

# Poole Park Access

## Trial closure of Whitecliff Road gate to motor vehicles

Consultation findings

February 2024

# Background and methodology

Poole Park is a heritage listed park in a Conservation area, which is managed and maintained by BCP Council. Opened in 1890, the road was originally designed for horse and carriages to access the park. BCP Council now allows controlled motor vehicle access to the park.

BCP Council put forward a proposal to close one of the three vehicle entrances. In January 2024, a trial closure was put in place to assess the impact and a consultation ran for 4 weeks alongside the closure to allow residents and park users to have their say about the proposal while experiencing the effect of the closure.

The trial closure and parallel consultation began on 17 January 2024. Running the trial closure alongside the consultation allows people to experience the impacts of the closure, both positive and negative, before sharing their views.

Temporary signage was put in place 2 weeks earlier on 3 January 2024 to give drivers notice of the intended trial closure

The consultation was open for 4 weeks, closing at 23:59 on 13 February 2024

Signs were put up in the park promoting the consultation. An online survey was available, as well as paper copies in BCP libraries and in the Ark café

The consultation was promoted on the council's social media channels and press releases.

# Methodology continued

The information supporting the consultation was hosted on the council's Engagement HQ (EHQ) platform with the online survey itself hosted in Snap Surveys.

The EHQ page was launched two weeks prior to the start of the consultation and trial as this is when the signage went up in the park.

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Poole Park: Whitecliff Gate closure

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### Poole Park Access

#### Proposed closure of entrance by Whitecliff Road / Twemlow Avenue

From 17 January 2024, BCP Council will be trialling a daily 24-hour gate closure at Poole Park. This will only be at the entrance and exit point on Whitecliff Road, adjacent to Twemlow Avenue. This is an extension to the current daily closure in place from 7.30-10am at all entrances, which prevents vehicles entering or exiting the park during the morning rush hour.

The reason for this closure is to promote environmental improvements in and around Poole Park. This is in line with BCP Council's Corporate Strategy for health and well-being and active, sustainable communities.

A consultation will open in conjunction with a trial closure on Wednesday 17 January 2024 and will run for 4 weeks, closing at 23:59 on Tuesday 19 February 2024. We will consider the feedback and then make a decision about whether to retain the closure of this park entrance to motor vehicles or revert to the previous opening / closure times.

#### Background information

Poole Park is a heritage listed park in a Conservation area, which is managed and maintained by BCP Council. Opened in 1890, the road was originally designed for horse and carriages to access the park. BCP Council now allows controlled motor vehicle access to the park. The park road is not an adopted highway though some drivers use it as a through route, avoiding busy junctions nearby.

The park is closed to vehicles 7.30 am - 10am Mon-Sat, to reduce the impact of rush hour traffic, creating a car-free environment. This closure to vehicles has been in place since at least the 1960's.

Previous road-closure consultations (2017) have shown an equal split in opinion for closing or maintaining a through road. However, more recent 'Future of Parks' surveys and engagement related to temporary closures nearby show an increased preference for vehicle restrictions.

#### Proposal

We propose to permanently close the entrance to the park adjacent to Twemlow Avenue to motor vehicles, effectively preventing the use of the park as a through route between Poole Town Centre and Sandbanks Road / Whitecliff area.



#### Impact

[Complete an online survey](#)  
Survey live from 09:00 17 January and closes 23:59 19 February 2024

#### Lifecycle

- Advance notice**  
Two week notice period prior to start of trial closure and consultation
- Open**  
This consultation is open for contributions.
- Under Review**  
Contributions to this consultation are closed for evaluation and review. The project team will report back on key outcomes.
- Final report**  
The findings of the consultation are documented here.

#### Documents

- [Poole Park consultation document \(168 KB\) \(pdf\)](#)
- [Questionnaire \(129 KB\) \(pdf\)](#)

#### FAQs

- [Why are you closing the park to traffic?](#)
- [Why are you doing this?](#)
- [How can you do this to a public highway?](#)
- [Why are you wasting money on this?](#)
- [What special wildlife is in the park?](#)

# Social media

The consultation attracted a lot of social media attention.

Some of the main comments were:

- Questioning the legality of the closure process
- Questioning the legality of the consultation process
  - The survey is open and could potentially be completed multiple times by the same person
  - The consultation does not require respondents to prove where they live and could be 'hijacked' by campaign groups from outside the area
- Criticism of cost implications
- Questions about evidence / data e.g. air quality, traffic counts
- Impact on disability access
- Suggesting that the council intends to stop all vehicle access to the park
- Questioning why the trial closure is remaining in place after the consultation closes

# Consultation process

For most BCP Council consultations we run an inclusive consultation process, including paper and online surveys, where respondents aren't forced to provide personal details such as name/address/ email address and can freely take part to share their views. There are some statutory consultations (e.g. the local plan) where respondents must provide name and addresses. This approach is common across other local authorities and public sector organisations.

It is important to remember that public consultation is not a vote or a referendum, but an opportunity to gather a range of insights, views and feedback on proposals before any decisions are made.

It is important for decision makers to know that this consultation has attracted more attention than most of our previous consultations. In context, decision makers should be aware of the following;

- Both sides of the debate have promoted the consultation widely and have encouraged people to take part.
- Officers have seen posts on social media encouraging people to complete the survey as many times as possible using different IP addresses to avoid detection.

Therefore, in context of the quality and relevance of the responses, your officers would recommend focusing on the range of issues that have been raised as part of this consultation, in relation to the reasons for the trial closure.

Due to the high number of responses, the open (literal) question about the impact of the closure was analysed by an external research company, Enventure Research.

# Consultation results

The following slides show the responses to the consultation survey.

The survey received 5,392 responses.

The highest volume of responses came in the first week with more than 750 on the first day and a further 1,900 in the rest of the first week

The survey itself was short. The first few questions established how people use the park before asking whether or not they agree with the proposal to make the closure permanent and asking what impact the closure would have them. The final questions asked for a postcode and personal characteristics as required by the Equalities Act.

All questions have been cross-tabulated against the personal characteristics and these are reported where differences are statistically significant.

Postcode information has been used to categorise BCP residents, non-residents, non-valid postcodes and no response. Again, differences are reported where they are statistically significant.

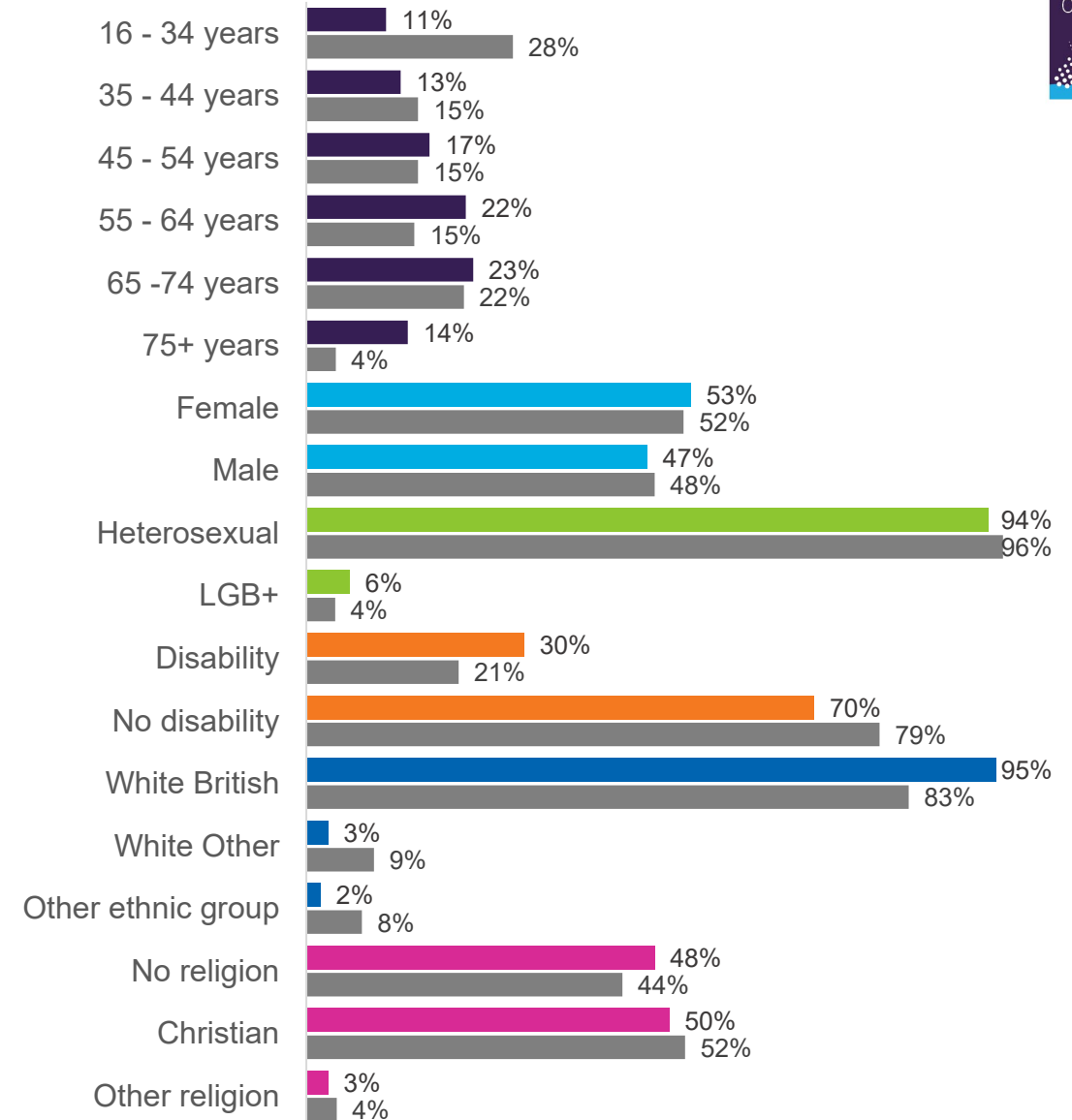
# Respondent Profile

The chart shows the protected characteristics of survey respondents (in colour) compared to the BCP population age 16+ in the 2021 Census (in grey). Respondents who answered these questions with 'prefer not to say' or who did not answer are excluded from this chart

The survey has higher representation of all age groups over 45 with particularly high representation of age 55-64 and age 75+ groups

Respondents with a disability are strongly represented in the survey, making up 30% of respondents compared to 21% of the Census population

Minority ethnic groups have low representation in the survey, with white British respondents making up 95% of survey respondents compared to 83% of the Census population.



