

# Tunbridge Wells Borough Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study (2017)



## Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (Final)

# Tunbridge Wells Open Space Sport and Recreation Assessment - Consultation Report

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ATP	Ancient Tree Forum
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
EA	Environment Agency
GBIS	Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
GI	Green Infrastructure
KCC	Kent County Council
KHWB	West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PAWS	Planted Ancient Woodland Site
PC/TC	Parish Council/Town Council
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
PROW	Public Rights of Way
RA	Ramblers Association
RTW	Royal Tunbridge Wells
RUPP	Road Used as Public Path
SAMM	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SANG	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SDC	Sevenoaks District Council
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
WASt	Woodland Access Standard
TWBC	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
WDC	Wealden District Council
WFD	Water Framework Directive

## **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, sport and recreation facilities. The study has been carried out by Ethos Environmental Planning in conjunction with associates Leisure and the Environment.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is one of three reports provided within the overall *Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment 2017*. It is a supporting document to the two main reports: The Open Spaces Study and the Built Facilities and Non-Pitch Sports Study. It provides consultation findings from various stakeholders and feeds into other aspects of the study as explained below.

### 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 2017 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to provide an up-to-date and robust assessment identifying needs, surpluses and deficits in open space, sport and recreation facilities<sup>1</sup> to support the production of the Local Plan.

In summary the requirements of the brief are to provide:

- A comprehensive borough-wide audit and assessment of existing spaces and facilities including consideration of facilities in neighbouring authorities.
- Recommendations for future standards of provision, including those associated with ANGSt (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard).
- Analysis of existing deficiencies and surpluses in provision in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility and size.
- A forecast of future needs based on socio-demographic trends, trends in the popularity of different activities, and the impact of planning and other council policies, and of currently planned provision.
- The identification of land use implications that would follow from making up deficiencies in provision.
- An indication of strategic options and opportunities for the future.

In order to meet this brief Ethos are providing:

- An Open Spaces audit and assessment<sup>2</sup>
- A Built Facilities and non-pitch sports audit and assessment

As such the overall outcome of the study will comprise of two main reports drawing upon an evidence base comprised of:

- Consultation and engagement with all relevant key stakeholders, agencies and organisations as well as the wider community and general public.
- A detailed audit of all facilities within the scope of the study.
- Analysis and assessment of the adequacy of current and future facility provision based on recommended methodologies such as Sport England's "Assessing Needs and Opportunities" national planning guidance and Playing Pitch Strategy guidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding pitch sports which have been covered by a separate Playing Pitch Study (PPS). The Open Space study will take into account findings from the PPS.

<sup>2</sup> Including play space and natural green space/recreation

## 1.2 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

This report makes a cross-cutting contribution to the overall study in providing evidence that will be used in both of the main study reports<sup>3</sup>. It primarily relates to the Open Spaces Assessment but relevant findings and information will also be carried forward in the Built Facilities and Non-Pitch sports study.

In the two main reports the consultation findings will be combined with other evidence, findings and assessments such as that completed in the audit, mapping and analysis process.

Undertaking comprehensive consultation and engagement with all relevant stakeholders and the wider community is an essential part of the overall process. It is an expectation of the National Planning Policy Framework and is needed to ensure that the study is robust in relation to recommended national guidance such as that recommended by Sport England.

The report examines local need for a wide range of different kinds of open space, sport, and recreation facilities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from relevant play, sports, leisure and open space studies. 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 four main sections:

- General community consultation
- Neighbouring local authorities; and town and parish councils
- Parks, green spaces, countryside, and rights of way
- Play and youth facilities

Each section provides additional detail on the consultation process relevant to that section and at the end of each section there is a short summary of the key findings.

The consultation and research programme was undertaken from June to October 2017. The extent of the research reflects the breadth and diversity of the study and a consequent need to engage with as wide a cross section of the community and stakeholders as possible<sup>4</sup>.

In summary, questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- A general household survey (postal and online)
- A survey of town and parish councils
- Local groups and organisations' surveys

In addition to the above a number of one to one stakeholder interviews/surveys were undertaken.

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 three main reports.

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<sup>3</sup> Additional consultation has also been undertaken in relation to non-pitch sports and indoor facilities as advised in Sport England guidance. These additional findings will be included in the Built Facilities and non-pitch sports report.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this report provides consultation evidence in the form of the observations and views/opinions sourced from many different organisations, individuals and studies. On occasion the views and observations expressed by individuals and groups may not be consistent with each other, nor are such individual contributions necessarily accurate or up to date.

The consultation report also helps the study to understand stakeholder and local people's appreciation of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space, sport and recreation facilities are considered as part of plan making as well as in dealing with planning applications.

## 2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This section provides consultation findings that covered all aspects of open space, sport and recreation facility provision. In this sense it provides a useful overview across all these aspects rather than simply from groups and organisations with specific interests in just one aspect of open space, sport and outdoor recreation. This contrasts, for example, with the other sections of the report which supply findings from individuals, groups and organisations with specific interests in individual elements of open space, sport and recreation.

The section also includes engagement with public health stakeholders who have an interest running across all aspects of recreation facility provision, whatever activity that may be (in relation to encouraging an increase in physical activity - with associated health benefits).

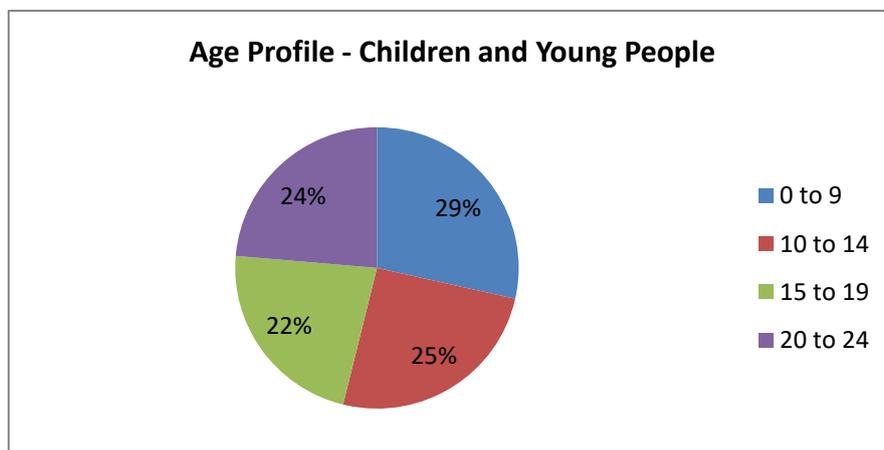
### 2.1 Residents' Household Survey

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

The open space, indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities study needs to secure a general understanding of how residents of Tunbridge Wells Borough currently make use of the various kinds of open space, sport and recreation facilities; in particular whether they think there are enough of such facilities; what they think of the quality of those facilities; how accessible they are; and what kind of 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 Tunbridge Wells households.

A questionnaire survey was therefore designed by Ethos and agreed by the Borough Council. It was distributed to a random sample of 3000 households. In addition an online version was promoted by the Borough Council's Communications Team. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 811 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1,953 and the average household size of the households was 2.4 – the same as the average for England and slightly higher than of Tunbridge Wells Borough as a whole (2.3).

Just over 49% of households who responded had children (representing household views on behalf of 196 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range:



The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 2 and the following provides some of the key findings<sup>5</sup>.

### **2.1.2 Frequency of use – All households**

Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of the following types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within the study area, and the results are shown on the charts below<sup>6</sup>:

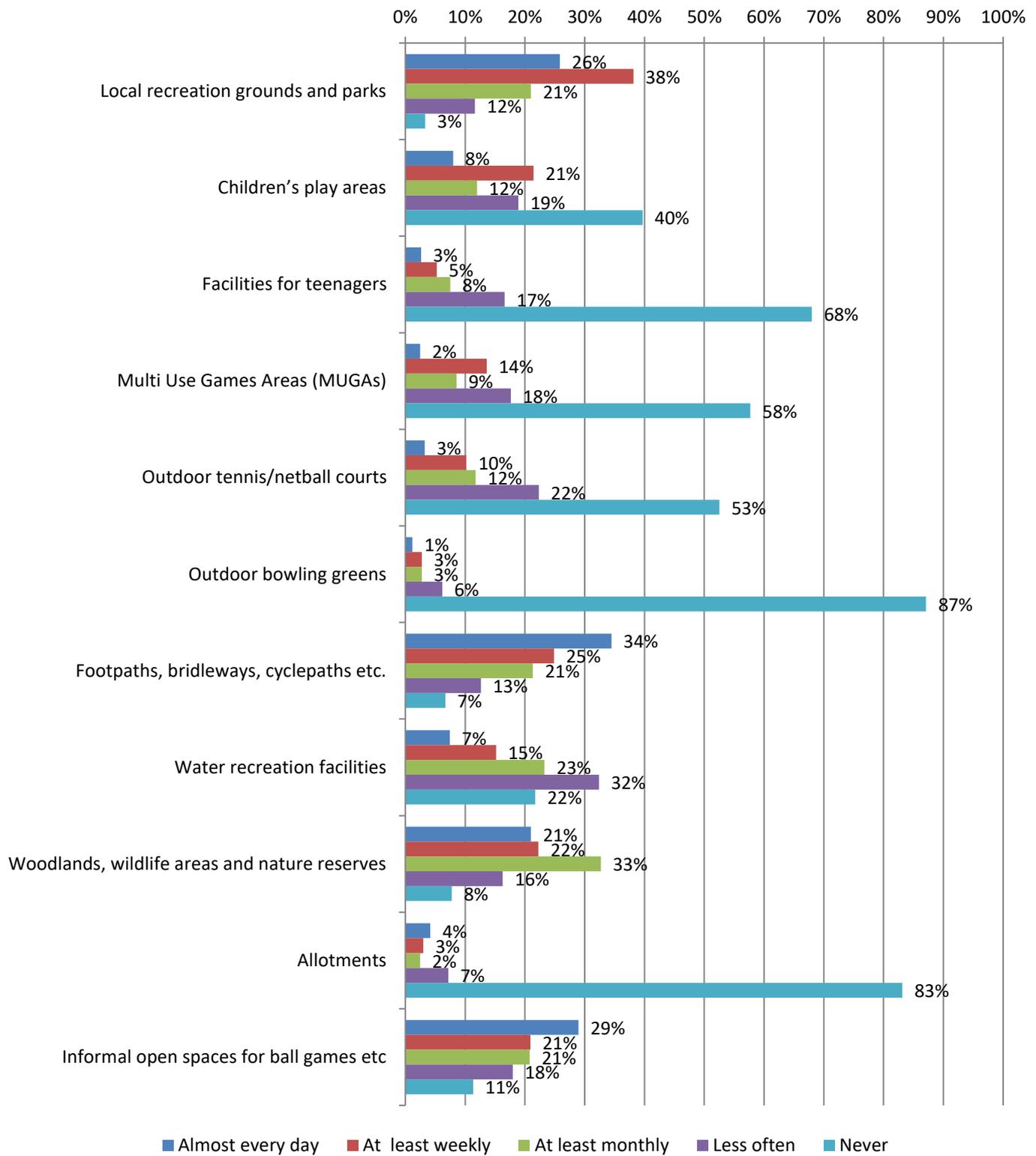
#### *Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

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<sup>5</sup> The findings are further considered - in detail - in the main reports; along with consideration of regional and national participation frequencies from sources such as Sport England's Active people survey.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest full percentage. This means that on some occasions the total percentages will vary slightly from 100%.

### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities - frequency of use - all households

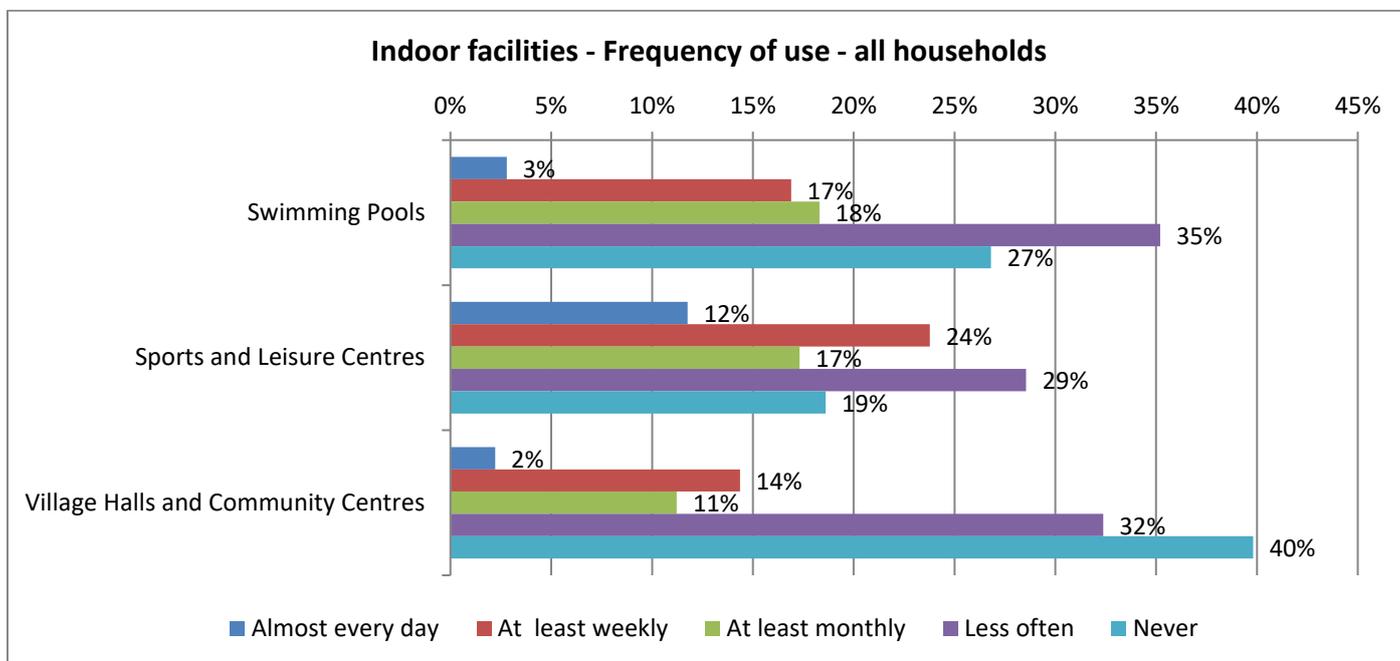


It is the Borough's local parks and recreation grounds that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (85%); followed by footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths (80%) and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (75%). Parks and rights of way are also by far the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis: 64% visit parks and recreation grounds at least weekly (26% of which visit almost every day); and 59% use footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths etc. at least weekly (34% of which visit almost every day).

Other spaces used at least weekly by at least 43% of households (including those who are more frequent users) are informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves.

Play areas and areas for water recreation are also fairly frequently used but by fewer households. At least 41% use them on a regular basis - at least monthly (including those who are more regular users).

*Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities*



Sport and Leisure Centres are used regularly by significant numbers (53% of households report using them at least monthly - many more regularly). 38% of respondent households make use of swimming pools at least monthly and 27% use village halls/community centres.

Sport/Leisure Centres are also the most frequently used on a weekly and daily basis (36% of households report using them at least weekly, including 12% almost every day).

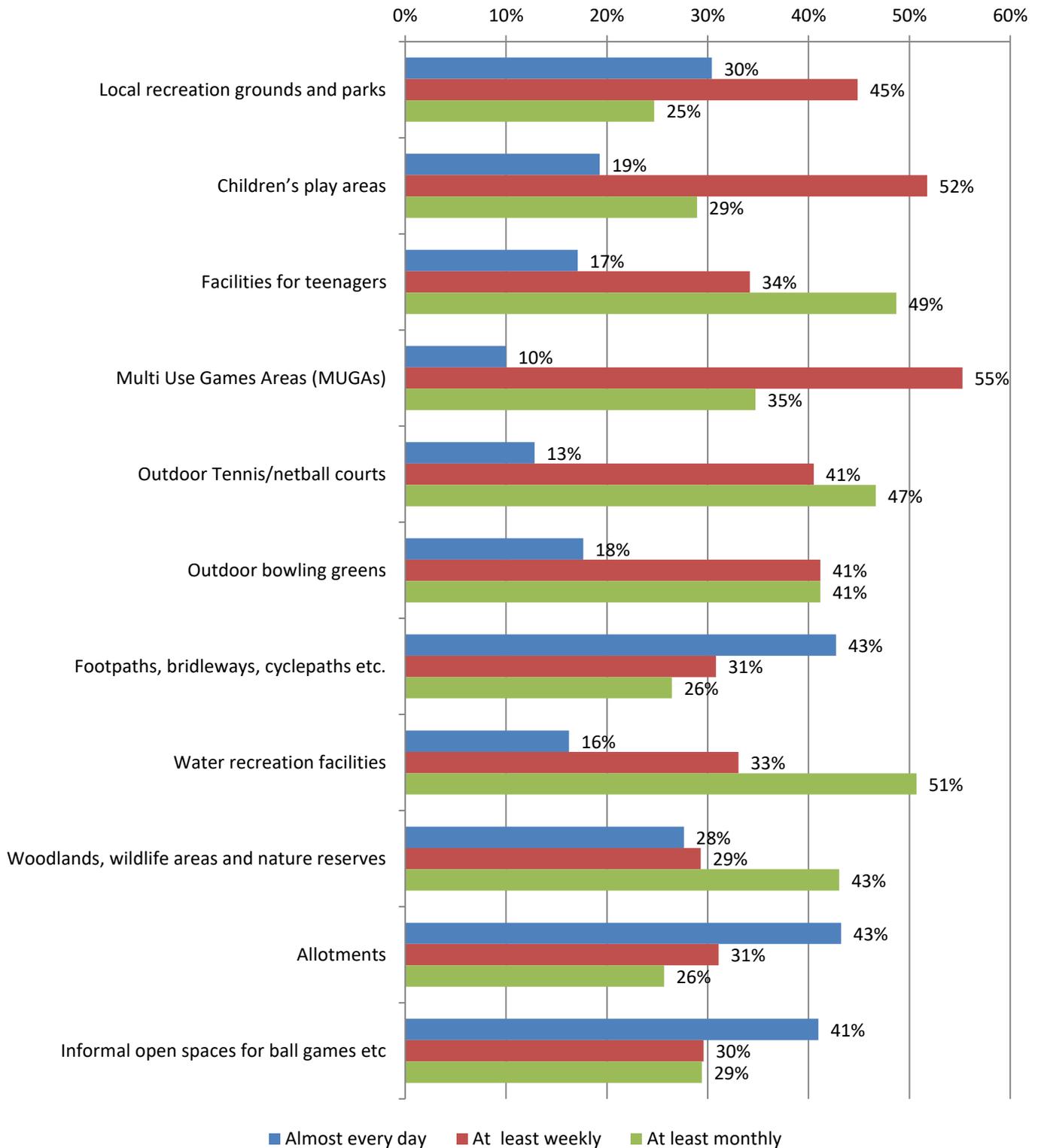
**2.1.3 Frequency, regularity and times of use – Regular Users<sup>7</sup>**

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

*Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

<sup>7</sup> By regular users we mean those households where open spaces/facilities are used/visited at least monthly.

### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities - frequency of use - users

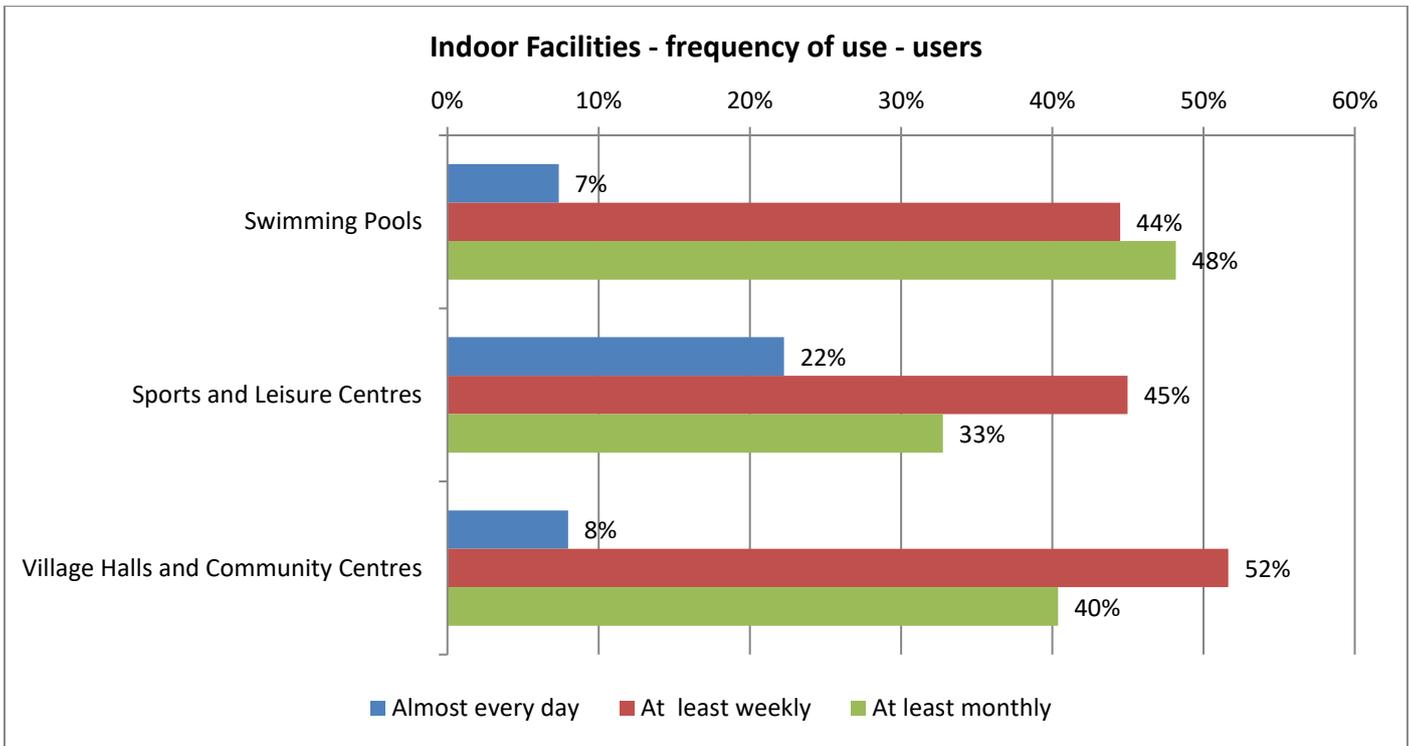


74% of allotment holders visit their allotment at least weekly (of which 43% visit almost every day).

71% of households using play areas visit at least weekly (of which 19% make use nearly every day); and 65% for MUGAs (10% nearly every day).

Many users of bowling greens also use them at least weekly (59% of which 18% use them nearly every day); similarly for tennis courts (54% of which 13% use them nearly every day).

### Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



In terms of indoor facilities the most frequently visited by regular users (at least weekly) are the sports and leisure centres (67% use these at least weekly of which 22% make use almost every day).

