

CHAPEL WELL GARDEN, MARJORIEBANK STREET, BATHGATE



BATHGATE HILLS VENTURE – PROJECT SUGGESTIONS

Background

The Chapel Well Garden in Bathgate offers a welcoming, if slightly under-valued, green space in the centre of Bathgate. It is a Council owned communal area used by local people, particularly dog walkers. With a little investment and attention it could be improved from an access & safety perspective, and be made more attractive, informative and useful to all. Following discussion with West Lothian Council, who spoke to the Grounds and Maintenance team, we have already introduced an additional flower bed to make the area more attractive. Big thanks to Bathgate in Bloom for providing the plants for this. We propose further safety and usability enhancements through this project.

The garden has much to offer from a historical perspective as it hosts the original Chapel Well that provided some of the water for the town, and includes the historic Provost's Lamp Post, which was initially moved from house to house to mark this dignitary role. The lamp post's resting place is now at the edge of this small garden. These special historical features feel under-promoted and under-valued.

The Bathgate Hills Venture group have researched the area, spent time in the garden and believe that it can and should be improved for local community benefit. We are keen to improve accessibility in winter months, better share it's interesting history, and offer more outdoor educational and reflective space. By introducing sensory planting we hope that the garden can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities.

Background (2)

As well as improving the garden itself, we will provide more historical information that should link well with walking tours in an around Bathgate. We will consult with the Bennie Museum and local historians to learn and share as much as we can about the well and the lamp post. This new information will be available on site and online, and should encourage people to visit the museum to learn more.

Our ideas will be developed in consultation with WLC, Bathgate in Bloom, the local community and local primary schools and clubs. We propose to spend time over 6-9 months enhancing what the garden has to offer with local groups getting involved.

From council discussions we know that WLC have budget to support grass cutting in the garden, but cannot afford to do much more. We are clear and accept that our plans cannot increase maintenance costs in the short or long term.

Our aim is to encourage more people to benefit from access to a safe and secure green space, get involved, enjoy it's history, and enjoy the opportunity of being close to nature.

