

Avondale Park, Armadale



Survey Report



Avondale Park – Survey Results

SUMMARY

In June/July 2023, a community consultation was held in order to gain feedback on what the public thought about Avondale 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. Fourteen responses were received by the deadline of 16 July 2023.

What people like about the park

The green and open space is appreciated by park users. The wildlife that can be seen and the views of The Moss are liked. The park offers access to the adjacent school and Nature Reserve. It is a quiet place, away from the main road. It is popular with dog walkers and is well maintained and tidy. People also like the trees, woods and hedgerows. The dark was also mentioned as a thing liked about the park.

What people don't like about the park

Respondents commented negatively about the existing equipment in the play area. Access onto the park by unauthorised vehicles/motorbikes was a dislike. The lack of a path to the play area and limited access to the majority of the park for those with reduced mobility was not liked. Comments about the seating, amount of mown grass, drainage and the uniform habitat were also mentioned as dislikes about the park.

Recommendations for action

Using the suggestions from the community feedback, and considering the available budget that could potentially deliver them, it is recommended that the following proposals are developed–

- New windust path;
- New vehicle gate;
- New pedestrian/equestrian gates;
- New fence sections (with hedge planting if separate funding can be secured);
- Unmown grass areas;
- New trees (if separate funding can be secured);
- New metal seat (if the park budget allows).

Proposals

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

Introduction

Avondale Park is located on the western edge of Armadale. It is owned and maintained by the Council. 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.

Pedestrian access is available from the northern and western boundaries of the park over a whindust path or amenity grassland with informal access also taken from the east of the park, through Black Moss Nature Park.

The park is relatively flat and open with the majority of it under amenity grassland. The whole of the park can be viewed from its central point. Two small woodland areas are located on the outer edges of the central part of the park. The eastern half comprises a football pitch with two goals and the western portion has a small play area, one practice goal and a whindust path from the northern boundary to the western edge of the park which leads to Armadale Academy and beyond.

Open views are available over Black Moss to the south – a raised, peatland bog designated as a Local Biodiversity Site – and Black Moss Nature Park to the east. The Nature Park is a community woodland with a network of paths through open ground and mixed woodland. Informal connections have been created between Avondale Park and the Nature Park by pedestrians and illegal motorbike users. The whindust path through the west of the park forms part of Armadale Round Town Path and is designated as a Core Path. This provides access to the rear of Armadale Academy and beyond to the western section of the town. A beech hedge stretches along the majority of, and forms, the northern boundary to the park which is then separated from Avondale Drive, High Academy Street and Mount Pleasant residential areas by a rough, unsurfaced track leading to the rear boundaries of nearby homes.



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 23 June 2023 and 16 July 2023. Emails were sent to the local ward members, Armadale Community Council and a number of Council officers advising of the park survey.

Posters were put up in and around the park which highlighted and gave the link to the survey along with a QR code connecting you directly to the survey. A copy of the poster was delivered by hand to properties on Avondale Drive, High Academy Street and Mount Pleasant which are closest to the northern park boundary.

There were 14 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

The majority of respondents call the site Avondale Park with a couple shortening this to Avondale. Moss Park or The park also get used by a few of the community.

What people like about the park

The green and open space is appreciated by park users. The wildlife that can be seen and the views of The Moss are liked. The park offers access to the adjacent Armadale Academy and Black Moss Nature Reserve. It is a quiet place being away from the main road. People also like the trees, woods and hedgerows. It is popular with dog walkers and is well maintained and tidy. The dark was mentioned as a thing liked about the park, which presumably refers to its lack of light pollution at night.

What people don't like about the park

Respondents commented negatively about the play area and its existing or lack of facilities and equipment or that there was nothing for kids to do on site. The use of the park by unauthorised vehicles/motorbikes was a dislike. The lack of a path to the play area and limited access to the majority of the park for those with reduced mobility was not liked. Other dislikes about the park include the amount of seating, the overly cut grass, drainage and its uniform habitat.

Suggestions to enhance the park

A number of suggestions were made to enhance the park or improve the enjoyment of park users. These, and any relevant comments relating to them and the areas outside of the park, are as follows –

- Play equipment and facilities – A number of comments were made suggesting improvements to the play area or play provision in the park. This included new equipment for different age ranges or specific assets such as a basketball hoop, BMX track, skate park or surfaced area for skates and scooters/bikes.