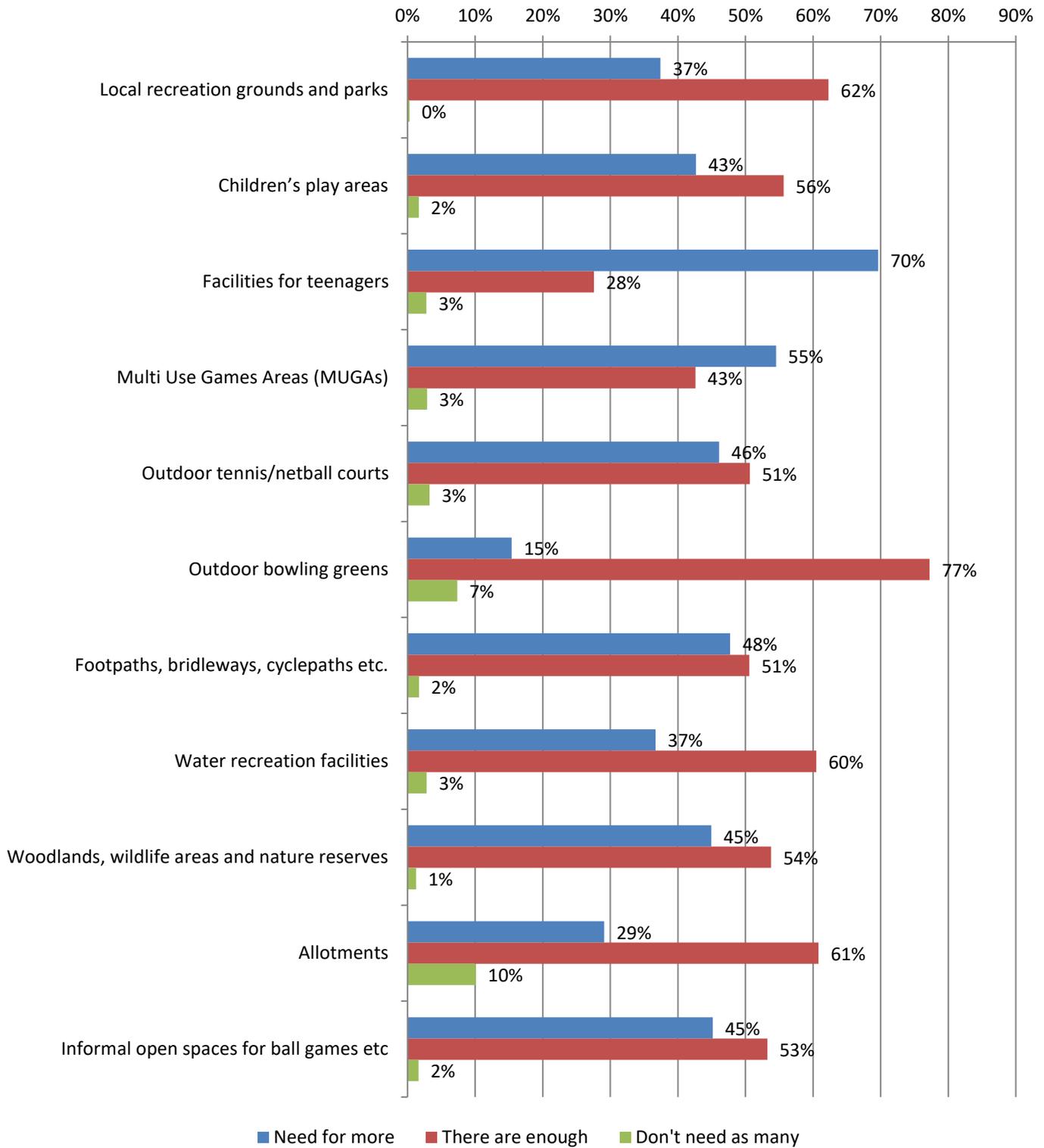
In addition, 60% of village hall/community centres use them at least weekly (of which 8% use them nearly daily).

**2.1.4 Quantity of open space, sport and recreation facilities**

Residents were asked if they needed more, the same or fewer of different types of open space and recreational facilities. Findings are illustrated in the chart below and will influence the “quantity” component of local standards as appropriate (this will be explained further in the 3 main reports).

*Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

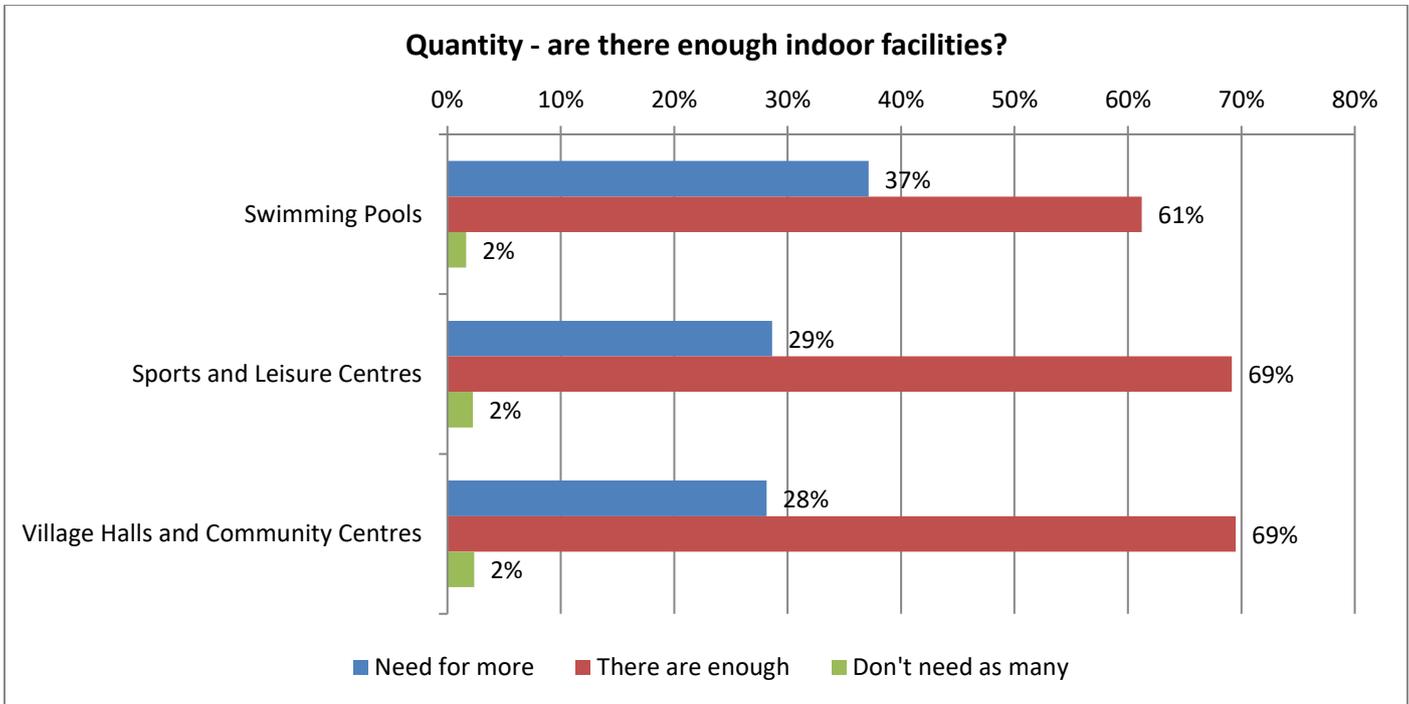
### Quantity - are there enough open spaces/outdoor facilities?



There are only two open space typologies that a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - facilities for teenagers (70%); and MUGAs (55%).

A large majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (77%) and an additional 7% said that we don't need as many. Smaller but substantial majorities think that in general there are enough allotments (71%); water recreation facilities (63%); and parks and recreation grounds (62%).

### Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



A clear majority of households reported that overall there are currently enough of all three kinds of indoor sport and recreation facilities; most notably in relation to village halls/community sports centres and Sports and Leisure Centres (69%).

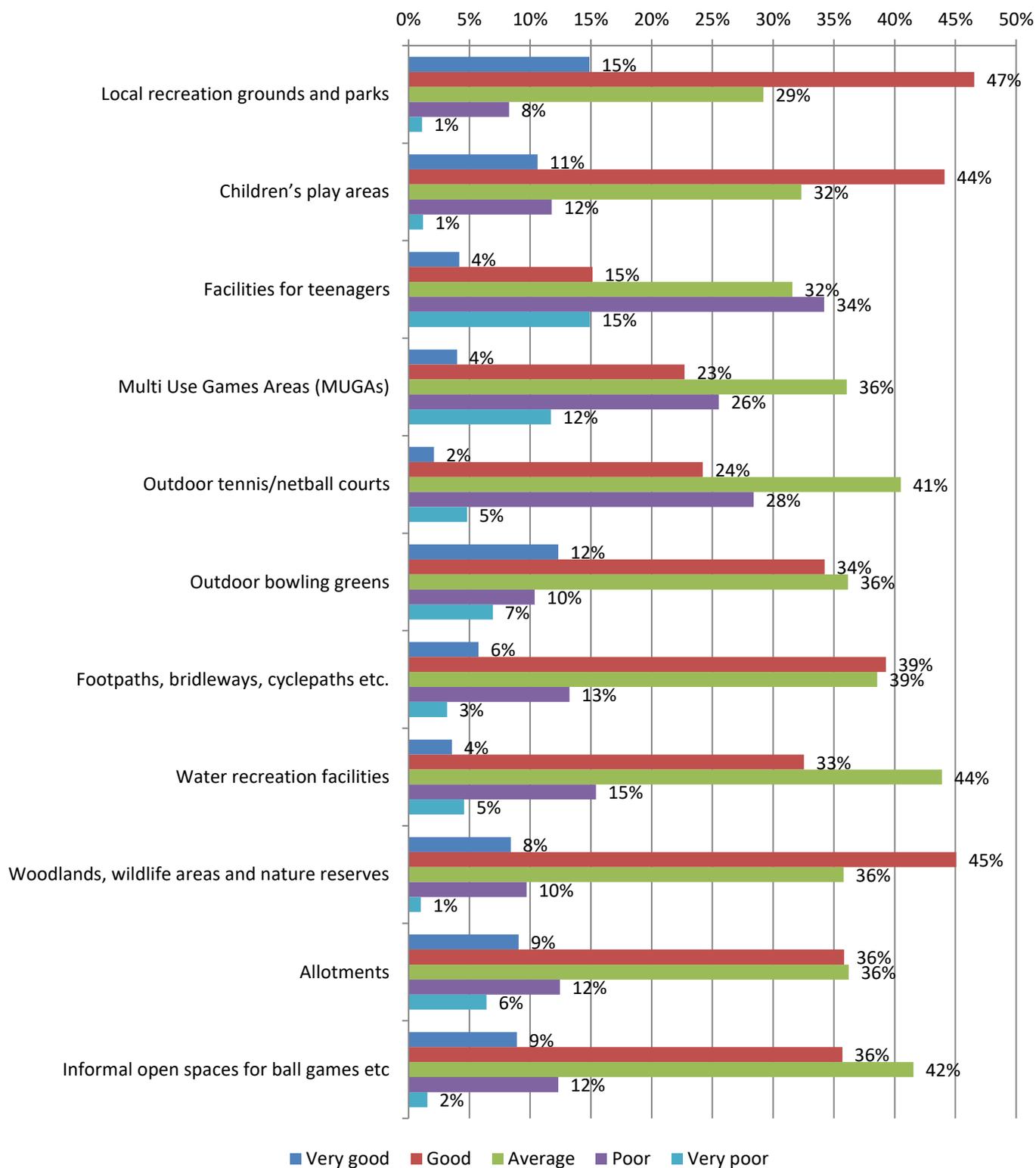
37% suggest a need for more swimming pools.

**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 below:

*Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

### Quality of outdoor facilities/open spaces

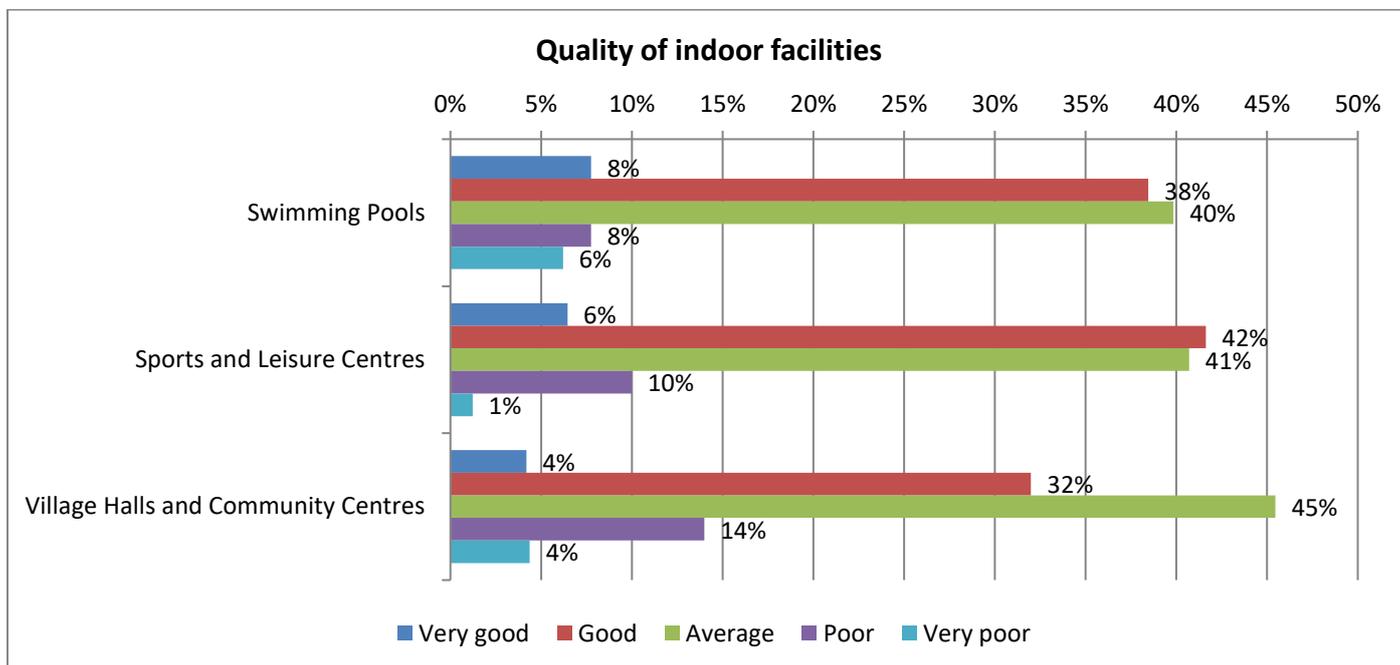


For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below.

59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.

In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

### Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



In broad terms respondent households appear quite satisfied with the quality of indoor sports and recreation provision. All are commonly rated as being of average or better quality.

The indoor facilities most commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are sport and leisure centres (48%) and swimming pools (46%).

Village /Community Halls are not rated quite as highly – 36% rating them as good or very good and 18% rating them as poor or very poor.

The detailed findings regarding quality will be useful in relation to reviewing the “quality” aspect of local standards.

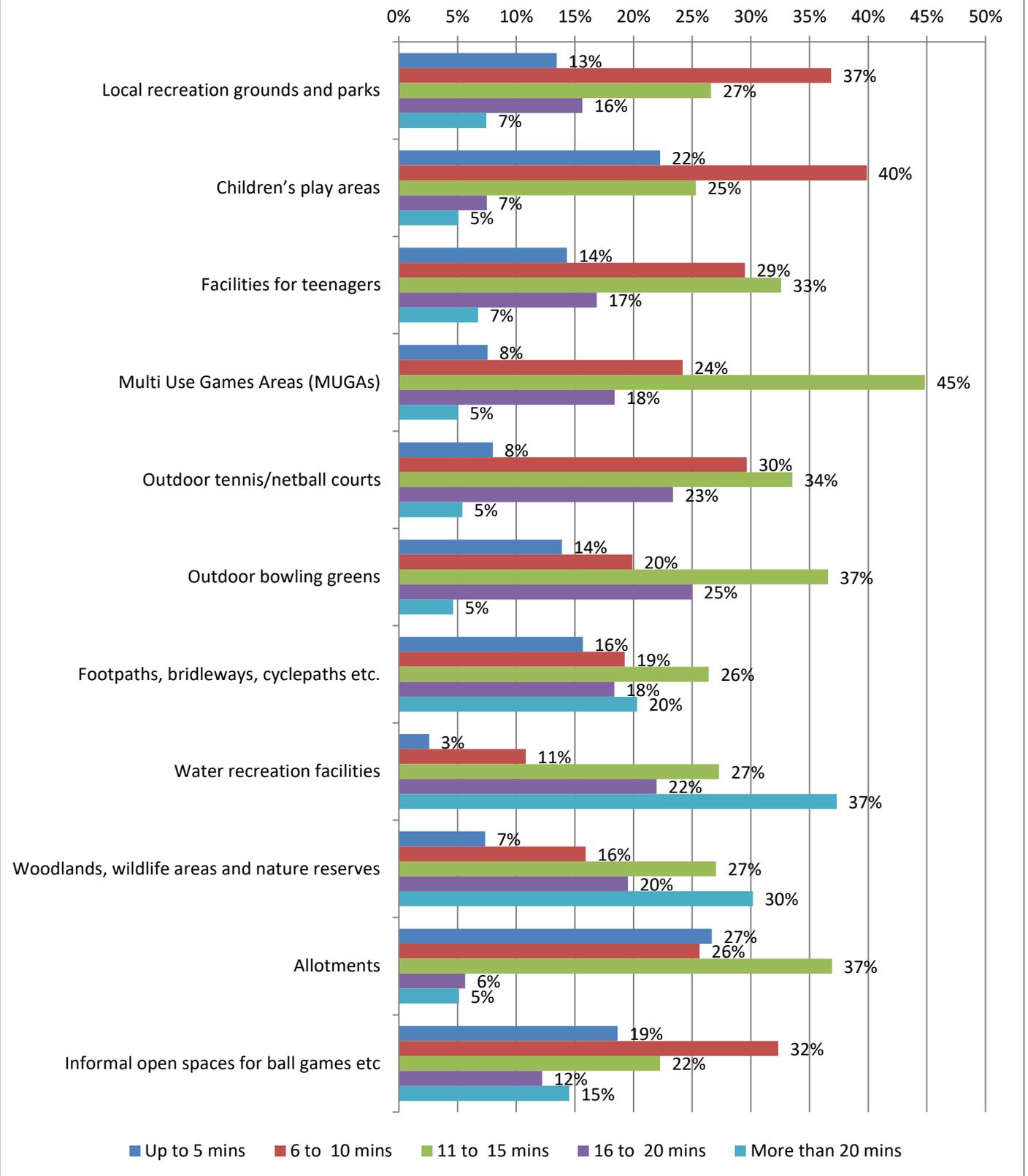
#### 2.1.6 Access Issues (Geographical)

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 facility/open space (which might be by car, foot, bike, 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 the first set of charts below it should be noted that these do not specify the mode of preferred travel (this is covered by the next set of charts).

### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

### Acceptable travel times to open spaces/outdoor facilities



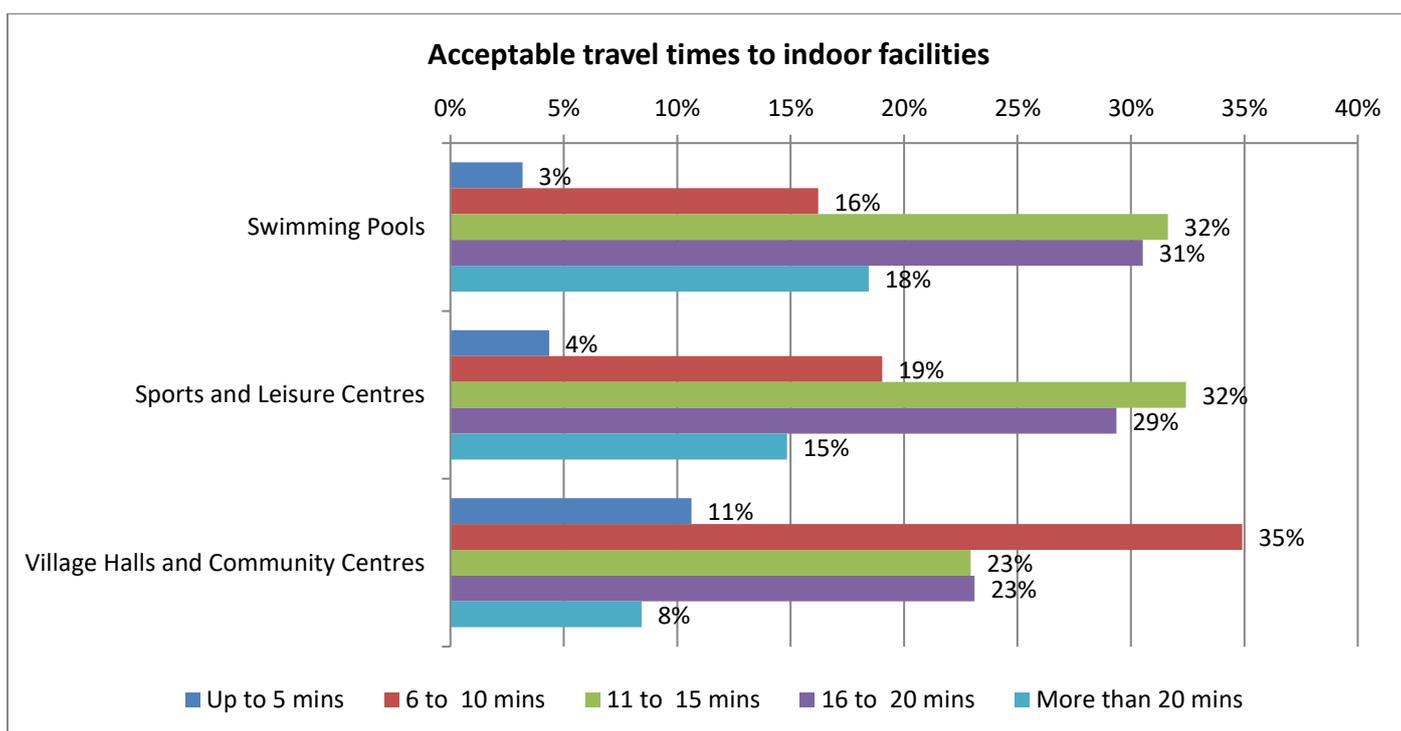
In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit most kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.

For example, 59% of households are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit water recreation facilities and 50% of households are prepared to travel that long to visit woodlands, wildlife areas and 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, parks and recreation grounds, and informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc).

- 62% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 50% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 13% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 51% of users would expect informal open spaces to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 19% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

### Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



Where households make use of the opportunities identified 81% of users are prepared to travel up to 15 minutes to use swimming pools. 31% of these would travel up to 20 minutes and 18% more than 20 minutes.

