

## **Use of S106 funding in Childs Hill Park**

April 7 2019

### **Summary**

The Friends of Childs Hill Park undertook consultation with its membership and other park users about their preferences for the allocation of S106 funding to improve the capacity and facilities in Childs Hill Park. There was strong support for bringing the bowling green back into use as a dog free family picnic area, to upgrade the Nant Road bed and improve the playground. Respondents put forward additional ideas to promote diverse planting and wildlife, to enhance security and improve play opportunities. The report concludes that a design and costing exercise will be a vital first step to establish which measures are affordable.

### **Recommendation**

2. That the Environment Committee should agree that (LBB Barnet/The Friends of Childs Hill Park) run a competition to select landscape architects to develop a costed design.

### **Background**

3. Plans to develop 139 new flats and houses on the Granville Road Estate proved contentious, mainly because of the substantial loss of green space involved. The plans were initially rejected by Barnet, and then went to appeal.

4. At the resulting public inquiry, the planning inspector agreed that the scheme would reduce the amount of outdoor leisure and play space available to existing and new residents of Granville Road. It would also increase the pressure on the already heavily used Childs Hill Park, the nearest green space to the proposed development.

5. The inspector made his approval of the development scheme dependent on a S106 (planning gain) agreement whereby the Developer would contribute £210,000 to improve the capacity and facilities of Childs Hill Park. The inspector said that an example of an improvement would be bringing the disused bowling green back into use.

6. Following this decision there was a meeting between Childs Hill ward councillors, officers from Green Spaces, representatives from the Granville Road Residents Association and the Friends of Childs Hill Park. At the meeting, officers asked the Friends of Childs Hill Park to undertake a consultation with their members and other local park users to establish preferences for the allocation of the S106 funding. This is in line with the 'Adopt a Place' agreement between Green Spaces and the Friends of Childs Hill Park which states the Friends will from time to time carry out such consultation exercises. Barnet would have regard to the results of the consultation in reaching a conclusion on how to spend the S106 money to improve Childs Hill Park.

## **The consultation process**

7. The committee of The Friends considered how to improve the capacity and facilities of the park so that it could serve a larger population. They also considered the long term maintenance cost of any improvements. The Friends' committee put forward proposals which were discussed at the Friends A.G.M. in 2017. They were refined and submitted to the 2018 A.G.M where 3 main proposals were supported.

- a) To bring the disused bowling green back into use as a family friendly, dog free picnic area;
- b) To upgrade the Nant Road bed to provide an accessible and attractive amenity with additional seating capacity.
- c) To upgrade the children's playground surface to make it more usable year round.

It was agreed that additionally respondents would be invited to give their own views on how they would like the funding to be used.

8) The Friends undertook a consultation exercise by incorporating these ideas into a Survey Monkey. This was circulated widely on line to members of The Friends of Childs Hill Park, other neighbourhood groups, Granville Road Residents Association and to local schools. Additionally face to face consultation took place in the park itself. There were a total of 185 responses.

