Robertson Avenue Park, Bathgate



Survey Report















Robertson Avenue Park, Bathgate – Survey Results

SUMMARY

In June/July 2023, a community consultation was held in order to gain feedback on what the public thought about Robertson Avenue Park and what suggestions the community had that would enhance the park. The survey was conducted on-line. Information was provided about the park and feedback then sought via a simple questionnaire. 19 responses were received by the deadline of 16 July 2023.

How people rate the park

Users were asked to rate the Park using the Council's Park Audit criteria. Scores of 1-5 were allocated against 15 criteria. Overall, respondents scored the park as average. The average score of 41.2 means that users think the park is "fit for purpose", but only just. (A minimum quality score of 40 is necessary to be considered Fit for Purpose). The categories that scored lowest were Community Involvement, Quality of materials, Economic Benefits, Regulating Benefits, Variety and Clear information/signage. Average scores were given for Attractiveness/character, Sustainability, Biodiversity, Easy to walk to and access, Entrances/boundaries and Maintenance. The areas scoring highest, above average, were Adaptability, Network with wider area and Feeling Safe.

What people like about the park

People appreciate that the park is a good sized open and green space. It is considered a good place to play and walk or exercise dogs. The clean and well-maintained condition of the park is noted. The peace and quiet is enjoyed along with good views of, and closeness to, the adjacent nature reserve along with wildlife that can be seen in and near the park.

What people don't like about the park

The lack of facilities in, or purpose to, the park is not liked along with the fact that there are no paths around the park. The condition of the fences in the park and lack of gates is also disliked. The fact that it is accessed by trail/motorbikes is a negative point. The lack of play equipment, except for the football goals which are regarded as noisy by some, is not liked. The amount of dog fouling, untidy bushes and maintenance of the park are seen as negative aspects of the park. Some, however, feel it is overly mown with a lack of wildflowers and trees. The lack of seating was also mentioned.

Recommendations for action

Using the community feedback it is recommended that the following actions are undertaken -

- Repair fencing and install new gated access;
- Install new dual-purpose bin;
- Install new bench;
- Create new path along southern boundary and upgrade existing route to Village Nature Park;
- Plant new trees;
- Leave some unmown grass areas;
- Cut back bushes in the park;

Proposals

A number of proposals have been drawn up for community consideration. A second consultation is, therefore, planned prior to requesting costings for the implementation of any works.

Introduction

Robertson Avenue Park is located on the western edge of Bathgate, between Little Boghead Village Nature Park and Falside residential area. It is regarded as a Local Park by the Council and designated as Land Safeguarded for Open Space in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan 2018.

Access is available off residential street cul-de-sacs from Falside Crescent in the north and Robertson Avenue in the east. There is a Right of Way from Falside Crescent connecting with Little Boghead Village Nature Park on the south.

The park is bounded on the north and east by the residential area of Falside. Former agricultural land is now being developed for housing on the park's western boundary. A water course forms the southern boundary with Little Boghead Nature Park lying to the south of the stream.

The site is roughly rectangular in shape with a small indentation in the west reflecting different land ownership although this is not marked on site. The site is relatively flat with the majority being amenity grassland apart from a small section of hedge/scrub running north-south in the middle of the site, a hedge section and some shrubs in the north and shrubs in the north-east corner. Two children's football panels are located in the eastern half of the park. A small electricity sub-station lies on the park's external north-western boundary. The majority of the park is enclosed within fencing or the rear of residential properties.



Information gathering

An on-line survey was used to gather comments and feedback from local stakeholders. This was posted on the Council's website and available for completion between 20 June 2023 and 16 July 2023. Emails were sent to the local ward members, Bathgate Community Council, Bathgate Community Development Trust, Little Boghead Village Nature Park group and a number of Council officers.

Posters were put up at the park entrances which highlighted and gave the link to the survey along with a QR code connecting you directly to it. A copy of the poster was delivered by hand through the properties which overlook or were on the access routes into the park.

