

MTW Consultants Limited Leisure and Regeneration Consultants



A Public Consultation on improvements to the Parliament Hill Area in July 2023



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Prepared for:

the City of London



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DRAFT REPORT

28th August 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction and Method

The City of London is looking to carry out a programme of improvements to the Parliament Hill Area (PHA) of Hampstead Heath subject to funding. Six areas were selected from the Masterplan and drawn up and visualised by Land Use Consultants. The areas selected were:

- A New Wetland Area
- Improvements to the Café
- Improvements to the Children's Play area (under 5s)
- Playground improvements
- New Ball Games Court
- New Splash Park

MTW Consultants carried out a public consultation exercise in July 23 to get the views of PHA users and test out these initial ideas. An outdoor exhibition of the plans was held on Sunday 16th July in PHA. A link to an on-line survey was handed out to visitors on the day and subsequently the QR code link was advertised around the Heath and circulated to Stakeholder groups.

2. Sample details

In total 382 completed responses to the questionnaire were received by the cut-off date, 3rd August, and a separate submission was subsequently received from the Heath & Hampstead Society. The vast majority of respondents visited the PHA once a week or more (82%). The main reason for visiting selected by most was 'Quiet time/reflection' (19.6%), followed by 'Children's activities' (18.3%), and Swimming (13.6%). Dog walking attracted just under 11% which is fairly standard as a proportion of visits across most parks. Most travelled on foot and the main postcodes where visitors lived were NW5 (30%), NW3 (27%) and N6 (11%).

3. Views on proposed improvements

Respondents were shown the visuals of each area as they are now and after the improvements, and asked to rate them. The results for all 6 areas are summarised below:

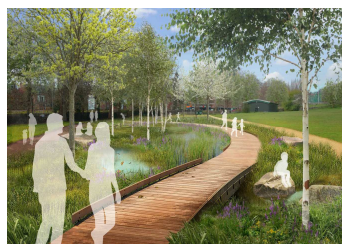
Rating	New Wetlands Area %	Café improve %	Children's Play Area %	Playground %	New Ball Games Area %	Splash Park %
Excellent	24.8	21.9	18.0	24.5	24.0	35.0
Very good	31.7	36.9	39.1	36.3	39.7	33.4
Average	20.3	29.6	20.1	19.9	20.8	15.9
Poor	7.2	5.3	5.6	5.6	2.1	4.5
Very poor	11.2	5.5	9.5	6.4	3.5	6.1
Don't know this area	4.8	0.8	7.7	7.3	9.9	5.0
Excellent or Very good	56%	59%	57%%	61%	64%	68%

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

The area that scored the highest in terms of 'excellent' or 'very good' ratings was the Splash Park (68%) and the more contentious was the new Wetlands Area (56%), which was also rated poor or very poor by the highest number of respondents (18%).

Respondents were asked if they would like to make any other (open ended) comments about the proposals. Many comments were received ranging from 188 comments on the new Wetlands Area to 120 for the new Ball Games Area. The respondents put forward many ideas and suggestions. It should be noted that the respondents expressing comments represented only 30-50% of the sample and were sometimes weighted more toward detractors from the ideas than those in favour.

Comments on new Wetlands Area (188 comments)



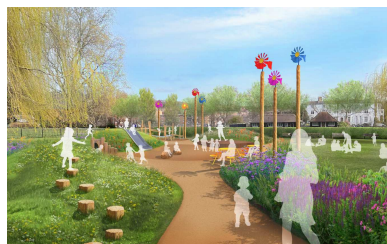
The proposed new wetlands area on the frequently flooded area of open space near the Lido stimulated a variety of opinions. While some appreciated its potential benefits for biodiversity and water management, others felt that the existing natural beauty of the area should not be tampered with. Concerns were raised about the impact on the wild and serene atmosphere, the potential for over-engineering and high maintenance costs, the intrusion of boardwalks and paths, and the need to preserve open spaces for children's sports and games. Accessibility, seating options, and considerations for wildlife were also points of discussion. While some saw the proposal as unnecessary and costly, others welcomed the opportunity for positive change that could balance both human use and nature.

Comments on the Café improvements (180 comments)



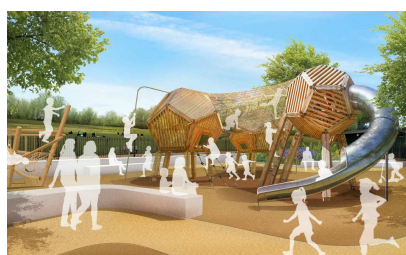
Some individuals were supportive of improvements, highlighting the need for updates and welcoming additional seating, better facilities and healthier food options. There were 35 comments broadly in favour of the proposals (19%). Others were critical of the proposed changes, expressing concern about the potential destruction of greenery, loss of character and unnecessary alterations. 31 comments came from respondents wanting the Café left as it is (17%). Many accepted the café needed a revamp but felt it should be kept low key and not turned into a crowded 'hot spot'. There were 37 comments on the design (20%) and 16 comments on the food/catering (9%).

Comments on new Children's Play Area (167 comments)



The comments highlighted a range of opinions, with some emphasising the need to maintain open spaces for picnics and quiet enjoyment, while others questioned the purpose of specific elements such as windmills and towers. Many expressed the importance of striking a balance between introducing new play features and preserving the area's natural charm. There were calls for inclusive play equipment, seating for parents, and considerations for wildlife, with a preference for natural materials. Concerns were raised about overstimulation, maintenance, and the impact on the peaceful environment. Overall, the comments emphasised the desire for thoughtful updates that enhance children's experiences while respecting the area's existing character.

Comments on the Playground improvements (162 comments)



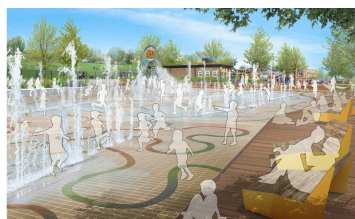
The comments regarding proposed improvements to the playground for older children reflected mixed views. While some expressed concerns about potential safety hazards, others acknowledged the need for updates due to the current playground's state of disrepair. There were calls for preserving elements that work well, ensuring visibility for supervising parents, and maintaining a variety of play options. Many commented on the importance of considering different age groups and the potential impact on the surrounding environment. Some emphasised the need for more seating and shaded areas, as well as accessibility for disabled children. Concerns about the size of the proposed structure, the potential disruption during renovations, and the balance between existing features and new additions were also mentioned. Overall, opinions varied on the necessity and design of the improvements, with some advocating for changes and others preferring the playground's current state.

Comments on the Ball Games Area (120 comments)



Some respondents expressed concerns about the bright colours and urban design, suggesting a preference for a more natural and subdued aesthetic. Others appreciated the idea and potential improvements, such as increased seating and better fencing to prevent balls from going over to the railway. Some emphasised the need for variety in sports and games, including basketball and netball, while others mentioned the potential for noise and safety issues. There are suggestions for better accessibility, longer opening hours, and consideration of different sports like padel or beach volleyball. Overall, the comments reflected support for the proposed ball games area.

