

# Victoria Park's Bowling Greens

Summary of consultation responses (June 2024)

## 1. Executive Summary

This report details the consultation and design work conducted to develop proposals for re-purposing the bowling greens at Victoria Park. These efforts were initiated in response to a motion by Councillor Osler, approved by the Council on June 1, 2023. The document outlines the background to the project, summarises the findings from the consultation hub, and sets out the key steps required to implement these schemes.

## 2. Background

In 2023, Edinburgh Leisure returned the bowling green venue at Victoria Park to the Council due to its condition and low usage. The area was identified for potential re-purposing. The Council, through an adjusted motion, sought to explore alternative uses for this venue, including community growing spaces and other recreational facilities.

## 3. Summary of Engagement and Consultation Methods

Council officers engaged with local stakeholders, including Friends groups, community councils, elected members, care homes, support groups, fitness professionals, schools, and other community organizations. These engagements, held between December 2023 and May 2024, led to the development of outline proposals and surveys published on the Council's Consultation Hub. Consultation activities included:

### October 2023 online preliminary conversation:

- In a preliminary discussion chaired by Linda Anglin, CEC's Senior Manager in Parks and Green Spaces, Ben Ferguson of AtkinsRéalis presented initial design suggestions for the site.
- The 16 attendees, including representatives from Trinity Community Council and Friends of Victoria Park, expressed strong emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility, especially for elderly residents, as well as sustainability, urban growing, and maintaining green space.

### February 2024 in-person drop-in workshop:

- This event was well-attended, and operated in a drop-in style, where participants could speak to council officers and add their feedback to different ideas.
- Around 60 community members came along throughout the evening, with three Council Officers present.

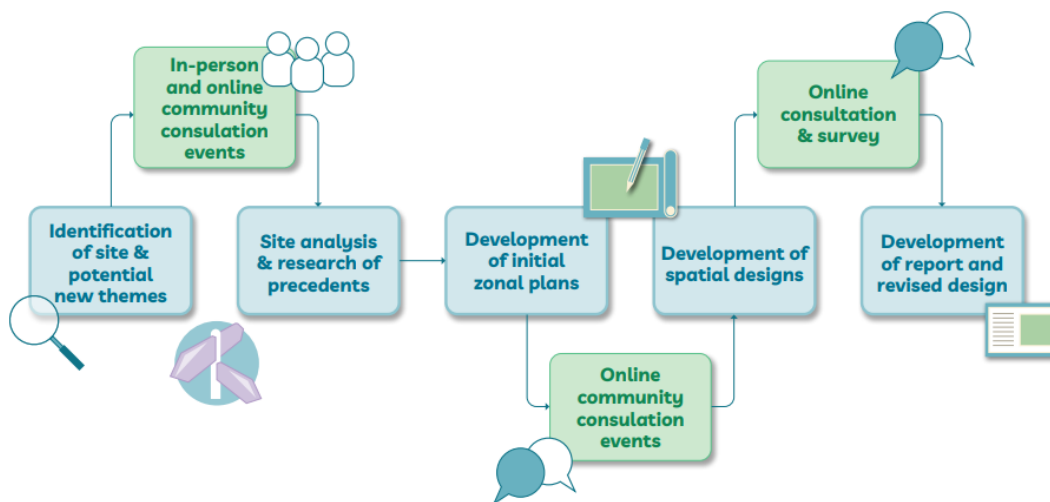
- Overall, the community feedback highlighted a desire for inclusive, green spaces with attention to maintenance, security, and balancing constructed elements with natural landscapes.
- This workshop emphasised the following features as ones to be taken forwards with design proposals: Sensory Garden, Café and Public Toilets, Natural Play, Allotments, Community Garden, Nature-friendly Interventions

#### March workshop with Trinity Academy:

- A workshop at Trinity School involved 13 students and three teachers exploring the bowling greens and brainstorming ideas for enhancing the park.
- The students proposed various ideas, including a café, skate park, trampoline, bug hotel, and water features, with discussions continuing back at their school.
- The session was conducted in collaboration with the Enhanced Provisions class, bringing diverse perspectives to the proposals.

**Engagement with care homes:** Council Officers visited several neighbouring care homes to the park, provided information about the project, and paper versions of materials (e.g., maps, designs, surveys). Conversations explored how to make the space more accessible, and the benefits that a sensory garden could provide, especially for those with dementia.

These ideas formed the basis of AtkinsRealis’s designs. Additional stakeholder workshops were held to refine ideas further. These ideas were then developed into design proposals for the Consultation Hub.