Overall perspective

Shrubs and flower beds

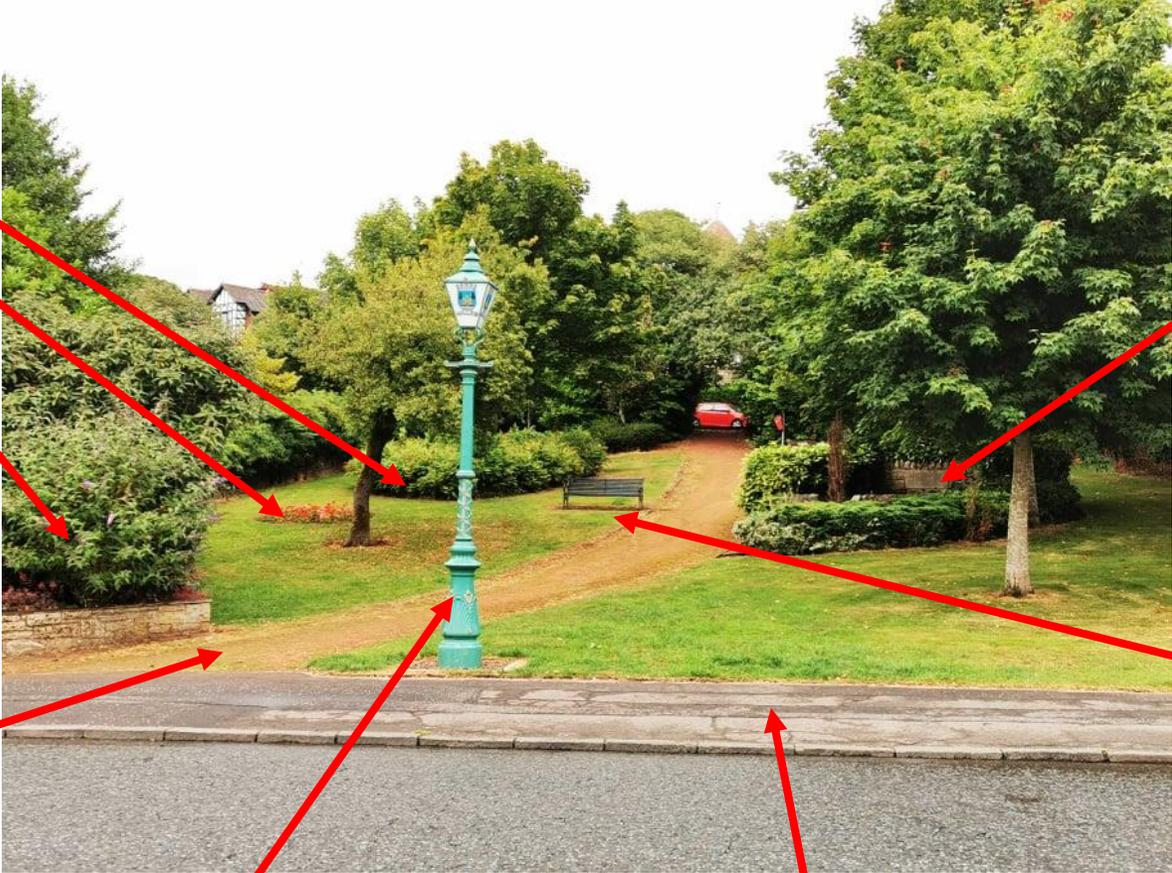
Chapel Well

Seating

Central path

Provost's Lamppost

Front Access onto Marjoriebank Street



Current Status

This garden is council owned and well looked after from a grass cutting perspective.

It has established trees and a few shrub beds, plus some bench style seating.

From observation it is regularly used by dog walkers and a few of the local community.

It has great potential in a central location.

It has a fascinating old well and the Provost's lamp post, but it feels like these are not hugely well known or visited.

It's value to the wider community and visitors could be enhanced.

The Bathgate Hills Venture group have received some ideas for sensory gardens that could be established here, done sensitively to enhance rather than damage.

On the next pages we show ideas for future improvement using photographs and notes relating to different elements of the garden.

Safety



One of the planting volunteers had a small under school age child with her and we discovered how quickly children can run and get to the busy road. They were safely caught, but it gave us a warning.

A neighbour to the garden was very supportive and helpful and told us there used to be a hedge at the front, but that caused issues with older kids hanging about behind it.

Perhaps the installation of a very low rockery or fence would provide a safety barrier without attracting older kids again.

Introduce one or two soakaways at the top and middle of the central path to allow rain water to run off into the garden itself. Presently the water runs straight down the path which in winter creates a treacherous ice risk, reducing accessibility until spring.

Space to reflect and learn

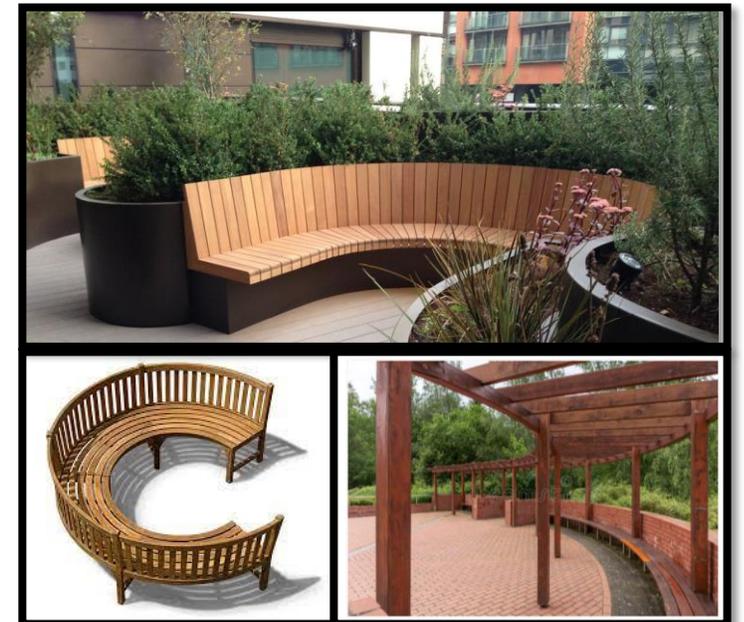


There is a large curved area at the top of the garden – which is further from the road and a little quieter.

Curved seating could be added to allow people to enjoy some reflective quiet time.

If designed correctly it could also be used as an outdoor learning area for visiting schools or clubs. There are a couple of benches along the central path in the garden, but these overlook the busy road, and don't create a quiet space to reflect or learn.

