

# **Chelmsford Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study (2016 - 2036)**



## **Community and Stakeholder Consultation Final Version**

Report produced on behalf of Chelmsford City Council by  
Leisure and the Environment in association with Ethos  
Environmental Planning



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## 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.

## Glossary of Terms

| Term  | Meaning   |
|-------|---|
| ANGst | Accessible Natural Green Space Standard           |
| ATP   | Artificial Turf Pitch                             |
| BDA   | Bowls Development Alliance                        |
| CAPS  | Club Action Planning Scheme                       |
| CBAP  | Chelmsford Biodiversity Action Plan               |
| CBN   | County Badminton Network                          |
| CCG   | Clinical Commissioning Group                      |
| CIL   | Community Infrastructure Levy                     |
| CVC   | Chelmsford Volleyball Club                        |
| ECBA  | Essex County Badminton Club                       |
| EWT   | Essex Wildlife Trust                              |
| FACE  | Families Acting for Change Essex                  |
| GIS   | Geographical Information System                   |
| LTA   | Lawn Tennis Association                           |
| NCN   | National Cycle Network                            |
| NE    | Natural England                                   |
| NGB   | National Governing Body                           |
| NICE  | National Institute for Health and Care Excellence |
| NPPF  | National Planning Policy Framework                |
| NT    | National Trust                                    |
| SSSI  | Site of Special Scientific Interest               |
| WAst  | Woodland Accessible Standard                      |
| YEA   | Young Essex Assembly                              |

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Description of report

1.1.1 This is one of six reports provided within the overall Chelmsford Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study. It provides consultation findings from various stakeholders and feeds into other aspects of the study (as explained in sections 1.2 and 1.3 below). The six reports are:

1. Chelmsford Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (Local Needs Assessment);
2. Chelmsford Open Space Study (comprising a main report and six area profiles);
3. Chelmsford Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (Part A, B and C);
4. Chelmsford Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan (Part D of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment);
5. Chelmsford Indoor/Built Sports Facility Needs Assessment (this report); and,
6. Chelmsford Indoor/Built Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan.

### 1.2 Study Overview

1.2.1 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.

1.2.2 In view of the above, in 2014 Chelmsford City Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to produce a new open space, indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities audit and assessment- a needs assessment and strategy to inform the decision making process up to 2036 to replace that published by the Council in 2005.

1.2.3 The overall aims of the study are:

- To provide an audit of existing indoor and outdoor leisure facilities within the City's administrative area and immediate boundaries.
- To provide an assessment of these facilities in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.
- To provide a community and stakeholder needs assessment.
- To identify gaps in provision, over provision and priority guidelines for future investment.
- To develop and provide a strategy determining the actions and resources required to guide the City Council's decision making up until 2036.

1.2.4 There are three key elements to the study:

- An Open Space Assessment
- A Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment

- An Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment

1.2.5 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.

### **1.3 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment**

1.3.1 This report makes a "cross cutting" contribution to the overall study providing evidence that will be used in all three of the main study reports (where it will be combined with, for example, other evidence, findings and assessments completed in the audit and analysis process).

1.3.2 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.

1.3.3 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.

1.3.4 The report is made up of five main sections:

- General Community Consultation
- Sports - Indoor and Outdoor (non-pitch)
- Parks, green spaces, countryside, and rights of way
- Children and Young People - play and youth facilities
- Neighbouring local authorities and Town/Parish Councils

At the end of each section there is a short summary of the key findings.

1.3.5 The consultation and research programme was undertaken from October 2014 to February 2015<sup>1</sup>. The extent of the research reflects the breadth and diversity of the study and

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<sup>1</sup> Full detail of the timeframe for individual elements of the programme can be found in Appendix 1.

a consequent need to engage with as wide a cross section of the community and stakeholders as possible<sup>2</sup>.

1.3.6 In summary, questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- An online general household survey (Leisure Plus Household Survey)
- A survey of Town/Parish Councils
- A survey of local groups and organisations
- A survey of sports National Governing Bodies (NGBs); league secretaries and local clubs.

1.3.7 In addition to the above a series of one to one stakeholder interviews were undertaken.

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

1.3.9 The result of this consultation and other analyses will help amongst other things to inform the content of the recommended local standards as appropriate. This will be explained further in the three main reports: The Open Space Study; The Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment and the Indoor/Built Sports Facilities Assessment.

1.3.10 This document also helps the study to understand stakeholder and local people's appreciation of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space, sport and recreation facilities are treated and designated in the Chelmsford Local Plan, as will be highlighted in the three main reports.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this report provides consultation evidence in the form of the observations and views/opinions sourced from many different organisations, individuals and studies. On occasion the views and observations expressed by individuals and groups may not be consistent with each other, nor are such individual contributions necessarily accurate.

## **2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

### **2.1 Overview**

2.1.1 This section provides consultation findings that cover 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.

2.1.2 This section also includes reference to research findings from the general public that cover a broad range of open space, sport and recreation facilities; 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 and the associated health benefits).

2.1.3 Section Two is comprised of three main parts:

- Leisure Plus Household Survey
- Place Survey and subsequent Chelmsford residents' surveys
- Stakeholder Views - Public Health

There is also a summary of key points at the end of the Section.

## **2.2 Leisure Plus Household Survey**

### **2.2.1 Introduction**

2.2.1.1 The open space, indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities study needs to secure a general understanding of how residents of Chelmsford 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 significant number of Chelmsford City area households.

2.2.1.2 An online questionnaire survey was therefore distributed through the City Council's Leisure Plus data base<sup>3</sup>. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 575 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1438 and the average

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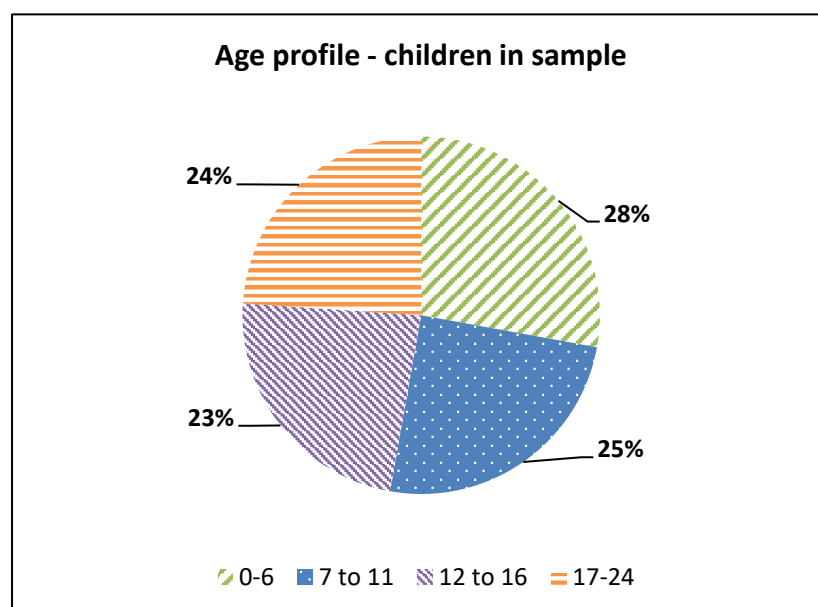
<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Leisure Plus cardholders make use of leisure facilities more frequently than a typical/average Chelmsford household so usage levels for formal fee paying sport and leisure facilities may be higher than the average.



household size of the households was 2.5 - slightly higher than the national average (2.4) and that of the Chelmsford City Council area as whole (2.4).

2.2.1.3 Just over 30% of households who responded had children (representing household views on behalf of just over 300 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age profile of children in Leisure Plus Household Survey



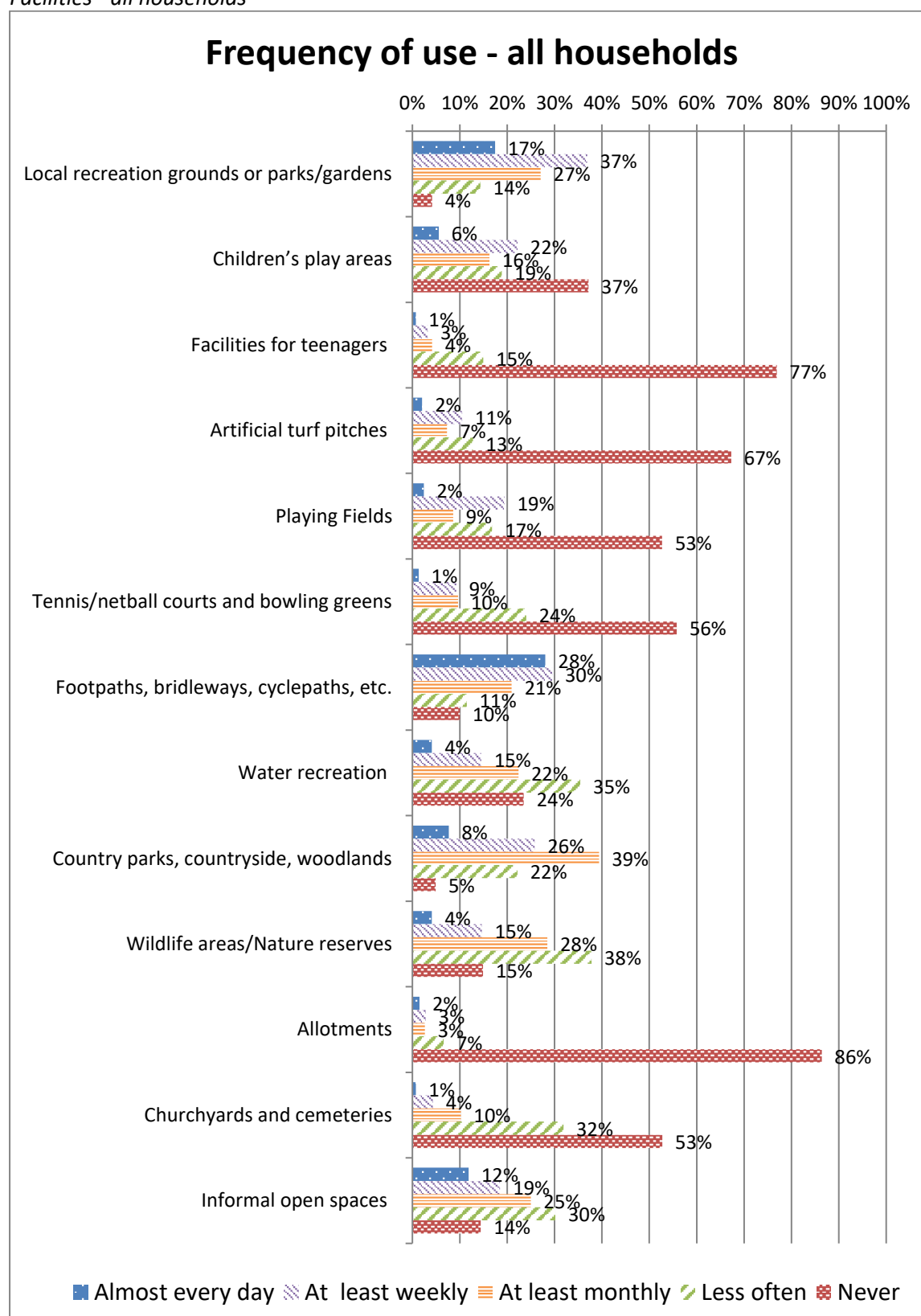
2.2.1.4 The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 2 and the following provides some of the key findings<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2.2 Frequency of use – All households

2.2.2.1 Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of the various types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within the study area, and the results are shown in figures 2a and 2b.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Figure 2a: Frequency of use results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Open Space and Outdoor Facilities - all households



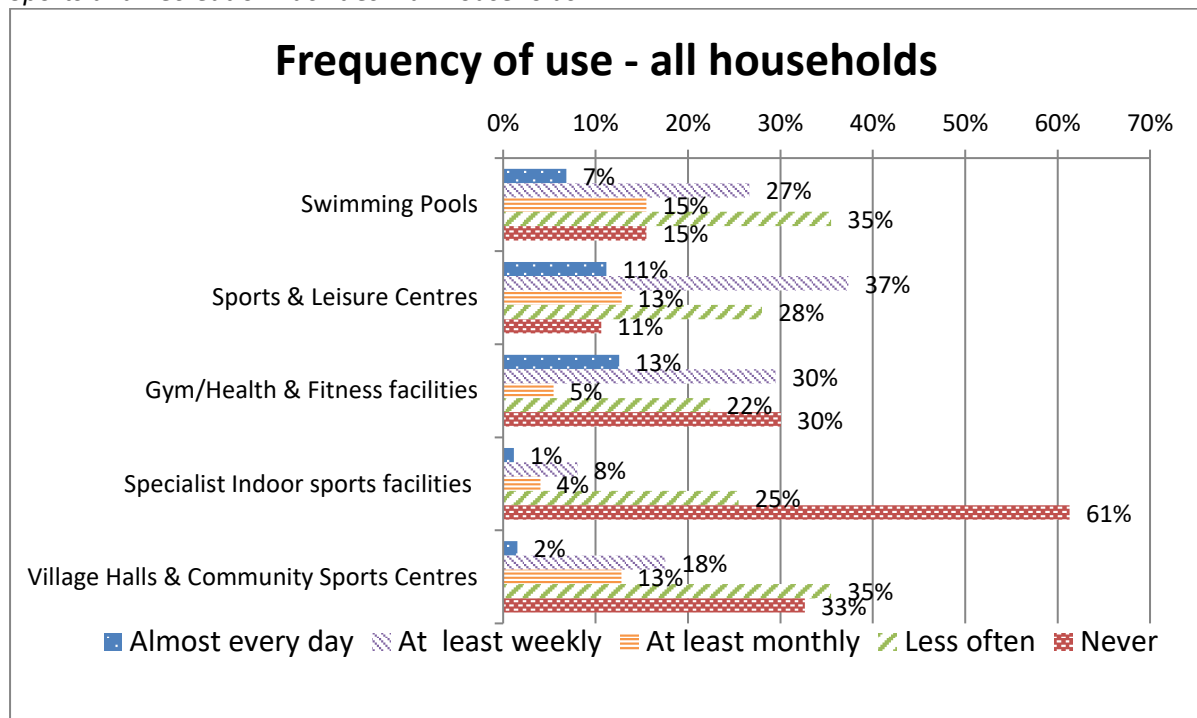
2.2.2.2 As can be seen in Figure 2a, it is the areas' parks, gardens and recreation grounds that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (81%); followed closely by rights of way - footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (79%). These open space facilities are

also by far the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis e.g. over 54% visit parks, gardens and recreation grounds at least weekly and 30% use rights of way almost every day.

2.2.2.3 Other spaces used at least weekly by at least 30% of households (including those who are more frequent users) are country parks/countryside and woodlands and informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.).

2.2.2.4 Play areas, areas for water recreation and wildlife areas/nature reserves are also fairly frequently used but with fewer households (at least 40%) using them on a regular basis (at least monthly - including those who are more regular users).

*Figure 2b: Frequency of use results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – all households*



2.2.2.5 As can be seen in Figure 2b, Sports and Leisure Centres are used regularly by significant numbers (61% of households report using them at least monthly - many more regularly); as are the areas' swimming pools and gym/health and fitness facilities (around 48% at least monthly).

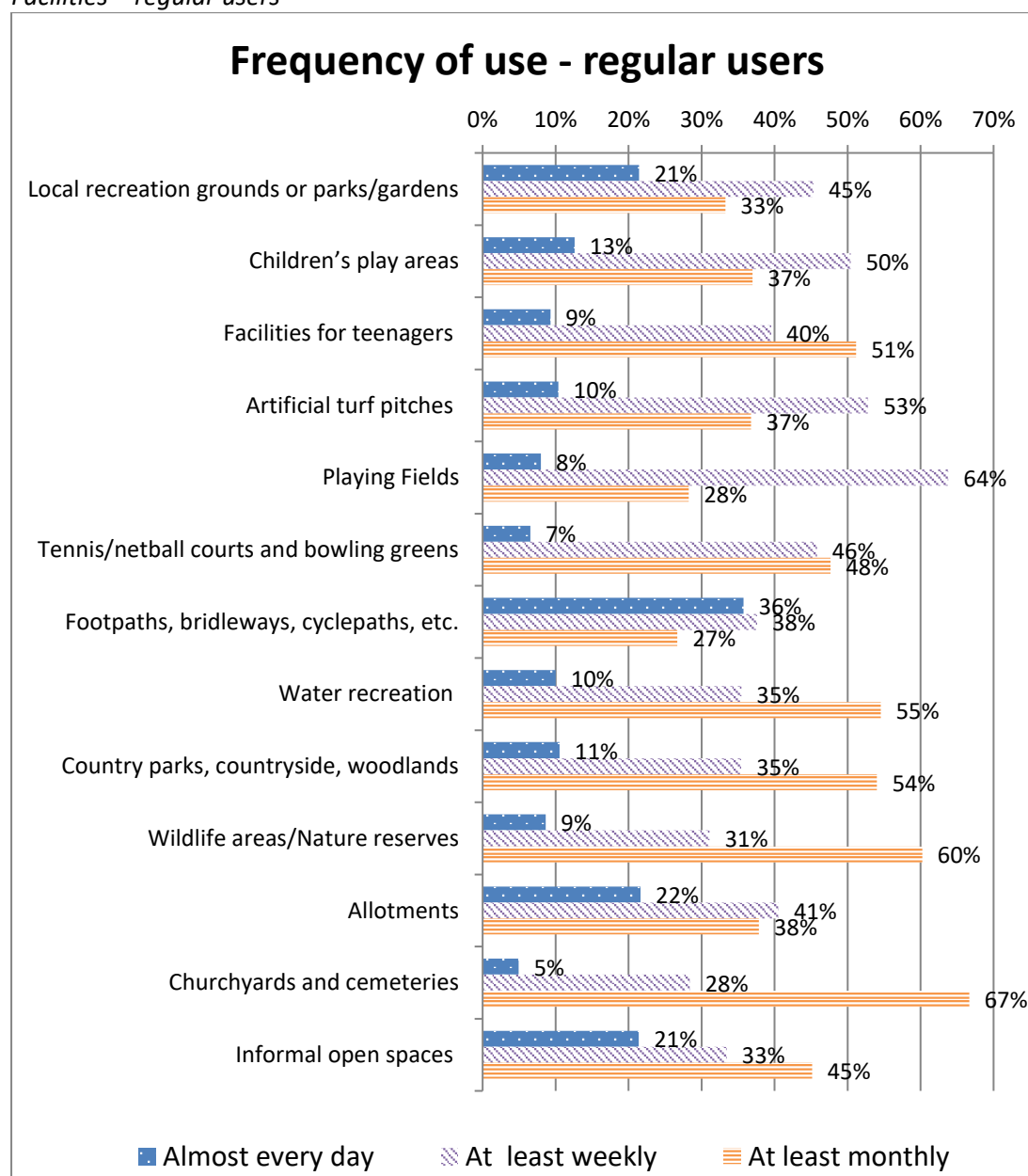
2.2.2.6 These facilities are also the most frequently used on both a weekly and daily basis. For example, over 48% of households use sports and leisure centres at least weekly (including more regular users); and around 13% use gym/health and fitness facilities almost daily.

2.2.2.7 Over 30% of respondent households use village halls/community sports centres at least monthly.

## 2.2.3 Frequency, regularity and times of use – Regular Users

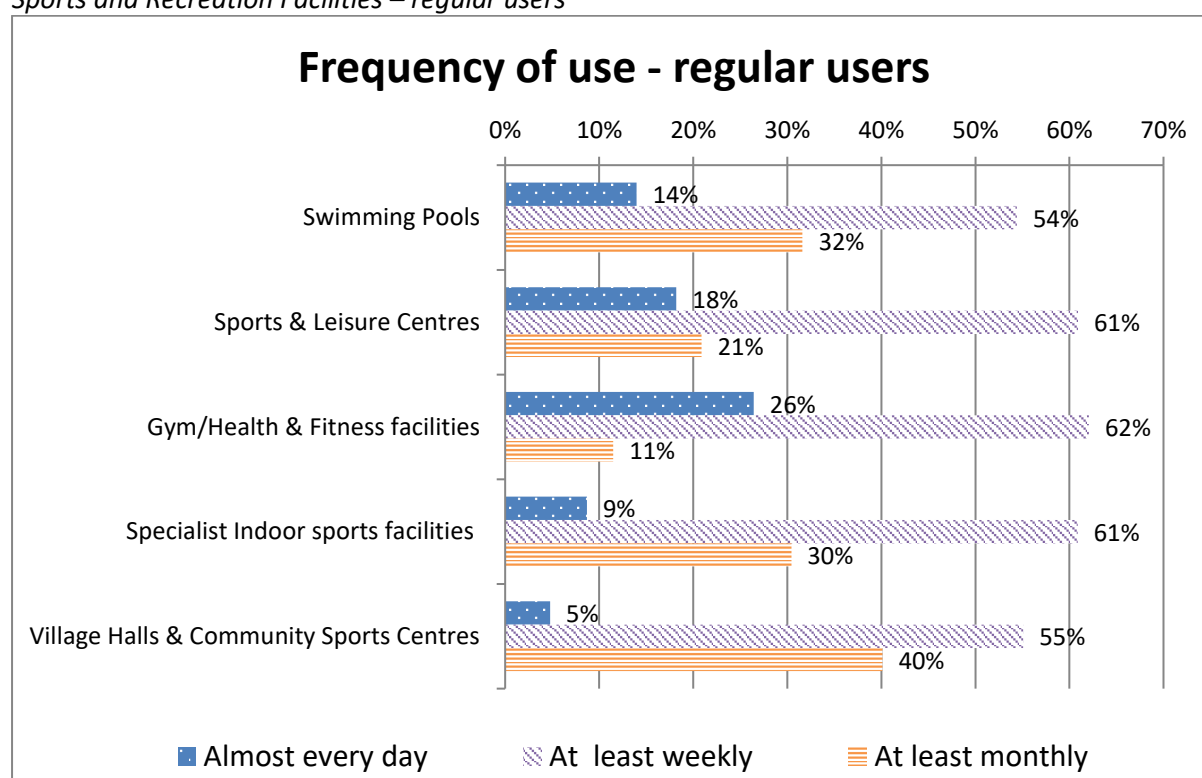
2.2.3.1 It is interesting to look at the frequency with which regular users of facilities visit them as this is not immediately obvious from looking at the overall figures (figures 2c and 2d).

Figure 2c: Frequency of use results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Open Space and Outdoor Facilities – regular users



2.2.3.2 Figure 2c shows, for example, that many users of outdoor sports facilities use them at least weekly (72% for grass playing fields, of which 8% use them nearly every day); 63% for astro-turf pitches (10% nearly daily); and 53% for tennis courts and bowling greens (7% nearly daily). 63% of allotment holders visit their allotment at least weekly (of which 22% visit almost every day).

Figure 2d: Frequency of use results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities – regular users

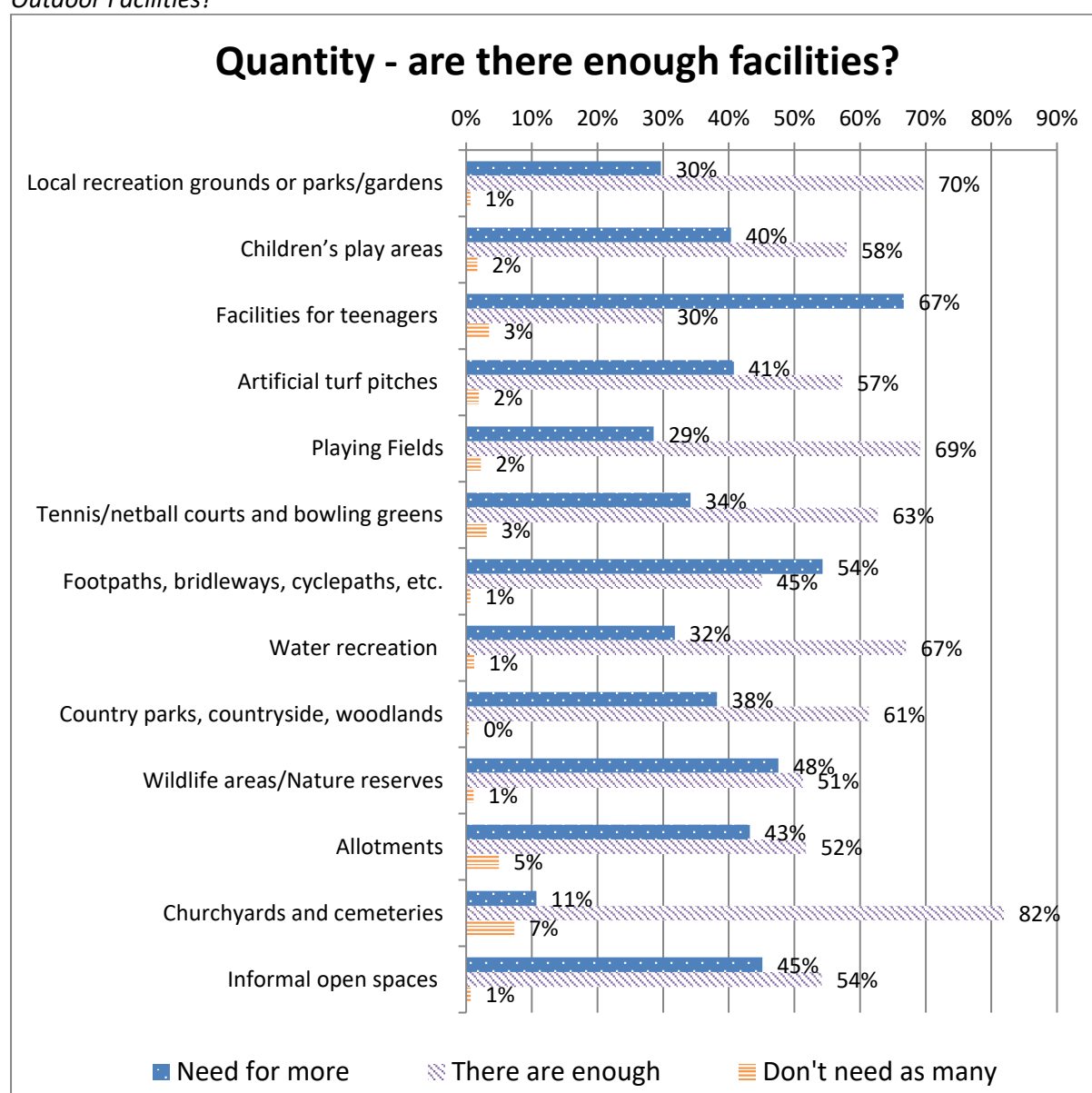


2.2.3.3 Figure 2d shows that in terms of indoor facilities, the most frequently visited by regular users (at least weekly) are the gym/health and fitness facilities (88% use these at least weekly of which 26% make use almost every day). Sports/leisure centres are used at least weekly by 79% - of which 18% visit nearly every day; and for swimming pools 68% - of user households visit at least weekly (of which 14% make use nearly every day).

## 2.2.4 Quantity of open space, sport and recreation facilities

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

Figure 3a: Quantity Results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Are there enough Open Space and Outdoor Facilities?



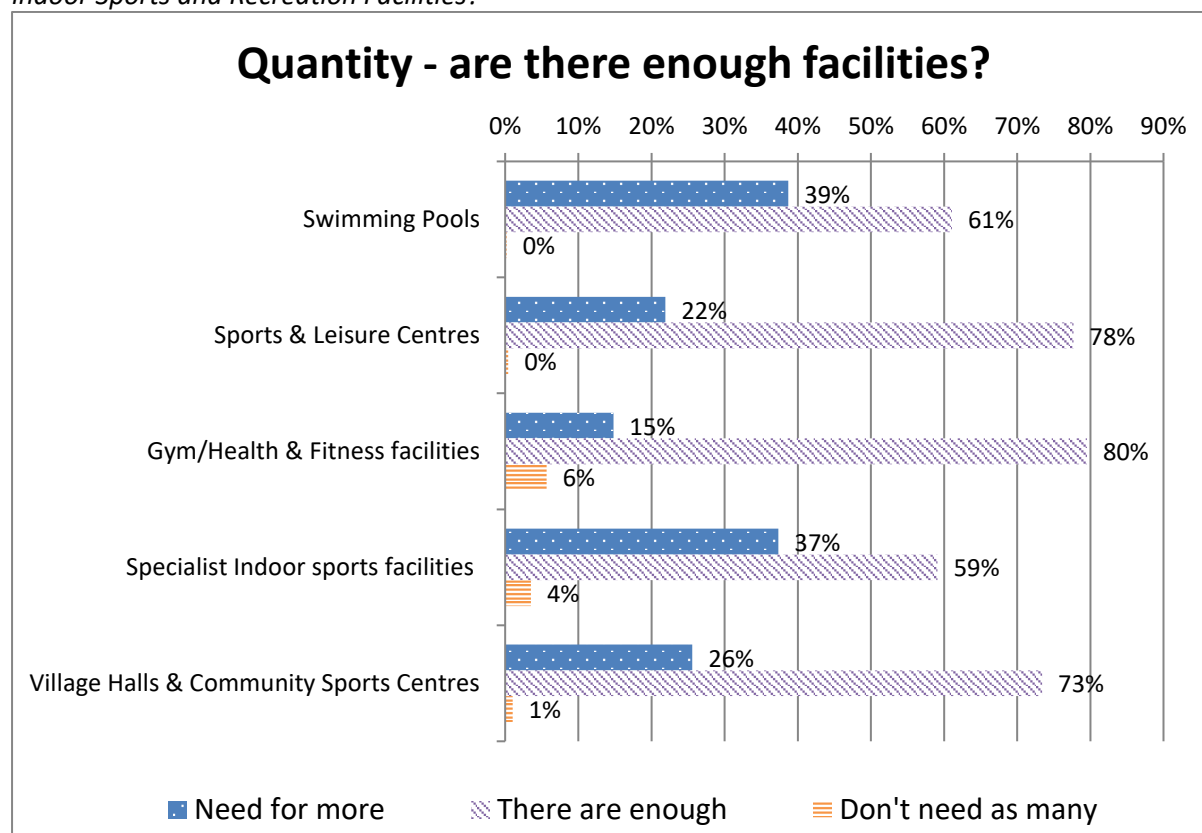
2.2.4.2 As can be seen from Figure 3a, other than for youth facilities and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths, a majority of households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various kinds of open space and outdoor sport facilities. However, significant numbers did indicate a need for additional open space and outdoor facilities as noted below:

2.2.4.3 A clear majority (67%) of respondents think there is a need for more facilities for teenagers and a majority (54%) thought that there are not enough footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths. In addition 48% highlighted a need for more wildlife areas /nature reserves.

2.2.4.4 Following this, other aspects where there was considered to be a shortfall by many were: play areas; artificial turf pitches; allotments and informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.). 40% or over indicated a need for more of such facilities.

2.2.4.5 The smallest levels of demand for additional outdoor provision were for churchyards and cemeteries (82% believing there to be enough).

Figure 3b: Quantity Results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Are there enough Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities?



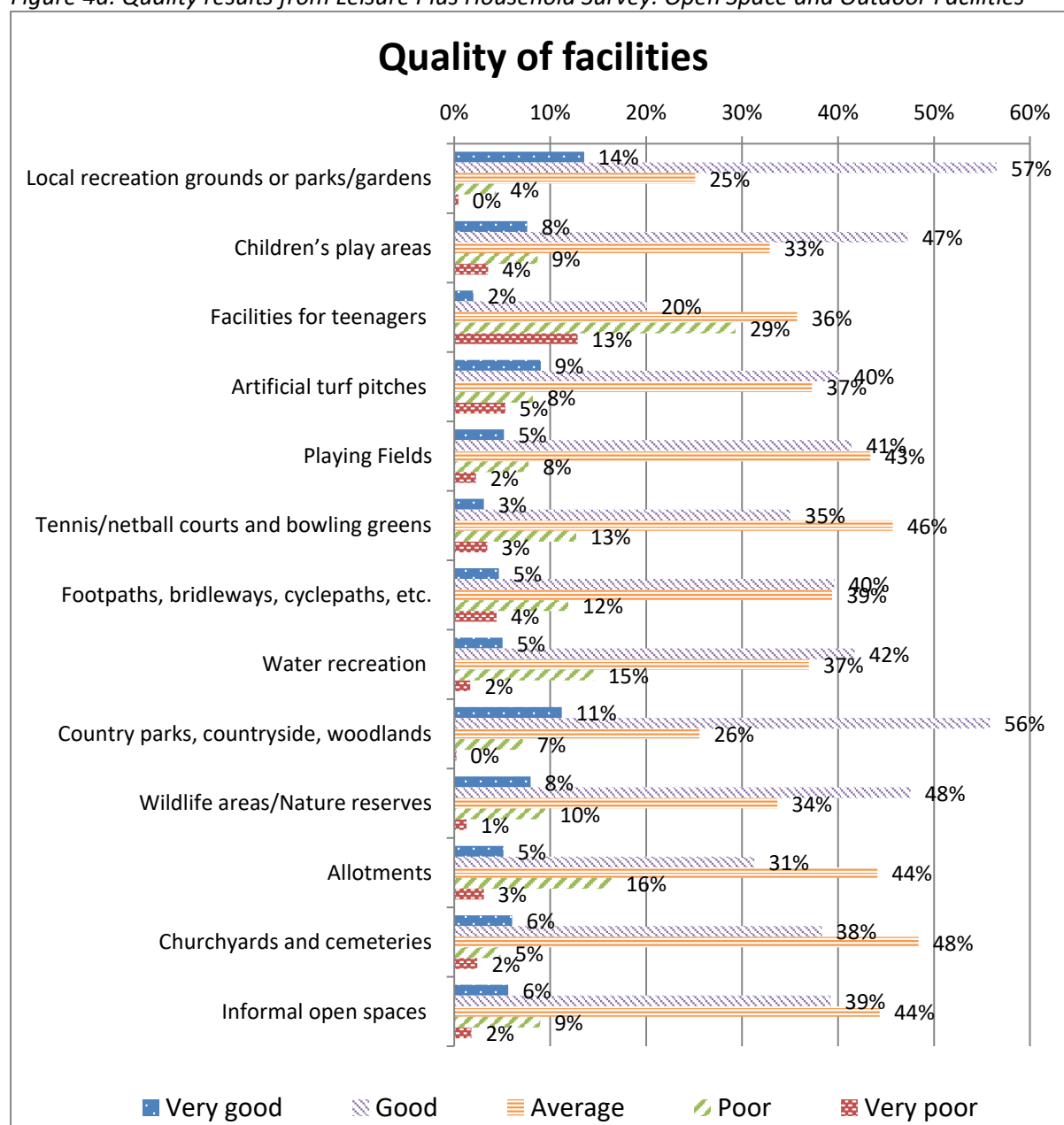
2.2.4.6 Figure 3b shows that a clear majority of households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various kinds of indoor sport and leisure facilities; most notably in relation to gym/health and fitness facilities (80% think that there are enough); and sports and leisure centres (78%).

2.2.4.7 The two kinds of facility where significant numbers of respondent households believe there is a need for more are swimming pools (39% think there is a need for more) and specialist indoor sports facilities (37%)

## 2.2.5 Quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities

2.2.5.1 Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated in Figure 4a.

Figure 4a: Quality results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



2.2.5.2 Figure 4a shows that 42% households highlighted the quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. 19% thought that the quality of allotments was poor or very poor, 17% thought that the quality of water recreation was poor or very poor and 16% highlighted the quality of Tennis, netball courts and bowling greens and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths as being either poor or very poor

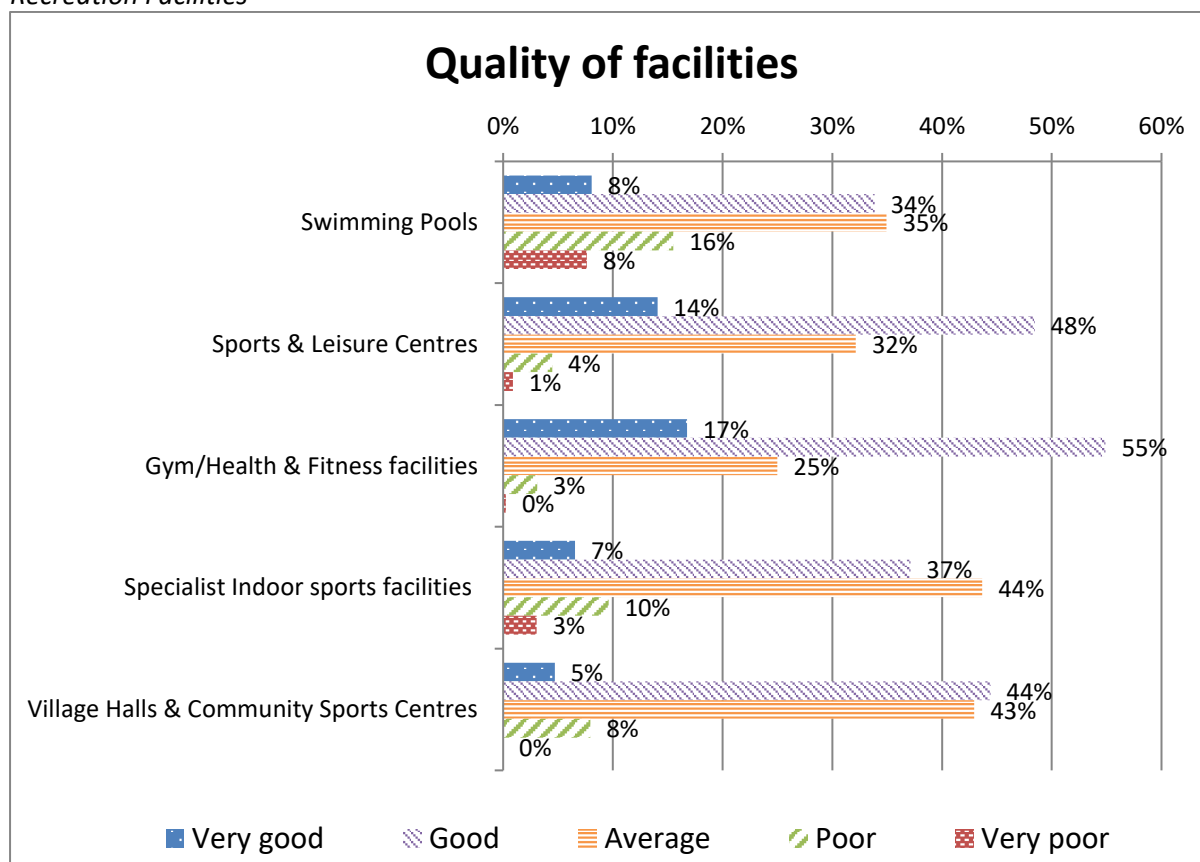
2.2.5.3 Outdoor facilities/open spaces with high levels of satisfaction noted are parks/recreation grounds (over 71% rate quality as good or very good); and country parks/countryside/woodlands (67%).

2.2.5.4 Other facilities where a majority of households rate quality as being good (or better) are children's play areas (55%) and wildlife areas/nature reserves (56%).



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

*Figure 4b: Quality results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities*



2.2.5.6 Figure 4b shows that in broad terms respondent households tended to view the quality of indoor sports and recreation provision as being satisfactory.

2.2.5.7 Indoor facilities commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are gym/health and fitness facilities (72%); and sports and leisure centres (62%).

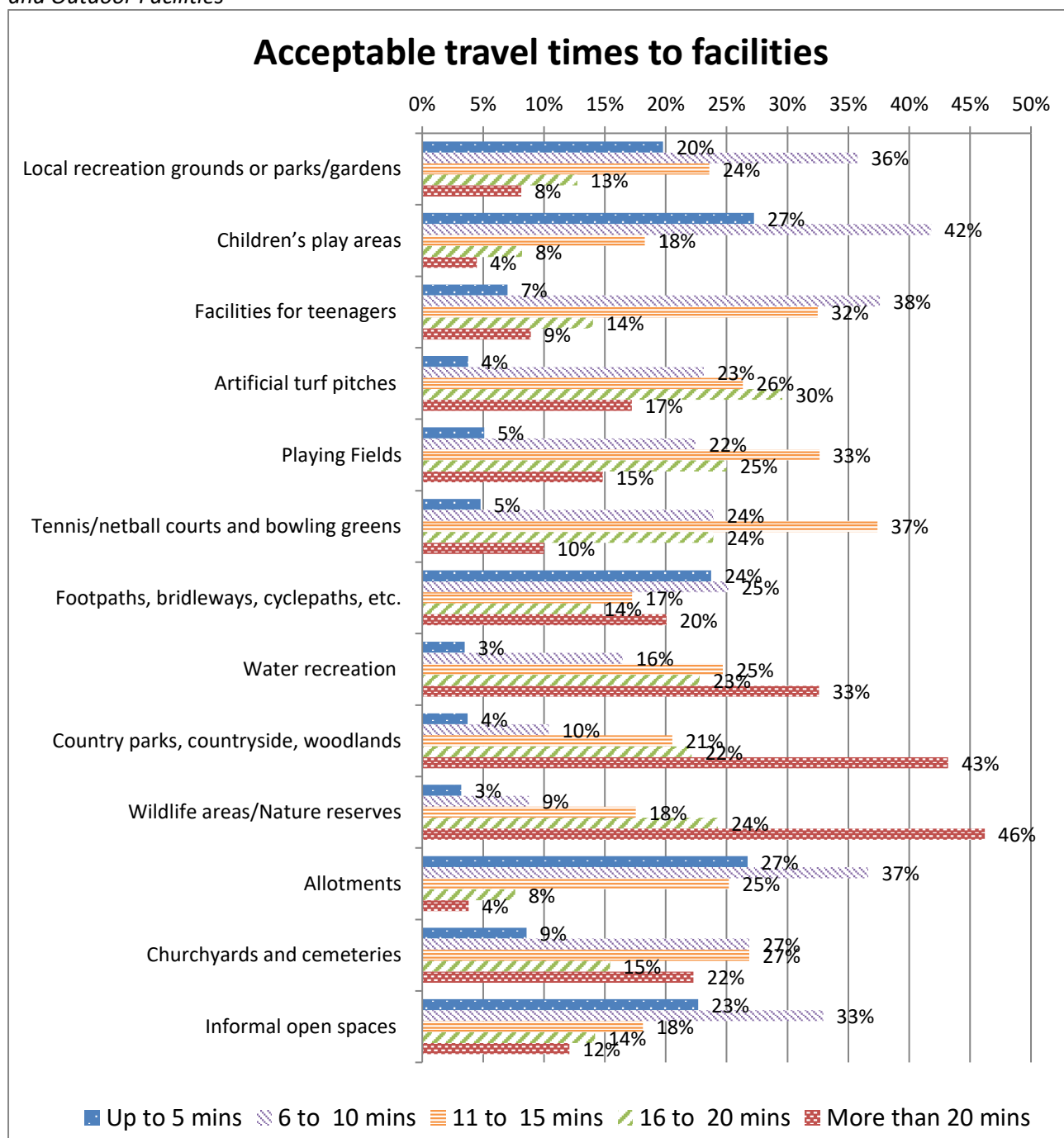
2.2.5.8 While 42% of respondent user households rated the quality of swimming pools as being good or very good, 25% highlighted the quality of swimming pools as being either poor or very poor and 35% as simply "average".

## 2.2.6 Access Issues (Geographical)

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

2.2.6.2 In looking at the travel times in Figures 5a and 5b it should be noted that these do not specify the mode of preferred travel (this is covered by Figures 5c and 5d).

