

Option to convert Southwood Golf Course into new natural open parkland

Consultation report by Strategy, Performance and Partnerships

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Summary

There were 2,413 responses to the survey from people living in and out of the borough. In total 1,514 respondents (62.7%) had postcodes or addresses in the borough.

From those answering the related questions the respondents tended to be male (63.0%), white British (86.6%), not have any health conditions or disabilities, which limited daily activities (81.6%) and be heterosexual/straight (80.6%). The largest age group of respondents was 45-54 years (19.7%).

Of those who play golf, 281 respondents (16.9%) indicated that they were members of Southwood golf course, 1,151 respondents (72.9%) indicated that they have used the golf course and 554 respondents (41.7%) indicated that they would give up playing golf if Southwood was to close.

Overall, 61.% of respondents indicated that they wanted to 'Keep Southwood Golf Course open, and as it is' compared to 39.0% who wanted to 'Close Southwood Golf Course and turn it into natural parkland, which in turn, would allow around 2,500 homes to be built elsewhere in the borough'. Of those with postcodes or addresses in the borough, 50.6% of respondents indicated that wanted to 'Close Southwood Golf Course and turn it into natural parkland, which in turn, would allow around 2,500 homes to be built elsewhere in the borough' compared to 49.4% who wanted to 'Keep Southwood Golf Course open, and as it is'.

The main themes of responses to the open questions asking why they wanted to keep the golf course are affordability, plenty of other green spaces around, course is well used, provides a sense of community and the course is fantastic.

The main themes of responses to the open question asking why they wanted to close the golf course are, it is a great idea, need more parkland, more people will benefit than do from golf, issues with the running costs and it will allow more housing.

The most popular thing respondents wanted to see at Southwood Golf Course if we were to create new natural parkland was 'open space for walking and dog walking', followed by 'natural trails'. The least popular was 'small allotment'.

The main theme of the last question asking for any other comments were, don't want the golf course closed and leave it as it is.

Introduction

The council is considering the possibility of converting Southwood Golf Course into new natural open parkland.

This would mean that the area would be opened up to become around 50 hectares of green space for all our residents to enjoy, replacing the golf course use.

Together with Southwood Woodland and other green open space nearby, this would create a large country park area, offering activities such as walking, cycling, trim trails, natural play structures and a community orchard.

The natural parkland would become what is known as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This means the area would become a permanently protected public open space that could never be built on.

Converting the golf course would allow for around 2,500 new homes to be built in the borough under the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area mitigation requirements. In turn, new town centre homes, particularly flats, would provide funding to help support the much-needed regeneration of Aldershot and Farnborough town centres, as well as bringing new footfall to the areas.

In recent years, overall use of the golf course has reduced from 40,000 to 25,000 rounds a year. This is made up of casual users, societies, season ticket holders and golf club members. There are approximately 175 golf club members, of which around half live in Rushmoor.

Methodology

To understand people's views on the options to convert the golf course, an online survey was designed and public meetings organised. Paper versions of the surveys (appendix A) were also available at the Council Offices and were taken to public meetings. The public meetings were held at:

- Southwood Community Centre on Tuesday 15 August
- Southwood Golf Course on Tuesday 19 September

In total 2,072 households around the golf course received a leaflet (appendix B) informing them of the survey and the consultation events.

Due to public interest, the original deadline was extended by one week, from 22 September to the 29 September. An additional public meeting on Monday 18 September at Southwood Community Centre was also added.

The households around the golf course received a postcard (appendix C) informing them of the extension and the extra meeting.

The consultation ran from Friday 8 August until Friday 29 of September 2017.

Responses

There were 2,255 online responses and 158 paper responses, giving a total of 2,413 responses. The table below shows the location of respondents; 62.7% (1514 respondents) had postcodes within the borough.

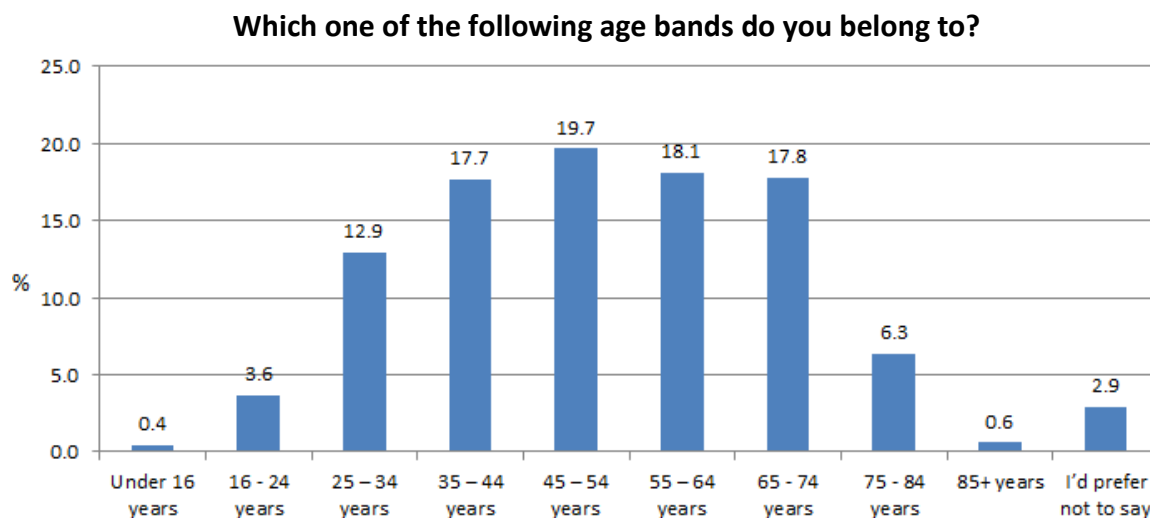
Location of respondents	Number	Percentage
Postcode or address in the borough*	1,514	62.7%
Postcode or address out of the borough	533	22.1%
Location not given	366	15.2%

