

Cavendish Park

Access and Mobility
Review - June 2022



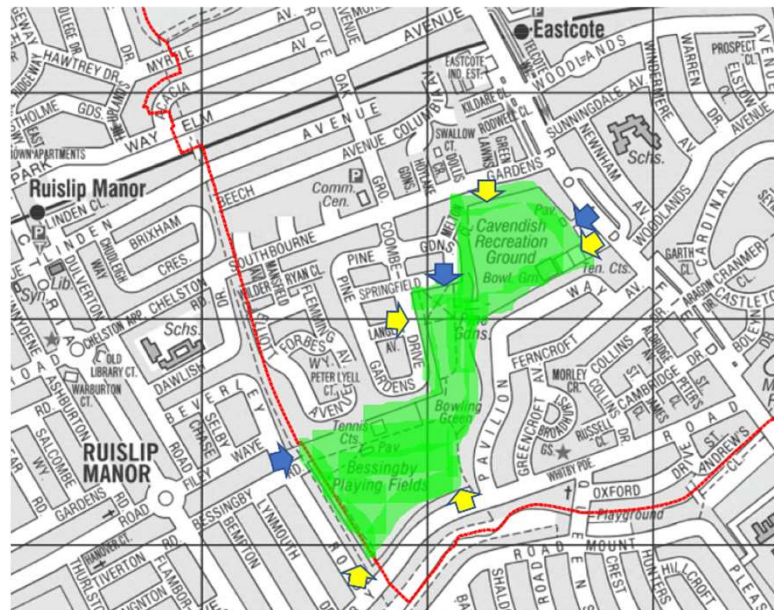
1

Where is Cavendish Park?

South-west corner of the current Eastcote ward, (red line denotes ward boundary)

Accesses
 Vehicle
 Pedestrian

One of the main entrances, Bessingby Road, comes in from the Manor Ward.



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Cavendish, Bessingby and Pine Gardens

Cavendish and Bessingby recreation grounds were originally separate local parks. This is why there are two formally laid out park entrances, at Bessingby Road and Field End Road (Cavendish).

A section of the Pine Gardens housing estate seems to have been laid out for development, but remained unbuilt throughout WW2 and postwar years because of drainage difficulties. Eventually the land was deemed unsuitable for building, and was added to the two parks to create a bigger open space.

Both Cavendish Park and Bessingby Park have flowerbeds near their main entrance and playing fields further from the road. There is no continuous surfaced path across the fields to link the two parks.

The council is working with other agencies on projects to resolve the ongoing water management problems

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c86d75f974094f429832bba2d0cdb8ef>



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Vehicle Access and Parking

- Field End Road**
 There is an open car park off Field End Road near the Cavendish Pavillion, rose garden, tennis courts and bowling green (Eastcote Bowling Club). There are 48 unrestricted parking spaces and 3 marked disabled parking spaces.
- Corner of Springfield Gardens and Pine Gardens**
 Parking spaces exist inside the grounds, near to the Bessingby and Dean Park bowling green. The vehicle access is through a vehicle barrier at the Springfield Gardens / Pine Gardens entrance. Bowlers then drive along the old concrete road to the parking spaces, and walk or roll down to the bowls club entrance via a narrower path. There are 14 spaces, two of which are marked for disabled parking.
- Bessingby Road**
 Another locked vehicle access gate is off Bessingby Road, with on-road parking but no designated parking for park users, disabled or otherwise.



None of the vehicle barrier padlocks can be opened by a wheelchair user seeking access to the park. The padlocks can only be operated from inside the park, meaning they can only be operated by a person able to walk into the park.

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📍 Pedestrian Access

- There are a variety of pedestrian entrances around the park as well as at the vehicle entrance points. Some of these lead onto surfaced paths, others lead straight onto grass.
- The surfaced paths have barriers to control access. The barriers include kissing gates and pedestrian width restrictions. Cycles and motorbikes cannot be wheeled through the kissing gate while the padlock is in place.
- The park is open 24 hrs a day to people able to walk through the barriers and gates.
- People can freely walk into the park via the public footpath R168 from Field End Road amongst other ways.

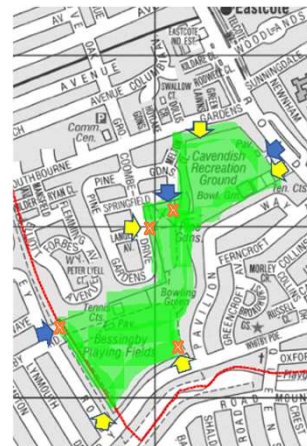


A pedestrian waits to use the gate while someone else lifts a bicycle over it.

