



Gadebridge Park river restoration consultation response report Autumn 2018

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

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We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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Executive summary

Introduction

This report is a summary of the outcomes from our public consultation, held online between 20 July and 30 September 2018. The aim of the consultation was to obtain public views on options proposed to improve the wildlife, recreational value and environmental resilience (to flooding and dry weather) of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead. This project is part of a wider programme, Revitalising Chalk Rivers, to improve chalk streams.

We ran the consultation online for 78 days and held 2 public events where we displayed information on the proposed options. We ran the consultation online to make it more accessible to a wide audience, and held public events within the park. As an alternative option, we provided paper copies of the consultation at The Forum, Hemel Hempstead.

An estimated 80 people attended our drop-in events. We received a total of 147 survey responses. Of these, 143 were submitted online with the remaining 4 through paper responses.

Each submission, where permission was given, has been published online and can be read in full at: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>.

This document outlines how we ran the consultation and summarises the responses. We have also analysed the comments we received and summarised our responses to these.

We consulted on the 7 objectives of the river restoration scheme, these are to:

1. Improve the river and the adjacent parkland for wildlife
2. Improve the opportunities for amenity and recreation around the river
3. Improve resilience to low flow events and climate change
4. Improve wildlife of the river so that it supports Good Ecological Status under the European Water Framework Directive
5. Improve floodplain connectivity, reducing the impact of flooding - i.e. so water can come onto the floodplain when it needs to, but that it doesn't sit on the parkland for long periods of time
6. Address the impact of the gauging station
7. Make the channel easier to maintain for the benefit of people and wildlife

The project

Some of the notable outcomes from our analysis reveal:

- there is widespread support of the proposals laid out through the objectives and indicative landscape plan
- there are a mixture of views on certain aspects of the proposals, specifically paths for accessibility
- there is a need to make sure the history of the park has appropriate representation for future generations
- further information needs to be presented to the public to improve understanding of the need and the constraints for the project

These comments are extracted from a wide range of views we received. This document summarises these and other responses we received in further detail.

Next steps

The responses to the consultation will feed into our investigation of the proposed options. We will continue to look at technical considerations, environmental and social impacts and feed these into our detailed designs. We currently plan to complete this investigation and share our detailed designs in autumn 2019. This is subject to change, dependent on the progress of the project through the next stages.

In the shorter term we will continue to work with local interest groups and provide updates online. These updates will be available at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>

<http://www.colnecan.org.uk/>

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	3
The project	3
Next steps	4
1. Introduction.....	6
Why does the River Gade need restoring?	6
2. Consultation objectives.....	6
3. The consultation process.....	8
The timeline for the consultation.....	8
Consultation events.....	8
Internal Environment Agency staff	8
Promoting the consultation	8
Online consultation.....	11
4. Public events and meetings	12
Content	12
Staffing.....	13
Who came to the drop-ins?	13
Feedback from the drop-ins.....	13
Meetings with local interest groups.....	14
Feedback from meetings with local interest groups	14
5. Consultation responses	14
Question 1: How close is your home or business to Gadebridge Park?	15
Question 2: How often do you visit Gadebridge Park?	16
Question 3: Why do you visit Gadebridge Park? Please select all that apply	16
Question 4: How much do you enjoy the following features/activities of the park?	17
Question 5: How do you feel about the River Gade through Gadebridge Park at present?	19
Question 6: Do you support the project objectives?	20
Question 7: What do you like about the proposals?	20
Question 8: Is there anything that you feel is missing from the proposals?	21
Question 9: Do you have any other comments, concerns, or suggestions about the proposals?	21
Question 10: Are you a member of any of the following groups/organisations?	22
Question 13: Please tell us how you found out about this consultation	22
6. Making use of the feedback	23
7. Appendices	24
Appendix 1 - Indicative landscape plan	24
Appendix 2 - Gadebridge Park river restoration scheme - July 2018 summary.....	24
Appendix 3 - Artists impression of proposed realigned river.....	24
Appendix 4 - Indicative alignment of proposed channel	24
Appendix 5 - Consultation survey	24

1. Introduction

We are working in partnership with Dacorum Borough Council, Affinity Water and JBA Consulting to improve the wildlife, recreational value and environmental resilience (to flooding and dry weather) of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead.

This is part of Revitalising Chalk Rivers, a wider programme of projects that aims to protect and restore our rare chalk streams. We lead the programme with Affinity Water, working alongside a number of other partners across different projects.

Affinity Water have recently completed a project as part of Revitalising Chalk Rivers in the upper section of Gadebridge Park. This aimed to provide new in-channel habitat for aquatic wildlife and improve water quality. Our proposed project through the rest of the park aims to link up with this work to provide a continuous improved corridor for wildlife and people.

JBA Consulting carried out an initial feasibility study and outline designs for Gadebridge Park from 2016 to 2018 in consultation with project partners and key stakeholders. The outcome of this study can be seen in our proposals for the river restoration scheme.

Our public consultation, which ran from 20 July to 30 September 2018, presented these proposals to the local community. This report includes a summary of the recent consultation and its outcomes.

Why does the River Gade need restoring?

The River Gade has been significantly impacted by historic channel alterations and currently provides poor habitat and low wildlife diversity. As a result, the watercourse is classified as having a 'bad' ecological status under [the European Water Framework Directive \(WFD\)](#).

The channel through Gadebridge Park sits at a higher level than the valley bottom and as a result is disconnected from its floodplain. Consequently, when flooding occurs in the valley bottom the water remains in the park for long periods of time as it's unable to flow back into the channel.

The River Gade also suffers from low flows due to spring flow which is diverted into an underground tunnel (culvert), pressure from water abstraction and being disconnected from the groundwater table. For a chalk stream, where over 70% of flow is from groundwater, this can have a big impact on both resilience to low flows and also to the wildlife of the channel.

Furthermore, the river has a low gradient, is over-wide and straight. This has resulted in low variety of flow types, build-up of sediment and excessive vegetation growth. The weir at the Environment Agency Bury Mill Gauging Station exacerbates these issues, and also acts as a barrier to fish. All of these impact the wildlife that the channel is able to support.

2. Consultation objectives

Our primary objective for this consultation was to talk to users of Gadebridge Park and a variety of local interest groups.

We wanted to:

- better understand the current state and use of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park
- collaborate with others to develop river restoration proposals which maximise benefits for people and the environment
- work with local communities to ensure they understand our proposals and the actions they can take to look after their local water environment

The consultation aimed to share proposals for the River Gade to improve the wildlife, recreational value and environmental resilience and to help us develop these in more detail.

These proposals were presented in the form of an indicative landscape plan (see below, and Appendix 1), which was one of the outputs from the initial feasibility study by JBA Consulting between 2016 and 2018 in consultation with project partners and key stakeholders.

Indicative Landscape Plan: Gadebridge Park River Restoration



Version 7-0
11/7/18

3. The consultation process

The timeline for the consultation

The online consultation opened on 20 July 2018 and closed on 30 September 2018.

We began preparing for public consultation in June 2018. We opened the consultation as early as possible to provide us with the most amount of time available to receive and analyse feedback. As the consultation period coincided with school holidays and the main summer period we chose to keep the consultation open until 30 September to ensure everyone had an equal opportunity to have their say.

Consultation events

We held 2 public drop-in events during the consultation period. Both of these events were held in Gadebridge Park, in close proximity to car parks and footpaths to maximise accessibility.

The first event was held on 9 August 2018 between 14:00 to 19:00, the second on 10 September between 15:00 and 17:00.

In addition to these events we also met with a number of local interest groups to discuss any concerns and receive local knowledge on the area.

