

Aberdeen City Council

# Union Terrace Gardens Public Engagement



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# 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report presents a summary of results from the public engagement exercise on proposals for Union Terrace Gardens (UTG).

## The engagement process

- 1.2. The public engagement sought views on proposals for the revitalisation of Union Terrace Gardens (UTG). These proposals have been developed on the basis of six priorities identified through the City Centre Masterplan process, specifically:
1. Preserving the green space;
  2. Accessibility;
  3. Create events space;
  4. Improve facilities;
  5. Safety; and
  6. Heritage features.
- 1.3. A short consultation document was produced for the public engagement. This provided an overview of the proposed design for Union Terrace Gardens, and specifically outlined how the proposals seek to address each of the six priorities listed above. The consultation document included seven main consultation questions asking for residents' views on specific aspects of the proposals – one question in relation to each of the six priorities, and a final open ended question inviting any further comments. Questions on the six priorities were in a similar format, asking residents to rate the extent to which proposals address the relevant priority, and inviting written comments to expand on their response.
- 1.4. The public engagement ran between 2 and 9 December 2016. A total of 1417 responses were received by the time the engagement process closed. This included 1298 responses through the Council's Citizen Space online portal, and 119 hard copy responses. Hard copies included 48 responses from pupils of Harlaw Academy and Robert Gordon's College. The Children's Parliament Imagineers (pupils representing Aberdeen City primary schools) also took part in an exercise to provide feedback on the proposals.
- 1.5. Around 90% of responses provided postcode information, and this has been used to develop the geographic profile of response at Figure 1. This shows that a large majority of respondents live in the Aberdeen City local authority area; 81% gave an Aberdeen City postcode, with around half of these living in the wards immediately surrounding Union Terrace Gardens (wards 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12).

1.6. Figure 1 below provides an overview of response to the public engagement.

**Figure 1: Overview of response**

	Volume	% of all responses
<b>Total</b>	<b>1417</b>	
<b>Response method</b>		
Online	1298	92%
Hard copy	119	8%
<b>Respondent type</b>		
Members of the public	1369	97%
School/College students, including...	48	3%
<i>Harlaw Academy pupils</i>	24	2%
<i>Robert Gordon's pupils</i>	24	2%
<b>Respondent location</b>		
Aberdeen City, including...	1150	81%
<i>Ward 1. Dyce / Bucksburn / Danestone</i>	70	5%
<i>Ward 2. Bridge of Don</i>	74	5%
<i>Ward 3. Kingswells / Sheddocksley / Summerhill</i>	43	3%
<i>Ward 4. Northfield / Mastrick North</i>	25	2%
<i>Ward 5. Hilton / Woodside / Stockethill</i>	49	3%
<i>Ward 6. Tillydrone / Seaton / Old Aberdeen</i>	52	4%
<i>Ward 7. Midstocket / Rosemount</i>	143	10%
<i>Ward 8. George St / Harbour</i>	100	7%
<i>Ward 9. Lower Deeside</i>	69	5%
<i>Ward 10. Hazlehead / Ashley / Queens Cross</i>	145	10%
<i>Ward 11. Airyhall / Broomhill / Garthdee</i>	108	8%
<i>Ward 12. Torry / Ferryhill</i>	116	8%
<i>Ward 13. Kincorth / Nigg / Cove</i>	47	3%
Other	267	19%

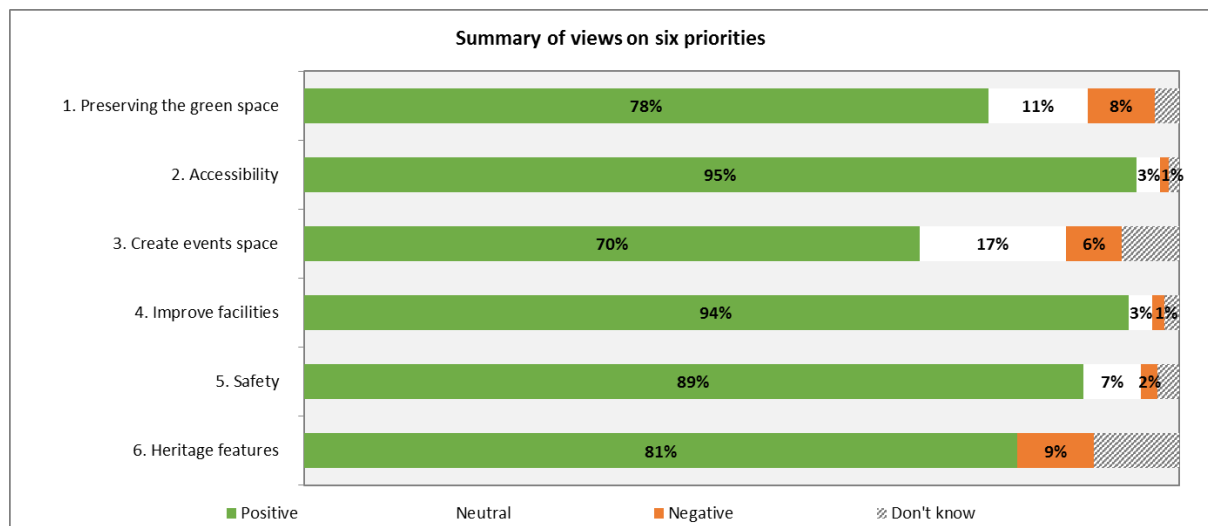
## This report

1.7. The remainder of this report provides a summary of findings from the public engagement process. This focuses on respondents' rating of proposals against each of the six priorities – a full report will be produced subsequently, providing a more detailed analysis of written comments from respondents.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE SIX PRIORITIES

- 2.1. Figure 8 below provides an overview of respondents' views across the six priorities. This is based on ratings of the extent to which proposals will have a positive impact on each of the priority areas.
- 2.2. As this shows, views are positive in relation to all six priorities. A large majority of respondents feel that proposals will deliver benefits in relation to each of the six priorities, and relatively few respondents gave negative ratings. Views are most positive in relation to accessibility and improving facilities, with more than 9 in 10 respondents giving positive ratings (95% and 94% respectively). Only 1-2% of respondents feel that proposals would be a negative step for accessibility and facilities within the gardens.
- 2.3. Views are also positive in relation to safety, (89% positive ratings), heritage features (81%), preserving the green space (78%), and creating events space (70%). Ratings are slightly less positive for these priorities, and respondents are more likely to have a negative view of proposals in relation to heritage features (8% negative ratings), green space (8%) and events space (6%). However the majority of respondents rated the proposals positively, and negative ratings remain a relatively small minority. Indeed the somewhat lower level of positive ratings for green space and events space are primarily due to a larger proportion of respondents giving neutral "no change" ratings, rather than a significant volume of negative ratings.

**Figure 2: Overview of ratings**



- 2.4. The remainder of this report considers respondents' views on each of the six priorities in further detail.

### 3. PRESERVING THE GREEN SPACE

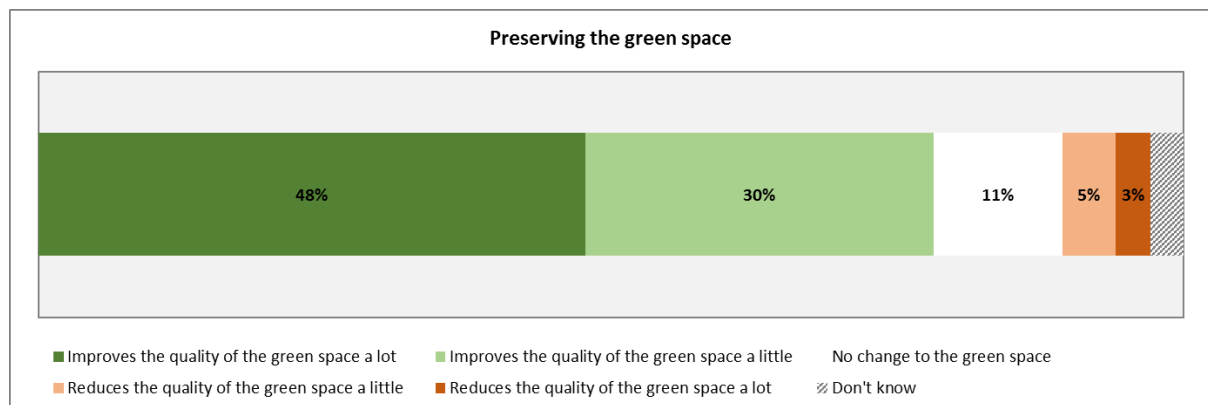
3.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to **preserve green space**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to the extent and quality of green space in the gardens:

- New, enhanced tree and shrub planting that is rich in biodiversity and creates new wildlife habitats;
- Retaining the maximum number of existing trees as possible, removing only those in poor health or quality;
- Replacing any existing trees to be removed (due to poor health/quality) with new mature specimen trees;
- Retaining and reinterpreting the ‘floral crest’ as a richly planted garden route from Rosemount Viaduct into the gardens;
- Retaining the large central lawn space as a place for gathering and events; and
- A community garden to the edge of the space adjacent to the railway line.

#### Rating of proposals

3.2. Figure 2 below summarises respondents’ rating of the extent to which proposals preserve green space for Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, more than three quarters of respondents feel that proposals will improve the quality of Union Terrace Gardens green space (78%). This includes nearly half of all respondents who feel that proposals will significantly increase the quality of the green space (48%). Less than 1 in 10 respondents feel that proposals will reduce the quality of the green space (8%).

