

UPPER HUTT CITY

Report



Our parks and open spaces: Issues and Opportunities Report on public feedback

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Background

Upper Hutt City Council is developing *Our Parks and Open Spaces* – a strategy that will guide and support the planning and development of open space in Upper Hutt. These spaces help make Upper Hutt beautiful and unique. It also plays an important role in creating a healthy, vibrant and connected community.

As our city grows it is not only important to look after and improve the open space network, but also to ensure open spaces are appropriately located and meet the needs of the community.

Issues and opportunities feedback

A key step in developing the strategy was to consider current issues and potential opportunities to improve the network of open spaces. The issues and opportunities discussion document set out the background to why Upper Hutt's open space is important and considerations for the future – to identify matters that could be addressed by the proposed strategy.

The issues and opportunities document was published on Council's consultation website and was available in key locations (Upper Hutt library, Expressions, Council reception) with a dedicated feedback form and an online submission form being available for completion. The invitation for feedback was promoted with two large advertisements in the Upper Hutt Leader and a campaign on Council's Facebook page, while interested stakeholders were emailed directly. The feedback period was open from 10 May - 2 June 2017.

Summary of feedback

The questions on the feedback form (online and hard copy) were divided into sections to focus on open space in 'Your neighbourhood' and 'Wider Upper Hutt' in terms of how open space is rated for quality, used and valued. These were followed by general questions about the issues and opportunities identified (see Attachment 1 for an extract of the feedback form).

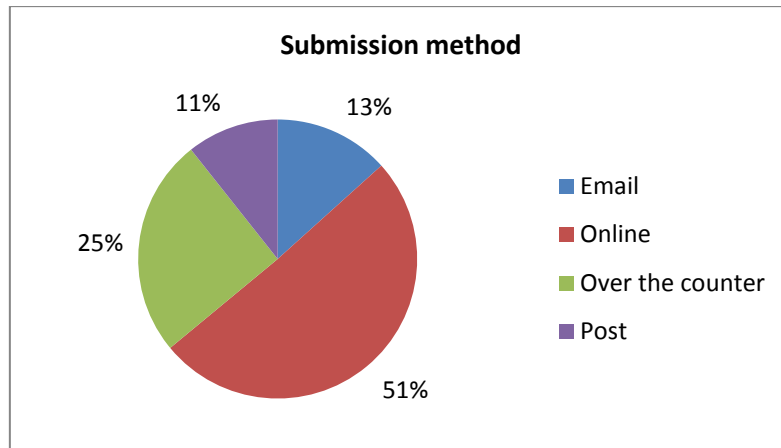
Council received 76 submissions during this feedback period. The majority of submissions used the dedicated online or hard copy feedback forms provided, however not all submitters provided responses to all the questions asked.

ABOUT THE SUBMITTERS

Age group		Gender	
Under 18	1%	Male	9%
18-29	4%	Female	43%
30-44	19%	Not stated	47%
45-60	46%		
Over 60	14%		
Not stated	16%		

Is this your first time submitting to Council?

Yes	65%
No	35%



QUALITY OF OPEN SPACES

The rating of open spaces as either 'excellent' or 'good' was at 53% for 'your neighbourhood' and for 'wider Upper Hutt' it was 72%.

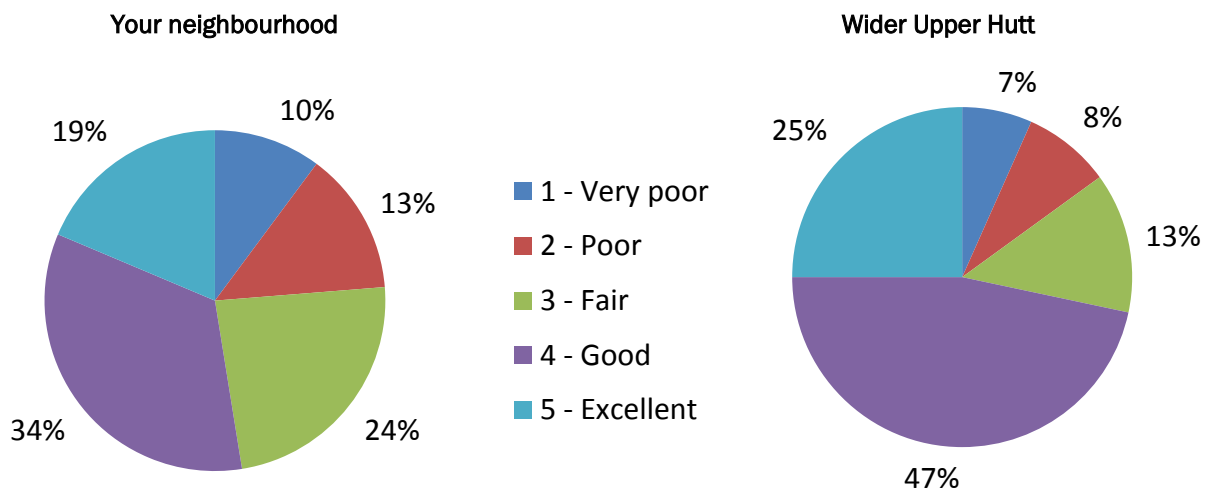
This means 47% of submitters rated their neighbourhood open space as less than good (fair, poor or very poor), notably higher than the equivalent rating for open space in wider Upper Hutt which was at 28%.

