

Executive Decision Report

Victoria Park Centenary Walk

Decision to be taken by: City Mayor

Decision to be taken on: 29 January 2014

Lead director: Adrian Russell, Director of
Environmental & Enforcement services



City Mayor

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: Castle
- Report author: Brian Stafford
- Author contact details: 39 4484
- Report version number: 1.1

1. Summary

The purpose of this reports aims to seek approval to begin works on the Centenary Walk project and to release capital funding towards the first phase of the project, starting in winter 2013/14.

2. Recommendations

That the capital funding of £1.5m be committed for the Centenary Walk project, with a funding allocation of £240,000 approved and released for the first phase of the project for 2013/14. This will allow works to commence on site including the proposed toilet block and the moving of electrical and other services prior to the main landscaping scheme. Further reports to the City Mayor will be presented as the project progresses and the remainder of the funding released in tranches.

3. Supporting information including options considered:

A project master plan was developed in early 2013 against which a feasibility estimate was commissioned to determine the costs of the proposals. This estimate gave a total project cost of £1.5m which included major landscaping works across the car parking areas at Victoria Park. The works include

- The restoration of the view between the park lodges and the war memorial and the creation of a tree-lined processional route between the two.
- The integration and rationalisation of the two existing car parks, including additional parking to the front of De Montfort Hall.
- Improvements to the existing sports facilities (tennis court, basketball court and skate area)
- Creation of new public conveniences
- Improvements to lighting around the car park area.

A public consultation exercise was carried out in July / August 2013.. The results from the consultation were very positive, with over 70% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the project proposal. There was strong support also for the proposed toilet block and improved lighting, although there were a few comments asking for better lighting not just around the car park but across the rest of the park itself.

The approval of the first phase (subject to planning permission) will allow for the toilet block to be built and utility services across the park to be extended and relocated for the next stage that is planned for 2014/15.

Any works on site need to be co-ordinated with the summer moratorium, to ensure the large park events such as the Caribbean Carnival, Leicester Marathon and Pride marches are not disrupted. The splitting of the project into the two separate phases will allow for the work to be carried out either side of this moratorium and is the best option for its delivery.

4. Details of Scrutiny

The Centenary Walk project was presented to the Heritage, Culture and Sports Scrutiny committee on 14th October 2013.

This followed a period of public consultation for the project, which ran for 5 weeks from late July to the end of August 2013.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

Funding for the project will be met from resources set aside for Phase 2 of the Economic Action Plan. It is recommended that the scheme is added to the Capital Programme.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

5.2 Legal implications

Victoria Park and Granville Road Car Parks are contained in the Leicester (Off-Street Parking Places) Consolidation Order 2006. This Order details the terms and conditions of their use, should the project proceed and the car parks changed then we would have to make an amendment to that Order by Traffic Regulation Order and follow the statutory procedures for doing so. Traffic Operations team should be advised of this project if not done so already so as they can instruct Legal Services on any changes that will need to take place prior to completion.

Jamie Guazzaroni, Legal Services Ext 296350

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

The increase in car parking will promote more car use and will not support progress towards the council's target to reduce city wide carbon dioxide emissions to 50% of the 1990 level by 2025/26. The new toilet block will result in a minor increase in the council's direct carbon footprint.

Mark Jeffcote, Environment Team (x296765)

5.4 Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Not applicable

6. Background information and other papers:

City Mayor briefing 25th September 2013

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 – results from public consultation 2013

8. Is this a “key decision”?

Yes

9. If a key decision please explain reason

Spending of over £1m is to be committed on a scheme that has not been specifically authorised by Council.

Appendix 1

Victoria Park Centenary Walk

Findings of the public consultation
As at 13th September 2013

Prepared by:

- *Parks & Green Spaces*
- *Research and Intelligence*

*This report provides a summary of the findings of the public consultation.
It includes information about:*

- *The issues and options under consideration;*
- *The consultation method;*
- *The public response and views expressed;*
- *The decisions taken in light of what was learnt.*

BACKGROUND

Victoria Park Centenary Walk

The council is aiming to create a new processional route from the Victoria Park Lodges on London Road down to the War Memorial

Options under consideration include:

- Creating a tree-lined avenue to restore the view from the lodge gates to the war memorial
- Combining the two separate car parks into one larger space
- Increasing the number of parking spaces for events and general use
- Creating a new car park entrance and exit on Granville Road
- Repair and restoration of the historic lodge gates and those at the bottom of Peace Walk
- The creation of a new toilet block for park users
- Improvements to the tennis courts and skate park
- Better lighting throughout the car park area

CONSULTATION METHOD

Objectives and techniques

Between July and August 2013, residents and other interested parties were invited to provide feedback on the proposal to create a new processional route from the Victoria Park Lodges on London Road down to the War Memorial

Information and questions about the proposal, including a map and an artist's impression of the intended layout, were distributed via the city council's online consultation hub and a series of public displays held at the following venues:

- De Montfort Hall
- Knighton Library
- Central Lending Library
- New Walk Museum.

With each venue hosting the display for a week.

People were also given the option of completing the questionnaire online.