Figure 5a: Access results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Acceptable travel times to Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

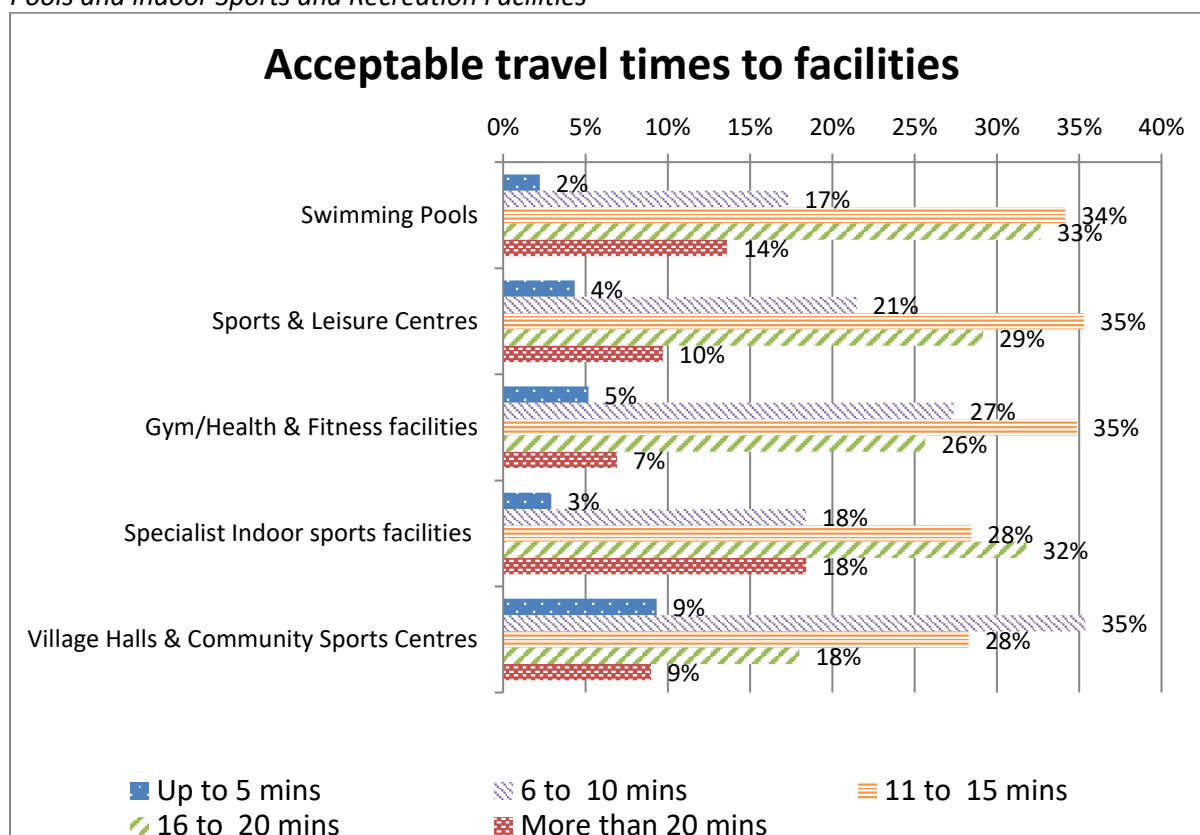


2.2.6.3 It can be seen from Figure 5a that where respondent households make use of the opportunities identified, 50% or more of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as wildlife areas/nature reserves (70%); country parks, countryside and woodlands (65%); and areas for water recreation (56%).

2.2.6.4 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).

- 69% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 27% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 64% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 27% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 56% of users would expect informal open spaces to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Figure 5b: Access results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Acceptable travel times to Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



2.2.6.5 Figure 5b shows that where households make use of the opportunities identified, 50% of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as specialist indoor sports facilities.

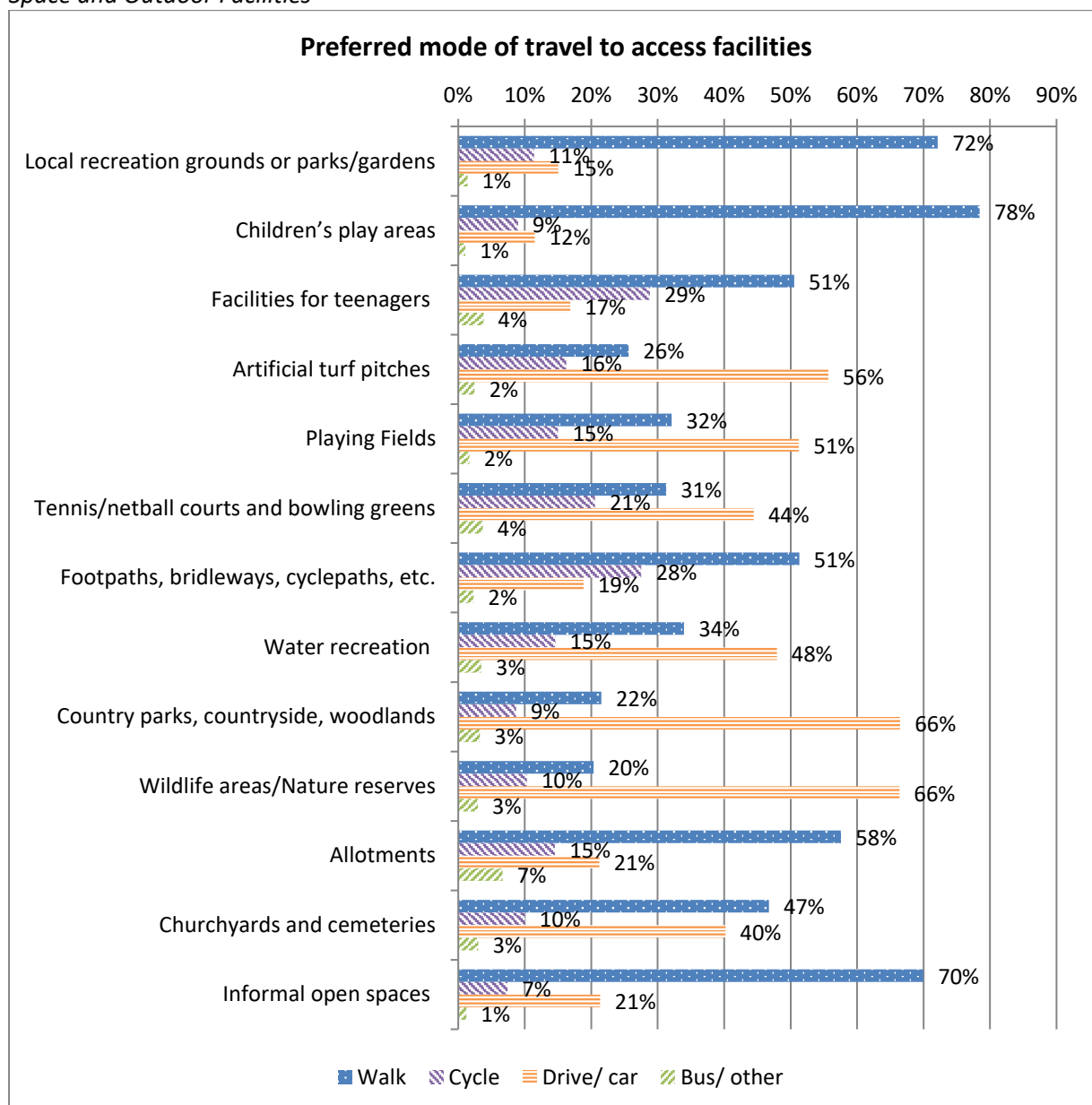
2.2.6.6 In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, some indoor facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used. For example 44% of users of village halls and community sports centres would not wish to travel more than 10 minutes, of which 9% would expect to travel 5 minutes or less.

2.2.6.7 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 facility. In drawing up the "access" element of specific local standards for different kinds of

open space/facility it is clearly very important to take careful note of all of these findings (combined with the preferred mode of travel options discussed below).

2.2.6.8 An accompanying question asked what mode of transport respondents were likely to use to get to such opportunities (where they would use them). See Figures 5c and 5d below.

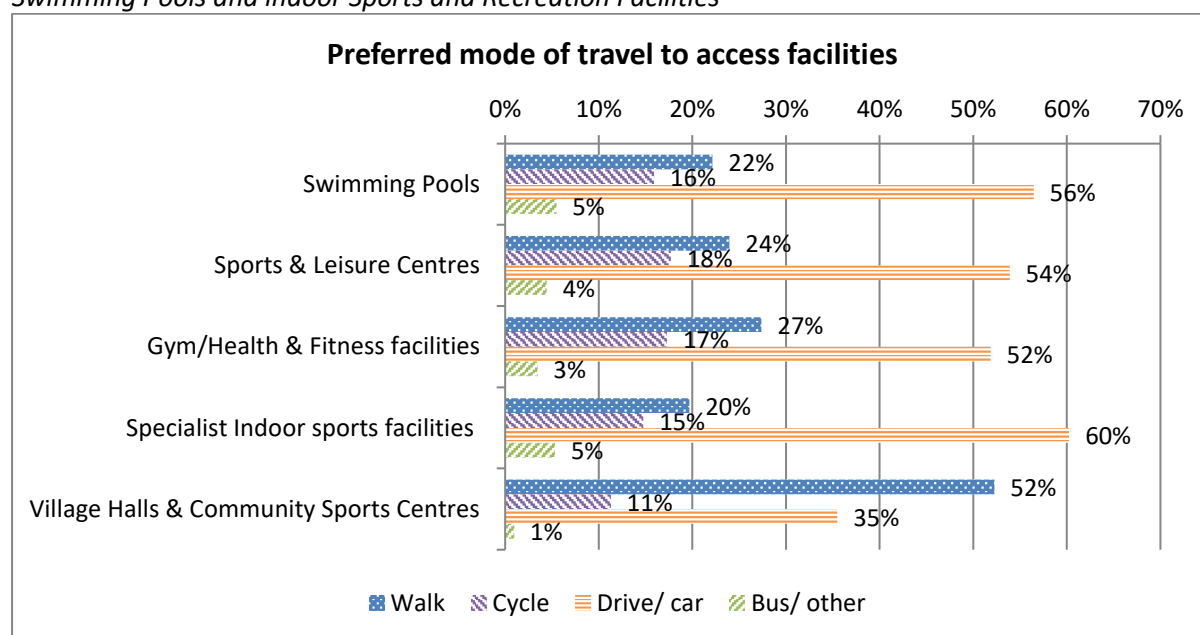
Figure 5c: Access results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Preferred mode of travel to access Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



2.2.6.9 Figure 5c shows that respondents are more likely than not to drive to many open spaces and outdoor facilities most notably country parks, countryside and woodlands; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.

2.2.6.10 However, walking and cycling are the norm for facilities such as play areas; parks and recreation grounds; and informal open spaces for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.

Figure 5d: Access results from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Preferred mode of travel to access Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



2.2.6.11 Figure 5d shows that in relation to indoor sports and recreation facilities, respondents are more likely than not to drive to all facilities except village halls and community sports centres; most notably in the cases of specialist sports facilities and swimming pools.

2.2.6.12 Walking is the preferred mode of travel for a majority of respondent households accessing village halls and community sports centres (52%).

2.2.6.13 For a small but significant minority access by cycling and bus/other is important. For example, 18% prefer to cycle to their sport and leisure centre; and 4% make use of the bus/other transport mode.

2.2.6.14 The results indicate that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as local parks, children's play areas, recreation grounds, and other informal recreation areas. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for larger and more specialised facilities such as swimming pools, leisure centres and nature reserves, which may be some distance removed from many potential users. This information is 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.

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

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

2.2.6.16 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
- Country parks, woodlands, nature reserves etc.

2.2.6.17 From the findings above (Figures 5c and 5d) it is less clear for some facilities e.g. grass playing fields, tennis/bowls and water recreation which may be the more appropriate transport mode upon which to base access thresholds.

2.2.6.18 The above are broad conclusions and will be considered in detail in the three main reports. For example, drive times may be more appropriate for the strategic access element of a standard for "destination" parks (such as Oaklands Park where the Museum is based).

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

2.2.6.20 The three 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.

### **2.2.6.21 Importance of Footpath/cycle access**

2.2.6.21.1 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.

- 91% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 90% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

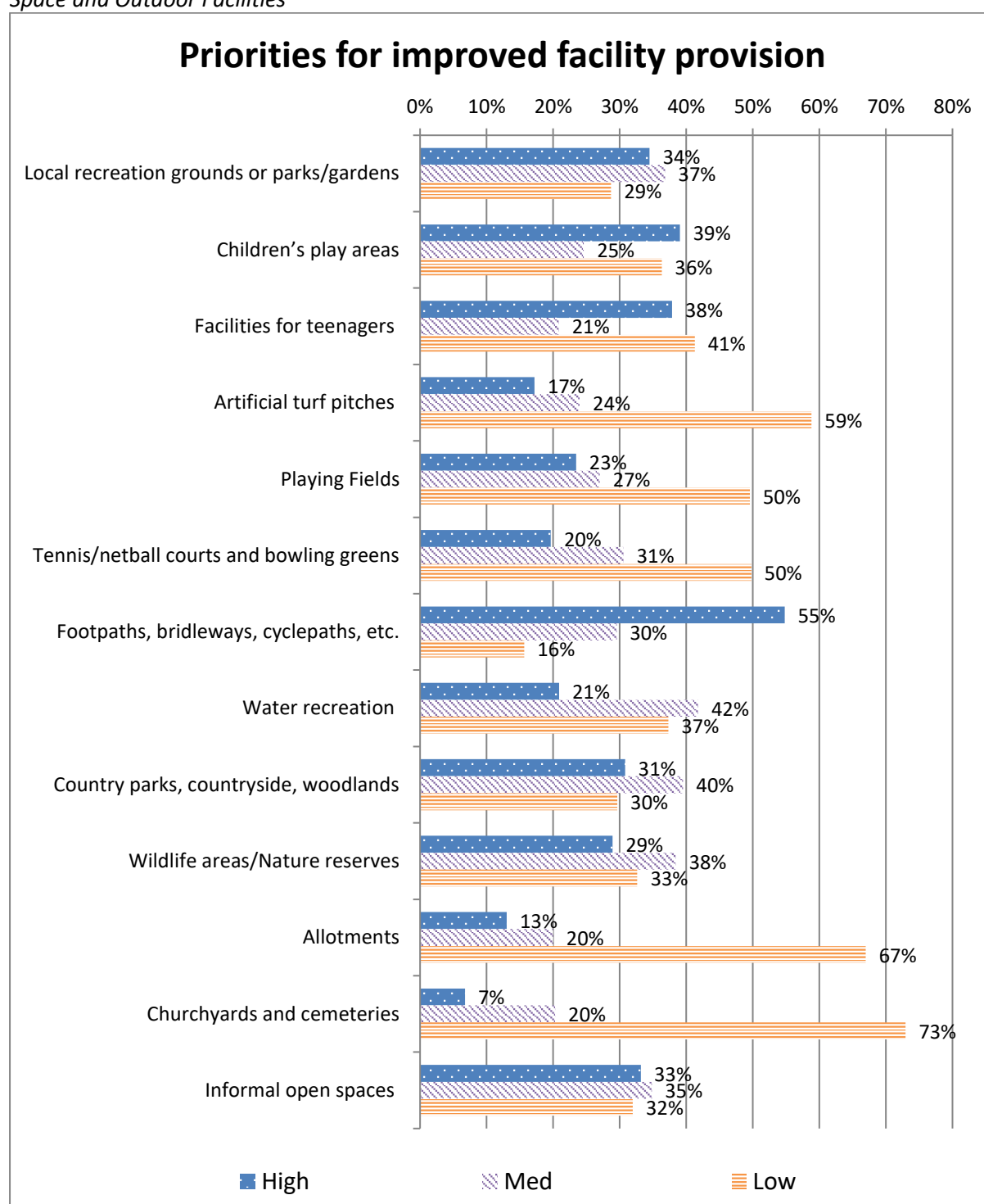
2.2.6.21.2 This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good footpath and cycle path access to facilities.

2.2.6.21.3 The detailed findings from this section will be used when drawing up the access elements of relevant standards for different kinds of open space in the three main reports.

## **2.2.7 Key Issues and priorities for improvement**

2.2.7.1 Households were also asked what their priorities for improvement in provision were. Findings are illustrated in Figures 6a and 6b. Respondents were asked to rate the need for new or improved facilities by indicating priorities at three levels – high, medium or low.

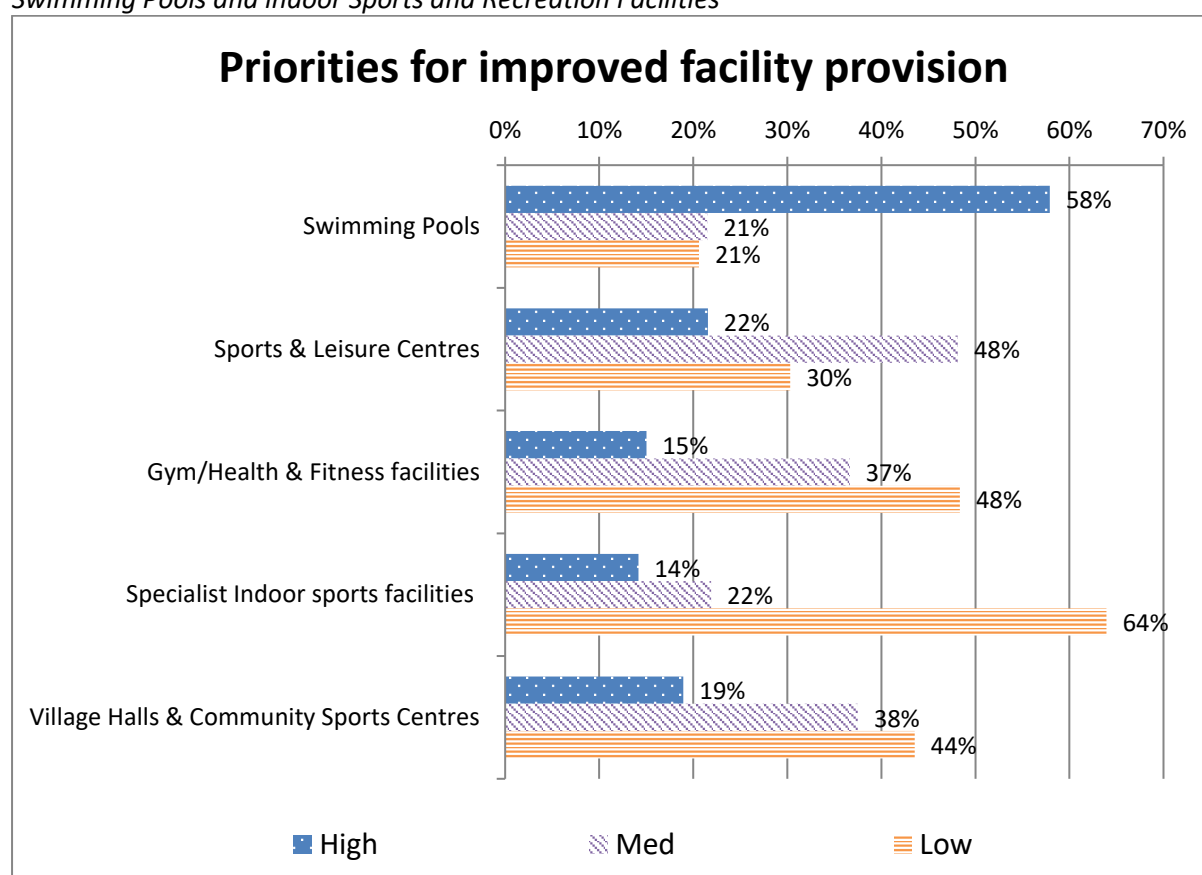
Figure 6a: Priorities results for improved facility provision from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Open Space and Outdoor Facilities



2.2.7.2 Figure 6a shows that in relation to Open Space and Outdoor Facilities the category highlighted by the largest number of households (55%) as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (55%).

2.2.7.3 Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were for children's play areas (39%); outdoor facilities for teenagers (38%); parks/gardens/local recreation grounds (34%); and informal open spaces (33%).

Figure 6b: Priorities results for improved facility provision from Leisure Plus Household Survey: Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



2.2.7.4 Figure 6b illustrates that for indoor sports and leisure facilities the category highlighted by the largest number of households (58%) as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision, by a large margin, was for swimming pools.

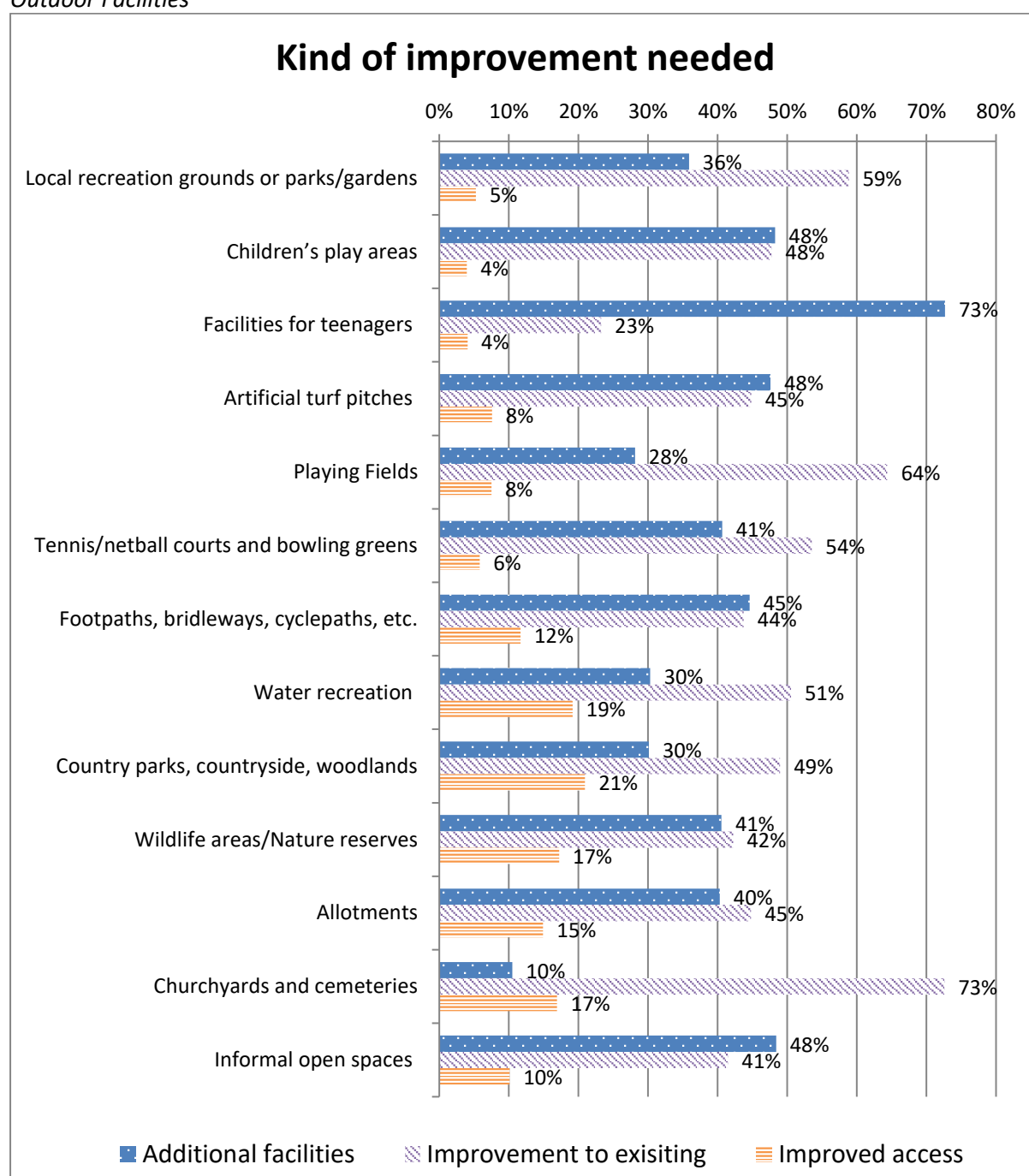
2.2.7.5 Other high priorities for facility improvement noted by around 20% of household respondents were sports and leisure centres (22%) and village halls/community sports centres (19%).

### 2.2.7.6 Type of Improvement Needed

2.2.7.6.1 Associated questions asked households to indicate whether the type of priority need was primarily for more facilities, improved quality of existing, or improved access. In relation to the priorities noted above these findings are shown in Figures 6c and 6d.



Figure 6c: Results of Leisure Plus Household Survey: Type of improvement needed for Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

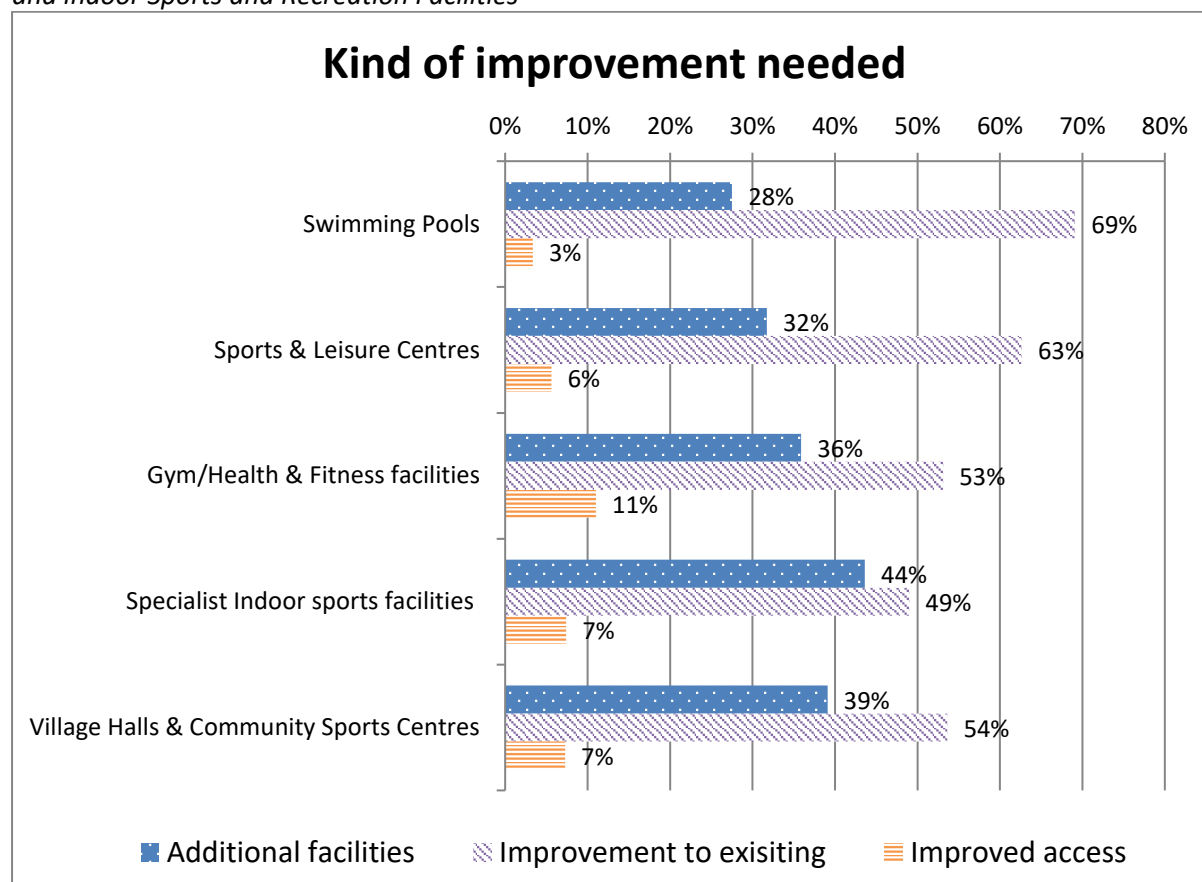


2.2.7.6.2 From Figure 6c it can be seen that:

- The only category where it is clear cut that the primary need identified is for more facilities is provision for teenagers (73%).
- For others quality/access improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement suggested e.g. churchyards (89%); and grass playing fields (72%).
- Improved access is particularly significant for some categories e.g. access to country parks, woodland etc.; water recreation; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.

- In some cases the choice between additional facilities or quality improvements/improved access to current facilities is fairly evenly split e.g. play areas; informal open spaces; and artificial turf pitches.

Figure 6d: Results of Leisure Plus Household Survey: Type of improvement needed for Swimming Pools and indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities



2.2.7.6.3 From Figure 6d it can be seen that:

- In general, for indoor sport and leisure facilities more households highlight the primary need being improvements to existing facilities rather than for additional facilities.
- In relation to swimming pools it is particularly clear cut that improvements to existing provision, rather than providing additional facilities, is the more common kind of improvement suggested (69%). This is also the case for sports and leisure centres (63%).
- In the case of specialist indoor sports facilities the choice between additional facilities or quality improvements/improved access to current facilities is less clear cut (49% suggesting the need is for improvements in comparison to 44% noting a need for more).
- Improved access is quite significant for a minority of households for gym/health and fitness facilities (11%).

## 2.3 Place Survey and subsequent Chelmsford residents' surveys

2.3.1 The Government's 2008 Place Survey was the last national survey undertaken in all of England's local authority areas that provided information on people's overall perceptions of their locality and the local services they receive<sup>5</sup>.

2.3.2 The Place Survey included investigating residents' broad levels of satisfaction with local sports and leisure facilities and parks and open spaces. The results for Chelmsford are shown in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Results of 2008 Place Survey for Chelmsford*

|                 | % very or fairly happy with |                    |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
|                 | Sports/Leisure Facilities   | Parks/ Open Spaces |
| Chelmsford      | 53%                         | 78%                |
| East of England | 58%                         | 81%                |
| England         | 46%                         | 69%                |

2.3.3 Table 1 indicates that in 2008 about 53% of residents in Chelmsford were very or fairly happy with the sports and leisure centres. This was lower than for the Eastern region but higher than for England as a whole.

2.3.4 With regard to parks and open spaces about 78% of residents in Chelmsford were very or fairly happy with provision. Again, satisfaction levels in Chelmsford were also lower than for the Eastern region but higher than for England as a whole.

2.3.5 In general terms satisfaction with parks and open spaces was considerably higher than with sports and leisure facilities (a trend seen widely across the country).

2.3.6 Chelmsford City Council has continued to undertake residents surveys along similar lines as the Place Survey since 2008, the results of which are noted in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: Results of Chelmsford City Council residents surveys 2008 - 2013*

|   | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2012/13 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| % satisfied with sport/leisure facilities | 53%     | 51%     | 56%     |
| % satisfied with parks and green spaces   | 78%     | 77%     | 81%     |

2.3.7 Table 2 indicates that broadly speaking resident satisfaction levels for both sport/leisure facilities and parks and green spaces have increased slightly over from 2008 to 2012/13.

<sup>5</sup> Sport England have conducted a number of national "Active People" surveys since 2008 providing participation levels various specific sports and physical activities and these will be considered in the three main study reports as appropriate.

## 2.4 Stakeholder Views - Public Health

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

2.4.1.1 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."

2.4.1.2 Box 1 below is a summary from NICE highlighting how local authority provision and promotion of open space, sport and recreation facilities can help them meet their public health duties.

*Box 1: NICE Local Authority Briefing – Public health<sup>6</sup>*

#### **NICE Local Authority Briefing - Public health**

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

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

2.4.1.3 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 service in Chelmsford and Essex.

### 2.4.2 Chelmsford City Council Public Health and Protection Services

2.4.2.1 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 public health services. This is because there may be potential to secure public health funding for recommended facility improvements. It is also useful to understand how public health services are structured in Chelmsford and Essex.

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<sup>6</sup> NICE Local government briefing: Published: 15 July 2012 [nice.org.uk/guidance/lgb3](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/lgb3)

2.4.2.2 A meeting was therefore held with the Chelmsford City Council Public Health and Protection Services Manager who provided the following information and key points.

### **2.4.2.3 Overview**

- The County Council has a statutory role for Public Health (supported by funding previously allocated to the NHS for this purpose).
- The City Council has no statutory role but many services have important links with health e.g. Leisure, Parks, Environmental Health etc., planning, housing etc. The City Council Public Health and Protection Services has strategic links with all of these services and provides a direct route to the statutory Public Health service.
- The Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) covers Chelmsford, Braintree and Maldon districts. Essex County Council sit on this board to represent a public health interest.
- The City Council chair the local Chelmsford Health and Wellbeing Board which has direct links with the CCG.

### **2.4.2.4 Key points**

- Although Chelmsford City is a relatively affluent area, there are notable health inequalities in some wards with issues such as alcohol consumption, obesity, smoking and the need to increase physical activities.
- A Chelmsford Public Health initiative has secured £26k for three years to support projects for health promotion and health improvement. This can include leisure, sport and recreation initiatives such as the GP referral scheme.
- Providing local people with opportunities for participation in a wide range of sport, leisure, active recreation, and play activities can have a significant impact on improving health and wellbeing and in preventing a wide range of illnesses - both mental and physical. This could also lead to savings in NHS budgets.
- There needs to be a range of options for physical activity that fit within people's lifestyles and preferences. The kind of activity undertaken is less important than the fact that the person is taking part in some sort of physical activity on a regular, frequent basis.
- Parks, open spaces and rights of way are important elements of infrastructure. Chelmsford has an excellent array of such and it is important to provide good information and publicity so that people are aware of all the opportunities they offer. Park Run is a good example of a successful leisure initiative that many people have taken up.
- Access to good outdoor play opportunities and informal youth facilities is important. For many children and young people sport is not a primary interest to them so providing opportunities for informal outdoor activity is important. There is a need to

recognise that young people have a right to "hang out" in parks and public open spaces and that their presence there is welcome.

- Cost can be a barrier to some sectors of the population in relation to participation at sports and leisure centres so providing some kind of targeted subsidy scheme would be likely to help promote improved health and wellbeing for more people.
- Another barrier arises around motivation and confidence. If people have not been active and are unfit they may need a lot of support and encouragement in making a change in their lifestyles. Publicity and promotion is also important to ensure that people realise that the health benefits highlighted in research are directly relevant to them rather than simply being an interesting set of statistics. Outreach projects may help in this respect e.g. for young people and heavy alcohol users.
- As well as providing leisure/recreation facilities and programmes it is also important to provide good access links to these. A key consideration in this respect is to plan for good, safe footpath and cyclepath access to facilities and also between them. More people walking and cycling will in itself lead to improved health.
- The City Council's Leisure Plus card system has a very large membership. Access to and analysis of data collected through the scheme could potentially be of great value in relation to planning for public health initiatives.
- Another suggestion is that the planning process should include a public health assessment so that all significant planning proposals should include an assessment of their public health impact - how benefits can be maximised and detrimental impact minimised.

### **2.4.3 Active Essex**

2.4.3.1 Active Essex is the County Sport and Physical Activity Partnership. It is hosted by Essex County Council and has support from Sport England. Active Essex are also commissioned by the County Council Public Health services to deliver health and wellbeing programmes.

2.4.3.2 A meeting was held with Active Essex and key general points highlighted as being of relevance to this study are noted below<sup>7</sup>:

#### **2.4.3.3 General**

- Active Essex see this study as a key strategic opportunity to plan for an improved infrastructure across Chelmsford City and the wider area for all kinds of sport, leisure and active recreation.
- In particular it is an opportunity to ensure that all proposals moving through the planning process take into account infrastructure for sport, leisure and active

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<sup>7</sup> Active Essex also highlighted a number of points in relation to facilities for individual sports that are noted in Section 3 of this report.

recreation and that appropriate measures are taken in relation to CIL and S106 arrangements.

- When appropriate this should also recognise the importance of investment in "ageing stock" and securing funding to improve existing provision (as well as the need for new facilities). Sustainability is a key consideration.

#### **2.4.3.4 Public Health**

- Staying active can help people lead a healthier and happier life. Physical activity is probably the most effective way of losing weight. It can also cut the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers.
- Physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing the risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer's.
- Active Essex have been commissioned by the County Council's Public Health service to promote and deliver programmes of activity to improve health and wellbeing. The aim is to increase physical activity, particularly in priority areas regarding health inequality.
- Initiatives supported include *Let's get Moving* and *Park Run*<sup>8</sup>.
- Promoting regular and frequent participation in active recreation, such as walking, cycling and outdoor play, are just as important as sports in relation to health benefits. The "facility" infrastructure for these kinds of physical activity needs to be considered alongside provision for sports.

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<sup>8</sup> *Let's get moving* is a service based at local GP surgeries supporting people to be more physically active being rolled out in local GP surgeries. *Park Run* is a national initiative provided locally at Central Park. It is a community based scheme open to all that provides free, weekly, 5km timed runs throughout the year.

## **2.5 General Community Consultation – Key Findings**

### **2.5.1 Use of leisure facilities and open spaces**

- It is Chelmsford's parks, gardens and recreation grounds that are most commonly used by most respondent households on a regular monthly basis (81%); followed closely by rights of way - footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths (79%).
- Sports and Leisure Centres are used regularly by significant numbers (61% of respondent households report using them at least monthly) as are the areas' swimming pools and gym/health and fitness facilities (around 48%).
- Over 30% of respondent households use village halls/community sports centres at least monthly.
- Other spaces used at least weekly by at least 30% of respondent households are country parks/countryside and woodlands and informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.).
- Play areas, areas for water recreation and wildlife areas/nature reserves are also fairly frequently used but with fewer respondent households (at least 40%) using them on a regular basis (at least monthly).

### **2.5.2 Quantity**

- Other than for youth facilities and footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths, a majority of respondent households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various kinds of open space, sport and recreational facilities.
- A clear majority (67%) of respondent households think there is a need for more facilities for teenagers and a majority (54%) thought that there are not enough footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths. In addition just over 47% highlighted a need for more wildlife areas /nature reserves.
- Following this, other aspects where there was considered to be a shortfall by many were: play areas; artificial turf pitches; allotments and informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.). 40% or over indicated a need for more of such facilities.

### **2.5.3 Quality**

- 42% respondent households highlighted the quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor; and over 25% said the same in relation to swimming pools. Around 21% thought that the quality of allotments was poor or very poor
- Outdoor facilities/open spaces with high levels of satisfaction noted are parks/recreation grounds (over 70% rate quality as good or very good); and country parks/ countryside/ woodlands (67%).
- Indoor facilities commonly regarded as being of good or very good quality are gym/health and fitness facilities (72%); and the sports and leisure centres (62%).
- Other facilities where a majority of respondent households rate quality as being good (or better) are play areas and wildlife areas/nature reserves (55%).



#### **2.5.4 Access**

- There is great variance in respondent households willingness to spend time travelling to different types of facility and open space.
- 50% or more of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as wildlife areas/nature reserves (71%); country parks, countryside and woodlands (65%); areas for water recreation (55%); and specialist indoor sports facilities (50%).
- In contrast, for a significant number of respondent households, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, allotments, and informal open space areas informal open spaces - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.).
- Respondent households are more likely than not to drive to many facilities most notably specialist sports facilities; swimming pools; country parks, countryside and woodlands; and wildlife areas/nature reserves
- Walking and cycling are the norm for facilities such as play areas; parks and recreation grounds; and informal open spaces for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.
- Ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities is likely to encourage residents to walk/cycle further to access facilities and to use them more often.

#### **2.5.5 Priorities and other issues**

- The categories highlighted by the largest number of respondent households (58%) as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was for swimming pools; followed by better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (55%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were children's play areas (39%); outdoor facilities for teenagers (38%); parks/gardens/local recs.(34%); and informal open spaces (33%).
- The only category where it is clear cut that the primary need identified is for more facilities is provision for teenagers (73%).
- For others quality/access improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement suggested e.g. churchyards (89%); swimming pools (73%); grass playing fields (72%); and sports and leisure centres (67%).
- Improved access is particularly significant for some categories e.g. access to country parks, woodland etc; water recreation; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.
- 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.
- 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 SPORTS - INDOOR AND OUTDOOR (NON-PITCH)

### 3.1 Introduction and Overview

3.1.1 This section provides an overview of consultee responses on the main indoor and outdoor (non-pitch) sports. It does not report on consultation undertaken in relation to the associated Playing Pitch Study<sup>9</sup>. The chapter contains feedback from Council Officers from Chelmsford City Council with responsibility for sport and leisure, Officers from Active Essex (the County Sport and Physical Activity Partnership) and relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport. It also incorporates findings from surveys of sports clubs.

3.1.2 To understand the City Council perspective on sports facilities interviews were held with officers from the City Council's Leisure and Heritage Services team. Meetings/interviews were also held with Active Essex, Active Chelmsford and local School Sports Partnership.

3.1.3 The various stakeholders were asked for their views on the supply of and demand for indoor and outdoor non-pitch sports facilities in the Chelmsford City Council Area (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.

3.1.4 This section is structured in two main parts:

- Part One - Outdoor Sports (non-pitch)
- Part Two - Indoor Sports

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

3.1.6 Findings from Part One 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). Findings from Part Two will be taken forward in the *Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities* main report.

3.1.7 The two main parts are preceded by a short overview of School and College facilities since this has relevance to both indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

## 3.2 Schools and College Facilities

### 3.2.1 Overview

3.2.1.1 Many secondary schools and colleges in the Chelmsford City Council area have a range of both indoor and outdoor facilities with varying degrees of community use. It is therefore useful to have an understanding of these facilities and school issues prior to consideration of the more detailed consultation responses covered in parts One and Two of this section.

### 3.2.2 Chelmsford School Sports Partnership (SSP)

3.2.2.1 The School Sports Partnership (SSP) officer provided an overview of sports facility provision across the City Council area from an SSP perspective as noted below.

#### 3.2.2.2 Background

- The Chelmsford SSP is financially supported by eight secondary state schools, two special schools and 50 primary schools. Three of the secondary schools have part time School Sports Co-ordinators.
- As well as co-ordinating the core school games programmes etc. the SSP offers support to all schools on competition, delivering high quality PE, leadership opportunities, gifted and talented support, coaching, INSET and access to funding .
- The SSP ethos is "to work in partnership with all providers, coaches, and NGB's; plus other organisations that support young people in Chelmsford to lead active healthy physical lifestyles".
- The SSP has strong links with the wider sports development networks including City Council sports development and parks and leisure; local sports clubs e.g. football, cricket, hockey, golf, tennis, badminton, and squash.
- The Athletics Development Officer based at Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre is an important SSP partner. The Sport and Athletics Centre is a key facility for the SSP.
- All of secondary schools and some of the primaries host SSP events of various kinds using both indoor and outdoor sports facilities.

#### 3.2.2.3 School Sports Facilities

- The SSP provided a schools facility spreadsheet from an earlier audit which also indicated facility hire availability at that time for the various secondary schools (Appendix 3).
- In general most of the secondary schools hire out their sports facilities (indoor and outdoor) to many local sports clubs at both evenings and weekends. They are therefore an important element of the local community sports facility infrastructure.
- Four secondary schools have swimming pools that offer limited community use (Great Baddow High, Moulsham High, The Boswells and Chelmsford County High). These pools are not available for casual public swimming but they are hired by local clubs.

Columbus School and College also has a good pool that is not currently used for club and community use. A number of primary schools have very small indoor pools<sup>10</sup>.

- Moulsham High School has a new full size 3G (3rd Generation) Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP).
- The small-sided 3G ATP at Great Baddow High School has a "dome" roof thereby providing an indoor all weather facility.

#### **3.2.2.4 Facility issues**

- Securing access to pools for national curriculum required swimming lessons is a significant problem for primary school children. Primary schools use the Riverside and the 4 school pools (Great Baddow High, Moulsham High, The Boswells and Chelmsford County High) but they can't access enough pool space to meet all requirements.
- Netball - there is high demand for netball in Chelmsford and the schools are key facilities. There is an identified need for a dedicated all weather netball facility.
- There is no indoor all weather tennis court provision in Chelmsford. The Marconi tennis centre is key facility with 12 floodlit courts. The SSP questioned if this could provide a site for an indoor facility. There is also a sport hall at the site.
- There are no indoor sports hall facilities with spectator facilities. A large sports hall with retractable seating for spectators would be a major asset for Chelmsford. Brentwood is probably the nearest such facility.
- Westlands Primary School has an artificial turf pitch which could be used more if there was better car parking.

#### **3.2.2.5 Other points raised by the SSP**

- Columbus School and College has excellent pools and sports facilities which have the potential for greater community use. It has a large 6 badminton court size sports hall accessed via the adjacent St John Payne School.
- There are a number of private sector swimming pools that are available for public swims.
- There are good links with the City Council's parks department and parks are important facilities for cross country running. They are very well used by schools for this purpose.
- The Greater Beaulieu Park development could help secure significant new sports facilities for the City.
- Chelmsford Athletics Club is aiming to secure grant aid to refurbish its club house.

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<sup>10</sup> The SSP officer did not know which, if any, of the small primary school pools were used by clubs. None are available for casual public access. The Council understands that Newlands Spring Primary School has some community use by the public at weekends (by prior arrangement - not casual use).

### 3.2.3 Schools and Colleges Survey

3.2.3.1 A survey of secondary schools and colleges in the Chelmsford City Council area was undertaken. The survey gathered information on indoor and outdoor facilities; and the current and potential extent of community use. It also asked about any plans or aspirations for facility development. Responses were received from:

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Chelmsford College
- The Boswells
- Chelmer Valley High School
- Chelmsford County High School for Girls
- Great Baddow High School
- King Edward VI Grammar School
- Moulsham High School
- Thriftwood School and College
- William de Ferrers School

3.2.3.2 Details can be found in an associated excel spreadsheet (Appendix 4) but it is useful to see at the outset which schools currently have plans and aspirations for facility development as noted in Table 3 below.

