DRAFT

Our plans for Southwood Country Park – your views

November 2021

Consultation report by Policy and Communications

Contents

Summary

Southwood Country Park is used regularly and the top three reasons to visit are for walking (67.0%), followed by dog walking (33.2%) and enjoying the scenery (30.4%). Over 50% of respondents visit the park for between 30minutes and one hour. The most popular way to get to the park is by foot (47.9%), followed by car/van (43.7%).

The top three other places visited for the same reason that Southwood Country Park was visited for were:

1. Fleet Pond
2. Hartland County Park
3. Bramshot Farm County Park

The vast majority of respondents (96.36%) like the proposed plans for the visitors centre and café. The sustainable features (including solar panels, green roof and ground source heat pump) and the café were the features the respondents liked the most about the plans. The vast majority (92.9%) also liked the proposed finish to the outside of the building.

Respondents thought the café was the right size (87.5%) and they thought the covered external space was the right size (72.9%). The majority of respondents (84.4%) liked the proposed green energy features and respondents like the proposal for a children's play area (82.3%) and a dog wash facility (51.0%).

The vast majority (92.1%) supported the habitat improvements proposed in the environmental design. Respondent were generally very positive about the design in particular the improvements to the river/brook and ponds and the wild-flower areas. Respondents mentioned that there needed to be more and improved paths across the site.

The majority (81.6%) of respondents agreed that overall, the proposed management arrangements will create, protect and improve the natural habitats in the country park. The main theme of concern from the respondents is the Esso pipeline. The majority (74.0%) of respondents agreed that the proposed management arrangements will provide the access and infrastructure needed for the country park to function as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Some respondents are concerned about the road crossing and the lack of a proper / controlled crossing

Overall, respondents are very positive about all the plans and proposals.

Introduction

Southwood Country Park is a 57-hectare area of green open space in Farnborough, connected by a network of formal and informal paths. The park opened in 2019 and it is what is known as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), which means the area is permanently protected as natural green public open space.

There are plans which will improve the country park and make it more attractive to people and wildlife. The consultation was designed for members of the public to give their views on those plans. In particularly their views on:

- The draft designs to adapt the former clubhouse building into a visitor centre and café
- The proposals to improve the natural environment
- The interim management plan for the park

Methodology

To understand people's views on the improvement plans, an online survey was designed and public events held at Southwood County Park. The online survey was advertised through the Arena Magazine (appendix A), via the email news and on the Council social media platforms. Posters advertising the public events and the online survey were placed throughout the park (appendix B) and paper versions of the surveys were available at the public events (appendix C).

The public meetings were held on:

- Tuesday 2 November from 8am to 5pm
- Saturday 6 November from 9am to 4pm

The consultation ran from Monday 18 October to Friday 12 November.

Responses

There were 325 online responses and 71 paper responses, giving a total of 396 responses.

In total 375 (94.7%) respondents had visited Southwood Country Park and 21 (5.3%) respondents had not visited.

The table below shows the location of respondents:

Location of respondents	Number	Percentage
Aldershot	14	3.5%
Farnborough	344	86.9%
Other	38	9.6%

In total 90.4% (358 respondents) indicated that they lived in either Aldershot or Farnborough, with the vast majority living in Farnborough (86.9% - 344 respondents). 38 respondents indicated that they didn't live in Aldershot or Farnborough, with the majority coming from the surrounding towns. The nearby towns mentioned more than once were:

- Fleet (11 respondents)
- Camberley (4 respondents)
- Mytchett (3 respondents)
- Cove (2 respondents)
- Ash (2 respondents)
- Frimley (2 respondents)
- Yateley (2 respondents)

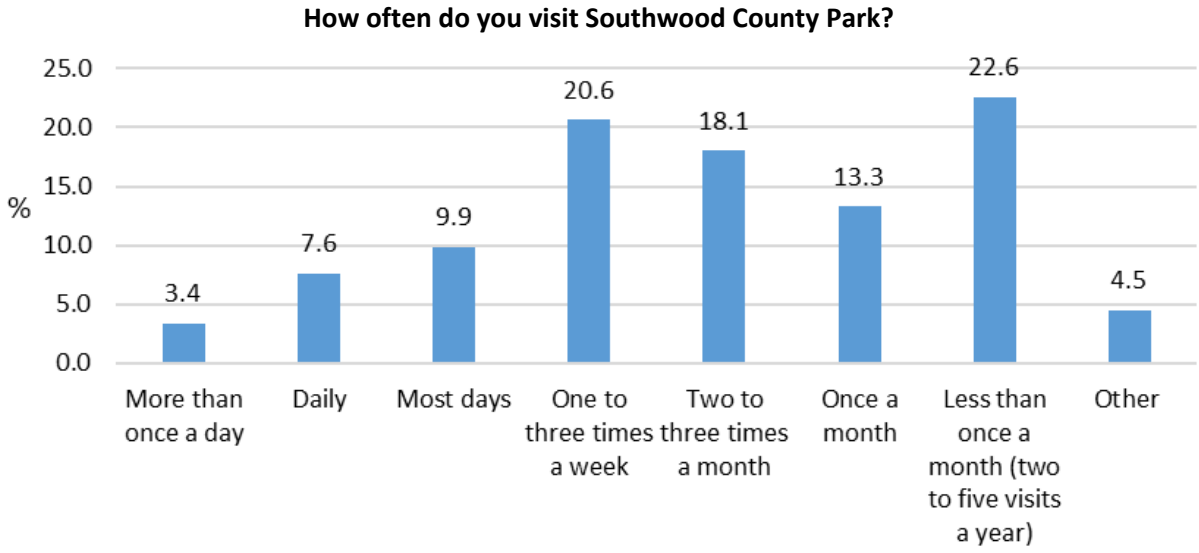
Results

Section one – visitors to Southwood County Park

Note: this section was available to all those who answered that they had visited Southwood County Park in Question 1.

