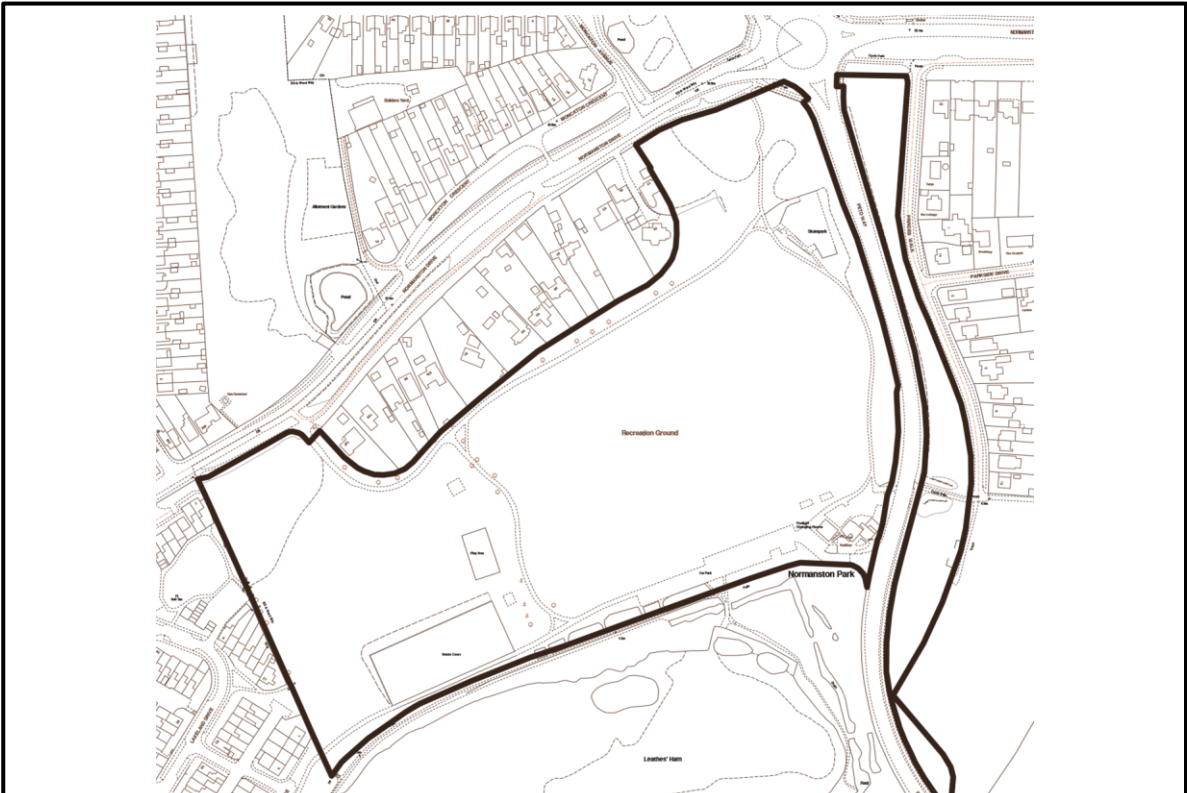


# Normanston Park, Lowestoft, Suffolk



## Current Site information

Ward: Normanston	Site Reference: SK261598
Area:	Special Status:
Covenants:	Entrances: 4
TPOs:	
Services:	Facilities on site: Café, parking, football pitches, cricket pitches, skatepark, tennis courts, changing rooms, basketball hoop, running circuit, children's' play area
Access:	
Species on Site:	Soil Type:
Issues:	
The changing facilities/toilet provision need updating. The is no toilet provision near to the children's play area	
Current main use of site:	
The park is mainly used for sports, dog walking and family time. It is also attached to a conservation area managed by SWT.	

## Future planned use of site:

The park is the key destination sports park in the north of Lowestoft but needs investment and consideration to achieve its potential.

Key considerations to achieve this are:

Improvement of the existing changing rooms, toilet and café. Provision of toilets and changing space is geared towards men. With the reduction of teams playing at the park the facility to reduce and improve the changing room provision and create new toilet provision within the existing changing room block.

Replacement of old tennis pavilion. This would be a ready location to site a second set of toilets close to the children's play area. It would only need to be a one or two multi-functional cubicle structure, which could be prefabricated. There is an existing concrete foundation and the services to the site were capped and should still be available.

Witches Garden Bike Trail. The wooded area in the south-west of the park is known as the Witches Garden. It is overgrown and not really considered part of the park. This could be turned into a bicycle trail (it is understood that it might already be used unofficially in this way) but by specifically making it into a designed area it would reduce safety risks and improve use possibly leading to a reduction in the other uses. It would also make the areas easier to maintain.

