

Involving communities

Introduction

- 4.1 A series of consultations have been undertaken amongst both users and non-users across the District to establish the views on open space provision.
- 4.2 Consultations were carried out with many organisations and individuals using various methods, including:
- **a household survey** – surveys were distributed to 5,400 randomly selected households across Sevenoaks
 - **sports club surveys** – to all identified sports clubs in the District
 - **young people’s internet survey** – a letter and information pack was sent out to all the primary and secondary schools in the District for completion by pupils
 - **drop-in sessions** – held at five different locations across the District: Bexhill town centre, Little Common, Battle, Ticehurst and Rye.
 - **internal consultations** – with Council Officers from a range of departments including planning, leisure and sports development
 - **external consultations** – with parish councils and other major open space providers in the District to ascertain their views on open space and outdoor facilities.
- 4.3 The information gained from these consultations has been used to inform the study and to help understand:
- the needs and requirements of local residents
 - the attitudes and expectations for open space
 - good and bad points about the existing provision
 - existing open space, sport and recreation provision at a strategic level
 - the key issues/problems facing different Council departments and agencies.
- 4.4 The information collected through the consultation is invaluable to this report and forms the basis of the recommended local standards.
- 4.5 Below is a summary of how the consultations have been used to inform the study and where the information and statistics can be found relevant to quality, quantity and accessibility.

Household survey

- 4.6 The household survey is one of the most important features of the consultation, allowing a number of randomly selected households to comment on quantity, quality and accessibility of open space, and sport and recreation facilities, as well as providing the opportunity to comment on site-specific issues. It allows non-users to be targeted, as well as users.
- 4.7 5,400 household surveys were sent to households spread across the five analysis areas of Rother District. 705 completed surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample that can be used to extrapolate the views of the broader population within the District. A copy of the household survey can be found in appendix D.
- 4.8 Specific questions in the household questionnaire directly input into the standard setting process. For example, respondents were asked whether they consider there to be enough of each type of open space. They were also asked to explain their answer. This provides a sound, opinion-based statistical basis for the quantity standards. It can be further analysed to assess, for example, whether a perceived lack of open space is really a need for better quality facilities or a need for additional facilities.

Respondee profile

- 4.9 57% of respondents were female with the vast majority of completed surveys from residents aged 40-59 (34%) and 60-75 (32%) respectively, most of whom have no children in the household (78%). 97% of residents surveyed were of white British background.

Open space quantity

- 4.10 In terms of quantity, 61% of respondents thought that there was an adequate number of parks and gardens with 19% suggesting that the District was in need of more. A similar result emerges regarding natural and semi-natural areas with a majority of 65% satisfied with the current availability. Amenity areas were viewed as adequate by 43%, almost enough by 16% and not satisfactory by 26%. In terms of play areas there was a significant number of respondents unable to offer an opinion (15%) which can be expected given the older demographic. Of the other responses 39% agree that supply meets demand with 25% believing that there is a shortfall within the district.
- 4.11 Teenage facilities was recognised as a priority area with 59% recording an unsatisfactory supply. Again there was a significant number with no opinion (19%). Outdoor sports facilities on the whole were deemed as acceptable by 39% of the respondents with 29% implying the district required more. Again it is with little surprise that allotment awareness was limited with 39% offering no opinion, the next largest category thought availability was adequate (29%). Over 85% of surveys indicated that there was sufficient or more than enough of beach and coastal areas. Civic spaces are limited in the District and this was reflected by a quarter of respondents not offering any opinion and 28% believing that there is not enough provision. Only 10% of people indicated a shortfall of churchyards and cemeteries in comparison to 45% recording a deficit of green corridors.

Open space usage

4.12 The following table provides percentages relating to how often respondents used each of the open space typologies:

Table 4.1 Usage frequency

Typology	Usage frequency (%)		
	More than once a month	Less than once a month	Don't use
Parks and gardens	50	37	13
Natural areas	66	27	7
Amenity areas	31	30	38
Play areas for children	21	19	60
Teenage facilities	5	7	88
Outdoor sports facilities	20	21	59
Allotments	6	2	92
Beaches and coastal areas	72	24	5
Civic spaces	25	36	39
Cemeteries and churchyards	14	31	55
Green corridors	50	26	24

4.13 There is consistent usage of parks and gardens, natural and semi natural areas, beaches and coastal areas and green corridors. Typologies with limited use are most notably allotments, outdoor sport facilities, cemeteries and churchyards, play areas and teenage facilities; the later two can be accounted for by considering the demographic surveyed. Several facilities are popularly frequented on an irregular basis such as civic spaces and cemeteries. Various typologies are used by a particular group but not used on a regular monthly basis by a significant number such as outdoor sport facilities, teenage facilities, amenity areas and civic spaces which may relate to accessibility and availability of these typologies.

Perceived quality

4.14 Identifying perceived quality of open space areas is critical to establishing specific typology deficits within the Rother District. Residents were asked whether they found each type of open space good, average or poor.