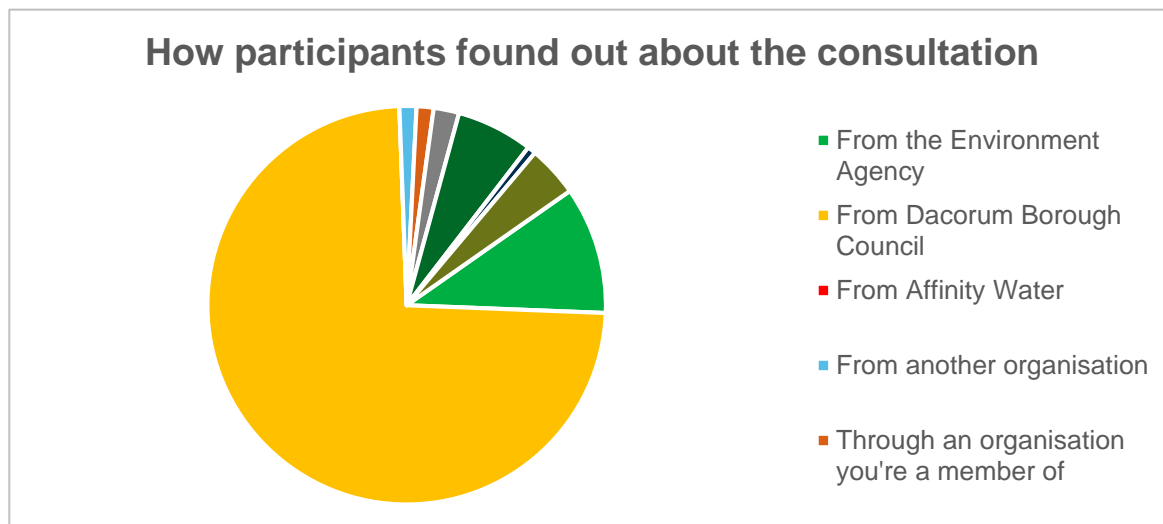
Internal Environment Agency staff

We held internal meetings with Environment Agency staff before and during the consultation period, to obtain their feedback and comments. These meetings helped decide what information we presented, and in what format, throughout the consultation. Environment Agency staff with different specialisms and interests attended the drop-in sessions to answer questions and provide information on biodiversity, geomorphology and flooding.


Promoting the consultation

We used a variety of methods to advertise the consultation and the drop-ins including posters, press releases, digital newsletters, digital display boards, direct emails to local environmental groups, social media and via Dacorum Borough Council's, Affinity Water's, ColneCAN's and Parks Herts' websites. In addition, we also directly contacted groups that had previous involvement in the project, particularly at the feasibility study stage. Through this consultation we have improved our understanding of who the interested parties are and added others to our mailing list for future communication on the project.

The chart below shows how participants found out about the consultation and demonstrates that overall, contact from Dacorum Borough Council was the most effective approach.



One of Dacorum Borough Council's preferred communication methods was through their monthly digital newsletters.




Views wanted on River Gade proposals

We'd like your thoughts on proposals to improve the River Gade in Gadebridge Park. We're working with the Environment Agency and Affinity Water on plans to improve the river for wildlife, protect water resources, and make it easier for local residents and visitors to get close to and enjoy the river and nature.

[Learn more and sign up](#)


We issued a press release ahead of the launch, inviting local media to publicise the consultation. An example from Living Magazines is shown below:



Advertise with us!
info@livingmags.info
01442 824300
Twitter Facebook Pinterest LinkedIn

HOME / WHAT'S ON / PUBLICATIONS ▾ / FEATURES / NEWS / ADVERTISE ▾ / MEET THE TEAM / CONTACT US

REVITALISING THE RIVER GADE, GADEBRIDGE PARK



ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS HERE!

Looking for a Personal Care Assistant or private Care work?
PA Pool offers a quick, easy way to find a PA or PA job!
CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR FREE!

pa pool

SCHOOL REPORT

2017/2018 EDITION

SCHOOL REPORT
PRE-SCHOOL TO ADULT LEARNING

The mini-format maxi-impact local schools directory.
A comprehensive source of education

Dacorum Borough Council would like your thoughts on proposals to improve the River Gade in Gadebridge Park. They're working with the Environment Agency and Affinity Water on plans to improve the river for wildlife, protect water resources, as well as making it easier for local residents and visitors to get closer to the river and enjoy nature.

Please view the [Gadebridge Park river restoration – indicative landscape plan](#)

We advertised the consultation through Dacorum Borough Council's digital display boards, such as their large display in The Forum, Hemel Hempstead (pictured below).



The consultation was also promoted through external websites such as Parks Herts (<https://www.parksherts.co.uk/parks/view/gadebridge-park>) and the Colne Catchment Action Network (<http://www.colnecan.org.uk/>).

Latest news

11/10/18 – News
ColneCAN Conference 2018
 The Colne Catchment Action Network are holding their first annual conference. Find out how to attend here.
[Read more ...](#)

01/08/18 – News for Rivers Gade and Bulbourne
Gadebridge Park River Restoration - consultation event
 The Environment Agency, Dacorum Borough Council and Affinity Water are hosting a consultation event on 10th September to seek the view of the general public on their proposals to restore the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead.
[Read more ...](#)

09/07/18 – News
Colne Valley Regional Park Set to Recieve £2.5m

River Colne Catchment Action Network

Rivers Gade and Bulbourne: news

[Home](#) | [Background & aims](#) | [The action plans](#) | [Get involved](#) | [Riverfly monitoring](#)

01/08/18 – News for Rivers Gade and Bulbourne
Gadebridge Park River Restoration - consultation event
 The Environment Agency, Dacorum Borough Council and Affinity Water are hosting a consultation event on 10th September to seek the view of the general public on their proposals to restore the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead.

The restoration scheme is part of Revitalising Chalk Rivers, a wider programme of projects that aims to protect and restore our rare chalk streams. Affinity Water and the Environment Agency lead the programme, working alongside other partners.

The Gade at Gadebridge Park flows down an artificial channel created to supply water to the now demolished Bury Mill. The river is straight and slow flowing and is prone to breaking out of its banks when they become eroded by dogs and people accessing the river. The natural line of the river should follow the valley bottom through the Park (this can be seen during wet winters, when groundwater rises to the surface).

Proposals include:

- Realignment of the river from downstream of the White Bridge, back to the valley bottom through the park. This will reconnect the river to its floodplain and to groundwater through the area.
- Re-routing spring flows, which currently run through a culvert (underground tunnel), into the new channel to provide additional flow to the river, increasing its resilience, particularly in times of

Events

We used our 2 drop-in events, on 9 August and 10 September 2018, to promote the consultation, provide information on the project, and answer any questions the public may have (see section 4 of this report for more information). We also provided iPads and paper copies of the consultation survey for attendees to complete on the day. To promote this opportunity to the public we provided

information online through our main consultation webpage at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>, digital display boards and social media accounts from all partners on the project.



Online consultation

In addition to our public drop-in events, we also made the consultation information and survey available online at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/> between 20 July and 30 September 2018. We did this to ensure that as many people as possible could take part in the consultation even if they weren't able to attend one of our events. The online consultation was promoted through posters at our events and on all of the flyers we distributed. Our partners also promoted the online consultation on their websites and in a range of other communications, as described above.

The survey questions asked as part of the online consultation were put together based on the objectives of the consultation. These were to:

- better understand the current state and use of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park
- collaborate with others to develop river restoration proposals which maximise benefits for people and the environment
- work with local communities to ensure they understand our proposals and the actions they can take to look after their local water environment

The opening 4 questions were designed to help us find out more about the use of the River Gade and Gadebridge Park. The rest of the consultation aimed to identify the perceptions of the river and park and to receive feedback on the proposals laid out in our feasibility study.

We also asked for email addresses so we could build our list of people who have requested to be kept informed about the project for future engagement.

A copy of the questions we asked is included in appendix 5 of this report.

We received a total of 147 survey responses. Of these, 143 were submitted online with the remaining 4 through paper responses.

4. Public events and meetings



Our public drop-in events were designed to give visitors information about the potential options and the opportunity to speak with the team from the Environment Agency, Dacorum Borough Council, Affinity Water and JBA Consulting.

Content

The main information we displayed consisted of our indicative landscape plan (See page 7 or Appendix 1), indicative panoramic images (see below) and handouts (Appendix 2). The handouts provided further information on the current state of the river, why change is needed, site constraints, and anticipated issues.

Picture below displays an artist's impression of how the river may look after the proposed realignment. Presented throughout the consultation events and meetings. Appendix 3.



Picture below displays the indicative alignment of the proposed channel. Presented throughout the consultation events and meetings. Appendix 4.

Gadebridge Park: existing views



Staffing

At each event project team members from the Environment Agency, Dacorum Borough Council, Affinity Water and JBA Consulting were available to speak with visitors. Our team at each event included specialists who were available to respond to more detailed questions and concerns.

