Inspired Living: A Design Code to enhance design in Northern Cambridge Neighbourhoods

Phase 1 Understanding your neighbourhood and establishing a vision
Survey Results v1 09/10/2023

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Executive summary

Introduction

Inspired Living is a design code pilot aimed at enhancing the standard of design in northern Cambridge including areas of Arbury, Kings Hedges and West Chesterton. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, working with Pollard Thomas Edwards architects are collaborating with local communities in three phases on this project. As part of phase 1, we have sought to better understand the neighbourhood by hearing views of the community through online survey, comments on an online map, culminating in a small drop in exhibition and workshop on 27th September 2023. The comments received from these interactions are being used to inform the next phases of our engagement and will directly inform the design code.

Below is the summary of the phase 1 online survey, where we received 116 submissions. 59 participants also made a total of 126 individual comments on the interactive area map which you can view here. The online survey includes a broad mix of participants with a range of ages above 20 and incomes. We would like to engage further with young people and schools.

Summary of Results

The survey asked questions about how people got around, their views on local green spaces/play areas, the use of local shops and facilities, the things that they most liked about the area and what could be improved.

- **Getting around**

This theme included question on walking, cycling, mobility storage, public transport and the private vehicles and safety.

Cycling is very popular, with most people making trips by bike at least a few times a week. Bike ownership is very high in the area, with most households having 2-3 bikes. However, around half of the surveys said people did not feel safe cycling on local streets. There was a desire for better cycling infrastructure (cycle lanes, bike storage), improved junctions and street lighting.

Public transport use is low. The survey indicates people would be encouraged to use it more if it was more regular and convenient.

The code will need to provide for car parking, as most households have one car, with a minority having more than 1 car. Around 18% of respondents did not have a car.

- **Local Green spaces and play areas**

This theme included questions on playground and parks, gaps, underused spaces and neighbourhood character.

Access to green spaces, and the presence of trees and planting, is the most valued and widely shared characteristic of the area. However about 40% of respondents did

not use the parks and playgrounds. Local playgrounds are used but many people said there were problems with antisocial behaviour and poor design.

People felt that the landscape can be much better, with more tree planting, better play for all ages, better design and management of spaces, areas of focus, places for meeting, with enhancements to green spaces being the most popular suggestion for improvement.

- **Quality and Accessibility of Shops and community facilities**

This theme included questions on community facilities and neighbourhood character.

People value their local shops and facilities, with a large majority finding it easy to access the local shops. People generally find these met their everyday needs, but would like to see more facilities for young adults, a pharmacy and some more restaurants/cafes/pubs rather than takeaways, etc. However, they would like to see these facilities supported by improvements to shops as well as public realm.

- **Neighbourhood Character and buildings**

This theme included questions on what people liked about their neighbourhood and what they felt could be improved.

People valued green space, trees and planting and felt that the contributed most to the neighbourhood's character. They valued the accessibility to local shop, community facilities and school and valued a sense of community all contributing to the neighbourhood character. At the same time people felt that the green spaces and a sense of community could be strengthened.

The look and feel of the existing buildings were by a wide margin the least popular characteristic of the area. Improving the design of buildings was the close-second most popular survey suggestion after improving green spaces.

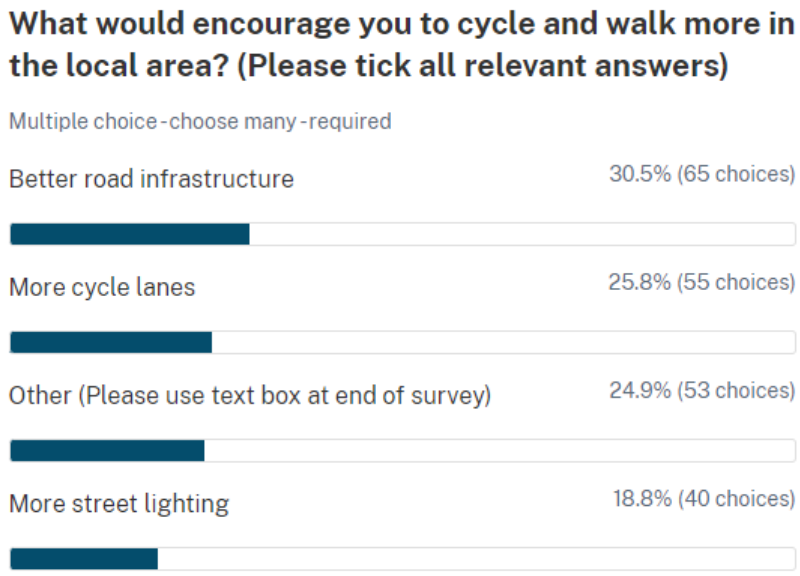
Detailed Survey Results

Walking and Cycling

How easy is it to walk and cycle in the area? For example, go to the local shops and schools?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