**Figure 3: Rating of proposals on preserving the green space**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Improves the quality of the green space a lot	48%	47%	60%
Improves the quality of the green space a little	30%	30%	29%
No change to the green space	11%	11%	6%
Reduces the quality of the green space a little	5%	5%	0%
Reduces the quality of the green space a lot	3%	3%	0%
Don't know	3%	3%	4%
Base (% of all responses)	1396 (99%)	1348 (98%)	48 (100%)

## Written comments

- 3.3. Nearly 400 respondents provided written comment on preserving the green space, more than a quarter of all those responding to the consultation. The majority of those commenting felt that proposals would improve the quality of green space, although it is notable that most of those who felt that proposals would have a negative impact provided further comment.
- 3.4. Looking first at ***comments from those who feel that proposals would improve the overall quality of green space*** at Union Terrace Gardens, around half used their written comments to express broad support for the proposals and/or highlight specific elements of the design. These respondents referred to the importance of Union Terrace Gardens as a significant green space within the city centre, and many described the proposals as a clear improvement to the quality of green space within UTG - as “breathing new life” into the gardens. The extent to which proposals had preserved the volume of green space within the gardens was also a particularly positive for these respondents.
- 3.5. Those in favour of the proposals also highlighted other specific design elements as positives in terms of improving green space within UTG. This was most commonly in reference to:
- Enhancing tree and shrub planting throughout the gardens was seen as a significant positive.
  - Retaining as many mature trees as possible was also highlighted as an important aspect of the proposals, and a significant part of keeping the current character of the gardens.
  - Development of a community garden was identified as a positive, although respondents also wished to see more detail on the design of the community garden and how it will be made available to the community.
  - Increasing access to green space and maximising use of the gardens was an over-riding concern for many of those providing written comment, and was also cited as a key factor in respondents’ support of

specific proposals such as enhanced planting and the community garden.

- 3.6. Around two thirds of those providing written comment on green space raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. Nearly all of those providing written comment who felt that proposals would reduce the quality of green space raised concerns and/or suggested amendments to the proposals. However, it is also notable that a substantial number of those suggesting amendments gave proposals a positive overall rating – around 1 in 10 of all those who felt that proposals would improve green space also raised issues or suggested amendments.
- 3.7. Most of the suggested amendments and other issues raised by those in favour of proposals referred to specific design elements. However, these respondents also referred to broader issues such as ensuring adequate maintenance and management of the gardens following the re-design. This included some expressing a view that there has been a lack of maintenance to the gardens over recent years, which has contributed to the current condition of the gardens. A small number of those in favour of the proposals also felt that more detail was required on some design elements, such as the approach to replacing some mature trees (e.g. how this will be assessed), how the floral crest will be integrated into the new design (some concerns that the floral crest should retain a prominent place in the gardens), and how the community garden will be used.
- 3.8. In terms of suggested amendments or issues for specific elements of the proposed design, these most commonly related to:
  - Enhancing tree and shrub planting was the most commonly mentioned design element. This was clearly a significant positive for many respondents in terms of improving the green space at UTG. These respondents made a range of specific suggestions for the approach to planning, including:
    - Improving visibility and natural light within the gardens, particularly on the Union Terrace boundary. This included through pruning to existing trees, and the design of new planting;
    - Ensuring good quality, imaginative planting that introduces more visual interest to the gardens (in addition to increasing biodiversity);
    - Protecting healthy existing trees, and particularly elm trees given their scarcity in the wider region;
    - Using tree planting to screen the railway line and dual carriageway; and



- Concerns that use of mature specimen trees to replace existing trees may carry risks for new trees adapting to the environment.
  - Retaining the floral crest was also a significant element of the design for some respondents, and a number of these raised questions around how design proposals would “retain and reinterpret the floral crest”. A number of these respondents suggested that the crest is an important part of the character of the gardens, and should retain its current prominence as a significant landmark.
  - The community gardens were generally welcomed by those in favour of the proposals, including some suggesting specific uses for the garden (such as allotment space, edible planting, as an educational green space, or as a “therapeutic space”). However, some comments questioned the viability of the garden in terms of whether it will be used by the local community, the need for regular maintenance of the garden, and its location at a distance from the main access points and potentially affected by pollution from the adjacent dual carriageway.
  - The central lawn was seen as having potential to provide a flexible space within the gardens, but a number of respondents referred to previous events having caused significant damage to the lawn surface, and suggested a need for significantly improved drainage if the lawn is to be used as an event space.
- 3.9. Looking now at ***comments from those who did not feel that proposals would improve the overall quality of green space***, these included a mix of broad concerns about the overall design for UTG and more specific issues or proposed changes to specific elements of the design.
- 3.10. In terms of broader concerns, some respondents felt that the overall design did not go far enough in improving green space within the gardens. This included suggestions that “hard landscaping” should be reduced to increase the volume of green space, and a view expressed by a number of respondents that proposals represented relatively minor “cosmetic” changes which would not provide a significant improvement in terms of making the gardens a more attractive and safer place. These respondents wished to see more radical change to the existing green space, and some referred to elements of previous proposed designs such as raising the level of the gardens and extending the gardens with a bridge over the railway line and Denburn Road.
- 3.11. Reflecting a view amongst some respondents that proposals would not result in a significant change to the gardens, a small number of those providing comment specifically suggested that proposals would not provide good value for money. These respondents felt that improving maintenance to UTG would be sufficient, and suggested that funds are invested elsewhere in the City.

- 3.12. A substantial proportion of comments from those who did not feel that proposals would improve green space suggested changes to specific elements of the design proposals. These comments referred to a range of the elements set out in the consultation document, and there is some overlap with the amendments suggested by those in favour of the overall design (see paragraph 3.8 above). For example, tree/shrub planting and integration of the floral crest to the sloped access route were the design elements where respondents most commonly expressed concern and/or suggested changes.
- 3.13. Suggested changes to tree and shrub planting focused on:
- Ensuring that planting (and ongoing maintenance) is designed to improve the experience of those using the gardens. This included specific reference to making the gardens lighter and more open, improving visibility across the gardens to improve safety. Some of these respondents wished to see less dense planting to increase light within the gardens, including suggestions that some thinning of the existing tree canopy would be required.
  - While a number of respondents wished to see a reduction in the existing tree canopy, comments also expressed concerns that healthy existing trees are adequately protected as part of a more diverse approach to tree planting.
  - Using “anti-pollution” planting to screen the railway line and dual carriageway and improve air quality in the gardens; and
  - Concerns that use of mature specimen trees to replace existing trees may carry risks for new trees adapting to the environment.
- 3.14. As is noted above, the floral crest was identified as an important part of the gardens for some respondents – described by some as a “signature” of UTG. A number of those who felt that proposals would not improve green space raised concerns regarding integration of the floral crest with the sloped access route. This included some respondents who felt that the crest will be diminished by the new design approach – a small number of respondents strongly objected to this aspect of the design. Some also expressed concerns around the overall design of the access route from Rosemount Viaduct. These respondents suggested that the proposed walkway and wild planting would not be in keeping with the more formal design of the crest, and would impact on those who currently use the grassed amphitheatre as a seating area.
- 3.15. Respondents also raised concerns around the integration of the central lawn within the overall design. The main area of concern was drainage to the lawn, and the extent to which the current lawn is suitable for use as an events space. Several respondents referred to previous examples of drainage problems for the lawn area, and suggested that this can mean that the lawn is in poor condition for large parts of the year. These respondents suggested that drainage would have to be significantly improved if the lawn is to be used as

an event space – some felt that raising the level of the lawn would be the most effective way of achieving this.

- 3.16. Several of those who felt that proposals would not improve green space made reference to the proposed community garden. This was primarily requesting further detail on how the community garden will be used, and the role it will play within the gardens. However, a small number of respondents felt that the community garden did not fit well within the overall design approach. This included concerns around the location of the garden along the railway line boundary.
- 3.17. A small number of respondents objected to the inclusion of a water feature within the designs. This included concerns around the number of water features within the City that are not functioning.
- 3.18. In addition to the above suggestions, a number of respondents referred to previous design proposals which they felt would have a more beneficial impact on green space at UTG. This was most commonly in relation to raising the lower level of the gardens, and covering the railway line and dual carriageway to provide additional green space. In addition to increasing the volume of green space, some respondents suggested that these proposals would improve drainage, access and safety within the gardens.

## 4. ACCESSIBILITY

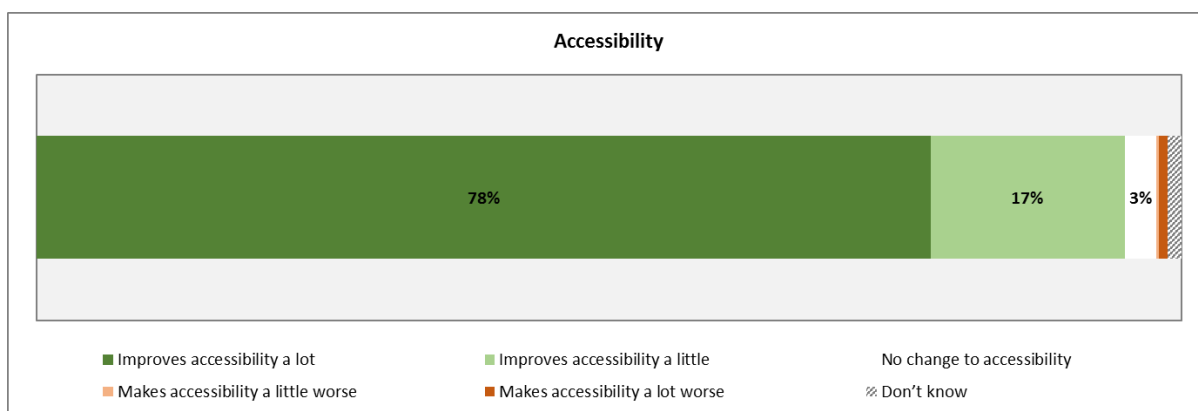
4.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to ensure **accessibility**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to improving the accessibility of the gardens:

- New accessible walkway route into the gardens from Union Street;
- Lift access from Union Street into the lower level of the gardens through a new entrance building on Union Street;
- Lift access from Union Terrace into the upper level of the gardens through a new entrance building on Union Terrace at the existing Burns Monument;
- New accessible garden route into the lower level of the gardens from Rosemount Viaduct;
- A level access route into the lower level of the gardens at the rear of His Majesty's Theatre through the existing Rosemount Viaduct Archway; and
- New disabled parking spaces on Union Terrace directly adjacent to the new accessible walkway routes into the gardens.

