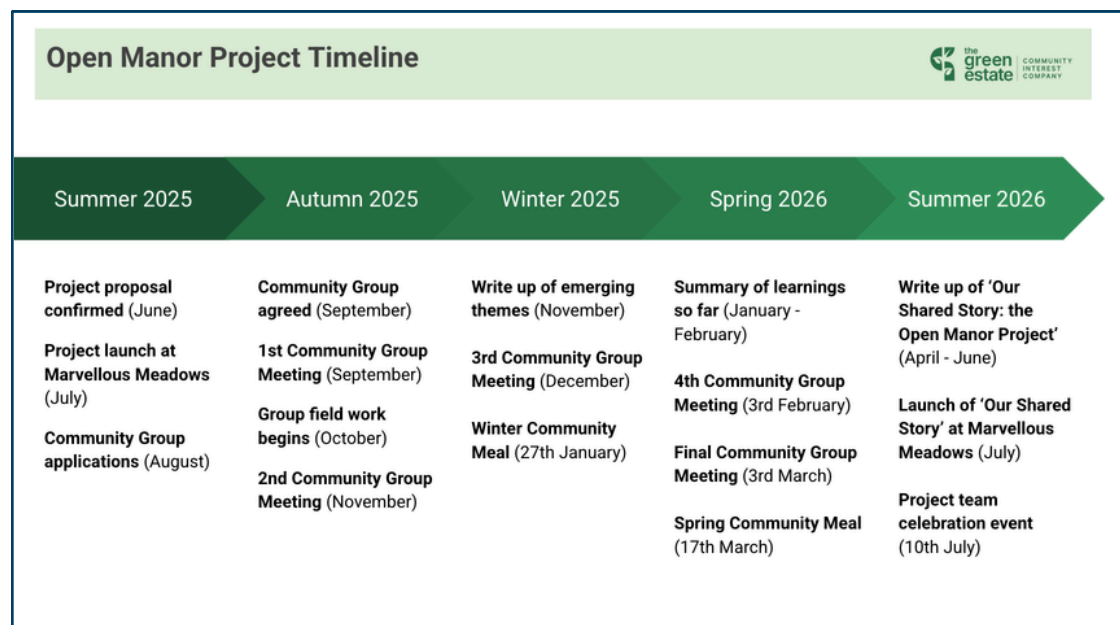
The Open Manor project was designed around an inclusive approach, prioritising trust and building relationships between Co-design Team members, and with The Green Estate and wider community and project partners. When we started to work together it was important that our project values could be translated into practical commitments to support our ways of working.

These values and commitments were as follows:

- **Being mutually beneficial:** by ensuring participation was enjoyable and creative rather than extractive - paying Co-design Team members for their time and expertise, creating Contracts of Care that set out expectations around respect and reciprocity in how team members and facilitators would work together, and removing financial and other barriers so community members could come together at The Green Estate to share food and activities through our pilot community meals.
- **Being life centric:** by weaving opportunities throughout the project to develop new ways of understanding our relationships with each other, the local community, and the urban nature of Manor Castle Ward. Team members experimented with creative and experiential methods, building new skills and confidence that they shared with others through the community meals.
- **Supporting collective ownership:** by acting on Co-design Team feedback to continually refine our shared understanding of community priorities, ensuring members were co-authors of the work, and sharing emerging findings openly with The Green Estate throughout the project so they could inform the organisation's community and visitor offer in real time.

Our values shaped how we approached each stage of our project journey, and the creation of a series of supportive structures for our work including:

- **Identifying a physical space large enough to share stories** - where we could engage the wider community and start our project journey. This became the Barn at The Green Estate.
- **Creating a co-design lab for our community team** - where we could work together comfortably and safely and team members felt at home. This became the Clayworks at The Green Estate.
- **Documenting and sharing our project journey as it developed** - through using a range of digital tools to support team communications and track emerging learnings. We did this through regular group emails, setting up of Co-design Team broadcast channels and action focused groups on WhatsApp, creating Google slide decks for Co-design Team meetings, and a project planning board on Miro.



A simple but important aspect of our live documentation and open communication approach was the creation of an adaptable project timeline slide, which we used as a planning resource with Co-design Team members in each of our monthly meetings. This helped us to reflect on what we had done so far, where we were currently, and what we hoped to do next. We would then iterate our future plans for project activities, based on this collective feedback and individual availability.

Inviting contributions through creative methods

Our work began in July 2025 when we launched the project in the Barn at The Green Estate, as part of the annual Marvellous Meadows event. By utilising the Barn - which at present is often closed to the public - we were able to activate an underutilised space, large enough to host a significant number of visitors and comfortably accommodate multiple project activities at the same time including:

- **Opportunities for people to enjoy a more hidden side of The Green Estate**, by setting up informal seating areas inside (on couches) and outside (on deck chairs) the Barn.
- **Building community connections with The Green Estate staff and their volunteers**, who helped us to share information about the project and Barn activities.
- **Experimenting with a range of creative methods**, so people could choose how to share their past and present stories in a diversity of ways aligned to their needs and interests.
- **Designing experiential and fun activities to engage children**, so through play we could understand their future hopes and dreams for the Manor Castle Ward.

We created conversation cue cards for staff and volunteers to help guide participants through the activities and to support informal discussions about the future project, and across the day over 200 people visited the Barn and contributed their thoughts to the Barn activities. Of these, 40 people completed a Wish Postcard sharing their interest in hearing more about our work across the year with communities, and 11 people voiced their interest in becoming a community project team member.



Community stories and wishes

Insights captured from across the day are shown in the subsequent tables in terms of **individual expressions** (which were personally communicated through creativity activities) and **collective themes** (that have been synthesised through reflective analysis across multiple contributions):

The Story Wall

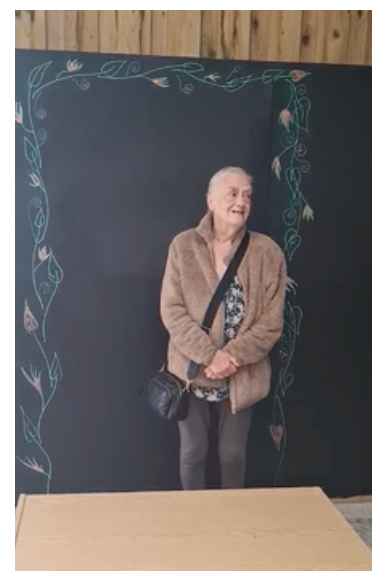
	Individual expressions	Collective themes
Memories and Past	- Mary Queen of Scots - We got married here at the Turret House - Sun shining - Flowers - Floods	- Valuable heritage - Visible history - Personal connection - Moments in time - Link between environment and social experience
The Present and Now	- Abundance of wildlife. - Meadows are marvelous - I love Manor Fields - We love to walk around the meadows at Manor Fields - Marvellous Meadows mucho magnifico	- Pride in the local environment - Beauty in nature - Wildlife on your doorstep
Future Hopes and Dreams	- Trees are like elders, they give us more than we can give them - Communities coming together - Happiness for me and my lovely family - No child goes hungry, no mother should cry, peace in power, power for the people	- Nature is flourishing - Respect for all living things - Communities coming together - Happy families - Power for people



Community stories and wishes

Vox Pox Films

Individual expressions	Collective themes
• In the past we had lots of freedom as children “we were a bit ferocious!” • Memories of the working farm and grazing animals • Enjoyed contact with animals and miss them now • Lots of places to play • More things happening again • Valuing having the Rhubarb Shed as a local cafe • Always loved the area, brilliant place to live • Noticing things have changed, the fields have disappeared • Wanting somewhere people respect • Love the wildflowers and Manor Fields • Lucky to have so much green all around • Importance of friends on the street, keeping an eye on things together • Grew up just down the road • All about your children’s childhood • Manor Lodge as a key landmark • Having somewhere to walk, to calm children - and how important this is for mental health and wellbeing • Staff caring for the green spaces, cutting the grass, seasonal routines • Potential to open up community spaces and people’s gardens • Learning from different cultures through dance	• Things for families • Interacting with animals • Places for children to be wild and free • An ever changing place • Importance of building intergenerational connections and celebrating diverse communities in Manor Castle across time and throughout the area • Valuing the deep community roots and growing these



