

Guildford Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment



Community and Stakeholder Consultation 2017

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
AGLV	Area of Great Landscape Value
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BOAT	Byway Open to all Traffic
CS	Core Strategy
DM	Development Management
FWA	Former Wisley Airfield
GBC	Guildford Borough Council
GI	Green Infrastructure
HLS	Higher Level Stewardship
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Open Space
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PRB	Princess Royal Barracks
ROW	Rights of Way
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SCC	Surrey County Council
SPA	Special Protection Area
SNCI	Site of Nature Conservation Interest
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Acknowledgments

Many individuals, groups and organisations have provided information, views and support in preparing this study. Input from these stakeholders is fundamental to the report, and provides the basis for the evidence in supporting the standards, options and recommendations in relation to open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities. The study has been carried out by Ethos Environmental Planning.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is a supporting document to the main *Guildford Borough Open Space Study 2016*, and provides consultation findings from various stakeholders in relation to the study.

1.1 Study Overview

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies need to be based on a thorough understanding of local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision.

In view of the above, in 2016 Guildford Borough Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to undertake an open space study, part of which includes looking at the quantity and accessibility of open space; and its quality and value. The open space as a whole provides evidence base documents for the Council's emerging Local Plan.

The Open Space Study - scope and objectives

The brief for the open space study highlights that the assessment needs to:

- Robustly determine appropriate standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreation facilities for Guildford borough. The study brief notes that the Parks and Countryside service have completed a review of play space provision using Fields in Trust standards.
- Provide a robust assessment of the provision of open space, sports and recreation facilities in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.
- Provide an assessment of the suitable uses for identified open spaces, for example identifying opportunities for the installation of fixed play equipment where there is a shortage of playspaces.
- Build upon evidence from the Council's Play Space Strategy on the quantity and quality of fixed play equipment.
- Identify areas of surplus and deficit in open space, sports and recreation facilities with regards to quantity, quality and accessibility and
- Be concise and present factual evidence to meet the requirements of paragraph 73 of the NPPF.

1.2 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

This report provides evidence that will be used in the main Open Spaces Study report (where it will be combined with, for example, other evidence, findings and assessments completed in the audit and analysis process)¹.

¹ This report provides consultation evidence in the form of the observations and views/opinions sourced from local residents, parish councils and other key stakeholders. Views expressed may not always be consistent or accurate.

Undertaking comprehensive consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders and the wider community is an essential part of the overall process. It is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework and is needed to ensure that the study is robust in relation to recommended national guidance.

The report examines local need for a wide range of different kinds of open space, informal outdoor sport, and recreation facilities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques. It outlines the community consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the study as well as the main findings.

The report is made up of 3 main sections:

- General Community Consultation
- Consultation with neighbouring local authorities and parish councils
- Key Stakeholder interviews

The consultation and research programme was undertaken in March and April 2016.

There is a summary of findings, issues and observations at the end of each section.

In summary, questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- A postal general household survey.
- A survey of parish councils
- A survey of neighbouring local authorities

In addition to the above a series of one to one stakeholder interviews were undertaken with key Guildford Borough and Surrey County Council officers.

Each section provides additional detail on the consultation process relevant to that section.

The result of this consultation and other analyses will help amongst other things to inform the content of the recommended local standards as appropriate. This will be explained further in the main Open Space Study report. The report findings also help the study to understand stakeholder and local people's appreciation of open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure; and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and outdoor facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities are treated and designated in the Guildford Borough Local Plan.

2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This section provides consultation findings that cover all aspects of open space, informal sport and outdoor recreation provision. It contains the findings from a general household survey designed and undertaken specifically to inform and steer the Open Spaces Study in relation to its recommendations for the quantity, quality and accessibility elements of local spatial planning standards.

2.1 Household Survey

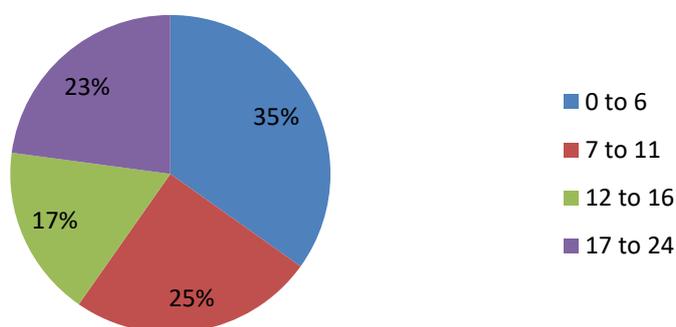
2.1.1 Introduction

The open space study needs to understand how residents in Guildford Borough currently make use of the various kinds of open space, informal sport and outdoor recreation facilities; in particular whether they think there are enough of such spaces; what they think of the quality of those spaces/facilities; how accessible they are; and what kind of spaces/facilities they think are priorities for future development and improvement. A good way of securing this general overview is to secure responses from a broad cross section of households.

An online questionnaire survey was therefore distributed through a random postal survey of 3000 households. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 411 surveys were completed (14%). The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1036 and the average household size of the households was 2.52 - a little higher than the Borough as a whole (2.42) and the national average (2.3). Just over 35% of households who responded had children (representing household views on behalf of just over 278 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age profile of children and young people in household survey

Age profile - children and young people



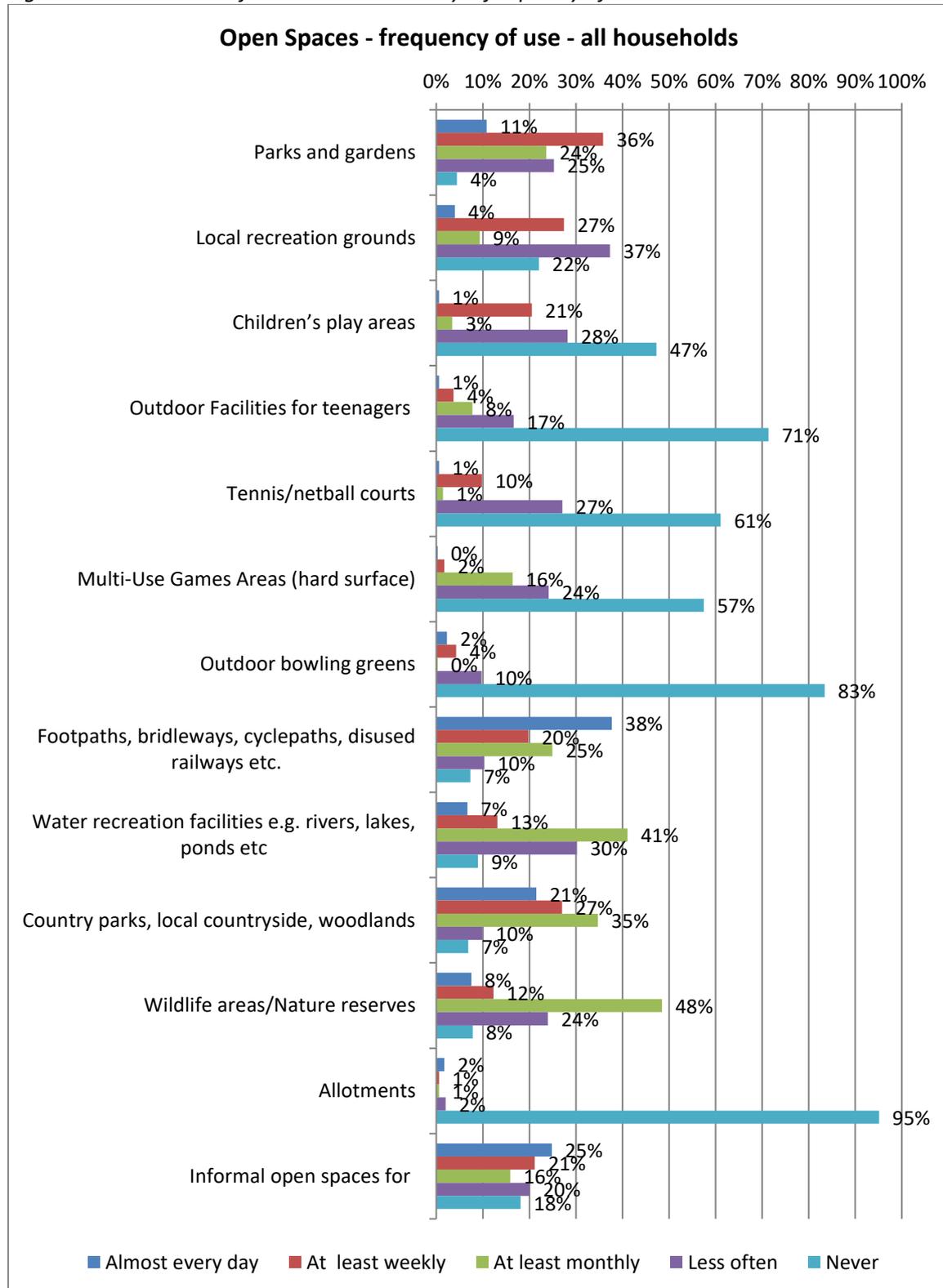
The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 2 and the following provides some of the key findings².

2.1.2 Frequency of use – All households

² The findings are further considered - in detail - in the main report.

Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of the following types of open space, and outdoor recreation facilities within the study area, and the results are shown in figures 2 and 3 below.

Figure 2 Results from household survey – frequency of use



As can be seen, it is the Borough's footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths, as well as its country parks, countryside and woodlands, that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (83%). Following these are the Borough's parks and gardens (71%), wildlife areas/nature reserves (68%) and informal open spaces - for ball games, picnics, dog walking etc (62%).

