Arnos Park – 5 Key Concerns and Responses

1. Why change the course of the Pymmes Brook?

The current course of the Pymmes Brook through Arnos Park is artificial, having been straightened in the past and moved away from its natural alignment along the valley bottom.

This modified channel results in several issues:

- A steeper gradient causes faster flows, leading to bank erosion and placing nearby infrastructure, such as the railway arches, at greater risk
- A series of weirs fragments river habitats, traps silt, and blocks the natural movement of fish and invertebrates
- Restoring the river in its existing location would require significant engineering interventions, including the removal of concrete, masonry, and potentially contaminated material. The existing channel is also tightly constrained by mature trees and property boundaries, leaving little room for re-meandering

Creating a new, meandering channel along the park's natural low point would:

- Allow for a more gradual river gradient, helping reduce erosion and flood risk
- Provide space for features such as wetlands, supporting improved water quality and biodiversity
- Enable improved habitat connectivity and long-term ecological resilience.

This approach is more cost-effective and environmentally beneficial than restoring the river in its current alignment and forms part of Enfield's wider catchment strategy for the Pymmes Brook.

2. Park Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

Concerns have been raised about whether changes to the river corridor could affect perceptions of safety within Arnos Park. The design of the scheme is being developed in consultation with the council's community safety team, and will include features to ensure safety is maintained:

- Sightlines will remain open across paths, riverbanks, and park entrances to avoid the creation of obscured or enclosed spaces
- New features will be positioned to remain visibly connected to busy areas of the park, avoiding dead-ends or isolated zones
- Crossing points across the river will be provided
- Increased park use is expected, including by families, dog walkers, and volunteers — helping provide natural surveillance

- Deeper sections of the river will be set back from walking routes and protexted by vegetation

Overall, the scheme aims to support a safe and welcoming environment for all park users, including through improved access and more visible, well-used park areas.

3. Maintaining the restored River and Park

The long-term maintenance of a restored river channel and associated features is a common concern for parks and green spaces.

This scheme is being designed to minimise ongoing intervention and key measures to ensure the scheme will be maintained including:

- A defined maintenance schedule which will cover vegetation management, path safety, and litter control
- Aim to secure external funding for long-term maintenance
- Planting which will be selected for durability and low maintenance, suited to the local park landscape
- Natural features are easier and safer to maintain than concrete channels with deep, impounded water, fast flows and steep banks
- The council working with the Friends of Arnos Park and other community volunteers to support light-touch stewardship

4. Tackling pollution in the Pymmes Brook

The Pymmes Brook suffers from ongoing water quality issues, caused by pollutants - such as road runoff, misconnected plumbing, and historical contamination from upstream.

The proposed restoration scheme offers opportunities to address some of these issues by incorporating:

- Constructed wetlands, planted banks and low-flow areas that help trap, absorb, and treat pollutants
- Slower flows, which help reduce sediment and nutrient loading in the brook
- Educational signage and engagement with local schools, to raise awareness about water pollution and encourage behaviour change

These methods reflect successful interventions at Firs Farm where visible water quality improvements have already been achieved.

In addition:

- Thames Water continues to trace and address misconnected pipes across the borough
- The Environment Agency is working on source identification and upstream planning to support further improvements

5. Protecting Open Green Space in Arnos Park

Some residents have expressed concern that the introduction of a more natural river channel could reduce access to usable park space.

The scheme will be designed to balance ecological improvement along with recreational needs:

- The central playing field and most of the open grassed areas will remain unchanged and fully accessible
- Flood storage areas will be gently graded, grassed, and designed to remain usable during dry periods
- New planting will be positioned to maintain open views and avoid cutting off key areas of the park
- Tree removal will be minimised and offset by replanting, aiming to increase overall canopy cover and species diversity
- Improved paths and bridge crossings will help open up underused areas of the park.

The aim is to maintain Arnos Park as a well-used and accessible green space, while enhancing its biodiversity, ecological function and resilience to future climate impacts.