Quite easy	46.6% (54 choices)
Very easy	20.7% (24 choices)
Quite hard	15.5% (18 choices)
Neither	13.8% (16 choices)
Very hard	3.4% (4 choices)



Residents loved the new cycle lane infrastructure recently delivered on Histon Road and Arbury Road and wanted more cycle paths in the area. They found the junction at Histon Road and Warwick Road complicated. However, they wished the continuation of cycleway on Arbury Road, recognising the constraints of a narrow road and pavement. They also felt that new cycling infrastructure needs to be properly thought through, citing the right turn from the new cycle lane on Arbury Road into Campkin Road as dangerous. It made it harder to pull out before the junction and sandwiched cyclists between motor traffic going north and south as they wait for a safe moment to turn.

They would like to see pavements and verges in a better state of repair with drop curbs, more even pavements in all areas, potholes repaired, making spaces more accessible and easier for disabled users in wheelchairs, mobility scooters, children on bikes, the elderly, pram and push chairs. They felt that the surfacing was particularly bad around Pulley Park, Aragon, Sackville Close areas, the route to Arbury Court, Northfield Avenue Road and Campkin Road near roundabouts.

Some residents highlighted the need to have more benches in the area including the route along Histon Road and from Roseford Road to the Co-op for people to rest when walking to shops.

Some residents felt the need to improve pedestrian safety particularly for children cycling on Arbury Road (Milton Road end) which was putting them into massive conflict with motorists due to the road narrowing and parked cars. One stated that Carlton Way is particularly unsafe during school drop offs whilst another was concerned about the safety for cars and cyclist at the junction between Mansel Way and Arbury Road.

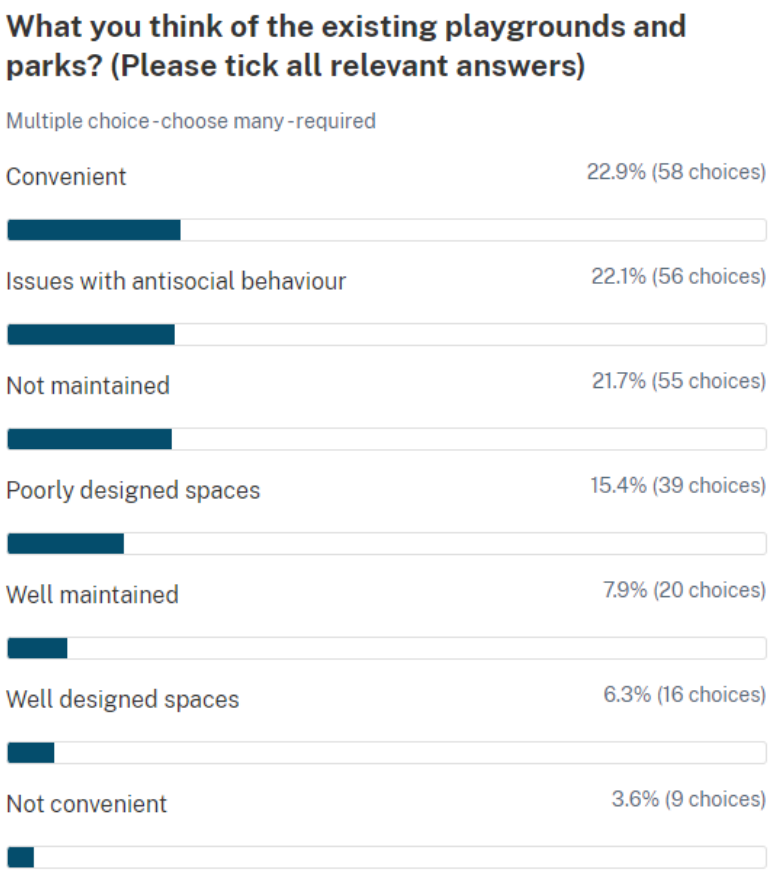
One resident commented that walking along the street in parts of Kings Hedges can feel isolating because pedestrians are surrounded by high fences needed for residents to have privacy in their back gardens.

