

Church Stretton Town Council

Sandford Ave Recreation Park Survey Feb 2021 Full Report



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Introduction

The Town Park Task group ran a survey in Feb 2021 to consult with learn the views of residents regarding the town park. The survey was promoted online using Facebook, the town council website and community messenger. In normal circumstances, printed copies of surveys would have been made available in the library, Mayfair, leisure centre and town council offices so people without internet access would also have the opportunity to participate. This was not possible because of the covid lockdown. Posters were put up in town to advise people to contact the Town Council office if they wanted a survey.

Who showed most interest?

There were 621 completed surveys. Of these 515 (82%) provided details of their family and living situation.

- 360 (70%) of these lived in the SY6 area.
- 208 (40%) described themselves as retired
- 178 (35%) had children aged 0-16 (living with them)
- 147 (28%) had grandchildren visiting regularly - of these 104 also described themselves as retired.

Hardly any schoolchildren and young people responded to the survey. A youth survey carried out by the Town Council in 2018 demonstrated the Town Park is very important to young people as a place where they can go to meet their friends. Ref [Survey of Young People | Mysite \(strettonscip.org.uk\)](http://strettonscip.org.uk)

It would be useful to consult further with this age group if planning to introduce more facilities for that age group.

Why the park is important to people

The main reasons given why people responding think the park is important are:

- Families and grandparents value it as a place where children can safely run about and play. It is the only park in Church Stretton with playground equipment for very young children.
- Some people liked to come to simply sit, relax, walk and enjoy looking at the flowers and birds.
- Elderly people and those with mobility issues appreciate the park because it provides well surfaced level paths they are able to walk on or push a wheelchair around.
- Some people value the sports clubs which also provide a way of making new friends as well as to exercise, which helps their physical and mental wellbeing.

A few of the comments made

<p><i>'We love having a park so close, the children can bike around the paths and play on the equipment. We use it an awful lot'</i></p>
<p><i>'We have 4 grandchildren, 3 of whom love the playground equipment - our 4th granddaughter who is disabled, also loves the park as it allows her the opportunity to use her powered wheelchair in the open spaces. All 4 children and their parents love and appreciate the park.'</i></p>
<p><i>'It's a pleasant green space where children can play and adults sit and relax in peace.'</i></p>
<p><i>'I rely on the park for my daily exercise it's a safe and level place to walk there are lovely mature trees and plants and it is a haven for wildlife with lots of birds squirrels and rabbit'</i></p>
<p><i>'I am a walk leader and frequently take an elderly walking group through the park who enjoy the environment and watching any activities going on. I also take my granddaughter there to play on the equipment'</i></p>
<p><i>'I work as a Care Worker in the community I do several social visits a week mostly with adults with dementia it is very beneficial to them to have fresh air and exercises to is safe level clean path they enjoy the flowers the conkers seeing and hearing children play. To have this available to locals it brings back fond memories it is incredible beneficial to their mental and physical well-being'</i></p>
<p><i>'I bowl at least twice a week from April 1st until Sept. 30th. I also walk there frequently & take grandchildren to use playpark area.'</i></p>
<p><i>'The social contact of playing bowls is vital to my mental well- being'</i></p>

405 (73 %) of the respondents said they were likely or very likely to recommend the park to friends and relatives.

When do people use the park?

190 (30%) of people responding used the park more than once a week, and another 195 (31%) use the park a few times a month. People use the park during the week and at the weekend. Mornings and afternoons are more popular times than evenings.

What Activities do people participate in.

The activities mentioned most were supervising children playing (57%), admiring plants and flower (46%), sitting and relaxing (41%) and walking through on their way to somewhere else (48%). Watching activities (17%) and having a picnic (18%) were also mentioned.

A smaller number of people mentioned playing tennis, Crazy Golf, Bowls and Croquet.

	Number responders playing	Percentage
Tennis	66	11
Crazy Golf	52	8.5
Bowls	29	4.8
Croquet	25	4.1

There were numerous comments made about it being difficult to access these facilities because they are locked. People did not know how to get access to them or pay for them and some people said the facilities being poorly maintained.

A few of the comments made

<i>Poorly kept, unsightable and all facilities kept locked</i>
<i>There is no signage at the Park gates to let visitors know how they would be able to play crazy golf, tennis, bowls or croquet. Such a shame because these facilities have a lot of spare capacity. Even as a resident I did not realise it is possible to play bowls and tennis on a 'pay as you go' basis.</i>
<i>The toilets always being closed. The golf being closed except for when the kids are at school which seems pointless! The play equipment feels a bit scruffy.</i>
<i>Tennis courts locked - cannot find groundsman</i>
<i>Difficult to pay for tennis/crazy golf - have to rely on the park keeper being around. No toilet facilities/ refreshments available.</i>

How do people want to pay?

