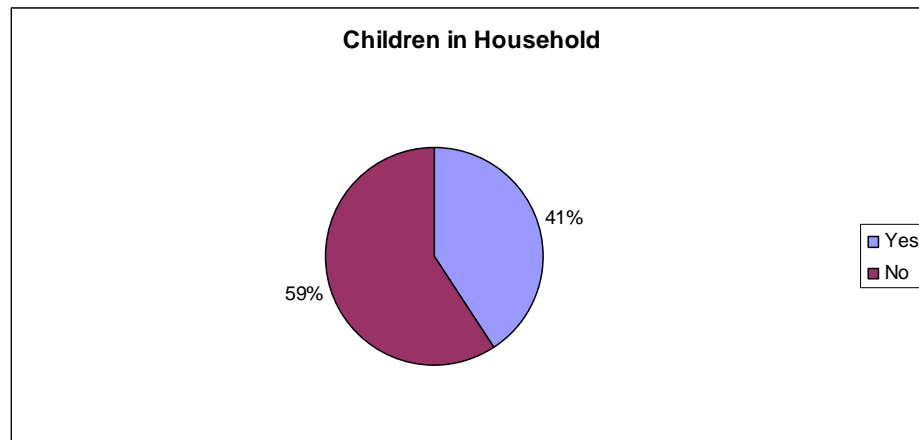
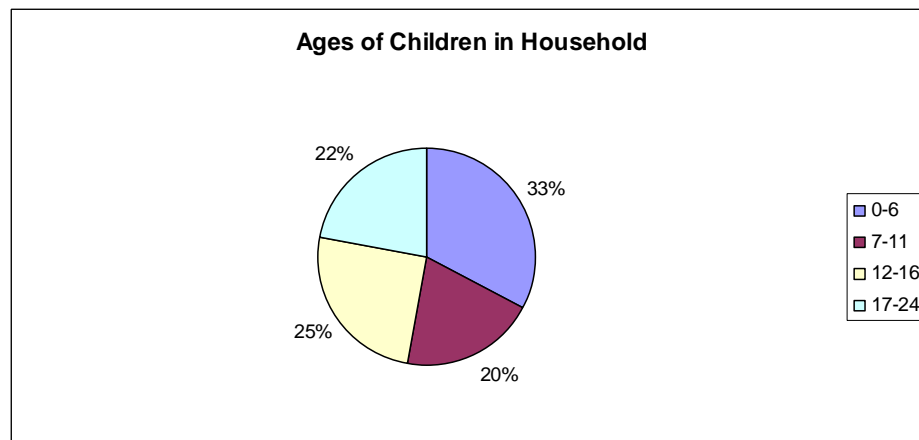


Of those who completed and returned the questionnaire, the percentage breakdown in terms of age is shown on the left.



Of those households responding the percentage breakdown of those containing children or otherwise, is shown on the left.



Of those responding households with children the following chart on the left shows the overall percentage breakdown of age for those children.

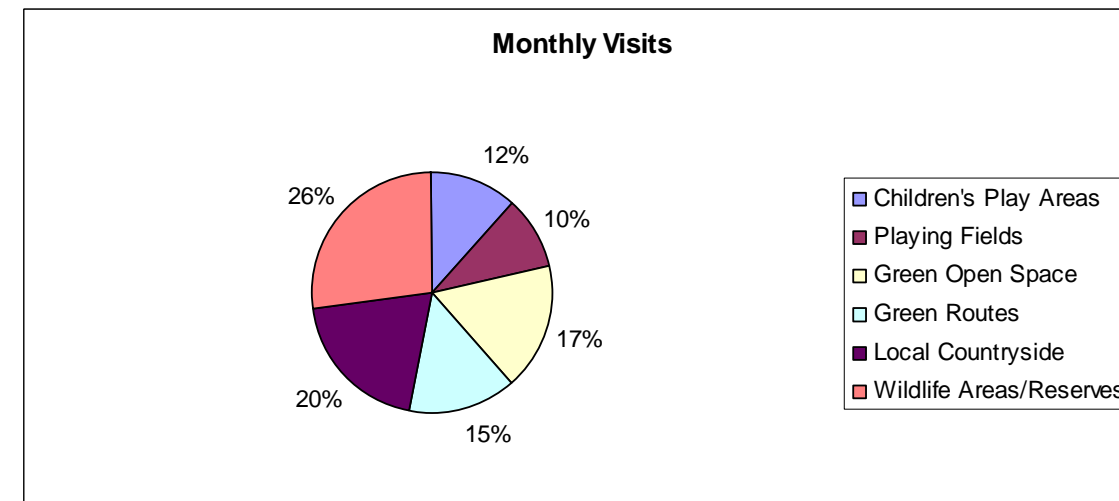
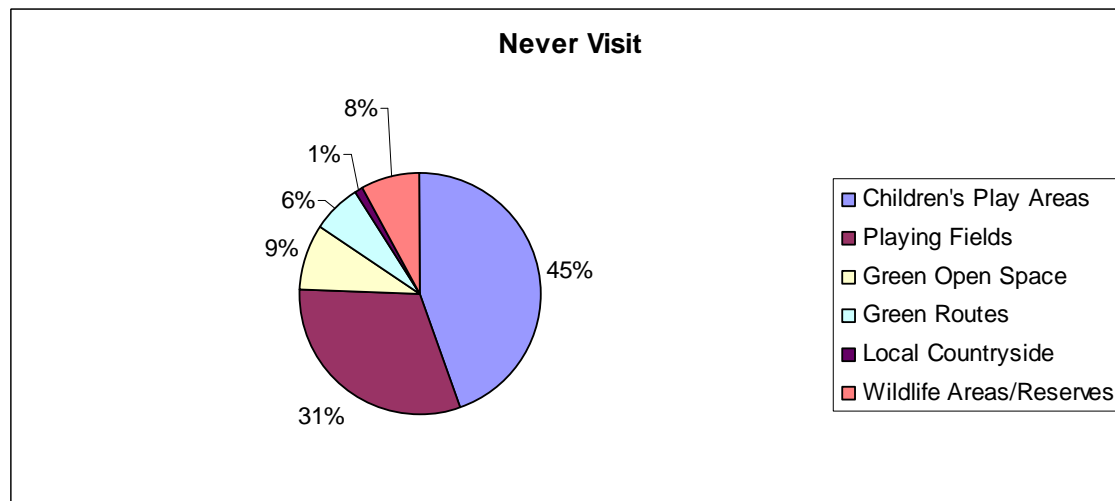
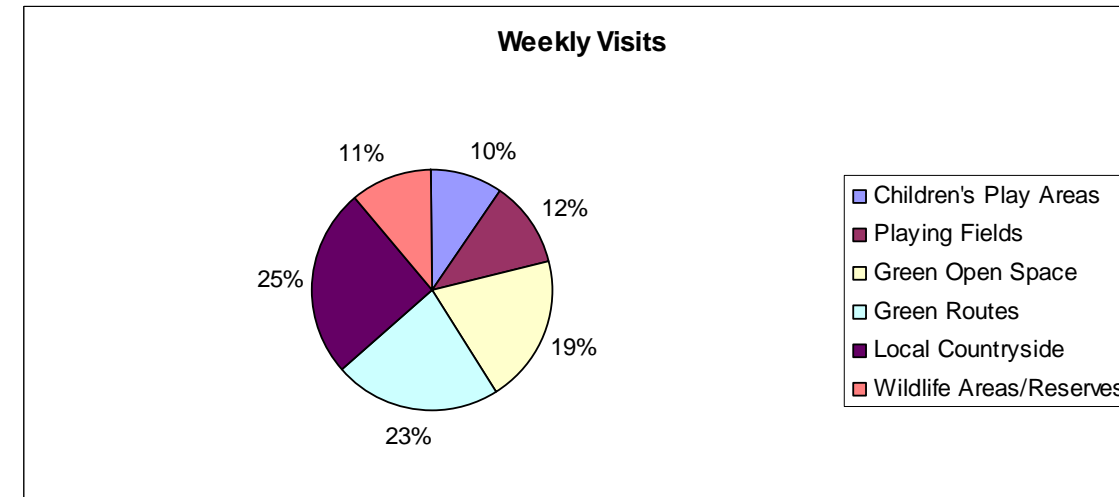
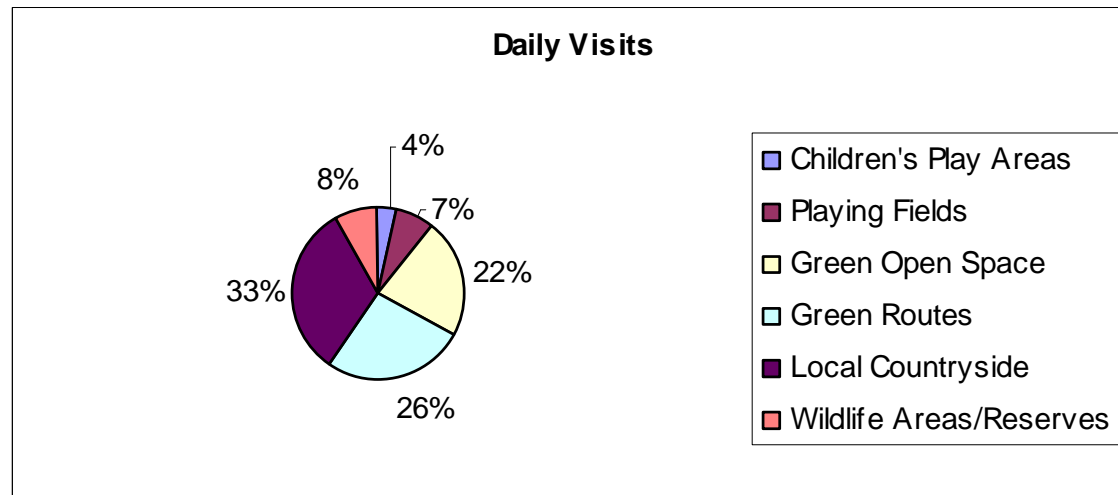
Comments on the characteristics of the respondents.