*We have included those who responded with part of the postcode GU14

Characteristics of the respondents

Age

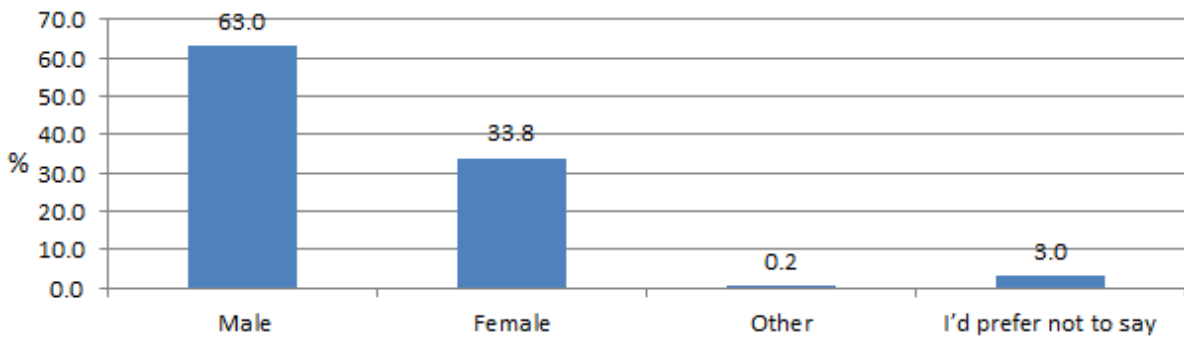
In total 2,248 respondents filled in the question about their age. The age of respondents ranged from under 16 years to 85+ years, with the largest age group being 45-54 year olds (442 respondents).



Gender

In total 2,245 respondents filled in the question about their gender. The majority of respondent were male; 63.0% (1,415 respondents). Of the four respondents that filled in the other comment box, there was no commonality in response.

