

BORÅS - THE ADAPTABLE CITY

Gässlösa is Borås' new inner-city neighbourhood: a dense, mixed-use area anchored around high quality central public spaces and interwoven with green and blue elements. It is developed as a productive area in the city. Strategic institutions as well as space for the urban manufacturing industry infuse the area with a dense mix of activities and in turn creates a highly adaptable and resilient city.

BP284 BORÅS AND GÄSSLÖSA

Gässlösa is located south of central Borås along the river Viskan. The area lies in the river valley and the railway forms a barrier between it and the rest of the city to the north. Rather than seeing this as a disadvantage, though, this clear delineation of the area provides an opportunity to develop a unique and coherent new neighbourhood with a distinctive identity; an identity that builds both on the area's existing industrial character and mixes it with a dense urban fabric.

Borås is an important city and centre of employment and education in Västra Götaland. In further developing the city it is important to build on the qualities and history of the city. The productive elements will therefore be an integral part of the new Gässlösa and it will be a neighbourhood where housing, production and commerce all contribute to a multi-faceted and resilient city and where it is possible to live a sustainable urban life with urban amenities, employment as well as nature and recreation all co-located.

The green and blue city

The river Viskan runs through the area and forms the backbone of the neighbourhood as well as its most characteristic natural quality. But not only in Gässlösa, it is an important element for the whole city of Borås and therefore naturally ties the new Gässlösa together with the existing city.

Viskan runs through Gässlösa roughly from the north-east to the north-west with a sharp bend in the heart of the area. The area grew around the river but today it is fenced off in many parts and though it offers great natural qualities, these are often out of reach.

The main concept behind integrating the new Gässlösa with Viskan is with the long stretch of promenade, **Wiskaniapromenaden**, that runs along Gässlösavägen from the north-eastern entry into the heart of the area. It creates a public promenade that ties the whole area together and furthermore it leads visitors from the entrance into the central parts of Gässlösa, offering an experience of both the new neighbourhood and the river on the way. It frames high quality existing buildings such as the old Wiskania factory, from which it takes its name, as well as new institutions such as the co-fabrication lab. In addition to being important parts of the productive strategy of the area, they thereby also become central to the urban experience.

The promenade leads into the heart of Gässlösa where the area's new central park is located. The river bend runs through and defines the green heart and its central location means it is a

natural gathering and meeting spot in the area, accessible from all the different parts of Gässlösa. From a practical standpoint, the park can also handle the low but elevated risk of the river Viskan flooding. After passing through the park, the shores of Viskan return to a more natural and untouched state.

From the park several green corridors lead through the area and connect to the existing green areas that surround Gässlösa. Both Viskan, the new park and Gässlösa as a whole thereby become part of a larger blue-green network that interweaves the city and its neighbourhoods and ensures that nature is never far away.

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Mobility

In the new Gässlösa, a dense network of paths and connections for pedestrians and cyclists form the backbone of mobility within the area. Along with the central pedestrian stretch, Wiskaniapromenaden, the network of paths connect all the central public squares and areas. Furthermore, the paths connect to new and existing paths on the border of Gässlösa to facilitate connection with the larger Borås urban area.

The pedestrian and cycle paths often provide not only shortcuts within the area but also more scenic and varied experiences of walking through the area. From the dense green paths in close proximity to the new housing construction to the open green area of the park and the urban feel of the central public squares and new and existing buildings. In this way, walking and cycling become the natural way of moving around within the area but the network also encourages these sustainable modes of transportation when moving to other parts of the city. The trails connect Gässlösa not only to central Borås but also to recreational areas such as the green areas of St. Sigfrids griftegård and Kronängs sports area.

The main streets through the area that connect to the wider Borås are Gässlösavägen, which forms the main thoroughfare through the area, and Jössavägen. In addition, a new street connection links the area to Kristineberg to the east and thereby ensures that Gässlösa is a well-connected and integrated part of Borås.