Who came to the drop-ins?

In total around 80 people visited the drop-in events. The majority of those who attended were taking a casual walk through the park, dog walking, using the play area, or commuting to and from work. However, we did have a number of attendees who specifically came to talk with us about the project and to raise specific concerns. In addition to local residents, the attendees included members of the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Friends of Gadebridge Park, Dacorum Environment Forum, Hemel Hempstead Bowls Club, The Hemel Hempstead Local History & Museum Society, and Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative.

Feedback from the drop-ins

***"I enjoyed meeting your EA colleagues and completed a form as requested
- I was impressed by their positive attitude to the project"***

***"The event in the park was really helpful, the information provided was
very clear and the project team were able to answer all of my questions"***

Meetings with local interest groups

In addition to the public events we attended a number of meetings with local interest groups. These meetings allowed us to present our proposals in further detail and the interest groups to provide feedback and ask any questions around the project. Similar to the events, we had a number of specialists from the project team attend the meetings to respond to more detailed questions and concerns.

Feedback from meetings with local interest groups

"Many thanks again to you and your professional colleagues and project partners for having attended and contributed to our meeting"

"Thank you very much for your time this morning. I believe the meeting went very well and thank you for taking on-board our comments and concerns, which I hope you found helpful"

"I just wanted to say thank you to you all for a most productive meeting, my colleagues and I were all very happy with the discussion and look forward to working with you in the future"

5. Consultation responses

The consultation was made up of 14 questions aimed at helping us to understand the park and river users, receive feedback on the project proposals and to increase the effectiveness of our future engagement. These questions varied from multiple choice to free text depending on the type of question asked. We also decided to make answering each question optional, making the survey more appealing to complete.

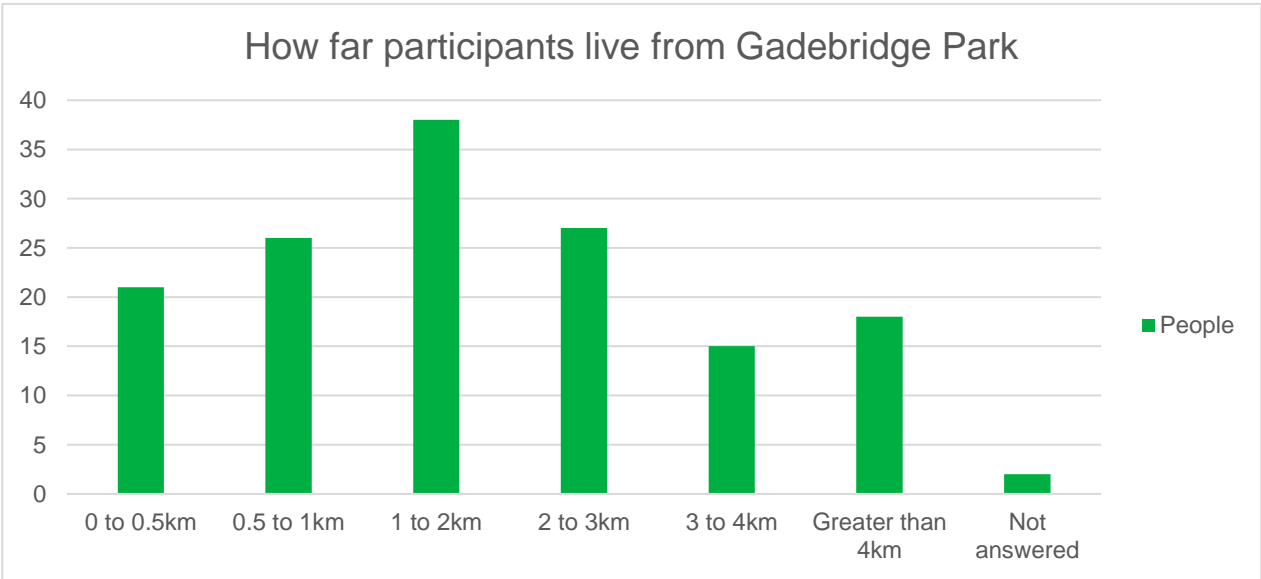
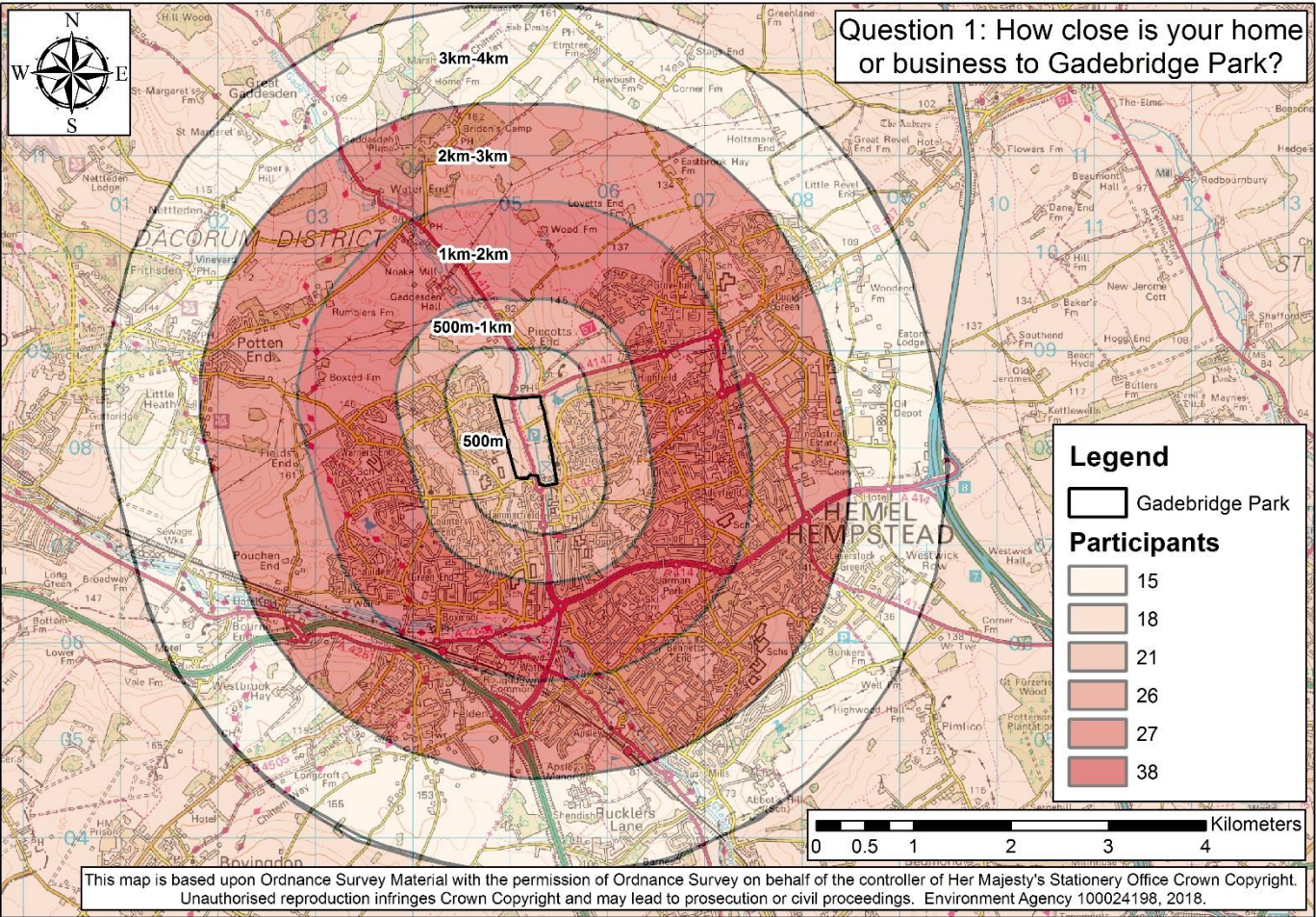
In this section we present the information collated from the survey, summarising the general comments from free text responses. Each submission, where permission was given, has been published online and can be read in full at: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>.

