

Churchill Gardens

Management and Development Plan

February 2008



	Name	Signature	Date
Written by:	Chris Stringer Parks Community Development Officer		
Reviewed by:	Reg Williams Parks Manager		
Approved & Authorised by:	City Area Committee (Community)		

**"The measure of any great
civilisation is in its Cities, and a
measure of a City's greatness is to be
found in the quality of its public
spaces, its parks and its squares"**

**John Ruskin
Victorian Philosopher**

(1819 - 1900)

A VISION FOR CHURCHILL GARDENS

(2007-2017)

"To develop the park's infrastructure and facilities, creating clear and complementary areas that appeal to residents and visitors alike"

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1 Introduction

1.1 Scope

This report intends to critique the management and maintenance of Churchill Gardens, identifying current issues and problems, as well as recognising the benefits and the superior aspects of the park. Furthermore, the report will consider the future development needs of the site, taking into account any threats and opportunities, so concluding with a comprehensive Action Plan with a view to maintaining and improving the park over the coming years.

In preparation of this, Salisbury District Council Parks Section undertook significant consultation to canvass the thoughts of residents, visitors and interested parties. The results of this consultation have subsequently been analysed to ensure that the plan reflects the various ideas and opinions of those people closest to Churchill Gardens.

1.2 Consultation Methodology

Public Consultation

Public consultation was carried out using questionnaires (*please see Appendix 1*). These were hand delivered to residents living within a 500m radius of Churchill Gardens, so included households in Exeter Street, Friary Lane and Carmelite Way, a number of the residential roads and streets off Southampton Road, Britford Lane and some of New Bridge Road and Harnham Road.

Questionnaires were also handed out to park users¹ during October & November 2006.

The questionnaire was then made available online, meaning that residents and visitors could complete it at their leisure.

All of the completed questionnaires were coded, meaning that responses from residents and users could be easily identified and then separated; this was to allow for more discrete analysis when and where appropriate.

The consultation exercise was promoted on the Salisbury District Council website, in the local press and on the local radio station (Spire FM ran 4 adverts each day across a 10 day period). Alongside this, posters were put up in the park to create further awareness.

The publicity advised local residents that a questionnaire would be delivered to them shortly, and listed the various time slots when council representatives would be on site to meet with park users. These time slots amounted to 9 hours: 5 hours over the weekend and two different 2-hour time slots on weekdays (between 8am and 5pm) between Saturday 4th November 2006 and Friday 10th November 2006. Members of the public were also advised that they could obtain a questionnaire from the council offices or from the Salisbury District Council website.

173 completed questionnaires were received from local residents. Consultation in the park across the stated week generated a further 80 responses from park users.

To complement this, representatives from the council were on site for the morning of 25 October 2007 and the afternoon of 26 October 2007 specifically to canvass the ideas and opinions of the groups and individuals using the skate park.

The overwhelming public response is indicative of the strength of feeling towards Churchill Gardens.

¹ Anyone visiting Churchill Gardens not classed as a local resident.

Other Consultation

The following individuals, organisations and stakeholders were also approached for comments during the course of the consultation process:

- Ward Councillors - Cllrs Howarth, Tomes
- County Councillors - Cllrs Chettleburgh, Dalton
- Parks Section, SDC - Reg Williams, Andy Cole, Mike Moore and Debbie Cox
- Environmental Services, SDC - Graham Dewey and Phil Down
- Sports Development Officer, SDC - Louise Cary
- Community Safety Officer, SDC - Kelly Bagley
- Partnership Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction Officer - Kelly Bagley
- Housing (Repairs Service), SDC - Alan Coombs
- Joint Transportation & Conservation, SDC - Paul Shaddock (on behalf of the Walking Forum)
- Shop Mobility, SDC - Marion Barton
- Area Highways Engineer, Wiltshire County Council (WCC) - Graham Axtell
- Salisbury Police - Zoë Rattue and Lorraine Rice
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust - Nicky Warden
- South Wiltshire Agenda 21
- The Environment Agency
- The Living River project - Martin Gilchrist
- Salisbury College - Steve Williams
- Salisbury Sea Cadets
- Skate Park affiliates

(It should be noted, however, that some of these parties have not contributed their thoughts as yet.)

1.3 Plan Lifespan

Once adopted, it is anticipated that the Action Plan will last for the next decade, albeit with a full review after 5 years. In addition to this, there will be annual reviews (though on a smaller scale) to ensure that progress is being made in line with the stated aims and objectives. The plan is also intended to be a working document, allowing for revisions and updates as and when necessary.

1.4 Summary of Aims and Objectives

Salisbury's parks and open spaces make a significant contribution to the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, providing change and respite from the houses, shops and industry that otherwise dominate the cityscape - they encourage recreation and sport, as well as providing areas for relaxation and refuge for wildlife. Churchill Gardens is one of the most important of these sites, particularly given its variety of facilities and its proximity to both primary and secondary schools and to Salisbury College.

The overall aim of this plan is to ensure that Churchill Gardens remains relevant and vital. In order to achieve this, both the management of the park and the park itself need to develop and evolve, taking into consideration changes to the environment alongside changes in the expectations and wants of the public - if the site cannot adapt, then there is a real danger that it could become moribund.

Further to this, there are numerous other benefits to producing a management plan:

- Consultation encourages community involvement, promoting interest and support
- A plan sets out a schedule for work and creates a framework for decision making
- Aims and objectives can be clearly identified
- Costs are outlined; this is crucial in support of bids for funds and grant aid
- Potential conflicts of interest can be recognised and then resolved
- The site can be properly assessed to gauge its importance and place
- Future requirements and aspirations can be readily identified

- By recording information, this ensures that the site is properly described for posterity
- Successes and progress can be measured against reported targets
- The plan can be used in support of quality accreditation schemes

The intention of this management plan is thus: to produce a document that will allow for and encourage the development of Churchill Gardens, whilst remaining relevant to a diverse audience (including elected members, parks staff, interested parties and stakeholders, as well as the visitors using the park and the community who live and work nearby).

1.5 Policy Context

The provision of management plans is informed by a number of Salisbury District Council's core values: excellent service; fairness and equal opportunity; meeting local needs; and working together with the public. The plan is also linked to and supports two of Salisbury District Council's adopted priorities - Improving Services in the district and Creating Better Places to Live.

(In practice, the management plan will also overlap with numerous derived plans and policies: the Corporate Plan, planning policy guidance, cultural strategy, community plan, green space strategy, crime and disorder, sport and recreation strategy, youth strategy, community safety strategy and the Best Value performance plan.)

Furthermore, the City Area Committee (Community) continues to acknowledge the potential benefits of effective management plans - minute 191 from the Committee's meeting of 15 November 2005 requested that the parks service be reviewed and that management plans be drawn up to enable the parks in the city to deliver quality services in line with the expectations and needs of the district - as such, the committee is keen to adopt plans for all of Salisbury's parks. In short, parks have a crucial role to play within the local community; and by extension, management plans for those parks are equally crucial.

Likewise the national emphasis: management plans are recognised as being essential in ensuring high quality provision within parks and public spaces, with the government appointed Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) documenting the potential benefits that effective management plans can bring, particularly in working towards the government's Liveability agenda.

Finally, it is also essential to show management plans when applying for Green Flags.² For more information on CABE or about Green Flags, please visit www.cabe.org.uk or www.greenflagaward.org.uk.

1.6 Local Plan Context

It is becoming increasingly important for central and local government to balance the need for new commercial and residential development against a desire to conserve the natural environment and historic fabric of any given area. Indeed, recent research by MORI on behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA) demonstrates that clean, safe and green are key issues for residents.

In order to help realise this balance, Salisbury District Council has developed a comprehensive Local Plan, so providing detailed guidance concerning the use and development of land in the Salisbury District through to the end of the year 2011. Accordingly, this plan encourages and embraces the concept of sustainable development for the benefit of future generations. Furthermore, since the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 places a duty upon local authorities to prepare such plans, the Salisbury District Local Plan has full statutory status.

(It is also notable that the policies of the Local Plan coincide with the policies of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016: www.wiltshire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning-home/planning-saved-local-plans/planning-structure-plan.htm. The current version of the Structure Plan was adopted in April 2006, providing a strategic policy framework for development in Wiltshire through to 2016, and therein forming the basis of numerous development proposals in the Local Plan.)

² Green Flags are awarded to accredited parks in the same way that Blue Flags are awarded to beaches.

Broadly, the main aims of the Local Plan are as follows:

- To promote the principles and practice of sustainable development;
- To promote a healthy economy that provides standards of living at least equal to that currently enjoyed by the people of the district;
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment;
- To promote a high quality of life for residents of the Salisbury District without compromising the quality of life for others.

For further information relating to the Local Plan, please refer to the following page of the council's website: www.salisbury.gov.uk/planning/forward-planning/local-plan.htm.

Since public open spaces and parks are becoming ever scarcer, the Local Plan seeks to protect those parks and areas that already exist. Since Churchill Gardens is one of Salisbury's most valuable recreational assets, there are various policies in place to protect against its loss or redevelopment. Policy R5 of the Local Plan defines Churchill Gardens as a Recreational Open Space - this means that the site cannot be redeveloped for other purposes given normal circumstances.³

In addition to the Local Plan, there is further protection for the parks and open spaces in Salisbury contained within national guidelines - Note 17 of the Planning Policy Guidance document.

Further to both of these restrictions, Churchill Gardens is situated outside of Salisbury's Housing Policy Boundary, and is subject to Policy C7 of the Salisbury & Wilton Landscape document. This means that the site is currently considered to be countryside - accordingly, the site could only be allocated for new housing in exceptional circumstances, and not if the new houses are to the detriment of the visual quality of the landscape.

Explicitly, the site is well protected by existing local and national planning policies.

³ The only circumstances in which redevelopment will be considered are as follows: if the sports and recreation facilities are retained in - or enhanced by - the redevelopment plans of any part of the site; if alternative provision is made in the locality; if there is an excess provision of sports and recreation facilities in the locality.

2 Site description

2.1 Location

Churchill Gardens is located to the south of Salisbury, approximately 1.5km (just under 1 mile) from the city centre. The park is framed by the A36 (Southampton Road) and the A338 (Churchill Way South, leading into New Bridge Road) and is accessible from both of these roads. (*Please see Appendix 2*).

Roughly, Churchill Gardens has four sides. Southampton Road defines the northern boundary; Churchill Way South is to the west; whilst the River Avon flows along the southern and the eastern sides.

Beyond these boundaries, Salisbury College is situated off Southampton Road and overlooks the park, the houses and flats in Friary Lane and Carmelite Way lie just between Churchill Way and the city centre, across the river to the south of the park is privately owned farmland and finally, across the river to the west are water meadows and grassland.

The park has the following Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: SU 139320.

2.2 Ward

Churchill Gardens is in the Salisbury District Council St Martin and Milford ward and the Wiltshire County Council Salisbury South electoral division.

2.3 Elected Members

As at February 2008, the District Councillors responsible for Churchill Gardens are Cllrs Simon Howarth and Ian Tomes; the County Councillors are Cllrs Mrs Bobbie Chettleburgh and Mr Brian Dalton.

2.4 Size

Churchill Gardens covers between 23 and 24 acres (approximately 96,000m²), making it larger than Queen Elizabeth Gardens, but smaller than Hudson's Field.

The total perimeter of Churchill Gardens approaches 1,750 yards (or 1,600 metres).

2.5 Tenure

Salisbury District Council holds the freehold of Churchill Gardens. The routine decision making is undertaken by the City Area Committee (Community), though see Notes below.

There are contracts in place for the maintenance of the grounds. The Sea Cadet hut is leased.

Notes:

1. The main car park, whilst technically within the boundary of Churchill Gardens, is not part of the gardens from a managerial or funding perspective. As one of Salisbury District Council's Pay & Display car parks it comes under the management of the Forward Planning and Transportation department. The income and expenditure derived from and spent on the car park forms part of the council's overall car parking budget and strategy.
2. The public conveniences are deemed to be of a strategic nature due to their proximity to a major trunk road route into and through Salisbury. As such, the management and funding for the conveniences currently falls to the General Fund of the council and not to the city's special expenses. The public conveniences are managed by the Parks section, however.

These notes notwithstanding, both the car park and the toilets are so clearly connected to the day to day activities of Churchill Gardens that it has been considered essential that their impact on the park is taken into account whilst undertaking this plan (*please see Appendix 3 attached*).

3 History

3.1 Establishment

Churchill Gardens is named in commemoration of Sir Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965), the British Prime Minister during World War II (from 1940 to 1945) and then again from 1951 to 1955.

The gardens were opened to the public in 1972 - ahead of this opening, a number of byelaws had been confirmed in June 1971 to regulate public behaviour in the new park.

Previously, the site had been occupied by the then Salisbury City Council Depot & Sewage Works after the land that makes up the park was bought by the then mayor and the Citizens of the City of New Sarum (more commonly known as the Salisbury Corporation) in December 1871. At this time, the majority of the land was used for sewage disposal, although there were some areas made available for private gardens and allotments.

Further back, the land was home to a hospital for plague patients.

Historically, the area is recorded as being very marshy. Indeed, that the park still floods now is an indication of just how much water flows through the Avon at this location. For this reason, the site was always considered a vital part of Salisbury's defences to the south of the city (even more so when Salisbury was developing in importance and stature throughout the 15th and 16th centuries).

3.2 Developments within and around Churchill Gardens

There have been a number of changes to the design of Churchill Gardens since its opening, with various facilities, including a second play area and a paddling pool, present in recent times.

The most obvious changes in the last two decades of the park's history have been the development of the play area circa 1990 (followed by its refurbishment in 2004) and the more recent development of the skate park, in 1997.

3.3 Community Events

Recent events in Churchill Gardens have included a number of extreme sports days (to publicise the skate park and including live music) and various charity runs through the park. Such events are well suited to the park, with the skate park one of the larger free facilities in the region, and the web of paths through the park allowing for different length races within the same event (encouraging different ages and abilities to take part). Further to this, there are already plans to hold a race in the summer of 2008, as well as the prospect of further events tied to the skate park.

Unlike Hudson's Field or Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Churchill Gardens does not currently host any annual events.

3.4 Sports Facilities

Churchill Gardens has a skate park that lends itself to skateboarding and BMXing, as well as rollerblading and skating. Adjacent to this is an area intended to support basketball (there are two hoops) and street hockey. This area could also be used for football.

Other than this, the size of the park, the pleasant scenery and the infrastructure of paths mean that walkers and runners are also well catered for. The park also has specially marked footprints on the pathways; these were painted to encourage walking as part of the Footsteps in the Park scheme.

4 Physical

4.1 Layout

With reference to the photograph below, Churchill Gardens has the following areas and facilities:

From left to right, marked in **yellow**:

- The Sea Cadets hut;
- The children's play area;
- The smaller (circular) car park;
- The basketball court;
- The skate park;
- The paved area adjacent to the toilets & the toilet block;
- The embankment slide;
- The main car park.

Also marked (in **red**) are two areas of the park with notable scope for development.



4.2 Geographical Environment

Churchill Gardens is located on the outskirts of Salisbury, with only the Friary estate close by in terms of housing, and the college the most notable landmark.

4.3 Access

There are pedestrian entrances to Churchill Gardens off Southampton Road, Churchill Way and from St Nicholas Road towards Harnham. There are also entrances through the car parks located off Southampton Road and Churchill Way.

There is access for vehicles through gates in both of the car parks, however these gates are usually locked - this means that access can be restricted to emergency vehicles, those vehicles allowed on site for events, or those with prior permission.

4.4 Buildings and Structures

There are only two buildings in Churchill Gardens - the hut where the Sea Cadets meet and the toilet block next to the car park off Southampton Road.

There is also a small shelter overlooking the river near the entrance to the park by the main children's playarea, however this is very tired-looking and currently covered in graffiti.

4.5 Infrastructure

The park has traditional wooden fencing along Southampton Road, now supplemented (in places) by perennial hedging.

Within the park, there is a low metal fence that runs parallel to the river along the south. This makes way for mesh fencing around the building to the very corner of the site. In turn, this makes way for an open river bank. The park has a number of benches situated around the site. There are also a number of litterbins and dog bins in the park as well as a number of lighting columns.

4.6 Sports and Play Facilities

Churchill Gardens currently has dedicated facilities to support the following sports: skateboarding; BMXing; rollerblading; skating; basketball and street hockey.

Alongside this, the site lends itself to running and walking, as well as impromptu games of football and rugby, for instance.

Finally, Churchill Gardens has a dedicated play area for children.

4.7 Signage

There are no signs into the park from any of the roads close by.⁴ Similarly, there are very few signs within the park itself, other than by each of the car parks. The signs that are in the park would benefit from more information as well as a refreshed style and tone.

4.8 Watercourses and Features

The water that flows through the channel in the park comes from the Avon, starting next to the play area, running underneath Churchill Way to the Friary area and reappearing in the west of the park (next to the subway) before taking a pretty direct route to rejoin the main river by Southampton Road.

4.9 Drainage

Churchill Gardens has always suffered drainage problems - a present reminder of the site's marshland history. This is most apparent when heavy rainfall causes the river to swell and rise, with the area in the north east corner (including the main car park) most susceptible to flooding. This only tends to occur in autumn and winter though, when the higher (general) levels of rainfall cause the water table to rise (this is aided by the chalk content in the soil, chalk being a highly porous material). For the same reason, rainfall at this time of the year can spot and pool on the grass of the open areas in the park especially in the area where the old paddling pool was located.

4.10 Service Information

The site is serviced by electricity, gas and water / mains sewerage at the Sea Cadet hut, and by water / mains sewerage and electric at the toilet block.

⁴ Please note that this is the same as it is for the other parks in Salisbury, furthermore, any decisions about such signs are principally made by Wiltshire County Council and the Highways Agency.

5 Landscape

5.1 Topography and Soil Type

In common with most of the Salisbury area, the soil in Churchill Gardens has a high content of chalk. In the case of Churchill Gardens, the park drains into the Avon system, and it is the river - shallow, clear and fast moving – that infuses the soil in this area with chalk.

The park is predominantly a flat flood plain; indeed, the only obvious change in the terrain is the man made hill where the slide is currently situated. As a consequence of this, drainage in the park is sometimes a problem - the car park and the grass in the north-east of the site have suffered from flooding in recent years. Such flooding ties the park to its marshland history.

5.2 Visual Character

Churchill Gardens has four large, open areas: from north to south, these can be readily identified as the car park, the skate park and two expanses of grass. In between these areas - and around the edges of the park – there is a visible variety to the shrubs and trees in the park.

The park is also characterised by its numerous (intersecting) paths and the waterway that bisects the site.

The park also benefits from its proximity to the Avon in the south and the east, with panoramic views of the river and the scenery beyond.

5.3 Ecology

5.3.1 Animals

Please refer to the Wildlife Survey undertaken by Nicky Warden of the Salisbury Wildlife Project (*see Appendix 4 attached*).

5.3.2 Hedgerows

There is a fledging hedgerow along part of Churchill Way South (this was planted in the last couple of seasons and is establishing itself well) and an established but patchy hedge surrounding the main car park.

5.3.3 Grassland Flowers

The grass in the park is predominantly short mown, amenity turf. This is cut on a fortnightly basis during the growing season, before being left during autumn and winter.

There were few flowering plants noted in the sward - those present were those that might be expected in amenity grassland: daisies, yarrow plants and dandelions.

5.3.4 Birds

Please refer to the Wildlife Species List compiled by the Salisbury Wildlife Project Officer (*see Appendix 4 attached*). Further to this list, it should be highlighted that the number and variety of trees in the park, complemented by the closeness of the Avon, means that Churchill Gardens is home to a good variety of birdlife.

5.4 Horticulture

Churchill Gardens is certainly a pleasant and open park, but there is little of significant interest from a horticultural perspective.

5.5 Arboriculture

There is great variety in the tree stock in Churchill Gardens, with a carefully planned balance between hardy evergreens and the range of deciduous trees in the park; it is this balance that affords the park its visual impact, creating a spectrum of changing colours and shades throughout the year.

To illustrate this, the following is a list of some of the various trees in Churchill Gardens:

Acacia	<i>Goat (or Pussy) Willow</i>	Pine
<i>Alder</i>	<i>Holly</i>	Poplar
<i>Ash</i>	Hornbeam	Red Horse Chestnut
<i>Bay</i>	Horse Chestnut	Red Willow
Bird Cherry	Indian Bean Tree	<i>Rowan</i>
Blue Spruce	Lawson Cypress	<i>Scots Pine</i>
Cherry	Leylandii	Silver Birch
<i>Common Beech</i>	<i>Lime</i>	Sycamore
Common Hornbeam	Lombardy Poplar	Thorn
Common Spruce	London Plane	Turkish Hazel
Common Walnut	Maple	Weeping Willow
Corsican Pine	Monterey Pine	<i>Weymouth Pine</i>
Crab Apple	Norway Maple	Whitebeam
English Oak	<i>Oak</i>	Willow
Field Maple	Pear	<i>Yew</i>
Fir	Persian Ironwood	

This list is based on a tree schedule compiled by Wessex Tree Surgeons for Salisbury District Council in 1997, and is largely exhaustive of the genera and species present in the park. The trees in **bold** text are deciduous trees; additionally, the trees in *italics* are native British trees⁵. Since native trees are crucial in supporting and encouraging native wildlife, it is good practice to maintain a complement of such trees; conversely, introducing trees from other countries can bring striking new colours, shapes and textures, so again, balance is vital.

Following a further survey in December 2004, it was noted that there were some 436 trees in Churchill Gardens. Although some of these trees have since been removed, others have been planted in their place; consequently, it is now likely that the number of trees in the park is somewhere between 440 and 450. Despite such replacement work, the tree stock in the park still leans (numerically) towards older trees rather than saplings. Of the established trees, approximately 20 would benefit from some works, be it coppicing, pollarding or pruning; a further 10 trees will need to be removed in the next decade as they could become hazardous and will only deteriorate further in the coming years.

Ideally, this work would all be complemented by succession planting, with new, native trees being planted alongside ornamental trees, so creating further variety and supporting local wildlife.

⁵ In this context, the term 'native' refers to trees that colonised England, Scotland and Wales before they were cut off from the rest of Europe by rising sea levels following the end of the last ice age some 10,000 years ago.

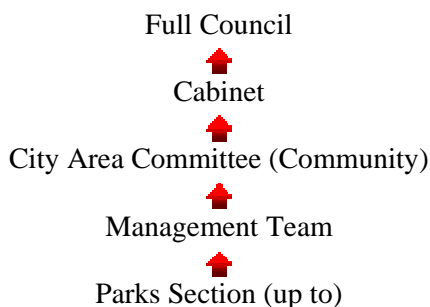
6 Management

6.1 Management History

The land that Churchill Gardens occupies has been under the management and ownership of Salisbury District Council (or its predecessors) since circa 1930.

6.2 Management Structure

The formal decision making process is currently as follows:



(In reality, it is very rare that any decisions are referred higher than the City Area Committee.)

6.3 Staff Presence

Grounds staff are only present in the park when they are involved in the following:

Contract maintenance work (including grass cutting)

In response to individual jobs issued by the Parks Section

In response to requests made by the public through the Parks Section.

