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Questions raised by members of the Project A Working Group for Lake Market Research can be found at the end of the report.

Independent Review of Project A Informal Consultation

Prepared by Lake Market Research for Bearsted Parish Council

January 2022



"This report complies to ISO 20252 and any other relevant codes of conduct."



PROJECT BACKGROUND

Bearsted Parish Council received the donation of land to the east of the Church Landway formerly part of Mote Hall. The donated land sits off the Church Landway opposite the Bearsted and Thurnham Tennis Club. It is understood that the land has been donated with the request to improve facilities to the local allotments, tennis club and parking facilities in the area and the land being donated can only be used for allotments (no buildings can be developed on the donated land).

The consultant preparing this report has been advised that area issues previously communicated to Bearsted Parish Council by residents include:

- Lack of allotment plots available
- Inadequate level of parking facilities around and near to facilities local on the Church Landway
- Anti-social behaviour in car park
- No public toilets
- Oversubscribed tennis club
- Highly used Bearsted Woodland Trust
- Requirement for more lighting in the area
- Littler / lack of bins
- Church Landway surfacing
- Parking for large church events
- Parking for local adhoc events
- Parking in Church Lane by visitors
- Level of traffic on Church Lane

Initial designs for the area in question have been drawn up that offers Bearsted and Thurnham Tennis Club the land next to the existing club building. This land is where the current allotment garden is located. With this additional land, the Tennis Club could extend their offering with two further tennis courts and two paddle courts and the existing car park double in size. Designs also therefore include a proposed rehoming of the current allotments (which are expected to increase in size), additional allotments, a Dementia Garden and a Children's Garden for use by schools and clubs on the land donated to the east of the Church Landway.

It is envisaged that within the plans there is also a possibility of:

- Introducing a defibrillator, electric car charging point, bins and bicycle parking within the proposed expanded car park.
- Addressing drainage at the car park and a water harvesting system
- Addressing the lack of lighting and uneven surfaces on part of the Church Landway
- Inclusion of public convenience

An informal consultation on the proposed designs took place between 27th May and 3rd August 2021. Communication of the consultation was conducted via the following means:

- Website
- 10 x notice boards
- Facebook (which attracted 2065 follows)
- Email newsletter sent to those known amongst Bearsted residents – 248 in total. It is understood that 87.1% of these emails were opened.
- Emails sent to allotment holders (Church Lane and The Street), organisations on the Church Landway and Holy Cross Church
- Press Announcements given to Downsmail, Kent Messenger and Village magazine

The consultant preparing this report has been advised that the summary above covers all means of Bearsted Parish Council notifying residents and allotment holders of the informal consultation. No communication was made via post. The consultation understands that leaflets and other documentation has been shared amongst Bearsted residents by those in favour and those with concerns about the proposed plan.

Bearsted Parish Council have commissioned Lake Market Research to review all responses received by the Parish office via email or postal letter, analyse the feedback received and provide an independent evaluation report.

INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSE

Prior to analysing the feedback received, as far as possible, all responses were verified to ensure any duplicate submissions were removed and feedback put forward over more than one email / letter submission was merged to form consolidated feedback from a resident / household.

It should be noted that a sample of residents / households across Bearsted provided feedback on the proposed plans rather than all households. This needs to be considered in the context of any counts or percentages noted in this report and figures are therefore subject to sampling error. This informal consultation is self-selecting and not all residents were asked and/or provided feedback and had received input from individuals who support the proposed plans and individuals who have concerns over the proposed plan.