Please note that we have excluded the following questions:

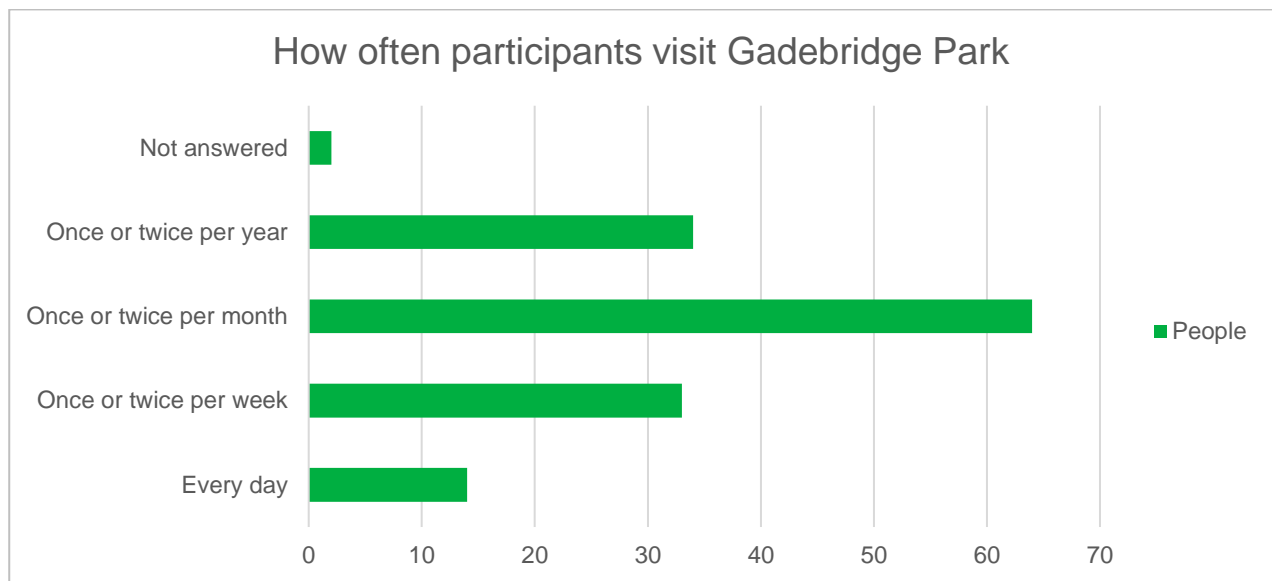
- Question 11: Are you happy to be contacted in the future about the project?
- Question 12: Can we publish your response?
- Question 14: How satisfied were you with this consultation tool? (online survey only)

A copy of the consultation survey can be found in Appendix 5.

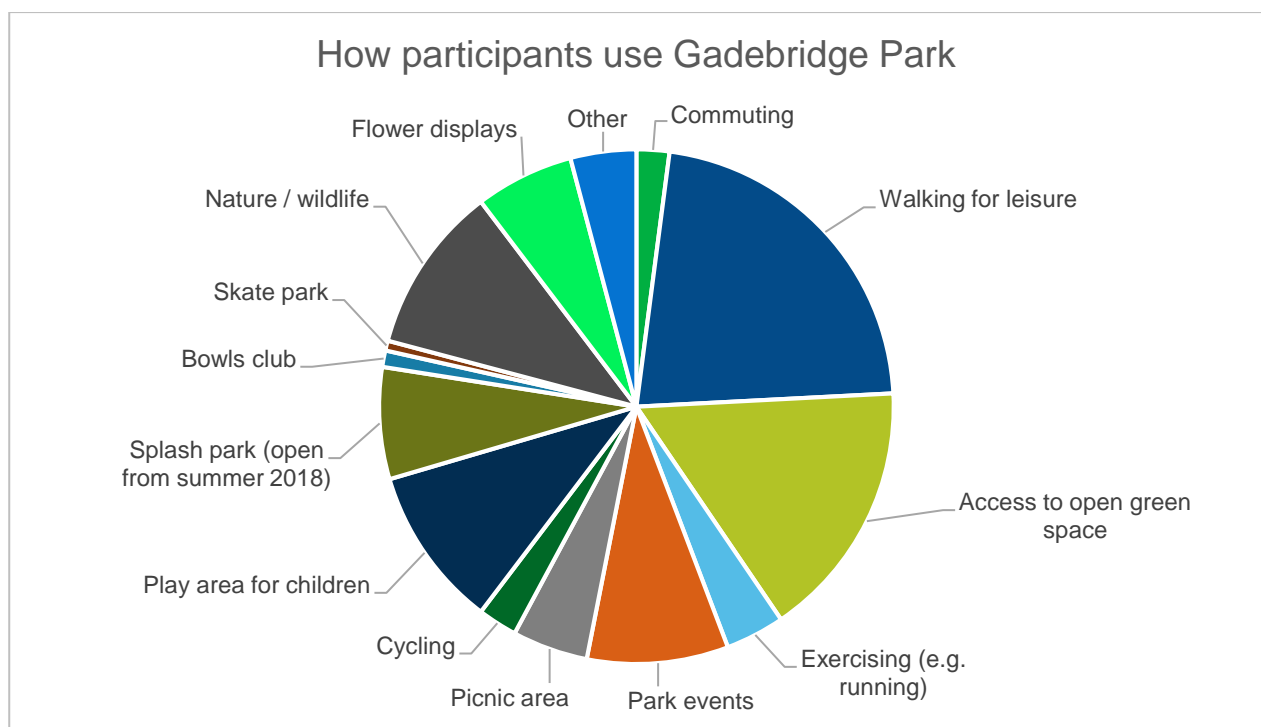
Question 1: How close is your home or business to Gadebridge Park?



