

# **Cheshire West and Chester Open Spaces Study (2016-2030)**



**Cheshire West  
and Chester**

## **Community and Stakeholder Consultation**

(Final Version March 2017)

**Cheshire West and Chester Open Spaces Study  
Community and Stakeholder Consultation**

**ethos**  
Environmental Planning

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## Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
AC	Angling Club
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
BOATS	Byways open to all traffic
CAPS	Club Action Planning Scheme
CCBA	Cheshire County Bowling Association
CCS	Clinical Commission Groups
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CTC	Cyclists Touring Club
CPRE	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
CrBAP	Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CW&C	Cheshire West and Chester
CWT	Cheshire Wildlife Trust
EA	Environment Agency
FoAM	Friends of Anderton and Marbury
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
ISNA	Integrated Needs Assessment
LAF	Local Access Forum
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LRA	Least Restrictive Access
LTA	Lawn tennis Association
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NCN	National Cycle Network
NGB	National Governing Body
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
RC	Rowing Club
ROW	Rights of Way

ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
S106	Section 106
TC	Tennis Club
WASt	Woodland Access Standard

## Acknowledgments

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

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is a supporting document to the main *Cheshire West and Chester Open Spaces Study* (2016-2030). It provides consultation findings from various stakeholders and feeds into the main report as explained below.

### 1.1 Study Overview

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

In view of the above, in 2015 Cheshire West and Chester Council appointed Ethos Environmental Planning to review and update the Council's Open Space Assessment and Assessment of Need 2011. The project needs to assess current open space provision and provide a comprehensive needs assessment to inform the decision making process up to 2030.

The brief for the study highlighted that the overall aims are to:

- Provide background evidence to support Local Plan policies in relation to open space and formal recreation, ensuring that this evidence is sound, robust, capable of being scrutinised through examination, and meets the requirements of the NPPF.
- Examine the need for new green space and existing space, and ensure that it is aligned with all of the green space policy across the Council;
- Supply information that will enable the Council to develop an open spaces strategy and inform related strategies and plans, identify deficiencies (or surpluses) in the extent, type, quality, accessibility and connectivity of open space;
- Review open spaces usage and the facilities within them;
- Evaluate the needs and aspirations of local communities with regards to these spaces;
- Assess open spaces as a community and environmental resource and the potential to improve people's quality of life, health and well-being, and create more sustainable communities;
- Review open space maintenance requirements and costs to inform Council budget setting and corporate decision making;
- Review the information to enable the Council to justify collecting developer contributions and inform the Council on the distribution of developer contributions to open space in line with Community Infrastructure Levy regulations.

### 1.2 The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

This report provides evidence that will be used in the main study report (where it will be combined with, for example, other evidence, findings and assessments completed in the audit and analysis process).

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

The report examines local need for a wide range of different kinds of open space, informal sport, and recreation facilities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of

consultation findings from relevant open space studies. It outlines the community consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the study as well as the main findings.

The report is made up of 5 main sections:

- General Community Consultation
- Parks, green spaces, countryside, and rights of way
- Children and Young People - play and youth facilities
- Informal sports - outdoor (non-pitch)
- Neighbouring local authorities; locality areas; and town and parish councils

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

The consultation and research programme was undertaken from July to November 2015<sup>1</sup>. The extent of the research reflects the breadth and diversity of the study and a consequent need to engage with as wide a cross section of the community and stakeholders as possible<sup>2</sup>.

In summary, questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- An online survey utilising the Borough Council's Citizen's Panel (supplemented by a postal general household survey)
- A survey of town and parish councils
- Local groups and organisations' survey
- Survey of relevant sports national governing bodies and local sports/recreation clubs.

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

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

The result of this consultation and other analyses will help amongst other things to inform the content of the recommended local standards as appropriate. This will be explained further in the main Open Space Study report.

The report findings also help 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 Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan, and will be highlighted in the main Open Space Study report.

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

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

## 2.0 GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This section provides consultation findings that cover all aspects of open space, informal sport and outdoor recreation provision. In this sense it provides a useful overview across all these aspects rather than simply from groups and organisations with specific interests in just one aspect of open space and 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, informal sport and recreation.

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

### 2.1 Household Survey

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

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

An online questionnaire survey was therefore distributed through the Borough Council's Citizen's Panel<sup>3</sup> supplemented by a postal random household survey. Respondents were asked to respond to provide a view on behalf of their household, rather than simply as individuals. 404 surveys were completed. The total number of people represented through the household survey was 947 and the average household size of the households was 2.34 - a little higher than Cheshire West and Chester as a whole (2.31) and lower than the national average (2.36).

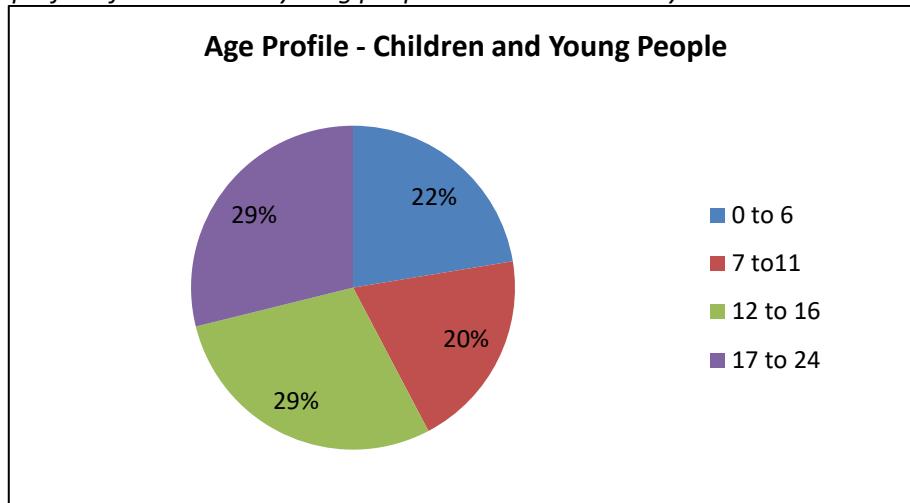
Just over 28% of households who responded had children (representing household views on behalf of just over 201 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range (Figure 1).

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<sup>3</sup> A Citizens' Panel is a cross section of local people who agree to take part in research and consultation with the Council on a regular basis. Usually, people are selected at random and invited to participate.

Figure 1

Age profile of children and young people in household survey



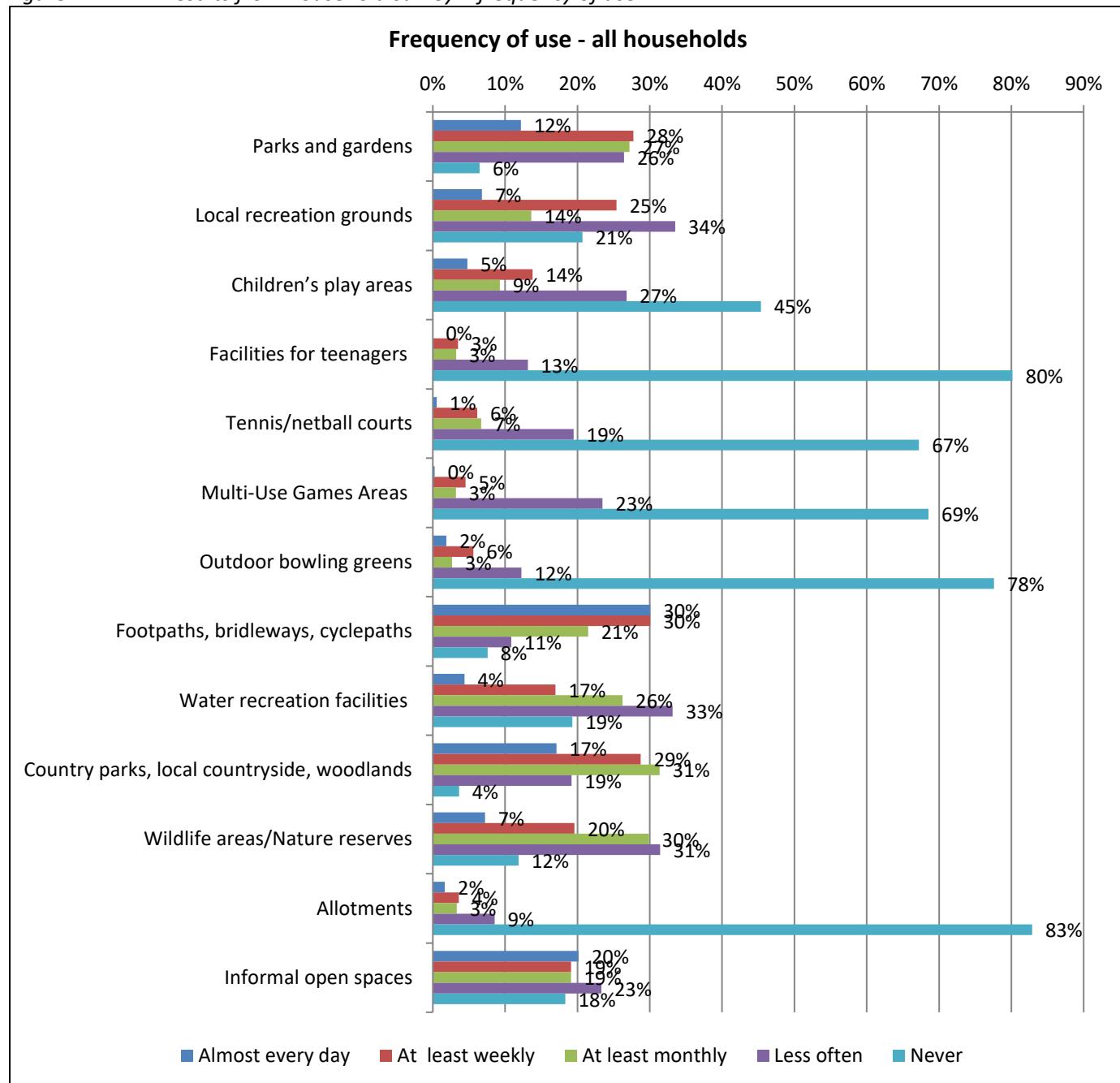
The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 2 and the following provides some of the key findings<sup>4</sup>.

### 2.1.2 Frequency of use – All households

Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of the following types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within the study area, and the results are shown in figures 2 and 3 below.

<sup>4</sup> The findings are further considered - in detail - in the main report.

Figure 2 Results from household survey – frequency of use



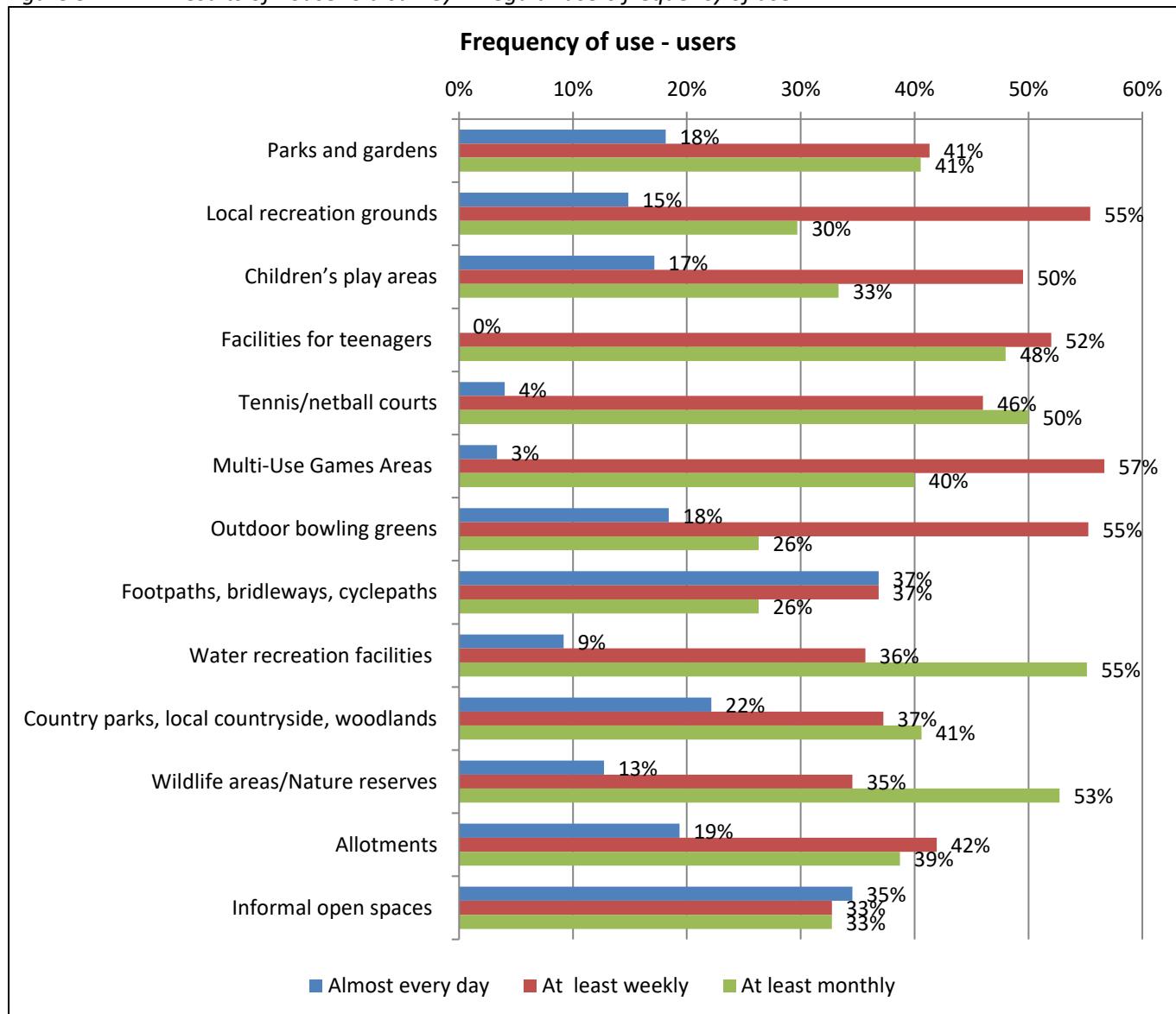
As can be seen, it is the Borough's footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths that are most commonly used by most households at least monthly (81%); followed by country parks, countryside and woodlands (77%); and local and parks (67%). These open space facilities are also by far the most frequently used facility on both a weekly and daily basis e.g. 60% use rights of way at least weekly (of which 30% make use almost every day). 46% visit country parks, local countryside and woodlands at least weekly (17% of which visit almost every day).

Other spaces used at least weekly by at least 25% of households (including those who are more frequent users) are informal open spaces (for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc.); local recreation grounds; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.

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

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

Figure 3 Results of household survey – Regular users frequency of use



This shows, for example, that:

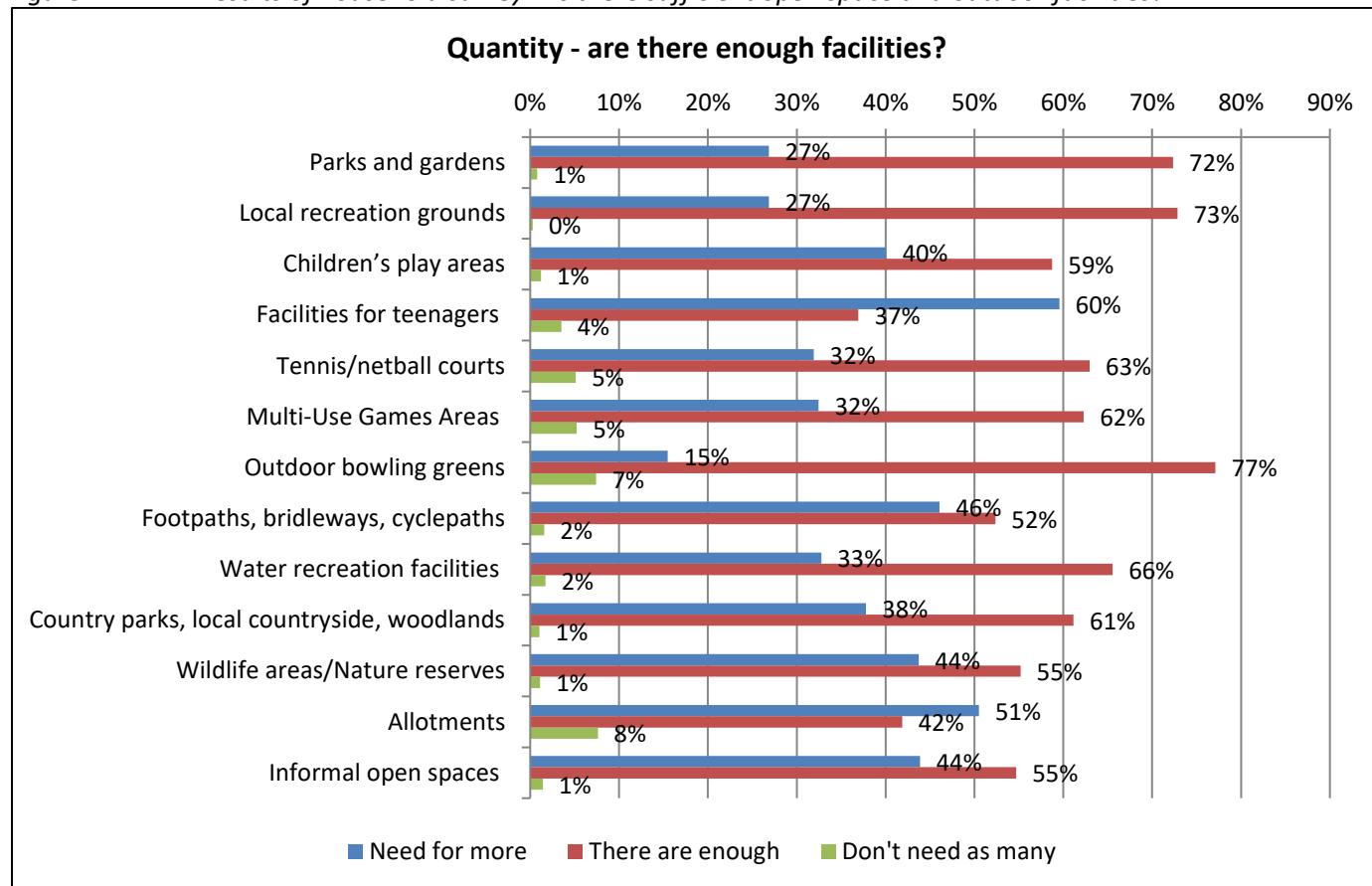
- 73% of users of bowling greens use them at least weekly (of which 18% use them nearly every day).
- 67% of households using play areas visit them at least weekly (of which 17% use them nearly every day).
- 61% of allotment holders visit their allotment at least weekly (of which 19% visit almost every day).

#### 2.1.4 Quantity of open space, informal sport and recreation facilities

Residents were asked if there was a need for more, the same or fewer of different types of open space and recreational facilities. Findings are illustrated in Figure 4 below and will influence the “quantity” component of local standards as appropriate (this is explained further in the main report).

Figure 4

Results of household survey – is there sufficient open space and outdoor facilities?



There are only two open space typologies where respondents suggest there is a general need for more. 60% suggest a shortfall of facilities for teenagers; and 51% for allotments.

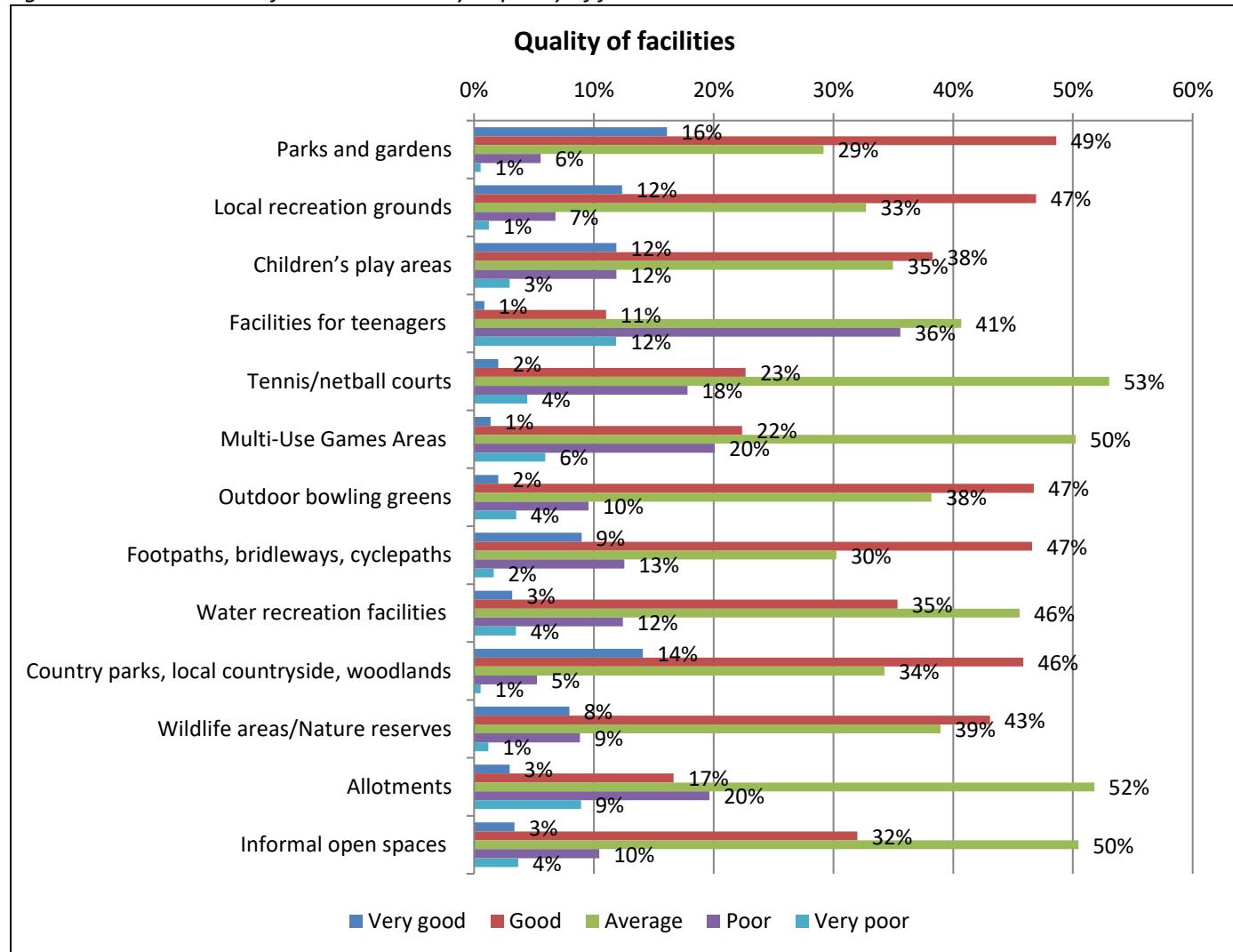
A very clear majority think that overall there are enough bowling greens (77%), local recreation grounds (73%), and parks and gardens (72%).

Smaller, though significant, majorities (over 60%) think that in general there are enough: water recreation facilities; tennis courts; bowling greens; and county parks, accessible countryside, and accessible woodlands.

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

Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Results of household survey – quality of facilities



For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality.

- 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- Over 25% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas and tennis courts as poor or very poor.

By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by a clear majority in terms of quality.

- Parks and gardens (65% rate quality in general as being good or very good);
- Country parks/countryside/woodlands (60% similarly);
- Local recreation grounds (59%).

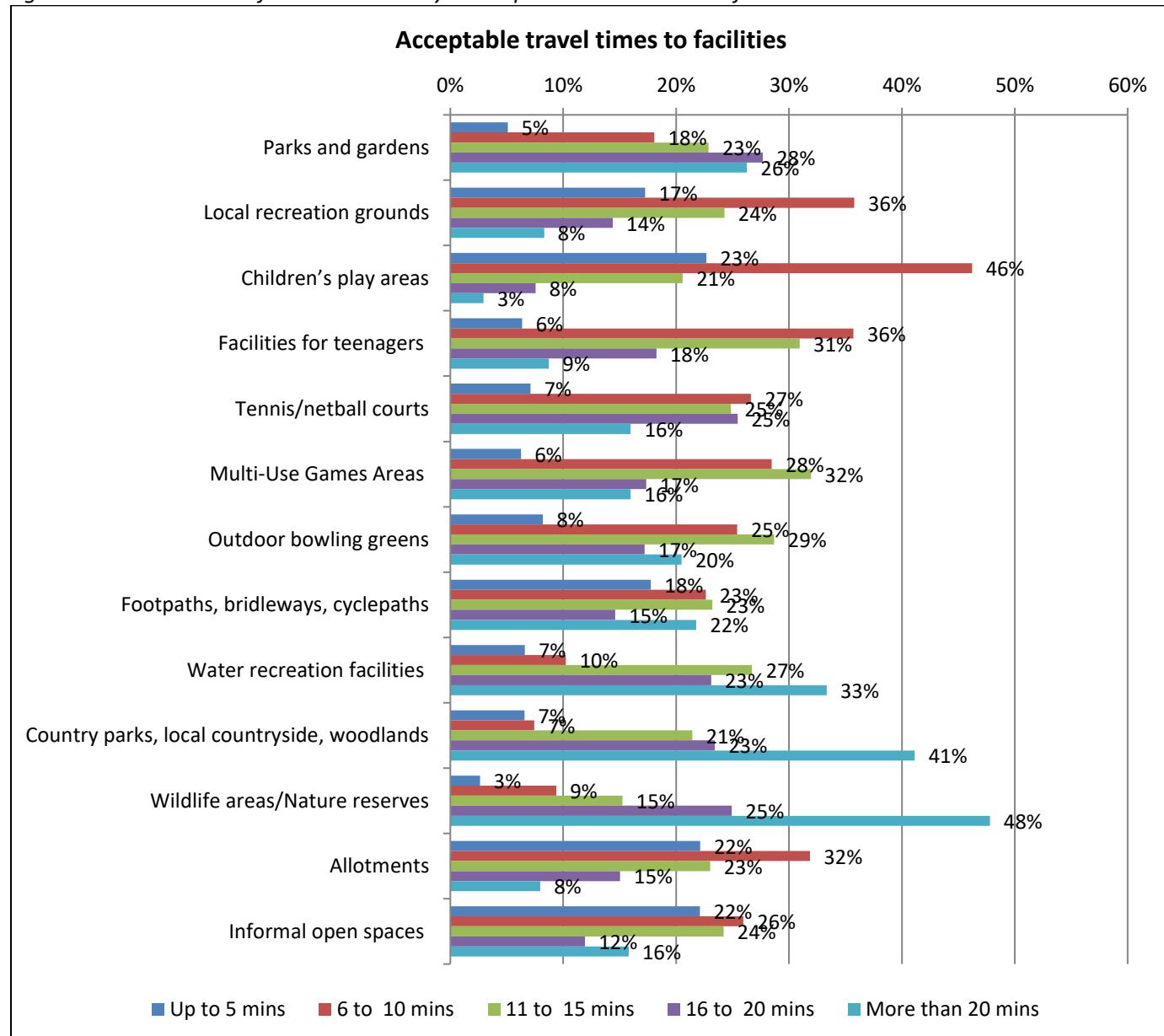
## 2.1.6 Access Issues (Geographical)

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

foot, bike, public transport etc.). Where appropriate, these results will feed into the determination of the “access” element of local standards.

In looking at the travel times in Figure 6 below it should be noted that it does not specify the mode of preferred travel (this is covered by Figure 7).

Figure 6 Results of household survey – acceptable travel times to facilities

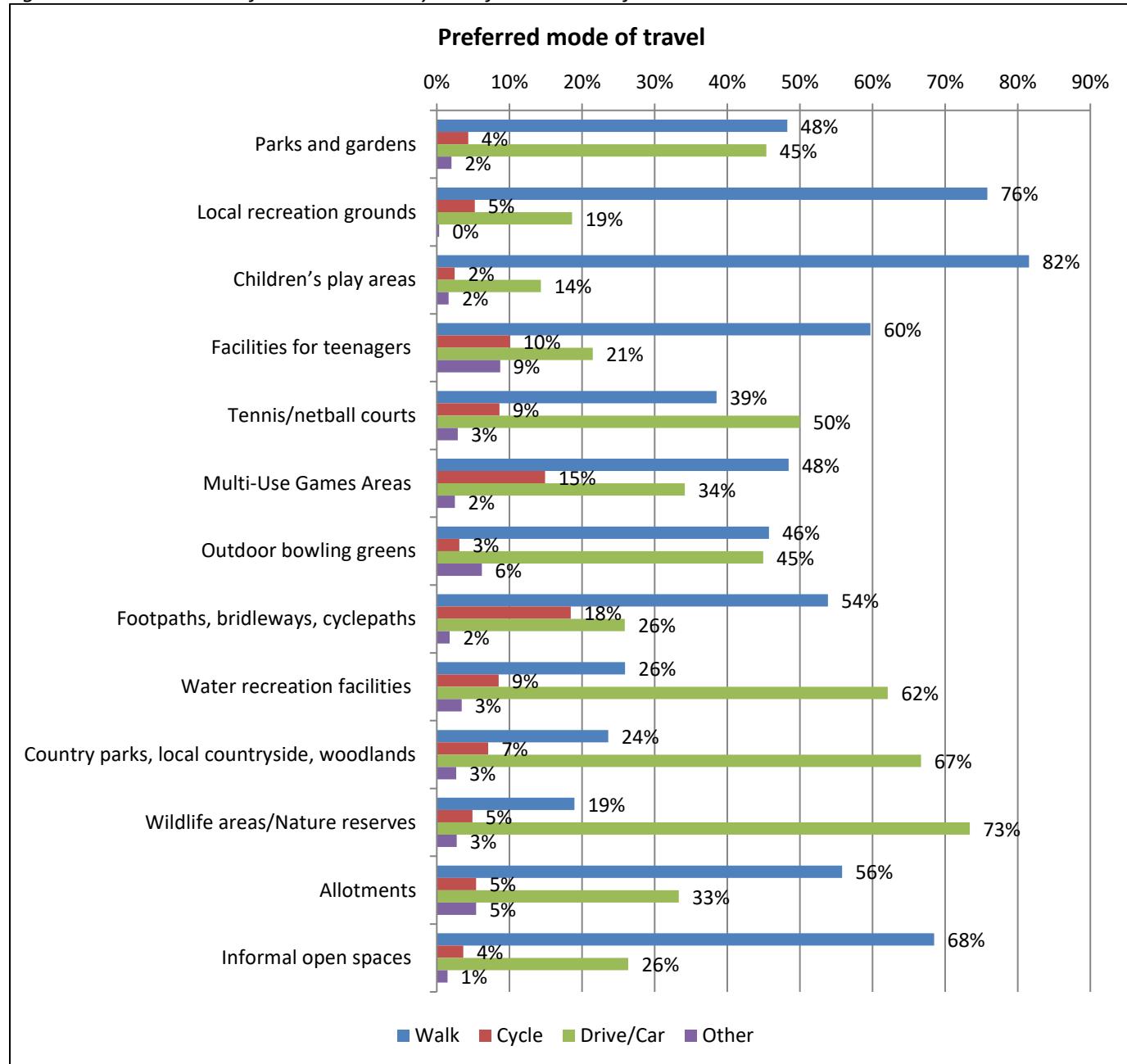


It can be seen that where respondent households make use of the opportunities identified a large proportion (48%) of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit a wildlife area/nature reserve. Significant numbers are also willing to travel that long to visit other kinds of open spaces/facilities, for example: country parks, countryside and woodlands (41%); and areas for water recreation (33%).

In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, recreation grounds and allotments).

- 69% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 54% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 53% of users would expect local recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 17% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

Figure 7 Results of household survey – Preferred mode of travel



Respondents are more likely than not to drive to many open spaces and outdoor facilities most notably wildlife areas/nature reserves (73%); country parks, accessible countryside and woodland; and water recreation sites.

However, walking is the norm for many of the typologies such as play areas (82%); local recreation grounds (76%); informal open spaces - for dog walking, picnics, hobbies etc (68%).

Cycling is a significant form of transport used for accessing MUGAs (15%) and youth facilities (10%). When combined with walking the totals for non-motorised access to these facilities are 63% and 70% respectively. In addition 9% of teenagers also travel by public transport to access youth facilities.

It should also be noted that that nearly 10% of households reported that they did have access to a car for transport.

It is not of course surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as children's play areas, recreation grounds, and "informal" green spaces. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for larger or more specialised spaces such as nature reserves and country parks - which are often some distance removed from many potential users. It is however of great importance when it comes to drawing up the access element of local standards in terms of whether access thresholds should primarily be provided in terms of walking, cycling or drive times.

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

- Recreation grounds
- Play areas for children
- Teenage facilities
- Rights of way
- Allotments
- Informal open space

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

- Water recreation sites
- Country parks and countryside sites
- Wildlife areas and nature reserves

From the findings above it is less clear for some facilities e.g. parks and gardens; tennis courts; and bowling greens; which may be the more appropriate transport mode upon which to base possible access thresholds.

It should be noted that the above are broad conclusions and will be considered in detail in the main report. For example, drive times may be more appropriate for the strategic access element of a standard for "destination" parks and gardens but walking may be best for local "pocket parks". Equally there may be a need to consider standards for different types of youth facility. For example, planning for skate park provision in the main towns may be best served by aiming for a strategic supply of high quality facilities that may need to take into account proximity to public transport routes, cyclepaths and such like. The provision of youth shelters may need a much more locally based, demand led, strategy.

The main report 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/green corridors may not be focused on specific quantity or distance/time threshold standards.

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

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

- 81% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 81% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

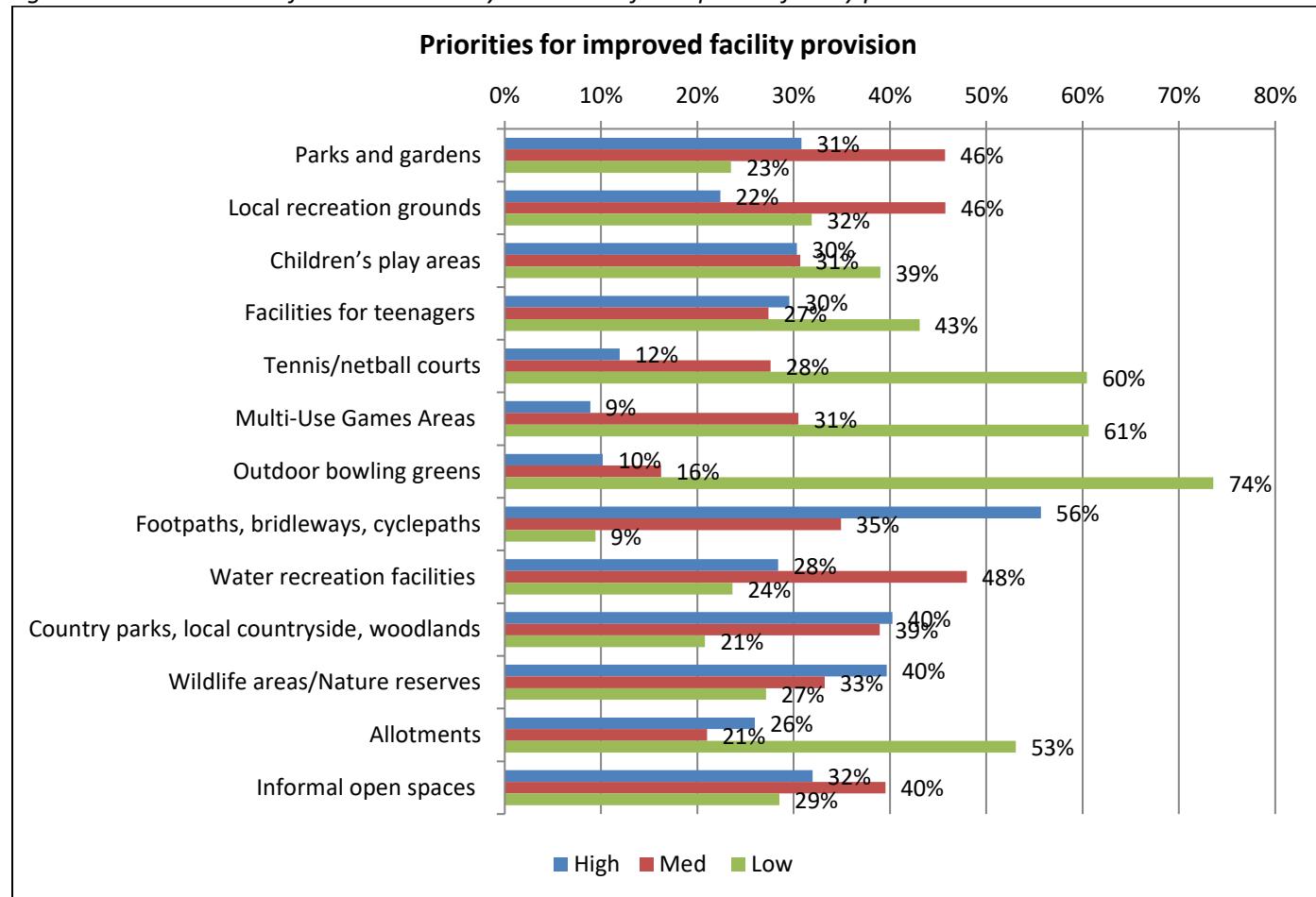
This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities.

