

NEILSTON GOING PLACES



Charrette Report
April 2014



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NEILSTON GOING PLACES

Re-energising the charter process and engaging with you to build a positive view of the future landscape of Neilston.

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The Team

THE CHARRETTE TEAM

TOM SNEDDON
ARCHITECT

TOM SNEDDON: ARCHITECT
Tom fulfilled the role of lead consultant and co-ordinated the input of the various consultants. Tom is a co-founder of Development Trust Association Scotland which has community-led regeneration as one of its core principles. Tom led the Village Centre thematic group.



CITY DESIGN CO-OPERATIVE
Richard East is a landscape architect and urban designer. Richard led the Open Space group.



URBIS Ltd - ARCHITECTS
David Fleming from Urbis is an architect with considerable experience in housing of various types and he led the Housing Opportunity group.



SNOOK
Sarah Drummond, Matthew Lowell and Alex Clarke led on the community engagement strategy and communications throughout the charette process.



University of Stirling
Professor Leigh Sparks from Stirling University provided expertise on national strategy, town centre issues and retail.



Neilson Partnership
David Neilson from the NEILSON PARTNERSHIP provided cost information to the designers.

THE PROJECT TEAM



East Renfrewshire Council
The core Charrette Team was supported by Daniel McKendry and his colleagues including Economic Development, Regeneration Services, Planning, Estates, Housing, Parks, Sports and the Community Planning Team.



Neilston Development Trust
Pauline Gallacher from Neilston Development Trust supported by Steven Tolson who was engaged by the Trust as their project agent providing guidance on housing, market analysis and delivery mechanisms. While he was not formally part of the consultant's team he played an active part in the Charrette process, community engagement and the preparation of the report.

The Community Team
The community team provided invaluable support and comprised representatives from the Advisory Group, Neilston Community Council, Hillside Residents, Councillors Buchanan, Gilbert, Green and O'Kane, business representatives, schools, staff and volunteers at the Bank, and the people of Neilston.

Foreword

Neilston: an ordinary place, in the flux of its common life, its routines, its joys and sorrows; but also unique, in its heritage, its geography, its potential, and the particular talents and relationships that make it what it is, at this moment in its history.

10 years ago Neilston folk came out in large numbers to have a proposition made to them; that of embarking on a community-led, strategic plan for the village, one that would respect and cherish the life and identity of this modest place, while pressing for a better designed environment and sustainable future. The can-do response of individuals on that night, and over the years, and their loyalty to the vision, have brought us to where we are now.

We were clear from the outset that the test of all our efforts would be any strategy's fit with the planning system, and for that we needed the participation of the statutory authorities. Quite how that might happen was not clear to us; but a start was made. And here we are, with our Town Charter about to be enshrined in the Council's Development Plan policies.

10 years....a blink of the eye in the history of a place, especially one with the long reach of Neilston, but half a generation in the lives of its current inhabitants. Why has it taken that long to come thus far? Our ambition, we soon discovered, would not be realised in the pages of a design document, however creative, but by the building of new relationships with the Council, growing trust and collaboration among groups in the community, creating

new structures of governance, developing capacity for the work we had given ourselves.

This document is all about our place and how it be changed, positively and productively. Change is a constant; what matters is what the change is, who makes the changes and who benefits - or not. At the risk of making grandiose claims, what's being attempted in Neilston embodies many of the aspirations of commentators and policy makers; that it should be possible to develop a more transparent and locally owned change-making process.

The talk is all about identity and power. Policies to support community empowerment, land ownership, social enterprise are one part of the equation, but in the end it will come down to the extent that people want and are able to take that power, responsibly, to themselves, and the resources they get to do that work; to play the long game needed to win trust, find a shared vision and the means to deliver. When we set out, there were no guarantees. 'Time will tell', we said. And, happily, it did.

It gives me great pleasure to commend this report to Government and to the people of Neilston. The report is brimming with carefully considered responses to the insights and ambitions of local people. It challenges obstacles to fruitful development of 'non-commercial' sites. It makes practical recommendations for addressing prosaic but pressing problems (such as parking and urban maintenance), which can unlock other developments. It applies the practice of genuine urban design - the

creation of places for people - to Neilston's streets and spaces. And just as important, it provides a steer for implementation which is as realistic as it is innovative.

To those who brought us thus far, from the local people, politicians and officials who have kept faith with Neilston, to the consultants and external supporters who have contributed their insights and skills, our heartfelt thanks. 10 years from now, it will be interesting to see how we've got on.

Pauline Gallacher
Neilston Development Trust

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This report records the ambitions, actions, and outcomes of the Neilston Charrette carried out during the period February to March 2014.

The Charrette developed from substantial previous work connected with the Neilston Charter and within this document we highlight the methodology used to engage with the Community, the policy context within which the work was carried out, and the outcomes of specific potential development initiatives which emerged from the consultation.

Neilston is examined as a place in terms of what the community thinks about itself, the infrastructure and assets to support future investment, the underlying economy and market characteristics and the local community organisations that have and continue to provide human capital into Neilston's future.

The key part of the report is project studies which have been considered within 3 thematic groups.

- Open Space
- Village Centre
- Housing Opportunities

12 projects were examined as part of the Charrette exercise with additional "micro projects", all of which were examined under three sub-sections:

- Community Engagement – what people are saying, their likes and dislikes
- Project Development – designer's drawing productions and descriptions
- Doing the Doable – a statement of viability, an assessment on how the project might be funded and whether the project is short term, medium or long term.

The report's conclusions and recommendations bring together the lessons learned from the Charrette exercise, identified project priorities and suggestions on how the community will continue to help shape the future investment for Neilston in terms of policy guidance, project delivery propositions and place stewardship.



CHAPTER 2

The Neilston Charter, Policy Context & Community Engagement Methodology

Neilston is recognised for the strength of its community, its participatory efforts and its appetite for innovative action. The Charrette process took place over a period of 5 weeks and brought together the people of Neilston to exchange and develop ideas on what action may be required to build upon the good work already achieved over the last 10 years.

Neilston a Village or Town?

Prior to industrialisation Neilston was a small village characterised by single storey housing for agricultural workers and their families. The village expanded with the introduction of cotton bleaching, spinning and dyeing with associated mill worker housing close to the place of work. A significant amount of this housing remains today and forms an important part of Neilston's character, heritage and culture.

Further expansion of the village took place with the arrival of the railway lines that provided good connections to Glasgow's city centre making it attractive for those wishing to live on the edge of the City. Today, in the hearts and minds of most people of Neilston the place remains a village, reflecting a strong community interaction and cultural identity. Neilston's population is around 6,000 people which, given its scale and amenities, is a small town. Arguably it doesn't really matter whether Neilston is regarded as a town or village but what matters is that the community is able to maintain a common vision, social integration and spirit that characterises a village's identity and way of life. For this reason, this report refers to Neilston as a village.

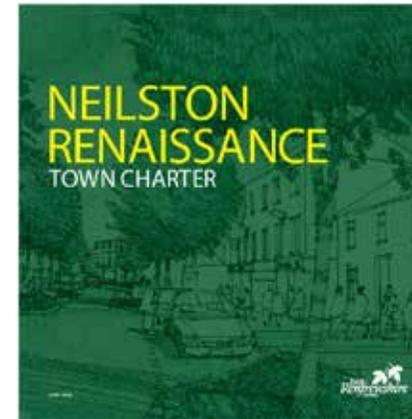
Neilston Town Charter

As part of the community's appetite to get things done, in 2009 Neilston developed a Town Charter that outlined a 20-year vision for the village.

The Town Charter was prepared by the Neilston Town Team that included the people of Neilston, East Renfrewshire Council, the Glasgow Urban Laboratory Mackintosh School of Architecture Glasgow School of Art, Architecture and Design Scotland and Urban Design Skills. This work was also supported by Barrhead Housing Association, The Lighthouse, SUST, and the Development Trust Association Scotland. The Charter is acknowledged as a good practice exemplar of an ambitious community that worked with democratically elected representatives and skilled and experienced practitioners to build a vision for the future of Neilston.

The Charter, represents a community vision for Neilston that informed the Council's local development plan process and subsequently influenced the plan policies for Neilston. For the same reason the Neilston Charrette is intended to inform and influence the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for the local development plan.

The Charrette exercise built on the Charter vision and tested its ideas with the people of Neilston. It examined Neilston's needs, demands and influences and assessed regional and national external impacts that contribute towards the shaping of Neilston's future.



The Charrette examination also included work on the Village Infill Strategy which focussed on seeking to repair the fragmented urban fabric in and around the centre of Neilston along with additional work undertaken in 2013 that looked at local governance issues and the creation of the Advisory Group that would help develop a project delivery strategy.

In effect the Charrette exercise was designed to act as a bridge between the early vision of the Town Charter and the project delivery phase.

For this reason the Charrette exercise needed to do 3 things:

- Build upon the past work
- Ensure that the outcomes of the Charrette process informs Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Deliver "do-able" projects that can be brought forward for early action

Policy Context

The Neilston Charrette exercise was informed by a range of both National and Local Government policies. These included

- National and local Spatial Planning policies
- Town Centre Review, as part of Scottish Government's Regeneration Strategy
- Community Empowerment Bill

Scottish National Planning Policies

The Neilston Charrette sits within a national planning policy context of the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). The National Policy for local development plans and supporting supplementary planning guidance.

This key National Planning Policy review is due to be completed and published in June 2014. The relevance of the SPP to Neilston is illustrated in the above SPP statement.

Scottish Government expects local development plans to

- focus on land and infrastructure,
- concentrate on what will happen, where and why,
- use maps and plans to explain and justify the long-term settlement strategy
- contain policies and proposals that will achieve predictable outcomes.

"Development plans should be concerned primarily with land and infrastructure. The efficient use of land and good infrastructure are important for the wellbeing of an area, particularly where they are supported by the commitment to the creation and maintenance of high quality places."

Scottish Government SPP Statement

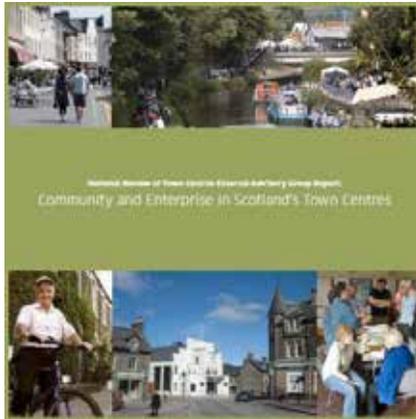
East Renfrewshire Council Planning Policy

Local Development Plan

The Full Council agreed the proposed Local Development Plan on 29 January 2014 and this has now been submitted to the Scottish Government for Examination. The Examination will commence in Spring/Summer 2014 with the Local Development Plan expected to be adopted in the latter part of 2014.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

The Council's SPGs will include a range of documents such as Development Briefs, Master Plans and expressions of detailed policy arising from the adopted local development plan. The purpose of the SPG is to expand upon or supplement the policies and proposals contained within that development plan. The East Renfrewshire Council Planning Service is looking for the Neilston Charrette process to inform and support the SPG statutory process. The programme for the SPG is due to commence in summer 2014 and be concluded in the latter part of 2014.



The National Town Centres Review (Fraser Review)

The state of Scottish high streets has become an increasingly public issue. In England the celebrity 'retail guru' Mary Portas was asked to examine the state of the high streets. A private consortium, led by ex-retailer Bill Grimsey, more recently has produced a further report and call for action.

In Scotland, with retail vacancy in the high street at an all-time high, the Scottish Government commissioned architect Malcolm Fraser and an External Advisory Group to produce a Town Centre Review. This review was published in July 2013 and the government's response – the Town Centre Action Plan – was published in November 2013.

Scottish Government's External Advisory Group under the chair of Malcolm Fraser published their report, Community and Enterprise in Scotland's Town Centres in June 2013.

Six themes for Town Centre recovery were

- Town Centre Living – to ensure that more people lived within the centre of our towns and bringing empty property back to life.
- Vibrant Local Economies – to get a collective approach between business and local authorities that generated more activity in the centre of towns
- Enterprising Communities – a greater emphasis on smaller organisations and social enterprises operating within a Civic Economy
- Accessible Public Services – a greater central focus and location of our public organisations
- Digital Towns – enhanced digital connectivity to improve competitiveness between all town centre users, public authorities and citizens
- Pro-active Planning – a greater level of pro-action from local government, civic and amenity groups. Having the right planning policies that support town centres

Scottish Government's Town Centre Action Plan

The Action Plan indicates that the Scottish Government will work with COSLA to consider how to achieve the "Town Centre First" principle.

The Government is looking to set up "demonstration projects" based around the six themes. Such projects will require demand from local authorities, business, third sector and local partnerships. Given the early work undertaken by the people of Neilston it appears that it is well placed to be a candidate for support as a "demonstration project".

Government is consistent with its wider community engagement approaches by seeking to work with the private sector to develop appropriate investment models to support town centres. Scottish Government is looking for ideas from the private sector about how their support for town centres can be strengthened through effective partnership working across all sectors.

"Community empowerment is a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them"

Scottish Government & COSLA definition of Community Empowerment

Scottish Government Community Empowerment Bill 2014

Scottish Government believes that empowerment

- gives communities a voice and partnership working in public service delivery
- enhances the opportunity for communities to acquire property for public benefit

Scottish Government argues that where communities are empowered the following benefits should transpire

- boosting of local democratic participation
- increased confidence and skills among local people
- higher numbers of people volunteering in their communities
- more satisfaction with quality of life in a local neighbourhood.

The community of Neilston through Neilston Development Trust is well advanced in their empowerment knowledge having successfully acquired the “Bank” premises under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The Community Empowerment Bill proposes to expand the provisions within the Land Reform Act 2003 by providing qualifying rights for “Community Bodies” who are seeking to acquire land or property within their neighbourhood.

Community Engagement Methodology

A Bottom Up Approach

The key to the engagement strategy with the community of Neilston was to get as many people as possible to participate. The strategy began with discussions with the client team and stakeholders (ERC, NDT and the Advisory Group) regarding the best way to engage and attract the local community to feed into the process.

The programme was designed to make things as convenient as possible for the local community to engage by providing a variety of opportunities, day or evening accessibility and locations. It was also recognised that some people preferred informal discussions rather than formal group meetings.

For some 10 years the people of Neilston have participated in a range of consultation exercises so it was important that the Charrette process was not seen as a repeated exercise going over old ground. We developed our questions and evidence gathering by seeking to develop the detail around the previous ideas discussed at the Town Charter stage along with how current and future economic conditions might re-shape and impact on processes and project implementation.

Rather than having just large-scale public meetings with the purpose of exploring community issues it was believed that in order to bring about collective ownership of ideas and solutions it was believed that the Neilston Charrette needed to be carried out by using a disaggregated approach. This brought about bookending two plenary meetings (a traditional larger

public meeting) interspersed with two smaller scale thematic group meetings on two separate occasions. During the thematic meetings three groups were formed to focus on the themes:

- Village Centre
- Open Space
- Housing Opportunities

This approach adopted an examination that

- considered Neilston as a place
- examined the elements and activities within the local area and how they contributed and interacted with each other.

These thematic group meetings provided the opportunity for open discussion on detailed matters relating to individual projects or tasks. The points raised within these meetings were then refined and discussed within the open design studio and programme of engagement events.

In order to capture the thoughts, ideas and aspirations of the local community we made extensive use of photographs and film recordings. While this publication displays many of the photographs that were taken throughout the process, all digital content can be viewed at:

<http://www.neilstongoingplaces.com>
<https://vimeo.com/user26060864/videos>

The Plenary Sessions

Open to everyone

The first plenary meeting held on Saturday 22nd February provided an explanation of the process including:

- an outline of the overall Charrette objectives,
- identification of the key opportunities through the thematic group meetings
- how the engagement programme would operate
- how information would be disseminated

On 29th March, the second plenary session provided a chance to report back to the community, highlighting the agreed outcomes from the thematic group sessions together with recommendations for going forward.



The Thematic Group Meetings

Focused Discussion

Focusing on the three themes – Village Centre, Open Space and Housing Opportunities – the thematic group meetings were organised one week apart and provided opportunity for more detailed discussions around key issues and sites. During the second meeting, community members were asked to discuss a number of key sites within Neilston identify priority issues.

Participants in the groups were encouraged to move from one group to another and contribute to all discussions, helping the development and interaction of ideas. At the end of both meetings participants came together to provide an overview of each themed discussion, sharing their thoughts in order to inform everyone present about each group's progress.

In addition to the above community engagement process, a range of parallel meetings with retail trade representatives, land owners and Council departments were organised. Progress made at these meeting was fed back into the Charrette process and used to help overall development.

Open Design Studio

A hub for all engagement

The “Neilston Going Places” Open Design Studio was opened on 25th February 2014 acting as a hub for community engagement and a point of contact for community members to engage in an informal way. The studio was open for one month and used to facilitate conversations and document discussions.

Local people were encourage to “drop-in” to find out what was going on and provide their thoughts and ideas. Throughout the month the studio walls became a tapestry of ideas capturing and reflecting discussions and thoughts of the local community.

As an engagement tool, the open design studio was very powerful and effective at visually communicating the wealth of input from community members that helped form an overall vision for Neilston’s future.



Programme of Events

Capturing community view

In addition to the open design studio allowed people to ‘drop-in’ it also housed a number of events. The events, advertised throughout Neilston, were aimed to offer a fun, playful way for local people to engage in the overall process and have their voices heard.



Lego Building Workshops

Using Lego as a sketching tool to visualise and communicate ideas, community members of all ages were able to think in 3D and be imaginative when building new spaces bringing their future visions for Neilston to life. Combining this approach with scaled maps of the area gave life to a creative range of ideas, improvements and initiatives.



Design Challenge

Younger people responded well to engagement by a design challenge. To capture the voice of younger people it was recognised the event should be taken to them. It was important to approach younger people within their daily routines and the local youth club provided the perfect setting to build upon youth engagement.

Street Interviews

Getting out into the Community

To broaden the contact with the community we went out into the streets of Neilston and spoke to people. This provided on the spot accounts of their thoughts on Neilston's spaces and people's behaviours and attitudes. These interviews were recorded on video with excerpts being shown in the thematic and plenary sessions.



Community Walks

Walking around the place and standing on project sites with local people brought a fresh perspective helping us all to recognise and understand the ideas that had been promoted by visualising how they would work in the physical environment.



Tea, Cake & Chit Chat

In formal discussions over cups of tea give insight into many thoughts, ideas and issues that surrounded the process. This approach to engaging with the community encouraged a relaxed atmosphere and gave voice to those who perhaps did not feel to comfortable or willing to speak in front of larger groups at other sessions.



Commuter Interviews

Capturing commuters' views

A number of people in Neilston commute to and from work by train. To capture their thoughts we engaged with them during their journey. A technique of a 'pick-me' card game broke the ice and assisted the interview dialogue. These quick interactions often lead to more in depth conversations which helped inform the debate.



Street Installations

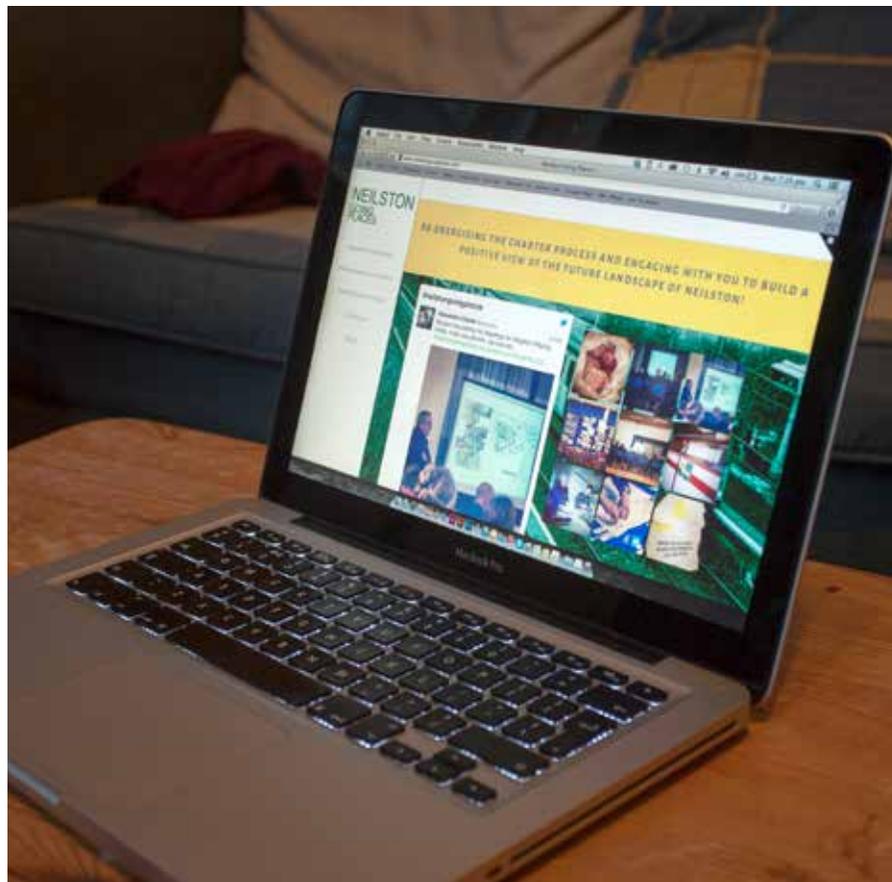
Site Specific engagement

"Idea" cards were located at specific sites around Neilston and prompted people to share their thoughts, aspirations and ideas for the spaces around them. Although these installations did not last long in situ, they were successful in raising the profile of the Neilston Going Places project and encouraged those living in the vicinity of the opportunity sites to engage with the project and visit the open design studio.