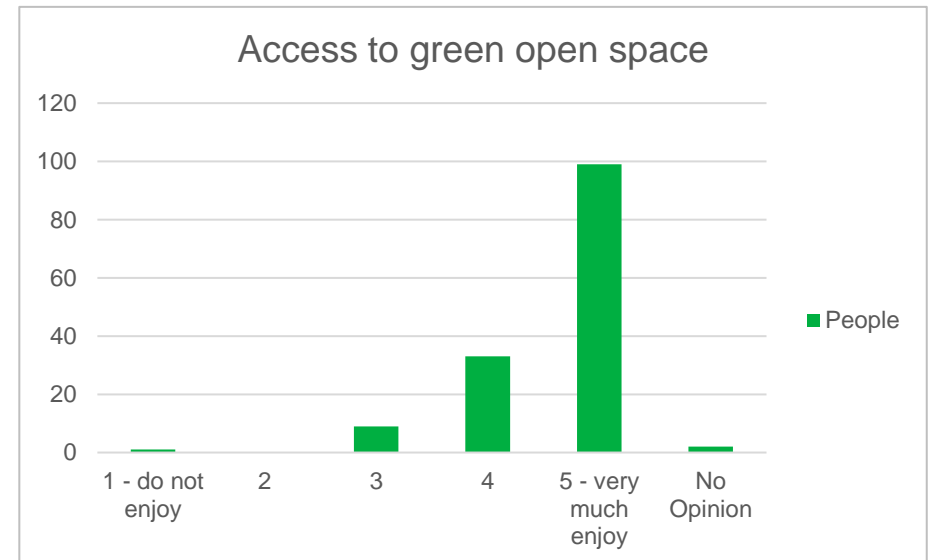
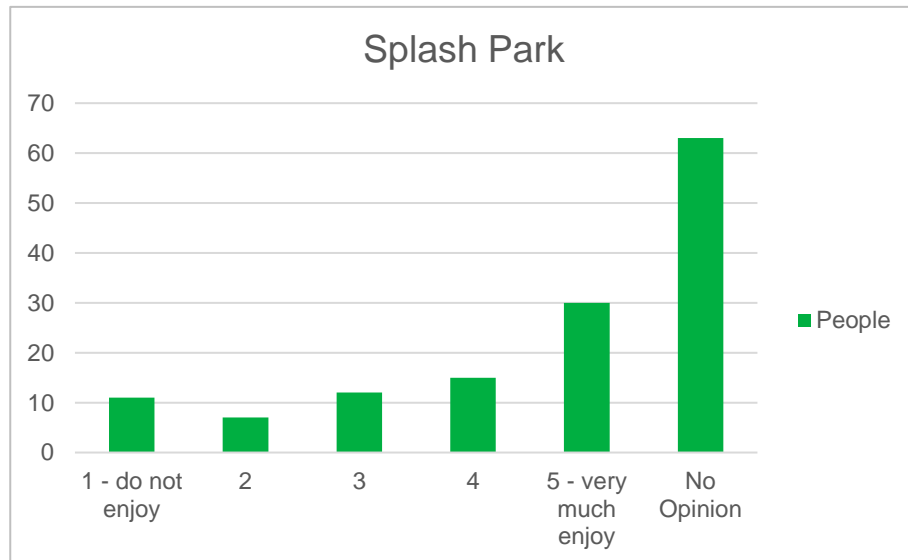
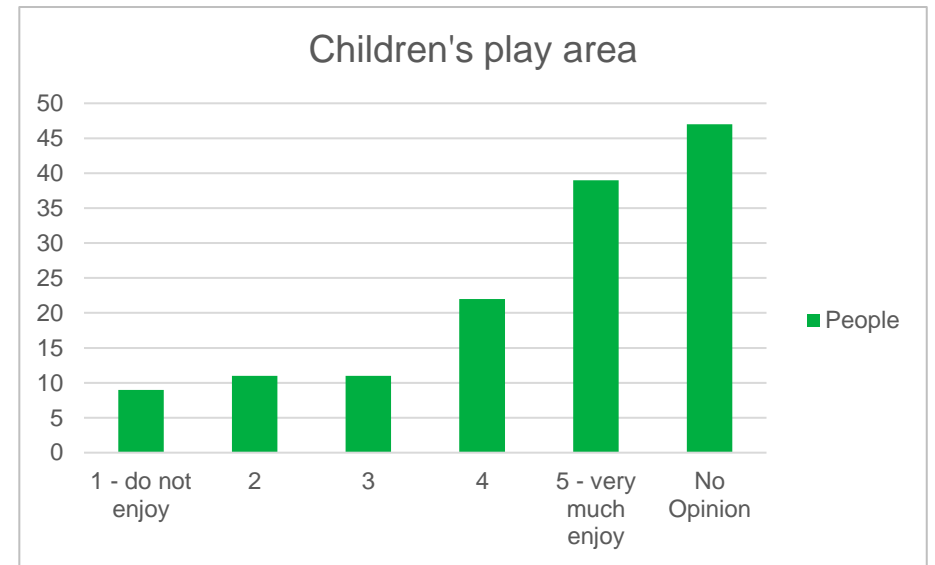
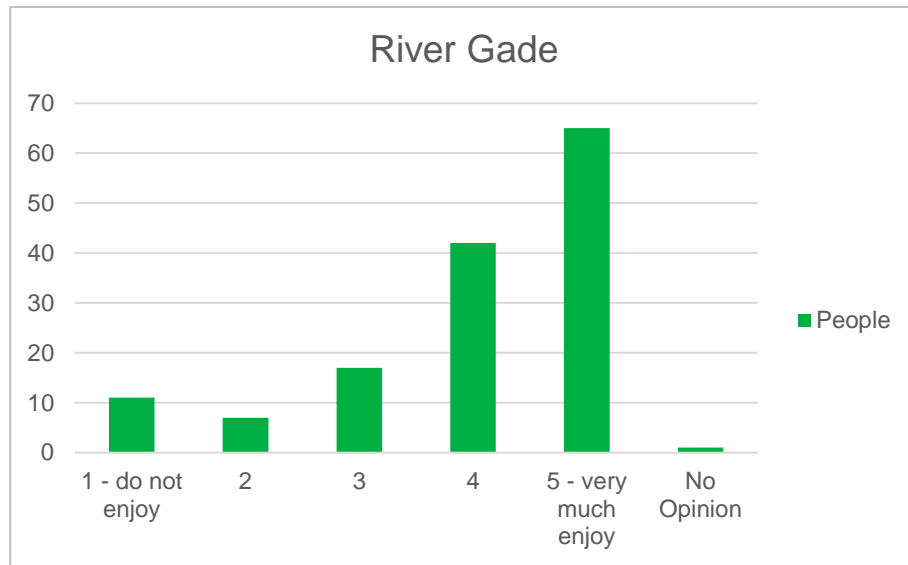
Question 2: How often do you visit Gadebridge Park?

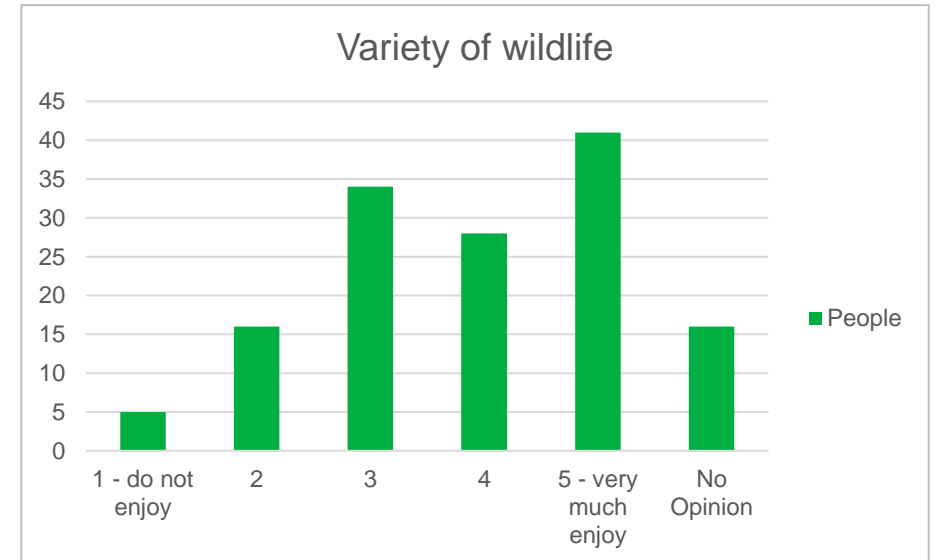
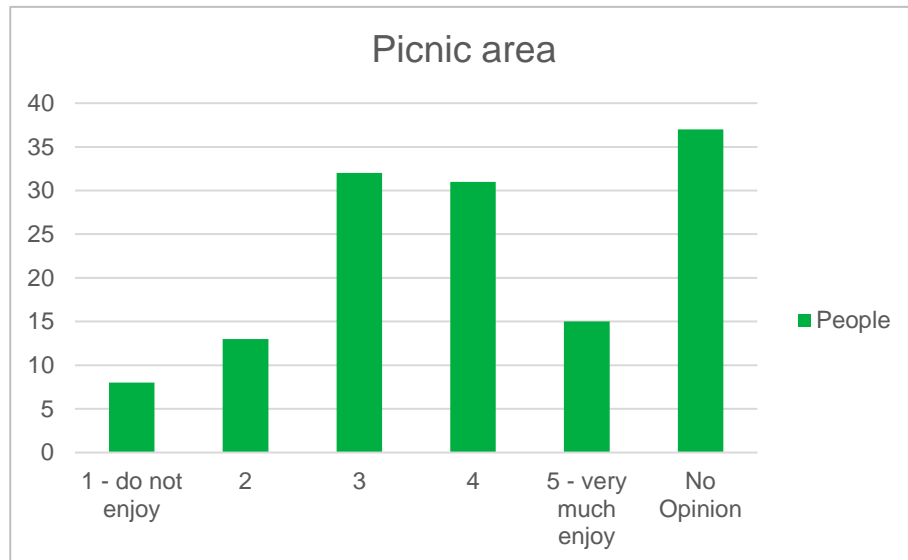
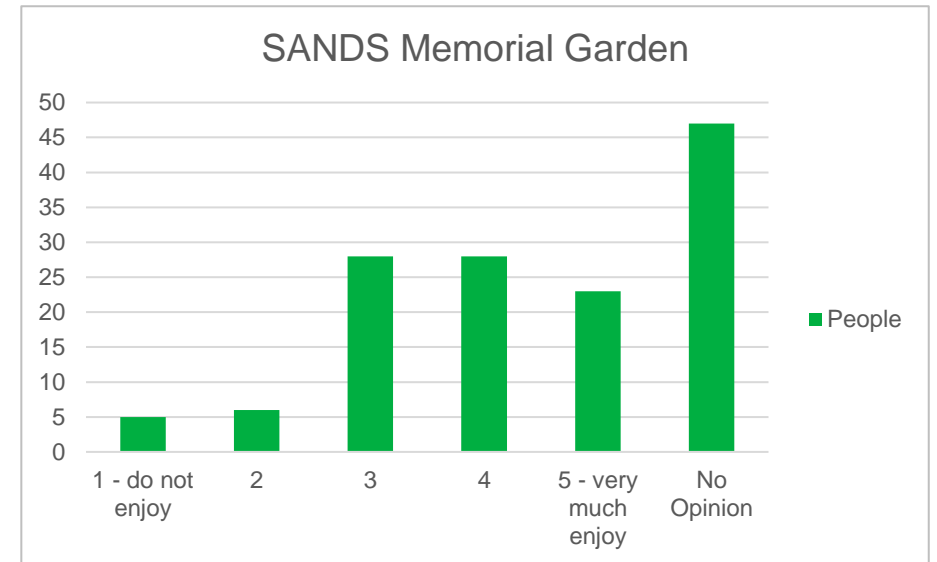
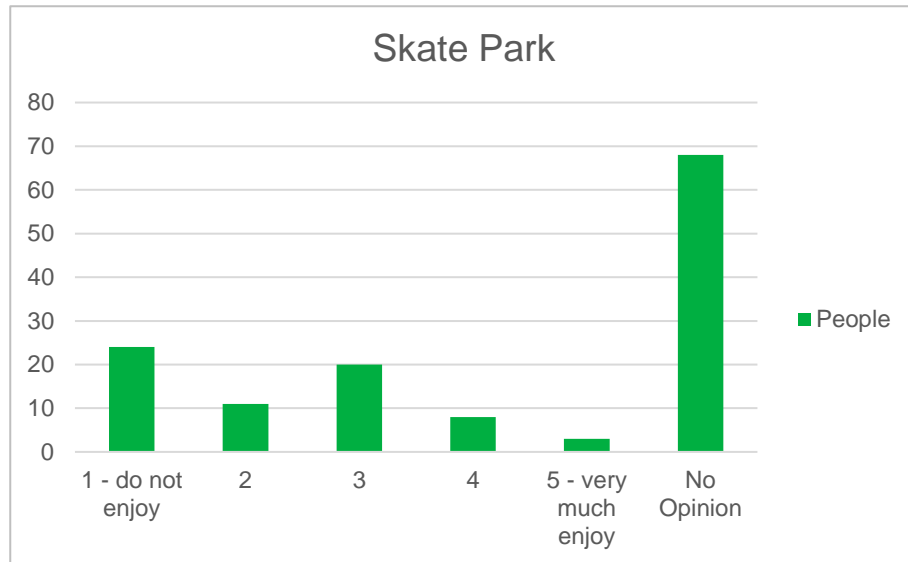