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

### 2.1.7 Key Issues and priorities for improvement

Households were also asked what their priorities for improvement in provision were. Findings are illustrated in Figure 8 below. Respondents were asked to rate the need for new or improved facilities by indicating priorities at three levels – high, medium or low.

Figure 8 Results of household survey – Priorities for improved facility provision



In relation to Open Space and Outdoor Facilities the category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (56%).

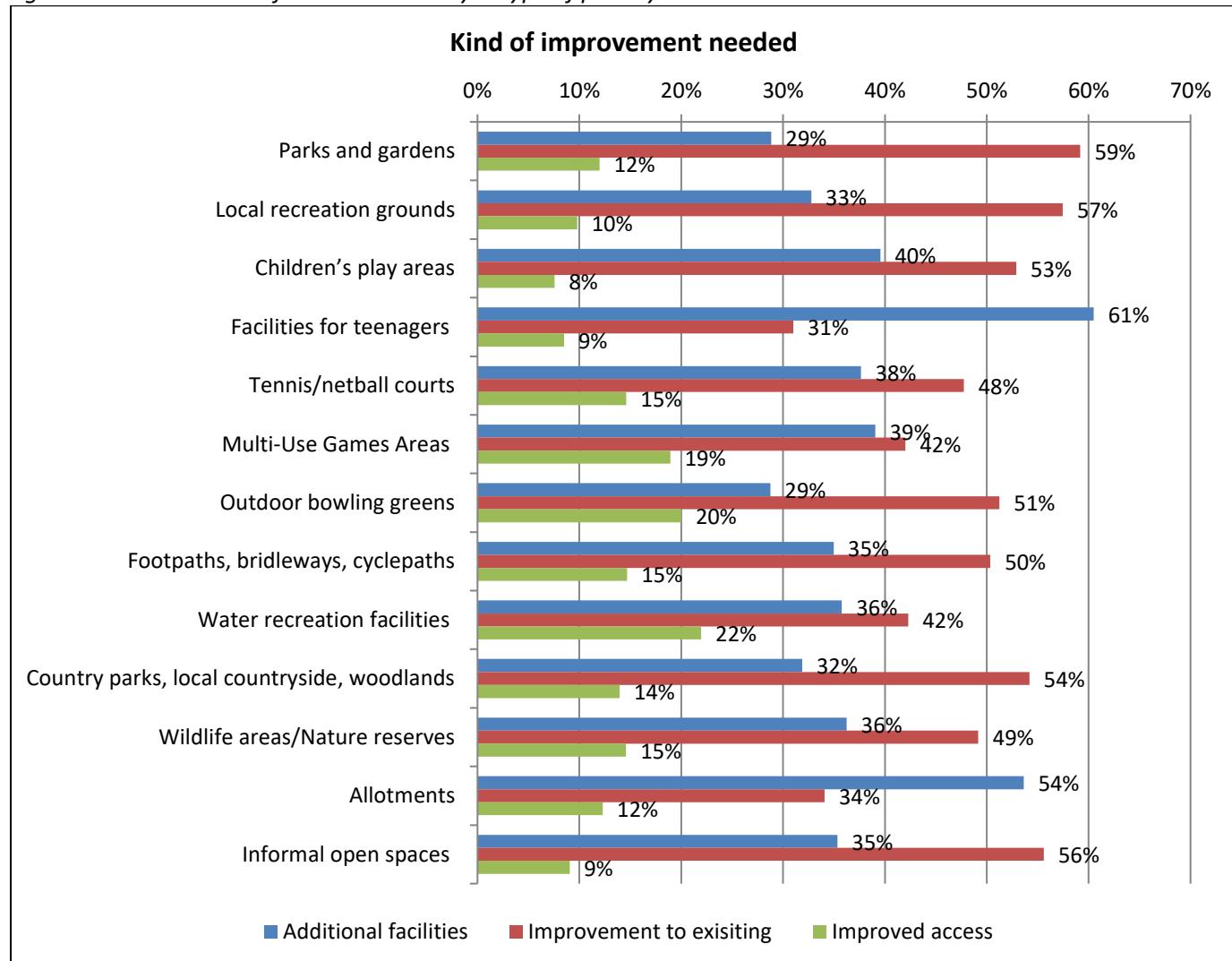
Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were for country parks, accessible countryside/woodlands, and nature reserves/wildlife areas (40%). Around 30% rated improvements to parks and gardens; children's play areas/facilities for teenagers; and informal open spaces as high priorities for improvement.

Access to sites for water recreation also scored quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 76% of households - 48% medium/28% high).

#### Type of Improvement Needed

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 9 below.

Figure 9 Results of household survey – Type of priority needed



From this it can be seen that:

- In the main households tended to suggest that improvements to existing open space facilities rather than new provision was most needed.
- The only categories where a majority identify a primary need for more facilities are provision for teenagers (61%) and allotments (54%).
- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement need suggested e.g. parks and gardens (59%); recreation grounds (57%); and informal open spaces (56%).
- Improved access is quite significant for some categories e.g. access to water recreation; bowling greens; and MUGAs (around 20%).

## 2.2 Stakeholder Views - Public Health

### 2.2.1 Introduction - the general value of open spaces and physical activity to health

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

#### NICE Local Authority Briefing - Public health

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

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

More specifically in relation to the Open Spaces Study, Public Health England have provided a health equity briefing: *Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces*.

#### Public Health England - health equity briefing: Local action on health inequalities: Improving access to green spaces. Summary of key points

- There is significant and growing evidence on the health benefits of access to good quality green spaces. The benefits include better self-rated health; lower body mass index, overweight and obesity levels; improved mental health and wellbeing; increased longevity.
- There is unequal access to green space across England. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to live near green spaces and will therefore have fewer opportunities to experience the health benefits of green space compared with people living in less deprived areas.
- Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups is likely to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and reduced social isolation.
- Local authorities play a vital role in protecting, maintaining and improving local green spaces and can create new areas of green space to improve access for all communities. Such efforts require joint work across different parts of the local authority and beyond, particularly public health, planning, transport, and parks and leisure.

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

## 2.2.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council Public Health Team

In relation to the development of the main report 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 and outdoor play/recreation provision is valued by the public health service. For example, there is potential to secure increased public health funding for potential open space developments.

The Cheshire West and Chester Council Consultant in Public Health was contacted and provided the following information and key points:

### Overview

- Cheshire West and Chester Council has a statutory role for Public Health (supported by funding previously allocated to the NHS for this purpose).
- There are two NHS Clinical Commission Groups (CCGs) in Cheshire West and Chester (West Cheshire and Vale Royal) and The Council have a place on these boards to represent a public health interest.
- The key strategy guiding the delivery of Public Health services in Cheshire West and Chester is the *Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-19* produced jointly by the Health and Wellbeing Board and the West Cheshire Strategy Board.
- The strategy is based on the evidence supplied in the Cheshire West and Chester *Integrated Needs Assessment* (ISNA). The ISNA provides:
  - An analysis of current and future health and wellbeing outcomes;
  - An understanding of what people need from their services; and
  - A view of the future, predicting and anticipating potential or new unmet need.
- Many Council services have important links with public health e.g. Planning, Total Environment, Place Operations, Housing, Regeneration, Highways and the Locality Teams. The Council Public Health Team has strategic links with all of these services.

### Key points

- The Public Health Team fully understands and values the important role that access to well managed open spaces provides in relation to reaching health and wellbeing targets for Cheshire West and Chester.
- The team is currently developing a strategic *Eat Well, Be Active Framework*. This is a partnership framework aiming to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity by "creating a structure which addresses lifestyle, behaviour change, our physical environments and issues of access to healthy food and green space".
- There are three elements within the framework, one of which is particularly relevant to the Open Spaces Study - *Place and Planning*. Within this element two of the three main strands are directly linked to open spaces: "planning our environments to promote eating well and being physically active" and "using transport to promoting eating well and being physically active". A detailed Action Plan for *Place and Planning* is currently being developed.

- Providing safe and accessible space for children's play, informal sports, and outdoor youth facilities should be an important consideration within the study. Reducing childhood obesity is a key target for public health in Cheshire West and Chester.
- Maintaining and developing allotment provision is a good example of the role green spaces can play for public health - providing opportunities for physical activity, healthy eating and improving mental health.
- Providing a good "active travel" infrastructure for walking and cycling and promoting its use is another key element of open space planning that is important to public health.
- As well as providing a strategic framework for public health service delivery the Public Health team also develop local pilot projects aimed at testing practical projects to improve health and wellbeing. One such initiative provided funding to support volunteers with mental health issues to work as volunteers alongside Countryside Rangers at various local sites.
- The Public Health Team is working with the Mersey Forest to develop the idea of a commissioned "Natural Health Service" - to provide "health products" making use of the Natural Environment as a key element of health care or improvement. Examples could include initiatives such as Green Gyms, Forest School provision, and Cycle/Walking for Health projects.
- The Team have recently prepared an innovative expression of interest for a residential housing development in Ellesmere Port becoming a pilot in the national NHS *Healthy New Towns* initiative<sup>5</sup>.
- The Council Public Health Team also supports the principles set out in *Public Health and Landscape - Creating healthy places*<sup>6</sup> which demonstrates how important open spaces are in relation to promoting health and wellbeing.

### 2.2.3 Active Cheshire

Active Cheshire is the County Sport and Physical Activity Partnership, supported by Sport England and the Borough Councils. It is a strategic commissioner of sport and physical activity in Cheshire and Warrington. They work with a wide range of health, sport, education, environment, transport and business partners with the aim of enabling people to get active on a regular basis.

A meeting was held with Active Cheshire early in the consultation process and they key points raised are as follows:

- Active Cheshire were supportive of the process and offered to distribute consultation material to their local contacts in Cheshire West and Chester.
- They see this study as an opportunity to plan for an improved infrastructure across Cheshire West and Chester for both informal sports and active recreation.
- Active Cheshire is currently completing their own audit and mapping of sport and recreation facilities across Cheshire and Warrington and hope that the Open Spaces Audit can complement this work. There may be opportunities to share data to mutual benefit.
- Active Cheshire highlighted that 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.

<sup>5</sup> This initiative provides NHS funding related to residential housing developments in which a key aim is to "put health at the heart of new neighbourhoods and towns across the country".

<sup>6</sup> Landscape Institute Position Statement (2013)

- They noted that promoting regular and frequent participation in active recreation, such as walking, cycling, riding and outdoor play, are just as important as formal sports in relation to health benefits. The "facility" infrastructure for these kinds of physical activity needs to be considered alongside provision for sports.
- They suggest that the decline in physical activity is partly due to an increase in sedentary behaviours during occupational, leisure and domestic activities. Likewise, an increase in the use of "passive" modes of transport has been associated with declining physical activity levels.
- In recognition of the importance of improving access to, and use of, recreational open space Active Cheshire has an officer dedicated to engaging with those involved in the "Great Outdoors". This covers facilities such as parks, waterways and open spaces.
- They note that people are making increasing use of open spaces to engage in physical activity, and Active Cheshire is working to engage wider populations in the outdoor facilities on offer.

#### 2.2.4 Disability Access

In relation to public health equitable access to opportunities for active recreation is an important issue. The household survey indicated that around 21% of households had at least one member who considered themselves to be disabled.

A meeting was therefore held with the Borough Council Senior Access officer. This post carries a broad corporate brief for promoting inclusive access across all Council services and facilities. In addition the Senior Access Officer provides advice and guidance to commercial and voluntary sector organisations. The Council also convenes a Corporate Disability Access Forum, a partnership of local and regional disability organisations, local access groups and Cheshire West and Chester Council. This meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Some key points of information/advice/issues are noted below:

- Various detailed access guides to Council facilities have been produced including some parks and open spaces and these can be accessed via the *Disabled Go* website <http://www.disabledgo.com/>
- The Borough Council commission 25 access audits and guides per year from *Disabled Go*. The Open Spaces Study could suggest that a proportion of these each year are dedicated to appropriate green space sites.
- Ideally all kinds of informal sport, recreation and play facilities should be accessible to disabled people. For many kinds of facilities there are official specifications and good practice guidelines aimed at maximising access opportunities. These should be identified and used for all new facility provision; and in relation to potential improvements and refurbishments.
- There are various general access guidance documents that the Open Space Study could recommend that the Council adopt, potentially to be included in an Open Space Supplementary Planning Document. These include:
  - *KIDS - Inclusive Design for Play*
  - *Sport England* provide access information for individual sports and their facilities
  - *The Sensory Trust* have an extensive library of open spaces access guidance <http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/index.html>
- The breadth of the Open Spaces study and its varied typologies provide a challenge in suggesting an overall approach to access, particularly in relation to natural green space and countryside access. The adoption of the principle of Least Restrictive Access (LRA) would be a good starting point. The

principle of LRA requires that any work, whether planned improvement or ad hoc maintenance, should meet the highest standards of access possible for that work. The Countryside Agency's *By All Reasonable Means* and Fieldfare Trust's *BT Countryside for All* recommend specific standards.

- The LRA suggests working to the highest standards that are possible. If the highest standards cannot be achieved, because of factors such as funding, topography and so on, then the next highest standards should be chosen, and the reason for this choice should be clearly documented.
- Restrictions to access should always be highlighted. It may not be possible to provide full access to all open spaces but providing accurate and up to date information on the level of accessibility is key.
- Some key issues for access to parks and green spaces include:
  - Provision and maintenance of paths within open spaces. This includes the surface of the paths and encroaching vegetation. The width of paths, accessible gates, seating etc. are all important.
  - Ensuring the routes to the main access points for open spaces are themselves accessible e.g. dropped kerbs, paths from car parks being suitably surfaced and maintained.
  - Ensuring gates and access points are suitable for wheelchairs.
  - Access to country paths and rights of way - provide kissing gates wherever possible; and in particular on planned routes where wheelchair accessible kissing gates would allow for a complete route to be followed e.g. a circular route on a decent surface.
  - Provide and promote good information on the level of access available and any barriers that may prevent access so that disabled people can assess the level of difficulty that may be faced.
  - For destination sites car parking is important with good paths from the car park to the site. On-site disabled toilets need to be provided also.
- Access to many outdoor recreation activities can be successfully planned for e.g. provision of platforms to enable wheelchair users to participate in angling (and well surfaced paths to such platforms).
- For play areas it is important that access paths to play equipment is good; that there is adequate space between items of play equipment; that seats are provided nearby; that the equipment is designed to be accessible for a wide range of ability levels and so forth.
- Innovative and creative access initiatives could also be considered. For example, in countryside open spaces at the point at which access is restricted provide interpretation panels that show what can be seen further on. Think about producing virtual tours of sites that can be accessed on home PCs.
- For large scale developments involving master planning or developing Design and Access statements the Corporate Disability Access Forum should be consulted early in the process.
- When planning for new local open space developments or improvements it is also recommended that local disability groups are engaged at the earliest opportunity to provide input on how to reduce barriers and to maximise access.

## 2.3 General Community Consultation– Key Findings

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

### Quantity

- There are only two open space typologies where respondents suggest there is a general need for more. 60% suggest a shortfall of facilities for teenagers; and 51% for allotments.
- A very clear majority think that overall there are enough bowling greens (77%), local recreation grounds (73%), and parks and gardens (72%).
- Smaller, though significant, majorities (over 60%) think that in general there are enough: water recreation facilities; tennis courts; bowling greens; and county parks, accessible countryside, and accessible woodlands.

### Quality

For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of adequate or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality.

- 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- Over 25% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas and tennis courts as poor or very poor.

By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by a clear majority in terms of quality.

- Parks and gardens (65% rate quality in general as being good or very good);
- Country parks/countryside/woodlands (60% similarly);
- Local recreation grounds (59%).

### Access (geographical)

- There is great variance in respondent households willingness to spend time travelling to different types of facility and open space.
- A large proportion (48%) of users are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit a wildlife area/nature reserve. Significant numbers are also willing to travel that long to visit other kinds of open spaces/facilities, for example: country parks, countryside and woodlands (41%); and areas for water recreation (33%).
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, recreation grounds and allotments).
- Respondents are more likely than not to drive to many open spaces and outdoor facilities most notably wildlife areas/nature reserves (73%); country parks, accessible countryside and woodland; and water recreation sites.
- Walking is the norm for many of the typologies such as play areas (82%); local recreation grounds

(76%); informal open spaces - for dog walking, picnics, hobbies etc (68%).

- Cycling is a significant form of transport used for accessing MUGAs (15%) and youth facilities (10%). When combined with walking the totals for non-motorised access to these facilities are 63% and 70% respectively. In addition 9% of teenagers also travel by public transport to access youth facilities.
- Over 80% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved; and that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.
- Nearly 10% of households reported that they did have access to a car for transport.

### Priorities and other issues

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (56%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement were country parks, accessible countryside/woodlands, and nature reserves/wildlife areas (40%). Around 30% rated improvements to parks and gardens; children's play areas/facilities for teenagers; and informal open spaces as high priorities for improvement.
- Access to sites for water recreation also scored quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 76% of households - 48% medium/28% high).
- In the main households tended to suggest that improvements to existing open space facilities rather than new provision was most needed.
- The only categories where a majority identify a primary need for more facilities are provision for teenagers (61%) and allotments (54%).
- For other typologies quality improvements to existing provision is clearly the more common kind of improvement need suggested e.g. parks and gardens (59%); recreation grounds (57%); and informal open spaces (56%).
- Improved access is quite significant for some categories e.g. access to water recreation; bowling greens; and MUGAs (around 20%).
- 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 PARKS, GREEN SPACES, COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY

### 3.1 Introduction

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

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

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

This section is comprised of seven main sections:

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

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

### 3.2 Review of policy and strategy documents – Cheshire West and Chester Council

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

Some of the policy and strategy documents have specific relevance to the sub-sections noted above and these links will be highlighted within those sections.

#### 3.2.1 Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011)

This report recognises the many benefits that are derived from the provision of open space and that effective planning and management of open space will be essential if benefits are to be maximised and the goals of the sustainable community strategy are to be achieved.

The local needs assessment (Assessment of Open Space Need –Consultation Report, June 2010) consultation highlights the importance of open space in defining the character of Cheshire West and Chester for both residents and visitors.

The report recommends a strategic approach to open space provision is promoted to ensure that all partners are working to achieve a common goal. The provision of a network of high quality, accessible open space can be achieved by:

- ensuring the quantity of open space is sufficient to meet local needs and expectations;

- ensuring that sites are accessible and functional and provide maximum benefit to the local community; and
- maximising the quality of open spaces in terms of both recreation and biodiversity. Green Space must be safe, accessible, attractive and of high quality.

Key findings from the local needs assessment are shown in Table 1 below.

*Table 1 Key findings from 2010 Local Needs Assessment*

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
Quantity	Overall positive perceptions on the quantity of provision across Cheshire West and Chester. Priorities for future provision lie around allotments, facilities for children and young people. Local standards are therefore likely to place emphasis on the protection of existing levels of provision for most types of open space, but reflect a required increase in provision in allotments, facilities for young people and also children's play areas.
Quality	On the whole, views on the quality of provision are positive. The emphasis on the existing amount of provision being sufficient places higher emphasis on the quality of facilities, and focusing on maintaining and improving these facilities. Quality standards therefore need to reflect the importance of quality to residents as well as ensuring that facilities remain sustainable in the longer term. For many types of open space, qualitative improvements will be more important than providing additional sites.
Accessibility	<p>Some specific access issues were raised relating to different types of open space and it is clear that location and proximity to the home is a key determinant of the level of use. Access standards for each type of open space will need to reflect this, and will promote local access to facilities for residents while maintaining a strategic approach to provision.</p> <p>Connectivity between different types of space, and the importance of green corridors in linking open spaces together emerged as one of the key priorities. This will need to be central to future thinking around open space, sport and recreation facilities.</p>
General	<p>Other issues which need to be addressed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency</li> <li>• Need for a joined up approach across the Borough in terms of both provision and delivery</li> <li>• Importance of partnership working and support for voluntary agencies</li> <li>• Role of both grass roots and elite level performance</li> <li>• Importance of maximising other wider benefits of open space, sport and recreation facilities</li> <li>• Promote and increase awareness of open space</li> </ul>

The report recommended standards for a number of types of green space (see table 2 below) covered in this section of the consultation report i.e.:

- Parks and Gardens
- Natural and semi natural open space
- Amenity Green Space
- Allotments
- Green Corridors

The 2011 standards (shown in Table 2 below) will be reviewed in the main open space report.

Table 2 Recommended Standards in Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard	Quality Standard
Parks and Gardens	0.37ha/1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban Wards – 15 min walk time (720m)</li> <li>Rural Wards – 15 min drive time</li> </ul>	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and litter free</li> <li>Well kept grass</li> <li>Flowers, trees and shrubs</li> <li>Clearly defined and well maintained footpaths</li> <li>Seating</li> <li>Dog and litter bins</li> <li>A range of facilities</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toilets (at larger sites)</li> <li>Events/activities (particularly at larger sites)</li> <li>Park wardens/CCTV/security measures</li> <li>Information Boards</li> <li>Lighting</li> <li>Car Park and cycle storage facilities</li> </ul>
Natural and semi natural open space	1.5ha/1000 (to be applied to new development only).	10 minute walk time (480m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and litter free</li> <li>Clearly defined footpaths</li> <li>Trees</li> <li>Wildlife and conservation benefits</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dog and litter bins</li> <li>Parking (at larger sites) and cycle storage</li> <li>Seating</li> <li>Water features</li> <li>Information boards</li> </ul>
Amenity Green Space	0.81ha/1000	10min walk (480m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and litter free</li> <li>Seating</li> <li>Level surface</li> <li>Litter and dog bins</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flowers and trees</li> <li>Footpaths</li> <li>Lighting (where appropriate)/overlooked to aid perceptions of personal security</li> </ul>
Allotments	0.15ha/1000	15 minute walk time (720m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High quality boundaries</li> <li>Clean, tidy and well maintained</li> <li>Composting and litter bins</li> <li>Features enhancing safety and security</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notice boards at site entrances</li> <li>Toilets</li> <li>Clearly defined access routes suitable for residents of all ages</li> <li>Accessible water supply</li> <li>Parking facilities at sites where residents have to travel by car to access them</li> </ul>
Green Corridors	No standard set	No standard set	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean and litter free</li> <li>Dog and litter bins at entrance/exit points</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined footpaths</li> <li>• Parking and cycle storage</li> </ul> <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flowers, trees, and natural features</li> <li>• Seating</li> <li>• Clear signage</li> </ul>
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### 3.2.2 Green Space Strategic Review – Consultation Findings Report (2012) Draft V1

This report presents the findings of a preliminary consultation programme to inform a green space services review and the development of a "transformational strategy".

Individual interviews were held with Council Members, key directors and senior managers to give a high level steer to the consultation programme and the overall strategic services review. The consultation programme included five focus group meetings - three meetings with internal Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) staff groups, one meeting with an external, sub-regional group and one meeting with community and 'friends of' groups.

The green spaces consultation programme was managed through collaboration between the Council's green spaces team and Groundwork Cheshire.

Key headline findings from the 24 key topic areas identified from the consultation were:

1. Community engagement and facilitation
2. Evidence base for assessment and decision making
3. Transformation programme for the Council and the Community
4. Review of green space services provision
5. New models of working
6. Community Involvement and Sustainability
7. Funding, resources, finance and budgeting
8. Green space transitional strategy development
9. Business planning, contingency and risk assessment
10. Altogether Better programme

These key topics were developed into two principal themes, providing a framework to progress the green spaces services strategic review to the next phase. These are:

- **Taking Stock and Moving on** - Production of a robust evidence base to underpin an all services review in order to forge transformational change.
- **Shaping a new agenda** - Development and implementation of a service transformation through new models of working and a customer-first approach that optimises outcomes.

In order to accord with these findings, one of the next steps identified within the report was to 'Undertake a review and produce a robust green space evidence base'.

### 3.2.3 Sustainable Community Strategy (2010-2026)

The first Sustainable Community Strategy (Together we can aim high 2010-2026) was prepared in 2010 and set out a vision for the future social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area:

*By 2026 West Cheshire will be even more prosperous and attractive: a really great place to live, work, learn and visit. The borough will play a full role in the region and beyond, fulfilling our changing responsibilities and enabling our residents to benefit from the opportunities in the twenty first century.*

It then set out a number of commitments, and how these can be achieved, in order to work towards the vision.

In July 2012 the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) was refreshed (Altogether Better: An interim partnership plan, July 2012). The Interim Partnership Plan was prepared jointly by the Local Strategic Partnership (West Cheshire Together) and the Health and Wellbeing Board for Cheshire West and Chester. The document builds upon the first SCS and sets out how to make a real difference to the well-being of our communities over the period to 2017.

Eight strategic priorities have been identified as follows:

- Give every child the best start in life;
- Enable all to feel safe and secure and maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
- Have a thriving and strong economy and create quality work and learning opportunities for all;
- Support all to have a healthy standard of living and strengthen ill health prevention;
- Create sustainable places and communities;
- Enable older people to lead healthier and fulfilling lives;
- Create a strong sense of community pride in our area; and
- Have sustainable health and social care services that are delivered at the right place and the right time.

Key challenges identified that are relevant to this study include:

- Promote positive wellbeing which can have high social and economic benefits;
- Encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles across the borough but particularly amongst men in our more deprived areas;
- Enhance and promote our access to green spaces;
- Encourage older people to stay fit and healthy.

The SCS also identifies the natural environment, green and open spaces as an asset and highlights the benefits – physical and mental wellbeing, and production of local food.

### **3.2.4 Chester Waterways Strategy (2012)**

The strategy was developed “Given the significance of the Canal and River Dee as a network of waterways from a leisure, visual, urban form and heritage perspective it is vital that a comprehensive Waterways Strategy is developed for the city to maximise the potential of the waterways as an economic and social asset.” The strategy is a direct deliverable from Chester’s One City Plan.

The vision of the strategy is:

*‘Chester waterways will be better connected. The ‘joined up’ strategy will deliver an impact in terms of social, economic and physical regeneration more than the sum of its individual parts. Chester’s waterways will, once again, play their part in delivering growth and vitality for the city.’*

The strategy development was undertaken in partnership between Chester Renaissance, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the Canal and River Trust, Chester Canal Heritage Trust and the Inland Waterways Association.

The main aims of the strategy are:

- To provide clear direction for how developments related to the waterways can contribute to the growth agenda;
- Improve connectivity between the canal, river and city. Also encourage increased investment and increased tourism;
- Encourage increased employment relating to the leisure economy and maximise the potential of the waterways for recreational purposes; and
- To complement the emerging transport strategy, cycling strategy and importantly, provides input to the statutory Local Plan which guides development.

The main focus of the strategy is on the River Dee corridor and the Shropshire Union Canal corridor.

### **3.2.5 Equestrian Strategy**

This sets out the broad principles for providing for the equestrian.

The Councils aim is to enable equestrian activity to take place safely across Cheshire on the road and bridleway network through the promotion of regional, county and local bridle route networks within the framework of the development of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

To do this the Council will:

- Promote, within the framework of the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, a series of predominately 'off road' circular and linear routes of both local and regional importance.
- Give full consideration to the needs of equestrians when developing new highway maintenance policies and strategies, (and reviewing existing ones) where possible within the limitations of operational and financial constraints (e.g.: grass cutting policies along sections of road verge that link two bridleways).
- Give full consideration to the needs of equestrians when designing new highways and improving existing highways.
- Introduce signing along equestrian routes in accordance with current signing legislation to increase road safety.
- Provide equestrian crossing facilities (e.g.: a Pegasus, or improved visibility of the crossing point) where appropriate and justified.
- Assist planning authorities to develop policies for new or modified developments related to equestrian businesses so that they provide suitable routes, predominantly off-road for riders and/or carriage drivers. Such facilities must be provided by the developer along with any signing or crossing facilities of roads, as considered necessary for the safe and efficient operation of the highway network.
- Work with partners (e.g.: Bridleway Groups) to raise awareness of equestrian issues and endeavour to support national campaigns for road safety training related to horse riding and carriage driving, and also promote respect between all types of road users.

### 3.2.6 Rights of way improvement plan (2011-2016)

The plan includes an assessment of the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public, the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and recreation and their accessibility to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.

It includes a statement of action for the management of local rights of way, in order to address the issues raised under each of the chapter themes (Assets and Maintenance; Economic Growth; Climate Change; Safety, Security and Health; Greater Quality of Opportunity and Quality of Life).

Examples of actions include:

- **AM1** We will aim to increase the percentage annually of routes that are easy for the public to use.
- **EG1** We will improve the condition or management of existing routes identified during consultation and network survey as significant for tourism or leisure visits.
- **QL1** We will increase the opportunity the people have of accessing green space.

There is also a 5 year delivery plan, which sets out how the actions will be achieved in more detail.

### 3.2.7 Rural Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan (2011)

Adopted in September 2011, the strategy sits as part of the evidence base and strategic framework supporting the Local Development Framework. It provides a framework which the Council will use to steer delivery of its regeneration services over the next 10 years. It will influence the way that it invests and supports its rural area, and the businesses, people and places within it. It sets out the council's agreed approach to sustaining rural communities, the need for growth, and its views on the contribution that the rural area can make to improve the quality of life for all the Borough's residents.

The Strategy sets out a framework to guide the council and its partners and assist Cheshire West and Chester Council's Rural Area and Market Town Regeneration Team with the preparation and implementation of its annual business plans.

The Council wants to use the Strategy as an opportunity to:

- maximise economic potential;
- create access to affordable living for rural communities;
- empower and connect rural communities; and
- capitalise on our environmental potential.

The overarching objective of the Strategy is to revitalise the Borough's rural communities and contribute to Cheshire West and Chester's sustainable economic growth.

The council's vision is that in 2030 the rural area of Cheshire West and Chester will be a vibrant and successful place. Its working countryside, thriving communities and market towns will host in the region of 40% of the Borough's population and over a quarter of its economy (in terms of jobs and value). Its high quality natural environment and built heritage will be accessible and enjoyed by all.

The Council believes that, by 2030, the number of homes in the rural area will need to increase by around 8,000 (in the region of 12 – 15%); the population will need to grow by 15,000 to 20,000 and we will need to attract and create in the region of 3,500 – 4,000 new jobs.

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**Key ambitions:**

- to retain and attract an additional 17,000 young people, families and people of working age within the rural area;
- to meet the housing needs of the rural population through the provision of new homes which are well-designed, energy efficient, affordable and suitable for young people, families and the elderly;
- to safeguard local services, cultural and community facilities and maximised their contribution to the vitality of rural communities;
- to support sustainable economic development across the rural area, securing an additional 3,600 jobs, improving the competitiveness of local businesses and providing the conditions where enterprise can flourish;
- to address market failure where it affects quality of life and economic success -the provision of public transport services and high speed broadband;
- to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and the related CO2 emissions by 37% by 2020 (relative to 1990 levels); and
- protect the natural and historic environment, cultural and heritage assets and ensure that they are preserved for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

**Projects include the following:**

- **2015-2020 Cheshire and Warrington LEADER Programme** - The Cheshire West and Chester Rural Team, in conjunction with Cheshire East Council and Warrington Borough Council, are working towards the creation of a new LEADER programme in Cheshire and Warrington. The LEADER programme is a unique source of funding for rural areas within Cheshire and Warrington. LEADER takes a community-led approach to delivering European funding, with decisions being made by a Local Action Group (LAG) formed of locally appointed representatives of the private, public and third sectors.
- **Mid River Dee Action Plan** - The framework considers the natural environments of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East and Wirral. It sets out a vision of how a healthy natural environment can help sustain economic growth and thriving communities. To date, Green Infrastructure action plans have been produced for:
  1. Flintshire Coastal Path – adopted by Flintshire Council
  2. Lower River Dee (Neston/Deeside) – adopted by LDF Panel Cheshire West and Chester Council & Flintshire Council
  3. Ellesmere Port and Chester GI links – Completed but adopted
  4. Total Environment (Northwich & Winsford) Under development

Each action plan identifies heritage, history and biodiversity assets of the respective areas.

- **Cheshire West's Rural Market Towns** - The rural villages and Market Towns of Cheshire West and Chester – home to 40% of its population and representing over a quarter of its economic output – are vital social, economic and cultural hubs. The Market Towns of Neston, Frodsham, Malpas and Tarporley play a key role in ensuring the long term sustainability of the area and the Rural & Market Towns Team recognises the importance of these Towns and the necessity to support them in becoming even more vibrant. The overall objective is to actively engage with stakeholders in our Market Towns and work together to achieve long term sustainable economic growth for the area.

- **Lottery Projects** - The rural area of Cheshire West is currently hosting a number of lottery funded projects, new and old. A number of prospective lottery funded projects are being focussed on at present including:
  1. Opportunities are being prepared for a cross border project focusing on the mid River Dee area working directly with Wrexham Borough Council.
  2. Legacy to the Habitats and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- **Cheshire's Equine Industry** - Cheshire West and Chester recognise the value of the equine industry in Cheshire and have an ultimate aim to make Cheshire a more competitive region nationally and internationally in respect of the equine industry.

### 3.2.8 Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan (CrBAP)

Cheshire West is a borough of contrasting landscapes - wooded river valleys and sandstone hills, meres and mosses, estuaries and heaths, industrial wastelands and old parklands - all set within a matrix of intensively productive farmland and urban development. The diversity of landscape types, in turn, supports a fragile and vulnerable wealth of different types of wildlife habitats, some of which are of national and international importance, for example: lowland heath, peatland, grassland, ancient woodland, rivers and estuaries, glacial meres, ponds, hedgerows, historic and notable trees and artificial habitats.

The Cheshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (also known as Countdown) contains all the species and habitats that are identified as being in need of assistance in the Cheshire region. There is an Action Plan for each species or habitat, with current status, trends, targets and actions included.