Comments on the new Splash Park (152 comments)



Respondents generally expressed enthusiasm for the new splash park. Some, however, believed that the current paddling pool is well-liked and should be maintained, emphasising its suitability for babies and toddlers. Many would like to see a splash park and a paddling pool. Concerns about maintenance costs, accessibility, safety, and hygiene were raised. Some welcomed the idea of fountains and additional seating, while others argued for maintaining the tranquillity and natural aspects of the Heath. There were suggestions for more shade and non-slip surfaces, and a balance between playfulness and calmness. Some questioned the necessity of the project, its cost, and its seasonal nature.

4. Comments, questions or concerns about other spaces in the Parliament Hill Area (157 comments)

Finally respondents were asked for any comments, questions or concerns they might have about other parts of the PHA.

Overall, there was support for enhancements as long as the natural character of the space was preserved. Concerns included the potential impact on the wildness and tranquillity of the area, the need for more benches, better signage, lighting, and facilities like toilets. Some suggestions included focusing on children's facilities, upgrading tennis courts with floodlights and water fountains, enhancing accessibility, and maintaining a balance between developments and preserving nature. There were calls for improvements to be sustainable, practical, and sensitive to the environment. Some questioned the need for certain changes and expressed concerns about potential fees, privatisation, and the overall impact on the unique character of the Heath.

5. Submission by Heath & Hampstead Society

The Society supports proposals for improvement of sports facilities and grounds, playgrounds and facilities at and around the Parliament Hill Café, including a nature interpretation centre at the Café. Although it strongly supports the idea of establishing a wetland for drainage and biodiversity, it is opposed to the proposed location and favours a corridor of wetland and woodland along the east side of the football pitches from the Broad Walk to the Lido area.

1. INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

1.1 The City of London is looking to carry out a programme of improvements to the Parliament Hill Area of Hampstead Heath. Together with their landscape architects LUC, they have drawn up a Masterplan for the area and identified 21 different areas and facilities that need investment. Six of these have been drawn up in more detail and visualised by LUC. They are:

- A New Wetland Area
- Improvements to the Café
- Improvements to the Children's Play area (under 5s)
- Playground improvements
- New Ball Games Court
- New Splash Park

1.2 MTW Consultants Ltd was commissioned by the City of London in June 2023 to carry out a Public Consultation among visitors to the Parliament Hill Area (PHA) to get their views on these initial ideas and other comments on what is needed in the PHA.

The Public consultation consisted of two elements:

An outdoor exhibition of the LUC Masterplan and visualisations in the PHA (opposite the Café) in a City of London gazebo inviting views and comments.

An on-line survey questionnaire to gather people's views asking them to rate the 6 visualisations and give their comments on them as well comments about other spaces in the PHA.

1.3 The two methods were closely interlinked as the exhibition day was used as a primary means of distributing leaflets with a link to the questionnaire¹. Every visitor to the stand was given a leaflet. The questionnaire link and / or leaflet were also circulated to the Stakeholder committee members involved in Hampstead Heath for them to cascade down to their members. Finally the leaflet was posted up on notice boards around the Heath.

¹ A copy of the questionnaire is shown in Volume 2, Appendix 9

2. PUBLIC EXHIBITION

2.1 A poster notifying Hampstead Heath users of the Public Consultation day was put up on various notice boards about a week beforehand (see below) inviting people to come and see the proposals on Sunday 16th July. The day chosen coincided with the annual ‘Give it a Go’ event put on in the PHA by the City Corporation.



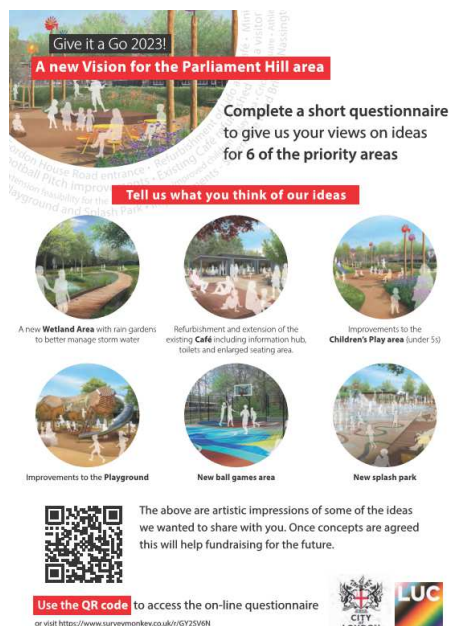
Come and see an exhibition of our proposals for improving and renewing areas of Parliament Hill

Find us opposite the Café

After consultations with key stakeholders, LUC Consultants have drawn up some concepts for some areas for improvement at Parliament Hill that we would like to share for wider views. **Come and see what you think of the ideas so far.** Once concepts are agreed, this will help fundraising for the future.



2.2 The stand was in a very visible City of London branded gazebo on a busy thoroughfare opposite the main café. Although the Give it a Go event did not start until 1pm, the stand was manned from 10am until 4pm. An estimated 200 people visited the stand during the day and most were given a leaflet (see below) with a QR Code that linked directly to an on-line questionnaire.



Visitors could browse visualisations on A1 boards showing the improvements to the 6 areas that had been worked up by LUC from some 21 areas designated as needing improvement in the Masterplan. Staff from the City Corporation and LUC were on hand to answer any questions asked.

It was made clear to all visitors that these were ideas only, rather than funded proposals; and that their views would help to refine them and assist with raising the funds need to implement them.

Leaflets with the link to the on line survey were also handed out to people visiting the Café and the All Dogs Matter Bark Off show by MTW's team.



2.3 The large majority of verbal responses received from visitors and their children who visited the public exhibition on the day, were positive and supportive. A small minority expressed doubts on the need for such changes and a desire to leave the Heath as it is. This dichotomy is reflected throughout the survey results.

3. SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

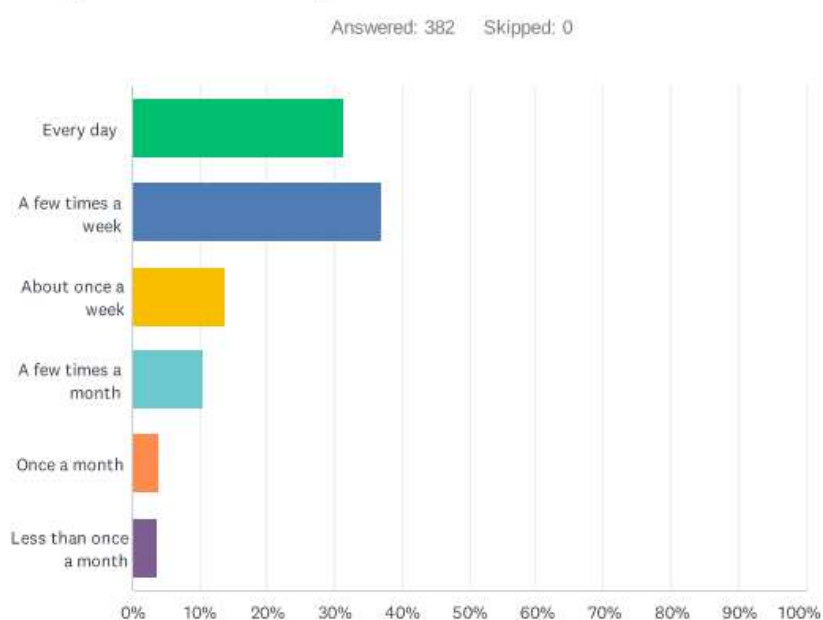
3.1 SIZE OF SAMPLE

In total, 382 completed responses were achieved between the 16th July and the 3rd of August, the date chosen to close the survey. Peak collection days were 16th July, the day of the exhibition itself (45), the day after (38), 2nd August (63) and 3rd August (131), the last day of the survey which closed on 3rd August. Details were published in the Hampstead & Highgate News on 2nd August, undoubtedly causing this spike in responses on the last two days.²

3.2 FREQUENCY OF VISITS TO PHA

The vast majority of respondents visited the PHA once a week or more (82%) with 31% visiting it every day and 37% visiting a few times a week. The sample therefore contains primarily *regular and frequent users* who will know it well.

Q1 How often do you visit the Parliament Hill area?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Every day	31.41%	120
A few times a week	36.91%	141
About once a week	13.61%	52
A few times a month	10.47%	40
Once a month	3.93%	15
Less than once a month	3.66%	14
TOTAL		382

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

² Details of the survey appeared in the Hampstead & Highgate News on 2nd August 23.

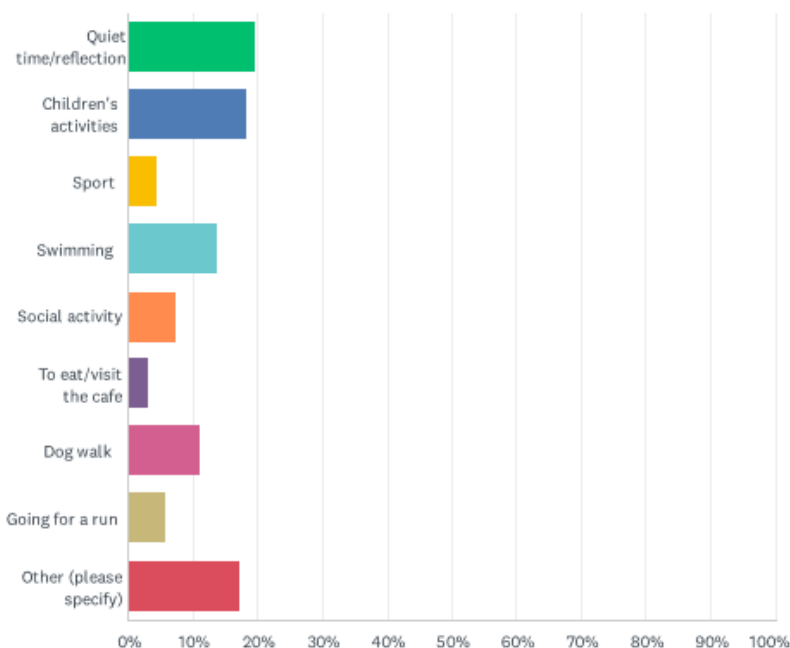
<https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/23696296.consultation-hampstead-heath-parliament-hill-plans/>

3.3 MAIN REASON FOR VISITING THE PARLIAMENT HILL AREA.

Respondents could only give their primary reason from the selection provided, but could enter other reasons in the 'Other' part of the question. The main reason selected by most was 'Quiet time/reflection' (19.6%), followed by 'Children's activities' (18.3%), and Swimming (13.6%). Dog walking attracted just under 11% which is fairly standard as a proportion of park visits across most parks. A further 11.5% cited going for a walk in addition to the other reasons. 1.6% were volunteering.

What is your main reason for visiting the Parliament Hill Area?

Answered: 382 Skipped: 0



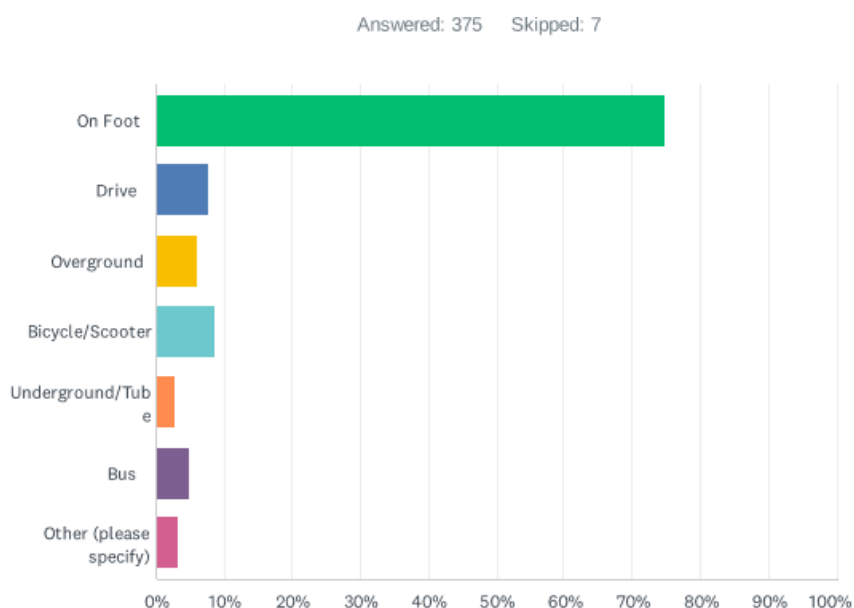
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Quiet time/reflection	19.63% 75
Children's activities	18.32% 70
Sport	4.19% 16
Swimming	13.61% 52
Social activity	7.33% 28
To eat/visit the cafe	2.88% 11
Dog walk	10.99% 42
Going for a run	5.76% 22
Other (please specify)	17.28% 66
TOTAL	382

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

3.4 MODE OF TRANSPORT

Respondents could choose a combination of transport systems. 75% of all respondents travelled on foot to the PHA

How did you travel to the Parliament Hill area today?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
On Foot	74.67%	280
Drive	7.73%	29
Overground	5.87%	22
Bicycle/Scooter	8.53%	32
Underground/Tube	2.67%	10
Bus	4.80%	18
Other (please specify)	3.20%	12
Total Respondents: 375		

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

3.5 POST CODE

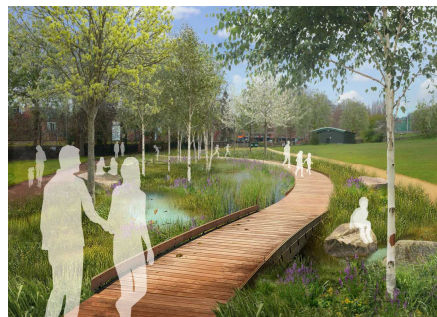
Respondents were asked to give the first part of their postcode. This was answered by 98% of the sample.

