

# Solihull Metropolitan Borough Open Space Assessment (2018)



## Community and Stakeholder Consultation DRAFT V3

# Solihull Metropolitan Borough Open Space Assessment - Consultation Report

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## Glossary of Terms (to be completed)

| Term   | Meaning   |
|--------|---|
| ANGSt  | Accessible Natural Green Space Standard           |
| AONB   | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty                |
| EA     | Environment Agency                                |
| ERDF   | European Regional Development Fund                |
| GI     | Green Infrastructure                              |
| HAP    | Habitat Action Plan                               |
| HS2    | High Speed Two (railway line)                     |
| LAP    | Local Area for Play                               |
| LEAP   | Local Equipped Area for Play                      |
| LNR    | Local Nature Reserve                              |
| LWS    | Local Wildlife Site                               |
| MRC    | Main Rural Centre                                 |
| MUGA   | Multi Use Games Area                              |
| NDP    | Neighbourhood Development Plan                    |
| NEAP   | Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play              |
| NICE   | National Institute for Health and Care Excellence |
| NPPF   | National Planning Policy Framework                |
| PC/TC  | Parish Council/Town Council                       |
| PPG17  | Planning Policy Guidance Note 17                  |
| RA     | Ramblers Association                              |
| SAP    | Species Action Plan                               |
| ShRIMP | Solihull River Corridor Improvement Plan          |
| SMBC   | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council             |
| SPD    | Supplementary Planning Document                   |
| WASSt  | Woodland Access Standard                          |
| WMCA   | West Midlands Combined Authority                  |
| WWT    | Warwickshire Wildlife Trust                       |

## 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 and outdoor 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 two reports provided within the overall *Open Space Assessment 2018*. It is a supporting document to the main report. 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 outdoor 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 2018 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to provide an up-to-date and robust assessment identifying needs, surpluses and deficits in open space, and outdoor recreation facilities<sup>1</sup> to inform the Local Plan Review and act as a baseline to update the Green Spaces Strategy and approach for managing the Council's green space

The overall aim of the commission is to audit the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space within the Borough; identify any surplus, shortfalls or deficiencies; assess future needs as a result of proposed growth; and to develop local standards for planning policy.

The objectives of the Assessment are:

- To form evidence to support the Local Plan Review spatial strategy and policies developed by SMBC.
- To identify the deficiencies or surpluses in existing and future open space provision in the Borough, as well as options for addressing these.
- To provide evidence to justify the collection of developer contributions towards open space.

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 the NPPF, PPG17 and NICE guidelines on physical activity and the Environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding pitch sports which have been covered by a separate Playing Pitch Study (PPS).

## 1.2 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

The evidence provided in this report will be taken forward in the main study report where it is 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.

The report examines local need for a wide range of different kinds of open space and outdoor recreation facilities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from relevant play, 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 July to September 2018. 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>2</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 main report.

The consultation report also helps the study to understand stakeholder and local people's appreciation of open space and outdoor 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 and outdoor recreation facilities are considered as part of the review of the local plan as well as in dealing with spatial planning applications.

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<sup>2</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.

## 2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This section provides consultation findings that covered all aspects of open space and outdoor 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 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 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).

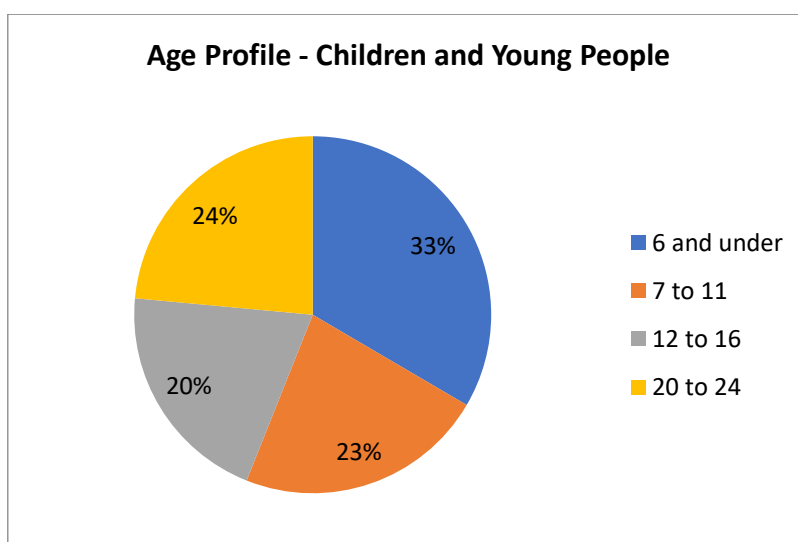
### 2.1 Residents' Household Survey

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

The open space and outdoor recreation study needs to secure a general understanding of how residents of Solihull Borough currently make use of the various kinds of open space and outdoor 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 Solihull Borough households.

An agreed questionnaire survey was therefore distributed to a random sample of 4000 households who could reply via Freepost or online. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 610 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1503 and the average household size of the households was 2.5 – slightly higher than the average for England (2.4) and that of Solihull Borough as a whole (2.4).

Just over 32% of households who responded had children and young people resident (representing household views on behalf of 323 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range:



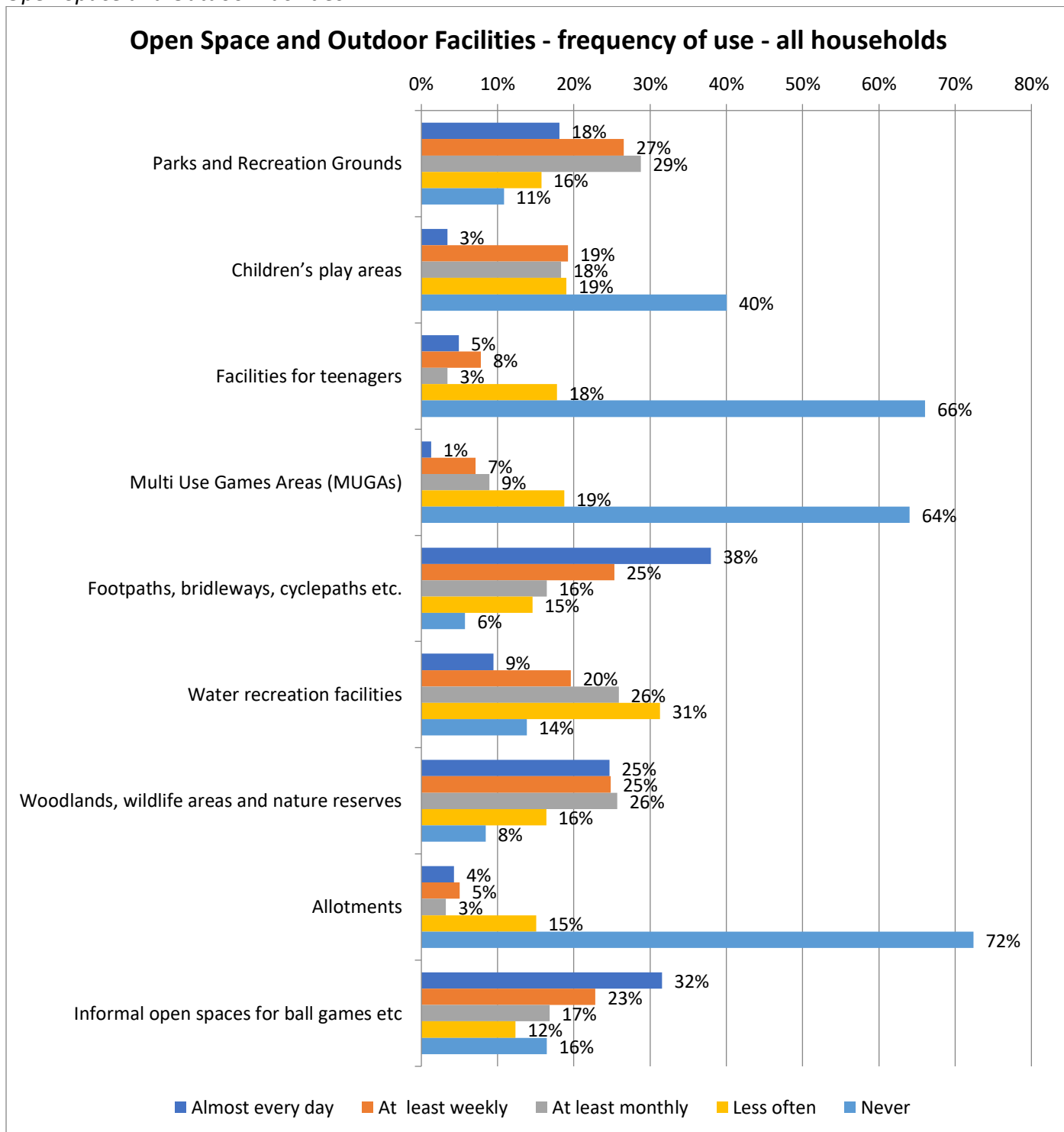
The following sections provides some of the key findings<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The findings are further considered - in detail - in the main report.

## 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, and outdoor recreation facilities within the study area, and the results are shown on the charts below<sup>4</sup>:

### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



It is the Borough's footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (79%); followed by woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (76%) local parks and recreation grounds (74%) and informal open spaces for ball games etc (72%). Rights of way, parks and

<sup>4</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 very slightly from 100%.

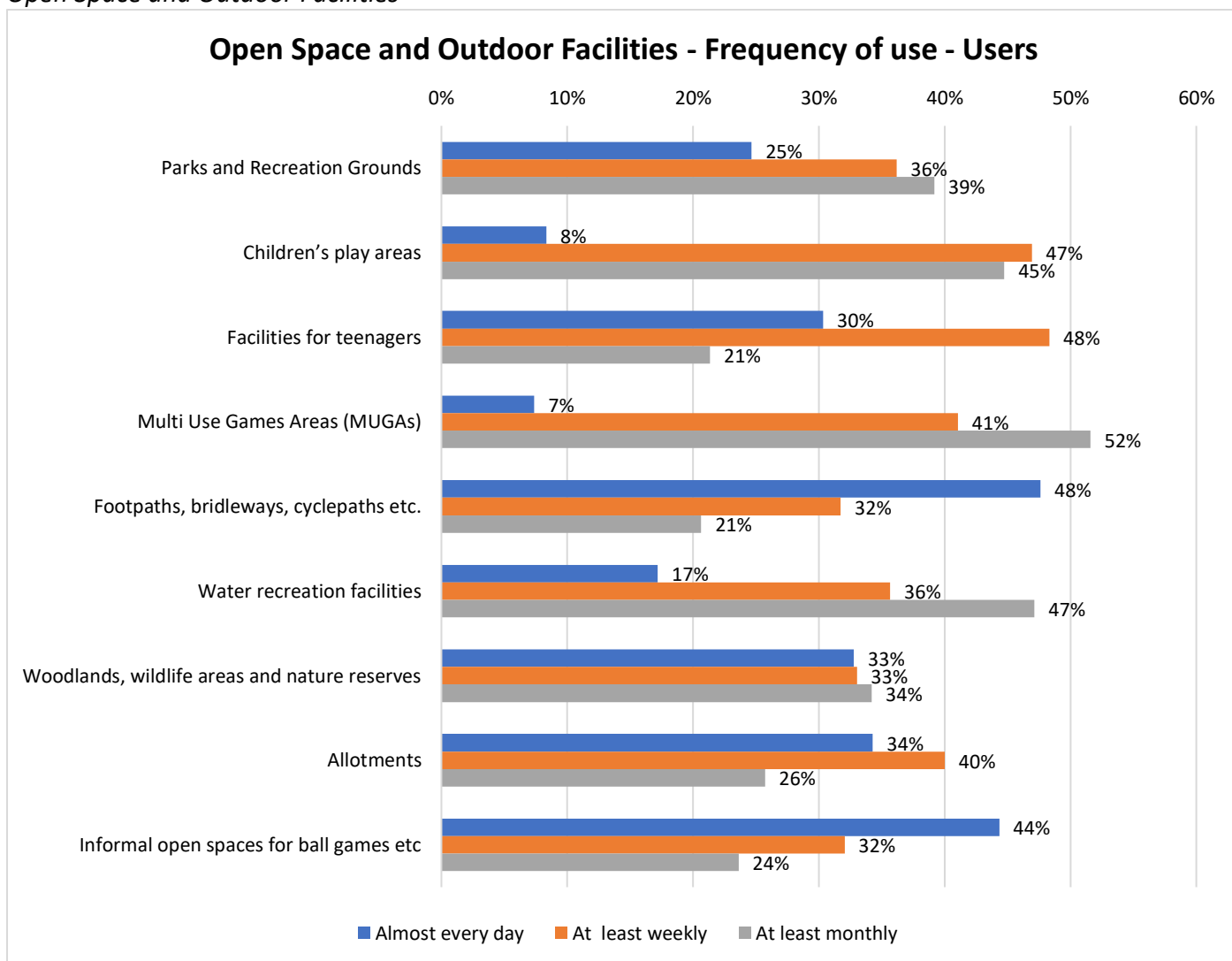
informal open spaces are also the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis: 63% use such paths at least weekly (of which 38% make use almost every day); 55% make use of informal spaces at least weekly (of which 32% almost every day); and 55% visit parks and recreation grounds at least weekly (18% of which visit almost every day).

Play areas and areas for water recreation are also fairly frequently used but by fewer households. At least 40% use them on a regular basis - at least monthly (including those who are more regular users).

### 2.1.3 Frequency, regularity and times of use – Regular Users<sup>5</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



78% of households using youth facilities visit at least weekly (of which 30% make use nearly every day) and 74% of allotment holders visit their allotment at least weekly (of which 34% visit almost every day). 55% of households visiting play areas visit at least weekly (of which 8% almost every day).

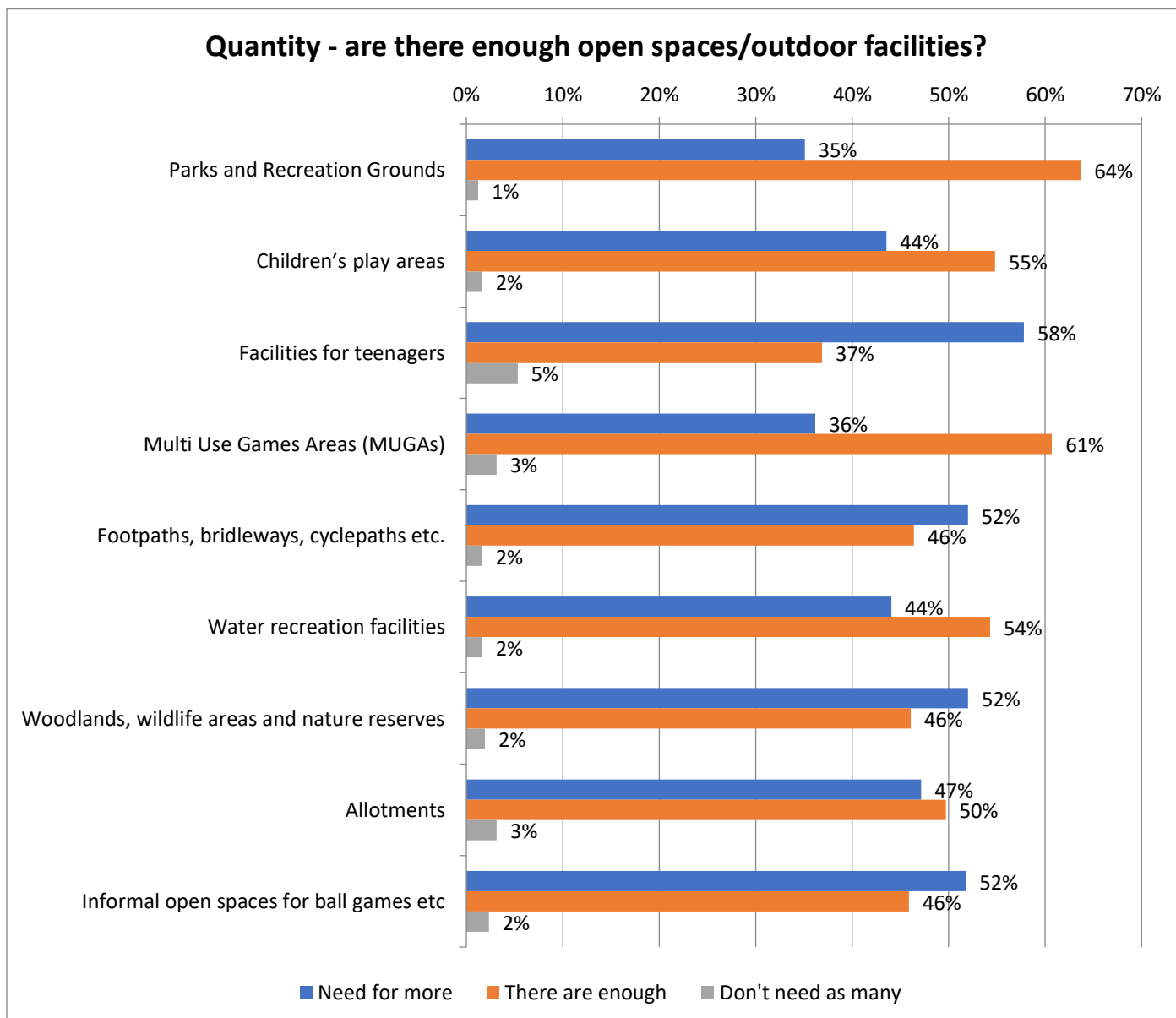
<sup>5</sup> By regular users we mean those households where open spaces/facilities are used/visited at least monthly.