Habitat action plans:

Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland	Lowland wood pasture and parkland
Cereal field margins	Merens
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Peatland
Heathland	Ponds
Hedgerows	Reedbeds
Lime-beds	Unimproved Cheshire grassland

There are species action plans for 40 species including barn owl, grey partridge, brown hare, dormouse, harvest mouse, polecat, skylark and white-letter hairstreak butterfly.

## 3.3 Key Stakeholders - strategic context and overview:

This section includes general comments from the key stakeholders consulted.

Responses specific to individual typologies from the stakeholders consulted will be noted under each of the focused topic headings (sections 3.5 to 3.9 below).

### 3.3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council

#### *Sue Fernandes (Environment Client Manager - Place Operations)*

The Environment Client Manager in Place Operations has overall responsibility for the operational management of the Council's green spaces including parks and gardens, playing pitches, play areas, outdoor youth facilities, allotments, countryside sites (including country parks), trees, and rights of way.

As well as casual public use there are various events and programmes delivered making use of the Council's green spaces - such as theatre performances at Grosvenor Park and the programme of health walks. There is potential for greater use of open spaces for these kinds of activity.

#### Maintenance of open space

The bulk of the green space maintenance work is undertaken in-house by Place Operations but some of the work is undertaken by contractors e.g. hedge cutting, countryside maintenance and rights of way.

The Council also leases some sites to local parish councils and groups e.g. Little Budworth Parish Council. Winsford Town Council have recently taken on the management of the town park. Some play areas are also being transferred to town and parish councils. A number of allotments are now self-managed by local allotment associations.

The Locality Teams tend to raise local issues relating to green space maintenance and development/improvements.

#### Partnership working and volunteers

External contacts and partners include: housing associations such as Plus Dane, Sanctuary and Weaver Vale; Groundwork; Mersey forest; and Keep Britain Tidy (Green Flag). A number of parks and countryside sites have active "Friend of" groups, Marbury Country Park and Anderton Nature Park being good examples.

#### Strategy relating to green space

The Total Environment team are responsible for the development of Council strategies relating to green spaces. There is currently no Council Green Space Strategy.

The Environment Client Manager highlighted that the development and adoption of such a strategy should be seen as a high priority for the Council. It is hoped that the evidence gathered through this Open Spaces Study will be used to produce such a strategy. This would help provide clear strategic guidance to Place Operations as regards the operational management and development of the Council's own green spaces.

In developing a strategy it will be important to highlight the public health benefits of maintaining, developing and promoting access to green spaces in relation to both physical and mental health.

#### Improvements to open space/facilities

There is an annual Asset Improvement budget of around £650k which supports a rolling programme of planned open space/facilities improvements. A proportion of the annual budget is also unallocated with its use being determined as the need arises. A Green Space strategy would help in determining the best strategic use of this budget.

Maintenance budgets have been reduced over recent years meaning there is a need to prioritise the most important Council green space sites while less well used sites may receive less attention. A Green Space Strategy would help in this prioritisation process.

#### Quality of open space and barriers to use

Place Operations have developed quality standards to govern the practical operational management of the Council's green spaces but these are not directly related to the spatial planning standards adopted through planning policy.

There is potential for greater use of the Council's open spaces and some barriers to use include some of the parks and green spaces not being of the quality the public may wish for; anti-social behaviour and not feeling safe in some areas; poor location of facilities e.g. play areas that are a bit remote; and a lack of

publicity, promotion and awareness of what is available. Providing more events and activities within parks and open spaces would introduce more people to the wider potential of the Council's open spaces.

***Jill Connolly - Principle Green Space Officer (Environmental Services - Place Operations)***

The Principle Green Space Officer is responsible for the Council's management of 27 urban parks, 54 countryside sites, 27 allotment sites and all trees on Council owned land.

**Funding, Maintenance and improvements**

Resources for the management and maintenance of Council parks, countryside and allotment sites have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on Place Operation's capacity to maintain all of the facilities to the standard the public would wish to see.

In relation to developments and improvements this will only be possible in relation to securing new funding e.g. from S106, CIL and/or grant aid from external sources. There is no Council green space capital fund to support improvements.

There may be potential to secure funding from Public Health sources given the increasing amount of evidence of the value of green spaces in promoting improved health and wellbeing.

The drive for improvements tends to be driven by local community groups; and locality and regeneration teams; rather than being driven by a strategic assessment of need.

Where there are opportunities for new provision arising through S106/CIL it is essential to ensure that long-term management and maintenance arrangements are made so that such sites and facilities are sustainable. This could include management by town and parish councils, community organisations, and trusts.

***Total Environment Team (Ian Hesketh and Mary Lavery)***

The Total Environment Team has strategic development responsibility for Cheshire West and Chester Council's services in many aspects of both the natural and built environments. This includes green infrastructure relevant to the Open Space Study such as natural green space, parks, play spaces, and rights of way.

The team provide strategic guidance for Place Operations who manage the Council's own green spaces; and support and advice to the Locality teams as regards open spaces.

The team works closely with external organisations such as the Mersey Forest, Groundwork, English Heritage, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

**3.3.2 Natural England (Gareth Lawler – Lead Advisor)**

***Standards of provision***

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

- Of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
- One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus

- Statutory local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population

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

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

Natural England highlight that some of the issues associated with recreational pressures around sensitive sites can be found with the following reports:

- [Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites \(IPENS\): Recreation and disturbance workshop notes \(IPENSTP009\).](#)
- [Public Access and Disturbance Theme Plan: A strategic approach to identifying and addressing significant effects on the features of Natura 2000 sites.](#)
- [Scientific research into the effects of access on nature conservation: Part 1: access on foot \(NECR012\).](#)
- [Scientific research into the effects of access on nature conservation: Part 2: access on bicycle and horseback \(NECR013\).](#)

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

Natural England have provided references to guidance and further information relating to the ecological value and multi-functional benefits of open/green spaces such as:

- [Green space access, green space use, physical activity and overweight. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR067](#) – This study provides evidence that good access to urban green spaces is associated with higher use, higher physical activity levels, and a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese. Informal physical activity is an important component of overall activity levels, and provision of facilities such as green spaces which can be used for a wide range of physical activities, has population wide benefits. It is important that supportive environments are available to facilitate active lifestyles, and the findings suggest that green spaces may provide a valuable resource in urban areas.
- [Health and natural environments: An evidence based information pack](#). Natural England (2012). Contains six evidence based information sheets that outline the natural environment's contribution for improved health and wellbeing.
- [Greening Dementia. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR137](#). (21 November 2013) - A literature review of the benefits and barriers facing individuals living with dementia in accessing the natural environment and local greenspace.
- [Natural solutions for tackling health inequalities](#) UCL Institute of Health Equity). The report highlights the evidence of the benefits of green spaces to health and wellbeing outcomes, and the inequalities in use of, and access to, natural environments across England.
- [Wild Adventure Space: its role in teenagers' lives. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR025.](#) The study sets out evidence of the potential benefits for the individual and the community arising

from young people's engagement with wild adventure space, barriers to obtaining these benefits, gaps in understanding, issues for further study, and opportunities for provision of relevant and necessary resources. It recommends the action needed to take this work forward and identifies a range of potential partners.

### 3.3.3 Environment Agency (Duncan Revell - Biodiversity Officer)

The Environment Agency (EA) have highlighted a number of reports, projects and plans where they have an interest in Cheshire West and Chester:

- EA Programme for routine maintenance of “*main rivers*” in priority flood risk areas in Cheshire West & Chester.
- Maintenance and operation of Sealand Flood Basin, Chester.
- Dee River Restoration Plan.
- Dee Invasive Non-native Species Partnership Project.
- North West River Basin Management Plan (Water Framework Directive).
- Dee River Basin Management Plan (Water Framework Directive).
- North West Flood Risk Management Plan.
- Dee Flood Risk Management Plan.
- Natural flood management (priority habitat creation) – Countess Country Park, Chester.
- Diffuse Water Pollution Plans for Oak Mere, Abbots Moss, Pettypool Brook Valley, Bar Mere and Chapel Mere.

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

A report into the state of England's wildlife sites led by Professor John Lawton, “Making Space for Nature”, was published in September 2010. It concluded that England's wildlife sites are fragmented and not able to respond to the pressures of climate change (e.g. more extreme flood events, prolonged droughts, etc.) and other demands we put on our land and water environment. It led to the first White Paper for nature conservation in 20 years, “The Natural Choice” (June 2011), which aims to:

- a) improve the quality of the natural environment across England;
- b) halt the decline in habitats and species;
- c) strengthen the connection between people and nature.

The England Biodiversity Strategy “*Biodiversity 2020*” was launched in August 2011 as a result of the White Paper. By 2020:

- 90% of priority habitats need to be in favourable or recovering condition;
- at least 200,000 hectares of priority habitats must be created;
- and 15% of degraded ecosystems must be restored to combat climate change.

The EA believe there is a direct link between sustainable flood risk management (i.e. wetland habitat creation, making space for water) and the principles outlined in making space for nature, the White Paper and Biodiversity 2020.

### 3.3.4 The Woodland Trust (Nick Sandford – Government Affairs Officer)

The Woodland Trust manages a number of woodlands in Cheshire West and Chester.

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

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

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

#### **3.3.4 The Mersey Forest (Tom Butlin –GIS co-ordinator)**

The Mersey Forest have highlighted **The Mersey Forest Plan ‘More from trees’**, which is a long term and strategic guide to the work of The Mersey Forest team and partners. The vision is to get ‘more from trees’ to help make Merseyside and Cheshire one of the best places to live in the country:

*‘We will work with partners, communities and landowners across rural and urban areas, to plant trees and woodlands, improve their management, and complement other habitats. This will increase woodland cover to 20% of the area. We will revitalise a woodland culture, and bring economic and social benefits through our transformed environment’.*

The Mersey Forest covers the northern part of Cheshire West and Chester, as this is where most of the communities are. The website includes an interactive version of the indicative woodland cover target (%) map. Policies relating to this area are C1-C22 on page 71 of the plan, for example:

**C4: Around Ellesmere Port** – Plant trees and woodlands to create a multi-use linear or green ring around Ellesmere Port, linking the M53 and Shropshire Union Canal Corridor, Rivacre Valley and Booston Wood. Indicative woodland cover target is 30% (woodland cover in 2012 is 12%).

The plan notes that Northwich Woodlands is a vibrant community woodland, with an active Friends of Group, on reclaimed post-industrial land. There are proposals to create a similar Forest Park around Frodsham. It highlights that The Mersey Estuary is an important feature of the landscape.

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

The following was highlighted from the consultation with the Mersey Forest (verbatim comments):

- Due to the nature of green infrastructure, green spaces will always be multifunctional to some extent. For example, a park, the primary ‘purpose’ of which is recreation, will also help to cool its surroundings through evapotranspiration, and will allow storm water to soak into the soil. The level of multifunctionality does not necessarily correlate with the level of biodiversity. We would urge the Council to consider the quantity, quality and access dimensions in conjunction with consideration of need for specific green infrastructure functions.
- Where an existing green space meets need for a function, it should be protected and managed, if possible, to ensure that it continues to meet the need. Where need is not met, green infrastructure should be created or enhanced, if possible, to meet the need. This applies to all functions, but we would like to highlight the functions that rely upon access (in all of its complexity). This is an issue in Cheshire West and Chester, with its partially rural, agricultural character.

### 3.3.5 Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (Peter Heberlet - Programme Director – Land)

Groundwork have completed an open space strategy for Frodsham Town Council and Worked with CW&C Council to complete a Green Space Strategic Review (see section 3.2.2).

They also manage/make use of a number of open spaces in CW&C and have a number of plans and projects in the area as outlined below:

- Development and management of the Grozone community garden, horticulture and wildlife project in Northwich - the site is open 6 days a week and they run a horticultural therapy project from the area (lease agreement with the council).
- Development of a number of recreation areas/sites and routeways in Ellesmere Port in partnership with the Council and the local community, including play areas, BMX track and currently a Parcour site.
- Currently assisting Waverton Parish Council, Kingsley Parish Council and Frodsham Town Council with the development of their play areas/ recreation areas.
- They coordinate the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funded Saltscape Landscape Heritage Initiative and the Environment Agency funded Weaver/Gowy Catchment Partnership and are working with a number of partners on improvements along the canals and other water courses as well as on ways to encourage schools and the local communities to use the Weaver Valley more as a resource and to protect the watercourses water quality.
- They are finalising a Green Infrastructure Audit for Northwich Town Centre, which in part will be seeking to develop stronger linkages between Northwich Town Centre and a range of parks surrounding Northwich. They have well developed Business Improvement District projects in Mid Cheshire which are an opportunity to engage 10,000 employees from 600 companies to encourage greater use of public open spaces to support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aspirations of local employers.

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

Groundwork identify biodiversity as an important part of many sites that needs careful management. They highlight that Initiatives and ideas developing within Saltscape and the Weaver/Gowy Catchment Partnership are aimed at enhancing biodiversity particularly along watercourses, some of which have funding or part funding secured.

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

Groundwork highlight that there is scope for more initiatives like Grozone (or outreach projects linked to it) which could use open spaces to engage people in taking on the enhancement and use of these sites for community benefit. However, adequate levels of support and community development are needed for this to be a success.

### 3.3.6 RSPB – Colin Wells (Site Manager - Dee Estuary Nature Reserve)

The RSPB manage and make use of a number of areas of open space in CW&C. Specific projects noted are high tide birdwatching events at Parkgate Old Baths & promenade and management (in partnership) of the Greenway from Burton Point to Quayside.

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

It was highlighted that biodiversity is becoming increasingly more important for local people, but there can be a conflict with other users. This needs to be managed accordingly, perhaps looking at the zonation of areas.

#### **3.3.7 Cheshire Wildlife Trust (Rachel Giles – Ecology and Planning Manager)**

Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) own a number of nature reserves in CW&C which are open for public access.

The following has been recommended regarding ecological networks (verbatim comments):

- CW&C should support the identification, selection and functioning of Ecological Networks (as stipulated in the NPPF).
- Ecological Networks should be landscape scale and function across local authority boundaries. The design should be evidence based and build on the work of the Local Wildlife Site Partnership, Econet and the NIAs. Networks should incorporate international national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation.
- All losses and gains of biodiversity and geodiversity should be measurable and monitored to ensure there is 'no net loss'.
- An appraisal of the provision of Ecosystem Services in CW&C is recommended.

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

All multi-functional open spaces should be managed for their biodiversity as well as for public access. This will require management planning and funds to support the ongoing cost of implementation and long term monitoring.

## **3.4 Community Organisations Survey (non-sports): overview**

An online survey was set up for local organisations with an interest in green spaces (non-sporting). Responses were received from 39 organisations with varied interests including rambling, cycling, allotments associations, friends of groups, and conservation volunteers. A response was also received from a CW&C Ward Councillor, representing community groups within Blacon.

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

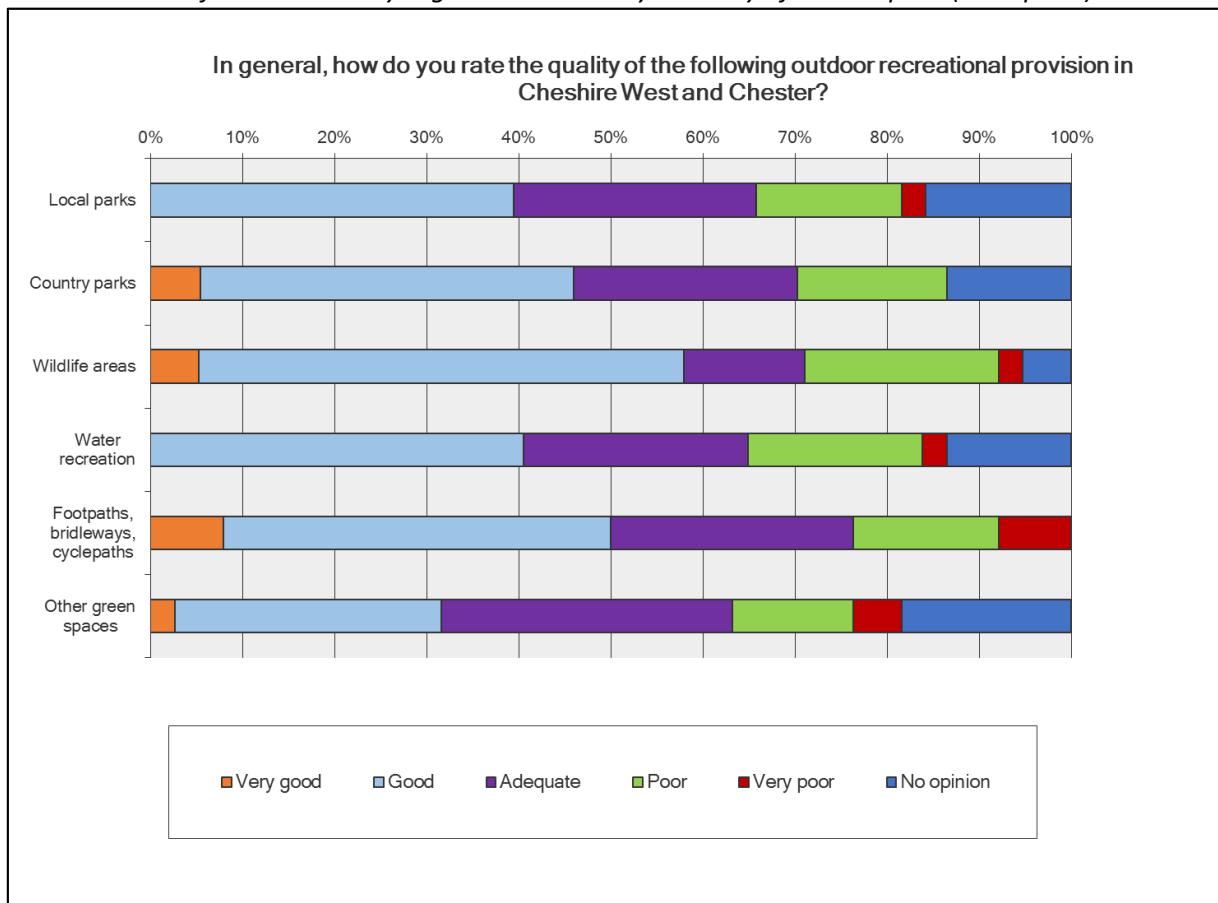
### **3.4.1 Quantity**

- 92% of respondents felt their organisations make direct use of open space or outdoor recreation facilities.
- 57% feel there are enough open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of the groups primary activities, whereas 40% feel there is inadequate provision.
- Organisations who felt there was inadequate provision include Chester Cycling Campaign, Blacon community groups, Transition Chester, Wirral Wildlife, Cheshire Walkers and Tarvin Community Woodland, reflecting a spectrum of interests and geographies.

### 3.4.2 Quality

- The general views of these local community organisations as regards the overall quality of the different types of (non-sporting) green spaces in Cheshire West and Chester are summarised in Figure 10 and the information below.

Figure 10 Results from community organisations survey - Quality of Green Space (non sports)



- The majority of the groups (58%) think the quality of Wildlife areas are either good or very good. However 24% of groups also thought that they were poor or very poor, and 13% think they are adequate.
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths also had a similar split, with 50% of groups rating them as good or very good and 24% rating them as poor or very poor. 26% also thought they were adequate.
- 46% of groups rated country parks as good or very good, 24% as adequate and 16% as poor or very poor.
- 40% rated Water recreation as good, with relatively high numbers believing them to be adequate (24%) or poor/very poor (22%). The results were similar for parks with ratings of 39% good, 26% adequate and 19% poor.
- The other green spaces category had adequate ratings.

### 3.4.3 Access

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

- 53% of groups reported that they don't suffer from access issues to open space and recreational facilities.
- However, a significant percentage (35%) of groups did note that they suffer from access issues and 12% didn't know.

Of those that did report access issues, these are focused around:

- Public Rights of Way – obstructions and poor maintenance
- Lack of disabled access (including provision of accessible play areas for children with additional needs).
- Distance – e.g. access only possible if you have a car
- Costs – having to pay for use of facilities and/or travel costs

The reputation of the area was also mentioned as a reason why people may avoid exploring/visiting areas e.g. the nature park in Blacon.

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

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

The following points were raised by respondents:

- In sensitive areas it is helpful if the sensitive nature of the environment is identified to users so that they can respect it. In these areas it is helpful if spaces can be set aside to enable users to interact with the environment in a way that is appropriate. E.g. picnic tables, info boards, planned and marked walking routes which encourage and enable people to use the space appropriately.
- Noisy sports should not be allowed in the countryside. Boating, maybe canoeing, cycling and walking - things that do not threaten the wildlife are ok.
- It would work best if there are designated parts of the park areas that are well maintained with good areas for ball sports and also activity areas like outdoor gyms. Then in other parts of the park there are good sized areas that are a lot wilder they would be more wildlife friendly.
- Given the complaints that we have had from residents about noisy sport I think noisy activities should be restricted to areas where they are not likely to disturb people's home environment or disturb the local wildlife (well away from gardens and wildlife areas).
- Please keep noisy activities away from the countryside in general and wildlife-rich areas in particular. Some wildlife may cope - but it seriously impedes people trying to enjoy that wildlife. Any proposal for intensive recreation in green areas (i.e. not general walking) should assess the impacts on wildlife.

### **3.5 Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds**

#### **3.5.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council**

***Jill Connolly Principle Green Space Officer (Environmental Services - Place Operations)***

- Most of the urban parks are located in the Chester and Ellesmere Port localities of the Borough, though there are Council managed parks elsewhere e.g. Castle Park, Frodsham. There are seven main urban community parks.

- Town and Parish Councils tend to be the primary managers of parks in the eastern parts of the Borough e.g. Northwich and Winsford. Other managers of public open spaces include some of the housing associations and charitable trusts e.g. the Countess of Chester Country Park (the Land Trust).
- Only three of the Council parks have tennis courts though there are a considerably greater number of sites with bowling greens.
- Many parks have "Friends of" groups that are active to varying degrees. Some of the Friends Groups are also notably active in relation to practical volunteering on-site; good examples include the groups at Marbury Country Park and Anderton Nature Park (both Northwich) and Caldy Nature Park, Chester.
- There is a general need to recruit younger members and volunteers to the Friends of groups.
- In terms of the quality of the Council's parks and countryside sites the quality is very varied. Parks of relatively good quality include Grosvenor Park, Chester; Westminster Park, Chester; Castle Park, Frodsham; Marbury Country Park; and Stanney Fields, Neston; Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port. Eight of the council's parks have achieved Green Flag status.
- Resources for the management and maintenance of Council parks have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on Place Operation's capacity to maintain all of the facilities to the standard the public would wish to see.
- In the absence of an adopted strategy Place Operations have recently begun an informal process of prioritisation in relation to the site management of Council parks and countryside facilities. The aim is to categorise sites in a simple A, B and C format based on factors such as level of use, extent of catchment, degree of active community engagement, political priorities, ease of access etc. The idea is that Parks categorised as "A" could then be prioritised in relation to maintenance; the "B" category would have a lighter touch; and "C" category sites may receive the least level of regular maintenance.

#### ***Total Environment (Environmental Services – Place Operations)***

- There has been recent investment at a number of parks including Grosvenor Park and Castle Park. The Locality areas have various aspirations for green infrastructure developments, for example, the completion of a "green loop" recreational linear route around Ellesmere Port.

#### **3.5.2 Natural England (Gareth Lawler – Lead Advisor)**

- Whilst suitable improvements have been made to Westminster Park Doorstep Green (Ellesmere Port) and St. Anne's Doorstep Green (Chester) in recent times, Natural England have noted additional information relating to Millennium and Doorstep Green sites and the Green Flag Award quality standard.

#### ***Country Parks***

- Natural England notes the following Country Park sites within the authority area: Little Budworth CP, Marbury CP, Rivacre CP, Stanney Woods CP, The Wirral CP, Countess of Chester CP. We would also encourage further investigation in to the possibility of putting sites forward for Country Park Accreditation in order to further improve quality standards associated with these sites in addition to Green Flag Awards.

### 3.5.3 Environment Agency (Duncan Revell - Biodiversity Officer)

- There is great potential to utilise country parks and open space upstream of urban areas to help reduce flood risk to homes and businesses (i.e. upstream flood water storage). For example, we are working with partners like the Land Trust to adopt natural flood management upstream of Chester in the Countess Country Park. As part of this, there is considerable potential to enhance biodiversity through the creation of priority habitats and improve water quality.

### 3.5.4 Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (Peter Heberlet – Programme Director - Land)

- There are a number of parks throughout the area which vary in quality.
- Some are very high quality are well maintained and well used, but there are others that are falling in to disrepair and so their value is diminishing as repairs cannot always be afforded.
- We are aware that there are also plans for some sites where, working with the community we, CW&C and some parish and town councils are improving key sites but much of this relies on Section 106 or external funding to be raised.

#### *Country Parks*

- Generally in good condition, but we are aware that budgets are restricting the resources that can be put in to them to keep the previous levels of maintenance. In some areas, Friends of Groups are assisting with the maintenance and improvements, but without adequate support and guidance it is doubtful that they can take on the same roles and responsibilities due to insurance costs etc.
- The new park at the Countess of Chester that we helped to secure significant funding for might be a model to look at in how to develop and resource the development of an area and the upkeep of it through a broad partnership involving the local authority, health sector and third sector.
- Our Green Infrastructure audit for Northwich Town Centre (currently being finalised) will encourage investment in developing stronger links to country parks surrounding Northwich Town Centre.

### 3.5.5 RSPB (Colin Wells - Site Manager, Dee Estuary Nature Reserve)

#### *Country Parks*

- Parking needs to be improved and increased in the Parkgate area.

### 3.5.6 Mid Cheshire Bridleway Association (Susan Griffiths – Committee Member)

#### *Country Parks*

- Generally good provision for horse riding in rural areas in Mid Cheshire.
- Little Budworth Country Park issue - lack of parking for horse boxes as car park small with height barrier.

### 3.5.7 Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) (John Higgs – Volunteer)<sup>7</sup>

There are several parks and play areas within Winsford, but a shortfall in leisure facilities for teenagers, such as youth coffee bars.

#### ***Country Parks***

Winsford has a cycle way- Whitegate way, and a riverside walk and there is a country park adjoining the river in Wharton. There are no new parks, and there is a shortage of such areas that are available for the south part of Winsford.

### 3.5.8 Community Organisations Survey

#### ***Quantity***

The majority of comments received were regarding the quality of parks and recreation grounds, rather than provision. The exception being Blacon, where the following comments were made:

- ‘Not enough green spaces when considering the numbers of people who live in Blacon. Basic care only and a much more creative use of the space would encourage usage. Need to be inclusive’.
- ‘There is open space, but no managed public parks’.
- ‘There is no provision for a bowling green in the Blacon area - Sadly the Highfield Pub had one, but it had not been available for years’

Ledsham and Manor Action Group also highlight that areas that were used for football pitches in Ellesmere Port have been lost to development.

#### ***Quality***

Although a number of groups are happy with the management of parks and recreation grounds, many identified diminishing budgets and subsequent poor maintenance/condition of parks and play areas, dog fouling, litter and vandalism. The importance of volunteer groups in helping to care for/manage parks is also apparent. Comments regarding quality of parks include (verbatim):

- Cheshire County Playing Fields Association – ‘Tarvin playing fields and Grogans walk are well maintained thanks to local voluntary help’.
- Blacon Educational Village – ‘Play parks are poor, Cairns Crescent is bad - outdated, old, damaged, used by teens at night time. Adventure Playground is popular, well used and well maintained’.
- Blacon Health and Social Care – ‘Our estate is large and outside the city I would say because there is a great deal of social housing so I don't think the same kind of care that is given to other areas is given to our facilities’.
- Friends of Stanney Fields Park – ‘We would like to see encouragement of the public to make greater use of outdoor space for organised physical activity. The cuts in spending have definitely had an adverse effect on the maintenance of the park. There aren't now enough resources to keep weeds in check and keep the flower and shrub borders looking their best and the park doesn't look as

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that all responses received from CPRE relate only to Winsford

good as it used to. Reduction in police resources has also resulted in an increase in vandalism and anti-social behaviour'.

- Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society – 'The grass is regularly cut on the recreation ground but there has been concern in the past that the children's play equipment on the recreation ground has not been well maintained. The equipment tends to be removed rather than repaired when there is a problem. Mole hills are a problem as is 'dog poo'. Residents would like a greater variety of sports available on the recreation ground such as cricket, bowls and skate boarding'.
- Friends of West Vale Park – 'Our local park on West Vale is adequate and well maintained. However, there are things such as lack of care around the established trees and park edges that do not get the attention they need to keep the area looking at its best. For example - growth from the bases of trees looks untidy and could be dealt with very easily if the staff had the time. Grass cutting is somewhat random'.
- Friends of Caldy Nature Park – 'Insufficient areas for dog walkers e.g. dry flat land for ball games. Insufficient general maintenance e.g. control of aggressive plant species which has meant that other species have been crowded out. Grass mowing has been much better in the last 2 years. It would be good to have more wildlife friendly areas e.g. planted with farmland wild flower species to attract birds & butterflies'.

### ***Potential and suggested improvements***

Comments for improvements included more wildlife friendly management as well as more diverse use of sites including planting edible plants. Comments included the following (verbatim):

- Action Transport Theatre – 'Action Transport Theatre occupy a large period building within Whitby Park and are currently considering capital development plans for the building including the exterior and the offer we can make to the community'.
- Wirral Wildlife, the Wirral Group of Cheshire Wildlife Trust – 'Too many small green areas are just mown grass and a few trees, often with no young trees growing up to act as replacements. This is poor for people and wildlife. Can there be more imaginative management involving local people in the decisions about what to do? So how about new copses, ponds, marshes, pockets of wild flowers, shrubs? With a little investment in suitable machinery, areas of grass can be cut less frequently, saving money - but choose the right areas, which contain some flowers, and choose the timing to suit the flora'.
- Transition Chester – 'Local parks and recreation grounds could be better utilised to encourage communities to get together and carry out planting - importantly this needs to be supported to unlock the energy of voluntary effort. They could be utilised as part of public health agendas to encourage physical exercise either through physical games or cultivation of designated areas for the production of food - e.g. fruit trees, nut trees, areas set aside for edible plants'.
- Vale Royal Environment Network – 'Composting should be done on site, to demonstrate how, and the importance, of composting to the public. Weed killing should not be by chemicals, hoeing is better. In nature, plants will grow wherever there's the opportunity, and that's to be celebrated as a way of retaining soil carbon. There are also many opportunities to plant edible plants, which can

usually match purely decoratives for show, as well as providing for anyone prepared to harvest, or offering to foodbanks or community meals'.

## **Access**

- Space – 'There are not enough accessible play areas for children with additional needs. Those that claim to be accessible i.e. a 'disabled swing seat' actually only work for very few. Consideration should be given to a range of abilities'.

## **Country Parks**

### Quantity and access

Generally the provision of country parks is considered to be adequate, but it is access that has been highlighted as the main issue by groups (especially by Blacon groups and Gorsehill Homeless Families Unit). The popularity of country parks was noted.

- Blacon Health and Social Care – 'It would cost a great deal to get to the majority of them they are not easily accessible'.
- Gorsehill Homeless Families Unit – 'The nearest one is Wirral Country Park. Not good if you haven't got your own car'.
- Transition Chester - 'The new Countess of Chester Country Park is welcome but access to country parks from Chester is difficult unless you have a car, although Delamere Forest (Forestry Commission) is accessible by train. The Whitegates Way is good. More could be done to promote the country parks for cycling - both getting there e.g. by train to Cuddington to join the Whitegates Way and then along the Weaver to get to Greenbank for return journey to Chester'.

### Quality

The comments regarding the management of country parks are generally positive, although litter, dog fouling and reductions in maintenance have been identified as issues:

Friends of Anderton and Marbury (FoAM) - Northwich Woodlands: 'Ranger resources have been reduced resulting in maintenance increasingly falling short. Unless this is addressed, the facilities will deteriorate over time'.

Friends of Stanney Fields Park – 'Wirral Country Park needs more cutting back of vegetation and trees'.

Friends of Weaver Parkway- 'Due to budget cuts they are no longer managed and cared for as they should be unless they have a volunteer work force to maintain'.

## 3.6 Allotment Provision

### 3.6.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council

- The Council are responsible for the management of 27 allotment sites. Most of these are located in Ellesmere Port and Chester.
- Resources for the management and maintenance of Council allotment sites have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on Place Operation's capacity to maintain all of the facilities to the standard the public would wish to see.
- Quality is varied but in most cases reasonable. Over the last two to three years 3 or 4 sites have become self-managed. In addition, a number of the rural sites have been transferred to parish councils.
- While many sites do have waiting lists they are not generally long and have reduced over recent years. This has partly been achieved by reducing the size of plots thereby creating a larger number of smaller plots.
- Many town and parish councils provide allotment sites.

### 3.6.2 Community Organisations Survey

Comments and issues from community survey respondents included:

Vale Royal Environment Network:

- With the trend towards smaller gardens, it's more important to offer allotments.
- Planters and other beds in town centres could be tended by local clubs or by an Incredible Edible group. This would help educate town visitors in horticulture and food growing. There may be a chance to join up a healthy eating campaign with the health authorities and schools.

Helsby Old Chester Road Allotments Association did not have any specific comments regarding quality and access but they did feel there was sufficient open space to meet the needs of the group's primary activities.

## 3.7 Natural green space, wildlife areas and woodlands

### 3.7.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council

- The majority of the Countryside sites under Cheshire West and Chester Council management tend to be located in the eastern side of the Borough, for example, Marbury (Northwich) and Little Budworth Country Parks. There are 19 main Council managed country parks, woodlands and nature reserves.
- For Countryside sites a common issue is the need to maintain and improve access to and within the sites - footpaths, cycle paths etc. Many of the countryside sites such as Marbury Country Park and the wider Northwich woodland, Little Budworth CP, and the Wirral Way have active volunteer groups who help with practical maintenance tasks.
- Resources for the management and maintenance of Council countryside sites have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on Place Operation's capacity to maintain all of the facilities to the standard the public would wish to see.
- Important "destination" recreational sites/facilities of natural and s/n green space in the Borough include the Northwich Woodlands (including Marbury Country Park); the Sandstone Trail; Delamere Forest; and the Wirral Way.

### 3.7.2 Natural England (Lead Advisor)

- Burton Mill Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Helsby Quarry LNR, Rivacre Valley LNR, Stanney Woods LNR and Whitby Park LNR are all noted and recorded on Natural England's LNR website.
- Natural England encourage further examination to see how well Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) standards are being met for Local Nature Reserves within the authority area (1 hectare of LNR per 1000 population) and whether there is further scope to declare additional sites.

### 3.7.3 Environment Agency (Biodiversity Officer)

- There is a need to improve the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Cheshire West & Chester, particularly the River Dee, Oak Mere, Abbots Moss, Pettypool Brook Valley, Bar Mere and Chapel Mere. The main adverse impacts upon these nationally-important wildlife sites are diffuse water pollution from agriculture, physical modification and invasive non-native species.

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

- Woodland Trust has developed an Access to Woodland Standard (set out in their Space for People (2010) report. It aspires that everyone should have a small wood of at least 2 hectares within 500metres of their home (i.e. easy walking distance) and a larger wood of at least 20 hectares within 4km of their home.
- Cheshire West and Chester performs reasonably well for the 4km access standard, with 72.7% of the population with access to a 20ha (or larger) woodland within 4km. However, only 18.3% of the population has access to a 2ha (or larger) woodland within 500m.

### **3.7.5 The Mersey Forest (GIS co-ordinator)**

- Cheshire West and Chester would certainly benefit from more woodland in some areas, as detailed in **The Mersey Forest Plan (2014)**. Ideally standards should reflect the targets and policies in the Forest Plan.