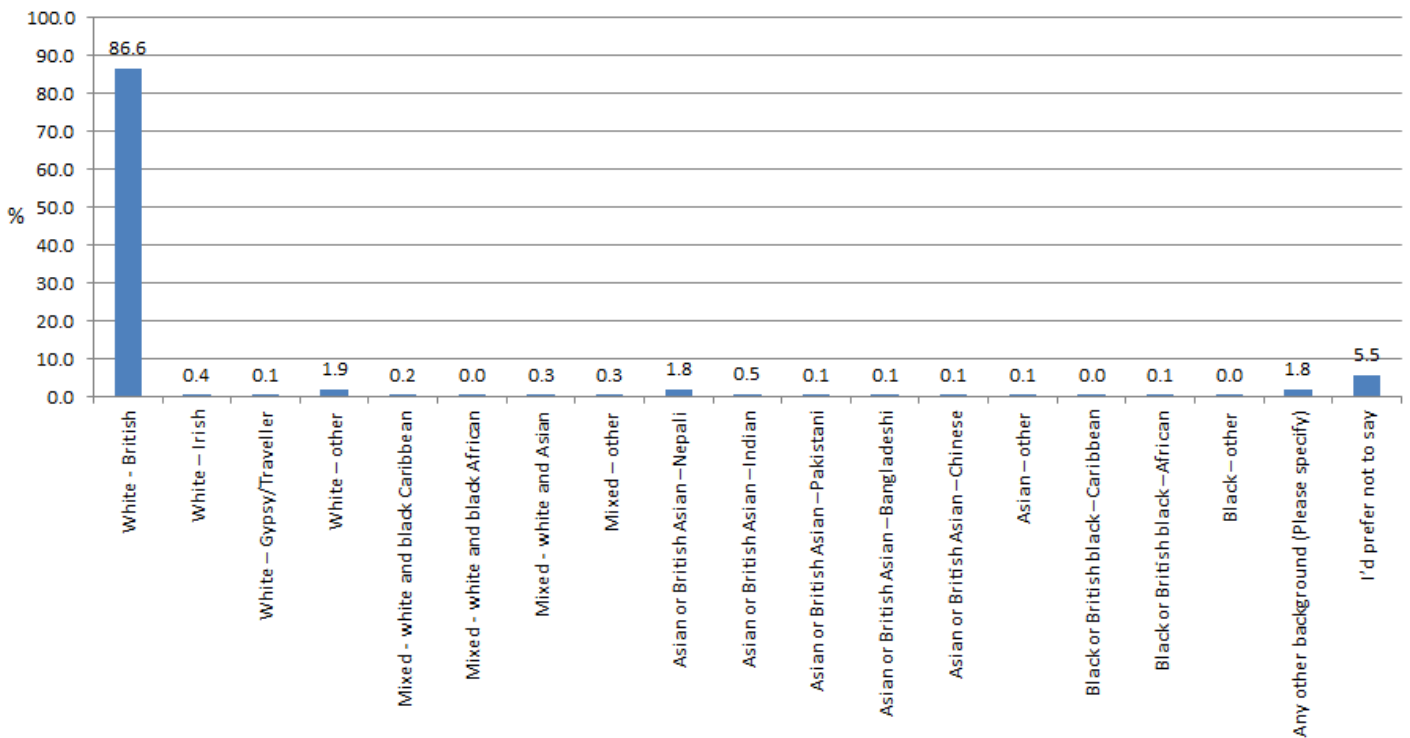
Your gender



Ethnic group

In total 2,233 respondents filled in the question about their ethnic group. The majority of respondents were white - British; 86.6% (1,933 respondents).

What is your ethnic group?

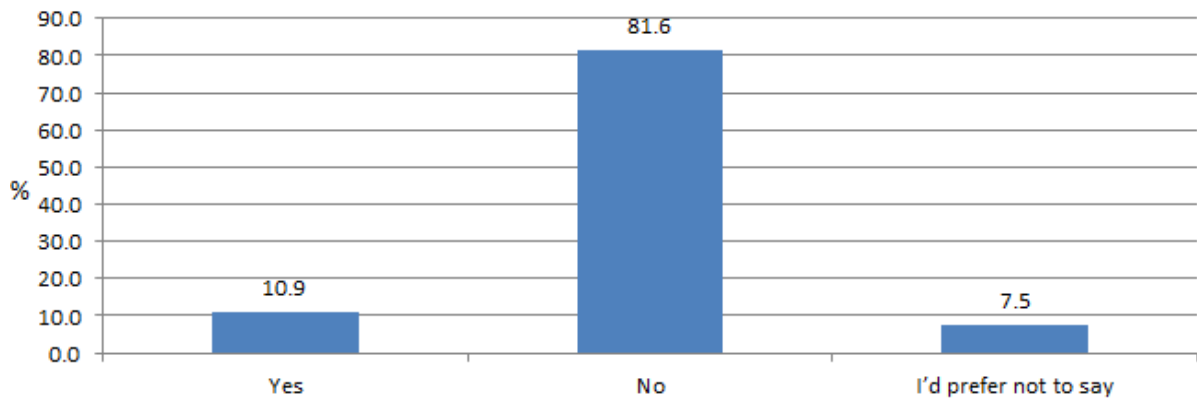


Of the 40 respondents that filled in the other comment box, the most common responses were 14 indicating they were English and nine indicating that the question was irrelevant.

Health conditions or disabilities

In total 2,223 respondents filled in the question about their health. The majority of respondents (81.6%) indicated that they did not have a health condition or disabilities, which limited their daily activities.

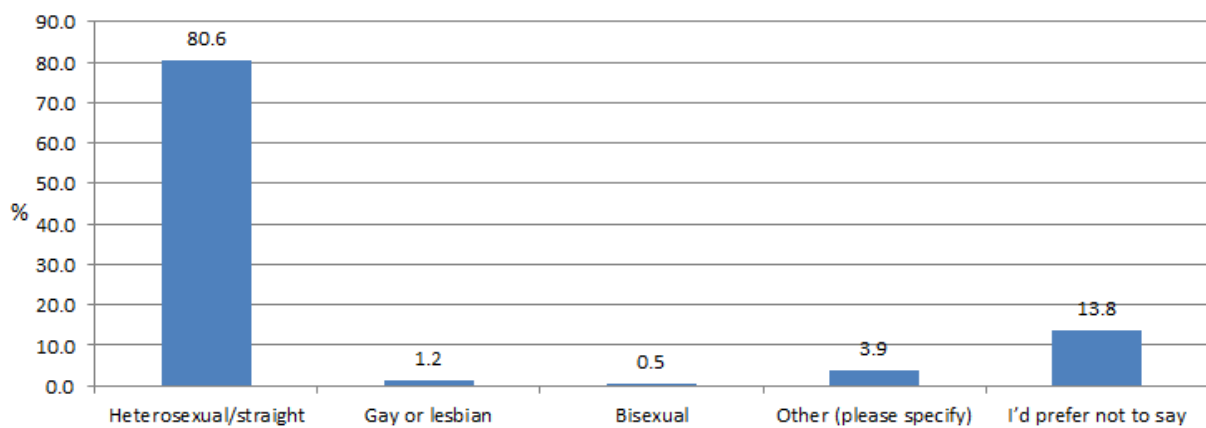
Do you consider yourself to have any health conditions or disabilities, which limit your daily activities?



