

# The Leys facility improvements: Local consultation findings & FAQs

March 2023



In partnership with others, we ran an extensive local consultation in November-December 2022, collecting 446 responses from Witney residents, 93% of whom support plans for a multi-activity hub.

### Key findings

- 93% were positive about the overall hub proposal
- 95% said the hub would encourage them to use the park more
- 74% would be encouraged to do more physical activity
- 83% said the hub would promote better physical health and 86% better mental health
- 69% felt that the project would increase community spirit
- 71% of responses highlighted the proposed café as the main reason for visiting the park
- 93% of respondents would rate the current toilet facilities as 'Poor' or 'Very poor'
- 84% of respondents 'Liked' or 'Really liked' the new options of free or low-cost physical and social activities

### Method

- Online survey live for 5 weeks in November and December 2022
- Letters hand posted to residents with immediate proximity to the park
- Notices in the park, café and street noticeboards
- Emails sent to members of Got2B, local schools and tennis court bookers
- Posts on local social media

### Demographics

- 446 responses, of which 62% female, 38% male
- Age range: u25: 15%, 25-34: 14%, 35-44: 25%, 45-54: 24%, 55-64: 11%, 65+: 11%
- Ethnicity: 91% white, 9% non-white
- Postcode: 44% OX28 (Witney), 56% other
- Disability: 10% with, 90% without

# Activity



**93%** were positive about the overall proposal

**95%**

would use the park more



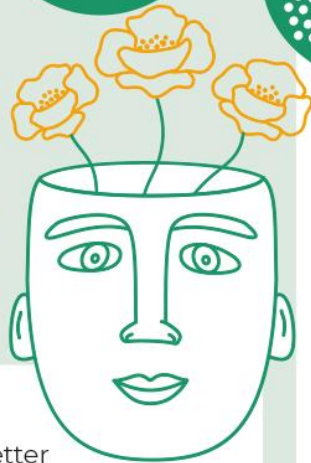
**74%**

would be encouraged to do more physical activity

**83%** said a multi activity hub would promote better physical health



**86%** said it would promote better mental health



**73%** would like to try padel tennis



**77%** would like LED lights for tennis/netball courts

**77%** like the idea of a multi-use games area



**75%** are positive about a new skatepark



**71%** said the café was the main reason they visited the park



**85%** are positive about a new indoor activity space



**49%** rated the current playground facilities positively



**97%** rated the current toilet facilities negatively

**69%** would use the park more if there were new toilets



## Plus...

**43%**

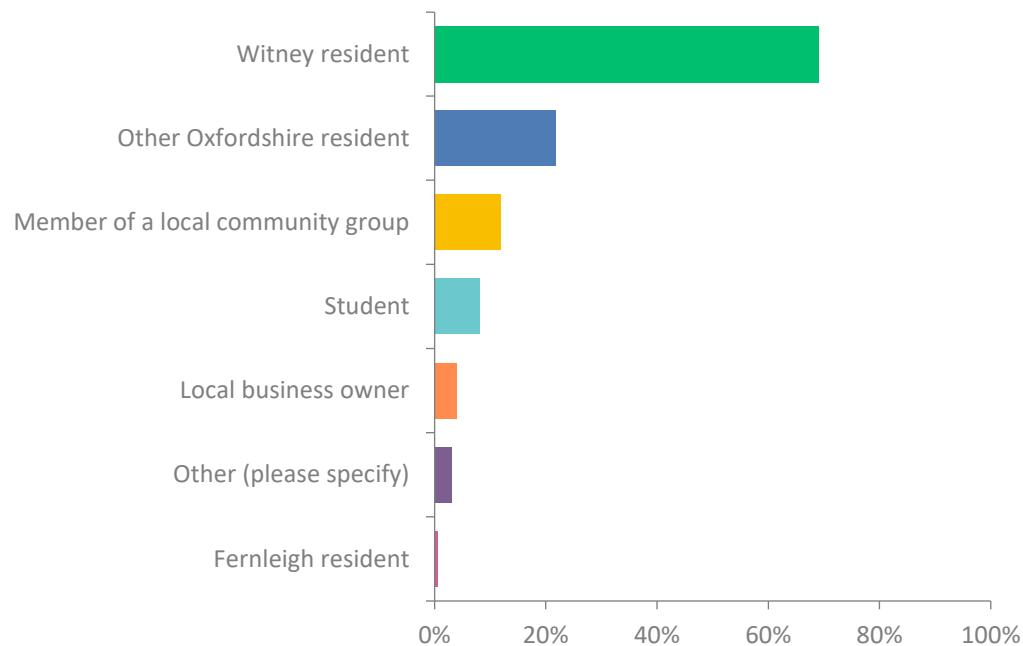
feel there's a below average offer of physical and social activities

**Goal: seek feedback from local people to help shape proposed park facility improvements**

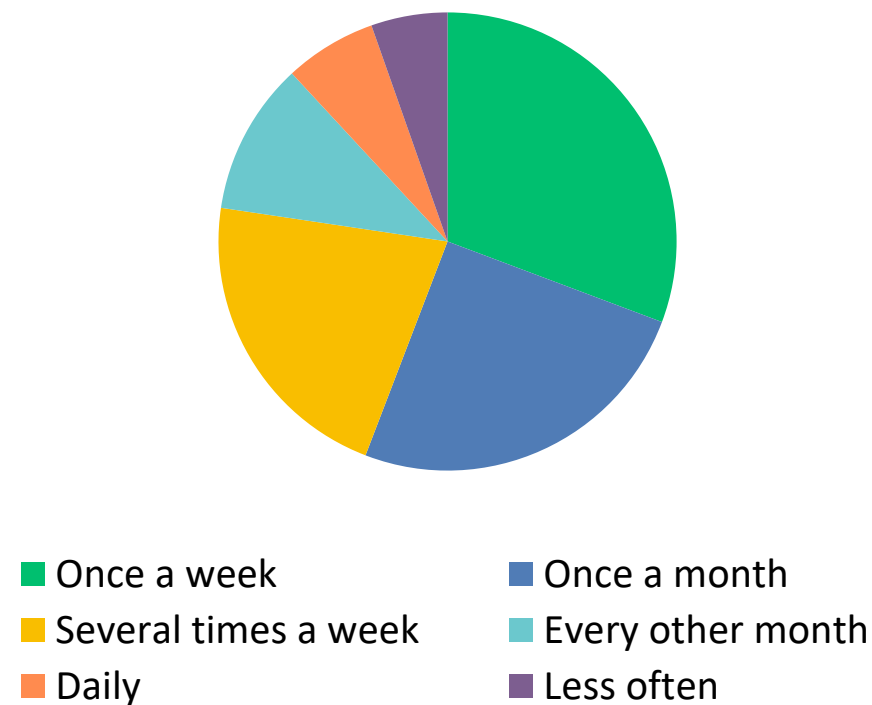
Consultation conducted Nov to Dec 2022, 446 responses