Playgrounds and Parks

Do you use the playgrounds and parks?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

Yes	58.6% (68 choices)
No	41.4% (48 choices)



Residents felt that parks need to be better maintained as the grass is untidy, hard to walk through when it rains, hiding potential hazards such as dog poo and needles which you get in this area. Some residents felt that they didn't feel safe to let their toddlers walk around. Bins are constantly overflowing and not emptied leading to litter blowing around everywhere, which toddlers tend to play with, which is unsafe. The messy grass beds could become nice wildflower verges like other councils have done.

They felt that some of the play areas are rather run down or lack new equipment. and that they should have toilets in all of them. One commented that their favourite park is the infant area at Nuns way but some of its features like the little bridge are yet to be replaced.

Some residents mentioned that the local provision in parks trends too far towards providing 'Type C' spaces, at the expense of 'Type A' spaces. They feel that smaller, high quality play facilities offer parents the opportunity to meet and get to know other parents and children within their immediate local area, building a stronger sense of community.

They felt that there is a greater emphasis on providing 'modern' versions of play equipment such as tilted roundabouts, 'conceptual' climbing frames, monkey bars, 4-way see saws etc. that are aimed mainly for children of school age and above. They would like to see classic items such as slides, swings, roundabouts, see-saws, which can be used by all children including toddlers, pre-schoolers but also by all age groups.

Residents cited the Nuns Way pavilion, which is council owned but run by Northern Cambridge Community Partnership as a good example of venues run by local people in theory. However, they needed funding, capacity and checks and balances from the council to ensure that they are maintained, open regularly and serving the need of the wider community. It also needs investment for its up-keep.

There were suggestions to:

- improve Nuns way skatepark - demolish the old metal one and build a fit for purpose concrete mini ramp - 3 to 4 foot high, so more suitable for a range of abilities.
- replace dog poo bins and add more litter bins.
- improve the footpath/cycle path down the side of the Pulley play area park, on King's Hedges recreation ground.
- provide more seating and benches.
- improve playgrounds for kids at St Albans recreation grounds, Kings Hedges and Orchard Park.

Car Parking

Do you have a car or van?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

Yes, 1 vehicle	67.2% (78 choices)
No	18.1% (21 choices)
Yes, 2	12.1% (14 choices)
Yes, 3 or more	2.6% (3 choices)

Do you feel safe parking your car where you live?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

Yes	76.7% (89 choices)
No	23.3% (27 choices)

Residents felt that parking around Arbury School is anti-social and very dangerous at drop off and pick up time. They felt that there are significant problems locally, with insufficient convenient parking provision, leading to inconsiderate parking on grassed areas, turning areas, opposite other vehicles etc. On-street parking needs dedicated spots otherwise it can lead to a parking maze with dangerous and poor visibility.

Cycle Use and Storage

How many bicycles does your household have?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

3 or more	47.4% (55 choices)
2	25% (29 choices)
1	16.4% (19 choices)
None	11.2% (13 choices)

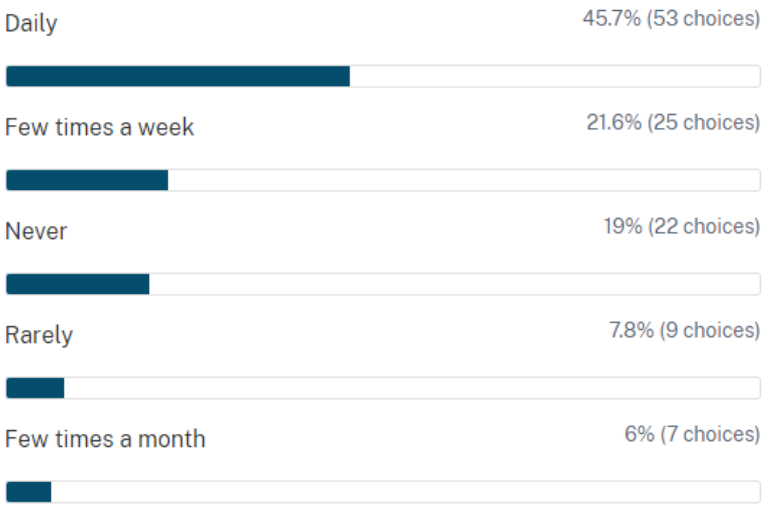
Do you have an e-bike or e-scooter?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