The numbers who rated open space as very poor was 7% and 10% respectively.

21 submitters (27% of the total) who ranked their neighbourhood as less than good requested additional facilities for horse riders, and 10 were located in the rural zone (not all responses provided addresses). Other reasons for ranking neighbourhood open spaces as less than good include poor connectivity to wider networks (e.g. barriers or lack of paths), poor drainage or wet weather facilities and safety.

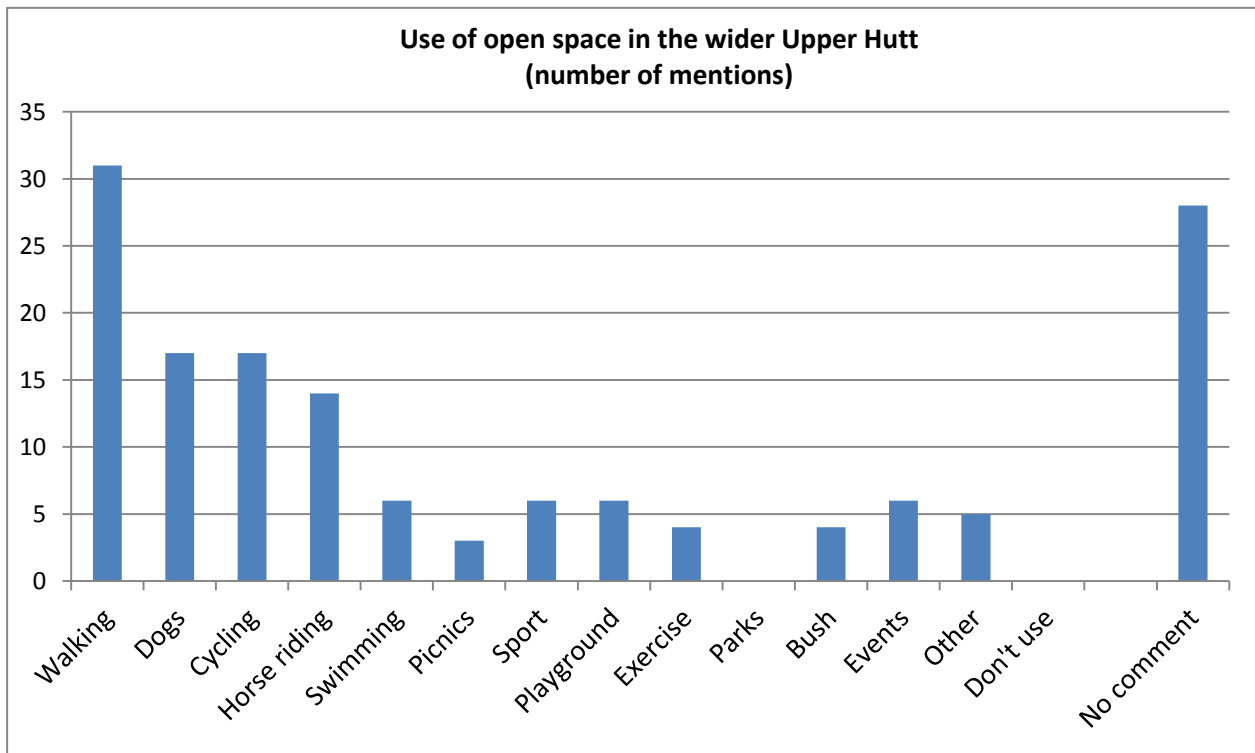
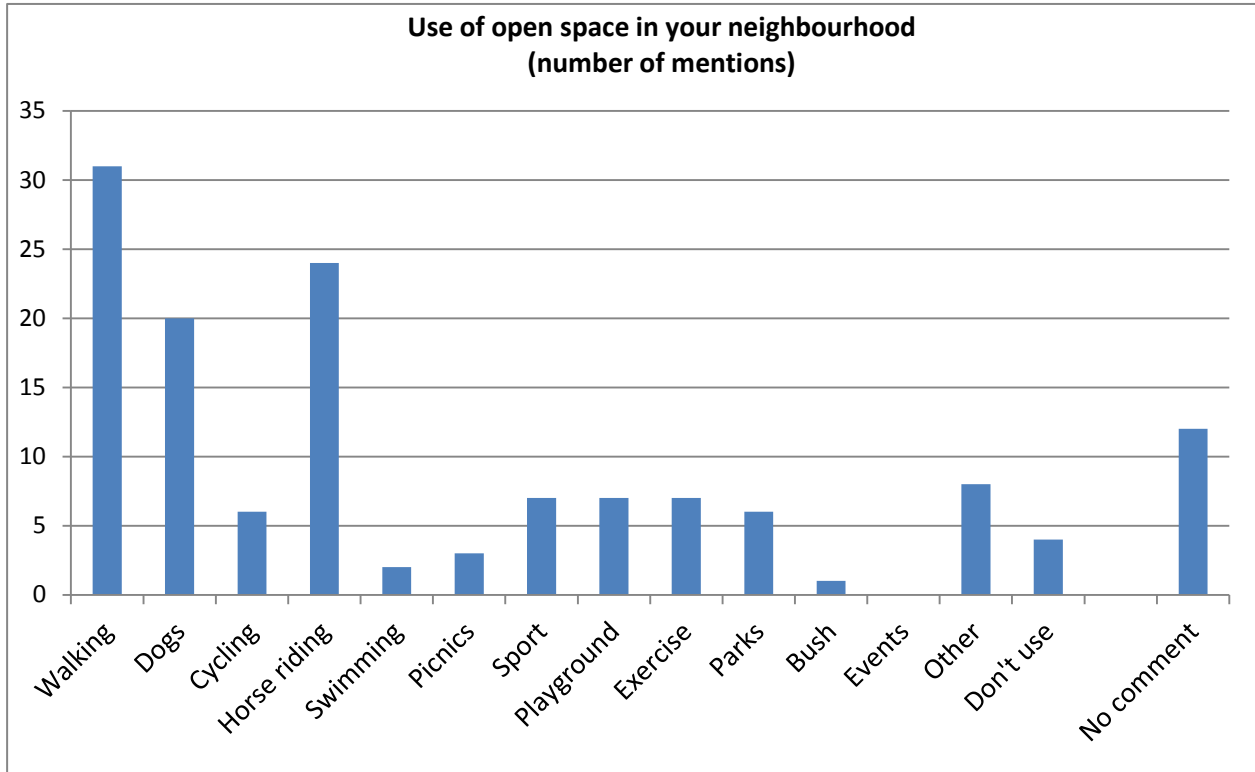
How do you rate the quality of our open spaces?