*Table 3: Schools and colleges survey: Facility plans and aspirations*

| School                                  | Facility plans and aspirations   |
|---|--|
| Anglia Ruskin University                | Planning expansion of indoor facilities to include viewing area to sports hall, bigger gym (250sqm) and additional dance studio space. At early stages. The University would like to install outdoor space on or near the campus - 3G or multi-use space big enough for teams to train on. |
| Chelmsford College                      | No specific plans highlighted.   |
| Boswells                                | No specific plans highlighted.   |
| Chelmer Valley High School              | No specific plans highlighted.   |
| Chelmsford County High School for Girls | Planning permission has been sought for a new sports complex. Funding is currently being raised to support the plans.  |
| Great Baddow High School                | The School has recently completed an indoor small-sided 3G Astroturf facility (dome type roof).  |
| King Edwards VI Grammar School          | The School is applying for grant for sports hall which then could be used for community use.   |
| Moulsham High School                    | No specific plans highlighted.   |
| Thriftwood School and College           | Costings are being collected for repairs to ATP floodlighting on the college site. The School site needs an ATP as the field is out of action for much of the winter due to waterlogging.  |
| William de Ferrers School               | Football- the School, with their joint-use partner Chelmsford City Council, has recently secured funding for a new 3G ATP. The School field would benefit from being more level and better drained.  |

## Part One: Outdoor Sports (non-pitch)

### 3.3 Overview of Part One: Outdoor Sports (non-pitch)

3.3.1 This section supplies feedback from the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of individual sports, sports clubs, Active Essex and Chelmsford City Council in relation to the supply of and demand for outdoor non-pitch sports facilities in the Chelmsford City Council Area. It also gathers their views on the current quality of such facilities; and plans, aspirations and priorities for future facility development and improvement.

3.3.2 Part One is comprised of 5 sections:

- Tennis
- Athletics/Running
- Outdoor Bowls
- Netball
- Other outdoor (non-pitch sports)

3.3.3 There is a summary of key points at the end of Part One.

### 3.4 Tennis<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.4.1 Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

##### 3.4.1.1 General

- The new three year LTA Tennis Strategic Plan was launched in March 2015.
- The Chelmsford City Council area is likely to become a prioritised local authority area for the LTA in 2015/16<sup>12</sup>.
- The LTA undertook a feasibility study for the Chelmsford City Council area in summer 2015.
- Any potential capital or revenue investment will be based on the facility strategy.
- The LTA has been involved in advanced conversations with Chelmsford City Council on what a district wide tennis development plan might look like.

##### 3.4.1.2 Facility supply

- When an area becomes a priority area the LTA completes a full technical audit of facility stock, as yet this has not been done for the Chelmsford area. Details of clubs and facilities at a basic level can be found via a search on the LTA website: [www.lta.org.uk/play/](http://www.lta.org.uk/play/)
- From the LTA's perspective the most important facilities for tennis in the Chelmsford City Council area are at Grove (Chelmsford) Lawn Tennis Club (LTC); Old

<sup>11</sup> Please note that the views below are those of the various groups listed.

<sup>12</sup> Not confirmed as of 16th September 2015.

Chelmsfordians Tennis Club (TC); Marconi TC; Writtle TC; Great Baddow LTC; Danbury TC; Andrews Park; Tower Gardens; Beaulieu Park Recreation Ground; Central Park; Chancellor Park; Chelmer Park; Lionmede Recreation Ground; Melbourne Park; Oaklands Park; and Baddow Recreation Ground.

- The first six sites are Club sites. The remainder are park sites which are all owned and managed by Chelmsford City Council, except Baddow Recreation Ground that is owned and managed by Great Baddow Parish Council.
- Public facilities are located in the park sites above, some with other sports or recreation provision. These are directly accessible for the local communities. Some of the facilities are used by and are located close to local education establishments.
- Overall it seems that the quality of public courts is generally fairly good and all would be suitable for grassroots engagement.

#### **3.4.1.3 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.
- Talent: to support, and continuously improve LTA talent identification procedures and development structures.
- Performance programmes: Chelmsford is covered by the Essex talent pathway.
- The LTA add "we would anticipate that once the area becomes prioritised demand will be driven up and there is a realistic expectation that this, in turn, would potentially create a need for further facility development, i.e. new courts, floodlights, ancillary facilities".

#### **3.4.1.4 Other issues and observations**

- Key opportunities for tennis in the Chelmsford City Council area are increasing usage and developing the use of park courts; and supporting local clubs to maximise their current facilities and expand when/if required.
- Potential NGB funding potentially available to support the delivery of facility priorities in the Chelmsford area will be confirmed once the LTA facility strategy is developed.

### 3.4.2 Chelmsford City Council

- The LTA have indicated that Chelmsford will become a priority area for tennis in the near future which will mean they will look in detail at the opportunities for developing tennis both in terms of facilities and sports development interests.
- Initial discussions with the LTA have been around the potential of the public tennis courts at park sites - linking tennis clubs with casual players; looking at coaching opportunities etc.
- The quality of parks courts is variable but they are all of playable quality. They are available free of charge and bookings are not taken (other than for events etc.). The courts at Chelmer Park are floodlit as is the court (Multi- Use Games Area - MUGA) at South Woodham Ferrers.
- There is a degree of vandalism at some park courts e.g. broken glass on courts. One option suggested was to introduce a free scheme access via registration for a key fob based system (as is done in Norwich for example<sup>13</sup>).
- There are six main clubs in the City Council area - Marconi, Grove, Great Baddow, Writtle, Old Chelmsfordians and Danbury.
- Most clubs have actively engaged with the City Council on Sports Development initiatives such as providing open "have a go" and "Play Tennis" days at club venues.
- Overall there appear to be enough courts to meet current levels of interest.
- Tennis does suffer from an image held by some as being an "elite" sport which may be a barrier to more people taking up the sport. The LTA priority area programme may help to break through this barrier.
- The lack of indoor tennis facilities have been noted and Marconi TC have expressed an interest in securing a dome type cover to close this gap in provision.

### 3.4.3 Active Essex

- There seems to be a good supply of tennis courts in the City Council area - within parks and via the tennis clubs across the area. Park courts mainly seem to be used around the Wimbledon time.
- The image of tennis can be a barrier to participation for some people who may see it as an "elite" sport.
- The planned growth in housing in the north of Chelmsford could result in additional demand for tennis facilities.
- Clubs may suggest a need for an indoor tennis facility or at least a dome type cover for existing courts at a suitable location to enable extended use of courts e.g. at the Marconi club site.
- With the proposed growth of Chelmsford, opportunities may arise for a Leisure and Tennis Centre such as at Southend or a David Lloyd type centre. The likely population

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<sup>13</sup> The Parks Manager noted that the Norwich Scheme appears to be concentrated where there are clusters of courts, with secure fencing, access controls and a pre-booking scheme. Other than perhaps at Chelmer Park this may not be feasible for Chelmsford.



profile may suggest that Tennis is one of the sports that will fit the anticipated demographic (see Sport England Market Segmentation information).

### 3.4.4 Club responses

3.4.4.1 Responses were received from Danbury and Springfield tennis clubs.

- Danbury has 370 members and reported that their playing membership has increased over the past three years. Springfield is a small club - ten members currently - and over the same time period it reported a decrease in membership.
- Danbury has an active junior section with links to local schools but Springfield does not.
- Danbury rates the general quality of their main venue/facility as very good; Springfield say that overall quality is only "adequate".
- Danbury rate most aspects of quality as good/very good but highlight facilities for the disabled as being poor. Changing and shower facilities; and equipment and storage facilities are noted simply as being "adequate".
- Springfield do not rate any aspects of quality as being better than adequate other than "value for money" which they report as being good.
- Both clubs would like to increase activity by attracting more members but Springfield note that they are currently "unable" to attract new members<sup>14</sup>.
- Barriers to club development noted by Danbury are: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; shortage of specialist equipment; shortage of playing members; and a lack of external funding.
- Danbury have plans for improving their clubhouse and also highlight that they have just resurfaced two courts and replaced the fencing.

3.4.4.2 Further detail of responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet (Appendix 5).

## 3.5 Athletics/Running<sup>15</sup>

### 3.5.1 England Athletics

#### 3.5.1.1 General

- There is no relevant National Governing Body athletics facility strategy and currently Chelmsford does not feature in any specific NGB plans for facility development.
- England Athletics see the Chelmsford City Council area as a priority in relation to the *Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre* which hosts many workshops and courses.
- Currently there is no NGB funding potentially available to support the delivery of athletics facility priorities in the Chelmsford area.

<sup>14</sup> Springfield Tennis Club may be restricted to very local players whilst using Lionmede, as there is limited parking available.

<sup>15</sup> Please note that the views below are those of the various groups listed.

### **3.5.1.2 Facility supply**

- England Athletics' view is that overall there are sufficient facilities for athletics in the Chelmsford City Council area.
- Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre - for the track and indoor use - is the most important facility in the Chelmsford area. It is well located to meet needs. Access to the facilities is good - the management and booking team are always helpful. The throws development area (for hammer, discuss, javelin and shot putt) is very well supported and subscribed to. There is potential for the centre to cater for more physical preparation courses and workshops. To enable this there may be need for additional equipment. There is also potential to work in partnership with Chelmsford Athletics Club to use their club house to facilitate workshops.
- The Chelmsford Athletics Club - in partnership with the Sport and Athletics Centre - is looking to refurbish their club house (located within the Centre parking area).

### **3.5.1.3 Demand and participation issues**

- Chelmsford Athletics Club have over 250 members using the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre.
- A variety of competitions are run at the Sport and Athletics Centre, including the East Region disability event. Although the facility is excellent for training, access to the stadium for competition has been contentious in the past season.
- A number of athletes from the Chelmsford Athletics Club are young Great Britain athletes so sport in this area is strong and important for athletics.
- Recreational running is another area that is part of England Athletics strategy and this can link into the club.
- Performance programmes: England Athletics run local coaching and at times regional workshops at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre.

### **3.5.1.4 Other issues and observations**

- There are many opportunities in building on the England Athletics recreational running strategy to increase number of new runners - through new 3-2-1 routes<sup>16</sup> or trails in local parks but also giving that link to the centre.
- Opportunities and challenges - providing a good quality competition venue for talented throwers (i.e. hammer, javelin, discuss, and shot putt).

## **3.5.2 Chelmsford City Council**

- The Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre is an excellent facility, providing both indoor and outdoor facilities. It is unlikely that there is a case for any additional facilities.

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<sup>16</sup> 3-2-1 is a national running/athletics project which aims to provide a range of marked out running or jogging routes across the country accessible to the general public.

- The club is nearing capacity and is unable to take on all the young people who would like to join. To help resolve these capacity issues a Club Academy was set up in partnership between the Athletics Club and Chelmsford City Council. This has allowed the Club to now run a sustainable Academy and increase the coaching available to younger age groups.
- The Club who are based there provide for all age ranges and are very successful and active. The club is currently developing a bid to improve their club house and provide an additional range of indoor facilities. To be successful they will need to secure renewal of their lease on a long-term basis.
- The City Council have an Athletics development officer who works closely with the club.
- The City Council, Athletics Club and School Sports Partnership organise various sports development initiatives including coaching in primary schools, competitions for school children at the centre, and opportunities for secondary school age children and young people.
- There are also lots of opportunities for runners through initiatives such as Park Run at Central Park (adults - about 350 - on Saturday; juniors on Sunday). There is also a very successful cross country running league.

### **3.5.3 Active Essex**

- The Chelmsford Sport and Athletics centre is an excellent facility and athletics is well catered for in the Chelmsford area. It has indoor and outdoor facilities and is well located adjacent to Melbourne Park.
- There are plans to improve the club house which will improve the range of facilities.
- There is also a very successful Parks Run at Central park with large numbers participating on a regular basis (adults and juniors).

### **3.5.4 Club and network responses**

#### **3.5.4.1 Chelmsford Athletics Club**

- The club is based at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre. Current membership is 350 and this has increased over the last three years. They also make use of some general roads around Chelmsford, plus Hylands and Admirals parks.
- The club notes that reasons for an increase in membership include "attracting aspiring and existing talented athletes through our strong coaching team, plus the follow on impact of the Olympics etc".
- The club has an active junior section and works with St John Payne School and the Girls High School. Coaches also assist the centre staff with many of their council run sessions for the six and older children
- The club rates all aspects of the quality of the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre as being either very good or good.

- The club reports that "our club is upgrading its clubhouse facilities to improve the gym area. Plus we are anticipating changing out the old changing area and replacing it with a modern meeting room and toilets".
- The club wishes to expand its activities and to gain more competing members "but in saying that we need to increase the support team eg coaches and team managers etc".
- The main barrier noted for development is a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club.

#### **3.5.4.2 Little Baddow Ridge Runners**

- The club is based at Little Baddow Recreational Ground which they generally rate as good or very good - other than facilities for the disabled and lighting.
- They currently have about 50 members and noted that their membership has increased over the last three years. They observe that this is because "we have introduced a club website and used social media to advertise ourselves".
- During October to March the club takes part in the mid-Essex cross country league.
- The club don't currently have links with schools: "we don't have any but it'd be good to have something in place".
- The club would like to expand its activities: "we would like some more members, specifically younger runners. Our membership is growing steadily but it would be better to encourage some more people of a younger 18-30 age group".

Further detail of responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet (Appendix 5).

#### **3.5.4.3 Essex Athletics Network**

3.5.4.3.1 The Essex Athletics Network was set up in 2010 and their main current activities are focused on arranging coach education workshops and competitions on behalf of their 15 member clubs. They hold several of these at the *Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre* each year.

3.5.4.3.2 The network offered the following comments (verbatim):

- Other bookings, quite often non-athletics, restrict the choice of dates and times available to us at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre.
- The noise level at other bookings, such as kids' parties in the sport hall, detract from sessions.
- We have been alarmed at the deterioration in the facilities in the past few months and the track surface in places needs urgent replacement<sup>17</sup>.
- Considering that we are fairly regular users, it has been difficult to develop a good working relationship, except with the Athletics Development Officer".
- While receive a 10% discount on bookings, as the centre is an external Network partner, we've been told that this may not continue. If that's the case, given the state of the

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<sup>17</sup> The City Council believe that this refers to the indoor track surface which is due for replacement in September 2015.

facilities, we will arrange sessions elsewhere at Lee Valley which is cheaper and has better facilities.

## 3.6 Outdoor Bowls<sup>18</sup>

### 3.6.1 Bowls England, the Bowls Development Alliance and Active Essex

#### 3.6.1.1 General

3.6.1.1.1 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 underline all of our work during the course of this Strategic Plan".

3.6.1.1.2 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

3.6.1.1.3 Bowls England through the *Bowls Development Alliance*<sup>19</sup> (BDA) have identified five "hot spot" areas in the country for the roll out of an "intensive recruitment and investment programme from 2013 - 2015.

3.6.1.1.4 Essex is a priority "hot spot" area and Active Essex has been working in partnership with the Bowls Development Alliance over the past two years to increase participation levels in the sport of bowls.

3.6.1.1.5 Active Essex report that overall this has been a successful initiative in Chelmsford and clubs have been actively engaged. It remains a challenge however for bowls club to retain and increase membership as it is predominantly viewed as a sport for older people. Attracting younger members is a priority for clubs.

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<sup>18</sup> Please note that the views below are those of the various groups listed.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

### **3.6.1.2 Facility Supply**

- On the Active Essex club data base there are 15 outdoor clubs registered - some clubs are privately owned. There are, however, quite a number of other clubs and greens in the parishes across the City Council area.
- Broadly speaking there appears to be sufficient outdoor greens to meet current demand both at parks sites and via a good number of local clubs.
- Active Essex's overview 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.
- The only initiative that Active Essex is aware of aimed at improving facilities is via the Sport England Inspired Facilities funding.
- Active Essex note that a lot of the clubs do not have wheel chair 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)

### **3.6.1.2 Demand and participation issues**

- Essex, including Chelmsford, 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.
- 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 City Council 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).

### **3.6.1.3 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+.
- The BDA is delivering a range of products through its "Hot Spots" initiative and the packages under the 'Play Bowls' brand to attract more people into the sport, including

roadshows, play bowls days and other specialist health, age, business and community projects as appropriate.

- Active Essex is working with the Bowls Development Alliance to promote the sport of Bowls across the county including Chelmsford. However, The BDA funding ended in April 2015 and this means they will not have the capacity to continue to provide the level of support and programme delivery that clubs have benefited from over this period.
- There is potential for club development and increased membership given the age demographic of the City Council area.

### **3.6.2 Chelmsford City Council**

- The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) have identified Essex as a priority area for Bowls development and Active Essex act as their agent for delivery of programmes.
- The City Council have three bowling greens on park sites: Tower Gardens, Chancellor Park, and Lionmede Park. There are various others in the City Council area at club and Town/Parish Council sites.
- The Parks Development Manager's view is that overall bowls is adequately catered for by the Council (the City Council closed down the green at Central Park two years ago because of lack of use); and the Falcon Bowling Club (indoor/outdoor bowls centre) caters for a wide demand.
- Many clubs wish to recruit younger members but this a key challenge for the clubs as bowls has an image of a sport for older people. The City Council have organised 'have a go' sessions via holiday programmes and the School Sports Partnership have organised visits to schools.

### **3.6.3 Bowls Clubs**

3.6.3.1 Responses were received from four local bowling clubs: Chelmsford Bowling Club (BC), Danbury BC, Falcon BC and Writtle BC.

3.6.3.2 Some key points were:

- Writtle BC reported an increase in playing membership over the last three years; Falcon BC and Chelmsford and Danbury BCs noted that membership had been stable. All the clubs had a current membership of over 100 with Falcon having nearly 900 members.
- Falcon BC noted as a reason for the decrease "generally older people bowl here and natural causes means level of membership decrease. We do try very hard to try and introduce new members to the game with free taster sessions and open days etc".
- None of the clubs have a junior section but Falcon BC are in liaison with Community Sport & Wellbeing Officers at the City Council to try and advertise their sessions to schools and young people.

- All of the clubs are generally happy with the overall quality of their facilities rating overall quality as being very good.
- Chelmsford BC and Danbury BC highlighted facilities for the disabled as being poor; and Writtle BC said their facilities for the disabled were no better than "adequate".
- Chelmsford BC noted that their changing and shower facilities were "adequate"; and Danbury highlighted that "ease of getting to the facility" for members was "adequate".
- Chelmsford and Falcon BCs both wish to expand and develop their activities.
- The main barrier for development for Chelmsford BC is a falling membership/shortage of playing members.
- For Falcon BC the main barriers are a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources; falling membership/shortage of playing members; a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising); and a lack of external funding.
- All of clubs had plans or aspirations to improve facilities as noted in the table below.

3.6.3.3 The clubs were also provided with an opportunity to provide additional comments as noted in Table 4 (verbatim comments).

*Table 4: Additional comments from local bowling clubs*

| Club                    | Other issues and comments   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Chelmsford Bowling Club | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have plans for updating the Clubhouse.</li> <li>• We would like to attract more members in the 40 -55 age group. The reason being that the average age our current membership is around 72 and we foresee problems in a couple of years.</li> <li>• Thanks to having a good relationship with Chelmsford City Council our green is one of the best in the area. Our members are very active and helpful when it comes to maintenance of the club house. Any help with marketing and promotion of bowls would be welcome.</li> </ul> |
| Falcon Bowls Club       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have put in a funding application in to refurbish our outdoor synthetic green. We also wish to build an outdoor pavilion but have had funding declined for this project. We are looking into ways of funding this facility.</li> <li>• We would like to attract more members, especially outdoors, if we manage to refurbish the synthetic green. This would enable people with disabilities to enjoy the sport as they may not be able to manage bowling on the grass green.</li> </ul>  |
| Danbury Bowling Club    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for ongoing maintenance only.</li> </ul>  |
| Writtle Bowling Club    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need hand rails to help people with disabling conditions to access the green safely; and to purchase bowling arms to support players to continue bowling despite having disabling conditions.</li> </ul>  |

3.6.3.4 Further detail of responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet (Appendix 5).



## **3.7 Netball<sup>20</sup>**

### **3.7.1 Netball England**

#### **3.7.1.1 General**

- Netball East 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 East 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 East Essex County Netball Association represents the registered Netballers residing in it's area and the Leagues of Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester, Harlow and Southend. It is affiliated to Netball East and to it's 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.

#### **3.7.1.2 Facility Supply**

- In the Chelmsford City Council area there is a large netball senior and junior league. Chelmsford is a large hub for netball in the county due to the volume of people playing and also the facilities available.
- There are many good netball venues in Chelmsford mostly at schools. It would be good to have more netball provision at local leisure centres or even a dedicated centre for competition/county academy training.
- The most important facilities for netball in the Chelmsford City Council area are New Hall School, Boreham and Chelmer Park.
- New Hall has recently been refurbished and the courts are of a much better standard, though they do still slope at the ends of the courts at the back.
- Chelmer Park courts could do with a re-vamp.
- The NGB does not have a huge involvement in booking facilities for the leagues. However from the NGB perspective booking appears to be quite easy; though often pricing is an issue when working with a budget. Availability of indoor courts is a problem also.
- Chelmsford netball league have an ongoing facility use agreement with New Hall School.

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<sup>20</sup> Please note that the views below are those of the various groups listed.

### **3.7.1.3 Demand and participation issues**

- Netball is a very popular sport in Chelmsford which is often used as the central hub for hosting county events/coaching workshops and county academy training. The adult league currently comprises of 13 divisions and over 130 teams. The junior league is hugely successful with over 70 teams. Chelmsford is also one of only two areas in the county who offer a High five netball league for the under 11 age group.
- Performance programmes: The NGB has a county academy and a county satellite academy in the Chelmsford area which currently run out of Great Baddow High School. They note that the performance group often have difficulty each year looking for a suitable venue.
- The Satellite and County academies lead into the regional academy for the East Region which is currently held in Braintree. Players can progress from this into England squads. Essex have very much lead from the front for a number of years in the talent programme.

### **3.7.1.4 Other issues and observations**

- Key opportunities are the large local senior and junior leagues. School netball is a great success in Chelmsford.
- More could be done to support recreational netball; e.g. more opportunities for "Back to Netball" sessions.
- Provision of a centre to host competitive level netball such as regional league or county academy.

### **3.7.2 Chelmsford and District Netball League/Junior League**

- There is a need for facilities for Netball in the Chelmsford area. There are 12 divisions with 10 teams in a division and there is a need for 10 or even 12 courts.
- New Hall School in Boreham is used as they have the most (eight) Netball courts within the Chelmsford area. The league uses them every evening at 19:30 and 20:30.
- The league is at maximum capacity and not able to accept any new teams to the due to limited facilities.
- There are not enough toilet or changing facilities to meet the leagues needs at New Hall. As the facility is at a boarding school, the league have to be very quiet and children or dogs are not allowed. There are insufficient parking facilities which limits the social element.
- Junior teams play on a Saturday morning at Great Baddow High School in Chelmsford.
- Netball England are running "Back to Netball" sessions and last year the league had five new teams enter from these sessions. They are normally "mums" that played Netball at school and love the social side.
- There is a need for facilities to improve the social aspect of the league e.g. somewhere to have a soft drink after a game

### 3.7.3 Chelmsford City Council

- Netball is very strong in Chelmsford with many teams in the Mid Essex League. There have been a number of successful sports development initiatives including "*Back to Netball*" that has led to new teams and clubs being created.
- New Hall School is an important venue with good quality flood-lit netball courts. There are eight courts set within a walled area and with access to changing rooms and toilets. Clubs use these at evenings and weekends.
- Clubs also use a number of other school courts e.g Great Baddow.
- The main parks facility for netball is Chelmer Park, but Chancellor Park also has courts that can be used. There is potential to use park courts more but car parking would also need to be considered.
- Clubs indicate that there are not enough courts to meet demand and that in particular there is a need for a dedicated 12 court floodlit facility.
- The County High School for Girls had a recent planning application submitted for an indoor netball court with three external ones (currently they have four external courts).

### 3.7.4 Active Essex

- Netball has high levels of participation in the Chelmsford area with a number of active clubs.
- Clubs play at both park sites and a number of schools.
- There have been a range of successful development initiatives including "*Back to Netball*" that have led to an increase in participation.
- There seems to be a need for a large central venue for netball. Active Essex query whether this could be accommodated at a multi-sports site such as Chelmer Park, which is home to Chelmsford Hockey Club and Chelmsford Cricket Club. It already has some floodlit netball courts used by local clubs<sup>21</sup>.

### 3.7.5 Club Responses

3.7.5.1 Responses were received from 12 netball clubs - Benford; Benton Hall; Brookshaw Stuart; Cathedral; Chelmsford; Conquerors Juniors; Flames Juniors; Galaxy; Great Waltham, LHF; Pink Ladies; and Westlands.

3.7.5.2 Some key points were:

- Seven clubs reported that their playing membership has increased over the past three years; two note that membership has been stable; and three reported a decrease.

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<sup>21</sup> The City Council Parks Manager notes that the only way additional netball could be accommodated at Chelmer Park would be by taking out some existing pitches.

- 10 of the 12 clubs fielded adult teams; five of the 12 clubs catered for school children; and eight for teenagers/young people.
- The most common issue as regards quality related to New Hall School changing and showering facilities. Seven of the nine clubs who used New Hall rated the quality of these as being poor or very poor. Two clubs highlighted poor quality in relation to equipment and storage facilities at New Hall School.
- Changing and showering facilities at Great Baddow and Chelmer Valley Schools were rated as good by the clubs using them. Car parking was highlighted as being an issue at Great Baddow High School.
- Other than the above quality tended to be rated as "adequate" or good for most aspects of provision.
- All of the clubs noted a wish to see improvements at their main facility other than clubs playing at Chelmer Valley School.
- The barrier to club development most commonly highlighted by clubs is a shortage of good quality outdoor and indoor facilities. Other common barriers noted were a lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; a shortage of suitable training facilities; and the cost of hiring/using facilities.

3.7.5.3 The clubs were also provided with an opportunity to provide additional comments as noted in Table 5 below (verbatim).

*Table 5: Comments from local netball clubs*

| <b>Club</b>        | <b>Other issues and comments (verbatim)</b>   |
|--------------------|---|
| Brookshaw Stuart   | We aim to run more teams and attract more members   |
| Cathedral          | We want to attract more members   |
| Chelmsford         | Chelmsford and District Netball League is the largest league in the East Essex region. We desperately need a dedicated venue (similar to Basildon Sports Village or Chelmsford Hockey Club). The league would flourish even more if we had use of proper changing facilities, some kind of bar/social club (which could be staffed by the league) and dedicated space for Officials. This could work in conjunction with the Chelmsford Junior League which has been equally successful for many years. |
| Conquerors Juniors | We would like to run more teams but do not have the court space available, if we did we would therefore attract more members into our club, more coaches, parents involvement<br>Please provide more Netball courts. Chelmer Park currently has four outside courts, increasing the number of courts to five would be great for all.  |
| Galaxy             | We want to field more teams   |
| Great Waltham      | We are looking at attracting new members and potentially running a new B team   |
| Pink Ladies        | We need more training facilities.   |
| Westlands          | One barrier to our development is finding facilities or an area of land that could be developed.  |

3.7.5.4 Further detail of responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet (Appendix 5).

### **3.8 Other outdoor (non-pitch) sports<sup>22</sup>**

#### **3.8.1 Golf**

##### ***3.8.1.1 Chelmsford City Council***

- The Council has an 18 hole pitch and putt course at West Park operated by Golfwise Ltd.
- Golfwise are currently investigating the possibility for introducing 'Footgolf', and looking at potentially suitable venues.
- The Park Development Manager's view is that there is no need for a municipal course with there being sufficient clubs to meet demand. For example, Chelmsford Golf Club and a number of other private golf clubs located around the City area. This includes one adjacent to Hylands Park which also uses the name Hylands.
- It appears that clubs are competing for custom and it is possible that some are struggling as regards viability.
- The YMCA have developed a "StreetGolf" initiative which aims to bring golf to young people, regardless of their access to traditional facilities. It is ideal for use in an urban or inner city environment and provides a cheap means of trying out golf.

##### ***3.8.1.2 Active Essex***

- There appear to be enough golf courses to meet demand in the Chelmsford area and there are a number of strong clubs. Provision is club based with the exception of a municipal pitch and putt course. New development will be likely to increase demand.
- There has been a street golf initiative for young people but the exit routes from engagement at this level to club golf are difficult to carry through. The image of golf is that is more of an elite sport and that it is expensive.

#### **3.8.2 Triathlon**

##### ***3.8.2.1 Triathlon England***

- Triathlon England do not have any specific priority areas in the Eastern region - nor do they have any specific facility strategies or funding for facilities.
- The most important facilities for Triathlon in the Chelmsford City Council area are its swimming pools and lakes (for open water swimming); that there are enough of such facilities in the area to meet current demand; and that they are well located for participants - with easy access.

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<sup>22</sup> Please note that the views below are those of the various groups listed.

- Provision is available and managed by schools, the City Council and a private provider (Trifarm).
- Discovery Tri work out of New Hall School.
- The NGB is aware of only one Triathlon club based in Chelmsford (children only) and that there are at least two other clubs nearby - Blackwater Tri (Maldon) and Born2Tri (Braintree).
- Triathlon England indicate that if someone approached them to set up a tri club in Chelmsford that they would support them.
- It is highlighted that there is a Regional Academy – 11-18 program - that operates in the Eastern region and who make use of Trifarm.
- Challenges/opportunities for Triathlon in the Chelmsford City Council area are noted as: pool time, open water lakes, and closed road cycle circuits.

### **3.8.2.2 Active Essex**

- There is an opportunity to develop improved access to open water in the Chelmsford area and hence improve participation in triathlon e.g. at Boreham.

### **3.8.2.3 Trifarm Chelmsford and the Triathlon England Regional Academy**

3.8.2.3.1 Trifarm (a private operation) provides: one stop training, a marked 800m open water swim area, a transition area with bike racks, a 1km running track, a 10k bike loop on minor roads around site with parking and changing on site. They made the following points:

- Trifarm has over 2000 users which has increased over the last three years due to improvement of facilities and greater awareness.
- Several local schools use the facility for open water events, New Hall amongst them. Blackwater and Discovery Junior Triathlon clubs use the lake, as do the East of England Regional triathlon squad. Happy to see more use of lake, including paddleboard and canoeing training.
- Trifarm itself reports that quality of provision is good other than changing and showering facilities. The Triathlon England Regional Academy rate these aspects of Trifarm as very poor and all other aspects as good.
- Trifarm have aspirations to provide a permanent clubhouse and shower facilities. They would like to run more small events for local clubs and schools.
- The main barriers to development are a lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising) and a lack of external funding.

3.8.2.3.2 The Eastern Region Triathlon Academy note that a number of members are from in and around Chelmsford. They point out that Trifarm is the only place in the region where they can meet for open water swimming and triathlon specific training at convenient times. They add "it offers the basic facilities that we require: safe, open water swimming with space to run and cycle. It offers little else: rudimentary changing facilities, portable toilets, no showers or running water, no indoor shelter. We very much hope that Trifarm will continue to develop and look forward to using it for many years to come".

3.8.2.3.3 Responses were also received from Blackwater and Havering Triathlon clubs and Chalkwell Redcaps (open water swimming club). These clubs, while outside of the City Council area, are users of Trifarm. They made similar points to those above.

### 3.8.3 Other outdoor sports/activities

#### 3.8.3.1 Chelmsford City Council

Table 6: Chelmsford City Council: Observations and issues regarding other outdoor sports/activities

| Sport        | Observations and issues  |
|--------------|--|
| Rounders     | Rounders has been supported via sports development initiatives though no specific facility aspirations were identified.  |
| Canoeing     | There is an active club and they have highlighted some difficulties regarding access to the river. Writtle College are considering creating a lake/reservoir on site and making it available for water sports including canoeing and wind surfing.   |
| Cycling      | There are strategic aspirations to improve the cycling infrastructure in the Chelmsford City area. The aim is for making Chelmsford a cycle friendly city. A local cycling route map has been produced and a group is looking at ways of improving the network. All new developments should take into account provision of appropriate footpath and cycling access. There is development work underway with the local CTC on a number of initiatives including promoting recreational cycle rides. |
| Walking      | The Community Sport and Wellbeing team organises a programme of health walks using the parks and nearby paths and pavements.   |
| Table tennis | Table tennis is quite strong in Chelmsford and Table Tennis England have recently designated Chelmsford as a priority area. Parks sites could provide sites for outdoor (concrete) table tennis tables.  |

#### 3.8.3.2 Active Essex

Table 7: Active Essex: Observations and issues regarding other outdoor sports/activities

| Sport        | Observations and issues  |
|--------------|--|
| Canoeing     | The canoe club is very active in Chelmsford. They would like to extend their activity and improve facilities. To do this they would either need to secure a long term lease on the club house which is unlikely as it is on a "prime site" in the middle of town (with potential value for more commercial operators); or re-site to another location. |
| Cycling      | It is important to improve the cycling network within the area and work is underway along these lines via the Chelmsford Cycling City initiative. This needs to be supported through the planning system in relation to planning for "active travel" for all new developments.   |
| Table tennis | Chelmsford was recently designated as a priority area and there are about 10 clubs in the area. Potential for various development initiatives including outdoor tables in parks.   |

### 3.8.3.3 Club Responses

3.8.3.3.1 Survey returns were also received from Chelmsford Canoe Club, Chelmer Cycling Club, Chelmsford Youth Cycling Club, and Chelmsford Tudor Rose Archers.

Table 8: Main points from local clubs regarding canoeing, cycling and archery

| Sport    | Main points   |
|----------|---|
| Canoeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chelmsford Canoe Club have about 400 members and report that their membership has been stable over the last three years. They note that membership is "at capacity".</li> <li>Their main base is their club house at Empire Walk, Chelmsford near the River Chelmer.</li> <li>The club have an active junior section and links with Columbus College. They are in the process of developing more school links.</li> <li>The club rate all aspects of their current facilities as good or better except car parking which is simply rated as "adequate".</li> <li>The club would like to expand its activities and to have space for more members.</li> <li>The club would like to have a secure lease on the land on which they are based as this would give them access to a greater range of grants.</li> <li>They would also like to be able to extend into the adjoining Sea Cadets land (which the club believes they are about to vacate<sup>23</sup>).</li> <li>The club would like to build several more boat houses to be able to store existing member's boats and so they could buy more club boats and be able to cater for more members. At the moment the club is at capacity due to lack of space.</li> </ul> |
| Cycling  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chelmer Cycling Club (CC) have about 200 members and Chelmsford Youth Cycling Club about 35. Both clubs report an increase in membership over the last three years.</li> <li>Chelmer CC have a developing youth coaching structure but no formal links with local schools as yet. They add: "once we have our coaching system fully up and running this is certainly something we would be interested in. We aim to offer more formal coaching activities in the future".</li> <li>Chelmer CC use a variety of road and closed circuits throughout the Eastern region.</li> <li>Barriers to club development are noted as: a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources (outdoor and indoor); a shortage of suitable training facilities; a lack of external funding; and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club.</li> </ul>   |

<sup>23</sup> The City Council Parks Manager's understanding is that the Sea Cadets are considering the feasibility of relocation, not that they are about to relocate.



|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Archery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chelmsford Tudor Rose Archers have about 70 members and report an increase in membership over the last three years. They note that "since the Olympics and films including archers our waiting list is constantly full".</li><li>• Sandon School is their main base in the winter (indoor). Writtle Agricultural college sports ground is the main base in the summer (outdoor).</li><li>• They are generally happy with the quality of facilities they use but note that "we are actively searching for ground to purchase or long term lease for our own archery grounds which would allow us to expand the membership of the club".</li><li>• The main barriers to development are: a shortage of good quality facilities/resources (indoor and outdoor); the cost of hiring/using facilities; and a lack of external funding.</li></ul> |
|---------|---|

## **3.9 Outdoor (non-pitch) sports: Key Findings**

### **3.9.1 General points and observations**

#### ***3.9.1.1 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 Chelmsford City Council area 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).

#### ***3.9.1.2 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.

#### ***3.9.1.3 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 be of significant value to local clubs and the wider community.

#### ***3.9.1.4 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.

### **3.9.2 Sports Specific Points**

#### ***3.9.2.1 Tennis***

- The LTA have indicated that Chelmsford is soon to become a priority area for the LTA which will trigger a detailed study to determine facility needs as well as a tennis development programme.

- Initial discussions between the City Council and the LTA have been around the potential of the public tennis courts at park sites - linking tennis clubs with casual players; looking at coaching opportunities etc.
- There is a good spread of facilities across the City Council area, public and club based, which accommodate a wide range of people wanting to play tennis. There are no significant problems in relation to accommodating matches or training.
- Local Tennis Clubs and Active Essex highlighted that there are no indoor tennis facilities in the City Council area.
- There are six key tennis clubs in the City Council area all of which have good quality facilities and engagement with City Council Sports Development initiatives.
- The quality of parks courts is variable but they are all of playable quality. They are available free of charge. The courts at Chelmer Park are floodlit as is the court (MUGA) at South Woodham Ferrers.
- The LTA note that key opportunities for tennis in the Chelmsford City Council area are increasing usage and developing park courts; and supporting local clubs to maximise their current facilities and expand when/if required
- NGB funding may potentially be available to support the delivery of facility priorities in the Chelmsford area. This will be confirmed once the LTA facility strategy is developed.

### **3.9.2.2 Athletics**

- England Athletics believe that overall there are sufficient facilities for athletics in the Chelmsford City Council area.
- Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre - for both track and indoor use - is the most important facility in the Chelmsford area. It is well located to meet needs. Access to the facilities is good.
- Quality is generally regarded as good but the Athletics Network reported that there are some issues with the track surface that need addressing (the City Council believe that this refers to the indoor track surface which is due to be fully replaced in September 2015).
- The Chelmsford Athletic Club is seeking to upgrade its clubhouse facilities to improve the gym area. They are also planning to replace the old changing area with a modern meeting room and toilets.
- The Chelmsford Athletic Club is nearing capacity and is unable to take on all the young people who would like to join. The City Council have since commented that to help resolve these capacity issues a Club Academy has been set up in partnership between the Athletics Club and Chelmsford City Council. This has allowed the Club to now run a sustainable Academy and increase the coaching available to younger age groups.
- There are also lots of opportunities for runners through initiatives such as Park Run at Central Park. There is also a very successful cross country running league.

### **3.9.2.3 Bowls**

- Essex was a priority "hot spot" area for bowls and Active Essex has been working in partnership with the Bowls Development Alliance over the past two years to increase participation levels. The BDA funding ended in April 2015 and this means they will not have the capacity to continue to provide the level of support and programme delivery that clubs have benefited from over this period.
- On the Active Essex club data base there are 15 outdoor clubs registered - some clubs are privately/club owned. There are, however, quite a number of other clubs and greens in the parishes across the City Council area. The City Council have three bowling greens on Park sites.
- Broadly speaking there appears to be sufficient outdoor greens to meet current demand both at parks sites and via a good number of local clubs.
- In general the quality of facilities and access to them are good/adequate, though some clubs have plans and aspirations for improvements. Falcon Bowls Club have put in a funding application to refurbish their outdoor synthetic green. They also wish to build an outdoor pavilion and are looking into ways of funding this facility.
- A number of bowling clubs are sustaining (some even increasing) their current levels of membership but a challenge for all of them is attracting new members, particularly younger players. The city council have organised have a go sessions via holiday programmes and the School Sports Partnership have organised visits to schools.
- There is potential for club development and increased membership given the age demographic of the City Council area.

### **3.9.2.4 Netball**

- Netball England reports that netball is a very popular sport in Chelmsford. It is often used as a central hub for hosting county events/coaching workshops and county academy training.
- There are many good netball venues in Chelmsford mostly at schools but also on park sites. The NGB suggest it would be good to have more netball provision at local leisure centres or even a dedicated centre for competition/county academy training.
- The most important facilities for netball in the Chelmsford City Council area are New Hall School, Boreham and Chelmer Park.
- The most common issue reported as regards quality related to New Hall School changing and showering facilities. Seven of the nine clubs who used New Hall rated the quality of these as being poor or very poor.
- Clubs suggest that there are not enough courts to meet demand and that in particular there is a need for a dedicated 12 court floodlit facility. The NGB highlights the potential for provision of a centre to host competitive level netball such as a regional league or county academy.

### **3.9.2.5 Other (non-pitch) outdoor sports/activities**

- Canoeing: Chelmsford Canoe Club reports a need to secure a long-term lease as this would give them access to a greater range of grants. They would like to extend into the adjoining Sea Cadets land (the club believes the Sea Cadets may be considering relocation<sup>24</sup>). The club would like to build several more boat houses to be able to store existing member's boats and so that they could buy more club boats. This would enable them to cater for more members (at the moment the club is at capacity due to lack of space).
- Cycling: There are strategic aspirations to improve the cycling infrastructure in the Chelmsford City area. The aim is for making Chelmsford a cycle friendly city. New developments should therefore take into account provision of appropriate footpath and cycling access. There is development work underway with the local CTC on a number of initiatives including promoting recreational cycle rides.
- Golf: There appear to be enough golf courses to meet demand in the Chelmsford area and there are a number of strong clubs. Provision is club based with the exception of a municipal pitch and putt course. New development may increase demand.
- Triathlon: Trifarm (a private operator) has aspirations to provide a permanent clubhouse and shower facilities at its base in Boreham. The Eastern Region Triathlon Academy reports that Trifarm is the only place in the region where they can meet for open water swimming and triathlon specific training at convenient times but that there is a need to improve the quality of its facilities.
- Table tennis: Table tennis is quite strong in Chelmsford and Table Tennis England have recently designated Chelmsford as a priority area. Parks sites could provide sites for outdoor (concrete) table tennis tables.
- Angling: there is potential for developing angling in the Chelmsford City Council area but no feedback was received from angling organisations (despite several reminders and phone calls).

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<sup>24</sup> The City Council Parks Manager's understanding is that the Sea Cadets are considering the feasibility of relocation, not that they are about to relocate.

## Part Two Indoor Sports - Built Facilities

### 3.10 Overview of Part Two: Indoor Sports – Built Facilities

3.10.1 Part Two provides information and feedback received from Chelmsford City Council Officers, Sports/Leisure Centre Managers, individual sports National Governing Bodies, and sports clubs in relation to the supply of and demand for indoor sports facilities in the Chelmsford City Council Area. It also gathers their views on the current quality of such facilities; and plans, aspirations and priorities for future facility development and improvement.

3.10.2 Part Two is comprised of two main elements:

- Indoor Built Facilities – Review and Issues
- National Governing Bodies and Sports Clubs

3.10.3 There is a summary of key points regarding indoor sports facilities at the end of the Section.

### 3.11 Indoor Built Facilities - Review and Issues<sup>25</sup>

#### 3.11.1 Chelmsford City Council

3.11.1.1 A meeting was held with officers from Leisure and Heritage Services to secure an overview from a City Council perspective. Key points raised are noted below:

##### ***3.11.1.2 Key Issues for the Council's Leisure Strategy***

- An important focus for the leisure strategy is the refurbishment or replacement of the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre. The Centre includes the only publically accessible swimming pool in central Chelmsford and a popular ice rink (the only one in Essex).
- The development concept for the wider site might include:
  - Retention of the ice rink and sports hall with replacement of the existing older built leisure facilities, such as the pool.
  - Replacement of the swimming pool with a 25m x 10 lane pool, including division by a boom with capability of raising/lowering the floor, to enhance all types of community swimming programmes and to enable competitive club swimming (not possible with the existing dimensions).
  - Improved car parking.
  - Development of attractive riverside visitor facilities.
  - Possible development on the remainder of the site.

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<sup>25</sup> The observations and issues identified (during the consultation period which ran from October 2014 until February 2015) are linked to built sports facility provision and location. They are not based upon a financial appraisal of current operations or management arrangements.

- The ice rink's popularity is linked to its central location in Chelmsford and relative ease of access; wider competition is located in the Lee Valley Regional Park (Lea Bridge Road, Waltham Forest), in Milton Keynes and Romford if/when it opens.
- the size of the rink is 56m x 26m (not Olympic size (60m x 30m); this and its seating capacity inhibits its use for Premier League Ice Hockey and major national and international ice events. It does however offer a popular programme of ice shows, public sessions, teaching and ice hockey competition fixtures.
- North East Chelmsford will be the location for major housing development requiring additional secondary and primary schools, community sports and leisure facilities. A Joint-Use sports centre integral to a new school is being considered (Section 106 plans) as part of the future Greater Beaulieu Park development.
- The leisure strategy should embrace a review of the level of fitness gym provision in Chelmsford by public, private and education sectors.
- Within educational establishments that have synthetic turf pitches, MUGAs, sports halls, swimming pools and fitness gyms, there is a need for them to offer more time and access to community clubs and individuals; this will complement provision of existing neighbourhood facilities by the Council and Parishes.

