

Fortune Street Park improvements: public engagement summary report

Background

Fortune Street Park has been allocated £590,000 for improvements. This thriving pocket park is situated in the Bunhill ward in a busy and built-up part of the city and sited next to two schools, Prior Weston Primary and Richard Cloudesley School. It has lawns, trees, playgrounds, benches, a picnic area and a coffee stall. The park is very well used by the local community, including school children and parents, people living or working in the area and people passing through.

Aims and objectives of the public engagement

The aim of the initial park user survey was to gather people's views about the park, find out how they use it and how they might like to use it in the future, and to use this information to aid in developing a concept design for the improvements.

Public engagement approach and methodology

The survey was open from 10 August – 13 September 2021 and consisted of a postal questionnaire and an online survey.

450 questionnaires were sent out to residents in the Bunhill ward. Out of these 259 questionnaires were returned. We accepted questionnaires for an extra week as they continued to be sent after the deadline.

The online survey was publicised via the council's website and social media channels and was also posted on NextDoor and in City of London's weekly online newsletter for Barbican residents. There were 188 responses.

We found that with the postal questionnaire some respondents gave multiple answers for some questions, and some questions were not answered at all. There was also a printing error with question four – the options given were the wrong ones – so answers could only be used if people wrote their specific responses.

With the online survey, we again found that not everyone answered all the questions.

Responses and feedback

The below responses have been collated from both the online survey and the postal questionnaire.

1. How often do you usually visit Fortune Street Park?

Answer	Number of people
More than once most days	42
Daily	121
Once a week	35
More than once a week	153
More than once a month	39
About once a month	11
Occasionally (3-11 times per year)	22
Rarely (2 or less times per year)	9
Never	7
Don't know/can't remember	6

Due to a printing error, 'once a week' was included in the online questionnaire but not in the postal one.

2. Do you usually visit Fortune Street Park...

Answer	Number of people
Alone	215
With children	123
With other family members	97
With friends/acquaintances/colleagues	93
Other	19

The most popular answers under 'Other' were: dog walking, with carer, cutting through the park, to meet friends.

3. How long do you usually stay when you visit the park?

Answer	Number of people
Less than 5mins	75
5-15mins	91
15-30mins	97
30-60mins	115
1-2hrs	69
More than 2hrs	21

4. What are the main purposes of your visit to the park? (tick all that apply)

Answer	Number of people
Play with children in the playground	56
To sit on benches	96
Dog walking	11
Passing through / short-cut	119
Dropping off / picking up children from school	15
Picnic / eat	42
Sit / lie on grass	22
Jogging / running / exercising	4
Attending site event	8
Other, please specify	46

The most popular answers under 'Other' were: visit the café for coffee, recreational, playground, nature.

Due to a printing error, the above options were not available on the postal questionnaire, but 35 respondents gave 'Other' answers which were incorporated into the above.

5. What parts of the park do you usually visit? (tick all that apply)

Answer	Number of people
Lawns	233
Playground	135
Coffee kiosk	233
Picnic area	114
Community garden beds	72
Other	102

The most popular answers under 'Other' were: benches, paths, coffee, nature.

6. What do you particularly like about Fortune Street Park? (tick all that apply)

Answer	Number of people
Convenient to home	376
Convenient to work	44
Attractive / nice to visit	203
Peace and quiet	144
Good for children	179
Good for everyone	206
Good for dogs	34
Good all year / in all weathers	129
Friendly / sociable	217
Everything	50
None of these	5
Other (please state)	45

The most popular answers under 'Other' were: fresh air, nature and wildlife, coffee.

7. Do you think the park could be improved?

Answer	Number of people
Yes	343
No	33
Don't know	60

8. What improvements would you like to see?

178 postal respondents and 134 online respondents gave an answer to this question. Most comments related to wanting:

- more benches
- better management of litter (including at times when office workers have their lunch in the park)
- better maintenance of the lawn
- better/more biodiversity
- a redesigned playground for all ages (including older children).

Other comments identified a desire for a water fountain/feature for people and wildlife, tackling anti-social behaviour (e.g., drink, drugs, smoking in the playground, making the park safer), toilets, pigeon control, more activities, shelter from weather, better lighting, making the park bigger, having art in the park, not locking the park, information about the nature and wildlife found in the park, and an outdoor gym.

There were some contradictions, e.g., no dogs/dog areas, stop cyclists/create a safer cycle route, have a football area/don't have a football area. Some respondents said the park was pretty, some found it unattractive, some liked the pigeons, some wanted to ban people feeding them, someone wanted to allow barbecues while another wanted to ban them. Although many comments were about improving the park and playground for children and young people, other respondents commented that the park was too centred around children.

