



Report ABPC/18/17

To: Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council.

Date: 11th March 2019

Status: Public Report

Subject: Aldington Meadows

1. **SUMMARY:**

This report has been compiled to follow on from the consultation of residents in the Aldington meadows area as to how they perceive the recreation area and suggestions for improvements to the area.

2. **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION.**

As the landowner responsible for the maintenance of the recreation area at Aldington Meadows the Council has a duty of care to ensure that the area is safe for all users.

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **To receive and note Report ABPC/18/17.**
2. **To receive and note the feedback from the residents of Aldington Meadows**
3. **To request the Parish Clerk to obtain quotations and designs for suitable play equipment for further consultation and consideration.**

4. **INTRODUCTION:**

A consultation questionnaire was delivered by hand to all of the properties in the immediate vicinity of Aldington Meadows recreation area in December 2018 requesting a response by 2nd January 2019. This has resulted in twelve responses, these have been summarised at the end of this report.

With regard to the question about the current facilities and condition it has highlighted that there are deficiencies in what is being provided and the overall condition of the area. It should be noted that the play area was installed by the developer of Aldington Meadows and a measure of landscaping undertaken before the site was formally handed to the Parish Council. The Parish Council have undertaken the regular maintenance of the area since then and have upgraded the pathway through the site.

There have been several suggestions put forward as to what facilities residents would like to see in the area as well as some they would like to see removed and those they would not like to see there.

5. **NEXT STEPS:**

The Parish Council needs to consider what it wishes to do with the recreation area and

how it can incorporate the views of the residents. Clearly there is a requirement to undertake works on the site as the surface is very uneven and there are buried objects which over the years have penetrated the surface. The ground conditions need to be considered carefully as during the winter months the area tends to be waterlogged and very soft underfoot and during the summer the ground dries out resulting in large cracks. Any decisions that are made should result in benefits for the majority.

6. **OPTIONS:**

The consultation has shown a desire for some play equipment for older children and the recently completed play park at Bridgefields in Ashford has been given as an example, this is a much larger area than the area at Aldington Meadows.

An example of the popular multiplay equipment suitable for older children is illustrated here:



Should the Parish Council decide that it wishes to provide this type of equipment it would be beneficial to install before the surrounding surfaces are dealt with.

There have been requests for fruit trees to be planted this could possibly be done in the area close to the allotments as a screen, any planting in this area needs to take into consideration the possible negative effects on the allotments such as shading and absorption of moisture.

7. **CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS.**

If you have any queries about this report please contact the Responsible Financial Officer of the Council Tel.: 01233 721757 or email: clerk@ald-bonnpc.kentparishes.gov.uk prior to the meeting.

Aldington Meadows consultation responses:

What are your thoughts on the current condition/facilities?
Currently I feel the playpark is suitable for very young children. We have 18 months old who's already outgrown it. Also grass area uneven in places, causing hazard.
Clearly geared towards toddlers and require a greater expansion, reflecting the growing children on the estate.
Current facilities are well maintained. Only complaint is dog mess, although this is due to bad owners not the Parish Council.
Looks very sparse.
Very poorly maintained for the number of residents in the immediate vicinity. Why put allotments there when they exist at the top of Forge Hill?? Disrespectful to local council tax payers.
We live close by and notice the existing facilities are rarely used. We occasionally take our grandchildren to play there and it would appear the over 5's find it very boring and unchallenging. Also very few pieces of play equipment and barely enough for a visit of half an hour or less.
Playground excellent for small children and well used.
We feel the current facilities are adequate and it is important to have open space for public use. However the ground is very uneven in places particularly near the edge and there is a pipe sticking up out of the ground which is a hazard particularly in the dark.
I think are good but very under-used. Parents of the children from the estate don't want to supervise their children and actually taken them to the park.
I use the park daily with my dog and the playpark with grandchildren. The small park is good for small children but could do with some more equipment such as a second swing etc. it's good that it's fenced in to stop kids escaping and keep dogs out. I like the natural nature of the area and don't want it over developed.
Children's play area inadequate. Dogs taken into it!
Given the rurality of the area more efforts could be made through the design of spaces to increase community aspects. The overall urban design of the estate is generally rather appalling given there is no visible centre to the development; making better use of the Meadows will be beneficial to the neighbourhood as a whole.

What would you like to see provided on the site?
Playpark with far more swings (for young babies and older children) slides, climbing frames perhaps trampoline. Also I think a couple of goal posts basketball/netball/badminton net would be fantastic! As long as ground not hard (more like rubbery or grass)
A reduced version of the excellent playground at Bridgefield Park with something for older children as well as pre-school children (like a tower for exploring and a tube slide) and imaginative/challenging options like an obstacle course.
I would like to see an adventure playground for the over fives. Fixed goal posts.
Wildlife/insect garden including bird boxes, bee and insect houses, hedgehog houses etc. lots of herbal borders and a wildflower border surrounding.
Proper ground maintenance – edible fruit trees Remove allotments to reclaim space Ground level path illumination (solar?) All weather table tennis tables eg concrete Dog adventure/agility equipment/features
Definitely a wide range of play facilities for younger children and the introduction of equipment for adventure play for children in the 5 – 11 years age. Probably unsuitable for older children perhaps tree planting around the allotment site which is a bit of an eye sore.
More seats and tarmacked paths across the site for scooters, prams and general access across this area for all in all the seasons.
No further equipment
Adult exercise equipment would be good. General landscaping is needed. E.g. get rid of the rocks and holes in the ground. The manure pile by the allotments is a mess.
I would like to see a further fenced off area for older kids 3-4 years up to teens with bigger equipment. Maybe a wildlife garden or pond, an adventure playground would be good but needs to cater to a wide age range Bridgefield Park is a perfect model.
A water tap for allotment holders. Fitness equipment
I feel that the area of Aldington Meadows needs to offer something in the way of a small pavilion for gatherings of people due to the walk up the hill to the core of the village. The Meadow needs to be spatially reconfigured to utilise the site far more efficiently. The spaces around a potential pavilion need to be multi-use; the play park at the centre of the space is not the best use as it forces the landscape around it to become redundant. I feel this needs to remain in place but be moved to the periphery of the space. The centre of the Meadow needs to be a terminal for people of all ages rather than a void which I think the area has become. The landscape design of the area needs to reconfigure the space to include the play area; some form of allotment, a low maintenance meadow or garden; and a small pavilion or building which can be used for community events/gatherings. I appreciate on first glance this might appear to be a costly proposal but I know from experience that this does not require masses of budget.

What would you not like to see provided on the site?
Anything that would attract teenagers who would think it's a good place to come and drink/smoke. No skate parks.
I would not like to see fitness equipment.
Any more hard surfaces, buildings etc.
Poor ground maintenance, gaudy colours on furniture/children's area. Cheap industrial shrubbery etc.
Pleased that a skate park and bmx track has been ruled out. Plenty of adult fitness equipment in recreation ground in centre of village which is rarely used so don't provide any more. Seating is ok if it is for parents supervising children, but not generally. Please don't make it into an 'urban' playground, with formal flower beds etc.
Equipment especially backing on to the houses in Pattison Farm Close. I was told that there would be a purpose made (fencing or hedge) buffer zone between the recreation area and fences, however this never happened and we just have an area of uncut brambles which does the job of protecting the boundary, just not what we had anticipated. If these brambles were to be removed I would feel vulnerable. The ground is currently well used by young children and their families, dog walkers and the allotments. I am particularly keen not to have any structures or high equipment in the nearby vicinity of my fence.
Children's equipment that won't be used.
Too much development of whole area.
Anything susceptible to graffiti.