



WEST PILTON PARK

LANDSCAPE CONCEPT DESIGN + ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

FEBRUARY 2022 | [UPDATE ON WORK IN PROGRESS](#)



PRE-DESIGN ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Working in close partnership with local stakeholders and park users is central to this project's development process. Before any design thinking was progressed, ELGT and LTLA held online and face-to-face introductory workshops, with the aim to develop briefing and direction for the vision plan and statements which will emerge from this masterplan process.

29TH NOVEMBER 2021

Representatives from West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, Fresh Start, Oaklands School, Muirhouse Library and Stepping Stones engaged in an online introductions call. These stakeholders were identified by ELGT from past involvement in the park's use and activity, and from this focused group a good response could be gathered on opinion of the existing park, how they use it (or don't), and directions for us to explore a new masterplan.

6TH DECEMBER 2021

A face-to-face workshop was held with stakeholders from the Neighbourhood Centre, North Edinburgh Arts and FreshStart. They led an open discussion on aspirations for the space informed by these groups' current and aspirations for use of the park was followed by outlining a diagram of the network of active organisations focused on greenspace and growing projects was mapped.

13TH DECEMBER 2021

Walkaround & Workshop with stakeholders and wider public. Much like the first event, but more widely publicised around the community and hopefully starting to reach residents and the general public.

15TH DECEMBER 2021

ELGT attended the West Pilton Lunch Club at the Neighbourhood Centre. Notably, they were interested in an enclosed/sheltered area to sit and relax outside the neighbourhood centre, so neighbourhood centre activities or meetings can take place outside in good weather.

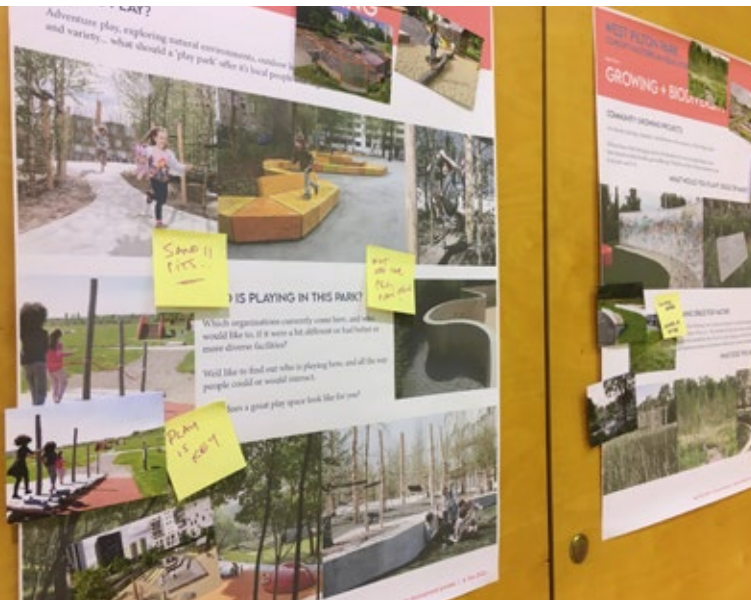
15TH DECEMBER 2021

Online Findings & Feedback Meeting. ELGT and the landscape architect presented the findings and feedback from the preceding engagement events, take stock of what we have learnt so far and talk through the next steps for the new year.

PLAY RANGERS

14TH JANUARY 2022

After a preliminary meeting in the park on the 7th January, a design ideas workshop was held with the Play Rangers during a session in the park. Play Rangers is led by the team at North Edinburgh Arts who use West Pilton Park as their venue. At this session, the following notes and observations were recorded:



Adding 'image preferences' to emerging conceptual themes



Responses to the Workshop poster, recording discussions

GENERAL

- Sheltered space for activities in all weathers
- Multifunctional sheltered spaces
- Formalised safe area for a fire pit with seating
- Amphitheatre-like area under shelter for sitting and group organising
- No opportunity for recycling points in park
- Need more benches and seating everywhere
- Pop up cinema space
- Lighting is poor

