

Hillside Recreation Ground, Findern

Report on consultation November 2016

South Derbyshire District Council produced a questionnaire to canvass residents' opinions on the future of the Hillside Recreation Ground in the village.

The questionnaires were circulated to every household in the village by the Parish Council, as an insert to the Parish newsletter.

Residents were given approximately 4 weeks to complete and return to the Parish Rooms, with the deadline for responses set as 25th November 2016.

Responses

87 completed questionnaires were received - approximately 11% of those sent out.

Of those received, 66 respondents currently used the site (76%) and 86 respondents thought the site should be improved (99%).

Responses to suggested improvements were:

- Surfaced footpaths – 44 (51%)
- Tree planting – 43 (50%)
- Wildflowers/bulbs – 46 (53%)
- Seating
 - Seats – 19 (22%)
 - Benches – 42 (48%)
 - Picnic tables – 42 (49%)
- Play equipment
 - Toddler – 67 (77%)
 - Junior – 63 (72%)
 - Teen – 35 (40%)
- Natural play – 46 (53%)
- Outdoor gym equipment – 33 (38%)
- Car park – 24 (28%)
- Sports pitch – 44 (51%)

A lot of ideas were written in the “Other” category. Suggestions included:

- Bowling Green
- Tennis court/Multi-use games area
- Lighting
- Petanque/Boules
- Designated dog walking area with dog poo bins
- Community garden/fruit trees
- Kite flying area
- Disabled access

Concerns about the site were as follows:

- Anti-social behaviour – 47 (54%)

- Security/safety – 41 (47%)
- Parking – 32 (37%)
- Nuisance & noise – 27 (31%)
- Dog fouling – 38 (44%)
- Drainage/condition of ground – 56 (64%)
- Maintenance – 55 (63%)

General comments were also invited, in which many respondents took the opportunity to voice their concerns and support for the notion of improving the site.

Key issues are:

- The need to balance dog walking requirements with the desire for dog free areas (particularly play equipment)
- General condition of the ground and poor drainage making it unusable for large parts of the year
- Requests to avoid overdevelopment of the site, and don't block the views
- The site can (and should) provide for everyone in the village (from 0 – 100 years!)
- Concerns about vandalism, impact/disturbance on the local residents, and attracting people from outside the village
- Responsibilities for maintenance and future upkeep of any improved facilities needs to be agreed
- Parking provision on site was largely not wanted, as the site should be for local residents

What happens now?

From the results it is clear there is a desire to improve the site in some way, but residents have asked that the scale of improvements be considered. The site is over 5 hectares in size, so should be able to accommodate a variety of activities if appropriate.

Any improvements will not come without challenges, least of all fundraising, and there are some key concerns that need to be addressed.

South Derbyshire District Council and Findern Parish Council will meet to discuss the responses from the questionnaires and to agree an approach to the project. A public meeting will then be scheduled for the new year to feed back to the residents, provide an opportunity for further consultation and to form a working group to take the project forward.