### Q1. What kind of stakeholder are you?

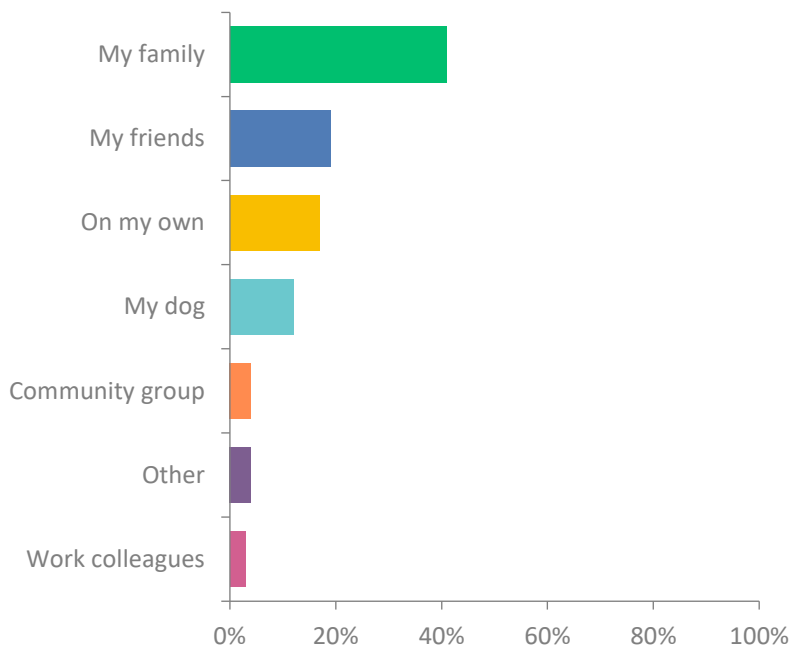


### Q3. How often do you visit the park?



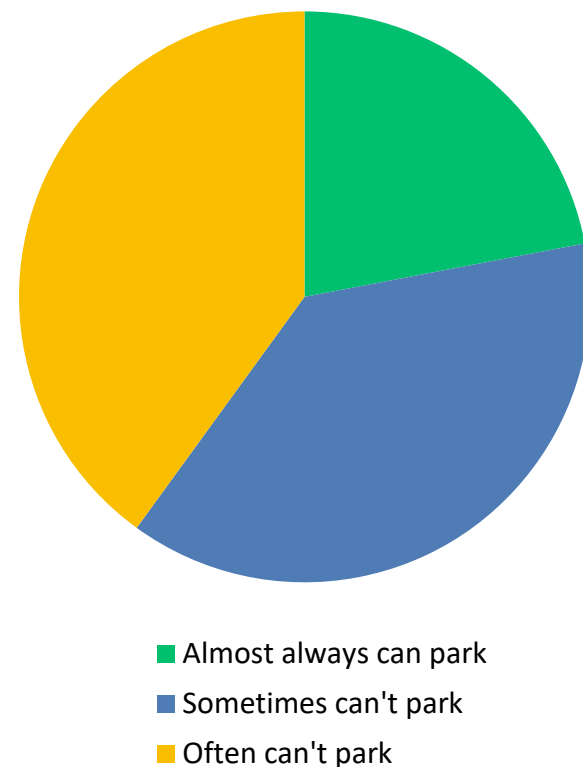
- 70% of stakeholders are local residents in Witney
- 58% visit the park at least once a week
- 23% of existing customers are attracted from outside of Witney

### Q4. Who do you typically come to The Leys with?



- 41% visit with family, 19% visit with friends, 17% visit on their own
- 78% of visitors find it difficult to park some or most of the time

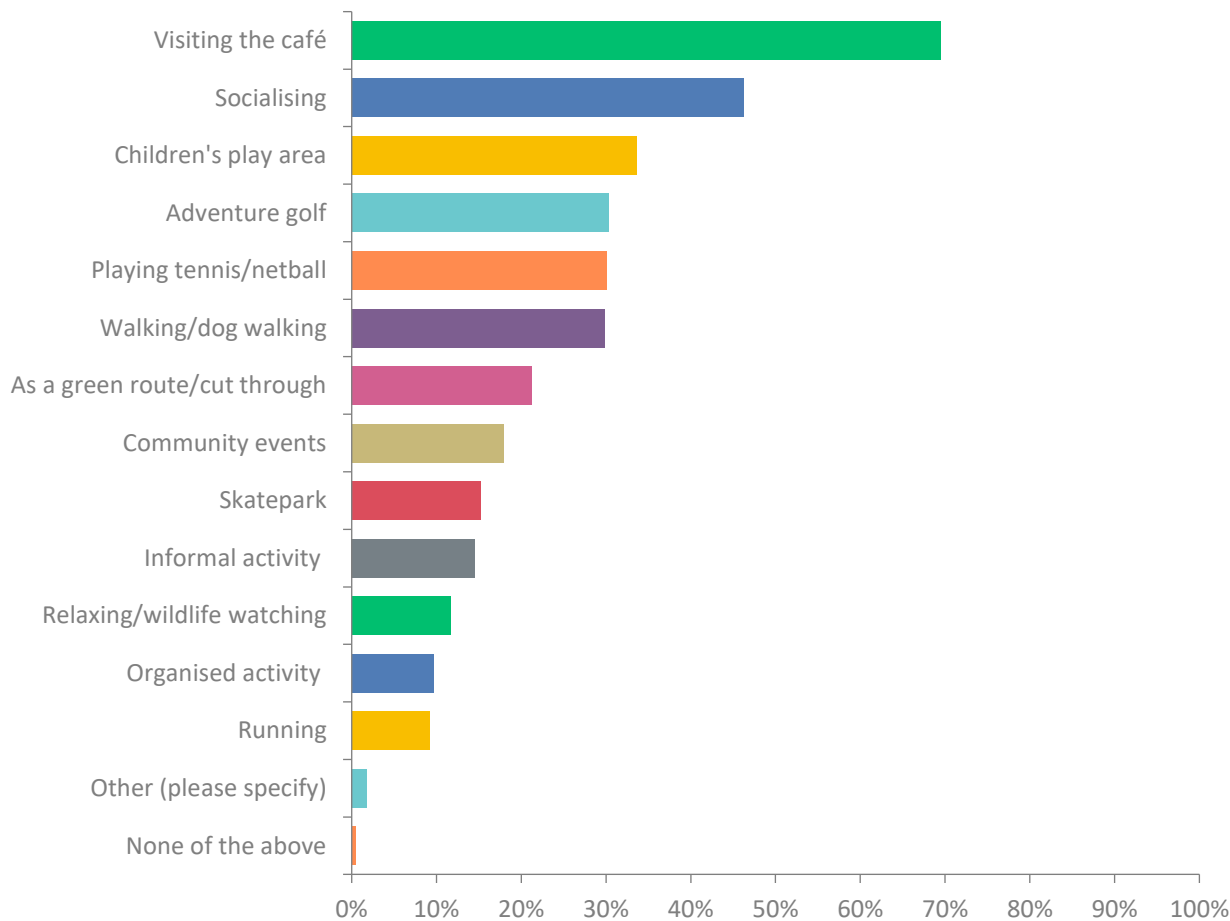
### Q6. What would you say about the availability of parking?