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Wheeled Mobility Access entrance barriers (1)

- Anyone using wheeled mobility aids such as rollators, wheelchairs and buggies will encounter at least one impediment at every entrance. This review mainly disregards unsurfaced entrances direct onto grass.
- The following are the entrances which lead onto surfaced paths, which therefore could be considered potentially accessible users of wheeled mobility aids. All have modal barriers installed, presumably to deter unauthorised use by motorised traffic.
 - Field End Road carpark,
 - Bessingby Road ✘
 - Springfield Gardens / Pine Gardens ✘
 - Whitby Road (near Pavillion Way) ✘
 - Coombe Drive ✘



Wheelchair gates are marked ✘

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Wheelchair gate locking system

The kissing gates, also known as wheelchair gates, have padlockable metal clogs (see right). The gate is designed allow people though on foot when the clog is locked in position but to prevent anyone other than on foot from entering the park without a special key (known as a radar key) to open the padlock.

Not every wheelchair user will actually have a Radar key, but such keys are easy to obtain from internet suppliers and local locksmiths.



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Wheeled Mobility Access entrance barriers (2)

The idea is that a disabled person would carry a radar key and use it to open the padlock, before pushing the gate open to go through.

This can be awkward for:

- People who cannot get out of the wheelchair or buggy
- People who cannot easily manoeuvre and reverse a wheelchair in a confined space
- People who cannot push and hold a gate open while manoeuvring a wheelchair
- People with limited eyesight and/or dexterity to fit the key in the padlock and operate it.

Presumably, having unlocked the gate and passed through it, a mobility aid user is expected to turn round and close and lock the gate behind them, and to repeat the process on exiting the park.




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Wheeled Mobility Access some other impediments


- People in the park with a wheeled mobility aid cannot access all the facilities unless able to travel across the grass. The customary walking route that links the Cavendish entrance with the rest of the park is though the playing field avoiding marked pitches.
- Some of the other entrances to the park are via unadopted alleys which are valued and frequently used by many local residents. However the original surfaces are now very uneven. For wheeled mobility users this may make them uninviting and possibly hazardous points of access.
- Water management problems are evident in recurrent episodes of flooding and sewage overflows. Mud, sewage debris and ice periodically reduce the usability of some paths. It is to be hoped that recent initiatives for natural flood alleviation will prove helpful.
- The path down to Whitby Road is narrow and heavily used. A short sharp incline beside the Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green is difficult for wheelchairs and buggies, with poor visibility around the gate of the bowling green, a point where people often stop to chat.


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Field End Road Car Park entrance (1)

Map shows vehicle entrance, 

Car Park shaded in grey,

with pedestrian entrance off carpark 

Footpath R168 is the purple line from the pedestrian entrance south of carpark 



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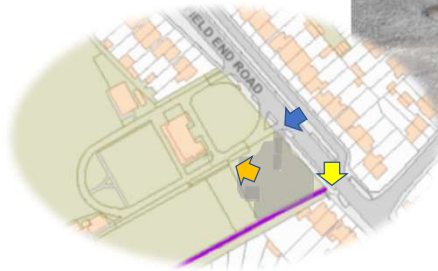
Field End Road Car Park entrance (2)

There is no signage indicating the best route for wheelchair users.

Pedestrians and wheeled mobility users coming from the pavement must go into the car park to the left alongside the vehicles. There is a barrier across the main path straight ahead. This vehicle barrier has a round yellow padlock and can only be opened by a person already inside, so is inaccessible to a mobility aid user on the outside even if they had a key.

Potholes at the entrance to the car park are difficult for a wheelchair or buggy user.

(Off the right of the picture)
There is a separate exit-only vehicle lane back to the Field End Road, and also a vehicle-barriered access on the north side of the Cavendish pavilion.



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Field End Road Car Park entrance (3)

The only way from the car-park into the park is through a former disabled parking space and then a gap in the hedge.

Vehicles are necessarily prevented from entering this parking space by a bollard. Many people have observed that nobody would be able to enter the park from the car park if a car was in this space.



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Field End Road Car Park entrance (4)

A dropped kerb 90cm wide and some tarmac were provided as a stop-gap in response to a desire line formed by people crossing the hedge, after the barriers were put across the straight main path a few years ago.



This impromptu-seeming path is not level and not wide enough for mobility access. The width comes down to approximately 80cm because of tree roots.