# Respondent postcodes

Respondents were asked to provide their full postcode. These postcodes were analysed to see where responses came from.

679 respondents did not provide a valid postcode, either not answering the question or providing a partial postcode. Where a respondent provided just the first part of their postcode these have been included in the table (right). This still leaves 520 respondents whose location is unknown.

It should be noted that postcodes do not match ward or local authority boundaries. For example BH21 includes part of the BCP area but also extends to Wimborne and beyond.

Just over half of responses came from BH14 and BH15 postcodes, those closest to the park. The table on the right shows the postcode districts with more than 100 responses and groups the remaining postcodes into 'rest of BCP', 'rest of Dorset' and 'outside BCP / Dorset'

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| BH14                 | 1540 |
| BH15                 | 1199 |
| BH12                 | 393  |
| BH17                 | 363  |
| BH18                 | 254  |
| BH13                 | 213  |
| BH21                 | 141  |
| BH16                 | 113  |
| Rest of BCP          | 522  |
| Rest of Dorset       | 89   |
| Outside BCP / Dorset | 45   |
| Unknown              | 520  |



# Respondent wards

As previously stated, postcodes do not match exactly to local authority boundaries and wards. In matching respondents to wards we have mapped the centre point of each full postcode and matched it to the ward in which it is located. It is not possible to include partial postcodes in this analysis as the areas covered are too large and may cover parts of several wards.

There are 11 wards that contain more than 100 responses and these are shown in the table opposite. The remaining areas are grouped into 'rest of BCP', Dorset, elsewhere and unknown.

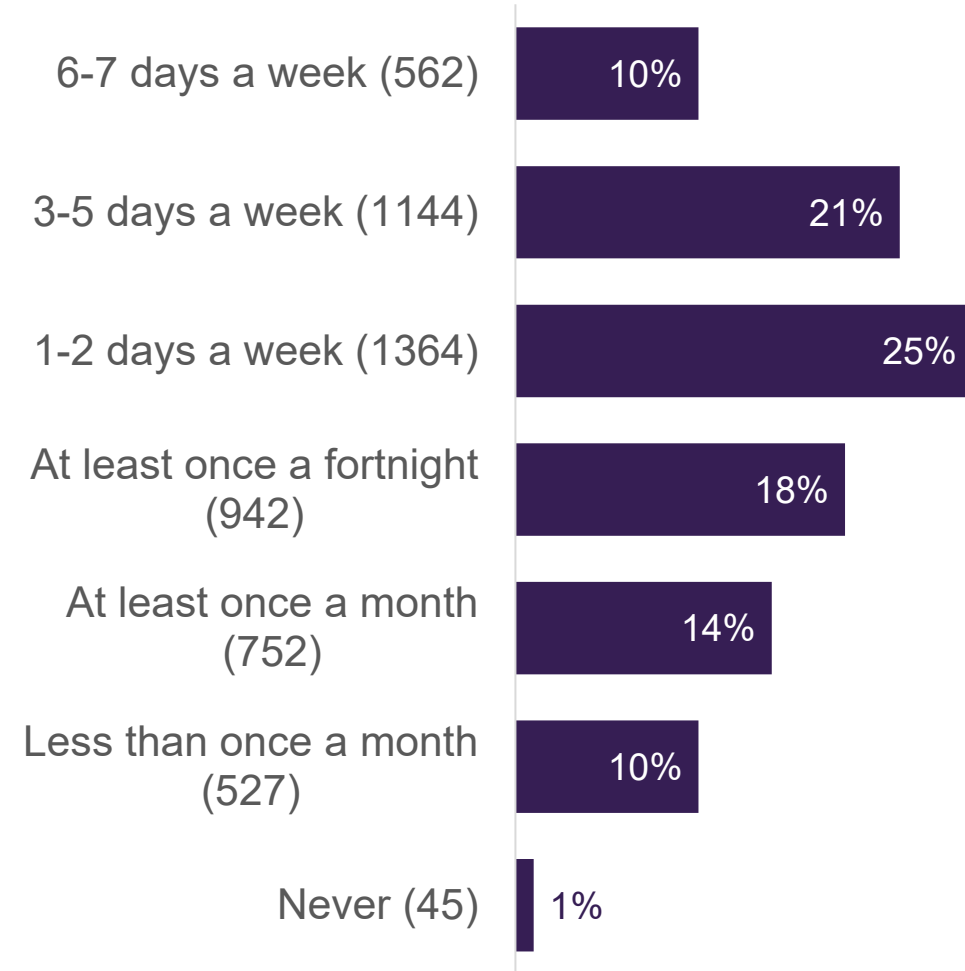
The highest number of responses came from the wards closest to the park: Parkstone; Poole Town; Penn Hill and Oakdale.

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Parkstone                | 905 |
| Poole Town               | 649 |
| Penn Hill                | 489 |
| Oakdale                  | 335 |
| Canford Cliffs           | 265 |
| Broadstone               | 221 |
| Newtown & Heatherlands   | 216 |
| Creekmoor                | 186 |
| Canford Heath            | 180 |
| Hamworthy                | 177 |
| Alderney & Bourne Valley | 159 |
| Rest of BCP              | 622 |
| Dorset                   | 264 |
| Elsewhere                | 45  |
| Unknown                  | 679 |

# Frequency of travel

**On average, how often do you travel to or through Poole Park?**

56% of respondents say that they travel through the park at least once a week



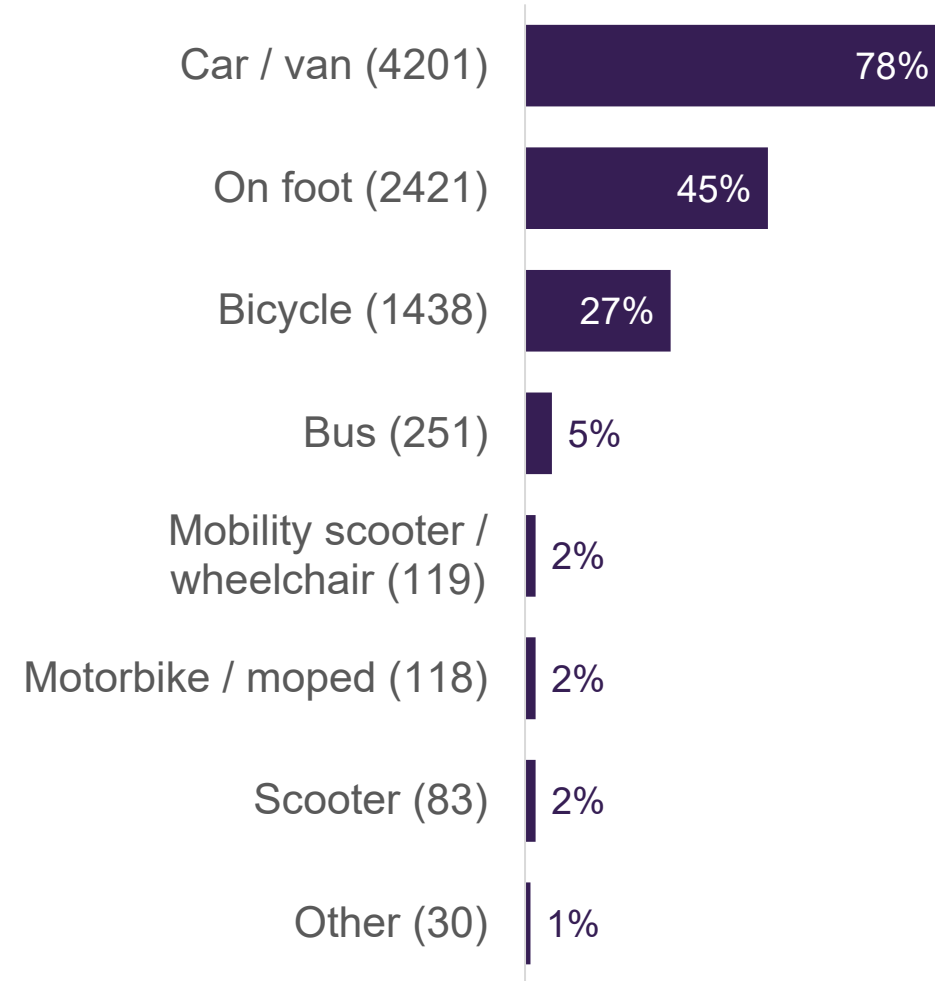
# Mode of travel

## How do you travel to Poole Park?

Car or van was the most common mode of travel

On foot and by bicycle were the next most common.

