



# ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCAN



**BLACKBIRD LEYS**  
**12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**





## **BLACKBIRD LEYS - ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCAN**

This report provides an overview of the findings of the Active Neighbourhood Scan undertaken in Blackbird Leys neighbourhood (Blackbird Leys and Northfield Brook wards) on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The report highlights how easy it is for residents to be active in Blackbird Leys, what works well in the neighbourhood, what gets in the way of being active, and what needs to change.

### **WHAT IS AN ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCAN**

Active Neighbourhood Scans are a way of understanding how easy it is for residents to walk, cycle, wheel the pavements and road, and to play and engage in physical activity in the parks and green spaces within their community.

***It gives an understanding of what works, what gets in the way and what needs to change.***



Scans involve residents, community groups, along with representatives from schools, local authority planning, health, infrastructure and activity teams walking, wheeling, cycling and playing in their neighbourhood and whilst they do it **completing a scanning tool focused on three areas of activity**

### **HOW SCANS WORK**

1

Participants who live or work in the neighbourhood attend a scanning event, which is hosted at a community centre, leisure centre or school in the neighbourhood.

2

The scan participants are given a route to walk or wheel. The routes take them to local facilities for example shops, schools or parks. All routes are within a 30 minute walking distance.

3

The participants walk, wheel or cycle the route. On route they answer questions about how easy it is to walk, wheel or cycle and provide scores out of 10 for each question, making notes about things that make the route easy or difficult to access. Routes that go to local parks, playgrounds, outdoor leisure facilities and green spaces also have a set of questions about these facilities.

4

Participants are also asked to capture photos of things make it easy, or hard to be active and to jot down their ideas for improvement.

5

In total we aim to cover 20-30 routes within the neighbourhood, taking in all the parks and leisure facilities.





## THE LEYS NEIGHBOURHOOD

The information below is taken from the Blackbird Leys community profiles. Oxfordshire County Council Public Health is undertaking a programme to work with local partners to create community profiles, to better understand the needs and priorities of communities in Oxfordshire. The goal of the profile is to provide an in-depth understanding of the local health needs and to support community assets. They use both local data and community insight based on an asset-based community development (ABCD) model.

### SNAPSHOT OF LEYS NEIGHBOURHOOD

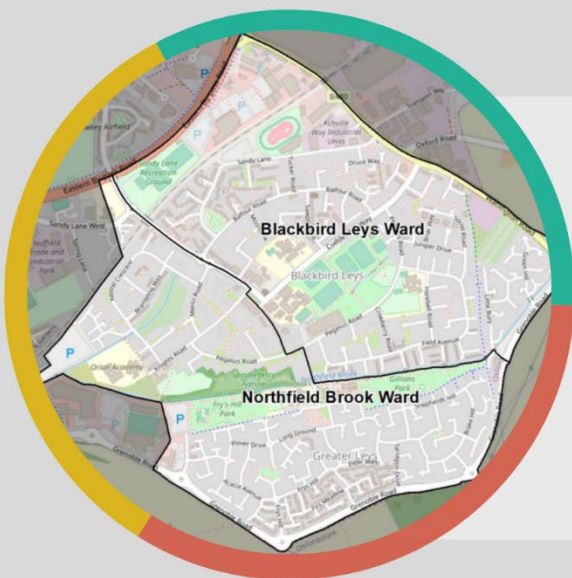
The Leys neighbourhood is formed of two wards Blackbird Leys Ward and Northfield Brook Ward. The wards are in Oxford and are in the top 20% nationally, in terms of facing challenges of income and health outcomes. A child born in Blackbird Leys can expect to live 13 years less than a child born in the most affluent parts of Oxfordshire



People in the Leys value their green spaces and find them accessible. There is a strong sense of community and community spirit and the diversity of the community is celebrated.



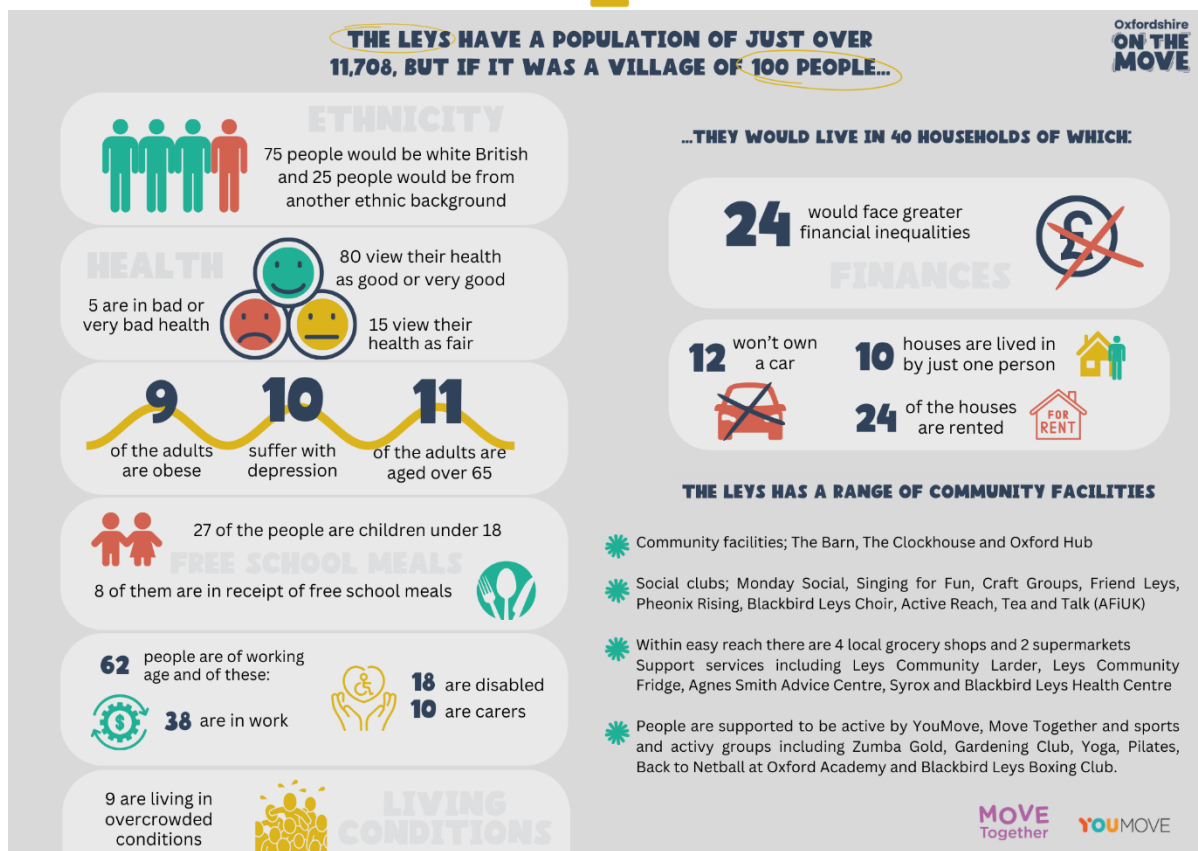
People in the Leys are concerned about cost of living, accessing affordable healthy food, drugs and anti-social behaviour, the future of their young people, litter, dog-mess and the appearance of their green spaces. They want affordable places to meet and socialise.



### THE LEYS HAS A RANGE OF COMMUNITY SPACES

- A swimming pool and leisure center
- 3 primary schools (Pegasus, Windale, Mable Pritchard) and a secondary school (Oxford Academy) and a specialist school (Orion Academy)
- 3 large parks (Blackbird Leys, Fry's Gillian, Balfour Road) and three small parks (Kingfisher Green, Overmead Green and Mistletoe Green) and Spindleberry Nature Park



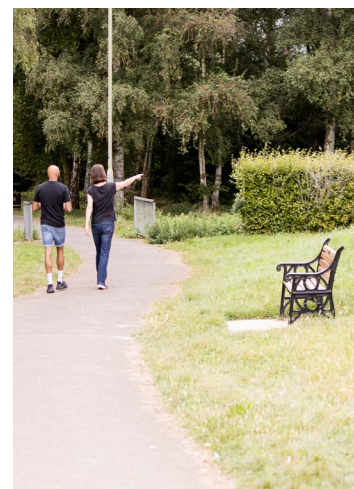


## **THE BLACKBIRD LEYS SCAN**

We held two sessions on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, allowing as many people from the community as possible to attend to the most convenient session for them.