It is a 90° turn from the parking space combined with a non-level kerb leading to a narrow path rising approximately 15cm in 1.5m, with variable camber due to tree roots. Care is needed to avoid toppling over



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Public footpath R168 from Field End Road (1)

This path runs from Field End Road south of the tennis courts towards the Pine Gardens section of the park.

At Field End Road there is a pedestrian gate which is jammed partly open, a litter bin and a dog waste bin.



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Public footpath R168 from Field End Road (2)

The path is secluded, with the park boundary hedge on one side, garden fences and a ditch on the other side. This is a satisfactory path for dog walkers. Whilst pleasantly shady, and having some wildlife interest, it is not currently a suitable route for wheelchair users.

The path has an uneven and cambered surface, on which a wheelchair could topple over. The path leads onto rough grassland that tends to be waterlogged in winter.



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Springfield Gardens / Pine Gardens entrance

Radar-key operated kissing gate.

Wheelable access in a level straight line direct from the road (no turning required other than to operate the padlock and gate).

Access from the pavement would require two 90° turns in a confined space.

Vehicle barrier with grey padlock provides access to the parking spaces adjacent to the Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green, for people with the key.

On-road parking is possible, but no reserved spaces. A quiet road.

This is currently the best access point for wheeled mobility users. However they cannot get to the facilities on the Cavendish side of the park except when the grass is very dry and short. It is also challenging to get down the slope to the Bessingby and Dean park bowling green.



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Parking spaces inside the park near the Bessingby and Dean Park bowling green

In about 2014 the Pine Gardens abandoned road was partially resurfaced and some additional parking spaces were put in. None of the new parking spaces were marked for disabled access. However, most disabled visitors to the Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green would find it challenging to get up and down the steep section of the path to access the gate of the bowling green, especially if using a manual transfer wheelchair or a rollator from their parked car boot.

The more level access route to the gate of the Bessingby and Dean Park bowling green might be via the Bessingby Road entrance, a route which is flat except for some abrupt speed humps (believed to have been put in in the past to reduce the speed of parks contractors' vehicles). **Bessingby Road could potentially be a good point of access for very local residents coming independently on mobility scooters and trikes, without requiring to park a car.**



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Coombe Drive pedestrian entrance

Radar-key operated kissing gate.

This is a very difficult exit for wheeled mobility aids due to the misalignment of the barriers and gate with the line of the path outside and the old concrete gateposts.

The alternative for people from the Coombe Drive area is to go round to the Springfield / Pine Gardens entrance.



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Coombe Drive pedestrian entrance the path to the street

A concrete sill forms an additional barrier outside the wheelchair gate.



There are also Barriers at the road, with difficult alignment of path to the dropped kerb and street furniture.



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Bessingby Road entrance

This appears to be a continuation of Bessingby Road, forming a wide, level route through impressive ornamental gates.

The road then encircles a roundabout-like flowerbed.

Any vehicle can freely drive round this, including the park maintenance crews whose depot is out of the picture on the left.



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Bessingby Road inner entrance

There is a low metal trip-barrier around the perimeter to the left and right, which pedestrians can step over.

Wheeled mobility aids must pass through the gate shown on the right. The angle of approach is awkward unless you have gone right (anti-clockwise) round the roundabout.

The red padlock on this kissing gate often does not work, but sometimes does. The same key (obtained online from a quality supplier) works consistently on other radar locks here and elsewhere.



The path as far as the Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green is wide and level.

However speed humps make it difficult for those mobility scooters and transfer wheelchairs with smaller wheels.

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Whitby Road (near Pavillion Way)

Pedestrian entrance off an alley.

The barrier is designed to let through pedestrians, and children's bikes (though a puzzle-shaped hole) but nothing larger. The way it is installed, all users have to step off the path when the gate is shut.

It has a wheelchair gate with a radar-key operated padlock. On one recent visit this padlock had been modified such that it could not be opened even with the radar key. After reporting this, the modification was swiftly removed.

This section of the alley is very much in need of resurfacing if it is to continue to be used by people in wheelchairs, particularly if they suffer from chronic pain.



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Whitby Road (near to Beverley Road).

This informal but permanent entrance from the alley goes onto a muddy corner of the playing field, where walkers spread out in various directions.

It's possible to discern or imagine traces of an old track going to the left up the field but without a solid path this entrance would not be of interest to most wheelchair users at most times of the year.

This is shown for information only.