NW5	30%
NW3	27%
N6	11%
N19	6%
NW6	3%
N2	3%
NW11	2%
NW1	2%
Other North London	12%

4. VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

4.1 NEW WETLAND AREA

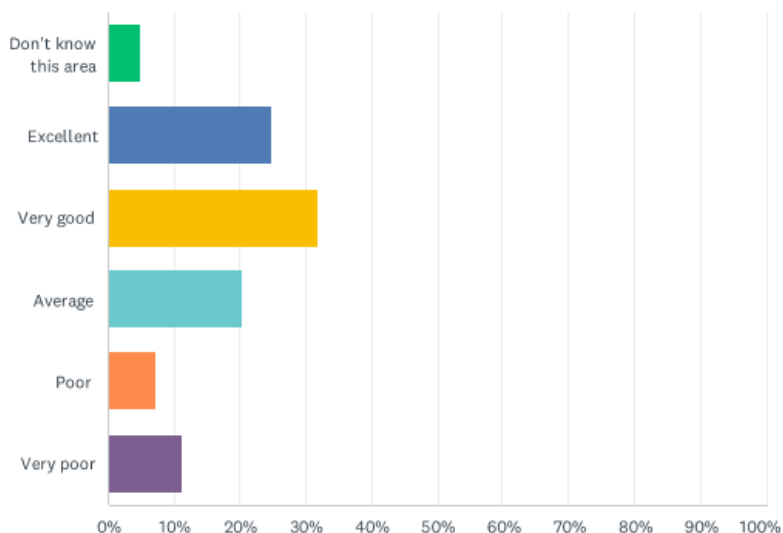
4.1.1 Respondents were asked for their views on improvements to the often saturated ground near the Lido which would include better management of storm water with boardwalks and rain gardens. They were shown the before and after images below:



4.1.2 56.5% said the proposals were excellent or very good (24.8% and 31.7% respectively); however 20% said they were average and 18% said they were poor or very poor. 4.8% said they didn't know this area.

Rate the Wetland Area idea by ticking one of the boxes below

Answered: 375 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know this area	4.80%	18
Excellent	24.80%	93
Very good	31.73%	119
Average	20.27%	76
Poor	7.20%	27
Very poor	11.20%	42
TOTAL		375

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

- 4.1.3 Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. This was one of the more controversial ideas and 188 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 1.

Summary of Comments

- 4.1.4 The comments expressed a range of opinions regarding the proposed improvements. Many who commented were against any changes that would affect the wild and open character of the Heath or detract from the current use of the area by children for sports and games. In total 71 comments (38%) argued that the area should be left as it is, while 39 (21%) were generally in favour or very supportive. There were 25 comments (13%) concerned with the proposed design, such as it not looking natural enough or not catering enough for children or the disabled or dogs. Other comments were concerned with the loss of this amenity for sports and games for children or picnicking. There was agreement by some that drainage of the area was necessary in order to improve its use as an open space. The cost of on-going maintenance of the new Wetlands area was also raised by several respondents who felt it could fall into disrepair in the future or the money could be better spent elsewhere. The key issues that came up can be grouped as follows:

Main issues raised about the New Wetlands proposals

- 4.1.5 ***Preservation of natural character:***
Many comments emphasised the importance of preserving the natural and wild character of Hampstead Heath. There were concerns that the measures would make the area too managed or organised, too much like a 'Park' and there was a strong desire to maintain the existing open space. Typical of the comments were:
- 4.1.6 ***Impact on wildlife***
Several respondents expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on local wildlife and biodiversity. The need to protect and enhance the habitat for various species is highlighted.
- 4.1.7 ***Drainage issues***
Drainage problems during wet weather are mentioned in multiple comments. Some see the proposed wetland features as a way to address these issues, while others question the necessity of the changes in addressing overall drainage problems in the area..
- 4.1.8 ***Access and accessibility***
Access for various groups including disabled, families and dogs was a concern. Some comments mention the need for the boardwalks to be wider, non-slip or to include seating at regular intervals.
- 4.1.9 ***Sports & Recreational activities***
Some respondents were concerned about the loss of a recreational area expressing worries that the proposed changes might limit access or interfere

with existing activities such as kid's football training and ball games and dog walking.

4.1.10 ***Design & aesthetics***

Opinions on the proposed design of the new area varied. There were conflicting comments about the boardwalks with some wanting them bigger and some unhappy with them. Others questioned the design's compatibility with the natural landscape of the Heath. Typical comments were:

4.1.11 ***Community engagement and information***

Some participants expressed a desire for more information and engagement with the local community regarding the proposed changes. The importance of involving existing groups working on biodiversity and environmental preservation is highlighted.

4.1.12 ***Maintenance and long term viability***

Several comments mention concerns about the long term maintenance costs of the proposals. There were worries that certain features such as boardwalks might require ongoing expensive maintenance.

4.1.13 ***Prioritisation of expenditure***

Questions were raised about the allocation of funds for the proposed improvements. There are worries that other priorities, such as improving drainage or facilities, should take precedence.

Mixed support

4.1.14 Clearly the comments only reflect the views of those who answered this additional open ended question. Half did not and the earlier histogram shows a majority (58%) in favour of the idea. However, they provide a useful insight into the reasons for opposition as well as some constructive contributions on access, design, maintenance etc.

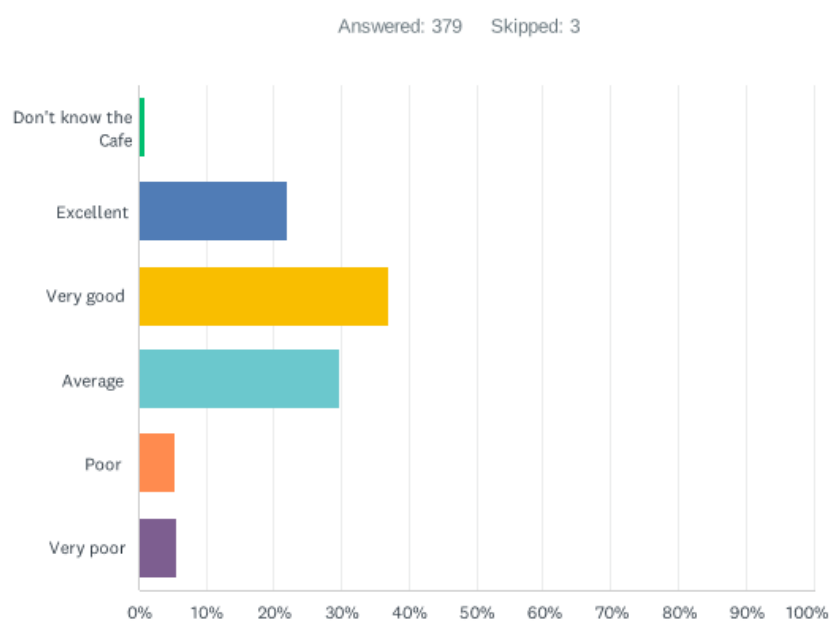
4.2. CAFÉ IMPROVEMENTS

4.2.1 Respondents were asked to comment on **improvements to the existing café** including its refurbishment, extended area, an information hub and new enlarged outdoor seating area. They were shown the before and after images below:



4.2.2 Just under 59% thought the proposals were excellent or very good (21.9% and 36.9% respectively). 29.6% thought they were average and 10.8% thought they were poor or very poor.