No	84.5% (98 choices)
Yes	15.5% (18 choices)

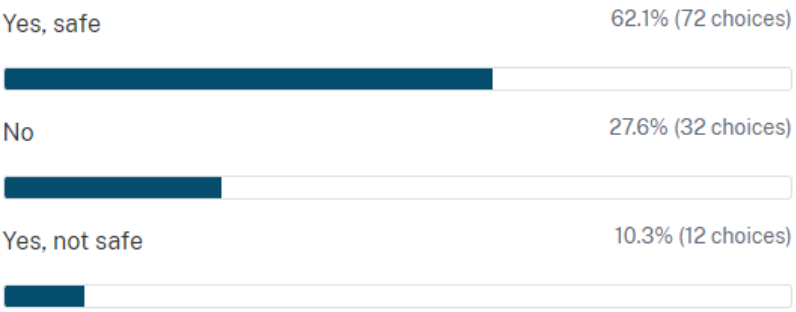
How often are the bikes/e-bikes/scooters used in your household?

Multiple choice - choose one - required



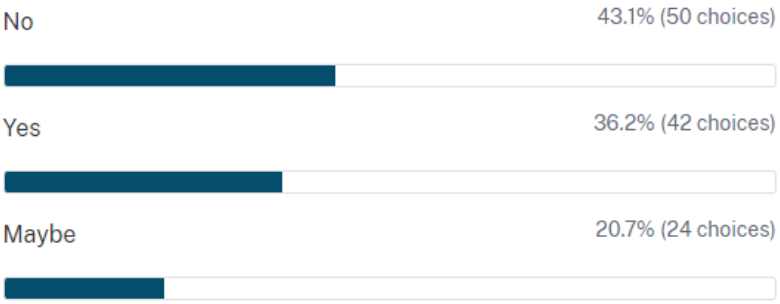
Do you have access to a secure bike store, and does it feel safe to leave your bike there?

Multiple choice - choose one - required



Would more convenient bike storage encourage you to cycle more?

Multiple choice - choose one - required



Residents felt that the area needed more secure bike racks, Sheffield bars for bikes (rather than the horrible wheel twisters that get installed as a cheap option in some places).

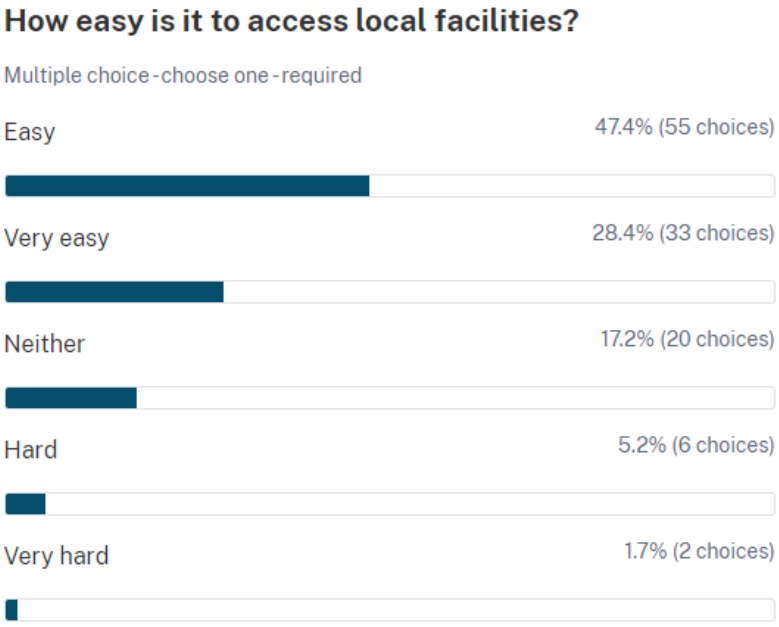
There was a suggestion that perhaps a scheme to provide subsidised bike storage options for households could be introduced as the cost of private purchase for these is high. However, if the council were to buy in bulk, then a discount could be negotiated with suppliers.