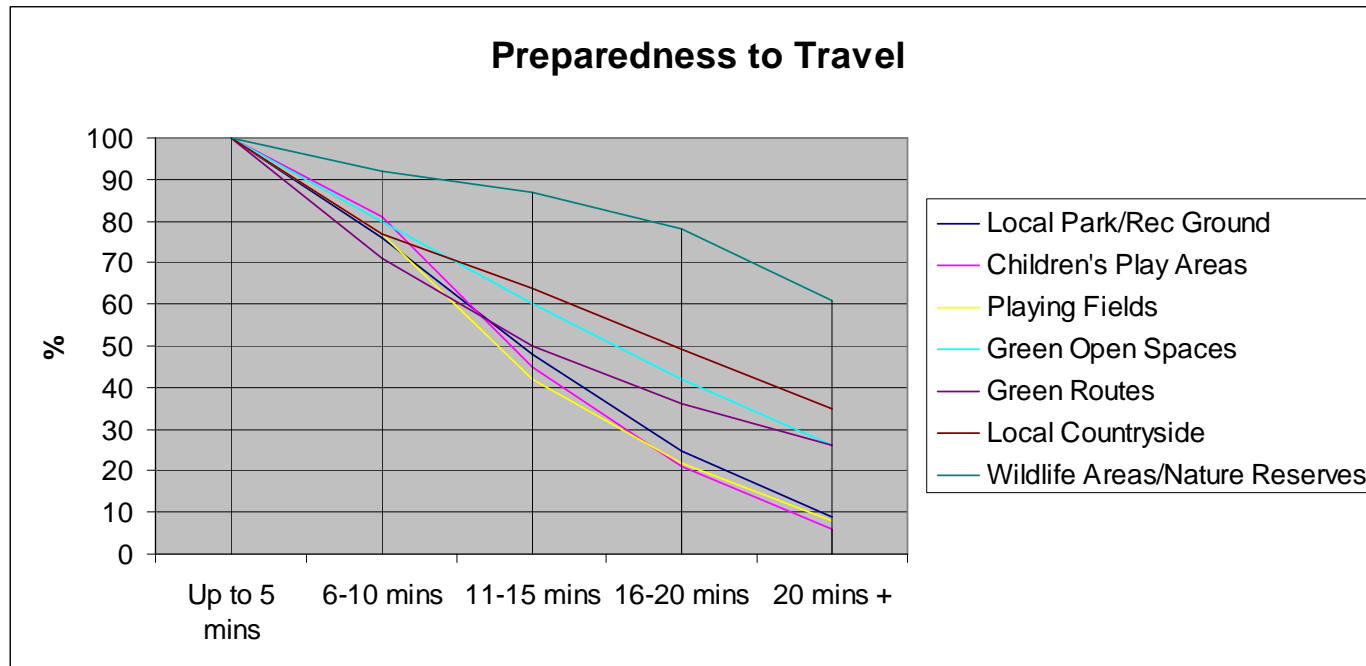
The household survey represents a core component of the consultation, and the information derived helps to inform many aspects of the study and, ultimately, recommendations for the development of local standards of provision. However, such surveys tend to provoke a higher response from householders of a particular demographic and social background. The findings must be considered with those of other community investigations to achieve a rounded view.

Frequency, regularity and times of use

Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of various types of open space within the Borough, and the below charts summarise the results.

The charts do make clear the importance of informal and natural space to respondents in terms of their regular visits. It is recognised some of the responses may tend to skew findings against some types of open space that might be regularly used by other members of the community who are not 'householders'.





Location of facilities relative to place of residence and 'preparedness to travel'

An important function of this study is to develop and recommend a series of local standards of provision for different types of open space, of which 'Accessibility' will be a core component.

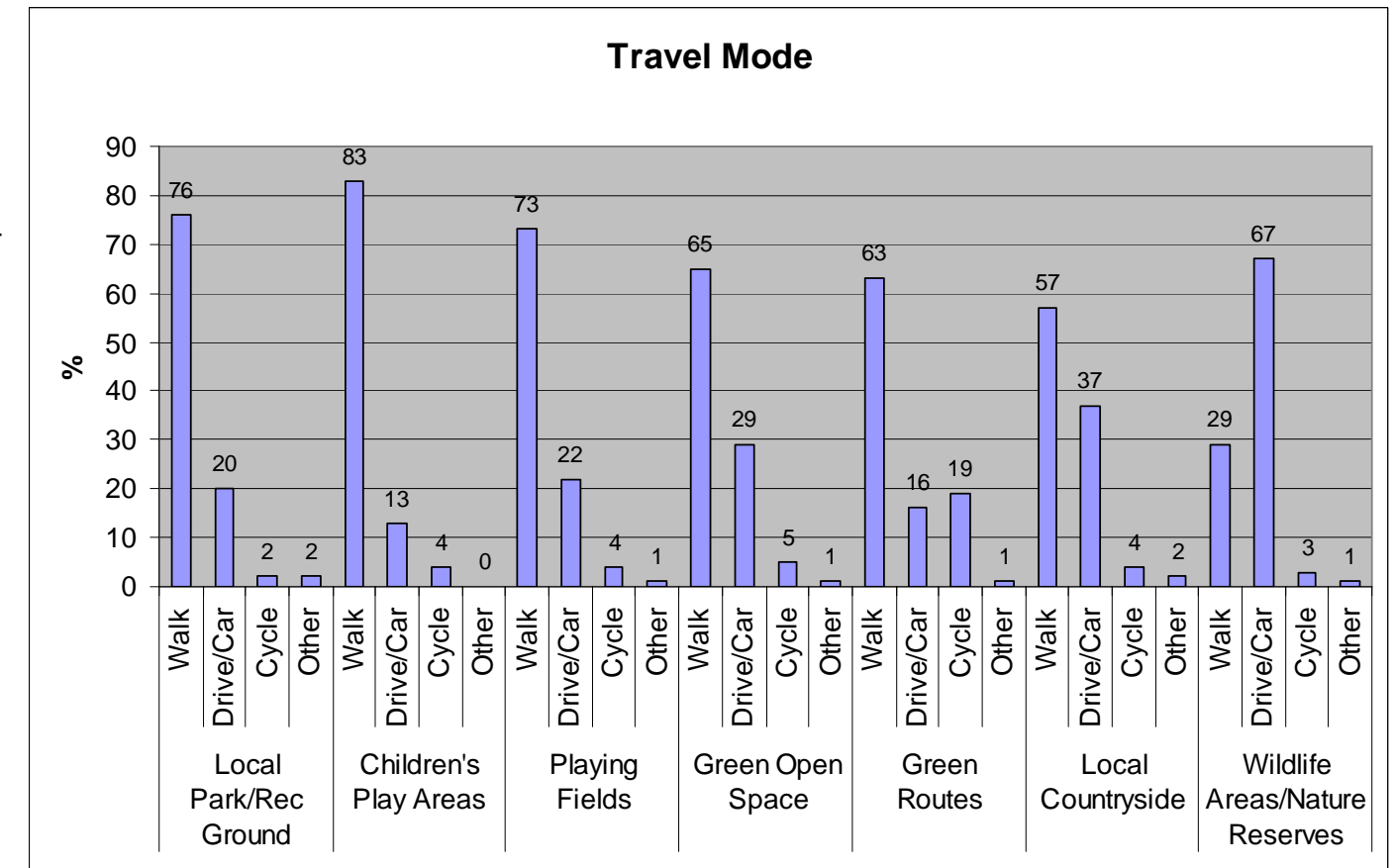
The chart on the left summarises respondents' preparedness to travel to different types of space (if they use them).