\*Q5: How do you typically get to The Leys? (drive: 55%; walk 39%; cycle 3%; other 3%)



### Q7. What are your main reasons for visiting the park? Please tick all that apply.



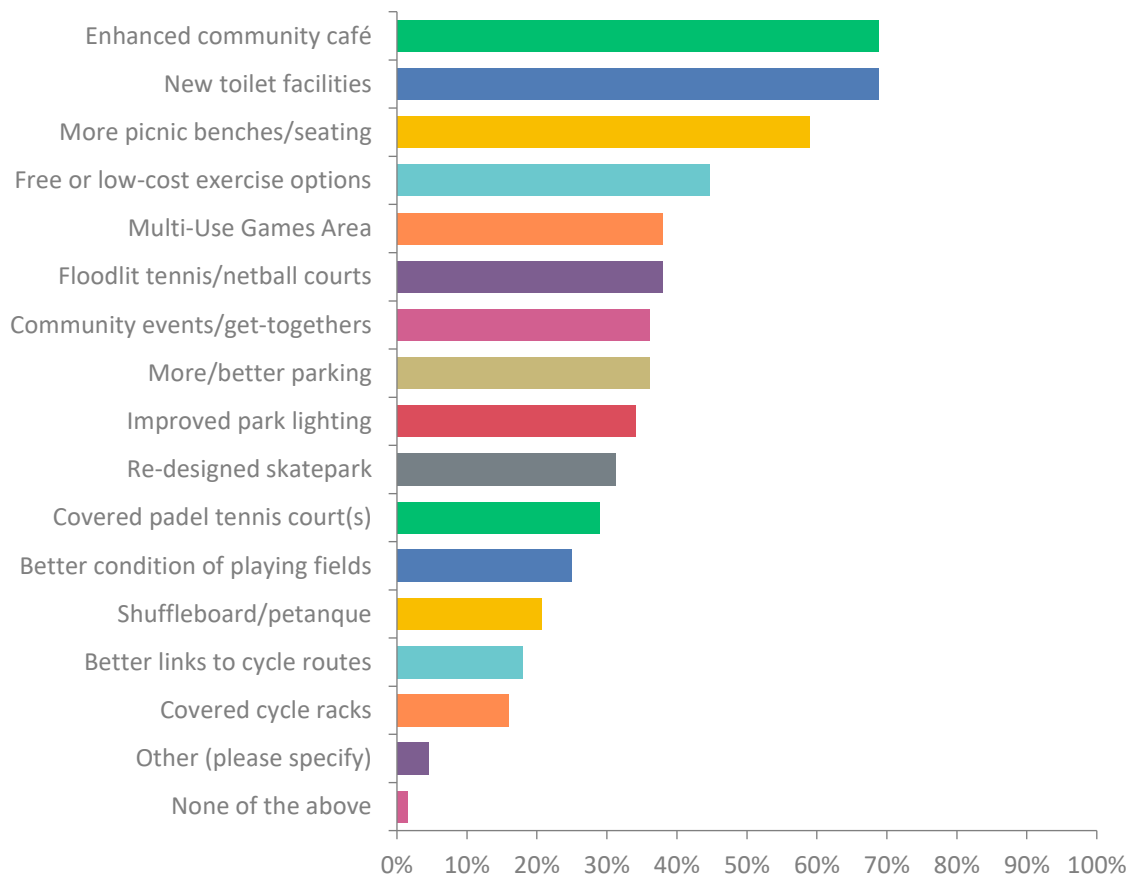
The community café (**436** people) and socialising (**288** people) were the most popular reasons for visiting the park.

Almost a 1/3 of all visitors\* took part in activity on the tennis courts or adventure golf.

Other included:

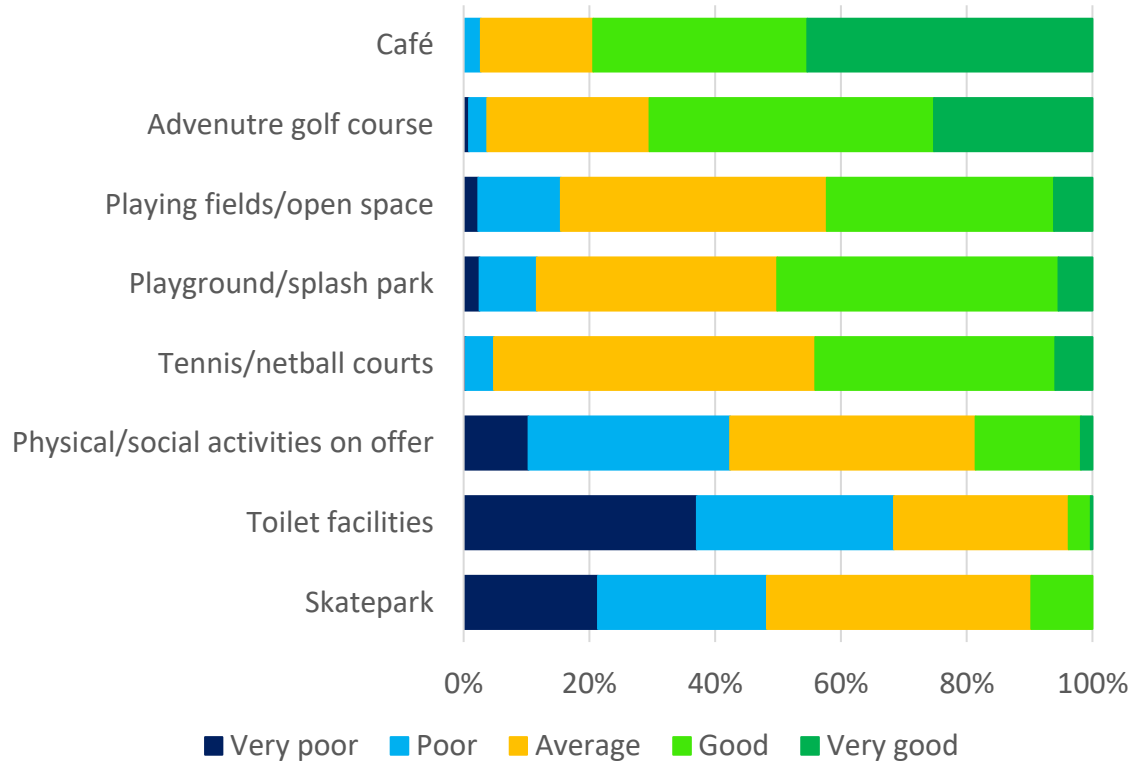
- Picnic/Lunch
- Table tennis
- Visiting war memorial

