

# Appendix 5 - Future of Hermitage Recreation Ground and former leisure centre site

## Feedback gathering exercise: June – August 2022

Following a community engagement exercise in 2019, consultants V4 used public feedback to create a 'vision' for the future of the Hermitage Recreation Ground and former leisure centre site, showing a range of options.

This summary details the community feedback opportunities carried out between June and August 2022, to gather public opinion on the V4 vision options.

Three opportunities to provide feedback were available to the community:

Feedback opportunity	Date	Details	Responses
Community feedback event	Thursday 9 June 2022	Held in person at Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre – paper surveys completed	45 attendees
Paper survey	Tuesday 14 June 2022	Hand delivered to 350 homes surrounding the Hermitage site	106 returned
Online survey	Live from 10 June to 15 August 2022	Live online	931 responses
Total surveys return through all three methods:			1,082

In addition, **Whitwick Parish Council** was provided with a summary document and supporting documents. Officers attended its meeting on Thursday 21 July 2022 and the parish council was asked to provide formal feedback by Friday 26 August 2022.

Officers also met with representatives of community enterprise **Coalville CAN** on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 to provide an overview of the current situation and to give them an opportunity to provide feedback, given their proposals for the former leisure centre. A representative of Sport England was in attendance too at the request of Coalville CAN. Officers presented a paper that outlined the outcome of the initial round of public consultation together with a

series of options for the leisure centre building and wider site following a comprehensive feasibility and options appraisal. Officers were keen to understand Coalville CAN's level of interest in working with the council to further develop the community zone aspect of the project, with a view to establishing some working principles thereafter. The capital investment and the (negative) affordability position was presented where Sport England confirmed they had no capacity to support the scheme although Coalville CAN summarised an alternative means by which the capital might be raised (through community and local business contributions).

## Summary of feedback

In regard to the **investment in the recreation ground**, people across the board support the development of an eco-park, and investment in play facilities, activity and nature trails, and habitat development.

When it comes to **residential development on the leisure centre footprint site**, the feedback shows between 50% and 60% of people are against the idea, with around 20% - 30% of people in support of the idea and around 20% of people who showed no preference. The exception to this is the community feedback event, where 82% (27 of the 45 people in attendance) stated that they were against the idea of residential development on the leisure centre footprint.

Engagement method	Against the idea of residential development on the leisure centre footprint	Support the idea of residential development on the leisure centre footprint	No preference in relation to the idea of residential development on the leisure centre footprint
Community feedback event	82% (27 people)	18% (6 people)	-
Online and paper survey	53% (546 people)	29% (305 people)	18% (184 people)
Paper survey only	57% (59 people)	25% (26 people)	18% (19 people)
<b>TOTAL (PEOPLE)</b>	<b>632 people</b>	<b>337 people</b>	<b>203 people</b>

## Community feedback event – Thursday 9 June 2022 – Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre

Specific people and / or organisations who have a particular interest in the recreation ground and / or leisure centre site were directly invited to the community feedback

event, including community organisations, sports and special interest groups with bookings on the recreation ground and neighbouring businesses.

Whitwick Parish Council	Hermitage Harriers
Park View TARA	Coalville Town Academy
Linford and Verdon TARA	Aspire Life Skills
Greenhill TARA	Coalville Town FC
Whitwick and Thringstone TARA	Shepshed United
Whitwick Historical Group	Whitwick Juniors
Whitwick Scouts	Belton Villa FC
Whitwick U3A	Bardon Hill Juniors
Hall Lane Methodist Church	Coalville RFC
Silver Oaks Residential Home	Monday FC
Royal British Legion	Whitwick Juniors Football Club
Woodstock In Whitwick	Ashby Angling Club
Coalville CAN	North West Leicestershire Society of Model Railway Engineers

The invite was shared with the wider public on the council's social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). A [news release outlining the V4 vision](#), summarising the condition report on the former leisure centre and promoting the community feedback event was issued on 1 June 2022. This was covered in the Leicester Mercury and Nub News.

At the community feedback event, the 45 attendees were shown a presentation detailing the V4 vision and presenting the budgetary requirements for this vision.

Officers explained that, within the current financial situation, the full vision was unaffordable, and introduced the idea that some residential development on the leisure centre footprint could provide additional funds to be invested in the recreation ground.

A number of attendees at the meeting showed strong feelings about the future of the site and did not agree with some aspects of the vision. Many were opposed to the idea of housing on the leisure centre footprint.

Attendees were asked to leave feedback at six different question tables. Some attendees chose not to leave any feedback at all, and others only left feedback at certain tables.

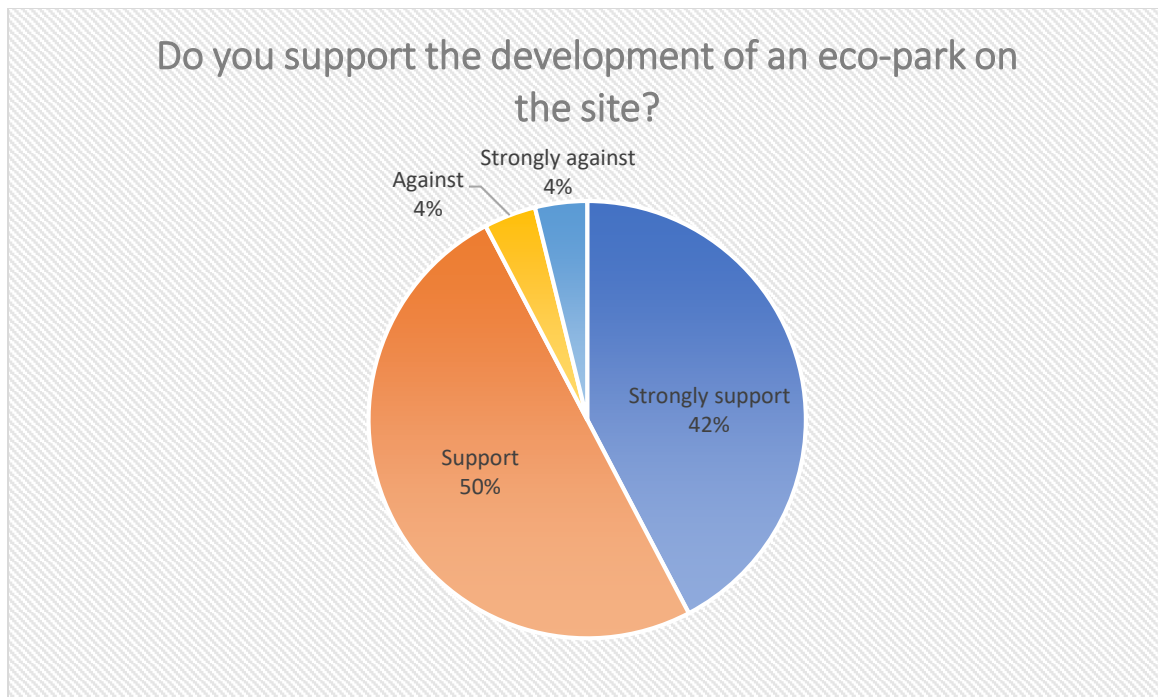
Analysis of the responses are shown below, along with written comments received during the event.

## Feedback analysis – community feedback event

### Q1. Do you support the development of an eco-park on the site?

Of the 26 people who chose to answer this question, 92% either supported (50%) or strongly supported (42%) the development of an eco-park.

8% of respondents were either against (4%) or strongly against (4%) the development of an eco-park.

