Report

footprint ECOLOGY

# Visitor Surveys at Potential SANGs Sites in Wealden District



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## Summary

We present the results of visitor surveys at six countryside sites in East Sussex. These included five sites near Uckfield (Boothland Wood, Lake Wood, Uckfield Millenium Green, Views Wood and West Park) and Crowborough Ghyll, located near Crowborough.

Increased development within Wealden and nearby Districts has the potential to lead to increased recreational use of Ashdown Forest, an internationally important heathland site vulnerable to impacts from increased levels of access. Ashdown Forest is part of the Natura 2000 network of European Protected Sites and is therefore subject to strict legal protection. This survey was commissioned by Wealden District Council in order to provide information on the levels and patterns of use of the respective sites and to consider their potential to act as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace ('SANGs'). By providing enhanced local green infrastructure for local people to use for activities such as dog walking, SANGs are a potential mechanism by which new development can occur without adverse effects on Ashdown Forest. The visitor survey work therefore provides a check as to whether the sites may function as SANGs.

In total 353 interviews were conducted with visitors to the six sites. The interviews suggest local use, predominantly by dog walkers (91% of interviewees) and with the majority (78%) of people arriving on foot. The median distance from home postcode to interview location (from all sites combined) was under 2km, indicating that half of all visitors lived within 2km of the survey sites. We present data on overall visitor numbers, home postcodes, visitor density within the sites and views about different management approaches at each of the sites. We also consider each site in line with guidance on the design of SANGs.

Of the sites surveyed, Views Wood (24ha) and Crowborough Ghyll (40ha) are the only two sites in themselves large enough to provide a reasonable walk (such as might be typical for visitors on a large heathland site such as Ashdown Forest), and even at these sites none of the interviewed visitors had completed a route walk of 2.5km (the length of walk recommended in SANGs guidance). Crowborough Ghyll is relatively steep in places and more 'urban' in feel than Views Wood. People using Views Wood also visit the adjacent area to the east, including Buxted Park. Views Wood is managed by the Woodland Trust and already has considerable existing visitor infrastructure, such as marked trails. Parking at the site is however limited and enhanced parking here would potentially be a means to increase the levels of use to this site.

The other sites are comparatively smaller and on their own would be too small to act as SANGs. Lake Wood stood out from the other sites in that it was not used much by dog walkers and there was a strong weekend bias in the visitor patterns, with more families and children visiting at the weekend. The site draws families and children due to the varied terrain, rocky outcrops and landscaped feel. This site therefore was unique among the surveyed sites in having a 'draw' that is more than just the people living in close proximity.

None of the surveyed sites were particularly busy – for example Lake Wood had hardly any visitors on a weekday. Using the visitor data we suggest that all the sites could accommodate additional numbers of people and still not feel too busy, with the exception of West Park which was the busiest site in terms of people per ha. While the sites – on paper – are not heavily visited at present, this does not necessarily mean that they can be enhanced to provide a suitable alternative to Ashdown Forest.

Within the report we identify some potential enhancements to the sites, such as providing parking at Lake Wood or improving the path network at Crowborough Ghyll, and it remains to be seen whether such improvements would be sufficient to draw users away from Ashdown Forest. We

suggest that next steps would involve detailed consideration of the scope and practicalities of enhancing the sites for access, and checks with Natural England. In addition, many of the sites have nature conservation interest (although none are SSSI) and we suggest further work could be undertaken to consider the nature conservation issues.

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# 1. Introduction

## Overview

1.1 This report relates to Ashdown Forest and has been commissioned by Wealden District Council. The report details levels of access and recreational use of six sites (near Uckfield and Crowborough) around the outside of Ashdown Forest and assesses whether these sites have spare capacity to assist in the provision of SANGs. Increased development within Wealden and other nearby Districts has the potential to lead to increased use of Ashdown Forest, which is an internationally important heathland site. The aim of this work is to consider the potential for the six sites to act as alternative greenspace, i.e. absorb additional levels of recreation and therefore resolve, together with other mitigation measures, the impacts to Ashdown Forest. The report does not however seek to address the use of these specific greenspaces as mitigation for specific developments proposed to take place in the towns or settlements surrounding Ashdown Forest.

## Ashdown Forest

1.2 Ashdown Forest lies within Wealden District and is classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the presence of breeding nightjars and Dartford warblers and is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) due to the heathland habitats present. The European designations cover around 3000ha (the SPA is slightly larger than the SAC), and the site is different from some of the other internationally important heathland sites in southern England (such as Dorset and the Thames Basin Heaths) in that the protected area forms a relatively contiguous block of habitat rather than a number of small fragments. The site has historically been a very wooded heath and contains large tracts of ancient woodland.

1.3 Existing visitor survey results (UE Associates 2009) highlight the popularity of Ashdown Forest for recreation, particularly by local dog walkers. The visitor survey (conducted in September 2008) sampled 20 access points (out of 66 identified at the time) and during 320 hours of data collection recorded 1499 people and 953 dogs leaving the site. A high proportion of visitors were regular, visiting all year round and were visiting to walk their dog, a pattern consistent with many other heathland sites in southern England. The data from the on-site visitor survey of Ashdown Forest was used to generate spatial models of visitor use across Ashdown Forest, which involved deriving predictions for visitor use at different access points around the SPA (Clarke, Sharp, & Liley 2010). These predictions were based on models that incorporated the level of housing at different distances from each access point as well as the characteristics of each access point. The models highlighted that development relatively close to the SPA would be more likely to generate additional visits to the SPA. For example 100 new houses at Crowborough was predicted to lead to 12.2 extra visitors per 16 hours in contrast to only 0.3 extra visitors for an equivalent number of extra houses near Crawley further away.

## Impacts of development on the European Site interest and implications for strategic plans and windfall development

1.4 European sites hold the highest level of biodiversity legislative protection. Member states have specific duties in terms of avoiding deterioration of habitats and species for which sites are designated or classified, and stringent tests have to be met before plans and projects can be permitted, with a precautionary approach embedded in the legislation. The overarching objective is to maintain sites and their interest features in an ecologically robust and viable state, able to sustain and thrive into the long term, with adequate resilience against natural influences.

1.5 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations.' Recent amendments to the Habitats Regulations were made in 2012. The Habitats Regulations are in place to transpose European legislation set out within the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC). Within the Habitats Regulations, local planning authorities, as public bodies, are given specific duties as 'competent authorities' with regard to the protection of sites designated or classified for their species and habitats of European importance. Regulation 61 of the Habitats Regulations sets out the Habitats Regulations Assessment process for plans and projects, which includes development proposals for which planning permission is required. Additionally Regulation 102 specifically sets out the process for assessing emerging land use plans.

1.6 Urban development near or adjacent to heathland sites can lead to a suite of impacts, many of which relate to increased levels of access and use of sites by local people. Such impacts have been well documented and include disturbance to birds, trampling vegetation, increased incidence of fires and predation by domestic pets (see De Molinaar 1998; Haskins 2000; Underhill-Day 2005 for reviews).

1.7 Wealden District Council's Core Strategy Local Plan sets out a long-term spatial vision and strategic objectives for the District for the period 2013 to 2027. The plan sets out a level of residential development of around 9460 homes within Wealden District from 2006 to 2027[1]. Some of these new homes will be in the vicinity of Ashdown Forest SPA, for example Crowborough is allocated 300 new dwellings and Uckfield 1000. Given the relative proximity of these settlements to the SPA, there is concern regarding potential impacts to the site. The supporting text relating to the environment in the Core Strategy Local Plan recognises these issues[2] and in accordance with the Habitats Regulations Assessment and advice from Natural England, the Plan states that it will be necessary to reduce the recreational impact of visitors resulting from new housing development, and indicates that this will be achieved through:

[1] Submission version; SPO3
[2] Submission version paragraph 3.32

- The creation of an exclusion zone of 400 metres around the SPA within which there will be no net increases in dwellings,
- The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) in Uckfield and Crowborough
- Requiring contributions to on site management and monitoring measures at Ashdown Forest.

1.8 Wealden District Council's Core Strategy Local Plan was considered for adoption and formally approved by Wealden District Council in November 2012 and the South Downs National Park Authority in February 2013. In the Inspector's report there is reference to the Council being proactive in identifying Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and on-site management measures at Ashdown Forest. In particular the Inspector referred to windfall development and suggested that "to avoid otherwise acceptable development being delayed it is important that, with appropriate partners, the Council proactively identifies suitable SANGs and develops an on-site management strategy for the Forest as soon as possible in accordance with the conclusions of the HRA". The Inspector included modifications to highlight the importance of establishing SANGs promptly. These modifications were incorporated into Wealden District Council's formally adopted Core Strategy Local Plan.

1.9 In response, Wealden District Council is seeking to implement an Interim Mitigation Strategy for SANGs provision to ensure that otherwise suitable windfall development is not delayed whilst suitable SANGs are identified and brought forward in future Local Plan Documents. The purpose of an Interim Mitigation Strategy is to deliver a short-term solution for windfall sites to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.

### Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs)

1.10 It is the SANGs provision in Uckfield and Crowborough that is the focus of this report. The creation of alternative sites to divert visitors from sensitive sites has been widely promoted as a means to resolve issues relating to new housing development and impacts from increased access. The impetus is that by increasing the amount or improving existing green infrastructure in an area, providing sites designed to be welcoming and attractive to particular users, the levels of visitor use on nearby sensitive sites such as SPAs would decrease. In the Thames Basin Heaths and the Dorset Heaths these alternative sites are referred to as SANGs ('Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace') and (in the Thames Basin Heaths in particular) they have become a key component in a suite of mitigation measures designed to ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of the European Sites as a result of new development (Liley et al. 2006; Burley 2007; Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board 2009).

1.11 While some local authorities have been very specific about the level of new SANGs provision required (in the Thames Basin Heaths a level of 8ha per 1000 residents has

been used to establish a level of contribution for new dwellings), other local authorities[3] have refrained entirely from specifying a set area but instead have focussed in particular on the design, location and character of the SANGs.

1.12 For potential sites to function as effective SANGs they must act as an alternative to Ashdown Forest, attracting people who would otherwise visit the SPA/SAC. The choice of location, size and features of a SANG are therefore critical. Given that Ashdown Forest represents a large area of semi-natural open habitat with an expansive, wild feel, SANGs are unlikely to be effective if they are small, urban in feel or if they are difficult to access. In order to provide clear guidance to developers guidance on SANGs design and provision is available. We draw on a guidance document provided to us by Wealden District Council and it is included in this report as Appendix 1.

1.13 The evidence on the effectiveness of SANGS is limited, primarily because monitoring is necessary over a number of years, on both the designated site and the SANG. Such monitoring has yet to run for a long enough period on any SANG site within the UK (that we are aware of). It is therefore necessary that SANGs are just one element of a particular mitigation strategy and potentially need to be combined with other measures, such as on-site access management measures at the SPA itself. Monitoring in the long term will be necessary to ensure that SANGs are effective.

## Potential SANGs

1.14 Wealden District Council has identified six potential SANG sites in the vicinity of Crowborough and Uckfield. The six sites are shown in Map 1 in relation to Ashdown Forest SPA. The sites are:

- **Boothland Wood**: 5.1ha; an ancient woodland site near Uckfield and owned/managed by Uckfield Town Council.
- **Crowborough Ghyll**: 39.7ha; a wooded stream valley, situated on the edge of Crowborough and owned/managed by Crowborough Town Council.
- **Lake Wood**: 8.5ha: an ancient woodland site to the west of Uckfield. The site was landscaped in the 18th Century to create the lake, with rocky outcrops and cliffs. It is owned/managed by the Woodland Trust.
- **Uckfield Millenium Green**: 8.9ha; Lying to the south of Uckfield this site is managed as a public open space and contains a dog free picnic area, surfaced path and a pond. It is owned/managed by Uckfield Millennium Trust and Uckfield Town Council.
- **Views Wood**: 24.3ha; an ancient semi-natural woodland lying between Uckfield and the Buxted Park estate, owned and managed by the Woodland Trust.
- **West Park**: 10.6ha; a local nature reserve near Uckfield which includes mixed woodland, grassland and an area of marsh. Sandstone outcrops were the site of a Mesolithic settlement. Owned/managed by Uckfield Town Council.

