Annex 1 | 14th January 2025

Green Infrastructure Consultation

Contents

Cover image: Grantham Canal on the edge of Redmile, as seen from the nearby highway bridge

1. Introduction

This consultation report is an annex to the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024. The public and stakeholder consultation was held from 26 July to 6 September 2024. The consultation was preceded by a related consultation for the Melton Open Space Strategy & Action Plan 2024, which was held from 10 January to 4 March 2024. This green infrastructure consultation was primarily web-based, with paper-based response forms available upon request through Melton Borough Council Parkside Office reception, the Melton Mowbray Library, the Bottesford Library, and local Parish Council Offices.

The consultation was open to all members of the public. A selection of relevant stakeholders, including statutory stakeholders, was approached directly by e-mail. The aim of the consultation was to uncover lived experiences of green infrastructure in the Borough of Melton, giving residents, local businesses, community groups and other interested parties the opportunity to share their views and thoughts. The outcomes of the consultation are complementary to the green infrastructure strategy and action plan developed by the authors. This means points made in the consultation process were used to develop the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024.

Chapter 2 details the methodology used, describing who was consulted, what was consulted on, and how the consultation took place. Chapter 3 shares the results from the consultation, with the number of responses and representation across respondents. The responses to all questions on the consultation are analysed and connected with relevant sections of the Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024. Finally, chapter 4 offers a summary, with an overview of the key points made and key actions addressed in the strategy and action plan.

A note to the reader: all statements shared in chapter 3 are statements from the consultation respondents. These statements are analysed thematically and used to inform the Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024.

2. Consultation Methodology

2.1 Who was consulted

The consultation was open to all members of the public. A selection of relevant stakeholders, including statutory stakeholders, was approached directly by e-mail. We received a total of 55 unique responses (Table 1).

Type	Number
Digital form	53
Printed form	0
E-mail	2
E-mail addendum to submitted form	1
Total unique responses received	**55**

Table 1 | Number of responses received

The respondents represent a variety of relationships with the borough, different age groups and genders, and almost all respondents reside in and around the borough (Figure 1). Note that a respondent can have multiple relationships with the borough. For example, there are residents who also work in the borough. Also, note that three respondents indicated 'other'. These respondents are two non-departmental public bodies, as well as a utility provider, landowner, and blue infrastructure funder.

Relationships with the Borough of Melton

- I am a resident: 52
- I am a frequent visitor: 1
- I represent a local business: 4
- I work in the Borough of Melton: 7
- I am in local or regional government: 5
- I own or represent an organisation who owns land in the…: 2
- I am a member of a community group: 8
- I am a member of a local organisation: 4
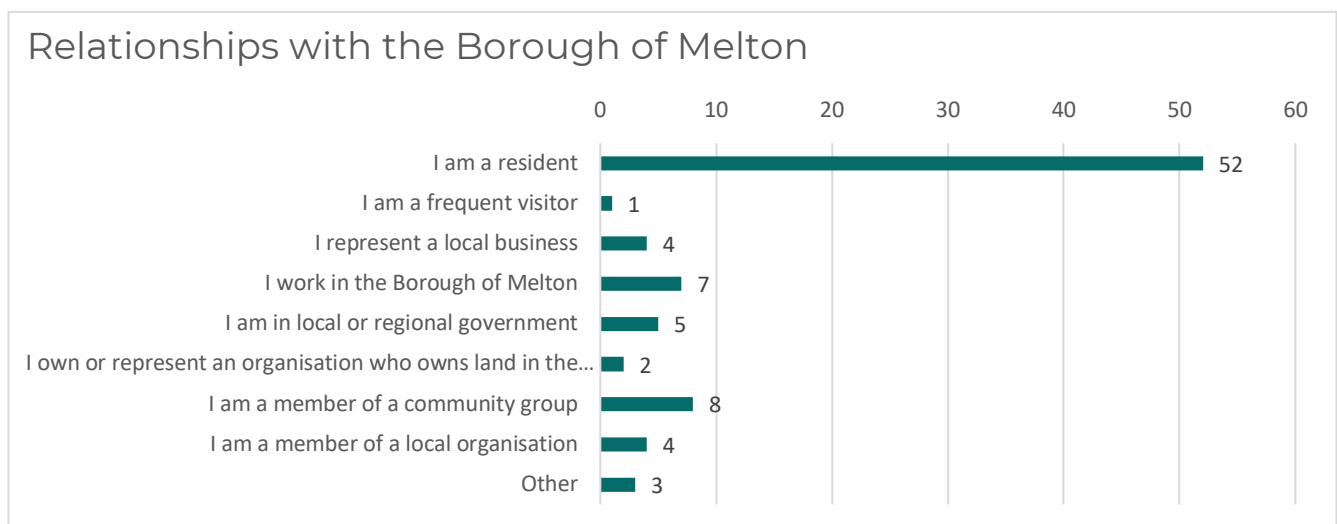- Other: 3

Figure 1 | Respondent's relationships with the Melton Borough *n=55*

The respondents represent all age groups, with most respondents fitting in the age group 55 – 74 (Figure 2). Respondents represent female and male residents and stakeholders in and around the borough (Figure 3). Respondents primarily reside in the borough. The total number of responses shows a spread across the borough and neighbouring areas (Figure 4 and Figure 5[1]). Most respondents are based in Melton Mowbray, with good representation across the entire borough.
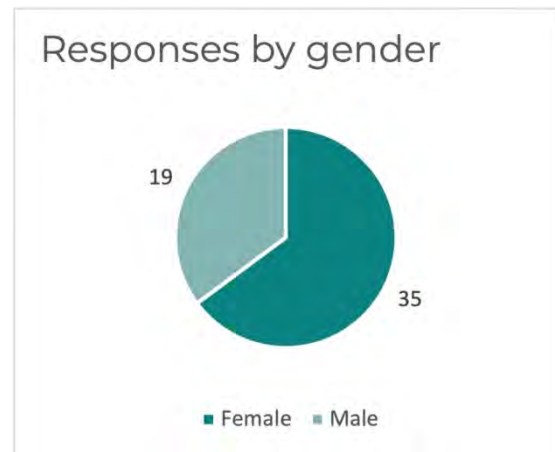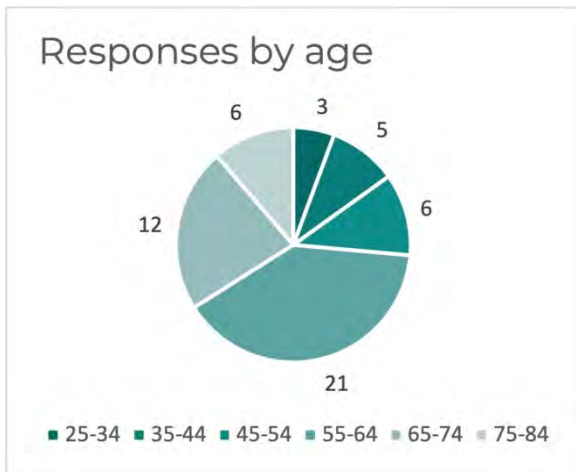

Figure 3| Representation by age *n=53*

Figure 2| Representation by gender *n=54*
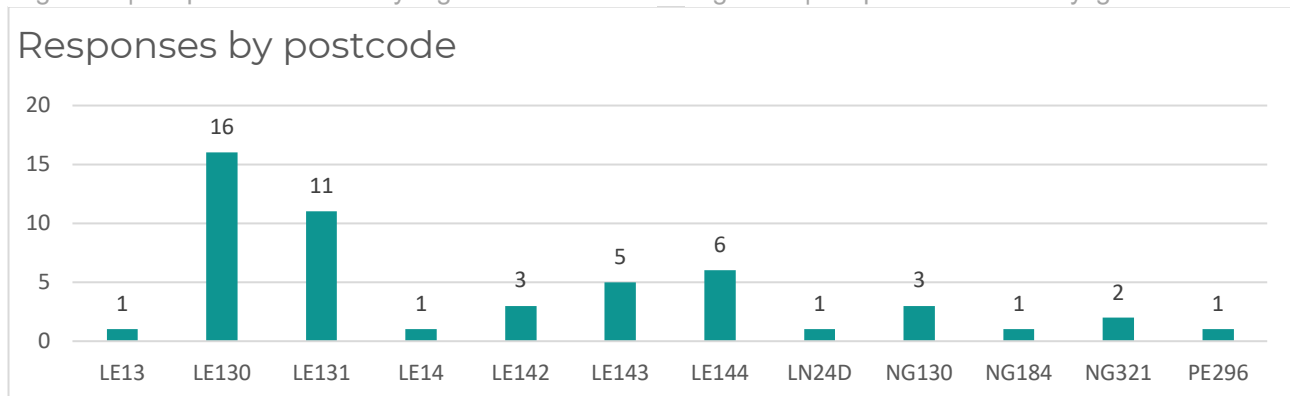
Figure 4 | Representation by postcode *n=51*