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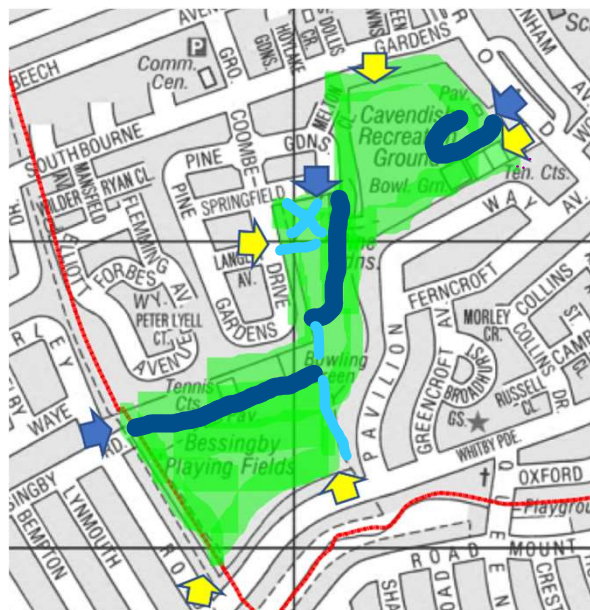
Existing paths

Wide paths

- Cavendish car park around the Cavendish.
- Pine Gardens old road
- Link: Pine Gardens abandoned road to Coombe Drive
- Bessingby Rd to Bessingby bowling green

Smaller paths

- X mini cycle practice circuit
- Link: Pine Gardens abandoned road to Bessingby bowling green
- Bessingby bowling green to Whitby Road



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Missing path

- There is no link between the Cavendish car park and the Pine Gardens abandoned road. The abandoned road connects to most of the park features other than the tennis courts and Eastcote Bowling Green which are near to the Cavendish car park.
- The shortest and firmest potential route of a new connecting path would be more or less straight across to the Springfield Road/Pine Gardens entrance from the Eastcote bowling green. A possible variation would be from round the edge of the field and past the basketball base.
- An alternative would be to surface part or all of the line of Footpath R168. A connection would need to be made through from the Cavendish car park. To avoid the majority of the wet ground an extension of the path could follow the raised ground inside the eastern boundary and branch across to the Pine Gardens abandoned road above the parking spaces and/or continue southwards along the boundary to join the path down to Whitby Road.



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Existing path: link from Pine Gardens abandoned road to Bessingby bowling green

The link from Pine Gardens abandoned road to the Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green entrance includes a short incline so steep that it is challenging for a person with a wheeled mobility aid to go up or down.



Below: Hidden dip
(one man and his amazing disappearing dog)



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Existing path Bessingby bowling club to Whitby Road

The link from Bessingby and Deane Park bowling green to Whitby Road is too narrow for a wheelchair to pass another park user and both to remain on the path.

There is a brown sign for the Bowling Green on Whitby Road pointing up the alley towards the Whitby Road entrance and this path. The alley surface is in a very broken up state, as previously noted.



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Personal Impact statement about the barriers from a Carer propelling a disabled person in a wheelchair

It must be doubted that an equality impact assessment was done when the various barriers were installed or modified. For example a disabled space had to be blocked to make access from the carpark, and the path through the hedge does not meet any relevant standards for access.

A disabled person using a mobility aid cannot open any of the vehicle barriers, and may not be able to open the kissing gates, without the help of a carer.

The padlocks on some or all of the kissing gates are unreliable. This impacts me as a carer as well as my disabled passenger. I am not able to lift the wheelchair over the barriers when they cannot be opened. If we are unable to enter or leave the park by the chosen gate we have turn round and use a different gate and a longer way round by the road than a non-disabled person. In some cases negotiating a difficult section of path twice.

It is hard to manoeuvre into and out of some those gates which are not in a straight line with the path, and I am concerned that my back is at risk doing this.



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Recommendations

Cavendish Park

- Repair the potholes at the entrance to Cavendish car park.
- Review the number and layout of disabled parking spaces at the Cavendish car park
- Improve access for pedestrians and wheeled mobility aids from the Cavendish carpark (and independently from Field End Road) into the park.
- Provide a continuous level surfaced path linking the Cavendish car park and bowling green to other features in the park.

Bessingby and Pine Gardens

- Improve access to the Bessingby and Dean Park bowling green from the Bessingby Road entrance for people on mobility scooters and wheelchairs, by signing the anticlockwise path around the flowerbed and by removing or softening the profile of humps along the path.
- Improve the width of the path going down to the Whitby Road pedestrian entrance. This needs to be co-ordinated with any plans for water management in that area.
- Resurface the alleys leading to the park entrances on the the west and south of the park

General

- Trial the unlocking of kissing gates and consider a security patrol to deter antisocial behaviour out of hours.
- Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment under the 2010 Equality Act of these and any other works being considered, which may affect disabled access to the park.