

**South Staffordshire District Council
Open Space Assessment
Consultation Project
December 2007**

FINAL REPORT



**'I think this park's ok-
well I do and I don't'.**

Young adult, Quinton estate

1.0 Introduction

Why do the consultation?

Consultation with local residents is required to meet the requirements of a PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit and supports the outcomes of the site surveys, setting of the provision standards, and the outcomes of the existing consultation carried out by the District Council.

Paragraph 4.12 of PPG17 states *"It is impossible to identify local needs properly without involving local communities. Establishing the views of local communities is also an essential part of the Best Value regime and the Community Planning process and one of the key themes in Sustaining Communities - Delivering through Planning"*.

This was further underpinned by the former ODPM in 2005 *'we need to reconnect people with the things that people really care about in their local communities – by giving them more power and a bigger stake in the way their areas are run'* ((Sustainable Communities: People, Places, Prosperity).

South Staffordshire Council is therefore committed to consulting with local residents as part of the work on its Open Space Audit and beyond. This is essential in gaining a full understanding of local issues relating to how open spaces in the District, how they are used and people's aspirations of how they could be improved.

What a consultation should deliver - the objective

At best, a consultation with local people

- allows local residents to understand why the study is taking place
- engages with them in a way that provokes and captures their responses
- gives them a role in shaping and achieving the recommendations of the study- a sense of ownership

and all of this should help to ensure the best possible quality study, both in terms of the audit and the recommendations.

The consultation process for an Open Space study is about gathering knowledge and information from the people who know most about the open spaces in their areas – the residents. This information should then be used to focus the analysis of the outcomes of the site audit and into the debate around policy options.

How can consultation contribute to the Open Space Assessment and what are the challenges?

The value of local engagement in the Open Space Assessment should be to underscore the principle of local democracy; to demonstrate through actions that the local authority listens to the local residents and takes notice of their needs and opinions.

The consultation element of any study is fraught with difficulty. It is almost inevitable that local residents will see the process as a precursor to

unwelcome change, or to strategy and policy making in conflict with their wishes.

In order to minimise this risk the best thing to do is to keep the process accessible and friendly- on site, surveyors will meet members of the public and the professionals need to be able to calm fears and answer questions. Any other direct questioning of stakeholders needs to demonstrate that their views are central to the development of standards, policies and that the local authority are mindful of their role as public servants. Any existing consultation outcomes should be fed into the Open Space project to provide a more robust platform against which policy options can be determined.

Attending meetings and interpreting Ordnance Survey maps does not interest large numbers of people and the challenge when working with certain sections of the population; for example young people, is how to engage them in this debate. For some people the notion of being consulted at all seems largely irrelevant,

"Don't ask me, you're the council get on and do your job."

However, open space affects everyone. It's easier to perhaps see this in the negative- we can all imagine the headlines in the local press, were all civic gardens to be concreted over, greenbelt land developed and children's play areas closed and turned into car parks.

It is not just the use that people make of them but also the landscape value that is important to local residents

Many factors contribute to a definition of what sort of person you are and therefore how you live your life. One important factor is where you live, and what you think and say about it. Mature trees and generous open spaces give a sense of gravitas and dignity to the landscape, lots of pleasant places to exercise and play, for you, your family and the dog make life more enjoyable, abundant and varied wildlife contributes to a healthier environment, and all of this allows us to tell better stories about ourselves and where we live. This is well documented at a national level by CABE, Groundwork and The New Economics Foundation.

The challenge

The challenge is focused around conflicting agendas - the use that older people will want to make of open spaces may clash with the use that young people might make of them; bowling and relaxation needs peace and quiet, skateboarding and hanging with your friends is best done to a very loud soundtrack.

The consultation undertaken with the Parish Councils primarily focused on identifying

- Sites which residents had raised as causing problems
- Sites which Parish Councillors considered to be problematic
- Good sites
- A list of sites within their particular parish area

The community often contradicts itself and it is not the task of this consultation exercise to attempt to resolve these tensions. Instead we have laid out what we have done in order to engage the community in this debate, what people have said to us and where there are general trends of opinion, observations, ambition or behaviour, to highlight these.

2.0 What was required by South Staffordshire Council?

The key principles we expected to be confirmed by our discussion with the Parish Councils were that

- Open space should be somewhere you feel safe
- Open space should be clean and well kept
- Open space should be part of your identity
- Open space should be somewhere that gives you freedom
- Open space should be for everyone

Methodology - how we went about the consultation

The three techniques employed were;

- Face to face meetings and discussions with stakeholders
- Structured telephone interviews with Parish Councils (clerks and chairs)
- Attending events where young people would be

In addition we prepared a postcard which encapsulated the main issues of PPG17

- 1) Where do you go (ie what open spaces do you use?)
- 2) What do you do there?
- 3) How long does it take to get there and what mode of transport do you use?
- 4) Where don't you go and why?

This was used at the events we attended and residents could also return them direct to us.

