



**Vale
of White Horse**

District Council

Abbey Meadow Public Consultation

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of consultation undertaken by Vale of White Horse District Council on the future of Abbey Meadow; a popular park in Abingdon

DRAFT V1

July 2015

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SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of consultation undertaken by the Vale of White Horse District Council on the future of Abbey Meadow; a popular public park in Abingdon.

The consultation sought views on improvements that could make the park more attractive and improve Abingdon's offer as a visitor destination.

Early discussions took place with local community groups and schools in October 2014 to understand their views on the park, as well as involving them in a scoping exercise which considered improvements that could be practically made within the scope of the project. Three broad-brushed scenarios for the future of Abbey Meadow were developed as a result of these discussions and presented to members of the public for comment between February and April 2015.

29 community groups, two schools and 3,157 members of the public got involved in the consultation.

We found that:

- Abbey Meadow is much-loved public park, providing a space for leisure and recreation for both residents and visitors to Abingdon
- The parks' riverside location and offer of an outdoor swimming pool are regarded by many as unique assets to both the park and the town as a whole
- There is a general consensus that much could be done to improve Abbey Meadow. Commonly stated objectives included; improving what's already there, making it more attractive to families, encouraging activities which promote healthy living and extending seasonal usage.
- The public consultation undertaken between February and March 2015 demonstrated overwhelming support for keeping the park as a 'place to swim and play', with 81 per cent of respondents backing this scenario. These people wanted the existing outdoor pool to be retained and repaired over and above other proposals which involved replacing this asset with other facilities
- In addition to work on the outdoor pool, other popular improvements desired by respondents included; new picnic tables and seating, refurbished changing rooms, adventure play equipment for the over 10s, an enhanced splash pad and a better coffee kiosk
- Whilst the strength of public opinion towards the improvements stated above is clear, there are nevertheless some differences of opinion which should not be overlooked. In particular, respondents were divided over the need for any new catering facilities, whether or not an outdoor performance space would get used and retention of the crazy golf/ pitch and putt

The results of the consultation are being used to plan future improvements to Abbey Meadow. Updates on the project will be made available on the council's website¹.

¹ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/sports-leisure-and-arts/parks/abbey-meadows-abingdon>

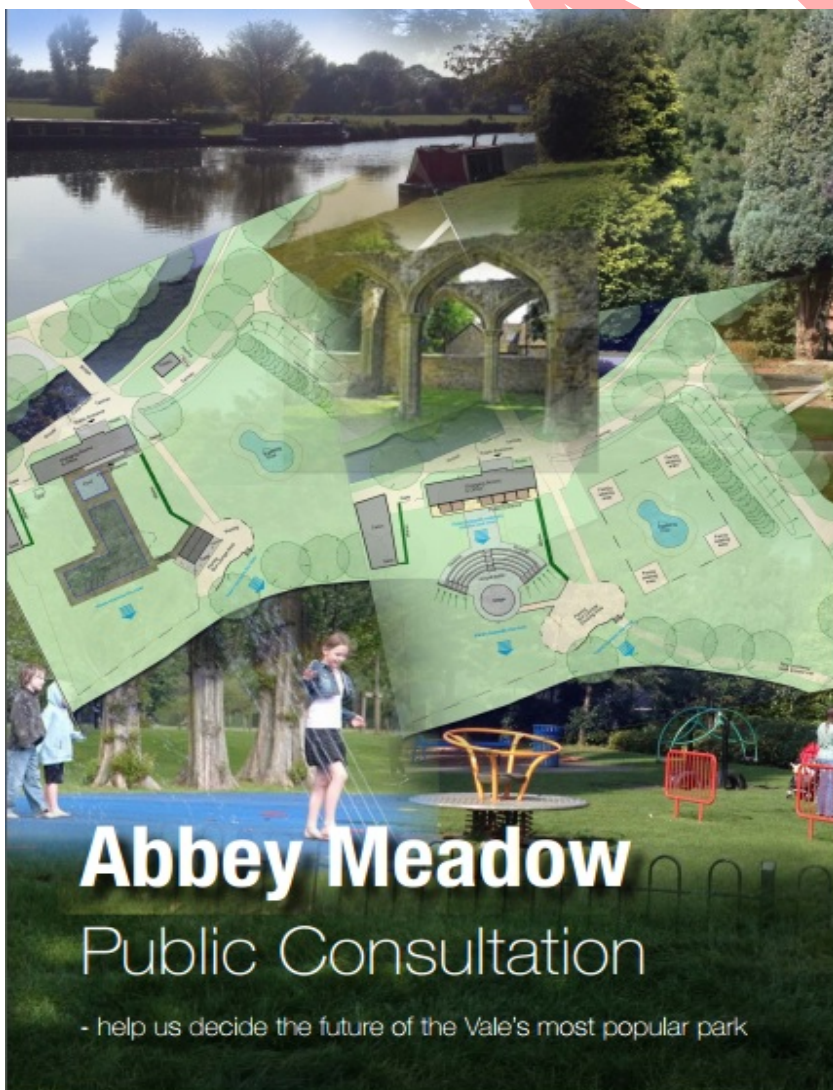
BACKGROUND TO THE ABBEY MEADOW PROJECT

Situated on the banks of the River Thames in Abingdon, Abbey Meadow is the most visited public park in the Vale of White Horse. Especially busy during the summer months, it boasts an attractive riverside location and a range of facilities for leisure and recreation including:

- Outdoor swimming pool
- Play park
- Children's splash pad
- Tennis courts
- Crazy golf
- Pitch and putt
- Kiosk selling coffee and ice cream during the summer holidays

In recognition of the importance of Abbey Meadow to the residents of Abingdon, as well as visitors from further afield, the council made a commitment to invest £500,000 in improvements to the site.