A few examples below to give the idea – could also be higher backed

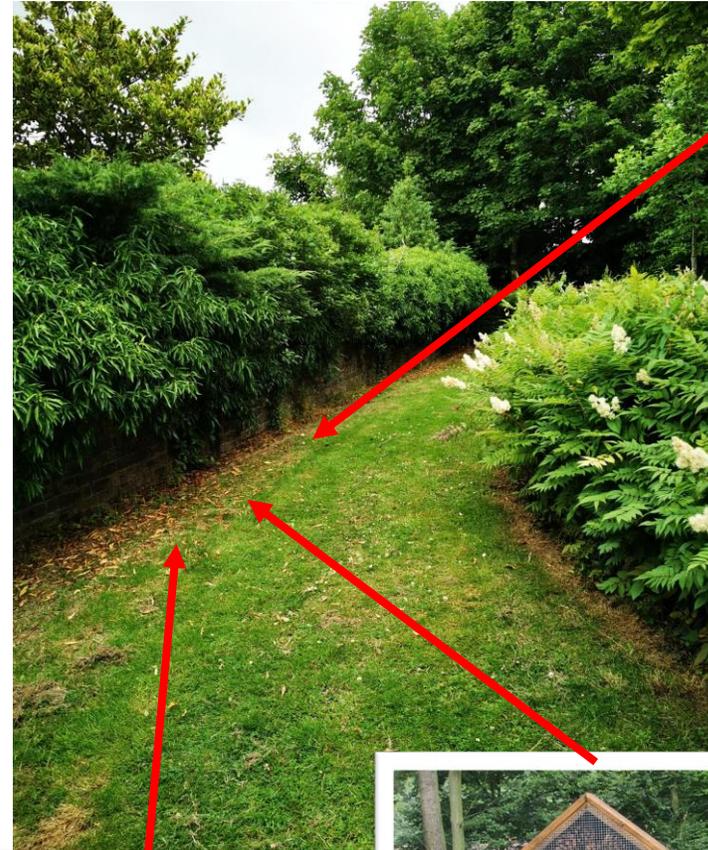


Include schools and clubs



Ask families, clubs or school children to decorate themed pebbles to add to the base round trees – tidy up the weeds – and add weed membrane to stop them coming back.

Leave space for grass cutters



Tidy weeds all round the edges of the garden and ask families, clubs or school children to make bug hotels, creating a nature village for local wildlife and pollinators..

Build in education about who might live in them.



Leave space for grass cutters

Tidy up the historic Chapel Well



Tidy up round well – remove moss and clear leaves etc



Remove dead conifer so that you can see and read the Chapel Well Info.