A training session was provided before undertaking the scan, to ensure that everyone understood the process and knew how to keep themselves safe whilst on the scan.

The scans started at the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre, a central point within the neighbourhood. 29 people attended, including members of the community from young children to older people, a group of sixth formers from The Oxford Academy, and representatives from Oxford-based organisations (including MyVision Oxfordshire, Oxford Hub, Joy Riders, Refugee Source, a city planner from Oxford City Council, and a Parish Councillor, as well as Active Oxfordshire). Participants came from a range of different backgrounds with different experiences.



Participants reported finding that being involved in the scan was a positive process:

*"I enjoyed the Active Neighbourhood Scan, the vibe and energy in the room were lovely and Ellie and the team were so inviting. What stood out was that the thought process of those people with limited mobility, vision, or other disabilities, were included in every aspect. The session was very inclusive, nice diversity, and lots of fun. I would recommend joining in the Active Neighbourhood Scans."*

*"Many thanks for your kindness yesterday, it was a brilliant session."*

*"I don't normally come to focus groups but because its Active Oxfordshire organising it, I know things will change."*

*"I've been so excited about this session, I have so many ideas."*

*"Thanks for today, very useful and I hope the sessions have provided you with lots of ideas."*



## **THE ROUTES**

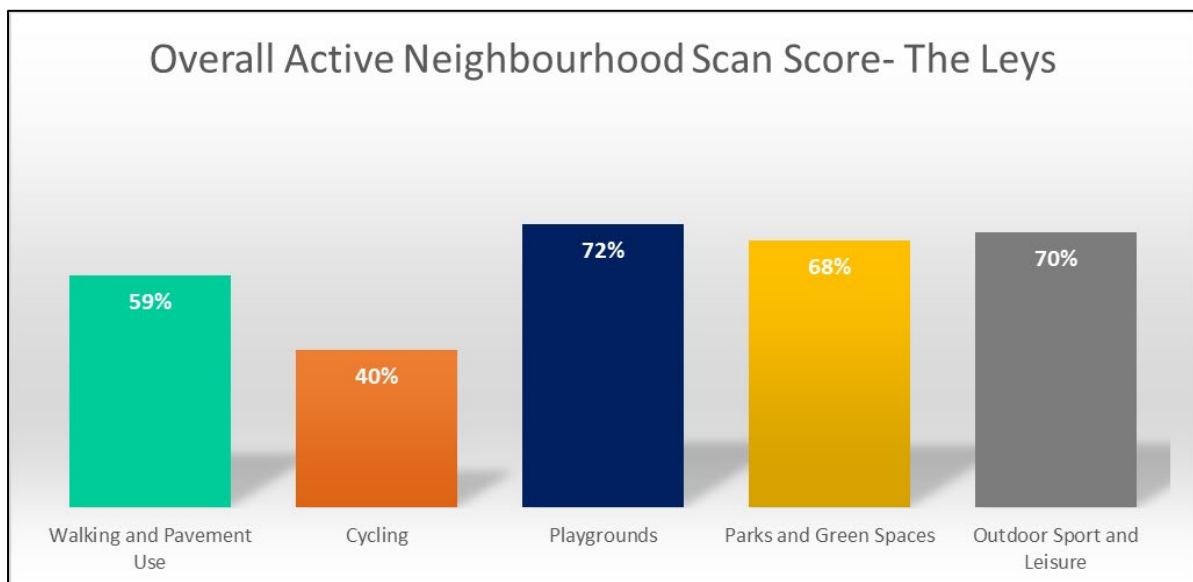
The routes were designed to ensure that all parks and assets (such as shops, schools, and parks) in the neighbourhood were accessed. In total, 19 different routes were undertaken, 14 being pavement-use (walking and wheeling) and 5 being road-use (cycling).

The scan included between 25 and 60 questions (dependent on the route) which asked how easy it was to walk, wheel, cycle or play in Northfield Brook and Blackbird Leys. The questions covered:

- Maintenance of paths and pavements
- Feelings of safety, including sense of isolation and lighting
- Availability of cycle lanes (if relevant to the route)
- Environment and attractiveness – this included availability of litter bins
- Accessibility for those wheeling, pushing buggies, or with disabilities

## **WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES OF THE SCANS?**

Looking across all routes, we found that in Blackbird Leys, there is good provision in terms of playgrounds, outdoor leisure facilities, and parks and green spaces, with these areas being generally accessible and valued. Cycling in the Leys is less well supported, with the overall score being only 40% out of a potential 100%. The overall scores for Blackbird Leys are in the below graph.



A score of 100% would indicate that the route or facility is well maintained, has good access for all, and meets the needs of the participants very well.



## **WHAT DO THE RESULTS DEMONSTRATE?**

- There was variation in walking, wheeling, and pavement use, with the routes from the leisure centre to Fry’s Hill Park, Balfour Road Park, and Orion Academy scoring the lowest and hence having the most issues, and the route to Gillians Park having the fewest problems.
- Cycling in Blackbird Leys was notably more difficult than walking and wheeling, with the routes to Lidl, The Clockhouse, Mable Pritchard School, and Sandy Lane Sports Ground being the most challenging.
- Playgrounds varied, from Gillians Park Playground which was very well maintained and accessible with a score of 96%, to Balfour Road Playground which scored 58% and Blackbird Leys Park Playground which scored 63%.
- There was also variation in perception of the parks between individual participants. Gillians Park was scored 42% by one group.
- Parks and green spaces also showed variation, though there was variation in perception of the parks between individual participants with Gillians Park being scored 42% by one group, and 98% by another. This was due to different lived experiences of the groups completing the routes. One of the groups had a resident who knew the area really well, saying that Gillians Park was their favourite place in Blackbird Leys and highlighting the *“wide paths and smooth surfaces, which is good for people with visual impairments”*. They also highlighted the great range of activities that Gillians Park provides. The other group didn’t have residents in and suggested that the park felt quite isolated if you were to visit the park alone, as it was very closed in.

<b>Routes</b>	<b>Pavement use</b>	<b>Road use</b>	<b>Playgrounds</b>	<b>Parks and Green Spaces</b>	<b>Outdoor sport and leisure</b>
Tesco’s Superstore	55%	49%			
Gillians Park – The Barn	53%	54%		42%	
The Clockhouse – The Playground	73%	28%	87%	90%	68%
Blackbird Leys Healthcare Centre – Gillians Park	61%	42%		51%	



Spindleberry Nature Park – Windale Avenue	55%		65%	74%	82%
Blackbird Leys Park – Pegasus Primary School	71%	31%	60%	68%	48%
Mabel Prichard Primary School	51%	27%			
Fry's Hill Park – Orion Academy	49%	51%	87%	68%	79%
Balfour Road Park	48%	26%	58%		
Kingfisher Green – Gillians Park	88%	35%	96%	98%	73%
Mistletoe Green – Fry's Hill Park	45%	43%	80%	77%	75%
Sandy Lane Sports Ground	54%	29%		52%	56%
Shops - Pharmacy – Gillians Park	62%	59%		58%	
The Library – Blackbird Leys Park	68%	20%		74%	75%
Frys Hill Park - The Barn	54%	63%	70%	55%	67%
Pegasus Primary - Premier – Blackbird Leys Park	64%	49%	63%	73%	
BBL Park – Mabel Prichard Primary School	58%	34%		82%	65%
Balford Road Park – Cuddesdon Way	53%	58%	63%		
Fry's Hill Park - Lidl		24%	67%	55%	79%
<b>Average</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>70%</b>





## **WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

The scans generated a huge amount of information. The groups took over 245 photos with over 250 comments in addition to the scores on the local facilities and assets. The information has been analysed to provide consensus findings for the neighbourhood.