Sexual orientation

In total 2,177 respondents filled in the question about their sexual orientation. The majority of respondents (80.6%) indicated that they were heterosexual/straight.

What is your sexual orientation?



Of the 80 respondents that filled in the other comment box, 62 of the comments were about the relevance of the question to the survey.

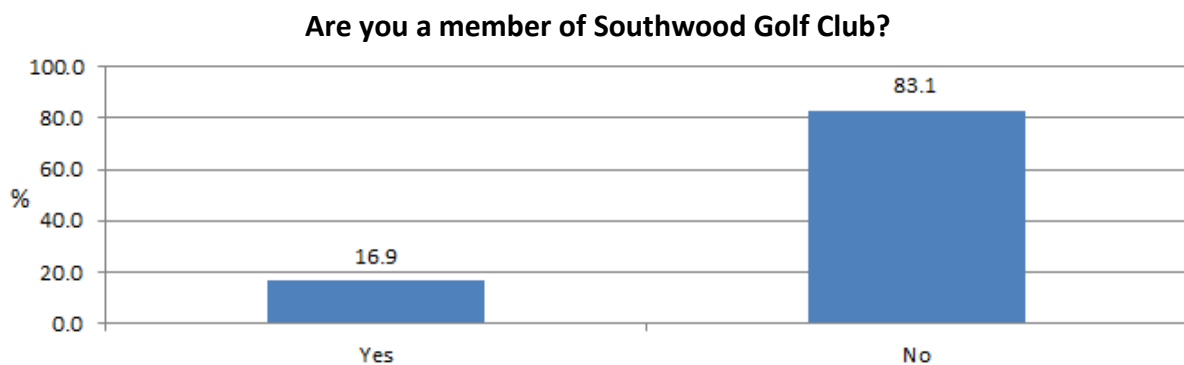
Results

SECTION ONE – Golfers

Note as this section was available to all to answer and first in the survey, some non-golfers may have filled in some of the questions.

Question 1: Are you a member of Southwood Golf Club?

In total 1,660 respondents filled in this question; 16.9% (281 respondents) indicated that they were members of Southwood Golf Course and 83.1% (1,379 respondents) indicated that they were not members.



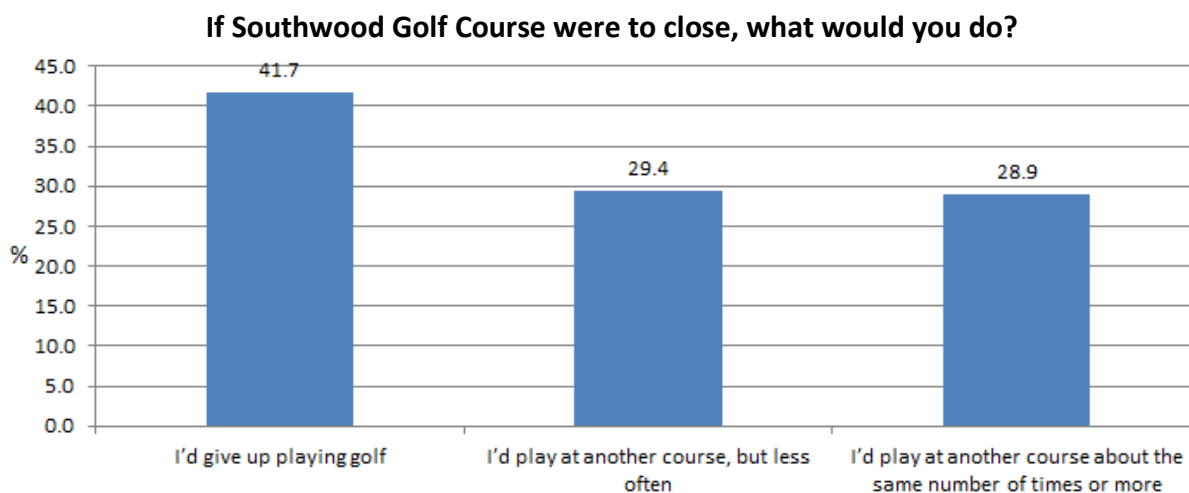
Question 2: How often have you played at Southwood Golf Course in the last 12 months?

In total 1,578 respondents filled in this question. 72.9% (1,151 respondents) indicated that they had used the Southwood Golf Course and 27.1% (427 respondents) indicated that they had never used it. Of those who had used the golf course, the most frequent use was weekly; 14.8% (234 respondents).



Question 3: If Southwood Golf Course were to close, what would you do?

In total 1,330 respondents filled in this question; 41.7% (554 respondents) indicated that they would give up playing golf, 29.4% (391 respondents) would play on another course but less often and 28.9% (385 respondents) would play at another course about the same number of times or more.