### Rating of proposals

4.2. Figure 3 below summarises respondents' views in relation to the extent to which proposals improve accessibility to Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, the great majority of respondents feel that proposals will improve accessibility to Union Terrace Gardens (95%). This includes more than three quarters of all respondents who feel that proposals will significantly improve accessibility (78%). Only 1% of respondents feel that proposals will reduce accessibility to Union Terrace Gardens.

**Figure 4: Rating of proposals on accessibility**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Improves accessibility a lot	78%	78%	70%
Improves accessibility a little	17%	17%	28%
No change to accessibility	3%	3%	2%
Makes accessibility a little worse	0.3%	0.3%	0%
Makes accessibility a lot worse	1%	1%	0%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%
Base (% of all responses)	1398 (99%)	1351 (99%)	47 (98%)

## Written comments

- 4.3. More than 450 respondents provided written comment on improving accessibility, around a third of all those responding to the consultation. The great majority of those commenting felt that proposals would improve accessibility to the gardens, although almost all of the small number of respondents who felt that proposals would have a negative impact provided further comment.
- 4.4. Looking first at ***comments from those who feel that proposals would improve accessibility***, around half of these used their written comments to express broad support for the proposals and/or highlight specific elements of the design. These respondents referred to the importance of accessibility in realising the aim of transforming UTG, and particularly in achieving an increase in the number of people using the gardens (seen by many as the over-riding priority for the proposals). A substantial number of those providing comment felt that proposals would result in “a major improvement” in accessibility, although this included some who saw current accessibility as particularly poor and who felt that improvements are “long overdue”.
- 4.5. In terms of specific elements of the design highlighted by those who supported the proposals, these most commonly referred to:
- The accessible walkway from Union Street.
  - Lower level access via the Rosemount Viaduct Archway.
  - The new entrance buildings and lift access from Union Street and Union Terrace – although some questioned the provision of two sets of lift access in relatively close proximity.
  - The accessible garden route from Rosemount Viaduct – although some felt that the design of the pathway was not in keeping with the floral crest, and was at the expense of existing green space.

- 4.6. Around two thirds of those providing written comment on accessibility raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. Most of these respondents felt that proposals would have a positive impact on accessibility. Indeed around 1 in 5 of all those who felt that proposals would improve accessibility, nevertheless raised issues or suggested amendments.
- 4.7. Most of these respondents focused on specific elements of the proposals, although some also raised broader points which have informed their view of the proposed approach to improving accessibility. This included for example the extent to which the focus on improving access will be at the expense of UTG's green space and heritage features, will justify the additional cost, and will cause disruption to local residents. A small number of respondents also noted that improved accessibility alone will not be sufficient to improve usage of the gardens, and that the public must also be provided with incentives to make use of the improved accessibility.
- 4.8. Several of those who feel that proposals will improve accessibility overall wished to see more detail on the approach to managing and maintaining the gardens following the re-design. These respondents felt that effective ongoing maintenance would be important to ensure accessibility features remain effective, including some who feel that there has been a lack of maintenance historically to the gardens.
- 4.9. In terms of specific design elements, those who felt that proposals will improve accessibility raised the following points:
- Lift access from Union Street and Union Terrace was the most commonly referenced element. For many of those providing comment, this was around whether it is necessary to provide two lift access points in relatively close proximity – some felt that this element of the design was “a bit extreme”, and there were suggestions that alternatives such as covered escalators and/or covered ramped access would be sufficient. Respondents also raised concerns around the design of lifts in terms of ensuring that people feel safe using lifts (e.g. good visibility, CCTV security), that lifts are designed to minimise vandalism and properly maintained to keep them in operation, and that lifts provide sufficient capacity. Some also questioned whether lifts would be accessible 24 hours a day, and if so whether security would be provided. Finally, a small number of respondents raised concerns around any negative impact on the Burns Monument.
  - Access from Rosemount Viaduct including the sloped access route and access via the Rosemount Viaduct Archway. A number of respondents expressed concern around the design of the sloped access route including suggestions that this is not in keeping with the character and heritage features of UTG, will be at the expense of existing trees/planting and green space currently used for informal seating, may be too long for many park users, and is not necessary if other accessible options are provided. Some respondents also wished to see

further detail on the design of the access route via the Viaduct Archway, and in particular how this will ensure the route is well signposted and that people feel safe using it (e.g. lighting, security features). A small number of respondents objected to providing access via the Archway due to the impact on His Majesty's Theatre which currently uses the Rosemount Viaduct Archway for service access.

- Disabled parking on Union Terrace was also raised by a number of those who feel that proposals will improve access. Several of these respondents questioned whether Union Terrace is the most appropriate location for disabled parking, and expressed concerns around the impact on traffic flow and congestion. Some suggested that this disruption could have a negative impact on access to and use of UTG. Parking near to the lower level access under Rosemount Terrace (for example near to His Majesty's Theatre) was suggested as an alternative.
- The accessible walkway from Union Street was also referenced by a number of respondents. This included concern regarding the proposed walkway design and whether this will fit with character of UTG and the potential reduction in green space. Some felt that the walkway may dominate the south end of UTG, and may not be necessary if other accessible routes are provided. Several respondents also raised safety concerns in relation to the raised walkway (including suicide risk), and wished to see more detail for example on the surfaces used and barrier provision.

- 4.10. A substantial number of those in favour of the proposals also referred to previous designs – around 1 in 7 of those providing comment. This was most commonly a preference for an access link with Belmont Street and/or the train station to be included in the design.
- 4.11. Turning to ***comments from the small minority of respondents who did not feel that proposals would improve accessibility to UTG***, these included a mix of suggested changes to specific design elements, and broader concerns that had informed respondents' overall view on whether proposals improve accessibility. These concerns were primarily related to how proposals balance improving access with the need to retain existing green space and heritage features, and concerns that improved accessibility will not be sufficient to increase footfall to the gardens without for example an improvement in events programming.
- 4.12. Reflecting some of these concerns, those who did not feel that proposals will improve accessibility suggested a range of amendments to specific design elements. These suggestions were most commonly focused around lift access from Union Street and Union Terrace, the accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct, and disabled parking on Union Terrace:

- Lift access from Union Street and Union Terrace was the most commonly referenced element. This included several respondents of the view that two lift access points are not required, and concerns regarding the cost of repair and maintenance to lifts. Some also suggested that safety concerns may prevent people from using lifts – an all-weather escalator was suggested as an alternative here. A small number of respondents also felt that the entrance building at Union Street may have a negative impact on footfall as it will blocks views of the gardens from Union Street.
  - Comments regarding access from Rosemount Viaduct focused primarily on the proposed sloped access route. Several respondents objected to the design on the basis that this would not be in keeping with the character of UTG.
  - Disabled parking on Union Terrace was also a concern for some of those opposed to the overall design. These respondents felt that proposals would have a significant impact on traffic flow and congestion on Union Terrace, and that disabled parking would be better located around the Rosemount Viaduct Archway access.
- 4.13. Respondents also made reference to previous design proposals, and in particular raising the level of the gardens to aid accessibility, and developing an access link with Belmont Street and/or the train station.



## 5. CREATING EVENT SPACE

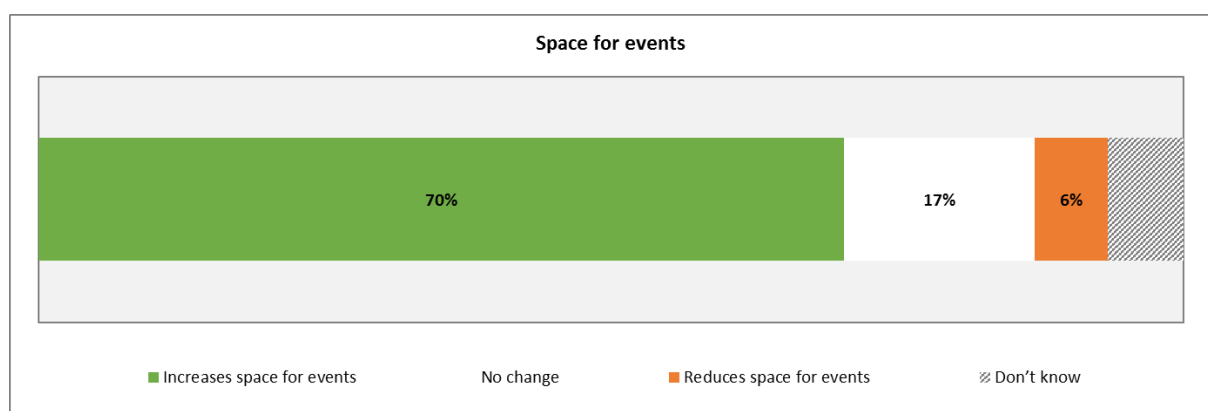
5.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to **create events space**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to providing flexible spaces throughout the gardens for hosting a range of events:

- Retaining the central lawn space as a flexible space for large scale gatherings and events;
- New entrance plaza opposite His Majesty's Theatre to accommodate smaller scale events;
- Two accessible viewing platforms which provide elevated events spaces for smaller scale events;
- Seating along the new accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct to act as an informal 'amphitheatre' space to view events in the lower lawn area; and
- Provision of metered water and power points throughout the gardens to provide necessary supply for events.

