Wealden District Open Space Study

2016 - 28

Community and Stakeholder Consultation
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<td>East Sussex County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Forestry Commission</td>
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<td>GI</td>
<td>Green Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTA</td>
<td>Lawn Tennis Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>MUGA</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCN</td>
<td>National Cycle Network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Netball England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGB</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDC</td>
<td>Rother District Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROWIP</td>
<td>Rights of Way Improvement Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Special Area for Conservation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMMM</td>
<td>Strategic Access Management and Monitoring</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SANG</td>
<td>Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Special Protection Area</td>
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</table>
Acknowledgments

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

This is one of four reports provided within the overall Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment 2016. It is a supporting document to the three main reports: The Open Spaces Study, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Study and the Indoor Sports Facilities study. It provides consultation findings from various stakeholders and feeds into other aspects of the study as explained below.

1.1 Study Overview

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

In view of the above, in 2016 Wealden District Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to provide an up-to-date and robust assessment identifying needs, surpluses and deficits in open space, sport and recreation to support the production of the Local Plan.

The scope of the work includes a wide range of open space and informal recreation facilities as well as formal sports and recreation facilities within the District and adjacent to the district boundary. In summary this includes:

- Open Space facilities.
- Play facilities.
- Outdoor sports facilities.
- Indoor sports facilities.
- Natural resource sport and recreation facilities.

A further requirement of the brief is to provide the assessment and analysis separated as:

- A District wide assessment and analysis of each facility,
- A rural area analysis
- A town area assessment to include Crowborough, Uckfield, Hailsham, Polegate and Heathfield.

In delivering the brief Ethos have focussed on three key elements:

- An Open Spaces audit and assessment\(^1\)
- A Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports audit and assessment
- An Indoor Sports Facilities audit and assessment

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

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

\(^1\) Including play space and natural green space/recreation
1.2 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

This report makes a cross-cutting contribution to the overall study in providing evidence that will be used in all three of the main study reports. In the main reports the consultation findings will be combined with other evidence, findings and assessments such as that completed in the audit, mapping and analysis process.

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

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

The report is made up of 5 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
- Outdoor non-pitch sports.

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

The consultation and research programme was undertaken from June to August 2016. 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.

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’ survey
- Survey of non-pitch outdoor sports national governing bodies (NGBs) and local sports clubs.

In addition to the above a number of one to one stakeholder interviews was 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 reports.

The consultation report also helps the study to understand stakeholder and local people’s appreciation of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by

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2 Additional consultation has also been undertaken in relation to pitch sports and indoor facilities as advised in Sport England guidance. These additional findings will be included in the main reports as appropriate.

3 It should be noted that this report provides consultation evidence in the form of the observations and views/opinions sourced from many different organisations, individuals and studies. On occasion the views and observations expressed by individuals and groups may not be consistent with each other, nor are such individual contributions necessarily accurate or up to date.
the community to the various forms of open spaces and facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space, sport and recreation facilities are considered as part of plan making as well as in dealing with planning applications.
2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

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

The section also includes reference to general research findings from the general public that have a wide scope across typologies; and 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 Household Survey

2.1.1 Introduction

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

A random sample postal survey was sent to 3000 households. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 505 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1205 and the average household size of the households was 2.4 - the same as the national average (2.4) and slightly higher than Wealden District as a whole (2.3).

30% of households who responded had children (representing household views on behalf of just over 265 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 6</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 11</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 16</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 to 24</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

4 In addition an online survey was promoted via the District Council’s My Alerts system which provides households with a regular information on a range of topical information across all council services. This attracted an additional 501 completed surveys and analysis of this survey reinforced the findings of the postal survey with no significant variances in responses. My Alerts is a self selecting sample so the findings in this report simply refer to the random sample household survey.

5 The findings are further considered - in detail - in three main reports; along with consideration of regional and national participation frequencies from sources such as Sport England’s Active people survey.
2.1.2 Frequency of use – All households

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

Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Almost every day</th>
<th>At least weekly</th>
<th>At least monthly</th>
<th>Less often</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play areas</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for teenagers</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use Games Areas</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial turf pitches</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/netball courts</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor bowling greens</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water recreation facilities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife areas/nature reserves</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal open spaces</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen, it is the District’s footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (81%); followed by natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (70%); and local parks and recreation grounds (69%). These open space facilities are also by far the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis e.g. 58% use rights of way at least weekly (of which 29% make use almost every day). 43% visit parks, gardens and recreation grounds at least weekly (16% of which visit almost every day).

40% of households also use informal open spaces - (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.) at least weekly.

Play areas and areas for water recreation are also fairly frequently used but by fewer households. At least 36% use them on a regular basis - at least monthly (including those who are more regular users).

Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

Sport and Leisure Centres are used regularly by significant numbers (43% of households report using them at least monthly - many more regularly); as are the District's gym/health and fitness facilities (33%); and swimming pools (33%).

36% of respondent households use village halls/community centres at least monthly.

These facilities are also the most frequently used on both a weekly and daily basis. For example, 29% of households use sports and leisure centres at least weekly (including more regular users); and around 9% use gym/health and fitness facilities almost daily. 18% make use of Village Halls and community centres at least weekly.

Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

Sport and Leisure Centres are the main public indoor centres. Village Halls and Community Centres and are commonly managed by parish councils and trusts having smaller halls. Gym/Health and fitness facilities are often private sector managed.

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6 Sports and Leisure Centres are the main public indoor centres. Village Halls and Community Centres and are commonly managed by parish councils and trusts having smaller halls. Gym/Health and fitness facilities are often private sector managed.
2.1.3 Frequency, regularity and times of use – Regular Users

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*

![Open Spaces - Frequency of Use - Users](chart)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Almost Every Day</th>
<th>At Least Weekly</th>
<th>At Least Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play areas</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for teenagers</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use Games Areas</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial turf pitches</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/netball courts</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor bowling greens</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water recreation facilities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife areas/nature reserves</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal open spaces</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Almost every day, At least weekly, At least monthly*
This shows, for example, that many users of outdoor sports and recreation facilities use them at least weekly: 92% for tennis/netball courts; 69% for artificial-turf pitches and 67% for MUGAs; 65% for bowling greens (24% nearly daily); 64% for playing fields; and 57% for play areas.

97% of allotment holders visit their allotment at least weekly (of which 26% visit almost every day).

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

![Indoor facilities - frequency of use - users](chart)

In terms of indoor facilities the most frequently visited by regular users (at least weekly) are the gym/health and fitness facilities (84% use these at least weekly of which 32% make use almost every day).

Sports/leisure centres are used at least weekly by 73% - of which 17% visit nearly every day; and for swimming pools 68% - of user households visit at least weekly (of which 8% make use nearly every day).

Specialist indoor sports centres are used at least weekly by 70% - of which 8% visit nearly every day.
2.1.4 Quantity of open space, sport and recreation facilities

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

Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Need for more</th>
<th>There are enough</th>
<th>Don't need as many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play areas</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for teenagers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use Games Areas</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial turf pitches</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/netball courts</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor bowling greens</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water recreation facilities</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife areas/nature reserves</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal open spaces</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are three open space typologies where a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more. 61% suggest a shortfall of facilities for teenagers; 59% for natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves; and 57% for informal open spaces - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.

A clear majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (79%) and grass playing fields (67%). Smaller majorities think that in general there are enough tennis/netball courts (57%); parks and recreation grounds (54%); and allotments (53%).

For some kinds of open space opinion is very closely split. For example, country parks (50% think there are enough overall and 49% say there is a need for more) and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (49% think there are enough and 50% say there is a need for more).

Swimming Pools and Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

A clear majority of households reported that overall there are currently enough of all of the various kinds of indoor sport and leisure facilities; most notably in relation to Village Halls and Community Centres (79%) and Sport and Leisure Centres (76%).

The two kinds of facility where significant numbers of respondent households believe that overall there is a need for more are swimming pools (38%) and specialist indoor sports facilities such as indoor bowls and tennis centres (30%).
2.1.5 Quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities

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

*Open Space and Outdoor Facilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play areas</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for teenagers</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use Games Areas</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial turf pitches</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/netball courts</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor bowling greens</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water recreation facilities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife areas/nature reserves</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal open spaces</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

47% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. The quality of Multi-Use Games Areas - and artificial turf pitches - was rated as poor or worse by 41% of respondents.

In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated highly by a majority in terms of quality. These include: natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (59%); country parks (55%); and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (51%). In addition 40% or more of respondents also rated a number of other facilities as being good or very good: parks and recreation grounds (44%); bowling greens (40%); and informal open spaces.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of indoor facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports &amp; Leisure Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym/Health &amp; Fitness facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Indoor sports facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Halls &amp; Community Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In broad terms respondent households tended to view the quality of indoor sports and recreation overall provision as being quite good.

The indoor facilities most commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are gym/health and fitness facilities (60%); sport and leisure centres (57%); and village halls and community centres (55%). Swimming pools were rated slightly less highly (46% rating them as good or very good).

The quality in general of specialist sports centres was not rated as highly (37% of respondents rating them as good or very good).

The detailed findings regarding quality will be referenced in relation to the determination of the “quality” aspect of local standards.
2.1.6 Access Issues (Geographical)

An important component of this study is to develop and recommend a series of local standards of provision for different types of open space, sport and recreation opportunity. The following provides a means to gauge people’s willingness to travel to use different types of opportunity (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

![Chart showing acceptable travel times to facilities/open space]
It can be seen that where respondent households make use of the opportunities identified at least 50% are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit country parks (66%); water recreation facilities (56%); and natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (50%).

Significant numbers are also willing to travel that long to visit other kinds of open spaces/facilities, for example: artificial turf pitches (44%); and outdoor bowling greens (43%).

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

- 68% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 25% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 66% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 19% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 55% of users would expect footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 32% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Swimming Pools and Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities

Where households make use of the opportunities identified just over half (51%) of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as specialist indoor sports facilities.

In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, some indoor facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used. For example 44% of users of village halls and community centres would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes, of which 11% would expect to travel 5 minutes or less.

It is clear from the above that for both indoor and outdoor facilities there is great variance in respondents’ apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of opportunity. In drawing up the “access”
An accompanying question asked what mode of transport respondents were likely to use to get to such opportunities (where they would use them).

**Open Space and Outdoor Facilities**

![Preferred mode of travel to facilities/open space](chart)

Respondents are more likely than not to drive to many open spaces and outdoor facilities, most notably artificial turf pitches (67%); country parks (67%); outdoor bowling greens (66%); water recreation facilities (64%); and tennis/netball courts.
However, walking is the norm for many, most notably for facilities such as play areas (72%); informal open spaces - for dog walking, picnics etc (64%); footpaths/bridleways and cycle paths (60%); parks and recreation grounds (59%); facilities for teenagers (58%); allotments (55%); and natural greens spaces - wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

It is also notable and understandable that cycle access is significant for some households in relation to youth facilities (7%) and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (11%).

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

In relation to indoor sports and recreation facilities respondents are more likely than not to drive to all facilities except village halls and community centres; most notably in the cases of specialist sports facilities (76%) and sport and leisure centres (75%).

Walking is the preferred mode of travel for 50% of respondent households accessing village halls and community centres but this is very evenly split as 48% drive.

For a small number of households access by cycling is important. For example, 4% prefer to cycle to their local gym; and 4% make use of the bus/other transport to get to specialist indoor sports facilities.

It is not of course surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as parks and recreation grounds, children’s play areas and youth facilities etc. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for larger and more specialised facilities such as swimming pools, leisure centres, and country parks which may be some distance removed from many potential users. It is however of great importance when it comes to drawing up the access element of local standards in terms of whether access thresholds should primarily be provided in terms of walking, cycling or drive times.

The main implications for deriving access standards are that, in general, walk times would be more appropriate for:

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The main implications for deriving access standards are that, in general, walk times would be more appropriate for:
• Parks and recreation grounds
• Play areas for children
• Teenage facilities

• Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths
• Allotments
• Informal open space

Based on the above drive times would, in general, be more appropriate for:

• Swimming pools and leisure centres
• Specialist sports facilities
• Gym/health and fitness facilities
• Artificial turf pitches

• Multi-use Games Areas
• Sports playing fields
• Tennis courts and bowling greens
• Country parks
• Water recreation facilities

From the findings above it is less clear for some facilities e.g. wildlife areas/nature reserves and village/community halls which may be the more appropriate transport mode upon which to base access thresholds.

The above are broad conclusions and will be considered in detail in the 3 main reports. For example, drive times may be more appropriate for the strategic access element of a standard for "destination" parks in the main towns.

Equally, for example, there is need to consider standards for different types of youth facility. For example planning for skate park provision in the main towns may be best served by aiming for a strategic supply of high quality facilities that may need to take into account proximity to public transport routes, cyclepaths and such like. The provision of youth shelters may need a much more locally based, demand led, strategy.

The 3 main reports will also discuss in detail the way different typologies should be treated in relation to spatial planning standards. For example, recommendations for rights of way may not be focused on specific quantity or distance/time threshold standards.

**Importance of Footpath/cycle access**

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

- 82% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 84% 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**

![Bar chart showing priorities for improved facility/open space provision](chart_image_url)
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 parks and recreation grounds (63%); followed by better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (60%); and natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (59%).

Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers (over 50%) were play areas (53%); and country parks (52%).

Informal open spaces also scored quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 83% of households - 47% high/36% medium). Similarly for access to areas for water recreation (a combined high/medium priority choice for 77% of households - 42% medium/35% high).

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

For indoor sports and leisure facilities in general, fewer households highlighted high priority needs.

Improvements to village halls and community centres had the highest level of high/medium priority scores - 75% as a high/medium priority need (28% high/41% medium priority).

Following this came improved swimming pool provision (67% - of which 38% noted a high priority need) and improvements to sport and leisure centres - 61% (22% high/39% medium priority).
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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open spaces and facilities - kind of improvement needed</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for teenagers</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Use Games Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial turf pitches</td>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis/netball courts</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor bowling greens</td>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths</td>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water recreation facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country parks</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife areas/nature reserves</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal open spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that:

- The only category where a majority of respondent households suggested that providing more facilities was the primary need was informal open spaces (55%).
- Other typologies where more households highlight a primary need for additional provision than improvements to quality are: natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (48%); country parks (44%); footpaths etc. (42%); water recreation facilities (41%) and artificial turf pitches (40%).
• Typologies where the primary need for quality improvements to existing provision is strongest include: grass sports playing fields (57%); tennis/netball courts (56%); and bowling greens (54%).
• Improved access is particularly significant for some categories e.g. bowling greens (28%); country parks (23%); water recreation sites (22%); and artificial turf pitches (21%).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indoor facilities - Kind of improvement needed</th>
<th>Additional facilities</th>
<th>Improvement to existing</th>
<th>Improved access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Pools</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports &amp; Leisure Centres</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym/Health &amp; Fitness facilities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Indoor sports facilities</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Halls &amp; CommunityCentres</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this it can be seen that:

• The only typology of indoor sport and leisure facility where more households highlight the primary need being additional facilities rather than improvements to existing facilities/access are swimming pools (46%).
• The kind of facilities where more households highlight the primary need being improvements to existing facilities rather than additional facilities/access are: village halls and community centres (72%); sport and leisure centres (55%); and gym/health and fitness facilities (54%).
• Improved access is the most important factor for significant numbers in relation to specialist indoor sport facilities (23%).
2.2 Public Health

2.2.1 Introduction - the general value of sport, leisure and physical activity to health

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

NICE Local Authority Briefing - Public health

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

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

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

2.2.2 Wealden District Council Public Health

Introduction and background

In relation to the development of the 3 main reports e.g. in respect of their statements of policy and the development of future strategy, it is important to understand to what extent open space, sport and recreation provision is valued by the Council.

The two officers at Wealden District Council with a specific role in public health issues that relate to sport, recreation and open spaces are the Principal Policy Advisor (in relation to the wider strategic aspects); and the Community and Regeneration Manager in relation to strategy and projects relating to sport and active recreation.

The County Council has a statutory role for Public Health (supported by funding previously allocated to the NHS for this purpose).

The District Council has no statutory role but many services have important links with health e.g. Leisure, Parks, Environmental Health etc, Planning, Housing etc. The District Council officers noted above have strategic links with these services and provide a direct route to the statutory Public Health service.
Principal Policy Advisor - Public Health Strategic Overview

Wealden District Council is an active member of the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board and assists in delivering the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for East Sussex. In addition the Council is represented on the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which aims to look at the work of the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthcare Trusts, and the NHS.

The Council’s Principal Policy Advisor, referenced a recent Cabinet report (April 2016) *The Role of Wealden District Council in Public Health*. The report outlines the "vital role that the District Council plays in keeping the public healthy, both directly through the services provided and through various partnerships and other arrangements with a variety of agencies including those from the public, private and voluntary sector".

The report notes that "Wealden is in a good place but there are very distinct challenges ahead. According to Public Health England’s annual Health Profile 2015, the health of people in Wealden is generally better than the England average and life expectancy for both men and women is also higher than the England average. However there is a life expectancy gap of 4.9 years for men and 4.4 years for women between the most deprived and least deprived areas within the district. The area also has an ageing population which is likely to result in increased pressure on NHS resources".

The report highlights that: "The Council offers a range of services and projects to protect and improve public health in the community. The Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 makes it clear that the Council is committed, both through its own efforts and by working in partnership with others, to help Wealden’s residents become healthier and safer and build on economic growth in the area".

Another important point within the report notes: "if people feel unsafe it can affect deleteriously their health and wellbeing. The Safer Wealden Partnership, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Safety, brings a number of agencies together, including Sussex Police and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, with the purpose of collaborative working to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime. Priorities are decided annually based upon crime data and feedback from the community".

Community and Regeneration - Public Health - Active Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy

The Community and Regeneration Manager noted that:

- The Council recognises the value and importance of access to leisure facilities and open space, including natural green space, in relation to improving health and wellbeing and in relation to residents’ quality of life.
- The Council’s *Active Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy* expired in 2014 and a new "Active Strategy" is currently being developed. Promoting Health and Wellbeing is a key issue for the District in relation to sports, leisure and physical activity.
- The Government has recently published its cross-governmental strategy entitled: Sporting Future: A new Strategy for an Active Nation. It is aimed at tackling flat-lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in this country. The strategy redefines what success in sport means with a focus on five outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development.
- A Tourism Destination Plan is also being developed which will include promotion of leisure facilities and the Wealden’s open space and landscape assets.

The Council offers a number of projects and initiatives to promote physical and social wellbeing. For example:
• The Council invests into leisure provision through its contract with Freedom Leisure who manage and operate four leisure centres in the District. It actively promote exercise as a key ingredient to improve and maintain health.

• In addition to providing swimming, gym and studio classes, Freedom Leisure deliver specialist programmes such as ‘Chairfit’ – Parkinson’s Society rolling programmes, stroke rehabilitation, cancer rehabilitation, cardiac rehabilitation, postural stability courses, rebalance – weight management, mental health and water therapy – disability and rehabilitation rolling classes. There is a GP exercise referral scheme - a 12 week programme incorporating gym, swimming and specialist classes.

• The Council has set-up and organises many events for varied sectors of the community. For example ‘Active 4 Life’ activity sessions aimed at older people are held within the sheltered housing schemes around the District. ‘Active 4 All’ is a partnership project with Freedom Leisure and Wealden District Council to deliver activities for disabled children within the leisure centres in the District. In 2015 Wealden District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council worked in partnership to deliver the second Coast to Country Walking Festival.

• A new project called the Wealden Dementia Action Alliance was launched recently. This will see action plans produced across the five main Wealden towns to make them as Dementia friendly as possible.

• Fun and Safety Days and Summer Activity Days have been organised for many years by the Council in partnership with other agencies provide a range of experiences for young children and their families. Safety in Action has been co-ordinated by the Council in partnership with the emergency services and others and is now in its 25th year. Thousands of primary school children have benefitted from learning about important personal and community safety issues.

• The Council distributes annual community grants to community organisations and charity groups through the Community Grant Programme. The grants awarded recognise the valuable work of the third sector across the District and make a vital contribution to the delivery of various projects and initiatives across a wide agenda including health and wellbeing, sports and leisure, the environment, learning new skills and training and supporting people.

• Since 2006, the grants programme has provided over £800,000 to 235 small and capital for projects ranging from village hall, sports pavilion and recreational space improvements to lunch clubs, arts festivals and activities for the disabled and young people.

• The Wealden Senior Citizen Partnership/Older Peoples Day is an annual event which aims to help tackle social isolation. In 2015 Wealden District Council supported the Wealden Senior Citizen Partnership in holding an event; the exhibitors who attend give out useful information and help to introduce older people to the available services from various local agencies.
2.3 General Community – Key Findings

This section provides consultation findings from Wealden households and stakeholders expressing a view on all aspects of open space, sport and recreation facility provision (rather than groups and organisations with a specific interest in one or two specific typologies).

Quantity

Open Space

- There are three open space typologies where a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more. 61% suggest a shortfall of facilities for teenagers; 59% for natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves; and 57% for informal open spaces - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.
- A clear majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (79%) and grass playing fields (67%). Smaller majorities think that in general there are enough tennis/netball courts (57%); parks and recreation grounds (54%); and allotments (53%).
- For some kinds of open space opinion is very closely split. For example, country parks (50% think there are enough overall and 49% say there is a need for more) and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (49% think there are enough and 50% say there is a need for more).

Indoor Facilities

- A clear majority of households reported that overall there are currently enough of all of the various kinds of indoor sport and leisure facilities; most notably in relation to Village Halls and Community Centres (79%) and Sport and Leisure Centres (76%).
- The two kinds of facility where significant numbers of respondent households believe that overall there is a need for more are swimming pools (38%) and specialist indoor sports facilities such as indoor bowls and tennis centres (30%).