Table 4.2 Perceived quality

Typology	Perceived quality (%)		
	Good	Average	Poor
Parks and gardens	52	40	8
Natural areas	60	37	4
Amenity areas	25	56	18
Play areas for children	24	52	24
Teenage facilities	5	26	70
Outdoor sports facilities	23	48	29
Allotments	25	53	21
Beaches and coastal areas	74	23	3
Civic spaces	24	56	20
Cemeteries and churchyards	38	54	8
Green corridors	33	53	15

- 4.15 The majority of residents perceived the quality of parks and gardens, natural areas, amenity greenspaces, allotments, civic spaces, cemeteries and churchyards, and green corridors as being between average to good. Play areas for children and outdoor sports facilities received a more even distribution with a significant number of residents reporting poor quality facilities. The most concerning typology is that of teenage facilities with 70% of respondents stating quality as poor and only 5% suggesting the sites are good; this may have some correlation to the significant amount of respondents that do not frequent this typology regularly.

Open space most frequented

- 4.16 Residents were asked which typology they visited most often. The most popular was beaches and coastal areas with a significant 37% (Bexhill Beach most regularly used followed by Camber Beach); the second was natural areas with 27% and third parks and gardens with 13%. Less popularly frequented sites were green corridors (7%), play areas for children (6%) and outdoor sports facilities (5%). Amenity areas, civic spaces, allotments, and cemeteries and churchyards all received only 1%. No respondents deemed teenage facilities as their most frequented typology.

Outdoor sports

- 4.17 Residents were asked how they perceived the quantity of various outdoor sport facilities in the District; results are listed in Table 4.3 overleaf.

Table 4.3 Perceived provision of outdoor sports facilities

Type of facility	Perceived provision (%)			
	More than enough	About right	Not enough	No opinion
Grass pitches	5	53	18	24
Synthetic turf pitches	2	12	29	57
Tennis courts	5	38	28	30
Bowling greens	8	46	13	34
Golf courses	13	42	8	37

4.18 For all facilities except synthetic turf pitches the majority of respondents suggest that the quantity of provision is about right. Few respondents across all facilities imply that there is an oversupply of outdoor sport facilities. Synthetic turf pitches appear to be the main facility that is undersupplied across the District with 29%, the largest poll of people that offered an opinion, believing that there is not enough available.

4.19 The following are collective opinions expressed by residents regarding outdoor sport facilities across the Rother District:

- a large demand exists for accessibility to public golfing facilities such as a 'pay as you play' course or driving range
- concern over teenage facilities is most prominent. The general feeling is that low cost facilities need to be provided but there needs to be much more in the way of promotion and encouragement by investing in team leaders and volunteer programmes. Suggestions such as indoor skate ramps and BMX tracks look to establish a way of engaging with a troublesome teenage population
- the quality of sport pitches throughout Rother and especially in areas such as Battle are deteriorating due to excessive dog fouling and poor path management. Drainage issues are also causing problems for parks such as Downs and Egerton and Little Common as well as for recreation ground users, transpiring to reduced accessibility for pushchairs and wheelchairs
- there is a demand for safe cycle paths and horse riding sites
- provision of further synthetic turf pitches with floodlights would occupy a deprived teenage population during evenings. Interest for an athletics facility to serve the whole District is also evident
- car park quality and security is an issue with many feeling that parking sites are poorly lit and often have inadequate surfacing. Furthermore overflow car park management is required at sites such as Broadoak Park
- a greater supply of recreation facilities is required for toddlers, especially in the Battle area

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- a collective view throughout a majority of opinions is that publicity is limited and on sites such as the beach there is a shortage of relevant signage indicating what activities are permitted.

Indoor sport facilities

4.20 Residents were asked how they perceived the quantity of various indoor sport facilities in the District; results are listed below:

Table 4.4 Perceived provision of indoor sports facilities

Type of facility	Perceived provision (%)			
	More than enough	About right	Not enough	No opinion
Swimming pool	2	37	49	12
Sports halls	2	47	30	22
Health and fitness (gyms)	6	49	22	22
Indoor tennis	1	13	35	51
Indoor bowls	3	32	17	48
Church/parish/community halls	8	63	9	20

4.21 Similarly to outdoor sport facilities there is a minority within the District that believe there is an abundance of indoor facilities. Indoor bowls and indoor tennis have a large percentage of 'no opinion' responses, probably due to a shortage of resident involved in these sports there is a distinct contrast. Most believe that there are sufficient bowls facilities in the area, contrary to indoor tennis where there appears to be a greater demand and more limited supply, as 35% of residents indicated not enough facilities available. Almost half of all respondents believe that there is a shortfall of indoor swimming pools and a significant 30% indicating that more sport halls are required. Generally health and fitness facilities and church/parish and community halls appear to suffice in terms of current demand.

4.22 The following are collective opinions expressed by residents regarding indoor sport facilities across the Rother District:

- a sentiment throughout the surveys is that where community and village halls are accessible activities and opportunities are not publicised adequately or that restrictions are too readily put on the type of facility use permitted. Programmes designed for the older generation tend to disregard younger resident requirements
- concessions for elderly but primarily teenagers for leisure centre use at leisure centres such as Summerfields would improve attendance

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- areas such as Sidley, Camber and Bodiam need better hall facilities and Battle requires a swimming pool. There is an evident interest for a form of Yoga class across Bexhill
- while Bexhill leisure pool has made recent refurbishments to the reception and changing room areas the pool is unappealing to several residents. Where a swimming interest exists there is lack of swimming time availability and coinciding this with public transport access during evening hours.