Deer Graffiti

Individual expressions	Collective themes
• Jokes and laughter • Making your own mark • Memories of past uses and animals like Big Lad (the shire horse) • Weddings and celebrations • Flowers and growing • Conservation and protection "Save our Oceans!" • Green Estate is Life! • Stop pollution! • I am a deer!	• Care for all life • Taking action • Standing up • Being counted • Being visible



Home for a Deer

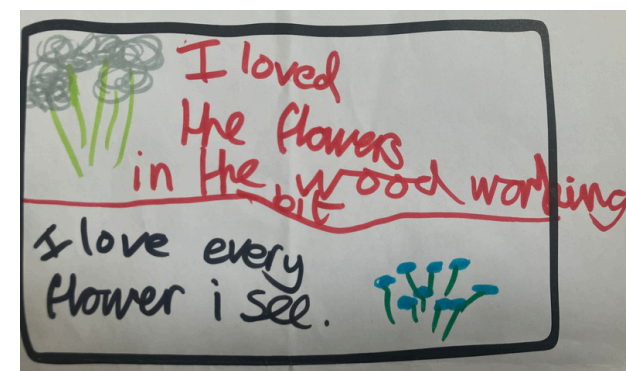
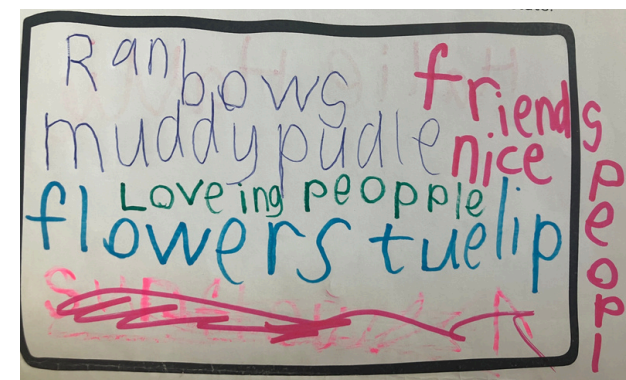
Individual expressions	Collective themes
• Butterflies • Smiling people • Animals with humans • Friends and families • Hills and mountains • Frogs • Stars. • Hearts and love	• No separation between humans and nature • Joy • Celebration • Protection



Community stories and wishes

Post Your Wish

Individual expressions	Collective themes
• I am an artist! • Cornflowers and lavender • Landscapes, sky, sun, hills • Prehistoric animals. • Green Estate is wonderful! I am interested in engaging neurodiverse children and adults and finding a career, hobby that gets them involved in things that suit their personality and neurodivergence. The classroom and office can be a stressful place. Outdoor work may help! • Smiling family and the Turret House. • Flowers, trees and bees. • Dressing up in the Turret House and walking in the grounds. • Keep up the good work Green Estate! "I love the kerbside flowers, meadows and Manor Lodge herb garden. I volunteer on Fridays in the Forest Garden and am new to the area." • Bring back farm animals and gardens. • I love the flowers and wood working bit. I love every flower I see. • Sharing gifts with friends. • Love for the world and trees. • Rainbows, muddy puddles, friends, nice loving people, flowers and tulips.	• Lived and shared experiences. • Inclusion of people with neurodiversity. • A rich ecosystem that supports diverse plant and animal life. • A love for flowers, trees • A world of colour. • A love for people. • Pollinators and healthy meadows. • History and imaginative play. • A place to create new connections and rediscover your roots.



The Co-design Team invitation and selection

Marvellous Meadows provided an ideal launchpad for building project awareness, though its City-wide audience meant local voices were sometimes underrepresented. To ensure our community Co-design Team reflected the immediate neighbourhood, we went directly to local people, engaging through trusted partners like Manor and Castle Development Trust and using a mix of online and in-person channels.

From July to early September, we invited expressions of interest via The Green Estate website, social media, and printed materials distributed at local events. The invitation was transparent about expectations: the project timeline, the pattern of involvement, and the benefits including financial compensation, skills development, peer connection, and the opportunity to shape community-led change alongside The Green Estate. We aimed to bring together 10 Manor Castle Ward residents who shared a collective care for their area while representing a genuine diversity of people and experiences.

To understand what applicants most cared about in Manor Castle Ward and why they wanted to be part of the Community Co-design Team, we asked people to provide responses to the 5 questions (see right).

In total we received 13 applications - online, verbal, and written - from people living in or near the ward. Applicants reflected a strong diversity across gender, age (18–64), employment status, disability, and ethnicity, including Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British/Caribbean/African, Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups, White British, and White Gypsy Traveller/Roma communities.

Join the Community Project for local residents!



What is the Community Project about, and how will it work:

- We want to celebrate and share the hidden stories of Manor Castle - our memories, our present & our dreams for the future!
- To help us do this we're looking to bring together a Community Project Team of 10 local people.
- Over the next year the Community Project Team will work together to shape our Shared Story of Manor Castle
- Our team meetings will be held at Green Estate, where we will meet on a regular (monthly-ish) basis

Benefits for Community Project Team Members:

We want to value the contribution made by Community Project Team members, so if you become a team member you will:

- Be paid for your time and expertise, in line with the Real Living Wage.
- Get financial support with travel expenses to participate in team sessions.
- Learn new skills, and how to practically apply these in the project and beyond.
- Build new friendships and connections with others
- Be named as a Co-Author on anything we produce and publish from our work together.

If you are interested in becoming a Community Project Team Member: post your Wish in the Barn post box, tell us about you and what you care about.

- **What is your connection to Manor Castle Ward or The Green Estate?**
- **What do you care about most in your local community?**
- **What do you hope to learn or gain from being involved in this project?**
- **If you could create one activity or event to celebrate the people and places of Manor Castle, what would it be?**
- **What future do you hope to see for Manor Castle and its communities? (What kind of change or growth would make a positive difference here?)**

The Co-design Team invitation and selection

Overall the responses we received highlighted a diverse mix of resident experiences: from newcomers seeking connection to lifelong residents wanting to preserve community spirit, from professional community workers to immigrants looking for cultural support.

Common themes of care included: desires for better community connections, celebrating diversity, supporting vulnerable populations, and making better use of the area's green spaces and heritage assets.

To ensure a balanced Community Co-design Team, we invited members of The Green Estate's senior leadership (including the CEO), Manor and Castle Development Trust, and Welcoming Cultures to help us in the final selection. Places were offered to 10 applicants based on the diversity of their experiences, their care for the local area, and their availability to commit to the project. A further 2 Green Estate staff members who lived locally were also invited to join, bridging community perspectives with organisational knowledge and ways of working. This resulted in a final Co-design Team of 12 members, supported by 2 facilitators - Alice Jones (The Green Estate's Head of Green & Resilient Communities) and Al Mathers (an independent research consultant).



Our Community Co-design Team, facilitators and local partners

Autumn 2025



Relationships: team development and care for the area

An adaptive and reflective approach

Our first Co-design Team meeting took place on 1st October 2025 at the Clayworks within The Green Estate site. Our facilitation approach was to be open, collaborative and adaptive, responding to what emerged from the group's discussions - rather than directing it. This represented a cultural shift for many involved. Early on, some team members looked to us as the facilitators to define what the project should be and where it would lead, reflecting their experience of community groups where scope is typically set by leaders.