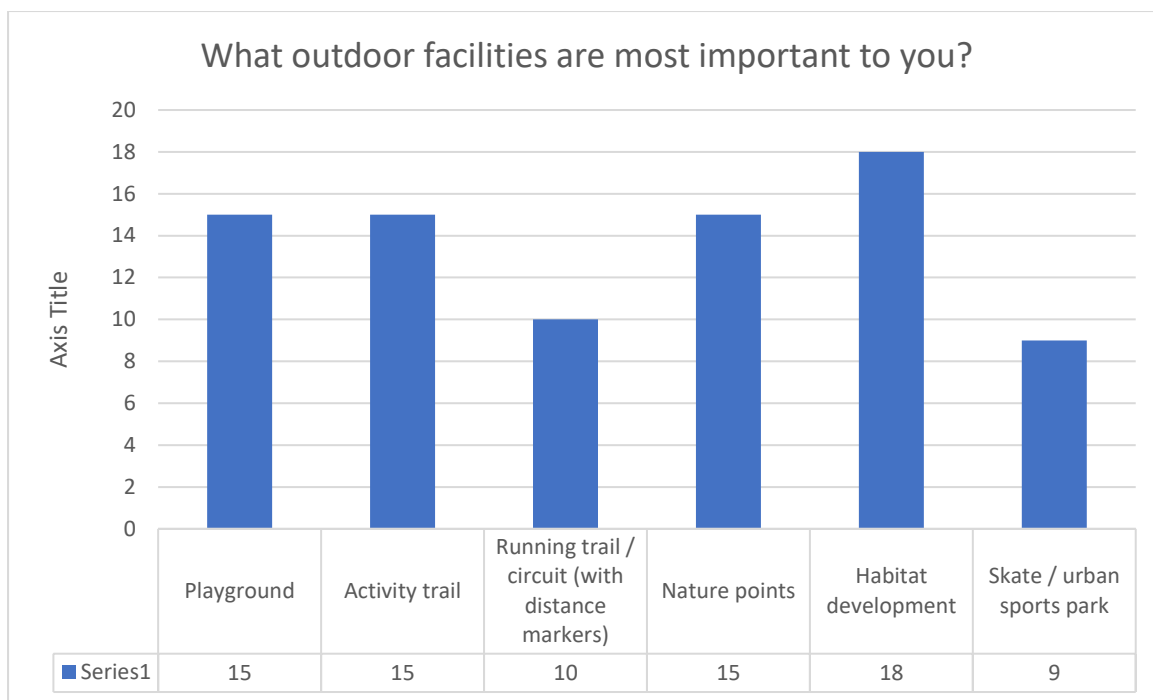


## Q2. What outdoor facilities are most important to you?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- Had all of these and half were removed for the new centre, or not maintained.  
Running trail was done last time - not used
- Football pitches (two respondents)
- I don't want houses to pay for facilities
- Keep runners off the roads

Voting was fairly evenly spread across all the options. 'Habitat development' received the most number of votes (18), followed by 'Playground', 'Activity Trail' and 'Nature points', which each received 15 votes. 'Running trail / circuit' received 10 votes, while 'Skate / urban sports park' received 9 votes.

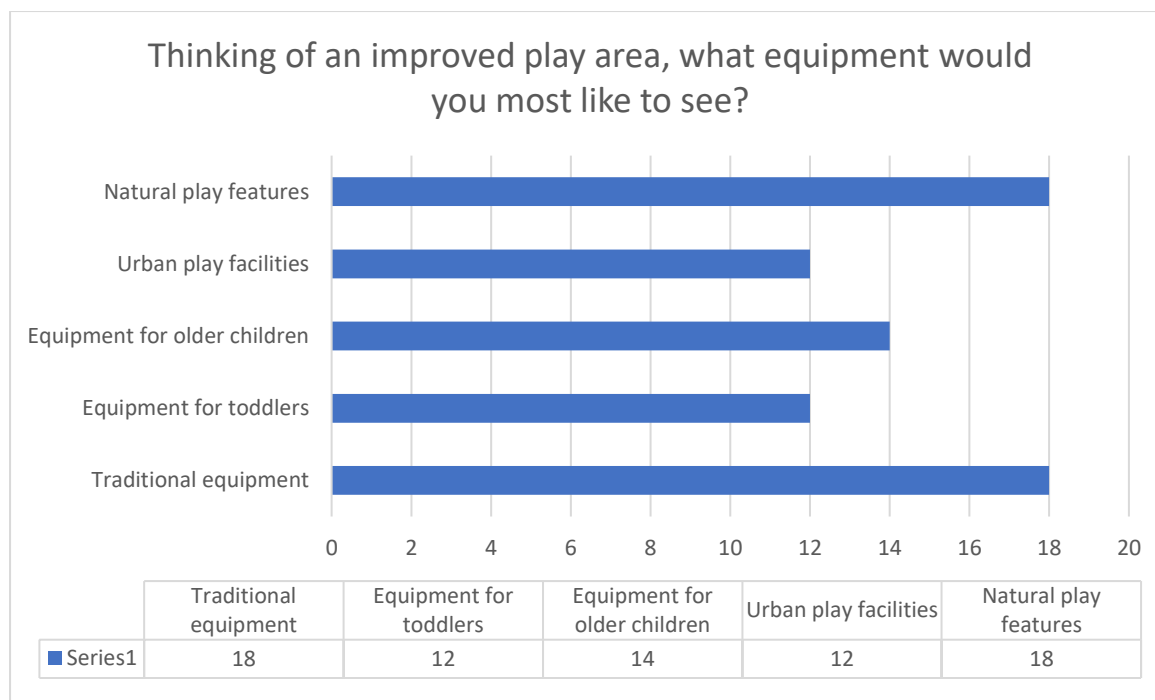


### Q3. Thinking of an improved play area, what equipment would you most like to see?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- Adventure play equipment
- Inclusive play for able / additional needs to play together
- Woodland equipment
- Urban play in a separate area to younger children
- Doesn't get maintained anyway

Voting was fairly evenly spread across all the options. 'Traditional play equipment' and 'Natural play features' each received the greatest number of votes (18), followed by 'Equipment for older children' (14 votes). 'Equipment for toddlers' and 'Urban play facilities' each received 12 votes.



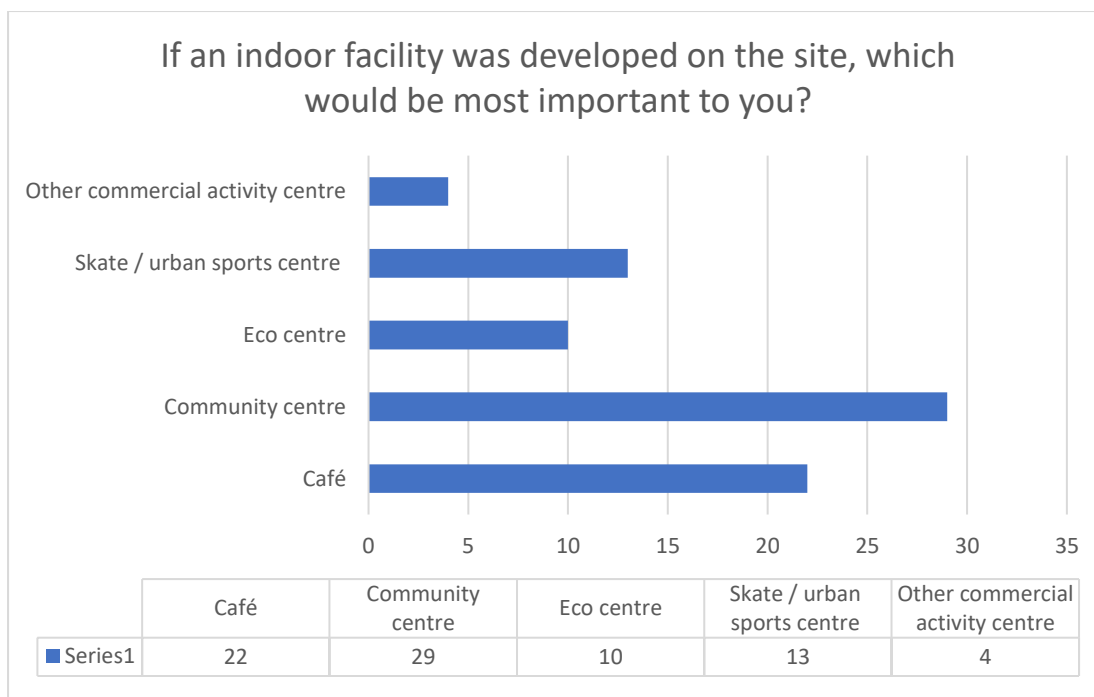
#### Q4. If an indoor facility was developed on the site, which would be most important to you?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- Not for profit community buildings with youth activities
- No to a skate park – don't put it near existing housing – put it away from residents in the eco-zone
- Why not use the already in place not too bad (in your words) sports hall and bar and café for music events or cinema - demolish the pool area but keep the sports hall
- Indoor football
- Indoor fusball
- Large community building
- Something run by the council for the community
- Community ownership needs to be considered
- Youth clubs / roller disco
- Creative arts facility for mental health - those who can't necessarily do physical activity
- Something supporting culture / arts

A 'Community centre' was the most popular choice, receiving 29 votes, with a 'Café' being second most popular with 22 votes.