## **WHAT ARE LOCAL STRENGTHS OF BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

We received a lot of feedback in terms of things which make Blackbird Leys special, easy to be active, and what the local assets are. The following areas and features received overall positive feedback:

- Gillians Park
- The outdoor gyms in Blackbird Leys Park and Gillians Park
- Fry's Hill cycle path
- Spindleberry Nature Reserve
- The Barn and The Clockhouse – both were described as great community facilities
- Little pocket park by the library and local shops
- Great range of local facilities: shops, pharmacy, schools, library, pub, community centre
- Great public transport links, enabling easy access to Oxford city centre

## **WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO BEING ACTIVE IN BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

There were some repetitive themes across all the routes which were barriers to being active in the local area:

- Litter
  - All participants commented on this, and this was an issue identified on all routes.
- Lack of lighting
  - On all routes, at some point it was mentioned that there was a lack of lighting.
  - 100% of participants said that they would feel uneasy walking at night, and they wouldn't feel comfortable allowing a 12-year-old to walking in those parts of the neighbourhood alone in the evening.



- Poorly maintained paths or paths disrupted by tree routes, making them difficult to pass
- Lack of safe or formal crossings, and lack of dips in kerbs for access for wheelchair or mobility scooter users, or those with buggies or walking aids
- Uneven paths and pavements making it difficult for those wheeling or using walking aids

## **FINDINGS BY ACTIVITY TYPE**

### **PAVEMENT USE**

#### **WHAT MAKES WALKING, WHEELING, AND PAVEMENT USE EASY IN BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

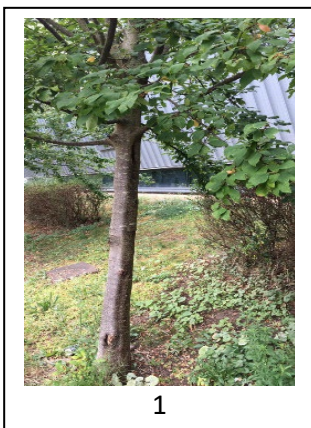
##### **Wide footpaths**

Lots of footpaths are quite wide, which make it easy for people travelling in both directions to access. Some have space for cyclists too.

Pavements were viewed as relatively easy to navigate for those with buggies or for those with visual impairments:

*“Uncluttered pavements. Compared to East Oxford, the pavements were much easier to navigate – until you hit a kerb.”*

##### **Trees**



*(1) “Tree-lined path is a nice feature outside the leisure centre and provides green space next to a large concrete building.”*



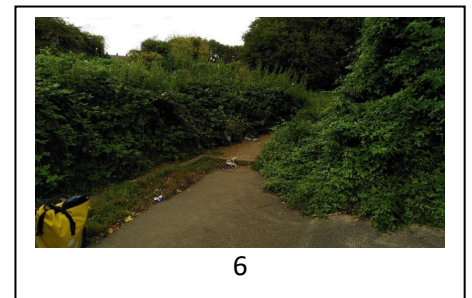
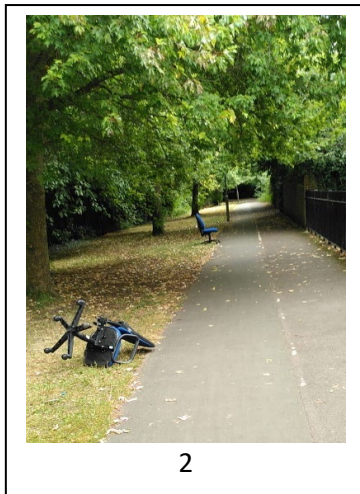
*(2) “Plover Road has good tree coverage and shade covering the footway and carriageway. It’s the wrong time of year, but cherry blossom from trees near here are often particularly attractive.”*



## **WHAT ARE ISSUES IN PAVEMENT USE?**

### **Litter and fly tipping**

On 100% of the routes, litter on the pavement was mentioned. Litter was particularly noticeable on the road in front of the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, and the corners of Windale Avenue and Pegasus Road.



*"Lots of litter on the corner of Windale Avenue. It would make a good spot for a litter bin."*

*(1, 5) "Dumped rubbish on the corner of Pegasus Road."*

*(3) "There isn't a litter bin at the front of the Leisure Centre and there is litter on the floor."*

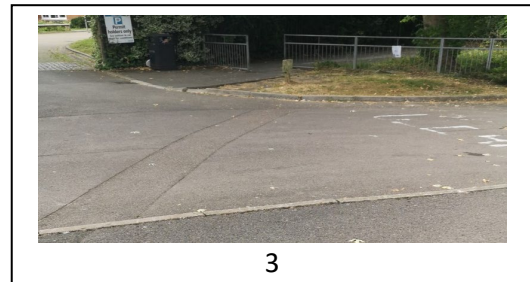
*(6) "Kassam Stadium parking lot. Not very pleasant."*



## Lack of safe crossings

It was highlighted on 89% of the routes that there is a need for more formal crossings. Crossings were not available at key assets, such as at the leisure centre and local schools.

Many dropped kerbs did not match on either side of the road, even at key assets, making it difficult for people with buggies, wheelchairs, or walking aids, to cross.



(1) "Steep drop down. This route would be impossible for a wheelchair user." Blackbird Leys → Spindalbury Nature Reserve → Windale Primary School

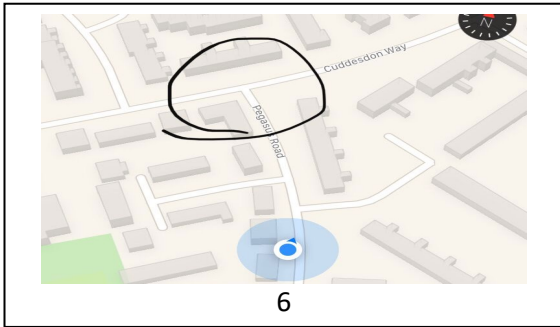
(2) "Just outside the Leisure Centre, no safe crossing provision of Pegasus Road."

(3) "Need for some dropped kerbs priority for pedestrians/cycles accessing cycle/pedestrian track from outside Windale Primary School."

(4) "There is no dipped kerb between Pegasus School and the primary school. Makes it hard for buggies and scooters, and it's really busy with buses."

(5) "No dipped kerb for pedestrians on Juniper Drive."

(6) "Lack of safe crossings on Cuddesdon Way. Busy road with lots of buses but no real safe place to cross."



*(7) "Lack of crossings to Balfour Road Park. Pedestrians have to cross between parked cars and on a bus route. Dropped kerbs are for cars accessing driveways not for walkers and wheelers to cross."*

*(8) "No safe crossings." – near top shops*

*(9, 10) Dropped kerbs often coincided with drains making it very difficult for people wheeling or with visual impairment to cross safely.*

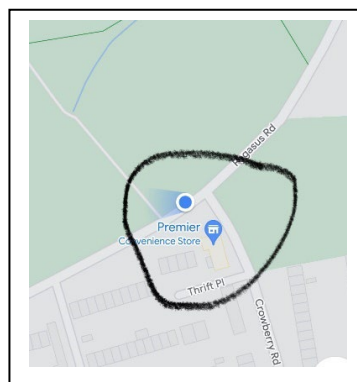
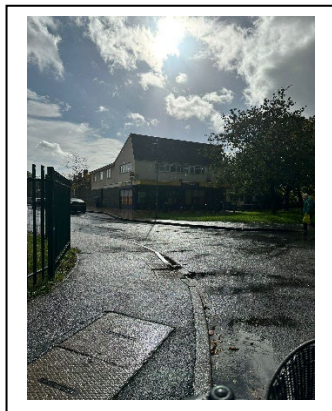
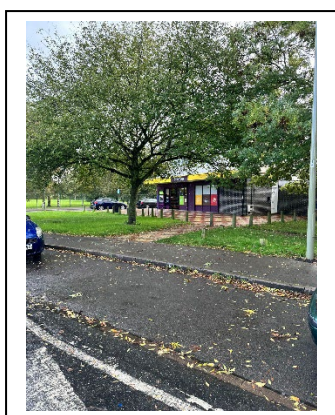
### **Antisocial behaviour**

From their local knowledge, participants raised that antisocial behaviour was an issue particularly by the Premier mini supermarket. This has also been highlighted in the Blackbird Leys ward profile carried out by the Council, as well as by the local police team.

*"Doesn't feel safe due to anti-social behaviours."*



Suggestions to help resolve this problem included having brighter lights and generally making the space a nicer environment.