PLAY

- Skatepark with quality surfacing, with lots of sitting and 'hanging out' space – old play area
- MUGA – combined with skate park in old play area, with double height basketball facilities
- Wider adventure / play opportunities that draw you to different spaces across the whole park
- More natural play elements – rock climbing walls and boulders – high play equipment – logs
- Graffiti walls and designated areas for informal art
- Treehouses & aerial walkways in woods with poles and spaces to erect tarpaulins in the rain and hammocks in the summer.
- Footprint is great for climbing and parkour style play – kids would like to see a lot more to climb on and jump about, perhaps the foot could be a centre of expanding this kind of play?
- Racing / running track
- Current play equipment is babyish – more for older kids / teenagers

WILDLIFE

- Willow maze / willow area for weaving and other natural activities
- Woodlands need good maintenance
- More bushes for hiding spaces
- More / bigger woodland areas
- Thinning for access to woods
- Growing space/community gardens
- Water feature
- Woodland glade, space and opportunities for woodland school activities

SCHOOLS' WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1 - FORTHVIEW PS SESSION 1 18TH JANUARY 2022

ELGT and LTLA met up with a P6 class from Forthview Primary School for an outdoor 'field work' session, exploring what's valuable about the park based on what the local children like, and what worries them. 24 children worked in 4 groups, with each individual taking on a role to focus on while exploring and describing what they were most proud of and how they would change West Pilton Park. Key notes from the workshop:

- The mud makes the park slushy and soggy and difficult to move around.
- There's tonnes of rubbish.
- Make wood chip paths where there are short cuts and through the trees to make them cleaner and safer.
- A lot of the lights in the park don't work.
- The footprint is beautiful, and perfect for a lake.
- We don't like the damp, dark sand in the new kids play park, and it attracts cats and foxes to poo in it.
- The trees in the woodland blocks are not inviting, and we never go in there, it is dangerous and dirty.
- The MUGA should have benches, goal posts and nets.
- The trees in the park look dead and we need more.
- Plant more trees and wildflowers, would like to see all the colours of the rainbow on the sloping part.
- More bins.
- The park is really fun, more fun than we thought it would be!
- Some of the old rides in the playpark were more fun than the new ones, it's been made too safe and now the play park is boring for us.
- More playing poles that you can spin on.



WORKSHOP 2 - FORTHVIEW PS SESSION 2 20TH JANUARY 2022

The second P6 class was invited to the same workshop format, this time 20 children in 3 groups explored the themes 'play space', 'getting around the park' and 'nature, biodiversity and water'. Again the children engaged fully and it was encouraging that they asked when they would next meet us, and were very keen to be part of follow up events or activities in the park. We noted the following comments and ideas:

- Cut the grass, it's too long. Long grass hides the dog poo.
- There's a lot of broken glass around the park which is bad for dogs and tiny children.
- Have a separate part which is fenced off where people walk their dogs off the lead, and keep dogs on leads everywhere else.
- More gates that lead into the grass parts.
- Make a path that people in wheelchairs can access into the park - we were surprised that there was no ramp for wheelchairs and buggies.
- Flowers at the road edges.
- Like the herb garden at the footprint, and it would also be perfect for a skate park if it had a different surface on it.
- Bird feeders.
- More rubbish bins / more benches.
- Clear the thorny branches in the wooded paths.
- The stairs are dangerous, and need to be made of a more safe surface.
- All the metal railings could be painted in different colours, make it colourful.
- Trampolines and climbing frames in the old (dismantled) play area.
- Skate park in the old play area.
- The flying fox is old and unused.

