

MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL OPEN SPACE, SPORT & RECREATION STUDY: ASSESSMENT REPORT

PART I: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) is currently undertaking a review of its Local Plan. The Council has produced a Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out the stages for production of a Local Development Framework. The scheme includes the preparation of Open Space Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) and Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations SPD. As part of this process, this PPG17 compliant Audit and Needs Assessment provides the necessary evidence base and to provide recommendations for implementation in the Open Space SPD.
- 1.2 In addition to the above, this report provides MHDC with clear strategic pathways for improvement, investment and protection of open spaces, sport and recreational provision. However, this report is a 'living document' and the recommendations contained within it are to be reviewed on a regular basis as outlined in PPG17 and to take account of adopted local plan housing sites as and when required.
- 1.3 The report provides an audit based assessment of both quantitative and qualitative open space, sport and recreation facilities in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and the Companion Guide entitled "Assessing Needs and Opportunities" published in September 2002. The outputs from this study include:
- A comprehensive audit of existing provision of different types of open space, sporting and recreational facilities detailing quantity, quality, accessibility and wider value to the community.
 - Identification of local needs and recommended standards of provision for all types of open space, sporting and recreational facilities in accordance with PPG17.
 - Identified deficiencies or surpluses in provision.
 - Strategies and development plan policies to protect, enhance and provide facilities in response to identified shortfalls or over provision both now and in the future, delivering a network of accessible, high quality open spaces and sports and recreation provision.
 - A comprehensive, robust evidence base for planning policies in development plans.
 - Evidence to inform community, corporate and departmental strategies/initiatives and development control decision making.
 - Information to enable the Council to justify collecting developer contributions and to inform their distribution.
- 1.4 The study follows the five stages as outlined in "Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG 17". The five stages in summary are:
- Reviewing existing strategies and policies and consultation with communities to establish current and future priorities and needs.
 - Audit of the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open space.

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- ❑ Set standards of provision for open space to include quantitative; qualitative and accessibility measures.
- ❑ Applying standards of provision to identify surpluses and (or) deficiencies.
- ❑ Assessing strategic options and prepare draft policies for inclusion in the Local Development Framework.

1.5 This report now presents the latest and most up to date picture of open space provision in the District and, as such, replaces any previous study site recommendations. However, the report does recognise the importance of the Malvern Urban Greenspace Study (MUGS) in consideration of the value of sites. Although the MUGS has different considerations, there are also some overlaps with this study and its examination of value complements the assessment for this study. A list of sites assessed by both this study and the MUGS is included at Appendix I.

Resident survey

1.6 KKP carried out a household postal survey to identify the attitudes and needs of the broader local community. KKP received 824 responses from across the District:

❑ Malvern Town area	232
❑ Rural areas	282
❑ Tenbury Town area	84
❑ Upton and Hanley areas	115
❑ Unallocated areas	110

1.7 This provides a robust sample, capable of sub-analysis, e.g., by area, gender, age etc. Variations are highlighted in analysis for the individual typologies. Data is particularly useful when assessing walk/cycle/drive-time catchments. Key issues covered include the following:

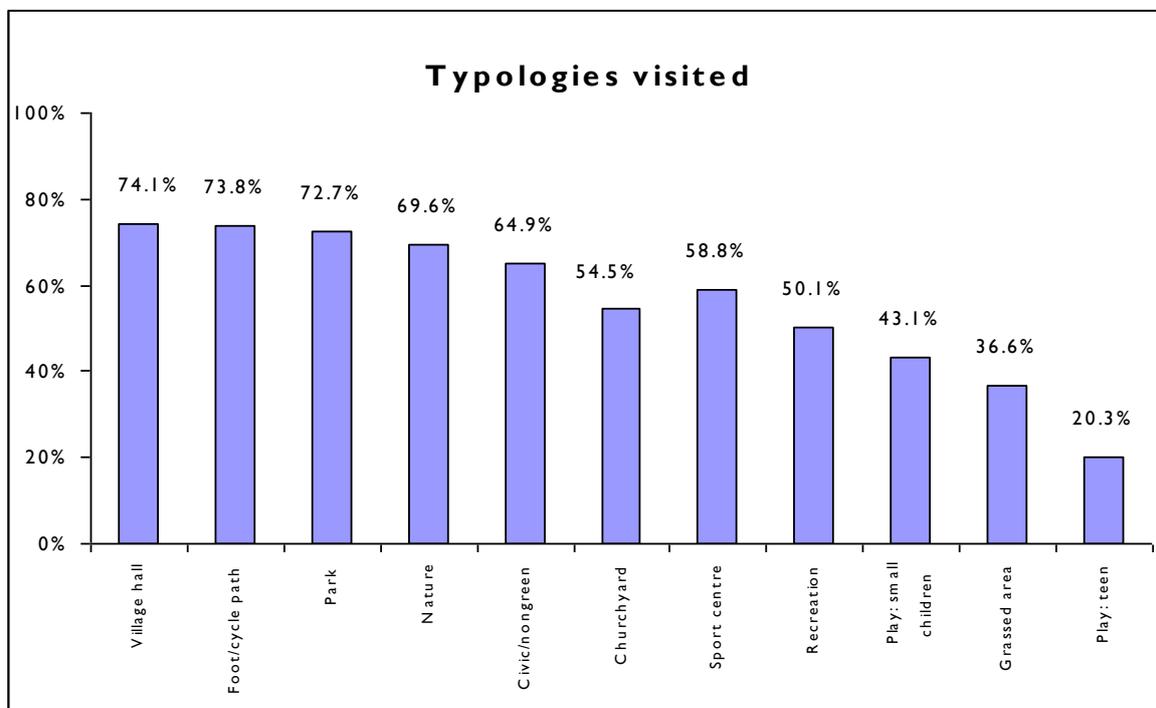
- ❑ Current usage of open spaces.
- ❑ Reasons for usage/non-usage of open spaces.
- ❑ Time taken/distance travelled to open spaces.
- ❑ Attitudes to open spaces (e.g., adequacy, quality, accessibility).

1.8 The summary of results (generic issues, which cut across more than one typology) of the two surveys have been analysed and are presented in graph format with commentary below. Questions relevant to individual typologies are covered in the relevant sections of the Report.