## **Results**

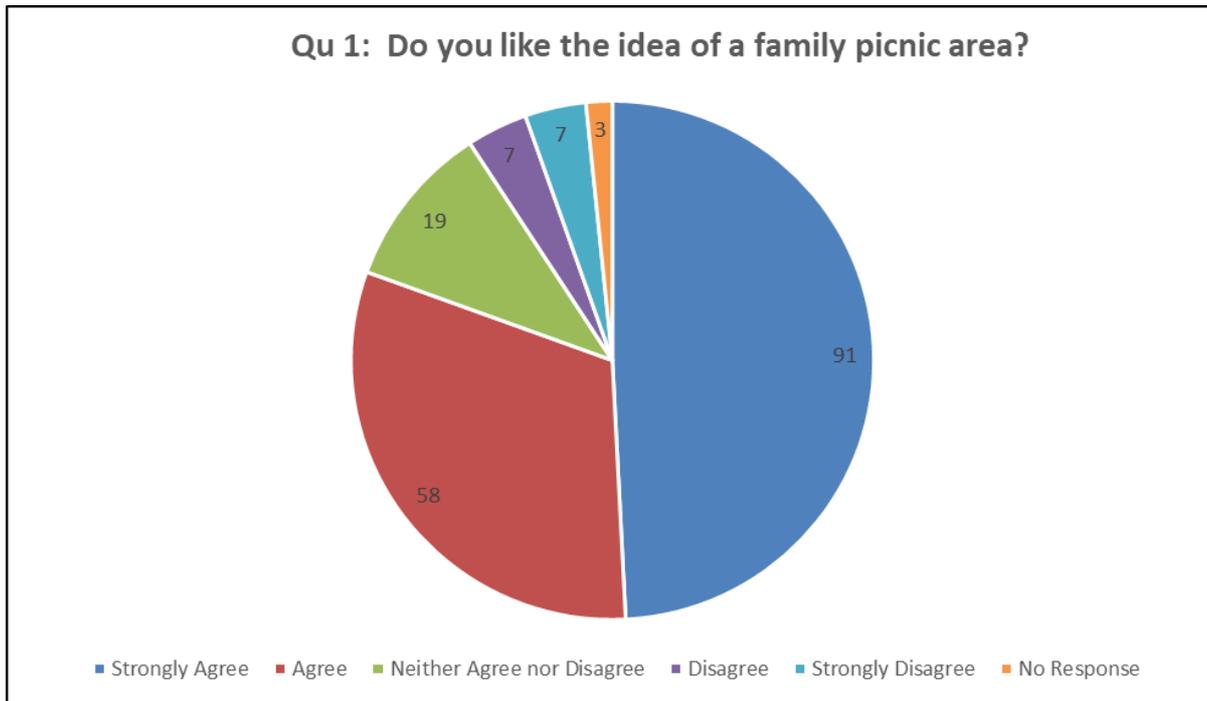
9. These are reported separately for each of the 3 main proposals and then a section on other ideas suggested by respondents. Note – there was a non-response rate (orange section) of between 1% and 2% for each question. Non responses have been omitted from the analysis.

### *The Bowling Green*

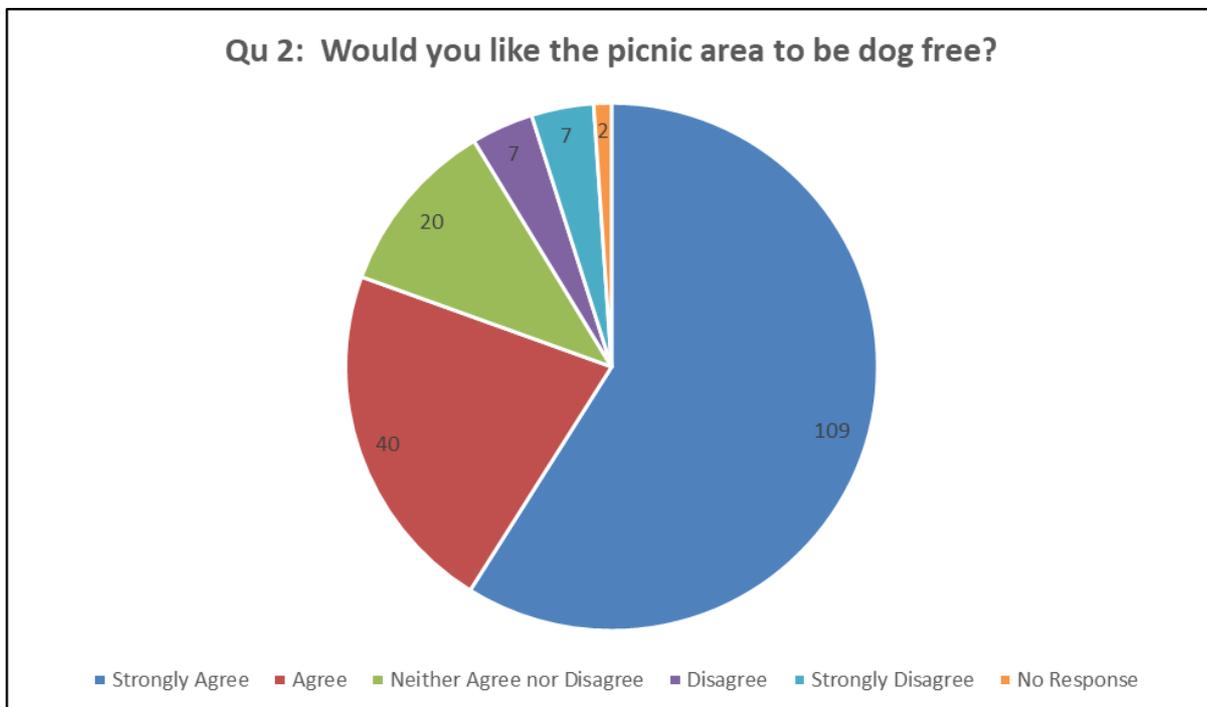
10. The bowling green club closed 5 years ago due to lack of membership. Barnet Green Spaces tried unsuccessfully for over 2 years to find an alternative club, and the green remains locked and unusable. It is surrounded by a high metal fence, which is covered in a dense high hedge of bushes and trees.