Feedback has been collected in the form of open emails and letters and not in the form of a structured set of questions / response options. All responses shared with Lake Market Research have been reviewed carefully by the consultant / author of this report as well as the Lake Executive team. The findings sections of this report summarise the open feedback received during the consultation dates. The strength of feedback received for reasons for supporting and not supporting the proposals have been summarised in terms of the number of people referencing them in their feedback as well the calculated percentage of these mentions out of

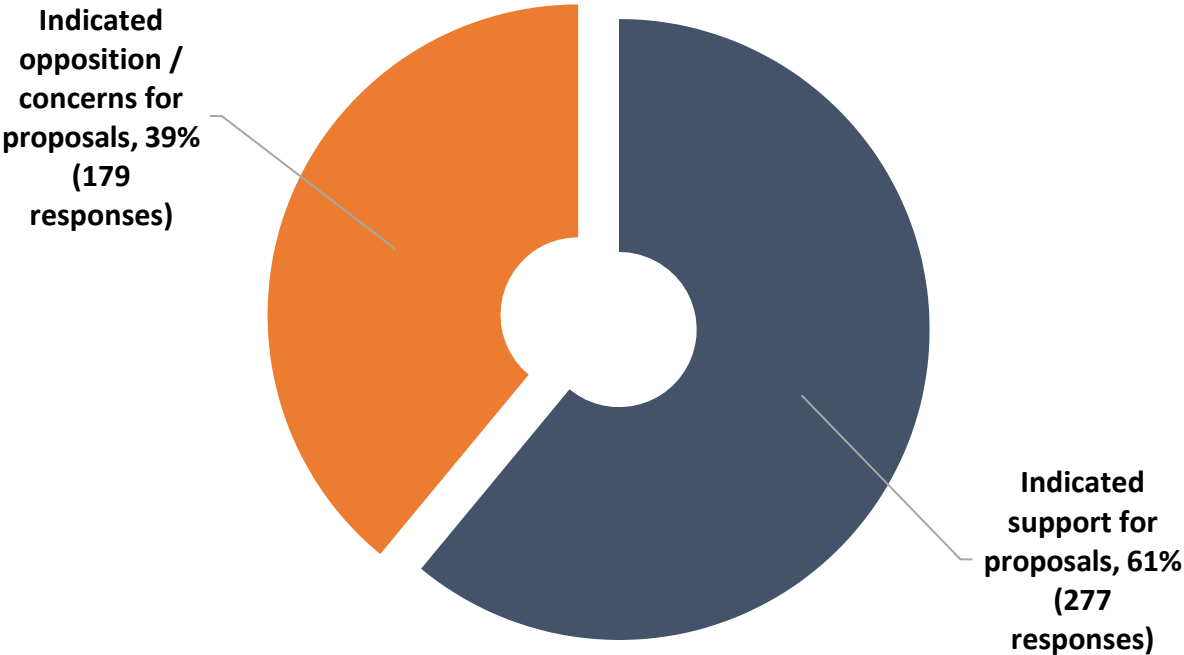
the total number of responses received to the informal consultation. Specific comments made by those taking part in the consultation have not been included for privacy reasons.

The feedback the consultation received included commentary with regards to how the consultation was conducted in terms of timelines for advising stakeholders and the clarity of proposals for consideration. Please note that the consultant’s analysis in this report is focused on feedback on the specific proposals for Project A only.

Please note that the consultant producing this report has not reviewed all responses to establish who submitted feedback and where those who submitted feedback live, i.e. within or outside of Bearsted. A proportion of the open text within the emails / letters sent to the consultant for review contain written references to living in Bearsted or representing groups / organisations within Bearsted. However, a significant proportion of the feedback received does not contain this information so the consultant is unable to quantify or detail the makeup of the feedback received. It is expected that the feedback received for this consultation came from Bearsted residents as well as other interested stakeholders in Project A plans.

OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Feedback from 456 individuals / households / organisations were provided to the consultant to analyse and consolidate feedback. Analysis of the feedback received from these 456 submissions concludes 61% of responses received support the proposals and 39% do not support and have concerns over the proposals outlined.