Face to Face Contact

B arts attending a meeting of Parish Council representatives at the Civic Offices in Codsall to introduce the project in person. The B arts team spoke with Parish Councillors at their regular Parish meeting.

Structure Telephone Interviews

These were carried out by B arts team members in the summer (July and August 2007).

A list of Parish Council contacts was obtained from the Local Authority and an introductory email sent to all clerks outlining who B arts were and what we were doing and why. This was followed up with a series of telephone conversations structured around the key PPG17 issues;

- Which open spaces (publicly accessible spaces) were located within the particular Parish in question
- What conflicts of use had arisen
- What was the respondents view of the quality of the open space
- And any other issues which arose during the conversation.

These outcomes were used to help shape the site audits with some Parish Councillors specifically requesting attendance at the relevant site visits. The responses from parish councils are listed below.

a) Bilbrook

Publicly accessible open space

- Small village green – ornamental
- Twenty Man Playing Field – Village Hall situated here

Other open spaces

Agricultural land – therefore not accessible

Issues:

- Litter
- Dog mess – there are bins but they don't get used
- Young people hanging about – leaving cans/bottles all over the playing field
- Vandalism at weekends and evenings – to the village hall as it is situated on the only really accessible green space
- Used to have lots of publicly accessible green land, but was swallowed up by Wolverhampton when boundaries changed in the 70's
- They don't have any amenities for older people – but no-one has ever asked for any in the 40 years our respondent had been on the Parish Council

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Football (2 football pitches)
- Families picnicking and playing games
- Sports
- Young children play on play equipment
- Walking

b) Bobbington

Publicly accessible open space

- Halfpenny Green – green, plants, millennium signpost
- Brantley Crescent play area – green area

Other open spaces

Football pitch on privately owned land

Issues

No play equipment for children or things for teenagers, but no-one has asked for anything at the parish council meetings.

c) Brewood and Coven

Publicly accessible open space

- The Bront (8 acres of fields/woodland) owned by the parish council
- 1 sports field – owned by Parish Council but managed by local sports organisation
- Bishops Wood Playing Field
- Coven Playing Field
- Brewood Playing Field
- 3 schools all with playgrounds

Issues

- Playing field backing onto old people bungalows – balls being thrown into gardens/rowdy kids
- Coven Heath Common (over 4 acres of common land) residents want it as a village green, a local landowner has objected to it – ongoing battle for years
- Trying to get grants for a bowling green – ageing population within the villages
- Applying for funding for new changing rooms

Use of publicly accessible open space

- Dog walking
- Picnics
- Playing
- Sports
- Fetes
- All are well used – playing fields are the best used areas.

d) Cheslyn Hay

Publicly accessible open space

- Rosemary Road recreation ground – play equipment/football pitches/basketball
- Bridge Avenue recreation ground – surrounded by houses on 3 sides and river

Issues

- Vandalism at Bridge Avenue has meant that the play equipment and fence to the river has been removed – residents are concerned about the danger this poses
- Alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour

Use of publicly accessible open space

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Picnics
- Football
- play equipment for small children

Other notes

- Not enough open space
- Trying to get grants to improve the play areas

e) Codsall

Publicly accessible open space

- Village Hall & Playing field
- Wheel field
- Codsall House
- Chapel Lane playing field
- Oakham Drive playing field
- Moatbrook playing field & nature reserve
- Common land off Strawmore Road
- Allotments
- Singing Lady Garden (small piece of land in centre of village)

Issues

- Litter - not a huge issue as they employ 5 litter pickers, but could do with more
- Dog mess – not a real issue, bins are provided and emptied by DC – dogs are banned from village hall playing field, Codsall House, Chapel Lane and Moatbrook
- Vandalism
- Don't have amenities for teenagers – all open spaces are next to residential areas and residents don't want the teenagers hanging around there – Parish Council has identified some land to the North East of the village on Sandy Lane that would be ideal for a leisure centre as its away from residential areas

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Football (1 football pitch on village hall playing field)
- Cricket (1 cricket square – used by a club on village hall playing field)
- Families picnicking and playing games
- Annual carnival at the village hall
- Sports
- Young children play on play equipment
- Walking

Other notes

- Children's play area at village hall playing field (new equipment installed)

- Village hall playing field in general – the annual carnival pulls in a lot of crowds

f) Dunston & Coppenhall

Publicly accessible open space

Dunston and Coppenhall have publicly accessible space

Other open spaces

- Farmland
- School – but grounds are locked

g) Acton Trussel, Bednall and Teddesley Hay

Publicly accessible open space

- 4 acre recreation field with community centre
- Nash Lane – play area with play equipment

Issues

- Young people hanging around/vandalism
- People camping overnight in the summer, which isn't a problem, but they don't bring toilets with them

Use of publicly accessible open space

- No organised sports, so just people kicking a ball about
- Campers in the summer
- Young children use play equipment

There are no publicly accessible open spaces in Bednall.

