Highfield Clean and Green
Public Consultation Findings

for the Highfield Memorial and Community Garden

26 October 2026

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the public consultation on the proposed Highfield Memorial and Community Garden. The consultation sought views from local residents and those connected with Highfield on the development of land associated with St Matthew's Church into a memorial and community garden. A total of 110 submissions were received: 18 by paper and 92 online.

The vast majority of respondents (105 out of 110) live nearby, demonstrating strong local representation. Connections also include links to the school, hall and cricket club (48), family buried in the churchyard (37), worship at St Matthew's (25), and existing involvement with Highfield Clean & Green (11).

Overall Support

105

of 110 respondents support the development of this land into a Memorial and Community Garden

Support for the core proposal is overwhelming. Only 3 respondents opposed the development, with 2 not answering the question.

Question	Yes	No
Support Memorial & Community Garden	**105**	3
Agree two separate areas is best use	**99**	9
Support footpaths as identified	**99**	9
Support planted borders as illustrated	**101**	7

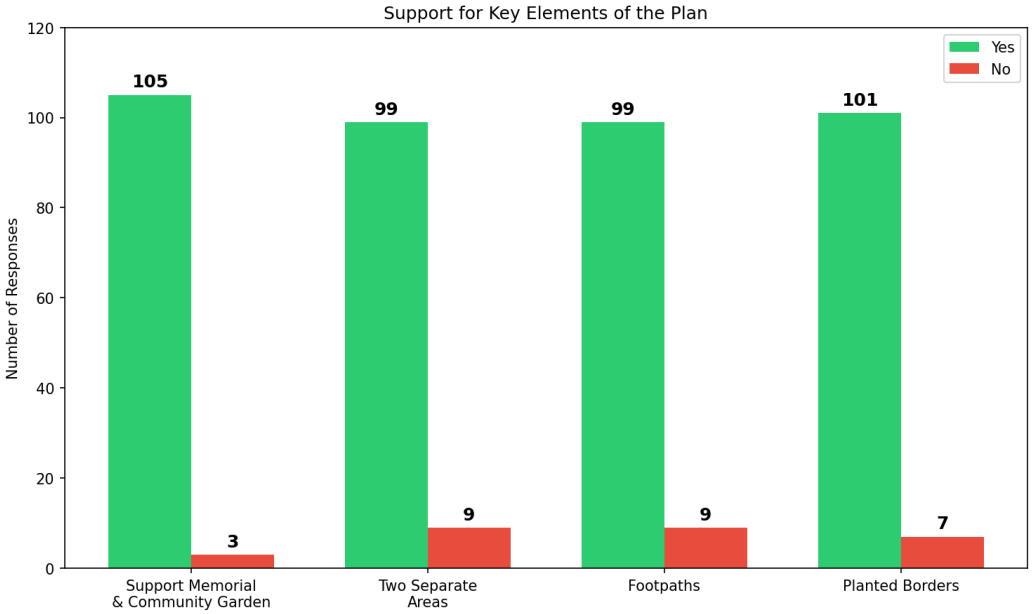


Figure 1: Support levels for key elements of the proposed plan

Support for Specific Features

Respondents were asked which features within the plan they support. The following received the highest levels of support:

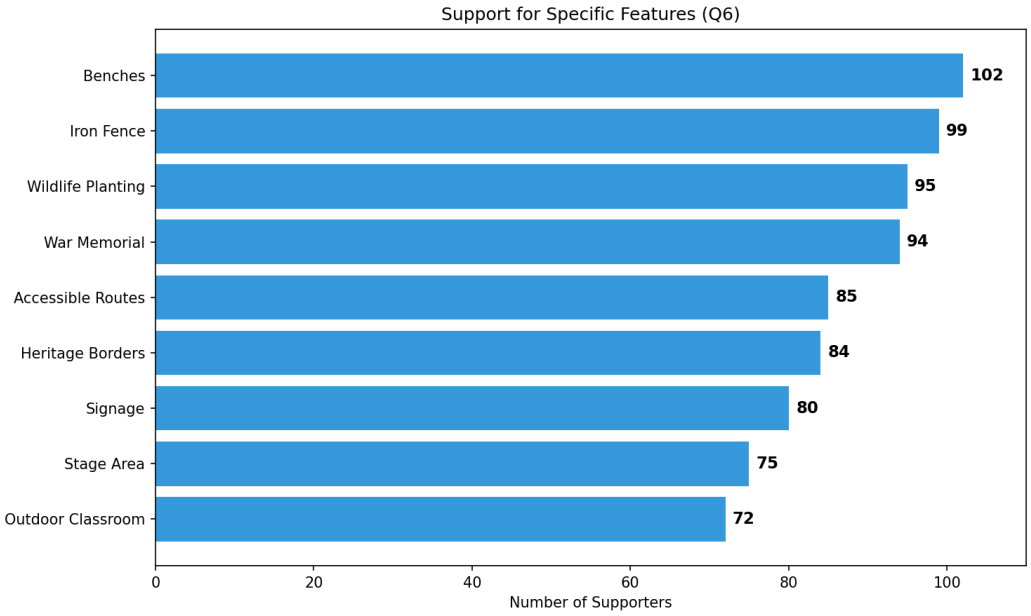


Figure 2: Number of respondents supporting each feature

Benches for sitting and reflection (102), refurbishing and repainting the iron fence (99), wildlife-friendly features and planting (95), and the war memorial on a circular plinth (94) received particularly strong support. The stage area (75) and outdoor classroom (72) were also well supported but attracted more mixed comments in the free-text responses.