Other modes of travel were used by 5% or fewer respondents



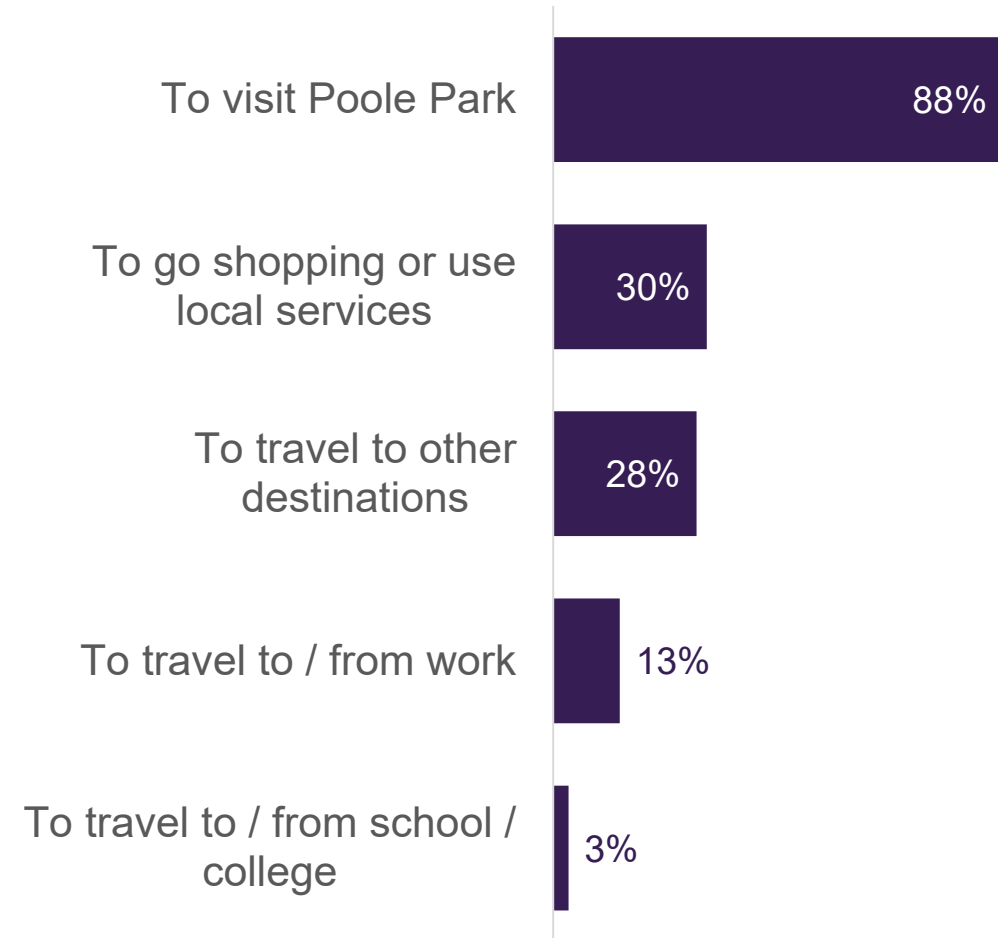
# Use of Whitecliff Gate

78% of respondents said that they use the Whitecliff gate while 21% do not and 1% were unsure.

Those who use the gate were asked for what purpose they use the gate and were allowed to choose more than one answer.

While most respondents (88%) said that they use the gate to visit the park, 30% said that they use it to travel to shops / local services and 28% said that they use it to travel to other destinations

10% of respondents cited 'other' purposes and were invited to write in what those purposes were. Most commonly these were more specific reasons for the purposes already listed.



# 'Other' purposes for using Whitecliff Gate

10% of those that answered about their purpose for using the gate gave 'other' answers. Many respondents chose to use this option to tell us more about the specific reason for their journey rather than the general purpose.

The largest number of these responses could be categorised under 'to visit Poole Park' but gave specific reasons e.g. running, to play bowls, walk the dog, etc.

87 respondents specifically mentioned enjoying a scenic drive through the park.

There were 86 responses that remained categorised as 'other'. Many of these were too vague to categorise e.g. "various reasons", "leisure" and others were too specific.

70 responses mentioned travelling through the park on the way to or from other destinations. While some of these also spoke about enjoying the scenery, the primary purpose of the journey is to travel through.

Proximity to Whitecliff / Baiter / Harbourside is important to many users of the gate. 36 respondents mentioned these other parks – the majority were walkers or cyclists who enjoy a circular route taking in Poole Park, Whitecliff and Baiter via Keyhole Bridge.

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Using the park</b>                            | <b>208</b> |
| <b>Scenic drive</b>                              | <b>87</b>  |
| <b>Other</b>                                     | <b>86</b>  |
| <b>Cut through / avoid traffic</b>               | <b>70</b>  |
| <b>Link to other parks (Baiter / Whitecliff)</b> | <b>36</b>  |
| <b>Live / visiting nearby</b>                    | <b>35</b>  |
| <b>Part of longer walk / run / cycle</b>         | <b>15</b>  |
| <b>Hospital / doctor</b>                         | <b>14</b>  |
| <b>Lighthouse</b>                                | <b>10</b>  |

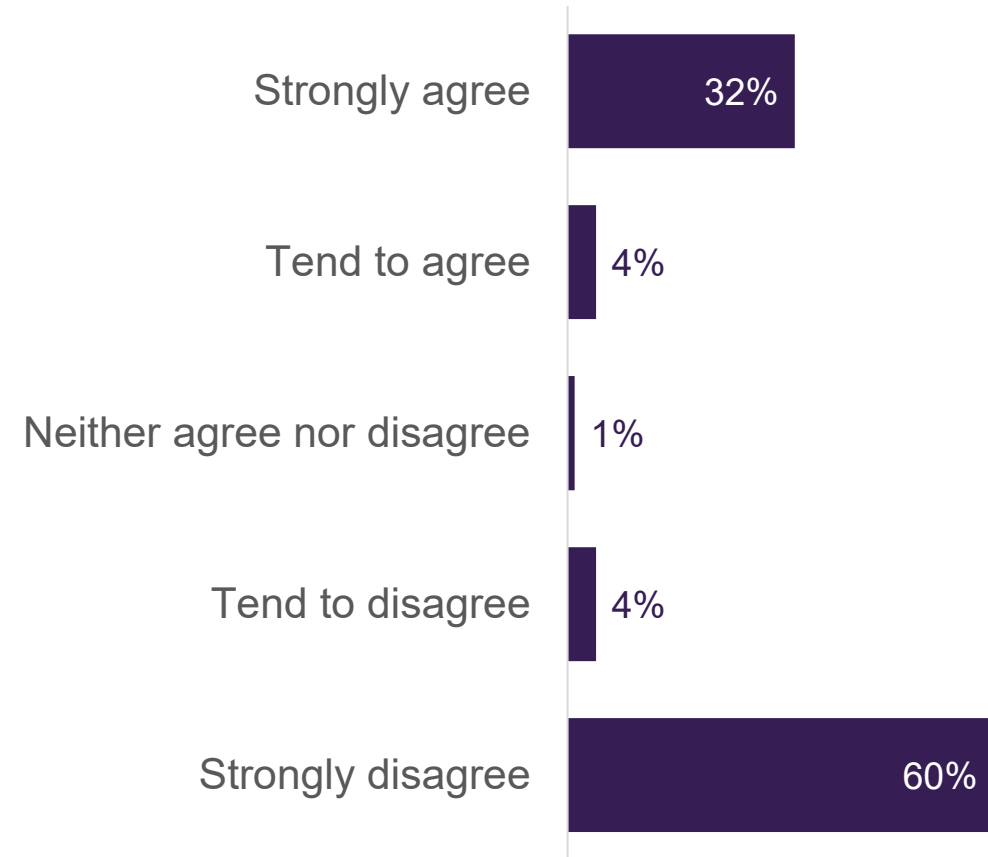
# Agreement / disagreement with the proposal

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to permanently close this entrance to the park?**

Overall 63% disagree and 36% agree with just 1% giving a neutral response.