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[1] Map created based on GBMaps.com (2018)
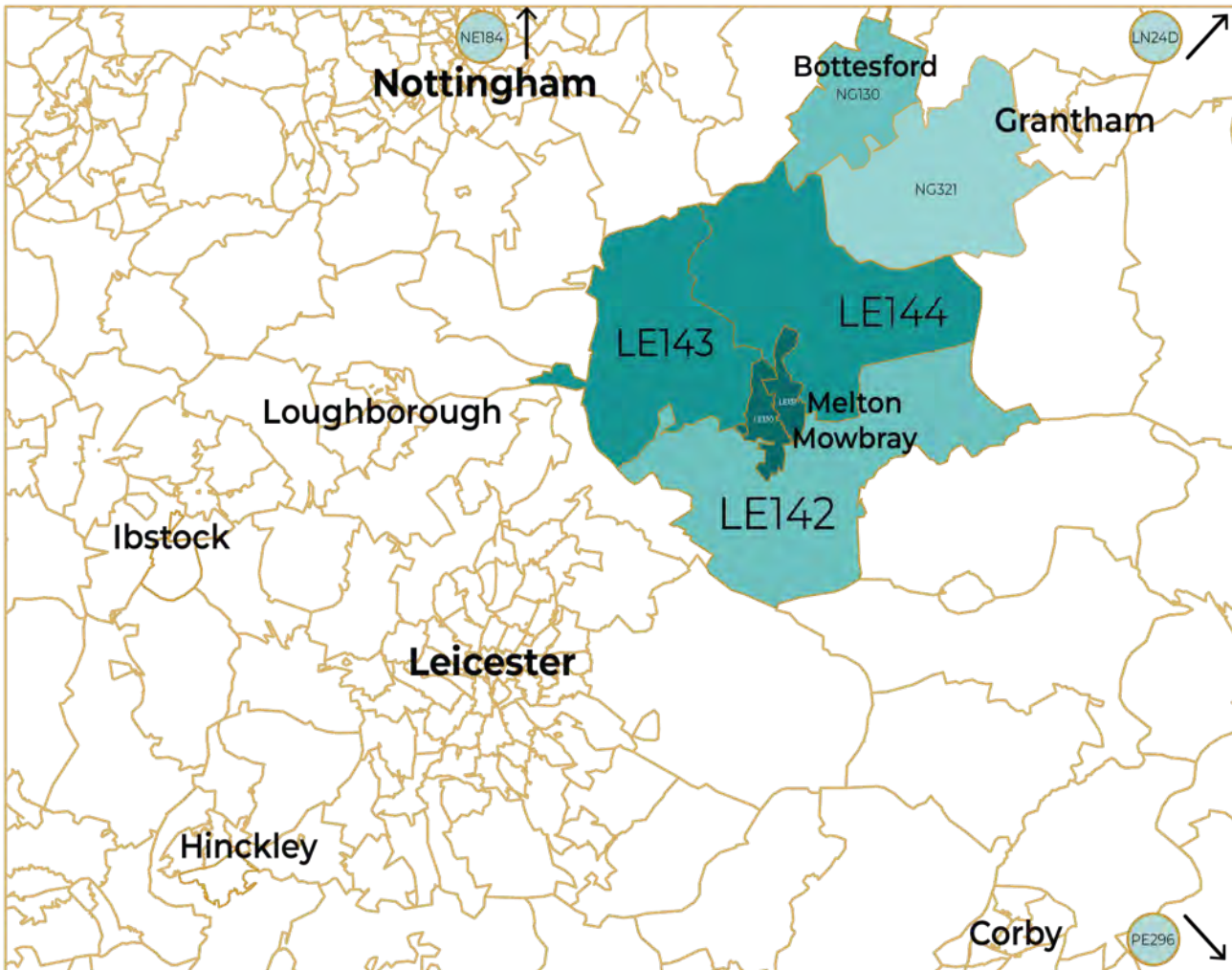
Figure 5 | Geographic spread of respondents, with darker areas on the map indicating more respondents from that postcode *n=51*

2.2 What was consulted on

The consultation included a number of themes. For each of the themes, respondents were given the option to reply through closed questions and open questions (
Table 2 | Consultation themes and questions
Table 2).

Theme	Form question	Answer options
Familiarity with GI (see also 2.3.2 Accessibility)	Had you heard of green infrastructure before joining this survey?	• Yes • No
Existing green infrastructure in and around the Borough of Melton	Which of these types of green and blue spaces do you regularly use within the Borough of Melton?	• Allotments • Bridleways • Canals and rivers: to walk along • Canals and rivers: to swim • Parks • Private gardens

		• Public footpaths • Rights of way, e.g. a field margin • Wetlands • Wildlife areas • Woodlands • Other: …
	What do you typically do when you visit these green and blue spaces?	• Enjoying nature • Exercise, for example jogging or cycling • Meeting friends and family • Leisure • Out for a walk • Play, or watching my children play • Walking my dog • Other: …
	Which of these types of green and blue spaces do you regularly use <u>around or close to</u> the Borough of Melton?	• Allotments • Bridleways • Canals and rivers: to walk along • Canals and rivers: to swim • Parks • Private gardens • Public footpaths • Rights of way, e.g. a field margin • Wetlands • Wildlife areas • Woodlands • Other: …
	What do you typically do when you visit these green and blue spaces?	• Enjoying nature • Exercise, for example jogging or cycling • Meeting friends and family • Leisure • Out for a walk • Play, or watching my children play • Walking my dog • Other: …
	Would you like to highlight any of the above? Why is this particularly important to you?	Open answer
Appreciation of green infrastructure in and around the Borough of Melton	What green or blue infrastructure <u>within</u> the Borough of Melton is most special to you?	Geolocation on map
	Why does this green or blue infrastructure stand out to you?	Open answer
	What green or blue infrastructure <u>around or close to</u> the Borough of Melton is most special to you?	Geolocation on map
	Why does this green or blue infrastructure stand out to you?	Open answer
How easy it is to use green infrastructure in	Is there any green or blue infrastructure within or around the Borough of Melton that you would visit <u>more</u> if better connected?	Geolocation on map
	What kind of connection would be helpful to better connect this green or blue infrastructure?	Open answer

the Borough of Melton	Are there any areas in the Borough of Melton that don't have enough green infrastructure provisions?	Geolocation on map
	What is missing in these areas?	Open answer
Green infrastructure management in the Melton Borough	Who should be involved with green infrastructure provision, enhancement, maintenance and management?	• Borough Council • County Council • Neighbouring Parish Councils • Developers • Community Organisations • Town Trusts, such as the Melton Mowbray Town Estate • Contractors, including landscape contractors • Farmers • Trainees and apprentices • Other parties which should be involved: ….
	Who do you expect to carry the cost of green infrastructure maintenance?	• Local Parish Councils • Borough Council • County Council • Neighbouring Parish Councils • Developers • Farmers • Town Trusts, such as the Melton Mowbray Town Estate • Residents, e.g. through resident fees • Other parties which should be involved: ….
	If you or your organisation steward, manage or own land in the Borough of Melton: How would you like to be informed about green infrastructure developments in the borough?	• Regular update via e-mail/digital newsletter • Annual update via e-mail/digital newsletter • Invitations to seminars and workshops • Network events • Other: …
	If you or your organisation steward, manage or own land in the Borough of Melton: What kind of information would you need from Melton Borough Council to become more involved with the local green infrastructure network?	Open answer
Other	Is there anything else you want to add about open spaces in the Melton borough?	Open answer

Table 2 | Consultation themes and questions

2.3 How did the consultation take place

The consultation was primarily web-based through Google Forms, with paper-based response forms available upon request. With both options, respondents could submit their responses anonymously. Additionally, respondents were given the option to share supplementary statements through a dedicated e-mail address.

2.3.1 Dissemination
The consultation was widely circulated on both online and offline platforms. For online dissemination, we circulated the link to the Google Form to the following locations:

- Melton Borough Council Have Your Say
- Melton Borough Council Planning Policy
- Melton Borough Council monthly news bulletin
- Melton Borough Council social media: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Direct e-mail to known stakeholders

To make the form available offline, we took the following steps:

- Print-on-demand form available from Melton Borough Council Parkside Office reception, the Melton Mowbray Library, the Bottesford Library, and local Parish Council Offices
- Posters with QR code to online form available from the same locations

2.3.2 Accessibility
To ensure accessibility of the consultation, we took a number of steps. These include the following:

- Adhering to Melton Borough Council communication guidelines
- Adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, including the use of alt text for images and an accessible colour palette
- Anonymous data collection and anonymised data processing
- Provision of clear introduction and instructions
- Provision of Frequently Asked Questions at Melton Borough Council Planning Policy
- Provision of qualitative open questions with space for elaboration
- Run-time of consultation of 6 weeks, with additional reminders shared across platforms a week before the consultation deadline
- Use of visualisations to explain the concepts of open space types, open space quantity standards, and open space access standards