11. The proposal is to remove the fence and hedging, put in a low surrounding fence, level the grass and create a dog free family picnic area with robust picnic tables. An additional option would be to include some simple toddler equipment on the green. Picnicking is already a very popular activity in the park, but many people do not like dogs to approach them whilst they are eating.

12. Respondents were asked whether they liked the idea of a family picnic area, whether they would like it to be dog free, and whether toddler equipment should be included in the scheme.

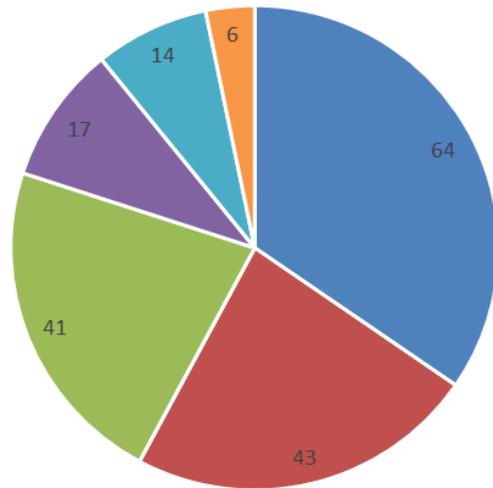


80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they liked the idea, 11% neither agreed nor disagreed and 9% strongly disagreed or disagreed.



13. 78% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they would like the picnic area to be dog free, with the larger proportion strongly agreeing. 12% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

**Qu 3: Would you like us to include toddler play equipment in the picnic area?**



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ No Response

13. Views on including toddler equipment were less clear cut. 56% strongly agreed or agreed with the idea, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

14. Clearly overall there was very strong support for the proposal to use the bowling green as a picnic area. There were additional ideas for inclusion in the scheme. One was for water play **'an amazing water play area with pipes that allow children to see water flowing from one pipe to another'**

15. There was a suggestion to make provision for shade; **'make an area with shade and a roof so that children can play when raining or strong sun without getting burned.'**

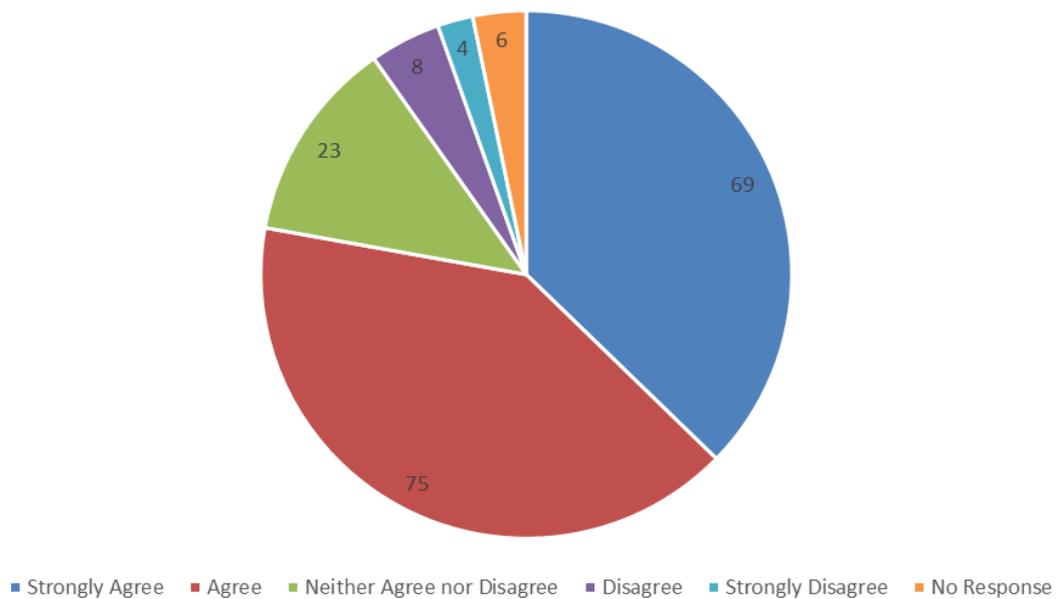
16. One respondent was particularly keen to ensure the picnic area would really remain dog free **'barriers must be equal to keeping dogs out.....there is no hiding-place or respite (in the park) for people who feel uncomfortable around dogs. And it would be great to have at least one small area free of dog faeces.'**

*Nant Road Bed*

17. The Nant Road bed is long and very deep. It has a few fine trees and shrubs, but mostly it is dense with weeds and snowberries. As a result the existing bed is not attractive to look at and is not accessible for use by the public.