	Neighbourhood	Wider Upper Hutt
1 - Very poor	10%	7%
2 - Poor	14%	8%
3 - Fair	24%	13%
4 - Good	34%	47%
5 - Excellent	19%	25%



USE OF OPEN SPACES

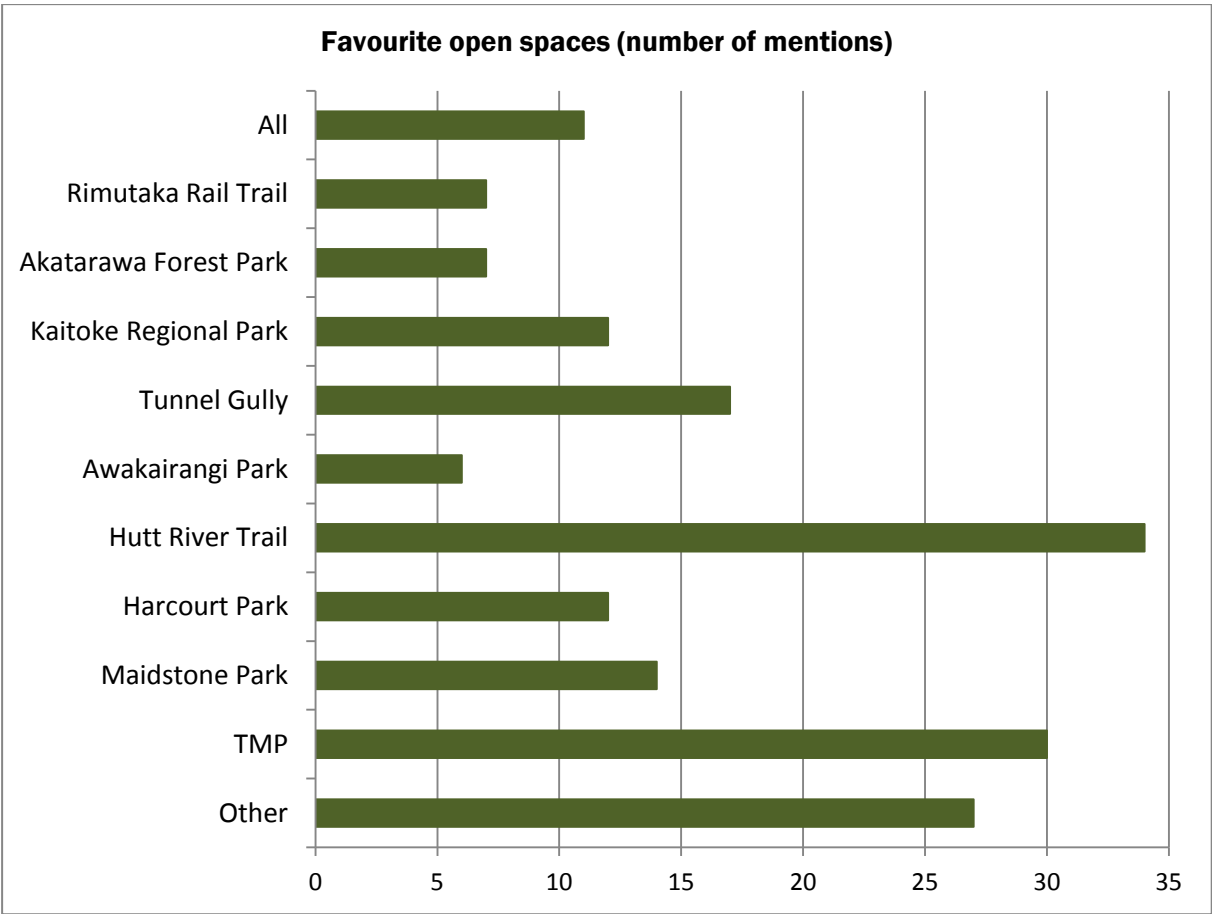
Submitters were asked how they used open spaces in both 'your neighbourhood' and 'wider Upper Hutt' with a free text comment field provided for comments. Submitter comments were analysed to identify the common activities or themes stated in relation to the use of open spaces. A large number did not complete the question in relation to open space in the wider Upper Hutt area.



FAVOURITE OPEN SPACES

Submitters were asked what their favourite open spaces were with a free text comment field provided for comments. Upper Hutt’s destination open spaces (Hutt River Trail, Maidstone Park, Trentham Memorial Park and Harcourt Park) and regional parks featured highly on the list of favourite open spaces. Mentions of Akatarawa Forest were specifically related to the Cannon Point walkway and Birchville Dam.

The ‘Other’ category included private spaces such as Riding for the Disabled at Silverstream, paper roads and the following parks which each received less than five mentions: Clyma Park (3), Moonshine Park (3), Ecclesfield Reserve (2), Dunns Park (2), Heretaunga Park (2), Ngati Tama Park (2), California Park (1), Pinehaven Reserve (1), Collins Stream (1), Keith George Memorial Park (1), Kiwi Park (1), Rata Park (1), Battle Hill Regional Park(1), Belmont Regional Park (1).