To inform this work, a programme of consultation took place between October 2014 and April



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CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

The consultation aimed to provide an opportunity for people to have their say on the future of Abbey Meadow.

To fulfil this aim, the consultation was designed around two discreet objectives:

- Engagement of key stakeholder groups in an informed discussion about the future of Abbey Meadow to identify improvements, taking into consideration financial and practical constraints (Phase One)
- Canvass public opinion and test appetite for the improvements suggested by key stakeholder groups (Phase Two)

The design of the consultation was informed by the council's Customer Engagement Charter 2014-2016² which sets out a number of principles for this type of activity

Phase one – engagement with key stakeholders

ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

The council initially held one-to-one meetings in October 2014 with a small number of stakeholder groups known to regularly use the park or have strong views on its future use. Early engagement with these groups was deemed important due to the potential sensitivities surrounding the project. The council wanted these groups to be the first to know about the project, its scope and constraints identified to avoid any misunderstanding.

The meetings were informal but provided an opportunity to understand the groups' relationship with the site, test appetite for the project and also identify initial ideas and issues.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

Feedback from the one-to-one groups was then used to inform the design of a stakeholder workshop open to councillors and representatives from community groups in the Abingdon area.

The workshop was facilitated by consultants from Hidden Britain on 4 November in Abingdon Guildhall and engaged participants in structured activities designed to:

- capture views on current facilities provided within Abbey Meadow and rank their relative importance
- outline common aims and objectives for the future use of the site
- scope out three potential scenarios for the improvement of Abbey Meadow, including the mix of facilities which could be retained or introduced

² <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/have-your-say/our-commitments-engaging-customers>

ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The council's youth officer undertook further engagement with young people from Larkmead and Fitzharrys Schools in Abingdon along the same lines as the workshop.

Phase two – public consultation

Feedback from the one-to-one meetings, stakeholder workshop and engagement with young people was used by council officers to research and draft three overarching 'scenarios' for the future of Abbey Meadow. Each scenario was intended to be distinct from each other, presenting a different mix of facilities that could be potentially provided within the financial and practical constraints associated with the project.

The three scenarios prepared were:

- A. A place to swim and play** (including repair of the outdoor pool)
- B. A place to relax and unwind** (including removal of the outdoor pool and building of a new café/ restaurant)
- C. A flexible outdoor space** (including removal of the pool and a number of smaller, more flexible uses of the available space)

To provide residents with a chance to have their say on the scenarios, a formal consultation was undertaken between 23 February and 07 April 2015 to canvass wider public opinion and test appetite for the proposals.

Details of the three scenarios were made available on the council's website, as well as on printed leaflets and display boards placed in the council's offices and in Abbey Meadow.

Members of the public were invited to respond to the consultation online via the council's website or alternatively by completing and returning a form featured at the back of the consultation leaflet.

The consultation asked respondents the following questions:

1. What is your preferred scenario? [Multiple choice – one option only allowed]
2. For your preferred scenario only, please tell us what additional facilities you would like to see provided? [Multiple choice, ranked in order of preference]
3. Do you have any other comments? [Free text box]

Respondents were required to detail their name and postcode to prevent multiple responses being submitted by each person.

Appendix A features the consultation leaflet, showing how this information was presented on printed media. The online consultation mirrored this presentation.

The council's communications team made efforts to publicise the consultation as widely as possible, producing press releases, featuring the consultation on the front page of the council's

website, arranging an interview with the council leader on BBC Radio Oxford and making contributions to the Abingdon Blog and posts to social media. In addition the council's youth office drew the consultation to the attention of schools and the equalities officer to groups representing the disabled and elderly.

Publicity surrounding the consultation also increased due to campaigning efforts made by The Friends of Abingdon Outdoor Pool to save the pool which was picked up on several occasions by the local media.

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CONSULTATION RESPONSES – PHASE ONE, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

One-to-one meetings

The council held informal, one-to-one meetings with the following groups in October 2014:

- The Friends of Abingdon Meadow Outdoor Pool
- Abbey Brass (who occupy a temporary building on the site)
- Abingdon Town Council
- Friends of Abingdon
- Christ Hospital of Abingdon (who hold a restrictive covenant over the Meadow)

Early discussions with these stakeholders showed there was an appetite for improving Abbey Meadow. The stakeholders considered that many existing facilities needed to be repaired or replaced to ensure the park remains a popular attraction for local residents and visitors.