## 2.1.4 Quantity of open space and outdoor 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



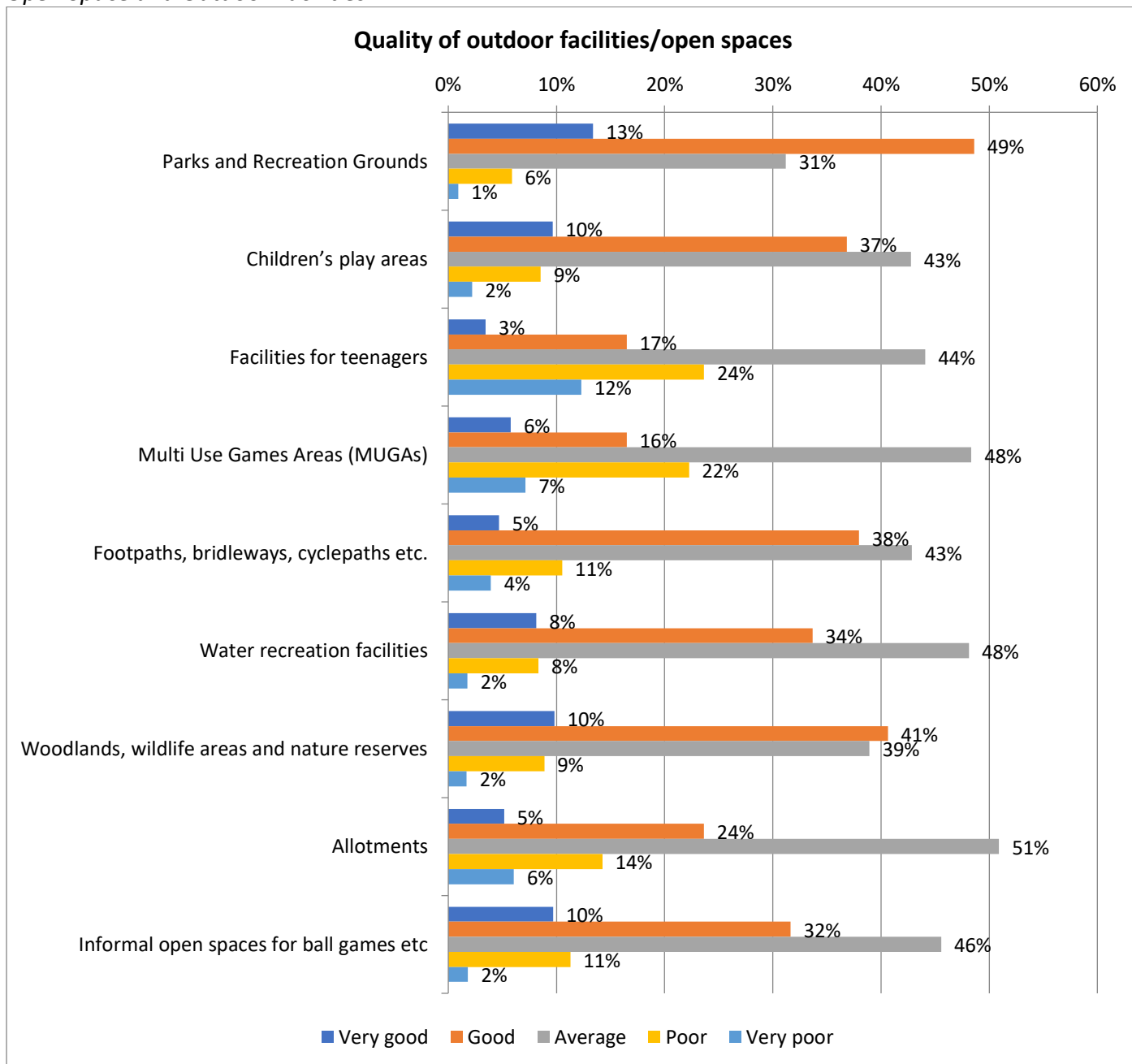
It is notable that:

- Over 60% think that overall there are enough parks and recreation grounds and MUGAs; and 54% note that there are enough areas for water recreation.
- 58% of households suggest a general need for more facilities for teenagers.
- A small majority of households (52%) suggest a general need for more footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths etc; woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves; and informal open space for ball games, picnic etc.
- In many cases opinion is quite close regarding the sufficiency of provision most notably for allotment provision where 47% report an overall need for more while 50% think there are enough.

## 2.1.5 Quality of open space, and outdoor 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



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.

36% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor compared to 20% rating them as good or very good; and 29% rated the quality of MUGAs as poor compared to 22% rating them as good or very good.

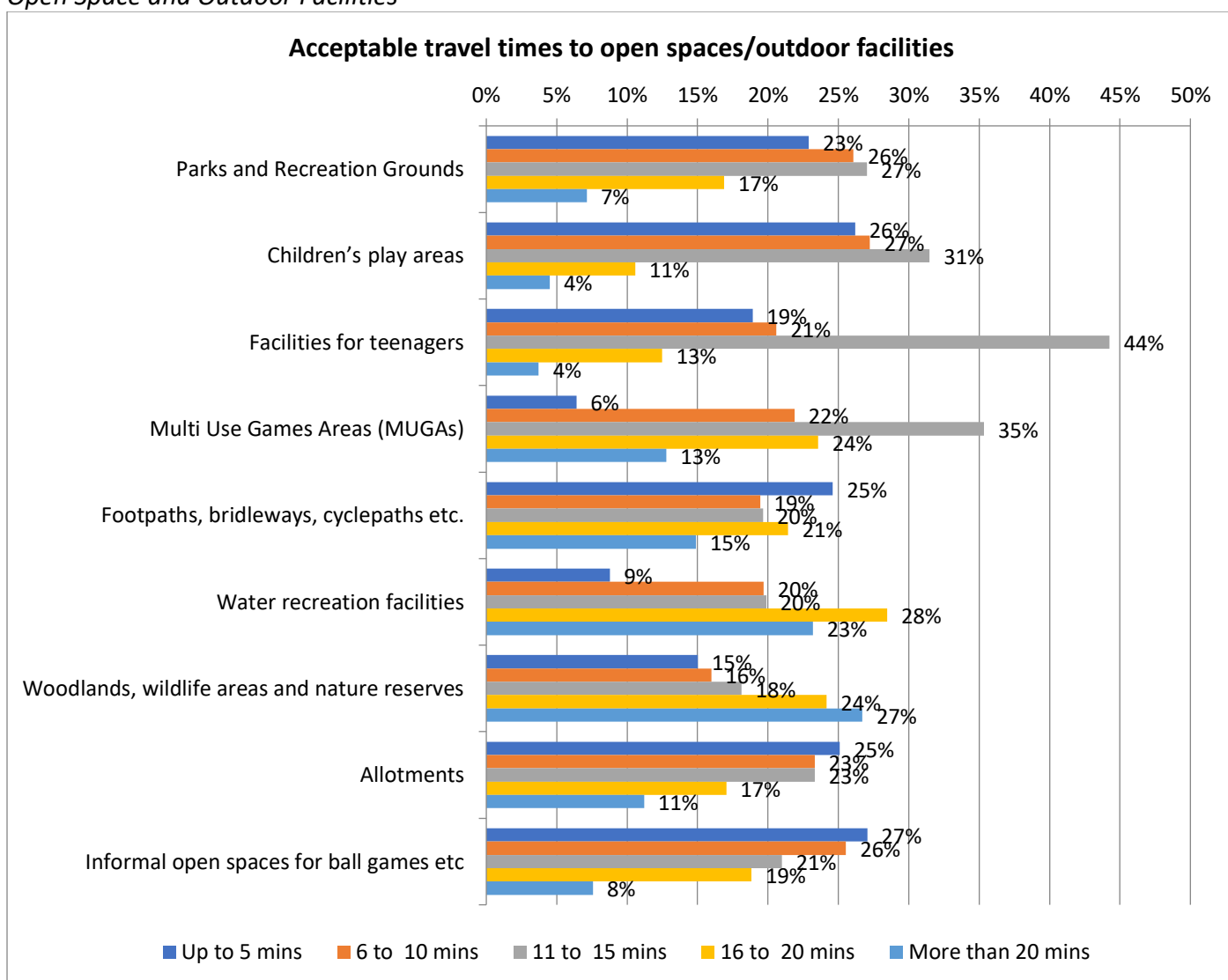
In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (51% similarly); footpaths etc (48%); and play areas (47%).

### 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 and outdoor 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



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

For example, 51% of user households are prepared to travel 20 minutes to visit woodlands, wildlife area and nature reserves and water recreation facilities. Around 25% of these report that they would travel more than 20 minutes.

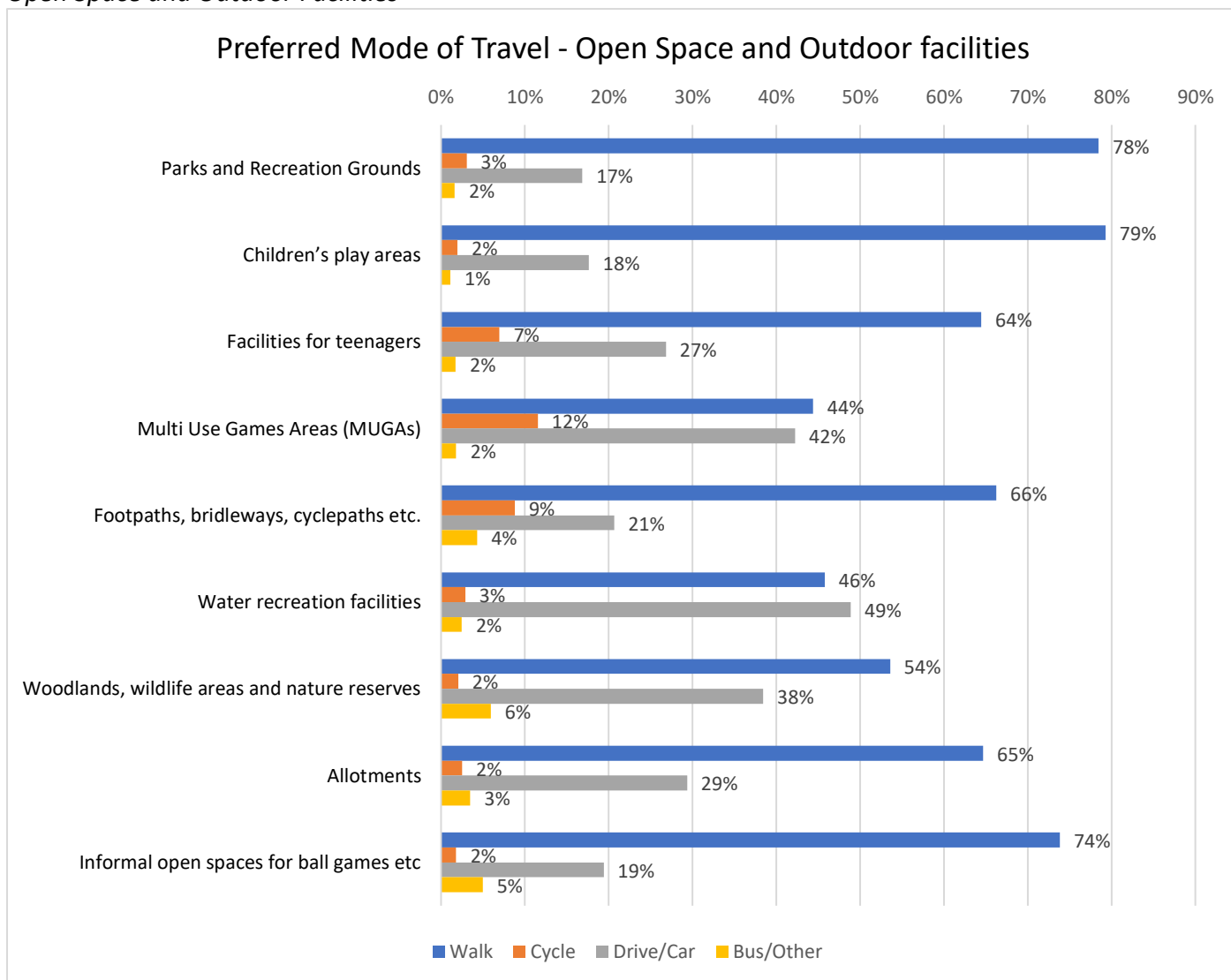
In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas; informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking; parks and recreation grounds; and allotments).

- 53% of users would expect play areas and informal open spaces to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which around 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 49% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 25% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Household members will travel further to access youth facilities and MUGAs: 72% will travel for 15 minutes to use a MUGA; and 61% to access teen facilities such as skateparks. This includes some who report that they would travel longer.

It is clear from the above that there is great variance in respondents' apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of facility/open space. 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).



For nearly all typologies walking is the norm and will provide the basis for setting access standards, most notably for facilities such as play areas (79%); parks and recreation grounds (78%); and informal open spaces (74%).

However, a higher proportion of households would normally drive rather than walk to areas for water recreation; and significant numbers would drive to some of the facilities e.g. 42% would drive to access MUGAs and 38% would drive to visit woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves. It is also of note that cycling is an important access consideration for some households e.g. 12% of respondents have household members who would cycle to use MUGAs; 9% to access footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths; and 7% to make use of youth facilities.

The main report will 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.

- 78% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 79% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

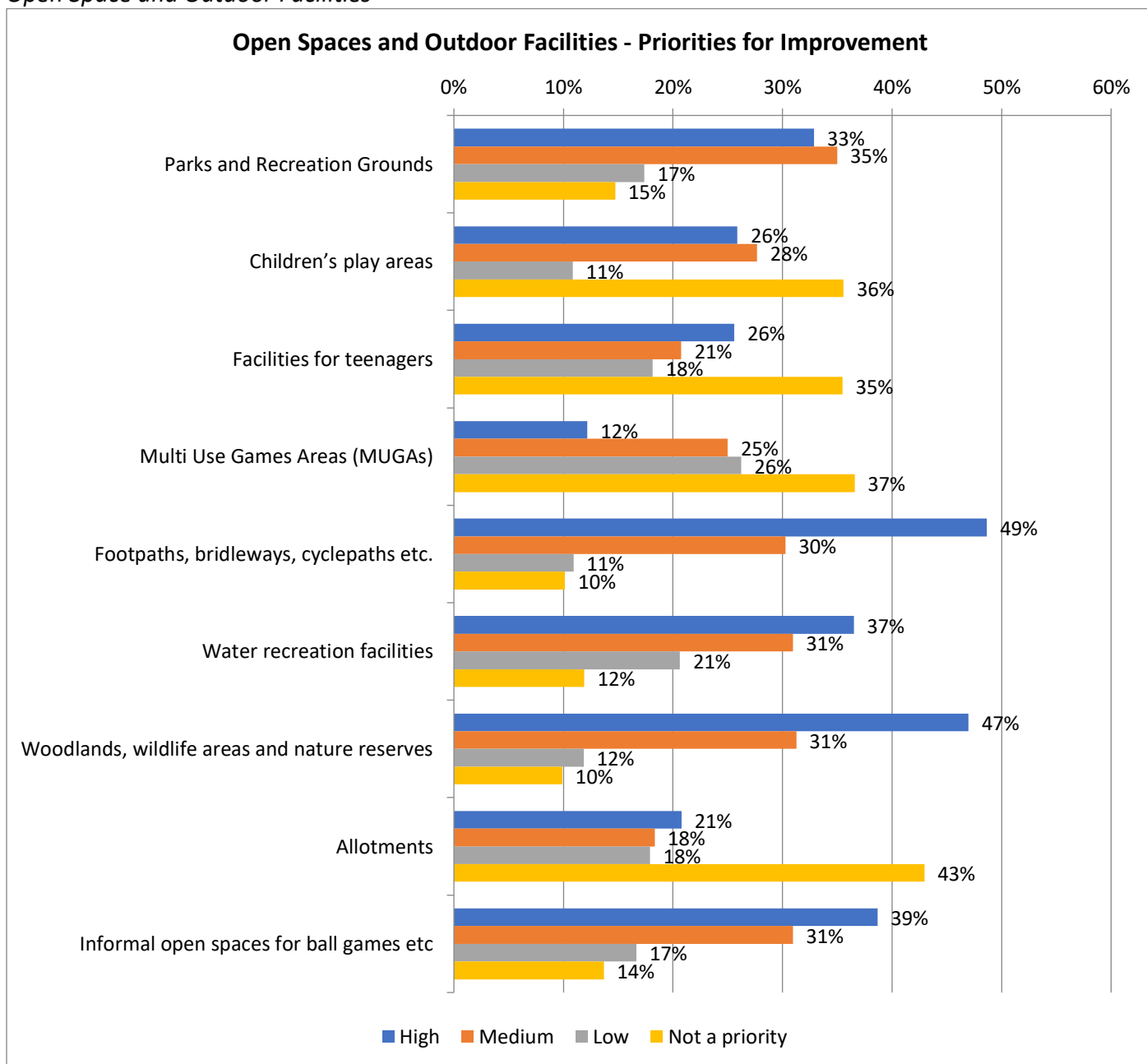
This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities.