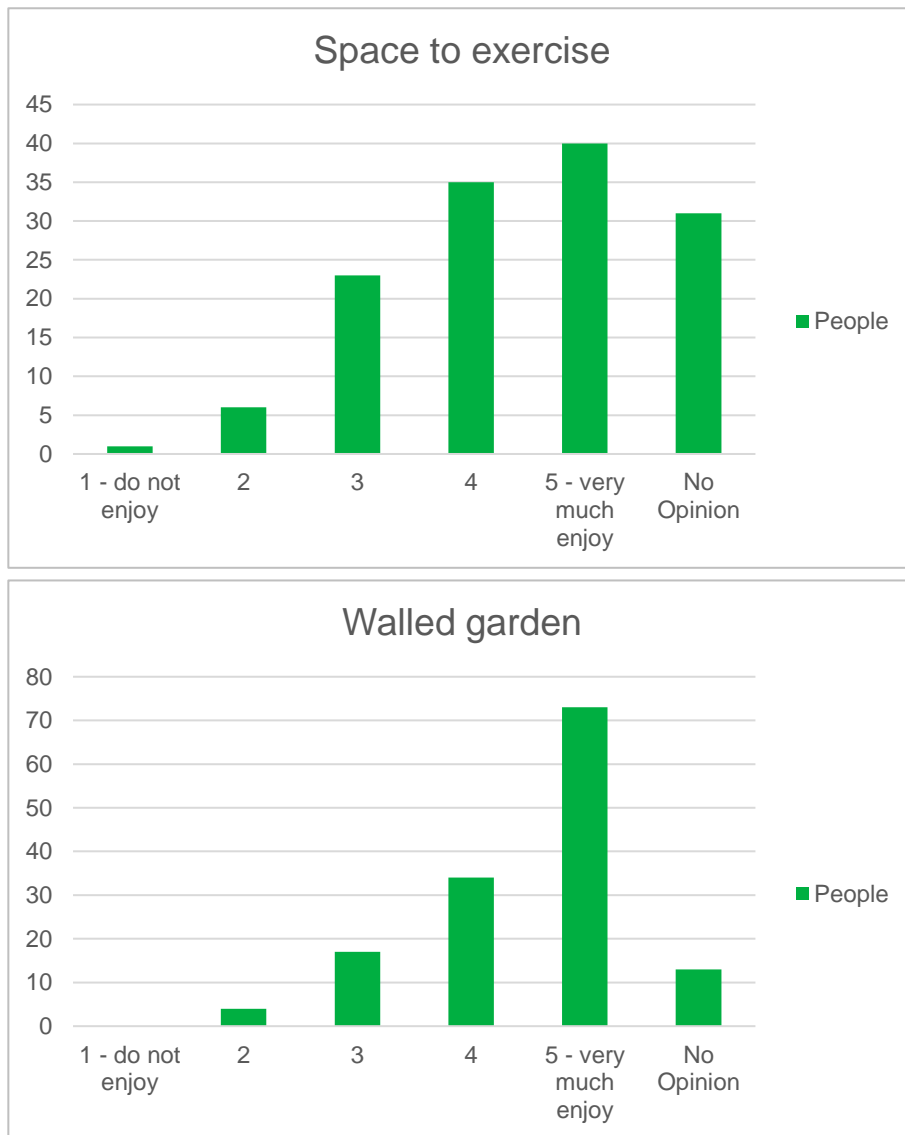
Question 3: Why do you visit Gadebridge Park? Please select all that apply



Question 4: How much do you enjoy the following features/activities of the park?







Question 5: How do you feel about the River Gade through Gadebridge Park at present?

Example responses:

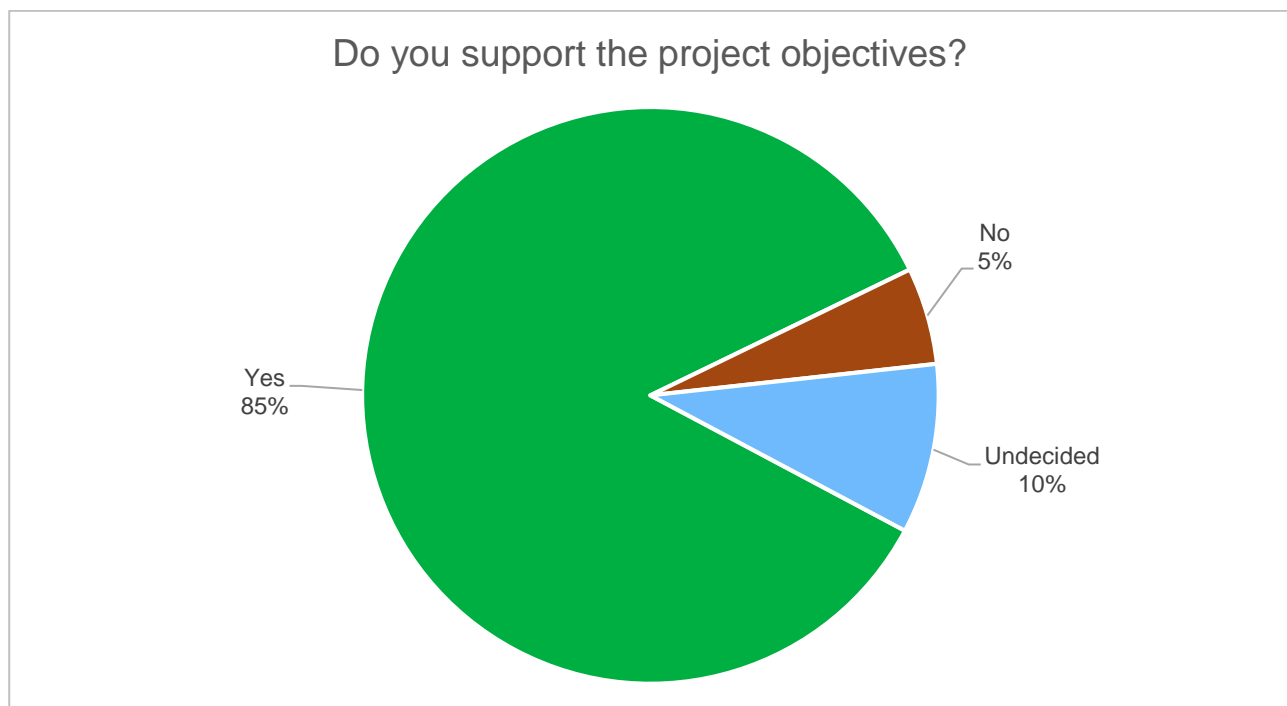
"It was always fine, when looked after. Since being left and disregarded the quality of the river has fallen greatly."