Rate the Café area improvements



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know the Cafe	0.79%	3
Excellent	21.90%	83
Very good	36.94%	140
Average	29.55%	112
Poor	5.28%	20
Very poor	5.54%	21
TOTAL		379

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

- 4.2.3 Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. This also raised quite a few issues among respondents. In all 180 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 2.

The comments provided highlight a range of opinions regarding the proposed improvements to the café area. (These comments must be seen in the context that *overall* 59% of the sample thought the proposals were excellent or very good). The main points and themes that stand out from the comments are:

4.2.4 ***Mixed reactions to changes***

Some individuals are supportive of improvements, highlighting the need for updates and welcoming additional seating, better facilities and healthier food options. There were 35 comments broadly in favour of the proposals (19%). Others were critical of the proposed changes, expressing concern about the potential destruction of greenery, loss of character and unnecessary alterations. 31 comments came from respondents wanting the Café left as it is (17%). Many accepted the café needed a revamp but felt it should be kept low key and not turned into a crowded 'hot spot'. There were 37 comments on the design (20%) and 16 comments on the food/catering (9%).

4.2.5 ***Seating and space***

Many comments emphasised the need for more seating, both indoor and outdoor, while maintaining a balance to avoid overcrowding and preserve the natural feel of the Heath. Some suggested specific improvements like covered outdoor seating areas for various weather conditions.

4.2.6 ***Food and service***

Numerous comments mentioned the importance of improving food quality, diversity of menu options and affordability of the café. Some called for better food and drink offerings, better catering and potential partnerships with local suppliers. A better café offering was more of a priority with some than the physical improvements.

4.2.7 ***Nature preservation***

Several comments expressed concern about maintaining the natural state of the Heath and not encroaching on green spaces or altering the landscape. A recurring theme was the desire to strike a balance between improvements and preserving the unique character of the Heath, avoiding overdevelopment.

4.2.8 ***Ownership and chains***

There is a desire to keep the café under the existing management and prevent corporate chains from taking over, emphasising the importance of community and affordable pricing.

4.2.9 ***Design and aesthetics***

Opinions on the proposed design varied with some finding it appealing and others considering it unnecessary or lacking innovation. The small thumbnail

visual in the questionnaire made it difficult to see the changes and this was reflected in quite a few answers such as:

Others felt the accent should be more on improving planting around the café, a small wildlife garden perhaps. Other design ideas included more indoor space, more thought for cyclists, a sensory area with aromatic plants, and space for pop-up stalls

4.2.10 ***Community and accessibility***

Comments highlighted the café's role as a social hub and the need for a diverse range of visitors to access and enjoy the space. There were calls for accessibility improvements, including better seating for families, dog friendly spaces, and facilities for the disabled.

4.2.11 ***Engagement and transparency***

The difficulty of seeing the changes properly among the many who couldn't attend the public consultation day, led to dissatisfaction with the consultation process and the need for clearer explanation of the proposals and detailed plans.

4.2.12 ***Visitor experience***

Suggestions for enhancing the visitor experience included play areas for children, educational boards, a visitor centre, a hatch serving drinks, a tie up place for dogs, more recycling bins, and more shade for hot weather conditions.

4.3 CHILDRENS PLAY AREA

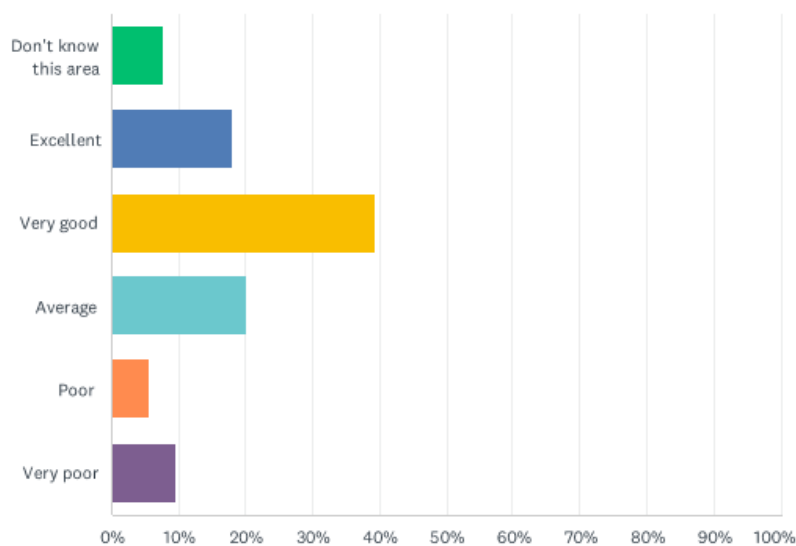
4.3.1 Respondents were asked to comment on the renewal of the Under 5's Children's Play area and were shown the following before and after images:



4.3.2 57% rated the proposals as excellent or very good (18% and 39% respectively). 20% rated them as average and 15% rated them as poor or very poor. 7.7% didn't know this area.

Rate the new Children's Play area.

Answered: 378 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know this area	7.67%	29
Excellent	17.99%	68
Very good	39.15%	148
Average	20.11%	76
Poor	5.56%	21
Very poor	9.52%	36
TOTAL		378

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

4.3.3 Other comments

Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. This also raised issues among some respondents. In all 167 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 3. Of these 35 were positive, 15 were negative

The main issues and concerns raised by those who added a comment regarding the Children's Play Area (44%) are grouped under the following headings:

Preserving open space: Many comments emphasise the importance of maintaining open spaces for picnics, gatherings and imaginative play.

Balancing nature and development: Several respondents expressed concerns that the changes might compromise the natural and peaceful atmosphere of the area.

Overcrowding and noise: There are worries that the proposed improvements might lead to overcrowding, increased noise and loss of tranquillity.

Nature and biodiversity: Some comments highlight the need to consider biodiversity and the impact of changes on the local ecosystem.

Design and aesthetic: Aesthetic concerns included the use of certain structures like windmills and bright colours which are seen as not fitting in well with the natural surroundings.

Accessibility and safety: Several comments raised issues about ensuring the safety, visibility and accessibility for children of varying ages and abilities.

Equipment & play features: There is a desire for improved play equipment, inclusive play structures and creative play features that cater to a variety of age groups. Many comments suggested using natural materials and designs that blended well with the surrounding environment.