Quality

Open Space

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

- 47% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. The quality of Multi-Use Games Areas - and artificial turf pitches - was rated as poor or worse by 41% of respondents.
- In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated highly by a majority in terms of quality. These include: natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (59%); country parks (55%); and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (51%). In addition 40% or more of respondents also rated a number of other facilities as being good or very good: parks and recreation grounds (44%); bowling greens (40%); and informal open spaces.
Indoor Facilities

- In broad terms respondent households tended to view the quality of indoor sports and recreation overall provision as being quite good.
- The indoor facilities most commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are gym/health and fitness facilities (60%); sport and leisure centres (57%); and village halls and community centres (55%). Swimming pools were rated slightly less highly (46% rating them as good or very good).
- The quality in general of specialist sports centres was not rated as highly (37% of respondents rating them as good or very good).

Access

There is great variance in respondent households willingness to spend time travelling to different types of facility and open space.

Open Space

- At least 50% are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit country parks (66%); water recreation facilities (56%); and natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (50%). Significant numbers are also willing to travel that long to visit other kinds of open spaces/facilities, for example: artificial turf pitches (44%); and outdoor bowling greens (43%).
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, allotments, and informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc).
- Respondents are more likely than not to drive to many open spaces and outdoor facilities, most notably artificial turf pitches (67%); country parks (67%); outdoor bowling greens (66%); water recreation facilities (64%); and tennis/netball courts.
- However, walking is the norm for many, most notably for facilities such as play areas (72%); informal open spaces - for dog walking, picnics etc (64%); footpaths/bridleways and cycle paths (60%); parks and recreation grounds (59%); facilities for teenagers (58%); allotments (55%); and natural greens spaces - wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).
- It is also notable and understandable that cycle access is significant for some households in relation to youth facilities/MUGAs (7%) and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (11%).

Indoor Facilities

- Just over half (51%) of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as specialist indoor sports facilities.
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, some indoor facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used. For example 44% of users of village halls and community centres would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes, of which 11% would expect to travel 5 minutes or less.
- Respondents are more likely than not to drive to all facilities except village halls and community centres; most notably in the cases of specialist sports facilities (76%) and sport and leisure centres (75%).
- Walking is the preferred mode of travel for 50% of respondent households accessing village halls and community centres but this is very evenly split as 48% drive.
- For a small number of households access by cycling is important. For example, 4% prefer to cycle to their local gym; and 4% make use of the bus/other transport to get to specialist indoor sports facilities.
Importance of footpath/cycle access

- 82% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved; and 84% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

Priorities

Open Space

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was parks and recreation grounds (63%); followed by better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (60%); and natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves (59%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers (over 50%) were play areas (53%); and country parks (52%).
- Informal open spaces also scored quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 83% of households - 47% high/36% medium). Similarly for access to areas for water recreation (a combined high/medium priority choice for 77% of households - 42% medium/35% high).

Indoor facilities

- For indoor sports and leisure facilities in general, fewer households highlighted high priority needs.
- Improvements to village halls and community centres had the highest level of high/medium priority scores - 75% as a high/ medium priority need (28% high/41% medium priority).
- Following this came improved swimming pool provision (67% - of which 38% noted a high priority need) and improvements to sport and leisure centres -  61% (22% high/39% medium priority).

Public Health and other issues

- The Council recognises the value and importance of access to leisure facilities and open space, including natural green space, in relation to improving health and wellbeing and in relation to residents' quality of life.
- Providing opportunities for physical activity by developing and maintaining appropriate facilities such as sports and leisure centres, parks and open spaces is very important in relation to promoting better public health and reducing health inequalities.
- The Council’s Active Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy expired in 2014 and a new "Active Strategy" is currently being developed. Promoting Health and Wellbeing is a key issue for the District in relation to sports, leisure and physical activity.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived urban wards of the study area.
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 sport, play and recreation facilities.

Section Six is comprised of two main sub-sections:

- Neighbouring Authorities - Cross-boundary issues
- Locality Area and 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 issues

Overview – Wealden District Council (Senior Planning Officer)


The following cross border issues in relation to Planning have been identified:

- Tunbridge Wells on the northern boundary – residents that live in north Wealden will use open space/facilities in Tunbridge Wells and vice versa. There is significant growth (housing) proposed near the boundary with Tunbridge Wells.
- Eastbourne adjoins the southern boundary of WDC, and there will be cross border use of open space/facilities in this area. There are also relatively large housing developments planned nearby e.g. at Polegate, Willingdon, Westham and Hailsham.
- Planned development near to the eastern boundary will impact on Bexhill and Rother District.
- Lewes is on the western boundary, and there are linkages (although not as strong compared with the links with Tunbridge Wells and Eastbourne). A key link here is employment, as Lewes is quite a large employment centre (along with Brighton).
- Large areas of open space that attract visitors from a wide area include Ashdown Forest, South Downs National Park (which includes Seven Sisters Country Park and the South Downs Way which is a major trail), Pevensey Bay and Cuckmere Haven.
- Bewl Water is a large reservoir in the north of the district and draws people from the wider area. There are plans to expand the recreational provision at the site.
Forward planning officers were also contacted from the 6 neighbouring authorities to check if they had identified any cross border issues that they thought should be taken into account.

Comments and observations from officers of the neighbouring authorities are provided below\(^7\).

**Rother District Council (RDC)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes/updates on relevant studies</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues(^8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure</td>
<td>Completed August 2011. We are intending to write an additional 2016 ‘Addendum’ to the GI Study, as a further background paper in support of the Biodiversity policy in our ‘Development &amp; Site Allocations DPD’</td>
<td>Management of Pevensey Levels. Strategic scale GI was noted by RDC as being relevant to the Wealden District Council area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/PPG17 study</td>
<td>Completed in 2007. Applied in Core Strategy Policy CO3.</td>
<td>Open space standards were noted by RDC as being relevant to the Wealden District Council area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Recreation strategy</td>
<td>Leisure Facilities Strategy (2015)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Playing Pitch Study currently in progress.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other relevant studies/ Strategies?</td>
<td>HRA and SA</td>
<td>Management of Pevensey Levels, particularly in relation to water quality bought out in both of these.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes/updates on relevant studies</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure</td>
<td>Completed 2014. SPD adopted in 2014 – an update will be undertaken as part of new Local Plan.</td>
<td>Includes land around Royal Tunbridge Wells that overlaps with Wealden District. See Option 1: Woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/PPG17 study</td>
<td>2006 (significantly outdated). Review shortly to be underway, going out to tender towards the end of 2016.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/Greenspace/Country-side Strategy</td>
<td>There will be a Greenspace Strategy but yet to be scoped, Parks Strategy will be informed by study above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport/Recreation strategy</td>
<td>Underway. Being put to Cabinet for adoption for adoption on 22 June 2016.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Landscape Characterisation</td>
<td>Underway. Borough-wide study to update Kent HLC in line with Sussex HLC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape Character</td>
<td>Underway. Update to existing 2011</td>
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</table>

\(^7\) The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma.

\(^8\) These comments will be taken forward and considered in the main report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>SPD. (Out to tender, complete end of 2016)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landscape Capacity Study</td>
<td>Underway. Focus on Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, update and extension of 2009 study. Will include 1km zone around Royal Tunbridge Wells that falls within Wealden. (Out to tender, complete end of 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark Skies SPD</td>
<td>Ambition to produce Lighting/Dark Skies SPD which will overlap with adjoining authorities. Member support but no work progressed by Officers yet. If produced, will overlap with adjoining authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>Studies required for Local Plan. Will need to consider land adjacent to Royal Tunbridge Wells within Wealden District Council.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other planning related issues that are relevant to the Wealden District Council area were highlighted by TWBC as follows:

- Work is ongoing concerning SANGS and SAMMS for Ashdown Forest between affected authorities.
- Sports Strategy due to be adopted at Cabinet on 22 July.
- Development allocated at Hawkenbury Farm in the Site Allocations DPD for approximately 200 dwellings, very close to the border with Wealden.

**Hastings Borough Council**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes(updates on relevant studies)</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure Study</td>
<td>Green Infrastructure Study (2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/PPG17 study</td>
<td>Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rother and Hastings Playing Pitch Strategy (2016). Currently being drafted by HBC &amp; RDC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play/Youth Strategy</td>
<td>Hastings and St. Leonards Play Space Strategy 2015-2017</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

HBC commented that there are no significant cross border issues with Wealden within any of the strategies identified above.
### Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes/updates on relevant studies</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/PPG17 study</td>
<td>Completed 2007. Assessments were carried out in 2005, although the report was not finalised until 2007. We know that it is out of date. We will be looking to start a new Open Space Assessment within the next 6 months.</td>
<td>Eastbourne residents are likely to use open spaces within Wealden, and vice versa, particularly in the Willingdon and Stone Cross/Westham/Pevensey areas. The 2007 Open Space Assessment identified that Huggetts Lane in WDC could meet some of EBC’s open space needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy</td>
<td>An Eastbourne Downland Management Plan was prepared in 2012. I understand that this was due to be updated although I am unsure of its current status.</td>
<td>The open spaces/countryside between EBC and WDC is relevant, particularly in terms of countryside gaps and landscape setting. The Willingdon Levels crosses the border – the part within Eastbourne is known as Eastbourne Park. EBC have policies for the protection of Eastbourne Park and would like to encourage increased use of the area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EBC also made the following comments:
There are a number of cross boundary issues for Eastbourne and Wealden in open space from the expected development on the borders of Eastbourne. The WDC Open Space, Sports and Recreation Assessment should take into account the impact of WDC development on the need for open spaces in Eastbourne, but also that new open space provision in WDC could be used by Eastbourne residents.

EBC also commented that they would be happy to provide WDC with the GIS shape files from their 2007 Open Space Assessment if needed.

### Lewes District Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes/updates on relevant studies</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure</td>
<td>Completed 2005 (Still relevant).</td>
<td>SANGS are the key cross border issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space/PPG17 study</td>
<td>Completed 2004. Update currently in progress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mid Sussex District Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of study</th>
<th>Notes/updates on relevant studies</th>
<th>Comments and observations – cross border issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure</td>
<td>No study, but Green infrastructure mapping has been undertaken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Ashdown Forest SPA Joint SAMM Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Town and Parish Councils

3.3.1 General Overview

Within Wealden District there are 43 parishes. 40 are town/parish councils and three are parish meetings. Surveys were sent to all parish councils/meetings together with two reminders to chase responses as needed. In total 33 parish councils responded. The survey covered issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of various types of open space, sport and 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:

- Berwick Parish Council
- Buxted Parish Council
- Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council
- Chiddingly Parish Council
- Crowborough Town Council
- Cuckmere Valley Parish Council
- East Dean & Friston Parish Council
- East Hoathly with Halland Parish Council
- Fletching Parish Council
- Forest Row Parish Council
- Framfield Parish Council
- Frant Parish Council
- Hadlow Down Parish Council
- Hailsham Town Council
- Hartfield Parish Council
- Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council
- Hellingly Parish Council
- Herstmonceux Parish Council
- Hooe Parish Council
- Horam Parish Council
- Isfield Parish Council
- Maresfield Parish Council
- Mayfield and Five Ashes Parish Council
- Ninfield Parish Council
- Pevensey Parish Council
- Polegate Town Council
- Rotherfield Parish Council
- Uckfield Town Council
- Wadhurst Parish Council
- Wartling Parish Council
- Westham Parish Council
- Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council
- Withyham Parish Council

Responses were not received from: Alciston, Alfriston, Arlington, Danehill Parish Council, Laughton, Little Horsted, Long Man, Selmeston and Warbleton.

Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- 29 of the 33 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 24 of the 33 local councils who responded noted that that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- 12 of the parishes did not think there was scope for greater community use of outdoor sport and recreation spaces at local schools; and nine were not sure. However, 12 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town/Council</th>
<th>Improvement Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowborough Town Council</td>
<td>Repair swimming pool at Beacon College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly with Halland Parish Council</td>
<td>School currently uses the village hall for indoor PE lessons during the winter. The school used to use the village playing field but now has its own sports field which is used by both the village and the church annually for a village fete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Council</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fletching Parish Council</td>
<td>I think the Primary school could use the recreation ground more. The pre-school recently closed down one reason was limited facilities and no outdoor area. We are looking into the ability to develop the pavilion for use by a pre-school or other community activities. New village hall on recreation ground to provide facilities for local school and to hold functions, i.e. Badminton, wedding receptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Row Parish Council</td>
<td>It is possible - but unknown - that the cultural facilities at Michael Hall Steiner School (Priory Road) could be developed for community use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham Town Council</td>
<td>The excellent sports facilities at Hailsham Community College could be secured for the wider community through partnership agreements – although I believe the school hall etc is currently available for public hire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council</td>
<td>Heathfield desperately needs a swimming pool - the site at the Heathfield Leisure Centre has planning approval but help with fund-raising the huge amount needed is urgently needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herstmonceux Parish Council</td>
<td>Currently the recreation ground is used by the School for sports days etc plus extra curricula activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninfield Parish Council</td>
<td>The school has previously made it quite clear that we are unable to access any of their facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uckfield Parish Council</td>
<td>The local Community College already shares a site with a community leisure facility. This site could be used to expand community facilities and is centrally located within the town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadhurst Parish Council</td>
<td>There is potential for developments at Uplands School, but as there was a recent proposal for a MUGA which had to be dropped because of costs, it is not possible to offer suggestions at this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingdon &amp; Jevington Parish Council</td>
<td>Willingdon Community school has a large field and changing facilities separate to the main building which could perhaps be used for organised sports, it would rely on attendance by a caretaker, security staff and only at times when the school were not letting it out or using it themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withyham Parish Council</td>
<td>Withyham St Michael’s has previously spoken with us about making some facilities available for community use but encountered issues with ESCC over safeguarding and protection of property.</td>
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</table>

**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 have good car parking facilities.

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between public open spaces; that they should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community; and that there should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.

Other aspects of quality specifically highlighted and related comments were:

- Sadly, adequate security measures need to be built in to both existing and projected facilities.
- As the majority of small parish facilities are central to the villages in which they are situated many of the facilities quoted above are therefore not necessary such as car parking and toilets.
- Help to make people aware and enforcement to deter dog fouling in open space.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town/Parish Councils</th>
<th>Village Halls</th>
<th>Winter pitches</th>
<th>Cricket pitches</th>
<th>Tennis courts</th>
<th>MUGAs</th>
<th>Bowling greens</th>
<th>Play areas</th>
<th>Teenage facilities</th>
<th>Allotments</th>
<th>Parks, rec. grounds</th>
<th>Wildlife areas, etc.</th>
<th>Footpaths etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berwick</td>
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<td>Chalvington with Ripe</td>
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<td>Willingdon/Jevington</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The table above covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities\(^9\). For parish/town councils in Wealden District the aspects of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Improvements and new provision of village and community halls
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- The need for additional pitches (football mainly) and improvements e.g. drainage.
- 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Council</th>
<th>Groups in parish whose needs not being met</th>
<th>Current plans and known aspirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berwick</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>The Parish Council are working with a local community group (The Ionides Trust) to provide further older children play equipment, and adult play equipment on the open recreational land in Buxted Village. This is also the land on which planning permission has been granted for a new village hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buxted</td>
<td>Not that I am aware of as we have two recreation grounds and Buxted Park – so lots of open space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalvington with Ripe</td>
<td>Play park for children has been requested but no land is available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chiddingly</td>
<td>I am not aware of any. We have the large Jubilee Field - but it is not used by local football/rugby teams etc - as there aren't any teams of these nature in our village. There is a cricket club who have their own field and facilities (not run by the parish council)</td>
<td>We previously considered developing the Jubilee Field so it could host more sporting activities. But research of the local community advised us that they wanted the field left as it was and there was no requirement to develop it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowborough</td>
<td>Netball facilities i.e. one court is below requirement.</td>
<td>To upgrade the existing cinder running track at Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. Jarvis Brook Football Club are hoping to expand their play area at Lime Kiln, Palesgate Lane in newly acquired land by the Town Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuckmere Valley</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) In the table the red shading indicates the most common kind of issue raised and amber the next most common.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Current Needs</th>
<th>Proposed Actions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Dean and Friston</td>
<td>Yes – there is currently demand for an upgrade and possible extension of the play area to widen its offering for more age groups. The Residents’ Association has offered to help finance a piece of outdoor exercise equipment for adults.</td>
<td>A play project is ongoing to upgrade and possibly extend an existing play area at the recreation ground in Gilber’s Drive. The council is liaising with ESCC and the National Trust to provide information boards about footpaths for tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly/Halland</td>
<td>Village football and stoolball teams are all unable to play on our pitch due to the pitch being waterlogged as a result of bad drainage for most of the year, both teams have now disbanded due to this. The village play area needs extending to ensure older children are provided for (to include basket ball hoops and a skate/scooter area). An adult exercise area would be welcome.</td>
<td>The PC has formed a Playing Fields Sub-Committee and the project plan is in development but will include a replacement and larger village hall, a MUGA for 12 month use, a skate ramp and outdoor table tennis table, improved play equipment for both toddlers and older children and total replacement/improvement of the football/stoolball pitch. A priority will be for a meeting place and recreation/play area in Halland as there is currently no provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletching</td>
<td>No School, young people.</td>
<td>Fletching Parish Council want to explore the ability to develop the pavilion area as an additional community asset, with particular potential benefit for a pre-school. There are particular parking issues in our village that make use of the existing Village Hall difficult for users and the village. Would like new village hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Row</td>
<td>Young people playing casual sport. General public access to tennis courts</td>
<td>We are currently planning for a new-build youth &amp; community centre at the rear of the Foresters Green (build cost ± £250,000) with an attached free-to-use MUGA. The exact future trajectory of the Sports Ground is currently under discussion (the Association holds it under licence from the Council).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framfield</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>The Parish Council already manages these high number of assets for a small/medium Parish Council and there is no requirement for anything else. The play areas have recently been refurbished via a loan arrangement. A refurbishment programme is underway of the Memorial Hall in Framfield.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frant</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>We hope to get additional information regarding the needs/wishes of parishioners when completing a neighbourhood plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadlow Down</td>
<td>The current facilities aren't adequate and there is nothing for teenagers. Drainage work at the playing field needed.</td>
<td>The Parish Council purchased the land at the play area last year (they previously leased it) and need to undertake some vegetation clearance and fencing of the land. They would like to update and replace most of the play equipment however they do not have the funding to do all of this so grants would need to...</td>
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<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hailsham</td>
<td>The Hailsham Active organization have provided a detailed report advising</td>
<td>The Town Council will be working with Hailsham Active to identify needs</td>
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<td>that Hailsham currently has a significant deficit of open spaces and</td>
<td>for the future. The Town Council is also currently working on</td>
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<td>sports facilities [link] and the Town Council broadly supports the aims</td>
<td>identifying its own strategic aims and plans for the improvement of the</td>
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<td>of this organization although not at present in any ‘formal’ capacity.</td>
<td>town and is currently working on a Neighbourhood Plan, although the</td>
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<td>The Town Council has in the recent past been approached by individuals</td>
<td>specific requirements for the Town have yet to be identified. The</td>
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<td>looking to establish youth and adult football clubs and also for ‘Boot</td>
<td>Town Council is currently in the process of liaising with developers</td>
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<td>Camp’ and fitness related activities on the HTC owned recreation areas.</td>
<td>and WDC regarding taking on the ownership of a large sports and</td>
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<td>It is widely acknowledged that there is also a deficit of meeting spaces/room</td>
<td>community hall and surrounding sports field and open space at</td>
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<td>available for hire for all groups in Hailsham as well as an overall</td>
<td>Welbury Farm. The council is also scheduled to take on an</td>
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<td>deficit of sports facilities and open spaces</td>
<td>additional allotment site at Willow Farm.</td>
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<td>Hailsham Active are networking and attempting to galvanise all local</td>
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<td>groups into a collective voice in order to improve play, open space</td>
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<td>and Sports facilities in the Town.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hartfield</td>
<td>I am not aware of any additional group or sector whose needs are not</td>
<td>Parish Council strongly believes in the provision of recreational</td>
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<td>currently met. There is a project underway to consult with the youth</td>
<td>areas for the community and strives to work with local groups to</td>
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<td>of the parish to understand whether we are currently fulfilling their</td>
<td>optimize that provision. We have a very active parish and the</td>
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<td>needs.</td>
<td>facilities we provide are extensively used. There maybe plans that</td>
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<td>come out of the project with the youth of the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathfield/Waldron</td>
<td>There is a lack of facilities for young people - no cinema, for example.</td>
<td>No land available for further sports pitches.</td>
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<td>There is a demand for more football pitches - the Parish Council</td>
<td>Heathfield Soccer School wish to create a MUGA and Heathfield</td>
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<td>struggles to meet demand with the pitches available.</td>
<td>Partnership are continuing with fund-raising efforts to provide a</td>
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<td>swimming pool.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hellingly</td>
<td>The Rugby Club have indicated that they would like another pitch and</td>
<td>The Parish Council has planning permission for a new Community Hall</td>
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<td>are trying to create a smaller pitch on the recreation ground. The</td>
<td>at Roebuck Park, this will complement the Country Park. The</td>
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<td>Bowls Club are in the process of trying to improve their facilities</td>
<td>Parish Council is hoping to include in the Neighbourhood Development</td>
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<td>Plan for Hellingly a proposal around the Lower Horsebridge</td>
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<td>Recreation Ground. Discussions still to take place with the various</td>
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<td>sports clubs at the site as</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Current Situation</td>
<td>Future Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>More facilities for the new developments in the Parish Allotments for site east of Park Road – originally in the plans but now dropped</td>
<td>Parking is an issue at all existing sites but land is an issue in providing additional parking to their future development plans, but it is hoped that this is something that can come forward as a site proposal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Herstmonceux</td>
<td>We have identified a lack of recreational for early to mid-teens youth. Also apart from Cricket there are no other sports activity's for the young i.e. under 12's</td>
<td>HPC has planning permission in place for a Bowls/Scouts/Football pavilion at our Lime Cross site subject to the acquisition of the appropriate additional land and funding. Additionally HPC is exploring the prioritising open space provision to further enhance the village setting of the settlements of Herstmonceux, Windmill Hill &amp; Cowbeech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hooe</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Possible expansion/rebuild of the Village Hall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horam</td>
<td>Not aware</td>
<td>Council working with Village Hall committee to improve play equipment.</td>
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<td>Possibility of additional public open space adjacent to A267 if proposed housing development goes ahead. Currently looking into improving village pond at Recreation Ground.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isfield</td>
<td>Tennis courts, cricket nets, play facilities and extension to village hall have all been requested</td>
<td>Mainly addressed as part of housing developments (Maresfield Village only).</td>
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<td>Building of a new pavilion for the Fairwarp QEII sports field.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maresfield</td>
<td>None that I’m aware of, but some current areas need upgrading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayfield/Five Ashes</td>
<td>Unaware of any</td>
<td>Play area refurbishment and resurfacing planned in the long term. New skate park ramps are planned.</td>
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<td>The cricket club has plans to move site and develop a sports complex including 2 cricket pitches somewhere in Mayfield.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ninfield</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Research being completed at the moment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pevensse</td>
<td>Westham and Pevensey Sports Club (as above) would like further football/cricket pitches to cope with increased junior numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polegate</td>
<td>I am not aware of any</td>
<td>One of our fields has recently been made a field in trust (Brightling Road Leisure Ground), the town council hopes this will be able to be upgraded and drainage provided to make it suitable for all year round use. (It is</td>
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</table>
waterlogged most of the year) The cricket club has asked for an all weather pitch (Polegate War Memorial recreation ground) the cricket club has asked for practice nets (Polegate War Memorial recreation ground) the football and cricket club have asked that the pavilion be upgraded and improved to enable the clubs to remain in leagues as the accommodation is now out of date and does not meet their needs (Polegate War Memorial recreation ground). The council is currently looking at provision on all green spaces. The council has looked in the past at obtaining land for a cemetery within the town but it was too costly to purchase and provide in areas that were suitable. The council will need to improve and update a very old play area in Oakleaf drive (wooden).

