



## **Abbey Fields Consultation Report**

See [Fields for our Future](#) consultation content on WDC Webpage

Abbey Fields is a much-loved and well-used open space in Kenilworth, with sweeping views across the Finham Brook valley, teeming with wildlife, and home to magnificent archaeological ruins. However, the Fields mean different things to different visitors. Some visit for informal play, to keep fit, have family picnics or to walk their dogs. Others go to watch wildlife, spend time with nature and unwind. Many are drawn by the history of the Abbey, and some simply like to stroll through to the town centre.

In the next 10 years, all open spaces within the District will come under pressure from an increasing population and the rapid pace of climate change. The Council has declared a Climate Emergency, and all Council policies from now on must consider how we can reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and become much more sustainable. This includes making sure green spaces help us cope with flooding and overheating, as well as encouraging more sustainable means of transport.

Your Council wants to draw up a 10-year management plan for Abbey Fields so that these beautiful grounds can be protected and enhanced for years to come. We want to gather as much feedback as possible from our communities. We want to know what you think, and what you value the most

### **Consultation Methodology: How did we consult**

Residents and community groups in Kenilworth were invited to have their say on "Fields for the Future" in a public consultation which was carried out from 4 November 2019 until 9 December 2019.

Warwick District Council organised seven drop-in events, where the public were encouraged to take part in an information gathering exercise for Abbey Fields, which would help to inform a management plan for the wider Abbey fields.

The drop-in sessions took place from 9 to 30 November 2019 at Abbey Fields Swimming Pool, Castle Farm Recreation Centre, the Kenilworth Centre and the Holiday Inn. At these events staff from the WDC parks project teams and our management and maintenance plan consultants Idverde UK asked attendees to complete 'Fields for our Future' consultation questionnaires and offer insights into how they currently use the Fields with the aim to gain the opinions of Abbey Fields users.

In addition to the drop-in sessions people can also complete the consultation surveys online by visiting the [forourfuture](#) website.



## Drop in Sessions

The drop-in sessions took place on the following dates and **540** members of the public attended the drop-in sessions over the course of the month-long consultation.

Date	Time	Location
Saturday 9 November	10am to 3pm	Abbey Fields Swimming Pool
Tuesday 12 November	4pm to 8pm	Abbey Fields Swimming Pool
Wednesday 20 November	10.30am to 1.30pm	Castle Farm Recreation Centre
Thursday 21 November	7pm to 9pm	Castle Farm Recreation Centre
Saturday 23 November	11am to 4pm	Holiday Inn
Thurs 28 November	10.30am to 1.30pm	Kenilworth Centre
Saturday 30 November	11am to 4pm	Holiday Inn

The Consultation surveys could also be completed online from 4 November until 9 December 2019 by visiting [forourfuture.co.uk](http://forourfuture.co.uk).



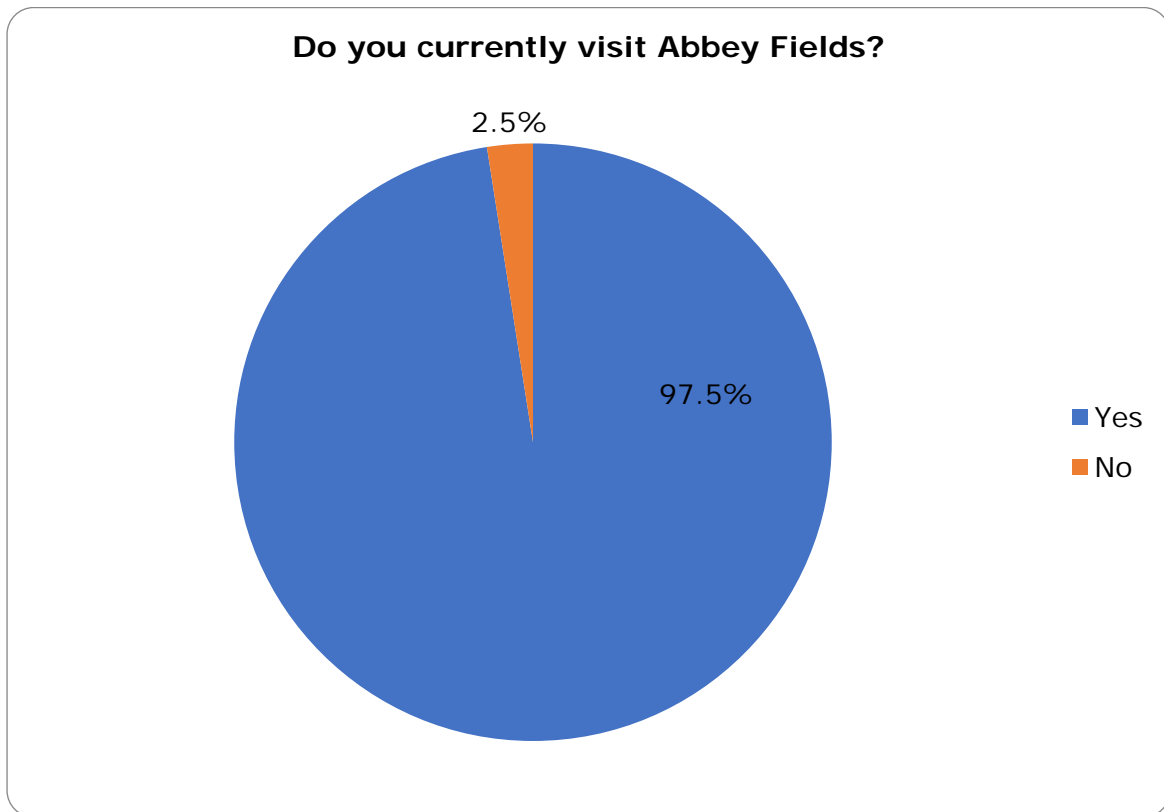


## **Consultation Results: What was the feedback**

A total of **863** survey responses were returned online and an additional **39** survey responses were completed at one of the seven face to face consultations held in venues around Kenilworth between 9<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 so a total of **902** survey responses were received and analysis of the results can be found below.

### **1. Do you currently visit Abbey Fields?**

97.5% respondents completing the survey said that they currently visit Abbey Fields.



### **2. If you don't visit Abbey Fields, what is your reason?**

The 2.5% respondents who don't visit Abbey fields provided the following reasons why:

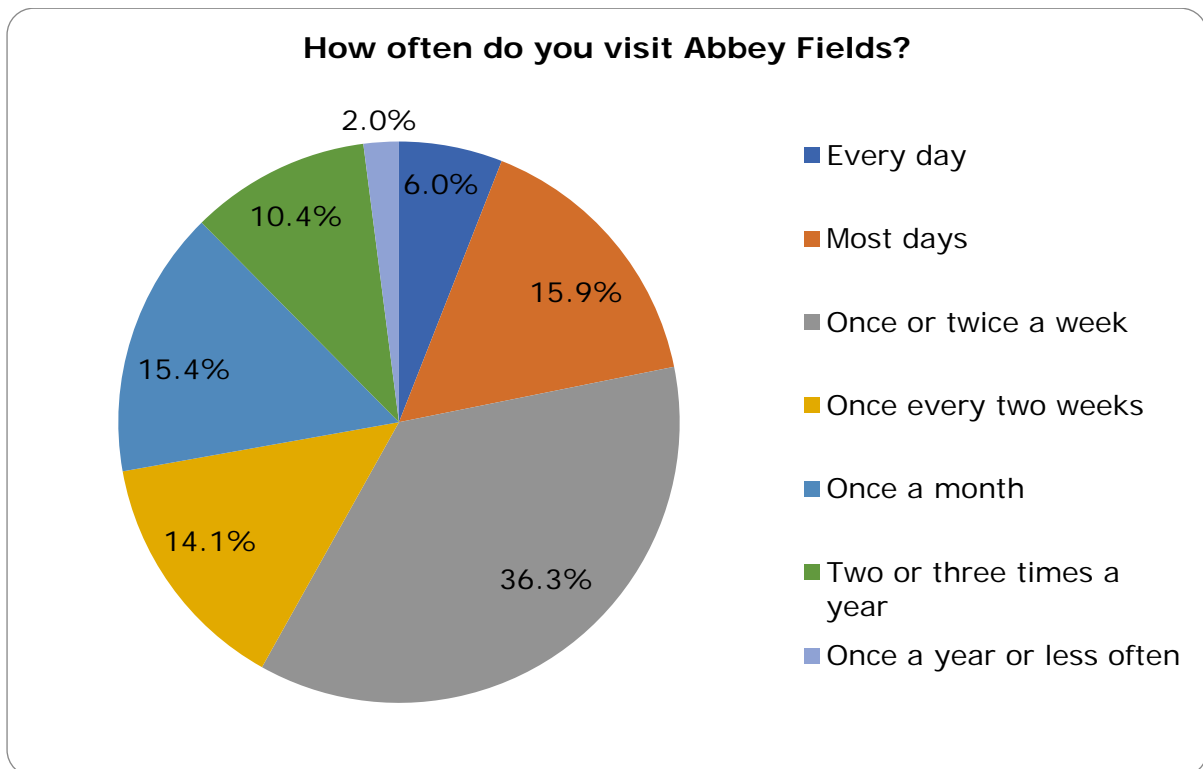
- Don't swim and walk the dog and play tennis and badminton elsewhere.
- There are no cycle friendly routes through it.
- Facilities nearer to them.
- New to area.

### **3. How often do you visit Abbey Fields?**



Of the **838** people that responded that answered the greatest percentage of people attended Abbey Fields One or twice per week with **36.3%** of respondents, with **6%** visiting Abbey Fields Every Day.

**64** people skipped answering this question.





#### 4. Typical purpose for visiting Abbey Fields?

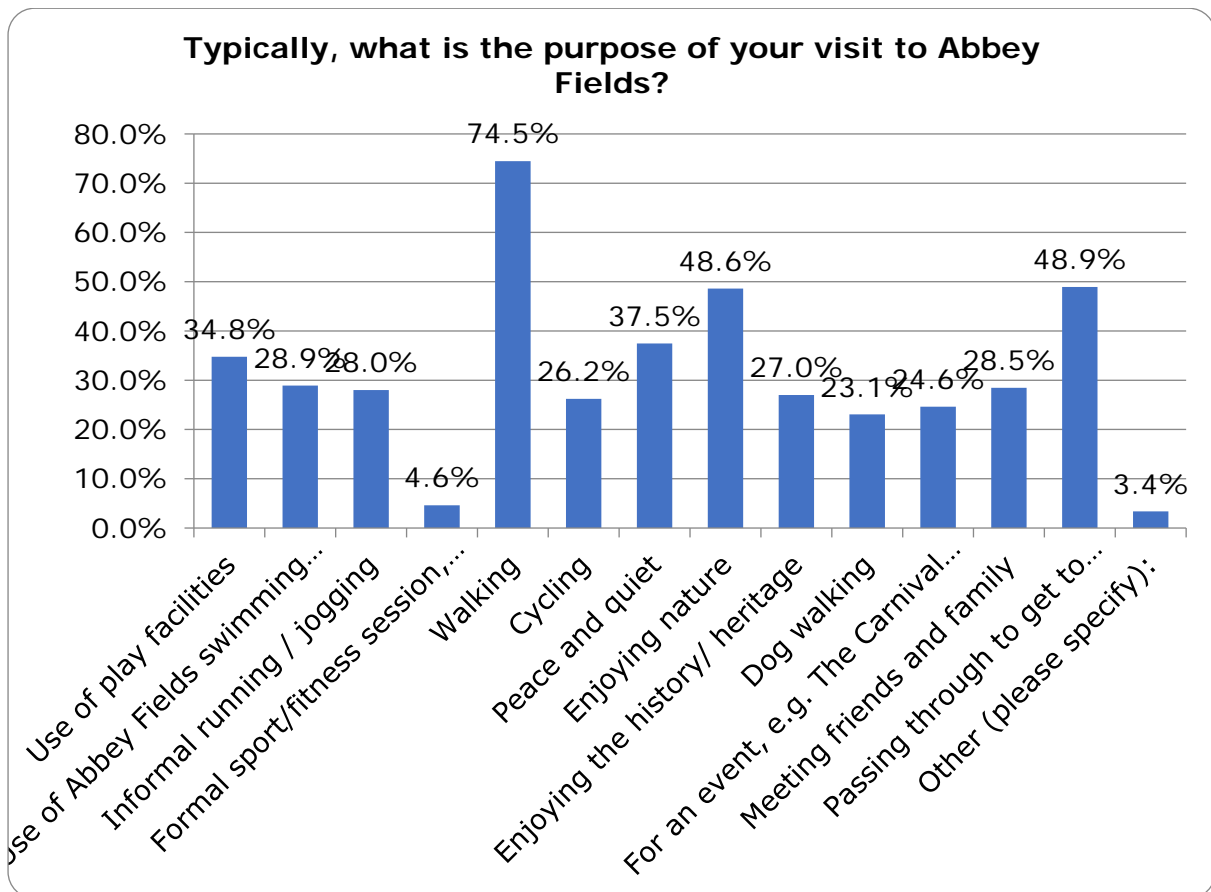
Of the **889** people that responded to this question the vast majority of people used the site for **walking** closely followed by **enjoying nature** and a high percentage of people used Abbey Fields as a commuting route to other locations in Town as well as accessing the Swimming Pool Complex.

A surprising number of respondents visiting Abbey Fields did so for **Cycling** even though it is currently not permitted under the bylaws for Abbey Fields.

Purposes other than those categories that respondents mentioned included:

- Photography, drawing and painting.
- Catch Pokémon
- Orienteering events with Octavian Droobers Orienteering Club
- Attending church

