



ROYAL MILITARY CANAL
PRINCES PARADE SITE

GOLF COURSE

PRINCES PARADE SITE ALLOCATION STUDY

BASELINE CONSULTATION REPORT

Draft report | October 2012



Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners



Brand Music

DOORI - Nepalese Restaurant

PRINCES PARADE
Public consultation - July 2012

How is the area used at the moment?

PRINCES PARADE
Public consultation - July 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

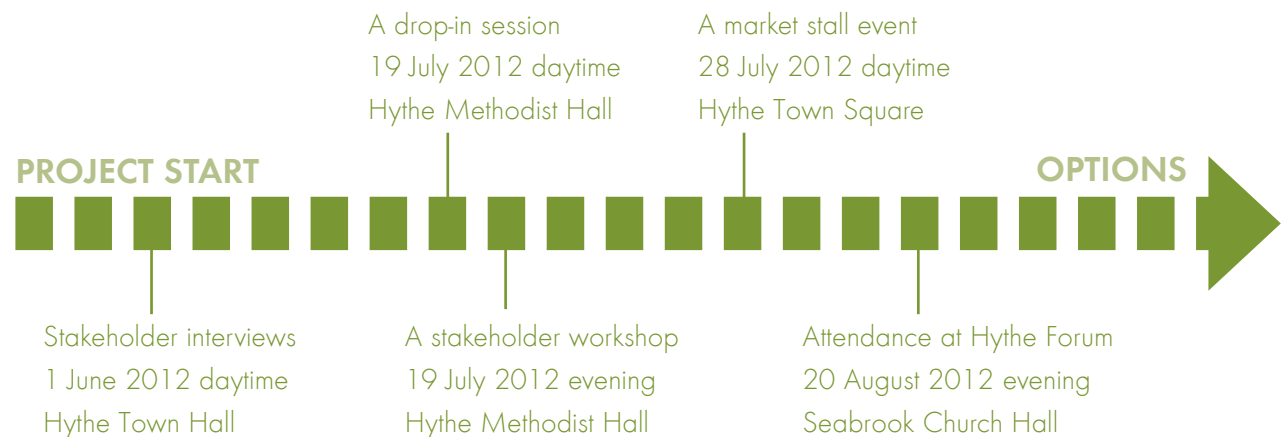
Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners was commissioned as part of the wider Prince Parade study to undertake a programme of consultation and engagement. The project, exploring the issues for future use allocation of the site, does not require formal consultation but the consultant team has followed a best-practice programme of consultation and engagement usually undertaken for planning documents, to ensure a robust process. This report sets out a review of consultation for the project so far and is structured as follows:

- Chapter two sets out a summary of stakeholder interviews undertaken for the project;
- Chapter three reviews the stakeholder workshop and the feedback at this;
- Chapter four provides a summary of the key points made at the public drop-in sessions; and
- Chapter five reviews independent correspondence to Shepway District Council during the baseline period of the study.

Programme overview

The consultation has been structured according to the three phases of the project – baseline analysis, options development and draft recommendations. The baseline consultation and engagement was designed to give the consultants a broader understanding of the key issues relating to the Princes Parade area and the priorities for the local community. The key messages from this early stage of engagement inform the development of options during the next phase of the project.

A range of consultation events and activities has been held, in order to engage with a variety of people through the process, outlined below. In addition to the organised events for the project, written and email correspondence regarding the project has been collected and analysed to reflect the views of the local community.



2. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

At the start of the project, Shepway District Council identified a number of key stakeholders to be interviewed at the start of the process, in order to give the project team a greater understanding of the context and key issues surrounding the Princes Parade area. Stakeholders included local town, district and county councillors, community group representatives and people who had expressed an interest in the future of Princes Parade in the past.

Interviewees were given the choice of individual interviews or small group interviews, depending upon their preference. In total, 13 separate interview sessions were held, some grouped and some individual, with the following stakeholders:

Cllr Robert Bliss	Cllr Dearden
Cllr Reg Belcourt	Cllr Alan Smith
Lesley Whybrow	Judith McCormick
Cllr Rick Watson	Cllr Mr Griffiths (by phone)
Cllr Peacock	Cllr Mrs Griffiths (by phone)
Cllr Chris Capon	Chris Melchers
Cllr Haywood	Crispin Davies
Denise Maskell	Alan Joyce
Cllr Keren Belcourt	

The majority of meetings were held on 1 June 2012, with a couple of subsequent meetings for those unavailable on the day. The interviews each lasted approximately 45 minutes and covered a number of key discussion topics:

1. How is Princes Parade used today?
2. Who uses the space?
3. Are there any ways in which the space could be improved?
4. What roles could Princes Parade play in the future?
5. What are the key factors to consider in deciding the future directions of Princes Parade?
6. Is there any key site information we should be aware of as we carry out our work?
7. Do you have any other comments?