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 (49%) followed by woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (47%).

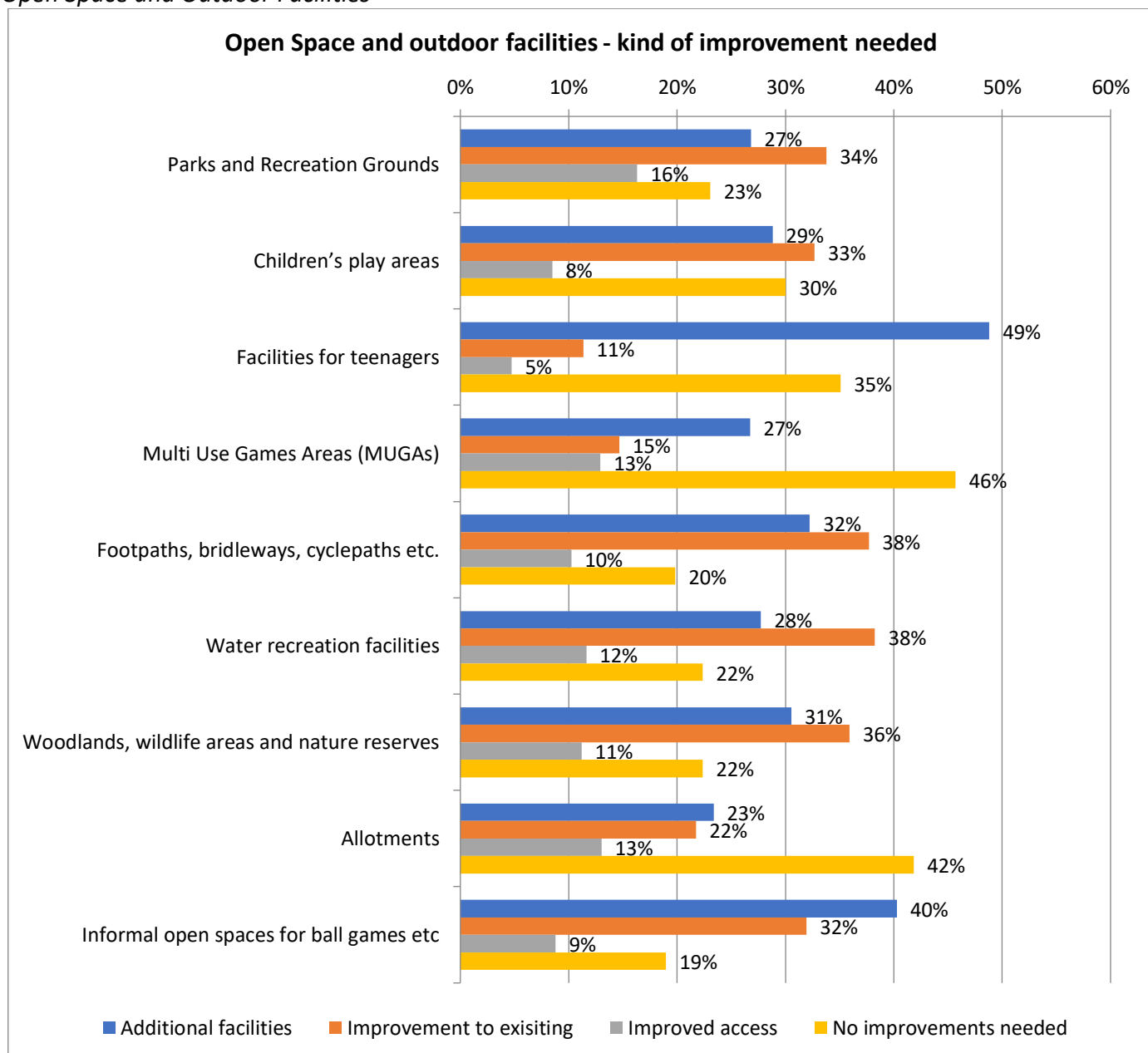
Other notable high priorities for improvement highlighted by significant numbers were informal open spaces (39%); areas for water recreation (37%); and parks and local recreation grounds (33%).

Children’s play areas also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 54% of households - 26% high/28% medium). Facilities for teenager were also rated similarly (a combined high/medium priority choice for 47% of households - 26% high/21% medium).

*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 rather than improvements to existing is provision for teenagers (49%).
- Other typologies with a higher proportion indicating a need for additional facilities rather than improvements in quality were: informal spaces; MUGAs; and allotments.
- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is the more common kind of improvement need suggested e.g. parks and recreation grounds; play areas; footpaths etc; areas for water recreation; and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves.
- Facilities with significant numbers highlighting the primary need being access improvements were parks and recreation grounds (16%); MUGAs and allotments (both 13%).
- 47% of households thought that no improvements were needed for MUGAs; and 42% similarly for allotments (42%).



## 2.2 Stakeholder Views - Public Health

### 2.2.1 Solihull Borough Council Public Health Services

Solihull Council fully recognises the value of access to open space in relation to promoting health and wellbeing and public health objectives. Public Health services noted that:

- A recent report from the Children's Commissioner for England report highlights the importance to children of play and physical activity in relation to health and wellbeing.
- Recent research by the University of East Anglia suggests that green spaces can form part of a multi-faceted approach to achieving a wide range of health outcomes.
- The Solihull Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2016-19 highlights that lack of physical activity is a major contributor towards the pattern of health inequalities in Solihull. Accessible open space provision can provide opportunities for increasing physical activity.
- Obesity is contributing to increasing levels of poor health and long-term conditions such as diabetes; obesity levels (22% in men; 24% in women). National Child Measurement Programme data indicates a widening of the obesity gap for those children living in regeneration areas compared to those living in more affluent areas of the borough.
- A significant proportion of residents would like 'more things for young people to do' to be a priority in their local area.
- Evidence suggests that people in communities with access to quality green space have improved mental well-being, less stress and social isolation, improved social cohesion and improved physical health, with fewer working days are lost to ill health. Conversely, when contact with the natural environment becomes difficult, or even unpleasant, the impact on people's emotional wellbeing will be adversely affected.
- Creating opportunities to provide new green infrastructure throughout the borough is essential to improving the urban environment. The provision and enhancement of green infrastructure should be an essential part of planning proposals, and should be viewed through the lens of the impact on physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Existing deficiencies within the urban area of green space and green infrastructure is not currently given priority to develop emotional wellbeing.
- In 2016 the Public Health Team looked into the relationship between green space and mental health. It concluded that "evidence consistently links green space to mental wellbeing benefits including helping people be physically active, connect with others, reduce stress and improve their resilience to mental ill-health".
- The team also noted that to maximise benefit, green spaces need to be: high-quality not left to decay; close and accessible to all sectors of the community. Children and older people often feel excluded; multi-functional and multi-use; and connected to other green spaces as part of a green infrastructure network.

A number of specific SMBC public health aims were also noted, including:

- To improve access to and quality of open and green spaces available across the social gradient; and to further develop urban planning which encourages increased activity.
- To develop initiatives to increase active travel across all age groups.
- To increase opportunities for uptake of physical activity amongst children through initiatives such as 'Solihull Girls Can'.

## 2.2.2 Solihull Active

The Solihull Active team's purpose is to promote and develop initiatives that enable residents to become 'more active, more often'. The team are a part of the Public Health Directorate at Solihull Council and aim to support local people to take part in sport and physical activity across the Solihull borough, and lead a more active lifestyle.

The team recognise the importance of providing and promoting access to parks and green spaces in relation to health and wellbeing. They highlight, for example:

- The general value of parks (including parks events), local nature reserves and allotments in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing both physical and mental.
- The importance of play areas and outdoor informal youth facilities such as MUGAs and skate parks in enabling regular physical activity for children and young people.
- Provision of measured walk routes in the Council's parks.
- The range of circular walks guides promoted by the Council using rights of way and visiting local parks and natural green space.
- The promotion of walking through the Walk Solihull initiative – walk your way to wellbeing.
- The promotion of cycling opportunities and the Council's cycling/walking map and network of cycling routes.
- Support for events such as Park Run and Race For Life – a 5k or 10k run/walk starting from Malvern Park – which also acted as a fund raiser for Cancer Research.
- Initiatives such as Eat Well Move More – a free family weight management and healthy lifestyles programme for families with children aged 4-16 years who have concerns over their child's weight and health.

## 2.3 General Community – Key Findings

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

### Quantity

- Over 60% of respondents to the household survey think that overall there are enough parks and recreation grounds and MUGAs; and 54% note that there are enough areas for water recreation.
- 58% of households suggest a general need for more facilities for teenagers.
- A small majority of households (52%) suggest a general need for more footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths etc; woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves; and informal open space for ball games, picnic etc.
- In many cases opinion is quite close regarding the sufficiency of provision most notably for allotment provision where 47% report an overall need for more while 50% think there are enough.

### Quality

- 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. For example, 36% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor compared to 20% rating them as good or very good; and 29% rated the quality of MUGAs as poor compared to 22% rating them as good or very good.
- In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (51% similarly); footpaths etc (48%); and play areas (47%).

### Access

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

- Just over half of user households are prepared to travel 20 minutes to visit woodlands, wildlife area and nature reserves and water recreation facilities. Around 25% of these report that they would travel more than 20 minutes.
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas; informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking; parks and recreation grounds; and allotments).
  - 53% of users would expect play areas and informal open spaces to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which around 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
  - 49% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
  - 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 25% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

For nearly all typologies walking is the norm and will provide the basis for setting access standards, most notably for facilities such as play areas (79%); parks and recreation grounds (78%); and informal open spaces (74%).

However, a higher proportion of households would normally drive rather than walk to areas for water recreation; and significant numbers would drive to some of the facilities e.g. 42% would drive to access MUGAs and 38% would drive to visit woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves.

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

- It is also of note that cycling is an important access consideration for some households e.g. 12% of respondents have household members who would cycle to use MUGAs; 9% to access footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths; and 7% to make use of youth facilities.
- 78% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved; and 79% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

### **Priorities**

- 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 (49%) followed by woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (47%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement highlighted by significant numbers were informal open spaces (39%); areas for water recreation (37%); and parks and local recreation grounds (33%).
- Children's play areas also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 54% of households - 26% high/28% medium). Facilities for teenager were also rated similarly (a combined high/medium priority choice for 47% of households - 26% high/21% medium).

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

- Solihull Council fully recognises the value of access to open space in relation to promoting health and wellbeing and public health objectives.
- The Solihull Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2016-19 highlights that lack of physical activity is a major contributor towards the pattern of health inequalities in Solihull. Accessible open space provision can provide opportunities for increasing physical activity.
- Public Health also note the importance of play areas and outdoor informal youth facilities such as MUGAs and skate parks in enabling regular physical activity for children and young people.
- Evidence suggests that people in communities with access to quality green space have improved mental well-being, less stress and social isolation, improved social cohesion and improved physical health, with fewer working days are lost to ill health. Conversely, when contact with the natural environment becomes difficult, or even unpleasant, the impact on people's emotional wellbeing will be adversely affected.
- Creating opportunities to provide new green infrastructure throughout the borough is essential to improving the urban environment. The provision and enhancement of green infrastructure should be an essential part of planning proposals, and should be viewed through the lens of the impact on physical and emotional wellbeing.
- Public Health also noted that to maximise benefit, green spaces need to be: high-quality not left to decay; close and accessible to all sectors of the community; multi-functional and multi-use; and connected to other green spaces as part of a green infrastructure network.
- Solihull Active deliver specific projects relating to public open space in support of the Council's public health remit including walking and cycling initiatives; Park Run and Race for Life; and Eat Well Move More.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; and those in the more deprived wards of the borough.

## 3.0 NEIGHBOURING LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCILS

### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides information and feedback from neighbouring local authorities and local parish and town councils. It is important to consult with neighbouring local authorities under the "duty to co-operate" 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".

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

Section Three is comprised of two main sub-sections:

- Neighbouring Authorities - Cross-boundary issues
- Town/Parish Councils

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 report.

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

#### Overview – Solihull Borough Council

Solihull Borough shares borders with 6 local authority areas – Birmingham City, Bromsgrove District, Coventry City, North Warwickshire Borough, Stratford on Avon District and Warwick District. A number of general points relating to cross border and wider strategic issues are noted below:

- Solihull Borough along with Birmingham, Bromsgrove & Redditch, North Warwickshire and Stratford Councils fall within the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area.
- For environment/nature conservation/green infrastructure there are groups across different administrative boundaries, e.g. Local Nature Partnership: Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire authorities.
- Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry are constituent members of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership includes Birmingham, Solihull and Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils.

Specific observations noted regarding cross-border and strategic issues by individual local authority included:

- Birmingham City - HS2 – Environment; WMCA Environment Board – e.g. Natural Capital projects; River Cole Improvement Projects; and Grand Union Canal.
- Coventry City - WMCA Environment Board
- North Warwickshire Borough - HS2 – Environment; River Cole Improvement Projects; Tame Valley Wetlands Project; and Tame Valley Nature Improvement Area

Further examples of cross border working and issues relating to the wider strategic area are:

- West Midlands Parks Forum
- Tame Valley Wetlands Nature Improvement Area – WWT Living Landscapes
- Tame, Anker, Mease catchment Partnership and the Warwickshire Tame Cole Blythe Anker to Natural England led Heritage Lottery Fund bid.
- Solihull’s ERDF Projects - Solihull Habitats and Nature Improvements project and Greening the Grey - Strategic Partners: Environment Agency and Warwickshire Wildlife – delivering their strategic objectives locally (ShRIMP)
- HS2 Environment and Landscape Work stream Board and River Cole project (HS2 Community Fund?)
- Local Nature Partnership – Green Infrastructure Working Group
- Habitat Biodiversity Audit and Local Wildlife Sites Partnership
- West Midlands Natural Capital Round Table (WMCA Environment Board) - Natural Capital and the Government’s 25-year Environment Plan.
- Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub regional Green Infrastructure Strategy and opportunity Mapping - Biodiversity Offsetting
- Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull - Local Biodiversity Action Partnership –(SAPs) and Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)
- River Blythe Restoration Plan

Comments and observations from officers of the neighbouring authorities are provided below<sup>6</sup>.

#### Birmingham City Council

| Type of study                 | Notes/updates on relevant studies   | Comments and observations – cross border issues <sup>7</sup> |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Green Infrastructure          | Green Living Spaces Plan (2013) – maps out what there is<br><a href="https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/832/green_living_spaces_plan">https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/832/green_living_spaces_plan</a> | None specifically identified by officer.                     |
| Open Space/PPG17 study        | None  |  |
| Play /Youth Facility Strategy | Draft Play Policy: Lead officer is Robert Churn, Head of Landscape Practice Group.  |  |

#### Bromsgrove District

| Type of study        | Notes/updates on relevant studies   | Comments and observations – cross border issues   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Green Infrastructure | Worcestershire County wide Green Infrastructure Strategy – more detailed work required on Landscape Character Assessment to inform Bromsgrove District Plan Review. | Possible implications arising from cross boundary landscape types (to the north east of Bromsgrove District) and future action plans? |

<sup>6</sup> The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma.

<sup>7</sup> Relevant comments will be taken forward and considered in the main report

|                           |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Open Space/PPG17 study    | Completed in 2007. Will require updating in light of District Plan Review. | Unclear at such an early stage in plan review/until up to date evidence base in place and it is clearer where future development/growth will be located. |
| Play/Youth Facility Study | Some standards incorporated as part of 2007 audit.                         | None specifically identified by officer.   |

### Coventry City Council

| Type of study              | Notes/updates on relevant studies   | Comments and observations – cross border issues    |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Green Infrastructure Study | Completed 2008 (Coventry only); and 2011 (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire study).   | Yes - but none specifically identified by officer. |
| Open Space/PPG17 study     | Draft Green Space Strategy – likely to be completed by late 2018. Being prepared by the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Team. | None specifically identified by officer.           |
| Play/Youth Strategy        | Covered by the Coventry Sports Strategy (2014 to 2024)  | None specifically identified by officer.           |

### Stratford on Avon District Council

| Type of study          | Notes/updates on relevant studies   | Comments and observations – cross border issues  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Green Infrastructure   | <p>Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub-Regional GI Strategy (2013): The purpose of the strategy was to provide evidence for the preparation of plans, policies and strategies relating to GI at a sub-regional level.</p> <p>Green Infrastructure Study for the Stratford-on-Avon District (2011): Produced to form an evidence base for the District's Core Strategy and the purpose of the study was to identify the existing GI networks. The study focused on the main town of Stratford-upon-Avon and the eight Main Rural Centres (MRCs) as set out in the Core Strategy.</p> | <p>River Tame tributaries Blythe and Cole – 'living landscapes'. Earlswood Lakes on the border with Solihull.</p> <p>The closest MRC to Solihull is Henley-in-Arden but the assessment area did not extend to the Solihull border.</p> |
| Open Space/PPG17 study | Playing Pitch Strategy – currently being completed. The strategy will include an audit of existing facilities, an assessment of the quality of those facilities and a review of existing and anticipated demand. The study will contribute to an update of the PPG17 study and partial update undertaken in 2014 which was produced to inform the Submission Core Strategy  | The study is not yet complete, but clearly there is opportunity for residents of Stratford-on-Avon District using open spaces and facilities within Solihull and vice versa.   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | and Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The new Strategy is to take account of the revised (higher) housing figures set out in the adopted Core Strategy. |  |
|--|---|--|

**Warwick District Council**

| <b>Type of study</b>                   | <b>Notes/updates on relevant studies</b>   | <b>Comments and observations – cross border issues</b>  |
|--|--|---|
| Green Infrastructure                   | Warwick District Green Infrastructure Study (2012); Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Sub –Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy (Nov 2012) | Identification of the medium / long term aspiration/opportunity to enhance the Arden Landscape character area. Principally to target the enhancement of the Arden Landscape and fragmented woodland resource in the west of Warwick District. |
| Open Space/PPG17 study                 | Parks and Open Spaces Audit (March 2008)   | None specifically identified by officer.  |
| Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy | Green Space Strategy 2012-2026 (Dec 2012); Green Space Action Plan 2013-2016 (Dec. 2012)   | None specifically identified by officer.  |
| Play /Youth Facility Strategy          | Warwick District Play Strategy (2007-2012)   | None specifically identified by officer.  |

It was also noted that the above documents are available on Warwick District Council’s website and can be located by reference to the Local Plan’s Evidence Base.



