South Gloucestershire Council

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You Said, We Did: Design for Merritt Way Rain Garden

Results from Resident Engagement July 2025

Published November 2025

We are proposing a new design for Merrit Way green space:

Currently, every time it rains, water runs off our roads and into drains, carrying with it all sorts of nasty stuff like oil, petrol and brake dust. That polluted water flows straight into Warmley Brook, harming wildlife and increasing the risk of flooding.

We think a 'rain garden' that uses nature to clean and slow down the water before it reaches the brook would encourage more wildlife, making it a nicer place to relax or walk, with lots of interesting features and cleaner water.

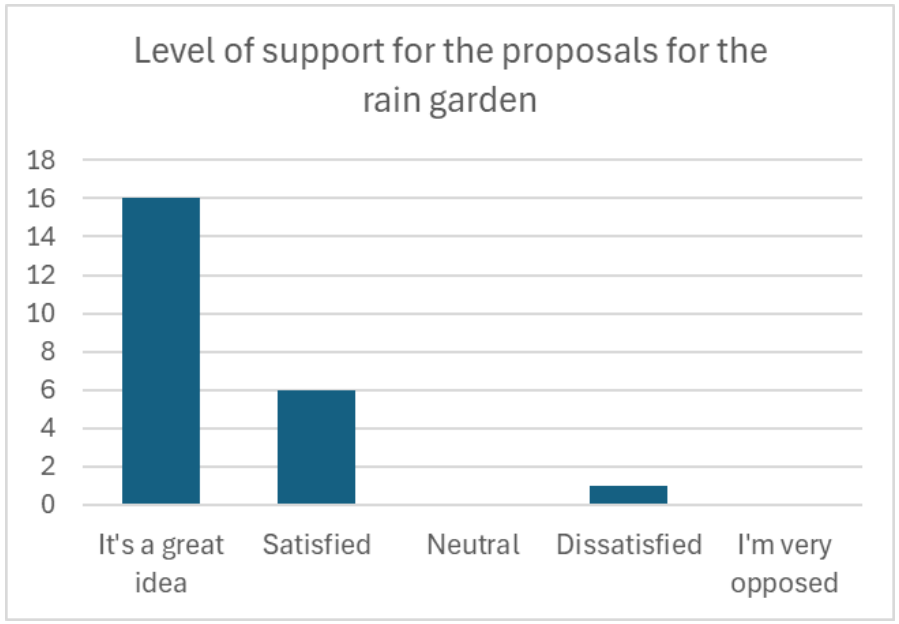
We wanted local residents' feedback on how our initial design, to help it meet their usage needs.