### **Uneven surfaces and pavement maintenance**

On 100% of the routes taken, participants commented on the maintenance of paths and pavements:

*“A lot of uneven bumpy roads and pavements not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs and lots of trip hazards.”*

*(1) “Would be nice for this to be maintained a bit better to look nicer.”*

*(2) “Looks a bit untidy on a lot of the pavements, could be an opportunity for some wildflowers/garden.”*

*(3) “Nettles and barrier.”*

*(4) “Windle Avenue. Footpath next to the school narrow and twisty. Better to formalise and provide a wider route where the desire line is to the right/away from the road which is likely particularly hazardous with small children.”*

*(5) “Unsafe crossings opposite BMW.”*

*(6, 7) “Overgrown on this corner, can’t see the road name sign.”*



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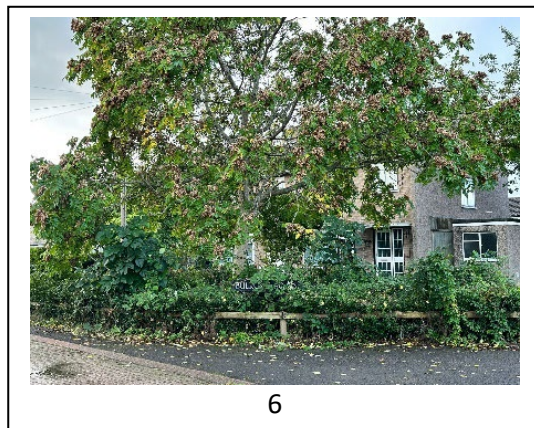
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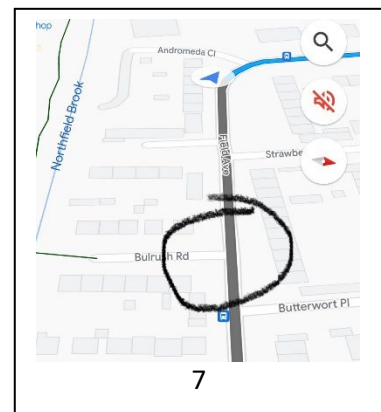
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## Lack of lighting

The lack of lighting was another issue highlighted on all routes, and 79% of participants suggested they wouldn't feel safe on the route in dark evenings/mornings because of the issue.

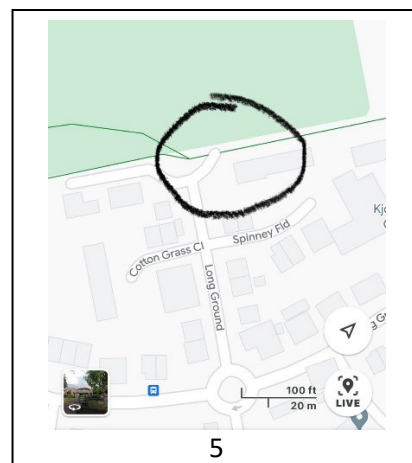
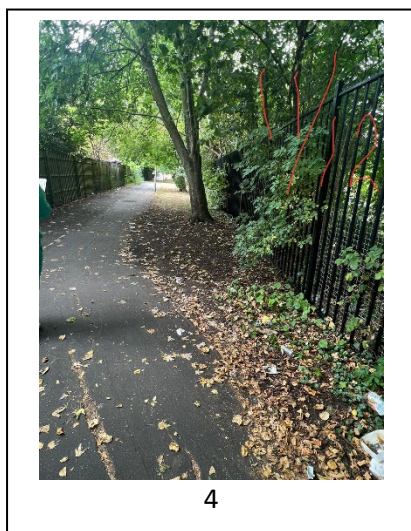
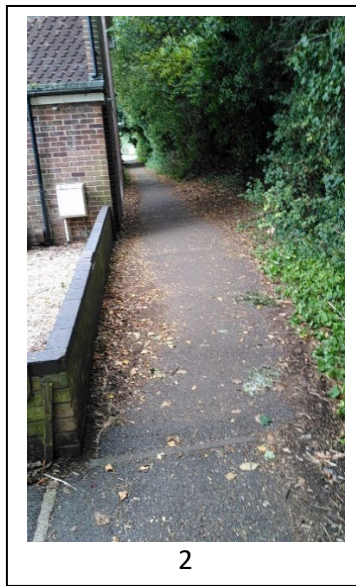


(1) "On Windale Avenue just before the Spa market, there could be more lighting in the garden. Would make us feel uneasy at night."

(2) "Narrow and unlit." – Round the back of Fry's Hill Park

(3) "We would feel uncomfortable walking here at night." – By the underpass to access the big Tesco's

(4, 5) "More lighting needed in this area."







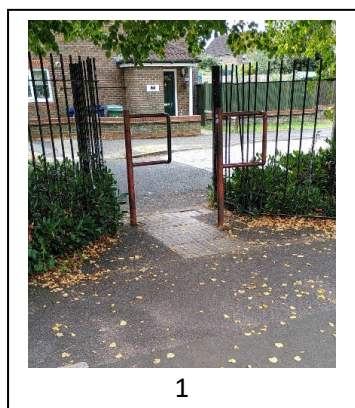
## General maintenance

(1) *"Dangerous to those younger children and is near Windale Primary"*



## Accessibility

Accessibility was an issue raised on 84% of the routes, with unnecessary bollards being an issue for wheelchair users and those with buggies or bike trailers.

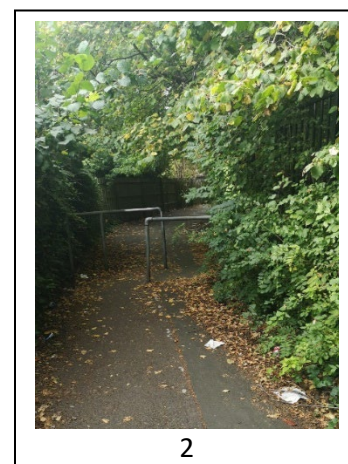


(1) *"Not clear what the aim of the barrier is."*

(2) *"Footpath/cycle path from Dunnock Way to Frys Hill. Staggered barriers an access issue. Vegetation creep for what is a well-used route."*

(3) *"Unnecessary."*

(4, 5) *"Cars parked on paths ways."*

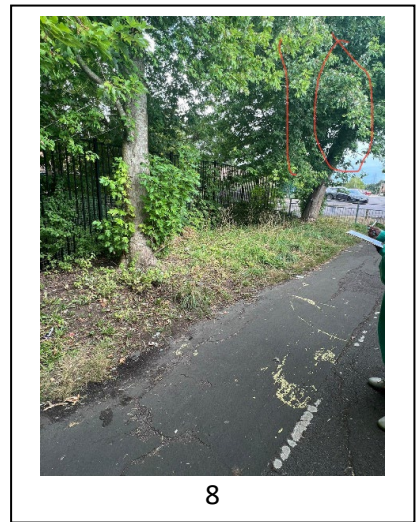
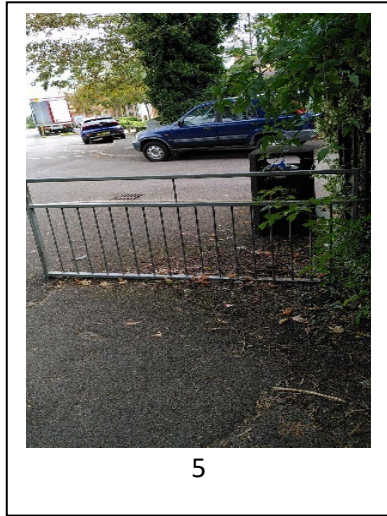
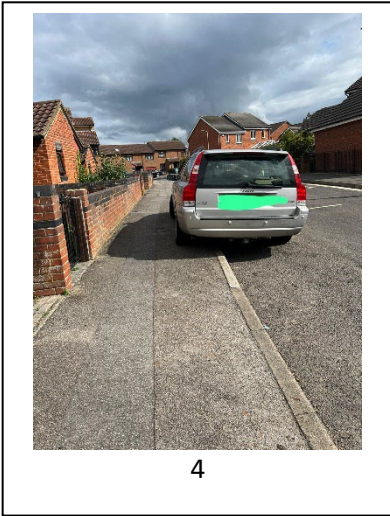


(6) *"On the corner of Balfour Road Park there is a sign blocking the pavement, could be an issue for people in wheelchairs or pushing a double buggy."*

(7) *"Not accessible – alleyway behind Windale Primary School."*

(8) *"Good to have more benches on walking routes for people to rest during walk."*







## **ROAD USE**

### **WHAT MAKES CYCLING EASY IN BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

Cycling is frequently used as a form of transport in Blackbird Leys, and pavement-use participants from the scans noticed the number of cyclists they saw whilst undertaking their routes:

*"Saw quite a few people cycling while we were on our walk."*

Participants who took part in the road-use routes commented on the fact that the traffic in Blackbird Leys is slow, which makes cycling easier.