Other options were fairly evenly spread, with 'Skate / urban sports centre' receiving 13 votes, 'Eco centre' receiving 10 votes and 'Other commercial activity centre' receiving 4 votes.



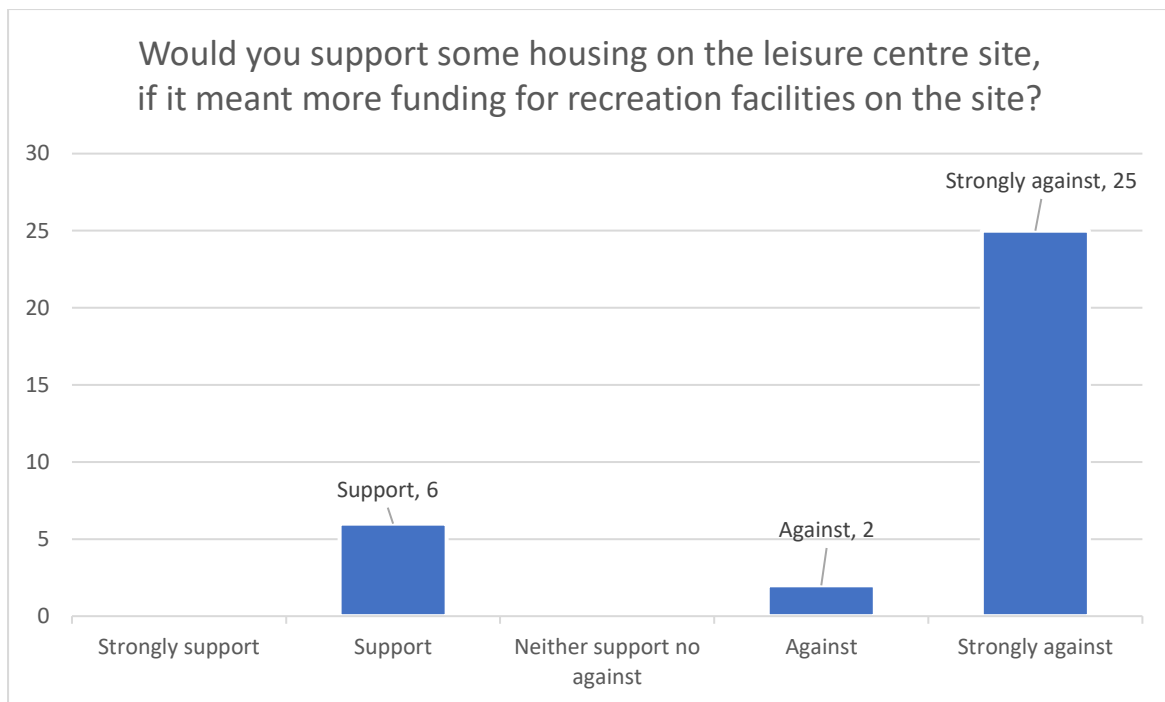
**Q5. Would you support some housing on the leisure centre site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site?**

Of the 33 people who chose to answer this question, 82% (27 people) were either against (6% - 2 people) or strongly against (76% - 25 people) the development of housing on the leisure centre site.

18% of respondents (6 people) supported housing on the site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site.

Some respondents chose to make comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- This is an eco site, you said so. Therefore trees are needed, not housing
- It is green wedge and should be returned to the community
- No way
- Never
- Grass it over and revisit later



**Q6. If a small amount of housing was developed on the site of the leisure centre, what would be most acceptable to you?**

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been inputted.

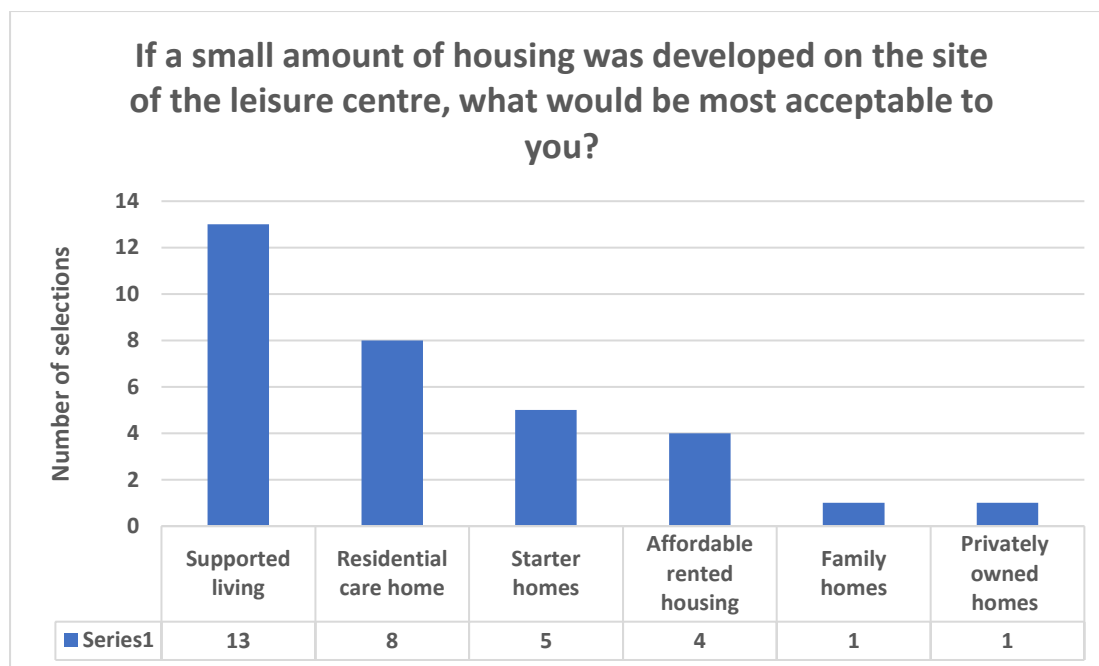
Of the 31 response cards returned, 17 were used to provide comments, rather than making selections. These comments are listed below, along with others received from those who made selections:

- None / None of these / None of the above / No housing / No way (14 respondents)
- It is green wedge and should not be built on
- No housing should be allowed
- Supported living or residential care home – should be only for the elderly, not mixed ages
- Local elderly (2 respondents)
- Grass it over and revisit at a later stage

Of the options available, 'Supported living' (13 votes) and 'Residential care home' (8 votes) were the most acceptable to respondents.

'Affordable rented housing' received 5 votes, 'Starter homes' received 4 votes and 'Family homes' and 'Privately owned homes' received 1 vote each.





## Postal survey – delivered on Tuesday 14 June 2022 to 350 homes surrounding the Hermitage Recreation Ground and former leisure centre site.

Hard copy surveys were hand-delivered, along with an information sheet detailing the V4 vision and current situation, plus next steps, to 350 homes surrounding the Hermitage Recreation Ground site.

The hard copy survey received a 30% return rate, with 106 surveys returned in total. These surveys were inputted by officers into the online survey system, but for the purposes of this feedback appendix, they have been pulled out to show the responses from those properties neighbouring the site.