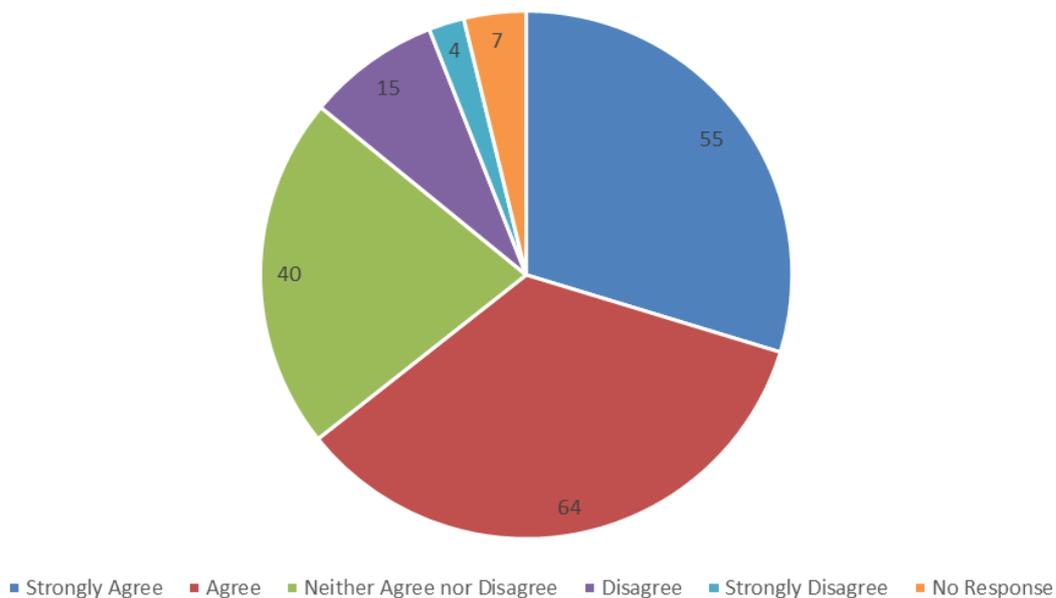
18. The proposal is to clear the bed other than the specimen trees and shrubs, grass it over and install more benches. This should be both attractive and easy to maintain.

**Qu 4: Should we install more benches in the Nant Road bed?**



19. There was strong support for more benches on the Nant Road side of the park, with 76% strongly agreeing or agreeing. 15% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

**Qu 5: Would you like open grassy areas in the Nant Road bed?**



20. There was less enthusiasm for open grassy areas in the Nant Road bed, with 60% strongly agreeing or agreeing, 25% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 15% strongly disagreeing or disagreeing.