Additionally, we added a section on 'What is Green Infrastructure' in the response form, as green infrastructure is not a widely understood concept. To ensure all respondents would be able to answer the questions in the form with confidence, we included a short explanatory text, and embedded the explanatory film 'What is Green Infrastructure?' of just over 1 minute, produced by Natural England. We then asked respondents if they had heard of the term 'green

infrastructure' before completing the survey, to be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. From this question, we learned that indeed, over 40% of respondents were new to the concept of green infrastructure (Figure 6). Amongst those previously unfamiliar with the concept are two respondents who are in local or regional government, and several members of community groups.
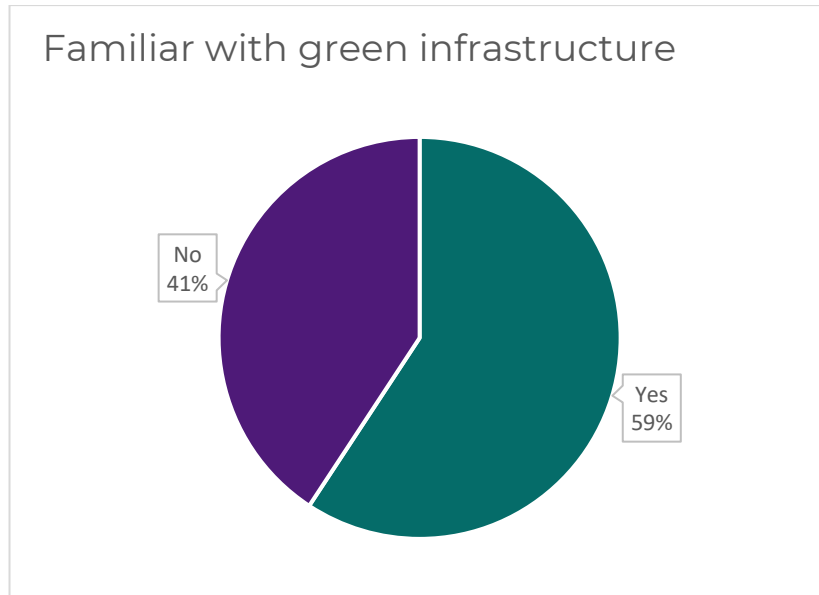
Figure 6 | Familiarity of respondents with green infrastructure *n=54*

2.4 How were the responses processed

All data from the consultation was processed anonymously by the consultants. The responses were processed using the following programmes:

- Google Forms for collating responses
- Google Maps for geolocating anonymised responses
- Microsoft Excel for processing and visualising anonymised answers
- ChatGPT for thematic analysis of anonymised textual answers to open questions

3. Outcomes

3.1 Existing green infrastructure in and around the Borough of Melton

Green Infrastructure is the network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features in urban and rural areas. Together, this network of green and blue spaces can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity (National Planning Policy Framework, 2023). Green Infrastructure is often also referred to as Green and Blue Infrastructure.

A green infrastructure network can include street trees, green roofs/walls, parks, private gardens, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, through to wildlife areas, woodlands, wetlands and natural flood management functioning at local and landscape scales. Linear GI includes roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and canals and rivers. Different from open spaces, GI includes all public and private green and blue spaces. Green infrastructure includes all connected public and private green and blue spaces and other natural features in urban and rural areas.

Figure 7 | Types of green and blue spaces

Because connectivity is vital to green infrastructure, respondents were asked to consider not just green infrastructure within the Borough of Melton, but also the surrounding green infrastructure elements. Respondents were asked to consider the following types of green and blue spaces (Figure 7) and to distinguish between green infrastructure <u>within</u> and <u>around or close to</u> the Borough of Melton:

- Allotments
- Bridleways
- Canals and rivers: to walk along
- Canals and rivers: to swim
- Parks
- Private gardens
- Public footpaths
- Rights of way, e.g. a field margin
- Wetlands
- Wildlife areas
- Woodlands
- Other: …

From the responses, we can see no major differences between the types of green infrastructure used <u>within</u> the borough and <u>around or close to</u> the borough. Across the board, green infrastructure within the borough or, 'close to home', is used slightly more (Figure 8), and includes 'the green outside the house'. Nonetheless, the neighbouring green infrastructure is important for respondents and accessed regularly, especially wetland areas (Figure 9). Note, too, that canals and rivers are used for swimming indeed.
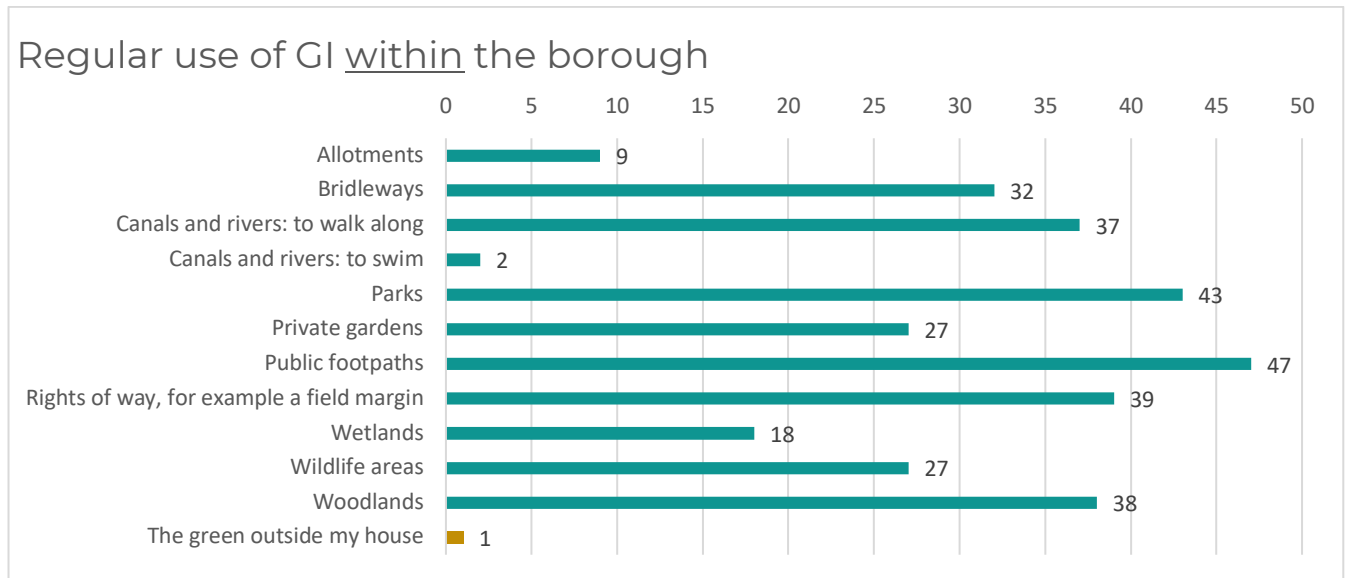
Regular use of GI <u>within</u> the borough

Category	Value
Allotments	9
Bridleways	32
Canals and rivers: to walk along	37
Canals and rivers: to swim	2
Parks	43
Private gardens	27
Public footpaths	47
Rights of way, for example a field margin	39
Wetlands	18
Wildlife areas	27
Woodlands	38
The green outside my house	1

Figure 8 | Regular use of green and blue spaces <u>within</u> the borough *n=53*

Regular use of GI <u>around and close to</u> the borough

Category	Value
Allotments	7
Bridleways	31
Canals and rivers: to walk along	37
Canals and rivers: to swim	3
Parks	39
Private gardens	21
Public footpaths	41
Rights of way, for example a field margin	34
Wetlands	22
Wildlife areas	28
Woodlands	35
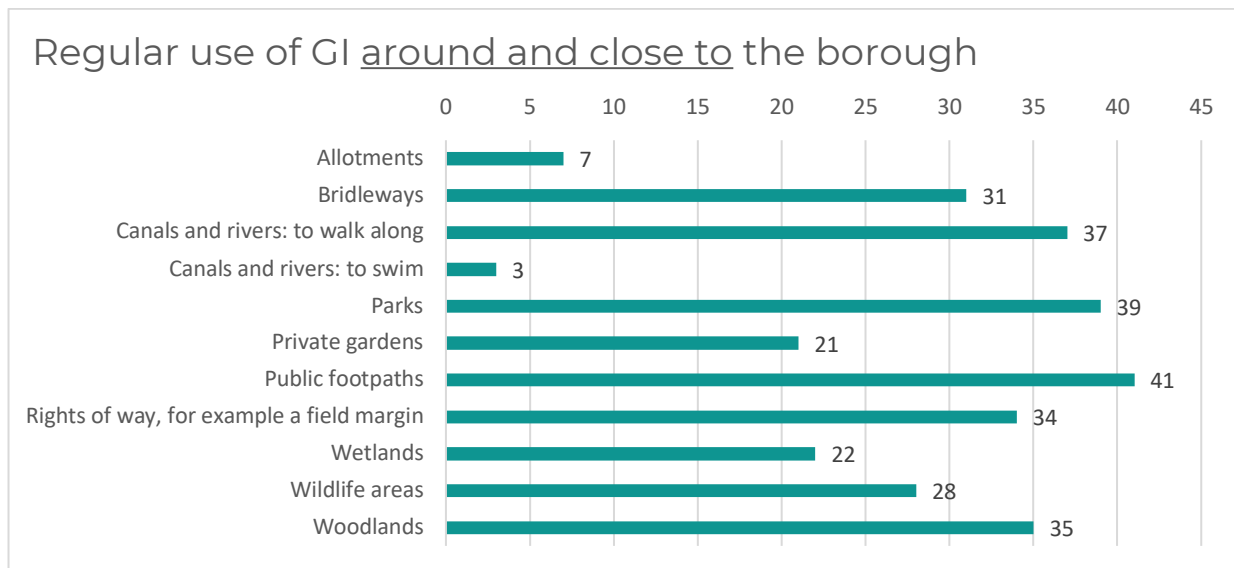
Figure 9 | Regular use of green and blue spaces <u>around and close to</u> the borough *n=50*

Green infrastructure within and around or close to the borough is used for a variety of reasons. These include enjoying nature and going out for a walk, space for social interactions and relaxation, but also involve exercise, horse riding, making art (taking photographs) and work-related site visits. The typical use of green infrastructure within the borough (Figure 10) and around or close to the borough (Figure 11) is very similar.