(1) *"Great to have a cycle path."*

(2) *"Good dropped kerbs. They allow cyclists to cross the road easily."*

(3) *"Good access to active travel."*

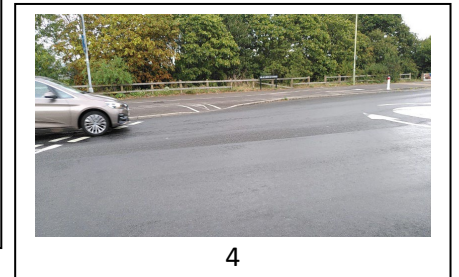
### **WHAT ARE ISSUES IN ROAD USE?**

There were regular themes which came up as barriers to cycling being easy in Blackbird Leys. One barrier which came up on 100% of cycling routes was the lack of bike-locking facilities in parks, including in Balfour Park, Blackbird Leys Park, Cuddesdon Way, Pegasus Road, Gillians Park, and Fry's Hill Park.



## Lack of safe cycle lanes

Participants suggested, where possible, to “*separate the bike lane from the road*”, as most cycle paths are too close to the roads. Other suggestions were “*making cycling a priority, as roads are low speed but prioritised for cars and parking.*”



(1) “*Some of the pavements should be a wider walking/cycling route.*”

2) “*Crossings are wide to cross and vehicles enter quite quickly.*” – An example of this was by the Leisure Centre.

(3) “*Barriers are too narrow, cyclists need to dismount, and there is litter.*”

(4, 5) “*Painted lines not adequate for children on this busy road.*”

(4, 5) “*Roads very busy, with fast traffic.*” – Blackbird Leys Road



(6) "Lack of cycle provision and unrestricted parking along entire route to Balfour Road Park."

(7) "It is a walk way and cycle track but no markings." – By the underpass to access the Tesco's Superstore.

(7) "Not clear which side is cycling and path in not great condition."

### Road surfacing and clarity of cycle routes

On 100% of the routes that were completed by cyclists, it was noted that the road surface was uneven, making it feel less safe to cycle on. The main areas of concern were Dunnock Way and the end of Windale Avenue.

78% of routes picked up that cycle lanes need to be repainted so that they stand out for both cyclists and cars. There was also the suggestion of using fluorescent paint so that the markings are more visible in the dark.



1



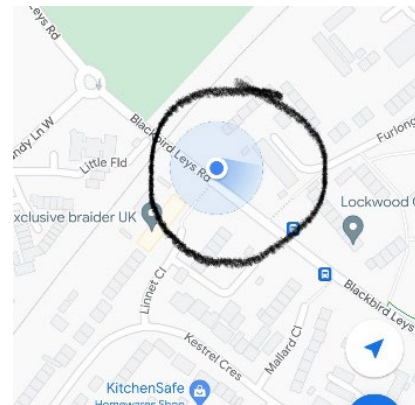
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(1, 2, 3) *"The uneven surface and barriers makes it difficult using the bike trailer though the barriers."*

(4, 5) *"Top of Blackbird Leys Road on Sandy Lane Sports Ground side, faint cycle track markings and it's not clear which side is for cyclists and which side is for walking."*

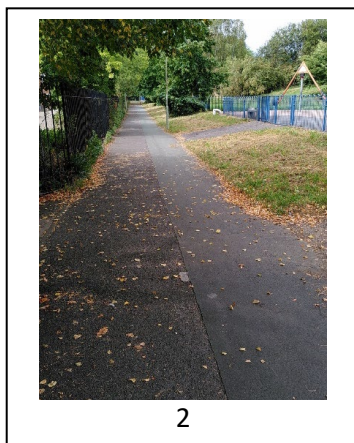
(6) *"Uneven roads make it difficult for cyclists."*

## Cycling signage

Participants reported that, at times, it wasn't clear if routes were for cycling.



1



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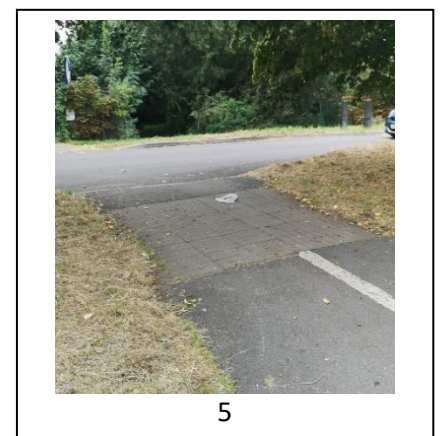
(1) *"Blue cycling sign very covered."*

(2) *"Cyclists tend to zoom down here, would be good to have separate lanes and signs/markings to specify."*

(3) *"Fry's Hill Park unclear if different surfacing is meant to be a separate footway/cycle track. Personal feeling is it's too narrow to be segregated."*

(4) *"Conflicting messages."*

(5) *"Windale Avenue off-road cycle route abruptly ends opportunity for better prioritised crossing/school nearby and onwards link."*

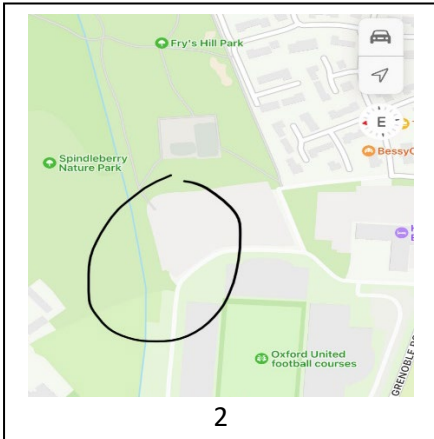


5



## Lack of drop kerbs

On 100% of the routes that were cycled, participants stated that at some point during their journey, they had to get off their bike and walk up a kerb, as there were limited drop kerbs.



(1, 2) "No dropped kerb, unpleasant unsafe environment."



## **PLAYGROUNDS**

There are a number of playgrounds in Blackbird Leys: Fry's Hill Park, Blackbird Leys Park – Pegasus Road and Cuddesdon Way, Balfour Road/Sandy Lane Playground, and Gillians Park. Participants told us that these areas are well used and valued by local children and families.

### **WHAT DO RESIDENTS LIKE ABOUT PLAYGROUNDS IN BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

- The picnic benches next to Blackbird Leys Park Playground (Pegasus Road)
- Nice cycling routes though some of the parks; Fry's Hill Park, Gillians Park and Blackbird Leys Park
- Free outdoor gym equipment in Blackbird Leys Park and Gillians Park
- Lots of different uses for the park – playing with the kids, spending time outdoors, picnics, walks during breaks, watching and listening to wildlife, walking, socialising







(1) 100% of routes that visited Fry's Hill Park and Gillians Park stated that it was a good park with lots of variety for all different ages.

(2, 3, 4) It was also highlighted that Blackbird Leys Park (Pegasus Road) had accessible equipment.

(5, 6) *"Good to have little kids park and bigger kids park separated but looks like there is a lack of accessible equipment in both."*

## **WHAT ARE ISSUES IN PLAYGROUNDS?**

### **Lack of lighting**

The lack of lighting in parks, along access routes to playgrounds, and inside playgrounds, was an issue identified repeatedly. Poor and no lighting limits the usability of playgrounds in the autumn and winter and reduces the feeling of safety.

*"Brighter lights in lampposts and more lighting generally."*

*"No lights inside the playgrounds."*

(1) *"No lighting in Balfour Road Park, only lighting from the pavement lampposts but nothing in the park itself."*



### **Poor accessibility into playgrounds**

The playgrounds in Blackbird Leys are not accessible to all. The surfacing in Blackbird Leys Park playground makes access for those wheeling difficult.