4.23 The following are general issues raised by residents prescribing how overall open space can be improved throughout the Rother District:

- the most prolific concern of residents is the availability of facilities for the teenage population and co-ordinating this successfully with a public transport system, safe paths and cycleways. Respondents provided suggestions such as:
 - creating links between community projects and schools
 - building attractive and suitable new facilities such as enclosed skateboard parks
 - identifying designated youth sport leaders to publicise and organise teenage sport on a local level
 - using local halls for sport and moving away from an elderly dominated program.
- quality of paths especially in natural areas and recreation grounds was a widespread issue with many feeling that this combined with poor drainage in certain areas is prohibiting access
- general publicity of what facilities are available in the District via leaflets or an advertised website would aid residents
- cost of facilities, especially in Bexhill, was a concern with many believing the lack of adequate concessions was depriving the teenage population.

Sports club survey

4.24 The sports club surveys form part of the information collected to inform standards and recommendations for indoor and outdoor sports facilities. Surveys were sent by PMP to 113 sports clubs across the Rother District with additional surveys distributed by the Council's sport officer. 46 surveys were successfully completed and returned, accounting for the following types of sports clubs:

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| • football (12) | • stoolball (4) | • squash (2) |
| • cricket (9) | • table tennis (3) | • hockey (1) |
| • bowls (5) | • water sports / sailing (2) | • rugby (1) |
| • tennis (4) | • badminton (2) | • golf (1). |

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- 4.25 The following points summarise the main generalities arising from the survey regarding club attendances, type of facility currently used and general facility concerns:
- the largest group of facility users comprises of adults, followed by young people and over 50s respectively. Primary age children are the lowest attendance category.
 - the facility type primarily identified by this survey is the grass pitch (used by 25 various types of clubs). Sports hall use is next, encapsulating village, church and leisure centre halls. No club indicated pool use as necessary for their club.
 - just under half of all clubs (21) recognise that facility provision for their type of sport across the district is sufficient. Only golf and bowls clubs suggest an oversupply. Football clubs advocate a slight deficiency in terms of quantity, with current facility usage of grass pitches (11), synthetic pitches (5) and sport halls (5).
 - all clubs surveyed recorded car use as a major form of transport used by members to access the facility. The second highest transport method was to walk (11) followed by cycling (5). There was a reasonably even spread in terms of desired travel time to reach the venue of between 5 to 30 minutes.
 - popular sport sites in the District include facilities at Bexhill College with South Saxons Hockey Club, Glenco Youth Football Club, Bexhill United Football Club, Trader Jacks Football Club all using the all-weather astoturf and 1066 Specials Football Club using the sports hall. Icklesham recreation ground is also frequented regularly, accommodating Icklesham Casuals Football Club and Icklesham Stoolball Club.
 - within the District most club's membership is derived from the Bexhill (15 clubs) and Battle (14 clubs) areas although 8 clubs identify Hastings as a significant source of membership, especially in sports such as football, table tennis and cricket.
- 4.26 An even split was obtained between clubs that believed facilities are adequate for their members and those that require improving. This balance is also reflected between individual sport types. The following are generally collective but more specific issues and concerns expressed:
- several football clubs indicated substandard changing facilities and parking provision. Those that used sports halls and synthetic pitches expressed concern at excessive costs being passed onto their members and lack of booking availability. A recurrent issue was that of poor drainage and flooding throughout the winter months.
 - three bowls clubs (Polegrove, Gullivers and Spartans) specified that poor pavilion quality transcended directly onto insufficient catering and changing facilities
 - cricket clubs lacked public practise facilities with often no winter training option feasible. Etchingam and Fontridge Cricket Club are required to play all matches away due to pitch shortages.

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- tennis within Bexhill requires a form of umbrella management, co-ordinating interclub demand and supply. Bexhill Tennis Club is oversubscribed but Cooden Squash and Tennis club has significant availability.
- stoolball is a prominent sport in Rother that predominantly uses recreation grounds, several of which have poor drainage (Pett and Little Common). As the largest member group is young people there is a concern of over dependency in rural areas on these waterlogged sites due to the large distance required to travel to local leisure centres. Pavilion quality and litter are also issues raised in connection with recreation ground use.
- most clubs suggested that car parks need better lighting to improve security at night, especially at tennis facilities, where a considerable number of members are over 50 or families.
- In terms of club aspirations for facilities across the district most feel that more synthetic turf/all weather pitches would be of most value (48%). Unsurprisingly a significant degree of this demand derives from football (10) and cricket (4) clubs. This is combined with a general feeling throughout the surveys that provision of youth facilities need to be greater. A smaller demand exists for further sports halls and multi-use games areas. 78% of the clubs would rate the quality of facilities in their local area as average or better.

4.27 Level surfaces and good drainage were sighted as features to prioritise on new leisure facilities by 43% surveyed. Again a vast majority of these represented football and cricket clubs. Other popular features included ease and security of parking (16), cost of facility (12) and range of activities on offer (12).

Young people's internet survey

4.28 In December 2006 PMP sent an information pack to all schools in the Rother District inviting their pupils to complete an on-line questionnaire regarding open space and sports facilities in the District of Rother. The survey was based upon a standard questionnaire that has been developed through working on over 50 PPG17 studies; however, this has been amended to more suitably reflect Rother District. The survey can be viewed in appendix D.