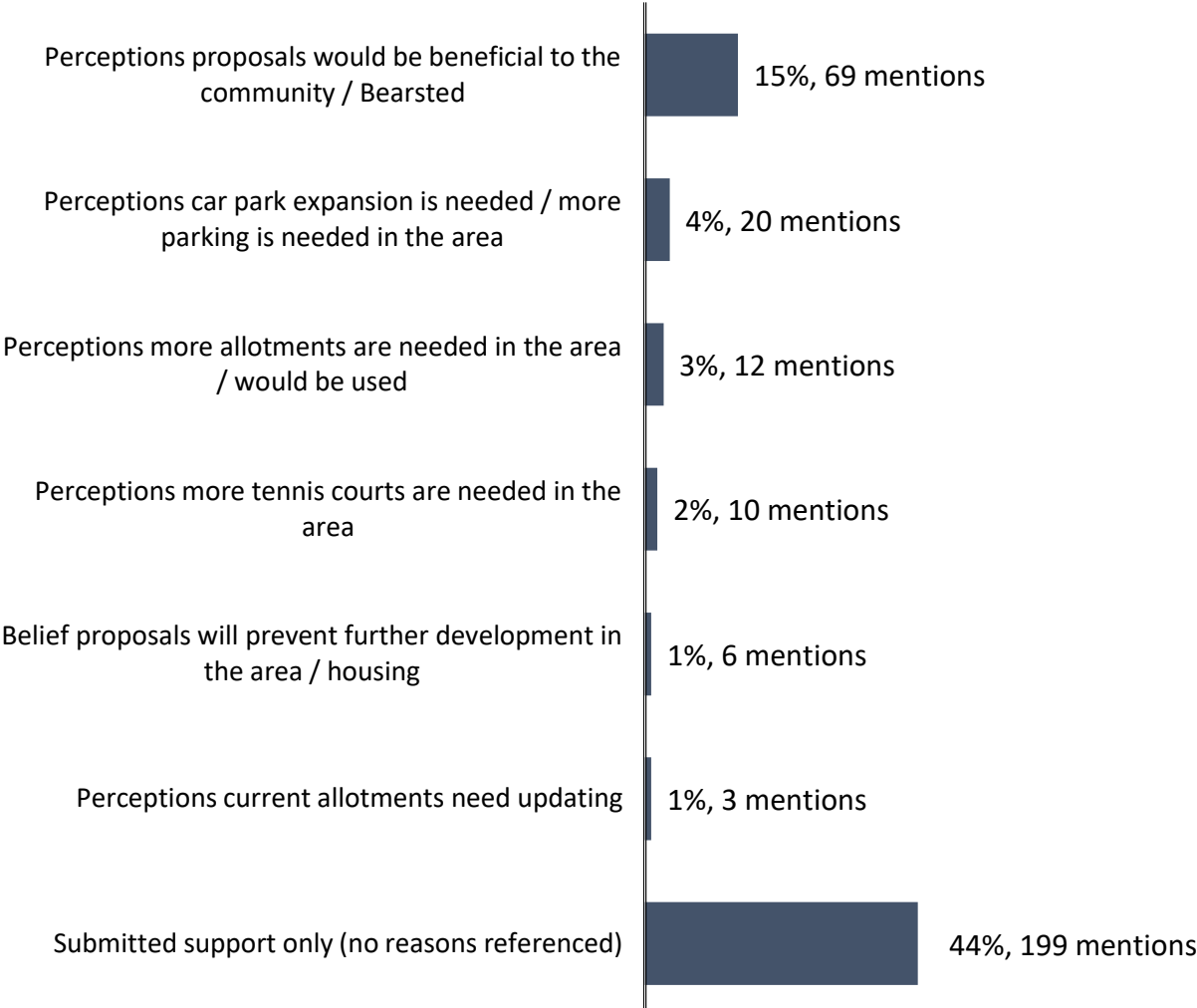


REASONS FOR SUPPORTING PROPOSALS

The reasons referenced by those who support the current proposals are summarised in the chart below. Please note percentages have been calculated based on the number of mentions out of the total number of responses received to the informal consultation.