Community Facilities

In general, what do you think about the local facilities you use? For example, shops, restaurants, schools, community hubs

Multiple choice - choose many - required

Meets my everyday needs	24.9% (59 choices)
Well used	19.4% (46 choices)
Doesn't meet my everyday needs	17.7% (42 choices)
Good quality	13.5% (32 choices)
Poor quality	11.4% (27 choices)
Other (please use the text box at the end of the survey)	6.8% (16 choices)
Underused	6.3% (15 choices)

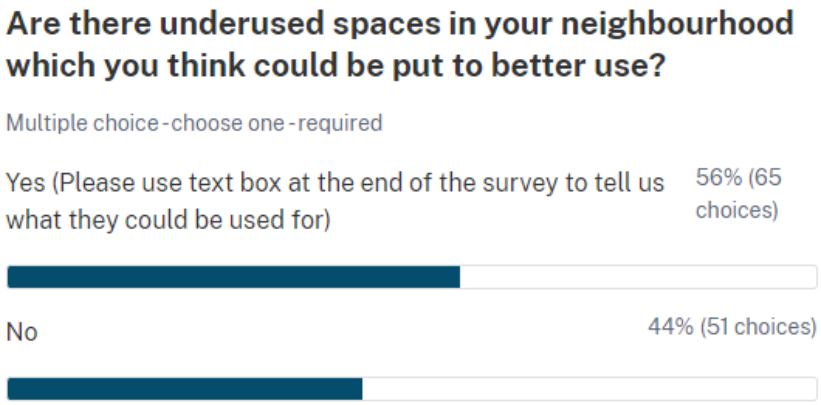


Residents felt that the area lacked restaurants, cafes, music venues, pubs, youth clubs, community hub, sports halls, pharmacies, post offices, a decent sized supermarket, a well-maintained football pitch and dentists whilst there were too many takeaways. They would like to see facilities that cater for older children and young adults such as a coffee bar with pool, darts, and gaming. Residents are pleased with Chesterton School and sports centre and the Meadows and Akeman Street Community Centres for providing a good mix of uses including a café. They would like to see the Carlton Arms staying as a working pub.

They felt that Arbury community centre is poorly maintained. They felt Arbury Court has improved recently for shopping with one mentioning that they loved the art on the side of Arbury Court. Some areas such as Arbury Court are underused, and they suggest providing a café and shelter to be more like a community hub. They suggested more benches for elderly people to rest in between shopping. Residents wrote that Arbury court is lively on weekdays but there is less activity at weekends and is less welcoming. They felt that a regular programme of community events in Arbury Court would benefit everyone.

Residents would like to see shops and services in Arbury court open throughout the day. They would like there to be afternoon community groups in Arbury / Kings Hedges and community a hub to meet and be warm in the winter. They felt that parking can be difficult at the Arbury Community centre as it is always full.

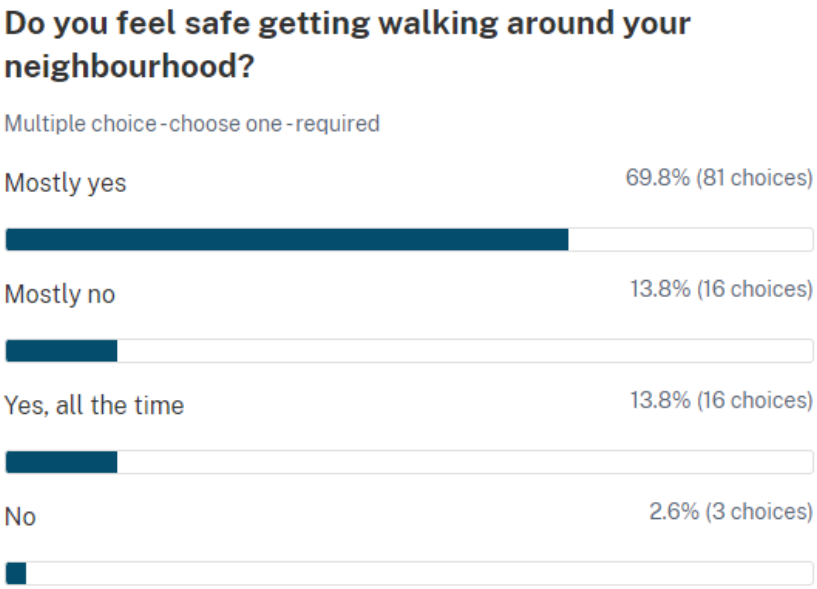
Gaps and underused spaces



Residents felt that there are neglected gaps and underused spaces, particularly within Kings Hedges, which provide a green buffer, could potentially be made more friendly and welcoming with flowers, benches and bins that are regularly emptied to decrease littering. They should not automatically be considered for alternative use. A programme should be implemented to improve ill planned open spaces which could contribute to those protected within the ward.