### Q8. What would make you use the park more? Please tick all that apply.



- Most popular responses were an enhanced café (69%), new toilet facilities and more seating
- 39% would use the park more if the tennis courts were floodlit
- Nearly a 1/2 of all responses (189 people) would visit the park more with the introduction of free or low cost exercise options
- 283 people wanted to see improved park infrastructure such as improved parking and better lighting
- 69% of people would use the park more if the toilets were improved

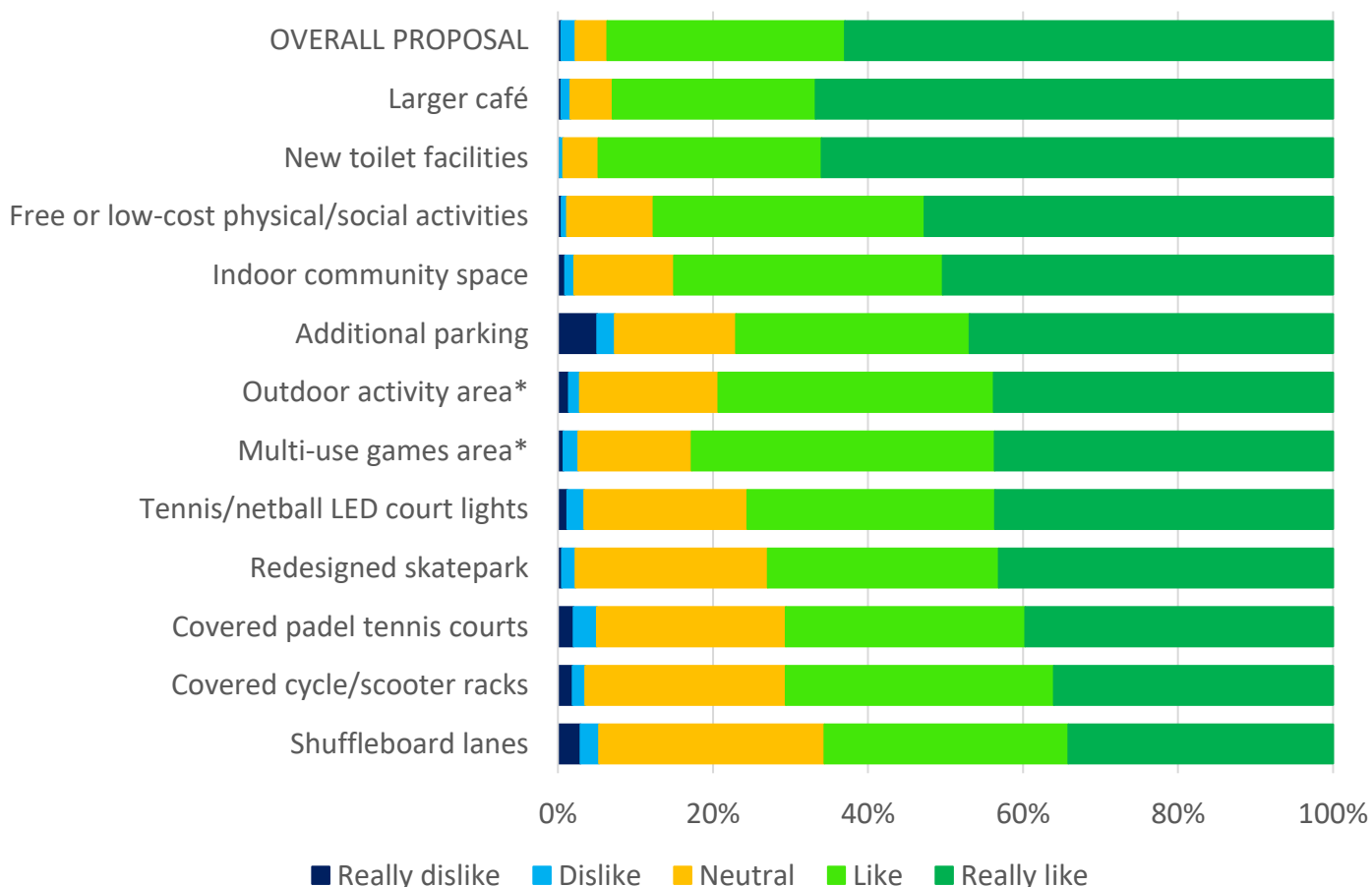
### Q9. How do you rate the following at The Leys today?



- Toilets are the most negatively viewed, with less than 4% of respondents rating them 'Good' or above
- 48% of respondents rated the skate park as below average
- The most positive ratings were for the cafe. 79% rated it 'Good' or better
- Football/playing fields had a 58% rating of 'Average', 'Poor' or 'Very poor'



### Q10. What do you think of these possible new facilities?



93% said they either 'Like' or 'Really like' the proposal

Refurbished toilets are the most popular with 94% approval

83% would welcome a new multi-use games area\*

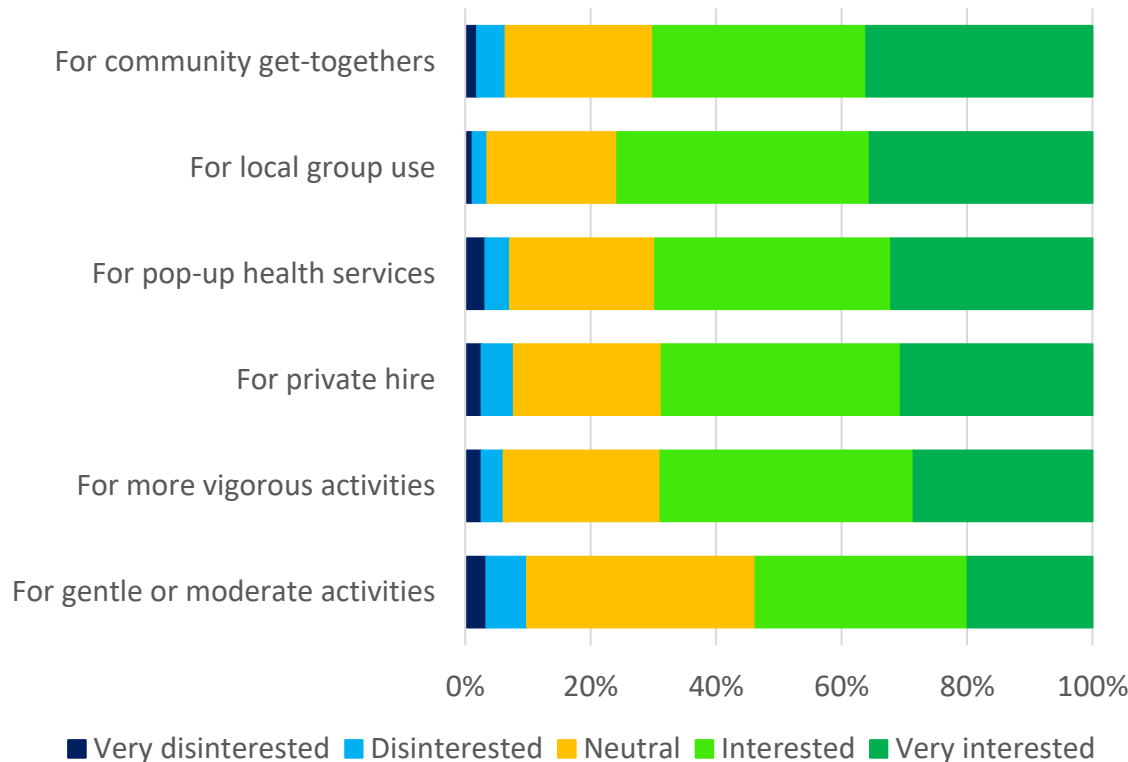
77% would like to see the skatepark redesigned

70% were positive about adding LED court lights to the tennis/netball courts

\* A multi-use games area might incorporate 5-a-side football, 3x3 basketball and mini tennis

\* An outdoor activity area might be used for group exercise classes such as yoga or pilates

### Q11. How interested would you be in seeing an indoor space connected to recreation facilities used in the following ways?