"The Gade is part of the park, used to fish well pretend to fish there with nets when we were younger, The growth of weed caused by nutrients has silted and completely destroyed the water plant that used to keep the water clean. So the wildlife has lessen to practically nothing now."

"I'm glad it's there, but obviously it does frequently flood, and this extreme, hot weather will increase plant growth which needs to be controlled. A couple of years ago I saw a native crayfish in there, so these need to be encouraged."

"The new part that has been cleared is a real triumph, we love the new stoned area that leads to the water and you can see an increase in wildlife and small fish. If the remainder of the river is revitalised like this it can only have a positive impact on the wildlife and overall enjoyment of the park."

Question 6: Do you support the project objectives?



If not, please provide some comments as to why

Example responses:

"Please do not take its natural beauty away with paths, and a manicure look and let's keep the bridge its park of the park."

"I agree with most. But not with reducing the impact of flooding I think that we need to use it to create a lake. It would be a great feature and help with flooding."

Question 7: What do you like about the proposals?

Example responses:

"Something has to be done with The Gade. I like that you have taken account of the Gade as a wildlife habitat and ecosystem and made recommendations based on that, rather than aesthetic consideration."

"All of them seem welcome from the environmental point of view and for the pleasure of visitors, i.e. improving the river and adjacent parkland for wildlife; making it easier for residents and visitors to access the river and enjoy nature; protecting water resources from the effects of drought and climate change; reconnecting the river to its floodplain to reduce the impact of flooding. Also: altering the course of the Gade to increase water flow and help brown trout, plants and insects flourish; reconnecting the Gade with its floodplain, to allow water to disperse more quickly after heavy rain; new footpaths along the river and crossing points to make access easier; environmental improvements, such as creating new wetland habitats."

"I think it will be really beautiful and restore a valuable wildlife habitat. The park is really improving our quality of life in Hemel."

Question 8: Is there anything that you feel is missing from the proposals?

Example responses:

"Maybe a proper bathing area adjacent to the grassy areas so families my bathe and enjoy the environment. A small artificial beach perhaps for the little ones, the Splash Park is great but this is nature, there's no beating nature."

"Like the idea of the gravel beach but feel this could be expanded."

"I would like some nice seating areas close to the river."

"The details of what is proposed for the new river bed. This is important if one of the objectives is to promote wildlife, such as the mentioned brown trout, as well as other fish species and the insect life required to support them."

"Access to the Bowls Club from the Bowls Club Car Park needs to be clarified..."

...On the plan it looks as if access will be at the northern end of the club house which means that bowlers would have much further to walk with heavy bowls bags containing their bowls."

"More gravel beaches."

Children flock to water and making it easy for them to paddle while not damaging the banks is very important."

The new gravel beach within the recent redevelopment of the upper part of the river is perfect."

"Dedicated paddling points / fishing points we used to have bags of fun as youngsters trying to catch sticklebacks and minnows."

Question 9: Do you have any other comments, concerns, or suggestions about the proposals?

Example responses:

"I think there should be information boards posted in the park to explain the developments to the public using the park - everyone needs to be included and with understanding are more likely to ensure that new planting etc is preserved. I have seen the work carried out at the north end of the park but have not understood what was happening or the aim of the project until I followed the link to this consultation."

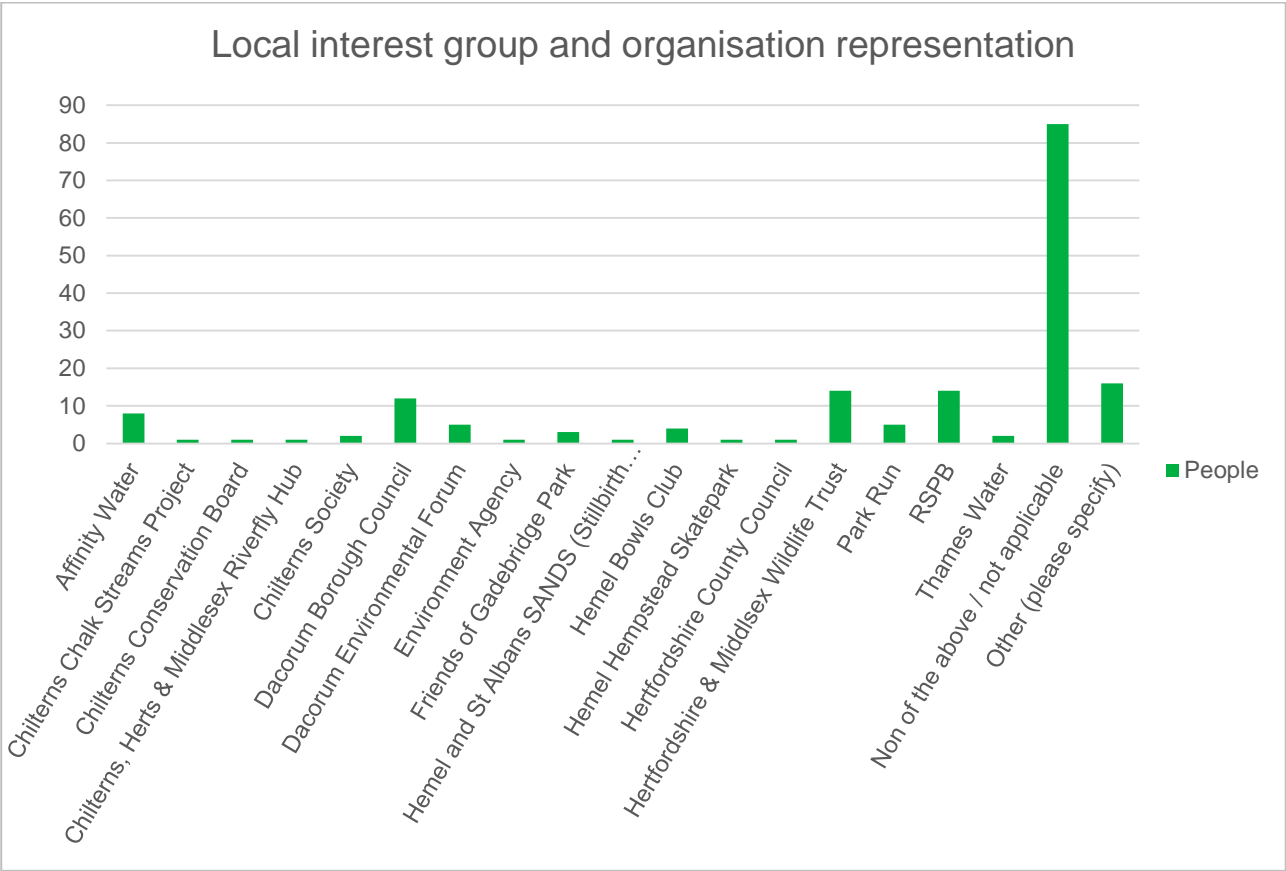
Paths laid in the north of the park are very light coloured and conspicuous - perhaps any more new paths could be darker and blend in with the surroundings better."

"An excellent set of proposals which will benefit Conservation, Access and Recreation of this well used parkland space."