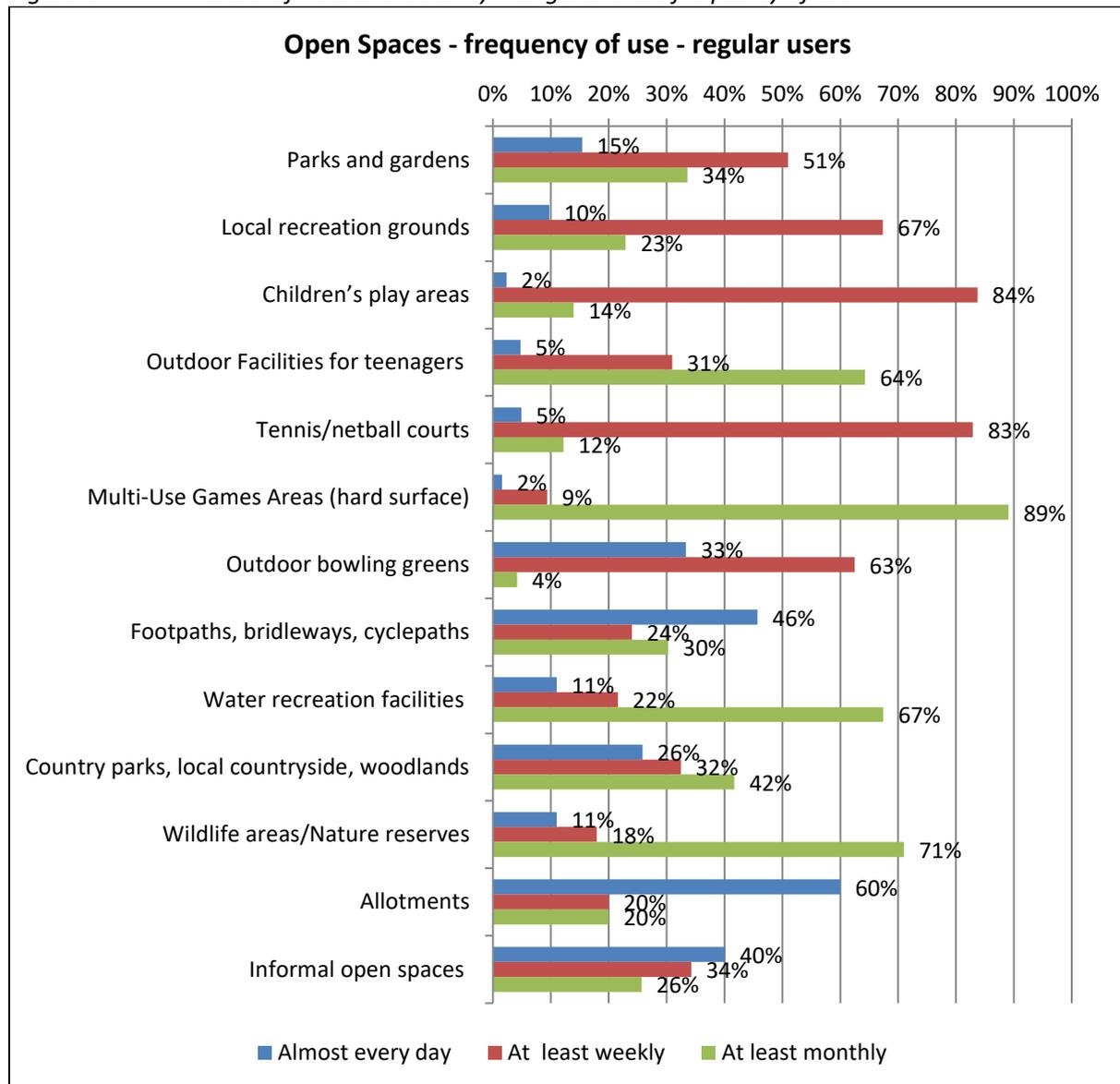
These open space facilities are also by far the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis e.g. 58% use rights of way at least weekly (of which 38% make use almost every day). 48% visit country parks, countryside and woodlands (of which 21% make use almost every day). 47% visit parks and gardens at least weekly (of which 11% visit almost every day).

As would be anticipated a large number of households do not use more specialised kinds of open space facilities such as allotments, bowling greens, play areas and outdoor teenage facilities.

2.1.3 Frequency, regularity and times of use – Regular Users

It is interesting to look at the frequency with which regular users of open spaces and outdoor facilities visit them as for some facilities this is not immediately obvious from looking at the overall figures.

Figure 3 Results of household survey – Regular users frequency of use



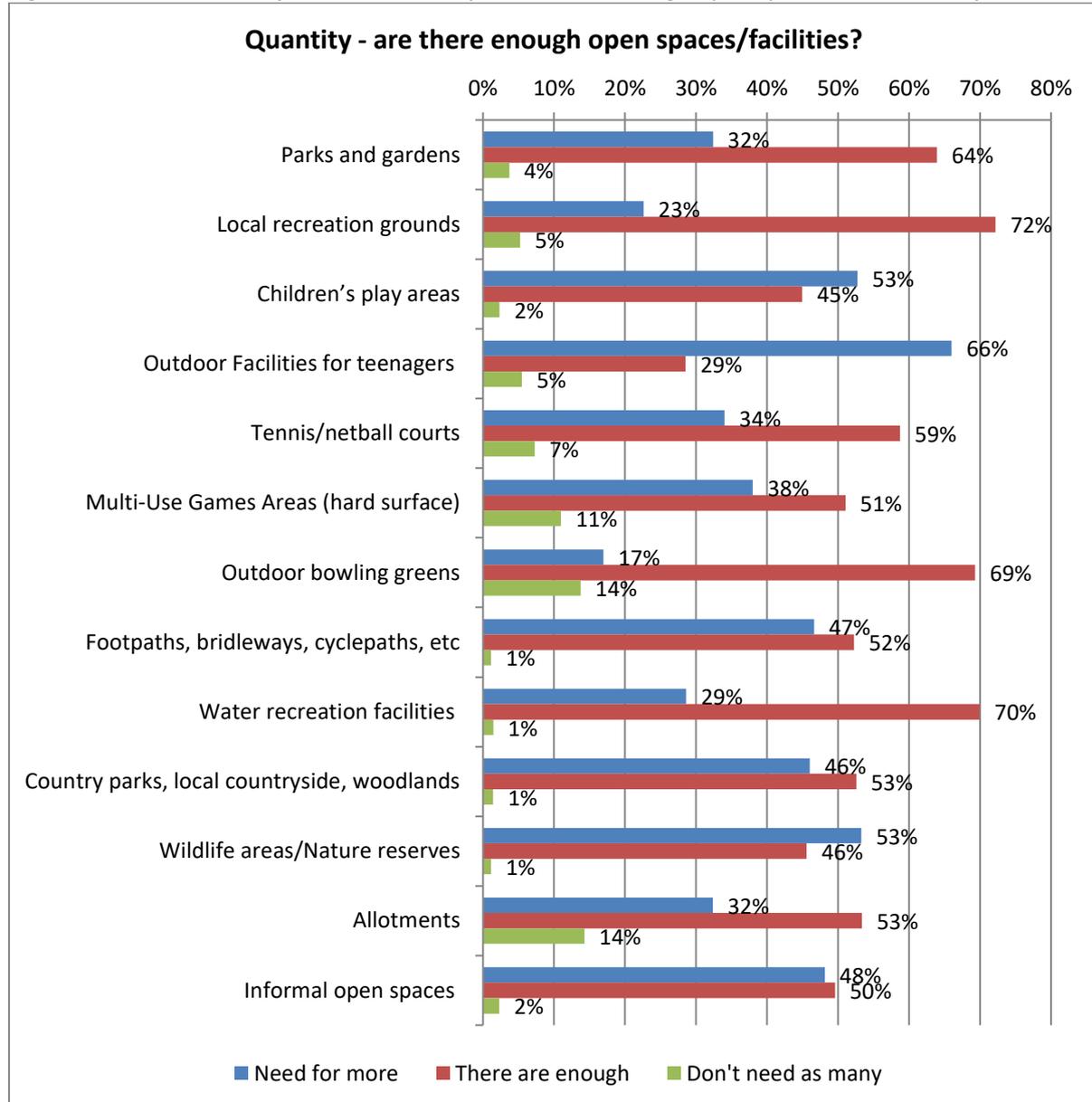
This shows, for example, that:

- 60% of allotment holders visit their allotment nearly every day and an additional 20% visit at least weekly.
- 33% of bowlers make use of outdoor bowling greens nearly every day and an additional 63% use them at least weekly.
- 86% of user households visit play areas at least weekly (2% nearly every day).

2.1.4 Quantity of open space, informal sport and recreation facilities

Residents were asked if there was a need for more, the same or fewer of different types of open space and recreational facilities. Findings are illustrated in Figure 4 below and will influence the “quantity” component of local standards as appropriate (this is explained further in the main report).

Figure 4 Results of household survey – are there enough open spaces and outdoor facilities?



Over 60% of households think that overall there are enough local recreation grounds (72%); water recreation facilities (70%); bowling greens (69%) and parks and gardens (64%). 59% believe there are enough tennis/netball courts;

Smaller majorities think that in general there are enough country parks, countryside and woodlands (53%); allotments (53%); allotments (53%); footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths (52%); and MUGAs (51%).

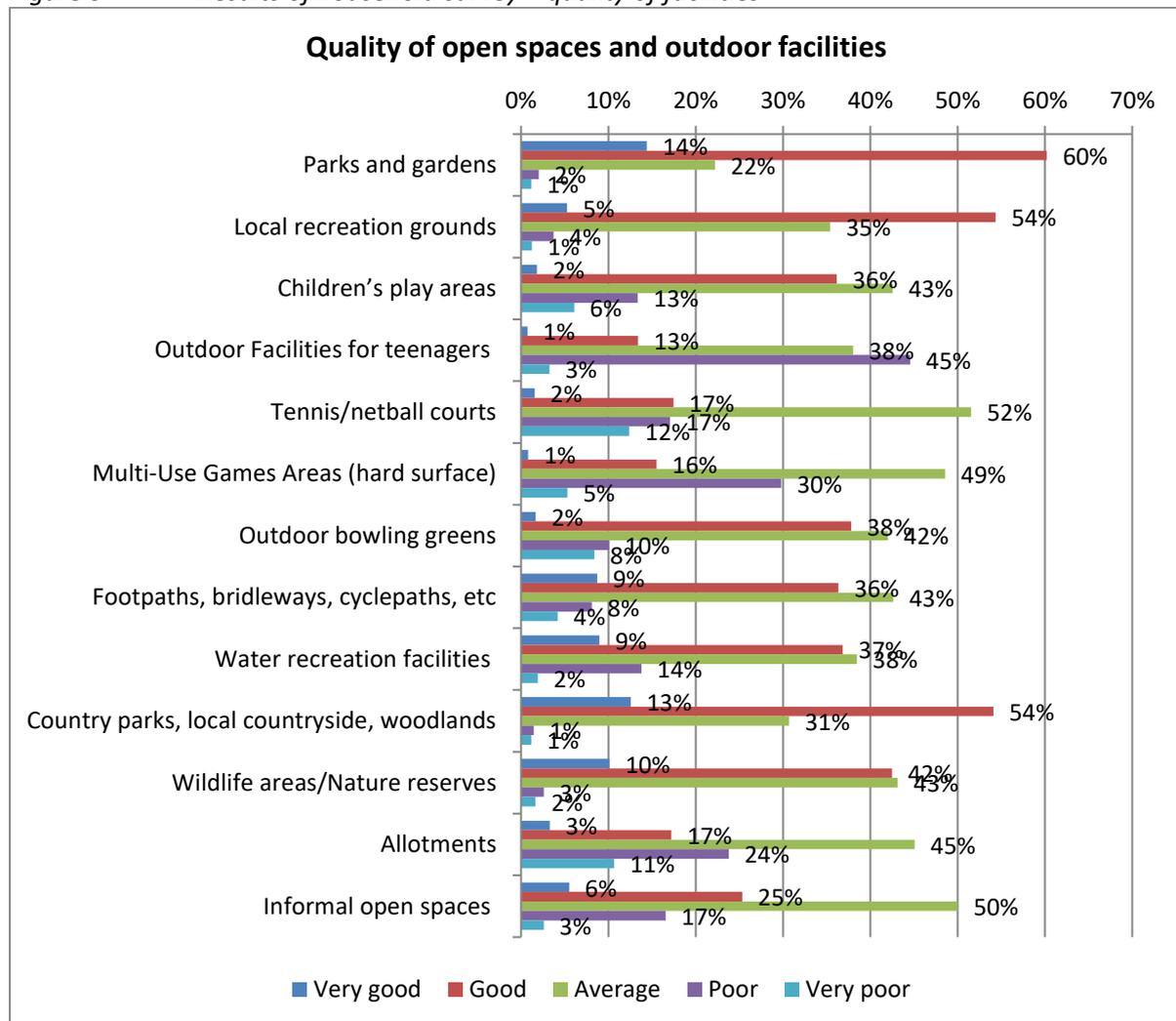
The only typologies where a majority of respondent households suggest there is an overall shortfall are:

- Outdoor facilities for teenagers (66%)
- Children's play areas (53%).
- Wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%)

2.1.5 Quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Results of household survey – quality of facilities



For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality.