There are no publicly accessible open spaces in Teddesley Hay but there is access to Cannock Chase.

There have been no requests by locals for more publicly accessible open space.

h) Enville

Publicly accessible open space

- No land owned by the Parish Council
- All of the land around Enville is owned by the Enville estate including Highgate Common. NOTE: Highgate Common is owned and managed by Staffordshire County Council

Issues

- Cricket pavilion also doubles as village hall – needs refurbishing but lottery has turned them down
- Need funding - village sports club is central to the village

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Sports – cricket pitch
- Picnicking
- Dog walking
- Events/fetes
- Informal play

i) Essington

Publicly accessible open space

- Recreation ground next to Community Centre in Essington
- Weston Croft recreation ground
- Long Lane – large open space
- High Hill – large open space

Other open spaces

- Broad Lane – owned by the Parish Council, but now leased long term to Walsall Football club who are regenerating the pavilion – not accessible to the public now
- Bowling Green – owned by Working Men’s Club

Issues

- Litter
- Dog mess – there are bins but they don’t get used
- Land rich and cash poor
- No play equipment for children – they used to have some, which got vandalised – they have now rented out Broad Lane to Walsall Football Club on a long term lease which means they can now afford one piece of play equipment
- Young people hanging about

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Football
- Sports
- Walking
- Inter-Parish games
- Dog shows

Other notes

All areas are well used – Long Lane and High Hill are very popular with people from outside the area

j) Featherstone and Brinsford

Publicly accessible open space

- Baneberry Drive Community Centre with land; football cage, play equipment, goal posts on grass

Other open spaces

- Surrounded by privately owned farm land

- Grassed areas left by developers

Issues

- There is a lot of green belt and farm land around the village but it is not owned or managed by the parish council
- Dog mess – there are bins by the community centre because they don't want to encourage dogs onto the grassed area – but people let dogs foul on grass anyway
- Vandalism – to the play equipment and the community centre
- Litter – though a litter picker has been employed
- Residents complain that kids are hanging around the grassed areas left by developers – but these are not owned or managed by anyone
- Have a definite need for a full sized football pitch. A piece of land has been identified – but the owner is looking to build on it now
- Need funding for more play equipment for young children and for something for the teenagers to do

k) Great Wryley

Publicly accessible open space

- Star Land (behind pub) on Walsall Road/Hazel Lane: a number of large fields used for village events, informal sports, dog walking
- Recreation ground at junction of Walsall Road/Jones Lane: green space
- Memorial Gardens off recreation ground: benches
- Yems Croft Open Space – Walsall Road opposite Yems Croft cul-de-sac: rectangular field with goalposts
- Youth area – land adjacent to Quinton shopping centre on Landywood Lane: youth shelter, skate park, bmx track, 5-a-side area, basketball area, play equipment
- Brook Lane play area – play equipment (needs replacing)
- Leander Close play area

Issues

- The main issue is not having enough funding in place to maintain the areas they already have – play equipment could do with replacing, football pitches need sorting out as the land is undulating and not really suitable for football – Star Land
- Territorial issues between young teens and older teens – especially around the skate park and youth shelter near Quinton shopping centre
- Litter is a general issue – broken glass in particular
- Kids hanging around at night

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Picnics
- Football
- Small children play equipment
- Carnival

- Annual bonfire

l) Hilton

Publicly accessible open space

- Small piece of land in the middle of Park Road – kids use it for informal football
- Public footpaths

Other open spaces

Very small village surrounded by farm land

Issues

- Nothing for teenagers or smaller children to do
- The parish council looked into putting basketball hoops on the Park Road piece of land, but locals didn't want it

m) Himley

Publicly accessible open space

- Children's play area – School Road
- Cricket Pitch – Stourbridge Road (might be member only)

Other open spaces

- Farm land
- Himley Hall – Dudley Council – people tend to use that for walking and dog walking etc.
- Himley Walk

Issues

Only issue is that if the play equipment breaks down again it will be taken out as there is no real need for it

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

Playing

Other notes

Mainly older people live in the village, and no one has asked for any provision.

n) Huntington

Publicly accessible open space

- Littleton Leisure Park
- Recreation Ground

Other open spaces

- New housing development is under way – the Parish Council will get a village green from this, and want to put a new community centre on it
- Cannock Chase – people tend to use this space if they are able to get to it

Issues

- Litter
- Dog mess – there are bins but they don't get used – and the Recreation Ground is supposed to be a dog free area
- Young people hanging about – leaving cans/bottles all over the playing field
- There is no play equipment for young children as it was all vandalised and removed – so there is nothing for younger children
- New families are moving into the area and there is nothing for the young children
- Nothing for older people – but they haven't asked for anything and they tend to go to Cannock
- New skate park and changing rooms have already been vandalised
- Parish council want to buy an old railway line (behind new development at the bottom of the Recreation Ground) which they want to develop into a dedicated dog walking area
- Parish council plan to open a cricket pitch on the Recreation Ground