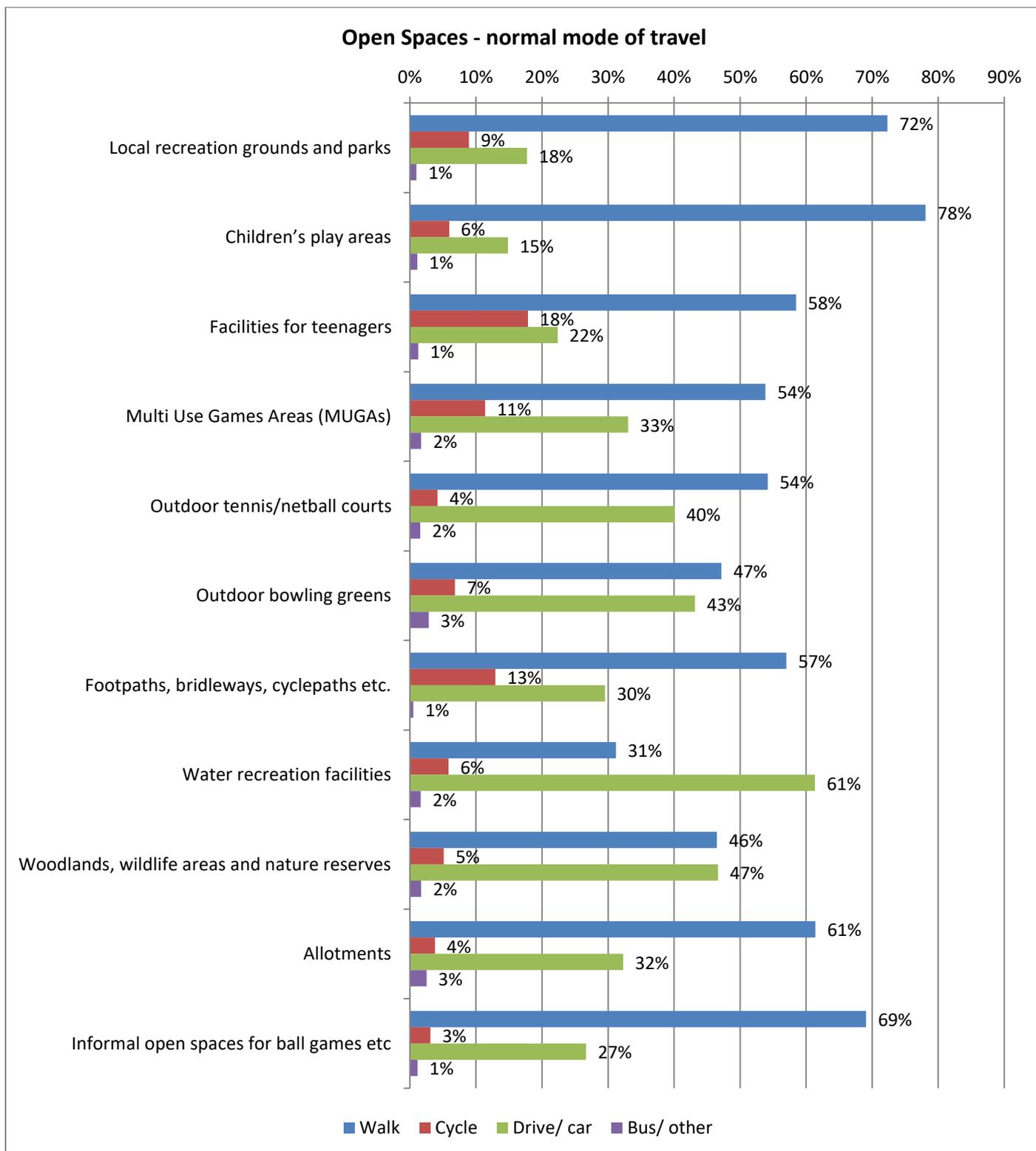
In the case of sports/leisure centres 76% of users are prepared to travel up to 15 minutes to make use of such facilities. 29% of these would travel up to 20 minutes and 15% more than 20 minutes.

In contrast, 46% of users of village halls and community centres would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes, of which 11% would expect to travel 5 minutes or less.

It is clear from the above that for both indoor and outdoor facilities there is great variance in respondents' apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of opportunity. In drawing up the "access" element of specific local standards for different kinds of open space/facility it is clearly very important to take careful note of all of these findings (combined with the preferred mode of travel options discussed below).

An accompanying question asked what mode of transport respondents were likely to use to get to such opportunities (where they would use them).

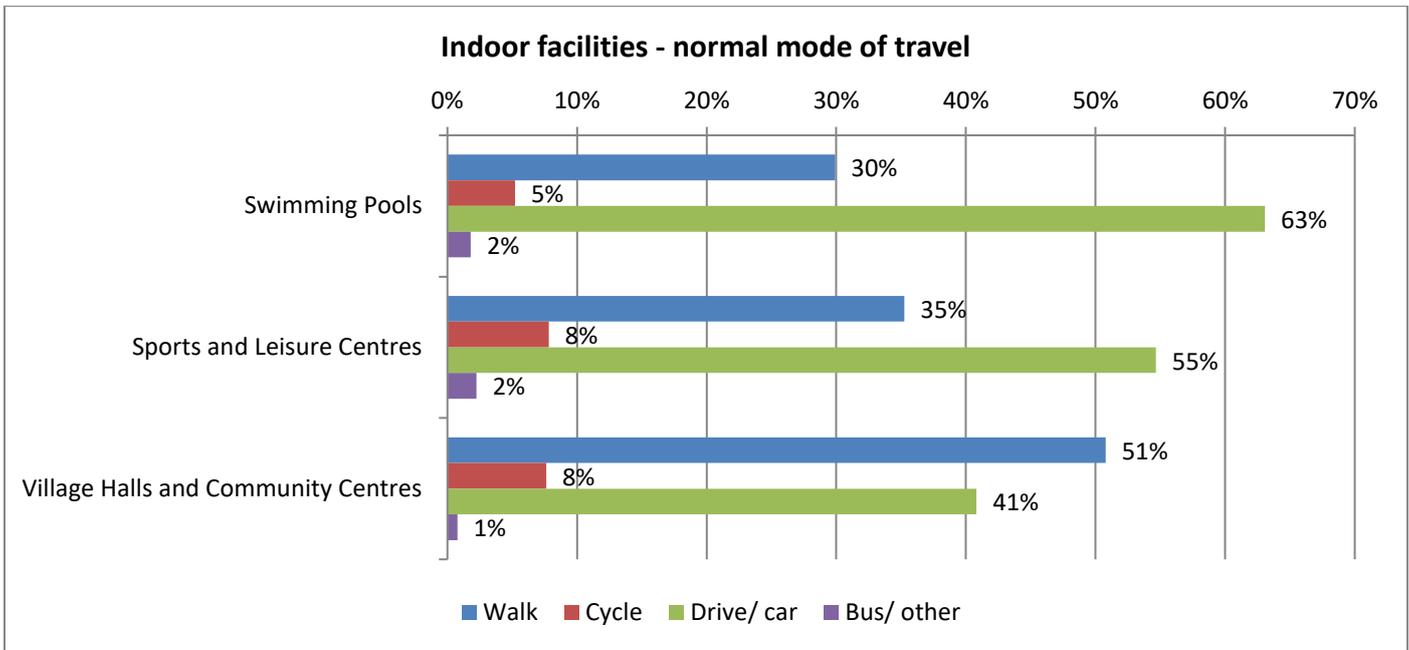
## Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



For most typologies walking is the norm, most notably for facilities such as play areas (78%); recreation grounds and parks (72%); and informal open spaces (69%).

However, a majority of respondent households would normally drive rather than walk to water recreation facilities (61%). In addition more households would normally drive (47%) rather than walk (46%) to access woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves. Significant number would also drive to outdoor bowling greens (43%) and tennis/netball courts (40%).

## Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



In relation to indoor sports and recreation facilities respondents are far more likely than not to drive to Swimming Pools and Sports/Leisure Centres. For a small number of households access by cycling is important to Sports/Leisure Centres.

Walking is the preferred mode of travel for a clear majority of respondent households accessing village halls and community centres (51%) plus an additional 8% who cycle.

It is not of course surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as local parks, children’s play areas, recreation grounds, and other informal recreation areas. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for larger facilities such as swimming pools and leisure centres. It is however of great 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:

- Parks and recreation grounds
- Informal open space
- Play areas for children
- Teenage facilities
- Allotments
- Rights of way
- Village halls/community centres

Based on the above drive times would, in general, be more appropriate for Swimming Pools, Sports/Leisure Centres and water recreation facilities.

For some typologies it is less clear cut, for example, woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves; bowling greens and tennis/netball courts.

The two main reports will also discuss in detail the way different typologies should be treated in relation to spatial planning standards. For example, recommendations for footpaths’ bridleways and cyclepaths 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.

- 76% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 77% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

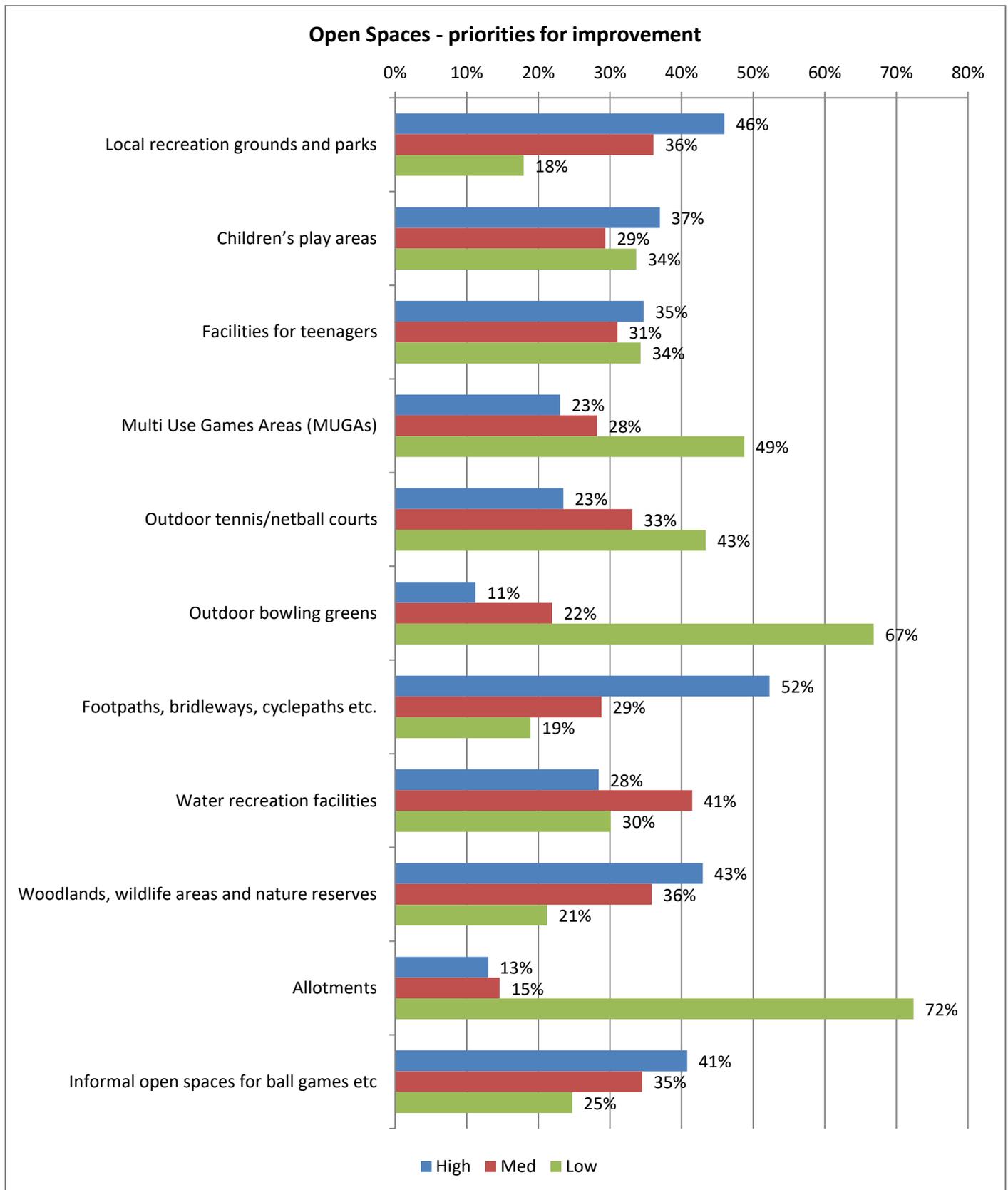
This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities.

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 on the table below. Respondents were asked to rate the need for new or improved facilities by indicating priorities at three levels – high, medium or low.

*Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

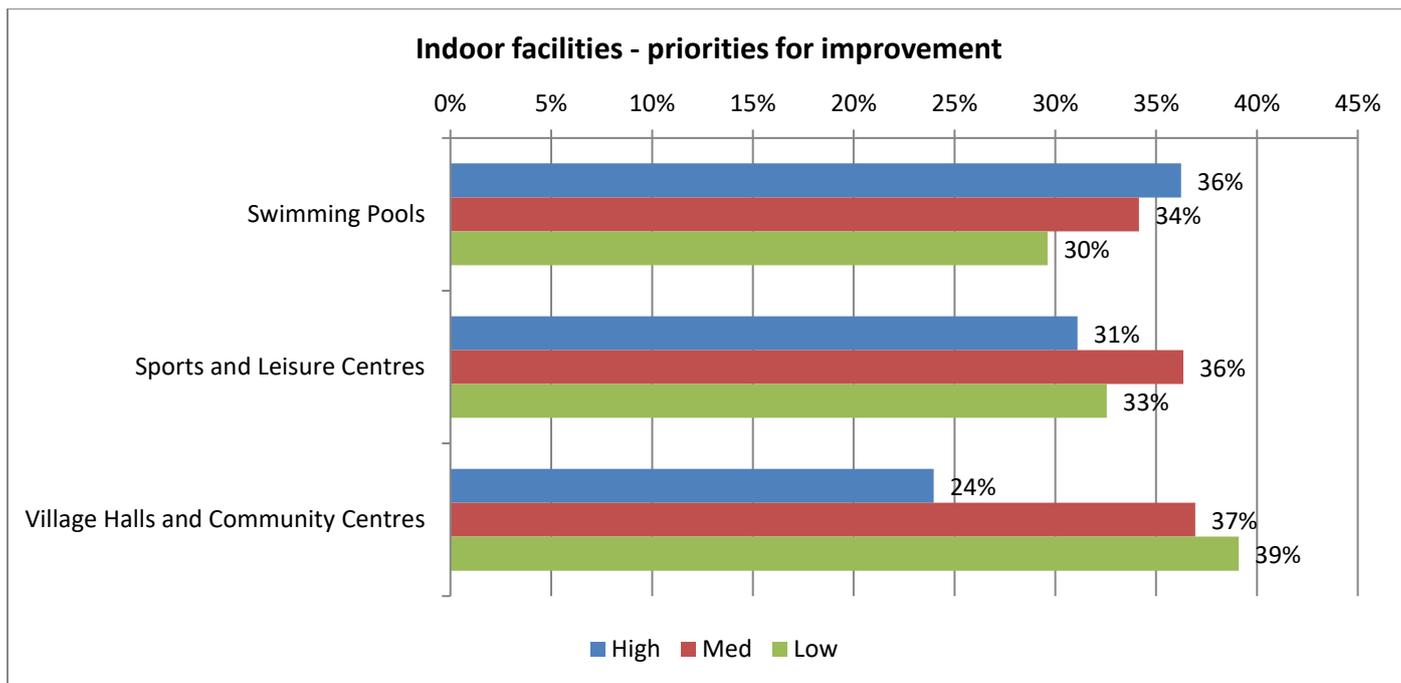


In relation to Open Space and Outdoor Facilities the category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (52%), followed by parks and local recreation grounds (46%).

Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (43%) and informal open spaces (41%).

Children’s play areas and facilities for teenagers also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 66% of households).

*Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities*



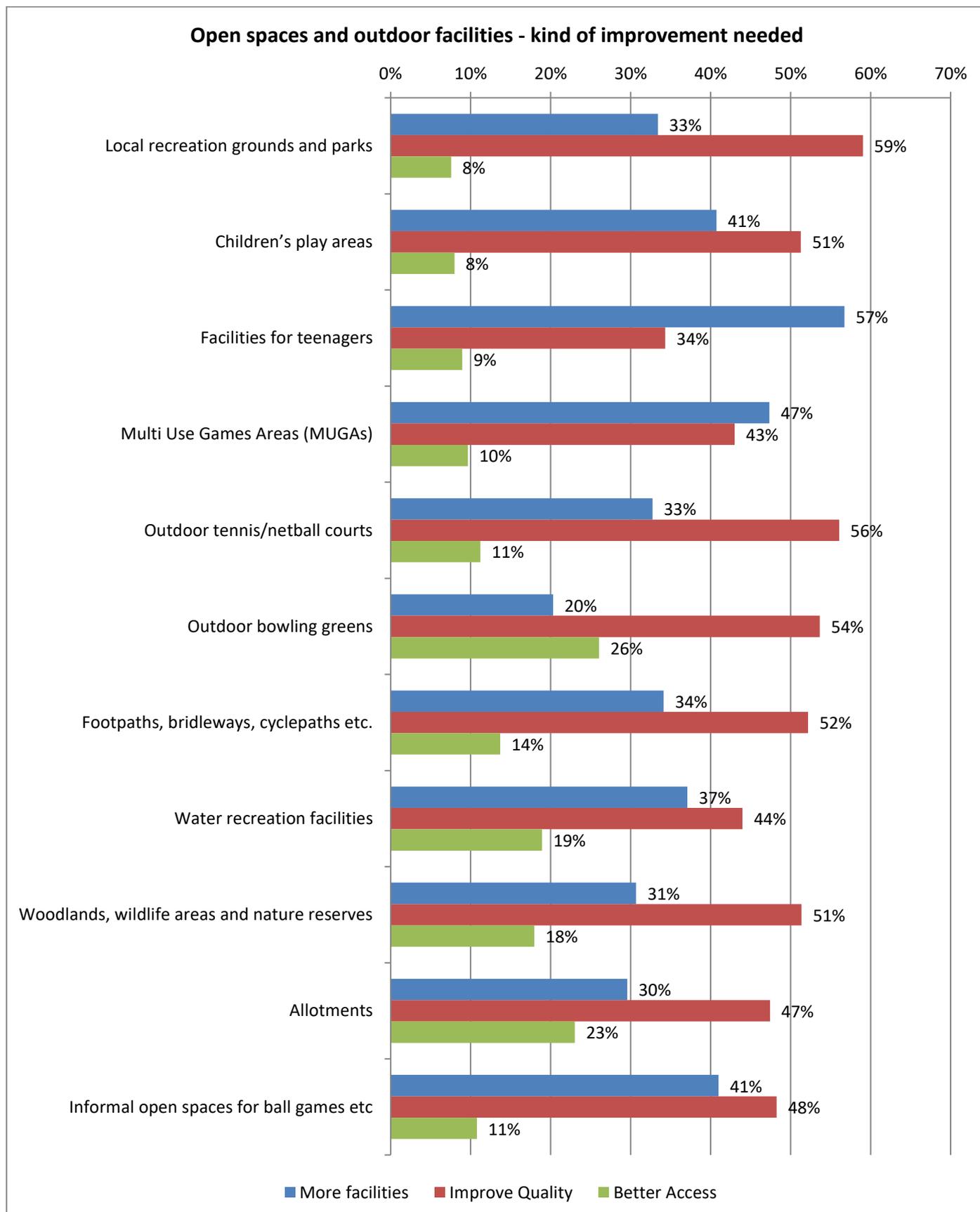
For indoor sports and leisure facilities in general, fewer households highlighted high priority needs. Improvements to swimming pool provision gained the highest proportion of high priority ratings (36%).

Following this, improvements to sport and leisure centres were rated as a high priority by 31%.

## Kind of Improvement Needed

Associated questions asked households to indicate whether the kind 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 the charts below:

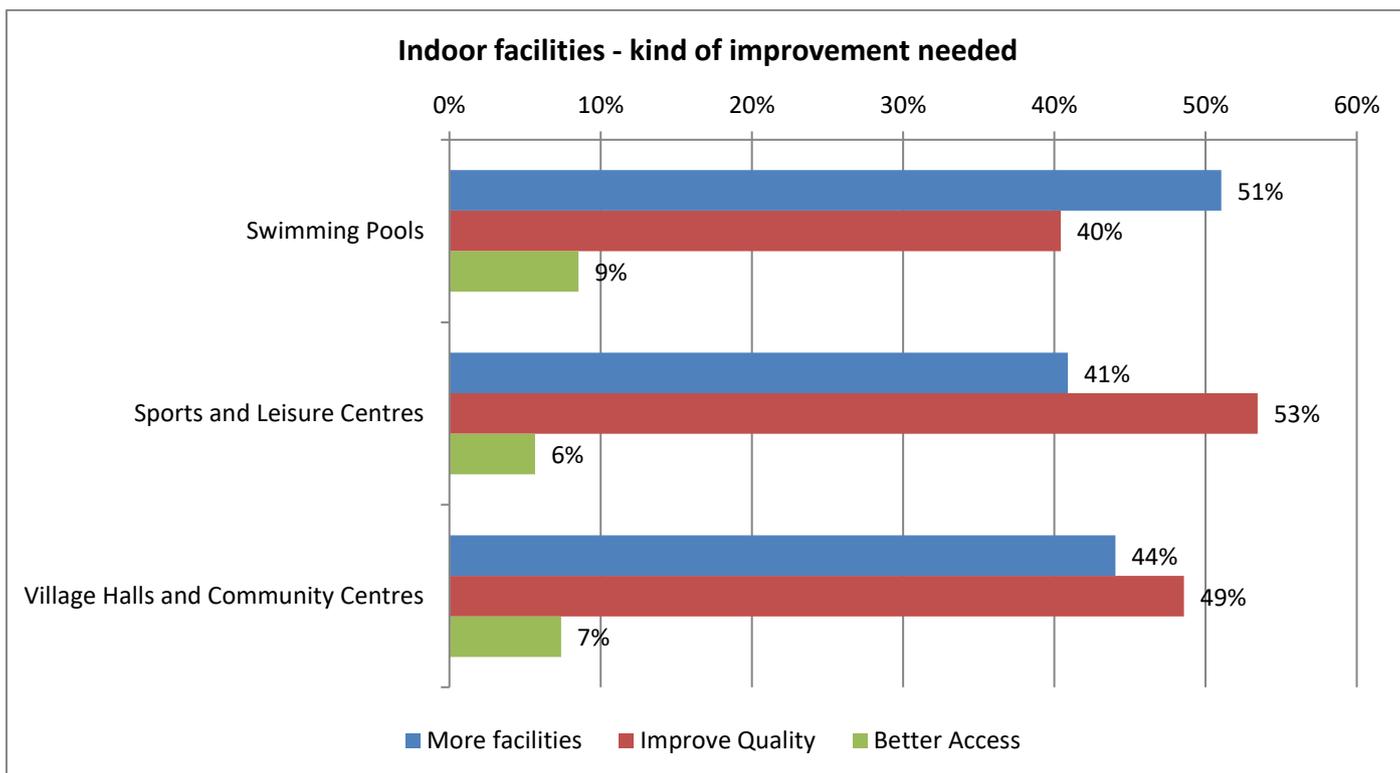
### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



From this it can be seen that:

- The category where it is particularly clear cut that the primary need identified is for more facilities is provision for teenagers (57%).
- The other typology with a high proportion indicating a need for more rather than improvements in quality is MUGAs.
- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is the more common kind of improvement need suggested most notably for parks and recreation grounds (59%); tennis/netball courts (56%); bowling greens (54%); and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (52%).
- Improved access was deemed important by significant minorities for bowling greens (26%) and allotments (23%).

### *Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities*



From this it can be seen that:

- For swimming pools a majority of households suggested that providing more facilities was more needed than improvements to existing.
- For sports/leisure facilities and village halls/community centres more thought that improving existing facilities was the primary need rather than more facilities.

