
Lower Green Placemaking Engagement: Consultation Statement



December 2024



Elmbridge
Borough Council

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Introduction

This consultation statement summaries the engagement methods and community engagement activities that were conducted for the Lower Green Placemaking Project ('Project'). The purpose of the engagement was to gather opinions, concerns and aspirations about Lower Green from the people who live, work and visit there ('community'). This engagement took place from 9 September to 7 October 2024. The document outlines how the council conducted the engagement, summarises the feedback received, and explains how this feedback influenced the Project's Vision and Objectives.

Background

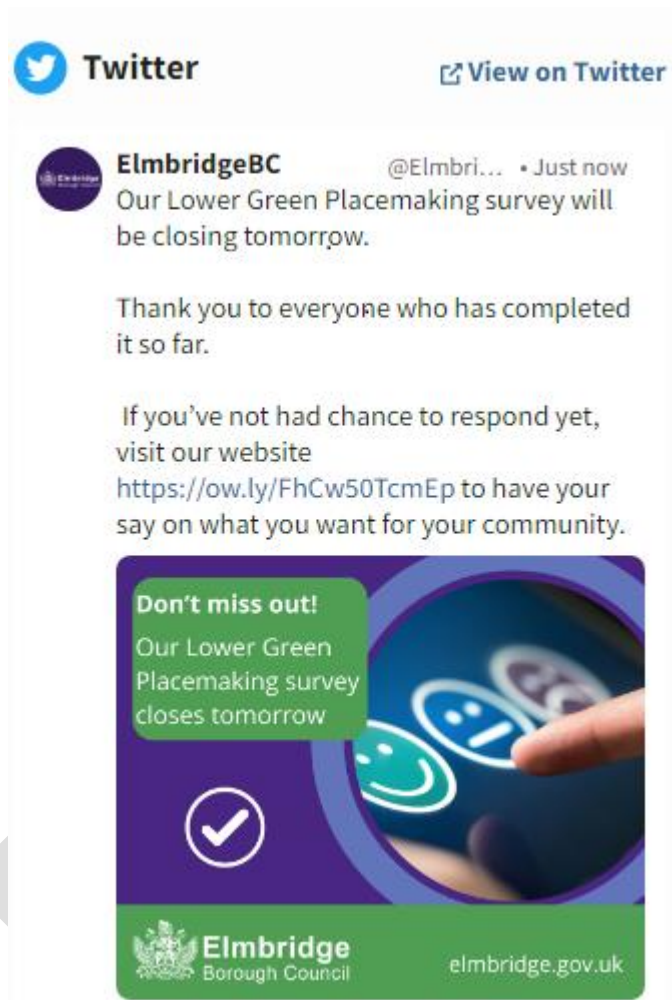
1. Lower Green Placemaking is part of the council's three-year Transformation Programme, providing an opportunity for the council to consider and identify ways to improve the area for the benefit of the Lower Green community.
2. Significant efforts have been made to explore how to implement ambitious yet realistic changes to Lower Green, aimed at improving the area for the community. This process involved collaborating with Councillors to draft the Lower Green Vision, which outlines potential goals for the area and serves as a guide for future developments and improvements.
3. In addition, the council has developed the Lower Green Placemaking Objectives, which outline the goals for the Project aimed at transforming Lower Green from a place the community likes into a place it loves. This work included an assessment of the area's constraints and opportunities to explore how to achieve these goals. As a result, a high-level feasibility assessment was conducted, identifying various options and potential improvements for Lower Green.
4. The council recognises the importance of including the community's views, aspirations and concerns in its future plans. To facilitate this, an initial community engagement event was scheduled from 9 September to 7 October 2024, to listen to and gather the community's input.
5. Before the engagement began, the council met with key stakeholders from

Lower Green for briefings on 30 July and 6 September 2024, via Teams. The purpose of these meetings was to inform them about the upcoming initial engagement and to ask for their support in engaging with the entire community, including those who may be hard to reach. Additionally, a Councillors briefing was held on 15 July 2024.

6. To inform everyone about the upcoming engagement event, the council created dedicated pages on its website elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2024/lower-green-placemaking. These pages included details and updates about the Project, as well as the survey for the community to share their views. Additionally, updates were shared with stakeholders, Councillors, local media, and the community through residents' newsletters.