Demographics

4.29 A total of 758 surveys were completed and submitted on-line. Six schools responded to the survey:

- Battle and Langton Primary School
- Claverham College (four responses)
- Guestling Bradshaw (ten responses)
- Robertsbridge Community College
- St Richards Catholic College
- Thomas Peacock Community College (11 responses).

4.30 Of the respondents 50% are aged 9-11, 44% 12-14 and 6% 15-18. 60% of the respondents were male however the ethnic background was not requested.

Other interests

- 4.31 Pupils were asked what activities they preferred to do in their spare time, for which three main options were provided. The results were:
- indoor activities like playing games and watching TV (22%)
 - play sport (32%)
 - play or hang out with friends outside (45%).
- 4.32 If none of the three main options were selected, a fourth “other” option was available. 16.5% of pupils indicated the “other” option, with the most popular responses being:
- computer based activities (either games or social networking sites) – 16
 - musical instruments – 7
 - shopping – 11
 - bmxing/cycling – 7
 - horse riding 6
 - reading – 5
 - listening to music – 4.
- 4.33 The next question asked “what is your favourite activity in your free time?”. The answers were broadly similar to the previous question. The most popular answers were sport based and the most popular sport was football (130 responses). This was followed by swimming (36 responses), horse riding (26 responses) and basketball (22 responses). The other most popular answers included meeting with friends (56 responses), computer based activities (65 responses) and shopping (33 responses).
- 4.34 Other answers of note are dance (28 responses), skateboarding (19 responses), bmxing/cycling (35 responses), watching television (17 responses) and reading (10 responses).
- 4.35 Pupils’ awareness of organised out of school sport or school holiday play activities was questioned next. 43% stated they knew of such activities, 33% did not know of such activities whilst 24% stated they did not know.
- 4.36 The next question was designed to ascertain interest in out of school sport or play activities. The responses were broadly similar to the previous question with 53% interested, 26% uninterested and 21% indicating they did not know.

Open space most frequently used

- 4.37 67% of respondents stated that they use open space near to where they lived. A large proportion of the sites identified were outside the District, in particular Alexander Park in Hastings, Summerfields Leisure Centre in Hastings and various sites in Eastbourne. Within the Rother District the most popular answer was Egerton Park (19 responses) followed by Battle Recreation Ground (13), Hurst Green Recreation (11) and Robertsbridge Recreation Ground (10).

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4.38 Other venues of note include:

- Broad Oak Recreation Ground
- Gildredge Park
- Little Common Recreation Ground
- Northiam Park
- Staplecross Park
- Bexhill Downs.

4.39 Q11 asked what type of open space they visited most often. The most popular answer was for amenity green spaces (21%), followed by play areas (19%) and grass pitches (17%). Multi use games areas usage was selected by 13% with a further 9% using a specific teenage facility such as a skate park.

4.40 The frequency of usage to the type of open space visited most often was next questioned and 58% of respondents stated that they use the facility once or more a week. 31% use it once a month or more, with just 11% using it once a year or more. It is worth noting that as this survey was undertaken in December it is possible that a higher score may be ascertained during the summer.

4.41 The vast majority of pupils walked to the open space that they visited most often (57%). The next most popular mode of transport was to cycle (18%), then car (17%), followed by skating (5%). When asked for their preferred mode of transport, walking was still the most popular method with 37%. Cycle was the second most popular with 33% with car dropping to 13%.

4.42 Pupils were then asked how long they would be willing to travel to an open space. The results showed:

- less than five minutes – 34%
- less than ten minutes – 23%
- less than fifteen minutes – 20%
- more than fifteen minutes – 11%
- more than twenty minutes – 11%.

4.43 The main reason for using an open space or sports facility was to meet friends (25%). The next five answers all received similar responses, these were:

- to play on sports pitches/courts with friends – 17%
- to play on the sports pitches/courts with a team – 14%.
- it is just somewhere to go – 13%
- for a kickabout/informal play – 12%
- to use the playground/play equipment – 11%.

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4.44 The top three “likes” about the open space used was that it is located close to home (28%), it is free to use (27%) and it is a good place to meet friends (21%). The top three “dislikes” were its unavailability in the evenings (18%), the play facilities are boring (16%) and the levels of litter and graffiti (15%).

Open spaces in the local area

4.45 41% of respondents stated there are open spaces in their local area where they feel unsafe. A large number of respondents mentioned parks and woodland sites in general, with Egerton Park the most mentioned site. Many comments stated that they only felt unsafe at nighttime.

4.46 In terms of improving safety, the following responses were given with regards to the implementation of specific safety features:

- lighting (33%)
- cameras (25%)
- staff on site (22%)
- being overlooked (14%)
- organised activities on site (5%).

4.47 Respondee were then asked about the quantity and quality of open space in their area. Table 4.5 shows that the dominant answer for both quantity and quality was “fair”.