By taking a more relational and reflective approach, we adapted as the project evolved - identifying new opportunities to explore place experience more deeply. We did this by drawing on creative expertise from local, national, international, and cross-sector partners, weaving their contributions into our emerging project journey. This additional resourcing of our Co-design Team was expertly supported by the following individuals:

- **Martin Heaton (University of Sheffield)** - who supported the Autumn group workshops with synthesis and note-taking.
- **Steven Forrest (University of Hull)** - who introduced participatory mapping methods to the Co-design Team members.
- **Helen Todd (Unfurling, Sheffield)** - who awoke the group's connection to urban nature through forest bathing in the local landscape.
- **Junia Mortimer (Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil)** - who helped unlock creativity by supporting us to develop new visual narratives using urban archives, photographic collaging and zine making.

To build trust in our more exploratory approach, and to help a group of largely new acquaintances find common ground, our first session focused on two things:

1. Understanding what had brought everyone together
2. Exploring the care each person held for their local area

Surfacing team member care and connection

We did this through an informal, in the round, discussion, where everyone took a turn to share their perspectives on two questions, with responses from across the group shown as follows:

Q1. What is everyone's point of personal connection and care for Manor Castle and The Green Estate?

- Importance of home - both for those who have been born and brought up in Manor Castle and those who have chosen to return or relocate.
- Meaningful work - for those with roles past and present that have focused on supporting and growing community connections.
- Communication issues - promoting a different story of Manor Castle and moving beyond the historic label of 'The Worst Estate in Britain'.
- Better information - understanding what's going i.e. local school groups didn't know there was a castle here.
- Welcoming new arrivals - finding ways to meet people, celebrate creativity and share diverse cultures.
- Developing skills - more opportunities for young people, local adults and children, to share and develop green skills and confidence in English.
- Ageing well - having an area wide commitment to people and families living with Dementia.

Q2. What is everyone's point of personal connection and care for Manor Castle and The Green Estate?

- Rebuilding connections with The Green Estate - it used to be loved by local people, employed local people, and held events for local people i.e. pie nights, Burns nights.
- Growing urban food - planting apple trees in the park and managing them as they grow.
- Encouraging people to care - finding solutions to get people to pick up their dog mess.
- Valuing air quality - as a huge local health and wellbeing asset compared to other areas of Sheffield .
- Improving mental health - through volunteering with Echo and The Green Estate in the Forest Garden.
- Raising aspirations for young people and children - through working with schools and families.
- Providing contact with animals - the impact on multiple generations of Big Lad the horse.
- Digital opportunities and barriers - sharing and supporting local events and building positive community connections through WhatsApp.

Stories: local memories and current experiences

This started to reveal why being part of the project mattered to team members, in terms of individual interests, and what connected everyone as a group, in terms of collective care for the local area. These themes also resonated with what we'd heard from adults and children who attended Marvellous Meadows, and set up the group members to start digging deeper, through a month of self-directed fieldwork in the community.

The October fieldwork invited group members to spend 3 hours exploring Manor Castle and The Green Estate through 3 lenses:

- **Social stories.** What experiences and relationships have shaped this place? This might include stories from your own life, or those of friends, neighbours and family, and what people care most about and why.
- **Environmental stories.** What does the local landscape tell us? This might include what you notice in parks, streets and green spaces, and what this reveals about the changing ecology of the area.
- **Economic stories.** What does investment (or its absence) look like here? This might include new developments, areas where investment is needed, and why this matters to you and the community.

Group members identified a range of creative approaches including:

photography, film, junk journaling, conversations with neighbours and family, exploring local photos, maps and archives, written reflections or diary entries, and verbal storytelling. There was no right or wrong method, the aim was simply to see what each person brought back to the November meeting. This included three team members who chose to collaborate on a film and sound piece together (quotes from which are shown on page 29).

Everyone's safety during fieldwork was a priority. Therefore guidance and safeguards were put in place (see box for details).

- A safety information guide was shared with all group members.
- Group members were asked not to carry out home visits. Any conversations with community members should take place in public spaces.
- Anyone planning to have conversations with community members was asked to notify the team in advance, so printed consent forms could be provided.
- If any fieldwork or community conversations raised difficult or concerning issues, group members were encouraged to contact the project facilitators.
- All group members were also provided with a project badge to use during fieldwork, showing their role and association with The Green Estate.

Stories: local memories and current experiences

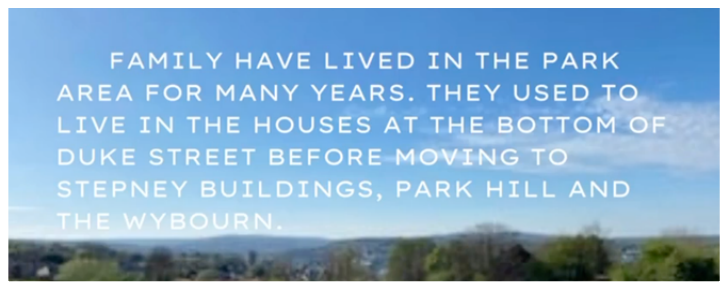
In our November meeting we reflected on what had emerged through the community fieldwork and experiences of the methods that had been used. Group members shared that there was 'a skill to interviewing', and some experienced 'challenges with tech and [team member] coordination', it 'takes time to speak to more people, get more stories, as there are so many!', and the focus on building trust 'as people can feel uncomfortable and shut down' and then it's 'hard to get them to [feel safe] to respond'.

The findings from the fieldwork were incredibly rich in highlighting local challenges and resident priorities which we grouped in terms under social, economic and environmental story themes:

- People love the area, but could do more to build community, including more places for young people to meet and socialise
- It's hard to get the word out about community facilities and programmes, and it takes time and money. There is no newsletter, what exists is full of negative news or is sporadic and unreliable - need to have a multi-platform approach
- There are multiple overlapping projects
- Divide between original and new residents
- Strong bond with wards people grew up in
- Myth vs Reality - positive stories can easily get drowned out by the negative i.e. 'Worst estate in Britain' and 'Reputation lags behind performance'
- People fear what they don't know and confidence issues around doing things that are not the norm for their class, culture, affinity groups
- Good values come from tradition
- Being an immigrant is like being a child and starting again with a heightened need for community
- Use cultural platforms and modes that people are familiar with
- Need for representation - other people like me, to feel more comfortable
- Hard to motivate people to get actively involved - perception is that creating community is someone else's job



THE LONG RUNNING
FAMILY
TIES ARE COMMON AROUND
HERE WITH FAMILIES
OFTEN STICKING TO THE
WARD OR RETURNING IF
THEY LEAVE.



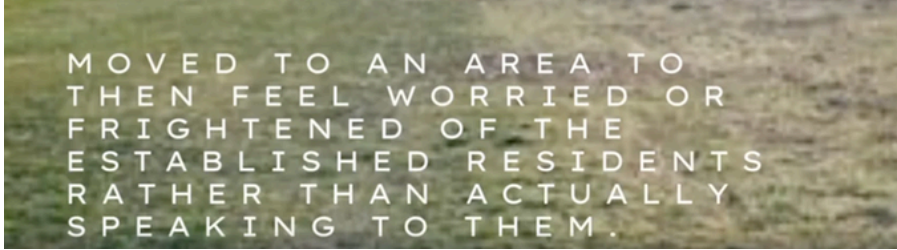
FAMILY HAVE LIVED IN THE PARK
AREA FOR MANY YEARS. THEY USED TO
LIVE IN THE HOUSES AT THE BOTTOM OF
DUKE STREET BEFORE MOVING TO
STEPNEY BUILDINGS, PARK HILL AND
THE WYBOURN.