PADMEC (mini railway engineers) are constantly improving their area as an attraction to the town. Polegate Football club continually try to improve the grounds they hire Polegate and Stone Cross cricket Club continue to improve the cricket pitch and square).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Facilities/Features</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rotherfield</td>
<td>Skate Park, small all weather surface Tennis Court - Bowls club Pavilion</td>
<td>All weather surface on site of old Tennis Court with a basketball court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uckfield</td>
<td>None - Community groups that are in contact with the Town Council do have access</td>
<td>None identified within current land ownership.</td>
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<td>to facilities. However increased participation or increased population would</td>
<td>Planned improvements to provide a new play area and multi-use games area at</td>
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<td>place pressure on existing facilities.</td>
<td>Ridgewood to take place in 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadhurst</td>
<td>Overall there is a poor mix of facilities and spaces for recreational and cultural</td>
<td>There is no current Parish or Neighbourhood plan. This is under discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activity, particularly for young people. The proposal to rebuild the hundred</td>
<td>Commemoration Hall and Field proposals. These would need agreement and funding.</td>
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<td>year old Memorial Hall as a modern community centre, if agreed and</td>
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<td>implemented, will address and resolve some of these issues. There is a</td>
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<td>longstanding aspiration to build a swimming pool, but no realistic prospect of</td>
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<td>so doing. Although we are in a rural location with plenty of walks, the local</td>
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<td>clay makes these muddy to the point of impassable for much of the year. This</td>
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<td>particularly</td>
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affects the older population, families with young children and many dog walkers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wartling</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westham</td>
<td>Skate ramp for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingdon/Jevington</td>
<td>The local football team use Huggetts Lane as one of the only suitable facilities in the area but the pavilion needs development.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If we have to have c700 houses on Mornings Mill Farm/Hindsland Playing fields we need more recreational space/sport provision to be provided on these sites.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>One of our Willingdon Football Clubs would like to be able to go up to a higher division but the facilities they currently have are not up to the right FA standard so they cannot progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withyham</td>
<td>Our Parish Plan identified the need for more sports provision for older people (the Chair of Groombridge Sports Ground Association has some ideas for suitable activities). Also the need for all weather facilities in the parish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We intend to set up a Volunteer group to assist with maintaining our many assets in our parish, including our open spaces, play areas and footpaths.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We work closely with our sports associations in Groombridge and Ashurst/Blackham, both of which have aspirations to continue to deliver good quality facilities that meet the needs of their communities. These thrive on volunteers. They need help and support from both Parish and District on occasions, and money should be available equitably across the District to help develop and sustain local facilities for local people.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The detailed parish responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements summarised in the table in 6.2.1 above are provided below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berwick</td>
<td>None specifically highlighted.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Buxted                      | Village Hall: We have planning permission for a new village hall in Buxted but cannot fund the building as the planning agreement restricts us selling the existing village hall for redevelopment.  
Youth facilities: Need identified.  
Footpaths etc: Safe footpath needed from Buxted Village to Primary School. |
| Chalvington with Ripe       | Play Areas: Have been requested.                                                                                           |
| Chiddingly                  | None specifically highlighted.                                                                                                |
| Crowborough                 | Netball court facilities: One court is below requirements. All weather pitches: these are needed.  
Athletics track: better running track surface needed.                                                                     |
| Cuckmere Valley             | None specifically highlighted.                                                                                                |
| East Dean and Friston       | Tennis Courts/ MUGAs: Could be turned into a proper MUGA with marking for different sports and a better playing surface.  
Play Areas: Need to improve quality and extend age range of equipment.  
Youth facilities: Need to improve quality and extend age range of equipment.  
Footpaths etc: Need to provide visitor information about paths between the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| **East Hoathly/Halland** | Village Hall: the village hall and Pavilion need to be merged into one replacement building.  
Winter pitches: football - drainage needed.  
Cricket pitch: drainage needed.  
MUGAs: need new provision.  
Play Areas: improved provision needed.  
Youth facilities: need for skate/skateboard/scooter area.  
Allotments: currently have a number of vacant allotments so more use would be great!  
Parks and Recreation Grounds: needed in Halland to provide for all local age groups including children’s play area.  
Natural green space: we have an area of woodland that needs improved paths to ensure wider access into designated walking areas. Board walk needed over boggy ground at entrance.  
Footpaths etc: The Weald Way runs through the Parish and needs improvement in the Church area, bridlepath at Mill Lane is impassable for equines Improved way of enabling people to walk and cycle in safety between Halland and East Hoathly village to enable access to the facilities. |
| **Fletching** | Village Hall: new village hall (this could be improved).  
Winter pitches: football pitches needed.  
Tennis Courts: would be a nice addition |
| **Forest Row** | Village/Community Halls: Community centre & village hall both currently subject to programmes of planned refurbishment and there is a perceived need for more 'relaxed' hiring accommodation for mother & toddler groups and seniors.  
Tennis Courts: Need for improved access for general public use.  
Bowling Greens: available in Coleman’s Hatch.  
MUGAs: A MUGA is planned for the rear of the main village green for free-to-use access  
Footpaths etc: the main bridleway connecting the green with the Forest Way cycle path is in need of refurbishment |
| **Framfield** | None specifically highlighted. |
| **Frant** | None specifically highlighted. |
| **Hadlow Down** | Village Hall: Village Hall very old and unsuitable for requirements, need a new hall built.  
Winter pitches: Drainage being improved as pitch currently becomes waterlogged and unusable.  
Cricket pitch: Drainage being improved as pitch currently becomes waterlogged and unusable.  
MUGAs: Not available.  
Play Areas: Equipment needs replacing, however new items need to fit in with the natural environment.  
Youth Facilities: No facilities at present, need to be provided.  
Footpaths etc: Work needs to be undertaken to ensure that they are usable. Safe cycle paths required. An all weather footpath is required linking Buxted and Hadlow Down. |
| **Hailsham** | Village/Community Halls: Our own facilities are in high demand. We are aware of clubs looking for additional spaces. Impossible to say where – suggest in town centre, and also north and south areas of parish. Future demand will largely depend on where additional houses are located.  
Artificial turf pitches: I am not aware of any publicly accessible 3G pitches in the |
**Winter pitches:** used football/sports fields are subject to poor drainage/having been built on marsh lands, and are often unplayable for long periods.  
**MUGAs:** needed.  
**Play areas:** Additional housing will increase the need for additional play areas across the parish.  
**Youth facilities:** current skatepark in Hailsham East – additional housing will increase demand in other areas of town.  
**Allotments:** Town Council currently has a long waiting list for allotment plots.  
**Parks and recreation grounds:** will be required for quality of life as housing numbers expand in the town.  
**Natural green space:** will be required for quality of life as housing numbers expand in the town.  
**Footpaths etc:** the Town Council has been approached with a view to providing and funding cycle training paths on our existing open spaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Winter pitches:</th>
<th>MUGAs:</th>
<th>Play areas:</th>
<th>Youth facilities:</th>
<th>Allotments:</th>
<th>Parks and recreation grounds:</th>
<th>Natural green space:</th>
<th>Footpaths etc:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hartfield</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Play areas: our current play area would benefit from additional work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth facilities: youth consultation underway, which may result in request for additional recreational area</td>
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<td><strong>Heathfield/Waldron</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter pitches: football pitches needed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MUGAs: the only one available is at Heathfield Community Centre.</td>
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<td>Youth facilities: the current one is very restricted due to its location</td>
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<td><strong>Hellingly</strong></td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: anew Community Hall has planning permission</td>
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<td>Winter pitches: Football and rugby. There is currently no football pitch in the Parish, the current Rugby pitch is well used but prone to flooding, parking is also an issue and space is currently limited to be able to provide more.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Play areas: An additional playground is still to be provided at Hellingly Country Park. Also needed for new developments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth facilities: Teenagers have expressed a wish for a skate park.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Allotments: needed for new planned developments</td>
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<td>Parks/recreation grounds: the current sports pitch at Lower Horsebridge Recreation Ground is used by the Rugby Club in the winter and the Cricket Club in the summer. This means additional work is needed at the end of the rugby season to get the pitch ready for the cricket season. This is not an ideal situation so separate pitches would be much better.</td>
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<td><strong>Herstmonceux</strong></td>
<td>Play areas/youth facilities: Early to mid teens enhanced play area, currently being considered for the existing Bowls Green provided the sports pavilion proceeds.</td>
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<td>Footpaths etc: Currently we have no cycle paths in the Parish. Cyclists have to rely upon use of a busy main road to get to and from key parts of the parish</td>
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<td><strong>Hooe</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Horam</strong></td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: Village Hall car park requires improving.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Winter pitches: Good football club, but no rugby pitch.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cricket pitch: Currently no cricket facilities.</td>
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<td>Play areas: equipment and general play area needs updating.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Youth facilities: need updating.</td>
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<td><strong>Isfield</strong></td>
<td>Cricket pitch: Nets needed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tennis courts: improved provision needed.</td>
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<td>Play areas: improved provision needed.</td>
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<td>Youth facilities: improved provision needed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MUGAs: improved provision needed.</td>
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<td><strong>Maresfield</strong></td>
<td>Allotments: need to find space in the Parish to provide allotments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mayfield/Five Ashes</strong></td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: Mayfield Memorial Hall is reaching the end of its life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Sports facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ninfield</td>
<td>Tennis courts: upgrading required. Play areas: Refurbishment and resurfacing and new equipment required. Youth facilities: Refurbishment and new ramps required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: Hall is in need of upgrading and extending with disabled toilets, improved kitchen facilities and new boiler. MUGAs: Requirement to upgrade. Bowling greens: bowls club would like to upgrade their clubhouse. Natural green space: there is an aspiration to increase the wildlife area surrounding Church Wood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pevensye</td>
<td>Sports pitches: Westham and Pevensey Sports Club would like further football/cricket pitches to cope with increased junior numbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polegate</td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: improvements and additional needed. Winter pitches: all need drainage improvements. Cricket pitch: potentially needed. Tennis courts: potentially, yes. MUGAs: potentially (the primary school is installing a new one at present I understand). Bowling greens: potentially (we have none, but do not know what the demand is). Play areas: potentially. Youth facilities: the Town Council has just installed a new outdoor gym and already has a skate park. Allotments: we have a waiting list, but most are non-residents. Parks and recreation grounds: we do not have enough greenspace particularly in the north of Polegate. Natural green space: potentially - we have one wildflower meadow and one developer has a small wild area. Other: potentially - cemeteries - we have none within the parish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rotherfield</td>
<td>Artificial turf pitch: need for small all weather surface for all year round. Cricket pitches: need pitch that they do not need to share with football club. Bowling greens: upgraded pavilion where existing one is. Youth facilities/MUGAs: This could incorporate a small all weather surface in the recreation ground. Play areas: new roundabout in children's play area. Allotments: Improved access to site. Footpaths etc: footpath between Rotherfield and Jarvis Brook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uckfield</td>
<td>No specific needs highlighted but reference made to the plans and aspirations of Active Uckfield. The Town Council notes that it is refreshing its business plan over the next few weeks/months alongside its budget setting process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wadhurst</td>
<td>Village/Community Halls: need for improved provision MUGAs: needed (abortive attempt at Uplands School). Play areas: existing facility too far away from the centre. Youth facilities: need for improved provision. Footpaths etc: vital as the roads are very busy and dangerous in places, and the local clay makes paths very muddy for much of the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wartling</td>
<td>None specifically highlighted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westham</td>
<td>None specifically highlighted.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Willingdon/Jevington | Village/Community Halls: the parish Council would like a custom built facility to be used as a theatre, sports hall and/or cinema. Winter pitches: more football pitch/rugby pitch provision. No rugby teams at present play in our area as there is no provision. Cricket pitches: although we have two cricket pitches, the one at Jevington has a
problem with rabbit holes and Willingdon have 3 teams and only one cricket ground in Willingdon.
Tennis courts: there are currently no courts in the area
MUGAs: due to the flooding of the pitch at Huggetts Lane there is a need for this type of facility.
Bowling greens: the large elderly population would benefit from the addition of bowling facilities.
Youth facilities: if a suitable location could be found then these provide an ideal location for young people to meet.
Allotments: we have no allotments at present. If suitable land can be found these would be required.
Parks/recreation grounds: needed.
Natural green space: needed.
Footpaths etc: Cycle lanes needed and paths network needs improving.
Other: a swimming pool is needed.

Withyham

Cricket pitches: Groombridge Cricket Club is often waterlogged and unable to play. As a village club it struggles to identify funding opportunities to sufficiently address this issue
Play areas: Groombridge Recreation Ground play area requires updating
Youth facilities: Teenagers have been encouraged at Ashurst & Blackham Sports Ground to develop a cycle track. Further work could be done. There is currently no outdoor recreational facilities for teenagers in Groombridge other than organized sports.
Footpaths etc: we have over 40 miles of footpaths in the parish. However, we suffer from some being inaccessible seasonally due to crops, overgrowth, etc. that are never cleared
Natural green space: there has been strong local support for bushcraft projects in Withyham/Balls Green. We would like to see this continue and thrive through dedicated space, and perhaps be offered to other parts of the parish.
Other: currently there are no all-weather pitches in the parish, or indoor dedicated sports spaces.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Issues and other comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuckmere Valley</td>
<td>Please note, Cuckmere Valley is a very small rural Parish, with no current facilities, although there are many footpaths and bridleways for recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly/Halland</td>
<td>As a Parish Council we feel that we should be providing safe recreational facilities for the teenagers in our parish, indoor and outdoor and working with our community to support general health and well-being.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fletching</td>
<td>We have an obesity problem in Wealden, everything is so expensive for youngsters to do to keep fit and exercise. Reduce prices at leisure centres for youngsters and over 60s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Row</td>
<td>There is currently a wide range of facilities available to the village community in one way or another. Some 'loosening up' of public access is desirable. (Personally I would like some snooker/pool facilities not on licensed premises, but I seem to be a lone voice on this!)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hailsham</td>
<td>As mentioned above, Hailsham Town Council is currently involved in the process of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Plan for the parish and therefore the answers to some of these questions may be more ‘qualified’ at that point. The Town Council is also currently involved in the Hailsham Area Action Plan Process with WDC which I am sure will also address some of these issues. I also strongly recommend that the Hailsham Active organisation is consulted with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hellingly</td>
<td>There is a large network of footpaths in the Parish.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingdon/Jevington</td>
<td>We know we have below the recommended amount of outdoor sport, recreation and open space and play facilities in our Parish. We have no indoor sport provision at all and no swimming pool. We know 20 years ago we were actually 16 hectares short of outside recreational space, which included Hindsland (and before any new dwellings are built) under the NPFA guidance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withyham</td>
<td>Withyham Parish Council is concerned about plans for a sports park in the south of the district. It would be over an hour away by car for our residents (and many other parishes in the north of the District) due to poor transport links and infrastructure. We would ask that as people are unlikely to regularly travel long distances to use sporting and leisure facilities in the south of Wealden, investment should instead be made across the District into local facilities for local people. Whilst a sports park in the south of the District would be to the cost of our taxpayers, it would fail to have any impact on the health and well-being of those living in our parish and so would not a proper use of public funds. Rather it would be better to maintain and develop the existing wide range of facilities and new initiatives throughout the district.</td>
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### 3.4 Neighbouring Local Authorities and Town/Parish Councils - Observations and key issues

**Neighbouring Local Authorities – Key Findings**

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

The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived.

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

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

General Overview

- The individual town/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.
- 29 of the 33 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 24 of the 33 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- 12 of the parishes did not think there was scope for greater community use of outdoor sport and recreation spaces at local schools; and nine were not sure. However, 12 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. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Improvements and new provision of village and community halls
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- The need for additional pitches (football mainly) and improvements e.g.drainage.
- 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 have good car parking facilities.

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be good footpath and cycleway links to and between public open spaces; that they should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community; and that there should be control of noise and unsocial behaviour.

Detailed responses on open space typologies

Many of the parish councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed.
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, recreation grounds and rights of way.

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

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

This section is comprised of seven main sections:

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

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

4.2 Review of policy and strategy – Wealden District Council and East Sussex County

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

4.2.1 Wealden District Council

Wealden District of Opportunity – Corporate Plan 2015-2019

The Council’s Corporate Plan sets out its direction and priorities for the next four years.

Vision: Wealden will Continue to work with our partners to support:

- Sustainable economic growth and sound financial management
- Engaged, resilient, active communities
- Access to suitable housing, local jobs, services, facilities and leisure opportunities

We will:

- Protect and enhance Wealden’s unique rural character and distinctive, high quality, natural and historic environment
- Promote the countryside as a sustainable resource for recreation, tourism and other rural enterprise
- Work with partners to regenerate our diverse market towns, creating jobs, attracting investment and bringing in wealth
• Support our local businesses and entrepreneurs
• Generate sustainable sources of income to reinvest in local priorities
• Manage growth to meet future needs
• Provide more homes that local people can afford, maintaining a balance between our rural settlements and market towns
• Help improve connectivity and access to services for all our communities

**Key Priorities** are set out under three themes as follows:

**Communities**
We want… people in Wealden’s communities to have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life through:

• Access to services
• Healthy lifestyles
• Access to good health care
• Affordable housing
• Skills and employability
• Increasing connectivity
• Effective community leadership and representation
• Keeping communities safe

**Environment**
We want… Everyone in Wealden to enjoy the attractive natural environment and have access to housing and local employment opportunities through:

• Planned growth that respects our environment
• Sensitive improvements to essential infrastructure
• Protection for our outstanding landscape and our heritage
• Maintaining a great place to live, work and play

**Local Economy**
We want… Wealden communities, residents and businesses to prosper and flourish in the District. We are committed to promoting and planning opportunities for growth through:

• Vibrant high streets and villages
• Business innovation in a green environment
• Fast broadband for Wealden enterprise
• Wealden growing as a tourist destination
• Working with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership
• Working with local businesses through the Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses
• Encouraging funding into the District
• Improved mobile phone coverage
The emerging new Local Plan and evidence base

The Council is now preparing its new Local Plan called the Wealden Local Plan (WLP or The Plan). The Wealden Local Plan will identify policy for housing, the economy, the environment and infrastructure including green infrastructure, open space, sports and recreation provision.

The Plan covers the area of Wealden District, excluding that part within the South Downs National Park Authority area, and will include land use allocations and policies to guide development. The proposal is for the focus of the majority of housing to be within the south of the District, around Hailsham and Polegate. However, a number of other settlements within the District will also be allocated growth. Brownfield sites shall continue to be utilised where possible, but the significant growth proposed will most likely result in developing greenfield sites. The policies set out in the Local Plan will, alongside national policy, provide a basis for decision making when determining planning applications.

The new Wealden Local Plan will review all the policies within the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2013. When the Wealden Local Plan is adopted, the Core Strategy policies will no longer exist. In addition to this the Wealden Local Plan will supercede the Wealden Local Plan adopted in 1998.