Table 4.5 Quantity and quality responses

Play area responses	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know
Amount of play/youth facilities available	29%	34%	27%	10%
Overall quality of youth/play facilities	21%	40%	26%	13%

4.48 When asked what improvements respondents would like to see at a new or improved facility there was no clear consensus. 17% wanted more interesting play equipment whilst 15% wanted additional indoor sports facilities. A skate park was favoured by 10%, whilst 13% wanted a specific indoor youth facility. The least popular improvement was for planned organised activities (5%). 105 respondents answered “other” for this question, with the most popular “other” answer being for an indoor swimming pool. Other popular answers included basketball courts/hoops, youth clubs and an ice rink.

Other comments

4.49 The final question was a general comments box regarding open spaces and sports facilities. The main themes from answers to this question were:

- youth centre requests
- concerns of the quality of current equipment and sites
- a general lack of current facilities and equipment
- a cinema in Bexhill
- skate parks and bmx specific areas wanted
- swimming pool requests
- concerns regarding anti-social behaviour from older children.

Internal Consultation

4.50 The internal consultation is another important feature of the study. It provides an overview of Council plans, roles of officers and expectations from their perspectives. Individuals from various Council departments were consulted.

4.51 Face-to-face interviews were used to inform the setting of local standards for the various types of open space in the District.

4.52 This also feeds into the separate sections of the report (Sections 5-12) and setting of local standards (Appendices H, I and J).

4.53 The most significant points to come out of the internal consultation were:

- to maximise through long-term development strategies the natural potential of the area. Methods include increasing publicity, and initiating partnerships across the District that balance the needs of various interest groups.
- the need for greater youth opportunities, implemented through schemes such as the Play Strategy. This must co-exist with good accessibility and adequate public transport to meet the requirements of a progressive and diverse youth population.
- that accessibility is a prominent concern within Rother District due to its rural status and inadequate public transport provision. As a result the council has had to invest heavily in local community and village hall projects to meet resident demand.
- funding for open space development is already limited with further reductions expected. This has meant local facilities have suffered and while poorer areas have been identified and are being addressed, issues such as drainage and geographic location of play area are currently deemed as minor isolated issues.

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- generally most sites across the District are well maintained with beaches, coastal areas and outdoor pitches all of a reasonable standard and used regularly by the public. There is also an expressed interest that Bexhill may be able to justifiably accommodate more major leisure venues, wet and dry, in the future.

Parish consultation

- 4.54 Each Parish Council is requested to complete a survey to express their thoughts on quality and quality of the open space in their parish. This enables analysis of areas of provision that are perceived adequate and sites that are deemed to have deficiencies. Such information sourced direct from the Parish Council can be of value in offering a source of local comparison and identifying local needs.

Fairlight Parish Council

- 4.55 This parish's indoor and outdoor facilities are all perceived as suitable to meet demand with the village hall experiencing high levels of usage but with no availability problems. Overall maintenance and cleanliness of open space is deemed as very good with the only inadequate aspect being parking. There appears to be no resident demand for improvements of sites with Woodfield and the village hall justified as being examples of good practise. The bowls club are currently building an extension and this will incorporate improvements to the Woodfield paths, an element of enhanced accessibility that was desired by residents.
- 4.56 Accessibility to individual open space sites across the parish area is good but general provision and distance from public transport and cycleways is thought to be very poor with signage being a further issue of concern. Overall the outdoor accessibility rating is good. Indoor facility accessibility is perceived as very good, including the promotion of sites; the only shortfall being that of cycleway provision. A general feeling was that facilities should be within 20 minutes walk and 5 minutes drive.

Hurst Green Parish Council

- 4.57 Lodge Field playground is perceived as being a very good site with high usage and good accessibility. Drewetts cricket field again experiences high usage yet has poor accessibility, similarly Stage Field, owned by Rother District Council is perceived as having poor accessibility but also an insignificant level of usage and being of poor quality.
- 4.58 The village hall is used often with excellent quality and accessibility. The only significant open space typologies in the Parish are amenity greenspace, play areas and outdoor sports facilities; quantity of all is perceived as basic. The only indoor facility, the village hall is noted as adequate for the population. Litter, noise, signage and parking are all problems across the Parish. Overall quality is average to good. Residents have not expressed any trepidation at current facility provision.
- 4.59 Accessibility to Stage Field is the main issue combined with a serious lack of public transport provision. In terms of indoor facilities there is a slight lack of signage and promotion of the village hall; overall accessibility to all sites is average. Proposed walk-time to the main facilities, play areas, outdoor sports facilities and village halls is 15 minutes yet while children should not have to travel more than 5 minutes in a car to play areas, 30 minutes is an acceptable drive-time to sports facilities. Accessibility is not a concern of residents within Hurst Green.

Ticehurst Parish Council

- 4.60 All open space sites, Flimwell Recreation Ground, Ticehurst Allotments, and Ticehurst Recreation Ground have high usage, are of very good quality and easily accessible. Indoor facilities are of average to poor quality with Ticehurst Scout Hut also experiencing low usage. The supply of parks and gardens, amenity greenspaces, play areas, and allotments (all plots occupied with a waiting list) is satisfactory. Demand exists for more outdoor sports facilities in the Parish. There is a further indoor facility demand for another village hall in Flimwell and restoration of the Scout Hut. Developments proposed involve Flimwell Trust in conjunction with Woodlands Enterprises.
- 4.61 Parking is the main problem in the Parish with lighting, toilets, pathways and signage also current concerns. General cleanliness and maintenance is of a good standard. Resident complaints include noise disturbance and the flooring of Ticehurst Hall becoming hazardous. Development suggestions include rectifying the village hall situation and providing changing facilities at the football sites. The multi-court tennis facility at Ticehurst is considered a flagship facility for the Parish catering for a youth population.
- 4.62 Provision of public transport is poor as well as signage and promotion of outdoor and indoor sites. Cost, entrances and distance from the user population is perceived as being very good for outdoor facilities and reasonably good for indoor sites. Across all open space sites excluding beaches, the walk-time should be 10 minutes and drive-time 5 minutes. The Parish are unaware of any accessibility complaints from local residents but improvement suggestions for car parks and lighting would hopefully minimise the use of pavements for parking.