[3] e.g. Purbeck District's local plan: http://www.dorsetforyou.com/local-plan/part-1/purbeck

## Aims and objectives

1.15 SANGs are pivotal to delivering the Core Strategy allocations as well as any potential acceptable windfall development. In light of the Inspector's findings and the adoption of the Core Strategy Local Plan, Wealden District Council wish to swiftly confirm suitable SANGs. This report therefore focuses on the six potential SANG sites around Uckfield and Crowborough (identified above) and aims to:

- Determine the current visitor use of the sites
- Explore their likely effectiveness as SANG sites.
- Provide a baseline dataset for the sites in question
- Assess the potential of the sites to absorb additional visitor numbers
- Identify potential improvements or management measures necessary to ensure that any SANGs provision functions effectively.

# 2. Methods

## Survey Locations

2.1 Initial site visits to all six sites were made on the 2nd and 3rd October 2012. The initial site visits were undertaken to check the sites, identify the appropriate methods to survey and identify survey locations within the sites. The site visits also provided the opportunity to assess the sites against SANGs guidelines, estimate parking capacity etc.

2.2 A total of 12 survey locations were identified where face-face interviews with a random sample of visitors would be conducted and counts made of the number of people passing. These 12 locations are summarised in Table 1 and Maps 2 and 3. The approach in selecting these locations was to ensure good coverage at each site, such that we could be confident most (ideally all) visitors were counted and a reasonable sample interviewed. In order to accurately count visitors at a site the optimal approach would be to count all entry points into the site and do this over the course of a year. Such a level of survey effort would be very expensive. We therefore selected locations either within sites (for example at major path junctions where paths from two or three entry points converge) or at major access points to ensure counts were reasonably accurate yet ensuring the minimum of survey effort.

2.3 In addition automated counters were deployed at a further 5 points. These automated counters are not as reliable as direct counts, but are a useful way of checking levels of use at different locations and were set up while the surveyor is undertaking the interviews. The counters are triggered by movement in their vicinity.

**Table 1: Survey Locations: Face-face interviews**

| Site | Map ID | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 1 | At gate south of recreation ground |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 2 | At edge of site, north-east corner |
| Boothland Wood | 3 | Survey point roaming along edge of wood. Dot on map indicates path entrance at eastern side, there is a second entrance into wood to west, with people parking in the Pleasure Ground. Surveyor would need to interview people using both entrances. |
| West Park | 4 | Roaming surveyor intercepting people in ne of W Park |
| Lake Wood | 5 | Surveyor inside Lake Wood, at path junction near lake. |
| West Park | 6 | Roaming surveyor intercepting people in sw of W Park |
| Views Wood | 7 | Access point and parking in far south-east corner |
| Views Wood | 8 | 'Main' parking location/access point |
| Views Wood | 9 | Parking at south-west corner, Nevil Green |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 10 | At path junction/ cross roads, picking up people from north, east and west |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 11 | Roaming surveyor along edge of wood intercepting people entering wood (Tally reflects those entering the wood) |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 12 | Bottom car-park |

## Survey Methods

2.4 At each survey location eight survey 'sessions' were conducted. Each session was two hours, and they were spread over the day (covering the periods 07:30-09:30; 10:00-12:00; 12:30-14:50; 15:00-17:00) with four sessions conducted on a week day and four on a weekend day. Dates when each location was surveyed are summarised in Appendix 3. The level of survey 'effort' is therefore consistent between survey locations, meaning that direct comparison is possible. Different numbers of survey locations were 'covered' at each site, so the level of survey effort at sites as a whole varied, but all main access points were included.

2.5 During each two hour period the surveyor collected two sets of data, a tally of visitors to the site and interview data. In order to ensure that random samples of visitors were selected for interview, the surveyors approached the next person they saw (when not already undertaking an interview). Only one person per group was interviewed.

2.6 A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix 2.The questionnaire asked questions relating to:

- Transport used to reach the site
- Activities undertaken and frequency of visit
- Visitor profile
- Home postcode and whether a local resident or visiting tourist
- Other locations frequented by visitors
- Route travelled on site

Other questions asked related to visitor perceptions of the site and what, if any, changes could be made to enhance the site in their opinion. Visitors were also asked whether their visiting behaviour would change should certain changes be made to the site; for example, whether the site being busier would influence their decision to spend time there. Visitor comments were also noted and such questions helped to establish overall visitor perceptions of the survey locations.

2.7 The tally data involved recording all groups, people and dogs passing the surveyor. The term 'group' reflects the number of people in each party. At survey points where there was a clear entrance to the site, then the tally reflects visitor flows entering the site. Where survey points were inside the site, then the totals reflect people passing in a single direction.

2.8 Automated counters were passive infra-red counters[4] which were strapped to trees or fence posts as appropriate. They were placed at access points which were considered to not necessarily warrant surveyor time, but where it was felt useful to have a check of the levels of use. Counters were placed at secondary access points, for example on the

[4] Trailmaster TM550 Passive infrared counters.

north side of Views Wood adjacent to Buxted Park, where a footpath network provides access to the wood but without parking or housing nearby. The counters were set up by surveyors when surveying nearby points and collected again at the end of the day.

2.9 The number of breaks should ideally equate to the number of groups of people passing the counters. They can however be set off by animals and other movement (such as tree branches moving in the wind). Where the raw tally data are presented within this report it represents the total number of times the beam was broken, rather than the exact number of visitors. Where converted to visitor rates (i.e. per hour) we divide the total by two, on the assumption that any group entering will also exit by the same route. This means that data can be more easily compared to the tally data where a surveyor has recorded the number of people entering the site. We place relatively little weight on the results of the automated counters, but they do provide a useful check that significant visitor numbers have not been missed. The route data (see below) provides a means of checking the counter results.

### Visitor routes

2.10 Route information was collected using maps in the field, with the interviewer asking the interviewee about their route and using a map to enable the interviewee to indicate their route. Routes were drawn as lines on the map, individually cross-referenced to each questionnaire.

2.11 The visitor data was entered into the GIS as polylines, with a single line for each interview (where a route was recorded). The data was summarised by site by determining the length of each route that fell within the site boundary (boundary files provided by Wealden District Council). Data was also summarised using a 25m grid aligned to the OS National Grid, and covering each of the six sites. The total number of people in the interviewed groups that passed through (intersected) each grid cell was extracted, allowing a representation of 'footfall' within each site.

### Home postcodes

2.12 The home postcode data that was collected were used to determine the distance between interviewee's homes and the location interviewed. Postcodes from the interview data were geocoded using GIS to the nearest postal address to the centroid of the postcode area (with 1m accuracy) using a reference file that originated from Postzon and code point using Royal Mail Postcode Address File and Ordnance Survey Open data. The linear distance between the postcode and the survey location was then extracted for all postcodes using MapInfo v10.0.1

### Estimating 'capacity'

2.13 A potential challenge is to consider whether existing greenspace – that already has visitors – could contribute to any SANGs provision, and if so how to best assess this contribution. For example, an area of greenspace might currently have a low level of access because it is not possible to park, part of the site is wet or there are no formal access arrangements. By modifying or enhancing such a site it may be possible to draw more people to the site, and this may be as effective as creating an entirely new SANG.

2.14 It is in fact very difficult to assess 'capacity' because an appropriate level of use for a site depends on a range of factors. For a site to be effective as a SANG it must provide an alternative to the SPA, and therefore replicate the experience gained from a visit there. A busy, overcrowded site is unlikely to provide that experience. Yet how 'busy' a site feels is likely to be subjective, dependent on the vegetation, site lines, noise levels, shape of the site etc. Furthermore, certain site features, such as the number of car-park spaces, may also limit capacity, regardless of how many people actually visit. Therefore capacity at some sites is not a measure of people but physical infrastructure such as parking spaces.

2.15 We therefore suggest that assessing the potential for existing sites to function as a SANG should be determined on a 'site by site' basis and will depend on the character of the site, the character of the European site and a number of other relevant considerations. Further enhancements to the site may have the potential to increase capacity, depending on the nature of the enhancements and / or the design of the site. This will need to be determined once the exact enhancement works for a particular site have been identified.

2.16 The level of current use is of course important, we therefore check whether the surveyed sites are relatively busy in respect to their area. We use a benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour. This level of use is considered at the right level of visitor use for a typical SANG-type site to not feel too busy. Drawing on visitor work conducted by Footprint Ecology and others, a visit rate of 1 person per ha per hour is a level of access much higher than at Ashdown Forest and other SPA sites such as the Thames Basin Heath yet is also a level that is much lower than would be expected on a busy urban park. The rate of 1 person per ha per hour is based on consideration of visitor data from a range of different sites (Liley 2007) and represents a pragmatic, easy-to-apply benchmark.

2.17 Predictions of visitor numbers at Ashdown Forest (Clarke, Sharp, & Liley 2010) suggest around 325 people visit per hour (based on visitor survey work undertaken in September 2008). With an area of around 3000ha, this equates to approximately 0.1 people per ha per hour visiting the SPA. Our benchmark is therefore a visitor rate around ten times that of the SPA. This is appropriate as Ashdown Forest is a large, contiguous block of habitat, and visitor density is not even over the site – visitor rates at the car-parks will be higher than 0.1 person per ha per hour and in the areas well away from access points visitor rates will be lower still. We know relatively little about how visitor numbers may vary over a year at Ashdown Forest and how busy September may be compared to other months. September 2008 was a relatively wet and rainy period, so visitor levels from the survey may be low. The choice of 1 person per ha per hour therefore sits well in comparison, and is a level very much lower than visitor densities encountered on many urban greenspace sites and parks. The approach of using this

benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour also has a precendent in that it was used by Wokingham Borough Council to assess SANGs capacity within their miniplan[5].

2.18 We recognise that some sites may well support higher levels of access before they 'feel' busy, and conversely it is possible to have a site (for example one with extensive areas of water/marshy ground) where visitor use may be concentrated in a small area and 1 person per ha per hour would seem busy. We therefore recognise that the benchmark needs to be checked against the features, character and infrastructure present on the sites.

2.19 We supplement our considerations of how busy a site is by using route data to determine whether parts of the site are underused. Using the 25m grid cells (see paragraph 2.13), it is possible to check the frequency distribution of the visitor density data. If there are extensive parts of the site that are not visited, this would suggest that the site has additional capacity in a particular part. By contrast a low but even visitor density across a site would indicate that the site may accommodate more people in general. This approach is a useful check on the visitor data.

2.20 A further check is actually asking people questions which relate to their visit patterns and how busy the site is. Questions 9 and 13 both include elements about the number of other users, and therefore relate to our consideration of whether the sites can accommodate more people. The responses to these questions are considered in the analysis section of the report.

5 http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planningcontrol/planning/planningpolicies/thamesbasinheathsspa/mitigation/

# 3. Visitor Survey Results

## Tally Data

3.1 Across all survey points a total of 580 adults, 97 children and 626 dogs were counted entering (or passing) and a total of 499 groups were encountered. Overall this equates to 2.6 groups per hour of survey work entering/passing. Survey point 6 (West Park and Lake Wood) was the busiest, with 79 groups recorded. Survey point 12 (Crowborough Ghyll) was the quietest, with 21 groups recorded in total.