It is clear from the chart that for most types of space the large majority of respondents are prepared to travel between 6-10 minute. The exception to this is for wildlife and nature reserves where the toleration of travel is higher, perhaps because respondents perceive that such features tend to be found in relatively remote and isolated locations.

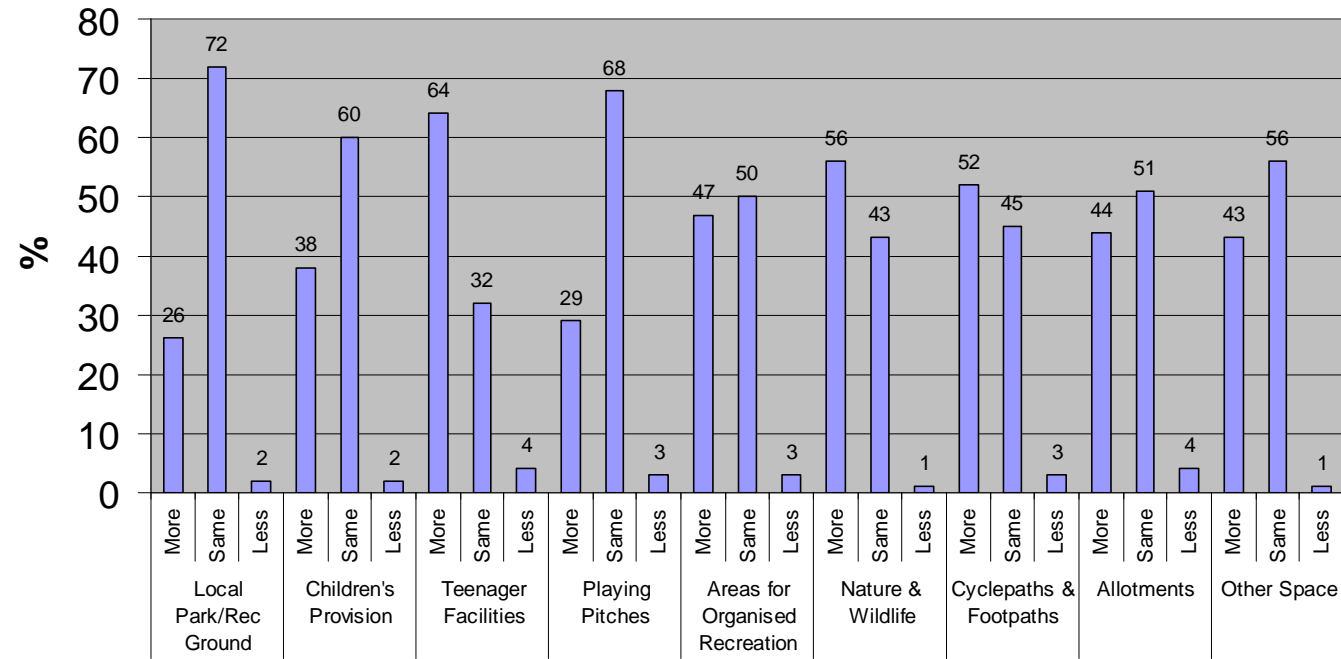
Mode of transport

An accompanying question asked what mode of transport respondents were likely to use to get to the various types of open space, with the results summarised by the chart on the left.

It is not surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to most types of space. The results do suggest greater preparedness to use a car to get to 'local countryside' and 'wildlife areas/nature reserves'. In terms of the latter car borne trips are in the majority, which again suggests a perception that such areas tend to be in remote locations.



More/Less/Same Space



'More, less or the same'

Respondents expressed their views as to what types of open space they would broadly like to see 'more, less, or the same of' with the results shown to the left.

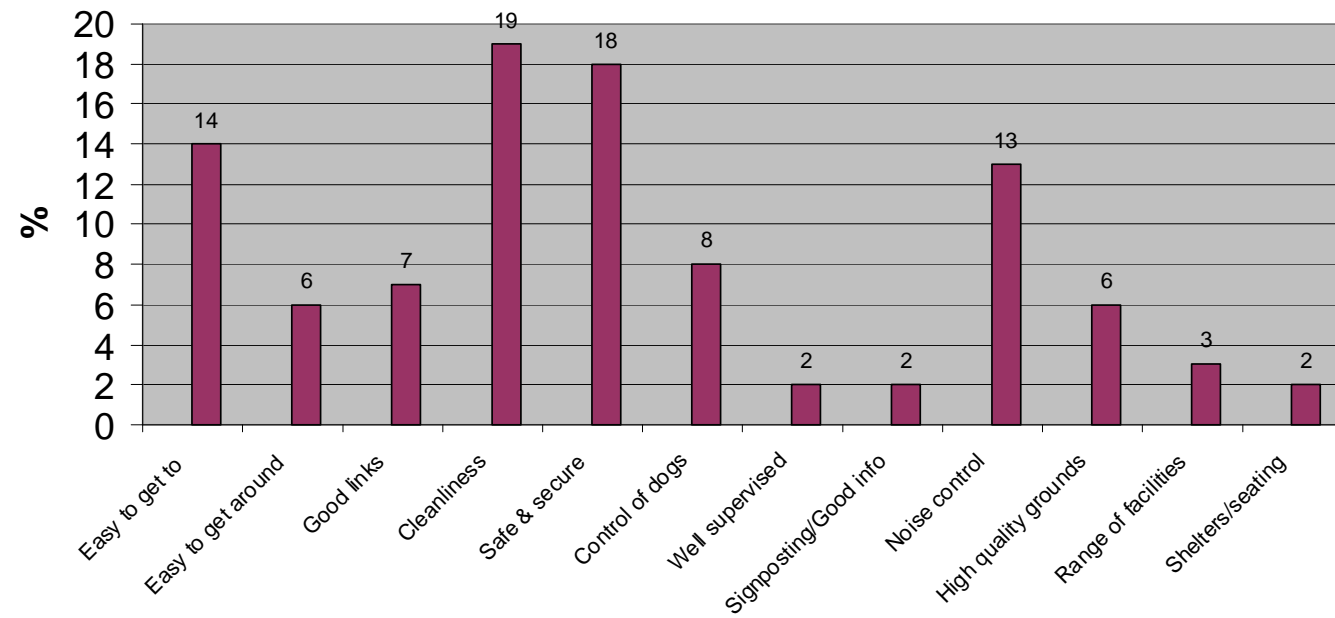
In terms of wanting to see 'more space' the following were the highest scorers (in descending order):

- Teenage facilities
- Nature and wildlife sites
- Cyclepaths and footpaths.

'Areas for organised recreation' and 'allotments' also had a strong showing.

Judging from the results few people felt there to be too much open space of any kind. The highest scores of any kind tended to be in the categories where people felt there should be the same amount of open space.

