

**To which extent does a 15-minute
community concept work to
enhance social connection in St
Albans?**

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Introduction

The research project focuses on the social disconnection within St Albans highlighted by the St Albans Residents Association, specifically in the Warrington Village. This has been the result of the urban development of the Northern Corridor Motorway, constructed by Christchurch City Council. The impact of this is it has provided a new directory for traffic heading into or from the north of the city, affecting surrounding roads. Traffic has been redirected down Cranford Street, the main road through St Albans. This street is interconnected with Warrington Street, of which the Warrington Village and its amenities are located. This has physically disconnected the St Albans suburb and the communities within it.

This is in accordance with the Council's physical recognition of St Albans and Edgeware as two different suburbs. Despite this physical separation, the residents still recognise these communities to be defined and contextualised to be part of the geographical boundary of the St Albans Borough, as identified by figure 1 (St Albans Resident Association, 2021). The

daily needs because of the current amenities present.

Through these problems being identified, St Albans Residents Association and the group

Figure 1:

Online Survey

We chose to obtain data through an online survey using Qualtrics, with the questions directed towards the residents who have knowledge of the area (Preston, 2009). Creating an online survey allowed the group to save time and to cover a broad range of the community. This enabled the spatial and social variations of the community to be collected (Preston, 2009). This was very practical as we entered into a lockdown and obtaining data from residents in person was not going to be achieved.

When we made the survey, we first gave it to our supervisor, to make sure that it was ethically sound to be sent out to the community. We also presented the draft to the community partners, to further refine the questions to suit what they saw relevant to the community, ensuring it was adequate for our research. Once all parties were happy it went live for fourteen days. This allowed enough time to get adequate responses for our data analysis to occur. Asking questions from the residents allowed us to obtain data that related specifically to the community and how they felt within the community. This provided us with valuable information for how the concept would fit into the community.

For the analysis of the survey data, we used descriptive statistics methods to analysis the

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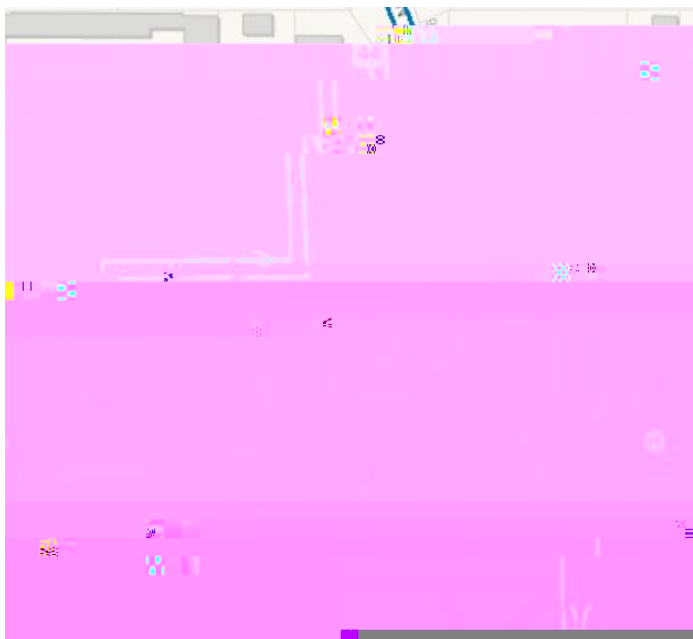


Figure 4: How long respondents would be willing to walk to the Warrington Village

Figure 5: How long respondents would be willing to Bike to the Warrington Village

Amenities and attractiveness of Warrington Village

We asked participants various questions to rate the attractiveness of the Warrington Village area to give us an understanding of why people used this area. It was highlighted by figure 7 that the most popular amenities were the St Albans Park, Ris'tretto Cafe, followed by an auto centre and other food places. Comparing this to figure 8, which rated the least attractive amenities, it shows that general shops were least attractive to use. The new sports shop did not seem to attract respondents to come and surprisingly, the pub was rated as one of the least attractive amenities within the Warrington Village area. Overall these responses of attractiveness were supported by other questions asked in the survey that asked the respondents to rate the attractiveness of the village, through both a photo (see Appendix A) of the village and the physical urban design. 65% respondents rated the village overall to be either very poor or poor (figure 9).