Dedicated members of staff are also employed to collect litter either daily or at least three times per week. When members of staff do attend the site, they are only ever there for the duration of the work(s) in which they are involved.

There is no standing presence outside of office hours. It should be noted, however, that members of the Parks Section are always contactable in the event of an emergency via Salisbury District Council's Emergency Control staff.

6.4 Grounds Maintenance Specifications

Since central government enforced Compulsory Competitive Tendering across all local authorities in 1988, the contracts for any work undertaken in the park have been tendered for on the open market. The current contract was won by Salisbury District Council's Environmental Services Section in April 2006 - this is due to expire at the end of March 2011.

Historically, there have been times when a member of the grounds staff has been based at the park to undertake the majority of the necessary jobs; they were then supplemented by mobile teams for certain tasks as required. This is no longer the case, and there have not been any members of staff permanently on site at the park for around 10 years. This was because of financial restrictions, as well as changing work practices.

The current maintenance standards for Churchill Gardens are the same as those set for all of the other parks in Salisbury. These specifications and standards are set out in a comprehensive document held by the Parks Section - this document runs to nearly 100 pages, and covers every aspect of the maintenance of the parks and open spaces in the district in specific detail.⁶

⁶ A copy of this document is available to the public and can be viewed by contacting the Parks Section.

6.5 Maintenance of Infrastructure

Invariably, benches, bins, fences and the like are maintained as and when they need to be. This is not ideal (being fundamentally reactive), so it would be best practice if such work became part of a planned maintenance programme to ensure that the park is kept in a good, serviceable condition.

In the event of any vandalism or damage, requests are made to Salisbury District Council's Housing Repairs service, who then organise for repairs to take place.

6.6 Financial Resources

The development and maintenance of parks and open spaces is traditionally a Parish or Town Council function. Since Salisbury is not split into parishes, this function has been delegated to Salisbury District Council via Section 35 (2) (d) of the Local Government Act 1992. The elected members within the city thereby collectively act as a quasi-City Council within the auspices of the District Council, raising a special expense annually to cover this (and other) delegated parish functions.

6.6.1 Revenue

The budget for the maintenance of Churchill Gardens for the current financial year (2007/08) is £26,790 net. This is made up of expenditure of £28,140 offset by income totalling £1,350. This income is made up from the leasing charge from Salisbury Sea Cadets.

This compares favourably with the situation in 1989/90 when the net cost of maintaining Churchill Gardens was £29,300. The fundamental difference in these two sets of figures is primarily down to more efficient work practices, no on site presence and the impact of Compulsory Competitive tendering.

Please Note - these figures do not include the costs of managing either the main car park nor the public conveniences for reasons highlighted at point 2.5 (1&2) previously.

6.6.2 Capital

There is no capital budget allocated for Churchill Gardens for 2007/08. In recent years, most of the capital expenditure has been met from planning policy R2 developer contributions; it is likely that this source of funding may still be available in the immediate future.

Historically, capital expenditure was funded by the special expense reserve account (ostensibly a savings account made up of monies accumulated from expense surpluses and the proceeds of selling land). Over the past 20 years, capital projects at Churchill Gardens have included the building and the refurbishment of the skate park, completed in 2001 and 2004 respectively.

6.7 Stakeholders

Stakeholders connected to Churchill Gardens (either directly or indirectly) include:

Salisbury Sea Cadets
Salisbury College
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
The Environment Agency
The Living River project
Salisbury Police
Wiltshire County Council
The Highways Agency

6.8 Marketing

There are dedicated pages on the Salisbury District Council website that cover the parks and open spaces in and around the city. These pages are currently being improved to include more comprehensive information about each of the parks in Salisbury, as well as updated photographs and maps. Individual events - like the scheduled charity run, for example - are publicised at the expense of those organising the events. Salisbury District Council does not undertake any other routine marketing.

6.9 Visitor Attractions

The main attractions in the park would appear to be the skate park, the play area and the river walk(s). As well as this, the openness and space of the park - combined with the effective infrastructure, is likely to appeal to people walking their dog(s) and to runners.

7 Current Use

The consultation carried out to support and inform this plan has provided us with comprehensive and relevant information about the use of Churchill Gardens; the wealth of information now available means that we no longer need to rely on assumptions about park users or about the community's demands and expectations for the park.

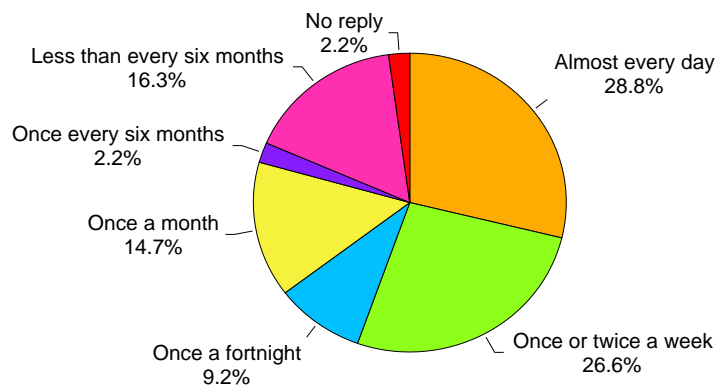
Added to this is a significant amount of information collated from councillors and officers from a number of departments of Salisbury District Council, as well as various stakeholders and other interested parties.

7.1 Patterns of Use and Visitor Behaviour

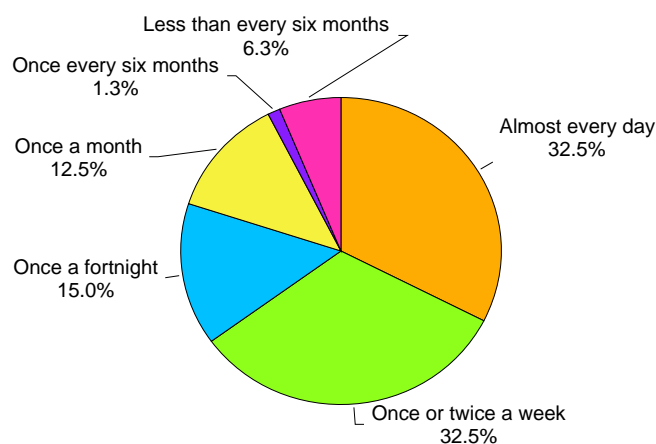
The results from the 'General Use' section of the questionnaire are summarised below. The responses from local residents and park users have been presented separately to help identify any common trends; this should highlight the facilities and the services that are being used, as well as those that meet with expectations. Equally, such analysis should help to identify those areas that are in need of improvement or revision.

7.1.1 Frequency of Use

Residents - Nearly 60% of the local residents surveyed visit Churchill Gardens at least once a week – this equates to over 100 people. Nearly 25% then visit at least once a month, leaving only 34 people visiting every six months or less:



Users - visit Churchill Gardens with greater frequency than residents, with over 75% visiting at least once a week. Only a small proportion visit every six months or less:



Based on the returned surveys, we can estimate that somewhere in the region of 33,835 visits are made to Churchill Gardens each year by those people sampled. This works out at an average of 93 visits per day, or 8 visits per hour across the 12 hours of the day⁷ that people are most likely to visit.

Frequency of visit	Number of visits by local residents	Visits by local residents per year	Number of visits by park users	Visits by park users per year
Almost every day	53	19,345	26	9,490
Once or twice a week	49	2,548	26	1,352
Once a fortnight	17	442	12	312
Once a month	27	324	10	12
Once every 6 months	4	8	1	2
Totals		22,667		11,168

NB. Calculation for the annual estimates:

Daily visitors	Weekly visitors	Fortnightly visitors	Monthly visitors	6-monthly visitors
*366 (days)	*52 (weeks)	*26 (weeks)	*12 (months)	*2 (months)

By comparison, for the 33,835 visits to Churchill Gardens, 87,075 visits were made to Victoria Park, 49,287 visits to Queen Elizabeth Gardens and 44,000 visits to Hudson's Field (these figures have all been calculated by the same method, as above⁸).

This also compares with 651,000 visitors to Five Rivers Leisure Centre, 101,000 to Durrington Pool and 43,000 to Tisbury Leisure Centre (based on figures for the year 2005-06).

It should be noted that although these figures are useful in guesstimating the number of visits to Churchill Gardens throughout the year, there is a danger that any calculations by such elementary methods could underestimate the number of visitors to the park. In part, this is because the survey was conducted during October & November - a relatively unpopular time of the year. More than this, however, the survey could not easily include or legislate for the following:

Those people in the park who refused to be included in the sample;
 Those people who make multiple visits to Churchill Gardens each day, for instance walking a dog in the morning and the evening, or going to and from the city centre in the same day.

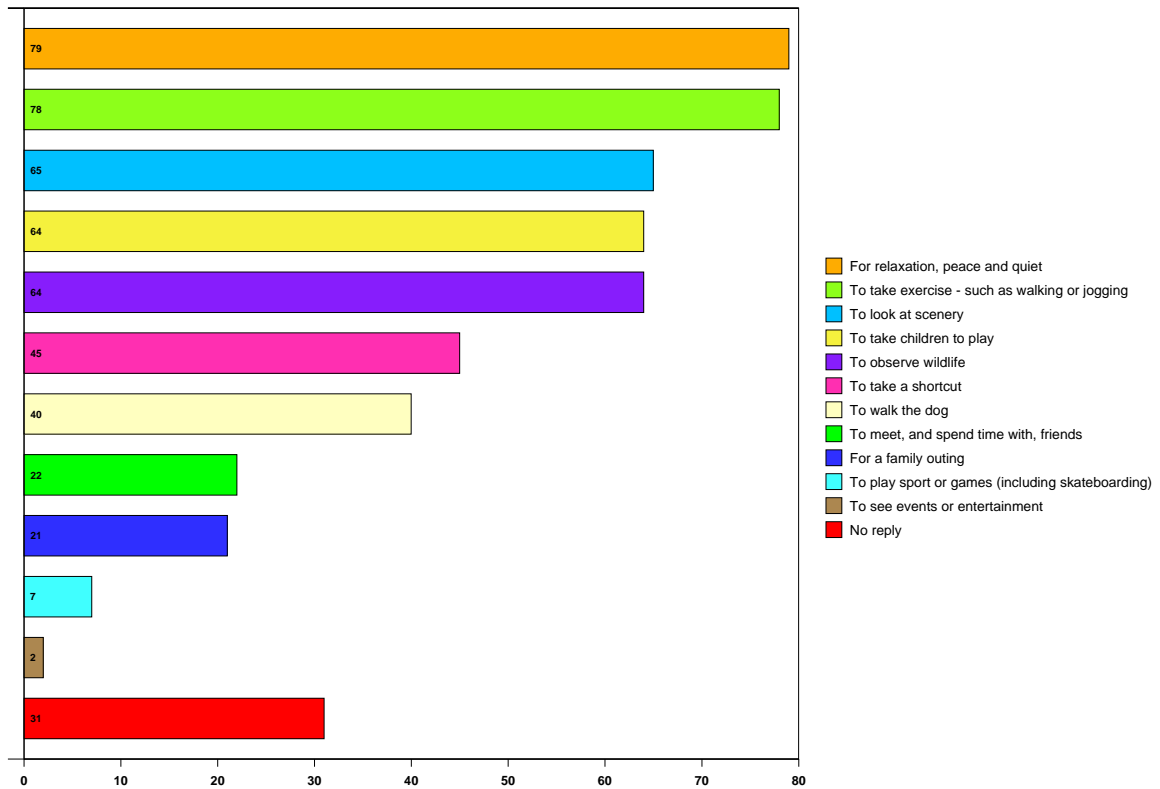
Given these limitations, it is reasonable to assume that the actual number of visitors to Churchill Gardens is significantly higher than those figures calculated above.

⁷ 8.00am until 8.00pm.

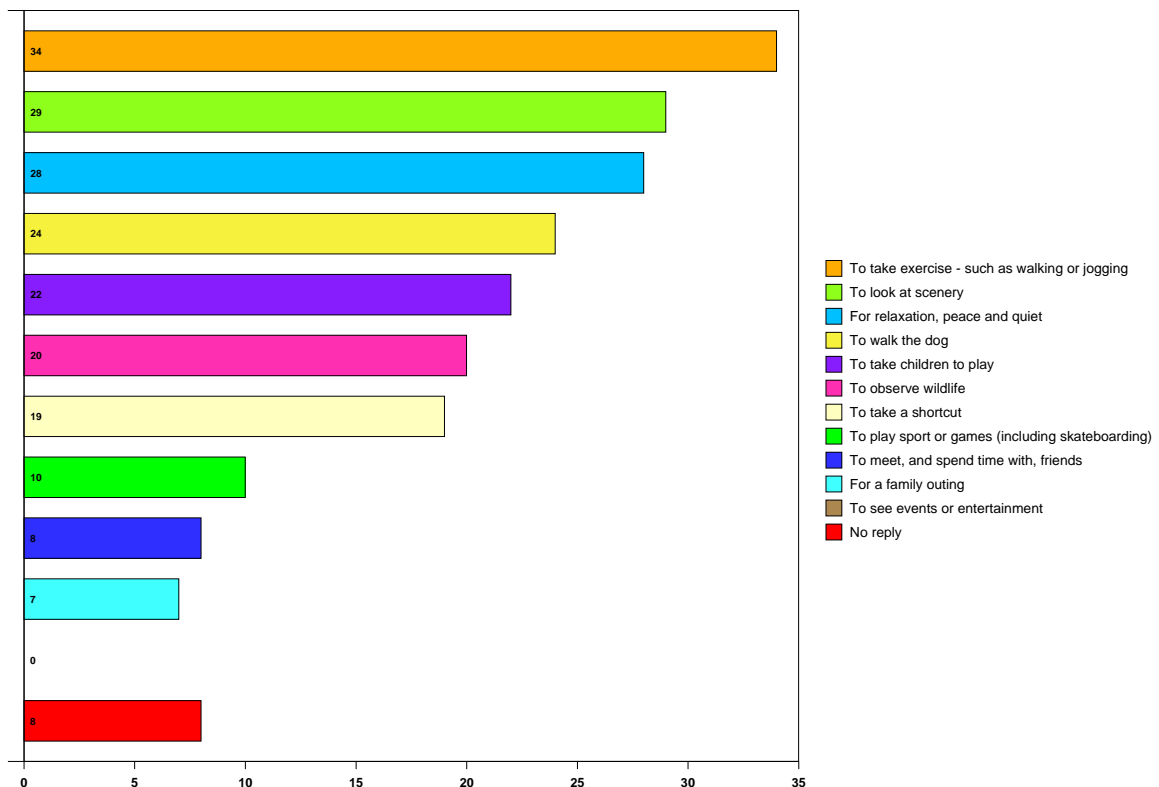
⁸ Please also refer to the equivalent Management Plans for Victoria Park, Queen Elizabeth Gardens & Hudson's Field.

7.1.2 Reason(s) For Use

Residents - The most popular reasons for visiting Churchill Gardens are for relaxation and to take exercise. After this, similar numbers of people visit the site to look at the scenery, to take children to play and to look at the wildlife. The park is also relatively popular for people with dogs and for people taking a shortcut (given the site's proximity to Salisbury College and to the shops and businesses on Southampton Road, this is not at all surprising). Very few residents go to the park for events, though this almost certainly reflects the lack of events held in recent years. Finally, only 7 residents out of the 173 canvassed go to play sport or to skate; given that the skate park is one of the few in the area, this is both surprising and disappointing though may also be a reflection on the ages of those completing the questionnaires



Users - The most popular reasons for visiting Churchill Gardens amongst users are very similar to those of the residents, albeit in a slightly different order:



Taking both samples into consideration, the following groups of people appear to make up the majority of visitors to the park:

Walkers or runners

People taking in the scenery, tranquillity and wildlife

People walking their dog(s)

People taking children (or grandchildren) to play

In addition to this, time spent in the park in November 2007 showed that the skate park is a very popular facility, with children and adults from 6 to 40 visiting on a regular (weekly) basis. Alongside this, any number of children and young adults between 10 and 25 visit the park every day when possible, staying from mid-morning until sunset. Although this popularity is not reflected in the charts above, this is for reasons detailed under heading 7.2.3 later in this plan, and certainly not because the skate park is not being used. Accordingly, the people using the skate park make up another group that should be appended to the list above.

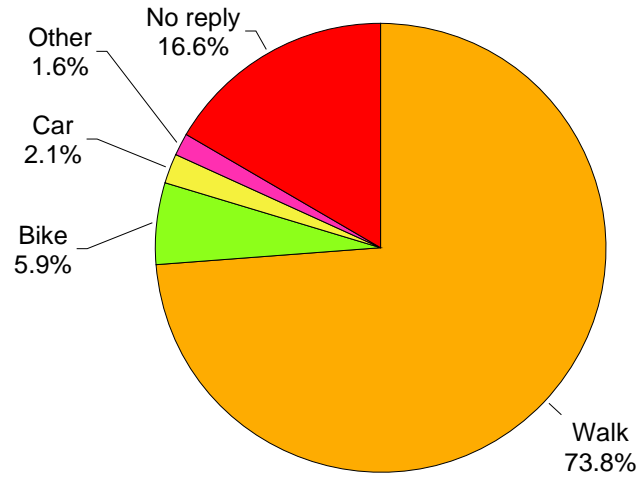
7.1.3 Use of Other Parks

Residents - 51 of the 178 residents made frequent use of other parks and open spaces within the district. By far the most popular alternative park was Queen Elizabeth Gardens, for the following reasons: prettier; better playground for children; en route to the train station; for access to the Town Path; feels safer than Churchill Gardens. Alongside this, about a quarter of those who use other sites also go to the Greencroft and to the Maltings play area - in the case of both of these spaces, people commented on the better play facilities for children (or grandchildren).

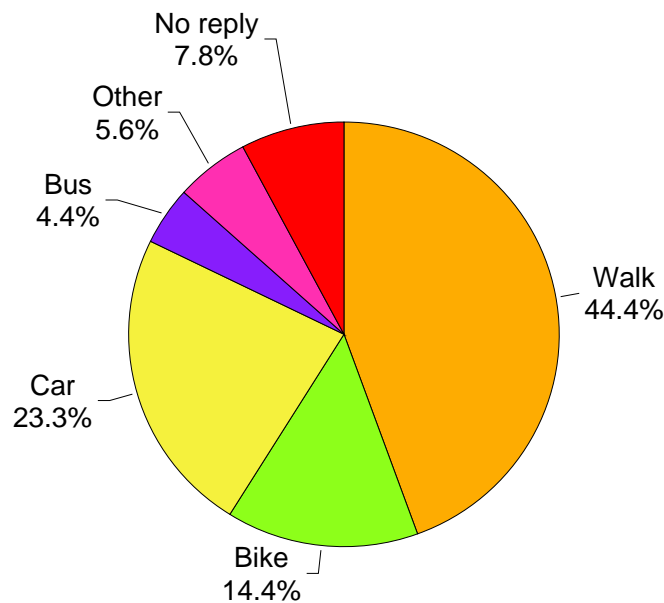
Users - 38 of the 80 respondents also frequent some or all of the other parks and open spaces in the district. Again, the single most popular alternative park was Queen Elizabeth Gardens, although most of those using other sites listed the likes of Hudson's Field, Victoria Park and the Greencroft as well. The reason(s) that people use these other spaces include the following: for variety - especially in walking their dog(s); as a cut through to somewhere else (typically the city centre); or to take their children to a better playground.

7.1.4 Transport Use

Residents - It is encouraging that nearly 80% of local residents walk or cycle to Churchill Gardens, with very few people travelling by car. Since so many residents go to the park to take exercise, this is probably linked, although the very fact that residents (for the purposes of our survey) had to live within 500 metres of the park will also explain this trend:



Users - Again, over half of the people visiting the park either walk or cycle. That more visitors travel by car and bus is understandable given that they (necessarily) live further away:



7.1.5 Duration of Use

Residents - Very few residents spend more than an hour in Churchill Gardens each day, with the majority spending between 30 minutes and an hour:

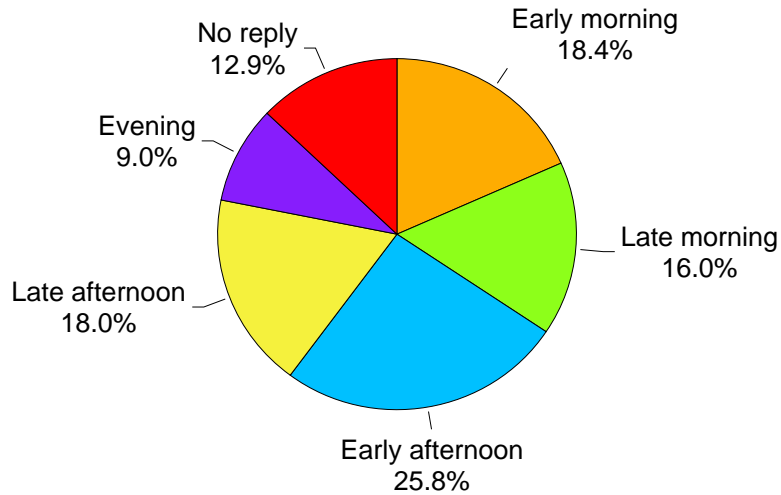


Users - Park users generally spend shorter amounts of time in Churchill Gardens, although the majority again spend between 30 minutes and an hour:

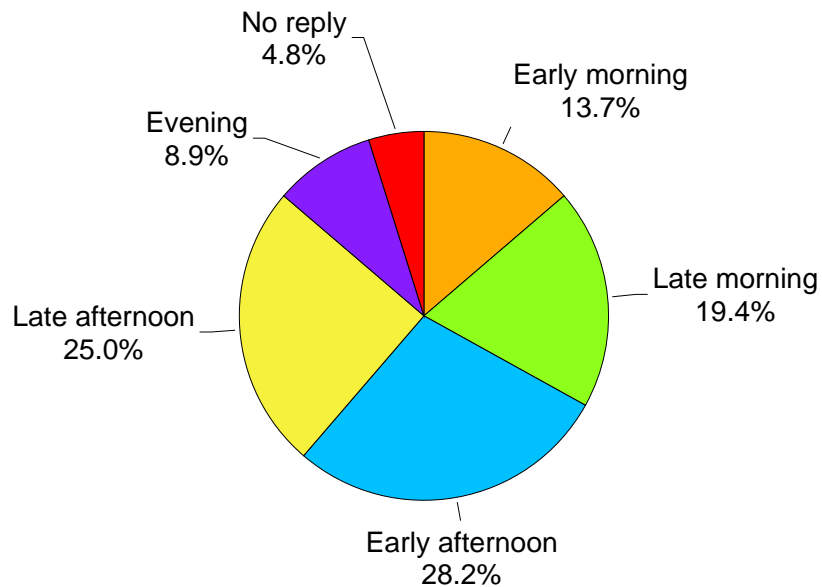


7.1.6 Time of Use

Residents - visit Churchill Gardens fairly consistently throughout the day, albeit with the single largest use in the early afternoon. It is perhaps significant that the least popular time of day is in the evening; this can be traced to concerns about safety in the park (please refer to section 8.8 later in this report):



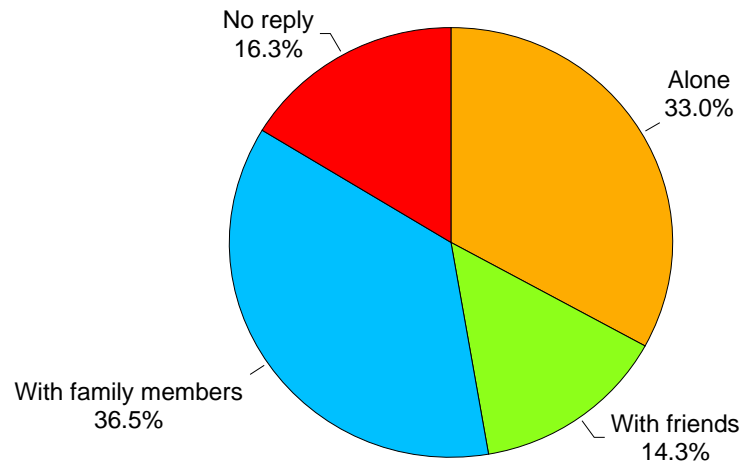
Users - Likewise, park users also visit Churchill Gardens consistently throughout the day, albeit with the largest use in the late morning as opposed to the early afternoon:



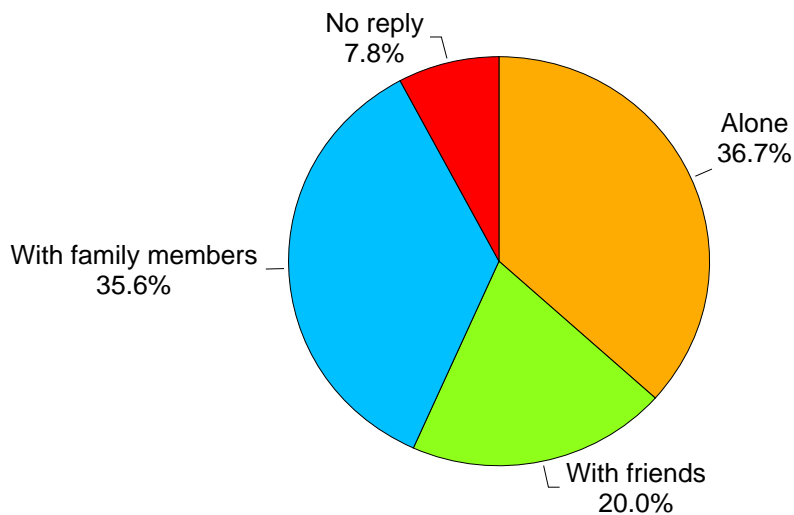
7.1.7 Company During Use

The reasons why people visit the site are - certainly in part - reflected in whom they visit the site with.