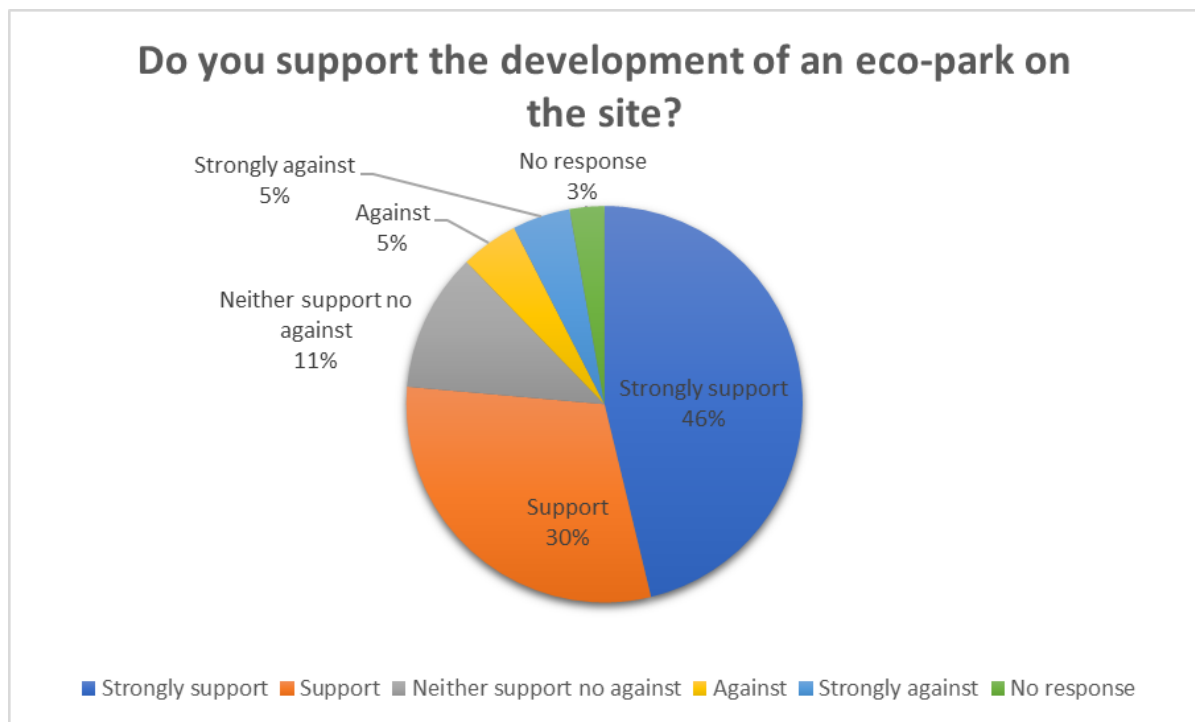
Of these respondents, the majority were in favour of the development of an eco-park, nature points, habitat development and improved play facilities, including natural play equipment and traditional equipment. A community centre and a café were top of the list for this group of respondents, in terms of indoor facilities.

On the topic of residential development on the former leisure centre footprint site, 57% of respondents in this group were against, 25% were in support and 18% were neither for nor against the principle of housing on the site.

Full analysis of the responses is shown below, along with written comments received on the hard copy survey.

## Feedback analysis – postal survey

### Q1. Do you support the development of an eco-park on the site?



Of the 81 people who chose to answer this question, 76% either supported (30%) or strongly supported (46%) the development of an eco-park.

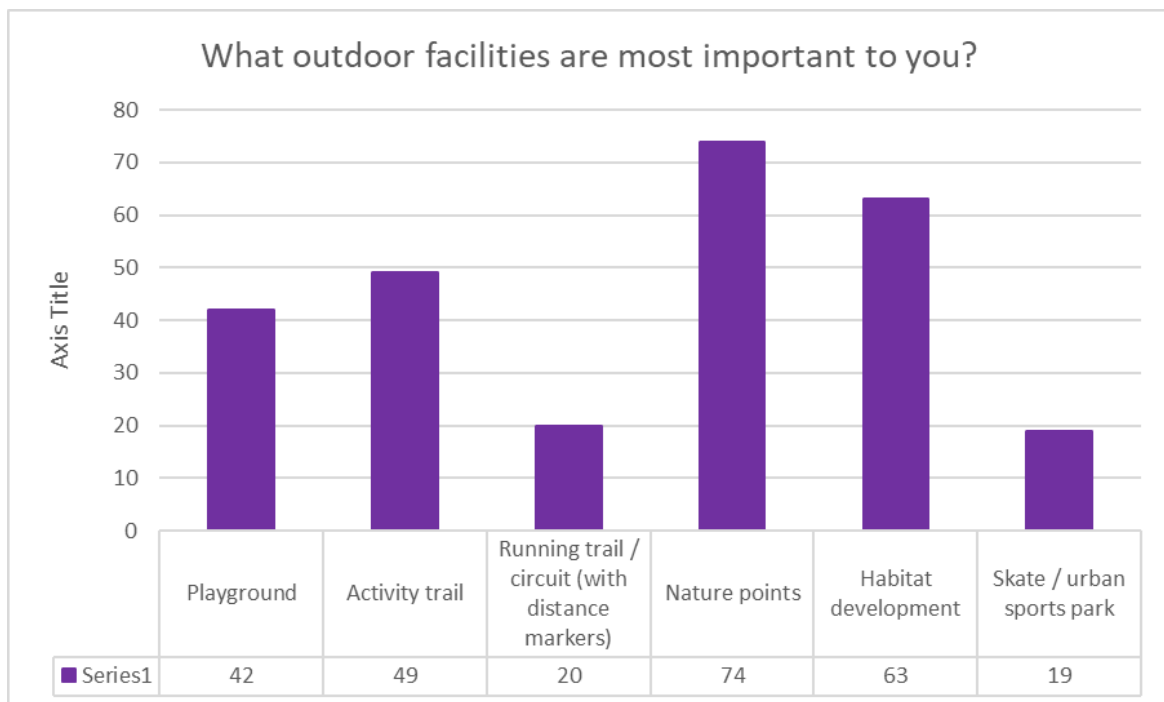
10% of respondents were either against (5%) or strongly against (5%) the development of an eco-park.

### Q2. What outdoor facilities are most important to you?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- To make the walkways round the lake better. Please make it safer for younger children (more bins needed)
- Tidy place up and get rid of some Canada geese
- Wild flower meadows to encourage bees
- Community gatherings/fairs/circus/fetes
- Walking tracks/routes
- Cycle tracks/routes
- Dog walking.

In this group, 'Nature points' received the most number of votes (74), followed by 'Habitat development' (63 votes), 'Activity Trail' (49 votes) and 'Playground' (42 votes). 'Running trail / circuit' received 20 votes and 'Skate / urban sports park' received 19 votes.

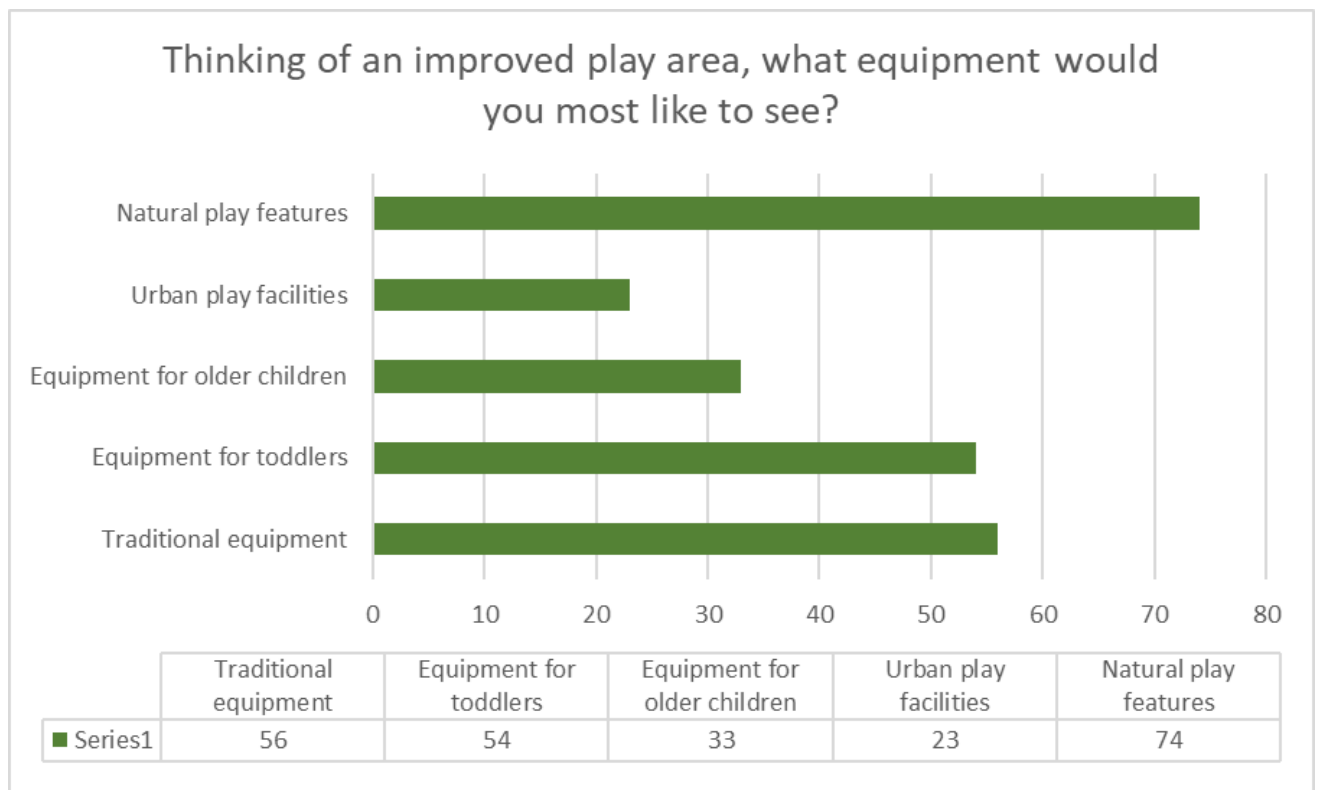


### Q3. Thinking of an improved play area, what equipment would you most like to see?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- Adventure play equipment
- Inclusive play for able / additional needs to play together
- Woodland equipment
- Urban play in a separate area to younger children
- Doesn't get maintained anyway