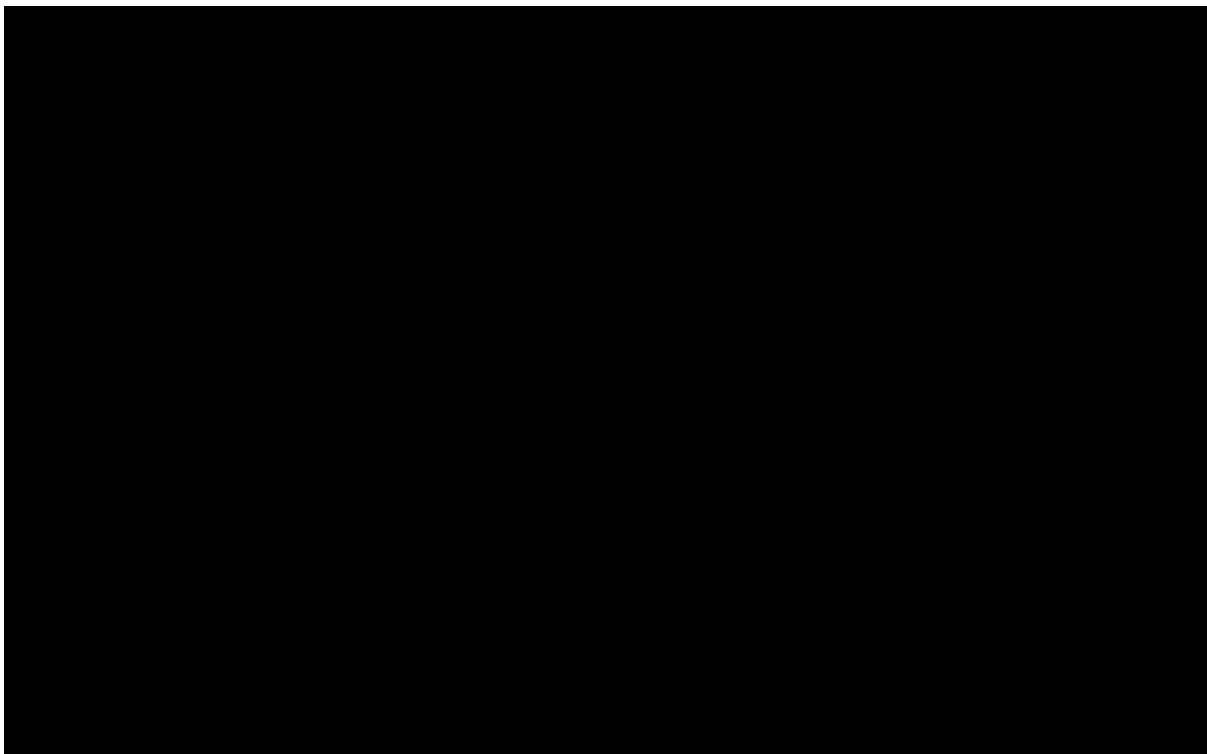


Figure 7: Top 6 rated amenities that attract people to come to the Warrington Village area.