- 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- 35% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas as poor or very poor.
- 35% similarly rated the quality of allotment provision as poor or very poor.

By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by significant numbers in terms of quality.

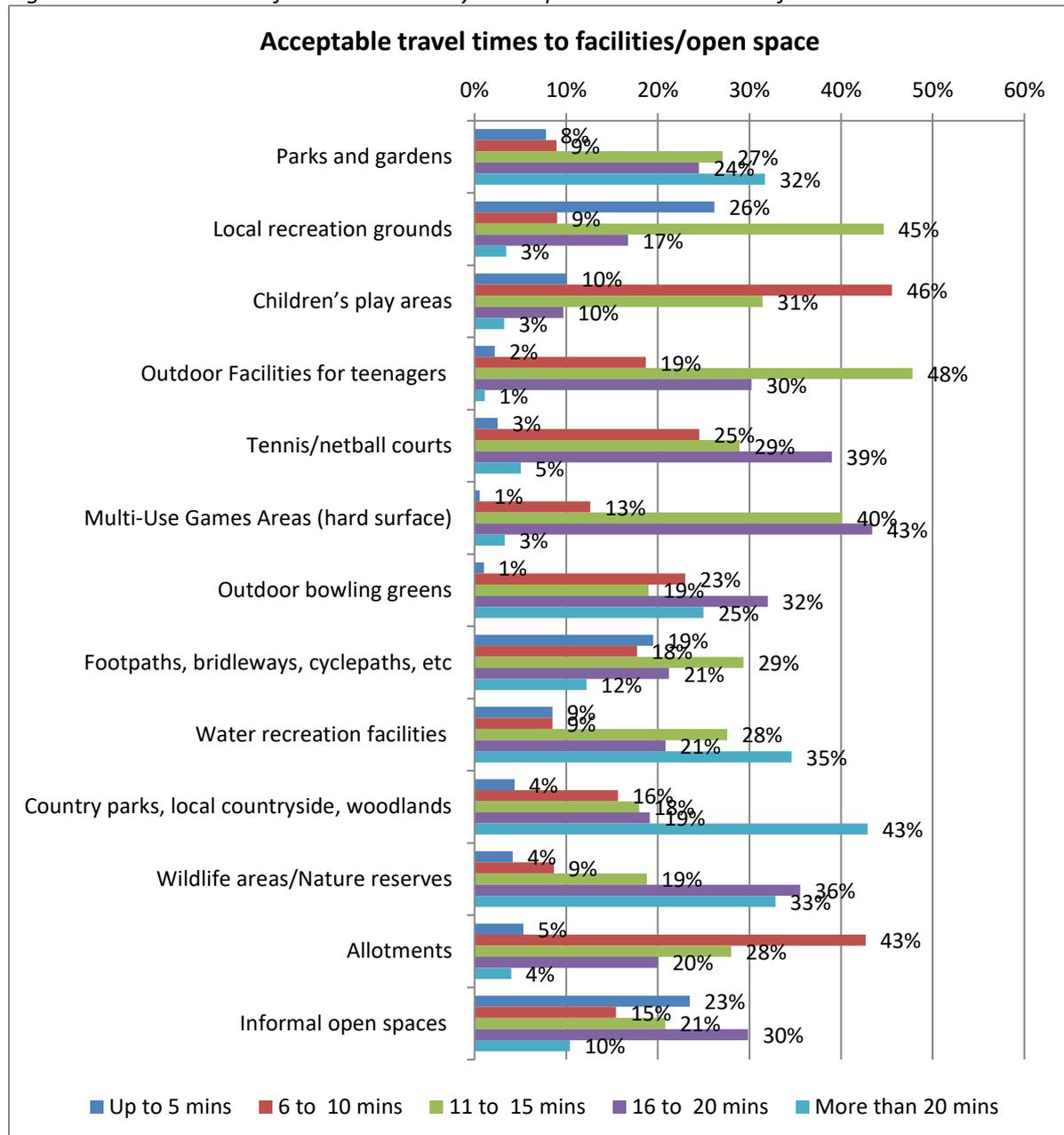
- Parks and gardens (74% rate quality in general as being good or very good);
- Country parks/countryside/woodlands (67% similarly);
- Local Recreation Grounds (59% similarly).

2.1.6 Access Issues (Geographical)

An important component of this study is to develop and recommend a series of local standards of provision for different types of open space, sport and recreation opportunity. The following provides a means to gauge people's willingness to travel to use different types of opportunity (which might be by car, foot, bicycle, public transport etc.). Where appropriate, these results will feed into the determination of the "access" element of local standards.

In looking at the travel times in Figure 6 below it should be noted that it does not specify the mode of preferred travel (this is covered by Figure 7).

Figure 6 Results of household survey – acceptable travel times to facilities



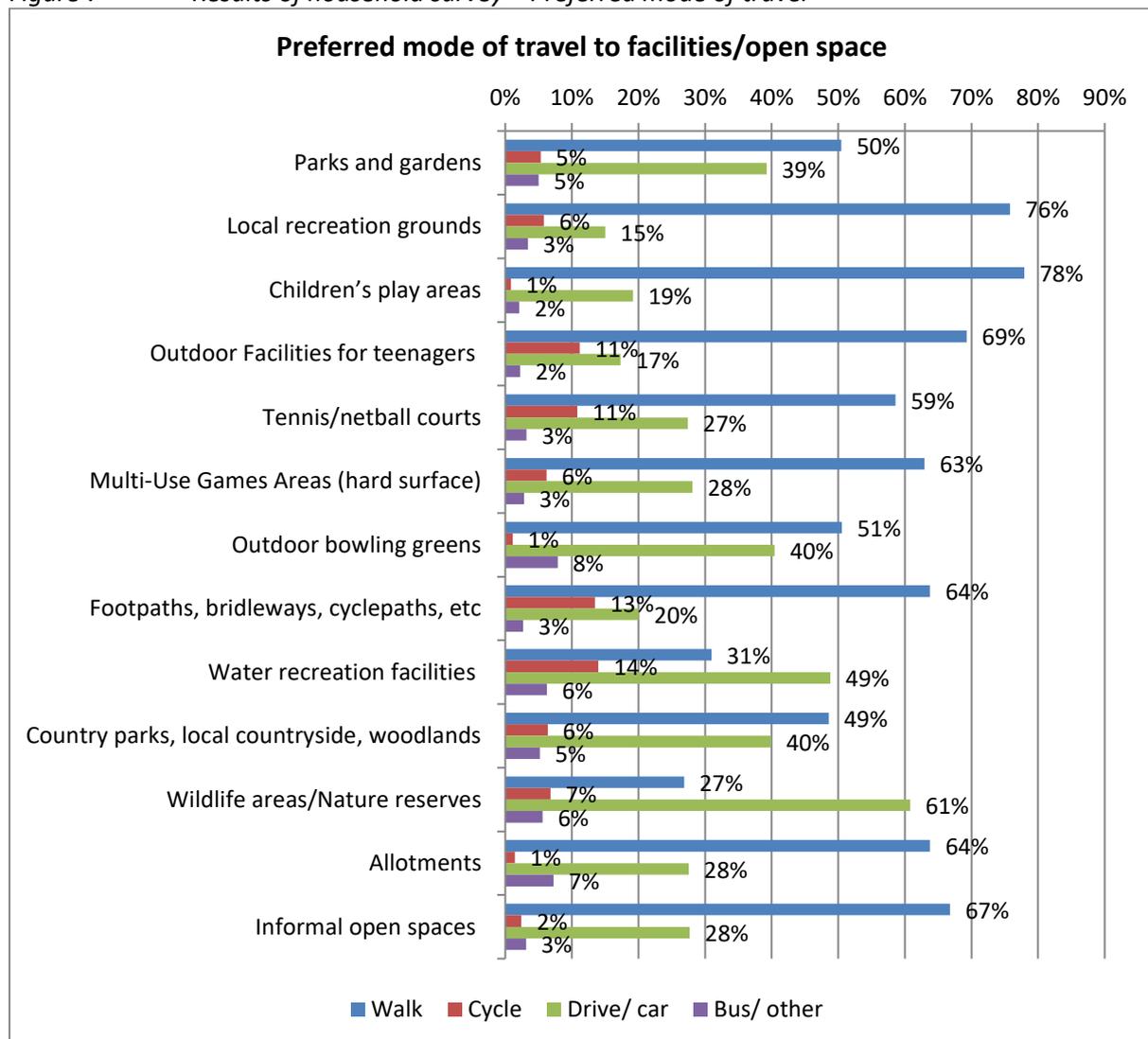
It can be seen that where respondent households make use of the opportunities identified a considerable number of users are prepared to travel for a relatively long time to gather certain kinds of facility e.g.

- Country parks, countryside and woodlands - 43% are willing to travel more than 20 minutes to visit and 19% would travel from 16 to 20 minutes.
- Water Recreation facilities - 35% are willing to travel more than 20 minutes to visit and 21% would travel from 16 to 20 minutes.
- Wildlife areas/nature reserves - 33% are willing to travel more than 20 minutes to visit and 36% would travel from 16 to 20 minutes.

In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, allotments, and local recreation grounds).

- 56% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 10% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 5% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 35% of users would expect local recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Figure 7 Results of household survey – Preferred mode of travel



Respondents are more likely than not (61%) to drive to wildlife areas/nature reserves. Of the transport options driving is also the most common means of getting to water recreation sites (49% compared to 45% who would walk or cycle).

However, walking is the norm for all of the other typologies most notably play areas (78%); local recreation grounds (76%); teen facilities (69%); and informal open spaces (67%).

Cycling as a form of transport is of importance to some households notably for access to water recreation sites (14%); footpaths/bridleways etc (13%); teenage facilities (11%); and tennis/netball courts (11%). For a number of households public transport is also important in relation to accessing some kinds of open space; for example bowling greens (8%), and wildlife areas/nature reserves (7%).

It should also be noted that that around 7% of households reported that they did not have access to a car for transport.

It is not of course surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as children's play areas, recreation grounds, and allotments. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for accessing spaces such as nature reserves and water recreation sites - which are often some distance removed from many potential users. It is however of importance when it comes to drawing up the access element of local standards in terms of whether access thresholds should primarily be provided in terms of walking, cycling or drive times.