There were 19 surveys completed by the closing date.

Feedback

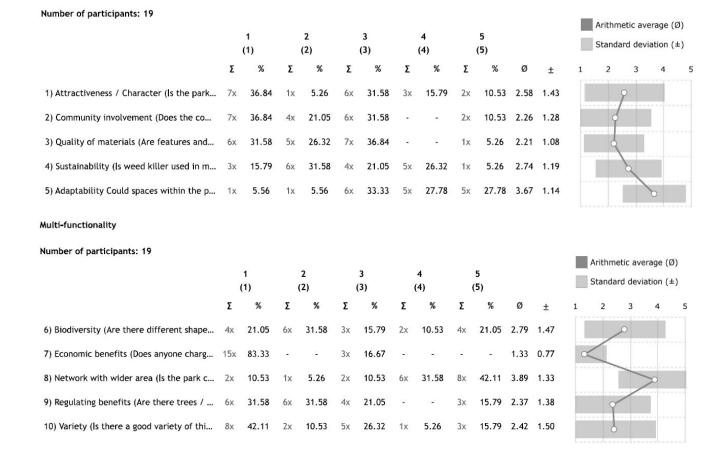
Full responses to the survey are available in **Appendix 1**. A summary of answers to each question is as follows:

Name of the park

There are a number of names given to the park. The Park/Grass park was the most common name used but Falside Park, The field, The Ash Park or The Ashy and Robertson Avenue are also used.

Rate the Park

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. An explanation of categories included in the audit is shown in **Appendix 2**. Scores of 1-5 were allocated against 15 criteria, with 1 being poor and 5 being good. The results are shown in the charts below.



Num	her	of	participants:	19

Number of participants: 19	1 2 (1) (2)		2 3 (2) (3)				5 (5)			Arithmetic average (Ø) Standard deviation (±)							
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±	1	2	3	4	5
11) Easy to walk to and accessible for all	2x	10.53	3x	15.79	5x	26.32	2x	10.53	7x	36.84	3.47	1.43			9		
12) Entrances/boundaries (Do you know	4x	22.22	3x	16.67	5x	27.78	1x	5.56	5x	27.78	3.00	1.53			9		
13) Maintenance (Is the park well-mainta	3x	15.79	1x	5.26	8x	42.11	4x	21.05	3x	15.79	3.16	1.26			1		
14) Clear information / signage (Is it clea	10x	52.63	4x	21.05	4x	21.05	1x	5.26	2	-	1.79	0.98		~			
15) Does it feel safe? (Do children and ol	1x	5.26	1x	5.26	8x	42.11	5x	26.32	4x	21.05	3.53	1.07				O	

Overall, respondents scored the park as average. The average score of 41.2 means that users think the park is "fit for purpose", but only just. (The Council uses a standard survey methodology to determine the quality of a park. In summary, each site is given a score between 1 and 5 (low to high) for each of 15 quality criteria. These scores are then totalled, giving an overall score out of 75. A site with a score of 40 or above is considered 'fit for purpose').

The categories that scored lowest were Community Involvement, Quality of materials, Economic Benefits, Regulating Benefits, Variety and Clear information/signage. Average scores were given for Attractiveness/character, Sustainability, Biodiversity, Easy to walk to and access, Entrances/boundaries and Maintenance. The areas scoring highest, above average, were Adaptability, Network with wider area and Feeling Safe.

What people like about the park

People appreciate that the park is a large green space and that it has an open aspect which makes it a safe place to visit and play. It is regarded as a good place for playing, walking or exercising dogs. Park users commented that it was clean and well-maintained. The peace and quiet of the site are enjoyed by the community along with good views of, and a good connection to, Little Boghead Village Nature Park. Visitors can see wildlife within the park or from the park on the adjacent Nature Park.