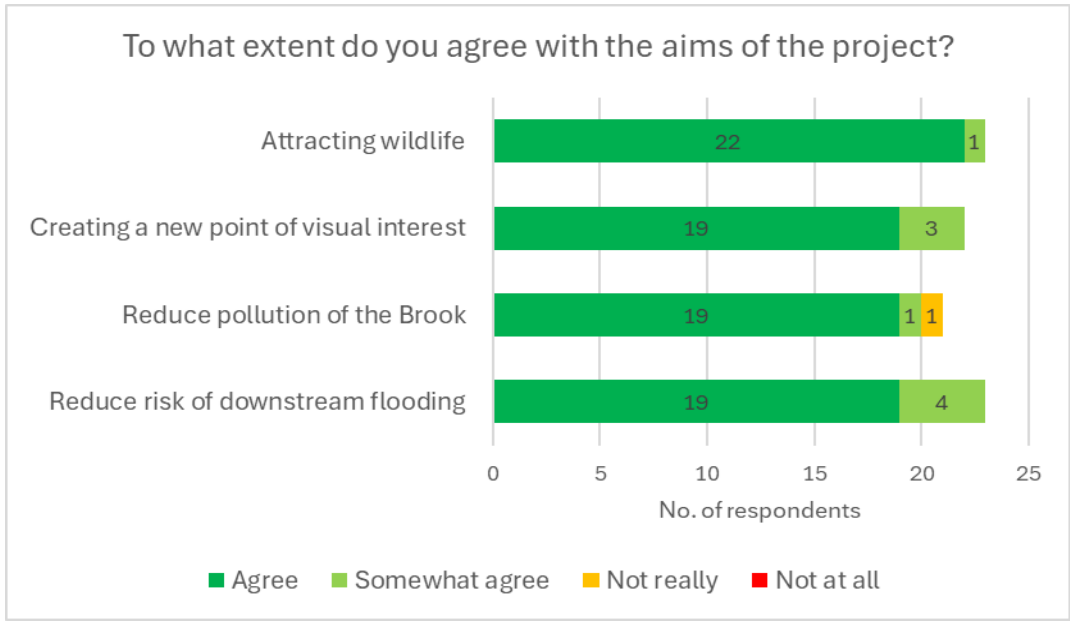


The preferred design option when dry, and lower intensity events

There is strong support for the Rain Garden and its proposed outcomes

- Majority of respondents fully support the current proposals. Only one respondent is dissatisfied with them
- Almost all respondents agree with all four aims of the project