7. The council also conducted promotions across various social media platforms such as Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, before and during the engagement period.



8. To ensure inclusive engagement, the council used various methods to engage with the community during the initial engagement. These methods included posting posters on noticeboards, shops, Lower Green Community Centre and businesses in the area. Additionally, the council sent out letters to approximately 1,200 residents in the area, providing a QR code to access the survey.
9. Two drop-in sessions were held to answer questions about the Project and assist with completing the survey. The first session took place on 17

September from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Lower Green Community Centre, Esher. The second session was held on 26 September from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Cranmere Primary School, Arran Way. Additionally, an officer was available at the Lower Green Community Centre for a full day on 30 September and on 2 October from 9:30 am to 11:30 am.

17 September

11:30am to 1:30pm

Lower Green
Community Centre
Recreation Ground
KT10 8AU

26 September

5:00pm to 7:00pm

Cranmere Primary
School
Arran Way
KT10 8BE

Engagement Response

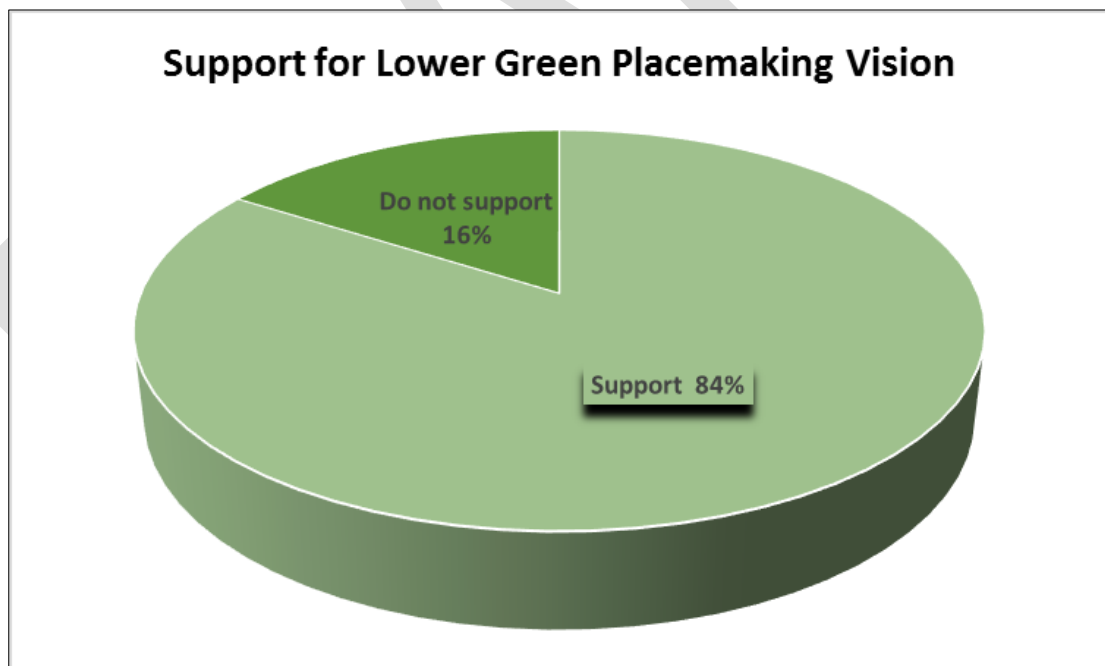
10. Our main method of collecting feedback was through surveys on the council's planning consultation portal and directly on the council's website, which did not require users to sign in elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2024/lower-green-placemaking. The council also gathered handwritten surveys during drop-in sessions.
11. The survey questions were designed to enable respondents to share their thoughts in their own words, allowing the council to capture a variety of views and opinions. In addition, closed questions were included for easier data assessment, such as, "Do you use the Recreation Ground?"
12. Officers worked closely with community members to develop the survey, ensuring that the language was simple and easy to understand while capturing the relevant data needed for the Project. Additionally, we piloted the survey with a community member before launching it.
13. The council acknowledged that not everyone wanted to complete the survey,

so we sought feedback through emails and post-it notes during the drop-in sessions.