Ashburnham and Penhurst Parish Council

- 4.63 Only two facilities are cited, Ashburnham Cricket Ground and Ashburnham Village Hall both of which experience low levels of usage despite the cricket ground having very good accessibility and being of good quality. The village hall is of poor quality and with average accessibility; stimulating complaints from local residents regarding kitchen and toilet facilities. Suggestions of a new hall being built have been made.
- 4.64 Provision of public transport and cycleways is very poor with distances from the population to outdoor open spaces and indoor facilities being very poor via all forms of transport. Signage and promotion of open space facilities appears nonexistent and very poor for indoor facilities. Walk-time to all sites should be 20 minutes, cycle, bus and drive-time 10 minutes. Residents have made no complaints or suggestions.

Iden Parish Council

- 4.65 All outdoor open spaces are of reasonable quality with average to good accessibility and only the new burial ground currently with low usage. Iden Park is frequented most significantly by residents and seen as the leading facility, used regularly by the cricket team. The village hall is the only indoor facility and used often, is of a very good quality and has excellent accessibility. Quantity of all indoor and outside facilities is satisfactory excluding the provision for children and young people where a perceived shortage exists. The only quality issue is dog fouling but lighting, toilets and pathways are not envisaged as applicable to the Parish. Residents regarding open space quality have made no complaints or suggestions.

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- 4.66 All accessibility aspects are good to very good except for the provision of public transport. Cycle and drive-time to facilities is hoped to be 2-5 minutes and walk-time 5 minutes for all sites except green corridors (10 minutes). Residents have not reported any accessibility problems.

Whatlington Parish Council

- 4.67 St Mary Magdalene Church has low usage, good accessibility and is of satisfactory quality. Footlands Wood is used heavily and is of excellent quality and has very good accessibility. The only indoor facility is the village hall that is used regularly offering good quality and accessibility.
- 4.68 There are no quality issues with very limited evidence of vandalism, graffiti, litter, litter, and dog fouling. There is also a very good provision of signage and pathways. Lighting, equipment, planted areas, toilets and changing facilities are not seen as applicable to the area. No complaints from residents regarding quality have been voiced. Footlands Wood is sited as well laid out with good walking facilities but has been spoilt to a degree by a large telephone mast being erected.
- 4.69 Accessibility for outdoor facilities is perceived as being very good with excellent entrances, opening times, costs to the user, distance of transport from the population, signage and promotion of sites. Public transport is good although cycleways are not present in the Parish. Indoor facilities are slightly less accessible on foot or by public transport but this is still seen as adequate. Overall the accessibility rating is good. Drive and bus time is desired to be around 20 minutes to most sites but with just 5 minutes to village halls. It was stated that Footlands Wood is infrequently served by buses whilst walking distances should not exceed 5 minutes.

Westfield

- 4.70 Westfield offers a variety of open space facilities that all have an adequate to high usage and accessibility with just the Parish Field perceived as being of poor quality. The Community and Church halls both have significant usage with good accessibility and are of a high standard. The Scout Hut is used fairly often but with average accessibility and is of a poor quality; plans are being made for a new hall. There is a demand for more gardens (possibly as part of the recreation site), provision for children (decent sized play facility), and outdoor sports facilities (for an alternative to football).
- 4.71 Development plans this year include a new football and cricket pavilion, new scout hut, senior and junior football pitch and a play area (planning permission to be submitted). Current quality standards are reasonable except for provision of bins, lighting, equipment security and safety, and parking. Residents have complained about the limited use of the Parish Field (for football) and the restricted size of the three old play areas. Current Parish plans should address these concerns. Issues of sport use inside the community hall have arisen because of a restriction brought about by damaged ceiling tiles.
- 4.72 Public transport provision and distance from the population is not seen as applicable and cycleway provision is poor. All other accessibility issues are satisfactory to good with particularly good access to facilities by foot. A suggested 5 minute drive-time and 10-15 minute walk-time to facilities is thought to be appropriate. Residents have signalled that greater access is required to the Parish Field and that football users should not dominate the facility. Accessibility is a major element to any plans forwarded for new open space facilities by the Parish.

Bodiam Parish Council

- 4.73 The Parish Council identified open space facilities at Levetts Lane Play Area, Bodiam Recreation Ground, Levetts Lane AGS and the Village Green. All are substantially underused yet are of a high quality with good accessibility. A focus has been upon the well-equipped play area that has poor usage levels partially as it's liable to flooding. Plans are in progress to develop a village hall with possible recreation facilities following resident suggestions. The quality of all open spaces are average to good but lighting, pathways, noise and smells are not seen as applicable.
- 4.74 Accessibility to all facilities is average to good with all open spaces free of charge to the user. Walk-time to sites should be 15-20, cycling and driving 5-10 minutes. Accessibility to open spaces is a concern amongst the residents.