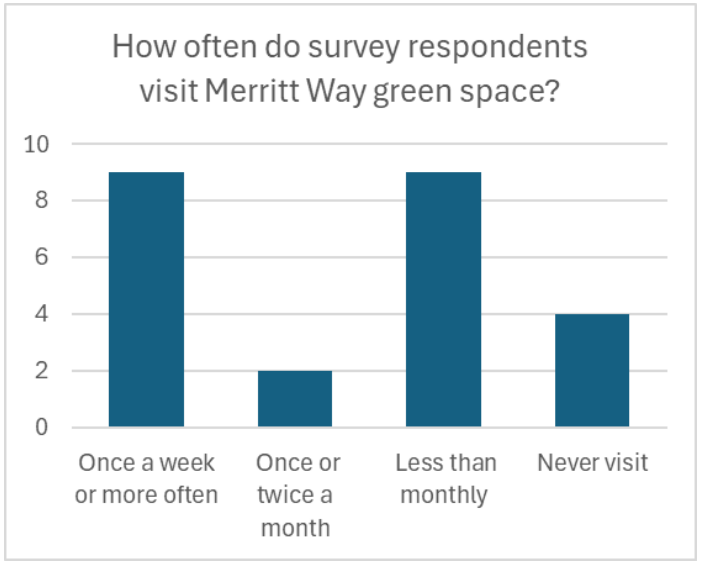


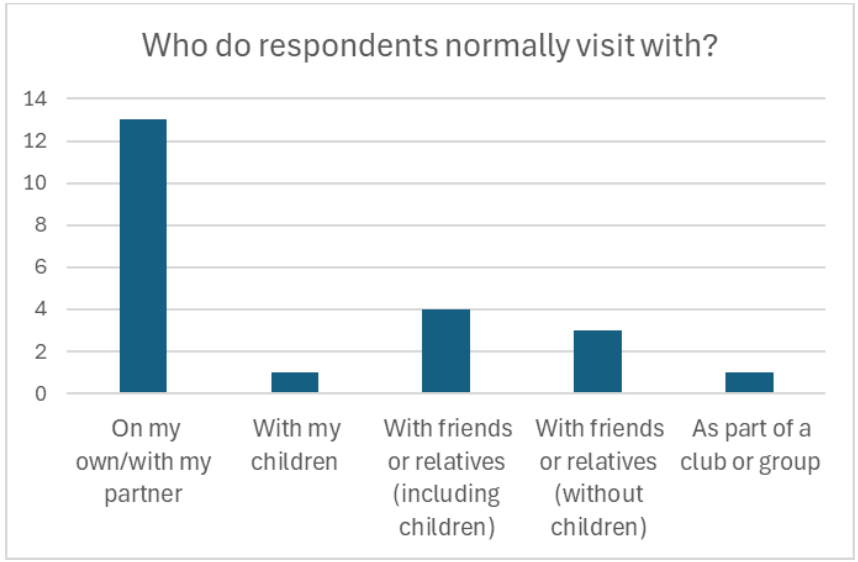


We should ensure the design maintains current use of green space

- Survey respondents are roughly divided between those who use the space weekly, and those that use it a few times a year.
- It's considered most important to be able to use the green space for **exercise and to relax.** Drop-in event participants mentioned the need for space to have picnics and play ball games

What we can do: *To retain a sufficiently large open space, the SUDS could be be slightly reduced in scale, and should still be effective.*







Concerns from residents for Council to address:

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Theme	Specific concern	Proposed solution
Lack of space for leisure and relaxation	- Playing ball games – rounders, football - sunbathing, - picnics, - Riding bikes	- To retain a sufficiently large open space, the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) could be slightly reduced in scale, and should still be effective.
Space being misused or used by local people displaying anti-social behaviour	- Might attract more anti-social behaviour or gathering of young people (noise) - Children throwing the stones/pebbles	- We could omit the steps that would provide access from Mangotsfield station area - We can construct the bioswales as soil and vegetation, avoiding exposed aggregates/ stones
Not sure it will sufficiently prevent pollution	- Will pollutants stay in land / become concentrated - Concern about heavy metal pollution - Seems minimal vs. pollution from industrial estates and businesses	There should be no additional problem in terms of pollution. Exposure to UV will neutralise any harmful bacteria and the plants will do the rest through phytoremediation. The concerns about build up of heavy metals are not as great as some might think – there are heavy metals in brake dust but on an estate like this where car speeds are always low, the highway dust probably contains less brake dust than found in areas where heavy braking is frequently done. Plants can be highly effective in removing heavy metals (through phytoremediation) and we will incorporate 'hyper-accumulator' plant species that are most effective and highly tolerant to heavy metals.
Impact on adjacent properties	- Will it affect my home insurance / flooding?	- We can't see any way either the work or finished space would affect home insurance. The SuDS is designed to reduce the risk of flooding.
Ongoing maintenance	- Will council maintain the space / will it be harder to maintain or keep tidy? - Will need weeding to help new plants establish / prevent brambles taking over - Can the council add litter bins?	- We will be careful in the design to ensure we don't make it harder for the maintenance teams to keep the hedge cut. Most of the hedge access in the field will remain as it currently is - Add 1 bin

Concerns from residents for Council to address:

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Theme	Specific concern	Proposed solution
Build disruption	- Deer being impacted	- Woodland boundary of site will remain available and unaffected ensuring safe corridor for deer to continue moving through the site
	- Disruption to parking or bin lorry access	- Try to minimise number of vehicles used, consider only parking construction vehicles whin area of construction and off-street as much as possible. Find out when bin lorry collection day is and take particular care on this day - Provide residents with timetable of works and try to undertake works outside of school holiday period. Establish a resident liaison role so someone can represent residents and bring any issues to the attention of the contractor.
Safety	- Ponds being drowning hazard	- Include suitable fencing around the main pond, reinforced with planting on one side and open aspect on the other so that a view of the pond can be enjoyed. Over time it may be possible to remove the fencing from the planted site with the planting deterring children and dogs but enabling wildlife to access the water. Ensure the profile of all ponds includes shallow edges to prevent slips into deep water and help people extract themselves from the water. Consider knee rail is only installed on the face of the pool where it borders the path. Signs at entrance points could advise of deep water during prolonged rainy periods. Provide a design that keeps temporary pools as shallow as possible
	- Uneven ground a trip hazard	- No green space is managed on the basis of providing a perfect smooth surface guaranteed hazard free. We can try where possible to contour swales gently so that the changes of surface levels are gentler, but this increases the area needed for each swale and may compromise our aim to keep the system as compact as possible to maximise lawn area
	- Water being unsafe for dogs to drink	- Possibility for signage to advise dog walkers to keep dogs on leads. Dogs can currently access the water in Warmley Brook (or street puddles), which is likely to be far more contaminated at present than the water would be in the swales.