Voting was fairly evenly spread across all the options. 'Natural play features' was the most popular choice (74 votes), with 'Traditional play equipment' receiving 56 votes 'Equipment for toddlers' receiving 54 votes. 'Equipment for older children' received 33 votes and 'Urban play facilities' received 23 votes.



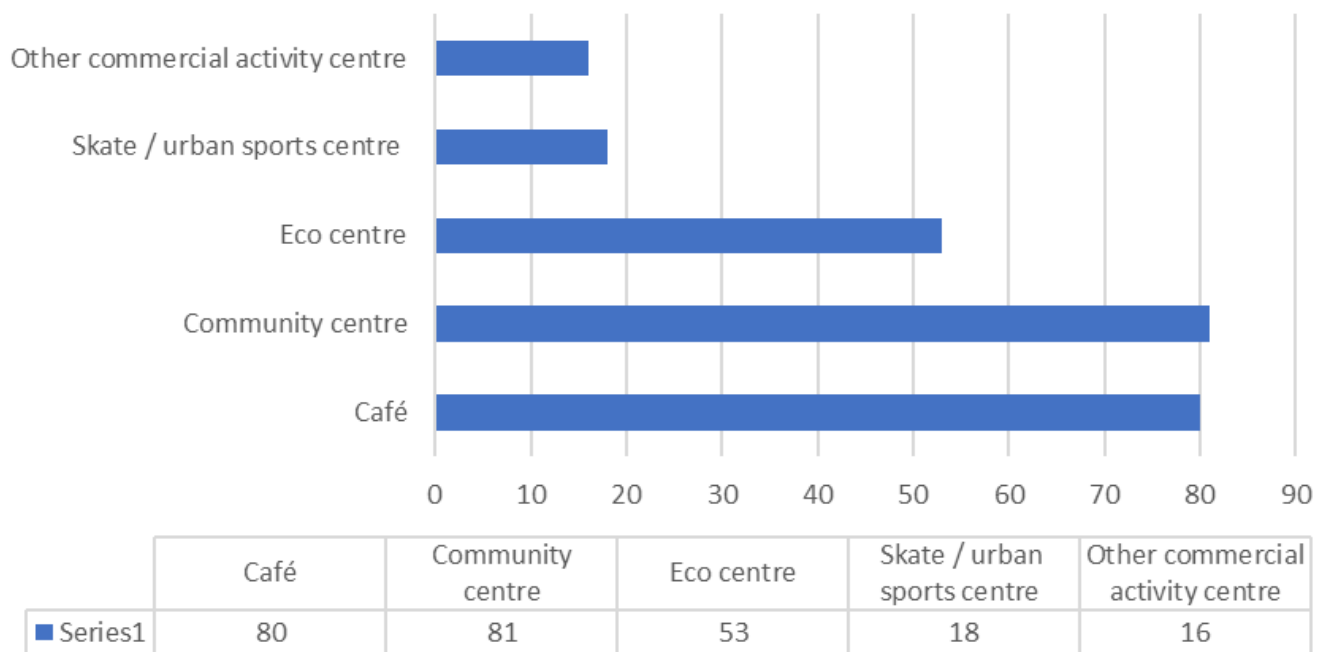
#### Q4. If an indoor facility was developed on the site, which would be most important to you?

Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been counted. Some respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question, they are listed below:

- Theatre/cinema/arts centre. Whitwick Jubilee celebrations proved we need a community area. We feel isolated at moment. I spoke to people their 90% said no to houses – we need a large community hub
- None. Turn it into a nature reserve
- Bands/films nights/ roller disco/community get togethers
- Arts activities

A 'Community centre' (81 votes) and a 'Café' (80 votes) were the most popular choices, with 'Eco centre' receiving 53 votes, 'Skate / urban sports centre' receiving 18 votes and 'Other commercial activity centre' receiving 16 votes.

## If an indoor facility was developed on the site, which would be most important to you?

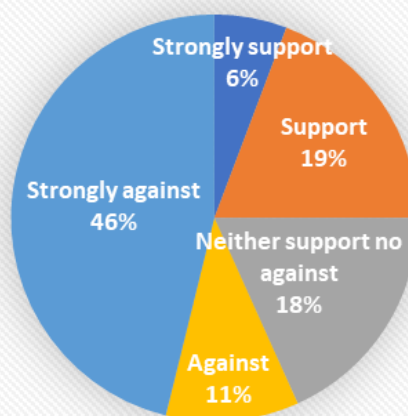


### Q5. Would you support some housing on the leisure centre site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site?

Of the 59 people who chose to answer this question, 57% were either against (11%) or strongly against (46%) the idea of residential development on the leisure centre site.

25% of respondents supported housing on the site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site, while 18% gave no preference.

## Would you support some housing on the leisure centre site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site?



■ Strongly support 
 ■ Support 
 ■ Neither support no against 
 ■ Against 
 ■ Strongly against

**Q6. If a small amount of housing was developed on the site of the leisure centre, what would be most acceptable to you?**

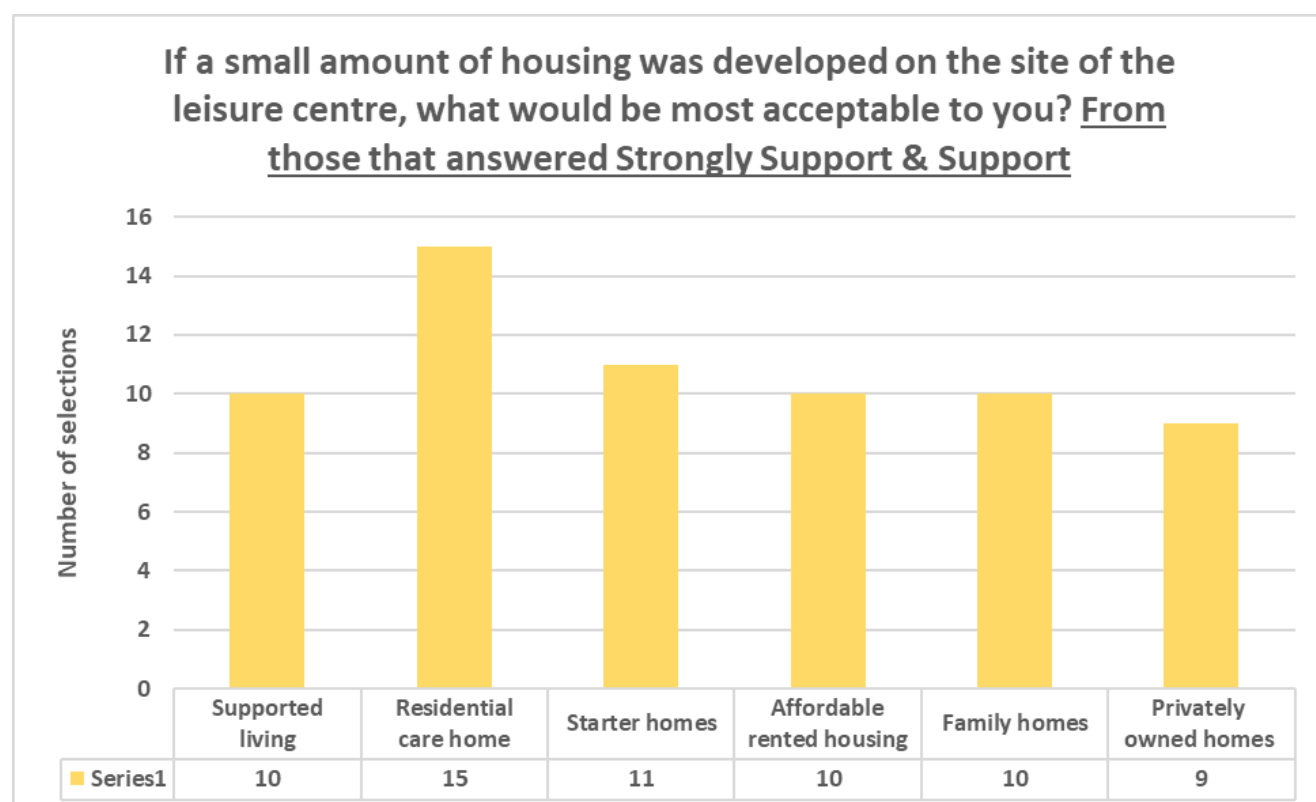
Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been inputted.