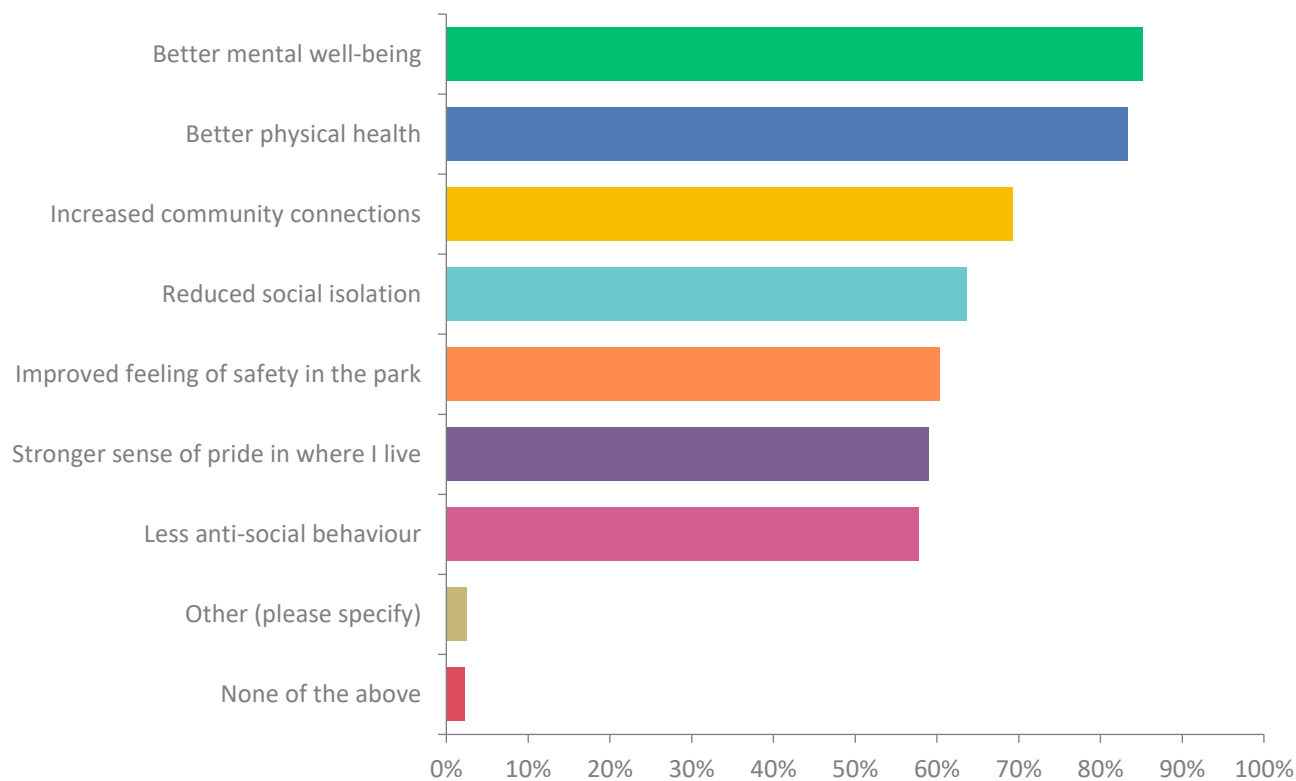
- The use for local groups like youth clubs was the most popular use for the proposed indoor space at **74%**
- Pop-up health services and private hire options were rated similarly, with **70%** 'interested' or 'very disinterested' in the former and **69%** in the latter
- **15%** more people favoured vigorous exercise (e.g. fitness classes) over gentle or moderate exercise (e.g. chairrobics)

Q12. Do you have any ideas for specific physical and/or social activities you would like to see (e.g. health walks, yoga, pre-school storytelling etc.)?



*NB: a word cloud is a visual representation (image) of word data*

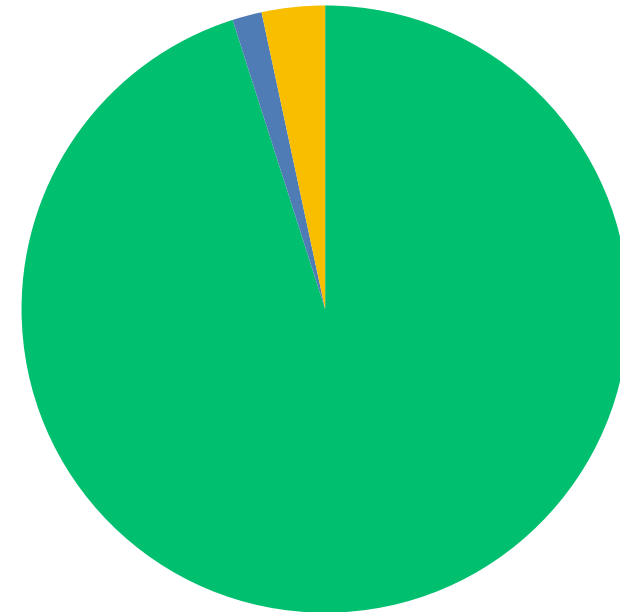
### Q13. How do you think a multi-activity hub would benefit the local community? Please tick all that apply.



- Over 83% said that the multi-activity hub would improve physical health and better mental well being
  - Over 61% said that the multi-activity hub would make them feel safer
  - 64% said that it would reduce social isolation
  - 60% said that the activity hub would strengthen their sense of local pride
- ‘Other’ included:
- Potential local business links

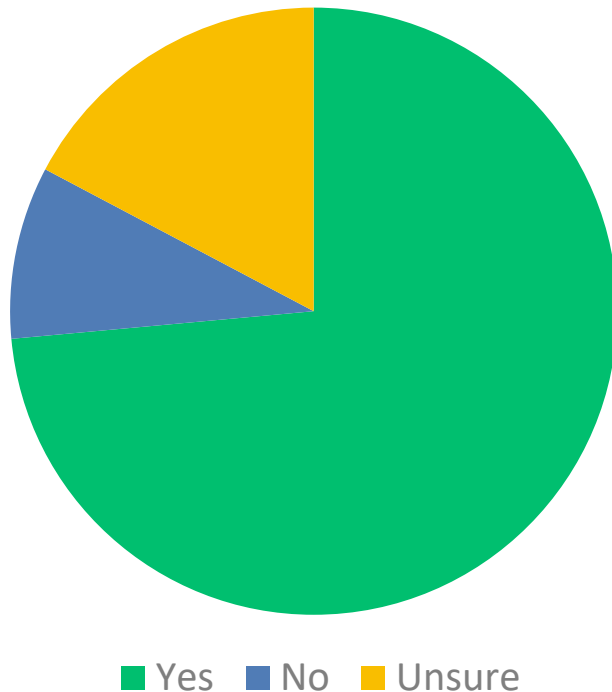
### Q14. Would this development encourage you to visit The Leys more?

