

COUNCIL – 17 DECEMBER 2025

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions to Portfolio Holders / Committee Chairs

With thanks to Cllr Simon Speller, Cllr Rob Broom and officers for keeping me personally in the loop on the progress of the pre-requisite works in Fairlands Valley Park.

In December 2023, the Council unanimously supported considering eco-friendly, wildlife-conscious lighting. The requisite bat survey, funded in the 2025/26 budget to remove the ecological barrier, is now complete.

However, the Green Spaces Strategy 2025-2035, developed following this vote, categorises this project (Action FV1) as 'Long Term (8-10 years)' to merely 'explore options'. This implies a delivery date of 2033-2035.

This timeline is now untenable given three key developments:

- National Policy: The Angiolini Inquiry Part 2 Report (published 2 December 2025) explicitly classifies 'better street lighting' as a critical preventative measure for violence against women and girls.
- Local Precedent: The Council's Community Safety Unit and Herts Police are currently consulting on a 'Safer Route' from the Old Town, explicitly stating that a 'well-lit route... enhances confidence and security for everyone, especially women and girls.'
- Community Demand: The 'Glow Ride' (October 2025) demonstrated active, physical demand for safer, lit cycling routes in the park.

It is also widely recognised, including in the Angiolini Inquiry, that violence and harassment in public spaces are significantly under-reported, and that many women and girls avoid unlit parks after dark, so recorded crime figures do not fully reflect the level of risk they experience.

Given this material change in national safety guidance, the completion of the bat survey, and the Council's own commitment to "Safer Routes" elsewhere in Stevenage, will the Council now bring forward and implement an accelerated, wildlife-conscious lighting scheme for Fairlands Valley Park by reclassifying Action FV1 from "Long Term" to "Short Term (1–3 years)", updating the wording to "Install wildlife-conscious lighting", allocating the necessary capital funding within the 2026/27 budget (ahead of the 12 February 2026 decision), and commencing design work immediately using the bat survey findings to mitigate wildlife disturbance while enhancing the confidence and security of everyone using the park, especially women and girls?

Answer (Councillor Rob Broom):

The Council has recently received the results of the bat survey which was undertaken over the summer and early autumn at Fairlands Valley Park.

Officers are reviewing the documentation, which indicates that 10 species of bat were identified.

All bat species are protected and careful consideration of the results is required to understand what the possibilities and limitations are regarding the installation of any lighting. Options also need to be considered in the context of available financial resources.

Subject to the bat survey study the Council will consider funding a specialist lighting design in 2026/27, which it will need to identify funding for; with the purpose of integrating the bat survey's constraints, best-practice lighting guidance, and community safety aims.

We will continue to keep the petitioner updated on progress on this.