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Appendix 01 - Consultation Outcomes Report

PLINCKE | SEPT 2016

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

St. Mary's Lands is a significant green space that provides a link between Warwick town centre and open countryside. Its landscape character is valued as a contrast to Warwick's other more formal parks and gardens. St. Mary's Lands is important to wildlife, recognised by its status as a Local Nature Reserve. It is also important for its heritage and cultural values as recognised by its Conservation Area status. Warwick Racecourse grandstand and the Victorian detached pleasure gardens at Hill Close are important listed features for their special historic interest and whose setting is closely linked to the development of Warwick Common. The green space is also important for a variety of recreational and leisure uses from active sports to quiet relaxation and niche interests such as model aeroplane flying. St. Mary's Lands is the venue for large scale events in the town such the annual Mop faire and Bonfire night celebrations that help to build community cohesion. St. Mary's Lands is also important to the local economy, it supports a variety of business and leisure interests to Warwick that contribute to the local visitor economy.

It is no surprise that with such a diversity of interest, conflicts of opinion will arise from time to time.

The conflicting interests in such a multi-facetted space, can include the priorities for funding, rights of access, and the most appropriate uses as well as the general landscape character and appearance of the site. Many such conflicts will arise and are usually resolved through a combination of good communication and common sense. However, when significant developments are proposed that have implications for major change, these can lead to irreconcilable positions being taken between the various interest groups. In such instances an entrenchment of views leads to a stalemate, a breakdown of communication and trust. In the long-term, such a position results in a failure to implement any change, however worthwhile. This has not been the history of St. Mary's Lands from the past. The action group that resisted the development of Hill Close Gardens as a housing site evolved into a highly credible Charitable Trust to deliver the £1.3 million restoration of the Grade II* landscape in close cooperation with the District Council. Or the delivery of the first regeneration masterplan that encompassed significant changes at the site including new housing and the stables relocation.

'Without vision, partnership working, and integrated thinking this project would not be happening. It is a model of how good planning can achieve results.'

Clive Harridge: the former RTPI Vice President | Reviewing the first St. Mary's Lands regeneration project.

The St. Mary's Lands Working Party has been established to enable the range of stakeholders with an interest in the open space to come together to plan a joint vision for its future. One that sets out a 10-year Regeneration Master Plan that contains the framework for safeguarding the green space whilst recognizing that change can be both beneficial and essential to the long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability of St. Mary's Lands.

The Working Party developed the 10-year strategy over a 6-month period from October 2015 to March 2016. The group reached agreement on a set of proposals by which the strategy might be implemented. These proposals have developed to achieve four key aims:

- ***Protect St. Mary's Lands for People and Nature***
- ***Improve Access and Enjoyment for All***
- ***Support the Local Economy***
- ***Invest for the Future***

Each of the four aims distills the individual aspirations expressed by the various stakeholders on the Working Party, these have ranged from ensuring that its wildlife value is enhanced and that there is no loss of the green space. Whilst others have expressed the need for change and investment.

In April 2016, the Executive Committee of Warwick District Council approved the recommendations of the Working Party, that the wider public should be consulted upon the proposals before these ideas were developed any further.

This report summarises the means by which the consultation took place, who were consulted, what the outcomes were, and the key recommendations for moving forward.

'Apparently intractable differences and preconceived positions have been overcome, partly because everyone has been given the opportunity to be heard, and we have all bought into the process.'

Nigel Hamilton, Friends of St. Mary's Lands | Correspondence in support of the proposals 05.04.16.

In summary, the consultation process has endorsed the Working Party's recommendations. In the analysis of degrees of +/- support, none of the proposals has received a minus score. This has provided the Working Party with the confidence to draw up a delivery plan for taking the ideas forward to the next stage of development.

Validity of the Outcomes

It is acknowledged that the consultation process could only represent a snap shot in time and capture only the views of a small minority of those affected by the proposals. However, the consistency of the responses received provides a clear indication of which areas require the most review and re-appraisal. It is unlikely that the consultation outcomes would change if greater numbers were consulted. The consistency of the responses is seen to offer a high-level of reassurance that the opinions given are a valid response and broadly representative of the public's views on the proposals. It is clear that support varies across the range of ideas presented and it is also very clear that many people are passionate about St. Mary's Lands and many more would wish to be kept informed of the next steps. Individual elements of the Regeneration Master Plan will require detailed and 'targeted' consultation.

This report should not be taken as the end of the consultation process. It should be used to set the priorities for engaging with the wide range of interests, aspirations, and concerns that have been expressed to date. 'Good consultation' is not a one-off event, but is multi-layered and builds from the early planning to the implementation and aftercare of projects. The process to date sets out a solid foundation to ensure a meaningful process of consultation is achieved to reduce the risks and increase the opportunities in taking this project forward.

The Working Party is grateful to its various members and the Council officers who assisted in the planning and delivery of the consultation events. It is especially grateful to the several hundred people who took the time to participate in the consultation process, with nearly 200 of these providing us with their detailed feedback and comments. This feedback has provided an invaluable insight to assist the Working Party to make the right decisions moving forward.

In spite of the many and varied views and opinions expressed, the single most important message is that St. Mary's Lands is a public open space, available to all and must remain 'green'.

2 PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

Meaningful Consultation

The Working Party members include representatives of amenity and user groups, the business organisations working at the site, Council officers and Councillor representatives of the three tiers of local government. The Councillor representatives in particular are tasked with representing the views of their constituents. The cross-section of interests helps to establish the group's legitimacy to formulate the Regeneration Master Plan for St. Mary's Lands. The representation is broad and their interests diverse. The group agreed that a consultation process needed to reflect that a lot of the ground work in forming the outline proposals had already been completed, with each respective group or member having discussed, where applicable with its own members or organisation the potential range of ideas that were possible. This had also included an assessment of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to the site. Given the work to date, the facilitating consultants recommended that to be meaningful and genuine the consultation should focus on the specific outline proposals, in particular, that its purpose was not to ask for wide ranging and open ended views on what should happen to St. Mary's Lands. Instead the purpose of the public consultation was to establish whether these preliminary ideas were supported; in other words, it was about sharing information, building awareness and seeking a mandate rather than saying it was a 'blank piece of paper'.