14. We received a total of 110 responses, of which 107 were from completed surveys. Among the completed surveys, 68% of the respondents were residents of Lower Green, while 6% worked in the area. The remaining respondents had some connection to Lower Green, such as visiting the area.
15. The comments received through the engagement process, along with the council's responses and any changes made to the Project based on this feedback, are detailed below. Feedback that fell outside the Project's scope was directed to the appropriate service area.

Feedback from Surveys

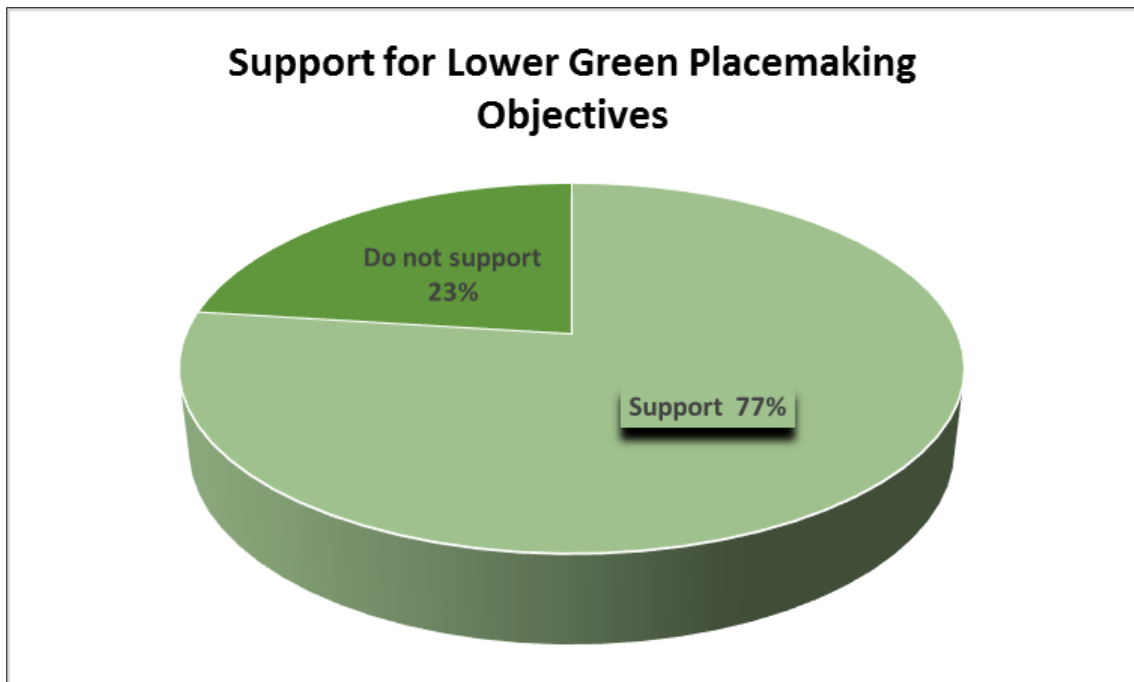
Feedback on the Lower Green Placemaking Vision



16. The survey asked respondents if they supported the Lower Green Placemaking Vision, and the results showed strong backing, with 84% of respondents indicating their support for the Vision.

17. The feedback on why respondents supported the Vision varied significantly. Some recognised the need for improved connectivity, safer roads, enhanced green spaces, better transport links and upgraded community facilities. Others emphasised the importance of creating a safe and attractive environment that fosters a sense of community and well-being.
18. More than 13% of responses highlighted the importance of preserving green spaces, the playground, and the Lower Green Community Centre for families and children.
19. Among the respondents who did not support the Vision, various concerns were expressed. These included worries about the potential loss of green space, the expansion of industrial sites, and the impact of additional housing on the area's social, environmental and financial aspects. Additionally, some respondents desired more tangible actions and real improvements rather than just plans.
20. However, some of the respondents who did not support the Vision acknowledged that the area has limited public transport options and is difficult to access due to the railway line and the river. They expressed a desire for initiatives that would improve accessibility to and within the area.
21. The council has made the following changes to the Lower Green Vision in response to these comments:
- The Lower Green Placemaking Vision was amended to specify that green spaces will be improved through any redevelopment of the area.
 - The Lower Green Placemaking Objectives have been amended to include that the council will consider and implement the necessary infrastructure to support any new developments, which may involve additional homes and/or commercial expansion.
 - The first line of the Vision was amended to read: "The Lower Green Vision will ensure that any future development will consider the impact on the area's social, environmental and economic aspects."