The key messages regarding each of these questions are set out over the following pages.



2. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

KEY MESSAGES

Question 1: How is Princes Parade used today?

The Princes Parade site was identified as having different sections, with the canal path, the pocket park and the route in front of the sea considered to be valuable and a 'shabbier' scrubland section, which is not well used and does not fulfil its potential.

The pocket park at the eastern end of the site was mentioned by a few people as valuable and well used, with requests for this to be extended.

Comment was made that the area is not as well used as it might be, due to Council signs preventing access. The area was more actively used in the past, before these signs were erected.

The area is used more actively during the summer months than the winter months, although this is also the period in which the scrubland grows up and larger areas become inaccessible.

Question 2: Who uses the space?

Princes Parade was identified as being used by anglers, joggers and dog walkers in the most part and by families at the pocket park. The bridleways along the canal are used by cyclists and joggers.

The area is most frequently used by Seabrook residents, although apparently it is visited by tourists during summer months, who branch out from the main beach area.

Question 3: Are there any ways in which it could be improved?

Some people considered the shrubs to be overgrown and in need of management/removal. Others felt a light touch management of the wild environment would be suitable. The idea of a coastal park of some sort was mentioned by most interviewees, with Folkestone's Lower Leas park referenced.

References were made to making use of the site through accommodation of a school or swimming pool, with some development to help fund these.

Question 4: What roles could Princes Parade play in the future?

Many interviewees would like to see Princes Parade remain as open space. Some believed the space could be improved, with greater access to the area south of the canal and more family facilities. Some suggested that a section of the area could be developed, with the remainder retained as open space but improved and with greater access.

In terms of development, some respondents preferred to see community resources on the site rather than housing. The swimming pool was mentioned as acceptable by more than one respondent, but there was concern over whether the location would meet Sport England's requirements in terms of accessibility.

A number of respondents would like to see the open space improved, and there was an understanding by some that this would require some development in order to cross-fund the improvements. However, other respondents would like to see the space remain as it is – a semi-wild environment without improvements or cross-funding development.

Lower building lines would be preferred and a one-storey swimming pool was supported by one or two on this basis (however, the one-storey may be equivalent to 2 or 3 storeys of residential).

The inclusion of beach huts fronting Princes Parade road and the beach was suggested by two respondents as having the potential to improve the appeal of the area.

Question 5: What are the key factors to consider in deciding the future directions of Princes Parade?

Interviewees were concerned that the site has effectively been used as a dumping ground at points over the last 70 years and that there is not a clear understanding of the waste below the surface, including military, industrial, medical waste and canal dredging.

The Royal Military Canal was thought to be a key consideration by many respondents. Some thought the fact that the site is the only open space between the canal and the sea is a key factor. One

or two interviewees mentioned that the canal will require dredging in future and the logistics of this will need to be considered.

Some thought that the site was home to protected animal species and should therefore be retained as a natural environment. Others mentioned that the local area is deficient in public open space and the site should be left open, with improved access to help address this need. Others mentioned that play and picnic areas should be included, with Folkestone's Lower Leas Coastal Park mentioned by a couple of people.

The site is overlooked by a number of homes on the hill to the north and development here will impact on views, although it was recognised that domestic views are not protected through planning regulations. Some interviewees mentioned that any development should be sensitive to these views, in terms of architectural style.

Some interviewees considered the site to be reasonably large and particularly 'long' and therefore, different uses and spaces along the site should be explored.

Access to any development, public amenity or private homes, was mentioned, with discussion regarding whether the sea front road should be shifted and access roads to the site added.

The shingle surface of the site was mentioned, in relation to the need for pilings to provide strong foundations for any development, which could be expensive.

Potential flood risk at the site was also mentioned by interviewees, with the flood defence wall considered to be an issue.

Lastly, respondents felt it was important for the Council to take account of local residents views and opinions in deciding how to move forward with the site.

2. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

KEY MESSAGES

Question 6: Is there any site information that we should be aware of as we carry out our work?

Many of the answers for question six overlapped with those for question five.

In terms of wildlife habitat, it was stressed that ecological studies should be carried out at the correct time of year to be accurate and comprehensive. New references were made to the fact that the site might have had any issue with blowflies in the past.

New plans for the canoe centre were mentioned, with reference to funding through the Section 106 contribution from residential development at the former police station site.

The select committee investigations of 1997 and 2003 were mentioned by a couple of interviewees and it was considered important to understand the reasons behind the select committee's decision as these may still be valid.

Question 7: do you have any other comments?

The fact that the site had been slated for development as part of a marina was mentioned by a number of interviewees, with a roughly even split of opinions regarding whether this would have had a negative or positive impact on the local area. Those believing the plans would have adversely affected the area felt that the open space would be more valuable. Those believing the plans would have brought benefits to the area felt that the town would benefit from an economic strategy that attracts more visitors to the area.