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Sports
- Football (2 football pitches)
- Families picnicking and playing games
- Walking
- Bereavement groups meet at Littleton Leisure Park

Other notes

Littleton Leisure Park is the most used area – people come walking there from outside the area.

o) Kinver

Publicly accessible open space

- Jubilee Gardens, High St – gardens, benches, war memorial
- Daneford Gardens – benches
- Legion Drive Community Centre and marsh playing fields – cricket square, pavilion, football pitch, play equipment

Other open space

- Riverside Walk off Dark Lane – maintained by SSDC
- Kinver Edge – National Trust owned woodland and heathland

Issues

- Not enough for 12-16 year olds to do. Surveys have been conducted and they are looking into getting funding
- No space to install anything for 12-16 year olds at the moment
- Occasionally have problems with anti-social behaviour, but has improved recently

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking

- Football
- Sports
- Walking
- Use of play equipment
- Picnic

p) Lapley, Stretton and Wheaton Aston

Publicly accessible open space

Lapley

- Lapley Green
- Surround to All Saints Church and cemeteries

Stretton

- Not sure if there is any public open space – much of Stretton is owned by the Monckton Estate

Wheaton Aston

- Broadholes Lane play area
- Ivetsey Road – small grass area surrounded by houses
- Badgers End – small grass area surrounded by houses
- Jct Broadholes Lane and Badgers End – small piece of open space
- Marston Road playing field and dog walk
- Wheaton Aston Village Centre – paved open space
- Lapley and Wheaton Aston Recreation Ground, Lapley Road
- Primrose Bank Play area – Primrose Close

Other open spaces

- Shropshire Union Canal runs through parish
- Staffordshire Way
- Public footpaths and bridleways

Issues

- Primrose Bank – ongoing issue of abusive behaviour from young people hanging about here until the early hours: serious flashpoint for the community (*see below*)
- Litter
- Vandalism
- Trespassing

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Football
- Sports
- Walking
- Dog Walking
- Play equipment for young children

Wheaton Aston

The meeting was attended by 14 members of the public as well as 10 Parish Councillors.

Publicly accessible open space

- Staffordshire Way
- Canal Frontage
- Sports and social club
- Plus a private school playing field
- Primrose Bank

Issues

Primrose Bank was the cause of substantial concern and the Parish Council have under taken an Anti Social Behaviour Review. The headlines from which are:

- Nuisance vehicles
- Inappropriate language
- Alcohol
- Inappropriate and lewd behaviour
- Poor maintenance to planting and play equipment
- A youth shelter has been provided but this is not working
- Equipment is the magnet for anti-social behaviour – it's impossible to put anything in...

Comments

Feel like we are living on a council estate

Rustic equipment works ok – some is less attractive to youth than others

The Youth Worker for Wheaton Aston referred to the Youth Shelter as '*not a bad space, on the edge of the village, young people have to walk to get there, no much there apart from he shelter and pitches*'.

q) Lower Penn

Publicly accessible open space

- Village green – Springhill Lane
- Playing field – Castlecroft Lane – 2 and an half acres – football pitches
- Railway Walk (continues through a number of villages)

Other open spaces

- Langley Road playing field – owned by Wolverhampton City Council – football pitches, millennium tree planting
- Other play areas are owned by Wolverhampton City Council
- Surrounded by privately owned farm land and green belt land

Issues

- Anti-social behaviour at Castlecroft playing field – this has improved with the presence of a community police officer – prior to that residents complained of young people throwing things into their gardens
- Sprawling village with no centre as such
- No-one has asked for any more open spaces or facilities
- Wolverhampton City Council are applying for permission to turn the land at Langley Road into a cemetery – residents not happy

r) Pattingham and Patshull

Publicly accessible open spaces

- 4 public walkways – Millennium walks
- Burnhill Green playing field – play equipment
- Pattingham playing field - adult football pitch/changing rooms/play equipment

Other open spaces

The surrounding farm land

Issues

- Vandalism to children's play equipment and changing rooms
- Not enough land – would like more areas for smaller football pitches

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Football
- Sports
- Walking

s) Penkrige

Publicly accessible open space

- Land at the Side of Princefield School and adjacent to the Wharf
- Three play areas, Wolverhampton Rd, Horsefair and Kempson Rd
- Cherrybrook Open Space off Cherrybrook Drive
- Festival Gardens
- Land at the rear of Stanford Close
- Skate Park at the Monckton Recreation Centre
- Two corners of the A449 -Bungham Lane and Boscomoor Lane
- Three islands - A449, Crown Bridge and Wolgarston Way
- Land at the corner of Francis Green Lane/Cannock Road
- Land at the side of the Star Public House/Cannock Road