Residents - Half of the local residents visit Churchill Gardens accompanied by family members, however a significant proportion visit alone; this ties in with all those residents who visit the site for walking or jogging and those who walk their dog. Only a small proportion of those residents surveyed visit with their friends:



Users - There is a more even spread shown amongst park users; in particular, there is a noticeable increase in the amount of users who visit the park with their friends:



7.2 Comparison of Visitors against the Wider Community

In order to assess whether the sample of residents is representative of the ward as a whole - and how the sample of park users compares to the demographics of the ward - both samples have been cross-referenced with statistics obtained from the 2001 Office of National Statistics Census for the St Martin and Milford ward.⁹

7.2.1 Sample Size

The population of the St Martin and Milford ward in 2001 was 4,698. Questionnaires were sent out to in the region of 650 households, approximately 14% of the ward. Replies were received from 173 local residents, a 27% response rate and 4% of the ward. This is a slightly disappointing response rate and -so it follows- not the best sample. This may reflect the fact that Churchill Gardens is cut off from those houses and flats closest to it by two busy roads.

Park users completed and returned a further 80 questionnaires. Of the park users questioned, a number lived in Salisbury - for example Castle Street, and Wilton Road - but remained outside the 500m radius to be classed as a resident.

Towns and villages represented in the sample include Alderbury, Bemerton Heath, Bishopdown Farm, Laverstock, South Newton and Winterslow. Some users also came from further afield: Andover and Fordingbridge were both mentioned.

7.2.2 Gender Structure

The Male - Female breakdown for the St Martin and Milford ward and the comparison with the samples is as follows:

%					
Sex	Ward figures	Resident sample	Difference (in % points)	Park User sample	Difference
Male	43.2	23.7	19.5	46.3	3.1
Female	56.8	72.3	15.5	50.0	6.8

Interestingly, nearly three-quarters of the resident surveys have been completed by females. Since the split in the ward is much closer, it seems fair to speculate that this is simply because more women ended up completing the survey on behalf of each household; indeed, there were similar trends in the returned surveys for the other parks in the district. This (superficial) disparity notwithstanding, it is unlikely that male viewpoints have been negated.

7.2.3 Age Structure

The age categories used in the census were slightly different to the questionnaire¹⁰, but comparisons can still be made:

%					
Age	Ward figures	Resident sample	Difference (in % points)	Park User sample	Difference
Under 16	14.7	0.0	14.7	5.0	9.7
16 - 24	12.4	0.6	11.8	13.8	1.4
25 - 44	27.5	27.7	0.2	27.5	0.0
45 - 64	20.0	31.8	11.8	36.3	16.3
Over 65	25.4	37.6	12.2	13.8	11.6

⁹ These statistics are shown as Ward figures in the following four tables.

¹⁰ The 2001 census had the following age groups: Under 16, 16-24, 25-44, 45 -64 & Over 65. By contrast, the questionnaires used made the following splits: 25-34 & 35-44 and 45-54 & 55-64. Accordingly, the results from these groups were combined to match the 25-44 and 45-64 groups of the census.

Evidently, the resident sample is progressively skewed towards the older age ranges. The fact that both Under 16s and 16-24 year olds are barely represented was anticipated (to a certain extent) for the following reasons:

Questionnaires of this nature tend to be completed by adults; in the case of the aforementioned age groups, the survey will most likely have been completed by parents or guardians rather than by the Under 16s or the 16-24 year olds living in the household. A number of 16-24 year olds may be recorded on the census, but could be away at college or on a gap year, for example, so may not be living in Salisbury to make use of the park at all.

This disparity may have been mitigated to a certain extent, with the views of the whole household having informed some of the answers. Even so, it remains problematic that these two age groups (and therein their ideas and views) are not properly represented - this situation may well explain the fallacy that residents do not appear to be using the skate park, when it is known to be incredibly popular with younger residents. Accordingly, and to redress this failing, Parks staff undertook further consultation around the skate park, so better canvassing these groups.

Interestingly, the figures in the park user sample are generally closer to the survey figures for the ward. In particular, approaching park users directly would appear to have been much more effective in canvassing the younger age groups, with an above average response from the 16-24 years old age group, as well as a much improved response from the Under 16s.

7.2.4 Registered Disabled

It is difficult to compare the samples against the ward statistics, as the census records people with a 'limiting long term illness'¹¹, rather than those people who are registered as disabled; more people place themselves in this category than would be registered as disabled - where 9.2% of the resident sample are registered disabled, the census recorded that 16.3% of the ward have a 'limiting long term illness'. 8.8% of park users are registered disabled.

¹¹ Defined as a significant health problem or a disability that affects everyday work or activity.

7.2.5 Employment Status

The employment breakdown for the ward can be compared with the samples as follows:

%					
Employment status	Ward figures	Resident sample	Difference (in % points)	Park Users sample	Difference
Full time employment	42.4	21.4	21.0	31.3	11.1
Part time employment	9.3	15.6	6.3	16.3	7.0
Full time house person	5.0	5.2	0.2	5.0	-
Full time education (16-24)	7.3	1.2	6.1	7.5	0.2
Self employed	9.6	8.1	1.5	7.5	2.1
Unemployed	5.0	3.5	1.5	3.8	1.2
Retired	14.7	43.9	29.2	27.5	12.8
Other (in the census only)	6.7	-	-	-	-

The resident sample contains a significantly higher proportion of retired people; likewise those in part time employment. This is partly to be expected, since both of these groups will tend to have more time to spend in the park; it is also conceivable that they may have a particular interest in the park, with retired people often having grandchildren, whilst a number of part time workers take such work since they are also parents.

Those in full time employment and (less so) those who are self-employed are not as well represented, logically because they tend to have less free time, either for filling in questionnaires or for visiting the park in the first instance.

The full time education statistics are not easily comparable since the census only recorded 16-24 year olds in education, whereas the questionnaire covers full time education as a whole. Even so, local residents in this bracket are poorly represented; this can be linked to parents completing the questionnaires rather than younger residents.

The sample of park users is generally closer to the ward statistics, although those in part time employment and those in full time employment are again represented disproportionately.

7.2.6 Ethnic Origin

%					
Ethnic origin	Ward figures	Resident sample	Difference (in % points)	Park User sample	Difference
White/European	97.5	94.2	3.3	92.5	5.0
African	0.2	0.0	0.2	1.3	1.1
Indian	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.3
Chinese	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.7
Other	1.3	1.2	0.1	0.0	1.3

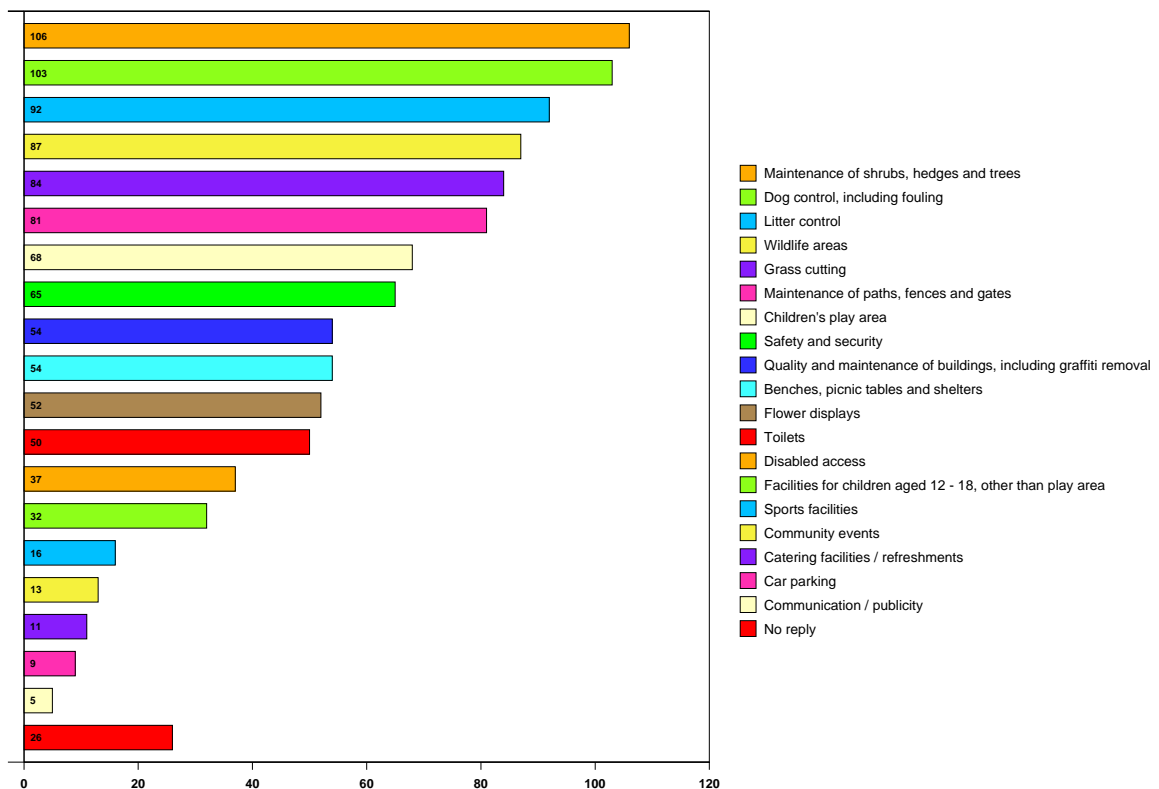
Clearly, both samples are highly representative of the ward.

8 Identification of Issues

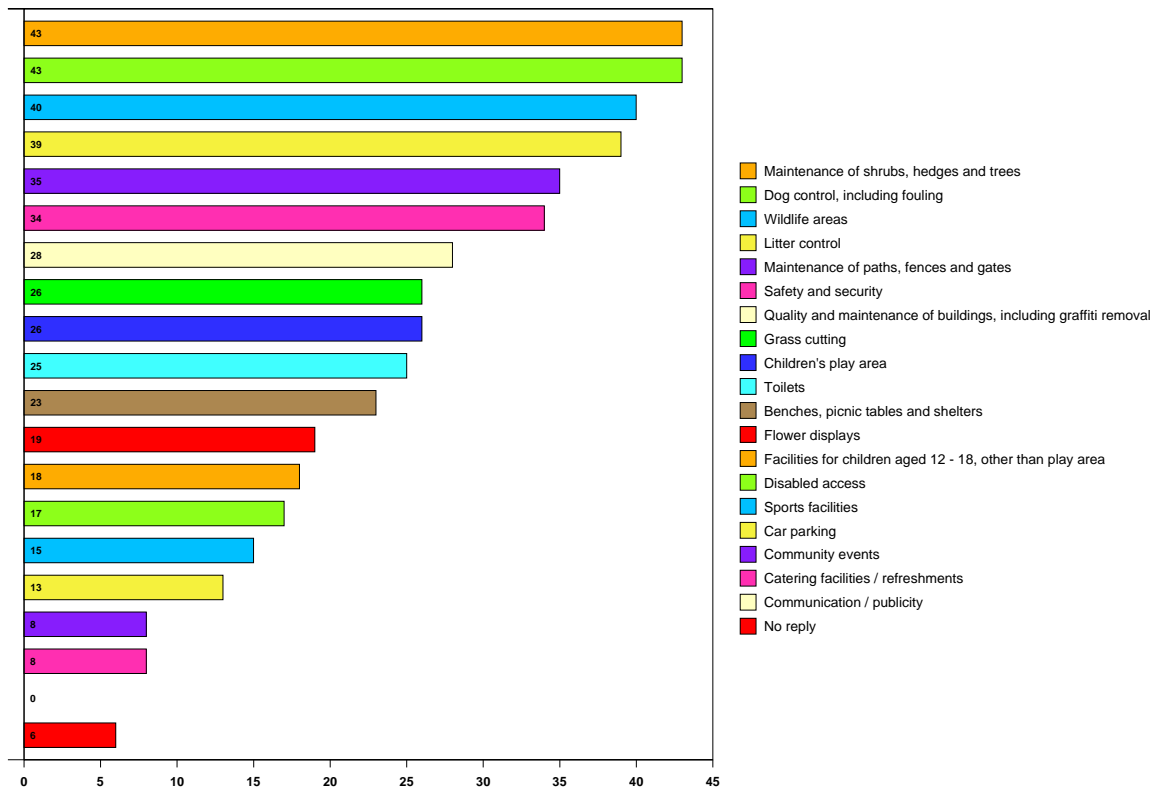
The second and third sections of the questionnaire addressed perceptions of the park and of the services and facilities in Churchill Gardens. The results from these sections are looked at below, with the responses from residents and park users again analysed separately.

8.1 Park Priorities

Residents - consider the maintenance of the shrubs, hedges and trees in the park to be of the highest priority. After this, dog control, litter control and other maintenance also feature highly, suggesting that the upkeep and appearance of the park is of particular importance to local residents. The provision of sports facilities is not seen as a priority; likewise community events. Whether this is because people do not want any more events or because they have become accustomed to not having them is a matter that should be addressed by a Friends group at a later date:



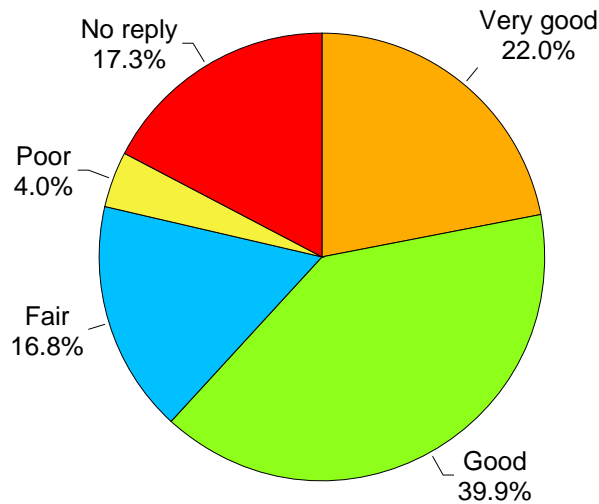
Users - see the priorities for the park similarly to residents, with the maintenance of shrubs, hedges and trees and dog control (including fouling) again the highest priorities:



8.2 Overall Impressions

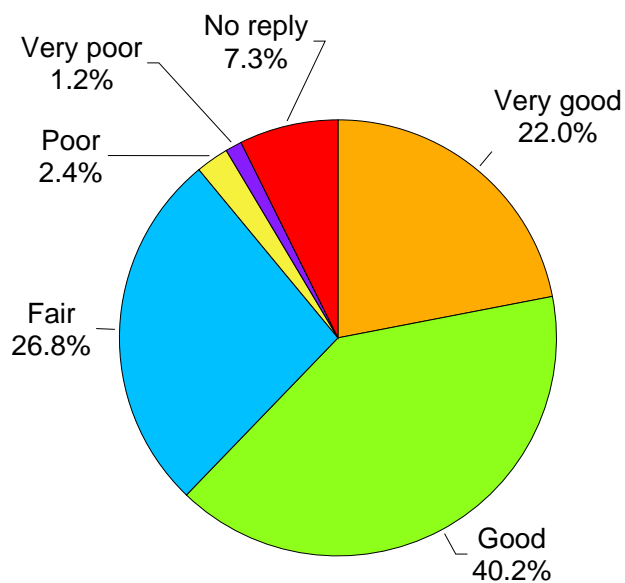
Residents - The general impression of Churchill Gardens is very favourable, with over 100 residents rating the park as either very good or good. Alongside this, only 7 people rated the park as poor, whilst none of the residents questioned felt that the site was very poor.

Further to this, 76% of local residents would recommend Churchill Gardens to a friend. As such, these results are highly encouraging:



Users - were similarly enthusiastic, with 51 people rating the park as good to very good. Again, very few people felt that Churchill Gardens was poor (only 2 visitors) or very poor (1 visitor).

Of the users surveyed, 85% would recommend Churchill Gardens to a friend:



8.3 Favourite Parts

Residents & Users

The river and its banks are by far the most popular aspects of Churchill Gardens, accumulating more votes than every other part of the park combined across residents and visitors alike. Most comments about the river referred to the quality of the scenery; the provision for wildlife and the tranquillity of the park to the south-east of the site (the area around the sluice gate and the slide).

Residents

After the river, the following areas and features were next most popular amongst residents:

The variety of shrubs and trees in the park, particularly in terms of the colours produced throughout the year;

The play area;

The slide (with the surrounding grassed area);

The provision for wildlife in the park.

Lastly, there were also odd votes for the area in the north east of the park (with mention of the work carried out in enhancing the waterway), as well as one vote for the skate park.

Users

The second most popular part of Churchill Gardens for park users was the skate park.

After this, votes also went to the shrubs and trees in the park (the cherry trees were singled out for particular praise in one answer).

The play area only received a couple of votes from visitors, perhaps suggesting that people who live further away choose to go elsewhere (Queen Elizabeth Gardens, the Greencroft and Victoria Park all have larger playgrounds).

8.4 Least Favourite Parts

Residents & Users

As with their favourite part of the park, residents and users were united in their votes for their least favourite part of Churchill Gardens - the toilets were considered dirty, smelly and unsafe, whilst the surrounding paved area was deemed unkempt, untidy and desperately outmoded.

Although it was only directly referenced by 3 people, the lack of lighting in the park is a clear problem and was implicit in a number of other answers to this question; residents and users both talked about a lack of safety at night and suggested that the park could be a very intimidating place - one respondent also mentioned that one of their friends had been mugged in the park.

The underpasses that lead to the park were commented on by a number of people, with negative remarks about their cleanliness, flooding and graffiti typical.

A number of residents and users also mentioned that the park has problems with graffiti and litter generally, but this point was often made as a secondary one; 'the skate park has litter everywhere - in fact the park is always messy' was typical of a number of answers here. Further to this, it is interesting that a number of the residents who expressed their dislike of the skate park also made reference to the litter and graffiti; this intimates that the problem these residents have with the skate park may not be fundamental, and that it could be allayed with changes in the maintenance of the park.

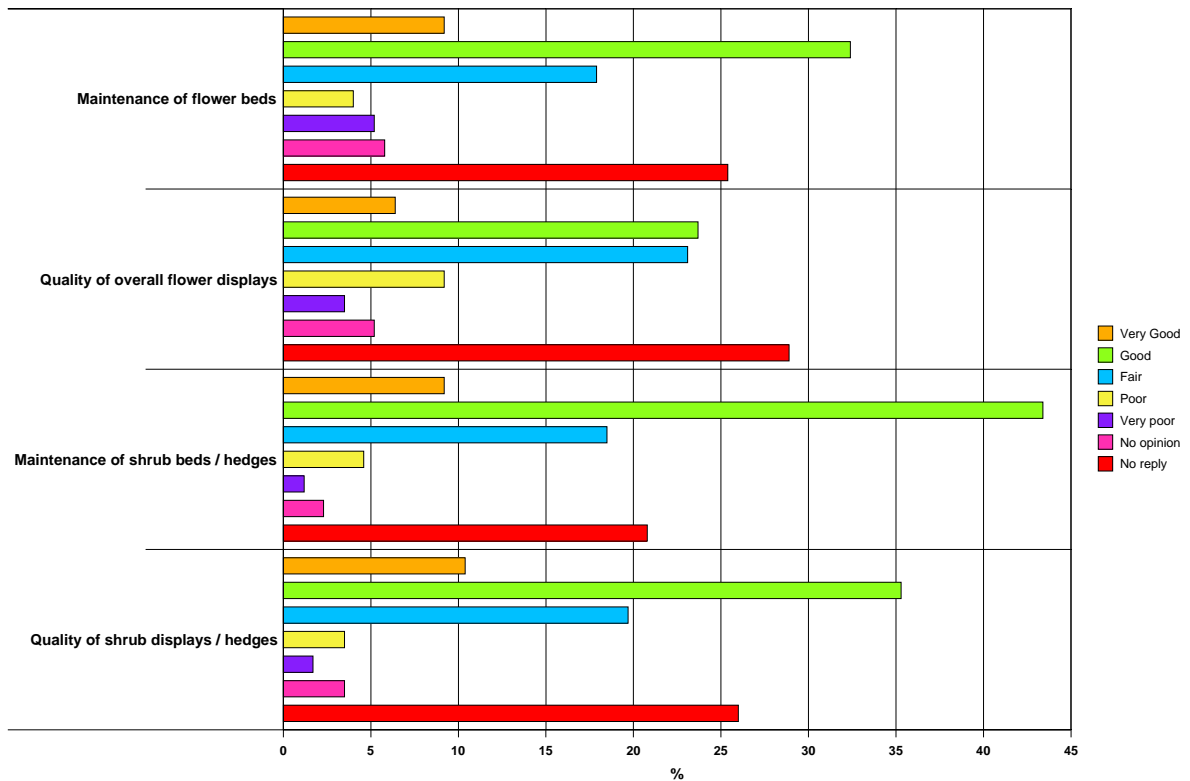
Residents

There was something of a discrepancy between residents and users when it came to the skate park: residents voted it second in their list of least favourite parts, whereas users have it as their second favourite.