**Table 2: Tally totals by survey point**

| | Location | Total Groups | Adults | Children | Dogs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 1 | 51 | 61 | 6 | 57 |
| | 2 | 40 | 46 | 11 | 48 |
| B. Wood | 3 | 58 | 70 | 7 | 73 |
| West Park | 4 | 46 | 53 | 8 | 55 |
| | 6 | 79 | 91 | 19 | 91 |
| Lake Wood | 5 | 25 | 36 | 15 | 23 |
| Views Wood | 7 | 42 | 46 | 3 | 58 |
| | 8 | 43 | 48 | 9 | 57 |
| | 9 | 41 | 46 | 11 | 59 |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 10 | 22 | 23 | 0 | 31 |
| | 11 | 31 | 38 | 0 | 47 |
| | 12 | 21 | 22 | 8 | 27 |
| | Total | 499 | 580 | 97 | 626 |

3.2 Tally data are summarised by site in Table 3. It can be seen that West Park was the busiest site, with 3.9 groups per survey hour. Lake Wood appears markedly different from the other sites in that it has the lowest visit rate (groups per hour). However, the number of children per hour is higher than the other sites and the number of dogs per hour low, suggesting that this site attracts families rather than lone dog walkers.

**Table 3: Tally totals by site**

| Site name | Groups | Adults | Children | Dogs | Survey Hours | Groups per hour | People Per hour | Children per hour | Dogs per hour |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 58 | 70 | 7 | 73 | 16 | 3.6 | 4.4 | 0.4 | 4.6 |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 74 | 83 | 8 | 105 | 48 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 0.2 | 2.2 |
| Lake Wood | 25 | 36 | 15 | 23 | 16 | 1.6 | 2.3 | 0.9 | 1.4 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 91 | 107 | 17 | 105 | 32 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 0.5 | 3.3 |
| Views Wood | 126 | 140 | 23 | 174 | 48 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 0.5 | 3.6 |
| West Park | 125 | 144 | 27 | 146 | 32 | 3.9 | 4.5 | 0.8 | 4.6 |

3.3 Sites were busier at weekends, with overall a slightly higher number of groups and adults at weekends. The differences were however not significant (paired t test using tally data from each session, groups: T=0.47; N=48, p=0.639; T=-1.13; N=48, p=0.263). Two particular survey points, Lake Wood (survey point 5) and Views Wood (survey point 8) stand out in having a markedly higher number of people counted at the weekend compared to the weekday.

**Table 4: Tally data for weekends and weekdays by survey point. Data are for entering or passing (depending on survey point). Numbers in bold highlight the highest value for that site on a weekend or weekday.**

| Survey point | Site | Weekday | | | | Weekend | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Groups | Adults | Children | Dogs | Groups | Adults | Children | Dogs |
| 1 | Uckfield Millennium Green | **27** | 28 | 0 | **31** | 24 | **33** | **6** | 26 |
| 2 | Uckfield Millennium Green | 18 | **23** | 4 | **24** | **22** | **23** | **7** | 24 |
| 3 | Boothland Wood | 26 | 27 | **4** | 30 | **32** | **43** | 3 | **43** |
| 4 | West Park | **25** | 26 | 3 | **32** | 21 | **27** | **5** | 23 |
| 5 | Lake Wood | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | **22** | **35** | **13** | 20 |
| 6 | West Park | **43** | 44 | **10** | 44 | 36 | **47** | 9 | **47** |
| 7 | Views Wood | 15 | 15 | 2 | 16 | **27** | **31** | 1 | **42** |
| 8 | Views Wood | **33** | **38** | **7** | **39** | 10 | 10 | 2 | 18 |
| 9 | Views Wood | **26** | **24** | 3 | **35** | 15 | 22 | **8** | 24 |
| 10 | Crowborough Ghyll | 10 | 11 | 0 | 14 | **12** | **12** | 0 | 17 |
| 11 | Crowborough Ghyll | **19** | **24** | 0 | **30** | 12 | 14 | 0 | 17 |
| 12 | Crowborough Ghyll | 8 | 8 | 3 | 13 | **13** | **14** | **5** | 14 |
| Total | | **253** | 269 | 38 | 311 | 246 | **311** | **59** | **315** |

## Automated Counter Data

3.4 Automated counters were used and placed at four out of the six sites at five locations as indicated in table 4 and shown on Map 2. Counters were attached to trees or posts at positions where visitors would pass to enter or leave the site and were in position for one week day and one weekend day. The greatest number of beam breaks was on average recorded at Views Wood (56%), while the lowest number of beam breaks was recorded at Lake Wood and West Park (9%) (Table 5).

**Table 5: Automated counter results, showing number (%) of beam breaks at each location on one week day and one weekend day. Grey shading indicates where surveyors noted that the counters seemed to be over-recording and that there may be issues with people tampering with the devices, branches swaying etc.**

| Site Name | Automated Counter Number | Date | Length of time in position (hours, minutes) | Total Number of Beam Breaks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 13 | 02/11/2012 | 09,30 | 21 (3) |
| Boothland Wood | 13 | 03/11/2012 | 09,30 | 42 (6) |
| Lake Wood | 15 | 11/11/2012 | 09,08 | 178 (24) |
| Lake Wood | 15 | 09/11/2012 | 09,21 | 15 (2) |
| Views Wood | 16 | 10/11/2012 | 09,11 | 53 (7) |
| Views Wood | 16 | 08/11/2012 | 09,11 | 73 (10) |
| Views Wood | 17 | 08/11/2012 | 09,15 | 196 (27) |
| Views Wood | 17 | 10/11/2012 | 09,08 | 94 (13) |
| West Park | 18 | 02/11/2012 | 08,35 | 31 (4) |
| West Park | 18 | 03/11/2012 | 09,08 | 35 (5) |
| Total Number of Beam Breaks | | | | 738 |

3.5 Reviewing the data in Table 4 it appears that the automated counters were recording high numbers of beam breaks, despite being in relatively quiet locations. There were some issues, which included, two different interviewees at location 18 indicated that they had seen the counter and gone up to investigate it, they were worried they had set it off multiple times. The counter at location 13 (3/11/12) was checked by the surveyor at lunchtime (checks 1 hour and ten minutes apart). During this time it had been triggered 15 times. The surveyor was sure 15 people had not passed during this time, and was concerned about branches near the counter swaying. There were also children playing in the nearby skateboard park and it may have been that they had been playing nearby.

### Overall Visit Rates of People to Sites

3.6 The number of people entering at each survey point is illustrated in Map 4, which also shows the automated counter data. It is clear that the blue circles (representing the results from the automated counters, and plotted using the same scale as the surveyors tally data) are too high, as shown by the route data (see Maps 8 and 9).

3.7 We summarise visitor rates (per ha per hour) in Table 5. These rates are calculated by combining the weekend and the weekday tally data. At all locations the rates of people visiting sites is relatively low. The table uses only the tally data and we add some interpretation to this within the notes column. Crowborough Ghyll and Views Wood are the quietest sites, mainly because they are relatively large.

**Table 6: Visitor rates per ha per hour. Site area figures are taken from the GIS data provided by Wealden District Council. People per hour is derived using 16 hours for each site (this reflects the amount of time each access point was surveyed)**

| Site name | Survey Points | Site Area (ha) | Total people (adults) | People per hour | People per ha per hour | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 1 | 5.1 | 70 | 4.38 | 0.86 | Site is small and therefore surveyor tally should be reasonably accurate as few people likely to be missed. |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 3 | 39.7 | 83 | 5.19 | 0.13 | Visitor totals probably reasonably accurate. There are two access points in the south-east corner of the site that were not surveyed, but neither are likely to be much used. Route data shows 8 of the interviewees exited the site through these unsurveyed access points. |
| Lake Wood | 1 | 8.5 | 36 | 2.25 | 0.26 | Totals likely to be accurate as all visitors walking round lake were counted. Access point at south-eastern corner (bend in Rocks Road) was not surveyed, but all visitors likely to go round lake. |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 2 | 8.9 | 107 | 6.69 | 0.75 | Totals likely to be accurate as all main access points surveyed. Only other access is from farm to south, and no-one that was interviewed had crossed the southern boundary of the site. |
| Views Wood | 3 | 24.3 | 140 | 8.75 | 0.36 | Totals potentially slightly underestimated as route data shows many people using Buxted Park area and also numerous small access points off housing. Automated counters along eastern edge seem to support evidence that many people use surrounding countryside, however likely that most are parking and accessing through Views Wood. |
| West Park | 2 | 10.6 | 144 | 9 | 0.85 | Route data suggests people at southern end (only area where no surveyor) follow the edge of the site near the road and seems likely that majority of visitors would have been picked up in the tally data. |

## Questionnaire Data

### Overview

3.8 A total of 353 interviews were conducted. Nobody was interviewed that was on holiday, reflecting local use of survey sites. The majority (98%) of interviewees stated that they were visiting from home (Table 6); six people (2% of interviewees) indicated that they were visiting from a friend/relative's house. The number of interviews conducted at survey locations ranged from 19 (locations 5 and 6) to 41 (location 1).

3.9 Group size (i.e. the number of people in each party accompanying the interviewee) ranged from one (i.e. interviewee was visiting on their own) to seven (Table 8). Nearly three quarters (73%) of groups were of just one person; Lake Wood stands out in that it was the only site at which the median group size was not 1, and at this site 37% of groups were of two people and a further 16% of groups were three people.

3.10 Approximately half (51%) of all people in the interviewed groups were in full-time employment and around one fifth of all visitors were retired (Table 9).

**Table 7: Number of interviews at each survey location and response to question 1 (which of the following best describes your situation today?).**

| Situation | Location | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | |
| Visiting from home | 39 | 36 | 28 | 26 | 19 | 43 | 27 | 36 | 31 | 16 | 19 | 26 | 346 |
| Visiting from a friend/relative's house | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | | | | | 6 |
| Other | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Total | 41 | 36 | 28 | 27 | 19 | 45 | 27 | 38 | 31 | 16 | 19 | 26 | 353 |

**Table 8: Group size by location. Table gives number (%) of groups of each size, with percentages calculated for each row. Bold numbers indicate median group size at given site.**

| | Group size | | | | | | | Group size not recorded | Total Groups | Total People |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | | |
| Boothland Wood | **18** (64) | 7 (25) | 1 (4) | 1 (4) | | | | 1 (4) | 28 (100) | 39 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | **49** (80) | 9 (15) | 3 (5) | (0) | | | | (0) | 61 (100) | 76 |
| Lake Wood | 6 (32) | **7** (37) | 3 (16) | 2 (11) | | 1 (5) | | (0) | 19 (100) | 43 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | **56** (73) | 17 (22) | 3 (4) | 1 (1) | | | | (0) | 77 (100) | 103 |
| Views Wood | **76** (79) | 16 (17) | 2 (2) | | | | 1 (1) | 1 (1) | 96 (100) | 121 |
| West Park | **51** (71) | 13 (18) | 6 (8) | | 1 (1) | | 1 (1) | (0) | 72 (100) | 107 |
| Groups | **256** (73) | 69 (20) | 18 (5) | 4 (1) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) | 2 (1) | 2 (1) | 353 (100) | 489 |

**Table 9: Number (%) of people in the interviewed groups at each site falling into a particular category relating to employment status.**

| | Full time education | Part time employment | Full time employment | Looking after family | Retired | Unemployed | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 4 (11) | 9 (25) | 12 (33) | (0) | 11 (31) | (0) | 36 (100) |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 5 (7) | 14 (19) | 36 (49) | 4 (5) | 14 (19) | 1 (1) | 74 (100) |
| Lake Wood | 9 (24) | 6 (16) | 18 (47) | 3 (8) | 2 (5) | (0) | 38 (100) |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 3 (3) | 12 (12) | 65 (66) | 5 (5) | 12 (12) | 1 (1) | 98 (100) |
| Views Wood | 1 (1) | 16 (15) | 60 (57) | 4 (4) | 21 (20) | 3 (3) | 105 (100) |
| West Park | 6 (8) | 16 (20) | 29 (36) | (0) | 28 (35) | 1 (1) | 80 (100) |
| Total | 28 (6) | 73 (17) | 220 (51) | 16 (4) | 88 (20) | 6 (1) | 431 (100) |

## Time spent at location

3.11 Visitors were asked how long they had spent or intended to spend at each of the survey locations. Overall, the majority of visitors (90%) spent less than 1 hour in each of the locations (40% 30 minutes and 50% between 30 minutes and 1 hour - Table 10). Only 1% of visitors spent 2 or more hours in an area, specifically at Lake Wood.