The topics addressed included:

1. The design proposal for Centenary Walk;
2. Important features for Centenary Walk;
3. Respondents' use of Victoria Park;
4. Respondents' age.

The public response period ended on 23 August 2013.

Specific stakeholder groups were contacted directly for their comments on the proposals.

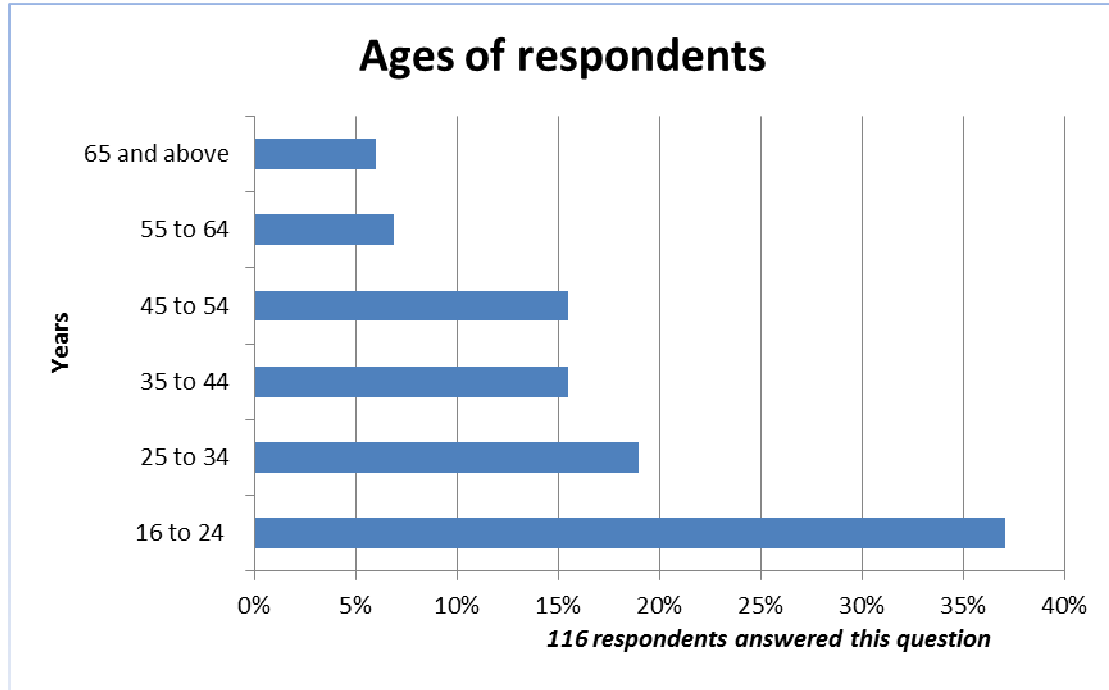
These included:

- Remembrance Sunday organising committee
- Park Event organisations (via LCC Festivals and Events team)
- Local Access Forum
- Leicester Counselling Centre, based at No.1 Lodge, Victoria Park.