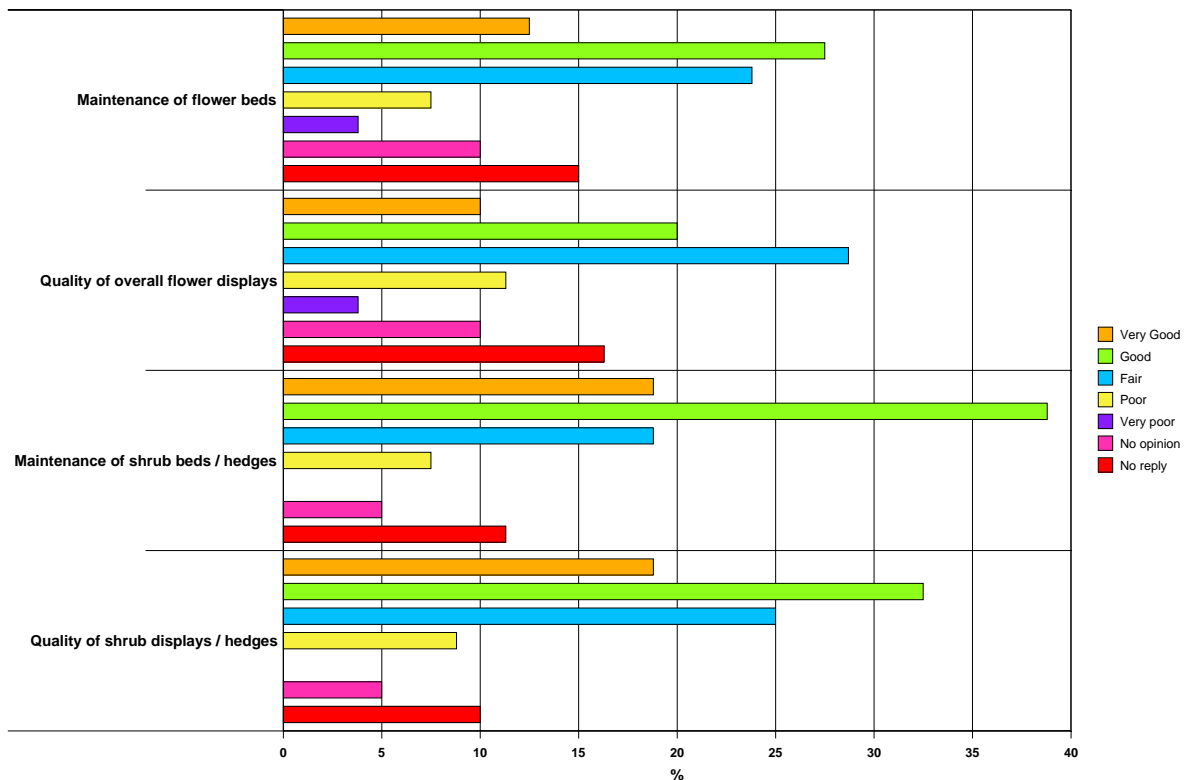
One resident drew attention to the lack of fencing along the riverbank to the east of the park, suggesting that this is dangerous.

8.4.1 Maintenance and Quality of the Landscape

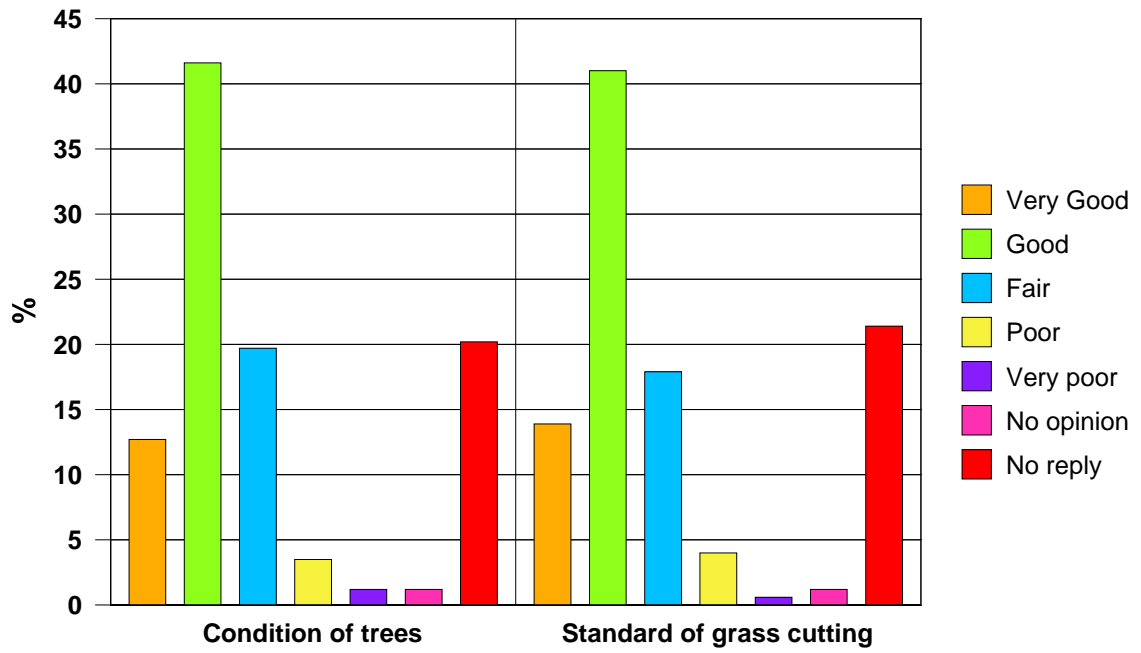
Residents - Most residents rate the maintenance and quality of the shrubs, flowers and hedges as somewhere between fair and very good. As a slight aside, a number of residents did not reply to these questions, suggesting that they are either indifferent to or are not enthused by the landscape:



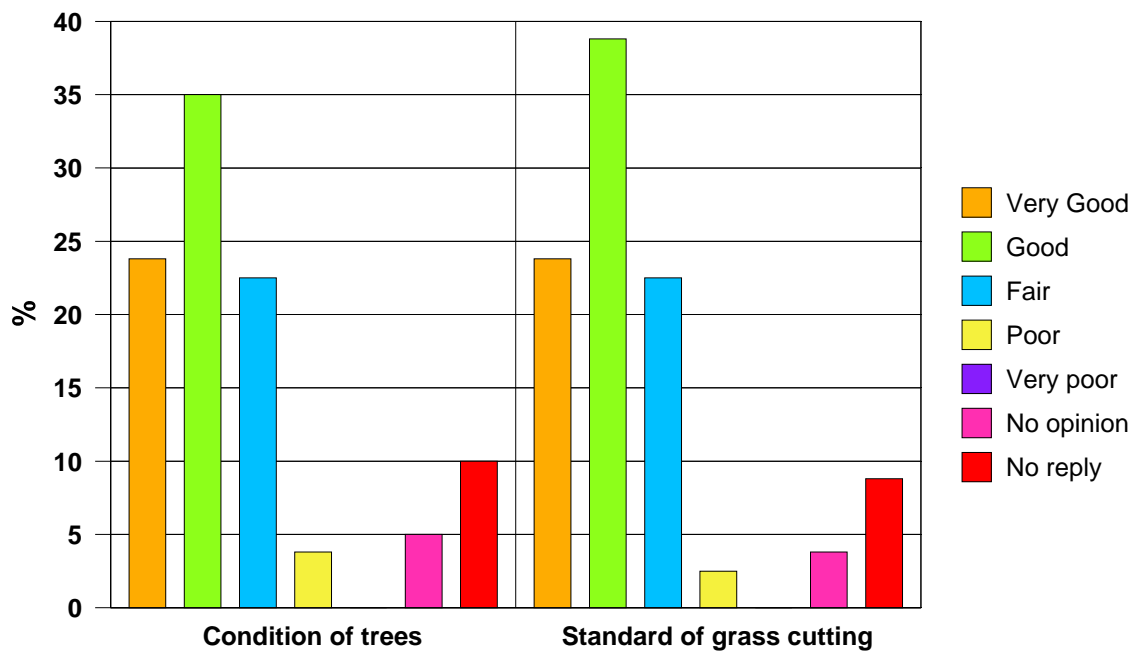
Users - Likewise, park users are generally impressed by the maintenance and quality of the shrubs, flowers and hedges.



Residents - rate both the condition of the trees in the park and the standard of grass cutting to be good:

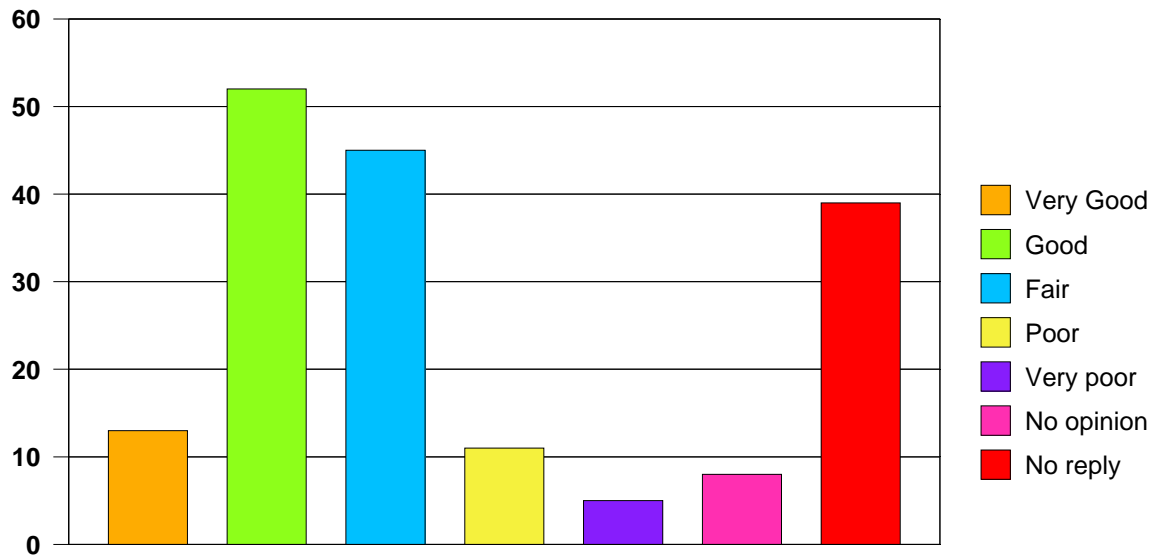


Users - have similar opinions, albeit with higher proportions deeming both features very good:

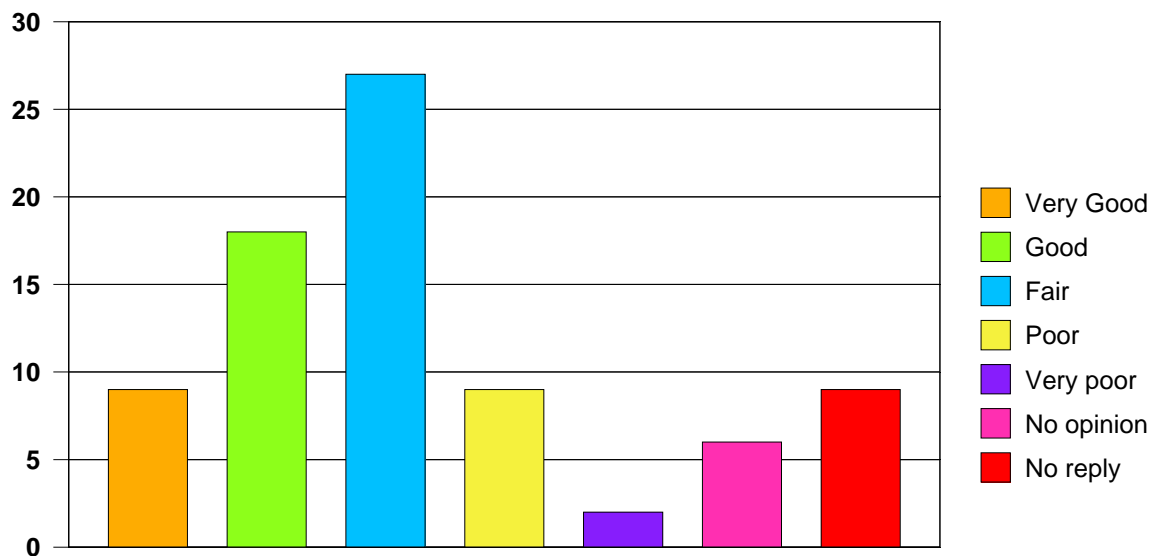


8.5 Wildlife Provision

Residents - The vast majority of residents feel that the provision for wildlife in the park is good to fair.



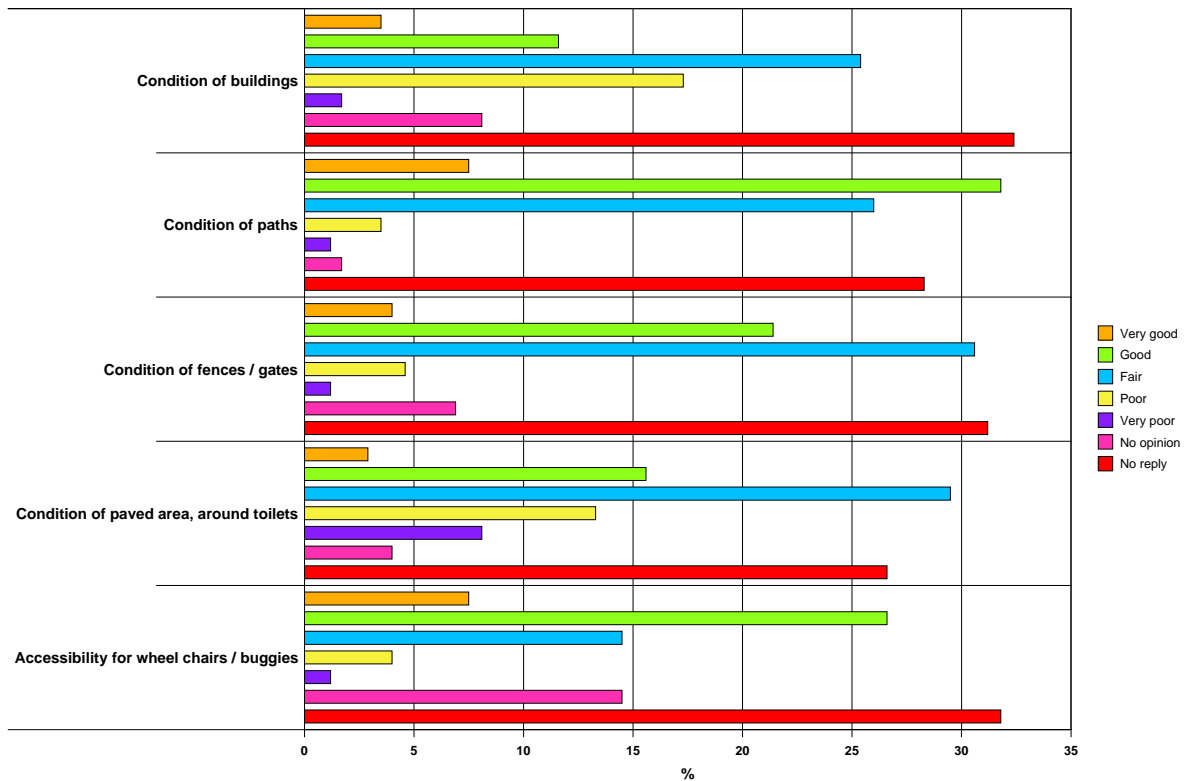
Users - Again, the majority considered that wildlife provision in the park is fair to good.



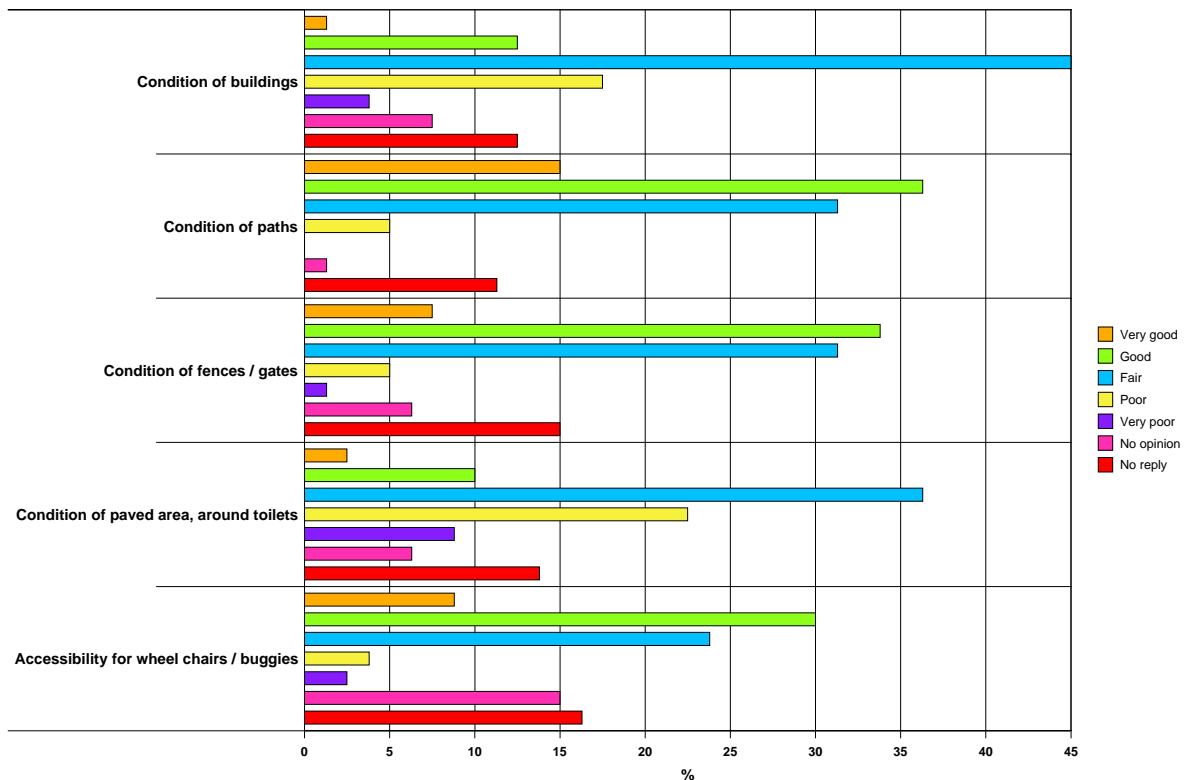
8.6 Infrastructure Standards

8.5.1 Buildings, Paths, Roads, Fences & Gates

Residents - The toilet block and the paved area that surrounds it are both deemed fair to poor, suggesting that this entire area is in need of review and refurbishment. This apart, the infrastructure in the park is generally considered to be fair or good:

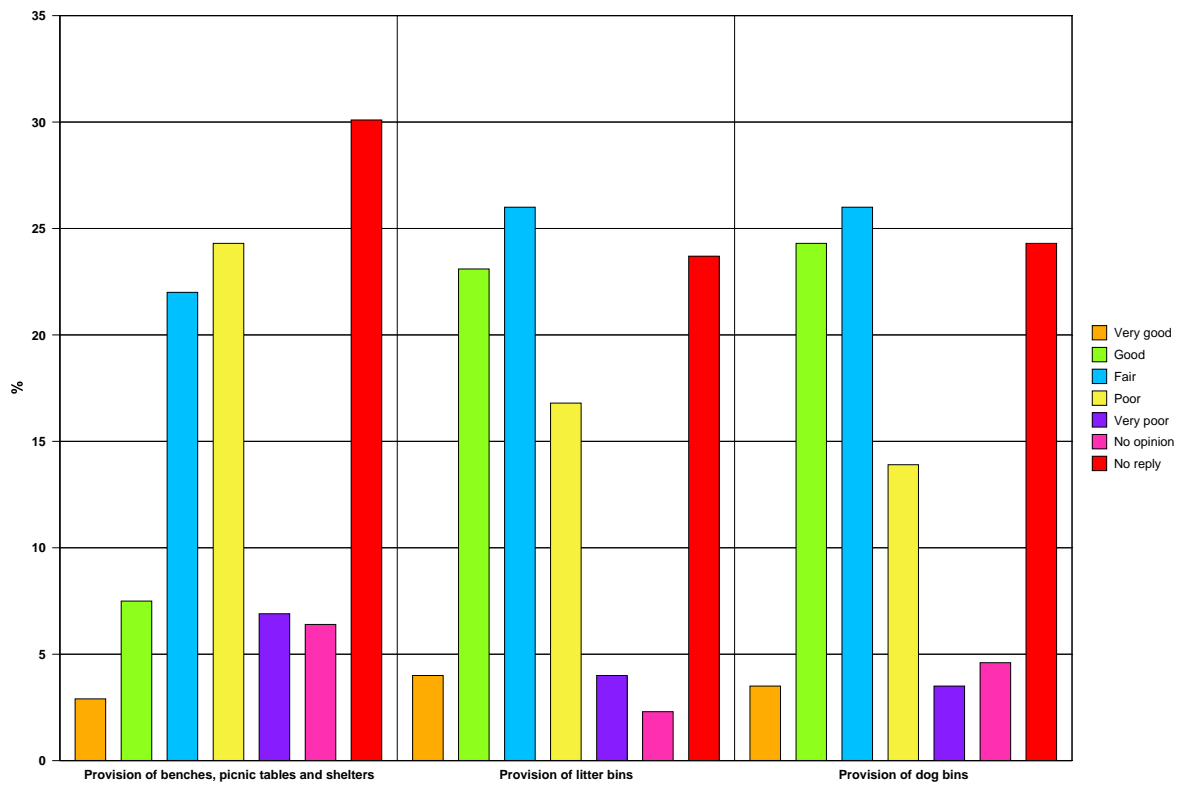


Likewise, Users:

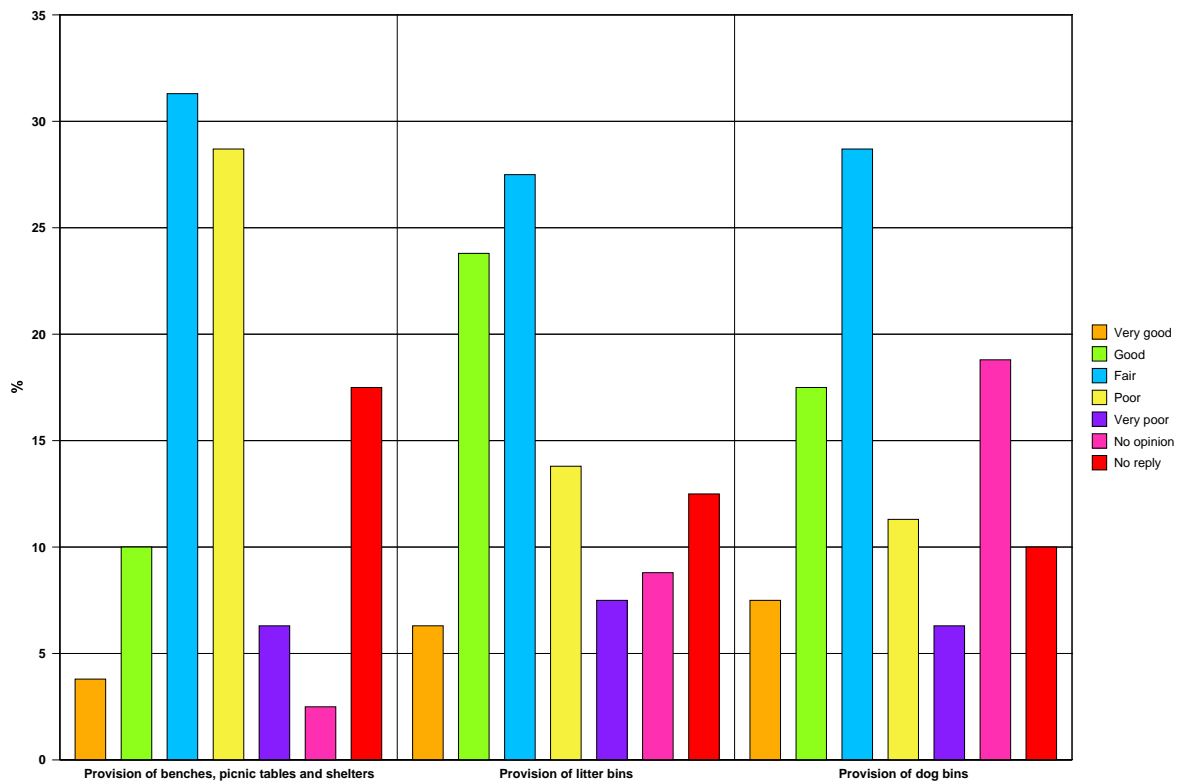


8.5.2 Benches & Bins

Residents - The provision of benches in the park is considered poor to fair. The provision of bins (including dog bins) is somewhat better:

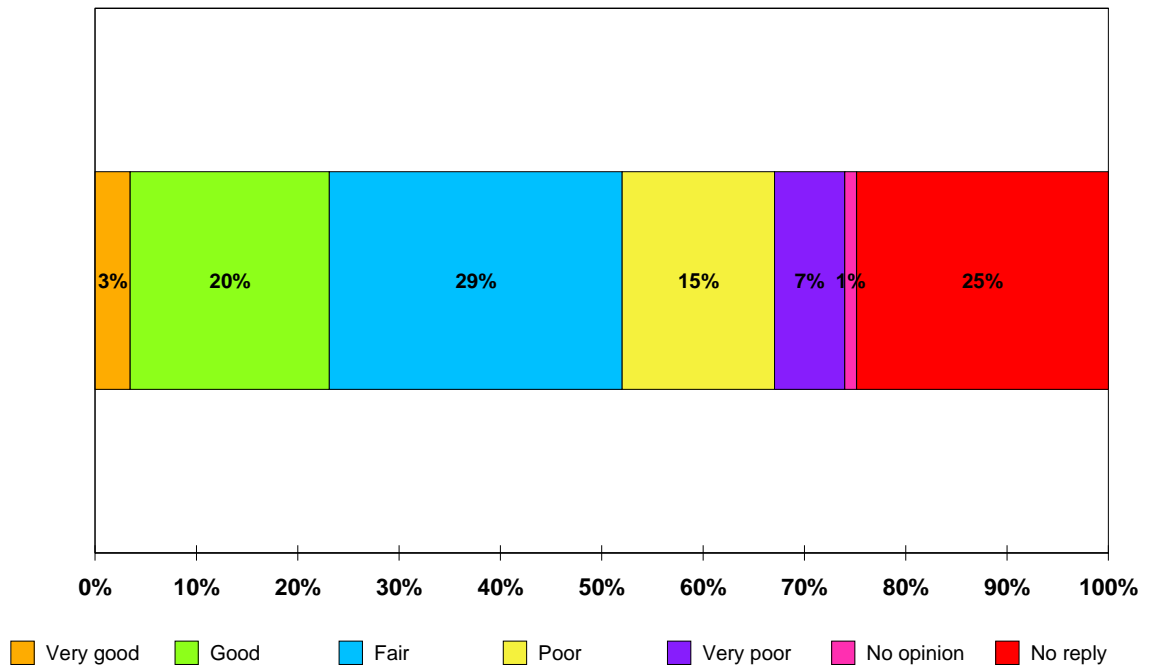


Users - have very similar opinions:

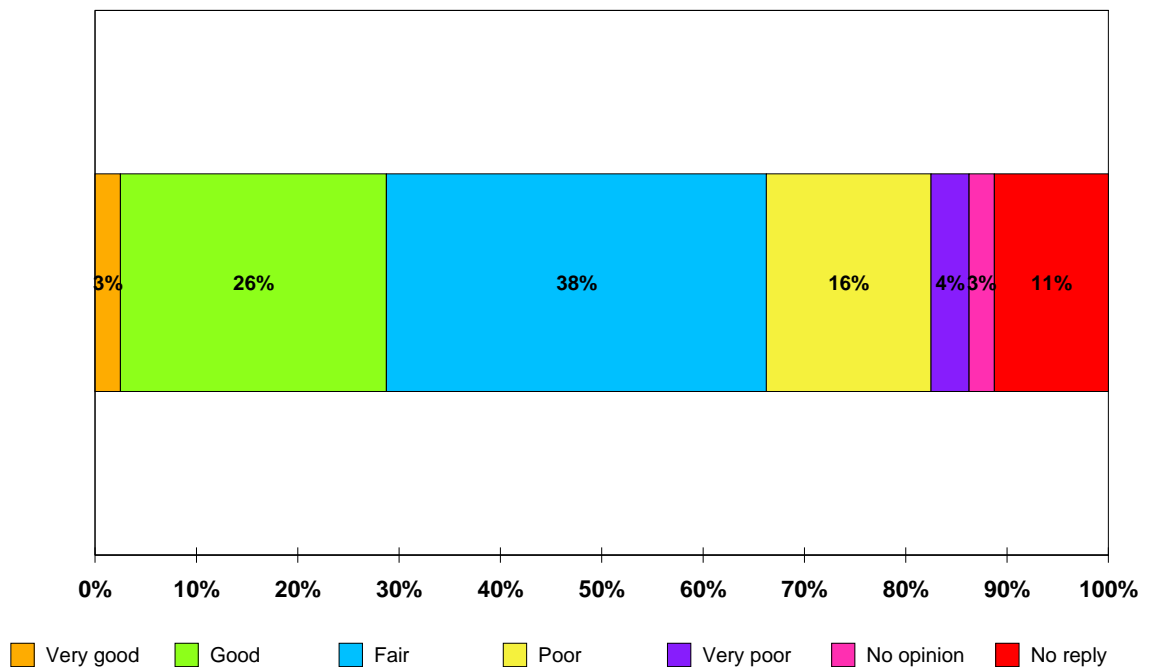


8.5.3 Cleanliness of the infrastructure in general

Residents - Just over half of the residents feel that the general standards of cleanliness in Churchill Gardens are at least fair, with nearly a quarter of all the residents surveyed confirming good or very good ratings. Again, a number of respondents did not reply to this question:



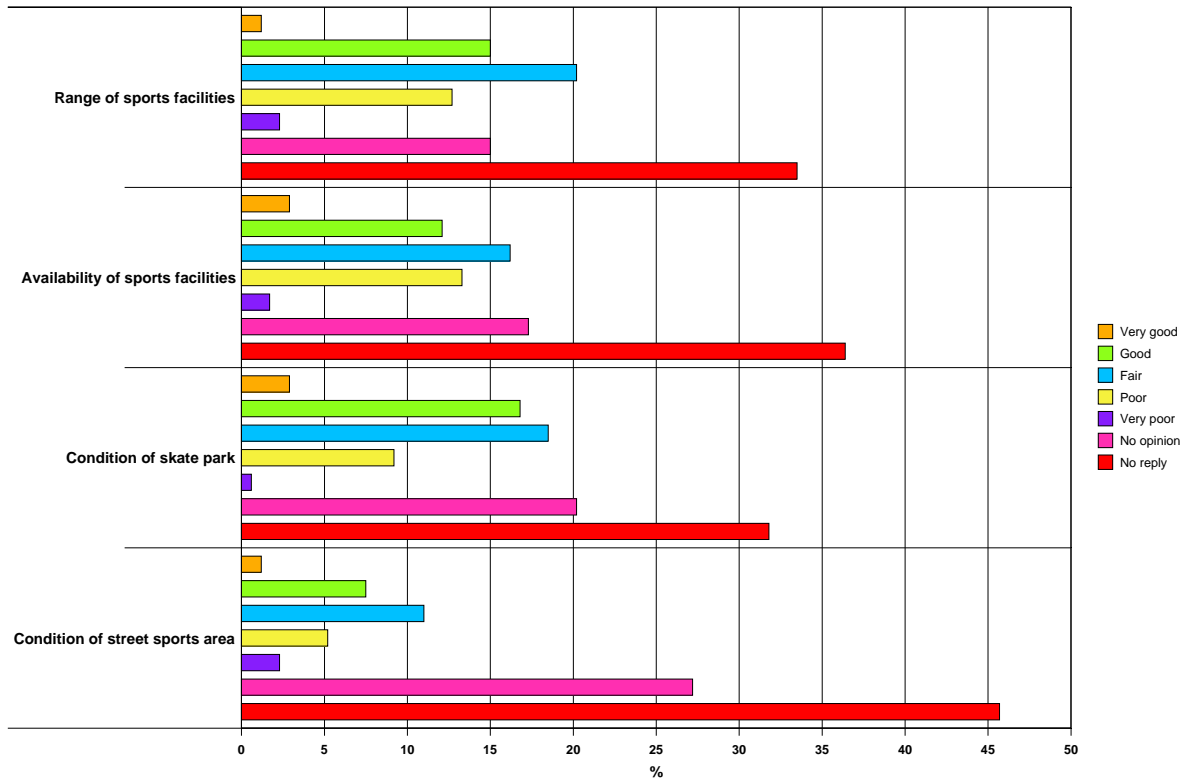
Users - were even more impressed, with nearly 30% voting good or very good, and close to 40% then deeming the current standards fair:



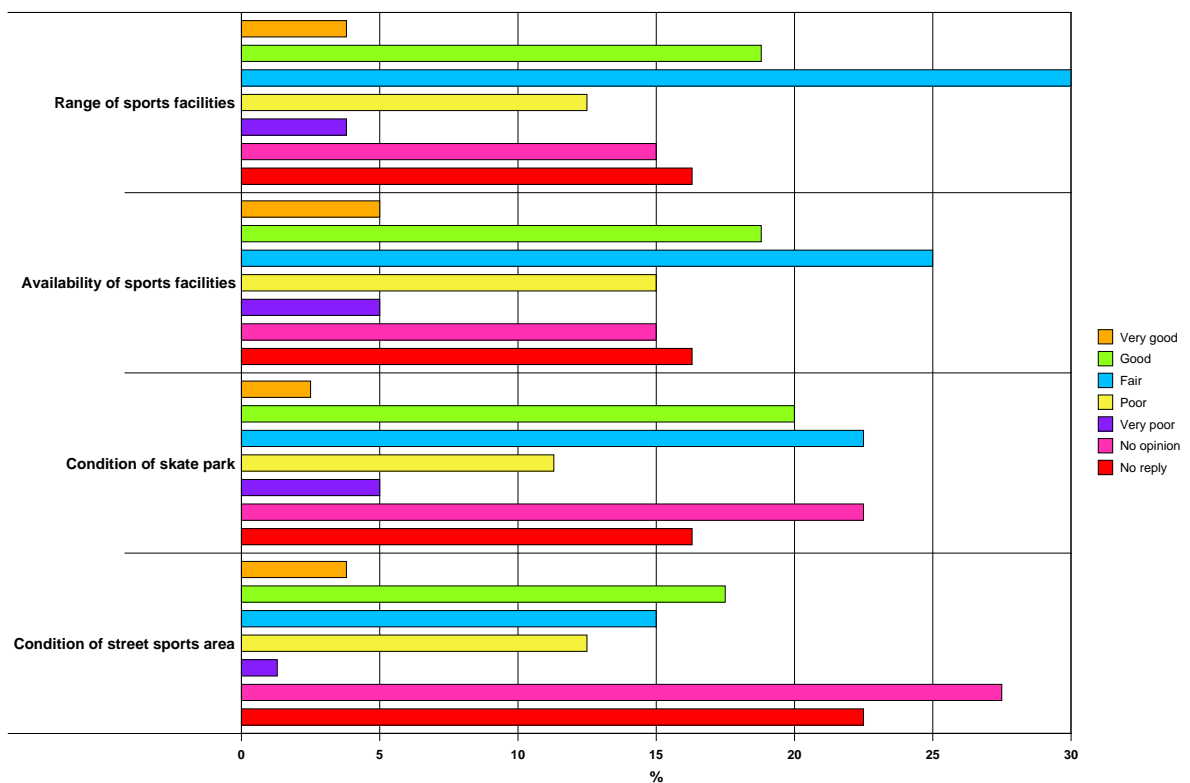
8.6 Range and Availability of Facilities

8.6.1 Sports Facilities

Residents - The sports facilities (including the skate park) are deemed to be in reasonable condition; the range of facilities is similarly fair:

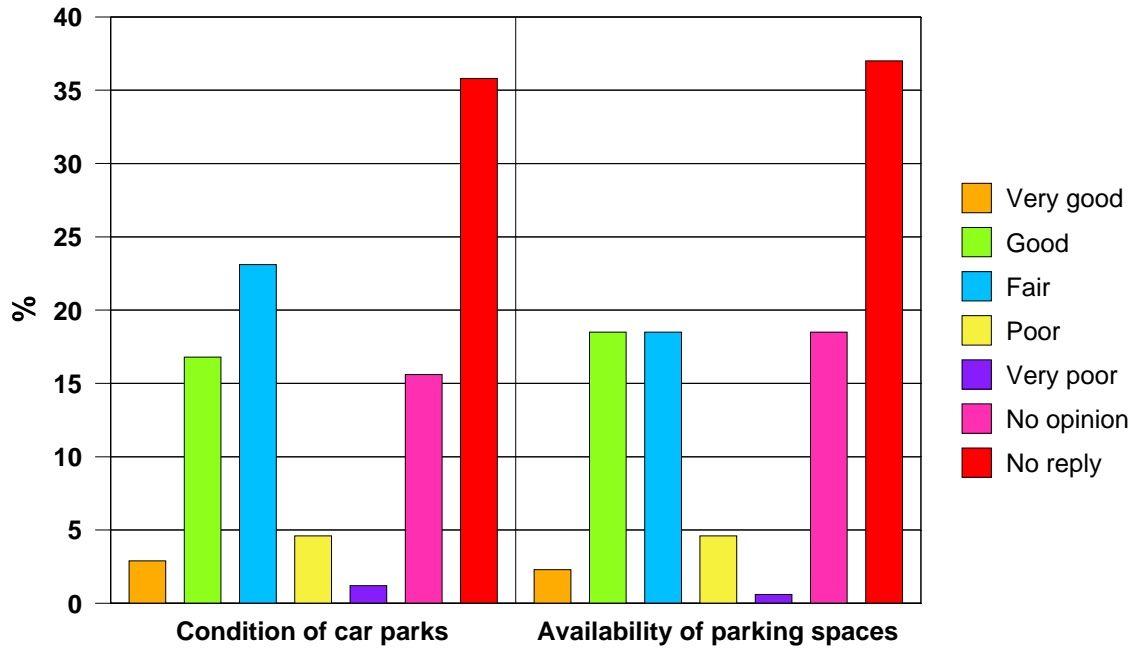


Users - share the same opinions:

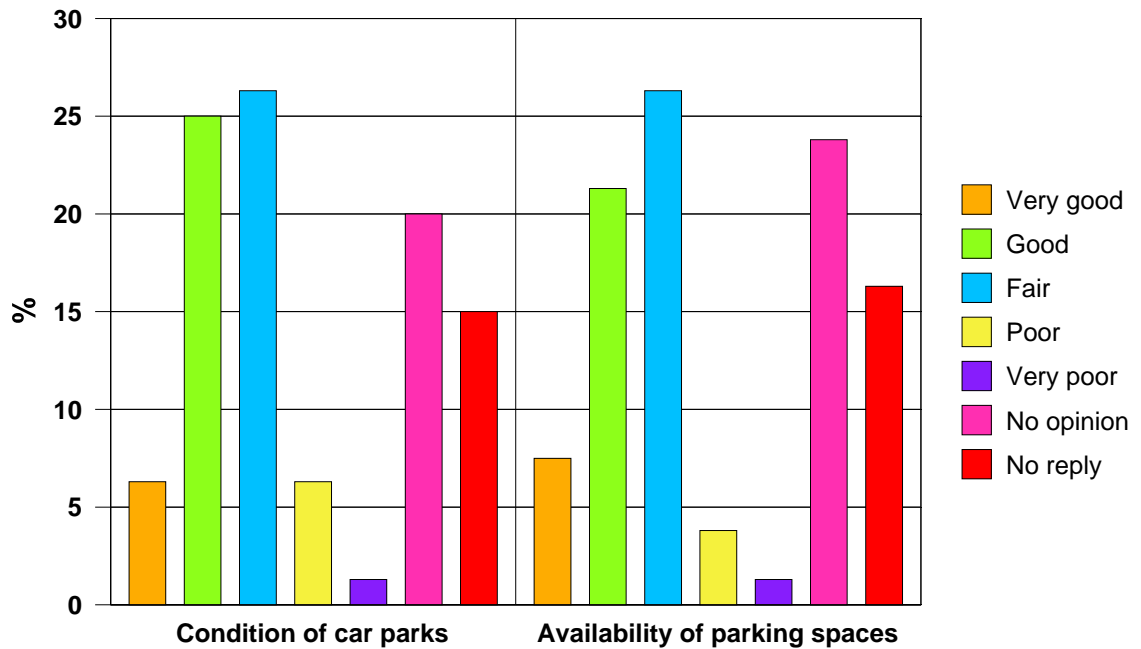


8.6.2 Car Park Facilities

Residents - rated the condition of the car parking areas as good or fair; likewise the availability of parking spaces:

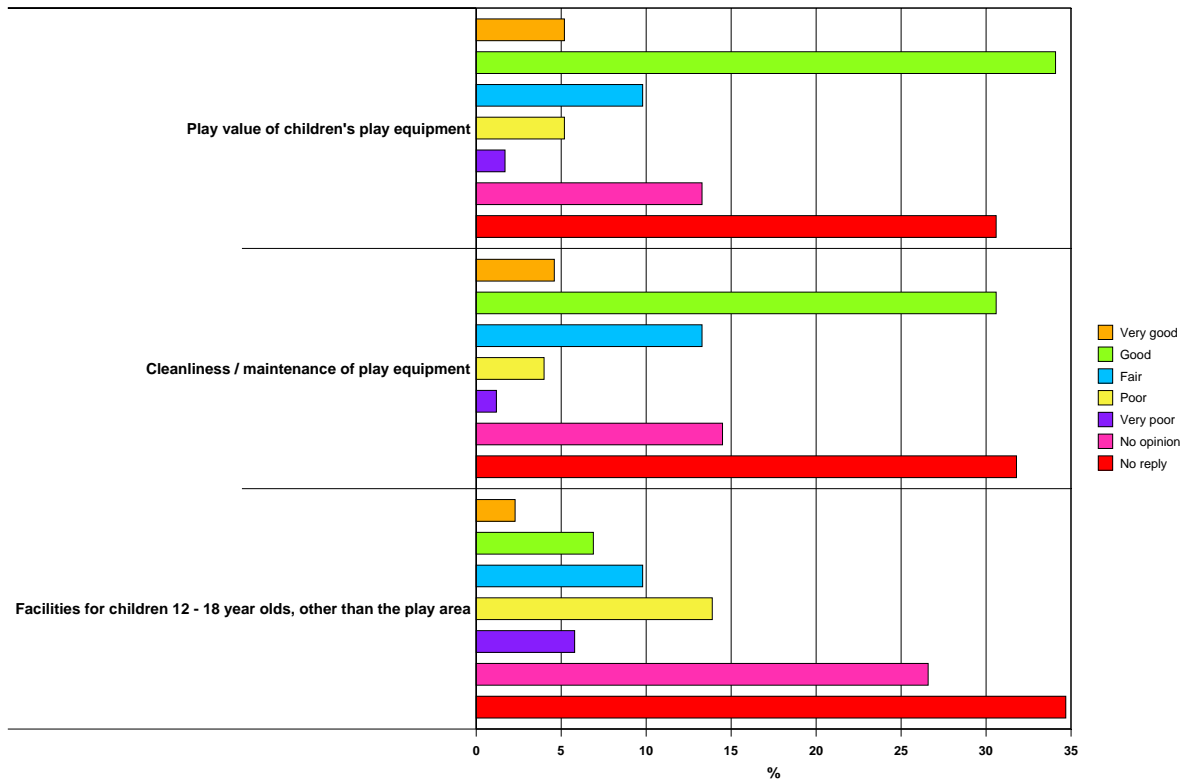


Users - had very similar opinions:

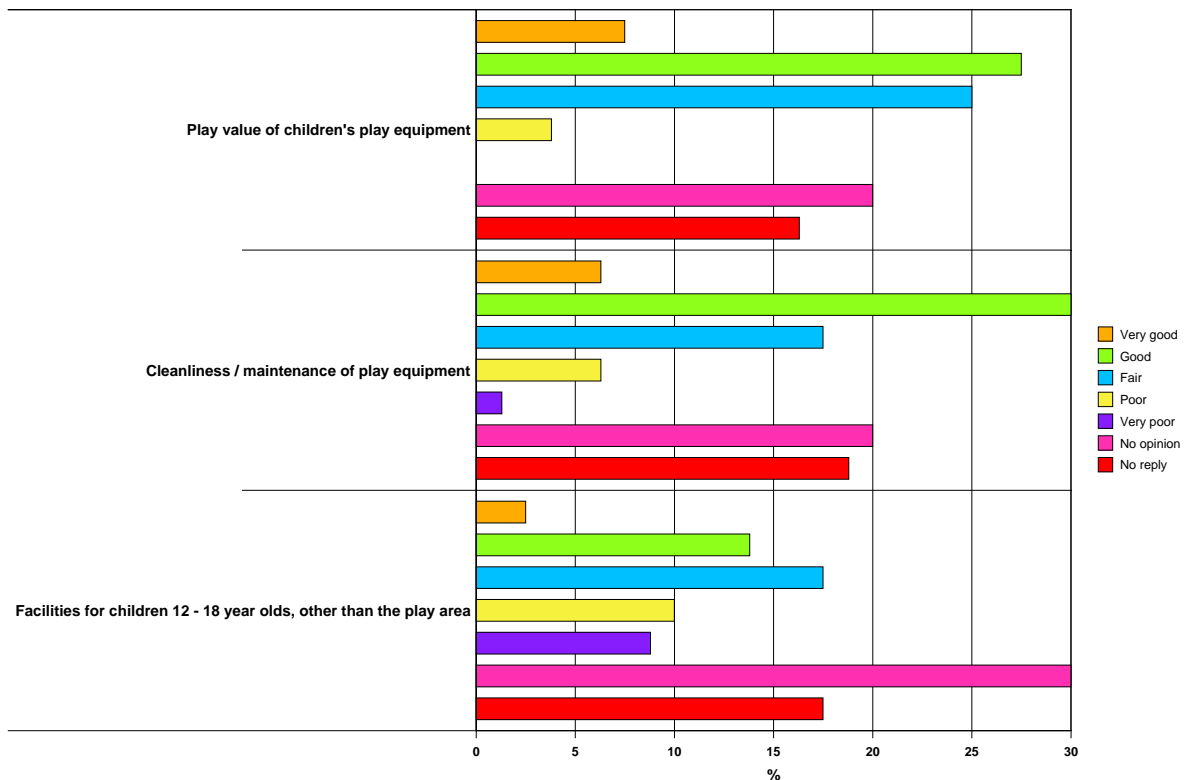


8.6.3 Range of Facilities

Residents - Although residents rated the range and availability of sports facilities as good in general, facilities for the 12-18s were (somewhat surprisingly) only considered to be poor or fair:

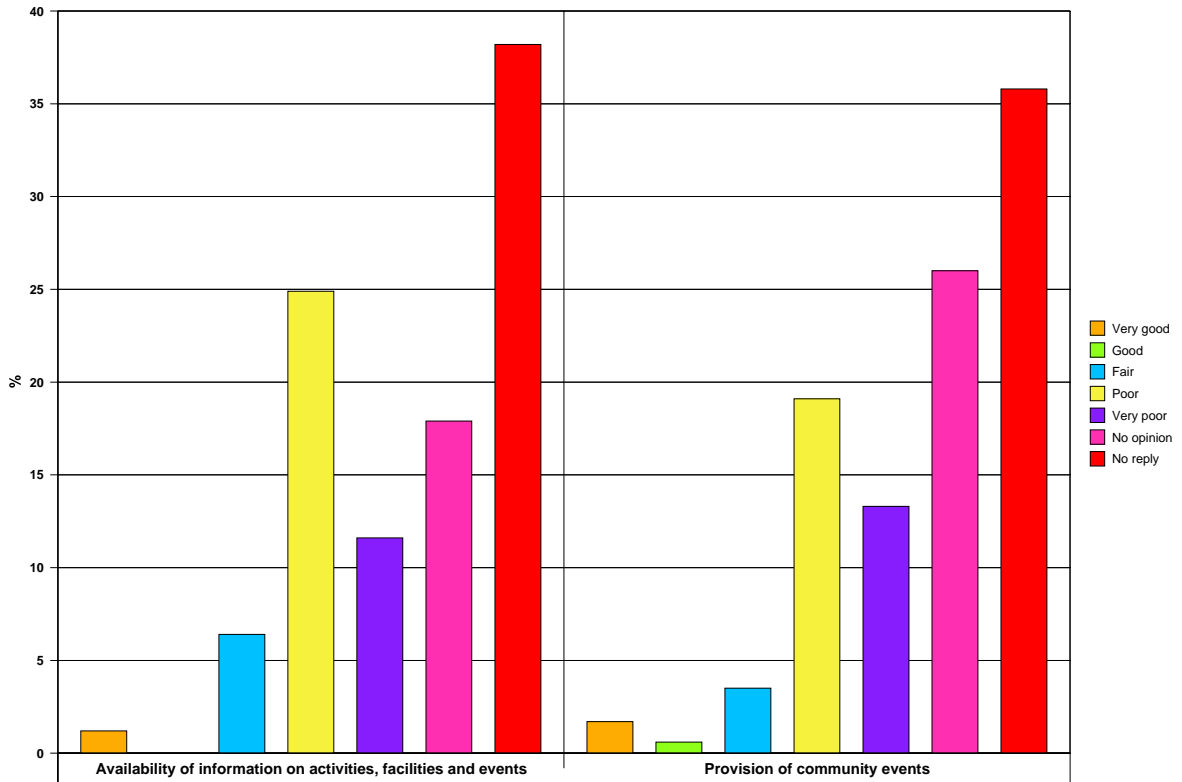


Users - Likewise, park users generally rated the range and availability of sports facilities as good, followed by fair. Unlike residents, users felt that the facilities for 12-18 year olds were fair or good, perhaps an indication that more users than residents visit the skate park:

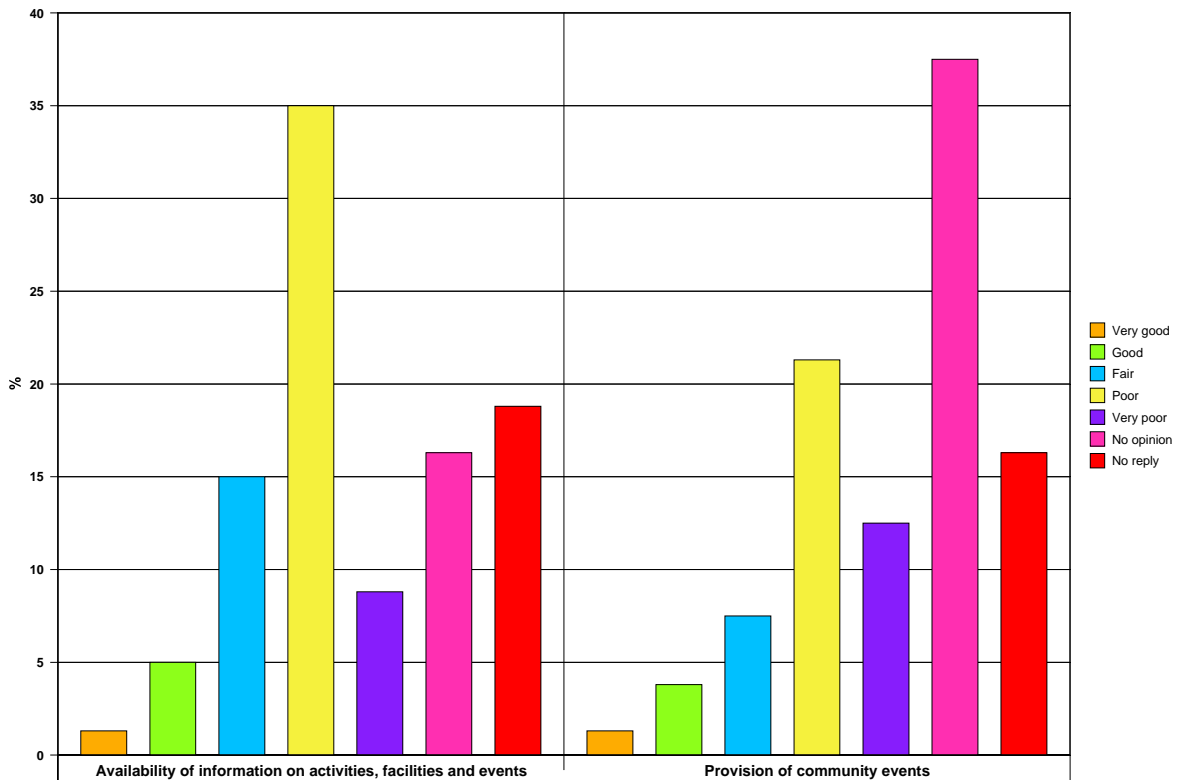


8.6.4 Community Events and Availability of Information

Residents - There are very few community events held in Churchill Gardens, hence the indifference and poor ratings amongst residents. The availability of information relating to the park has a few more fair votes and a few less very poor votes, but is still generally considered to be poor.



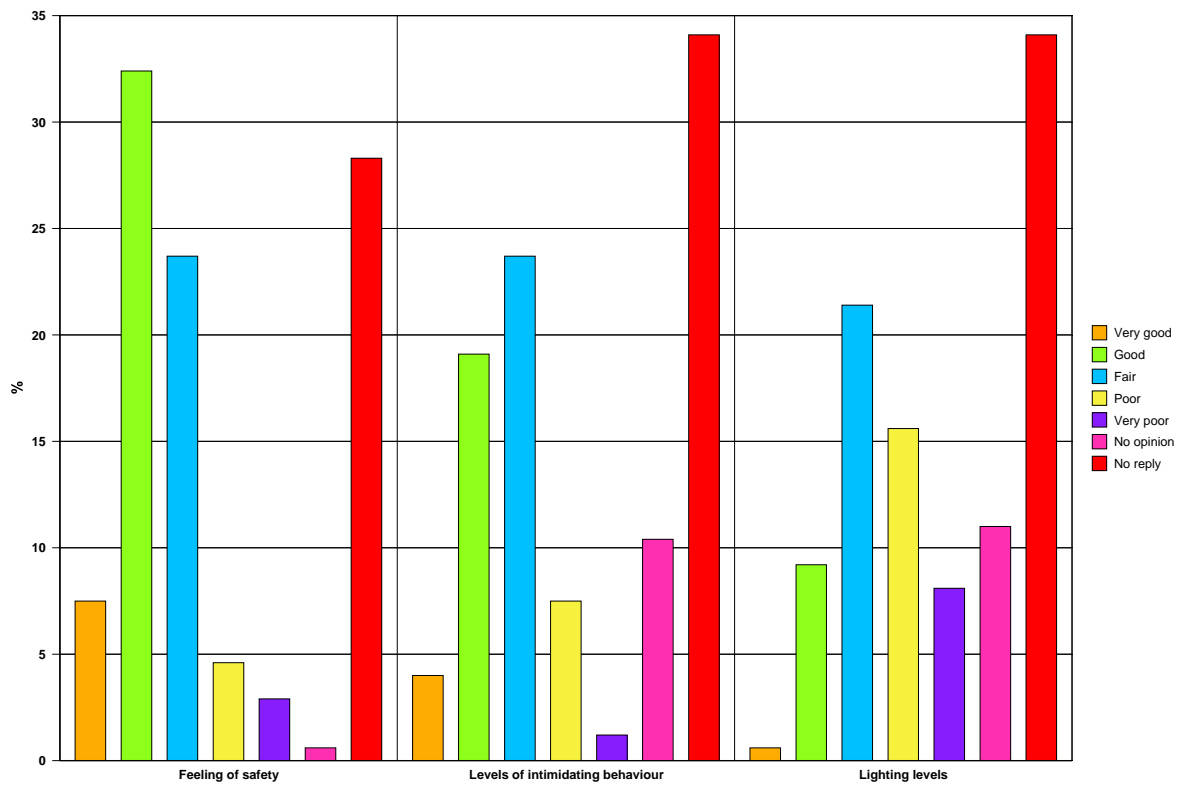
Users - have broadly similar views: the provision of community events is again classed as poor to very poor whilst the availability of information fares little better:



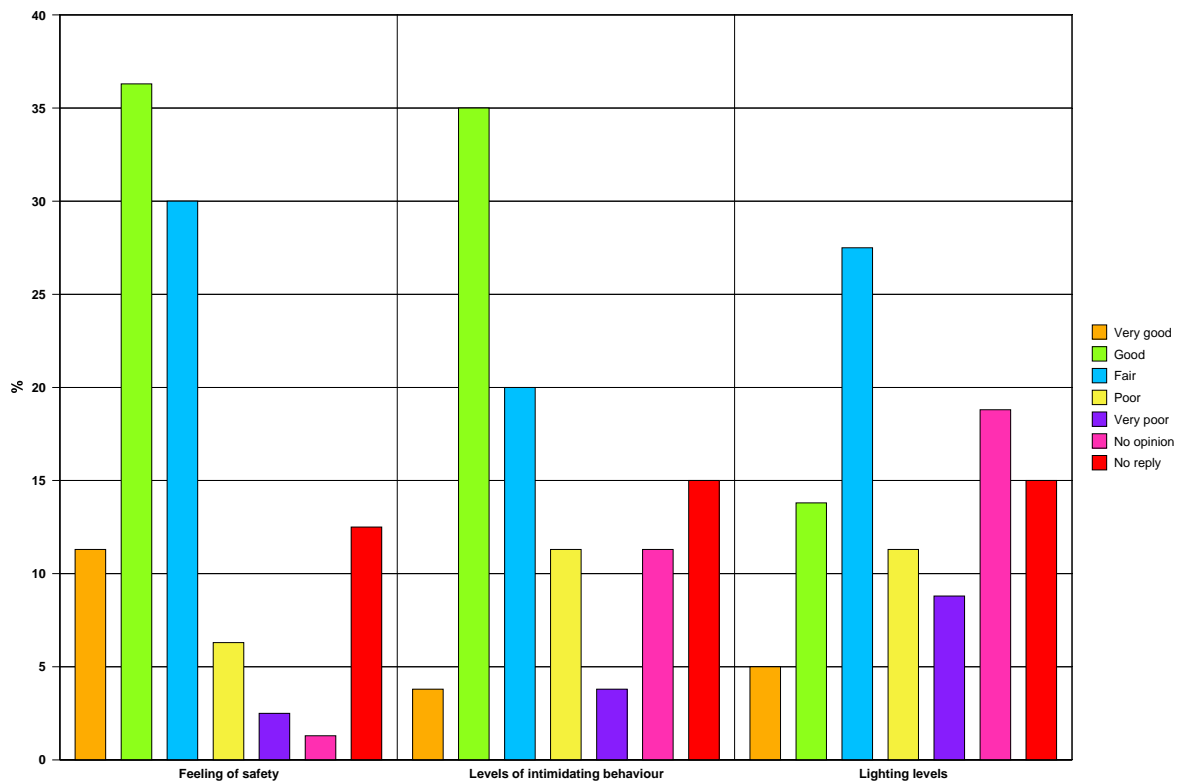
8.7 Park Security and Personal Safety

8.7.1 Personal Safety

Residents - Ratings here are encouraging, although somewhat surprisingly the lighting in the park was deemed fair by most respondents - this is a little contrary to most comments on the park:

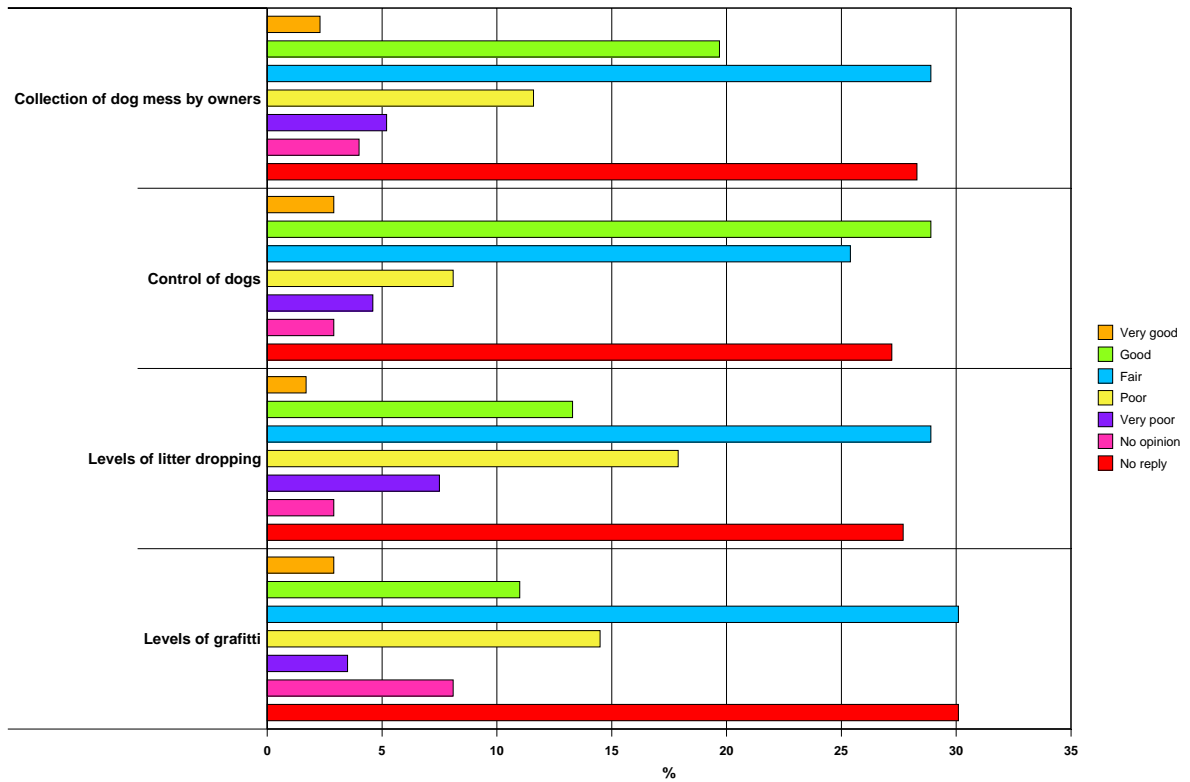


Users - also had a good overall opinion of the park.

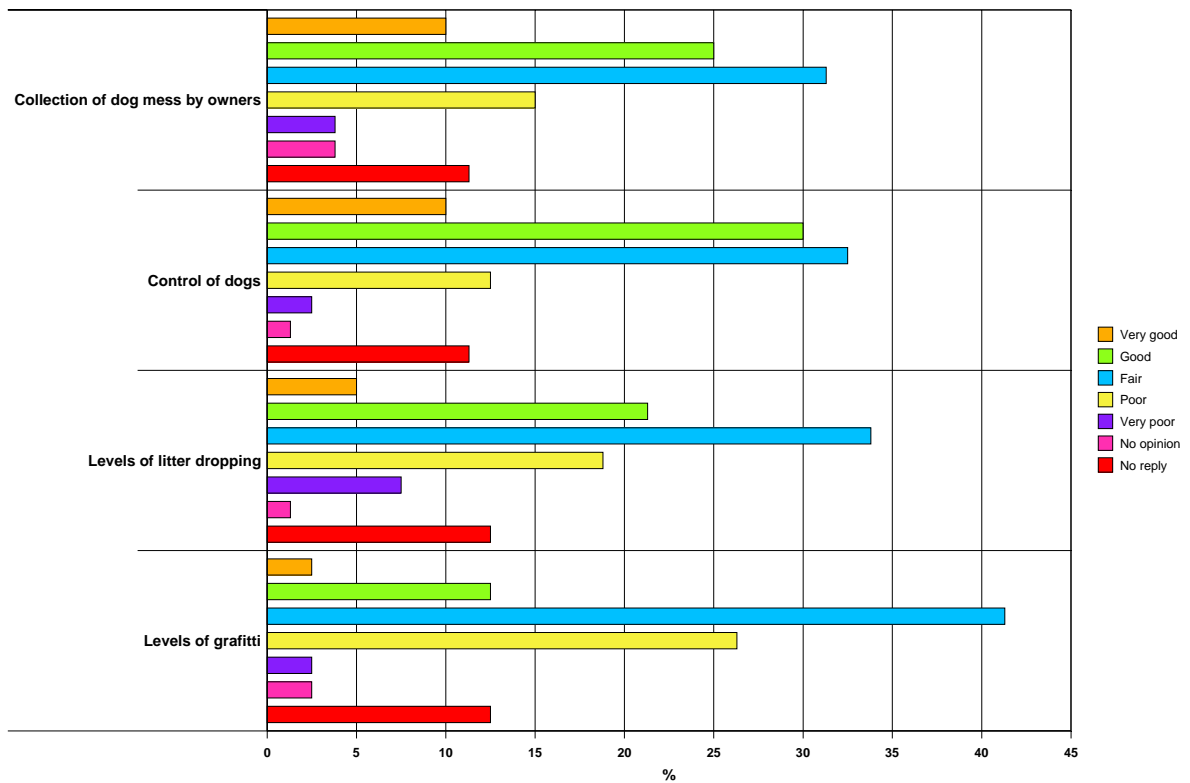


8.7.2 Conduct of Others

Residents - generally rated the collection of dog's mess and dog control by owners to be fair or good. Alongside this, the levels of graffiti and the levels of litter dropping were both considered to be fair:

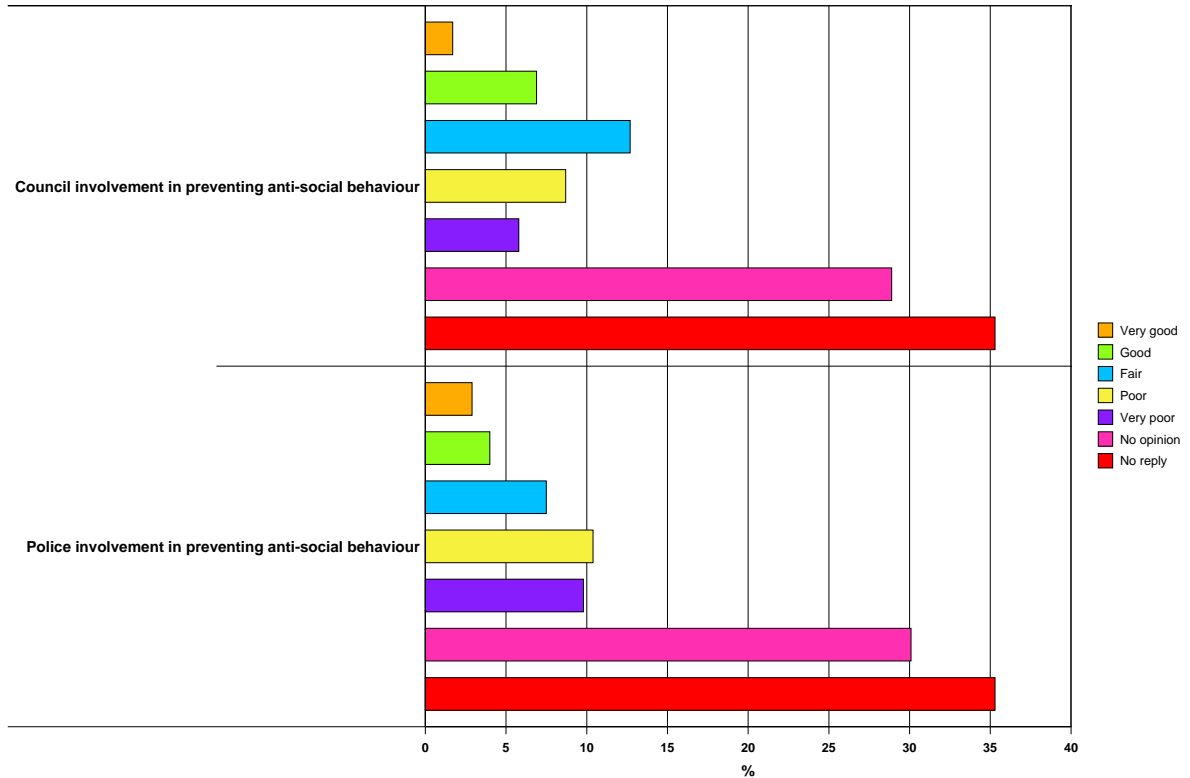


Users - showed very similar trends, suggesting that most people who visit Churchill Gardens use the site and the facilities responsibly and with good conscience:

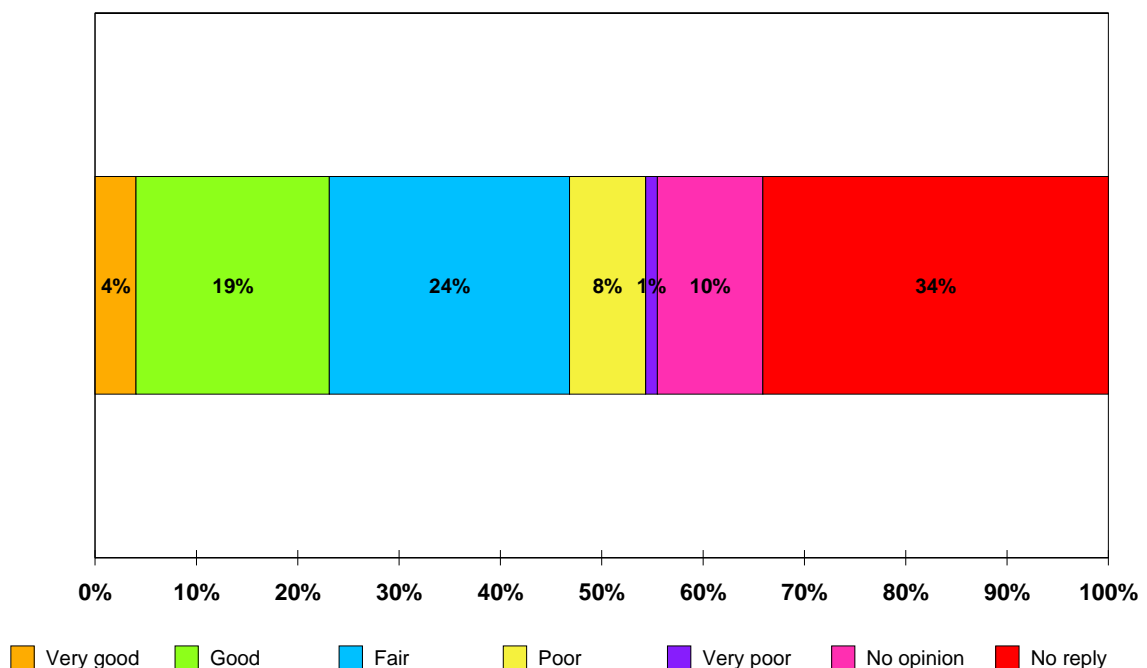


8.7.3 Council and Police Involvement in Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour

Residents - Those residents who expressed an opinion generally rate council involvement to be reasonable, with 22 fair ratings and a balance between good and poor ratings. Feelings towards the police are not as positive though, with more people feeling that their involvement is either poor or very poor. This certainly confirms that there is work for both organisations to do in the park, but suggests that the public expects a greater response by the police. It is also notable that so many residents do not have an opinion on the matter, and that even more chose not to reply to the question at all. This apathy possibly suggests that the residents are not expecting the problems in the park to be resolved:

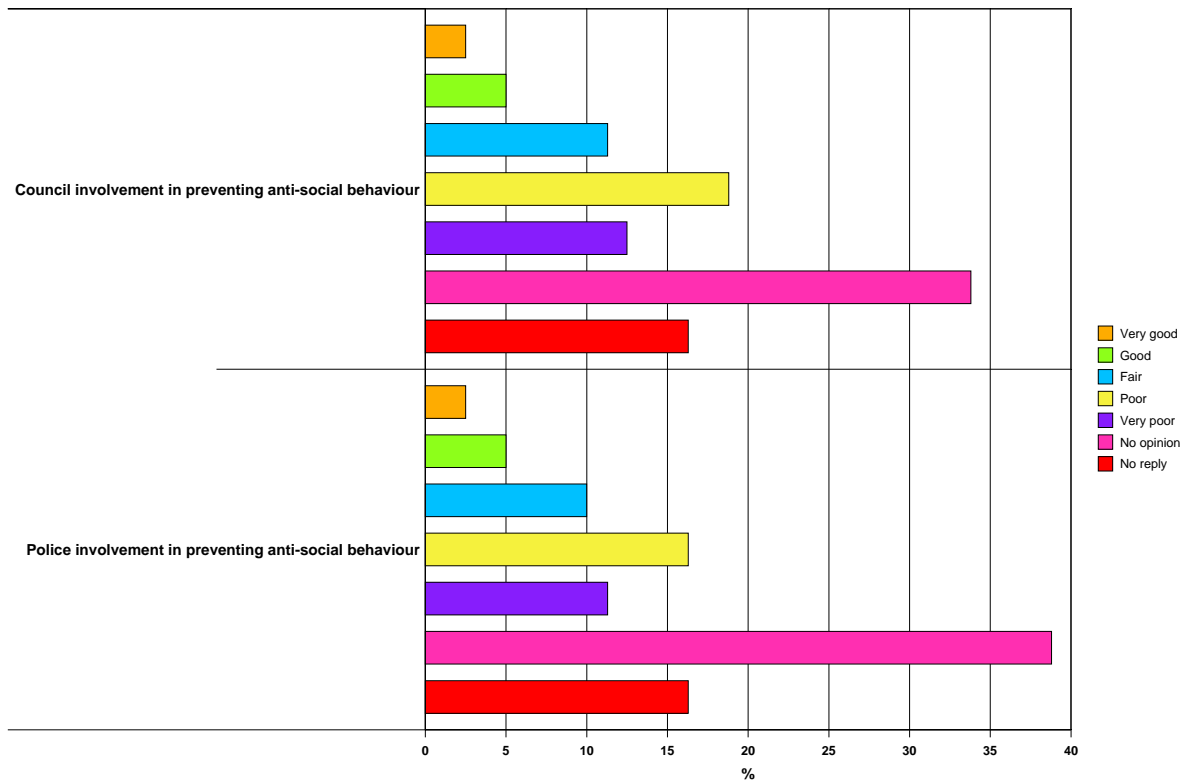


Levels of Intimidating Behaviour

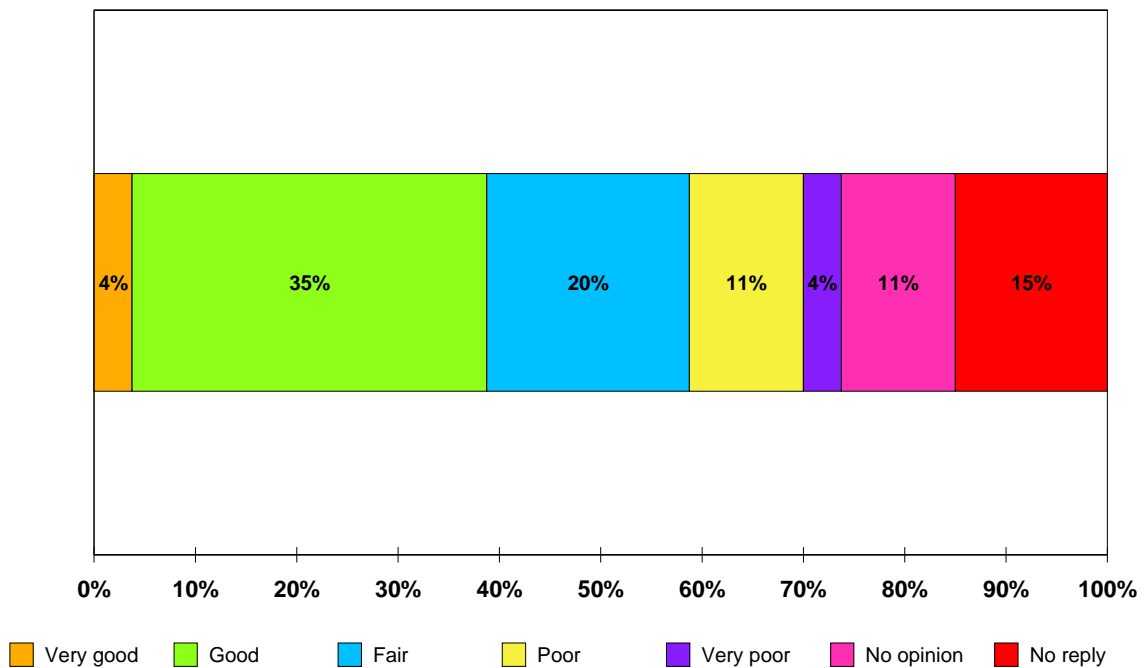


Users - Similarly, the majority of park users have no opinion. In another similarity, those with opinions still rate both council and police involvement as generally very poor.

The sheer number of residents and users without an opinion could reveal that the current initiatives to resolve the problems in Churchill Gardens may not be very well publicised:



Levels of Intimidating Behaviour



9 Communication

9.1 Consultation Generally

Following this report, one of the anticipated actions is the development of a 'Friends of Churchill Gardens' group. The intention is that this group will be made up of residents and people who use the park, with regular support from the Parks Section and a ward councillor. The group will then be charged with helping to achieve the goals set out in the Action Plan, as well as continuing discussions relevant to the park in the future.

In preparation of this, one of the questions in the surveys sent out asked for declarations of interest in becoming involved with such a group:

47% (or 82) of the residents surveyed said that they would like to be consulted more often about the way that Churchill Gardens is managed and maintained.

16% (28) said they would also like to be part of a prospective focus group, whilst 8% (14) would like to be actively involved in the maintenance and management of the site should the opportunity arise.

51% (or 41) of those visitors surveyed said that they would like to be consulted more often about the way that Churchill Gardens is managed and maintained.

29% (23) said they would like to be part of a prospective focus group; 16% (13) said they would like to become actively involved in the maintenance and management of the site.

9.2 Contact

It is important that people know how to contact Salisbury District Council in order to report any problems in the park. Furthermore, it is equally important that these reports are dealt with - and are seen to be dealt with - in a satisfactory manner:

Residents

- Only 36% of the residents surveyed confirmed that they would know where to voice their complaints and suggestions about Churchill Gardens. This figure is disappointing, highlighting a lack of effective information in the park. More than this, however, if there was a problem in the park that required urgent attention then the likelihood is that the person or persons reporting the matter would not know the best way of reporting this, so delaying any response.
- Only 1 in 10 residents have contacted Salisbury District Council about Churchill Gardens.
- In the last few years, complaints have been made reference to the following - poor standards of shrub maintenance, acts of vandalism, problems with travellers in the main car park, rubbish and debris in the waterway, sewage in the river, drinking and drug taking, mini motorbikes and the underpass flooding.
- Of the 17 complainants, only 7 felt that the matter had been dealt with to their satisfaction. This is a poor return, and there can be no excuses for shrub maintenance not to meet standards, for instance.¹² In mitigation, however, it should be noted that is not always appropriate or possible for Parks (or even Salisbury District Council) to take unilateral action; moving travellers on involves coordinated work with other sections of the council, the courts and the police, for example. Additionally, some of the complaints that had been received are not dealt with by Parks or SDC at all - flooding in the subways falls under the remit of Wiltshire County Council, for example, whilst sewage in the river should be reported to the Environment Agency rather than to Salisbury District Council. Thereby, the lack of a visible response from Parks is sometimes because of other factors, not because the matter is being left.

¹² To qualify this, the standards referred to here are those specified in the maintenance contracts, not personal preferences.

Users

- Park users were split between the 44% who would know where to voice their complaints or suggestions about Churchill Gardens, and the 48% who wouldn't know. Although this is more encouraging than the equivalent figures for residents, looking at the two sets of results together clearly shows that this is an area that needs to be improved upon. Hopefully, this matter can be addressed quickly and simply with information boards in the park and better promotion.
- Only a small proportion of users - just 15% - have had to contact the council about matters relating to Churchill Gardens.
- Somewhat surprisingly, the matters reported by park users did not duplicate any of those reported by residents, instead, the following issues were raised - fallen branches, concerns about the pedestrian crossing on Southampton Road, the lack of signage in the park and the camber and disrepair of the paths.
- Pleasingly, 9 out of 12 park users who had reported matters felt that their complaints had been dealt with effectively and satisfactorily. This is a much better return than that for residents, which is encouraging.
- These results have again been skewed, however, with some reports made to Parks in error - concerns relating to Southampton Road should be made to the Highways Agency, for instance. This is a further indication of the need to have more information (including contact details and guidance) plainly available in the park.

9.3 Value for Money

Churchill Gardens costs approximately 3.5p per week per household in the city (based on actual expenditure in 2007/08 and a 15,000 household city tax base).

Further to this, 61% of the local residents questioned believe that Churchill Gardens represents good value for money; only 12% believe the opposite.

The figures for visitors to the park are 61% and 24% (a marked increase) respectively.

9.4 Non-Users

Communication with people who do not frequent the parks in Salisbury is traditionally passive - articles publicising events in the park feature in the Citizen newspaper, information is available on the council website and, on occasion, flyers are sent out within the district.

Assuming that some of the suggestions put forward during consultation are adopted, the likelihood is that a number of new users will be attracted to the park. It is also apparent that tackling and resolving instances of anti-social behaviour and creating a safer environment will entice more users.

Alongside this, there is evidence nationally that promoting community involvement in parks creates a greater and more tangible sense of interest, pride and responsibility, in turn encouraging more visitors. As such, setting up a Friends group should generate greater publicity for the park.

10 Other Consultations

This section deals with the opinions and thoughts of those groups and individuals consulted in addition to the public.

10.1 Councillors

The Councillors' comments can be summarised as follows:

- The area surrounding the toilet block is in need of attention - the shrub beds here are all but redundant, whilst the paving is untidy, juts out at different heights and looks unsightly. The lack of lighting in the park is also a significant problem in this area in particular.
- The shelter next to the playground is also in need of a tidy up, with graffiti a frequent eyesore.

10.2 Salisbury District Council officers

10.2.1 Parks Section

Consultation took place with the following members of staff: Reg Williams, Andy Cole, Mike Moore and Debbie Cox:

- The general opinion of the site is that it is reasonably well conceived in terms of layout, but that there is scope for making better use of some of the space (the site is of a good size, and its situation away from the city centre and away from too many houses means that the park lends itself to facilities that perhaps cannot be considered in other parks in the city area).
- There is a feeling that the grass in certain areas of the site could be left to grow a little longer to encourage further wildlife to the area. These areas could then be sown with wildflowers to create drifts for the future.
- The unanimous feeling is that the hedges, shrubs and trees need investment; there are a number of trees that would benefit from work or being removed, whilst the shrub beds are largely dated and/or at the end of their natural lifespans.
- There is scope for planting new trees around the perimeter of the field, and a move towards more diverse, specimen trees could create a vivid and interesting landscape for the future.
- In combination, the space available and the stream running through the park could nurture areas of further marginal wetland.
- The toilet block would benefit from total refurbishment, not only in terms of the building itself, but also in how the toilets are managed (it could be good practice to lock the toilets at night, for instance). They are currently a constant source of problems (though please see note 2.5, page 12 of this report)
- The hard landscape area / patio area around the public conveniences and leading to the skatepark is extremely dated and in poor condition. The area could be so much more attractive with investment.
- The main playarea is in reasonable condition and gets extremely busy at weekends especially. It should be surveyed to assess if it can be extended, improved etc
- Anti social behaviour is relatively light at this site, however some form of mobile out of hours service should be considered to ensure this remains the case
- The main car park needs to be improved by the Forward Planning department to prevent access by travellers (a regular problem), the car park signage is also tatty (please see note 2.5, page 12 of this report)
- The lack of lighting in the park is a significant issue and should be subject to a full report, ideally in conjunction with the local police and Wiltshire County Council.
- Signage to and in the park is very poor. Again, a full report with Wiltshire County Council would be appropriate.
- Fencing is currently repaired (and replaced) when necessary, however the fencing itself is old. Alternative styles need to be considered, as well as the option of using fuller hedging in place of some of the fences altogether.
- There is certainly scope for further benches and tables in the park, if only to replace some of the existing benches.

- Graffiti on the toilet block and on the shelter is a problem and more time and money is spent on cleaning this up than anybody would like, especially when this money could be put to other (better) uses. Graffiti on the boards at the skate park is part of the culture and is something that can be developed, perhaps with the introduction of a graffiti wall to try to reduce the instances of tagging on the ramps themselves.
- The street hockey area needs reviewing as it simply isn't used enough and alternative uses should be considered. The main area however is hugely used and a survey should be carried out to ascertain if the ramps etc are still suitable etc.
- Events at Churchill Gardens have decreased over the years. This is something of a shame, since the park's situation and (unique) facilities lend it to more informal events like runs and fitness events. The scope for more events tied to the skate park is massive as well, and needs to be considered.
- The bank slide is currently somewhat isolated - this area could be developed into a further play area, or could become part of a Trim Trail as it is the only one of its type in the city.

10.2.2 Sports Development

Louise Cary:

- The Footsteps in the Park scheme is great in theory, but may need to be refreshed and re-advertised.
- Churchill Gardens could be used by employers in Salisbury as a site for structured fitness regimes.
- There is scope for regular skate and BMX coaching sessions for beginners, most logically in the school holidays. This is already being worked on with Nick Thrower from Wiltshire County Council.
- The skate park could benefit from competitions and events - although there were events to mark the opening of the park and a few soon thereafter, regular (perhaps annual) events could create a name and a brand, attracting more visitors to Salisbury. Such visitors may also come from further afield.
- The site could encourage and support leftfield sports, including free running, orienteering, Frisbee and volleyball. There is also enough space in the park to accommodate a climbing wall.
- Support may be available from the following organisations - WAYS, the Wiltshire Alternative Youth Sports group (www.northwilts-communityweb.com/site/Wiltshire-Alternative-Youth-Sports/index.htm) and SPLASH, a charity that organises activities and events for 10 to 16 year olds (www.splash-wiltshire.org.uk/mainstream/home.asp)
- If the site had a permanent café, this could also be used for the hire of sports equipment on a daily or hourly basis as appropriate.
- The paths in the park are good for walking, running and cycling, but properly marked cycle lanes could improve them further as could resurfacing

10.2.3 Environmental Services (grounds maintenance contractors)

The staff member interviewed were Graham Dewey, the Senior Foreman, and Phil Down, Environmental Services Officer:

Graham Dewey:

- Vehicle access to the site is problematic - to gain access to the paved area adjacent to the toilets (and thereby to the rest of the park), you have to drive over grassed areas. This causes damage to the turf, and could be alleviated by a hardstanding that allows grass to grow through.
- Some of the shrub beds need replanting and updating
- The skate park is all too often affected by litter, graffiti and vandalism. There is also a separate issue of the groups and individuals using the park bringing in girders, palettes and other items to use for stunts and tricks - it is unclear as to who should be removing these items and who would be responsible if someone injured themselves on or using them. This should be clarified.
- The corner where the pathway follows Churchill Way (from Southampton Road) is difficult for vehicles to negotiate – this results in driving across the grass. Ideally, this corner could be softer and larger.

Phil Down:

- The toilet facilities in the park are in need of refurbishment - they look outdated and worn, especially given their situation next to the car park of a high profile park on the way into Salisbury. Despite this, they are kept reasonably clean considering the high amount of usage they get.
- Although the toilets are cleaned frequently and to a high standard, the age of the facilities means that they never appear quite as clean as they are.
- Any problems in or around the toilets tend to occur at the weekends, or in the evenings during the summer months. The most commonly reported problem is vandalism, although historically there have been instances of people found drunk in the toilets as well as reports of inappropriate behaviour from men hanging around the area. To a certain extent, these problems could be resolved if the toilets were locked at night.

10.2.4 Parking

Pete Hutton, Market Superintendent, Forward Planning & Transportation

- The main car park is relatively large, with 94 spaces for cars and 2 bays for motorbikes.
- The car park is cheaper than other Pay & Display car parks in Salisbury, partly because it is on the outskirts of the city centre and partly because it is often used by students and visitors attending Salisbury College.
- Perhaps because of the cheaper fees, the car park is well used, and lots of people park here before walking into town. Across the period 1 December 2005 to 30 November 2006, over 18,500 tickets were taken for this car park, generating some £26,000 in revenue.¹³
- The small car park is ill-conceived in terms of design and (arguably) situation, however it offers free parking and easy access to the play area. Notably, the car park would have already been closed had it ever become a problem rather than a quirk.
- Travellers can be a problem and have parked in the main car park in the past. A height barrier would restrict such access, but would also prevent legitimate customers with caravans and motor homes using the car park. Accordingly, an appropriate method of restricting access may need further consideration. (It is also likely that restricting access here could see travellers parking in one of the central car parks - there is an argument that they are more out of the way in Churchill Gardens.)
- Flooding can be a problem.
- Leaf clearance is sometimes an issue.

10.2.5 Community Safety Partnership and Anti-Social Behaviour Reduction

Kelly Bagley:

- There are few issues directly linked to Churchill Gardens at the present time, although the lack of lighting in the park is a concern and could conceivably cause other problems in the future. Specifically, the area surrounding the skate park, the toilet block and the main car park could feel intimidating in the dark; given the numbers of children who play in the park and this should be addressed as a preventative measure. Further to this, it would also be better if the toilets were locked at night - this should help to prevent vandalism and other incidents.
- This apart, the park is generally considered to be quiet and safe, especially when compared to Victoria Park and Queen Elizabeth Gardens - this difference likely reflects the park's situation on the outskirts of the city centre as well as the (relative) lack of housing close by.

¹³ Figures courtesy of Mike Noke, Parking Supervisor

10.2.6 Repairs Service

The staff member interviewed was Alan Coombs.

- Repairs are reported by the Parks section staff and are carried out in line with the relevant service contract.
- Typically, the repair and maintenance undertaken work in Churchill Gardens is a relatively small element of the whole service.
- Work is prioritised according to severity and urgency, with health and safety issues given the highest weighting.
- Most repairs are due to vandalism.
- Enforcement officers or a park ranger role could help to reduce vandalism.
- Ideally, the toilet block and the area surrounding it should be revamped.

10.2.7 Joint Transportation Team

Paul Shaddock:

- The pathways in Churchill Gardens are in no more than a reasonable condition for walkers and cyclists alike.

10.3 Shop Mobility

Marion Barton commented as follows:

- Churchill Gardens has a good network of paths, all of which are tarmac and most of which are in a reasonable condition.
- The area adjacent to the toilets is much more problematic, having a number of uneven paving slabs and a variety of less successful designs and textures.

10.4 Wiltshire County Council Officers

Graham Axtell, Area Highway Engineer, provided the following remarks on Churchill Way South between College Roundabout and New Bridge Roundabout:

- The entrance into the circular car park could be improved - the turn in (or out) is sudden and unexpected, particularly given that it comes off a road with a 40mph speed limit. That the turn is so abrupt also accentuates how narrow the entrance is (it would be difficult to accommodate a car turning in at the same time as a car turning out).
- All of the paths within the gardens are maintained by Salisbury District Council.

The Highways Agency (www.highways.gov.uk) is responsible for Southampton Road. To date, they have not submitted any comments for inclusion in this report.

10.5 Salisbury Police

Zoë Rattue & Lorraine Rice. Their comments can be surmised as follows:

- The main concern for the police in Churchill Gardens is the lack of lighting and the direct impact that this has - problems are much more likely after dark.
- Either Zoë or Lorraine will walk through the park at least once a week. Other than these patrols, attendance is based on call outs.
- As at November 2007, the police have received 2 calls in the previous two months. Both calls were emergency calls (dialling 999) and both calls were attended.
- The consumption of alcohol is prohibited in Churchill Gardens, so it would be appropriate that there are signs to confirm this.