Tidy and plant in the triangular bed – looks like it originally had plants



Clean out the well itself – remove plastic bottles etc

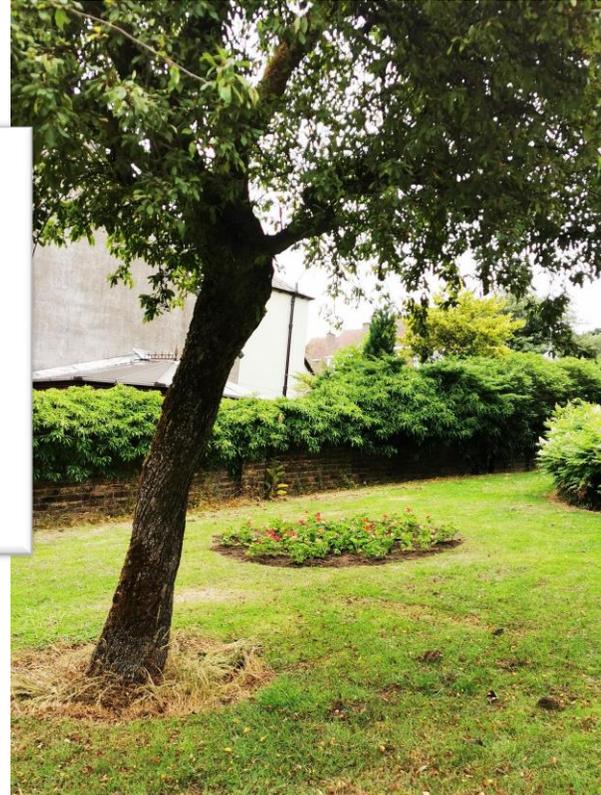


Clean up the signs

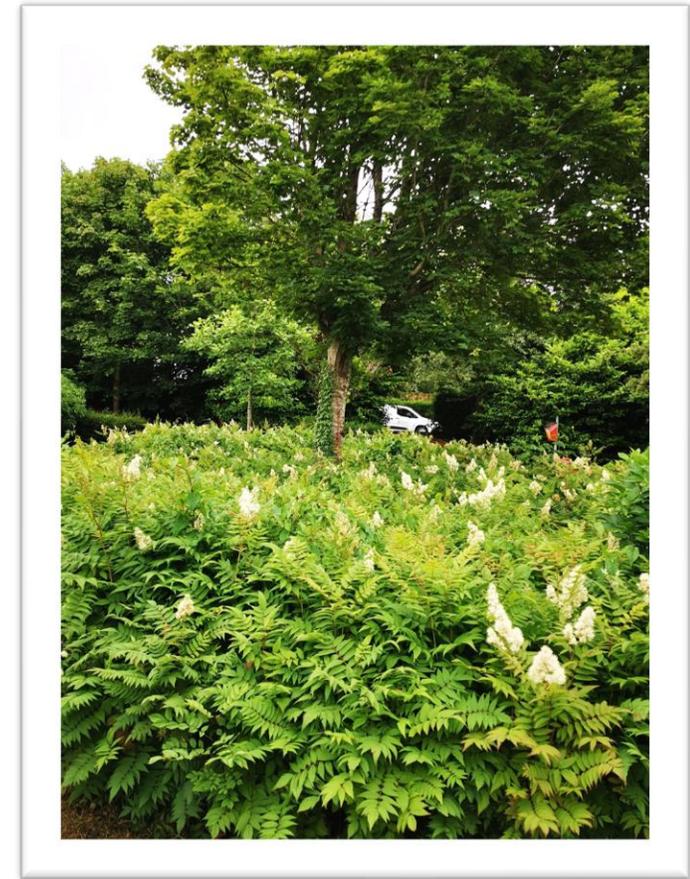
Enhance Shrub and flower beds



Add new flower bed for colour – bedding plants were donated by Bathgate in Bloom – **achieved in July 2021**



Replace bedding plants with sensory perennials
<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/resources/info-sheet/plants-for-a-sensory-garden>

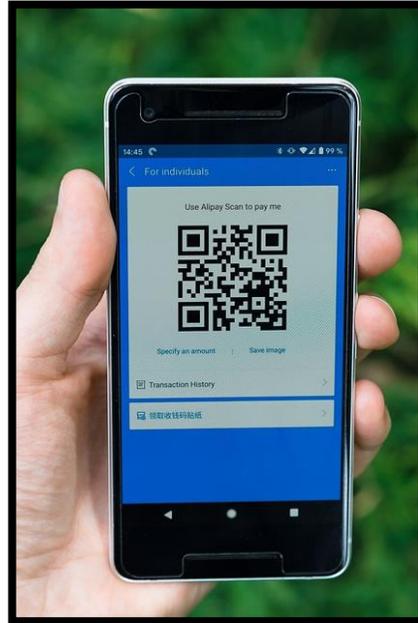


Reduce number of Sorbaria (False spiraea) plants around this central tree – these grow up to 2m tall and will swamp the tree and the garden – retain same size of bed and replace with smaller / lower sensory plants round the edges – lavender etc

Share historical info through digital QR codes and geocaching



Add one or two posts with a QR code plaque on top



Make accessible via QR code readers on mobiles



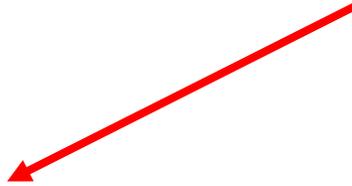
Take direct to [Bathgate Hills website](#) to a new Chapel Well Garden section where people can learn about the Well, the Provost's Lamp Post and the new Sensory Garden. People can access videos and podcasts sharing the history, to help bring it to life in a fun interesting way for all ages and abilities.



