



Gartcosh Village Square

This proposal is in response to Gartcosh Tenants & Residents Association's efforts to identify and or in some cases enhance, increase or establish community space in Gartcosh Village. The GTRA identified this community space for upgrade and facilitate multifunctional use. We placed this under the banner "Gartcosh Village Square".

Objective

To upgrade and refurbish the existing community space situated at the community hall on Lochend Rd Gartcosh.

Goals

To define the space and purpose in accordance with community / residents suggestions. Ensuring the identity and future function is recognised as a central village space. That this space works as a multi-functional space within Gartcosh which can help maximise the limited social and environmental opportunities of the community. We would look to:

- Transform the location / environment to support wellbeing and enhance quality community use and access of the square.
- Ensure we keep our environment clean, safe and attractive.
- Improve the involvement of North Lanarkshire Council in supporting the community as a partner.
- Ensure consultation data supporting this community project is evidence based in decision making.

Solution

Refurbish the space adjacent to the small parade of shops located at Old Gartloch Rd. and Lochend Rd. The GTRA would seek to create a more sociable space for both younger and older residents to enjoy. That it is seen as a destination point within the village that can be a recreational point or accommodate a small community event. The introduction of design elements and new materials will transform a rather dull grass area with one bench into a vibrant multifunctional space that will be a welcomed high value asset in the centre of the village.

Considerations

We considered a number of factors. The community survey had identified "A" & "B" projects. The Village Square - a "B" project, is a small project and could be achieved with smaller grants or in partnership with the council.

We consulted online, in the street and at the Gartcosh Gathering, a community conference type event, and had the survey open for over 6 weeks. We did not want to continually survey at our own events where we may only reach the same audience. We also did not make the survey a single issue choice and made the survey flexible so residents could add suggestions and truly engage with the community. We received 244 completed surveys and 430 completing the like and dislike portion totalling 674, a full analysis is on our [website](#).

The play park as a B project came in first. The busy junction and the fact that a play area sits just behind the hall ruled it out. We contacted planning and confirmed that Avant is putting in a play trail which has indicated it would cater for older children as well. The village square was the next popular "B" choice by residents and was also first as a second and third choice in ranking 1 to 7 by residents. Along with the village square, residents asked for a pleasant place to sit, a destination to walk to, a coffee shop and green space to sit and enjoy.

We also considered its current use. The whole area is not accessible to disabled residents, in that they are confined to the path and there is only one seat.

The Care Inspectorate in 2017 identified the area as unsafe and not secure for children. Children themselves made comment in the report as being "really muddy and not very safe". The after school care is an excellent service for users and parents, but it is a private company and for profit. We concluded a private company which could relocate to premises near any new school or choose to locate elsewhere should not be considered in any deliberation and should not be part of any community volunteer grouping and we gave due consideration to the safety comments mentioned in the care inspectorate report above associated with the area in connection with the service.

The area is currently mainly grassed. If you venture on to the grass, it is periodically full of dog foul. You can raise grass into the borders or planter. So grass can be presented differently and can be a pleasure not being a health risk, and discourages anti social practices of minority dog owners.

There could be concerns that the improvements may become a magnet for vandalism and youth to hang around. We concluded many parents of teenagers in the village would take great offence at the suggestion that their child would engage in such behaviour. Also regarding equality, are our young people not to engage with their peers in safe pleasant surroundings like all other members of the community? Anti-social behaviour is dealt with within the community. It is not a defensible position to not improve our surroundings because of a minority. Should we all give up our dogs because of a few irresponsible owners? One could easily argue that the installation of CCTV increases security.

The Project

The GTRA propose to develop this area both as a traditional outdoor village square in keeping with a small village but take the design further into a multifunctional community space.

Traditional Design Elements - The space requires good quality hard landscaping that allow access to the whole site ensuring access for disabled. Clearance boundaries for established trees needs to be maintained. Rules regarding introducing structure and planting will be observed in protecting trees.

We have looked to develop small themes within the design which are educational and practical. We would install a small outdoor clock tower and incorporate weather instrumentation such as a thermometer, barometer and a weather vane. By incorporating these small features it:

- creates a destination point.
- in practical terms provides the time, valuable when engaging with public transport at this location.

- introducing weather instruments can provide a platform for any number of projects related to science, weather or climate change by any youth groups.
- it provides an opportunity for outdoor interaction and community engagement.
- seating should be of a style and sufficient to allow residents to engage in the space in solitude or enjoy the space with friends or family.

Additional Design Elements

There has to be a fixed power supply and water to be a multifunctional space to support community events and planting. The council are planning to extend their CCTV scheme to provide security that is not there today. As with any valuable outdoor space in Scotland the weather can dictate the frequency of availability of quality outdoor space. We wish to incorporate canopy technology to extend the practical and economic benefits and we are confident that our design and solutions will broaden the potential use for the community. People asked for a coffee shop. We can't provide that but the GTRA could undertake in the summer months afternoon tea events or coffee mornings, sponsor lunch for older residents under cover of the canopy or the lunch club might look to change the venue and use it to eat al fresco. Using an outdoor screen a film for children could be shown. If children wanted to put on a performance or music recital the space could also be utilised. The few children who did survey all asked for performing arts space. The school could hold an outdoor class, a community gardening class or flower arranging. The canopy expands the use and in a practical sense provides cover to residents if rain does make an appearance. Most of these activities listed above would be in the summer and during the day.

An example of the various design elements that helps depict the the quality of space we are trying to create are available to view as a mood board below. The space will function as a green space 70% of the time as it does today but 30% of the time it has the potential to be host for other organisations and the community as a whole. The improved green space by far is in the planting and using large planters to provide planting areas. Raised planting brings plant material to the eye line of small children and allows older residents to participate in any volunteering in upkeep.

There is no planting of great importance in the current space (one corner) apart from the trees. It presents an opportunity to create impressive planting areas and introduce colour.

We are looking to have planting days to involve residents of all ages. Have small metal type name plates that a child can attach their name to decorate the planters, we can make bespoke planter for certain areas and young people can join in, hoping this will create ownership by the very young and the youth in our community. There also wildlife elements such as bird boxes and planting to attract the bees and bug hotels.

As with any community, there will be residents who have no interest in the project, and some with a passing interest. Others may wish to be involved and add skills and knowledge, or just help. If you are interested please get in touch via our website - all help welcome. Others who will hate it but that's what makes a community. The GTRA have a project that embraces in a small way what our community cares about expressed in the survey, in a very small space on a small scale and on a small budget. We would have liked to have attached the council design team plan and invite you to a presentation of the project. Hopefully we will be announcing a date for the presentation shortly.

Example Visuals