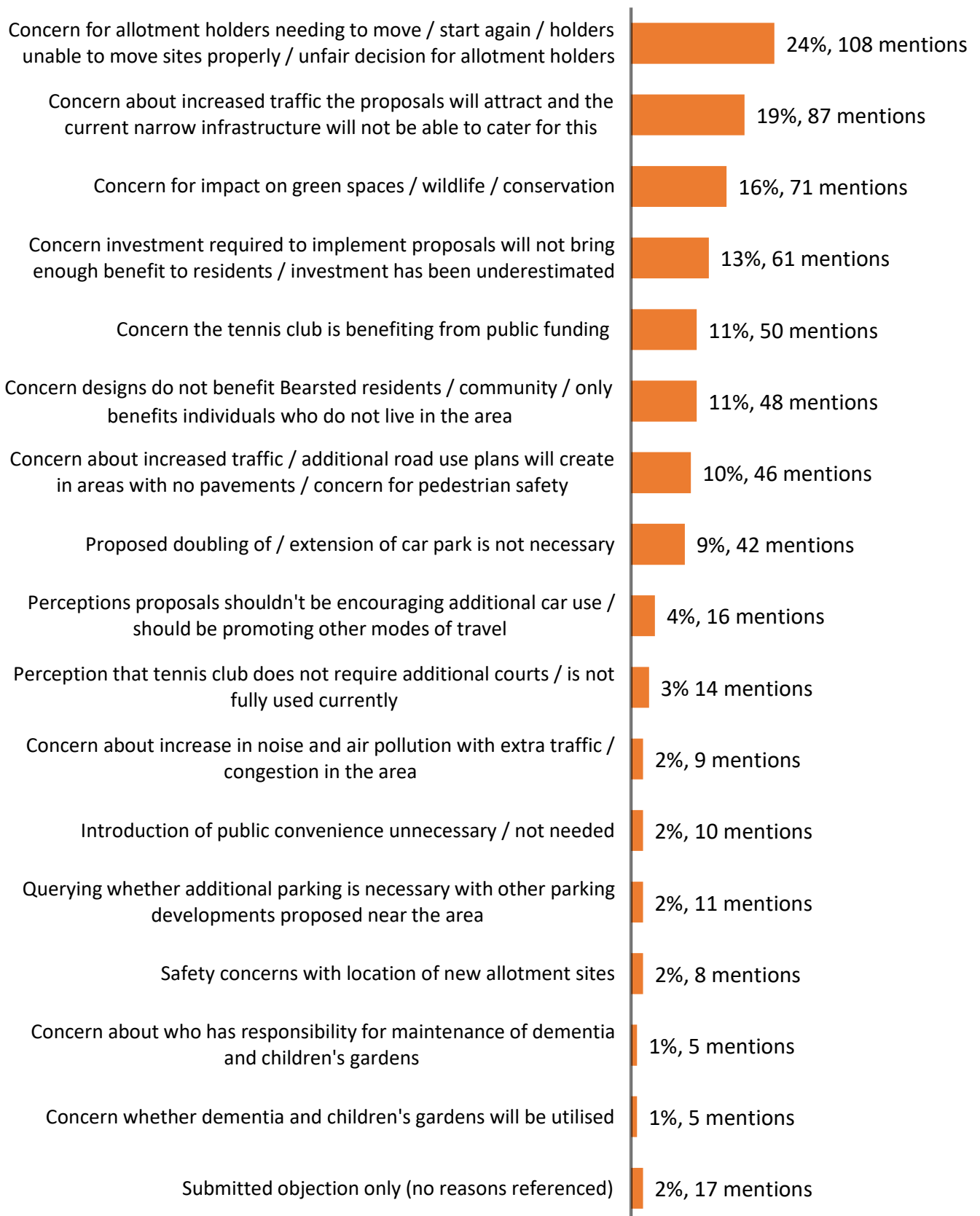
A significant proportion of those indicating their support for the proposals did not provide any additional commentary or detail to explain their support (199 of the 277 who indicated they support the proposal – 72%).

Amongst those who provided detail on why they support proposals, the most common reason is a perception that the proposals would be beneficial to the community / residents of Bearsted (69 mentions). A smaller proportion indicated they felt the car park expansion / additional parking is needed in the area (20 mentions), more allotments are needed in the area and would be used (12 mentions) and more tennis courts are needed in the area and would be used (10 mentions).