Of the 65 people who chose to answer this question, several chose to provide comments in addition to their answer. These are listed below:

- Old people bungalows rented. I would like to thank the council for consulting me and other residents on the future of the site
- For the older/elderly, residential and starter to be affordable for low income workers (JAMs). Please note I live opposite hermitage court which was for elderly now very much mixed living – some of whom are undesirable rowdy and possible habits. Living with elderly and middle aged persons on warden control
- It would be an ideal site for bungalows like the ones built on Loughborough Road

Of the options available, 'Residential care home' (15 votes) was the most acceptable to respondents, followed by 'Starter homes' (11 votes).

'Affordable rented housing', 'Family homes' and 'Supported living' each received 10 votes, while 'Privately owned homes' received 9 votes.



## Online survey – available at [www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/hermitage) from 10 June to 15 August 2022

An online survey was available between 10 June and 15 August 2022 on the council's website.

A [news release announcing the opening of the online survey](#) was issued on 10 June, a banner promoted the survey on the council's website and social media activity promoted the survey over the months that followed up to the closure date.

Media organisations, including the Leicester Mercury, Nub News, BBC Radio Leicester and BBC East Midlands Today covered the story and promoted the online survey.

**In total, 1,037 responses were received to this survey (106 of these were inputted by council staff from the postal survey).**

It is not possible to extract the postal survey responses from the online responses once inputted, so the statistics shown below include both groups of respondents, though the postal-only responses are shown above.

### **In summary, of those responding to the online and postal surveys:**

- Most people support the development of an eco-park on the site
- Most people support investment in play facilities, an activity trail, nature trails and habitat development on the site
- There is a preference for traditional play equipment, using natural features
- There is a clear desire for community facilities, including a community centre and / or a café
- Opinion is split with regards housing on the former leisure centre footprint with 53% against housing, 29% in support of housing and 18% showing no preference
- If housing was development, most people would prefer supported living or a residential care home

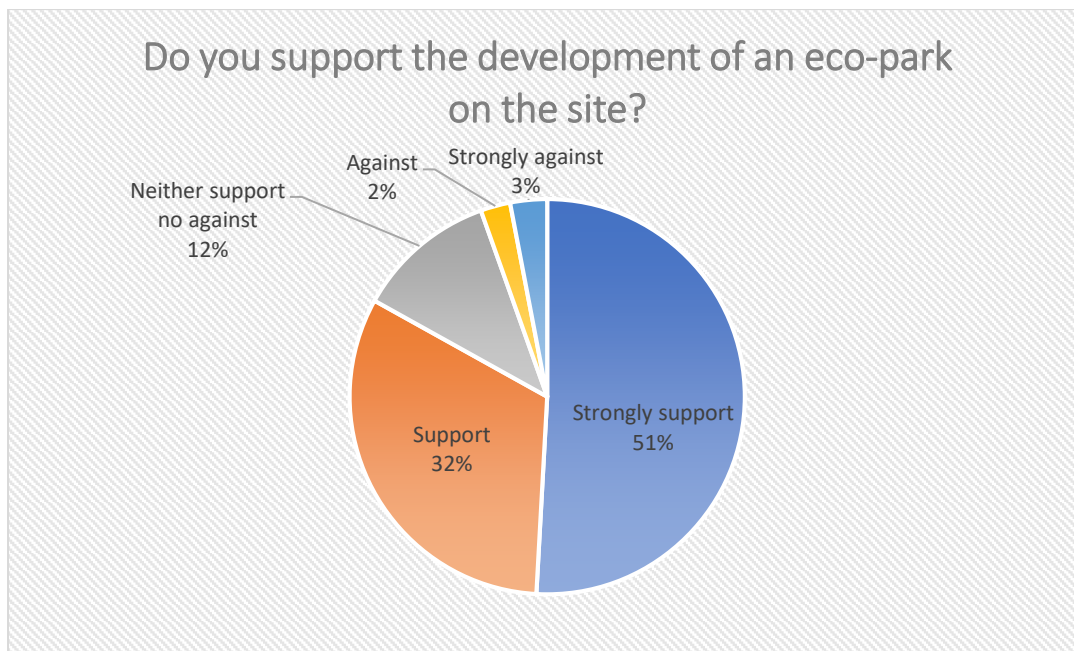
Full analysis of the responses is shown below, along with written comments provided.

## Feedback analysis – online survey

### **Q1. Do you support the development of an eco-park on the site?**

Of the 1,022 people who chose to answer this question, 82% either supported (50%) or strongly supported (32%) the development of an eco-park.

6% of respondents were either against (3%) or strongly against (3%) the development of an eco-park.



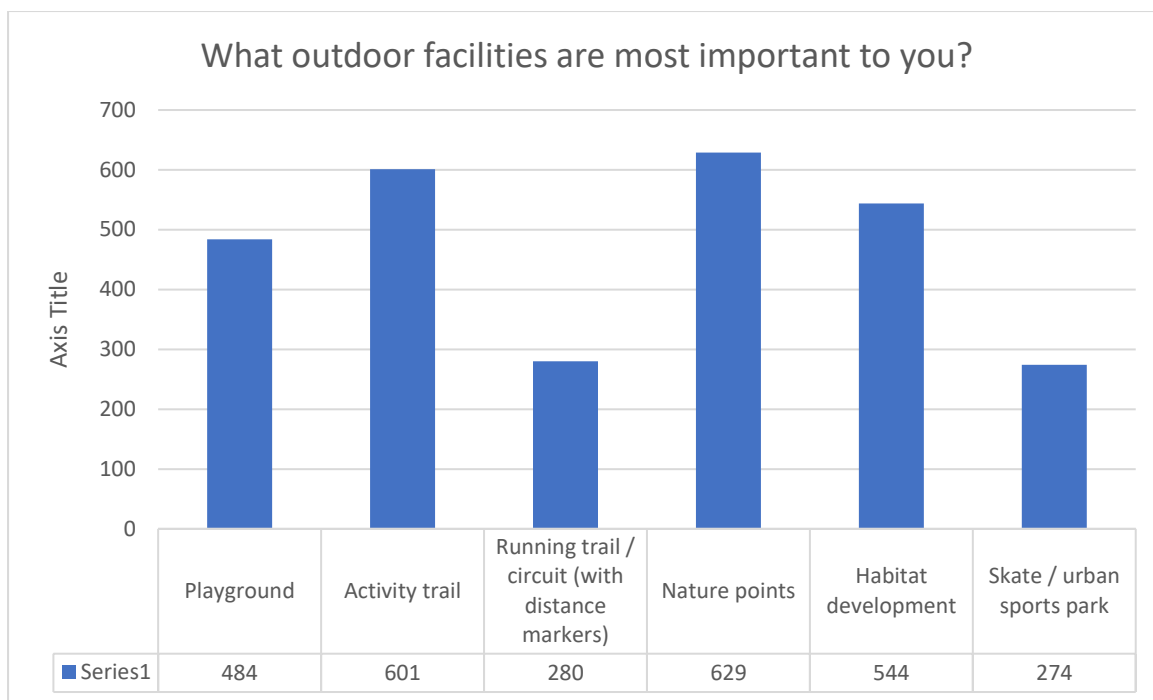
## Q2. What outdoor facilities are most important to you?