### Rating of proposals

5.2. Figure 4 below summarises respondents' views on whether proposals increase space for events at Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, the majority of respondents feel that proposals will increase space for events (70%). A further 17% of respondents feel that proposals will lead to no change in events space. A small minority of respondents feel that proposals will reduce space for events (6%).

**Figure 5: Rating of proposals on creating events space**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Increases space for events	70%	70%	75%
No change	17%	17%	13%
Reduces space for events	6%	6%	8%
Don't know	7%	7%	4%
Base (% of all responses)	1390 (98%)	1342 (98%)	48 (100%)

## Written comments

- 5.3. Around 400 respondents provided written comment on creating event space, around 3 in 10 of all those responding to the consultation. Around half of those commenting gave proposals a positive rating in terms of increasing events space – while those who felt that proposals would have a negative impact on events space were most likely to provide written comment, these respondents account for only around 1 in 10 of all comments received.
- 5.4. Looking first at ***comments from those who feel that proposals would increase space for events***, around half of these respondents used their written comments to express broad support for the proposals. This included suggestions that the gardens are an important public space within the City, and that the City has few other locations with the same potential for outdoor events. These respondents felt that proposals represented a significant improvement in event space within the gardens – although some felt that the programme of events to date had not made effective use of the gardens.
- 5.5. Respondents also praised the mix of spaces proposed. This was related to a relatively common view that proposals were not seeking to increase the volume of events space, but providing better quality and more flexible spaces. Respondents saw other aspects of the design approach as significant to achieving this, for example improving accessibility and the quality of green space to maximise use of the gardens.
- 5.6. A small number of respondents highlighted specific elements of the design as positives:
- The range of smaller spaces – including the viewing platforms and entrance plaza opposite HMT - providing flexibility for events of varying sizes and types.
  - The informal amphitheatre created by seating along the accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct.
  - Provision of covered events space such as the new pavilion.
  - Providing water and power points to enable a broader range of events to be hosted.

- 5.7. More than two thirds of those providing written comment on events space raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. These respondents were evenly divided between those who felt that proposals would have a positive impact on events space, and those who gave a negative or neutral rating. Indeed, it is notable that around 1 in 8 of all those who felt that proposals would improve events space, nevertheless raised issues or suggested amendments.
- 5.8. Comments from those who felt that proposals would improve events space included some referring to specific design elements, but most raised broader points which have informed their view of the proposed approach to creating events space. The most common theme across these comments was the importance of delivering a programme of events which will make best use of the new design, and which will attract people to use the gardens. A number of respondents expressed a view that the programming of events to date had not made best use of the gardens, and a small number of those in favour of the design proposals expressed scepticism around whether an adequate programme of events would be put in place. Other themes across comments on events space included the importance of maintaining facilities and infrastructure in good condition to support a varied programme of events – again some respondents perceived lack of maintenance to date.
- 5.9. Some of those who felt that proposals would improve events space felt that this was at the expense of natural green space. These respondents questioned whether design proposals had struck the right balance between events space and retaining the park for general leisure use.
- 5.10. In terms of issues and suggested amendments to specific elements of the proposed design, the main points for those in favour of the proposals were:
- In relation to the lawn space, a number of respondents referred to poor drainage and to previous events having caused significant damage to the lawn. These respondents suggested that there may be a need to limit the number and range of events on the lawn. The depth of the lawn and the limited natural light was also cited as a factor for consideration here.
  - Viewing platforms were also referenced by a number of respondents. Comments here suggested that the orientation/layout and materials used in viewing platforms should support a range of staging and sound equipment, include appropriate safety barriers, and potentially include some cover from inclement weather. Several respondents also wished to ensure that the design of viewing platforms is in keeping with the character of the gardens. Others were less positive on the inclusion of viewing platforms – they were described as “intrusive”, and not required where the natural shape of the gardens means that already a range of viewing points.

- Seating on the accessible route from Rosemount Viaduct was seen as a positive aspect of the design, although some highlighted a need to ensure the design and construction of seating is suitable for local climate, and potentially includes some cover from poor weather. Several respondents also questioned whether proposals include sufficient space for seating, and suggested that more seating is included throughout the gardens.
    - A small number of respondents commented specifically on the proposed entrance plaza opposite His Majesty's Theatre. This included some who did not find the proposal appealing, and expressed concerns regarding the balance between hard landscaping and green space. Others wished to ensure that the design of the plaza would support a range of events, including provision for staging, lighting, sound, etc.
- 5.11. In addition to these specific proposals, respondents also referred to other design considerations for the creation of events space. The most common was to provide a range of covered events spaces and/or incorporating retractable covers throughout the gardens, recognising the impact of the local climate on scope for outdoor events. Respondents also highlighted the importance of providing sufficient lighting and other facilities to support events (such as toilets, a large screen for sports and other events, and induction loop systems).
- 5.12. ***Those who do not feel that proposals will improve events space*** provided a range of written comments. Most of these respondents objected to or raised concerns around the overall design of proposals for events space (rather than referring to specific elements of the proposed design. In relation to the overall design approach to events space, the main issues raised were:
- Suggestions that proposals will not increase events space for UTG. This was both in relation to the overall volume of events space across the gardens, and also the range of events that the gardens can host – a number of respondents felt that proposals will not be sufficient to support larger events within the gardens.
  - Scepticism around the extent to which events space within the gardens will be well used. As noted above, a substantial number of respondents suggested that the park is currently underused, as an events space and for leisure more widely. Some of these respondents suggested that this is in large part due to the topography of the gardens resulting in damp areas with limited natural light, to weather conditions, and to the availability of other events space in the City. These respondents suggested that the scope for the gardens to host events will continue to be constrained, and that proposals are insufficient to overcome these factors.
  - Balancing the creation of events space and retaining natural green space for leisure use. A number of those opposed to the overall approach to events space felt that proposals sacrificed too much green space. This included reference to the hard landscaping and

infrastructure required to create events space, and also the extent to which the design of spaces will support more general leisure use when not in use for events.

- The importance of delivering a programme of events which will make best use of the new designs, and which will attract people to use the gardens. A range of respondents expressed concerns around the extent to which the number and range of events held at the gardens would justify investment in creating events space – including some of those in favour of the proposals. These respondents referred to a need to better promote the gardens for events space to encourage greater attendance, to the Council being more proactive in developing a programme of events, and to ensuring the gardens are available to a range of organisations and groups wishing to host both formal and informal events (e.g. by minimising bureaucracy and cost).

5.13. Some of those who did not feel that proposals would improve events space suggested changes to specific elements of the proposals. These suggestions most commonly focused on the lawn space and viewing platforms:

- In relation to the lawn space, concerns raised by respondents related to the extent to which proposals appear to reduce the size of the central lawn, and whether the lawn is suitable for a range of events. In relation to the latter point, these respondents suggested that there is a need to significantly improve drainage or use an all-weather surface. Some also wished to see more seating provided around the lawn space.
- In relation to viewing platforms, a number of those opposed to the overall proposals expressed a dislike for the inclusion of viewing platforms – these respondents felt that the platforms would not fit with the character of the gardens, and do not add significantly to events space. Some also suggested that the platforms appear to reduce the central space and potentially limit natural light for the lower level. Respondents also expressed safety concerns in relation to the raised platforms.

## 6. IMPROVING FACILITIES

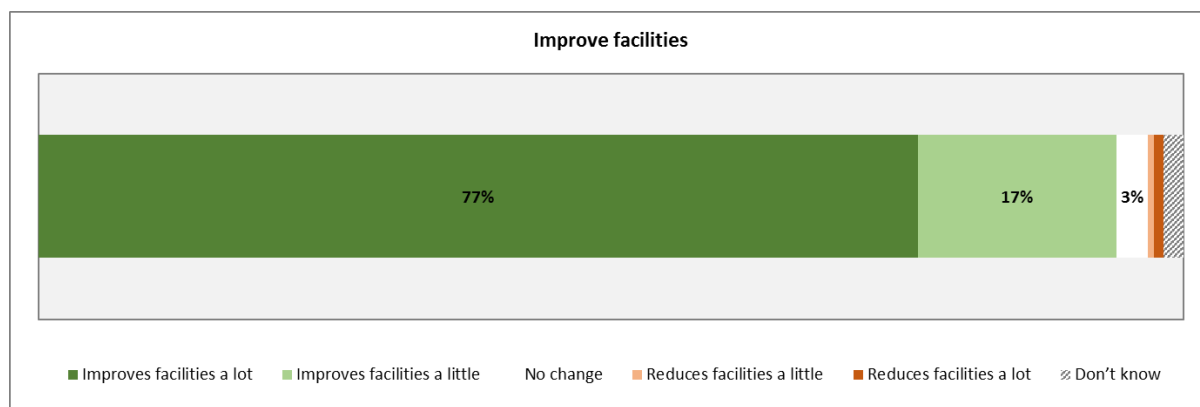
6.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to **improve facilities**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to the aim of creating new facilities within the gardens for play, community growing, education, toilet provision and places to eat and drink:

- Upgrading of the existing Victorian Toilets on Union Terrace for a new use;
- Potential café and gallery space at the Burns Monument and within the existing arches;
- A new café pavilion opposite His Majesty's Theatre;
- Upgrading of the existing 'bothy' as a space for park maintenance teams to store equipment and utilise as an education and training space;
- Provision of water and power supplies throughout the gardens for events;
- Provision of opportunities for both formal and informal play within the gardens; and
- A new community garden space adjacent to the railway.