**Table 10: Time spent at each location. Table gives number (%) of interviewed visitors and the amount of time spent at each survey location.**

| Time spent in the area | Less than 30 minutes | 30 minutes - 1 hour | 1 hour - 2 hours | 2 or more hours | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 11 (39) | 15 (54) | 2 (7) | 0 (0) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 21 (34) | 32 (52) | 8 (13) | 0 (0) | 61 |
| Lake Wood | 10 (53) | 5 (26) | 4 (21) | 0 (0) | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 49 (64) | 25 (32) | 3 (4) | 0 (0) | 77 |
| Views Wood | 16 (17) | 62 (65) | 16 (17) | 2 (2) | 96 |
| West Park | 31 (43) | 39 (54) | 2 (3) | 0 (0) | 72 |
| Total | 138 (39) | 178 (50) | 35 (10) | 2 (1) | 353 |

## Visit frequency

3.12 Visitors were asked how frequently they visit the site, with one response being recorded per interview. Frequency ranged from 'more than once a day' to '2 to 3 times per month' or 'other'.

3.13 At Boothland Wood and Crowborough Ghyll, high numbers of visitors stated that they visit the sites daily or most days (Table 11). At Uckfield Millennium Green, Views Wood and West Park, high numbers of those interviewed visit the site most days, daily or more than once a day. At Lake Wood, in contrast, visitors appear to visit less frequently, with the greatest number of visitors responding with 'other' (37%). Other responses included for example, that the interviewee was visiting the site for the first time.

**Table 11: Frequency of visit to each site. Table gives number (%) of interviewees and frequency with which they visit the site. Cells in bold represent highest value for each row.**

| Frequency of visits to the site | More than once a day | Daily | Most days | Once a week | 2 to 3 times a month | Other | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 4 (14) | **12 (43)** | 8 (29) | 0 (0) | 2 (7) | 2 (7) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 7 (11) | **20 (33)** | 19 (31) | 3 (5) | 5 (8) | 7 (11) | 61 |
| Lake Wood | 0 (0) | 2 (11) | 4 (21) | 2 (11) | 4 (21) | **7 (37)** | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 24 (31) | **25 (32)** | 16 (21) | 4 (5) | 6 (8) | 2 (3) | 77 |
| Views Wood | **38 (40)** | 34 (35) | 14 (15) | 5 (5) | 1 (1) | 4 (4) | 96 |
| West Park | **21 (30)** | 19 (27) | 15 (21) | 7 (10) | 5 (7) | 4 (6) | 71 |
| Total | 94 (27) | **112 (32)** | 76 (22) | 21 (6) | 23 (7) | 26 (7) | 352 |

## Temporal visitor patterns

3.14 Visitors were asked whether they visited the area more at a particular time of year. Those interviewed were able to select multiple answers and in total, 366 responses were recorded from the 353 interviews. The majority of responses (90%) indicated that

those interviewed visited the site equally throughout the year and were not influenced by seasonality (Table 12). At all survey locations, the most popular season (excluding 'equally all year'), was summer (5%).

**Table 12: Number (%) of total responses regarding the time of year that interviewees visit the area**

| Time of Year | Spring | Summer | Autumn | Winter | Don't know / First Visit | Equally all year | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 0 (0) | 1 (4) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 2 (7) | 25 (89) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 3 (4) | 4 (6) | 3 (4) | 1 (1) | 3 (4) | 54 (79) | 68 |
| Lake Wood | 0 (0) | 3 (15) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 17 (85) | 20 |
| Uck. M. Green | 1 (1) | 4 (5) | 1 (1) | 1 (1) | 0 (0) | 73 (91) | 80 |
| Views Wood | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 93 (96) | 97 |
| West Park | 1 (1) | 6 (8) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 2 (3) | 64 (88) | 73 |
| Total | 5 | 19 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 326 | 366 |

3.15 The time of day that visitors normally visited the area was recorded, with multiple responses being accepted. A total of 679 responses were recorded. The majority of those interviewed normally visited the area between before 9am and 5pm (85%), while 7% visited the area after 5pm (Table 13).

**Table 13: Number (%) of total responses regarding the time of day that interviewees visit the area**

| Time of Day | Before 9am | Between 9am and 12 | Between 12pm and 3pm | Between 3pm and 5pm | After 5pm | No / Don't Know / First Visit | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 8 (22) | 5 (14) | 4 (11) | 7 (19) | 2 (6) | 10 (28) | 36 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 26 (26) | 19 (19) | 17 (17) | 19 (19) | 4 (4) | 16 (16) | 101 |
| Lake Wood | 6 (15) | 9 (23) | 12 (30) | 11 (28) | 1 (3) | 1 (3) | 40 |
| Uck. M. Green | 47 (27) | 30 (17) | 31 (18) | 45 (26) | 19 (11) | 0 (0) | 172 |
| Views Wood | 55 (28) | 32 (16) | 30 (15) | 51 (26) | 14 (7) | 16 (8) | 198 |
| West Park | 32 (24) | 21 (16) | 24 (18) | 33 (25) | 8 (6) | 14 (11) | 132 |
| Total | 174 | 116 | 118 | 166 | 48 | 57 | 679 |

3.16 Most visitors that were interviewed had been visiting sites for a number of years. Visitors were asked how long they had been visiting the sites for, from less than a year to over three years. 73% of those questioned responded with 'other' (Table 14), with length of time ranging from 3 to over 50 years.

**Table 14: Length of time that interviewees have been visiting the area**

| How long have you been visiting this site | Less than a year | Between 1 and 2 years | Between 2 and 3 years | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 3 (11) | 1 (4) | 1 (4) | 23 (82) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 4 (7) | 9 (15) | 4 (7) | 44 (72) | 61 |
| Lake Wood | 1 (5) | 4 (21) | 3 (16) | 11 (58) | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 7 (9) | 9 (12) | 12 (16) | 49 (64) | 77 |
| Views Wood | 11 (11) | 3 (3) | 6 (6) | 76 (79) | 96 |
| West Park | 5 (7) | 2 (3) | 9 (13) | 56 (78) | 72 |
| Total | 31 | 28 | 35 | 259 | 353 |

## Mode of transport to sites

3.17 The majority of visitors travelled to the sites on foot (79%), while 21% travelled by car. No visitors travelled to sites by bicycle or other means (Table 15). The proportion of people arriving by car was highest at Boothland Wood (50% of interviewees) and Lake Wood (42% interviewees).

**Table 15: The mode of transport used by visitors to the sites. The number (percentage) of visitors travelling by car/van or on foot.**

| Transport Mode | Car / Van | On Foot | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 14 (50) | 14 (50) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 13 (21) | 48 (79) | 61 |
| Lake Wood | 8 (42) | 11 (58) | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 12 (16) | 65 (84) | 77 |
| Views Wood | 15 (16) | 81 (84) | 96 |
| West Park | 13 (18) | 59 (82) | 72 |
| Total | 75 (21) | 278 (79) | 353 |

## Activities

3.18 Visitors were asked what main activity they were undertaking during their visit to the area, for which one response was recorded. Multiple other responses were possible for activities that were also being undertaken during the visit.

**Table 16: Main activity undertaken. The number (%) of visitor responses when asked what main activity they were undertaking**

| Main Activity | Dog Walking | Walking | Passing Through/Short-cut | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 28 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 53 (87) | 3 (5) | 3 (5) | 2 (3) | 61 |
| Lake Wood | 11 (58) | 7 (37) | 0 (0) | 1 (5) | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 70 (91) | 6 (8) | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 77 |
| Views Wood | 92 (96) | 3 (3) | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 96 |
| West Park | 66 (92) | 6 (8) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 72 |
| Total | 320 | 25 | 3 | 5 | 353 |

3.19 The most commonly cited main activity by interviewees during their visit was dog walking (91%). The highest percentage of dog walkers was recorded at Boothland Wood (100%) and the lowest at Lake Wood (58%) (Table 16). The second most popular main activity was walking (7%).

3.20 Walking was the primary activity being undertaken by interviewees asked if they were carrying out any other activities in addition to their main activity (67%) (Table 17). No visitors responded with 'wildlife watching', 'professional dog walking' or 'cycling'.

**Table 17: Other activities undertaken. The number (%) of visitor responses when asked if they were carrying out more than one activity**

| | Dog Walking | Walking | Jogging | Passing through/Shortcut | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 0 (0) | 1 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 4 (29) | 8 (57) | 0 (0) | 1 (7) | 1 (7) | 14 |
| Lake Wood | 0 (0) | 7 (50) | 1 (7) | 1 (7) | 5 (36) | 14 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 1 (8) | 6 (46) | 1 (8) | 3 (23) | 2 (15) | 13 |
| Views Wood | 0 (0) | 7 (78) | 1 (11) | 0 (0) | 1 (11) | 9 |
| West Park | 1 (6) | 11 (65) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 5 (29) | 17 |
| Total | 6 | 40 | 3 | 5 | 14 | 68 |

3.21 Dog walkers are clearly the major user group at the sites. Perhaps not surprisingly, dog walkers were the users that tended to visit most frequently (62% of dog walkers across all sites indicated they visited daily or more frequently). Dog walkers also tended to visit sites for a relatively short period (across all sites, 27% of dog walkers indicated there visit was less than half an hour).

## Choice of location

3.22 Visitors were asked about their motivations for choosing to visit the site in particular, rather than visiting another local site. Responses were categorised into one of fourteen responses and the one response, which had the most influence over the decision to visit, was classed as the 'main' reason. Additional responses, where provided, were classed as 'other' reasons.

3.23 Overall, the most commonly cited main motivation for visiting the site was proximity to home, with 199 visitors providing this answer. This was representative of all sites, except for Lake Wood, where most visitors provided 'other' as a response (Figure 1). 69% of those who provided 'other' at Lake Wood chose the area due to its attractive scenery and pleasant atmosphere.

3.24 103 visitors responded with 'other' when asked about their main motivation for visiting the site. Responses were varied and included a general appreciation for the scenery and ambience of an area, ability to enjoy peace and quiet, proximity to other areas of interest and the quality of paths. At Boothland Wood, 46% of visitors felt the area was good for dog walking. Many visitors enjoy the sites for the quality of habitats and find them to be nice places to visit: 78% of visitors at Uckfield Millennium Green, 62% at Views Wood and 73% at West Park.

3.25 Interviewees were able to provide more than one reason for choosing the site over others in the local area; 747 additional responses were recorded. The ability to allow dogs off lead was a common response overall (20%) (Figure 2), particularly at Uckfield Millennium Green (6%) and Views Wood (7%). Many respondents provided 'other' as their motivation for choosing the site; reasons varied again from a general liking for the area and habitat, suitability for dogs and good paths.