[Insert notes from meetings]

Stakeholder workshop

The more formal, stakeholder workshop was attended by representatives from 29 community groups (see Appendix B).

[Insert notes from workshop]

Common objectives for the site included:

- making the site appeal to a broader spectrum of people
- extending seasonal usage of the site
- improving access and signage
- maintaining or increasing the range of leisure activities on offer.

However, discussion about the practical and financial limitations of the site exposed some differences of opinion with regards to the relative importance of retaining key facilities/ assets. Some groups expressed a strong preference for keeping facilities, such as the outdoor pool, and building on what's already there. Others felt that the project provided an opportunity to introduce new leisure opportunities. The scenarios developed were a response to this feedback.

Engagement with young people

The youth officer engaged a total of 60 young people from Larkmead and Fitzharrys Schools.

[Insert notes from engagement with young people]

CONSULTATION RESPONSES – PHASE TWO, PUBLIC CONSULTATION

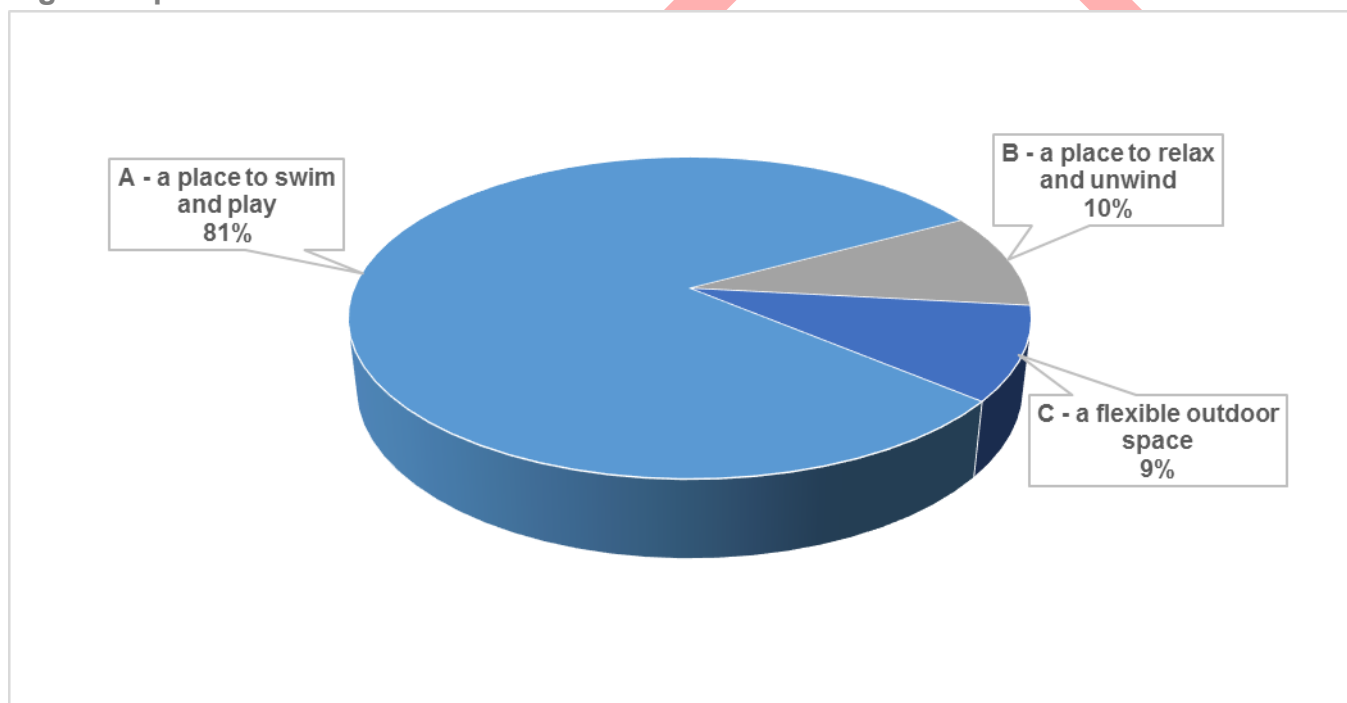
The public consultation attracted a large volume of responses. 3,157 people took part, excluding 46 duplicate responses which were removed for the purposes of analysis. This is equivalent to nearly ten percent of the population of Abingdon³.

Preference by scenario

Overall, there was overwhelming support for Scenario A – a place to swim and play. For every five people completing the survey, just over four (81 per cent) expressed a preference for this particular vision for Abbey Meadow.

In contrast, only 10 percent favoured Scenario B and 9 percent Scenario C (Figure 1).

Figure 1: preferred scenario



	Count	Duplicate entries	Total	Percentage
A - a place to swim and play	2,593	36	2,557	81%
B - a place to relax and unwind	310	6	304	10%
C - a flexible outdoor space	300	4	296	9%
Total	3,203	46	3,157	100%

Preference for additional facilities

The consultation also asked people to rank in order of preference additional facilities and improvements they would like to see delivered as part of their preferred scenario.