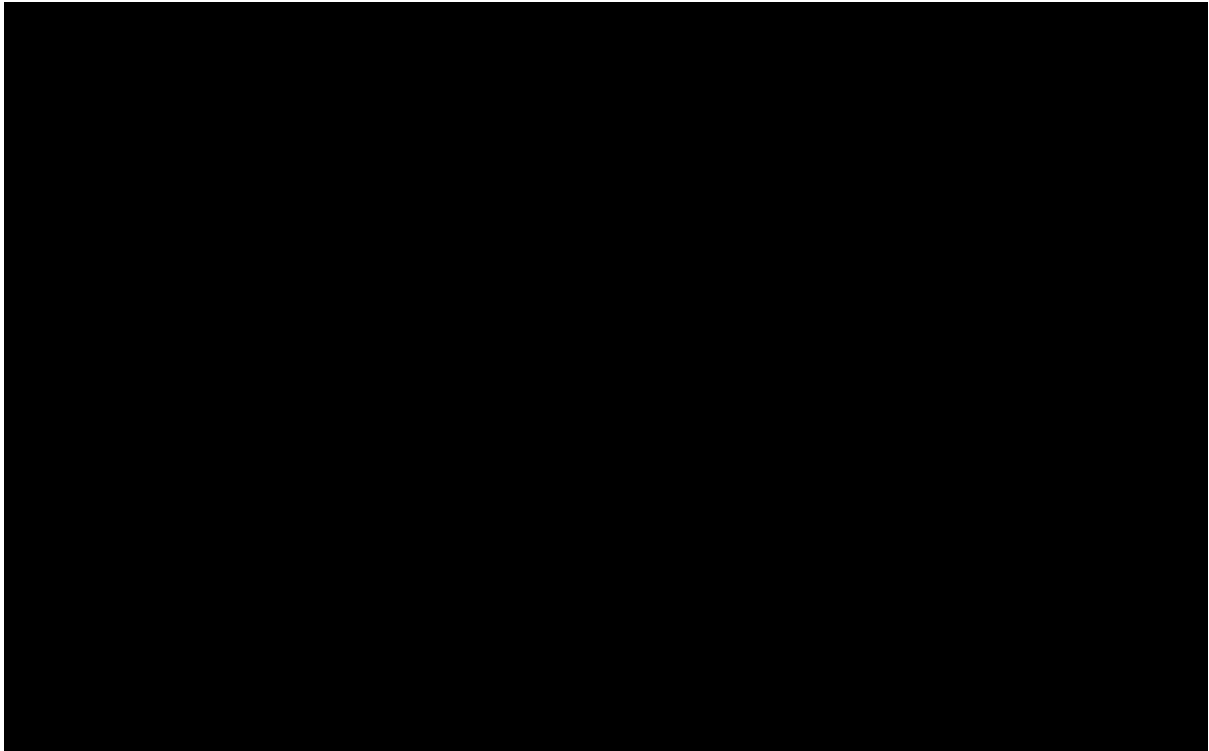


Figure 8: Bottom 6 rated amenities that attract people to come to the Warrington Village area.

Attractiveness of the Warrington Village

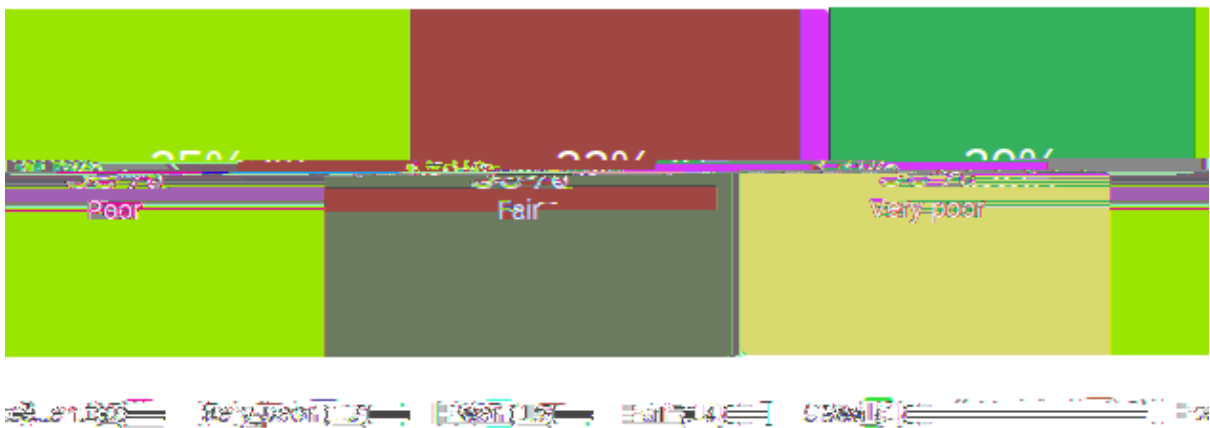


Figure 9: Rating the Attractiveness of the Warrington Village

In addition respondents were asked to rank eight urban designs (footpaths, cycle-ways, car parking, traffic lights/crossings, bus stops, public lighting, bike stands and access to amenities) between 1-5. Figure 10 shows that the top 3 urban designs were traffic lights, bus stops and footpaths, whilst the bottom were bike stands, car parking and public lighting.

When asked to elaborate on these choices in question 18, a common theme arose, majority of participants described the overall

as it is located off Barbadoes Street. Another concern was the car park capacity as it is often full in the evenings resulting in residents having to park further away.



Figure 10; Mean rating of urban design items in the Warrington Village

We also wanted to have the community's view point of what else they would think would benefit the village. The most common response to this was the addition of a fruit and veggie shop. It was highlighted that having a bakery, a nicer, upmarket pub and more takeaways (fish and chips/kebab shop) would benefit the area. The need for a pharmacy and/or GP was mentioned, supporting the GIS analysis finding that the key amenity of care is missing.

While the GIS map covers some supplying facilities, more consideration is needed for other local amenities such as bakeries, pharmacies or takeaways. This should be considered future research that looks into the spatial relationship of new amenities with existing amenities on a much smaller local scale.