## 3.3 Town and Parish Councils

### 3.3.1 General Overview

Within Solihull Borough there are 16 town/parish councils. Surveys were sent to all town/parish councils together with reminders to chase responses as needed. 11 of the town/parish councils responded. The survey covered issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of various types of open space and outdoor recreation facilities. There was also an opportunity for the local councils to highlight any priorities they might have for new or improved provision.

Responses were received from the following town/parish councils:

- Balsall Parish Council
- Berkswell Parish Council
- Castle Bromwich Parish Council
- Chadwick End Parish Council
- Chelmsley Wood Town Council
- Cheswick Green Parish Council
- Dickens Heath Parish Council
- Hockley Heath Parish Council
- Kingshurst Parish Council
- Meriden Parish Council
- Smith's Wood Parish Council

Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- 10 of the 11 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 10 of the 11 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- Two of the parishes did not think there was scope for greater community use of outdoor play and recreation spaces at local schools; and four were not sure. However, five of the parishes highlighted potential for community use (see below) or noted a need for improvements.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers.

The suggested potential for improvements/greater community use of school facilities is noted below:

| Town/Parish     |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Berkswell       | If a new primary school is built on Allocation 1 on the Solihull draft plan then joint use facilities could be provided. E.g. swimming pool, gym, all weather sports pitches, However, gyms and all weather sports pitches are more normally associated with secondary schools |
| Castle Bromwich | All school recreational facilities could be made available at evenings and weekends for community use.   |
| Dickens Heath   | A community facility at Dickens Heath Primary School is being progressed by SMBC. This has potential for youth groups and youth activities, plus holiday clubs for young people.   |
| Hockley Heath   | The village school has its own grounds but I am unaware to the extent they use these for the community. Would possibly have to consider safeguarding issues if children in school.   |
| Kingshurst      | There are three Primary Schools in the Parish, and all have fields that could be used by local residents. There would have to be some sound stewardship of their use outside of school hours, but this ought to be manageable.   |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Meriden | The parish council has repeatedly offered the sports park to Meriden J & I school for sports facilities access. |
|---------|---|

**Quality factors - open space provision**

We asked the parish 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 safe and secure for those using them.
- They should be easy to get to (and get around) for all members of the community.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained. They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- They should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community.

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between public open spaces; and that there should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.

Other aspects of quality specifically highlighted and related comments were:

- New community space must be provided between existing and any new homes to encourage community integration and ensure that it is readily accessible to all. It must not be on the outside of the settlement. The highly used park at Hallmeadow Road shows how well that works. The poorly used Willow Park on the extreme west of Balsall Common shows the failure of parks on the edge of the settlement. It must include formal areas for play with equipment and laid out sports facilities and informal green space for play/recreation such as informal football/cricket/rugby etc, model plane/kite flying, ball throwing etc and proper dog walking routes of significant length. Bio offsetting is critical in major new developments both for nature itself and to maintain a “green environment” for the social benefit and education of residents, particularly the young. That should include large wet/pond areas to encourage wildfowl and fish.
- Refreshment facilities should be available, even just water, picnic area for families. Places to sit and rest, not just in poor weather. Very secure to avoid unauthorised encampments but allow access for maintenance. Monitored by CCTV and regular foot patrols of wardens. Goal is always to gain green flag status for every open space
- Local facilities should be managed by the Parish Council, or have involvement from the PC. Hedgerow & woodlands should be better maintained to improve wildlife habitats & further encourage people to walk. Residents regularly request additional bins.
- There should be toilet facilities along with refreshment facilities.

| Town/Parish Councils | Parks, rec. grounds | MUGAs | Play areas | Teenage facilities | Allotments | Wildlife areas, etc. | Footpaths etc. |
|----------------------|---------------------|-------|------------|--------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Balsall              | X                   | X     |            | X                  |            | X                    | X              |
| Berkswell            | X                   | X     | X          | X                  |            | X                    | X              |
| Castle Bromwich      |                     |       | X          |                    |            |                      |                |
| Chadwick End         | X                   | X     | X          | X                  |            |                      |                |
| Chelmsley Wood       |                     |       | X          |                    | X          |                      |                |
| Cheswick Green       | X                   |       |            |                    | X          |                      |                |
| Dickens Heath        | X                   | X     | X          | X                  |            | X                    | X              |
| Hockley Heath        | X                   |       | X          |                    | X          |                      | X              |
| Kingshurst           |                     |       |            | X                  |            |                      | X              |
| Meriden              |                     | X     |            | X                  | X          | X                    | X              |
| Smith's Wood         |                     |       |            | X                  | X          |                      |                |
|                      | 6                   | 5     | 6          | 7                  | 5          | 4                    | 6              |

The table above covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of open space and outdoor recreation facilities<sup>8</sup>. For parish/town councils in Solihull Borough the aspects of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Need for improvements to parks, recreation grounds and village greens
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas and allotments in some parishes.
- Improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.

### 3.3.2 Parish specific issues

#### Unmet needs and aspirations for improvement

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

#### *Town/Parish Council*

| Town/Parish Council | Groups in parish whose needs not being met                | Current plans and known aspirations  |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Balsall             | Some comments contained in focus group interviews held as | Balsall NDP will be exploring the potential for a Green Spaces Plan as part of the document. |

<sup>8</sup> In the table the red shading indicates the most common kind of issue raised and amber the next most common.

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
|                 | <p>part of Neighbourhood Development Plan evidence gathering:- Youth groups - Dog walkers are a big community here. The Scouts have a lot of participation with the natural environment, so our green spaces are very important to us. The Brownies help a lot with Balsall Rocks that gets them outside. Sports Associations - There are not enough places for the community to come together the Abbey Fields scenario is the answer. Connect the green spaces through traffic calming and cycle paths. Ask to create a running circuit (make sure footpaths are flat and wide enough to run along). Design it to make it easier to encourage activity. Avoid dark alleys in development of housing sites. Should be no net loss to the environment when new building took place.</p> |  |
| Berkswell       | <p>Gym facilities particularly for young people. All weather football pitches. Large lakes for wildlife etc. Just sitting in the open air in the shopping centre in Balsall Common.</p>   | <p>Significant housing is planned for Berkswell parish/Balsall Common. The draft NDP calls for 2.86 hectares of formal green space plus 0.5 hectares of informal space per 1000 residents. This must be provided within any significant new development. Monetary compensation is not acceptable. New residents must have play/recreational/wild areas within easy walking (5 minutes), Such space to be placed between existing and new homes to encourage community integration. It must not be placed on the outside of Balsall Common because that will not maximise easy access by residents nor support the integration of new and existing residents. See draft Berkswell NDP planning policies B1 and B3</p> |
| Castle Bromwich | <p>No specific needs but general recreational space would be welcomed by residents.</p>   | <p>Funding is a problem. Trespass by travellers has caused extensive damage and any spare financial resources have been spent restricting access to the sites. If the PC had additional funding then it would be easier to make plans to provide additional facilities.</p>  |

|                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| Chadwick End   | Young, teenage, retired and families   | We are planning longer term to maybe renew the playground in a different location, relocate the football team to a new playing field with changing rooms, landscape the playing field to create a public park and rebuild the village hall, probably within the next 10 years.  |
| Chelmsley Wood | Not aware.   | Additional play equipment within play area located at the Town Council Offices  |
| Cheswick Green | No – but someone did post something on Facebook about trying to set up some sort of exercise boot camp – but there is nowhere appropriate for this to held as the areas referred to are public open spaces and it would not be appropriate for someone to charge a fee when using these areas. | Currently don't have any specific plans.  |
| Dickens Heath  | There is a desperate need for recreational facilities for young people. The playground is currently closed as it is in need of refurbishment, and there are no facilities at all for young people aged 11 to 17.   | The Parish Council is attempting to register the Village Green formally as a village green, and to acquire it from the liquidators so that the playground can be refurbished and reopened, and the open space secured as a community asset.   |
| Hockley Heath  | Not aware of any particular groups but more could be done to target teenagers and all age groups.  | Our current plan is to maintain the grounds we have and carry out further bulb planting. We have had requests from the football teams for further maintenance but the Parish Council are not able to fund this. It would be wonderful if land could be provided in the village for allotments but the Parish Council cannot provide these.<br>The local football team would like the recreation ground improved, along with drainage, to FA standard pitches. |
| Kingshurst     | There is a need for more provision for their use by teenagers. At the moment the teenagers have little in the way of outdoor facilities to use. However, we should remember there is no youth and community facility of substance for the community to use.                                    | No specific plans highlighted.  |
| Meriden        | All sectors of the community would benefit from increased activities that include access to Meriden's open green spaces.   | To improve Meriden Pool to make it inclusive and accessible which it is currently not. The same applies to the War Memorial on Berkswell Road for all ambulant and non ambulant residents to access and participate.  |

|              |  |  |
|--------------|--|--|
| Smith's Wood |  | Due to the regeneration project in Smith's Wood there are little or no areas of open space left to provide additional outdoor recreational facilities. |
|--------------|--|--|

The detailed parish responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements summarised in the table in 3.3.1 above are provided below:

| Town/Parish     | Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments  |
|-----------------|---|
| Balsall         | Our responses to this question are based on the Balsall NDP Household Survey conducted in late 2017.  |
| Berkswell       | <p><b>Parks and Recreation Grounds:</b> There are no facilities to the east and south east of Balsall Common within Berkswell Parish. There are facilities in the very north and on the very west of Balsall Common but these must be driven to for many residents. Much more will be needed if the Solihull Plan requires significant additional housing in Berkswell. Please see draft Berkswell NDP. Balsall Common needs a seating/properly laid out communal space in the shopping centre to encourage community interaction and also an occasional street market. That is outdoor recreation for many people and helps create a heart to a community. A planned enhancement of tree planting will significantly improve the environment and create valued green environment and not just concrete.</p> <p><b>MUGAs:</b> All weather football fields – a current need. The subsoil in Balsall Common is clay meaning that the ground becomes waterlogged in periods of sustained inclement weather</p> <p><b>Play areas:</b> Much more will be needed if the Solihull Plan requires significant additional housing in Berkswell. Please see draft Berkswell NDP policies B1 and B3 and appendix 5</p> <p><b>Youth Facilities:</b> Much more will be needed if the Solihull Plan requires significant additional housing in Berkswell. Please see draft Berkswell NDP policies B1 and B3 and appendix 5</p> <p><b>Natural green space:</b> Much more will be needed if the Solihull Plan requires significant additional housing in Berkswell. Please see draft Berkswell NDP see policies B1 and particularly B3 which requires an evidence based mitigation plan.</p> <p><b>Footpaths etc:</b> Balsall Common and Berkswell Parish needs a joined up cycleway system to join together the bits that currently exist on Hallmeadow Road and the Kenilworth Greenway. See Berkswell draft NDP policy B7 and the indicative cycle routes map 6 after paragraph 10.21. More activity needed to make sure the network is fully accessible for all users.</p> |
| Castle Bromwich | <b>Play Areas:</b> Play Equipment needs replacing.  |
| Chadwick End    | <b>MUGAs:</b> Needed<br><b>Youth Facilities:</b> Needed   |
| Chelmsley Wood  | <p><b>Play Areas:</b> Additional play equipment within play area located at the Town Council Offices</p> <p><b>Allotments:</b> Bluebell Leisure Gardens Allotment is situated on Bluebell Drive, Chelmsley Wood. The site holds a number of full and half site plots. The cost of a full size plot is £40 per annum and a half size plot is £20 per annum. Currently all the plots are allocated.</p>   |
| Cheswick Green  | <b>Parks and recreation grounds:</b> OK at present but with proposed future development at Blythe Valley Park more will be needed.  |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
|               | <b>Allotments:</b> A proposal was made to the Parish Council in 2010 to provide allotments, despite writing to a number of landowners about this, the Parish Council had not managed to provide any allotments to date.   |
| Dickens Heath | <b>Parks and recreation grounds:</b> The Village Green and small nature reserve are currently in the ownership of liquidators PwC. The Parish Council believe they need to be in public hands and are hoping to acquire them.<br><b>MUGAs:</b> This is required urgently, SMBC holds s106 monies<br><b>Play areas:</b> The play area is currently closed, and in the ownership of the liquidators. It needs to be urgently refurbished and reopened.<br><b>Youth facilities:</b> As MUGA above<br><b>Allotments:</b> There are allotments nearby.<br><b>Natural Green Space:</b> There are 2 nature reserves - one owned by SMBC, but the other is in the ownership of the liquidators and should be owned by the PC or SMBC<br><b>Footpaths etc:</b> A footpath is required along Rumbush Lane to connect Dickens Heath Sports Club with the village - so that families in Dickens Heath will be encouraged to use its excellent facilities. |
| Hockley Heath | <b>Parks and recreation grounds:</b> Fixed gym equipment may be beneficial for all members of the community<br><b>Play Areas:</b> Further play equipment would be beneficial.<br><b>Allotments:</b> We do not have the land available for allotments.<br><b>Footpaths etc:</b> Dedicated cycle paths would be useful as Hockley Heath sees many cyclists throughout the village   |
| Kingshurst    | <b>Youth Facilities:</b> More needed for teenagers.<br><b>Footpaths etc:</b> Better pathways along the local river in Babbs Mill and accompanying parkland areas.   |
| Meriden       | <b>MUGAs:</b> Another MUGA would be an asset.<br><b>Youth facilities:</b> Young People have previously requested a skatepark<br><b>Allotments:</b> 4 allotments were lost with the Taylor Wimpey development on Leys Lane; additional land for allotment use as currently the parish council has a waiting list.<br><b>Natural Green Space:</b> Safeguarding the quarry area as a future nature reserve reinstating footpaths and tree lines.<br><b>Footpaths etc:</b> Improvements to all required   |
| Smith's Wood  | <b>Youth facilities:</b> None exist in Smith's Wood<br><b>Allotments:</b> None exist in Smith's Wood  |

### Parish Councils – other comments

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

| Town/Parish | Issues and other comments  |
|-------------|--|
| Berkswell   | The current Solihull Green Space provision standards are essential for the future              |
| Meriden     | Open Space maintenance to be improved to avoid looking neglected and unattractive to visitors. |

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

### Neighbouring Local Authorities – Key Findings

Section 3.2 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 recreation and play strategies.

The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived. It is also notable that many authorities are currently involved with commissioning new open space related studies or updating previous strategies that are out of date.

There is a considerable amount of cross border and wider strategic partnership working between Solihull Borough and neighbouring authorities particularly relating to Green Infrastructure and natural green space, but relatively few neighbour authorities highlight specific issues related to the Solihull Open Space Assessment. Some examples are noted below:

- Bromsgrove District: GI -Possible implications arising from cross boundary landscape types (to the north east of Bromsgrove District) and future action plans.
- Stratford on Avon District: GI - River Tame tributaries Blythe and Cole – ‘living landscapes’. Earlswood Lakes on the border with Solihull. The closest Main Rural Centre to Solihull is Henley-in-Arden but the assessment area did not extend to the Solihull border. Open Space: the study is not yet complete, but clearly there is opportunity for residents of Stratford-on-Avon District using open spaces and facilities within Solihull and vice versa.
- Warwick District: GI - Identification of the medium / long term aspiration/opportunity to enhance the Arden Landscape character area. Principally to target the enhancement of the Arden Landscape and fragmented woodland resource in the west of Warwick District.

### Town/Parish Councils

#### *General Overview*

- The individual towns/parishes are very different in relation to size, demographics, geography, needs and demand/aspirations. It is important that the study takes this variation into account.
- 10 of the 11 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 10 of the 11 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- Two of the parishes did not think there was scope for greater community use of outdoor play and recreation spaces at local schools; and four were not sure. However, five of the parishes highlighted potential for community use or noted a need for improvements.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers.



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

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

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. MUGAs, skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Need for improvements to parks, recreation grounds and village greens
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas and allotments in some parishes.
- Improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.

### ***Quality considerations***

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

- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- They should be easy to get to (and get around) for all members of the community.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained. They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- They should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community.