CONCERNS PUT FORWARD

A number of reasons were referenced by those who indicated they do not support the current proposals and these are summarised in the chart below:



The paragraphs below detail the concerns put forward with over 5% of mentions referenced in the feedback received so these can be reviewed and considered by Bearsted Parish Council.

Concern for allotment holders needing to move / start again / holders unable to move sites properly / unfair decision for allotment holders

Project A proposals reference that a comfortable transition period for the allotments is needed and the donated land needs to be prepared correctly for allotment owners to transition their allotments with as little impact to their crops as possible and is expected to take place over the two years.

Concerns with regards to the rehoming of allotment sites was received from both current allotment holders as well as Bearsted residents who do not currently have allotments. There is depth of feeling that the process of transferring allotment sites from one site to another is not a straightforward process and significant time and effort has been put into the current allotment sites, developed over a number of years. Whilst current proposals reference a comfortable transition period, those responding feel there could be more appreciation for the time taken to develop current sites, development of the new land will take considerable time to become as fertile / usable and how the length of time it will take before allotments are back to an equivalent standard. Amongst those responding who do not currently have an allotment, there is heartfelt appreciation for the appearance and maintenance of the current allotments and the contribution these sites bring to the community in terms of green / open space.

A significant proportion of those commenting on concern for the rehoming of the allotment sites propose an alternative use of the donated land. The alternative proposed suggests that the donated land is used for additional tennis / paddle courts as well as additional green space for the suggested dementia and/or children's garden or other green initiatives (with the current allotment sites staying in their current position). A number of those providing feedback in this area believe the new tennis / paddle courts would be positioned on a short and safe route from the existing site for those using if they were built on the donated land.

Concern about increased traffic the proposals will attract and the current narrow infrastructure will not be able to cater for this

As a result of the proposed expansion of the tennis club as well as the additional car parking space, there is significant concern that these proposals will bring additional traffic to the local area. The current road infrastructure is perceived to be narrow with concerns already felt with existing traffic movements through the area. Feedback commented on a lack of traffic calming measures in the area, vehicle accidents, sharp bends and condition and maintenance of the road surfaces. There is concern regarding the likelihood of additional traffic and the subsequent impact this may have on the safety of road users and local residents.

In addition to safety concerns, feedback also contained reference to perceptions of the plans encouraging the use of cars / driving as a mode of transport from an environmental perspective. Those commenting on this area feel the area is losing its green space and becoming increasingly developed from the perspective of housing and congestion. They also

believe that active travel should be encouraged as much as possible and additional car parking facilities contradicts this preferred approach.

Concern for impact on green spaces / wildlife / conservation

Feedback received in this area details the perceived loss of trees that currently occupies a significant proportion of the proposed land and Project A's proposals. There is concern that this will have a significant impact on wildlife / their habitats and there are a number of contrasts made to the loss of these in comparison to the development of facilities proposed under Project A. In the context of the local area itself and preferences within the local community to live and enjoy green / open spaces, it is felt that the proposals currently outlined under Project A will impact the balance of the area.

There are also references concerning the requirement of planning permission to fell trees that those who are providing feedback believe are subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Feedback has been provided that suggests that revised Tree Preservation Orders in the area include protection to individual trees located in the grove that straddles the proposal site.

Concern investment required to implement proposals will not bring enough benefit to residents / investment has been underestimated

Feedback references perceptions that the proposals themselves as well as the £100,000 contribution from Bearsted Parish Council will not deliver enough / the required benefits residents are looking for in the local area. Feedback in this area references that a significant proportion of local residents (i.e. allotment holders and those impacted by additional road use) will suffer as a result of the current proposals and not benefit from the level of investment proposed. The difference in the perceived benefits of local residents in comparison to Tennis Club members is considered unsettling in the feedback reviewed under this area. There is also concern that Bearsted Parish Council funding, commonly referred to as 'public funding' by those providing feedback, is being proposed to contribute towards Project A proposals and the benefit of private organisations.