Some interviewees referenced the fact that developments providing a large number of new homes in the area had been granted planning permission in the last few years and were concerned that the planning authority is over delivering on homes and will struggle to meet the social infrastructure requirements for these.

The project process was mentioned by a couple of interviewees and it was felt that joint working with Hythe Town Council should be undertaken, should the local authority, as landowner, wish to take forward a change of use through a site allocation through the planning system.

It was suggested that development should be located at the deeper, western end of the site, closer to Hythe town centre.

Reference was made to the primary school and the plans it had to move to the Eversley Road site and it will be important to take account of Kent County Council's plans.

Reference was also made to the canoe centre and plans for new premises. It was considered important for these uses to be taken into account.



Folkestone's Lower Leas Coastal Park, mentioned in stakeholder interviews

3. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday 19th July Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners held a stakeholder consultation at Hythe Methodist Church from 5.00pm to 7.00pm for a selection of key stakeholders from the local area.

This workshop provided an opportunity for the consultants to present an introduction to the project. Discussion and feedback at the workshop helped to identify the initial issues and options for the site which had been identified by local people, as well as any key priorities for the area. The attendees at the event are set out to the right.

Attendees were separated into discussion groups and completed worksheets to record their thoughts and help to stimulate useful discussion. The first worksheet asked the groups to identify the issues, options and priorities for Princes Parade. The second worksheet asked each group to identify a number of scenarios for the site and to highlight the implications for each of these.

The notes taken at the workshop have been accurately reflected in mock-ups of the worksheets over the following pages.

John Barber	Town Centre Manager, Folkestone
Cllr Keren Belcourt	Hythe Town Council
Philip Carter, Chairman	Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership
Cllr John Griffiths	Hythe Town Council
Cllr Rosemary Griffiths	Hythe Town Council
Ian Hill	Hythe Civic Society
Peter Hobbs	Chief Executive, Kent Channel Chamber of Commerce
Alan Joyce	Vice Chairman of the Hythe Civic Society
Roger Joyce	Chairman of the Sandgate Society
Chris Kirkham	Visit Kent / Discover Folkestone, Hythe & Romney Marsh
Cllr Michael Lyons	Shepway District Council and Hythe Town Council
Denise Maskell	Local resident
Mike O’Sullivan	Hythe Civic Society
Cllr David Owen	Shepway District Council and Hythe Town Council
David Plumstead	Shepway Environment and Community Network
Leslie Whybrow	Transition Hythe
Julia Saunders	Dura Design LTD
Ben Saunders	Dura Design LTD
Dick Maskell	Hythe Forum
Trevor Minter	Roger De Haan Charitable Trust

WORKSHEET ONE

PRINCES PARADE, HYTHE Stakeholder workshop - Thursday 19 July 2012		
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES	PRIORITIES
Too many new homes - will more sell? But equally - need for affordable housing	Establish really good north / south links	No housing
Contamination - landfill	Facilities - restaurant, WCs	Public access to site and open space (understand contamination)
Open space - need quality	Conservation / preservation	Respect and promotion of heritage assets
Preserving the integrity of the canal and the hub of military remains at the eastern end of the canal	Open space - paths through, adventure playground, recreation space, conservation	Protection of open space
Current development at Seapoint	Neighbourhood plan in progress	Enhance ecological value
Bird watchers	Parking - flip over to the other side of the road	Parking organisation
Low light pollution - great for star-gazing	Make much more of the history - battle visitor centre	Improve pedestrian environment and access to the sea front

PRINCES PARADE, HYTHE Stakeholder workshop - Thursday 19 July 2012		
ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES	PRIORITIES
Cycling	Enhance the space for a variety of users	
Walking	Broaden appeal to a greater number of people	
Users	Careful response / limited / enhance / manage / suitable / regenerate	
Site conditions	Legacy	
Access	Sustainable funding	
Heritage	Add tourism and awareness of wildlife and heritage	
Wildlife	Views from and to the site.	
Leisure/public use		
Views		

Group responses to worksheet one

3. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

WORKSHEET TWO

PRINCES PARADE, HYTHE Stakeholder workshop - Thursday 19 July 2012	
SCENARIOS	IMPLICATIONS
Do nothing	Not a realistic option. It's not a usable space at present. No final solution realised for the area.
Do minimum - access only	Delivers improved access to the site Not other facilities or uses
Do minimum - access and recreational uses	Additional open space and recreation facility Expanded canoe launch and boats Mountain biking and bike hire
Active heritage and leisure (heritage information and recreation facilities)	Increase costs with increased benefit - capture economic value Attractive to visitors Parking costs / ability to access Long term funding issues - need a business plan and funding plan - section 106?
Pool option	Remote and wrong place Not comfortable fit to heritage uses Link to other facilities (sea bathing?)