It is also thought important by many local councils that there should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between public open spaces; and that there should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.

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

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

## 4.0 PARKS, GREEN SPACES, COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY

### 4.1 Introduction

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

Consultation undertaken for this section included key stakeholder surveys, and a survey of relevant community organisations.

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

This section is comprised of six main sub headings:

- Key stakeholders - strategic context and overview
- Community organisations - overview
- Parks and recreation grounds
- Allotments
- Natural green space/outdoor recreation – e.g. wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands
- Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.
- Water recreation
- Other open space

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

### 4.2 Key Stakeholders - strategic context and overview

This section summarises the role and function of key stakeholders that have responded to the consultation. Responses specific to certain types of open space are highlighted under each of the focused typology headings later in this section.

#### 4.2.1 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

The following Council officers provided comments through written response and/or phone interview. The roles of these officers are summarised below, and their comments on themes covered by the study are addressed later in this section.

##### **Public Realm Manager**

**Role:** Leadership and management of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces, Love Solihull Initiative, Neighbourhood Activity Programme, Park Ranger Service, Allotments, and all related and relevant strategies and plans. The service manages all council-controlled open space and parks (28 parks including 18 principal parks). The service also looks after many smaller pockets of land.

##### **Neighbourhood managers (north and south)**

**Role:** Neighbourhood Management is part of an integrated working model with the Neighbourhood Police and other partners, enabling crime, ASB and various problems to be tackled quickly by deploying the relevant expertise and resources.

## **Team Leader - CLAUDE (Coordinating Landscape and Urban Design Ecology)**

**Role:** Responsible for the management and supervision of the Landscape Architecture and Ecology Service for the Council, and more recently the service has expanded to include Urban Design.

## **Development Surveyor**

**Role:** Considers the impact of any changes in Council policy on its land and property asset portfolio.

## **4.2.2 Strategic Organisations**

A semi-structured questionnaire was circulated to all relevant strategic organisations considered to have a bearing on the study (with the exception of neighbouring local authorities, which were considered through a separate part of the consultation). Strategic organisations were defined as those that cover a geographical area larger than the Borough, although their interests, decisions and actions relate to the Borough.

The organisations consulted were:

- British Horse Society
- Canal and River Trust
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife
- Woodland Trust

## **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) (Planning & Biodiversity Officer)**

**Role:** WWT manages the following nature reserves within the Borough, some are managed on behalf of the council:

- Elmdon Manor Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Priory Fields
- Parkridge LNR
- Temple Balsall
- Cuttlepool Lane
- New Fallings Coppice & Clowes Wood

WWT is also the lead partner in the Tame Valley Wetland Nature Improvement Area which is a landscape scale scheme covering the northern part of Borough and up towards Tamworth. The current scheme delivered by this partnership is completing several conservation projects to restore heritage and improve wildlife alongside reconnecting people with their landscape by promoting access and learning. More information can be found here: <http://www.tamevalleywetlands.co.uk/about/>

WWT also hosts the Habitats and Biodiversity Audit Team in partnership with the country council and Local Authorities. This team is responsible for surveying and designating Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) which are of county importance for nature conservation. There are 218 LWS or potential LWS (awaiting survey) within the Borough. More information can be found at: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/habitatbiodiversityaudit>

## **Canal and River Trust** (Planning Manager)

**Role:** The Canal & River Trust (the Trust) is the charity that cares for 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England and Wales. “We are passionate believers in using the power of local waterways to transform places and enrich lives. The Trust is making life better by water.”

The Trust owns and maintains a network of canals, and reservoirs and feeder channels within the Borough, including:

- over 12 kilometres of the Grand Union Canal from Elmdon a launching Catherine de Barnes Reservoir, and downs in the Borough boundary west of Chadwick End. This includes the Olton Reservoir which feeds the canal network; and,
- over 7 kilometres of the North Stratford Canal, including a stretch at Solihull Lodge an around Whitlocks End, Dicken’s Heath, and down to the Borough boundary at Illshaw Heath. The feeder channel that links the Earlswood lakes to this network also falls within the Borough.

## **Natural England** (Lead Advisor- Planning for a better environment)

**Role:** The government’s adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England’s nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. Its responsibilities are for:

- promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity
- conserving and enhancing the landscape
- securing the provision and improvement of facilities for the study, understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment
- promoting access to the countryside and open spaces and encouraging open-air recreation
- contributing in other ways to social and economic well-being through management of the natural environment

**Spatial planning standards:** 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 minute’s 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).

## **The Woodland Trust**

**Role:** The Woodland Trust is the country’s largest woodland conservation charity with over 500,000 members and supporters and more than 1,000 sites, covering over 26,000 hectares, all over the UK.

The Trust protect and campaign, plant trees, and restore ancient woodland for the benefit of wildlife and people. It states that “Trees and woods filter our air, cool our cities, purify our water and enrich our soil. Yet the damage done to them has now reached catastrophic levels, and our plant and animal species are declining at an alarming rate.”

**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.

## **Environment Agency (EA)**

**Role:** The Environment Agency (EA) protects and improves the environment and promotes sustainable development. It plays a central role in implementing the government's environmental strategy in England. The Environment Agency plays a lead role in managing flood risk and works to minimise the impact of flooding.

EA is an executive non-departmental public body of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

**EA’s views on 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. The EA note that:

- 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** (Local Partnership Advisor)

**Role:** The Forestry Commission is the government department responsible for protecting, expanding and promoting the sustainable management of woodlands and increasing their value to society and the environment.

The Forestry Commission and Natural England share Standing Advice in relation to Ancient Woodlands. The

Local Partnership Advisor notes that:

- The NPPF amended in May contains stronger protections for ancient trees and ancient woodlands
- The Forestry Act regulates felling of woodland. UK Forest Standard provides guidance on acceptable management of woodland and on best practice.
- The government's 25 Year Environment Plan reiterates a commitment to planting 11 million trees.
- the government's Clean Growth Strategy includes a commitment to increasing woodland cover in England to 12% by 2060, which means 130,000ha of new woodland. It also sets out a target of a 26% drop in emissions from land use, which may require an even larger shift to woodland.

The Forestry Commission also provided additional general guidance on their approach relating to Open Space and GI studies and this is included in the main report.

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

### 4.3.1 Introduction

A semi-structured questionnaire was circulated to relevant community organisations considered to have an interest in open space covered by this study. Community organisations were defined as those that cover a geography spanning only a relatively small part of the Borough. The British Horse Society (BHS) whilst being a national organisation, is covered in under this heading because of the representative's local residence and knowledge.

The questionnaire asked about each organisation's key interests and activities. It also asked for comments on aspects of local green Infrastructure, open space, recreation in relation to considerations of 'Quantity', 'Quality', and 'Accessibility'.

34 organisations responded and the following summarises the roles of each of these organisations. Their detailed comments received are covered later in this section and (for play and youth facilities) in section 5.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Balsall Common Village Residents' Association (Secretary)</b>  |
| <b>Area covered:</b> Balsall Common, covering Balsall Common, Berkswell and surrounding areas   |
| <b>Role:</b> Our Residents Association has been in existence since the 1980's and its prime objective is to preserve and improve the amenities of Balsall Common. The Association represents all residents of the "village" or "settlement" of Balsall Common including both Balsall and Berkswell Parishes. Residents are automatically members of the Association; there are no membership fees.  |
| <b>Knowle Society</b>   |
| <b>Area covered:</b> Knowle   |
| <b>Role:</b> Residents organisation - exists to maintain the character of Knowle and the surrounding countryside.   |
| <b>Dorridge &amp; District Residents Association (Chair)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Dorridge and Bentley Heath   |
| <b>Role:</b> We represent the residents of Dorridge and Bentley Heath, reminding the Council of their duties, eg planting trees, painting pedestrian crossings, repainting railway bridges, keeping residents informed of changes and events. We deliver a newsletter three times a year. We pay for and run first aid and instruction on defibrillator sessions regularly throughout the year. We support and contribute to the Christmas lights switch on in both Dorridge and Bentley Heath. We contact local councillors and police if necessary. We represent residents and keep them informed   |
| <b>First Steps (Co-ordinator)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Family Care Trust -north and south Solihull.   |
| <b>Role:</b> First Steps is a service to which caters for individuals with mental health issues of all ages ranging from 18 yrs - 80 yrs. This includes both male and female. The group aim is to combat isolation, encourage individuals to socialize in a friendly relaxing setting, take part in therapeutic activities, if they choose too. We enjoy group outings, social meals, tombola events and bingo, plus more. Average numbers who attend the group each week is 20 - 30. All refreshments are free, small charge 00.60p for four games of bingo only, and lunch is provided. All the group welcome new members and due to the relaxing atmosphere, many return each Friday, due to meeting new friends and having fun. |
| <b>Solihull Ratepayers Association (Executive Secretary)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Shirley - Solihull Borough Wide  |
| <b>Role:</b> Founded in 1974 with membership open to Solihull Residents or people connected with Solihull by work, education or property/business ownership. Acts on behalf of the community as an Independent Monitor on actions by Solihull Council and other bodies who levy taxes or charges on our citizens including the NHS aimed at protecting a high level of community and environmental services. Taking a   |

|  |
|--|
| close interest in Planning and Public Transport and Public Amenity issues while providing a range of social activities and trips to places of interest for our members to participate in.  |
| <b>Community Action in Fordbridge</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Fordbridge  |
| <b>Role:</b> We organise small events to benefit charities or local residents  |
| <b>Catherine de Barnes Residents' Association (Chair)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Catherine de Barnes   |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a residents' association   |
| <b>South Solihull Community Group (Secretary)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Based in Shirley and covers Shirley   |
| <b>Role:</b> A volunteer organisation committed to protecting green spaces in Shirley  |
| <b>Cars Area Together (Community Development Worker)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Auckland Hall. Cars Area, Smith's Wood  |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a resident led group who have been given funding from the Local Trust to improve the area and work with the residents.   |
| <b>Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group (Chair)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Eastern Balsall Common/Berkswell  |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a group of nearly 100 neighbours with a common aim of resisting any development in the Green Belt between Balsall Common and Coventry at its narrowest point.  |
| <b>Bacons End Triangle Residents Association (BETRA) (Chair)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> all areas between Birmingham Road, Chester Road and A452 Collector Road   |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a residents-based organisation that looks after and if necessary, makes representations on behalf of our local residents on any issue that the residents feel strongly enough about, including environmental issues and issues with the local authority. |
| <b>I Grew on Kingshurst (Founder)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Kingshurst  |
| <b>Role:</b> A Facebook Group, currently 1,300 listed members, various ages but mainly middle-age. Group reminisces on the early days of Kingshurst and the locals - sharing memories, photos and generally keeping up to date with friends                                  |
| <b>Safe &amp; Sound in Area 3 (Secretary)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Auckland Hall, Sunbeam Close we cover the cars area   |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a local residents group who meet 4 times a year. We have speakers from; the police, attend every meeting and speakers from SMBC, SCH and Regeneration are invited to some meetings.  |
| <b>Friends of Shirley Park (Chair)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Shirley Park and surrounding area   |
| <b>Role:</b> We aim to maintain and improve the park to make it safer, cleaner and more wild-life friendly for all park users to enjoy and we run various fund raising activities to help support our work   |
| <b>Gro-Organic CIC (Director)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Chelmsley Wood - Solihull Borough   |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a social enterprise that promotes and develops the use of outdoor spaces to help develop health, wellbeing and life opportunities for all.   |
| <b>Soroptimist International, Solihull and District (Member)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> International Organisation, but we cover the whole of Solihull and surrounding areas.   |
| <b>Role:</b> Empowering women and girls around the world to achieve their potential  |
| <b>Friends of Damson Parks (Secretary)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Elmdon Heath, Solihull  |
| <b>Role:</b> Non-profit making community group raising money to improve facilities within our local park.  |
| <b>Three Trees Community Centre (Chair)</b>  |

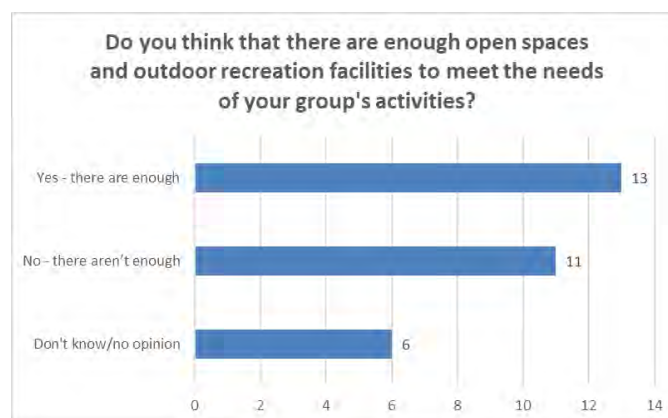


|   |
|---|
| <b>Area Covered:</b> north Solihull   |
| <b>Role:</b> Community centre   |
| <b>Solihull Ramblers (Chair)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Solihull based but covering a wide area  |
| <b>Role:</b> We are a charitable countryside walking organisation arranging walks using public footpaths over a wide area within a 50-mile radius of Solihull.  |
| <b>Damsonwood Litter Pickers (Organiser)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Rowood Drive/Damsonwood  |
| <b>Role:</b> Litter Pickers in a group once a month, and myself weekly  |
| <b>Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers (Organiser)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Castle Bromwich area   |
| <b>Role:</b> Volunteer litter pickers   |
| <b>Big Local, Cars Area Together (Chair)</b>  |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> Auckland Hall. The area we cover is the whole of what's known as the Cars formerly area 13 of Chelmsley Wood.  |
| <b>Role:</b> The purpose of the group' is to recreate the feeling of safety and general improvement of the area. During the Summer months especial we use the field for football skills and multi-sports activities. We cover and invite anyone from the area to take part. Many of the activities are free. Ages range from 7 upward. No one is excluded.  |
| <b>Sense (Acting Head of Sense Specialist Services)</b>   |
| <b>Area Covered:</b> National- however we have centre based in Selly Oak, Birmingham  |
| <b>Role:</b> Sense Specialist Service for Children and Young People support children and young people aged 0-25 yrs with a combined vision and hearing impairment (multi-sensory impairment and Deafblind are the official terms used). The wider organisation also has services for people with complex communication needs. There is a centre in Birmingham Selly Oak, which is open to the public, has a café, local library and activities to cater for people with and without a disability. |

### 4.3.2 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports): overview – quantity, quality, and accessibility

The organisations were asked about whether they used open space to meet the specific needs in respect of the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space. These themes are considered in more detail later in this section. However, as a general overview, the following were highlighted by the questionnaire survey.

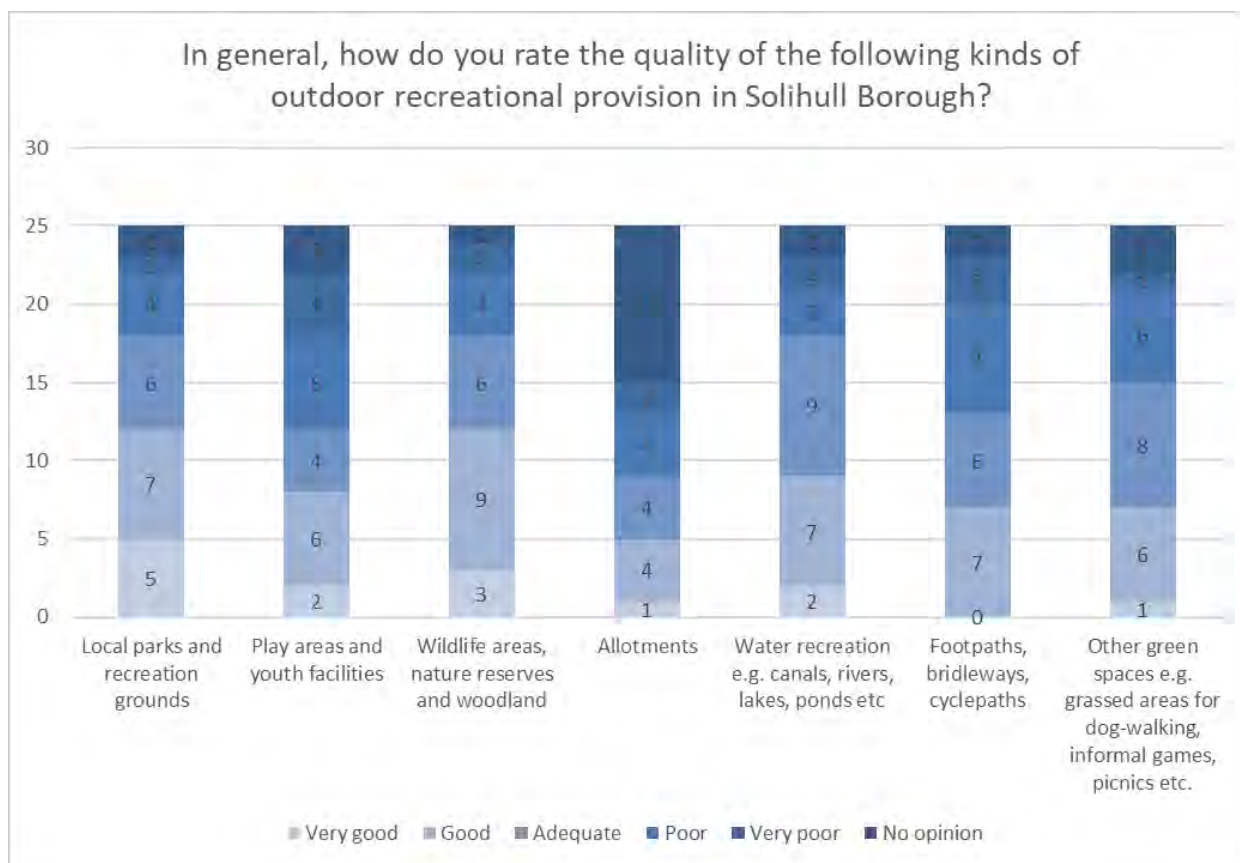
#### Quantity



Of the 32 organisations responding to this question 24 (75%) stated that they did make direct use of open space, and 8 (25%) said that they did not.