## 2.2 Stakeholder Views - Public Health

### 2.2.1 Introduction

This section highlights stakeholder views on the value of open space to the wider public health agenda. This includes national perspectives from organisations such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Public Health England. It also provides feedback from the TWBC Health team and the Public Health Specialist of Kent County Council who are responsible for the management of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board (KHWB).

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have representatives on the West Kent Health and Wellbeing Board (a sub-committee of the KHWB). This group leads and advises on the development of the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Integrated Commissioning Strategy and Plan. It ensures effective local engagement and monitors local outcomes. It focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of the people living in their CCG area through joined up commissioning across the NHS, social care, district councils, public health and other relevant services.

### 2.2.2 National perspectives on the value of open spaces and physical activity to health and wellbeing.

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<sup>8</sup>."

#### **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 has 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.

<sup>8</sup> NICE Local government briefing [LGB3] - April 2013

- 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 Tunbridge Wells Borough.

### **2.2.3 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Public Health – Healthy Lifestyles Team**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council fully recognises the value of open space, sport and leisure in relation to promoting health and wellbeing and public health objectives. The Assistant Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator noted that:

- Health and wellbeing is a corporate priority in the Borough Council 5 Year Plan (2017 – 2022). The Plan notes that residents value the provision of facilities and activities that promote health and wellbeing.
- One specific element of the Plan is aimed at ensuring “A Well Borough”. This involves aiming to ensure that “every resident is supported to live a healthy lifestyle”.
- The Plan includes a commitment to work with partners to deliver the Health Inequalities Action Plan 2015-19 (Mind the Gap). This Action Plan sets out TWBC priorities and actions being taken locally to improve health outcomes across the Borough, in the areas where it is needed most.
- Mind the Gap notes that “obesity is linked to a number of debilitating and life threatening conditions including diabetes, coronary heart disease, certain cancers, stroke, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis”.
- The Plan specifically aims to work towards a reduction in adult and childhood obesity. The importance of providing access to open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is a key element of pursuing this objective.
- The Council’s *Choose Health* service aims to support anyone who wants to make a change to lead a healthier lifestyle. The programmes the Council offers includes:
  - Weight For It! – a free adult weight loss group
  - Exercise Referral - a ten week programme of exercise at TWBC sports centres
  - Family Weight Management - a course for families with children aged 7-13
  - Health Checks - a free NHS health check for those between the ages of 40-74
  - Health Trainers - working with residents on a one-to-one basis over a number of weeks
  - Change 4 Life - an interactive way for families to improve their health
- The Assistant Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator also highlighted the Tunbridge Wells Greenspace Needs Assessment report 2016. This report focussed on the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity (see section 4.2 below for details).

### **2.2.4 Kent County Council – Public Health – Public Health Specialist**

The Kent Health and Wellbeing Board is a committee of Kent County Council. It leads and advises on work to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Kent through joined up commissioning across the NHS, social care, public health and other services. The Board’s statutory functions are to:

- Prepare a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- Encourage integrated working between health and social care commissioners including making arrangements under Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006

The Kent Public Health team produce a county-wide Health Inequalities Action Plan which the Borough Council's own plan supports. The importance of active lifestyles and open space, sport and recreation is noted.

The County Council also promotes a number of initiatives under a theme of *Get moving* including:

- Active 10 – noting that “walking briskly for 10 minutes every day can make a difference to your health”; and promotion of walking, cycling and outdoor activities.
- Promoting the use of local leisure centres and sports facilities; and encouraging participation in sport and physical activity.
- Promoting visits to Kent's Country Parks and local parks to encourage active recreation.
- Promoting participation in exercise programmes by offering a range of support and activities to help residents become more active.
- Signposting to local support aimed at helping residents to make healthier life choices; and promoting family activities to encourage families to “move more”.
- Promoting support and advice from Kent Connected to help you get started with commuting to work by bicycle; and cycle training courses in Kent for children and adults.

In addition to the *Tunbridge Wells Greenspace Needs Assessment* referred to in section 4.2.3 below the KCC Public Health Specialist highlighted The *Kent Public Health Observatory report on Adult Physical Activity (2017)*.

This report clearly highlights the importance of physical activity for both physical and mental health. It refers to the national public health document ‘Everybody Active, Every Day’. This is a national implementation framework for physical activity published by Public Health England in June 2017. The framework outlines the importance of creating environments and cultures that support physical activity including the provision of leisure and sport facilities, outdoor gyms, active travel and walking and cycling opportunities. It also highlights the importance of “free-to-use natural environment assets, walking or cycling” and “built facilities for sport and recreation”.

The KCC report notes that “Kent has a particular strength in natural environment assets due to the diversity and accessibility of natural environment settings including farmed land, woodland, grassland, and both inland and coastal waterways” as well as the key role of access to “managed country parks, local and urban parks, green infrastructure, amenity grassland, and over 4,200 miles of public rights of way such as footpaths, bridleways and byways”.

Finally it notes that “addressing the quality, accessibility and local provision of facilities or access in response to local need and protecting existing sport and leisure assets such as local authority grass fields are key issues”. Local actions recommended to promote physical activity include:

- protecting and improving existing grass playing fields
- maintaining and improving public rights of way
- integrating physical activity into transport and environmental planning and services
- improving physical activity assets and facilities in response to identified demand
- increasing use of the natural environment for physical activity and health reasons.

The KCC Public Health Specialist also notes the Kent and Medway Sports Board report *Towards an Active County* covering the period 2017 to 2021. This has a vision of “More People, More Active, More Often”, and it notes: An active life with regular engagement in physical activity, sport, volunteering or coaching can have a hugely beneficial impact on people’s lives, local communities and Kent as a whole. The aim of the Strategic Framework for Sport and Physical Activity in Kent and Medway is: “To make Kent more active by 2021”.

## 2.3 General Community and Public Health – Key Findings

This section provides some key consultation findings from the Tunbridge Wells Borough household survey and public health stakeholders.

### Quantity

#### **Open Space**

- There are only two open space typologies that a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - facilities for teenagers and MUGAs.
- A large majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (77%) and an additional 7% said that we don’t need as many.
- Smaller but substantial majorities think that in general there are enough allotments (71%); water recreation facilities (63%); and parks and recreation grounds (62%).

#### **Indoor Facilities**

- Overall a clear majority of households reported that there are currently enough Swimming Pools, Sport/Leisure Centres and village halls.
- However a significant minority (37%) suggest an overall need for more swimming pools; and in a supplementary question to respondents who indicated a need for improvements to pools, just over half said that additional pools rather than improvements to existing was the main issue.

#### **Open Space**

- For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below.
  - 59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
  - The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.
- In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

#### **Indoor Facilities**

- In broad terms respondent households appear quite satisfied with the quality of indoor sports and recreation provision. All are commonly rated as being of average or better quality.
- The indoor facilities most commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are sport and leisure centres (48%) and swimming pools (46%).
- Village /Community Halls are not rated quite as highly – 36% rating them as good or very good and 18% rating them as poor or very poor.

## **Access**

### ***Open Space***

In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit most kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.

For example, 59% of households are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit water recreation facilities and 50% of households are prepared to travel that long to visit woodlands, wildlife areas and 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, parks and recreation grounds, and informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc).

- 62% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 50% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 13% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 51% of users would expect informal open spaces to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 19% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

For most typologies walking is the norm, most notably for facilities such as play areas (78%); recreation grounds and parks (72%); and informal open spaces (69%).

However, a majority of respondent households would normally drive rather than walk to water recreation facilities (61%). In addition more households would normally drive (47%) rather than walk (46%) to access woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves. Significant number would also drive to outdoor bowling greens (43%) and tennis/netball courts (40%).

### ***Indoor Facilities***

- 81% of users are prepared to travel up to 15 minutes to use swimming pools. 31% of these would travel up to 20 minutes and 18% more than 20 minutes.
- In the case of sports/leisure centres 76% users are prepared to travel up to 15 minutes to make use of such facilities. 29% of these would travel up to 20 minutes and 15% more than 20 minutes.
- In contrast, 46% of users of village halls and community centres would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes, of which 11% would expect to travel 5 minutes or less.

Respondents are far more likely than not to drive to Swimming Pools and Sports/Leisure Centres. For a small number of households access by cycling is important to Sports/Leisure Centres. Walking is the preferred mode of travel for a clear majority of respondent households accessing village halls and community centres (51%) plus an additional 8% who cycle.

### ***Importance of footpath/cycle access***

- 76% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved. 77% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

## **Priorities**

### ***Open Space***

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (52%), followed by parks and local recreation grounds (46%).
- Other high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (43%) and informal open spaces (41%).
- Children's play areas and facilities for teenagers also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 66% of households).

### ***Indoor facilities***

- For indoor sports and leisure facilities in general, fewer households highlighted high priority needs. Improvements to swimming pool provision gained the highest proportion of high priority ratings (36%).
- Following this, improvements to sport and leisure centres were rated as a high priority by 31%.

### **Public Health and other issues**

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council fully recognises the value and importance of access to open space, outdoor recreation facilities and indoor leisure facilities, in relation to improving health and wellbeing and in relation to residents' quality of life.
- Health and wellbeing is a corporate priority in the Borough Council 5 Year Plan (2017 – 2022). One specific element of the Plan is aimed at ensuring "A Well Borough". This involves aiming to ensure that "every resident is supported to live a healthy lifestyle". The Plan specifically aims to work towards a reduction in adult and childhood obesity. The importance of providing access to open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is a key element of pursuing this objective.
- Examples of Borough Council health projects include: Weight For It; Exercise Referral at TWBC sports centres; Family Weight Management courses; and Change 4 Life.
- Kent County Council Public Health highlight the general importance of open space, sport and recreation in relation to supporting a number of objectives of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived wards of the study area

## 3. NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCILS/FORUMS

### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides information and feedback from neighbouring local authorities and local town and parish councils. It is important to consult with neighbouring local authorities under the "duty to cooperate" requirement. This places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to "engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters"<sup>9</sup>.

The need to consult and engage with local parish councils arises from the fact that many parish councils are responsible for the management of open spaces, play areas and recreation grounds; and the local councils also tend to have a good understanding of local needs and priorities in relation to local sport, play and recreation facilities.

Section three is comprised of two main sub-sections:

- Neighbouring Authorities - Cross-boundary and strategic issues
- Parish Councils/Forums

There is a summary of key issues at the end of the section. The information and findings of this section will be taken forward in the main reports.

### 3.2 Neighbouring authorities - Cross boundary and strategic issues

#### 3.2.1 Overview – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Policy

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council shares borders with Ashford, Hastings, Maidstone, Rother, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Wealden. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Principal Planning officer (Planning Policy) provided an overview as noted below:

- **Ashford** - most of the future growth at Ashford Borough Council will be directed to the town of Ashford which is further from our border strategically. However, there is some growth (housing) directed to Tenterden, which potentially may be an area that some of the residents of TWBC (in the east of the Borough – Sandhurst etc) may use for day to day facilities including recreation etc.
- **Hastings** - TWBC doesn't actually have a border with Hastings and we are not aware of any strategic issues that might affect the Borough due to its focus around the urban area of Hastings.
- **Maidstone** - TWBC is not aware of anything significant at Maidstone which would be likely to have any impact on the Borough strategically or in terms of recreation in particular. However, residents to the south east of the Borough, so around Cranbrook/Hawkhurst/Sissinghurst area, may well travel to Maidstone for higher order recreational facilities.
- **Rother** - most of the growth within the District will go to Bexhill further south so although we do border with Rother we are not currently aware of anything significant to note.
- **Sevenoaks** - TWBC work closely with Sevenoaks as part of a West Kent Planning approach but we are not aware of anything significant in recreation terms. The Borough is highly constrained by the Green Belt designation that covers the majority of its area.
- **Tonbridge & Malling** – TWBC shares a close border with Tonbridge and Malling and work closely with them on a variety of issues as part of a west Kent approach as above with Sevenoaks. There

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>

are a close synergy also with this area and particularly with the use of recreational (built facilities) within Tonbridge Town in particular, e.g. the Angel Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool for residents of the north of the town.

- **Wealden** - Wealden directly abuts the urban area of Royal Tunbridge Wells and therefore there is a lot of synergy between Tunbridge Wells Borough and Wealden in terms of facilities/services etc. A lot of work has been done on visitor pressure on the forest and visitor surveys to see where people are travelling from and to the forest. There is also discussion about the provision of SANG's and SAMM's. Also, there may be considerable travel from Tunbridge Wells to Crowborough for recreation at the sports centre there (swimming especially) particularly from the south side of Tunbridge Wells.

### 3.2.2 Neighbouring Local Authorities

Planning policy officers were also contacted from the six authorities noted above to check if they had identified any cross border issues that they thought should be taken into account. Comments and observations from officers of these authorities are provided below<sup>10</sup>.

#### Ashford Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues <sup>11</sup>
Green Infrastructure	Completed in 2008 but still current.	None highlighted.
Open Space/PPG17 study	Recently completed – currently in draft format	None highlighted.
Sport/Recreation strategy	Recently completed – currently in draft format	None highlighted.
Playing Pitch Study	Recently completed – currently in draft format	None highlighted.
Play /Youth Facility Strategy	Currently underway – completion anticipated early 2018.	None highlighted.
Any other relevant studies	Green Corridor Action Plan, recently completed – currently in draft format	None highlighted.

#### Hastings Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Green Infrastructure study (2012) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/planning/planning_policy/local_plan/evidence_base/pdfs/information/GI_Study.pdf">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/planning/planning_policy/local_plan/evidence_base/pdfs/information/GI_Study.pdf</a> HBC/DMP/156 - East Sussex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014) <a href="http://sussexlnp.org.uk/documents/EastSussexGIStrategyFinal.pdf">http://sussexlnp.org.uk/documents/EastSussexGIStrategyFinal.pdf</a>	The East Sussex Green Infrastructure study was a cross boundary strategy which would include Rother bordering T/Wells area

<sup>10</sup> The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma.

<sup>11</sup> These comments will be taken forward and considered in the main reports.

	<a href="#">l.pdf</a>	
Open Space/PPG17 study	Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (2007) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my_council/policies_strategies/parks/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my_council/policies_strategies/parks/</a>	
Parks/Greenspace/Countryside strategy	Management Plans for Alexandra Park, Hastings Country Park and St Leonards Gardens <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/parks_gardens_allotments/park_management/parksmanagementplans/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/parks_gardens_allotments/park_management/parksmanagementplans/</a> Parks/Greenspace/Countryside Strategy to be developed 2018-19	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Sport & physical activity strategy (2016) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/sport_play_recreation/active/pdfs/AH_SPORTS_STRATEGY">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/sport_play_recreation/active/pdfs/AH_SPORTS_STRATEGY</a>	
Playing Pitch Study	Playing Pitch strategy (2016) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/leisurefacilities/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/leisurefacilities/</a>	Possible links with travel to facilities in Tunbridge Wells (page 30), joint study with Rother which borders T/Wells area
Play /Youth Facility Strategy	Play space strategy (2015) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my_council/policies_strategies/play/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/my_council/policies_strategies/play/</a> Play development (2014) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/play/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/play/</a>	
Any other relevant studies/strategies?	HBC/DMP/59 - Hastings walking & cycling strategy (2014) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/planning/planning_policy/local_plan/dm_plan_siteallocations/dmplan_examination/pdfs/information/coredocs/walking_cycling_strategy.pdf">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/content/planning/planning_policy/local_plan/dm_plan_siteallocations/dmplan_examination/pdfs/information/coredocs/walking_cycling_strategy.pdf</a> Leisure Facilities Strategy (2015) <a href="https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/leisurefacilities/">https://www.hastings.gov.uk/sport_play/strategies/leisurefacilities/</a>	

## Maidstone Borough Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) - 2016 <a href="http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/9874/Green-and-Blue-Infrastructure-Strategy-June-2016.pdf">http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/9874/Green-and-Blue-Infrastructure-Strategy-June-2016.pdf</a> An Action Plan for the GBIS is programmed to be presented to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee on 10 October 2017.	The GBIS identifies where spatially-specific proposals will interact and link with green infrastructure proposals of adjoining districts, including for Tunbridge Wells: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Weald/Low Weald links project</li> <li>• Green Infrastructure Plan Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Draft (2014)</li> <li>• Improved links between the High Weald and Low Weald through Tunbridge Wells Borough</li> </ul> New opportunities are identified through the potential to extend the High Weald Transition Zone project in Tunbridge Wells Borough to the Laddingford Low Weald area where landscape enhancements

		would help match the landscape quality of the surrounding area. The Action Plan will identify which schemes will be taken forward.
Parks/Greens space/ Countryside strategy	Maidstone Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan' details how the Council will manage the parks and open spaces that are under its control. The plan was approved, subject to amendments, on 4 July 2017 <a href="https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=581&amp;Mid=2854">https://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=581&amp;Mid=2854</a>	None identified.
Sport/Recreation strategy	Underway - Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd (PLC) has been commissioned to produce a Playing Pitch Strategy and a Sports Facilities Strategy with a resultant Action Plan. The draft strategies and action points are programmed to be presented to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee on 5 December 2017.	Do not know yet. As part of the project, Sport England has been commissioned to undertake a profile report for swimming pools and sports halls in Maidstone and its adjoining authorities, including Tunbridge Wells.
Playing Pitch Study	As above.	Do not know yet.
Play /Youth Facility Strategy	Underway - whilst not a separate strategy, junior facilities form part of the Playing Pitch Strategy. Also a 'Play Area Strategy' is programmed to be presented to the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee on 3 October 2017, which will identify facility investments and disposals.	Do not know yet.

### Rother District Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	GI Background Paper (2011) Addendum (2016)	Para 4.2.50 (2011) Bewl Water, option for enlargement. Related to recreational use, cross border.
Open Space/PPG17 study	Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study (2007)	No specific issues identified.
Sport/Recreation strategy	Indoor Sports & Leisure Facilities Strategy (2015)	No specific issues identified.
Playing Pitch Study	Rother and Hastings playing pitch strategy (2016)	No specific issues identified.
Play /Youth Facility Strategy	Part of the PPG 17 Study (2007)	No specific issues identified.

**Other Comments:** Sub-regional recreational facilities close to the District boundary, such as Bewl Water and Bedgebury, are of notable value to Rother residents.

### Sevenoaks District Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Part of the Allocations and Development Management Plan.	No issues identified.
Open Space/PPG17 study	Part of the Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study to be completed Autumn 2017. Previous document completed 2009.	No issues to raise currently.
Sport/Recreation strategy	Part of the Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study to be completed Autumn 2017. Previous document completed 2009.	No issues to raise currently.
Playing Pitch Study	Ongoing – Part of the Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study to be completed Autumn 2017.	No issues to raise currently.

**Other Comments:** No real strategic issues to raise.

### Tonbridge & Malling District Council

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	<p>In terms of evidence, we currently have as part of our adopted LDF an Open Space Strategy and Green Infrastructure Report accompanying our Managing Development and the Environment DPD dating from 2009 (copies can be found on our website here: <a href="https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/planning/local-development-framework/ldf/3515">https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/planning/local-development-framework/ldf/3515</a> ).</p> <p>We are planning to update both in-house for the emerging Local Plan. We have prepared a draft for the Open Space piece of work, but haven't started the GI report yet.</p>	There is an issue of identifying and managing the impacts of development plans on the Ashford Forest SAC - though this is more of a Habitats Regulations Assessment issue
Open Space/PPG17 study	As above	None specifically identified.
Sport/Recreation strategy	As above	None specifically identified.
Playing Pitch Study	As above	None specifically identified.

**Other Comments:** Regarding open space/sport and recreation cross boundary issues, I cannot recall anything being flagged up at our regular West Kent Duty to Cooperate meetings.

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	<p>GI Study is complete (2017) and can be found on the Council’s website here  <a href="http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base/Biodiversity_and_Green_Infrastructure.aspx">http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base/Biodiversity_and_Green_Infrastructure.aspx</a></p> <p>A GI Strategy is to follow, likely to be in 2018.</p>	<p>No major issues identified.</p> <p>No individual issues of major cross border significance identified although the Study does set out a proposed Green Infrastructure Network for Wealden District at various scales. The network comprises broadly defined strategic green and blue corridors containing a mosaic of land uses, natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats and access links. The corridors act as linkages and stepping stones for dispersal of wildlife, provide sustainable transport linkages through provision of footpaths and cycle routes connecting local communities to natural greenspace, and enable strategic linkages with Green Infrastructure networks in adjoining areas. The study proposes broad strategic access links with neighbouring areas including Tunbridge Wells but does not propose any measures or projects within those areas. The proposed Green Infrastructure Network provides a recommended framework for the delivery of Green Infrastructure to support the planning of sustainable development. It is not a statement of Council policy but will be considered as part of the development of a GI Strategy moving forward.</p>
Open Space/PPG17 study	<p>The majority of the study is complete (2017) but the outdoor sports report is still work in progress and this will feed into the playing pitch study. It is anticipated that the completed work will be available on our website very shortly.</p>	<p>No individual major issues.</p> <p>No individual issues of major cross border significance identified although the reports highlight that in relation to more major facilities (e.g. leisure and sports centres) , the catchment areas are cross border meaning that any change in provision or population can impact on the neighbouring authority. In this regard, cross border working as regards future provision is likely to be helpful.</p>
Playing Pitch Study	<p>The aim is to complete this asap but no specific date has yet been set.</p>	<p>No individual major issues yet identified but still work in progress.</p> <p>The same comments as above (in the context of the open space/PPG 17 study) in relation to cross border working would again apply.</p>
Other relevant studies.	<p><i>A Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan</i> have recently been adopted. This includes promotion of open space and green space as well as walking/cycling and the Cuckoo Trail recreational route.</p>	<p>None specifically identified.</p>

**Other Comments:** The athletics track at the Goldsmiths recreation ground at Crowborough has recently had a major upgrade. Tunbridge Wells is included within the catchment area of this facility.

### 3.3 Town/Parish Councils and the Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) Town Forum

Surveys were sent to the sixteen local councils in the Borough and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum followed up by email reminders and phone calls. Twelve of the town/parish councils and the RTW Town Forum responded. The twelve local councils that responded were:

- Brenchley Parish Council
- Capel Parish Council
- Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC
- Frittenden PC
- Goudhurst Parish Council
- Hawkhurst PC
- Horsmonden Parish Council
- Lamberhurst PC
- Paddock Wood Town Council
- Sandhurst Parish Council
- Southborough Town Council
- Speldhurst PC

Responses were not received from Benenden, Bidborough, Pembury and Rushall Parish Councils.

#### 3.3.1 Responses overview

Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- All twelve of the town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and outdoor recreational facilities. Only five managed indoor halls.
- Ten of the local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play, sport and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- The sectors of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were children, young people/teenagers and various sports teams/clubs.

#### ***Quality factors - open space provision***

We asked the local councils to highlight what they thought, in general, were high 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 easy to get to for all members of the community; and internally they should be easy to get around.
- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained - they should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- Spaces need to be designed and managed so that noise and antisocial behaviour is minimised.

Other factors highlighted were the need for design to minimise maintenance costs; and to consider the need for secure cycle parking and disabled parking rather than simply parking in general.

#### ***Summary of Identified needs for improvement***

The table below covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities. An “X” in a box indicates an identified need for improvement/lack of provision. The detailed responses from the

respondents confirm whether an identified need is a lack of provision or a need for improvements in quality<sup>12</sup>.

