

Summary of open comments from Greenspace Management Strategy survey.

There were a significant number of open comments (1,377) in the GSMS survey. Below is a summary of some of the key themes arising from the survey.

Allotments

In Q4, when asked 'What do you value most in our parks and open space?' 'allotments' were not a pre-selected option, but out of 155 comments, 41 (26%) mentioned how important allotments are.

- "Many people get great satisfaction from tending, producing and eating their own fruit and veg"
- "During lockdown, when I was confined to a small flat, my allotment was a real lifeline"
- "Treat allotments as equal importance to parks, playgrounds etc"

In addition, in Q8, when asked 'Are there other priorities the council should consider for managing our greenspace over the next five years?', out of 512 comments, 63 (12%) said the council should increase allotment provision.

Disagreement with statements about parks and open spaces

In question 5, respondents were asked if they agreed with a series of positive statements about our parks and open spaces. If they didn't agree, they were given the opportunity to leave a comment.

Out of 239 comments, 8 respondents (3%) mentioned drugs, 27 (11%) complained about dog fouling and 9 respondents (4%) mentioned nuisance dogs.

Drugs and feeling unsafe

- "Drug dealers in local park and groups of men hanging around smoking weed"
- "There are drug users at the Little Wymondley Rec, which doesn't make me feel safe"
- "Norton common at night is not at all lit and is very scary"
- "Work with police to reduce antisocial behaviour and drug use around open spaces - e.g. adjacent car parks being used for drug dealing"

Dogs – fouling and nuisance/litter bins

- "The rubbish bins are often overflowing & very unpleasant. Dog poo bags are frequently deposited near the bins as there is insufficient room in the bins"
- "The loss of dog waste bins has turned the parks and green ways into revolting poop areas. You have to put waste into bins overflowing with dog mess – it's revolting"
- "Too many dogs off lead or not under control meaning I worry, particularly about taking children out"

- “I think there is an increasing litter problem, especially dog waste. Yesterday I collected 4 bags of dog waste on the oughthead common path, just a few hundred metres from a bin. Can we have a media blitz on this please?”
- “Bins are a problem. They are often overflowing with rubbish, but worst is the bags of dog mess. Dog owners do not wish to take their bags and dispose of them cleanly if the bins are overflowing, they just dump them beside, on, or near the bins.”

Greenbelt

Q8 – When asked ‘Are there other priorities the council should consider for managing our greenspace over the next five years?’, another priority mentioned was to protect the greenbelt with 32 comments (6%) out of 512 mentioning “greenbelt”, including:

- “Protect greenbelt from development & enhance areas for biodiversity & wildlife”
- “Do not build on Greenbelt areas I moved to Letchworth 4 years ago to live in a green area with open spaces. Now realising you intend to build on Greenbelt areas which will mean I will move out of the area if this happens”
- “Green belts are "greenspaces" too. It is a shame that NHC seems to be so keen to getting their status changed, in order to build more homes, which will attract more traffic and pollution”

Quality of play equipment

- “The equipment in all three of our nearest play areas - St Ippolyts (x 2) and Gosmore is not in the best condition and needs to be overhauled”
- “The Lytton Fields recreation space in Knebworth is very poorly maintained. There are often nettles under the play equipment and the grass needs cutting more often. The play equipment is dated”
- “Smithsons recreation area in Hitchin has not been cleared of leaves in months and it’s very dirty for the children to play on and around the equipment. When money was spent on the park a few years ago there was nothing spent on the children’s play area it is old and very inferior to the other play parks in Hitchin”
- “We're quite good on play facilities for the younger age groups. Need more things for early teens. Adventure playground type equipment for that older group”
- “Natural play for children that integrates into the environment”
- “Please add gates and fences to the play areas. Some parks are far too stressful for parents!”
- “The recent revamp of Howard Park playground is incredibly disappointing, the previous version was better. You've replaced too many elements which multiple children could use with single-user items (bee pots, wobbly bridge, mirrors), and the sandpit is a nightmare as

children now fight over the scarce resources. Who on earth designed it? We all wanted more swings, nothing else!”

- “Howard park in Letchworth is managed very well with friendly staff. Would welcome more areas with (even very basic) play areas for children in the south of Letchworth. Impressed with maintenance of the Greenway - thanks to all the council staff who make this a nice place to live”