Of those responding to the question 13 (43%) local organisations felt there to be enough open spaces to meet their needs; 11 (37%) did not think there were sufficient; and 6 (20%) didn't know/had no opinion.

### Quality



Of those responding to a question about the *quality* of different types of open space:

- 12 (48%) considered that local parks and recreation grounds were at least good or very good in quality;
- 12 (48%) considered wildlife, nature reserves and woodland were at least good or very good in quality;
- 10 (40%) did not know/had no opinion about the quality of allotments;
- 9 (36%) considered that water recreation opportunities were at least good or very good in quality- the same percentage felt them to be of adequate quality;
- 10 (40%) considered that footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths were of poor or very poor quality; and, 14 (56%) felt that 'other' informal and amenity green spaces were either poor or adequate in quality.

Of those responding to a question about the *accessibility* of different types of open space:

- 8 said that they did face issues;
- 14 said they did not face issues; and,
- 4 said they didn't know/had no opinion.

Specific issues raised were:

| <b>Organisation</b>                               | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---|---|
| Balsall Common Village Residents' Association     | Location of play areas too far from village centre. Access to the Greenway is poor, flooded at many times by Carstins Garage on Station Road. No access to Greenway for those with mobility issues. Play facilities required for new large developments. No adult fitness equipment locally.  |
| Knowle society                                    | Access to Local Nature Reserve can be restricted if pathways are not cleared at the appropriate time. Recent 'let it grow' areas did not have mown pathways as promised.  |
| British Horse Society                             | Equine users often have to pay for a permit yet walkers and cyclists can use the routes for free!   |
| South Solihull Community Group                    | Allocation 13 is under threat from housing development which would be a tragedy   |
| Bacons End Triangle Residents Association (BETRA) | If we lose our ground everyone will need to cross busy roads, Its simply not acceptable   |
| Friends of Damson Parks                           | We have to raise most of the funding if we want any equipment or to make any changes in the park. We have to pay for liability insurance and a trading licence to hold events to raise money to make improvements to Solihull Councils Park Land totalling approx £150, would it really hurt them to pay that for us, we have raised over £80,000 to put a footpath around the perimeter of the park which most parks take for granted. |
| Castle Bromwich litter pickers                    | Issues are not enough dog mess bins - which means we really have a problem with footwear and children's prams Paths often overgrown.  |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together                     | The field we use belongs to SMBC, the Education dept manage it. We have to seek permission each time we want to use it. New groups or groups that want to extend the length of the activities due to increase demand are all treated the same We can't plan further than a few weeks ahead because there is a constant threat of SMBC selling all or part of the land for redevelopment.  |

## 4.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Within the Borough it is the Borough Council that provides and manages most of the open space covered by this study. There are also a number of parish councils that provide local opportunities.

### 4.4.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

##### SMBC Public Realm Manager

##### *Quantity*

The view is that the Borough is quite well-provided overall in terms of quantity, but this may vary dependent on population density. (i.e. not so good in the north of the Borough)

##### *Quality*

The Council is working with the community through the Solihull Initiative, including litter pickings, fundraising, etc. There are a few Friends of Parks and like associations. Trend towards more 'wider-looking' 'community groups (i.e. wider perspectives). e.g. Friends of Shirley Park)

The Borough has 15 'Green Flag' Parks, which is considered to be a very good number compared with many local authorities.

##### *Accessibility*

Generally, access to parks is thought to be good, but there can be issues with access for the disabled, and especially due to barriers introduced to deter off-road motorcycling)

#### Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

##### *Quality*

Parks and recreational ground offer a great opportunity to create wildlife areas in locations that are accessible. There is mounting evidence that the more naturally diverse parks are, the more health and wellbeing benefits they provide. It is also very easy to include wildlife areas alongside other functions of a park, for example areas of wildflower meadow along pathways or edges of fields, hedges planted along boundaries and ponds created in safe locations.

For example, Elmdon Park has good examples of enhancement with grass left to grow long in places, gradually increasing the number of wild flowers and small mammals found here. There is potential to do much more in combination with our Elmdon Manor Nature Reserve next door.

There is also lots of good work happening in Breuton Park; with a wet meadow and woodland area. There is also potential to further enhance Breuton Park for wildlife; such as replacing ornamental rhododendron with native alternatives would attract more wildlife to the area to be enjoyed by the community.

WWT consider its staff have a good working relationship with SMBC officers. However, having a vision and aims to increase the wildlife within all council owned parks would help direct resources to this mission.

## 4.4.2 Community Organisations Survey

### Quantity

| Organisation                              | Comment   |
|---|---|
| Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group | We strongly support the draft Berkswell NDP in its open space policies particularly the provision of local parks. |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together             | None in the area. Only a former school field.   |
| Safe & Sound in Area 3                    | We only have Bosworth Wood school field and Lanchester Park which you have to access via a main road.             |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association           | Generally comfortable with level of provision   |
| South Solihull Community Group            | Shirley park has already been reduced and there is really nothing else similar in our area                        |

### Quality

| Organisation                                  | Comment   |
|---|---|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack                    | The parks are good in general and well maintained.  |
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade                   | On the whole I think there are enough open spaces in Solihull and the quality of them is very good. I also think the access to our parks is good.   |
| Balsall Common Village Residents' Association | Balsall Common and Berkswell believed to be big enough to support a local sports centre.  |
| Cars Area Together                            | Sadly, the parks and recreation grounds also have the issue of dog owners not cleaning up after their pet(s) and therefore a hazard to other users.   |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers                | Any recreation ground subject to fly tipping and litter - not enough bins or dog bins. Not litter picked by litter wardens. often paths overgrown so difficult to walk through with nettles and thorn bushes.   |
| Community Action in Fordbridge                | Parks are unfortunately not appealing for us due to the minority of youths who make the experience unpleasant   |
| Friends of Shirley Park                       | Shirley Park is a great amenity but litter is a particular problem as is anti-social behaviour (to a lesser degree). One of our key messages is that a cleaner park is a safer park - and our group strives to achieve this as best we can. It is appreciated that Council resources are stretched and the Public Realm team do a great job. An upgrade of the play equipment, the skate park and the dog area would be good. |
| Gro-Organic CIC                               | Parks in the south of the Borough seem to be better maintained than those in the north and have nice things happen like jazz festivals and open air concerts where as in the north we never seem to see any of this in our parks. I think if people felt there were worthwhile things happening and going on they would be more likely to use them  |
| Knowle Society                                | The local parks are well maintained and sufficient for current use. However, with an anticipated increase in residents' numbers over the coming years further recreational areas may well be required.  |

## Accessibility

| Organisation                                  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade                   | ..... I also think the access to our parks is good.  |
| Balsall Common Village Residents' Association | Balsall Common and Berkswell believed to be big enough to support a local sports centre.   |
| Cars Area Together                            | Within Smith's Wood the park on Lanchester Way is a decent park however getting to it from the other side of Lanchester Way is hard as there isn't a crossing to use therefore a lot of the children on the Cars Area and surrounding Roads don't tend to us it and use Bosworth Wood Playing Field instead. |
| Knowle Society                                | No access issues.  |
| Safe & Sound in Area 3                        | We only have Bosworth Wood school field and Lanchester Park which you have to access via a main road.  |

## 4.5 Allotment Provision

### 4.5.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Sollihull Metropolitan Borough Council

SMBC Public Realm Manager

##### *Quantity*

Sites well used and well cultivated in the main- almost at capacity. The Council manages c. 15 sites, and there are several run by local associations.

The council owns a small number of garden plots which are not statutory allotments (sheds and greenhouses etc. are not allowed) and are generally used by council housing tenants for growing vegetables and flowers. Town and Parish councils are responsible for the management of statutory allotments.

There is only one community garden- Bluebell Garden in Chelmsley Wood (controlled by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)

##### *Quality*

The service is considering planting 'fruit trees' in existing parks and open spaces- small.

The Council still provides a service but struggles due to finances. The Council does not have resources to set up and manage support fora. Pared down to the minimum service.

The Council is engaging with the Garden Organic Organisation, in respect of how the latter can help with local groups.

**SMBC - CLAUDE**

##### *Quality*

General concern over longer-term issues management/maintenance/sustainability facing the Council.

#### Canal and River Trust

##### *Quality*

The Trust encourage the planting of native species, including fruits and herbs and those that encourage pollinators in order to facilitate the best possible diversity. The Trust actively discourages invasive species and takes action to eliminate these and their dis-benefits to wildlife, fauna and flora.

### 4.5.2 Community Organisations Survey

##### *Quantity*

| Organisation                   | Comment  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Big Local, Cars Area Together  | None in the area.  |
| Community Action in Fordbridge | No allotments at all in Fordbridge. Kingshurst is our nearest. |

| Organisation                               | Comment                 |
|--|-------------------------|
| Dorridge & District Resident's Association | Adequate                |
| Knowle Society                             | Okay                    |
| South Solihull Community Group             | Allotments are adequate |

### Quality

| Organisation            | Comment  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Friends of Damson Parks | As a group we have an allotment but the soil has been depleted over the years by poor use by the previous occupant. We ask our council for some top soil to make it usable again and were told they don't fund that.   |
| Gro-Organic CIC         | Allotments are accessible and seem to be well used although I think there are opportunities for tenants to access funding to improve the allotments if they could move away and be supported to be non-council managed. We have successfully worked with allotments who have had their own association drawn up and have helped them win funding to have major improvement work. The quality of the allotments in Solihull isn't great - many don't have toilets, shelter or classrooms which doesn't encourage people to spend more time outdoors as the facilities prevent them from doing so. |
| I Grew Up On Kingshurst | We have just the one Allotment these days on Kingshurst - We know that it has suffered by vandalism attacks & thefts. That it has a significant problem of drainage and the ingress of "Maretail" which has a detrimental effect on produce - Could we start a new location?   |
| Knowle Society          | Lack of supervision has caused practical problems for allotment holders  |

### Accessibility

| Organisation    | Comment  |
|-----------------|--|
| Gro-Organic CIC | Allotments are accessible and seem to be well used although I think there are opportunities for tenants to access funding to improve the allotments if they could move away and be supported to be non-council managed. We have successfully worked with allotments who have had their own association drawn up and have helped them win funding to have major improvement work. The quality of the allotments in Solihull isn't great - many don't have toilets, shelter or classrooms which doesn't encourage people to spend more time outdoors as the facilities prevent them from doing so. |



## 4.6 Natural green space, wildlife areas and woodlands

### 4.6.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

##### SMBC Public Realm Manager

##### *Quantity and Quality*

In April 2017, Solihull Council was successful with a funding application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to undertake a wide range of habitat and nature improvement projects across the borough. The application was made under the ERDF Priority Axis 6d: Preserving and Protecting the Environment and will result in improved conservation status for 121 hectares of habitat. The three-year programme of *woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality* improvements will be delivered across publicly accessible green space within Solihull. The funding will be used to undertake 28 individual habitat improvement schemes that collectively will increase and strengthen the capacity of the natural environment to deliver ecosystem services across the region. All of the proposed schemes are located in the urban areas of Solihull. The Environment Agency and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust are strategic partners on the delivery of the project

Introducing grasslands (as part of this programme) into some sites has caused issues with residents

#### Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

##### *Quantity*

Our natural environment is still in decline despite the efforts taken over the last 20+ years. Further action is therefore required to halt this decline in natural habitats and species and to positively restore and reconnect our natural areas. This is in line with Government commitments in the Natural Environment White Paper (2014) and recently within the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018).

We hope that this Open Space Study can support this ambition by helping to identify where SMBC's open spaces can contribute to a Nature Recovery Network alongside connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing of the community. This will require an increase in both the quantity and quality of natural areas.

There is opportunity to encourage the active management and public access to the small woodlands that scatter the borough.

##### *Quality*

Improving the quality of existing natural areas should be a priority. A lack of long-term favourable management often causes wild areas to decline, and areas under private ownership are often most at risk from land use changes. Designating areas as Local Nature Reserves is one tool that the Local Authority can use to protect and enhance habitats and this should be encouraged.

We also recommend that the Local Green Space designation is used to protect green spaces of value to the local community, for example Local Wildlife Sites such as Elmdon Nature Park and Castle Hills Farm Meadow which are otherwise at threat from land use changes.

## Accessibility

Access to nature reserves is often a problem as they tend to be located outside urban areas where wildlife can often more readily flourish. However, the Parkridge centre/ Brueton Park is a good example of how a nature reserve can be located within easy access of the community. A balance of easily accessed reserves and more isolated wildlife havens should be maintained.

A number of our reserves (Shadowbrook Meadows, Cuttle Pool and Temple Balsall) are hard to access and have poor parking - there is not much that can be done about this.

## Canal and River Trust

### *Quantity and Quality*

The canal network in Solihull is designated as a County Wildlife Sites along the Grand Union and North Stratford Canals<sup>9</sup>.

At its northern extent adjacent to the City of Birmingham the North Stratford Canal is also adjacent the churchyard, cemetery and playing fields at School Road, Warstock, forming part of a wider open space area. In Hockley Heath the North Stratford Canal also runs close to the recreation ground and wider open space area.

In parts both canals run through the Green Belt in the Borough of Solihull linking with open landscapes. On the Grand Union Canal at Copt Heath east of Junction 5 of the M42 there is a focus for boating, especially narrow boating linking with existing facilities at Copt Wharf.

The Olton Reservoir lies within the boundaries of the Olton Conservation Area. As such, its historic context, openness and contribution to the wider character of the area is recognised as important positive to our culture and heritage.

Whilst these last two have no formal wildlife designation, they contribute towards their wider context and the benefits these open areas bring.

### *Accessibility*

The linkages between the canal network and other open space areas are important, both for public access to maximise enjoyment but also as linked habitats for biodiversity gains.

## 4.6.2 Community Organisation Survey

### *Quantity*

| Organisation                | Comment  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack  | It would be good to develop these further, to encourage and develop the wildlife habitats.   |
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade | I don't know of any wildlife areas / nature reserves, other than that in Brueton Park. The areas there are excellent and we go there each year with our girls. |

<sup>9</sup> The Solihull Senior Development Officer – Planning Policy - noted that the Canals are potential Local Wildlife Sites but that they are not currently listed as adopted by the local authority.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group | While there are significant wildlife reserves at Temple Balsall and Marsh Lane, further reserves should be developed in the Barratt's farm area to compensate for the loss of the Kenilworth Greenway to HS2.   |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together             | None in the area.   |
| British Horse Society                     | Lots of building on areas which should really be left for undisturbed nature.   |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers            | Wildlife areas and pools and ancient woodland - Park hall nature reserve have been filled in for HS2 - so we should have some more created. Wildlife struggling due to loss of their habitat - Cranes a normal sight over CB -not been seen this year since ponds filled in. newts gone - Shameful. |
| Dorridge & District Residents Association | More needed   |
| Friends of Shirley Park                   | Areas reserved for wildlife are of great importance and should never be compromised, used for housing etc.  |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association           | An area we feel Solihull makes above average provision  |
| South Solihull Community Group            | There is only Allocation 13   |

**Quality**

| <b>Organisation</b>            | <b>Comment</b> (including any on the impact of noisy activities on the natural environment, and how these might be mitigated).  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack     | ....there has to be a balance but if it is done correctly then we should be able to enjoy the wildlife as well as they benefitting from our interest.   |
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade    | <p>I don't know of any wildlife areas / nature reserves, other than that in Brueton Park. The areas there are excellent and we go there each year with our girls.</p> <p>I am unsure what constitutes noisy activities, but I would have thought there were areas where these activities could be held without causing damage to our countryside or wildlife areas. These areas could be disused warehouses and or similar.</p>   |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together  | The countryside and wildlife need to be protected but noisy activities are useful for youngsters to let off steam and keep them off the streets and causing A.S.B.  |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers | <p>Wildlife areas and pools and ancient woodland - Park hall nature reserve have been filled in for HS2 - so we should have some more created. Wildlife struggling due to loss of their habitat - Cranes a normal sight over CB -not been seen this year since ponds filled in. newts gone - Shameful.</p> <p>We suffer from airplanes and motorway noise and now off road bikes and road racing - churning up the green paths and areas. Noisy activities should be a fair distance away from housing - but as all the spare green land has been built on in the north - and more to go with HS2 - we will continue to be kept awake as we were last night due to racing cars down the Water Orton road.</p> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Dorridge & District Residents Association        | <p>More (natural areas) needed.</p> <p>I do not think that countryside or wildlife is damaged by outdoor recreational activity.</p>  |
| Friends of Shirley Park                          | <p>Areas reserved for wildlife are of great importance and should never be compromised, used for housing etc.</p>  |
| Gro-Organic CIC                                  | <p>Bikes in north Solihull are definitely a problem and it doesn't seem to be going away. The same with quad bikes. I think a great recreational area could be set up so that they can ride their quads and bikes in open spaces away from the main road. I am sure with this would could some loss to the environment but that is better than lives being lost as their behaviour is so reckless.</p>   |
| I Grew Up On Kingshurst                          | <p>Babb's Mill Lake was fished at one time, you never see anglers there now, why is that? Are there plans to dredge the lake, clear it of junk?</p>  |
| Knowle society                                   | <p>These are valuable assets, but it is obvious that they are maintained on a shoe string. Without volunteers they would be in a sorry state.</p> <p>Noisy activities should be located in noisy locations - by motorways?</p>   |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association                  | <p>Would support increased provision of facilities where noise levels do not impact on adjacent residents e.g. partnerships with existing sports clubs.</p>  |
| Soroptimist International, Solihull and District | <p>I would like to see wider encouragement for people to be involved in the maintenance of these. Whilst there are 'Friends of..', publicity surrounding these is poor.</p> <p>Where there is outdoor recreational activity, appropriate measures should be in place for litter collection. If bins are not provided, people may not take their rubbish home. At Fun in the Park, we are meticulous about putting up sufficient litter collection areas, and people to collect, but this is not always the case.</p> |

## 4.7 Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycling

### 4.7.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Solihull Borough Council

##### SMBC CLAUDE

##### *Quantity, Quality, Accessibility*

re Policy - see SMBC Local Plan; Draft Local Plan and Solihull Connected Delivery Plan and Solihull's walking and cycling strategy although this is now out of date and I believe due to be refreshed

##### SMBC Neighbourhood Management

##### *Quantity, Quality, Accessibility*

These are generally well-managed and maintained.