Question 3. How often do you visit Southwood County Park?

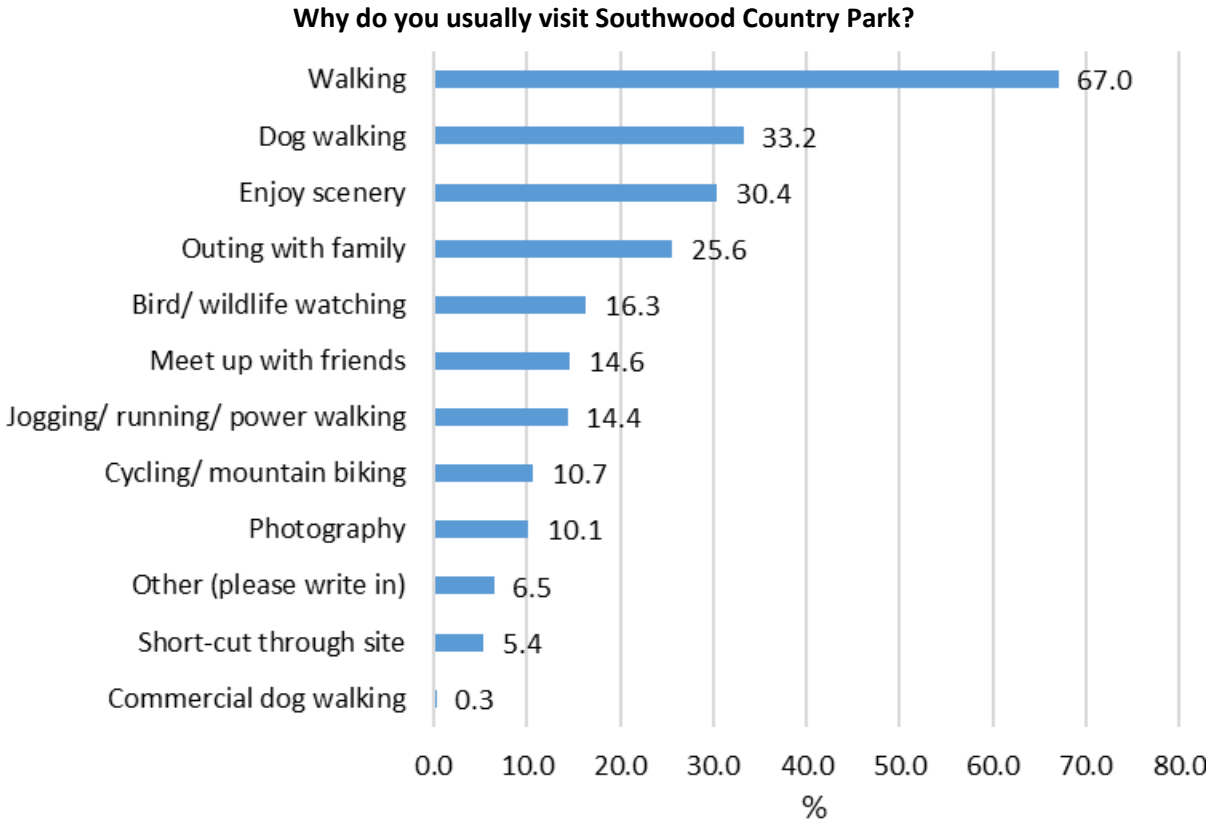
In total 354 respondents completed this question. The most popular response was less than once a month (two to five visits a year) with 22.6% (80 respondent), followed by one to three times a week with 20.6% (73 respondents). 11% (39 respondents) visited Southwood Country Park daily or more than once a day.



16 respondents completed the 'other' section of the questions. However, there were no common theme to the answers.

Question 4. Why do you usually visit Southwood Country Park?

In total 355 respondents completed this question. The most common reason to visit Southwood Country Park was for walking (67.0% - 238 respondents), followed by dog walking (33.2% - 118 respondents). The third most common reason was to enjoy the scenery (30.4% - 108 respondents).