Website / Social Media

A window into the process

The dedicated website (www.neilstongoingplaces.com) allowed community members to discover the latest developments and give their feedback and comments. Utilising social media, the approach, using photographs and videos, provided community members with an accessible account of the charrette process and projects without necessarily participating in events.



Summary

Throughout the month of consultation, over 100 community members were involved with the project. Throughout this time community members managed to fill out over 80 ideas cards, give numerous quotes and share their thoughts in around 30 in-depth video interviews.

While many people chose to feed into the process throughout the programme of events, others found it convenient to just drop-in to the open design studio in their own time.

Cowden Mill Meeting

As part of the Charrette process a meeting was held with the owner of Cowden Mill. The Mill extends to some 7 to 8 acres with an additional 14 acres of land relating to the former Cowden Hall Gardens. The Lavern Water burn, Lagoons and Dams are also within the Mill ownership.

The mill owner currently occupies just less than 10% of the premises carrying out recycling operations. Some other space is let to small business enterprises. The Mill owner commits significant expenditure to maintaining the building in a wind and watertight condition.

A development feasibility was undertaken prior to the recession which proposed a mixed use approach, however, it is now recognised that the housing market is now not strong enough to sustain such a proposal. Therefore it was acknowledged that an alternative solution needed to be found by exploring other potential uses.

The mill owner indicated that they would be willing to participate in further discussions as the Charrette process develops and co-operate in any future Mill feasibility work where grants can be obtained.

Neilston Retail Traders' Meeting

A meeting was held with a number of Neilston's retail traders to understand their issues and what improvement action could be taken to enhance village centre trading levels and their businesses. The traders were clear that their respective businesses could not survive if they relied purely on Neilston customers. Therefore they were looking for proposals that would attract more people into Neilston including visitors and new inhabitants.

The meeting concentrated on 3 questions: what works, what doesn't and what might the solutions be?

As an early action to re-invigorate the village centre the traders indicated a willingness to re-establish a traders' association. The Council's community planning partnership agreed to offer secretariat assistance to a newly formed association and provide support on such matters as business rate relief guidance and consumer surveys etc.

Matters of importance to traders were

- the consumer survey carried out by Neilston Development Trust in 2011 required updating. Such a survey could include the proposals for the village centre
- there was a need to generate more footfall
- the rear car park behind the shopping parade required remedial action
- speed of traffic passing through Neilston
- safe car parking, the amount and condition of the car parks
- on street parking on Main Street

As a general point the traders would like early interventions from quick and simple actions. As a first stage exercise it was suggested that the Village Centre should have better presentation including a branding exercise.

The traders agreed that a representative should be part of the Advisory Group.



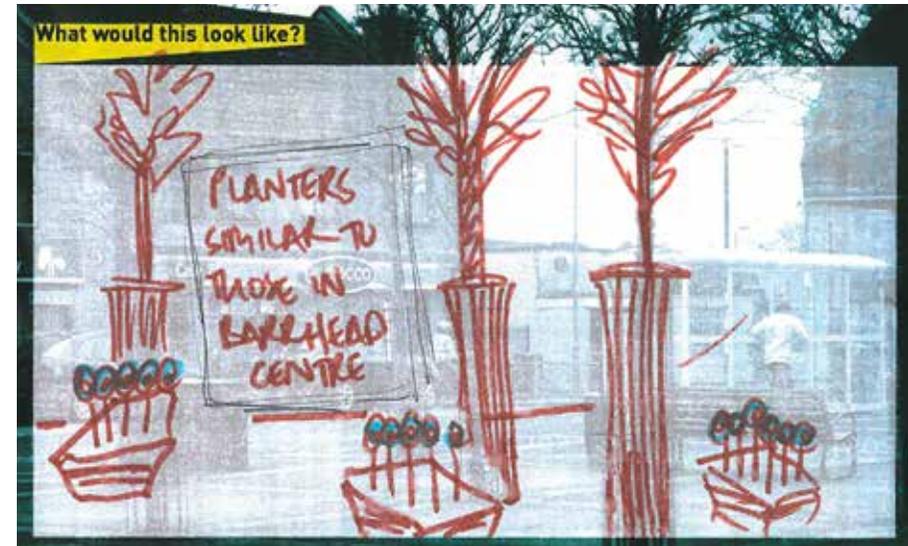
CHAPTER 3

A Review of Neilston

The Who, What and Influences

This chapter makes an assessment of Neilston by outlining;

- 12 key points of what the people of Neilston think about; their place; the future of the area; and the services and facilities that are either provided or are missing.
- how the community is represented and operates both formally and informally.
- opportunities and barriers such as infrastructure, services and property ownership.
- market conditions for housing, retailing and commercial businesses.



I think we need more flower displays in Neilston.

Neilston Community Member



“

Some days the school gates can be complete chaos.

Neilston Community Member

”

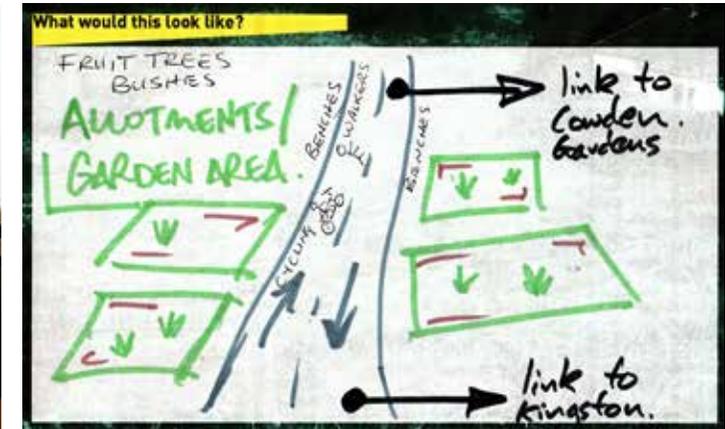
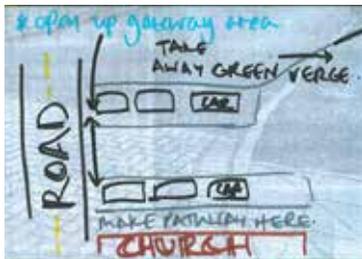


“

You could put some lights into the park, so if its dark you don't have to stay indoors after school.

Neilston Community Member

”



A Community View of Neilston

Village Wide

1. Generational Pride

The emerging thoughts, ideas and aspirations from the engagement process produced an insight into the daily lives of the local community, how physical spaces were used and the current issues that needed to be addressed.

From our engagement it was clear that a diverse range of people live in Neilston many with varying priorities and needs. Not surprisingly differing opinions emerged about what Neilston should be now and in the future.

The community representations had a strong focus on a “bottom-up approach” and were keen to see their thoughts, ideas and aspirations move into tangible development plans.

It was clear throughout the Charrette exercise that the people of Neilston demonstrated a pride in their place. While there were differing views of what interventions are required what stitches the community together is an awareness and resilience that Neilston is what it is as a result of generations of people living and working in the village and being proud of what it represents. This pride was illustrated by a kind of competitive spirit within meetings where people were keen to say how long they and their families had lived in Neilston. This sense of belonging is one of Neilston’s greatest strengths.



I'm really interested, I think it's a great opportunity for the community. I think we have a great chance to mould the future.

Neilston Community Member



Village Wide

2. Citizenship

While engaging with the local community, many indicated that they feel that some people within Neilston adopt a 'don't care' attitude such as not picking up dog-mess, littering and in some cases vandalism.

Some individuals felt that there is a lack of citizenship within the local area and there is a need to encourage people to feel proud to say that they are from and live in Neilston. While it was clear that many individuals were active citizens and respected their local area, these individuals highlighted the difficulty in approaching more disengaged people within the community who did not share their pride for Neilston. It was agreed that while it was challenging it was important to involve community members, especially the young, in the design, construction and long term management and maintenance of the village. The greater the involvement the greater the sense of ownership and respect of Neilston's physical spaces.

“

We need to start with the young people. They are the next generation within Neilston's community.

”

Neilston Community Member



Village Wide

3. History & Heritage

Local history and heritage is a point of interest for many within the community of Neilston, and it was believed that it was important to retain a sense and understanding of where Neilston and its people have come from.

Neilson is often perceived as a commuter area, where individuals reside whilst working in Glasgow. Throughout this project, community members began to open up and discuss ideas in greater detail, sharing stories of a rich historical past.

Some community members spoke about the Parish Church and how it was first recorded in 1163, while others told stories about the old workings within The Mill and spoke about the last remnants of buildings that housed Norwegian refugees during World War Two. A range of people highlighted the importance of building greater sense of community pride by being better connected to the village's history.

“

That's all that's left of the place where the people from Norway stayed... that should be preserved.

”

Neilston Community Member



Village Centre

4. Traffic & Parking

Key matters expressed by the community were that:

- the current traffic and parking management is inadequate
- some people parked in a haphazard way and inconvenienced others
- a concern over increasing vehicular speed and disordered parking.

Although the number of parked cars and traffic speed is not an issue at certain times of the day, many community members highlighted that during busy periods some difficulties arose such as accessibility and safety, leading to some frustration and anger.

Some people suggested traffic management interventions, such as speed bumps and cameras but rather than ad-hoc interventions were suggested, it was generally regarded that a more holistic approach to traffic management including a focus on use and behaviour would be more effective. Some community members highlighted initiatives and examples of good practice from other places where road spaces were shared.

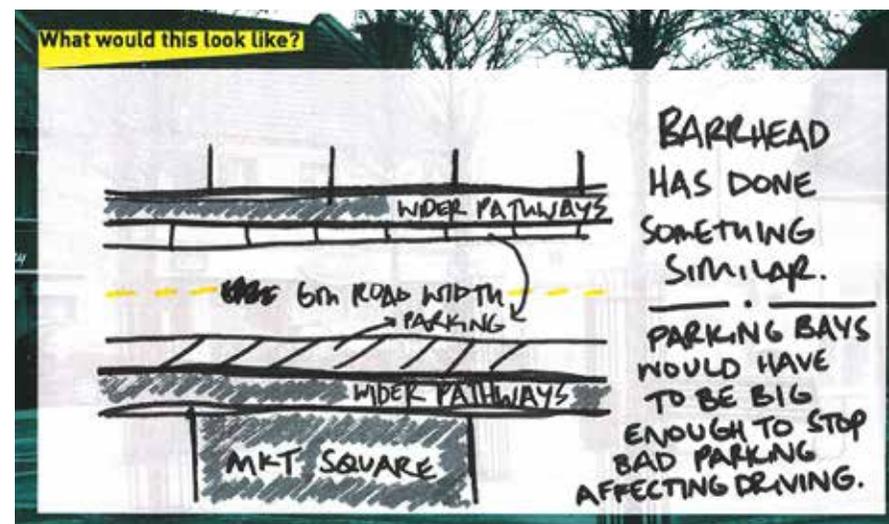
A number of people at the public meetings commented on the need to recognise the frequency with which the 'low road' is closed due to accidents and repairs, and the impact that this has on high levels of traffic (including large vehicles) through the village at such times. Therefore any amended road layouts should take account such circumstances.

“

We need better crossings but no traffic lights. I think the street is too small.

Neilston Community Member

”



Village Centre

5. Physical Appearance

The community acknowledged that clutter, barriers and general building conditions has a direct impact upon the atmosphere, character and use of public spaces. Such conditions are both real and a perceived as being negative to the image of the whole village.

While some recent improvements have been made to some areas there is still a need to build upon this work, cleaning up and revitalising the village centre

The Market Square area was considered a key central focus for Neilston where interventions were necessary to reflect the community vision of Neilston. It was felt that improving the physical appearance of Neilston's village centre should be the main focus of attention as this would:

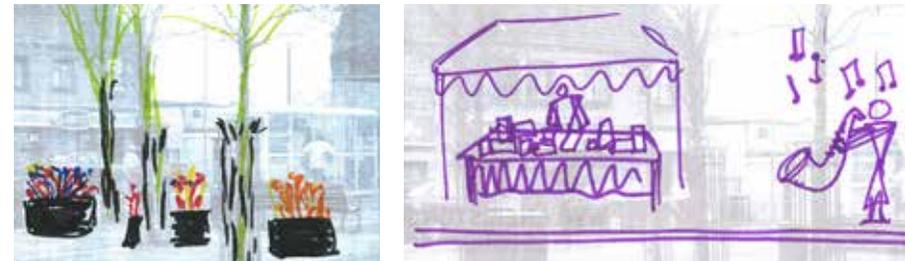
- provide opportunities for building a greater sense of community.
- increase business and social footfall and by such increased presence could discourage anti-social behaviour.

“

It's is like a prison fence,
I'd like to see a small wall,
maybe some flowers.

Neilston Community Member

”



Village Centre

6. Functional Spaces

It was believed that there were barriers to using many spaces in Neilston. Some highlighted difficulties in

- crossing roads
- dropping-off and picking-up from the school gate areas
- quick convenient access into shops

It was clear that there was an expectation that where convenient facilities were not provided some people chose to break parking rules or caused offence to others. Such matters are not unusual in modern life with convenience being a key value for people.

“

The parking situation in Neilston is terrible! Just getting to the shops can be a task in itself.

”

Neilston Community Member



Housing Opportunities

7. Affordable Housing

It was recognised that utilising gap sites there is an opportunity to increase the availability of affordable housing within accessible locations close to the village centre. Many felt that there is a need for such housing which is underpinned by some 343 Neilston households currently on the Council's social housing waiting list.

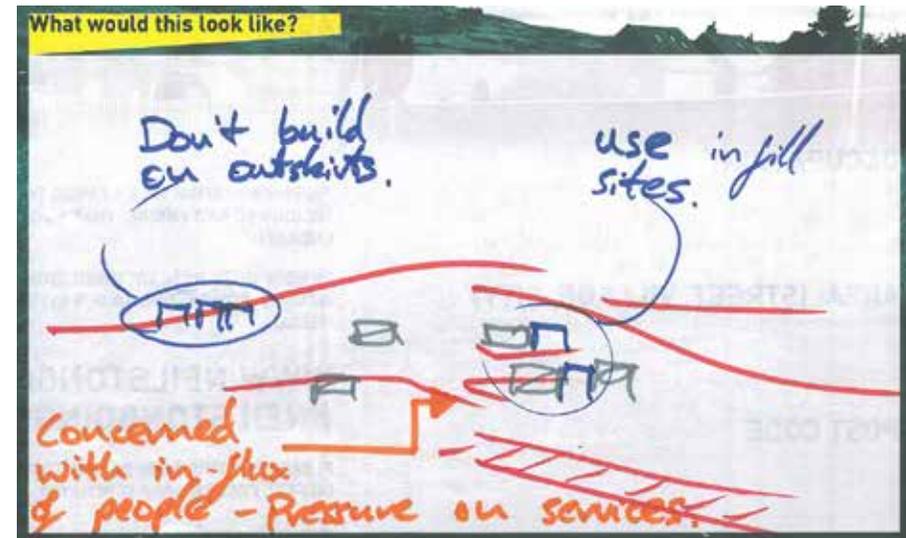
In addition, it was acknowledged that utilising the gap sites would help restore Neilston's street pattern and improve the overall presentation of the village area.

“

Maybe housing for older people – more affordable, smaller if they're just by themselves so that they can keep themselves healthy and happy.

”

Neilston Community Member



Housing Opportunities

8. Amenity Housing

Many felt that within Neilston, there is insufficient housing for older people and those with disabilities. Housing sites that are close to the village centre and local services presented an opportunity for people such needs to continue to live independently.

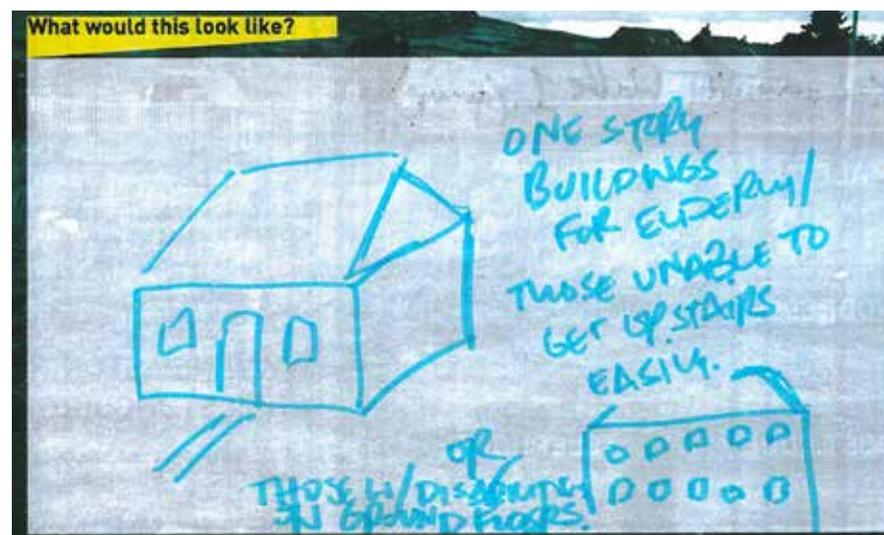
It was generally accepted that a provision of amenity housing would be best placed within other forms of housing in order to build a greater sense of community through inter-generational living.

“

More flexible accommodation suitable for older people that meets their needs and allows them to live independently.

”

Neilston Community Member



Housing Opportunities

9. Local Services & Infrastructure

There was concern within the community that local services and infrastructure could not cope with an influx of new housing. However, the Council confirmed that as part of the local development plan process their housing supply proposals were investigated and tested against current infrastructure and service capacity.

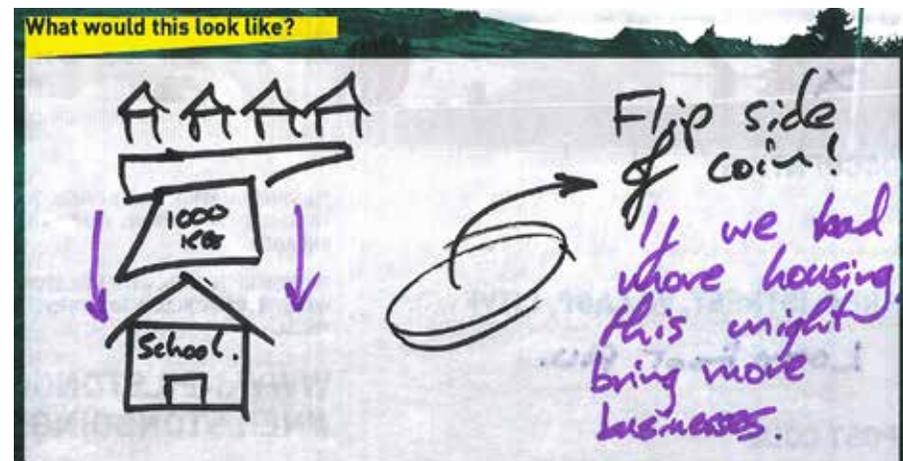
The Council was of the opinion that the current Neilston infrastructure and services has sufficient capacity to accommodate the local plan's growth proposals.

“

New people would keep schools open and vibrant as well as bring new skills and enthusiasm to the community.

”

Neilston Community Member



Open Space

10. Connectivity

A range of discussions took place on how people moved about Neilston. It was commonly felt that there was a lack of joined up routes restricting access around the village. To improve matters people were keen to see unused spaces opened up for pathways or existing ones improved.

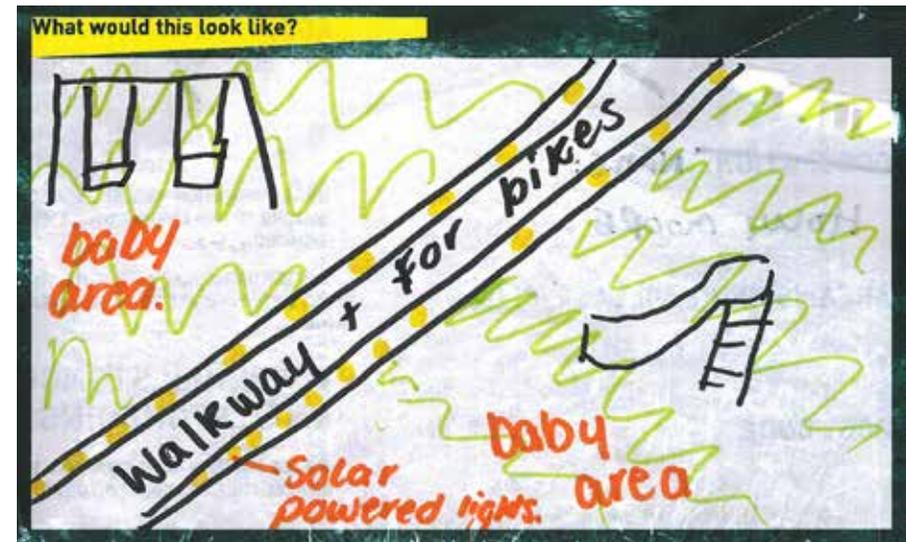
It was also felt that improved pathways would help resolve some of the issues regarding traffic and parking and also encourage the local community to be more active.

“

I've got a friend that lives here and if I was going to his house i used to go along the old railway but you'd end up mucky. If you want to go the clean way, you're forced to go the long way round.