Use new Bathgate Hills website pages to promote the Bennie Museum, local walks, history groups and gardening groups

Encourage Art in Nature through Sculpture/Artwork

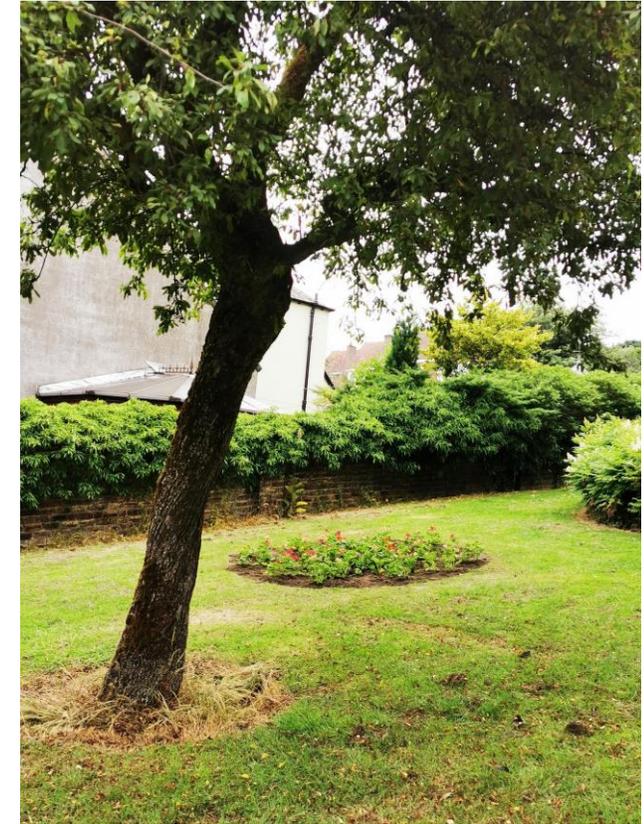
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We would like to source a local West Lothian artist to create a new sculpture for the centre of our new sensory flower bed.

We originally thought it could recognise all the people who worked so hard to keep us safe during covid, but it could also reflect hope for the future.

Design, shape, colour etc all to be agreed if we agree the principle and secure funding



Proposal Summary

Safety improvements

- Establishing a low height rockery at the boundary to Marjoribanks Street, to allow safe play within garden of young children, reducing risk of them running onto the road. This would be designed sufficiently low to avoid acting as a place for anti-social behaviour and still allowing free access to garden area from all mobility users. Alternative to rockery may be a low rising wooden fence or timber bench/planter similar in design (albeit not necessarily size) to that to the left of the footpath.
- Introduction of one or two soakaways at the top and middle of the central path to allow rain water to run off into the garden itself. Presently the water runs straight down the path which in winter creates a treacherous ice risk, reducing accessibility until spring.

Space to reflect and learn

- We aim to consult, design and install a curved seating area at the rear of the garden. This could be used as a quiet space for contemplation and reflection. If designed correctly it could also be used as an outdoor learning area for visiting schools or clubs. There are a couple of benches along the central path in the garden, but these overlook the busy road, and don't create a quiet space to reflect or learn.

Inclusion of schools and clubs

- The long edges of the garden are empty other than a few weeds, and offer an opportunity to engage local children in the creation of bug hotels. Through encouraging them to build and revisit these, we will introduce the importance of safe spaces for nature & how this can help biodiversity in our natural world.
- There are a number of mature trees in the garden which have empty spaces around them. They would be a perfect space to hold painted pebbles made by local children. Our aim is that this pebble art work will relate to what can be learned about the garden - its history, it's plants, the need for green space. In this way we will encourage themed pebbles which reinforce learning, both to the creator and future visitors.

Proposal Summary

Tidy up the historic Chapel Well

- Clean up inside the well, exterior area to well, and existing information signs.
- Plant up the small triangular additional area in front of well.

Enhanced shrub and flower beds

- Add new bedding plants, garden enhancement and sensory garden/educational elements

Additional historical information through digital QR codes and geocaching

- Creation of a new section within the new Bathgate Hills website dedicated to the Chapel Well Garden – including appropriate research to be undertaken. We will ask for help from the Bennie Museum Trustees and other local Bathgate history lovers.
- Installation of up to 2 additional wooden (or other) posts to include QR codes and Geocaching linked back to above, providing history on Chapel Well and Provost Lamppost.
- Add links to the Bennie Museum, local history and gardening groups to help people learn more and find out how they can get involved in community activities.

Encourage Art in Nature through Sculpture/Artwork

- Appoint a local artist to engage, develop and produce an artwork sculpture to form a centrepiece to the recently created enhanced bedding and sensory garden. We will involve the local schools / colleges and the local community.