WORKSHOP 3 - ST MARKS PRIMARY SCHOOL 2ND FEBRUARY 2022

A third school group took a team of facilitators on a tour of the park, this time Primary 5s from St Mark's Primary School who have also been previously engaged in park enhancement projects such as bulb planting and the Wee Forest. Their opinions and insights echoed those voiced by the previous groups, and served to reinforce and emphasise the needs of this park user group:

Active play

- Skate park at the footprint
- Skate park in the old play park
- Swimming pool or pond
- Parkour or paths through the woodland
- Rappelling tower

Furniture

- More bins
- Goal posts
- Benches built into the slopes
- The footprint is a good spot for sitting
- Slides on the slopes
- We need more seats and umbrellas over them
- Add a cafe near the Neighbourhood Centre

Keeping the park safe and tidy

- Litter all over the place
- Separate dog park
- We need to stop cutting down trees
- Protect the woods from litter
- More trees and flowers
- It is too muddy now, so new footpaths
- Dog poo everywhere

Accessibility

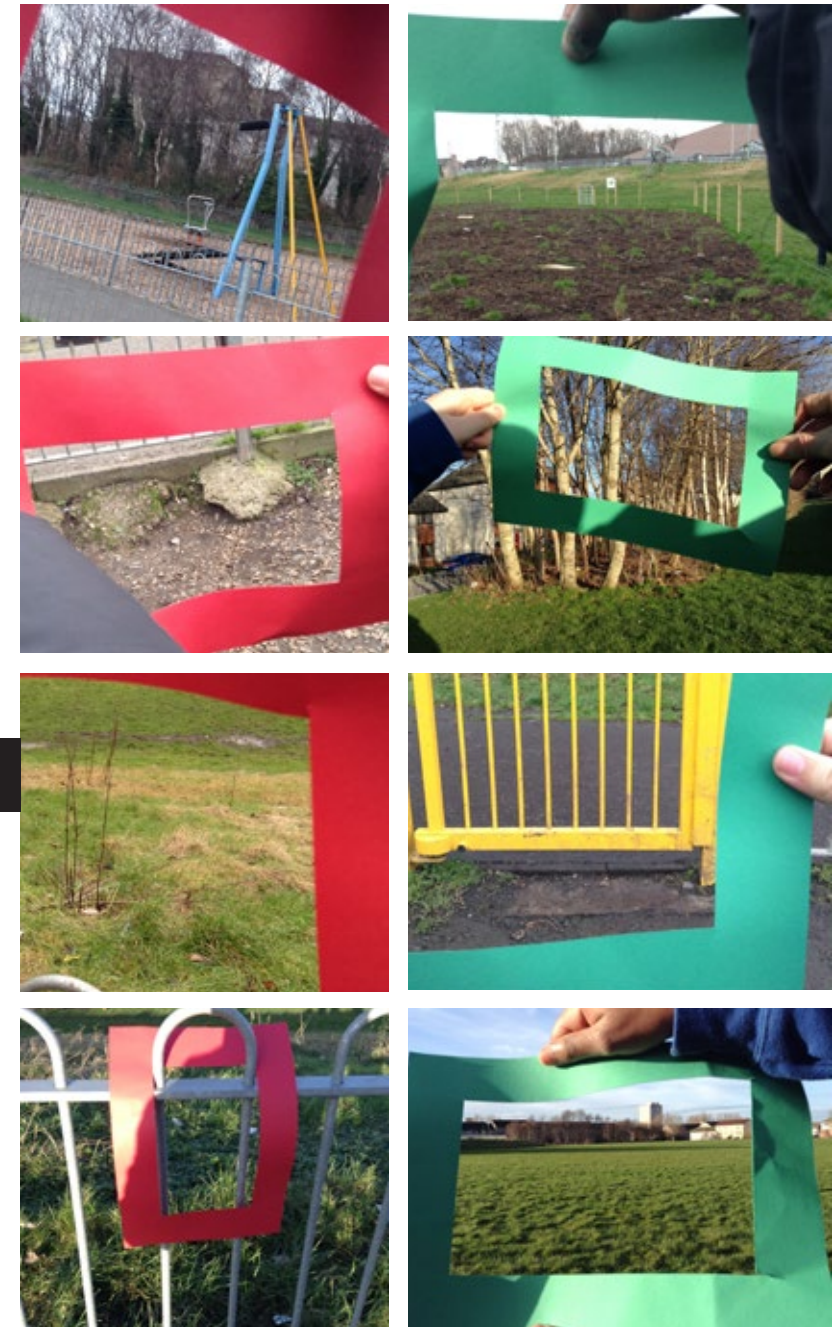
- More paths in the grassy area
- Make a maze or footpath through woods