Reasons for support and other feedback:

Theme	Specifics	Proposed solution
More use of area	- If it helps more people use it or have more uses for it - Good to have people of all ages and abilities use it - Area currently underused - Could we add benches?	- Add up to 2 x benches. Benches can be sited some distance from each other to address concerns about encouraging anti-social groups to gather
Water pollution	- Bad smell in bottom corner of space / river - I don't let my grandchildren play in the brook because currently dirty and unsafe - Water has rubbish dumped in it, green space has litter – in need of improvement! - Concern about safety of area currently due to levels of pollution	- System should ensure the stagnant marshy area is replaced with a pond that has sufficient replacement and replenishment periods to prevent smelly stagnation.
Nature	- Want to help nature - Will make the space more interesting and inviting - In favour of nature corridors	
Community involvement	- Involve local businesses and town and parish councils - Community could help with planting the plants and hopefully be willing to look after space in future	
Accessibility	- Could there be an alternative to the stepped path to the brook?	
Optimism	- Have seen this work elsewhere and is really good - Believe it will help the environment - Good idea, good timing, - Cost-effective - Will do many different positive things in one go	

Other questions raised by residents:

- *How long will the work take?*
  - Excavation works could potentially be completed in a 4 to 6 week period, with an entire construction phase of 3 months, but this will depend on the final design.

- *Will the would area be out of bounds during this time?*
  - Consideration will be given to zoning the work although this might not be feasible if doing so adds significantly to either cost or duration of work period. In either case the eastern end of the space should remain accessible.

- *How deep will the ponds be?*
  - Maximum likely depth of swales during heavy rain periods to be 15-30cm. Maximum likely depth of holding pools 45cm – 60cm. It should be remembered that these depths will only be achieved during periods of intense rainfall when visitor numbers within the space will be at their lowest

- *What will happen to the existing brick-built discharge point sited at the western end of the space?*
  - There are no plans yet but if this has no purpose within the scheme and becomes redundant, then the intention would be to remove it.

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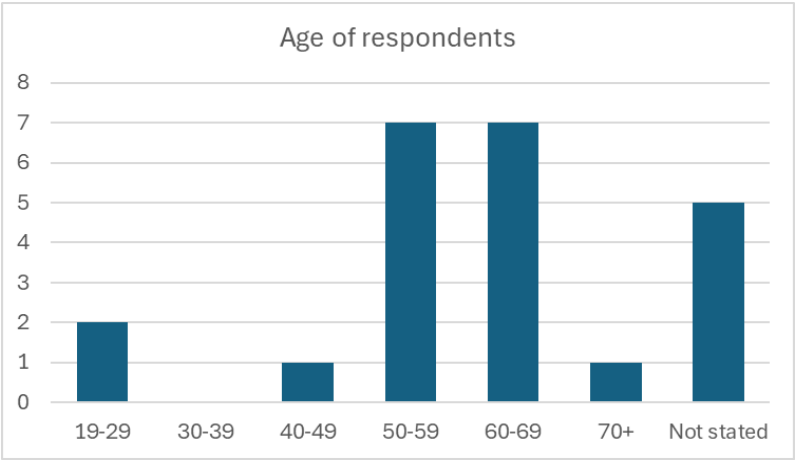
Thank you to all the residents who took part!