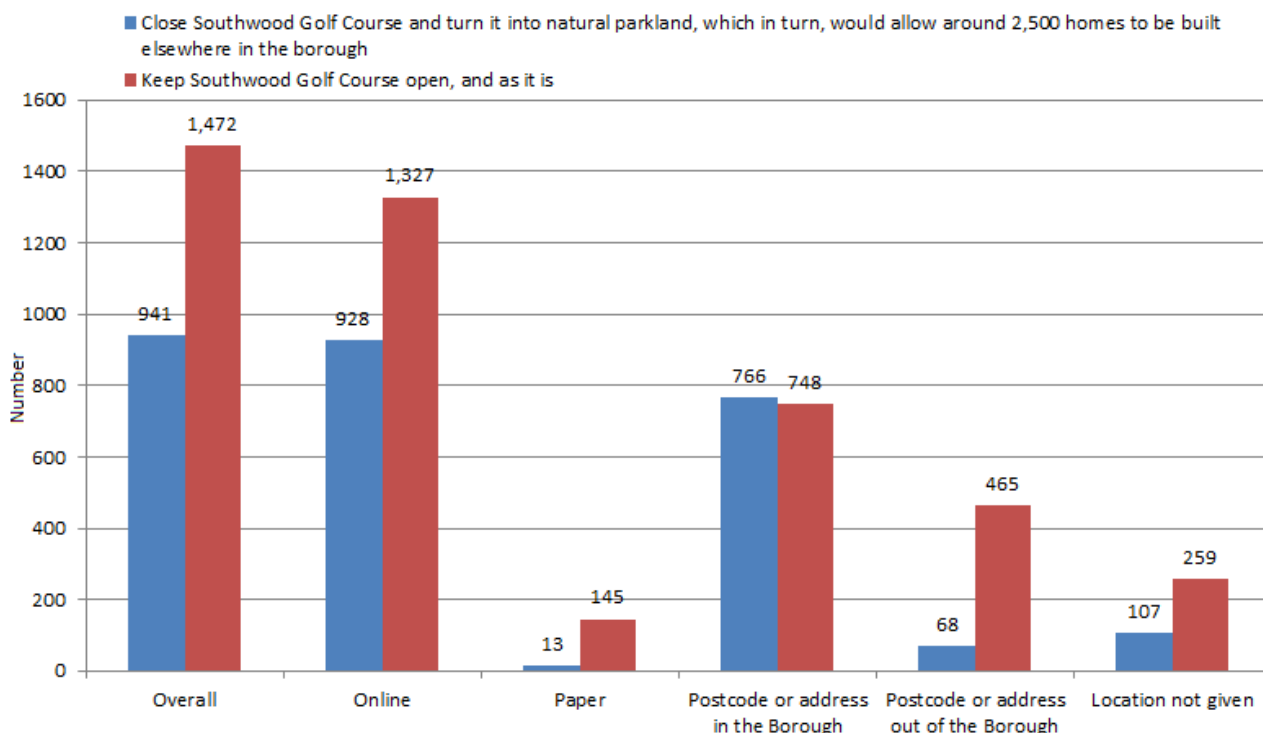
SECTION 2 – For everyone to complete

Question 4: Given what you've read about the option to convert Southwood Golf Club into natural parkland, which of the following would you most support?

This was the only mandatory question in the survey so all 2,413 respondents filled in this question. Overall, 61.0% (1,472 respondents) wanted to keep the Southwood Golf Course as it is and 39.0% (941 respondents) wanted the golf course closed and turned into natural parkland. On those who identified themselves as living in the borough, 50.6% (766 respondents) wanted the golf course closed and 49.4% (748 respondents) wanted to keep the golf course. A high percentage (91.8%) of those who returned paper copies of the form wanted to keep the golf course.

	Close Southwood Golf Course and turn it into natural parkland, which in turn, would allow around 2,500 homes to be built elsewhere in the borough	Keep Southwood Golf Course open, and as it is
Overall	941 (39.0%)	1,472 (61.0%)
Online	928 (41.2%)	1,327 (58.8%)
Paper	13 (8.2%)	145 (91.8%)
Postcode or address in the borough	766 (50.6%)	748 (49.4%)
Postcode or address out of the borough	68 (12.8%)	465 (87.2%)
Location not given	107 (29.2%)	259 (70.8%)

Split of results by method of response and location of responder



In total, there were 1,833 comments for why respondents chose either to keep or close the golf course.