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Usage of open spaces

Figure 2.2: Types of open spaces visited in the previous 12 months

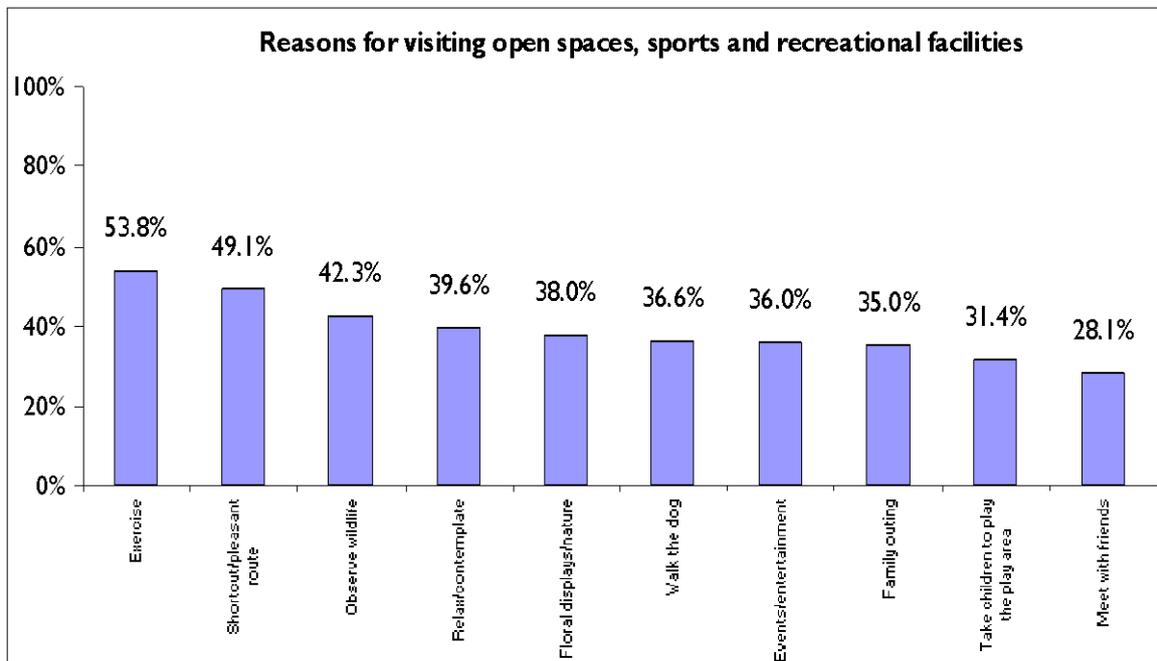


1.9 The most commonly visited typologies in the previous 12 months are village halls/community centres (74.1%), foot/cycle paths (73.8%), parks (72.7%) and nature areas (69.6%). Sizeable proportions also have visited civic/non green space (64.9%) and sports centres (50.1%). Only two typologies have usage rates below a third - allotments (10.5%) and play areas for teenagers (20.3%). These reflect the nature of use of these types of provision (e.g., teenage play areas will only be used by a small proportion of the population).

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Reason for usage

Figure 2.3: Reasons for usage of open space in the previous 12 months

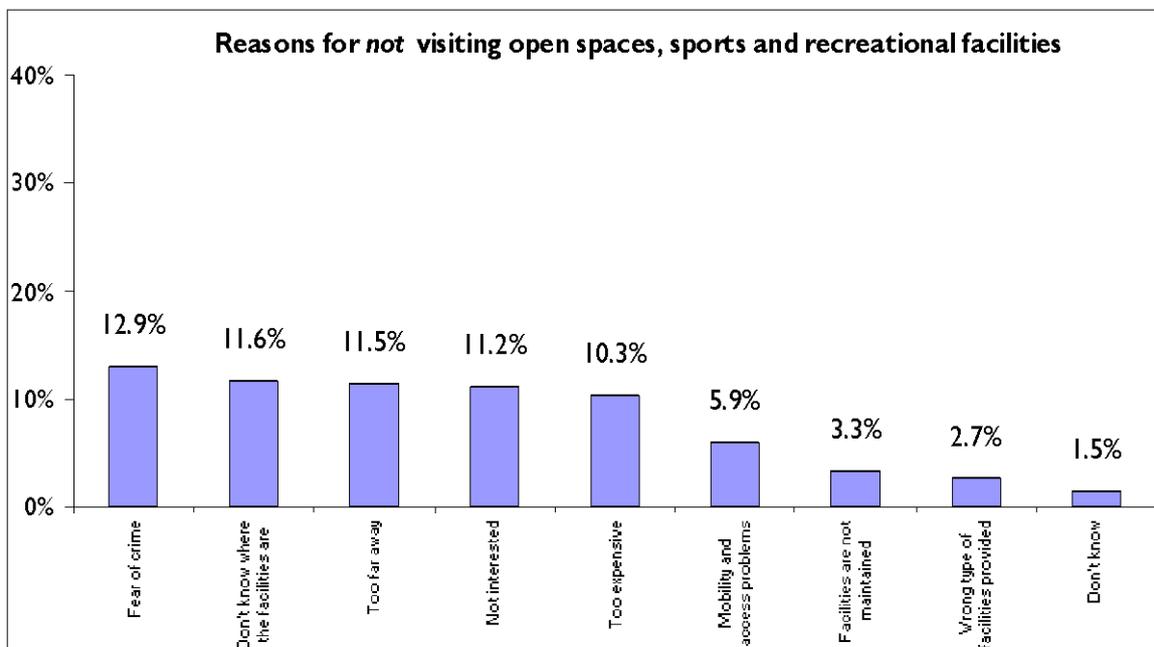


1.10 The most popular reason for visiting open spaces, sports and recreational facilities is for exercise with over half (53.8%) of residents stating this. Nearly half (49.1%) use open spaces as a shortcut or scenic route with a further 42.3% who visit to observe wildlife. Other popular reasons for having visited open spaces, sport and recreational facilities in Malvern Hills District include to relax/contemplate (39.6%), enjoy floral displays/nature (38.0%), walking a dog (36.6%) and events/entertainment (36.0%).