Themes from economic stories

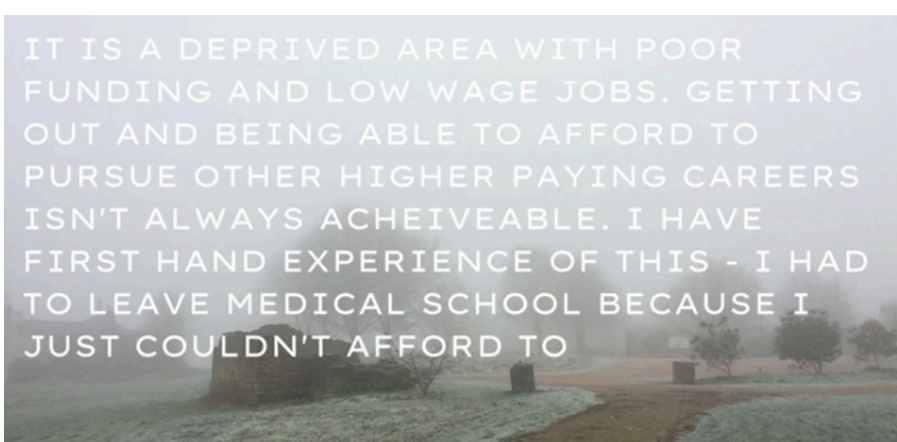
- There is a cost (in terms of both money and time) to high quality communications
- The onus is on local people to fund cultural events
- What The Green Estate offers isn't for locals - for example the food on site isn't within reach financially
- Accessing culture and going to theatres and exhibitions is expensive - so there needs to be a better outreach approach

Themes from environmental stories

- It's not that people don't care about their environment - but they have other priorities
- People appreciate the green space, but there is a lack of facilities for young people and children. What is the green space 'offer' for young people? What can children do at The Green Estate? What are the opportunities for natural play and adventure?
- Green space is not fully integrated into the culture of Sheffield, despite 'greenest city' title
- The lack of a map or signage at The Green Estate makes people feel 'Not welcome' or 'Not allowed'
- How can green spaces be a place to develop skills or apprenticeships i.e. in woodland craft, foraging, food growing etc.



MOVED TO AN AREA TO
THEN FEEL WORRIED OR
FRIGHTENED OF THE
ESTABLISHED RESIDENTS
RATHER THAN ACTUALLY
SPEAKING TO THEM.



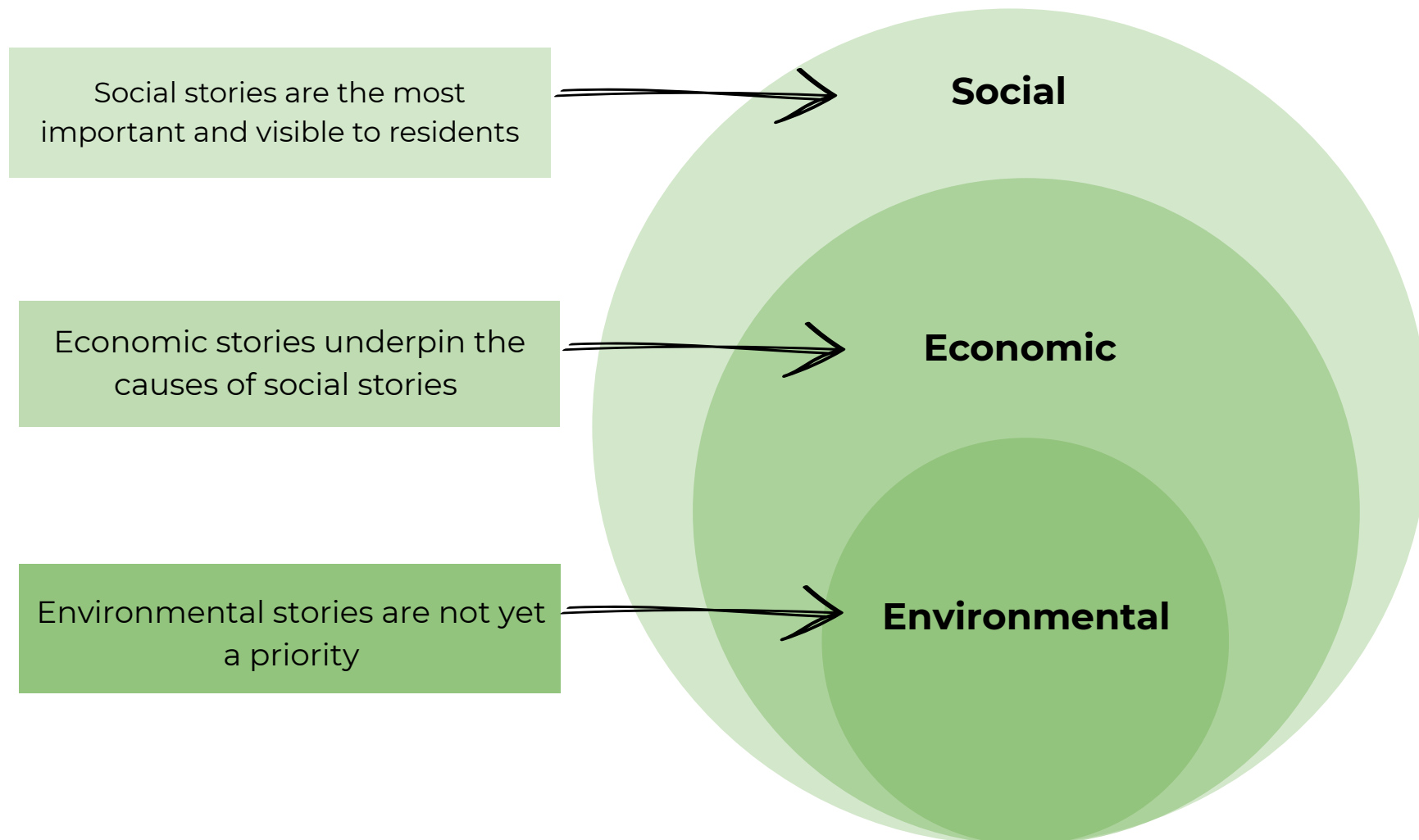
IT IS A DEPRIVED AREA WITH POOR
FUNDING AND LOW WAGE JOBS. GETTING
OUT AND BEING ABLE TO AFFORD TO
PURSUE OTHER HIGHER PAYING CAREERS
ISN'T ALWAYS ACHIEVABLE. I HAVE
FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF THIS - I HAD
TO LEAVE MEDICAL SCHOOL BECAUSE I
JUST COULDN'T AFFORD TO



IT MAY SEEM THAT CLIMATE
CHANGE IS LOW DOWN ON
THE LIST OF PRIORITIES
WITH THE COMMUNITY HERE
BUT THEY STILL CARE
ABOUT IT. THEY JUST HAVE
MORE IMPORTANT NEEDS
FIRST SUCH AS FOOD, WORK
AND CARING FOR THEIR
FAMILIES AND THEMSE

The nested visibility and importance of existing stories

These findings can also be summarised as a nested graphic as shown below, illustrating the relationship between the importance of, or the degree to which people value, current local social, economic and environmental experiences:



Exploring place through participatory mapping

To uncover how social and environmental aspects of the local area might help or hinder future climate adaptation and resilience, the Co-design Team members also undertook a participatory mapping workshop facilitated by Dr Steven Forrest of the Energy and Environment Institute at the University of Hull.

Participatory mapping is a process where local communities are actively involved in creating maps of their own areas, rather than having maps made for them by outside experts. It combines traditional mapping techniques with local knowledge, allowing people to record and communicate information about their land, resources, boundaries, cultural sites, and everyday experiences in a visual format they help shape. The goal is to give communities a voice in decisions that affect their land and lives, and it is increasingly used in urban planning, conservation, land rights, disaster risk, and development projects.

The workshop aimed to bring a deeper, community-led understanding of place in Manor Castle Ward to support the Rapid Global Review of Place-Based Urban Resilience, commissioned by The Green Estate and produced by Steven Forrest and his colleague Rhys Furley. In particular, it sought to capture how Co-design Team members currently experienced their local neighbourhoods, and what they noticed in their daily journeys through the area.