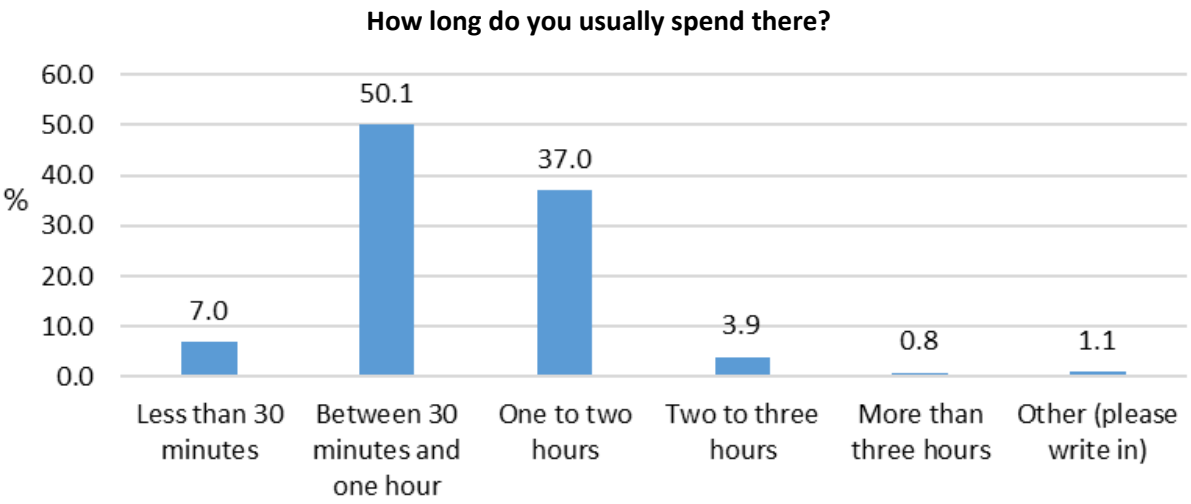


23 respondents completed the 'other' section of the questions. The main themes of the answers were:

- For volunteering and maintenance work (mentioned in 8 comments)
- For mental and physical health (mentioned in 3 comments)
- For home schooling (mentioned in 3 comments)

Question 5. How long do you usually spend there?

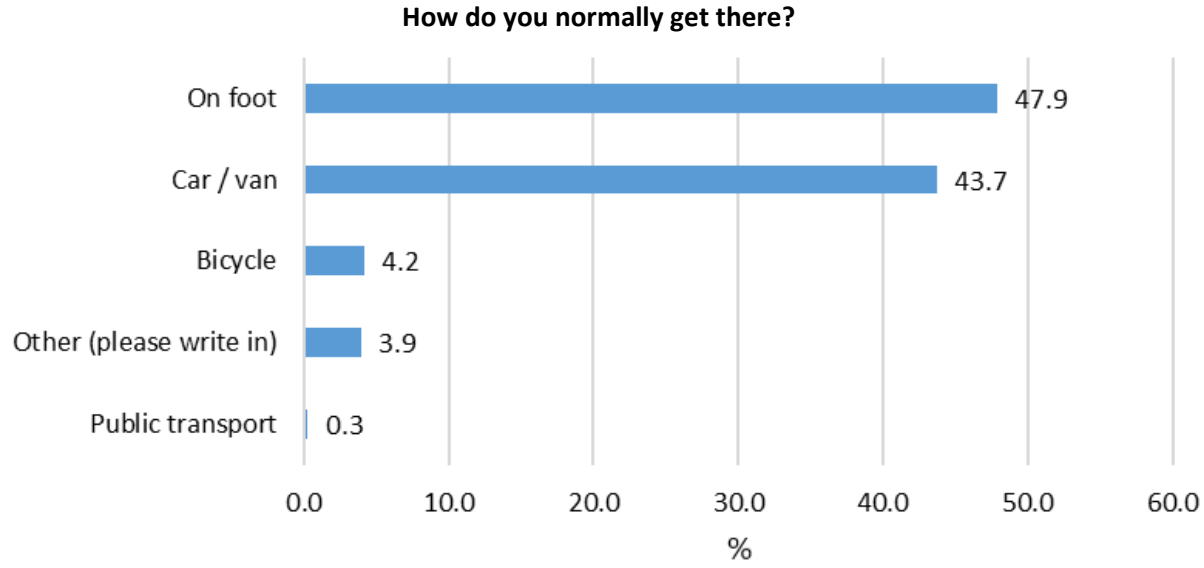
In total 357 respondents completed this question. Over 50% of respondents (178) indicated that they spent between 30 minutes and one hour at Southwood County Park.



4 respondents completed the 'other' section of the questions. However, there were no common theme to the answers.

Question 6. How do you normally get there?

In total 357 respondents completed this question. The most common way to visit Southwood Country Park is on foot (47.9% - 171 respondents), followed by car/van (43.7% - 156 respondents).



14 respondents completed the 'other' section of the questions. The main theme of the answers was:

- By car and on foot (mentioned in 5 comments)

Question 7. What is your full home postcode?

In total 350 respondents completed this question. Further work will be undertaken to work out average the distance travelled to Southwood County Park.

Question 8. Can you name three other green spaces that you also visit for the same reasons?

In total 324 respondent completed this question. The most popular places to visit were (all those mention 5 times or over):