Camber Parish Council

- 4.75 Jubilee Green is underused but all outdoor open spaces are of good quality and generally have very good accessibility except for Romney Marshes. Indoor sites are all used often and are of a good quality but accessibility to Pontins and Park resort is very poor. In terms of quantity more parks and gardens (picnic tables and planting), natural and semi-natural areas, green corridors, and amenity greenspaces are required. The allotment is fully occupied but there is no waiting list.
- 4.76 Indoor sites are used regularly yet there is demand to develop a youth club. Other proposed developments include a multi-use games court (currently being installed) with teen shelter and skate ramps on Johnsons Field. An extended cycleway to join up all current routes has been applied for and funding is being sought. A suggested open play area near Pelwood Road would also offer value to the local community.
- 4.77 The Parish suffers from litter problems through bin shortages and also has very poor planted areas, changing rooms, pathways and signage with parking also requiring attention. Residents concern are significant with large support for current developments and also the suggestion that better signage to show public rights of way is required and pathways/bridges across the beach and marsh areas need to be maintained. Indoor provision for teenage recreation such as youth clubs is a priority for residents.
- 4.78 Accessibility issues stem from poor provision of cycleways and lack of signage. Opening times of indoor facilities is also a problem, possibly escalated by lack of publicly circulated information and promotion regarding these facilities. A focus on disabled access to open spaces, especially beaches is required. Walk-time to sites should not exceed 20 minutes, cycle-time and bus time no higher than 15 minutes and drive-time between 5-10 minutes.

Sedlescombe Parish Council

- 4.79 All outdoor open spaces in Sedlescombe are have high usage levels except the allotment which is fairly derelict due to lack of publicity. The Village Hall (new in 2001) is used regularly yet the Scout Hut is largely underused and is in imminent danger of closing. A greater need for children play areas (for the under 12s) and outdoor sports facilities such as a new pavilion on the sports field to replace the very poor current changing facilities (planning permission submitted).

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- 4.80 Provision of bins across the Parish is very good yet there is still a limited amount of litter. Complaints from residents have transpired from anti-social behaviour caused by youths using open spaces for drinking and thus a demand has arisen for facilities such as skate parks, swings, land for off-road bikes to alleviate the current teenage problem.
- 4.81 Accessibility is adequate with just a shortfall of cycleways sighted. Opening times of facilities and cost to the user is excellent for outdoor provisions. Walk-times to sites should be 10-20 minutes, residents appear satisfied with overall accessibility.

Northiam Parish Council

- 4.82 There are low levels of use for Harlots Wood, Goddens Gill green, Northiam Village Green, and The Meadow yet all have average to good accessibility and quality standards. Northiam Bowling green is highly used, of excellent quality yet has poor accessibility. Accessibility and quality of all indoor facilities is acceptable but St Marys Churchyard has no usage status and is currently closed. The Village Hall is significantly used with excellent accessibility and is of a very high quality.
- 4.83 There is a shortfall of play areas and cemeteries and churchyards (all grave plots full), both of which need updating and extending, plans are being considered. The allotment is well maintained and fully occupied. Currently a new community/school sports facility is under construction. Quality of play equipment is very poor and information and signage and parking in the area needs attention. Complaints from residents are focussed on play areas that need extending and improving. Dog fouling and illegal parking on these sites must be prevented.
- 4.84 All forms of transport except walking are not seen as applicable to the Parish. Signage is poor and promotion of open space is very poor. Walk-time should be 20-30 minutes to all sites except village, community, church and scout halls which should not exceed 10 minutes. All other forms of transport to sites should be 5 minutes.

Burwash Parish Council

- 4.85 Limited information provided – high usage of all indoor and outdoor sites.

Ewhurst

- 4.86 Colliers Green is the only outdoor site with low usage levels. All outdoor open spaces are of a good quality with excellent accessibility. All indoor facilities are also of a reasonable quality with good accessibility and are used frequently. A demand exists for more play areas, outdoor sports facilities and cemeteries as well as all forms of indoor halls and community centres. Quality issues are cited for toilets and changing room issues. Cleanliness, maintenance, security and safety, vegetation are all seen as adequate. Resident concerns are targeted at updating the village hall and providing more parking across the Parish.
- 4.87 Cycleways are the main accessibility shortfall for both indoor and outdoor facility locations. The maximum walk-time to sites should be 15 minutes for all and a cycle, bus, drive-time of no more than 10 minutes.

Crowhurst Parish Council

- 4.88 All outdoor open spaces are perceived as having high usage figures, very good accessibility and being of excellent quality. The Youth Club and Crowhurst Village Hall have high usage levels but are of poor quality and the youth club is difficult to access. Supply of all facilities is adequate to meet demand and on the whole these sites are appreciated and well looked after by the local community. Nevertheless there is a demand for refurbishing both the Village Hall and the Scout Hut with further consideration towards a multi-use facility.
- 4.89 Quality issues in the Parish stem from poor toilets, changing rooms and parking located at the Village Hall. Generally cleanliness, maintenance and security are satisfactory. The recreation ground is identified as an excellent site for community use with a recently upgraded play area.
- 4.90 Provision of public transport, and unsafe, limited cycleways is the main accessibility problem. The cost to the user of the indoor facilities as well as lack of informative promotion are cited as further negatives. Walk time to parks and gardens and beaches should be around 30 minutes but all other walk-times between 10-20 minutes. Drive-time for sites except parks and gardens, outdoor sport facilities, allotments and beaches should not exceed 5 minutes. Besides issues over parking at the Village Hall the other limiting factor water logging of the recreation ground during winter months.