CONSOLIDATED PLAN OF IDEAS FROM SCHOOLS WORKSHOPS



'FRAMED VIEWS' FROM SCHOOLS WORKSHOPS



CONSOLIDATED PLAN OF IDEAS FROM STEPPING STONES WORKSHOP



"We would benefit from a shelter like the willow dome at NE Arts garden for eating and outdoor education."

"I like how there are fences all the way around"

*"Connection to the old days"
"Keep the historic stuff!"*



EMERGING SPIRIT OF PLACE STATEMENTS

WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF WEST PILTON PARK?

- The park's visibility within the neighbourhood - and its role as a neighbourhood park.
- Play park is used well as a meeting place during school days.
- Open-ness.
- Trees and other planting, making West Pilton Park a green lung in the neighbourhood

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT WEST PILTON PARK?

- The footprint sculptural feature, and its history.
- People don't want to lose historic connections.
- The landmark of the tower blocks, and views from above.
- The range of active community and interest group in the area.
- Generations of families with memories and connections to place.
- Multi-cultural population and diversity of heritage.

WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF WEST PILTON PARK?

- The reason Pilton / Muirhouse and the peripheral estates were built - why were they planned and laid out this way - and the park's function to provide space for fresh air, space and leisure activity.
- Local neighbourhood women activists, making change for family and community.



EMERGING DESIGN THEMES

1. STORMWATER

- Pond feature a recurring aspiration.
- Response to muddiness and waterlogged grass areas.
- Planting for colour, texture, variety, biodiversity.
- Creating better connections - for people and nature.
- Creating networks.
- Habitat restoration and making planting / nature a positive feature not something which is feared.
- Wetland - blue/green.



2. PLAY-SCAPE + COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

- Play for all ages.
- Active play - skate, trampolines, using the levels.
- Hang out space for other age groups.
- Adventure play in natural environments, overcoming fears and safety concerns.
- Climbing structures or features.
- Who is playing here - school / nursery groups / Play Rangers / Stepping Stones.
- Integrating play throughout.
- Management of access to dogs.
- Play opportunities address level changes.



3. NETWORKS

- Accessibility - networks for people and nature
- Movement across the park, a lot more path connections
- Diverse user groups - ages, heritage, interests.
- Path design / patterns of use and DDA recommendations re: seating / stopping.
- Getting here.
- Inclusive design.
- Active travel - giving people options.
- Signposting this place, sharing information on activities and events.
- Interpretation and historic connections to place.



1. STORMWATER

A large area in the northern half of West Pilton Park is waterlogged for much of the time in Winter. It becomes muddy, inaccessible, unattractive and off-putting to locals using this as a greenspace they're proud of.

What if the water wasn't seen as a problem though, but an opportunity? What if we collected more of the adjacent storm water run off, and rather than push against drainage issues, worked with landforms to create features and purpose?

A lot of stakeholders and park users were keen to explore how a pond could be integrated in the park. This could go further to be a key focus for the park's purpose, another thing people told us was lacking.

With the historic route of the Wardie Burn running underground just to the south of West Pilton Park, this is a natural place for water to accumulate at surface level, if given the chance.

With design features which benefit both people and nature, we can help alleviate flooding by introducing new storm water features or rain garden elements in West Pilton Park.