Core Strategy Local Plan

Adopted in February 2013, the Core Strategy Local Plan is the overarching planning policy document for the District and comprises a long-term spatial vision, strategic objectives and key planning policies for the Wealden District area (incorporating part of the South Downs National Park) for the period 2013 to 2027. It seeks to provide sufficient growth to sustain the local economy while protecting Wealden’s high quality rural environment, much of it protected by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the South Downs National Park.

It has been prepared and adopted by both Wealden District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority which is the Local Planning Authority for part of south Wealden. In due course the South Downs National Park Authority will produce its own, Park-wide Core Strategy, which will supersede this Core Strategy as it applies to the area of the National Park within Wealden District.

The vision is that:

By 2027 Wealden will have successfully accommodated growth to meet future needs whilst protecting and enhancing its essential rural character and high quality environment and promoting the countryside as a resource for recreation and tourism. Its market towns will have been regenerated providing opportunities for residents to access suitable housing, local jobs, services, facilities and recreational opportunities and a number of its villages and rural settlements will have enhanced their sustainability through successful growth including provision of affordable housing.

A number of spatial planning objectives are set out in order to achieve this vision, and following this, spatial planning policies identify what will be delivered on a strategic scale, and when e.g. WCS1 Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006-2027.

The broad locations for delivering growth are being revised as part of the Wealden Local Plan.

Wealden PPG17 Assessment (December 2008 with April 2010 Amendments)

The PPG17 assessment produced by Kit Campbell Associates in 2008 provides the key evidence base to the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (adopted in February 2013). This study provided an assessment of a range of open space; children’s play provision and formal sports provision across the District. The NPPF
suggests that evidence to support Local Plans should not be more than 5 years old. The PPG17 assessment work is therefore now out of date for the purpose of plan making.

This assessment suggested possible provision standards for (non-sports specific) open space as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Travel time (minutes)</th>
<th>Walking distance (metres)</th>
<th>Quantity per person (sq m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity greenspace</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Included as part of multi-functional greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Grounds</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Included as part of multi-functional greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Greenspace</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Included as part of multi-functional greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Parks</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Included as part of multi-functional greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-functional greenspace</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: These standards will be reviewed in the main reports of this study

The Assessment includes ‘multi-functional greenspace’ which consists of amenity green spaces; churchyards and cemeteries; parks; natural green spaces and open access playing fields. The access standard for this combined typology is that no one should live more than 5 minutes walk from at least one of these forms of provision. However, the appropriate distance thresholds for specific forms of provision considered in isolation are also given.

The assessment also states that the balance between these different forms of multifunctional provision may vary from one area to another. For example, it will not always be necessary to have all of them in any given area e.g. the rural areas of the District are unlikely to have urban parks. It assumes that apart from churchyards and cemeteries, these forms of provision are substitutable one for another e.g. someone wanting to visit a natural green space will probably be happy to visit a park or amenity green space instead, if it is closer, and accordingly an aggregate quantity standard was recommended. This is one of the key differences compared to the current study.

District-wide open space recommendations from the assessment were as follows:

Multi-functional Greenspaces
- There are quite a number of spaces that require enhancement to bring them up at least to the average quality and value of spaces across the District. This should be the first priority of the District Council and its town and parish council partners.
- There are clear gaps in accessibility to different forms of provision across the District, with the most glaring need being for more parks and gardens. A second priority, therefore, should be to identify spaces that can be made more “park-like”, especially in the main settlements – for example, the Wolfe Recreation Ground (Crowborough); and Hindsland Playing Fields (Polegate/Willingdon).

Allotments
- Allotment site owners should do more to attract tenants for their vacant plots
- Once this is done, there is likely to be a need to allocate sites for additional plots in the eastern and western parts of Crowborough; the western part of Hailsham; Heathfield; and the northern part of Polegate
The assessment also looked at the overall provision of facilities in relation to the five key settlements of Wealden, namely Crowborough, Uckfield, Hailsham, Polegate and Heathfield, drawing conclusions on the surpluses, deficits and requirements in relation to each town.

**European Designated Sites (Natura 2000 sites) within Wealden District**

**Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA (and SSSI)**

Ashdown Forest is classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the presence of breeding nightjars and Dartford warblers and is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) due to the heathland habitats present. The European designations cover around 3000ha (the SPA is slightly larger than the SAC), and the site is different from some of the other internationally important heathland sites in southern England (such as Dorset and the Thames Basin Heaths) in that the protected area forms a relatively contiguous block of habitat rather than a number of small fragments. The site has historically been a very wooded heath and contains large tracts of ancient woodland.

As part of the Councils adopted Core Strategy Local Plan the Council are committed to investigating the impacts of nitrogen upon the Ashdown Forest SAC so that its effects upon development in the longer term can be more fully understood and mitigated if appropriate. In April 2014, Wealden District Council awarded a contract to Ecus Ltd, supported by Air Quality Consultants Ltd, to determine the effects of atmospheric pollution on the Ashdown Forest SAC. The consultants have now implemented a monitoring, modelling and assessment programme which will run for a number of years.

On 9th July 2015 in response to a Court of Appeal decision, the Council has made changes to its Core Strategy Policy WCS 12 relating to Ashdown Forest. Prior to the Court of Appeal Judgement Policy WCS12 provided that any net increase in residential development between 400m and 7km would be required to mitigate its recreational impact through the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and on-site visitor management measures. The reference to the 7km zone of influence and the specific mitigation identified in this policy has now been removed. However, all planning applications will continue to be subject to the Habitat Regulations which protect the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC.

The Council is continuing to actively work on developing a strategy to mitigate the impact of recreational pressure at Ashdown Forest with regards to residential and tourism related development. This includes work to identify **Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS)** together with working with partner authorities and organisations to identify and implement a **Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS)**.

The aim of the SAMM Strategy projects will be to:

- Raise awareness and build visitor understanding of the importance and sensitivity of ground nesting birds and their habitats within the Ashdown Forest SPA as part of the wider education and heathland management programme;
- Promote alternative recreational spaces (SANGs) for local people especially in the breeding bird season;
- Promote and enforce where necessary the Code of Conduct for dog walkers;
- Encourage responsible dog walking and behavioural change as set out in the Code of Conduct;
- Provide new and additional volunteering opportunities such as Volunteer Dog Rangers in the delivery of advice and on-site support to ensure and promote responsible behaviour and use of the Ashdown Forest SPA;
- Contribute to the existing Ashdown Forest education programme to deliver outcomes that relate to the required mitigation measures in relation to Ashdown Forest SPA; and
• Help coordinate and support bird monitoring on the Ashdown Forest SPA and undertake visitor monitoring on the Ashdown Forest SPA and at SANG sites. This will be used to:
  o Ensure that projects are effective;
  o Inform the direction of strategic access management; and
  o Measure the effectiveness of avoidance and mitigation measures.

**Pevensy Levels Ramsar Site**

Pevensy Levels is one of the largest and least-fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in southeast England. The low-lying grazing meadows are intersected by a complex system of ditches which support a variety of important wetland communities, including nationally rare and scarce aquatic plants and invertebrates. The site also supports a notable assemblage of breeding and wintering wildfowl. A small area of shingle and intertidal muds and sands is included within the site.

**4.2.2 East Sussex County**

**Pride of Place – An Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex 2008-2026**

The Sustainable Community Strategy demonstrates how local organisations and agencies will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area whilst safeguarding the prospects of future generations. It focuses on the issues and priorities that local people are most concerned about, like crime, housing, education, jobs and the environment. It also sets out the key things that must be tackled to achieve the vision.

**Vision and objectives**

We want to raise the quality of life for all our residents by securing their future prosperity and well-being and improving the places where they live, work and spend their leisure time. Our vision therefore is:

*to create places where everyone can prosper, be safe and healthy, and live in a high quality environment.*

To achieve this vision, our main objectives are to create and sustain:

- A vibrant, diverse and sustainable economy
- Great places to live in, visit and enjoy, and
- Safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.

**Strategic Priorities**

A number of issues affect the quality of life for people in East Sussex, and tackling these issues have become strategic priorities, each of which contributes to the vision and objectives:

- Developing our economy, creating jobs and increasing prosperity
- Providing high quality education, learning & skills opportunities
- Improving travel choices and access to services
- Providing high quality affordable housing
- Protecting our natural and built environments and adapting and responding to climate change
- Improving health and well-being
- Ensuring people and communities are safe and secure
- Creating strong communities and community leadership
- Enabling people to enjoy culture, sports and leisure.
Each District and Borough has its own chapter, setting out each Local Strategic Partnerships priorities. The vision for Wealden is outlined below.

**Chapter 8: Wealden**

The Wealden vision

- a healthy, rich and diverse environment based on sustainable principles for everybody in Wealden
- reduce health inequalities, provide appropriate information and advice and access to health and social care services in order to maximise the potential for good health and well-being
- enough decent, affordable homes to meet the needs of everyone who lives in or needs to live in the District
- access to lifelong learning, education and skills training to allow Wealden residents to fulfil their potential
- a broad range of opportunities to improve quality of life, health and well-being, including sport, leisure, recreation and the arts
- a prosperous and sustainable local economy that is dynamic, flexible and maintains the environmental qualities of the area
- residents and visitors to Wealden are confident of their safety and free from the fear of crime
- improved accessibility for all and reduce the impact of traffic on people and places

**Environment Strategy for East Sussex (2011)**

This 15 year Environment Strategy for East Sussex was developed for the East Sussex Strategic Partnership by the Environment Strategy Group, a network of organisations and individuals, who have decided to work together to help deliver the environmental vision for the county set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy (Pride of Place) which is to protect and enhance our natural and built environment for current and future generations, and enable individuals and organisations to tackle and adapt to climate change.

**Vision:** By 2026 East Sussex will be a place where:

- there is a better quality environment which has made people healthier
- people are more aware of how important the environment is to our prosperity and where there are more ‘low carbon’ and environmental jobs
- we are more self-sufficient and use energy and resources better
- the landscape and built and historic environment has been conserved and enhanced so that it retains its unique character
- areas of high nature conservation quality have been conserved and the loss of plant and animal species has been reversed
- we are firmly on track to becoming a ‘low carbon’ county and are more adaptive to climate change
- people have become ‘greener’ in the way they live their lives
- the environment lies at the heart of other strategies and plans for the county and where we have worked together better to implement them

To realise this vision by 2026, this Environment Strategy for East Sussex establishes 10 environmental principles and identifies three key short/medium term actions, showing how the strategy will be implemented.
East Sussex as a county supports a wide range of GI assets, many of which provide more than one function or are truly multifunctional, and which underpin a number of social, economic and environmental benefits. There are also opportunities across these assets to enhance their multifunctional benefits. These assets can be drawn upon to provide opportunities for mitigating and compensating for new development and loss of Greenfield sites. The GI assets are essential to buffer the natural environment against new development and growing populations and protect the ecosystem services which this supports. The wide range of GI assets should also help to ensure that key priority functions can be protected and enhanced where it may not be desirable for an area to provide for all functions. For example, sensitive wildlife sites where public access would not be desirable.

The study has helped to identify that the GI priorities for East Sussex are to:

(a) Consider opportunities for enhancing the condition of GI assets at a landscape scale which works across statutory boundaries (e.g. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and County Landscape Character areas);

(b) Conserve and enhance the character of the East Sussex landscape and reinforce a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valued landscapes and cultural heritage;

(c) Identify opportunities for enhanced sustainable transport building on existing GI assets for example:
   - Green Lanes and historic routeways
   - River corridors
   - The extensive rights of way network
   - Disused railway corridors
   - Existing cycle routes;

(d) Facilitate the districts and boroughs to build up an evidence base to ensure that the required multifunctional GI can be provided in relation to new development.

Case Study: Wealden District Council and Planning for Green Infrastructure (Appendix 4)

The case study describes the process of GI planning for Wealden District Council at the different GI scales identified within the study – district wide and strategic site or settlement scale.

It sets out examples of Local Plan policies as adopted by Wealden District Council for the protection and enhancement of GI assets (WCS13 Green Infrastructure and WCS12 Biodiversity). The Strategic Site case study demonstrates how this can be achieved at the development site scale.

Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan

Sussex Biodiversity Partnership contains representatives from a range of organisations including conservation bodies, statutory agencies and local government. The Partnership was set up in 1996 to work together to conserve and enhance the special habitats and species of Sussex. This work is guided by the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan.

Sussex has a wide range of habitats including flower-rich meadows, ancient wooded valleys, coastal sand dunes and shingle. Many of these habitats have declined in area and quality over the past 100 years, leading to the writing of the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan. The plan reflects UK targets for habitats of conservation concern, and translates them to a local level. Priority habitats in Sussex with action plan targets are categorised into different groups of habitats as follows:
• Lowland Farmland (includes arable field margins, hedgerows, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland heathland, lowland meadows, purple moor grass and rush pastures, and traditional orchards).

• Wetlands (Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, eutrophic standing water, lowland fens, ponds and reedbeds).

• Coastal (includes coastal saltmarsh, coastal sand dunes, coastal vegetated shingle, intertidal mudflats, maritime cliff and slope and saline lagoons).

• Woodland (Wood pasture and parkland and woodland)

• Marine (Blue mussel beds on sediment, intertidal chalk, intertidal underboulder communities, mud habitats in deep water, peat and clay exposures, Ross worm reefs, seagrass beds, subtidal chalk and subtidal sands and gravels).

• Urban (networks of green spaces).

In line with the England Biodiversity Strategy and the South East Biodiversity Strategy, the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan aims to integrate the needs of species and habitats within landscape-scale delivery.

The Partnership’s work on habitats will incorporate actions for associated priority species. Species not covered by this integration are being identified regionally along with the work necessary to support them and the Partnership will work with the relevant bodies to deliver the actions required in Sussex.
4.3 Key Stakeholders - strategic context and overview

This section includes general comments from the key stakeholders consulted.

Responses specific to individual typologies from the stakeholders consulted will be noted under each of the focused topic headings.

4.3.1 Wealden District Council

Estates Management Officer

Wealden District Council (WDC) own and manage a variety of open spaces as follows:

- Amenity grassland from private housing which excludes highway verges – these areas are cut on a regular basis and have some recreational value.
- Garden plots – these are not statutory allotments (the council do not allow sheds etc.), and are used for gardening only e.g. growing vegetables and flowers. Priority in letting them is given to housing tenants. In some areas there are full waiting lists.
- Closed churchyards – these are churchards where there will be no further burials. There are 10 closed churchyards with Wealden DC.
- The Cuckoo Trail (part owned by East Sussex) which is a popular leisure route used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- Diplocks Wood in Polegate – a semi-ancient woodland primarily used for dog walking.
- Wilmington Common - registered common land.
- Birling Gap - WDC are responsible for the steps to the beach and a section of the shoreline. The car park, café, hotel and land at the top of the cliff has been owned by the National Trust since 2010.
- Pevensey Beach - WDC own a small section of beach at Pevensey together with a Tourist Information Centre and toilets.

WDC also own a small number of recreation grounds (around 5 or 6) that are leased to Parish Councils e.g. Marshfoot Lane in Hailsham.

It was also noted that the Council have recently acquired a large site (Walshes Park Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)) in Crowborough. The site is not currently accessible to the public, but is due to open in Spring 2017.

Asset Management Co-ordinator

Two Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) are currently being progressed by WDC in order to mitigate the recreational impacts of new development on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC. The council has developed SANGs Guidelines which provides evidence regarding the design, access and marketing of these spaces.

Walshes Park in Crowborough is approx. 70 acres. Works have started to make the site safe, and official opening is planned for Spring 2017.

A second SANG in Uckfield (another 70 acre site) is being transferred to the council in December, and this requires work before it is open to the public.
WDC are watching the outcome of the ESCC consultation ‘Shaping the future of our countryside access’ (see section 4.3.2 below), as they could potentially work together to put a package of sites out to external management, or equally if management stays in-house, there is scope for the councils to work together. At present WDC plan to out-source the management of the SANGs with a 25 year management contract, however management could be retained in-house if there are no suitable contractors.

Park Wood, Hellingly – owned by the Environment Agency and managed by East Sussex Council - is a well used accessible woodland adjoining new housing.

4.3.2 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) – overview of countryside sites

Rights of Way and Countryside Management

A team of rangers is responsible for the management of 11 countryside sites and 2000 miles of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) across East Sussex County.

ESCC countryside sites within Wealden District are as follows:

- The Cuckoo Trail (Part owned by WDC)
- Forest Way Country Park – disused railway line
- Seven Sisters Country Park
- Shinewater Park (joint with Eastbourne BC)
- Weir Wood LNR (part)

ESCC are currently consulting with the public about the management of their countryside site and Rights of Way. The Council want to look at other organisations taking on/managing some of these sites in order to enhance community involvement, conservation and visitor engagement, and are currently carrying out a public consultation ‘Shaping the future of our countryside Access’, which is based on a draft Countryside Access Strategy.

The Vision of the draft Countryside Access Strategy is: To ensure that our public rights of way and countryside sites are accessible, maintained, enhanced and promoted; meeting the needs of our residents and visitors in the most efficient, affordable and effective manner.

This vision is supported by four strategic outcomes that will be used to structure and prioritise spend to ensure the contribution to Council priorities is maximised:

1. Enable residents and visitors to safely use our public rights of way and countryside sites.
2. Support and enable landowners, stakeholders and residents to exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.
3. Achieve the most efficient and effective management of our public rights of way and countryside sites for the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife.
4. Enhance local communities through engagement with our public rights of way and countryside sites.

Preferred model

Broadly, the Council has determined two models for the functions:
1. PRoW will be managed in-house

2. How we manage our countryside sites should change i.e. by passing sites to others experienced in community involvement, conservation and visitor engagement. The Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way are more like Public Rights of Way in their appearance and use, so they require different management arrangements to green open space. Consequently we propose that the Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way continue to be managed in-house by East Sussex County Council.

Consultation was undertaken as part of the draft Countryside Access Strategy, to understand how and why people are using PRoW and countryside sites.

The feedback has enabled ESCC to establish what contribution PRoW and countryside sites make to the Council priorities. Most notable is the contribution to the priority: “Helping people to help themselves”. This can take many forms and includes:

- Helping people to be healthy, stay active and independent and particularly enjoy the benefits of green exercise (exercise outdoors in green areas);
- Improving community involvement and community wellbeing through locally established volunteer and interest groups set up to look after stretches of the PRoW network or for conservation work.

A summary of the results from the consultation undertaken to inform the draft Countryside Access Strategy is as follows:

Individual survey

This was advertised across East Sussex and we received 886 responses. 97% of respondents had used PRoW and 85% a countryside site in the last two years. 60% said they used them to get fresh air, for their health and to enjoy scenery and walking. Over 80% of those visiting a countryside site travelled there by car.

There were 405 additional comments about PRoW which told ESCC: they are a valued asset (14%), where accessibility (15%) and maintenance (26%) is important.

There were 141 additional comments on countryside sites: 18% said they were a valued asset; 12% said maintenance and management was important; 15% praised ESCC management; 85% said the countryside sites were important for wildlife conservation; 18% wanted easier access; and 13% wanted more information.

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders were asked how they are involved and what their plans are for the future.

There were 126 replies to the survey and had 65 attendees at ESCC meetings. ESCC spoke to a range of stakeholders including landowners, user groups, partners and organisations. 10% were from the private sector, 14% voluntary, 18% public sector and 42% association or society.

The top reasons respondents were involved in PRoW and countryside sites were:

- Enjoyment of the countryside
- Health and exercise
- Monitoring and management.
20% were involved with Seven Sisters Country Park (SSCP), 27% with the Cuckoo Trail and 64% in walking. When asked about the future, the main issues cited were: financing (12%), co-ordination (12%), change (13%) and information (12%).

**ESCC County Landscape Architect**

ESCC produced a report looking at access to strategic open spaces (publicly accessible open access land, commons, woodlands and nature reserves over 20ha in size) using 2008 mid-year population population estimates against Natural England’s Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt) and The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WAS).

**East Sussex Comparison with the standards**

Strategic Open Space: 92% of the county’s population currently achieves the 20ha standard, 86% achieve the 100ha standard and 67% achieve the 500ha standard. For the 500ha standard of sites within 10km of homes, a wide band of deficiency exists from Hastings and Bexhill, through Battle and up to Heathfield.

Local Nature Reserve provision is not a problem within East Sussex as it is well provided for, with nearly 2.0 ha per 1,000 population, although this varies greatly at a local level.

Woodland: In East Sussex, 83% of local residents achieve the larger Woodland Trust standard. The main areas of deficiency are around Rye, Pevensey Levels and Newhaven. Other smaller areas of deficiency are scattered around in the more rural parts of the county. Woodland is not part of the landscape character of the Rye and Pevensey Bay areas and, therefore, creating more woodland in these areas would not be appropriate. However, creating more woodland in the Newhaven area would address the largest area of remaining deficiency and would be in keeping with the local landscape character. Other areas (e.g. between Lewes and Uckfield), and south-east of Heathfield are lower priority, as at least some of these areas’ needs could be met by increasing access to existing woodland. The other small, rural areas of deficiency are low priority areas to address because fewer people live in them.