Peasmarsch Parish Council

- 4.91 Level of usage, quality and accessibility of all outdoor open spaces is perceived as reasonable with particular high use levels at the allotment (all plots occupied, no waiting list) and recreation ground. The one public indoor facility is the Memorial Hall, which is used often but is of poor quality. A demand for further play areas and outdoor sports facilities is required to counter the overuse of the current recreation ground and pitch respectively.
- 4.92 The church hall is used regularly for village functions and projects are currently underway for a new hall (Peasmarsch Action Plan, 2006). Quality of sites is seen as average to good with the only issue being dog fouling. The recreation ground is overused by football and stoolball players causing it to deteriorate rapidly over the winter season especially. Another field is required to cater for informal users. The bowls club is cited as a facility of excellent standard. Farley's Way Play Area is not adequately spaced and has caused disturbances for the neighbours.
- 4.93 Accessibility issues only arise through provision of cycleways, all other aspects are of a good standard and meet resident requirements. Walk-time for facilities except play areas (10 minutes) is between 15-20 minutes with a 30 minutes bus journey to beaches and outdoor sports facilities envisaged as appropriate. A new gate has been proposed to improve wheelchair and pushchair access to the recreation ground.

Salehurst and Robertsbridge Parish Council

- 4.94 Level of usage and perceived quality of all open space type is good or very good with the only exception being the allotment, which is perceived as being of average quality. Accessibility to all open spaces is average or good with Jubilee Gardens being very good. Robertsbridge Hall has high usage, quality and very good accessibility. Both the Scout and Guide Huts are used often with average to good

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accessibility and quality. The Church Hall is used often but is of poor quality with poor accessibility.

- 4.95 There is a demand for a greater provision of equipment and areas for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities. Provision of all other types of facility is perceived as adequate for indoor and outdoor open spaces. The Salehurst Churchyard is full with estimated space available in the Parish Cemetery until 2040.
- 4.96 Quality of equipment is very good. All aspects of cleanliness, maintenance, security, safety, vegetation and ancillary accommodation are perceived as average to good. There is an absence of appropriate lighting in the Parish. There have been no open space issues raised by residents but it is felt that the area would benefit from a rugby pitch and associated facilities. Accessibility to all facilities, indoor and out is generally good but with the notable absence of public transport and the provision of cycleways. The only suggestion for enhanced accessibility is to provide a children's play area at Heathfield Gardens.

Drop in sessions

- 4.97 The public consultation sessions provided the chance for any member of the public within Rother to comment informally on open space within their local area. The sessions were advertised in the local press and by press releases and held across two main towns, Battle, Bexhill, Rye and Ticehurst providing an opportunity for everyone to comment.
- 4.98 One theme to emerge was that of cycleway provision. There is a significant demand for cycle access along the whole seafront at Bexhill and providing safe access for on and off road cyclists throughout the District.
- 4.99 Teenage facility provision is another concern amongst residents with a notable lack of proper youth clubs. Improvement suggestions include a greater presence of youth workers in rural areas, sport and leisure centres playing a greater role in youth sport team promotion, and more floodlighting of current outdoor recreation facilities. Many youths suggested a demand for a more advanced skate park facility, similar to that of Hastings.
- 4.100 Proper dog walking open space was another prominent issue. Fenced amenity greenspace and natural and semi natural areas are needed whereby dogs can be allowed to run free whilst being supervised by their owners. In retrospect there is also a concern amongst residents that dog fouling is diminishing the appeal of current open space areas such as Camber Beach; more dog fouling bins and tighter regulation enforcement are recommended solutions.
- 4.101 Young people's play areas require new and updated equipment (North Trade Recreation Ground) or replacing of removed items (Egerton Park). Play areas need greater maintenance and more varied items for older children such as a football wall to play against. Residents requested greater enforcement of rules preventing mopeds and bikes being brought onto areas. Proper secure boundaries should be provided around all sites.
- 4.102 Bexhill residents expressed a concern over future developments at Galley Hill and the need to retain areas such as this in order to provide an extensive range of necessary small amenity greenspaces and parks and gardens that have direct parking and proper pathways across.

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- 4.103 It was suggested that there should be greater public access to outdoor school sports facilities, especially in Bexhill. This is due to drainage problems and overuse of current recreation ground pitches across the District such as at Little Common.
- 4.104 Other issues of note that arose were a greater security of churchyards to protect against vandalism, the need for larger and more accessible swimming pools, greater provision of public golf facilities, more information about allotment availability in urban areas, and greater promotion of events and activities at leisure centres. Many also felt that a lack of paths within and onto large amenity greenspaces and natural and semi natural areas such as High Wood hindered accessibility and deterred use.