

# Friends of Finchley Way Open Space



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## Consultation Report

*December 2020*



# Friends of Finchley Way Open Space



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### Key findings

- Broad support for the draft plans and enthusiasm that the site is to be enhanced
- Retain the Green Field as an open space for informal leisure
- Install some form of seating on the Green Field being sensitive to the surrounding properties in its location
- Keep any wild flower planting on the Green Field to the edges to retain the open space
- Make the site secure for young children and dogs
- Request for litter and dog bins
- Request for disabled access
- Support for:
  - information board telling the history of the site
  - replacing the fence with hedging but also support for retaining the fence to make the interior of the Green Field more visible to passers-by and residents, thereby reducing anti-social behaviour
  - woodland walk
  - pocket nature reserve but concern about damaging habitat and disturbing any wildlife on the site
  - site having an educational function with information on trees and plants



### 1. Introduction

This report provides the results of the consultation on draft plans for the site held between 26 October and 22 November 2020. In some places the Committee has provided a response. These responses mainly focus on explaining why some ideas cannot be taken forward at this time and the constraints under which the Committee is working. Where the majority of responses agree with the draft plan no comment has been made.

The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 and the leaflet showing the plans presented to respondents in Appendix 2.

It should be noted that the plans were drawn-up based on some emails following the initial announcement of the setting-up of the Friends of Finchley Way Open Space. The broad approach outlined in those emails was echoed at the first AGM of the group in December 2019.

Approximately 1200 leaflets were distributed to addresses in an area bordered by the Northern Line to the east and Dollis Brook to the west, Argyle Road to the north and Dollis Road to the south. Not all addresses were delivered to, in particular there are a number of blocks of flats that cannot be accessed.

Posters advertising the consultation were put up on the outside of the fencing around the site, in local shops and community sites.

Links to the plans and the online questionnaire were provided on the FoFWOS website [www.fofwos.org](http://www.fofwos.org)

All Friends were contacted directly about the consultation and information was provided in November's newsletter. Information was also posted on the Friends' Facebook group and the open Facebook page as well as on Next Door West Finchley and the West Finchley Residents' Association (WFRA) Facebook group. WFRA also sent information to their members.

Additionally the following organisations were contacted directly:

- Barnet Green Spaces Network
- Barnet Homes (owners of Chilvins Court)
- Fernbank Nursing Home
- Finchley Golf Club
- Finchley Horticultural Society
- Finchley Lawn Tennis Club
- Finchley Society
- Gordon Hall Scout Group
- HADAS (Hendon and District Archaeological Society)
- Historic England
- Moss Hall Schools Federation
- Non-resident directors of Cedar Court Ltd
- Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association (owners of Penstemon Close)
- West Finchley Police (who visited the site with the Chair and Secretary)
- Shops in the parade by West Finchley station were asked to hold leaflets and display posters
- Thames Water

We also attempted to contact the Environment Agency but could not find a contact.



## 2. Findings

### 2.1 Sample

There were 77 substantive responses to the on-line consultation survey, plus nine people who commented separately by email. Comments from the latter are incorporated in the other comments section below (section 2.1). The 78<sup>th</sup> response reported in the tables below as 'skipped' was one of the Committee testing the questionnaire. This is just sufficiently large to be able to provide percentages.

We have no way of knowing how representative of the local residents are those who responded but we believe that this represents a fairly good level of response for this type of local consultation, especially given the size of the site.

Only Moss Hall Schools Federation replied directly as a recognisable organisation, although that does not mean others did not reply to the questionnaire as responses were anonymous.

### 2.2 Questionnaire results

1. Do you agree or disagree with maintaining the open field as an open area for recreation?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		79%	61
2	Agree		16%	12
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4%	3
4	Disagree		1%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0%	0
			answered	77

There is overwhelming support for retaining the field as an open area.



## 2. Do you agree or disagree with installing seating on the field area?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		52%	40
2	Agree		34%	26
3	Neither agree nor disagree		10%	8
4	Disagree		4%	3
5	Strongly disagree		0%	0
			answered	77

The vast majority would like to have a seat on the Green field.