³ The population of Abingdon was recorded as 33,130 in the 2011 census.

The list of facilities and improvements was unique to each scenario reflecting the overall aim, but also the likely cost of delivery. There were however some facilities and improvements that were common to all three scenarios.

Figure 2 shows how these facilities and improvements were ranked in order of preference across all three scenarios.

The most popular improvements common to all three scenarios were new picnic tables and seating, adventure play equipment, an enhanced splash pad and improved coffee kiosk.

Figure 2: preferred additional facilities/ improvements⁴

Rank	Facility/ improvement	A score	B score	C score	Total score
1	New picnic tables and seating	12,118	2,043	2,366	16,527
2	Refurbished changing rooms	16,312	n/a	n/a	16,312
3	Adventure play equipment for over 10s	9,728	1,450	4,497	15,675
4	Enhanced splash pad	10,126	1,507	2,115	13,748
5	Improved coffee kiosk	13,389	n/a	n/a	13,389
6	Improvements to under 10s play area	8,791	1,363	2,068	12,222
7	Outdoor gym equipment	6,142	779	1,312	8,233
8	Refurbished tennis courts	6,217	785	871	7,873
9	Electricity supply for a mobile ice rink	5,218	974	1,263	7,455
10	Multi-use games area	n/a	1,189	1,894	3,083
11	Pop-up café	n/a	n/a	2,363	2,363
12	Outdoor performance space	n/a	n/a	2,276	2,276
13	Landscaping improvements	n/a	n/a	1,894	1,894
14	Circular walking paths	n/a	n/a	1,568	1,568
15	Nature areas and information boards	n/a	n/a	1,251	1,251
16	Bandstand	n/a	997	n/a	997
17	Public art trail	n/a	n/a	772	772

Free text comments

Nearly half of respondents to the public consultation (*n* 1,597) took the opportunity to provide additional comments. These comments ranged from a few words to several paragraphs in length.

To make sense of this data, each comment was tagged with keywords which attempted to encapsulate the types of view expressed (see Figure 3). These keywords or 'codes' were used to identify themes that ran throughout the free text comments.

These comments are helpful for understanding the sentiment that respondents felt towards the three scenarios presented, other suggestions and ideas for the site and controversial issues.

Figure 4 shows the frequency of comments made for each code generated. It shows that the most commonly made comments related to the retention of the pool, proposals relating to the provision of catering facilities, the need to improve what Abbey Meadow already offers rather than doing something completely different and keeping the park as a space for families to enjoy.

⁴ Scores were arrived at by weighting the ranking respondents gave to each facility/ improvement.

The main codes generated are described in the remainder of this report. They have been categorised into comments where there was a general degree of agreement (shown in green in Figure 4) and those where there was disagreement (shown in red).

Figure 3: screengrab showing coding of free-text comments

Code	Comment	E	F	G	H
552	A - Save the pool-once gone it will be gone forever. Build a cafe at the pool and use the pool space during the winter months ie investigate a hard cover/flooring that could be fitted over the pool for ice skating or roller blading etc and keep the cafe going all year.	Keep pool	Café/kiosk	Extended seasonal use	
553	A - a place to swim and play				
554	A - I love to swim in the outdoor pool, which I do a couple of times a week when the pool opens, but I find that once the children finish their exams/schools break up, it becomes impossible to enjoy lane swimming. Therefore, as someone who gladly pays for swimming, I often feel forced out by those who aren't paying. Would it be possible to have lane swimming at designated times? Couldn't under 16s pay a nominal fee, eg Â£2, which could help with income. Abingdon already has lots of great restaurants. Abingdon already has a theatre. We only have one outdoor pool, surely we want to keep this great facility and improve it so even more people would want to use it. Feel free to contact me further on this j.m.j@sky.com	Cost query	Keep pool	Improve whats there	
555	A - I think it is vital to maintain the facilities for outdoor activity for adults and children in Abingdon. We do have the indoor leisure facilities but these - especially the swimming pool are so heavily used at weekends that it is necessary to book a slot by phone or risk an hours wait in the hope of a swim. Not very satisfactory. Also the meadows are a wonderful space for whole family fun in the fresh air and hugely enjoyed by residents and visitors. Constant criticism of an obese population would suggest a need to maintain and add to the existing facilities; not remove them	Better management	Something for everyone	Improve whats there	
556	A - Feel sure a coffee/snack/ refreshment place nearby would do well during other months of the year - not just summer.. It's a popular walking area...	Café/ kiosk	Extended seasonal use		
557	A - Would love the swimming pool to stay, my only comment about the pool and the pool area is that there is not enough shade, or areas covered to provide shade. Lack of shade was the only reason I did not visit last year with my 2 year old. Parasols, or a pergola of some sort would be ideal for the younger children to protect them from the mid-day sun.	Keep pool			
558	A - a place to swim and play				
559	A - Abbey Meadows features in a huge part Abingdon residents lives. Be it young children's first water play to oldr children's first swimming with friends and family	Families	Keep pool	Splash pad	Improve whats there