PRINCES PARADE, HYTHE Stakeholder workshop - Thursday 19 July 2012	
SCENARIOS	IMPLICATIONS
Removal of road. Access only by public transport / foot / cycle / tram?	Cost for tram facilities and route Traffic circulation problems/issues Impact on hotel business Potential for temporary closures
Events Venue (seasonal)	Impact on ecology Financial benefits balanced with costs Maintenance costs Campsite? Visitor pressure Anti-social behaviour
Development (housing and other uses)	Conflict with heritage and the environment Open space deficiency in Seabrook area Is it an appropriate place for housing? Don't want piecemeal development Potential for hotel development on the site

Group responses to worksheet two

PRINCES PARADE, HYTHE

Stakeholder workshop - Thursday 19 July 2012

SCENARIOS

- Do nothing
- Do everything
- Do something
- Do something different

IMPLICATIONS

- Missed opportunity
- May not be feasible and may be detrimental
- Site not big enough
- With balanced development most of the objectives could be realised
- Leisure development would be good - bowling / cinema / nightclub / casino
or
Open space leisure offer and community uses



4. PUBLIC DROP-IN SESSIONS

INTRODUCTION

A drop-in session was held during the day on 19 July 2012, between 11.00am and 4.00pm, at the Hythe Methodist Church Hall to find out what local people thought about the Princes Parade area. The event was advertised in the local paper but was also designed to attract passers-by.

A similar event was held outside the Aldi on Hythe High Street on Saturday 28 July 2012 between 10.00am and 2.00pm. Again, this event was advertised in the local paper, and posters were put up in the local area with the help of community members. As with the previous event, the market stall was placed in a high profile location so that passers-by who might not be part of the community network or read the local paper could also make comments.

At each of these events, a set of pop-up banners introduced the context and the purpose of the site allocation study and provided key information on the project programme and tasks.

A series of questions were asked at each event to help guide responses. Participants were invited to make comments using post-it notes on each of the large sheets to respond to the questions and a large number of post-it notes were collected over the two events.

The responses to the questions are set out over the following pages, with a summary of the key messages from the post-it notes. The answers have also been collated into graphs to help illustrate popular themes.

A transcript of all the comments are included in the appendices.



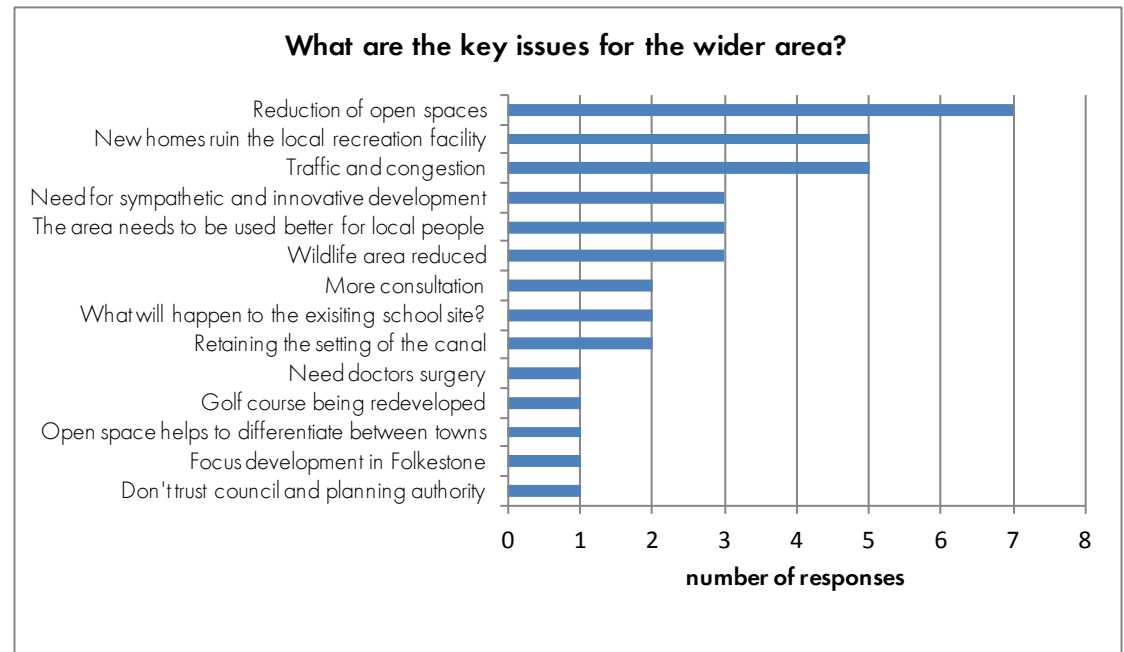
KEY MESSAGES

'What are the key issues for the wider area?'