”

Neilston Community Member



Open Space

11. Healthy Living

Many of the community indicated that they would like to see additional facilities such as

- outdoor gyms
- an increase in outdoor play equipment catering for a wider range of ages
- walking routes (as outlined above)
- an increase in cycle infrastructure
- skate-parks
- tennis courts

It also emerged that many believed that in order for new infrastructure or spaces to function well and be sustained over the long term, improved services and systems on an organisational level would need to be implemented. This level of action would ensure the proper management, maintenance and repair.

“

Walking busses would allow you to cross safely and get to school. You'd have a big person at the front and back to make sure the wee ones are ok.

”

Neilston Community Member



Open Space

12. Lighting

People suggested that there was insufficient lighting in many open spaces throughout the village. It was thought that a lack of lighting

- made people feel unsafe at night
- led to certain spaces being avoided in the evening
- created conditions for un-neighbourly activity

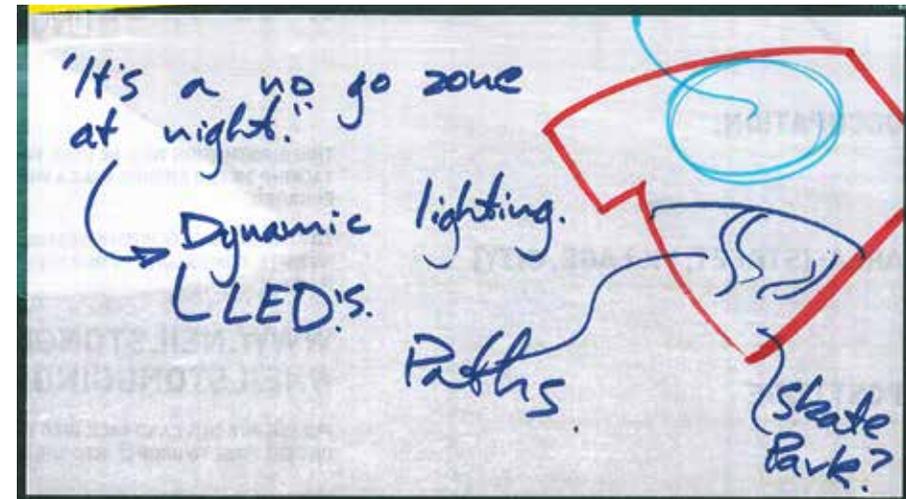
It was clear that many young people in Neilston would like to use the local open spaces in the evening and have highlighted that this is not possible with the current lighting provision.

“

Put some floodlighting in.
I've seen people use their
car headlights to kick a ball
about after dark.

”

Neilston Community Member



Neilston's Local Community Organisations & Delivery Vehicles

Neilston Development Trust (NDT)

The strong community spirit is highlighted by energetic voluntary action from those that care about Neilston's past and want to shape its future. Through the efforts of Neilston Development Trust, Neilston was Scotland's first Renaissance Town initiative acquiring the "Bank" as a community resource and asset and entering into a joint venture renewable energy project that will generate future income that provides an opportunity to support a range of opportunities and ventures that can help sustain and improve Neilston.

Neilston Community Council (NCC)

The Community Council is the village's third tier of local government. While it has formal remits to consider planning and licensing applications, the community council has a wider commitment to improve conditions for local people. It has been involved from the outset of the Charter and has strong representation in the governance structure below. As the two local organisations accountable to the whole of the village population via their membership, NDT and NCC are committed to working together to further the ambitions of the Charter and to ensure representation of opinion across the whole community.

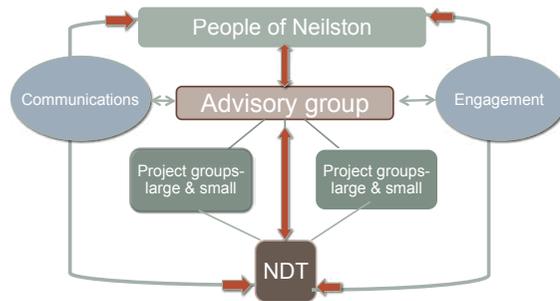
Delivering on the Charter

Since the publication of the Charter in 2009, various attempts had been made to move towards further development and delivery. However the lack of a well considered and locally owned means of coordination and leadership meant that progress was at times difficult. Community participation, confidence and the building of trust all have to be earned as well as establishing governance, defining roles and agreeing communication processes.

To re-energise this process, a 're-booting' exercise took place in 2012, which identified some key themes around which the 44 widely varying projects in the Charter might be clustered. But more significantly there was a need to address the question of governance. Thus 2012-13 saw the development of a governance structure, evolving out of the former Town Team (the open assembly which had sat at the heart of the initial charter process). The ERC community planning team's engagement staff and members of the subsequent charrette team supported this work.

This exercise forms a critical component of the Charter narrative. It underlines the considerable investment required to translate the aspiration for 'community-led' regeneration and the whole empowerment agenda into robust and sustainable institutions, without creating additional bureaucratic imperatives. It also strengthens the argument for

Neilston Charter: making sure local people are at the centre



the creation and ongoing support of ‘community anchor’ organisations, without which there is no accountable vehicle with the core capacities to carry the responsibilities inherent in maintaining transparent and accountable local governance outwith the statutory framework.

The resultant structure, supported by clear terms of reference, was agreed by the group, which represents all interests (Community Council, ERC, NDT and resident groups) who identified themselves as stakeholders in the matter. It was presented to an open meeting [date], which endorsed the proposal. The structure will be subject to periodic review and is designed to marry clarity with a degree of flexibility.

The People of Neilston

The People of Neilston are the principals, since the Charter and all the work that has gone into it thus far is predicated on the view that good planning should reflect the lives of the people of a place, in their own time, but with an eye to a sustainable future.

Nothing less than a new approach to local democratic control of this process is being tested here, and it is hoped that with every passing year, local residents feel stimulated to engage in the Charter but also in other aspects of local service provision through the structures currently being developed in Neilston

Neilston Development Trust

Neilston Development Trust acts as coordinator and lead agency, working in close collaboration with ERC and all local partners to support Charter delivery. They are partly supported by a 2-year Service Level agreement from ERC for this role, with additional support from Big Lottery Investing in Ideas, reflecting the recognition by this local authority and some funders that significant work of this nature requires resource.

Charter Advisory Group

Charter Advisory Group acts as a ‘wise counsellor’ for the Charter process with membership reflecting the widest possible range of community and sectoral interests. The Advisory Group will continue to monitor and advise on progress and communication and engagement issues.

Advisory Group composition

- Neilston Community Council
- Neilston Business Community
- Neilston Development Trust
- Statutory & Voluntary Organisations
- Young People Representative
- ERC elected representatives
- Community groups:
- Community Health & Care
- Hillside Residents Association Partnership
- Richmond Fellowship
- ERC Officials
- War Memorial

The advisory group meet bimonthly and its structure is subject to periodic review.

Working Groups

Working Groups are the locus for the development work essential for project delivery. Such activity will include:

- Planning and design
- Business modelling and funding
- Maintenance provision).

Each project will have different requirements for professional skills and stakeholder involvement. A clear remit will be agreed and requirements will be made on each group to present their communication and engagement approaches to the Advisory Group and be subject to review on performance.

Engagement and Communication

Engagement and Communication are the shared responsibilities of all participants in the process. A range of methods are used to disseminate of information to stimulate exchange, discussion and debate. A bi monthly newsletter delivered to all households, and social media and website are core components that are supplemented by dedicated events and a constant community platform for the process at the Bank, NDT's community-owned hub.

Infrastructure & Assets

During the course of discussions some members of the Neilston community questioned whether there was sufficient infrastructure capacity to handle housing developments proposed within the Council's local development plan in terms of roads, drainage and public services such as schools and health services.

In response the Council indicated that they were not envisaging any infrastructure objections to any of the LDP proposals in Neilston. The Council suggested that through their local development plan (LDP) preparation, the service providers had not raised any major issue relating to the servicing of any of the developments proposed. It was further indicated that if further information on infrastructure matters came to light then these would be addressed through the detailed planning application process.

The junction at Neilston Road/Kelburn Street/Lochlibo Road in Barrhead will be addressed with the introduction of traffic lights in association with the neighbouring housing development currently being undertaken by Bellway Homes.

The school capacities at Neilston and St Thomas Primary Schools are 420 and 210 respectively. Neilston Primary School's occupancy is 278 (66%) and St Thomas Primary School's occupancy is 154 (73%). East Renfrewshire Council's Education service is of the opinion that there is sufficient capacity within the primary schools to accommodate additional children from developments identified within the Council's local development plan.

Project Study Land Ownerships

SITE	OWNERSHIP
KINGSTON PLAYING FIELDS	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
MILL COTTAGES	PRIVATE
PIG SQUARE	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
STATION ENVIRONMENT	PRIVATE
BRIG O'LEA	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
THE MILL	PRIVATE
COMMUNITY HUB	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
REDUNDANT RAILWAY LINE	PRIVATE
COWDEN HALL GARDENS	PRIVATE
MAIN STREET	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

PRIMARY SCHOOL GATES	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
HOUSING OPPORTUNITY SITES
KIRKSTYLE LANE	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
BROADLIE STREET	PRIVATE
CRAIG ROAD	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
HILLSIDE ROAD	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
GLENIFFER VIEW	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL
HARTFIELD CRESCENT	EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

As a key partner in Neilston's regeneration the Council has the benefit of being the property owner of the majority of the project sites which should provide greater clarity and opportunity in terms of development and investment proposals. Local Authorities are obliged to demonstrate "best value" in the transfer of publicly owned ground that could be exercised by the "Community Body" demonstrating "public benefit", as defined in the draft Empowerment Bill 2014.

An Overview of Housing, Retail & Commercial Property Markets in Neilston

Neilston's Owner Occupation Market

Neilston's housing stock largely reflects many settlements in the West of Scotland with older housing in the historic core of the village along with 19C mill worker cottages. Later public housing was developed comprising of flatted or terraced forms. Other than some infill developments private housing is dominated by terraced, semi and detached houses. In the last 30 years Neilston, like other places, has seen private house building providing semi and detached accommodation. Neilston's location and accessibility via the railway will continue to be an attractive location for families to live. This is highlighted by the edge of town interest in development by a range of developers.

An analysis of the private housing market in February 2014 shows Neilston's average house value based on current properties for sale was £154,737 and a median price (mid point of prices) at £121,600. Given the wide range of property in Neilston the median price provides a better indication of Neilston housing value.

Properties of two bedrooms or smaller tend to sell for less than £100,000 with three bedroomed semi detached selling from £125,000 depending on age and condition of the property. Over the last 24 months 3 and 4 bedroomed detached property sold at levels in excess of £150,000.

From the analysis 3 bedroomed properties appeared to be in greatest demand by selling quicker with values tending to be higher, pro rata, than

smaller dwellings. Family dwellings are typically constructed by housing developers.

As a general observation, sale values for smaller properties are at a lower level than the costs of producing such housing, making it unviable for developers. Therefore, for the foreseeable future it is unlikely that there will be any house builder demand to speculatively construct one or two bedroomed flats within Neilston. Accordingly, any flatted accommodation that were proposed on infill sites would require subsidy and more likely to be for social housing or some other form of subsidised affordable housing.

Neilston's Private Rental Market

Low housing values in small property are attractive for investors in private renting. Typically 2 bedroomed flats have a rental value of between £400 - £500 per month. While local authorities apply regulations and registration to the private rented sector there is some concern about the quality and maintenance of the private rented stock particularly in areas of low value smaller older property.

Given the low private rental levels it is thought unlikely that any National Housing Trust (NHT), mid market rental, initiatives will come forward for the Neilston area as part of the wider Scottish Government programme for "affordable housing".

Neilston's Social Housing Stock & Needs

Social housing

The Council's housing needs data also shows a continuing demand for low cost and social housing in Neilston and Uplawmoor. There are 450 council houses in the local area and at November 2012 there was a waiting list of 343 households. There are also 81 housing association properties in the village, 19 of these being homes suitable for older people or others with particular housing needs. With an average turn-over of only 37 council houses each year, and around 6 applicants for each of these properties becoming available, it is expected that there will remain a sustained level of demand for years to come. The release of private housing land, which will include for the provision of 'affordable' properties could make a useful contribution towards meeting this demand. There is a need for housing across the whole size-range with the highest demand being for 1-bedroom (2 apartment) properties.

Amenity housing

Council figures show a high demand for the existing sheltered and amenity housing in the area. In Neilston and Uplawmoor the demand was estimated in 2012 from the Council's waiting list as being for 46 units, with turnover averaging 5 units per year. There were potentially 6 applicants for each property which became available for let. There is also known demand from other particular groups who have specific housing requirements, for example people with physical and learning disabilities and young people.

This Council evidence was supported by our Charrette discussions where we were made aware that there is interest from older sections of the village population for smaller accommodation which is close to the village amenities. The indications are that some people either now or in the near future would prefer to downsize their home and have accommodation that is purpose built to meet their future needs rather than staying within their existing adapted home. Their preference is that older people want to stay within their own community as it is their place, with connections to their family, friends and familiar support services and amenities. However, there is limited choice of accommodation to meet their anticipated needs.

In order to fully understand the current and future needs and demands for Neilston's older population a local housing needs survey is required.

It should also be noted that while affordable housing planning policies provide land for affordable housing, some of which will be social housing, this policy does not contribute any significant funding for a social housing development.

The policy requires developers to set aside sufficient ground for some 25% of the total housing capacity for affordable housing purposes. However, if the Council is minded to adopt a "commuted sum" approach to meet its affordable housing policy within Neilston, then such commuted sums would provide a cash contribution to the building of social housing upon Council owned land.

The exact amount of funds will depend on the valuation of the developer's ground and also the development costs associated with developing say some of the infill sites referred to elsewhere in this report.

Assuming a social housing development is undertaken by a registered Housing Association (registered social landlord (RSL)), the funds available for social housing include grant, currently £58,000 based on 3 person dwelling (3p) and private funding which is around £35,000 depending on the rental policy and operational costs for a social dwelling.

Therefore, subject to the availability of social grant, total funds are in and around £90,000 to £95,000 per dwelling. Given that the cost of constructing a social house (3p) is around £110k-£120k there is a gap in the funding. If the Council builds upon its own land at zero value and a commuted sum can be obtained from a private developer as part of their own housing development consent then there is potential for the gap in funding to be bridged. This last statement is of course a broad brush assessment based on a hypothetical development, however, it is intended to demonstrate how through a combination of utilising existing Council assets and applying planning policies in a creative way, social housing developments might be delivered.

An Overview on Retailing in Neilston & the Village Centre

The following observations are from traders along with previous supportive work and inspections carried out during the course of the Charrette process.

At the macro level Neilston is subject to activity in the retail and wider economy. As a village with good connections in the broader Glasgow area, Neilston is also affected by the strong pull of the UK's second best retail centre (Glasgow). In the Greater Glasgow area there are also major retail attractions and expansions at Silverburn and Braehead.

More locally, the heavy investment in Barrhead and its new Asda store (soon to open) provides further retail offers close to Neilston.

Retailing is being changed by both structural and recessionary pressures. Structurally there is

- an internet/digital transformation
- too much retail space of the wrong type in the wrong places

The digital/internet revolution has seen substantial retail spend move away from customers visiting fixed stores. The rapid growth of retail space generally over the last few decades has left a legacy of vacant and underused space in particular places. These two trends are now intersecting to question the viability of much fixed store space.

From the consumer perspective the recession has added to these longer-term trends by generating a focus on:

- Price and discounts (re-value)
- Convenience

Price has become a stronger driver of many retail sales and the rise of food and non-food discounters shows the impact (Lidl, Poundland, Primark). At the same time convenience has become more valued to minimise time and money costs of getting products. Consumers are now more in control of product access but want it to be on their terms.

To some extent, it is perhaps surprising that there is not a higher level of vacancy in the core retail offer of Neilston. Most, if not all, of the units are occupied, though this does not indicate their degree of profitability and/or vulnerability. The main occupiers are the Co-operative Group small store, a number of local/convenience stores and a variety of food outlets. The butcher's shop is noted as a major draw with a strong reputation. There is no main food chain and little non-food presence.

There is on-street and off-street parking, with the former being seen as a good draw, though persistent occupancy and low "churn rate" (number of cars arriving and leaving due to availability of spaces) is an issue. The market square development is uninspiring, as is the general upkeep and visual impact of much of the main street. The road acts as a barrier and

the street architecture does little to help a sense of place. In access terms the bus stops are centrally located but not helpful to the flow of people or traffic. The railway station is poorly linked to the centre and needs modernising. There is little connection or obvious access to the main street.

The retailers require “footfall” and spend to survive and prosper. They need people to gain access to the centre of Neilston and to their shops. They believe that local people do not use the village that much and that passing trade is vital. Parking is thus a big issue for them, as is anything that overly constrains traffic in the village.

The actual spend and purchasing patterns are, as noted earlier, unknown. Previous survey work may have error bands on it and the sample characteristics are unknown. The limited information suggests that the respondents viewed the village as

- having uncompetitive prices,
- limited choice and range.

There was a desire to see

- the choice improved,
 - the environment or look of the stores enhanced
 - parking developed.
- The main use of the stores was for food and drink, convenience and leisure uses (restaurant, pub).

From inspections at particular times of the day and night Neilston has a proliferation of anti-theft shutters portraying a village as one that is closed for business. The reasons behind the shutters are well known, but the impact is considerable. Alternatives, allied to some general maintenance might give Neilston a better ‘feel’ especially if allied to some enhanced lighting around the historical buildings of note and generally a clearer streetscape.

In retail terms, in addition to the stores in the village, there are gaps, notably in fish, bakery (though this is proposed to be filled) and in fruit and vegetables. Non-food coverage is also limited but this is perhaps more expected. The emphasis appears to be on local and passing convenience focused trade.

A Retail Analysis of Neilston			
ELEMENT	ATTRACTIONS	ACCESS	AMENITY
POSITION	The retail offer has some local attractiveness but this is limited and subject to competition. Other non-retail attractions may be a little spread out in the village.	There are bus/train and walking access and the road provides passing trade. Some pedestrian access is unclear and the extent of out-shopping is unknown.	Many (not all) of the buildings/streetscape need enhancement as does the railway station and the main Market Square area.
ACTIONS	Given retail charges at a macro level there is little scope for central new space. Potential sites for discounters might be available. Wider facilities need to be more closely linked for limited trips.	There is a need to enhance access facilities and opportunities. Parking is a major issue. Other access modes e.g. cycling seem underprovided.	There is a need to do some cleaning/maintenance preferably to provide a stronger and more coherent visual design during day and night. Shutters are an issue.

Given the nature of the village with the current central dominance of the road, there needs to be more consideration given to public/social space. The Market Square does not seem to provide a suitable space as a village heart at the moment and further review of improving this area is needed. This could also involve consideration of the shop-fronts in this area and the parking behind as well as the bus stop area.

During the charrette process discussions were structured around the following table to summarise the current position and possible actions for the retail component in the village centre.

ACTIONS
There is a strong tone from the Charter. Some attractions/networks are in abeyance e.g. traders association.
Re-establish trader group. Focus on small wins and on the ongoing need for management post investment.

What Needs to be Done

There is no doubt that there is a strong base on which to build in Neilston. There is a sense of community and direction and many things about the village are positive. The retail offer needs to be supported and strengthened and elements to do this include:

- Focus on attracting more “footfall” (more people to shop) and spend;
- Improve streetscape and visual amenity for consumers;
- Add quality to the parking offer (including on-street enhancements);
- Tie the village together via an enhanced Market Square;
- Utilise best resources to better understand consuming and trading patterns;
- Help retailers improve performance (rates etc. qualifying for rate relief, local networking, marketing & branding).

One thing that could help the situation could be a new consumer and trader survey of Neilston. A low-cost approach to this might be to engage the local schools in doing this with the right support.

Neilston Business Space

Other than Crofthead Industrial Estate and the adjacent builder's merchants and coach depot along Holehouse Brae there is very limited commercial space in Neilston. Locally, Barrhead provides a range of existing and new Class 4 (office) and 5 (industrial) space.

Given rental values and investment yields, demand for commercial development and investment is not anticipated in the foreseeable future. That said, there may be demand for affordable commercial space for small scale operations such as social or private small enterprises and start ups. Such space is available at Crofthead Industrial Estate (Crofthead Mill) on flexible arrangements. The Neilston Railway Shed provides an opportunity for workshop spaces although this is currently vacant and being informally marketed.



CHAPTER 4

The Project Studies

In reflecting the ambitions of the national Charrette programme a holistic and integrated “bottom up”, community led approach was adopted for the Charrette exercise.

Our approach to this task was to use the metaphor of the jigsaw to reflect the nature of the place and how it is made up. In post-industrial Neilston some of the original jigsaw pieces are missing. Therefore, this process seeks to identify those missing pieces and bring them together to create an improved picture.

Successful places require a more finely tuned, community-led, environmentally sensitive plan – a sustainable strategy for the twenty first century, as outlined in the Charter document. Repairing a town fabric, through infill development is a sustainable strategy, although small scale sites create procurement and delivery challenges. In effect this exercise explores some potential development opportunities. The sketches provided in the following pages indicate some development options, although some options may not be capable of being supported by standard market development solutions. It must also be noted that all proposals when finalised will need to take account of planning policies and guidance, including designing streets, parking and open space standards.

12 project studies were identified from both the workshop sessions in 2013 and through various subsequent discussions.