Typical use of GI within the borough
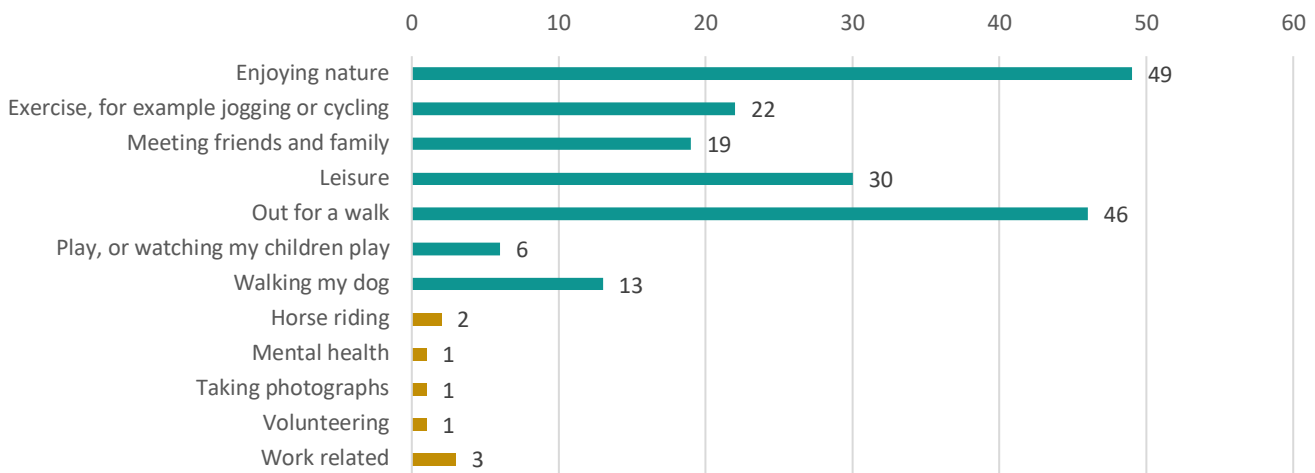
Figure 10 | Typical use of green infrastructure within the borough, with typical uses and additional uses as identified by respondents n=53

Typical use of GI around and close to the borough
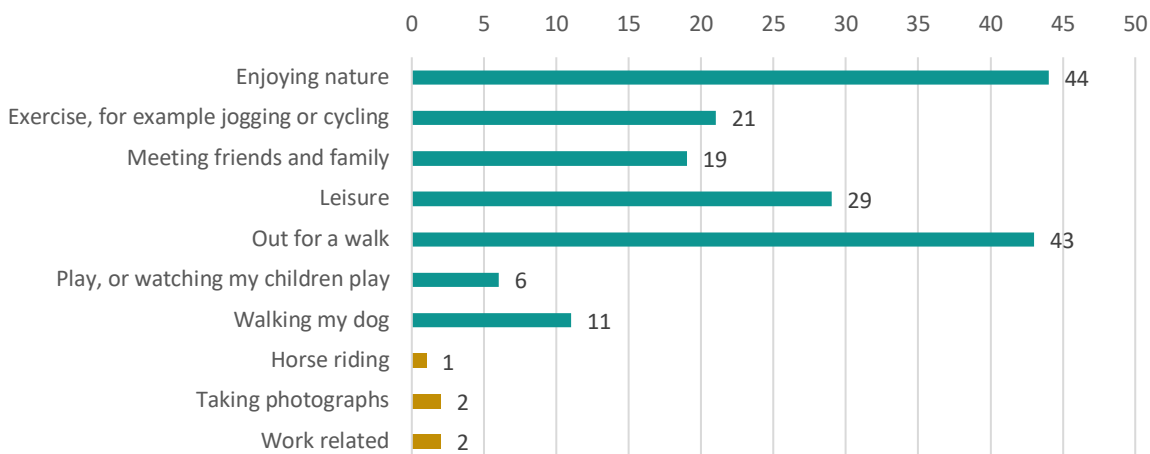
Figure 11 | Typical use of green infrastructure around and close to the borough, with typical uses and additional uses as identified by respondents n=50

Respondents highlighted birdwatching and taking time to sit in nature and look at birds, plants, and insects as particular activities in the category of 'enjoying nature'. The work-related activities include the management of land assets to support natural capital, visiting particular sites as part of the respondent's work remit, and executing bird surveys for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

We asked respondents if they would like to highlight any of the activities mentioned, and why those activities are particularly important to them. Table 3 lists the reasons why open spaces are important:

Reasons why green infrastructure is important	Times mentioned	Relevant quotes
Connection with nature	10	"Enjoying and understanding nature enables us as a society to value and so invest in nature."
		"Enjoying with Nature, reconnecting with Nature is a fundamental need."
		"They're vitally important to connect with nature."
		"Without the beauty and peace of nature, I'd go mad!"
Health and wellbeing	7	"For me, this is part of looking after my physical, mental and spiritual health."
		"My main exercise is walking. To walk in areas with nature is a great help in dealing with mental illness."
		"Walking and running in nature-rich environments makes my soul soar!"
Recreation and leisure	6	"I cycle or walk on them several times every week."
		"Out for quality family time."
		"I like being outside and having plenty of different places to visit."
Accessibility and maintenance	5	"Increasing problem of access to rural footpaths because they are not maintained."
		"The footpaths and bridleway condition in the area has significantly deteriorated recently."
		"I was recently advised to 'take secateurs' if styles were badly overgrown."
Nature conservation	4	"We need traffic-free areas to allow wildlife to thrive and to be safe for cycling."
		"Wildlife areas, rivers & canals, and footpaths are needed so we have more chance to see wildlife."

Table 3 | Reasons why green infrastructure is important *n=34*

3.2 Appreciation of green infrastructure in and around the Borough of Melton

We asked respondents to share with us what green infrastructure is most special to them, both within the Borough of Melton and around or close to the borough. The places mentioned are mapped on this interactive map on Google Maps (Figure 12). Simply click the point on the map and the reason why the place is special pops up. These locations and reasons are listed in **Error! Reference source not found.** on the next pages.
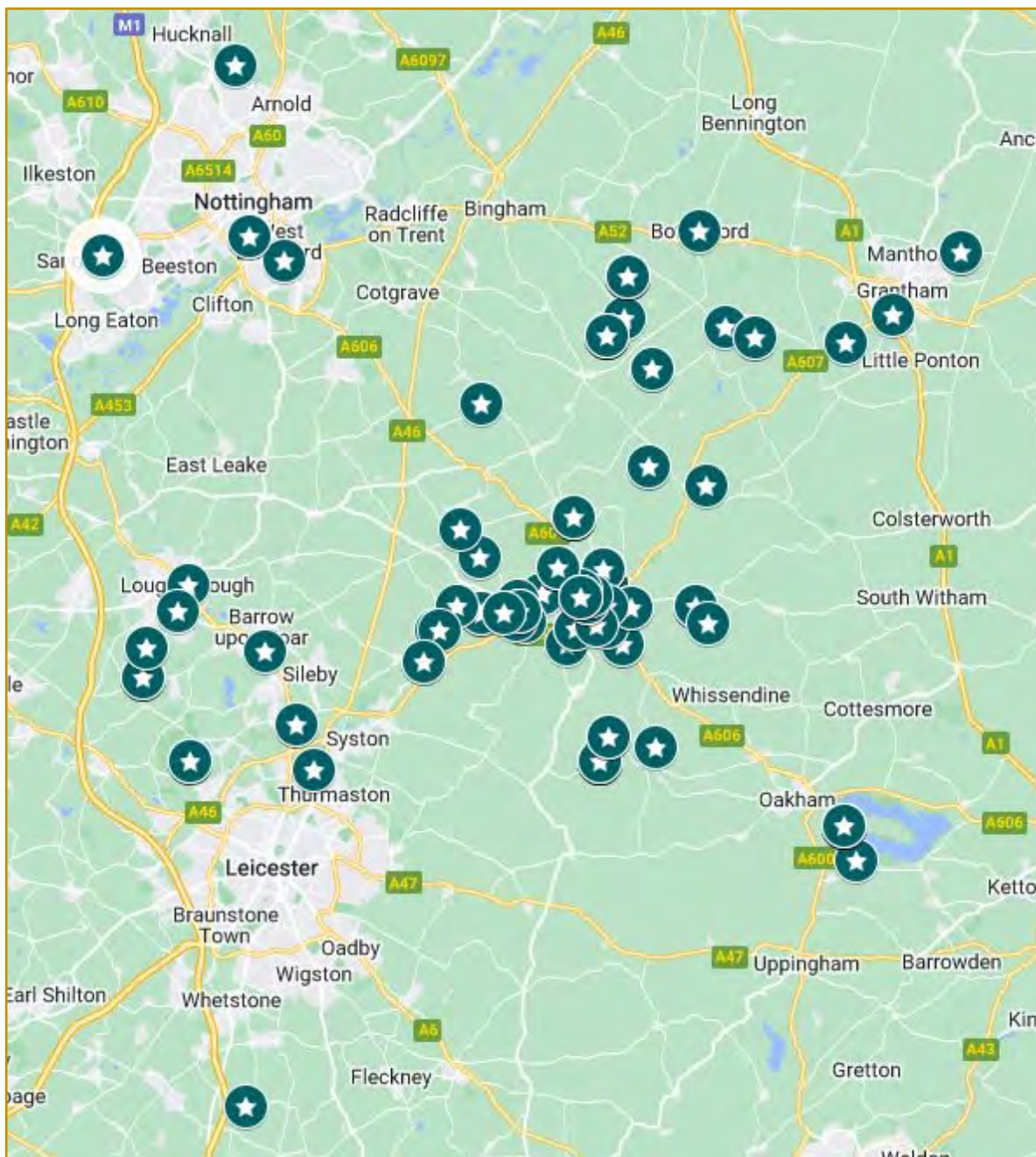

Figure 12 | Interactive map indicating special green infrastructure in and around the borough *n=51 + 48*

To understand the value of these 174 geographical places mentioned by respondents, we further summarised appreciated green infrastructure into the types of green infrastructure mentioned (Table 4). The reasons of appreciation given by respondents were thematically analysed using ChatGPT (Table 5).