### Rating of proposals

6.2. Figure 5 below summarises respondents' views on the extent to which proposals improve facilities at Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, the great majority of respondents feel that proposals will improve facilities at Union Terrace Gardens (94%). This includes more than three quarters of all respondents who feel that proposals will significantly improve facilities (77%). Only 1% of respondents feel that proposals will reduce facilities at Union Terrace Gardens.

**Figure 6: Rating of proposals on improving facilities**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Improves facilities a lot	77%	77%	69%
Improves facilities a little	17%	17%	31%
No change	3%	3%	0%
Reduces facilities a little	1%	1%	0%
Reduces facilities a lot	1%	1%	0%
Don't know	2%	2%	0%
Base (% of all responses)	1393 (98%)	1345 (98%)	48 (100%)

## Written comments

- 6.3. More than 500 respondents provided written comment on improving facilities, more than a third of all those responding to the consultation. Reflecting the overall balance of views summarised at Figure 5 above, the great majority of those commenting gave proposals a positive rating in terms of improving facilities.
- 6.4. Looking first at ***comments from those who feel that proposals would improve facilities***, more than half of these used their written comments to highlight specific aspects of the design and/or to express broad support for the proposals. The latter group included a number of very positive comments describing proposals as “excellent”. These respondents highlighted the importance of facilities to support year-round use of the gardens.
- 6.5. In this context, respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing maintenance to ensure that poor condition does not discourage use of facilities. Some suggested that a lack of maintenance has been an issue over recent years, and questioned whether adequate investment would be provided to support ongoing maintenance. Related to this point, some respondents felt that improvement to facilities has been required for some time, and suggested that “proper facilities are long overdue and will be welcomed”. Indeed, a small number of these respondents wished to see proposals go further in terms of providing features that will attract people to gardens, in addition to “basic amenities”.
- 6.6. Those in favour of proposals for improving facilities highlighted a number of specific design elements as positives. These related primarily to:
- Provision of cafes within the gardens – including potential for a café on the lower level to encourage use of this part of the gardens.
  - Café and gallery space within the arches as additional covered space within the gardens.

- Restoration of the Victorian Toilets – although some expressed concerns around the “new use” referenced in the consultation document.
  - Providing more indoor and sheltered spaces within the gardens.
- 6.7. Around two thirds of those providing written comment on facilities raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. Most of these respondents felt that proposals would have a positive impact on facilities. Indeed around 1 in 5 of all those who felt that proposals would improve facilities, nevertheless raised issues or suggested amendments.
- 6.8. Most comments raised issues or suggested amendment to specific design elements. However, some also referred to broader design points – most commonly the importance of ongoing maintenance and management of facilities, and the need to provide incentives for people to visit the gardens and make use of facilities:
- Maintenance and management of facilities, including security provision, was the most common issue raised by those in favour of the overall design. A substantial proportion of those providing comment mentioned the importance of regular ongoing maintenance of facilities to maintain cleanliness and good condition. This was seen as vital to ensure continued use, and that facilities can attract businesses for example to cafes and the proposed space under the arches. Security was also a relatively common concern, and a number of respondents wished to see a security presence within the gardens to prevent vandalism of facilities. Respondents also suggested other security measures such as lighting and design of facilities to minimise isolated or poorly lit areas – in this context some also wished to see the gardens made an alcohol-free area. Respondents noted the potentially high cost of a security presence – particularly if gardens are open 24 hours a day – and suggested that projections for facilities should take this into account.
  - Ensuring that there is sufficient incentive to increase footfall and encourage use of facilities was also a common theme across comments. A number of respondents suggested that facilities can only justify the development cost if they are well used, and that events and other incentives are needed to attract more people to the gardens. Some respondents cited the proposed cafes and gallery space as a potential incentive, and suggested that the design and location of these facilities should seek to maximise footfall (e.g. Union Street has highest footfall).
  - Some respondents suggested that the range of facilities proposed is at the expense of the gardens’ natural space and heritage features. There was some difference of opinion amongst those who felt that proposals improve facilities on the preferred balance between encouraging more use of the gardens (a “more vibrant” space), and maintaining their use



as a quiet green space (who felt that the proposed design is “too busy”). Almost all respondents agreed with the need for improved amenities such as toilets and access, but some of those providing comment felt that proposals included too many additional facilities such as cafes, gallery space and other buildings. It is also notable that even amongst those who wished to see more facilities, there was still some concern that the design is in keeping with their natural surroundings.

- The importance of ensuring facilities are accessible to all was also highlighted by respondents. This included in relation to disabled access, but also for example in ensuring facilities such as cafes and the proposed gallery space can accommodate younger children and families.

6.9. In terms of issues and suggested amendments to specific elements of the proposed design, the most common areas were:

- While there was broad support for the proposed café and gallery spaces at the arches and Burns Monument, some queried aspects of the proposed design and suggested amendments. A substantial number of those providing comment felt that the arches – and gardens more generally – should not be a location for “commercial outlets”. This was seen as important to the character of the gardens, and respondents also emphasised the importance that the approach to renovating the arches retains their current character. A number of respondents suggested that a social enterprise and/or community led approach would be the preferred option. Respondents also suggested that rents are minimal and potentially other incentives offered to attract independent operators and/or social enterprises. Others questioned whether there will be sufficient footfall to support café and other facilities at the arches, and whether this would be an attractive commercial prospect. The layout of the arches space was also seen as restricting the range of potential uses, and a creative approach will be needed to make best use of the available space (suggestions included enabling cafes to expand into the outdoor space when weather allows). In terms of location, some noted that proposals locate all cafes at street level, and felt that there would be value in including more facilities at the garden level below.
- Comments also show widespread support for the renovation of the Victorian toilets, and several respondents referred to the building as a significant aspect of the gardens’ heritage features. However, a substantial number of respondents questioned the reference to a “new use” for the toilets, and wished to see more detail on this. Most indicated a preference for retaining their use as toilets, and this reflected a broader view that the gardens required sufficient toilet provision. However, the great majority emphasised the importance of retaining the Victorian features whatever their eventual use.

Respondents also saw ongoing maintenance as important, particularly if they are retained as toilets, and some suggested that levying a small fee for use may be appropriate to ensure sufficient maintenance funds.

- Views were more mixed in relation to the café pavilion opposite His Majesty's Theatre. Some expressed concerns that the café will compete with the HMT café opposite, and potentially other facilities in the area. This was seen as having potential for a negative impact on HMT, and/or undermine the viability of the new café pavilion. Some respondents also indicated a preference for the location allocated to the café pavilion to be retained as open space, and this appeared to be linked to views that the proposed design is “too cluttered” and includes too many cafes. In terms of the operation of the café pavilion, respondents raised a range of points similar to those noted above in relation to the cafés at the arches and Burns Monument. There was a general preference for independent operators or social enterprises, and a wish to see rents and other charges set at a sustainable level.

- 6.10. In terms of other facilities, some respondents also referred to proposals for play areas and the community garden. Most of these respondents felt that more detail is required on the approach to these two element. In relation to play areas this included for example what is meant by “formal and informal play”, and a specific preference from some for facilities which “go beyond the standard ‘swing park’ design”.
- 6.11. Turning to ***comments from the minority of respondents who did not feel that proposals would improve facilities***, these included a mix of suggested changes to specific design elements, and broader concerns that had informed respondents’ overall view on proposals. These concerns were primarily related to how proposals balance improving facilities against the need to retain existing green space and heritage features, and a view that proposals do not represent value for money.
- 6.12. In relation to maintaining green space and heritage features, a number of respondents suggested that these aspects were at a premium in the local area and contrasted this with the number of cafes across the City. Concerns around the extent to which proposals represent value for money appeared to be linked to scepticism around the potential to increase footfall sufficiently to support the range of facilities proposed. These respondents felt that the location and topography of the gardens will remain a barrier to people using the gardens, including some who described the proposals as “unambitious” in terms of providing reasons to use the gardens. This included comparison with previous design proposals.

6.13. Respondents who felt that proposals would not improve facilities suggested a range of potential amendments to specific design elements. Consistent with the issues raised by those who supported the overall approach to improving facilities (see paragraph 6.9), these suggestions related primarily to cafes within the gardens and refurbishment of the Victorian toilets:

- In relation to proposals for cafés and a gallery at the arches and Burns Monument, the most common concern related to the number of cafes proposed across the gardens. A small number of respondents also raised concerns around the condition and structure of the arches and whether they are suitable for the proposed use. Views were also somewhat mixed on the proposed design, including for example whether it is appropriate to enclose the arches. In relation to the gallery space at the arches, several respondents sought clarity on whether this would be included in the final design (referring to “potential space” described in the consultation document). A small number of respondents felt that this space may have a negative impact on other gallery space in the local area.
- Similar points were raised in relation to the café pavilion opposite His Majesty’s Theatre. For example, a number of respondents questioned whether there is a requirement for multiple cafes within the gardens – and whether they will be sustainable. However, the location of the café pavilion was the main concern. Respondents suggested that proposals would have a negative impact on the HMT café opposite, and potentially on other local businesses. Some also objected to the impact on what was described as an “iconic view”, and questioned whether provision of a café at street level will encourage greater footfall within the gardens.
- Comments in relation to the upgrading of the existing Victorian toilets focused primarily on the “new use” for the toilets. These respondents generally wished to see the building retained as toilets, and this reflected a view that additional toilet facilities are required for the gardens. The importance of retaining the Victorian features of the toilets was also highlighted.