Three specific questions were set out and agreed by the Working Party in a consultation programme:

"Have we missed anything?"

Asking questions to ensure that the proposals of the Working Party meet the needs and aspirations of the wider community, articulated through consultation, rather than the Working Party assuming that they had been fully represented. Whilst the Working Party covers a very broad cross-section of users of St. Mary's Lands, the consultation's purpose was also to gain the views of non-users and how this might affect how the proposals could be adapted to engage with this part of the community.

“Did you know?”

Ensure that information about the development plan, including key projects and timescales are made widely available to build public awareness of the project. The promotion of the project was seen as important to address the public’s criticism that ‘things just happen without us knowing’. Building awareness was seen to be an essential element of building trust and reducing future friction as projects move towards implementation.

“Do you agree?”

The timing of the consultation was specifically set at the completion of the preliminary ideas before these became actual projects. Prior to developing these ideas, an endorsement was considered essential. The consultation acted as a wider sounding board of local opinion to build consensus and test the legitimacy of the proposals.

In addition to the three primary aims of the consultation, it was also intended to achieve the following outcomes:

- build potential synergy with other initiatives, partners and organisations by raising awareness of the range and scope of the masterplan
- reduce future risks by consulting early with a range of statutory consultees and interest groups.

At the April Executive Meeting of Warwick District Council, the recommendation to consult with the wider public on the ideas of the Working Party were approved.

‘A set of proposals have now been developed by the Working Party and they are now at a stage to go out to wider public consultation. This reports sets out those proposals and sets out the proposed means of consultation.’

Executive Committee Report 06.04.16 | Recommendations on the proposed format for consultation.

3 CONSULTATION FORMAT

In order to meet the purposes, set out in Section 02, the format needed to be accessible to a large audience. It also needed to address potential barriers to access. These barriers typically include physical (unable to attend an exhibition), technical (not able access the internet), or social and cultural restrictions (it doesn't affect me, I don't have time). The multi-layered approach adopted targeted a range of audiences with differing levels of information depending upon the levels of interest. The various formats included:

- Press briefing pack and presentation at Racing Club Warwick to media outlets to encourage awareness of the consultation events and the scheme
- A stakeholder presentation and consultation 'pre-view' event held at the Hill Close Gardens Visitor Centre
- On-line questionnaire and downloadable information pack
- Weekend exhibitions staffed by Working Party members, Council officers and the consultants at the Shire Hall and Market Square with questionnaires and comment sheets
- Unstaffed week-long exhibition at the Shire Hall
- Targeted presentations to the Friends of St. Mary's Lands, Warwick Society, and Warwick Town Council.

The District Council's website contained an easy to access questionnaire that was duplicated in hard copy at the exhibitions. The questionnaire comprised 16-questions expanding upon the 4-key project aims of:

1. Protecting St. Mary's Lands for People and Nature
2. Improving Access and Enjoyment for All
3. Supporting the Local Economy
4. Investing in the Future

The questions were selected to understand the levels of endorsement of eight specific proposals:

1. The proposed play area close to Racing Club Warwick
2. The proposed footpath and cycle track improvements
3. Expanding the Caravan Club without loss of green space
4. The location of the hotel
5. Extra car parking spaces
6. Improving the main entrance to St. Mary's Lands
7. Improving the frontage to Hill Close Gardens
8. Investing in the Golf Centre.

Whilst the Regeneration Master Plan contains many more ideas and proposals, these eight were selected on the basis that they could either be delivered early in the programme, were broadly representative of the range of improvements proposed or were deemed to be more controversial and required a specific measure of comment.

The Working Party had discussed a number of potential risks and the content of the consultation materials had been agreed to manage these risks. In particular:

- *It's all been decided already -* use of words such as masterplan, designs or development were avoided as these imply fixity that would undermine the openness of the consultation process. Instead words such as outline ideas or proposals were adopted
- *It's the District Council doing what it wants -* the consultation process needed to come from the Working Party, rather than a wholly District Council led initiative. The inclusion of Working Party members throughout the process and not 'branding' the consultation materials too heavily was seen as giving the ideas a neutrality
- *It's just the Racecourse trying to get a hotel through the backdoor –* a risk to the process was that the hotel would overshadow the other elements of the scheme. In particular, if perceived to be a Jockey Club proposal, it could undermine trust in the process. The presentations and materials emphasized that the hotel was not being sponsored by the Jockey Club, but a proposal that had been collectively reached by the whole of the Working Party
- *It's just about commercialisation of the Common –* the consultation needed to emphasize the broad range and scope of the scheme, rather than too narrow a focus on elements with a business or commercial aspect. The hotel in particular could have skewered the outcomes by creating a higher level of dissatisfaction with the scheme than would otherwise be the case. Two questions were included within the questionnaire, at the beginning and at the end, to try to establish the overall level of support by asking:

  - 1.3 The outline proposals will enhance my experience of visiting St. Mary's Lands
  - 4.4 Overall I support these proposals for the future of St. Mary's Lands.

The full list of questions were:

Warwick District Council in partnership with the St. Mary's Lands Working Party have developed a range of ideas for improving St. Mary's Lands and the local economy. We would like to know your views on these outline proposals by completing the short questionnaire below.