Town/Parish Councils	Indoor Facilities	Tennis courts	Multi-Use Games Areas	Bowling greens	Children's play areas	Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)	Allotments	Parks, rec. grounds, village greens etc.	Wildlife areas, nature reserves	Footpath/bridleway/cycleways
Brenchley Parish Council					X	X				
Capel Parish Council	X	X	X		X	X				X
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Frittenden PC										X
Goudhurst Parish Council						X				
Hawkhurst PC	X		X		X	X		X		
Horsmonden Parish Council	X		X			X				
Lamberhurst PC										
Paddock Wood Town Council	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
RTW Town Forum										X
Sandhurst Parish Council			X		X					
Southborough Town Council				X	X	X				
Speldhurst PC		X								
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

The needs of individual parishes/towns are quite varied. The more frequently highlighted typologies are:

- Indoor facilities – varied needs including village hall improvements, additional storage space, sports halls and swimming pools.
- Parks and recreation grounds – mainly highlighting a need for additional space for such provision in relation to population/housing growth.
- Play areas, youth facilities and MUGAs – a mix of new provision and refurbishments and improvement to existing facilities.
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths in relation to access to facilities and as leisure facilities.

<sup>12</sup> Details relating to whether the main issue for an individual parish is a lack of provision or a need for improvements is provided in section 3.3.2 below.

### 3.3.2 Parish/town 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.

<b>Local Council</b>	<b>Groups whose needs not being met</b>	<b>Current plans and known aspirations</b>
Brenchley Parish Council	A Parish survey conducted at the end of 2016 indicated that most people thought adult sports and leisure facilities were satisfactory. There was less consensus on provision for children and teenagers although a majority of those who responded to the survey thought that a children's play area in Matfield would be a good idea.	The Council is developing a medium-term plan and will cover future needs in this area.
Capel Parish Council	No facilities for netball, squash or tennis clubs. Teenage age group could benefit from outdoor facility such as climbing walls/skate/cycle ramps in recreation ground.	Provision of a MUGA in Rec. Refurb of playgrounds
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council	Cranbrook Town Band Badminton Youth & Older people - facilities and activities	Community Centre in Cranbrook Rugby Club, Cranbrook Crane Valley Lane Trust Providence Chapel High Weald Academy Cranbrook School
Frittenden	No specific groups identified.	Cycleway - aspiration only. Renewal or upgrading of the Memorial Hall (which is used for various privately run fitness activities including yoga (two separate classes), Tai chi, mother and toddler fitness classes, and chill dancing). Changes to the Memorial Hall are under consideration but no plans agreed yet. Adult fitness equipment – aspiration at this stage."
Hawkhurst	Hawkhurst junior football club - very limited on pitches.	NDP shows clear need for improve sporting facility including a sports pavilion with better changing facilities and ability to indoor sport. There is a need for a village hall facility.
Horsmonden Parish Council	General lack of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swimming pool</li> <li>• Climbing walls</li> </ul>	Maintain existing play area to a good standard – existing area at Lockett Green, Back Lane.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor gym equipment</li> </ul>	<p>Fund a larger village hall - if a suitable alternative can be found and resources allocated.</p> <p>Pump track for youths - no specific area in mind at present, but a green area could be allocated by a developer as part of a larger scheme.</p> <p>Outdoor gym equipment for adults- potentially in corner of village green or outside parish toilets (needs to be centrally located).</p> <p>MUGA – on corner of sports ground or an alternative green area if one could be located or provided by a developer as part of a larger scheme.</p> <p>Horsmoden cricket club – would like an electronic scoreboard.</p> <p>Lockett green space – managed by Horsmoden Kindergarten would like soft goal posts and all-weather surface in the goal mouths."</p>
Lamberhurst	A Neighbourhood Plan is currently underway and the consultation may answer these questions.	Currently under review
Paddock Wood Town Council	<p>Football and Rugby Clubs would like to expand and improve facilities as they cannot currently meet demand.</p> <p>PW Football club has put forward plans for expansion in the past but insufficient funding available.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan group is putting forward a proposal to have one outdoor sports hub for football, rugby and capacity to develop other outdoor sports activities in the future. This would improve facilities and focus maintenance in one area rather than 4. Possible sites are being explored, and may require discussions with local schools and adjoining parishes.</p> <p>A development of a community centre is in the early stages to meet aspirations for leisure activities not involving sport – for all age groups.</p> <p>The future population growth from 1000 houses, currently allocated, will increase demand for sport and recreation activities which cannot be met within as current capacity.</p> <p>It has also long been an aspiration to have a swimming pool in Paddock Wood.</p> <p>Residents express that wish whenever consultations on facilities are carried out.</p>	<p>Community Centre – Memorial Field</p> <p>Skate park &amp; youth activities – Putlands &amp; Memorial field.</p> <p>Outdoor sports Hub – venue to be decided</p> <p>Improvement to Putlands Sports &amp; Leisure Centre.</p>

RTW Town Forum	Whilst the RTW Town Forum is not aware of specific shortfalls in sports and leisure facilities among our members who represent the voice 50,000 people in the unparished area of town, we want TWBC to uphold a high standard of maintenance and facilities in the existing parks, open spaces and sports facilities. Several of our members are Friends Groups of local parks.	Priorities are to maintain existing provision and to increase in line with increase in population. Important that open spaces are maintained and not lost to housing / other development due to pressure on housing numbers.
Sandhurst Parish Council	None specifically identified.	Improvements to the Sandhurst Public toilets situated on the Sports Ground - possibly through grant funding.
Southborough Town Council	No	Athletics track.
Speldhurst PC	More football pitches and there are no tennis courts	New cricket nets at Speldhurst Recreation ground; improved drainage at Langton Green Recreation Ground

The specific town/parish and RTW Forum responses relating to aspects of quantity, quality and access re: the various elements are provided in the table below<sup>13</sup>.

Parish/town	Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments
Brenchley Parish Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> There is significant support in the Parish for a children's play area in Matfield if a suitable location (and source of funding) can be found. <i>Teen facilities:</i> There is a church-run youth group as well as guides and scouts but specific teenage facilities may well be desirable although the Parish survey did not produce any clear views. More work would be necessary to determine the wishes of local residents in that age group.
Capel Parish Council	<i>Indoor facilities:</i> Poor transport links to nearest swimming pools, leisure centres and large gyms. Village hall oversubscribed e.g. Bowls would like more days but unavailable <i>Tennis courts:</i> No facility at all in parish. <i>MUGAS:</i> CPC endeavouring to provide <i>Bowling Greens:</i> No facility/space <i>Play Areas:</i> Reaching end of life and in need of urgent repair, constant maintenance issue. <i>Teen facilities:</i> None at present. <i>Allotments:</i> Good facility <i>Parks and Recreation Grounds:</i> Recreation ground a good space <i>Paths etc:</i> Footpaths generally good but no access to Paddock Wood as too dangerous. Roadways overgrown and poorly maintained between footpaths, limited bridledways, no cycle or river walks. Pedestrian walking dangerous on all roads in parish.
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC	<i>Indoor Facilities:</i> Need for a new community centre in Cranbrook, St Georges - improving the quality, Providence Chapel - improvements required, Rugby Club - improvements required. <i>Play areas:</i> Improvements required. <i>Teen facilities:</i> areas for improvement and enhancement.

<sup>13</sup> It is clear that many parishes highlight a need for more and better facilities for teenagers. Provision of this kind is quite varied and includes skateparks and wheeled sports facilities, MUGAs, more challenging play equipment, youth shelters etc.

	<p><i>Allotments:</i> If other areas become available to meet the need.</p> <p><i>Parks and Recreation Grounds:</i> areas that require recreational grounds - Colliers Green, Hartley and any Hamlets.</p> <p><i>Nature/wildlife areas:</i> Extension to existing - Crane Valley</p> <p><i>Paths etc:</i> Further improvements to connect existing ones up.</p>
Frittenden	<p><i>Paths etc:</i> Cycleways (especially so that young people can ride safely, avoiding dangerous country roads). The parish is well-served by public footpaths but some stiles need attention.</p>
Goudhurst Parish Council	<p><i>Teen facilities:</i> Youth shelter?</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> minimal demand.</p> <p><i>Nature/wildlife areas:</i> Goudhurst has good woodlands accessible by Public Rights of Way (PROW).</p> <p><i>Paths etc:</i> Goudhurst Parish has a good network of PROWs and we spend time and money on maintenance when KCC is unable to do so. We lack Footways - aka pavements. Most roads in the Parish are unsuitable for cycling due to vehicular traffic. There is excellent cycling at Bedgebury Forest.</p>
Hawkhurst	<p><i>Indoor facilities:</i> Village hall suitable for sport.</p> <p><i>MUGAS:</i> Yes we need one.</p> <p><i>Play areas:</i> refurbishment needed.</p> <p><i>Teen facilities:</i> no facilities and a real need.</p> <p><i>Parks and Recreation Grounds:</i> Football pitches – need for improved provision.</p> <p><i>Paths etc:</i> need to be improved and kept clear</p>
Horsmonden Parish Council	<p><i>Indoor facilities:</i> stage and dance facilities need improvement. A small meeting room is required; additional storage required; more parking required; larger parish office required; and larger catering facility required.</p> <p><i>MUGAS:</i> for adults - possibly in the sports grounds or another green space - allocated by a potential developer.</p> <p><i>Play areas:</i> potential requirement for more expansive facilities if development takes place in the village; perhaps a natural play area in addition to the rubber surfaced and metal /plastic play equipment already provided by the existing parish play.</p> <p><i>Teen facilities:</i> pump track; climbing wall.</p>
Paddock Wood Town Council	<p><i>Indoor facilities:</i> Community centre project is underway. Community centre survey has identified a need for improved indoor sports facilities at Putlands Leisure Centre; including expanding the gym area, providing additional studios and range of activities. These issues have previously been flagged up during previous consultations with the public during the NP process and the 2008 Healthcheck. Additional indoor space is required by groups such as U3A, guiding and scouting.</p> <p><i>Tennis courts:</i> Currently sufficient capacity, however the council is aware that there is lack of capacity in other areas of the borough. The increase in population in PW in the future will increase demand. A recent community initiative to establish a tennis club has increased usage and awareness. This has resulted in regular coaching sessions particularly for the younger age group. As usage increases the courts will require upgrading.</p> <p><i>MUGAS:</i> Youth council and youth groups have expressed a wish for a MUGA, but indoor facilities are currently available to hire at limited times at Putlands.</p> <p><i>Bowls:</i> Run by Paddock Wood bowls club – self funded group with community access at limited times. Adequate capacity at present, but again may change with the expansion of the town.</p> <p><i>Play Areas:</i> Currently 5 children’s play areas. Two larger play areas at St Andrews and Memorial have both been renewed and upgraded in the last 5 years. Both are well used and cater for all age groups. The remaining 3 areas are for younger</p>

	<p>children and were built by developers as part of new housing developments. As population expands further facilities will be required on the new developments.</p> <p><i>Teen facilities:</i> currently a small skatepark which includes a teen shelter and basketball hoops. Teenagers and the youth council would like to see expansion of skate park and increased facilities for young people. Eg: swimming pool, climbing wall, community campsite, permanent youth café/hub.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> 3 sites, with spare capacity at present.</p> <p><i>Parks and Recreation Grounds:</i> all new developments should incorporate additional green space and recreational areas. Existing areas are well used by current population, with little spare capacity.</p> <p>Nature/wildlife areas: future developments must take into account natural recreation areas as well as the more formal areas, as residents currently have access to field which will shortly be built on. Consideration for the natural environment and the rural character of the area should be taken into account.</p> <p><i>Paths etc:</i> The neighbourhood plan group is putting forward plans to improve walking and cycling routes within and around the town to discourage the use of cars, as current roads are congested and the additional housing will increase the problem. There are significant numbers of horse owners around the town and bridleways are limited, which prevents horse owners from riding out around the countryside.</p>
RTW Town Forum	<i>Paths etc:</i> The RTW Town Forum actively supports the TWBC's plans for improving safe cycling in the town as there is almost no provision. The town needs a comprehensive network of routes for commuters / utility cyclists (to reduce congestion) and leisure cyclists.
Sandhurst Parish Council	<i>MUGAs:</i> need identified to provide a Multi-use game area for football, netball etc. <i>Play areas:</i> need for improvements to the existing playground equipment and the purchase of outdoor gym equipment.
Southborough Town Council	<i>Bowls:</i> provision is inadequate. <i>Play Areas:</i> Bright Ridge as there is no green space <i>Teen facilities:</i> provision is inadequate.
Speldhurst	<i>Tennis courts:</i> No public amenities

### **Town/Parish Councils and the RTW Town Forum – other comments**

The survey also provided the opportunity to raise any other issues or to make other points:

<b>Parish/town</b>	<b>Other Comments</b>
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC	Need to consider publicity material for what's in and around the Borough promoting what is available.
Paddock Wood TC	<p>Increased population from the agreed new developments will require investment in both indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities. Putlands Sports Centre in particular does not meet the needs and expectations of the current population and will require upgrading in the future.</p> <p>All age groups over a number of years have expressed a wish for a swimming pool in Paddock Wood. At present residents have to travel to either Tunbridge Wells or Cranbrook, neither of which are easily accessible without a car.</p> <p>There is a very active U3A in Paddock Wood but facilities for expansion of groups is limited, although the new community may help resolve this.</p> <p>There is also limited night time economy, and residents would like to have family friendly restaurant and bars within walking distance.</p>
Royal Tunbridge	As well as preserving open space and sporting facilities for the town's increasing

Wells Town Forum	<p>population, maximum use should be made of existing facilities – e.g. those space “owned” by schools are not always available for community use.</p> <p>Particularly important that facilities are placed where people are able to access with active travel – cycling and walking – or by public transport.</p> <p>More initiatives to bring formal and informal sports and active leisure programmes to public parks during school holidays and weekends, coaching and fun sessions for children and families, through to older people. This requires human leaders as well as facilities.</p> <p>A careful balance needs to be struck between the needs of different users of open spaces in Tunbridge Wells. At the moment, that balance does not exist, with cyclists banned from most parks, including the Commons. If we are to encourage active travel, those bans need to be removed.</p> <p>We also need to ensure that Public Spaces Protection Orders are not overused. Better to expect reasonable behavior from different users.</p>
Southborough Town Council	Women’s sports are not catered for enough within the parish.

### 3.4 Neighbouring Local Authorities and Parish Councils - Observations and key issues

#### Neighbouring Local Authorities – Cross Boundary Issues

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.

Authorities specifically highlighting some cross-border issues are:

- Hastings Borough Council – related to Green Infrastructure and playing pitches.
- Maidstone Borough Council – related to Green Infrastructure.
- Rother District Council – related to Green Infrastructure and sub-regional recreational facilities close to the District boundary such as Bewl Water.
- Tonbridge & Malling District Council - related to Green Infrastructure,
- Wealden District Council - related to Green Infrastructure; Open Space/PPG17 study; and the athletics track at the Goldsmiths recreation ground at Crowborough.

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.

#### Parish Councils/Forums

Section 3.2 above provided findings from the parish councils’ survey undertaken for the study. 12 of the 16 local town and parish councils responded.

#### General Overview

- All twelve of the town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and outdoor recreational facilities. Only five managed indoor halls.
- Ten of the local councils who responded noted that that there was a need for additional or

improved open space, play, sport and recreation facilities within their town or parish.

- The sectors of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were children, young people/teenagers and various sports teams/clubs.

### ***Common areas of concern***

The needs and aspirations that individual parishes identified were very varied. The more frequently highlighted typologies are:

- Indoor facilities – varied needs including village hall improvements, additional storage space, sports halls and swimming pools.
- Parks and recreation grounds – mainly highlighting a need for additional space for such provision in relation to population/housing growth.
- Play areas, youth facilities and MUGAs – a mix of new provision and refurbishments and improvement to existing facilities.
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths in relation to access to facilities and as leisure facilities.

### ***Quality factors - open space provision***

The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community; and internally they should be easy to get around.
- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained - they should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- Spaces need to be designed and managed so that noise and antisocial behaviour is minimised.

Other factors highlighted were the need for design to minimise maintenance costs; and to consider the need for secure cycle parking and disabled parking rather than simply parking in general.

### ***Detailed responses on open space typologies***

The parish councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed.

## 4.0 PARKS AND GREEN SPACE

### 4.1 Introduction

This section covers consultation responses and findings in relation to non-sporting recreational open spaces, including parks and recreation grounds, natural green spaces, water recreation, allotments and rights of way.

Consultation undertaken for this section included key stakeholder surveys, and a survey of relevant (non-sports) groups and organisations.

The information and findings from this section will be taken forward in the Open Space Study main report.

This section is comprised of seven main sections:

- Review of policy and strategy
- Key Stakeholders - strategic context and overview
- Parks, gardens and recreation grounds
- Allotments
- Natural green space – e.g. wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands
- Water recreation
- Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.

There is a summary of key points and issues at the end of the section.

### 4.2 Review of policy and strategy

#### Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

This section provides a brief overview of relevant Borough Council policy and strategy documents, helping provide a well-established framework and context for future open space planning.

##### 4.2.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Corporate Objectives – The Five Year Plan 2017-2022

The Five Year Plan is the Borough Council's corporate strategy for the next five years, and focuses on what they want to achieve for the borough and for services the council provide. It has an overarching vision of what the council wish to achieve and the priorities that it believes will achieve the vision.

**The vision** of the Five Year Plan is: To encourage investment and sustainable growth, and to enhance quality of life for all.

Extracts from the plan directly relevant to this study are noted below:

#### ***Creating new sports facilities across the borough***

Residents value the provision of facilities and activities that promote health and wellbeing, and access to these activities adds to the quality of life experienced in the borough. There is a high take-up of sports club activities across the borough, and the local football and rugby clubs have both had considerable success in recent years.

Options will be investigated to provide new sports facilities so that access is improved and increased, including the possibility of a new site that can act as a focus for a variety of sporting activities and as a catalyst for greater achievement.

### ***Support the development of the Community Centres in the borough***

The Council has worked closely with Southborough Town Council to help them secure a planning application for the delivery of new community facilities. We will continue to work with them to deliver this exciting project, and with Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council, and Paddock Wood Town Council, who have similar aspirations to increase the availability of local services in the heart of their communities and so enhance quality of life of residents.

### ***Enhancing the public realm in the borough***

An enhanced and more pleasant public realm will help to attract further tourism, and investment in local economies, and help our businesses to grow because they are located in a place people want to come to, where there is a high quality of life.

### ***Active travel***

We need to ensure every resident is supported to live a healthy lifestyle. Switching more car journeys to active travel (walking, cycling and public transport) can improve health outcomes, is good for the environment (including air quality) and will also help to support local businesses. The Council will work with partners to improve the cycle network in the borough.

### ***Improving social and health inequalities***

We know that there are significant pockets of deprivation in some wards, and that the life-chances of some of our residents are limited by this deprivation. Over the next plan period, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver the Health Inequalities Action Plan.

## **4.2.2 Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)**

This 2006 study undertook a comprehensive analysis of the supply of and demand for the various kinds of indoor sport and open space typologies across the Borough. It provided local standards for the following kinds of provision relevant to the current Open Space Study i.e.

- Parks and Recreation Grounds
- Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space
- Bowling Greens
- Outdoor Tennis Courts
- Informal Open Space
- Provision for Children & Young People
- Allotments

## **Local Standards**

The local standards proposed for quantity and quality are summarised in the table below:

### Quantity

Typology	Existing level of provision (ha per 1000 residents).	Recommended quantity standard (ha per 1000 residents).
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.32	1.32
Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space	37.40	37.40
Informal Open Space	0.21	0.21
Allotments	0.32	0.2

### Access

Typology	Distance (walking)
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.06 km
Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space	1.27 km
Informal Open Space	0.80km
Allotments	1.48km

Standards for the provision of bowling greens and tennis courts were expressed as follows:

**Bowling Greens:** The minimum standard of 1 bowling green for 6,941 people should be adopted for bowling green provision. However this needs to be revised on an annual basis depending on the future demand for outdoor bowls.

**Tennis Courts:** Tennis Courts the minimum LTA standard (2% of the population participate in tennis = 2,082 in Tunbridge Wells Borough) should be adopted; therefore need to provide 1 court per 45 people = 46 courts and one floodlit court per 65 people = 32 courts on basis of current population.

It was also stated that for bowling greens and tennis courts:

- These standards should be maintained on a borough wide basis.
- The standards should be applied to increases in population, including those relating to housing developments, as a preliminary measure of the need for additional outdoor facility provision

The 2006 standards and findings will be reviewed and new standards proposed in the current study. The new standards will then be applied across the Borough.

## Kent Nature Partnership - Health & Nature Subgroup

### 4.2.3 A Needs Assessment relating to the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity – Report for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (2016)

#### Aims

This study set out to establish the proximity, accessibility and naturalness of greenspace in areas of Kent where the population is characterised by low levels of physical activity. Subsequently, this assessment was

used to prioritise areas for future action and investment, based on levels of population deprivation, size and need.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Physical activity is known to be beneficial for a range of key health and wellbeing outcomes. There is growing evidence that the provision of, and access to, natural greenspace can support physical activity, health and wellbeing. Where accessibility to greenspace is lacking, improving access and/or creation of additional greenspace is recommended.

The analysis suggests that in the Kent population physical inactivity is not consistently linked to accessible greenspace provision. It is therefore also recommended that initiatives to promote use of greenspace for physical activity would bring health benefits to people who are not active enough. Exploring the barriers to using existing greenspace is also necessary as there may be reasons (e.g. safety, quality of greenspace) why people do not currently use local sites for physical activity.

### **Prioritisation of areas for action**

Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) populations were grouped and prioritised according to the proportion that is physically inactive as in the table below:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Population grouping</b>
Physically inactive priority 1	>80% population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 2	>60% to 80% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 3	>40% to 60% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 4	>20% to 40% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 5	0% to 20% of the population physically inactive

Measures were then proposed for increasing opportunities for physical activity in greenspace across Kent, associated with each priority. In addition, the results from the analyses and evidence from the literature point to some general actions which could be taken in Kent to improve provision/access to greenspace and encourage physical activity in greenspace.

The report notes that research evidence has shown that people are more likely to visit natural greenspace in close proximity to where they live. The report therefore proposed that priority should be given to increasing accessible greenspace in LSOAs where less than 50% of the population was found to meet Natural England's ANGSt for greenspace of at least 2 ha within 300 m of home.

The full details of this analysis can be found in the main report for the *Needs Assessment relating to the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity*.

## 4.3 Key Stakeholders - strategic context and overview

This section includes general comments from the key stakeholders consulted. Responses specific to individual typologies from the stakeholders consulted will be noted under each of the focused topic headings.

### 4.3.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

The Borough Council's Parks and Sports Team Leader was interviewed and some key general points noted were:

- The Borough Council manage a range of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities in Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) including parks and recreation grounds; play areas and youth facilities; tennis courts and MUGAs; bowling greens; allotments and woodlands.
- Overall RTW is well provided for in relation to the quantity of parks, recreation grounds and play areas.
- Elsewhere in the Borough open space and outdoor facilities are primarily managed by parish councils, recreation trusts and other agencies.
- As budgets have reduced over recent years maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 funding.
- In general terms the quality of the five main parks in Tunbridge Wells is good with the parks being maintained to a high standard. The parks are quite varied in relation to their character, facilities and functions. A number of parks have seen significant investment in recent years.
- In the main, access to the parks for local residents and visitors is good.
- Most of the parks have Friends of Groups with varying levels of active involvement and volunteering. Some of the Friends Groups have been active in helping to secure external funding (with support from the Parks Team).
- Increasingly there is a need to secure external funding for substantial improvements and refurbishments and there is a need to secure data such as visitor numbers, the demographic of users etc. Currently such data is very limited.