## 7. SAFETY

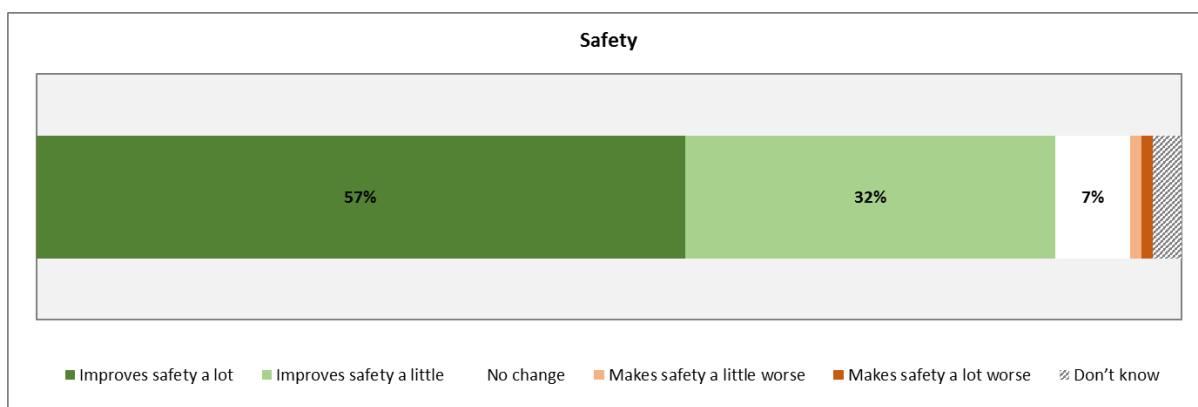
7.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to **improve safety**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to improve safety in the gardens:

- Improved lighting to the new accessible walkways into the gardens;
- Creation of a new entrance building on Union Street, providing an activity hub that overlooks the space in the day and evening;
- Lighting installation within the arches to animate the upper terrace and increase the sense of safety and security along this edge; and
- A major new lighting installation within the gardens to act as a beacon to attract footfall into and around the gardens.

### Rating of proposals

7.2. Figure 6 below summarises respondents' views on the extent to which proposals improve safety at Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, around 9 in 10 respondents feel that proposals will improve safety at Union Terrace Gardens (89%). This includes more than half of all respondents who feel that proposals will significantly improve safety (57%). Only 2% of respondents feel that proposals will worsen safety at Union Terrace Gardens.

**Figure 7: Rating of proposals on safety**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Improves safety a lot	57%	56%	62%
Improves safety a little	32%	32%	32%
No change	7%	7%	4%
Makes safety a little worse	1%	1%	0%
Makes safety a lot worse	1%	1%	0%
Don't know	3%	3%	2%
Base (% of all responses)	1393 (98%)	1346 (98%)	47 (98%)

## Written comments

- 7.3. Around 500 respondents provided written comment on safety, more than a third of all those responding to the consultation. Reflecting the overall balance of views summarised at Figure 6 above, a large majority of those commenting gave proposals a positive rating in terms of the extent to which proposals would improve safety in UTG.
- 7.4. Looking first at ***comments from those who feel that proposals would improve safety***, nearly half of these used their written comments to highlight specific design elements and/or to express broad support for the proposals. Safety was a clear concern for a substantial number of these respondents, who saw improving safety as a significant factor in terms of increasing use of the gardens. This included some who indicated that they do not feel able to use the gardens at present specifically due to safety concerns – a small number of these respondents suggested a need to promote the gardens as a safer space to address this negative reputation. In addition to increasing footfall through the gardens, improving safety was also seen a shaving potential to improve the mix of people using the gardens – for example attracting more families with young children, and older people.
- 7.5. Some respondents suggested that a lack of maintenance has been an issue for the gardens over recent years, and felt that this has contributed to safety issues. These respondents emphasised the need for adequate investment to ensure ongoing maintenance of safety features such as lighting.
- 7.6. Respondents also highlighted a range of specific design elements as positives. These focused almost exclusively on proposals for additional lighting; this was seen as a positive by the great majority of those providing comment, primarily to improve safety but some also referred to creative use of lighting to improve the appearance of the gardens. Respondents also drew links with other aspects of the proposals, such as the approach to trees and planting to create a more open space with more natural light. However, while most praised the proposed approach to lighting, some questioned whether the

lighting installation will be sufficient to attract more people into the lower levels of the garden.

- 7.7. In addition to comments on proposed lighting features, some respondents also referred to the proposed new entrance building as a safety feature. However, this appeared to be due more to potential for a staffing presence rather than proposals that the building will create an activity hub overlooking the gardens.
- 7.8. Around three quarters of those providing written comment on safety raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. A large majority of these respondents felt that proposals would have a positive impact on safety. Indeed nearly a quarter of all those who felt that proposals would improve safety, nevertheless raised issues or suggested amendments.
- 7.9. These included a mix of comments suggesting changes to specific design elements, and those raising broader design points. The latter most commonly related to a perceived need for additional security measures such as CCTV and security patrols, alongside improved lighting and other proposals. Around 1 in 10 of all those who felt that proposals would improve safety also suggested a need for additional security measures. In relation to potential for security patrols this included a mix of comments suggesting funding a caretaker role for the gardens, and integration of the gardens to existing police and community warden patrols. These respondents also suggested that this security role could also incorporate a maintenance element.
- 7.10. While most respondents supported the proposals for improving safety in the gardens, some felt that safety concerns will remain. These respondents suggested that additional lighting alone will not be sufficient to make the gardens feel safer, and that for example a significant increase in footfall throughout the gardens would also be required. Indeed some suggested that without this, the gardens could never be a welcoming area.
- 7.11. A small number of respondents suggested changes to the proposed approach to lighting, to address concerns that the design will result in additional lighting pollution, and will be not in keeping with the character of the gardens. This included concerns regarding the impact on the local neighbourhood, and on the gardens themselves (e.g. lighting potentially discouraging wildlife).
- 7.12. In terms of issues and suggested amendments to specific design elements, the main areas identified by those in favour of the overall approach were:
  - Written comments indicated a mix of views in relation to proposals for a major light installation as a “beacon” for the gardens. Some of those providing comment were unsure whether the installation (and potentially the lighting approach more widely) will be sufficient to attract people into the lower level of the gardens. This included suggestions that a more substantial increase in lighting will be required. A small number of respondents also wished to see a more

ambitious approach to design of the lighting installation, and referred to more creative use of light to provide a more stimulating environment. Also in relation to the design of lighting in the gardens, some wished to see use of solar lights and/or sensor reactive lighting to save energy. A small number of respondents did not support proposals for the lighting installation; these respondents suggested that the installation would not be in keeping with the character of the gardens and described the design as “overly intrusive”, including some who supported an overall increase in lighting to the gardens.

- In relation to the proposed entrance building on Union Street, comments indicate some lack of clarity regarding the proposed role of the building. Some felt that proposals described this as primarily a lift entrance, while others questioned whether the building would be used for events, as a viewing point, and/or as a security base. This included some questions regarding the opening hours and staffing of the entrance building. In addition to questions regarding the role of the building, some respondents were concerned that proposals will focus activity at the street level, and may not encourage more use of the lower gardens level. This included concerns that the proposed design for the building could dominate the gardens and detract from views from Union Bridge.
- Lighting to the arches and the proposed accessible walkways were generally seen as significant elements in addressing safety concerns – particularly if the arches are to be used as an access point. However, some respondents felt that proposals appeared insufficient to fully address safety concerns, and wished to see more ambitious proposals.

7.13. In addition to comments on the specific elements above, respondents also highlighted the importance of increasing footfall (particularly to the lower levels of the gardens) to address safety concerns regarding the gardens. These respondents referred to other proposals relating to creating events space and improving facilities as significant elements in increasing use of the gardens, and suggested that these should form part of an integrated approach to safety. The approach to improving green space was also seen as relevant here, ensuring that planting creates a more open space with better visibility and natural light.

7.14. Comments from ***the relatively small minority of respondents who did not feel that proposals would improve safety*** included some reference to specific design elements, but were primarily focused on broader concerns and issues. These included the extent to which proposals will fully address safety concerns, the need for additional security measures, and the importance of increasing footfall:

- A number of respondents suggested that safety will remain a concern even with the proposed changes to the gardens. Indeed some respondents specifically indicated that even with proposed changes,

they would not use the gardens after dark. For some this related to concerns regarding the quality and design of lighting (e.g. to minimise areas in dark shadow), but for most respondents a lack of footfall appeared to be a bigger safety concern than lighting. These respondents pointed to parts of the gardens and other areas across the City where lighting has not removed safety concerns, and suggested that a real change in the level of use of the gardens would be required to address safety concerns. The topography of the gardens was also mentioned as a significant concern, and that the lower level of the gardens would remain a safety risk even with significant lighting levels. As noted below, some respondents felt that lighting alone would not be sufficient to make the gardens safe, without other security measures.