Most Important Considerations in relation to Open Space



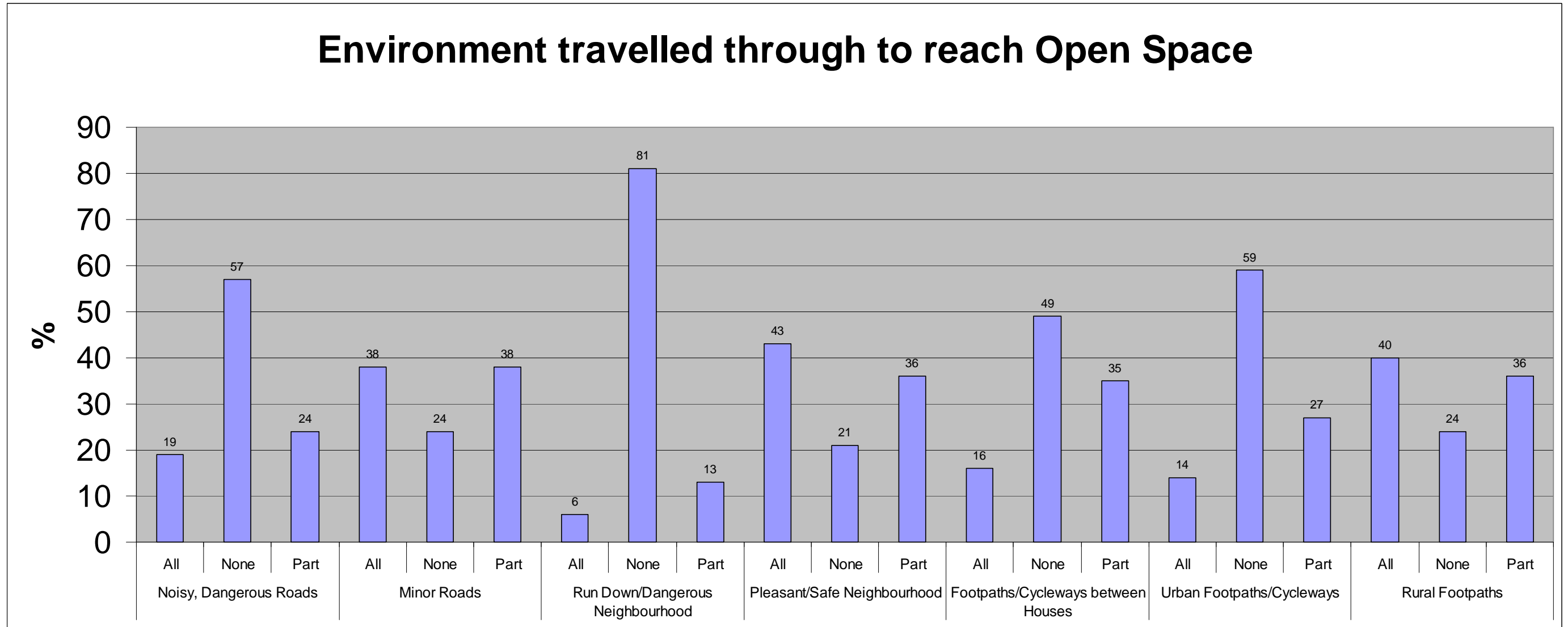
Most important considerations

Respondents were asked to identify the most important considerations in relation to areas of open space.

The chart on the left indicates that the most important issues for residents are to ensure that sites are clean; safe and secure; and easy to get to. Control of noise and anti-social behaviour was also prominent. It is likely that some respondents will have conflated various categories in terms of their responses, but the key message appears to be 'clean, safe, and easy to get to'.

Travel environment

Clearly, there is no value in having good quality open space if it is difficult and/or unpleasant to reach. Earlier in this section the views of respondents were summarised in term of their preparedness to travel. However, there are other factors governing ease of access. Respondents were asked to categorise the environment they travelled through to reach their most used open spaces. The following chart summarises the responses.



Large percentages of the respondents therefore considered they had to travel through dangerous and unpleasant environments to reach open space. These views stress the importance of not planning and providing open space in isolation from considering the permeability of the surrounding environment in the widest sense.

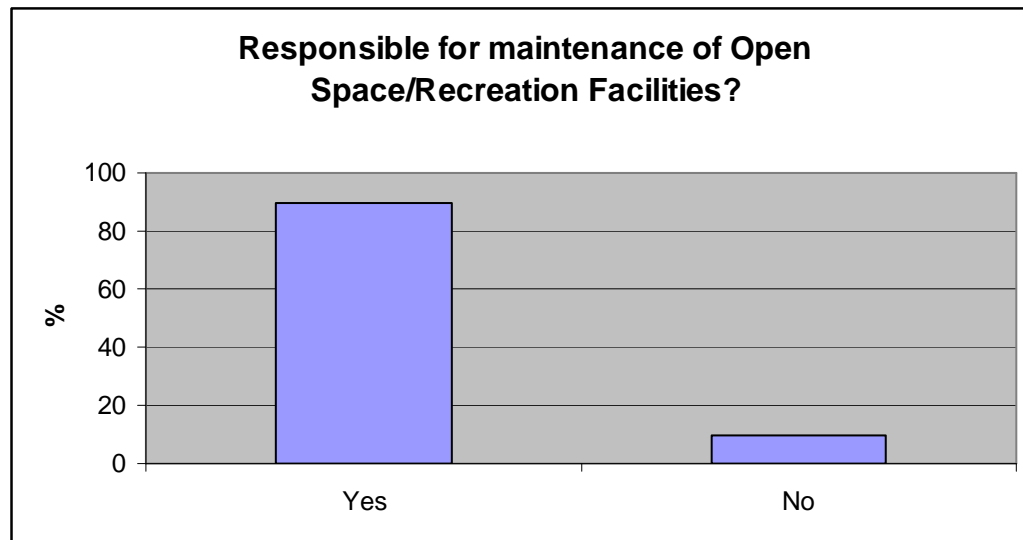
4.5 Town and Parish Councils' Questionnaire Survey

There are 42 town and parish councils within Ashford Borough and a questionnaire was sent to each. An Ordnance Survey map of the local council area was also provided. The town and parish councils were asked to annotate the map with any open space used by the community of which they were aware. Where these maps were returned they complemented independent survey work. The following table summarises the level of response obtained.

Estimated Population	Name	Questionnaire Returned	Map returned	Estimated Population	Name	Questionnaire Returned	Map returned
7613	Tenterden CP	•	•	981	Aldington CP	•	•
6709	Kingsnorth CP	•	•	880	Hothfield CP	•	•
4206	Great Chart with Singleton CP			846	Smeeth CP	•	•
3833	Stanhope CP			843	Challock CP		
2694	Charing CP	•	•	754	Appledore CP		•
2434	Biddenden CP	•	•	740	Westwell CP	•	•
2405	Wye with Hinxhill CP	•	•	727	Ruckinge CP		
1824	Woodchurch CP	•	•	392	Stone-cum-Ebony CP	•	•
1595	Chilham CP	•	•	374	Warehorne CP		
1495	Rolvenden CP	•	•	366	Godmersham CP		
1463	High Halden CP			318	Sevington CP	•	•
1443	Bethersden CP	•		307	Brook CP		
1442	Brabourne CP	•	•	274	Bilsington CP	•	•
1281	Orlestone CP			249	Molash CP	•	•
1222	Smarden CP	•	•	239	Little Chart CP	•	•
1143	Wittersham CP	•	•	226	Hastingleigh CP		
1135	Shadoxhurst CP	•	•	210	Kenardington CP		
1104	Egerton CP			193	Newenden CP	•	
1099	Boughton Aluph CP			168	Crundale CP		
1058	Mersham CP	•	•	119	Eastwell CP		
1050	Pluckley CP	•	•	109	Bonnington CP	•	•

Overall 27 local councils responded to this approach in some way, of which most returned both the map and questionnaire. A couple of councils either returned only the map or the questionnaire. The table orders the list of local councils by population size. With a few notable exceptions, there was a good response rate from the more populated local council areas (1000 people or more). Many of the smallest parishes do not in fact have any responsibilities for open space.

The findings of this meeting are provided below.



As shown on the left the large majority of the responding councils have responsibilities for the maintenance of at least some open space/recreation facilities in their area; either directly, or else through a related trust or association.

The councils were asked to comment about the quantity and quality of a range of facilities and the following table highlights the issues of concern (marked with an ●) for the different councils (no ● entered indicates no perceived problem for the parish).

Where needs were identified, the balance of comments were in respect of insufficient and/or poor quality pitches, play and youth provision. Inadequate provision for teenagers was the most frequently identified. Of the most populated parishes both Wye with Hinxhill, and Tenterden identified major deficiencies in open space provision of all kinds which is likely to be further impacted by increased population.