Investment in play areas and equipment is from a separate budget to the park investment budget. The budget that is currently available is for the park's

enhancement. There is no play park budget earmarked for Avondale Park in the current capital programme.

A fence around the play area was suggested in order to keep out dogs. The Council does not fence play areas unless they are within close proximity to a road. This play area would not, therefore, be considered for fencing.

- More dog waste bins – The Council is phasing out the provision of separate dog waste bins. The black waste bins are dual purpose and can be used for litter and dog waste.

The emptying of bins is undertaken by the Council's Cleaner Communities team. They determine where a bin is placed by considering the level of litter and the location of existing bins in the nearby vicinity. The current provision of bins around Avondale Park is felt to be sufficient at this time. If you would like to report an overflowing bin or litter on site please use [Report Litter - West Lothian Council](#)

- New paths in the park – A new path to the play area from the existing whindust path would improve accessibility, particularly after wet weather for those with young children and prams or reduced mobility.

A new circular path connecting the play area and central part of the park would improve accessibility generally within the park by increasing opportunities for all park users to relax or become healthier through gentle exercise.

- Suggestions for areas outside the park –The budget that is available for the park enhancements is limited and the focus for spend will, therefore, be the area within the park (excluding the play area). The suggestions for extending the path to the Moss, improving the access track to the north of the park and enhancing the greenspace between Avondale Drive and High Academy Street will not, therefore, be considered.

- Barriers to prohibit vehicles – It has been stated that there is an issue with cars and motorbikes entering the park. This not only damages the park surface but can be a danger to those using the park as well as creating a nuisance to nearby residents. Prohibiting cars could be achieved with a vehicle gate which is padlocked and then only accessed by authorised vehicles such as those operated by the Council. Pedestrian gates must be accessible by wheelchairs and prams (and also horses on the Core Path) which, due to their width, means that they can also be accessed by most motorised bikes. Putting gates up would, however, potentially slow the progress of motorbikes etc. and may change behaviours if they have to get on and off to open a gate. Signage can also be put up stating that "It is an offence" for motorbikes, quads and 4x4 vehicles to be on-site.

- Additional seating – More seating was suggested which would provide a resting point for park users The location of any additional seating would need to be considered to limit the chance of anti-social behaviour.

- Less mown grass/more planting/improved biodiversity – Suggestions were made to introduce unmown grass areas and trees and have "wilder" areas for nature.

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004), all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. One way of doing this is to reduce the area of amenity grassland that is mown. Mown grass has little biodiversity value. Leaving grass to grow longer between cuts would increase species

numbers and variety by encouraging new plants to grow and increasing nectar and pollen sources which in turn increases insect life and provides more foraging opportunities.

There are patches of grass that appear to have little or no use by park visitors and these, particularly where they border other habitats, would make good areas to be left unmown for the majority of the year and then receive an annual cut in late summer/early autumn. This would contribute to improving biodiversity in West Lothian. The areas that are suggested to have less grass cuts are along the western boundary and in the south-western corner of the park.

Park proposals

Based on the community suggestions that can be implemented within the park (and likely to be within budget) a number of proposals have been drawn up:

- New whindust path – A new whindust path in the western half of the park would create a loop by making connections to the play area and the central entrance on the northern boundary. This would make more parts of the park accessible to more park users especially when the grass is wet;
- New vehicle gate – A metal gate would restrict large vehicles onto site with the exception of Council authorised vehicles. This would be padlocked when not in use;
- New pedestrian/equestrian gates – New gates would formalise park entrances and assist with excluding non-authorised vehicles. New gates on the western, northern and eastern boundaries should help to reduce this anti-social behaviour.

Gates must be accessible by those in wheelchairs or double buggies which also allows motorbikes through. It will not, therefore, prohibit their access completely but will hopefully reduce motorbikes entering the park area if they have to get off and open a gate. The gates at each end of the existing path, near the Academy and on the north-western boundary, would need to be constructed so that they can be opened by those on horseback, as this is a Core Path.

