This document was produced by Enfield Council and was intended to be discussed in their invitation-only 'engagement' event on 26-Jun-2025, which they subsequently cancelled. It was sent to selected invitees on 11-July-25 and was referenced at the Community Meeting organised by APPS on 17-July-2025. Enfield Council were invited to this meeting but no officers were available.

APPS has commented on this document – see red text – including points raised by some of the 124 attendees of our Community Meeting.

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.

APPS – this does not appear to be correct, the brook has been in the same location since 1881, the only modifications being those required to build the viaduct and a small section straightened in the eastern end of the park between 1914 and 1936.

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

  APPS – the railway arches have been there since the 1930s so we're not sure what the problem is.

- A series of weirs fragments river habitats, traps silt, and blocks the natural movement of fish and invertebrates

  APPS – fish can cross the weirs in both directions in times of high water; the sections between weirs could support a lot more species of fish if the water quality were improved.

- 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

  APPS – not all the river has concrete banks, we advocate restoring a limited section where the banks are fairly natural, by installing current accelerators, cutting back trees to let light reach the water, planting with water weeds, rushes and wildflowers. The key would be to do this on a small enough section to be manageable. Money saved on the proposed scheme would be better spent on tackling pollution e.g. building inspections, prosecutions of polluters, checking of people's plumbing.

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

  APPS – local flooding is occasional and manageable – the park already serves as an overspill area with flood water taking a day or two to recede; flood risk downstream in Edmonton seems greatly exaggerated by the Council – Pymmes Brook has seemingly never caused flooding and its highest ever level in 1993 was 1m below flood level.

Provide space for features such as wetlands, supporting improved water quality and biodiversity

APPS – Enfield wetlands don't seem to be improving water quality, as shown by water testing at Broomfield Park and Firs Farm wetlands (water quality at the outlets of both wetlands rated BAD rating for phosphates and POOR for ammonia on average so far this year).

Biodiversity can be well supported in the existing river channel. Also, in Arnos Park, significant efforts are already underway to improve wildlife habitats e.g. managed wildflower meadow, long grass and scrub areas. Any limited wildlife gains of a new river would be massively insufficient to compensate for the loss of amenity and safety in Arnos Park.

- Enable improved habitat connectivity and long-term ecological resilience.

  APPS – the existing river and the new habitats mentioned in the previous point already provide ecological connectivity and 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.

APPS – the proposed scheme is likely to cost more than £2m (simple estimate - Albany park cost £1.5m and that is half the size of the scheme proposed for Arnos Park).

Pollution and an entirely predictable lack of management will severely limit any environmental benefits (for example, overgrown trees will shade the water in the new channel and prevent water plants growing – water plants are important habitat for invertebrates).

Meanwhile, pollution in the existing channel will become more concentrated (same amount of pollution going into it within the park, but less water flowing into it as most will go into the new channel) – hence it will become environmentally degraded.

The existing channel is likely to become stagnant and a breeding ground for mosquitos. Mosquitos are also likely to breed in any slack areas in the new river channel – as they do now in the new river in Albany Park.

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

APPS – all the evidence from existing wetlands, and from Albany Park, is that sightlines will not remain open due to the lack of management of trees and other vegetation.

- New features will be positioned to remain visibly connected to busy areas of the park, avoiding dead-ends or isolated zones

APPS – the new river will CREATE isolated zones and it will eliminate the total freedom of movement across the park the people currently enjoy and value.

- Crossing points across the river will be provided

APPS – new bridges will bring unwanted additional hard structure to the park and will not compensate for the loss of freedom of movement due to the new river.

- Increased park use is expected, including by families, dog walkers, and volunteers — helping provide natural surveillance

APPS – where is the evidence for this? Our experience of other wetlands is that they are not well used by the public. The highly unpopular new river scheme is likely to drive people away from Arnos Park, not attract them.

Dog walkers have already told us that they will be less likely to use the park should the new scheme go ahead, as it will be much harder for them to keep their pets out of two polluted river channels and not just one as now.

- 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.

APPS – whatever 'aims' are claimed for the scheme, the fact is it will reduce access and visibility in the park, not improve it.

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

APPS – this would be a first for Enfield. Given the lack of maintenance of any other wetlands / river schemes by the Council, and current failures to stay on top of litter etc, this claim is simply not credible.