Exploring place through participatory mapping

Working in three groups, participants were asked to map a daily route, such as a journey to work, school, or shops, and then build on this by recording what they observed along the way. This included landmarks and points of interest, people or groups they encountered or interacted with, and elements of the natural environment they noticed. Participants were also invited to reflect on what they liked or disliked about their route, helping to surface both the strengths and challenges of the local area as experienced by those who live and move through it.

Their maps revealed a deeper level of insight into how group members valued the green and open spaces in the area. These were places to meet and escape the busyness of everyday life; spaces where people found beauty, natural and human-made landmarks, and points of orientation. They also emerged as vital connection corridors, linking home, school, work, shopping, and social activities.



Our participatory mapping exercise focused on identifying local routes and places of significance in relation to **four broad categories: generic landmarks; named places; people and events; the natural environment**. Working together in small groups Co-design Team members marked these places on three A1 maps, and we collated this data in the table below:

Local place categories	Local places of significance for group members		
Generic landmarks	• Cafes • Town • Haircut • Zebra crossing (described as “very helpful!”)	• New homes where fields were • Allotments • Work • Home • New houses	• Football pitch • Lovely bench with a nice view to have a flask of coffee (Norfolk Park) • Donated bollard • Gym
Named places	• Norfolk Park • Duke of Norfolk’s old estate office • Post office • Sky Edge • Asda • Lidl • Sweet factory • Graves • Alms houses	• Manor Lodge Primary School • Wybourn Primary School • Arena (Manor Park) • Manor Fields • Cemetery • Visits and events at Green Estate and Sheffield Manor Lodge • South Street Park (referenced heavy drug use (2020-2023) reduced from 2024)	• Cholera monument (mentioned funding to plant 60-70 trees in 2014/2019 (unclear), need pollinators now – hardly any fruit)\ • Ponds Forge • Shops on Manor Park centre • All Saints School • SUDS
People and events	• Manor Lodge Primary • Wybourn • Matrec • Sheffield park academy • School kids	• Young people • Runners • Sports • Dog walkers • A lady who feeds the ravens (Norfolk Park)	• Family (including “Family grew up here”) • Friends • Sheffield Carnival 2019, Sheffield Fayre 2023 (both Norfolk Park) • Football
Natural environment	• Trees • Squirrels • Apple trees	• The green spaces • Deer • Birds	• Rescued seagull at work • Fox

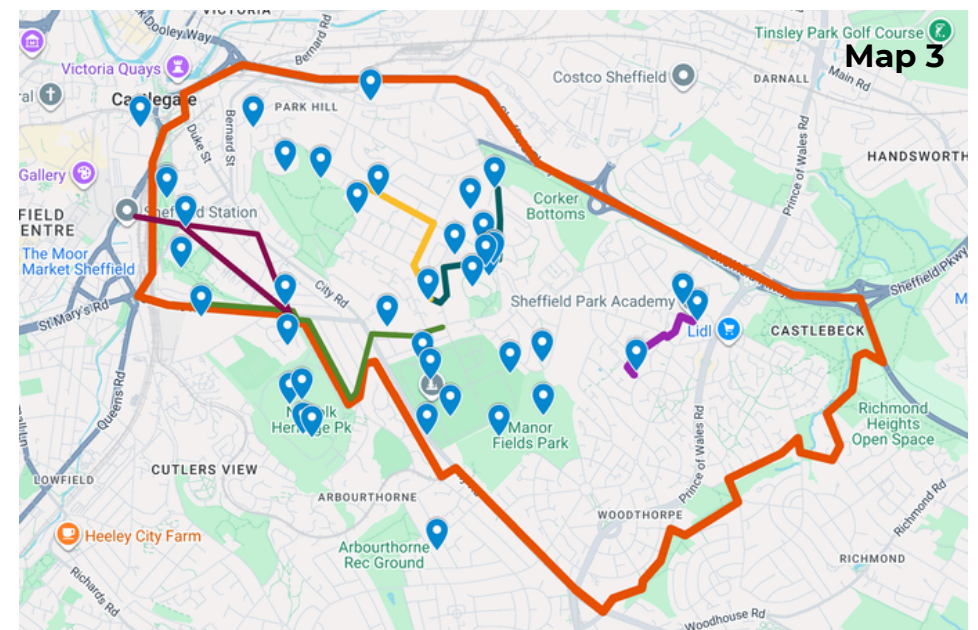
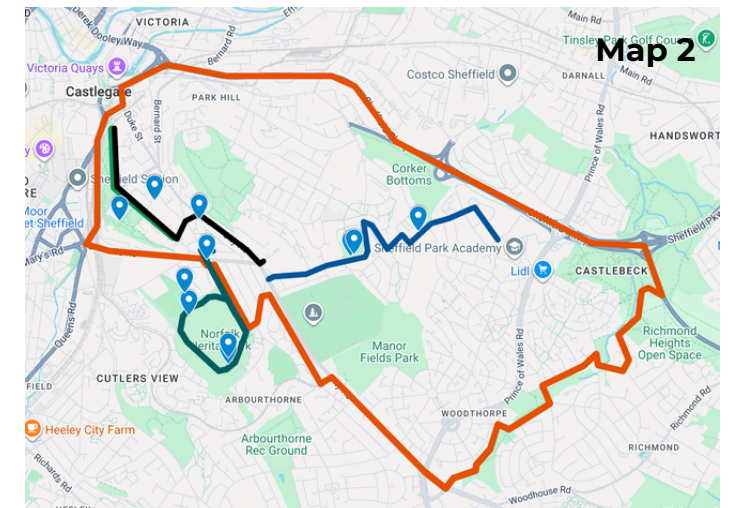
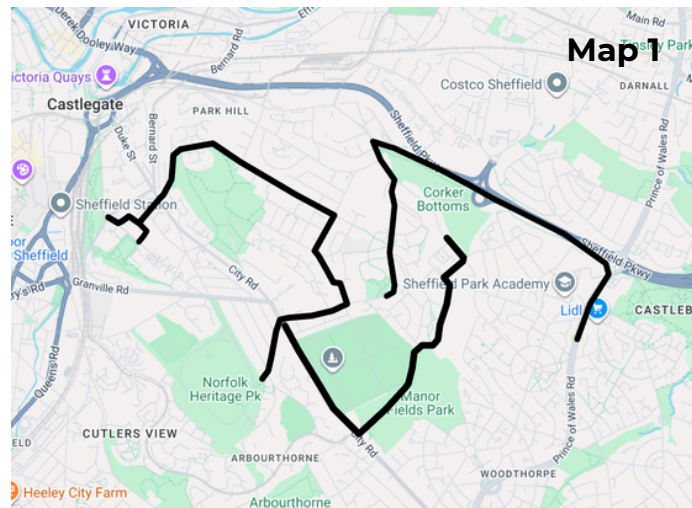
Exploring place through participatory mapping

The participatory mapping session also revealed which local walking routes held personal and shared significance, and provided key pedestrian corridors and connections between places such as home, school, work, shops, green spaces, social activities and meeting places.

You can explore these routes in more detail, and the local place experiences that the group identified, by clicking on the following Google Map links:

- **Map 1: Routes and places**
- **Map 2: Routes and places**
- **Map 3: Routes and places**

The routes identified highlighted the group's preference for **green walking corridors**. This included a comparison of two alternative routes as shown on Map 3 - walking along Norfolk Road or Stafford Road - with Norfolk Road being the preferred route as there were *"many trees on path, so if it was too sunny or rainy these could provide shade and protection"*.



Winter 2025



Experimenting: nurturing connections with urban nature and local food

In response to this emerging shared team value, we looked to find a way to explore a deeper level of connection to the urban nature growing in the nearby green spaces at The Green Estate.

Forest bathing at the arena

Forest bathing or Shinrin-Yoku in Japanese is about slowing down and fully immersing yourself in nature through your senses. A guide offers a series of invitations to help participants notice and connect with the natural world in ways they might otherwise overlook. You don't need to travel to a remote wilderness; there is real power in engaging differently with the nature right around you.