Parish council questionnaire survey- quality and quantity issues

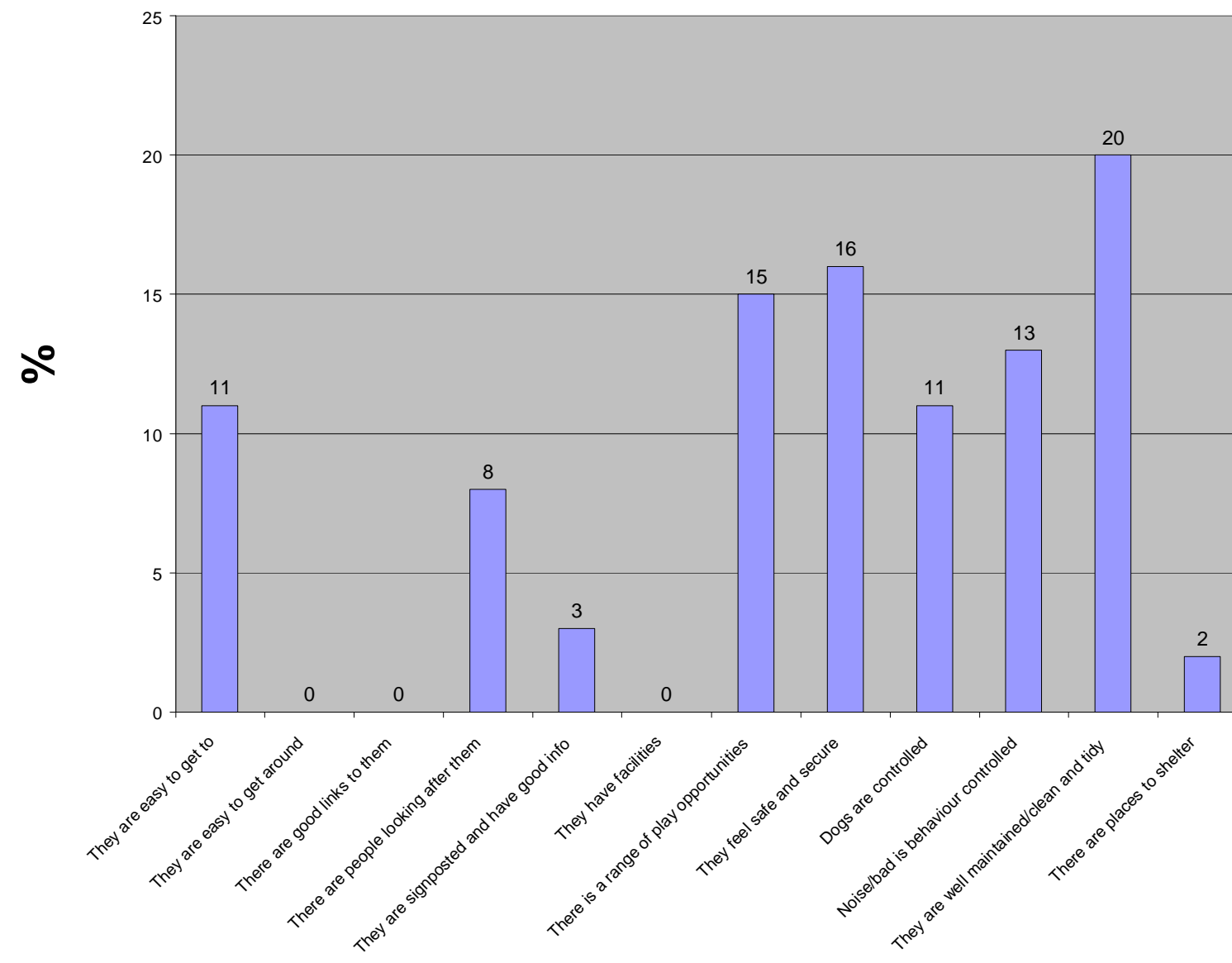
Town/Parish Council	Population	Football Pitches (not enough)	Cricket Pitches (not enough)	Rugby Pitches (not enough)	Poor Quality Pitches	Insufficient/poor quality MUGAs	Poor changing facilities	Insufficient/poor quality bowls	Insufficient informal open space	Insufficient Play areas	Poor quality play areas	Insufficient for teenagers	Shortage of Halls	Shortage of footpaths/other Routes	Shortage of wildlife areas
Aldington	981											•			
Appledore	754	No Questionnaire returned													
Bethersden	1443														
Biddenden	2434											•			
Bilsington	274												•	•	
Bonnington	109											•			
Boughton Aluph	1099	No Questionnaire returned													
Brabourne	1442	•				•						•			
Brook	307	No Questionnaire returned													
Challock	843	No Questionnaire returned													
Charing	2694					•	•					•	•	•	
Chilham	1595					•						•			
Crundale	168	No Questionnaire returned													
Eastwell	119	No Questionnaire returned													
Egerton	1104	No Questionnaire returned													
Godmersham	366	No Questionnaire returned													
Great Chart with Singleton	4206	No Questionnaire returned													
Hastingleigh	226	No Questionnaire returned													
High Halden	1463	No Questionnaire returned													
Hothfield	880	•									•				
Kenardington	210	No Questionnaire returned													
Kingsnorth	6709					•		•			•	•	•		•
Little Chart	239					•			•			•			
Mersham	1058	•				•					•	•		•	•
Molash	249														
Newenden	193														
		No Questionnaire returned													
Orlestone	1281	No Questionnaire returned													
Pluckley	1050	•	•			•		•			•	•			•
Rolvenden	1495				•		•				•	•			
Ruckinge	727	No Questionnaire returned													
Sevington	318	•				•					•	•		•	•
Shadoxhurst	1135				•		•			•	•	•			
Smarden	1222												•		
Smeeth	846					•						•			
Stanhope	3833	No Questionnaire returned													
Stone-cum-Ebony	392										•				
Tenterden	7613	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Warehorne	374	No Questionnaire returned													
Westwell	740										•	•			•
Wittersham	1143					•						•			
Woodchurch	1824											•			
Wye with Hinxhill	2405	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

When asked specifically about new or improved recreation opportunities that would benefit the community, the following were identified.

Parish council questionnaire survey- specific provision required

Parish	New or improved facilities that would benefit the parish	Parish	New or improved facilities that would benefit the parish
Aldington and Bonnington	"Facilities for Teenagers"	Rolvenden	"New football pitch with changing facilities. Update for equipment in children's play area"
Biddenden	"Teenage Facilities"	Tenterden	Representation by letter about shortages in recreation facilities in terms of existing and future populations
Bilsington	"Use of Village Hall for indoor recreation"	Shadoxhurst	"A club that teenagers could attend"
Brabourne	"Teenagers look for skateboard/rollerskate facilities- but siting is a big problem"	Kingsnorth	"Village hall/meeting room on Brisley Farm. Kickaround/goalend at Westhawk Play Area. Teenage Meeting Place. Bowling facilities"
Charing	"Sports hall to replace pavilion"	Smarden	"New sports pavilion. New youth club building"
Chilham	"Teenagers are poorly served...a specific area is required possibly including a MUGA involving basketball"	Stone cum Ebony	"Better play area for toddlers & older children"
Hothfield	"Child play area –refurb"	Smeeth	"Area for skate boarding and kickabout"
Kingsnorth	Village Hall meeting room on Brisley Farm. Kickaround/goalend at Westhawk Play Area. Teenage meeting places. Bowling facilities.	Westwell	"Playing area for children and young people needs improvement/refurbishment"
Little Chart	"Revamping tennis court & creating safe area for ball sports"	Wittersham	"MUGA"
Mersham & Sevington	"Teenage facilities; toddler facilities:family picnic areas"	Woodchurch	"Youth shelter/hangout area"
Molash	"None needed"	Wye with Hinxhill	Representation by letter about shortages in recreation facilities in terms of existing and future populations
Pluckley	"Football field for juniors and adults...parking for parents taking children to Rec ground, play area for children that is not in danger of being hit by cricket balls (or a separate cricket ground) storage for equipment used by PC, CC, Junior FC. PARKING for visitors (500+ at Halloween!"		