- Aim to secure external funding for long-term maintenance

APPS – even if funding were available, we doubt the Council management's ability to ring fence funds and ensure they are used for the designated purpose. In any case, even if the scheme were to be well maintained, local people still don't want it because it cuts the park in two, reducing freedom of movement and safety and destroying the sense of open space.

- Planting which will be selected for durability and low maintenance, suited to the local park landscape

APPS – the problem, as at Albany Park, will be self-sown willow and sallow trees which are very fast growing and require a large management effort to control.

- Natural features are easier and safer to maintain than concrete channels with deep, impounded water, fast flows and steep banks

APPS – we don't agree with this. Wide, gently sloping river banks tend to become overgrown quickly and it is then hard to maintain them. Conversely, the steep banks of Pymmes Brook in Arnos Park and Oak Hill Park mean that mowers can mow the grass right to the edge.

- The council working with the Friends of Arnos Park and other community volunteers to support light-touch stewardship

APPS – it would be some cheek for the Council to build a massively unpopular scheme like this in the teeth of local opposition and then expect the Friends of Arnos Park to maintain it.

What does light-touch stewardship mean anyway? Our experience with Friends of Broomfield Park managing the wetlands there (both reeds and trees) is that the work is heavy and demanding and requires a lot of manpower, plus vehicles to take waste material away.

Friends of Arnos Park is already busy maintaining Arnos Park – mowing, litter picking, tree clearance, sorting out problems. Having to manage a new river channel as well would mean we would have to pay for tools and training, yet the Council has said they have no funds to support us. It is unreasonable for the Council to burden the Friends in this way.

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

APPS – if, as per Council map of the scheme, a wetlands were constructed out of the main flow, then most of the water in the river would simply by pass it. In any case, even maintained wetlands like Broomfield Park and Firs Farm don't seem effective at improving water quality (see above).

- Slower flows, which help reduce sediment and nutrient loading in the brook

APPS – we are not sure what is meant here; it is in areas of slower flow (e.g. the inside of river bends or above weirs) that sediments settle out.

- Educational signage and engagement with local schools, to raise awareness about water pollution and encourage behaviour change

APPS – no amount of talking to schoolchildren is going to reduce pollution in Pymmes Brook. At our well-attended public meeting on 17-Jul-25, parents, school teachers and scout group leaders said they would be less likely to bring children to the park should the new river be built, due to the safety risk – it is much harder to keep them away from two rivers at the same time.

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

APPS – water quality test results we have seen suggest otherwise (see above).

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

APPS – Enfield Council has a role to play here by inspecting building works and by prosecuting polluters; why not apply for funding to do more of that?

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

APPS – the new river channel will be 10-12m wide, so it will take up a significant loss of space; more importantly it will break up these open spaces, also making them less suitable for ball games as balls lost in the river will be difficult to retrieve.

- Flood storage areas will be gently graded, grassed, and designed to remain usable during dry periods

APPS – they will still be liable to becoming overgrown as self-sown trees will spread out from the river channel. This is already happening in long grass areas around the park where saplings become established, are not removed (apart from areas being managed by Friends of Arnos Park) and after a couple of years are big enough to prevent mowing – hence leading to a loss of short amenity grass.

- New planting will be positioned to maintain open views and avoid cutting off key areas of the park

APPS – as mentioned already, the real problem will be self-sown trees.

- Tree removal will be minimised and offset by replanting, aiming to increase overall canopy cover and species diversity

APPS – any interference with existing mature trees in the park will be very unpopular.

- Improved paths and bridge crossings will help open up underused areas of the park.

APPS – this doesn't make sense at all – a new river channel will block access across the park, not open it up.

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.

APPS – for all the reasons mentioned above, the scheme is likely to be a failure on its own terms.

In APPS' public meeting on 17-Jul-25, a disabled man, a member of FoAP, stated that as a wheelchair user the relocation of the river would mean that he would not be able to see or access the river. In its current location it provides many lovely views, and access to wildlife, close to the fully accessible path, for him and everyone else to enjoy.

APPS supports **RIVER RESTORATION NOT RELOCATION**. Let's improve the river where it is now, by cutting back trees, planting water weeds, creating wildflower margins and tackling pollution at source. Local people consistently say they would support a scheme like this.