Issues

- Vandalism, litter and anti social behaviour; depends on the time of year, the main problems occur during the summer months
- There is one play area that they would like to have new equipment, but unfortunately they are struggling with funding at the moment
- They have problems with litter at all three play areas and rely on volunteers to help with litter picks as often as they can

Best used

The most used areas are the Festival Gardens, Horsefair Play Area and Kempson Road Play Area.

t) Perton

Publicly accessible open space

- Anders Square play area – managed by the parish council - youth shelter, play equipment, football
- Perton playing field (off Gainsborough Drive) leased by the parish council from SSDC and subleased to a sporting organisation – 3 football pitches

Other open spaces

- Lake – owned by SSDC
- 5 a side and basketball area owned by SSDC

Issues

- There is lots of land around Perton, but the majority of it belongs to and is managed by the District Council
- There are a large number of teenagers and young people living within the village and there is nothing for them to do. Therefore there is a big problem with anti-social behaviour, vandalism to play equipment and other areas within the village
- The nearest High School is in Codsall, so there is nothing for them to do in Perton
- There are constant requests for allotments from residents who only have small gardens, but the parish council don't have any land for this
- Would like a cemetery

u) Wombourne

Publicly accessible open space

- Bratch Park
- Poolehouse (WPC rent from SSDC)
- Wombrook Walk
- Brickbridge Lane Playing Fields
- Field behind the Civic Centre
- Railway Walk
- The Bratch
- Staffordshire & Worcester canal paths

Other spaces

Village green however you need to be a member of the Cricket Club to use this space.

Issues

- Vandalism to play areas at Poolehouse (not locked at night) – WPC looking to put cameras up
- Young people hanging around in general

Use of publicly accessible open spaces

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Picnics
- Football
- Cricket

- Tennis
- Small children play equipment
- Carnival

Other notes

- Wombrook Walk is the best used area by walkers and dog walkers
- All areas are popular seasonally
- The Parish Council employ litter collectors around the village to collect rubbish twice a day

Summary

21 of the 27 Parish Councils were consulted during the summer and early autumn of 2007. Of the remaining 6 B arts were requested not to contact three of the Councils as they would be approached directly by South Staffordshire Council. The remaining three outstanding Councils did not respond.

It should be noted that parish councils who did not respond are not now precluded from doing so and therefore can still input into the Open Space Strategy via the Local Authority.

It should also be noted that residents who live in the Quniton area, which is on the edge of the District's administrative boundary, have stated that they often visit and uses open spaces outside of the South Staffordshire District.

Face to face consultation events

B arts conducted face to face consultation with targeted groups. The outcomes are recorded below

Outcomes from Consultation with Young People at the SSDC Young People's Conference (6th July 2007)

A member of the B arts team attended the conference during the lunch break and spoke with a number of the young people. The headline outcomes were;

- Young people use the open spaces for meeting friends or playing football
- Most young people spoken to went on foot
- All took less than 10 minutes to reach their preferred open space or area

Sites specifically referred to included

Bratch Park
 The Bront
 Cheslyn Hay Park
 Calfheath Foot
 Weston Drive
 Penkridge Park

Comments made by the young people included:

What is important about open spaces....

There's freedom to do stuff

If young people are in the park the police get phoned up

Very important – children need to be somewhere

Got to be accessible, not litter, quiet, but place for people to play, not just a pretty thing to look at

Clean, easily accessible, safe

Want people to be using it

Outcomes from Events Attended by B arts team Quinton Fun Day (5th August 2007)

B art team members attended the Fun Day with a view to capturing the views of young people in order to determine what local spaces they use and what they go there to do. We also captured a series of *direct quotes* from the young people which give an immediate and personal perspective to the consultation.

Male adult about Quinton Estate Park

"I've lived here all my life and I've never known the name for here"

The Quinton community sergeant

"This park is the most used space in the area, it's the main bit of open space round here. I mean there isn't that much for younger kids and it did used to be a spot for anti-social behaviour, fighting and drinking but the atmosphere's really changed a lot, you see a lot of families using this park now. We really targeted this park, confiscating alcohol and making arrests, if they know they're going to have their alcohol confiscated when they come here to drink they stop coming, its had a significant impact. I mean from their point of view they think they're coming somewhere out of the way to drink, they don't realise how threatening it can seem to other people, that they're having a negative impact. It would be useful if there were more facilities for the younger children and better quality football facilities, maybe an Astroturf pitch so there is somewhere to play when the grass is wet."

"As far as I know nothing's normally organised in this park (5 asides and such) people just use it off their own back"

Q-What is important to you about open space in South Staffordshire?

"you need it for people to gather, it's a focal point for the community"

Male who works for the council

"They're slowly killing the area, they're wrecking this place, they're just building everywhere, selling it all off, the important thing is to think long term 30,40,50 years into the future."