People were asked how they would like to pay for using these facilities.

The most popular support was for pay as you go (91% saying it is good idea or definitely) and book and pay online (82% good idea or definitely)

There was less support for Holiday pass (70%), annual pass (61%), Club Membership or Subscription (56%) - though still a good number of people were happy to pay this

Existing facilities - people's thoughts

People were asked to comment on the Crown Bowling Green, Tennis Courts, Croquet lawn, Crazy Golf, Skatepark, BMX Track, children's play area and cycle track including whether they wanted to keep them, were keen to have them and whether they needed upgrading.

Most people want to retain all the existing facilities, even if they did not use them themselves.

'I don't have children, so this section isn't really for me. But I like that the park is used and useful to families with children. It gives joy to the area'

The facilities mentioned as most in need of upgrading are the children's play area, crazy golf, children's cycle track and BMX track.

	Don't want	Don't want to lose	Very keen	Needs upgrading
Crown Bowling Green	9.42%	59.96%	22.91%	7.71%
Tennis Court	4.24	45.34%	42.58%	7.84%
Croquet Lawns	19.41%	50.56%	26.19%	3.84%
Skate Park	12.69	32.07%	50.33%	4.90%
BMX Track	16.30%	36.51%	28.34%	18.82%
Crazy Golf	15.84	32.32%	23.43%	28.42%
Children's Play Area	1.02%	20.45%	43.56%	34.97%
Children's cycle track	7.19%	25.49%	41.39%	25.93%

Improved & New Play facilities?

People were asked to comment about having an enclosed play area to keep dogs out, updating the play equipment, adding rope climbing frame, adding a splash water park and adding play equipment for disabled children

All of these were popular. The strongest support was for updating the play equipment, adding rope climbing frames and adding play equipment for disabled children. There was slightly less support for having a Splash Water Park.

Many people commented the rope climbing frame would be good as there was very little play equipment in the park for older children.

	Don't want	Wouldn't use	Good idea	Very keen
Enclosed play area	10.20%	7.60%	60.20%	22%
Updating play area	1.43%	6.11%	51.73%	40.73%
Rope climbing frames	3.29%	8.23%	56.38%	32.10%
Adding a splash water park	18.45%	19.71%	36.48%	25.37%
Adding play equipment for disabled children	1.42%	10.14%	57%	31.44%

A few of the many comments made

'The play equipment is limited. It is better for the younger children, but the bigger play things are limited'

'Needs great, careful research. Ground surface must be child friendly. Apparatus needs to be suitable for a wide age range, not just toddlers'

'Separate play areas from sport areas to make easier to keep children within reasonable distance (play and sports areas are already quite separate; just need to enclose child bits). 2. Cycle and scooter paths. 3. Sandpit. 4. Pyramid climbing frame'

'Add rope climbing frame for teenagers as well as younger children please! My disabled friend always misses out. I agree to have equipment for them too like Telford'

'My son has a disability and suitable equipment is always welcome.'

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'Add an outdoor gym, with pull up bars and other equipment for the older teens'

'Enclosed play area also ideal to prevent stray toddlers'

'It could do with some seating near the play area'

Exercise and Sporting facilities

People were asked if they would like more exercise and sporting facilities. The most popular facilities were adult outdoor gym facilities (63%) and a mile running track around the park (53%)

Other suggestions got less support.

- Multi-use all weather pitch for Football, Basketball, Netball, Hockey (48%)
- Outdoor training sessions such as: Yoga (44%)
- Adult equipment for disabled people (42%)
- Outdoor training sessions such as: Boot Camp (39%)

Other suggestions

People were asked to comment on whether they wanted a Visitor Information Centre, a room for visiting teams/birthday parties, a men's shed, a solar powered shelter with wireless points, upgraded tennis pavilion, upgraded toilets play boards and wildlife zones.

There was massive support for upgrading the toilets (94%), Wildlife Zones (81%) and upgrading the tennis pavilion (69%)

Less than 50% of people supported having a Visitor Information centre, Solar powered Shelter with wireless charging points or Men's Shed in the park.

	Don't want it	Wouldn't use it	Good idea or very keen
Visitor Information centre	20.41%	34.49%	45%
Room visiting teams/birthday	16.90%	27.70%	55%
Men's shed	39.14%	38.49%	22%
Solar powered shelter	24.84%	34.24%	41%
Upgrade tennis pavilion	5.67%	25.21%	69%

Upgrade toilets	1.39%	4.37%	94%
Play Boards	13.37%	30.31%	56%
Wildlife area	7.33%	11.64%	81%

Accessibility

80% of respondents said they found it easy to gain access to the Park and 97% said that once in the park it was easy to get around. People were asked if they use the car to visit the park and if so where they park it. Only 258 people said they travelled to the park by car and of these 169 (65%) parked in nearby 89 (34%) parked in a nearby car park.