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Reasons for non-usage

Figure 2.4: Reasons for non-usage of open spaces (proportion of all respondents)



1.11 The most commonly cited reason for not visiting open spaces, sport and recreational facilities is the fear of crime (12.9%). This is reinforced by findings of the consultation process, although it must be noted that the fear of crime is higher than the actual incidence, suggesting that more work is required to attract residents to open spaces and other facilities and demonstrate their safety. Other reasons highlighted include people being unaware of the location of such space (11.6%), that they are too far (11.5%) or that they are not interested (11.2%).

Quality of provision

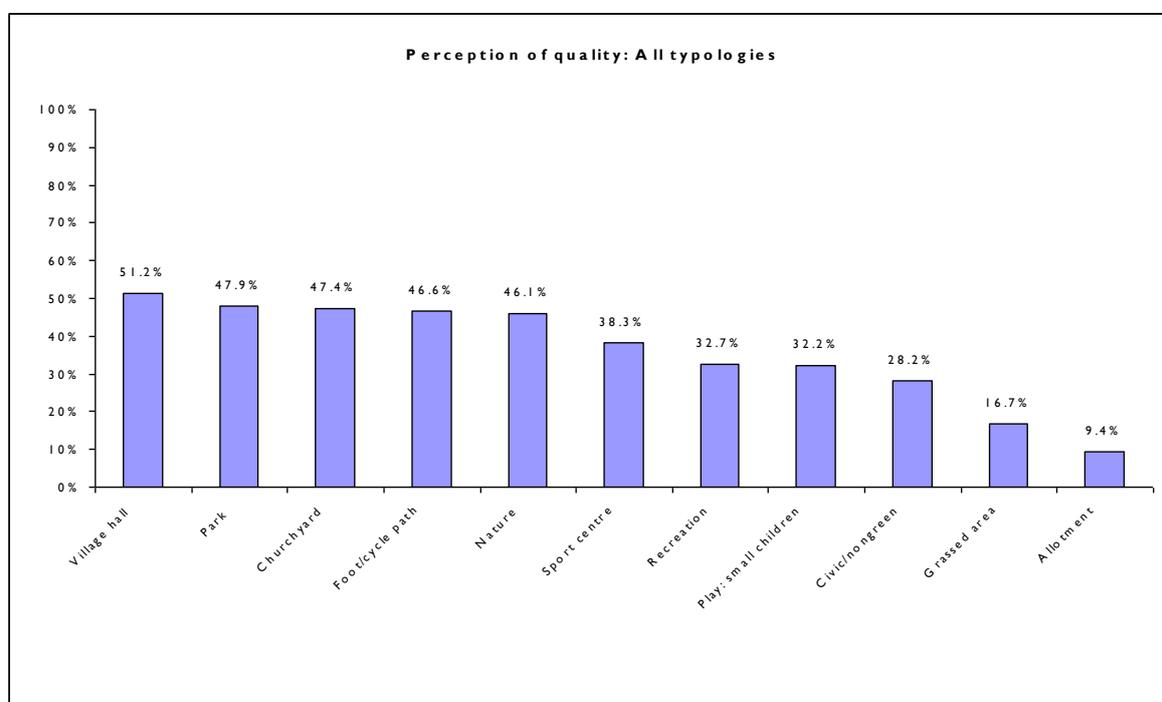
1.12 Just over half of residents rate the quality of village halls/community centre as good or very good (51.2%). Other well rated provision includes parks (47.9%), churchyards (47.4%), foot/cycle paths (46.6%) and nature areas (45.1%). In most cases, quality is more likely to be rated as good than poor, with sizeable proportions unable to rate quality, which reflects usage levels. The main exception is play provision for teenagers, where a quarter (26.5%) rate provision as poor or very poor. This is reinforced by consultation findings.