The main implications for deriving access standards are that, in general, walk times would be more appropriate for nearly all typologies with the exception of wildlife areas and nature reserves and water recreation sites.

It should be noted that the above are broad conclusions and will be considered in detail in the main report. For example, drive times may be more appropriate for the strategic access element of a standard for "destination" parks and gardens but walking may be best for local "pocket parks". Equally there may be a need to consider standards for different types of youth facility. For example, planning for skate park provision may be best served by aiming for a strategic supply of high quality facilities that may need to take into account proximity to public transport routes, cyclepaths and such like. The provision of youth shelters may need a much more locally based, demand led, strategy.

The main report will also discuss in detail the way different typologies should be treated in relation to spatial planning standards. For example, recommendations for rights of way/green corridors may not be focused on specific quantity or distance/time threshold standards.

Importance of Footpath/cycle access

Residents were asked if they would cycle or walk further or more often if the quality of their journey by foot or bike to a nearby open space or facility was improved.

- 82% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 85% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

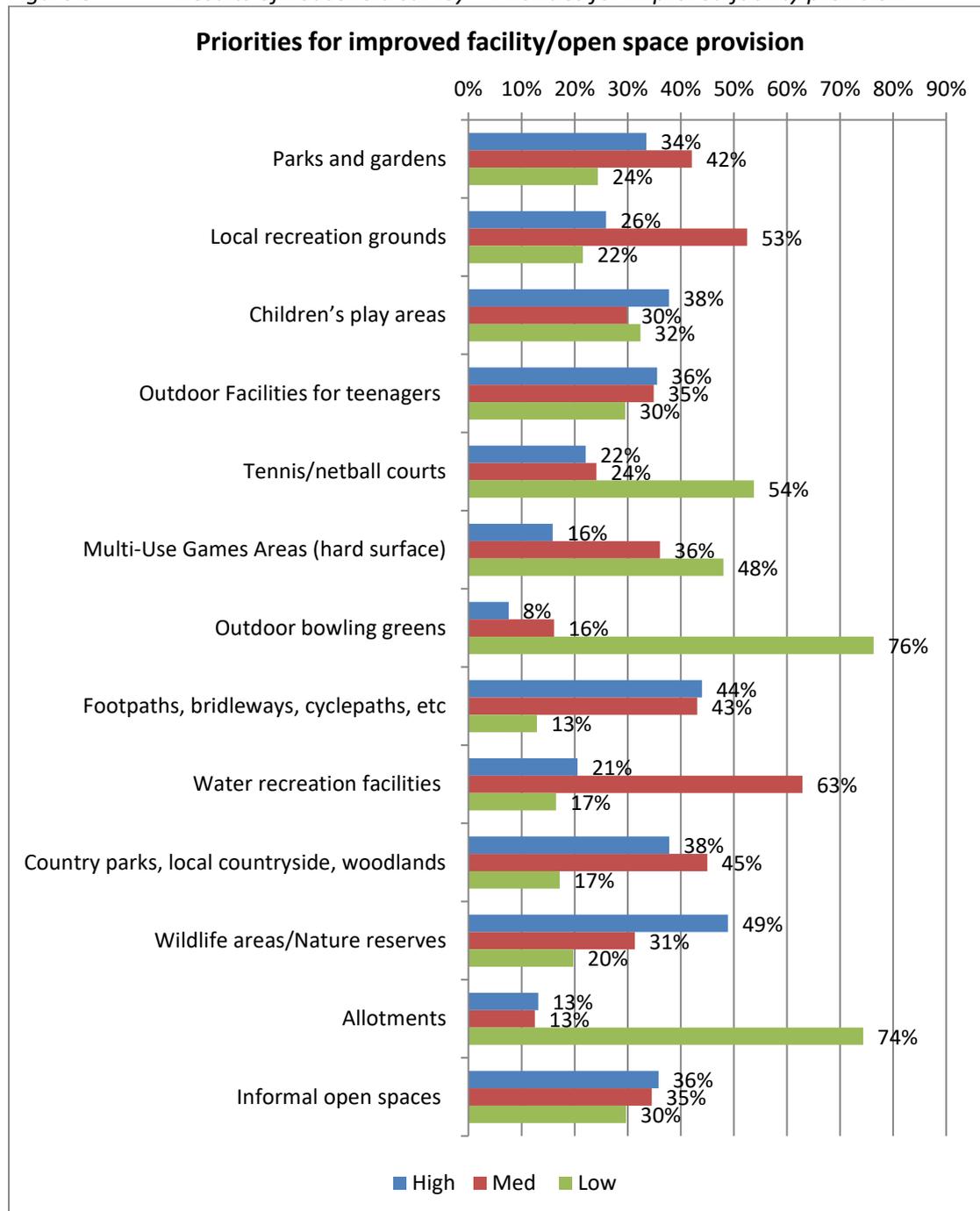
This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities. The detailed findings from this section will be used when

drawing up the access elements of relevant standards for different kinds of open space elsewhere in the study.

2.1.7 Key Issues and priorities for improvement

Households were also asked what their priorities for improvement in provision were. Findings are illustrated in Figure 8 below. Respondents were asked to rate the need for new or improved facilities by indicating priorities at three levels – high, medium or low.

Figure 8 Results of household survey – Priorities for improved facility provision



In relation to open space and outdoor facilities the categories highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision were wildlife areas/nature reserves (49%) and footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (44%).

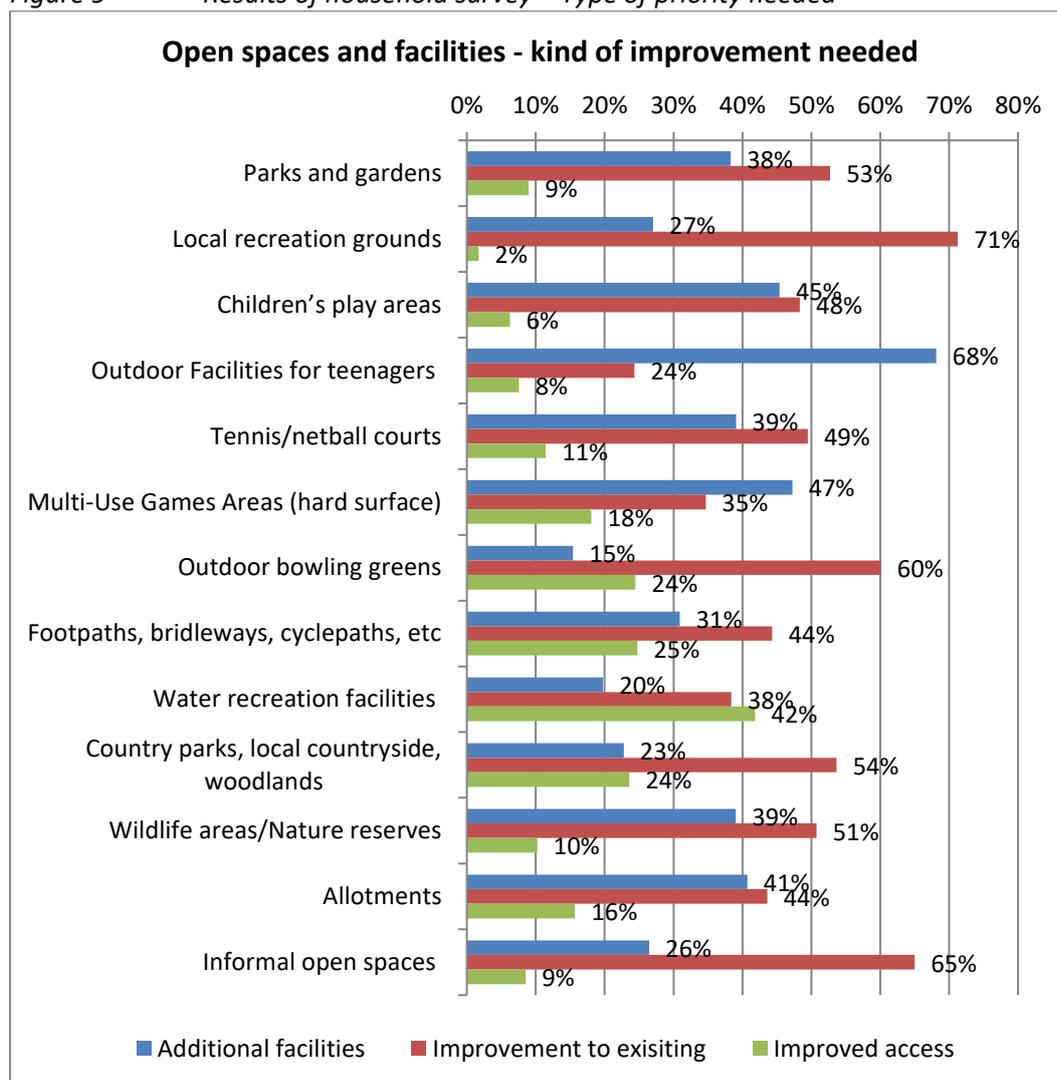
Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were country parks, local countryside and woodlands (38%); children's play areas (38%); and teenage facilities (36%).

Improvements to water recreation facilities and local recreation grounds also scored quite highly as priority needs (a combined high/medium priority choice of 83% and 79% respectively).

Type of Improvement Needed

Associated questions asked households to indicate whether the type of priority need was primarily for more facilities, improved quality of existing, or improved access. In relation to the priorities noted above these findings are shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9 Results of household survey – Type of priority needed



From this it can be seen that:

- A clear majority (68%) identify a primary need for more provision for teenagers and significant numbers highlight a shortfall of MUGAs (47% compared to the 35% who note the primary need as being improvements to existing).
- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement need suggested, for example, local recreation grounds (71%); informal open spaces (65%) parks and gardens (64%); informal open spaces (63%); and bowling greens (60%).
- Improved access is quite significant for some categories, most notably for water recreation sites (42%).

2.2 General Community Consultation– Key Findings

Quantity

The typologies where a majority of respondent households suggest there is a shortfall are:

- Outdoor facilities for teenagers (66%)
- Children's play areas (53%).
- Wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%)

Over 60% of households think that overall there are enough local recreation grounds; water recreation facilities; bowling greens; parks and gardens; and 59% believe there are enough tennis/netball courts.

Smaller majorities think that in general there are enough country parks, countryside and woodlands; allotments; footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths; and MUGAs.

Quality

For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality.

- 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- 35% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas as poor or very poor.
- 35% similarly rated the quality of allotment provision as poor or very poor.

By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by significant numbers in terms of quality.

- Parks and gardens (74% rate quality in general as being good or very good);
- Country parks/countryside/woodlands (67% similarly);
- Local Recreation Grounds (59% similarly).

Access (geographical)

Respondents are more likely than not (61%) to drive to wildlife areas/nature reserves. Of the transport options driving is also the most common means of getting to water recreation sites (49% compared to 45% who would walk or cycle).

However, walking is the norm for all of the other typologies most notably play areas (78%); local recreation grounds (76%); teen facilities (69%); and informal open spaces (67%).