Additional points relating to the various typologies can be found in the appropriate sections later in the report.

### 4.3.2 Strategic Organisations

#### Natural England – Focus Area Advisor

##### *Standards of provision*

Natural England has proposed standards for provision of natural green space, the Accessible Natural Green Space (ANGSt) standard. These standards recommend that everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural green space:

- Of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
- One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- Statutory local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population

Natural England suggest that these standards should be a target to achieve; and particularly that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural green spaces of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes from home).

### **General Comments**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has the opportunity to deliver positive biodiversity outcomes by having a strategy that links the current and any proposed open spaces. Ecological Networking should be used to link many of the open spaces outlined within the topics. An ecological network is a network of high quality sites, protected by buffer zones, and connected by wildlife corridors and smaller, but still wildlife-rich, 'stepping-stone' sites. Ecological networks generally have five components.

- Core areas of high nature conservation value which contain rare or important habitats or ecosystem services. They include protected wildlife sites and other semi-natural areas of high ecological quality.
- Corridors and 'stepping stones' enabling species to move between core areas. These can be made up of a number of small sites acting as 'stepping stones' or a mosaic of habitats that allows species to move and supports ecosystem functions.
- Restoration areas, where strategies are put in place to create high value areas (the 'core areas' of the future), restoring ecological functions and wildlife
- Buffer zones that protect core areas, restoration areas, and 'stepping stones' from adverse impacts in the wider environment.
- Sustainable use areas, areas of surrounding land that are managed in a sustainable and wildlife friendly way.

Further information about Ecological networks is found below:

*Ecological networks* – The integration of cultural values in nature conservation is essential in a general sense, as well as more specifically in the design of a more sustainable future that supports both species conservation and people's use, within the context of a changing environment. This is why such future design should include cultural values and should provide cultural services as well – “Econets, Landscape and People” Natural England (2015)

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6172716216352768>

Greener neighbourhoods and improved access to nature may also improve public health and quality of life and reduce environmental inequalities. Urban green spaces will provide varied ecosystem services and will contribute to coherent and resilient ecological networks.

*Green Infrastructure:* The NPPF states that local planning authorities should plan ‘positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure’. Urban green space allows species to move around within, and between, towns and the countryside. Even small patches of habitat can benefit movement. Urban Green Infrastructure (GI) is also recognised as one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves.

Should Tunbridge Wells Borough Council wish to discuss the possibilities described above further with Natural England, we recommend that they seek advice through our Discretionary Advice Service.

## Environment Agency (EA) – Sustainable Places Planning Specialist

### *The importance of biodiversity and multi-functional open space*

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a term that describes a network of interconnected green and blue spaces such as: parks and gardens; playing fields and allotments; towpaths and wildlife corridors; beaches; watercourses, wetlands and flood storage areas; woodlands; trees; grasslands; green roofs and swales. GI lies within and between cities, towns and villages and can include both private and public spaces.

- A well planned and managed GI network can and should perform multiple functions and provide multiple benefits and services for communities such as,
- managing surface water and flood risk
- improving water quality
- helping communities to address and adapt to climate change
- providing opportunities for recreation and improved wellbeing
- enhancing biodiversity
- promoting community interaction

Guidance is available <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

## The Forestry Commission

Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest on the Kent and Sussex border is managed by the Forestry Commission. The Commission notes that “it provides one of the world's best conifer collections and provides a beautiful place to walk in all seasons”. It provides healthy outdoor activity in a beautiful setting. It has extensive trails for family cycling, mountain-biking, riding, walking, and running, as well as Go Ape and adventure play for all ages and abilities. Regular events and activity trails are also offered throughout the year.

In response to the invitation to provide input into the Open Space study the Forestry Commission provided the following general information:

### *Local Plans and ancient woodland – Forestry Commission approach*

The Forestry Commission is not in a position to input into the consultation process for Local Plans. However, the information below is provided to assist you in assessing the appropriateness of sites for future development, and to highlight opportunities for achieving your renewable energy obligations.

### **A summary of Government policy on ancient woodland**

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#) (published October 2006).

**Section 40** – “Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) (published March 2012).

**Paragraph 118** – “planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss”.

[National Planning Practice Guidance](#) – Natural Environment Guidance. (Published March 2014)

This Guidance supports the implementation and interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework. This section outlines the Forestry Commission's role as a **non-statutory consultee** on *“development proposals that contain or are likely to affect Ancient Semi-Natural woodlands or Plantations on Ancient Woodlands Sites (PAWS) (as defined and recorded in [Natural England's Ancient Woodland inventory](#)), including proposals where any part of the development site is within 500 metres of an ancient semi-natural woodland or ancient replanted woodland, and where the development would involve erecting new buildings, or extending the footprint of existing buildings”*

It notes that **ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat**, and that, in planning decisions, **Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) should be treated equally in terms of the protection afforded to ancient woodland in the National Planning Policy Framework**. It highlights the Ancient Woodland Inventory as a way to find out if a woodland is ancient.

[Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees](#). (Published April 2014)

The Forestry Commission has prepared joint [standing advice](#) with Natural England on ancient woodland and veteran trees which we refer you to in the first instance. This advice is a material consideration for planning decisions across England. It explains the definition of ancient woodland, its importance, ways to identify it and the policies that relevant to it. It also provides advice on how to protect ancient woodland when dealing with planning applications that may affect ancient woodland. It also considers ancient wood-pasture and veteran trees.

The Standing Advice website will provide you with links to [Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory](#), [assessment guides](#) and other tools to assist you in assessing potential impacts. The assessment guides sets out a series of questions to help planners assess the impact of the proposed development on the ancient woodland. **Case Decisions** demonstrates how certain previous planning decisions have taken planning policy into account when considering the impact of proposed developments on ancient woodland. These documents can be found on our [website](#).

[The UK Forestry Standard](#) (3rd edition published November 2011).

**Page 24** “Areas of woodland are material considerations in the planning process and may be protected in local authority Area Plans. These plans pay particular attention to woods listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory and areas identified as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Importance (SLNCIs).

[Keepers of Time](#) – A Statement of Policy for England's Ancient and Native Woodland (published June 2005).

**Page 10** “The existing area of ancient woodland should be maintained and there should be a net increase in the area of native woodland”.

[Natural Environment White Paper “The Natural Choice”](#) (published June 2011)

**Paragraph 2.53** - This has a “renewed commitment to conserving and restoring ancient woodlands”.

**Paragraph 2.56** – “The Government is committed to providing appropriate protection to ancient woodlands and to more restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites”.

[Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#) (published August 2011).

**Paragraph 2.16** - Further commitments to protect ancient woodland and to continue restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

Renewable & low carbon energy

The resilience of existing and new woodland is a key theme of the Forestry Commission's work to Protect, Improve and Expand woodland in England we will continue to work with Forestry / Woodland owners,

agents, contractors and other Stakeholders to highlight and identify, pests and diseases and to work in partnership to enable Woodlands and Forests are resilient to the impacts of Climate Change. Woodfuel and timber supplies continues to be an opportunity for local market growth whilst also enabling woodlands to be brought back into active management.

#### Flood risk

The planting of new riparian and floodplain woodland, can help to reduce diffuse pollution, protect river morphology, moderate stream temperature and aid flood risk management, as well as meet Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the restoration and expansion of wet woodland.

The Forestry Commission is keen to work in partnership with Woodland / Forest Stakeholders to develop opportunities for woodland creation to deliver these objectives highlighted above.

In the wider planning context the Forestry Commission encourages local authorities to consider [the role of trees in delivering planning objectives as part](#) of a wider integrated landscape approach. For instance through:

- the inclusion of [green infrastructure](#) (including [trees and woodland](#)) in and around new development; and
- the use of locally sourced wood in construction and as a sustainable, [carbon lean fuel](#).

### **Kent Wildlife Trust – Planning and Policy Officer**

#### ***Management of Local Sites***

The Trust is responsible for the management for a number of reserves in our ownership. We are responsible for the management of these and they are managed with nature conservation aims. We also oversee the designation, monitoring and ongoing protection of Local Wildlife Sites, locally designated sites (not necessarily in our ownership) of County importance for wildlife.

#### ***General Comments***

The Trust thinks that overall there are not enough wildlife sites in the Borough. We face an issue of increasing recreational pressure in our reserves and other nature conservation areas. This is due to development within or near to these protected sites.

We would like to see increased provision of nature conservation in the borough, both through more sites with this as their main objective but also by incorporating nature conservation principles into other sites such as allotments, footpaths, riversides etc. We would like to see better green infrastructure links and a clear policy for this; policy should include borough-wide mapping, measured benchmarks and improvement plan.

### **The Woodland Trust - Government Affairs Officer**

The Woodland Trust noted that they appreciate the opportunity to input into this document. They highlighted that proximity and access to woodland is a key issue linking the environment with health and wellbeing provision.

#### ***Management of Local Sites***

In Tunbridge Borough the Trust manage woods at Nellington, Friezland and Hurst.

## ***Spatial Planning Standards***

The Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WAS<sub>t</sub>) for local authorities to aim for, encapsulated in their *Space for People* publication. They believe that the WAS<sub>t</sub> can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits.

The WAS<sub>t</sub> is complimentary to Natural England's ANGST+ and is endorsed by Natural England. The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard recommends:

- that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size
- that there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people's homes.

## ***Other information/points raised***

- Our document 'Residential developments and trees' may be useful: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2015/07/residential-developments-and-trees/>
- The **Trees or Turf (2011)** report outlines the benefits of converting selected areas of intensively mown grassland to woodland, and in particular the cost savings which can be made.
- The Trust supplied a number of additional typology based comments noted in the appropriate sections below.

The trust also makes comments specifically on Local Parks and Recreation Grounds as noted in the typology section below.

## **The Case for Trees: Forestry Commission (2010)**

Trees enhance biodiversity. A mature oak can host up to 5,000 species of invertebrate that will form the basis for a healthy food chain that benefits birds and mammals. As a platform for biodiversity trees can link pockets of wildlife that, in time, helps to increase it and thus bring people closer to nature.

## **Historic England - Planning Adviser**

Tunbridge Wells Borough includes a number of historically significant open spaces, some formally registered and some not designated. Kent Gardens Trust have undertaken an inventory of all open spaces in the borough with heritage value and is a useful source of information on these.

## **Kent High Weald AONB Partnership**

The Kent High Weald Partnership is a partnership between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council & the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Most of our activities are based in the Borough, which lies within the High Weald AONB.

The partnership aims to:

- conserve landscape features and wildlife habitats;
- promote quiet access to the countryside;
- encourage community environmental action
- raise awareness of the High Weald and its landscape.

These aims are achieved through working in partnerships with individuals, community groups, schools, youth groups, landowners, local businesses, Parish Councils, the Borough & the County Council. This approach continues to be very successful in achieving results.

### **General Comments**

There is clear evidence (for instance by the Countryside Recreation Network) that nature can make a positive contribution to our health, and help us recover from pre-existing stresses or mental health problems. The assessment should take account of the vital role that the countryside and local green space plays in keeping residents healthy and active.

In relation to outdoor recreation in environmentally 'sensitive areas' see the High Weald AONB Management Plan objectives for public understanding and enjoyment. <http://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html>

The partnership also makes comments specifically on a number of specific typologies as noted in the appropriate typology sections below.

### **Kent County Playing Fields Association – Secretary**

Kent Playing Fields are firm advocates for the production of Open Space/Playing Pitch Strategies covering all districts and we urge that this message be promoted. Such strategic work will ensure better consultation with clubs, more effective and better understood facility use, more focused management and planned maintenance - and better protections for playing pitches and outdoor recreation into the future. Emerging Local Plans and Local Neighbourhood Plans around the country - which are very much 'land' focused in their intentions - must prioritise and safeguard the formal and informal recreation areas in their own patches for sport and physical activity for future generations. The new government national sports strategy is a great place to promote this principle and adopt these important safeguards.

Whilst Sport England are the only formally 'recognised' consultees on Planning matters for sport, we maintain that both County Sports Partnerships and, where they exist, the County Playing Fields (both are more knowledgeable and more local to matters in each county) are part of an 'agreed' consultation process for planning enquires and applications in relation to outdoor places for formal and informal recreation. The current planning consultation structure is informal and variable around the country. The provision of County Playing Fields organisations are also patchy throughout the country, and each county, in partnership with Fields in Trust, should be promoted as part of a national network supporting and promoting local green spaces for formal and informal recreation to ensure children, in particular, have easy and permanent access to healthy outdoor sport and recreation.

We maintain that community 'Sport Clubs' be central to the new strategy. Whilst Government and a number of agencies will be very keen to promote the 'health and physical activity' agenda message, at the end of the day a considerable level of physical activity will be delivered through schools, member/private clubs, community leisure centres and health and fitness clubs and related activities. However, a large segment will be delivered by the county's precious community sports clubs. In our view, they - and their large and valuable volunteer base - have the potential to underpin many of the outcomes of the new strategy. At a time when there are so many technological, entertainment and lifestyle challenges to sport, we must surely advocate and profile these voluntary community sports organisations and their crucial volunteers, and promote a high level of visible and resource support to community sports clubs. Sport MUST not primarily be a jigsaw piece in the nation's health agenda. Culturally, too, it needs its own identity.

In a changing political and economic world, we all share a responsibility to promote high standards of outdoor sports facilities. However, with the budgetary constraints imposed on local authorities in particular, the strategy ought to promote the provision of high quality outdoor and clubhouse facilities through the best means available. This very much focuses on the level and standards of maintenance undertaken on outdoor spaces and related buildings. We remain open-minded to the transfer of public recreation assets, partially or wholly, to voluntary sports clubs and associations, particularly where it works for local authorities and the community sports organisations concerned. Quite simply - when competing for people's leisure-time - poor facilities will be a turn off for potential participants. The [re] establishment of sizeable funding from Sports Lottery and/or local authority, or similar, grant provision is vital to underpin the issue of ageing sports facilities and the changing needs of the sporting world. We must secure the best facilities and customer services if community sport is to compete in the new technological and changing lifestyles world.

We recognise, for numerous outdoor activities, that artificial surfaces [or their variations] will be the way forward (eg the FA's development plan) for a number of sporting activities. Kent Playing Fields are supportive of the provision of artificial or other suitable variation of playing or training pitch facilities where their need has been proven and we hope the strategy will be able to identify with the changing outdoor sport scenery. Where new or adapted artificial facilities emerge, then community sport hubs or school sites should be given consideration wherever possible to encourage multi-use of facilities and maximise the opportunities for sport and active recreation for people of all ages. Where this happens, the one proviso is that a percentage of the income generated is legally set aside for the future replacement of the playing carpet and other fixed assets.

County Sports Partnerships, or equivalent organisations, are vital for the effective coordination of sport covering a county or region. Sport and sports organisations MUST be better coordinated. The previous County Sports Partnership bodies also provided a valuable service to the nation's young people, especially the organisation of more competitive games and matches, facilitating opportunities from where our future sporting talents will emerge.

Finally, sport gives us all the inspiration to participate in life, socially and actively. We advocate its high priority in the government's agenda.

Thank you for the opportunity to have our say.

## 4.4 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports): overview

An online survey was set up for local organisations with an interest in green spaces (non-sporting). Responses were received from 17 local groups<sup>14</sup>:

- Beulah Road Residents Association
- Boyne Park Resident Association
- Friends of the Earth
- Friends of Calverley Grounds
- Friends of Dunorlan Park
- Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park
- Friends of the Grove
- Friends of Tunbridge wells and Rusthall Common
- Hawkenbury Allotment Holders' Association
- Hawkenbury Pump Track
- Hawkenbury Village Association
- Hunters Chase Residents Association
- Inner London Road Residents Association
- Matfield and District Riders association
- Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- Tunbridge Wells Ramblers
- Warwick Park Area Residents Association

Detailed comments from the groups are found in the typology based sections 3.5 to 3.9 below.

### Quantity

- All of respondents except one reported that their organisations make direct use of open space or outdoor recreation facilities.
- Nearly two thirds of respondents responded that there are enough open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of their group's primary activities.

Groups who reported there not being enough open space/outdoor facilities explained further:

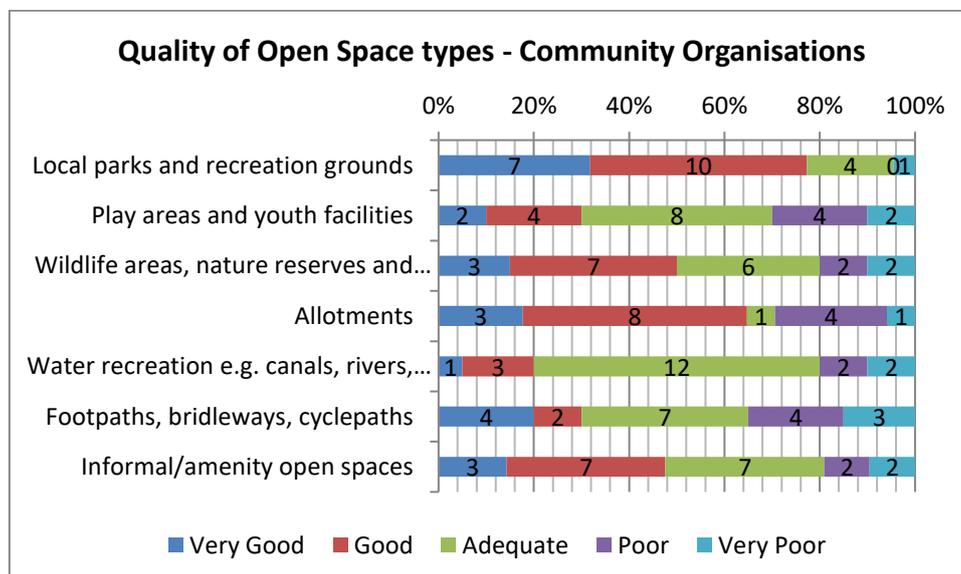
Group	Comments
Boyne Park Resident Association	Maybe there could be a fitness circuit on the common, with bars or little stations to do particular fitness activities. Would like to see the old racecourse reinstated as a circuit for rollerbladers, wheelchair users, buggy pushers, joggers and walkers... without sinking in mud. Maybe even join the two sections of the common with a tunnel under Major York Road!! That would be fab..... we don't seem to be getting a zebra crossing anytime soon. Think of Central Park, New York and similar Centennial Park in Sydney, a circle is the key to a social park people would talk and interact more.
Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park (FoGH)	We are always on the lookout for improvements and encourage local schools to make good use of the potential for environmental classes within the park, for example.
Friends of the Earth	There should be more awareness of need for space and that these spaces should be pleasant and wildlife friendly
Hawkenbury Village Association	There are enough outdoor areas but not enough facilities to meet all ages requirements. Small children are catered for with the play/swing area but anyone older than that has nothing provided until they reach the age they can play football

<sup>14</sup> The survey was sent to groups identified by the Borough Council and via web searches. Responses were received from a broad range of groups with a wide range of interests. There may be additional organisations with an interest in open space that were not identified. The general findings may not therefore be entirely representative of all such groups across the Borough.

	<p>or tennis, etc. eg my older grandchildren are bored whilst waiting for their younger siblings enjoy the swings but it won't be long until they are too old to use them. Then what do they do?</p> <p>We would like more activities within the recreational ground. Over 200 new houses are being built very soon and we would benefit from extra facilities. A café would also be good!</p> <p>The residents of the area have been promised and Adult Gym facility on the Recreation ground for the past 3 years but this has failed to materialised because the Borough Council has now decided to wait for Section 106 monies to become available from the Berkely Homes development rather than funding it directly as was promised over 2 years ago. Also, there was a very popular and highly used open air bowling green on the Hawkenbury Recreation ground which was shut down some years ago and has been abandoned ever since, thus limiting a popular and effective physical activity, especially amongst the older members of the local community.</p>
Matfield and District Riders association	<p>We have numerous riders in the area of all ages. We support local economy with the needs we have for our horses but access to ride safely on busy dangerous roads is having a negative effect on our health hobby. Some have had to purchase transport to access some rides, impacting on carbon footprint. Riding is a passion that promotes a healthy lifestyle, teaches young riders responsibility, gets them away from technology and encourages them to strive for improvement. Lack of somewhere safe to ride and having to engage with drivers that have no regard for our need to be on busy roads is making this pastime almost impossible to pursue. Cyclists and ramblers/walkers are far better catered for, we are the poor relations.</p>
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	<p>Our group focuses on residents of Paddock Wood looking at green space for all uses. We currently think there is enough space but with the agreed future development this will need to be increased to meet the needs of the expanding population. There will need to be improved facilities for sport, as there is not sufficient space to expand existing facilities where they are. Accessible open spaces will be needed within the developments to meet the needs of all age groups.</p>

### Quality

The general views of these local community organisations who expressed an opinion as regards the overall quality of the different types of outdoor recreational provision in Tunbridge Wells Borough are summarised in the chart and information below:



- The quality of all kinds of open spaces and outdoor spaces is rated as at least adequate by a clear majority of local organisations.
- 77% of the groups think that the quality of parks and recreation grounds is either good or very good; and 65% rated allotments similarly.
- Wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands are also rated quite highly by most groups with 50% rating them as good or very good compared to 20% rating them as poor or very poor. Similarly for informal/amenity open spaces.
- Opinion on the general quality of other kinds of open spaces/outdoor facilities is more split with nearly equal proportions rating them as good/very good or poor/very poor – with the greatest proportion rating them as adequate.

## Access

Respondents were asked whether their group faced any access issues in relation to open space and recreational facilities:

Nine of the groups noted that they suffer from access issues and their specific comments are noted below:

Group	Comments on access issues.
Boyne Park Resident Association	Zebra crossing on Major York Road. A better surface for winter access/wheelchairs and buggies to make a circuit on the common.
Friends of Dunorlan Park	Some of our older members find the hill out of the Park to Pembury Road very steep but we can't do much about that. Car parking is very often inadequate. There are current proposals to charge for car parking but this could cause more problems.
Friends of the Earth	Traffic is so bad into Tunbridge Wells I tend to stay north of it.
Hawkenbury Village Association	If someone of any age needs transport to access Hawkenbury Recreation Ground (or nearby Dunorlan Park) it is not possible to do so in the evenings or on Sundays/bank holidays because we don't have a bus service at those times. This makes people prisoners in their own homes. Access/ barriers aren't secure, meaning children and dogs often run into the road on a blind bend. A spring on the gate would be an easy solution Inadequate parking at the Hawkenbury Recreation Ground
Hunters Chase Residents Association	It has been necessary to erect physical barriers across the entrance to the green Lane open space, due to vandalism and problems with people abusing the small car park there. Physical access to the field is also constrained due to an old car which had been burned there approximately 1 - 2 years ago.
Inner London Road Residents Association	Problems crossing the A 26 opposite our houses. Serious need for a zebra crossing or pedestrian lights. A problem for many other local people as well.
Matfield and District Riders association	Distance is an issue, requiring the need for your own additional transport to move horses or high cost of hiring a transporter. We are also time limited to be able to do this as we are responsible regarding ground conditions. The one bridleway we could utilize in the area is accessed by the A228, a death wish if you wanted to use it and local farmer has pigs on the bridlepath. Rups in the area are poorly maintained.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Footpaths are not well maintained and accessible to all residents. Parks, good dog walking facilities and water activities can only be accessed by car. Small green spaces accessible to residents are being gradually sold off for housing, reducing access to green space where people live and reducing the rural 'feel' of Paddock Wood.
Tunbridge Wells Ramblers	High, unmaintained stiles. The replacement 'kissing gates' are a tremendous boon

## **Sport and Recreation in environmentally sensitive areas**

The question posed was: 'Should we have more or less areas for activities that are noisy? If so, where should they go? Is countryside or wildlife damaged by sport and recreational activity?'