Feedback on the Lower Green Placemaking Objectives



22. The survey asked participants if they supported the Lower Green Placemaking Objectives, with 77% showing strong approval.
23. The feedback from respondents who supported the Objectives highlighted a desire to improve access to green spaces, enhance local amenities and community facilities, and create active travel routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
24. However, among those who did not support the Objectives, concerns varied. Many expressed fears about the expansion of industrial uses and the construction of additional homes. They were worried about the potential impacts of new developments on existing infrastructure, including schools, healthcare services and traffic.
25. A total of 9% of all respondents expressed the need for more detailed information about the proposed developments before forming a definitive opinion.
26. The council noted the feedback and will seek to address this during the later

stages of the Project as follows:

- Concerns about the potential impact of development on the existing green spaces, local shops and community facilities shall be addressed as part of the design stage of the Project. During this time, the Lower Green community will have the opportunity to highlight any concerns through additional engagement.
- The council acknowledges the lack of clear plans at this stage. However, there are currently no viable proposals available. During the next stage of the engagement process, there will be an opportunity for the Lower Green community to consider any potential options for the area.

Feedback on Statements about Lower Green

27. The survey responses to the statements about how best to describe Lower Green varied widely, with a range of answers from strongly disagree to strongly agree. However, for simplicity, the responses for each statement have been summarised below:

Opinions on statements related to Lower Green

1. It has a Sense of Community:

The majority of responses showed that respondents felt neutral about the statement that Lower Green has a sense of community. However, the next highest response was that they agreed with this statement.

2. It Feels Safety:

The feedback on whether Lower Green felt safe was mostly neutral, with many respondents selecting neutral, indicating they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. However, the next highest response was that respondents agreed with this statement.

3. It has Good Access to Employment Opportunities:

The feedback regarding Lower Green's access to employment opportunities showed that most respondents did not agree with the statement, with neutral and disagree being the top chosen responses.

4. Proximity of Schools:

The majority of respondents strongly agreed that schools are within walking

distance.

5. Availability of Local Services:

The responses about the availability and quality of local services varied significantly, with most respondents disagreeing and many others agreeing.

6. Proximity to Nature and Wildlife:

The majority of the feedback showed that respondents agreed that Lower Green is close to nature and wildlife.

7. Nearness to River Network:

Most respondents agreed that the Lower Green is near the river network.

8. Access to Green Space:

The feedback includes a variety of responses: agree, strongly agree and neutral, reflecting mixed opinions about whether Lower Green has access to green spaces.

28. The overall feedback indicated that Lower Green has a valued community, with many respondents appreciating the area's strong sense of community, as well as its access to schools, wildlife and rivers. However, the feedback also pointed out the need to improve safety, local services, employment opportunities and access to green spaces.
29. The council has taken note of the feedback and will address it as follows in the Vision:
- The Vision will be revised to acknowledge the necessity of creating a safe space that provides essential services and enhances connectivity for better access to employment opportunities. However, the Vision should be both aspirational and realistic, understanding that not all improvements may be fully attainable.

Improvements to Lower Green

30. The survey identified some of the improvements that the Project aims to deliver and asked respondents to rate their importance using the following options: very important, important and not important. While responses varied, all categories (listed below) were overwhelmingly regarded as very important by the respondents:

- Enhancing the design quality of new development
 - Providing opportunities for leisure
 - Increasing the provision of shops
 - Improving safety
 - Enhancing biodiversity
 - Enhancing green spaces
 - Improving connections to the wider area
 - Creating walking and cycling routes
 - Increasing the frequency of bus services
- This feedback confirmed that the key improvements identified by the council are important to the Lower Green community. These improvements will guide the Project's implementation..