This question helped the consultants to understand issues that the local people were aware of for Hythe and the surrounding area. These issues help to set the context for any development of Princess Parade, identifying wider problems that might influence what happens on the site.

The answers to this question highlight the value attributed by local people to the open space as a recreation facility for the local area. This was seen as an important natural open space resource for both people and wildlife. There was also a concern expressed about the current traffic problems being further exacerbated by any development at Princess Parade.

A significant number of people commented that the site could be used better for local people as a recreation facility and that there was a need for 'sympathetic and innovative' development of this resource.



Graph 1: What are the key issues for the wider area?

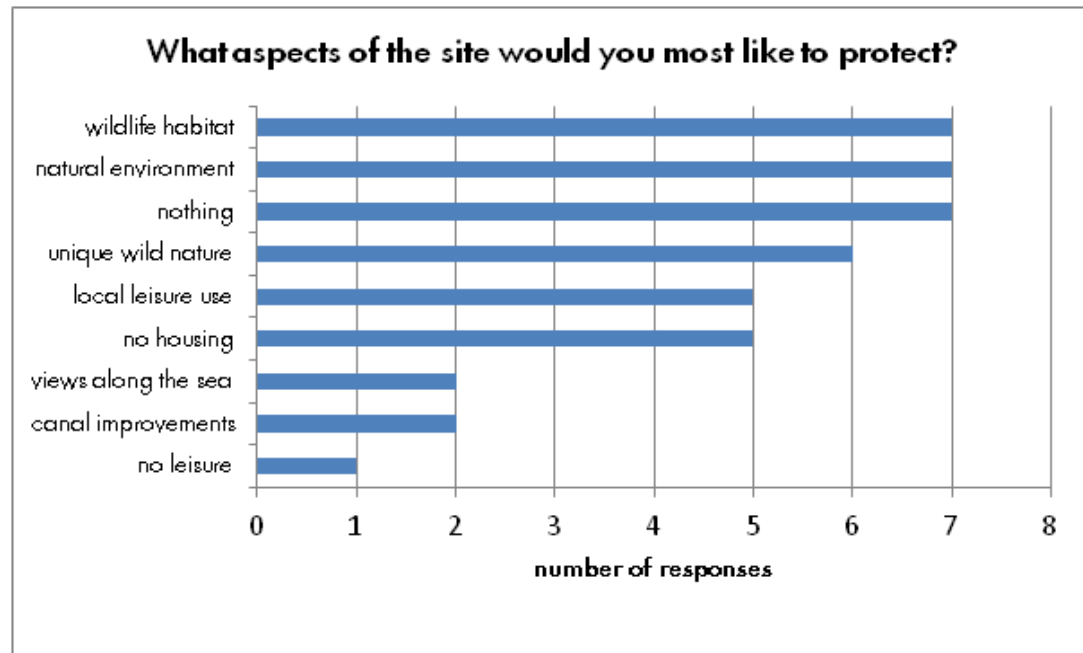
4. PUBLIC DROP-IN SESSIONS

KEY MESSAGES

What aspects of the site would you most like to protect?

This question helped to identify the key aspects within Princess Parade that local people felt were important and should be protected. A key theme that emerged was the protection of wildlife habitats and the natural, unique and wild environment that Princess Parade currently provides. It was also seen as important to protect the area as a space for local leisure use.

A high number of people also suggested that there was 'nothing' about the area that they wished to protect.