Developed in Japan in the 1980s to help city dwellers cope with modern stress, Shinrin-Yoku draws on ancient Shinto and Buddhist philosophies. Similar practices connecting nature with wellbeing can be found across many cultures, from Celtic and Islamic traditions to indigenous

communities in Latin America. Research - particularly from Japan where the government funds dedicated forest research centres - shows that Shinrin-Yoku improves psychological wellbeing and reduces stress, anxiety, and depression. It also encourages a sense of reciprocity: a desire to give back to nature, not just benefit from it.



For our session we were guided by Helen from Unfurling, and spent time in the orchard at The Green Estate. The group members found fascination in unexpected places - such as the miniature worlds within a decomposing apple - and described feeling both relaxed and revitalised afterwards.



Moving from connection to purpose

As group members deepened their connection with The Green Estate site, so too did our bonds as a Co-design Team. With a shared sense of purpose established, we turned to naming the project - choosing a name that captured what we most wanted to create: more opportunities for connection, and greater openness across Manor Castle Ward.

The group voted, and The Open Manor Project was born.

This was an important step change in our journey, as Co-design Team members began to more actively shape the future direction and focus. As energy built across the team, with it came the need to ensure we continued to be inclusive of all group members - we therefore introduced a Talking Stick (or Talking Spoon in the case of our project).

A talking stick is a tool used to ensure every voice in a group is heard equally.

Whoever holds the stick has the floor and others listen without interrupting. When they have finished speaking, the stick is passed on. Rooted in the council traditions of many indigenous peoples of North America, the talking stick is one of the oldest and most widely recognised tools for facilitating respectful, inclusive dialogue. Its use reflects a deep belief that every person's perspective has value and deserves to be fully heard before another speaks. In our Co-design Team meetings, the talking stick slowed the conversation down in a positive way - reducing the tendency for louder voices to dominate, creating space for quieter members to contribute, and encouraging genuine listening rather than simply waiting for an individual's turn to speak.

Martin, who had supported our work throughout the Autumn sessions with capturing and synthesising our workshop discussion, also helped us to bring design thinking and approaches to ideation into the project. And so we shared **IDEO's Rules of Brainstorming** and started to apply these principles to how we moved from exploration into experimentation.

EASY TO USE AND UNDERSTAND

INSTRUCTIONS

1. THE PERSON HOLDING THE TALKING STICK SPEAKS WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.
2. LISTENERS DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING BY ASKING CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AND RESTATING.
3. LISTENERS MAY NOT MAKE THEIR POINTS, ARGUE OR DISAGREE.
4. ONCE YOU ARE SATISFIED THAT YOU HAVE BEEN HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD, PASS THE TALKING STICK TO THE NEXT PERSON.
5. YOU CAN PASS IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SPEAK.



From fieldwork stories to future potential

We began this new stage of our work with a series of questions. These were aimed at identifying specific opportunities for immediate experiments from strands of work we'd done across Autumn. That had the potential to be further scaled, and where The Green Estate and others could make a meaningful contribution to bringing these into being, that would be complementary - not competitive - with existing local activities.

The reflective questions we asked were:

1. What stood out in terms of past, present and future community priorities?
2. How might we focus on potential - not problems- in relation to these?
3. What is it that only The Green Estate can help us do to realise this future potential?
4. How might we as a group work together with The Green Estate to bring this future closer?
5. How can other community partners help us to realise this future?
6. How might we as a group work together with local partners?
7. Who else should we be including in our future work in 2026?

The Community Co-design Team priorities and the future potential we identified, around which we started to experiment, are shown in the table.



Future Priorities

Emerging Potential

- The importance of being welcoming and places we can eat and drink together
- Focusing on building connections
- Activities for young people and children to help to develop social, creative and cultural skills
- Communities being able to share information out across the area
- Supporting integration of both young and older people to prevent isolation
- Creating a sense of shared ownership
- Being able to find people with similar interests and backgrounds
- Working with the weather and changing seasons and not seeing these as barriers
- The importance of ongoing events and groups to create connections
- Recognising value in the small scale and building momentum
- Centring on specific interests and reasons to engage

Developing a strategic, supportive approach to growing community connections through nurturing an annual pattern of new and ongoing events and groups.

Piloting the community meals

We chose to experiment with these ideas through the creation of a new series of community meals at The Green Estate in partnership with a local chef, Sarah Short, who had recently set up Manor Parish Community Kitchen.

The meals began in January 2026. Our first Winter meal was designed to coincide with Burns Night - to connect back to past food-focused events that had been held at The Green Estate and had brought the local community together.

The approach to the community meals was shaped by the lived experience and local insight of the Co-design Team members in terms of three key dimensions listed below.

- **How to create the right invitation for the immediate local community**
- **How to design the food menu and room set up to be inclusive**
- **What activities should be involved and how could we share what we had been doing**

Co-design Team member ideas in response to these questions are shown in Appendix 1.

New! The Green Estate CIC x Manor Parish Community Kitchen

COMMUNITY MEAL! ALL WELCOME!

BURNS NIGHT SPECIAL
Tuesday 27th January 4-6pm

- 🍷 Haggis & neeps and taties & pudding! 🍷
- 🔥 Fire pit & marshmallows, games & activities 🔥
- 🏠 Meet your neighbours & friendly faces 🏠
- ★ Hear about the Open Manor Project ★
- 👨👩👧👦 Families with children & all ages welcome 👨👩👧👦

Pay as you feel

Where: Manor Oaks House,
389 Manor Lane, S2 1UL



Contact: community@greenestate.org

 the green estate COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY



Refining our approach

Reflections on the Winter Community Meal from local guests, Co-design Team members and our local chef partner highlighted the following:

What worked well

- Nice flow
- Good test of concept
- Met people who we haven't seen for years
- Opportunity to engage with lots of different locals with lots of different agendas
- Chance to talk about memories of The Green Estate i.e. experiences of animals at The Green Estate previously
- Identified a need for more places for young people to socialise, which buildings and outdoor spaces The Green Estate could provide
- Flyering on Manor Lane which brought in new people and which we could do more of

What should we change

- Improve the 'Pay as You Feel' area
- Open the venue doors!
- Increase social media presence and sharing
- Clearly and confidently explain what we're doing as a group
- Aim for a 5.30pm meal start
- Begin the evening with an introduction to our group
- More ice breaker activities i.e. dancing, music, quiz with prizes
- Focus more time on communications with 'incomers' and new residents i.e. you don't vandalise what you understand and value and to address perceptions around anti-social behaviour
- Have one person whose role is to support children's activities

Priorities for the second Spring Community Meal

- Advertise the meal sooner including through social media, WhatsApp groups and The Mantle
- Email people who came to the Winter Community Meal
- Flyer in advance on local roads with Wybourn and Manor Lane schools, Co-op, local shops, doctors surgeries
- Dedicated roles for group members: 1) supervising children's games and activities, 2) welcoming people at the sign in desk, 3) food prep with Sarah the chef at The Green Estate, 4) presenting our group and project, 5) supporting creative activities (i.e. Spring wreath making, Our Shared Story collaging)
- Show a looping film of our project so far
- Set up 'Don't Waste Food' signs
- Make the 'Pay as You Feel' area clear at the welcome / sign in desk and include a suggested donation
- Engage people through local connections with MCDT, Welcoming Cultures, MASKK, the Romanian church etc.
- Create greater online visibility by launching our new Open Manor Project page on The Green Estate's website
- Make sure we think about diversity and how to address barriers for people
- Create a Community Meal FAQs doc and include ways to anonymously share feedback and thoughts
- Include a Chill Out area or more informal seating space
- Make clear the point of contact for enquiries i.e. name, phone number and email
- Include prep time for group talk covering what is The Green Estate and our project
- Decide how many people we can provide food for i.e. room capacity is 80

The Green Estate CIC x Manor Parish Community Kitchen

CELEBRATING SPRING! ALL WELCOME!