Type of green infrastructure	Times mentioned	Reasons for appreciation
All of it	10	"It's my world"
		"Because they are vital for health and wellbeing"
		"All bridleways and other off-road routes accessible to horses and all woodlands and other wildlife habitats, private and public. Because I notice how few animals, birds and insects there are in these spaces compared to when I was younger. We are cheating our younger generations of joys and healthy pastimes if we do not retain these areas."
		"All footpaths and bridleways in and around Somerby parish. History and heritage. Nature and Wellbeing"
		"All Melton Sports Grounds"
		"All Melton Town Parks"
		"Silly question, just open your eyes."
All surrounding countryside	3	"Space and trees"
		"Space and trees"
		"Traffic free"
Allotments	1	"Grow my own food"
Bridleways	2	"Especially in Somerby. Wildlife mix"
		"Especially within and around the villages of Waltham on the Wolds, Stonesby, Eastwell, Goadby Marwood, Chadwell and Scalford. Accessible from my home without the need for transport."
Canals, rivers and streams	4	"Canal NCN routes in the region. Freedom to enjoy"
		"Because these places have become rare, fractured and disconnected, yet they are absolutely necessary. They are often already in a very bad state due to litter, pollution and loss of biodiversity and often under additional threat from more human destruction, pollution and encroachment. They should be protected, connected with each other, not built upon or further exploited."
		"Because they're an escape from urban sprawl"
Footpaths	3	"Along the River Eye. Space for nature, river, peaceful, mature trees, bird and insect life"
		"Specifically, D68, 69, D74, D70, D72, D71A, D73, C81, C95, D68, D61. These heritage footpaths are integral to our history, heritage and topography"
		"Walks around Waltham on the Wolds. Relief from traffic"
Nature reserves	1	"Brilliant space for nature to flourish, there are many mature trees, peaceful"
Outside my house	1	"We need them, there are so many houses"
Places to enjoy with the family	1	"Places to enjoy with the family"
Public rights of way	1	"Because they're an escape from urban sprawl"
Railway embankments	1	"Space for nature, river, peaceful, mature trees, bird and insect life"
Town Estate Parks	3	"Traffic free, encourages wildlife"
		"Traffic free"
		"Space for nature, river, peaceful, mature trees, bird and insect life"

| Woodlands | 2 | "Because these places have become rare, fractured and disconnected, yet they are absolutely necessary. They are often already in a very bad state due to litter, pollution and loss of biodiversity and often under additional threat from more human destruction, pollution and encroachment. They should be protected, connected with each other, not built upon or further exploited." |
| | | "Because they're an escape from urban sprawl" |

Table 4 | Appreciated types of green infrastructure in and around the borough *n=51*

Reasons for appreciation	Times mentioned	Relevant quotes
Importance of nature and biodiversity	14	"Because [green infrastructure] is vital for health and wellbeing."
		"Because these places have become rare, fractured and disconnected, yet they are absolutely necessary."
		"Good biodiversity."
Accessibility	12	"Accessible from my home without the need for transport."
		"They are not too far to get to, are quiet and have water and lots of wildlife to spot."
		"Easily accessible on foot, are well maintained and have a variety of landscapes, plants and habitats."
Health and wellbeing benefits	10	"It's a good mental health support and allows me to disconnect from work over what has been some very challenging years."
		"Important for health and wellbeing to be able to access the natural environment and wildlife."
		"I spend 9-10 hours a day in front of a computer...I love being outside in the countryside."
Beauty and peacefulness	9	"Brilliant space for nature to flourish, there are many mature trees, peaceful."
		"Peaceful for a walk."
		"I enjoy the peace and history."
Community and heritage	7	"These heritage footpaths are integral to our history, heritage and topography."
		"Especially the Iron Age Hillfort. History, views, access by bike from Melton."
Concerns over development and pollution	6	"[Rivers] are often already in a very bad state due to litter, pollution and loss of biodiversity."
		"[Streams] should be protected, connected with each other, not built upon or further exploited."

Table 5 | Reasons for green infrastructure appreciation *n=51*

The themes mentioned are incorporated in the Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan. For each of the topics mentioned, the corresponding section is marked in Table 6 below.

Topic	Corresponding section in Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024
Accessibility	Section 7.4 (Standard 2)
Beauty and peacefulness	Sections 1.7, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 (Standard 1, as well as Standard 2 and Standard 3, under 'quality')
Biodiversity	Sections 1.7, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 (Standard 4), 7.6, 8.2, 8.3, 9.3
Connection with nature	Sections 7.1, 7.2, see also 'health wellbeing'
Health and wellbeing	Sections 1.4, 1.5, 4.2, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3), 7.5, 7.6, 8.2, 8.3, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4
Maintenance	Sections 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 1), 7.6, 9.1, 9.2
Nature conservation	Sections 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 3)
Recreation and leisure	Sections 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 8.3

Table 6 | Overview of responses to respondents' appreciation and concern

3.3 Accessibility and provision of green infrastructure

We asked respondents to consider green infrastructure accessibility and provision within and around the Melton borough. The questions in the survey particularly focussed on the quality of the connectivity between green infrastructure assets in and around the borough, since connectivity is a key feature of successful green infrastructure.

3.3.1. Accessibility of green infrastructure in and around the borough

We asked respondents to share with us what green infrastructure within and around the borough they would visit more if better connected. Respondents mention a number of potential solutions to improving connectivity. Their proposals especially mention the need to improve and extend the rights of way network in and around the borough. As one respondent mentions: "Ideally, we would have a right to roam (like in Scotland and many parts of Europe). We would care for and enjoy nature everywhere, with a right to swim in any river and any lake, without fear of swimming through pollution caused by raw human sewage, litter, fertilisers and pesticides. What is also needed is the establishment of green corridors connecting all the remaining green and blue spaces, removing all wired fences, supported by a network of well-maintained public footpaths." Additionally, respondents have indicated a number of specific locations and actions where accessibility and connectivity of green infrastructure in and around the borough could be improved (Figure 13 and Table 7).
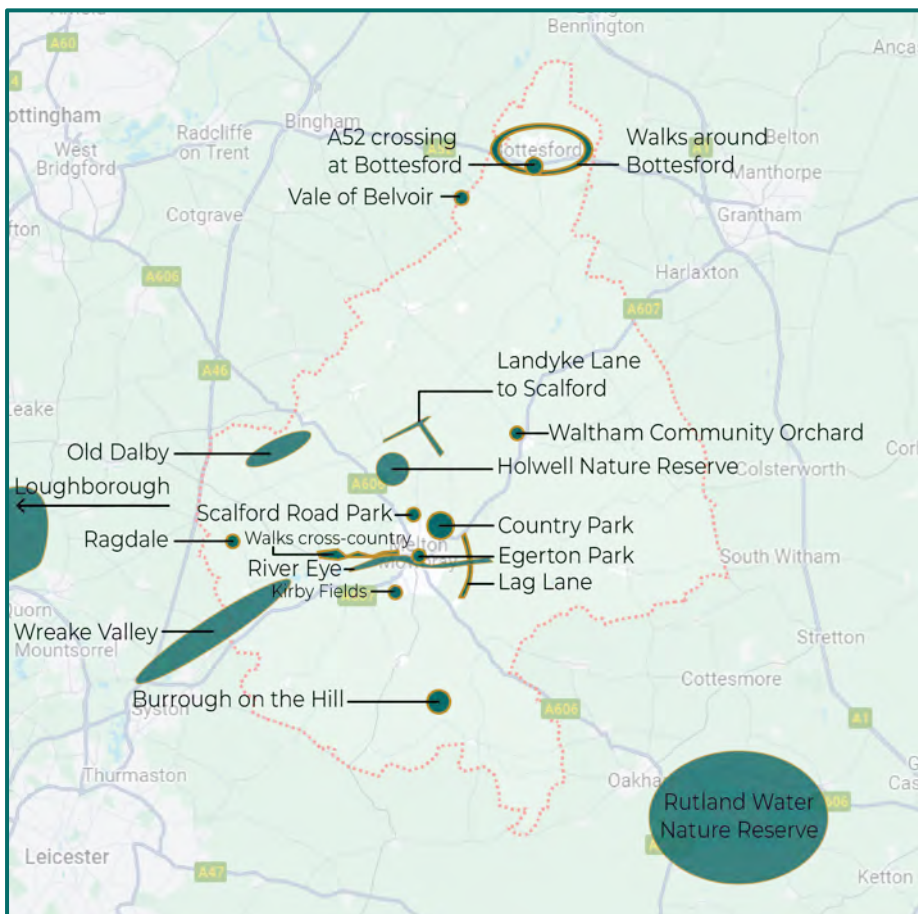