- 95% said that they would visit The Leys multi-activity hub **more**
- 1% said that the development of The Leys multi-activity hub **wouldn't** encourage them to visit more



■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

### Q15. Would these facility improvements encourage you to do more physical activity?



- Over 74% of respondents said that the multi-hub improvements would encourage them to do **more physical activity**, with more proposed options for exercise and sport potentially available



### Q17 – “Do you have any final comments?”

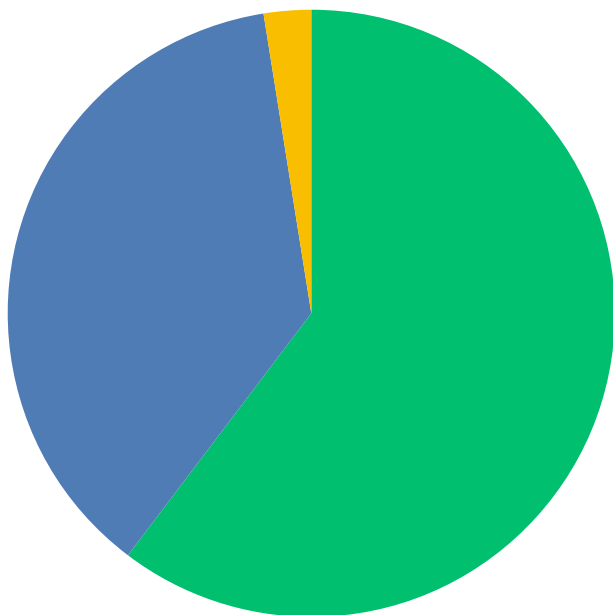
- *“Overall if managed correctly and well looked after this is a great idea for Witney.”*
- *“I hope the shed coffee shop does not become too commercialised! The café serves a large group of the population on a daily basis, reducing loneliness and creating a kind and welcoming community to all.”*
- *“I think the parking should be limited to maybe 3 hours, which would stop the spaces being used by those who want to park for school all day or who want to get the bus into Oxford and use The Leys as all day free parking. I think the spaces next to the café should be disabled and staff only.”*
- *“I would only be concerned that drawing more people to The Leys may lead it to feel crowded or commercialised, especially in the summer.”*
- *“If possible I would prefer to have tennis courts free from the netball court lines (and vice versa) - I am not sure that dual use of the space is that great of an idea... Covered padel courts are a great idea!”*
- *“I think adding floodlights to the tennis would be amazing and allow me and my family to play all year round rather than having to stop in the winter months.”*
- *“The skate park is in real need of a refurbishment! It is such a valuable space for our youth.”*
- *“The team at The Coffee Shed has done such an amazing job through very difficult circumstances, this could be such a great thing for Witney if it can happen quickly. I'm impressed the Council are supporting you and wish you luck turning it into a reality.”*
- *“Please make a skate plaza and a good basketball court, the town's younger generation need a decent place to progress in such skills.”*
- *“I don't like the idea of losing a number of tennis courts as during spring and summer it's busy enough.”*

- *“Great idea, anything that will improve facilities in the area for all local residents, but especially the younger generation and those who are more isolated, is a good thing.”*
- *“I like the scheme overall apart from introducing parking by the cafe. The Leys is currently traffic free apart from council vehicles and occasional deliveries to the cafe. This introduces traffic into a primarily pedestrian area.”*
- *“In times of austerity, resources that bring people together and encourage activity are priceless! The cafe is always wonderful, please help them to be even better! Please find this essential funding for a better future! Thank you.”*
- *“I would like to see more seating in the area. The Leys seems well used by older people for exercise, but an opportunity to rest a while is always welcome.”*
- *“The redevelopment of the site is long overdue and has been a regular discussion topic amongst our group, so we are very pleased that something may now be happening... Our main concern of any redevelopment, would be safety with regard to increased traffic to the proposed parking area.”*
- *“I feel strongly that youth provision in Witney should be improved. This proposal would go part way to improving social and sporting opportunity for young people.”*
- *“There is a shortage of space for rental to host social events in Witney - this would be a welcome addition to the current offer.”*
- *“Please do not let this redevelopment get too big or too commercial or let it spoil the green spaces already there.”*
- *“I'm very excited about this redevelopment, the cafe is a wonderful asset for the community so I'm really pleased it's being enlarged.”*
- *“Good luck and brilliant to see some real social enterprise at the heart of Witney.”*

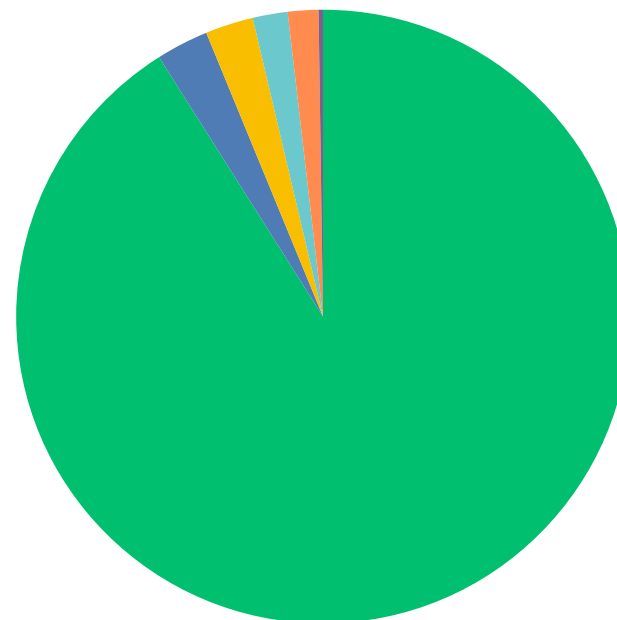
### Qs 19-24 Funding data questions

Answers from a diverse range of participants around Witney:

Respondents were mostly female (62%) and mostly of white backgrounds (91%).



