

# ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCANS

## BLACKBIRD LEYS

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 12th 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 that 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.



# SNAPSHOT OF LEYS NEIGHBOURHOOD

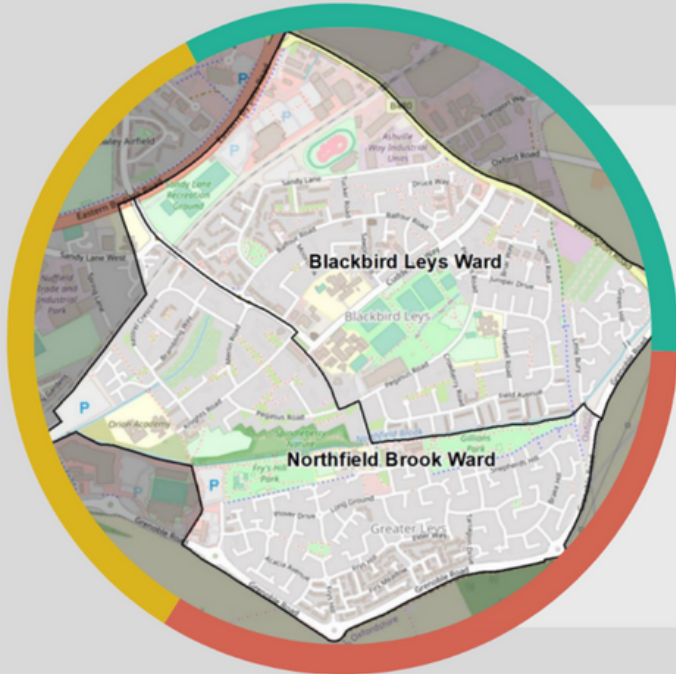
The Leys neighbourhood is formed of two wards Blackbird Leys Ward and Northfield Brook Ward. The wards are in Oxford and are in the top 20% nationally, in terms of facing challenges of income and health outcomes. A child born in Blackbird Leys can expect to live 13 years less than a child born in the 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 LEYS HAVE A POPULATION OF JUST OVER 11,708, BUT IF IT WAS A VILLAGE OF 100 PEOPLE...**

Oxfordshire  
**ON THE MOVE**

## ETHNICITY



75 people would be white British and 25 people would be from another ethnic background

## HEALTH

5 are in bad or very bad health



80 view their health as good or very good

15 view their health as fair

**9**

of the adults are obese

**10**

suffer with depression

**11**

of the adults are aged over 65



27 of the people are children under 18

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS

8 of them are in receipt of free school meals



**62** people are of working age and of these:



**38** are in work



**18** are disabled  
**10** are carers

9 are living in overcrowded conditions



## LIVING CONDITIONS

...THEY WOULD LIVE IN 40 HOUSEHOLDS OF WHICH:

**24**

would have some form of deprivation



## FINANCES

**12** won't own a car



**10** houses are lived in by just one person



**24** of the houses are rented



## THE LEYS HAS A RANGE OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- ✿ Community facilities; The Barn, The Clockhouse and Oxford Hub
- ✿ Social clubs; Monday Social, Singing for Fun, Craft Groups, Friend Leys, Pheonix Rising, Blackbird Leys Choir, Active Reach, Tea and Talk (AFIUK)
- ✿ Within easy reach there are 4 local grocery shops and 2 supermarkets  
Support services including Leys Community Larder, Leys Community Fridge, Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Syrox and Blackbird Leys Health Centre
- ✿ People are supported to be active by YouMove, Move Together and sports and active groups including Zumba Gold, Gardening Club, Yoga, Pilates, Back to Netball at Oxford Academy and Blackbird Leys Boxing Club.

We held two sessions on Tuesday 12th 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.