The following points were raised by respondents:

- People should be encouraged outside to keep fit, especially children. Except air pollution is so bad that I doubt it's of great benefit sometimes. The most annoying noises come from traffic and aeroplanes, not from people enjoying activities outside.
- We need more but not necessarily noisy. The proposed Pump Track for Hawkenbury Recreation Ground is not noisy in itself although the users might make a noise. If wildlife is affected, it could be compensated by the creation of a designated 'natural' area in another part of the park or area. Hilbert/Grosvenor Park seems to have it all.
- I am happy to have activities that are noisy as long as they finish at a reasonable time at night. Location should be carefully considered to minimise the impact on wildlife
- Noisy activities are still promoting good health but need to have designated areas. Horses do not damage countryside or wildlife in any way. We are sensitive to designated areas of grazing and ground nesting birds.
- Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan is proposing moving outdoor sports to the edge of town, to one area to reduce noise and light pollution. Activity should be limited around areas of ancient woodland and wildlife habitats.
- Quad bikes etc. are a real nuisance on some footpaths and bridlepaths. Countryside and wildlife are certainly disturbed by them. Footpaths are torn up to the extent they do not recover. More designated areas for them would be a real help.
- If choices have to be made, people should come first. So noisy activities should be away from population centres.

## **Other Issues and Observations**

The survey provided an opportunity to highlight any other issues that didn't specifically fall into observations on particular typology types. Comments are noted below:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park (FoGH)	We have had the benefit of a transforming Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery grant which has delivered much appreciated improved facilities. It would be a great shame if the few individuals who are unable to behave properly are allowed to continue to inflict damage and a threatening attitude here; we would greatly appreciate more support to overcome this.
Hawkenbury Village Association	The car park in Hawkenbury Recreation Ground (HRG) needs to be enlarged to accommodate the present users. The proposed car park enlargement to cater for the Berkeley Home development additional usage should create even more space. Public transport should be available for people to get to Dunorlan Park and HRG from the Hawkenbury direction. There's no point in the elderly having bus passes if they can't use them in the evenings, Sundays or Bank Holidays. No transport causes people to be trapped in their homes/area and loneliness. Pedestrian access to Dunorlan is dangerous via Halls Hole Road. It's easier to take pushchairs via the car park than it is to cross the fields. Maybe a path on one side could be created? People should be encouraged to walk and not use cars all the time, but it should be safe to do so. We think the Recreational Ground would benefit from a pump track and outdoor gym.

Matfield and District Riders association	Please consider the riders in our area, riding is not an elite hobby for the rich. Due to the increase in cars on the road, impatient drivers, no off road riding or useable designated bridleways, we are putting the lives of ourselves, our horses and our children to maintain this hobby.
Tunbridge Wells Ramblers	Thank you for involving the Ramblers in this survey. We will help in any way we can.

## 4.5 Parks and Recreation Grounds

### 4.5.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

The five main parks in Royal Tunbridge Wells (RTW) are Dunloran Park, Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, Calverley Grounds, Hawkenbury Recreation Ground and St Johns Recreation Ground.

- Dunloran Park is a historically important and popular public park. It is just out of town, on the A264. The Park is spacious with wild grassy slopes and views across the lake to the Weald. It has a natural play area. A regular Park Run is held there.
- Grosvenor and Hilbert Park is the town's oldest public park and has a café and play areas. It has had recent investment of £2.36m via Heritage and Big Lottery funding. There is a regular programme of events. The recreation ground has two woods designated as a Local Nature Reserve.
- Calverley Grounds is a popular and historic park located in the town centre with lawns and ornamental gardens. It also has a café, an adventure play area and outdoor sports provision. Calverley Grounds is part of a planned major redevelopment with the town centre.
- Hawkenbury Recreation Ground primarily provides outdoor sport provision with changing rooms and toilets; and a play area. There is a local aspiration to develop a pump track on site. There is also an opportunity to acquire additional land to expand/improve the site and provide a 3G sports pitch (via developer contributions relating to major housing development).
- St John's Recreation Ground provides outdoor sports facilities, a good play area and a MUGA. It has some meadow land and also toilets. There is potential for improvements via funding related to housing development.

#### ***Tennis/Netball Courts***

- Overall there is good provision across Royal Tunbridge Well. Tennis courts are provided at Calverley Grounds (three); Hawkenbury Recreation Ground (three – two of which are grass courts); and St John's Recreation Ground (three). Calverley Grounds also has two netball courts.
- The courts are free to use and not bookable. Some coaching courses are provided.
- Overall the quality of courts is reasonable. There is a need to repair fencing at Calverley and the court surface only has about five years of playable life. The hard surface court at Hawkenbury has about ten years of playable life.
- The courts seem quite well used in the summer particularly but exact levels are not known as no bookings are taken.
- There are also a number of tennis clubs across the Borough and some courts are provided by parish councils.
- There are four indoor tennis courts at Tunbridge Wells Sports Centre.

#### ***Bowling Greens and Croquet Lawns***

- The Council provide bowling greens at Grosvenor and Hilbert Park and St John's Recreation Ground and the greens are in good condition. There are clubs at both parks and pay and play is available, though this option is not taken up by many users.
- The bowling club at Grosvenor is strong with a large membership but the club at St John's appears to be declining in membership.
- Overall demand is falling and over time the council has closed two greens due to insufficient demand.
- In addition there is a commercial indoor bowls facility at the edge of town; some parish councils provide bowling greens; and there are three croquet lawns at Calverley Grounds.

Additional typology specific information is provided in the appropriate sections below.

## 4.5.2 Strategic Organisations

### Woodland Trust

The following applies to many open spaces (eg parks, country parks and nature reserves):

Trees outside woods are extremely important. We would wish to see tree cover increased overall as this will help to address the threat of tree disease. Planting a range of suitable native trees will help to make our tree stock more resilient.

Old individual trees are an important part of our cultural and landscape heritage: ancient, veteran and notable trees resonate with the history of the landscape and form markers in the lives of individual people and communities. Ancient trees also have a special conservation value, supporting many species of epiphytes, invertebrates and fungi, whilst also providing a habitat for other animals including owls, woodpeckers, other hole nesting birds and bats. In addition, trees make a significant contribution to the urban environment both in visual terms and in helping to abate air pollution and create oxygen.

It is important that there is no further avoidable loss of ancient trees through development pressure, mismanagement or poor practice. The Ancient Tree Forum (ATF) and the Woodland Trust would like to see all such trees recognised as historical, cultural and wildlife monuments scheduled under TPOs and highlighted in plans so they are properly valued in planning decision-making. There is also a need for policies ensuring good management of ancient trees, the development of a succession of future ancient trees through new street tree planting and new wood pasture creation, and to raise awareness and understanding of the value and importance of ancient trees.

## 4.5.3 Community Organisations Survey

Comments from the Community Organisations Survey in relation to parks and recreation grounds are noted below:

Group	Comments
Boyne Park Resident Association	Maybe there could be a fitness circuit on the common, with bars or little stations to do particular fitness activities. Would like to see the old racecourse reinstated as a circuit for rollerbladers, wheelchair users, buggy pushers , joggers and walkers... without sinking in mud. Maybe even join the two sections of the common with a tunnel under Major York Road!! That would be fab..... we don't seem to be getting a zebra crossing anytime soon. Think of Central Park, New York and similar Centennial Park in Sydney, a circle is the key to a social park people would talk and interact more.
Friends of Dunorlan Park	Since the departure of Head Gardener, Tony Ewins, we are concerned about the standard of maintenance in the Park provided by Sodexo who have still not properly replaced Tony six months on.
Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park	There could be more emphasis on physical fitness for instance exercise machines. We have many complains about the lack of lighting in the evening as the park is used by school children and commuters and they feel unsafe in the winter months.
Friends of the Earth	Lots of spraying eg to kill crane fly larvae. Fewer trees than normal. Scrubland is dirty - shows the air pollution in the borough.
Hawkenbury Village Associaion	Governor and Hilbert is brilliant for all ages, very good cafe, wish Hawkenbury had little coffee man, adult exercise equipment and maybe better zip wire, crazy golf

	<p>instead of a pump track idea.</p> <p>Dunorlan Park and Hawkenbury Recreation Ground are local. They each offer different facilities. Neither have anything suitable for children over 10, apart from the boats in Dunorlan or, when older, the sports facilities in the HRG. Neither are easily accessible from Hawkenbury in the evenings, Sundays or Bank Holidays, if not a car owner and it's too far, or difficult to walk, due to the fact that no buses run after 6.30 or Sundays or BH. One an hour would be helpful, especially with all the existing new building and proposed new building in the area.</p> <p>We would like improved facilities in a Hawkenbury Recreational Ground. It's a well-used park but improved facilities would prepare us for the extra residents to come next year.</p>
Hunters Chase Residents Association	Access to the car park associated with the Green Lane open space has been constrained due to vandalism and issues with anti-social behaviour.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Paddock Wood does not currently have any formal parks, but there are a number of recreation fields, which double up for sport. Due to problems with surface water drainage during the winter these areas are often inaccessible to walkers and sports teams. Residents of Paddock Wood have expressed interest in having a local park which is easily accessible, such as a small park behind the Wesley Centre (near a care home) and on Memorial Field. Future developments must take into account natural recreation areas as well as the more formal areas, as residents currently use local fields, which will shortly be built on. Consideration for the natural environment and the rural character of Paddock Wood and the surrounding area should be taken into account.
Southborough & District Wheelers	<p>It is very poor that cycling is banned in all parks in Tunbridge Wells, with the exception of Hilbert Recreational Grounds. As a result, there is nowhere for people (especially children) to ride their bikes.</p> <p>Parks offer safe off-road riding and need to be opened up for cyclists. NOTE - Tunbridge Wells Common in particular needs to be open to cyclists - to create a safe cycling route to the town from Rushall and Langton Green.</p> <p>Allow cycling in designated areas within parks to create safer travel for riders.</p>
Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group	Cycling is banned in all Tunbridge Wells parks (apart from Grosvenor & Hilbert Rec) and this needs to be reviewed as we need to be removing any impediments to more people being active and using our green spaces. Several of our parks (particularly the Common) should provide direct and safe transport links taking cyclist away from heavily trafficed (and dangerous) routes.

## 4.6 Allotment Provision

### 4.6.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

- The Borough Council is responsible for thirteen allotment sites in Royal Tunbridge Wells. In addition to this many parish councils also have allotment sites.
- Within RTW there is sufficient allotment space overall and the sites are well distributed across the town.
- The Hawkenbury Allotment site is owned by the Borough Council but managed by the Hawkenbury Allotment Holders Association.
- Other than at Hawkenbury there are no other formal allotment associations though many allotments do hold informal meetings with plot gardeners.
- Take up of allotment plots in general is high. There are a number of vacant plots at some sites but in the main sites are well used with few unused plots. There is a long waiting list at the Reynolds Lane site.
- Quality is generally quite good but the Cunningham Road site does not have water on site. The main maintenance tasks include occasional repairs to fences.
- The demographic of site users is very broad with a wide age range and families involved. The common image of allotments being for retired and older residents is out of date.

### 4.6.2 Community Organisations Survey

Comments from the Community Organisations Survey in relation to allotments are noted below:

Group	Comments
Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park	There seems to be very little monitoring on the allotments. Some areas are neglected. Certainly parking for the allotments around George V hill is limited mainly due to commercial and commuters vehicles.
Friends of the Earth	Many of them are being sold to property developers.
Hawkenbury Allotment Holders' Association	Because of increasing numbers of older people who are unable to cope with the bending involved in managing an allotment, we are planning to create - in addition to the 12 waist-high raised beds we already have - an additional four such beds on a plot that has become vacant.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	There are currently sufficient allotments for residents of Paddock Wood, but new areas may need allocating in the future.

### 4.6.3 Parish councils

Many parish councils manage allotment sites and individual comments on allotments can be found in section 3.3.2 above.

## 4.7 Natural green space, wildlife areas and woodlands

### 4.7.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

- There are two woodlands sites at Grosvenor and Hilbert Recreation Grounds, but in the main natural green spaces tend to be managed by other agencies such as the Kent High Weald Partnership (see below).

### 4.7.2 Strategic Organisations

#### The Kent High Weald Partnership

The Kent High Weald Partnership manages woodland areas in Tunbridge Wells Borough including:

- Marshley Harbour Wood is situated on the north eastern edge of Pembury with access available from a number of footpaths. Marshley Harbour and adjoining Forest Woods comprise some 213 acres of mixed conifers and sweet chestnut coppice with open heathy glades. The site has an educational nature trail and a network of paths.
- Snipes or Bassetts Wood. The woodland is located 1/4 mile to the east of Pembury. The Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk runs through the wood.
- High Wood is located 1/4 mile from the village of Hawkenbury on the eastern edge of Tunbridge Wells. The part of the wood north of High Woods Lane is served by a network of paths, whilst access to the southern part is formally via the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk.
- Barnett's Wood – High Brooms, Tunbridge Wells has access for walks and a small play area.
- Cinderhill Woods, Matfield - Covering a total area of 12 hectares has access for walks. There are heathlands and grasslands, woodland and streams.
- Crane Valley Local Nature Reserve is situated near the centre of Cranbrook and consists of woodland and a wet meadow.
- Sherwood Lake and Woodland is in the Sherwood ward of Tunbridge Wells, it is an area with Village Green status. There is a stone and boardwalk path circling the lake and other walking routes cross the woodland passing many historical features of old parkland.
- Southborough Common - the site is 33.5 hectares, a mixture of ancient woodland, woodland pasture, relic heathland and an old quarry site. The common has a network of footpaths running across it. The site is managed with Southborough Town council.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan is the statutory document that all local authorities with land in the area, including Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, have adopted as their policy for the management of the area and the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. This Plan can be accessed at <http://www.highweald.org/high-weald-aonb-management-plan.html> It describes what makes the area beautiful and sets objectives to enable bodies and individuals to conserve and enhance the AONB. The key landscape components are:

- Geology, landform, water systems and climate
- Settlement
- Routeways
- Woodland
- Field and Heath.

There is also a section on public understanding and enjoyment which will be relevant to this study.

In relation to Woodland it notes that the High Weald AONB is characterized by the great extent of ancient woods, gills, and shaws in small holdings, the value of which is inextricably linked to long-term management.

It also notes the following objectives:

**W1 Objective:** To maintain existing extent of woodland and particularly ancient woodland.

*Rationale:* To maintain irreplaceable habitats for biodiversity, to maintain a key component of the cultural landscape, and to maintain contribution to carbon storage.

**W2 Objective:** To enhance the ecological functioning of woodland at a landscape scale.

*Rationale:* To increase the viability of the woodland habitat for wildlife, by identifying and extending the area of appropriately managed woodland (including restoring planted ancient woodland) to link and enhance isolated habitats and species populations, providing greater connectivity between woodlands and other important wildlife areas, and helping to facilitate species' response to climate change.

## The Woodland Trust

We wish to highlight the huge multifunctional value of woodlands.

Woods provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits and woodland has been shown to contribute to 10 of the 20 quality of life indicators for the UK.

Public health is one of the biggest challenges facing modern society. Easily accessible woods close to residential areas provide measurable benefits: they encourage people to exercise; help reduce the mental stresses of modern society; improve air quality and reduce respiratory diseases. At present 85% of the population do not have a wood within easy walking distance. We need to remedy this and bring the quality of life benefits trees and woods can offer to our communities.

Woods make particularly outstanding greenspaces for public access because of the experience of nature they provide, their visual prominence alongside buildings which offers balance between the built and natural worlds, their low maintenance costs and their ability to accommodate large numbers of visitors.

We would like to see sensitive restoration of Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

Although often damaged, these PAWS sites still retain Ancient Semi-natural woodland features that existed before conversion, and these can be managed to help restore this valuable habitat. This is the only way of increasing the area of ancient woodland with semi natural characteristics.

The key findings of research carried out by the Oxford Forest Institute (OFI) into PAWS and their restoration were that most sites retain elements of their previous semi-natural ancient woodland ecosystem. The best way to make the most of these remnants is to change the woodland canopy structure gradually, rather than removing non-native tree species in one go, which has been the most common approach in the past. We have combined this research with our own experience to produce a short guide for woodland owners and managers entitled The Conservation and Restoration of Plantations on ancient woodland sites - available on the Trust's website - <http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/Pages/ours.aspx>.

### 4.7.3 Community Organisation Survey

Respondents' views in relation to Wildlife Areas, Nature Reserves and Woodlands are noted below:

Group	Comments
Boyne Park Resident Association	Need more signs highlighting and informing folk about what to look for... the common especially. Signs encouraging folk to help?
Friends of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park	With the aid of volunteers and Kent High Weald partnership these are well maintained
Friends of the Earth	Some of the woodlands are over managed. Some areas are more difficult to get to because of traffic congestion around Tunbridge Wells, especially travelling north to south. I tend not to visit places in Tunbridge Wells because of the plane noise - I like quiet walks.
Hawkenbury Village Association	None provided in Dunorlan or Hawkenbury. There are woods around Hawkenbury. The ancient woodland has been ruined by the landowner and has not yet been restored despite losing the planning application. Access isn't very easy.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Paddock Wood residents are concerned about the impact on Foalhurst Wood of the new housing development planned for Mascalls Farm in 2018. It is important to maintain natural habitats for wildlife in this predominantly rural area.

## 4.8 Water Recreation

### 4.8.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

- Dunorlan Park has a boating lake with boat hire. There are pond dipping activities and the lake is also used by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Model Boat Club.
- Marnock Lake and the dripping wells have been restored in Grosvenor and Hilbert Park as part of the £2.36million funding received from the Heritage and Big Lottery Funds.

### 4.8.2 Environment Agency

#### *Water Framework Directive*

The Environment Agency is the competent authority for implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD seeks to improve the local water environment for people and wildlife, and promote the sustainable use of water.

The Directive applies to all surface water bodies, including lakes, streams and rivers as well as groundwater. The overall aim of the WFD is for all water bodies to reach good status by 2027, and in Tunbridge Wells Borough this would mean improving their physical state and preventing deterioration in water quality and ecology.

The WFD introduced the concept of integrated river basin management and such plans should influence development plans. Tunbridge Wells Borough lies within the South East River Basin District and in February 2016 the Environment Agency published the updated South East River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). This document and supporting documents include our thoughts on what needs to be done to deliver the requirements of the Directive.

#### **High Weald AONB Partnership**

The High Weald AONB Partnership manages Sherwood Lake and Woodland is in the Sherwood ward of Tunbridge Wells. It is an area with Village Green status. There is a partly stone and boardwalk path circling the lake and fishing is allowed with a rod licence from a series of swims set up at points around the lake.

#### *The High Weald AONB Management Plan*

The High Weald AONB Management Plan notes that “Since the entire AONB is an important water catchment, much of the vision can be realised through the adoption of river restoration policies that seek to maximise opportunities for natural processes to reduce flooding; improve water quality; reduce soil erosion; increase biodiversity and amenity value; and encourage environmentally responsible land management and agriculture”.

The Plan has the following objective for water systems:

**G1 Objective:** To restore the natural function of river catchments.

**Rationale:** To protect the built-environment and human life by safe water conveyance within river catchments, whilst increasing the range of ecosystem goods and services (e.g. improving the aquatic ecosystems and water resource provision and mitigating the effects of increasingly frequent and high peak flows) provided by the river catchments of the AONB.

## 4.8.2 Community Organisation Survey

Respondents' views in relation to Water Recreation are noted below:

Group	Comments
Boyne Park Resident Association	Where is the water in Tunbridge Wells? It isn't there for any visitor to see in the town central. Dunorlan Lake is a green soup. The puddle down by Sainsburys isn't much better. The stream where I walk regularly in Hurst Woods... behind Bishops Down School is constantly polluted with effluent from the local water works when it rains too hard. Take a walk and you will never see a fish, waterboatman or even any weed.
Hawkenbury Village Association	There is a commercial boating lake in Dunorlan Park, only.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	Paddock Wood is surrounded by privately owned fishing lakes, which are not always accessible to local residents. To access any water recreation a car journey is necessary.

## 4.9 Rights of Way - Footpaths, Cycling and Bridleways

In relation to the open spaces study it is important to consider the provision of and need for linear recreational open space in the form of rights of way such as footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths. For this reason, footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths are included in the typologies of open space considered.

### 4.9.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Cycling Strategy 2016-2020

The Cycling Strategy highlights its relevance to the Tunbridge Wells Borough Transport Strategy which sets out the vision for transport in the borough between 2015 and 2026. The Transport Strategy identifies the delivery of cycle routes as one of its key priorities, acknowledging cycling's potentially significant contribution to congestion reduction, air quality enhancement and road safety.

The Cycling Strategy also notes how it is supported by the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which promotes the use of urban green space and Public Rights of Way for active travel.

The vision of this Cycling Strategy is: ***To make cycling a normal part of everyday life in the borough, by creating a safe and welcoming environment for cyclists of all ages and abilities.***

The strategy includes a number of statements and actions that relate to green space and rights of way including:

- KCC and TWBC will seek to plan new developments and road improvement schemes which make space for cycling, and incorporate appropriate design.
- Action 1: A network of high quality cycle routes will be completed in the urban areas of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook. Where possible, inter-urban and leisure cycling routes will be delivered. Where a proposed route requires new or upgraded public rights of way, partners will work with landowner(s) to secure implementation.

To guide the development of new, and the improvement of existing, cycle routes in the borough, the high level design considerations of relevance to the Open Space Study include:

- Separate cycle routes – Many cyclists prefer routes away from heavy traffic flows, due to perceived and actual safety concerns. Routes which make use of green space provide a more comfortable and lower risk environment.
- Public Rights of Way – Where existing Public Footpaths are proposed as cycle routes the Borough Council will work with the County Council to seek either an upgrade to Public Bridleway or conversion to Cycle track Status.

#### Kent County Council

The County Council has primary responsibility for rights of way and their main strategic document is the Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan.

#### Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan

The Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan aims to increase the use and enjoyment of Kent's public rights of way and open green space. The plan aims to deliver improvements which contribute to health, rural business and the local economy, congestion reduction and the quality of life in Kent.

It includes:

- an overview of the current state of access to the countryside in Kent
- key objectives to improve the public rights of way network

The plan aims to:

- evaluate the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public
- assess the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of Kent
- assess the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems
- provide a strategy for future proactive management of countryside access in Kent to put in place a more meaningful and sustainable network
- support bids for external funding by demonstrating links to a wide range of local and national strategies, in order to maximise opportunities for funding
- provide a catalyst for actions that both improve the countryside access estate and raise its profile.

## The High Weald AONB

The High Weald AONB Management Plan notes that it wishes to aim for a landscape in which the character of the distinctive lanes and Rights of Way is protected. The management will take account of increased leisure activities (riding, cycling, walking and off-road driving), under use of many Rights of Way, and expanding development.

The aim can be realised through guidelines that seek to respect the character of lanes and Rights of Way by encouraging use of sympathetic surfacing materials and boundary types; reducing unnecessary use of highway furniture; and by promoting selected walking, cycling and riding routes.