Female Male Prefer not to say



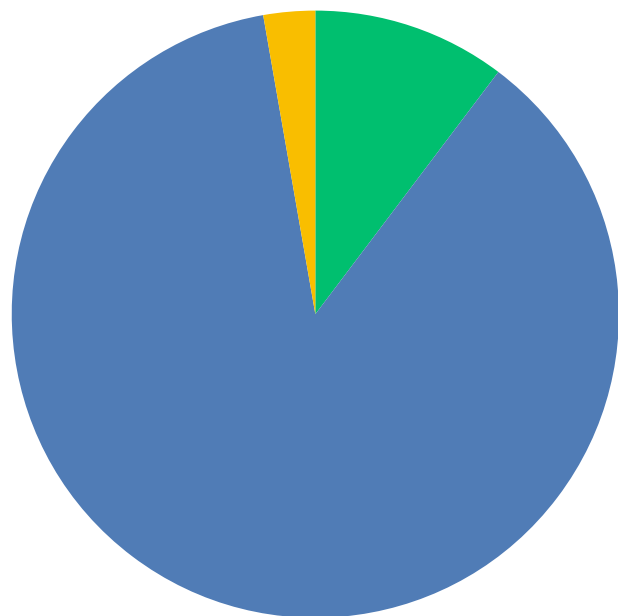
White Mixed Prefer not to say Black Asian Other

### Qs 19-24 Funding data questions

Answers from a diverse range of participants:

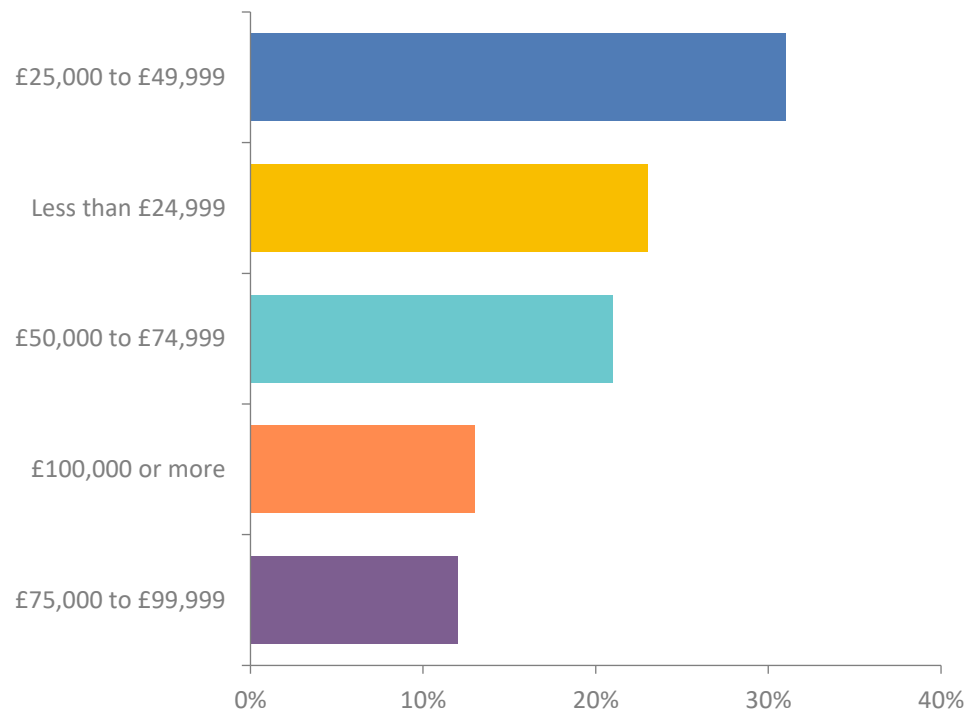
54% of respondents have household income of less than £50,000.

#### Do you have a registered disability?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say

#### What is your annual household income?

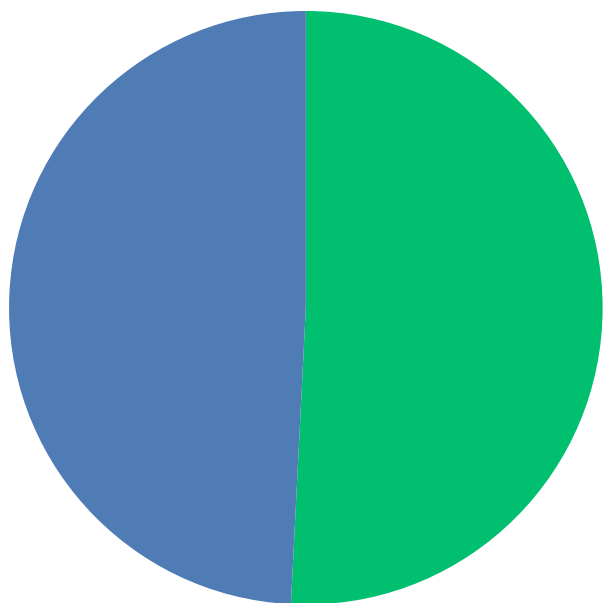


## Qs 19-24 Funding data questions

### Answers from a diverse range of participants:

The largest age group of respondents is 35-44, with 25% of the total.  
46% of respondents are 45 or older and 29% are 34 or younger.

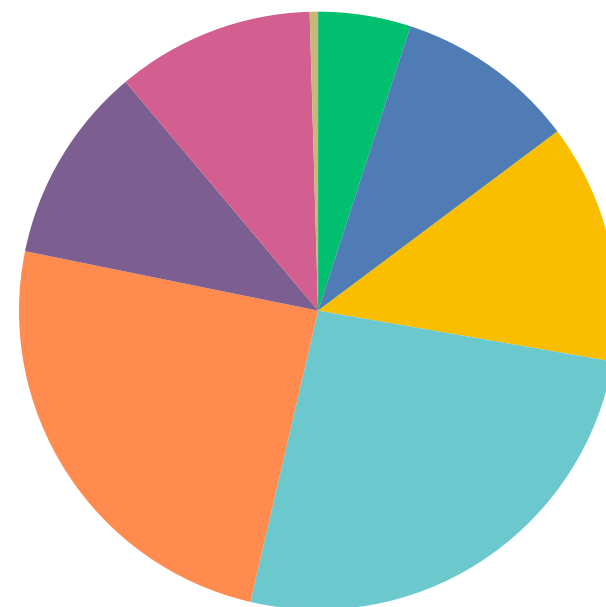
Do you have any children under 18 currently living in your household?



■ Yes ■ No

Under which age bracket do you fall?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say



We have put together a list of questions below that have appeared regularly within our consultation and survey feedback and we would like to share our responses with you. If you have any other questions or queries, please drop us an email at [hello@courtside.uk](mailto:hello@courtside.uk).

### ***How and when will this project happen?***

The multi-activity hub is a partnership project jointly financed the Government (DLUHC'S Community Ownership Fund), Witney Town Council (WTC) and Courtside. The funds that have been raised must be spent and the project delivered by April 2024 (final designs, Council approvals, planning permission, construction and launch). There is plenty to do!

### ***Why does the park need this development?***

The Leys is much loved and much used, but a growing town requires good infrastructure, and the facilities require renovation. WTC is committed to delivering on its Open Spaces Strategy which includes a masterplan for The Leys. WTC has a strategic remit to get people to move more, and parks are a great way into informal, recreational exercise in early life or sustaining good health in later life.