What people don't like about the park

Some regard the park as having no purpose and no facilities and that it is just a large patch of grass. The condition of the fences around the site is not liked and the fact that there are no gates which enables access by quad/trail bikes into the park. The level of dog fouling is seen as a negative aspect of the park. The lack of play equipment and the existing goals are not liked by some. The amount of mown grass and lack of trees or wildflowers is regarded as a negative issue along with lack of paths through the park.

Suggestions to enhance the park

There were many suggestions for enhancing the park and the enjoyment of park users. The most common suggestions that can be considered within the available budget have been summarised as follows –

• Repair fencing and install new gates — Installing a new fence along the eastern boundary, the north-south fence-line running down the middle of the park and the south-western boundary will improve the look of the park and assist with excluding non-authorised vehicles entering the majority of the park. New gates on the eastern and southern boundaries and central point may also help reduce this anti-social behaviour. It will not prohibit it completely but will hopefully reduce motorbikes entering the main park area. Gates must be accessible by those in wheelchairs or double buggies which, unfortunately, also allows motorbikes through but may deter them if they have to get off and open a gate.

- <u>Install a new bin</u> A new bin is proposed at the Robertson Avenue entrance. This will be an all-purpose bin into which litter and dog waste can be placed. The existing dog waste bin in this area can be removed once the new bin is installed.
- <u>Install a new bench</u> A bench is proposed for the southern boundary of the park. This will be a backless type allowing park users to view the park and football area or look out over the Nature Park.
- <u>Create a new path and upgrade the existing one leading to the Nature Park</u> The park has no current path around it which makes it harder for, or excludes, those with mobility issues or pushing a pram to fully enjoy the park. A whindust path is proposed along the southern boundary to connect Robertson Avenue and Falside Crescent.

 The existing route between Falside Crescent and the footbridge on the south of the park is uneven and worn. A re-surfacing of this section is proposed to provide a safe path once more for those entering/exiting the park from the Nature Park.
- Reduce areas of mown grass The majority of the park is amenity grassland with only a few patches of scrub or unmown grass. The amenity grassland has very limited biodiversity value and not every area of the mown grass will be used by park visitors anyway. By reducing the number of grass cuts on a small area of the park biodiversity will start to increase, both in numbers and variety. The area in the south-west corner is proposed to have less grass cuts in order to let the grass and other vegetation, including wildflowers, grow and provide improved pollen, nectar and shelter for wildlife. A mown path through this area would still receive the same number of cuts as the rest of the park for access through this section of the park.
- <u>Plant trees</u> The addition of trees to the park would introduce new habitat for wildlife as well as visual variety, shade and interest for human visitors. Trees are, therefore, proposed along the southern and south-western boundary. The maturity (age/size) of these will depend on the cost of the other proposals being within budget but British natives, suited to the site conditions will be chosen.
- <u>Cut back bushes</u> the bushes in the north-east and north-west corners of the site have become overgrown and can no longer be maintained by Grounds Maintenance (due to working at height restrictions). It is proposed that these are reduced in height and width to a manageable size for future maintenance and regeneration.

The above recommendations have been shown as proposals on a layout in **Appendix 3**.

There were a number of suggestions which will not be developed into proposals for various reasons:

- There were suggestions to replace the existing football goals and also install new play equipment. There is, however, no funding currently available for investment in play provision (investment in parks and play facilities is from separate budgets) but comments will be retained for potential future enhancements if funding for play assets becomes available.
- There was a suggestion for lighting but the council does not generally provide lighting in parks unless there are adopted paths through them (which Robertson Avenue Park does not have).
- Signage to encourage dog walkers to pick up dog poo was suggested. Over the years it has been found that the installation of new signage for such purposes does not, unfortunately, change the behaviour of dog owners who don't clean up after their pets so it is not, therefore, regarded as value for money when considering the spend of limited park

resources. If park users see dog fouling then there is a Council webpage that can be used to report it at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32095/Report-a-Dog-Fouling-Issue

• A suggestion was made for parking which has been assumed to be within the park. The council would not consider parking provision within this park. It is regarded as a Local Park with the majority of users expected to access the park by non-motorised means.