### 4.9.2 Community Organisations Survey

Respondents' views in relation to footpaths, cycling and bridleway provision are noted below:

Group	Comments
Boyne Park Resident Association	It is a shame more paths and alleyways don't quite join up, also no map for visitors. I would never let my children cycle in the town, that would be a death wish.
Friends of the Earth	Sometimes take you passed dirty, smelly areas with graffiti.
Hawkenbury Village Association	The National Trail - The High Weald Walk, which is also part of the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk - which borders the Hawkenbury Recreation Ground and which continues through woodland that is very badly overgrown and badly in need of clearing if it is to be walked safely. Footpaths are kept in good condition by the two park attendants.
Inner London Road Residents Association	Strongly opposed to proposals (now dormant) for cyclepaths in front of our houses or down the A26. In favour of cyclepaths in general but not at the cost (here) of losing scarce parking.
Matfield and District Riders association	We have no accessible bridleways in the area but a plethora of footpaths. Those bridleways we have are inaccessible due to dangerous access. RUPPs

	<p>that we can use are poorly maintained and muddy all year. Some of the rights of way in the area are dead ends. We have nothing apart from Marshley Harbour that we only utilize when ground conditions are favourable as we do not want to upset local community by poached areas and Cinderhill, which historically have always had problems with the local travelling community tethering horses. We are very poorly served considering how much we support the local economy. All these areas that we can access are also used by riders on trials bikes, which cause safety issues.</p>
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group	<p>The Paddock Wood NP group is putting forward plans to improve walking and cycling routes within and around the town to discourage the use of cars, as current roads are congested and the additional housing will increase the problem. The Paddock Wood NP group would like to see improvements to bridleways as there are significant numbers of horse owners around the town and bridleways are limited.</p>
Southborough & District Wheelers	<p>Local Cyclists – under 18s who do not want to ride on the road for safety reasons face difficulties. This is particularly important to riders who are into the sport of cycling – there no safe options that I am aware of - for training/exercise in Tunbridge Wells.</p> <p>In Royal Tunbridge Wells there is a need to create more safe cycling routes for riders to get around the town.</p> <p>The area could do with a space similar to CycloPark in Gravesend – a municipal/council facility that can be used all year round (i.e. with tarmaced surfaces/paths) for cyclists of all ages and abilities. See: <a href="http://www.cyclopark.com">www.cyclopark.com</a></p>
Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group (TWBUG)	<p>There is a need to improve provision generally for cyclists, both recreational and transport of all ages and abilities (from small children and upwards to very elderly or disabled riders, who use bicycles for mobility (<a href="http://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/v2-Nov-2017.pdf">http://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/v2-Nov-2017.pdf</a> )</p> <p>Almost no provision of cycle paths – need for comprehensive network of routes for commuters / utility cyclists (to reduce congestion) and leisure cyclists. Cycling facilities should be all weather and all season (so need tarmac surfaces). This would also enable mobility scooters and disabled users to access them too (as well as pushchairs).</p> <p>As well as preserving open space and sporting facilities for the town’s increasing population, maximum use should be made of existing facilities – e.g. those space “owned” by schools are not always available for community use. Particularly important that facilities are placed where people are able to access with active travel – cycling and walking – or by public transport.</p> <p>Many of our current paths that cyclists can use are not of good enough quality with access barriers that exclude legitimate users. Future developments must be built to best practice standards (e.g. the <a href="#">London Cycling Design standards</a> or <a href="#">IAN 195</a> and need to properly cater for the needs of people on bicycles (which are different than those of pedestrians)</p>
Tunbridge Wells Ramblers	<p>Footpaths are generally well-maintained but many get overgrown and local residents, individual walkers and sometimes Ramblers official walks help keep them clear.</p>

## 4.10 Parks, Natural Green Space and Rights of Way: Key Findings

### Overview

- The Borough Council's *5 Year Plan* and *Minding the Gap* strategy highlight the role that open spaces can have in relation to improving health and wellbeing; and provide plans as to how the Council and its partners can maximise that benefit for local people.
- The Borough Council's Cycling Strategy has specific relevance to this study in relation to the development of cycle routes that make use of public open space and rights of way.
- The Borough Council manages a range of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities in Royal Tunbridge Wells including parks and recreation grounds; play areas and youth facilities; tennis courts and MUGAs; bowling greens; allotments and woodlands. Elsewhere in the Borough open spaces are managed by parish councils and other agencies.
- The importance of partnership working, both with strategic organisations and through parish councils etc. is highlighted.
- Natural England suggests that the ANGst standard should be a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space. Variations from this standard should be justified.
- The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WAS - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should also be taken into consideration.
- Many stakeholders highlight the importance of biodiversity and having multi-functional open spaces that take biodiversity into account in relation to design and maintenance. A number of stakeholders also note the need to balance access and outdoor recreation with conservation in environmentally sensitive areas.
- The importance of the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space and outdoor recreation facilities were key issues highlighted throughout the consultation.

### Quantity

- The Borough Council Parks and Sports Team Leader notes that overall Royal Tunbridge Wells is well provided for in relation to the quantity of parks, recreation grounds and play areas.
- Parish Council views on the sufficiency of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities in individual parishes vary quite considerably.

### Household Survey:

- There are only two open space typologies that a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - facilities for teenagers (70%); and MUGAs (55%).
- A large majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (77%) and an additional 7% said that we don't need as many. Smaller but substantial majorities think that in general there are enough allotments (71%); water recreation facilities (63%); and parks and recreation grounds (62%).

### Quality

- The Borough Council Parks and Sports Team Leader notes that the quality of open spaces is generally good in Royal Tunbridge Wells. As budgets have reduced over recent years maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for

smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 funding.

- Views on the quality of open space facilities in the parishes are very variable.

#### *Household survey:*

For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below.

- 59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.

In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

#### *Community group survey:*

- The quality of all kinds of open spaces and outdoor spaces is rated as at least adequate by a clear majority of local organisations.
- 77% of the groups think that the quality of parks and recreation grounds is either good or very good; and 65% rated allotments similarly.
- Wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands are also rated quite highly by most groups with 50% rating them as good or very good compared to 20% rating them as poor or very poor. Similarly for informal/amenity open spaces.
- Opinion on the general quality of other kinds of open spaces/outdoor facilities is more split with nearly equal proportions rating them as good/very good or poor/very poor – with the greatest proportion rating them as adequate.

### **Access**

#### *Household survey:*

- In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit most kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.
- The detailed findings relating to acceptable access times to the various typologies will be considered in detail to help determine the access elements of relevant standards for different kinds of open space.
- 76% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved. 77% said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

#### *Other points raised*

- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived areas of the Borough.

## 5.0 OUTDOOR PLAY AND YOUTH FACILITIES

This section provides feedback and information relating to outdoor play and youth facilities. It considers information and views provided by various stakeholders including the Borough Council, strategic organisations and local groups.

The section is structured into two main parts:

- Review of Policy and Strategy
- Youth and Play – stakeholder feedback

There is a summary of key points and issues at the end of the section.

### 5.1 Review of Policy and Strategy

#### 5.1.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2006)

##### Introduction

In the 2006 study it was noted that provision for Children and Young People included equipped play areas and specialist provision for young people, including wheeled play areas, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and Teen Shelters.

Provision for children’s play was sub-divided into categories in line with the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) play area categories<sup>15</sup>. These include Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP). The report noted that there are no LAPs in the Borough, as there was a Borough Council policy decision taken that LEAPs would be the minimum standard of provision, in both the town and parishes. A number of play areas do not fall into either the category of a LEAP or a NEAP. These are identified as ‘unclassified’ in the study. Three main types of youth provision were identified, specifically for wheeled play facilities such as skateboarding and BMX biking, ball courts, multi-use games areas (MUGA) and teen shelters.

##### Local Standards

The 2006 Study proposes a local standard for play space and youth facility provision as noted below:

Typology	Existing level of provision (ha per 1000 residents).	Recommended quantity standard (ha per 1000 residents).
Provision for Children & Young People	0.05	0.24

##### Access

Typology	Distance (walking)
Provision for Children & Young	LEAP - 1.14km

<sup>15</sup> The National Playing Fields Association is now called Fields in Trust. The NPFA/FIT classify play areas into three kinds – LAPs (Local Areas for Play; LEAPs (Local Equipped Areas for Play) and NEAPS (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play).

People	NEAP - 1.6km
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The current study will review the information and standards provided in the 2006 study. New local standards will be proposed and applied Borough wide.

### 5.1.2 Play England

Play England have some broad observations about overall policy direction and advice on local standards as summarised below.

#### **Quantity**

Play England recommend provision of a range of play spaces in all urban environments:

- A Doorstep spaces close to home
- B Local play spaces – larger areas within easy walking distance
- C Neighbourhood spaces for play – larger spaces within walking distance
- D Destination/family sites; accessible by bicycle, public transport and with car parking

They emphasise that play spaces do not just mean formal play areas. While these are included play spaces cover all areas of public open spaces that are "playable" e.g. spaces that are accessible, safe, appropriate for play and where play use is welcomed and encouraged.

They also point out the need for standards for smaller settlements and rural areas where the doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination hierarchy is unlikely to be appropriate.

#### **Quality**

Play England would like the Play England Design Guide *Design for Play* to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Play England have developed a *Quality Assessment Tool* that can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. They recommend that local authorities consider adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces in the local area.

#### **Access**

Access is the key element for Play England as referred to in the Quantity section – a range of doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination play spaces with appropriate catchments. Disability access is also an important issue for Play England and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS publication *Inclusion by Design* as a Supplementary Planning Document.

#### **Priorities**

Play England have a guidance document: *Better Places to Play through Planning*. The publication gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space. It also shows how provision for better play opportunities can be promoted in planning policies and processes; giving detail of how local development frameworks and planning control can be utilised in favour of child-friendly communities. They recommended that local authorities adopt this guidance generally in terms of play and spatial planning.

## 5.2 Youth and Play facilities – Stakeholders

### 5.2.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – Parks and Sports Team Leader

- The Borough Council manages most play space sites across Royal Tunbridge Wells (other than Greggs Wood Road and Ramslye Road play areas which are managed by Town & Country Housing Association). Play provision elsewhere in the Borough is managed by parish councils.
- In terms of quantity there is currently enough play provision in Royal Tunbridge Wells though facilities for young people is more limited.
- The quality of play areas in the main parks is generally good but at the smaller sites quality is quite variable.
- Play areas have a relatively short “shelf life” and need to be refurbished more often than many other forms of outdoor recreational provision.
- As budgets have reduced over recent years maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 funding.
- The play area at Showfields is twenty years old and in need of refurbishment but there are insufficient internal resources to do so. There is little opportunity to secure S106 funds to help as there is no scope for additional residential development nearby. The play area at Allandale Recreation Ground would also benefit from refurbishment but funding is not likely to be available for similar reasons. External funding would be needed to undertake these improvements.
- Grosvenor Recreation Ground is a good example of a high quality play space. It is well equipped for both younger and older children; and it contains a ball games area and a small cycle track. Toilet facilities and a café are located next to the playground. Calverly Grounds is a good example of a well-designed and popular natural play space.
- In relation to design of play spaces and youth facilities the Borough Council follows good practice and guidance ensuring the design is tailored to make the most of the specific site as regards play value and to ensure it is appropriate to the wider open space in which it sits.
- Local consultation is also undertaken but it is sometimes difficult to ascertain precisely what kind of provision is most needed by local children and young people. Care must also be taken not to raise expectations beyond what can be provided within limited budgets.
- Facilities for teenagers: as part of the refurbishment of Grosvenor and Hilbert Park the play area was revamped to include more challenging opportunities for older children. There are also wheeled sports facilities available at Grosvenor and Hilbert. There is a small concrete skate park area at St John’s Recreation Ground; and an informal bike course alongside the play area at Oak Road Play area. At Southwood Road Recreation Ground, Rusthall there is a BMX cycle track. A number of youth shelters have been piloted over the years but were removed as they did not seem to get a lot of use. There is some demand noted for additional/improved youth provision.
- MUGAs – there are a number of MUGAs in the parks/play areas e.g. MUGAs at St Johns Recreation Ground and Southwood Road Recreation Ground are very well used; and some schools also have MUGAs.
- Provision of good quality and accessible play areas is important in relation to increasing physical activity for children and young people and so helps with improving health and wellbeing which is a priority in the Council’s 5 Year plan.

### 5.2.2 Kent County Council – Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub Delivery Manager

The Youth Hub Delivery Manager oversees the open access and targeted youth provision for children and young people aged 8-19) provided across Tunbridge Wells as part of the Early Help strategy. They currently have detached sessions running in Cranbrook, Rusthall and Calverley Park for young people aged 8-18 to

attend. During these sessions they utilize any open space or activities to engage the young people during the session. During the holiday they also organize family days which we hold in open space areas to promote health and wellbeing.

### **Quantity**

Overall I think there are not enough equipped play areas and outdoor youth facilities but there are enough open space areas for informal and natural play. There are also not enough MUGAs. Young people frequently request improvements to outdoor facilities - improved skate park, outdoor gyms, shelters and access to toilets.

### **Quality**

We work with young people who provide continuous feedback on their views of the provision available to them and the level of satisfaction is very low. Children and young people suggest that the quality of equipped play areas and grass kickabout areas is adequate; but that that youth facilities such as youth shelters, MUGAs, areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers and wheeled sports provision are generally poor.

### **Priorities for improvement**

In terms of priorities for improvement we think that the top three are youth shelters/outdoor meeting areas with seats; skateboard, BMX or other wheeled sports facilities; and play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers. Other priorities include outdoor gyms, access to toilets and better provision for young people with disabilities. I am aware that Goudhurst Parish Council are exploring options to provide a youth shelter.

## **5.2.3 Town and Parish Councils**

Town and Parish Councils are also key owners and managers of local play areas and youth facilities. Many of them highlight needs for improvements. Comments on play and youth facilities from individual parishes are provided in the table below:

<b>Local Council</b>	<b>Comments – Play and Youth Facilities</b>
Brenchley Parish Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> There is significant support in the Parish for a children’s play area in Matfield if a suitable location (and source of funding) can be found. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> There is a church-run youth group as well as guides and scouts but specific teenage facilities may well be desirable although the Parish survey did not produce any clear views. More work would be necessary to determine the wishes of local residents in that age group.
Capel Parish Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> Reaching end of life and in need of urgent repair, constant maintenance issue. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> None at present.
Cranbrook and Sissinghurst PC	<i>Play Areas:</i> Improvements required. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> Areas need improvement & enhancement
Goudhurst Parish Council	<i>Youth Facilities:</i> Youth shelter possibly needed.
Hawkhurst PC	<i>Play Areas:</i> Refurbishment needed <i>Youth Facilities:</i> No facilities and a real need
Horsmonden Parish	<i>Play Areas:</i> Potential requirement for more expansive facilities if development takes

Council	place in the village; perhaps a natural play area in addition to the rubber surfaced and metal /plastic play equipment already provided by the existing parish play.
Lamberhurst PC	Currently under review
Paddock Wood Town Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> Currently 5 children's play areas. Two larger play areas at St Andrews and Memorial have both been renewed and upgraded in the last 5 years. Both are well used and cater for all age groups. The remaining 3 areas are for younger children and were built by developers as part of new housing developments. As population expands further facilities will be required on the new developments. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> Currently a small skatepark which includes a teen shelter and basketball hoops. Teenagers and the youth council would like to see expansion of skate park and increased facilities for young people. Eg: swimming pool, climbing wall, community campsite, permanent youth café/hub.
Sandhurst Parish Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> Improvements to the existing playground equipment and the purchase of outdoor gym equipment.
Southborough Town Council	<i>Play Areas:</i> Need in Bright Ridge as there is no green space. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> Need for facilities.

### 5.2.4 Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust highlight that woods are important spaces for informal play.

"As highlighted in the **Public Health White Paper** (Healthy Lives, Healthy People; Nov 2010) there are tremendous opportunities for native woodland to contribute positively towards delivering improved mental and physical health for children and young people. Research shows that woodland can provide benefits for air quality, urban heat island cooling, physical exercise provision and relief from mental illness".

### 5.2.5 Community Organisations Survey

Group	Comments on Play and Youth Facilities
Boyne Park Resident Association	The little nursery on the cricket pitch at the common take their children to play in the sand pit in the long grass by the rocks on the other side of the cricket pitch where all the doggies do their business. I guess they might be getting some sort a natural immunisation.
Early Help	Early help provides family support for children and young people up to 25. I think that while there are enough play areas (and quality is good) provision for young people is lacking. There are not enough youth shelters or wheeled sports facilities and quality is poor. The top priorities for improvements are more challenging areas for teenagers, wheeled sports provision and youth shelters/seating areas. Lots of focus needed on challenging and exciting equipment for teens.
Friends of Grosvenor & Hilbert Park (FoGH)	We do have a problem with anti-social behaviour from a small number of the teenage users in the skateboard park. This does include some drug taking and dealing. Despite following guidance to contact the CSU unit and police on 101 the backup from these organisations is nowhere near sufficient to put a stop to this behaviour. The detrimental effect of this is to allow these youngsters to make the skate board park 'their territory', driving away other legitimate users of the facility. This marginalisation encourages further damage to play equipment which is highly valued by the vast majority of socially caring park users.
Friends of the Earth	Provision is often sited by major roads. Not good for children with asthma and allergies to diesel fumes and sinusitis.
Hawkenbury	There is a good play area but nothing for young adults.

Village Association	For very young children in Dunorlan Park, swings for small children only in Hawkenbury Recreation Ground. Youth have tennis courts and football, but nothing imaginative. Hopefully, the proposed Pump Track will be accepted and put in place. However, there will be children who don't ride bikes - and youth - who need something to occupy their time and leisure. Could there not be a youth play park? More advance climbing and zip wires, assault course type facility that's not accessible to young children. Even with the excellent overall facilities at Grosvenor/Hilbert Parks, there is nothing for children over 10, who hang around bored when younger children are playing on swings.
Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group	In Paddock Wood, there are a number of play areas for younger children, some of which need upgrading. There is currently a small skatepark which includes a teen shelter and basketball hoops, but teenagers and the youth council would like to see expansion of the skate park and increased facilities for young people. Eg: climbing wall, community campsite. More will be needed as the population expands with the future increase of at least 1,000 homes.
Southborough & District Wheelers	<i>Youth Facilities:</i> Need for more cycling facilities i.e. BMX pump tracks, off road trails for safe riding
Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group	<i>Play Areas:</i> Cycling is currently prohibited in all parks of Tunbridge Wells except Hilbert and Grosvenor Rec. This means there is nowhere for children to safely learn to ride bikes or for families to cycle in central Tunbridge Wells. <i>Youth Facilities:</i> Tunbridge Wells lacks facilities for teenagers such as pump tracks or BMX tracks and this should be addressed as a matter for urgency. There is a campaign for a pump track to be built at Hawkenbury Rec, which TWBUG supports.

### 5.3 Play Areas and Youth Facilities - Key Findings

The Borough Council manages most play space sites across Royal Tunbridge Wells (other than Greggs Wood Road and Ramslye Road play areas which are managed by Town & Country Housing Association). Play provision elsewhere in the Borough is managed by parish councils.

#### **Quantity**

- The Borough Council Parks and Sports Team leader noted that in terms of quantity there is currently sufficient play provision in Royal Tunbridge Wells though facilities for young people are more limited.
- A small number of parish councils suggest that there is not enough play provision in their parish but a higher proportion highlight a lack of youth facilities.
- The Kent County Youth Hub Delivery Manager noted that young people from their projects reported that overall there are not enough youth facilities but there are enough open space areas for informal and natural play. There are also not enough MUGAs.

#### *Residents survey*

- A clear majority of respondents (70%) to the resident's survey believe that overall across Tunbridge Wells Borough there is insufficient provision of youth facilities. A smaller majority (55%) also suggest that there are not enough MUGAs.
- By contrast a majority (56%) say that overall there are enough play areas.

#### **Quality**

- The Parks and Sports Team leader noted that:
  - The quality of play areas in the main parks in Royal Tunbridge Wells is generally good but at the smaller sites quality is quite variable. The play areas at Showfields and Allandale Recreation Ground are in need of refurbishment.
  - Grosvenor Recreation Ground is a good example of a high quality play space. It is well equipped for both younger and older children; and it contains a ball games area and a small cycle track. Toilet facilities and a café are located next to the playground. Calverly Grounds is a good example of a well-designed and popular natural play space.
  - In relation to design of play spaces and youth facilities the Borough Council follows good practice and guidance ensuring the design is tailored to make the most of the specific site as regards play value and to ensure it is appropriate to the wider open space in which it sits.
- A significant number of parish councils highlight a need for improvements to local play areas and youth facilities.
- The KCC Youth Hub officer noted that:
  - Children and young people suggest that the quality of equipped play areas and grass kickabout areas is adequate; but that youth facilities such as youth shelters, MUGAs, areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers and wheeled sports provision are generally poor.
  - Young people frequently request improvements to outdoor facilities - improved skate park, outdoor gyms, shelters and access to toilets.

### *Residents survey*

- The quality of youth facilities is not rated highly - 81% of respondent households say that they are at best adequate with 49% of those rating them as poor or very poor).
- In general resident have less concern with the quality of equipped play areas across the Borough (55% rated them as being good or very good in contrast to 13% rating them as poor or very poor).

### **Access**

#### *Residents survey*

- 62% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- A majority of respondents (57%) would be prepared to travel 15 minutes to make use of Multi-use Games Areas (of which 24% would travel up to 20 minutes).

### **Priorities for improvement**

- Stakeholders indicated that the kinds of facilities that were most frequently rated as being a high priority for improvement were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; skateboard, BMX or other wheeled sports facilities; and youth shelters/outdoor meeting areas with seats.

### **Other Issues / General Observations**

- The Parks and Sports Team Leader noted that as budgets have reduced over recent years, maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 funding.
- The Parks and Sports Team Leader also noted that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain precisely what kind of provision is most needed by local children and young people. Care must also be taken not to raise expectations beyond what can be provided within limited budgets.
- The value of play in relation to improvements to children and young people's health and wellbeing was highlighted by a number of stakeholders.
- Stakeholders noted the need for well-designed play and youth facilities, the value of consultation with young people and the wider community in that process, and the potential for natural landscaped play areas in which play equipment may not be necessary or simply be a small element of the overall design.
- Play England provide useful guidance on play and spatial planning; play space design; and managing risk in play. Some of these could be adopted as guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

## 6.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survey work, stakeholder consultation, and desk-based research have highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study.

Response levels to the residents' survey, town/parish councils survey, and community organisation survey<sup>16</sup> have been high. This has ensured that a wide and diverse range of views from local residents and groups with an interest in open space, recreation and sport have influenced the findings of the study. All strategic stakeholders have responded and key issues have been identified to be further considered in the main Open Space, Sport and Recreation study reports.

There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local and strategic need/aspirations, from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable. This provides a strong evidence base to be combined with the detailed facilities audit and analysis.

The information and findings from the consultation report are further considered and analysed in both the Open Space Study and the Built Facilities reports in relation to the various typologies of open space, sport and recreation being analysed. In particular they provide evidence to support the recommended spatial planning standards recommended for the different categories of open space and sport/recreation facilities.

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<sup>16</sup> A full list of groups and stakeholders consulted is provided as an appendix. In the case of local community organisations while this covered a wide range of interest groups it is possible that there are additional groups that the Council are unaware of and hence could not be contacted.