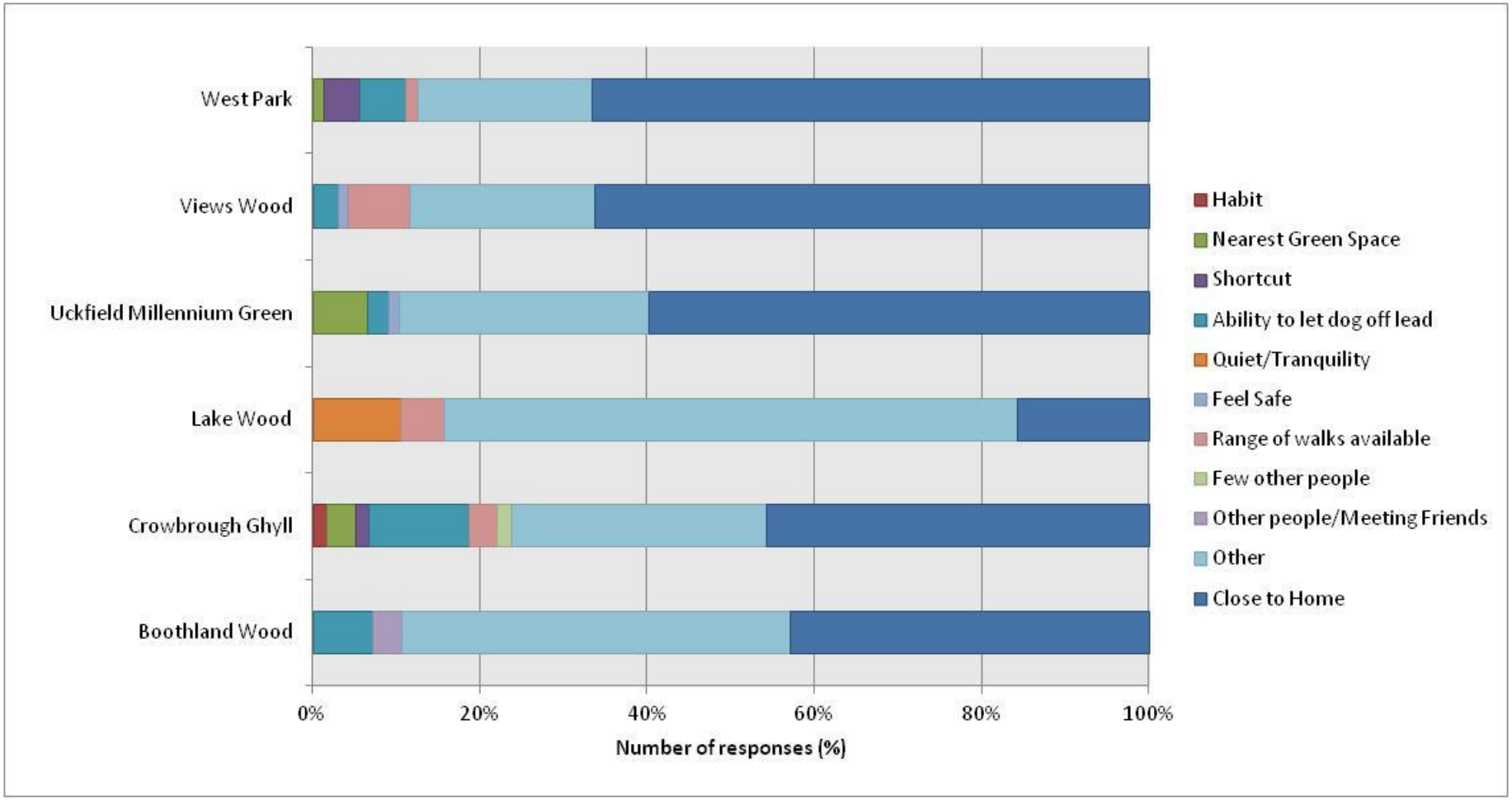



**Figure 1: Main reason for choice of location at each of the six sites. Number of responses (%)**

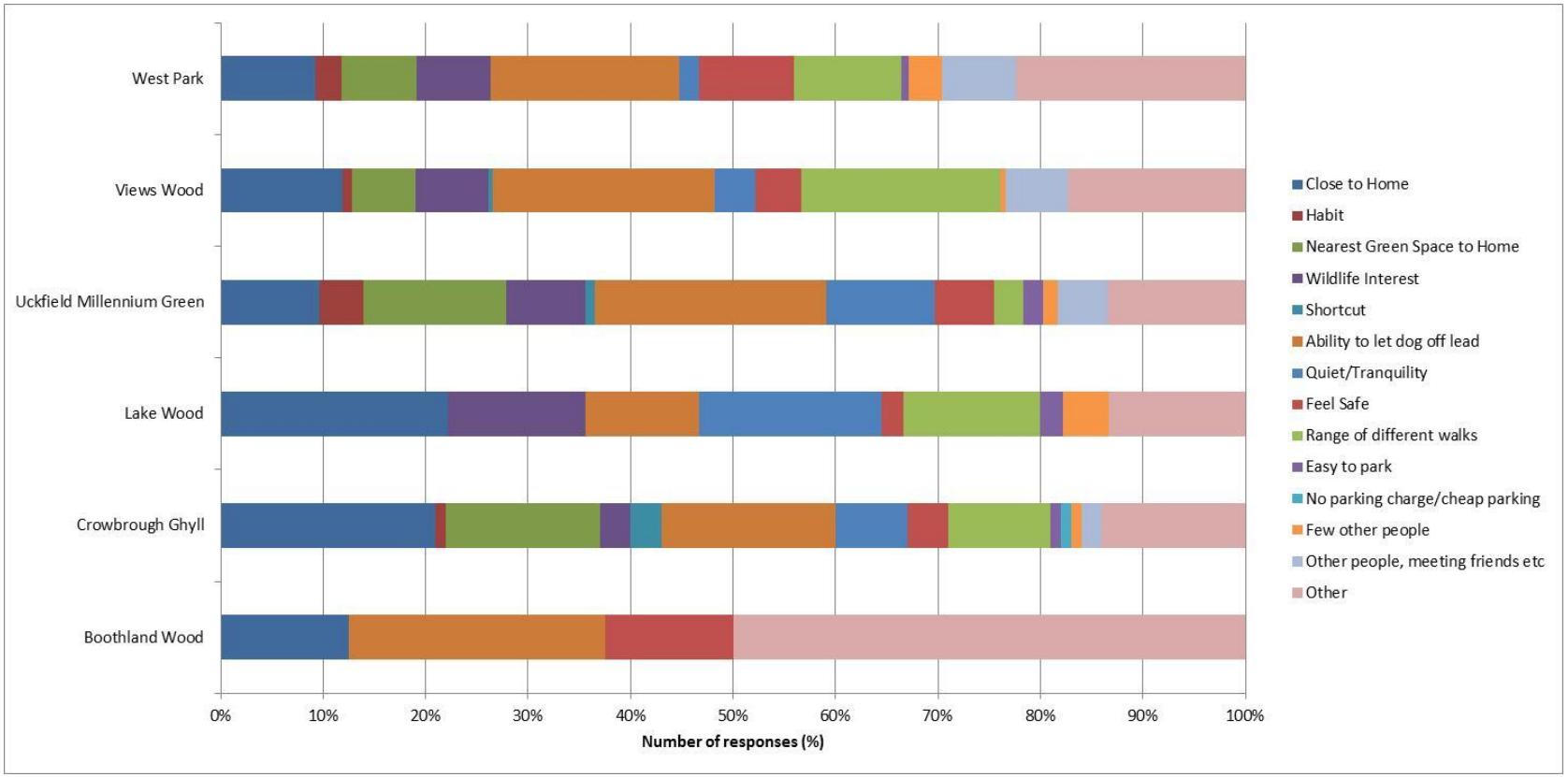



**Figure 2: Other reasons for choice of location. Number of responses (%)**

## Routes

3.26 Visitors were asked to map the route they had taken that day, or the route they intended to take. Visitors were also asked whether that route was reflective of their normal route.

3.27 73% of visitors stated that their route was reflective of their usual route, while only 1% took a longer than normal route on the day of the interview (Table 18). Roughly one in six (16%) of those questioned had no typical visit, or were unsure about the route.

**Table 18: Number (%) of responses to the question of whether the interviewee's route was reflective of their normal route**

| Location Name | Yes, Normal | Longer than normal | Shorter than normal | Not sure/No typical visit | Grand Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 26 (93) | 0 (0) | 2 (7) | 0 (0) | 28 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 34 (60) | 1 (2) | 12 (21) | 10 (18) | 57 |
| Lake Wood | 17 (89) | 1 (5) | 0 (0) | 1 (5) | 19 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 59 (77) | 1 (1) | 7 (9) | 10 (13) | 77 |
| Views Wood | 60 (63) | 0 (0) | 7 (7) | 28 (29) | 95 |
| West Park | 61 (85) | 0 (0) | 5 (7) | 6 (8) | 72 |
| Grand Total | 257 | 3 | 33 | 55 | 348 |

3.28 Route data were summarised within each site by calculating the distance walked within the site boundary for each visitor. Routes were plotted for 309 visitors and the length walked within each site ranged from 0.039km to 2.39km. Across all sites the mean was 1.05+0.02 and the median 0.99.

3.29 Route lengths are summarised by site in Figure 3. It can be seen that at all sites the majority of routes were below 1.5km, and Crowborough Ghyll and Views Wood (the largest sites) were the only two sites where anybody walked over 2km. Visitors to Boothland Wood (the smallest site) seemed to walk the shortest distances within the site.

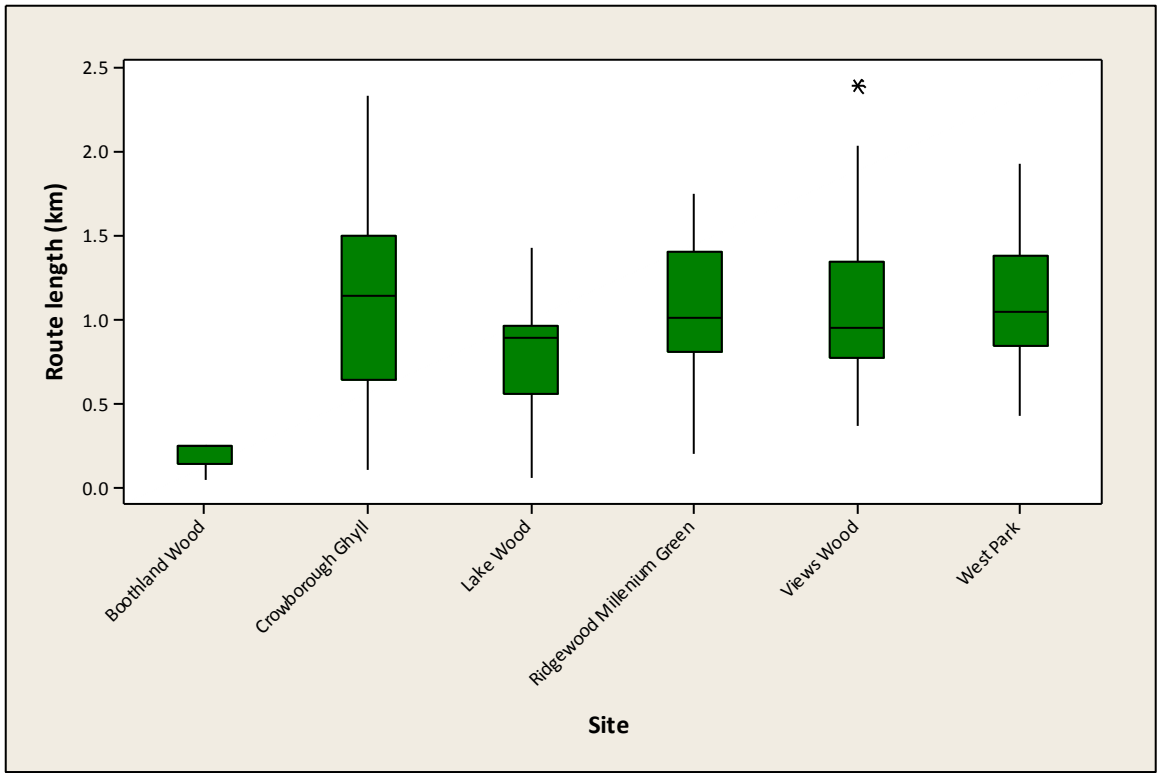



**Figure 3: Route length by site**

## Other sites used by visitors

3.30 Visitors were asked if they visited any other sites for the main activity they had provided, along with their mode of transport to that location and the average frequency with which they visit. Up to four responses could be given per interview. Of the 353 people interviewed, 302 stated that they visit at least one other site for their given activity.