### **3.11.1.3 Other issues and observations**

- 5-a-side football. Demand for indoor football is high and this can dominate sport hall bookings to the detriment of other sports. A dedicated indoor small sided venue may be useful in this respect.
- Table tennis is quite strong in Chelmsford and Table Tennis England have recently designated Chelmsford as a priority area. Parks sites could provide sites for outdoor (concrete) table tennis tables.
- Badminton - The NGB has designated Chelmsford as a priority area for development.

### **3.11.2 Chelmsford City Council facilities**

3.11.2.1 The following facilities are operated by Chelmsford City Council:

- Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre
- Dovedale Sports Centre
- Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre
- South Woodham Ferrers Leisure Centre

Meetings were held with the facility managers and key points raised are noted below:

#### **3.11.2.2 Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre**

**3.11.2.2.1 Location:** The Centre occupies a prime site location in Chelmsford city centre. It has considerable car parking shared with other city and retail park use.

#### 3.11.2.2.2 Facilities:

- Multi-use hall, studio (aerobics), studio (spinning), six court sports hall
- 33m x 6 lane swimming pool plus diving pool and learner pool
- Outdoor pool (now closed – see footnote 26)
- Two squash courts
- Ice rink including seating and catering outlet
- Fitness Gym
- Main foyer - reception, catering and seating

#### 3.11.2.2.3 Condition Survey 2013/14

- The City Council commissioned a Condition Survey which was undertaken during 2013/14 by Calfordseaden LLP. The Executive Summary is provided in Box 2 below.

#### *Box 2: Riverside Ice and Leisure Condition Survey - Executive Summary*

##### **Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre - Condition Survey - 2013/2014: Executive Summary**

The structure and fabric of the buildings are generally in a serviceable condition commensurate with their relative ages, use and type of construction.

The survey has identified some maintenance works that will need to be addressed in the short term to maintain the operational status of the centre.

These defects occur in the building fabric both internally and externally although the greatest area of concern lies with the mechanical, electrical and specialist pool plant in the older Swimming Pool building.

Given the age and condition of many items of mechanical plant and equipment and considering the levels of relative obsolescence and the accompanying difficulty in obtaining spare parts, it is anticipated that failure requiring complete renewal of those items of primary and swimming pool plant will be required within the next six years.

Repair is not considered a realistic option, partly because there are several items of equipment within the building that are already beyond the sensible boundaries of further repair and partly because much of the plant is of such an age that failure is predictable even though chronology of failure cannot be accurately pinpointed.

The same is true in the case of the electrical installations which are generally aged and in a condition requiring substantial renewal.

While plant renewals are considered the elements most likely to affect the operational status of the centre some focus also needs to be placed on the fabric of the building (walls, roofs, etc.) together with considering more cosmetic enhancements such as internal and external decoration.

At this stage, mechanical and electrical risk items cannot be accurately predicted, identified or prioritised although the overriding risk is the centre not being operational therefore



affecting income production. The desire of the Council to invest over the next 12 months is commendable and this will reduce the risk (although not provide guarantees) of significant plant and/or building failure.

It is critical therefore that to avoid unnecessary expenditure and substantial disruption to the operation of the Centre due to plant breakdowns, a clear strategic plan for the current Riverside building, including a detailed risk analysis, outside the scope of this report and it is recommended that a workshop is held involving key consultants, City Council Officers (including Technical staff) and Members to assess the risk of different courses of action. This will ensure that a planned approach is adopted and appropriate budget provision is made. If no medium term plan is made the report identifies that in years 2 -6 some £5.7m will be necessary to retain the current facility for customers, beyond 6yrs this could total £8.7m. The commitment to a long-term solution may also result in avoiding some of the 2yr – 6yr repair and renewal costs identified in the report.

Improvements to energy efficiency throughout the centre have been made recently but there is still plenty of scope to develop these further in order to maximise the potential energy savings available. This needs to form part of the strategic review of the buildings.

In terms of the next stage, the identification of key risk areas needs to be developed further over the next 12 months to allow the short and medium term strategic objectives to be finalised. Further investigations to establish design parameters and to determine more accurate costs will also be included within this exercise.”

### **2015 Update**

The Calfordseaden LLP report stated that although c £3m had been spent on the ice rink, fitness room and reception area, a further c £9m would be required for essential maintenance to pool and other plant and the fabric of the building within the next 10 years with priorities to be identified. A sum of c £400,000 was spent on essential high risk items in the first year following the condition survey. This related in the main to pool plant and work in the pool hall.

In view of the high cost of refurbishing an outdated facility, a redevelopment scheme for the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre scheme is currently being considered by Officers and Members of the Council which would take account of and supersede recommendations included within the 2013/14 Condition Survey Report. The redevelopment scheme includes retention of the existing ice rink and replacement of the swimming pool as part of the wider redevelopment of the Centre and the site.

#### 3.11.2.2.4 Issues:

- Facilities are somewhat dated and in some areas not meeting perceptions and expectations of modern day provision, such as the indoor pool, outdoor pool, sports hall, and some of the ancillary areas. Recent refurbishments have improved the image and popularity of some of the facilities, such as the fitness gym, aerobics studio and foyer catering area, for example.
- There are increasing building and plant maintenance costs identified, including c. £3m spent in recent years with some £9m requirement over the next 10 years. A summary of a recent Condition Survey is shown in Box 2 above.
- **Six lane swimming pool (33m)** is well used but increasing maintenance costs are anticipated. It does not meet modern day requirements for swimming competition which requires a 25m pool;
- **Outdoor pool** has limited summertime/fair-weather use - no longer meets modern expectations<sup>26</sup>.
- **Ice rink** - 56m x 26m (not Olympic size (60m x 30m) - the size of rink and seating capacity inhibits growth of Ice Hockey. The seating capacity is currently being extended to c.300.
- **The Centre's catering** concession is performing well in terms of customer service with the contract to be renegotiated during 2015/16. (Ice Rink outlet, Main Foyer outlet, Vending).

#### 3.11.2.3 Dovedale Sports Centre

3.11.2.3.1 *Location:* Vicarage Road, immediately adjacent to Chelmsford College, central Chelmsford.

##### 3.11.2.3.2 Facilities:

- Five court sports hall
- Two squash courts
- c. 25 station fitness gym
- multi-use studio room (former Bar and Catering area).

##### 3.11.2.3.3 Issues:

- Generally well maintained facilities but ageing and dated facilities, no longer meeting modern day expectations for sports facilities. Refurbishment of existing facilities estimated at close to £1m;
- Joint use with Chelmsford College with no footprint for expansion unless into adjacent car park.

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<sup>26</sup> The City Council have since confirmed that this outdoor pool has now closed  
<http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/outdoor-pool>

### **3.11.2.4 Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre**

**3.11.2.4.1 Location:** A phased build in 2002 and 2014 in Melbourne Park adjacent to and incorporating the original Melbourne Athletics Stadium and Chelmsford City Football Club (since 2005).

#### **3.11.2.4.2 Facilities:**

##### *Indoor*

- Training facilities - 60m Indoor x 6 lane track training facility - pole vault - triple jump run up - curtained/netted throwing area (built to prevailing guidelines and specification at the time but it no longer meets current NGB specification for discus).
- Four court sport hall (same surface) - multi sports including five-a-side football.
- Studio and additional store converted to studio/meeting room.
- Fitness gym - c.50 stations with separate free weights gym.

##### *Outdoor*

- Eight lane athletics track - throwing area (plus additional throwing practice area) - long/triple/high jump areas - original seating not well positioned due to people standing along sprint/finish straight).
- Central football pitch - grandstand seating.
- Football Club Clubhouse, changing rooms and social facilities.

##### *Adjacent*

- Floodlit Synthetic 3G Turf Pitch, three MUGAs, grass pitches, diamond for baseball, practice throwing area.

#### **3.11.2.4.3 Issues:**

- Mixed/shared use of facilities (Clubs/Council) by different organisations
- Indoor throwing area does not meet current NGB specifications for discus.

### **3.11.2.5 South Woodham Ferrers Leisure Centre**

**3.11.2.5.1 Location:** Adjacent to William de Ferrers School (Academy) in the town centre.

#### **3.11.2.5.2 Facilities:**

- 25m x 6 lane swimming pool
- Four court sports hall (Granwood floor)
- Two multi-use halls (one mainly used for gymnastics) and small activity room
- Climbing wall
- Fitness gym (20 stations)
- Sand-based Synthetic Turf Pitch (due for replacement)
- Tennis courts/MUGAs

### 3.11.2.5.3 Issues:

- Joint use allows daytime term-time use by the school and places some limitations on community use.
- STP surface/under surface in need of replacement. There are plans to replace this with a 3G pitch in 2015<sup>27</sup>.

### 3.11.3 Education Facilities (independently operated)

3.11.3.1 Discussions with colleges and schools highlighted the following points:

#### 3.11.3.2 Anglia Ruskin University - Head of Sport

- On the Chelmsford campus, existing facilities are a four badminton court size sports hall (badminton, two cricket nets, futsal coaching scheme), a small gymnasium (c.12 stations, c. 70m<sup>2</sup>), a separate small dance studio.
- The University is considering the development of improved sports facility provision at its Chelmsford Campus (sports hall, Astro turf pitch) - a c. £5m scheme). It is currently trying to secure Planning Permission.
- The University's Corporate Plan identifies a desire for the University to integrate more closely with the community; to offer community sporting opportunities to the wider population is one way being considered. On the Chelmsford campus this would largely depend on aspirations for a larger gymnasium and multi-use dance studio, although no firm plans are in place currently.

#### 3.11.3.3 Chelmsford County High School for Girls

- Chelmsford County High School for Girls is considering plans to build a new sports hall, small gym and studio.

## 3.12 National Governing Bodies and Sports Clubs

### 3.12.1 National Governing Bodies

3.12.1.1 NGB responses were sought in relation to the following sports: Badminton, Basketball, Bowls (indoor), Boxing, Cricket (indoor), Gymnastics, Judo, Netball, Squash, Swimming, Table-Tennis, Tennis (indoor) and Volleyball. The key points raised by the NGB's in relation to these sports are noted below.

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<sup>27</sup> The Parks Development Manager notes that England Hockey are speaking to Chelmsford Hockey Club about their plans to replace the water pitch and the clubs wish to also start using Astro again at Chelmer Park. They seem to be linking potential loss of a hockey facility at William De Ferrers School to this.

### **3.12.1.2 Badminton England - Essex County Badminton Association (ECBA)**

- Badminton is generally well provided for in Essex within a range of schools and sports centres across the County: William Edward School in Grays provides an eight court sprung floor badminton centre for example; there is a new six court sports hall at the St. John Payne School in Chelmsford;
- Other significant regional centres for badminton competition and recreational use are at Basildon Sports Village (6 courts) and Redbridge Sports Centre (20 courts);
- In Chelmsford, Council operated sports halls provide opportunity for recreational club and casual badminton in the main, but junior county competitions take place in the four court Anglia Ruskin University sports hall which provides a sprung wooden floor; cost and availability are in issues in some venues in Chelmsford;
- Essex possesses the infrastructure for the development of badminton within a County Badminton Network (CBN); improved access to better facility provision and effective sports development programmes are a critical focus for the Network going forward.

### **3.12.1.3 Basketball England**

- The national Basketball Facility Strategy is currently being finalised with Sport England, though Chelmsford isn't specifically identified as a priority.
- The most important facilities for basketball currently are Baddow High School and Anglia Ruskin University.
- In general, better access is needed to multi court venues and those which are affordable for clubs.
- In Chelmsford one issue is aging stock and many halls are in need of upgrade/refurbishment. There are no double court halls which hinders capacity and mass participation.
- The key issues are increasing access to existing facilities at an affordable rate; and creating new multi court facilities with community use agreements in place to allow clubs to operate informal and formal participation initiatives.

### **3.12.1.4 Essex Basketball**

- Competitions for all playing age groups take place within Essex, the main venues being schools and sports centres;
- Active basketball venues in Chelmsford are at Anglia Ruskin University and Great Baddow HS Sports College (Baddow Eagles);
- There is more provision than demand across the Council's sports centres.

### **3.12.1.5 Amateur Boxing Association**

- Boxing shows frequently take place within hotel or social club premises environments, such as in Billericay and Basildon for example;
- Chelmsford Boxing Club shares premises with the National Association of Boys and Girls Clubs in central Chelmsford providing their training gym facilities;
- Boxing shows/events may take place at the Marconi sports facility in Chelmsford;

- Discussions have not identified concerns by the Governing Body or Club in the Chelmsford area.

#### **3.12.1.6 Essex Indoor Bowling Association**

- Indoor bowling takes place either at a purpose built indoor bowling centre which may be owned and operated by a Club, or as short mat bowls/carpet bowls requiring less space (but needing storage) - played in community halls and sports centres for example.
- There are 17 indoor bowling centres spread across Essex totalling 105 indoor rinks; while these accommodate current demand, membership is generally experiencing a decline in most clubs.
- The challenge for the sport is to both recruit and retain membership across the young and elderly, the one to replace the other; there is no current demand identified for additional indoor rinks in Chelmsford.
- There is one major indoor bowling centre in Chelmsford, namely The Falcon Bowling and Social Club, Springfield, north Chelmsford (eight indoor rinks plus social facilities, two outdoor greens - one grass, one artificial grass); a very successful club this is also experiencing a current decline in membership.

#### **3.12.1.7 Essex Football Association**

- There are 23 x 3G (third generation) artificial grass pitches of various dimensions registered with the Essex FA for club/league matchplay; of these there is only one covered 3G pitch in Colchester; there are no known plans for further covered 3G pitches in Essex and funding can be prohibitive; it is now permissible for FA league matches to be played on a 3G pitch, subject to specification.
- Futsal (stemming from South America) is a growing form of 5v5 indoor football promoting speed and personal skills, encouraging participation and feed into the traditional outdoor game; it is the FIFA and UEFA accredited version of 5v5 indoor football; this requires a sports hall (approx. one basketball court size) and is played at the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre and at Anglia Ruskin University.
- Futsal competitions are limited when played within a single sports hall and ideally require two halls of suitable dimensions so that competition games can be played in parallel.

#### **3.12.1.8 British Gymnastics - Essex East**

- Gymnastics clubs are currently accommodated within their own leased premises or in sports centres; growth in this sport may require additional facilities in the future.
- The main clubs within the Chelmsford City Council area are Chelmsford Gymnastics Club, Tatersall Way, central Chelmsford (formerly at Dovedale Sports Centre) and the Swallows Gymnastics Club in South Woodham Ferrers (formerly at South Woodham Leisure Centre).

- These two clubs have leased industrial units to accommodate their needs, each with in excess of 800 members; future and growing demand may put pressure on their existing facilities.
- Major clubs north and south of the study area are Colchester School of Gymnastics and the South Essex Gymnastics Club in Basildon.

### **3.12.1.9 British Judo Association**

- Judo clubs are variously accommodated within halls around the region where the important criteria are ownership and storage of mats.
- There is no regional centre for Essex nor purpose built Dojo. There are no plans or sufficient demand at the current time from individual clubs. A Dojo of regional significance could be included economically within a multi-sports facility and would accommodate a main club (adults and juniors), other martial arts clubs, aerobics classes and yoga for all ages. This might be considered as part of the eventual Riverside and Ice Centre replacement facilities.
- The Chelmsford Judo Club (adults) operates at the Dovedale Sport Centre and the Bushey Judo Club (juniors) at the Chelmsford Sports and Athletics Centre at one end of the 60m indoor track. Neither club is oversubscribed in terms of membership; larger clubs are located in Basildon and Redbridge, for example.

### **3.12.1.10 East Essex Netball**

- Netball is very strong in Essex and in Chelmsford.
- There is demand for a netball centre with some 8-10 outdoor courts and one or two indoor courts to host leagues and competitions; similar provision has been made at the Basildon Sports Village.
- Such provision would be very well used by local clubs, attract more people from Chelmsford to the game and reduce travelling time to venues outside Chelmsford.

### **3.12.1.11 Essex Squash and Racketball Association**

- Essex County is developing its own strategy for the development of Squash and Racketball whilst part of the wider strategy being developed with Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Middlesex.
- It recognises the ageing population and fall away from the sport in recent years and is focusing its strategy on bringing in younger participants through schools and outreach programmes working with Sport England, whilst also focusing on the 18-40 age-groups to get people back into squash; racketball is also the focus for women's programmes, ageing squash players and new players.
- The existing courts are more or less at capacity at peak times in the Chelmsford area and the potential success of the regional and country strategies will create potential demand for the provision of new courts over the next five years.
- Two new courts have recently been provided by Marconi, south of Chelmsford.

### **3.12.1.12 ASA (East Region)**

- Swimming pools are provided by public, education and private sectors within Chelmsford with only the public sector facilities offering secured use for the community. Some additional schools may offer time and space to community groups and teaching but not on a 'secured' basis. The City's main swimming facility (33m x 6 lane pool, diving pool, learner pool, outdoor leisure pool) is located centrally at the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre.
- The regional governing body recognises the value to the community of the swimming pool at the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre for recreational swimming and learning to swim; equally it has great value as a competition venue for various organisations (schools, uniformed groups for example); its length (at 33m) however no longer meets standard competition specification (25m), such that its competition value and use is limited.
- The Chelmsford Swimming Club and other clubs use it as a training venue in the main.
- Its replacement to modern day standards for swimming competition would be welcomed by the Club and by the ASA.
- The ASA Strategy 2013-17 seeks to retain, replace or build new Diving facilities.
- Diving is a minor sport which has struggled to prioritise facility provision (some resurgence in popularity through successes in recent Games).
- There are no national or local standards identified by the ASA.
- There are 9 Diving Clubs in the Eastern Region, at varying levels of performance.
- Chelmsford Diving Club aims at mid-level performance, using volunteer coaches. New facilities would give opportunity for growth, higher levels of performance and profile in the region.
- Ideal provision for high performance diving would include 2 x 3m springboards, 2 x 1m springboards a 3m, a 5m and 10m platform – movable floor for additional income generation.

### **3.12.1.13 Essex Table-Tennis Association**

- The sport of table-tennis in the Chelmsford area is less popular at the current time than it was some 10 years ago; there has been a decline in the number of players, leagues and premises to play; this is generally the case across Essex with the exception of Southend where the sport remains buoyant.
- The Chelmsford Club maintains its activities at Chelmsford Sports and Athletics Centre hiring the indoor training athletics rack.
- Chelmsford Championships take place at Hylands School to the west of Chelmsford.
- There does not appear to be a motivational strategy in place to increase the sport's popularity and quality of venues in the Chelmsford area.

### **3.12.1.14 Lawn Tennis Association**

- While there are no current plans for an indoor tennis centre, Chelmsford remains identified by the LTA Essex Region as a priority for indoor tennis.



- Airdomes or lightweight structures may offer may offer alternative opportunities for outdoor tennis clubs in the future, subject to planning consents and funding.
- This study has not identified a strategic demand for an indoor tennis centre in Chelmsford; there is a spread of indoor courts in Essex including at:
  - Frinton LTC (two)
  - Colchester - Essex Golf and Country Club (six)
  - Billericay - Lawn Tennis Club (two - Airdome)
  - Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre (four)
  - Harlow Tennis Club (four+ onemini)
  - Redbridge Tennis Club (eight)
  - The Connaught Club, Chingford (two + two Airdome)
  - Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre (four)
  - David Lloyd Centres in Chigwell, Romford, Southend, Basildon.

### **3.12.1.15 Volleyball England**

#### *3.12.1.15.1 General*

- Volleyball England has five priority areas, called Investment Zones, in England and Chelmsford falls within one of them – East London and Essex. The area has a dedicated Volleyball England Regional Manager.
- Volleyball England does have an agreed facilities strategy. Chelmsford is not specifically identified, although Volleyball England would like to be consulted about the development of significant new facilities particularly at the design stage.

#### *3.12.1.15.2 Facility Supply*

- The investment zone of East London and Essex is awarded a significant revenue budget each year. There are four main strands of funding available – secondary school delivery, FE delivery, HE delivery and adult participation. Depending on what type of project it is, Volleyball England has a capital pot to help mainly with the sourcing and installation of volleyball equipment. For example, fixed volleyball nets and volleyball marking on the floor.
- There are very limited volleyball courts available to hire or play on in the Chelmsford City Council area. They tend to be functional and more suited to training than competition where supporters need to be catered for.
- Ideally a competition venue would have free car parking nearby, a clearly identified volleyball floor with seating for supporters and a cafe area.
- Although there is suitable space and court marking at Riverside, the floor is not suitable for prolonged use due to the flooring material. There is one court marked out at Dovedale Sports Centre, although it was unavailable to hire for volleyball the last time an enquiry was made.
- Aside from this there are only two other venues that are used by volleyball participants in Chelmsford.
- Team Essex use The Boswells School sports hall and Chelmsford Volleyball Club use St John Payne Catholic Comprehensive School sports hall. The only other facility that offers a volleyball court for hire is Anglia Ruskin University – Mildmay sports hall.

- One access issue is that school sites do not necessarily have appropriate car parking provision. For example in the past an away team has travelled to a volleyball match in Chelmsford and the bus has become stuck on the school site at the Boswells School.
- The facilities that the existing clubs use are suitable for current playing levels, however this will not be the case in the future when clubs expand, develop and ultimately outgrow their existing home venues.
- The areas that would be required to improve, as mentioned above, would be the provision of café areas for use by teams but also spectators, the number and quality of spectator seating options around a centre/match court.
- To date, national volleyball teams have trained in the facilities within the Chelmsford City Council area (Mildmay and Boswells) but in order to be able to attract national events and competitions, the lighting (Lux levels), car parking and spectator seating are the main barriers.
- Riverside and Dovedale are run by the council. Mildmay is managed by the University. Boswells and St John Payne are managed internally.
- The facilities on the school sites are obviously only available to hire out of school time. They are closed for use during school holidays which can cause difficulties when trying to schedule national volleyball league games and it also prevents teams training on a consistent basis. In addition to this, school sports halls are often used for exams, so at The Boswells Schools external hire stops from Easter onwards, which also dictates when the club can use the facility.
- Due to the size of a volleyball court (minimum four badminton court sports hall) the price for hiring a volleyball court is expensive for clubs who typically hire two hours as a minimum for training and typically three hours for matches. The pricing varies in Chelmsford for an hours use of a Volleyball court: The range is Mildmay £35/hour, Riverside £32.40/50mins, St John Payne £35/hour Boswells £32/hour.
- Volleyball England does not have a formal long term agreement with any facility in the area – the only facility where this is in place is in Kettering, Northamptonshire.
- The volleyball clubs agree contacts on a year on year basis but it has been known for providers to renege on these contracts mid-way through the year.
- As the clubs do not own or have any long term agreements in place with volleyball facility providers all the facilities that are used in Chelmsford are at risk. If the price increases or the facility providers simply decided not to let the facility out the clubs would have to move out of the area.
- Historically, Chelmsford Volleyball club used the Mildmay sports hall but unfortunately in one year the price increase was so substantial that they were forced to leave and relocate at St John Payne. This situation is becoming more pressing when facilities are trying to find ways to generate income.
- Volleyball England are aware of a possible new secondary school development in the Springfield area but at this stage no further details are known. It would be very helpful if the facility made provision for competitive volleyball play. Volleyball England could assist make this happen.
- Floor fixings for the volleyball net are frequently not provided in sports halls and this should be part of the specification for future provision where this occurs.

### *3.12.1.15.3 Demand and participation issues*

- Volleyball was stronger in Essex in the 1980's; over time clubs have merged and/or folded but there has been some growth in the last few years; there are currently 10 clubs in Essex fielding 21 teams in the Essex leagues.
- There are currently three schools playing volleyball within the Chelmsford area – Boswells, St John Payne and Sandon. Boswells in particular has a fantastic record in winning national school championships and producing players of the highest calibre. To date they have won male and female U15/U16 and U18 titles across a 15 year period. They are also recognised as a Volleyball England Satellite Academy as they have a reputation for producing players who go onto represent England and Great Britain. This institution is vital to volleyball development in the area.
- There are two well established volleyball clubs in the Chelmsford area – Chelmsford Volleyball Club (CVC) who field three local league teams (two male and one ladies team). Total full time members = 30-35 and the aspiration is to grow in the future.
- The other is Team Essex Volleyball (TEVC) who field 4 national league teams (one junior, two male and one ladies team). Total full time members = 48. This club has a sound and comprehensive club development plan and intends to field five teams next year. There is a strong 100+ junior (aged 8-16) section.
- As Boswells only has one volleyball court available for hire at any one time, Team Essex are currently looking for additional facilities to hire. This is particularly relevant in the next domestic season (August 2015-April 2016) as there is a demand to add another ladies team to their club structure.

### *3.12.1.15.4 Other issues and observations*

- The exposure for volleyball is actually very limited in the Chelmsford City Council area considering the substantial amount of success and recognition that local teams/players have achieved.
- While the number of registered players is modest there is strong potential for considerable growth from Juniors as they feed through. Moreover a recent agreement with Essex University means more students are now playing in Chelmsford (instead of Colchester/Tendring).
- If the sport is to grow, it is important at the very least that the clubs and associated teams play in facilities where they are priority hirers or have long term usage agreements in place. In addition to this, if the any of the teams gain promotion to the Super eight league, which is possible for TEVC, then a facility that has suitable spectator seating around a volleyball court is required.
- As mentioned above there is capital funding for fixed volleyball equipment available.
- Volleyball England would like to be consulted with regards to any future facility modernisation or development within the area.

## **3.12.2 Indoor Sports Clubs**

3.12.2.1 Survey responses were also received from Chelmsford Swimming Club and the Blackwater Barracudas (swimming for disabled - main pool Blackwater Leisure Centre, Maldon); Woodlea Badminton Club and Hoynors Badminton Club; Chelmsford Ice Hockey

Academy; Chelmsford Karate Club; Chelmsford Gymnastics club; Swallows Gymnastics Club and DC49 Boswells (gym and cheerleading). Points raised by these clubs are provided in Table 9.

*Table 9: Observations and issues raised by local clubs for Badminton, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Karate and Swimming*

| Sport      | Observations and issues   |
|------------|---|
| Badminton  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodlea Badminton Club (BC) have 28 members and play at the Riverside Leisure Centre. Hoynors BC have 24 members and play at the Danbury Sports and Social Centre. Both Clubs report a decline in membership over the last three years. Woodlea have an active junior section though no formal school links.</li> <li>• Woodlea suggest that fewer young people have the opportunity to play badminton at school and the number of clubs has reduced in the area due to high court costs. They have lost young players that they have trained up to university, but we hope they will return on finishing University.</li> <li>• Hoyners BC is satisfied with the quality of Danbury Sports and Social Centre rating most aspects as good or very good. Woodlea BC rates many aspects of the Riverside Centre as being no better than adequate including: value for money; changing and shower facilities; and facilities for the disabled.</li> <li>• Both clubs would like to expand their activities and attract more members, particularly young adults.</li> <li>• Falling membership/shortage of playing members is a barrier to development for both clubs. Woodlea also note a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; the cost of hiring/using facilities; a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising); and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club.</li> <li>• Woodlea think that coaching for juniors is very inadequate in the area and therefore the average age of players is rising without new young players becoming available. Purpose-built venues for playing badminton are needed (with sprung floors, decent lighting and visibility) rather than multi-purpose sports halls.</li> <li>• Hoyners note that they support the Danbury Sports and Social Centre's plans to obtain funding to install a sprung floor in the sports hall.</li> </ul> |
| Gymnastics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chelmsford and Swallows gym clubs both report an increase in membership over the last three years with current membership being 700 and 350 respectively. They both have active junior sections and links with schools. DC49 Boswells (cheerleading and gym club) report a decrease in members.</li> <li>• Both the gym clubs have their own base - Chelmsford Gymnastics Club (GC) in Chelmsford and Swallows GC in South Woodham Ferrers. DC49 Boswells use Boswells School, in Chelmsford.</li> <li>• All three clubs are generally satisfied with the quality of their facilities rating most aspects as either good or very good. Swallows GC rate</li> </ul>   |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | <p>changing and shower facilities and facilities for the disabled as being only "adequate".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All three clubs wish to expand their activities. Chelmsford and DC49 Boswells would like to have more members (DC49 Boswells also note a need for more space). Swallows would like to offer more classes for teens and for the disabled. They are also looking to replace all of their old equipment for new.</li> <li>• Both Gym clubs highlight a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and/or administer the club as being a barrier to development. Chelmsford GC also highlight the expense of equipment. For DC49 Boswells the main barriers are a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a shortage of suitable training facilities; and a shortage of specialist equipment.</li> </ul>   |
| Ice Hockey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chelmsford Ice Hockey Academy play at the Riverside ice and leisure centre. They have a current membership of 125 (children and young people) which has increased over the last three years. They would like to increase members and aim to canvass schools.</li> <li>• They rate most aspects of the centre as good in terms of quality, though changing and shower facilities and the ease of booking/hiring are only rated as adequate.</li> <li>• They would like to expand their activities by running additional teams.</li> <li>• Barriers to development are a shortage of suitable training facilities; the cost of hiring/using facilities and a lack of external funding.</li> <li>• The club would like to purchase rink dividers so they can gain additional ice time. The club also note that they are unable to gain any additional ice time which is required to increase membership and teams.</li> </ul>   |
| Karate     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chelmsford Karate Club use a number of venues including the United Reform Church Hall in Chelmsford and Keene Hall in Galleywood. They have a membership of 95 which has increased over the last three years "due to a membership drive, club success at competitions, and gradings; media cover in newspapers; and social media and internet".</li> <li>• They have an active junior section and would like to develop further links with schools. They have run Introduction to Karate sessions at Oaklands Infant School and Moulsham Infant School during school hours.</li> <li>• In general they are happy with the facilities they use, though car parking is rated as poor (not clear which venue).</li> <li>• The club would like to expand the number of classes they hold - providing additional classes aimed at specific age groups; and to increase current classes attendance</li> <li>• Barriers to development are: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a lack of internal financing; a lack of external funding; and marketing skills to attract new members.</li> </ul> |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Swimming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chelmsford Swimming Club has a current membership of 740. Membership has increased over the last three years. The club provides for: competitive swimming; water polo; synchronised swimming; swim fit; learning to swim; and disability swimming.</li><li>• The club has a strong reputation for competitive success and also a wide range of activities. They are one of only a small number of swimming clubs offering all aquatic disciplines (with the exception of diving).</li><li>• The Swimming Club have an active junior section and links with a number of schools, running water polo coaching sessions e.g. Moulsham High; Boswells.</li><li>• The main base for the club is at New Hall School pool "plus the Riverside Leisure Centre". They also use Moulsham High School and South Woodham Ferrers Pool.</li><li>• The swimming club rate most aspects of their main base as being no better than "adequate" i.e. general quality of facility; availability when needed; value for money; ease of getting there; facilities for the disabled; equipment and storage; lighting; and car parking. Changing and shower facilities are rated as poor.</li><li>• The club note that "we are currently involved in discussions with Chelmsford City Council about the potential for improving facilities for swimming".</li><li>• The club wish to increase membership and to expand activities. Barriers to development are a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a shortage of suitable training facilities; poor quality, changing facilities; and a lack of external funding.</li><li>• The club notes that Chelmsford lacks a modern swimming pool that is up to current competitive specification and with good spectator facilities. This prevents the Club from hosting galas that are crucial fundraising and profile raising events. They have stated how great and urgent the need for improved pool facilities is to the future of the swimming club.</li></ul> |
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### 3.13 Indoor Sports: Key Findings

#### 3.13.1 Facility Overview

- Chelmsford City Council manage four indoor sports facilities: Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre, Dovedale Sports Centre, Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre and South Woodham Ferrers Leisure Centre.
- Other than the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre the main issue is one of aging stock and the need for a realistic replacement/refurbishment strategy.
- Other sports hall and swimming pool facilities are managed by Anglia Ruskin University and the local secondary schools. The extent of community use of these education based facilities is varied. There is a need for them to offer more time and access to community clubs and individuals. This would complement provision of existing neighbourhood facilities by the Council and Parishes.
- Falcon Bowling Centre provides eight indoor rinks as well as two outdoor greens (one synthetic).
- The University is considering the development of improved sports facility provision at its Chelmsford Campus (sports hall, Astroturf pitch) - a c. £5m scheme). It is currently trying to secure Planning Permission.

#### 3.13.2 Sports Specific issues and observations (based on NGB and club responses)

**3.13.2.1 Badminton:** Badminton is generally well provided for in Essex within a range of schools and sports centres across the County. For example, there is a new six court sports hall at the St. John Payne School in Chelmsford. The City Council operated sports halls provide opportunity for recreational club and casual badminton in the main, but junior county competitions take place in the four court Anglia Ruskin University sports hall which provides a sprung wooden floor. Cost and availability are issues in some venues in Chelmsford.

**3.13.2.2 Basketball:** The most important facilities for basketball are Baddow High School and Anglia Ruskin University. The key issues are increasing access to existing facilities at an affordable rate; and creating new multi court facilities with community use agreements in place in order to allow clubs to operate informal and formal participation initiatives.

**3.13.2.3 Boxing:** Chelmsford Boxing Club shares premises with the National Association of Boys and Girls Clubs in central Chelmsford, providing them with their training gym facilities. Boxing shows/events take place at the Marconi sports facility. Discussions with the Governing Body and Club have not identified any specific concerns.

**3.13.2.4 Indoor Bowls:** There is one major indoor bowling centre in Chelmsford, namely The Falcon Bowling and Social Club, Springfield, north Chelmsford (eight indoor rinks plus social facilities, two outdoor greens - one grass, one artificial grass). The club has put in a funding application in to refurbish its outdoor synthetic green. They also wish to build an outdoor pavilion and are looking into ways of funding this facility.

**3.13.2.5 Indoor Football:** Futsal is a growing form of 5v5 indoor football. It is the FIFA and UEFA accredited version of 5v5 indoor football. It requires a sports hall (approximately one basketball court size) and is played at the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre and at Anglia Ruskin University. Futsal competitions are limited when played within a single sports hall and ideally require two halls of suitable dimensions so that competition games can be played in parallel.

**3.13.2.6 Gymnastics:** Chelmsford and Swallows Gymnastics clubs are currently accommodated within their own leased premises. Growth in this sport may require additional facilities in the future.

**3.13.2.7 Judo:** Clubs are variously accommodated within halls around the region where the important criteria are ownership and storage of mats. There is no regional centre for Essex nor purpose built Dojo. A Dojo of regional significance could be included economically within a multi-sports facility and would accommodate a main club (adults and juniors), other martial arts clubs, aerobics classes and yoga for all ages. This might be considered as part of the eventual Riverside and Ice Centre replacement facilities.

**3.13.2.8 Netball:** There is expressed demand for a netball centre with some 10-12 outdoor courts and one or two indoor courts to host leagues and competitions. Similar provision has been made at the Basildon Sports Village. Such provision would be well used by local clubs, could attract more people from Chelmsford to the game and reduce travelling time to venues outside Chelmsford.

**3.13.2.9 Squash and Racketball:** The existing courts are more or less at capacity at peak times in the Chelmsford area and the potential success of the regional and country strategies may well create potential demand for the provision of new courts over the next five years. Two new courts have recently been provided by Marconi, south of Chelmsford.

**3.13.2.10 Swimming:** Swimming pools are provided by public, education and private sectors within Chelmsford with only the public sector facilities offering secured use for the community. The ASA recognises the value to the community of the swimming pool at the Riverside Ice and Leisure Centre for recreational swimming and learning to swim; equally it has great value as a competition venue for various organisations (schools, uniformed groups for example); its length (at 33m) however no longer meets standard competition specification (25m), such that its competition value and use is limited. The Chelmsford Swimming Club and other clubs use it as a training venue in the main. Its replacement to modern day standards for swimming competition would be welcomed by the Club and by the ASA. The main base for the swimming club is at New Hall School pool (changing and shower facilities are rated as poor). They also use Moulsham High School and South Woodham Ferrers Pool.

**3.13.2.11 Table Tennis:** Chelmsford has recently been identified as a priority area for development. The Chelmsford Table Tennis Club runs its activities at the Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre, hiring the indoor training athletics track. Chelmsford Championships take place at Hylands School to the west of Chelmsford.



**3.13.2.12 Indoor Tennis:** Tennis has recently been identified as a priority area for development. While there are no current plans for an indoor tennis centre, Chelmsford remains identified by the LTA Essex Region as a priority for indoor tennis. Airdomes or lightweight structures may offer alternative opportunities for outdoor tennis clubs in the future, subject to planning consents and funding.

**3.13.2.13 Volleyball:** The exposure for volleyball is very limited in the Chelmsford City Council area considering the substantial amount of success and recognition that local teams/players have achieved. If the sport is to grow, it is important that the clubs and associated teams play in facilities where they are priority hirers or have long term usage agreements in place. In addition to this, if any of the teams gain promotion to the Super eight league, which is possible for Team Essex Volleyball, then a facility that has suitable spectator seating around a volleyball court is required. There is capital funding available from the NGB for fixed volleyball equipment.

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

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 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, village recreation grounds and rights of way. Consultation undertaken for this section included key stakeholder interviews and surveys, a casual user survey focused on Chelmsford City Council Parks, and a survey of relevant local (non-sports) groups and organisations.

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

4.1.3 This section is comprised of six main sub-sections:

- Strategic context and overview
- Parks, gardens, and recreation grounds
- Allotments
- Natural green space - e.g. wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands
- Water Recreation
- Footpaths, cycling and equestrian routes (bridleways)

4.1.4 Each section features findings from the various consultation processes undertaken (as appropriate).

### 4.2 Strategic context and overview

4.2.1 This section provides a strategic overview and general comments from the key external stakeholders consulted. Additional comments from these stakeholders will also be found in the five following sections (4.3 to 4.7) in relation to more specific issues.

#### 4.2.2 Natural England (NE) (Lead adviser, sustainable land use team)

4.2.2.1 Natural England provides conservation advice for statutory designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), to SSSI owners and occupiers. These may be private individuals or local authorities.

#### **4.2.2.2 Standards of provision**

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

- of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (five 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 10 kilometres of home; plus
- statutory Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per 1000 population

4.2.2.2.2 Natural England suggest that these standards should be a target to achieve; and particularly that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (five minutes walk) from home. Key points raised by Natural England via the Lead adviser (Sustainable Land Use Team) are noted below:

#### **4.2.2.3 Access and Quality**

- Natural England supports designs for outdoor spaces that, through an integrated Ecosystem Approach to land management, deliver multiple benefits to people and wildlife.
- Natural England also supports better access to greenspaces close to where people live.
- Evidence shows that over two thirds of visits taken in England are close to home (68% within two miles) and that participation in visits over the previous week by residents of each region is likely associated with the amount of locally available greenspace.
- Natural England support designs that seek to achieve this through increasing the amount of greenspaces and improving the quality of greenspaces that communities have access to.
- Natural England supports strategies for greenspace and green infrastructure provision that are accompanied by sustainable management mechanisms to ensure high quality provision for communities into the future.
- It is important that good, safe cycle access is provided to open spaces, with good linkages between each space. Secure cycle locking areas are important with provision of 'Sheffield stand' type facilities recommended

#### **4.2.2.4 Sport and recreation in environmentally sensitive areas**

The Council should note that whilst as a general principle Natural England supports public access to the natural environment for a wide range of reasons (some of which are expanded on below), there are occasions where the sensitivity of the special wildlife interest of SSSIs and other designated sites requires carefully designed solutions to conserve this interest and safeguard undisturbed areas as may be appropriate. Here the principles of honeypot areas to absorb the majority of recreational pressures can sacrificially relieve damaging and disturbing

impacts in more sensitive locations.

#### **4.2.2.5 The importance of biodiversity - multi functional open spaces**

A multi-functional approach, which recognises the value of nature and the services that ecosystems deliver, delivers sustainable ways of improving the quality of people's lives and delivering economic benefits.

### **4.2.3 The National Trust (NT) (Community Engagement Manager)**

4.2.3.1 The National Trust Community Engagement Manager highlighted the following:

"The National Trust's regional sites in closest proximity to Chelmsford include Danbury and Lingwood Commons (SSSI), Blakes Wood (SSSI) and Hadleigh Country Park. None of these sites have visitor facilities e.g. tearooms, visitor centres and so on. There are no restrictions on opening hours, nor do they have a boundary fence, so as such we class the sites as open access countryside".

#### **4.2.3.2 General**

- On a national level The Trust have produced a number of key reports on children's play and other general guidance, which influence the work in Essex and across the country.
- Reports reflecting the increasing need to re-engage children with the outdoors have been published including *Natural Childhood* and *Reconnecting children with nature*. A Nationwide campaign *50 things to do before your 11¾* has been established and a 'kid's council' recruited to help influence future plans and programmes.
- The NT planning stance covers key planning principles focused on safeguarding wildlife, the landscape and natural environment.

The Trust's responses to specific issues are supplied below (verbatim).

#### **4.2.3.3 Sports and recreation in environmentally 'sensitive areas'**

If the definition of 'sensitive areas' is that of conservation value then we are constantly managing these conflicts and the need to strike a balance between access and conservation. New recreation areas would alleviate the capacity issues and impact on nationally significant sites and aid the health and well-being opportunities in the area.

#### **4.2.3.4 The importance of biodiversity – multi functional open spaces**

This is a key topic for us as we are a conservation charity and will be championing landscape scale connectivity in the future. We manage our sites on multi-functional levels with charitable ethos of balancing conservation and access for all. We are happy to advise further/be consulted if this translates into access and wildlife/nature in one site – as we are experts in this field. We would also advise that you talk to people involved in 'Countryside Stewardship' – Natural England and Forestry Commission.

#### **4.2.3.5 Good Practice and Partnership Working**

4.2.3.5.1 The Trust in Essex has specific plans and aspirations with regards to a number of sites including current proactive partnership working.

4.2.3.5.2 Our Community Engagement team are working with Essex County Council Country Parks with our campaign *50 Things to do before you're 11¾* at Danbury Park.

4.2.3.5.3 We participate in a number of events – 3ft People, Fling, Ideas Festival that are hosted in local parks. This enables the Trust to reach our target audiences when we don't have considerable presence at our sites.

#### **4.2.3.6 Local National Trust Research<sup>28</sup>**

4.2.3.6.1 A study was commissioned by the National Trust in 2014 into audience profile and consumer insight in South Essex, with Southend and Chelmsford providing the two key areas of focus. 200, 15-minute phone interviews were conducted with Chelmsford residents exploring motivations for visiting, travel times and their leisure activities and hobbies.

4.2.3.6.2 Key Findings include:

- In general, Chelmsford and Southend exhibit an older age profile, with Chelmsford more affluent – driven by a higher proportion of Socio-Economic Groups A and B and potentially more affluent retirees in groups D and E<sup>29</sup>
- 80% of those surveyed in Chelmsford enjoy going on walks and rambling, 63% visiting the local park, 40% Cycling, 31% birdwatching and 24% walking the dog.
- Participation is higher in South Essex than the National Average with over 40% of the sample visiting countryside sites and nature reserves more than twice a year,
- An increasing number of those sampled were choosing to spend their time locally in South Essex rather than travelling further afield, and those willing to travel over an hour to reach a destination down from 72% in 2013 to 63%.

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<sup>28</sup> Full details of the survey findings are available on request.

<sup>29</sup> Socio-Economic Groups: Market Research agencies often divide the population into different groupings, based on the occupation of the head of the household, for the purpose of drawing comparisons across a wide range of people - it is used to see how people in differing socio-economic situations react to the same stimuli. The groups are most often defined as follows:-

- A - Higher managerial, administrative, professional e.g. Chief executive, senior civil servant, surgeon
- B - Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional e.g. bank manager, teacher
- C1- Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial e.g. shop floor supervisor, bank clerk, sales person
- C2 - Skilled manual workers e.g. electrician, carpenter
- D- Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers e.g. assembly line worker, refuse collector, messenger
- E - Casual labourers, pensioners, unemployed e.g. pensioners without private pensions and anyone living on basic benefits

- Activities including helping protect wildlife and conservation, getting children playing outdoors, tidying up local parks and gardens, health walks and local volunteer opportunities were all cited as ways respondents would engage further with the National Trust.