## 3. Do you agree or disagree that the seating areas should be where they are shown in Masterplan Key?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		28%	21
2	Agree		41%	31
3	Neither agree nor disagree		21%	16
4	Disagree		3%	2
5	Strongly disagree		1%	1
6	Somewhere else on the field, please say where		7%	5
			answered	76

Seven in ten people are content with the positioning of the seating areas as set out in the plan. Some would like additional seating in other areas including nearer the entrance, sited in the sun or even in the middle of the field. Some said that it is important to ensure that the log seating will not be in the way of the goal area for children's football games.

**Committee comment:**

The location of any seating will need to be agreed with Barnet Council who would install it as they are responsible for Health and Safety on the site.



**4. The plan suggests creating a wild flower area on part of the field. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to plant wild flowers on part of the field?**

			<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	Strongly agree		56%	43
2	Agree		34%	26
3	Neither agree nor disagree		9%	7
4	Disagree		1%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0%	0
			answered	77

Nine out of ten agree with the creation of a wild flower area on part of the field, with just over half strongly agreeing. This question attracted the second largest number of additional comments and ideas (20 people commented).

Many like the idea in principle, including its contribution to biodiversity and increasing pollinators, but there are some concerns about its practicality and whether it would be compatible with the use of the field for play, recreation and exercising dogs. It is thought that it would be difficult to protect wild flowers from trampling by dogs and children or by people in general. Several people stress the importance of ensuring the Green Field area remains available for both children’s play and dog exercise. For that reason some emphasise the need to keep the wild flowers to the borders. There are also concerns about how a wild flower area can successfully be maintained and the extra costs which could be involved. Others see the educational value of having wildflowers, primarily for children but also to encourage local residents to introduce wild (UK native) flowers to their own gardens.

**Committee comment:**

**It is the intention to maintain this as an open area.**



5. We intend to place an information board inside the Finchley Way entrance telling the history of the site. Do you agree or disagree that there should be an information board telling the history of the site?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		56%	43
2	Agree		39%	30
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4%	3
4	Disagree		1%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0%	0
			answered	77

There is strong support for installing a notice board on the history of the site.

6. Longer term it is planned to remove the cherry laurel and wooden pale fencing from around the edge of the field while retaining the trees, replacing the fencing with native species hedging. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		26%	20
2	Agree		41%	31
3	Neither agree nor disagree		18%	14
4	Disagree		9%	7
5	Strongly disagree		5%	4
			answered	76



Views on replacing the fence with hedging and removing the cherry laurel are more mixed than for other questions and this question also attracted the largest number of additional comments (23). Although nearly seven out of ten agree with the plan, 11 out of 76 (14%) do not.

Four people are concerned that hedging rather than fencing might be less effective in preventing children and dogs running out into the road. Six people commented on the roles of fencing or hedging in ensuring the security of the site and discouraging illegal and undesirable activities. However, views on the best way to tackle this problem vary. Some feel that fencing is preferable because it offers a clearer view than hedging into the site, thereby deterring undesirable activities. Some question the need for any kind of fencing or hedging around the site at all but others feel that it helps control the number of entrances thereby improving security. There is appreciation of the recent cutting back of the cherry laurel as it has allowed more visibility and light into the field whilst others think the laurel bushes provide good nesting sites. Those who prefer having hedging and trees emphasise the environmental benefits. A few people feel that replacing the cherry laurel and fencing with hedging is not a priority, considering it a potential waste of time, energy and money.

**Committee comment:**

The cherry laurel is non-native and longer term we would like to replace it with native species.

Any change to the current fencing along Finchley Way and The Drive is long term and would require specific funding. Fencing along Hamilton Way is likely be replaced first as it is broken in places. Fencing behind Chilvins Court will be replaced during 2021.

**7. The plan envisages as a woodland walk the area leading from the bottom of the green field into the area that is currently overgrown. See the Masterplan Key. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		56%	43
2	Agree		34%	26
3	Neither agree nor disagree		6%	5
4	Disagree		3%	2
5	Strongly disagree		1%	1
			answered	77

There is strong support for having a woodland walk, with over half strongly agreeing with the idea.



