



LANGSIDE GARDENS GREEN

POLBETH

WEST LOTHIAN COMMUNITY CHOICES

SURVEY REPORT

AUGUST 2022



SUMMARY

KEY SURVEY THEMES

By analysing the survey results, speaking to consultees on site and observing the park in use, several key themes have become apparent:

- The focus of the park is the playground. The park is loved for its safe, overlooked location, bounded by residential properties. This makes it a perfect place for children to play without full-time supervision, grow friendships and independence. This character should be safeguarded.
- Thanks to the passive surveillance levels at the park, it doesn't suffer from excessive vandalism
- The kick pitch is a well loved feature of the park, made possible by past community engagement. It offers a space for exercise for all ages.
- The lack of appropriate toddler play was a common comment in the survey. The play equipment provision should be reviewed to ensure all age groups are catered for. Identified gaps should be remedied where possible or noted into future plans.
- The park does not offer much to other user groups and could benefit from a more varied park landscape and a range of seating options. A more colourful, attractive and interactive landscape will invite adult and elderly users to use the park for their own health and wellbeing. It will also invite children to non-prescriptive play which will take some pressure off the play equipment as the only source of play/entertainment.
- Due to the park layout, dog walkers often walk through the playground. A range of interventions could be considered to lead them around the playspace instead and make it clear and convenient to encourage disposal of dog foul.

- The park borders the countryside and unique views of the Five Sisters Bing. There is opportunity to celebrate this more.
- Although not a survey priority, there are no accessible paths into the park which can exclude users with mobility issues. Some provision for inclusive park use should be provided.
- Although not a survey priority, ecological enhancements should be considered to assist the Council in dealing with the climate emergency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By analysing all the information collated, recommended actions for improving the park are:

1. Encouraging dog walkers to avoid the play space and dispose of dog foul through a range of interventions
2. A range of seating options throughout the park
3. Additional toddler play and a holistic overview of existing play features
4. Considered planting additions to improve park aesthetics and biodiversity value
5. Bespoke features or information boards to celebrate local history and views from the park
6. Inclusive access route into the park



INTRODUCTION

Langside Gardens Green is designated as a Local Park in the West Lothian Open Space Plan and is safeguarded for open space in the West Lothian Local Plan (2018).

Langside Gardens Green is a small local park, approx. 0.76ha in size. The park consists of 2 distinct parts - an irregular shaped grass area with a playground and a rectangular kick pitch area surrounded by tall grasses. The ground is fairly flat but slopes down steeply to the north-west of the kick pitch. There is some car parking spaces to the north-east along Langside Gardens. The park is bounded by a tarmac path and residential properties to the north, east and south. To the west it's bounded by pasture land and boasts landmark views of the Five Sisters Bing. The Park is well overlooked by housing and in a quiet, residential location. A pedestrian path links it south to Calderburn Road and into wider Polbeth.

The park consists of a mown grass area, a playpark, 1 bench, 2 bins, a kick pitch and a grass edge which is left unmown. There is an adopted footpath with lighting to the north, east and south of the park edge, but no paths run through the park.

Known park users include local residents, children and dog walkers, although visitors from elsewhere in Polbeth also attend the park.

West Lothian Council has some money to make improvements to the park in 2022/23. Feedback from local stakeholders will inform the improvements and help to shape a longer-term vision for the park.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Feedback from local stakeholders was gathered via an online survey. The survey period ran from 13th July to 8th August 2022.

Emails were sent to all known stakeholders, including council officers, Polbeth Community Council, Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden, Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Community Development Trust and local Councillors. 25 fliers advertising the survey were put through neighbours' doors around the park and 1 poster was displayed in and around the park. The survey was also advertised through the council's Media team. A total of 21 consultees gave their feedback altogether.

An Open Space Officer also attended two 'meet me in the park' sessions on the 29th of July 2022, between 12:00 - 1:00pm and 17:00 - 18:00pm. During these sessions, the consultees were welcome to speak with the Officer or ask for help with filling in the survey.