### **3.7.6 Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (Programme Director – Land)**

- For those that we are aware of or linked in to (via initiatives such as Saltscape), there is a good Friends of network who help to manage the sites, but these groups often struggle to recruit new members.
- In other local authority areas that we work in, we run programmes such as our Green Energisers programme and/or other youth based programmes such as the National Citizens Service where we work with young people and involve them in community based projects and they have assisted with the maintenance or improvements to an area - these are short term programmes.
- We are working with businesses on Winsford Industrial Estate to open up access to a pond area at the top of Road One.

### **3.7.7 RSPB (Site Manager, Dee Estuary Nature Reserve)**

- The importance of (and management of) wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands was noted, and that so often they just become over taken by dog walkers.

### **3.7.8 Mid Cheshire Bridleways Association (Committee Member)**

- There is good provision in Delamere Forest including Old Pale.
- There is opportunity for riding in some Woodland Trust sites especially those that are adjacent to bridleways such as at Dutton but this is not permitted. Similar situation with some National Trust sites.

### **3.7.9 CPRE (Volunteer – Comments relate to Winsford only)**

- This is an area that in my view has been neglected in the current wave of house building. The remaining fields surrounding Winsford need such areas set aside for new woodlands, wild flower field margins, and especially ponds and marshy areas, as this is what Cheshire is noted for. I think that farmers in areas surrounding new developments should be given incentives to create these amenities.
- In addition when development occurs it is essential that blocks of open countryside are left so as not to destroy bio-diversity and that wildlife corridors linking such areas are left. These need to be at least 10 metres wide e.g. hedges copses and wildflower zones.

### **3.7.10 Community Organisation Survey**

Respondents' views in relation to Wildlife Areas, Nature Reserves and Woodlands are noted in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Community groups' comments in relation to wildlife Areas, nature reserves and woodlands

Community Group/Organisation Name	Comments (Relating to Natural Green Space, Wildlife and Woodlands)
Councillor Carol Gahan	We need more of these areas created closer to Blacon.
Ledsham and Manor Action Group	<p>The reason why people moved here was because of its semi-rural situation. This is now being taken away. Shame on CW&amp;C.</p> <p>The most important open space to local residents is the natural one created by open farmland that has a diverse wildlife to observe and wonderful views to the Welsh hills. This will now be lost by the approved housing development. This kind of open space cannot be replaced by the provision of small parks.</p>
Vale Royal Environment Network	Many are based on clough woodlands, which have their accessibility issues. Volunteer groups are helpful in involving the public, making locals aware of their patch, so that it's less of a home for vandalism. I'm involved with Marshall's Arm, where some vandalism has affected facilities. We've lost a pond due to school fences; it was great for pond dipping.
Transition Chester	Not much woodland immediately accessible to Chester
Blacon Educational Village	The nature park is used for bonfires and drug use - it is overgrown and is not felt to be safe - wouldn't walk through even during the day time.
J H Godwin school	There could be more information in Blacon and maybe a family bus with arranged visits during holiday time for families.
Vale Royal and Knutsford Ramblers	Interpretation boards are frequently installed but then not maintained & are difficult to read.
The Friends of Caldy Nature Park	Nowhere nearly enough wildlife areas locally i.e. where wildlife is the priority rather than humans! Countess C'side Park still needs a lot more developing.
Kingsway & Newton Residents Association	More info and usage care.....monitoring of care
Blacon Health and Social Care	We do have a self-made wildlife park but it is not well looked after and is not suitable for all
Gorsehill homeless families unit	I think it's excellent to have that little green oasis, Blacon nature park and that it links up with Blacon meadows as a wildlife corridor. Frankly, I don't care if people don't use it over much, gives some space for the birds, hedgehogs etc., shame the pond doesn't thrive though.
Dee Estuary Conservation Group	The Dee Estuary within Cheshire West is well managed by the RSPB, farmers and the Dee Wildfowlers and Wetland Management Club. There could always be more site information and interpretation, but this is being delivered quite well by the RSPB.
Cheshire Walkers	Delamere is well catered for but some in some parts of Cheshire there is a shortage of woodland.
Tarvin Community Woodland Trust	We are shortly to expand the woodland with some land from the new Taylor Wimpey estate and hope that, should

	<p>there be further development between the existing woodland and the A51 / A54 roundabout, we can persuade the planners and developers to add another strip of woodland as a wildlife corridor and footpath.</p> <p>We want to have some scrapes in our woodland to increase biodiversity and enable the local primary school to have access for pond-dipping and aquatic biology in general.</p>
Friends of Owley Wood	<p>Owley Wood has recently experienced problems of antisocial behaviour such as drug taking, fire setting (which has recently destroyed a 100yr old Oak), graffiti, and repeated digging to try and create a BMX area which has destroyed a large area of undergrowth. The establishment of a BMX track locally would remove 2 of these problems and perhaps reduce some of the others</p>
Friends of West Vale Park	<p>There are lots of good walks around Neston and they all seem to be well cared for.</p>
Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society	<p>Pleasant countryside and wildlife areas are easy to access from Willaston. Residents look after the wildlife areas although additional funding would no doubt help with maintenance. Whilst site information is available for the larger areas such as 'The Big Meadow' there is no site information for the smaller local wildlife areas.</p>
Wirral Wildlife, the Wirral Group of Cheshire Wildlife Trust	<p>Ellesmere Port and Neston has some good wildlife areas accessible to people e.g. Wirral Way, Rivacre Valley, Big Meadow at Willaston. However, they tend to be isolated sites, which is not good for wildlife, which will need to move in response to climate change. Sir John Lawton put it succinctly - we need "more, bigger, better, joined" areas for wildlife. Wildlife areas are proven good for people as well, from supporting pollinators to improving people's mental health. So more green spaces should be managed to benefit wildlife and people, existing spaces expanded where possible and well-managed with adequate resources (money and people) and thought given to joining up the wildlife areas through corridors and stepping stones of greenspace. The planning system needs to protect existing and potential wildlife areas and buffer sensitive areas (buffers have not happened at Boundary Park ,Neston - but the fault lies with the Planning Inspectorate for that one - a policy to buffer all SSSIs, LWS and other sensitive areas is needed). The public sites I am familiar with need more interpretation, but that can be on-site, electronic or printed. Most of all they need knowledgeable, approachable staff, with time to communicate with people as well as physically manage the sites.</p>
Cheshire County Playing Fields Association	<p>Tarvin community forest well looked after by band of local volunteers hard and regular maintenance work. Grogans walk and pathway needs smoother surface be provided for use with 'rolators' (four wheeled walkers)</p>

## 3.8 Water Recreation

The Borough Council's Chester Waterways Strategy is of relevance to this section (see 3.2.4 above).

### 3.8.1 Environment Agency (Biodiversity Officer)

- Improved fisheries for angling - As part of the North West and Dee River Basin Management Plans (Water Framework Directive), there is a statutory need to improve the ecological condition of rivers, lakes and estuaries in Cheshire West & Chester. All waterbodies must reach "good ecological status or potential" by 2027 and one of the ecological parameters associated with this target is the quality of the fishery (numbers and diversity of native fish species).

### 3.8.2 Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (Programme Director – Land)

- There is scope for more use of 'blue' rather than 'green' resources, and through Saltscape we are helping to promote these resources.

### 3.8.3 Canal and River Trust – Joy Gill (Area Planner)

The Canal & River Trust is a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. It is separate from government but still the recipient of a significant amount of government funding.

The Trust has a range of charitable objects including:

- To hold in trust or own and to operate and manage inland waterways for public benefit, use and enjoyment;
- To protect and conserve objects and buildings of heritage interest;
- To further the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment of inland waterways; and
- To promote sustainable development in the vicinity of any inland waterways for the benefit of the public.

The Canal and River Trust have a 10 year Strategy '**Living Waterways transform places and enrich lives' (2015)** which is summarised below.

#### **Quantity**

The canals and rivers that the Trust look after offer an authentic, unfenced, 'no turnstiles' opportunity to **interact with history and nature first-hand**. On top of maintaining 2,000 miles of canals and rivers, which are often over 200 years old, we are responsible for an enormous network of bridges, embankments, towpaths, aqueducts, docks and reservoirs alongside everything else that makes up our wonderful waterways. By keeping our waterways alive we can ensure that visitors will always enjoy the boats, wildlife and **sense of community that they create**. However around 96% of waterside land is in the control of third parties so the role of the Trust as a statutory consultee on planning applications is vitally important to ensure the preservation of the network of waterways.

#### **Quality**

Our waterways provide an incredibly important natural corridor. Bringing the countryside into the heart of our busiest cities and linking fragmented wildlife communities together, our canals, rivers and reservoirs

are some of the most bio-diverse spaces in the country. 30% of them have been officially recognised for their special environmental value.

Our vision begins with the waterways. They need to be living waterways – teeming with wildlife, heritage and people. A vision far removed from the dilapidated waterways of decades ago. Through the work that we do, we begin to transform places and make a difference to the communities they run through. And by transforming these waterways we enrich people's lives.

The waterways offer tranquillity, recreation, health and wellbeing. They enable us to connect with people and put the waterways back into the centre of their communities. Living waterways transform places and enrich lives.

We want:

- To encourage and grow the number of people boating, using and enjoying the waterways
- To manage our assets – everything from bridges to aqueducts to culverts and locks – in the best possible way
- To look after the heritage and wildlife on our canals and rivers for people to enjoy – now and in the future
- Towpaths that are safe and available for everyone to use for all the activities that people enjoy doing
- To be a champion for restoration and grow the number of waterways we care for

### **Access**

**Taking a walk along a canal is something that should be enjoyed by as many people as possible.** The Trust is constantly working to make our canals and rivers the very best they can be, from improving towpaths for cyclists and encouraging biodiversity by creating new wildlife habitats to maintaining our locks, bridges and aqueducts. Our towpaths can play an important role in helping people of all ages improve their health and wellbeing. We want more people to realise the benefits of these traffic-free walking and cycling routes.

**Better Towpaths for Everyone** – a national policy for sharing towpaths, sets out how the Trust intend to encourage safe, responsible use of the nation's towpaths by the millions of people who visit each year. The policy advises that priority should generally be given to the slowest and those using the waterway, and also outlines the simple ways in which people using the towpath can play their part by being careful and considerate to others.

The policy was shaped by a two month consultation which saw over 2000 people from a range of backgrounds and interests, giving their views. As well as setting out nine simple principles of towpath use, the policy identifies three key areas of focus: Better Infrastructure; Better Signs and; Better Behaviour.

There is also a page on their website regarding disabled access/ access for all: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/features/towpath-walking-for-people-with-disabilities>

#### **3.8.4 CPRE (Volunteer – Comments relate to Winsford only)**

- There is a large area of open water called Winsford Flashes that has been recognized as a beauty spot and sailing facility for years, even attracting tourists. This area has never been maintained or managed for its amenity and wildlife value until recently, and is still under threat of speculative housing development. It has been highlighted in the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan as an area to be enhanced with walkways for better access.

### 3.8.5 Community Organisation Survey

Respondents' views in relation to Water Recreation are noted in Table 4 below.

Table 4 *Community groups' comments relating to water recreation*

Community Group	Comments
<b>Councillor Carol Gahan</b>	Good access to the canal and the towpath is good.
<b>Vintage Blacon</b>	The Canal Towpath from Blacon Avenue towards Mollington is not as good as it was.
<b>Vale Royal Environment Network</b>	A cyclepath along the River Weaver from Northwich to Frodsham and Runcorn. The current path is circuitous and takes ages. A river route would take the hills out and help keep cyclists and cars apart – especially important along the A533 west of the A49. In Northwich it would help people from Winnington Village get into Northwich without clogging the roads.
<b>Transition Chester</b>	Improve towpath surface from Chester to Ellesmere Port! – several years ago it was surfaced and now it is getting positively hazardous. Extend towpath surfacing beyond Waverton to encourage family recreational cycling.
<b>Blacon Educational Village</b>	Pond in the nature reserve only. Travel to Northgate or Sandy Lane for water activities.
<b>St Theresa's Catholic Primary School</b>	Opportunities for water sports for all would be an excellent idea for the local area. Children should be able to use the water safely and experience opportunities near the water safely.
<b>Friends of Caldy Nature Reserve</b>	Canal tow path in need of regular maintenance & improvement. Issues around sharing for walkers & cyclists.
<b>Friends of Anderton and Marbury (FoAM)</b>	Canals are well used, but insufficient access and use is made of the river frontages in Northwich. There is local concern that the flood defences currently being installed will make the river frontage even less attractive.
<b>Blacon Health and Social Care</b>	The canal is very accessible and great improvements have been made to it.
<b>Gorsehill Homeless Families unit</b>	Its good the cycleway meets up with river dee and the shropshire union, providing excellent local network for walking/cycling
<b>Cheshire Walkers</b>	Would be good to introduce some watersports like paddleboarding as on some of the canals on the continent.
<b>Friends of Grosvenor Park &amp; The Groves</b>	The riverside path on the Queen's Park side, opposite The Groves needs attention and lighting, and the self-seeded trees and shrubs need cutting back to reveal the view. The old mill water wheel needs refurbishing and the Fish count could be opened up visitors'.
<b>Willaston Residents' &amp; Countryside Society</b>	There are some ponds used for fishing in our area. They are used by private clubs. Access is only possible by foot or by vehicle. There are no rivers or canals in our immediate vicinity. Elsewhere towpath surfaces could be improved for wheelchair and buggy access. Residents have not asked for more water sports although public transport to the local swimming pools would be useful.
<b>Chester Canal Heritage Trust</b>	The Chester Canal Heritage Trust, working with the Canal and River Trust, the Inland Waterways Association and CW&C, seek full implementation of the Chester waterways Strategy (launched in 2014). In particular, we are working towards our vision of making Chester's waterways an interconnected system. A key element would be to ensure full navigation of the Dee branch canal and a lock in the millrace on the Handbridge side

	of the river to improve connectivity between the tidal and non-tidal Dee, thus fully exploiting the potential of Chester's waterways and making Chester a 'waterways city' in the full sense of the word.
<b>Friends of Willaston Meadow</b>	We help to manage two ponds which need more maintenance and financial support than our small group can provide. Pond dipping facilities would be an additional resource for the Forest School students.

## 3.9 Footpaths, Cycling and Equestrian provision

### 3.9.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council Rights of Way (Richard Ankers & Pete Atkinson - Footpath Officers)

The overall policy and strategy guiding the rights of way service is the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2011-2016) – see section 3.2.6.

The value of maintaining, developing and promoting the use of rights of way in relation to public health benefit was highlighted. Improving links from town/settlement to country is an important aspect in this respect.

There are about 1280 km of statutory rights of way in the Borough comprised of footpaths (86%), bridleways (7%), restricted byway (6%) and BOATS - byways open to all traffic (1%). Additionally there are permissive rights of way and a small amount of open access land.

A detailed survey of the entire network was undertaken in 2010. This information includes data regarding all trail furniture items and viewpoints as well as surface condition, gradients and accessibility. This is available on GIS.

#### ***Provision and Access***

- There is particularly poor provision for horse riders and cyclists. Poorer still is provision for drivers of horse drawn vehicles and off-road motor vehicles.
- Access to attractive countryside and Greenspace varies throughout the Borough. Access to waterbodies; canals; rivers and other watercourses is good in places but poor in others.
- Most canal tow paths are open to walkers but may not be available to other categories of user and there is little coastal access at the moment. There are some small areas of accessible woodland and one large forest at Delamere.
- Other deficiencies include local gaps in the network for walkers, route severance, poorly routed paths and limited access to attractive features and landscapes.
- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (see section 4.2.6) notes that about 15% of the walking network is accessible for people with restricted mobility or visual restrictions. One key approach to improving access is the replacement of stiles by kissing gates.

#### ***Quality and improvements***

- Budgetary restrictions over recent years has meant that the primary role of the Rights of Way (ROW) team has been that of responding to complaints from interest groups and the general public rather than implementation of a strategic plan to improve the network.
- In relation to making improvements to the network the impetus often comes from town/parish councils and community groups who raise funds for particular projects. A number of parish councils have active footpath committees. There is also potential to secure funds from S106 agreements.
- The quality of rights of way is very varied to a large degree depending upon the extent of use. Overgrowth of vegetation is probably the most common issue reported. However all routes are signposted from the road and most paths are open and available.

## **Maintenance**

- There is an annual programme of maintenance (1 or 2 vegetation cuts per year) for the main paths - about a third of the overall network. The programme is varied from year to year (increasing in the main) in response to reports from users and interest groups.
- The ROW team meet regularly with interest groups such as the Ramblers Associations to discuss the condition of the network to help plan for maintenance. This includes issues such as the over-cropping of paths, vegetation overgrowth, needs for stile/gate/bridge repairs/replacements, and blocked paths.

## **Destination Sites**

- Trails that have been developed and promoted over the years include the Sandstone Trail (recently surveyed), the Bishop Bennet Way (horse riding), the North Cheshire Way, the South Cheshire Way, the Longster Trail and the Delamere Loop (bridleway).

### **3.9.2 Natural England (Lead Advisor)**

- Natural England would encourage further discussions with the Cheshire West and Chester Local Access Forum (LAF) as a means of securing the best local outcomes for access provision within the authority area.

### **3.9.3 Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside (Programme Director – Land)**

- We have been involved over the years in enhancements and new routes being developed, including the Winsford to Northwich greenway and helped to develop a routeway strategy over 10 years ago for the routes in and around Northwich some of which has been built and linked to Northwich Woodlands.
- We have also been helping to develop the routes around Ellesmere Port, and are aware that more needs to be done to complete these routes in order that more people can use them and be less reliant on using their cars for journeys to work and other facilities.
- We are also currently finalising a Green Infrastructure audit around Northwich, to support the development of stronger links between the town centre and wider green infrastructure. Our three Business Improvement Districts in Mid Cheshire covering Northwich Town Centre, Winsford Industrial Estate and Gadbrook Business Park all have links to footpaths, open country and bridleways.

### **3.9.4 RSPB (Site Manager, Dee Estuary Nature Reserve)**

- The Greenway at Burton has attracted a lot of users and is an excellent example of partnership working. Still some work to do on resolving conflicts between cyclists & pedestrians, this is in progress.

### **3.9.5 Sustrans (Karen Brenchley - Development and Delivery Manager for Merseyside and Cheshire)**

Sustrans manage the Chester Greenway cycle and walking route between Mickle Trafford and Deeside Industrial Park.

The Sustrans National Cycle Network (NCN) policy for Greenways (The National Cycle Network, its greenways and their development) was also highlighted.

- A safe route for cyclists and walkers between Chester and Wrexham is lacking at present. There is an existing designated route but this is difficult to follow in terms of signs and does not follow an easy or clear desire line. A feasibility study into the construction of a safe, easy to use route would be welcomed.

### **3.9.6 Mid Cheshire Bridleways Association (Susan Griffiths - Committee Member)**

Mid Cheshire Bridleways Association promote safe riding in safe and pleasant surroundings. They have an elected committee and are affiliated to the British Horse Society and the Bridleways and Byways Trust. They have established links with Cheshire West and Chester Council rights of way sections and are represented at the Local Access Forum. They contributed to the council's equestrian strategy (see section 3.2.5).

Bridleway routes in the area are Aston Ring, Bishop Bennett Way, Delamere Loop and Oakmere Way.

- Good provision in some areas but more circular routes are required to link with equestrian developments and livery yards and country parks etc. Opportunity to upgrade some paths to bridleways to achieve this or permit access for riders along some watercourses where not currently permitted by the Canal and River Trust such as parts of Weaver Navigation. Aspiration for upgrading part of Weaver towpath near Frodsham.
- Other issues – lack of box parking to access some bridleways, difficulty crossing some main roads and problem with some surfacing, lack of maintenance, badger holes and difficult gates. Due to lack of Council resources many of these problems are worse than previous years and deter usage of some routes.
- Promotion of existing routes could be improved. For example the Council has run out of leaflets for many routes popular with riders such as the Bishop Bennett Way and the Delamere Loop and there are no funds to re-print these.
- Oakmere Way Bridleway – current proposal for the creation of a parking area for horse boxes and cars due to the success of this route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders since opening in 2014. Planning application to be submitted this month and sources of funding being looked into. Future aspiration for a linking circular bridleway around Cheshire Sands Quarry.

### **3.9.7 CPRE (Volunteer – Comments relate to Winsford only)**

- Winsford has a good network of footpaths in the surrounding fields which are popular with locals for exercise without having to drive miles. However they are not given the recognition they deserve so are often neglected and hard to follow (the council have tried hard to keep up with signing etc. but funds appear to be short for this).

- When planning permission has been given in the past the amenity value of the footpaths was of no importance with the result that the paths became corridors surrounded by ugly dilapidated fencing and fouled by dogs.

### 3.9.8 Community Organisations Survey

#### ***General***

- Councillor Carol Gahan – ‘Could do with more and need better maintenance, currently relying heavily on volunteers’.
- St Theresa’s Catholic Primary School – ‘Cycle paths and bridleways are improving all the time - investment in these areas is really noticeable and worthwhile. Stiles and hedges need managing so that broken ones are repaired and hedges trimmed so that access points are not blocked. A way of reporting these needs should be made available so that local people can help manage the situation and report needs when necessary - both in the town and the countryside. People should be encouraged to re-act and take ownership of the responsibility for the valuable resources we have in our local area’.
- Transition Chester - ‘Cycle paths/shared used paths could be developed to improve access to countryside to east of Chester - especially from end of GreenWay at Mickle Trafford towards Helsby/Frodsham area and to Barrow’.
- Wirral Footpaths & Open Spaces Preservation Society – ‘Cheshire West and Chester is blessed with a fine network of footpaths etc. Maintenance has deteriorated since the contract was placed with a private sector company last year and we understand that there have been further changes to the maintenance of stiles etc. very recently about which we have concerns. There is always scope for additions to the network but we feel that there is little will on behalf of CW&C to do so. We feel that, sadly, this is given very low priority’.
- Friends of Anderton and Marbury (FoAM) – ‘Footpaths and cycle ways in the areas around the edges of Northwich are quite good, but they are poor through the town centre. In particular, the one-way system has not included adequate provision for cyclists’.
- Cheshire Walkers – ‘Walking on some canals is slightly isolated for lone walkers so it puts them off walking - it would be good in more isolated spots if there were more paths joining up to these spots or wider open spaces with some seating so that it encourages more people to visit them - people out walking on their own would then be more inclined to use them as they would feel safer’.
- Cheshire County Playing Fields Association – ‘Smooth surfaces needed for four wheeled rollators on all country walkways e.g. Tarvin to Roman Bridges to Christleton’.
- Friends of Willaston Meadow – ‘Summer maintenance is not always sufficient’.

#### ***Footpaths***

- Ledsham and Manor Action Group – ‘Our local public footpaths that used to meander through open farmland will now be replaced by street paths!! That is a disgrace’.
- Vale Royal and Knutsford Ramblers – ‘Footpath maintenance is poor and we frequently clear overgrowth ourselves’.
- North and Mid Cheshire Ramblers – ‘There are plenty of attractive footpaths, but some need more maintenance’.

- Friends of Caldy Nature Park – ‘There are large numbers of brilliant footpaths around CW& C. We could do with more though nearer Chester city centre though. Also, some paths are regularly overgrown & difficult to access e.g. around Frodsham & Helsby. The replacement of stiles with kissing gates has been a positive step for accessibility. The long distance paths are great though need more regular maintenance’.
- Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society – ‘We have many attractive footpaths but maintenance is a problem. The Council does not appear to have sufficient staff to keep the paths clear all the time. Residents say that the paths are ‘fairly to well’ maintained’.
- Transition Chester – ‘Footpaths generally OK and signed - improving network of off road shared use paths in Chester area, but there are many missing links that would encourage greater use’.

### ***Cycling***

- Chester Cycling Campaign – ‘We need better maintenance of the cycle paths we have and more attention needs to be given to designing in routes that take advantage of new developments in the local area’.
- Cheshire Gardens Trust – ‘There are absolutely not enough cycle paths to encourage and facilitate cycling for work or pleasure which discourages those members who could cycle to events from doing so’.
- Blacon Health and Social Care –‘We do have cycle paths but we do need more that would take you to the country’.
- Blacon Educational Village - ‘Cycle paths are ok but get teenagers hanging around at night time, lots of dog muck’.
- Gorsehill Homeless Families Unit – ‘It’s good the cycleway meets up with River Dee and the Shropshire Union, providing excellent local network for walking/cycling’
- Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society – ‘There are insufficient roadside cycleways. Some residents would like a cycle way alongside the A540. Bus services are being reduced making it more difficult for people to get from town to country. We need more not less bus services in rural areas’.

### ***Bridleways***

- St Theresa's Catholic Primary School – ‘Some bridleways in the countryside near Malpas need more attention and strimming twice a year to ensure that they remain clear’.
- Willaston Residents' & Countryside Society – ‘In our area there are sufficient bridleways but it would help if it was easier to get from one bridleway to another without having to use busy roads’.

### ***Site Specific comments and suggested improvements***

- Friends of Stanney Fields Park – ‘The paths on the Wirral Way are deteriorating and narrowing due to growth of vegetation. This puts pressure on the joint users of the path with cyclists and walkers sometimes unable to pass each other’.
- Vintage Blacon – ‘The combination of Greenway and Canal Towpath is good. The Dee bank is good also, as is Dukes Drive. A linking footpath from the Dee to the Greenway would be great (in the Welsh sector)’
- Vale Royal Environment Network - A cyclepath along the River Weaver from Northwich to Frodsham and Runcorn. The current path is circuitous and takes ages. A river route would take the

hills out and help keep cyclists a cars apart - especially important along the A533 west of the A49. In Northwich it would help people from Winnington Village get into Northwich without clogging the roads.

- Vale Royal Environment Network – ‘A sign on the Weaver cyclepath near Moulton needs amending to reflect the newly opened stretch. The kissing gates along the Weaver are awkward to get your bike through. There’s an opportunity for linear orchards - there are already some apple trees near the Blue Bridge’.
- Blacon Educational Village – ‘Gorse Hill footpath - no pavement or street lights and is a well- used cut through to the estate. Treborth Road to Sealand Road - fences around steps are poorly maintained, fence panels are missing and dangerous’.
- Friends of Grosvenor Park & The Groves – ‘The footpaths along the Groves and the Queens Park side of the river, could be made into a circular walk; crossing over the Suspension Bridge and the Old Dee Bridge, returning to the Groves’.
- Friends of West Vale Park – ‘The Greenway cycle and walking track to Wales is proving very popular. The Wirral way is an excellent way to leave Neston on foot or on bike. More benches would be welcome’.
- Friends of Caldy Nature Park – ‘Need bridge over river Dee at Huntington’.
- Friends of Owley Wood – ‘We currently could improve a number of our paths if we had funding’

### 3.10 Parks and Green Spaces: Key Findings

#### Overview

- Natural England stress the need to take into account the ANGst standard as a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space. Variations from this standard should be justified.
- The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WASt - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should be taken into consideration.
- The Mersey Forest state that CW&C would benefit from more woodland and their plan ‘More from trees’ has the vision of increasing woodland cover to 20%.
- CW&C does not currently have a Green Space Strategy. It is hoped that evidence gathered through this Open Space Study will be used to produce such a strategy to provide clear strategic guidance, especially important in light of severely reduced resources for management and maintenance of council open space.
- The Open Space Assessment (2011) sets out a number of standards which will be reviewed as part of the main open space study.
- The importance of partnership working, including volunteer engagement, in delivering funding and management of open space is highlighted.
- The importance of biodiversity, ecological networks and the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space were key issues highlighted throughout the consultation.

## Quantity

### Community groups survey:

- 57% of community groups feel there are enough open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities to meet the needs of their primary activities.
- However, a significant minority (40%) feel there is inadequate provision e.g. Chester Cycling Campaign, Blacon community groups, Transition Chester, Wirral Wildlife, Cheshire Walkers and Tarvin Community Woodland.

### Household Survey:

- There are only two open space typologies where respondents suggest there is a general need for more. 60% suggest a shortfall of facilities for teenagers; and 51% for allotments.
- A very clear majority think that overall there are enough bowling greens (77%), local recreation grounds (73%), and parks and gardens (72%).
- Smaller, though significant, majorities (over 60%) think that in general there are enough: water recreation facilities; tennis courts; bowling greens; and county parks, accessible countryside, and accessible woodlands.

## Quality

### Overview:

- Resources for the management and maintenance of council open space have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on the maintenance of sites/facilities.
- Quality of sites varies throughout CW&C. Examples of relatively good quality parks include Grosvenor Park, Chester; Westminster Park, Chester; Castle Park, Frodsham; Marbury Country Park; and Stanney Fields, Neston; Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port.

### Household survey:

- For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality - 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor and over 25% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas and tennis courts as poor or very poor.
- By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by a clear majority in terms of quality - Parks and gardens (65% rate quality in general as being good or very good); Country parks/countryside/woodlands (60% similarly); and Local recreation grounds (59%).

### Community group survey:

- Wildlife areas proved the highest rating typology with 58% of the groups happy with the quality of provision (rating them as good or very good).
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths and country parks also score highly with 50% and 46% respectively rating them good or very good.
- Parks and water recreation also scored reasonably well with 39% and 40% respectively rating them as good or very good.
- It should be noted that there were also notable levels of dissatisfaction with the quality of wildlife areas; footpaths, cycle paths and bridleways and water recreation with 24%, 24% and 22% respectively rating them as being either poor or very poor, reflecting the variation in quality.

## Access

### Household survey:

- 81% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 81% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

### Stakeholder and Community groups survey:

- The majority of community groups (53%) reported that they do not suffer from access issues, however a significant proportion (35%) noted that they do suffer from access issues.
- Access issues highlighted are predominantly regarding the connectivity (provision) and maintenance (quality) of Public Rights of Way.
- There is particularly poor provision for horse riders and cyclists. Poorer still is provision for drivers of horse drawn vehicles and off-road motor vehicles.
- Most canal tow paths are open to walkers but may not be available to other categories of user and there is little coastal access at the moment.
- Other deficiencies include local gaps in the network for walkers, route severance, poorly routed paths and limited access to attractive features and landscapes.
- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) notes that about 15% of the walking network is accessible for people with restricted mobility or visual restrictions. One key approach to improving access is the replacement of stiles by kissing gates.
- It was highlighted that the promotion of existing routes could be improved.
- Stake holders and community groups have a number of aspirations for improved provision of rights of way.

### Key Issues and priorities for improvement

- The household survey identified footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths as the highest priority for potential improvement//new provision (56%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were for country parks, accessible countryside/woodlands, and nature reserves/wildlife areas (40%). Around 30% rated improvements to parks and gardens; children's play areas/facilities for teenagers; and informal open spaces as high priorities for improvement.
- Access to sites for water recreation also scored quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 76% of households - 48% medium/28% high).
- In the main households tended to suggest that improvements to existing open space facilities rather than new provision was most needed.
- The only categories where a majority identify a primary need for more facilities are provision for teenagers (61%) and allotments (54%).
- Improved access is quite significant for some categories e.g. access to water recreation; bowling greens; and MUGAs (around 20%).

## 4.0 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Introduction

This section provides feedback and information relating to play and youth facilities. It considers information and views provided by various stakeholders including children and young people, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Play England and play and youth organisations across the Borough.

The section is structured into five main parts:

- Review of policy and strategy (The 2011 Open Space Assessment - play/youth facilities)
- Survey of children and young people
- Youth and Play - key stakeholders
- Local play and youth organisations
- Inclusive Play for disabled children and young people

There is a summary of key points and issues at the end of the section. The information and findings in this section will be taken forward in the main Open Space Audit Report.

### 4.1 Review of policy and strategy

#### 4.1.1 Open Space Assessment (2011)

The 2011 Open Space Assessment covered provision of play and youth open space under two categories:

- Provision for Children (below 12)
- Provision for Young People (above 12)

Provision for Children (below 12) included: equipped play areas and adventure playgrounds that cater for children under 12. Toddlers play areas were also considered under this classification.

Provision for Young People (above 12) included: strategic facilities such as skate parks and BMX tracks; and local facilities such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), basketball courts, youth shelters, informal kickabout areas, and play areas/adventure playgrounds aimed at teenagers.

### ***Consultation***

#### Provision for Children (below 12)

The study noted that "consultation demonstrated that there were mixed views on the amount of facilities for children across Cheshire West and Chester"; and that "provision for children emerged as one of the key issues during the local needs assessment". The report also noted that "residents expect to find facilities local to their home, and access to facilities is particularly important. Safe pedestrian routes were felt to be important if use of facilities was to be maximised".

#### Provision for Young People (above 12)

The study noted that "overall, there are more concerns relating to the quantity of facilities for teenagers than any other typology and there is a perception that both the quantity and quality of facilities is poor. It is clear however that views on the amount of facilities are influenced by the quality of facilities, and by the type of facilities that residents wish to see".

## The proposed standards

The standards for provision of children's play space/teen facilities as set out in the 2011 Open Space Assessment are summarised in Table 5 below.

*Table 5 Standards for provision for children and young people as set out in the Open Space Assessment (2011)*

Type of Open Space	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Provision for Children (below 12)	10 minute walk time (480m)	No standard set. Provision to be accessibility led.	<b>Essential:</b> A variety of challenging and exciting play facilities for a range of ages; Clean / litter free; Well kept grass and safety surfacing; Appropriate boundaries; Litter bins; Conformity with national guidance including size (to be a minimum of LEAP size) buffer zones and location.
Provision for Young People (above 12)	Local:15 minute walk time (720m)  Access to a strategic facility within a 15 minute drive time.	No standard set. Provision to be accessibility led.	<b>Essential:</b> Challenging and exciting play facilities, Clean / litter free, Well kept grass and safety surfacing, Appropriate boundaries, Litter bins, Seating.  <b>Desirable:</b> Dog free area, community involvement, Appropriate location – overlooked/natural surveillance,

These standards will be reviewed in the main Open Space Study report and new standards proposed.