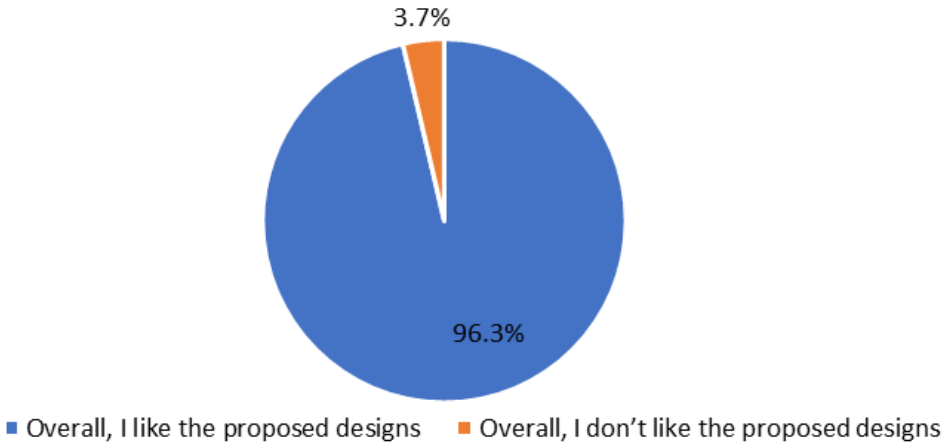
- Fleet Pond (mentioned in 99 comments)
- Hartland County Park (mentioned in 96 comments)
- Bramshot Farm County Park (mentioned in 92 comments)
- Hawley Woods/Lake (mentioned in 61 comments)
- Southwood Woodlands (mentioned in 51 comments)
- The Basingstoke Canal/the Canal Centre (mentioned in 38 comments)
- Queen Elizabeth Park (mentioned in 34 comments)
- Frimley Lodge Park (mentioned in 32 comments)
- King George the 5th Park (mentioned in 25 comments)
- Caesars Camp (mentioned in 23 comments)
- Minley Manor/Woods (mentioned in 21 comments)
- The Ranges/Ash Ranges (mentioned in 18 comments)
- Wellesley Woodland (mentioned in 13 comments)
- Edenbrook Country Park(mentioned in 12 comments)
- Cove Brook (mentioned in 12 comments)
- Frensham Ponds (mentioned in 12 comments)
- The Blackwater Valley (mentioned in 9 comments)
- Yateley Common (mentioned in 9 comments)
- Priory Street Park / Rectory Road Recreation Ground (mentioned in 9 comments)
- Farnham Park (mentioned in 8 comments)
- Rowhill Nature Reserve (mentioned in 8 comments)
- Tices Meadow (mentioned in 8 comments)
- Cove Green (mentioned in 6 comments)
- Alice Holt (mentioned in 6 comments)
- Hawley Meadows (mentioned in 6 comments)
- Virginia Waters (mentioned in 6 comments)
- Velmead (mentioned in 5 comments)

Section two – visitors centre and café

Question 9. Looking at the proposed designs for the visitor centre and café, what do you think of them?

In total 354 respondents completed this question. The vast majority (96.3% - 341 respondents) liked the overall plans for the visitor centre and café. Only 13 respondents (3.7%) did not like the plans.

Looking at the proposed designs for the visitor centre and café, what do you think of them?



Question 10. What design features do you like, and why?

In total 292 respondents completed this question. Features mentioned 5 or more times were:

- The café (mentioned in around 63 comments)
- The solar panels (mentioned in around 61 comments)
- General comments about the sustainable features (mentioned in around 59 comments)
- The green roof (mentioned in around 77 comments)
- The wood/cladding/natural finish (mentioned in around 41 comments)
- The outdoor seating (mentioned in around 40 comments)
- The fact it looks like it fits in with its surroundings/environment (mentioned in around 28 comments)
- The Classroom/ education space (mentioned in around 26 comments)
- The fact the building is being reused (mentioned in around 22 comments)
- The toilets (mentioned in around 21 comments)
- The modern look (mentioned in around 9 comments)
- The dog wash (mentioned in around 8 comments)
- The play area (mentioned in around 8 comments)
- The ground source heat pump (mentioned in around 8 comments)
- The proposed road crossing (mentioned in around 7 comments)

Question 11. What design features do you not like, and why?

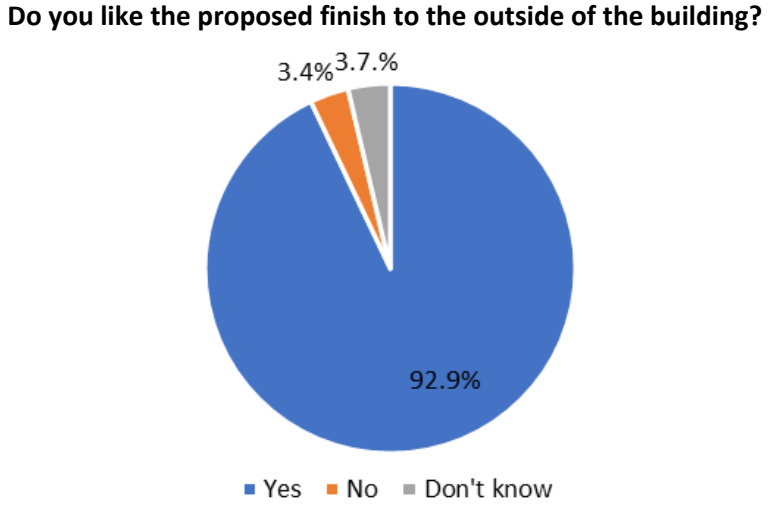
In total 170 respondents completed this question. Features mentioned 5 or more times were:

- N/A / none / nothing (mentioned in around 46 comments)
- All good/ I like it / nothing to dislike (mentioned in around 12 comments)

- Concerns about the use of cladding (mentioned in around 11 comments)
- The need for bike rack (mentioned in around 9 comments)
- Concerns about the crossing/ lack of bridge (mentioned in around 8 comments)
- Respondents thought the windows could be bigger (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- More disabled parking needed (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- Questions about who can use the classroom and how it can be used (mentioned in around 5 comments)
- The need for more outdoor seating (mentioned in around 5 comments)
- The need for a play area (mentioned in around 5 comments)