9. If funds were available, which three of the following would you most like to see provided/improved at Fortune Street Park?

Answer	Number of people
Playground	139
Planting	203
Paths	74
Lawns	206
Security	76
Seating	236
Don't know	6
Nothing needs improving	13
Other	54

The most popular answers under 'Other' were: bins (more, emptied more frequently), extra seating, cleaning, toilets.

10. Do you have any other comments?

157 people took the time to make comments. Some people used this to reiterate previous comments or to raise issues not related to the park.

Most people who commented thought the park looked fine and was well maintained: "The park is a lovely place please don't mess it around. Just keep it clean and tidy of takeaway litter and well planted. It shows how even a very small park can be a huge benefit for all and enjoyed by everyone. The park is an oasis."

Other recurring themes were:

- Nature (e.g., plants, trees, flowers) should be better maintained or improved: "Just keep building on it with flowers, plants, herbs etc. so it keeps it peaceful, friendly feeling because the environment is becoming quite harsh with all the monstrous buildings which are towering over us, not very emotional friendly. People and the community will take more responsibility when their environment represents where they live."
- The park as an important part of the local community: "As said, it is such a community resource. It's been the hub of our community especially over the last year, a place where

everyone goes. The coffee is brilliant, places to sit and chat, the trees in blossom are a delight. The beds might be refreshed with fragrant plants (I love the lavender in Spa Fields). Some climbing roses would be lovely! Thank you very much to Council staff who maintain the park. We appreciate your work!"

- There should be more litter bins/litter collections: "Yes - I have given this much thought over the past years. 1. Office works (usually under 30) purchase lunch and leave all the packaging etc. piled on top of bins. 2. Islington Council could start a project or put-up signage to ask users to take rubbish home. 3. Islington Council could use income from the food market to promote better disposal of litter. Not more bins. 4. Replace current bins with bird/animal proof bins. 5. Invest in more policing of anti-social behaviour – it is such a small space but it needs a friendly warden on duty. 6. No adults without children in the playground. 7. More accountability from Pret and Waitrose re litter."
- The lawn should be better maintained and improved: "Lawn/grass area should be larger, better maintained."
- The playground should be improved: "I would like to see more improvement in the playground, more sports area, security and less dog exercise, more fruit trees."
- Anti-social behaviour needs to be addressed and security improved: "Urgent security measures required to help resolve the current problem of drug users in the park."
- People using the park for lunch create litter and take up too much space in the park at lunchtime: "The playground should only be used for people with children and not used by lunchtime users from the office blocks."
- Positive comments on the café: "The park is great and it is so good that there is a lovely and independent coffee shop there - it makes it a genuine community meeting place. Thank you."
- Children/parents blocking paths before/after school: "The school should use other exits."
- Control or ban dogs: "Some days the park is overrun by dogs."
- Seating: "Seating is good - there are lots of options, although some benches could be better."
- The park is too busy/only locals should be allowed to use it
- Encourage birds or other wildlife
- Grow vegetables
- Stop cyclists or have a dedicated area
- Toilets
- Make the park bigger
- Survey is a waste of resources
- Have more volunteers
- Football
- Have more events

Some comments related to non-park issues, such as requests for more trees, benches, or green space on Whitecross Street, and comments on low-traffic neighbourhoods, street closures, too many buildings being built, a need for more parks in the borough, and pollution.

Summary

The response to the survey has been very good. Most people who completed it live near the park so have an interest in seeing it be improved. It is a well-loved and well-used park which is vital in an area with little green space. We know that being out in nature can help people's mental health, so parks are more important than ever.

Based on the people who responded we can see the park is used by people who enjoy being outdoors in nature, as well as those who choose to pass through on their way to another destination. It is also a community hub where people can meet up, especially during the pandemic.

Many respondents find it attractive and friendly and enjoy being in it but acknowledge that because it is so well used a lot of litter is created and some areas, like the lawn, wear out.

Some of those who use the playground would also like it updated and refreshed and for there to be more equipment for older children.

Next steps

The results of this survey will be passed to landscape architects Davies White, who have been appointed to design the improvements for the park. They will use this information, alongside site analysis and survey information, to create a concept design which we will share with you at the next round of engagement in early spring 2022. You can keep up to date with this project via [the project's webpage](#) or by emailing the Project Manager, Lara Ellington-Brown, at Lara.Ellington-Brown@islington.gov.uk to be added to the project mailing list.