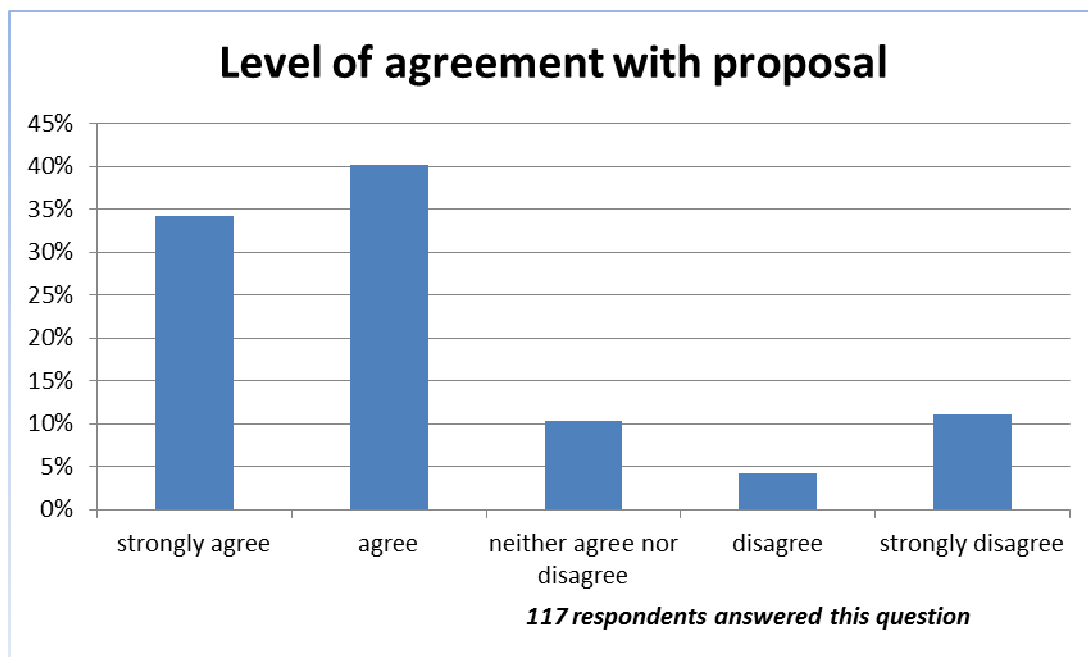
PUBLIC RESPONSE AND VIEWS EXPRESSED

Respondents

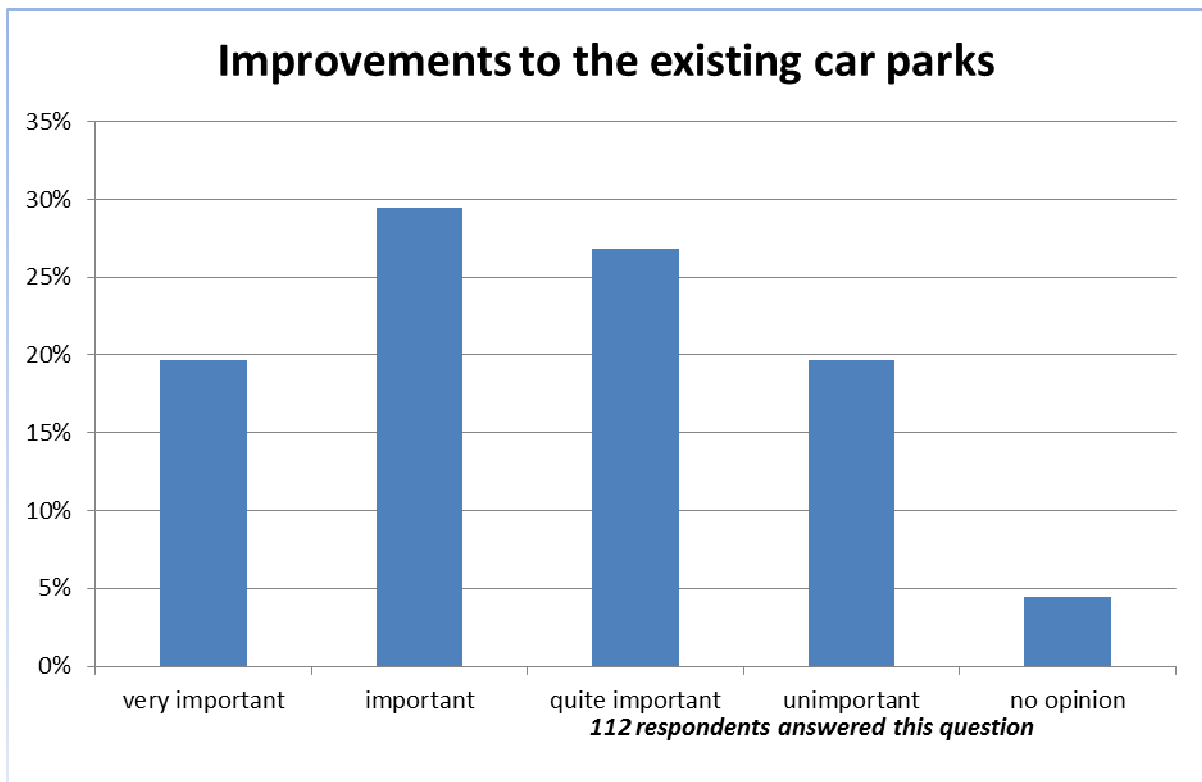