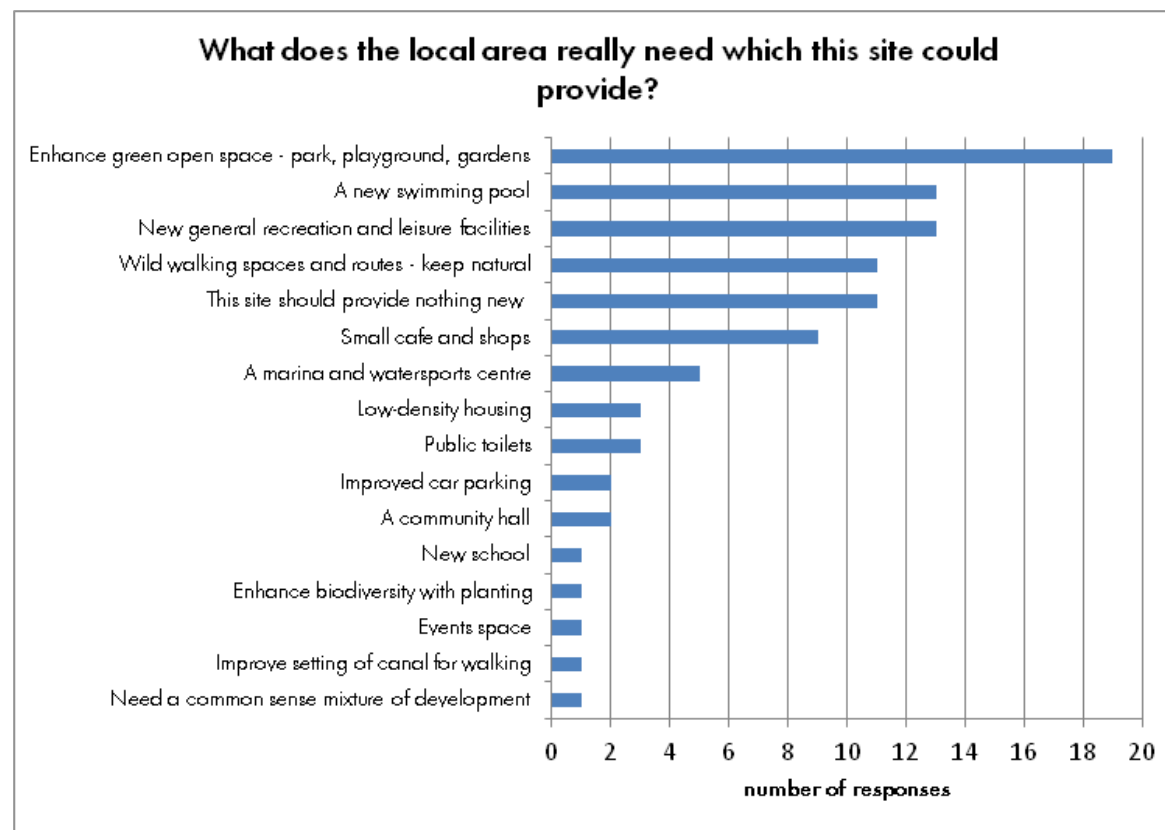
Graph 2: What aspects of the site would you most like to protect?

What does the local area really need which this site could provide?

This question helped to draw out what local people wanted to happen at Princess Parade and what the site could provide for the local area.

The responses demonstrate the important role Princess Parade currently plays as an open space facility for the local area. The most popular answer commented that this open space could be further enhanced to encourage more people to enjoy it with a playground, area of gardens, large park and green open spaces. Similarly, a popular response was to create more usable walking routes through the site, maintaining the wild and natural sense of the site while opening it up with better access.

A large number of people commented that the site should be developed with general recreation and leisure facilities but were unspecific about what these should include. A new pool was also a popular option for the site.



Graph 3: What does the local area really need which this site could provide?