‘Re-using existing infrastructure, building on internal growth patterns [re-densification] allows adaption and a sense of direction based on existing assets’

Professor Anne Power

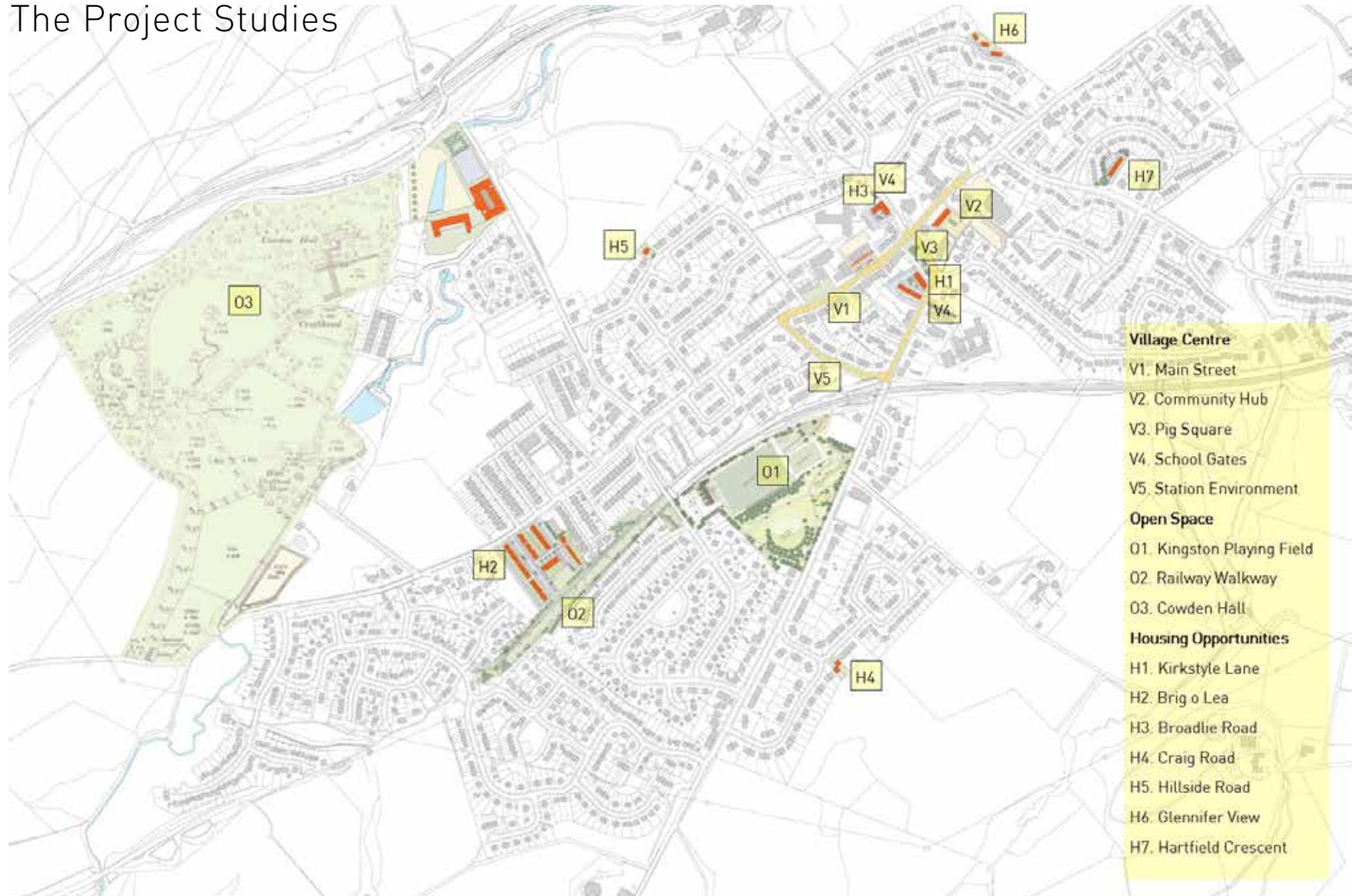
The Project Studies

- Housing Opportunity Sites
- Mill Cottages
- Kingston Playing Fields
- Primary School Gates
- Station Environment
- Redundant Railway Line
- Main Street
- Community Hub
- Pig Square
- Brig O’lea
- Cowden Hall Gardens
- Cowden Mill

While each project study had its own specific characteristics and issues it was acknowledged that there was a degree of overlap which enabled different voices and opinions to be heard from the thematic group contributors.

That said, project studies Mill Cottages, Cowden Mill and the Station environment were subject to private ownership issues and were not included in the thematic workshops but taken forward separately. These three elements appear at the end of this chapter.

The Project Studies



The Village Centre

The regeneration of town and village centres is an important objective for many places in Scotland.

A key part of the regeneration is how to:

- Get a better balance between pedestrians and vehicle users
- Make our streets safe without having segregating fences and signs that clutter and act as barriers
- Improve access. Ease of access to shops, cafés and other offers is essential for both customers and businesses.

What speed is appropriate for traffic?

How should we handle car parking?

Can the environment around the shops be improved to give a more uniformed appearance without prejudicing the level of activity and trade?

These were some of the issues and questions raised with the traders and within the Thematic Group sessions. The Open Studio input highlighted two further aspects for consideration, namely:

- PHYSICAL APPEARANCE.....this has a direct impact upon the atmosphere, character and use of public spaces and can affect the perception of the entire village. Improvements could offer the opportunity to build a greater sense of community, increase footfall and discourage anti-social behaviour.

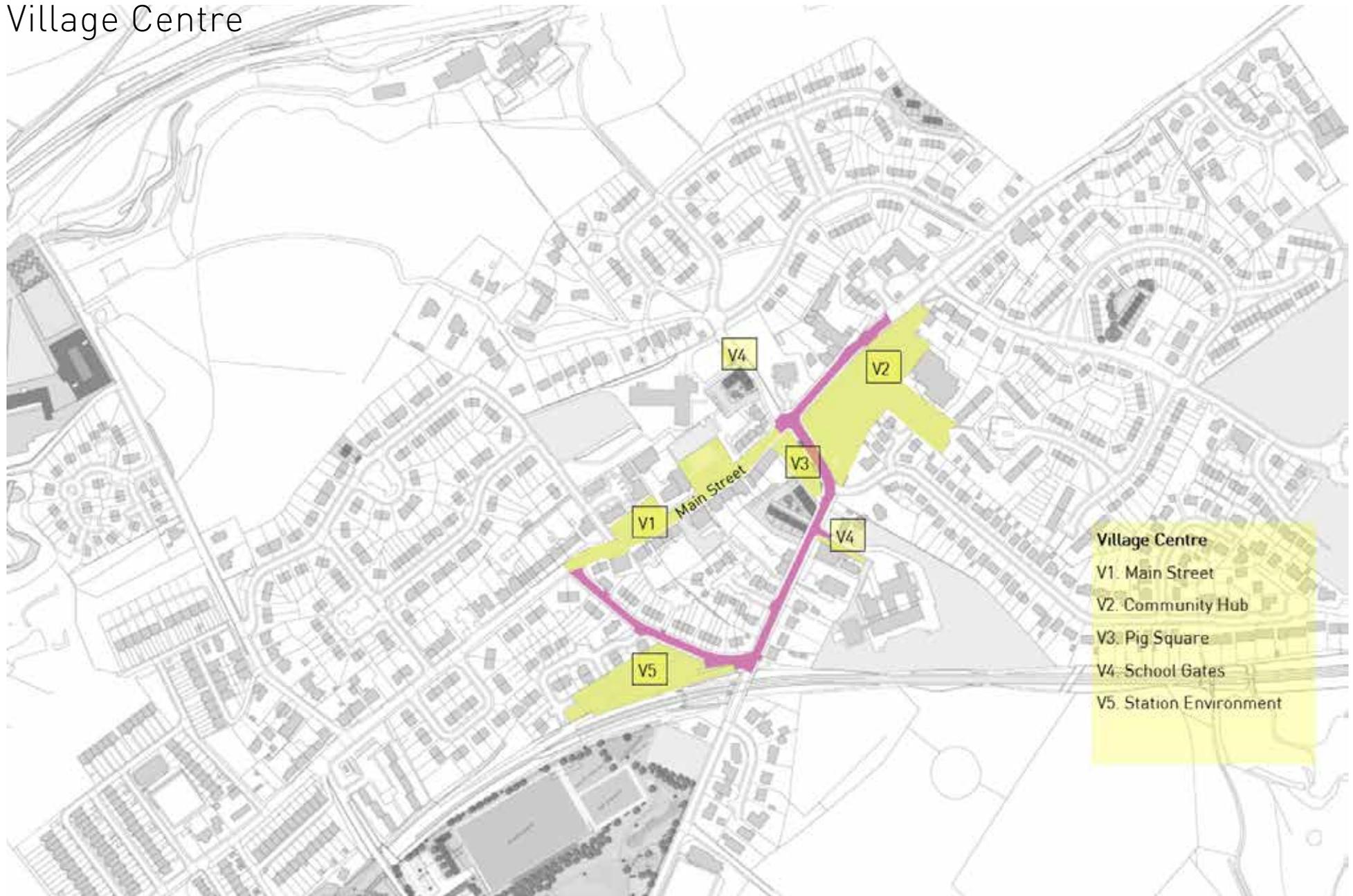
- FUNCTIONAL SPACES...there is an opportunity to improve the design of some of Neilston's spaces and make them more functional and user friendly.

'Town [village] centres are often at the core of community life, offering spaces to meet and interact with access to facilities and services that people require. It is important that town centres are functioning, well maintained assets that develop to support the needs of their residents, businesses and visitors'

Town Centre Action Plan 2013

Main Street, Community Hub, School Gates and Pig Square are the principal jigsaw pieces related to the Village Centre. What links these project opportunities together is the existing road infrastructure. With this in mind the overall ambition for the village centre, emerging from the various engagement sessions is to create a traffic calmed central area to cover Main Street, High Street and Station Road.

Village Centre



Village Centre

Main Street

On Main Street the carriageway will be reduced to 6.0m and along with other measures will combine to reduce traffic speed, an essential ingredient to creating safer streets as part of a more user friendly public realm.

Main Street is the backbone of the village and as such reducing the carriageway width, re-aligning the pavement on the south side, defined by new trees which will enhance the overall feel of the space, making a visit to the village centre a more pleasant experience. The road re-alignment will also enable the provision of additional on street parking.

Elsewhere on Main Street the two existing car park areas would be resurfaced with better lighting as an important first step to improving the overall infrastructure within the village centre. On completion of these very practical but essential elements attention should then focus on upgrading the space in front of the parade of shops, creating a new Market Square at the heart of the village.

For this we have two options – a micro and a macro version.

The micro version concentrates effort on the north side of the street. Re-configured this area is large enough to accommodate a sizeable marquee structure for functions or a series of individual stalls as a market space. The existing bus stop would be re-positioned as part of the new street alignment with a clock tower added as a new visual element. The macro version would take the new shared surface the full width of the street knitting both sides together as part of the upgrade of the overall public realm.



I would improve the space outside the shops, because I think it looks a bit run down.

Neilston Commuter



Discussions with the traders and from feedback from the thematic group made it clear that these expenditure items should only take place once an appropriate local organisation was in place that would clean, repair and maintain this new provision.

WE MUST BE ABLE TO LOOK AFTER WHAT WE HAVE. THE IDEA OF A 'TOWN FACTOR' WAS BORN.

Other points agreed were:

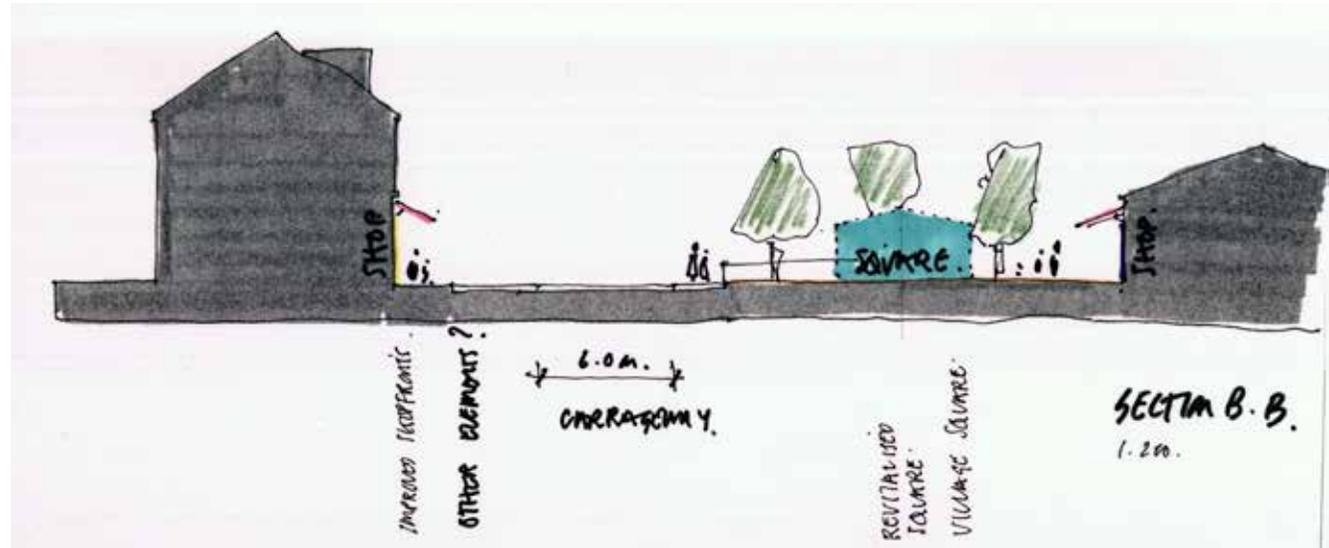
- Re-establish the Traders Association
Traders, along with others would be part of a new client body who would direct the brief for improvements, monitor progress and be part of the aftercare on completion.
- Organise a SPRUCE UP and CLEAN UP as part of a re-branding exercise. Starting with a simple coat of paint, new awnings and signage.

Current View

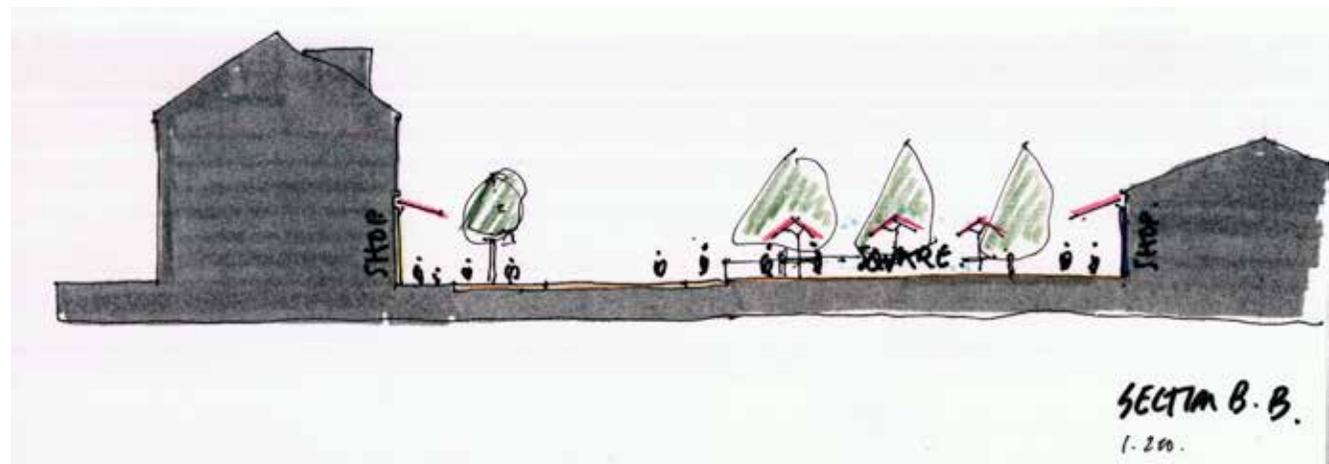


Market Square

Micro Version



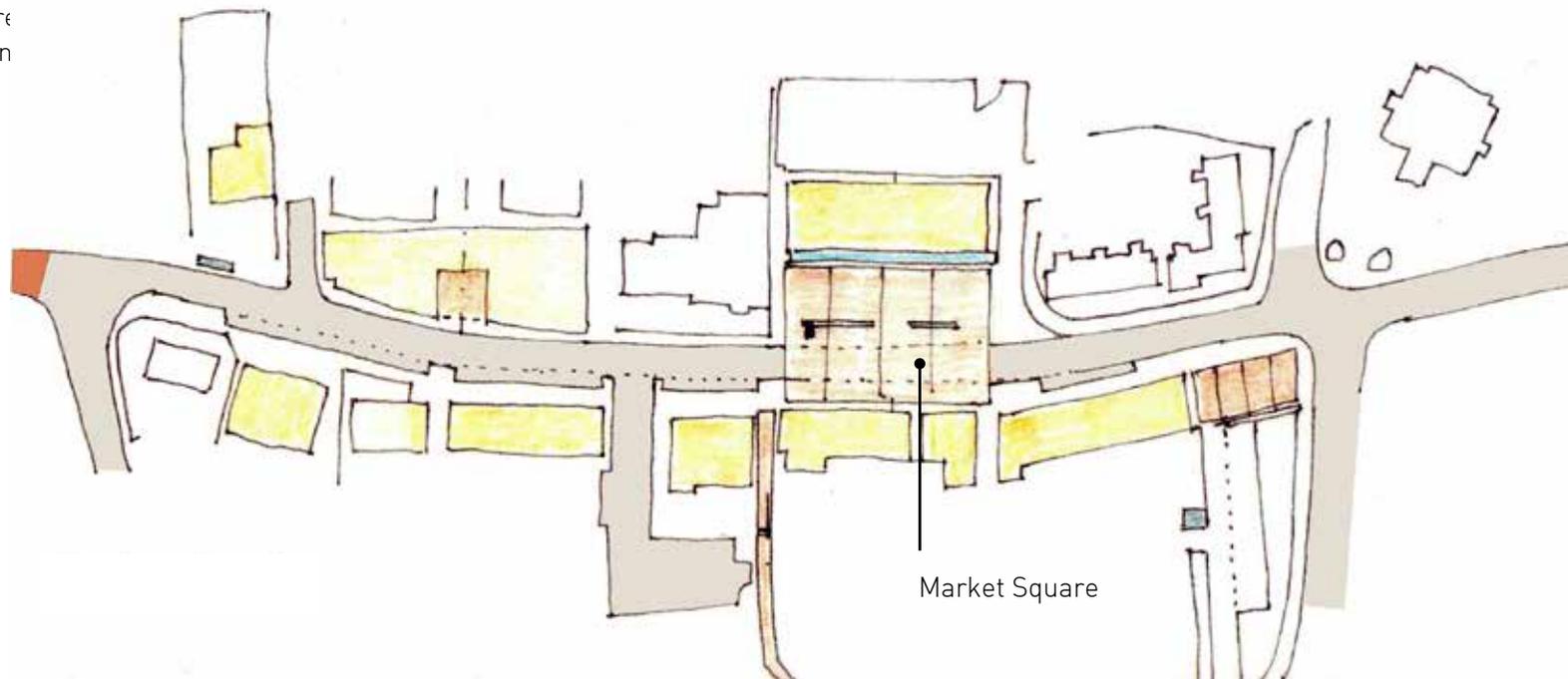
Macro Version



Market Square
Micro Version



Market Square
Macro Version



Market Square



View towards St Thomas' Church

Doing the doable

- Form traders association and village centre client group.
- Development of brief.
- Seek funding from public sector grant funding.
- Volunteer action.

Costings

- Micro - £205,000
- Macro - £385,000

Village Centre

Community Hub

The community hub is a collective term for that part of the village centre containing the doctor's surgery, the current library and the recently upgraded leisure centre, all sitting to the east of the Neilston Cross.

The medium to longer term aim is to reconfigure and relocate the library facility, including a small IT/homework base suggested by some of the young people at a Charrette session within the leisure centre complex.

Such a move would enable two new car parking courtyards to be formed releasing the opportunity to build on Main Street at this point, creating the opportunity for new commercial space or residential accommodation to reinforce the street line at this important entry point to the village. It is proposed that a new pedestrian route could link these spaces and functions back to Main Street and High Street via a new ramped pathway passing on the boundary with the doctor's surgery.

A second, more ambitious option shows a relocated library provision as before with an expanded health facility on land adjoining the commercial garage together with a new business space occupying the corner of High Street/Main Street, thereby re-defining the Cross, signifying again its importance in townscape terms and creating a stronger relationship with the Old Parish Church opposite.

Current View



Within the village centre the provision of new car parking spaces together with improvements to the quality of the existing provision are two crucial requirements to address both the perception and reality surrounding the village's infrastructure issues. The new car park at the leisure centre could provide an additional 46 spaces and provide the necessary additional capacity and flexibility to allow other interventions to take place.

Traffic speed reduction and upgrading the parking provision will improve the school gate environment in terms of a meeting place and strategy for a safer "drop off" / "pick up" of school children.

