

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MARCH 2026

AGENDA ITEM 4: PETITIONS

1. Lead Petitioner – Sarah Jones

Lack of accessibility to and inside Albert Road Recreation Ground for all

Access is difficult for wheelchair users of all ages, with uneven pavements along Albert Road, and the pedestrian gate in Richmond Road is too hard to manoeuvre through. Added to these unnecessary accessibility barriers, there are no disabled parking bays in the car park.

The playground is outdated and not DDA-compliant. As a result, local children with special needs are excluded from playing alongside their siblings and peers.

All children deserve safe, inclusive places to play. We call on the Council to urgently:

- Upgrade the playground with inclusive, accessible equipment
- Improve wheelchair access throughout the park
- Provide designated disabled parking near the entrance

Albert Road Rec should be a space for everyone. Please act now to make it inclusive.

RESPONSE by Councillor Barnett-Ward (Lead Councillor for: Leisure and Culture):

Thank you for raising your concerns about accessibility and inclusion at Albert Road Recreation Ground. We appreciate residents taking the time to highlight barriers faced by disabled children, young people, and adults. Creating safe, inclusive, and accessible public spaces is a priority for the Council and is reflected in our wider programme of investment in play areas across Reading.

Reading's Labour Council maintains over eighty parks and open spaces and has invested more than £1.7m since 2024, and over £3.5m since 2021, in public play and sports facilities across the Borough. Albert Road Recreation Ground was one of my nearest playgrounds when my children were younger, so I know it very well and have spent a great deal of time there.

Last year, the Council delivered a £100,000 improvement programme at Albert Road. This investment refurbished the popular and free-to-use tennis courts, improved the car park layout, and provided a new wheelchair-accessible entrance. We are also looking to refresh the car park markings to further support safe and accessible use.

Across Reading, the Council has invested significantly in inclusive equipment such as accessible swings, roundabouts, multi-play units, and mobility-aid-friendly surfacing. We will apply this experience and approach as we review the needs at Albert Road Recreation Ground. Any future works would need to be considered carefully as part of a future capital programme, alongside needs and priorities across all of Reading's parks and open spaces. It must be noted that the playground at Albert Road Recreation Ground presents a greater challenge than the playgrounds we have replaced so far, because there are mature trees next to the play area. The root network of these trees extends beneath the play equipment. To date, we have not been able to identify a solution for altering or replacing the play equipment that would not result in the loss of some or all of the trees.

I agree wholeheartedly that this park should be a space for everyone. I hope that the Council's strong recent record of investment in inclusive play demonstrates both our capability and our commitment. Our ambition for Albert Road Recreation Ground is for it to be a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment for all children and their families.

To support this, I would be happy to bring Council officers to meet Ward Councillors and residents at the park so concerns can be discussed and understood directly on site.