The area is designed for low car ownership, but is inclusive of cars. Parking is provided on the streets or in close proximity to residential areas either in designated parking areas or garages. Where possible, new buildings might include underground parking.

The productive mixed-use city

The new Gässlösa is conceptualised as a productive milieu that encourages meetings between different people and activities. The idea of the productive mixed-use city is integral to the urban strategy for the area because it forms the livelihood of the neighbourhood.

The concept of urban manufacturing is gaining traction within the discourse of urban planning. Where in the past, industry was pushed out of the city and often also out of the country, advances in technology as well as an emerging new and more flexible organisation of the labour

market mean that cities are once again becoming hubs of productive activity. Technical knowledge and industrial innovation are central to success, and these can be encouraged in dense urban milieus where people meet and exchange ideas.

Building on Borås' existing strengths in the textile industry, Gässlösa can become a hub of not only the new businesses in that industry, but a hub of entrepreneurship and productivity as a whole. Existing key buildings in the area are retrofitted to become clusters of small businesses. These functionally anchor the area as a productive milieu, while also being a major contributor to the overall feel of the area; the old industrial buildings exist side by side with the newly constructed buildings.

The intermixing of activities and functions within the area encourage participation and creativity and ensure that the urban area is infused with different ideas, people and daily routines. This is also part of a larger resilience strategy, as productive and adaptable neighbourhoods can better accommodate fluctuations in both labour and housing markets.

Development strategy: public space as a backbone

The development of the area is projected to occur in phases. The mixed-use nature of the area as well as its incremental development over time are seen as assets of an adaptable and changing city. The urban fabric ranges from open court yard blocks to the field of objects typical of industrial areas. Here, though, density is increased and streetscapes are more clearly defined through buildings thereby creating a stronger sense of urbanity, even in the more production oriented areas. In the south and east, areas of smaller scale housing ensure that there's a variety of housing types to be found in the area.

To anchor the incremental development over time, a series of central public squares are established as important points in the area. These high quality central gathering spaces ensure a hierarchy in the urban fabric and are especially important in the mixed use city for fostering meetings and exchanges between people. The public space strategy also ensures that, especially in the later phase 4, the plan is not dependent on a specific mix of commercial to industrial and residential, because as long as the development is anchored around a high quality urban gathering space, the plan is highly adaptable to changes in planning and needs.

The promenade stretch along Viskan is established first, as it is important for the coherence and identity of the new Gässlösa. The rest of the area is developed in phases that allow for incremental implementation of the plan while existing activities can remain in areas not yet ready for development.

Sustainability

Gässlösa is envisioned as a sustainable new neighbourhood in Borås both in terms of ecological sustainability, but also in terms of social and economic sustainability. The urban planning of the area makes it easy to make sustainable choices in everyday life especially in regards to mobility and having urban amenities closeby.

At a strategic level, sustainability is ensured through planning. Several existing buildings are kept and renovated, thereby lowering the footprint for new construction. Since the construction industry is a huge contributor of carbon emissions, all new construction must strive for a low or zero-emission construction for example by using sustainable materials, eg. CLT instead of concrete.

At the social and economic level, the mixed housing types and the room for and encouragement of different kinds of businesses and startups ensure that the area is inclusive multi-faceted.

A model for future development

The new Gässlösa is a dense mixed-use productive neighbourhood in Borås. In terms of redevelopment of industrial areas, it is a model for how such areas can be developed from monofunctional into diverse areas with housing and commercial while still retaining productive activities and even encouraging entrepreneurship in these sectors.

The strategic focus on high-quality public space as the backbone for development of the urban area can be used across Borås. In fact, the more this strategy is employed, the more successful it becomes: coupled with a strong network of soft mobility connections throughout the city, a series of high quality public squares and spaces integrated with the blue and green qualities of the city can lift the entire public realm of Borås.

The new Gässlösa is a green neighbourhood where sustainability permeates at every level. It is a distinctive neighbourhood in Borås with its own identity built around the existing Gässlösa infused with new people and activities and integrated into Borås' blue and green networks.