997 respondents chose to answer this question. Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been shown in the data. 132 respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question; a selection is shown below:

- Whitwick Park play equipment is run down. Snibston isn't suitable for under 4s. Coalville Park is lovely now. We need a park to keep all ages entertained
- Would also love a small bird watching hide to watch a quiet area of the lake/eco zone
- Fun cycle routes like Snibston
- Smooth concrete
- Cycling access
- Leave it as it is
- Sports field
- No housing
- Nice place to walk with dogs and off lead. The current site is used a lot by dog walkers. I would be very against losing this green space in any way and prefer more social facilities like cafe etc. There is nothing like this in Whitwick all development seems to be focused on Coalville
- Education / forest school area
- Affordable housing. We already have parks and the hermitage lake area. Young people need somewhere affordable to live such as one bedroom flats
- Green space for mental well-being and wildlife, sculpture park, just somewhere to walk (no Woodstock in Whitwick though, they can't control the noise).

Voting was fairly evenly spread across all the options. 'Nature points' received the most number of votes (629), followed by 'Activity Trail' (601 votes) and 'Habitat development' (544 votes). 'Running trail / circuit' received 280 votes, while 'Skate / urban sports park' received 274 votes.



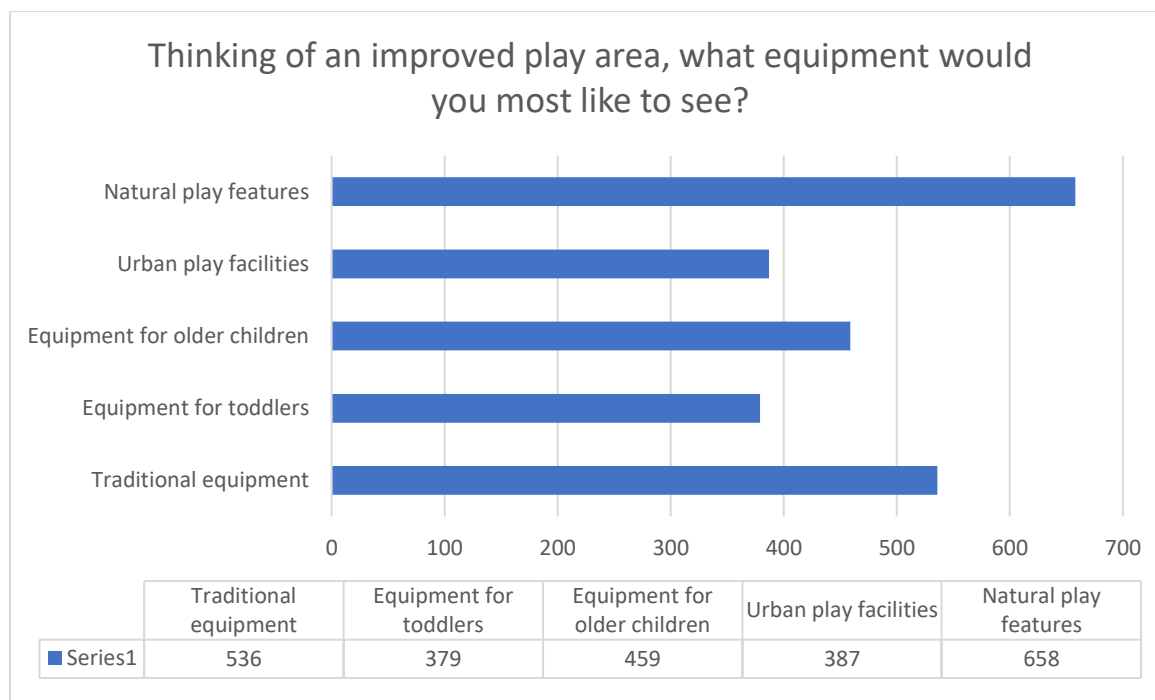


### Q3. Thinking of an improved play area, what equipment would you most like to see?

973 respondents chose to answer this question. Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been inputted. 102 respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question; a selection is shown below:

- There needs to be more for all. There is nothing else is Coalville for teenagers
- You could have a lovely tarmac cycle route for beginners it's hard to find a place to teach the younger generation to cycle without doing it on a over-crowded road.
- Outdoor gym
- Equipment for SEN
- Keep original park area... always popular for families
- Little boat rides
- More eco-friendly or educational, could even consider a community garden and learning new skills how to make things etc.
- We already have a playground by the lake, the children love it there
- Accessible equipment for people who are in large wheelchairs
- Seating and picnic tables so mums / families can meet up
- Non plastic play equipment
- Accessible play equipment for children of all abilities and disabilities
- Concerned a play area may attract youths and littering like the one at Hermitage lake.

Voting was fairly evenly spread across all the options. 'Natural play features' received the most number of votes (658), followed by 'Traditional play equipment' (536 votes) and 'Equipment for older children' (459 votes). 'Urban play facilities' received 387 votes and 'Equipment for toddlers' received 379 votes.



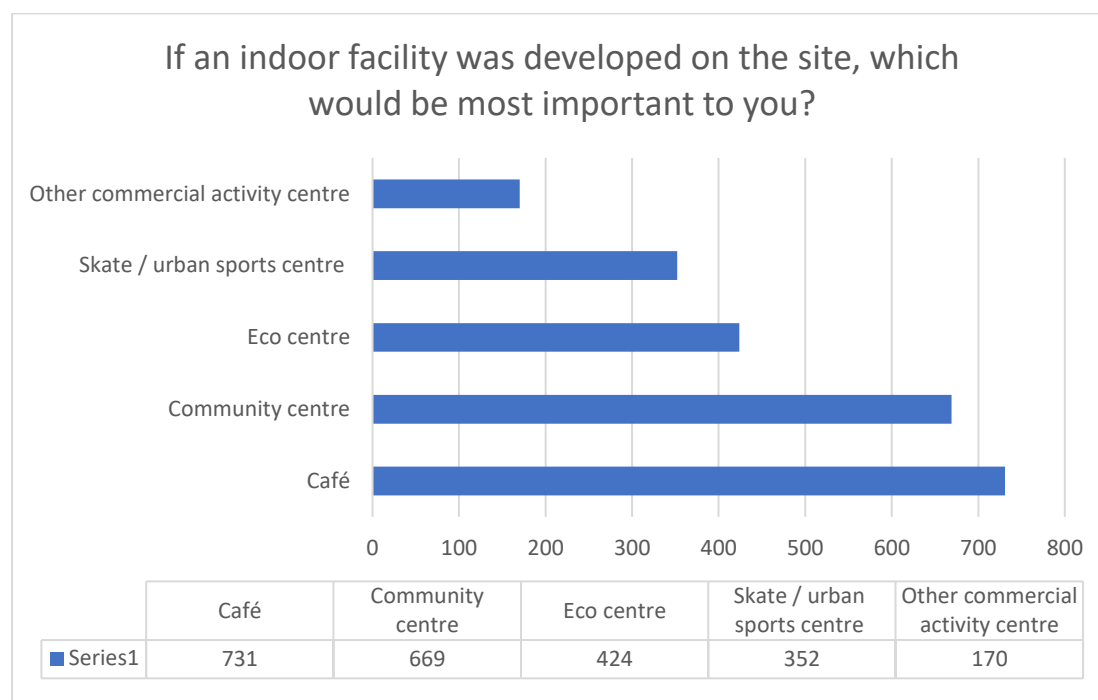
#### Q4. If an indoor facility was developed on the site, which would be most important to you?

973 respondents chose to answer this question. Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been inputted. 159 respondents chose to make suggestions or comments when responding to this question; a selection is listed below:

- Indoor roller skate park. There is nowhere like Granby Halls back in the day
- Soft play
- Nothing! That building needs to be demolished! Hasn't been suitable for its purpose for years now
- Leave it as it is
- Museum and gallery
- Whatever the greatest community need is
- Somewhere that could be hired to hold dance / sport clubs / competitions / tea dances etc.
- No housing
- A day centre for mature people for activities
- Youth centre
- Roller skating / ice skating
- Toilets
- Nothing to encourage motor bike racing or any substance use
- Not like Hicks Lodge which only offers for a certain interest. We need versatile activities and areas for all ages. Plus somewhere for teens to go to keep them off the streets
- Wildlife centre, concert hall / arts centre.