Figure 4: frequency of all free text comments by type

Codes	Frequency	Codes	Frequency
Keep pool	357	Changing rooms	29
Coffee kiosk/ café/ restaurant	262	Extended opening times	27
Pool an asset/ USP	245	Open/green space	25
Improve what's there	143	Riverside location	24
A space for families	119	Disabled access & facilities	23
Improve toilets	90	Fencing/ safety	23
Crazy golf/ pitch and putt	89	Trees	16
Performance space, bandstand	88	Commercial operator for café/kiosk	15
Healthy living	68	Litter bins	14
Extended seasonal use	65	Dogs	12
Opposition to pool [Scenarios B&C only]	63	Multi use games area	10
Activities for teenagers	55	Nature trail	10
Splash pad	53	Cycling	7
Better management	51	Extend pool	7
Cost query	51	Better access/signage	6
Heat pool	50	Flora and forna	5
Picnic tables/ seating	49	Parking	4
Ice rink	46	Art trail	4
Play equipment	41	Events	3
Outdoor gym	40	BBQ area	3

Comparison to other successful pools	35	Skate park	3
Something for everyone	33	Open air cinema	3
Tennis	32	Landscaping	1
Paths	31	Boat hire	1
Hydro project	31	Bridge over river	1

KEEP POOL/ POOL AN ASSET TO THE TOWN/ COMPARISON TO OTHER SUCESSFUL POOLS

Simple statements in support of keeping pool

The important thing is to keep the pool and changing rooms (192)

Pool an asset

I LOVE Abbey Gardens and the pool especially. It is a wonderful, historic, family friendly space. Please keep the pool!! (244)

The Outdoor pool and splash park area are fantastic community facilities and the atmosphere down there in the summer is so friendly and inclusive (85)

Please keep the pools [...] we are quite limited on outdoor facilities in / near the centre of town except for just open space / meadows. It provides something to do! (377)

Pool makes Abingdon distinctive

It's important to keep the pool which is a strong facility that not all towns can boast about. Abingdon can! (1230)

There are very few outdoor swimming facilities left in England and it would be travesty to see this one go when it has and continues to be loved by so many (606)

A draw for visitors

Please keep the pool. It is popular, keeps people fit, and is used by people of all ages: it is also something distinctive to Abingdon and more likely to draw people from outside town than anything promised in the other two scenarios (62)

Improvements will increase usage

Keep the pool, make it better and it will pay for itself (1283)

I would love to see a more ambitious attempt to get funding to radically extend and improve the facilities so that they would get even more use and so better pay for themselves (2365)

Comparisons to other successful pools

The Hinksey open air pool in Oxford is really successful - can you learn from them about how to encourage more membership? Could you open for early morning swimming (for all of us adults who want to swim before work and before the children get there). Could you use the pool for adult swimming lessons for adults in the mornings through the summer? (281)

OPPOSITION TO POOL

However opposition to pool from some supporters of scenarios B&C

Current facilities are not up to scratch

The last time I paid to use the outdoor pool it was unbearably cold and the changing rooms were grotty (2611)

Pool not well used, other facilities available, costs not justifiable

I don't think the pool should stay, as it takes a lot of money to run for just a few months of the year and the people petitioning to keep it, probably don't even use it, as when I have been down the Abbey hardly anyone is in there (2669)

I think the maintenance of an outdoor pool is not a good use of public money given we have a very good indoor pool already in the town (2699)

Friends of Abingdon Outdoor Pool not representative of everyone in the town

Friends of the Outdoor Pool at Abingdon, are a very small but very vocal group of people who do not represent the taxpayers of this town. Please bear this in mind when dealing with them (2616)

Appreciation that refurbishment of pool would take up much of the budget and limit other improvements to site

I would prefer to keep the pool but do not want the whole budget to be spent on that alone (2961)

It would be wonderful if the pool could remain open as well as these enhancements to the area, however my preference would be spend the public money on things which are free of charge to use (2985)

I think it is far better to spend money on facilities that can be used all year round, or for as long as possible during the year, and therefore believe the swimming pool option is not a good use of money (2726)

Do not think we need the outdoor pool, there's one a few miles up the road and they can only be used very few months of the year so as a family with young children would much rather see improvements to play areas etc (2682)

COFFEE KIOSK/ CAFÉ/ RESTURANT

Support for basic/ improved coffee kiosk

A coffee kiosk selling sandwiches etc is totally adequate, so near to town & Waitrose (2112)

The cafeteria need not be too elaborate - just drinks, sandwiches, ice creams, crisps (607)

An improved (but modest) coffee facility might attract people (195)

Limited support for larger café/ restaurant

If there was a restaurant I would potentially take my wife there for dinner in an evening (2656)

A decent eating place would be more attractive than just a coffee kiosk and would make more of the river frontage - I'm sure a commercial company would snap up the lease (148)

Opposition to larger café/ restaurant

We certainly do not need yet another cafe/restaurant in central Abingdon: there are plenty of great options available already and Abingdon really needs a unique selling point which an enhanced swimming pool with this beautiful river view could be (380)