FEEDBACK

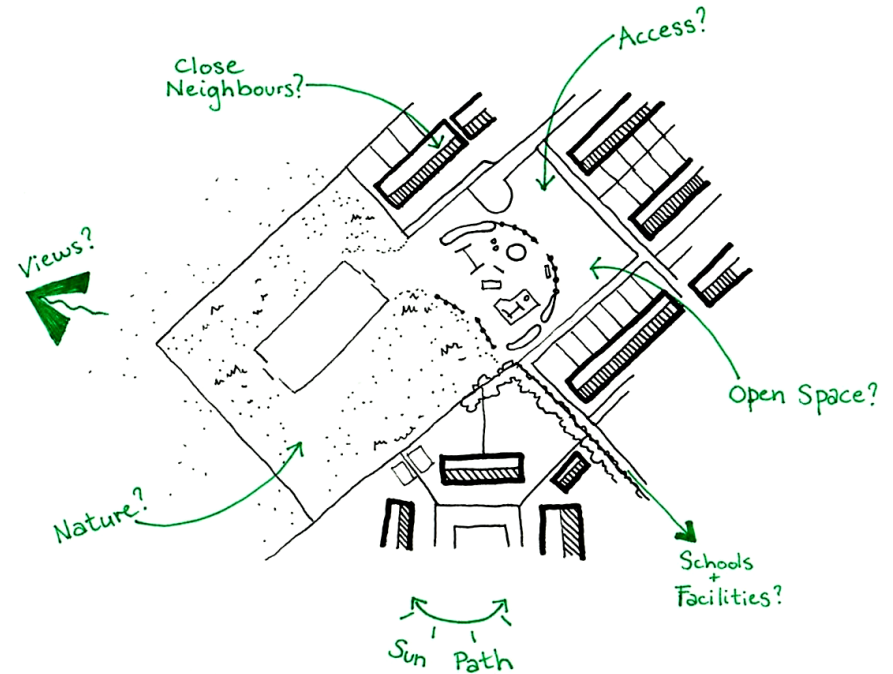
FROM WLC OFFICERS

Officers noted issues with dog foul, as well as opportunities for additional paths, fence repairs and planting.

FROM SURVEY

Q1. Personal experience of the Park

The public were asked to consider the park as a whole, and their personal relationship with it. The most common responses mentioned the attractive view, the positive use of the kick pitch by all ages and the lack of sufficient or appropriate play features for toddlers. Some interesting comments are quoted below:



Keeping the view to the 5 Sisters and to the zoo would be important

Love that you can see the zoo from the park and the kick pitch is well used

It is a great space, I live right next to park but it needs to provide more mixed age play

Love that you can see the zoo from the park and the kick pitch is well used

Sometimes we see owls and foxes in the park

Kick pitch! Me and my little boy use it regularly

Kids play around the little hills (rolling and hiding) and use sledges there in the winter. The open space is used by younger children who play football and rounders

Q2. Park Assessment

What do people like best about the Park

The most common response was that this is a place where children can meet and play safely, close to home and easily overlooked from neighbouring houses.

Other common responses noted the kick pitch and the play equipment as favourite features in the park.

What do people like least about the Park

There were 3 issues raised most notably:

- That the existing play equipment is insufficient, inappropriate, doesn't cater for enough age groups or needs updating
- That dog walkers walk their dogs through the play park, and leave behind dog foul
- That there isn't enough seating

Current Park demographics - who uses the park the most?

The consultees have ranked who they see using the park the most (1 being most common - 8 being least common)



Is anyone excluded from or unable to use the park?



Q3. Park Scoring System

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. 20 people participated in the scoring. The Survey responses are demonstrated in the table to the left, with the survey score in dark grey and the original Open Space score in light grey for comparison.