Tennis Courts. There is an excess of tennis courts in Lowestoft however there are regular users of these courts but generally only three of them. It would be practical to reduce the number of courts (retaining those favoured by the tennis players) and erecting a new fence between the two sections along with a new gate. The newly formed area could form a multi-use area. It would not be big enough to be a stand alone MUGA however its surface would make it an ideal hockey training area which is lacking in the north of the town and it could also potentially be used for some other sports such as basketball widening the use of the facility and use by younger generations.

Outdoor Gym. Council has already been considering installing an outdoor gym and as the main destination sports park this should be our initial location. Looking at an overview of the park and the other installations we are discussing there are three possible locations depending on layout and council have already agreed to invite in companies to look at the site and draft proposals. The three possible locations are:

- The south west corner bounded by the tennis courts, Leathes Ham and Constable Close. This is a relatively square, flattish area of land which could have a rotational form of outdoor gym.
- To the north of the 'running track' on the grassed area between it and the backs of the houses on Normanston Park so that it could be used in conjunction with the running track. It could be individual items at a distance from each other or small clusters of equipment
- South of the skate park and east of the football pitches making in convenient to the changing rooms and café.

Skatepark. The skatepark is relatively self-contained and well used. It does not need a lot of ongoing general maintenance but does require specific work from time to time. This should be considered and a budget provided. There is the potential to light the skatepark. It was approved by Suffolk County Council Highways Department and Environmental Health at the time the skatepark was built and all the necessary services and ductwork were included in the build to future proof for this possibility.

The running track. This is currently an adapted path and not a really running facility. Installation of a better surface and the costs involved could be investigated. The runners, as well as dog-walkers, have requested lighting along the path. The cost was considered prohibitive but that was without knowing the information regarding lighting the skatepark. The feasibility of installing low-level downlighters (either connected to the mains or via solar panels) could be investigated as part of the overall long-term plan for improvements to the park.

Table tennis. There are currently two concrete outdoor table tennis tables which rarely see use. We should investigate the cost of outside paddles and balls and speak to the café about whether they would be willing to hold them and lend them out on deposit. We should also ensure that information on how to borrow paddles and balls is by/on the table tennis tables.

Football/Cricket pitches. These are not used as much as previously and we need to gain more info on this. There are issues as the top pitches slope and the bottom pitches can flood. This is due to a layer of clay beneath the park and how it slopes and causes an unusual water table. It would be difficult to solve and probably expensive and might not lead to an increase in usage. There may be the same issue with the underground electric supply which affected the children's play area. Adult football play is reducing as is cricket and whilst provision is currently still being used, we need to be considering potential usage in ten- or twenty-years' time. Interestingly there is still a growth in youth football and the main centre in north of the town is Barnards Meadow which is adjacent.

In the western half of the park there is also the potential to place an area which could be more landscaped in a zen style and used for yoga and Tai Chi. There has been positive public expression about this possibility and it could work well near to the north-west entrance from Normanston Drive or Lakeland Drive and engage another type of park user and exercise activity.

With all of this it will be important to work with experts to plan out a scheme and locate each element to form a whole, build a schedule and costing and look for funding.

The Council will also need to maintain a long-term view of sports and leisure development to ensure that we don't just provide what we have always provided and seek to work with health and leisure specialists to maximise the use and benefits of our sports parks.

There is also a potential to create an area where dogs could safely be let off of the lead.

Seating. Normanston is probably not that short of seating because of the nature of its usage however the nature of the seating could possibly be addressed. Are traditional park style heritage benches the best option? Would they be better sited elsewhere and replaced with something more suited to the use of the park? If they are memorial benches, would those who donated them be happy with them being moved? Are they in the best locations? There are some excellent sports style benches available even skateboard specific. Maybe we need more picnic benches or communal seating? This could all be investigated.