Figure 13 | Areas within and around the Borough of Melton in need of better connectivity *n=32*

Areas within and around the Borough of Melton in need of better connectivity	Measures needed to improve accessibility
A52 safe crossing for residents of Bottesford	Bridge
Burrough on the Hill	Regular bus service
Country Park	Footpaths
	Cycle paths, especially a cycle way towards Scalford
Egerton Park	Footpaths
Holwell Nature Reserve	Cycle paths
	Regular bus service
Kirby Fields	Public footpath, access routes
Lag Lane	Public footpath, access routes
Landyke Lane, Scalford	Cycle paths, increased road safety
Loughborough	Cycle paths
Old Dalby	Cycle paths
Ragdale	Cycle paths
River Eye	Footpaths, riverside walk
	Footpaths, path maintenance
Rutland Water Nature Reserve	Connection to LNRS, highway verges, blue infrastructure features including a river walk
Scalford Road Park	Regular bus service
Vale of Belvoir	Cycle paths, footpaths, bridleways
	Regular bus service
Walks around Bottesford	Replacement of stiles with access gates
Walks cross-country from Asfordby to Melton	Footpaths, signage
Waltham Community Orchard, Goadby Road	Footpaths
Wreake Valley	Cycle paths

Table 7 | Areas within and around the Borough of Melton in need of better connectivity *n=32*

3.3.2. Provision of green infrastructure in and around the borough

We also inquired with respondents if there are any specific areas in the borough that don't have enough green infrastructure provisions. Most respondents mention "there is not enough in any area. Some areas are worse than others, but none have 'enough'." One respondent remarks that "humans are not the only inhabitants of the Borough of Melton", and mentions that the old green belt protections seem to have diminished, renamed and downgraded. A number of specific locations throughout the borough are specifically mentioned (Figure 14; Table 8), where green infrastructure provisions should be made or enhanced.
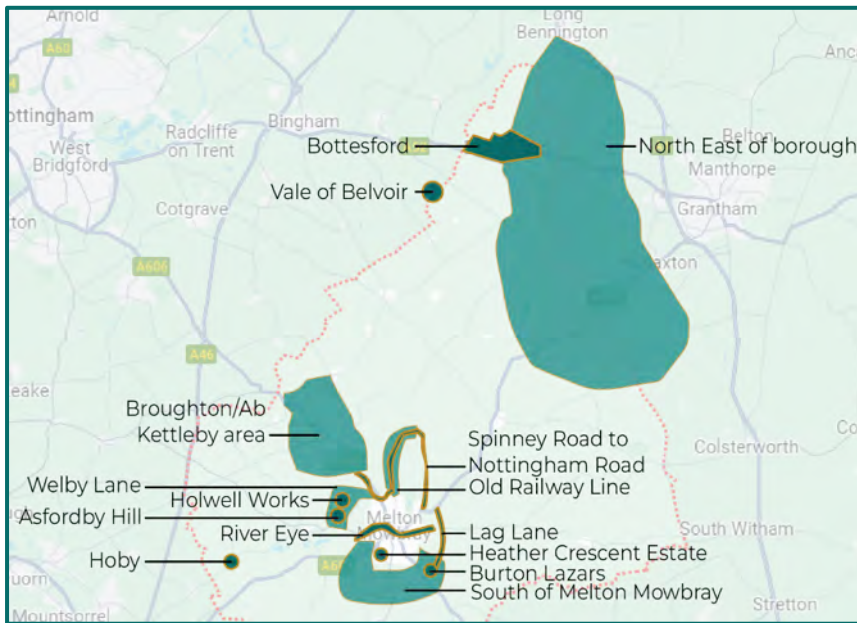
Figure 14 | Areas in need of additional green infrastructure provisions according to respondents *n=27*

Areas in the Borough of Melton that don't have enough green infrastructure provisions	What is missing in these areas
Asfordby Hill	Street trees, including permanent coniferous trees that might be decorated during the holidays
Belvoir Vale	Leisure walks, increased public access to the woodland
Bottesford	Bridges, cycle infrastructure
Broughton/Ab Kettleby area	Increased public access to existing footpaths, new circular routes and walks, public transport, provision for parking, introduction of signage
Burton Lazars	Allotments, parks, and recreational areas, cycle infrastructure
Heather Crescent Estate area	Street trees, more diverse vegetation beyond grass
Hoby with Rotherby	Open spaces, play areas, protection of existing open spaces like the church paddock
Holwell Works	A country park, housing
Lag Lane	Well maintained paths, linking paths to allow for circular routes, path maintenance, re-instating of footpaths
Melton Mowbray market area	Street trees
Melton Suburbs	Woodland ringing the suburbs
Melton Town Centre	Street trees
	Street trees, vegetation
	Street trees
North East of the borough	Publicly accessible spaces
North of Melton, from Melton Spinney Road to Nottingham Road	Wildlife corridors between new housing developments with bridges and tunnels

Old Railway Line, between Country Park and Scalford	Official designation of footpath as public footpath
River around Town Parks	Maintenance through additional funding and volunteers
	Development too close to the river, with a need for improved connections
South of Melton Mowbray	Green corridor between the south towards the centre of Melton Mowbray
Welby Lane	Footpaths

Table 8 | Proposed measures to improve green infrastructure provisions in the Borough of Melton *n=27*

Additional to provision of tangible green and blue spaces, most respondents mention the need for connectivity and public access. "The bridleway network is sporadic and requires a lot of road use to join it up." "Footpaths are designed for the bare minimum, keeping to marginal land almost the whole time." "We need circular routes." One respondent makes a case for "free and total unimpeded access to visit and enjoy all those spaces, to learn about them and ourselves, how to be better and ultimately more responsible guardians of nature." To achieve this, the borough needs "crucial connected wild areas with large free-range grazing animals, beavers, and natural predators such as foxes, stoats, weasels, and birds of prey."

3.3.3. Concrete actions towards accessibility and provision of green infrastructure
Based on the locations and action points mentioned above, the concrete actions proposed by respondents can be summarised as follows (Table 9):

	Type	Times mentioned
Infrastructure to be added and improved	Access routes	4
	Bridge over A52	2
	Bridleways	5
	Cycle paths	12
	Footpaths, especially public footpaths	13
	Highway verges	1
	Linear blue infrastructure, e.g. rivers and canals	1
	Links between footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways	2
	Public transport (e.g. bus) in lieu of footpaths	3
	Riverside walk	1
Other actions	Access gates, to replace existing stiles	1
	Add sculptures along paths	1
	Add signage	3
	Better lighting	1
	Land protections, including protection from development	1
	Maintenance of paths, especially to improve safety	6
	Plant trees, along paths and streets	3
	Respecting and extending rights of way, including removal of fences	2
	Strategic mowing, including prevention of gang mowing	1

Table 9 | Proposed actions to improve green infrastructure accessibility and provision *n=32 + 27*

3.4 Responsibility for green infrastructure

Well-designed and well-managed green infrastructure generates multiple benefits for people and nature and creates greener, healthier places to live that support a more productive economy. Green infrastructure can only deliver these benefits when appropriately managed. Green infrastructure management occurs on four levels:

- Provision and creation: providing or creating new green and blue spaces and providing and creating new connections between existing green infrastructure
- Enhancement: improving existing green infrastructure
- Maintenance: maintaining newly added and existing green infrastructure
- Management: long-term responsibility for green infrastructure provision and enhancement