Can you tell us which of these statements you most agree or disagree with by ticking the numbers below:

1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). (need 5 circles after each question with a 1 to 5 in them)

1. **Protecting St. Mary's Lands for People and Nature**

    1.1 St. Mary's Lands is important for nature and wildlife

    1.2 St. Mary's Lands supports a wide range of activities for sport and recreation

    1.3 The outline proposals will enhance my experience of visiting St. Mary's Lands

    1.4 More of St. Mary's Lands should be managed to encourage wildlife and nature

2. **Improving Access and Enjoyment for All**

    2.1 St. Mary's Lands offers something for all ages

    2.2 The play area close to Warwick Racing Football Club is a good idea

    2.3 The existing footpaths are well laid out and well sign posted

    2.4 The proposed footpaths and cycle track improvements are a good idea

3. **Supporting the Local Economy**

    3.1 Expanding the Caravan Club without losing green space is a good thing

    3.2 There is a need for more hotel rooms in Warwick to support the local economy

    3.3 The location for a hotel shown on the plans is a good suggestion

    3.4 The extra car parking spaces are a good idea

4. **Investing for the Future**

    4.1 Improving the main entrance will lift the quality of the area

    4.2 Improving the frontage of Hill Close Gardens will make people / potential visitors more aware of the gardens

    4.3 Investing in the Golf Centre building, parking and driving range is a good idea

    4.4 Overall I support these proposals for the future of St. Mary's Lands

5. **Do you have any comments you would like to add?**

(comment box)

6. About you?

Your postcode?

Your gender?

Your age?

The questions were structured in such a way to establish the degrees of support for three main response trends:

- ***There is no need to change – I like it has it is***
- ***I support change***
- ***I support and endorse the proposals.***

For example, strong support for questions 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1 and 2.3 would indicate a stronger preference for no need to change – I like it has it is. Whilst strong support for questions 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 would indicate a stronger desire for change. Strong support for questions 1.3 and 1.4 would indicate a high level of endorsement of the proposals. Whilst this is a relatively simplistic analysis, it does at least provide an indication of the level of support overall rather than to any particular idea or proposal.

No need to change

1.1 SML is important for nature & wildlife

1.2 SML supports a range of activities for sport & recreation

2.1 SML offers something for all ages

2.3 The existing footpaths are well laid out & well sign posted

Support Change (10)

1.4 More of SML should be managed to encourage wildlife & nature

2.2 The play area close to WRFC is a good idea

2.4 The proposed footpath & cycletrack improvements are a good idea

3.1 Expanding the caravan club without loss of green space is a good idea

3.2 There is a need for more hotel rooms in Warwick to support the local economy

3.3 The location for a hotel shown on the plans is a good suggestion

3.4 The extra car parking spaces are a good idea

4.1 Improving the main entrance will lift the quality of the area

4.2 Improving the frontage of Hill Close Gardens will make people more aware of the gardens

4.3 Investing in the Golf Centre building, parking & driving range is a good idea

Support the proposals:

1.3 The outline proposals will enhance my experience of visiting SML

4.4 Overall I support these proposals for SML.

4 CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the 198-completed questionnaires were evaluated on the following basis:

Responses have been given a value weighting:

Ticked response

Strongly agree	**+ 4 points**
Agree	**+ 2 points**
Neither agree or disagree	**0 points**
Disagree	**- 2 points**
Strongly disagree	**- 4 points**

Outcomes from the various consultations are illustrated on the following pages. These have been shown as the staffed exhibitions in the first instance and then all paper responses, including those completed at the non-staffed exhibition and those returned by post. These are then followed by the electronic responses gathered from the District Council's website. Finally, both sets of data have been aggregated.

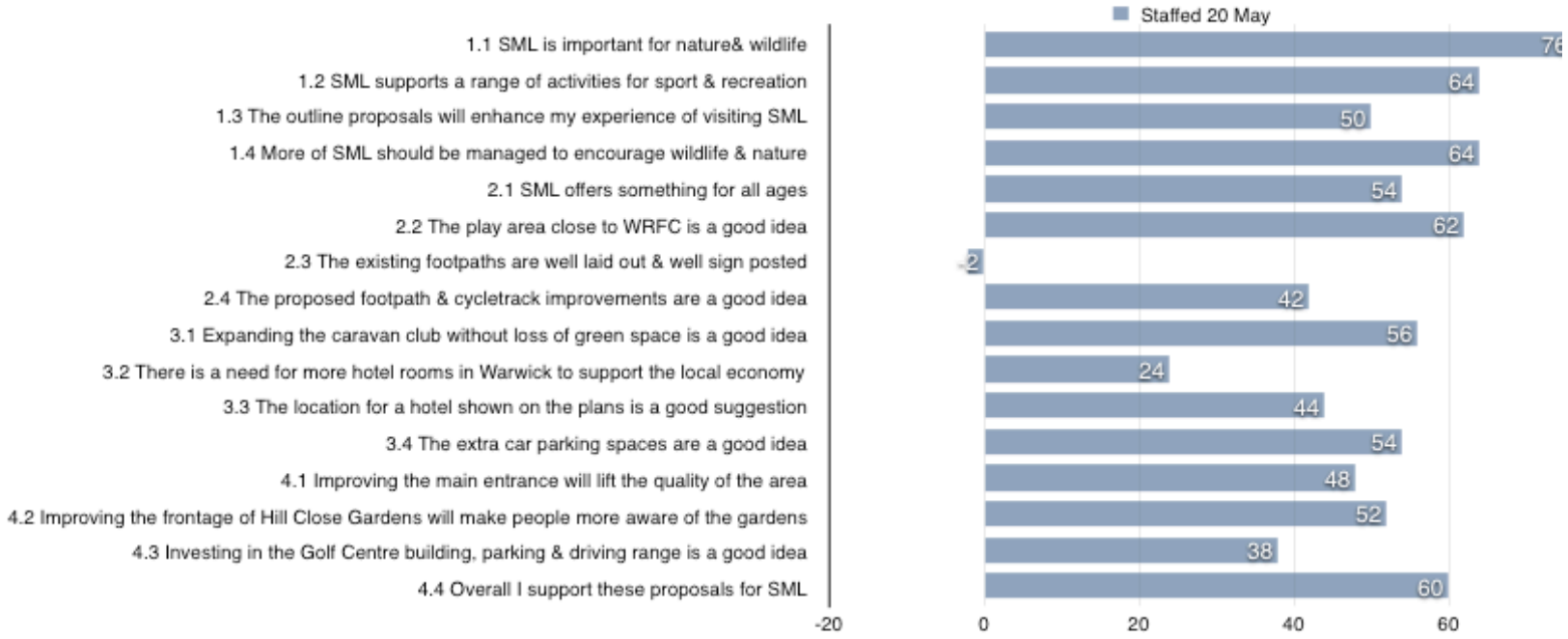
The responses gathered from the staffed exhibitions tend to be more supportive of the proposals then the electronic responses. This may indicate that when the public were able to ask questions about the scheme, they were more satisfied with the content of the proposal.