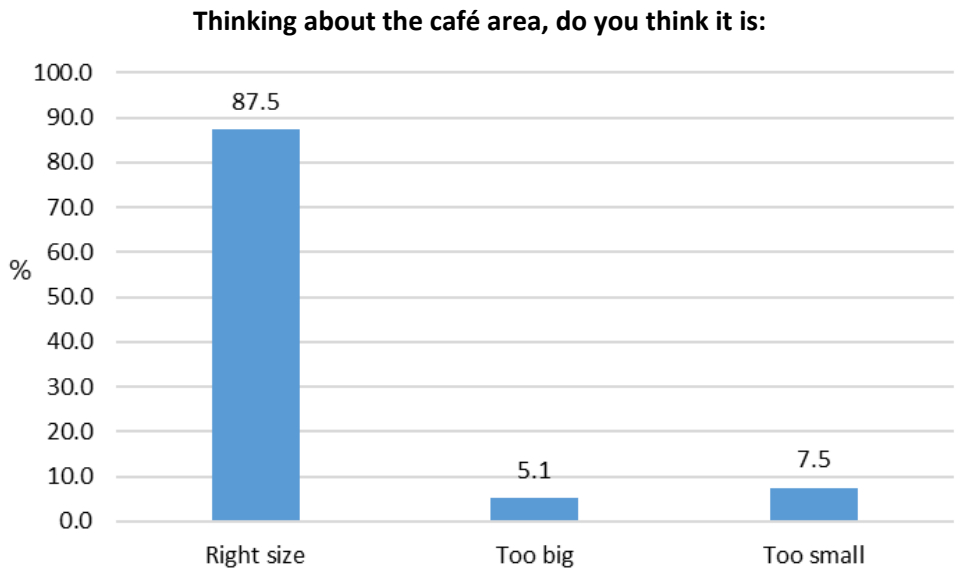
Question 12. Do you like the proposed finish to the outside of the building?

In total 354 respondents completed this question. The vast majority (92.9% - 329 respondents) liked the proposed finish to the outside of the building. Only 12 respondents (3.4%) did not like the proposed finish and 13 respondents (3.7%) didn't know.



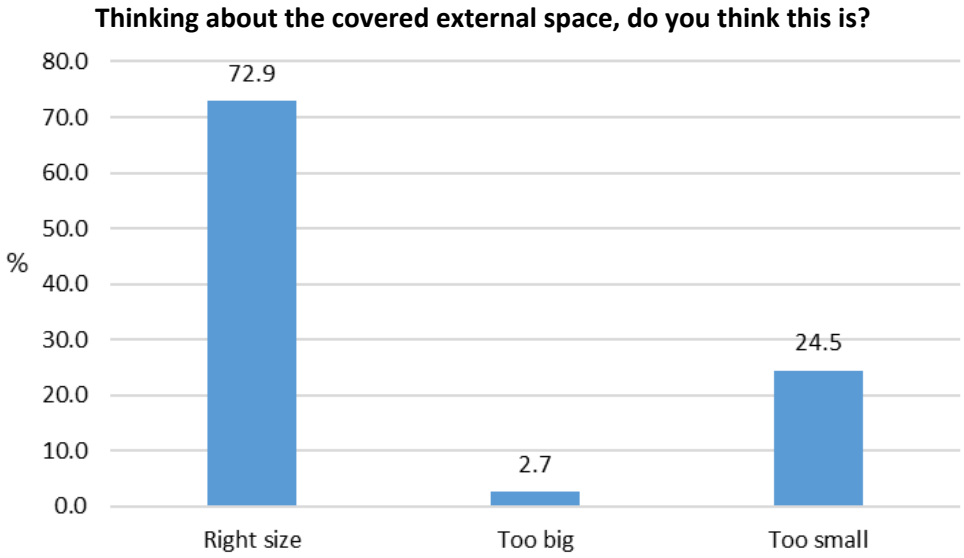
Question 13. Thinking about the café area, do you think it is:

In total 335 respondents completed this question. The majority (87.5% - 293 respondents) thought the café area was the right size, 5.1% (17 respondents) thought it was too big and 7.5% (25 respondents) thought it was too small.



Question 14. Thinking about the covered external space, do you think this is?

In total 339 respondents completed this question. The majority (72.9% - 247 respondents) thought the covered external space was the right size, 2.7% (9 respondents) thought it was too big and 24.5% (83 respondents) thought it was too small.



Question 15. Do you have any comments on the style and design of the covered external space?

In total 134 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

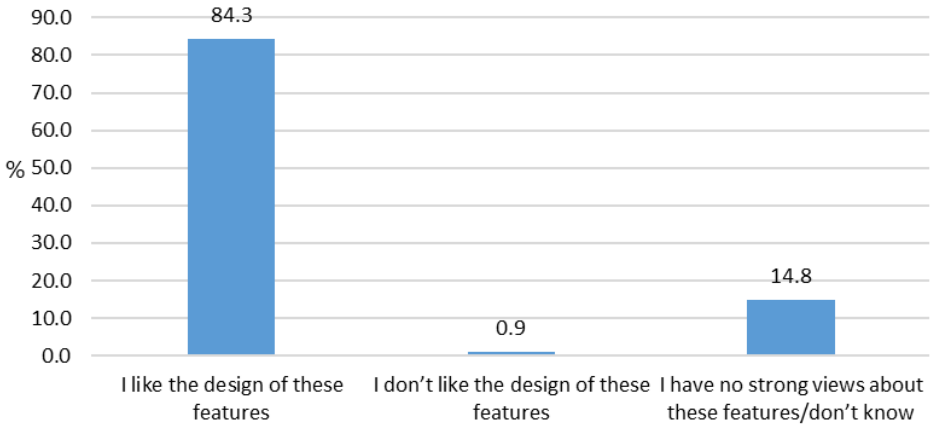
- Positive comments e.g. looks good / love it / looks amazing / needed (mentioned in around 33 comments)
- No / none (mentioned in around 20 comments)
- The need for the space to be bigger (mentioned in around 11 comments)

- Concerns/ideas about the style of seating for the covered outside space (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- More outdoor seating not covered and ionic benches (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- Negative comments about the cost / need / look of covered external space (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- Difficult to tell the size from the plans (mentioned in around 5 comments)

Question 16. We are proposing to include green energy features in the building. What do you think of the design of these?