WORKING WITH NATURE

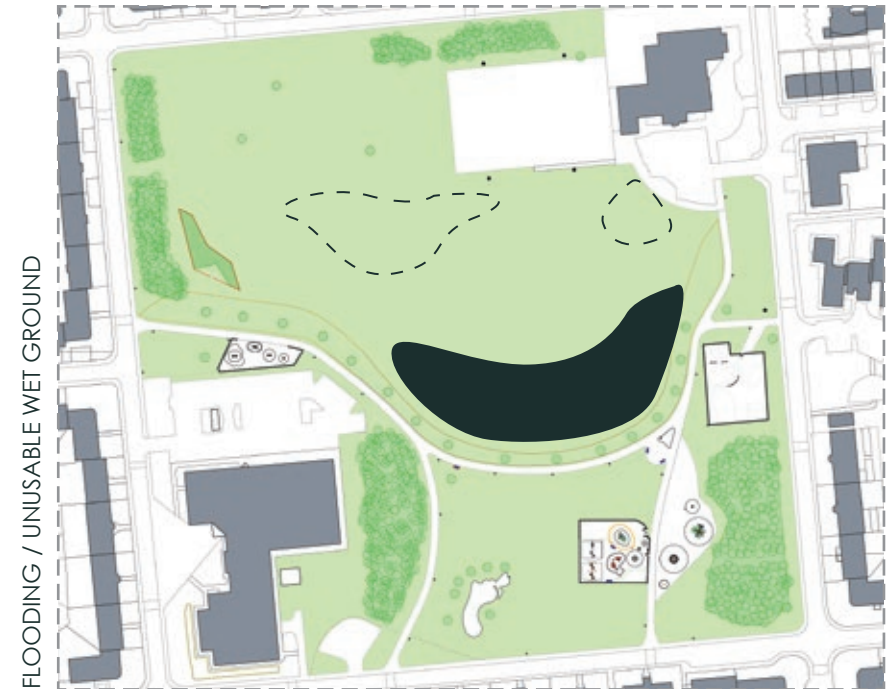
SENSE OF PURPOSE

VISUAL INTEREST

SPACE FOR NATURE

FEEDING THE DUCKS

AN INTERESTING WALK



IMAGES FROM ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES PROCESS
(SELECTIONS FORM A VISUAL BRIEF)



2. PLAY-SCAPE

The project engagement and end-user participation process highlighted a significant demand for play experiences in West Pilton Park, which should be varied and offer something for all ages.

From the youngest children finding safe and sensory environments to explore to young adults having space to gather safely, this park should be programmed to offer a far greater variety of play facility and resources.

Many users were keen for more active pursuits, ranging from rappelling to skating, trampolining to climbing, walking, running and more equipment in the outdoor gym.

Based on images selected from a large pile of reference place designs, users gravitated towards features which were constructed with natural materials, and environments which integrated play with natural environment such as tree planting and water features.

Colour and texture is lacking, and although the park was being experienced in winter during the engagement walkabouts the local residents were keen to see more colourful planting, variety, and opportunities to get involved in gardening as an activity. There is already a good level of involvement in this local greenspace, and this is something which the future management and planning of the park should support and protect.