**13** people skipped answering this question.



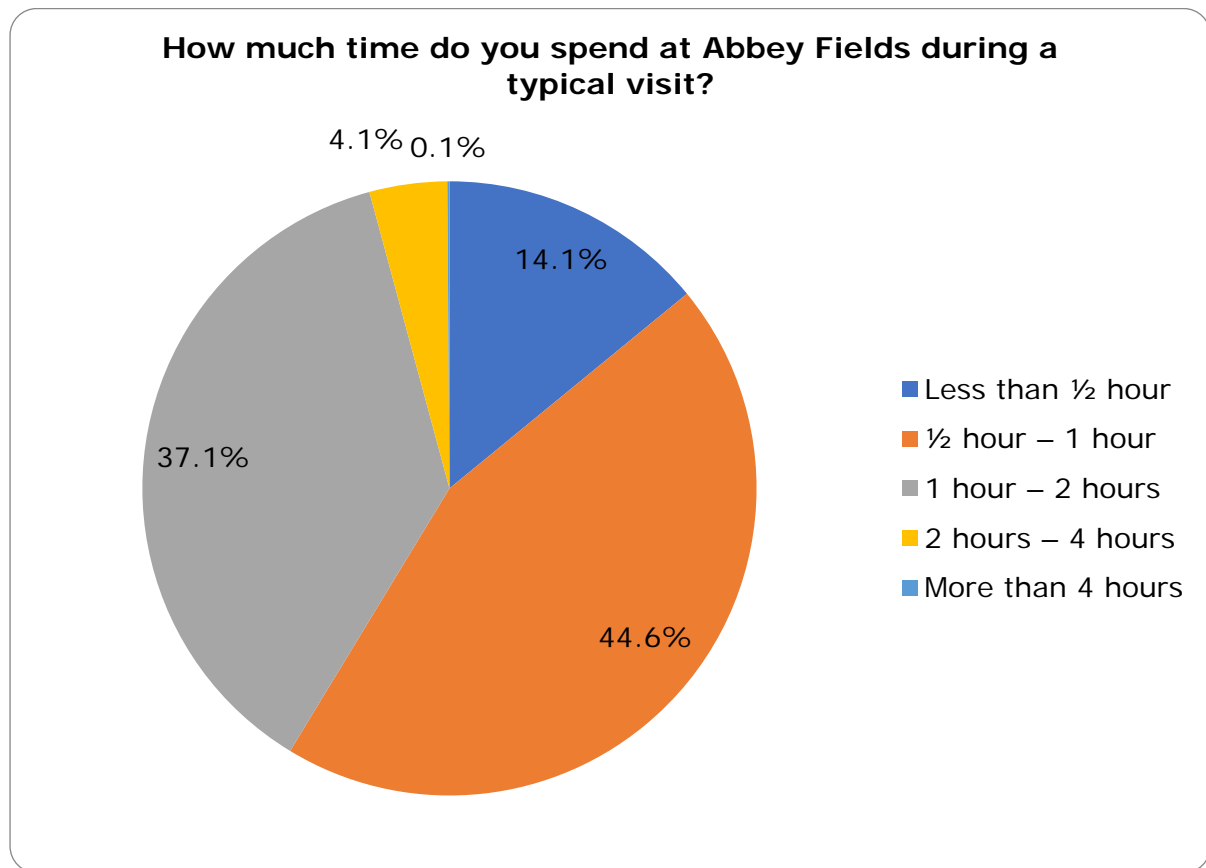


### 5. How much time do you spend on a typical visit to Abbey Fields?

Of the **881** people that responded to this question the vast majority of people spent between half an hour to 2 hours on site which covered **81%** of respondents with **45%** half hour to one hour and **37%** One hour to Two hours.

With just **4%** of respondents spending over 2 hours on site.

**21** people skipped answering this question.





## 6. What is your main mode of transport to travel to Abbey Fields?

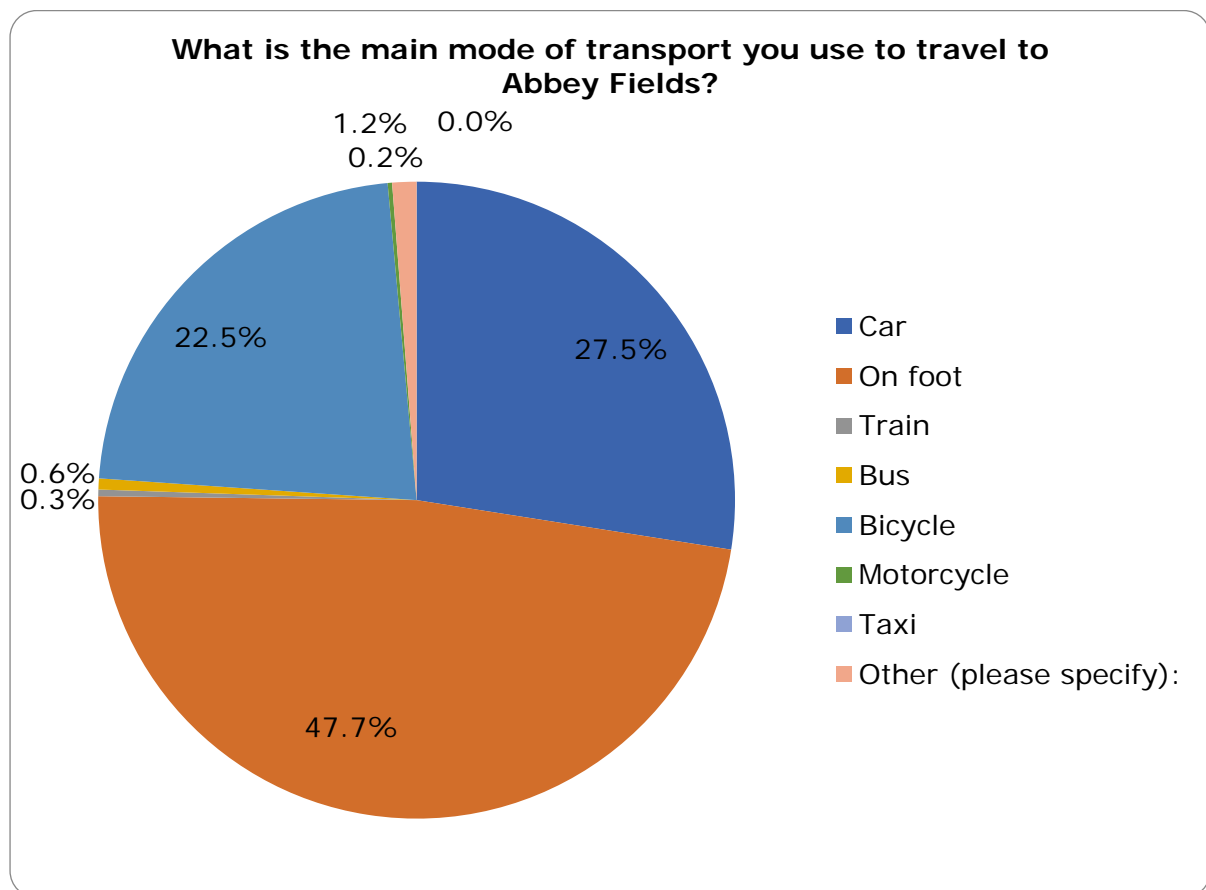
Of the **895** people that responded to this question just under half of people walked to Abbey Fields.

With **27%** of people travelling to site by Car and **23%** of people travelling by Bicycle.

Other modes of transport not on the survey included

- Wide range: bike, scooter, walk, car depends on what we are going for
- I often arrive on foot, having parked at Castle Farm.