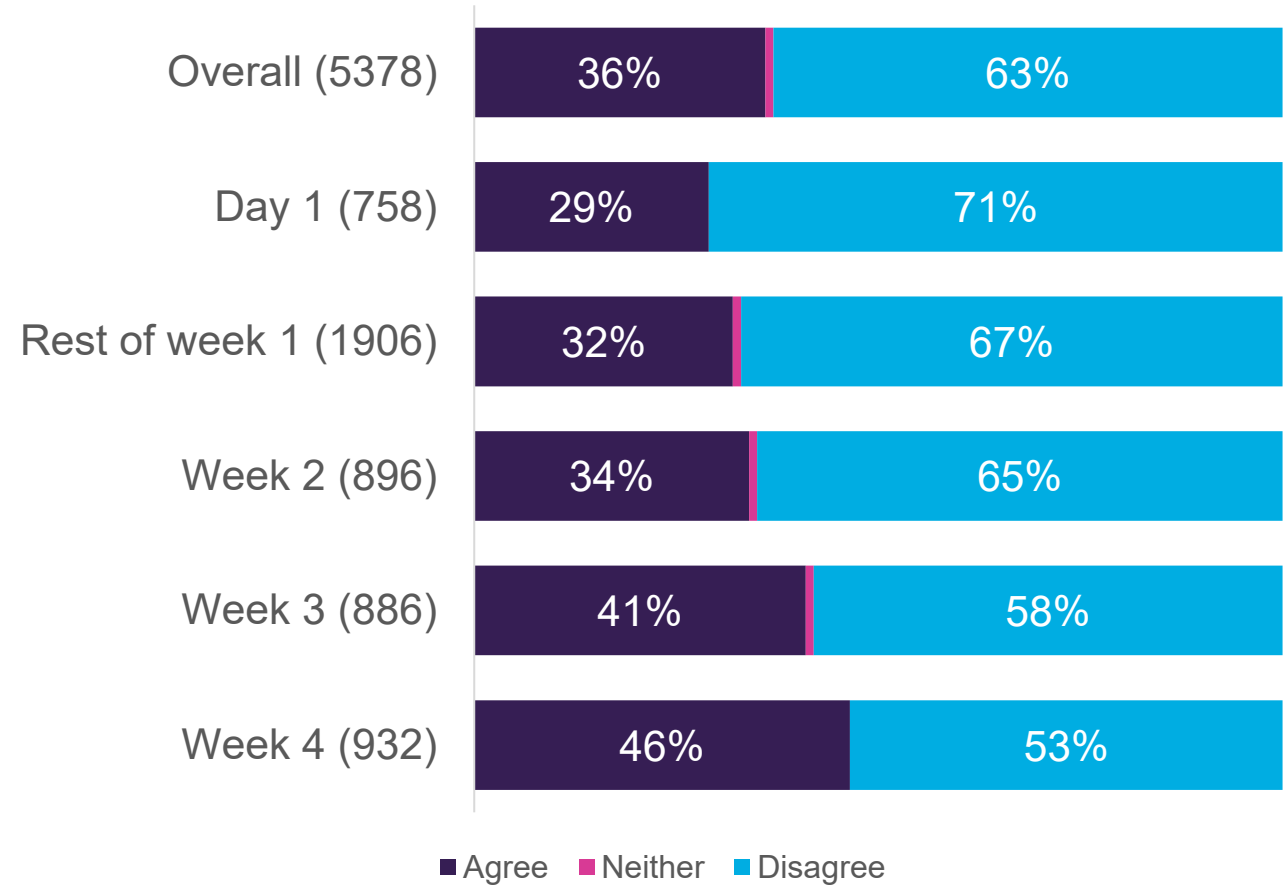
Views were strongly held. Almost all respondents either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal.

*(Note that figures on the chart are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point so appear to add differently to the totals stated above)*



# Agreement / disagreement throughout the trial

Support for the proposal grew as the trial went on. On day one of the trial, 29% of respondents agreed with the proposal but this grew to 46% by the final week of the trial.



# Comparison by respondent types

The following slides compare different groups of respondents and looks at who is more likely to agree or disagree with the proposal.

In analysing the data, we carried out significance testing and the following slides indicate where a group of respondents is significantly more likely to agree or disagree with the proposal than other groups and the overall sample.

Please note that where a group is listed as 'more likely to agree', this means that they are more likely to agree **compared to other groups and the overall sample** and doesn't necessarily mean that a majority of that group agree.

The % of respondents in each of the listed groups who agree or disagree is shown in brackets



# Who agrees / disagrees?

## More likely to agree compared to the overall sample (36%)

- Uses the park 6-7 days a week (52%)
- Travels to the park
  - On foot (52%)
  - Bicycle (58%)
  - Scooter (51%)
  - Bus (52%)
- Lives outside BCP/Dorset (62%)
- Lives in Dorset (42%)

## More likely to disagree compared to the overall sample (63%)

- Uses the park
  - once a fortnight (70%)
  - 1-2 days a week (69%)
  - once a month (67%)
- Travels to the park
  - Car / van (77%)
  - Motorbike (84%)
  - Mobility scooter / wheelchair (69%)
- Did not supply a valid postcode (80%)

# Who agrees / disagrees?

## More likely to agree compared to the overall sample (36%)

- Age group
  - 35-44 (47%)
  - 45-54 (42%)
  - 25-34 (42%)
- Males (44%)
- No disability (48%)
- Other white ethnic background (59%)
- No religion (50%)

## More likely to disagree compared to the overall sample (63%)

- Disability
  - Limited a lot (83%)
  - Limited a little (75%)
- Age group
  - 65-74 (65%)
  - 75+ (73%)

Note: Personal characteristics questions include a 'prefer not to say' (PNTS) option. In this survey a higher than typical proportion of respondents either selected PNTS or didn't answer the questions. These respondents are much more likely to disagree with the proposal than those who answered the questions. The result of this is that the responses from those who did answer are more positive and less negative. For example, ALL ethnic groups are more likely than the overall sample to agree with the proposal. 22% of respondents either replied PNTS or didn't reply to the ethnicity question, of this group 82% disagreed.

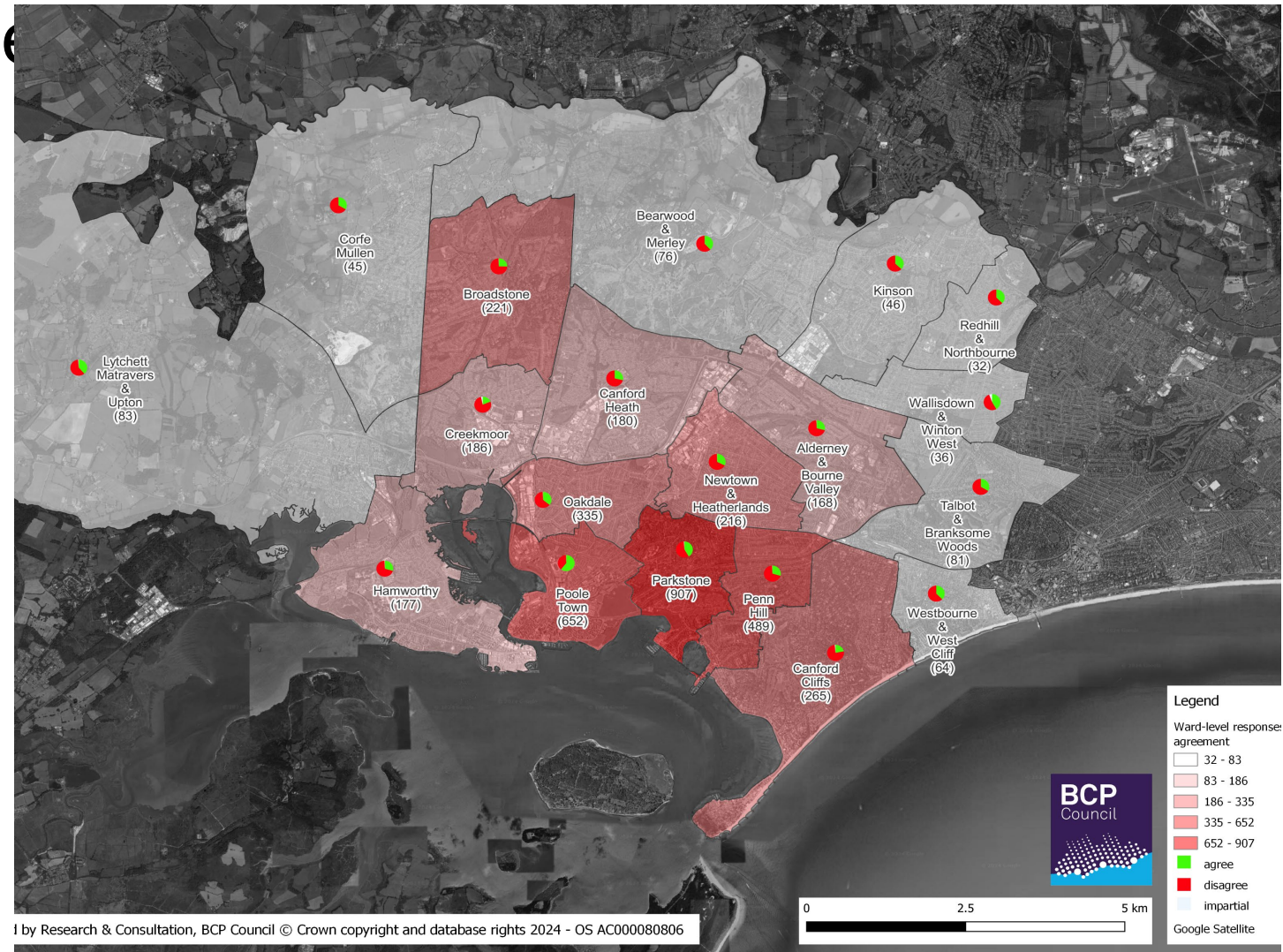
# Agree / disagree ward

The pie charts on the map show the proportion of respondents from each ward who agree (green) or disagree (red)

The shading on the wards indicates where the highest number of responses came from with the actual numbers shown in brackets.

The map shows wards with 30 or more responses.

Of the wards shown, only Poole Town has a majority in favour of the proposal while Parkstone has more agreement than average (42%). The highest level of disagreement comes from further afield, from Creekmoor (78%), Canford Cliffs (77%) and Broadstone (74%).