There were 609 comments from those who wanted to close Southwood Golf Course. The main themes of the comments (those mentioned over 20 times) were:

- Great idea/agree with the idea/need more park land/great for the area/like park land (mentioned 262 times)
- Parkland will be used more than the golf course/more people will benefit/better use for the community (mentioned 207 times)
- Issues with the running costs/subsides of the golf course and value for money (mentioned 83 times)
- It will allow housing/we need more housing/housing more important than golf (mentioned 80 times)
- There are plenty of other places for golf around (mentioned 57 times)
- The land will be protected (mentioned 46 times)
- Concern about extra housing/don't want housing/location of extra housing/infrastructure (mentioned 37 times)
- Good for wildlife/biodiversity/nature (mentioned 29 times)
- Want the housing to be affordable housing (mentioned 26 times)
- It will allow regeneration/development (mentioned 24 times)
- Exercise and fresh air benefits/well-being (mentioned 24 times)

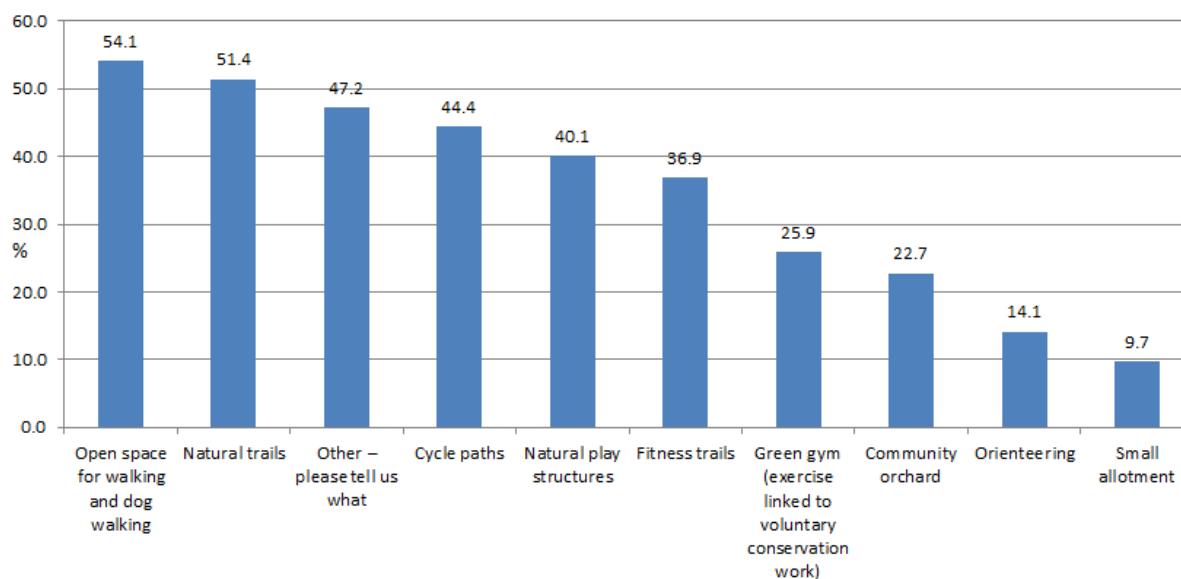
There were 1,224 comments from those who wanted to keep the Southwood Golf Course, the main themes of the comments (those mentioned over 20 times):

- Affordability/ the reasonable price of the course/the cost of using other courses/affordable for pensioners (mentioned 321 times)
- There are already plenty of other open/green spaces around (mentioned 173 times)
- Health and fitness benefits (mentioned 171 times)
- The course is well used/busy/I play there (mentioned 161 times)
- Social/friendship and sense of community benefits of the course/club (mentioned 141 times)
- The course is great/lovely/good/fantastic/well maintained (mentioned 113 times)
- Concern about current/future infrastructure if more homes are built (mentioned 85 times)
- Benefits for the older population/less able with the course being accessible/flat/option to play less holes (mentioned 72 times)
- The location of the golf course/on doorstep (mentioned 66 times)
- No more housing/development isn't wanted (mentioned 58 times)
- The course is good for young people/beginners/learners (mentioned 56 times)
- Cost of maintaining the natural parkland/will it be maintained (mentioned 56 times)
- The club supports charities/raises money for good causes (mentioned 53 times)
- The course is the only/best pay and play/public course in the area (mentioned 49 times)
- The course is already a green space/full of wildlife/natural parkland (mentioned 45 times)
- Course attracts people to the area/an asset to the area/community asset (mentioned 38 times)
- Southwood woodland not maintained/well used (mentioned 33 times)
- I think/concern that it will be turned in to housing/airport expansion in the future (mentioned 32 times)
- Concern about antisocial behaviour if the course wasn't there (mentioned 30 times)
- Market /invest/promote the golf course (mentioned 28 times)
- Compromise with a 9 hole course(mentioned 21 times)

Question 5: If we were to create new natural parkland at Southwood Golf Course, what would you like to see provided there?

In total 2,045 respondents filled in the question. The 'open space for walking and dog walking' was the most popular option with 54.1% (1,106) of respondents wanting to see this provided. This was followed by 'Natural trails' with 51.4% (1,051) of respondents wanting to see this provided. The least popular option was for 'small allotment', with only 9.7% (199) of respondents wanting to see this provided.

If we were to create new natural parkland at Southwood Golf Course, what would you like to see provided there?