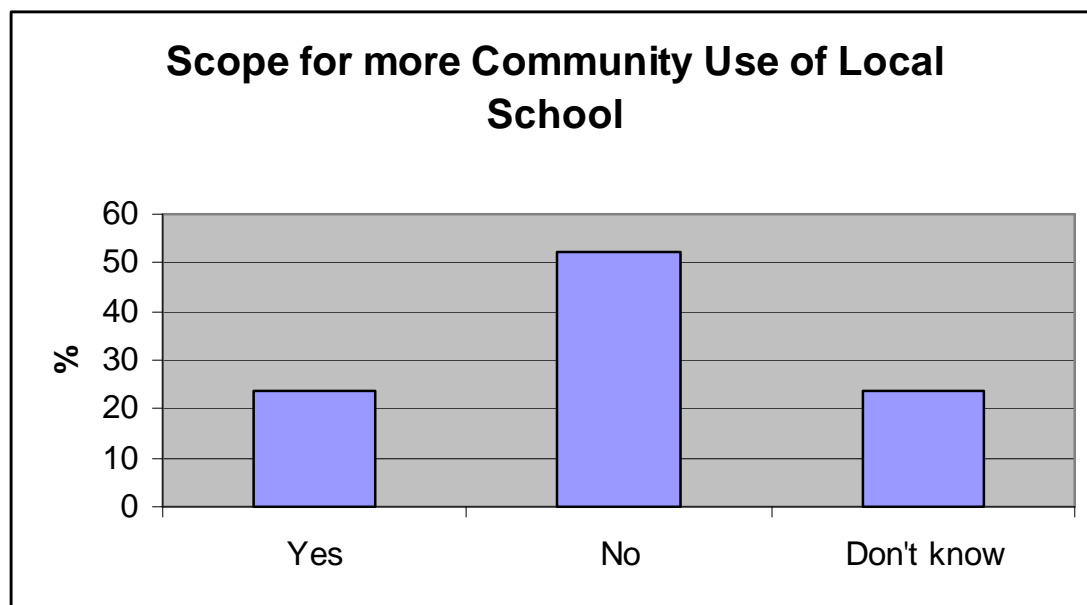
Main Considerations in respect of Open Spaces



Main considerations in respect of open space.

Councils were asked to indicate the main considerations in relation to open space, with the results shown in this chart.

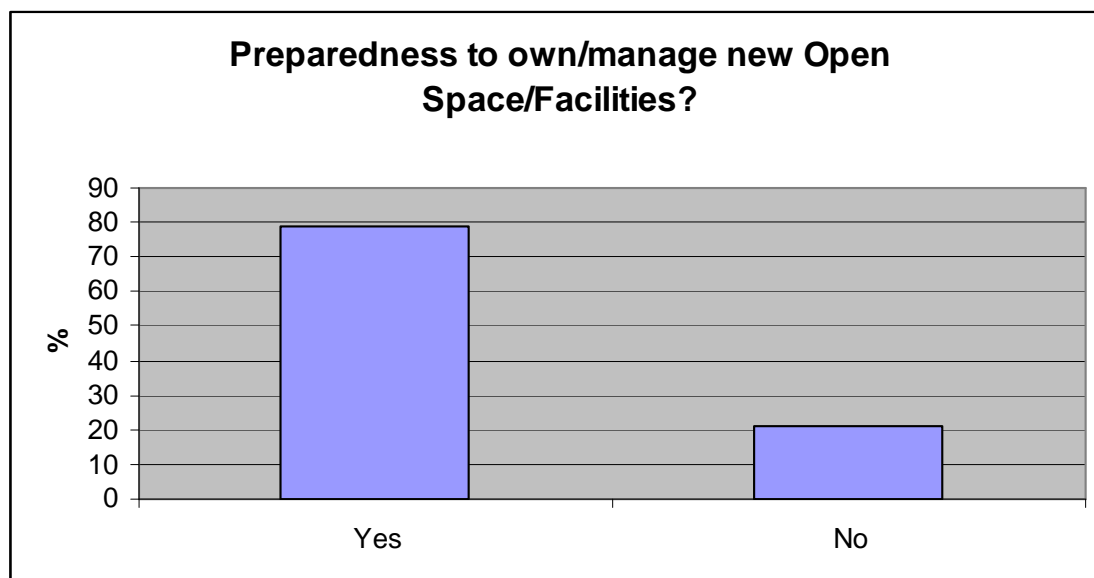
The highest scoring considerations (maintenance/cleanliness and safety/security) are the same as the highest scores in the community survey. The importance of 'ease of access' and 'noise control' is also consistent with the results of the community survey.



Scope for more community use of schools

The local councils were asked whether they felt there to be scope for jointly providing facilities at local schools, or further developing community use, with the following results.

At first glance the above results appear to represent an emphatic “no”. However, several of the parishes do not have local schools. Some other responses suggested a perceived reluctance on the part of schools and/or the education authority to allow such use.



Management of new open space

Councils were asked whether they, or else a related association or trust, would be prepared to take ownership and/or manage new open space/facilities if these were provided, with the chart on the left recording the response.

The councils were asked to name what they thought to be the most used open space in their parish, with the results indicated in **Part 2**. Finally the Councils were asked if they had any other comments or issues they wished to make, and the results are summarised in **Part 2**.

4.6 Community organisations' survey.

A questionnaire was sent out to 28 relevant groups and organisations identified by the Borough Council with responses received from nine, with the general findings as follows.

The majority of the community organisations say there are enough of the following facilities:

- local recreation ground/parks
- children's play areas
- playing pitches
- amenity open space
- natural green space
- indoor sports provision
- gyms/fitness facilities.

Whereas they said that there are not enough of these facilities:

- teenage areas
- other outdoor sports facilities
- cycle/foot paths
- allotments.

The 3 most important things about open space were deemed to be:

- easy to get to
- opportunities for all age groups
- being safe and secure.

The following aspects of open space were said to be good:

- the range & quality of play facilities for young children
- security & feeling safe.

The aspects that were said to be satisfactory were:

- the number & quality of playing pitches
- the range & quality of outdoor and indoor sports facilities
- the number & quality of local parks
- wildlife areas, footpaths & cycleways
- country parks
- allotments
- accessibility for wheelchairs & pushchairs
- provision of special events & festivals
- car parking
- areas & bins for dog fouling and lighting.

Whereas the following aspects were rated as poor:

- the range & quality of play facilities for teenagers
- areas for sitting out or informal ball games
- cleanliness & freedom from litter & graffiti
- provision of shelters & seating
- signposting, information boards & leaflets.

The main factors that they felt would encourage greater use of open space, sport and recreation facilities were:

- better and cheaper public transport
- more suitable open spaces nearer to people's homes.

From the above it is again worth noting the perceived poor quality in the provision of space for young people (teenagers). Safety and security and ease of access are also identified as important considerations when planning and managing open space, which is consistent with the views of other consultations.

4.7 Non-pitch sports questionnaire

The Borough Council has already undertaken an investigation into local needs with regard to space for pitch sports like football, rugby, hockey, and cricket and these investigations are summarised elsewhere in this section. For other sports a questionnaire survey was conducted on clubs known to the Borough Council. Twenty eight clubs were sent a questionnaire, of which 8 responded.

4.8 Pitch sports

Pitch sports (primarily football and cricket, and to a lesser extent rugby and hockey) are significant users of open space within the Borough. Football is the most popular sport in terms of overall participation, but cricket has a very strong local profile, and especially outside the Ashford urban area in the villages and smaller towns.

The Borough Council has conducted research into the supply of and demand for pitches within the urban areas of Ashford.

In brief these investigations considered the need for sports pitches in the Ashford urban area through:

- Undertaking a technical assessment of supply and demand using a method recommended by Sport England.
- Consulting with the representatives of the governing bodies, local leagues and key clubs.

The overall conclusions of these investigations are as follows.

Football:

- The technical assessment of supply relative to times of demand indicates that there is sufficient capacity to meet known demand at times of peak demand.
- The above tends to be confirmed by the views of Kent Football Association and local leagues in relation to adult football.
- Contrary to the findings of the technical assessment, junior age football leagues considered there to be a shortage of pitches at peak times, with junior and mini soccer teams reliant on the use of adult size pitches that had been previously used in the day by adult teams, leading to problems with the playing surface.
- The technical assessment of pitches suggested that most of the pitches were of at least 'average' quality, although pitches used on education sites tended to be of higher quality. To some extent these findings were at odds with the views of the Kent FA and local leagues who felt that poor drainage of many pitches was a significant issue along with inadequate or often non-existent changing facilities.