**4.3.3 Strategic Organisations**

**Natural England (Lead Advisor)**

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

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

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

Natural England manage and promote Lullington Heath National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Wealden. They are also shortly due to begin work on England’s Coastal Path National Trail in the Wealden area.
**Sport and Recreation in environmentally sensitive areas**

Previous consultation with Natural England regarding an open space study in 2015 highlighted the following reports which cover some of the issues associated with recreational pressures around sensitive sites:

- **Improvement Programme for England’s Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS): Recreation and disturbance workshop notes (IPENSTP009).**

- **Public Access and Disturbance Theme Plan: A strategic approach to identifying and addressing significant effects on the features of Natura 2000 sites.**

- **Scientific research into the effects of access on nature conservation: Part 1: access on foot (NECR012).**

- **Scientific research into the effects of access on nature conservation: Part 2: access on bicycle and horseback (NECR013).**

Consultation with Natural England in 2015 and for this current study also provided references to guidance and further information relating to the health benefits of open/green spaces such as:

- **Green space access, green space use, physical activity and overweight. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR067** – This study provides evidence that good access to urban green spaces is associated with higher use, higher physical activity levels, and a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese. Informal physical activity is an important component of overall activity levels, and provision of facilities such as green spaces which can be used for a wide range of physical activities, has population wide benefits. It is important that supportive environments are available to facilitate active lifestyles, and the findings suggest that green spaces may provide a valuable resource in urban areas.


- **Greening Dementia. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR137.** (21 November 2013) - A literature review of the benefits and barriers facing individuals living with dementia in accessing the natural environment and local greenspace.

- **Natural solutions for tackling health inequalities** UCL Institute of Health Equity). The report highlights the evidence of the benefits of green spaces to health and wellbeing outcomes, and the inequalities in use of, and access to, natural environments across England.

- **Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers’ lives. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR025.** The study sets out evidence of the potential benefits for the individual and the community arising from young people’s engagement with wild adventure space, barriers to obtaining these benefits, gaps in understanding, issues for further study, and opportunities for provision of relevant and necessary resources. It recommends the action needed to take this work forward and identifies a range of potential partners.
Environment Agency (Planning Specialist)

The Environment Agency manage all main rivers including the Cuckmere, Pevensey and Ouse, with the remit to improve wetland habitat including improving fish passage. Our projects aren’t designed to improve recreation facilities in Wealden. However, the projects might offer a secondary benefit of improving recreation in wetland areas for example.

Our projects for habitat and fish passage improvements on the main rivers in Wealden District are shown below, including what we hope to achieve. None of these projects are absolutely certain to be delivered (especially those where the funding is uncertain), but these are what we have in our programme for 2016/17.

All of the projects are seeking to improve habitat, improve fish passage, remove invasive species or reconnect the flood plain. You can see that our main focus for this year is on the River Cuckmere, where we are seeking to remove or alter structures in particular to improve fish passage on many stretches of the river. Another project of particular importance is the understanding and control of Cressula (an invasive plant species) which is present on the Pevensey Levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main River</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>What we hope to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cuckmere</td>
<td>Shermans Bridge Fish Pass</td>
<td>Low cost baffle solution. (Baffles are structures (almost ‘steps’) that can be added to existing weirs to improve fish passage without the need to remove the weir itself. Fish can pass over them in high flows and through designed spaces between them during low flows).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sessingham Weir Removal</td>
<td>Investigate what depth the South East Water pipe is that runs underneath the weir and cut out the weir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cuckmere River Restoration</td>
<td>Habitat improvements on the River Cuckmere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cowbeech Low Cost Baffles*</td>
<td>Improve fish passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milton Gate Marshes</td>
<td>Reconnect the flood plain and improve habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Milton Lock Removal / fix in open position</td>
<td>Improve fish passage and habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tumblers Lock Removal / fix in open position</td>
<td>Improve fish passage and habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tidal Cuckmere River Restoration</td>
<td>Creating 20Ha of coastal saltmarsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pevensey</td>
<td>Pevensey Invasive Species Project</td>
<td>Map the extent of Crassula on the Pevensey Levels, develop a control programme with Natural England, trial new biological control. Meets Defra Strategy Objective 4 'UK better protected against non-native species'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of Biodiversity in multi-functional open spaces

Wetland habitats - Quantity is reasonable, quality is often good as most wetland habitats are protected in some way but there is a lot of opportunity to create more and improve what we have. The most important aspect is connectivity – joining up existing good quality habitat with new open spaces that can develop into good quality habitat themselves.
There is an EU Red list of threatened habitats report due soon and the most threatened we are interested in are grassland (wet in particular) and mires, from the JNCC. There is a lot of opportunity to manage grassland more sensitively to improve biodiversity and it is a habitat that is relatively easy to access for most people.

**The Woodland Trust (Government Affairs Officer)**

The Woodland Trust manage/make direct use of woodland within the Wealden District.

The Woodland Trust has developed an Access to Woodland Standard which is supported by both Natural England and the Forestry Commission. It aspires that everyone should have a small wood of at least 2 hectares within 500metres of their home (i.e. easy walking distance) and a larger wood of at least 20 hectares within 4km of their home. Their *Space for People* (2010) report sets out details of the standard.

Their *Trees or Turf* (2011) report outlines the benefits of converting selected areas of intensively mown grassland to woodland, and in particular the cost savings which can be made.

The Woodland Trust would like to see tree cover in green spaces maintained or increased. This is particularly important with the threat of tree disease to tree stock. There is a need to go beyond protecting what trees we already have. To maximize continuity more trees should be planted. Local Authorities have a role to play by only removing trees where absolutely necessary and by replacing trees that have been removed with a wider range of suitable native species as possible to increase future resilience.

They offer free school and community tree packs may be helpful in this regard. For more information: [http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/in-your-community/apply-for-a-community-tree-pack/](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/in-your-community/apply-for-a-community-tree-pack/)

They also highlight the following reports:

**The Independent Panel on Forestry final report (2012)** states "We believe there should be more, and better maintained trees, close to where people live. This means more trees on urban streets, more trees in town parks, and tree “corridors” from the centre of towns and cities out to local woods and forests with good access. We want people to enjoy the health benefits of access to trees and woodlands, and we want our urban areas to have more natural shade and to be more resilient to climate change."

An important publication from the Forestry Commission, *The Case for Trees in development and the urban environment* (Forestry Commission, July 2010), sets out *‘The multiple value of trees for people and places – increasing greenspace and tree numbers is likely to remain one of the most effective tools for making urban areas more convivial’,* and lists (on p.10) the benefits as –

- Climate change contributions
- Environment advantages
- Economic dividends
- Social benefits.

Trees within our towns and cities provide a huge number of benefits and services as outlined in guidance produced by the Trees and Design Action Group - *‘No Trees, No Future’* (Trees and Design Action Group, 2010):

**Economic benefits of urban trees:**

- Trees can increase property values by 7-15 per cent.
As trees grow larger, the lift they give to property values grows proportionately.
They can improve the environmental performance of buildings by reducing heating and cooling costs, thereby cutting bills.
Mature landscapes with trees can be worth more as development sites.
Trees create a positive perception of a place for potential property buyers.
Urban trees improve the health of local populations, reducing healthcare costs.
Trees can enhance the prospect of securing planning permission.
They can provide a potential long-term renewable energy resource.

Social benefits of urban trees:

- Trees help create a sense of place and local identity.
- They benefit communities by increasing pride in the local area.
- They create focal points and landmarks.
- They have a positive impact on people's physical and mental health.
- They have a positive impact on crime reduction.

Environmental benefits of urban trees

- Urban trees reduce the 'urban heat island effect' of localised temperature extremes.
- They provide shade, making streets and buildings cooler in summer.
- They help remove dust and particulates from the air
- They help to reduce traffic noise by absorbing and deflecting sound.
- They help to reduce wind speeds.
- By providing food and shelter for wildlife they help increase biodiversity.
- They reduce the effects of flash flooding by slowing the rate at which rainfall reaches the ground.
- When planted on polluted ground they help improve its quality.

[For research references see the full report: www.forestry.gov.uk/tdag]

Sussex Wildlife Trust (Conservation Officer)

Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) own a number of open access nature reserves in Wealden District which are open for public access e.g. Old Lodge, Eridge Rocks and Selwyns Wood. They also manage part of Pevensey Levels, however access is by permit only.

The importance of Biodiversity in multi-functional open spaces

This is a key element of any assessment as any open space also contributes to the District’s natural capital and will be providing a huge range of ecosystem services. Any opportunity to increase open space provision should also aim to incorporate net gains to biodiversity (NPPF paragraphs 9 and 109). SWT recommend that WDC use some of the tools listed below to ensure that biodiversity is considered in a holistic way.

SWT believes that a Green Infrastructure Strategy and an assessment of the District’s natural capital is vital to ensure sustainable development. We recommend the following documents/websites:

‘Planning for a healthy environment: good practice for green infrastructure and biodiversity’
The Forestry Commission (FC) own and manage a number of woodlands within the Wealden District. These are:

- Abbot’s Wood
- Friston Forest
- Sheffield Forest
- Birchden Wood
- Snape Wood (no formal facilities, however the 41ha site is dedicated under the CRoW (2000) Act which allows for free access on foot.

The FC highlighted the United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS) (http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-BBVECX), which is the reference standard for sustainable forest management in the UK. At the heart of the UKFS approach is the importance of balancing the environmental, economic and social benefits of forests and the recognition that our forests serve a wide range of objectives.

Local Nature Partnership (LNP)/East Sussex County Council (County Ecologist)

The purpose of the Sussex Local Nature Partnership is to work across sectors and organisations to secure the healthiest ecological system possible thereby protecting and enhancing the natural environment and all that it gives us.

This vision is the key guiding principle behind the work of the LNP, both in terms of its direct delivery and in terms of any advice it may give, the statements it makes and the positions it may hold.

The LNP has set two high-level objectives, consistent with its vision to determine the nature and trajectory of the LNP’s activities. These are:

1. Conserve, enhance and expand Sussex’s Natural Capital.
   Growth in Natural Capital is the fundamental pre-requisite for enhancing the services provided by ecosystems and so underpins the economic and social well-being of Sussex. The LNP will promote
the greening of the economy including the need to invest in nature because of the many benefits and essential services it provides.

2. **Ensure that Sussex residents share in the benefits provided by healthy, well-functioning ecosystems.**
   The LNP will aim to improve the connection between people, their environment and the benefits they get from the environment. This will cover a broad spectrum of activities including health, well-being, social and economic areas.

In order to deliver growth in natural capital and share in the benefits of healthy ecosystems, the LNP will ensure that the evidence is collated to promote concepts, projects and initiatives that support the positive development of ecosystem services in Sussex. This will be shared across all sectors and audiences.

Individual members of the LNP manage/use open space e.g. National Trust. The LNP itself does not manage land, or have any specific reports. The East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study (link below) has been approved by the LNP.

Areas where the LNP/ESCC have a particular interest are:

- Seven Sisters Country Park (owned & managed by ESCC);
- Cuckmere Estuary (task & finish group looking at restoration of meanders);
- Ashdown Forest (managed by Conservators of which ESCC is Chair);
- Heritage Coast (includes Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area and a Marine Conservation Zone).

*The importance of Biodiversity in multi-functional open spaces*

In some cases, green spaces should not be multi-functional in terms of access as this can be detrimental to biodiversity, either directly, indirectly or both. Green spaces managed specifically for their biodiversity value are usually still multi-functional in other ways though, e.g. by providing resilience and adaptation to climate change, water management etc.

**East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study:** [http://sussexlnp.org.uk/projects.php](http://sussexlnp.org.uk/projects.php)

*Sustrans (Network Development Manager)*

Sustrans are involved with/promote Forest Way and the Cuckoo Trail which form part of National Cycle Route 21.

**Groundwork South (Surrey and Sussex - Development Manager)**

Whilst the federation of Groundwork trusts take a strategic view on public open space, Groundwork South is not currently active in Wealden District Council.

Groundwork’s report Grey places need green spaces – The case for investing in our nations natural assets (2012) was highlighted. The report sets out the economic, health and social benefits of urban green space and includes 13 recommendations ranging from national legislation to facilitating local action that can help towards a view of green spaces as a vital national asset and shared resource with enduring rights of public enjoyment.

Groundwork are currently in the process of producing a major strategic review of Brighton & Hove’s play areas with some interesting findings emerging for councils who heavily invested in their play areas with
Playbuilder funding, but the report has not been published yet and we are unable to release a copy at this time.

**British Horse Society (Regional Manager)**

BHS horse riders utilise PROW in Wealden for recreational riding. Specific comments have been provided under the footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths and ROW section.

**Other strategic organisations consulted**

The National Trust were also contacted on at least three separate occasions via email, but no responses were received.

**4.3.4 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports): overview**

An online survey was set up for local organisations with an interest in green spaces (non-sporting). Responses were received from 9 organisations with varied interests including rambling, wildlife conservation and recreational use of open space, and allotment gardening.

Detailed comments from the groups are found in the typology based sections 4.4 to 4.8 below.

**Quantity**

- 100% of respondents felt their organisations make direct use of open space or outdoor recreation facilities.
- 100% feel there are enough open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of the groups primary activities (1 group skipped this question).

**Quality**

- The general views of these local community organisations as regards the overall quality of the different types of (non-sporting) green spaces in Wealden District are summarised in the chart and information below
Quality of Green Space (non sports):

- The majority (67%) of groups think the quality of park and recreation grounds are good, 17% think they are adequate and 17% have no opinion.
- The majority (57%) of groups rated country parks as good or very good, with 14% rating them as adequate and 14% as poor. 14% had no opinion.
- The majority (71%) of groups also rated natural green space (e.g. nature reserves and woodlands) as good, with 29% rating them as adequate.
- For water recreation, 14% of groups think the quality is good, 29% adequate, 14% poor, and the majority have no opinion (43%).
- 57% of the groups think the quality of footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths are good, however 43% think the quality is poor.
- The other green spaces category (e.g. grassed areas for dog-walking, informal games, picnics etc) had good or very good ratings – with the majority of 85%. 14% rated them as adequate.

Access

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

- 43% of groups reported that they don’t suffer from access issues to open space and recreational facilities.
- However, 57% of groups did note that they suffer from access issues.
Of those that did report access issues, these are focused around:

- Public Rights of Way – poor maintenance and stiles instead of gates (Ramblers groups).
- Costs of erecting temporary fencing in certain areas to enclose ponies for their and the public’s safety (Sussex Pony Grazing and Conservation trust).
- Limited access to Ashdown Forest for disabled and children in pushchairs etc. (Ashdown Forest Tourism Association).

**Sport and Recreation in environmentally sensitive areas**

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

The majority of respondents skipped this question, however Hempstead Meadows LNR and West Park LNR Supporter’s Groups commented that ‘The two key sensitive areas, the LNRs, already are protected from any kind of sport and recreational activity’.
4.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

In Wealden District it is the town and parish councils who are the key providers of parks and recreation grounds so it is important to refer to Section 3.3 for detailed feedback on local issues.

4.4.1 Strategic Organisations

There were no specific comments received from the strategic organisations consulted regarding parks and recreation grounds and country parks.

4.4.2 Community Organisations Survey

Quantity

All three of the groups that responded to this question think that there are enough local parks and recreation grounds.

Quality

Respondents did not raise any particular issues around the quality of local parks and recreation grounds. Hempstead Meadows LNR and West Park LNR Supporter's Groups commented that ‘Uckfield Town Council provides many areas for recreation and sport. They are well managed by the Town Council ground-staff. There are many up to date children’s play areas, a large skate parks and provision of courts for basket-ball etc’.

Potential and suggested improvements

The Ashdown Forest Tourism Association commented that ‘Some areas could be used for a specific purpose i.e. Skate park. Others to be left as open access’.

Country Parks

Hempstead Meadows LNR and West Park LNR Supporter’s Groups commented that ‘We do have a very large area of protected natural heathland, the Ashdown Forest in the heart of the District accessible to perhaps half the communities in the north of the district. I am unaware of any other WDC provided country parks’.
4.5 Allotment Provision

In Wealden District it is the town and parish councils who are the key providers of allotments so it is important to refer to Section 3.3 for detailed feedback on local issues.

4.5.1 Wealden District Council (Estates Management Team)

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.

4.5.2 Community Organisations Survey

Buxted Allotments Association commented that ‘Sufficient land allocated to meet current demand in Buxted Civil Parish. Since the formation of the Buxted Allotments Association in May 2013, the allotment-holders themselves have a much greater say in how the site is managed and maintained’.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Association – ‘I gather that all the new allotments in Heathfield are allocated. This could indicate that more are needed?’

Rotherfield Millennium Green Trust – ‘I have a cherished allotment in Chant Lane and it affords me and 20+ other people a great deal of pleasure. The Parish council have helped us greatly here’.
4.6 Natural green space, wildlife areas and woodlands

In Wealden District many town and parish councils also manage areas of natural green space so it is also important to refer to Section 3.3 for specific feedback on local issues.

4.6.1 Wealden District Council (Countryside Officer)

Wealden DC manages the following countryside sites:

- Diplocks Wood in Polegate
- The Cuckoo Trail (part owned by East Sussex County Council)
- Wilmington Common and Monken Pyn

There are individual management plans for the majority of sites, but no overall strategy. The main aim is to keep these spaces as natural as possible.

The priorities from WDC’s point of view is health and safety (mainly around paths and trees) – there is a programme of inspections and maintenance in place. There are always improvements that the council would like to make to these sites.

The Cuckoo trail is heavily publicised and attracts around 250,000 visitors a year. There is a programme of improvements in place e.g. scrub clearance to encourage wildflowers, old railway infrastructure improvements. Access is good with tarmac paths and entrances designed for disable users. ESCC employs a ranger which manages the trail in partnership with WDC. The other 4 sites provide for local residents, and do not generally attract visitors from a wider area.

4.6.2 East Sussex County Council

Rights of Way and Countryside Management

ESCC countryside sites within Wealden District are as follows:

- The Cuckoo Trail (Part owned by WDC)
- Forest Way Country Park – disused railway line
- Seven Sisters Country Park
- Weir Wood LNR (part)

Access to and within ESCC Countryside sites is generally good, and sites are good quality and well provided:

- The old railway lines are flat and well surfaced, and provide good linkages between towns/settlements e.g. The Cuckoo Trail runs through Hailsham and links Eastbourne.
- The Seven Sisters is treated like open access land and there is a flat run to the beach, and links with Friston Forest, Birling Gap and Beachy Head. There are good car parks and the area is well connected by public transport. Toilets are an issue – there is a need for more. There isn’t much of a problem with litter and dog fouling. There are dog bins on site and most people pick up, although the rangers do get complaints about dog fouling.
- If the sites are kept in house (following public consultation), there are improvements that the team would like to make, although staff time is stretched e.g. don’t have the capacity to work with
volunteers. There is potential for income from the cottages and campsite, which are not currently utilised to their full potential.

- Wealden DC think that ESCC do a good job and would like ESCC to take on the management of new sites e.g. from new development.

- There is good provision of accessible natural green space/countryside with the extensive ROW network and South Downs National Park.

The main barrier to improvements is funding/budget and staff size/time - this means that site safety is the priority, and there are little resources to look at developing tourism and visitor engagement etc.

### 4.6.3 The Woodland Trust (Government Affairs Officer)

The Woodland Trust believes that proximity and access to woodland is a key issue linking the environment with health and wellbeing provision.

Recognising this, the Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WASt) for local authorities to aim for, encapsulated in our *Space for People* publication. We believe that the WASt can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits.

The WASt 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.

Applying this standard in Wealdon, 22% of the population has access to a 2ha+ woodland within 500m of their home and 93% have access to 20Ha+ woodland within 4km of their home. This presents an excellent opportunity for creating more accessible woodland to improve health & well being opportunities for sustainable communities and neighbourhoods. The data used can be supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

### 4.6.4 Local Nature Partnership/East Sussex County Council (Kate Cole – County Ecologist)

There is a network of Local Wildlife Sites throughout District, some have public access, some do not. These sites are currently under review.

### 4.6.5 Sussex Wildlife Trust (Conservation officer)

In order to assess the quality and quantity of the District’s natural spaces the Trust recommends that WDC undertake an assessment of the District’s natural capital and complete a green infrastructure strategy. I understand that some evidence documents relating to green infrastructure were produced during the creation of the Core Strategy, but these mostly relate to strategic allocations rather than the District as a whole. This would be in line with national policy (NPPF paragraphs 114, 117 and 158)

In particular, any assessment needs to consider the connectivity of the natural green spaces rather than their quality of each site in isolation. This should also relate to the other areas of open space that make up a part of the District’s current natural capital such as Local and Country Parks and wetland features.
It must also be acknowledged that some natural green spaces are not appropriate for large amounts of public access due to their sensitivity.

4.6.6 Community Organisation Survey

Respondents’ views in relation to Natural Green Space e.g. nature reserves and woodlands are noted below:

Hempstead Meadows LNR and West Park LNR Supporter’s Groups - ‘The LNRs are cared for by a UTC employed Countryside Ranger assisted by community volunteers. They are kept to a good standard. Other well kept green spaces in addition to the sports field and recreation ground. Funding for more site information/ better signage would be welcomed’.

Buxted Allotments Association – ‘Perfectly happy and feel very lucky with what we have in the area’.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Association – ‘Main issue - litter collection for areas which are not manned’.

Rotherfield Millennium Green Trust – ‘Yes (there are pleasant countryside and wildlife areas easy to get to from where you live). The Millennium Green is central to the village’.
4.7 Water Recreation

4.7.1 The Woodland Trust (Government Affairs Officer)

We have a project called ‘keeping rivers cool’ which might be helpful. For more information:

http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/mediafile/100597182/keeping-rivers-cool-leaflet.pdf?cb=f0fa1eb2188d4c2ea7180d8e7b5d4c5a

Woods, trees and hedgerows can play a key role in water management whether reducing flood risk, improving water quality or helping freshwater wildlife thrive and survive - see the woodland trust publication woodland actions for biodiversity and their role in water management (pdf) - https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2008/03/woodland-actions-for-biodiversity-and-their-role-in-water-management/.