3 adult females with children from toddlers to teens (WS6 6EH)

"We use this (Quinton Estate park)...this is all there is round here. Its ok here it only takes 5 mins on foot from where we live on Broadmeadow Lane, the kids kick a ball around and go on the play park, its good to have somewhere to take em...There need to be more things about for kids to play on especially toddlers. The buses round here all have steps instead of ramps so its hard work travelling with a push chair, so we can't take them places like Cannock very easily. We walked once to Cannock that's how bad the buses are. It is important to have somewhere to get some exercise or some entertainment for the children.

My eldest lad is 12 and he's too frightened to go on the skate park, the atmosphere there is rough, the big kids go there, the police keep an eye but only at certain times. He won't even come out of Quinton, he finds it hard mixing, but it should be safe for everyone.

This park is ok, its quite clean and normally quiet, I'd just like to see some more equipment for the little ones, just something to occupy them a bit

Adult female, lives in Penkridge but works with young people across the area.

"In Penkridge the vast majority of the kids gather in the centre of the village because that's where the lighting is, lighting is very important. You need a space not too close to houses but visible, somewhere they can be seen, close to an open road but not too close, it's a narrow line between overlooked but not so close that people complain about the young person causing a nuisance. You need to give young people what they want, just kicking a ball around a field doesn't cost anything, as long as they've got a field."

Adult female and 2 adult males (early 20s)

There's two bits of space on Walsall Road but they've mostly been taken over by anti social people, so has this one, there need to be more initiatives to get them off the streets, there's nowhere for them to go, so they congregate in these spaces which is highly intimidating, over 25s can't use them. There needs to be something to occupy them so they don't come here and drink and trash stuff. There needs to be more play

stuff on parks for over 8s. Spaces like this should be clean and friendly and possibly patrolled, and there needs to be something to do. Also we could do with some toilets on this park (Quinton) and some more parking. Organised events like this are really good but they need to be better publicised.

12 year old female

I come here to Quinton park most its only a minutes walk from my house. I play football here with my dad and I go on the play park with my mates. I think this parks ok, well I do and I don't. The play park isn't that big, we need more apparatus for older children, the big swings are lower than the baby swings. I'd like one of those spinning things where you stand on them like up by Rushall Park, that takes about 10-15 minutes by car so I can only go when I get a lift. They've got stuff for all ages there. It's important to have somewhere to mess about with your friends so you're not always stuck in the garden. I sometimes feel safe here, but there are older people sometimes who are a bit iffy.

Statistical significance - Outcomes

20 people were consulted using the postcard questions. The responses to the first three questions are outlined below;

- Name an Open Space you use most often
- How long do you take to get there?
- How do you get there?

These outcomes were drawn up from completed postcards.

The outcomes are organised according to the questions asked on the postcard (this question is given in parenthesis after each heading)

All quotes are from the young people completing the survey and have been given anonymously.

Responses have been analysed individually.

- *'we can't use any' postcode WS6 6GY – 'it's very bad near us, they use the spaces to take drugs and drink, there's lots of violence I don't feel safe using it' (Great Wryley)*
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground – accessed within one minute on foot (young person)
- Weston Drive (football pitch and playing park) – accessed on foot (adult) within one minute
- Churchyard or ASDA car park – by bus (10 minute journey) (outside District)

- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground – accessed within 2 minutes on foot (adult F)
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground accessed on foot within 10 minutes (adult F with children)
- Hensford Hills/Hensford Park accessed on foot within 5 minutes (adult M) (outside District)
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground accessed within 15 minutes by older adults on foot
- Farley Park (the recreation ground Walsall Road Park) accessed within 10 minutes on foot. Resident of Tipton (outside District)
- *'we don't use any local spaces'*. Spaces they use are accessed by car
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground –(adult F) accessed on foot within 10 minutes
- Quinton Park accessed within 15 minutes on foot by young people aged 16 and 17
- Land behind the Star Pub on Walsall Road in Quinton (adult M and adult F) on foot within 5 minutes
- Quinton Stake park on foot within 10 minutes (adult on behalf of children)
- Quinton Park accessed by car by person with disabilities within a few minutes to take grandchildren
- Cannock Park (but not local spaces) that can be accessed within 5 minutes on foot
- Oak Park/Holland Park (skate park and Astroturf) – accessed on foot within 2 minutes
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground accessed by car within 10 minutes
- Quinton Park/Recreation Ground (skate park) accessed within 2 minutes on foot
- Cheslyn Hay accessed on foot within 2 minutes

What do you use the open space for?

Quinton Park

- Skate park – 4 respondents used the park for this

- Walking/cycling/deer-spotting
- Chilling out and meeting friends - 4 respondents used the park for this
- events

Weston Park (This must not be confused with the other (registered parkland on the A5) Weston Park)

- Playing football

Hensford Hills/Hensford Park

- walking the dog
- cricket, football, recreation

Farley Park

- Playing on play park

Oak Park

- Skate board and Astroturf

Quality

One respondent didn't use open spaces locally but thought that spaces were 'ok'. *it's very bad near us, they use the spaces to take drugs and drink, there's lots of violence I don't feel safe using it'.*

In relation to Quinton Park/Recreation Ground comments made included Quinton Park is good quality but *'don't feel safe using it. There's a community police officer but they are only out until 4pm, then it fills up with cars and young chavs, it's intimidating – I think we need a park keeper'*

'The kids use it, especially the skate park and the play park. I've got three aged 8, 12 and 16. There's not enough for them to do. I'd love to see some play schemes set up – cricket, football games. It's nice on Quinton because all the children know each other'.