COMMUNITY MEAL
Tuesday 17th March 5-7pm

- 🍴 Tasty homemade food...first come, first served! 🍴
- 🔥 Fire pit & marshmallows, games & activities 🔥
- 🏠 Meet your neighbours & friendly faces 🏠
- ★ Hear about the Open Manor Project ★
- 👨‍👩‍👧 Families with children & all ages welcome 👨‍👩‍👧

Pay as you feel

Where: Manor Oaks House,
 389 Manor Lane, S2 1UL

Contact: 07949 529871
community@greenestate.org

Manor urban archives, collaging and zine making

We also wanted to introduce reflective and creative activities into the community meals, which could connect with both younger and older people.

Therefore as part of our March Co-design Team meeting we were joined by Junia Mortimer, a researcher from Brazil who works with collage using photographs and other materials. Junia helped us create photocopied, cut and collaged artwork based around the stories that had been important to the group members, which had shaped their relationship to the past, present and future of Manor Castle Ward and The Green Estate.

We exhibited this artwork at our second Spring community meal on March 17th 2026, where we wove into the meal activities a zine making workshop, led by Junia, which in turn built upon the multi-layered images created by Co-design Team members in the collage workshop.



Zines are small, self-published booklets, typically handmade, photocopied, and produced in small quantities. Zines have a long history as a grassroots medium, giving individuals and communities a creative outlet to share ideas, stories, art, and perspectives outside of mainstream channels. The zine-making workshop at the Spring Community Meal brought a diversity of people to sit together and create their own zines around the stories of Manor Castle Ward. No artistic experience was needed, and the zines celebrated lo-fi, DIY creativity, with no rules about what they should look like or contain. The zine making process encouraged people to reflect on their local experiences and connection in a tangible, practical and visual way.

Manor urban archives, collaging and zine making



Manor urban archives, collaging and zine making

Reflections on Urban Archives in the Open Manor Project

"I had been encountering the concept of interspecies assemblies through books and academic talks. But it was unexpectedly in our workshop with the Open Manor Project that I understood how viscerally this reflection operates in daily life, so embedded in the ordinary that it risks being taken for granted, dismissed, or simply overlooked.

Participants were sharing pictures and objects they had brought to introduce themselves and situate their relationship with the place. Then someone mentioned a horse that had lived in the Manor area. There was immediate excitement around the table: The Big Lad. That was his name. And everyone had stories. Helen had a picture of her son (today thirteen, but then only six) pointing his small right hand toward the animal. Oz said he had groomed The Big Lad himself, and showed us a photograph: the horse in the foreground, he himself slightly behind, proudly conducting. Others recalled the smell of horse manure drifting through the neighbourhood. Someone wondered aloud why there were no longer horses in the Manor.

What emerged was striking: both the discussion it opened about urban policy and animal rights, and the collective movement of memory that spiralled around the table, offering everyone enough fragments to assemble some sense of belonging.

The workshop, titled Urban Archives: The Open Manor Project, was designed to surface memories, locate common ground, and reflect on them visually - through cutting, printing, pasting, and copying as research tactics for co-producing urban history. The outputs (the zines, the collage boards) matter less than what happened in the making. What mattered were the potential bonds around urban imaginaries, and the neighbourhood network of care that the activity itself quietly activated. Yet the objects remain as testimony to a process of cultivating relations: between residents, researchers, and consultants consistently engaged with the shared dream of truly opening Manor to the city - and the city to Manor."

Junia Mortimer, Assistant Professor | Federal University of Minas Gerais

Community meal feedback and next steps



Community meal feedback and next steps

To date, a total of 62 people have joined the community meals.

The Winter Meal welcomed 29 attendees, made up of 15 adults, 7 children, and 7 Green Estate staff, volunteers, and Co-design Team members. **The Spring Meal saw attendance grow to 33**, comprising 13 adults, 11 children, and 9 Green Estate staff, volunteers and Co-design Team members.

At each meal we asked for feedback from local residents and guests attending the meals about:

The Community Meal: *Would you like them to carry on? What food would you like to see?*

Thank you for the meal, a lovely idea

Maybe some activities to help people mingle/meet others if they want to

Really loved it

Made some great connections

Maybe curry night? Do have more

Maybe charge a donation for the superb food

Excellent food and staff, do more community events please! Thank you

Fab idea, lovely food, good company, thank you!

Great idea

Amazing evening, totally unexpected. Such a delightful gathering, loved it

Meat lacking, but still a great taste, Eaten all but the fork and the plate, All the desserts, along with the atmosphere, Long live the chef, cause she's a dear!!

Community meal feedback and next steps

The Green Estate: Do you visit us? What do you like about the site? What could we do more of?

Lovely place to be

Apple days

*Good things
happening*

*Please advertise the wonderful
things you do more widely*

*More advertising
in local area*

More open days

*We loved getting involved but find it hard
to find out what's going on*

*I used to visit a lot
when my kids were
young but I haven't
seen anything that
appeals to my
teenagers*

*The site is lovely, I didn't know it had so
many things happening here*

*Stop and stare at the beauty of it, In the place
we planted, water it, then sit, Take the fruits
out of your labour then start again, Every day
a star you are, my friend*

*Beautiful!!! Lots of seasonal interest and
so well maintained! Exciting to hear
sustainable considerations for the
future!*

The local green spaces and parks: Do you like using the green spaces? Did you know we look after some of them?

*We are incredibly lucky in Sheffield, no one should
need to travel far in order to reach a green area.
Sheffield is such a wonderful green city*

*I love our green spaces, wild flowers and meadows and
Manor Lodge. Keep going and growing*

As a result of this feedback, The Green Estate have continued grow the community meals, with a third meal taking place in June 2026. They have also applied for funding to invest in the resources (equipment) and infrastructure (advertisement and payment for staff time) which is now needed to sustain the momentum created by piloting the seasonal meals as part of the Open Manor project.

Spring 2026



Dreaming: how to grow a resilient and thriving future

As the project moved into its final seasonal chapter, Spring brought with it a sense of new beginnings - a moment to sow seeds for the future that The Green Estate, local partners, and community residents could nurture together.

Through reflective and generative discussions with the Co-design Team over the Winter months, a clear theme emerged: the importance of balancing future hopes with realism. This included acknowledgment of the tensions The Green Estate must manage, in terms of continuing to be financially sustainable in a challenging economic environment, adhering to business and legal requirements, and their commitment to supporting local community resilience on the other.

A natural first step towards how to balance this future was already within reach. Strong enthusiasm within the group for a Summer Celebration - an event bringing people together around nature, food, and shared experience - found its

perfect home in The Green Estate's annual Marvellous Meadows event on 5th July 2026. The Barn at The Green Estate would provide space for activities, communal eating, and gathering across the site, while the occasion itself offered something deeper: a moment to showcase the work and learnings of the Open Manor project, celebrate what had grown since its beginnings in 2025, and look ahead together to what might yet be possible.



Dreaming: how to grow a resilient and thriving future

This celebration would not simply be an event in isolation, but an early expression of a larger shared dream: growing sustained community access to nature-focused activities at The Green Estate. That longer-term vision has several interlocking elements:

- **A clear community offer:** spanning growing, preparing, and eating local food, neighbourhood nature walks, and green prescribing - welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds.
- **Reaching people across the area:** requiring a strategic communications approach, combining online and offline networks, and supported by a dedicated community connector role to build relationships and reduce barriers to participation.
- **Enduring beyond the life of the current project:** with the offer resting on an economically sustainable business plan, with affordable rates ensuring that local people and groups can genuinely access the spaces and buildings on site.
- **A robust evaluation approach:** tracking footfall, community comfort, and depth of nature connection to help demonstrate the value being created and make the case for continued investment.
- **A commitment to place-based partnership:** drawing together organisations already rooted in the area - such as local schools, foraging groups, Manor Open Gardens, Park Hill Community Garden, Manor and Castle Development Trust, Manor After School and Kids Klub, Manor Parish Community Kitchen - and city and regional partners - such as Sheffield universities and colleges, health organisations, local businesses, Sheffield Foyer, Great Places and South Yorkshire Housing Association, Sheffield City Council and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority - to help to co-deliver activities, provide referral pathways, and contribute to shared communications and outreach across the ward.