Cycling as a form of transport is of importance to some households notably for access to water recreation sites (14%); footpaths/bridleways etc (13%); teenage facilities (11%); and tennis/netball courts (11%). For a number of households public transport is also important in relation to accessing some kinds of open space; for example bowling greens (8%), and wildlife areas/nature reserves (7%).

A considerable number of users are prepared to travel for a relatively long time (20 minutes plus) to gather certain kinds of facility e.g. Country parks, countryside and woodlands; water recreation facilities and wildlife areas/nature reserves

In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, allotments, and local recreation grounds).

- 56% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time. 10% of this 56% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 5% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 35% of users would expect local recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Over 80% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved and that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

Priorities and other issues

- The categories highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision were wildlife areas/nature reserves and footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision.
- Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were country parks, local countryside and woodlands; children's play areas; and teenage facilities;
- Improvements to water recreation facilities and local recreation grounds also scored quite highly as priority needs.
- A clear majority identify a primary need for more provision for teenagers and significant numbers highlight a shortfall of MUGAs.

- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement need suggested, for example, local recreation grounds; informal open spaces; parks and gardens; informal open spaces; and bowling greens.
- Improved access is quite significant for some categories, most notably for water recreation sites.

3.0 NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCILS

3.1 Neighbouring authorities - Cross boundary issues

Overview – Guildford Borough Council (Principal Planning Officer – Laura Howard)

Guildford Borough Council shares its borders with six local authority areas –Elmbridge Borough Council, Mole Valley District Council, Rushmore Borough Council, Surrey Heath Borough Council, Waverly Borough Council, and Woking Borough Council.

The following green space and cross border issues were highlighted by Guildford Borough Council Spatial Planning:

- At the border with Rushmoor (Blackwater Valley), the river forms a barrier and is an important recreational route.
- There is a large development in Surrey Heath (Deepcut) which extends into north west Guildford, although it is only the SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) that extends into Guildford (no housing) – there is an SPA (Special Protection Area) in this part of Guildford.
- There are linkages between Guildford and Woking. A lot of the area is SPA and there is not much development in this area. There is a need to ensure that recreation pressure on this area is not increased.
- Proposed site allocation in Guildford (Wisley Airfield) abuts the Elmbridge boundary and the 400m buffer of the SPA crosses into the disused airfield.
- Effingham Village (in Guildford) is close to Bookham Village (in Mole Valley District) Neighbourhood Plan area. There is potential for green belt release between these areas and lots of links between the two villages (likely to be cross border recreational use).
- The Surry Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers the majority of the southern half of the borough and there is not much development in this part of the borough.
- There is not much cross border communication regarding green infrastructure that Laura is aware of to-date, and the issue of GI has not been raised as pertinent.

Planning Policy officers were also contacted from the 6 neighbouring authorities to check if they had identified any cross border issues that they thought should be taken into account.

Neighbouring Local Authorities

Comments and observations from officers of the neighbouring authorities are provided below³.

³ The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma. All the neighbouring local authorities responded except for Mole Valley District Council (the original email plus three reminders were sent).

Elmbridge Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues ⁴
Green Infrastructure	<p>Core Strategy Policy CS14: Green Infrastructure – http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy/corestrategydpd.htm</p> <p>Development Management Plan Policy DM20 – Open Space & Views - http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy/dmp.htm</p>	Continued requirement and need to protect and mitigate the impacts of development on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Ongoing engagement and buying to the Joint Strategic Partnership Board and the provision and management of Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANG).
Open Space / PPG17 study	Open Spaces & Recreation Assessment - http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/policy/evidencebase.htm	The nearest settlement within Elmbridge to Guildford Borough is Cobham & Oxshott. The deficiencies in provision of children’s play space, public parks, natural green space and allotment provision within the area are localised and given the distances to Guildford Borough, will not be provided for across the Borough boundary.
Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy	<p>Countryside Strategy - http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/leisure/countryside/discover.htm</p> <p>Has been updated and awaiting the agreement of Natural England to publish – imminent.</p>	Ockham Common is dissected between the two Boroughs by the M25 and the A3 Wisely Junction. Any surveys of this area and its planned management should consider the area as a whole.
Sport/Recreation strategy	Elmbridge Physical Activity Strategy 2015 – 2020 – http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/leisure/sports/sportstrat.htm	
Playing Pitch Study	Elmbridge Playing Pitch Strategy – 2013 http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/documents/detail.htm?pk_document=23637	
Play / Youth Strategy	<p>Elmbridge & Surrey CC Joint Youth Strategy – http://mygov.elmbridge.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=2400</p> <p>Recommended to Full Council for adoption by Cabinet in October 2015.</p>	
Any other relevant studies/strategies?	The Council is undertaking its own Local Green Spaces assessment. A methodology	Local Green Space – local designation and given the distances between the two

⁴ These comments will be taken forward and considered in the main report

	has been drafted but no documentation has been formally published.	authorities and the settlement areas, any designations in Elmbridge Borough are unlikely to have an impact (positive or negative) on Guildford Borough.
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Other Comments: I am unaware of any developments within the vicinity of Guildford/Elmbridge Borough Boundary that are relevant to this study.

Rushmoor Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Not yet started	
Open Space / PPG17 study	Copy available at: http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/newlocalplan	
Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy	Blackwater Valley Countryside Strategy	Delivery of Blackwater Valley Countryside Strategy requires action from Rushmoor and Guildford Councils
Playing Pitch Study	Copy available at: http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/newlocalplan	
Any other relevant studies/ strategies?	Rushmoor Local Plan Preferred Approach June 2015 and Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper. Copy available at: http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/newlocalplan	An important cross boundary issue is Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation - Guildford Borough Council and Rushmoor are involved in ongoing discussion about the use of a possible shared SANG at Tongham Pools. The most significant open space / countryside cross boundary issue between our two authorities is planning to protect the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Considering commencement following completion of updated OS Study.	
Open Space / PPG17 study	Currently being updated – due to be completed end June 2016.	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Currently being updated – due to be completed end June 2016.	May wish to bear in mind emerging development at Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut, which includes provision for a 7ha sports hub.

Playing Pitch Study	Currently being prepared – due to be completed end August 2016.	May wish to bear in mind emerging development at PRB Deepcut, which includes provision for a 7ha sports hub.
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Other Comments: Need to plan for SANG provision.

Waverley Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Open Space / PPG17 study	Completed in 2012	No issues identified.
Playing Pitch Study	Completed in 2013	No issues identified.
Play / Youth Strategy	Completed in 2015	No issues identified.

Woking Borough Council

	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	The Council is preparing 'Natural Woking', a biodiversity and GI strategy. http://www.woking.gov.uk/environment/greeninf/naturalwoking Draft agreed by Executive 17 March 2016, publication anticipated April 2016. Action plan to follow to support delivery.	Opportunities for improved cross-border green infrastructure and wildlife habitat connectivity.
Open Space / PPG17 study	http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/policy/ldfresearch/ppg17	
Parks/Greenspace / Countryside strategy	The Council's strategy for the Countryside comprises of five aims http://www.woking.gov.uk/council/strategies#countryside_strategy This is not contained in a Strategy document.	
Sport/Recreation strategy	The Council's Sports Development Plan is no longer relevant as all aims expired in 2012.	
Playing Pitch Study	http://www.woking.gov.uk/planning/policy/ldfresearch/ppsr The Council is currently preparing a new Playing Pitch Strategy. This is being prepared by Bennett Leisure and Planning.	This is currently being updated. For more information please contact Jacqueline Bennett Jacky@belap.co.uk
Play / Youth Strategy	http://www.woking.gov.uk/community/children/child/playdev/playstrat	
Any other relevant studies/strategies ?	Green Space Development Plan	

Other Comments: The Council welcomes opportunities for a well connected green infrastructure network that crosses borough boundaries, particularly opportunities for improved pedestrian and cycle movement between green spaces of the boroughs and improved wildlife habitat connectivity. Woking BC has prepared a draft *Natural Woking Biodiversity and GI Strategy* which sets out the Council's strategic approach. This will be followed by an Action Plan to ensure the objectives are delivered.

3.2 Parish Councils

Within Guildford Borough area there are 23 parish councils. Surveys were sent to all the parish councils together with two reminders to chase responses as needed. The survey covered issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of various types of open space and outdoor recreation facilities. There was also an opportunity for the local councils to highlight any priorities they might have for new or improved provision. Responses were received from the following 15 parish councils:

- Ash
- East Clandon
- East Horsley
- Effingham
- Normandy
- Ockham
- Puttenham
- Ripley
- Shalford
- St. Martha
- Tongham
- Wanborough
- West Clandon
- West Horsley
- Worplesdon

Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- 13 of the 15 parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- Ten of the 15 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play and recreation facilities within their parish.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were children and young people.

Quality factors - open space provision

The parish councils were asked to highlight what they thought, in general, were priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces. The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- They should be easy to get to (and get around within) for all members of the community.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained

Additional aspects of quality commonly highlighted included:

- There should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between them.
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- There should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.
- There should be adequate opportunities for dog walking and freedom from dog fouling.

Other specific suggestions included:

- They should be animal friendly - meaning dog walking. So there should be provision for removal of dog fouling and a place to hook up dogs while children play.
- Unspoilt countryside is essential.
- Many spaces have important historical aspects. e.g. the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills site. This is also of value for recreational use and for it's flora and fauna.

The table below provides a summary of responses from the 15 parish councils that responded. An X in a column indicates that the parish council reported a need for improved provision

Parish Council	Parks	Local Recreation Grounds	Children's play areas	Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)	Tennis courts	Multi-Use Games Areas	Bowling greens	Footpath/bridleway cycleways	Water recreation	Wildlife areas, nature reserves	Allotments
Ash			X	X	X			X			
East Clandon	X							X			
East Horsley		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Effingham			X				X	X			X
Normandy								X		X	
Ockham			X								
Puttenham					X			X		X	
Ripley											
Shalford		X									X
St. Martha			X	X	X						
Tongham											
Wanborough											
West Clandon			X			X	X	X	X		
West Horsley			X						X	X	X
Worplesdon			X	X	X			X			
Totals	1	2	8	4	5	2	2	8	2	3	3

The table covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities. For parish councils in the Borough the aspects of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- The need for improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas and improvements to tennis courts in some parishes.
- Other fairly commonly identified areas of concern relate to a lack of allotment plots; and the need for improvements to wildlife areas and nature reserves.

Parish specific issues

Unmet needs and aspirations for improvement

As part of the survey we also asked the open questions "are you aware of any particular groups within your community whose needs are not currently met" and "if you have, or are aware of, any specific projects, plans and aspirations for improving open space and outdoor recreation facilities in the Parish please tell us". Individual town/parish responses are shown in the table below.