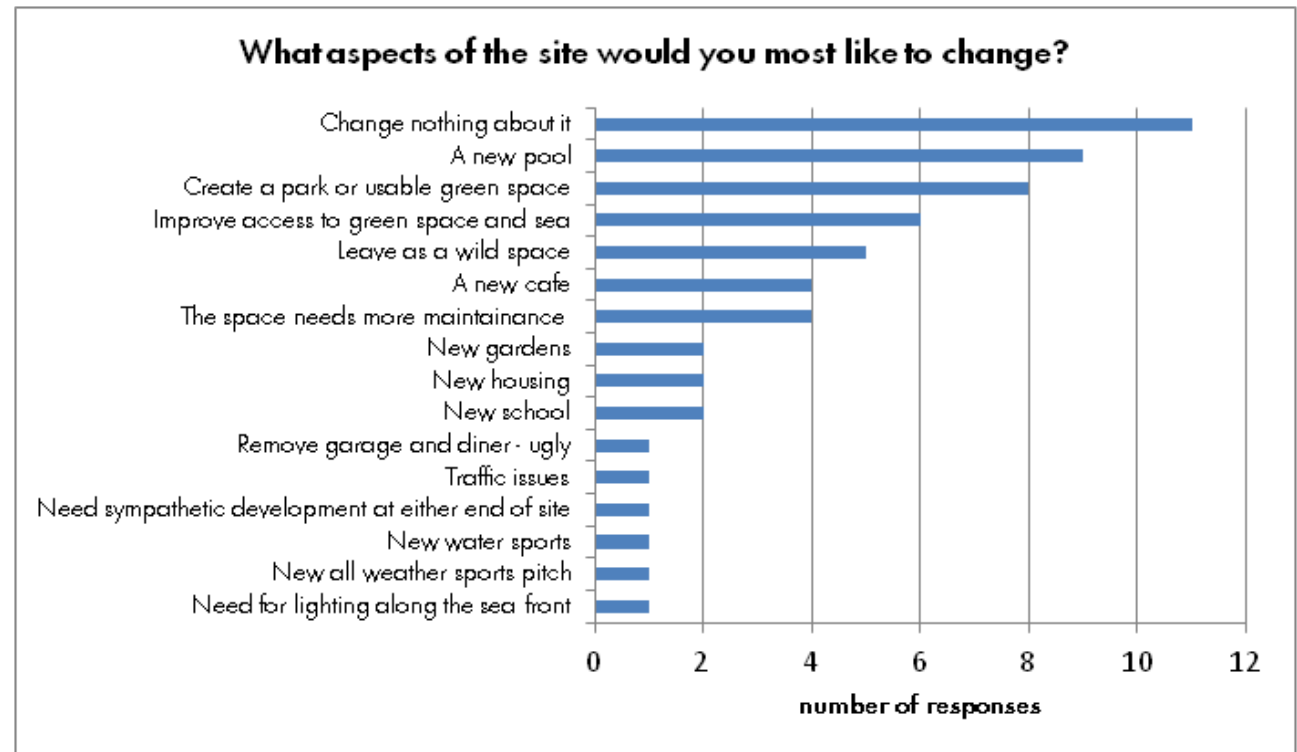
4. PUBLIC DROP-IN SESSIONS

KEY MESSAGES

What aspects of the site would you most like to change?

This question seemed to draw out a similar set of responses to the previous question and did not draw out many aspects of Princess Parade in its current use or condition that needs changing. Generally people commented about what new development could take place.

There was an opinion that improved access and maintenance was needed in the current site to make better use of the resource for the local area. However, there was a strong opinion in response to this question that nothing in the site needed changing and it should be left as a wild space.



Graph 4: What aspects of the site would you most like to change?



5. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

INTRODUCTION

A large number of emails and letters, counted at over 40, were received by Shepway District Council and the consultation team at GVA and Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners from members of the general public about the plans for Princess Parade. These generally outlined concerns, key priorities or extra information that individuals felt was important to highlight.

The key themes of this correspondence is summarised below and a tally of responses are included in the adjacent table. A full copy of all emails and letters is included in the appendices.

Important history should be retained and developed as an attraction:

Some suggested that this area should not be built upon because of the important history that Princess Parade has. Its military history has been documented on television and in books and articles and therefore could provide an attraction to visitors. Information boards could be provided about why the canal was built.

Military waste/use:

There were a number of comments made about the use of Princess Parade as a dump for military ordnance and waste including live ammunition. Generally individuals were suggesting that the area should be surveyed to check these issues.

Retain, enhance and develop open green space for recreation (Cycling, walking, play-spaces):

The area was felt by members of the general public to be an important landscape feature and place for people to visit. There is a wide variety of activities including walking, cycling, canoeing and horse-riding that were felt could not take place if the area was built upon. A small number of people felt that the area should remain exactly the same, perhaps with a few footpaths to better enable



KEY MESSAGES

access for walking. A large number of people felt that the space could be better used as an exciting recreational facility with gardens, play spaces and other facilities.

Retain natural views and open space:

The area was felt by members of the general public to be an important landscape feature that provided a natural area of land and green space with protected views to the sea. The views of the sea were felt to be important to remain and perhaps in some places further enhance.

Enhance access to natural open spaces:

A number of individuals cited the Lower Leas coastal park on Folkestone's lower Sandgate Road as an example which improves the attraction of a natural area for both locals and visitors. This was described as an accessible portion of coastline that local residents and visitors could enjoy.

Protect Wildlife and biodiversity:

Princess Parade was felt by many to be an important undisturbed natural habitat for wildlife. A large amount of this resource should remain and be protected.

Location of pool and school - Other sites are available:

There were a number of comments made that suggested that neither the school nor the swimming pool needed to be located at Princess Parade as both had a preferred alternative site and funds already in place. If the school was to be located at Princess Parade there is concern that it would be paid for through contributions from the developer and this suggests a large amount of housing would also be built.

Advertise consultation sessions:

There were a number of issues highlighted with the way that consultation was advertised and some felt that it should have been better advertised in Seabrook itself, through posters and social media.

Request for more information:

A number of members of the public requested more information on the project and were directed to the council's website or correspondence with the consultant.

Prevent high density housing development:

High density housing development by large scale developers was strongly opposed to in many of the letters and emails that were received. People were concerned about the loss of open space and the damaging environmental and social effects of high density housing in this location. Some responses recognised that a small amount of housing could be acceptable and perhaps necessary for some other facilities to be provided. There was concern that the funding shortfall for the pool and open space would be met with high density housing development and this should be guarded against.

Parking:

Parking was a conflicting issue amongst the feedback that was received. A number of people felt that the council could charge for car parking if the facilities were improved as it would be a method to help pay for some recreational and community uses at Princess Parade. However, others felt that paying for car parking discouraged people from using the area.

5. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE

KEY MESSAGES

Traffic:

A number of people felt that the busy traffic in the area detracted from the natural setting of Princess Parade. One popular idea was to enforce a 20mph speed limit to make the area more positive for cyclists and pedestrians in the area and help to reduce speeding.

The council has already made up their mind for the site:

Some individuals were concerned that the council had already made up their minds for the site and that they were determined that there should be housing development at Princess Parade.