Outline Proposals

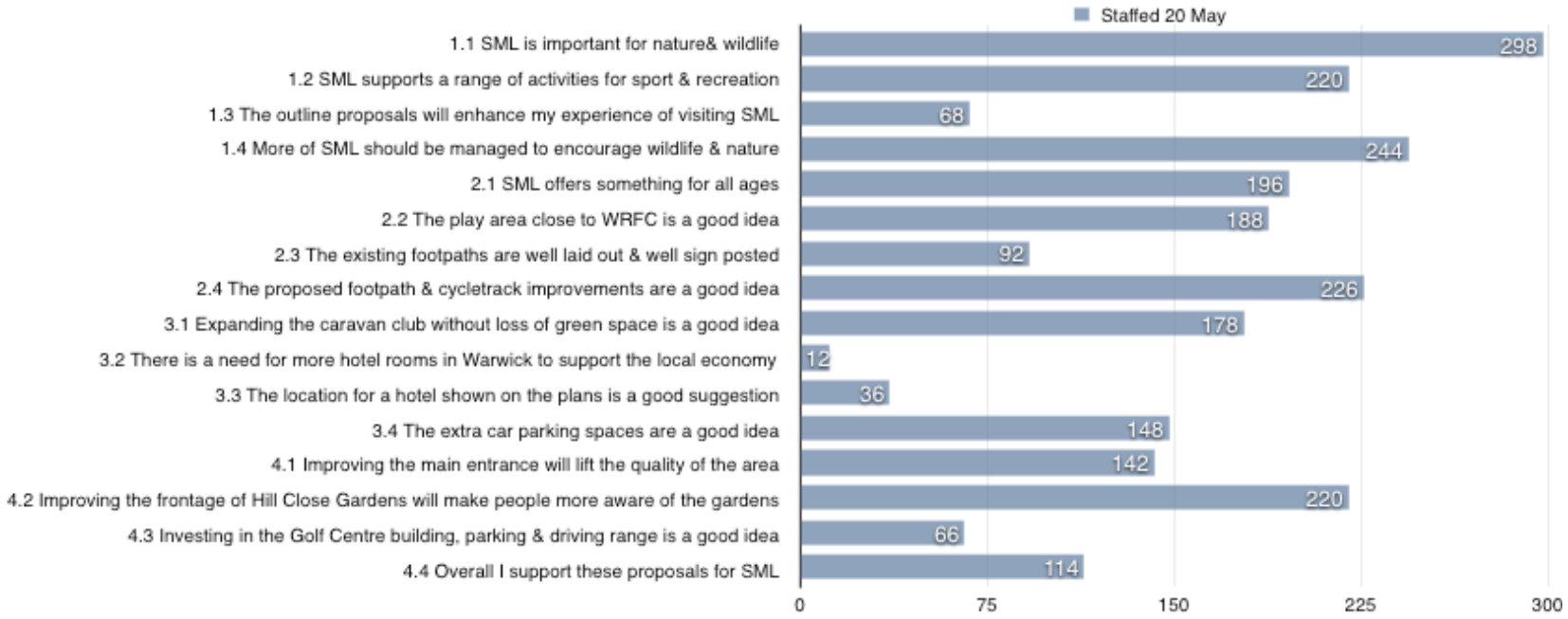
The consultation materials emphasised the partnership nature of the project.

A partnership project between the St. Mary's Lands Working Group and lead by Warwick District Council in association with Warwick Town Council and Warwickshire County Council.

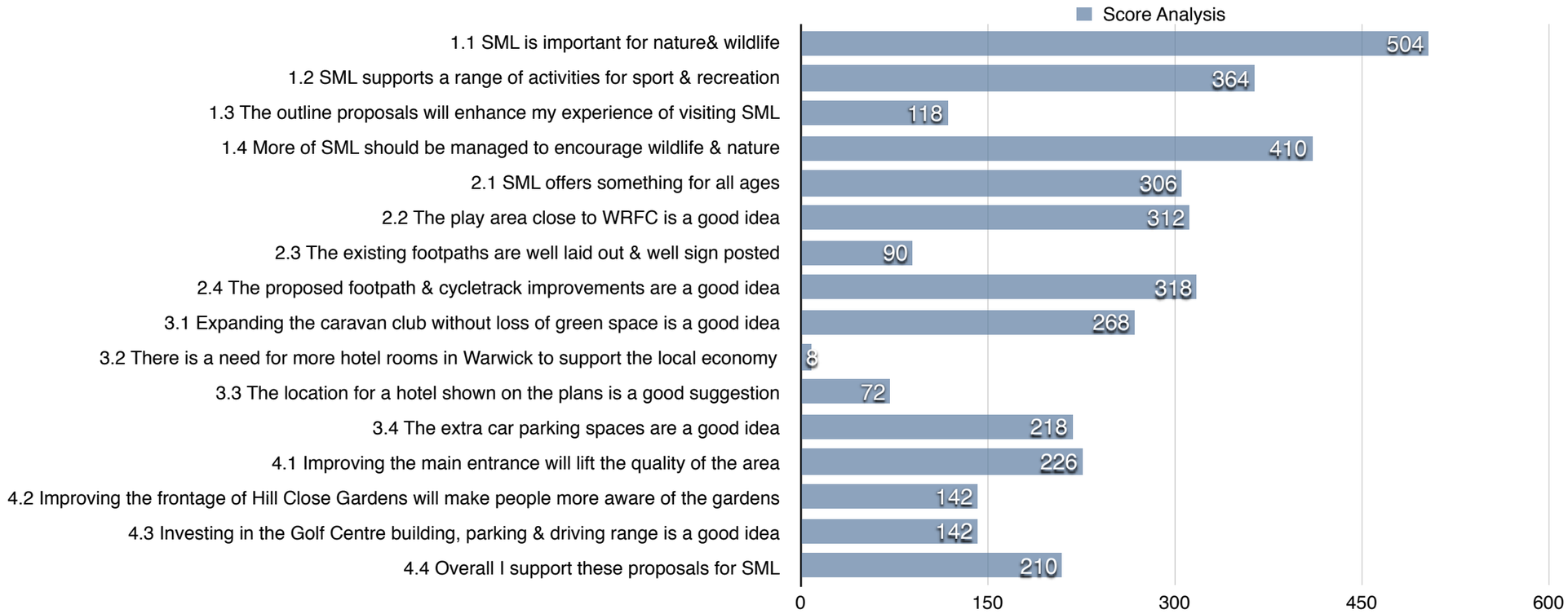
Shire Hall I **Staffed Exhibition Friday 20th May** - based on 19 responses.