3.5.1 Involvement in green infrastructure management

Respondents indicate that they expect particularly the Melton Borough Council, the Leicestershire County Council and developers to contribute to the provision and creation, and enhancement of green infrastructure (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Additionally, they expect local Parish Councils to be involved. Farmers and Town Trusts are particularly expected to contribute to the maintenance and management of green infrastructure.
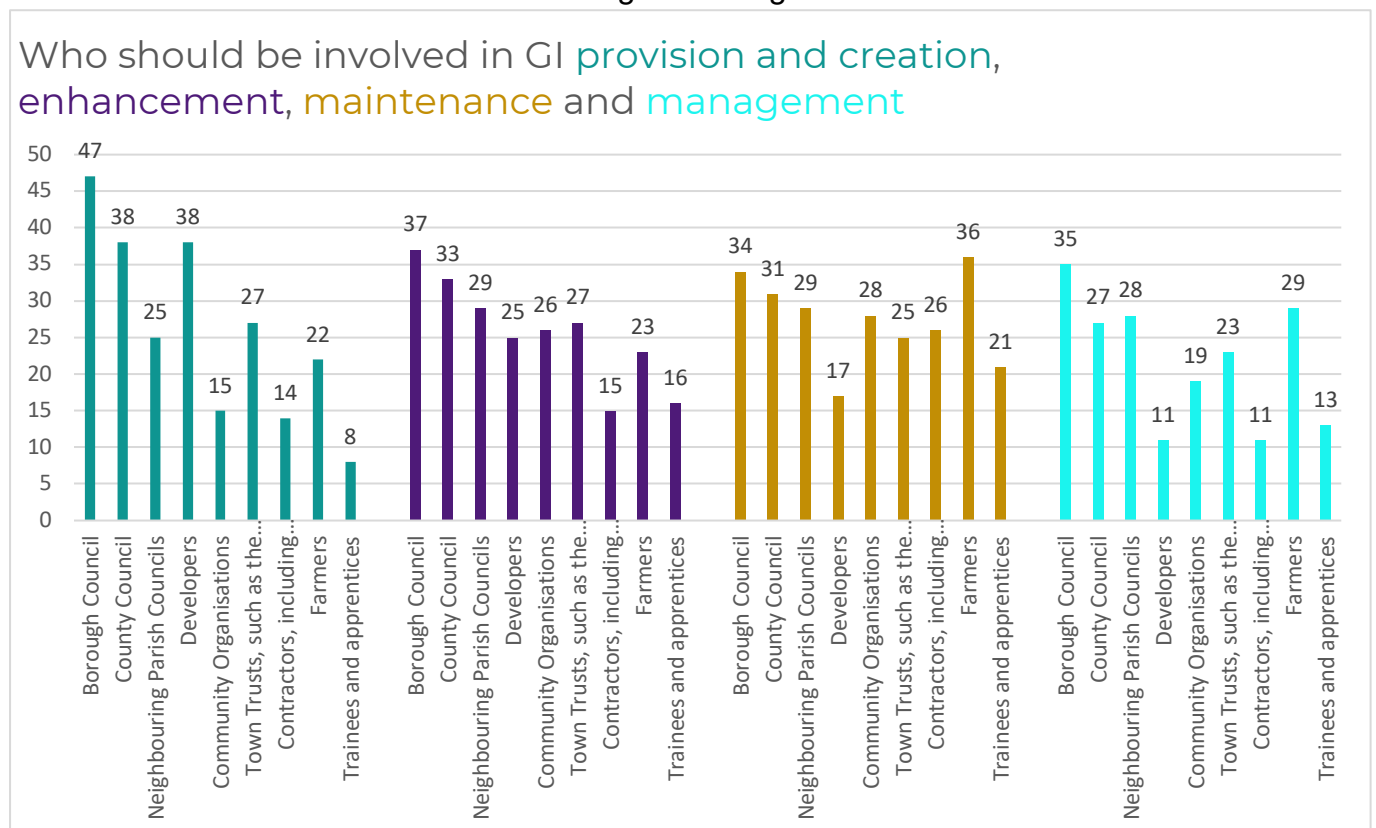

Figure 15 | Who should be involved in green infrastructure provision and creation, enhancement, maintenance and management n=51

Additionally, respondents have indicated a number of specific stakeholders they expect to be involved:

- Churches, especially graveyards
- Community service, for example by young offenders
- Conservation and community organisations and charities
- Environmental groups, such as the Bee Conservation Trust and other local wildlife trusts. National trusts such as the British Trust for Ornithology, the Canal and River Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the Woodland Trust could be involved on a consultancy basis
- Local community groups, such as Melton In Bloom
- Local residents close to the specific area
- National organisations, such as DEFRA, Environment Agency, Natural England, Sustrans National Highways
- Right to Roam
- Schools and colleges
- Utility companies

3.5.2 Cost of green infrastructure maintenance

In response to the question 'who should carry the cost', respondents indicate they particularly expect local government, developers and farmers to contribute to the cost of green infrastructure provision and creation, enhancement and improvement, and regular maintenance and management (Figure 16). Local Parish Councils, including neighbouring councils, and residents are much less expected to carry these costs.
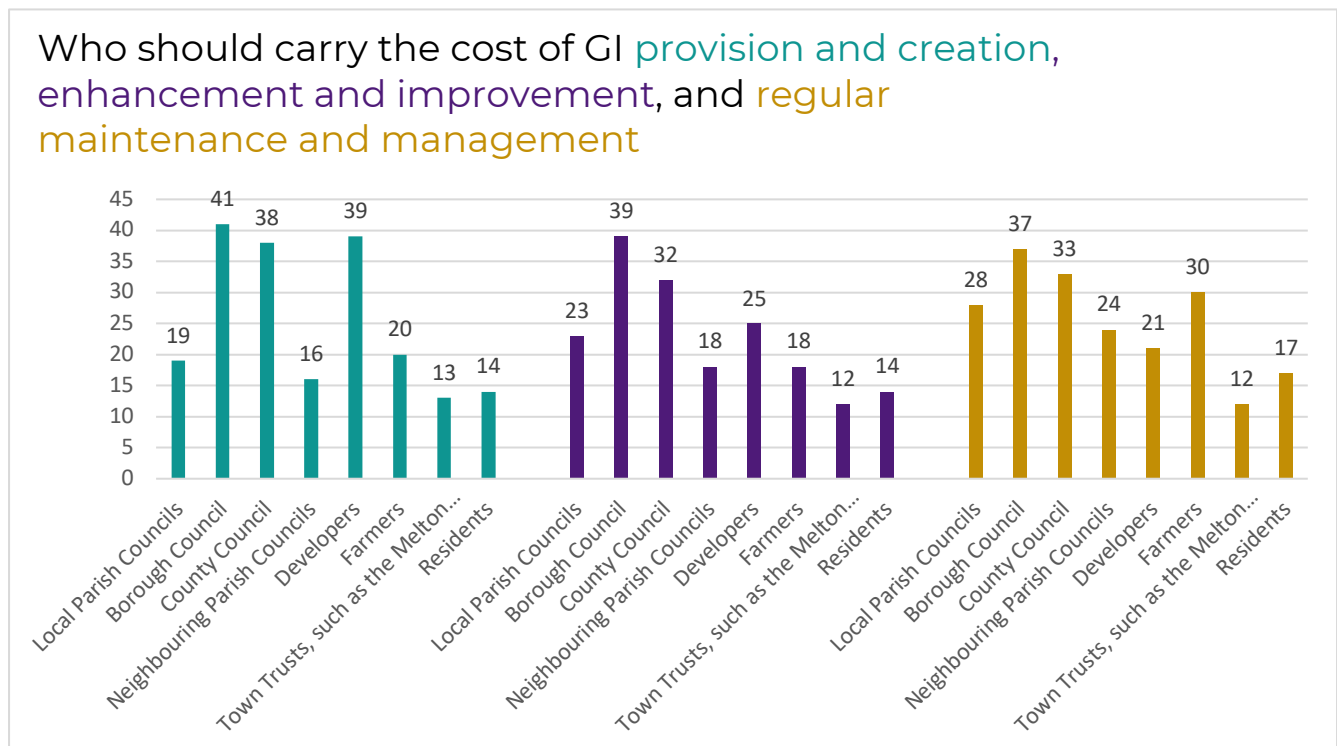

Figure 16 | Who should be carry the cost of green infrastructure provision and creation, enhancement and improvement, regular maintenance and management n=50

Respondents advice to involve specific partners for specific projects, such as applicable charitable organisations, corporate sponsors and appropriate central government agencies. Additionally, respondents mention the following stakeholders and financial resourcing:

- Forestry England
- Landowners, especially landowners with a right of way on their land
- Local community groups
- Melton Mowbray Town Estate
- Volunteers
- Wildlife organisations and trusts, such as the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

3.5.3 Response to proposed involvement and cost carrying

The Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy is generally compatible with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Funding for objectives that align can deliver co-benefits greater than the sum of the parts. For example, recreational access to nature rich areas is known to bring considerable health and well-being benefits.

Funding from developers can achieve shared goals and objectives, for example through S106 agreements and the use of biodiversity net gain (BNG).

Large scale projects are suitable for the development of project consortia (including public, private and voluntary sector). The view would be to make applications to the Heritage Fund and any future 'challenge funds' available through the public sector.

Given that much of the Borough of Melton is rural and agricultural, there is a key role for agri-environmental funding. The current scheme is called ELMS (Environment Land Management), which is the scheme by which government pays for land-based environment and climate goods and services. The rules and regulations are generally subject to change, so green infrastructure improvements will in part be determined both spatially and temporally by the scheme at the time of planning and delivery. Hence, there is a key role for farmers, landowners and land managers in the success of delivering green infrastructure improvements.

It is unrealistic for the Borough Council to be a major funder, but they have a key role in the coordination and development of projects and can act as a constituent in funding applications.