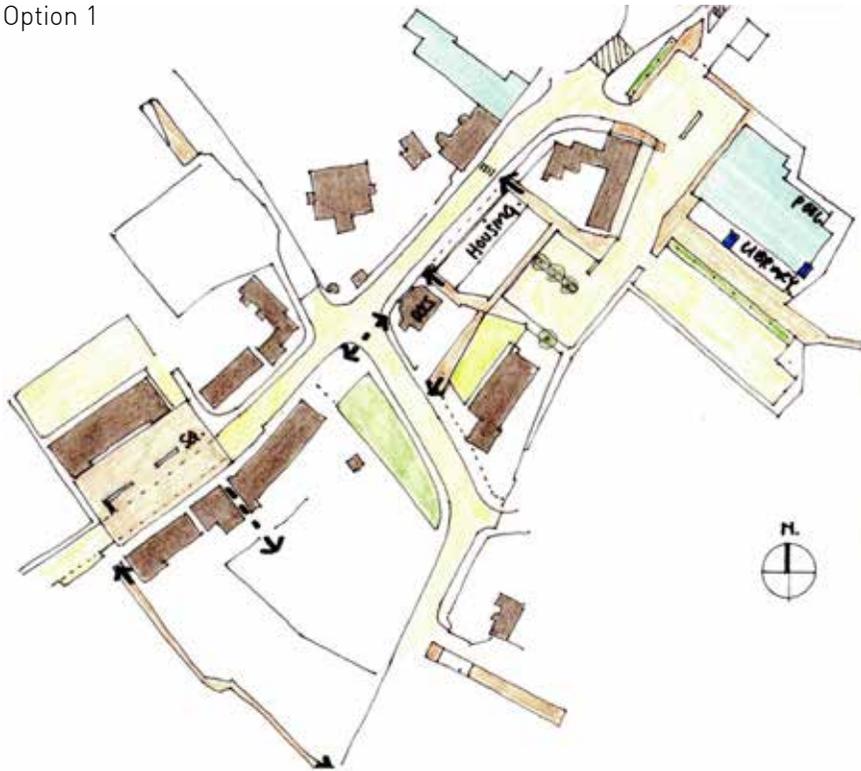
The wider strategy for school children should reinforce the Active Travel agenda and include:

- walking the last 100m to school
- school walking/cycling trains
- direct gate/ramp link to St Thomas's from the adjacent car park

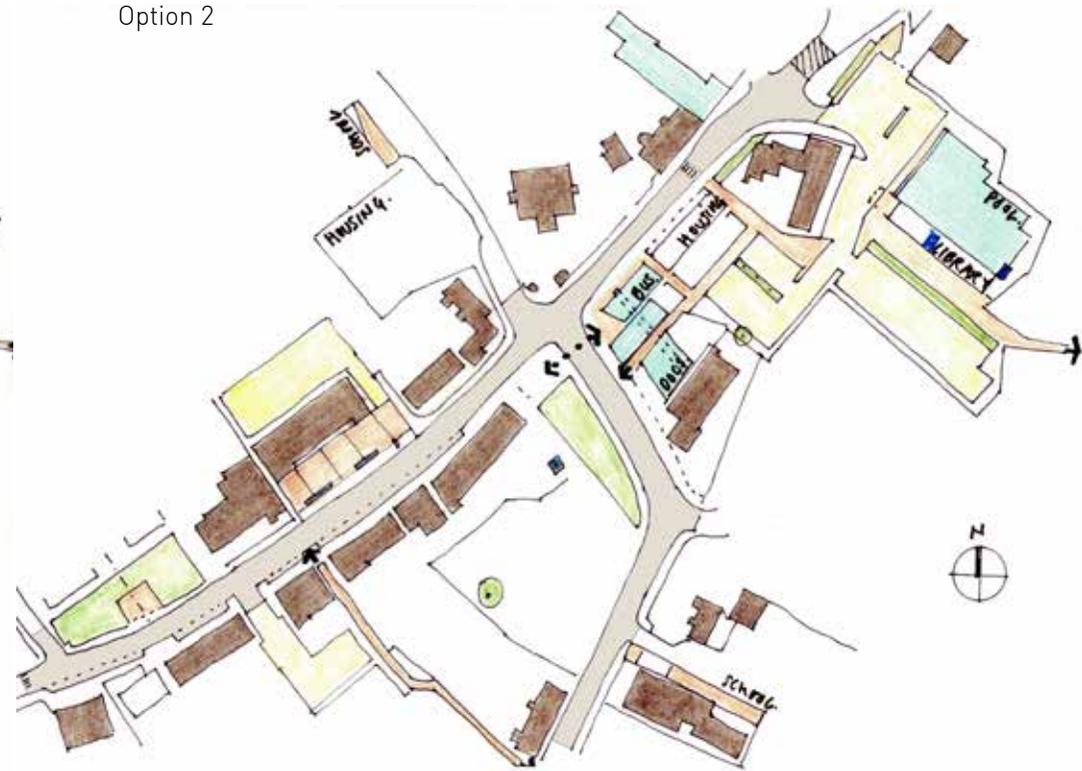
Each school gate could have a new surface treatment, a small canopy and benches all set back from the roadway signifying their importance in the civic life of the village.

Community Hub

Option 1



Option 2



Doing the doable

- Complete car park project next to leisure centre to help wider parking issues and unlock other projects.

Costings

- New 46 space car park as primary project - £140,000

Village Centre

Pig Square

From workshop discussions it was agreed that the green space between Kirkstyle Lane and High Street marked by trees and monument should not be built upon. However, the adjacent open space to the rear and west of Kirkstyle Lane that includes the car park adjacent to High Street along with the former pub sites on Broadlie Road are discussed later in this chapter under Housing Opportunities.

This new conceptual framework for the village centre has been presented to a representative of East Renfrewshire Council Road's Department and, subject to further detailed discussions was broadly supported in terms of ideas and aspirations for the future.

A fully developed community hub and village centre could boost foot fall activity and provide more retail/commercial capacity with living space reinforcing both the importance of Main Street while addressing the vibrancy from a mix of uses.

Moving forward with the various infrastructure and public realm projects will require a partnership with East Renfrewshire Council and a funding and development programme.

“

I'm not sure the village could cope with a big increase in new housing. This has to be controlled and managed carefully.

Neilston Commuter

”

Current View



Pig Square



Village Centre

School Gates

“Neilston has two primary schools and a family centre. Here dropping off and collecting children offers a valuable opportunity for children, parents, grandparents and others to meet and socialise. These small areas represent an important civic function that strengthens community bonds and connections.”

Town Charter 2009

A school gate is an important meeting point and needs to be a place where people move in and out of in a safe manner. Ways of having a better balance between people and vehicles is essential.

The combination of reduced traffic speed and the upgraded parking provision creates the conditions to enable the issues around the school gates, in terms of a place to meet etc. can be considered as part of the overall village centre strategy with the help and inclusion of the schools, the children themselves and the community, through:

- Walking the last 100 metres to school
- Organised school walking/cycling trains as part of the Active Travel scheme
- Direct gate/ramp link to St Thomas’s from the adjacent car park



Parents usually pick up their kids with their cars and you can see there’s a bit of double parking. It can become a danger, especially for me.



Neilston Lollipop Man

On High Street, a new wider pavement stretching from the school gates to Kingston Playing Fields will eventually link to a new walkway/cycle route starting from Mill Cottages providing a safe and green route to and from the school and the centre of the village.

Each school gate could have a new floor surface treatment, a small canopy and benches, all set back from the roadway signifying their importance in the civic life of the village.

Current View

High Street



Brodlie Road



Drop off & Pick up at Neilston Primary



School Gates - Neilston Primary School

View From
High Street



New enclosure, seat, floor surface

School Gates - St Thomas' Primary School

View from
Brodlie Road



New enclosure, wall, seat, floor surface

Doing the doable

- Enlist school / education service involvement.
- Seek community space / lottery funding.

Costings

- Total cost for two locations - £50,000

Open Space

Historically the village had a tight knit centre which was a focus for paths and through routes. It lay in the open countryside and had a tightly defined edge. As the population has grown the new housing areas have increased the village footprint substantially, enclosing a variety of spaces and modifying access to surrounding countryside.

The open spaces theme examines these spaces in their context and in relation to each other, exploring potential links and improvements. The overall aim is to improve and enhance the potential for the community use of open space.

The Charrette Thematic Open Space Group looked at 8 areas of public space in the village. Functions of the space within each area vary but a key and unifying feature is the linkage between spaces and the opportunity to improve safe accessibility for non motorised transport across and around the village.

Clearly these links are of value in terms of improving access and recreation particularly where they tie into the designated "core path" network into the surrounding countryside. Linkages are also important in terms of movement within the village and offer the opportunity to provide safe routes to schools and generally around the village.

“

Three words to describe the open spaces in Neilston? I'd say quite plentiful, pleasant and enjoyable.

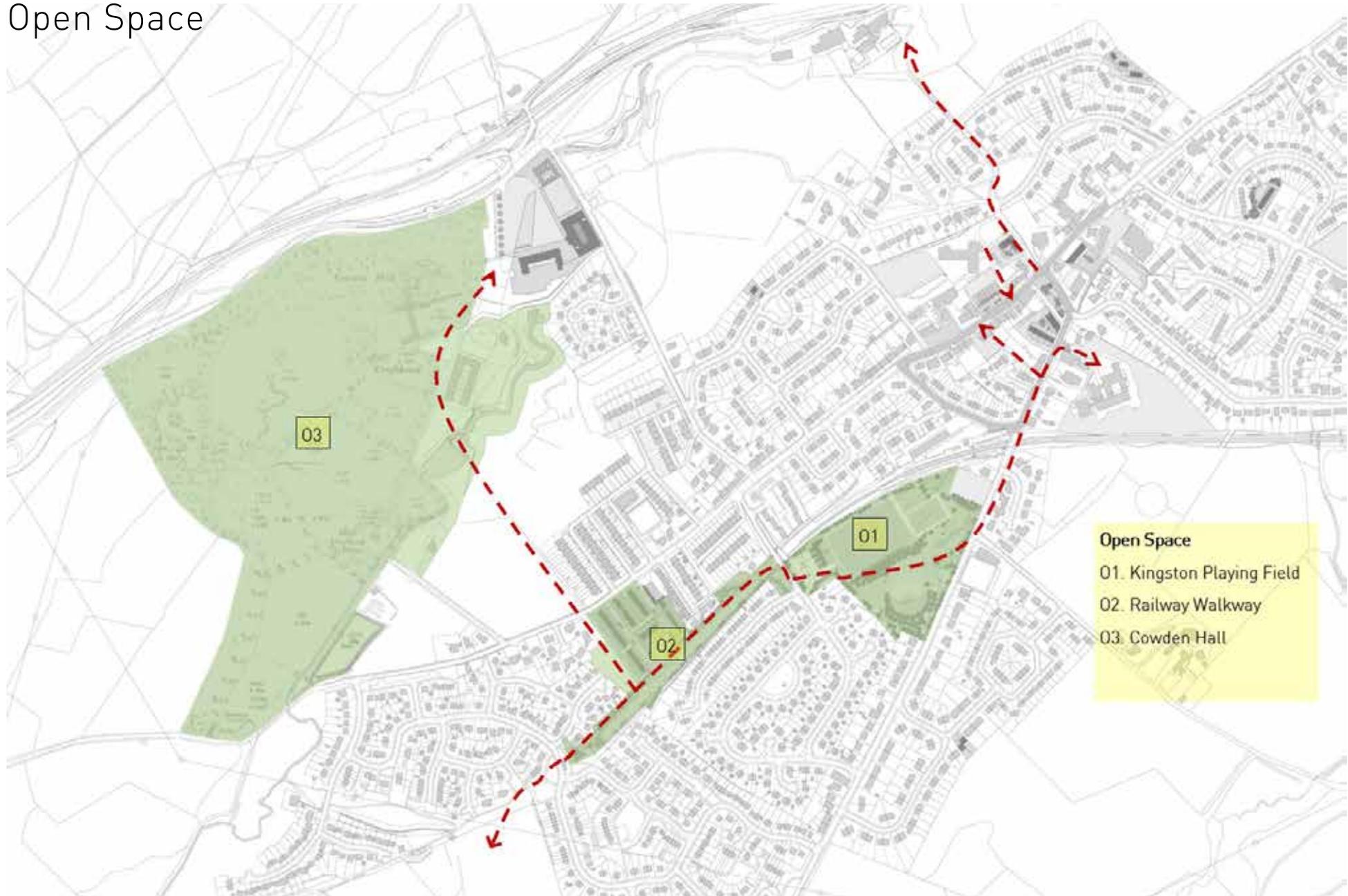
Neilston Commuter

”

The areas identified for consideration within the open space group overlap with those being examined by other groups, particularly those looking at the village centre. At the initial workshop there were 8 open spaces or routes that were considered. After discussion it was decided to focus on 3 key spaces in more detail.

The two Open Space Group workshops were structured to ensure that all spaces were discussed in order to identify key issues surrounding village open space. It was agreed that the principal Neilston open space site was Kingston Playing Fields. The importance of this space was highlighted by the fact that it was the sole topic considered at one of the workshops. Given this clear focus from the community it was decided that a more intense discussion was required to examine all the issues including proposed uses, technical aspects and the viability of the development elements.

Open Space



Open Space

Kingston Park

The overall aim has been to develop a series of improvements to the playing fields which in time will transform the area into a fully functional and hopefully much treasured park. The process of discussion and briefing has been designed to get the most out of the new park. It should be usable and enjoyed by as wider cross section of the community as possible.

A key move would be to reduce from two to one the number of full size football pitches and to convert the remaining pitch into a lit, all weather surface that can be used throughout the year. This, it is emphasised, is seen as being a community facility. If the Neilston were to use of the all weather pitch it would be on a shared and bookable basis. The plan indicates potential locations for a changing facility and also a small stand. It is proposed that the latter element be incorporated within the hillside on the southern edge of the proposed pitch fitting into the topography of the site and minimising the impact on the local amenity. Balancing the “cut and fill” needed to optimise the landform would provide an opportunity to for a small amphitheatre to be formed on the southern side of the park. This would be a low-key feature but would provide space enough for performances or local events. A ball catcher fence would enclose the pitches.

It is proposed that a further all weather playing surface be built to the east of the main pitch. This would be designed to be suitable for 5 a side football and would also incorporate tennis courts. Through careful planning it would also be possible to also add a small grass pitch. This would be appropriate for seven aside football and primary school level games. The pitches and associated



Parents would feel safer if they knew their kids were playing in a more structured park, not a vast open space.

Neilston Community Member



infrastructure would be accommodated substantially on the northern side of the park. At the workshop session there was strong support for a skate park area and a youth shelter. This could be located at the north west corner of the area, thereby minimising any disturbance to close neighbours.

A perimeter path circling the entire park would provide easy access to all areas and could also serve as a measured jogging track. Out door exercise equipment located along the length of this path would provide an outdoor gym.

The existing play area would be fully upgraded and it is proposed that the local community, schools and youth leaders be involved in its detailed design. Provision is needed for all ages. A toddler friendly environment would be formed together with distinct zone for older kids. This might include challenging climbing structures and possibly a zip wire.

Throughout the park extensive planting is required to create form and year round interest. This should follow contemporary best practice and is likely to include plants that reinforce local biodiversity including woodland blocks and wild flower meadows. The details of the design should be part of an ongoing process that encourages full community involvement.

Current View

The first area that may be tackled as part of the overall plan could be the frontage to the park. The rusty steel security fencing along the roadside presents a poor an image. Removal of this and replacement with trees and planting could be an early win.

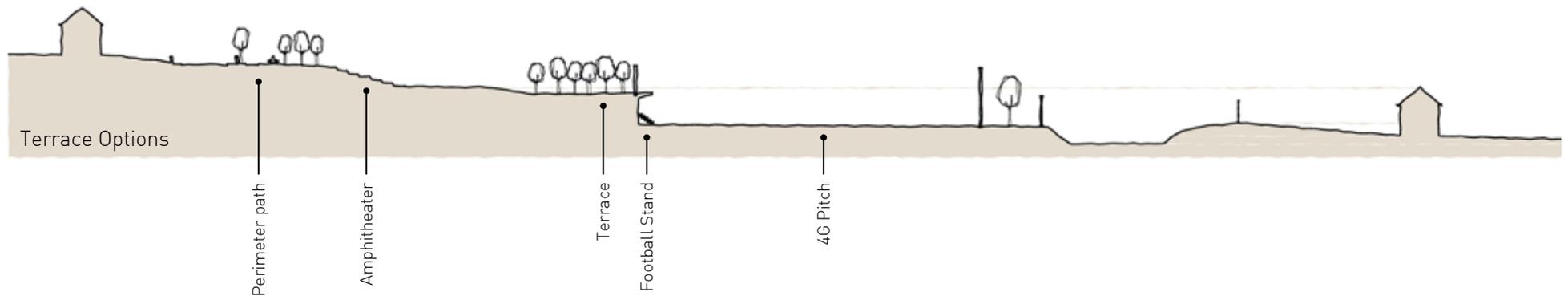
To achieve all the elements indicated on the plan would inevitably be expensive. However it is likely to be easier to secure funds from a variety of sources if the park is considered holistically and as a genuine community based initiative.

Management of the park and associated facilities and equipment will need to be fully described and agreed. The pitch areas will require a high degree of upkeep may be managed through a village based trust comprised of local interested bodies. The nature of the management will be the focus of further discussion. Other areas of the park are likely to be maintained in partnership with the local authority.



Kingston Park





Doing the doable

- Create client group
- Develop Brief
- Apply for a suit of grant funding including ERC, Sports Scotland, charitable funds and Big Lottery.
- Contributions from community volunteers

Costings

- Full option - £3.2 million
- Parking, playing fields, sports provision, pavillion refurbishment, stand and earthworks - £1.65 million
- Playground facilities, exercise equipment, youth shelter - £350,000
- Park development including; site clearance, drainage, path, lighting, boundery treatments, soft landscaping and signage (excluding pre-lims and contingencies) - £600,000

Open Space

Railway Path

This is a broad area, average width 30m, that links Double Hedges Road to Glen Shee Avenue a distance of approximately 420m. Glen Shee Avenue is a principle route through an extensive residential area. Where the old railway meets Glen Shee Avenue is a key access point that, should the path be formalised, would provide safe substantially off road access for a large proportion of the community living in western Neilston to the village centre. It is also noted that the area of the old railway line is very wet in places. This is evidenced on the ground by the wetland vegetation that has colonised some areas. It appears to be the case that much of the old railway bed has been removed for recycling elsewhere and that this has disrupted the original drainage system. A new drain system would be required as part of path works.

The form that the path would take was discussed in some detail during consultations. It was agreed that the path should be robust and "urban" rather than rustic and rural. This suggests a fully made up path would be the most useful surface, giving easy year round access. The path would need to be appropriate for cyclists, buggy users, wheeled chair access and pedestrians. The width would need to be sufficient to accommodate mixed use. Allowance has been made to provide adoptable lighting along its length. Drainage would run from west to east and would terminate in either a SUDs swale or a large soakaway. The path width would be a minimum of 2.4m. Controls would be required to manage vehicle access.



A nice pathway would be great. It would be great for nipping up to the station.

Neilston Community Member



The sketch development of the path indicates that if the route is planned on the north side of the available space it would be possible to create up to 17 full size allotments together with a compound and service area at the east end. Allotment sizes could be adjusted to meet demand; half size plots being made available if these were required. The allotments would be accessed via a new service track linking into Brig O'Lea Terrace. It is proposed that edge planting be undertaken to the sides of the overall space and that this be based on indigenous woodland edge species such as blackberry and wild rose. Between the edge planting and the backs of neighbouring properties allowance has been made for the installation of 2m high fences to provide additional security for neighbours.

At the east end a connecting path would lead up the slope to Double Hedges Road where a light controlled crossing would be installed creating safe access to Kingston Playing Fields. The cost of the crossing installation has been included in the overall cost estimate for the works.

To develop successful allotments it will be necessary to import substantial amounts of topsoil, giving an average growing medium depth of 500mm.

Management and maintenance of the route, and management of the allotments will be necessary to ensure the project is sustainable. This could be project managed by a new "third sector" social enterprise organisation.

Current View

It is noted that the old railway land is currently in private ownership and access will need to be negotiated with the estate of the owner. The costings for the development of the path do not at this stage include for any purchase or legal costs associated with securing the path. These will be assessed as the potential for delivery becomes clearer.



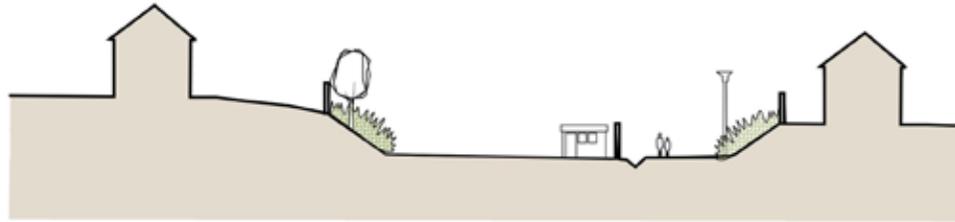
Railway Path



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | new path 2.4 m wide tarmacadam 1350 sq m |  | Large soakaway or SUDs pond 12m dia |
|  | high/secure fence 2m high 1100 lin m |  | shrub planting eg fruit canes/roses 3200 sq m |
|  | lighting columns 14 nr 6m high |  | Allotments: strip of vegetation amd import and spread additional top soil: (assumes old track bed stone already removed)
Area 14000 sq m volume of soil required say 7000 cu m |
|  | trees 68 nr double staked and tied with weldmesh cage to each tree |  | Light controlled crossing |
|  | rubble drain 1m deep x 0.750m section, back filled with coarse stone and geotextile wrapped | | |



Railway Path Cross Section



Harelaw Avenue

New High Fence
Planting

Allotment Garden

New Drainage
Tarmac Surfaced Path
Lighting

Brig O'Lea Terrace

Doing the doable

- Clarify willing seller of ground.
- Seek support from funders such as Sustrans.