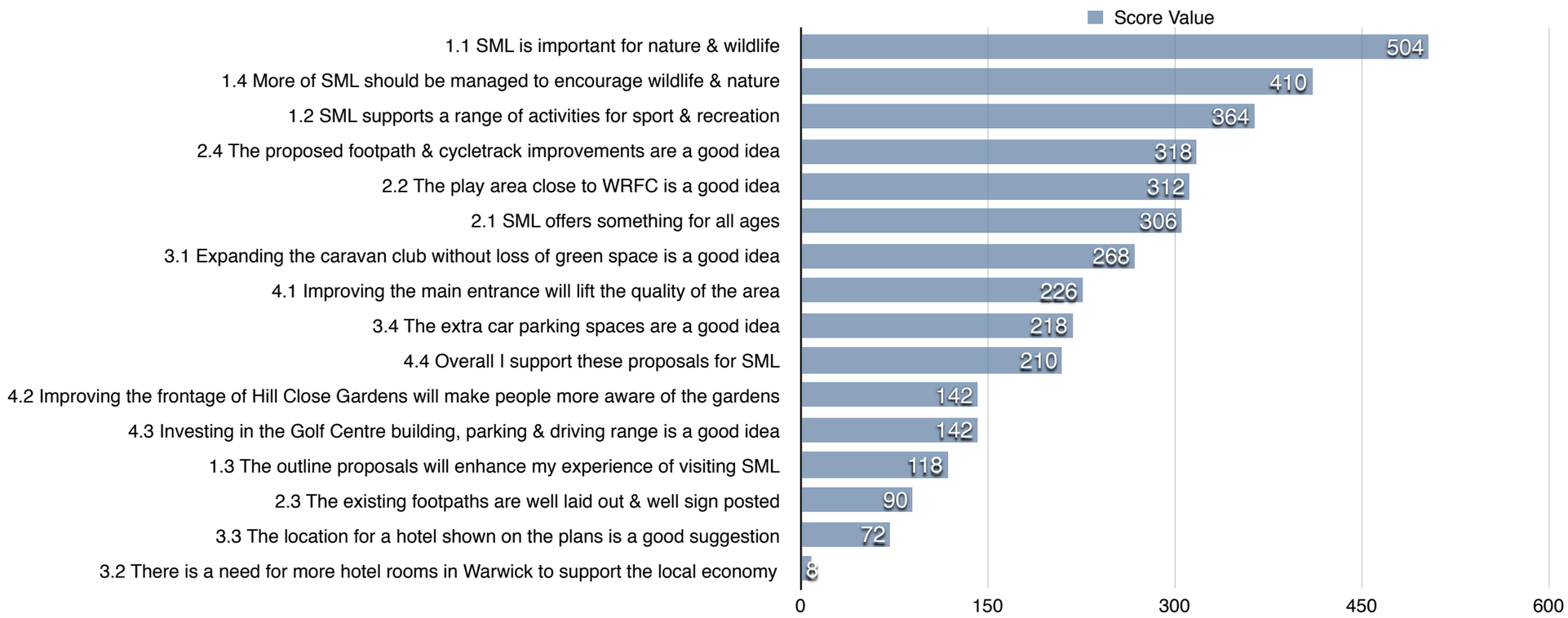
Market Square I **Staffed Exhibition Saturday 28th May** - based on 85 responses.



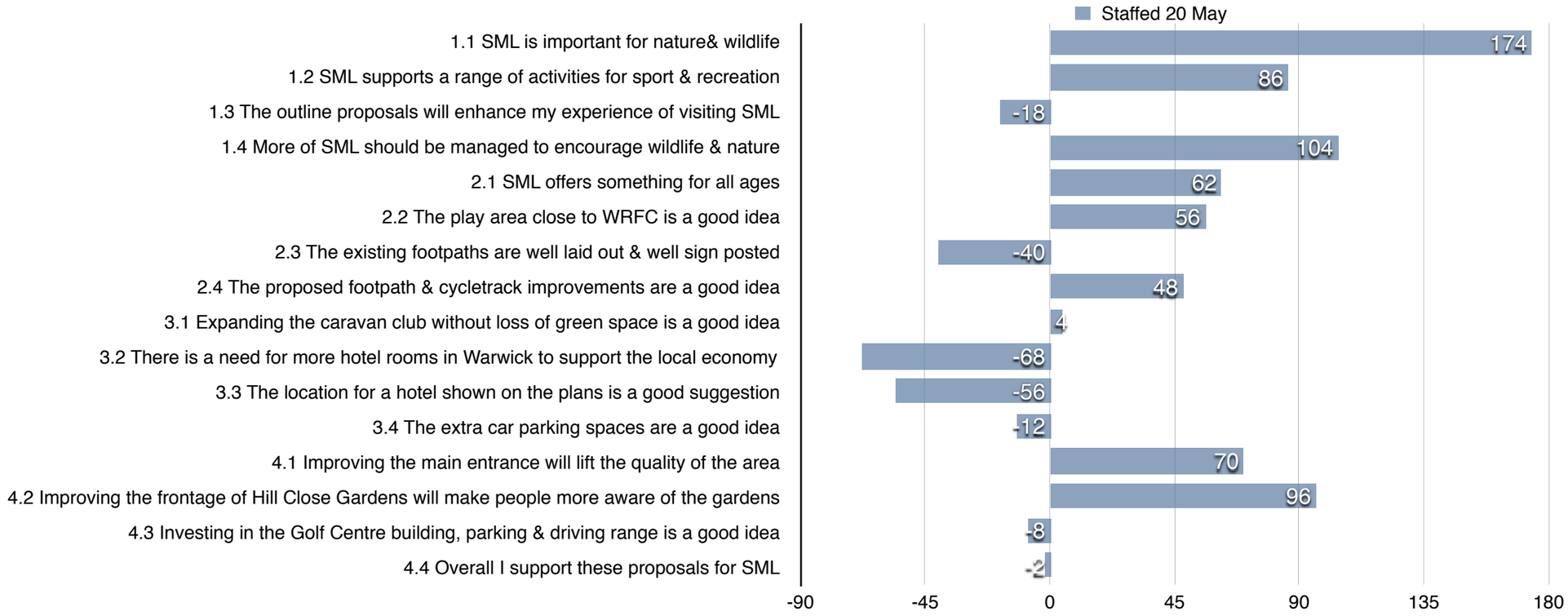
All paper responses based on 139 responses..