Parish council responses regarding unmet needs and aspirations for improvement

Parish Council	Groups in parish whose needs not currently being met	Current plans and known aspirations
East Clandon	All age groups catered for, but the style of playground for children could be improved	<p>1. We have an active tennis community using our tennis court. This is kept clean of algae/moss annually and this is funded by our budget. It needs a new fence as the current one is getting worn and needs annual patching (no funds for this currently)</p> <p>2. The Playground on the Rec. is being re-painted and cleaned this spring and we have a taskforce of village mothers looking at what improvements to the play facilities and the grounds could be made. Also, they will look at the range of groups and disability access for the play area. The report will be out in a few week's time and from there we will formulate a strategy for improvement if identified.</p>
Effingham	The Effingham Village Recreation Trust has identified several community needs, for all age groups, that they are planning to cater for on the King George V Playing Field – if they can find the finances;	Our draft Neighbourhood Plan is available which shows our local aspirations and plans. We will also be producing a Village Plan in due course.

	The Friends of Effingham Common work with the GBC Parks Department to improve the Common	
Normandy	Mavericks Baseball and Softball Club	Installation of 12 station trim trial on Manor Fruit Farm. Installation of senior and junior football pitches on Manor Fruit Farm. Installation of senior and junior baseball diamonds on Manor Fruit Farm. Construction of 4 changing sports pavilion on Manor Fruit for use of footballers, baseball players an Rounders club. Construction of mountain bike trial on Normandy Common.
Ripley	Permanent youth club is required. Day centre for older generations is required following closure of White Hart Court. Mobile Library service would be desirable.	
Tongham	There is little for older children and youths to do.	The Tongham Community Association are working with us to provide a picnic area with play provision.
West Clandon	The local village infant school has little open space/play area/sports grounds	
West Horsley	Young people – rely on Youth Clubs available in neighbouring East Horsley and local Churches. There is a small playground for very young children at The Village Hall, but the ‘teenagers’ have to go to East Horsley for a skate park, and other recreational facilities. It would be worth considering the need and suitability for more recreational facilities for teenagers e.g. an all-weather multi-skills area/wall. For swimming, or other sporting facilities, people	West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are in the process of identifying Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreational spaces, and designating Local Green Spaces, as part of our evidence gathering towards our Neighbourhood Plan. These will form the background to policies that we produce for consideration by, and consultation with our residents, with a view to influencing where we can future development, in order to ensure that West Horsley Village retains its openness and rural character. Below is the list identified so far of areas that are important to West Horsley: Open Spaces: Areas protected by the SPA within the northern part of the parish Areas protected by the SPA buffer zone in the central part of the Parish Areas within the AONB - The Sheepleas (SSSI). Note – the Sheepleas has an SSSI over its 400

	<p>have to go to Guildford, Dorking or Leatherhead. Limited availability for swimming at Cranmore School and Horsley Towers.</p> <p>The small Village Green is not large enough for our own 'Village Events' so we rely on the generosity of Dene Place nursing home for the use of their facilities for significant Village events e.g. the Biennial Village Fete. The Parish Council have been trying for some time to find an alternative 'Village Green'. Discussions with the owner of West Horsley Place are in progress.</p>	<p>acres so access is limited to footpaths and bridleways in theory)</p> <p>SNCIs – Lollesworth Wood, Parkrow Copse, Great Wix Wood, Upper Weston Wood</p> <p>AGLV – the entire Parish south of the A246</p> <p>SANG's – none, although Ben's Wood is proposed in the new Local Plan</p> <p>National Trust – part of the Hatchland's estate is situated within the Parish</p> <p>Conservations Areas and the environs of the 40 plus Listed Buildings</p> <p>All Ancient and semi-natural woodlands e.g. Hook Wood</p> <p>All traditional orchards e.g. The Village Orchard</p> <p>Local Green Spaces: All areas listed elsewhere plus The Old Rectory Field and Daws Dene</p> <p>Smaller recreational 'greens' that are important to local residents e.g. Overbrook, Long Reach triangle, Nightingale Crescent, the Barley Mow Beer Garden (these are just a few)</p> <p>All areas that provide wildlife corridors and priority habitats</p> <p>Further comments to note: West Horsley is an ancient historic village with over 40 listed buildings and lies between Clandon and Horsley mainline stations. The Village can be described as a <i>gateway to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</i>. Many people come to the area to enjoy our 'Open Spaces' and at least four pubs benefit from these visitors (to include Queens Head in East Clandon and Duke of Wellington in East Horsley.) For this reason it is imperative that the overwhelmingly <i>rural</i> nature of the village be preserved.</p> <p>In the South of the Parish there is easy access to the AONB which gives huge benefit to walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, school-children doing their Duke of Edinburg Awards and to naturalists and photographers.</p>
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The detailed parish responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements summarised provided in the table below.

Parish council responses regarding the need for new and improved provision

Parish	Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments
Ash	There is a need for continued maintenance of play areas and equipment - need for upgrades of equipment and the introduction of outdoor gym facilities.
East Clandon	<p><i>Play Areas:</i> The current play area is adequate but can do with more excitement and variety.</p> <p><i>Teenage facilities:</i> Other than our tennis court and some play equipment, there is not much available. We need to add to the adventure element for this age group.</p> <p><i>Tennis Courts:</i> We have one. It could do with a new fence as this one is 10 years old and needs annual patching.</p> <p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> It would be lovely if we could open another footpath to link the northern end of the village near our Common to create a safe link along the Ripley road to Green Lane at the far northern edge of our parish; and link into a circular route to West Clandon.</p>
East Horsley	<p><i>Parks and youth facilities:</i> Kingston Meadow - proposed Skate Board Park and improved outdoor gym equipment. Wellington Meadow - improved amenity value, information boards, benches and improved access.</p> <p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> Improved access to avoid roads needed.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Need for toilet facilities for families using Kingston Meadow.</p>
Effingham	<p><i>Parks:</i> Not on Effingham Common.</p> <p><i>Local Recreation Grounds; Children's play areas; Teenage facilities; Tennis courts; MUGAs:</i> The EVRT Charity Trustees are planning to cater for all of these categories on the KGV recreation ground – if they can find the finances.</p> <p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> We are always trying to improve these and we have a shared cycle path between East Horsley and Effingham that needs attention – finance permitting There are privately owned ponds and lakes This would need a discussion</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> The allotments are very popular - existing facilities seem adequate.</p>
Normandy	<p><i>Play Areas:</i> Children's Play Area on Normandy Common needs extending. Additional play equipment required on Manor Fruit Farm Play area.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> Mountain bike track/trial on Normandy Common.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> Additional allotments required.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Senior and junior football pitches are required on Manor Fruit Farm. Senior and junior baseball diamonds are required on Manor Fruit Farm</p>
Ockham	<p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> Regarding the last Parish Plan, completed by 70% of villagers, the following information was collected: Within the community, 93.8% of residents use the public footpaths and 76.8% make use of the public bridleways. 43% of respondents believe that more village footpaths are required. Just over 50% of residents indicated their willingness to assist in maintaining these rights of way.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> The majority of respondents would like to maintain the rural feel of the village, its historical architectural features, protection of the Green Belt and green spaces including the Former Wisley Airfield (FWA). Over 90% of respondents believe it is very important to continue to protect the designated SPAs (Special Protection Areas) and SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).</p>
Puttenham	<i>Play Area:</i> Needs updating - plans are to replace all equipment in children's play area in the next couple of years
Ripley	<i>Tennis Courts:</i> Issue raised by Lovelace Neighbourhood Plan survey.

	<p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> Further footpaths, rights of way, and cyclepaths are being sought. Also linking up of footpaths, Rights of Way, across Lovelace Ward.</p> <p><i>Wildlife areas/nature reserves:</i> The parish council is seeking planning approval for Nature Reserve development.</p>
St. Martha	<p><i>Recreation Grounds:</i> Need a Village Green for general recreational use.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> Need some, none at present.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Wish to use West Lodge, within the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills site for community use. As a mini Visitor/ Information Centre, storage of finds etc.</p>
Tongham	<p><i>Play Areas:</i> We need a play area for 8+ age group.</p> <p><i>Teenage facilities:</i> We are planning a teen shelter, with solar lighting, in due course.</p> <p><i>Tennis Courts:</i> We have two tennis courts and are planning to refurbish one of them in the 2017/18 financial year.</p> <p><i>Bowling Greens:</i> Tongham Moors Trust includes an excellent bowling club.</p> <p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> There are many footpaths around the village.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> We very much want to provide better recreation for all age groups in the village.</p>
West Horsley	<p><i>Play Areas:</i> Improvements needed</p> <p><i>MUGA:</i> Needed - none in Horsley</p> <p><i>Bowling Greens:</i> Needed - none in West Horsley⁵</p> <p><i>Footpaths etc:</i> Footpath 99 running parallel with the railway between The Street, West Horsley and Kingston Avenue, East Horsley has been designated as a cycle path. It is not wide enough to take pedestrians and cyclists and usually means those on foot have to take to the overgrown verge into the brambles. If it is to continue to be a designated cycle path it should be brought up to the width standard for dual paths. It is even more difficult when the pedestrians are walking dogs. It is probably not suitable for disabled access.</p> <p>Cranmore Lane connection to Little Cranmore Lane part of which is a bridleway is impassable for much of the year for pedestrians as a stream runs along it and at the Little Cranmore Lane end the path bit is so narrow it is almost impossible for horses as well without resorting to the ditch.</p> <p>Footpath 99 would benefit from clear signage at each end to show the links between east and West Horsley e.g. a little train to show it's the way to the Train Station.</p> <p>Additional safe cycle ways would be a great local benefit, but existing roads are impractically narrow in most places.</p> <p><i>Water recreation:</i> The watercourses in West Horsley are not properly cleared out which contributes to the excessive flooding of the roads along side which the ditches etc run.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> The closure of Francis Corner car park on Coombe Lane means there is very little parking giving direct access to the Easy Access routes across Netley Heath and Hackhurst Down. This means that Surrey County Council is denying wheelchair users and those with prams etc. the chance to walk through the forestry and countryside. In the summer particularly you could get up to 8 cars there with dog walkers, cyclists & children riding bikes somewhere safe with only very little traffic even on the Byway.</p>

⁵ There is however a bowling green in adjacent East Horsley.

Worplesdon	<p><i>Play Areas:</i> Upgrade of Jacobs Well Play Area to be carried out June 2016</p> <p><i>Water recreation:</i> Maintenance of White House pond, Jacobs Well to take place August 2016.</p> <p><i>Wildlife areas/nature reserves:</i> Burpham Court Farm to become a Nature Reserve.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> The Parish Council intends to provide 10 x 6 rod size allotments in Harry's Meadow - subject to demand.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Our aspiration is to protect all our open spaces, including common land and farmland, from the excessive development proposed within the draft Local Plan.</p>
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Parish Councils – other comments

Finally, the survey also provided the opportunity to raise any other issues or to make other points. The table below provides individual town/parish responses made.