**8. The third area is intended to be a pocket nature reserve, as marked on the Masterplan Key. Do you agree or disagree with this plan?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		60%	46
2	Agree		31%	24
3	Neither agree nor disagree		9%	7
4	Disagree		0%	0
5	Strongly disagree		0%	0
			answered	77

There is strong support for having a pocket nature reserve with no one disagreeing with the idea.

**9. How often do you come to the site?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Most days		14%	11
2	About once a week		14%	11
3	About once a month		33%	25
4	Less often		39%	30
			answered	77
			skipped	1

Six in ten of those who responded to the survey say they come to the site once a month or more often, but nearly two in five come less frequently. One in seven are very regular users, visiting on most days.



### 10. How long do you usually stay on the site?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Just walk through		32%	24
2	Less than an hour		39%	29
3	An hour or more		5%	4
4	It varies		15%	11
5	Not sure		9%	7
			answered	75

Most respondents (seven in ten) currently spend less than an hour on the site each time they visit, with almost a third just walking through it.

### 11. When you come to the site do you most often come...

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	alone		37%	27
2	with children		24%	18
3	with others of my age		12%	9
4	with adults of various ages		15%	11
5	to walk my dog, whether alone or with others		12%	9
			answered	74

Of those who responded to the consultation over a third usually come alone, and a quarter visit with children. Dog walkers account for about one in eight visitors.

## 2.3 Other comments

Thirty-six out of the 77 people who responded to the survey made additional comments on the plans, some of these covered more than one issue. In addition nine people commented separately by email. These additional comments are incorporated below. Comments have been grouped under headings for ease of interpretation.



## Friends of Finchley Way Open Space

### General support and enthusiasm (17 comments)

Many of the comments expressed strong support for improving the space and generally welcomed and were excited by the plans. The plans were seen as a good use of the money allocated. People also appreciated the effort and thought which has been put into the proposals and were pleased to see this 'local governance of shared space'. The plans were seen as reflecting both community needs and promoting an environment friendly space. One respondent whose family, including their dog, had no garden emphasised just how extremely important the space was to them.

### Access (8 comments)

Several respondents commented on issues of access to the site. There was a request for an entrance from Penstemon Close to make it more accessible to residents. Some wanted the entrance at the junction of the paved and unpaved road section of Hamilton Way to be reinstated so that access was not only through the unpaved section. However there was also strong opposition to doing this.

Some wanted the unpaved section of Hamilton Way to be smoothed to make access easier.

There was a request that the woodland path and nature areas should be made accessible for people with disabilities who use wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

Improving drainage, especially in the lower field, was suggested as it can get very muddy in wintertime.

Others suggested that the site should be better advertised with signposts, perhaps at the tube station and in Lovers Walk.

#### Committee comment:

**At the moment the Orchard and the Copse are very overgrown and access is difficult. As the area is replanted we will plan-in disabled access paths but specific funding will need to be sought for this and paths are unlikely to be possible for several years yet.**

**The unpaved section of Hamilton Way is a private road unrelated to the site.**

**Too many entrances are a security risk and this is discussed below.**

**Advertising the site requires additional resources to those currently available.**

### Seating (6 comments)

There were several requests for seating to allow greater enjoyment of the space, especially for the elderly, those with mobility problems and for parents so that young children could be watched and kept safe while they played. Seating in the woodland area should also be considered. However, it was also felt that the amount of seating should be limited to avoid attracting anti-social behaviour. There was some concern that seating near Cedar Court would attract late night noise and drug use in that corner of the field. There was a call for naturally covered areas, protected from sun and rain, for meditation.



## Friends of Finchley Way Open Space

### Play facilities (4 comments)

Views were equally divided between having or not having children's play equipment. Some requested basic equipment or facilities for a natural playground such as logs for children to step across. Other felt strongly that the area should be kept natural and used for informal outdoor activities only.