There is no way a cafe/restaurant should be built. You want to be drawing trade into the town to assist the existing pubs/restaurants & shops. The Abbey is a space for outdoor activities & picnics (76)

Abingdon only seems to offer restaurants, pubs and high shops, so why ruin an an brilliantly located outdoor pool to build ANOTHER restaurant? (612)

Extended seasonal usage if coffee kiosk open for longer in the year

An improved coffee kiosk that is open for more of the year would be a bonus for parents/grandparents who are often standing watch while the children are playing (1147)

An improved cafe that could be open year round(maybe just weekends in winter) would vastly improve the area and make the most of what is a truly outstanding area by the river Thames. This would keep the area accessible and affordable to all (2250)

Community run facility selling local food

If a restaurant/cafe is selected then this must be run by an independent, local business, not a chain! (2827)

It would be lovely to see the kiosk made into a community cafe with homemade high quality food (189)

IMPROVE WHATS THERE

I feel that most people are quite happy with what is there already but would just like it properly updated (193)

The current facilities are very popular because of what is there already, they need to be improved (1078)

Please don't change it too much, but refurbish it, and allow new generations to enjoy it (1113)

What you have already is good. All it needs is proper maintenance and repairs (1516)

Keep it simple, and maintain and enhance what has been enjoyed by Abingdon families for decades (572)

A SPACE FOR FAMILIES/ SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Abbey Meadows is a place that works well for families

It is a great space for people to meet up with friends and family and have 'good old fashioned' outdoor fun! Good Luck for the refurbishments! (188)

I love the river side and feel that refurbishing the existing area is fabulous but would not want to lose the family feel to the place (224)

The outdoor pool especially caters for families

Abbey Meadow outdoor pool is a vital and important part of recreational facilities in Abingdon. It is used a great deal throughout the summer months and benefits many children and families (144)

The pool is a good draw for people with families into the town and should be maintained (519)

Improvements must cater for everyone

Keep it simple and easy to access for everyone in all senses ie price and physical access (952)

I also believe that it's very important to ensure that there are fun activities for people of all ages to do (children, teenagers, parents and the elderly) (1001)

IMPROVE TOILETS

Toilets are in need of improvement

The toilets in the park are a disgrace - they should be top of the agenda for refurb (1300)

Toilets are very basic, [and] this is something which does put parents with small children off (375)

The toilets need completely doing knocking down and start again (1178)

Extended opening hours

They need to be improved but must be 'hardy' and sustainable, longer opening hours? (375)

Extended seasonal opening

I think the toilets should be open all year (977)

Suggestion of pay per use toilets

Pay for use toilets might be better if this meant that they would be clean and safe for families (2403)

CRAZY GOLF/ PITCH AND PUTT

No mention of crazy golf/ pitch and putt in consultation

Why no option to keep/upgrade etc the "pitch and putt" golf course? I would have put that ahead of some of my preferred options (298)

Keep and improve crazy golf / pitch and putt

Please don't get rid of the crazy golf! It is an integral part of the Abbey Meadows. The course could be improved and this would attract lots more people to the Abbey Meadows. Plenty of towns have refurbished their crazy golf courses and people enjoy using them as they are a fun way to unwind and enjoy yourself (653)

Improvements don't need to cost much

A more modern, colourful (and not necessarily hugely expensive) crazy golf course would add to the attractions in the park (1114)

The crazy golf could do with a makeover too, even if it's just a lick of paint (2332)

Get rid of crazy golf/ pitch and putt

No need for golf or crazy golf as they hardly gets used (848)

Remove the Pitch and Putt (it is a menace to passers-by on the rare occasions it is used) and use the space for other facilities (2573)

PERFORMANCE SPACE/ BANDSTAND

Very few statements in favour of a permanent outdoor performance space or bandstand

I would prefer to lose the swimming pool in favour of the open air theatre feature that could double as a bandstand (281)

I think if you put a performance space in the Abbey Meadows it would attract the teenagers in the local area to attend concerts, overall making it more enjoyable for the teenagers-young adults (3021)

Concern, even among proponents of scenario C that an outdoor performance space would get used

If there is an outdoor performance space, thought should be given as to how often it is likely to be used (2920)

I like the idea of building an amphitheater, but I feel that unless partnerships are created with such organisations such as the Creation Theatre Company who have experience of working

on outdoor productions to deliver an exciting programme all year round the space would become unused and be as costly as the pool is now (403)

let's face it, no-one would use a bandstand (279)

There's already provision for outdoor performances elsewhere

We already have an outdoor performance space in the Abbey Meadows (the gothic folly is used for summer performances), so getting rid of the pool and building another 'amphitheatre' makes no sense at all (1485)

The abbey gardens provide a flexible green space as the annual music in the park proves, and while I would like to see more of this (ie outdoor theatre performances) in the end Abingdon is too small a place to provide these on a frequent basis and most weekends it would just be an empty space (2003)

Couple of concerns about the proposed facility attracting unwanted behaviour, especially amongst teenagers