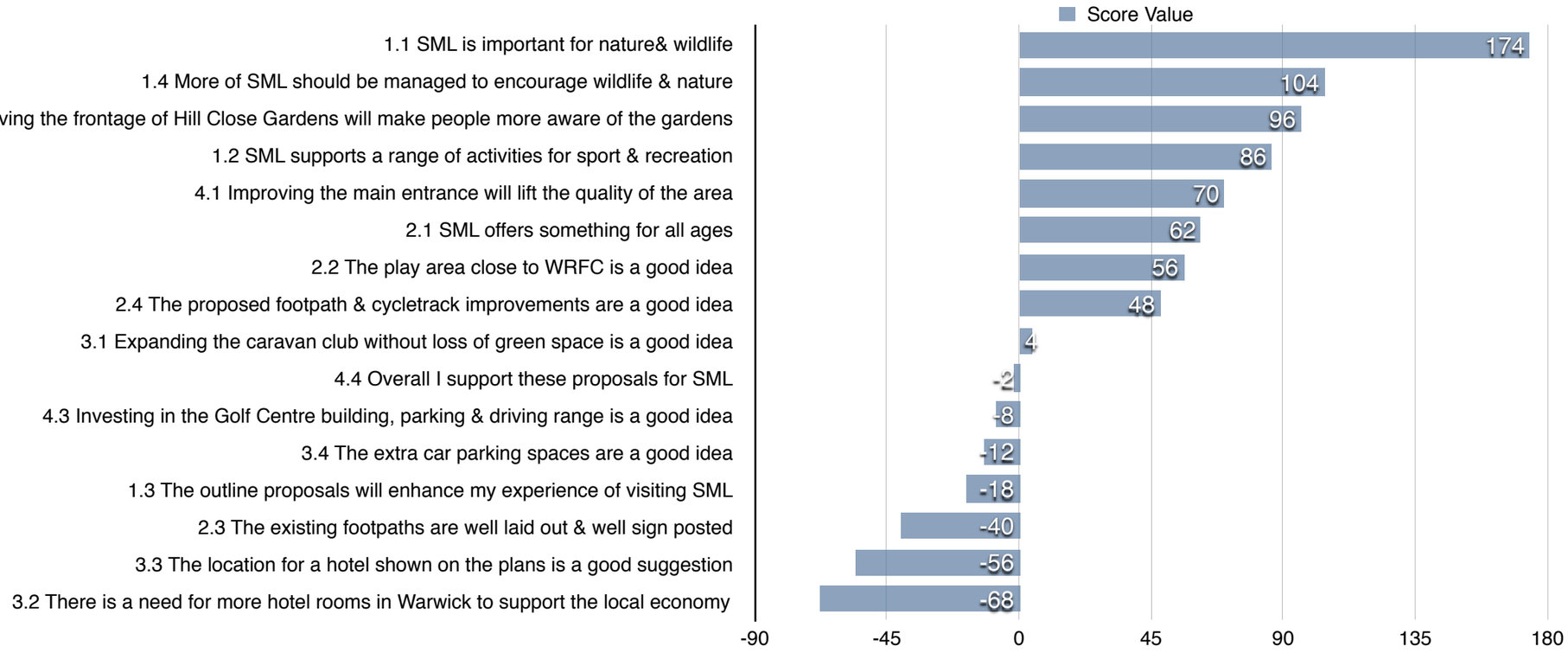
All paper responses based on 139 responses. Assessed in order of support.