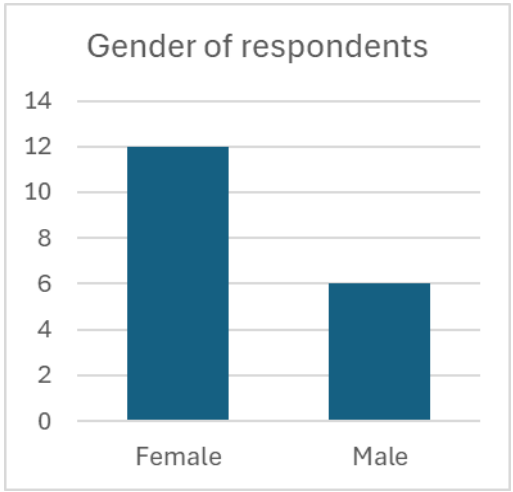
We look forward to updating you on the next stage as soon as we can

If you have any further comments or questions, please contact *consultation@southglos.gov.uk*

Appendix: Method and Sample

- 590 Households close to the green space near Merritt Way were sent a letter in the post in June 2025 inviting them to take part in the co-design of Merritt Way Rain Garden. They could attend an in-person drop-in session held on the space on 15th July, or by provide their feedback in our online survey, open until 3rd August.
- We received **23 survey responses** – a very small sample which we cannot rely on to represent the wider community but can give us an indication of the views of those who likely feel most highly involved in the future of the rain garden.
    - **14 survey respondents said they live within walking distance** of Merritt Way
    - Female residents and those aged 50-69 are over-represented in the survey feedback
- 6 local residents braved the wind and rain to talk to council officers, local councillor Matt Palmer and one of the parish councillors at the drop-in event





Appendix: Reason for concern from respondent who is dissatisfied with current proposals:

At first glance, the proposed design looks attractive and favourable.
Whilst in favour of attracting nature, reducing risks around flooding and pollution, and creating attractive green spaces, I have the following concerns:

1) Replacing the largest area of grass with the main pond and mounds, (3 and 1 on plan), denies people all of the space currently used by children/families/friends to gather for picnics, sunbathing, ball games (e.g. setting up a football net, cricket, rounders etc).

*2) If the current run off is polluting Warmley brook to the extent that it is *****, then surely these pollutants will just seep into the ground of Merritt Way green space instead. Concern pollutants would become concentrated and a hazard for those who use it (humans and animals). The sunlight won't remove heavy metals or particles.*

3) In prolonged or very heavy rain, the storm water cascades down past the front of house number [redacted]. We would want reassurance that diverting the flow of water to the new, proposed route would not cause any excess of water to back up, which could, potentially, cause flooding at the front door of property number [redacted].

*4) I believe both local Councilors and the police are aware of the ***** use and anti-social behavior on the railway path around Mangotsfield station. I oppose the direct access from the railway path, (7 & 8 on plan), due the risk of encouraging those involved in such activities to visit the Merritt Way green space. There is the risk that any new seating or play equipment would get vandalised fairly quickly (e.g. as happened to tree saplings on the Merritt Way green space, which was reported to South Gloucestershire council in April 2017. On a separate occasion, an art installation at Mangotsfield Station was also badly vandalised). Items7 & 8 would also be expensive to implement, e.g. to install steps down the very steep bank. It does not benefit the main aims of the project, which seem to be reducing pollution and flooding.*

5) Concerns about maintenance of the space after the project is complete. This includes a) early on, whilst new planting is getting established, aswell as ongoing maintenance to prevent the rain garden becoming untidy and b) ongoing cutting of the Merritt Way hedge, and any grass areas that remain, will become trickier due to the intricacies of the design and layout proposed.

6) It is unclear from the plan how the existing brick structure, where the water emerges from underground storm drain, will be dealt with. (This is on the green space at the cul-de-sac end of Merritt Way, nearest number [redacted]) Will this be incorporated into the main pond area? (3 on plan) or left in situ and allowed to fall into disrepair and become an overgrown hazard.#

7) Given the expectation that the ponds will mostly be dry, there is general concern that these areas of the rain garden will attract litter