## 4.2 Children and Young People's Survey

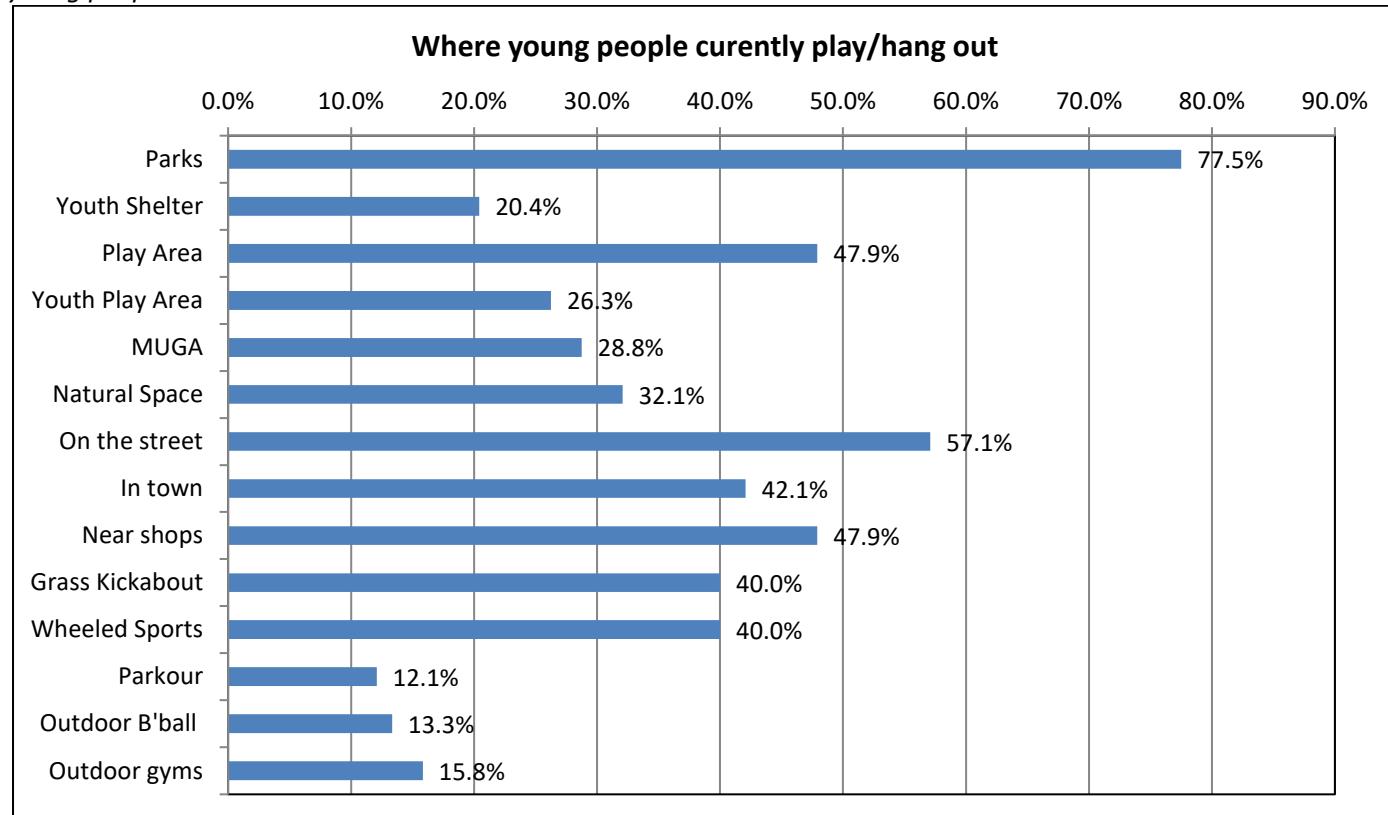
The household survey reported in Section 2 of this report gathered views on all kinds of open spaces including play and youth facilities and respondents were asked to reply on behalf of the household as a whole (including children and young people). However it is also important to gather views directly from children and young people

A survey was therefore developed in liaison with the Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service Team. The team promoted the survey via an online system as well as distributing and collecting hard copies. 240 responses were received from young people from 11 to 20 years old. The main findings are provided below.

### 4.2.1 Current Use

The kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities young people currently use is shown in the Figure 10 below.

Figure 10 Results from Children and Young People's Survey – types of facilities currently used by children and young people



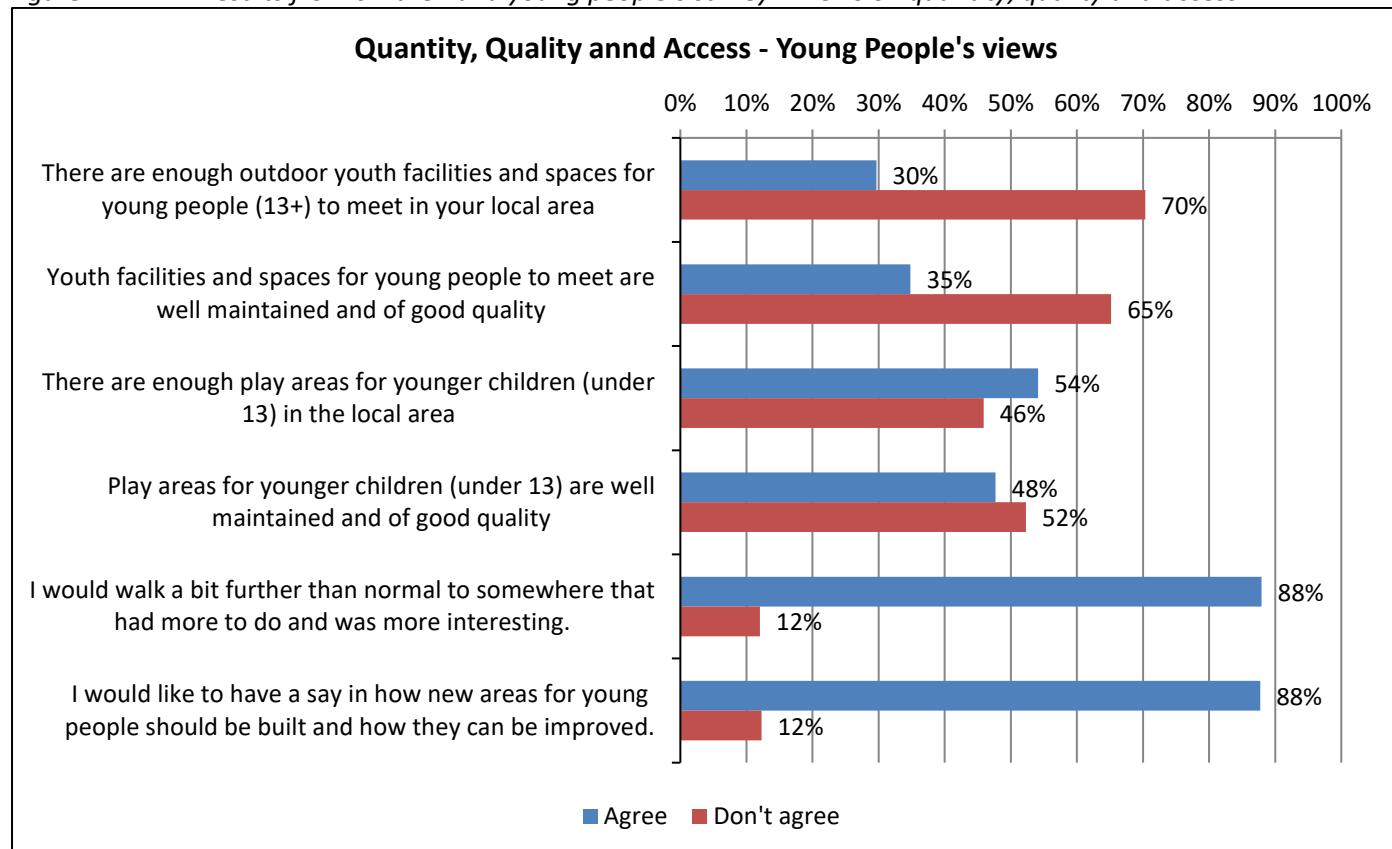
Other kinds of outdoor open spaces used by young people include fields, countryside and woods; marsh land; water parks; ponds; back gardens; "dog walking places"; "the Tesco bench"; the zoo; and tracks for bike riding.

- Local parks are the most commonly used kind of open space (nearly 78%).
- The other most common areas of open space currently used are local equipped playgrounds (48%); grass kickabout areas and wheeled sports facilities (40%).
- A high proportion of children and young people (over 57%) play and hang out "on the street", in their city/town/village (42%) and near local shops (48%) - indicating the wider importance of planning for a child friendly "public realm".

#### 4.2.2 Quantity, Quality and Access

The survey asked young people whether there were enough play areas and youth facilities, what they thought in general about the quality of current play/youth facilities and about access to such provision. The key findings are noted in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11 Results from children and young people's survey – views on quantity, quality and access



### Quantity

- 70% of children and young people thought that there was a need for more outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in their local area.
- By contrast, a small majority (54%) of children and young people thought that there *are* enough play areas for younger children in their local area.

### Quality

- 54% of children and young people agreed that play areas for younger children are well maintained and of good quality
- By contrast, a clear majority (65%) of children and young people thought that youth facilities and spaces for young people to meet are *not* well maintained or of good quality.

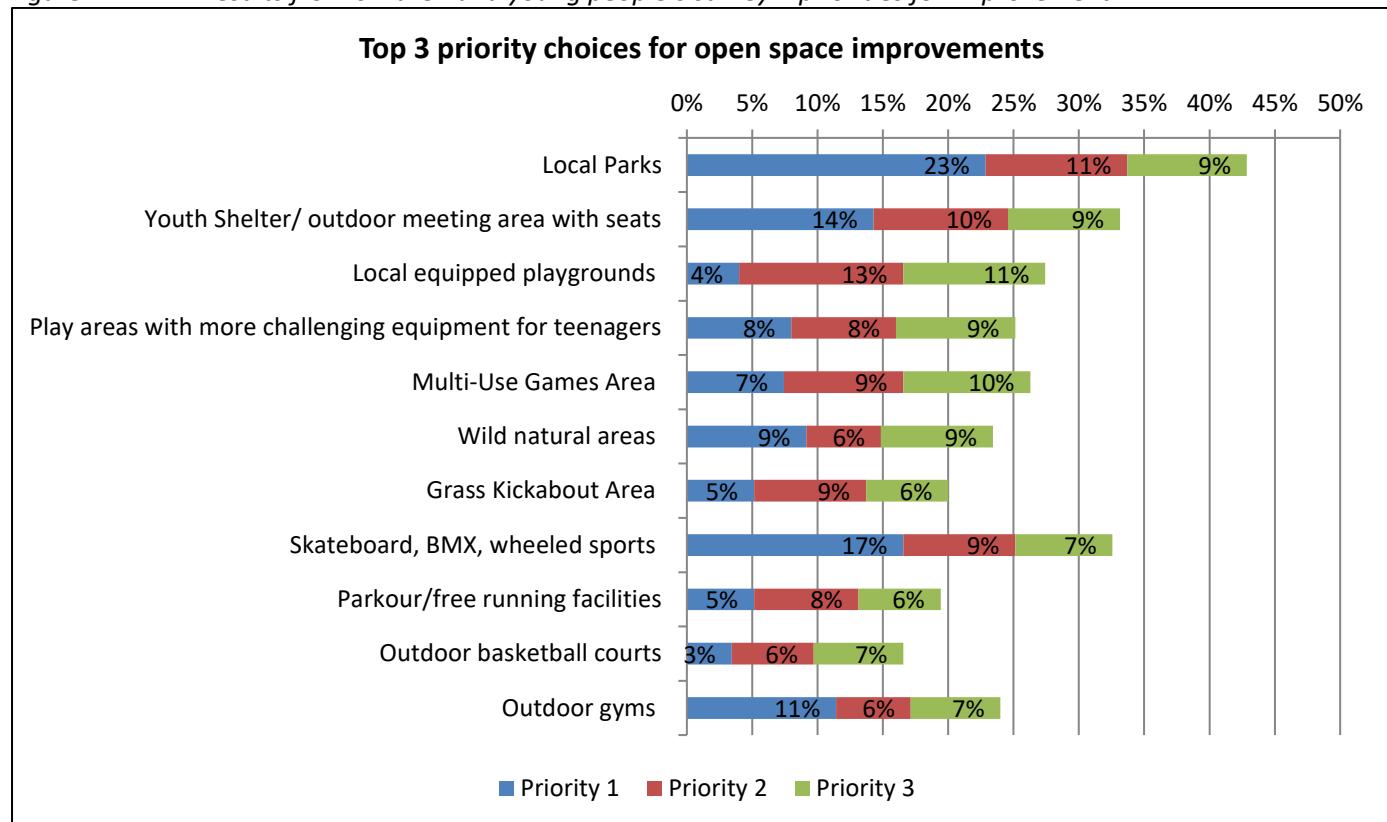
### Access

- 88% of children and young people said that they would be prepared to walk further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting.

#### 4.2.3 Priorities for improvement

The survey asked young people to prioritise the kinds of open spaces and outdoor facility provision that they would most like to see improved by ranking all the different kinds of open space provision in priority order. Figure 12 below shows the top 3 priority choices.

Figure 12 Results from children and young people's survey – priorities for improvement



Some observations on the most commonly chosen top three priorities are noted below:

- 46% of young people highlighted improvements to parks as being one of their top 3 priorities (of which 23% chose it as their top priority).
- 33% chose provision of skateboard, BMX and wheeled sports facilities as being one of their top 3 priorities (of which 17% chose it as their top priority).
- 33% chose provision of youth shelters and outdoor seated areas as one of their top 3 priorities (including 14% of which chose it as their top priority).
- Other commonly prioritised spaces/facilities were local equipped playgrounds (28%); Multi-Use Games Areas (26%); play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers (25%); wild natural green spaces (24%); and outdoor gyms (24%).

#### ***Other priorities and future consultation***

A number of young people suggested other priorities that should be considered: a trampoline park; outdoor toilet facilities; playing fields - for tennis and football; places for just teenagers and not little kids; and playground equipment for younger children under two (like swings and sandpits).

Finally, 88% confirmed that they would like to have a say in how new open space facilities for young people should be built and how existing spaces can be improved.

#### **4.2.4 Other Comments**

There was an opportunity at the end of survey for young people to make additional comments. Examples of these are noted below:

## General Comments

- It would be good to consult young people and get us more involved with planning and volunteering locally.
- Need somewhere where teens can meet with adults around to supervise.
- BMX/mountain biking is a fantastic idea and sport to get kids into. It has helped a lot of my friends of all ages.
- The local park with the skate park is a great facility but there could be an indoor centre with a youth club for different age groups or if there is it could be better advertised. We would like an indoor skatepark.
- An outdoor gym would keep people healthy. We need more outdoor fitness facilities.
- We really need more outdoor gyms and free running/parkour areas.
- We need more places to sit/use specifically for teenagers, where others aren't really allowed. I think a main issue for young people is feeling judged or disapproved of by small children's parents or the elderly.
- Need more cycle lanes.
- There are lots of small parks but these don't receive enough attention.
- Parks and open spaces need doing up - they should be locked up at night. Parks need to be improved a lot.
- I would use the MUGA if it was better maintained.
- Wherever we go we just get told to move but there's nowhere safe to go; we're tired of getting moved on.
- Where I live is a main road so not a lot of space. I can't go to any other outdoor spaces apart from on a walk.
- Parks should have better toilet facilities.
- Need more things that are suitable for disabled people.
- Some parks are filled with teenagers who just seem to go there to take drugs, assault people and vandalise or steal property. Nothing seems to be getting done to fix the problem and the police don't seem to be all that concerned.
- All of the parks need better security as yobs seem to be running rampage and causing trouble, which makes them an extremely unsafe place for anybody to go, young or old.
- Stop people destroying things.
- Within any area, graffiti needs to be removed from walls and local parks with swings, roundabouts etc. as there are lots of small children playing and graffiti could contain unsuitable language for them to read. There are park benches engraved with unsuitable messages which children could read.
- The outdoor facilities are all destroyed and there is no where people can go to have fun and there needs to be supervision on all new places for kids/teenagers.
- Thank you!

## Local issues and specific needs

The survey also provided young people with the opportunity to highlight specific local issues, needs and aspirations (see full spreadsheet for details).

## 4.3 Youth and Play - Key Stakeholders

### 4.3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Council

#### ***Total Environment***

The Total Environment team is responsible for providing the overall strategy for play and youth facility provision across the Borough. The team is currently working with Place Operations on developing a Borough-wide Play Strategy. This strategy will cover all publically accessible outdoor play and youth facilities (not simply the Council's own sites). The strategy scope does not include staffed play and youth provision.

#### ***Place Operations***

A meeting was held with the Place Operations officers who are responsible for the Council's play space management.

- Place Operations are responsible for the operational management of the Council's own play areas and outdoor youth facilities.
- There are currently 127 Council managed play areas/youth facilities in Cheshire West and Chester. The quality of the Council's play spaces is very variable across the Borough.
- Other providers of play areas include town and parish councils; housing associations; and schools. There is potential for schools to open up their facilities more, particularly MUGA type provision in the rural areas. Some of the Council's own sites are adjacent to schools.
- In the light of budgetary restraints the primary aim currently is to improve and maintain existing Council play sites to achieve a satisfactory quality standard rather than create additional play spaces.
- As regards access, the approach is to develop inclusive play spaces that are accessible to all by: providing good paths to and within play areas; ensuring there is sufficient space between items of play equipment; providing seating nearby; and choosing play equipment that is usable for varying levels of ability. There is still work to be done to achieve this at all of the Council's sites.
- Place Operations are in the process of completing a prioritised Play Space Improvement Plan covering the Council's own play areas and outdoor youth facilities. This is using existing funding including S106 contributions. The aim is to have a planned rolling programme of play space improvements.
- It is important that play spaces have a site specific design. For example there will be different opportunities for landscaping; fencing may or not be needed depending on the site; play equipment will need to be sufficiently robust to suit the local area; and local consultation may result in different choices of equipment, locations, and design ideas.
- The Total Environment team are currently working with Place Operations in developing a Borough-wide Play Strategy. This will be helpful in future reviews of the prioritisation of investment in the Council's own sites.
- Management of dogs and fouling on play sites is a common issue where clear guidance would help. For example, rather than fence in all play areas (which often reduces play value) and banning dogs from parks (difficult to enforce) consider things like: provide a fenced exercise area for dogs; require dogs to be on a lead in parks and recreation fields; provide poop-scoops and containers (empty them regularly); request owners to remove faeces; provide clear signs; and develop publicity and education programmes.
- The Locality Teams also propose play area and youth facility developments and if funding can be secured Place Operations provide advice and guidance as to the practicalities of the implementation of local improvements.

- Barriers to improving play areas include a general lack of resources (financial and staff); and a lack of clear policy and strategy (soon to be remedied).

#### 4.3.2 Play England

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

##### **Quantity**

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

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

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

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

##### **Quality**

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

##### **Access**

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

##### **Priorities**

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

##### **Nature Play Initiative**

By Nature Play, Play England simply mean children exploring and enjoying the natural environment through their freely-chosen play. As well as simply enjoying playing outdoors and discovering green spaces

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near their homes, nature play can include planting and growing vegetables, fruit and flowers; cooking outdoors; playing with the elements or making camps and dens with natural materials.

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

#### 4.3.3 Woodland Trust

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

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

#### 4.3.4 The National Trust

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

Two reports reflecting the increasing need to re-engage children with the outdoors have been published: *Natural Childhood* and *Reconnecting Children with Nature*. A nationwide campaign *50 things to do before you're 11 ½* has been established and a 'kids council' recruited to help influence future plans and programmes.

### 4.4 Views from Local Play and Youth Organisations

#### 4.4.1 Play and Youth Organisations Survey

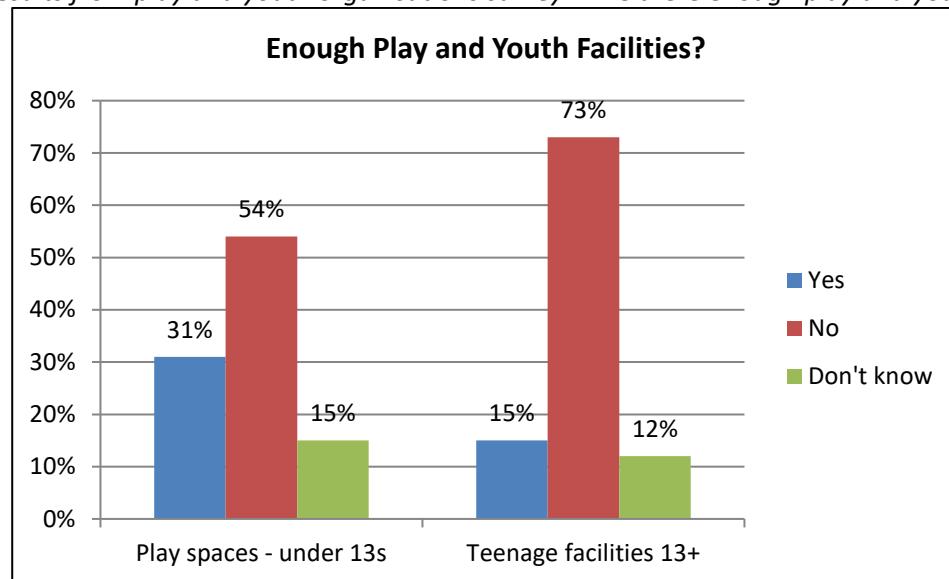
Local play and youth organisations were surveyed via an online questionnaire. Responses were received from 25 groups. 80% reported that they make direct use of outdoor play equipment or areas of open space. Some of the main findings are noted below.

##### **Quantity**

Groups were asked whether they thought there were enough play facilities for children aged 12 and under, and youth facilities for teenagers. Top-level responses are summarised in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13

Results from play and youth organisations survey – Are there enough play and youth facilities?



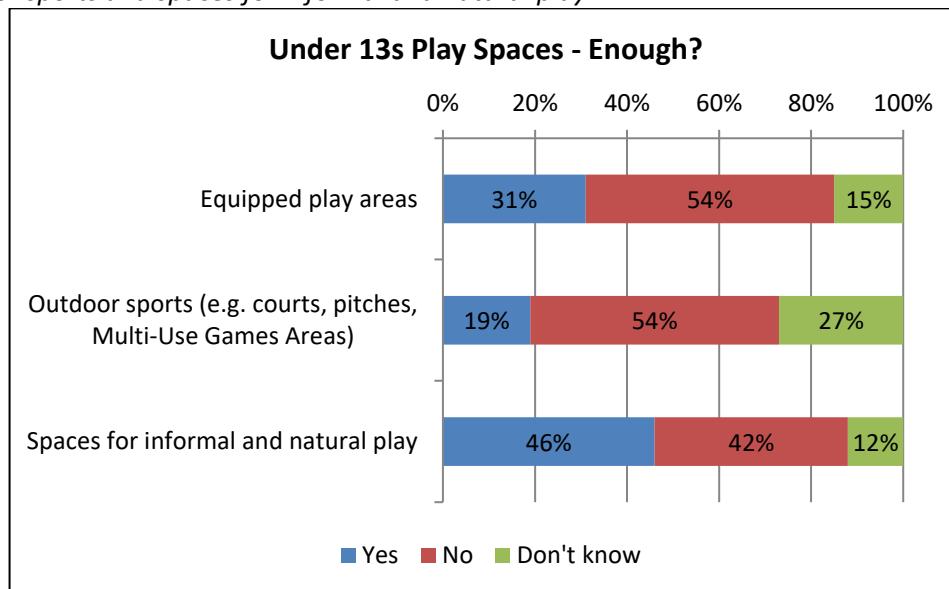
A small majority (54%) consider that there are insufficient play spaces for younger children and a significant majority (73%) highlight a need for increased provision for teenagers.

In more detail, respondents were asked for their views on provision for the different age ranges:

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

For children aged 12 and under the survey asked for views on whether there are enough of the following types of open space and outdoor sports facilities for children (Figure 14).

Figure 14      Results from play and organisations survey- Children aged 12 and under – are there enough equipped play areas, outdoor sports and spaces for informal and natural play



Responses show that:

- 46% of respondents felt that there was adequate provision of informal natural play spaces for children of 12 years and under (compared to 42% who thought there were not enough)

- The provision of traditional equipped play areas and outdoor sports provision are considered less well provided for with a majority (54%) answering that there were not enough of either kind of facility.
- 31% thought there were enough equipped play areas but only 19% agreed there were enough outdoor sports facilities).

Table 6 below details other comments relating to the provision for under 12s when asked the following question: "if you don't think there are enough of any of the above facilities/open space areas, why not/what would you like to see more of?"

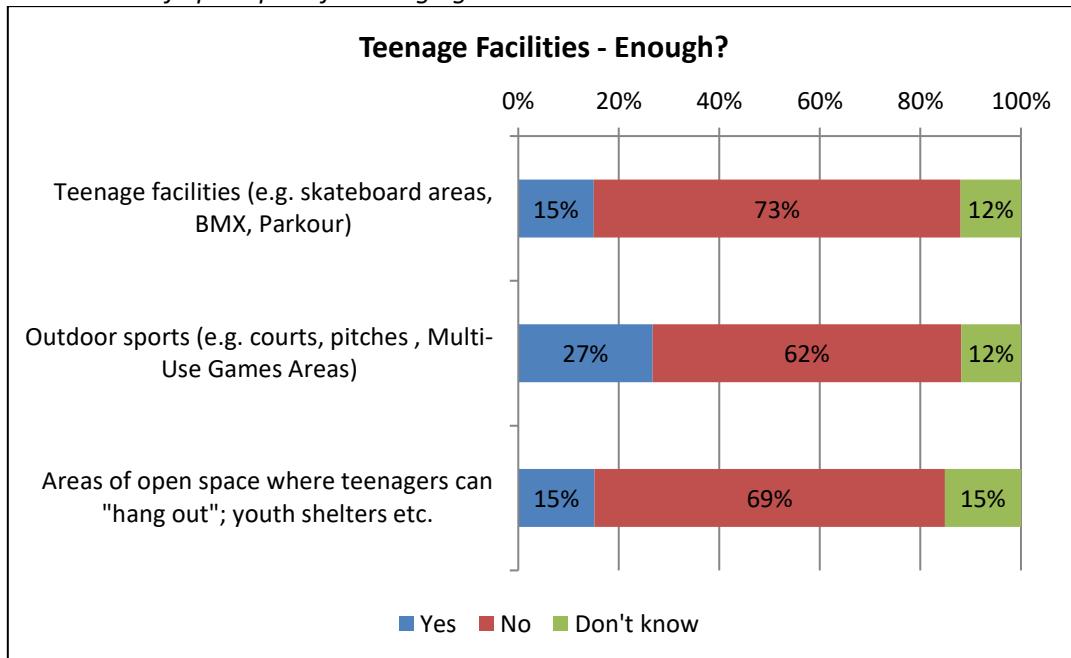
*Table 6 Comments from play and youth organisations survey relating to the provision for under 12's*

Organisation	Comments
Christ Church Preschool	Better quality more modern equipment.
Upton Village Preschool	There is no play park at this end of Upton for the use of the children. An adventure play park with more natural climbing things would be brilliant---- such as the amazing play park in Calderstones Park in Liverpool where I take family because Chester does not provide for us. On a personal level I visit little villages on holiday which can provide skate board parks and biking areas but Chester seems to be so lacking in such things.
Cheshire West Youth Service	There are not enough pitches and MUGAs, just plenty of parks. Need more sport layout areas to use and encourage sports.
Christ Church Preschool	More safe equipped play areas. More open areas.
Integrated Early Support	We have Muga's in our area and parks but no natural play areas.
The Beeches Pre School	Outdoor play area specifically for younger children, eg Recreation Ground in Malpas not fit/safe for under-5's to play freely - big open sandpit which is left uncovered and therefore contains faeces, rocks, boulders for climbing, but which have sharp edges and drops which are unsafe for the younger age group, etc etc
Live!	There should be more places for children with disabilities and adapted play equipment.
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Both formal and informal play spaces where a variety of structured sports and creative spaces where children can use their imaginations to play and have adventure.
Frodsham Youth Association	There is only one all weather pitch in Frodsham and it is very old and under sized.
Winsford Youth Forum	MUGA's are limited to certain areas within Winsford - very popular, should be extended. Need for 'bowl' designed skateboard/ scooter/bmx sites - easy/cheap to maintain, across the area Plain 'kicking walls' , sand covered playing areas, however this would need to maintained/supervised
Dodleston Pre-school	More areas for children to explore naturally e.g. tunnels, ramps etc. The areas are very basic and could be modernised. E.g. the roundabout in the park can be dangerous could do with being one that is in beds in the ground instead of being raised.
Kidzone	More play spaces for all ages, possibly a skate park area
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Trees / Wooded Areas
Young People's Service	Open space areas, Skateparks in rural areas
Cheshire Young Carers	I think open spaces should offer several options to young people, such as play areas, exercise / sports areas and natural, open space

## Provision of facilities for teenagers

Similarly for teenagers, groups were asked whether there were enough of various types of open spaces and sports facilities for young people as shown in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15 Results from play and youth organisations survey – teenagers – are there enough teenage facilities, outdoor sports and areas of open space for ‘hanging out’



- From the results above it is very clear that the quantity of youth and teenage provision for teenagers is not considered satisfactory
- Responses are relatively consistent across all types of facility, although dissatisfaction with the provision of wheeled sports type facilities and informal hangout areas are the most notable.

Again, respondents when asked the question ‘If you don’t think there are enough of any of the above facilities/open space areas, why not / what would you like to see more of?’ gave additional feedback (Table 7).

Table 7 Additional feedback from teenagers in play and youth organisations survey

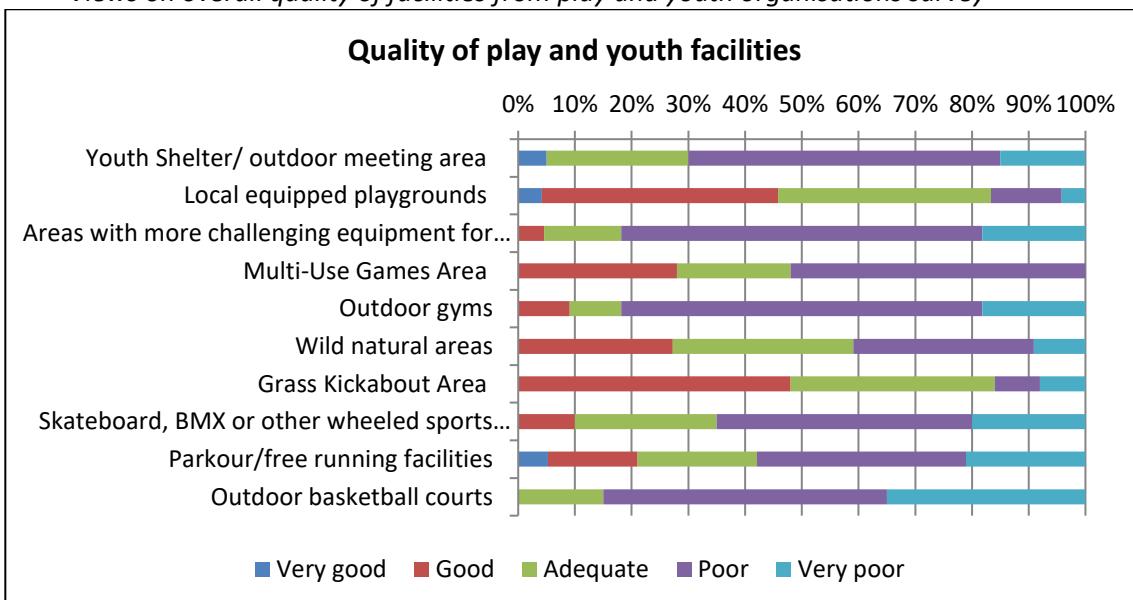
Organisation	Comment
CW&C Youth Service	Again, improved quality and better equipped.
Christ Church Preschool	Skate parks, biking areas, hang out areas football pitches that are looked after rather than run down, Basket ball one on one courts.
Integrated Early Support	In these areas I cover there are very few facilities for young people outside. Weaverham, Kingsmead and Leftwich have nothing specifically for young people. The MUGA in Weaverham is in a bad state but with some work it has good potential. Northwich could do with more bike/skate park facilities. There is a lack of youth shelters where it is light and safe. This is why young people often meet outside shops where they feel safe, but often get moved on for being in large numbers
The Beeches Pre School	Don't think there are any of the above in Wharton.
Live!	I don't believe there are equipped areas for older young people.
Frodsham Youth Association	As above, parks and play areas do not cater for young people with disabilities.
Winsford Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth shelters attached to skate parks.</li> </ul>

Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muga's and astroturf facilities so they can play sports formally and informally.</li> <li>Safe spaces where young people can hang out! Most importantly there are already some of these facilities but they are in a bad state of repair, in the wrong location and not maintained regularly. Building a facility is not enough - ensuring it is glass free and safe to use is just as important.</li> </ul>
Kidzone	I don't know of any safe, informal spaces in Frodsham for teenagers to hang out. Youth Shelters are an interesting idea but I think the design and location are important to ensure success.
CW&C Youth Service	As for the U12's - Teen shelters should be sited to support other play areas.
Young People's Service	In the area that I am thinking about (Dodeleston) there does not appear to be any of the above for teenagers and space for them is limited.
Cheshire Young Carers	No bike/skate facilities - there has been some work towards building one but still some way off Playing fields ok for football but no other activities Park equipment aimed at younger children - outdoor gym equipment may be good idea
Upton Village Preschool	More facilities for teenagers to 'hang out' in and around.
Cheshire West Youth Service	Teenagers are not catered for in the Northwich area.
Integrated Early Support	Skateparks in rural areas.
Live!	More areas shelter, spaces and premises for youth groups
Frodsham Youth Association	Youth Shelters.
Winsford Youth Forum	Could be more outdoor MUGAs.

## Quality

We asked for views on the overall quality of open space and outdoor facilities of general interest to children and young people and responses are illustrated in Figure 16 below.

Figure 16 Views on overall quality of facilities from play and youth organisations survey



- Cheshire West and Chester's grass kickabout areas and equipped playgrounds scored the highest satisfaction levels with local groups, with nearly 80% rating them as least as "adequate". Of the 80%: 48% rated kickabout areas as good or very good and 46% rated play areas similarly.
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction with "challenging" teenage play spaces and wheeled sports facilities. Over 80% rated the former as being poor or very poor and 65% similarly for the latter.
- The quality of outdoor gyms and basketball facilities was also deemed to be poor/very poor by over 80% of the groups.

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

*Table 8 Specific comments and observations from play and youth organisations survey*

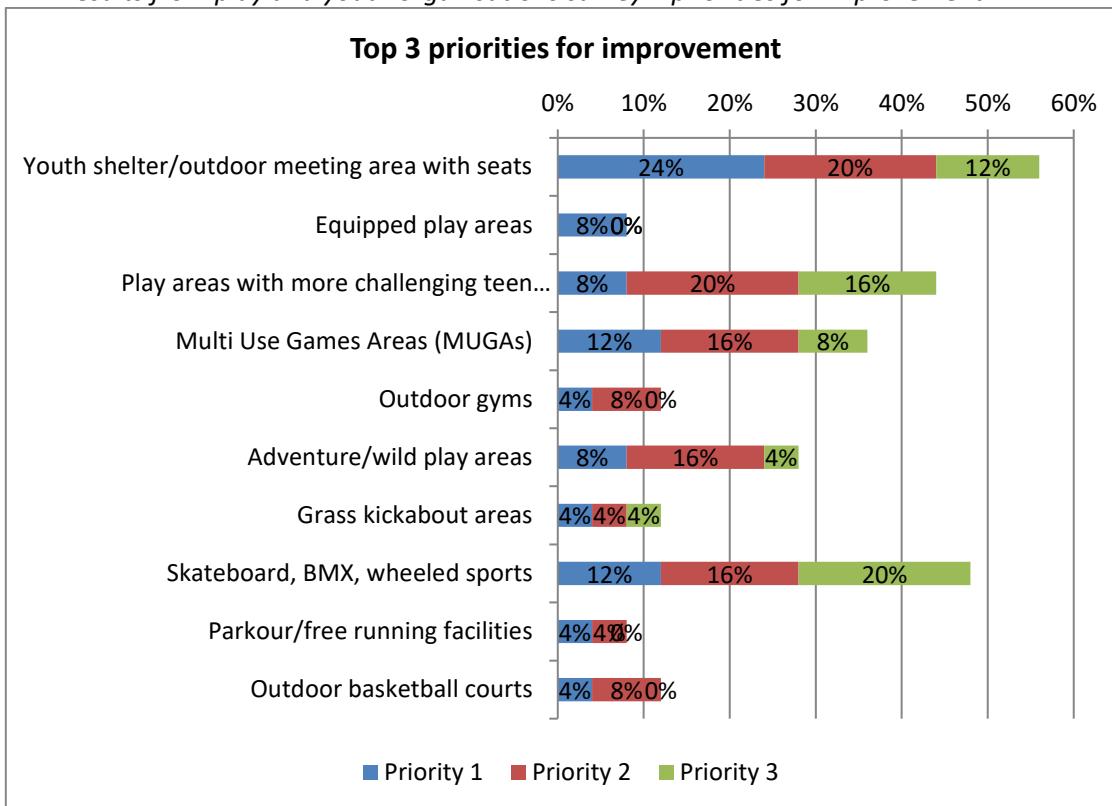
Group	Comment
Upton Village Preschool	Chester needs to think about its young residents rather than just the tourists - sorry but I have always been amazed at Chester's decision to ignore children's needs then when they do hang around the streets they are considered a nuisance.
Cheshire West Youth Service	Great to see a survey being done that young people are directly getting included in.
The Beeches Pre School	Am only commenting on Malpas and local area.
Cheshire West and Chester Youth Service	Most of these areas suffer from poor maintenance, they are not promoted - some young people do not know they exist and their location not always great.
BASE 18 Youth Club	I have answered these looking at what is within our area.
Winsford youth forum	Notice that the bigger towns/cities in the UK now developing their existing facilities/sites to be all embracing, catering for all ages, making these family friendly sites. Not forgetting places for parents to sit/meet, for supervising etc - with all provision !
Dodleston Pre-school	Maybe I am not aware of these facilities being around but do live in Chester and think areas for walks are now limited as well as places for teens to be.