In total 345 respondents completed this question. The majority (84.3% - 291 respondents) liked the design of the green energy features, 0.9% (3 respondents) didn't like the design of the green energy features and 14.8% (51 respondents) didn't have strong views on the energy features.

We are proposing to include green energy features in the building. What do you think of the design of these?



Question 17. Do you have any other comments on the design of the green energy features?

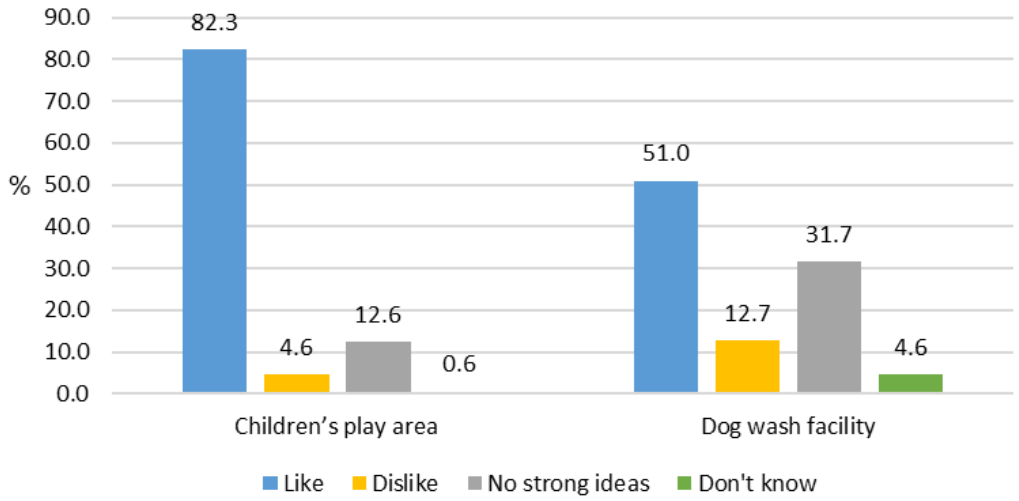
In total 93 respondent completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

- No / none / N/A (mentioned in around 30 comments)
- General positive comments about the green energy features (mentioned in around 26 comments)
- Comments about possible rainwater harvesting (mentioned in around 6 comments)
- Concern about the cost of the energy features (mentioned in around 6 comments)

Question 18. We are proposing to have a natural children's play area and dog wash facility near the visitor centre and café. What do you think of these proposals?

In total 351 respondents completed this question. There was support for both proposed facilities. There was stronger support for the children's play area with 82% (288 respondents) liking this proposal, compared to 51.0% (177 respondents) liking the proposal for the dog wash facility. However, nearly a third of respondents (31.7% - 110 respondents) had no strong opinions on the dog wash facility.

We are proposing to have a natural children's play area and dog wash facility near the visitor centre and café. What do you think of these proposals?

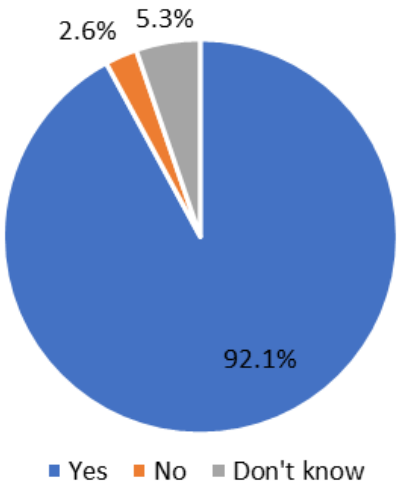


Section three – improving the natural environment

Question 19. Do you support the habitat improvements proposed in the environmental design?

In total 342 respondents completed this question. The vast majority (92.1% - 315 respondents) supported the habitat improvements proposed in the environmental design. Only 9 respondents (2.6%) did not support the habitat improvements and 18 respondents (5.3%) didn't know.

Do you support the habitat improvements proposed in the environmental design?



Question 20. Please tell us about the aspects of the design that you like

In total 170 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

- General positive comments about environmental design (mentioned in about 52 comments)
- The improvements to the river/brook and ponds (mentioned in about 47 comments)
- The wild-flower areas (mentioned in about 25 comments)
- New and improved variety of habitats (mentioned in about 14 comments)
- Improvements to pathways (mentioned in about 12 comments)
- None /N/A (mentioned in about 7 comments)
- The woodland areas (mentioned in about 6 comments)

Question 21. Please tell us about the aspects of the design that you don't like, or think could be improved

In total 103 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

- None / N/A (mentioned in about 25 comments)
- More seating and/or more bins (mentioned in about 5 comments)
- Paths need to be improved (mentioned in about 5 comments)

Question 22. Are there any additional improvements that are not in the proposed environmental design that you would like to see?