- While comments indicate widespread support for proposals to improve lighting across the gardens, a substantial number of those providing comment also wished to see additional security measures. This was most commonly regarding CCTV systems and security staffing or patrols from Police or community wardens. Some of these respondents clearly saw such measures as the only means of effecting a genuine improvement in safety across the gardens, and wished to see part of the funding for proposals dedicated to this provision. Locking the gardens at night when not in use was also a relatively common suggestion. Recommendations for staffing to the gardens was primarily focused on security, but some also suggested that this role is integrated with maintenance and clean up following events.
- While a substantial proportion of those providing comment appeared to feel that increasing use of the gardens would be a key factor in improving safety, a small number of respondents disagreed and suggested that increased footfall could lead to increased safety issues. This was particularly in relation to increasing footfall within the gardens after dark, and some suggested that this could lead to more problems such as antisocial behaviour, theft and assault.
- The raised walkway and viewing platforms were also highlighted by a number of respondents as potential safety risks. This was most commonly in relation to a perceived suicide risk associated with the raised walkway, and several respondents wished to see this addressed by proposals. A small number of respondents also felt that raised areas brought a risk of accidental injury, and that shaded areas under the raised walkway were a potential safety concern.

- 7.15. Respondents who did not feel that proposals would improve safety suggested a range of potential amendments to specific design elements. Comments from these respondents focused primarily on proposals for additional lighting to the gardens, but also included reference to the new entrance building. This included some who wished to see more detail on the approach to improving



safety, including the detailed design of lighting and the intended use of the entrance building:

- The lighting installation was the most common focus for comments and suggestions. While a number of respondents saw significant potential for this to improve safety to the lower levels of the gardens, some felt that the effectiveness of the installation would depend on the quality and design of lighting. This was both in terms of ensuring lighting is bright enough for the area, and that the design of the lighting installation is sensitive to the character of the gardens. This included ensuring the space can be used for events and leisure activities, minimising the impact of light pollution, and avoiding any negative impact on wildlife. As noted earlier, some felt that encouraging more people to use the lower garden levels could lead to an increase in crime and antisocial behaviour – particularly after dark. Others also saw a risk of vandalism to the lighting installation, and highlighted the need for maintenance – these respondents suggested that cost projections should include provision for ongoing repair and maintenance.
- Similar points were raised in relation to lighting to accessible walkways and the arches. Respondents wished to see more detail on the proposed design of lighting and the extent to which this would fit with the character of the gardens, and would be of sufficient quality to address safety concerns.
- A small number of respondents raised concerns or queries regarding the proposed new entrance building on Union Street. This included some seeking further detail on the role of the entrance building, for example opening hours and staffing levels, facilities provided and how the space will be used. In terms of the potential role of the building in improving safety, some respondents noted that surrounding buildings already overlook the gardens and that this does not appear to have improved safety. These respondents suggested that the entrance building would not have a positive impact on safety without adequate staffing.

## 8. HERITAGE FEATURES

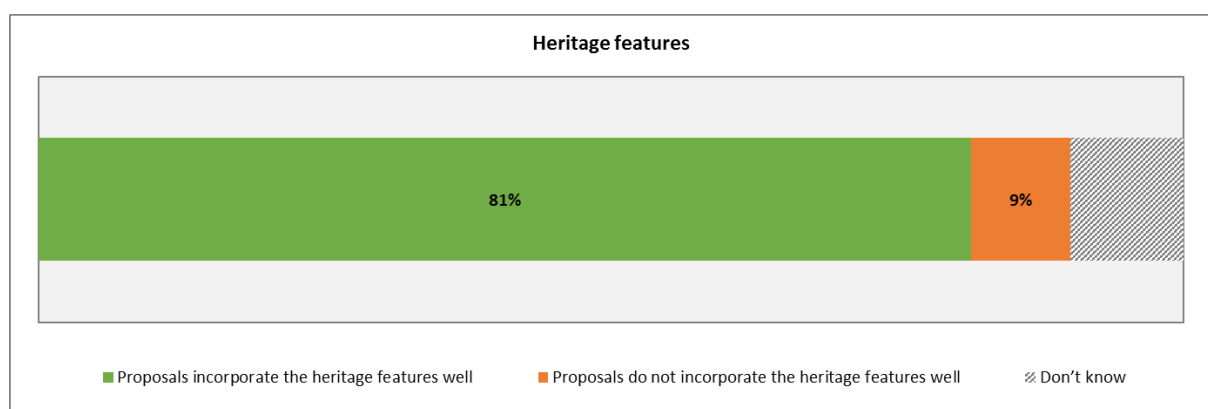
8.1. This section provides a summary of views on how Union Terrace Garden proposals address the priority to incorporate **heritage features**. The consultation highlights the following aspects of the proposals as being particularly relevant to the enhancement and celebration of existing heritage features in the gardens:

- Retaining and repairing the existing granite balustrading to the perimeter of the gardens;
- Reinstating the 'grand staircase' as a central part of the new accessible route into the gardens from Rosemount Viaduct;
- Reusing the existing granite steps, walls and coping materials as part of the new interventions within the scheme;
- Retaining the existing monuments to the edges of the gardens, giving them a new, enhanced setting;
- Creating new interventions within the arches which are 'lightweight structures' that express the heritage fabric of the gardens; and
- Utilising lighting to celebrate heritage features such as the arches, monuments and viaduct.

### Rating of proposals

8.2. Figure 7 below summarises respondents' views on whether proposals effectively incorporate heritage features at Union Terrace Gardens. As this shows, a large majority of respondents feel that proposals incorporate UTG heritage features well (81%). A little less than 1 in 10 respondents feel that proposals do not incorporate these heritage features well (9%).

**Figure 8: Rating of proposals on heritage features**



	ALL	Respondent type	
		Public	School/College
Proposals incorporate the heritage features well	81%	81%	87%
Proposals do not incorporate the heritage features well	9%	9%	4%
Don't know	10%	10%	9%
Base (% of all responses)	1383 (98%)	1337 (98%)	46 (96%)

## Written comments

- 8.3. Around 350 respondents provided written comment on improving safety, a quarter of all respondents. Nearly two thirds of commenting felt that proposals incorporated heritage features well, reflecting the overall balance of views summarised at Figure 8 above. However, it is notable that most of the minority of respondents who felt that proposals did not incorporate heritage features well provided further comment to explain their view.
- 8.4. As is noted below, a number of common themes emerged through comments across respondents giving positive and negative ratings for the approach to integrating heritage features. This included concerns that designs included too much concrete and implied the removal of too much granite – these respondents wished to see proposals make greater use of granite to link with Aberdeen's heritage. Repair and retention of granite was also one of the most common issues across both groups of respondents, and this appeared to reflect a common view that re-development should be in keeping with the character of the gardens.
- 8.5. Looking specifically at ***comments from those who feel that proposals incorporate UTG's heritage features well***, a substantial proportion of these respondents expressed broad support for the design approach. For most of these respondents, this focused on how proposals strike a balance with the original features of the gardens and its general character, and make good use of existing heritage features. This included reference to specific features such as the Victorian toilets, the "grand staircase" and granite balustrade, monuments and the arches. Respondents also noted that proposals acknowledged the importance of Aberdeen's wider heritage and identity, including for example through retention and reuse of granite materials. These respondents praised the proposals as enhancing the surrounding area, and creating an accessible public space for the city centre.
- 8.6. Most of those providing written comment on heritage features raised issues, points for clarification, objections or suggested amendments. This included a substantial proportion of those who felt that proposals integrated heritage features well, but who nevertheless qualified their support with concerns and/or suggested amendments. Some of these comments raised general concerns for proposals, including the risk of over-development leading to light and noise pollution, and how the balance between heritage features

and green space can be struck. The latter issue included specific reference to retaining the prominence of the floral crest, proposals to pave over parts of Prince Albert gardens, and the design and location of the new café pavilion detracting from the character of the area.

8.7. In terms of suggested additions and improvements to proposals, the main areas raised by those generally in favour of the approach to heritage features were:

- Several respondents suggested that heritage features could be enhanced through signage, plaques and tours focusing on the architectural histories and geography of the area - such as the old loch and the Denburn.
- Re-use of materials and consistency with Aberdeen's architectural features was also emphasised by some respondents. Some felt that it will be important to re-use cast iron from the existing park, and many argued for the importance of using locally sourced granite.
- Some respondents suggested opportunities to involve other bodies and civic fixtures within Aberdeen – such as Gray's School of Art or local arts organisations – alongside use of local materials, suppliers and contractors. In this context, some respondents also highlighted the social and civic functions of the Gardens, and the importance of maintaining access to key features (e.g. the Wallace statue) for celebrations and events.
- Other specific improvements suggested by respondents in relation to integration of heritage features were:
  - The park near the Wallace monument is better incorporated into proposals.
  - A museum of the city by or within the gardens.
  - A new monument to mark the redevelopment.
  - Pedestrianisation around the square.
  - Replacing the tarmac paths.
  - Improving the railings by the bridge.

8.8. Turning to ***comments from the minority of respondents who did not feel that proposals integrated heritage features well***, these included a mix of suggested changes to specific design elements, and broader concerns that had informed respondents' overall view on proposals. These more general concerns were primarily focused on the extent to which proposals sufficiently retained and preserved heritage features – most of those expressing concerns regarding proposals referenced this issue. This included some of the view that proposals are too contemporary and appeared to remove significant heritage features, and compromise the Victorian character of the gardens. Indeed some expressed a preference for no change to the gardens,

and expressed fears that “interference” would change the Victorian character of the gardens.