Willingness to Help

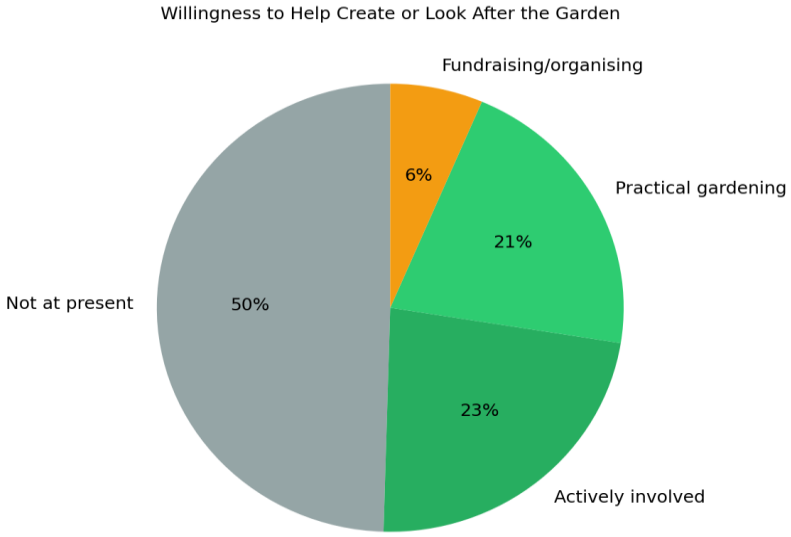


Figure 3: Willingness to help create or look after the garden

Approximately half of respondents indicated a willingness to help in some capacity: 25 actively involved when needed, 23 with practical gardening, and 7 with fundraising or organising. 54 said not at present.

Geographic Representation of Respondents

Of the 110 submissions, 105 respondents indicated they live nearby. Addresses or streets were provided by 87 respondents. The map below shows the local distribution of responses around St Matthew's Church and the proposed garden site on Billinge Road. Concentrations of responses appear on Findley Cook Road, Foundry Lane, Billinge Road, Merton Road, Sandpiper Road, Clevedon Drive, Hulme Grove, Crossley Avenue, Pine View, and other nearby streets within the Highfield area of Wigan.