The Coffee Shed has also hit operational problems: kitchen constraints, lack of parking, poor toilets, over-supply of tennis courts, no sports lighting, major seasonality issues. The proposed developments will address these challenges, drive income for facility maintenance and create jobs/apprenticeships, develop skills, and provide volunteering opportunities to bring local people together.

Alongside this, WTC is continuing to look at playing pitch improvements for the Vikings and Swifts, playground maintenance, and splash park management (all of which complement the proposed hub).

### ***How can something like this fit within The Leys?***

The current facilities proposed for development in the park are for sport and recreation: they are being upgraded and repurposed to cater to a broader range of users. Given that The Leys is protected as a 'Field in Trust' and located within a conservation area, careful consideration has been given to the proposed design, aesthetics and materials (as needed for planning permission). We intend for the anticipated result to be far more attractive than the current pavilion, toilet block, maintenance depot, tennis courts and skate park – and a fitting jewel in Witney's crown.

### ***Will the hub require Council subsidy year after year?***

No, we hope the opposite: the mix of facilities will enable income to be generated for WTC which can be reinvested into the facilities for future community use. Courtside will be responsible for on-going maintenance and all costs of running the hub, while the Council will be responsible for the facility sinking fund.



### ***Why have you picked the proposed activities/amenities at the hub?***

The open, flat, flexible design allows for 20+ activities to be offered, as many facilities can be multi-purpose. We are consciously avoiding facilities offered by others locally (e.g. gym, football, bowling). We are adding popular recreational activities to offer more than just ‘traditional sport’ and allow for groups to get together and for individuals to choose between moderate or more vigorous options. A new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) will offer additional free activity which is especially important for kids and teens. Padel tennis is growing rapidly and will be popular across different ages.

### ***Won't the hub compete with other local providers?***

The hub is not a leisure centre, nor a specialist sports club/facility. It will be a source of information (via display materials and staff presence) for activities taking place within the park and beyond. It will complement – rather than compete with – existing provision.

### ***Will the hub be accessible/wheelchair friendly?***

Yes, one of the specific benefits of the site is its open, flat design; all facilities will be as accessible as possible, and we want the hub to be known as a welcoming place offering variety and value for all ages and abilities.

### ***How will you control any anti-social behaviour?***

We will have an onsite presence from morning to evening which we believe will help build relationships and reinforce respect for the park and facilities. We will install CCTV and our hub staff will act as additional ‘eyes and ears’, encouraging quiet departures at closing time.

### ***Why are you proposing additional parking?***

We want to promote all forms of active travel (walking, cycling, scooting, etc) and new bike racks will help facilitate the safe storage of cycles. However, The Leys does not benefit from good bus links and an investment like this requires car parking to attract people and raise income to cover direct costs, staff and maintenance. The current parking is limited and abused by many people, which is unfair on legitimate users of The Leys and hugely restricts café trading. There are no plans to introduce charges, but we think there should be enforcement, e.g. free for up to 4 hours, with priority spaces for the disabled, parents of young children and staff.

### ***What will happen to The Coffee Shed in the interim?***

We will ensure that there is provision for refreshments from our friendly team throughout the redevelopment of the site; these details are being finalised.

### ***Will the skatepark be included within the redevelopment project?***

Yes, redeveloping the skatepark is the first phase of The Leys masterplan, funded by WTC and Courtside and managed by WTC. An important resource for adults, teenagers and children, the skatepark is outdated and in poor condition. The new facility will maximise the space, incorporate a free-flowing design to attract more girls and younger users, and have a concrete base for easier maintenance and reduced noise.

### ***What will be the impact of the development on green space within the park?***

There will be no loss of green space in that we are upgrading facilities within their existing footprint. This is a significant construction project which by definition will cause short-term disruption to the park and may impact some of the landscaping to ensure good accessibility and visibility. We are committed to a minimum of 10% biodiversity gain as part of any planning application, replanting or replacing any affected landscaping. We will consolidate ideas on how we fulfil this commitment and enhance the park further. Consideration of safety, accessibility and aesthetics all need to be balanced carefully to ensure the final design is sympathetic to both the environment and future users.

### ***How can you ensure the café does not become yet another commercial chain?***

Courtside is a social enterprise, of which The Coffee Shed is part. For 8 years to date, we have demonstrated our commitment to the community through our staff hires, service ethos, local partnerships, activities hosted, suspended coffee scheme, and so on. During Covid, we closed when it was right to do so, and we re-opened when it was right to do so, respecting Government guidance and taking our steer from local people. In order to look after customers, we must look after our staff and this project will transform their working conditions and allow us to do so much more for the community. The obvious differences include a bigger kitchen, environmentally friendly building, more seating, new DDA-compliant toilets, additional facilities and activities... but our commitment to the community of Witney will not change.

### ***Will there be provision for floodlights?***

We plan to install LED court lights to extend play through the winter (+1000 hours per court per year). This will create opportunities for year-round fun and fitness, as well as provide more financial security for our coaches. The lights will be subject to a curfew time and are designed to be minimal glare downward 'spotlights' in order to respect both neighbours and wildlife.

### ***What can you offer teenagers and the older generation, age groups that are often overlooked?***

We want to bring people together and deliver and maintain a mix of amenities for all ages. A revamped skatepark, LED lit courts for tennis and netball, a multi-use games area, padel courts, shuffleboard lanes and picnic benches are all envisaged. The hub will promote social inclusion, physical health and mental well-being, by offering a calendar of community-led activities and events. Some of these might be hosted by volunteers, connecting with existing community groups, while others might be more structured and coached. We would love to host a youth club as well as offer 'Forever Active', a mid-week activity morning for older residents. The new facilities can be 'flexed' to accommodate a wide range of activities for young and old, and everyone in between.

### ***Is it necessary to reduce the number of tennis courts currently on offer?***

We will retain 3 full-sized tennis courts (with new LED lights), retain 4 mini tennis that can also be used for pickleball and badminton and add new covered padel courts. We will offer more coaching sessions and social tennis opportunities. In order to attract a wider range of people, we will also add line markings for two 3x3 basketball courts. Overall, there will be more tennis/racket sport options and more choice of other activities.

### ***Will there be any indoor activity space?***

Yes, the proposed designs include a multi-purpose indoor activity/events space. This is needed to get through the off-season winter months and we hope will offer weekly physical and social activities as well as a new community event and meeting space. This area will be able to offer overflow seating on special occasions and will be linked to the new café/toilets.

### ***Will there be more outdoor seating?***

Yes, the new café design will offer much more outdoor seating, both covered and uncovered, at the front facing out into the park, at the back connecting with the sports area and at the side as part of a new picnic and play area linking the skatepark and mini golf course. This will help host people in different weather conditions, ensure parents can keep an eye on their children when playing in the park, and allow non-active visitors to feel part of the energy of the hub.

Thank you for your support.

July, 2023