Next Steps

This report will be made available on the council's webpage at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo under Reports.

The proposals that have been drawn up, based on the suggestions from the community and recommended actions by the council, will shortly be available for voting on to "Agree" or "Disagree" with their implementation on site. Proposals that are supported will then be costed and, if within budget, delivered ideally within 2023/24.

The 13 respondents who requested to join the park email list will be kept updated about the park improvements. Anyone else who would like to join the list can request to do so by emailing Carol.Campbell@westlothian.gov.uk



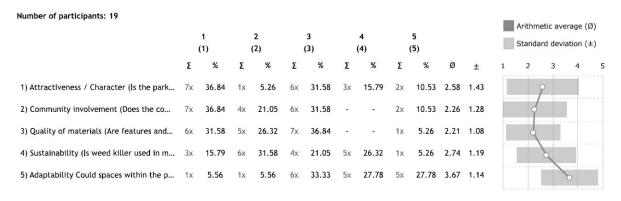
Appendix 1 - All survey results (some personal information has been redacted)

1. What do you call the park?

Number of participants: 11

- -Falside park
- -The field
- -The Ash Park (as my family always refer to it by that name for some reason so it kind of stuck)
- -Robertson Avenue
- -The Ashy
- -The ashy
- -The grass park
- -Park
- -Park
- -The park
- -Just the park or the field

2. Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good Quality



3. Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good

Multi-functionality Number of participants: 19 Arithmetic average (Ø) Standard deviation (±) (1) (5) 3 6) Biodiversity (Are there different shape... 21.05 15.79 10.53 7) Economic benefits (Does anyone charg... 15x 8) Network with wider area (Is the park c... 2x 5.26 10.53 31.58 42.11 3.89 1.33 9) Regulating benefits (Are there trees / ... 6x 31.58 31.58 4x 21.05 2.37 10) Variety (Is there a good variety of thi... 8x 42.11 2x15.79 2.42 1.50 10.53 5x 26.32 5.26

4. Please rate the park against the measures - with 1 being poor to 5 being good

Safe and welcoming																	
Number of participants: 19	(1 1)		2 (2)		3 (3)		4 (4)		5 (5)			_			erage (s	•
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±	1	2	3	4	5
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15) Does it feel safe? (Do children and ol	1x	5.26	1x	5.26	8x	42.11	5x	26.32	4x	21.05	3.53	1.07				0	

5. 1) What do you like best about this park?

Number of participants: 19

- -The fact I can let my wee dog run around within it.
- -Nothing
- -I often see Deer on the Park early morning, plenty local birds Nest round about the area. It's a really nice park, Dog walkers use the park to gain access to the adjoining nature reserve. Maybe the only thing it lacks is Trees or maybe some shrubs and plants to brighten the place up a bit As
- -Good space and used for games such as rounders and football and children learning/playing on their bike, used for dog walkers
- -The fact that it's always clean plus has so much space as it allows for many activities plus gives the local kids a safe place to play in. Also, the fact that it's by far, the best place in the neighbourhood for people to play with their dogs since the aforementioned amount of space is perfect for them to run after and fetch their toys. The view is stunning as well
- -Backdrop of nature reserve
- -Open space
- -Quite green space
- -It's a nice area with plenty of potential.
- -It is a safe open space where children from the area have always played, including myself when was young.
- -That there is an open space that has potential. Areas for games, kicking a ball, small events etc.
- -It is a short cut for walkers and neighbours. I remember it from childhood
- -It is a large open green space connected to the boghead reservation where there is a lot of wildlife and plants/
- vegetation. With the building of new houses in an adjacent field we are loosing too much of our "green spaces".