#### **4.2.3.7 Other Observations and Issues**

- The National Trust manages a number of key sites of SSSI in Chelmsford, which are well used and enjoyed by residents.
- Their own quantitative research offers an insight into the motivations of Chelmsford residents; including their hobbies, leisure pursuits, personal interests and the travel times they are willing to consider when accessing natural open space
- The Trust has aspirations to develop facilities in Chelmsford based sites.
- During conversation with the Community Engagement Manager it was also noted that the National Trust are looking to have a greater input into planning issues in the Essex area and would welcome any future opportunities to comment.

#### **4.2.4 Chelmsford Bio-Diversity Forum (Chair)**

4.2.4.1 The Chelmsford Biodiversity Forum was set up in 2002 and includes a range of partners responsible for delivering the Chelmsford Biodiversity Action Plan 2013 – 2018 (CBAP). The Forum supports the Essex Wildlife Trust 'Living Landscapes' vision and is a partner organisation in delivering projects in the area. The Forum's comments are noted below (verbatim).

##### **4.2.4.2 General**

4.2.4.2.1 An audit of the amenity/informal sites is required to establish whether management for biodiversity and other functions such as urban drainage could increase their value and maybe reduce maintenance inputs.

4.2.4.2.2 Essex and Chelmsford currently has no green infrastructure policy and this should be addressed.

4.2.4.2.3 There are 150 Local Wildlife Sites in the borough but most are privately owned and therefore not open to the public. The National Trust own key sites in the Danbury area and the Biodiversity Forum would welcome increased engagement with them.

4.2.4.2.4 *Living Landscapes* is a national initiative promoted by The Wildlife Trusts. In 2008 Essex adopted the target of producing eight Living Landscape visions documents within the county by 2010 as a Local Indicator under the Local Area Agreement scheme. To date five have been produced within the City Council area.

##### **4.2.4.3 The Importance of Biodiversity - Multi Functional Open Spaces**

Clearly we believe this to be a vital objective – working in partnership with Parks we have been able to deliver a number of projects that have enhanced the wildlife value of sites;

however there is always more that can be done. By taking a multifunctional approach there are opportunities for example to integrate elements such as flood management with habitat creation or use wildflowers to create visual interest in an area of traditional amenity grass. It is hoped that the recently proposed Wildlife Plan will help ensure that the opportunities are considered at a strategic level.

#### **4.2.5 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports)**

4.2.5.1 An online survey was set up for local organisations with an interest in green spaces (non-sporting). Responses were received from 24 organisations with varied interests, including rambling, horse riding, 'friends of' parks groups, bird watching and conservation volunteers.

##### **4.2.5.2 Overview and general findings**

4.2.5.2.1 The general views of these local community organisations as regards the overall quantity and quality of the different types of non-sporting green spaces in Chelmsford are summarised in the information and Figure 7 below.

##### **4.2.5.2.2 Quantity:**

- Of the 83% of respondents confirming that their organisations made direct use of open space, 52% agreed there was enough open space and recreational facilities to meet their needs.
- A further 33% felt there was inadequate provision and 14% had no opinion.
- Organisations identifying a lack of facilities included The Essex Bridleways Association, Essex Waterways, Chelmsford Cycling Action, Essex Birdwatching Society, The Environment Bank and Essex Biodiversity Forum - reflecting a broad spectrum of interest groups.

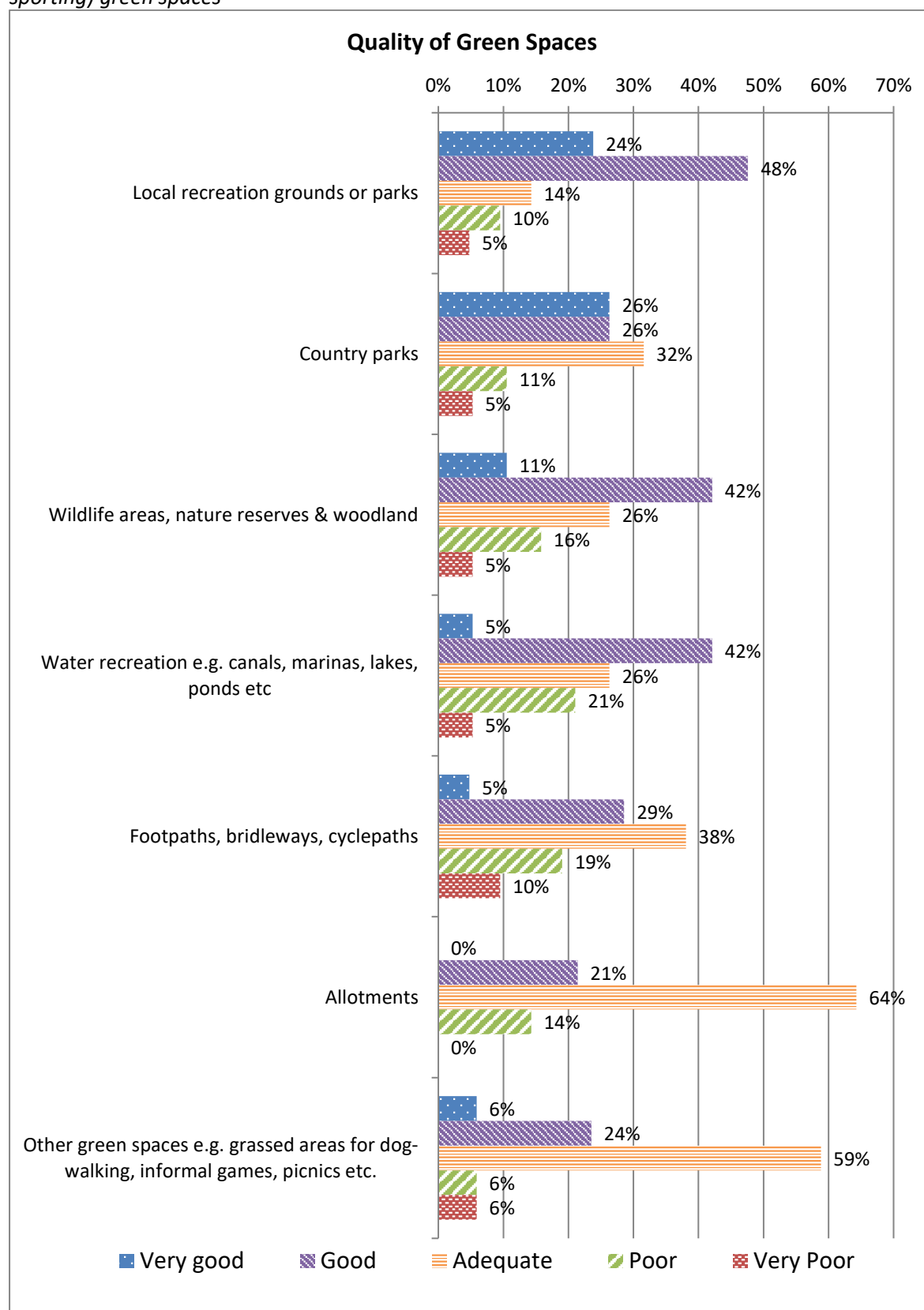
##### **4.2.5.2.3 Quality:**

From Figure 7 it can be seen that:

- 68 % of groups are happy with the overall quality of their local recreation grounds and parks (rating them as good or very good).
- 50% were happy with the overall quality of wildlife areas, nature reserves and accessible woodlands) and 47% with Country Park provision.
- Aspects where quality was not rated so highly were footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths, where 37% rated them adequate and 27% rated them poor, or very poor.
- Other informal grassed spaces were rated by 50% of respondents as adequate.

More detailed responses in relation to different aspects of provision can be found in the associated excel spreadsheet (Appendix 6).

Figure 7: General views of local community organisations regarding the overall quality of (non-sporting) green spaces





#### 4.2.5.2.4 Access

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

- Access issues appear to be high with over 50% of the respondents reporting that they suffer access issues in relation to open space and recreational facilities.
- Issues directly affecting access include: limited cycle path provision, blocked footpaths, and poor paving; and infrastructure for disabled users.

#### 4.2.5.3 Sport and Recreation in sensitive areas

The following points were highlighted by respondents (verbatim):

- Disturbance and/or noise does create issues for wildlife, but if these activities are managed and sited correctly then the affect should be kept to a minimum. Before more new sites are created the existing sites must be used to their full capacity.
- Chelmsford Council, in my opinion, do an excellent job of balancing the needs of all user groups, sports groups, general park users, wildlife groups, etc.
- In general most field sports are "noisy" and are better placed away from housing. There seems to be less and less sports fields and what fields that have survived are mostly over used.
- There is currently very limited provision within the Borough. One of the few off-road vehicle courses is situated west of the A130 opposite Belsteads Farm Lane. This has Essex Wildlife Trust nature reserves to the north and south and the River Chelmer to the west. There is some damage to these caused by the vehicles and a better venue would enable this site to be restored and create a larger reserve. (It is also close to the new access to a major new residential development. It is necessary to identify alternative sites which offer a wider range of activities including water sports and powered vehicle activities. If these are properly designed they can integrate habitat creation etc. In general sport is important for people's health and well-being. Most outdoor sports require large areas of often flat close-mown grass. These areas have little wildlife value however this should not be an issue so long opportunities to provide wildlife habitats around these areas are taken.

## 4.3 Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds

### 4.3.1 Chelmsford City Council Parks Development

4.3.1.1 Parks and Green Space Services manage and maintain a wide variety of parks, nature reserves, play areas, sports pitches, allotments, cemeteries and gardens. They also offer a broad programme of activities for the parks volunteers who make a significant contribution to the upkeep of City parks and gardens.

4.3.1.2 Specific points from the Parks Development Manager are noted below:

- Coronation Park off Springfield Road has occasional issues with limited car parking at weekends due to the rugby and crickets activities on site. It is an aspiration to extend into open space at the Police HQ adjacent to the site to improve access/facilities to visitors and reduce any inconvenience to adjoining residents.
- In urban areas generally, parking space is at a premium and there is a limited quantity, which has resulted in commuter parking at public parks and at times inconvenience to park visitors.
- The distribution of parks and green spaces across the city is generally good, although limited in older urban areas such as Old Moulsham and the town centre, where new development places increased pressure on existing green space.
- In the context of accessibility, there is a need for a better strategic spread of skate parks and BMX tracks, since young people do rely on public or parental transport where these facilities are not immediately accessible.
- It is the intention to ensure a green flag standard park is accessible to everyone in the City. (Currently 13 green flag sites and three green heritage awards)
- There is currently a good geographic spread of sites, and it is hoped the next application of the cemetery and crematorium will help increase access<sup>30</sup>.
- Smaller 'satellite' sites are also being added to bigger established Green Flag Parks i.e. Boleyn Gardens is being linked with Beaulieu Park Rec and Andrews Park is being linked with Melbourne, which reflects existing management arrangements.

4.3.1.3 The Parks Development Manager made specific reference to Hylands Park which is a major strategic facility. It has over 574 acres of parkland, including an ancient woodland, grassland, ponds, lakes and formal gardens. Facilities include a visitor's centre, outdoor café, an inclusive, adventure play area and formal pleasure gardens. Key points highlighted were:

- Hylands Park has poor access for visitors using bus and public transport; the nearest bus stop requiring a 10-minute walk and does limit people's ability to access the site via public transport. The Friends of Hylands do operate a mini bus service during peak times such as the summer holiday period however this does not support access requirements throughout the year.

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<sup>30</sup> The City Council have since confirmed that Chelmsford Cemetery & Crematorium has achieved Green Flag Award status in 2015.

- Hylands Park has benefited from a number of improvements in recent years including a new play area and refreshment facilities, but has become a victim of its own success - with increased visitor numbers and requests for events in the park. There are now capacity issues and both visitor numbers and events to be held require careful management in order to protect the historic landscape and House.

#### 4.3.1.4 Other comments

- Infrastructure improvements are required in a number of areas; examples include Melbourne Park where new sports facilities have been installed but the existing 1950's park pavilion hasn't been significantly upgraded, and a number of park pavilions require improvements to heating and water systems
- Oaklands Park has had an extension to its museums and a new play area, but a frequent visitor comment is disappointment at having no café facility.

#### 4.3.1.5 Chelmsford Museum and Essex Regiment Museum (Oaklands Park):

- The museum is located in Oaklands Park, in the Old Moulsham area of the City and is centrally based in the park. A funding bid to develop a café facility adjacent to the museum and serving both the park and museum is currently in progress.
- As part of the Heritage Lottery funding bid, the museum conducted a 'non user' survey – asking face-to-face questions in the Town Centre on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014.
- A 'user' focus group was also undertaken with people already signed up on the museums contact list with the primary view on parks facilities relating to the provision of a kiosk or café facility, which would attract users to Oaklands Park.

##### 4.3.1.5.1 The Museum Manager highlighted the following points:

- The museum and Oaklands Park is out of the town centre and difficult to reach.
- The museum is centrally located within the park but there is limited lighting on the routes through to it from surrounding roads and access points. This makes evening events in the museum in the winter months less attractive to visitors as lighting and general safety is limited. Events have been brought forward to earlier times.
- On site car parking is limited with only some on street parking and with parking restrictions.
- The outdoor toilet facilities have been a key issue in the park (not those provided within the museum) although they have been renovated over the period of the consultation and were completed early 2015.

### 4.3.2 Parks Casual User Survey

#### 4.3.2.1 Introduction

4.3.2.1.1 In line with the project brief and consultation plan a 'casual user' survey was undertaken at five pre-selected sites across the city, with respondents able to complete either an on-line survey, or respond via paper questionnaires. This provides a very useful overview

of the general public's view on City Council managed parks and gardens which will feed into the *Open Space Assessment* main report.

#### **4.3.2.2. Method and overview**

4.3.2.2.1 The sites, selected by Chelmsford City Council represent a range of facilities and geographical spread. The sites surveyed were:

- Saltcoats Park and Compass Gardens, South Woodham Ferrers
- Bell Meadow / Central Park, Chelmsford
- Oaklands Park, Chelmsford
- Chelmer Village Green, Chelmsford
- Melbourne Park, Chelmsford

4.3.2.2.2 Marketing and promotion was undertaken via a number of methods:

- Posters placed in park, community and local venue notice boards
- Leaflet dispensers placed at key entrances to each site and regularly updated with information flyers
- @Chelmsparks twitter account
- Indoor venues adjacent to the sites putting up posters and distributing flyers.

4.3.2.2.3 In addition to the original brief, a paper version of the survey was printed and placed at key indoor locations around certain sites, enabling those without access to the Internet to submit their views.

4.3.2.2.4 The survey went live on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and dispensers remained in situ until Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 – a total of 6 weeks. Chelmsford City Council parks staff ensured the holders remained topped up and replaced vandalised holders in Melbourne Park.

#### **4.3.2.3 Responses**

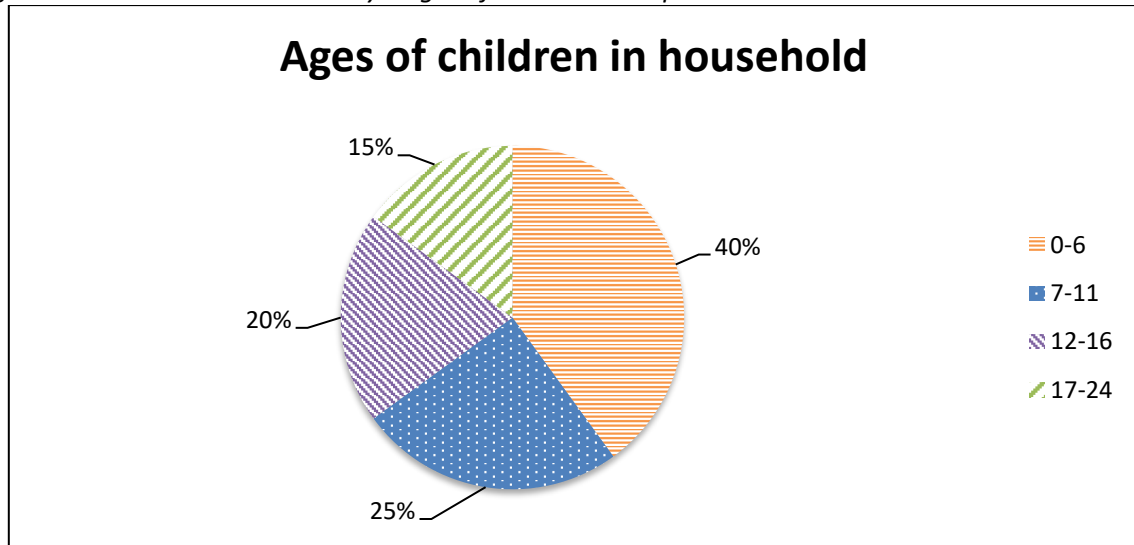
4.3.2.3.1 A total of 107 responses were received across all sites, 100 online submissions and seven written surveys were completed.

4.3.2.3.2 The core age ranges of respondents were just under 25% in the 51 – 64 age range, and a further 21% aged between 41-50.

4.3.2.3.3 33% of respondents fell within the age range of 26 – 40.

4.3.2.3.4 37% of respondents had families with children (see Figure 8 for age splits) and 9% noted that illness or disability limits their household's activities to some degree.

Figure 8: Parks Casual User Survey - Ages of children in respondent households



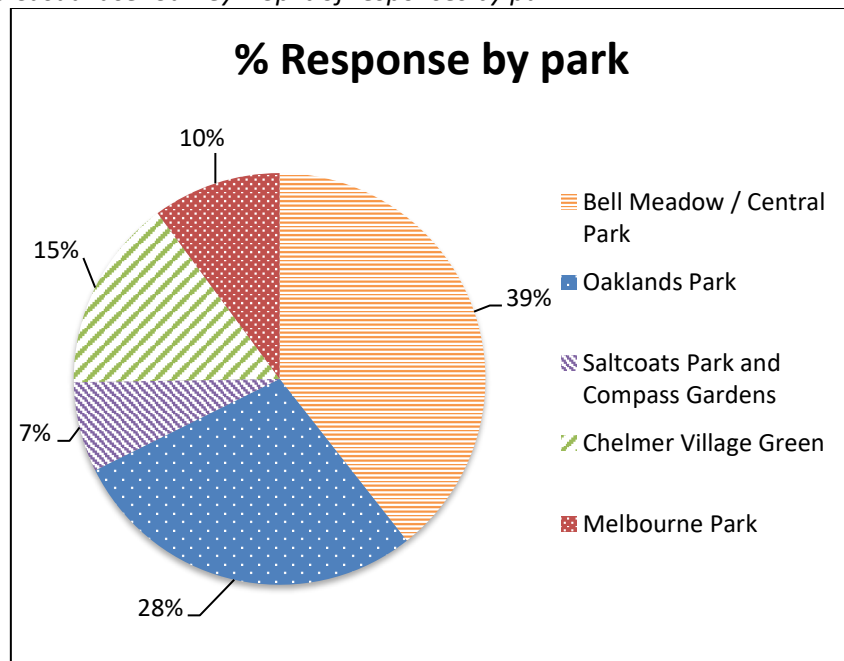
4.3.2.3.5 92% of respondents considered themselves of white British or white 'other', therefore, only a small minority of Black and Minority Ethnic communities participated in the survey.

#### 4.3.2.4 The Findings

##### 4.3.2.4.1 Frequency of use of all open spaces

4.3.2.4.1. 1 The split of responses by park can be seen in Figure 9 below.

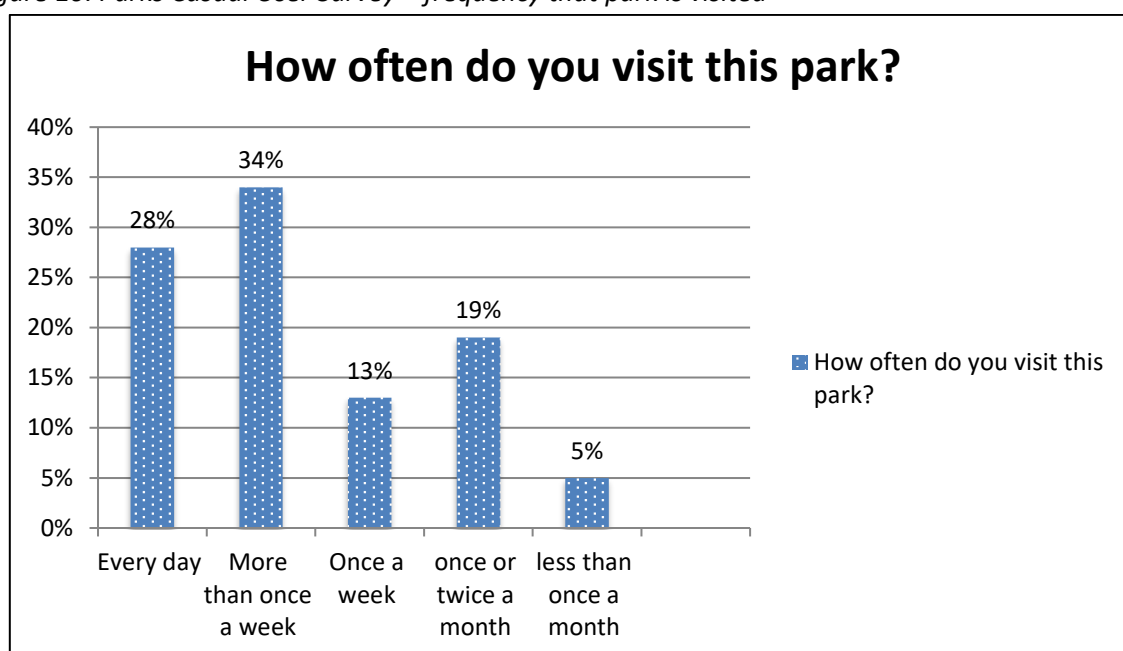
Figure 9: Parks Casual user Survey – Spilt of responses by park



4.3.2.4.1.2 The responses are indicative of the location of some of the sites – most notably Bell Meadow / Central Park which is in a city centre location and is a well-used thoroughfare for commuters and visitors.

4.3.2.4.1.3 Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used the park they were responding about. The results are shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Parks Casual User Survey – frequency that park is visited



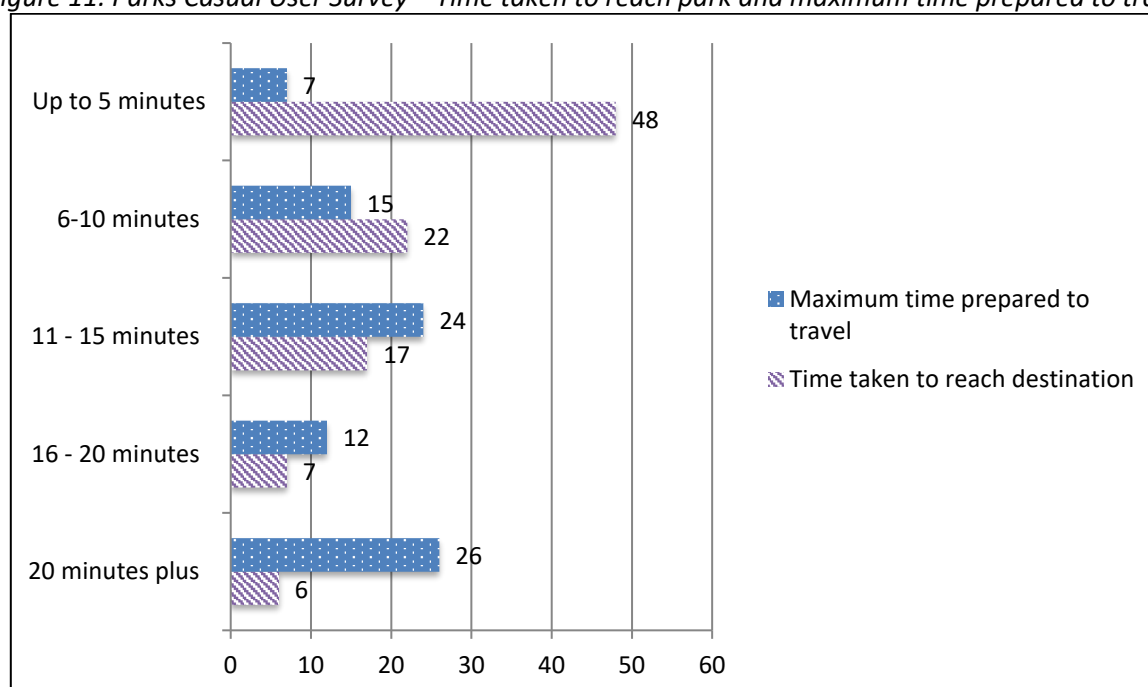
#### 4.3.2.4.1.4 General Observations regarding frequency that park is visited

- The results demonstrate that the parks surveyed are popular and used on a frequent basis; over 62% of respondents use the sites either every day, or more than once a week. Only 5% used the park less than once a month.
- In addition, over half of respondents reported using the parks on both weekends and weekdays, demonstrating continued and sustained use throughout the week.

#### 4.3.2.4.2 Access (Geographical)

4.3.2.4.2.1 Respondents were asked how long it had taken them to reach their destination, and what their maximum travel time would be. Figure 11 demonstrates how far individual respondents travelled to reach their destination and how far they would be willing to travel.

Figure 11: Parks Casual User Survey – Time taken to reach park and maximum time prepared to travel



#### 4.3.2.4.2.2 General observations regarding access issues

- Whilst a majority of respondents had travelled less than five minutes, it is clear people are willing to travel further to access the facilities they would like to use.
- It is interesting to see that a majority have excellent access to their nearest park with 48 respondents travelling less than five minutes to reach the site.
- It is also evident that people are willing to travel to reach the facilities they require with a total of 62 respondents willing to travel in excess of 11 minutes upwards
- Notably when breaking the information down on an individual park basis – 38% of respondents in Oaklands Park were willing to travel 20 minutes plus to reach their destination. This suggests that people are willing to travel further to ‘destination’ sites where added attractions such as the museum are an impetus to travel.
- 62% of respondents from Chelmer Village Green took less than five minutes to reach the park with all respondents accessing the site by foot.

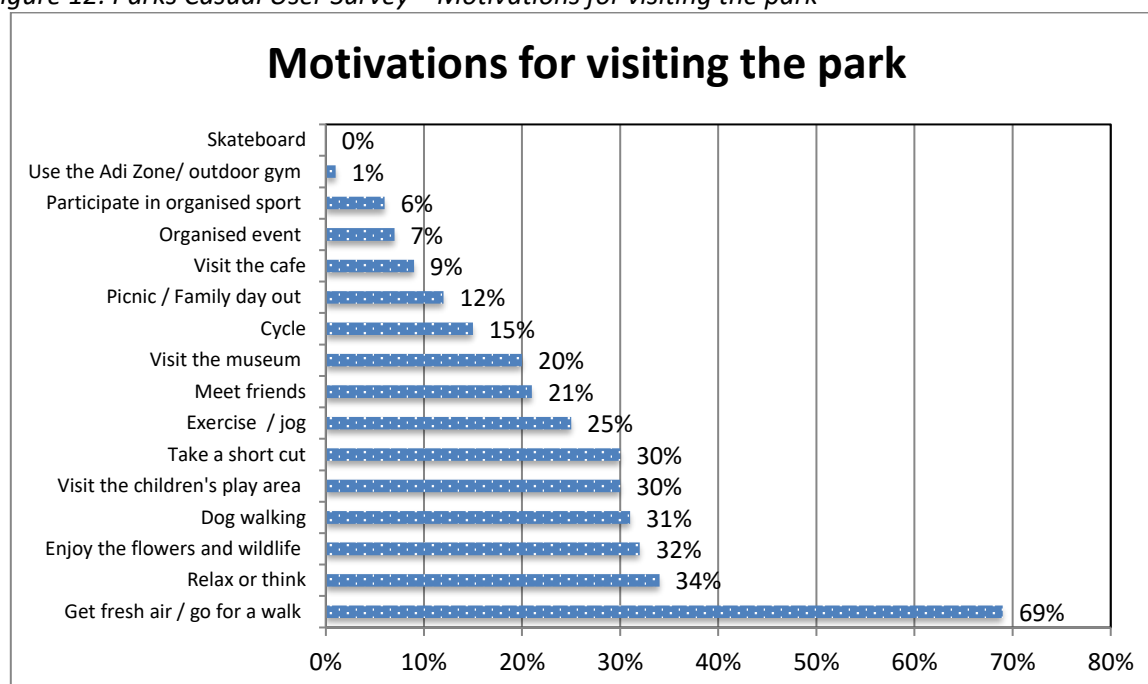
4.3.2.4.2.3 In continued support of the view that residents have good local access to their parks, 67% of respondents travelled by foot to the park, with the second most popular mode of transport being car (23%) Other modes of transport included bus and bicycle.

4.3.2.4.2.4 It is not an unusual scenario for walking to be the predominant mode of travel to reach facilities such as local parks and children’s playgrounds and other informal recreation areas. Equally it is more common for people to travel by car, or public transport to larger, more specific facilities. It is important when developing the access element of local standards to take into consideration different thresholds for different modes of transport.

#### 4.3.2.4.3 Access (*Motivations for travel*)

4.3.2.4.3.1 Motivations for visiting the park were prioritised by respondents – with people being able to tick as many boxes as relevant. Figure 12 below shows the most popular reasons they considered for visiting the park.

Figure 12: Parks Casual User Survey – Motivations for visiting the park



#### 4.3.2.4.3.2 General Observations regarding motivations for visiting the park<sup>31</sup>

- 69% of respondents cited 'going for a walk / getting fresh air as a reason for being in the park, twice as many votes as any other category; suggesting that despite other reasons for visiting the park, the inherent benefits of outdoor activity are acknowledged by respondents.
- Other primary motivations for visiting the park include: To relax or think (34%) enjoy the flowers and wildlife (32%), dog walking (31%) and visiting a children's play area (30%)
- More structured activities received lower responses with organised sports, picnics, meeting friends and organised events receiving response rates of between 6% and 20% - These findings however are consistent with the seasonal variations in park use and the survey having been carried out in November/ December time. Undoubtedly these figures would be higher during the summer months.

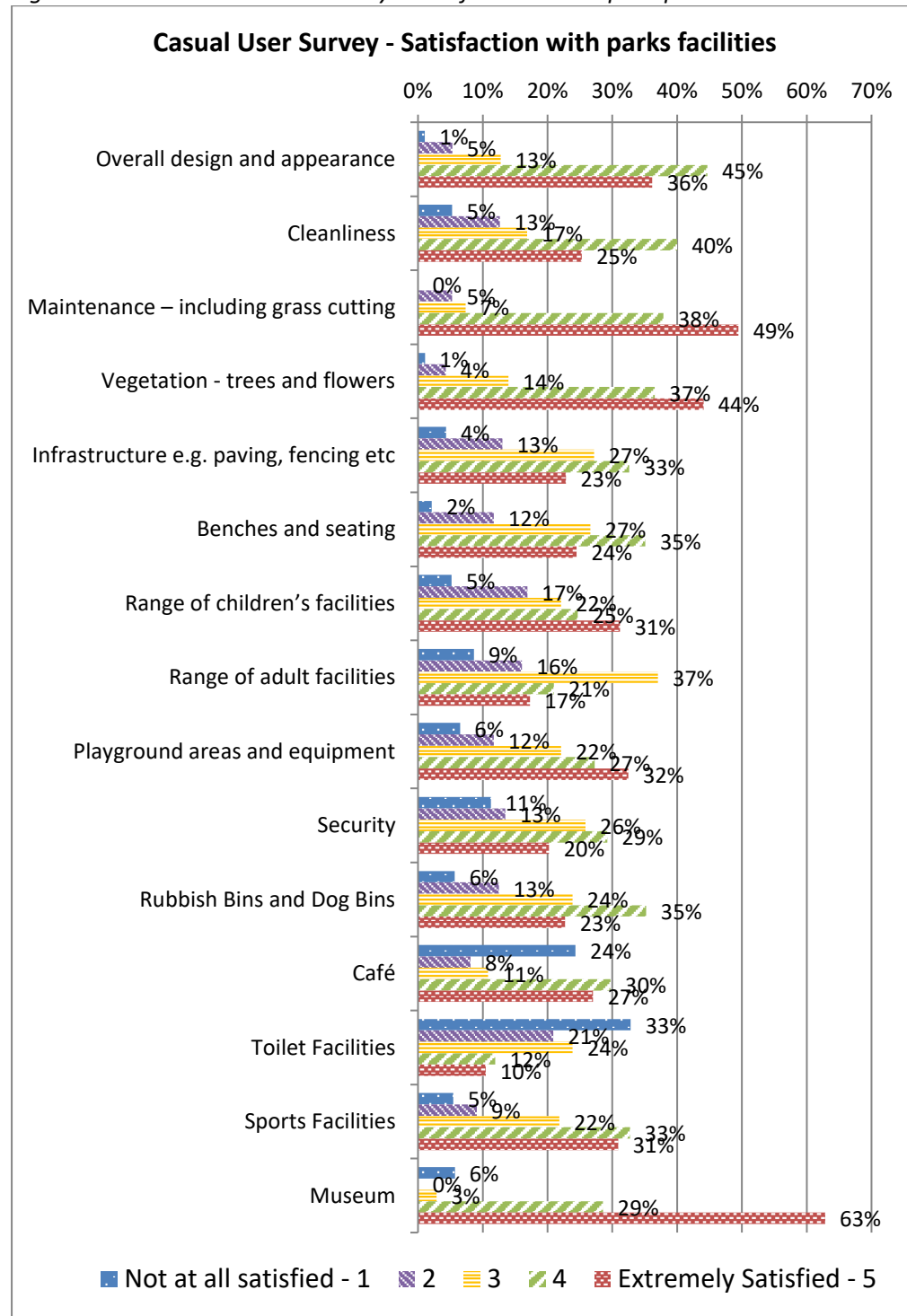
<sup>31</sup> Please note that this survey was aimed at adults. It is clear from consultation with young people that for young people the skate park is well used and is a key motivation for their visiting the park.



#### 4.3.2.4.4 Quality of open space

4.3.2.4.4.1 Respondents were asked how they rated their satisfaction with the facilities available to them in the park. Satisfaction was rated on a scale of 1 being not at all satisfied, through to 5 being extremely satisfied: where the category was not relevant respondents were able to identify them as not applicable. Figure 13 details satisfaction levels on the different categories of facilities.

Figure 13: Parks Casual User Survey - Satisfaction with open space



#### 4.3.2.4.4.2 General Observations regarding satisfaction with open space:

- The quality of the Chelmsford Parks included in the study is considered to be of a high standard with less than 10% of people rating any of the facilities a 1 – (not at all satisfied)
- Maintenance and upkeep scores well with 82% giving park overall design and appearance a 1 or 2, 87% for maintenance and 67% rating cleanliness at the same standard demonstrating the overall feel of the parks are positive and welcoming.
- Infrastructure also has a positive review with 56% of respondents giving a score of a 5 – extremely satisfied, or a 4. Paving and fencing received 60% rating and benches and seating 57%. Variations on a park by park basis are more evident however in more detailed qualitative feedback, outlined below.
- Children's Play facilities are rated fairly consistently across the range of score with children's facilities, and play equipment receiving around 15% (3) mid 20% (2) and between 26 – 27% (5 extremely satisfied.)
- Specific infrastructure issues are noted; dissatisfaction with toilet facilities is evident with 23% saying they are extremely dissatisfied with provision.
- Sports facilities have received positive feedback with 44% of respondents rating either a 5 (extremely satisfied) or a 4.
- Of the 40% of respondents who commented on the Museum provision (60% ticked the N/A box) 26% were extremely satisfied, and a further 11% rated it a 4 – demonstrating an overwhelmingly positive response to the museum facility within Oaklands Park.

#### 4.3.2.4.4.3 Qualitative feedback supports the view that Chelmsford Parks are of a high quality and standards:

- 'The Parks Services team do an excellent job. Thank you for making the Parks so nice to be in.' (Oaklands Park)
- 'Its an excellent park, very well managed. Any reduction in this facility would greatly concern me and my family. We have a disabled grandson who uses this park a lot. It is family friendly and good to have quality facilities that promote good health and family experience. This is a poor area of Chelmsford and this park is depended upon by many.' (Melbourne Park)

#### 4.3.2.4.5 Safety and Security

4.3.2.4.5.1 When asked the specific question of whether they felt safe in the park, 87% of respondents said they did. The satisfaction question however demonstrates a lesser confidence with 48% scoring a 3 or below – and 9% stating they are extremely dissatisfied. Table 10 summarises the reasons why people did not feel safe.

Table 10: Parks Casual User Survey – Reasons why people did not feel safe in the park

| Park                              | Reason  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | Although the lights aren't very bright now it's getting dark some dingy path areas  |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | Poorly lit when dark  |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | At night it feels very un-safe as it is very dark, not much lighting  |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | Underpass by cricket ground gloomy and kids hang around drinking, lots of graffiti  |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | Most of the time, a bit uneasy if I'm too early or too late in the afternoon  |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | Cycling at night is often unsafe as there are no wardens or police nearby   |
| Bell Meadow / Central Park        | There are increasing numbers of drunks using the park and the use of class three drugs and their sale is on the increase also.  |
| Chelmer Village Green             | Certain times of the day a lot of older kids 'hang out' there   |
| Chelmer Village Green             | Dogs off the lead particularly when it's dark.  |
| Chelmer Village Green             | Hoodie yobs drinking, smoking and throwing their rubbish where they feel like it in the blue round metal seating  |
| Oaklands                          | There are lots of youths taking drugs and hanging around after school   |
| Oaklands Park                     | Uncontrolled dogs.  |
| Oaklands Park                     | On occasions certain people in the parks come across as not conducive to safety e.g. loud, swearing, drinking in day etc. I do feel a bit vulnerable even in the day.                                   |
| Saltcoat Park and Compass Gardens | I babysit my friend's children and i refuse to take them there. This is because the last time I took them, the youngest being 4 years old, cut herself on broken glass found around the play equipment. |

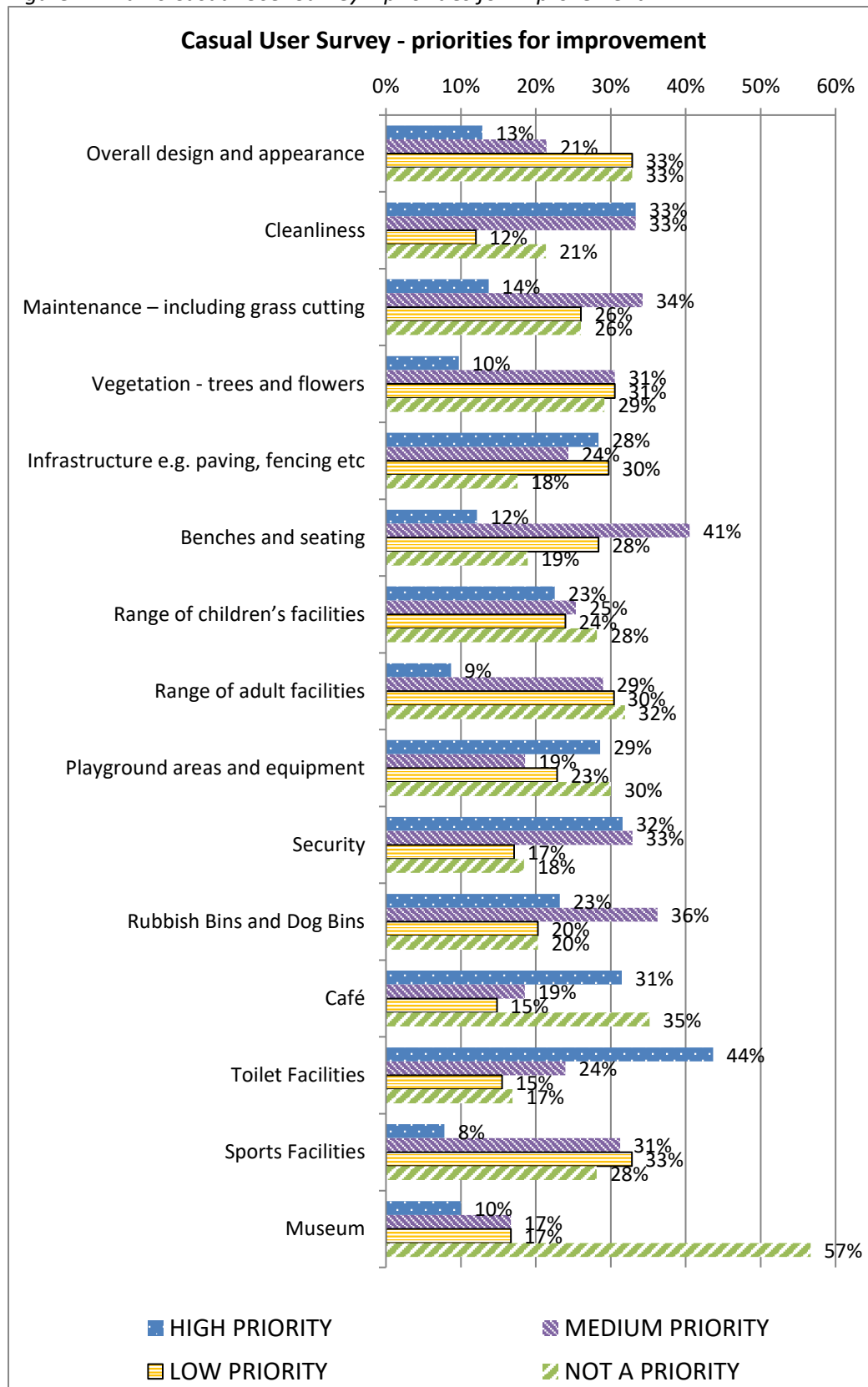
4.3.2.4.5.2 It is clear from these responses that lighting plays a significant role in the establishment of a safer, more welcoming environment for park users and that teenagers spending time in the parks can sometimes appear intimidating.

4.3.2.4.5.2 The provision of defined youth facilities in identifiable 'teen' areas, including teen shelters was noted as a priority in the Youth Council stakeholder feedback. More detail can be found in Section 5 of this report.

#### 4.3.2.4.6 Key issues and priorities for improvement

4.3.2.4.6.1 Respondents were given the opportunity to rate the need for new, or improved facilities by indicating priorities at four levels (high, medium, low and not a priority). Figure 14 shows the ratings for each of the facilities/areas.

Figure 14: Parks Casual User Survey – priorities for improvement



#### 4.3.2.4.6.2 General Observations regarding priorities for improvement

- The areas noted as a highest priority for improvement are toilet facilities (40%), followed by cleanliness (32%)
- 30% of respondents identified security as a high priority, supporting the findings noted in priorities for improvement, and identifying a priority for future quality improvements.
- Interestingly playground facilities and range of children's facilities are not considered a priority by a significant % of respondents, with 37% and 35% respectively stating they are not a priority. This may be due to the demographics of respondents, with only 37% having children.

#### 4.3.2.4.7 Additional qualitative comments and trends (on a site-by-site basis)

##### 4.3.2.4.7.1 Oaklands Park

The key issues identified in Oakland Park are the lack of a Café facility:

- *'The lack of a cafe brings Oakland Park down'*
- *'There needs to be a decent cafe at Oaklands Park, everything else is great. Excellent play equipment and tennis courts.....'*

And poor quality toilets:

- *Toilet facilities really need improving- they are not a nice place to be<sup>32</sup>*

87% of respondents however identified visiting the museum, and/ or the children's playground as the main reason for this visit, suggesting the facilities are well used and enjoyed.

##### 4.3.2.4.7.2 Central Park

Safety – 50% of all comments made around safety and security are in Central Park, focused primarily on poor lighting.

Generally however the qualitative comments received are extremely positive congratulating the quality and standards of maintenance achieved in Central Park:

- *'The Parks Department does a fantastic job and we wouldn't want to see the services or the parks areas diminish'*
- *'I watch the people who work there and they really do work very hard to keep it clean and tidy.'*

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<sup>32</sup> The City Council have since confirmed that these toilets were refurbished in 2015.

General comments on increased development on the periphery of the park, litter, and street drinking are also made.

#### 4.3.2.4.7.3 Chelmer Village Green

The general perception of this site is that whilst the quantity box is ticked, the quality of the site is significantly lacking. Litter problems are repeatedly identified, along with general lack of facilities and any real identity of the park.