#### **Committee comment:**

**It is not possible to have any sort of formal children's play area with swings etc. as these have to be regularly inspected and this is not possible. The site will be kept for informal play.**

### Security and safety (6 comments)

Five comments related to issues of security and safety and one to the nuisance of fly-tipping.

There were concerns about the security of surrounding buildings and of the site itself and what steps could be taken to address this. For security reasons some wanted a single public entrance to the site (on Finchley Way) and the entrance at the junction of the paved and unpaved road section of Hamilton Way to be for maintenance purposes only.

It was suggested that CCTV might help counter the fly-tipping problem.

#### **Committee comment:**

**The Chair and Secretary have met with members of the local Ward Police team on the site. Their advice involved closing the entrance at next to 33 Hamilton Way and retaining it for maintenance only. This will leave two public entrances, one which we have designated the main entrance in Finchley Way and one opposite the bungalow 28 Hamilton Way. There is also the large maintenance entrance in The Drive which is used by the mower and other maintenance teams.**

**Restricting the number of entrances for the public reduces the attractiveness of the site for anti-social behaviour. People cannot get out of the secluded area without going into the open field where they can be seen and it is easier for the police to block them.**

**There is quite a lot of pedestrian traffic between these two gates which keeps an eye on what is going on and so also deters anti-social behaviour.**

**The gate next to 33 Hamilton Way has not been locked in the past and it may be some time before it is locked. Barnet Council are responsible for this.**

**The positioning of CCTV on the site would be a matter for Barnet Council.**

### Nature (12 comments)

There were nine comments on aspects of the proposed wildlife area and three about how to improve its educational role.

There was clear support for the idea of a nature reserve. However, some were very concerned about any clearing of the dense areas of overgrown vegetation as these are seen as wildlife havens and there was concern that their removal would lead to the destruction of smaller mammals including hedgehogs. Some felt that the Copse area was a fragile eco-system which should be left alone. The findings



## Friends of Finchley Way Open Space

of the Ecological Survey were awaited with interest. There were concerns about not over-developing the site such that it would lose its wild feel.

It was felt that a marsh, bog garden or small pond would promote more wildlife but it was acknowledged that this would need to be carefully designed to prevent accidents.

If feasible it was suggested that steps could be taken to encourage a variety of birdlife and that having some plants/trees with edible fruit/nuts would be useful.

Some said that the perimeter of the Green Field should include some beautiful, low maintenance planting schemes but this should be limited in scale as this area is not seen as a [formal] park.

Suggestions for improving education about nature included a hands-on learning table or interactive information and interpretation panels on plant species in the nature reserve. Someone suggested that several short, succinct panels would be better than one very long one. Tree identification panels could include leaf shapes or bark patterns which could be used for rubbing or making comparisons. Wildflower and bug identification information should also be considered.

The local Moss Hall schools should be consulted about having a local small nature ramble.

### **Committee comment:**

**Our plan is to remove some of the current ground cover and replace it with other species typical of this type of site. This will encourage a greater variety of wildlife. The ecology survey found very low levels of animal and bird life. It is not our intention to create a formal park.**

**A pond on site raises questions of safety for young children, although it is something that the Committee has discussed. Barnet Council would have to agree to this.**

**As part of the consultation Moss Hall Schools Federation was contacted. They responded positively but the current pandemic situation is placing additional burdens on them at the moment. This is something to be picked-up when we have a specific project in which pupils can be involved or in September 2021 once things have begun to return to normal.**

**Labelling trees, having information panels, etc. are in our medium term plan but will require funding.**

### **Facilities for dogs and waste bins (7 comments)**

There were comments that bins for dog poo should be provided, especially at the entrances as this was currently a problem. There was also a need for litter bins, especially as seating areas would lead to more waste as these would attract people having snacks and drinks. A system for emptying these bins was also seen as essential.

It was suggested that part of the Green Field could be designated as a dog playing area (with poo bin facilities included) as this do not exist elsewhere in the whole area.



Some suggested that small gates at the entrance would make the space safer for dogs and small children by stopping them running out into the road.