### Priorities for improvement

Respondent's views on priorities for new or improved provision of play and youth facilities are shown in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17

Results from play and youth organisations survey – priorities for improvement



- The most commonly highlighted priorities for improvement are youth shelter/hang out areas (56% highlight this as one of their top 3 priorities); and wheeled sports provision (48% similarly).
- Other common high priorities are Play areas with challenging equipment for teenagers (44%) and MUGAs (36%).

Organisations were also provided with the opportunity to suggest other priority needs as noted in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Other suggested priority needs from play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Other suggestions for improvement priorities
Upton Village Preschool	Natural Play Parks with wooden climbing equipment.
Live!	Accessible equipment or adapted play equipment for people with disabilities
Frodsham Youth Association	Full size all weather pitches
Winsford youth forum	Sheltered areas for parents, sand based activity sites water fountain challenges
Dodleston Pre-school	Picnic areas and seating in the parks that we do have.
Young People's Service	Smooth paths for rollerskating

Some specific needs and initiatives aimed at improving play provision were noted in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Comments regarding specific needs and initiatives from play and youth organisations survey

Organisation	Specific need/known initiative
Winsford youth forum	Multi use concrete 'bowl' designed skateboard/scooter/bmx freestyle areas open space for 'kite flying' and power kite activities!
Cuddington and Sandiway Youth Club	BMX / Skate facility adjacent to Cuddington playing fields
CW&C	Space for playing football near Elton

Young People's Service	Elton youth group have been fundraising for goal posts + nets and are trying to establish an u15 football team
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There was also an opportunity for groups to add any other points or comments, which are noted in Table 11 below.

*Table 11 Additional comments from play and youth organisations survey*

Organisation	Additional Comments
BASE 18 Youth Club	When designing these areas meaningful consultation with young people is required and then follow up every year to ensure it is still meeting the needs and wants of young people. Usually when these facilities are built they are then forgotten about and allowed to fall into disrepair or not modified to meet young people's changes in tastes, wheeled equipment especially, when young people have mastered the equipment they need more of a challenge that needs to be considered when designing and building. We need to ensure they are safe, well-lit spaces for young people to congregate and not shoved away so that they are undesirable to the majority of young people.
Dodleston Pre-school	Make sure not all improvements are done in Chester !!
Young People's Service	Provision is good where available, e.g. Upton 7C, but not available in all areas.
Cheshire Young Carers	There are definitely not enough outdoor open places for young people, more spaces need to be created.
CW&C Youth Service	There are some exceptional park areas and spaces but then in other areas equipment is often damaged and appears to have gone unrepairs or not made safe for some time. Good Luck!

## 4.5 Access to Play and Youth Provision for Disabled Children

### 4.5.1 Cheshire West and Chester Senior Access Officer

The Borough's Senior Access Officer highlighted a number of issues relating to access to play and youth facilities by disabled young people:

- For play areas it is important that access paths to play equipment is good; that there is adequate space between items of play equipment; that seats are provided nearby; that the equipment is designed to be accessible for a wide range of ability levels and so forth.
- The Open Space Study could recommend that the Council adopt good practice guidance, potentially to be included in an Open Space Supplementary Planning Document. These could include the guidance provided by KIDS<sup>8</sup>: *Inclusive Design for Play*.

### 4.5.2 Disabled young people's views - inclusive access to leisure - national research

Information below relates to the issue of improvements for disabled young people to facilities, part of a valuable research study undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

<sup>8</sup> KIDS is a national charity supporting disabled children and young people; and their families. One of its aims is to: "assist local authorities and other organisations in making their facilities accessible and welcoming to all disabled children and young people".

**Disabled teenagers' experiences of access to inclusive leisure** (Joseph Rowntree Foundation - Pippa Murray -2008)

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.

## 4.6 Children and Young People - Key Findings

### Quantity

- Youth play provision is generally considered underprovided for across the Borough with 60% of the 2015 Citizens Panel/household survey answering that there were not enough facilities for older children and teenagers.
- 70% of children and young people in the youth survey agreed that there was a need for more outdoor youth facilities and spaces for young people (13+) to meet in their local area. Play and youth organisations also highlight a shortage of teenage provision.
- A shortage of wheeled sports facilities and youth shelters/hang out spaces are particularly notable with 73%/69% of play/youth organisation respondents stating there were not enough of such facilities.
- 59% of Citizen's Panel/household respondents thought there **were** enough play areas for younger children (12 and under). A majority (54%) of children and young people agreed that there are enough play areas for younger children in their local area. 54% of play/youth organisations respondents were also satisfied with the quantity of formal equipped playgrounds for younger children (under 13's).
- A clear majority of play/youth organisations also highlight a need for more Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs).

### Quality

- In general residents are reasonably happy with the quality of equipped play areas across the Borough (50% of the Citizen's Panel/household respondents rated them as being very good or

good - 35% adequate. However, 15 % rated them as poor or very poor).

- Cheshire West and Chester's grass kickabout areas and equipped playgrounds scored the highest satisfaction levels with local play and youth groups, with nearly 80% rating them as least as "adequate". Of the 80%: 48% rated kickabout areas as good or very good and 46% rated play areas similarly.
- There were much lower levels of satisfaction overall with outdoor youth facilities. The Citizen's Panel/household responses indicated that only 12% rated them as good or very good compared to 48% who rated them as poor or very poor.
- 54% of children and young people in the youth survey agreed that play areas for younger children are well maintained and of good quality. By contrast, a clear majority (65%) of children and young people thought that youth facilities and spaces for young people to meet are **not** well maintained or of good quality.
- Play and youth organisations further confirmed these observations with most kinds of youth facilities being rated as poor or very poor most notably "challenging" teenage play spaces and wheeled sports facilities. Over 80% rated the former as being poor or very poor and 65% similarly for the latter.

## Access

- 88% of children and young people in the youth survey said that they would be prepared to walk further than normal to somewhere that had more to do and was more interesting.
- Organisational respondents noted the difficulty with access to local provision in some more rural areas – citing poor public transport, long walks or general inaccessibility as barriers to access.
- The Senior Access Officer noted that for play areas it is important that access paths to play equipment is good; that there is adequate space between items of play equipment; that seats are provided nearby; that the equipment is designed to be accessible for a wide range of ability levels and so forth.

## Priorities for improvement

- Other than improving parks in general the most commonly chosen top priorities for young people (youth survey) were provision of skateboard, BMX and wheeled sports facilities and shelters and outdoor seated areas.
- For youth and play organisations the most commonly highlighted priorities for improvement are youth shelter/hang out areas (56% highlight this as one of their top 3 priorities); and wheeled sports provision (48% similarly).
- Other common high priorities for youth and play organisations are play areas with challenging equipment for teenagers (44%) and MUGAs (36%).

## Other Issues / General Observations

- Stakeholders highlight the importance of ensuring that when new play spaces and youth facilities are developed, or investment made into improvements, it is essential to ensure that ongoing budgetary provision is sufficient for maintenance.
- Many town and parish councils have an interest in play and youth facilities and there is potential for them to take more responsibility for providing local play spaces.
- There is potential for improved communication systems and partnership working between CW&C and housing associations in relation to developing and improving play and youth facilities in the Borough.
- Many stakeholders highlight the importance of involving children and young people in all aspects

of play and youth facility provision e.g. location, the kind of provision most needed, design, access issues etc.

- Children and teenagers play and hang out regularly “on the street”, on amenity and natural green space, near local shops, etc. as well as on spaces specifically planned for play and youth facilities. The study should therefore highlight planning related issues aimed at making the wider open space and residential environment more child-friendly.
- A key barrier to teenagers’ use of “public” open space is that they are often moved on by nearby residents and authorities such as the police. They need more tolerance and places recognised as “theirs”.
- Play England provide excellent guidance on play and spatial planning; play space design; a Quality Assessment Tool for play spaces; and managing risk in play. Some of these could be adopted as guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

## 5.0 INFORMAL OUTDOOR SPORTS (NON-PITCH) AND ACTIVE RECREATION

### 5.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of consultee responses on outdoor (non-pitch) sports that are commonly played on park sites and other informal sports activities. The chapter contains feedback from Council Officers from CW&C Council Officers; Brio Leisure<sup>9</sup>; and relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport. It also incorporates findings from a range of sport<sup>10</sup> and active recreation clubs and organisations.

To understand the Borough Council perspective interviews were held with officers from the Borough Council's Total Environment and Place Operations. A meeting was also held with Active Cheshire who helped to distribute surveys to local clubs and organisations.

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

There is a summary of key points at the end of the full section. Findings will be taken forward in the main report.

The section starts with a short review of findings from the 2011 Open Space Assessment.

### 5.2 Open Space Assessment (2011) - non-pitch outdoor sports

#### 5.2.1 Consultation summary

- For both tennis courts and bowling greens, there are split views, although more residents (particularly in urban areas) expect to walk to these sites than would drive.
- Analysis of the quantity of provision for both of these types of facility suggests that provision is sufficient, although particularly with regards tennis, there are issues relating to access to sites. The quality of facilities was also rated as important, and it was considered essential to balance quantity with quality.
- For these reasons, a drive time standard has been set for both tennis courts and bowling greens, although local access to provision will be targeted where possible and particularly considered when planning new facilities.

#### 5.2.2 The proposed standards (Open Space Assessment 2011)

The standards for provision of bowling greens and tennis courts as set out in the 2011 Open Space Assessment are summarised in Table 12 below.

Table 12 *Standards of provision of bowling greens and tennis courts as set out in the 2011 Open Space Assessment*

Type of Open Space	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Bowling Greens	10 minutes' drive time	0.23 greens per 1000	<b>Essential:</b> Clean and litter free, Effective maintenance and management, Parking facilities,

<sup>9</sup> Brio Leisure operates most of the leisure portfolio on behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council. It is a Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee, and a wholly owned subsidiary of Cheshire West and Chester Council.

<sup>10</sup> The sports covered are those that are commonly played on parks, local recreation grounds and school sites.

Tennis Courts	10 minutes' drive time	0.45 courts per 1000	Good site access.  <b>Desirable:</b> Appropriate specification for key users (designed in accordance with NGB guidance), Changing facilities, Toilets, Accessible pricing, Lighting and security measures, Ancillary provision – bar etc.
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These standards will be reviewed in the main Open Space Study report and a new approach to standards proposed.

### 5.2.3 Tennis and Bowls - summary of recommendations (from 2011 Open Space Assessment)

#### *Tennis Courts*

The majority of residents have access to a tennis court, however, there is a lack of public access to facilities, with many courts being located on school sites. Demand for more publicly accessible tennis courts should be assessed and agreements to access facilities on school sites should be considered. There are also opportunities to improve the quality of existing courts and particular priority should be given to improving quality and access to facilities in Winsford, Upton and Ellesmere Port.

#### *Bowling Greens*

The current quantity of bowling greens is sufficient to meet demand and the quality of existing provision is good. Particular priority should be given to improving access to facilities for residents in Farndon, Waverton, Hartford, Mickle Trafford, Ellesmere Port and Malpas.

## 5.3 Tennis

### 5.3.1 The NGB - The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

#### *Plans and Strategies*

##### The National LTA Places to Play Strategy

The strategy aims to provide "high quality facilities for everyone at a convenient location" and to "increase opportunities for people to play tennis on a regular basis at tennis clubs close to their home".

**Vision:** *The LTA is committed to growing the sport to ensure that more people are playing tennis more often at first class tennis facilities, with high quality coaching programmes and well organised competition.*

The LTA's overall aim (for 2011-2016) is to ensure that "as far as practicably possible, the British population has access to and are aware of the places and high quality tennis opportunities in their local area". In brief their targets are<sup>11</sup>:

- Access for everyone to well maintained high quality tennis facilities which are either free or pay as you play.
- A Clubmark accredited place to play within a 10 minute drive of their home.
- Indoor tennis courts within a 20 minute drive time of their home.
- A mini tennis (10 and under) performance programme within a 20 minute drive of their home (Performance Centres).
- A performance programme for 11 - 15 year olds within a 45 minute drive time of their home (High Performance Centre).

<sup>11</sup> The LTA note that these targets are guidelines only and subject to demand, population density and existing provision.

- A limited number of internationally orientated programmes strategically spread for players 16+ with an international programme (International High Performance Centres).

The Regional LTA add that "our new facilities strategy was launched in April 2015. We are not only supporting our Community Indoor Tennis Centre/Clubs but also working on a wider strategy to increase participation at community venues, primarily parks (with a number of courts/potential) and some leisure centre sites".

### **Prioritisation**

- The regional LTA selects a number of Local Authorities as "priority areas" for development.
- When a Local Authority becomes a priority area the LTA completes a full technical audit of facility stock.
- Cheshire West and Chester is not a priority area at the moment for the regional LTA. However it notes that it "has identified a few club/park hubs as priorities so will be working in the area".
- The Regional LTA note that local facility plans are based on expressions of interest submitted by Places to Play and the local aim to increase participation 'get more people play tennis more often'.
- Current facility developments for CW&C include – relocation of Hoole LTC to Mickle Trafford; improvement to the tennis facilities at Alexandra Park (note the parks strategy includes infrastructure around social hub (café) and also a sustainable operating model).
- They are also looking at a gate access/ management system at Ellesmere Port LTC on West Cheshire College EP campus.
- As regards funding they note that "the LTA is generally a 'shortfall' provider so partnership funding is required. Decisions on investment are based on the return on this investment to increase participation".
- Cheshire LTA highlighted a number of known developments:
  - Helsby - the local tennis club are involved in discussions to secure new facilities as part of the new sports complex development.
  - Hoole Tennis Club are considering a move to new facilities in Mickle Trafford.
  - Rok Tennis now provide indoor court facilities at their tennis dome in Hartford. They have links with Hartford High School and Mid Cheshire College.
- Cheshire LTA highlighted the public courts at Alexandra Park, Chester as being of importance to them (with links to Hoole Tennis Club). Glen Aber Tennis Club play at Westminster Park, Chester. Frodsham Tennis club use facilities at Castle Park.
- Cheshire LTA also provided support to the study by circulating the on-line survey to their registered clubs in Cheshire West and Chester to give them the opportunity to highlight specific facility needs and aspirations.

### **Facility supply**

Summary details of clubs and facilities can be found via a search on the LTA website.

- Club membership of LTA registered "Places to Play" shows 15 registered clubs (approx. 54 courts).
- The Regional LTA note that "the relocation of Hoole LTC will provide additional tennis facilities and enable a significant potential for membership growth at the club. They are currently above the guideline that we set for court/player ratio. Also this would provide a competition venue".
- The LTA has also identified a lack of indoor courts in the CW&C area.
- They also note that "as we move to develop CW&C as a priority area we will also be looking at the leisure centre/school facilities as part of our audit. This will be set against current participation/latent demand for tennis to identify any shortage of tennis facilities".
- The LTA notes that many park tennis facilities need improvements to the court surface.

- The tennis clubs in general offer quality courts and facilities.
- Most tennis courts in CW&C are managed by the tennis club. Most clubs are volunteer led. Some own their own site whilst others have a lease/usage agreement in place with the Local Authority/college etc.

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

The LTA's Participation Strategy 2013 – 17 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, tennis' talent ID and development structures.

The Regional LTA note that:

- Membership records are currently being updated but the LTA rough estimate is there are over 2000 players.
- We have a number of interventions that we are using in other areas.
- We have a national campaign 'Great British Tennis Weekend' that in 2015 was held over 3 weekends between May and Aug at club and park sites. This campaign has a high sign up/attendance that in turn creates a demand for follow-on offer & activities.
- Performance centres provide the pathway for performance. This requires indoor courts. The nearest centre to CW&C is Wrexham RTC.

### ***Challenges and Opportunities***

The Regional LTA highlighted the following challenges/opportunities:

- Connecting traditional tennis clubs into community tennis facilities.
- Some planning obstructions in CW&C where clubs want to provide a year round opportunity by providing floodlighting. (Sometimes more difficult than schemes in other Local Authority areas).

#### **5.3.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council**

- Most tennis facilities are provided via local tennis clubs.
- Public Tennis courts are available at a small number of Parks sites including Alexandra Park, Chester – poor condition but a potential proposal is under discussion to seek funding to improve from LTA; Westminster Park, Chester – good condition – floodlighting available; and Castle Park, Frodsham - good condition; and Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port – fair condition.
- Tennis and MUGAs - if provided via developer contributions relating to new housing development it is important that ongoing management and sustainability measures are agreed.

- In broad terms it seems that in most areas Multi-Use Games Areas are needed more than dedicated tennis courts - providing facilities for both tennis and a wider range of sports.

### 5.3.3 Brio Leisure

Brio noted that tennis courts are provided at three Brio Leisure Centres:

- Christleton Sports Centre (Christleton Academy)
- Neston Recreation Centre (Neston Academy - using the all weather surface)
- Rudheath Leisure Centre (Rudheath Academy)

All of these centres are dual use centres with local schools. The tennis courts are available for community use at weekends and during the school holidays. Brio noted that the courts are mainly used over the summer months for recreational tennis (pay and play) but demand is not high. The court surfaces are regularly maintained and of adequate quality but they have not been re-surfaced for a number of years. The low level of demand means that Brio has no current plans for refurbishment, adding floodlighting or for the development of any new tennis court facilities.

There are good quality tennis courts (grass and rubber crumb) available at Knights Grange Golf Course in Winsford (though this facility is no longer managed by Brio). Mack Golf now mange this site on behalf of the Council.

### 5.3.4 Club responses

Responses were received from six local tennis clubs - Cuddington & Sandiway Tennis Club, Ellesmere Port City Tennis Club, Glen Aber Tennis Club, Hartford Tennis Club, Helsby Tennis Club and Upton-by-Chester Tennis Club.

- Membership ranges from 39 (Ellesmere Port) up to 450 (Hartford). Three clubs - Hartford, Helsby and Upton-by-Chester - reported an overall membership increase over the past three years; two clubs reported a stable membership - Glen Aber and Cuddington; and membership at Ellesmere Port had declined.
- Ellesmere Port TC highlighted "limitations on use of facility" as a reason behind the reported membership decline.
- All of the clubs have active junior sections with links to local schools.
- The reported quality of club facilities varies quite considerably for example Ellesmere Port report many aspects of quality as being unsatisfactory whereas Glen Aber rate most quality aspects as being either very good or good.
- The most commonly highlighted aspect of quality rated less than satisfactory are changing and shower facilities. Ellesmere Port and Helsby rate their changing and shower facilities as being very poor.
- All of the clubs think that the quality of their facilities provides good value for money to their playing membership; and that they well located in terms of access.

Plans and aspirations for individual clubs and other comments are noted in Table 13 below.

Table 13 *Plans and aspirations for individual tennis clubs*

Club	Plans, aspirations and other comments
Cuddington and Sandiway	<p>We want to attract, coach and develop more junior players as they are the life-blood of our club; and also to encourage greater participation of adults at all levels from beginners to team players.</p> <p>To enable us to increase the amount of junior coaching and general participation at the club during the darker winter months, we urgently need to install floodlights of two currently unlit outdoor tennis courts. We also need to provide facilities for disabled players and spectators.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this survey.</p>
Ellesmere Port City	<p>We want to attract adult members and enter more teams in leagues.</p> <p>We need access to toilets and changing facilities. We have no clubhouse and cannot easily access facilities in the college.</p>
Helsby Tennis	<p>We are actively promoting the club to encourage more players in all age groups. We are increasing the number of teams when possible and following our recent club survey will be looking for other playing opportunities for those that are currently not catered for. Friendly matches for those who are not league ready are also a priority. It would be good to have more junior matches in the winter.</p> <p>The sports club has currently got planning permission to move which will improve the facilities considerably. Unfortunately this is being delayed by a section 106 problem I believe. Whilst the planning is allowing space for the amount of courts we currently have there is a desperate need for this to be increased if possible. Our current clubhouse has no running water or toilet facilities which is a major problem.</p> <p>The progress of the club in the last year has been extremely positive. I truly believe the club could grow but funding will be an issue and this cannot be addressed until we know what the future holds. We have great plans and ideas for extending our current range of users including the disabled and the 16 - 23 yr age group but these are on hold until we know we can provide a good quality service.</p>
Hartford	<p>We are always looking to attract more members and have them actively involved in the club environment. Run more sessions and more teams</p> <p>We need a New Clubhouse - in the process of sorting.</p>
Glan Aber	<p>With more court availability we would be able to further extend our coaching and match programmes. We would be able to accommodate coaching and team matches for adults and juniors whilst leaving court space for non-structured play</p> <p>For use of the public courts in Westminster Park there needs to be an appropriate court booking system in place. At present availability is on a first come first served basis and our club is often receiving calls from the public on how to book them. The most likely solution would be for the new "owners" of the cafe/golf shop to take on the court booking system.</p> <p>Extra court space - hope to get permission for fifth court.</p>
Upton-by-Chester	<p>We need lighting for the two tennis courts. This would extend possible hours of usage to 9pm in Spring, Autumn and Winter.</p> <p>We would like to attract more members and add more teams. With lighting we could join the winter league.</p>

Barriers noted by the tennis clubs in relation to development are shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14 *Barriers to development noted by tennis clubs*

Club	Barriers to Development
Cuddington and Sandiway	Shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources and a lack of external funding. We will need to obtain planning permission to install floodlights on our two currently unlit outdoor tennis courts and also upgrade those on our four existing floodlit courts. We will then need to obtain sufficient external match funding to supplement our internal funds so that we can afford the overall cost of the floodlighting project.
Ellesmere Port City	Lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; falling membership/shortage of playing members; and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and administer the club.
Helsby Tennis	Shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and administer the club. The uncertainty of the potential move and what facilities will be available is meaning that decisions are being made very much in the short term which is a big difficulty. Once we know what / if this is happening we can focus on fundraising for the appropriate needs at that time.
Hartford	Competing against other sports; funding required to bring clubhouse up to the standard of the rest of the facility.
Glan Aber	GATC is looking to expand its facilities within Westminster Park and needs to work with CW&C to get the agreement(s) to support such an expansion. We are waiting for the Council to progress request for an extra court.
Upton-by-Chester	Shortage of specialist equipment; a lack of internal financing and external funding.

Further detail of responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet.

### 5.3.5 Summary

The following are the key findings and issues to emerge:

- Cheshire West and Chester is not a priority area currently for the regional LTA. This means it is not currently a priority in relation to securing LTA funding for facility improvements.
- However the LTA notes that it "has identified a few club/park hubs as priorities so will be working in the area". It is also currently supporting a number of facility developments in Cheshire West and Chester.
- Most tennis facilities are provided via local tennis clubs. There are 15 clubs noted in the LTA's Places to Play database.
- Public Tennis courts are available at a small number of park sites including Alexandra Park, Chester; Westminster Park, Chester; and Castle Park, Frodsham. Courts are also available at three Brio Leisure Centres: Christleton Sports Centre (Christleton Academy); Neston Recreation Centre (Neston Academy); and Rudheath Leisure Centre (Rudheath Academy)
- The LTA notes a lack of indoor courts in the CW&C area.
- The reported quality of club facilities varies quite considerably for example Ellesmere Port report many aspects of quality as being unsatisfactory whereas Glen Aber rate most quality aspects as being either very good or good.
- The most commonly highlighted aspect of quality rated less than satisfactory are changing and shower facilities. Ellesmere Port and Helsby rate their changing and shower facilities as being very poor.
- Individual clubs have various plans and aspirations to improve their own facilities.

## 5.4 Outdoor Bowls (Crown Green)

### 5.4.1 The National Governing Body - British Crown Green Bowling Association

In Cheshire provision for crown green (rather than flat green) bowls is the norm for outdoor bowling greens. The NGB for Crown Green Bowls is the British Crown Green Bowling Association (BCGBA). The BCGBA does not have a national facilities strategy. The aim of Cheshire County Bowling Association (CCBA) - operating in conjunction with the BCGBA - is to "promote, organise and govern Crown Green Bowls in its area".

The catchment for Cheshire County Bowling Association is based on historic rather than local government boundaries and includes the whole of Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East; plus parts of Greater Manchester, the Wirral, Halton and Warrington local authority areas. An overview of issues for bowls in Cheshire West and Chester was provided by the CCBA general secretary Steve Cook:

- Cheshire County Bowling Association run 25 leagues and have around 300 bowling clubs registered (across the whole of its area).
- The ownership and management of bowling greens is very varied in Cheshire including Borough Councils; town and parish councils; clubs and recreation trusts; and public houses.
- The quality of bowling greens is also very varied. This depends upon many factors but primarily it is due to the cost of maintenance. Club managed greens with a large membership tend to be of good quality. Local authority managed greens tend to have suffered in line with reducing maintenance budgets. Some small clubs also face difficulties in maintaining quality due to limited funds for maintenance.
- The loss of bowling greens is a big concern for the CCBA. Over the last 10 years or so about 5 bowling greens a year have been closed without replacement. Some public house bowling greens have been converted to beer gardens. In some cases greens have had to close because owners have raised rents to a level the clubs can't afford.
- The sustainability of some smaller clubs (20 to 30 members) is under threat due to rental increases and increasing maintenance costs. In many cases there is no access to alternative greens in reasonable proximity.
- It was noted that Warrington Borough Council has recently opened 2 outdoor artificial bowling greens. Artificial greens can save on maintenance costs but rental costs need to be kept reasonable to maintain participation. Developments of this kind could be appropriate in some parts of Cheshire West and Chester.
- In line with national trends overall participation in bowls in Cheshire over recent years has been declining. In recognition of this the CCBA is keen to work on extending a development programme to encourage a greater number of younger people to play; including youth and junior players. It would like to have more links with schools. An initiative in Helsby has made a successful start in this respect.
- Membership of individual clubs tends to go up and down a little over the years depending upon local factors and "cohorts" of players moving through to be replaced over time by new groups.
- The CCBA is working to secure television coverage of the Brunner Cup a major bowls competition held in Cheshire, following the lead of Blackpool (ITV4 is scheduled to show the Waterloo Bowls Championship in September 2015).

- The CCBA view is that there is sufficient demand for all existing bowling greens to be retained, particularly given the anticipated growth in the number of older people in Cheshire and their initiatives to encourage additional younger people to play.

### **Demand Issues**

- As Cheshire West and Chester has a high population of over 55's and the added health benefits to continue to be active throughout adulthood it is important to continue to support the clubs within the community.
- Over the last decade the British Crown Green Bowling Association has noted a trend of a reducing number of affiliated members year-on-year.
- There are a number of bowling clubs in the Borough that are sustaining their current levels of membership but a challenge for all is attracting new members, particularly younger players.

#### **5.4.2 Cheshire West and Chester Council**

- There are bowling greens at a number of parks sites including: Westminster Park, Chester – two greens, one fair quality, one poor; Alexandra Park, Chester – three greens, two fair quality, one poor; Cherry Grove, Chester two greens – fair quality; Water Tower Gardens, Chester – two greens, fair quality. Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port – three greens, three fair quality.

#### **5.4.3 Summary**

- In Cheshire provision for crown green (rather than flat green) bowls is the norm for outdoor bowling greens.
- The ownership and management of bowling greens is very varied in Cheshire West and Chester including the Borough Council; town and parish councils; clubs and recreation trusts; and public houses.
- Across Cheshire the loss of bowling greens is a big concern for the Cheshire County Bowling Association (CCBA). Over the last 10 years about 5 bowling greens a year have been closed without replacement.
- The sustainability of some smaller clubs (20 to 30 members) is under threat due to rental increases and increasing maintenance costs. In many cases there is no access to alternative greens in reasonable proximity.
- The CCBA view is that there is sufficient demand for all existing bowling greens to be retained, particularly given the anticipated growth in the number of older people in Cheshire and their initiatives to encourage additional younger people to play.
- The quality of greens is very varied. Club managed greens with a large membership tend to be of good quality. Local authority managed greens tend to have suffered in line with reducing maintenance budgets. Some small clubs also face difficulties in maintaining quality due to limited funds for maintenance.
- Artificial greens can save on maintenance costs but rental costs need to be kept reasonable to maintain participation. Developments of this kind could be appropriate in some parts of Cheshire West and Chester.
- 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.

- There is potential for club development and increased membership given the age demographic of the Borough Council area.

## 5.5 Netball

### 5.5.1 The NGB - Netball England

#### Overview

##### Netball North West

- Netball North West Region is one of 9 Regions within England Netball. It develops and facilitates the delivery of all aspects of netball within the region.
- Working together with the County Netball organisations (including Cheshire County Netball Association) Netball North West supports 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 organisations 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 development of netball facility projects is largely reliant on the sourcing of capital grants from external agencies/associations. England Netball has very limited capital funding and this is reserved for national and regional priority projects.

##### Cheshire County Netball Association

- *Mission Statement:* Cheshire Netball is committed to providing a safe environment in which all Cheshire Netball Association members, children and young people can participate, maximise their potential and enjoy the game.
- *Aim:* Netball is a game for all - to support, encourage and promote all aspects of the game of netball in Cheshire in order that all participants can enjoy and prosper in the game, and be the main force behind the development of the sport in Cheshire through greater participation in school and club organisations.

#### Facility issues

The Netball England Facility Strategy notes that:

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

England Netball - has established five categories of netball court. These are described in their publication *Categories of Netball Court and Surface Performance Requirements (1999)*. England Netball state that

"when designing a netball facility it is essential that the scheme has the appropriate number and categories of court for its intended use".

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

### ***Cheshire West and Chester***

In Cheshire West and Chester the top 3 facilities that Netball England/ Cheshire County Netball Association utilise are:

- Whitby High School – for large tournaments.
- Bishops High School – tournaments and club.
- Knutsford Leisure Centre – the County academy/satellite train there.

In addition Northgate Arena and Epic Sports Village are very important as they run leagues for England Netball.

More generally:

- There are 23 venues in Cheshire West and Chester being used for netball activity.
- Collectively, these venues have 44 outdoor courts, with none recorded as being floodlit. There are no outdoor covered courts and 25 indoor courts.
- The provision of outdoor courts in Cheshire West and Chester is similar to the national average (2.4 per 10,000 female population).
- Netball activity takes places in a variety of formats and in forms that is suited to the players as defined in England Netball's overarching Strategy, 'Your Game Your Way' Traditional / 7-a-side Netball.

The vast majority of England Netball members take part in traditional forms of netball. This involves training with a Club and competing in a league. Based on an analysis of the information provided by affiliated Clubs during the 2014-15 season, Cheshire County Netball Association knows that:

- 38% of the venues are based on educational sites.
- 66% of the clubs believe changing facilities to be inadequate for their needs.
- 38% of clubs rate the condition of venues used as very good, with remaining given a good or average rating.
- 73% of clubs find it either very easy or easy to book venues for netball activity.
- There is capacity at all but two venues (Tytherington High School and Bishops High School) for additional netball use.

#### **5.5.2 Brio**

- Netball can be played at Christleton Sports Centre, EPIC Leisure Centre, Frodsham Leisure Centre, Malpas Sports Centre, Neston Recreation Centre, Northgate Arena, Rudheath Leisure Centre and Stanney Oaks Leisure Centre.
- Of these the main centres for netball are Christleton Sports Centre, EPIC Leisure Centre and Northgate Arena
- In the main netball is played indoors at these centres and there has been little expressed demand for providing outdoor courts.

### 5.5.3 Club Responses

A responses was also received from Neston Netball Club:

- Neston Netball Club play at Neston Recreation Centre. Membership has decreased slightly over the past 3 years. The club has 21 members currently.
- The club rates facilities at the Centre highly in the main other than value for money, car parking and facilities for disabled players - which they rate simply as "adequate".
- The club note that barriers to club development are: the cost of hiring/using facilities; falling membership/shortage of playing members; and a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising) and external funding.

#### ***Facility improvement needs/other observations***

- The club notes that "the goal posts clash with the basket ball nets which hinders the shooting practice. The courts are small and there is no room beyond the back line.
- They add "we have survived for about 8 years but funds are running low and we need new kit and balls, etc. We keep having to put the subs up to pay for the court and the Epic league fees (where we play on a Thursday)".

Further detail can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet.

### 5.5.4 Summary

- Netball England is currently completing a facilities audit and strategy for Cheshire. They provided an early draft which provides useful information on facilities used currently.
- Netball is traditionally played on outdoor courts with educational sites being the most highly used by volunteer run leagues and Club training.
- There are 23 venues in Cheshire West and Chester being used for netball activity. Collectively, these venues have 44 outdoor courts, with none recorded as being floodlit. There are no outdoor covered courts and 25 indoor courts.
- There is an increasing demand for indoor facilities as the average recreational netballer prefers to play indoors and there is a requirement for performance programmes to be based at high quality indoor venues.
- The most important facilities for netball in Cheshire West and Chester are: Whitby High School – for large tournaments; Bishops High School – tournaments and club; and Knutsford Leisure Centre – the County academy/satellite train there. In addition Northgate Arena and Epic Sports Village are very important as they run leagues for England Netball.
- Quality - 38% of clubs rate the condition of venues used as very good, with remaining given a good or average rating. 66% of netball clubs believe changing facilities are inadequate for their needs. 73% of clubs find it either very easy or easy to book venues for netball activity.
- There is capacity at all but two venues (Tytherington High School and Bishops High School) for additional netball use.
- The development of netball facility projects is largely reliant on the sourcing of capital grants from external agencies/associations. England Netball has very limited capital funding and this is reserved for national and regional priority projects.

## 5.6 Other informal sports and recreational activities

### 5.6.1 Angling

Survey returns were received from two angling clubs - Barnton & Frodsham and Lymm.

- Barton & Frodsham AC currently have 575 members and Lymm AC around 1900. Barton & Frodsham membership has been stable over the last three years; Lymm report an increase (and they anticipate that this trend will continue).
- Both Clubs have active junior memberships and Lymm AC would like to develop more links with local schools.
- Barton & Frodsham AC fish at Heesom's Pool (Raddel Lane, Whiteley) and are generally happy with the quality of the pool and its environment. Lymm fish at Spring Pool Fishery (Lake Lane, Higher Whitley) and are less happy with fishery, rating general quality as poor. More specifically car parking and facilities for disabled people are noted as poor.
- Lymm AC would like to run more sessions and attract more juniors. They also highlight a need to improve facilities at Spring Pool Fishery.
- Both clubs note a shortage of personnel to run/coach anglers and administer the club as a barrier to development. In addition Lymm AC highlighted the lack of good quality outdoor facilities.

### 5.6.2 Archery

A survey return was received from the City of Chester Archers.