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Availability of provision

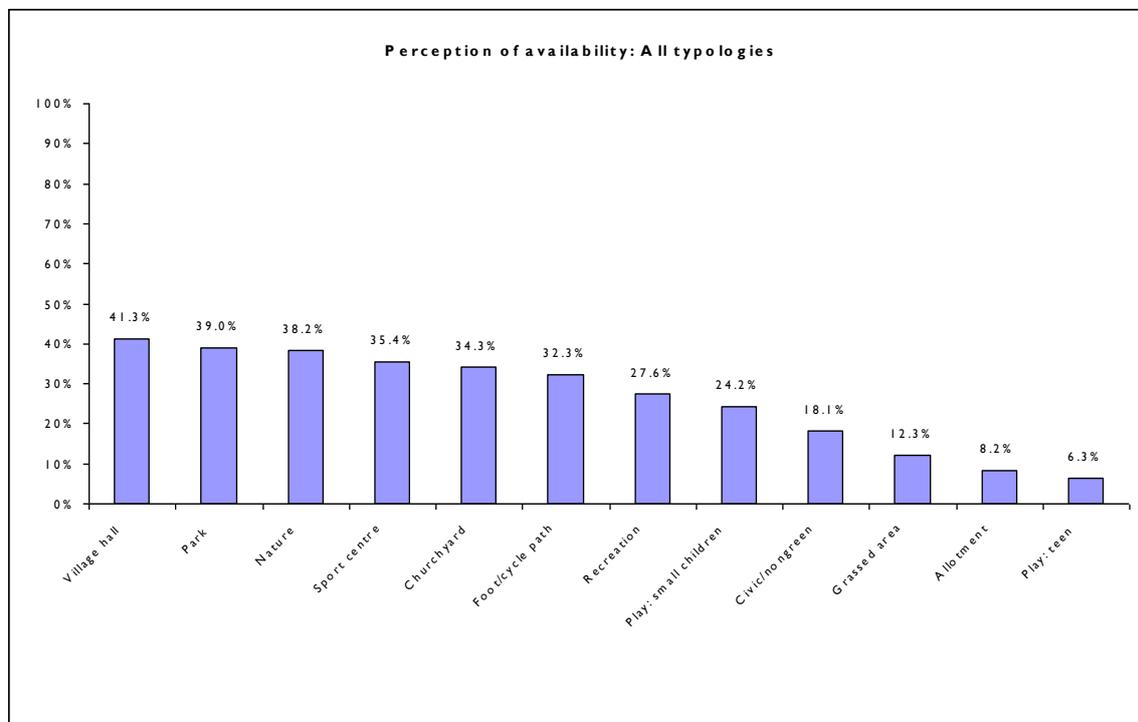
1.13 The highest ratings for the availability of provision are village halls (41.3% rating is as good or very good), parks (39%) and nature area (38.2%). In some cases, this reflects the range of available provision. However, there is a small number of parks in the District, yet residents rate availability highly. In most cases, lack of usage is reflected in residents not being able to comment on availability rather than considering it to be poor. This suggests that awareness needs to be increased. Exceptions to this pattern are civic/non green spaces (20% rating availability as poor/very poor), grassed areas on housing estates (12.1%) and allotments (7%).

Figure 2.5: Perception of quality



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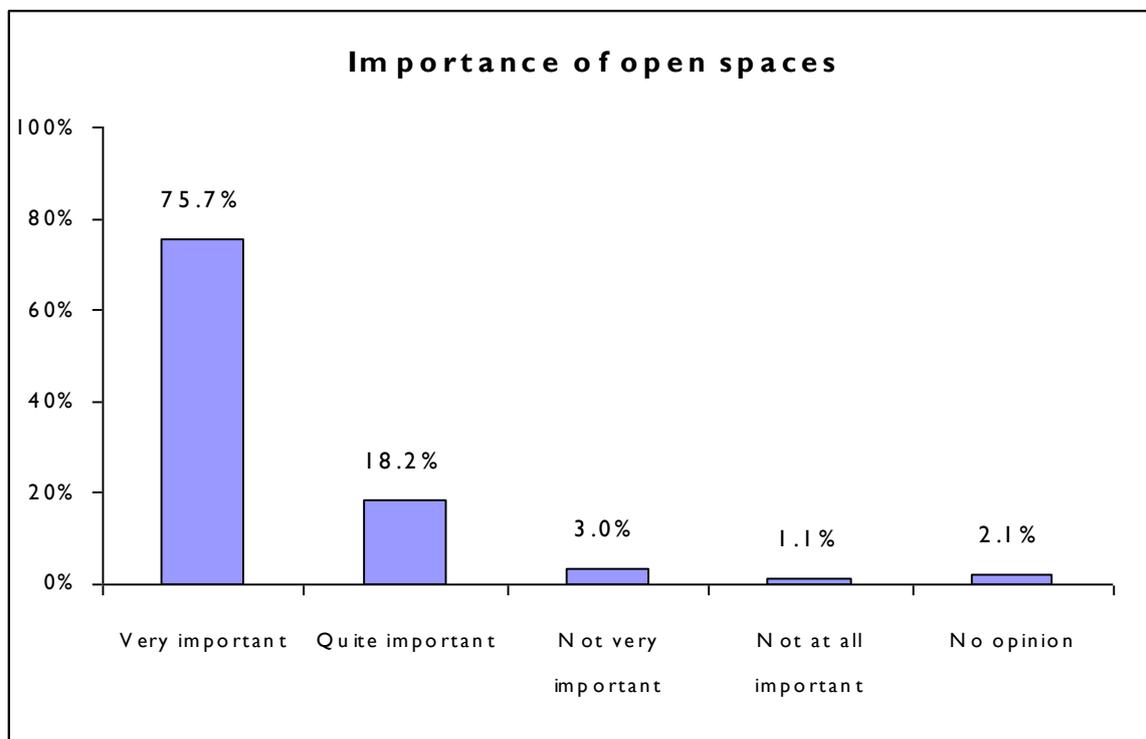
Figure 2.6: Perception of availability