'Maybe the skate park could do with a roof over it – when it rains they can't use it'

'It's ok'

Quinton Park is ok. *'we could have a bit more of it! And a few more trees. This skate park's really good for teenagers, our grandson uses it all the time.*

Quinton Park - *'it's alright. The litter's cleared quite frequently. It would be nice if it was a bit brighter (more lighting) and there's nothing really for us to do – more events like today would be great'* (YP F 16 and 17 years old)

Quinton Skate park is good quality *'but the park is a bit rubbish. I've got a 7 year old and there's not much for her really'*

it's good for the kids and they seem happy enough – they like. Maybe there's needs to be more rubbish bins not that always use them'

no alcoholics walking/hanging about

Other sites referred to included;

Weston Park – ok. *'it's just a field with goal posts really and when it rains it gets a bit muddy and you get bogged down. There's no indoor facility. There's some rubbish and glass sometimes'*

Hensford Hills – ok. *'They should lower restrictions on areas – you know like no ball games restrictions especially on open land'*

Farley Park – good quality. *'it's just been done up I think with Lottery Money*

Land behind the Star Pub, Quinton used for dog walking. *'it's fine- it's is just a field and it gets mown, but it does the job'*

spaces used not local but commented that spaces in District are ok – *'they're nothing special maybe more stuff to do – like a half pipe'*

Oak Park – good quality

Cheslyn Hay *'it's alright but it could do with more stuff. There's nothing there really it is just a big field with 2 benches in it. It's next to the police station so there isn't much ASB there*

Quotes made on the postcards in relation to open spaces generally included;

Safety (an important issue)

Feeling safe

To have somewhere safe, clean and reasonably local for kids to play

*You need it or you get claustrophobic
We'd really miss Cannock Chase if it wasn't nearby*

It should be clean and well maintained

Good facilities for all ages

That it is kept clean

Just to see a bit of green grass to be honest. I think there should be expansion and improvement of land that's already well used

You need it or you feel penned in, you want space and fresh air, you don't want houses everywhere that would spoil everything. This event is really good at getting everyone together (Quinton Fun Day)

Somewhere to go as a family safely

Somewhere for the kids to play

*That they stay open and no houses are built on them
That they are nice and tidy*

It is important to be able to breathe, it's nice to walk out without too many other people. It is getting to enclosed these days with all the new builds

That is clean and not wrecked by the older ones

We just come here and relax while the kids play – it's good to have somewhere to go

Something to do

Free facilities for children. I don't use anywhere where people let their dogs run loose. I'm scared I don't like them off leads

Better play areas/parks/more football and basket ball and stuff

It's important they're kept clean and more festivals like this would be great. It's great to have a reason to come here and meet up

It's just getting away really – somewhere

Everything!

Specific Sites

Seven specific references were made to Perton Lakes. Five respondents used the space for walking, with watching wildlife, playing and fishing other activities mentioned. Four took less than 5 minutes to reach the space. Five of the respondents thought the space was of poor (3) or ok (2) quality.

Comments made included

- that the space flooded
- there were overhanging trees
- *feel free and alive, space to roam, watch wildlife*

Other sites mentioned included Dippons Lane. This space was used for walking, cycling, running, exercise, dog walking. All accessed the space within 5 minutes. All thought the space was of poor or ok quality.

Comments about open spaces in South Staffordshire included;

- *Easy access- I use a scooter – in order to observe wildlife*

- *It provides wildlife and peace and calm*
- *Paths need resurfacing, the open spaces could be sown with wildflower mix and just mown one mower width round the paths and edges*

Other specific references included Bluebell Walk (Mercia Drive) and Smiths Rough (used by resident with postcode WV6 7YU)

Consultation with South Staffordshire Housing (RSL)

Following discussion with the Local Authority we approached the RSL who agreed to send out 150 postcards to their tenants (Tenant and Customer Groups). The cards were sent out with a covering letter explaining the project and included a pre-paid envelope for the postcards to be returned to B arts office. In addition as some of the residents were visually impaired the postcard was copied at A4 to allow increased participation on the project. A response rate of 30% was achieved.

Postcards returned by Post

46 postcards were returned to the b arts office of these

- 13 referred to non specified areas of open space such as canals (green corridors)
- 26 referred to individual sites
- 4 respondents didn't use open spaces but returned the cards
- 3 were hand written notes

Non specific

Canals, Lanes and Fields – respondents appreciated the value of the open spaces for peace and relaxation, walking, observing wildlife, freedom to walk away from the traffic, room for people to breathe, fresh air. Contemplation is a key activity.