Good Practice



Costings

- Path and allotments - £700,000

Open Space

Cowden Hall

The group discussion based on the Cowden Hall area acknowledged the importance of the old estate in the context of contemporary Neilston. The area provides a valuable local though informal recreational resource. It is relatively well used by walkers and dog walkers and several people in the group recollected childhood memories of visiting and playing at Cowdenhall.

The old estate had been developed to an advanced level with extensive recreational facilities for Mill workers including a boating pond, woodland walks and gardens. An extensive glasshouse area linked directly to the main house is thought to have been managed on a semi commercial basis. The gardens themselves included lawns and peripheral planting but it is thought they were probably unremarkable. More importantly there was a good collection of trees, including many from North America.

The estate is now unmanaged. Volunteers from the village have been involved in basic tidying operations; removing trees that blocked paths and easing local drainage where necessary. However many mature trees are in poor condition, paths overgrown and regenerative vegetation is concealing the history and story of Cowden Hall. It is noted that there is no clear, contemporary record of the remains of the estate, no audit of original planting and no information relating to the biodiversity of the area.

Possible functions were discussed in relation to the future management or development of the estate. These include the concept of an outdoor centre, possibly tying into the existing facilities at Lapwing Lodge. A commercial



There are books in the library but it would be great if there were visuals on site - read the landscape!

Neilston Community Member



recreational facility such as provided by "Go Ape" was mooted and the notion of restoration was briefly discussed. After discussion it was generally agreed that the Cowden Hall area should be brought into management but on a low key basis offering access and informal recreational facilities to local people. It was concluded that the nature of the estate should be more akin to a local country park than a developed visitor facility.

The Open Space working group were in agreement that Cowden Hall be developed in low key way that would preserve access and recreational potential for the local community.

To this end an active management plan for the estate is required. This will identify objectives and pathways to achieving them. A starting point for the management plan will be to undertake a full audit of the remnants of the surviving estate. This will include a detailed tree survey based on a qualitative assessment of all tree stock, a biodiversity assessment backed up with a phase 1 ecological study and a detail survey of the remains of the man made structure and infrastructure.

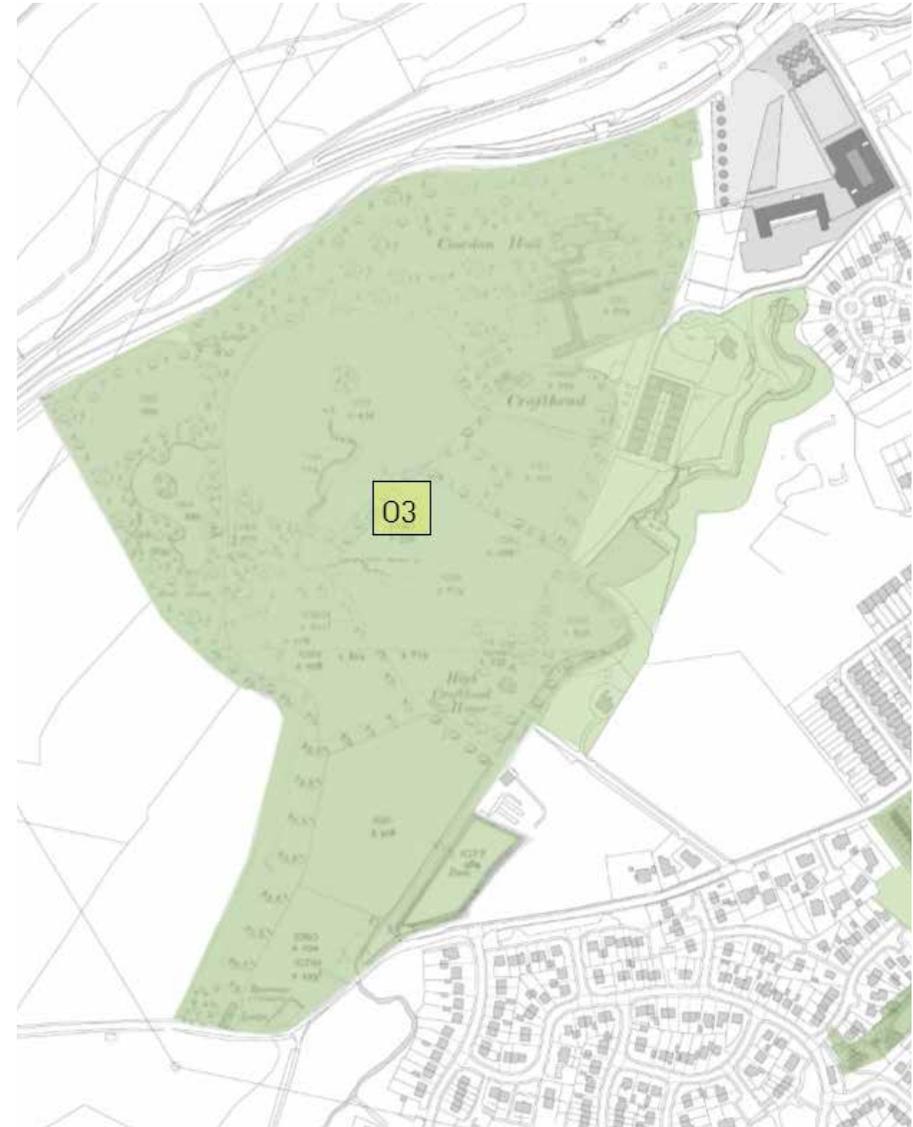
Once the plan has been completed the ongoing management strategy may devised. This will incorporate the key objectives and consolidate the procurement process for work to be undertaken. It is likely that funds for the various studies required to put a management plan in place will take time to accumulate. An early prioritisation of tasks will be beneficial. In the longer term it will be necessary to identify a management and funding

Current View



structure that will stabilise the condition of the estate and ensure the ongoing maintenance can be tackled. It is felt that this project may be an early beneficiary of a new “third sector” social enterprise organisation.

Cowden Hall



Housing Opportunities

People need housing, it is an essential part of life providing personal, social and economic value, and having a significant impact on a place's functionality, character, sociability and performance.

Housing supply policy focuses on affordable housing and market housing but there are access barriers for some people such as the availability of finance or the fact that the right type of housing is not available in the right location. Young and older people can experience difficulties in finding the right accommodation at a price they can afford.

The majority of market housing is provided on larger sites to suit building types and practices. Smaller sites are frequently neglected as unviable needing more creative delivery solutions implemented by different people. Smaller gap sites have locational merits being close to amenities and facilities often prevalent in towns and villages in Scotland and Neilston is no exception. Therefore, this part of the Charrette exercise was about seeking ways to develop small sites in and around the village centre and exploring the opportunities and challenges to deliver housing that is missing from Neilston's current offer.

The purpose of the Housing group was to examine the need for new housing, particularly for those looking for convenient access to amenities. By doing so the infill site opportunities could help repair the village gaps and create active focal points.

"To improve the urban fabric, retain the village's compact nature and reduce

the need for expansion, sensitive infill development utilising brownfield sites in the first instance will be generally supported before seeking development opportunities of green field areas..."

An extract from the Neilston Town Charter

The specific advantages of the housing infill proposals are that they:

1. Address the visual leakage of key spaces.
2. Create focus and character for the community to gather and support traders.
3. Re-create a traditional public realm hierarchy in the village centre.
4. Produce active views and interest onto public spaces, enabling passive supervision and making them safer day and night.
5. Provide sustainable living in the heart of the village giving easy access to amenities that is beneficial for older people and generating lower car usage.

Housing Opportunities

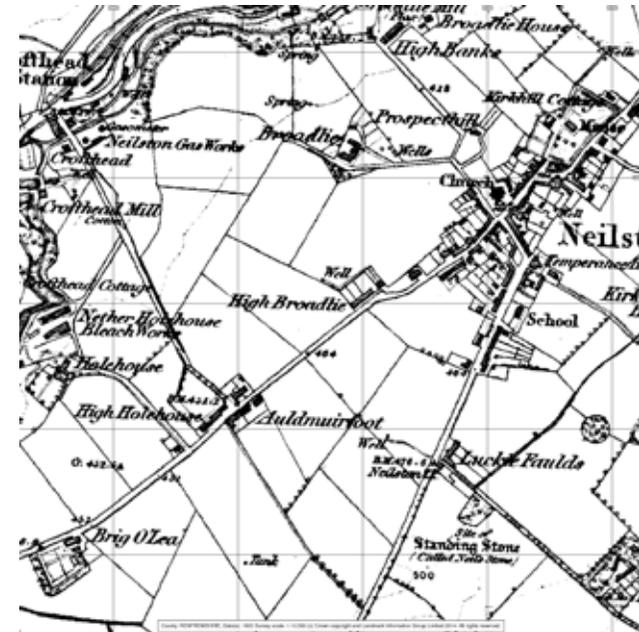


Neilston Historical Maps

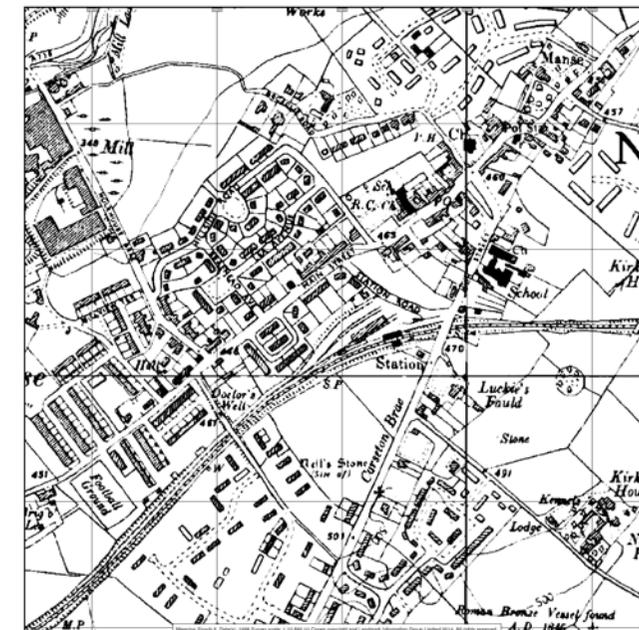
One of the main questions asked by the community at the consultation is “why build housing in the village centre”?

Examining the history of the town maps demonstrates that Neilston’s development has brought about a depopulating of the main streets, losing its distinct public spaces, which has eroded the character of the village. Around 1863, the pattern of development is quite distinct, developed around the main road arteries, with the three main public spaces being the cross, Pig Square and the public square at the north east entrance to the village. The development of the mill and mill cottages (slightly later) also create a similar dense pattern at the west end of the village..

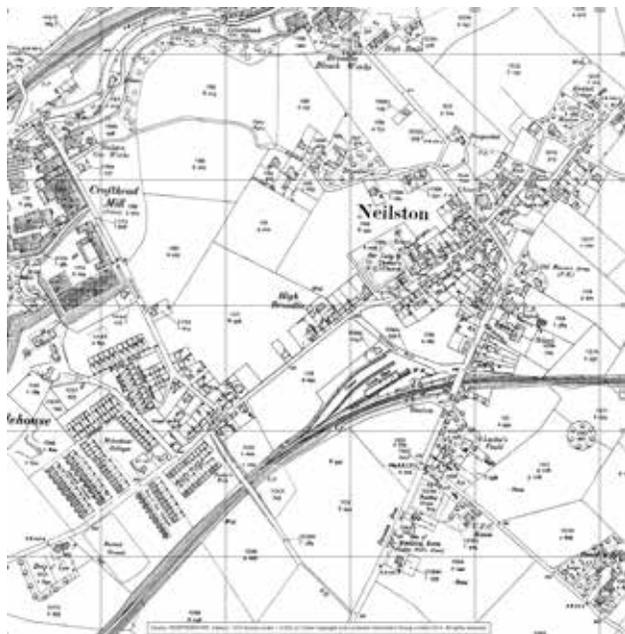
The 1938 map shows the introduction of a lower density suburban pattern of development between the village centre and mill cottages. This suburban pattern continued as Neilston grew over the latter half of the 20C. This changing development form also gradually eroded the older pattern of streets, houses and public spaces in the village.



Neilston: 1863



Neilston: 1958



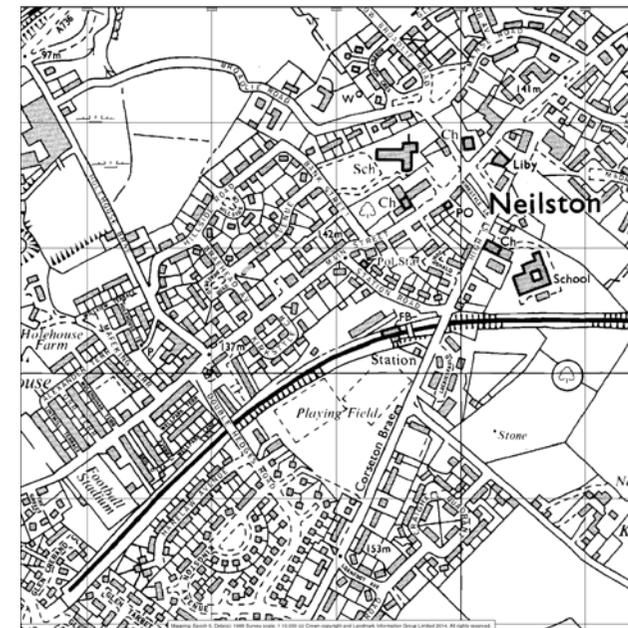
Neilston: 1913



Neilston: 1938



Neilston: 1970



Neilston: 1985

Ordnance Survey Licence Number LIG0447

Housing Opportunities

Kirkstyle Lane

The Principle of development

The development of Kirkstyle Lane will have numerous townscape benefits, in addition to addressing the need for amenity housing and one, two, and three bedroomed accommodation. This village centre development opportunity addresses all of the 7 points highlighted above representing a good location next to the main facilities of the village centre, having the ability to overlook the school entrance, providing interest for residents and passive supervision of the street.

Responding to existing site features

The development of the scheme will replace the existing car parking however, proposals are made within the village centre section of this report to re-allocate such parking adjacent to the close-by "community hub" of the sports centre and library. The desire to retain existing townscape and landscape visual features is recognised by the proposal to relocate the existing memorial monument to a more prominent location at Neilston Cross. This proposal reinforces the civic importance of that space within a potentially re-landscaped public "green".

Various Options presented

From the various options of form and scale presented to the working group, the proposal to create two terraces was the preferred choice. It was believed



More housing would put pressure on local services, although if we had more housing this would bring more business.



Neilston Community Member

that this option responded best to the orientation of the site, providing the larger homes amenity via south facing private, and shared, open spaces.

The proposal

On the eastern part of the site, the two storey plus roof space, "colonies" style terrace reminiscent of some of the Mill terraces, fronts Pig Square, forming a civic scale edge to the green space. This re-focuses the space towards the church, resulting in a sense of arrival on the approach to the village centre. The terrace provides four ground floor amenity dwellings that face Kirkstyle Lane, providing occupiers with active views onto the street, and four maisonettes above, entered from small private gardens to the west.

To the west, a second, lower terrace of four 1 ½ storey houses arranged perpendicular to High Street have their own private south facing gardens. Entered from the east they also form a shared garden space between the two arms of the development, and a route which could form a possible pedestrian way from High Street through to Main Street. The lower scale of this terrace reduces overshadowing of the new housing on Kirkstyle Lane, whilst the gable and the garden walls which link both terraces create a presence onto the street.

A shared car parking court recognises that although town centre living reduces the need for car-ownership, some requirement for resident and visitor parking will remain.

Delivery Options

The proposals recognise the need to be practical and affordable, retaining the existing gas governor which would have been expensive to relocate, and providing potential phasing scenarios for the housing that see the development of the roof spaces either as being built out at the time of development, or as potential "self-build" add-ons to the initial fit-out.

Current View



Kirkstyle Lane - View from High Street





Site Opportunities and Constraints

- Good central location close to town centre
- Overlooks school entrance— ideal amenity housing site
- Existing car park on site—compromises development potential—could be relocated?
- Existing services - gas governor needs to remain in existing location and there could be other underground infrastructure.
- Existing landscape





Kirkstyle Lane - View across Pig Square

Housing Opportunities

Brig O'Lea

The principle of development

The proposal is to utilise land in the event that it became available if the football club were to relocate to a new facility at Kingston Park. The proposal would provide up to 48 homes in mainly two storey terraces arranged in a similar orientation to the mill cottages to the north.

Responding to existing site features

The existing Scout hall will remain and its boundary tree-planted, and the overall "green" of the existing site will be reflected in a new village orchard linking the existing Uplawmoor Road with the proposed allotments on the site of the redundant railway line. A shared surfaced ("Home Zone") for the new residential streets would create further green connections through the site in the form of street tree planting leading to tree belts adjoining the proposed public walkway to the south.

The proposal

The Brig O'Lea site provides an opportunity for a mix of tenure types and property sizes, with options explored around mainly two and three bedroomed accommodation, utilising all or part of roof spaces, and all with front and back gardens. 100% parking is provided within front garden curtilages off shared surface streets with provision for visitor car parking. In addition to private gardens, the proposals illustrate a proposed community "green" for



Maybe housing for older people
– more affordable, smaller if
they're just by themselves so
that they can keep themselves
healthy and happy.



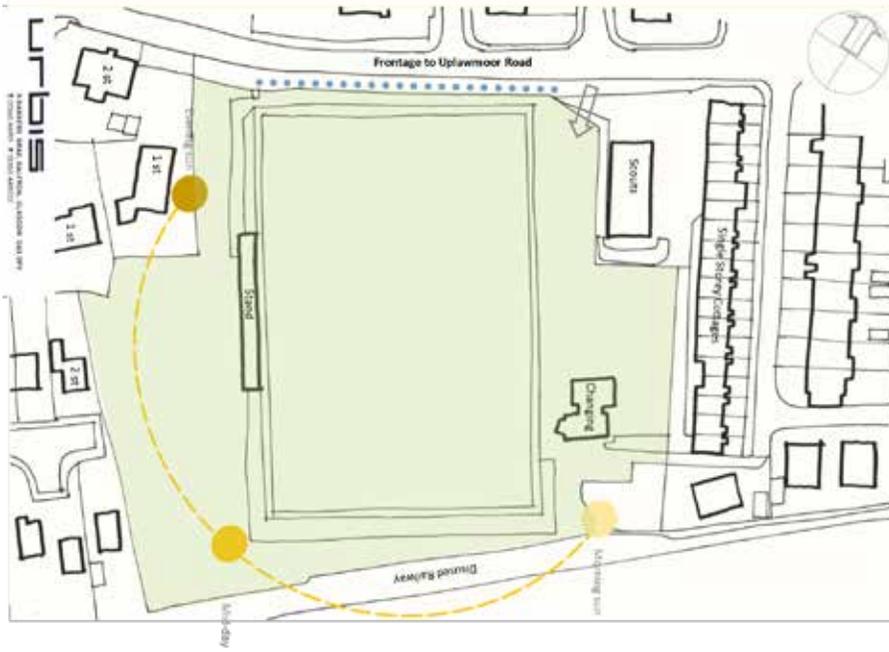
Neilston Community Member

small neighbourhood gatherings, which also opens up connections to the allotments proposed to the south.

Delivery Options

Given its current use, the site is relatively flat and, subject to the usual development investigations should be relatively economic to deliver. Delivery options would respond to specific housing demand by adjusting the house modules and heights within the permutations provided.

Current View



Site analysis

Brig O'Lea



View from Uplawmoor Road

Housing Opportunities

Further Housing Opportunities - Smaller, infill sites

The various sites considered have their own characteristics, and outcomes of these initial capacity studies are in brief as follows.

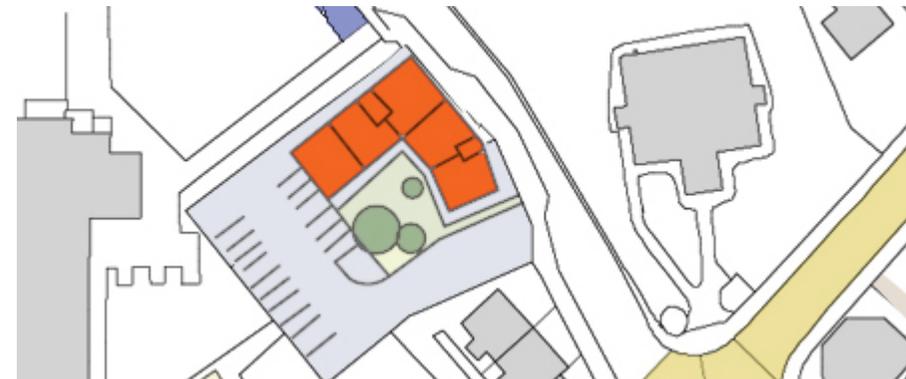
These are illustrative at this stage and will require assessment in terms of development plan policies and guidance and it is suggested that design briefs for each be prepared by the Council.

It should be noted that there may be various reasons why gaps have been left in existing development areas, ranging from site acquisition, geometric issues, a desire to create visual links to existing open space, to geo / SI issues of which we are not aware.



I think the village needs more accommodation with facilities for the future needs of tenants.