Think that band stand and outdoor amphitheatre MAY encourage young people to hang around late at night and leave lots of rubbish (1359)

HEALTHY LIVING

Improvements to Abbey Meadow should promote health and wellbeing of visitors, especially young people

The health and exercise of young people is currently very topical. Young people are not getting enough exercise and are over eating the wrong types of food. It is most important that we invest in facilities to encourage young people to take as much exercise as possible to keep themselves fit and healthy. It also gets them outdoors socialising in the right environment. Let's promote ourselves as a community that cares for the amenities and health of our young people! (980)

Outdoor pool is the best option for promoting health and wellbeing

It is extremely important that everyone (children, adults and older people) have the opportunity to take part in health-giving pursuits. Swimming is beneficial to positive health by not only exercising the main muscle groups of the body, but also an outdoor pool has the advantage of getting people out into the fresh air and getting the sun on their backs (184)

In this day and age surely we should be doing everything we can to keep our children and especially teenagers fit. Option A is the only one that commits to this. Please keep the pool (334)

Opposition to scenarios B & C because proposed activities are more sedentary and do not promote health and wellbeing

Option A contributes more than the other two options towards encouraging healthy active lifestyles by providing a safe outside swimming pool, whereas the other options are more sedentary.

It is more important to encourage exercise than food consumption (760)

EXTENDED SEASONAL USE

Many people felt that improvements to Abbey meadow should concentrate on extending its use throughout the season

Please upgrade the Abbey with all year round facilities so it's used as much as possible (816)

Make it so that the area can be used [...] throughout the year (1016)

Proponents of the pool suggested that this facility could open for longer during the year

The pool is an amazing resource but you need to plan for how it can be used for more months of the year (787)

We love [the pool] and have used it over many years in cold weather and hot. Our only issue is that the season is too short! (1563)

Other facilities such as a better café, improved playground facilities and ice rink during the summer months could help

Adding an ice rink will bring autumn and winter trade (434)

Feel sure a coffee/snack/ refreshment place nearby would do well during other months of the year - not just summer. It's a popular walking area (1556)

Extending the children's play area should be made a priority, this gets used all year round by so many families and it is currently too small (2684)

ACTIVITIES FOR TEENAGERS

More could be done to cater for older children and teenagers

As a 14 year old girl I feel there is not enough things for teenagers to do in Abingdon (1708)

I think we need more for young people and teenagers in Abingdon (14)

Pool is a facility that has particular appeal to teenagers

I would wish to keep the pool, as it is one of very few affordable amenities for teenagers within the town. During the summer holiday, the pool is well used by this age group (2028)

Adventure play equipment could cater for older children

There is currently nothing for teenagers and older [...] An adventure play area should be the number 1 priority (2765)

Sports facilities good for older teenagers

I believe that new sports facilities is a good idea because there are a lot of teenagers with nothing to do so football/basketball pitches are a good idea because they are 2 popular sports that can be played in the same court/pitch (3010)

Open spaces provide an important meeting place for teenagers to hang out

Open space is preferable to over organisation, it is very much used by teenagers as a space they can meet together in groups which I think is great (2207)

SPLASH PAD

Splash pad well used and valued by parents with young children

My family and I love the splash play park and would very much like to keep it (656)

Some suggestions for improvement, but mainly related to upkeep/ maintenance

Splash pad is really brilliant and any improvements will be very welcome (98)

The splash pad should be improved. It was quite often not working last Summer (607)

About 20 parents mention the need for fencing between the splash pad and the river to keep young children safe

The splash pad needs a fence around that area. There is nothing between this area designed for young children and a big river (250)

Please can the river be fenced off by the splash pad. I have seen so many parents having to bolt after their children who have wandered away from the sprinklers (425)

BETTER MANAGEMENT

Better management of the site could bring about improvements

Efficient management will be the key to the project's success. Poor management has blighted this wonderful facility in the recent past and it will be essential to improve (852)

Most comments/ suggestions were about management of the pool

The site is already good but the management of the swimming pool is a disaster: limited hours, you have to get out and then you have to book (259)

Why are the opening times so limited - some like to swim all year round! And why are kids free which makes it difficult for adults to enjoy swimming. Why not have it so there are times for kids when it is free? E.g. 1.00pm-4.00pm. After work is a good time for adults to swim (494)

It would be a great asset if the leisure centre pool membership could be combined with the outdoor pool membership so that the two pools could be used interchangeably depending on weather and temperature conditions (2094)

Volunteers could be used to help to refurbish the changing rooms; e.g to help to paint them (904)

Other comments

Please could the grass be cut more often on the big golf course because whenever I play there with my Dad we lose the ball (473)

Whatever improvements are finally agreed it is essential that money is provided to ensure proper 'supervision' of the area in respect of staff to pick up litter and empty rubbish bins etc, particularly at weekends. In recent years we have frequently seen overflowing litter bins on a Saturday and / or Sunday, or on weekdays in the school summer holidays, and nobody around to deal with this. Irrespective of which option is chosen staff MUST be available particularly on Saturdays and Sundays, between say 1st May and mid September throughout the day, especially if warm or hot weather is forecast. And collection of litter in the school summer holidays will need to be a 7 day exercise not just at weekends. Otherwise the new facilities will quickly lose their charm.