**Committee comment:**

Litter bins and dog waste bins are a difficult issue. Not having bins encourages people to take their litter and dog mess home and not leave it piled up round the bins when the bins are full. For litter left around the site, we have to consider whether the sort of people who leave this litter would act differently if there were bins.

This is an issue for Barnet Council who will have the final say on providing bins as they would be responsible for providing and emptying them.

There were gates on all the entrances, the two in Hamilton Way and the one in Finchley Way, but they fell into disrepair, possibly as a result of vandalism, and were removed.



## Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

### Consultation on outline plan 2020

The Friends of Finchley Way Open Space has been awarded a grant of £5,000 in a one-off award from Edward Harvist Charity by Barnet Council (London Borough of Barnet).

The grant is to pay for a public consultation on the plans for the site developed by the Friends' Committee, which was elected in December 2019. It will also pay for an ecology survey and initial clearance of the overgrown areas, as well as seating and an information board telling the history of the site on the Green Field.

We are therefore seeking the views of local people on our plans, which are based on initial feedback from local residents.

We appreciate that you may have different ideas and there is a question at the end for you to add any other comments. The nature of the site and budget constraints mean that some things are not possible on the site, for example children's swings and other equipment.

The plans can be found at <https://www.fofwos.org>

Please let us know if you would like a paper copy of the plans by emailing [fofwos@gmail.com](mailto:fofwos@gmail.com) or phoning 07496 471 658

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Q1 Do you agree or disagree with maintaining the open field as an open area for recreation.

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q2 Do you agree or disagree with installing seating on the field area?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



Q3 Do you agree or disagree that the seating areas should be where they are shown in Masterplan Key?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhere else on the field, please say where

Q4 Thinking about the area marked 4 on the Masterplan Key, do you agree or disagree with placing this type of seating in this location?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Prefer no seating
- Prefer other seating type, please describe

Q5 The plan suggests creating a wild flower area on part of the field. See maps 1 and 2.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to plant wild flowers on part of the field?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Please write in any comments

Q6 We intend to place an information board inside the Finchley Way entrance telling the history of the site.

Do you agree or disagree that there should be an information board telling the history of the site?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



Q7 Longer term it is planned to remove the cherry laurel and wooden pale fencing from around the edge of the field while retaining the trees, replacing the fencing with native species hedging. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Please write in any comments

Q8 The plan envisages as a woodland walk the area leading from the bottom of the green field into the area that is currently overgrown. See the Masterplan Key. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q9 The third area is intended to be a pocket nature reserve, as marked on the Masterplan Key. Do you agree or disagree with this plan?

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- No opinion
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q10 How often do you come to the site?

- Most days
- About once a week
- About once a month
- Less often

Q11 How long do you usually stay on the site?

- Just walk through
- Less than an hour
- An hour or more
- It varies
- Not sure

Q12 When you come to the site do you usually come...

- alone
- with children
- with others of my age

## Friends of Finchley Way Open Space



- with adults of various ages
- to walk my dog, whether alone or with others

Q13 If you have any other suggestions or things that you would like to see on the site, please type them below.



## Appendix 2 Consultation Leaflet

# Finchley Way Open Space



## Public Consultation - Have Your Say

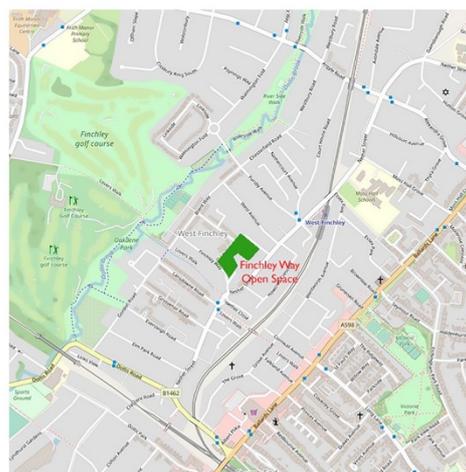


Finchley Way Open Space is a beautiful public space with open grassland and enclosed woodland.

It is owned by Barnet Council and is free for everyone to enjoy. The Friends of Finchley Way Open Space help maintain it.