A 'Café' was the most popular choice, receiving 731 votes, with 'Community centre' being second most popular with 669 votes.

Other options were fairly evenly spread, with 'Eco centre' receiving 424 votes, 'Skate / urban sports centre' receiving 352 votes. 'Other commercial activity centre' received 170 votes.

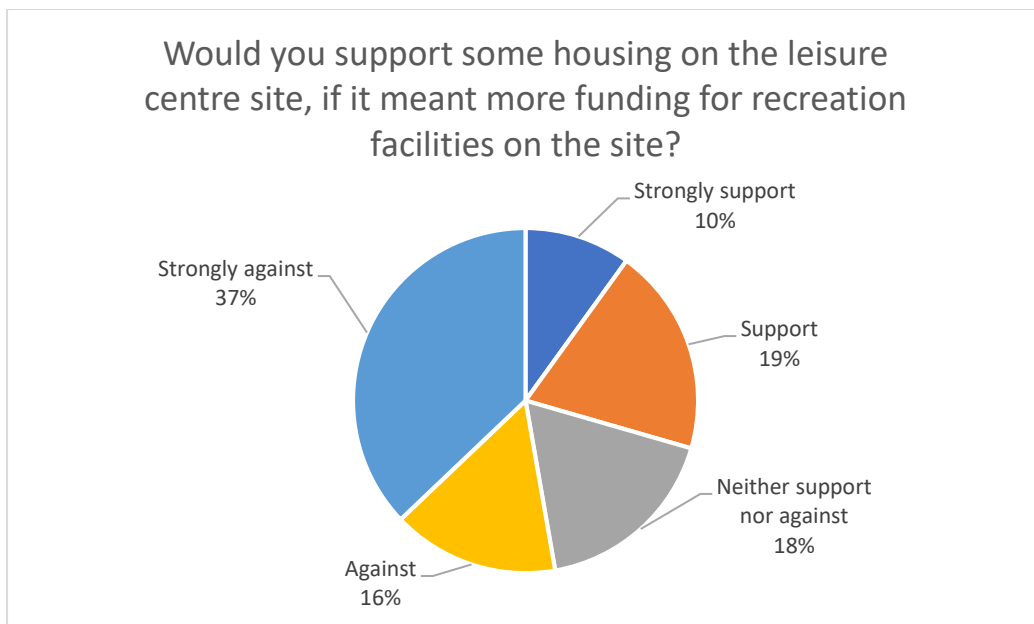


#### **Q5. Would you support some housing on the leisure centre site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site?**

Of the 1,027 respondents who chose to answer this question, 53% were either against (16% - 162 people) or strongly against (37% - 384 people) the development of housing on the leisure centre site.

29% of respondents (305 people) supported housing on the site, if it meant more funding for recreation facilities on the site.

18% (184 people) gave no preference.

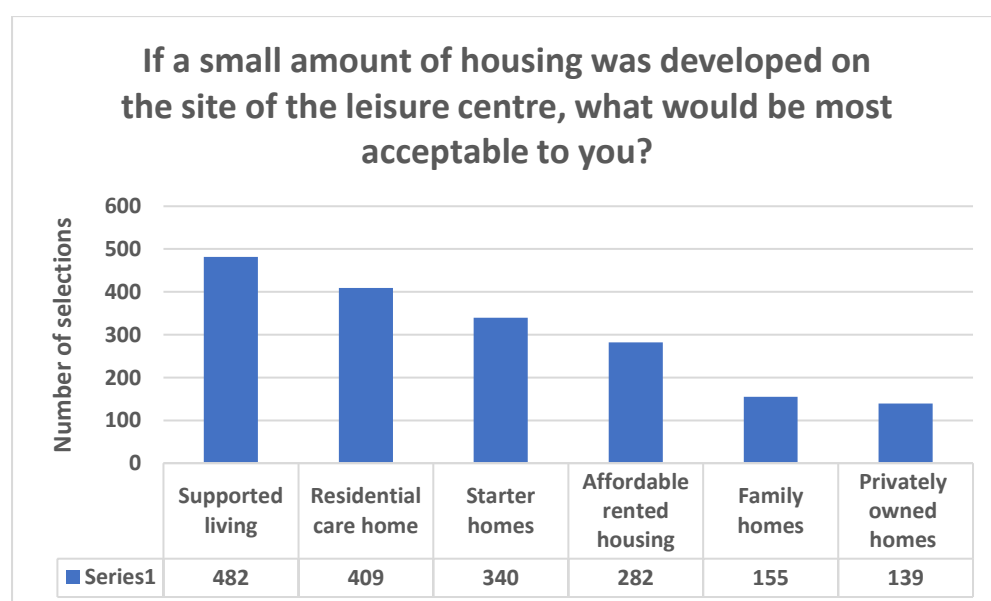


**Q6. If a small amount of housing was developed on the site of the leisure centre, what would be most acceptable to you?**

854 respondents chose to answer this question. Respondents were asked to select three from a list, though some chose to select more. All selections have been inputted. 18% of respondents (183 people) chose not to answer this question.

Of the options available, 'Supported living' (46%, 482 votes) and 'Residential care home' (39%, 409 votes) were the most acceptable to respondents.

'Starter homes' received 340 votes, 'Affordable rented housing' received 282 votes, 'Family homes' received 155 votes and 'Privately owned homes' received 139 votes.



## **Whitwick Parish Council – formal response**

The formal response provided by Whitwick Parish Council to NWLDC on 9 August 2022, is shown below.

In summary, Whitwick Parish Council would like NWLDC to consider transferring the former leisure centre building into community ownership for the purposes of providing services for young people.

## **Whitwick Parish Council Option for the future of Hermitage Leisure Centre**

Thanks are given to Mr Sanders and the team for finally attending our Parish Council meeting on 21 July with an update about the future of the Hermitage Leisure Centre (HLC). Whitwick Parish Council (WPC) are, however, disappointed that, despite us having a standard agenda item every month to allow for updates, these were not forthcoming. The parish council was left as an afterthought in the consultation process. We are also disappointed to learn that tenders have already been invited for the demolition of the HLC, this also seems rather presumptive, unless we are actually not being given any consideration in this process.

WPC are a significant stakeholder in this and made the HLC an Asset of Community Value. This was listed on NWLDC website 14/11/2016. This was taken back for full council to consider before it expired and it was renewed in 2021, yet we are now presented with the options already decided upon. **We would like to propose another option - that of Community Ownership.**

NWLDC have commissioned a whole raft of consultation and advice and through that have produced their 'vision'. The only reason for not going with this aspirational option is financial. We believe that through community ownership the 'vision' can be delivered.

The structural report by CBRE, commissioned by NWLDC, states that poolside and the plant are in no fit state to repair but that phase of the building could be demolished, leaving the gym, sports hall, cafeteria areas. This same report indicates that with minimal roof repairs this remaining structure has approximately 10 years of life, with more substantial roof repairs, another 25 years of life.

This is a substantial structure of great community value that could be salvaged and repurposed, saving much environmental damage. The only truly GREEN building is one that is already built. Destroying a reusable building would be tantamount to environmental vandalism. If a community group had ownership of the building for two years, this would help NWLDC to deliver their aspirational vision. If it fails, they've lost nothing because the plans can be reviewed. At the meeting of Whitwick Parish Council on 4 August 2022, members voted to trigger the Asset of Community Value and WPC intends to express an interest in it.

There are many ways forward including, but not limited to: The Community Ownership Fund, which works alongside existing Community Asset Transfer frameworks to support these transfers and fund renovation and refurbishment; Lottery Funding; a Community Share issue; Community Co-operatives, youth funding and Shared operating options.

**We urge the Scrutiny Committee to allow our option to be presented to cabinet and to seriously consider this option as the way forward with the Hermitage Leisure Centre.**

This option will provide an amazing community asset with safe affordable spaces for disaffected young people within our community to feel welcomed in. Youth workers could be on site who can identify any potential exploitation issues before they get out of hand. This would be useful to counter antisocial behaviour. When young people have nothing to do except congregate in large groups, ASB often develops within that environment. None of the proposals conflict with the new Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre. The two could operate in a complimentary fashion to enhance our leisure infrastructure.

**NWLDC has stated that it can demolish this building without it affecting the registration status of being an Asset of Community Value. The parish council would challenge that view and would take our own legal advice.**

9 August 2022

Cathy Tibbles, Parish Manager.