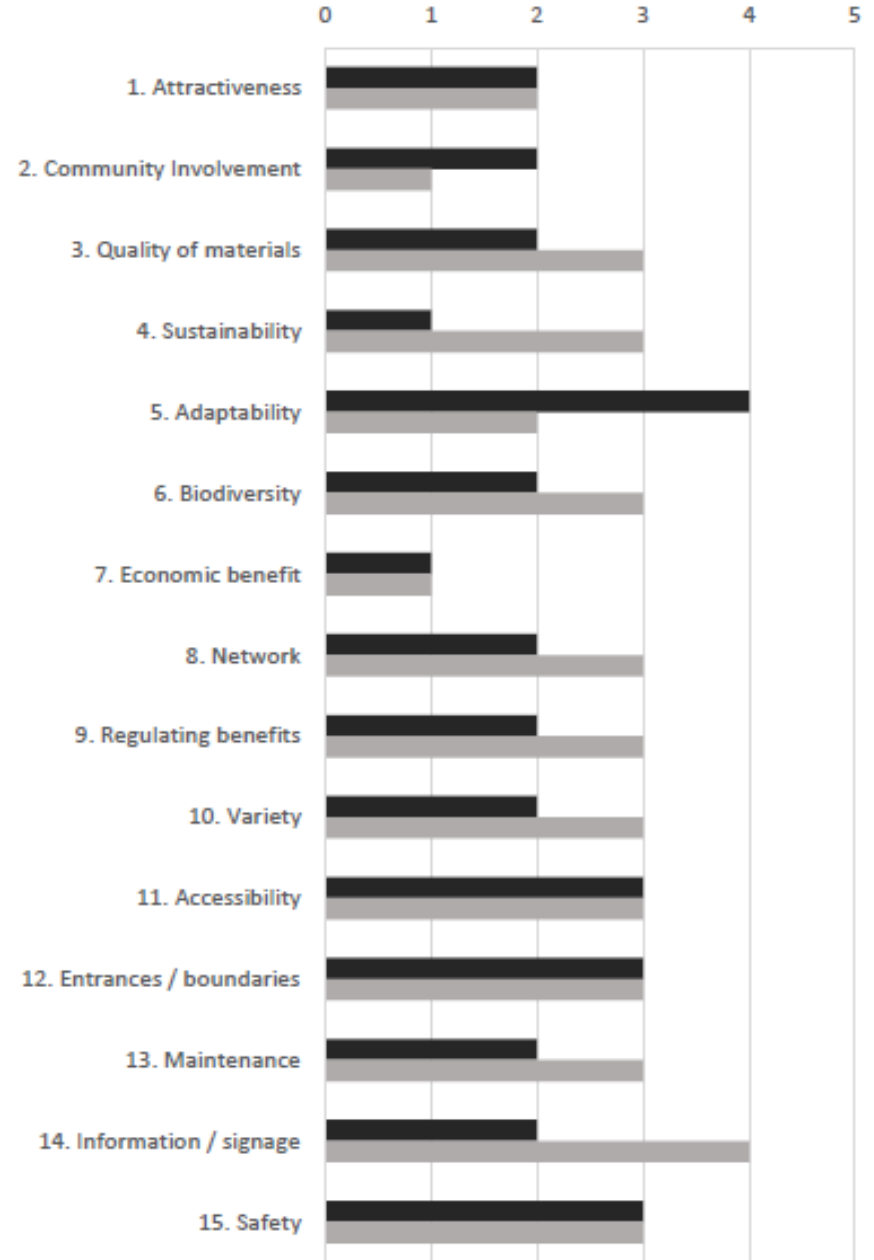
With a possible top score of 5 points for each category, it can be seen that only 4 park categories score above average: Adaptability, Accessibility, Entrance / boundaries and Safety.

All the other categories score below average with Sustainability and Economic benefits scoring the lowest.

These scores give us a clear indication of which themes within the park work well and which themes could be significantly improved. They participant scoring is mostly similar to the Open Space scores although there is some variation.

The park's total community-rated score is 33, which rates below 'fit for purpose' (40 being the cut-off point). This is 7 points below the score as rated through the council's park audit process (40). It is important to note that the participants will have responded based on their personal experience of the park, whilst the Open Space scoring is based on a wider understanding of council assets and priorities. This may account for the variation,. The public opinion of the park and their score is an important consideration to take forward.

Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the characteristics that were scored.



Q4. Improvement opportunities

The consultees have ranked which park improvement they see as most beneficial (1 being most beneficial- 8 being least beneficial):



Additional comments and suggestions

- Group seating shouldn't be too close to houses and should consider noise
- More colour in the park
- Boards with local information to engage children
- More exciting play equipment could include single swings, monkey bars, a trampoline, a flying fox, a rope climber or a rock wall
- Something to encourage the users to keep the park dog fowl and litter free - it should be a place where children can learn to care and take responsibility for their environment
- A keep fit bike or a mini gym to support teenager / adult use
- Remove the redundant fence to the south (noted it's a hiding spot)
- Fence off the play area to allow children to play safely and keep dogs out of the area
- Add seating to the kick pitch
- A formal garden or an exercise area to encourage adults and the elderly to use the space
- Include a picnic table
- Include a pump track
- Upgrade the kick pitch