- *'Kids play area is kept really badly. Litter in it is awful left from older kids and the fence around it is often broken.'*
- *'Lots of space, not much going on with it'*
- *'....it feels like odd bits of open land with no cohesive feeling'*

#### 4.3.2.4.7.4 Saltcoats Park and Compass Gardens

Poor footpath infrastructure, potholes, drainage and car parking facilities appear as significant and consistent issues at this site:

- *'Paths poorly maintained, car park at Compass Gardens in shocking condition'<sup>33</sup>*
- *'The footpaths and main car park are an absolute disgrace and virtually unusable in winter due to lack of drainage and maintenance. All weather surfacing must be a priority'*

This is supported by 63% of respondents identifying infrastructure as a 'high' priority for improvement.

#### 4.3.2.4.7.5 Melbourne Park

Positive feedback on the maintenance and management of the park by the park keeper / staff is referred to on several occasions:

- *'The park regularly has rubbish dumped overnight that that grounds staff clear up everyday. They are excellent staff. Very polite helpful.'*

Toilets and litter are also identified as a problem.

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<sup>33</sup> The City Council have since confirmed that car park and drainage improvement works were undertaken in late spring 2015.

### **4.3.2.5 Casual User Survey - Key findings**

#### **4.3.2.5.1 Access**

- A majority of respondents reached the site they were visiting within a 5-minute walking distance, demonstrating good existing access to parks and green spaces in these specific areas.
- Most people were willing to travel further to reach the park or green space they visited.
- Despite a majority of respondents stating they feel safe in the park, security and safety has been identified as a high priority for improvement, with levels of satisfaction being low on current provision.

#### **4.3.2.5.2 Quality**

- Respondents consider the parks included in the study to be of a high standard – supported by both quantitative and qualitative research. Staff are praised and well respected in the maintenance work they undertake and satisfaction levels are high.
- Specific facilities in individual parks, including toilets and café facilities have been noted as needing improvement, however further stakeholder research identifies these as already in the process of improvement (toilets) or part of a longer term improvement plan

#### **4.3.2.5.3 Quantity**

- As regards additional facilities children's play equipment and facilities have not rated particularly highly in the prioritisation exercise

### **4.3.3 Stakeholder views - Parks, Gardens and Allotments**

#### **4.3.3.1 The National Trust**

Points raised by the Trust are noted below (verbatim):

##### **4.3.3.1.1 Local Parks and Recreation Grounds**

The Trust have noted a requirement for increased quantity and quality in these provisions due to the pressure to build more houses in the area. Green infrastructure must be at the heart of any planning application. Infilling is endemic and should be looked at as a whole as well as the large new estates. There is increasing (unsustainable) pressure on sensitive sites – SSSI, etc. Our research has shown that people are less willing to travel long distances so there is an increase in local use of our sensitive sites.

#### 4.3.3.1.2 Country Parks

4.3.3.1.2.1 The country parks (managed by other organisations) that we access are always well kept and reasonably accessible. They suffer from the same problems we do – over capacity at key times of the year and heavy negative impacts on high usage zones over winter. Leaving sites to ‘recover’ in the spring can also be difficult if we have good weather around the Easter period.

4.3.3.1.2.2 The main area for improvement might be further investment in developing the nature conservation and biodiversity of existing sites. Buffer zones around these sites may also provide more robust environments, which can cope with high usage. Hylands for example has a number of ancient parkland trees but we are unaware of any veteran tree management, planting for the future or veteranisation techniques being applied. These may or may not be in place but we run specialist courses at Hatfield Forest in this field, which are nationally and internationally renowned. With the increased population in the county and city there is an urgent need for more open space for people to relax and recharge.

#### 4.3.3.1.3 Good Practice

The success of Notley Country Park just outside Braintree should be an example of how you can run a successful country park out of what was initially a spoil heap. The audiences who access the site are varied in both ethnicity and income, but all feel welcomed and free to enjoy the park. Over time the biodiversity has increased and acts as a green lung for the area.

#### **4.3.3.2 Chelmsford Biodiversity Forum**

Points raised by the Forum are noted below (verbatim):

##### 4.3.3.2.1 Country Parks

Chelmsford despite its large population has limited country park provision – Marsh Farm and Danbury Lakes are the only 2 designated as Country Parks although Hylands Park fulfils some of this role.

- Marsh Farm: The non-commercial part of Marsh Farm has limited public access with users being confined to the sea defences and footpaths – there are no formal cycling routes for example. The commercial part of the site is aimed principally at young families – it is expensive.
- Danbury Lakes is small and not easily accessible for most residents.
- Hylands Park is extensive and has good visitor facilities around the house in particular however does not have a ranger team able to run guided activities etc. There is a lack of easily accessible facilities to the north of the town (where the bulk of the new development is proposed.)



- The Bulls Quarry site near Boreham has been identified as a potential 'Country Park' once the site is restored; however nothing will happen until after 2020 as the site is still operational. There has been talk of creating a new site in the floodplain near Chelmer Village; however Countryside Properties who proposed it wanted 'enabling development' and have not pursued this.

#### **4.3.3.3 Forestry Commission**

The Forestry Commission note (verbatim):

- Woodland areas within parks should be under management to allow access. New areas of planting should be identified for biodiversity value.

#### **4.3.3.4 Sustrans**

Points raised by Sustrans are noted below (verbatim):

- NCN1 provides a fantastic traffic free route from the city centre to Writtle College and beyond via Central Park and Admirals Park. It would be great to see the development of the cycling and walking network to improve access to this facility. In addition there is a particular pinch point in Central Park where the route crosses the River Can via a narrow bridge. It would be great to see this bridge replaced to improve users experience and reduce conflict.
- NCN13 heads out of the city centre via Longstomps Avenue and Chelmer Park. This is a mixed route of on road and traffic free provision. It would be great to see improvements on Beehive Lane linking the park with Galleywood.

#### **4.3.3.5 The Local Access Forum (Disability)**

In relation to Parks and Recreation Grounds the Forum notes (verbatim):

- All areas should be accessible to wheelchair users and disabled people in general. Changes that could be made are in the form of seating that can be used by ambulant disabled people, good signage that meets the legislative requirements and making sure that there is clear delineation between cycle tracks and paths used by pedestrians.
- Obstacles such as lamp posts should be highlighted by placing reflective bands around them to ensure that they are picked out at dusk and in dawn light and are easily visible to a person with a vision impairment. Pathways could be delineated by using raised arrows or similar that can be picked out with the feet or a cane or highlighted in reflective paint.
- Maintenance of these issues is all important once they are installed. This is where many councils fall down. They fulfil the requirements of the disabled population in their area but forget to programme maintenance into their budgets so they end up going backwards instead of being a good service provider for their communities.

#### 4.3.4 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports) - Parks and Gardens

4.3.4.1 Comments from community organisations in relation to parks, gardens and recreations grounds are summarised below (verbatim):

##### 4.3.4.2 General Comments

- Yes there is a good range of parks and recreation grounds; and well looked after
- We are nearest to Chelmer Valley Park, which we use regularly and really enjoy. I would say the provision of parkland is good.
- There is scope to increase the amount of biodiversity provision within several of the parks by creating wildflower meadows and restoring features such as the traditional orchard in Chelmer Park.
- There is reasonable provision of green space in Chelmsford although the number and size of new housing developments will increase the requirement for this important resource for the community.
- Yes – there are enough parks and recreation grounds and they are reasonably well managed e.g. Central Park and Admirals Park
- I congratulate the gardening staff for their update on flowering and borders to maintain parks. Please help them in their efforts.

##### 4.3.4.3 Comments on specific sites

- Central Park and Bell Meadow are a jewel in the crown but there is certainly scope for more originality. Between the Sea Cadets Club and ERO it would be good to have a structure - galleon- for children to climb - a welcome relief from shopping all day, and healthy.
- Lots of facilities were sold off for housing!<sup>34</sup> With all the new building we will have more youngsters needing recreation. We know that exercise and fitness are important and Melbourne Park caters well but another park like it will be needed, maybe with access from the A12? Possibly near Boreham?
- Parks like Admirals, Central Park and Springfield Hall Park are superb, pollinator friendly planting schemes are being introduced to beds, areas set aside to help biodiversity, overall excellent.
- The promenade park is kept in reasonable condition, but suffers from over usage. The Drapers Farm sports facility suffers from poor ground maintenance, drainage problems and over use and is in a poor state of general repair<sup>35</sup>.
- The park in Tennyson road. This is very disappointing as there are no real park facilities the children at St Pius would love somewhere to play straight from school and the other park was badly designed; Please please please consider this park it is so disappointing for the children of St Pius

<sup>34</sup> The City Council Parks Manager notes that this refers to the Greater Beaulieu Park Development which will include a recreation ground and other forms of open space.

<sup>35</sup> The City Council Parks Manager notes that both Promenade Park and Drapers Farm are not within Chelmsford - both are Maldon District Council.

- Parkway is pretty awful! The flower boxes on the railings have been encouraging but Witham, Halsted, & the masses of places we've visited on trips do much better. Coventry, with all its problems was blooming beautifully this summer. I'm ashamed to say that I actually prefer the look of the artificial grass in Parkway rather than the mess in the beds further round.

#### **4.3.4.4 Country Parks**

- On the whole I think the council does a good job for us. If anything I would like to see some attention to the car parks for drainage and potholes as well as signage as some are not so easy to find. But I am very happy with service provided as a rule.
- Possibly more volunteers could be used in some aspects – e.g. if the walled garden is revived at Hylands.
- Not sufficient, but Hylands Park is starting to develop
- Local Country Parks are over used. The Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation is a linear recreational country park with considerable potential for greater use as the city expands. Links need to be improved and additional boating facilities provided.
- Hylands Park, brilliant Park, introducing heavy horses a great idea, adventure playground excellent, uncut meadows a haven for insects, bike trails through the woods, it's fantastic.
- The country parks, Marsh Farm, Danbury and (I would include) Hylands are very good in themselves; however for the size of the population there is a real under-provision. Danbury Lakes in particular is a very small site. There needs to be further provision particularly to the north of the town where much of the new growth is focused. Danbury Lakes in particular is not easily accessible<sup>36</sup>.
- Not enough access available for horse riders, for example Hylands Park does not allow horse riders. We suggest that any new development which encompasses a country park (for example the new Beaulieu Park development) should make provision for all users - including horse riders. There are NO parks that are owned/managed by Chelmsford City Council that are accessible to horse riders and this is an anomaly that should be addressed in future.<sup>37</sup>
- Hylands Park is a superb facility as is Admirals and the like. The park always seems to be in good shape and is well managed.
- The country parks are generally well-managed but there can always be more

### **4.4 Allotment Provision**

#### **4.4.1 Introduction**

4.4.1.1 Allotment provision in Chelmsford comes under the remit of both parish, private and City Council, with the City Council managing approximately 50%; and is governed by the City Council Allotment strategy, which was adopted in 2013.

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<sup>36</sup> The City Council Parks Manager notes that this comment refers to Country Parks generally, and that these are a designation under Essex County Council management (although Hylands fulfils a similar role).

<sup>37</sup> The City Council notes that Galleywood Common has a permitted route for horse riders

4.4.1.2 The strategy was developed to "review and analyse allotment provision throughout the City, to determine existing and future needs and to set standards for provision in the context of future land use planning".

#### **4.4.2 Adopted Standards**

4.4.2.1 The new standard adopted by cabinet was 13.5 plots per 1000 population, with sites no further than 1.5km from residential areas.

4.4.2.2 Other priorities for maintenance and improvements were laid out, including the development of new sites in areas currently under provided for, and including the standard and allotment strategy in the Councils emerging green infrastructure strategy.

4.4.2.3 As part of the development proposals in North East Chelmsford, to mitigate shortfalls and secure adequate provision, allotment provision has been included in the North East Chelmsford Action Plan and it is anticipated 170 plots will be secured through the planning process.

#### **4.4.3 Stakeholder views**

##### **4.4.3.1 Essex County Body of Allotments**

4.4.3.1.1 The organisation provides oversight and support to Allotment Sites and Associations that are members of the National Allotment Society – including a number of Chelmsford sites.

4.4.3.1.2 Quantity and Quality:

Feedback from the organisation was that *'yes there are enough allotments in Chelmsford'* and that provision is considered *'adequate'*.

4.4.3.1.3 Access:

Comments on issues regarding access to allotment and open space were that the group did have issues with access – including; *'Reduced range of facilities, lack of adequate support for services, lack of communication and pooling of resources, experience & knowledge'*

4.4.3.1.4 When asked for general comments on allotment provision, standards of maintenance and suggestions for improvement the response was:

*'We need more facilities provided and to improve the quality of sites and the infrastructure. Make sites more secure from theft and vandalism'*.

4.4.3.1.5 Comments and issues reported from other respondents include (verbatim):

- Provision overall is probably adequate but plots in the wrong place, few interested in Avon Road.
- There are spare ones in not so popular places. Popular ones should enforce better maintenance of those used.
- As a participator with an allotment, there always seems more space available.

- Our members who have allotments seem happy with theirs. Two folk told me they'd been told that there were no allotments available so we told them to check with their allotment association, found that there were quite a few, so returned to the Council and were given one. I wonder how many other folk have been turned away with incorrect information? Is the hidden agenda that if the allotments are not used the land can be sold for development? Surely not!!
- There are sufficient facilities, but these resources are very poorly managed which causes numerous problems. I know there is an issue with a key staff member but it really isn't good enough. We've got some great allotments; people are being put off by the difficulty of dealing with the designated member of staff.
- I have been on the waiting list for years without success.
- I've had an allotment for five years but am about to give it up. It's a half plot but I'm struggling and would like to share it with someone but haven't been able to find anyone. It would be good if shared plots/quarter plots were available. I know there is a community allotment but I'd rather have my own smaller allotment.
- We have an allotment in the Chelmsford area and in general feel the quality of this provision is adequate but again could be improved.
- With more people in flats, demand for allotments could increase.

## 4.5 Natural green space, wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands

### 4.5.1 Key Stakeholders

#### 4.5.1.1 *Natural England* (verbatim comments)

##### 4.5.1.1.1 Natural England Sites in Chelmsford

There are six SSSI's partly or wholly in the Chelmsford City Council boundary, and further details can be found on the Natural England website which also gives details of National and Local Nature Reserves. Specific comments on individual sites are laid out below:

- **Hanningfield Reservoir SSSI** – Essex Wildlife Trust reserve and visitor centre, owned by Essex & Suffolk Water. Whilst this site is in private ownership, it may be that this reserve and visitor centre is within the scope of the Open Space strategy, as a contributor to the open space provision for the district. Natural England advises that they are satisfied with the current level of public access to the SSSI, but advises that any changes will need to be carefully considered against the special interest features of the SSSI.
- **Danbury Common, Blake's Wood & Lingwood Common, and Woodham Walter Common SSSIs** - All three commons are popular with mountain bikers (sometimes in large groups) and although they generally keep to the paths, there is some evidence of path widening in places and Natural England advises that the level of mountain biking should not increase. Across these three sites, Natural England has broad aspirations to restore heathland and achieve "favourable condition" status as appropriate to each SSSI.

- **Thrift Wood, Woodham Ferrers** – this is an Essex Wildlife Trust managed reserve, and Natural England are content with the current management and access programme. Any proposed changes to access provision here would be most appropriate discussed with the EWT, to carefully explore visitor carrying capacity, against the special wildlife interest of the wood.

#### **4.5.1.2 National Trust** *(verbatim comments)*

- *Danbury & Lingwood commons (SSSI lowland heath)* are renowned for their Heathland restoration, pond creation (5), English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) – coppicing, scrub management.
- *Blakes Wood (SSSI ancient woodland)* – EWGS coppicing; access improvements which are supported by ECC highways. It suffers from consistent, persistent problems with mountain bikers on its bridleways and footpaths. We attempt to push them to Danbury Common as the site can absorb them there.
- *Hadleigh Country Park (ECC)* may resolve capacity issues and act as the county hub for this type of activity but a potential route/site may be needed elsewhere in the borough.
- Across our three sites there is still some room for gentle recreation activities such as walking and running. Elsewhere we are teaming up with 'Park Run' organisers zoning our sites so we can avoid the most sensitive areas

#### **4.5.1.3 Forestry Commission** *(verbatim comments)*

- Consultation with Forestry Commission, Natural England and Essex Wildlife Trust should take place before management work takes place. New areas of planting could in some cases improve the robustness of these areas.
- Areas should be protected from planning encroachment and proper plans in place to ensure consistency.

#### **4.5.1.4 Woodland Trust** *(verbatim comments)*

##### **4.5.1.4.1 Overview**

4.5.1.4.1.1 We would like to see trees and woodlands featuring strongly in this document.

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

4.5.1.4.1.3 Woodland and related activities can also be valuable in promoting social inclusion. Woodland activities, such as tree planting, walking and woodland crafts can provide a forum for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds to come together to learn about and improve their local environment. The Woodland Trust launched a Community Woodland project in 2002, which supports over 200 local groups, which have a shared focus on protecting and caring for a wood in their area.

#### 4.5.1.4.2 Woods and Health

4.5.1.4.2.1 The Government's Independent **Panel on Forestry** recommends: '*Government and other woodland owners to give as many people as possible ready access to trees and woodlands for health and well-being benefits – this means planting trees and woodlands closer to people and incentivising more access to existing woodlands.*' (Defra, Final Report, 2012).

#### 4.5.1.4.2.2 *Forest Research Report on Benefits of Green Infrastructure (October 2010):*

Trees and woods are vital to the health of people in the UK. There is a strong correlation between the quality of the natural environment where people live and their wellbeing. Increasing tree and woodland cover can be seen to reduce the impacts of poor air quality, mitigate some of the effects of a warming climate, particularly in urban areas, and increase opportunities for people to adopt a healthy lifestyle - see the Forestry Commission's publication *Benefits of green infrastructure* (Report by Forest Research, October 2010).

4.5.1.4.2.3 More native trees and woods could save millions of pounds in healthcare costs in a time of constrained public expenditure. Around £110bn is spent each year in the UK on healthcare, equal to 8.5% of all income. It has been estimated (Natural England, *Our Natural Health Service*, 2009) that if every household in England had good access to quality green space, it could save around £2.1bn annually in health care costs and woodland can be a major contributor to this saving.

4.5.1.4.2.4 Trees further improve air quality through the absorption of particulates from vehicle emissions and other sources – such that it has been estimated that doubling the tree cover in the West Midlands alone would reduce mortality as a result of poor air quality from particulates by 140 people per year. (Stewart, H., Owen S., Donovan R., MacKenzie R., and Hewitt N. (2002). *Trees and Sustainable Urban Air Quality*. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Lancaster University).

#### 4.5.1.4.3 Access Standards to Woodland

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

4.5.1.4.3.2 Recognising this, the Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WAS<sup>t</sup>) for local authorities to aim for, encapsulated in our ***Space for People*** publication.

4.5.1.4.3.3 We believe that the WAS<sup>t</sup> can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits.

4.5.1.4.3.4 The WAST is complimentary to Natural England's ANGST+ and is endorsed by Natural England. The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard recommends:

- No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size.
- 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.

4.5.1.4.3.5 Applying this standard in Chelmsford, with a comparison against nearby local authorities shows that Chelmsford has comparatively low access to woodland. This presents an excellent opportunity for creating more accessible woodland to improve health & wellbeing opportunities for sustainable communities and neighbourhoods.

4.5.1.4.3.6 The data used can be supplied free of charge by the Woodland Trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

*Table 11: Accessibility to Woodland in Essex using the Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard*

|                  |   | Chelmsford | Basildon | Harlow |
|------------------|---|------------|----------|--------|
| Accessible woods | % population with access to 2ha+ wood within 500m | 1.5%       | 4.6%     | 0.7%   |
|                  | % population with access to 20ha+ wood within 4km | 1.1%       | 0.5%     | 5.9%   |

4.5.1.4.3.7 Space for People is the first UK-wide assessment of any form of greenspace - the full 'Space for People' report can be found at the Trust's website.

#### **4.5.1.4.4 Good Practice**

4.5.1.4.4.1 We would like the Open Space Strategy to aim to increase access to woodland for the people of Chelmsford. We also offer free community tree packs and free school tree packs – which can help to increase access to new small woods.

4.5.1.4.4.2 We work in partnership with many local authorities on woodland creation projects and would be happy to have a discussion on this.

#### **4.5.1.5 Chelmsford City Council (Parks Development)**

4.5.1.5.1 Chelmsford City Council have cited a number of examples of good practice in wildlife management and provision of Natural Open Space:

- Danbury Common (National Trust Managed) and Danbury Park (Essex County Council managed) provide good access to natural open space, as does the Chelmer Valley Riverside LNR managed by the council and volunteers.



- Galleywood Common is also a good provision of a large open space for informal recreation, but now with only a few remnants of the rare lowland heath habitat that once existed here.
- Hylands Park and House is a fine example of a Grade 2 listed Repton landscape and has large areas of natural woodland (being remnants of the former Writtle Forest) plus open water bodies.

#### **4.5.1.6 Chelmsford Biodiversity Forum** (*verbatim comments*)

4.5.1.6.1 There are a good number of Local Wildlife Sites in the borough; however many of these do not have public access and/or are small.

4.5.1.6.2 Initiatives such as Living Landscapes aim to enhance the links between sites and improve access but are hampered by lack of resources. A current focus is around Little Baddow and Danbury where there are several large Essex Wildlife Trust and National Trust reserves and community interest.

4.5.1.6.3 Specific projects and plans include:

- *Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserve* – ongoing development with the support of the local community to enhance the biodiversity value of the site, which is of a high ecological value. We are also currently looking at a river restoration project jointly with Environment Agency and Essex Biodiversity Project. The Chelmer Valley Area needs increased provision – there is currently a large amount of underused grazing land that could be better managed to improve its value for biodiversity and flood management.
- *Marconi Ponds Nature Reserve* – a community managed urban nature reserve well supported by volunteers. It is intended to declare the site as a Local Nature Reserve.
- *Admirals Park and Central Park* offer opportunities for habitat improvement and river restoration projects.
- Proposed 'Wildlife Plan' - I have been asked by the Parks Development team to look at developing a service-wide 'Wildlife Plan' for the parks and open spaces, to review the opportunities for biodiversity enhancement particularly in Green Flag sites and then monitor their delivery.

4.5.1.6.4 Future Projects:

- I have been asked to look at enhancing areas within existing parks and open spaces such as Admirals Park to see how parts of these sites can be managed to enhance their biodiversity value. Works have included wildflower seeding and cutting areas for hay. At Chelmer Park, Galleywood a traditional orchard is being brought back into management.

- The council currently only has two Local Nature Reserves within its property portfolio, although it intends to declare Frankland Fields in South Woodham Ferrers, Marconi Ponds and part of Admirals Park. This is below the Natural England ANGSt target<sup>38</sup>.
- Consideration is being given to undertaking river restoration work at Chelmer Valley LNR and potentially Admirals Park, which would increase their wildlife value.
- We now have the woods in Hylands Park in active management and have coppicing taking place in College Wood. We are looking at potential areas for woodland creation.

#### **4.5.1.7 Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) (verbatim comments)**

4.5.1.7.1 Essex Wildlife Trust manages a number of Nature reserve sites within the LA boundary, which have management plans and offer public access and volunteering opportunities. The Trust highlighted the following points:

##### 4.5.1.7.2 Data sets:

- In 2009 EWT published an access to Natural Greenspace Analysis document, which has useful information relating to this consultation. The GIS layers are available.
- Through the 'Catchment Based Approach' (CaBA) EWT are hosting the Combined Essex Catchment which seeks to deliver a more inclusive and holistic approach to the management of the water environment and resource. We have undertaken a number of initiatives (habitat management and community engagement) within the LA and have undertaken scoping of potential improvements (to meet Water Framework Directive targets) to the River Chelmer sites within Chelmsford
- For more information please refer to document 'analysis of accessible natural greenspace for Essex, including, Southend on Sea and Thurrock unitary authorities' available from EWT.

##### 4.5.1.7.3 Other points highlighted were:

- Changes in management could reduce costs and provide additional wildlife habitat and an improved user experience. A number of Local Wildlife Sites require further/ongoing management
- Biodiversity should be a key component within the open spaces strategy. Information and assistance is available via the Essex Biodiversity Project.
- *Living Landscapes Initiative:* EWT with partners have identified a number of 'Living Landscapes' within the LA boundary. These are aspirational and provide a framework for EWT and partners to develop a long-term vision for an area, which develops its value for wildlife conservation, sustainable economy and community access. Of these the Danbury Ridge plan is most advanced.

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<sup>38</sup> The Parks Development Manager notes that Frankland Fields is already a declared LNR; land transfer being only an issue in terms of completing registration with Natural England.

## 4.5.2 Community Organisations Survey

4.5.2.1 A significant number of respondents have commented on the need for improved information and interpretation at nature reserves and wildlife sites (verbatim comments):

- There is an LNR near to my home, however, in general, they appear to be widely spaced and thus not accessible to everyone
- Due to the location of wildlife areas they are often difficult to get to without private car. The RSPB and EWT Reserves are well managed but they should be promoted better, along with the events they run.
- Maybe there could be notices showing the network of paths? I know you provide leaflets (e.g. cycle paths) but people lose them.
- Information boards in the park should be available for all charity groups not just Council activities - as so few noticeboards are provided in the City parks
- More wildlife information would be good. Things to look out for (plants and wildlife). Any history would also be good.
- More interpretation/information boards would be good. As a teacher I hate to see missed opportunities to encourage families to find out more about what they might see. What about mobile phone apps and information on line with access from Q codes?

### 4.5.2.2 Quality

- Chelmsford Council completely understands the need for wildlife areas and work really hard to engage with the community to maintain these areas as necessary. Chelmer Valley Nature reserve is a tranquil wildlife haven, which promotes a sense of wellbeing in anyone who walks through it.
- Yes (natural areas are) exceptionally looked after.
- We would like the Council to place litter bins within nature reserves and collect from them, then people might litter less.

### 4.5.2.3 In the context of development

- Our organisation has been working with local councils in Essex to enable better accounting for the environmental impacts of development, with the hope that more funds would be available for the restoration of habitat for wildlife
- We would like to see the planning department put pressure on all developers of new domestic and commercial buildings such that they incorporate both Swift and House Martin facilities, as they do in Europe. The inclusion of special nesting bricks cost virtually nothing and achieve so much and must be a way forward to help declining numbers of these species.

#### **4.5.2.4 General Comments**

- A key purpose of the Biodiversity Forum is to consider where additional wildlife areas can be provided within parks and open spaces to help bring wildlife closer to people. We have created the Chelmer Valley LNR and Marconi Ponds reserve within the city. Frankland Fields in South Woodham Ferrers is also developing into a good site. There is opportunities to increase the wildlife value of other sites including John Shennan Playing Field. Hylands Park is being managed better for biodiversity. The main issue is lack of resources and experience in managing sites for biodiversity (although I believe Chelmsford is better than most). There are a few 'hotspots' such as Danbury where there are lots of wildlife sites however much of the borough, particular to the north of the city centre has few sites of any wildlife value.
- I think that the wildlife fraternity are well catered for.
- We believe in making space for nature and that at present there is still not enough space.

### **4.6 Water Recreation**

#### **4.6.1 Key Stakeholders**

##### **4.6.1.1 Chelmsford City Council**

Chelmsford City Council chairs the River Users group and facilitates work on the river network. Comments on the current position are noted below:

- The River Users Group is well attended and consists of local clubs, plus organisations such as the Environment Agency, Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex Water Company, etc. It acts as a discussion forum and for information exchange between the various interested parties.
- The Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation canal is a private waterway that adjoins the River Chelmer in Chelmsford. There has been previous discussion around the development of a 'cut' alongside the Essex Records Office to facilitate better access between the Chelmer and the canal, which would be beneficial to water recreation in the area.
- Opening up river access and water based recreation generally is presently hampered by issues with low bridges along the river, which prevent pleasure craft getting into the town centre.

##### **4.6.1.2 National Trust (verbatim comments)**

We do not encourage this kind of recreation on our sites in the Chelmsford City area. However, we do have access to expertise in managing such habitats elsewhere in the county and country. Hatfield Forest has a successful boat hire operation, which is enjoyed by our visitors every year and offers a good model.

#### **4.6.1.3 Chelmsford Biodiversity Forum (verbatim comments)**

Some of the river restoration works would remove structures in the rivers, which impede canoeists and also slow river flow which promotes vegetation growth in the river channels.

#### **4.6.1.4 Essex Wildlife Trust (verbatim comments)**

Significant potential exists to make improvements to both meet WFD objectives and provide wildlife habitats and improved experience for visitors.

#### **4.6.1.5 Forestry Commission (verbatim comments)**

Water Framework Directive, re flooding and pollution could be addressed and again management of existing trees and establishing new woodland areas.

### **4.6.2 Community Organisations Survey**

#### **4.6.2.1 Essex Waterways**

4.6.2.1.1 A comprehensive response to the survey was received from the Chairman of Essex Waterways, highlighting a number of key issues and aspirations for the organisation (verbatim comments):

- The organisation is a volunteer led, not for profit charity, operating the Chelmer and Blackwater navigation as a recreational asset for public benefit.
- The scope of the organisation is a 14-mile linear open space incorporating the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. It is used for a broad range of recreational boating, public boat trips, canoeing, paddle boarding, angling, walking, cycling and youth groups.
- There are nearly 300 boats along the waterway, 4 public trip boats, numerous youth and educational groups and thousands of walkers and visitors.

#### **4.6.2.1.2 Access issues:**

Access to the Navigation in the Chelmsford City area is very restricted for both boaters and walkers. Links need to be improved for both.

#### **4.6.2.1.3 Current Plans and Aspirations:**

##### **4.6.2.1.3.1 Springfield Basin:**

- Springfield Basin should have a new navigable link to the city centre rivers so as to make more use and interest and an improved water supply.
- Springfield Basin towpaths need improvement and improved links.

##### **4.6.2.1.3.2 Infrastructure:**

- Towpaths need improvement.
- The boat craning site in Wharf Road MUST be retained as it is the only such facility on the Navigation.
- Several river bridges need to be wider and higher to cope with increased cycling and future river use.

#### 4.6.2.1.3.3 Access improvements:

- More recreational moorings should be provided with parking.
- Sandford Mill should become a 'honeypot' water based facility with marina, moorings and visitor facilities to serve the area. A location is also required to satisfy the increasing demand from visiting outdoor canoe and educational groups.

#### 4.6.2.1.3.4 CIL / Section 106 funding

- New and improved facilities as well as repairs to the historic structures on the Navigation have been funded by S 106 Agreements and 'planning gain'.
- Such support is essential to keep the Navigation available for public use (we took responsibility in 2005 to prevent its closure).
- We currently require around £100k per annum in additional funding to repair and maintain the Navigation structures and grants are increasingly difficult to obtain
- Additional moorings will help make the waterway sustainable, but as it receives all the surface water drainage from Chelmsford and surrounding areas, CIL payments should be available towards its maintenance as part of the flood defence system.

#### 4.6.2.1.4 Other comments re water recreation:

- Promotion of water activities nearer to the town centre would be beneficial.
- No personal wish for more water facilities, but a link between the river and canal has suggested.
- Yes, considerable scope for improvement in the City. Springfield Basin should have a new navigable link to the city centre rivers so as to make more use and interest and an improved water supply. Tow paths need improvement. More recreational moorings should be provided with parking. Sandford Mill should become a 'honeypot' water based facility with marina, moorings and visitor facilities to serve the area. A location is also required to satisfy the increasing demand from visiting outdoor canoe and educational groups. The boat craning site in Wharf Road MUST be retained as it is the only such facility on the Navigation.
- Our rivers in Chelmsford are unique but under used. With a cutting from the Canal to the river we could transform Chelmsford or put a lock at the weir.
- I hope we will be able to provide more river access once the City opens up near the Gas Works, I'm not sure what is happening to the clubs who used that land but it is lovely to see young people canoeing on the river - makes the City "come alive".
- Chelmsford makes good use of the rivers and waterways it has.
- I teach at Sandford Mill and we have a school session which uses the canal and the tow path. Usually the path is well maintained but it can get very muddy at times.

- Some issues for canoeists, such as old weirs and other structures, also have a negative impact on the rivers' wildlife value and we are considering ways of removing some of these. In turn this would increase river flow rates and reduce the build-up of vegetation within the channel. We are currently looking at these with the Environment Agency with a view to bidding for funds to enhance the river corridors.
- The Chelmer and Blackwater Canal is a fine facility but the tow paths surfaces are generally in a very poor condition. There are several water activity clubs in Chelmsford and the surrounding area.

#### **4.6.2.2 Comments from other groups**

- Access to the Navigation in the Chelmsford City area is very restricted for both boaters and walkers. Links need to be improved for both.
- Recreational boating on the Navigation is restricted to a leisurely 4mph and is not noisy and does not affect wildlife. It adds to the character of the Navigation Conservation Area.

### **4.7 Footpaths, cycling and equestrian provision (bridleways)**

#### **4.7.1 Key Stakeholders**

##### **4.7.1.1 Essex County Council – Public Rights of Way Department (verbatim comments)**

##### *4.7.1.1.1 Overview*

4.7.1.1.1.1 Our duty is to protect and maintain the network of Public Rights of Way. Within the Chelmsford City Council boundary there are approximately 440 miles of paths. A map showing the network can be seen via the Essex County Council website where various other information and policies can be found.

4.7.1.1.1.2 There are different classifications of paths: Footpaths – for walkers; bridleways – for walkers, horse riders and cyclists; and restricted byways – for the above users plus non-motorised vehicles; and byways – for all users including motor vehicles

4.7.1.1.1.3 The highway authority does not maintain adopted footways beside roads or adopted estate paths a cycle paths in built up areas or hedgerows.

4.7.1.1.1.4 The main challenge is to manage our budget as efficiently as possible with the aim of keeping the network in good condition; cutting grass and vegetation; maintaining surfaces; replacing bridges where necessary; providing good signage; ensuring obstructions are quickly dealt with; and removing unlicensed stiles and structures for ease of access. For the first time in 2014 a sub-contractor was used to undertake the PROW vegetation clearance, which was successful. Nonetheless, there will be scope for improvement in 2015 and efficiency improved by programming and clear digitised cutting maps and schedules.

4.7.1.1.1.5 We process diversion orders where necessary. This is usually at the request of the landowner, and they have to cover the costs. But there are a number of long term problems which are not of the landowners making, which await publicly funded diversion orders. Examples would be; where bridges have had to be moved, where “dead-ends” or indeterminate routes exist for some historical reason, where ground conditions have had an adverse effect, etc.

#### *4.7.1.1.2 Planning and CIL project allocations*

4.7.1.1.2.1 Where development is taking place we expect the existing Public Rights of Way network to be incorporated, with developer funded diversion orders where necessary, and with s106 agreements to make improvements where appropriate.

4.7.1.1.2.2 A priority project in Chelmsford that would benefit from CIL funding is *Beaulieu Park* - in particular ensuring a bridleway link by upgrading existing footpath from Boreham by means of a new bridleway bridge over the A12 and the railway to link to the new railway station/retail/leisure area of the Beaulieu Park development. It is appreciated that this involves third parties including Network Rail, Highways Agency, the developer and possibly LHP funding but this link is seen as crucial in helping to promote sustainable means of transport to the new development.

#### **4.7.1.2 Sustrans (verbatim comments)**

##### *4.7.1.2.1 Overview*

4.7.1.2.1.1 The National Cycle Network is a series of safe, traffic-free lanes and quiet on-road routes that connect to every major city and passes within a mile of 55 per cent of UK homes. It now stretches 14,200 miles across the length and breadth of the UK.

4.7.1.2.1.2 NCN1 runs east/west through the city linking Writtle with Woodham Walter. NCN13 links Chelmsford city centre with Billericay. We continue to work with ECC, CBC and other interested parties in improving the NCN with the city boundary.

##### *4.7.1.2.2 Strategic Planning and access requirements*

4.7.1.2.2.1 In a national strategic policy context – Sustran’s ‘Get Britain Cycling’ Report includes a number of recommendations and aspirations; particularly relevant are:

- A statutory requirement that cyclists’ and pedestrians’ needs are considered at an early stage of all new development schemes, including housing and business developments as well as traffic and transport schemes, including funding through the planning system

##### *4.7.1.2.3 Local Issues*

4.7.1.2.3.1 Chelmsford City has a wealth of good cycle and walking provision however there is still room for improvement.



- Routes towards Broomfield and the rural communities to the north of the city are much needed as well as improved provision towards Great Baddow. With the ever increasing population of the city (and the developments to meet that need underway) it is imperative that the City Council work with Sustrans and Developers to ensure that measures are in place to allow the public to choose sustainable travel for more of their everyday journeys. This can be achieved by improving PROW and developing new strategic shared use provision.

#### **4.7.1.3 Natural England** *(verbatim comments)*

##### *4.7.1.3.1 General comments*

- Design for open spaces should include elements that enable communities to access their local green spaces, along permanent green corridors using non-motorised means of transport. For those visitors from further afield, some means of public transport to the natural environment linking sites with rail or bus stations and local overnight stay provision, will provide opportunities for eco-tourism. Good cycle links to open spaces from railway stations allow a rail/ bicycle travel option.
- Green infrastructure provided for access delivers, along with hedges, verges and trees, a wildlife corridor linking areas specially managed for their conservation value. This will promote increased biodiversity and ensure wildlife is able to adapt to changes in climate.
- Natural England supports mechanisms for managing and addressing issues of access alongside conservation objectives such that access to the natural environment is encouraged.
- Dedicated cycle paths must be of good quality and reasonable width to allow safe passage (2m width minimum recommended). They must link places people want to go, not end abruptly halfway between destinations as is common. Shared use paths with pedestrians should be avoided to reduce potential conflict. Good provision for pedestrians must also be provided. Cycle paths should have priority over side roads to ensure smooth passage and avoid stop- start riding which will put people off.
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths must be well maintained and in the case of cycle paths, swept regularly.
- Tree planting will provide shade and reduction in the heat island effect associated with anticipated increased temperatures, whilst greenspaces, rivers, streams and swales, and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems provide effective flood risk management. Open spaces providing a setting for sport, recreation, and outdoor play, encourages the use of the outdoors for health reasons and contributes toward Local Authority targets under the Public Health Outcomes framework 1.16.

##### *4.7.1.3.2 Barriers to use*

The A12 acts as a major barrier to people wishing to access the countryside east of Chelmsford. There is potential for new non-motorised links over the A12 to be created to places like Danbury and Maldon. Such routes, if well designed could also act as commuter routes for cyclists from the east, reducing congestion in the city. Such provision must go hand

in hand with secure cycle locking facilities in Chelmsford and encouragement for employers to provide this. The cycle route to Writtle to the west could also be improved. This would give students at Writtle College for example safer, greener transport options.

#### **4.7.1.4 National Trust (verbatim comments)**

- Danbury Common is used by mountain bikers but we don't actively promote it. We have struggled to manage this with user group conflicts over the years but have now struck a balance by involving some key influencers within the user group. At present this appears to be working well but is very difficult to police/enforce anti-social behaviour. Due to the proximity of Danbury Common to Blakes Wood (which does not allow cycling) we do suffer from inappropriate use impacting the site. As discussed, cycling impacts on a small area of the Danbury site but there is room to allow for gentle recreational cycling on the main common.
- Horse riding is welcomed on Bridleways only – infringements occur and we find it almost impossible to enforce.

#### **4.7.1.5 Chelmsford City Council**

- There are plans to extend the Riverside Walks Network and this is currently integrated in existing planning policy:
- Essex County Council generally adopts the designated foot and cycle ways and is responsible for their maintenance. There are further opportunities to develop them alongside appropriate development proposals and would particularly like to see them extended beyond Broomfield from the Petersfield link road, heading North.
- Existing Cycle ways are generally of good quality and accessible with some linked into the Sustrans network.

### **4.7.2 Community Organisations Survey**

#### **4.7.2.1 Overview**

Table 12 below gives an overview of the type of access issues identified by respondents in relation to the paths network (verbatim comments).

*Table 12: Access issues identified from community organisations survey regarding the path network*

| Organisation                    | Access issues and observations  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Hike Essex                      | Access is generally very good but we sometimes find styles that are in poor repair or footpaths poorly marked.  |
| Chelmsford Cycling Action Group | There is cycle access along the Chelmer but only as far as Valley Bridge Rd. There is an impressive looking cycle lane along 3 mile Hill beside Hyland Park which is virtually unused because of the difficulty of crossing the main roads and roundabouts by Widford Church. |
| Essex Badger Protection Group   | Footpaths are sometimes found to be blocked. We have to hire a coach to take members and guests to reserves   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Chelmsford & District National Trust Supporter Group | Some of our members told me that the stile at the bottom of Mill Lane in Broomfield had been boarded over last year. My husband did the walk with me and it was certainly difficult to scramble over  |
| Friends of Marconi Ponds Nature Reserve              | We are unable to welcome disabled visitors and volunteers as the surface of the paths is uneven and not wheelchair friendly.  |
| Essex Bridleways Association                         | Lack of access of open spaces to horse riders   |
| Maldon & Dengie Ramblers Group                       | The poor state of maintenance and state of repair of footpaths is causing serious concern amongst the membership, a high percentage of way markers are missing, some styles are in a dangerous condition and farmers are not maintaining the paths as they are obligated. |
| North West Essex Ramblers                            | Some footpaths poorly maintained  |

#### **4.7.2.2 Detailed comments**

Other comments are summarised below under three headings: footpaths, cycling and equestrian.

##### 4.7.2.2.1 Footpaths (verbatim comments)

###### *4.7.2.2.1.1 Quantity*

There is always room for more paths. Marked routes are a good way to encourage more people to explore beyond those places near the parking areas.

###### *4.7.2.2.1.2 Quality*

- Footpath maintenance could be improved. In particular: Brook Street Cycle/Footpath to Springfield is frequently impassable due to flooding by run-off water from the neighbouring stockyard. Bottom of Admiral's Park is often flooded and impassable. In both cases better drainage or diverting run-off water would significantly improve use of footpaths
- Paths overgrown and in need of repair & improvement especially in west Chelmsford
- Some (paths) are well maintained but some are poor and the access is blocked or made as difficult as possible.
- There are many footpaths and rights of way in Chelmsford and the surrounding area. The quality of maintenance varies from very, very poor to very good. The farmers realise that the Council are struggling to find the resources to "police" the situation and there is a tremendous backlog of reports / observations sent in by local Ramblers held by the council.
- As a Rambler it is very important to maintain and improve public rights of way, with walking being promoted as a healthy activity. With the farming community being aware that resources are not being provided by the council to police the footpaths etc. a good number of footpaths now are un-walkable.

#### 4.7.2.2.1.3 Access

- There are reasonable links between town and country. However, these could be much improved to the north of Chelmsford where the riverside footpath just peters out and alternatives require crossing of the dangerous northern ring road or long walks alongside busy roads such as Broomfield road or Essex Regiment Way
- Reasonably good network.

#### 4.7.2.2.2 Cycling (verbatim comments)

4.7.2.2.2.1 Issues around access to cycle routes were highlighted by a number of key stakeholders and community organisations, including the cycling action group.

4.7.2.2.2.2 Projects identified for improvement include (but are not limited to):

- Facilitating access to the east of the city
- Routes over the A12
- Cycle routes to Writtle
- The continuation of established cycle access along the Chelmer, which only goes as far as Valley Bridge Rd.
- There is an impressive looking cycle lane along 3 mile Hill beside Hyland Park, which is virtually unused because of the difficulty of crossing the main roads and roundabouts by Widford Church.

4.7.2.2.2.3 Comments focused on the maintenance, infrastructure and connectivity of the routes are also notable:

- The cycle routes from the town are very sparse.
- Cyclepaths are good in some areas but not adequate in others and lack links where problems exist and discourage use.
- Need better connection in city and 20 mph limits where cyclepaths not available.
- Springfield Basin towpaths need improvement and improved links. Several river bridges need to be wider and higher to cope with increased cycling and future river use.
- Very poor continuous cycle paths through Chelmsford
- Some of our cyclists tell me that potholes are very dangerous, especially when there is water over the path and they can't see the potholes.
- Unfortunately, Chelmsford is not a cycling friendly place. Much could be done to improve cycle routes through the City, especially for the less confident. Specifically there should be a proper cycle path leading from Widford alongside the old A12 to Margaretting roundabout. There is space, the land must be owned by either Council, there is no excuse, cyclists are forced to mix it with 80mph traffic, and something should be done about this.
- More cycle paths would be good.
- More cyclepaths please to reduce traffic

#### 4.7.2.2.3 Equestrian (verbatim comments)

4.7.2.2.3.1 Feedback from the Essex Bridleways Association highlights significant issues with the provision of facilities for horse riders (verbatim comments):

##### *4.7.2.2.3.2 General:*

- There is a lack of both open space areas and rights of way within the Chelmsford City area that are accessible to horse riders.
- It should be remembered that horse riding is enjoyed by a wide range of people, especially women and children (who are usually targeted in schemes to increase physical activity) and this is hampered by the lack of safe, off road riding routes.
- Bridleways are also accessible to cyclists and with the increased level of interest in cycling in the area it makes sense that any new rights of way that are created are made accessible to all these user groups from the outset.
- We are very keen to be involved in any future planning of routes and would be happy to engage in further discussions in the future to help planning officers when drawing up plans for the area.