**Key Development Opportunities:**

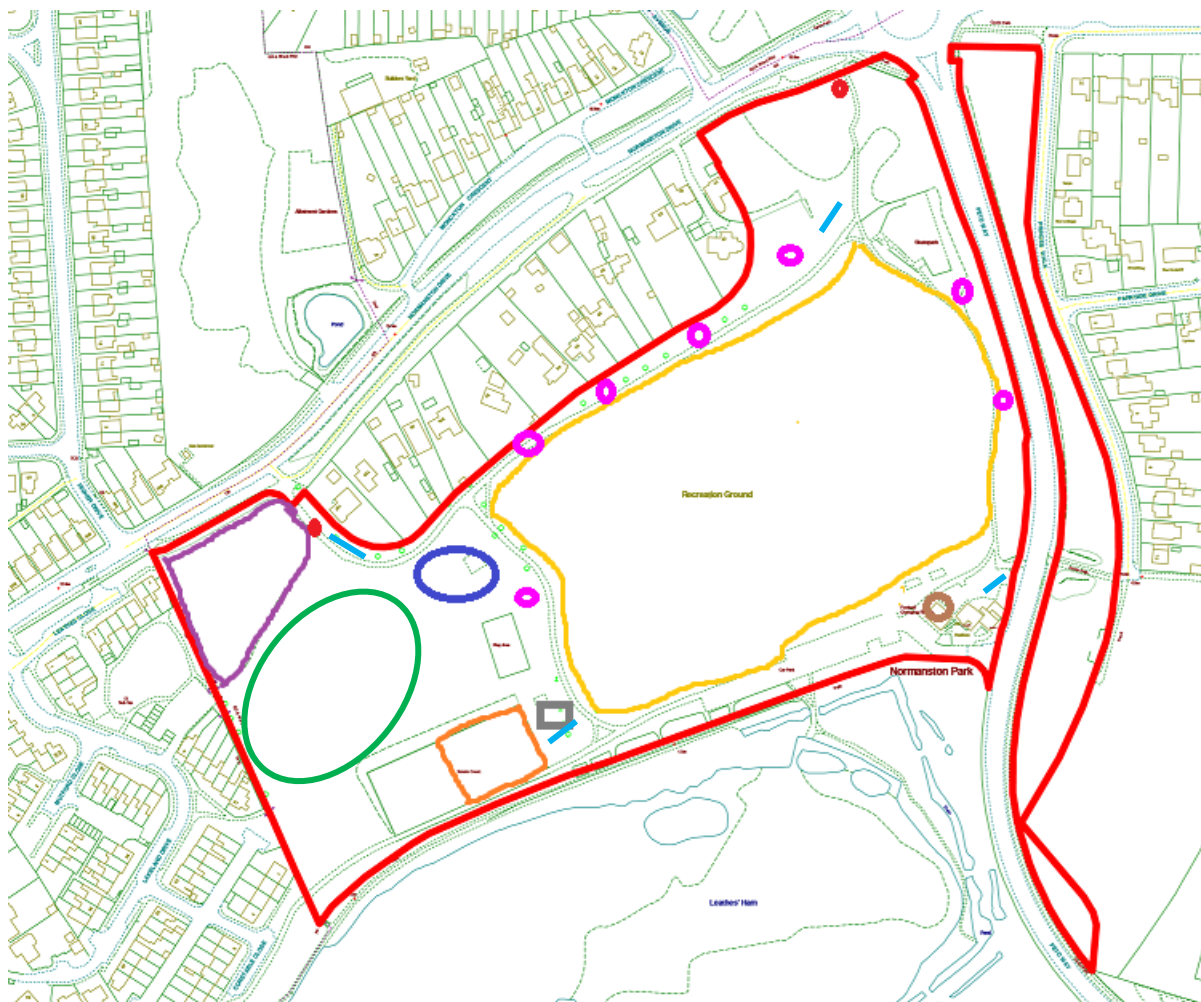
- Toilets – renovate existing changing room/toilet block
- CCTV – improve coverage
- Seating
- Bins
- Bike track
- Bike Racks
- Investigate options for café and
- Relocation and provision of Norse storage
- Bike Track
- Adult fitness equipment
- Lighting
- Signage
- Drinking Water fountain
- Conversion of part of tennis courts
- Additional toilet provision
- Dog Area

Resources Required:	Various
Funding Required:	Funding for toilets as agreed by council CCTV as part of future budget Grant via environment agency and matched funding for aerator
Stakeholder Group	Yes
Friends Group	Yes

## Current Benches, Bins and Bike Racks Inventory



Code			
	Item	Quantity	Potential Needed
●	Bin	14	2, one of both the entrances from Normanston Drive
●	Benches	12	There is not a shortage of benches however there are locations that additional benches could be added as well as teen seating some of that might be dictated to by development of the park
	Bike Rack	2	Potential for three new locations, one near the south west entrance from Normanston Drive, one from the bicycle path from Constable Close and one close to the skate park.



Code

	Bike/BMX Track		Dog area
	Main Sports Area		Gym Equipment
	Multi use sport area		Changing Rooms/Toilet
	Bins		Toilet
	Play Area		Bike racks

## Action Plan Further Information

### Main Sports Area

The use of football at Normanston has dropped off and this needs to be considered moving forward. We will need to assess the situation after lockdown and see whether there is any interest from youth sides as this is the growth area in amateur football at the moment. Either way it seems unlikely that we will have demand for four pitches. There is little hope of getting FA funding due to the slope of the pitches so unless we want to go to the length of tiering the ground to produce level pitches the park will only ever be a second choice for teams or the cheaper option. We could investigate potential sports which are on the rise however in the meantime it may be wise to maintain the two lower pitches for use by amateur teams and still set up the upper two for kick abouts. There was still limited use of the cricket pitches during the summer up until lockdown.