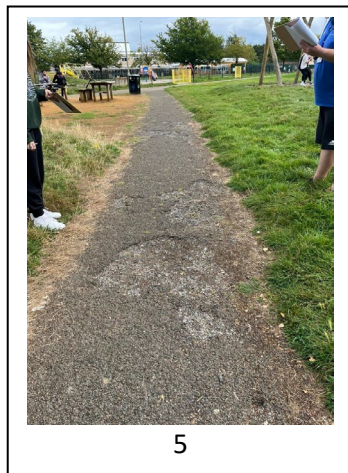
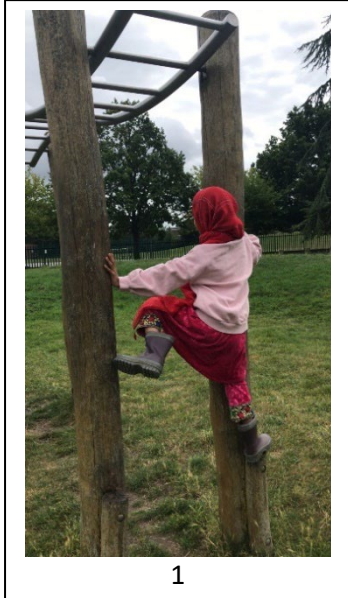
There was also a lack of accessible playground equipment, especially for people who may have a physical disability.

*"We have enough playgrounds but not sufficient equipment. Equipment is outdated."*



*"It would be good to have a bigger range of equipment for the older kids too."*

*"The Leys needs more apparatus in playgrounds and more inclusive things."*





(1) *"I need another foothold to reach the monkey bars!"* – The monkey bars are too large for smaller kids to reach, which could be a quick fix by adding one more foot hole.

(2) *"Unhelpful grass/dirt mound as you enter the main play park, not helpful for buggies or wheels to get into the park, doesn't seem like a tough fix either."*



(3) *"Another unnecessary barrier."*

(4) *"Fry's Hill Park - Hostile (feels unnecessary) fencing, barriers creating access issues."*

(5) *"Potholes near children's park in Blackbird Leys ark making it difficult for buggies and wheelchair users."*

(6) *"One of the entrances at Balfour Road Park is not accessible for wheelchair users or people with prams."*

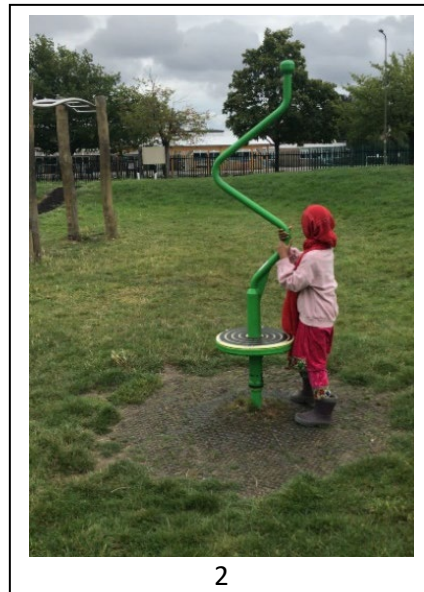
(7, 8) *"Equipment spaced out with grass in the middle, looks nice but not sure if it would be accessible for wheelchair users or people with visual impairments."*



It was highlighted on one of the routes that there could be some accessibility issues with the entrances of Gillians Park:

*“Great playground in Gillians Park but could do with some more accessible equipment.”*

## Safety



(1) *“More accesses points to parks.”* – Some of the parks only had one accessible entrance, due to some entrances being locked or potholes, bumpy access points, or raised grass making it hard for wheelchair users to access. This also means if they were in danger and the accessible entrance was blocked, they wouldn’t be able to get out safely.



(2) *“Blackbird Leys Park, no fence between it and the road. Makes keeping kids safe hard.”*

(3) *“Low fences and very open park, doesn’t make you feel as safe as you could be, Florence Park feels a lot safer.”*



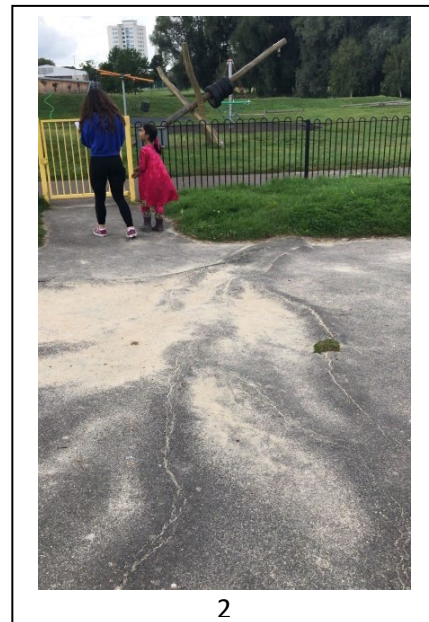
(4) *"Slide and swings located outside of the gates, this is really hard to use when you have multiple kids etc, doesn't make any sense?"*

## **Maintenance**

There were some issues with the state of maintenance of playground equipment. For example, there was broken equipment in Blackbird Leys Park which made the area less inviting and reduced the ability of children to use the park.

(1) *"The basket swing is broken in Blackbird Leys park."*

(2) *"Blackbird Leys playground tree routes trip up kids."*





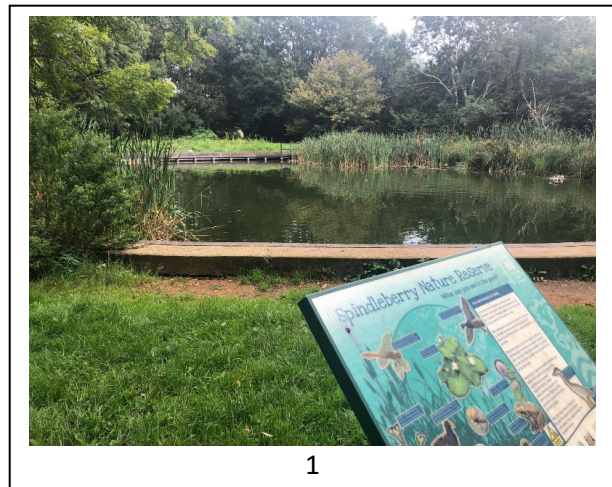
## **PARKS AND GREEN SPACES**

In Blackbird Leys, there are many parks and additionally a range of green spaces, including Blackbird Leys Park, Fry's Hill Park, Gillians Park, Spindleberry Nature Reserve.

### **WHAT DO RESIDENTS LIKE ABOUT PARKS AND GREEN SPACES IN BLACKBIRD LEYS?**

The parks and green spaces are really appreciated by the community. Participants remarked on the number of parks, playing fields, and green spaces, and felt these areas to be valuable to their community.

People also commented on the availability of outdoor gyms and how good it is to have access to these features in Blackbird Leys Park and Gillians Park.

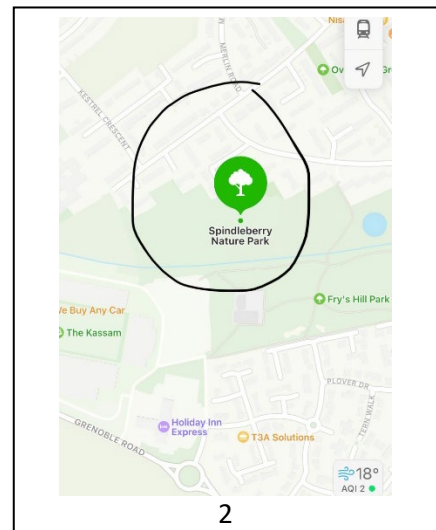


(1, 2) *"Spindleberry Nature Reserve is lovely."* – Over 25% of participants said this area was their favourite part of the neighbourhood.

(3, 4) *"Gym equipment in Blackbird Leys Park is in a circuit style to encourage more movement while using the equipment."*

(5) Lots of residents highlighted that they would feel comfortable with their children using the parks during the day. The parks are assets to the neighbourhood, with built equipment as well as nature being a fantastic place for kids to explore: *"This tree in Blackbird Leys Park is great for climbing."*

(6) *"Great park benches at Blackbird Leys Park. Lovely for socialising whilst being able to keep an eye on my kids in the park."*





(7, 8) "I am a resident and I use Gillians Park gym equipment on a regular basis."