Within feedback for this area, there is also some concern that the aforementioned £100,000 from Bearsted Parish Council will not be enough for the proposals outlined under Project A and believe the project's cost have been miscalculated.

Concern the Tennis Club is benefitting from public funding

In addition to the feedback outlined under the previous heading, there is also concern that the Tennis Club as an organisation is perceived to be gaining / helped in its development through the contribution of funding from Bearsted Parish Council to the proposals outlined under Project A. Feedback details that the Tennis Club is a 'private company and should not appear to be benefitted from public funding'. Whilst Project A details a number of proposals, one of which is the extension of the tennis / paddle courts, there is significant feedback that this extension will be the main recipient of the project's benefits.

Concern designs do not benefit Bearsted residents / community / benefits individuals who do not live in the area

There are a number of comments that reference perceptions of a significant proportion of current Tennis Club members do not live in Bearsted. Further to previous commentary, it is felt that those who are members of the Tennis Club will see the majority of the benefits from the proposals outlined currently. The use of 'public funding' for the proposals is therefore considered unfair amongst those providing feedback in this area.

Concern about increased traffic / additional road use plans will create in areas with no pavements / concern for pedestrian safety

In addition to concerns with regards to perceived additional traffic, there are also concerns for those travelling by foot within the immediate local area to the proposals. There are several references made to a lack of pavements / adequate pavements and the perceived safety of those travelling by foot (including children / older residents) currently. There are concerns that the safety of these individuals will be further compromised if the proposals attract additional traffic / congestion in the area.

Proposed doubling / extension of car park is not necessary

Feedback received in this area detailed that the existing car park is often observed not to be full / at capacity, with the exception of when a large event is taking place (for example, at the church). To this extent, increasing capacity is not felt to be a current need for the local area, particularly in conjunction with additional traffic and pedestrian safety concerns already highlighted in this report. Additional car parking space is felt to benefit those coming into the village as opposed to those living there, as such it is perceived that any public funding used to develop the car park will not benefit the local community.

Reconfiguration of the existing car park was suggested by a proportion of those providing feedback in this area. Inclusion of marked bays / clear signposting of spaces in the car park was put forward as an alternative to generate additional spaces within the existing car park / maximise use of the existing space available.

Feedback also detailed proposed plans for an Ashford Road car park as well as additional car parks in or near the local area. Amongst those commenting, these car parks are considered more suitable options for parking in the local area in comparison to the extension of the car park within Project A proposals.

QUERIES ON PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD UNDER PROJECT A

A series of questions and clarifications were included in the feedback submitted to Bearsted Parish Council. Whilst the consultant is aware of responses to these taking place during the consultation period, those frequently posed as follows:

- Whether there is any scope for the donated land to be used for the proposed tennis / paddle courts as well as some of the other initiatives e.g. children's / dementia gardens and the allotment plots can stay where they are.
- Further detail on the proposed plans under Project A including a breakdown of the costings for each component of Project A and how it will be funded.
- Any measures that are being considered in addition to those in Project A's current outline, for example road safety / security measures.
- The size and shape of the plots proposed in the relocation.
- The degree to which plots on the relocated land will be dug over, grass and weeds removed, soil fertilized and enriched and by whom.
- Who will cover the cost of new "permanent" plants e.g. Fruit trees, which may not be capable of being transplanted?
- Whether water will be provided at convenient locations for all plots.
- Whether sheds will be good construction and suitable size.
- Whether there has been any consideration given to "eco" measures within the allotments. e.g. Large waterbutts/tanks collecting water from shed roofs, solar powered lighting around the allotments and the provision of large compost bins.
- The processes to ensure the proposed allotments will be secure / ongoing security measures for allotment plot holders.
- Whether sites will be accessible by vehicles.
- Who has the responsibility for the proposed children's gardens and dementia gardens in terms of their maintenance and upkeep? Is there a cost to local residents for providing these facilities?