Concern the golf course will be built on in the future:

A small number of people felt that the golf course was being allowed to fall into a state of disrepair so that a proposal for development of this site would be more popular if it was submitted.

Marina proposal:

There were comments made both for and against the marina and sea lock proposals for Princess Parade. Some felt that the proposals would be inappropriate for the location while others felt that it would bring a new group of visitors to the coast and provide locals with a great recreational facility.

Flood protection:

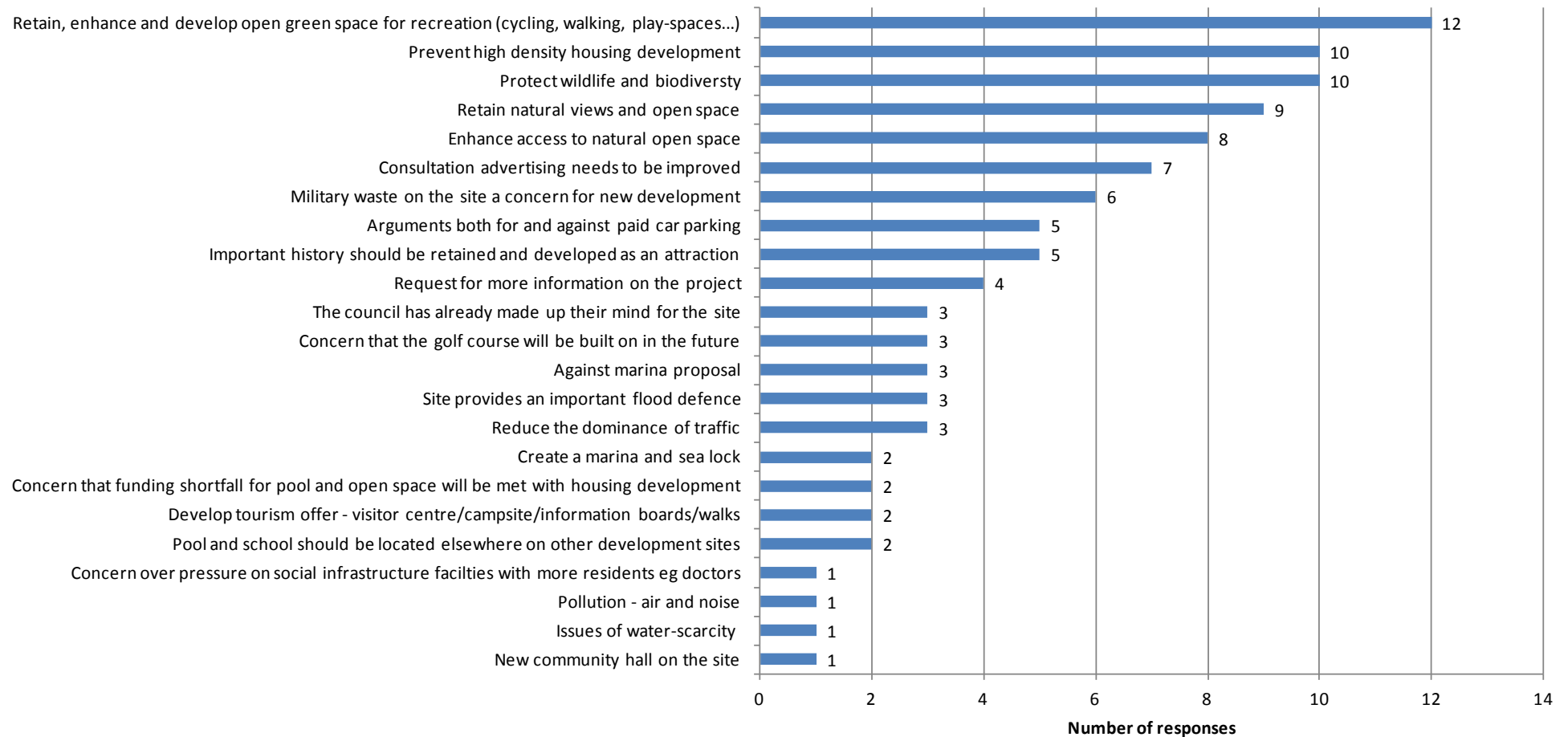
Comments were made that Princess Parade provides natural flood defences.

Tourism:

A number of people commented that Princess Parade could include more facilities to attract tourists. These could be small scale such as information boards and walking trails or larger scale such as a sailing school, campsite or visitor information centre.



Consultation Responses



Graph 5: Consultation responses

6. APPENDICES

The appendices for the document set out background information from the first stage of consultation for the Princes Parade Study. This includes:

1. Copies of written correspondence received by Shepway District Council and the consultant team during the first stage of the project. Correspondence has been anonymised but the names of people who submitted correspondence have been included at the start of the section.
2. Transcripts of post-it notes collected at the two drop-in sessions.