67.53% were in favour of putting a footbridge across the railways but only 47.42% in favour of a car park in the park off the A49.

	Don't want	Wouldn't use	Good idea or very keen
Car park off A49	28.37%	24.21%	47.42%
footbridge across railway	13.94%	18.53%	67.53%

There were many comments about it being difficult to access the park for families with small children and people with mobility issues.

The main entrance into the park close to the A49/Sandford Ave crossing. There is a footpath from Churchill Road into the park, but this means crossing the railway.

Parents were concerned about their child's safety in having to walk up to the busy A49 and cross the road twice, because of the narrowness of pavements on the park side of Sandford Ave.

Some people wanted the steps down to the park from Sandford Ave replaced so they did not have to walk to the end of Sandford Ave to enter.

A footbridge across the railway line or steps down to the park would be safer for children to access the park, but would not solve the problem for families with buggies and people in wheelchairs.

A few of the comments made

<i>'Got to walk all way down to busy main road to cross difficult with grandchildren. Other path not in use, traffic too big fast and too close on one side. Should be more pedestrian friendly.'</i>
<i>'It is close to the road crossing but the pavement bordering it is too narrow. There used to be steps into the park from the railway bridge. A better access from town would help'</i>
<i>'Access dangerous - need to be able to walk from town not by a49, too dangerous crossing railway track'</i>
<i>'My recently deceased husband would have loved the park but never visited it. He was disabled and found access impossible.'</i>
<i>'Have to cross railway line with small child or walk to main gates - pavement over bridge is very narrow and difficult to negotiate with a pushchair'</i>
<i>'I can walk there easily with a walking group but I can't take my elderly father there because of the lack of vehicular access.'</i>
<i>'The access is not that good. It could be improved. Years ago there was a gate on Sandford Avenue with steps leading down into the parl. Obviously unsafe for prams etc but at least an access nearer the town centre.'</i>

Catering

People were asked about their thoughts for new Catering facilities. The most popular suggestions were adding picnic tables (92%), having a café (73%) incorporating a food café in the pavilion (73%), Ice cream van (66%) and mobile catering van(54%)

There was less support for online order from local café, tea/Coffee snack vending machine, pay as you use BBQ

	Don't want	Wouldn't use	Good idea or very keen
Food café, take away, in the Tennis Pavilion	12.40%	14.88%	72.72%
Cafe	12.58%	14.26%	73.16%
Mobile Catering Van	24.95%	21.26%	53.80%
Ice Cream Van	18.57%	15.19%	66.25%
Tea Coffee/Snack/Vending Machine	33.26%	2.41%	34.33%
Machine Deliver on-line orders from local Cafes	27.37%	38.41%	34.21%
Pay as you use BBQ facilities	39.52%	35.15%	25.33%
Add some Picnic tables	2.92%	5.26%	91.81%

Some people did not think any of these apart from picnic tables would be financially viable. Others were concerned about the litter it might generate and poor toilet facilities.

A few of the comments made

<i>'Not sure there is enough footfall for on-site catering.'</i>
<i>'These sound ok but then we would need toilets, drains etc which would all add a lot of expense and would it be used to warrant the expense and the resulting litter'</i>
<i>'Adding catering facilities would create a rubbish problem and likely to mean more unrecyclable waste. It would also compete with existing food outlets and cafes in the town'</i>
<i>'catering ideas are good but it would then involve staff cleaning the areas, another cost to the council'</i>
<i>'apart from picnic tables, I suspect none of the other suggestions would work as they would not be profitable as not many visitors to park in the bad weather'</i>
<i>'There are businesses in the town who would be adversely affected by catering facilities in the park'</i>
<i>'Two big issues regarding most of these cost and viability, and litter!'</i>
<i>'I have a mobile catering coffee van, with a sustainable biodegrade approach and interested in setting up if possible on an ad hoc basis to see the interest.'</i>

What do you like least about the Park?

People were asked what they least liked about the park. Most of the comments made in this section had also been mentioned in comments in other parts of the survey.

A few of the comments made

<i>'could do with more picnic benches for people to enjoy picnics Dog mess. More seating facilities would be good'</i>
<i>'It is suitable for younger children but equipment isn't suitable for the 10-14 age group'</i>
<i>'The lack of facilities, toilets, ice-cream/drinks shop'</i>
<i>'The toilet in the pavilion needs updating'</i>
<i>'It's a shame the tennis courts are not open/available for occasional/spontaneous use. Cost of membership prohibitive for many.'</i>

'least like the fact that the play area is open so dogs cannot be kept out. It is very important that the play area is clean and there is no dog fouling. This is not possible when there is no fence'

'Many times we have been down the park in an afternoon and all the toilets are locked. Not very good if you have a desperate child needing to use the toilet meaning they either have to use a bush or try and make it home without messing themselves'

Events

People were asked what events they would like to see in the park. Most people liked the idea of having events in the park, in particular charity events (81.41%), social events (75.6%) and music events (73.54%). Some people suggested that other venues such as Rectory fields and Robinsons fields would be better as more accessible.