**7** people skipped answering this question.





**7. Please rate the features at Abbey Fields 1-5.**

Of the **870** people that responded to this question some clear themes emerged

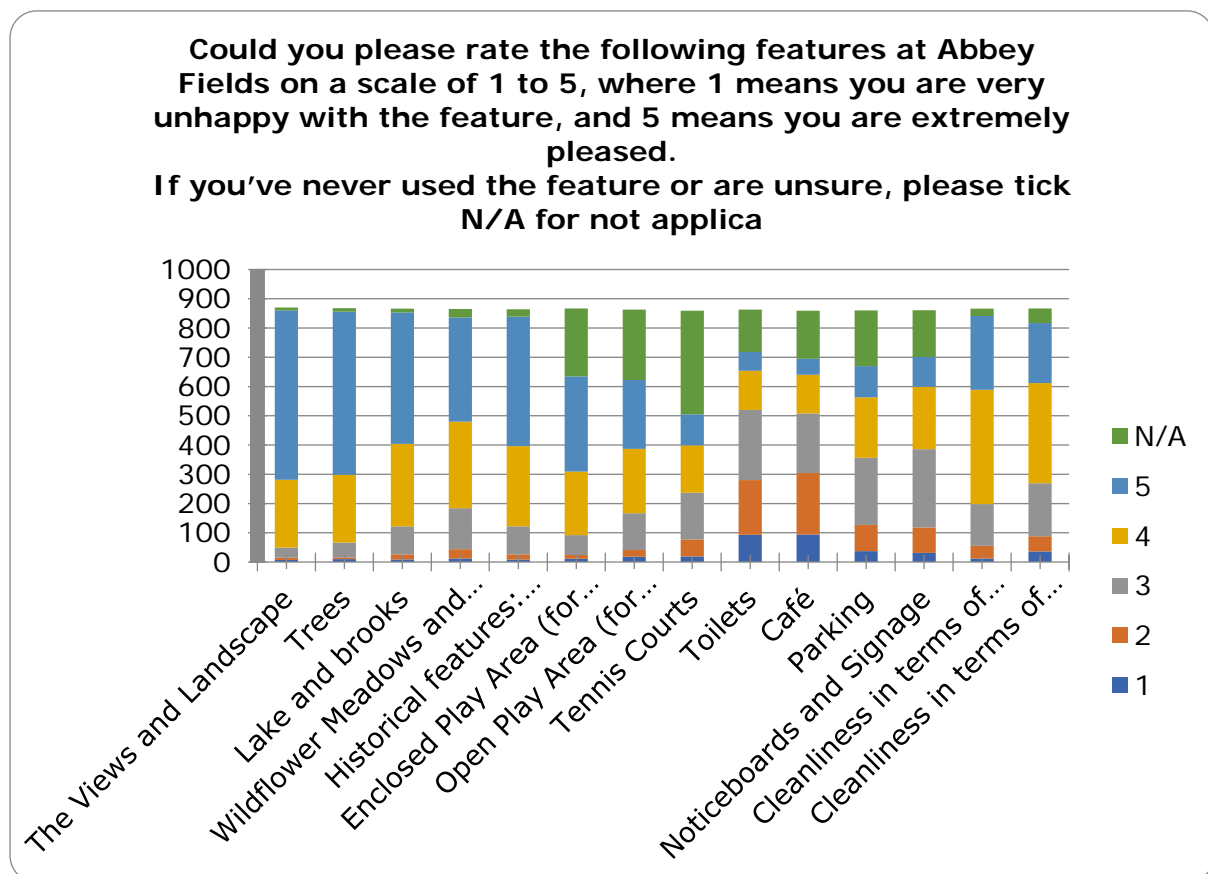
Respondents were most happy with Abbey Fields View, Landscape, Lakes, Meadows and Historical features.

While respondents were least satisfied by the Abbey Field Toilets and Café on site.

Park facilities like Playground, Tennis Courts, Noticeboard and Signage received mixed reviews

While cleanliness in terms of Litter and Dog Waste received a reasonably strong endorsement.

**30** people skipped answering this question.







**8. Please rate the accessibility of features at Abbey Fields 1-5.**

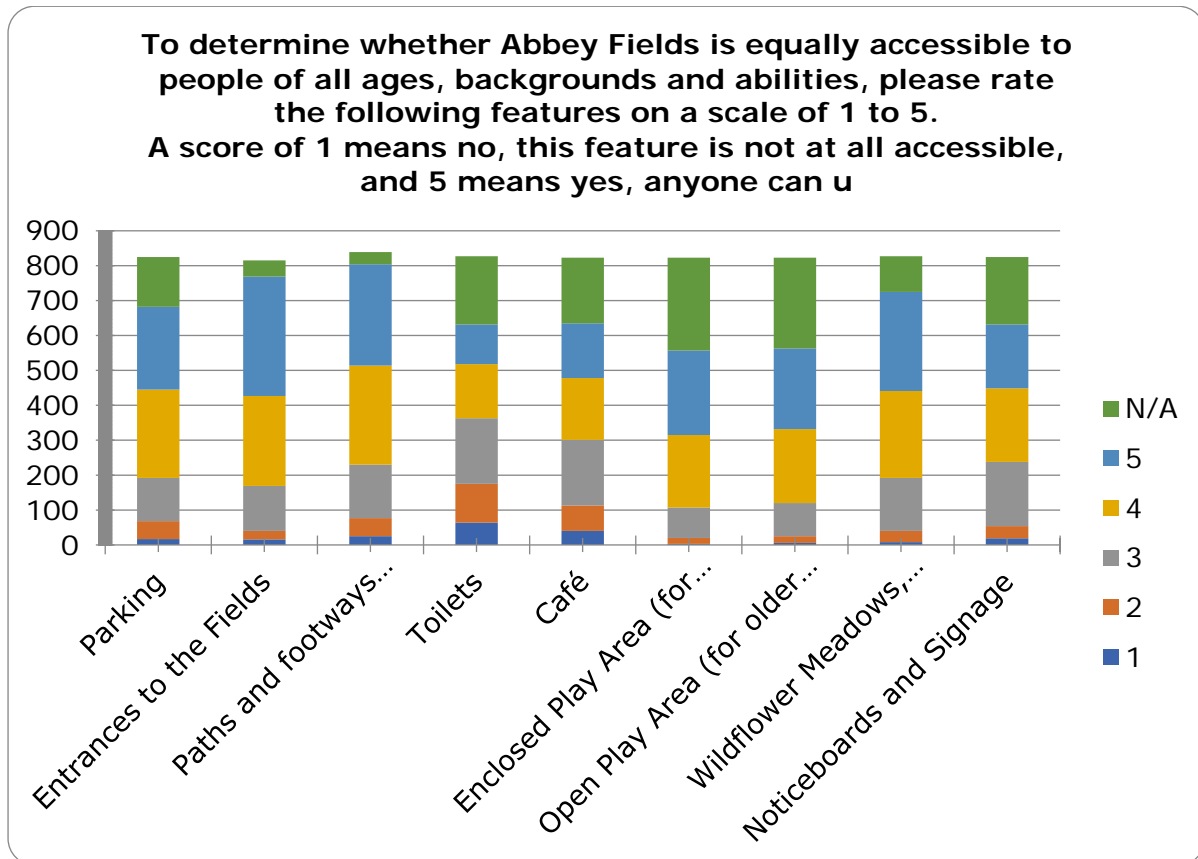
Of the **827** people that responded to this question some clear themes emerged

Respondents were most concerned about the accessibility of Abbey Field Toilets and Café on site with the greatest scores 1-2

Accessibility of Abbey Fields Paths and Footways although not as high a concern as the Toilets and Café, paths like those around the Lake have caused some accessibility issues to respondents.

Noticeboards and Signage have also been highlighted as a concern linked to placements and content.

**75** people skipped answering this question.





## 9. Do you feel safe when visiting Abbey Fields?

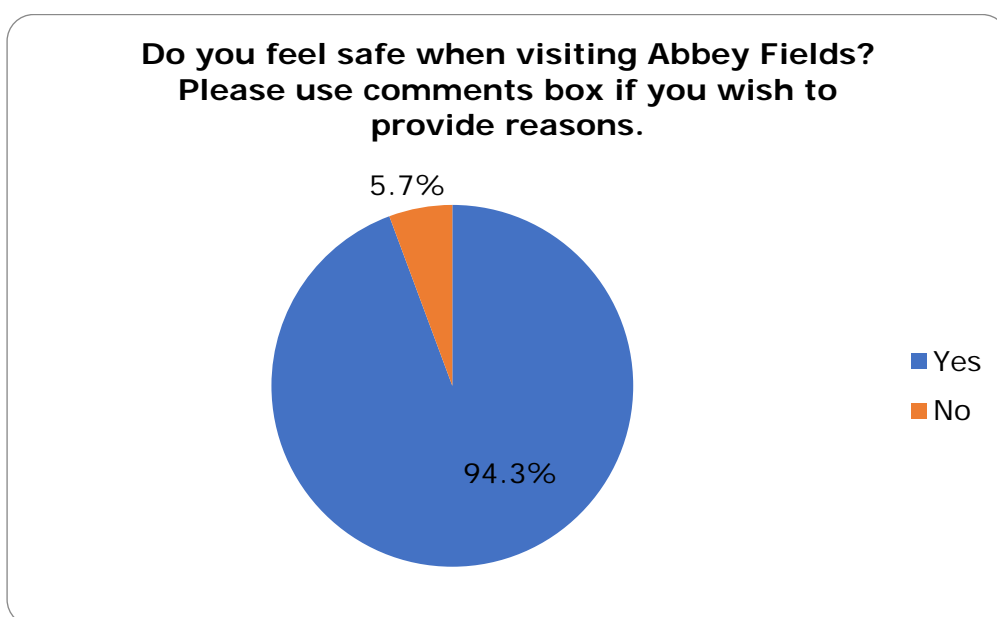
Of the **830** people that responded to this question an overwhelming 94% of respondents mentioned feeling safe when visiting Abbey Fields.