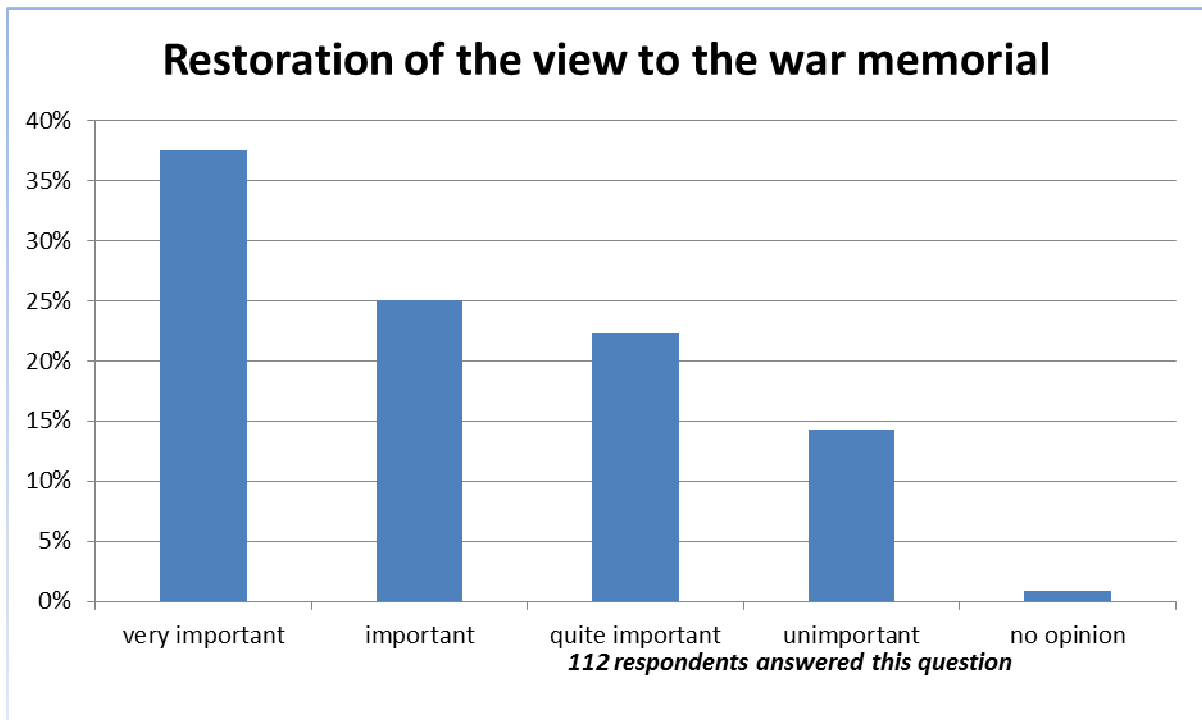
120 separate responses were received. 116 of those who responded are users of Victoria Park.



