

PRELUDE



# Whitchurch Hospital Community Workshops Report

April 2026



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## **Whitchurch Hospital Community Ideas Workshops**

Velindre NHS Trust commissioned Prelude to deliver community workshops to develop and give voice to local ideas for the future use of the old hospital site. Two identical sessions were held on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2026 (each three hours long) at Ararat Baptist Church.

The sessions were guided by the following Challenge Question and:

**“How might we ensure that the community benefits from the Whitchurch Hospital site?”**

64 participants worked in nine teams across the two workshops. The sessions followed a structured format, starting from local strengths and assets, understanding the Challenge, and then collectively developing ideas.

The following report captures directly the ideas that were put forward from the two workshops sessions and reflect what participants would like to see for the future of the site.

The ideas in the document include:

- The journey to the new use of the site and how the community wants to be informed and involved in pro-active ways
- The use and re-use of existing buildings and assets on the site
- The impact of new development of the site on local amenities
- The importance of access in any future use of the site
- The cultural, historical, social, environmental, economic, legal, and recreational uses of the site for the wellbeing of individuals and the community
- The priority of this once in a generation opportunity to make a lasting impact for good for local residents

## **Executive Summary**

Participants consistently advocated that the redevelopment should prioritise long-term community benefit over purely commercial or residential interests. They viewed this as a “once in a generation” opportunity for the Whitchurch Hospital site. Several major themes emerged repeatedly:

### **1. Community-led governance and participation**

Participants strongly wanted local people to remain involved throughout planning, development, and long-term management of the site. There were repeated calls for:

- Ongoing consultation and transparency
- Legally binding community protections
- A community trust or civic trust to oversee development
- Community ownership or stewardship of sports fields and public assets
- Developers being contractually required to deliver agreed community outcomes

The workshops reflected concern that community promises could otherwise be diluted once development begins.

### **2. Protection of green space and heritage**

A dominant idea was that the site’s existing environmental and historical character should be preserved. Participants emphasised:

- Retaining gardens and open green spaces
- Protecting sports pitches permanently
- Avoiding overdevelopment and excessive housing density
- Rewilding and biodiversity measures
- Reuse of historic buildings where possible

There was also strong interest in celebrating the site’s history through museums, heritage centres, and preservation of landmark buildings such as the chapel and water tower.

### **3. Health, wellbeing, and social infrastructure**

The community consistently framed the site as an opportunity to improve public wellbeing. Suggested uses included:

- Expanded GP and medical facilities
- Health and wellbeing hub
- Community gardens and allotments
- Spaces for social prescribing

- Leisure and sports facilities (clubs)
- Walking and cycling connections
- Accessible recreation for all ages and abilities

The site was seen as an important public-health asset for Whitchurch residents and visitors.

#### **4. Multi-use community spaces**

Participants envisioned the site as a mixed-use civic destination rather than a single-purpose housing estate. Proposed facilities included:

- Arts and cultural centre (“The Chapter Arts of the North”)
- Community café
- Theatre and cinema
- Sports hall and gym
- Market and festivals
- Adult education and university outreach spaces
- Youth facilities and childcare provision

Many groups suggested transforming existing buildings — particularly the chapel and hall — into cultural or recreational venues.

#### **5. Inclusive and affordable housing**

While most groups accepted some residential development, they emphasised:

- Affordable and social housing
- Mixed-age and supported housing
- Eco-friendly and sustainable homes
- Thoughtful architecture
- Development scaled to local infrastructure capacity

There was clear resistance to profit-driven or high-density development that would strain local services.

#### **6. Sustainability and environmental responsibility**

Environmental sustainability was a recurring theme. Ideas included:

- Solar panels and renewable energy
- Heat pumps and high insulation standards
- EV charging and cycle infrastructure
- Traffic management and active travel routes

- Sustainable drainage and sewage planning

Participants wanted the redevelopment to become an exemplar of environmentally responsible urban design.

## **7. Concerns about infrastructure pressure**

Residents repeatedly raised concerns that redevelopment must not overload existing local infrastructure. Concerns focused on:

- Traffic congestion
- Parking
- Drainage and sewage systems
- GP and dental capacity
- School provision
- Public transport connectivity

Many groups argued that infrastructure improvements should precede or accompany any major development.

## **8. Economic and local enterprise opportunities**

The workshops also highlighted opportunities for local economic development through:

- Small independent businesses
- Pop-up retail and restaurants
- Start-up businesses
- Apprenticeships and inclusive skills programmes
- Community repair shops
- Sustainable local enterprise

Participants preferred locally rooted businesses over large-scale retail chains, and opposed vape shops, barbers, and betting shops.

## **The Big Picture**

The overarching view emerging from the workshops is that the Whitchurch Hospital site represents a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity to create a socially valuable, environmentally sustainable, and community-centred development. Residents consistently asked for:

- Long-term community benefit
- Local involvement in decisions
- Preservation of heritage and green spaces
- A mixed-use model focused on community and wellbeing