RECOMMENDATIONS

OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS

Generally, the park is rated quite low by local users. Key issues can be addressed through the Open Space Capital spending in 2022 / 2023. Anything which can't be done during these Capital Investment works will form the basis for a longer-term plan. By analysing the park scores and bringing together feedback from all stakeholders, recommended actions for improving the park are:

1. Encouraging dog walkers to avoid the play space and dispose of dog foul through a range of interventions
2. A range of seating options throughout the park
3. Additional toddler play and a holistic overview of existing play features
4. Considered planting additions to improve park aesthetics and biodiversity value
5. Bespoke features or information boards to celebrate local history and views from the park
6. Inclusive access route into the park

The above recommendations should improve the park across a range of criteria such as attractiveness, sense of place, variety of use, inclusivity and green infrastructure. It should also help alleviate the key areas of concern highlighted by the Community choices exercise.

A number of survey responses suggested a need for additional and more varied play equipment. All play equipment on site will be reviewed for its suitability and if appropriate, new equipment can be added. Due to the supply and maintenance cost of equipment, this may not be viable, or may come in the form of informal 'natural play'. Some of the equipment suggested may be too big for the park. However, different options will still be presented at the second stage of the consultation.

Upgrading the kick pitch surface has been suggested in the survey. The pitch currently has a grass surface with astroturf goals. These surfaces appear to be in good condition and any noticeable wear can be repaired during the project works. Upgrading the surface to hard-standing will be very costly and, in past Council experience, may invite dog owners to use the pitch inappropriately. As such these works are not recommended.

A review of park maintenance should take place including provision of litter bins, dog fouling and grass management. Maintenance levels most likely cannot be increased at this time, however it may be possible to better organise maintenance activities.

NEXT STEPS

This report will be posted on the parks webpage www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfor

Based on the feedback and recommendations in this report, park improvement options and designs will be drawn up and presented in the second part of the consultation. The consultees who opted to be involved in the second part of the consultation will be contacted to vote on these proposals and help determine the final proposals.

Appendix 1 – Rate the Place characteristics explained

No.	Measure	Some things to consider 'yes' answers = higher score, unless stated
1	Attractiveness	Is the park generally attractive? Does it have a consistent or unique character?
2	Community	Does the community help to make decisions about the park? Are there frequent community events? Is there evidence of community involvement?
3	Quality	Are features and facilities robust and long-lasting?
4	Sustainability	Is weedkiller used in maintenance? (lower score) Is every bit of grass cut short? (lower) Recycling bins on site? Are there signs that materials / resources are reused on site? (e.g. grass clippings on shrub-beds)
5	Adaptability	Could spaces within the park be changed easily to suit different uses over time?
6	Biodiversity	Are there different shapes, sizes and types of plants within the park? Do you regularly see different insects / birds / other animals in the park?
7	Economic benefits	Does anyone charge for activities or events here? Does anyone sell things here? Do people collect wood or berries? Do people fish? Do people grow food here?
8	Network	Is the park connected to other green areas nearby, or rivers/burns? Is it connected to walking/cycle paths?
9	Regulating benefits	Are there trees / shrubs / plants at different heights? (to filter air/water, soak up rainfall and store carbon) Are there areas that visibly hold water when it rains? Are there flowers to support bees and other pollinators?
10	Variety	Is there a good variety of things to do in the park? e.g. sport/ walk/ sit/ learn/ play/ watch wildlife / picnic/ cycle/ eat/ run / climb / socialise / walk dog / good views
11	Accessibility	Is the park easy to walk to and get around? Is most of the park accessible to buggies / wheelchairs?
12	Entrances / boundaries	Do you know you're in a park? Are entrances and boundaries well defined? Are they attractive?
13	Maintenance	Is the park well-maintained? Is there much litter, vandalism or areas of neglect? (lower)
14	Signage	Is it clear who looks after the park and how to contact them? Is there any information on wildlife/ history, etc?
15	Safety	Do children and older people regularly use the park? Can you see across the park? Are there areas that feel unsafe? (lower)