It is about 10 minutes walk from West Finchley Station and a couple of minutes walk from the Finchley Way/Nether Street stop on the 326 bus route

**We are seeking the views of local people on our proposals for the site**



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## The Friends of Finchley Way Open Space (FoFwOS)

A group of local residents has formed the Friends of Finchley Way Open Space (FoFwOS) to oversee the future of the site. We aim to protect and enhance the environment of this green space, for public enjoyment and the long-term conservation of its flora and fauna.



### History

Brent Lodge house and garden was built in 1810. In 1922, it was sold to Augustus Cooper, who died in 1939 leaving the house and grounds to Finchley Borough Council. He required the garden to be 'retained always as an open space for the enjoyment of the public'.

### Outline proposals

The Friends' outline plan is shown opposite. Further details can be found on our website: [www.fofwos.org](http://www.fofwos.org)

The proposals include seating, a woodland trail, a pocket nature reserve, and other features. The nature of the site and budget constraints mean that some things will not be possible, such as children's swings and play equipment.

FoFwOS has been awarded a one-off grant of £5000 by the London Borough of Barnet for the initial works, including this public consultation.

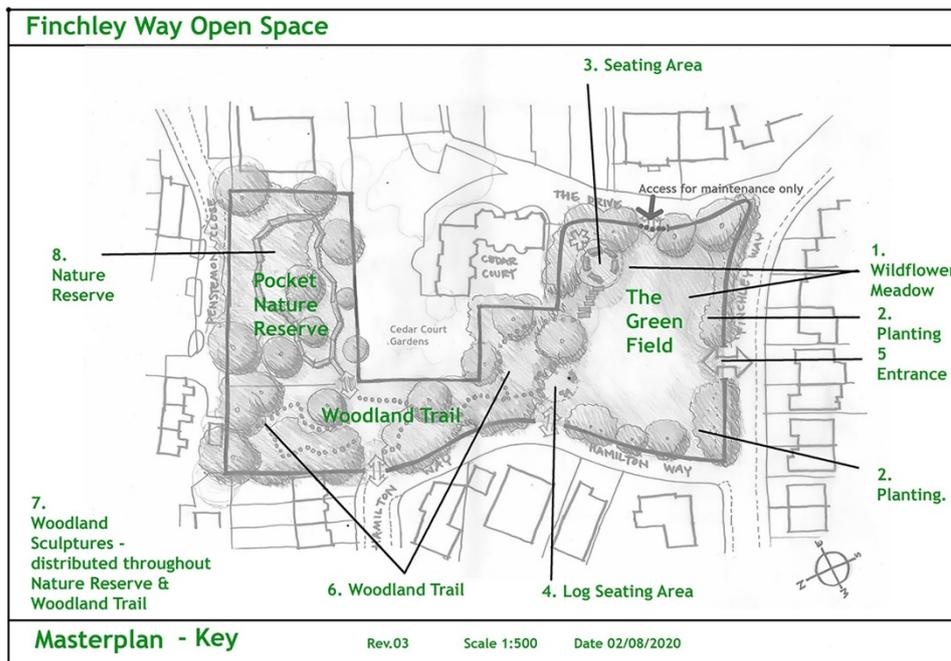
The money has been provided by the Edward Harvist Charity.



## Our Proposals

for more details see our website

[www.fofwos.org/plans](http://www.fofwos.org/plans)





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## Consultation: have your say

Whether you are a Friend, a neighbour or just someone interested in the area and its environment, please do let us know what you think about our proposals.

You can:

- provide feedback by completing the on-line questionnaire <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2SPECAs/>

The link can also be accessed from our website [www.fofwos.org](http://www.fofwos.org)

- email comments to [fofwos@gmail.com](mailto:fofwos@gmail.com)
- use the contact form on the website at [www.fofwos.org](http://www.fofwos.org)

There is more information on our website [www.fofwos.org](http://www.fofwos.org)

**Please make your comments by the closing date of 22 November 2020.**

## Get involved

If you would like to become a Friend, and/or join in a work party at the site, there is lots to do and you will be made very welcome.

Please contact us by email or through the website as above.