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Importance of open spaces

Figure 2.7: Importance of open spaces

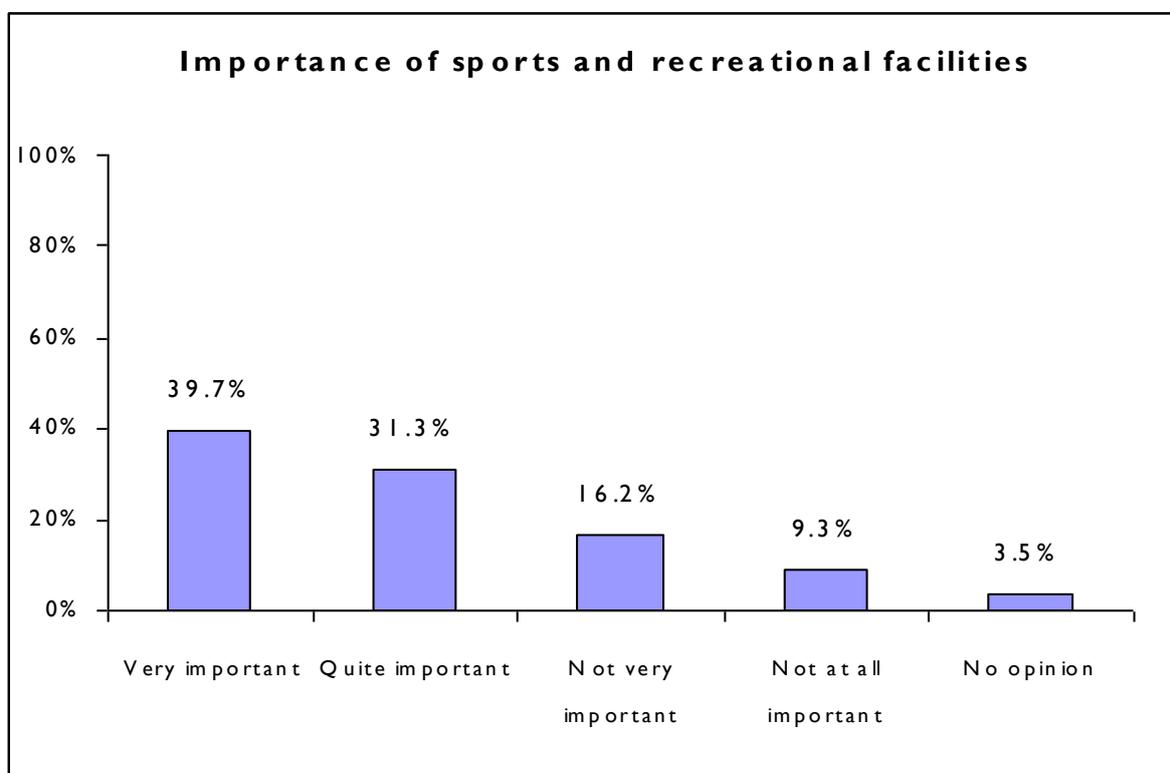


- 1.14 The vast majority of respondents (93.9%) consider open spaces to be very or quite important in Malvern Hills District. This highlights the high value placed on such provision by the residents of the District and investment in it by the Council and other providers in the area. A very small proportion (4.1%) do not consider open spaces to be important. There is no variation by area, gender or age.
- 1.15 Nearly three quarters (71%) consider sports and recreational facilities to be quite or very important. Whilst this is a strong rating, just over a quarter (25.5%) rate them as not being important to some degree. This suggests that, for a sizeable proportion of the population of Malvern Hills District, sport and recreational facilities are currently not relevant (this reflects the patterns exhibited in national research). The provision of sports and recreation facilities is more likely to be rated as important by rural residents (75.9%) than those in Upton and Hanley area (65.7%), Tenbury Town area (67.6%) and Malvern Town area (70.2%). This may reflect relative access to quality provision. There is no difference by gender, but significant fall by age from 87.7% for 35 – 44 year olds to 56.2% for those aged 65+. This may reflect the nature of facilities and their programmes.

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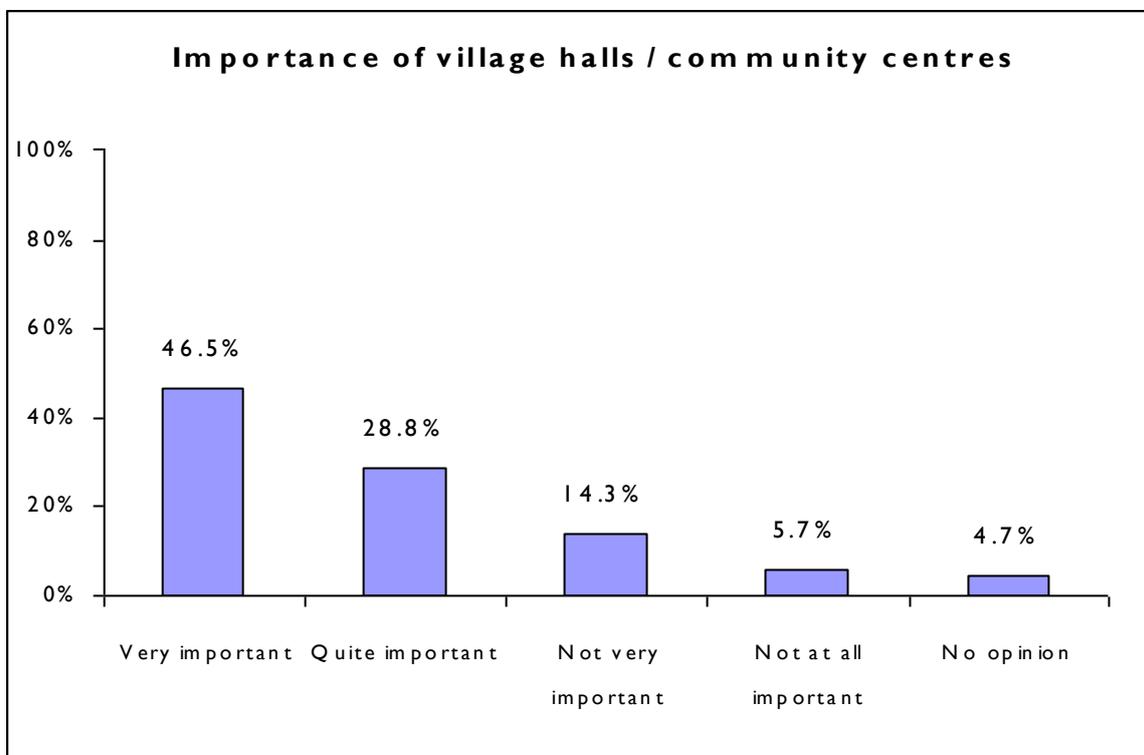
1.16 Just over three quarters (75.3%) consider village halls or community centres to be quite or very important. There is a similar pattern to sport and recreational facilities, with a fifth (20%) not considering such provision to be important. Village halls or community centres are important to Malvern Town area (59%), compared to rural areas (36%). Again, this probably reflects the nature of provision in these areas and the greater reliance on village halls or community centres in rural communities. Women rate the importance of such provision more highly than man (81.6% rating it as quite or very important compared to 65.1%). There is no variation by age.