Recreation Ground Usage

31. The survey asked respondents whether they used the Lower Green Recreation Ground. The results revealed that 63% of respondents do use the Recreation Ground, indicating that the space is popular among users. However, the frequency of use is relatively low: 22% use it daily, 39% weekly, 9% monthly and 30% use it occasionally.
32. Based on the feedback received, the Recreation Ground is used for a variety of activities. These activities include children playing on swings, meeting friends, playing football and basketball, using the skate park, walking dogs, observing wildlife and having picnics.
33. However, some respondents pointed out that the play area and the skate park are sometimes subject to antisocial behaviour that need to be addressed. A revamp or a makeover of the Recreation Ground were also suggestions.
- The feedback we received shows that the Recreation Ground serves various purposes, and any improvement should allow for the mixed usage of the space.
 - However, the feedback highlighted that the maintenance and care of the area need improvement. In response to this feedback, we have notified our Green

Spaces Team.

Respondents' Reasons for Not Using the Recreation Ground

34. The survey asked respondents who did not use the Recreation Ground to explain their reasons. The feedback included feelings of being too old, lack of motivation, no perceived need for the space, safety concerns and complaints about the area not being well-kept or inviting. Other reasons mentioned were living too far away, outdated facilities and a lack of activities for older people.
35. The feedback confirms that the Recreation Ground needs improvements to increase usage and to make users feel safe. As a result, the council has made the following changes to the Lower Green Vision:
- The Vision will be updated to state that any Recreation Ground should be accessible to diverse range of users.

Improvements Requested for the Recreation Ground

36. The survey asked respondents to help us increase the usage of a Recreation Ground by identifying improvements. The feedback was extensive, and for simplicity, we have summarised the recommendations and listed them below along with the council's response.

Recommendations to Improve a Recreation Ground	Council's Response
Waste Management and Cleanliness	
More bins needed.	The council will consider the appropriate number of bins for any improved recreation grounds in relation to the facilities provided.
Litter picking.	This is currently included within the ground maintenance contract and will continue to be included in any new facilities provided.
Reduction of dog mess.	Bins will be provided for residents to dispose of their dog waste.

Recommendations to Improve a Recreation Ground	Council's Response
Maintenance & Infrastructure	
Better maintenance of fencing.	The maintenance of council owned fencing will be considered in the development proposals.
Improved sport facilities and toilets.	The provision of improved sports facilities / toilets will be considered in any new proposals.
Lighting and video surveillance.	This will be assessed as part of any new development and determined by the type of development.
Accessibility	
Creation of a cycle route around green space.	Accessibility will be part of the new development brief.
Increase accessibility for everyone, including wheelchair users.	Accessibility will be part of the new development brief.
Nature and Green Spaces	
Grow wild plants and shrubs.	This will be assessed as part of any new development and determined by the type of development.
Create a community garden and opportunities for group exercises.	This will be assessed as part of any new development and determined by the type of development.
Play and Recreation Facilities	
Larger playground with activities for children across different age groups.	The council will consider the provision of play area in any new proposals
Improved children's area with nearby café for parents to watch.	The council will consider the provision of cafe in any new proposals.
Include a proper skate park, BMX track and outdoor gym.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.
Introduction of courts for racket games.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.

Recommendations to Improve a Recreation Ground	Council's Response
Better play park and sports clubs for kids to join.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.
Include a splash pad for the summer.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.
Youth and Teen Activities	
Introduction of activities for young teenagers.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.
A social club and youth activities.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.
Seating	
Introduction of shelters and more seating areas.	The council will consider the provision of these facilities in any new proposals.

Lower Green Community Centre Usage

37. The survey asked respondents if they used the Lower Green Community Centre. The results showed that a significant number do, with 54% reporting that they use the Centre, while 46% do not. Among those who specified their frequency of use, 16% indicated they visit daily, 60% weekly, 4% monthly, and 20% occasionally.

38. Respondents who used the Lower Green Community Centre identified a variety of reasons for their attendance. These reasons included enjoying the café, attending pop-up sales, participating in scout events, engaging in children's activities and taking classes like pilates. Additionally, many respondents used the Centre as a venue for functions and community meetings.

39. Some respondents also mentioned that they volunteered at the Centre.

40. For respondents who said that they do not use the Lower Green Community Centre, several reasons were given. These include a lack of awareness about

the activities offered, and the Centre's location and opening hours and access to alternative activities and facilities.