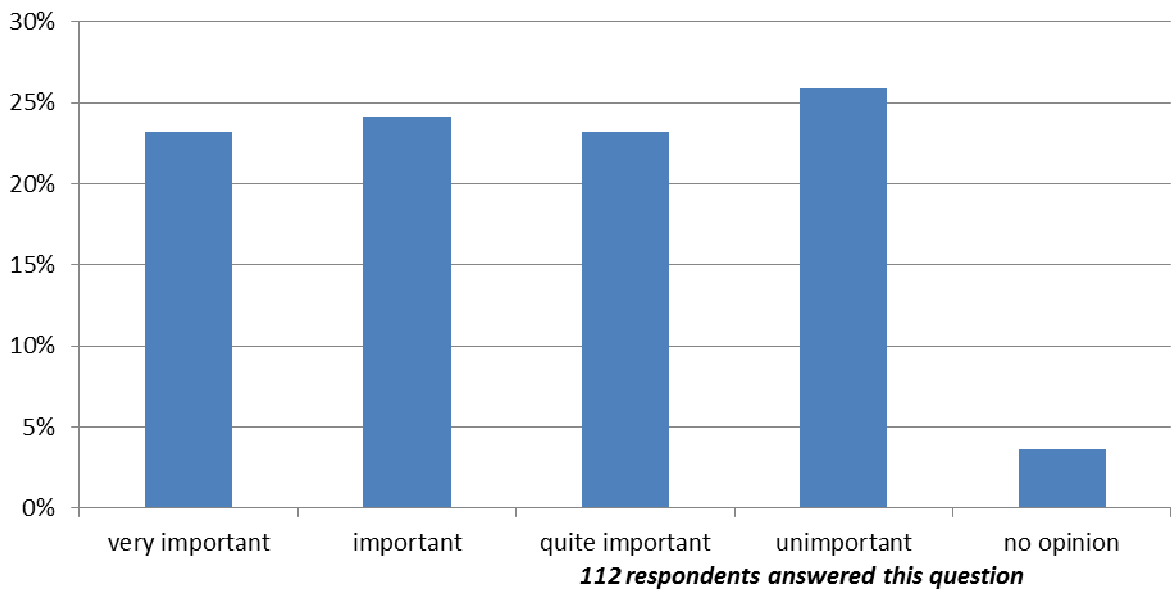
Views on the design proposal



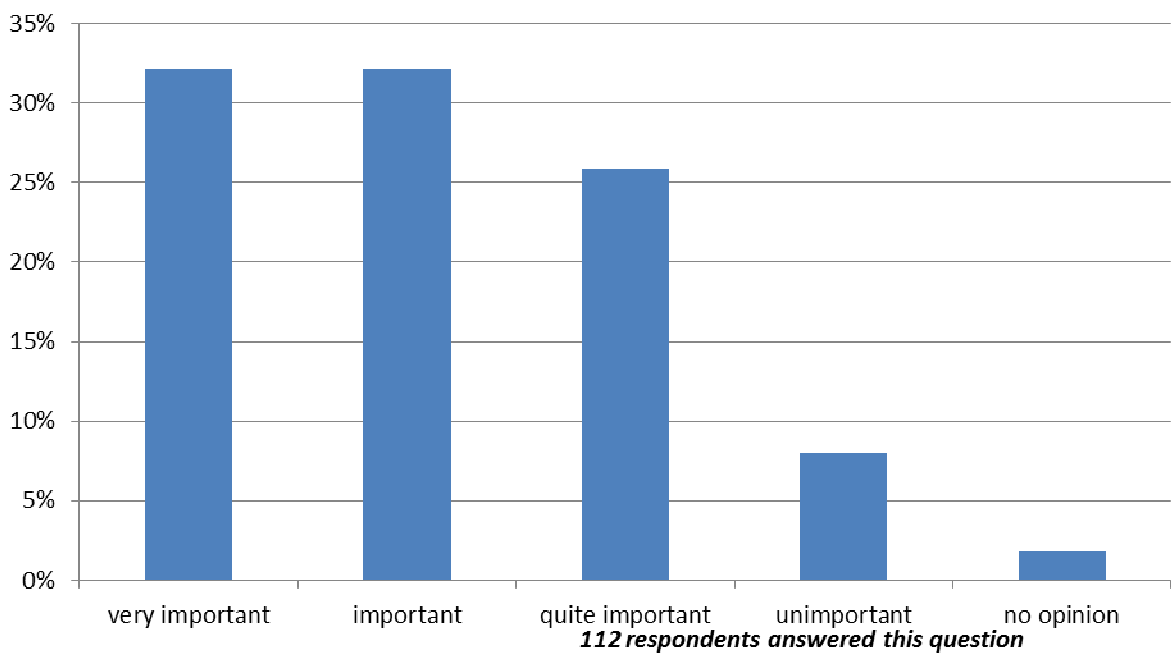
Views on specific features of Centenary Walk