We would like more "green lanes" i.e. to convert some lesser-used narrow rural lanes to no-through roads for access only, and for use by pedestrians and cyclists. This would also help to reduce our highway maintenance bill and stop in-appropriately large vehicles from being directed by satnav down these routes.

#### Canal and River Trust

##### *Quantity*

Our network of canals includes towpaths, which provide opportunities for walking, riding and cycling.

Nationally, during 2016-17, an estimated 2 million people made regular visits to the canal network for walking, jogging, cycling and fishing.

The Trust has approximately 20 miles of its national network within the Borough, and over 31% of the Borough's population live within 1km of this network.

##### *Quality*

The Trust generally seeks to maintain its assets in a steady state, and in the case of towpath management this is based on current usage. Where new development has the likelihood to increase usage the Trust considers it reasonable to ask for a financial contribution to mitigate this impact (through the planning process).

The Trust works with partners and volunteers towards improving the quality (and accessibility) of the network within the Borough. The Trust also encourages local employers to themselves encourage their employees to use canal towpaths for lunchtime recreation and exercise.

##### *Accessibility*

The canal towpath is free to access and use, for enjoyment and exercise with all the attendant benefits. Opening-up waterway towpaths for walking and cycling brings social and economic benefits. There may be stretches of towpath and access points that need upgrade. These would normally be identified through internal programme review, or else through development proposals.

## 4.7.2 Community Organisations Survey

### Quantity

| Organisation                                  | Comment   |
|---|---|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack                    | I feel there should be better promotion of cycle paths so that children can safely travel around the Borough.   |
| Balsall Common Village Residents' Association | Lack of cycle paths and those in place not maintained. No safe route to schools available for cyclists.   |
| Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group     | However, we are very concerned at the potential loss of footpaths and rights of way such as the Kenilworth Greenway due to HS2 and the A46/A45 link road. |
| Dorridge & District Residents Association     | More needed   |
| First Steps                                   | It would be great to have more cycle paths available. This would be most beneficial to all.   |
| Knowle Society                                | Cycle paths need to join up - not end at a busy roundabout!   |
| South Solihull Community Group                | Not very good (quantity) and the ancient bridleways would go if Allocation 13 is developed  |

### Quality

| Organisation                                  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack                    | I feel there should be better promotion of cycle paths so that children can safely travel around the Borough.  |
| Balsall Common Village Residents' Association | ...Local lanes are in bad state of repair and also not safe for cyclists. No safe route to schools available for cyclists.   |
| Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group     | Maintenance of footpaths is largely adequate because of activities of local walkers clipping back overgrowing vegetation. We are pleased to see the installation of kissing gates on many paths. However, we are very concerned at the potential loss of footpaths and rights of way such as the Kenilworth Greenway due to HS2 and the A46/A45 link road. |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together                 | Cycle paths are good but hardly ever used. Many footpaths require working on as they are not level. They are trip hazards and cause a problem for invalids, and those using prams and mobility scooters.   |
| British Horse Society                         | Bridlepaths need to have suitable parking available close by for horse lorries and trailers to cater for those not within riding distance of them. Gates on bridleways needs to be horse friendly. Foliage in bridleways needs to be well maintained (2m head clearance).  |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers                | Rights of way overgrown and not cleaned properly - too much moss on ground. Waste of money taking green space for cycle paths which are not used - in particular one up to NEC - and new one being installed in Hall Road.   |
| Dorridge & District Residents Association     | More needed  |

| Organisation                                     | Comment   |
|--|---|
| First Steps                                      | It would be great to have more cycle paths available. This would be most beneficial to all.   |
| I Grew Up On Kingshurst                          | Both Babb's Mill Lake Nature Reserve and Yorkswood, could do with much better footpaths, this would give greater access to the infirm, elderly and mothers with toddlers. Cyclists could also make much better access and usage if they had better footpaths, allowing for shorter 'safer' journeys to and from work etc. |
| Knowle Society                                   | cycle paths need to join up - not end at a busy roundabout!   |
| Solihull Ramblers                                | Local footpaths are generally maintained to a satisfactory standard. In saying this, we do work with Solihull Council in undertaking repairs and vegetation clearance in order to keep such paths in reasonable condition, on a voluntary basis.  |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association                  | We feel that generally these are maintained to a reasonable standard but would benefit from improved signage and promotion e.g. local maps to promote a more active and healthy lifestyle   |
| Soroptimist International, Solihull and District | I would like to see better signposting to access footpaths and rights of way. Also, encouragement for cyclists to have bells or similar on their bikes, which can then be used, would make shared ways more safe.   |

## 4.8 Water recreation (canals, rivers, lakes ponds etc)

### 4.8.1 Strategic Organisations

#### Solihull Borough Council

##### SMBC Public Realm Manager

##### *Quantity and Quality*

The ERDF funded Solihull Habitats and Nature Improvement Programme (described earlier in this section) includes four projects covering wetlands within the Borough:

- Smelly Brook 2, Babbs Mill Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Meriden Lake, Chelmsley Wood LNR
- Low Brrok, Alcott Wood LNR
- Hatchford Brook, Olton Jubilee Park

##### SMBC-CLAUDE

##### *Quantity and Quality*

(Other than the above ERDF Solihull Habitats and Nature Improvement Programme) there are several local initiatives involving wetlands and waterways within the Borough, including:

- Strategies and Plans - Tame Valley Wetlands Nature Improvement Area – WWT Living Landscapes
- Tame, Anker, Mease catchment Partnership;
- HS2 Environment and LandscapeWork stream Board and River Cole project; River Blythe Restoration Plan; Solihull River Improvement Plan (ShRIMP)

#### Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

##### *Quantity and Quality*

Although the Trust did not make specific comments under the heading of water recreation, it is acknowledged that the Trust is heavily involved in the many local projects, including those referenced under CLAUDE, and within the ERDF Solihull Habitats and Nature Improvement Programme.

#### The Canal and River Trust

##### *Quantity*

The Trust owns and maintains a network of canals, and reservoirs and feeder channels within the Borough, including:

- over 12 kilometres of the Grand Union Canal from Elmdon a launching Catherine de Barnes Reservoir, and downs in the Borough boundary west of Chadwick End. This includes the Olton Reservoir which feeds the canal network; and,
- over 7 kilometres of the North Stratford Canal, including a stretch at Solihull Lodge an around Whitlocks End, Dicken’s Heath, and down to the Borough boundary at Illshaw Heath. The feeder channel that links the Earlswood lakes to this network also falls within the Borough.



The waterways are significant green infrastructure but also function as blue infrastructure which serves in a variety of roles, including: an agent or catalyst for regeneration and contributor to water supply and transfer, drainage and flood management; a tourism and cultural, sports and leisure and recreation resources; a heritage landscape, open space and ecological resource; sustainable modes of transport; and routes for telecommunications. They also offer opportunities for leisure, recreation and sporting activities as part of the 'natural health service', acting as 'blue gyms', supporting physical and healthy outdoor activity.

The blue and green infrastructure provided by the canal network should not be viewed in isolation but holistically with other green and blue corridors and in relation to social and economic patterns and characteristics.

The network in the Borough navigable to boats, and available for use for running, kayaking, paddleboarding, angling, as well as having freely available and publicly accessible towpath for walking, running and cycling. The Olton reservoir is also used for boating. It provides a relaxing environment and recreation and travel, contributing to mental and physical wellbeing.

### **Quality**

The Trust generally seeks to maintain its assets in a steady state, and in the case of towpath management this is based on current usage. Where new development has the likelihood to increase usage the Trust considers it reasonable to ask for a financial contribution to mitigate this impact (through the planning process).

## **4.8.2 Community Organisations**

### **Quantity**

| <b>Organisation</b>                       | <b>Comment</b>  |
|---|---|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack                | I feel there should a suitable outdoor facility where we can teach skills such as canoeing or sailing and the dangers of swimming in open water. Currently we have to go to Leamington or Bromsgrove to do these types of activities. |
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade               | I think our area is good for canals.  |
| Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group | There is concern over the impact of HS2 on the Fishing Lakes by Berkswell Station.  |
| Big Local, Cars Area Together             | None in the area.   |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers            | Wildlife areas and pools and ancient woodland - Park hall nature reserve have been filled in for HS2 - so we should have some more created.   |
| Dorridge & District Residents Association | Enough canals. Not enough lakes & ponds.  |
| South Solihull Community Group            | There are only really the canals in our area. Most of the Blythe Valley has been developed  |

### **Quality**

| <b>Organisation</b>         | <b>Comment</b>   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade | ....I would like to see the pond at Brueton Park tended to so that the public could uses this space. |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers                   | Wildlife struggling due to loss of their habitat - Cranes a normal sight over CB -not been seen this year since ponds filled in - newts etc gone Shameful.              |
| Knowle Society                                   | Pond in Knowle Park requires a clean-up.  |
| Meriden Adventure Playground Association         | Water quality in Meriden Park's lake is very poor - we would love to get kids fishing there or have some low-key activities but it's not possible                       |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association                  | Believe further improvements to canal footpaths is warranted to encourage increased patronage of these facilities linked where practical to existing footpath networks. |
| Soroptimist International, Solihull and District | Towpaths need better maintenance  |

## 4.9 Other comments and observations

Beyond comments made under the above specific headings, several organisations and groups made comments that could not really be classified neatly under the above headings but are nonetheless considered to have relevance.

### 4.9.1 Strategic organisations

#### Solihull Borough Council

##### SMBC Public Realm management

###### *Quantity and Quality*

Below the recognised parks, the Borough Council is responsible for many smaller open spaces. There are several large open spaces that are not designated as parks (for example the open space of Streetsbrook Road). There has been some movement to get such larger open spaces designated as Important Open Spaces in the local plan.

##### SMBC Neighbourhood Management

###### *Accessibility*

Solihull is densely urban in parts and journeys on foot/ jogging/walking are so much more therapeutic if they take in green areas. Everyone should be able to access green space within a few minutes' walk of their home.

#### The Canal and River Trust

##### Quality and Accessibility

The Trust considers that the canal towpath is attractive, accessible and suitable for picnics. Pursuing hobbies, and dog-walking.

##### General comments

This appears to be a very broad consultation, and we ask that we are included in any further consultation, so to understand the direction the Council is seeking and how the information here will be used. This will also give us the opportunity to consider further partnership working with the Council.

### 4.9.2 Community organisations

| Organisation                   | Comment   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Big Local, Cars Area Together  | I/we would like to have certainty regarding the use of the only green space in the area, the former school field. This would give us the ability to plan with the knowledge that we would not be suddenly told that we had to cease due to re-development or even the school returning to the site. |
| Castle Bromwich Litter Pickers | Please don't build on any more of our green land or open space in the north - we are losing too much in what is already over populated areas. We are even having our playgrounds built on.  |
| I Grew Up On Kingshurst        | The subject area has been described as a 'Nature Reserve' but houses are still being built - this building should NOT be allowed to encroach any further - If social affordability & additional housing is required, then turn south!   |

| Organisation                                      | Comment  |
|---|--|
| Safe & Sound in Area 3                            | On the Draft Local Plan there was a proposal that the old Bosworth Wood School site now known as Jensen House would be used for housing which would mean we lose access to the field which is currently used by residents and in the summer Big Local have organised many activities, if access to the field is lost there is nowhere else to hold these activities. |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association                   | Generally, the association appreciates that Solihull provides a reasonable level of community recreation facilities that can always benefit from improvements in some areas  |
| Sorooptimist International, Solihull and District | Please consider putting back litter bins at all bus stops, to save the abundance of cigarette ends and other litter next to them.  |
| South Solihull Community Group                    | Allocation 13 is essential for Shirley   |

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

### Overview

- The Borough has produced several noteworthy strategy documents to inform the development plan process and other Council decision making.
- However, several of the above documents have elapsed time-horizons. These include strategies relating to woodland, nature conservation, walking, and cycling.
- There are a considerable number of 'standards' promoted by the Council for the provision and protection of open space. Most of these appear to be contained in non-statutory documents supporting the statutory local plan.
- Natural England stress the need to take into account the ANGst standard as 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 be taken into consideration.
- Working relations with strategic conservation bodies (especially the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust) appear to be strong and productive.

### Quantity

#### Strategic organisations (including Borough Council officers, and policy documents).

- The consensus seems to be that whilst the Borough is, overall, well provided with open space, the distribution is skewed across the geography. The 'urban' north is significantly worse of in per capita terms than the more rural south of the Borough.
- There is a concern about the proliferation of relatively small areas of 'amenity space' across the urban north of the Borough, which have no discrete function.

#### Community groups survey

- Of those responding to the question 43% local organisations felt there to be enough open spaces to meet their needs; 37% did not think there were sufficient; and, 20% didn't know/had no opinion.
- Specific instances of quantity issues are reported in the relevant part of this section.

#### Household Survey

- It is the Borough's footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (79%); followed by woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (76%) local parks and recreation grounds (74%) and informal open spaces for ball games etc (72%). Rights of way, parks and informal open spaces are also the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis: 63% use such paths at least weekly (of which 38% make use almost every day); 55% make use of informal spaces at least weekly (of which 32% almost every day); and 55% visit parks and recreation grounds at least weekly (18% of which visit almost every day).
- Play areas and areas for water recreation are also fairly frequently used but by fewer households. At least 40% use them on a regular basis - at least monthly (including those who are more regular users).

Of the householders responding:

- Over 60% think that overall there are enough parks and recreation grounds and MUGAs; and 54% note that there are enough areas for water recreation.
- 58% of households suggest a general need for more facilities for teenagers.
- A small majority of households (52%) suggest a general need for more footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths etc; woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves; and informal open space for ball games, picnic etc.
- In many cases opinion is quite close regarding the sufficiency of provision most notably for allotment provision where 47% report an overall need for more while 50% think there are enough.

## Quality

### Strategic organisations (including Borough Council officers, and policy documents).

- Even in 2006 the original Green Spaces Strategy raised concerns about the ability of the Council to maintain the quality of existing green spaces it controls within the Borough. Perceptions have not changed and have probably worsened in the intervening years, across the gamut of open space provisions.
- The role of the voluntary and community sectors in helping to maintain local spaces, is increasingly emphasised.

### Community group survey

Of those responding to a question about the quality of different types of open space:

- 48% considered that local parks and recreation grounds were at least good or very good in quality;
- 48% considered wildlife, nature reserves and woodland were at least good or very good in quality;
- 40% did not know/had no opinion about the quality of allotments;
- 36% considered that water recreation opportunities were at least good or very good in quality- the same percentage felt them to be of adequate quality;
- 40% considered that footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths were of poor or very poor quality; and, 56% felt that 'other' informal and amenity green spaces were either poor or adequate in quality.

Specific instances of quality issues are reported in the relevant part of this section.

### Household Survey

Of the householders responding:

- 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.
- 36% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor compared to 20% rating them as good or very good; and 29% rated the quality of MUGAs as poor compared to 22% rating them as good or very good.
- In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (51% similarly); footpaths etc (48%); and play areas (47%).

## Access

### Strategic organisations (including Borough Council officers, and policy documents).

The general views appear to be:

- Generally good access to green space in overall, but with some provision-specific exceptions. Play areas are covered in a separate section, but it is noted that access to certain types of facility is difficult in parts of the Borough.
- Internally within parks, there have been some barriers erected to stop motorcycling, but these can be problematic for visitors in wheelchairs.
- There are also concerns about the impact of human access in to some wildlife areas, although the health benefits provided by such access for residents is also recognised.
- There is a view that some of the quieter rural roads could be turned into quiet green lanes, where through vehicular traffic is discouraged or banned.