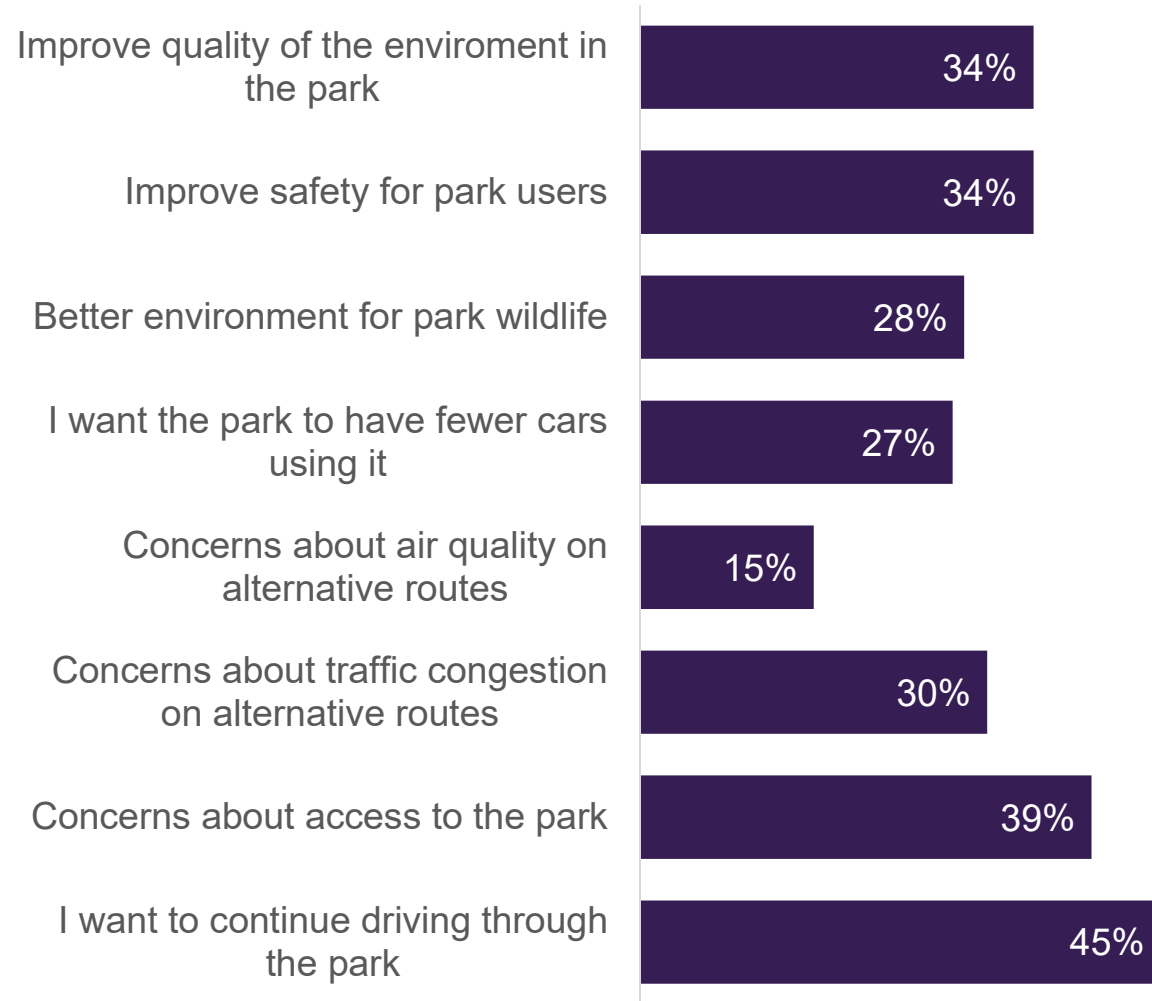
Map by Research & Consultation, BCP Council © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 - OS AC000080806

# Reasons for agreement / disagreement

Respondents were asked what their reasons were for agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal.

Overall, the largest number of respondents said that they wish to continue driving through the park.

Responses given to this question vary depending on whether respondent agree or disagree and the responses for each group are shown on the next slide





# Reasons for agreement / disagreement

Respondents were asked what their reasons were for agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal. The question presented four positive benefits of closing the gate and three negative impacts / concerns of keeping the gate closed plus the reason of simply wanting to continue driving through.

The chart shows respondents who agreed with the proposal in purple and those who disagreed in blue.

The % shown are the % of the respondents in that group (i.e. 90% of respondents who agree with the proposal said because it will improve the quality of the environment in the park)

Other reasons given include concerns about the remaining single exit point, concerns about the impact on disabled car users and a belief that drivers have a right to drive wherever they like in the park. The issues raised here are also raised in the responses to the following question about impact.



# Impact of closure

Respondents were given the opportunity to describe the impact the closure would have on themselves and their use of the park

3,953 respondents completed this question. Responses were sent to Enventure Research for analysis and were coded into themes, with some comments covering several themes.

64 themes were identified, though several of these are more general comments rather than describing impact.

The themes shown to the right are those that were mentioned in more than 10% of the comments.

|   |      |
|---|------|
| More traffic/congestion elsewhere                         | 1036 |
| Longer journey time/need to travel further                | 630  |
| Negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups     | 610  |
| Safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving     | 561  |
| More pleasant place to visit/improved experience          | 482  |
| Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic     | 474  |
| More difficult to access park/restriction of access       | 443  |
| Increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality          | 433  |
| Enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route | 397  |

# More traffic / congestion elsewhere

The 1036 respondents who mentioned this theme in their comments were more likely to:

- Live in BH14 postcodes
- Be aged 65-74 or 75+
- Be female
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- Increased emissions / air quality
- Longer journey times
- Negative impact on elderly / disabled
- No traffic problems / enough measures to reduce traffic in the park
- Leaves only one exit from park

# More traffic / congestion elsewhere

Having one exit point increases the volume of traffic on Parkstone Road, which is already extremely busy. Slow traffic belches out fumes. It will be an even worse nightmare in the tourist season!

This will cause huge congestion on Sandbanks Road - especially through the railway tunnel which is not wide enough for two cars - during the Spring and Summer.

Closure may not meet the aims of reduced vehicle movements to improve safety and air quality. It is more likely to increase congestion through other park access points.



# Longer journey time / travel further

The 630 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH14 postcodes
- Be aged 75+
- Be female
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- More traffic congestion elsewhere
- Increased emissions / pollution / poorer air quality
- Negative impact on elderly / disabled
- No traffic problems / enough measures
- Likely to visit less frequently

# Longer journey time / travel further

This will increase unnecessarily the distance I have to drive to visit the park which I do regularly to play tennis and walk my dog.

Probably not be using the cafe in the park as enter and exit via Whitecliff Rd, will add extra miles to our journey.

It will add time to my journey and will make me late for appointments as due to working hours I cannot avoid commuter times.

# Negative impact on elderly / disabled / vulnerable groups

The 610 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH16, BH17 or BH18 postcodes
- Be aged 65-74 or 75+
- Be female
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- More traffic / congestion elsewhere
- More difficult to access the park
- Longer journeys
- Enjoy driving through / visiting by car
- Increase emissions / pollution

# Negative impact on elderly / disabled / vulnerable groups

It will inconvenience me and make it impossible to take my elderly mother around her favourite places in Poole as she can't walk very far and she enjoys being able to see the birds from the car.

We like to drive through the park as we are elderly & walking is limited. We have been born & brought up in the Poole area & this park was given to the local people should remain accessible to everybody. There is a large elderly population & not everybody is able to walk / cycle.

For people with restricted mobility closing this entrance to cars will restrict access and make life more difficult for us.

# Safer for pedestrians / cyclists

The 561 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH15 postcodes
- Be aged under 25, 25-34 or 35-44
- Not have a disability

These respondents were more likely to also mention:

- Park should not be a rat-run
- More pleasant place / improved experience
- Better / safer for children and families
- Positive to have less traffic
- Quieter / more peaceful / relaxing

# Safer for pedestrians / cyclists

It's a park so cars shouldn't drive through it. This would make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

As someone who is 90 and with a disability it would make it safer for me to roam the park with less vehicles passing through.

Safer and more relaxing walk through. Cars travel too fast through the park frequently.

# More pleasant place to visit / improved experience

The 482 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in a BH15 postcode
- Be aged 35-44 or 45-54
- Be male
- Not have a disability
- Agree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- Safer for pedestrians / cyclists
- Park should not be a rat-run / too much traffic
- Positive to have less traffic / fewer cars
- Quieter / more peaceful / relaxing
- Better / safer for children and families

# More pleasant place to visit / improved experience

Will significantly improve the environment of the park and make it a more pleasant place to bring my children too. We would love to use the park more for family days out.

This is a brilliant idea. I do sometimes use the park in my car as a shortcut but appreciate that permanently closing it to through traffic will improve the park environment for everyone's benefit.

Since the closure of the entrance that part of the park has been SO much quieter and safer to walk/cycle in and the air quality must be much better too. We will be even more happy to walk and cycle in the beautiful park.



# Park should not be a rat run / too much through traffic

The 474 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in a BH15 postcode
- Be aged 35-44 or 45-54
- Be male
- Not have a disability
- Agree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- Safer for pedestrians / cyclists
- More pleasant place to visit / improved experience
- Park should be for people / wildlife, not cars
- Better / safer for children and families
- Car users can still access / park

# Park should not be a rat run / too much through traffic

This will make the park a much more pleasant place to go and spend time. I can see no downsides, there is still access for cars, and this will stop it from being used as a rat run.

It is used as a rat run by drivers.  
Congestion/pollution caused by vehicles. It is a park, it should not be used as a cut through.

It will make the park more enjoyable as an area for recreation and not have the feel of a through route for traffic.