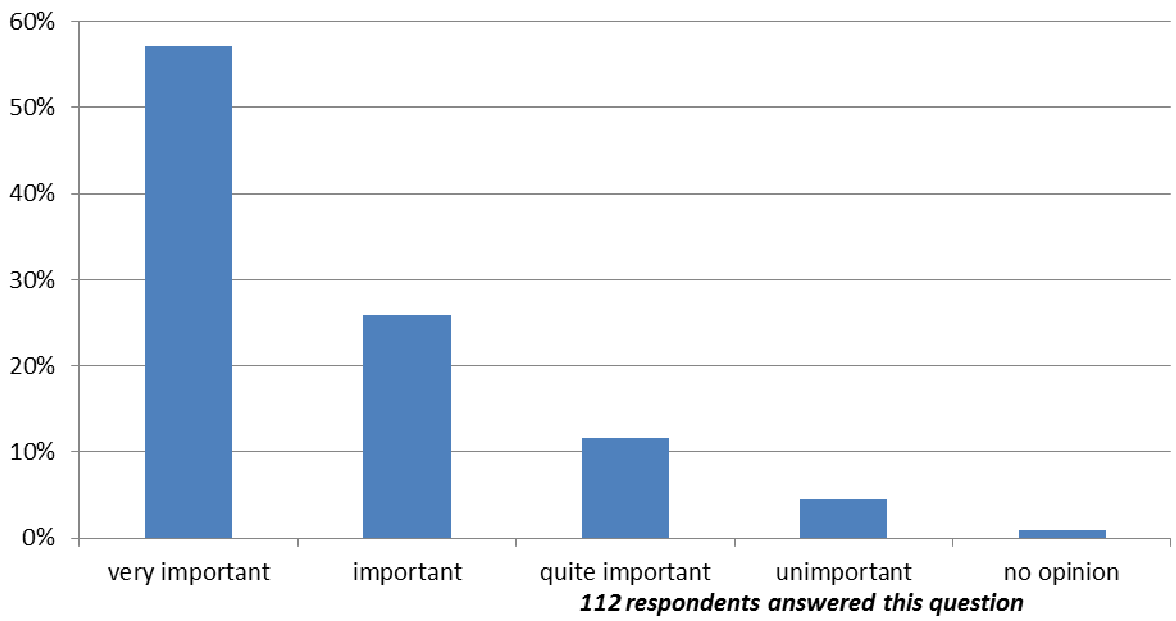
Additional car parking spaces



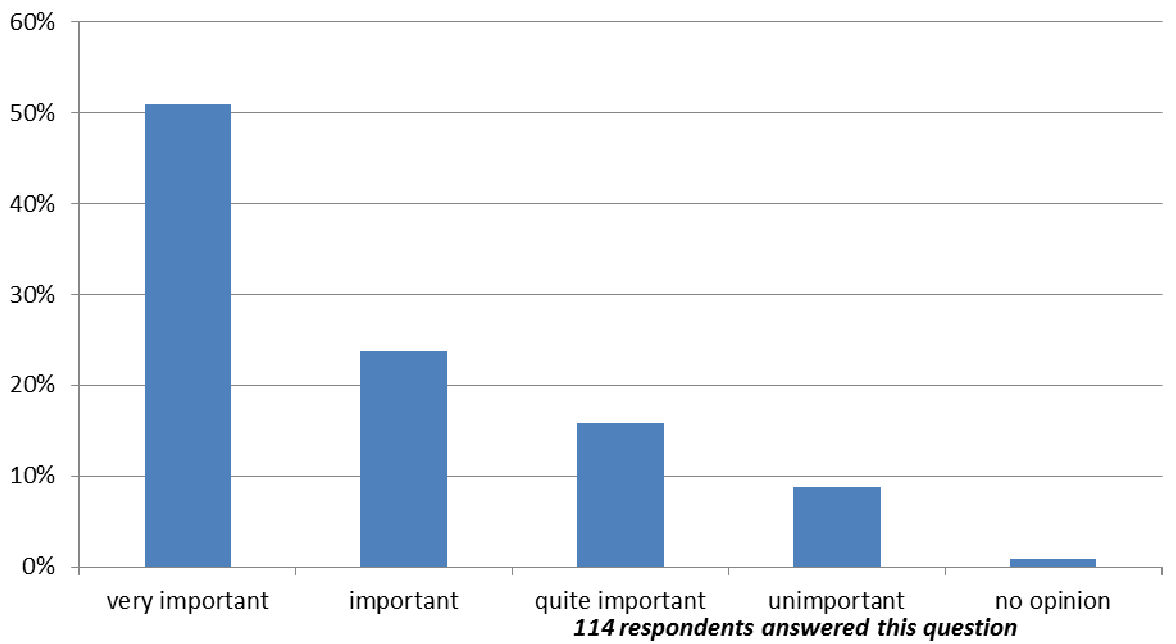
Improvements to the historic park gates



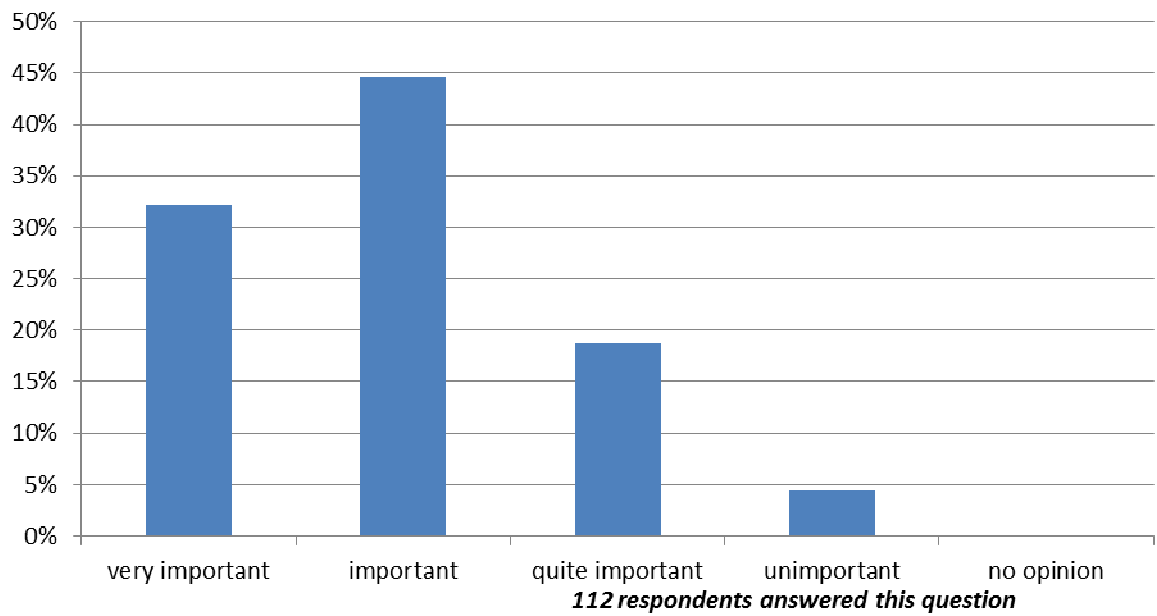