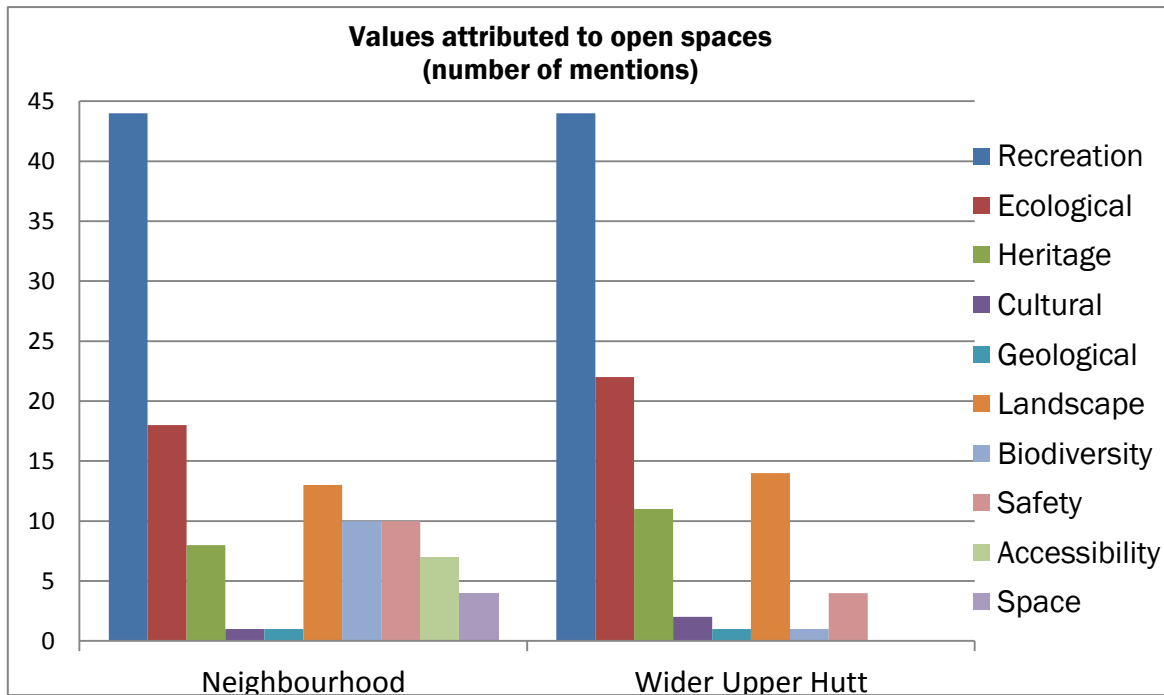


VALUE OF OPEN SPACES

Understanding what values people attribute to open spaces help to inform the characteristics of the open spaces that are important to the community to ensure these values are maintained or enhanced by the management and development of the open space network.

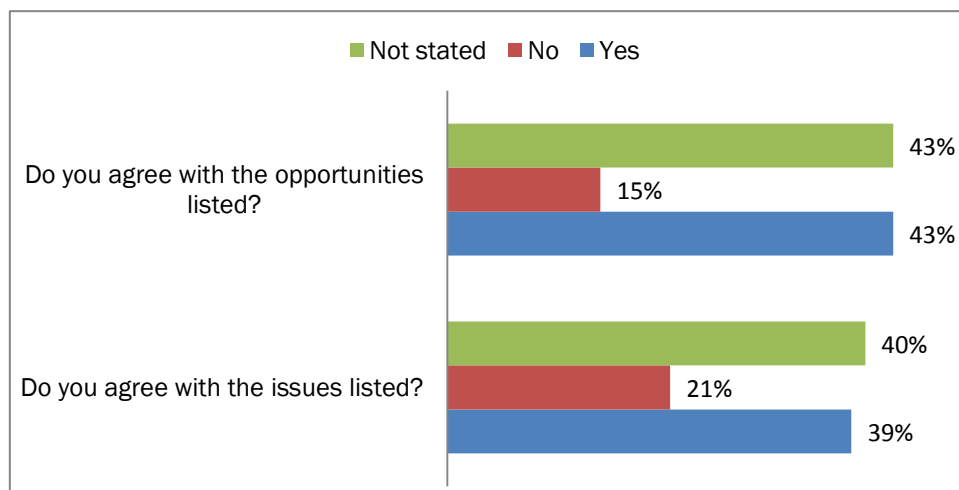
The questions on the value of open spaces gave examples of values (recreation, ecological, heritage, cultural, geological, landscape, biodiversity). Three additional values or themes mentioned repeatedly by submitters were included in the graph below (space, accessibility and safety).

- For both neighbourhood open space and wider Upper Hutt level, the top three values listed were recreation, ecological and landscape.
- For neighbourhood open space, the next most common values noted were biodiversity, safety and heritage. Comments noting accessibility and space only related to neighbourhood open space (none received for wider Upper Hutt open space).
- In the comments about accessibility this was mentioned in the context of being close by, providing connections or linkages, or being easy to get to.
- For the wider Upper Hutt open spaces, heritage was the fourth most common value selected.



ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Submitters were specifically asked to state their support for the issues and opportunities listed in the discussion document. A large number of submitters did not complete all the questions in the feedback form. Free text fields were also provided for comments on the issues and opportunities listed in the document, these comments are collated in Attachment 1.