A joint environment agency/forestry commission publication woodland for water: woodland measures for meeting water framework objectives states clearly that: ‘there is strong evidence to support woodland creation in appropriate locations to achieve water management and water quality objectives’ (environment agency, July 2011- http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/woodlandforwater).

4.7.2 The Environment Agency (Planning Specialist)

There is a small amount of recreational use in the estuary of the River Cuckmere. We are trying to open up water bodies to re-naturalise them and provide fish passage. This can conflict with recreation such as fishing so good consultation is necessary. More access to ponds, educational activities and river walks would be a good opportunity to explore in this study.

4.7.3 Community Organisation Survey

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

Hempstead Meadows LNR and West Park LNR Supporter’s Groups – ‘Uckfield has the River Uck. It is not big enough to be used for water sports. Access to it is restricted as it runs through built-up housing and industrial properties. This and private land ownership makes the creation of a ‘riverside walk’ extremely unlikely although the community has ambitions to develop this in the future’.

Heathfield & District Ramblers R A Group (Wealden Cuckoos) – ‘Footpaths alongside water can be taken over by Himalayan balsam’.

Ashdown Forest Tourism Association - ‘It would be lovely to have more paths along rivers. However this brings all sorts of issues such as personal safety at night and for children.'
4.8 Footpaths, Cycling and Equestrian provision

4.8.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC)

ESCC are responsible for the management of PRoW within Wealden (maintenance and legal record keeping). There is good provision of PRoW within the District.

4.8.2 Strategic Organisations

*Natural England (Lead Advisor)*


*Forestry Commission (Woodland Officer)*

TROT (Toll Rides Off-road Trust) is a charitable trust that aims to address the need of horse riders and carriage drivers for safe off-road routes which avoid main roads with the supply of underused farm and woodland trails belonging to farmers and other landowners. They also administer the Forestry Commission’s riding permit scheme for horse riding in forests in Southern England. This agreement frees a number of woodland trails for use in relative safety separated in many cases from other users of the forests.

In Wealden there are TROT routes on Forestry Commission woodland at Abbot’s Wood, Friston Forest, Sheffield Forest and Snape Wood.

There are also a number of additional routes in Wealden on land owned/managed by others. Details can be found at: [http://www.tollrides.org.uk/routes/search?name=&county=East+Sussex&mileage_from=&mileage_to=&limit=](http://www.tollrides.org.uk/routes/search?name=&county=East+Sussex&mileage_from=&mileage_to=&limit=)

*British Horse Society (Regional Manager)*

Although I cannot quote specifics, there is always a desire to create more PRoW for horse riders to enable them to enjoy recreational riding without having to ride on roads. Equally, given the cuts to local governments for maintenance of PRoW, many bridleways are overgrown, have poor gates and/or rutted surfaces all which cause problem to the recreational horse rider.

4.8.3 Community Organisations Survey

Respondents’ views in relation to footpaths, cycling and equestrian provision are noted below:

Heathfield & District Ramblers RA Group (Wealden Cuckoos) – ‘Footpaths are reasonably maintained although at times very overgrown. Stiles often in need of repair and even new ones collapsed. Great need for metal gates’

Rother Ramblers – ‘We frequently come across poorly maintained stiles, bridges etc. Paths can be overgrown and paths across cultivated lands are too often not reinstated after planting’.
Ashdown Forest Tourism Association – ‘Links to the Ashdown Forest are limited. It would be great to create more links such as the new bus route 262 which links the Forest car parks to other bus routes and Uckfield Station’.

Rotherfield Millennium Green Trust – ‘Old railway line footpaths are well looked after and well used, but the so called National Cycle Route 21 through this village runs on main roads and is pretty dangerous for family cycling; it would be good to see someone taking a look at this’.
4.9 Park, Green Space, Countryside and Rights of Way: Key Findings

Overview

- 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 (WAST - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should be taken into consideration.
- Work on England’s Coastal Path National Trail will begin shortly in the Wealden area.
- The Wealden PPG17 Assessment (2008) sets out a number of standards which will be reviewed as part of the main open space study.
- WDC are keeping a close eye on ESCCs consultation regarding the future management of public rights of way and countryside sites. The results of this consultation will influence how WDC manage their countryside sites going forward.
- Two Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) - one in Crowborough and one in Uckfield - will provide 70 acres (each) of publicly accessible open space to help alleviate recreational impacts on the Ashdown Forest. This is in addition to a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS).
- The importance of partnership working, including volunteer engagement, in delivering funding and management of open space is highlighted.
- The importance of biodiversity, ecological networks/connectivity and the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space were key issues highlighted throughout the consultation.

Quantity

Community groups survey
All community groups surveyed feel there are enough open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of the groups primary activities (1 group skipped this question).

Household Survey
- There are three open space typologies where a clear majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves; and informal open spaces - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.
- Majorities also think that in general there are enough parks and recreation grounds and allotments,
- For some kinds of open space opinion is very closely split. For example, country parks and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.

Quality

Overview:
- Resources for the management and maintenance of council open space have been reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on the maintenance of sites/facilities, with the focus on site safety.
- Key issues include biodiversity/connectivity of sites and maintenance, especially of PRoW.
Community group survey

- Parks and recreation grounds, natural green space and the ‘other’ green spaces category (e.g. grassed areas for dog walking, informal games, picnics etc) proved the highest rating typologies with 67%, 71% and 85% respectively of groups happy with the quality of provision (rating them as good or very good).
- 57% of groups rated the quality of country parks, and also footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (PRoW) as good or very good. However, 43% think the quality of PRoW is poor.
- For water recreation, 14% of groups think the quality is good, 29% adequate, 14% poor, and the majority have no opinion (43%).

Household survey:

- For all kinds of 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").
- Some kinds of open spaces were rated highly by a majority in terms of quality. These include: natural green space - wildlife areas/nature reserves; country parks; and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths. In addition 40% or more of respondents also parks and recreation grounds and informal open spaces being good or very good.

Access

Household survey:

- 82% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved and 84% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

Community groups survey:

- The majority of community groups (57%) reported that they suffer from access issues, however a significant proportion (43%) noted that they don’t suffer from access issues.
- Access issues highlighted are predominantly regarding the maintenance (quality) of Public Rights of Way.
5.0 PLAY AND YOUTH FACILITIES

In Wealden District it is the town and parish councils who are the primary providers of formal play and youth facilities so for detailed local issues and needs it is important to refer to Section 3.3 above.

This section provides feedback and information relating to play and youth facilities. It considers information and views provided by various stakeholders including Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council, Play England and play and youth organisations across the district.

The section is structured into three main parts:

- Review of Policy and Strategy
- Youth and Play - key stakeholders
- Local play and youth organisations

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

5.1 Review of Policy and Strategy

5.1.1 Wealden District Council


Consultation

The Council circulated a questionnaire relating to open space, sport and recreation provision to students at the District’s Community Colleges.

In summary, the main conclusions from the Youth survey were:

- Around 50% or more of respondents across the District believed there is a need for more facilities for young people, swimming pools, sports halls, tennis courts, grass pitches, green spaces in housing areas and parks.
- Young people were generally reasonably well satisfied with the quality of much existing provision, but overall would like to see better facilities for young people, green spaces in housing areas, swimming pools and parks.
- The forms of provision that young people appear to want most are basketball areas with lights, hang-out areas (both indoor and outdoor) and skateparks.
- Young people are most likely to travel on foot in order to use spaces or facilities

Local Standards for play areas and youth facilities

The 2008 PPG17 Assessment recommended the following local standards:

Quantity Standards

The recommended quantity standards were:

- Equipped play areas 0.325 sq m/person
- Teenage facilities 0.15 sq m/person
- Multi-sport courts 0.13 sq m/person
Accessibility

The recommended access standards were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Travel time</th>
<th>Walking distance</th>
<th>Cycling distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipped play areas</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td>600 m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-sport courts</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,500m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenage facilities</td>
<td>10 mins</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,500m (urban)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The report explains that "multi-sport courts are outdoor facilities around the size of a tennis court used for sports such as basketball and five-a-side football. They are sometimes floodlit".

Quality

Detailed quality standards can be found in Appendix E of the 2010 Wealden PPG17 Assessment Final Report

These standards will be reviewed in the main Open Spaces report and new standards recommended.

5.1.2 East Sussex County Council

East Sussex Children and Young People’s plan 2015 – 2018

The plan describes:

- Aspirations that partners have agreed for all children and young people in the county
- Priorities for collective action by partner organisations over the three years of the plan
- How partners will ensure the plan makes a difference and organisations work together as effectively as possible.

The plan does not carry specific recommendations relating to play and recreation provision for children and young people but one of it six priorities is:

- Improving support to children, young people and families to help maintain and enhance emotional well-being and mental health.

Alongside these specific priorities there are three key issues which the plan notes as being very important for the Children and Young People’s Trust partners but which are not covered in detail in this Plan. This includes physical health and wellbeing.

The plan notes that "the health and wellbeing of children and young people is a high priority for the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board. Two of the seven priorities in the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy relate specifically to children and young people; all of the five remaining priorities (including promoting healthy lifestyles) apply to the whole population including children and young people".

Providing a high quality and accessible network of play and youth facilities will help support these objectives.


As noted above this strategy includes specific reference to priorities relating to children and young people. Statements of particular relevance to this study include:
Taking a whole life approach

- By taking this approach we want to ensure that, in East Sussex every child has a good start in life: a safe, healthy and happy childhood provides the foundation for every child to thrive and achieve their potential.
- Children and young people develop well: the physical health and mental wellbeing of children and young people is essential to a good quality of life and good chances in adulthood.

Joining up health, care and other services that promote health and wellbeing

- A wealth of evidence, most recently presented by The Marmot Review of health inequalities, identifies the impact wider social, economic and environmental factors can have on individual and community health and wellbeing. We recognise the impact and contribution that ... culture, leisure and the physical environment has within all seven priorities within this strategy.

Specifically, "the availability of open spaces, cycle paths and leisure facilities to encourage physical activity" is noted as being of importance.

Preventing and reducing falls, accidents and injuries

- Children and young people: accidents and learning how to play safely and stay safe are part of growing up.

5.1.3 Play England

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

Quantity

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

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

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

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

Quality

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

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

Priorities

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

Nature Play Initiative

By Nature Play, Play England simply mean children exploring and enjoying the natural environment through their freely-chosen play. As well as simply enjoying playing outdoors and discovering green spaces near their homes, nature play can include planting and growing vegetables, fruit and flowers; cooking outdoors; playing with the elements or making camps and dens with natural materials.

Play England have recently published a series of nature play activity 'recipes'. The cards provide activities to explore nature and help children experience the benefits of connecting with the natural environment through play.

5.1.4 Woodland Trust

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

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

5.1.5 National Trust

On a national level the Trust has produced a number of key reports on children’s play and other general guidance, which influence their work in East Sussex and across the country.

Reports reflect the increasing need to re-engage children with the outdoors have been published – Natural Childhood report and reconnecting Children with Nature – a nationwide campaign ‘50 things to do before you’re 11 ¾’ has been established and a ‘kids council’ recruited to help influence future plans and programmes.
5.2 Views from Local Play and Youth Organisations

5.2.1 Play and Youth Organisations Survey

With the support of the District Council's Community and Regeneration team, East Sussex Council Youth Participation Team and the local youth group support charity Spark\textsuperscript{10} local play and youth organisations were surveyed via an online questionnaire. Responses were received from 26 groups. Nearly all of the groups (24) reported that they make direct use of outdoor play equipment or areas of open space. Some of the main findings are noted below.

**Quantity**

Groups were asked whether they thought there were enough play facilities for children aged 12 and under, and youth facilities for teenagers. Responses are summarised in the chart below:

![Bar chart showing responses to the question of whether play spaces and teenage facilities are enough.](chart.png)

Responses show that

- Groups thought that overall there is shortage of all kinds of outdoor teen/youth provision.
- For both children and young people a clear majority report a general lack of outdoor sports/MUGA type provision.
- 60% of respondents felt that in terms of quantity there was adequate provision of ‘formal’ equipped playgrounds for children of 12 years and under.
- A small majority (55%) thought there was enough open space for informal/natural play for the under 13s.
- 60% think that overall there is a need for more teen specific facilities such as skate parks, BMX and parkour (15% say there is enough).
- 55% note an overall shortfall of teen hang out spaces/youth shelters (20% think there are enough).

Detailed below are other comments on the provision for under 12s when asked the following question:

‘If you don’t think there are enough of any of the above facilities/open space areas, why not / what would you like to see more of?

\textsuperscript{10} Spark is a local charity with a membership of more than 200 youth groups in East Sussex ranging from uniformed organisations to local youth clubs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pevensey Sports Club</td>
<td>Indoor facilities for play and games during inclement weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OASTies</td>
<td>Shortage of artificial pitches due to issues with floodlighting in AONB preventing successful planning applications. There are 23 junior football teams in Wadhurst and a shortage of pitches that are playable throughout year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham Active Sports Alliance</td>
<td>The facilities are very poor and very limited (short-term financial decisions made by successive local government - backed by lack of legal requirement - something we need to change by adopting a different way forward - we have solutions) Need more play parks that suit all age ranges and abilities. More variety to keep the children interested. Even a well equipped play park can get boring if visited every day!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletching Recreation Ground Charity</td>
<td>Most of the recreation ground is reserves for cricket and stoolball during the summer and football during the winter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadlow Down Playing Field Association</td>
<td>Situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, the issue of flood-lighting and planning is an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushy Wood Scout Camp &amp; Activity Centre</td>
<td>Abbots Wood could feature more activity based items such as fitness trails etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herstmonceux Cricket Club</td>
<td>More Multi-Use games areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairwarp Sports Field aka Fairwarp QE2 Field</td>
<td>Would be nice to have facilities in every village, not just in the local towns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groombridge Village Hall</td>
<td>Playground for under 12's is tired and wants revamping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Detailed below are the groups specific comments what kind of provision is lacking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clued-up.info</td>
<td>There is no meeting place (apart from uniformed and paying clubs) for young people to meet together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Services</td>
<td>We need more areas specifically for older teens, so that the young children can play in peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham Active Sports Alliance</td>
<td>We need more of everything, particularly multi-use games areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletching Recreation Ground Charity</td>
<td>We would like to see more youth facilities but there are not the funds to develop the recreation ground for these types of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutley FC - Juniors</td>
<td>A BMX track in part of the Ashdown Forest around Nutley would be fantastic. It would be a great place for children to exercise and hang out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadlow Down Playing Filed Association</td>
<td>We would like to see more of all kinds of teen facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herstmonceux Cricket Club</td>
<td>Again more MUGA's needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairwarp Sports Field aka Fairwarp QE2 Field</td>
<td>There are insufficient youth facilities in the villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alderbrook Community Association</td>
<td>Of road mountain bike tracks would be good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We asked for views on the overall quality of open space and outdoor facilities of general interest to children and young people and responses are illustrated on the chart below:

- Overall the quality of most play and youth facility categories was not highly rated with youth specific facilities fairing particularly poorly.
- Wealden's equipped play areas for under 13s scored the highest satisfaction levels with local groups, with just short of 32% rating quality as either good, or very good. 74% rated them as at least adequate (including the good and very good ratings).
- Following this 65% rated grass kickabout as at least adequate (including 25% good and 5% very good).
- The final category rated by most as at least adequate was wild natural areas for play with 61% rating such provision as at least adequate (including 11% good and 5% very good).
- Many categories were rated as either poor or very poor by more than 80%:
  - More challenging teen play areas
  - Outdoor gyms
  - Skateboard, BMX and wheeled sports
  - Parkour/free running facilities
  - Outdoor basketball facilities

An option to add specific observations and comments was given and these are noted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Youth Support - Polegate Youth Club</td>
<td>Not only providing outdoor facilities etc, it needs to be ADVERTISED and young people informed of the provisions, so they can be USED!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham Active Sports Alliance</td>
<td>In the few areas of tarmaced play areas, there is regular use - but generally not enough, or no access when it is wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletching Recreation</td>
<td>Facilities may be available in other parts of Wealden, but children need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ground Charity facilities (not all) in their own village where parents or children can walk to.

Fairwarp Sports Field aka Fairwarp QE2 Field

Alderbrook Community Association

Climbing towers are really popular - need more and better quality.

**Priorities for improvement**

Respondent’s views on priorities for new or improved provision of play and youth facilities are shown on the chart below:

- The most commonly highly prioritised category for play and youth organisations is improvements to the provision of Multi-Use Games Area with 53% choosing it as one of their top three priorities.
- Following this are challenging teen play areas (47%), youth shelters/hang out areas (41%) and outdoor gyms (30%).
- Other categories are only high priorities for less than 18% of organisations.

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11 Respondents were asked to rank all 10 categories in priority order. This chart shows the top 3 priority choices.
5.3 Play and Youth facilities - Key Findings

Quantity

- Youth play provision is generally considered underprovided for across the District with 61% of the 2016 household survey answering that there were not enough facilities for older children and teenagers.
- Play and youth organisations also highlight a shortage of teenage provision. A shortage of MUGAs and teen facilities such as skate parks are particularly notable with 60% of respondents stating there were not enough of such facilities. 55% note an overall shortfall of teen hang out spaces/youth shelters.
- 50% of household survey respondents thought there were enough play areas for younger children (12 and under) compared to 48% who though there weren't. 60% of the play and youth organisations agreed that there were enough equipped play spaces for under 13s.

Quality

- 47% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. The quality of Multi-Use Games Areas was rated as poor or worse by 41% of respondents. 37% of household respondents rated the overall quality of play areas as good or very good compared to 26% rating them as poor or very poor.
- This was reflected in the views of play and youth organisations - overall the quality of most play and youth facility categories was not highly rated with youth specific facilities fairing particularly poorly e.g. more challenging teen play areas, outdoor gyms, and wheeled sports facilities were all rated as either poor or very poor by more than 80%.
- Wealden's equipped play areas for under 13s scored the highest satisfaction levels with local groups, with just short of 32% rating quality as either good, or very good). 74% rated then as at least adequate (including the good and very good ratings).

Access

- Organisational respondents noted the difficulty with access to local provision in some more rural areas – citing poor public transport, long walks or general inaccessibility as barriers to access.
- Groups and stakeholders have identified a range of disability access needs, which should be taken into consideration as part of any new playground design and installation; along with guidance recommended by Play England.

Priorities, other issues and general observations

- The most commonly highly prioritised category for play and youth organisations is improvements to the provision of Multi-Use Games Area with 53% choosing it as one of their top three priorities. Following this are challenging teen play areas (47%), youth shelters/hang out areas (41%) and outdoor gyms (30%).
- The Play England campaign for Natural Play, the Woodland Trust and the National Trust all highlight the importance of providing access to play, risk and challenge in the natural landscape as well as through formal play areas and youth facilities.
- Play England supply good practice guidance on play space design (Design for Play), Managing Risk in Play Provision and recommend Inclusion by Design by the Kids organisation for specific guidance on play space design principles for disabled children.
- In Wealden District it is the town and parish councils that are the key providers of play and youth facilities so the specific needs identified in Section 3 of this report are of particular importance.
6.0 SPORTS - OUTDOOR (NON-PITCH)

6.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of consultee responses on outdoor (non-pitch) sports. It does not report on additional consultation undertaken in relation to the associated Playing Pitch Study and Indoor Sports Facilities Study\(^\text{12}\). The chapter contains feedback from Council Officers from Wealden District Council, local sports associations and relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport. It also incorporates findings from surveys of outdoor non-pitch sports clubs.

The various stakeholders were asked for their views on the supply of and demand for indoor and outdoor non-pitch sports facilities in Wealden (as appropriate to their sport). The consultation also gathers views on the current quality of such facilities; and plans, aspirations and priorities for future facility development and improvement.

There is a summary of key points at the end of each full section.

Findings will be taken forward in the Playing Pitch Study and Outdoor Sports main report (along with additional consultation findings from the Playing Pitch Study process).

The section is comprised of 5 sections, preceded by an overview from the Wealden Council Community and Regeneration Manager and three local sports and active recreation associations (Active Hailsham, Active Uckfield and the Heathfield Partnership).

- Tennis
- Athletics/Running
- Bowls
- Netball
- Other non-pitch sports.

\(^{12}\) The playing pitch study provides a detailed analysis of the supply of and demand for the pitch sports facilities - football, cricket, rugby and hockey; conducted in line with the Sport England methodology. Similarly for the Indoor Sports Facilities Study.
6.2  Local Sports Partnerships

6.2.1  Hailsham Active (Chairman)

Hailsham Active is an amalgamation of sports and community groups in the south Wealden area, particularly Hailsham. Members cover everything from school use, private facilities through to recreation grounds.

Hailsham Active highlight that Hailsham is the largest town in Wealden "yet has some of the poorest sports field facilities for its size in the country".

They note that "an analysis conducted recently by a sports consultant concluded that the deficit is already 15 acres of facilities, and by the time the current agreed housing is complete, that will rise to 26 acres, based on suggested guidelines from Sport England".