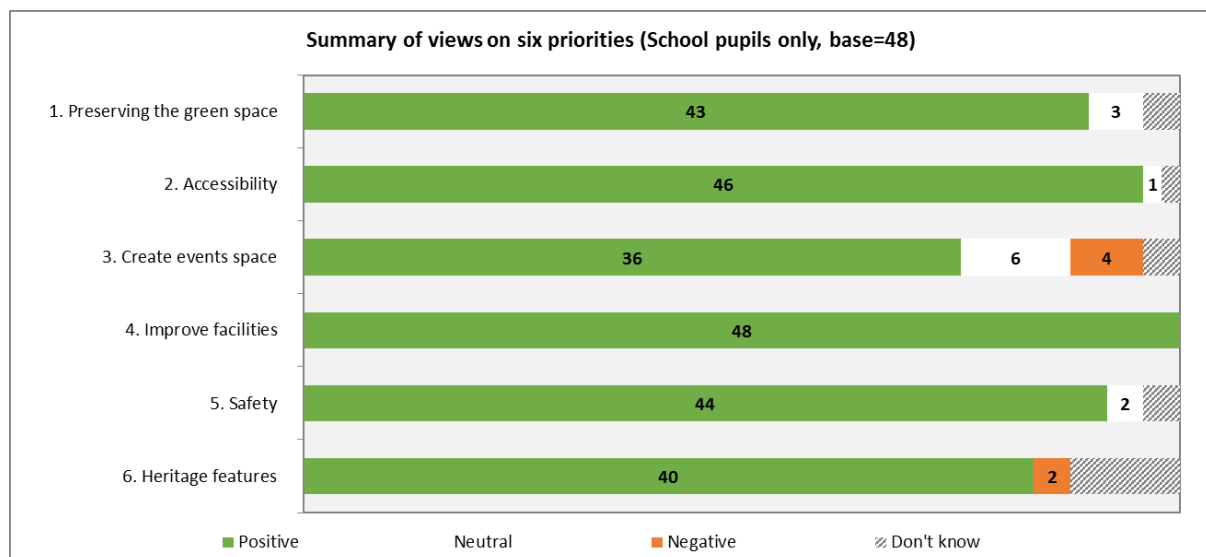
- 8.9. Some of these comments appeared to be due in part due to a lack of detail provided on specific aspects of proposals. For example, a number of respondents sought reassurance that specific heritage features such as the main staircase and granite balustrade would be respected. A substantial number of respondents also felt that there was a need for more detail generally on proposals. These respondents indicated that images did not provide sufficient detail, and they found it difficult to offer a view on the detail of proposals.
- 8.10. As has been highlighted across a number of the priority areas, a substantial proportion of those providing comment highlighted the importance of effective ongoing maintenance and cleaning. This appeared to be a particular issue for the integration of heritage features, and it was clear that some of those with a specific concern for heritage features saw ongoing maintenance of these features as a more significant issue than the new elements proposed for the gardens.
- 8.11. In terms of suggested amendments to proposals, the most common areas for those who felt that heritage features are not integrated well, were:
  - The inclusion of the café pavilion was a cause of concern for some respondents. This included the placement of the building (some felt that this would “clog up” the gardens and impact on viewing points), the extent to which an additional café is necessary, and the extent to which the proposed design fit with the character of the gardens.
  - Specific plans for renovation of the Victorian toilets were raised by a substantial number of respondents. Most wished to see the facility retained as toilets, but some indicated that they could not comment on or approve any alternative use without further detail – particularly in relation to whether and how original features of the toilets would be retained.
  - Some felt that the proposed raised walkway was too contemporary in design, and would not be consistent with the character of the gardens.
  - Some expressed concerns regarding the integration of the grand staircase within proposals. These respondents wished to see the staircase retain its current prominence, and were concerned that the design indicated in the consultation document would not deliver this.
  - The proposed approach to integrating the floral crest with the accessible walkway was also a cause for concern for some. These respondents wished to see the crest retain its current role as a significant landmark for the gardens, and did not feel that proposals would ensure this.

- Some respondents suggested that size and layout of the accessible walkway from Rosemount Viaduct would not be in keeping with the character of the gardens – nor of the floral crest. This included reference to the modern materials to be used in the walkway.
- A number of respondents wished to see reassurances that specific heritage features would not be removed or compromised. This included the bow brig, the granite balustrades, and the Wallace Statue.

## 9. VIEWS FROM SCHOOL PUPILS

- 9.1. As is noted in section 1 of this report, the public engagement process sought to include the views from school pupils. A total of 48 responses were received from pupils of Harlaw Academy and Robert Gordon's College, and the Children's Parliament Imagineers also provided feedback on the proposals.
- 9.2. Figure 9 below summarises the view of the 48 school pupils in relation to each of the six priority areas. As this shows, the great majority of pupils were positive about the approach to all six priorities. This was particularly the case in relation to improving facilities (all 48 rating proposals positively) and accessibility (46 positive ratings). Only four pupils rated any of the six priority areas negatively – in relation to creating events space, and integrating heritage features.

**Figure 9: Overview of ratings – school pupils only**



- 9.3. Reflecting the balance of views shown at Figure 9 above, written comments from school pupils were generally positive in tone. Across all six priorities, most written comments reiterated broad support for the proposals and/or highlighted specific positive design elements. Nevertheless, pupils did raise a range of issues and/or suggested amendments to proposals. These reflected a broad view that the gardens at present do not feel like a welcoming place for children and young people, and that proposals do not appear to include a great deal of provision for children and young people. Specific points raised by pupils are summarised below:
- In relation to green space, comments from pupils highlighted the importance of upkeep of green spaces to improve the present condition. Suggested amendments to proposals included a football

pitch, more natural play areas (“dens”, treehouses), a greenhouse for all year growing, a paddling pool, dog waste bins, and picnic tables.

- In relation to accessibility, comments from pupils highlighted the potential for antisocial behaviour and vandalism to lifts and other facilities and emphasised the importance of good design to minimise this, wished to see a direct link to Belmont Street and raising the level of the gardens to improve accessibility.
- In relation to events space, comments from pupils highlighted the need to provide a range of events and activities that change through the year, at different times of day, and for different age groups. Pupils also provided a range of suggestions for additional facilities to support events and wider use of the gardens. These included providing a large screen for sports, additional seating areas, provision to enable children and young people to use their bikes, orienteering or obstacle courses, parkour facilities, a small animal zoo, ice skating in the winter, and a Ferris wheel or similar “sightseeing monument”.
- In relation to facilities, comments from pupils were almost exclusively focused on the positive aspects of proposals – and in particular the extent to which improved facilities will attract more visitors. The only changes to proposals suggested by pupils was the introduction of a park manager for security, and a suggestion that warm indoor places should be available for visitors who do not wish to buy something at a café.
- In relation to safety, comments from pupils highlighted the need to improve safety, particularly after dark and for children and young people. The main suggested amendment to proposals was a park manager and/or greater police presence within the gardens, although pupils also suggested better fencing between the gardens and the railway line.
- In relation to heritage features, pupils made very few comments with the only suggested amendment being improved maintenance of monuments.



## 10. OTHER COMMENTS

- 10.1. In addition to comments on the specific design proposals for Union Terrace Gardens, the engagement also gave respondents an opportunity to raise any other relevant issues.
- 10.2. More than half of respondents provided additional comment here. The great majority of these reiterated issues discussed in relation to each of the six priorities, and a substantial proportion of these were positive in tone. This included general praise for the proposals and a view that they will benefit the gardens and wider area, including some who saw the proposals as a “good compromise” with previous design proposals. Comments also referred to design elements and principles which related to one or more of the six priority areas – such as the balance between green space and hard landscaping, and retaining heritage features.
- 10.3. Comments also repeated other issues or concerns that do not relate exclusively to a specific priority area, but which have been highlighted throughout the report. This was most commonly disappointment that specific aspects of previous design proposals have not been included in proposals, such as raising the level of the gardens, creating a link to Belmont Street, and developing access from the train station. Some also questioned the extent to which proposals represent value for money against what some saw as an excessive budget, and warned against the potential for the budget to increase during development. This included comments from some respondents who wished to see “more ambitious” proposals.
- 10.4. The public engagement approach was also a relatively common theme across comments. These comments indicated some scepticism around the engagement, and the extent to which results will have a genuine impact on final plans for UTG. This was evident across those who broadly supported the proposals, and those who were more negative. In this regard, respondents referred to the results of previous consultations not being reflected in planning decisions on UTG. A small number of respondents also referred to news reports during the consultation period that proposals were to go to committee for approval to enable work to commence.
- 10.5. In terms of the engagement process itself, some respondents felt that the consultation period was too short. As has been noted earlier in this report, a substantial number of respondents also sought further detail on the design proposals, and some felt that this should have been provided to enable residents to provide meaningful feedback. Some also criticised what was seen as over use of “jargon” in the consultation document, and felt that this contributed to a lack of clarity on proposals.

10.6. Respondents also referred to a broad range of specific suggestions for inclusion in proposals, and which did not relate to specific priority areas. These included:

- Advertising spaces
- Areas for pop up bars, clubs, eateries etc
- Art throughout the gardens
- Big screen or projector sports events, gaming and films
- Central artwork
- Community book box where people can place and take books for sitting and reading
- Cycling facilities, including bike storage and rent-a-bike
- Dog park and water fountain for dogs
- Drone racing
- Free wifi hotspots
- Ice skating in the winter
- Indoor play area
- Means of preventing skateboarding and cycling on walkways
- Orchard
- Orienteering or obstacle courses
- Paddling pool
- Paintball events
- Reinstating Schoolhill railway station
- Reintroduce garden draughts
- Rooftop café
- Small animal petting zoo
- Sports and fitness facilities including an outdoor gym, running track, space for football, basketball hoops, trampolining, climbing wall.
- Tourist information
- Treehouses
- Workshops for gaming
- Zipwire from the roof of HMT to the gardens