# More difficult to access park / restriction of access

The 443 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH18, BH12 or BH13 postcodes
- Be aged 75+
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- Negative impact on elderly / disabled
- More traffic congestion elsewhere
- Longer journey time
- Enjoy driving through park / visiting by car
- No traffic problems / enough measures

# More difficult to access park / restriction of access

It will be very difficult to access with a very young child, public transport to the park isn't good enough.

Makes entering park more difficult and I would think before planning to attend.

It will make it more difficult to enter the park if coming from Sandbanks, Canford Cliffs etc direction and also travelling from Poole to those areas.

# Increased emissions / pollution / poorer air quality

The 433 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH14 or BH13 postcodes
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- More traffic congestion elsewhere
- Negative impact on elderly / disabled
- No traffic problems / enough measures
- Closure will leave only one exit
- Greater risk of accidents / narrow / unsafe exit

# Increased emissions / pollution / poorer air quality

I feel there will be a long line of cars queuing to get out of the only exit left open in the park. All with engines running polluting the air all through the park.

Will have to go round the long way to get to the park causing longer driving so more pollution.

This is my nearest entry/exit. It would cause further traffic congestion around the park roads and impact on air quality for the house/apartments on Mount Pleasant Road.

# Enjoy driving through park / visiting by car / pleasant route

The 397 respondents who mentioned this theme were more likely to:

- Live in BH16, BH21, BH18, BH13 or BH17 postcodes
- Be aged 55-64
- Be female
- Have a disability
- Disagree with the proposal

These respondents also mentioned:

- Negative impact on elderly / disabled
- More traffic congestion elsewhere
- No traffic problems / enough measures
- Negative impact on mental health / wellbeing
- More difficult to access park

# Enjoy driving through park / visiting by car / pleasant route

Relaxing to drive through  
like driving along a coast  
road.

Deprive us of part of a  
scenic route chosen for  
our 'mental health and  
wellbeing'.

To close it would limit my  
enjoyment of the park as  
I enjoy driving through  
the park.



# Comments suggesting other options

Suggestions for alternative options include:

- Introduce more / change time restrictions (63)
- Close Keyhole Bridge to traffic (53)
- Close to traffic completely / only disabled access (49)
- Introduce more traffic calming (47)
- Make it one way / exit only / entry only (14)
- Close Civic Centre entrance (8)

I visit the park mainly at weekends with my family and elderly mother. I agree that the park should not be a rat run for weekly commute, I think a fair compromise would be to open it at weekends and keep it closed during the week, most people visit the park at weekends to support the ark and kitchen and also the mini railway. I hope this would be considered

Closure of the gate permanently would make it a much more enjoyable walk through the park as the vehicles use it for a rat run in the evening rush hour which is when I am walking home and they nearly all are going a lot faster than the speed they should be doing through there ....I think if it's not closed permanently it should be closed for the rush hour period as it is in the mornings

I would much prefer for the Keyhole bridge to be closed to traffic.

Its a public park NOT a car park - motor vehicle use should be kept to the absolute minimum required for vulnerable groups to access the park.

I enjoy the drive through the park, I feel that more robust traffic calming will improve the safety of people visiting the park.

If any solution were needed it would be to make the Whitecliff gate one way to Poole to stop commuter traffic through the park in the evening. The morning is time controlled anyway.

I don't use the entrance on the bend at civic centre as its dangerous because people dont look where they're going and nearly go up the back of you. It would be better to close this entrance.

# Emails

43 individuals/organisations emailed to give their views on the proposal

- 33 disagreed with the closure
- 8 agreed with the closure
- 2 were neither for or against the closure but requested more information or suggested other options

# Emails – against closure

- Pleasant, beautiful and unique journey as alternate route
- Important to ensure that the Park can be enjoyed in as many ways as possible by all residents and visitors wishing to use it for both recreation and wellbeing
- Road isn't fast or a 'rat run'
- Impact on disabled/limited mobility/elderly/vulnerable
- Loss of disabled bays
- Mental health/wellbeing council priority
- Makes quieter area of park less accessible
- Cyclists and e-scooter riders acting more dangerous than vehicles & increased congestion in park might cause cyclists to cycle on pavement
- Safety concerns – cars doing 3-point-turns in park, dangerous exit at Kingland Road, dangerous parts of alternative route e.g. bridge on Sandbanks Road
- Safety & ASB concerns – runners & pedestrians safer with passing vehicles e.g. Meyrick & Kings Park feel less safe
- Pollution concerns – increased distance & time to drive around compared to through
- Inconveniences drivers
- Increased congestion at other exit, particularly in summer
- Emergency vehicle access and vehicle escape if major incident
- Few cyclists use the park – better traffic/pedestrian-free alternative route through Baiter Park
- Historical commitments to free and open access - gifted to people with roads included
- Concern at spending involved – signage, consultation, communication etc.
- Concern at trial closure prior to consultation and during winter months when full impact unknown, trial closure better in busier summer months or school holidays – was this to avoid wider awareness
- Undemocratic trial closure – no cabinet vote
- Consultation concerns – hijacked by national campaign groups, multiple responses can be submitted, no email address required, misinformation/lies/, poor communications/publicity, only reaching small (online) audience, offline audience cannot easily access paper-form survey
- Concerns over conflicts of interest – councillors with agendas not acting on behalf of residents
- Concern that closure is designed to cause increased congestion in park, so cars are eventually banned altogether
- Lacking supporting evidence - no data on pre-closure vehicle movements through park or impact to local roads during trial period, no studies of impact on wildlife, no data on reasons drivers are using Poole Park
- Negative impact on local businesses and park utilisation
- Historical success of dual entrances
- No evidence of crashes, car related deaths, speeding etc. within park, but evidence of the same on alternative routes
- Previous closure worsened congestion in surrounding areas
- More important issues requiring resource
- Areas with roads are small in comparison to the rest of the park
- Does not achieve the whole aim of the BCP Health & Wellbeing Strategy

# Emails – for closure

- 3-point-turns is people ignoring signage
- Cars can still park next to the lake just outside of the Parkstone entrance
- East gate entrance still available
- Park calmer and more peaceful throughout trial closure
- Reduced traffic within park
- Increase in park usage for leisure since pandemic
- Removing transitioning traffic highlighted as positive by many people in Heritage Lottery work on the park
- Original purpose of park was leisure facility, not relief road
- Reasons to stop through traffic sit comfortably with BCP strategies and policies as well as national policy
- Parks are for people not cars
- Health & wellbeing - greenspace quality (including perceived safety) determines usage frequency & duration, reduction in vehicle noise, air quality within park
- Better for wildlife
- Encourages sustainable modes of transport e.g. walking & cycling
- No formal pedestrian crossing within Park
- Low car ownership & housing without gardens in Poole Town ward whose enjoyment of park is negatively impacted by vehicles travelling through

# Emails – other options

- Further traffic calming to stop limited number of drivers who do not comply with rules
- Closure of Seldown Gate would be more beneficial
- Closure of through-traffic at specific times instead of all times
- Inclusion of turning circle and cul-de-sac signage to mitigate concerns about turning
- Creation of parking bays along Whitecliff Road with disabled closest to park
- Addition of formal crossings within park



## Poole Park Access Consultation 2024

Report on free text responses

February 2024

[www.enventure.co.uk](http://www.enventure.co.uk)



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# Introduction

## Background

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council recently launched a public consultation alongside a trial closure of one of the access gates to Poole Park, a heritage listed park in a conservation area managed and maintained by BCP Council.

The Council proposed to permanently close the Whitecliff Road entrance to motor vehicles, effectively preventing the use of the park as a through route between Poole town centre and the Sandbanks/Whitecliff area. Pedestrians and cyclists have been able to continue using the entrance, whilst vehicle access has been maintained at the other entrances.

Enventure Research was appointed to support the Council with data entry of paper consultation survey responses and to undertake analysis of free text responses received to one question regarding the impact of the closure.

## Methodology

The consultation was managed and delivered by BCP Council. A questionnaire was designed to explore views on the proposed closure to motor vehicles of the Whitecliff Road entrance, and also included questions to establish respondents' demographics and other characteristics.

Residents could take part via an online survey or by completing a paper copy of the questionnaire. Paper copies were made available at all BCP libraries and in the Ark Café in Poole Park. Completed paper copies of the questionnaire were sent to Enventure Research for data entry.

The consultation commenced on Wednesday 17 January 2024 and closed on Tuesday 13 February 2024. Overall, 5,392 responses were received to the consultation. This includes 5,309 online responses (98%) and 83 paper copies (2%).

## Interpretation of the findings

### Thematic coding of free text responses

The survey included an open ended question which allowed respondents to provide free text responses. To quantitatively analyse these responses, all free text comments were read in detail and a coding frame developed based on the key themes. This allowed for





categorisation of the themes emerging in the comments. This analysis is presented in charts and tables throughout the report, with anonymised verbatim comments provided as examples. It should be kept in mind that a single comment may have been assigned more than one theme.

## Subgroup analysis

Subgroup analysis has been undertaken to explore the results provided by different groups, such as those who agree with the proposed closure, those who disagree, and key demographics.

This analysis has only been carried out where the sample size is seen to be sufficient for comment, as smaller base sizes tend to produce less reliable results due to a wider margin of error. Where sample sizes were not large enough, subgroups have been combined to create larger groups if possible. Only those differences which are statistically significant have been commented on within this report.

Throughout this report, those who took part in the survey are referred to as 'respondents'.