Hockey:

- Artificial Turf Pitches (ATPs) are now the required for playing competitive hockey..
- There is only one full size floodlit ATP in the Borough. This is the home ground of the only hockey club in the Borough, Ashford Hockey Club. The club uses the only other full size ATP in the borough at Towers School (Kennington), although this has no floodlighting which restricts its use. Three new full size floodlit ATPs are planned on educational sites, two of which appeared to have received funding.
- A technical assessment was undertaken of the supply of playing opportunities offered on the local ATPs compared with demand. The assessment assumed that senior teams could not play any matches on the Towers School ATP on Saturdays during daylight hours because it is not officially recognised. If this were the case then there would be a shortfall in capacity of 2 matches per week. In practise some of the adult matches are played at Towers School as well as some training sessions.
- The conclusion was that there is an immediate shortfall in ATPs and a good case can clearly be made for an additional officially full size, floodlit ATP immediately.

- Although a diverse range of ancillary facilities are available at Ball Lane hockey club, the condition of them is considered inadequate. The clubhouse is in need of total replacement. It has no female changing, poor toilets, no disabled facilities or child friendly changing areas. The club has prepared a case for a development including a new clubhouse and floodlit ATP, but has not yet identified a source of funding.

Rugby:

- Ashford Rugby Club is the only club of its kind in the Borough. The club owns four full size rugby pitches, which are all at its home ground at Kinneys Lane, Bybrook. Juniors play on a full sized pitch.
- The club's membership was growing due to a variety of reasons, including its strong position in the County League and the national team's performance in recent World Cups. Despite this they do not require additional pitches for matches or training in the foreseeable future.
- Although a diverse range of ancillary facilities are available at Ashford Rugby Club, the condition of them is considered inadequate. The clubhouse is very dilapidated in need of total replacement, for which the club is currently seeking funding. The changing rooms, showers and toilets are in an unacceptably poor state and there is no disabled access. This is affecting the club's prospects. The pitches are generally in good condition.

Cricket:

The Borough Council's assessment does not cover cricket. Most of the cricket within the Borough is played outside the Ashford urban area within the villages and smaller towns. Generally, cricket is played either on dedicated grounds owned or leased by clubs; or else, on village greens or recreation grounds.

On balance the above investigations suggest a general satisfaction with the overall current supply of sports pitches, at least in the urban area; although this is not a universally held view, and especially in terms of junior size football pitches. The poor quality or none existence of ancillary accommodation for football and rugby in particular is perhaps seen as a bigger problem together with often low quality drainage.

Ashford Open Spaces Site User Survey

Ashford Borough Council commissioned a user survey in the summer of 2005 across six natural spaces:

- Ashford Community Woodland
- Cuckoo Woods
- West Hawk Park Farm
- The Warren/Hoads Wood
- Park Farm Country Park
- Hothfield Common

Analysis of the findings suggest that the majority of users are generally happy and feel the appearance of natural green spaces is of good or excellent standard. The main comments made by the public are that they would like natural greenspace to be kept as it is- natural. They do not want building or extra development which would affect the natural appearance and threaten wildlife.

Generally most users are not prevented by anything from using the natural greenspace further. If there is a reason it is because they don't feel safe, or have insufficient time.

Satisfaction levels amongst users tends to be higher at the larger sites, where respondents are willing to travel further to use them. However, despite the overall satisfaction users feel regarding open spaces there are some significant areas for improvement. In particular it was found that dog and litter bins were in general need of improvement. It was also found that site information on cultural and natural features requires improvement. Users feel that information about greenspace on site would enhance their visit. Seating and directional signage are also other areas of improvement to consider.

Although this survey was confined to six sites and limited to current users, it does tend to confirm the importance attached to natural spaces by local people. It also indicates the value of larger spaces and people's willingness to travel to larger sites if they are attractive and interesting.

4.8 Consultation with children and young people: the Ashford Play Strategy

The focus of much of the consultation in this study has inevitably meant largely 'dealing with adults'- householders, club/society secretaries, parish clerks etc. Such representatives tend to speak collectively on behalf of the community, group, or family they represent. However, for certain types of open space provision it is essential also to liaise with children and young people as the most prominent users of such space. This additional consultation can be used to confirm, refute, and/or refine comments received via other elements of the consultation.

With regard to the children and young people, a considerable amount of research has been used to inform the development of a Play Strategy for Ashford. This research and the related strategy is both current and highly relevant.

Play Strategy Steering Group meetings provided a flexible and adaptable way of establishing the perceptions of the different parties involved in play services across Ashford. Further interviews were conducted by those representatives, to include parents and children in the process. A draft strategy was circulated amongst stakeholders including a range of public play services and interested individuals including local councillors and parish councils and members of the Ashford Partnership (LSP). Comments were debated at a 'Play Workshop'.

In addition the Strategy draws on:

- A community research study (OMAI 2005) conducted a review of community infrastructure across the Borough.
- In a recent MORI poll carried out in Ashford (Summer 2006), to help inform the Corporate Plan, over 800 residents were asked about their perception of and priorities for improving the quality of life of living in the Borough.
- Information supporting the *What Matters Youth Strategy 2006 – 2009* young people in Ashford (11 – 19 years old).

A recurrent issue raised by members of the public during OMAI consultation was the lack of local open space suitable for informal ball games.

In the MORI poll, when presented with a list of 24 items contributing to quality of life, facilities for teenagers came out as the fourth most important contributing to an area as a good place to live. Play areas, parks and open spaces were also on the list, but ranked 10th as a contributing factor for quality of life and priority for improvement.

As part of the *What Matters Youth Strategy 2006 – 2009* young people in Ashford (11 – 19 years old) had a number of key concerns including getting to places; having things to do; having a say; safe and clean streets; and improved leisure facilities. Those surveyed said that they wanted clean and safe informal facilities in open spaces in which to 'hang out' as well as more after school activity.

Other direct public feed used in informing the Play Strategy has come in the form of unsolicited requests for football goals for informal use, and teenage meeting places.

The research findings underpinning the Play Strategy therefore emphasise the importance attached to providing appropriate opportunities for children and young people as highlighted in the community consultation for this study; and, especially in terms of better provision for young people.

4.9 Key Points

Generally the community consultation has highlighted the following points.

Household survey:

- *the importance of informal and natural space to respondents in terms of their regular visits*
- *the longest people are prepared to travel between 6-10 minutes to reach most forms of space. The exception to this is for wildlife and nature reserves where the toleration of travel is higher*
- *in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to most types of space. There is greater preparedness unsurprisingly to use a car to get to 'local countryside' and 'wildlife areas/nature reserves'. In terms of the latter car borne trips are in the majority*
- *In terms of wanting to see 'more space' the following were the highest scorers (in descending order):*

- Teenage facilities
- Nature and wildlife sites
- Cyclepaths and footpaths

'Areas for organised recreation' and 'allotments' also had a strong showing.

- *the most important issues in relation to open space are to ensure that sites are:*
 - *clean*
 - *safe and secure*
 - *and easy to get to*

Control of noise and anti-social behaviour was also prominent. It is likely that some respondents will have conflated various categories in terms of their responses, but the key message appears to be 'clean, safe, and easy to get to'.