Appendix 2 – All survey answers

1. Is there anything unique or personal about the Park that you think should be kept in mind during design?

Number of participants: 16

- The park is used by all age groups, locals and visitors - keeping the view to the 5 Sisters and to the zoo would be important.
- The open space around it is also great for kids to play
- A focus of the five sisters / local history story boards for kids to learn about their local area and ecology would be a nice feature.
- No
- Love that you can see the zoo from the park and the kick pitch is well used
- It is a great space it is a well used park and
does need upgraded
- A seating area with benches suitable for having picnics at.
- No
- Please don't remove the football pitch or if anything please upgrade it. use it regularly and it would be a shame for it to
be removed. The fact it is closed makes it perfect for young kids and the artificial grass is great for little ones.
- I think having the park is great. At the moment, it's not as well used as the kick pitch. I like that it is set slight back from the path to my house with the hill setting it back. I would suggest keeping this sort of layout with the hill sections as the kids play around these (rolling and hiding) and use sledges there in the winter.. The open space is used by younger children who play football and rounders etc so would suggest leaving this clear too but perhaps fenced off a little more.
- Something for toddlers and use the full space of park area to stop older kids playing football as there is a kick pitch for that.also block the path which leads to the back lane making the park safer x
- pump track!!!
Pump tracks are fun spaces for all ages and abilities to learn and practice scooting, skating and biking.
- The kick pitch gets used a lot by all ages so should be kept .
- Kick pitch also used by adults. Constant use, could do with 3G. We made the kick pitch happen through CC funding.
- The views
- Sometimes we see owls and foxes in the park. Sometimes older kids bully us off the equipment. Everyone loves the kick pitch, young kids and adults all play there.

2. 2 Park Assessment

2.1 What's your favourite thing about the Park? Why do you come here most often?

Number of participants: 17

- Work. To assess wetpour repairs.
- I like the fact there is a large grassed space where users can play football etc, outwith using the enclosed basketball/football enclosure.
-
- Would be lovely to update the park at Ennis in Polbeth there is much more to do and it's more up to date and looks so much nicer/cleaner.
- There's a good selection of activities within the park and the size of the overall space is good. I come here and also litter pick the park regularly.
- Nothing really
- Kick pitch and love the grassy hill to run up and down
- need more bins and more benches for parents to sit and watch their kids
- I tend not to use it as I'm an adult with no children.
- Nothing, all parks in polbeth are terrible, this one is by far the worst. Absolutely nothing for older kids except a climbing frame that is pointless and hardly anyone can use.
- The football pitch
- Nothing as theirs nothing for toddlers
- Swing and views
- it's a huge space specially kick pitch.
- Me: i come to the park cause there is a green spiny thing u hang onto and it spins
Friend: I come to the park because I meet with my friends and I always have fun
- Children can all meet up from the neighbourhood and further afield. Kick pitch great
- Play area however not much to do for smaller children eg 5 yrs old
- Kids like to hang out in the play tower.

3. 2.2 What are the biggest issues with the Park? Is there an element that just isn't working out?

Number of participants: 18

- It's generally ugly. The play area is tired, and regularly the wetpour is damaged. Some of the boundary fencing and features are in disrepair. The area of long grass have little recreation of biodiversity value.
- There is not enough seating within the park, so that needs addressing. There is also large areas of unkept/wild growing grasses, which is both an eyesore and potentially dangerous to users.
- I feel like there isn't much there to enjoy. And really just new equipment or swings etc. Picnic Benches?
- Number of bins - there should be 3 minimum for the size of the area. One at the top (where there is now) one at the bottom towards the field and one next to the football pitch area.

Also there is a lot of unused space - large areas of just grass. Maybe add some wildflowers in the parts next to the farmers fields.