Improvements to lighting



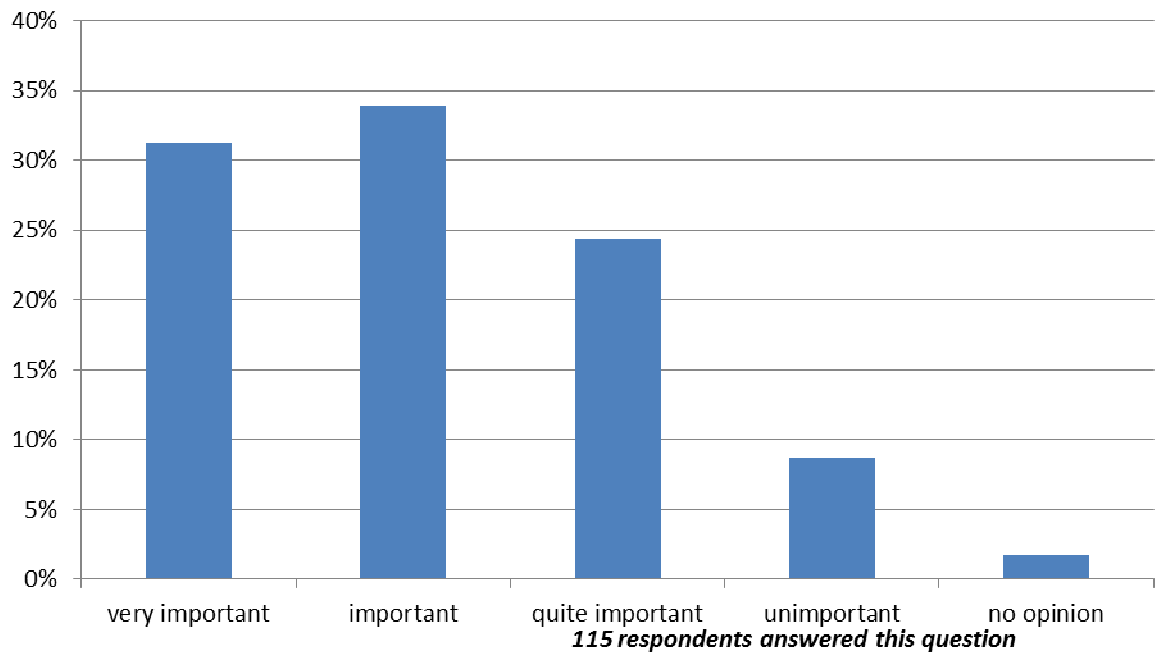
Provision of park toilet facilities



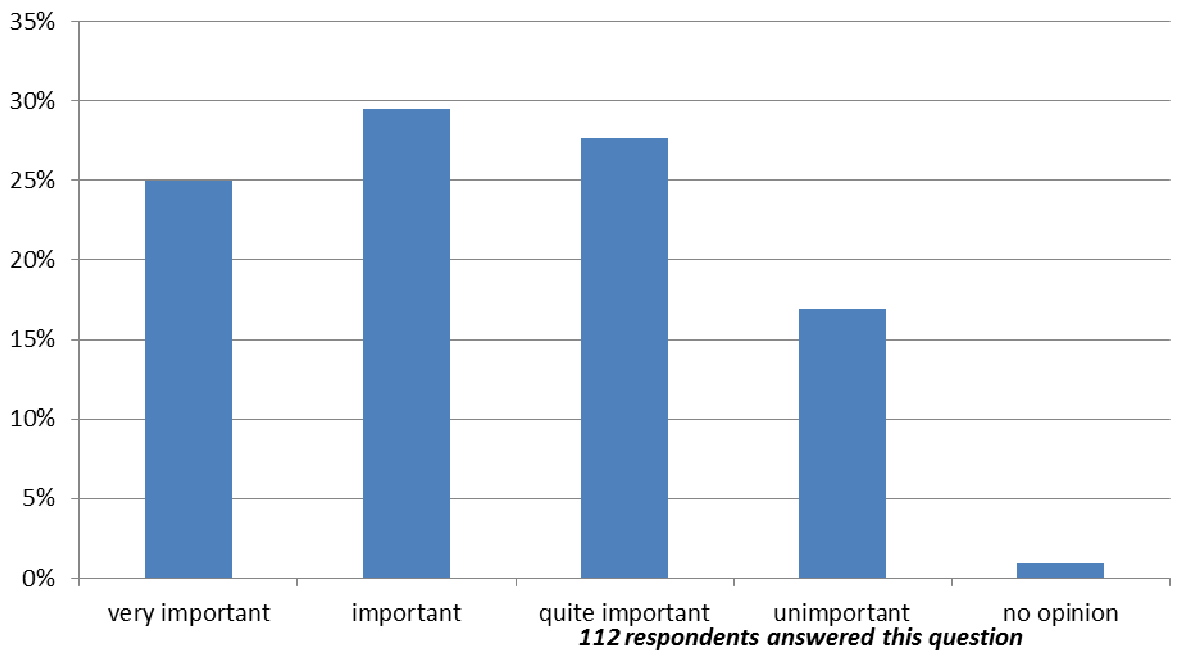
Park infrastructure (e.g. bins, benches)