In total 141 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

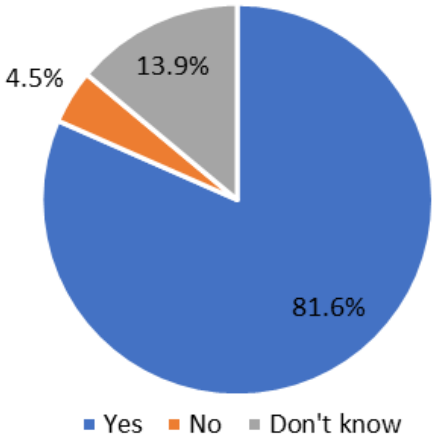
- Better paths / more path and more paths into the park / improved paths (mentioned in about 19 comments)
- No / N/A (mentioned in about 16 comments)
- More seating and/or more bins (mentioned in about 13 comments)
- More protection for wildlife from dogs / dogs on leads (mentioned in about 10 comments)
- Better road crossing / footbridge (mentioned in about 9 comments)
- Concerns about how wet it can get and flooding (mentioned in about 8 comments)
- Keep the area as natural as possible (mentioned in about 5 comments)

Section four – interim management plan

Question 23. Do you agree that overall, the proposed management arrangements will create, protect and improve the natural habitats in the country park?

In total 337 respondents completed this question. The majority (81.6% - 275 respondents) agreed that overall, the proposed management arrangements will create, protect and improve the natural habitats in the country park. 15 respondents (4.5%) did not agree and 47 respondents (13.9%) didn't know.

Do you agree that overall, the proposed management arrangements will create, protect and improve the natural habitats in the country park?



Question 24. Please provide any comments on the proposals to protect and improve the natural habitats in the park

In total 81 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

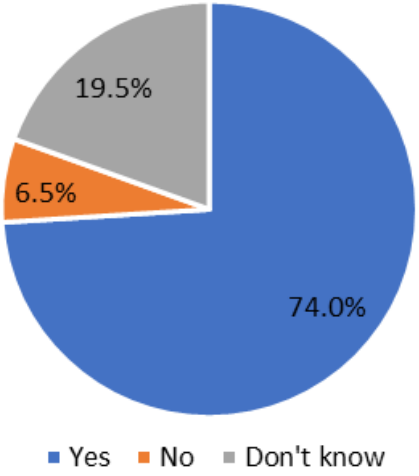
- Concern about the Esso pipeline (mentioned in about 9 comments)
- None / N/A (mentioned in about 9 comments)
- Concern about dogs and the need for them to be on leads (mentioned in about 5 comments)

- Positive about on-site rangers (mentioned in about 5 comments)

Question 25. Do you agree that the proposed management arrangements will provide the access and infrastructure needed for the country park to function as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)?

In total 323 respondents completed this question. The majority (74.0% - 239 respondents) agreed that the proposed management arrangements will provide the access and infrastructure needed for the country park to function as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). 21 respondents (6.5%) did not agree and 63 respondents (19.5%) didn't know.

Do you agree that the proposed management arrangements will provide the access and infrastructure needed for the country park to function as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)?



Question 26. Please provide any comments on the proposals to provide access and infrastructure taking account of this being a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

In total 113 respondents completed this question. The main themes (mentioned 5 or more times) of the answers were:

- Concern about the road crossing and a need for a 'proper' crossing (mentioned in about 19 comments)
- General positive comments (mentioned in about 13 comments)
- Better disabled access at the park and around the park (mentioned in about 11 comments)
- Better paths for all users (mentioned in about 10 comments)
- None / N/A (mentioned in about 8 comments)
- Concern about how boggy/wet the area/paths can get (mentioned in about 6 comments)
- The site should accessible for bicycles (mentioned in about 6 comments)

Appendix A. Copy of the Arena article

Give your views on Southwood Country Park

Residents are being invited to help us shape a new visitor centre and facilities at Southwood Country Park, along with the environmental design and an interim management plan for the area.

In July, our Cabinet agreed to earmark £126,000 to develop the design and costs for the visitor centre and café, on which a business case can be produced for the council to consider and make its final decision.

Now, as part of this process, you can have your say on these plans, by taking part in an online consultation running between

Monday 18 October to Friday 12 November

There will also be two drop-in sessions

Tuesday 2 November
Saturday 6 November

www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodcountrypark

As well as the visitor centre and café, the ideas we are already considering include cycle paths, a children's play area, a fenced dog exercise area, a pond dipping platform, public toilets and hides that schools, clubs and local people can use to study wildlife.

The addition of a visitor centre at the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), will be partially funded by approximately £600,000 of developer contributions. These will also pay for environmental improvements, and ongoing management and maintenance of the park by our ranger.

The project will look to use much of the existing buildings at Southwood to minimise the carbon impact and costs. The café will need to be funded separately, so we will be receiving rent and a percentage of turnover from the appointed contractor.

The creation of the park has already proved really popular with residents from across Farnborough and Aldershot, and based on the experiences of other SANGS, the new facilities will increase visitor numbers significantly.

The future design of the park includes plans to re-naturalise the site to improve its value for flora and fauna; reinstating hedges; re-naturalising some of the water courses; addressing some of the steep banking and additional tree planting.

Our interim management plan sets out our priorities over the next couple of years and we will develop the long-term management plan for the park once we have decided on the final design and when the work as part of the new Esso pipeline has been completed and permanent management arrangements put in place.

Councillor Martin Tennant, our Cabinet member for Major Projects and Property, said: "We are really pleased to be able to give the public the chance to share their thoughts and ideas on how we can make the park even better. This is such an exciting project that will transform Southwood Country Park.