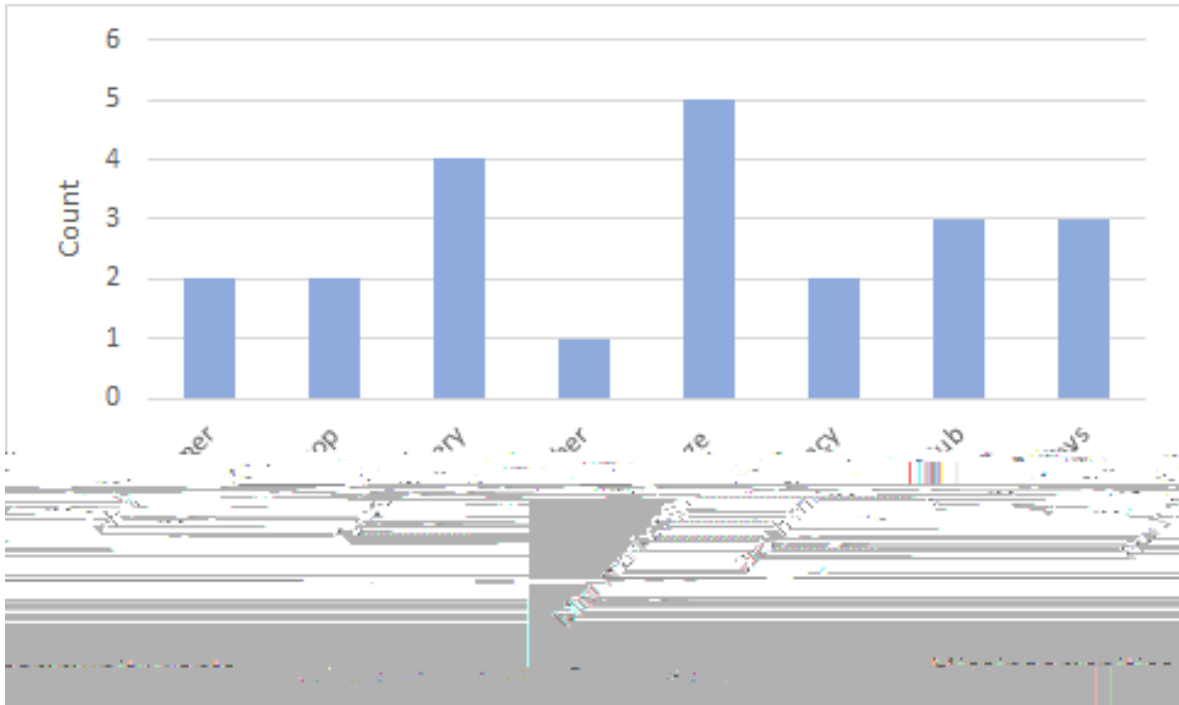


Figure 11: Response to the amenities missing from the Warrington Village

Social connectedness

To further build our understanding of the previous findings we wanted to understand the extent to which respondents agreed with the statement "I feel socially connected to the Warrington Village community". Figure 12 indicates that only a third of our responses felt somewhat or strongly disagree that they feel socially connected.

community (figure 13)

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree with the statement "I feel socially connected to the Warrington Village community"

Linear Regression

We repeated a much simpler version of Francis et al., 2012 regression linear analysis of the relationship between the quality of public spaces and sense of community in residents. The results highlighted that shop quality was significantly and positively associated with a sense of community. This was performed with question 16 relating to the attractiveness of the village and question 9 asking how socially connected they felt to the village. Questions 16 and question 9 were re-coded to give numerical values for the correlation.