- City of Chester Archers meet at Chester Rugby Club (Hare Lane, Littleton, Chester). Membership has increased over the past 3 years due they suggest to Olympic coverage and "movies with archery theme". The club has 70 members currently and an active junior section.
- The club rates facilities at Chester Rugby Club as being generally being poor as regards meeting their needs. Ease of booking, facilities for disabled people and changing/showering facilities are all rated as poor; and equipment/storage and general environment are rated no better than adequate.
- The club note that barriers to club development are: a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources and a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising).
- City of Chester Archers would like to expand its activities by securing a permanent outdoor range for practice and tournaments (250m by 100m) that could be utilised by the Cheshire squad and the 37 clubs in Cheshire. "Currently we need access to an outdoor shooting range that does not conflict with Rugby Club activities. There is local Council owned land across the road that is not used and going to seed, that could be utilised to expand the involvement and provide a Cheshire facility".

### 5.6.3 Cycling

Club returns were received from two cycling organisations - Chester Go-Ride Cycling Club and Chester Cyclists Touring Club (CTC).

- Chester Go-Ride Cycling Club have around 80 members and the CTC 200. Membership of both clubs has increased over the past 3 years. Chester Go-Ride Cycling Club suggest the growth may be because they are "the only club for many miles to cater specifically for children" and the CTC note that "cycling has become increasingly popular due to the high profile with the Olympics and Tours".

- CTC members ride on and off road throughout the Cheshire West and Chester area.
- Chester Go-Ride Cycling Club rate their main base at Upton Youth Club (Wealstone Lane, Upton-by-Chester) as generally being poor. They also use playing fields adjacent to Upton Youth Club.
- They note that "the youth club we use is in desperate need of complete redevelopment as it is very old and not ideal. There is a gathering consensus of users who feel this way, including a play group for disabled children. Storage, toilets and changing facilities are the main things we as a club need in the building".
- Chester Go-Ride would like to develop better links with the 2 schools neighbouring their base at Wealstone Lane.
- They note that barriers to club development are: a shortage of good quality indoor, outdoor and training facilities/resources; a lack of external funding; and problems in travelling to competitive/training venues.
- They add that "we need a path provided in the park to develop links with local schools. We have been planning this for some time and just need funding now. The main barrier to developing a path in the park has been raising the funding to build it. The path has been designed, the landowners (Upton Parish Council) have given us their backing, the Local Authority have confirmed that planning permission is not required and quotes have been gathered. Having the time to apply for the funding is the issue".
- Chester Go-Ride would like to expand its activities: "we want to run 'real' cycling activities for children. We need a basic path so that we can run training and competitive activities that replicate road cycling. There are no such facilities in the entire local authority. A path and good storage facilities would really help us to expand our activities especially in terms of helping our members make the step into regional level racing".

#### 5.6.4 Running

Survey returns were received from two running clubs - Ellesmere Port Running Club and Tattenhall Runners:

- Ellesmere Port RC currently have 136 members Their membership has increased over the last three years ("running is easily accessible, increased popularity and increase in the population"). Whitby Sport and Social Club is their main meeting point. They are interested in developing improved links with local schools and other clubs.
- Tattenhall Runners membership is around 50 which has decreased over recent years: "some ex-members are doing other activities e.g. cycling, triathlon; some issues regarding membership fees and training times also. We're hopeful membership will increase through a renewed marketing effort". Tattenhall Recreation Club is their main meeting point "though we train on/off road".
- Both clubs are generally happy with their main facility, though Ellesmere Port note that facilities for equipment/storage are very poor and Tattenhall Runners do not think their venue provides good value for money for their members.
- Ellesmere Port RC note a need for better facilities within Ellesmere Port as a whole. "The new facility in place of the old EPIC has very limited facilities" and "improved changing/showers/accessibility are needed at West Cheshire Track". Tattenhall Runners comment that it "would be great to have a running track".
- Ellesmere Port RC would like to have better links with the Local Authority "we would be willing to meet to discuss". They think there is potential for "more use of other clubs facilities and sharing costs". Tattenhall Runners would like to attract more members.
- Ellesmere Port RC note the following barriers to development: a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities/resources and suitable training facilities; a lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; and the cost of hiring/using facilities. Improved links with other clubs are needed.

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- Tattenhall Runners note barriers as being: falling membership; a lack of internal financing (subs/fund raising); and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and administer the club.

### 5.6.5 Water sports

Survey returns were received from two clubs - Grosvenor Rowing Club and Cheshire Scouts Canoeing group:

- Grosvenor Rowing Club currently have 200 members and Cheshire Scouts Canoeing group report that "facilities are available for up to 1000 young people". Both clubs report an increase in membership over the last three years. Grosvenor Rowing Club suggested that "the London Olympics encouraged older people looking for recreational sport". Both clubs have active junior memberships.
- Grosvenor Rowing Club's base is at The Groves, Chester and Cheshire Scouts Canoeing group meet at Chester Riverside centre. Grosvenor RC are generally happy with the quality of their facilities though car parking and changing/showering are only rated as "adequate". Cheshire Scouts think that most aspects of their facilities are poor (particularly car parking and changing/showering).
- Grosvenor Rowing Club note that their changing rooms and gym "need work" and that they have applied to Sport England's *Inspired Facilities* fund. Cheshire Scouts highlight that "the facilities are in need of a radical make over" and that "currently work is being progressed on a community watersports centre at the site".
- Grosvenor Rowing Club note a shortage of suitable training facilities and poor quality changing facilities as barriers to development. Cheshire Scouts highlight a shortage of good quality outdoor facilities; the cost of hiring/using facilities; a lack of external funding; and a shortage of personnel to run/coach teams and administer the club.

## 5.7 Informal outdoor sports and active recreation: Key Findings

### General points and observations

#### ***Range of informal sports and recreation activities making use of open space***

In general, the amount of activity detailed demonstrates the range of informal outdoor sport and recreation taking place in the Cheshire West and Chester 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).

#### ***Growing importance of linkages between health and fitness and active recreation***

With changes in public health management and revenue streams, linking fitness, active recreation 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.

#### ***Maintaining a rural network of facilities***

Recreation grounds, tennis courts, multi-use games areas and bowling greens are important recreation 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.

### Sports Specific Points

#### ***Tennis***

- Cheshire West and Chester is not a priority area currently for the regional LTA. This means it is not currently a priority in relation to securing LTA funding for facility improvements.
- However the LTA notes that it "has identified a few club/park hubs as priorities so will be working in the area". It is also currently supporting a number of facility developments in Cheshire West and Chester.
- Most tennis facilities are provided via local tennis clubs. There are 15 clubs noted in the LTA's Places to Play database.
- Public Tennis courts are available at a small number of park sites including Alexandra Park, Chester; Westminster Park, Chester; and Castle Park, Frodsham. Courts are also available at three Brio Leisure Centres: Christleton Sports Centre (Christleton Academy); Neston Recreation Centre (Neston Academy); and Rudheath Leisure Centre (Rudheath Academy)
- The LTA notes a lack of indoor courts in the CW&C area.
- The reported quality of club facilities varies quite considerably for example Ellesmere Port report many aspects of quality as being unsatisfactory whereas Glen Aber rate most quality aspects as being either very good or good.
- The most commonly highlighted aspect of quality rated less than satisfactory are changing and shower facilities. Ellesmere Port and Helsby rate their changing and shower facilities as being very

poor.

- Individual clubs have various plans and aspirations to improve their own facilities.

### ***Bowls***

- In Cheshire provision for crown green (rather than flat green) bowls is the norm for outdoor bowling greens.
- The ownership and management of bowling greens is very varied in Cheshire West and Chester including the Borough Council; town and parish councils; clubs and recreation trusts; and public houses.
- Across Cheshire the loss of bowling greens is a big concern for the Cheshire County Bowling Association (CCBA). Over the last 10 years "about 5 bowling greens a year have been closed without replacement".
- The sustainability of some smaller clubs (20 to 30 members) is under threat due to rental increases and increasing maintenance costs. In many cases there is no access to alternative greens in reasonable proximity.
- The CCBA view is that there is sufficient demand for all existing bowling greens to be retained, particularly given the anticipated growth in the number of older people in Cheshire and their initiatives to encourage additional younger people to play.
- The quality of greens is very varied. Club managed greens with a large membership tend to be of good quality. Local authority managed greens tend to have suffered in line with reducing maintenance budgets. Some small clubs also face difficulties in maintaining quality due to limited funds for maintenance.
- Artificial greens can save on maintenance costs but rental costs need to be kept reasonable to maintain participation. The CCBA suggest developments of this kind could be appropriate in some parts of Cheshire West and Chester.
- 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.
- There is potential for club development and increased membership given the age demographic of the Borough Council area.

### ***Netball***

- Netball England is currently completing a facilities audit and strategy for Cheshire. They provided an early draft which provided useful information on facilities used currently.
- Netball is traditionally played on outdoor courts with educational sites being the most highly used by volunteer run leagues and Club training.
- There are 23 venues in Cheshire West and Chester being used for netball activity. Collectively, these venues have 44 outdoor courts, with none recorded as being floodlit. There are no outdoor covered courts and 25 indoor courts.
- There is an increasing demand for indoor facilities as "the average recreational netballer prefers to play indoors and there is a requirement for performance programmes to be based at high quality indoor venues".
- The most important facilities for netball in Cheshire West and Chester are: Whitby High School – for large tournaments; Bishops High School – tournaments and club; and Knutsford Leisure Centre –

the County academy/satellite train there. In addition Northgate Arena and Epic Sports Village are very important as they run leagues for England Netball.

- Quality - 38% of clubs rate the condition of venues used as very good, with remaining given a good or average rating. 66% of netball clubs believe changing facilities are inadequate for their needs. 73% of clubs find it either very easy or easy to book venues for netball activity.
- There is capacity at all but two venues (Tytherington High School and Bishops High School) for additional netball use.
- The development of netball facility projects is largely reliant on the sourcing of capital grants from external agencies/associations. England Netball has very limited capital funding and this is reserved for national and regional priority projects.

#### ***Other informal sports/active recreation clubs***

- Individual returns were received from various other informal sport/recreation clubs with an interest in open spaces/water recreation i.e. angling, archery, cycling, running, water sports (rowing and canoeing). Some issues noted included:
  - Lymm Angling Club would like to run more sessions and attract more juniors. They also highlight a need to improve facilities at Spring Pool Fishery.
  - City of Chester Archers would like to expand its activities by securing a permanent outdoor range for practice and tournaments (250m by 100m) that could be utilised by the Cheshire squad and the 37 clubs in Cheshire.
  - Chester Go-Ride cycling club "need a basic path so that we can run training and competitive activities that replicate road cycling. There are no such facilities in the entire local authority. A path and good storage facilities would really help us to expand our activities especially in terms of helping our members make the step into regional level racing".
  - Ellesmere Port RC note a need for better facilities within Ellesmere Port as a whole. "The new facility in place of the old EPIC has very limited facilities" and "improved changing/showers/accessibility are needed at West Cheshire Track". Tattenhall Runners comment that it "would be great to have a running track".
  - Grosvenor Rowing Club note that their changing rooms and gym "need work" and that they have applied to Sport England's *Inspired Facilities* fund. Cheshire Scouts highlight that "the facilities are in need of a radical make over" and that "currently work is being progressed on a community watersports centre at the site".

## 6.0 NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES, LOCALITY AREAS AND TOWN/PARISH COUNCILS

### 6.1 Introduction

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

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

Section Six is comprised of two main sub-sections:

- Neighbouring Authorities - Cross-boundary issues
- Locality Area and Town/Parish Councils

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

### 6.2 Neighbouring authorities - Cross boundary issues

#### 6.2.1 Overview – Cheshire West and Chester Council (Spatial Planning – Graham Bench)

Cheshire West and Chester shares borders with 7 local authority areas - Warrington, Cheshire East, Shropshire, Wrexham, Halton, Wirral and Flintshire. Observations on green space and planning issues that may be of cross border and/or strategic interest and significance are noted below:

- Farndon in the south of CW&C is linked to the Welsh village of Holt (Wrexham Borough) on the other side of the River Dee and there is likely to be cross border use of local green space facilities.
- Middlewich in Cheshire East is directly adjacent to CW&C and in the past there has been some discussion of development in the adjacent part of the CW&C area. There are no current plans however for such development.
- The Sandstone Trail and Beeston Castle receive significant numbers of visitors from outside of the Borough and is easily accessible from Cheshire East, Halton, and Warrington. There has been less promotion of the trail over recent years.
- In the recent past there have been plans to develop a Weaver Valley Regional Park which would run for about 25 miles in mid Cheshire from Runcorn (Halton Borough) to Crewe (Cheshire East). The Weaver Way walking trail runs from Frodsham in the north to Audlem in the South.
- Winsford Flashes provide opportunities for fishing, walking and picnicking, as well as sailing and other water sports. It is likely to have a fairly wide catchment for visitors including parts of Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington Boroughs.
- Delamere Forest is a destination site that is likely to attract visits from outside of the Borough, in particular from Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington Boroughs.

- The Wirral Way is a long-established and well used multi user path that leads into the Wirral Country Park in Wirral Borough. Neston Town Council have an interest in the Wirral Way as noted in their Neighbourhood Plan.
- Parkgate is a popular coastal resort on the Dee estuary adjacent to Wirral Borough. It is also attracts bird watchers and there is an RSPB reserve
- Ness Gardens in the Wirral is also a major destination that is likely to receive visits from residents from the west of CW&C.

### 6.2.2 Neighbouring Local Authorities - Officer views

Forward planning officers were also contacted from the 7 neighbouring authorities to check if they had identified any cross border issues that they thought should be taken into account.

Comments and observations from officers of the neighbouring authorities are provided in Tables 15-21 below<sup>12</sup>:

*Table 15 Comments and observations from Flintshire County Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues <sup>13</sup>
Green Infrastructure	Lower Dee and Neston Green Infrastructure Strategy Completed 2012.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River Dee Estuary &amp; Canalised River Dee as well as Cycle Paths such as National Cycle Route No.5.</li> <li>• The changing morphology of the River Dee with the erosion of the Welsh Banks and the expanding marsh at Burton pose a longer term challenge related to the defence of coastlines, protection of development and protection or expansion of recreational routes.</li> </ul>
Green Infrastructure	Flintshire Coast Green Infrastructure Strategy Completed 2012.	<p>Flintshire County Council has developed its Flintshire Coast GI Study (completed 2012) into a Flintshire Coastal Prospectus to generate interest and explain FCCs vision for its Dee Coast.</p> <p>The enhancement of the Coast and the creation of a Coastal Park is a key aspiration which is dependent upon highly accessible links from CW&amp;C into North Wales along and near to the River Dee. Chester City FC's grounds are within Wales.</p>
Open Space/PPG17 study	2005 Survey written up and released in 2007 (still relevant) – study is 99% correct but we are aware of where there have been changes and are able to provide this advice on a site by site and settlement by settlement basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sealand sports pitch on the border with CW&amp;C serving Sougton and Sealand community.</li> <li>• Saltney community are likely to use the openspace at Barwood Drive in Lache.</li> </ul>
Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy	Flintshire County Council Greenspace Framework Strategy (Completed	

<sup>12</sup> The officer responses were collected via an emailed pro-forma.

<sup>13</sup> These comments will be taken forward and considered in the main Open Space Study report

	2013) – key document which has supported two Heritage Lottery Fund bids so far with more expected in the future.	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Completed 2015 (in part). Sports Pitch Assessments undertaken for 39 identified Sports Pitches. This will lead to a further assessment with regards demands (clubs and teams) which will lead to future strategy.	
Play /Youth Strategy	Completed 2010 (in part) and still relevant. 170+ Play Areas surveyed to assess play value, condition and community play needs. This has led to a targeted annual works programme which has seen over 3 million pounds invested into FCC play areas over the last 5 years.	
Any other relevant studies/strategies?	Play Sufficiency Assessment undertaken by FCC (Completed 2012/13) to assess how well play needs are being met by FCC departments. This led to action plan for period 2012-2016.	

Flintshire County Council also commented that they welcome the opportunity to share information and knowledge to the betterment of its environment and the communities dependent on quality and accessible open spaces.

*Table 16 Comments and observations from Wrexham County Borough Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Wrexham Green Network Strategy October 2008 (still relevant)	By its very nature green infrastructure is a cross boundary issue. For example links along the River Dee into CWC. I'm not aware that the 2008 Green Network Strategy made specific cross boundary comment.

Open Space/PPG17	An Open Space Audit and Assessment is being carried out on behalf of the WCBC by KKP consultants. The study is due for completion by October 2015. The study considers open space typologies outlined in TAN 16.	The Open Space study is due to comment on cross boundary issues. However only part of the study has been submitted, which does not currently include any such commentary.
Play/Youth Strategy	Wrexham Play Sufficiency Assessment ((WPSA) 2013 – still relevant)	

**Table 17** *Comments and observations from Wirral Borough Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	<p>Not completed - Expect to prepare to define boundaries after adoption of Core Strategy Local Plan (some initial preparatory work already complete). Progress currently limited by resources.</p> <p>The emerging Liverpool City Region Ecological Framework (ongoing)</p>	<p>Cumulative and cross-boundary Habitats Regulations Assessment issues with regard to European Sites and their supporting habitats particularly in relation to recreational pressures.</p> <p>This is being prepared by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service may also have cross boundary implications.</p>
Open Space/PPG17 study	<a href="#"><u>Open Space Assessment/Audit 2012 (Part Completed).</u></a>	<p>Consistency of standard and quality of provision in adjoining areas.</p> <p>Current standards for Wirral set out in Unitary Development Plan (February 2000 – Policy GRE1 and Policy GR6) expected to be carried over into Core Strategy Policy CS31 and Policy CS32 - Settlement Area Policies CS4 to CS11 may also be relevant.</p>
Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy	<a href="#"><u>Wirral Parks and Open Space Strategy 2014-2024</u></a>	A number of open spaces and facilities in CW&C are well-used by Wirral residents and vice versa as part of a wider coast and countryside, visitor and recreation catchment area, including facilities in and around Chester.
Play/ Youth Strategy	Wirral Play Strategy (2007)	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Wirral Pitch Strategy including tennis and bowls underway for completion in 2016	There are significant cross boundary overlaps.
Other relevant studies/strategies	<p><a href="#"><u>Wirral Landscape Character Assessment (2009 – still relevant)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Wirral Biodiversity Audit (2009 - still relevant)</u></a></p>	

The council also highlighted that a number of footpaths/cycle paths and bridleways cross over and go along the border with CW&C including the Wirral Circular Trail, Wirral Way, National Cycle Route 56; the Arrowe Park – Parkgate circular walk and a couple of historic promoted walking routes.

There are also likely to be cross-boundary issues in relation to countryside, Green Belt and Areas of Special Landscape Value (especially Dee Coast).

It was noted that the Wirral Rights of Way Officer would like to be involved in any future recreation strategy.

*Table 18 Comments and observations from Halton Borough Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Mouth of the Weaver Masterplan	May be a minor cross boundary issue.
Open Space/PPG17 study	Initial preparation being undertaken to produce update in 2015/16 (existing study is no longer relevant).	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Playing Pitch Strategy (2012) – 2015/16 Season update underway	
Other relevant studies/strategies	Mid-Mersey Water Cycle Study (Entec, 2011) Strategic level advice on water infrastructure and environmental capacity.  LCR Ecological Network - Completion expected Nov 2015	May be minor supply/ cross boundary issues.

*Table 19 Comments and observations from Warrington Borough Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	Mersey Forest Plan (Refresh) completed September 2013	As already noted under section 4.
Open Space/PPG17 study	The 2012 Open Space Audit is the most up to date published survey of the borough's open space. However, a revised audit has recently been completed but has yet to be published.	
Sport/Recreation strategy	A Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) was approved in April 2014 but was based on not formally published as new Sport England guidance was issued on methodology for undertaking an assessment of provision. Therefore, it was decided to produce a new PPS that conformed to the new SE	

	guidance. This work is being undertaken in-house and is expected to be completed by Dec 2015.	
Other	<p>Warrington Sports Facilities Strategic Needs Assessment (Completed April 2015) - Assessment only focuses on the key facility types listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports halls</li> <li>• Swimming pools</li> <li>• Health and fitness suites</li> <li>• Specialist sporting facilities including athletics, cycling and indoor tennis</li> </ul>	<p>The Assessment has identified that local cycling needs are currently being met by non-specialist cycling facilities and facilities located outside of the borough boundary.</p> <p>British Cycling mapping has identified a gap in provision across the region that could be met by a facility located in Warrington.</p> <p>British Cycling has capital investment available. The WSFNA recommends that this opportunity should be explored.</p>

*Table 20 Comments and observations from Cheshire East Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Green Infrastructure	The Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral (Completed Jan 2011 – still relevant).	Joint study – cross border issues re rivers, floodplains etc; environmental and economic benefits
Open Space/PPG17 study	Open Spaces Assessment (completed 2012 – still relevant).	
Parks/Greenspace/ Countryside strategy	Cheshire East Green Space Strategy (completed Jan 2013) (Parks Strategy going to Cabinet November)	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Indoor Sport Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategies being prepared	

*Table 21 Comments and observations from Shropshire Council*

Type of study	Notes/updates on relevant studies	Comments and observations – cross border issues
Open Space/PPG17 study	Completed 2009 – now needs updating	
Sport/Recreation strategy	Completed 2015 – rolling partial review	
Play /Youth Strategy	Started in 2015	

## 6.3 Locality Areas and Town/Parish Councils

### 6.3.1 General Overview

Cheshire West and Chester Council provide many local community services within a Locality Area framework. The four locality areas are:

- Chester
- Ellesmere Port
- Northwich and Winsford
- Rural

The majority of Cheshire West and Chester is parished and all town and parish councils were surveyed to enable them to provide their views on open space needs (see 6.3.3 below). Unlike the rest of the Borough, however, Chester and Ellesmere Port do not have City/Town Councils.

To provide a local input on known open space issues the locality managers were therefore contacted to provide an overview.

### 6.3.2 Locality Managers' overview

#### *Chester*

Table 22 *Locality Managers' comments regarding Chester*

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Tennis courts	Early discussions have taken place regarding the renovation of Tennis Courts at Alexandra Park, Hoole. There is potential to develop a Chester wide court booking system.
Bowling greens	General feedback is that these are in good condition and of a decent standard.
Children's play areas	Asset review ongoing in relation to condition and priority for renovation – Place Operations are leading on this.
Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)	Young People are extremely keen to have a designated City Centre Skatepark as they feel that 'The Cop' skatepark (located in the Garden Quarter Ward) is inadequate and is out of sight from the road etc.
Allotments	Hoole Community Allotments are in the process of becoming 'self-managed' by Hoole Allotment Society.
Water recreation - canals, rivers, lakes	Issues around 'Poets Corner' in Blacon ward, where the canalside is neglected. Local residents keen to see improvements.

It was also noted that "generally, local residents often feedback about the poor condition of open spaces".

The following specific plans/aspirations were highlighted:

- There is an aspiration in Lache Ward to develop community football pitch provision.
- Sandy Lane Aqua Park/Play area, Great Boughton & Boughton Wards – an options appraisal has been commissioned to investigate the potential future management arrangements of the space.
- LAPA Playing Field, Lache Ward – An aspiration to develop a playing field for community use. Early stages of scoping the feasibility.
- Alexandra Park, Hoole Ward – Early discussions regarding the potential improvement of key areas within the park boundary have taken place. Discussions have taken place in relation to the redevelopment of the Tennis Courts and other associated enhancements.

## Ellesmere Port

Table 23 Locality Managers' comments regarding Ellesmere Port

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Tennis courts	<p>There are two operational tennis courts on Whitby Park. These have been occasionally vandalised. Common complaints include glass on courts and nets not up.</p>
Bowling greens	<p>George Street Bowling Green (Westminster) has overgrown hedges that intrude onto the pathway. This issue is often raised by residents as is sand/mud on the pathway following heavy rain</p> <p>Currently Whitby Park has two bowling greens in use and maintained, with a third bowling green used as an overflow green during busier periods. However, due to a long period of underuse the third green is no longer maintained. The greens have been vandalised on a number of occasions.</p>
Children's play areas	<p><b>Naylor Green:</b> Part of new Rivacre Village development. Concerns over entry point due to proximity of two lane roundabout. Possible safety barrier needed between pavement and road.</p> <p><b>Blackstairs Road:</b> Part of new Rivacre Village development. Large round swing removed after play area opened due to ASB. Unfortunately it was located in an appropriate position and was far too close to a property. Also had problems with children kicking balls against fence lines. Additional signage and planting to help manage issue which seems to be working.</p> <p><b>Rivacre Village:</b> There will be additional informal greenspaces within this development though none are listed as having play facilities. The original plans indicate installation of a MUGA next to Wharf Lane play area though concerns that this will be too close to properties if it goes ahead.</p> <p><b>Plantation Drive:</b> This Play Area is in an unacceptable state and concerns have been raised about the site on numerous occasions over the last few years. The facility is located in an area of predominantly older people but is the only play area on this side of two busy main roads (Rossmore Road West and Rivacre Road/Netherpool Road)</p> <p><b>Festival Road Park:</b> This park includes a football pitch, play area and large green areas used by dog walkers. The park is a shortcut and therefore has a large footfall on a daily basis. It is subject to regular fires, litter issues and fly tipping on the Festival Road side of the park. The large round swing has been burnt on 2 occasions and has not been replaced. Play equipment is of a wooden design (less for slide) with a sand base. This remains unpopular due to lack of regular swings and play equipment.</p> <p><b>Luton Road Park:</b> This park has a MUGA, Basket Ball Hoop, 2 Youth PODS, fenced in Children's Play Area and open green space used for dog walking. This park is subject to some ASB and youth nuisance issues. Some equipment was recently lost due to fire.</p> <p><b>Heath Lane:</b> Nice small park and play area that is locked at night by local residents. This has helped reduce incidents of ASB.</p> <p><b>Whitby Park:</b> Contains a large children's play area which is well used. Whilst this play park has managed to avoid being vandalised, offensive graffiti is reported from time to time.</p> <p><b>Elm Grove:</b> This park contains no play equipment. Two consultations have been held with residents regarding the installation of play equipment but there is no support for this.</p>

	<p><b>Seacombe Drive:</b> The park has recently been refurbished and improvements made.</p> <p><b>Bebbington Road Play Park:</b> The park is accessed via a pathway between two properties and is kept reasonably well. No reports of vandalism or complaints about its upkeep.</p> <p><b>Wenlock Lane:</b> The park contains a few items of play equipment. The park has suffered from severe flooding in the past and is not well used due to the proximity of Seacombe Park.</p> <p><b>General Comment:</b> Most play areas in Ellesmere Port are subject to complaints regarding general maintenance and vandalism. Residents would also like a mix of equipment for all ages in all areas.</p>
Teenage facilities (e.g. skate parks)	<p>The town has a well-used BMX track and Skate Park and is about to have a purpose built Parkour facility. However, more activities and teenage targeted facilities are always requested.</p> <p>The Skate Park has had some vandalism (mostly small fires) and the bending of the safety barriers.</p>
Multi-Use Games Areas	<p>Whitby Park has a well-used MUGA.</p> <p>Seacombe Park has a well-used MUGA which has had fire damage to the surface in the past (now repaired).</p> <p><b>General Comment:</b> The key issues and complaints regarding MUGAs relate to improper use, litter and noise.</p>
Allotments	<p>There is a waiting list for the allotments in the area.</p>
Parks, rec. grounds, village greens etc.	<p><b>Luton Road Park and Festival Road Park</b> The largest green space (next to Luton Road Park) has now been handed to the UCEA as a sports field. This is open access and is well used by dog walkers (not a good thing as it is football pitches)</p> <p><b>Atherton Road Community Garden:</b> This is already in place but has been subject to criminal damage over last few weeks.</p> <p>Generally residents like the amount of green space in and around the town.</p>
Water recreation - canals, rivers, lakes	<p><b>River Mersey and Shropshire Union Canal:</b> Along the towpath there are wild flower areas and nature walks. Most complaints relate to litter and dog fouling.</p> <p>There are a number of small ponds on the <b>Stanney Woods Estate</b>. These are owned by Barratts and managed by POS Landcare. The main pond has recently had an ecology report done by the management company.</p> <p><b>Whitby Park</b> has a pond which is often the source of complaints, mainly relating to rat infestation and general maintenance.</p>
Informal/amenity open space <sup>14</sup>	<p>The town has a variety of open or green spaces of varying sizes, many of which are located close to or adjacent to housing stock. Most of these have no formal use but are used by dog walkers, resulting in problems with dog fouling, and illegal bonfires (particularly around Bonfire night).</p>
Wildlife areas, nature reserves	<p><b>River Mersey and Shropshire Union Canal:</b> Along the towpath there are wild flower areas and nature walks. Most complaints relate to litter and dog fouling.</p> <p><b>Meadow Park:</b> This is an area of 7.8 acres which is now managed by a newly formed "Friends of" group. They have a 5 year plan (into year 1) for its future development including the installation of a new pathway to allow better access to the site.</p>
Paths/bridleway cyclepaths	<p>There are a number of footpaths and cycle routes across the town, including the Green Loop. This is not fully complete and needs more active promotion.</p>

<sup>14</sup> For example, grassed areas for dog walking, informal games, picnics, etc.

It was also noted that most complaints regarding play areas fall into three areas: general maintenance (grass cutting/bins emptied/dog fouling); graffiti; and poor/dated equipment and upkeep. Most complaints regarding green space relate to the up keep and maintenance of areas.

The following specific plans/aspirations were highlighted:

- Former Sutton High School/Stanney North Campus (Mill Lane): Currently looking at future options for the former School Gymnasium, Squash Courts, astro-turf and adjacent green space. The playing fields are protected from future development. Community consultation due to take place before the end of October with a view to retain (subject to community or commercial interest) or demolish. Site is also adjacent to Bridge Community Farms CIC.
- Grange Ward: Local ward councillor has ambitions to provide the University of Chester CoE Academy with additional green space for allotments (grow zone) located at the rear of Cavell Drive. This has been discussed in the past but was not taken forward. Also keen to see redevelopment of local garage sites for additional composting and raised beds.
- Garage Sites: There are a number of garage sites across the town in need of improvement or redevelopment for other purposes, including additional green space / community gardens / allotments, etc. Currently under discussion with Plus Dane (housing management contractor).
- Parkour Zone: Work is due to begin on a new Parkour facility in Whitby park. Due to complete before the end of the calendar year.
- Shared Services Hub: A Full Business Case is under development for the establishment of a single shared public services hub in Ellesmere Port town centre. This would release a number of central sites for other purposes (e.g. housing, enterprise units, retail, car parking, green / amenity space, etc. FBC due end November 2015 will determine next steps. If scheme progresses, will be developed by April 2019.
- Locality “Better Outcomes” Programme: Under the new locality working arrangements, each locality will adopt a single issue outcome programme with a timeframe of 1 – 4 years. This is still being finalised but in Ellesmere Port will focus on a Cleaner and Greener environment.
- Alleyways: There are ongoing issues regarding the condition of alleyways in and around the residential areas of the town centre. Alley gates have been requested but cannot be installed due to limitations with the legislation. The alleyways are assumed PRoW. Work is ongoing to identify alternative solutions to issues of littering and fly-tipping, including community gardens.

### **Northwich and Winsford**

**Table 24 Locality Managers' comments regarding Northwich and Winsford**

<b>Facility/Aspect</b>	<b>Issues/comment/observations</b>
Tennis courts	Not picking up issues. There is some good provision in Northwich & Hartford
Bowling greens	Not picking up issues.
Children's play areas	Council are undertaking a play strategy review to look at what it needs, what to keep, what to de-commission, improvements, asset transfers etc. Key issue is on-going maintenance from both the Council and Parishes.
Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)	Regular issue is a request for a skatepark in Weaverham.
Multi-Use Games Areas	Weaverham community centre want to improve their MUGA but struggling to find funding. Have pick up some minor issues but don't get regular complaints; Glebe (Winsford) MUGA needs a net to cover the top to stop the ball going over Castle MUGA needs upgrading

	Cuddington muted about wanting a MUGA near the playing pitches
Allotments	There is a high demand for these (according to Town and Parish Councils) and not enough provision. 4 areas seem to have persistent requests; Northwich Town Council, Winsford Town Council, Barnton Parish Council, and Weaverham Parish Council
Parks, rec. grounds, village greens etc.	Generally the issue is funding for maintenance. Northwich Town Council looking to upgrade/improve Verdin Park but this is a big project and funding is an issue.
Water recreation - canals, rivers, lakes	Northwich – key issue is opening up the river banks on the waterways along the town centre stretch to create footpaths. Also making use of the waterway from Northwich town centre to the Salt Works museum / Anderton Boat Lift Winsford – improving Winsford Flashes to make it a centre of activity but with easy access routes to the town centre.
Informal/amenity open space <sup>15</sup>	Generally the issue is funding for maintenance
Wildlife areas, nature reserves	Generally the issue is funding for maintenance especially Northwich Woodlands Hartford Parish want to take over and improve Marshall's Arms nature reserve Possible new nature park in Rudheath as part of a new housing development
Footpath/bridleway cyclepaths	Cycleways and connectivity to the town centres is a key issue, Northwich Town Council has recently appointed someone to conduct a cycle study with recommendations. Cycleways is also a key priority for the Council to create connectivity between locations. Health is a top priority and there is a need for local circular short walks.
Other	Mid-Cheshire campus currently looking at improving their football pitches and creating a running track. Rudheath Social Club want to take over the Griffiths Park pitch but it belongs to NPL and they will not release it therefore they may need a pitch elsewhere but close to the club. Similarly Rudheath Junior FC want a permanent pitch to develop as a base in or near to Rudheath.

### Rural Locality area

Table 25 Locality Managers' comments regarding the rural locality area

Facility/Aspect	Issues/comment/observations
Tennis courts	Kingsley Village Institute – currently looking for funding to repair tennis courts.
Children's play areas	<b>Pulford Playing Fields</b> – currently applying for funding to deliver a children's play area. <b>Stoak</b> – seeking funding for additional/replacement play equipment - they currently only have one slide and this has been identified as needing repair work. <b>Thornton le Moors</b> – TLM Parish Council would like to develop the land adjacent to the Village Hall to provide a children's play area. <b>Norley</b> – The Norley Hill Top group would like to make some renovations to their play area and install some equipment for older children (table tennis etc) <b>Johnson's Recreation (Willaston)</b> – Planned phase 2 of the children's play area

<sup>15</sup> For example, grassed areas for dog walking, informal games, picnics etc.