Well done to whoever did the flower displays outside the toilet block and the building near the river for summer 2014. They were beautiful. More of that please! (270)

ICE RINK

Public opinion split down the middle on the ice rink. Some proponents

It would be wonderful to see this as winter setting with an ice rink (937)

A mobile ice rink would be a wonderful way to increase usage (and income) of the meadows in the winter (1610)

Others strongly against

An Ice Rink is an absolutely ridiculous idea that is a complete waste of money and I am surprised that it is even being considered (1053)

Oxford's ice rink is struggling. Why would we bother offering a seasonal one? (1636)

PLAY EQUIPMENT

Play equipment for both older children and younger children is desired

Play equipment for older children would be really appreciated (3124)

Over 10s play equipment is a great idea and there is little provision for this age range in parks generally (102)

I would love to see some less structured play equipment for the under 10s. Something like the boat at Bury Knowle, where children can play imaginatively, rather than simply taking turns in the swings! (2685)

Most of all we would like to see improvement in the playground area and the way it is laid out. We think there should be a few more things for the under 5s, a playground that can be used all year round (i.e. no rotting woodchips/bark, it's not nice when toddlers fall over in that stuff) and also it would be nice to have more distinct zones between the older children's play equipment and the younger ones (2918)

OUTDOOR GYM

Limited support

I do think that an outdoor gym is a must, after all we need to encourage adults to exercise what better place! (1341)

Free-to-use outdoor gym equipment plus table tennis tables also would appeal to teenagers/adults (799)

Outweighed by greater number of people who do not think the equipment will be used

Outdoor gym equipment is a waste of time and money (327)

Outdoor gyms are rubbish. Look at the one in Boxhill Park. Has anyone conducting this consultation ever tried one of these gyms? Some of the machines are sensible but some of them are daft. Anyway, I walk past it four times a day, five days a week and never see anyone using it, even in the height of summer (270)

TENNIS

Limited support for retaining/ improving the tennis courts

Tennis courts are a much healthier option than yet another cafe and bandstand (1583)

The tennis courts need to be open far more often (1509)

But majority of comments suggest that these facilities are not needed, particularly when there are other better courts nearby

Is it really necessary to spend money on outdoor tennis courts when 400 yards down the road you have indoor and outdoor courts? (1629)

There are other places in Abingdon where tennis can be played. Perhaps the site of the present courts could be redeveloped as an adventure playground (2194)

PATHS/ DISABLED ACCESS & FACILITIES

A number of respondents pointed out the need to ensure Abbey Meadow is accessible to people with disabilities

Keep it simple and easy to access for everyone in all senses i.e. price and physical access (952)

It would appear that disabled users currently find some of the paths difficult to use and improvements to the surface is needed

I would like the paths wide enough and smooth enough suitable for wheelchair use. There are a lot of elderly people who could use the paths with a carer (3030)

Please make the paths wide and smooth so wheelchair users can enjoy the outside areas (3074)

Interesting suggestion Re play facilities for disabled children made

Abingdon has no facilities for disabled children to play with their non-disabled friends and siblings. This MUST be considered as part of the overall plans, especially as the Kingfisher School is situated here. These can include - wide slides for child plus carer to use, basket swings and/or full body swings, wheelchair accessible roundabouts etc (621)

HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

The council has:

- considered the evidence set out in this consultation summary
- agreed to appoint a project manager to investigate the cost implications of the improvement works to the outdoor pool and the other top ten priorities
- agreed to develop a programme of phased activity to implement these works, bringing forward growth bids as required

Updates on the project will be made available on the council's website⁵.

DRAFT

⁵ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/sports-leisure-and-arts/parks/abbey-meadows-abingdon>

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the results of this consultation or the Abbey Meadow Project in general, please contact:

[Specify appropriate contact – Suzanne? Kate?]

DRAFT

APPENDIX A – PUBLIC CONSULTATION LEAFLET

[Insert copy of consultation leaflet]

DRAFT

APPENDIX B – GROUPS REPRESENTED AT STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP, 4 NOVEMBER 2014

- Abbey Brass
- Abbey Close resident
- ABC Tots
- Abingdon artists
- Abingdon Artists & Ox Art Groups
- Abingdon Carbon Cutters
- Abingdon Flower Club
- Abingdon Hydro
- Abingdon Museum
- Abingdon Naturalist Society
- Abingdon Town Band
- Abingdon Town Council
- Air Cadets
- Bid Team
- Carbon Cutters
- Choose Abingdon Partnership
- Christ's Hospital of Abingdon
- Drama Group
- Friends of Abingdon
- Friends of Abingdon Outdoor Pool
- NCT Abingdon
- Oxfordshire Arts
- Pasiol Play
- Preston Road Community Centre
- Silver Band
- South Abingdon Resident Plan
- St Helens Baby & toddler group
- VWHDC