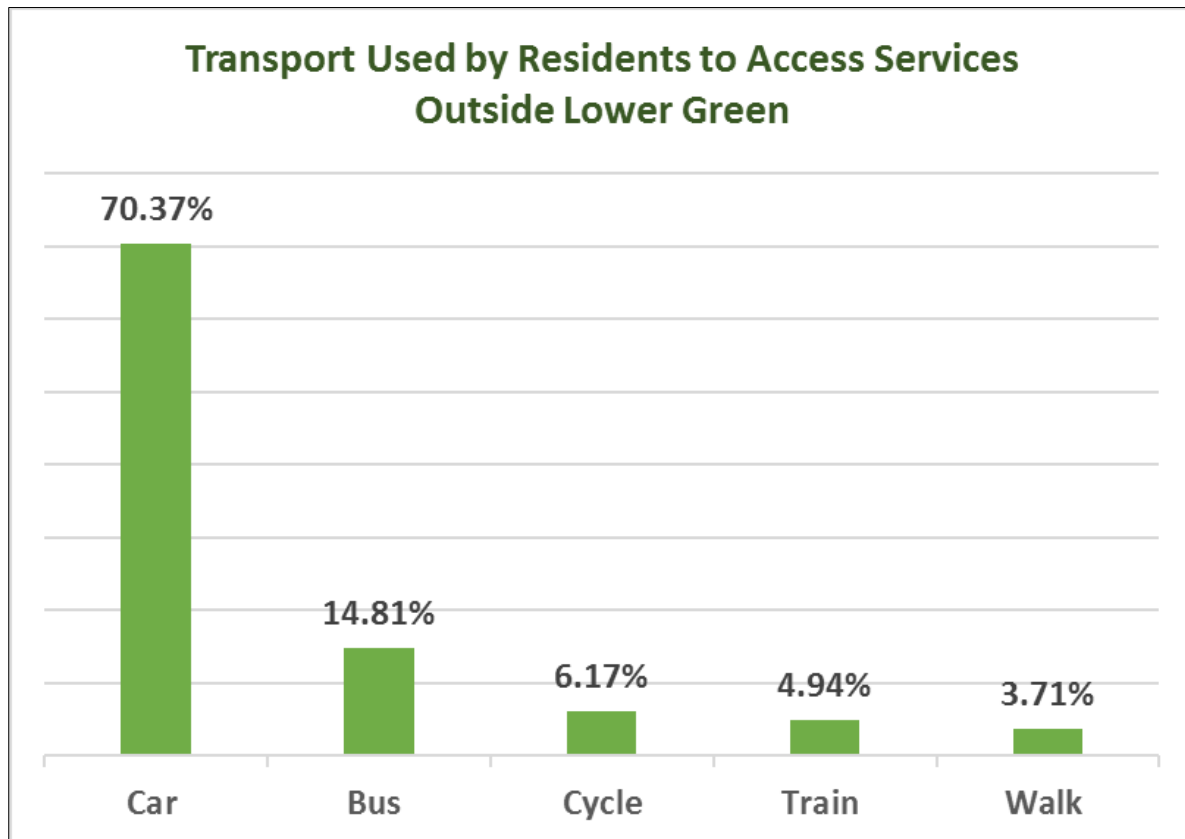
41. The overall feedback showed that the Lower Green Community Centre provides a range of facilities that cater to the community. The café within the Centre is especially popular, serving as a social hub and play area for children, as well as a venue for community events and activities.
- The council will support the Lower Green Community Centre in maintaining its current functions while enhancing the facilities.

Services Used in Lower Green

42. The survey asked respondents about the services they use in Lower Green. The results showed that the most frequently used services are the convenience store and the Lower Green Community Centre and the café. A few respondents mentioned using the park and playground.
43. Several individuals expressed concerns about potential negative impacts on existing services, particularly the convenience store. Although many respondents highlighted the need for improved shopping options.
- In response to this feedback, the council will ensure that any future development proposals for the area support the existing services and encourage new businesses to improve the existing offer.

Services Sought Outside Lower Green

44. The survey asked whether respondents travelled outside of Lower Green for their daily needs. The results showed that 94% of respondents do travel outside of Lower Green for these services. Among those who travel, 70.37% use a car, 14.81% take a bus, 6.17% cycle, 4.94% use a train, and 3.71% walk (see the chart below).