# Survey Findings

## Impact of the closure [Q7 analysis]

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what impact the permanent closure of the Whitecliff Road entrance would have on them and their use of the park, by providing their comments in a free text box. A large proportion of respondents provided an answer to this question, with 3,953 comments received in total.

The full range of themes is presented below in **Figure 1**, with themes which were largely supportive of the proposal highlighted in green and themes which were largely unsupportive highlighted in red. Neutral themes are unhighlighted.

A quarter of those who answered the question (26%) raised concerns about a potential *increase in traffic/congestion elsewhere* arising as a result of the closure. This included comments relating to both traffic and congestion within Poole Park itself and on surrounding roads and alternative routes.

Similar proportions said that the closure would result in a *longer journey time/need to travel further* (16%) and that there would be a *negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups* (15%).

One in seven (14%) felt that the proposal would result in Poole Park becoming *safer for pedestrians/cyclists* or that there would be *less risk from dangerous driving*. One in eight (12%) said that the Park would be a *more pleasant place to visit* or that visiting would be an *improved experience*, and the same proportion said that the *Park should not be a rat run* or that there was currently *too much through traffic*.

### **Figure 1 – Please tell us what impact this will have on you and your use of the park [Q7].**

Base: Those who provided a response (3,953)

| Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure   | Number | %   |
|---|--------|-----|
| More traffic/congestion elsewhere                         | 1,036  | 26% |
| Longer journey time/need to travel further                | 630    | 16% |
| Negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups     | 610    | 15% |
| Safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving     | 561    | 14% |
| More pleasant place to visit/improved experience          | 482    | 12% |
| Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic     | 474    | 12% |
| More difficult to access park/restriction of access       | 443    | 11% |
| Increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality          | 433    | 11% |
| Enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route | 397    | 10% |
| No traffic problems/enough measures to reduce traffic     | 343    | 9%  |



| Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure                   | Number | %  |
|---|--------|----|
| No issues currently/no change needed                                      | 314    | 8% |
| Positive to have less traffic/fewer cars                                  | 276    | 7% |
| Better/safer for children/families  | 259    | 7% |
| Park should be for people/wildlife not cars                               | 245    | 6% |
| Greater risk of accidents/unsafe/narrow exit                              | 242    | 6% |
| Needs to be accessible to all/by all methods of transport                 | 236    | 6% |
| Likely to visit less frequently   | 220    | 6% |
| Cost implications/waste of money/other spending priorities                | 211    | 5% |
| Closure will leave only one exit  | 208    | 5% |
| Quieter/more peaceful/relaxing park                                       | 205    | 5% |
| Protection for wildlife/natural environment                               | 194    | 5% |
| No accidents/conflicts/drivers are considerate                            | 185    | 5% |
| Negative impact on park businesses/café                                   | 185    | 5% |
| Will stop visiting/not be able to access                                  | 175    | 4% |
| Negative impact on mental health/wellbeing                                | 174    | 4% |
| No personal impact/minimal impact   | 161    | 4% |
| Less freedom of choice/choice of route                                    | 158    | 4% |
| Healthier environment/cleaner/better air quality                          | 151    | 4% |
| Car users can still access/park   | 151    | 4% |
| Not everyone is able to cycle/too much focus on cyclists                  | 150    | 4% |
| More inconvenience  | 142    | 4% |
| Will not improve anything/reduce emissions                                | 141    | 4% |
| Undemocratic/needs more consultation/should have consulted before closure | 141    | 4% |
| Park belongs to Poole residents/was gifted to the people                  | 138    | 3% |
| More difficult to access park facilities/boating lake                     | 129    | 3% |
| Need more evidence/data/information                                       | 115    | 3% |
| Attack on car users/BCP is anti-car                                       | 110    | 3% |
| Passing cars increase safety/more risk of crime/ASB                       | 104    | 3% |
| Impact on/difficulties for local residents                                | 98     | 2% |
| Complaint about cyclists/cyclists are dangerous                           | 91     | 2% |
| Likely to visit/use facilities more frequently                            | 81     | 2% |
| Agree/support generally/good idea   | 80     | 2% |
| More negative impact in summer/needs trial in summer                      | 80     | 2% |
| Another attempt to close Keyhole Bridge                                   | 78     | 2% |
| Enough alternative routes for cars exist                                  | 73     | 2% |
| Better/safer for disabled/older people                                    | 68     | 2% |
| Introduce more/change time restrictions                                   | 63     | 2% |
| Reduced number of park users/visitors                                     | 59     | 1% |
| Likely to visit Poole/other areas less frequently                         | 57     | 1% |
| Close Keyhole Bridge to traffic   | 53     | 1% |
| Review parking/may cause parking issues elsewhere                         | 51     | 1% |
| Encourages active travel/physical health benefits                         | 50     | 1% |
| Close to traffic completely/only allow disabled access                    | 49     | 1% |
| Increased cost of travel/using more fuel                                  | 48     | 1% |
| Introduce more traffic calming/speed restrictions instead                 | 47     | 1% |



| Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure | Number | %  |
|---|--------|----|
| Difficult for emergency vehicles to pass through        | 44     | 1% |
| Disagree generally/maintain vehicle access              | 43     | 1% |
| Complaint about survey/biased/flawed                    | 41     | 1% |
| Road improvements needed                                | 40     | 1% |
| Deal with flooding/other comment about flooding         | 34     | 1% |
| Unlawful/open to legal challenge                        | 27     | 1% |
| Make one way/exit only instead                          | 14     | 0% |
| Close Civic Centre entrance                             | 8      | 0% |
| Other comment   | 27     | 1% |

## Example verbatim comments

Below are some example verbatim responses for some of the most common themes.

### More traffic/congestion elsewhere (26%)

*Closure may not meet the aims of reduced vehicle movements to improve safety and air quality. It is more likely in increase congestion through other park access points.*

*Having one exit point increases the volume of traffic on Parkstone Road, which is already extremely busy. Slow traffic belches out fumes. It will be an even worse nightmare in the tourist season!*

*This will cause huge congestion on Sandbanks Road – especially through the railway tunnel which is not wide enough for two cars – during the Spring and Summer.*

### Longer journey time/need to travel further (16%)

*This will increase unnecessarily the distance I have to drive to visit the park which I do regularly to play tennis and walk my dog.*

*Probably not be using the cafe in the park as enter and exit via Whitecliff Rd, will add extra miles to our journey.*

*It will add time to my journey and will make me late for appointments as due to working hours I cannot avoid commuter times.*

### Negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups (15%)

*It will inconvenience me and make it impossible to take my elderly mother around her favourite places in Poole as she can't walk very far and she enjoys being able to see the birds from the car.*



*For people with restricted mobility closing this entrance to cars will restrict access and make life more difficult for us.*

*We like to drive through the park as we are elderly & walking is limited. We have been born & brought up in the Poole area & this park was given to the local people should remain accessible to everybody. There is a large elderly population & not everybody is able to walk / cycle.*

### **Safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving (14%)**

*It's a park so cars shouldn't drive through it. This would make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists.*

*As someone who is 90 and with a disability it would make it safer for me to roam the park with less vehicles passing through.*

*Safer and more relaxing walk through. Cars travel too fast through the park frequently.*

### **More pleasant place to visit/improved experience (12%)**

*Will significantly improve the environment of the park and make it a more pleasant place to bring my children too. We would love to use the park more for family days out.*

*This is a brilliant idea. I do sometimes use the park in my car as a shortcut but appreciate that permanently closing it to through traffic will improve the park environment for everyone's benefit.*

*Since the closure of the entrance that part of the park has been SO much quieter and safer to walk/cycle in and the air quality must be much better too. We will be even more happy to walk and cycle in the beautiful park.*

### **Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic (12%)**

*This will make the park a much more pleasant place to go and spend time. I can see no downsides, there is still access for cars, and this will stop it from being used as a rat run.*

*It is used as a rat run by drivers. Congestion/pollution caused by vehicles. It is a park, it should not be used as a cut through.*

*It will make the park more enjoyable as an area for recreation and not have the feel of a through route for traffic.*



### **More difficult to access park/restriction of access (11%)**

*It will be very difficult to access with a very young child, public transport to the park isn't good enough.*

*Makes entering park more difficult and I would think before planning to attend.*

*It will make it more difficult to enter the park if coming from Sandbanks, Canford Cliffs etc direction and also travelling from Poole to those areas.*

### **Increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality (11%)**

*I feel there will be a long line of cars queuing to get out of the only exit left open in the park. All with engines running polluting the air all through the park.*

*Will have to go round the long way to get to the park causing longer driving so more pollution.*

*This is my nearest entry/exit. It would cause further traffic congestion around the park roads and impact on air quality for the house/apartments on Mount Pleasant Road.*

### **Enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route (10%)**

*Relaxing to drive through like driving along a coast road.*

*Deprive us of part of a scenic route chosen for our 'mental health and wellbeing'.*

*To close it would limit my enjoyment of the park as I enjoy driving through the park.*

## **Subgroup analysis**

### **More traffic/congestion elsewhere**

Subgroups more likely to say there would be **more traffic/congestion elsewhere** (26% overall) include:

- Female respondents (29%) vs male respondents (21%)
- Those who have a disability or long term health issue (27%) vs those who do not (24%)

### **Longer journey time/need to travel further**

Subgroups more likely to say it would result in a **longer journey time/need to travel further** (16% overall) include:

- Female respondents (17%) vs male respondents (14%)