Recognising the reciprocal value of these relationships, and how they can help ensure that The Green Estate is not just a place people visit, but a living part of the community's future-resilient, rooted, and genuinely shared.

The Open Manor Greenprint for Manor Castle Ward

The vision and values we describe find their practical expression in the *Open Manor Greenprint*, which may be viewed on the following pages. This is a living framework that translates community dreams into actionable commitments.

Developed through the co-design process, it sets out what The Green Estate, local partners, and residents might build together: not as a fixed plan imposed from outside, but as a living document that can grow and adapt alongside the community it serves.

This is not a plan handed down from outside. It is something planted here, in Manor Castle Ward, by the people who know it best, and grown together, in the hope that it will still be flowering long after our project has ended.



The Open Manor Greenprint: rooted in place, grown together

Our Future Vision

A resilient, nature-connected community in Manor Castle Ward where people of all ages and backgrounds have sustained access to green spaces, locally grown food, and nature-based activities, with The Green Estate at the heart of a thriving network of partners and residents working together.



Community needs identified

- Accessible, affordable nature activities for residents of all ages and backgrounds
- Local spaces for young people to socialise, tailored to their needs
- Skills in growing, preparing, and eating local food
- Improved wellbeing through green prescribing and nature connection
- Stronger connections between residents and local organisations
- A sustainable community offer that outlasts individual projects



Local partners tending it together

- Co-delivering nature connection, horticulture, and food growing activities alongside The Green Estate, including Manor Open Gardens, Park Hill Community Garden, and local foraging groups
- Providing referral pathways into nature-based wellbeing through doctors practices, teaching hospitals, and health partners
- Supporting joint communications and outreach through existing networks, including MCDT, MASKK, Manor Parish Community Kitchen, and Sheffield's colleges and universities

Residents making it ours

- Co-designing the community offer to keep it relevant and locally rooted
- Taking active roles in events, growing projects, and nature activities as participants, volunteers, and peer connectors
- Sharing knowledge, skills, and networks to grow the reach and resilience of the offer
- Working with The Green Estate to develop a community incubator where residents and emerging businesses can take root, grow, and reinvest in their neighbourhood

The Green Estate CIC preparing the ground

Roots and shoots that require little or no additional resource

- Aligning strategic goals with community priorities
- Seeking funding for improved site signage and interpretation
- Hosting more community meals and celebrations

Seeds we can plant today by investing limited resources

- Community offer centred on nature skills and interests
- Raising awareness of how to access The Green Estate spaces
- Evaluation tracking footfall, comfort, and nature connection

Given the right conditions what we can grow with additional funding

- A community connector for outreach and ward relationships
- A sustainable business plan for the ongoing community offer
- Health partnerships focused on nature connection
- A local food growing initiative linking onsite and neighbourhood production
- A strategic communications approach for local reach
- A programme of nature walks, growing workshops, and food sessions for all ages
- Reciprocal partnerships to support coordinated delivery
- Funding to sustain and expand the community nature offer
- Evidence of impact to attract future investment

The Open Manor Greenprint: growing impact from the ground up



For young people

- Spaces to socialise, belong, and feel welcome
- Activities co-designed with and for young people
- Practical skills in growing, making, and environmental care
- Volunteering and leadership roles that build confidence and agency



In the lives of local people

- More people taking part in nature-based activities at The Green Estate
- New skills in growing, preparing, and sharing local food
- Better health and wellbeing through nature connection
- Stronger intergenerational bonds through shared experience
- The Green Estate's spaces accessible and affordable for all



In the natural life of the neighbourhood

- Local people actively stewarding green spaces
- More growing across gardens, doorsteps, and surrounding neighbourhoods
- Nature connection woven into everyday urban life



In the wider story of Sheffield

- A replicable model of community-led urban nature
- Deeper, more resilient partnerships rooted in Manor Castle Ward
- Growing evidence of footfall, engagement, and community confidence
- A meaningful contribution to Sheffield's ambitions for a healthier, greener, more connected city



Contact details

To find out more about the Open Manor Project and what's happening at The Green Estate get in touch at:

Address:

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Email: Community@greenestate.org

Telephone: 0114 276 2828

Project webpage: greenestate.org.uk/open-manor-project



Appendix 1: team ideas for the first community meal

Design ideas for the community invitation

Increasing invitation appeal

- Pay as you feel, making it clear any money collected will be reinvested in future community events
- Help getting there i.e. using the Manor Castle Community Transport bus service or a walking bus for older people or people who are coming on their own
- Advertising the activities we will be doing

Meal invitees

- We should prioritise inviting people living in very local houses around The Green Estate and people who are more isolated of all ages

Language

- Should be inclusive i.e. not supper club but a warm meal, place to chat, get to meet our group and hear about our project
- Make it clear and simple about how and when to attend and what's on offer
- Use multiple languages where possible on the invitation

Visual design

- Colourful
- To the point
- Photos of people and recognisable areas of The Green Estate - seasonal (frosty)

Methods for getting the meal invite out to people

- Local individual and community connections
- Use existing local group contacts held by group members
- Social media posts
- Printed leaflets
- Put up the invitation in local shops, doctors surgeries, common places
- Share through local WhatsApp groups
- Share through our new project page on The Green Estate website

Appendix 1: team ideas for the first community meal

Design ideas for community meal food and room layout

Food

- Seasonal
- Soup starter
- Burns night - vegetarian haggis, neeps and tatties
- Veggie pie
- Chilli, stew, burritos
- Options for kids
- Charcuterie board - but might not work with different dietary and cultural / faith needs
- Build your own pud - ice cream, chocolate and other sauces

Drinks

- Not alcoholic - water, tea, coffee, squash

Decorations

- On tables with greenery from around Green Estate

Room layout

- Blackboard menu with dietary requirements and meal options
- Around shared tables

Pre-meal activities

- Structure can be good for facilitating conversations
- Paper table cloths or place mats printed with local maps so guests can get to know each other through the participatory mapping activities

Design ideas for community meal activities

Activities

- Movement activities i.e. nature movement therapy
- Collaborative storytelling around the fire pit
- Bonfire and making smores and cooking them
- Poetry i.e. open mic
- Drawing and low budget crafts
- Show the film made by Co-design Team members
- Community questions board

Games

- Wink murder
- Pictionary
- Show and tell
- Quiz - what do people know about Green Estate and its history
- Scavenger hunt for kids
- Use Green Estates existing games: giant connect 4 and jenga

Appendix 2: links for project partners and approaches

Individual contributors

- Steven Forrest (University of Hull)
- Martin Heaton (University of Sheffield)
- Alice Jones (The Green Estate CIC)
- Al Mathers (Sheffield)
- Junia Mortimer (Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil)
- Helen Todd (Unfurling, Sheffield)

Project partners and supporters

- Manor and Castle Development Trust
- Manor After School Kids Klub
- Manor Parish Community Kitchen
- The Really Regenerative Centre CIC
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- Yorkshire Policy Innovation Partnership
- Welcoming Cultures

References for project approaches and tools

- Forest bathing (forestryengland.uk/blog/forest-bathing/)
- Participatory mapping (mappingforrights.org/participatory-mapping/)
- Community-led action research (scdc.org.uk/community-led-action-research/)
- IDEO's approach to Brainstorming (<https://www.ideo.com/en-gb/pages/brainstorming>)
- Liz Gadd Consulting (lizgaddconsulting.org/)





Get involved



Donate,
volunteer,
partner &
more...

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