Other town/parish council comments

Parish	Issues and other comments
East Clandon	We would be very eager to identify a source of funding for capital expenditure on improving our facilities. We have nearly sufficient annual funding for maintenance, and thus have a need for intermittent injections of capital to improve the stock or replace worn equipment and fencing.
East Horsley	The local authorities should engage with and communicate effectively with Parish Councils.
Effingham	<p>Our residents are opposed to a Car Park on Effingham Common.</p> <p>Many of our plans as aspirations require additional finance and GBC could provide help here.</p> <p>There is also a need to have areas of land that are restricted to the public and dog walkers to help support wildlife in our area eg Effingham Common. The Common was blessed with Skylarks five years ago but now there are none due to the increase of dogs and people roaming across the whole Common. Also horse riders are riding across the whole Common. This has discouraged Skylarks. We do need some protection for wildlife on the endangered list that were once common in our area but are now in steep decline.</p>
Ockham	<p>People in rural communities do not want or need dog walking facilities as the countryside provides ample informal opportunities already exist. People do not want shelters from the rain which need to be maintained. People do not want a wide range of facilities and high quality equipment. We have nature and wildlife in abundance.</p> <p>Diversity is important. In rural locations open spaces and play opportunities do not have to be created artificially. The outdoors is experienced 'as is' in rural locations. People who chose to live in rural locations choose rambling in the woods, bird watching, observing the changing seasons and experiencing sun and wind and rain over artificially created outdoor experiences in parks and play grounds and cafes/visitor centres.</p>
Worplesdon	Our commons should not be designated as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Working farmland should not be degraded to be used as SANG.

3.3 Neighbouring Local Authorities and Parish Councils – Key Findings

Neighbouring Local Authorities

Section 3.1 above briefly reviewed feedback from neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to the status of their open space strategies/associated studies and any cross border issues of significance. The variety of documents and strategies in place (and their relevance to current planning policy) is considerable, embracing green infrastructure studies, open space strategies, and sport, recreation and play strategies. The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived.

It is notable that many authorities are currently involved with commissioning new open space related studies or updating previous strategies that are out of date.

There is scope for neighbouring local authorities to work more together to make the most of accessible natural green space resources and to develop some common themes and agendas. It is suggested that much could be learnt in regard to best practice by better sharing of information between authorities and ensuring that local authority strategies afford some importance to considering developments and proposals in neighbouring authorities.

Parish Councils

Section 3.2 above provided findings from the parish councils survey undertaken for the study. 15 of the 23 parish councils responded to the survey.

General Overview

- The individual parishes are quite different in relation to size, demographics, geography, needs and demand/aspirations. It is important that the study takes this variation into account.
- 13 of the 15 parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- Ten of the 15 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play and recreation facilities within their parish.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were children and young people.

Common areas of concern

For the parish councils, the areas of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- The need for improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas and improvements to tennis courts in some parishes.
- Other fairly commonly identified areas of concern relate to a lack of allotment plots; and the need for improvements to wildlife areas and nature reserves.

Quality considerations

The parish councils were asked to highlight what they thought, in general, were priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces. The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- They should be easy to get to (and get around within) for all members of the community.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained

Additional aspects of quality commonly highlighted included:

- There should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between them.
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- There should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.
- There should be adequate opportunities for dog walking and freedom from dog fouling.

Detailed responses on open space typologies

Many of the parish councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed. These responses can be found in the associated excel spreadsheet.

4.0 LOCAL AUTHORITY STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

This section highlights the views of key Guildford Borough and Surrey County Council stakeholders in relation the value of open spaces and issues regarding the quantity, quality and accessibility of the various kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities within the scope of the study.

4.1 Public Health

Introduction - the general value of open spaces and physical activity to health

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have pointed out that "physical activity is not only fun and enjoyable, it is essential for good health, helping to prevent or manage over 20 conditions and diseases. This includes heart disease, diabetes, some cancers and obesity. It can also help improve people's mental health and wellbeing."

NICE Local Authority Briefing - Public health

Supporting people of all ages to be more physically active can help local authorities meet their new public health responsibilities. Specifically, it will impact on a range of indicators identified in the public health and the adult social care outcomes frameworks including:

- use of green space for exercise/health reasons
- child development
- excess weight in children and adults
- proportion of physically active and inactive adults
- self-reported wellbeing and health-related quality of life
- falls and injuries in the over-65s
- mortality from cardiovascular diseases (including heart disease and stroke), cancer and respiratory diseases.

More specifically in relation to the Open Spaces Study, Public Health England have provided a health equity briefing: *Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces.*

Public Health England - health equity briefing: Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces. Summary of key points

- There is significant and growing evidence on the health benefits of access to good quality green spaces. The benefits include better self-rated health; lower body mass

index, overweight and obesity levels; improved mental health and wellbeing; increased longevity.

- There is unequal access to green space across England. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to live near green spaces and will therefore have fewer opportunities to experience the health benefits of green space compared with people living in less deprived areas.
- Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and reduced social isolation.
- Local authorities play a vital role in protecting, maintaining and improving local green spaces and can create new areas of green space to improve access for all communities. Such efforts require joint work across different parts of the local authority and beyond, particularly public health, planning, transport, and parks and leisure.

Providing opportunities for physical activity by developing and maintaining appropriate facilities such as parks and open spaces is therefore very important in relation to promoting better public health. Public Health services nationally therefore tend to have an interest in all aspects of active recreation facility provision; and this is reflected in the views of the team in Guildford.

Guildford Borough Public Health

In relation to the development of the main report e.g. in respect of their statements of policy and the development of future strategy, it is important to understand to what extent open space and outdoor play/recreation provision is valued by public health. For example, there may be potential to secure increased public health funding for potential open space developments.

The Borough Public Health Coordinator was contacted and provided the following information and key points:

Overview

- The Guildford Borough Council Public Health Coordinator post carries responsibility for co-ordinating the Guildford Health and Well-being Board, which sets the Guildford Health and Well-being Strategy.
- Guildford Health and Wellbeing Board is a partnership with representation from Guildford Borough Council, Guildford and Waverley and Surrey Health Clinical Commissioning Groups, Surrey County Council, and local voluntary groups.
- The Public Health Coordinator co-ordinates health related work across the services that the council provide. This includes work with parks on the green spaces relating to the projects they do and similarly with the community wardens.
- The Public Health Coordinator noted that many services that the council provides have an impact on public health, so the work has links across the whole council.

- The Public Health service in Guildford fully understands and values the important role that access to well managed open spaces provides in relation to reaching health and wellbeing targets for Guildford.

Open Spaces and Health - Key points

- 66% of the Guildford population do more than 150 minutes of physical activity per week, which is good and health statistics are generally above average in relation to national figures. However, 24-26% of the population in Guildford do less than 30 minutes.
- Ash and Stoke & Westborough are the targets areas with the higher rates of smoking, biggest difference in life expectancy and these are the more 'deprived' areas. These are areas where increased physical activity would have most impact, and these areas are the ones that the council focus on.
- The Public Health Coordinator is involved in the physical activities group, which is looking to make opportunities for physical activity more available to people. For example, Public Health supported Streetplay organised by parks in 2015. This aimed to make play/physical activity more accessible <http://www.streetsalive.org.uk/my-street/play.aspx>
- The Council is keen to get across the message that being active doesn't have to involve joining a gym or a team. They want opportunities for people to be very easy for people to take advantage of. In this respect easy access to open space and outdoor facilities for regular physical activity is very important.
- There is a need to get across the general message that anyone can take part in physical activity and there needn't be any barriers.
- For example, money is often stated as a big barrier to people being more active – not wanting to pay for activities at Leisure Centres, Gyms etc. and not being able to afford it.
- Encouraging regular walking, cycling etc in parks and green spaces, using rights of way, and outdoor play for children removes this barrier as this is free for all sectors of the community. Maintaining accessible green spaces and facilities of this kind can therefore be of great benefit to improving health and wellbeing.

4.2 Guildford Borough Parks and Countryside Services

The Guildford Borough Parks and Countryside Services Manager and Parks and Greenspace Officer were contacted and provided the following information and key points:

Overview

Parks and Countryside Services cover 2600 acres of land including 7 green flag parks and open spaces, 61 play areas, 13 MUGAs, 2 skate parks, 1 BMX, 9 outdoor gyms, mini golf and table tennis. The service is also responsible for the management of bowling greens, netball, and tennis.

The main policy/strategy documents guiding work are as follows:

- The new Play Strategy has recently been adopted and sets out investment over the next 5 years;
- The emerging Countryside Vision Document;
- Sports Development Strategy;
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy; and
- Management Plans for Green Flag Award Sites.

It was also noted that the Planning Team are currently developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Key Points

The following key points were highlighted:

- Parks are managed entirely by the in-house team. There are a number of projects being undertaken to enhance Guildford parks. One particular focus at the moment is the Stoke Park development bid, where the Council is applying for funding to improve infrastructure including drainage, paths, refurbishment of the paddling pool etc.
- Stoke Park has over 750,000 visitors per year and Castle gardens over 550,000 visitors per annum.
- Tennis: There are 8 public tennis courts managed by the council. The council also lease a number of tennis courts to private clubs (the private clubs deal with the management/maintenance of these). The courts that the council manage seem to meet demand as they are never fully booked.
- Bowls: The council maintain 5 bowling greens which are all leased to private clubs. Some of the Bowls clubs are finding sustainability difficult and there may be a need to rationalise provision.
- Netball: There are only two dedicated netball courts (at Stoke Park). All other netball provision is through the use of MUGAs (of which there are 13). The provision of MUGAs seems to be adequate at present.
- Nature reserves are also very popular, with around 140 visitors a year to each reserve.
- Key aspirations/plans include getting people connected with biodiversity/wildlife in the urban parks and balancing the needs of different users.
- Promotion of sites (e.g. council's website) could be improved, and bylaws need refreshing.

Key points in relation to Quantity, Quality and Access are noted below:

Quantity

- Overall, there appears to be sufficient general recreation space, but a deficiency of sports pitches to accommodate demand; but there are some areas such as Guildford town centre where open space is limited.
- Children's Play: Many locations have open spaces which are lacking play areas and play equipment. For example, Friary St Nicholas Ward has a deficiency in play provision (which the council is trying to address).

Quality

- Maintaining existing quality standards is important (quality of sites and outdoor facilities is generally good), and replacement of old facilities is key. The service is fairly well resourced, but there is a budget gap to close e.g. the cost of implementing the play strategy is £1.2 million.
- Stoke Park is an example of an excellent quality park, attracting around ¾ million visitors a year. The park is also a key focus for the council, to ensure it is fit for the future (this is included within the councils' Corporate Plan).
- The quality of existing green spaces is high as reflected by the high number of Green Flag awards. There are currently seven Green Flag Award sites, and potential for two additional sites to meet the standard. There is always room for improvement, however. In particular, many of the parks have old infrastructure – eg. Stoke Park where the drainage system dates from the 1930s.
- The refurbishment of Woodbridge Road Sports Ground is also a priority within the Corporate Plan.
- Key quality issues are the drainage and maintenance of pitches - needs to be sustained, and maintaining (and enhancing) biodiversity. Litter is also a persistent issue. Dog fouling is generally not too bad, and there is a dog warden in post.