"The park is already proving to be a big attraction and a new visitor centre and café will prove even more of a draw.

"I can't wait for the day when I can call in, enjoy a warm drink and take in the wonderful countryside."

We hope you will take part in the consultation and shape the future of Southwood Country Park.

For more information, please see **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodcountrypark**

Appendix B. Copy of poster

Southwood Country Park

Give your views

Online survey:
Monday 18 October to Friday 12 November

Drop-in sessions at Southwood Country Park East car park, Ively Road:
Tuesday 2 November 8am-5pm
Saturday 6 November 9am-4pm

New visitor centre and cafe

Environmental improvements

Interim management plan

Find out more:
www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodcountrypark

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Appendix C. Copy of the paper version of the survey

Southwood Country Park
consultation survey

About Southwood Country Park

Southwood Country Park is a 57-hectare area of green open space in Farnborough, connected by a network of formal and informal paths.

We opened the country park in 2019. It is known as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), which means the area is permanently protected as natural green public open space.

Your views on our plans to shape the future of the country park

We are working on exciting plans, which will improve the country park and make it more attractive to people and wildlife.

This is your chance to give us your views on those plans. We are particularly interested in your thoughts on:

- Our draft designs to adapt the former clubhouse building into a visitor centre and café
- Our proposals to improve the natural environment
- Our interim management plan for the park

Please view the exhibition boards before filling in this survey.

You can also complete the survey on our website at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodcountrypark**

The consultation closes on Friday 12 November.

To view our consultation survey privacy notice, please visit **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/consultationprivacynotice**

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

About you

*** Please complete these questions.**

***1. Have you visited Southwood County Park?**

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No *(go to Q9)*

*** 2. Which town do you live in?**

- ❒ Aldershot
- ❒ Farnborough
- ❒ Other *(please write in)* _____

To help us understand your answers, we'd like to know a little more about your visits to Southwood Country Park.

3. How often do you visit Southwood County Park?

- ❒ More than once a day
- ❒ Daily
- ❒ Most days
- ❒ One to three times a week
- ❒ Two to three times a month
- ❒ Once a month
- ❒ Less than once a month (two to five visits a year)
- ❒ Other *(please write in)* _____

4. Why do you usually visit Southwood Country Park? *(please tick all that apply)*

- ❒ Dog walking
- ❒ Commercial dog walking
- ❒ Walking
- ❒ Jogging/running/power walking
- ❒ Outing with family
- ❒ Cycling/mountain biking
- ❒ Bird/wildlife watching
- ❒ Enjoy scenery
- ❒ Photography
- ❒ Meet up with friends
- ❒ Short-cut through site
- ❒ Other *(please write in)* _____

5. **How long do you usually spend there?**

- ❒ Less than 30 minutes
- ❒ Between 30 minutes and one hour
- ❒ One to two hours
- ❒ Two to three hours
- ❒ More than three hours

6. **How do you normally get there?**

- ❒ Car/van
- ❒ On foot
- ❒ Public transport
- ❒ Bicycle
- ❒ Other *(please write in)* _____

7. **What is your full home postcode?** This will only be used to calculate the distance that people travel to Southwood County Park.

_____

8. **Can you name three other green spaces that you also visit for the same reasons?**
(If you can only name one or two, that would still be helpful) (please write in, separated by a comma)

_____

Visitor centre and café

9. **Looking at the proposed designs for the visitor centre and café, what do you think of them?**

- ❒ Overall, I like the proposed designs
- ❒ Overall, I don't like the proposed designs

10. **What design features do you like, and why?** (please write in)

11. **What design features do you not like, and why?** (please write in)

12. Do you like the proposed finish to the outside of the building?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No
- ❒ Don't know

13. Thinking about the café area, do you think it is:

- ❒ Right size
- ❒ Too big
- ❒ Too small

14. Thinking about the covered external space, do you think this is:

- ❒ Right size
- ❒ Too big
- ❒ Too small

15. Do you have any comments on the style and design of the covered external space? *(please write in)*

16. We are proposing to include green energy features in the building. What do you think of the design of these?

- ❒ I like the design of these features
- ❒ I don't like the design of these features
- ❒ I have no strong views about these features/don't know

17. Do you have any other comments on the design of the green energy features? *(please write in)*

18. We are proposing to have a natural children's play area and dog wash facility near the visitor centre and café. What do you think of these proposals?

Children's play area	❒ Like	❒ Dislike	❒ No strong idea	❒ Don't know
Dog wash facility	❒ Like	❒ Dislike	❒ No strong idea	❒ Don't know

Improving the natural environment

19. Do you support the habitat improvements proposed in the environmental design?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No
- ❒ Don't know

20. Please tell us about the aspects of the design that you like *(please write in)*

21. Please tell us about the aspects of the design that you don't like, or think could be improved *(please write in)*

22. Are there any additional improvements that are not in the proposed environmental design that you would like to see? *(please write in)*

Interim management plan

23. Do you agree that overall, the proposed management arrangements will create, protect and improve the natural habitats in the country park?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No
- ❒ Don't know

24. Please provide any comments on the proposals to protect and improve the natural habitats in the park *(please write in)*

25. Do you agree that the proposed management arrangements will provide the access and infrastructure needed for the country park to function as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)?

- ❒ Yes
- ❒ No
- ❒ Don't know

26. Please provide any comments on the proposals to provide access and infrastructure taking account of this being a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) *(please write in)*

Thank you for taking part and completing our survey

Please put it in the box provided