10.6 Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Nicky Warden, Salisbury Wildlife Officer, offered the following general comments:

- There is tremendous scope for wildlife improvements within Churchill Gardens, with three or four areas in the park offering significant opportunities for creating and developing new habitats.
- The wildlife that lives along the river already benefits from having some borders of longer grass to distinguish the banks. This softens the transition from the short mown grassland to the hedgerows, creating further diversity of habitat and increasing the nectar sources for insects; if this became the adopted practice along all of the banks, these benefits would be multiplied. A metre strip is recommended as a minimum buffer zone.
- The grass on the slope is presently cut all the way up to the slide; if this grass was left to grow a little longer, then the slope could be seeded with wildflowers - this would add great diversity to the site and could then be mown less often, so reducing maintenance costs and time.
- Given the number and the variety of trees in the park it would be easy to put up some bird boxes in the more mature trees, creating nesting sites for birds during the breeding season.
- The area in the north-east of the park perhaps has the greatest potential for benefiting wildlife - it is already a more natural setting and has been improved in numerous ways by work along the waterway. As well as this, the area is less used than the main part of Churchill Gardens.
- Other areas that could be developed with wildlife in mind are the two grass plains and the glade to the south of the waterway between the two bridges.

Nicky also contributed the following report:

“Wildlife Survey - Churchill Gardens Grid Reference SU149293

The site was visited on three occasions in October 2007

Site Description and habitats

Churchill Gardens is an urban park bordered to the south and east by the River Avon and to the north and west by the Southampton Road and Churchill Way South. The River Avon is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and candidate for Special Area for Conservation.

The majority of the site consists of frequently mown amenity grassland. The sward consists of grasses and a variety of low growing and rosette forming herbs. Please see Appendix [4] for a list of species.

Recommendation - Leaving some areas uncut (or mowing less frequently) would be of benefit to wildlife and it may also be possible to introduce native wildflowers into the uncut areas providing more diversity for wildlife and an attraction for visitors to the park.

There are many trees and shrubs present, the majority of which are exotics. Please see Appendix [4] for a list of species.

Recommendation - It would be possible to plant further trees in some of the more open areas creating a small "woodland" area. Native species are recommended since they will support more of our native fauna. This will provide further habitat and food sources for birds and insects. Native woodland wildflowers could be introduced providing further diversity for wildlife and an attraction for visitors to the park. Dead wood should be left on the site rather than cleared away wherever possible.

Trees along the river are predominantly Willow and Poplar.

Recommendation - these trees could be pollarded which would extend their natural life.

The riverbank supports a variety of marginal plants. Please see Appendix [4] for a list of species. The riverbanks are a very good habitat for a number of species including small mammals and insects.

Recommendation - The area between the riverbank and path is currently frequently mown. Leaving the grass uncut along the bank would extend the habitat for the benefit of these species.

A hedge runs along small parts of the boundary with Southampton Road and Churchill Way South. This consists of native shrubs such as field maple, beech and hawthorn. It was planted around three years ago by volunteers and has established well. This hedge will provide useful cover and a food source for many small birds. It has been cut with machinery on all sides to a height of around 5 foot. **Recommendation** - If funds permitted it would be beneficial to extend the hedge to run the length of the park alongside the roads, providing a barrier to noise and pollution for visitors and extending the habitat for birds. Volunteers could undertake the planting of the hedge. If allowed to grow without being cut for season the existing hedge could be laid in a traditional style by volunteers. This will ensure a thicker, healthier hedge and a better habitat for wildlife.

A stream flows from the main river into the park in the Southwest corner of the site. It flows for about 20 metres before being culverted underneath Churchill Way. It then runs along the northern edge of Churchill Way before again being culverted and re-entering the site. It flows through the gardens and rejoins the river at the Northeast corner of the site. Near to where the stream re-enters the river some coir rolls have been introduced to the artificial banks allowing marginal vegetation such as common reed, yellow iris, reed sweet grass and water mint to grow. The rest of this stream is almost devoid of vegetation.

Recommendation - If funds allow, it would be of benefit to extend the coir rolls along as much of the artificial banks as possible.

10.7 South Wiltshire Agenda 21

Presently, the management and maintenance of all of the parks and open spaces should be carried out with more regard for the differing weather conditions of each season. In the long term, it is just as important that management and maintenance practices adapt and evolve to encompass the broader and underlying climate changes that are taking place.

(As an example of this, the decision could be taken that grass is left longer and cut less frequently in the dryer summer months. This change could then become part of a greater scheme where areas of short mown grass are balanced by areas of longer, meadow grasses, which should prove more suitable in the hotter, dryer summers that are predicted. In this way, an immediate change becomes part of a widespread shift, with more emphasis placed on future sustainability.)

The role parks can play in improving biodiversity - creating and sustaining a variety of habitats - is crucial. Furthermore, although parks inherently lend themselves to nurturing certain types of habitat, much more work could be done to establish other (rarer) environments. Specifically, not enough parks support wildflower meadows or wetlands. In particular, encouraging native wildflowers that are rich in pollen would attract more insects to the area, such insects are found at the bottom of numerous food chains, so, in turn, this would attract other wildlife to the park, especially a greater number of birds. Agreeably, there are areas in Churchill Gardens that could be tailored to both of these habitats.

The transition from one habitat to another is also paramount to improving biodiversity, and even little changes can make a big difference - not mowing up to the very edges of river banks, for instance, creates a transitional habitat of longer grass and native plants - this then allows wildlife to breed and move more readily. Similarly, setting aside other areas of the park for unkempt grass would be hugely beneficial to wildlife.

Within any district, it is inevitable that some of the parks or open spaces will be more suitable than others for encouraging wildlife. In Salisbury, Churchill Gardens and Hudson's Field are perhaps more suited to and showcase greater potential than Victoria Park and Queen Elizabeth Gardens in terms of sustaining different habitats. On a more micro scale (within individual parks), small areas managed with wildlife in mind can bring about important benefits - this can be achieved with thoughtful design and foresight.

Lastly, mobile park rangers (perhaps on bicycles) could be introduced to provide an official presence outside of office hours. This could ease littering and dog fouling, problems which can be associated with wildlife areas (and which could diminish the appeal of the area). Alongside this, rangers could also tackle other instances of anti-social behaviour.

10.8 The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency was set up to look after the environment and to safeguard the future and sustainability of our green spaces. With regard to Churchill Gardens, their interest extends to the park itself, as well as taking a foremost role in the maintenance of the River Avon. For more information about the Environment Agency, please visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

For the purpose of consultation, we spoke to the following individuals:

Allan Frake: Technical Specialist (Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity)

Len Simms: Technical Specialist (Asset System Management)

Emma Gilson: Environment Officer

The following points came out of these discussions:

- The channel created by the sluice gate in the south-east corner of the park is very important as this water eventually flows through to the sewage works - this means that both the water quality and the integrity of the flow need to be carefully monitored and maintained at this point.
- The Environment Agency is looking to introduce a newer, better gauge around New Bridge - this should help measure flood risks and monitor flow more accurately.
- Where the Avon flows alongside Churchill Gardens, the water quality is very good, and is classed as RE1 (this is the highest rating in the Environment Agency's River Ecosystem classifications).
- In recent times (back to 1 January 2006), there have only been two confirmed incidents relating to water quality in this area. Both of these incidents occurred during 2006, and both were the result of a blockage in the foul sewer owned by Wessex Water - this caused an overflow from a culvert into the river in the north east of the park, adjacent to Southampton Road. In both instances, Wessex Water undertook cleaning work, preventing any long term damage.
- The Environment Agency would advocate any efforts with a view to creating new habitats. Further to this, they have worked with the Living River project, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and Salisbury District Council in the past, and they would be happy to provide expert advice and assistance with any actions that are adopted.
- The uncertainty over who owns and is responsible for the mesh fence in the south-east corner of the site has not yet been resolved. Given the current disrepair of this fence, this is an issue that Parks will determine with a view to allocating future maintenance work.

10.9 Salisbury College

Steve Williams, Property Management:

- Churchill Gardens is well used by students and staff alike and offers pleasant views from the college buildings. Specifically, the park is a popular route for people walking to the college, provides an attractive and spacious environment for people to relax in, has benches close to the college for people to eat their lunch at and lends itself well to exercise, particularly walking and running. The skate park is also used by students throughout the day. For these reasons, further seating and a picnic area close to Southampton Road would be ideal.
- The college also has ambitions to introduce a sports-based course in the next few years, so the prospect of a sports pitch being marked up again would be welcomed. (There is also the possibility that the college will be setting up a football team, with Churchill Gardens a logical site for matches to be played at.)
- Given the number and variety of the courses offered at the college, there is significant potential for links between students at the college and Churchill Gardens. Examples of this could include photography students and/or art students exhibiting a visual record of the park, as well as events management students gaining work experience by helping organise events in the park. Beyond this, students could equally become involved in voluntary work organised by the likes of the Living River project or the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

- These suggestions notwithstanding, the lighting in the park is very poor and is something that could really be improved - any developments here would certainly increase feelings of safety in the park. Alongside this, the college is open into the evenings throughout the week, so lighting around the skate park and around the paths would probably see students and staff use the park for exercise later into the night. If this happens, further CCTV cameras could also be useful.

10.10 The Living River Project

The Living River project was set up to increase awareness and appreciation of the River Avon and its tributaries. It focuses on the wildlife living along the river and on working with local communities to enhance and promote the river. The project was set up to run for four years from 2006 to 2010. For more information (and contact details), please visit www.livingriver.org.uk.

The improvements made to the waterway in the north-east corner of Churchill Gardens are representative of the sort of practical work that the project undertakes.

Martin Gilchrist is a member of the project team:

- It is important to balance the maintenance of the park with developing and nurturing wildlife where appropriate. Although this is not always easy, the long term benefits can be profound and should benefit the park in the future.

10.11 The skate park

We spoke to Adrian Huxford, who is involved with the cabin located on site. Adrian commented as follows:

- There has not been any great change in how the skate park is used - the area is very popular with skaters and BMXers, but the sports court is rarely used - a half-court with one basketball net would almost certainly be sufficient. Further to this, it would be fair to estimate that some 8 out of every 10 users who come down to the skate park do so to skate or to ride, the remainder are made up of people rollerblading and people simply coming down to watch or socialise. The skate park is at its busiest during the summer months and during any school holidays, when it can attract between 50 and 150 visitors each day - it is more than likely that these visitors will stay for as long as they can, as well. Indeed, it is only in wet weather (when the ramps are dangerous) and when it gets dark that the park is really quiet.
- Despite the refurbishment work in 2004, the facility itself is now somewhat dated - even over location, the key to any skate park is the maintenance and replacement of the ramps, ledges, steps and the like. In part, this tiredness reflects the age of the park - when the park first opened it was new and the materials and ideas used were popular at the time. To some, however, there is the feeling that the council do not take skate boarding seriously, a feeling borne out by the lack of signage relevant to the park and by the general lack of publicity for the facility. This echoes the general feeling that although the council is quick to resolve any problems at the park, there is no thought or provision given to improving the park.
- Specific improvements for the skate park could include the following:
 - Creating new ramps and bowls in concrete
 - The installation of some lighting
 - Signage to the park (tied in with better publicity generally)
 - Paths leading to the area
 - More events
 - More benches and bins around the area
 - A roof, even if it just to cover some of the park

Alongside this (and as already mentioned earlier in this document), Parks undertook specific consultation with people using the skate park in October 2007. At this point, it is worth noting that the general comments from those users canvassed were very similar to those made above - in short, the skate park is very popular, but has potential for improvements.

One significant and mitigating point made by numerous users - and one that is not referred to above - is that the skate park remains free to use. In this context, the majority of users questioned felt that the park is better and succeeds on a larger scale than many of the other skate parks in Wiltshire, Hampshire & Somerset.

11 Analysis & Evaluation

The following are the objectives, ideas and suggestions that were commonly held by the individuals and groups involved in the consultations to date.

11.1 Landscape

Overview

Churchill Gardens is an attractive park to look at, with the variety of shrubs and trees contributing colour and texture to the landscape. The views across the Avon to the south and to the east also complement and enhance the sense of space and nature.

This is not to say that there is no potential for improvement though, and there is scope to add further variety to the landscape horticulture in the park, with native hedging along Churchill Way South one suggestion (this would have the added bonus of clearly and attractively defining the edge of the site, as well as screening the park - including the play area - from the traffic on the road).

There are also a number of areas in Churchill Gardens that would benefit from a complete redesign (or development work) according to a designated scheme or idea:

The paved area that runs parallel to Southampton Road appears clumsy, somewhat run down and dated.

The skate park is very popular, but the ramps look untidy and some are in need of repair work. In part, this was inevitable, revealing both the age of the park (designs, materials and trends have changed considerably in the last 10 years) and how well it is used, but given that the adjacent basketball court is not so well used, there is the opportunity to review and improve this whole area in terms of layout and conception.

The bank to the east of the waterway in the north east corner of the park serves no real purpose in itself and could be reserved as an area for wildlife (this would complement the work undertaken by the Living River project in recent years).

There are two large expanses of grass that - arguably - could be better used.

The play area(s) are very popular but could be better

Objective:

Create and define the boundaries of the park, as well as complementary areas within the park itself.

Options:

Use native hedging to define a wildlife area in the north east of the park, undertake a refurbishment programme to the planted areas

Develop the paved area surrounding the toilets, perhaps in conjunction with refurbishment work to the toilet block itself.

Review the two grassed open spaces as one or both have the potential to be used differently

Consider changes and improvements to the skate park (perhaps new ramps and different tricks) alongside a review of the sports court.

Review the playarea(s) with regard size, scope, design etc

11.2 Wildlife

Overview

Churchill Gardens supports a variety of wildlife reasonably well, but there is scope for changes that would improve things.

Objective:

Encourage more wildlife to the park (including different species)

Options:

Look at developing (and defining) three habitats in the park: a wildflower drift to the west and the south west of the slide; a marginal wetland to take in the stream in the north east corner of the park and lastly, a woodland area with bluebells, bulbs and a mown pathway to run parallel to the waterway where there are already a number of established trees

Begin succession planting of native hedges, trees and shrubs where these are due to be retained.

Encourage a greater diversity of trees with specimen planting.

Adopt bat, bird and insect boxes.

11.3 Paths and Bridges

Overview

The paths in Churchill Gardens are in a reasonable condition and are well used by people walking or to take exercise. This latter aspect in particular could be enhanced.

It is notable that there are no paths leading directly to the skate park.

Objectives:

Establish better links and paths to the skate park

Ensure that the existing paths are suitable for walking, running and cycling

Improve signage in the park

Options:

Identify where new paths can be laid (and undertake a needs assessment of those existing), most likely as part of the redesign of the street hockey area.

Consider widening the existing pathways and then marking clear cycle lines.

Review the Footsteps in the Park walk, possibly with a view to establishing a Trim Trail.

11.4 Accessibility

Overview

Accessibility is certainly reasonable, with three pedestrian access points and two car parks. It is also sensible that the site does not have unrestricted access to cars.

Objective:

Ensure the site is readily accessible to everybody.

Option:

Review the viability and the design of the smaller car park (best in conjunction with Wiltshire County Council).

11.5 Benches, Picnic Tables & Shelters

Options:

Continue the refurbishment and replacement of benches as necessary.

Consider the reintroduction of picnic tables in suitable areas - close to the play area, alongside the wildlife areas and perhaps near the skate park.

11.6 Bins & Cleanliness

Overview

The site is reasonably well kept, helped by the number of litterbins situated in and around the park. Litter can be a problem close to the skate park

Objective:

Maintain the tidy appearance of the park.

Options:

Clean the graffiti off the bins.

The incidence of graffiti in certain areas is a problem - the skate park, the play area and the shelter. It could be beneficial to introduce a graffiti wall to focus the talents of local graffiti artists - this could then be tied in with a competition run in the local press, seeking out images and murals to represent Salisbury and/or Churchill Gardens.

11.7 Car Parks

Overview

There would seem to be ample parking for the site, however the main car park could be improved with a few changes whilst the smaller car park would benefit from a redesign in the long term. There is no essential or urgent work, though.

Options:

Look at introducing a height restriction barrier to the main car park and improving the quality of signs etc (though please see note 2.5, page 12 of this report)

Consider ways of improving drainage in the main car park.

11.8 Refreshments

Overview

There is currently no provision for refreshments in Churchill Gardens, meaning that anyone wanting a drink or a snack has to head into the city centre. This is something of a missed opportunity, especially given the numbers of children and youngsters who frequent the skate park.

Option:

Consider a permanent café or kiosk in the redesign of the paved area next to the toilets.

11.9 Community Events

Options:

Work with local groups on events and days tied to the skate park.

Promote the park for walks, runs and other fitness pursuits.

11.10 Community Safety

Overview

Churchill Gardens is generally thought of as a safe place to visit, but it is important that the lack of lighting in the park is addressed to prevent this from changing.

Objective:

Improve the safety of the park, particularly at night

Options:

Lock the toilets at night.

Review the lighting in the park generally, with particular emphasis on improving matters in the areas surrounding the skate park and the toilet block

Create better lines of visibility (and less hiding places) in the paved area that runs parallel to Southampton Road

Consider an out of hours mobile ranger type service

11.11 General Issues

Objectives:

Encourage community involvement in the park

Provide effective and clear information about the park, for everybody to access

Options:

Help set up a 'Friends' group to continue the consultation process and develop better and more personal links with the community

Introduce signs in the park, detailing the name of the park, features, landmarks, history and a wildlife commentary

Discuss signing the park from the city centre and from selected roads

Objective:

Improve the information available on the Salisbury District Council website

Options:

Compare and contrast other council (and commercial) websites, paying particular attention to Frequently Asked Questions pages, as well as the different styles and the information, forms and downloads available elsewhere

Include links from the Parks pages to appropriate and relevant sites, for example the Living River project, the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

12 Work & Resource Plan

Based on all of the consultations, this plan contains the broad actions that seem the most appropriate to the future of Churchill Gardens. The ideas have been grouped into categories, with each idea then looked at in the following terms:

Feasibility	This ranking takes into account how practicable the idea is bearing in mind time, money, other resources and potential conflicts. (1 ~ Very feasible - 5 ~ Not very feasible)
Timescale	When the idea can be (or should be) realised by.
Priority	How important the idea is relative to the park and relative to the other ideas.
Funding	How much capital and/or revenue is already available to fund the idea, or how much capital and/or revenue the idea is likely to cost. Note: In this column, C refers to capital whilst R refers to recurring revenue.
Comments	Any other pertinent comments, including necessary consultations.

Crucially, the ideas in this plan have not yet been specified. This leaves scope for the plan to evolve as consultations continue; this freedom should become even more relevant once a Friends of Churchill Gardens group has been set up.

	Feasibility	Timescale	Priority	Funding (£)	Comments
Landscape					
Consider planting further hedges and trees along Churchill Way to screen the park from traffic noise	2	Winter 2008	Medium	4,000c	
Consider the reintroduction of site-based staff	3	Spring 2009	High	16,000r	Subject to further report
Undertake maintenance work to the current tree stock; there are at least 20 trees in need of work	2	Autumn / Winter 2008	High	3,500c	
Look into the possibility of flower and shrub beds around the outer edge of the site, including refurbishment of existing	2	Winter 2008	High	9,000c	
Consider a full re-vamp of the patio area around the public conveniences	4	2009	High	At least 100,000c	Subject to further report.
Consider upgrading, enlarging etc the playarea(s)	2	Spring 2009	Medium	15,000 to 50,000c	Subject to agreed schemes
Wildlife					
Look at developing certain areas to support more wildlife and to improve diversity	3	Autumn 2008	High	1,000r	
Adopt bat, bird and insect boxes	2	Summer 2008	Medium	500c	
Utilise the stream to create diverse habitats	3	Summer 2008	Medium	750c	Work alongside the Living Rivers staff

	Feasibility	Timescale	Priority	Funding (£)	Comments
Pathways					
Create a pathway/pathways to the skate park	3	Autumn 2008	Medium	TBA	Subject to survey
Review the existing pathways, with due consideration given to a cycle lane, surfacing etc	4	Spring 2009	Medium	TBA	Subject to survey
Update and/or re-advertise the Footsteps in the Park scheme	3	Autumn 2008	Low	1,500c	
Benches, Tables & Bins					
Look at the potential for further benches around the site, as well as the possibility of picnic tables in one or more areas	1	Summer 2008	Medium	2,000c	
Consider additional bins	1	Summer 2008	Medium	2,000c	
Ensure existing provisions are set onto suitable bases	1	Summer 2008	High	6,000c	
Toilets (see point 2.5 in main report)					
Redesign the toilet block	2	Spring 2009	High	100,000c	Subject to further report
Lock the toilets (early evening or night)	3	Summer 2008	High	TBA	Subject to further report
Parking & Vehicles					
Sign the secondary car park	3	Autumn 2008	Low	1,000c	
Consider improving access, design etc of small car park	4	Spring 2009	Medium	TBA	Costs dependant upon extent of scheme
Improve drainage in the main car park	5	TBA	Low	TBA	Very difficult to achieve as car park levels are at same level as nearby river (see point 2.5 in main report)
Ensure access by vehicles is in accordance with lease terms at small car park end	3	N/A	Medium	N/A	
Consider ways to prevent unauthorised access to main car park	2	Autumn 2008	High	2,000	see point 2.5 in main report
Improve quality of signage to main car park	3	Spring 2009	Medium	TBA	see point 2.5 in main report
Other					
Set up a 'Friends' group (or similar)	1	Spring 2008	High	300r	Friends groups are already functioning for Victoria Park, Queen Elizabeth Gardens & Hudson's Field. This should help in setting up an equivalent group for Churchill Gardens

	Feasibility	Timescale	Priority	Funding (£)	Comments
Undertake a review of the marketing of the site, including attracting more special events	3	Winter 2008	Low	N/A	
Improve signage to the site (including the skate park) from Southampton Road, Exeter Street roundabout and from the town itself	4	Winter 2008	Low	2,000c	This would need to be looked at in conjunction with Wiltshire County Council and the Highways Agency.
Consider installing a football goal (or goals) in the park again	2	Summer 2008	Low	1,500 to 15,000c	Costs depending upon type
Consider introducing an out of hours ranger type service	4	Summer 2009	Medium	TBA	Subject to report and linked to other parks
Investigate the provision of infrastructure to the field to support further events	4	Spring 2009	Low	TBA	Subject to survey
Update the ramps, boxes & grinds in the skate park	3	Spring 2009	Medium	10,000 to 25,000c	
Redevelop the street hockey area to create a supplementary (beginner) skate park area	3	Spring 2009	High	15,000c	
Improve the website: include Churchill Gardens in the 'C' of the A-Z & include the skate park in 'S' for (Skateboarding) and B for (BMXing)	2	Summer 2008	Medium	N/A	This would best be done in combination with the other parks in the city.
Set up an online suggestion box (with downloadable form for return to the office)	3	Summer 2008	Medium	N/A	
Make use of the shelter at the entrance to the park, or take it down	3	Autumn 2008	Low	TBA	
Set up a Frequently Asked Questions page on the SDC website	1	Spring/Summer 2008	Medium	N/A	