

# Open Space Audit Consultation

Greener Leith, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

Greener Leith welcomes the systematic categorisation of Edinburgh's Open Spaces. As is already evident from this document, the area of the Leith Neighbourhood partnership has considerably fewer open spaces of all kinds than the rest of the city, making it even more important that these open spaces are functioning optimally. The comments below mainly concern this area.

## **Classification and Environmental Designation**

Para 3.7 page 3. Greener Leith is in favour of including detailed information on environmental designations such as green belt or local biodiversity site in this audit, as better awareness of these designations by the general public can only be beneficial to the areas in question and helpful in improving the decision making process on related planning issues.

## **Statistics**

Greener Leith urges careful consideration of the use of statistics, as some these could be open to misinterpretation. To say that the Leith NP has the highest accessibility to play space of all the NP areas may be true, but this is mainly because Leith is very densely populated and there are comparatively many, if tiny, play parks in an area that is otherwise very short on open spaces. We note improved play spaces consistently feature as a high priority in local public consultations.

## **Public Parks and Gardens**

The average amount of open space per 1000 people in Edinburgh is 4.25 ha. In the Leith Partnership area this figure however is only 1.35ha, or about one third of what the rest of Edinburgh enjoys. As a result these open spaces are very heavily used and generally in a somewhat tired condition. Leith Links, a Premier Park, is a telling example: of all Premier Parks in Edinburgh the Links are the smallest and the least well kept according to its score of 54 points in the Park Quality Assessment Score. The other Edinburgh Premier Parks have scores of between 64 and 81. Greener Leith hopes that any future improvements to these open spaces will be aimed to even out these widely differing scores to provide a fairer distribution of well-kept open spaces across all of Edinburgh.

## **Large Private Gardens or Grounds/ Residential Amenity/Business Amenity**

Other than the Leith Academy sports pitches there are no large private gardens, grounds, residential or business amenity in the Leith Partnership area to speak of. Although largely inaccessible to the public, these open spaces elsewhere in Edinburgh act to diminish the effects of air pollution, the stress of living in a busy city and promotes local biodiversity.

Greener Leith wonders whether there are some instances of public land on the Housing Revenue Account in Leith, that are missing from the audit. For example, in some areas, there may be council owned land in the centre of the gardens associated with a block of housing, which is, in turn surrounded by private or common gardens. Should these, and indeed the tenement back greens that are commonly owned feature in the audit?

With the development of Leith Docks and the Seaward Extension there is an opportunity to redress the need, both for more public parks and better residential garden/amenity space, in Leith by making sure that more greenspace of this kind is included in the designs for Leith Docks than is currently planned. Planners should also keep a keen eye on the phasing of construction to ensure that the creation of quality greenspace does not come last on the list once all other construction is finished.

## **Play Space**

Leith's play spaces are on the whole well worn with many in need of improvement. In terms of premier parks, the Princes Street play space (PY 2) was installed in 2007 and The Meadows (PY51) in 2007. Leith Links play spaces (PY202 and 203) however were installed in 1992. Greener Leith would like to see that any investment into these open spaces is aimed at reducing the difference in standards across the whole of Edinburgh. Community Consultation in Leith (e.g. Leith Links Asks, Dr Bells Greenspaces Survey) consistently identifies improved play facilities in Leith as a priority for local residents.

## **Playing Fields/Tennis Courts/Bowling Greens**

Most of the primary schools in the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area do not have easy access to playing fields. In order to play ball games or have a sports day they have to go to a park where there are no changing facilities or toilets. On Leith Links the sports pitches on PG114, together with the changing facilities, need to be upgraded considerably to support both schools and sports clubs better.

Greener Leith supports the development of a shared changing facility and public toilets on Leith Links that would better support both schools and sports clubs to make the most of the sports pitches on PG114. There is also demonstrated local support for the restoration of the tennis courts. The development of a shared changing facility could also support the re-introduction of functional tennis courts to the links too. Greener Leith would like to see the disused tennis courts in Leith Links classified under the heading 'tennis courts' rather than public park as is currently the case.

The western part of PG114, to the North of Leith Primary School, is currently underused. Greener Leith notes that there are local discussions underway in connection with pedestrianising St Andrews Place, and improving this western Part of PG114. Although these discussions are at an early stage Greener Leith is broadly supportive of any measures that will increase the use of this area, particularly by the local school pupils.

On site BG61, there is a growing consensus that the need for a 4-green Bowling Club on Leith Links should be re-assessed, considering there are 6 other bowling clubs in Leith alone and membership numbers are falling. Maintenance costs associated with public bowling greens are high, and Greener Leith would like to see the money saved by reducing the number of public bowling greens re-invested in improving the maintenance standards of the Links.

Currently, for example, there are mismatched and poor quality bins, signage and benches on the Links. Issues like these could be improved and maintained using the savings derived from cutting the number of bowling greens.

## **Green Corridors**

The Green Corridors in Edinburgh are a unique resource. Not only in terms of providing much-needed car-free transport links, but as a green haven away from the pollution and noise of the city and a refuge for wild-life. However, they need to be given higher priority when comes to maintenance, cleaning, gritting and sign-posting. Every effort should be made to improve their access for wheelchair, pushchair and bike users, and where connections are interrupted, such as at the East side of Leith Links towards Portobello, new links and ramps should be constructed, as a matter of priority.

### **Business/Transport Amenity: Bonnington Estate**

The Bonnington Estate is typically characterised by low-rise industrial buildings with plenty of open space around them. Some of them are quite old, retain a certain amount of historical detail and enjoy an attractive setting near the Water of Leith. Greener Leith would like to see the whole of this neighbourhood assessed carefully to establish the nature of the many open spaces visible on the plan, as at the moment there is only one area classified as Business/Transport Amenity. Greener Leith support the retention of small industry in this area as it is considered essential to local employment and supports sustainable transport. If these open spaces are somehow missed out at this stage it would be much more difficult to support their retention should land owners want to develop these open spaces at a later stage.

### **Classification for Community Gardens**

There are currently two Community Gardens in the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership area: Redbraes and Persevere. Greener Leith would like to see these to be classified, ideally as allotments.

### **Gap site in Junction Street**

This is de facto an open space and Greener Leith would welcome a decision on its status.

### **The pedestrian open space around Waterworld and Co-op supermarket**

This area should be classified as Civic Space.

### **Triangle adjacent to PY214**

Named on the map as Norton Park, this disused railway area should be classified.

### **Corridor along disused railway from Abbey Hill to Lochend Park Road**

Although not used as such, Greener Leith would like to ask the planners to explore the possibility to classify this area as a Green Corridor – could it provide another traffic free pedestrian/cycle route?

## **About Greener Leith**

Greener Leith is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the Leith neighbourhood. To provide feedback to us about the issues raised in this consultation submission you should contact:

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