Of the 179 respondents that left reasons mostly related to daytime visits

- Visit mostly in daylight hours Community feel
- Never witness anti-social behaviour.
- I am not normally there after dark, so my comment relates only to daytime.
- I have never seen any unacceptable behaviour there. There are generally quite a few people around.
- I feel intimidated by dogs running loose and not on a lead under close control.

During the evening some concern is expressed about ASB around the Playground and Swimming Pool and some of the secondary entrance to the Park are very dark and some of the road crossings to get into Abbey Fields are unsafe day or night

- Not in the evenings. Youths drinking and drug taking... very unsafe and need more police patrolling in the area.
- Unsavoury characters and gangs of youths after dark. Friends have been assaulted there.
- Not at night though, hate walking in dark from pool home.
- Used to go late Friday evening when a member of Kenilworth Masters swimming club and young people tend to gather around the pool. Almost certainly harmless but could intimidate weaker souls.



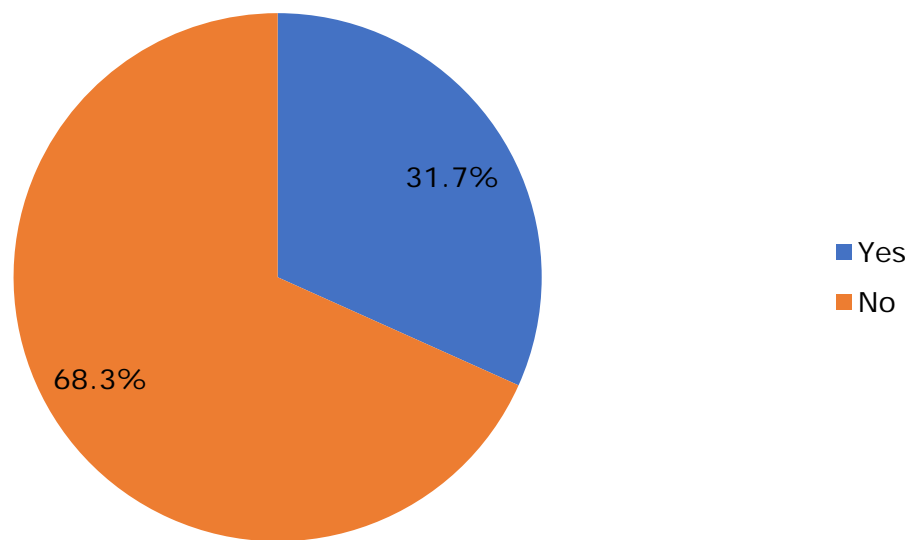


### 10. Do you intend to attend any of the Consultation Events?

Of the **823** people that responded to this question over **31%** indicated that they would be attending one of the seven consultation events held in Kenilworth during November 2019.

**79** people skipped answering this question.

**Have you attended (or are intending to attend) any of our Consultation Events? Please use comments box if required.**





## 11. Please give your thoughts on Cycling at Abbey Fields?

Of the **790** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 categories of response

### Those in favour of cycling at Abbey Fields 633 respondents

Example of comments below

- I am a keen cyclist and would like to see a cycle path through Abbey Fields to avoid some of the busy town centre roads
- Cycling is an essential part of future travel needed in the climate emergency. It solves many of society's issues in terms of air quality, obesity, congestion and the negative impact of cars that can create community severance.
- We live in the west of town and going through the park is the main route to the green way. We always cycle through respecting pedestrians, as it is the safest route with primary school age children. Parks should be a great place for children to learn to cycle. Abbey fields is a key link in being able to cycle safely into town for lots of people.
- Please allow cycling through abbey fields and ensure joined up cycle routes so that we can move around the town on a bike. This is particularly important for young children

Of the **633** respondents in favour of Cycling at Abbey Fields there is a clear view that a separate Cycle Path is needed for Abbey Fields as the existing path infrastructure is not wide enough to allow safe dual usage.

### Those Against cycling at Abbey Fields 149 respondents

Example of comments below

- Do not allow cycling as it is a danger to walkers and children.
- I believe a cycle route should run around the eastern / south eastern side of the park... linking Castle Farm to the green way... but not through the middle of the park!
- I am a cyclist but believe Abbey Fields should remain cycle free.
- No bikes in/through the centre of the Fields due to children playing and walkers.  
Perhaps a cycle path that connects the Greenway to the town centre avoiding the busy roads that runs discreetly up one side of the park.
- Do not allow. Cyclists can push their bikes for that short distance.
- A recipe for disaster! Will change AF forever losing the environmental qualities and peaceful attributes that reside there now

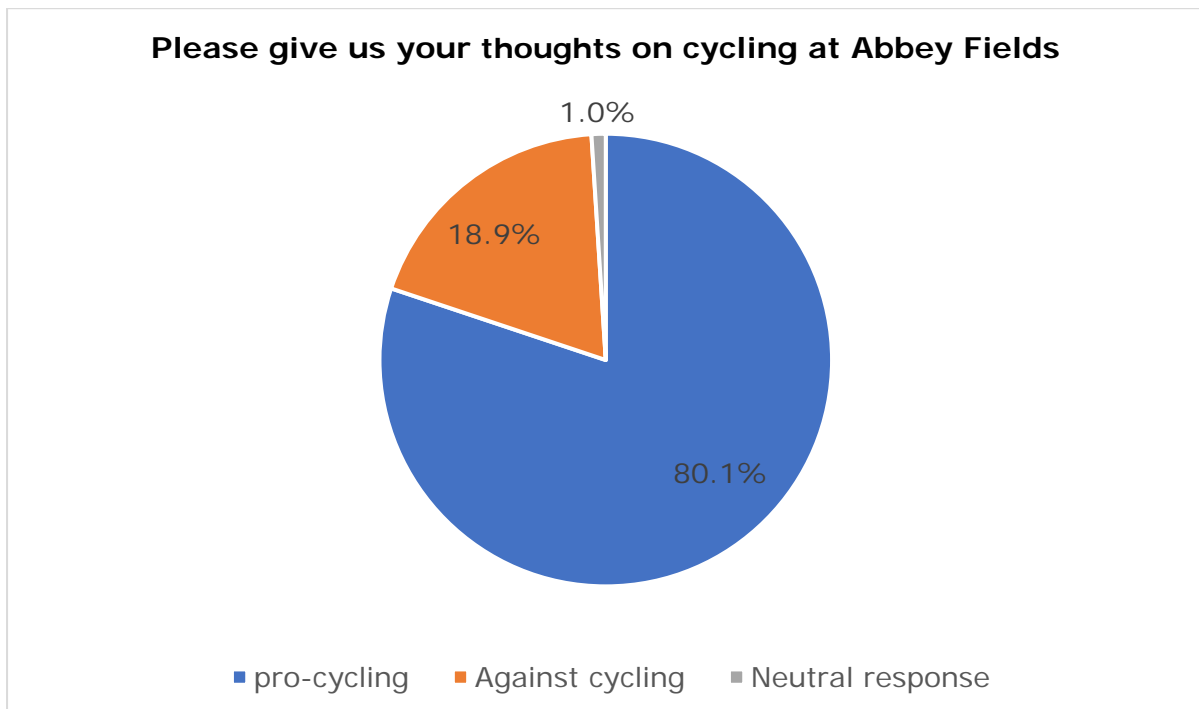
Neutral (neither in favour nor Against Cycling in Abbey Fields) **8** Respondents