45. The feedback from residents regarding which services they sought outside of Lower Green indicated that they look for a variety of services in other areas. These include supermarkets, food and clothing shopping, DIY items, pharmacies, pubs and restaurants, cinemas, sports activities, post offices, banks and health services.

46. Some residents also travel to neighbouring areas for specific services such as child-friendly indoor spaces or cafes, bakeries, butchers and entertainment options. Additionally, many seek employment opportunities, social clubs for children and teens and leisure activities outside of Lower Green.

47. The feedback shows that the existing services in the area are insufficient to meet the daily needs of residents.

- The council will support new businesses and collaborate with our partners to try and enhance the range of services in Lower Green; however, improving local amenities will require time.

- The council acknowledges the high use of cars to access services outside the area, and this issue is being addressed through the Project Objectives. The aim is to collaborate closely with our partners to improve active travel routes and public transport options, providing viable alternatives to private car usage.

General Feedback on Lower Green

48. The survey gathered general feedback about Lower Green, and the responses were insightful. Participants indicated a desire for change, particularly mentioning the lack of public transport and the need for improved bus services. Many voiced concerns about road safety, identifying it as a key priority for future improvements in the area.
49. Additionally, respondents called for improvements to the Recreation Ground and community facilities, while also voicing concerns about new housing developments and their impact on parking.
50. Overall, the sentiment expressed a desire for positive changes while maintaining the community's unique characteristics. One comment perfectly captured this sentiment: "This is a unique opportunity to enhance the area for the entire community."
51. The council appreciates the support received for the Project through the general feedback, which emphasises the need for initiatives that will improve the lives of Lower Green community. Suggested changes include enhancing connectivity to the surrounding areas.
- The council will consider the feedback as the Project progresses. Our aim is to work together with the community to ensure that any proposals are led by the community and align with their aspirations.

Feedback from Email and Social Media

52. The council has received feedback via emails sent to our placemaking address, lpacemaking@elmbridge.gov.uk as well as comments on social media. The feedback raised several concerns, including the importance of making recreational spaces accessible, consulting the community throughout

the development process and ensuring that any new developments are supported by the necessary infrastructure. These concerns have already been addressed in the Consultation Statement, as the surveys indicated similar issues.

53. In addition, Surrey County Council, our partner in this Project, provided detailed feedback that will be taken into account as we move forward. Their comments highlighted important areas to consider, including ecological factors, Biodiversity Net Gain, tree planting, active travel and local street improvements. They also requested a masterplan if any development is proposed in the future.

Comments Received During Drop-in Events

54. During the drop-in sessions, the main feedback highlighted the necessity for better public transport services, specifically an increase in bus frequency. Attendees expressed concerns about the safety of children using the playground and requested the installation of CCTV. They also raised concerns regarding potential development, including additional traffic, parking challenges and the loss of green spaces and playgrounds.
55. Furthermore, there was a desire for more in-person engagement events.
56. The feedback received was helpful and emphasised concerns already noted in the surveys and addressed in the consultation statement.
- The concerns about traffic expressed during the drop-in sessions have been addressed. The council has commissioned a Transport Assessment of the area to identify any issues related to the current road network and to better understand its capacity for increased usage. This information will underpin the feasibility of any new developments and will be evaluated at a later stage in the Project.
 - The request for more in-person engagement events was addressed by the council arranging additional officer sessions that took place at the Lower Green Community Centre. This enabled further discussions about the Project.

Next Steps

57. The council is carefully reviewing all the feedback received and is collaborating closely with its partners to understand the community's wishes. Our goal is to explore possibilities for improvements that will enhance the quality of life for the Lower Green community. Placemaking aims to work collaboratively with communities to create places where people want to live, work and play. We will use the feedback to implement short-term improvements, such as exploring options to install CCTV.
58. While we put these short-term measures in place, the council will also consider the feedback to determine the strategic direction of the Project. Given the need to collaborate with other landowners, such as Surrey County Council, Thames Water and the Environment Agency, we expect that progress on long-term plans will take time.
59. Additionally, the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation, which is scheduled to be completed by 2027 and involves merging Surrey districts and boroughs into unitary councils, will affect any long-term deliverables for the Project.
60. In the next phase of engagement, the council will define the project's long-term objectives by collaborating with all our partners and considering feedback from residents. This process will help shape a Lower Green that meets the aspirations of everyone involved.