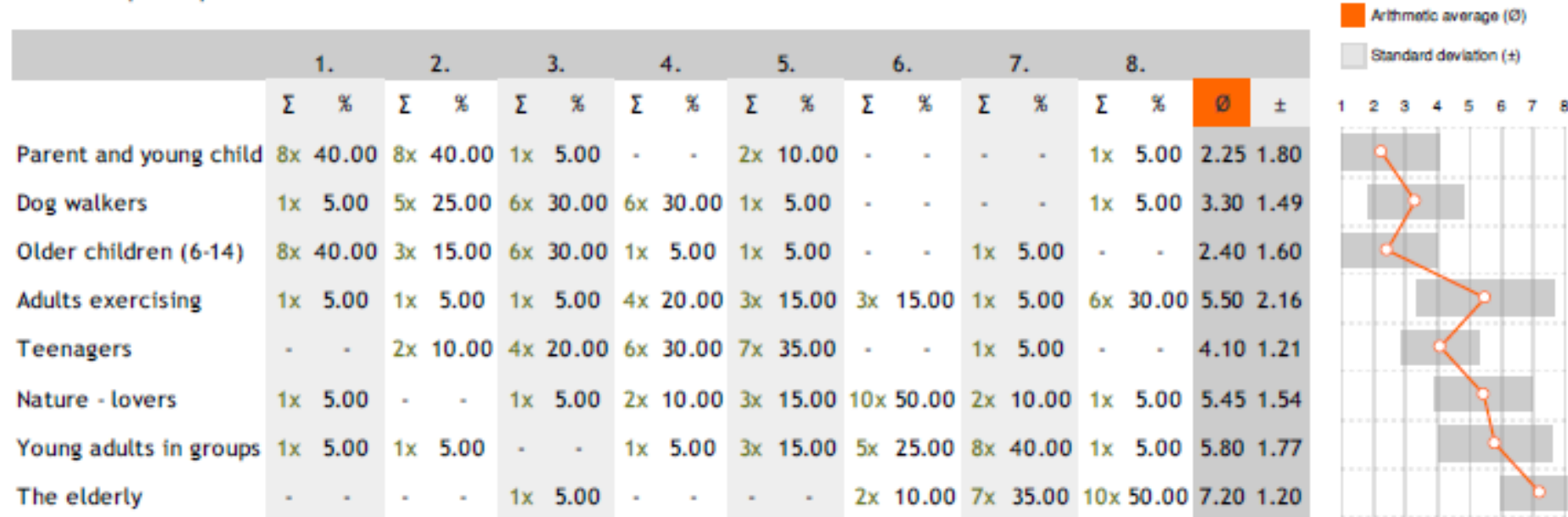
- Needs proper swings and proper play equipment. Climbing frame is rubbish
- The Astro gets ripped up a lot and there isn't enough things to play on
- Needs more kids equipment and benches spread out to not encourage teenagers all sitting together but few spread about so parents can sit
- No suitable areas for adults to socialise.
- All of the equipment needs updated. There is a small slide for younger kids and nothing for older kids. No real swings or seasaw. The climbing equipment is near impossible for kids to use. Nothing really to keep kids over the age of 3 entertained.
- Park is aimed at toddlers. Making it for all ages would be great
- A lot of the equipment is run down and not really suitable for younger children. I think swings - in addition to the big net swing - for toddlers and children would be a good inclusion. The climbing frame, yellow swing and frame closest to the bench are rarely used and a larger climbing frame with sections suitable for all ages may attract more people to the park - similar to the park at Bellsquarry and Murieston. Dog walkers also often use the park and so fencing more of the park off may stop this (they don't all clean up). There is only one bench for parents, only one bin and it's very open so you kind of feel like you're in a fish bowl - plants, trees, defined areas, bringing in nature etc would add more interest along with better play facilities.
- People using it to let their dogs do their business and leaving it lying.
- unaccompanied children all day
- The equipment that's in the park just now needs updated to make it friendly for all ages from toddlers to teenagers. The teenagers have the kick pitch but the toddlers don't really have much to use with the space that's there it could be better used with more benches for parents and litter bins.

There's not a lot of options to go on, there is only 9 things to go on and we have a lot of opening space

- Dog foul. Kids play hide and seek in the grass here dogs foul. Encourage dog walkers to use other routes. Dog walking sign, there was a sign but taken down.
- Play area too small too old
- No one uses the bell swing and it squeaks pretty badly. Dog walkers walk right through the play park. It's hard to supervise the children with the play area being set back from houses. The play area isn't fenced so the children can run off and get hurt - there should be metal fencing and gates around it.

4. 2.3. Please number the current Park user groups from 1 (most common user group) - 8 (least common user group).

Number of participants: 20



5. 2.4 Do you think there's a user group who would like to use the Park, but feels unwelcome or unable to? Why do you think that is?