- Those who have a disability or long term health condition (21%) vs those who do not (13%)

### **Negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups**

Subgroups more likely to say there would be a **negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups** (15% overall) include:

- Older respondents aged 75+ (20%) and 65–74 (17%) vs other age groups
- Female respondents (18%) vs male respondents (11%)
- Those who have a disability or long term health condition (30%) vs those who do not (8%)

### **Safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving**

Subgroups more likely to say the park would be **safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving** (14% overall) include:

- Respondents aged 25–34 (21%) and 35–44 (22%) vs other age groups, particularly those aged 75+ (11%)
- Those who do not have a disability or long term health condition (21%) vs those who do (7%)
- Respondents of Other White ethnicity (26%) vs White British respondents (17%)

### **More pleasant place to visit/improved experience**

Subgroups more likely to say the park would be a **more pleasant place to visit/improved experience** (12% overall) include:

- Respondents aged 35–44 (16%) and 45–54 (15%) vs other age groups, particularly those aged 75+ (9%)
- Male respondents (15%) vs female respondents (12%)
- Those who do not have a disability or long term health condition (17%) vs those who do (7%)

### **Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic**

Subgroups more likely to say the park **should not be a ran run/too much through traffic** (12% overall) include:

- Respondents aged 35–54 (16%) vs other age groups, particularly those aged 75+ (8%)
- Male respondents (16%) vs female respondents (11%)
- Those who do not have a disability or long term health condition (16%) vs those who do (7%)



### **More difficult to access park/restriction of access**

Subgroups more likely to say it would be **more difficult to access park/restriction of access** (11% overall) include:

- Respondents aged 75+ (15%) vs other age groups, particularly those aged 45–64 (9%)
- Female respondents (12%) vs male respondents (9%)
- Those who have a disability or long term health condition (17%) vs those who do not (8%)

### **Increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality**

Subgroups more likely to say it would result in **increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality** (11% overall) include:

- Female respondents (11%) vs male respondents (9%)
- Those who have a disability or long term health condition (13%) vs those who do not (9%)

### **Enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route**

Subgroups more likely to say they **enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route** (10% overall) include:

- Respondents aged 55–64 (13%) vs other age groups, particularly those aged 35–44 (6%)
- Female respondents (12%) vs male respondents (7%)
- Those who have a disability or long term health condition (14%) vs those who do not (7%)





## Differences between those who agree and disagree

There were marked differences in the themes arising in the comments provided by those who agree and those who disagree with the proposed closure. For example, two in five (39%) of those who disagree said that there would be *more traffic/congestion elsewhere*, whilst almost a quarter said that it would result in a *longer journey time/need to travel further* or that there would be a *negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups* (23% each). By contrast, only small proportions of those who agree with the proposal shared these concerns (2%, 3% and 1% respectively).

Those who agree were much more likely to comment that the Park would become *safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving* (41%), a *more pleasant place to visit/improved experience* (36%), or that the *Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic* (35%) in comparison with those who disagree (0% for all).

These differences are presented in **Figure 2** (themes mentioned by 5% of more of respondents are included).

### Figure 2 – Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure by agreement/disagreement

Base: All who provided a response (3,953); Those who agree (1,341); Those who disagree (2,573)

| Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure   | All    |     | Agree  |     | Disagree |     |
|---|--------|-----|--------|-----|----------|-----|
|   | Number | %   | Number | %   | Number   | %   |
| More traffic/congestion elsewhere                         | 1,036  | 26% | 23     | 2%  | 1,007    | 39% |
| Longer journey time/need to travel further                | 630    | 16% | 38     | 3%  | 588      | 23% |
| Negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups     | 610    | 15% | 10     | 1%  | 597      | 23% |
| Safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving     | 561    | 14% | 554    | 41% | 5        | 0%  |
| More pleasant place to visit/improved experience          | 482    | 12% | 477    | 36% | 2        | 0%  |
| Park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic     | 474    | 12% | 468    | 35% | 3        | 0%  |
| More difficult to access park/restriction of access       | 443    | 11% | 6      | 0%  | 436      | 17% |
| Increased emissions/pollution/poorer air quality          | 433    | 11% | 7      | 1%  | 425      | 17% |
| Enjoy driving through park/visiting by car/pleasant route | 397    | 10% | 14     | 1%  | 379      | 15% |
| No traffic problems/enough measures to reduce traffic     | 343    | 9%  | 8      | 1%  | 333      | 13% |



| Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure    | All    |    | Agree  |     | Disagree |     |
|--|--------|----|--------|-----|----------|-----|
|  | Number | %  | Number | %   | Number   | %   |
| No issues currently/no change needed                       | 314    | 8% | 3      | 0%  | 309      | 12% |
| Positive to have less traffic/fewer cars                   | 276    | 7% | 273    | 20% | 1        | 0%  |
| Better/safer for children/families                         | 259    | 7% | 259    | 19% | -        | -   |
| Park should be for people/wildlife not cars                | 245    | 6% | 244    | 18% | -        | -   |
| Greater risk of accidents/unsafe/narrow exit               | 242    | 6% | 2      | 0%  | 240      | 9%  |
| Needs to be accessible to all/by all methods of transport  | 236    | 6% | 5      | 0%  | 231      | 9%  |
| Likely to visit less frequently                            | 220    | 6% | 2      | 0%  | 218      | 8%  |
| Cost implications/waste of money/other spending priorities | 211    | 5% | 2      | 0%  | 207      | 8%  |
| Closure will leave only one exit                           | 208    | 5% | 3      | 0%  | 205      | 8%  |
| Quieter/more peaceful/relaxing park                        | 205    | 5% | 202    | 15% | 2        | 0%  |
| Protection for wildlife/natural environment                | 194    | 5% | 188    | 14% | 5        | 0%  |
| No accidents/conflicts/drivers are considerate             | 185    | 5% | 1      | 0%  | 183      | 7%  |
| Negative impact on park businesses/café                    | 185    | 5% | 1      | 0%  | 184      | 7%  |

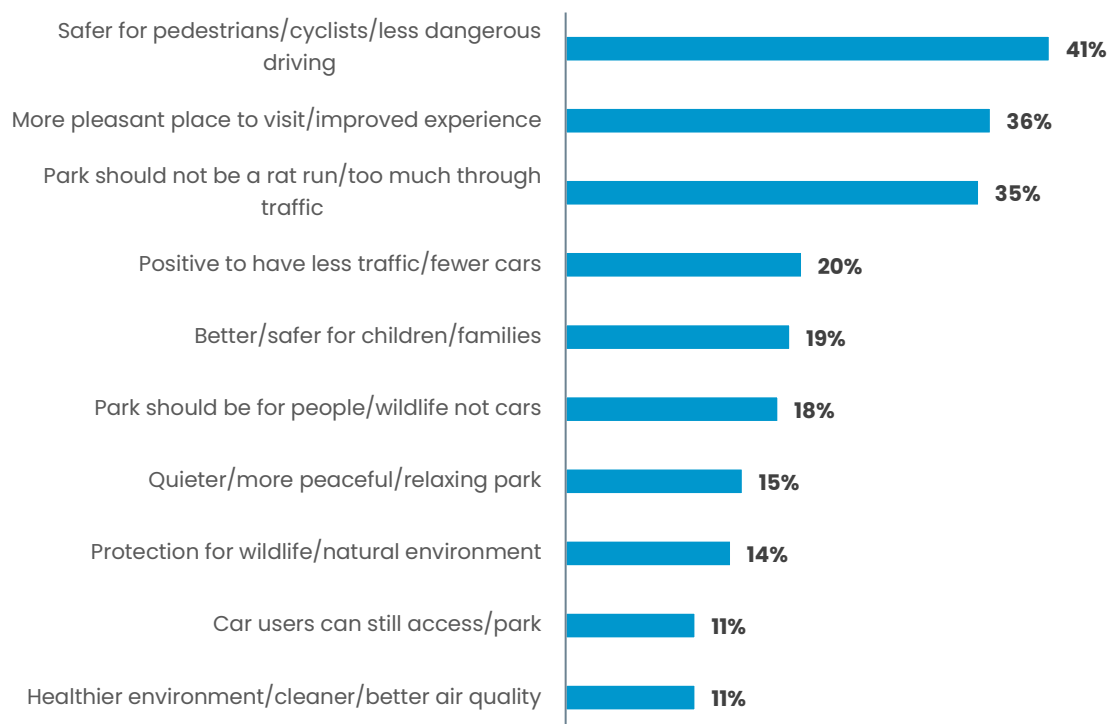
The most common themes arising from the comments provided by those who agreed with the proposed closure are presented in **Figure 3** overleaf.

Two in five of these respondents (41%) said that Poole Park would become *safer for pedestrians/cyclists/less dangerous driving*, and similar proportions said it would make the park a *more pleasant place to visit/improved experience* (36%) and that the *park should not be a rat run/too much through traffic* (35%).



**Figure 3 – Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure by agreement (top ten)**

Base: Those who agree (1,341)



Of those who disagreed, the most frequent response was that the proposed closure would result in *more traffic/congestion elsewhere* (39%). Almost a quarter said that there would be a *negative impact on disabled/elderly/vulnerable groups* or that it would result in a *longer journey time/need to travel further* (23% each). These results are shown in **Figure 4** overleaf.

**Figure 4 – Views/comments about the impact of the proposed closure by disagreement (top ten)**

Base: Those who disagree (2,573)