Neilston Community Member



Brodlie Road

This site is in a central location which is convenient and sustainable. Being adjacent to the primary school, it provides an active outlook for residents occupying amenity flats grouped in an L shape around a central south facing shared garden. The proposed form maximises the potential for views to the countryside to the north, while providing lift access to ten two bedroom, convenient and compact flats over three levels.

The development would benefit the village centre with more potential patronage of local shops and provide better definition to Broadlie Street as part of the traditional public realm hierarchy around the Kirk and its grounds. The building could be orientated to create the opportunity for an interesting gable form when viewed from the cross.



Craig Road

Existing surrounding development in Craig Road is two storey, and the existing site appears to be occupied by garage lock-ups. The proposed two dwelling development would address the dis-connect in geometry of the existing street, and its location gives the site visual prominence. Both two storey homes would benefit from south facing gardens to the open countryside.



Hillside Road

Another two storey proposal addressing the perceived gap in the existing street form, this proposal is set back to reflect its location fronting the central garden space on Hillside Road. The site slopes down to the north, which may mean that a split level proposal would take best advantage of the site capacity whilst aligning with heights of surrounding two story buildings. Pushing the homes back from the main building frontage also allows retention of partial oblique views to the surrounding countryside.



Glennifer View

A larger site existing primarily around a turning head and dominated by housing to the south which sits at a higher level. The intention in sketching the capacity analysis is to knit together the fabric, respond to plots and gardens of the higher semidetached homes to the south to create a series of visual groupings. The seven two story homes will have varying garden sizes but will have in common their substantial views to the north.



Hartfield Crescent

This proposal sits to the east of a predominantly single storey building type, and to the west of a larger dwelling and grounds. The proposal is for six 1.5 storey terraced cottages, sitting in a common court behind the existing crescent development. The visual image here might be Eaglesham, where intimate residential courts site behind street frontages and share parking whilst having very compact private outdoor space.

Additional Projects

The following projects did not form part of the Charrette formal engagement exercise largely as a result of being in private ownerships. That said, these topics were discussed with a range of property owners and interested parties some of whom made contributions within design studio discussions.

Mill Cottages

The "Mill Cottages" is a distinctive neighbourhood within Neilston. The cottages, developed as workers' accommodation for the neighbouring Crofthead Mill are arranged in terraces. Originally built as single or 2 storey units, they now have been extended, predominantly in the form of 'dormers' of various types. The cottages, like the Mill, represent an important part of Neilston's industrial and social heritage. They are the equal to, say, Moray fishing village housing in Nairn, Cullen etc but over the years the 'common' areas have generally not been maintained and the neighbourhood requires some general improvement.

From discussions with some Mill Cottage householders it was apparent that on street parking created problems within the neighbourhood. Residents of the Mill Cottages expressed a wish to upgrade the lanes and bring unused spaces back into use to transform the overall environment of this historic part of the village.

The opportunity exists to work with the residents and the adjacent land owner to come forward with proposals that address these areas of concern along with initiatives to address the quality of the fabric of some of the cottages.

The adjacent land owner to the north of the Mill Cottages currently wishes to develop his land holding with around 40 terraced units. The consultant team has examined how such a proposal might benefit the wider Mill Cottage neighbourhood and concluded that it would be possible to limit house building to a specific area which relates to the existing housing pattern and acts as a more sustainable edge to the neighbourhood. Such a design approach would provide the same housing capacity as proposed by the landowner's proposed scheme.

Through the establishment of a residents' group in conjunction with the local Council and the Development Trust the first steps could be taken to develop a programme of environmental and building improvements, ("subject plan action area") as part of a long-term plan to re-establish the character of this important part of the village.

Through the establishment of a residents' group in conjunction with the local Council and the Development Trust the first steps could be taken to develop a programme of environmental and building improvements, (a housing action area / general improvement area) as part of a long term plan to re-establish the character of this important part of the village.

Current View

Therefore the following action is proposed.

- environmental improvements to lanes and public realm
- develop unused pockets of land to provide additional parking
- It is recognised that the adjacent green field land is not designated for housing development making any proposals contrary to the Council's planning policy. That said, it is believed that there is merit in considering how the adjacent land can be developed by bringing proposals forward as part of a wider repair and renewal of the neighbourhood and provide a better robust edge to this historic part of Neilston. Such proposals would be within the context of the next local plan review period over the course of the next 5 years.



Additional Projects

The Mill

Historically, the Mill was Neilston's primary economic driver, born out of the area's landscape and assets. The original success of the mill brought employment for the people of Neilston and its surrounding area.

The building comprises 252,000ft² of space and is currently owned by J+M Murdoch and sons. The Murdoch family operate a range of related businesses from the mill, taking up around 25,000ft² of space. There are around 15/16 other tenants, occupying 50,000ft² within the remaining buildings providing employment for around 25 people. The buildings are therefore underutilised and not fulfilling their true potential. While many parts of the building remain vacant the owners have maintained the building fabric to arrest any further decay.

The owners have indicated that they would be willing to be part of further discussions and studies that would be required to find a viable new use for the site. The challenge must be to find a mix of new uses that together might create a vibrant and viable new destination on the edge of the village. The owner acknowledges that the conclusions to a study in 2006 recommending some ground floor commercial use with the remainder of the space given over to 200 residential units cannot be sustained in the current market conditions.



We need to keep Neilston's mill. It's a big part of Neilston's History.

Neilston Community Member



Therefore, it is proposed that a working group, comprising East Renfrewshire Council, Neilston Development Trust and the mill owner is established to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund – Enterprise Grant programme, for feasibility work that will research the opportunities for the site and the buildings in order to identify potential sustainable uses for the building and bring forward a coherent and viable business strategy.

Finding a viable and sustainable new use for the mill buildings would be a significant regeneration catalyst for the village. With the right proposals the use of the whole building could stimulate new employment opportunities as well as sustaining an important part of Neilston's heritage.

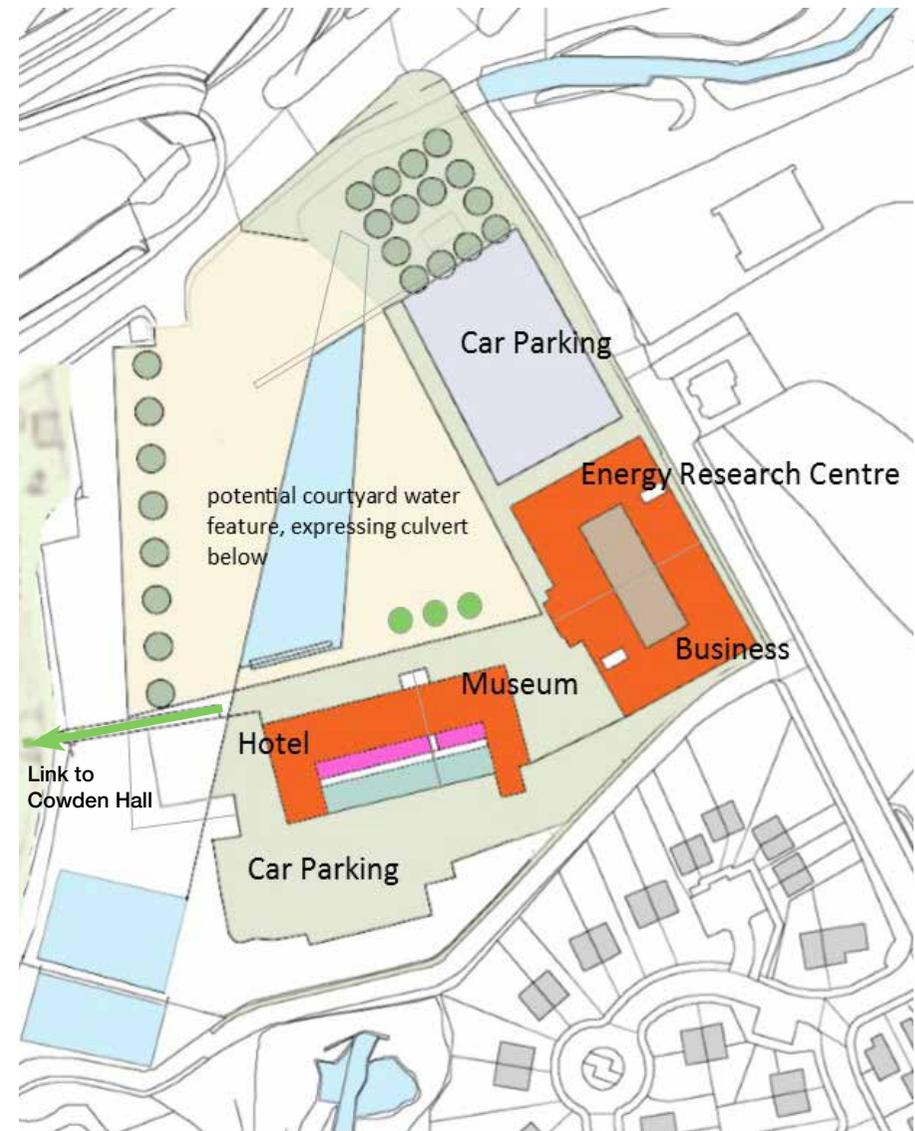
Current View



Good Practice



The Mill - Concept layout



Additional Projects

Station Environment

There is a significant amount of commuters and visitors using the railway to Glasgow's City Centre and other parts of south Glasgow. The railway station plays an important "shop window" arrival point for the village but there is scope for enhancing this Neilston asset.

The adjacent former railway sheds could also provide an opportunity for investment. The neighbouring shed provide some 6000ft² of accommodation which it is understood is currently used for unheated storage. The space is currently being informally marketed by the owner. From an external inspection the building appears to be in reasonable condition and could be utilised for light "craft based" industrial activity. Alternatively, subject to meeting building standards residential conversion may be possible although at present it is difficult to see how values would support such a proposal.

“

The trust have adopted the station, but personally I feel they alone don't have the bodies or the time to spend here that is needed.

”

Neilston Community Member

Current View





Micro Projects

We have identified 5 micro projects that should form the first steps for the Advisory Group as part of identifiable actions emerging from this Charrette process. The projects which have been identified by the Community Council and others include:

- bins for dog walkers
- planting to raised flower beds in Kirkstyle Lane
- new boundary treatment to Kingston Playing fields, along Kingston Road
- enhancement of junction of Main Street and Double Hedges Road
- village centre spring clean

Successful and speedy realisation of these projects would be a recognisable legacy for the charrette process as well as testing out a possible template for the longer-term ambition to establish a 'TOWN FACTOR' company that could carry out cleaning, repair/maintenance and landscape work together with education and training functions around these tasks. This could be a locally-based social enterprise company creating part-time and full-time employment, depending on the types of contracts obtained and carried out while also co-ordinating input from current and new volunteers.



An Estimation of Project Costs

Project	Cost (£)
Moving library	1,400,000
New car park adjacent to sports centre	140,000
Upgrade 2 ex. car parks behind Main Street	105,000
Market Sq. micro	285,000
Market Sq. macro	385,000
Alterations to Main St. Carriageway and new on street parking	70,000
Link path, Main Street to High St	20,000
School gates [2]	50,000
Alterations to High St carriageway extending up to Kingston Park	105,000
Railway path+ allotments	700,000
Kingston Park Full Option (individual elements could be phased)	3,200,000
Pig Sq. - Kirkstyle Lane - To achieve viability a community based project is required with affordable housing input	1,200,000
Broadlie Road	1,000,000
Brig o Lea	5,400,000

The estimation of costs has been based broadly on the indicative drawing information prepared as part of the Charrette process. These figures are for guidance and should not be relied on for any purposes other than for guidance associated with this Charrette exercise. All costs are inclusive of preliminaries and contingencies but exclusive of surveys, abnormals, fees and VAT.

Projects Arising from Green field Expansion Sites designated within the ERC Local Development Plan

Local Planning Authorities are required to make sure that a 5 year effective land supply is maintained at all times, and at present East Renfrewshire does not have sufficient supply either in the short term or the long term. Additionally, the Scottish Government requires the housing land supply to be "generous" i.e. that a margin above what is estimated to be required should actually be provided.

Accordingly, the Council has allocated additional housing sites in its Proposed Local Development Plan across the Council area. The sites within Neilston are at

- Neilston Road,
- Kirkton Road
- Holehouse Brae

These proposed allocations have been submitted to the Scottish Government Reporters who will examine the arguments for and against these, and will reach a decision towards the end of 2014.

Extract from Local Plan



The development of these sites, while not generally popular with Neilston residents, does provide an opportunity for the following benefits:

- the provision of affordable housing, in accordance with council policy, either provision on-site, or financial contribution towards provision elsewhere in the village;
- the provision of family homes to keep young people and families in the village;
- a stable population to support facilities such as local shops, sports centre, library etc;
- 'developer contributions' towards other community facilities in the village if shown to be necessary e.g. open space, play space, footpath/cycle links, contribution to school facilities etc.

It was recognised within the Charrette process that while some members of the community were not satisfied that Neilston's settlement would grow there were others that believed that some new housing could help sustain some of the existing amenities and services within the village. What was clear was that any new development should play a proper part in making Neilston a better place.

One way of achieving such a contribution was to look more holistically at how planning policy works in terms of affordable housing and other elements of planning contributions. This report argues that rather than locating affordable housing within the edge of settlement development sites, affordable housing

would be better served by being located in more convenient locations within the village centre. This is particularly appropriate for older people who require affordable accommodation with easy access to shops and services and be close to public transport connections.

In addition to the fact that affordable housing should be more accessible to the village centre, the benefit is compounded by the opportunity to utilise the infill sites in and around the village centre thereby making a wider regeneration place making contribution and generally allowing the historic pattern of development to be restored.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Council consider applying a "commuted sums" approach to their affordable housing taking the financial value of Greenfield plots to make a cross funded contribution to the aforementioned in-fill sites within the village centre. This creative approach to cross subsidy could be an important factor in the overall economic viability of the infill housing sites.

Neilston's Place Plan

The Neilston Overall Vision

Neilston has existed for many generations. The Community is proud of its place with many understandably not wanting radical interventions rather to seek ways to maintain and enhance what they already value. For this reason any physical development or corrective action is part of a Neilston Investment Plan what we have described as the "Neilston Place Plan". This is not a masterplan exercise but a series of propositions that are intended to create sustainable ways of building on the vitality of the community along with nurturing the heritage of buildings and the way of life exercised by generations of Neilston people.

The overall vision is to increase connectivity, generate a more cohesive urban fabric by filling some of the missing jigsaw pieces and generating activity with a focus on:

- repairing or introducing elements to join things up whether they are routes to the village centre or connections to neighbourhoods, public transport or simply places to walk on the edge of the village.
- bringing forward opportunity sites for development
- widen housing opportunities particularly near the village centre
- a safer traffic calmed village centre with improved infrastructure and public space
- the introduction of green spaces and routes that allow wider recreation and leisure activity whether that is formal (Kingston Park) or informal (Cowden Hall Gardens), or a new walk and cycle way along the disused railway line.

"The Place Plan" is a framework plan that highlights the project studies reflecting the discussions within the thematic groups, other community representations and comments from a range of individuals, stakeholders and agencies.

The development of the framework was a balancing exercise between an aggregated project studies "bottom up" approach and maintaining a coherent view of the whole place that maintains what Neilston was, what it is now and what the community wants it to be.

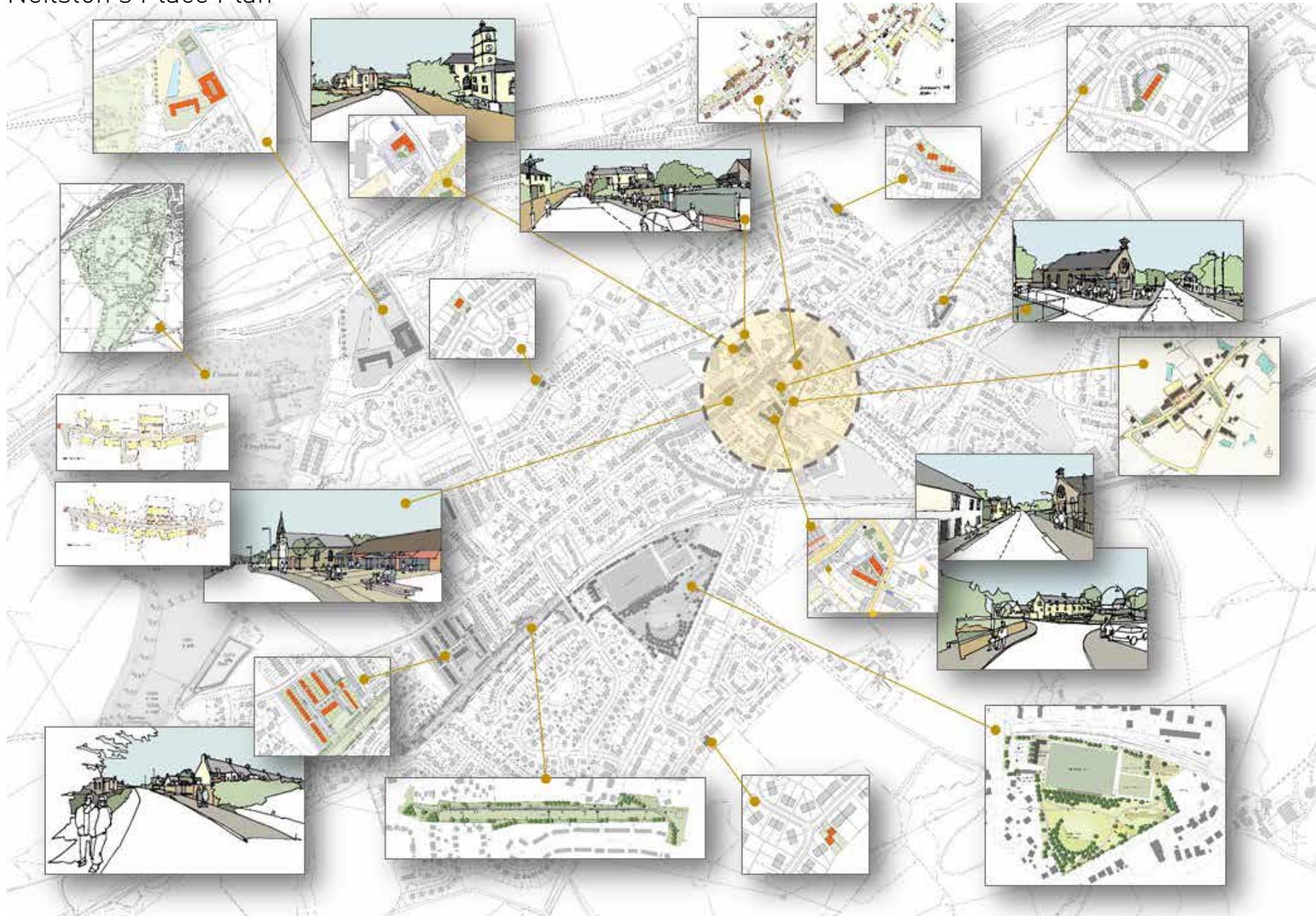
Therefore housing, village centre and open space work was examined on the basis of

- the specific benefits of the individual projects
- individual proposals having their own identity but also serving Neilston's public benefit

The new residential infill projects should be organised to conform with the scale of existing dwellings and other buildings as part of an overall infill strategy.

New housing tenures and types will add to the diversity that already exists but, importantly, such interventions and subsequent re-densification should all take place within a walkable distance from the village centre.

Neilston's Place Plan



Within the village centre these additions will be anchored in an upgraded, traffic calmed public realm with improved car parking provision designed to attract more footfall and spend, improve the streetscape and the visual amenity for customers and visitors alike and tie the village together via an enhanced Market Square at its heart. A good village space will not only encourage people to that space but also encourage them to interact with one other.

The projects identified and prioritised will work together to complete the jigsaw. Delivery will not be instantaneous but will take time. Delivery programmes will be designed by identifying the priorities and recognising a critical pathway where one project has the ability to unlock the next project.

As such projects will address the immediate needs and aspirations of the village, set the bar for future development while generating the co-operation required in order to take them forward, all contributing to making Neilston a better place to live.

Following the sustainability principles established within the original Charter document the village is committed to the concept of community sustainability which essentially is a framework to guide local action that will foster both a sustainable infrastructure and management structure. The objective is to provide solutions that are economically, environmentally, and socially healthy. These manifest themselves in the preference for low energy buildings, small scale affordable housing infill, and green movement and access networks together with functional easily maintained public spaces.

This project is all about working with the existing grain of the village, about building on what has been done in the past and about creating the right conditions to allow new projects to be developed in the future.





Summary & Nine Recommendations

The Community Engagement and What We Found

The Charrette exercise was primarily about engaging with the public on their thoughts and ideas about what interventions would help Neilston become a better place.

- A Community working Co-operatively

This was an exercise in asking people to express their thoughts and also about working co-operatively to develop such thoughts and ideas through exchanges and debate.

- Maintain Neilston's Character, Scale and Sociability

Some people thought that little change was required while others thought that Neilston had to move forward to remain competitive and have a sufficient scale to sustain amenities, facilities and services. A key message is that while enhancing their place they wanted to maintain Neilston's character, scale and sociability as a "village".

- Pride and Pragmatism of "Doing the Doable"

There is no doubt that interest in the exercise grew as engagement progressed. The people of Neilston responded and positively progressed a

range of proposals around the "doing the doable" the Charrette's working strapline. The people of Neilston expressed their pride in their place, they didn't want solutions that were flashy but they were looking for things that were realistic and achievable. The message was about doing the ordinary well.