3.31 668 responses were recorded in total and 158 locations were given in response to this question, with many interviewees providing more than one location. The site most frequently cited by those interviewed was Ashdown Forest (32% of all responses), followed by Buxted Park (10%) (Table 19).

3.32 Visitors who provided details of other sites were also asked what mode of transport they would normally use to access that site: by car, on foot, bicycle or by another mode of transport. 654 responses were recorded and no interviewees stated that they travel to the sites by bicycle. Virtually all of those people who provided Ashdown Forest as another site they visited travelled to Ashdown Forest by car (one person interviewed at Crowborough Ghyll said that they walked to Ashdown Forest).

3.33 Visitors were also asked how frequently they visit the other locations from a choice of six responses. Data are summarised (all data pooled) in Table 20. Most of the people that indicated that they visited Ashdown Forest did so either once a week or 2-3 times per week.

**Table 19: Visits to other sites. Table shows the seventeen most recorded responses (all locations named at least five times). The table gives the number of interviewees at each survey site that mentioned the other site, and the figures in brackets indicate the percentage of those visitors who travelled to the other sites by car.**

| Other Location | Boothland Wood | Crowbrough Ghyll | Lake Wood | Uckfield Millennium Green | Views Wood | West Park | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TOTAL INTERVIEWS | 28 | 61 | 19 | 77 | 96 | 72 | 353 |
| Ashdown Forest | 6 (100) | 41 (98) | 9 (100) | 57 (100) | 53 (100) | 45 (100) | 210 (100) |
| Buxted Park | 2 (100) | 1 (100) | 9 (78) | 20 (100) | 18 (17) | 19 (89) | 69 (72) |
| Victoria Park | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 29 (3) | 8 (63) | 6 (33) | 43 (19) |
| Lake Wood | 1 (100) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 3 (100) | 8 (75) | 18 (0) | 30 (33) |
| Millenium Green – Ridgewood – Recreation Grounds | 8 (50) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) | 1 (0) | 4 (75) | 15 (47) | 30 (47) |
| West Park | 6 (67) | 0 (0) | 4 (0) | 9 (67) | 2 (100) | 0 (0) | 21 (57) |
| South Downs | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 4 (75) | 4 (100) | 5 (100) | 5 (100) | 18 (94) |
| Crowborough Country Park | 1 (100) | 13 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 14 (7) |
| Boothland Wood | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (100) | 8 (50) | 0 (0) | 2 (50) | 11 (55) |
| Mount Ephraim | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 11 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 11 (0) |
| Hempstead Woods | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 4 (50) | 1 (0) | 3 (0) | 0 (0) | 8 (25) |
| Rotherfield | 0 (0) | 5 (60) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (100) | 6 (67) |
| Snatts Road Fields | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 3 (33) | 1 (0) | 2 (0) | 0 (0) | 6 (17) |
| Framfield | 1 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 3 (0) | 1 (0) | 0 (0) | 5 (0) |
| Hempstead | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (0) | 4 (0) | 5 (0) |
| Hornhurst Wood | 0 (0) | 4 (75) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (100) | 5 (80) |
| Isfield | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 2 (100) | 0 (0) | 2 (100) | 1 (100) | 5 (100) |

**Table 20: Frequency with which interviewees visit other locations. Table shows number (%) of those interviewed who visit the 17 most common locations**

| Location | More than once a day (1) | Daily (2) | Most Days (3) | Once a week (4) | 2 to 3 times a month (5) | Other (6) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ashdown Forest | 0 (0) | 2 (1) | 18 (9) | 57 (27) | 50 (24) | 82 (39) | 209 |
| Buxted Park | 0 (0) | 2 (3) | 10 (14) | 33 (48) | 17 (25) | 7 (10) | 69 |
| Victoria Park | 0 (0) | 2 (5) | 19 (44) | 15 (35) | 2 (5) | 5 (12) | 43 |
| Millenium Green - Ridgewood - Recreation Grounds | 0 (0) | 2 (7) | 11 (38) | 8 (28) | 7 (24) | 1 (3) | 29 |
| Lake Wood | 0 (0) | 1 (4) | 8 (29) | 8 (29) | 8 (29) | 3 (11) | 28 |
| West Park | 2 (10) | 2 (10) | 3 (15) | 6 (30) | 6 (30) | 1 (5) | 20 |
| South Downs | 1 (6) | 1 (6) | 0 (0) | 2 (12) | 8 (47) | 5 (29) | 17 |
| Crowborough Country Park | 0 (0) | 2 (14) | 8 (57) | 1 (7) | 2 (14) | 1 (7) | 14 |
| Boothland Wood | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 4 (40) | 4 (40) | 2 (20) | 0 (0) | 10 |
| Mount Ephraim | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 5 (45) | 5 (45) | 1 (9) | 0 (0) | 11 |
| Hempstead Woods | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (14) | 6 (86) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 7 |
| Snatts Road Fields | 0 (0) | 1 (20) | 0 (0) | 1 (20) | 2 (40) | 1 (20) | 5 |
| Rotherfield | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 3 (50) | 3 (50) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 6 |
| Framfield | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 2 (40) | 2 (40) | 1 (20) | 0 (0) | 5 |
| Hempstead | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (25) | 1 (25) | 2 (50) | 0 (0) | 4 |
| Hornhurst Wood | 0 (0) | 1 (20) | 2 (40) | 1 (20) | 1 (20) | 0 (0) | 5 |
| Isfield | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (20) | 2 (40) | 2 (40) | 5 |
| Total | 3 | 16 | 95 | 154 | 111 | 108 | 487 |

3.34 Those interviewees who did not provide Ashdown Forest as a response to which other sites they visit were asked specifically whether they use Ashdown Forest for their main activity. Of the 353 interviews, 108 responses were received for this question. 53% of all those asked stated that they visit Ashdown Forest occasionally, while only 7% considered themselves to be frequent visitors to the site (Table 21).

**Table 21: Number (%) and frequency with which those interviewed, who did not provide Ashdown Forest as a response to other sites used, visit Ashdown Forest.**

| Interview Location | Yes/Often | Occasionally/Sometimes | No/Never | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boothland Wood | 3 (14) | 12 (57) | 6 (29) | 21 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 1 (5) | 12 (60) | 7 (35) | 20 |
| Lake Wood | 0 (0) | 6 (86) | 1 (14) | 7 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 0 (0) | 1 (17) | 5 (83) | 6 |
| Views Wood | 4 (11) | 15 (43) | 16 (46) | 35 |
| West Park | 0 (0) | 11 (58) | 8 (42) | 19 |
| Total | 8 | 57 | 43 | 108 |

## Home Postcodes of Visitors

3.35 A total of 324 (i.e. 92%) of interviewees gave valid, complete postcodes that were georeferenced to national postcode data (Postzon). Home postcodes are shown by site in maps 5 and 6. In Map 7 we show the same map as Map 6, however the colour of the dots reflects visitors who indicated that they visited Ashdown Forest. The red points represent interviewees who mentioned Ashdown Forest as one of the other sites they visit. The blue points indicate those who did not mention Ashdown Forest until prompted (end of Question 11) and the black dots indicate those who did not mention Ashdown Forest at all.

3.36 For all of the six survey sites, the median distance from the survey point to the home postcode was less than 2km. Lake Wood draws people from a wider distance, whereas for all the other sites visitors are particularly local (Figure 4).

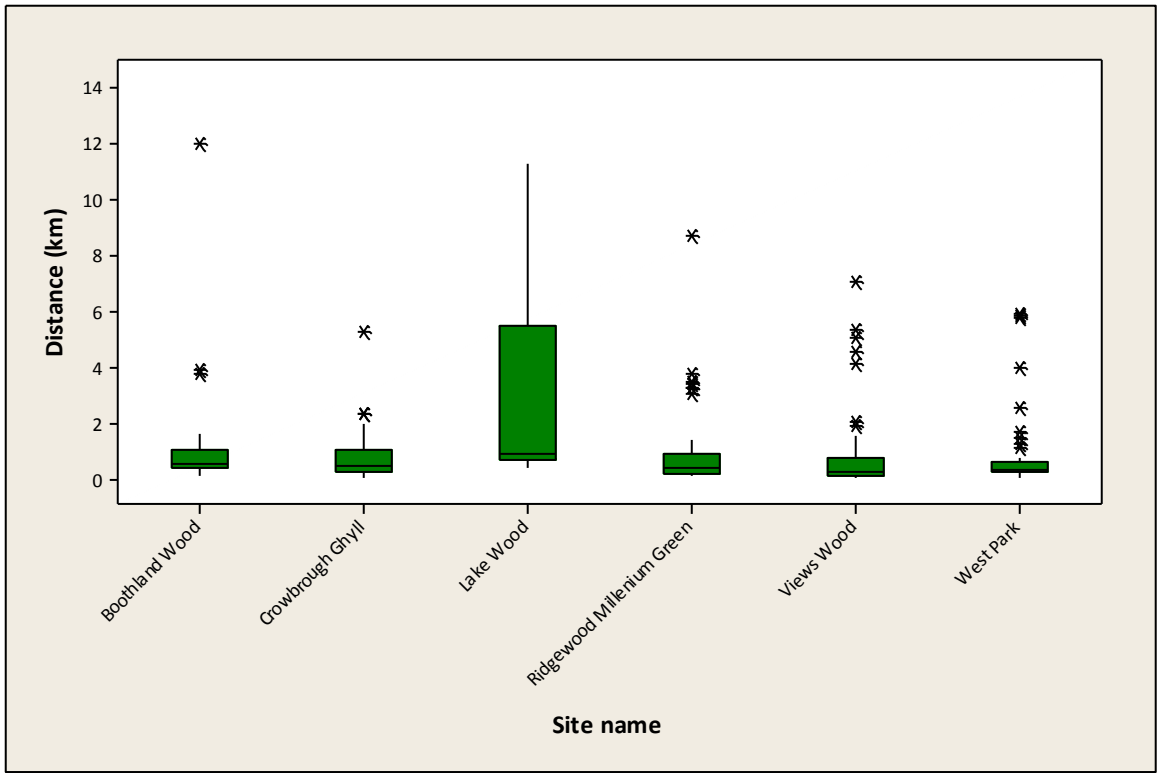



**Figure 4: Distance from home postcode to survey location, by site. Horizontal lines indicate the median distance, the boxes show the interquartile range, the vertical lines ('whiskers') show the upper and lower limit, and outliers are illustrated with asterisks. Three outliers are outside the scale range of the Y axis.**