No single organisation will be responsible for delivery but some that will be key are:

- Leicestershire County Council
- Melton Borough Council
- Farmers and landowners
- Canals and Rivers Trust
- Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency
- Developers
- Private sector sponsors
- National Lottery/Heritage Fund
- Infrastructure providers e.g. Water Companies

3.6 Stakeholder involvement

As the success of green infrastructure depends on strong networks and dedicated partnerships, we inquired with stakeholders who own or represent organisations that own land in the borough how the Melton Borough Council might best involve them (Figure 17). Most respondents indicate they would prefer regular digital updates, with the interval ranging from annual to more regular. A number of respondents also indicate their appreciation for offline events, such as seminars, workshops and network events.
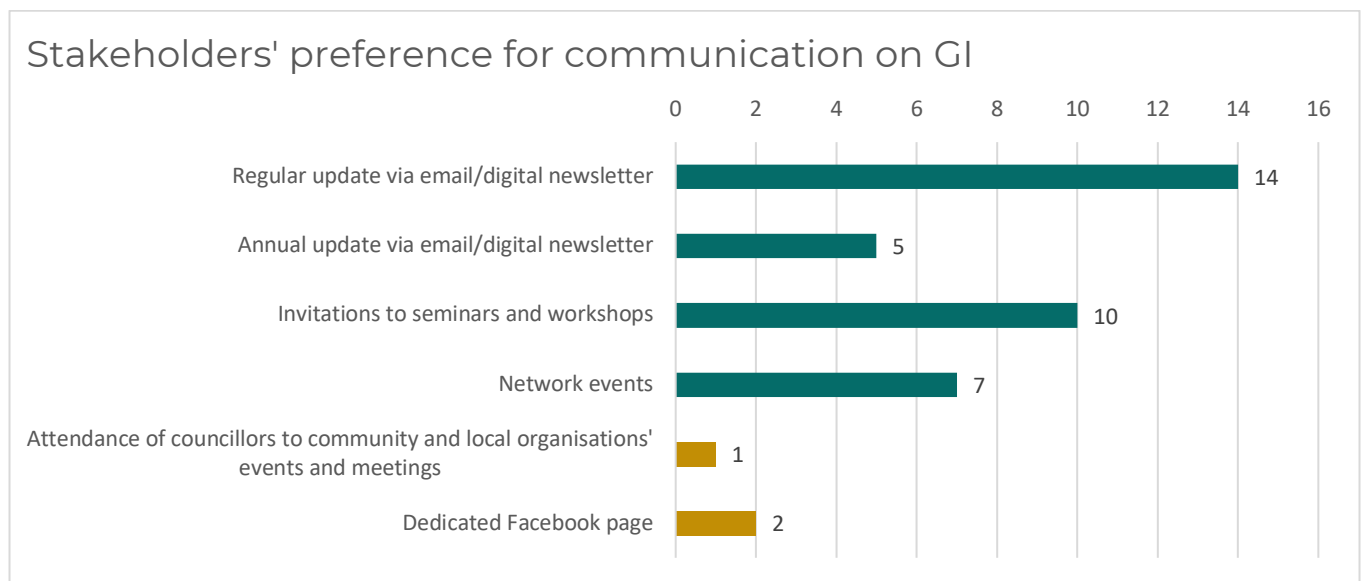

Figure 17 | Stakeholders' preference for communication on green infrastructure *n=21*

Additionally, we asked those who steward, manage or own land in the borough about the type of information they would need (Table 10). General communication and a clear vision would be especially appreciated.

Type of information needed to become more involved with the local green infrastructure network	
Availability of minutes	1
Communication, incl. leaflets and social media	4
Invitations to local plannings meetings and events	1
Links with LNRS and BNG strategies and legislation	1
Opportunities for funding	1
Opportunities for volunteering	1
Practical information on local projects	1
Vision and strategies including all local parishes, villages and towns	2

Table 10 | Type of information required for land stewards, managers and owners to become more involved with local green infrastructure *n=12*

3.7 Other responses

At the end of the form, we gave respondents space to share anything else they would like to add about green infrastructure in the Melton borough. Responses could be shared in the form or by sending an additional response to a dedicated e-mail address. From the 30 form responses and 3 e-mails, we analysed the specific themes and questions mentioned below (Table 11). All concerns and questions are considered and used to inform the production of the Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024.

Theme	Times mentioned	Relevant quotes
Wildlife and environmental concerns	5	"Particular attention needs to be given to the decline of the local ash tree population."
		"More consultation is needed with environmental groups."
		"We need to protect the park as a wildlife haven."
Development concerns	4	"Stop allowing so much development!"
		"There is a lot of development around the river."
		"Current proposals for industrial solar plants threaten footpaths."
		"Access routes are being threatened and destroyed by the development."
Waste management and maintenance	4	"Clarity about responsibilities for maintenance and management is needed."
		"Litter across the borough and dumping in blue and green areas should be addressed."
		"The state of paths, pavements, and hedgerows in the Melton borough is abysmal."
		"Rewilding is just another term for neglect."
		"If there is zero response when people report problems, it discourages people from pointing out issues."
Green infrastructure and connectivity	4	"All green and blue infrastructure should be linked by proper wildlife corridors."
		"The river proximity should be maintained as a blue/green corridor."
		"Individual pockets of parks are unable to sustain a diversity of wildlife."
		"Connection of green spaces is necessary to maintain green corridors."
Public engagement and volunteering opportunities	3	"Residents encouraged to improve green areas."
		"I would be glad to volunteer to help create/maintain an area."
		"It would be nice for residents to get more involved."
Accessibility	3	"Poor transport system is a barrier to accessing green spaces."
		"Make it safe for cyclists to shop/commute by bike."
		"I live off Burton Road and daren't cycle down it."
Allotments and community gardens	3	"All new developments should allow for allotments."
		"Why not grow food within the Borough?"
		"Find me a vegetable grown in the Borough for sale in the town?"
Facilities for children and families	2	"Add more facilities for children."
Communication and resources	2	"Current council websites are boring, complex, and not user-friendly."
		"Information needs to be current and dispersed in as many ways as possible."

Table 11 | Themes and quotes from open-ended responses *n=33*

From the additional responses submitted by respondents, four locations within the Melton borough come to the fore where particular actions are proposed:

1. Country Park Areas: Protect wildlife habitats from encroaching development and ensure access routes remain intact.
2. Edgerton Lodge: Improve maintenance of overgrown footpaths near Edgerton Lodge.
3. Somerby Parish: Preserve footpaths and bridleways from threats posed by industrial developments, including solar plants.
4. Burton Road: Create safer cycling routes along Burton Road to encourage cycling for shopping and commuting.

Natural England submitted a separate report via e-mail reflecting on how pleased they are with the use of Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework standards, principles and resources. The statutory body advises to adapt their five headline Green Infrastructure Standards into the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan 2024 for the Borough of Melton:

- Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard
- Accessible Greenspace Standard
- Urban Nature Recovery Standard
- Urban Greening Factor Standard
- Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard

These Green Infrastructure Standards define criteria and attributes for good green infrastructure and how to plan, deliver and maintain it.

Additionally, the Coal Authority remarks that within the borough area, there are recorded coal mining features at shallow depths or on surfaces in the form of two mine entries. These features may pose a potential risk to surface stability and public safety, and this should be taken into account with the provision, enhancement, maintenance and management of green infrastructure in the borough.

4. Conclusions

The Melton Borough has rich green infrastructure in place, both within the borough and connecting to neighbouring boroughs. Although not everyone in the community is aware of the definition of green infrastructure, all respondents indicate their appreciation for it and recognise its importance. Principally, respondents note their care for wildlife and the environment, as well as the pressure on both through developments in the borough. Respondents point out the need for better connectivity: green corridors for wildlife and better infrastructure for people, including rights of way, public footpaths, cycle infrastructure and bridleways. The Melton Borough Council has a clear mandate from respondents, with an expectation to work together closely with local government and specific partners for specific projects, such as applicable charitable organisations, corporate sponsors, landowners, local community groups, volunteers, and wildlife organisations and trusts. Both residents and other stakeholders want to be engaged in these collaborations and ask for public engagement, volunteering opportunities and to be clearly informed during the process.

All responses and answers from respondents are organised in the below list of topics of particular concern. Table 12 connects these topics with the corresponding section in the Green Infrastructure Strategy & Action Plan 2024 where the topic is addressed.

Topics of concern indicated by respondents	Corresponding section in Open Spaces Strategy & Action Plan 2024
Accessibility	Section 7.4 (Standard 2)
Accessible Greenspace Standard	Section 7.4 (Standard 2)
Allotments and community gardens	Section 5.2, 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 2), 8.3
Beauty and peacefulness	Sections 1.7, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 (Standard 1, as well as Standard 2 and Standard 3, under 'quality')
Biodiversity	Sections 1.7, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 (Standard 4, Standard 5), 8.2, 8.3, 9.3
Bridleways	Sections 3.3, 5.2, 7.2, 7.3
Coal mining and coal mine entries	Sections 7.1, 7.2
Communication and resources	Sections 4.2, 5.3, 9.3
Connection with nature	Sections 7.1, 7.2, see also 'health wellbeing'
Connectivity	Sections 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 2 and Standard 3)
Cycle paths	Sections 3.3, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4 (Standard 2, Standard 4)
Development concerns	Sections 2.3, 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3 and Standard 4), 8.3
Facilities for children and families	Section 4.2, 5.2, 6.1, 8.3
Footpaths	Sections 5.2, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 4)
Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard	Section 7.4 (Standard 1)
Health and wellbeing	Sections 1.4, 1.5, 4.2, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3, Standard 5), 8.2, 8.3, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4
Maintenance	Sections 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 1, Standard 5), 9.1, 9.2
Nature conservation	Sections 6.1, 7.2, 7.4 (Standard 3)
Public engagement and volunteering opportunities	Sections 3.3, 4.2, 7.4 (Standard 4)

Recreation and leisure	Sections 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 8.3
Urban Greening Factor Standard	Section 7.4 (Standard 1)
Urban Nature Recovery Standard	Section 7.4 (Standard 1)
Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard	Section 7.4 (Standard 5)
Waste management and maintenance	Waste management and maintenance falls outside the scope of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and as such, is not independently covered. However, considerations to waste management and maintenance are part of good quality Green Infrastructure, which is defined in the Spatial Strategy (Section 7.1), the Thematic Strategy (Section 7.2) and part of the Green Infrastructure Standards (Section 7.4).
Wildlife and environmental concerns	Sections 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1, 7.4 (Standard 3), 8.3

Table 12 | Overview of topics from consultation and corresponding sections in Strategy & Action Plan