Figure 2.8: Importance of sport and recreation facilities



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Figure 2.9: Importance of village halls/community centres



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Report structure

Open spaces

1.17 The first section of this report considers supply and demand issues for open spaces facilities in Malvern Hills District. Each part contains relevant methodology and typology specific data. It covers the predominant issues for all the typologies defined in 'Assessing Needs & Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG 17' and is structured as follows:

- Part 3: Parks and gardens.
- Part 4: Natural and semi-natural greenspaces.
- Part 5: Green corridors.
- Part 6: Amenity greenspace.
- Part 7: Provision for children and young people.
- Part 8: Allotments, community gardens and city farms.
- Part 9: Cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds.
- Part 10: Civic spaces.

Outdoor sports facilities

1.18 The study also incorporates a playing pitch assessment in accordance with the methodology provided in the Sport England 'Towards a Level Playing Field – A guide to the production of playing pitch strategies' for assessing demand and supply. Further methodology on this is provided in Part 12 and Part 13: Outdoor Sports Facilities.

1.19 The second section of this report is a quantitative summary of provision and a map showing the distribution of outdoor sports facilities. It also provides information about the availability of facilities to the local community and the governing body of each sport and regional strategic plans (where they exist). Details of local leagues are provided in order to outline the competitive structure for each sport.

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1.20 The findings of club consultation and key issues for each sport are summarised and structured as follows:

Part 14:	Football.
Part 15:	Cricket.
Part 16:	Rugby union.
Part 17:	Hockey.
Part 18:	Bowls.
Part 19:	Tennis.
Part 20:	Golf.
Part 21:	Athletics.
Part 22:	Education facilities.

Indoor sports facilities

1.21 The third section of this report is a quantitative summary of provision and a map showing the distribution of indoor sports facilities. It also provides information about the availability of facilities to the local community and the governing body of each sport and regional strategic plans (where they exist). Further methodology on this is provided in Part 23 and Part 24: Indoor Sports Facilities. The key issues for each type of facility are summarised and structured as follows:

Part 25:	Sports halls.
Part 26:	Swimming pools.
Part 27:	Fitness suites.
Part 28:	Squash courts.
Part 29:	Indoor tennis courts.
Part 30:	Indoor bowling greens.
Part 31:	Village halls and community centres.
Part 32:	Education facilities.

Context

1.22 PPG17 describes the role of the planning system in assessing opportunities and needs for sport and recreation provision and safeguarding open space which has recreational value.

1.23 The guidance observes that it is part of the function of the planning system to ensure that through the preparation of development plans adequate land and water resources are allocated for organised sport and informal recreation.

1.24 It says that local planning authorities should take account of the community's need for recreational space, having regard to current levels of provision and deficiencies and resisting pressures for development of open space which conflict with the wider public interest.

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- 1.25 It discusses the role of all levels of plan, planning agreements, and the use of local authority land and compulsory purchase powers. It discusses provision in urban areas, the urban fringe, the Green Belts, and the countryside and particular sports including football stadia, water sports and golf. (Original release date September 1991).
- 1.26 ‘Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17’ reflects the Government policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation, as set out in PPG17. The long term outcomes of PPG17 aims to deliver:
- ❑ Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable.
 - ❑ An appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision.
 - ❑ Clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners in relation to the requirements and expectations of local planning authorities in respect of open space and sport and recreation provision.
- 1.27 This assessment covers the following open space typologies as set out in ‘Assessing needs and opportunities: Planning Policy Guidance 17 companion guide.’

Table 1.1: PPG17 definitions

	PPG17 typology	Primary purpose
Greenspaces	Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
	Natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
	Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration.
	Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
	Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
	Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.

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	PPG17 typology	Primary purpose
	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
Civic spaces	Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.
Sports facilities	Outdoor sports facilities (pitch and non-pitch)	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls and athletics.
	Indoor sports facilities (built facilities)	Participation in indoor sports, such as badminton, swimming and gymnastics.

1.28 A detailed exploration of the national, regional and local context for open space provision is provided in Section 1: Introduction and context.