##### *4.7.2.2.3.3 Access:*

- The balance between footpaths and bridleways should be improved. Any new rights of way that are created through new development within the district should be designated as bridleways/multi user tracks from the outset so that all users are included in their use.
- Again, there are several areas within the Chelmsford City area that are accessible to cyclists and pedestrians but not horse riders. Public space should be inclusive and available to all users and should not exclude one user group.
- We have for many years been campaigning for access along the towpath of the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation - after all towpaths were built for horses initially and they should be open to all users. After all, cyclists appear to have free access along the towpath and it follows that horse riders should also be able to enjoy this facility. There is a shared towpath stretch of the river in the centre of Maldon/Heybridge (where there is a designated bridleway) and this works well; there is no reason why this could not be extended along to link Chelmsford with Maldon.

##### *4.7.2.2.3.4 CIL / Section 106 funding*

- Developers should be required through CIL funding to create new fully inclusive rights of way both within their developments and to, where possible, upgrade surrounding footpaths so that a network of multi user routes is created to keep vulnerable road users away from increased traffic on the district's roads.

## **4.8 Parks, green Spaces, countryside and rights of way: Key Findings**

### **4.8.1 Overview and context**

- Chelmsford City Council does not have a formal green infrastructure strategy. The evidence and outcomes presented from the open spaces study will help support the development of a strategy in the future.
- Natural England stress the need to take into account the ANGst standard as a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space. Variations from this standard should be justified.
- The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WAS - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should be taken into consideration.
- The Essex Wildlife Trust published an access to Natural Greenspace Analysis document in 2009, which lays out standards of access that should be expected. GIS layers and datasets are available to facilitate the development of future greenspace strategic planning.
- There is widespread and cohesive activity focused on natural open spaces, biodiversity and wildlife in the city with the potential to increasing the value of natural open spaces and improving access.
- Stakeholders are keen to improve partnership working to improve facilities and influence planning, particularly in the North of the City where development proposals are in place.

### **4.8.2 Quantity**

#### **4.8.2.1 Leisure Plus Household Survey**

- 54% thought that there are not enough footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths. In addition just over 47% highlighted a need for more wildlife areas /nature reserves.
- A further 40% indicated a need for more allotments and informal open spaces

#### **4.8.2.2 General observations**

- It is noted that Country Park provision in the city is heavily used at peak periods, with limited access during large-scale events. This leads to over usage in the summer.
- Applying the Woodland Trust – Woodland Access standard in Chelmsford, and comparing to nearby local authorities, Chelmsford has comparatively low access to woodland.
- Chelmsford currently only has 2 Local Nature Reserves, (one further site due to be declared) falling short of the Natural England ANGst target.
- National Trust research indicated an increasing (unsustainable) pressure on existing wildlife sites and SSSI's. People are less willing to travel long distances, increasing the use of local sites.

### **4.8.3 Quality**

#### **4.8.3.1 Leisure Plus Household Survey**

- Outdoor facilities/open spaces with high levels of satisfaction noted are parks/recreation grounds (over 70% rate quality as good or very good); and country parks/ countryside/ woodlands (67%)
- Around 21% of Leisure Plus respondents thought that the quality of allotments was poor or very poor

#### **4.8.3.2 Casual Users Survey (Parks)**

- The quality of the Chelmsford Parks included in the study is considered to be of a high standard with 82% giving park overall design and appearance a top score of 1 or 2, 87% for maintenance and 67% rating cleanliness at the same standard demonstrating the overall feel of the parks are positive and welcoming
- Infrastructure also has a positive review with 56% of respondents giving a score of a 5 – extremely satisfied, or a 4. Paving and fencing received 60% rating and benches and seating 57%.
- Qualitative feedback praises Chelmsford Parks as being well maintained and looked after

#### **4.8.3.3 Community Groups Survey**

- 68% of user groups surveyed are happy with the overall quality of their local recreation grounds and parks (rating them as good or very good).
- 50% were happy with the overall quality of wildlife areas, nature reserves and accessible woodlands and 47% with Country Park provision.
- The quality of footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths are not considered high with 37% rating them adequate and 27% rating them poor, or very poor. General comments support these findings noting that infrastructure issues (drainage and overgrown) and poor connectivity of cycle and footpaths make them problematic to users.
- All respondents who considered allotment provision relevant reported standards to be either adequate 45% or good 15%

#### **4.8.3.4 General observations**

- The high standards of maintenance and management of parks and recreation grounds stands out amongst respondent's comments. This is particularly relevant to city centre sites such as Central Park, Bell Meadow and Admirals Park.
- The quality of parks and recreation sites in Chelmsford is high, with a large number of green flag and green heritage sites; the aspiration to continue achieving more green flags demonstrates the drive to improve quality.
- A good working relationship between the key stakeholders working to protect biodiversity and nature conservation is evident, facilitating access to sites and making improvements.
- The integrity of the natural landscape at Danbury Common / Blakes Wood has been raised as a concern due to overuse of footpaths by mountain bikers. A need for a separate dedicated facility is something that should be considered.

#### **4.8.4 Access**

##### **4.8.4.1 Leisure Plus Household Survey**

- Where households make use of the typologies identified, 50% or more of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to use some facilities such as wildlife areas/nature reserves (71%); country parks, countryside and woodlands (65%); and areas for water recreation (55%);
- Other facilities however are expected to be more locally accessible, with respondents less willing to travel, for example, 63% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 27% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 55% of users would expect informal open spaces to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- The Leisure Plus findings show a wide variance in the maximum travel times people are willing to undertake and this should be taken into consideration when setting access standards.

##### **4.8.4.2 Casual Users Survey**

- A majority of respondents report having excellent access to their nearest park with 48 respondents travelling less than 5 minutes to reach the site. It is also evident that people are willing to travel to reach the facilities they require with a total of 62 respondents willing to travel in excess of 11 minutes upwards
- The added attraction of the museum increased the maximum time respondents were willing to travel to Oaklands Park with 38% willing to travel 20 plus minutes.

##### **4.8.4.3 General Observations**

- The need for good provision of public transport linking the natural environment to rail or bus stations is important when considering improvements and development
- There is very poor and very limited access for the horse-riding community to bridleways and generally poor facilities for horse riders.
- Limited access to interpretation materials/boards and general information in wildlife areas and nature reserves is a repeated comment made by local organisations.
- General direction and access information is also considered lacking directing visitors to Wildlife sites and Natures reserves.
- Long term provision of natural open space – Broomfield Airfield and the quarry provides a good future development opportunity considered by a number of key stakeholders.
- River access is hampered on both wildlife and recreational levels by old weirs and structures that have a negative impact and disrupt river flow rates.
- Planned improvements by the PROW team in 2015 should improve efficiency in programming and producing clear and digitised cutting maps and schedules.
- It is considered that some sites of SSSI such as Hanningfield Reservoir should only give limited access to the general public – protecting the habitat located there.



#### 4.8.5 Priorities/other issues

- The opportunity to develop 'Bulls Quarry' in Boreham into recreational facilities including a country park has been identified by stakeholders as a long term aspiration that should be include in planning policy.
- Chelmsford has no formal green infrastructure policy and this should be addressed.
- The presence of the Canal and River is part of the cities identity and offers good recreational value. A fully functioning 'honeypot' waterbased facility is an aspiration including marina moorings and visitor facilities. Increase use of the river by canoe and local educational groups is putting pressure on existing facilities.
- There is considerable interest in improving links between the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and River Chelmer – through infrastructure projects such as improving bridges, and in particular the provision of a new 'cut'
- Clear need for development of facilities for horse riders given the existing significant limitations noted on access to bridleways. New developments to give access to horse riders
- Good, safe cycle access to open spaces is highlighted as a priority by many stakeholders including Natural England and Sustrans. This is supported with a majority of stakeholders commenting on poor provision in specific areas

## 5.0 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section provides feedback and information relating to play and youth facilities. It considers information and views provided by various stakeholders including the City Council, Essex County Council, Play England, play and youth organisations and young people themselves.

5.1.2 The section is structured into four main parts:

- Review of policy and strategy
- Youth and play stakeholders - including young people
- Local play and youth organisations
- Access for disabled children

5.1.3 The information and findings in this section will be taken forward in the main Open Space Assessment Report.

### 5.2 Review of Policy and Strategy

#### 5.2.1 Chelmsford City Council – ‘Policy for the provision of equipped play areas’

5.2.1.1 Standards for access, quality and quantity of Children’s play equipment are set out in the ‘Policy for the provision of equipped play areas’, adopted in 2012.

5.2.1.2 The report sets out the policy and standards (quality, quantity and access) for the provision of equipped play throughout the Borough in order that the spatial catchment and quality standards set out in the policy can be met. A phased delivery programme of specific site improvement, upgrades and decommissioning is also included.

5.2.1.3 Key aspects of the report include:

- The spatial targets and standard for play space are based on the open space typology outlined in Planning Policy Guidance [PPG] 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.
- The standards are embodied in the Local Development Framework.

Table 14: Standards for quantity and accessibility as set out in Chelmsford City Councils' Policy for the provision of equipped play areas

| <b>Quantity standard<br/>[hectares per 1,000 population]</b>   | <b>Accessibility standard<br/>(travel time or<br/>equivalent distance)</b>                               |
|--|--|
| 0.81ha (8,100m <sup>2</sup> ) Borough wide split into:   |  |
| Equipped play areas and informal ball games areas: 0.405ha (4050m <sup>2</sup> ) split into  |  |
| <b>Local Play Areas</b><br><br>Designed for pre school children and children up to 8 years of age should contain a variety of static and moving play equipment and seats for accompanying adults. The minimum size for each play area should be 600m <sup>2</sup><br><br>NB This category combines pre school play areas and infant play areas into one category and designated a 'local play area'  | Within 400m of any dwelling and accessible without crossing major traffic flows or similar obstructions. |
| <b>Neighbourhood Play Areas</b><br><br>Designated for children up to 12 years of age. The play areas should contain a variety of static and moving play equipment, some more challenging play features for older children, seating, and where possible be associated with other recreational facilities, space for ball games etc. The minimum size for each play area should be 2,400m <sup>2</sup><br><br>NB this category was previously defined as a junior play area. | Within 1,000 m of each family dwelling (within 5 – 10 minute walk)                                       |
| Informal ball games space: defined as being designed for informal ball games by children of all ages. These should include a basketball station and/or hard surface of 10x10 square metres. The minimum size of each area should be 1ha (10,000m <sup>2</sup> )  | Within 400m of any dwelling.   |
| Informal Youth Space: 0.405ha (4,050m <sup>2</sup> )   |  |
| Defined as being intended to provide for the informal meeting and play of youth. They will initially be laid to grass and contain a youth shelter. Careful consideration should be given to their location in terms of possible noise nuisance. These should be a minimum of 1200m <sup>2</sup>  | Within a 1,000m of any dwelling.   |

5.2.1.4 It is acknowledged that different targets and standards need to be applied in rural areas making adjustments in the catchment criteria. Designated areas are listed in the document.

5.2.1.5 The spatial strategy is complemented by a qualitative assessment of equipped play provision including:

- The play value of the equipment provided, including its diversity
- Social factors leading to co-operative and stimulating play
- The provision of inclusive play opportunities
- The opportunity to interact with natural features and the surrounding environment generally
- The security, safety and standard of maintenance afforded to the play area

5.2.1.6 Quality:

- The policy is for all neighbourhood play areas to achieve a quality benchmark of at least 70% and for all local play areas and those serving rural communities to achieve a quality benchmark of at least 60%.

5.2.1.7 Delivery:

- Rationalisation and improvement of existing facilities, tested against the standards is laid out in the development plan on a site-by-site basis.
- The development programme includes site specific actions to improve access and quality and improve provision in areas currently lacking.
- In some cases some substandard or inappropriately sited play areas are proposed for removal.

## **5.2.2 Essex County Council – Essex Children and Young People’s plan 2009 – 2011**

5.2.2.1 Priorities and outcomes for young people in this plan are: ‘Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a positive contribution, Achieve economic well being, Narrow the Gap’. Indicators included ‘physically active children’

5.2.2.2 As part of the consultation process – comments from young people are noted in the document including:

- *‘A significantly greater proportion of young people in Essex say they go to the park, playground or sports club than children do nationally’*

5.2.2.3 Comments relating to Safety include:

- *‘The main reasons children and young people feel unsafe are because of teenagers hanging around their local area....’*
- *‘Children and young people don’t want teenagers hanging around because it intimidates younger children’*

## 5.2.3 Play England

### 5.2.3.1 Quantity

5.2.3.1.1. Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in all urban environments:

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

5.2.3.1.2 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 use for play is welcomed and encouraged.

5.2.3.1.3 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.

### 5.2.3.2 Quality

5.2.3.2.1 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.

### 5.2.3.3 Access

5.2.3.3.1 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.

### 5.2.3.4 Priorities

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

### **5.2.3.5 Nature Play Initiative**

5.2.3.5.1 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.

5.2.3.5.2 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.

## **5.3 Youth and Play Stakeholders in Chelmsford**

### **5.3.1 Representative bodies for young people in Chelmsford and Essex - overview**

#### **5.3.1.1 Young Essex Assembly**

5.3.1.1.1 The Young Essex Assembly is an elected youth council for Essex. It covers 10 key districts in Essex, including Chelmsford, and is made up of 75 young people aged 11-19, elected for a period of two years. Their role is to represent young people in the county and campaign to make a positive difference to their lives. As part of the YEA members will be listened to by the county council, and by other groups working with or for young people.

5.3.1.1.2 At the time of undertaking the consultation – the YEA was in the process of electing new representatives, and no meeting was planned before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

5.3.1.1.3 The group runs as a separate entity to the Chelmsford Youth Council, although communications are maintained between local representatives.

5.3.1.1.4 The group responded to the study via the online survey distributed to organisations (section 5.4).

#### **5.3.1.2 Chelmsford Youth Panel**

5.3.1.2.1 Chelmsford Youth Panel is open to young people aged 14 -18 offering an opportunity to put forward their views on Council Services, and Chelmsford in general. There are several consultations circulated each year and at least an annual meeting.

5.3.1.2.2 There is a general registration process online, enabling all young people to participate should they wish to.

### **5.3.1.3 Chelmsford Youth Council**

5.3.1.3.1 Chelmsford Youth Council are part of a wider youth strategy group in Chelmsford and work with Essex Youth Service. The Chelmsford Youth Council is an organisation to represent young people and work to make a real difference, by talking with local youth groups, schools and the council.

5.3.1.3.2 Detailed consultation was undertaken with the Youth Council, including facilitated discussion as part of the meeting, response through the online survey, and members of the youth council responding to more detailed questionnaires on facilities in the city.

## **5.3.2 Stakeholder Responses**

### **5.3.2.1 Chelmsford City Council**

#### 5.3.2.1.1 Parks Development

5.3.2.1.1.1 Responsibility for the delivery of the action plan, as outlined in the equipped play areas strategy comes under the remit of the Parks development manager.

5.3.2.1.1.2 During discussion, examples of good practice and popular children's equipped areas include:

- The new play area at Brownings Avenue is a good example of a site developed with good community involvement. Site includes a variety of equipment including swings, climbing frame and multi-functional equipment.
- Oaklands Park and Meadgate Avenue play areas are also good practice examples of neighbourhood play area provision.

#### 5.3.2.1.1.3 Youth Provision:

- There is a need for an improved spread of skate parks and BMX tracks, with a particular aspiration for a further skate park site to the north of the city so as to provide a strategic distribution across the city council area. Where suitable opportunities arise (or suitable premises already exist, such as unlet warehouses or industrial units). There is potential to accommodate indoor, all weather skate boarding/BMX use, which has previously been the subject of enquiry for suitable sites.
- The Council has had approaches for possible indoor BMX venues in the past, and have recently been approached about the potential for running skater classes looking for an undercover venue during inclement weather – at present young people are gathering at night around the undercover market storage area/bus pull in beneath the multi-storey car park, until they get moved on.
- There is a need to consider specific sites for 'noisy' sports – including motorbikes and powered aircraft flying, which is not particularly catered for and periodically takes place in public parks as an unauthorised activity, with associated dangers to general park users.

### 5.3.2.1.2 Community Sport and Wellbeing

5.3.2.1.2.1 The Community Sport and wellbeing team run a variety of activities across the city – with some making use of parks and open spaces: relevant activities and schemes were discussed in the context of current open space provision, and what improvements and changes could be made to facilitate the work of the community sport and wellbeing team further.

#### 5.3.2.1.2.2 Play Schemes:

- The Community sports and wellbeing team use park and green space facilities to deliver ‘free to all’ play schemes in the school holidays. Schemes are delivered at key parks sites across the city including the following; Hylands, Oaklands, Melbourne, Chelmer, Central Park and Compass Gardens (South Woodham Ferrers) These offer a good geographical spread of locations ensuring good access across the city.

#### 5.3.2.1.2.3 Teenage Facilities:

- Skate Park facilities are provided in Compass Gardens and Central Park in the South and Central parts of the city respectively. There is a gap in the provision of this type of facility to the North of the city.
- Work is underway to develop the existing site at Central Park in consultation with the Chelmsford Youth Council. There are plans designed and a planned public consultation on the proposals in early 2015.
- BMX track at Baddow Hall Park has a good provision. There is a private BMX trail and jumps facilities in the local area at Highwood, and 2 large race tracks outside of the city boundary in Braintree District but the actual demand for this type of facility is not certain.
- There is a potential gap in provision for an indoor Skate / BMX facility which has been raised as an issue with Parks Development (see below) and currently part of ongoing discussions. The opportunity to use council multi story car parks during closed hours has been proposed as an option<sup>39</sup>.

#### 5.3.2.1.2.4 Parkour:

- There are two parkour groups locally and approaches have been made to parks departments about specific resource requirements.

#### 5.3.2.1.2.5 adiZones:

- These are currently sited at Central Park and Andrews Park. There is no accurate data on how well used they are – similarly Chelmer Park, Compass Gardens and Great Baddow provide a spread of access to outdoor gym facilities.

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<sup>39</sup> The City Council Parks Development Manager has noted that the use of multi-story car parks will not be progressed due to health and Safety and site security issues.



### **5.3.2.2 Essex County Council Youth Service – (Senior Youth Worker)**

5.3.2.2.1 Essex County Council youth team manages the Chelmsford City Youth Service, including the drop in centre base in Moulsham Street in Chelmsford (verbatim comments).

- There need to be a more joined up approach to facilities being developed in Chelmsford, an example includes new sport changing facilities which have recently been developed in Beaulieu Park (Chelmer Village) It would have been a good opportunity to consider the inclusion of some sort of youth space in this area, and include it in the design for the build; developing facilities to engage young people – not just changing facilities.
- The location of teen shelters needs to be carefully considered as there are a number of examples of misplaced facilities; Trent Road where the shelter is over a small bridge from other CYP facilities and in a very isolated spot surrounded by long grass.
- There are other examples where shelters have been located too close to play areas designated for small children and this causes conflict (Chelmer Village, Springfield and Broomfield.) They should be sited a reasonable distance away. The youth service would welcome early discussions with the parks department to help identify appropriate places for the shelters to be located and involve local young people.
- The skate park in Central Park is popular however not an area people would use in the evenings due to poor lighting and general sense of lack of safety. Wouldn't walk through this area at night.
- Inclusion of cafes / food concessions are also a big draw to young people.

### **5.3.2.3 Chelmsford Youth Council**

5.3.2.3.1 An open discussion session was held with the Chelmsford Youth Council at their meeting on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

5.3.2.3.2 Three main questions were posed asking the group to consider

- 1) What is good about your current facilities? Examples of best practice (Quality)
- 2) What is missing from current provision? (Quantity)
- 3) What prevents you using facilities? (Access)

5.3.2.3.3 Comments on each of the three questions are listed below (verbatim comments):

1) Examples of play equipment and facilities that are good include:

- The outdoor gym in Chelmer Park
- The 'rocket' equipment at Springfield Hall Park
- Zip wire swings in Oaklands Park
- The adiZone football hard court, goal and basket ball hoops in central park are always full – would like to see more of this type of provision.

- Discussion was had around the enjoyment of more natural environments with planting and trees. The idea of a sensory garden and relaxing environments outdoors were discussed with positive feedback. Tower Gardens was given as a good example of a natural park site that young people enjoyed.
- The Central park football area was given as an example of a popular facility but poorly maintained. It has a run-down look and generally feels a miserable place to visit. The siting of the facility is also very poor as the balls often go over into the lake<sup>40</sup>.
- The Discovery Centre in Braintree was given as good example of free and challenging activity for young people<sup>41</sup>.

2) Discussion was had around skate facilities and BMX tracks in particular.

- Skate facility at central park is a key facility for skaters, although would like to see more in more locations. Skaters are more likely to travel to reach a good quality facility, and an example was given of people going outside of Chelmsford to visit bigger skate parks.
- The Youth Council are working with Chelmsford City Council at the moment to redevelop it and is a popular project which is progressing well.
- Would like to see more facilities like the hard surface football and basketball hoop set up in Central Park around Chelmsford.
- Discussion was had around what sort of facilities people would like to see locally, and what they were willing to travel for. Access to open space for activities such as informal kick about and games such as 'extreme flydisc' was mentioned particularly as a facility it would be good to have locally.
- More play equipment geared towards older children such as zip wires, large adult size activity equipment would make a great addition to parks.

3) Discussion around what prevents access to park and youth facilities included:

- Safety is a big issue for young people using parks and open spaces and members were keen to emphasise the need for good lighting, areas that are recognizable as facilities for young people so they won't get asked to move on by residents, police or other young people.
- Lighting – this was cited on a number of occasions as a barrier to access. Young people are not comfortable using teen or youth facilities in darker months without any clear lighting.
- CCTV was suggested as an asset to parks and open spaces – particularly around youth facilities to give young people a sense of protection.
- It was suggested that younger children (junior age) facilities should be located in local parks, close to home so that children could visit the facilities on their own – gaining a sense of independence, whilst parents still have a sense of them being close by and able to see/ reach them quickly.

<sup>40</sup> The City Council Parks Development Manager notes that this was originally lawn tennis courts, but in order to meet demand for a use that was taking place anyway, kickabout goals were installed.

<sup>41</sup> The City Council Parks Development Manager Notes that car parking charges apply here

- Cycle access to sites and cycle parking would be useful – some links aren't very consistent.
- Poor service received from bus provider First Bus was also noted as a general problem for access to facilities across the city.

5.3.2.3.4 Other ideas and comments are noted below:

- Designated busking spots would be a good idea in key parks
- Bandstand where people can perform and play music
- There are lots of facilities in Chelmsford for young people that you need to pay for – The Hub for example. These are not always an option for young people and free and accessible facilities are very important.
- A significant and repeated emphasis was made on the lack of bins in parks and open spaces sites and also the lack of any recycling provision. A majority of attendees expressed concern and annoyance at the poor levels of cleanliness and litter.

## **5.4 Views from local Play and Youth Organisations**

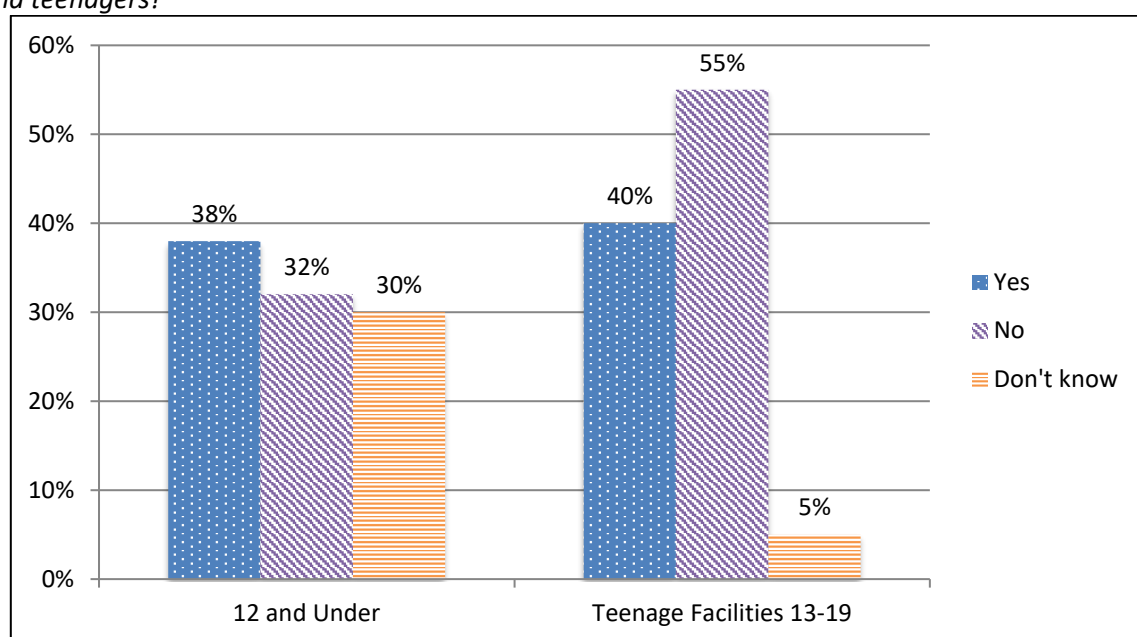
### **5.4.1 Play and Youth Organisations Survey**

5.4.1.1 Local play and youth organisations were surveyed via an online questionnaire. Responses were received from 25 groups. 80% reported that they make direct use of outdoor play equipment or area of open spaces. Full details are available in Appendix 7. Some of the main findings are noted below.

#### **5.4.1.2 Quantity**

5.4.1.2.1 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 Figures 15 and 16.

*Figure 15: Results of Play and Youth Organisations Survey – Are there enough play facilities for children and teenagers?*

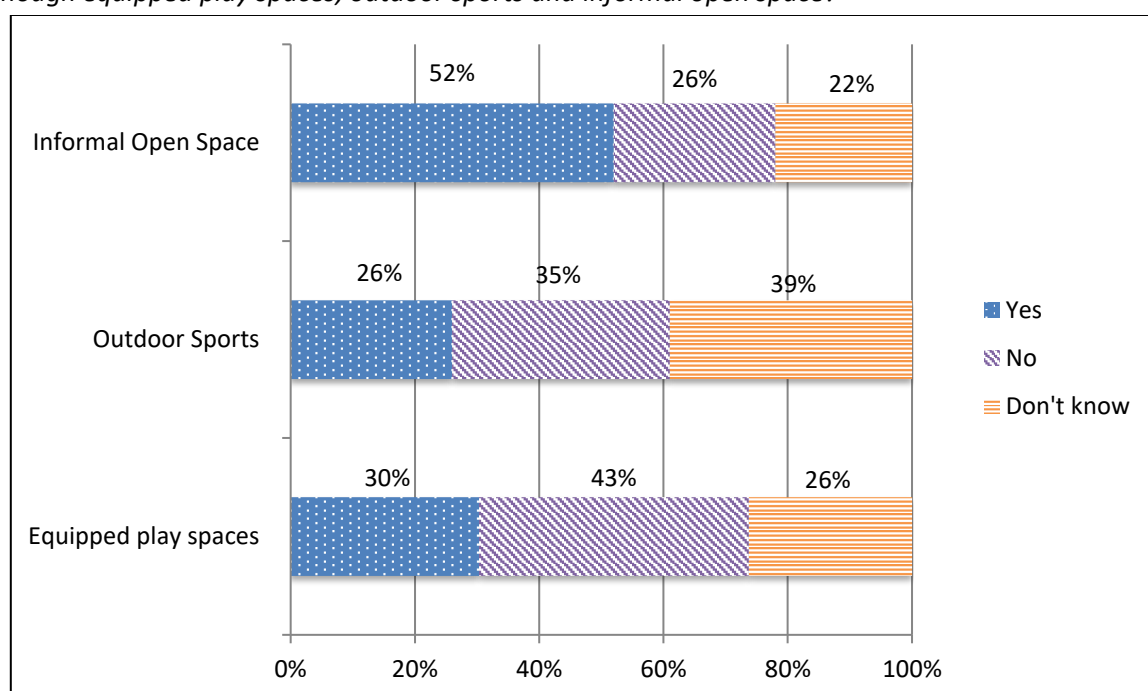


5.4.1.2.2 From Figure 15 it is clear that teenage provision is considered underprovided for with 55% of respondents answering no – there are not enough facilities.

#### 5.4.1.2.3 Types of provision for children (12 and under)

5.4.1.2.3.1 For children aged 12 or under the survey asked for views on whether there are enough equipped play spaces, outdoor sports and informal open space for children. Figure 16 below shows the results.

*Figure 16: Results of Play and Youth Organisations Survey for children aged 12 or under – Are there enough equipped play spaces, outdoor sports and informal open space?*



#### 5.4.1.2.3.2 Responses show that:

- Over 40% of groups felt that there are not enough 'formal' equipped playgrounds for children of 12 years and under.
- The provision of open space areas for informal and natural play are considered much better catered for with 52% of groups agreeing there is adequate provision for the under 12's.
- There is an almost equal split in opinion on outdoor sport provision (MUGA's, courts and pitches) with 26% of the groups considering there is enough provision, and 35% disagreeing. 39% of respondents did not know.

#### 5.4.1.2.3.3 Other Comments on the provision for under 12's are detailed in Table 15 below (verbatim comments).

*Table 15: Other comments on the provision for under 12's from Play and Youth Organisations Survey*

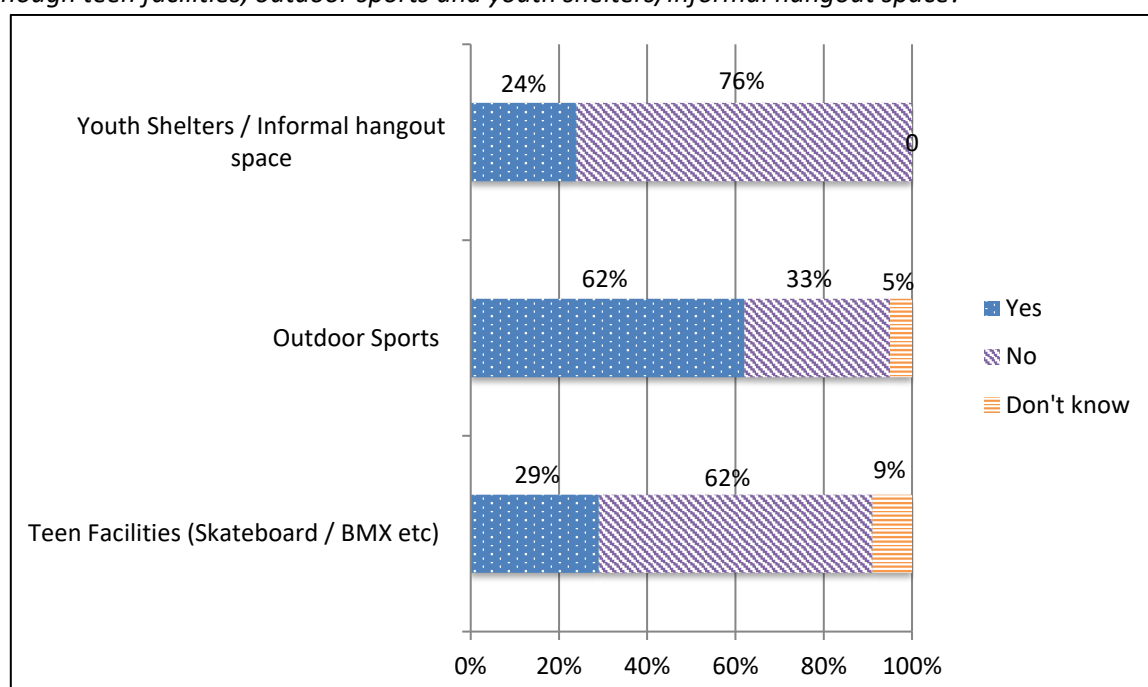
| Organisation                                  | Comments  |
|---|---|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Scouts             | More fun and exciting play areas, instead of just swings and a slide in most parks  |
| North Springfield Scouts                      | Very few equipped play areas in North Springfield and the courts and pitches are not used to full potential. Having a space that's not in use is just no good.  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford (Cathedral) scouts | More astroturf pitches, tennis / basketball courts / We would love to see more outdoor equipped play spaces and outdoor sports pitches that are for general use, Outdoor gyms for children along trails would be great too - such as those at the Marconi Ponds reserve |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Cubs               | More adventure areas where you can play during woodland using natural resources - like Discovery Centre   |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford (Cathedral) cubs   | I would like to see more cricket nets, as I have to cycle to Writtle  |
| Interact                                      | Courts and pitches  |
| Brownies                                      | The parks are not geared for all ages, for instance Hylands Park fort area is good but the fort area is more designed for young children, and during most of the 6 wks school holidays it is closed due to V  |
| Jubilee Friends Pre School                    | Areas that are well maintained, regularly monitored and suitable for most weathers/seasons  |
| Busy Bees                                     | More natural play areas, less plastic and metal structures  |
| Sallywags nursery                             | It's hard for teenagers not much to do, others just want to vandalise equipment, hardwearing equipment such as the outdoor gyms.  |
| Holly's House Childminders                    | I think there are plenty for 6+ years but although there are play areas supposed to be for under 6s I don't believe they are suitable for children of this age. Most of the under 6 play areas I feel are unsafe with big drops for young children to fall from         |

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
|                   | when a few bars to stop this would make all the difference. Also a few parks have only one "baby" swing with the bars around and ten lots of single seat swings for older children.   |
| Jesters Kids Club | Not enough places for structured play... tennis courts, basketball etc. Would love to see a proper play area locally that challenges all aged children with elements of risk. Nowhere locally that caters for all ages of children. Maybe some gym type equipment would be good |

#### 5.4.1.2.4 Provision of facilities for teenagers

5.4.1.2.4.1 Similarly for teenagers, groups were asked whether there were enough of various types of open spaces and sports facilities for young people as noted in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Results of Play and Youth Organisations Survey for teenagers (aged 13-19) – Are there enough teen facilities, outdoor sports and youth shelters/informal hangout space?



5.4.1.2.4.2 Responses show that:

- The quantity of youth and teenage provision for 13 – 19 year olds is not considered satisfactory.
- This is particularly notable with 76% of respondents feeling there are not enough informal spaces and youth shelters for young people in parks.
- Teen facilities such as skateboard and BMX facilities are considered under provided for with 62% reporting not enough.
- 62% of groups thought there were enough outdoor sports facilities including courts, pitches and multi use games areas.
- The responses demonstrate clear views with only a small % of respondents answering 'don't know'.

5.4.1.2.4.3 Additional feedback was given by respondents when asked: 'if you don't think there is enough of any of the above facilities, what would you like to see more of?' Verbatim comments are shown in Table 16.

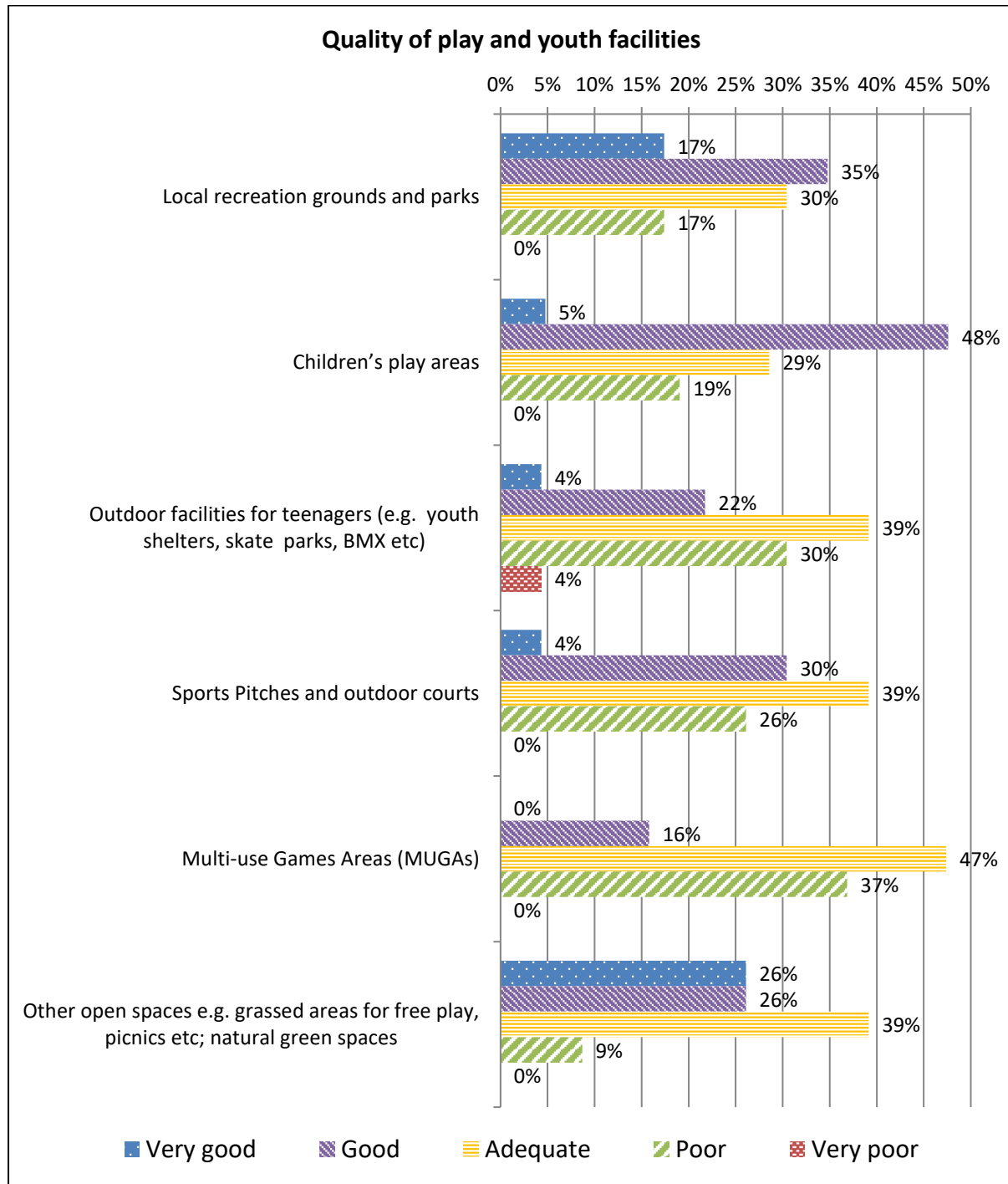
*Table 16: Additional feedback on the provision for teenagers from Play and Youth Organisations Survey*

| Organisation                                  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| Essex Youth Service                           | Need for more youth shelters but more importantly with adequate lighting (e.g. Mayland/Burnham)  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Scouts             | More interesting facilities needed, what about a splash park? Need for more astro turf pitches, tennis / basketball courts   |
| Chelmsford Youth Council                      | There are very few places in Chelmsford where teenagers can meet up and "hang out", apart from coffee shops  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford (cathedral) scouts | Need for more courts and pitches. I can only think of one skate ramp. There are very few places for young people to just hang out.   |
| Chelmer Village Youth Club                    | Need for a football rebound wall on the Village Green to encourage young people to engage in activity to improve low level fitness. There is also lack of youth shelters that needs to be addressed.   |
| Brownies                                      | There needs to be more skate parks, also would be good to have a specially made bike track with small hills and turns like in Paradise park. Don't know of any hang out spots of youth shelters, just know that teenagers go to the park as you normally have to clear the beer cans away. |
| Jubilee Friends Pre School                    | We need more climbing walls, rope swings, zip lines  |
| Liberal Democrat Youth                        | I do think there could be more safe places for young people to 'hang out', and also more organised facilities like youth clubs.  |
| Carelot day nursery                           | Need more indoor facilities to stop youths hanging around shops  |
| Scallywags Day Nursery                        | More organised things for teenagers needed.  |
| Jesters Kids Club                             | Nothing in Bicknacre.  |
| Sunrisers                                     | The children of St Pius would love a new park, the other one is badly designed and for older children. We need a traditional park with decent slide, seesaw, more practical ideas, swings  |
| Chelmsford Civic Society                      | Children benefit hugely from playing with sand - either construct a small beach as in Europe or provide a receptacle with a lid - possibly at Cake on the Lake.  |
| North Springfield Scouts                      | There is nothing for this age group in North Springfield. A Scout Hut with green space in North Springfield would be good as this could be a hub for the community as well as make sure the green space, pitches etc are used.   |

### 5.4.1.3 Quality

5.4.1.3.1 Views were sought on the overall quality of open space and outdoor facilities of general interest to children and young people and responses are illustrated in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Play and Youth Organisations Survey – Quality of open space and outdoor facilities





#### 5.4.1.3.2 Responses show that:

- Over 50% of groups were generally satisfied with the overall quality of Chelmsford's local parks and recreation grounds and Children's play areas, (rating quality as either good, or very good)
- 'Other open spaces' e.g. grassed areas, picnic spaces and natural areas were also considered good quality with 52% rating them very good or good, and a further 39% adequate.
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction with outdoor youth facilities, and skate parks with 68% rating them adequate or poor, and only 27% rating them very good or good.
- The view on sports pitches and outdoor courts was more mixed, though a greater proportion rated them as good rather than poor. (Just over 40% rated them 'adequate')

5.4.1.3.3 An option to add specific observations and comments was given and these are noted in Table 17 below (verbatim comments).

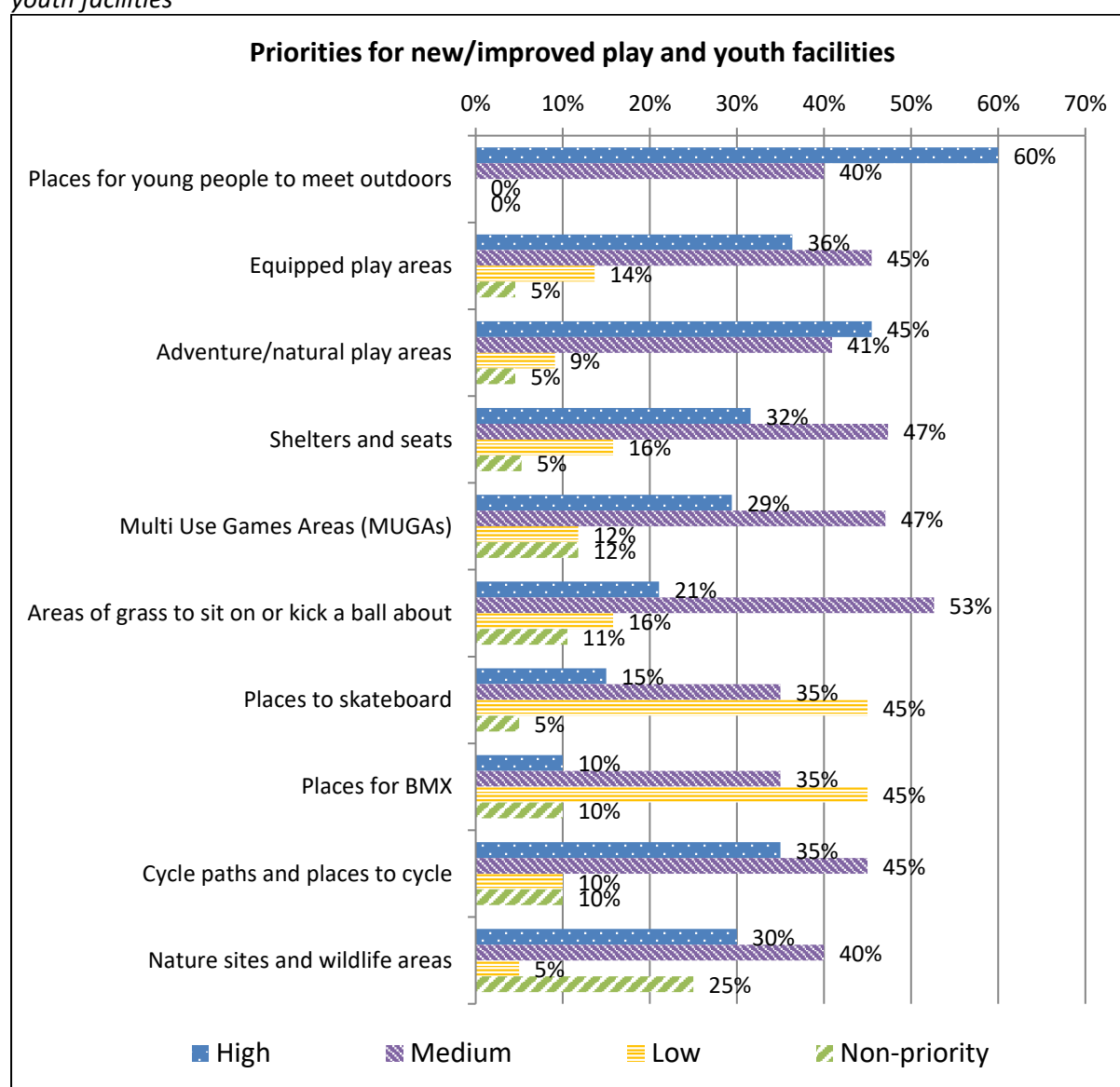
*Table 17: Play and Youth Organisations Survey – comments regarding quality*

| Group  | Comment  |
|--|--|
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Cathedral Cubs                   | Could we have somewhere to play cricket in St Andrew's park as well as toilet that is actually open.   |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Cathedral Scout Group | The development of the equipped area at Hylands is awesome and the children love playing on it   |
| Runwell Village Pre School.                      | It would be lovely to have a forest school approach nearer to our base.  |
| Brownies   | The toilets at Rainsford park are disgusting along with the ones at Hylands by the fort. The new ones at Hylands are only open when the kiosk is open  |
| Jubilee Friends Pre School                       | The children's play area in Jubilee Park is often too slippery to use even when it has not rained for several days, the wooden construction of the ramp that provides access to the tunnel and slide is rotting.     |
| Scallywags Nursery                               | The 3 foot festival has proved very successful maybe more for the different age groups   |
| Holly's House Childminders                       | I think parks for younger children just need to be safer for children they are designed for with barriers around ramps they walk up to higher platforms and focusing on what the children it is designed for can do. |

#### 5.4.1.4 Priorities for Improvement

5.4.1.4.1 Respondent's views on priorities for new or improved provision of play and youth facilities are shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Play and Youth Organisations Survey – Priorities for new or improved provision of play and youth facilities



5.4.1.4.2 Responses (Figure 19) show that:

- The most commonly highlighted high priority for improved provision is ‘places for young people to meet out of doors’ with over 60% rating it high priority and the remainder rating it medium.
- Following this adventure/natural play areas are a high priority for improvement, alongside shelters and places to sit.
- Equipped play areas are the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common high priority for improved provision.
- Places to skateboard and BMX do not feature as highly in the prioritisation exercise with just under 50% of respondents rating them as low priority.