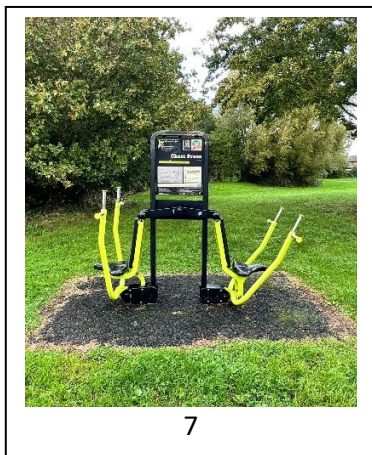
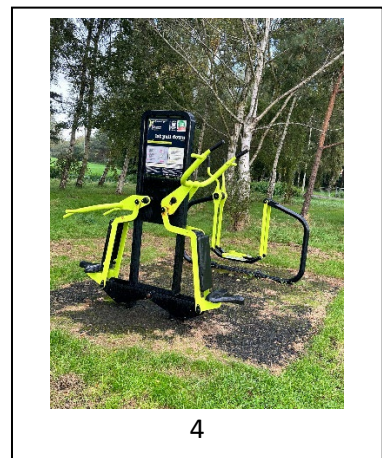
(9, 10) "Huge range of equipment in Gillians Park for all ages to enjoy; climbing equipment."

(11) "Wide paths and smooth surfaces in Gillians Park, good for people with visual impairment."

(12) "Under cover shelter in Gillians Park."

(13) "Nice different style of seating in Blackbird Leys Park."

(14, 15, 16, 17) "Good variety of things to do in Fry's Hill Park to get people moving."





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## **WHAT ARE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING PARKS AND GREEN SPACES?**

### **Lack of lighting**

On 100% of the routes which visited parks and green spaces, the lack of lighting was a persistent issue, and residents who participated in the scans highlighted that the lack of light can make spaces feel very isolated.



*“More lights in parks – too scary in the dark”*

*“There is no lighting in the parks. I am a resident and I wouldn’t feel comfortable coming to the park when it gets dark, let alone allowing my children to go, they are too dark and gloomy by this time.”*

*“More lighting would lead to more people using the parks around the clock!”*

*(1) “No lighting in Sandy Lane Sports Ground.”*

*(2) “Having no lighting attracts anti-social behaviour as people feel they are out of sight. We need more lighting at night generally across the estate but especially in parks and green spaces as we are lucky enough to have so much of it in the Leys, but it doesn’t get used enough as many people don’t.”*



## Litter and fly tipping

Litter and fly tipping was another issue raised on 100% of the routes that went through parks and green spaces. The issue was particularly noticeable in Blackbird Leys Park.

*"Litter everywhere – more bins needed."*

Dog mess was also raised as an issue, particularly where fencing does not separate play areas from spaces where dogs can run off-lead.

*(1, 2, 3, 4) "Lots of rubbish in the in Blackbird Leys, especially in the stream that runs through the middle."*

*(5, 6) "Quite a bit of litter in Gillians Park, mainly by the entrances."*

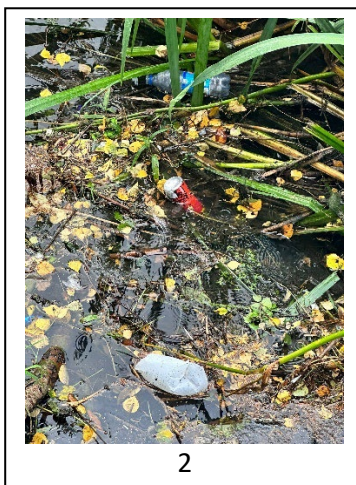
*"Quite a bit of dog mess and litter again."*

*"There was dog poo on the floor in Blackbird Leys Park which is very off-putting and unpleasant. There is a good amount of dog waste bins but lots of people don't seem to use them"*

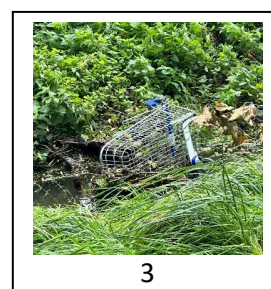
*(7) "Dog poo all over Blackbird Leys Park. This one has a footprint in it!"*



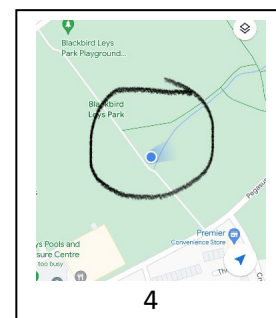
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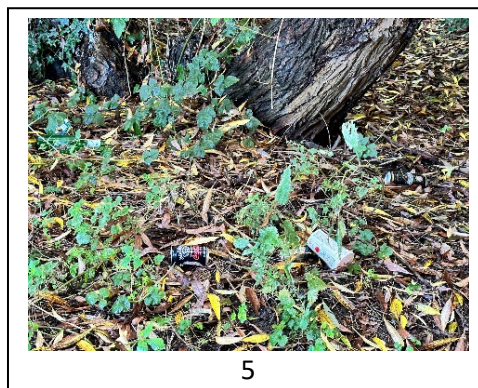
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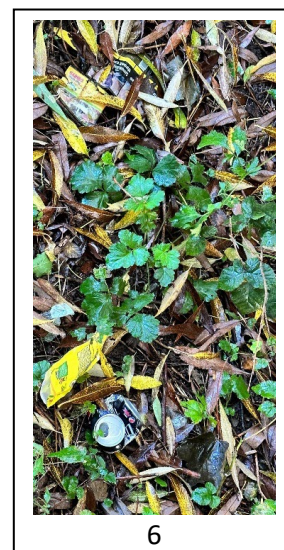
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## Antisocial behaviour

Some residents viewed the parks as being unsafe at night, especially Blackbird Leys Park, due to anti-social behaviour.



(1, 2) *"These areas in Blackbird Leys feel unsafe due to anti-social behaviour at night."*

## Lack of facilities

The lack of facilities in the parks was raised, and key issues were:

- Lack of covered spaces to sit (e.g., if it rains)
- No social spaces (such as community buildings or coffee huts)
- Lack of toilets and no sign to indicate where the nearest facilities are – this was identified as a real issue for those with children, older people, and those with health conditions.
- Lack of benches, and benches not placed along walking routes to allow for rest on walks:
  - *"There are not enough seating/eating areas at Fry's Hill Park."*
  - Participants suggested more attractive benches so people feel excited to go to the park and use the space, and benches grouped together in parks.

## Underutilised and misused green space

On 100% of the routes that went to Blackbird Leys Park, participants said that there was a lot of green space which was being underutilised.

*"We would love to be able to skateboard in the park or play in water fountains."*



*(1, 3, 6) "Area of grass being used as a car park." "Windale Avenue significant informal parking creating safety issues, opportunity to be reimagined as an outside play-space?"*

*(4) "Balfour Road Park has lots of green space that isn't being used – could have some social areas, picnic benches or general benches."*



*(5) "Lots of green space in Blackbird Leys Park but lack of socialising spaces."*

*(6) "Lots of green space in Fry's Hill Park which is lovely but could have some more benches or gym equipment."*



*(7) "Would be great to have some benches in Fry's Hill Park to encourage more socialising."*





## Maintenance

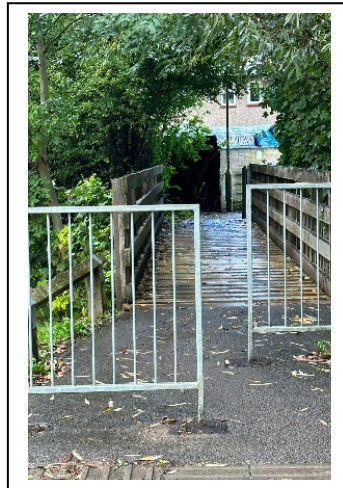
*“Blackbird Leys Park, there are a lot of nettles wildflowers would be nicer.”*



## Accessibility issues

Accessibility was an issue on some of the routes in Blackbird Leys, particularly in Gillian’s Park.