Access

- While access to open space is generally good, access to some sites could be improved. The availability of parking and slow public transport (Guildford is very congested) are issues.
- Castle Grounds has received a number of complaints about access due to its location on a hill. But the site has historic value and any access improvements would need English Heritage permission, and may reduce the sites visual appeal.
- Safe access to play areas (for children to walk to) is also a key issue, and is picked up in the Play Strategy.
- Within areas of need, health issues and/or a lack of confidence/knowledge about using open spaces may limit their use.

4.3 Guildford Borough Countryside Services

The Guildford Borough Countryside Officer was contacted and provided the following information and key points:

Overview

- The Countryside team manage the council's countryside estate. There are over 50 countryside sites (sites with 'access to nature'), covering around 700ha of land with a number of sites having varying levels of designations – from local to national and international importance for nature conservation and AONB.
- The Council are currently developing a Countryside Vision Document which will be the key policy document guiding the team's work.
- Maintenance/management of sites is carried out both in house and by contractors.
- There are Higher Level Stewardship Agreements (HLS) for a number of sites which provide funding for major works e.g. management of heathland sites. These agreements are due to end in 2019 and form a significant part of the maintenance budget, so there is concern if there is no replacement scheme.
- Cuts to the maintenance budget are also due over the next two years which could impact maintenance of sites.

Key Points

The following key points were highlighted:

- There are a number of strategic partnership projects that the council are involved with e.g. the council are funding partners in the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, the Basingstoke Canal Partnership and the Surrey Heathland Partnership. They are also part of the Landscape Partnership which develops a landscape scale approach to the River Wey catchment area, and the Surrey Nature Partnership (led by Surrey Wildlife Trust) where a number of the council's sites are key in delivering landscape-scale aims.
- The delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is key in order to mitigate the impacts of new developments/population growth on internationally important sites.

Quantity

- There is pressure on a number of sites that are closer to the town centre, and other areas are also very popular e.g. Pewley Down (chalk grassland).
- Forest Schools are in such high demand that their use needs to be restricted. There is demand for new areas for forest school, which could be accommodated through new provision of open space/woodland (although they generally like to be in walking distance from school).

Quality

- The quality of countryside sites is generally good, as they are well used and visited.
- Riverside Nature Reserve and Chantry Woods are examples of good quality sites.
- There are always plans for improvements e.g. management of habitats and access, improving car parks.

- One of the main issues is conflicts between different user groups (pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians) and the need to provide separate access – conflicts between different users is the main source of complaints.

Access

- Generally sites are easily accessible and wheelchair friendly, although there are sites where old infrastructure needs replacing and the natural gradients of sites can restrict access.
- The council are currently working through a programme of improvements e.g. installing board walks to allow people to walk areas that are seasonally wet (there is lots of floodplain).
- The Countryside team also work with Rights of Way to improve signage and routes.
- Public transport is lacking in some areas, which could create a barrier to use.
- At some sites, certain activities and access is restricted e.g. due to the designation of the site, but generally sites are open access. The main issue is conflict between different users.

4.4 Surrey County Council Countryside and Rights of Way Service

The Surrey County Council Countryside Access Team Leader was contacted and provided the following information and key points:

Overview

- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Surrey ROWIP (Revised 2014) is the overall policy and strategy guiding the rights of way service.
- The emphasis of the ROWIP is on multi-user routes and green transport.
- Key routes include:
 - The North Downs Way which is a national trail from Farham to Dover for walkers only,
 - Christmas Pie Route – Cycle route which runs partly along the old railway line from Farham to Guildford
 - The Downs Link – a long distance cycle route from Shalford to Brighton along the old Guildford to Horsham train line.
- There is a reasonably high percentage of bridleways as part of the overall ROW network.
- Gradients of routes are an important factor – the easier a route is to use, the higher its use/up-take. The Downs are a wonderful landscape feature, but often create problems in terms of gradients for new routes (especially cycle paths).
- There are various ROW forums and liaison meetings e.g. The County Access Forum, Horse riders Action group, Ramblers, Byways Meetings.

Key Points

Maintenance

- Vegetation clearance is carried out on a rolling programme – around 50% of paths are subject to being overgrown.
- Maintenance carried out is basic as it is restricted by council budgets. Some paths attract additional funding e.g. the North Downs Way receives funding from Natural England and is a high priority route.
- All other work is reactive – area officers respond to public and volunteers getting in touch
- The ROW network is heavily used, so the county council tend to find out about issues quite quickly.
- Volunteers e.g. Ramblers play an important part in the maintenance and inspections of path. The Council provide the materials/tools and co-ordinate tasks/liaise with landowners.
- Horse riding groups have contributed funding in the past.
- SCC encourage Parish councils to get volunteers involved with ROW monitoring and maintenance (they no longer have the resources to provide funding to Parish Councils for maintenance).

Quantity

- There are a total of 816 recorded Rights of Way (ROW) in the Borough, which equates to 602,812m of paths. The breakdown is as follows:
 - Footpaths: 556 paths/338, 367m
 - Bridleways: 212 routes/193,427m
 - Byways Open to all Traffic (BOATs): 34 routes/37,460m (some have restrictions regarding use)

Quality

- Common issues include overgrowing vegetation in the summer and muddy paths/surface issues during the winter. Landowner encroachment issues are also a common issue.
- The Downs Link (disused railway line) and North Downs Way are examples of highly promoted, good quality routes.
- Barriers to improvements include getting permission from landowners and funding (both capital and revenue).

Access

- The council use the principal of 'least restrictive access' and encourage the replacement of stiles etc. with kissing gates (or a gap if appropriate), although this approach is quite ad-hoc.

- The ROW network is generally reasonably well connected and there is good information on the council's website e.g. there is an interactive map which shows furniture along routes. There are a set of easy access routes on the council's website (suitable for disabled access).
- One of the biggest barriers is gaps in the network or roads. The A31 and A3 form major barriers (and safety issues) across some ROW, but there is no easy solution (other than very costly bridges, for example).

Spatial Planning

- New Roads and developments needs to take account existing ROW and retain routes and improve linkages/condition of routes. However, landowner negotiations can cause hold-ups.
- New development needs to mitigate traffic impacts, and creating new paths/linking paths/upgrading existing paths is cheaper than widening roads. This means that new housing developments generally result in improvements to the network.

4.5 Stakeholders - Key issues and observations

Overview

- The Borough Council Parks and Countryside Services cover 2600 acres of land including 7 green flag parks and open spaces, 61 play areas, 13 MUGAs, 2 skate parks, 1 BMX, 9 outdoor gyms, mini golf and table tennis. The service is also responsible for the management of bowling greens, netball, and tennis.
- Overall, there appears to be sufficient general recreation space across the Borough, but a deficiency of sports pitches to accommodate demand. There are some areas such as Guildford town centre where open space is limited.
- The quality of existing green spaces is high as reflected by the number of Green Flag awards. There are currently 7 Green Flag Award sites, and potential for 2 additional sites to meet the standard.
- While access to open space is generally good, access to some sites could be improved. The availability of parking and slow public transport (Guildford is very congested) are issues.

Public Health

- Providing opportunities for physical activity by developing and maintaining appropriate facilities such as parks, play areas and open spaces is very important in relation to promoting better public health and reducing health inequalities.
- Ash and Stoke and Westborough are the Council's public health target areas having higher rates of smoking, biggest difference in life expectancy etc. These are areas where increased physical activity would have most impact, and hence the ones that the council focus on.

Parks

- The Stoke Park development bid is a current priority for the Borough Council. The Council is applying for funding to improve infrastructure including drainage, paths, refurbishment of the paddling pool etc.
- Key aspirations/plans include getting people connected with biodiversity/wildlife in the urban parks and balancing the needs of different users.

Outdoor Sports (non pitch)

- Tennis: There are 8 public tennis courts managed by the Borough Council. The council also lease a number of tennis courts to private clubs (the private clubs deal with the management/maintenance of these). The courts that the council manage seem to meet demand as they are never fully booked.
- Bowls: The Borough Council maintain 5 bowling greens which are all leased to private clubs. Some of the Bowls clubs are finding sustainability difficult and there may be a need to rationalise provision.
- Netball: There are only two dedicated netball courts (at Stoke Park). All other netball provision is through the use of MUGAs (of which there are 13). The provision of MUGAs seems to be adequate at present.

Children's play

- Many locations have open spaces which are lacking play areas and play equipment. For example, Friary St Nicholas Ward has a deficiency in play provision (which the council is trying to address).
- Safe access to play areas (for children to walk to) is also a key issue, and is picked up in the Play Strategy.

Countryside Sites

- Nature reserves are very popular, with around 140 visitors a year to each reserve. At some sites, certain activities and access is restricted e.g. due to the designation of the site, but generally sites are open access.
- There is pressure on a number of sites that are closer to the town centre, and other areas are also very popular e.g. Pewley Down (chalk grassland).
- Forest Schools are in such high demand that their use needs to be restricted. There is demand for new areas for forest school, which could be accommodated through new provision of open space/woodland (although they generally like to be in walking distance from school).
- One of the main issues is conflicts between different user groups (pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians) and the need to provide separate access – conflicts between different users is the main source of complaints.
- There are a number of strategic partnership projects that the council are involved with e.g. the council are funding partners in the Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, the Basingstoke Canal Partnership and the Surrey Heathland Partnership. They are also part of the Landscape Partnership which develops a

landscape scale approach to the River Wey catchment area, and the Surrey Nature Partnership (led by Surrey Wildlife Trust) where a number of the council's sites are key in delivering landscape-scale aims.

- The delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is key in order to mitigate the impacts of new developments/population growth on internationally important sites.

Rights of Way

- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Surrey ROWIP (Revised 2014) is the overall policy and strategy guiding the rights of way service. The emphasis of the ROWIP is on multi-user routes and green transport.
- There are a total of 816 recorded Rights of Way (ROW) in the Borough, which equates to 602,812m of paths.
- The ROW network is generally reasonably well connected and there is good information on the County Council's website e.g. there is an interactive map which shows furniture along routes. There are a set of easy access routes on the council's website (suitable for disabled access).
- The County Council use the principal of 'least restrictive access' and encourage the replacement of stiles etc with kissing gates (or a gap if appropriate).
- Common issues include overgrowing vegetation in the summer and muddy paths/surface issues during the winter. Landowner encroachment issues are also a common issue.
- The Downs Link (disused railway line) and North Downs Way are examples of highly promoted, good quality routes.
- New Roads and developments needs to take account existing ROW and retain routes and improve linkages/condition of routes. However, landowner negotiations can cause hold-ups.
- New development needs to mitigate traffic impacts, and creating new paths/linking paths/upgrading existing paths is cheaper than widening roads. This means that new housing developments generally result in improvements to the network.

Other issues and observations

- Maintaining existing quality standards is important (quality of sites and outdoor facilities is generally good), and replacement of old facilities is key. The service is fairly well resourced, but there is a budget gap to close e.g. the cost of implementing the play strategy is £1.2 million.
- Off-site marketing of sites (e.g. council's website) could be improved, and bylaws need refreshing.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survey work and stakeholder consultation has highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space Study. There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local need and aspiration from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable, providing a strong evidence base to be combined with the detailed facilities audit.

The information and findings from the *Community and Stakeholder Consultation* report will be taken forward in the main Open Space Study report.