Example of comments below



- Neither for nor against really
- I'm not sure
  
- Kenilworth and Abbey Advisory Committee (KAAC) is neutral on the issue of Cycling at Abbey Fields

**112** people skipped answering this question.





## 12. Please give us your thoughts on Wildlife and Biodiversity at Abbey Fields?

Of the **570** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 general categories of response

Those in favour of more Management for Conservation and Biodiversity within Abbey Fields **403** respondents

Example of comments below

- The wildflower meadows are a great addition to Abbey Fields
- I think it's important that the Fields are kept and maintained sympathetically with the age and uniqueness of the area. It's not a "normal park" and I think the current wildlife and biodiversity tactics are great.  
I like the wildflower areas - could there be more?
- Leaving the grass meadows but with one or two tracks for dog walkers is an excellent idea and should be expanded to more areas of the park while leaving the grassy area around the park mown for family games etc
- The recent increase in meadow management is good. There are still large areas of the park which have poor connectivity for wildlife so possibilities for new hedgerows could be explored.

There is a clear message from the comments received that more should be done to interpret these areas of Biodiversity management within the park and inform the general public about why it is managed like this and Flora and Fauna that it attracts and helps protects

Those against any further Management for Conservation and Biodiversity within Abbey Fields **56** respondents

Example of comments below

- Too much emphasis is being given to wildlife, there should be no extension to the artificial meadows and reducing them should be considered. The Abbey Fields is a public park and always has been as with all parks its greatest asset is the open grassland and this should be kept mowed and accessible all year round.
- Brambles have been allowed to run rampant around many of the edges and wherever there is a stone wall, this is fine in moderation, but I question how much good it does when it gets so thick and extensive
- I think that the need to encourage biodiversity must be balanced against the need to maintain an attractive environment. Wildflower meadows can look very beautiful but often are not!

There is a clear message that biodiversity management should be moderated, and management practices should take into account management around historically sensitive buildings and structures within Abbey Fields.

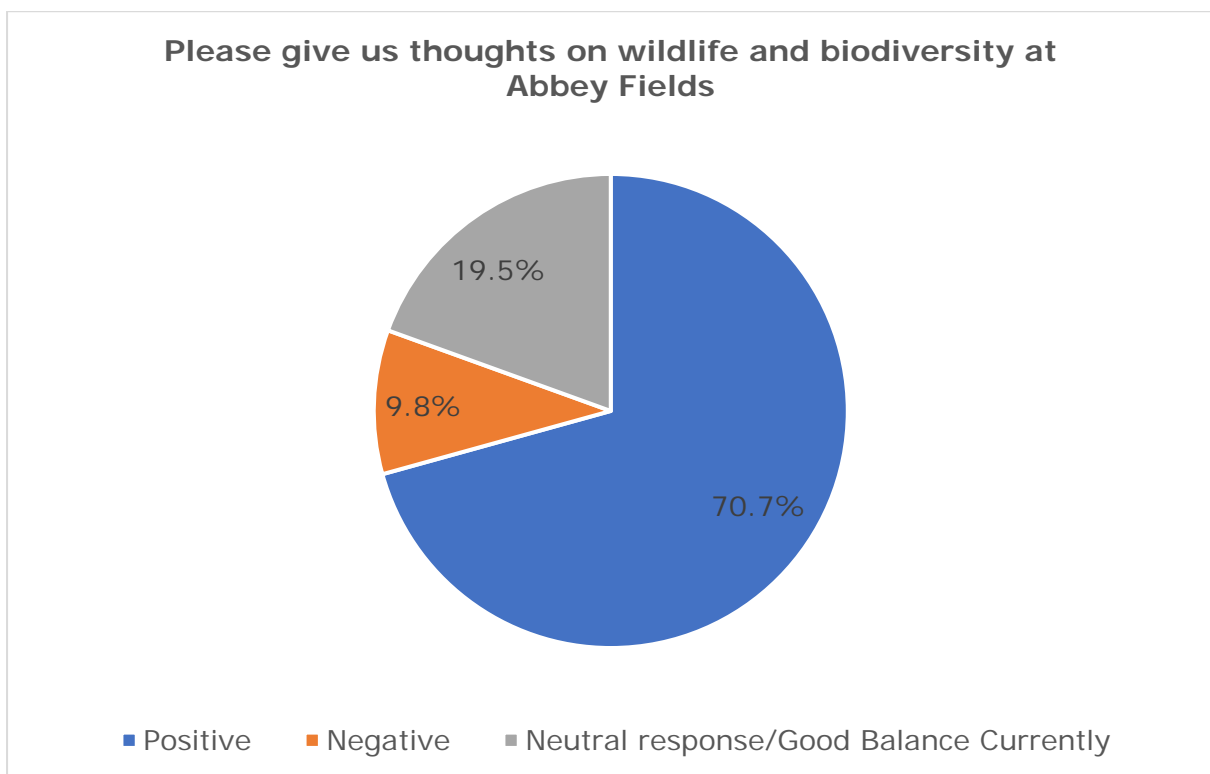


Neutral response Already currently a good balance of Conservation and Amenity within Abbey Fields **111** respondents

Example of comments below

- Leave it as it is.
- Seems right balance to me.
- About the right balance as it is.

**332** people skipped answering this question.





### **13. Please give us your thoughts on formal sports provision at Abbey Fields.**

Of the **841** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 general categories of response

Those in favour of more formal sports provision within Abbey Fields **585** respondents

Example of comments below

- I think it would be nice to have a wider range and more outdoor gym equipment
- With Castle a farm being 'gifted' to the Wardens... public football pitches should be re-introduced to Abbey Fields.  
I would REALLY like to see exercise equipment for older & elderly people as I see very often in Spain
- If drainage on the lower field by the tennis courts could be improved, that would be a good area for an informal football pitch. Maybe one of the tennis courts could serve as a multi sports area e.g. netball - I don't think you need a big area as organised groups will go to castle farm, so this would be for informal get togethers
- Personally, I enjoy tennis but accept that a mix including multi games area would benefit community. Reasonable charges for decent facilities, bookable online would be good.
- Football, basketball, boules, kids skate ramps would be good. Not enough equipment currently for those using it.

There is a clear message from this group that the majority of things being suggested are improving existing provision like the Tennis Court surfacing and fence, improving the existing Tennis Court to provide multi sports courts and an expansion of the existing Trim Trail or addition of an outdoor Gym.

Those against more formal sports provision within Abbey Fields **95** respondents

Example of comments below

- keep it informal, so as long as some of the grass is cut, any group can have a game of any type.
- I don't think abbey fields needs anymore sports equipment/facility.
- Not the place
- I think that this is a terrible idea as there are already areas for formal sports around the town and the large development at castle farm which is taking open fields and walking areas away from the town by installing more formal sport facilities.
- No this is available elsewhere at castle farm and the etc
- Definitely not, I think The Fields should be kept as a slower pace space. There are plenty of leisure centres on top of schools with sport facilities.