- *many people feel they have to travel through dangerous and unpleasant environments to reach open space, stressing the importance of not planning and providing open space in isolation from considering the accessibility from within the surrounding environment in the widest sense*
- *the large majority of local councils have responsibilities for the maintenance of at least some open space/recreation facilities in their area; either directly, or else through a related trust or association*
- *where local councils identified needs, the balance of comments were in respect of insufficient and/or poor quality pitches, play and youth provision. Inadequate provision for teenagers was identified as clearly the most common issue. Of the most populated parishes major deficiencies in open space provision of all kinds which is likely to be further impacted by increased population*

Parish and town councils:

- *local councils highest scoring considerations (maintenance/cleanliness and safety/security) are the same as the highest scores in the community survey. The importance of 'ease of access' and 'noise control' is also consistent with the results of the community survey*
- *local councils generally highlighted the perceived poor quality in the provision of space for young people (teenagers). Safety and security and ease of access are also identified as important considerations when planning and managing open space, which is consistent with the views of other consultations*
- *a natural greenspace user survey further confirms the importance attached to natural spaces by local people. It also indicates the value of larger spaces and people's willingness to travel to larger sites if they are attractive and interesting*
- *the research findings underpinning the Play Strategy further emphasise the importance attached to providing appropriate opportunities for children and young people as highlighted in the community consultation for this study; and, especially in terms of better provision for young people*

Community organisations:

- *the perceived poor quality in the provision of space for young people (teenagers) is identified. Safety and security and ease of access are also identified as important considerations when planning and managing open space, which is consistent with the views of other consultations*

Playing pitch sports:

- *on balance a general satisfaction with the overall current supply of sports pitches, at least in the urban area; although this is not a universally held view, and especially in terms of junior size football pitches. The poor quality or none existence of ancillary accommodation for football in particular is perhaps seen as a bigger problem for football, together with often low quality drainage*

Consultation for the Ashford Play Strategy:

- *the importance attached to providing appropriate opportunities for children and young people as highlighted in the community consultation for this study; and, especially in terms of better provision for young people*

5.0 AUDIT OF LOCAL PROVISION (OVERVIEW)

5.1 Introduction

This section describes the overall provision and distribution of open space within the Borough. It should be read in conjunction with the local area profiles in **Part 2**.

5.2 Typology of open space

The following section defines the various categories of open space considered by this study.

These categories generally reflect the typology of provision identified in PPG17 with some modifications to suit local circumstances. Although these categories are varied in their nature, a number of simple criteria have been set to establish whether they 'qualify' for inclusion in the study, these are:

- they are freely and openly accessible to the community (e.g. recreation grounds); or,
- they are accessible to the public on a managed access basis (such as with allotments and some kinds of outdoor sports facility)

A total of 864 potentially qualifying open spaces have been identified within the Borough. Other than open spaces within the Borough, there will be sites elsewhere that might be used by Borough residents on a regular basis. Such sites have not been included in quantitative analyses of provision. However, it will be important to bear these opportunities in mind, when considering general access to opportunities at the local and strategic level, as local authority boundaries are not a constraint in this regard.

5.3 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Parks and Recreation Grounds take on many forms, and may embrace a wide range of functions, including:

- Informal recreation and outdoor sport.
- Play space of many kinds (including for sport and children's play).
- Providing attractive walks to work.
- Offering landscape and amenity features.
- Areas of formal planting.
- Providing areas for 'events'.
- Providing habitats for wildlife.

Parks and Recreation Grounds are generally 'multi-functional' (an important aspect identified in the PPG17 companion guide) and therefore can host a range of activities. Parks (and public gardens) tend to be found in the larger settlements. In the smaller settlements the nearest equivalent is Recreation Grounds.

5.4 Outdoor Sports

With the exception of golf, those outdoor sports that tend to require most space to accommodate activity are the various pitch sports, and athletics. Grass pitches remain the surface of choice for most pitch sports at the community level. Many pitches within the Borough (apart from education provision) tend to be situated in recreation grounds, and this is especially the case in the rural areas. On the other hand there are standalone sports grounds (often privately owned) that also meet the needs of certain sports, notably cricket and rugby.

5.5 Equipped Children and Young People's Space

It is important at the outset to establish the scope of the audit in terms of this kind of space. Children and young people will play/'hang out' in almost all publicly accessible "space" ranging from the street, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields, "amenity" grassed areas etc as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks, Multi-use Games Areas etc. Clearly many of the other types of open space covered by this study will therefore provide informal play opportunities.

To a child, the whole world is a potential playground: where an adult sees a low wall, a railing, kerb or street bench, a child might see a mini adventure playground or a challenging skateboard obstacle. Play should not be restricted to designated 'reservations' and planning and urban design principles should reflect these considerations.

The study has recorded the following:

- Equipped children's space (for pre-teens).
- Provision for teenagers.

The former comprises equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years. The latter comprises informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard parks, basketball courts and 'free access' Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). In practice, there will always be some blurring around the edges in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for older persons and vice versa.

5.6 Informal Greenspace

The category is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing field or recreation ground; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
- Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- Unlikely to have planted flower beds or other formal planted layouts, although they may have shrub and tree planting.
- Generally no other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment or ball courts), although there may be items such as litter bins and benches.

Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces. They can serve a variety of functions dependent on their size, shape, location and topography. Some may be used for informal recreation activities, whilst others by themselves, or else collectively, contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area. However, as a general rule such spaces will not include highway verges and other incidental open space that does not fall within the definition of recreational open space contained within **Section 1**.

5.7 Natural Greenspace

For the purpose of this study, Natural Greenspace covers a variety of partly or wholly accessible spaces including meadows, river floodplain, woodland and copse all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and wildlife value, but which are also open to public use and enjoyment. Research elsewhere and the local consultation for this study have identified the value attached to such space for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of 'closeness to nature' with its attendant benefits for people is something that is all too easily lost in urban areas. Natural Greenspaces should be viewed as important a component of community infrastructure in planning for new development as other forms of open space or 'built' recreation facilities. Natural Greenspaces can make important contributions towards local Biodiversity Action Plan targets and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

Some sites will have statutory rights or permissive codes allowing the public to wander in these sites. Others may have defined Rights of Way or permissive routes running through them. For the remainder of sites there may be some access on a managed basis. Although many natural spaces may not be 'accessible' in the sense that they cannot be entered and used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity.

5.8 Allotments

Allotments provide areas for people to grow their own produce and plants. It is important to be clear about what is meant by the term 'Allotment'. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand for allotments.

The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term 'allotment garden' as:

“an allotment not exceeding 40 poles in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”

(n.b. 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch.)

The Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called Statutory Allotment Sites, by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may not specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as “temporary” (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.

In this country an Allotment Garden is generally distinct from a ‘Community Garden’. A Community Garden in the UK tends to be situated in a built-up area and is typically run by an independent non-profit organisation. It is also likely to perform a dual function as an open space or play area: while it may offer plots to individual cultivators the organisation that administers the garden will normally have a great deal of the responsibility for its planting, landscaping and upkeep.

5.9 Routeways and Green Corridors

Walking and cycling are continually identified by national surveys as major recreation activities in their own right, but are also endemic to everyday ‘healthy living’ (such as walking or cycling to work, the shops, or school). As activities they should be encouraged as a means of making both recreation and utility trips. Green recreational corridors can include:

- The local public Rights of Way network.
- Promoted long distance footpaths and cycleways.
- Permissive routes.

Links between town and countryside are important for accessing the wider rights of way network and quiet lanes, and can help to reduce car usage.

5.10 Other Open Space

The study has also identified a variety of other open spaces. These include churchyards and cemeteries, golf courses, and some large private spaces. These are not open spaces which are of central concern to this study given their specialist and (often) private nature. However, their existence should be acknowledged as well as the general contribution that they can make to the character and amenity of an area.

5.11 Issues with auditing open space

In practice it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between certain types of open space:

- Some of the larger local spaces (such as recreation grounds) may clearly serve more than one of the above functions. For example, a large recreation ground may include children’s play facilities, sports pitches, natural areas and more. On the other hand, many large spaces may serve predominantly one function.
- It is often difficult to differentiate between various types of informal recreation space, as local people do not necessarily draw distinction between (for example) a ‘recreation ground’, a park, and a large area of amenity open space; all are capable of meeting local need for informal activity and enjoyment. This demonstrates the need for flexibility in the perception of and planning for open space, which should have implications for the development and application of new local standards for open space.
- Some of the (larger) identified sites have been broken down as appropriate to reflect the above diversity of use. Other sites have not been broken down as such, and they are categorised according to their identified primary use.
- Much of the open space considered in this report is ‘free and open to use’. Access is not generally monitored for most sites considered and is often possible from a variety of points and directions. This makes it difficult to quantify with any precision the levels of use of different open spaces. However, as is seen in Section 4, local consultation has identified clearly the desire of residents to have access to such spaces for informal recreation opportunities.

5.12 Existing provision: a summary

The following pages summarise in pictures, charts and words the existing provision of open space in:

- the overall urban area
- the three urban sub areas (north, central, south)
- the overall rural area

For all areas more detailed information is contained in **Part 2** of the report, together with the supporting electronic databases.

5.13 Provision in the urban area

The following maps summarise provision within the urban area as a whole, and also the three sub areas.