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS PUT FORWARD

Feedback contained some suggestions for consideration, both in the context of the land being discussed under Project A as well as ideas that would benefit the community. These have been listed below:

- Wildlife garden/ nature trail, incorporating a picnic / BBQ area and dementia garden area for families to enjoy with part of the allocated funding used to pay a community gardener to maintain the area and work with organisations to benefit all users.
- A new pavilion on The Green with facilities for all including a toilet block providing benefit to all residents, and utilisation of the Elizabeth Harvey field for larger functions that require additional parking.
- Use of land to meet local unmet need in terms of school outside/nature space, catering for teenage needs.
- Improve sport / leisure facilities for the wider community of Bearsted (publicly funded).
- Rebuilding the guide and scout huts and giving them more land.
- Retain the new gifted land as a mix of open and woodland area to compliment the adjoining Bearsted Woodland Trust.

RECOMMENDATION

The consultant recommends Bearsted Parish Council review the details of this report in full and continue an open dialogue with Bearsted residents and relevant stakeholders to discuss the feedback collected to date.

Questions raised by members of the Project A Working Group

1. Can Lake Market Research identify where **all 456** respondents live
 - a) in Bearsted
 - b) outside Bearsted?

Please see the below paragraph in page 3 of the report. Lake was provided the emails received to the consultation but was not any given information on which of these email addresses had been validated in terms of where the residents live (in or outside of Bearsted). As a result we cannot comment on whether respondents live as whilst some of the emails contained reference to being a resident, these did not cover enough of a proportion to be able to make an accurate judgement and statement within the report. In addition, to make such a statement we would usually verify further that anyone that mentions they are a resident with their email address / contact details to make sure they are a resident – something as a research agency we are unable to do.

Please note that the consultant producing this report has not reviewed all responses to establish who submitted feedback and where those who submitted feedback live, i.e. within or outside of Bearsted. A proportion of the open text within the emails / letters sent to the consultant for review contain written references to living in Bearsted or representing groups / organisations within Bearsted. However, a significant proportion of the feedback received does not contain this information so the consultant is unable to quantify or detail the makeup of the feedback received. It is expected that the feedback received for this consultation came from Bearsted residents as well as other interested stakeholders in Project A plans.

2. How many of the 456 respondents can Lake Market Research identify live
 - a) in Bearsted
 - b) outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

3. Can Lake Market Research breakdown in terms of submissions
 - a) The number of respondents for Project A that can be identified as live in Bearsted
 - b) The number of respondents for Project A that can be identified as live outside Bearsted
 - c) The number of respondents opposed to Project A that can be identified as live in Bearsted
 - d) The number of respondents opposed to Project A that can be identified as live outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

4. Can Lake Market Research confirm that the out of 277 respondents for Project A, 199 did not give any reason for support?

Yes this is correct

5. Can Lake Market Research confirm how many of the 277 respondents for Project A
 - a) Live in Bearsted
 - b) Live outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

6. Can Lake Market Research confirm how many of the 199 respondents for Project A who were unable to give a reason
 - a) Live in Bearsted
 - b) Live outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

7. Can Lake Market Research confirm how many of the 78 respondents for Project A who were able to give reasons
 - a) Live in Bearsted
 - b) Live outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

8. Can Lake Market Research confirm how many of the 179 respondents opposed to Project A
 - c) Live in Bearsted
 - d) Live outside Bearsted

Cannot answer – see above – it would be misleading to include this information when we did not ask those completing to do so. Any numbers included in the report would be subject to scrutiny because there were so many we could not verify amongst those in favour and against.

9. Can Lake Market Research confirm how their percentages are calculated: i.e

2% = 10 mentions 3% = 12 mentions 4% = 20 mentions

As noted previously, all percentages are calculated out of the total number of responses received – 456 – so 10 mentions will be 2%, 12 mentions will be 3% and 20 mentions will be 4%.

This is also referenced to at the bottom of page 2 in the report:

The strength of feedback received for reasons for supporting and not supporting the proposals have been summarised in terms of the number of people referencing them in their feedback as well the calculated percentage of these mentions out of the total number of responses received to the informal consultation. Specific comments made by those taking part in the consultation have not been included for privacy reasons.