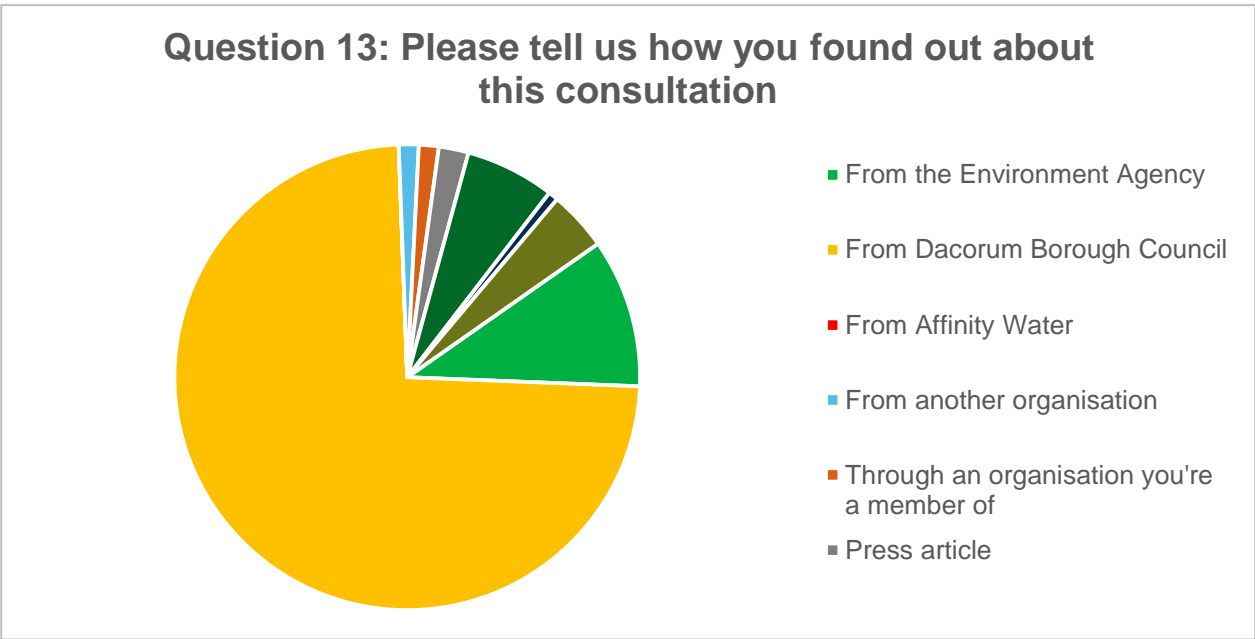
"In an area near the children's play area a board with pictures and brief details of wildlife that can be found in the area would interest and educate, and provide a game for parents and children looking for these creatures."

"Not sure I like the idea of the paths either side. I like the natural grass not man made paths."

Question 10: Are you a member of any of the following groups/organisations?



Question 13: Please tell us how you found out about this consultation



6. Making use of the feedback

Following the consultation, we are carrying out further investigations to inform our detailed designs. These investigations include:

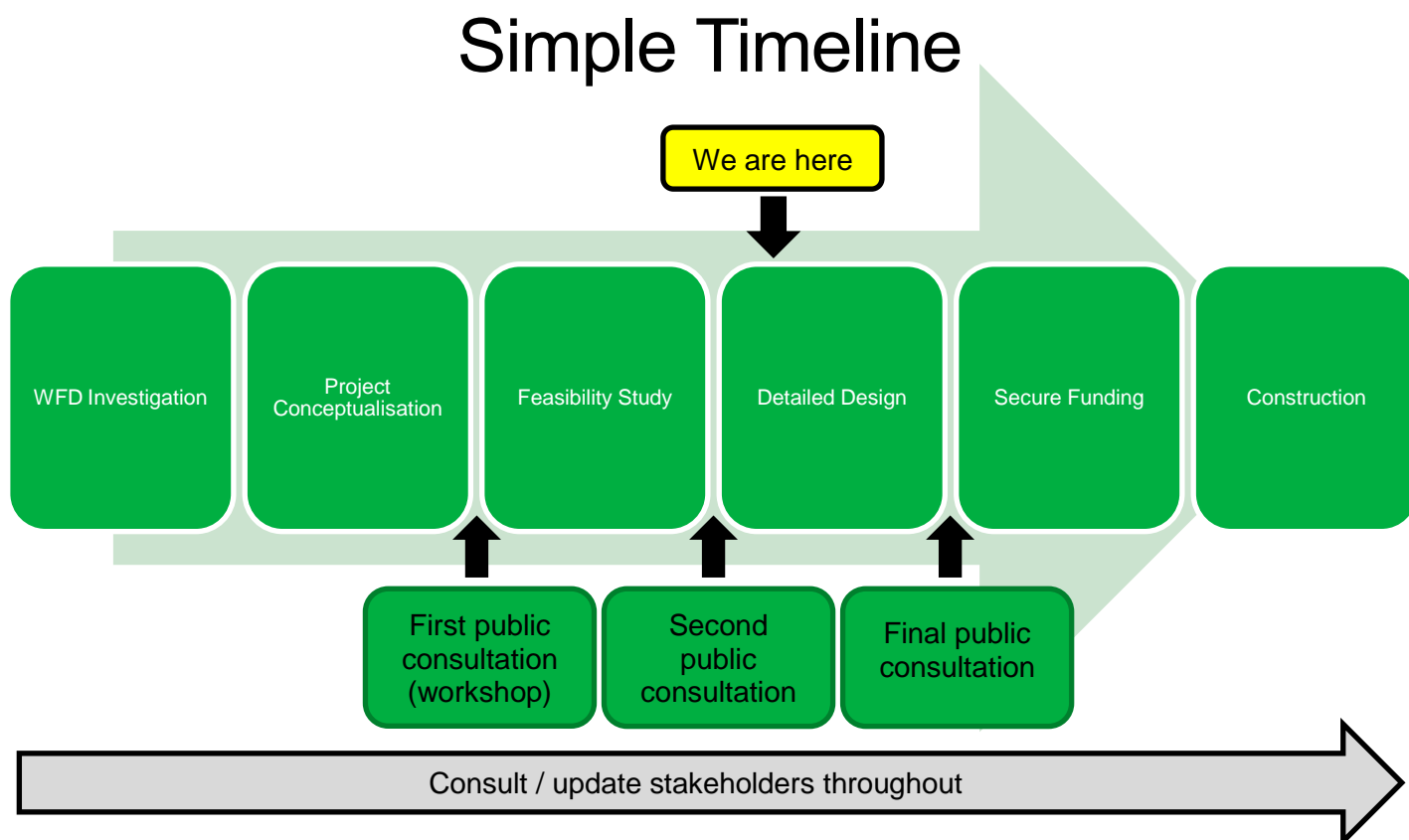
- Archaeological investigation
- Survey of existing outfalls into River Gade
- Survey of culvert which currently routes spring flow beneath the park
- Condition survey of sewer line through park
- Ground investigation
- Flood modelling of preferred option
- Impact assessment of trees
- Wetland features investigation (sustainability)

These are being managed by JBA Consulting on behalf of the Environment Agency.

The responses to the public consultation will also feed into our investigations of the preferred option and inform the detailed designs for the project. We will also look at technical considerations, environmental and social impacts to develop the option further to take it forward to detailed design.

We currently plan to complete these investigations and share our detailed designs in summer / autumn 2019. This is subject to change, dependent on the progress of the project.

The diagram below shows a simple summary of the project timeline with the different stages and points at which we will undertake formal consultation.



There will be further opportunity for public comment when we hold our next consultation, currently planned for summer / autumn 2019. We will also continue to engage directly with local interest groups who are providing us with vital local input into the proposals as we develop them further. In the shorter term we will continue to provide updates through partner websites as suggested on page 4 of this report. These updates will be available at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>

<http://www.colnecan.org.uk/>

Anyone who is not already on our mailing list but would like to be can email gadebridgepark@environment-agency.gov.uk and request to be added.

7. Appendices

The following appendices can be found as separate documents alongside this one at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/hnl/gadebridge-park-river-restoration/>.

Appendix 1 - Indicative landscape plan

Appendix 2 - Gadebridge Park river restoration scheme - July 2018 summary

Appendix 3 - Artists impression of proposed realigned river

Appendix 4 - Indicative alignment of proposed channel

Appendix 5 - Consultation survey

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