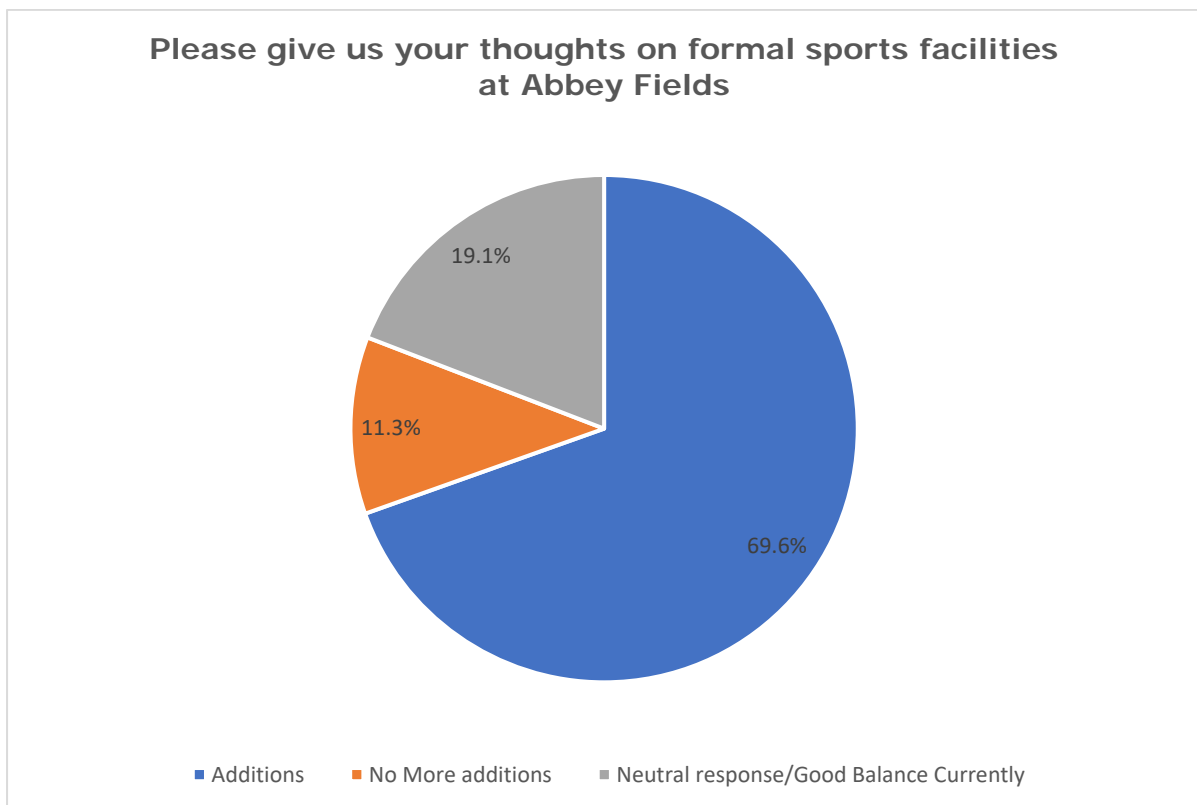
There is a clear message from this group that these facilities are already provided elsewhere within Kenilworth like at Castle Farm and Abbey Fields should provide a place for informal recreation.

Those currently happy with the current balance **161** respondents

Example of comments below

- Good balance of facilities given that there is a full sports centre at Castle Farm
- Leave as it is.
- I'm happy with the current arrangement.
- I don't think formal sports courts beyond the existing tennis courts are needed. It is used heavily by runners, perhaps recognised running trails would be good.
- Tennis courts and the outdoor gym equipment- not football or similar

**61** people skipped answering this question.





#### **14. Please give us your thoughts on the use of Buildings within Abbey Fields.**

Of the **388** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 general categories of response

Those requesting increased access to Park Buildings on site **34%**

- As a member and group leader for U3A, I think the buildings should be opened for use by local groups.
- I would love to see the ruins of Kenilworth Abbey opened so that people can visit. In my time living in Kenilworth, I've never seen inside these buildings.
- The old barn is a wasted opportunity... that should be converted into a cafe.
- The Pavilion could be used for displays about Abbey Fields' history or wildlife.
- The pavilion is somewhat different, but you have not provided any information as to its historical importance, or what you may consider doing with it. I question what this consultation therefore is seeking from respondents? It is not used for anything. What do you propose? If you have a proposal, then let the community give you their thoughts on that to inform your views and decision.

Those requesting to keep the Historic Buildings as they are **14%**

- The small pavilion is a part of History and provides a shelter for mothers and toddlers in the play area.
- The monuments should be left as they are with restricted access to ensure that they are not damaged.
- Historical monuments to remain as they are. Pavilion should be used.
- The barn and gatehouse should be left alone as they are. The barn provides an excellent facility to show off Kenilworth's history and the gatehouse is a significant local monument that must be appropriately protected.

Those requesting for an alternative use be sought for Pavilion Building in Enclosed Children's Playground **51%**

- The pavilion would make a good pop up cafe given your current plans for the swimming pool cafe make it inconvenient for people to get a coffee or ice cream and watch their children.
- The wooded structure next to the children's play area should be opened to provide covered seated areas. There is a similar wooden structure in St Nicholas Park in Warwick which isn't enclosed and has a seating area.
- the pavilion should be set up to be used by local business to offer 'pop up' refreshments/services and ice cream in the summer could also be hired out for birthday parties

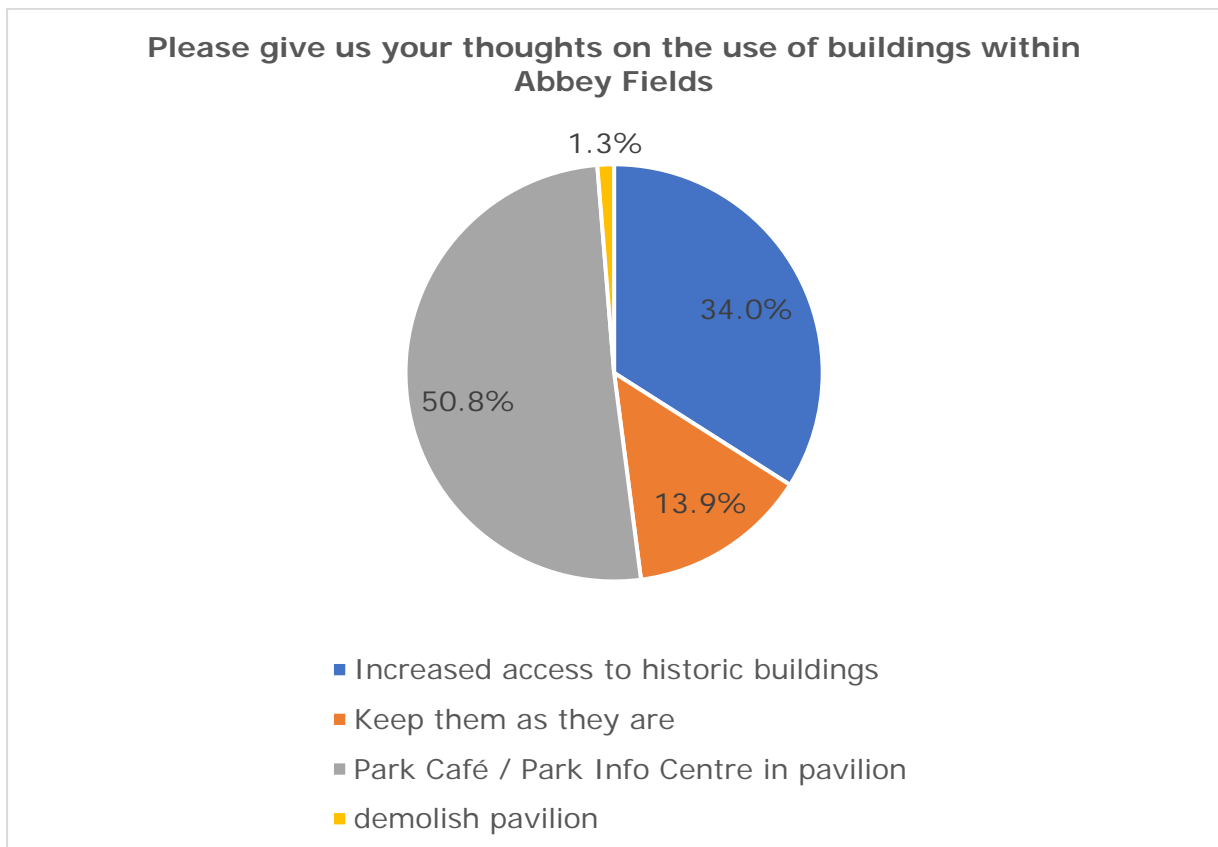


- The wooden building near child's play area would make a great venue for afternoon tea and snacks (similar to St Nicholas park cafe)
- Cafe, cafe, cafe. The former bowling green hut should be a cafe. It's a no brainer.