Number of participants: 17

- Suspect there would be no real appeal to elderly unless supervising young children i.e. no peaceful areas with good access. Suspect given dog foul issue, some groups may avoid if potential for out of control or off lead dogs. No obvious interest for nature lovers.
- Adults and the elderly would enjoy the park more if there was facilities for them - possibly an outdoor exercise area, or formal planted garden area.
- Older children / pre teens. Not enough activities for them to use the area. Older people too - there aren't enough benches / seating areas.
- No
- The elderly
- Young kids nothing for under 2s or older kids it needs swings and better equipment and nothing for parents to sit on except 1 bench which is very uncomfortable
- Anyone too old to use the current equipment, it's simply not designed for any other age group bar under 10's.
- Kids over the age of 4 as there is nothing to keep them amused except one circular swing.
- I think it is mostly aimed towards toddlers and a more diverse park would be great
- Younger children/toddlers with parents or primary school age children. The park is run down, there is limited seating and its very open for really young kids.
- Parents with young babies and toddlers
- At night there can often be large groups of teenagers often drinking and unsocial behaviour which put all others age groups off using the park but if not like this you would find more people would use park for longer.
- the group of children does not allow others to enter the park
- Children with extra needs have nothing in the park And younger toddlers 1 +
- I don't see much elderly going to the park that much anymore I only see the same people and walking there dogs there
- No
- Not enough for toddlers. Not enough for primary age kids who have to use equipment meant for older children, so they can't reach things or get scared.

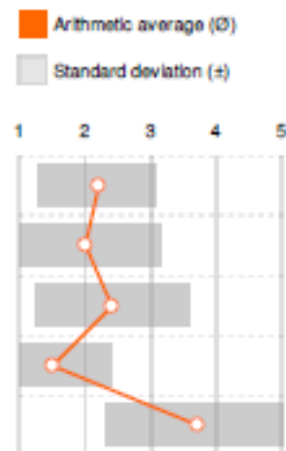
6. 3. Park Scoring System

The below criteria is how our officers score open spaces. If you can, please rate the questions to help us gain insight into public perception of park functionality:

Quality

Number of participants: 20

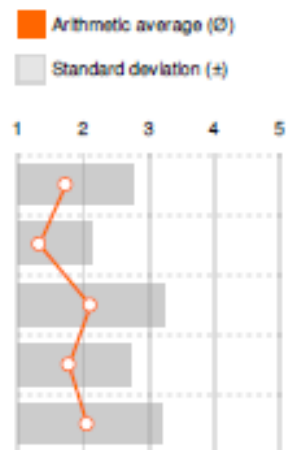
	1 Poor (1)		2		3		4		5 Good (5)			
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±
1. Is the Park attractive? Do...	5x	25.00	7x	35.00	7x	35.00	1x	5.00	-	-	2.20	0.89
2. Is the community involve...	9x	47.37	3x	15.79	6x	31.58	-	-	1x	5.26	2.00	1.15
3. Are the features & furnis...	6x	31.58	3x	15.79	6x	31.58	4x	21.05	-	-	2.42	1.17
4. Sustainability - does the...	13x	72.22	2x	11.11	2x	11.11	1x	5.56	-	-	1.50	0.92
5. Could spaces within the ...	2x	11.11	2x	11.11	2x	11.11	5x	27.78	7x	38.89	3.72	1.41



7. Multi-functionality

Number of participants: 19

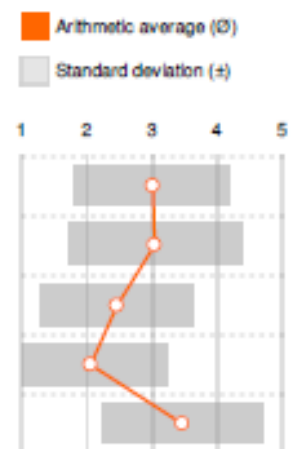
	1 Poor (1)		2		3		4		5 Good (5)			
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±
6. Does the Park promote b...	11x	61.11	2x	11.11	4x	22.22	1x	5.56	-	-	1.72	1.02
7. Economic benefits - does...	16x	84.21	1x	5.26	1x	5.26	1x	5.26	-	-	1.32	0.82
8. Is the Park connected to...	8x	42.11	3x	15.79	6x	31.58	2x	10.53	-	-	2.11	1.10
9. Does the Park help regul...	9x	50.00	5x	27.78	3x	16.67	1x	5.56	-	-	1.78	0.94
10. Is there a good variety ...	7x	36.84	7x	36.84	3x	15.79	1x	5.26	1x	5.26	2.05	1.13