A few of the comments made

'The Fathers Day Events was brilliant back in 2018. Surpassed my expectations in relation to what could be offered by a venue of this size'

'More events for children. Walk up and play monthly tennis tournament for example.'

'Bike training for children learners and bmx. Beginners family tennis lessons'

'Sporting events open bowls own tennis etc possible summer five a side football tournaments in large unused area new obstacle courses'

'Easter egg hunt. Family sports day event.'

'Circus skills days , hog roast summer part'

'kids fun events as well'

'Poor access and lack of facilities, especially toilets, militate against events'

'I think that Rectory Field and Richard Robinson Field are better for this. Less traffic noise, easier access'

'Music and cinema there are a waste of time. Too noisy. Access is too poor to do anything regular.'

Large grassed area (2 acres) at the northern end of the Park

There is a 2 acre grassed area at the north side of the park which is prone to flooding.

People were asked to indicate whether they would like to see this area used for a car park, housing or hotel development, all weather sports pitch or an expanded play area.

There was little support for any of these suggestions. The least popular option was developing it for housing or a hotel.

	% In favour	Number in favour
Car park	34.32%	162
Housing or Hotel	5.08%	24
All weather Sports pitch	37.71%	178
Expanded Play area	42.16%	199
Other please specify	36.44%	172

A large number of comments made under other ideas suggest many people want this area kept natural.

A few of the comments made

<i>'Leave it as a natural, untended play area.'</i>
<i>'Great place to have a wildlife area.'</i>
<i>'Definitely should only developed as natural habitat. No building development. As prone to flooding, ideal for additional wetland habitat, pool.'</i>
<i>'Plant some trees and make into a wild flower area'</i>
<i>'that's where I find most of the tortoise food!!! Surely green is good, even if flooded?'</i>

Volunteers

People were asked if they would be willing to help cut costs of maintain the park by volunteering or sponsoring facilities.

A large number of people indicated they were willing to help.

- 123 volunteered to help with the gardens
- 67 said they would grow seedlings and bedding plants
- 31 help with the skate board
- 102 be part of a community interest group
- 127 organise of help events
- 105 help with painting railings, gates, seats
- 78 help by sponsoring a facility or aspect of the park

Conclusions

The town park is much valued by the community, especially families with children and the elderly.

Why people value it - Parents and grandparents value it as a place where children can safely run about and play. Many people come to simply sit, relax and walk and enjoy looking at the flowers and bird. It is appreciated by people with mobility issues because it has well surfaced and level paths suitable for walking and wheelchairs.

Tennis, bowls and croquet -The people who use the tennis, bowls, croquet and crazy golf facilities value it for the opportunity to socialise as well as take exercise. A substantial number of people said they are deterred from using these facilities because they are locked, people don't know how to access them or are daunted by having to pay a large annual membership fee. People were keen to have the option of paying as you go or paying online.

Play facilities- the children's play area and equipment, crazy golf, children's cycle track and BMX track are seen as all needing upgrading. There is support for providing rope climbing frames to provide equipment suitable for older children as well as play equipment for disabled children.

Additional exercise and sporting facilities- People were given suggestions for possible additional exercise and sporting facilities. The most popular ones were adult outdoor gym facilities (63%) and a mile running track around the park (53%).

Other Suggestions There was strong support for upgrading the toilets (94%), creating Wildlife Zones (81%) and upgrading the tennis pavilion (69%)

Park Access- 80% of respondents said they find it easy to gain access to the Park and 97% said that once in the park it was easy to get around. However, there were many comments from parents about the difficulty accessing the park with small children and buggies. People with mobility issues also mentioned difficulty in accessing the park.

Car park & footbridge - 67% of people were in favour of a footbridge There were mixed feelings about having a car park with entrance from the A49. 47% of respondents were in favour and 52% said they did not want it or would not use it.

Northern end of the park - People are strongly opposed to using the park to develop houses or hotels with only 5% of people in favour of this. There was only a little support for extending the play area or building an all weather pitch. Many residents made comments wanting to retain this as a natural area

Catering facilities-- The most popular suggestions were adding picnic tables (92%), having a café (73%), incorporating a food café in the pavilion (73%), an ice cream van (66%) and mobile catering van (54%)

Events - Most people liked the idea of having events in the park, in particular charity events (81.41%), social events (75.6%) and music events (73.54%). However, Some people suggested that other venues such as Rectory fields and Robinsons fields would be better as more accessible.

Volunteers

A large number of people indicated they were willing to help by helping with the gardens, painting railings and seats, organising or helping with events and sponsoring.