The majority of visitors to the open spaces took less than the 5 minutes to reach the space of their choice (6), 4 took 10 minutes, with one took 25 and two took 15/20 minutes.

Site specific

The responses were analysed in terms of site name, time taken to reach the site by the respondents and the primary purpose or use.

Site	Area	Time taken to reach	Used for
Field at Manston Hill	Penkrigde	2	Dog walking
Wombourne Park	Wombourne	10	Dog walking
Highgate Common	Enville	5	Walking
Wombourne		3	Conserving wildlife
Perton Lakes	Perton	5	Walking
Park near Pine Close	Kinver	2	Walking
Himley Park	Himley	5	Walking, running

Himley Park		5	Walking
Park near Pine Close	Kinver	2	Walking
Highgate Common *	Enville	5	Walking and relaxing
The Bront	Brewood and Coven	-	Dog walking
Wheel Field	Codsall	10	Exercise
Cheslyn Hay	Cheslyn Hay	3	Playing/grandchildren
Railway walk/brook walk	Wombourne	5	Dog walking
Low Street	Cheslyn Hay	3	Dog walking
The Bront	Brewood and Coven	10	Dog walking
Kinver Edge	Kinver	15-20	Peace and solitude
Brownshore Lane,	Essington	2	Walking
Upper Lake	Perton	5	Exercise
Baggeridge Country Park	Himley	30	Walking, Birdwatching
Wombourne Brook		5	Peace and quiet
Greenhills Field	Codsall	5	Dog walking
Land off Woodside Grove	Bilbrook	<5	Walking/riding
Highgate Common	Enville	30	Walking/quietness
Littleton Park	WS 12 4QD	10-15	Walking
Penkridge by the Brook	Penkridge	2	Dog walking

- also known as Enville Common

Primary use – just over 50% of residents used their open spaces for walking and exercise, this rises to 82% if dog walking is included. No one visited the open spaces to play sport and only one resident said they used the space they visited for children’s play. 13.6% used the space for wildlife conservation and bird watching.

Comments made on the postcards in relation to ‘What is Important to you about open space in South Staffordshire’ included;

The feeling of space, lovely trees, view from my window

Tranquillity

Taking local children to explore nature

Tranquillity and beauty

It gives us some exercise and fresh air

Clean, lots of parking, refreshments

Accessibility

Peacefulness and relaxing – perfect

Very little of it left

To see trees and green fields, too many houses being built

That it should feel clean and safe

Easy accessibility and good signage

Wildlife and children playing

Places to walk and enjoy nature

I can exercise the children and the dog peacefully. It is clean and tidy

Exercise – appreciation of wildlife and other associated environmental issues

That it is used but respected by everyone & problems fixed

Headlines

Whilst the respondents to the consultation may not provide detailed statistical significance they do provide us with a very useful snapshot of opinion that can be translated into some headline issues for the main analysis.

Open spaces in South Staffordshire should therefore be;

Somewhere safe to go with friends...

Socialising and meeting up with friends was also frequently mentioned. Open spaces used were often a communal choice; somewhere the whole group enjoys 'hanging out, and somewhere that is equally convenient (or inconvenient) for everyone.

Somewhere which is litter free

This was mentioned as an issue many times

Somewhere for the children to play

This was an important issue for many people and if young people are included in the analysis it becomes a priority issue.

Somewhere close to home

Most respondents used spaces within 5 minutes from home, demonstrating the importance of local green spaces

Somewhere which offers peace and quiet

This was a very popular response and is a priority for residents

Somewhere to watch wildlife

This is a popular pastime for local residents

Quality

Two words stand out through the consultation process- the high quality of the open space in South Staffordshire. However it should be noted that

there were a number of negative comments made about the quality of Perton Lakes It is the existence of much of the open space that gives South Staffordshire its particular qualities and sense of quality, and that this is applicable across the community.

Young people value very much the same qualities in open space as adults; safety, cleanliness, accessibility & provision of activities and facilities. So that open space provide

- a place to socialise and relax
- places for sports; a clean and well-kept field is of more use than a pitch with broken glass and needles on it
- a place that offers tranquillity
- somewhere to walk the dog

The same issues deter people from using open space whatever their age;

- anti-social behaviour and feeling unsafe
- reputation of areas has a large impact on where people do and don't go

Very few residents made negative comments about specific sites. Of the postcards returned for example only one person said the quality of open space was poor (Fields adjacent to Manston Hill). In addition there were negative comments made about Perton Lakes.

Open spaces are highly regarded as being of good quality. However this needs to be analysed in conjunction with the outcomes of the site survey Essington

Residents clearly appreciate open spaces of the District and regard them as being of good quality. The chance to walk freely in safe spaces. Some of the spaces referred to by residents lie outside the administrative boundary of South Staffordshire.

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