There were 944 comments for the ‘other’ option. The main themes of the comments (those mentioned over 20 times) were:

- Golf course/keep golf course/as it is/disagree with plans (mentioned 414 times)
- None/nothing/wouldn't use (mentioned 170 times)
- These things are already available in the local area (mentioned 70 times)
- Café/restaurant/pub/refreshment kiosk (mentioned 52 times)
- 9 hole golf course (mentioned 32 times)
- Pond/Wildlife pond/lake (mentioned 31 times)
- Water play/splash park/swimming pool (mentioned 26 times)
- Play park/adventure park (mentioned 26 times)

Question 6: If you have any other comments, please let us know in the box below.

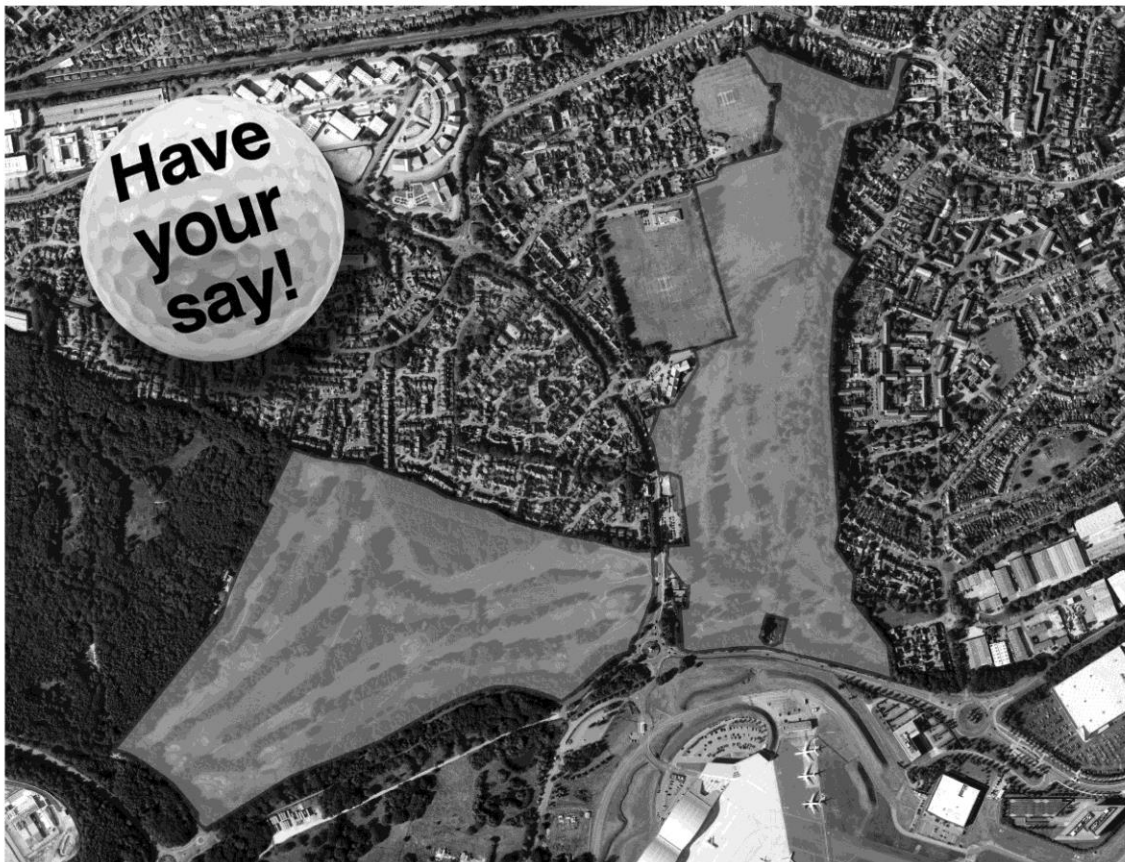
There were 869 comments for this question. The main themes of the comments (those mentioned over 20 times) were:

- Generally negative about closing the golf course/ don't want the golf course closed/ leave it as it is/ disgusted (mentioned 196 times)
- Generally positive about the golf course changing to natural parkland/ fantastic idea (mentioned 96 times)
- Plenty of open/green spaces / the suggested activities are in the area already (mentioned 58 times)
- Infrastructure concerns if housing is built (mentioned 46 times)
- Change management of the course/promote the course/increase fees (mentioned 44 times)

- Maintenance concerns/maintenance costs of the natural parkland (mentioned 43 times)
- Closing the course would deprive people of health and fitness, social interaction and enjoyment (mentioned 42 times)
- Consultation issues/the Council have already made minds up/issues with the £40,000 the Council have said is costs to run the course/bias and misleading information (mentioned 40 times)
- Only affordable course/can't afford other courses/course is reasonably priced (mentioned 37 times)
- Change to 9 holes/shorter course (mentioned 24 times)
- No to new houses (mentioned 21 times)

Appendix A. Copy of paper survey

Option to convert
Southwood Golf Course
into new
natural open parkland



You can read more about this on our website
www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodsurvey

Please complete our survey to tell us what you think about this idea

The closing date for giving your views is Friday 22 September

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Section 1 - Golfers - please complete this section if you are a golfer

1. **Are you a member of Southwood Golf Club?** (Please tick one box)

- Yes No

2. **How often have you played at Southwood Golf Course in the last 12 months?**

(Please tick one box)

- Daily Once or twice a year
 A few times a week Annually
 Weekly Less often
 Monthly Never
 Every couple of months

3. **If Southwood Golf Course were to close, what would you do?** (Please tick one box)

- I'd give up playing golf
 I'd play at another course, but less often
 I'd play at another course about the same number of times or more

Section 2 - For everyone to complete

4. **Given what you've read about the option to convert Southwood Golf Club into natural parkland, which of the following would you MOST support?** (Please tick one box)

- Close Southwood Golf Course and turn it into natural parkland, which in turn, would allow around 2,500 homes to be built elsewhere in the borough
 Keep Southwood Golf Course open, and as it is

Please tell us why you say this.

5. **If we were to create new natural parkland at Southwood Golf Course, what would you like to see provided there?** (Please tick all that apply)

- Open space for walking and dog walking
 Cycle paths
 Fitness trails
 Natural trails
 Green gym (exercise linked to voluntary conservation work)
 Natural play structures
 Orienteering
 Community orchard
 Small allotment
 Other – (Please tell us what)

6. If you have any other comments, please let us know in the box below.

Section 3 - About you

As part of the Equality Act 2010, we must make sure our services are open and accessible to everyone, that we treat people fairly and appropriately and in consultations, we hear all views.

The following questions will help us to check that we are doing this and will also help us to understand better the answers we receive. We will treat this information as anonymous and confidential and will not identify individuals.

You do not have to answer these questions if you would prefer not to.

7. Your age

Which one of the following age bands do you belong to? (Please tick one box)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 16 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 - 64 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 - 24 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 - 74 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 34 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 84 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 - 44 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 85 and over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45 - 54 years | <input type="checkbox"/> I'd prefer not to say |

8. Your gender (Please tick one box)

- Male
 Female
 Other (Please specify)

- I'd prefer not to say

9. What is your ethnic group? (Please tick one box)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> White - British | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian - Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White - Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian - Bangladeshi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White - Gypsy/Traveller | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian - Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White - other | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian - other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - white and black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Black or British black - Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - white and black African | <input type="checkbox"/> Black or British black - African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - white and Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Black - other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed - other | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other background (Please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian - Nepali | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or British Asian - Indian | |

- I'd prefer not to say

10. Do you consider yourself to have any health conditions or disabilities, which limit your daily activities? (Please tick one box)

- Yes No I'd prefer not to say

11. What is your sexual orientation? (Please tick one box)

- Heterosexual/straight
 Gay or lesbian
 Bisexual
 Other (Please specify)

- I'd prefer not to say

12. Your address

So that we can identify where responses come from, we would like your house number or name and postcode.

Your house name or number

Your postcode

13. Keeping you informed

If you would like to be kept informed about the outcome of this consultation and our decision, please give us your email address.

14. Sign up for email news from the council

Occasionally, we'd like to send our residents information about the council and our services by email. You can also find out about council consultations. In addition, our council Leader, Councillor David Clifford has his own email newsletter that you can sign up to receive.

- I'd like to receive news from the council
 I'd like to receive news about consultations
 I'd like to receive news from the Leader

Your email address (if not given, or different to, above)

Thank you for taking part in our survey.

Our councillors will use your responses to help them make a decision.
We will publish updates on our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoods survey

Data protection notice: We will only use the information you give us for the purposes stated in this survey.

Council Offices,
Farnborough Road,
Farnborough,
Hants, GU14 7JU

www.rushmoor.gov.uk
01252 398 399
customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk

 @rushmoorcouncil
 Rushmoor Borough Council
August 2017

Appendix B. Copy of postcard

Option to convert
Southwood Golf Course
into new
natural open parkland



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Before our councillors make a decision on this option, we would like your views.

You can read more about our consultation and complete our survey on our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodsurvey



Drop-in consultation sessions at:

Southwood Community Centre
Tuesday 15 August - 3.30pm-7.30pm

Southwood Golf Clubhouse
Tuesday 19 September - 3.30pm-7.30pm

The closing date for giving your views is

Friday 22 September

Council Offices,
Farnborough Road,
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August 2017

Appendix C. Copy of the extension postcard

Option to convert
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Have
your
say!

Due to public interest we have
EXTENDED the consultation deadline
and **ADDED** an open meeting

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Before our councillors make a decision on this option, we would like your views.

You can read more about our consultation and complete our survey on our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk/southwoodsurvey



An ADDED open meeting at:

Southwood Community Centre
Monday 18 September - 6.30pm-8.30pm

Drop-in consultation session at:

Southwood Golf Clubhouse
Tuesday 19 September - 3.30pm-7.30pm

The closing date for giving your views has been EXTENDED to

Friday 29 September

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