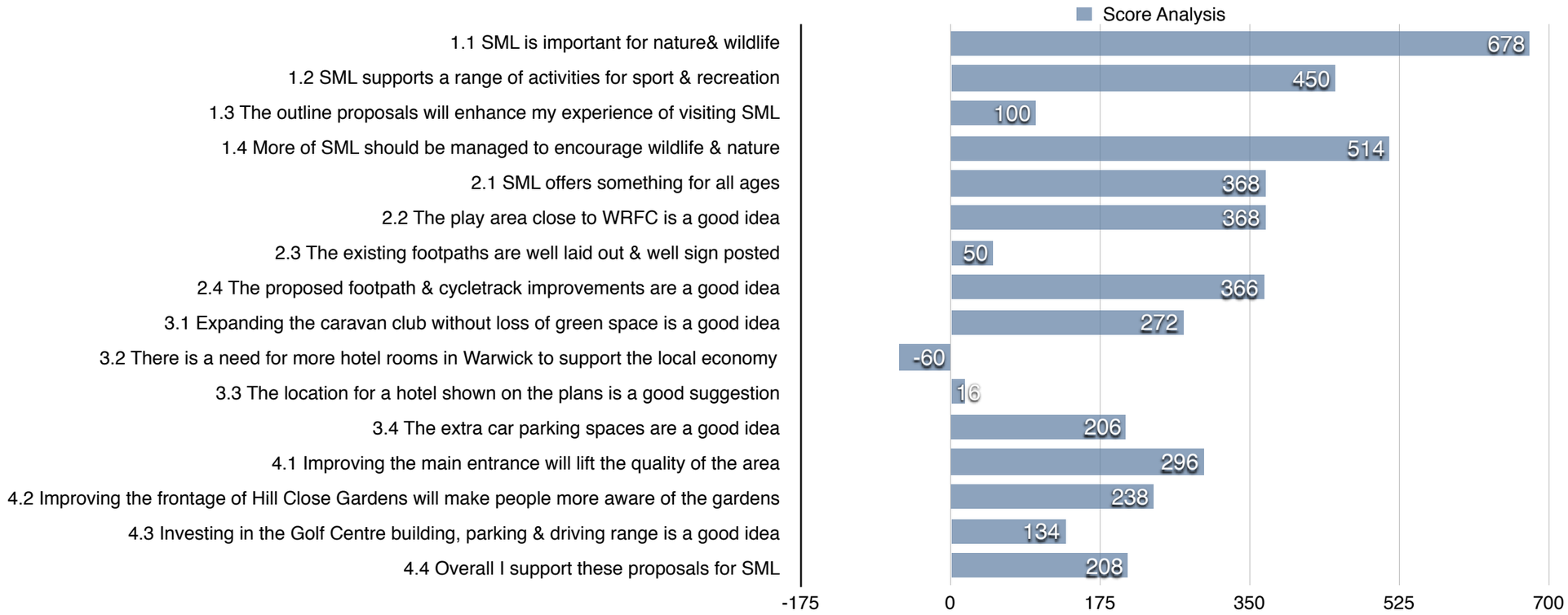
Online responses - based on 59 questionnaires.



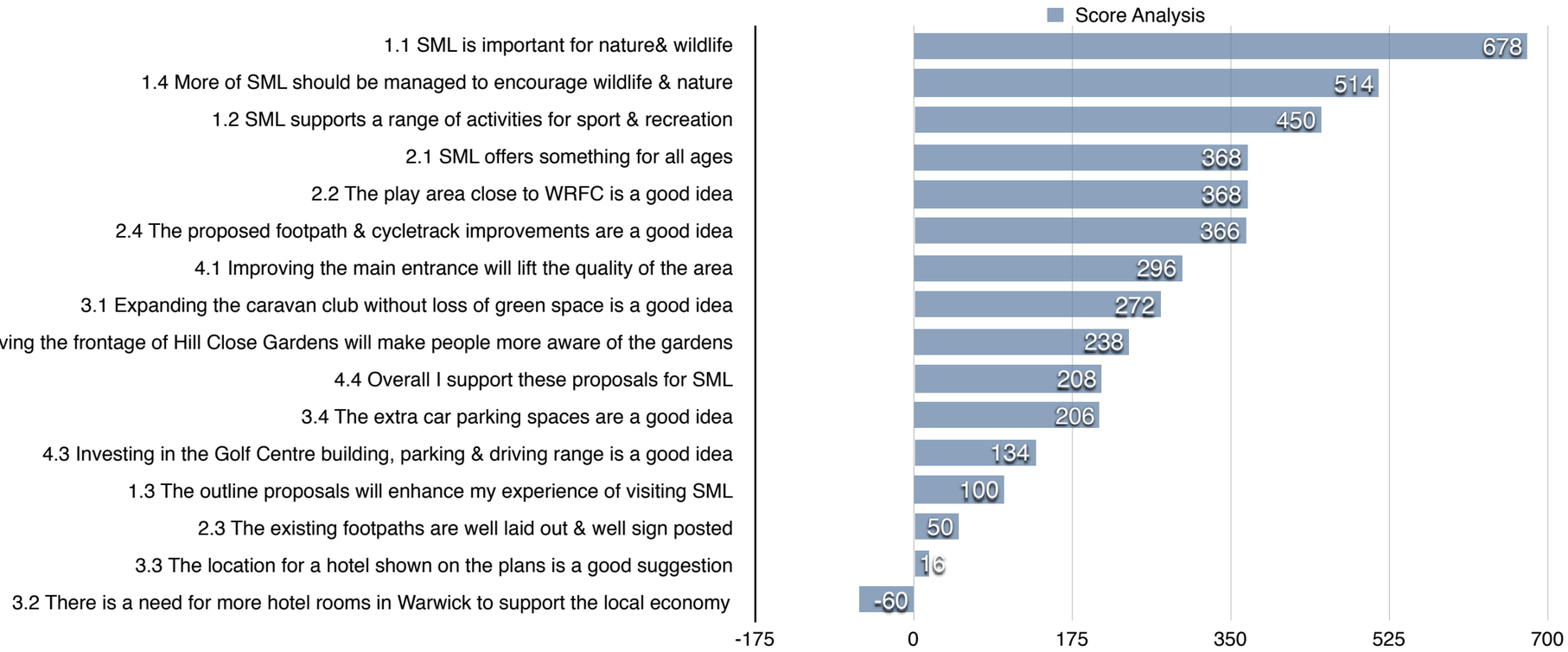
Online Questionnaire - based on 59 questionnaires. Assessed in order of support