### Household Survey

Of the householders responding:

- In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit the different kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.
- For example, 51% of user households are prepared to travel 20 minutes to visit woodlands, wildlife area and nature reserves and water recreation facilities. Around 25% of these report that they would travel more than 20 minutes.
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking; parks and recreation grounds; and allotments).

In addition:

- 49% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 25% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

### Community groups survey:

Of those responding to a question about the *accessibility* of different types of open space:

- 25% said that they did face issues;
- 58% said they did not face issues; and,
- 17% said they didn't know/had no opinion.

Specific instances of access issues are reported in the relevant part of this section.

## 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.

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

### 5.1 Youth and Play facilities – Stakeholders

#### 5.1.1 Solihull Borough Council

##### SMBC Public Realm Manager

- SMBC is largely responsible for play and youth facilities within the urban area, and facilities in the rural areas are often the responsibility of the parish councils.
- Increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of provision due to lack of internal resources, especially given the proliferation of small play areas.
- Play areas are a key element of open space provision. Play areas provided from the Play Builder programme ten years ago are now having to be refurbished as part of a prioritised programme. Some of the most heavily used being programmed first.
- Young people/teenagers – in certain locations there are good facilities, but not in all. The service is involved in early discussions with the FA regarding recreation football (MUGAs and other courts). Looking at ten sites currently.
- One good example of a facility in the Borough is Solihull BMX Pump, located in Olton Jubilee Park, Solihull. It is built up of tarmac turns, rollers, doubles, and tabletops designed to be enjoyed by all abilities.

##### SMBC Neighbourhood Management

More facilities for teenagers could assist us in engaging young people in positive activity and reducing anti-social behaviour. However, these can be unpopular with adjacent residents so there is a tension potentially.

##### Children's Services - Engage

The Community Engagement Worker in the Council's Engage Team supports the Solihull Youth Council which provides a voice for young people across the Borough. The Community Engagement Worker helped to promote an online survey prepared by Ethos. See Section below for further details.

#### 5.1.2 Solihull Youth Council

The Council's Community Engagement Worker noted that the timing of the consultation process (over the summer holidays) did not allow for a formal Youth Council meeting consultation. However, an online system was developed that enabled input from a small group of six youth council members, so as to provide a young people's perspective on provision. Some key points are noted below:

- The young people all made use of local parks and recreation grounds. The other spaces most commonly visited were local equipped play areas and MUGAs.



- Half of the young people highlighted meeting in the town/neighbourhood centre and “on the street” indicating the importance of considering the role of planning more widely in relation to the design of public open space.
- A clear majority of the young people thought that overall there are not enough outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet. In contrast a small majority thought that there are enough outdoor play areas for younger children (under 13).
- As regards quality and maintenance, a clear majority of the young people thought that outdoor play areas for younger children were not well maintained and of good quality. Opinion on the quality and maintenance of youth facilities was divided.
- A clear majority of the young people said that they would walk or cycle a bit further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting.
- The kinds of provision seen as a priority for improvement by most were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers, equipped play areas for younger children and youth shelters/outdoor meeting areas with seats.
- All of the young people said that they would like to have a say in how new outdoor areas for young people should be designed and how they can be improved.

### **5.1.3 Meriden Adventure Playground**

Meriden Adventure Playground is a staffed play area within Meriden Park in Chelmsley Wood. It attracts children, young people and families from all over North Solihull and some of East Birmingham. It is a self-build site with structures to climb and swing from, sandpits, a firepit, a zipwire, tunnel, platforms, ladders etc. and is open every day except Sundays and Mondays. It caters for children and young people up to 18 years old. It is open after-school Tuesday to Friday in term-time and during school holidays. It is also open on Saturdays and has Youth nights on Mondays and Thursdays.

#### **Quantity**

The Senior Playworker’s view was that overall there are not enough public play spaces or youth facilities in the Borough. She added that one problem was that they tended to attract people who are considered unsafe, and often end up vandalised and unloved, despite the efforts of SMBC and that “families tell us that they see parks and playgrounds as no-go areas...” In particular it was suggested that there is a need for more Adventure Playgrounds.

#### **Quality**

Overall the view was that in the main both play spaces and youth facilities tended to be of poor quality with the exception of outdoor gyms and grass kickabout areas which broadly speaking were “adequate” in terms of quality. The senior playworker said that “children and young people tell us that public play areas are actually boring with little challenge or stimulation”.

#### **Priorities for Improvement**

The main priorities for improvement noted were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; wild natural areas (grass, ponds, trees for climbing, sand/mud etc); and youth shelter/outdoor meeting areas with seats.

#### **Other comments**

The Senior Playworker noted that “realistically, play and youth areas need staffing - many parents will not allow their children or teenagers out to play as they perceive parks and playgrounds as unsafe”. She added that there were over 5000 recorded visits to the Adventure Playground over the summer holidays because “children and young people love it; and parents know we are on site so they know their kids are safe”.

### 5.1.4 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:

| Local Council      | Comments – Play and Youth Facilities   |
|--------------------|--|
| Hockley Heath PC   | Further play equipment would be beneficial.  |
| Dickens Heath PC   | The play area is currently closed, and in the ownership of the liquidators. It needs to be urgently refurbished and reopened. A MUGA is required urgently - SMBC holds s106 monies.                    |
| Balsall PC         | Repairs/Improvements needed for play equipment for under 5's; and play equipment for 5-12 year olds.   |
| Kingshurst PC      | More provision needed for teenagers.   |
| Smith's Wood PC    | There is no provision for teenagers in Smith's Wood.   |
| Berkswell PC       | Much more will be needed (play areas and youth facilities) if the Solihull Plan requires significant additional housing in Berkswell. Please see draft Berkswell NDP policies B1 and B3 and appendix 5 |
| Castle Bromwich PC | Play Equipment needs replacing.  |
| Chadwick End PC    | Youth facilities needed, as is a MUGA.   |
| Chelmsley Wood TC  | Additional play equipment needed within play area located at the Town Council Offices  |
| Meriden PC         | Young People have previously requested a skatepark. Another MUGA would be an asset.  |

### 5.1.5 Other Stakeholders

#### Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Wildlife areas are great alternatives to more structured play areas. Woodlands in particular provide lots of play opportunities that have added benefits to learning and development (climbing trees or logs, den building etc).

#### 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".

## Canal and Rivers Trust

Opportunities such as boating can be used by organised groups such as scouts/guides and sports clubs, and are often operated around our network by third party groups.

### 5.1.7 Community and Youth/Play Organisations

Local community and youth/play organisations were surveyed for their views on the various typologies of open space and green infrastructure. The groups were asked to give their view on the overall quality of play and youth facility provision across the Borough and the findings are shown in the chart below:



In general, the view was that overall the quality of play spaces and youth facilities was quite good (50% rating it as good or very good in contrast to 19% reporting it as poor or very poor).

Some of the groups provided points and observations on play and youth facilities as noted below:

| Group                       | Comments on Play and Youth Facilities  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1st Hockley Heath Cub Pack  | Improvements have been made in recent years such as in Shirley Park, though it would be good to see this where possible throughout the Borough.  |
| 2nd Solihull Girls' Brigade | The play areas in Solihull generally need updating. Unfortunately, there are youths who have vandalised some of the areas which makes it very difficult for younger children to play on all of the equipment.  |
| All Stars Childcare         | We have outings to local library and walks around the environment for 2-3 year old children; and local park trips during holiday play scheme. We don't think there are enough play areas for younger children or youth facilities for teenagers. We would like to see more climbing equipment and clean and safe play areas. Skate parks etc should be kept clean and safe; and youth shelters should be used as a base for supervised activities.<br>In general, the quality of play areas and youth facilities is poor though outdoor gyms, grass kickabout areas and wild natural areas for play are adequate. Play areas/facilities that are available are run down, covered in graffiti, broken etc. These areas need to be kept on top of and in an inviting condition for children and parents. Priorities for improvement are Youth Shelters; play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; and wheeled sports facilities/Parkour. |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>Youth services need to be a high priority as in the local area teenage behaviours are becoming very troublesome. Driving up and down roads on bikes, holding up traffic, violent crime etc.</p>  |
| <p>Barratt's Farm Neighbourhood Action Group</p>      | <p>There are public play areas at Lavender Hall Park and Willow Park, and a private sports club on Meeting House Lane. If the proposed housing developments take place these will be totally inadequate and much more provision will be needed to promote community adhesion and wellbeing. There need to be more facilities for youth activities which should include better use of schools.</p> <p>The small play area currently available is in the far west or south of Balsall Common and is already out of easy reach for families and toddlers especially for recent developments.</p> <p>Youth facilities are poor and the desire for young people to access modern gyms, good cycle routes and swimming facilities are not available.</p> <p>An aspiration to maintain open space between developments provides a quality environment and the provision of more play areas and facilities is important for a larger population.</p> <p>Without facilities, our young people can feel isolated and abandoned in a village with no buses after 7pm in an evening to reach friends in Solihull or Coventry.</p> |
| <p>Cars Area Together</p>                             | <p>Sadly, the play area (Lanchester Park) within Smith's Wood is hard to get across to due to no designated crossing point. It would be great to get a play area within the Cars Area as there are a number of crossing points that can be used to get to it.</p>   |
| <p>Castle Bromwich litter pickers</p>                 | <p>Play areas need TLC - play equipment often broken. No youth facilities at all. Young people are being denied green areas that are safe and clean.</p>  |
| <p>Challenge Adventure Group</p>                      | <p>We use all kinds of space, but not skate parks, purpose-built equipment etc. We use the fields by the church hall, parks etc. The quality of local play areas tends to be good as are grass kickabout areas. Play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers and wild natural areas for play tend to be poor.</p> <p>Priorities for improvement are play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers and MUGAs.</p>   |
| <p>Community Action in Fordbridge</p>                 | <p>One youth group and adventure playground as well as two toddler groups is not enough for our local area.</p>   |
| <p>Dorridge &amp; District Resident's Association</p> | <p>No youth facilities in locality. More Needed</p>   |
| <p>Gro-Organic CIC</p>                                | <p>Severe lack of youth provision - particularly in north Solihull. Cuts in youth facilities has seen a rise in kids hanging around parks and open spaces and in turn this has seen a decline in older people who want to visit those spaces as it is deemed as unsafe.</p>   |
| <p>Knowle society</p>                                 | <p>Youth facilities are not that well maintained and often look depressing from the outside.</p>  |
| <p>Meriden Adventure Playground Association</p>       | <p>Certainly not enough. Children's centres and youth centres have recently been closed due to local authority cuts. On a warm summer's day we can end up with over 450 children and whilst that's great in some ways, it is too many and is a visual aid of how little other similar provision there is. If kids in North Solihull are to have a good - and equal - start in life, we really really need more and better - and staffed - play areas and youth facilities.</p>  |
| <p>Safe &amp; Sound in Area 3</p>                     | <p>Only play and youth facilities/opportunities what Big Local provide at Auckland Hall.</p>  |
| <p>Shirley Community Church</p>                       | <p>There are not enough play areas and youth facilities in our area. In general quality is at best adequate except for the grass kickabout areas which tend to be good.</p>   |

|  |        |  |
|--|--------|--|
|  |        | Priorities for improvement are play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; outdoor gyms; and wild areas for natural play.  |
| Solihull Youth                               | Parish | We often run games and activities in the parks, Malvern/Brueton, scavenger hunts and other. Mostly summer months when it can be as often as once or twice a week. We think that there are enough play areas, skate parks and youth shelters but not enough MUGAs and outdoor sports spaces. Other than the set of outdoor gym equipment in Tudor Grange park, and the tennis courts in Malvern park I don't know of any other sets of these. The tennis courts especially get really busy. In general play areas and youth facilities are quite good but play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers are poor.<br>Priorities for improvement are youth shelters, more challenging play areas and wild areas for natural play. |
| Solihull Ratepayers Association              |        | We rate the provision of Youth Facilities as fairly low and would warrant additional provision particularly for teenagers should resources become available  |
| Soroptimist International, Solihull District | and    | There are not enough youth facilities. If there were, there might be less occurrence of youths hanging around in public parks, damaging equipment and newly planted trees  |
| South Solihull Community Group               |        | Shirley park has already been reduced and there is really nothing else similar in our area   |

## 5.3 Play Areas and Youth Facilities - Key Findings

The Borough Council is the primary provider of play space and youth facilities in Solihull Borough and manage 33 play/youth spaces across the Borough. Some of the town/parish councils also manage play spaces.

### 5.3.1 Quantity

#### *Stakeholder views*

- SMBC Neighbourhood Management noted that more facilities for teenagers could assist them in engaging young people in positive activity and help reduce anti-social behaviour.
- A small number of town and parish councils report that there is not enough play provision in their parish but a higher proportion highlight a lack of youth facilities.
- The Youth Council respondents thought that overall there are not enough outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet. In contrast a small majority thought that there are enough outdoor play areas for younger children (under 13).
- The Senior Playworker at Meriden Adventure Playground suggested that overall there are not enough public play spaces or youth facilities across the Borough.
- A significant number of play and youth organisations suggested an overall lack of youth facility provision.

#### *Residents survey*

- A clear majority of respondents (58%) to the resident's survey believe that overall across Solihull Borough there is insufficient provision of youth facilities.
- In contrast a majority of respondents (55%) report that there are enough play areas for younger children (under 13s).

### 5.3.2 Quality

#### *Stakeholder views*

- The SMBC Public Realm Manager noted that play areas provided from the Play Builder programme ten years ago are now having to be refurbished as part of a prioritised programme.
- The Public Realm Manager also observed that in certain locations there are good facilities for youth/teenagers, but not in all areas.
- A significant number of town/parish councils highlighted a need to improve the quality of local play space and youth facility provision.
- Community and Youth Organisations - the most common view was that overall the quality of play spaces is quite good (50% rating quality as good or very good in contrast to 19% reporting it as poor or very poor).
- Meriden Adventure Playground suggested that in the main both play spaces and youth facilities tended to be of poor quality with the exception of outdoor gyms and grass kickabout areas. The senior playworker said that "children and young people tell us that public play areas are actually boring with little challenge or stimulation".
- Youth Council - a clear majority of the young people thought that some outdoor play areas for younger children were not well maintained and of good quality. Opinion on the quality and maintenance of youth facilities was divided.

- A number of community organisations and Meriden Adventure Playground noted that vandalism was a problem in some areas in relation to maintaining the quality of play areas.

#### *Residents survey*

- The quality of youth facilities is not rated highly - 80% of respondent households say that they are at best adequate with 36% of those rating them as poor or very poor).
- In contrast residents are quite satisfied with the quality of equipped play areas across the Borough (47% rated them as being good or very good in contrast to 11% rating them as poor or very poor).

### **5.2.3 Access**

#### *Stakeholder views*

- Youth Council respondents indicated that they would walk or cycle a bit further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting.
- Cars Area Together noted the importance of ensuring there are safe routes to play areas for children and young people.

#### *Residents survey*

- 53% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which around 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 84% of users would expect youth facilities to be within a 15 minute travel time. 21% of these would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes and 19% no more than 5 minutes.

### **5.2.4 Priorities for improvement**

#### *Stakeholder views*

- Youth Council - the kinds of provision seen as a priority for improvement by most were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers, equipped play areas for younger children and youth shelters/outdoor meeting areas with seats.
- Meriden Adventure Playground - the main priorities for improvement noted were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; wild natural areas (grass, ponds, trees for climbing, sand/mud etc); and youth shelter/outdoor meeting areas with seats.

#### *Residents survey*

- Children's play areas score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 54% of households - 26% high/28% medium). Facilities for teenager were also rated similarly (a combined high/medium priority choice for 47% of households - 26% high/21% medium).

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

- The SMBC Public Realm Manager noted that it is increasingly difficult to maintain the quality of provision due to lack of internal resources, especially given the proliferation of small play areas.

- SMBC is involved in early discussions with the FA regarding recreational football (MUGAs and other courts). Ten sites are currently being considered.
- The value of play in relation to improvements to children and young people’s health and wellbeing was highlighted by the Borough Council and various 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.
- The Community Engagement Officer noted that It is particularly important that young people are consulted and engaged at an early stage in relation to any play and youth facility developments or changes in their local area.
- Youth Council - all of the respondents said that they would like to have a say in how new outdoor areas for young people should be designed and how they can be improved.
- Some of the Youth Council respondents highlighted that they met in the town centre and “on the street” indicating the importance of considering the role of planning more widely in relation to the design of public open space.
- Meriden Adventure Playground and a number of community organisations highlighted the need for more outdoor supervised play and youth activities – noting recent cuts in play and youth services.
- Play England and FiT 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 and Outdoor Recreation Study.

Response levels to the residents' survey, town/parish councils survey, and community organisation survey 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 and outdoor recreation facilities have influenced the findings of the study. All the main strategic stakeholders have responded and key issues have been identified to be further considered in the main Open Space Assessment report.

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 the Open Assessment report in relation to the various typologies of open space and outdoor recreation being analysed. In particular they provide evidence to support the spatial planning standards recommended for the different categories of open space and outdoor recreation facilities.