General Summary

In relation to the different kinds of sport and recreation facilities Hailsham Active note that:

- Swimming Pools - there are no competitive pool in Hailsham – just a leisure pool. Although the Hailsham Leisure centre caters for swimming and gym work – it does not cater for any other team sport, which has to take place at Hailsham School – with the timetable for use at capacity.
- Sports/leisure facilities (indoor): there is a total lack of indoor sports facilities in Hailsham. The old ‘purpose built’ sports hall has been changed to 10 pin bowling and a soft play facility.
- Multi sports sites: facilities at Hailsham Community College but such provision insufficient and over subscribed.
- Local parks and recreation grounds: insufficient provision (by 26 acres) and affected by weather (poor drainage, so not useable in winter months).
- Winter pitches: The lack of pitches is compounded by the fact that we are predominantly clay soil – so even the facilities we have, particularly football and rugby where disrupted by unplayable conditions for 4 months (junior football) and 3 months (rugby – senior and junior)
- Cricket pitches: It is not much better for summer sports like cricket as we have 8 senior teams (between Hellingly and Hailsham) and only 2 pitches – so many ‘home games’ are currently played at Ninfield, Ashburnham and Ringmer.
- Play spaces and youth facilities: play spaces and youth facilities are insufficient and affected by weather.
- Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths and rights of way: there are not enough footpaths or cycleways linking to town/schools etc.

Hailsham Active add that "our analysis shows a clear lack of facilities with the knock effect of poor health for the town (proven in many government reports, and highlighted through health statistics in town. We see a huge need to change things and have ideas to work with local government and local business/community groups to turn this round".

Sports Park

The view of Hailsham Active is that in order to address the overall lack of facilities noted above "the most logical solution is to create a sports park that caters for multi-sports, and particularly has an Astroturf element". They note that this approach has been successfully adopted in a number of towns and that such provision is often an edge of town facility.
Hailsham Active suggest that to secure the capital and ongoing revenue funds required to provide a sustainable facility of this kind, a partnership approach will be needed. Such a partnership could include Hailsham Active, local clubs and community groups, Hailsham Town Council and adjacent parish councils, local schools, Wealden District Council and local businesses/commercial sectors. In this respect they have begun to approach interested parties along these lines. Another idea in recognition of the public health benefits of sport and active recreation is to consider a site and development that would also include a health centre/GP surgery, thus creating a one stop shop for medical and public health provision.

6.2.2 Active Uckfield (Chairman)

Active Uckfield is a local sports association (previous name Uckfield Sports Partnership). It has a wide membership including many local sports clubs from Uckfield and the surrounding area. As well as supporting projects for improved facilities it helps organise development and "have a go" sessions to encourage greater participation in sport and active recreation. This includes an annual Sports For All day.

Key points and observations included:

- Local parks and recreation grounds: generally speaking these are quite good and are often located where accessible due to being linked with housing developments.
- Play areas and youth facilities: similarly in the main they are quite good and often located where accessible, being often linked with housing developments.
- Sports pitches: Encouraging multi use of facilities could increase town council income and certainly with better engagement with clubs/organisations.
- Bringing clubs and organisations together can help all concerned but facility sharing isn’t easy as pitches tend to be spread around town (good for easy access to local housing, bad for multiple use by organisations).
- The Uckfield all weather pitch at Uckfield Community Technology College (opened in 2013) seems to be popular, but there seems to be a lack of marketing.
- Recently facilities have improved with the provision of new tennis courts at Victoria Pleasure Ground, Uckfield, including the addition of a third, disabled access, multi-use training court. The courts are managed on behalf of the Town Council by a newly established charity the Urban Tennis Foundation.
- Other projects currently under consideration by the Town Council include a potential bowls club move to Ridgewood Recreation Ground, the possibility of improving the children’s play area there, and extending the village hall.
- A concern of Uckfield Stoolball is the lack of teams, particularly mixed teams, in the area. They would be interested in any council-led schemes promoting use of recreation grounds that might produce new teams in any of the Wealden towns or villages.
- Wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands: very good in Uckfield. Local support groups need to be developed to take workload from town council staff and encourage resident engagement, both of which are crucial to maximise success.
- Like many towns Uckfield has clubs and organisations which are very reliant on a couple or half a dozen people.

6.2.3 The Heathfield Partnership (Chair of Sport and Leisure Committee)

The Heathfield Partnership Trust aims to inform residents and visitors of what the town and community have to offer. It works for the people of Heathfield and surrounding villages. One of its current projects is to create a new indoor swimming pool and improved leisure facilities for Heathfield at Heathfield Community College. There is a Sport and Leisure Committee pursuing this objective.
The Partnership comprises people from various local organisations, such as officers and appointed representatives of East Sussex County Council, Wealden District Council and Heathfield and Waldron Parish Council. There are also representatives from Heathfield Chamber of Commerce, Churches Together in Heathfield, Heathfield Community College, Heathfield Community College Youth Council and Heathfield and Waldron Rotary Club.

The Sport and Leisure Facilities Project (Heathfield)

The Chair of the Sport and Leisure Committee noted "as the only Wealden town without any provision for an indoor swimming pool the Heathfield Partnership through its Sport and Leisure Committee have a long term aspiration to deliver such a facility for the town. We have made some progress in identifying a site, obtaining planning permission and conducting drainage surveys to bring about such a facility, however the current funding landscape is prohibitive and the lack of financial support from the district council to date limits the potential for accessing significant external funding".

Key points

- The ASA (Amateur Swimming Association) has confirmed there is a shortfall in swimming pools in this area of East Sussex according to their strategy facilities model.
- The aim is to bring about the design and construction of an indoor swimming pool and fitness centre for the Heathfield area.
- The partnership have a design for a 4-lane pool and new fitness centre, and a suitable site beside Heathfield Community College. Also, as part of the national Olympic legacy objectives, a Relocatable Olympic Swimming Pool has been applied for and successfully offered to the project.
- To-date the Partnership has raised around £50k, part of which was used to pay for a feasibility study (to prove the need and the practicality of our idea) and to fund the full design and planning application. Full planning approval was granted by East Sussex County Council in June 2012.
- The proposal is to build a 25-metre, four-lane pool - with a well-equipped fitness gym - as an extension of the existing leisure centre that is part of Heathfield Community College. The design proposal is for a modern building, using materials and technology to minimize the environmental impact and help to keep down running costs.
- Capital funds in the order of £4.5m are required to enable the project to proceed and a business plan has been produced. The committee is currently updating the business plan in light of the proposed additional new houses to be built in Heathfield and the surrounding villages.

In the light of the increasingly difficult financial climate and the lack of public funds to support new public leisure facilities additional options for improving sport and leisure facilities in the area are also being considered by the partnership for example the potential for a new all weather pitch.

In this respect the Committee has a keen interest in seeing the results of Wealden District Council's current analysis of the supply of and demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities i.e. this study prior to proceeding further in this vein. When the study is complete they wish to hold a meeting with the District Council and others to discuss future options.
6.3 Review of policy and strategy


The PPG17 study made recommendations relating to local standards for outdoor non-pitch sports provision as noted below:

**Quantity**

- Athletics facilities - no standard recommended.
- Tennis courts - 0.475 sq m/person
- Bowling greens - 0.2 sq m/person
- Multi-sport courts - 0.13 sq m/person

**Access thresholds**

The recommended access thresholds are noted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Travel time (mins)</th>
<th>Walking distance</th>
<th>Cycling distance</th>
<th>Driving distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling greens</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900 m</td>
<td>2,250 m</td>
<td>5,625 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis courts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900 m</td>
<td>2,250 m</td>
<td>5,625 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-sport courts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>600 m</td>
<td>1,500 m</td>
<td>3,750 m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Preferred maximum distance threshold for the whole District.
- Preferred maximum distance threshold for urban areas.
- Preferred maximum distance threshold for rural areas.

**Quality elements:** provided in an appendix to the main report.

These standards will be reviewed and new standards proposed in the main *Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment* report.
6.4 Tennis

6.4.1 Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

General

- The new three year LTA Tennis Strategic Plan was launched in March 2015.
- Wealden District is not a prioritised local authority area for the LTA in 2016/17.
- The LTA response also includes reference to indoor facilities and these comments will be taken forward in the main Built Facilities report.

Facility supply

- Details of clubs and facilities at a basic level can be found via a search on the LTA website: www.lta.org.uk/play/
- From the LTA’s perspective the most important facilities for tennis in Wealden are tennis club courts and accessible public park courts (managed in the main by town and parish councils).
- The LTA suggest that indoor facilities are required across Wealden, Rother & Hastings (to ensure a 30 minute travel time)
- They also suggest a need for additional accessible public park courts across the District.
- Overall it seems that the quality of public courts is generally fairly good and all would be suitable for grassroots engagement.
- The LTA are unable top provide an overview of the quality of facilities as not being identified as a priority area it was not included in a facilities audit that the LTA completed in 2014.

Demand and participation issues

The LTA’s Participation Strategy 2013 – 2017 places particular emphasis on the following:

- Priority areas: working with partners in priority areas to develop bottom up tennis development plans to offer more opportunities for people to play tennis.
- Parks: maximising the use of park sites to increase regular participation through the development of local authority and partnerships with other providers.
- Clubs: Driving participation in clubs by supporting ‘traditional’ clubs to keep more people playing tennis through optimised programming and consumer offers.
- Disability: To inspire and engage more disabled people in tennis, and develop a stronger infrastructure and tennis network for disabled players.
- Young People: 14-25 yrs will benefit from adapted product offers, more after school provision, including satellite clubs, as well as a significant expansion of the varied tennis options for FE and HE students, already trialled in 2011-13.

Wealden

The LTA noted that according to Active People data; 2,880 residents play tennis. They provided the following table regarding club membership:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clubs in Wealden</th>
<th>Total Members</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Junior</th>
<th>Mini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crowborough LTC</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-in-hand LTC</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Tennis Foundation (Uckfield)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below shows the number of members at each club.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Memberships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mayfield LTC</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maresfield LTC</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horam LTC</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly &amp; Halland LTC</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham LTC</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadhurst LTC</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutley LTC</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groombridge LTC</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartfield LTC</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwash LTC</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They further note that according to Active People data:

- 2,903 residents would like to play tennis
- 22,139 residents would like to play more outdoor sport

Other points the LTA make relating to demand are:

- The LTA is continuously developing a portfolio of "insight driven products to engage and retain tennis players in a variety of settings, including traditional club venues, community venues (parks, leisure centres) and education (schools, FE & HE)".
- There are currently no LTA performance programmes operating in Wealden.

**Other issues and observations**

- The LTA is aware that Wadhurst Tennis Club wish to add lights to two courts and they are supportive of this initiative.
- They note that Urban Tennis Foundation, operating parks tennis courts at Victoria Pleasure Ground in Uckfield, have expressed interest in developing tennis facilities at Uckfield Leisure Centre.
- Key opportunities noted are "developing sustainable parks tennis facilities in partnership with the local authority and town/parish councils (as applicable); in addition supporting clubs to grow membership, particularly those serving more rural communities, albeit not exclusively".
- Growing the Game Funding and Easy Access Loan funding is available for clubs to apply for.
- Three particular sites highlighted by the LTA with potential for development are:
  - Hardy Roberts Recreation Ground (Heathfield & Waldon PC).
  - Wolfe Recreation Ground (Crowborough Town Council).
  - Danehill Recreation Ground (Danehill Parish Council).

**6.4.2 Club responses**

Responses were received from six tennis clubs: Hartfield, East Hoathly and Halland, Hailsham, Mayfield, Groombridge and Horam.

- Membership of clubs ranged from 60 (Hartfield) to 400 (Mayfield).
- Two clubs reported an increase in membership (East Hoathly and Horam) over the past three years; two clubs reported a decrease (Hailsham and Hartfield); and two said overall membership numbers had been stable (Groombridge and Mayfield).
- All clubs other than Hartfield have an active junior section and links to local schools.
- All clubs rate the general quality of their main venue/facility as being either good or very good. Changing and shower facilities are not so highly rated by all clubs, being at best "adequate". Hartfield, East Hoathly and Hailsham rate them as poor or very poor.
• All clubs other than Hartfield would like to expand their activities by attracting new members, running more teams and/or improving facilities.
• Barriers to club development include: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; poor quality, changing facilities; lack of funding (internal and external); and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club.
• Other barriers/factors highlighted by individual clubs were: changing attitudes of members to spending time travelling and playing in matches against other clubs (Mayfield); we had our request for flood lights turned down by the District Council (Groombridge); and competition from other sports (Horam).

Other plans and comments from the clubs are noted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Plans, aspirations and other comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartfield</td>
<td>We would like to renovate our clubhouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hoathly &amp;</td>
<td>The Pavilion we share with other clubs is an embarrassment. The toilets are very unsavoury and need modernising. The kitchen area is poor to adequate. We are liaising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halland</td>
<td>with the Parish Council (Sports Ground Trustees) over possible improvements. We are hoping to have a good future working relationship with our Parish Council to improve amenities for the tennis club and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailsham</td>
<td>We are considering upgrading our floodlights to LED. Also need to increase our storage provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayfield</td>
<td>We are currently renewing artificial grass surfaces on four courts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groombridge</td>
<td>We may build one or two Padel courts and one more tennis court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horam</td>
<td>We would like an indoor court. Wealden has never provided any funds for our club and we have had to create it all with other funds. Yet every once in a while Wealden want to take credit for our facility...just because we are in Wealden area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.5 Athletics/Running

6.5.1 England Athletics (EA) - South Area Manager

General

- There is no relevant National Governing Body athletics facility strategy and currently Wealden does not feature in any specific NGB plans for facility development.
- Currently there is no NGB funding potentially available to support the delivery of athletics facility priorities in the Wealden area.

Facility supply

- England Athletics note that the most important facility for Athletics in Wealden is the cinder track at Crowborough Leisure Centre used by Crowborough Runners. They are aware that Crowborough Runners and Crowborough Town Council have been working to determine the viability of securing funding for resurfacing the current track. They understand that there is some local commitment to part-fund the project, but that the majority of costs would need to be sourced externally.
- EA suggest that all five England Athletics affiliated clubs within the district are in a reasonable close location to a certificated track "albeit none of the seven surrounding tracks in Sussex and Kent are within the Wealden District boundary".
- The note that all five EA affiliated clubs are running clubs and utilise the following sites for training:
  - Crowborough Runners – Goldsmith’s Leisure Centre track; indoor halls for junior training at Beacon Community College.
  - Heathfield Road Runners – largely use roads around Heathfield for training. Twice monthly training at Eastbourne Track.
  - Wadhurst Runners – Meet to run from Uplands Sports Centre.
  - Hailsham Harriers – Battle Road Playing Fields/Summerheath School Sports Hall (indoor winter training).
  - Uckfield Runners – Meet to run from Freedom Leisure Centre, Uckfield. Twice monthly training at Eastbourne Track.
- Regarding quality EA note that: "we are aware of the desire of Crowborough Runners to change the surface of the cinder track to a synthetic surface". They also suggest that "no other club has identified the desire to improve existing provision in the district".
- Access: EA are not aware of any issues regarding access to facilities.

Demand and participation issues

Overview

There are five clubs (all road running focussed) with small numbers of registered athletes (as of year end 15/16 affiliation data)

- Crowborough Runners – 64
- Heathfield Road Runners – 82
- Wadhurst Runners – 73
- Hailsham Harriers – 140
- Uckfield Runners – 66

In addition to the five affiliated clubs, there are seven Run England registered groups within the district.
As of the most recent Active People data (APS10), there are now 2.49million people taking part in athletics in England each week. The number of people aged 14+ who take part in athletics, including running, on a weekly basis has risen 5% in the year to April 2016. This means there are over 1million more people taking part in the sport each week compared to 10 years ago. The latest figure for those aged 16+ taking part on a weekly basis also rose to 2.35million.

In summary:

- There are now over 1 million more athletes taking part on a weekly basis compared to 10 years ago.
- Over the same period the number of women participating has now more than doubled.
- Notably, over the past 12 months, participation has increased by 15% amongst those aged 16-19, 17% amongst those aged 65 and over, 13% amongst disabled people and 7% amongst those from lower socio-economic groups.

Other issues and observations

- Our current group running programme “Run England” will evolve into “RunTogether” from the autumn, which will continue to help grow and sustain the running market, and we hope the clubs within the district will continue to support our programmes.
- One coach from Crowborough Runners over five years has graduated from the England Athletics Local to Area Coach Development Programme. Two recently qualified Athletics Coach level coaches from Crowborough Runners will join the Local Coach Development Programme this year.

6.5.2 Club response - Crowborough Runners

- The club’s primary facility is the cinder track at Crowborough Leisure Centre. Current membership is 125 (including 50 juniors) and this has decreased over the last three years due to "lack of facilities, Poker state of old clinker covered, pot holes and puddle bedecked track". They also "hire the grass track at Beacon, weather permitting".
- The club has an active junior section and has a club/school partnership with Beacon Academy. They are UKA Clubmark accredited.
- The club rates most aspects of the quality of their main facility as poor or very poor, bar ease of getting to the facility and car parking.
- The club reports that "we have been campaigning for years to get an all weather running track plus jumping and throwing facilities at Goldsmiths" and "we have plans for a new j type training track with jumps and throwing areas to replace existing cinder track".
- The club wishes to attract more members especially juniors.
- They note that: "we have no facilities suitable for disabled athletes. The track would be used by not just us but all local schools, other athletic Clubs, Freedom Leisure Centre clients, private individuals and NHS patients on healthcare recovery plans".
- Barriers to club development were a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources; a shortage of suitable training facilities; and a lack of financing (internal and external). They also note that "the town council have imposed restrictions on type of facility".
- Finally they note that they are "happy to share plans for the proposed new athletics facilities with the District Council".
6.6 Bowls

6.6.1 Bowls England and the Bowls Development Alliance

General

The overall aim of the Bowls England strategy is stated as: "in conjunction with Affiliated Clubs and County Associations we will:

- Promote the sport of outdoor flat green bowls
- Recruit new participants to the sport of outdoor flat green bowls
- Retain current and future participants within the sport of outdoor flat green bowls
- The key themes of Promote, Recruit, Retain will underlie all of our work during the course of this Strategic Plan".

Bowls England has identified the following strategic priorities for the period to 31st March 2017.

1. To increase participation in the sport of outdoor flat green bowls
2. To support County Associations and Clubs
3. To provide strong leadership and direction

Bowls England through the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) have identified five "hot spot" areas in the country for 2016 where there will be an "intensive recruitment and investment programme". Sussex is not one of these (though it has been previously).

The Bowls England response also includes reference to indoor facilities and these comments will be taken forward in the main Built Facilities report.

Facility Supply

- The view provided via Bowls England is that overall there are sufficient bowls facilities, with many venues across the district/county.
- The most important facility for bowls in Wealden is noted as the Wealden Bowls Centre which includes Wealden Indoor Bowls Club and Wealden Bowls Club (outdoor). The centre serves Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, East Grinstead, Forest Row, Nutley, Newick, Cross-in-hand, Uckfield, and Hailsham. It has good access for wheelchair users and easy access from the car park.
- As regards quality is that generally facilities tend to be in good condition with regards to the maintenance of the greens, however the club houses/pavilions are often needing more repairs as leases come to an end and clubs are trying to survive.
- A lot of the clubs do not have wheelchair access to both the green and the pavilion restricting the number of disabled people playing the sport (Sport England targets for the BDA is to increase disabled people 16-54 years playing bowls).

Demand and participation issues

- Wealden Bowls Centre has a membership of about 600 indoor and 60 outdoor.

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13 The BDA is the body for Bowls England (flat green outdoor) and English Indoor Bowling Association (flat green indoor) working together to grow the sport of bowls.
• In relation to the league play there is a County League, various Club Leagues, Club Competitions, County Competitions and National Competitions.
• Sussex including Wealden, has a high population of over 55s. There are known health benefits in being active throughout adulthood so it is important to continue to support the clubs within the community. The impact of new housing in Wealden also has to be taken on board.
• Bowls England recognises that the trend of a reducing number of affiliated members year-on-year is the biggest single issue facing the sport of flat green bowls.
• Whilst the board of Bowls England is keen for this trend to be reversed, it is also realistic enough to recognise that the trend may not be reversed within the term of its current Strategic Plan. It does however wish to focus its efforts on increasing participation, by both current and future participants, and success in this area can be achieved by all parties working together – Bowls England, County Associations and Clubs.
• There are a number of bowling clubs in the Wealden area that are sustaining their current levels of membership but a challenge for all is attracting new members, particularly younger players (the best international players are between 20-35 years).
• There are opportunities to apply for NGB funding via a bidding process.

Other issues and observations

• The English Bowls Association in its Whole Sport Plan sets out that over the next four years, it will target those over 55 and disabled participants aged 16+.
• There is potential for club development and increased membership given the age demographic of the Wealden District Council area.

6.6.2 Bowls Clubs

Responses were received from six local bowling clubs/centres: Uckfield, Hellingly, Isle of Thorns and District, Coleman Hatch, Mayfield and Wealden Bowls Centre.