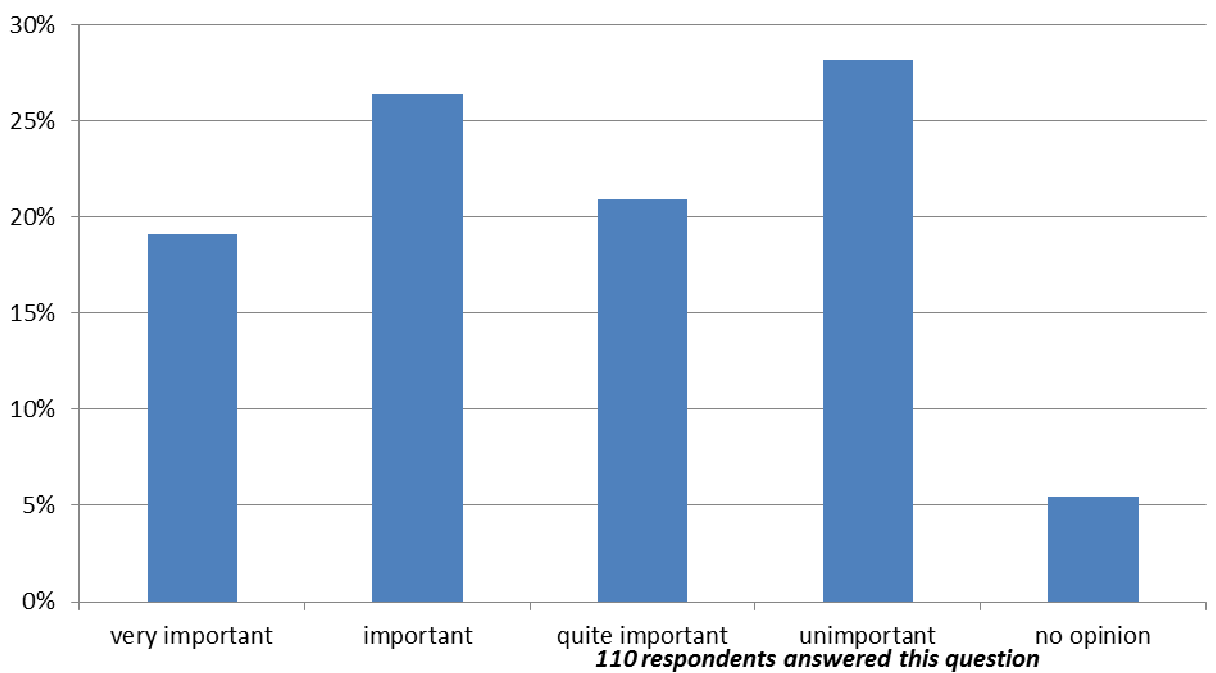
Improvements to sports facilities



Improvements for park events



Better signage and interpretation



Summary of consultation results:

- Nearly 70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal
- 37% of respondents said the restoration of the war memorial view was important
- 57% of respondents said improvements to lighting were very important
- 51% of respondents said the provision of park toilet facilities was very important

Further comments

Respondents were invited to put forward comments on the design or factors that should be taken into account.

Almost half of all respondents took up this invitation.

The word cloud below is based on the combined text from all of these responses. It gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently.



There were a number of common themes arising from the public consultation. These included:

- Concerns about pedestrians access around the area and potential dangers with cars
- Concerns over the walk itself being cluttered with cars
- Better provision for cycling & cyclists, including dedicated cycling lanes and storage
- Concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour on the new toilet block
- Improved lighting, not just around Centenary Walk but the whole park
- Improvements needed to the basketball courts

Other comments received included:

- The requirement for improvements for visually impaired people along Peace Walk and wheelchair access through the main lodge gates
- The requirement for additional hard standing / grass matting surfacing around the war memorial to help with Remembrance Sunday commemorative events.

Specific Stakeholder Comments:

As well as those from the general public, the following comments were received from specific groups.

Leicester City Council Festival and Events team:

- Potential disruption to events if construction is taking place simultaneously
- Requirement for access to be retained for event traffic and access to power and water services.
- A consideration of installing new event infrastructure (electricity / water) around the new car park area as a wet weather option.

Local Access Forum

- the proposals offer little benefit for pedestrians and cyclists and there needs to be better links between New Walk and Victoria Park.
- The current proposals only add to the visual and physical barrier, between New Walk and Victoria Park; formed of parked vehicles, inappropriately located landscaping and sporting facilities.
- Provision for the existing path running diagonally north south across the park and passing to the east of the War Memorial should be made within the proposal. The path is currently severed by the proposed works, but a clear route for the path - following the desire line to the junction of Granville Road and Regent Road - should be made through the car parking area.
- Improvements are needed at the junction of Granville Road and Regent Road. This is a difficult crossing point for pedestrians, and it is an obvious “desire” line from Regent Road to the park. The junction comprises a ninety-degree bend between Regent Road and Granville Road as well as entrances to the car park, DeMontfort Hall and the vehicular route into the park. Improvements could necessitate a reconfiguration of the entrance and exit from the car park and could also form a new pedestrian entrance into the park following the line of Regent Road.
- Any improvements should also include cycle parking, and provision should be made for a cycle track linking London Road along ‘Centenary Walk’ to NCN 63 at Peace Walk. Wider improvements for cycling around Victoria Park and along London Road should also be considered.

Leicester City Council Transport Strategy Section

- a request to explore the possibility of including vehicle charging points in the car park improvements

There were 3 other stakeholder groups contacted directly as part of the consultation, although none responded to the request.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a general agreement from respondents to the scheme, with most in agreement with the proposals and individual elements.

The most important issues raised were with regards to how pedestrians and cyclists will be considered as part of the scheme, the need for improved lighting (not just in the car park areas but across the park) and also public toilets.

Response to comments

As part of the detailed project design we will investigate the following:

- How best to integrate pedestrian and cyclist flow through the area and how this can be fitted into the proposed design
- The viability of including cycling infrastructure (stands and shelters) in the overall design
- The viability of lighting improvements across other areas of the park
- The viability of increasing event infrastructure in the new car parking area.
- The viability of improvements for visually impaired people along Peace Walk.

In relation to other comments:

Concerns about potential vandalism to toilet block

Whilst there can be no guarantee that the toilet block would never be misused or vandalised, this can be minimized through the relocation of CCTV to cover the toilet block and the possible inclusion of additional cameras to provide coverage of not just the block but the rest of the car park area.

Concerns about cars lining the walkway

There is still a need to retain these car parking spaces for general daily use and at peak times such as in the evening when there are shows at DeMontfort Hall. There is a need to explore how to better integrate pedestrians and cyclists which will be explored as part of the detailed design work.

Basketball courts & sports facilities

Detailed consultation will take place with users and officers in drawing up detailed designs. There may be little scope increasing the actual number of courts but our aim is to retain and improve on the existing facilities as much as possible.