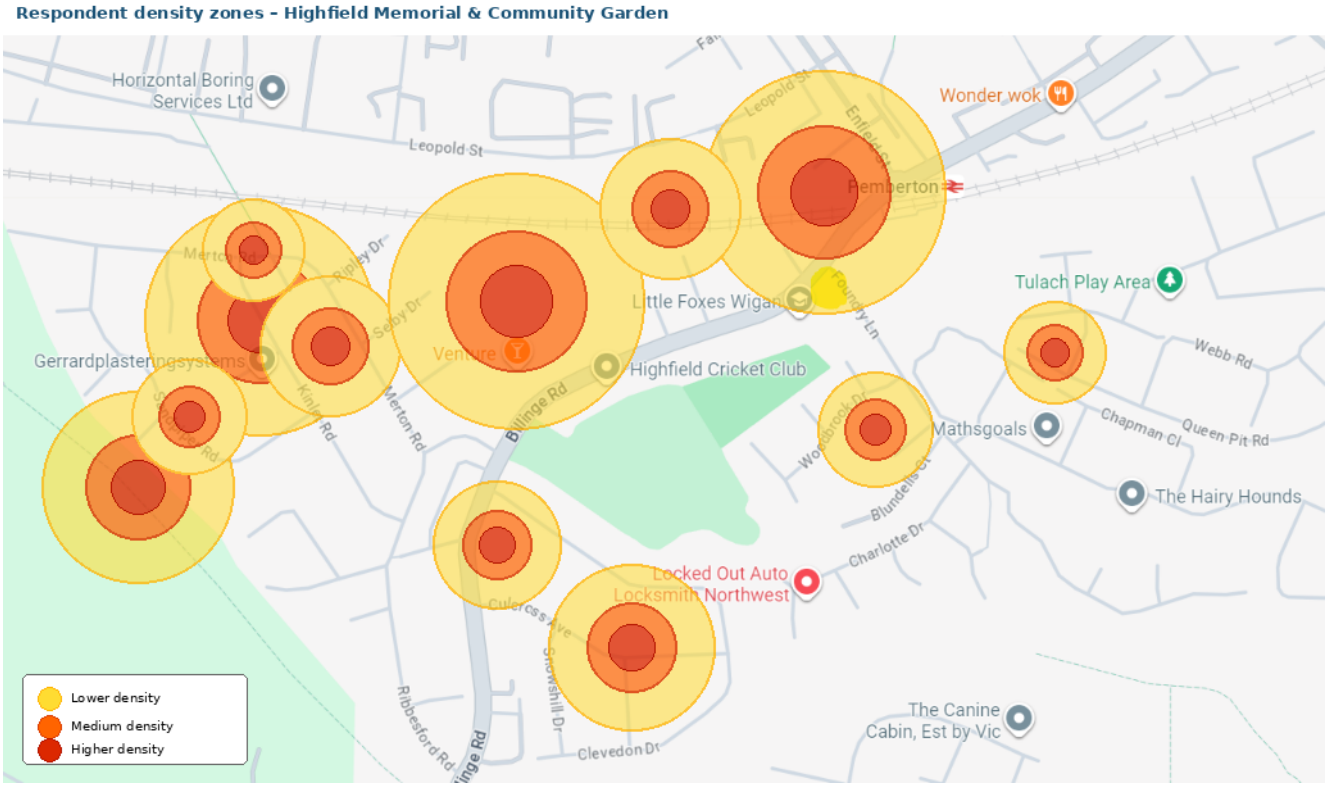


Figure 4: Detailed map of respondent locations around the proposed garden site (approximate street positions based on known local geography)

Concerns Raised (Question 8)

Question 8 invited comments on concerns relating to access, privacy, parking, noise, the stage, trees, and upkeep after March 2027. Approximately 39 respondents provided substantive comments (beyond simple "No").

The most frequently raised concern was the potential for antisocial behaviour, including teenage gatherings, vandalism, littering, and the space becoming a hangout, particularly in relation to the stage area and seating. Several respondents suggested measures such as locking the garden overnight, CCTV or security cameras (real or dummy), controlled access, and careful consideration of lighting — with some favouring lighting for deterrence and visibility from the main road, and others cautioning that lighting might encourage evening gatherings.

Preservation of the existing large trees was a strong theme. Respondents emphasised the importance of the trees for shade, wildlife, and the character of the area, and opposed any plans that would require their removal. Related points included ensuring nature-friendly planting suited to partial shade, careful checking for wildlife (including hedgehogs) before any clearance, and prioritising a green, less urbanised aesthetic over extensive hard landscaping.

The proposed M58 link road was mentioned by several respondents as a potential future risk to the site, with concerns that land might be lost to the road scheme and that the garden should be designed with this possibility in mind. Other concerns included parking pressures, noise from nearby roads, long-term upkeep and maintenance, the need for bins and waste management, and ensuring paths are made of permeable materials rather than tarmac. Overall, while concerns exist, they are framed within a context of broad support for the project.

Suggestions and Additional Comments (Question 9)

Question 9 sought any other comments, suggestions, or ideas. Around 35 respondents offered further input.

Many comments were positive and encouraging, describing the proposal as a wonderful idea that will benefit the community, improve an eyesore, celebrate local heritage, and create a space for reflection. Respondents praised the work of those involved and expressed enthusiasm for the memorial element.

Practical suggestions included solar or appropriate lighting for the darker months, garden waste bins with suitable collection arrangements, rainwater butts or a water connection for watering, and features to support wildlife such as bug hotels, hedgehog houses, and pollinator-friendly planting throughout the year. Several people recommended acknowledging specific aspects of local history, including the slipper works (and the women who worked there and served in the war), miners, and the consecrated nature of the ground — with one suggestion for a wall of niches for ashes, similar to facilities at Rivington Chapel. Other ideas included a “Welcome to Highfield” sign, a flagpole, a fairy corner for children, sensory planting, and making the stage/seating area more multifunctional or using more grass/clover rather than hard surfacing. One respondent pointed to Life for a Life Memorial Forests as a potential source of expertise.

In summary, the free-text responses reinforce the high level of support for the Memorial and Community Garden while highlighting practical issues around antisocial behaviour, tree retention, future-proofing against road schemes, and ongoing maintenance. Suggestions focus on enhancing the green, wildlife-friendly, and heritage character of the space.

Conclusion

The consultation demonstrates clear and strong local support for the development of the Highfield Memorial and Community Garden. With 105 of 110 respondents in favour of the overall proposal, high support for the key design elements, and a significant number willing to help with creation and upkeep, the project has a solid foundation of community backing. The concerns and suggestions raised — particularly around antisocial behaviour, tree protection, the potential impact of future road infrastructure, and long-term maintenance — provide valuable guidance for refining the plans and ensuring the garden succeeds as a peaceful, attractive, and sustainable community asset.

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What’s next?

We will use the consultation findings to develop an action plan and finalise the project’s design, ensuring it reflects the majority view, meets community expectations, and addresses the concerns raised. We will then be looking to finalise budget, funding and begin works.