The area is safe and maintained (grass cut) regularly. Some of the residents who have gardens that back onto the park have planted some flowers and shrubs which have added some colour and its really nice to see. It is well used by locals for exercising their dogs and for meeting/catching up with local residents who also walk the local

paths through the reservation and "clay road" to plessey estate.

I would not support changes to the current park and strongly suggest leaving at it is.. Having seen many posts on facebook etc of the vandalism to many of our local parks and the equipment (wester inch, balbardie etc) where the damage has caused harm to children (nails, broken glass, needles, equipment set on fire etc), I believe adding anything to the grass park would attract similar and unwanted behaviour. It would become an eyesore. I understand the council is cost cutting and wont be able to constantly maintain the park and any equipment to make it safe.

- -It's quiet you can walk the dog and it doesn't attract antisocial behaviour
- -Quiet open green area
- -Good for nature and walk. Meet community. Peaceful area.
- -Not a lot
- -The beautiful scenery. The grass and weeds are well maintained, There is lots of wildlife, birds, frogs, hedgehogs and occasionally deer. Some of the houses bordering the park have nice little borders with flowers and they add beuty to the area too. Smaller children play football a lot during the summer months. Dog walkers regularly meet and chat and it's used by people generally going about their business and passing through when out for walks.
- -Being able to walk freely along here with kids and dogs. Don't need anything else as there is already a kids playpark with items there to play.

6. 2) Is there anything you don't like?

Number of participants: 18

- -That people can gain access to it very easily with their trails bikes and fly up and down the park and then onto the paths in the nature reserve and up to the plessy road.
- -people use it for their dog toilet
- -As a property owner Backing on to the park the only thing I don't like is the Metal sheets used as goals for the kids to play football. I think some kind of netting or rope or something to dull the noise would be a better idea. But overall it's a good park for kids to play their football on.
- -The fact that the great view is sadly is set to go downhill a bit due to a housing development being built soon in the field behind that stretches down towards Sibbald's Brae
- -Just an area of mown grass with no purpose to it.
- -Lack of play equipment
- -No path
- -There's nothing in it.
- -I don't like how it has not been well maintained
- -There is little in the way of facilities and it is overly mown, just short grass and not a lot else, could provide so much more
- -I wish it had wild flowers planted around all edges and more trees grown with bird nest boxes to attract the bees and birds also a concrete path or stepping stones as when it rains it can get water logged and very muuddy

- -Fence repairs and gates to keep the area secure for dogs to run freely. The famers livestock can sometimes get out of the adjacent field and into the grass areas. Not a great situation with pregnant sheep/lambs when dogs can run around them.
- -Fix the fences could also use a gate
- -The old fence needs changing. Lots of rubbish collecting in the bushes by the houses. Bushes look untidy.
- -Fencing to houses poor condition. Rusty looks bad

No where to sit. No park bench

Park is Dog poop area. Not clean, disgusting. No place for dog poop. So children don't play.

No path south towards rail bridge. Muddy.

- -Its a bit barren and forgotten
- -Dog fouling. Through way usr for off road bikes and quads. Teenagers from Plessey Road gathering to drink and be a general nuisance in the community, shouting and leaving glass and litter.
- -The goal end posts are made of metal and are so noisy when balls are just kicked at it continuously and (not necessarily during a game of football). These should or would be better if made of some other material. There are people who work shifts and can't get to sleep because of this. There are also people who are using the area to ride dirt bikes up and down here and also up the walkway to the cycle track. It is very dangerous as kids are here and also many people walk their dogs and it can be frightening . They also mess up the grass with riding their bikes and also the walkway up to the cycle track is ruined because of this.