What do you think of the focus areas listed on page 5? (Free text comment field provided.)

- 15 submitters expressed support for the focus areas in the issues and opportunities document.
- 26 comments were received on provision for horse riding in the focus areas.
- Three comments noted the focus areas were vague, general or non-specific.
- Other comments included:
 - The strategy should provide support for joining up corridors (e.g. the link between Hutt and Whakatiki rivers, or connecting the city centre to the river cycling and walking trails).
 - Improve the focus on protecting and enhancing open spaces.
 - Don't agree with the focus on one-off events, recreational activities and the focus on international tourism. I think open spaces should be quiet and not places where as many people as possible should gather.
 - The 'essence' of why frequent users use these areas is often lost when the focus is changed to concentrate on opening it to other users (i.e visitors) who may not use it often (problems like rubbish, overpopulating etc.)
 - Focus on native planting.
 - Focus on film tourism and attracting sports events.
 - Need emphasis on civic space (i.e space across from Expressions).
 - Keep open spaces (do not sell or develop).
 - Provide a green space in the city centre
 - Look for opportunities for youth in Upper Hutt.
 - Think 'share parks and open spaces' along the same lines as 'share the road'.
 - Maintaining buildings and open spaces for families.
 - The beauty and range of open spaces where you can find plenty of space for whatever activity in one of the main reasons why we live in Upper Hutt.
 - Adventure tourism is a big opportunity.
 - Strongly support the idea of people in Upper Hutt being able to access and benefit from the outdoor areas (not only visitors) and providing ample and diverse opportunities to engage with the open spaces.

GENERAL COMMENTS

A summary of comments received on the issues, opportunities and in general is available in Attachment 2 (circulated separately, note submissions number 4, 5, 4 and 66 are excluded as no comments were provided on these questions). Alternatively please see the full submissions circulated separately.

- In the general comments section 35 submitters commented on the exclusion of horses and horse riding activities in open spaces, and made requests for tracks or shared pathways for horse riding or other measures to facilitate and support the equestrian community's use of open spaces.
- 15 comments received related to maintenance or levels of services provided by Council in relation to open spaces (for example requests for rubbish bins, seats, paths, lighting, widening of wheelchair access to open spaces, maintenance).
- Six submitters commented in relation to dogs in open spaces.
- Submission 30 from Forest & Bird Upper Hutt requested a green belt encircling the city to achieve legislated protection for the surrounding landscape and biodiversity protection including for bush remnants and wetlands. The submission also requests that the Silverstream Spur should have the protection of either open space or reserve classification.
- Submission 52 from Silverstream Steam Railway Inc. also supported protection of the Silverstream Spur and reiterated the submission made on the Land Use Strategy in this regard.
- Submission 77 from Upper Hutt Town and Country Association also supported protection of the Silverstream Spur.

Next steps

Officers will discuss further details of the feedback and how it may contribute to the draft strategy at the Council workshop on 3 July 2017.

The issues and opportunities feedback is being taken into account during the preparation of the draft strategy that is currently underway.

Note this was not a formal submission process requiring hearings or decisions to be made on submissions received. Formal consultation will follow on the draft strategy in August. Submitters were advised of this in communications about the initial feedback process.

Feedback received relating to operational matters (i.e maintenance or levels of service) will be passed on to the relevant council teams for consideration.

Attachment 1: Feedback form questions

For questions 1 – 4, please comment specifically in regard to the neighbourhood where you live as well as open space in Upper Hutt generally.

1. How do you rate the quality of our open spaces?

Your neighbourhood (please tick one)

poor

fair

excellent

Wider Upper Hutt (please tick one)

poor

fair

excellent

2. How do you use our open spaces?

Your neighbourhood

Wider Upper Hutt

3. Which are you favourite open spaces, and why?

Your neighbourhood

Wider Upper Hutt

4. What do you value most about our open spaces?

Please state this in order of how important the values are to you (the most important being at no.1). Examples of values include things like recreation, ecological, heritage, cultural, geological, landscapes, biodiversity.

Your neighbourhood

1.	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>

Wider Upper Hutt

1.	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>

5. What do you think about the focus areas we've listed on page 5 of the *issues and opportunities* document?

6. Do you agree with the issues we've listed on page 15?

YES NO

7. Do you agree with the opportunities we've listed on page 16 – 17?

YES NO

Do you have any other comments on the issues and opportunities document or on Upper Hutt's open space?