They liked the green spaces running through Kings Hedges but felt that there are few facilities / features within them that would encourage community use such as more benches, meeting spaces. They suggested subsidised Council marquee hire to help facilitate street / neighbourhood celebrations, provision of greater bike parking facilities to help people get around in a low carbon way and the provision of community cooking areas outside - brick BBQs in safe areas.

Safety



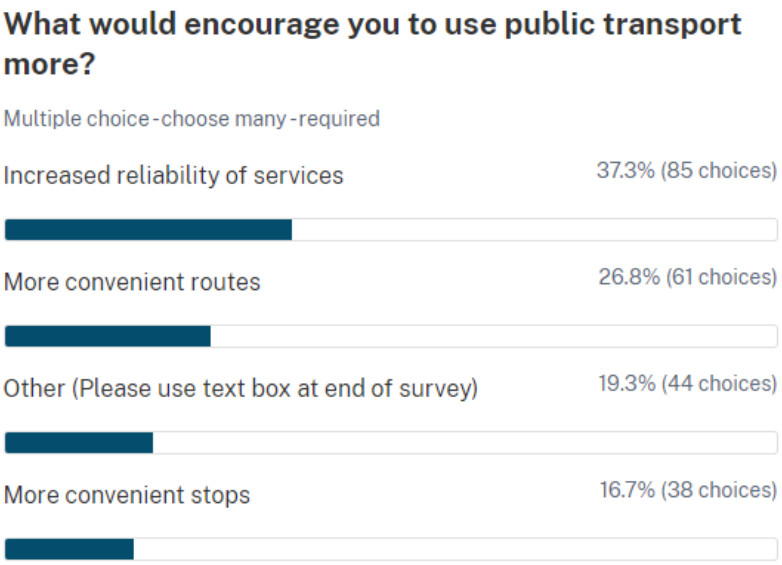
Residents expressed some safety concerns about walking at night in the dark, particularly for lone women as there are dimly lit, isolated pathways in parts of Kings Hedges and Arbury. Some residents felt that they have no choice but to walk around late at night and sometimes streetlights do not work. They felt that there needs to be better lighting on footpaths to help teen girls and women feel safe and help the visually impaired. They felt some streets such as Stretten Avenue are unsafe because of the sheer volume of cars parked on them. Resident pedestrians felt less safe on footpaths because of their use by cyclists, e-bikes and e-scooters.

Public Transport

How often do you use public transport (trains and/or buses)?

Multiple choice - choose one - required

Rarely	60.3% (70 choices)
Weekly	19% (22 choices)
Never	11.2% (13 choices)
Every few days	9.5% (11 choices)



Residents felt that bus services are expensive, subject to last minute cancellations, slow, dirty, lack sufficient ventilation and that there is not enough space on buses for wheelchairs and buggies. They would like to see smaller buses doing different journeys in the area to cater for more people. They felt some bus routes are quite inconvenient with little service to Cambridge north train station and for buses into Cambridge which often involves a long walk at one end or the other.