8. Safe and welcoming

Number of participants: 19

	1 Poor (1)		2		3		4		5 Good (5)		Ø	±
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%		
11. Easy to walk to and acc...	2x	10.53	5x	26.32	5x	26.32	5x	26.32	2x	10.53	3.00	1.20
12. Do Park entrances feel ...	4x	21.05	2x	10.53	4x	21.05	7x	36.84	2x	10.53	3.05	1.35
13. Is the park well-maintai...	5x	26.32	4x	21.05	7x	36.84	2x	10.53	1x	5.26	2.47	1.17
14. Is there clear informati...	7x	36.84	8x	42.11	1x	5.26	2x	10.53	1x	5.26	2.05	1.18
15. Does it feel safe? Is the...	1x	5.26	4x	21.05	3x	15.79	7x	36.84	4x	21.05	3.47	1.22

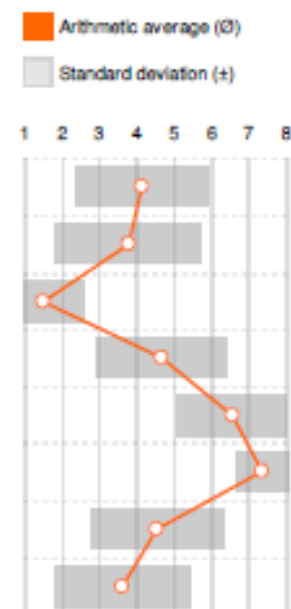


9. 4. Improvement Opportunities

4.1 Which Park improvement would be the most beneficial use of the Open Space funding? Please number the options from 1 (most beneficial) - 8 (least beneficial).

Number of participants: 17

	1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		Ø	±
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%		
Ecological enhancement...	-	-	3x	17.65	5x	29.41	2x	11.76	4x	23.53	1x	5.88	1x	5.88	1x	5.88	4.12	1.76
Group seating - I want to...	3x	17.65	2x	11.76	1x	5.88	6x	35.29	2x	11.76	2x	11.76	-	-	1x	5.88	3.76	1.95
More play features for ch...	13x	76.47	2x	11.76	1x	5.88	-	-	1x	5.88	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.47	1.07
A peaceful spot to sit - I ...	1x	5.88	2x	11.76	1x	5.88	3x	17.65	2x	11.76	7x	41.18	1x	5.88	-	-	4.65	1.77
Better access and pathw...	-	-	-	-	-	-	3x	17.65	1x	5.88	2x	11.76	6x	35.29	5x	29.41	6.53	1.46
Better legibility and sign...	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2x	11.76	7x	41.18	8x	47.06	7.35	0.70
Sports and leisure - I wan...	-	-	2x	11.76	4x	23.53	2x	11.76	5x	29.41	1x	5.88	2x	11.76	1x	5.88	4.53	1.77
A more attractive place ...	-	-	6x	35.29	5x	29.41	1x	5.88	2x	11.76	2x	11.76	-	-	1x	5.88	3.59	1.80



10. If you'd like to expand on any of your choices, please do so below:

Number of participants: 5

- The survey would benefit from a NA or Unknown option for question 3 e.g. I don't know if anybody is economically benefitting from the park, or if community has events in park etc. I only visit occasionally. If the survey forces public to guess or pick a random answer the results may be of little objective value. Any group seating must consider the potential for anti-social gathering in close proximity to houses i.e. noise pollution and potential vandalism.
- More colour and information on the local area as well as how it's important to keep parks litter free etc. it should be engaging for young children.
- More play equipment and more seating and bins as people walk their dogs needs bins to encourage them to pick up dog poo
- Single swings, pull up bars
- Na

11. Do you have a different suggestion? Please specify:

Number of participants: 6

- If question 4.1 is asking me to say what improvement I want, why do I have to give you my email address for you to ask me the same question again?
- Dog poo bins! Anything to bring down the litter levels and increase the overall enjoyment of the park. It's a good size park and it generally always busy with kids - it should meet their needs but also be a place where they can learn about the importance of caring for our environment and specifically the area where they live.
- unsupervised children are destroying the park and young children have nowhere to spend any time
- More play and equipment. Keep fit bike. Remove unnecessary fence.
- A mini gym
- seats at the pitch, monkeybars, trampoline, higher pitch fence, flying fox, rope climber, big slide, rock wall, lighting.