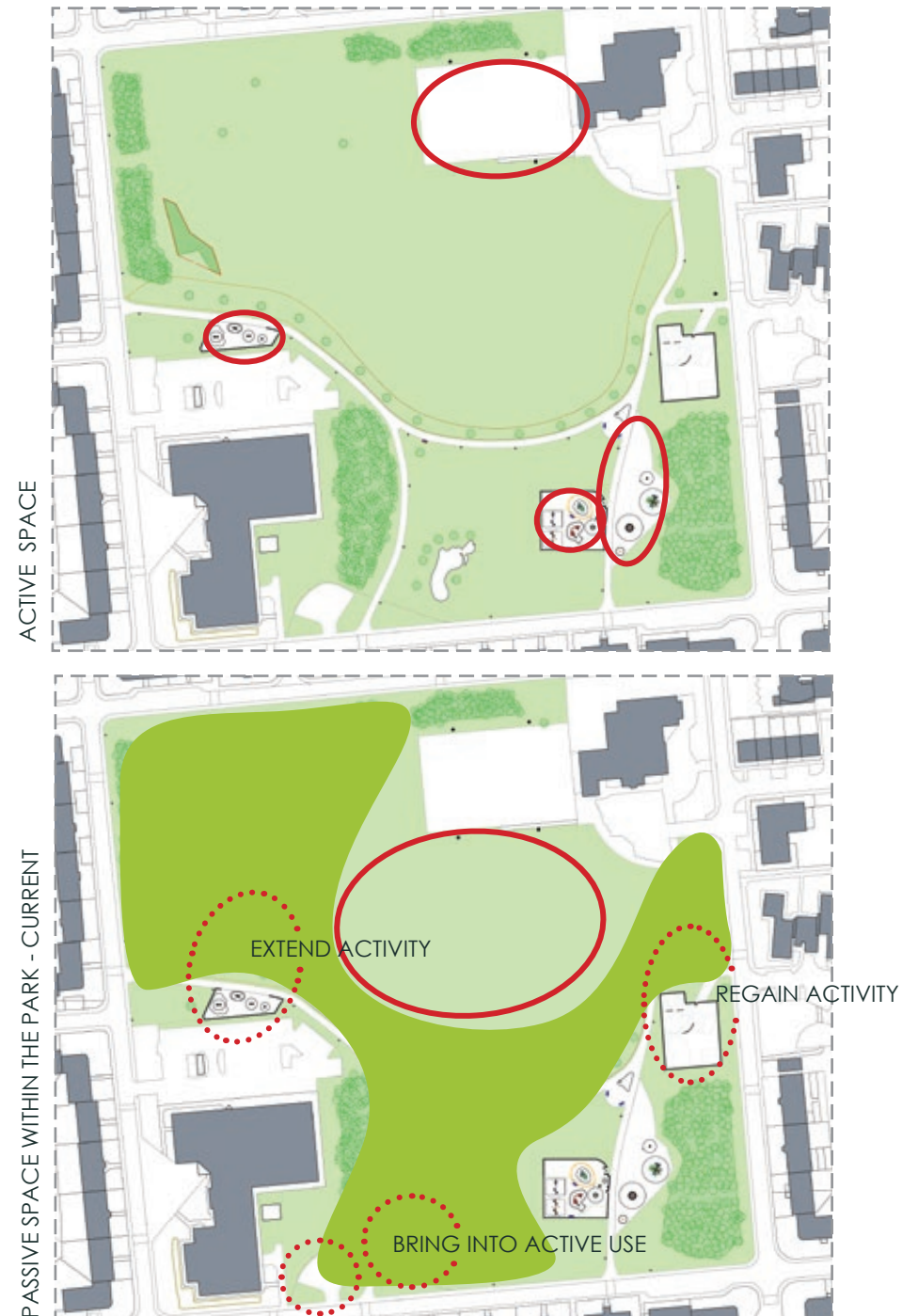
Saughton Park was described on several occasions as a place which the users were attracted to, thought highly of, and would like to see some of the approaches to integrated play incorporated here.

MAXIMISE PROGRAMME...

MORE THAN JUST A GRASSY FIELD

ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGES

REINVIGORATING EXISTING PLAY FACILITIES



IMAGES FROM ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES PROCESS
(SELECTIONS FORM A VISUAL BRIEF)