*“Some of the entrances for Gillians park might make it tricky if you have a double buggy or are a wheelchair user.”*





## **OUTDOOR LEISURE AND SPORT**

Fry's Hill Park was viewed as having great outdoor leisure and sport facilities, with all routes that visited this space scoring over 75%.



*"Great use of space in this park with a variety of different things. You could take your family there for the day."*

*(1) "The multi-use games area in Fry's Hill Park is fantastic and well-lit, but it would be better if we could have some more dotted around the estate, maybe in some of the green space that isn't being used."*

Residents also identified areas where the space could be better utilised to create spaces to be active, such as outside the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre:

*(2) "Space looks empty and dull outside the leisure centre it would be nice to have hopscotch, flowers, and swing bars."*





## **WHAT IDEAS DID PARTICIPANTS COME UP WITH TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS IN BLACKBIRD LEYS TO BE ACTIVE IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD?**

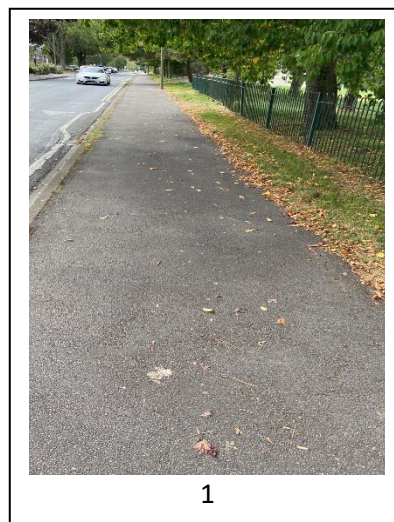
### **Supporting walking and pavement use**

Some of the key issues identified in the scans require the attention of local authority. These include:

- Lack of safe crossings
- The state of some footpaths
- Lack of dropped kerbs, which makes active travel difficult for those with visual impairment, and buggy, wheelchair, and walking aid users
- Safety issues, which was raised by all participants, particularly when thinking about walking in the evening and at night. There needs to be joint work between the community, local authority, and the police to look into how to create a greater sense of safety in the evenings so that paths and parks can be accessed safely.
- Lack of bins, meaning a high volume of litter

Participants generated ideas which would encourage more walking and wheeling in the neighbourhood:

- Ensure walking routes are joined up (dropped kerbs and crossings)
- *"We need more colour to brighten up the pavements and make it more engaging for kids"* – More of colour on pavements and walking trails/ routes, similar to the Zoo Trail in Kidlington
- (1) *"Opportunity for hopscotch/interactive trail on Pegasus Road."*
- More benches around the estate, especially on walking routes, to allow people to rest and socialise:
  - *"The area outside the local shops could become a mobility hub – more benches, cycle parking, greenery, flowers, lockers etc!"*





- Walking groups were also suggested:
  - *"We need more walking group for the women's group."*
- It was suggested that trails with games, like spot the things e.g., pictures in the nature reserve/bird-spotting would encourage families to walk.
- There should be more signs of wayfinding:
  - *"I had no idea Spindleberry Nature Reserve was tucked away here, it's so beautiful more people should know about it!"*
  - *"No toilets in some parks, have some signs that say where the nearest public toilets are, it might encourage families to go to the park for a day trip instead of just popping in when passing."*
- Some of the paths are wide, would be good if more were like this.
- More bins, such as on the corner of Windale Avenue, by the leisure centre side and post box.
- Creation of community gardens:
  - (1, 2) *"Opportunities for opening up the green space in this development for community gardens or usable green space for residents as currently overgrown and unmanaged."*
  - (3) More opportunities to *"make the most out of space"* as it looks tired – Blackbird Leys Park.







## **Supporting cycling and road use**

Participants suggest that cycling and road use in Blackbird Leys could be encouraged by:

- Ensuring that existing bike lanes are well and clearly marked
- Developing maps with safe cycle routes to local assets – this could include producing a cycling route map, so people are encouraged to take safe alternative routes.
- Providing more places to lock up bikes in the local area – something to consider is people living in flats and how they can safely lock up and store their bikes.

## **Playgrounds**

Playgrounds in Blackbird Leys are valued, but there are ways in which they could be improved to increase the feeling of safety and to encourage more use of the facilities.

Some issues identified require attention from local authorities and the parish council, including:

- Fixing broken play equipment in parks and increasing the availability of accessible play equipment (such as basket swings, accessible roundabouts and slides, and sensory boards)
- Replacing surfacing which has become worn or very uneven
- Reviewing the fencing of playgrounds, to ensure that families can play safely without worrying about dogs, roads, or traffic
- Improving lighting in playgrounds and parks
- Increasing the availability of litter bins
- Removing fly tipped waste

There were suggestions of how community and resident groups could play a role in improving the use of playgrounds too:

- Organise regular litter picks
- Encourage people to share if there is broken equipment – for example, there could be a QR code they could scan at that park or facility



Participants also thought of ways to improve the use of under-utilised space:

(1) *“Good pocket park by the library and community centre. Could provide opportunities for more community use (garden) or some interactive play or a mobility hub as located by a range of facilities.”*



## Parks and Green Spaces

Participants reported that there was a lot of under-utilised green space, both within the local parks and on the corners of streets and within housing estates. They highlighted where these green spaces were, and offered suggestions for how the space could be improved, including creating opportunities for activity and for improving the aesthetics of the given areas.

- More wildflowers – 90% of the routes included suggestions to have more flowers to make the areas more appealing to visit:
  - (1) *“Some wildflowers would make it look lovely”* – opposite The Barn, on the corner of Windale Primary School.
  - (2) *“More flowers in the middle of Blackbird Leys Park by the bench.”*
  - (3) *“Another huge space with potential for physical activity on Pegasus Road.”*  
*“Wildflowers – planting meadow flowers in green spaces and along the paths in parks to make the area more attractive and to encourage walking.”*





- Pull up bars in the outdoor gyms and outside leisure centres
- Outdoor gym in Fry's Hill Park
- BMX/skatepark in the middle of Blackbird Leys Park
- Climbing trees
- Basketball court/multi-use games area in Blackbird Leys Park
- Space for herb planting or a community allotment/garden, to bring the community together – a number of underutilised green spaces were suggested, such as Blackbird Leys Park, Gillian's Park, Balfour Road Park, Fry's Hill Park, the space opposite The Barn, on the corner of Windale Primary School, and opposite the top shops by the post box.
- A number of people have more ambitious ideas, with suggestions of a splash park or water feature in Pegasus Field to encourage families to spend time together at the park.
- Walking groups
- More trees and wildflowers
- Games and activities for children, e.g., spot things on nature trail routes
- Increase shady and covered spaces in parks and green spaces:
  - *"More trees – mainly a large park we visited lacked shade, with large areas of grass (good space for games but plenty more room to create some areas to sit and natural shade nearby). Improving tree cover would really help."*

### **Improving facilities**

- It was identified that the parks need more bins to reduce litter and dog mess.
- Consideration needs to be given to signage to help people know where the nearest toilets are.
- More benches positioned along walking routes:
  - *"No benches at all on walking route from Leisure Centre, past top shops, and through Pegasus Road."*
- Places to socialise in parks, such as a coffee hut or social area where community groups can gather and use the park space

### **Outdoor leisure**

There seem to be lots of opportunities for more outdoor leisure facilities, and on 100% of routes which went through Blackbird Leys Park, participants highlighted that the space was being underutilised.



On top of the potential for a BMX/skate park, climbing trees, game courts and multi-use areas, there could also be signage with suggestions of how to use the multi-use game spaces.

### **WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

The results of the Blackbird Leys Active Neighbourhood Scan demonstrated a need for further engagement with communities in the area. There are plans in place to work with more schools, youth clubs, and other specific community groups, to ensure that we are as well-informed as possible and that the feedback reflects the views of residents more accurately. We will also be proactively sharing this insight with key partners, planners, and developers, to help create long-term change, and importantly will be investing small amounts of funding, with potential for these to be matched, so that we can turn residents' ideas to create more active neighbourhoods into reality.

**Oxfordshire on the Move**  
**December 2023**