- An Inter-Generational Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm for their place was obvious not just from one section of the population but there was a clear demonstration of intergenerational common interest from the people of Neilston irrespective of their age.

Establishing a Policy Framework for Supplementary Planning Guidance

This Charrette exercise was designed to help inform East Renfrewshire Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance policy. Representatives of the Council's Planning Service attended plenary and workshop sessions helping to inform the debate, listen to community contributions and provide guidance on current policies.

The Charrette exercise of design development, community engagement and subsequent project study information will act as a platform framework for the development of the SPG policy.

The Elements of Project Delivery

Delivery is about connecting and making best value of the following contributions:

1. Financial Capital (cash, grants, debt funding)
2. Physical Assets – (land and property)
3. Human Capital (community inputs)

The impact of the recession is that there are limited financial resources to support projects. Given these conditions it is necessary to find alternative approaches that make best use of assets, charitable and other forms of grant assistance and the community's own contribution (what many describe as social capital).

Financial Capital

East Renfrewshire Council, like all Scottish Local Authorities, is required to make further budget cuts therefore funding support from more traditional funding areas is limited.

- Fund Assembly - Public Funding Can't Come From One Source
Regeneration is not an individual act but a process that cuts across a range of interests. This also applies to Councils where funding contributions to regeneration programmes need to come from a range of Council departments; transport, education, housing, social work etc. The challenge for the Council is how funds can be assembled to create a "marriage value" contribution, by that we mean that individual departmental contributions will establish a greater collective value.
- Exploit the Reputational (Covenant) Strength and Experience of Neilston's Organisations

Neilston Development Trust is one of the principal community organisations in Scotland and is well experienced in accessing funding from the likes of charitable trusts and other grant awarding organisations such as Big Lottery.

Given the growth of community organisations and the general lack of funds, bidding for grants will inevitably become more competitive and more time consuming. Once more, bringing financial resource to projects will be about assembling funds rather than expecting to receive support from one organisation. In addition to raising funds from charitable sources, NDT has been successful in gaining grant support from the Scottish Government Housing and Regeneration. However, it is hoped that Government can continue to provide a variety of capital and revenue funding such as town

centre grants, enabling funds for community empowerment etc that can sustain programmes beyond the short term.

On behalf of the Neilston Community, Neilston Development Trust has the potential to build up levels of equity that it can invest in community projects from their wind farm investments. The important aspect of this is that the investment has the potential for sustainable income which can then be utilised to access debt funding. Access to debt funding is usually difficult for community organisations as lenders require significant levels of equity to demonstrate commitment and shared project risk. NDT must continue to grow its reputation to provide confidence for funding participation.

Physical Assets

- Utilising Public Assets

While Council budgets are under pressure, there will be some funds and importantly they have property assets that can make a contribution to Neilston's regeneration. The transfer of such assets to other organisations allows wider access to external funding which a local authority is unable to obtain. Ownership of the asset then provides an element of security for other funders to participate.

While the Council is required to meet "value for money" criteria in transferring assets, it is hoped that within the context of such an obligation, a wider assessment of "value for money" is recognised in terms of "public benefit" and "public good".

- Working With What is There

This project is all about working with what Neilston is; understanding how its history has shaped its buildings and its people. These are the foundations that should inform new projects which should not act as isolated events but consider how they fit and enhance what is there.

Human / Social Capital – The Role of Neilston's Community

- An Impressive Team of Volunteers

Neilston Development Trust and Neilston Community Council along with other community organisations have built up strong community action and commitment from the people of Neilston. The amount of volunteer action is impressive and has been sustained over a long period.

- Community Commitment breeds Confidence for Project Delivery

A demonstration of such community action is the growing numbers engaged in the Charrette process and a determination and enthusiasm by people to drive forward projects particularly those that require small cash injection but can be achieved through people's time and effort. This community commitment is the foundation that breeds confidence for project delivery and for Neilston to achieve its goals.

Places need people: to communicate and talk, to get people on board to coordinate, organise, cajole, encourage, plan, prepare budgets. These people are the glue that binds community action giving confidence to local Councils, agencies and funders.

- A Governance Structure for Action

Last summer considerable time and effort was made to put in place an appropriate and agreed governance structure to take these ideas forward. This now needs to be activated. The experience and access to wider funds makes Neilston Development Trust an appropriate delivery vehicle to address these Charrette recommendations and develop the proposed projects. However, this must be done in partnership with all parties within the Neilston Community, East Renfrewshire Council, funders and other investors in delivering these aspirations.

- Investment Required to Build Community Capacity

For communities to be at the heart of the regeneration process and indeed to lead, they require capacity. There is a need to invest directly into our communities and places in order to build capacity through investing in staff resources that will enable the local management of development together with the ability to implement strategies and action plans.



Project Delivery Propositions

Priority programmes, funding and processes.

The projects investigated in this Charrette exercise have addressed a range of issues that require detailed research and analysis prior to a business case agreement. This exercise is the start of that testing process with proposals being subject to an initial outline cost and market assessment.

Some projects are more complicated than others and accordingly will take longer to deliver.

Time periods are always difficult to determine as projects are subject to a range of externalities, however, in broad terms the definition of the periods is as follows:

Short Term	3-5 years
Medium Term	5-10 years
Long Term	10+ Years

The following table provides an assessment of project time periods and a brief strategic outline of tasks.

Site	Period	Description
Kingston Park	Short / Medium	Early action projects could take place but there are funding and logistical issues to be addressed to transform this major open space into Neilston's Park
Mill Cottages	Long	This project includes the general improvement and restoration of the neighbourhood along with the potential for some additional housing. Any new housing will be subject to planning policy as the ground currently does not have any policy support for housing.
Station Environment	Medium	This private site is subject to land owner's proposals and market conditions. Wider regeneration action within the village should boost confidence in bringing the property forward for re-development.
The Mill	Long	The landowners are assessing their options for expanding their business. The market does not support private housing and other uses lack significant value for the major upgrading of the building. This building is likely to require substantial subsidy to enable a sustainable restoration programme to take place.
Community Hub	Short / Medium	It is proposed that the library and leisure facilities are re-provisioned within one building and a new village car park is formed. Such proposals are subject to Council budgets and departmental approvals. However, it is recommended that the car park should be short term to liberate other projects.
Redundant Railway Line	Short / Medium	A site that could have early intervention subject to land owner agreement. The long term proposals are also subject to adjacent projects at Kingston Park and Brig o Lea.

Site	Period	Description
Cowden Hall Gardens	Short / Medium / Long	A project that could, with some grant support, have early intervention through small scale volunteer action. Such proposals will require land owner approval.
Main Street	Short / Medium	Some of the action will relate to the proposed community micro projects. More radical proposals for shared surface and public realm will be subject to statutory transport involvement and budget availability.
Pig Square	Short / Medium	A small public realm project that relocates the monument may be organised as an early project. However, this will probably be phased within a programme that coincides with housing works at Kirkstyle Lane and/or Main Street.
Primary School Gates	Short	With the consent of the local authority this project might attract Community Spaces funding to realise these small interventions.
Housing Opportunity Sites		
Kirkstyle Lane (Pig Square)	Short	A housing development likely to be supported by the local planning authority. Funding for land acquisition and contribution to pre-contract design work is potentially available from Scottish Land Fund. This project may be subject to a phased development due to the proposed element of social housing and the timing of social grant.
Brig O'Lea	Medium	The re-development of this site is subject to the adoption and delivery of proposals relating to Kingston Park.

Site	Period	Description
Broadlie Road	Medium	Former pub site suitable for flatted accommodation but market demand is too low to support development. However, affordable housing may be more suitable for this site as land values would be lower. Private development of this site may need to wait until market demand increases for small flats.
Craig Road	Medium	Affordable housing site subject to funding.
Hillside Road	Medium	Affordable housing site subject to funding.
Gleniffer View	Medium	Affordable housing site subject to funding.
Hartfield Crescent	Medium	Affordable housing site subject to funding.

Delivery Processes

Throughout the Charrette process there has been regular reference to “doing the doable”. This was a deliberate approach recognising that economic conditions brought a greater focus on projects that are deliverable rather than being aspirational.

To get things moving it is necessary to examine the key elements of Project Delivery. These are essentially governed by:

- Land ownership
- Markets
- Policy
- Funds
- Delivery Vehicle and Capacity

Land Ownership

Ownership equals control, with delivery having greater strength and opportunity with the benefit of property ownership. East Renfrewshire Council owns the majority of the identified sites within the Charrette Place Plan and through the Council’s own regeneration services ERC has demonstrated a continued commitment to work in partnership with the Neilston Community. Such a relationship and continuing goodwill are essential components for project delivery.

The majority of the identified projects are within the ownership of East Renfrewshire Council thereby allowing a greater opportunity to exercise clarity for developing strategies and commitments towards project delivery.

Projects within private ownership will require early consent from owners to develop further design and funding proposals and an agreement on future ownership. Speculating action without the support of some form of heads of agreement is both risky when time might be better served working on projects with better prospects.

Markets

Many of the projects are public benefit projects such as open space (park, gardens and walkways) and public realm (village centre and school gates). In themselves these projects do not generate income but can have significant influence on generating activity that in turn generates trade and wider value impact.

For example, action in the village centre will improve the environment that hopefully will persuade people to shop in their local village, which in turn will help support local businesses.

Housing Market Demand

From our assessment of the current Neilston housing market it is recognised that there is insufficient value in flatted accommodation to allow private housing to be undertaken without subsidy. From the evidence available it appears that demand for family housing is more buoyant, which supports the traditional activity of housing developers who generally prefer to develop family suburban housing on larger sites. Supply side production from house builders inevitably shapes demand, therefore, small scale developments remain untested other than relatively low levels of sales evidence from existing private stock.

That said, while it is only anecdotal, we have established that there are residents in Neilston who would be interested in housing at Kirkstyle Lane subject to price and specification. Such interest has come from people who are either retired or are planning to be retired in the next few years.

Options for Developing Small

Given that private housing is largely delivered through house builders who will not operate at such small scales, the opportunity to develop smaller infill housing sites in Neilston must come from other forms of delivery. There is potential for community led private development particularly with the involvement of Neilston Development Trust which as a qualifying organisation has the ability to access grant funds and other forms of support funding.

NDT could act in a Development Management Capacity, either as an investor or agent to facilitate development through a range of options:

- Custom build / self build

An approach where initial infrastructure investment is provided with plots sold to individual or collective purchasers to undertake their own building proposals. This approach adopted for many years in Europe is becoming increasingly popular in the UK. The development of plots would be subject to design guidance. The argument put forward for the development of "Custom Build" housing is that it is capable of being delivered at a lower cost (no developer's profit) providing the project is carefully managed and supported by experts.

- Housing Co-operative

A similar approach to the above, but undertaken on a collective basis with the Housing Co-operative owning the completed development. The occupiers have a share in the ownership of the dwellings by being shareholders in the Co-operative. Each shareholder also acts as a tenant, paying a rent proportionate to their net income to the Co-operative. Evidence suggests that those investing in a Co-operative tend to stay longer in such accommodation than those who are individual private owner occupiers. Housing Co-operatives are a popular form of housing tenure in Europe and interest is starting to gather for such an approach in the UK.

- Joint Venture with a Contractor or Supplier

Such approaches could be combined or operate individually. Development could be undertaken by, say NDT entering into some form of joint venture partnership with a local builder or kit manufacturer who might look at a combination of sites in order to get better scale economies to reduce costs. Development might be part speculative and part for “affordable housing”.

Policy

Many of the Charrette projects are small and thereby not necessarily highlighted in the local development plan other than within broader use policies. Small scale housing infill projects are expected to be recognised as “windfall” sites in policy terms but their collective impact and capacity could still make a useful contribution towards Neilston’s future housing supply.

There is little likelihood of market demand for specialist converted flats at values that make development viable at Crofthead Mill. This is expected to be the case for the foreseeable future.

It is estimated that the housing capacity for the project sites examined as part of this Charrette exercise could contribute some 87 dwellings. This capacity is broken down into projects within the following table:

Site	Capacity
Kirkstyle Lane (Pig Square)	12
Brig O’Lea	48
Broadlie Road	10
Craig Road	2
Hillside Road	2
Gleniffer View	7
Hartfield Crescent	6
Total	87

It is recognised that some of the above capacity does not fit with housing supply densities or locations contained within the local development plan. However, such proposals are likely to extend beyond the 5 year review plan period.

Funding

Funding is a key challenge for delivering projects. The projects will require a range of funding sources some of which are outlined in the following table.

Site	Funding Sources
Kingston Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A suite of funding including ERC, Sport Scotland, Charitable funds and Big Lottery. Some action may be taken by community volunteers.
Mill Cottages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to budgets, street works need support from ERC. Environmental improvements may have an element of community volunteer action. Longer term potential for new housing to contribute towards neighbourhood improvements
Station Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt and equity finance
The Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mix of funding including private equity and debt with shortfalls supported by charitable funding and Heritage Lottery. Apply for initial feasibility funds from the Heritage Lottery and Architectural Heritage Fund
Community Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A public project funded by ERC
Redundant Railway Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Path and allotment proposals funded largely through sustrans, charitable funds and volunteer action. Possible cross subsidy funds from the potential development of Brig o'Lea for housing.
Cowden Hall Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial funding through charitable funds & volunteer action.
Main Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project requires public funding support - ERC Transport and Regeneration budgets Possible charitable support and Volunteer action

Site	Funding Sources
Pig Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A public funded project through ERC Transport and Regeneration budgets Possible charitable support Volunteer action
Primary School Gates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of funding through public sources and Lottery
Housing Opportunity Sites	
Kirkstyle Lane (Pig Square)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terraced housing and flatted accommodation Housing element developed for low cost home ownership - self-build, co-operative or some other innovative approach. May also be appropriate for people with physical or learning disabilities. Flatted element developed for social housing purposes or some other form of affordable housing Initial acquisition proposed by NDT supported by the Scottish Land Fund. Some finance from private equity and debt, Social housing funds, Potential commuted sums from S75 developer agreements, Possible NDT investment in shared ownership, sweat equity for custom build and co-operative housing
Brig O'Lea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A development funded by equity and debt. Affordable housing element funded by a mix of housing grant, debt and sweat equity / co-operative and cross subsidy from private element
Broadlie Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private site either equity / debt Affordable housing by commuted sums and social housing grant
Craig Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing commuted sums & housing grant
Hillside Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing commuted sums & housing grant
Gleniffer View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing commuted sums & housing grant
Hartfield Crescent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing commuted sums & housing grant

A Partnership Investment Vehicle of Property Assets, Finance and Human Capital

Neilston Development Trust (NDT) has been suggested as having the potential to play a role as development manager in some if not all of the projects. NDT currently lacks the capacity to undertake such an approach without support from the Council and a team of experts in development delivery. Therefore, in order to obtain the necessary inputs it is suggested that projects should be based around a Partnership proposition. Partnerships have been undertaken for many public private partnerships (schools, health etc) and it is suggested that a similar community based partnership investment vehicle (PIV) approach could be considered for regeneration and development.

What is key in a PIV vehicle is the bringing together of public assets, finance, relevant skills and experience. The partnership vehicle should avoid being complicated and it needs to share risk. The risk sharing approach is essential to navigate around unfavourable economic conditions where funds are severely limited and private and third sector organisations have little equity.

PIVs should be recognised as a vehicle that takes a longer term approach as regeneration and new build projects are needed to create good sustainable places.

A PIV allows public landed / property assets to be invested in the project as the equity contribution with investing partners contributing their equity funds and actions to balance the shareholding within the vehicle.

While initial vision and broad master plan framework will help define the project, the main work including design processes, charrettes, technical and statutory investigations along with development appraisals should be derived once the vehicle is in place.

Neilston – micro projects

This is a natural tendency in development to focus on big interesting projects. However, there is also a need to adopt a strategy of “gradualism”. Doing lots of early little things helps build up momentum, confidence and a recognition that things are happening.

Delivering micro projects will be an important legacy of the Charrette process and an indication that things can get done.

We have established a budget of circa £25,000 [exclusive of any professional fees and VAT] to cover these immediate projects. We have also agreed with J and M Murdoch & Son, a local recycling and waste management company operating out of the Mill to investigate funding these projects through the use of the Land Fill Tax Credit system.

This process would require Neilston Development Trust to become a registered environmental body through ENTRUST and for the sites to be registered to receive Objective B payments as part of this programme.

This arrangement will provide the necessary revenue stream to get these projects underway and to set in place procedures for similar projects in the future.

In chapter four we set out 5 Micro projects that were identified by the Community and discussed in the workshops. These were:

- bins for dog walkers
- planting to raised floor beds in Kirkstyle Lane
- new boundary treatment to Kingston Playing fields, along Kingston Road
- enhancement of junction of Main Street and Double Hedges Road
- village centre spring clean

A ‘town factor’ company could carry out such actions as well as a programme of cleaning, repair/maintenance and landscape work supplemented by education and training functions around these tasks.

The ‘town factor’ could be a social enterprise company creating part time and full time employment depending on the level of projects and services. It is envisaged that such work would be a combination of employment and volunteer activity.

Neilston Stewardship

Places need a local focus to keep things working. The proposal for a “Town Factor” Company is intended to provide that focus acting as an essential local deliverer that cares for its own place.

‘well kept, clean, attractive environments draw people into streets and common places, creating an atmosphere of security and common purpose’

Professor Anne Power

Developing the “Town Factor” by establishing client groups for specific stewardship projects and service delivery is what community-led development is about.

‘there is only one thing at which any place excels – being itself. And there is only one set of people who fully understand that – the people who live there’

Lesley Riddoch - Blossom 2013

Scottish Government has acknowledged through its empowerment agenda that place stewardship is best achieved by those that own, act, control and enjoy that place.

‘Community empowerment is a process where people work together to make change happen in their communities by having more power and influence over what matters to them’.

Scottish Government & COSLA definition of Community Empowerment

The primary objective of this Charrette exercise was to arrive at a series of key actions that had community support and had reasonable prospects of being delivered.

We believe that the methodology employed in seeking effective formal and informal participation of the community through meetings, workshops, design studio engagement, interviews and events demonstrated good community engagement practice that may be disseminated for wider benefit.



Nine Project Recommendations

1. ■ Build a new 46 space car park next to the Leisure Centre to support the Community Hub.

- This is a relatively modest but an essential project, providing a sense of focus and direction that will help address wider parking issues and unlock other projects.

2. ■ Achieve a solution to the poor condition of the car park to the rear of the shopping parade on Main Street

- NDT should seek to arrange a meeting with the car park owners and the Council.
- The condition of the car park is currently preventing its proper use and the current dispute needs a resolution before the associated streetscape works can be considered.

3. ■ NDT to seek funding for the preparation of a Town Factor Company Business Case

- Assess operational viability
- The fit within the governance framework

4. ■ NDT/ERC to create and facilitate a Traders Group and the Village Centre Working Group

- Scope and agree outline proposals that are contained within this report.

5. ■ Undertake the micro projects

- Bins for dog walkers
- Planting to raised floor beds in Kirkstyle Lane
- New boundary treatment to Kingston Playing fields, along Kingston Road
- Enhancement of junction of Main Street and Double Hedges Road
- Village centre spring clean

6. Create a Kingston Park client group

- To develop and transform the playing fields into a village park.
- First action is to apply for grant funding to support a scoping / business case appraisal of the works required and project delivery mechanisms.

7. NDT to seek the acquisition of proposed housing land at Kirkstyle Lane

- Finalising a Development Business Case
- Obtain Council agreement in principle (Heads of Terms) for the land acquisition
- Obtain funding support from Scottish Land Fund to support the acquisition and pre-contract expenditure

8. Ensure that the historic importance of the landscape at Cowdenhall is recognised and that it forms part of the SPG.

- By obtaining statutory status funding can be unlocked for a study, restoration and future development work in this historic garden.

9. Utilise this Charrette Report to inform the preparation of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) of the Local Development Plan

- SPG will provide planning guidance on the development sites identified in the plan these will be subject to separate community consultation.

Resources

There was a clear message from the Charrette exercise that before any spending and works commitment, there is a need to put in place structures and procedures with experienced support in order to:

- Devise a robust business case which is fundable both in capital and revenue terms.
- Have a well planned methodology of delivery that minimises risk to organisations, community and its representatives.
- Direct and manage projects including preparation of briefs and processes.
- In the case of private housing have a marketing and selling process that finalises agreements prior to implementing works.
- Put in place project repair and maintenance stewardship regimes

'Successful renewal depends on tackling problems in bite sized chunks, while seeing each problem as part of a bigger picture. The key to good governance is therefore grass roots involvement combined with strategic vision'

R Rogers and A Power.....Cities for a Small Planet

Putting together the regeneration jigsaw for Neilston is about working both at an individual site level and making sure this fits and contributes within the overall objectives for Neilston. The test should be to ensure that each project should contribute to the place of Neilston.

Neilston's "Prime Movers"

The Neilston Development Trust working with the Charter Advisory Group and supported by East Renfrewshire Council are the 'prime movers' acting as project brokers to co-ordinate local delivery action.

Continuing engagement with individuals and interest groups, keeping faith with the community in creative ways, will be critical to the success of the process going forward and NDT will identify resources to support this essential work.

No project can be successful without inspirational leadership, community support and decisive decisions. This Neilston Charrette exercise has demonstrated that there is wide spread enthusiastic support and a "can do spirit" that will build upon Neilston's reputation as an exemplar for successful place planning that has been "community led" and "community delivered".

NEILSTON

GOING PLACES