3. NETWORKS

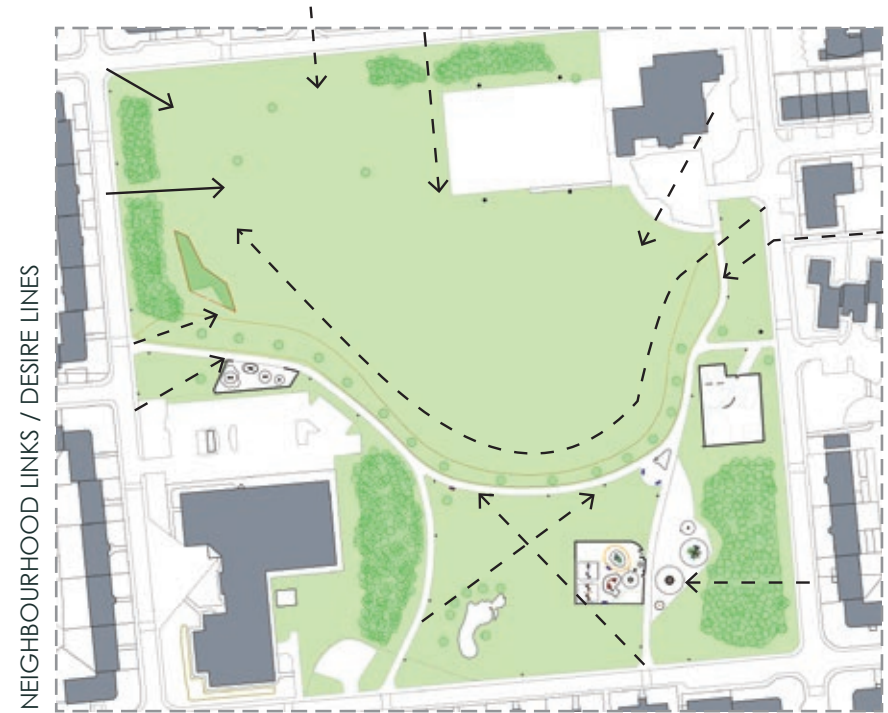
Movement through the park, and within the local neighbourhood is another aspect of the park's functionality that users highlighted for improvement. The level change at the sloping landform separates the north and south parts of the space, and limits the ability to enjoy circular walks within the park. Compounding this barrier is the railing which local residents felt didn't have enough gate points.

By adding more gates and surfaced footpaths in the northern section, this field is brought into more varied and active use. This may result in a more positive relationship with what is currently an uninspiring grassy field, and in turn will encourage a greater range of users.

In the southern portion of the park, clear desire lines cross the field and park users were keen for these to be recognised and surfaced to make them more inclusive - for parents pushing prams, cyclists and children cutting across this park to move within the neighbourhood - at present it is muddy and there's a lot of trouble with dog mess. Improving these routes helps connect the park and make cutting through it to go to shops or other local facilities more inviting, again increasing the footfall and thereby increasing safety for all users.

The railing at the Neighbourhood Centre could be opened up to integrate a Cafe trailer and other methods for discouraging motor access such as boulders and tree planting. Removing the railings at this location helps to make visual and physical links between the community building and the park, helping to make the Centre feel like it is sitting in a park rather than in a car park. This in turn increases use as Centre visitors use the outdoor environment to meet, relax, or take a break.

- MORE CONNECTION RESULTS IN MORE USE
- MORE USE IMPROVES PERCEPTION OF SAFETY
- ACTIVE TRAVEL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LINKS
- BRINGING THE BUILDINGS INTO THE PARK



IMAGES FROM ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES PROCESS (SELECTIONS FORM A VISUAL BRIEF)



These photos are taken in Saughton Park, a greenspace which was referenced often during engagement discussions

INITIAL CONCEPT MASTERPLAN



STORMWATER PARK

1. New pond feature with boardwalks
2. Mounding to create wetter / drier areas
3. SuDS trees - alder, black birch, willow
4. SuDS hedgerow / trench planting

PLAY SCAPE

5. Re-surface footprint and integrate levels
6. Rappell tower
7. Reinststate flying fox
8. New skate park and trampolines
9. Climbing boulders
10. Ampitheatre seating
11. Woodland play
12. Slides on slopes
13. Poles / upright logs play feature
14. Covered outdoor workshop / seating
15. Dog walking trail
16. Goal posts and landforming
17. Resurface / additional equipment

NETWORKS

18. Cafe trailer
19. Picnicking area / seating x2
20. New paths
21. New gate
22. New lighting
23. Improved level access - dropped kerbs
24. Community rain garden