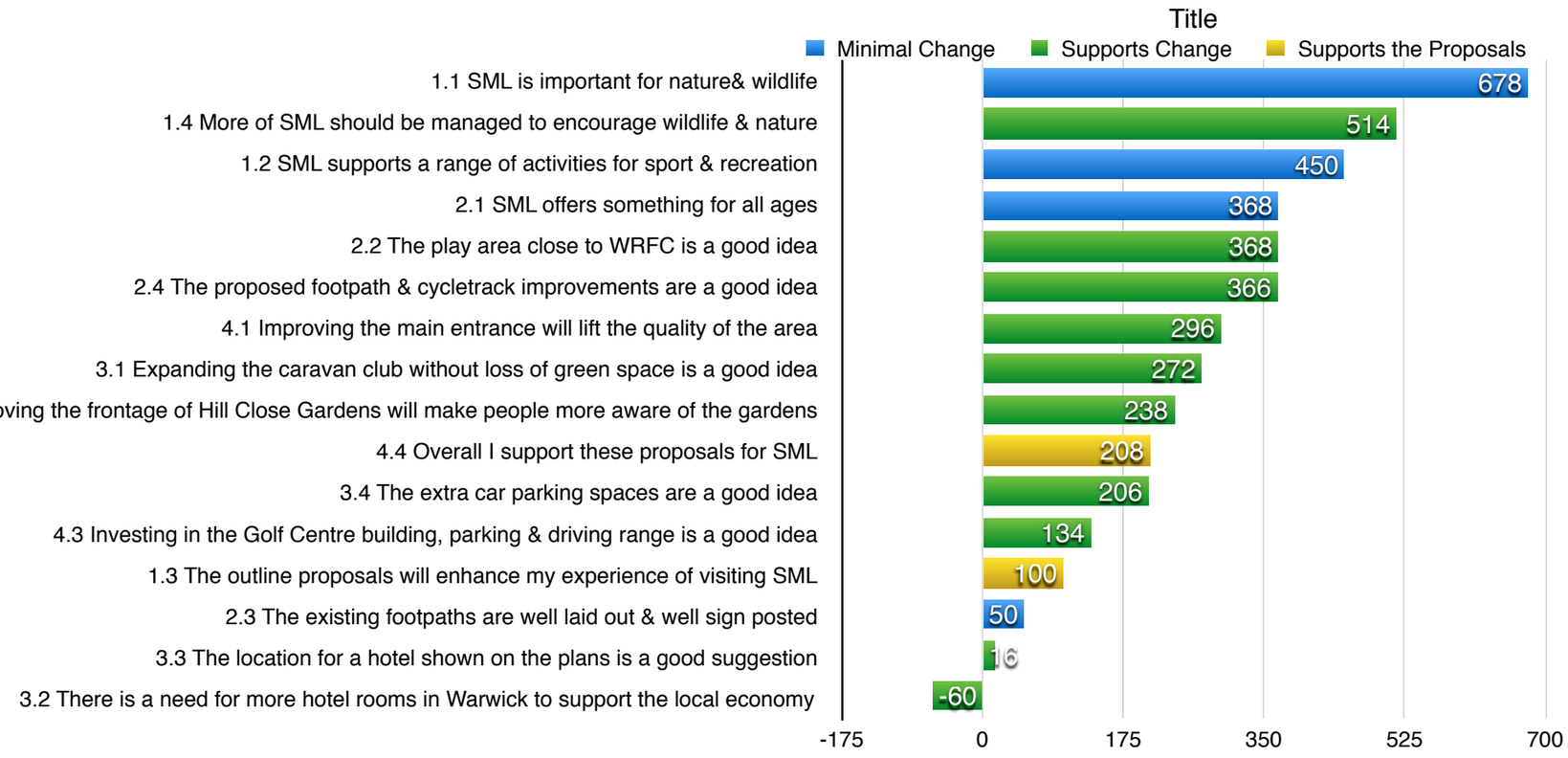
All responses based on 198 responses.



All responses based on 198 responses.



All responses based on 198 responses.



The three most supported statements are:

1.1 SML is important for nature & wildlife

1.4 More of SML should be managed to encourage wildlife & nature

1.2 SML supports a range of activities for sport & recreation.

The three least supported statements are:

2.3 The existing footpaths are well laid out & well sign posted

3.3 The location for a hotel shown on the plans is a good suggestion

3.2 There is a need for more hotel rooms in Warwick to support the local economy.

In addition to the questions, a substantial number of comments were also provided on the comments section. The most re-occurring comments were:

- Protecting the green space
- Prevent development
- Comments regards the suitability of the site for a hotel
- Traffic impact of the hotel
- Impact of the hotel on local business owners
- Access to toilets
- Car parking and the loss of town centre parking
- General access issues: 'it's Common land'
- Concerns over loss of access, fencing
- Historic decisions, in particular development of the golf course
- Both support and concerns in roughly equal measure over model aeroplane flying
- Concerns over safety of parking proposed opposite Bread & Meat Close
- Re-instatement of fishing at the reservoir.

Summary and Recommendations

The analysis is based on some 198 responses gathered from a range of venues and methods. This is a small sample but even so, the outcomes provide a very clear snap shot of public attitudes towards St. Mary's Lands. It was evident that had the hotel not been included at all, the levels of support for the scheme would have been significantly higher. Yet in spite of this, using the scoring analysis, even the proposed hotel location scored a positive figure in the aggregated results. Perhaps most surprising was this lower than expected objection to a proposed hotel.

However, there does remain a degree of mistrust over the more commercial elements of the scheme. In particular the hotel, but also re-development of the golf centre building and parking increases. It is clear that if the wider public are brought along with the proposals, 3-key recommendations need to be adopted:

1. That a hotel viability assessment and bedroom capacity study is commissioned to test the need for a hotel before taking this element of the proposals any further. Such a study would establish either way the justification of such a proposal and help to provide an evidential base for its need. With such an evidential base, the Council will remain open to

criticism that the scheme is being driven from behind the scenes by the Racecourse and/or that it would be a costly 'white elephant'.

2. That there should be a detailed feedback to the public via the Working Party on how it has responded to the outcomes of the consultation to build trust in the process, in particular emphasizing where further, more detailed work is being undertaken

3. That as each element of the scheme progresses, a suitable structure is put in place to consult on the detailed proposals with those elements of the public most effected by the proposals. This has already begun with dialogue opened up with the residents of Bread and Meat Close over the design and location of additional car parking over-looked by the apartment owners.