	<p><b>Sutton Weaver Play Area</b> – currently seeking funding to secure the children's play area as there has been ASB issues.</p> <p><b>Frodsham</b> – Frodsham Town Council are currently assessing play areas and have plans to renovate/provide new equipment to some of their existing provision.</p>
Teenage facilities (e.g. skateparks)	<p><b>Elton</b> – Elton Parish Council are exploring the option of having a skate park at the rear of the community centre, as there is little provision for the older children/youth.</p>
Multi-Use Games Areas	<p><b>Saughall</b> – plans to build a sports pavilion (subject to funding) to have a multi-purpose building to host and encourage sport within the area.</p> <p><b>Elton</b> – assessing provision for older children, currently they have 1 basketball hoop, but the Parish Council have aspirations to install a MUGA or something similar. The Elton area has lots of children so this is an area which requires more play equipment especially for the 10+ age group.</p> <p><b>Helsby</b> – currently working on plans for an outdoor gym near to the Library.</p> <p><b>Stanneyfields Park (Neston)</b> – Currently investigating proposals for an outdoor gym.</p>
Parks, rec. grounds, village greens etc.	<p><b>Kelsall</b> – will be commencing on Phase Two of the village green project, this is extending the single sided MUGA to a double sided facility with two football goals rather than the one that they currently have.</p> <p><b>Manley</b> – currently re-developing the Hilary Haworth playing fields for football provision.</p> <p><b>Tarporley</b> – there is a need for more play and football provision, although the development of the new community sports building may help with this. Currently one play area and one small football pitch in Tarporley.</p>
Informal/amenity open space <sup>16</sup>	<p><b>Tarporley</b> - potentially refurbishing their village square</p> <p><b>Frodsham</b> – doesn't have a natural village square – this has been noted from feedback</p>
Wildlife areas, nature reserves	<p><b>Parkgate Marshes</b> – issues when it's high tide event – parking, space for twitchers etc</p> <p><b>Ince Reservoir</b> – potential to have more marketing to promote the site?</p>
Footpath/bridleway cyclepaths	<p><b>Greenway</b> (Little Neston – Quay side end) – Cyclist speeding issues on the Greenway</p> <p><b>Frodsham Marsh Footpath/Cycleway</b> - currently having some refurbishment work. This route has the potential to be utilised for employment purposes but needs further investment and marketing.</p>

### 6.3.3 Town and Parish Councils

Within Cheshire West and Chester there are 95 parish/town councils. Surveys were sent to all parish councils together with two reminders to chase responses as needed<sup>17</sup>. In total 36 parish councils responded. If we did not receive a town/parish council survey response from a town council or key service area parish we reviewed the latest neighbourhood/parish plan 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.

Responses were received from the following town/parish councils:

<sup>16</sup> For example, grassed areas for dog walking, informal games, picnics etc.

<sup>17</sup> To ensure responses from the Town Councils and the ten key service centre parishes, telephone reminders were also made.

- Anderton With Marbury
- Ashton Hayes and Horton-cum-Peel PC
- Barnton
- Christleton Parish Council
- Cuddington Parish Council
- Darnhall
- Dunham on the Hill Parish Council
- Dutton Parish Council
- Farndon Parish Council
- Frodsham Town Council
- Great Barrow Parish Council
- Great Boughton Parish Council
- Guilden Sutton Parish Council
- Hargrave and Huxley Parish Council
- Helsby Parish Council
- Kelsall Parish Council
- Kingsley Parish Council
- Lach Dennis Parish Council
- Little Leigh Parish Council
- Malpas Parish Council
- Mouldsworth Parish Council
- Moulton Parish Council
- Neither Peover Parish Council
- Neston Town Council
- Northwich Town Council<sup>18</sup>
- Rushton Parish Council
- Sutton Weaver Parish Council
- Tarporley Parish Council
- Tarvin Parish Council
- Thornton le Moors Parish Council
- Threapwood Parish Council
- Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish C
- Whitegate and Marlin Parish Council
- Whitley Parish Council
- Wincham Parish Council
- Winsford Town Council

Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- 27 of the 35 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 30 of the 35 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers. Significant number also highlighted a need to bear in mind appropriate facilities and improvements for older people.

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

We asked the parish councils to highlight what they thought, in general, were high priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces.

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

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

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be adequate opportunities for dog walking (and freedom from dog fouling); and that there should be control of noise and anti-social behaviour.

Other aspects of quality specifically highlighted included:

- Provision of 'quiet areas' for older people.

<sup>18</sup> Northwich Town Council referred us to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan - see 6.3.3 below.

- Provision of seating.
- Ensuring that recreation spaces and paths in the parish are attractive, of high quality, well maintained, accessible and provide opportunities for informal exercise, play and sport for all residents; and where possible for nature conservation.
- Opportunities for informal recreation.
- Quality of landscaping and nature conservation.
- Opportunities for adequate planting of trees in order to enhance rural character.
- Increasing in biodiversity, including additional trees or substantial bushes of green areas.
- Good quality changing/toilet/shower facilities associated with recreation grounds.

Table 26 below provides a summary of responses from the parish councils that responded.

Table 26 Summary of responses from parish councils

Northwich								
Rushton Parish Council	X		X	X		X		
Sutton Weaver Parish Council								
Tarporley Parish Council								
Tarvin Parish Council	X			X	X		X	X
Thornton le Moors			X	X				
Threapwood Parish Council								X
Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish			X					
Whitegate and Marlin Parish Council			X			X		X
Whitley Parish			X			X		
WINCHAM				X	X	X		X
Winsford Town Council			X		X			X
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 26 covers issues of quantity, quality and access for a range of facilities. For parish/town councils in Cheshire West and Chester the aspects of most common concern are:

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.
- The need for improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- Other fairly commonly identified areas of concern relate to a lack of allotment plots; and the need for improvements to village greens and recreation grounds.

#### 6.3.4 Parish specific issues (survey)

##### ***Unmet needs and aspirations for improvement***

As part of the survey we also asked the open questions "are you aware of any particular groups within your community whose needs are not currently met" and "if you have, or are aware of, any specific projects, plans and aspirations for improving open space and outdoor recreation facilities in the Parish please tell us". Individual town/parish responses are shown in Table 27 below.

*Table 27 Parish council responses regarding unmet needs and aspirations for improvement*

Parish Council	Groups in parish whose needs not being met	Current plans and known aspirations
Anderton With Marbury	Young People	Neighbourhood Plan currently under production.
Ashton Hayes & Horton-cum-Peel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scout group facilities are inadequate for their needs</li> <li>• There is a lack of facilities for teenagers. However their needs have yet to be established e.g. MUGA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See attachment R1 extract from Draft Neighbourhood Plan</li> <li>• See attachment R2 extract from Draft Neighbourhood Plan which lists the footpaths in the area, their current state and actions necessary.</li> </ul>
Barnton	Older people and adult users – areas are primarily dedicated to children	Community group looking to create a village green on 'the patch'.
Christleton parish council	Older members of the community	Would like more facilities for older people, children and teenagers are catered for in the village, but facilities for adults apart from the Sports Centre and High School are

		<p>scarce. An outside gym at King George's Fields would be ideal</p>
Cuddington Parish Council	The recreational facilities are in need of upgrading on Norley Road Playing Fields.	<p>Cuddington Parish Council would request that CW&amp;C consider to financially (under S106) enhance a tired and dated play area at Norley Road Playing Fields Cuddington CW8 2LA. The playing field is owned by Cuddington Parish Council, and leased to Cuddington and Sandiway Parish Playing Fields Association Ltd who maintain it from an annual grant they receive from the Parish Council.</p> <p>This is a popular space amongst the local community and is used regularly. The Parish Council held an initial public consultation as part of the Village Plan, this included consultation with pupils at the village Primary schools. This showed high levels of use and satisfaction with the current facilities, but with a number of suggestions for new facilities. The play area caters for children of all ages.</p> <p>Existing play equipment needs replacing and further play equipment is required to create a more pleasant area for children to play.</p> <p>In view of the Parish Council and Playing Field Association's commitment to high quality play provision within the village at Norley Road, Boundary Lane Green, and Weaverham Road and acknowledging the absence of any new sites for play or public open space we would propose that the 106 funding is identified to enable the Parish Council and the PFA to undertake a planned programme of improvement and renewal of the existing facilities which are:</p> <p>Installation of gate and metal fencing to prevent small children from running into the car parking area. Sand pit improvements, creation of a barrier including seating at the edge of the sandpit/play area. Creation of a paved areas around the sandpit and wendy house area to improve disabled access. Five further seats would be provided around the Play area/ safety matting renewal to meet requirements of the inspection regime.</p> <p>Improving the condition of the football pitches at Norley Road and Weaverham Road sites. The usage of the pitches has increased and the condition deteriorated. The sites have been inspected by a consultant who has confirmed that the pitches need to be aerated, levelled and re-seeded.</p> <p>Comments received from the recently completed Village Plan were:</p> <p>In most age groups a clear majority considered there were enough clubs and social activities at present. Two groups did not – 12-18 years and 19-30 years, with the younger group being less satisfied.</p> <p>From the comments the following suggestions were most frequently raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities for more sports.</li> <li>Youth Club (or better/bigger YC).</li> <li>Skate/BMX facility.</li> </ul> <p>Requests for ways for elderly people to get out to socialise. These ranged from just a coffee and chat to activities such as walking groups.</p>

		<p>The need for a meeting place.</p> <p>It should be noted that the most popular of the above suggestions was the Youth Club with 19 comments.</p>
Darnhall	No open play space in parish for either young or old	Neighbourhood / parish plan will include aspirations listed elsewhere in our return.
Dutton	Young people	Children's play / recreation area on land owned by the parish council.
Farndon	Local football teams – we have the field but it is not in good enough condition. Older children's play area.	The Parish Council is at the beginning of a partnership project to take ownership of Farndon Sports and Social Club for the benefit of the village. A major renovation of the building and facilities is planned along with a new model for managing and running the club.
Frodsham	Constant demand for swimming pool. Frodsham Play Strategy might be helpful.	See Frodsham Play Strategy. Neighbourhood Planning underway which is establishing a Leisure, green spaces and the environment Working Group – early days.
Great Boughton	None specifically identified.	We are currently undertaking an improvement programme at Thackeray Drive football pitches with £60k of Sport England money.
Guilden Sutton	Neighbourhood Plan has aspirations for facilities for all age groups e.g. bowling green/tennis courts	Not yet got to the stage of locations
Hargrave and Huxley	None specifically identified.	Walking, cycling and open space countryside are rightly valued by many, and identified in recent consultation in the NDP.
Helsby	Helsby junior football club need additional pitches in Helsby	There is a section in Helsby Neighbourhood Plan that deals with this issue. New HCSC has recently been given Planning Approval but funding still being sought
Kelsall Parish Council	Older children are not well served by current playground. Many have commented that they would like a skate / bike park. Some have started organising to make this happen but this is in the early stages. Adults of all ages would benefit from fitness trail / equipment. Use of tennis courts would be improved by lighting. Open space with landscaping would benefit older people (much of Kelsall Green cannot be landscaped due to its use as a venue by the Chester Folk festival)	We have forwarded relevant sections of the draft Neighbourhood plan relating to community projects in that area. Teenagers in Kelsall have started discussing and getting organised to look into the feasibility of a skate park. Location unknown at present.
Kingsley Parish Council	We carried out a parish plan in 2012. The survey results showed that the community wanted a tennis facility, holiday activities for young people, more sports clubs for young children (e.g. rugby) and a swimming pool. We also carried out a playing field	Most of these have been covered elsewhere in our return. We are hoping to explore the need for additional play equipment at the playing field. Kingsley and Newton Village Institute are currently upgrading their 2 tennis courts but have a shortfall in funding to bring both courts into an adequate state of repair.

	<p>survey in 2014 to make a case for grant funding for a perimeter path and outdoor gym. 91% supported the idea of a path and 79% supported the gym project. We're happy to share the results of both surveys with you if required. We had lots of other interesting ideas such as a mini village orchard, separate dog walking area, a boules court, a zip wire and a climbing wall.</p>	
Lach Dennis Parish Council	Not aware of any.	Due to a very recent boundary change, the neighbouring village (Lostock Green) has now become part of our Parish. It is in this village the play area and football pitch is sited. I am unsure as yet if there are any aspirations relating to this among residents.
Little Leigh	Older young people need an open space / playing field. This is an aspiration in our parish plan and village design statement	See above - parish plan and Village Design Statement - open space for play area and cycleway to Barnton.
Malpas parish council	Malpas sports club requires additional playing fields due to the increase in members joining the junior football club and junior cricket club. these numbers will increase as there are 300 new houses due to be built in the village	PC is in the process of providing allotments for the village at the Mosslands. Malpas sports club is in the process of trying to improve the club facilities
Moulton	None specifically identified.	Our aim is to provide high class facilities for all.
Neither Peover	Local people would love to see the play area on Swan Green extended and seating areas created. Nothing in the area for young teenagers or even for the older population.	Walk to school scheme to enable local children to walk safely to school up the cobbles. This may only be possible by means of a compulsory purchase of a strip of land to create a footpath off the cobbled street. Improved seating in Swan green play area.
Rushton Parish Council	No play area for children.	As above, all projects were set out in the Rushton Parish Plan.
Sutton Weaver Parish Council	No field available within the parish for children eg to play football etc	No specific plans highlighted.
Tarporley Parish Council	Tarporley Primary School Please note the Council is working to establish a sports and recreation field which will include football pitches etc.	No specific plans highlighted.
Tarvin Parish Council	Youth Football At present there are total of 24 youth teams involving 305 boys & girls playing football on a regular basis. The existing football pitch on King George V Field is insufficient and teams need to travel to use pitches in	Proposals for the above are being developed as part of the Tarvin Neighbourhood Plan. The Village Design Statement has been discussed with Tarvin Community Woodland Trust.  Floodlights at Tarvin Tennis Club on George V Field to enable more people to play tennis, particularly juniors, are under consideration.

	<p>other villages for both 'home' and 'away' games.</p> <p>The building of new homes in Tarvin is expected to lead to an influx of young families into the village. In addition we also expect an increase in the number of girls playing football. Together both of these factors are likely to increase the above numbers to a figure closer to 500 over the next 10-15 years.</p> <p>At present there is no all-weather training facility in the village and, during the winter months, teams need to travel to use all-weather training pitches in Chester and Winsford.</p> <p><b>Adult Football</b></p> <p>There are 3 adult teams based in Tarvin consisting of an U21 team, an "open" age team Tarvin Rex, and a "Vets" team (predominantly over 35's).</p> <p>As with Youth Football the building of new homes, the increased interest from girls and the provision of high quality changing facilities should lead to an increase in the number of adult teams over the next 10-15 years.</p>	
Thornton le Moors	Restricted usage by all groups of people due to facilities offered.	We are trying with limited budget to upgrade our open spaces and recreation.
Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish	We would like to provide proper play equipment for young people in Utkinton Village.	The Parish Council hopes to use some land owned by Utkinton School to provide some basic play equipment. The lack of any play areas for children was mentioned in our Parish plan.
Whitley Parish	Play and recreation areas serving the needs of younger children and teenagers are not well provided for	No specific plans highlighted.
Wincham	<p>Young people need somewhere to meet. We have volunteers prepared to run a youth club, but no location.</p> <p>Wincham also needs a revamp of its only communal football pitch</p>	There is a large housing development (the Wincham urban village) that is taking place. It would be helpful if the improvement of the football pitch and the canal towpath access could be tied in with this.
Winsford Town Council	<p>Winsford United Football Club would like all weather facilities for joint community use adjacent to their Barton Stadium Ground</p> <p>During a recent consultation on</p>	<p>The Town Council recently assumed responsibility for management of the Town Park. We propose to bring it up to a standard whereby it is fit for purpose as an festivals and events venue.</p> <p>A priority in the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan is to protect and enhance the open space provision adjacent to the</p>

	proposals to improve the Wharton Recreation Ground, a number of people remarked that there was no rugby pitch in Winsford.	Winsford Flashes.
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The detailed parish responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements summarised in Table 26 are provided in Table 28 below.

*Table 28 Parish council responses regarding the need for new and improved provision*

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Need for new/improved provision and typology specific comments</b>
Anderton W17H Marbury	<i>Play Spaces:</i> We would like CW&C to provide and manage a play area. <i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> We already have Anderton and Marbury Nature Parks. <i>Paths:</i> Need a footpath/bridge over Marbury Hollows.
Ashton Hayes & Horton-cum-Peel	<i>MUGA/youth facilities:</i> New facilities required. <i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> See attachment R1 extract from Draft Neighbourhood Plan which lists recreation areas to preserve. <i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> See attachment R1 extract from Draft Neighbourhood Plan which lists green areas to preserve. <i>Paths:</i> See attachment R2 extract from Draft Neighbourhood Plan which lists the footpaths in the area, their current state and actions necessary. There is a need to install a footpath between the last railway bridge where the Baker Way exits the Delamere forest, to link up with Brines Brow. Currently people have to walk along a section of narrow busy road.
Barnton	<i>Bowling Greens:</i> need a bowling green - last one closed last year (privately owned). <i>Youth facilities:</i> currently planning to replace our skatepark. <i>Allotments:</i> in desperate need of suitable, reasonably priced land. Also need adult sport equipment to complement child based equipment.
Cuddington Parish Council	<i>Play Spaces:</i> Play area improvements particularly needed at Norley Road Playing Fields <i>Youth facilities:</i> The Parish Council is currently trying to fund a skate park. <i>Allotments:</i> The Parish Council is in consultation with Taylor Wimpey re Allotment provision at the old Nestle site on Warrington Road.
Darnhall	<i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> Restoration of site of Darnhall for public use to include tennis courts and wildlife nature reserve. <i>Paths:</i> Footpath and cycle ways needed. Footpath between New Lane along Swanlow Lane to Weaver Chapel. Better cycle facilities on Hall Lane from Knobbs Corner to boundary with Cheshire East.
Dunham Hill	<i>Play Spaces:</i> Improvements needed. <i>MUGA/youth facilities:</i> Tennis/MUGAs needed.
Dutton parish council	<i>Play Spaces:</i> new play area needed. <i>Paths:</i> footpaths along busy roads needed.
Farndon	<i>Play spaces:</i> Recent requests from young people – 200+ new homes built or to be completed shortly with many new families into the village. <i>Bowling Greens:</i> A bowling green exists but is largely used by the club and not widely available to all. <i>Youth facilities:</i> Older children are not catered for – good quality rustic play equipment is desired.
Frodsham	<i>Play spaces:</i> Planned improvements just been carried out at Churchfields. Similar improvements planned for Townfield but dependent on funding.

Great Barrow	<p><i>MUGA:</i> Survey within village showed support for a Multi Use Games Area .</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> Good for younger aged children less for older children.</p>
Great Boughton	<p><i>General</i> – our surveys and consultation have shown that the parish has a reasonable amount of outdoor space for sports, children's play and informal recreation. The need to increase and improve facilities particularly for teenagers and children's play was highlighted.</p>
Guilden Sutton	<p><i>MUGA/Tennis:</i> School has some facilities which could be improved but not available for public use.</p> <p><i>Bowling Greens:</i> new facilities required.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> There is some interest in this provision.</p>
Helsby	<p><i>MUGA/tennis:</i> one was planned for the new Helsby Community Sports Club (HCSC) but budget constraints saw it withdrawn from the scheme .</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> Parish Council is looking at possibilities.</p> <p>Business case for one 3g pitch being considered.</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> See Helsby Neighbourhood Plan</p>
Kelsall Parish Council	<p><i>MUGA/tennis:</i> in hand.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> currently none; this may not be possible to accommodate at current green.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> Need for increase in allotments, currently have a waiting list; new housing has very small gardens.</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> currently none, this is an aspiration in Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> Improvements needed to current footpath network</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Both churches in Kelsall running out of burial space and not adverse to the idea of woodland burial.</p>
Kingsley Parish Council	<p><i>MUGA/tennis:</i> We have a small one but it is in a remote area of the field and not particularly well used.</p> <p><i>Bowling Greens:</i> We have one at the Institute. It is very well used and maintained.</p> <p><i>Play spaces:</i> Need for more play equipment such as a zip wire and some resurfacing where there is wear and tear.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> Some support for a skate park and BMX track.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> We have a number of these in the village</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> We are currently looking to lease the Middle Lane playing field from CW&amp;C. Discussions are currently taking place between CW&amp;C and the parish council</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> We have a number of protected orchards in the village and a SSSI near to the River Weaver .</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> We do maintain a number of PROW around the village but there is always a case for more investment in stiles, hedge trimming etc. The proposed new path around the playing field will be suitable for cycles, scooters etc.</p> <p>We have lots of cyclists through the village, particularly at weekends, so perhaps there is scope for a cycleway. I think Frodsham Town Council are exploring cycle routes between Frodsham and Delamere Forest as the B5152 can get very congested with cyclists.</p>
Little Leigh	<p><i>MUGA/tennis:</i> New facilities needed.</p> <p><i>Play spaces:</i> CW&amp;C manage a modern one in Shutley Lane.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> Grass area needed.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> Possibly needed.</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> We have the canal, and facilities at the school.</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> Improved route to Barnton - footpath needs upgrading - aspiration in parish</p>

	plan and village design statement.
Malpas parish council	<p><i>MUGA/tennis</i>: Improvements at existing sites.</p> <p><i>Bowling Greens</i>: Improvements at existing sites.</p> <p><i>Play spaces</i>: enhance and improve existing play area.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities</i>: skate park/bike park at Malpas Recreation Ground.</p> <p><i>Allotments</i>: in process of providing allotments for the village.</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves</i>: Improvements needed.</p> <p><i>Paths</i>: Improvements needed.</p>
Moulton	<p><i>Play spaces</i>: Needs updating.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities</i>: Needs updating.</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds</i>: In need of refurbishment.</p>
Neither Peover	<p><i>Paths</i>: Foot path access to the school is dangerous. Crossing Crown lane and then travelling up cobbles is not easy on foot. Extensive footpaths in the area but are not always maintained as well as they could be and not all are accessible for disabled users.</p>
Neston Town Council	<i>General</i> : See Neighbourhood Plan.
Northwich TC	<i>General</i> : See Draft Neighbourhood Plan.
Rushton Parish Council	<p><i>MUGA/tennis</i>: Currently working on project to provide this.</p> <p><i>Play spaces</i>: Currently working on project to provide this .</p> <p><i>Youth facilities</i>: Some facilities will be provided within the play area.</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds</i>: Currently working on picnic area project.</p>
Tarporley Parish Council	<i>General</i> : See Neighbourhood Plan.
Tarvin Parish Council	<p><i>MUGA/tennis</i>: A new Multi-use Games area is needed, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Full size football pitch, which can be adapted for the various formats detailed by the FA</li> <li>• A half size, floodlit all weather multi use pitch suitable for football training, 5 a side and other team games</li> <li>• Changing rooms, including showers and disabled facilities, for both sexes.</li> </ul> <p>Facilities of this type would make it possible to provide open air sport activities for the disabled, something which is not possible in the village at the present time.</p> <p><i>Youth facilities</i>: There are currently very limited facilities suitable for teenagers and there is a need for a BMX park. This has been clearly demonstrated because on more than one occasion the young people have constructed their own BMX trails in the Community Woodland. Due to concerns over liability in the case of a serious accident the Trust has had to remove these trails. A custom made facility is urgently needed.</p> <p><i>Allotments</i>: There are allotments in Bruen /Stapleford but none in the rest of the Parish.</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves</i>: Recently the Woodland Trust persuaded Taylor Wimpey and the planners to include a strip of “woodland walk” as part of the new development. Good access to the countryside and to the Community Woodland was highly rated in the recent village survey. This valued community asset should be extended in a similar way as part of any new development, incorporating both ‘wildlife corridors’ and footpaths. In addition with an increasing elderly population there is a need for safe walking areas with suitable seating areas.</p> <p><i>Paths</i>: Improved footpaths and cycleways will be required to link to any new facilities. Improved footpaths, cycleways and bridleways are required to provide safe access within the village, e.g. between Tarvin and Oscroft. To reduce congestion and to encourage more environmentally friendly transport, safe cycle access between Tarvin &amp; Christleton/Chester needs to be developed.</p>

	<i>Other:</i> Disability access and facilities are required for the Scout & Guide Hall -
Thornton le Moors	<p><i>Play spaces:</i> require complete refurbishment and updating of play areas</p> <p><i>Youth facilities:</i> limited planning for skate parks due to demands on land available</p> <p><i>Wildlife Areas/nature reserves:</i> Gowdy meadows maintained by countryside alliance.</p>
Threapwood Parish Council	<i>Paths:</i> Need for improving the existing footpaths.
Utkinton and Cotebrook Parish	<i>Play spaces:</i> There are no children's play areas in either of the main villages in the Parish, although there is a primary school. This also has minimal play equipment.
Whitegate and Marlin Parish Council	<p><i>Play spaces:</i> Improvements needed.</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> Improvements needed.</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> Improvements needed.</p>
Whitley Parish	<p><i>Play spaces:</i> Expansion of an existing children's play area needed.</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> Village Green/Community focus</p>
Wincham	<p><i>Youth facilities:</i> There is space in the Linnards Lane playing field that could be used as a skate park. It would be very popular.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> Wincham has an allotment society, but no allotments! The village would love to have allotments.</p> <p><i>Parks/recreation grounds:</i> The football pitch on the park needs white lines, flattening of the pitch and nets for the goal posts.</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> cycle paths would be very helpful. Wincham has a canal but no access to the towpath! There is a place for a path to go down from the road, but it would need some work.</p>
Winsford Town Council	<p><i>Play spaces:</i> The Town Council is now in the final year of an 8 year rolling programme to upgrade all its Play Areas and recreation Grounds. Work is due to start shortly on upgrading the play area and developing an outdoor gym at the Wharton Recreation Ground.</p> <p><i>Allotments:</i> The Town Council has recently opened a new allotment site in Wharton, but we still have a waiting list of about 70 people. We are therefore constantly on the look-out for land suitable for allotment purposes</p> <p><i>Paths:</i> The Winsford Neighbourhood Plan puts forward proposals to extend the footpath/cycleway network in Winsford to open up hitherto inaccessible land around the Winsford Flashes, which are large lakes opening up from the River Weaver.</p>

#### ***Town/parish Councils – other comments***

Finally, the survey also provided the opportunity to raise any other issues or to make other points. Table 29 below provides individual town/parish responses made.

**Table 29      Other town/parish council comments**

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Issues and other comments</b>
Ashton Hayes & Horton-cum-Peel	There are a number of facilities outside the immediate area which would be used if reliable frequent public transport was available. At present access to these is dependent on the use of private transport which is not always practical for teenagers or elderly residents.
Moulton	Let local people manage recreation areas, not CW&C.

### 6.3.5 Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, Town Councils and Service Centres

Two key town/parish councils - Northwich Town Council and Tattenhall and District Parish Council (service centre) did not complete a survey but referred us to their Neighbourhood Plans. Relevant extracts are noted below. The Locality Manager for Northwich and Winsford also provided an overview of relevance (see 6.3.2 above)<sup>19</sup>.

#### ***Northwich Town Council***

##### **Northwich Neighbourhood Plan (Draft)**

###### **Natural Environment**

2.2.33 Due to the size, history and geography of Northwich, there are a plethora of environmental issues to consider when planning for the town's future.

###### **Rivers and Landscape**

2.2.34 The confluence of the River Weaver and the River Dane, and the valleys that surround them are a key part of the character of Northwich – a fact underlined by the consultation with residents, which rated this element as most valued in Northwich's environment.

###### **Open Spaces**

2.2.35 There are a variety of open spaces in Northwich, each fulfilling a different role: Formal urban parks, such as Verdin Park or Vickersway Park, which serve a recreation purpose and are used for town events; Sports grounds, such as Moss Farm, which are used for football, rugby, cricket, amongst other sports; Country parks with marked paths and cycle ways, such as the Northwich Community Woodlands. As well as providing an important recreational function, these are also ecologically important; Unmanaged open spaces, such as the Dane Valley, which are no doubt enjoyed for their stunning views, but primarily fulfil an ecological role.

2.2.36 According to the consultation, the town's open spaces were the second-most valued element of Northwich's environment.

###### **Ecology**

2.2.37 To the north of the Town Centre there is the Witton Lime Beds Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<sup>53</sup>. This area was notified in 1979 because of the wide range of plant species within it, many of which are rare in Cheshire and more typical of dune "slacks". The high calcium content of the soil encourages large numbers of snails and ten species have been recorded.

###### **Cycling**

2.2.52 The existing cycle network is relatively limited in its extent and relies upon a mix of signed on-road routes and a number of off-road routes that range in quality from good quality to narrow poorly designed link paths where cyclists currently have to dismount. The Town Council has commissioned a report from Sustrans to look in detail at the existing cycling provision in Northwich and suggest a strategy for improvements. The results of this study have been used to inform the Plan.

###### **Tourism**

2.2.60 With the extensive woodlands and open spaces surrounding the town, the ongoing regeneration project in the Town Centre, and the unusual position on the confluence of two rivers, Northwich has perhaps the greatest untapped tourism potential of any town in the North West.

<sup>19</sup> Both Northwich and Cuddington fall within the Northwich and Winsford Locality area.

## **Water Recreation**

2.2.66 In the consultation with residents, 91.0% believed the River Weaver, River Dane and the Trent and Mersey Canal are not being used to their full potential.

## **Key Issues**

2.3.7 The main issues and needs people thought that the Neighbourhood Plan should address included:

- Make better use of the River Weaver and River Dane, and improve access to them;
- Protect existing and provide additional green space.

## **Proposed Policies (draft)**

### **NBE3 Biodiversity**

Development proposals should seek to increase biodiversity. This can include the provision of new or extended wildlife corridors, new green spaces and the use of indigenous species in new planting. Orchards, hedgerows and mature trees should be retained wherever possible. This should be reflected when considering development proposals that affect trees and hedgerows or proposals that affect Tree Preservation Order protected trees or trees and hedgerows within the Conservation Area. The planting of new woodland and orchards will be encouraged, along with extending the Northwich Woodlands Forest Park in line with The Mersey Forest Plan, 2014 policy C6.

### **NBE5 Protected Green Space and Key Views**

The identified “green spaces” listed in Appendix 5.4 should not be lost or harmed by development except in exceptional cases. In such cases, development should fit with the purposes of the green space, and enhance the recreational value of the site. Major developments should enhance existing green spaces and create new green spaces. New developments should protect the key scenic and distinctive views into and out of Northwich.

### **TRANS6 Pedestrian and Cycling Routes**

New developments should provide for safe, direct and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes. When devising cycle routes, proposals should make reference to Sustrans’ Northwich Cycle Study to ensure they are contributing to the overall strategy. Modifications to existing highways must demonstrate how the highway will be made safer and more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists (with the exception of road classes where pedestrians and cyclists are prohibited), following best-practice guidance and consulting with expert bodies where appropriate. Applications for non-residential development should where possible provide an appropriate level of cycle storage commensurate with the minimum set out in Appendix 01: Cycle Parking Standards of Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Cycling Strategy.

### **HW3 Allotments and Garden Plots**

Existing allotment sites (both in public or private ownership) will be protected from development that does not enhance the allotment site for its intended use. Development will only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for plots and that reasonable efforts have been made to market the available plots and encourage use of the site. Proposals for new residential development should include garden plots, where possible.

4.7.9 In the residents survey, 32.1% responded that they would use an allotment if further land became available, suggesting that further provision will be required in future as the population grows.

## **Tattenhall and District Parish Council**

### **Tattenhall and District Neighbourhood Plan**

**Vision for Tattenhall:** The vision included:

- Endorsing policies that have a positive effect on the environment, including those that remove or minimise flood risk, mitigate climate change and reduce our carbon footprint.

- Maintaining the high quality natural environment with its protected wildlife interests.

## Objectives

- Protect greenspace, the landscape and support nature conservation.

## Strategy

- Important green spaces are to be protected as are strategic views within the Parish and into and out of the village of Tattenhall (Important views are listed at Appendix A). Green wildlife corridors are promoted along Keys Brook and Mill Brook through, and around Tattenhall.
- Improved walking and cycling connections are promoted, as an early action, from the hamlets to Tattenhall via new footways.

## Local Character

### ***Community Feedback***

- Development should minimise impact on woodland, hedges, ponds, streams, verges and geological features – 96% agreed.

## Local Facilities

### ***Community Feedback***

- Provide facilities for young people – 91%

## ***Open Space facilities***

- A wide range of sporting facilities are offered at the Tattenhall Recreation Club. Cheshire West and a bowling green, located in the heart of the village behind the Sportsman's Arms public house, is regularly used during the summer months.
- Open spaces include the Park with its children's play area, Sport Tattenhall and its indoor and outdoor sporting facilities, the Millennium Mile and other footpaths that lead into the wider countryside. A rollerblade and skateboard centre, The Boneyard, is situated in Newton-by Tattenhall.

## Footpaths and cyclepaths

### ***Community Feedback***

- Better footpaths and public rights of ways connecting the main village with the Parish's hamlets are needed.
- Show how pedestrian and cycle facilities will be improved – 94% agreed.
- Improve footpaths/bridleways to surrounding hamlets – 91% agreed.

## ***Policy 5***

- Development should maximise opportunities to walk and cycle, including between Tattenhall, Newton by Tattenhall and Gatesheath as well as supporting public transport where possible.

## Landscape and Environment

### ***Community Feedback***

- Not harm or impact habitats and wildlife corridors – 92% agreed
- Minimise visual and landscape impact – 93% agreed
- Conform with landscape and nature conservation policies – 92% agreed
- Enhance, maintain and create new wildlife corridors – 89% agreed
- Protect, restore and create existing/new wildlife sites – 90% agreed

## **Policy 6**

The areas listed below are designated 'Local Green Spaces' which are protected from new development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated:

### **SITES OF SPORT, RECREATION AND AMENITY VALUE**

These are sites valued for their open access for Sport, Recreation and Amenity. They are areas where residents can come together both informally and where community events are held

- b1 Castlefields play area
- b2 The Park playing field
- b3 Sport Tattenhall playing fields (Recreation Club)
- b4 Allotments on Rocky Lane and at Gatesheath

### **SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE**

There are a number of sites in the Parish that are significant in terms of their wildlife value which warrant protection. The sites listed below are all managed to safeguard and enhance their biodiversity.

- c1 The Mill Brook Wildlife Corridor
- c2 Jubilee Wood
- c3 Glebe Meadow
- c4 Barn Field (land behind flats at Ravensholme Court)
- c5 Land bounded by Barn Field, Glebe Meadow and the Spinney
- c6 The Spinney
- c7 Mill Field
- c8 Disused railway line between Chester Road and Frog Lane
- c9 Wildflower meadow at the front of Tattenhall Hall.
- c10 Allotment Pond, Rocky Lane
- c.11 Land within the curtilage of Tattenhall Marina

New development in the Parish should:

- Seek to protect and, where possible, enhance wildlife value, on the application site, surrounding sites and wildlife corridors.
- Respect local landscape character by reference to the Village Design Statement.
- Support the creation of a network of greenspaces for sport and outdoor recreation.

### **Plan Delivery and Implementation**

#### ***Local Facilities:***

The Parish Council will work with local organisations and the Borough Council to improve facilities and services for local people.

#### ***Landscape and Environment:***

The Parish Council will work with Tattenhall Wildlife Group to ensure that wildlife and the countryside surrounding Tattenhall is protected.

## 6.4 Neighbouring Local Authorities; Locality Areas and Town/Parish Councils - Observations and key issues

### Neighbouring Local Authorities – Cross Boundary Issues

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, recreation and play strategies. The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived.

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 Flintshire).

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

There is 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.

### Locality Areas

Responses were received from all four Locality Managers who provided an overview of issues in their area. Unlike the rest of the Borough Chester and Ellesmere Port do not have City/Town Councils so the responses from these two areas are of particular value in relation to highlighting local interests, aspirations and priorities.

### Town/Parish Councils

#### General Overview

- The individual town/parishes are very different in relation to size, demographics, geography, needs and demand/aspirations. It is important that the study takes this variation into account.
- 27 of the 35 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 30 of the 35 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers. Significant number also highlighted a need to bear in mind appropriate facilities and improvements for older people.

#### Common areas of concern

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

- Not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters etc. and the quality of existing play areas.

- The need for improvements to footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.
- The need for additional Multi-use games areas/tennis courts in some parishes (primarily MUGAs).
- Other fairly commonly identified areas of concern relate to a lack of allotment plots; and the need for improvements to village greens and recreation grounds.

### ***Quality considerations***

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

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

It is also thought important by many parish councils that there should be adequate opportunities for dog walking (and freedom from dog fouling); and that there should be control of noise and anti-social behaviour.

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

Many of the parish councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed. These responses can be found in the associated excel spreadsheet.

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## 7.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

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

The information and findings from the *Community and Stakeholder Consultation* report will be taken forward in the main Open Space Study report.