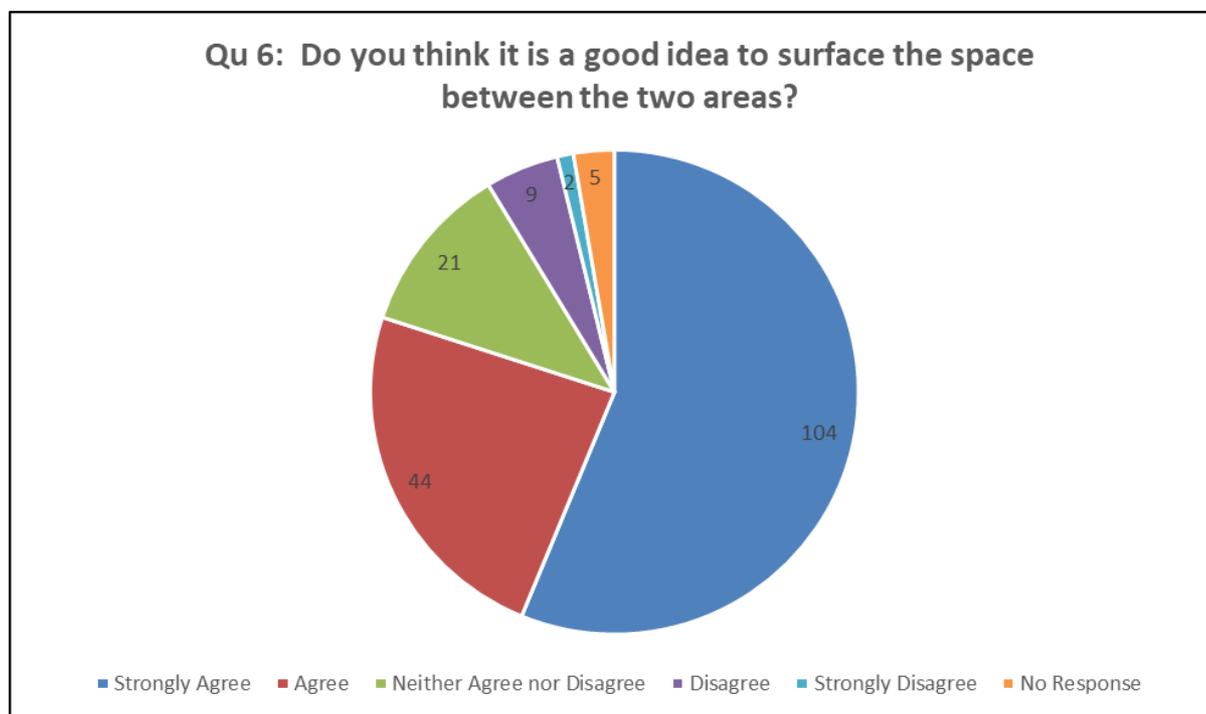
21. This would tie in with some of the concerns expressed in additional comments about the Nant Road proposal. Some respondents whose homes backed onto the park had security and

privacy concerns. 'The privacy of residents in Nant Road should be considered first so I would not like the removal of all of the bushes and shrubs or **any** trees.....There needs to be a barrier/screen including in Winter between the back of the back gardens and any seats for park users.'

22. The other consideration was to maintain a good level of planting. **'It would be nice to tidy up that area. But keeping in mind the wildlife, maybe not cutting all the existing plants to maintain their habitat too. And some more flowers would be lovely as well.'**

#### *Playground surface*

23. The playground is the most heavily used part of the park. It is partly hard surfaced, but there is a large grassy area between the two ends of the playground. This gets very muddy and slippery when it rains, particularly in winter, and some parents feel it is not safe for their children. The proposal is to complete the hard surface, possibly incorporating games such as hop-scotch, so as to make the playground more usable year round.



78% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it was a good idea to surface the rest of the playground; 14% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 7% strongly disagreed or disagreed.

24. Additional comments focused on further improvements to the playground. There were some requests for additional equipment such as swings, so that long queues do not form at busy times. There were several pleas for a water fountain and child friendly toilets near the playground.

#### *General comments*

25. Respondents were invited in the last section of the survey to suggest other improvements they would like to see. Several of these are for Green Spaces to consider. The

most frequently mentioned improvement was to tackle the litter problem. Many respondents highlighted the urgent need for additional bins with fox proof lids and more frequent collections of rubbish.

26. Another theme was a desire for more security, with a call for better lighting and mirrors, particularly in the passage ways and a stronger response to anti-social behaviour such as use of drugs. Additionally several respondents mentioned the poor state of the paths, particularly on the Dunstan Road side and in front of the café. This was inhibiting the use of the park, particularly by wheelchair users,

27. Other ideas could well be incorporated into S106 improvements. Some respondents asked for a tranquil area, with no ball games and perhaps a water feature. There were also many requests to improve the bio-diversity of the park, with planting of native species and installation of bat and bird boxes.

## **Conclusion**

28. The three proposals for the use of the S106 funds to improve the capacity and facilities of the park were all well supported, with approval ratings of between 56% and 80%. The strongest support was for bringing the bowling green back into use.

29. Additional comments showed that park users want their park to be clean, full of plants and wildlife and to be safe. A bonus would be more play equipment and a water feature.

30. It is not clear how many improvements the £210,000 will cover. It is therefore suggested that if the Environment Committee approves the proposals, that the next step would be to use the first tranche of the funding to appoint a landscape architect to design and cost plans to implement the changes.