7. 3) Please suggest things that could enhance the park or improve your enjoyment of it

Number of participants: 19

- -Improved access points, with perhaps a gate over the bridge to stop trails bikes flying up and down.
- -Make it in on a play park for the kids and access for walkers not people on motorbikes
- -I wouldn't change to much ,maybe some trees and plants for the neighbouring wildlife would be good.
- -Basketball hoops then could be used for multi sports
- -I'm very happy with the way it is. Maybe a few lights added in so as to make people feel safer when walking through it at night. Can't think of anything else though
- -The park is just a space for people to walk their dogs and kids to run about after school, it doesn't need to do any more than that. The best thing about it is that it's connected to the Nature Reserve and that should be built upon with more woodland edge habitat, grasslands etc. Improved access and better looking entrance points to the Reserve from both ends of the park will bring the most benefit to the assets already here and lift the image of the park along the way.
- -Play provision for children
- -Seats to watch nature reserve and footpath. Some shrubs and flowers would be nice and lights.

- -This should 100% be made into a quality play park for the kids. There are loads of kids play on the streets round about and forever running out fro behind parked cars. There's going to be an accident sooner or later. and already had close encounters with kids as youg as 3/4 years old running out infront of my car. I'm driving through the scheme with my foot constantly on the brake pedal. If there was a nice quality play park they'd all be down there playing as it's a nice quiet area with no dangers. We can't relax when our kids are out playing, would be so much safer knowing they are just along playing at the park.
- -The park area should be turned into a proper playground/play park for children
- -Trees, shrubs. path, meadows, seats, picnic tables, signage, stop spraying edges, replace fences with hedges or new fence lines but don't spray as an open space can have long vegetation if left deliberately as a wider margin. An area with so much potential but overly managed currently.
- -As above plant wild flowers more trees and bird nesting boxes and a path
- -Proper and updated signage for dog fouling and larger poop bins would be appreciated.

Upgrade the fencing and add gates.

- -Fix the fences could also use a gate
- -Change the old fence, remove the old bushes by the houses which just collecting rubbish and dogs poo. Put a few benches, bins, flower beds.
- -Replace fencing to houses

Fit park benches

Dedicated area for dog poop or dog ban. So children can play.

Path to join other path.

- -Play Equipment Footpaths Parking Signage Noticeboard
- -New signage regarding dog fouling and motorbikes. Fences desperately need repaired. A litter bin would be appreciated as people who live in Plessey Road now use the shop in Falside and litter dropping has increased

Personally I would not like to see change by way of annything new installed, this would only attract more unruly teenagers if for example they had somewhere to sit or shelter. Falside and Plessey Road already have childrens play parks. Falside is also Iin the process of losing the green belt area to house builders so I would like to see more preservation of the nature and beauty we have left. Please do not spoil a nice natural area by letting it become a target for vandalism, drugs and alcohol use and fire starting, all of which are on the increase in built up West Lothian parks. Perhaps planting some new shrubs?

-There needs to be new fencing at both ends of the park with possibly something to deter the dirt bike riders from getting through here.

Keeping the grass maintained and weed killer along the sides of the fences backing onto the houses and shrubs here being removed as they are overgrown. Other than that most people I know are happy with the way the park is used.

Appendix 2 – Park scoring criteria

	Quality	Poor			(Good
1	Attractiveness / Character	1	2	3	4	5
2	Community involvement	1	2	3	4	5
3	Quality of materials	1	2	3	4	5
4	Sustainability	1	2	3	4	5
5	Adaptability	1	2	3	4	5
	Sub total					

	Multi-functionality	Poor			,	Good
6	Biodiversity	1	2	3	4	5
7	Economic benefits	1	2	3	4	5
8	Network with wider area	1	2	3	4	5
9	Regulating benefits	1	2	3	4	5
10	Variety	1	2	3	4	5
	Sub total					

	Safe and welcoming	Poor			(Good
11	Easy to walk to and accessible for all	1	2	3	4	5
12	Entrances and boundaries	1	2	3	4	5
13	Maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
14	Clear information / signage	1	2	3	4	5
15	Does it feel safe?	1	2	3	4	5
	Sub total					

Explanation of measures

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 3 - Park proposals