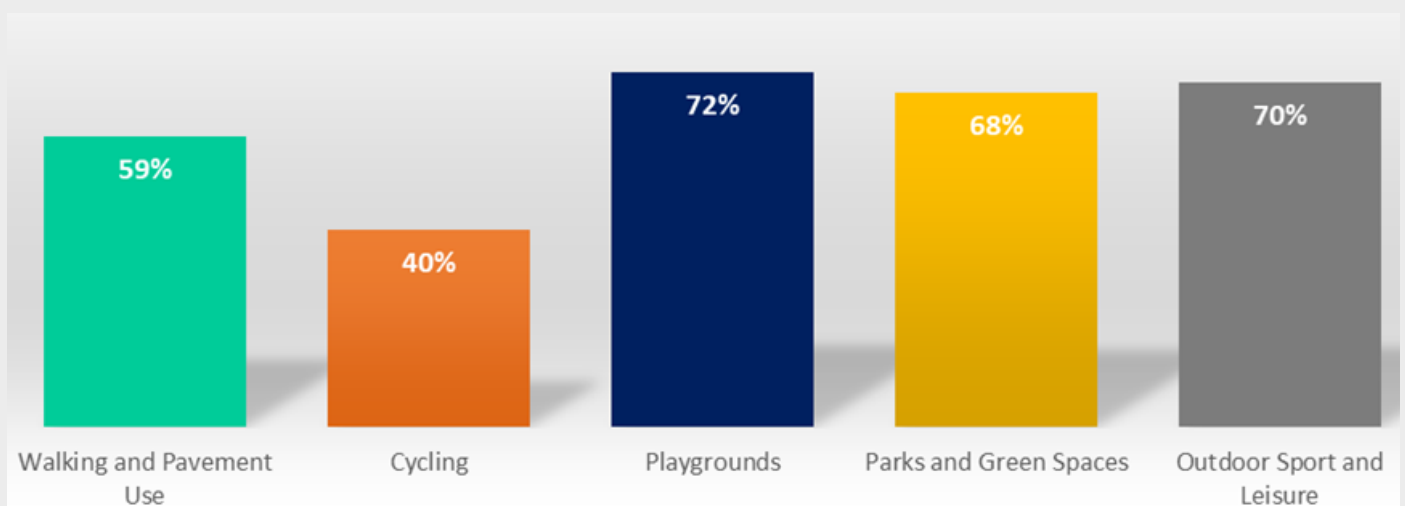
A training session was provided before undertaking the scan, to ensure that everyone understood the process and knew how to keep themselves safe whilst on the scan. The scans started at the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre, a central point within the neighbourhood.

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 of Blackbird Leys.



*"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."*

## OVERALL SCORE OF BLACKBIRD LEYS





## WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF BLACKBIRD LEYS?

- Gillians Park
- 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 facilities
- Little pocket park by the library and local shops
- Great range of local facilities: shops, pharmacy, schools, library, pub, community centre





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

## Litter

All participants commented on the abundance of litter, and litter or flytipping were issues raised on 100% of routes .

## Poorly Maintained Paths

Poorly maintained paths were a recurring issue with concerns around accessibility. This includes paths disrupted by tree roots, and uneven paths, which make it difficult for those using walking aids,

## 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.

## Lack of Safe Crossings

Lack of safe or formal crossings was raised on 89% of routes, and was an issue for both pavement users and cyclists. This issue is an accessibility and safety issue for people with visual impairment, and buggy, wheelchair, and walking aid users.

It was also surprising that many key local assets (ncluding schools and the leisure centre) lacked matching dropped kerbs.



## WHAT OTHER THEMES EMERGED FROM THE SCANS?

### Underutilised 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. Ideas of how to maximise the space were, skatepark, water fountains, picnic benches and space to socialise, outdoor gym or play equipment.

### Making spaces more attractive

Suggestions of how to make areas more attractive – bins to reduce litter, benches, planting flowers in green spaces and along paths to make them more pleasant

### Litter and flytipping

Litter (including dog mess and flytipping) an issue on all routes by both pavement users and cyclists. Lack of bins in public spaces, including out the front of the leisure centre where rubbish was prominent. Ideas were more bins, and organise community litter picks,

### Creation of more community spaces

A recurring theme to improve Blackbird Leys was to create more community spaces. Ideas suggested included installing benches, community spaces or huts, and facilities like toilets, coffee huts, or covered spaces to sit.

### What else did we find?

We also identified a range of issues and opportunities which we will be raising with local authorities. Issues included pavement surfacing, lack of safe crossings, curb locations, availability of bins, anything else, and are detailed in the full report, which you can find [here](#).

<https://www.oxfordshireonthemove.org/active-neighbourhood-scans>

Some of the issues identified on the scans required further attention from local authorities, such as local councils or police.



# What are the next steps?

## Future Scans

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.

## Funding

We are launching the Active Neighbourhoods Ideas Fund to turn the ideas which came out of the scans into a reality.

Funding from a few hundred to a few thousand pounds is available for each project, and projects should focus on making it easier for Blackbird Leys residents to be active in their neighbourhood.

For Blackbird Leys, we are looking for projects which tackle the following themes -

- Underutilised green space
- Making spaces more attractive
- Litter and flytipping
- Creation of community spaces

Find out more about funding opportunities and how to apply [here](#).

<https://www.oxfordshireonthemove.org/active-neighbourhoods-ideas-fund>