- New fence sections (with hedge planting if separate funding allows) – Most of the existing entrances are wider than a pedestrian or vehicular gate and would, therefore, need to have additional fence sections installed in order to restrict motorbike or car access.

If additional budget can be secured for hedge planting this would complement the fencing and extend the natural edge to the park particularly along the northern boundary.

- Unmown grass areas – The majority of the park is made up of mown grassland. Not all of this grass is used for recreational purposes. If the small areas in the south-western corner and along the western boundary were left to grow longer then this would enhance biodiversity in the park. These areas are suggested as they already abut with woodland habitat and open bog/grassland and this would extend the green network in the wider area. The path edges would still receive the number of existing cuts but the suggested areas would be left to grow longer and only be cut in the late summer/autumn.
- New trees (if separate funding allows) – The existing trees on site provide shelter from the wind and shade from the sun. They provide habitat for birds, insects and mammals to source food and seek shelter. Trees also mitigate flooding and reduce soil erosion. All of these benefits, to wildlife and humans (known as ecosystem services), multiply with each tree planted

whether grown as a single specimen or woodland group. If funding was secured for tree planting then the western boundary area could be planted with native species.

- New metal seat (if the park budget allows) – a new metal, backless, seat would allow park users to enjoy the view over the park or Black Moss.

The implementation of any of the above proposals depends on their costs being within budget. (The potential tree and hedge planting would be possible only if additional funding, separate to the park budget, was secured). If the proposals were overbudget then the seat would be the first item to be omitted from park works as creating/installing only part of the other proposals would not achieve the desired outcomes e.g. installing gates at only some of the entrances to reduce motorised bike use.

A layout plan showing the above proposals is shown in **Appendix 2**.

Next Steps

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

The community will shortly be asked to Agree or Disagree with the park proposals by voting on each suggestion. This second consultation will be made available on the Council's website and via the same link as above.

The 10 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 or comments have been redacted)

1. What do you call the park?

Number of participants: 13

- Avondale park
 - The park
 - The moss park
 - Avondale park
 - Avondale park
 - Avondale Park
 - Avondale park
 - Avondale
 - avondale park
 - Moss park
 - Avondale park
 - Avondale park
 - Avondale
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2. What do you like best about this park?

Number of participants: 13

- It's quiet away from the road
- The wildlife that can be seen regularly coming from the moss and the woods.
- It's dark.
- School access to save from having to climb the hill at the academy or having to contend with parents dropping [REDACTED] right at the school door. This access is works well for my child [REDACTED].
- Nice views over the moss and sometimes see deer.
- Like the trees.
- Space.
- Access to moss
- Popular with dog walkers
- Quiet gravel road is good for kids biking around
- It's away from main roads
- "I like the woods" - [REDACTED].
- Its a great area for those living this end of the main road.
- Good open space to run the dogs, backs onto the moss so hood views of the deer
- It has open spaces with potential for more
- well maintained , grass cutting and pathway tidy
- The openness , and the path made for the Academy pupils to enter the school at the back of the building . And definitely what is not needed is more trees .I believe the dog walkers in the area would also prefer if the park stayed as it is .
- Used to like the slide and climbing area for young kids but was sadly set on fire and we lost it.
- Green space
- Trees and hedgerows

3. Is there anything you don't like?

Number of participants: 14

-Nothing on it for kids to do

-I don't like the fact as a resident, myself and other residents have for many years now been maintaining the dirt road alongside the park at our own expense. Suddenly money seems to appear so perhaps you could not ignore the fact that other cars apart from residents use and abuse the road, race up and down it, dump their litter on it. Then also it's overgrown with weeds. Another important aspect to consider is wildlife, there are deer constantly in the vicinity and really crucial is we still have Curlew, a really severely endangered species

-The play area has declined over the years, not it is barely any use. The frequent motorbikes, quads and cars which drive irresponsibly on the grass.

-The play park used to have a great climbing frame made from steel and ropes. Great for older kids. Replaced by clearly a young kiddie park and nothing for older kids.

School access path could be better, particularly the area from gate to park.

Path around back of school could be extended so you can walk the loop all the way around the moss, which you can do but it's not accessible via bike or wheelchair. Could even join this up with the park at the other side of the moss behind almos.