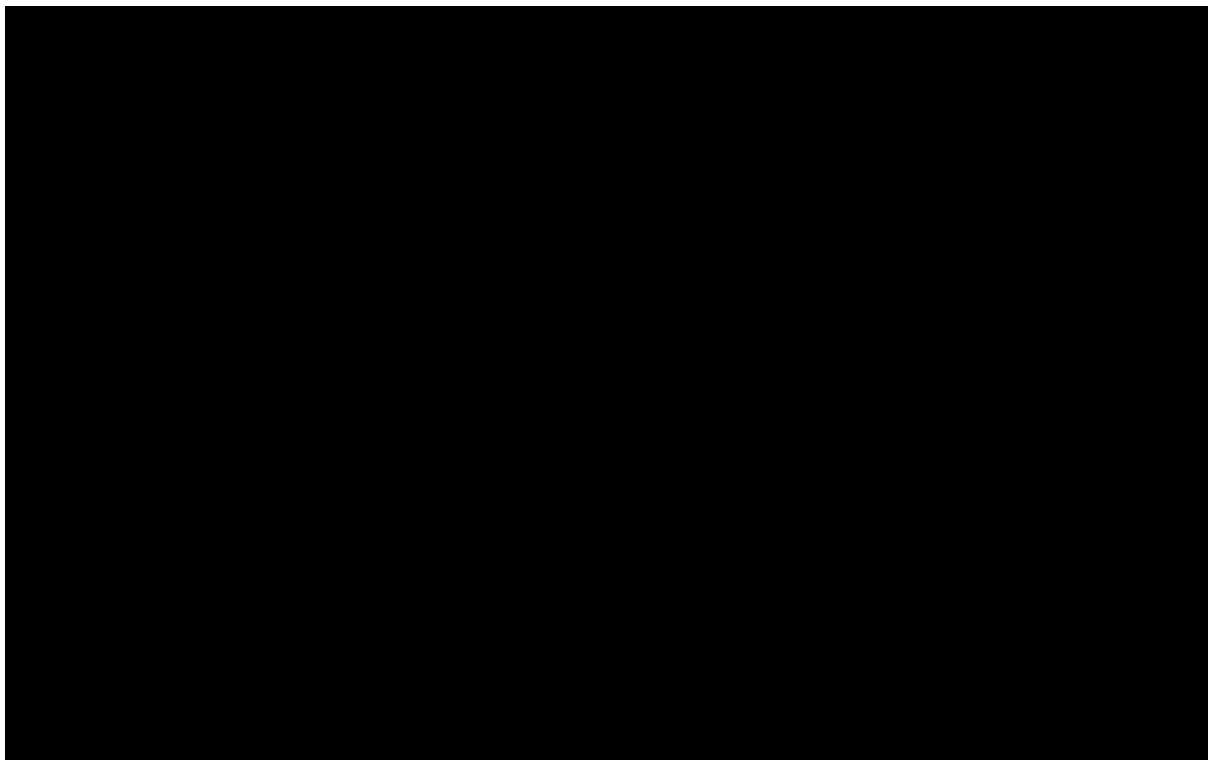


Figure 14: Linear Regression of the relationship between the Attractiveness of the Warrington Village to how respondents feel socially connected to Warrington Village

Table 2: Model Fit and measurements of the relationship between the attractiveness of the Warrington Village to how respondents feel socially connected to Warrington Village

Model Fit Measures		Overall Model Test	
Statistic	Value	Statistic	Value
R^2	.28	$F(1, 41)$	16.1
$F(1, 41)$	16.1	p	<.001
p	<.001	b	.81
b	.81	p	.0013
$r(41)$.531	p	<.001

A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 41) = 16.1, p = <.001$), with the attractiveness of the Warrington Village accounting for 28% of the variance in being socially connected to the Warrington Village. Attractiveness was a significant predictor of how people felt socially connected to the Warrington Village ($b = .81, p = .0013$). The attractiveness of the Warrington Village and how people felt socially connected to the Warrington Village was found to be a moderate positive correlation $r(41) = .531, p = <.001$.

Although on a simpler level, our regression models show similar results presented in Francis et al., (2012) article where shop quality was significantly and positively associated with a sense of community. As discussed in Francis et al., (2012) and relative to our results, higher quality spaces are an important setting for enhancing social connectedness with residents of new housing development is related to the ongoing intensification of housing in Christchurch, in particular St Albans, as the benefits of improving the attractiveness of the Warrington Village will help provide a stronger sense of community as it may result in increased participation and better physical and mental health. From talking with our community partners, we can see this already with the Edgware Village in St Albans as funding after the earthquakes to improve the quality of the village has resulted in the place feeling more lively and residents being more socially connected.

There are some limitations that need to be considered. Due to a small sample size (43 responses) because of covid-19 restrictions, this limited our ability to collect a large enough sample size. The proportion of variance accounted for was of moderate strength which indicates confounding variables in our regression. Variables from the survey included the safety, accessibility or other variables that were not captured in the survey of the Warrington Village area would have improved the variance of the regression model.

Improvements

Our survey also asked participants what they wanted to see improved in the future. There were five notable themes from these results.

Appeal

As already highlighted in the response to question 16, residents rate the appeal of the Warrington Village poor. Residents acknowledge that the village needs to be improved to create a more welcoming fee4q06()-4s.-4(r)8(he)14(e)3(sw)15(an)3(ts i)-4(de)3(c0()-4(d by)-4(t)-4(he)14()

Implications and contributions

Our project addresses the current gap in New Zealand's policy and planning and provides an

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References

St Albans Residents Association. (2021). *Group Discussion*. St Albans Residents Association.

Appendices

Appendix A - Photo of the Warrington Village for question 15 of the survey