Specific requests for additional swings, play structures, water features, shade, and seating areas were mentioned.

Concerns about the long term maintenance of new structures and play features were also raised.

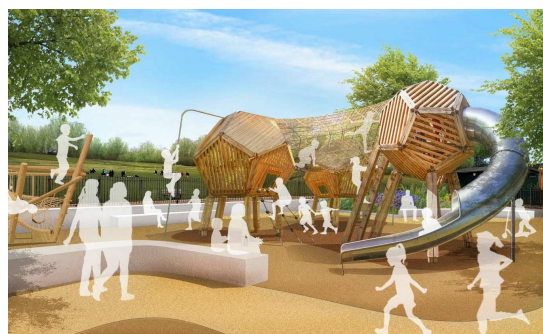
Community input: Some comments suggested involving the community in the decision-making process and considering various preferences

Usage and popularity: The current popularity and usage of the area are acknowledged with some calling for updates to meet evolving needs.

The comments reflected a range of opinions and concerns, including a desire to maintain the unique character of the play area, while also improving its features for children and families.

4.4 PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

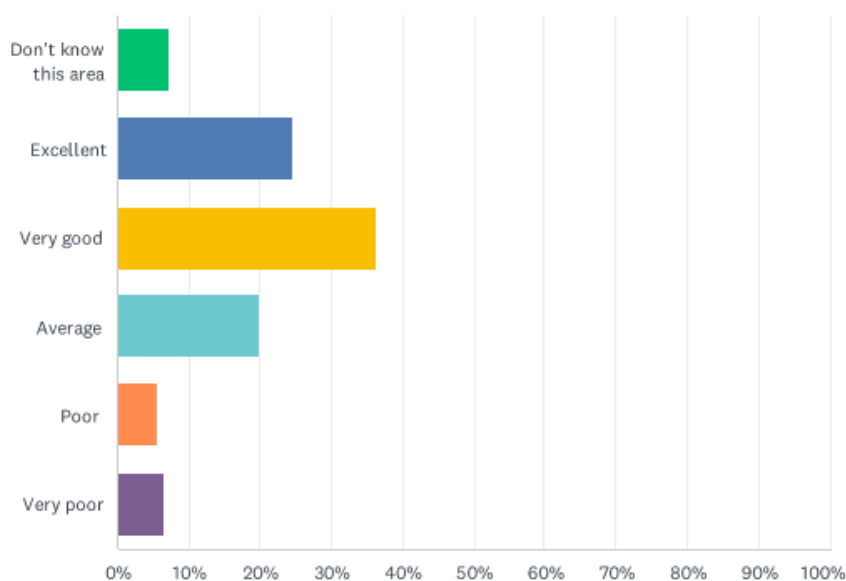
4.4.1 Respondents were then asked to rate the improvements to the Playground for older children and were shown the following before and after images:



4.4.2 60.8% of respondents rated the improvements to this Playground as excellent or very good (24.5% and 36.3% respectively). 20% rated them as average and 12.1% rated them as poor or very poor. 7.3% didn't know this area.

Rate the Playground improvements

Answered: 372 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know this area	7.26%	27
Excellent	24.46%	91
Very good	36.29%	135
Average	19.89%	74
Poor	5.65%	21
Very poor	6.45%	24
TOTAL		372

4.4.3 Other comments

Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. In all 162 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 4.

The main issues and points raised by respondents making comments regarding the playground improvements were as follows

Safety and accessibility: Concerns about ensuring the safety of children, avoiding hazards, and making the playground accessible for children of all abilities. Requests to include elements that cater to disabled children, older kids, and teens, ensuring that the playground is inclusive for all age groups and remains engaging and relevant.

Aesthetics and design: Opinions on the design of the new structures, included comments about aesthetics, size, and integration with the natural environment. They emphasised the importance of maintaining or enhancing the variety of play opportunities.

Requests were made for visibility and supervision points for parents and carers. Suggestions were made for additional seating for parents and carers, as well as amenities like shade, toilets, and refreshments nearby.

Current state and maintenance: Criticisms were made of the current playground's condition, emphasising the need for maintenance, repairs, and improvements.

Space and utilisation: Concerns were expressed about the proposed design potentially reducing available playing space or not accommodating multiple activities simultaneously, leading to overcrowding and longer queues. Observations were made that the playground was frequently busy, prompting considerations for managing increased usage resulting from improvements.

Engagement and consultation: There were calls for involving children and parents in the decision-making process to ensure that the proposed improvements met their preferences and needs. There were multiple calls for engaging directly with children for input and ideas.

Natural materials and environment: Requests for the use of natural materials and incorporating more green elements in the design to enhance the playground's appeal and blend with the park's environment. Voices for sustainability, utilising environmentally friendly materials and considering the ecological impact of the improvements

Existing play equipment: Some felt that the current playground was functional and well-liked by children, suggesting that improvements may not be necessary or should be minor. Some respondents expressed satisfaction with the current playground and questioned the need for significant changes.

Cost and Funding: There were concerns about spending money on unnecessary improvements, while other areas or facilities might have more pressing needs.

Integration with Park and Community: There were calls for ensuring that the improvements aligned with the park's character, views, and existing activities.

Usage when works are being carried out: There was concerns about the disruption caused by playground improvements and its impact on families using the park.

4.4.4 Summary of Comments

Overall, the comments covered a range of opinions on the proposed playground improvements, highlighting the complexity of addressing safety, aesthetics, age-appropriate activities, community engagement, and other considerations in creating a successful and beneficial upgrade.

4.5 NEW BALL GAMES AREA

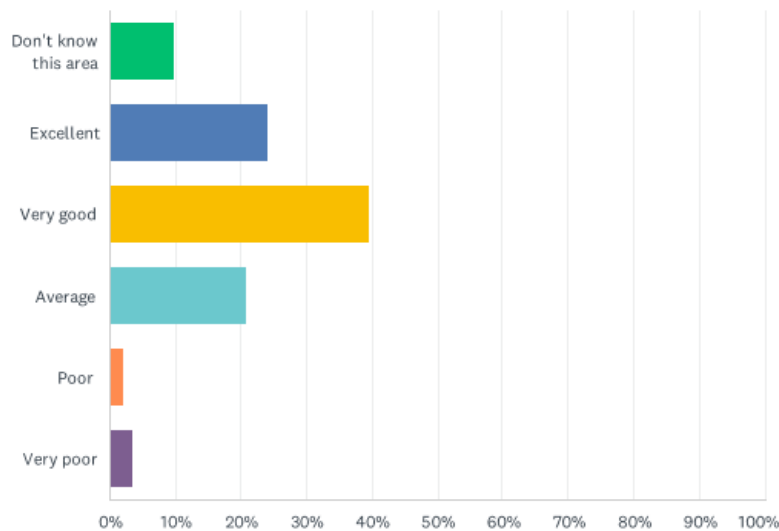
4.5.1 Respondents were then asked for their views on a new Ball Games Area and were shown the following before and after images:



4.5.2 63.7% of respondents rated the improvements as excellent or very good (24% and 39.7% respectively), 20.8% rated them as average and 5.6% rated them as poor or very poor. 9.9% didn't know this area.