**Table 22: Summary of distances from interviewee's home postcodes to the survey point**

| Site | Car/Van | | | | | | Foot | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1st Quartile | Median1 | 3rd Quartile | Min | Max | N | 1st Quartile | Median1 | 3rd Quartile | Min | Max | N |
| Boothland Wood | 0.58 | 0.88 | 2.15 | 0.46 | 12 | 14 | 0.15 | 0.42 | 0.56 | 0.13 | 0.77 | 13 |
| Crowbrough Ghyll | 1.5 | 1.69 | 2.17 | 0.53 | 5.25 | 13 | 0.25 | 0.39 | 0.57 | 0.05 | 1.69 | 48 |
| Lake Wood | 1.49 | 4.3 | 11.27 | 0.88 | 22.42 | 8 | 0.61 | 0.76 | 0.85 | 0.4 | 9.17 | 10 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 0.74 | 1.3 | 3.64 | 0.54 | 21.93 | 12 | 0.22 | 0.35 | 0.64 | 0.11 | 3.48 | 58 |
| Views Wood | 0.89 | 1.49 | 5.18 | 0.12 | 53.53 | 13 | 0.13 | 0.26 | 0.45 | 0.03 | 19.37 | 72 |
| West Park | 1.09 | 2.15 | 5.82 | 0.61 | 5.95 | 10 | 0.26 | 0.34 | 0.54 | 0.08 | 1.16 | 53 |
| ALL SITES | 0.86 | 1.59 | 4.17 | 0.12 | 53.53 | 70 | 0.22 | 0.35 | 0.58 | 0.03 | 19.37 | 254 |

## Management of the sites and potential changes

3.37 Across all sites over half (56%) of interviewees indicated that no changes/nothing could be done to enhance the site for access (question 12) (Figure 5). The differences between sites were significant ($\chi^2_5$=13.16, p=0.02). Boothland Wood and Lake Wood were the two sites where the most people indicated that there were no changes/nothing that could be done

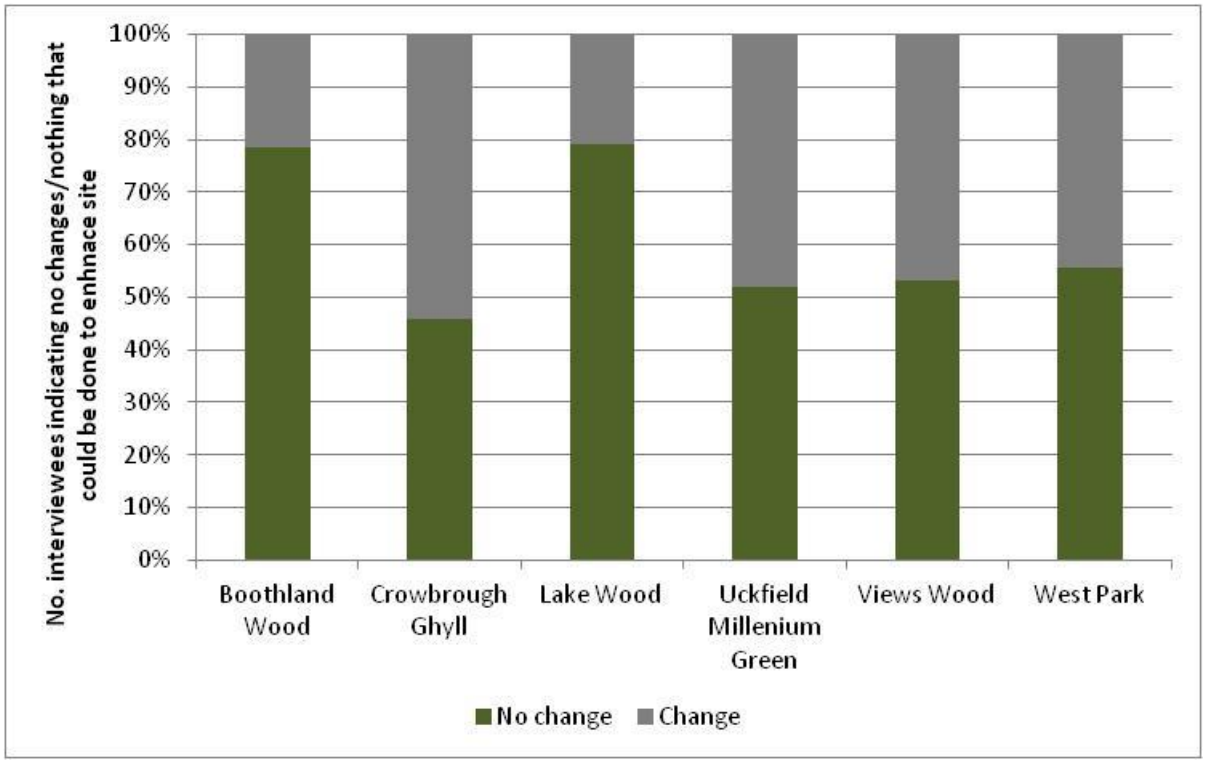



**Figure 5: Proportions of interviewees indicating that no changes/nothing could be done to enhance the site for access (question 12).**

3.38 The changes people suggested varied between sites (Figure 6). Changes relating to path surfacing, routes or signposting were mentioned at most sites (with the exception of Lake Wood) and paths seemed to be a particular issue at Crowborough Ghyll where over a third (36%) of interviewees indicated that changes to paths could be done to enhance the site for access. Issues with dog fouling or the provision of dog bins were mentioned at all sites, and appeared to be a particular issue for interviewees at Uckfield Millennium Green (where 29% of interviewees mentioned dog fouling/bins). Improvements to parking arrangements were mentioned only at Views Wood (where just 1 interviewee suggested parking improvements).

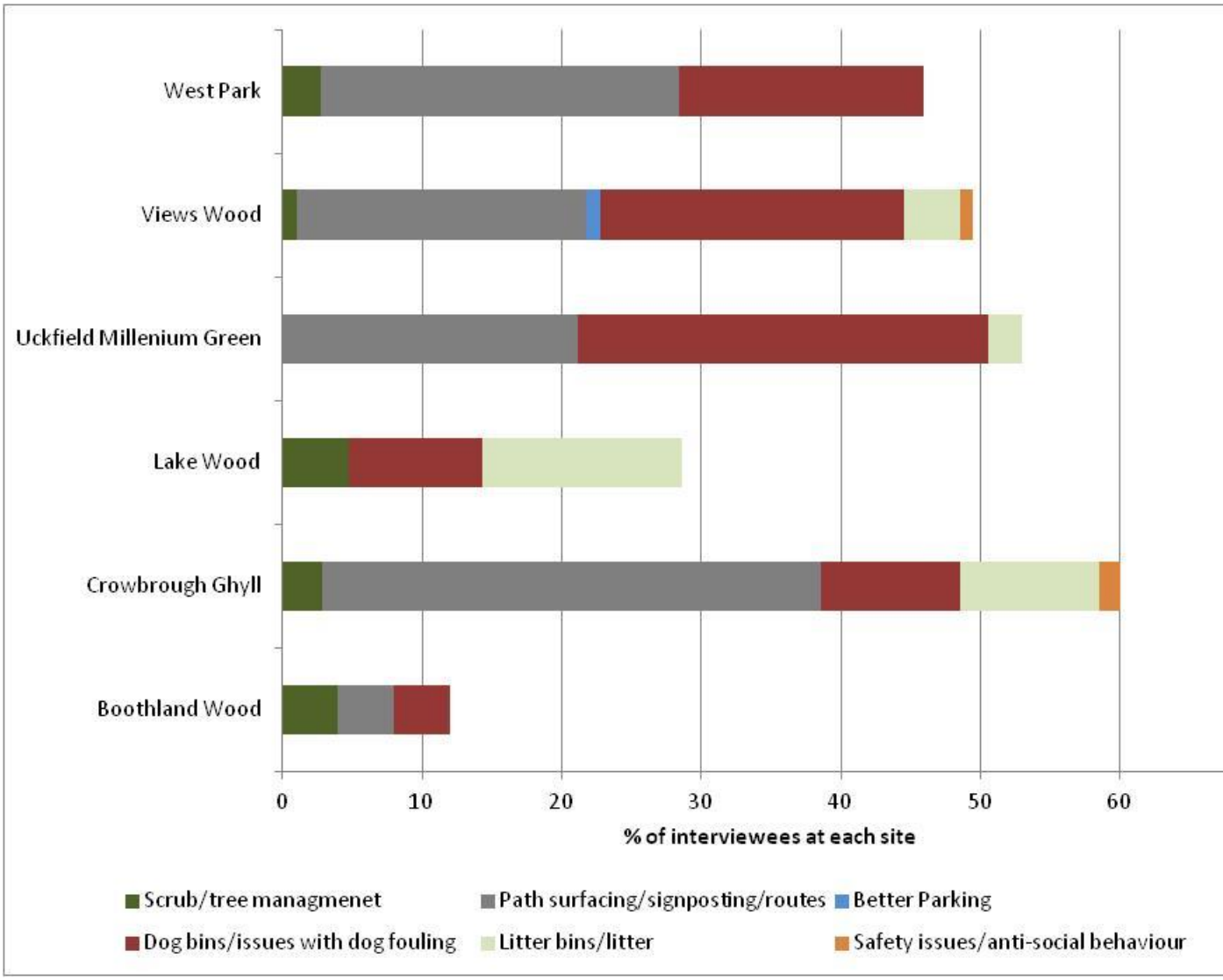



**Figure 6: Responses to question 12, relating to potential changes. Responses were categorised by the surveyor and the graph shows the percentage of interviewees at each site that indicated that they would like to see a particular change.**

3.39 The responses to question 13 ("if the following changes occurred, would you spend more or less time here for…?"), in many ways corroborated the answers to question 12. Looking across all sites the requirement for dogs to be on lead was the one measure that would appear to make a major difference, with 65% of respondents indicating they would spend less time visiting the site. The only other measure that would particularly result in a reduction in use is the site becoming busier, with 19% of interviewees (across all sites) indicating they would then spend less time on site (Figure 7). We summarise the responses to this part of the question by site in Table 23, and further discussion relating to the 'busy-ness' of sites is detailed within the capacity section.

**Table 23: Responses to part of question 13, if the following changes occurred, would you spend more or less time here.... "site busier with more people". Table shows number (%) of interviewees at each site.**

| | Boothland Wood | Crowbrough Ghyll | Lake Wood | Uckfield Millennium Green | Views Wood | West Park | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| More | 0 (0) | 1 (2) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 1 (0) |
| Less | 3 (11) | 13 (21) | 6 (32) | 23 (30) | 12 (13) | 9 (13) | 66 (19) |
| Unsure | 24 (86) | 45 (74) | 13 (68) | 53 (69) | 82 (85) | 63 (88) | 280 (79) |
| No response | 1 (4) | 2 (3) | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 0 (0) | 6 (2) |
| Total | 28 (100) | 61 (100) | 19 (100) | 77 (100) | 96 (100) | 72 (100) | 353 (100) |