#### 4. Consultation Hub findings

Draft design proposals and additional information about the features included were uploaded to the Council’s Consultation Hub. Questions were asked in a matrix Likert-scale format, with also an optional text comment box to add additional feedback. 271 people completed the

survey, with 21 completing the survey on behalf of a group or organisation. The survey results reported the following:

**Question: To what extent do you support the introduction of the following features?**

Design features - Allotments: Dedicated spaces for community members to cultivate their own fruits, vegetables, and flowers, promoting sustainable food practices.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	117	43.17%
Support	52	19.19%
Neither support nor oppose	35	12.92%
Oppose	39	14.39%
Strongly oppose	23	8.49%
Not Answered	5	1.85%

Design features - Community Growing: Spaces for communal gardening initiatives, providing opportunities for residents to collaborate on gardening projects and share resources.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	125	46.13%
Support	64	23.62%
Neither support nor oppose	36	13.28%
Oppose	20	7.38%
Strongly oppose	21	7.75%
Not Answered	5	1.85%

Design features - Sensory Garden: A tranquil space filled with aromatic plants and tactile elements, designed to engage the senses and promote relaxation and mindfulness.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	131	48.34%
Support	70	25.83%
Neither support nor oppose	41	15.13%
Oppose	11	4.06%
Strongly oppose	14	5.17%
Not Answered	4	1.48%

Design features - Gathering Space: Versatile areas suitable for hosting a variety of community events, gatherings, and activities, fostering social interaction and cultural exchange.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	120	44.28%
Support	77	28.41%

Neither support nor oppose	40	14.76%
Oppose	20	7.38%
Strongly oppose	11	4.06%
Not Answered	3	1.11%

Design features - Nature Play: Interactive play areas incorporating natural elements such as logs, boulders, and plants, encouraging children to explore and connect with the natural world.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	150	55.35%
Support	61	22.51%
Neither support nor oppose	34	12.55%
Oppose	10	3.69%
Strongly oppose	13	4.80%
Not Answered	3	1.11%

Design features - Tree Planting: Planting trees throughout the community space can provide shade, improve air quality, and enhance the overall aesthetics.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	165	60.89%
Support	63	23.25%
Neither support nor oppose	18	6.64%
Oppose	9	3.32%
Strongly oppose	13	4.80%
Not Answered	3	1.11%

Design features - Water Management: Implementation of sustainable water management practices, such as rain gardens or swales, to mitigate stormwater runoff and enhance biodiversity.

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly support	151	55.72%
Support	74	27.31%
Neither support nor oppose	24	8.86%
Oppose	7	2.58%
Strongly oppose	10	3.69%
Not Answered	5	1.85%

**Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed plan:**

Overall design benefits - Meets the needs of the local community

Option	Total	Percent
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Strongly Agree	91	33.58%
Agree	105	38.75%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	27	9.96%
Disagree	35	12.92%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.32%
Not Answered	4	1.48%

Overall design benefits - Will make the park more accessible to residents of all ages and abilities

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	83	30.63%
Agree	94	34.69%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	45	16.61%
Disagree	31	11.44%
Strongly Disagree	15	5.54%
Not Answered	3	1.11%

Overall design benefits - Will improve inclusion and accessibility within the park

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	74	27.31%
Agree	97	35.79%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	55	20.30%
Disagree	31	11.44%
Strongly Disagree	11	4.06%
Not Answered	3	1.11%

Overall design benefits - Will make the park feel more welcoming to all members of the community

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	90	33.21%
Agree	91	33.58%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	50	18.45%
Disagree	30	11.07%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.32%
Not Answered	1	0.37%

Overall design benefits - Will provide benefits to nature and local ecosystems

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	120	44.28%
Agree	107	39.48%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	29	10.70%
Disagree	5	1.85%
Strongly Disagree	5	1.85%

Not Answered | 5 1.85%

Overall design benefits - Will be good for your health and wellbeing

Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Agree	112	41.33%
Agree	103	38.01%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	32	11.81%
Disagree	12	4.43%
Strongly Disagree	7	2.58%
Not Answered	5	1.85%

### Question: What other comments do you have?

There were 156 responses to this part of the question. Many used the comments to share support for the design, whilst several others used the comment section to offer other ideas or raise concerns about the features presented. Primarily, comments shared the following:

- The demand for allotments should be balanced with community gardens to benefit a broader range of residents and ensure inclusivity.
- The current proposals lack facilities for teenagers, suggesting the addition of skateparks, pump tracks, and outdoor gyms to promote physical activity.
- Concerns about the absence of public toilets highlight the need for robust, accessible facilities, ideally linked to a café for improved park usability and hygiene.

## 5. Conclusions and Next Steps

**In summary:** The majority of respondents believe the design will make the park more welcoming and accessible, benefiting both people and nature. Key features with high support include a sensory garden (74%), improved water management (83%), natural play (78%), tree planting (84%), and a community growing space (70%). The proposals have been updated to include a community growing area, a multi-use gathering space with sensory planting, seating, swales to address flooding, and refurbishment or replacement of the pavilion to create a café, public toilets, and community space.

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation. We have already considered the comments and how to reflect them in the design. Where this is not possible, we will explore how other areas of the park can be adapted to accommodate some of these suggestions.

The next steps involve developing more detailed designs for Victoria Park and submitting planning applications to change the use of the bowling green. A funding plan will be created, and collaboration with local stakeholders will continue throughout the process. High-level cost estimates have been made for the scheme, with a mix of external grant funding, repayable finance, and Council budget allocations anticipated to fund the project.