Rate the Ball Games Area improvements

Answered: 375 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know this area	9.87%	37
Excellent	24.00%	90
Very good	39.73%	149
Average	20.80%	78
Poor	2.13%	8
Very poor	3.47%	13
TOTAL		375

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

4.5.3 Other comments

Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. In all 120 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 5. Of these 53 were broadly supportive and 17 negative.

The main issues and points raised in the comments regarding the Ball Game Area improvements include:

Colour choice and aesthetics: Concerns about the use of bright colours for the ground, with comments suggesting that the colours are unnecessary, jarring, or not in line with the natural environment of Hampstead Heath.

Design and integration: Comments on the design's urban feel and the need for a design that fits in with the ethos of Hampstead Heath. Suggestions for more subdued colours and a design that blends better with the surroundings.

Accessibility and usage: Questions about who will have access to the area, whether it will be open to the general public, and if there will be any restrictions or booking requirements.

Fencing and Safety: Mixed opinions on the proposed fencing, with some in favour of higher fencing to prevent balls from going over, while others express concerns about the potential for an oppressive or unsafe feeling due to fencing.

Additional Features: Requests for additional features such as more seating, football goals, and mat-based activities like yoga. Some suggestions for more sports to be included beyond basketball.

Integration with nature: Calls to keep the improvements more natural-looking and to ensure that the area remains in harmony with the Heath's natural environment.

Safety and Lighting: Concerns about the safety of the area, suggesting good lighting and potentially cameras to enhance safety and discourage potential trouble.

Location and Accessibility: Comments on the remote location of the area, challenges with access points, and suggestions to consider adapting existing tennis courts for the ball area.

Usage and appeal: Questions about the potential usage of the area and whether it will attract people. Some express that they didn't know the area existed or that it wasn't being used much.

Multi-functionality and inclusion: Suggestions for multi-purpose usage to accommodate various sports and activities beyond just basketball. Concerns about the accessibility and inclusivity of the area, especially for female users.

Natural look and feel: Emphasis on maintaining a natural appearance for the area and keeping it in line with the Heath's character.

Positive reception: Positive reactions to the idea of the improvements, expressing support and excitement for the addition of designated ball game areas.

Noise pollution: Concerns about potential noise pollution affecting nearby residents.

Sports nets: Suggestions to ensure sturdy sports nets, especially for basketball. Mention of basketball's popularity and the lack of funding for such facilities.

Specific sports requests: Requests for specific sports like football, beach volleyball, and paddle to be considered for the area.

Curiosity and lack of awareness: Comments from those who weren't aware of the existing ball game area and express curiosity about the improvements.

Integration with the Park's Name: Comments about the name "Parliament Hill Fields" and the association of fields with open grassy spaces rather than hard-surfaced game areas.

Use of space: Some view the space as underused and support the idea of repurposing it for ball games.

Critique of Colour Scheme: Criticisms of the proposed colour scheme as not appropriate for a sports area and suggestions for resurfacing with sports markings.

Support for Basketball: Expressions of support for basketball and netball, noting their popularity and positive impact on the local area.

4.5.4 Summary of comments

Overall, the comments reflected a range of opinions on the proposed improvements, with discussions covering aesthetics, accessibility, usability, and integration with the park's natural environment, safety concerns, and specific sports preferences.

4.6 NEW SPLASH PARK

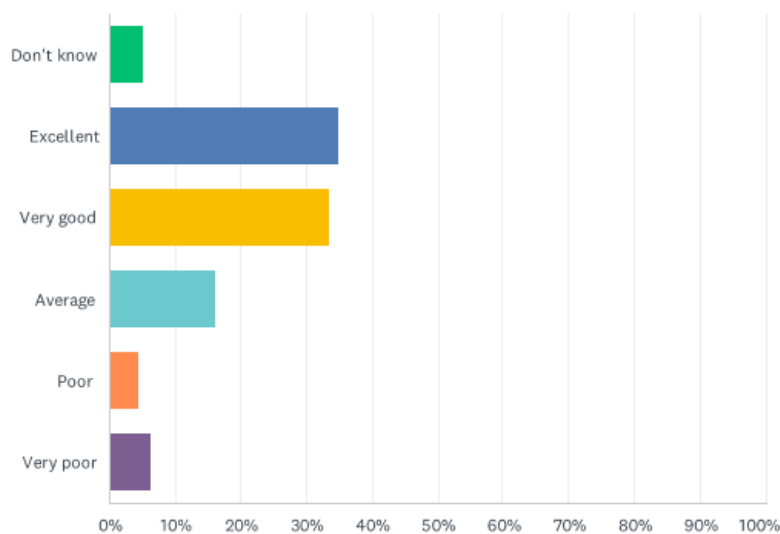
4.6.1 Respondents were asked for their views on a new Splash Park to replace the existing children’s paddling pool and were shown the following before and after images:



4.6.2 68.4% thought the Splash Park idea was excellent or very good (35% and 33.4% respectively), the highest positive score of all the ideas. 15.9% thought it was average and 10.6% thought it was poor or very poor. 5% said don’t know.

Rate the Splash Park improvements

Answered: 377 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Don't know	5.04%	19
Excellent	35.01%	132
Very good	33.42%	126
Average	15.92%	60
Poor	4.51%	17
Very poor	6.10%	23
TOTAL		377

Source: MTW Consultants Ltd: Survey of views on Parliament Hill Area improvements Aug 23

4.6.3 Other comments

Respondents were then invited to add any additional comments they would like to make. In all 152 comments were received which are shown verbatim in Appendix 6. In all there were 62 comments supportive of the proposals and 41 wanting to retain the status quo. The others were mixed with many favouring a hybrid scheme including both a Splash Park and paddling pool. These comments should be seen in the context of the high level of overall support for the Splash Park project from the whole sample, with over two thirds believing it to be excellent or very good (35% and 33% respectively).

The main Issues Identified in the comments about the Splash Park improvements was as follows:

Maintenance and Functionality: Many comments highlighted the importance of proper maintenance and keeping the splash park in good working order to ensure its continued enjoyment by children.

Design Preferences: Opinions varied on the design, with some preferring a deeper pool without fountains, while others advocated retaining the existing paddling pool or introducing fountains for added excitement.

Suggestions were made to maintain a mix of options, such as retaining the paddling pool and introducing fountains for variety.

A few comments mentioned the need for the design to be eco-friendly and sustainable.

Preservation of Current Pool: Several comments expressed attachment to the current paddling pool and its uniqueness, suggesting that it remains a beloved facility for children and families. Some preferred the simplicity of the current pool and expressed concerns about excessive features detracting from the natural experience. Some comments appreciated its role in introducing young children to water and providing a familiar, safe space.