Those requesting the Pavilion Building in the Enclosed Children's Playground to be demolished **1%**

- Do we need more meeting place type facilities in Kenilworth? If not, why not simply demolish the pavilion and extend the play area?
- Demolish them... they are an eyesore.
- The pavilion is an eyesore. Knock it down.

**514** people skipped answering this question.





## 15. Please give us your thoughts on safety and protection of the Brook?

Of the **515** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 general categories of response

Those in favour of increased protection of the Finham Brook **62%** of respondents

- I am very keen to see the brook protected and improved to be more wildlife friendly. I think zoning is a very good idea, with dog proof fencing of some description. This would allow children to access the safer parts for pond dipping, also some access for dogs, whilst protecting key areas for wildlife.
- Good idea as long as the duck race can continue!
- I don't have a problem with zoning off areas of the brooks on safety and protection grounds.
- This seems a very sensible approach.  
It would be nice if the appearance of the area could be maintained even if direct access has to be limited.

Those who feel no intervention is necessary **22%** of respondents

- Big BROTHER! leave it as it is, for children to wander freely and investigate. Maintain by all means but do not limit access.
- They seem fine as they are
- Leave as it is

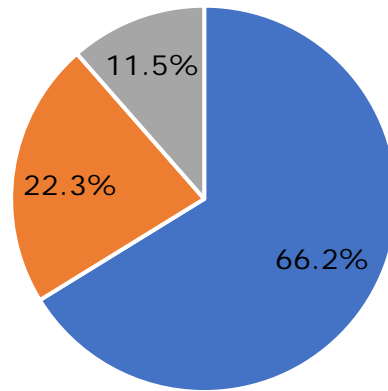
Those who require more information in order to decide **12%** of respondents

- I don't feel able to comment on this without more information about the zoning. If the zoning will restrict current access around Abbey Fields as a circular route and reduce areas available to dog walkers, then I would have some concerns. Please publish full information - it is difficult to comment without more detail.
- It's hard to answer this without knowing exactly how this idea would impact on people using the park but I believe in protecting the banks for wildlife and safety
- Happy to be led by the experts on this

**387** people skipped answering this question.



**Please give us your thoughts on safety and protection of the brooks**



- Yes Protect the brook
- No Interventions
- More information needed to make a decision



**16. Would you be interested in Volunteering or have any ideas on what other support the local community could provide of the management and maintenance of Abbey Fields?**

Of the **224** people that responded to this question with comment, there were 3 general categories of response

Those interested in Volunteering and feel they have a place in the management and maintenance at Abbey Fields **69%** of respondents

- I would be happy to support brook improvement and maintenance work.
- Happy to volunteer say once a month but not sure which groups other than Friends of Abbey Fields exist.
- I live next to Moseley Bog and you can use the way they maintain the Bog an example. There have drop-in sessions each week where volunteers from Black Country come over and clean up the area. They serve tea and coffee and biscuits, and it provides a great social outing for volunteers. You could also encourage young children to be interested in conservation activities especially those interested in such activities.
- I am not familiar with where the notice boards are. These could be more prominent, and the information provided also displayed around other parts of Kenilworth e.g. Library  
I volunteer as a member of KHAS to open the Abbey barn.

There is a clear message from those interested in volunteering that opportunities could be better advertised many respondents indicated happy to volunteer just need better sign posting of opportunities

Those not interested in Volunteering and feel volunteers shouldn't have a place in the management and maintenance at Abbey Fields **21%** of respondents

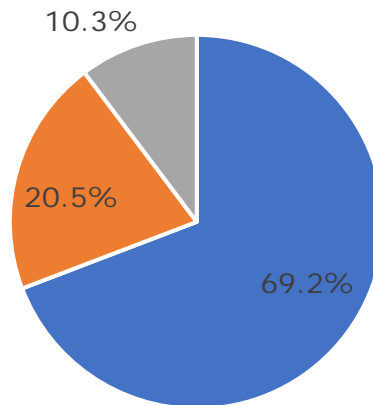
- I am a weekly Warwickshire Wildlife Trust volunteer on the Kenilworth nature reserves and as such cannot offer any more time.
- I already periodically volunteer for litter-picking through FOAF. I don't have enough spare time to volunteer for anything else.
- I don't want to volunteer
- Instead of relying on volunteers the fields need full time wardens/rangers to make sure rules are obeyed.

Those in support of what Volunteers are currently doing on site **10%** of respondents

- Friends of Abbey Fields do a good job but need wider recognition and need to promote themselves better to a new and wider audience. They are doing some school visits which is great.
- The litter pickers do a first-rate job
- The fields need to be policed in some way with full time rangers or wardens so that all bye laws are upheld.
- People volunteer to litter pick, but the council should be doing this too



If you would like to volunteer, or have any ideas on what other support our local community can provide, please give us your thoughts



- Yes interested in Volunteering
- Not interested in Volunteering
- Support what Volunteers currently doing

**17. Do you have any further comments you would like to make about the future management and maintenance of Abbey Fields?**

280 people responded to this question with further comments about Abbey Fields and its future management and maintenance. The Key Themes that came out of these comments are as below:

**Key Theme 1: To retain the natural ambience of Abbey Fields**

Abbey Fields is a tremendous asset to the town as an open space. Its natural ambience is a key part of its charm, so any improvements should be sensitively managed and not detract from this.

Abbey Fields should be recognised and marketed widely as a truly special ecological and historical area and not given the same treatment as other more modern parks.

Recreation space for families.

**Key Themes 2: Better Signage and Interpretation boards**

To provide inclusive signage and communication board to inform the wider users of Abbey Fields.

Provide Interpretation boards describing habitats on site and how they are managed



### **Key Theme 3: Accessible path**

To provide all weather accessible path network around the lake and in front of the gatehouse. The dirt paths become eroded and ill-defined and muddy and dangerous in wet weather. To create cycle paths linking with the national network to encourage more sustainable commute.

### **Key Themes 4: Improving access and the facilities.**

Better parking, improved cafe and toilets

Increasing cycling access and bike racks would help reduce the pressure on parking facilities.

Wider footpaths, especially round the lake would help wheelchairs and pushchairs get around.

### **Key Themes 5: Volunteering Opportunities at Abbey Fields**

Encourage and create a wider network of volunteering opportunities at Abbey fields and seek various funding opportunities.

### **Key Theme 6: Sustainable Abbey Fields**

To reinstate the disused water fountain in Abbey Fields to be able to refill a drinking bottle. Refilling water bottles saves reduces the use of plastic and provides a healthy option.

Make all these outdoor spaces accessible to all by bicycle with car free routes and join up the whole town landscape and wildlife corridors with more street tree planting and car free walking, cycling and running routes.

### **Key Theme 7: Enhance Biodiversity at Abbey Fields**

The preservation of the biodiversity of the fields should be the number one priority in any future plans.

Involve schools in studying its biodiversity.