Some key points were:

• Four clubs noted that membership had been stable over the past three years. Hellingly reported an increase in playing membership and Mayfield a decrease. Hellingly attributed their increase to being "a successful and friendly club" and Mayfield noted "older members retiring or dying and a lack of new members coming through".
• Uckfield has a junior section and two other clubs noted specific efforts to recruit younger players: "we hosted 36 members of the local youth club Chelwood Gate/Danehill youth group - this is an annual event" (Isle of Thorns); and "we would be pleased to encourage new young members to partake of our sport and would be willing to train them" (Mayfield).
• Most aspects of quality were rated as adequate or better by a majority of clubs but some aspects were commonly rated as poor or very poor e.g. changing and shower facilities; facilities for the disabled; and car parking.
• All clubs other than Uckfield wished to expand and develop their activities by attracting new members and Hellingly aspired to provide all year round bowling facilities e.g. short mat bowling during the winter months.
• The most common barriers to development were: falling membership/shortage of playing members; and a lack of funding (internal and external).
• All of clubs bar Isle of Thorns had specific plans, aspirations or comments as noted in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Other issues and comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uckfield</td>
<td>One key barrier to our development is uncertainty of our long term future, as Wealden District Council has not committed to renewing the existing lease which expires in three years time(^\text{14}).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellingly</td>
<td>The future of the club is developing the existing facilities to include an all year round facility. External funding will be the main obstacle to overcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colemans Hatch</td>
<td>Key barriers to us are the cost of equipment to look after the green, cost of a professional green keeper and the cost of making improvements to facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayfield</td>
<td>There is no room to expand and we cannot sell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealden Bowls Centre</td>
<td>Our facilities are owned by the members with the land leased from the Council. We would like to purchase the lease of our building from Wealden District Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{14}\) The Estates Management Team advises that the Council has agreed a new lease and is now working on preparing plans for a new lease.
6.7 Netball

6.7.1 Netball England (NE) - Capital Investment and Facilities Manager and Sussex Development Officer.

General

- Netball South Region is one of nine Regions within Netball England. It develops and facilitates the delivery of all aspects of netball within the region.
- Working together with the counties Netball South deliver netball throughout the region including competition, coaching, finance, officiating, performance and membership. They run the regional league and the performance development programme in the region.
- The Regional Unit together with the County Netball Development Officers are responsible for Club Development including the Club Action Planning Scheme (CAPS) and developing new junior clubs, working with further and higher education, communication and marketing, education and training, competition, finance and increasing participation.
- The Sussex County Netball Association represents the registered Netballers residing in its area. It is affiliated to Netball South and to its governing body, Netball England.
- The development of netball facility projects is largely reliant on the sourcing of capital grants from external agencies/associations. Netball England has very limited capital funding that is reserved for national and regional priority projects.

Facilities

The Netball England Facility Strategy notes that:

- Netball is traditionally played on outdoor courts with educational sites being the most highly used by volunteer run leagues and Club training.
- There is an increasing demand for indoor facilities as the average recreational netballer prefers to play indoors and there is a requirement for performance programmes to be based at high quality indoor venues.
- As netball is a non-asset owning sport, access to facilities can be a real challenge. The quality of facilities can also affect the player experience and affect participation levels if not given sufficient thought.

England Netball - has established five categories of netball court. These are described in their publication Categories of Netball Court and Surface Performance Requirements (1999). England Netball state that "when designing a netball facility it is essential that the scheme has the appropriate number and categories of court for its intended use".

England Netball seeks to influence facilities through good facility design at the planning stages and input into programming post development.

Sussex County

Information was supplied by Netball England at a Sussex County level.

- There are 86 venues in Sussex being used for netball activity.
- Collectively, these venues have 233 outdoor courts, 141 of which are floodlit, 3 outdoor covered courts and 90 indoor courts.
- The provision of outdoor courts in Sussex is higher than the national average.
- The provision of indoor courts in Sussex is higher than the national average.
Netball activity takes places in a variety of formats and in forms that is suited to the customer as defined in England Netball’s overarching Strategy, ‘Your Game Your Way’.

The vast majority of England Netball members take part in traditional forms of netball. This involves training with a club and competing in a league. Based on an analysis of the information provided by affiliated clubs during the 2014-15 season, we know that:

- There are 105 affiliated clubs training at Sussex venues with 2767 affiliated members.
- 61% of the venues are based on educational sites.
- Nearly three quarters of the clubs believe changing facilities to be inadequate for their needs.
- 22% of clubs rate the condition of venues used in Sussex as very good, with remaining given a good or average rating.
- 68% of clubs find it either very easy or easy to book venues for netball activity.

In its facility strategy Sussex Netball identifies the following key venues as "being instrumental to both achieving growth targets and delivering a first class experience to existing members. This is because they are a base for a central venue competition and/or a venue for participation and performance programmes".

- Brighton University, Falmer Campus
- Hampden Park Sports Centre
- St Paul’s Catholic College
- Worthing College (The Warren)
- East Grinstead Sports Club

None of these facilities are within Wealden District.

Recommended priorities for inclusion in the Sussex County netball facility improvement plans are:

- Seek improvements to the outdoor courts at Hampden Park Sports Centre, Eastbourne in order to sustain current levels of participation.
- Make the case for the courts at Durrington High School to be made fit for use by netball clubs and organisations.

Neither of these facilities are within Wealden District.

Wealden District

Facility supply

- There is no need identified currently for any competition venues in Wealden.
- The most important facilities we use in the Wealden area are Crowborough Leisure Centre (back to netball programmes & junior delivery); Uckfield Leisure Centre (back to netball programmes); and Heathfield Community College – junior club delivery.
- It is not always easy to access facilities. They are usually at capacity, and do not have any time slots available. If time slots are available these are often outside of peak times and mean clubs can not attend them. Cost varies, with some sites being acceptable, others not. School & FE facilities are also often difficult to get access as many do not hire their facilities externally.
- We are aware of the Hailsham Active Sports Park project where we would hope to see new facilities for netball use.

Demand

15 Please note – these are venues that are currently known to the Development Officer who acknowledges that there are other venues clubs use that EA is not aware of.
• There are five affiliated clubs offering junior and adult netball, in addition we have two England netball programmes being delivered in Wealden. There may well be additional clubs playing netball.
• Currently we have 4 individuals from within the Wealden area training to qualify as UKCC level 2 coaches.
• The intention is to increase the delivery of England Netball programmes such as Back to Netball, in East Sussex, which include increased demand for indoor facility space in Wealden to run these programmes.

Other issues and observations

• Challenges: shortage of workforce to support development of new clubs and delivery of England netball programmes.
• Currently NE does not have any specific facility priorities within Wealden.

6.7.2 Club Responses

Responses were received from Crowborough Netball and Wadhurst Junior Netball clubs.

Some key points were:

• Crowborough Netball (adult and juniors) has increased membership over the past three years; and Wadhurst Juniors note that membership has been stable. Crowborough Netball highlighted that "it is a new club in Crowborough which explains it's growth. I think it will continue to grow, particularly the children".
• Both clubs have junior sections and links with local schools.
• Crowborough Netball use The Beacon Academy Sports Hall for matches and train at the outdoor court at Goldsmiths, run by Crowborough Town Council. Wadhurst play matches in local leagues in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks and train at Uplands Community College, Wadhurst.
• Both clubs are reasonably satisfied with the quality of the main facilities they use but Wadhurst notes the general quality of facilities at Uplands Community College as only adequate. Facilities for the disabled and equipment and storage are rated by Wadhurst as poor.
• Crowborough note the need for an outdoor court with flood lights for use all year and would like to expand activities by running more matches for children and adults. They note that "it's a development that we hope will happen given the increasing number of players".
6.8 Other outdoor (non-pitch) sports/active recreation

6.8.1 Private Sector provision

Water sports facilities and outdoor activities are located at Bewl Water Outdoor Centre near Wadhurst, operated privately by the Marker Study Leisure Group. Some activities at Bewl Water are operated independently by, for example, the Canoe Club and by the County Council. Facilities include changing, storage, and catering. Future possible development opportunities have been discussed with Wealden District Council for planning advice including for residential accommodation, additional catering provision and general improvements.

The Bowles Outdoor Activities Centre is located north east of Crowborough comprising two ski slopes, an indoor pool, archery range and high ropes courses as well as the Bowles Rocks sandstone crag. The centre specialises in residential courses (140 beds), outdoor activities, personal and team development and experiential learning. It is a valuable regional resource for schools, youth and community groups, businesses and families’ (website information). There are also indoor climbing centres in Lye Green, near Crowborough (Evolution Climbing) and in Tunbridge Wells (the Chimera Climbing Centre) outside the district.

The Knockhatch Ski and Snowboard Centre is just west of Hailsham. Facilities include a 110m artificial dry ski slope and a nursery slope.

6.8.2 Active Recreation Sports Clubs

There were a number of other outdoor sports clubs/organisations who responded to the survey as noted below:

- Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club - Canoe Barn, Seven Sisters Country Park, Exceat (canoeing and kayaking).
- Groombridge Sports ground association - The Tanyard sports ground Groombridge (use includes: football, tag rugby, athletics, fishing, tennis, scouting, and dog walking).
- Hellingly Lions - Lower Dicker Recreation Ground (cycle speedway).
- Ashburnham Stoolball club - Ashburnham sports field (matches covering Rother/Wealden area).
- Maresfield Stoolball Club- Uckfield
- Buxted & District Rifle & Pistol Club - Rear of Buxted Medical Centre (compete in Benchrest, Rimfire & HFT competitions).

Some general points from the clubs are noted below:

- Most clubs report an increase in membership over the past three years and the others report a stable membership.
- Most clubs have an active junior membership and many have links with schools.
- Most clubs are fairly happy with the overall quality of their main facility but individual issues are noted in the table below.
- All clubs have suggested ways in which their facilities could be improved (details below).
- The most common barrier to club development is a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club. other common barriers are a lack of funding (internal and external) and

Key points noted by individual clubs are noted in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club          | • Facilities for the disabled are poor.  
• Need for improved shower and changing facilities, but as tenants of Buzz Active, the ESCC landlords, we can do little to change this.  
• We are currently trying to put together a bid to buy some new kayaks to improve fleet we have for our members.  
• We do not own facilities and can therefore do little to make changes. Coach training is costly and time consuming for volunteers these days and is difficult for clubs to arrange.  
• Expansion of club membership is only possible with more voluntary coaches to run sessions, which is costly and time consuming to provide.  
• Ideally it would be good if the club had its own building where we would be free to develop and grow. Sited in a Site of Specific Interest and Country Park, has its benefits and limitations! |
| Groombridge Sports ground association | • Our membership has grown because, with WDC help, we have increased our facilities!  
• Facilities for equipment and storage are poor.  
• We need to improve the parking area, the access to the pavilion and the storage for equipment. We are working on car park area and access ramps to the pavilion. Keep trying to find money to improve storage.  
• We want to provide new activities and expand our user clubs. |
| Hellingly Lions                      | • The membership has increased over the past 6 months. The belief is this has happened due to being far more active in the community and this is a trend that will continue.  
• The general quality of our facility is poor. Car parking is poor.  
• We need electricity and lighting to make our facility available 12 months a year; parking; improved storage facilities; changing and first aid facilities. These are long term plans for the club.  
• We will be looking to implement some of the above, we are currently having a lease for the track/location drawn up and that will help us to further our ambitions.  
• We want to attract more members, run more teams (junior) and run a local league so that individual towns can race each other and build community spirit. |
| Ashburnham Stoolball club           | • There are plans for the new village hall on the site. This could be useful for social events.  
• We want to attract more members, |
| Maresfield Stoolball Club-          | • Our main concern is the lack of teams, particularly mixed teams, in the area. We would be interested in any council-led schemes promoting use of recreation grounds that might produce new teams in any of the Wealden towns or villages. |
| Buxted & District Rifle & Pistol Club | • Membership has grown - we have a new website and are getting 2-5 enquiries a week.  
• We are located in an old National guard building that is in need of repair or rebuilding as it has been there since the 1940's. We are looking to rebuild the club ideally at current location but we are considering building elsewhere in the area.  
• We are looking into running more competitions. |
6.9 Outdoor (non-pitch) sports: Key Findings

6.9.1 General points and observations

Range of sports and recreation activities making use of open space

In general, the amount of activity detailed demonstrates the range of outdoor sport and recreation taking place in the Wealden District and the value of the open space facilities and resources which are used. All the trends suggest that use of outdoor space for health and fitness activities is growing – and there is tremendous scope for the greater linking and development of outdoor resources to serve this market (see below).

Growing importance of linkages between health and fitness and sport

With changes in public health management and revenue streams, linking fitness, sport and health can access new areas of funding; moreover the advantages to community health in increasing fitness levels is now receiving political support. Many initiatives and opportunities are possible: e.g. the idea of linking sports sites with trim trails, outdoor fitness equipment etc (using sports facilities as a base and green infrastructure and open space as resources). Associated with this, there is rapidly growing activity and demand for ‘individual fitness activities’ - walking, running and cycling, using existing facilities and open space resources.

Schools and Colleges

Many of the Secondary Schools and Colleges have a range of outdoor sports facilities but the degree of community use is varied with differing management arrangements and degrees of commitment to ongoing use. Securing greater and more reliable/consistent access to those facilities would of significant value to local clubs and the wider community.

Maintaining a rural network of facilities

Recreation Grounds, tennis courts, multi-use games areas and bowling greens are important sports facilities in rural areas. Maintaining these facilities with quality surfaces and ancillary facilities can be difficult; financial support is often required. Comments from clubs emphasise the ongoing issues of sourcing finance for upgrades to changing facilities and maintaining good quality grounds.

6.9.2 Local Sports Partnerships

Hailsham Active - Hailsham Active highlights a general shortage of facilities and are pursuing the development of a Sports Park for Hailsham and the local area that caters for multi-sports, and particularly has an Astroturf element. They note that such a development could also include a health centre/GP surgery, thereby "creating a one stop shop for medical and public health provision".

Heathfield Partnership - The Heathfield Partnership note that "as the only Wealden town without any provision for an indoor swimming pool" the Partnership through its Sport and Leisure Committee have a long term aspiration to deliver such a facility for the town".

Uckfield Active - Active Uckfield is a local sports association (previous name Uckfield Sports Partnership). As well as supporting projects for improved facilities alongside the Town Council, Active Uckfield helps organise development and "have a go" sessions to encourage greater participation in sport and active recreation. This includes an annual Sports For All day.
6.9.3 Sport Specific Issues

Tennis

- Wealden District is not a prioritised local authority area for the LTA in 2016/17.
- From the LTA's perspective the most important facilities for tennis in Wealden are tennis club courts and accessible public park courts (managed in the main by town and parish councils).
- The LTA suggest that indoor facilities are needed across Wealden, Rother & Hastings (to ensure a 30 minute travel time).
- They also suggest a need for additional accessible public park courts across the District.
- Overall their perception is that the quality of public courts is generally fairly good and all would be suitable for grassroots engagement.
- The LTA is aware that Wadhurst Tennis Club wish to add lights to two courts and they are supportive of this initiative.
- A number of additional local tennis clubs highlight specific needs for facility improvements i.e. Hartfield, East Hoathly & Halland, Hailsham, Mayfield, Groombridge and Horam.
- The LTA note that Urban Tennis Foundation, operating parks tennis courts at Victoria Pleasure Ground in Uckfield, have expressed interest in developing tennis facilities at Uckfield Leisure Centre.
- Key opportunities noted are "developing sustainable parks tennis facilities in partnership with the local authority and town/parish councils (as applicable); in addition supporting clubs to grow membership, particularly those serving more rural communities, albeit not exclusively".
- Growing the Game Funding and Easy Access Loan funding is available for clubs to apply for.
- Three particular sites highlighted by the LTA with potential for development are:
  - Hardy Roberts Recreation Ground (Heathfield & Waldon PC).
  - Wolfe Recreation Ground (Crowborough Town Council).
  - Danehill Recreation Ground (Danehill Parish Council).

Athletics

- England Athletics (EA) note that the most important facility for Athletics in Wealden is the cinder track at Crowborough Leisure Centre used by Crowborough Runners. They are aware that Crowborough Runners and Crowborough Town Council have been working to determine the viability of securing funding for resurfacing the current track. They understand that there is some local commitment to part-fund the project, but that the majority of costs would need to be sourced externally.
- Crowborough Runners adds "we have been campaigning for years to get an all weather running track plus jumping and throwing facilities at Goldsmiths" and "we have plans for a new j type training track with jumps and throwing areas to replace existing cinder track".
- EA suggest that all five England Athletics affiliated clubs within the district are in a reasonable close location to a certificated track "albeit none of the seven surrounding tracks in Sussex and Kent are within the Wealden District boundary".
- The note that all five EA affiliated clubs are running clubs and utilise the following sites for training:
  - Crowborough Runners – Goldsmith’s Leisure Centre track; indoor halls for junior training at Beacon Community College.
  - Heathfield Road Runners – largely use roads around Heathfield for training. Twice monthly training at Eastbourne Track.
  - Wadhurst Runners – Meet to run from Uplands Sports Centre.
  - Hailsham Harriers – Battle Road Playing Fields/Summerheath School Sports Hall (indoor winter training).
Uckfield Runners – Meet to run from Freedom Leisure Centre, Uckfield. Twice monthly training at Eastbourne Track.

- EA highlight that their current group running programme “Run England” will evolve into “RunTogether” from the autumn; and that this will continue to help grow and sustain the running market. They add “we hope the clubs within the district will continue to support our programmes”.

**Bowls**

- Sussex was a priority “hot spot” area for bowls and Active Sussex worked in partnership with the Bowls Development Alliance over that time to aim to increase participation levels. It is no longer a priority area however.
- The view provided via Bowls England is that overall there are sufficient bowls facilities, with many venues across the district/county.
- The most import facility for bowls in Wealden is noted as the Wealden Bowls Centre which includes Wealden Indoor Bowls Club and Wealden Bowls Club (outdoor). The centre serves Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, East Grinstead, Forest Row, Nutley, Newick, Cross-in-hand, Uckfield, and Hailsham. It has good access for wheelchair users and easy access from the car park.
- As regards quality is that generally facilities tend to be in good condition with regards to the maintenance of the greens, however the club houses/pavilions are often needing more repairs as leases come to an end and clubs are trying to survive. Access and car parking are also common problems.
- A number of local clubs highlight specific facility improvement needs/issues - Uckfield, Hellingly, Coleman’s Hatch, Mayfield and Wealden Bowls Centre.
- The English Bowls Association in its Whole Sport Plan sets out that over the next four years, it will target those over 55 and disabled participants aged 16+.
- Sussex including Wealden, has a high population of over 55s. There are known health benefits in being active throughout adulthood so it is important to continue to support the clubs within the community. The impact of new housing in Wealden also needs to be taken on board.
- Bowls England recognises that the trend of a reducing number of affiliated members year-on-year is the biggest single issue facing the sport of flat green bowls.
- Whilst Bowls England is keen for this trend to be reversed, it is also recognises that the trend may not be reversed within the term of its current Strategic Plan. It does however wish to focus its efforts on increasing participation, by both current and future participants, and it notes that "success in this area can be achieved by all parties working together – Bowls England, County Associations and Clubs".
- There are a number of bowling clubs in the Wealden area that are sustaining their current levels of membership but a challenge for all is attracting new members, particularly younger players.
- There are opportunities to apply for NGB funding via a bidding process.

**Netball**

- Netball England (NE) highlight that netball is traditionally played on outdoor courts with educational sites being the most highly used by volunteer run leagues and Club training. They add that "there is an increasing demand for indoor facilities as the average recreational netballer prefers to play indoors and there is a requirement for performance programmes to be based at high quality indoor venues".
- There are five NE affiliated clubs offering junior and adult netball. In addition NE has two England netball programmes being delivered in Wealden. There may well be additional clubs playing
netball.

- NE note that there is no need identified currently for any competition venues in Wealden. Currently NE does not have any specific facility priorities within Wealden.
- The most important facilities NE use in the Wealden area are Crowborough Leisure Centre (back to netball programmes & junior delivery); Uckfield Leisure Centre (back to netball programmes); and Heathfield Community College – junior club delivery.\(^{16}\)
- Crowborough Netball Club notes the need for an outdoor court with flood lights for use all year and it would like to expand activities by running more matches for children and adults.
- NE is aware of the Hailsham Active Sports Park project where they would hope to see new facilities for netball use.
- NE highlight that it is not always easy to access facilities: "they are usually at capacity, and do not have any time slots available. If time slots are available these are often outside of peak times and mean clubs can not attend them. Cost varies, with some sites being acceptable, others not. School & FE facilities are also often difficult to access as many do not hire their facilities externally".
- The intention is to increase the delivery of England Netball programmes such as Back to Netball, in East Sussex, which include increased demand for indoor facility space in Wealden to run these programmes.

Other (non-pitch) outdoor sports/activities

- There are a number of important private sector outdoor active recreation facilities in Wealden including Bewl Water Outdoor Centre near Wadhurst, The Bowles Outdoor Activities Centre north east of Crowborough an indoor climbing centres in Lye Green, near Crowborough and the Knockhatch Ski and Snowboard Centre just west of Hailsham.
- Canoeing: Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club (based at Seven Sisters Country Park, Exceat) highlight a need for better facilities for the disabled as well as improved shower and changing facilities. However they note that "we do not own facilities and can therefore do little to make changes".
- Groombridge Sports ground association: note a need to improve their parking area, access to the pavilion and storage for equipment.
- Cycle Speedway: Hellingly Lions - Lower Dicker Recreation Ground - note that "we need electricity and lighting to make our facility available 12 months a year; parking; improved storage facilities; changing and first aid facilities. These are long term plans for the club". They are currently having a lease for the track/location drawn up that they think will help the to further their ambitions.
- Stoolball: Ashburnham Stoolball club (Ashburnham sports field) note that "there are plans for the new village hall on the site which could be useful for social events. Maresfield SC (Uckfield) note that they would be interested in any council-led schemes promoting use of recreation grounds which might produce new teams in any of the Wealden towns or villages.
- Rifle & Pistol Clubs: Buxted & District Rifle & Pistol Club (Rear of Buxted Medical Centre) note that they are located in an old National guard building that is in need of repair or rebuilding "as it has been there since the 1940's. We are looking to rebuild the club ideally at current location but we are considering building elsewhere in the area".

\(^{16}\) Please note – these are venues that are currently known to the Development Officer who acknowledges that there are other venues clubs use that NE is not aware of.
7.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

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

The information and findings from the Community and Stakeholder Consultation report will be taken forward primarily in the Open Space Assessment report, the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment (in relation to the findings in relation to non-pitch sports) and the Indoor Sports Facilities Assessment.