Integration with the Heath environment: Concerns were raised about maintaining the calm and natural atmosphere of the Heath and avoiding overly flashy or urban designs that could disrupt the tranquillity.

Safety and hygiene: Safety and hygiene considerations were raised, including the need for shallow areas for toddlers, supervision, and proper water quality.

Environmental Impact: A few respondents questioned the environmental impact and water wastage associated with fountains, especially in light of ecological concerns. The amount of water usage and potential conservation measures were mentioned. A few comments expressed concern that the proposed changes could introduce urban elements that don't align with the Heath's natural environment.

Sustainability: Questions arose about the seasonal nature of the splash park and its usage during the rest of the year, as well as the potential for noise and disruption during construction.

Seating and Shade: Many respondents appreciated the addition of more seating and suggested the importance of shaded areas for parents and carers. The need for sufficient shading and comfortable seating for parents and caregivers is emphasised.

Children's Preferences: Different views are expressed regarding whether children prefer fountains or sitting in a pool of water, highlighting the diversity of preferences. Many comments expressed positivity about the improvements benefiting young children and offering a safer and more engaging experience.

Cost and allocation of funds: Several respondents questioned the cost-effectiveness of the project and suggested allocating funds to other areas. Some raised concerns about the allocation of resources for the splash park versus other amenities such as the ponds.

Community engagement: Some comments expressed dissatisfaction with the survey design, stating that it does not adequately represent the current usage of the space.

Year-round usage: The concern about the limited seasonal usage of water-related facilities like the splash park was mentioned, with some advocating for more year-round usability.

Hygienic and safe use: Hygiene and safety are mentioned as important considerations, particularly with regard to the behaviour of children near water.

Integration with playground and facilities: Suggestions are made to integrate the splash park with nearby playground facilities and provide adequate seating and amenities for carers.

Supervision and Access Rules: Ideas included having supervision rules and age restrictions for entry, as well as prohibiting dogs from the area.

Accessibility: Questions are raised about access for individuals with disabilities, toilets, and whether the attraction will remain unticketed.

4.6.4 Summary of comments

Overall, the main issues revolved around design preferences, the preservation of the current paddling pool, maintaining the Heath's natural atmosphere, safety, sustainability, equitable access, and the inclusion of shading and seating. There are also concerns about cost-effectiveness, noise, and seasonal usage patterns.

5. COMMENTS ABOUT OTHER SPACES IN THE PARLIAMENT HILL AREA

Respondents were invited to add any other comments, questions or concerns about any of the other spaces in the PHA. In all 157 comments were received. These are shown verbatim in Appendix 7.

A summary of the main issues and concerns expressed in the comments regarding other spaces in the PHA is shown below:

Preservation of natural beauty: Many respondents expressed a strong desire to maintain the natural beauty and open spaces of Hampstead Heath. There are concerns that proposed changes could negatively impact the unique atmosphere and biodiversity of the area.

Overdevelopment: Concerns were raised about potential over development and commercialisation, with worries that new facilities or structures might alter the character of the Heath and lead to increased congestion and litter.

Biodiversity and wildlife: There was a consistent emphasis on protecting wildlife habitats and promoting biodiversity. Some suggested creating managed wildlife areas or wildflower meadows as part of any improvements.

Maintenance and safety: Many comments addressed the need for better maintenance, including repairing broken equipment, upgrading paths, and addressing safety concerns in playgrounds and other areas.

Accessibility and facilities: Some respondents requested improved facilities, such as more improved toilets, benches, drinking fountains, water bottle refill stations, and cycle paths. Others emphasised the importance of accessible paths for pedestrians, cyclists, and families with children. Others are worried about the imposition of charges for new facilities.

Consultation and transparency: Several individuals expressed a desire for more inclusive and transparent consultation processes with the local community and stakeholders before implementing any changes to the Heath.

Specific Suggestions: There were specific suggestions for enhancements, including floodlights on the tennis courts and a water fountain, additional seating areas, cycle paths, improved toilets and signage, a fenced area specifically for dogs to run around in, a clubhouse for the Rugby Club, improvements to the PHA entrance from Highgate Road and the Hive building.

Cafe and Visitor Centre: Opinions varied regarding the proposed cafe improvements or visitor centre, with some welcoming the idea for improved amenities and others cautioning against potential commercialisation.

Community and Family-Friendly Spaces: Many comments focussed on creating safe and enjoyable spaces for families and children, including playgrounds, picnic areas, and events.

Balance and integration: Respondents highlighted the need for any improvements to strike a balance between enhancing the Heath's offerings and preserving its natural, peaceful character.

It's important to note that while some respondents expressed concerns and reservations, others welcomed certain improvements and enhancements, reflecting a diversity of opinions and priorities among the users of Hampstead Heath.

6. SUBMISSION FROM THE HEATH & HAMPSTEAD SOCIETY

6.1 Introduction

The Heath & Hampstead Society submitted a written response to the consultation after the on-line survey had closed due to not being aware of the link and the deadline. It was felt that the views of this key stakeholder must be taken into account so the main points they have raised are summarised here. Their full submission is shown in Appendix 9. Some of their comments related to the wider Masterplan in addition to the 6 selected areas.

6.2 General comments on the Masterplan and selected improvements

The Society supports proposals for improvement of sports facilities and grounds, playgrounds and facilities at and around the Parliament Hill Café.

Playgrounds

They would like some of the playground area to be allocated to outdoor exercise facilities for adults, including older adults.

Café

They would like to see a dedicated nature interpretation centre integrated with the café to educate visitors on the biodiversity of the Heath.

The Hive

They would support the improvement of the Hive and its facilities but feel these should support the work of Heath Hands rather than a new café.

The Broad Walk

We would like to see in the Master Plan the re-instatement of the planting of a line of oak trees along the Broad Walk. This proposal had been accepted by the City of London but was not included in the Masterplan.

6.3 The New Wetlands Area

The Society strongly supports the idea of safeguarding playing fields and adapting to climate change by establishing a wetland that serves as both drainage infrastructure and a biodiverse habitat in a nature-deprived section of the Heath. However, the specific proposed plan is not endorsed. Previous talks with the City of London led to the identification of a wetland and woodland strip along the east side of football pitches from the Broad Walk to the Lido area, where drainage is particularly problematic. This corridor is recognized as vital for local biodiversity. A nature recovery network connecting Heath, Parliament Hill, and other Camden SINC's was backed by the City of London in anticipation of increased foot traffic due to the proposed "Heath Line."

Although the initial plan changed due to a gas pipe concern, the new wetland location on the north side of the Lido lacks the same biodiversity potential and

connectivity. Instead it creates a strip of wetland that runs west to a low quality railside woodland not managed by the City of London.

The artist's depiction emphasises recreational rather than conservation value, raising concerns about foot traffic impact. A request is made to discuss the gas pipeline issue and the purpose and design of the wetland, with the goal of preserving the habitat corridor either within this development or as a separate component of the Master Plan.