## 5.4.2 Chelmsford Youth Council Survey - Youth facilities

5.4.2.1 A second questionnaire was completed by members of the Chelmsford Youth Council giving further insight into teenage specific issues, requirements and concerns. 10 respondents between the ages of 15 and 19 completed the survey - 4 female, 6 male. 8 respondents confirmed they are keen to have a say in how new areas for young people should be built, and improved – reflecting the comments made by the Youth Service. Key findings include:

### 5.4.2.2 Current Use:

- Remarkably the only place all 10 respondents spent time hanging out was in the city centre, followed by eight reporting they spent time hanging out ‘on the streets’
- Seven respondents used parks and open spaces a further six respondents said they also spent time in gardens and natural space.
- Reflecting the evidence seen so far that the provision of youth shelters are lacking – no one reported using a youth shelter or outdoor meeting area with seats – or any local playing field provision
- Low levels of useage for other facilities such as MUGA’s, play equipment, informal kick about areas, and Skate and BMX facilities were noted.

### 5.4.2.3 Quantity:

- 90% of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘there are enough outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in your area.

### 5.4.2.4 Quality:

- Views on the quality and maintenance of youth provision were equally split with 40% feeling they were not well maintained, and 40% considering that they were. 20% had no view.
- 90% of respondents agreed with the statement ‘My nearest outdoor place to visit / hangout / meet friends is too small and not interesting enough.

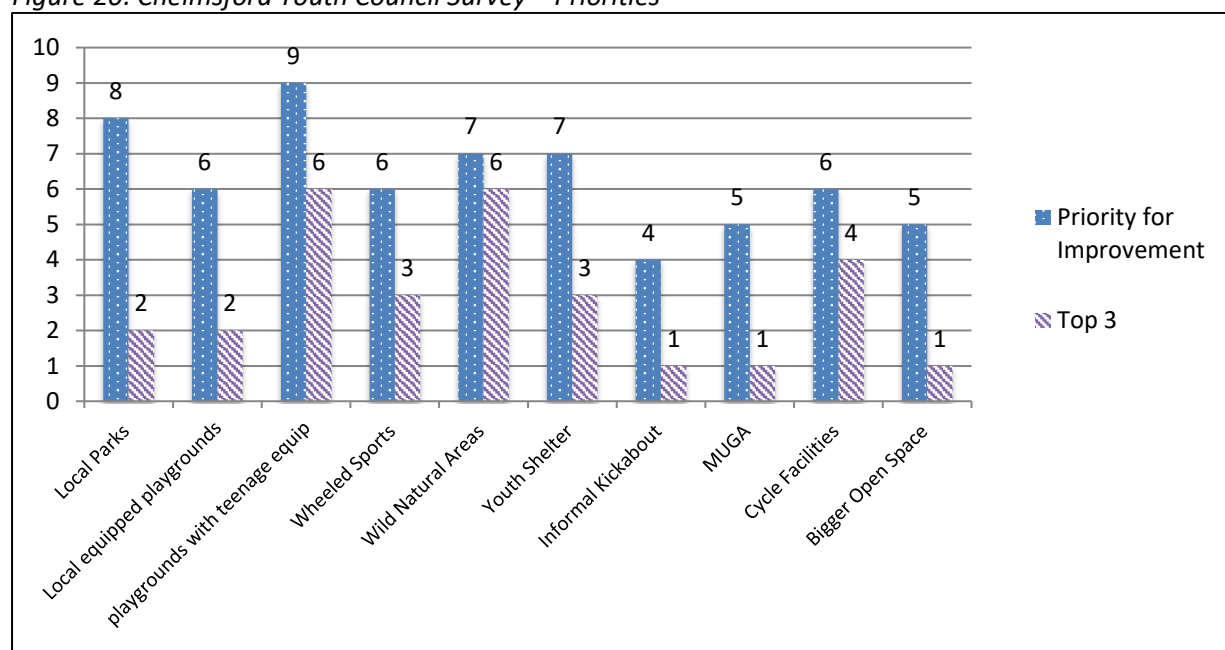
### 5.4.2.5 Access:

- 80% of respondents felt they would be happy to walk further to bigger, better facilities
- In further support of this trend only three respondents felt it important to have somewhere nearby
- Teenagers are happy to increase their travel time to have access to bigger, better facilities.

### 5.4.2.5 Priorities for improvement:

5.4.2.5.1 Respondents were asked which kinds of spaces they would like to see more of/improved and then identify their top three. Figure 20 details the priorities identified.

Figure 20: Chelmsford Youth Council Survey – Priorities



#### 5.4.2.5.2 General Observations:

- 90% of respondents felt playgrounds with teenage equipment would be priority for improvement – and 60% included it in their top three.
- Wild natural play areas such as grass, ponds, trees for climbing, sand and mud were also considered a top priority.
- Interestingly access to informal space was not considered a priority, and no other typology received an overwhelming vote in the top three.

### 5.4.3 Additional responses

#### 5.4.3.1 Chelmer Village Youth Club

5.4.3.1.1 Paul Spain – Chelmer Village Youth Club Leader called to discuss the survey and the views of the youth club are reflected also in a formal response via the online survey:

5.4.3.1.2 Paul felt that youth club didn't use the nearest Park – Chelmer Village Green, which backs on to ASDA and the Youth Centre hut itself. There is also a retirement home on the edge of the village green.

5.4.3.1.3 Reasons include:

- Possible concern from residents in the retirement home over noise and disturbance.
- Concerns raised over the fees and costs to run events on the green which have prevented events going ahead before: a Funday was cancelled due the need for a license, which the organiser was not able to finance. (not the youth club)
- Youth Club have had to get permission from the local parish council to play a rounders match, which has put them off using the park.

#### 5.4.3.1.4 Area of need:

- Area of biggest need in that location is a football rebound wall / football provision. Asda, and the youth club themselves have issues with young people kicking footballs against buildings and causing damage. This seems to be the main pastime of young people in the area and biggest requirement of those that attend the Youth Centre.

#### 5.4.3.2 7<sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Boys Brigade

5.4.3.2.1 An email response was received from Ted Davis – Captain – 7<sup>th</sup> Chelmsford Boys Brigade:

*'I have looked through the questionnaire but the only park we use is Hylands Park for our annual Battalion cross-country/ cyclo-cross and tug-of-war competitions and for which we are charged what we believe to be an exorbitant fee, considering we are promoting and organising sport for young people.'*

5.4.3.2.2 When asked if there were any improvements or changes that could be made to other free sites to encourage them to use them Mr. Davis suggested that Hylands Park offered the best option in terms of size and facilities.

### 5.5 Access to play and youth facilities for disabled children

**5.5.1 Disabled teenagers' experiences of access to inclusive leisure** (Joseph Rowntree Foundation - Pippa Murray -2008)

5.5.1.1 This valuable research relates to the issue of improvements to facilities for disabled young people.

5.5.1.2 Leisure is a key area in paving the way towards full community inclusion and participation. It takes on an additional significance for disabled young people when barriers to full participation in education and employment result in them having more time for leisure pursuits whilst simultaneously experiencing greater difficulty in accessing leisure services, activities, and pastimes. This research project consulted with over 100 disabled teenagers to uncover their experience of 'inclusive leisure'. The teenagers said that:

- Disabled young people felt that their experiences at school/college strongly affected their access to friends and leisure outside school.
- Many young disabled people described their lives being tainted with the experiences of isolation, loneliness and exclusion.
- Whereas professionals viewed inclusive leisure as a means of learning life skills, increasing independence and/or self-esteem, young people focused on friendships and fun.
- Whilst wanting to participate in ordinary, mainstream leisure activities, disabled young people welcomed the opportunity to meet with each other in order to share their mutual experience.

- Lack of appropriate support (such as transport, personal assistance, and support to facilitate and/or interpret communication) was a major barrier to the participation of disabled young people in ordinary leisure activities. This was particularly apparent for disabled young people with complex impairments and high support needs.
- Beyond the specific experience of exclusion due to impairment, the interests and concerns of disabled young people are no different from those of non-disabled teenagers

## 5.5.2 Stakeholder Views

5.5.2.1 FACE (Families Acting for Change Essex) undertook an audit in 2010 of play provision for disabled children. Whilst the findings are from respondents across the county, it is clear that opinion and requirements for provision can be applied across the area. Examples of best practice are also given.

5.5.2.2 FACE is an organisation keen to engage with and advise local authorities and parish councils in ensuring their play provision helps meet the needs and requirements of disabled children.

5.5.2.3 Findings are based on 70 responses to a questionnaire circulated amongst families of children with additional needs.

### 5.5.2.4 Key Findings

#### 5.5.2.4.1 Access:

- Improvements to infrastructure such as gates, pathways and space around equipment is important to enable wheelchair / buggy access
- Accessible parking close to the site is important
- Improved information as to equipment available at each play space (web based)

#### 5.5.2.4.2 Quality:

- Safety surfacing and fencing is important to prevent slips – and vulnerable children getting out of the park area.
- Handrails, and equipment at the right height for use by children with additional needs.

#### 5.5.2.4.3 Suggestions for improvement / new facilities:

- Sensory feedback equipment – noises, touches, scents, reflections.
- Accessible swings- open net swings, high back swings, and wheelchair accessible swings.
- Accessible slides- wider possibly with ramped access or wider steps.
- Tunnels that could accommodate a wheelchair possibly with mirrors inside.

5.5.2.4.4 An example of good provision in Chelmsford was South Woodham Ferrers Village Hall Park.

## 5.6 Children and Young People: Key Findings

### 5.6.1 Quantity

- A clear majority (67%) of residents responding to the Leisure Plus household survey think there is a need for more facilities for teenagers.
- The most commonly identified shortfall across the surveys and discussions undertaken as part of this study was for the provision of teenage facilities.
- 55% of respondents overall felt there were not adequate youth facilities (age 13-19) in parks, more specifically 76% stating there are not enough youth shelters, and 62% not enough skateboard and BMX facilities. Outdoor sport is better catered for with 62% agreeing there is adequate provision.
- 43% of groups felt that there are not enough 'formal' equipped playgrounds for children of 12 years and under. Informal space is better provided for with 52% agreeing there is enough.
- 90% of teenagers responding to the Youth Council survey disagreed with the statement 'there are enough outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in your area. The remaining respondent was not sure.
- The 'Provision of equipped play areas' strategy is adopted and part of an established programme of change and improvement that should help ensure improved and rationalised provision of facilities across the city.
- Skate park provision is good in the South and Central Parts of the city with improvements to equipment currently underway. There is a gap in provision in the north of the city.
- There is a consistent view from respondents that more wild, natural green space should be available for young people.

### 5.6.2 Quality

- Over 50% of groups were generally satisfied with the overall quality of Chelmsford's Children's play areas, (rating quality as either good, or very good)
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction with outdoor youth facilities, and skate parks with 68% rating them adequate or poor, and only 27% rating them very good or good.
- Respondents would like to see more interesting and creative play equipment in local parks, citing Hylands Park as a good example of exciting play equipment
- When asked to identify aspects that most need improvement 33% of respondents in the 2012/13 Chelmsford City Council residents survey identified activities for teenagers (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> overall)
- Various stakeholders highlighted the importance and value of provision of natural informal green space and planning for play in the future should take this into account, in addition to formal equipped play spaces.
- Leisure plus survey respondents highlighted notable high priorities for improvement of children's play areas (39%) and outdoor facilities for teenagers (38%);

- 90% of youth Council respondents felt playgrounds with teenage equipment would be a priority for improvement – and 60% included it in their top 3. Wild natural play areas such as grass, ponds, trees for climbing, sand and mud were also considered a priority.

### **5.6.3 Access**

- 69% of users in the Leisure Plus household survey would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 27% of those would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes. Access standards should take this into consideration.
- Location and proximity of facilities for young people are important considerations – in terms of being too close to young children's facilities, but not too far away from the boundary of the park – particularly if being used in darker months.
- It is important that younger children have access to some kind of play space within easy walking distance from home and that teenagers have access to spaces to hang out independently with friends.
- 80% of teenage Youth Council respondents felt they would be happy to walk further to bigger, better facilities, only 3 respondents felt it important to have somewhere nearby
- Teenagers are happy to increase their travel time to have access to bigger, better facilities.
- Disability groups have identified a range of access needs which should be taken into consideration as part of any new playground design and installation.

### **5.6.4 Other Issues and priorities**

- Fees and license requirements for using parks and green spaces act as a deterrent to organised groups to use local parks, and country park facilities
- Partnership working across departments including youth services, sports and parks is important to maximize investment into and use of facilities
- Security and lighting is a significant issue for teenagers in using green spaces.
- Clearly identified 'teenage' facilities would help young people feel more comfortable using open space and less likely to be told not to 'hang around' by adults.

### **5.6.5 General Observation**

- The Natural England campaign for natural play is supported through the findings of this study with respondents keen to see more provision of this type.



## 6.0 NEIGHBOURING LOCAL AUTHORITIES, TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 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".

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

6.1.3 Section Six is comprised of two main sub-sections:

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

6.1.4 There is a summary of key issues at the end of the full Section Six.

6.1.5 The information and findings of this section will be taken forward, as appropriate, in the three main reports - the *Open Space Assessment*, the *Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment* and the *Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment*.

### 6.2 Neighbouring Authorities - Cross-boundary issues

#### 6.2.1 Overview - Chelmsford City Council

6.2.1.1 Chelmsford shares boundaries with seven other planning authorities: Basildon Borough Council; Braintree District Council; Brentwood Borough Council; Epping Forest District Council; Maldon District Council; Rochford District Council; and Uttlesford District Council.

6.2.1.2 We therefore contacted forward planning officers in these authorities to check if they had identified any cross border issues that they thought should be taken into account.

6.2.1.3 Comments and observations from officers of the neighbouring authorities are provided in Tables 18-22<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma.

Table 18: Comments and observations from Basildon Borough Council

| OS Aspect             | Notes/update on relevant studies  | Comments and observations - cross border issues <sup>43</sup>   | Where addressed in the three main reports   |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Green Infra-structure | The <i>Thames Gateway Green Grid Strategy</i> was completed in 2005.  | <p>Hanningfield Reservoir. This provides the main water source for Basildon. There are also a number of definitive footpaths in the proximity of these settlements that cross the administrative boundary, and Basildon Council would support any local standards of provision that would allow residents of the Basildon Borough to be able to gain improved access to open space, sport or recreation in the neighbouring Chelmsford areas. For example, a significant proportion of Ancient Woodland surrounding the settlements of Billericay and Wickford is located in the Chelmsford City area.</p> <p>Basildon Council has already spoken to Chelmsford City Council regarding the A130 corridor to address strategic landscape &amp; movement issues / improvements. Basildon also has a joint project with the local authorities of Rochford &amp; Castle Point and the Council is keen to maintain joint working with neighbouring authorities on such projects in the future.</p> | Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.10 to 3.4.12)           |
| Sport/ Recreation     | Ashley Godfrey Associates – <i>Basildon Borough Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Study</i> completed in 2012.  | No specific cross border issues highlighted.  | N/A   |
| Playing Pitch Study   | <p><i>Basildon Borough Council – Playing Pitch Strategy Review</i> completed in 2011.</p> <p>Recent guidance from Sport England states that ‘as a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PPS being signed</p> | Wickford/Runwell – Many of the playing pitches in Basildon are in private ownership and therefore cannot be guaranteed for future use. Currently a high number of playing pitches, particularly for Football are located on one privately owned site at Barleylands, which serves residents of the whole Borough. If this site were to be lost, Basildon would need to identify a number of sites throughout the Borough in order to meet the demand created by this loss of supply and by future growth. Therefore, due to the proximity of the settlements of   | Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Needs Assessment (Table 23 and paragraph 6.3.7). |

<sup>43</sup> These issues will be taken forward and considered in the 3 main reports (as appropriate) as noted in the right hand column.

|                   |  |  |   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
|                   | <p>off by the steering group, then Sport England and the NGBs would consider the PPS and the information on which it is based to be out of date’.</p> <p>The Basildon Play Pitch Strategy is now just over three years old and the nature of the supply and in particular the demand for playing pitches will likely have changed over the last three years since 2011. Therefore without any form of review and update, it would be difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.</p> | <p>Wickford and Billericay to the Chelmsford area, this may have cross-border implications for future playing pitch provision in the Chelmsford and Basildon areas.</p> <p>Stock Brook Manor Country Club and Queens Park Country Park are both located north of Billericay in close proximity to the Chelmsford City area. Similarly, Barn Hall Playing Fields are located to the north of Wickford in close proximity to Runwell in the Chelmsford City area.</p>  |   |
| Open Space/PPG 17 |  | <p>Runwell/Wickford – Wickford has lowest ha of Open Space per population head of the Basildon Borough and it may be that Chelmsford would need to help meeting levels of provision within the Chelmsford City area. Wickford Memorial Park is also of excellent quality and high intrinsic benefit, and is located to the north of Wickford and crosses the boundary with Chelmsford. Therefore, any sites identified for future development in either Runwell or Wickford, or as part of a cross-boundary allocation identified through the production of respective Basildon and Chelmsford Council’s Local Plans, will need to consider open space provision. It is worth noting that residents of Wickford will need to access open space and recreation facilities in Chelmsford and vice versa for Runwell residents accessing open space and recreation in Wickford.</p> | <p>Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.11).</p> |

|                      |  |  |   |
|----------------------|--|--|---|
|                      |  | Norsey Woods is a large area of Ancient Woodland to the east of Billericay, which is in close proximity to the Chelmsford boundary. Basildon Council is keen to ensure due consideration of this area as part of any assessment of open space. |   |
| Play/Youth provision |  | Runwell – provision of play areas that could meet the needs of Wickford residents and vice versa.  | Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.11) |

Table 19: Comments and observations from Braintree District Council

| OS Aspect          | Notes/update on relevant studies  | Comments and observations - cross border issues  | Where addressed in the three main reports                     |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Open Spaces/ PPG17 | We are in the process of commissioning consultants to update the Open Space/PPG 17 study and produce an <i>Open Space, Sports &amp; Recreational Facilities Strategy</i> . This work is due to be completed by December 2015. A brief was supplied for information. | Great Notley Country Park - although located within the Braintree District it is within close proximity to Chelmsford.<br><br>Great Leighs Race Course – equestrian facility. We are not sure if equestrian facilities are included within the brief. If so, considering the close proximity to the Braintree boundary and possible impacts this might be relevant issue for Braintree and Chelmsford. | Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.15) |

Table 20: Comments and observations from Brentwood Borough Council

| OS Aspect            | Notes/update on relevant studies  | Comments and observations - cross border issues   | Where addressed in the three main reports                     |
|----------------------|---|---|---|
| Green Infrastructure | Green Infrastructure Strategy current status is working draft. Anticipated publication date early 2015. | A key recommendation of the draft report is to collectively protect key landscape assets forming the distinctive character of Brentwood e.g. Wooded farmland, fenland, river valley, and ancient woodlands with coppicing; in consultation with neighbouring authorities so that features are protected and enhanced in their entirety across the Council boundaries as part of a community led, multi- | Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.19) |

|                      |   |   |  |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
|                      |   | functional, accessible, countryside.  |  |
| Open Spaces/ PPG17   | Brentwood is in the process of commissioning consultants to produce an open space and sports study (including a playing pitch study). Once complete this will update the current Survey and Assessment of Needs and Audit of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities 2007. Anticipated completion date is the end of March 2015 | The open space and sports facilities study currently being commissioned by Brentwood will be required to assess the impact that open space and sports facility provision in neighbouring local authorities has on future provision and planning.<br><br>Potential need for reference to cemeteries, need, demand, importance etc. | Section 3.4 of Chelmsford Open Space Study (paragraph 3.4.20). |
| Play /Youth Strategy | Brentwood Play Area Strategy 2007-2010; updated strategy forthcoming.   | No specific cross border issues highlighted.  | N/A  |

Table 21: Comments and observations from Epping Forest District Council

| OS Aspect                 | Notes/update on relevant studies  | Comments and observations - cross border issues | Where addressed in the three main reports |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| Open Spaces/PPG17         | Open Space/PPG17 study completed in 2012.   | No specific cross border issues highlighted.    | N/A                                       |
| Play /Youth Strategy      | Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2015 - 2025 to be considered for adoption at the next Council Meeting (16th December 2014).                             | No specific cross border issues highlighted.    | N/A                                       |
| Other relevant strategies | Landscape Character Assessment (May 2010); Local Wildlife Sites Review (September 2010); and Settlement Edge Landscape Sensitivity Study (March 2012) | No specific cross border issues highlighted.    | N/A                                       |

Table 22: Comments and observations from Uttlesford District Council

| OS Aspect         | Notes/update on relevant studies  | Comments and observations - cross border issues | Where addressed in the three main reports |
|-------------------|---|---|---|
| Open Spaces/PPG17 | Uttlesford published an <i>Open space, Sport facility and Playing pitch Strategy</i> in January | Chelmsford were used as a comparator authority. | N/A                                       |

|                                      |  |  |   |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
|                                      | 2012. A copy of the document and appendices was supplied.  |  |   |
| Sport/Recreation and playing pitches | The <i>Open space, sport facility and playing pitch Strategy</i> included catchment plans for sports facilities. | For a number of them such as football pitches, cricket and golf, the 10 and 15 minute drive catchment extends into Chelmsford City Council area. Conversely, for provision such as Indoor Bowling greens, the facilities in Chelmsford are the nearest facilities to residents in the south of the District. | Built/Indoor Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan (paragraphs 3.2.2 and 3.3.7). |

6.2.1.4 No comments were received from officers at Maldon and Rochford District Councils. Both of these Councils received two reminders following the original invitation to highlight current issues of cross border interest.

## 6.3 Town and Parish Councils

### 6.3.1 General Overview

6.3.1.1 Within the Chelmsford City Council area there are 27 parishes. Surveys were sent to all Town/Parish Councils together with two reminders to chase responses as needed. In total 13 Town/Parish Councils responded. If a Town/Parish Council response was not received the latest parish plan (where available) was reviewed in relation to identified sport/recreation issues and plans/aspirations. 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.

6.3.1.2 Responses were received from:

- Broomfield Parish Council
- Danbury Parish Council
- Galleywood Parish Council
- Great Baddow Parish Council
- Great Waltham Parish Council
- Little Baddow Parish Council
- Runwell Parish Council
- Sandon Parish Council
- South Hanningfield Parish Council
- South Woodham Ferrers Town Council
- Stock Parish Council

- Springfield Parish Council
- Writtle Parish Council

6.3.1.3 Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- All of the Town/Parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 10 of the 12 local councils who have responded to date noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- Most of the Town/Parish Councils were not aware if there was scope for greater community use of outdoor sport and recreation spaces at local schools but three (Bromfield PC, Great Waltham PC and Springfield PC) highlighted potential for community use (see below).
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs was young people/teenagers.

6.3.1.4 The suggested potential for greater community use of school facilities is noted below (verbatim comments):

- *Broomfield* - Use of facilities at Chelmer Valley High School, Court Road Broomfield or Broomfield Primary School for use of indoor and outdoor facilities for Youth Club etc
- *Great Waltham* - Possible use of football pitch, flood lighting of the school facility
- *Springfield* - When the secondary school is built on the Beaulieu Park development residents should be able to use the sport facilities when the school is closed.

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

6.3.1.5.1 The Town/Parish councils were asked to highlight what they thought, in general, were high priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces.

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

- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained
- They should be safe and secure for those using them
- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community
- There should be adequate opportunities for dog walking and freedom from dog fouling.
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.

6.3.1.5.3 It is also thought important by most Town/Parish councils that public open spaces should be easy to get around by all members of the community.

6.3.1.5.4 Table 23 below provides a summary of responses from the Town/Parish councils that responded.

Table 23: Summary of responses from Town and Parish Councils

| Parish Councils                    | Village/Community Halls | Winter pitches - Football/Rugby | Cricket pitches | Tennis courts/ Multi Use Games Areas | Bowling greens | Children's play areas | Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks) | Allotments | Parks, rec. grounds, village greens etc. | Wildlife areas, nature reserves | Footpath/bridleway/ cycleways |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Broomfield Parish Council          |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                | X                     | X                                    |            |  |                                 | X                             |
| Danbury Parish Council             |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                |                       |                                      |            |  |                                 |                               |
| Galleywood Parish Council          |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                |                       | X                                    |            |  |                                 |                               |
| Great Baddow Parish Council        | X                       | X                               | X               | X                                    |                |                       | X                                    | X          |  |                                 | X                             |
| Great Waltham Parish Council       | X                       | X                               |                 | X                                    |                |                       |                                      |            |  |                                 | X                             |
| Little Baddow Parish Council       |                         | X                               |                 | X                                    |                |                       |                                      |            |  |                                 |                               |
| Runwell Parish Council             | X                       | X                               | X               |                                      |                | X                     |                                      | X          | X  | X                               |                               |
| Sandon Parish Council              |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                | X                     |                                      |            |  |                                 | X                             |
| South Hanningfield Parish Council  |                         |                                 |                 | X                                    |                |                       |                                      |            |  |                                 | X                             |
| South Woodham Ferrers Town Council |                         | X                               | X               | X                                    |                | X                     | X                                    | X          |  |                                 | X                             |
| Springfield Parish Council         |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                |                       | X                                    | X          | X  |                                 |                               |
| Stock Parish Council               |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                |                       |                                      |            |  |                                 |                               |
| Writtle Parish Council             |                         |                                 |                 |                                      |                |                       |                                      |            |  | X                               |                               |
| TOTALS:                            | 3                       | 4                               | 2               | 5                                    |                | 4                     | 5                                    | 4          | 2  | 2                               | 6                             |

6.3.1.5.5 Table 23 covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities. For Town/Parish councils in the Chelmsford City Council area the aspects of most common concern are:

- The need for more and better access to footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Winter pitches for football and rugby - need for more and improvements in quality.



### 6.3.2 Town/Parish Council specific issues (survey)

#### 6.3.2.1 Unmet needs and aspirations for improvement

6.3.2.1.1 As part of the survey there were two 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 Council responses are shown in Table 24 below (verbatim comments).

Table 24: Town/Parish Council comments regarding unmet needs and aspirations

| Parish Council   | Groups in parish whose needs not being met   | Current plans and aspirations   |
|------------------|--|---|
| Broomfield PC    | Young Adults – provision of skate parks/pump tracks;<br>Older people – walking track   | BPC have a Strategy Working Group which is looking at ways to take forward the Parish Plan and are more than happy to share our ideas in a future meeting to discuss in more detail<br><br>Provision of a modern Youth Club is under constant review by BPC   |
| Galleywood PC    | No outdoor space is available to the Galleywood Youth Centre, Watchouse Road, Galleywood                                     | The Parish of Galleywood has a Greening Galleywood Legacy plan which maintains key open space provision at The Spinney (Woodland) and Twitten Green (wildlife meadow). Chelmer and Jubilee Park provide excellent sporting and play facilities with a smaller play facility at Pavitt Meadow. The Common provides a good open space for a number of recreational needs. Footpaths and bridleways are numerous and are promoted by Parish Walk leaflets which provide historical information along the routes. The Galleywood Heritage Centre provides a wildlife garden setting for visitors. |
| Great Baddow PC  | Young people when current drop-in centre facility in Marrable House (The Vineyards) becomes unavailable due to redevelopment | GBPC is planning the renovation of the Bell Centre. We are investigating options for drop-in centre premises, resurfacing the all weather courts and extending allotment provision. We continue to pursue ECC for the cycleway.   |
| Great Waltham PC | Not aware of any   | Parish council is looking to put allotments in to Ford end as we have 6 expressions of interest. Parish council would like to improve the changing facility at Great Waltham. Parish Council would consider putting changing rooms in to Ford End. Parish council would consider additional play equipment at Howe Street and Ford End  |

|                          |  |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Little Baddow PC         | Tennis Club  | Improve small football pitch at Wicklay Green Play Area - owned by CCC and leased by Parish Council   |
| Runwell PC               | None identified  | <p>Runwell Parish Council is seeking to improve the play facilities at Runwell Park, maintaining the changing rooms and will look into costing drainage of the football pitches (existing land drains not functioning properly)</p> <p>Runwell Social Club will undergo major changes with the re-development of the former Runwell hospital site for housing. Plans and funding have been agreed and the formalities are in hand.</p>  |
| Sandon PC                | None identified  | There is a significant population of horses in the parish and it has its own livery yard plus several other private ones. With the restoration of Sandon Quarry there is an opportunity for enhanced public access including bridleway creation within this project.  |
| South Hanningfield PC    | Recently received a request for a netball court and hockey pitch.  | None at present   |
| South Woodham Ferrers TC | We are aware that there is significant demand for additional football facilities that may better cope with the large number of clubs and games seeking venues. Additional or improved facilities may usefully help local rugby and cricket clubs. Work is ongoing to provide new facilities on land owned by the Town Council and efforts continue to improve the quality and maintenance of the many children's play areas in the town (owned by the City Council). | <p>Largely as demonstrated in the individual responses. Other details of the Council's policy position are provided in the supplementary guidance document <i>"The Plan for South Woodham Ferrers"</i>.</p> <p>As a riverside town we have provided grants to local sailing clubs to support programmes to introduce younger people to the sport. We believe similar efforts will be led by the local scout group to promote canoeing/kayaking for younger people in the town</p> |
| Stock PC                 | None identified.   | <p>The Parish Council wish to improve the newly acquired woodland off Swan Lane. Hankins wood. New paths seats etc.</p> <p>The Football club have an aspiration to acquire the freehold of their leasehold ground in order to secure its future. The land owner is willing to sell. The Parish Council are keen to assist the football club.</p>  |

|         |                 |   |
|---------|-----------------|---|
| Writtle | None Identified | No wildlife areas/nature reserves in the parish but several local organisations are considering such provision. |
|---------|-----------------|---|

6.3.2.1.2 The detailed Town/Parish Council responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements summarised in Table 25 above are provided below (verbatim comments)

*Table 25: Town/Parish Council comments regarding need for new and improved provision*

| Parish                       | Need for new/improved provision   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Broomfield Parish Council    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play areas: facilities required for joint use for wheelchair &amp; other users</li> <li>• Teenagers: No facilities at present – possible location open space land at Church Avenue (present owner Chelmsford City Council)</li> <li>• Cycleway required from Springfield/Beaulieu Park areas across Chelmer Valley to provide easy access to Broomfield Hospital via foot/cycle bridge over Essex Regiment Way and to join with existing cycleway which runs into the City from the bottom of The Avenues</li> </ul>   |
| Galleywood Parish Council    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth facilities: No outdoor space is available to the Galleywood Youth Centre, Watchouse Road, Galleywood.</li> </ul>   |
| Great Baddow Parish Council  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village Halls: Bell Centre needs renovation</li> <li>• All weather sports courts in recreation ground only have a hard tarmac surface</li> <li>• Teenagers: Replacement premises for drop-in centre.</li> <li>• Our main allotment site in Vicarage Lane is gradually being taken over for its main purpose as a cemetery</li> <li>• A cycleway to the town centre is required.</li> </ul>   |
| Great Waltham Parish Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village Halls: both halls need improvement</li> <li>• Sports Pitches - having something would be a vast improvement to what we currently have!</li> <li>• MUGA: It would be good to have such a facility at Howe Street or Ford End</li> <li>• Footpaths etc: Improvements to what we have would be good</li> </ul>  |
| Little Baddow Parish Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to improve surface of small football pitch of play area</li> <li>• Tennis Courts are wanted by the Tennis Club</li> </ul>   |
| Runwell Parish Council       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy saving measures needed at Runwell Village Hall, Church End Lane.</li> <li>• Runwell Park needs a big investment in drainage to improve the quality of the football pitches that are prone to waterlogging.</li> <li>• The childrens play area at Runwell Park needs equipment for older children, this is being looked into by the parish council 2015/16</li> <li>• Allotments: Improvements needed to parking area, Parish Council to provide scalplings/type1 stone.</li> <li>• The pavilion/changing rooms at Runwell Park need new external doors and windows, the parish council are looking to fund this 2015/16</li> <li>• Wildlife areas/nature reserves: More involvement needed from local schools.</li> </ul> |

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Sandon Parish Council              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play area for older children; there is already a toddler play area within the Lintons Development</li> <li>• There are no bridleways in the parish at all, creation or upgrading of footpaths to bridleways would be beneficial.</li> </ul>   |
| South Hanningfield Parish Council  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities for netball and hockey requested</li> <li>• Request for cyclepath from Ramsden Heath into Billericay</li> </ul>  |
| South Woodham Ferrers Town Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived need for additional facilities for winter pitches, cricket pitches and tennis courts/ Multi Use Games Areas.</li> <li>• Play areas: Improvement in quality required. Some rationalization of existing sites may better fit local need.</li> <li>• Youth facilities: The Town Council has identified a need to provide additional meeting facilities and is looking at sites to help provide additional shelters.</li> <li>• There is a strong case for additional allotments to serve the town as demonstrated by the very large waiting list. Efforts to meet this need are under way.</li> <li>• Improvements to some pedestrian routes including footpaths by the River Crouch have been identified as priorities</li> </ul> |
| Springfield Parish Council         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional teenage facilities needed on Chelmer Village Green</li> <li>• Need for allotments on the new Beulieu Park Development</li> <li>• Additional equipment needed on the Chelmer Village Green</li> <li>• The movement of the play space at Anjou Park to be located away from the residential properties.</li> </ul>   |
| Writtle Parish Council             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village/Community Halls There are 4 in the village</li> <li>• Winter pitches - football pitches provided</li> <li>• Cricket pitches - Cricket provided for</li> <li>• Tennis courts/MUGAS - both provided</li> <li>• Bowling Greens - at Writtle Bowling Club</li> <li>• Play Areas - two in the parish</li> <li>• Teenage facilities - provided at Paradise Road</li> <li>• Allotments - two areas covering 130 plots</li> <li>• Parks and recreation grounds - already provided</li> <li>• Footpaths/bridleways/cyclepaths - a number in and around the village</li> </ul>  |

### 6.3.2.2 Town/Parish Councils – other comments

6.3.2.2.1 Finally, the survey also provided the opportunity to raise any other issues or to make other points. Table 26 below provides individual Town/Parish Council responses (verbatim comments).

Table 26: Town/Parish Council general comments

| Parish                             | Issues and other comments   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Broomfield Parish Council          | Sustainability & maintenance is a key factor in relation public open spaces.<br><br>All Parish Councils would appreciate help and advice from City/County Council for access to funding streams and expert advice   |
| Danbury Parish Council             | In relation to aspects of quality for public open spaces a key factor is to supply a variety of facilities to provide something for all ages  |
| Runwell Parish Council             | The cricket club disbanded at Runwell park due to attacks from local travellers   |
| Sandon Parish Council              | Bridleways are multi-user tracks that can be legally used by pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders - plus the disabled/elderly in wheelchairs/mobility scooters. All user groups should also be included in access considerations.  |
| South Woodham Ferrers Town Council | We would welcome improved co-ordination and communication between the various facility providers in the town. We also support the use of the facilities for special events to attract greater public use and awareness  |
| Writtle                            | The Parish Council owns and maintains two playing fields, Paradise Road and the Pleasure Bit in Oxney Green, both contain areas of play equipment for children and there is a skateboard strip and youth shelter at Paradise Road. The Paradise Road Sports Field has football pitches, a cricket pitch, tennis courts (run and operated by the Writtle Sports and Social Club) and a hard play area that can be used for tennis, 5-a-side football and netball. A playing field for Writtle Minors football was opened in 2007.<br><br>The Council has two allotment areas, Oxney Green and The Chase and plots are currently available. |

### 6.3.3 Town/Parish Council Specific Issues (other sources)

6.3.3.1 For the larger Town/Parish Councils that did not respond, an online search was undertaken to identify any relevant information, parish plans or village design statements. Information and observations of relevance to the open space, sports and recreational facilities study are noted in Table 27 below.

Table 27: Findings from online search for relevant information relating to Town/Parish Councils that did not respond.

| Parish                 | Issues/observations re sport, play and recreation facilities  |
|------------------------|---|
| Boreham Parish Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boreham Village has a village hall and recreation ground, a primary school, and a fitness centre.</li> <li>There are allotments and a bowling green in Waltham Road.</li> <li>Although Boreham Parish Council is the Custodian Trustee for the Village Hall, it is managed and administered by a Village Hall Management Committee. The hall has three separate halls for hire.</li> </ul> |

- The Scout and Guide HQ is a 1990's one storey building behind the village hall. It has a secure outside space and has been built on part of the recreation ground.
- There is a Sports and Social Club serving footballers and cricketers. It has a bar for members and visitors at the end of games, matches or for social events.
- A new parish footpaths map is currently being prepared by the parish council.
- The Recreation Ground- there have been recent problems with regard to the use of the recreation ground during very wet weather. The parish is considering a request from Boreham Youth Football Club to mark out a small pitch for Youth Football.
- Chase Field Play Area - the Parish Council has been successful in receiving £14,750 in funding towards an improvement project.
- Chantry Field. The Council is discussing the proposed sale of Chantry Field.
- Many people use the River Chelmer for boating and fishing. There are a number of lakes along Waltham Road which are used by various fishing clubs.
- There are many footpaths connecting the village to the countryside.
- There are no cycle ways to the north or south of Boreham or towards Hatfield Peverel causing cyclists to use the busy roads.
- Public footpaths throughout the parish are used heavily, mainly for recreational purposes including dog walking.
- The parish has one bridleway, one grade 2 protected lane (Birds Farm Lane) and the Chelmsford Centenary Circle (Footpath) loops around New Hall within its boundary.

#### Recommendations in Village Design Statement (2008)

- If the land to the east of the Chase play area comes into public ownership it could be used as an additional recreation area.
- A mountain bike track would be a welcome addition to the Chase Field recreation area.
- Permission for any new development should only be granted subject to Section 106 agreements to provide sufficient recreational facilities to bring Boreham in line with the standards laid down in the Chelmsford Borough Council Green Space Assessment criteria. Examples could include tennis courts.
- Any changes to the design of the school or its surrounding recreational areas should improve the scene and ensure that existing playing areas are enhanced for their visual amenity and health of the community.
- When the opportunity arises the owner or tenant is encouraged to replace the Sports and Social Club building with a new sports pavilion with a pitched roof in keeping with the Village Hall.
- Provide a dedicated cycle way between the village and Boreham House on the south side of the road.
- In any new road development in the parish any existing public footpaths should be accommodated eg. by the provision of bridges and/or underpasses.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A display panel should be commissioned, possibly made of mosaics, matching the school dragon and the Village Hall murals, showing Boreham Parish, its roads, public footpaths, the location of its main buildings, play and sports fields and the river. A high level position on the flank wall of the Butterfield Road shops facing Church Road could be a suitable location.</li> <li>• Provide safe pedestrian routes to field edges alongside Waltham Road between the Industrial Area to at least the allotments and along Church Road from the village to Black Bridge.</li> </ul>   |
| Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodham Ferrers Village Hall is located on Woodham Ferrers' main street. The Hall comprises two halls, a main hall and a small hall; with catering and toilet facilities.</li> <li>• Bicknacre Memorial Village Hall is also available for community use.</li> <li>• Bicknacre Playing Fields are next to Priory Primary School. Danbury and Bicknacre FC, an FA Charter Standard Club, currently play there providing football for boys and girls. They currently have 10 teams.</li> <li>• The Hooe Playing Field - the parish council has received offers of grants from the Big Lottery and Essex County Council for a skatepark project to be completed in spring 2015.</li> <li>• Priory Fields: managed by the Friends of Priory Fields. In 2007 the Friends purchased a further 25 acres, with the aid of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.</li> <li>• The parish council note that discussions with respect to providing a 25-year Lease to Danbury and Bicknacre Juniors Football Club are "progressing well". They are currently working through legal requirements to protect the land for the future. Friends of Priory Field are involved with the discussions as the proposed area of land identified is within the Priory Fields – currently identified as Priory Small Field.</li> <li>• The Parish Council has produced a leaflet of Countryside Walks in and around Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish.</li> </ul> |

## **6.4 Neighbouring Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils – Key Findings**

### **6.4.1 Neighbouring Local Authorities – Cross Boundary Issues**

6.4.1.1 Section 6.1 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.

6.4.1.2 It is noteworthy that few strategies currently appear to look in depth at cross boundary issues or identify networks of green infrastructure or open space which cross local authority boundaries; and officers highlight a relatively small number of specific cross border issues and plans (with the notable exception of Basildon).

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

6.4.1.4 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.

### **6.4.2 Town/Parish Councils**

#### **6.4.2.1 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.
- All of the parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 9 of the 11 local councils reported that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- Most of the parishes were not aware if there was scope for greater community use of outdoor sport and recreation spaces at local schools but two of the parishes (Bromfield and Great Waltham) highlighted potential for community use (see below).
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers.



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

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

- The need for more and better access to footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- Winter pitches for football and rugby - need for more and improvements in quality.

#### **6.4.2.3 Quality considerations**

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

- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained
- They should be safe and secure for those using them
- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community
- There should be adequate opportunities for dog walking and freedom from dog fouling
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.

It is also thought important by most parish councils that public open spaces should be easy to get around by all members of the community.

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

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

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

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

7.2 The following table summarises where the information and findings from the *Community and Stakeholder Consultation* report will be taken forward in the three main reports - the *Open Space Assessment*; the *Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment*; and the *Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment*.

Table 28: Where information/findings from this report will be taken forward.

| Community and Stakeholder Consultation Section             | Open Space Assessment | Playing Pitch Strategy and Outdoor Sports Assessment | Indoor Sports and Recreation Facilities Assessment |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| 2: General Community Consultation                          | ✓                     | ✓  | ✓  |
| 3: Part 1 - Sports - Indoor                                |                       |  | ✓  |
| 3: Part 2 - Sports - Outdoor (non-pitch)                   |                       | ✓  |  |
| 4: Parks, green spaces, countryside                        | ✓                     |  |  |
| 5: Children and young people                               | ✓                     |  |  |
| 6: Neighbouring Local Authorities and parish/town councils | ✓                     | ✓  | ✓  |