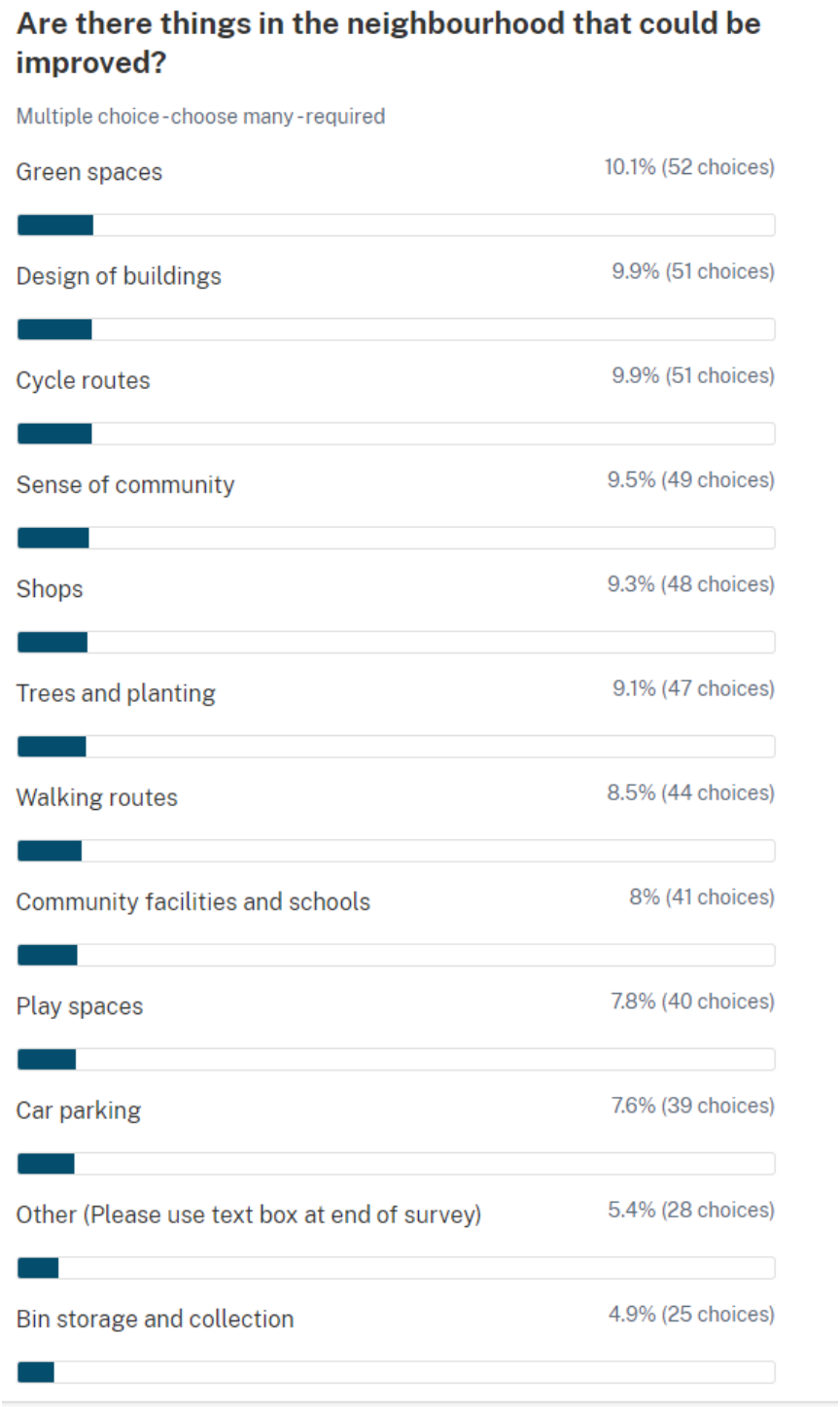
Residents would like to see bus stops with shelter, seating and up-to-date timetables. They would like to see Histon Road bus stops reinstated and buses always stopping at the new floating bus stops (at Brownlow Road, Carisbrooke Road) to pick up residents. Residents felt frustrated with the 15-20 minute break in service that buses regularly take at the intersection of Campkin Road and Arbury Road because there often isn't another alternative bus available that residents can board instead.

Neighbourhood Character

What do you like about your neighbourhood?

Multiple choice - choose many - required

Green spaces	16.2% (73 choices)
Trees and planting	13.3% (60 choices)
Shops	11.8% (53 choices)
Sense of community	10.4% (47 choices)
Community facilities and schools	10% (45 choices)
Cycle routes	8.7% (39 choices)
Walking routes	8.4% (38 choices)
Play spaces	6.2% (28 choices)
Bin storage and collection	4.2% (19 choices)
Other (Please use text box at end of survey)	4% (18 choices)
Car parking	3.8% (17 choices)
Design of buildings	2.9% (13 choices)



Residents would like to see better maintenance of benches, fences, the grass being cut regularly on green spaces, removal of weeds from the pavements, repair of uneven pavements, cleaner streets, less litter and repairs to King's Hedges splash pad and climbing frame, and the provision of more dropped kerbs for wheelchair users. They felt that playgrounds are poorly designed and not accessible for children with dwarfism.

Residents raised concern about drug use; illegal camping on public spaces; cycle theft; fly tipping; vandalised communal property; and some occurrences of anti-social behaviour at Arbury Court and Tesco's on Campkin Road.

Residents would like to see better use of existing spaces for many more trees and wildflower planting, long grass/wildflower verges/areas, hedging, spring bulbs as well as community growing spaces/allotments. They would like the provision of some raised beds/boxes along some roads/paths for sensory planting. Residents would like there to be more permanent public artworks installed to reinforce Cambridge as a prime cultural and artistic location.