### Skate Park/Bike Track

The skate park is one of the most popular things in the park for youngsters and is a major asset however there is not much room for expansion. It was designed for both skateboards and bikes however it is almost exclusively used by the former. Therefore, it would be worth considering installing a bike/bmx area. This has previously been considered in the wooded area near the southern entrance from Normanston Drive and when we had a discussion with someone who was interested in developing

biking facilities in the town this was also an area that was identified. It would be worth getting this considered alongside Clarkes Meadow and Fen Park by a consultant.

### **Play Area**

The play area was only refurbished about 2-3 years ago and had to be relocated as there is a major power line running under the park. The major issue with the play area is the distance that is it from the toilets and refreshments however with the park layout it was not possible to site them closer. There was however a pavilion in the park which burnt down and the base is still in location in this area of the park. The possibility of installing either a ready constructed toilet if the services are still available or a compostable toilet if not, should be considered.

### **Tennis Courts**

There are six tennis courts however only three tend to be used with regularity. Therefore, the option of dividing the courts could be considered so that the end which is rarely used could be turned into a multi-use area. The surface is suitable for hockey practice/training and is one of only two locations in the town with this surface. Additionally, basketball hoops could be added, even if it is not the size of a court it could be used for shooting hoops. It could utilise a facility which is being underused at the cost of adding in a dividing fence and a new gate.

### **Outdoor Gym**

There are different possibilities with this whether to have a concentrated site or to have isolated pieces of equipment which could be used in conjunction with the running 'track'. In this plan the isolated option has been considered. This could be co-ordinated with the potential lighting discussion.

### **Running Track**

At present the running track is the main tarmac path around the sports area. This does need to be maintained as a dual-purpose facility however, in time, alternative surfaces could be considered and costed. It might be that a permeable, self-binding, recycled tarmac path might provide a softer surface for running whilst still maintaining a durable path for pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Lighting**

The park is used a lot by runners but during the shorter days this is hampered by lack of lighting. As with Fen Park we will have to be careful of light pollution however low-level LED lighting might provide a solution. This could be solar powered but there was also electrical provision installed with the skate park for potential lighting which might be able to be drawn on. If so, lighting the skate park might also be an option at the same time. Obviously solar powered lighting would be preferable in the climate emergency and we should seek advice from a consultant.

### **Café Canopy**

Consideration is being given to providing external cover to provide more space outside for the café. Rather than a standard structure it might be positive to explore the possibility of having a green pergola constructed by a local manufacturer which could have a green roof. This would be far more unusual and would also look more pleasant for dinners in the upstairs restaurant. Additionally, it would be more environmentally friendly especially in the long term. This is also a feature which could be considered when the changing rooms are refurbished. Another consideration with the rooves should be rainwater capture and storage for watering purposes.

### **CCTV**

This development of the park might make CCTV a beneficial addition to the park.

### **Dog Area**

There are few areas in Lowestoft where dogs can safely be let off of the lead. With the drop off in football and the use of the main sports area for kickabouts, the old kickabout area is now vacant. It this area was fenced and hedged it could provide a safe location for this to be allowed. Wire fencing and posts could be used and then a mixed traditional hedge planted on the outside of the fence in order to disguise it. It could also be beneficial to wildlife.

## Changing Rooms

The existing changing rooms are rarely used. These could be redeveloped to provide a combination of fewer changing rooms with more locker space for multiple use and adding in new public toilet facilities to replace the current poor services. This would also have the benefit of allowing the café building to be reconfigured to provide more seating space and other facilities.

## Car Park

The car park is currently gravel parking off of a tarmac central roadway. This means that the gravel moves when cars are parking and leaving meaning that often a deep ridge develops for which the council could be liable if a car sustained damage because of it. It would be sensible to consider the costs of installing the plastic grid system used at the East Suffolk overflow car park in order to reduce liabilities.

## Planting

At the entrance at the junction of Normanston Drive and Peto Way there is an area which has a slight hollow. This area is a spring area planted with daffodils and it used to have a lot of bluebells. It would be good to reinstate this area.

The park is by nature more of an open green space than a planted-up park however there are areas where planting could be beneficial. Along the fence line of Peto Way it would be attractive to plant up a swath of bulbs in the same range as have been planted this year which would give succession flowering for several months. Around the edges of the park individual shrubs and groups of spring bulbs could be randomly planted to provide spots of colour. There have also been some trees lost in the park over the last few years and these should be replaced. Some were flowering cherries which would add to colour in the park and additionally trees such as acer drummondii or acer platanoides Crimson King or rowans would add to the colour in the park.

The other area for planting will be to screen the containers. The council had provisionally approved some climbing Peace roses for this purpose and these could be combined with clematis to provide longer colour.

5 year plan schedule of works				
Year	Item/project	Cost	Existing Budget	To be budget for that year.
2021-22				
2022-23				
2023-24				
2024-25				
2025-26				
Longer Term				