Park is used by people on scramble bikes and quads- sometimes dangerously close to kids when they are leaving school. This only happens periodically but I'm unsure as to how this would be stopped without restriction to access for all. With an improved pathway maybe more people using the park and surrounding area could help to police this area.

-There is no seating areas, the play park is very basic compared to all other parks in Armadale.

-The play park is boring and lacking in challenge. Since it went on fire, there hasn't been any attraction for local children to use it. It's a forgotten park cos it's so 'out of the way'.

-My daughter regularly goes to this park as we stay close, but as you know there is not much there. Other parks are too far to go on her own as there is too many busy main roads, so it would be a good idea to improve this park for the kids that stay this side of the main road.

I'll also add that the square green space at high Academy street is also a kind of a waste as its only really get used as a crossing for those walking to the moss. There is ample space to turn this into a cal de sac with road access or maybe the option for a drive way, this would take alot of the cars off the main road cause at school times this can be a nightmare.

Unless your at the end house then any deliveries etc is also a nightmare. I think this space could be used more appropriately its big enough to leave a green space but also have some sort of road/parking etc.. just my observation and suggestion while staying here.

-Motorbikes, quad bikes tearing up the grass. There has also been people on horses galloping up and down, gouging great big holes in the park.

-Overly grass cut

-the morons that use and abuse it with their quad bikes and trail bikes and the lazy parents that drive over it to park next to the swings

-The lack of play equipment in the back corner where there used to be roundabouts etc ,

-How far away from the path/road it is, there isn't a path leading up to it either. You have to walk on the grass to get to it and alot of the time it's marshy.

-The drainage could be better

-It's pretty uniform in habitat, there is limited access for reduced mobility users.

4. **Please suggest things that could enhance the park or improve your enjoyment of it.**

Number of participants: 14

- Improved access path to play area, improved seating at play area
- A nice big adventure park
- Barriers to stop vehicles going on the grass. Improved drainage on the football field and between the trees in the middle of the area. The play park to be improved as it has declined over the years with equipment not being replaced.
- Play equipment for older kids
- Bench
- Better path all the way around park, school, moss.
- A bench or seated area looking over the moss for nature watching. Rewilding area.
- Wouldn't want lighting as at night the dark skies views are very appealing.
- We don't have anti social issues with the area with the odd exception of the odd moss fire and motorbikes. Wouldn't like to attract this behaviour by making the park a place to hang.
- Increase nature reserve area.
- Increase access for bikes, wheelchairs.
- The play park could have a lot more attractions for children to play, a slide, roundabout, climbing frame? There is a lot of space available. A small BMX track would benefit all the local children or even a skate park. A couple of picnic benches would also be nice.
- Developmentally age appropriate areas. Fence around it to deter dogs fouling in it. A bin. An area for bikes and scooters inspired by the one at Watson Park.
- Please also consider some form of deterrent for motor vehicle such as quads, motocross bikes and even cars from accessing the park from Avondale Crescent /High Academy Street. This antisocial behaviour is continuous and destroys the park by churning up the ground. It's also extremely dangerous considering this is an area for families.
- Don't think there needs to be a lot as kids kind of make their own entertainment.
- Drove road park is always a popular choice so maybe something similar to that

- Basketball hoop would be a good choice
- Maybe a smooth surface area for skates, scooter.
- And green space for football.
- Kids need something like this to keep them out of mischief, there isn't anything this side of the main road.
- I hope this has helped.
- Some kind of gate to prohibit motorbikes and horses. Plus the children's playground could do with being improved, I know there was a deliberate arson attack on the climbing frame, so that has now gone. Also more dog waste bins, would be good.
- Wider areas of unmown grass/meadows with wide path cut through, maybe some trees and leaving the football end available.
- gate or fence off the areas to stop idiots gaining access and let the good people that pay their taxes enjoy an otherwise peaceful and tidy area
- If there is no money for play equipment leave the park as it is, kids can play football etc with no annoyance to neighbours.
- More play areas for the kids as there is currently none.
- Seating.
- Barriers to keep the cars, quads and off road bikes out.
- We're even getting horses now
- Relaxation of some areas for grassland. Enhance the hedgerow with planting, enhance the diversity of the site. Increased planting in appropriate areas.

Appendix 2 – Park proposals