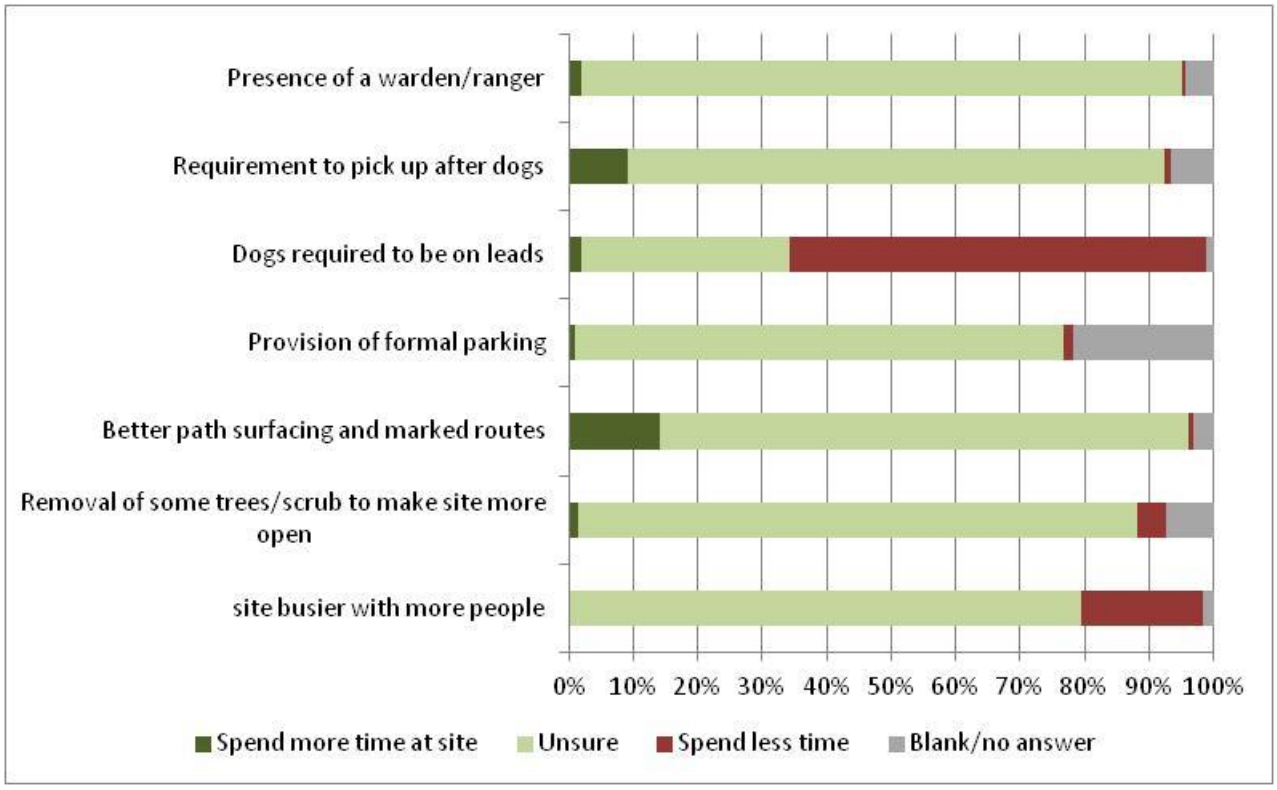



**Figure 7: Responses to question 13 regarding changes to the site and whether the interviewee would spend more or less time at the site.**

# 4. Levels of Current Use and Ability to Accommodate Additional Visitors

4.1 In this section we consider whether the surveyed sites are relatively busy and whether the sites are able to accommodate more visitors and still be effective as a SANG.

## Comparison with 1 person per ha per hour benchmark

4.2 Based on evidence we consider a visitor level of 1 person per ha per hour to be an approximate level at which a site might be considered reasonably busy. We have calculated the visitor rate on the six potential SANG sites as people per hectare per hour, using survey effort and the tally data (total adults, data equally split over a week day and a weekend day). The comparison of the visitor rates (per hectare per hour) with our benchmark (Table 24) provides an indication of whether the site is relatively busy or not. It can be seen that all sites apart from West Park fall below the 1 person per hectare benchmark (i.e. the values in column e is below 1), and this would suggest that the sites could currently accommodate more visitors before they became overly busy. Of the surveyed sites, Crowborough Ghyll has the lowest visit rate per ha and West Park was the busiest sites (just over 1 person per ha per hour).

**Table 24: Capacity estimates based on a benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour.**

| Site name | a | b | c | d | e |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Survey points | Site Area (ha) | Total people (adults & children) | People per hour | People per ha per hour |
| Boothland Wood | 1 | 5.1 | 77 | 4.81 | 0.94 |
| Crowborough Ghyll | 3 | 39.7 | 91 | 5.69 | 0.14 |
| Lake Wood | 1 | 8.5 | 51 | 3.19 | 0.38 |
| Uckfield Millennium Green | 2 | 8.9 | 124 | 7.75 | 0.87 |
| Views Wood | 3 | 24.3 | 163 | 10.19 | 0.42 |
| West Park | 2 | 10.6 | 171 | 10.69 | 1.01 |

Column c: Total people is derived from Table 3, from the tally data.
Column d: People per hour is calculated by dividing Column c by 16, (16 being the number of survey hours at each survey point). Note that this total is therefore not necessarily people per survey hour, but the visit rate to the site as a whole.
Column e: People per ha per hour is calculated as Column d divided by Column b.

## Visitor density within the site

4.4 In Maps 8 and 9 we show the relative visitor density – in terms of 'footfall' within 25m grid cells. Using the same data we can plot the frequency distribution of footfall within the site (Figure 8). In these plots, the horizontal axis represents categories from low to high visitor density, quantified by the number of people recorded within each cell. If a site was uniformly busy, and access was spread across the whole site, then the plot would show columns of similar height, and a flat shape. A skew to the left indicates that most of the site has relatively low levels of access, and a skew to the right would

indicate that most of the site was busy. It can be seen that most sites have a strong skew to the left, indicating that much of the site is 'quiet'. West Park and Uckfield Millennium Green both appear to have the highest footfall within the site and West Park stands out in that it has the most 'even' visitor distribution across the site, indicating that – compared to the other sites – all areas of the site are currently used by visitors.

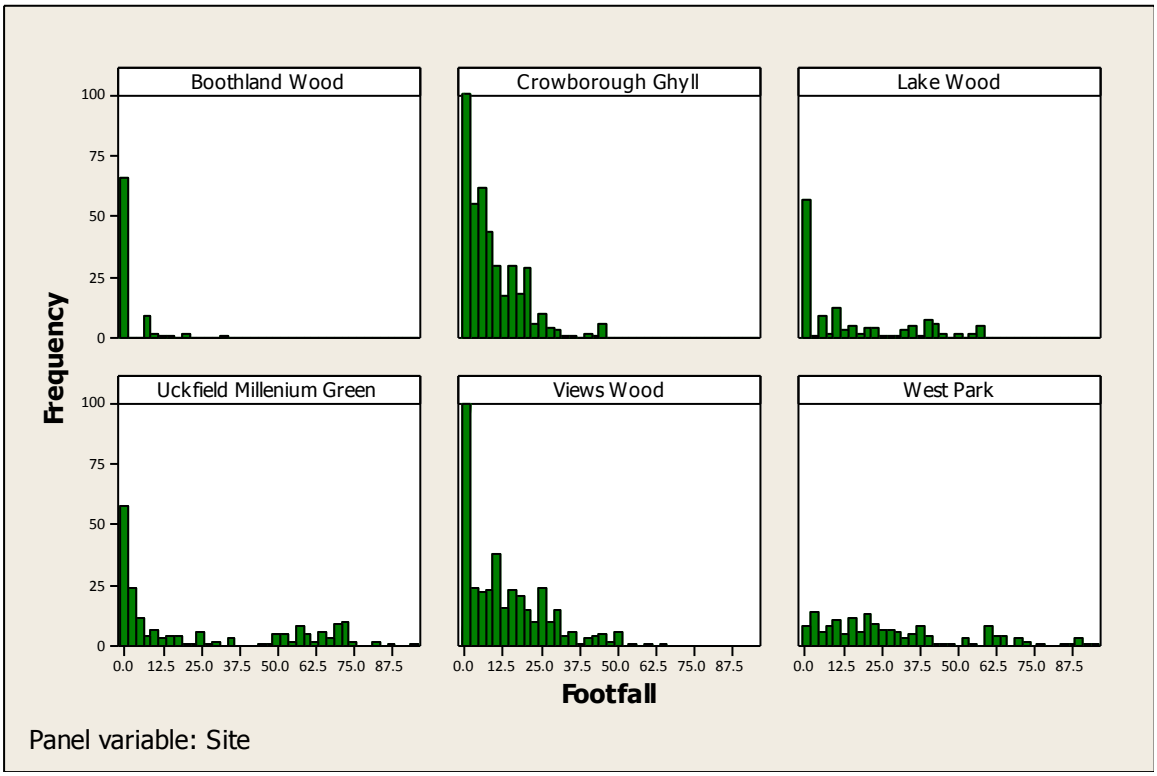



**Figure 8: Frequency distribution of visitor density (number of people) within each 25m cell.**

# 5. Overview of the Sites and Suitability as SANGS

5.1 The approach of providing alternative sites as mitigation to resolve development pressure on European Sites remains as yet untested. Nevertheless, increasing the amount of greenspace and providing and promoting an alternative to the SPA within a given area could result in a reduction in visitor numbers at particular locations. However, the issues are complex, because:

- People will visit heaths and other semi-natural sites because such sites offer a particular experience (large sites, wild feel etc) that are potentially hard to replicate (e.g. Liley et al. 2006).
- The presence of significant green infrastructure etc. may mean that new housing is occupied by people attracted by the presence of that greenspace – for example dog owners, who will also visit other nearby sites (such as the SPA).
- People may have particular affinity to visit sites they know well – access patterns may take a long time to change.

5.2 Reviewing the literature, there is evidence that the greater the availability of greenspace sites, the more they are used (Maat & de Vries 2006). Work in Dorset has shown that residents that have a large area of greenspace around where they live did not visit heaths any less; however the number of greenspace sites did prove to be a significant factor in that residents with lots of different sites around them did tend to visit heaths slightly less (Clarke et al. 2008).

5.3 Although evidence is currently limited and the trends of using greenspaces / heaths can vary from place to place, it can be concluded that alternative sites are most likely to be successful if they are very carefully designed and tailored to a particular area and types of use. Drawing from the current guidance provided by Wealden District Council (see Appendix 1), SANGs may be created from:

- existing open space of SANGs quality with no existing public access or limited public access, which for the purposes of mitigation could be made fully accessible to the public
- existing open space which is already accessible but which could be changed in character so that it is more attractive to the specific group of visitors
- land in other uses which could be converted into SANGs

5.4 Within the same guidance, a range of criteria relate to the quality of SANGs. These criteria set out features that a potential SANG site would be expected to provide and include parking, paths, feel of the site etc. The guidance has been written specifically to ensure that SANGs will work in relation to Ashdown Forest.

5.5 Using the guidelines as context and reviewing the results of the visitor work it is possible to consider the potential suitability and likely success of the six surveyed sites as potential SANG sites. We consider each site in turn below. Rather than consider the sites in alphabetical order (as they appear through the rest of the report), we consider the Uckfield sites together, followed by Crowborough Ghyll at the end of the section.

## Boothland Wood

**Table 25: Boothland Wood; summary details.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Area | 5.1ha |
| Car parking spaces | Victoria Pleasure Ground Car-park (c.60 spaces) or roadside parking on New Barn Lane |
| Infrastructure | Interpretation, litter bins, benches |
| Habitats present | Woodland, pond |
| Nature Conservation Interest | Ancient semi-natural woodland |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | ✓ |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | ✓ |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | ✓ |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | x |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | ✓ |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | Some paths muddy |
| Perceived safe by users | ✓ |
| Perceived as natural space? | ✓ |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | ✓ |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Under 12ha. Just woodland but adjacent to sports field |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | ✓ |
| Urban feel avoided? | ✓ |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | ✓ |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | ✓ |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | ✓ (pond) |

5.6 Boothland Wood is the smallest of the surveyed sites and in isolation the site is too small to function as a SANG. Despite the small size the capacity estimates suggest there is additional capacity in that visitor density within the site is relatively low. There may therefore be potential to link the site with other sites.

5.7 It is clear that current users use the adjacent field and area adjacent to Victoria Recreation Ground. As such Boothland Wood seems to not function as a greenspace in it's own right, rather it is part of a larger area of greenspace around the Recreation Ground.

5.8 Compared to the other surveyed sites, a relatively high proportion (50%) of visitors arrived by car. All 28 interviewees were visiting to walk their dog. The ability to let the dog off a lead and proximity to home were clearly factors underlying people's choice of visiting this location. Only 21% of the people interviewed at Boothland Wood stated that they also visited Ashdown Forest. We interpret this to suggest that Boothland Wood provides a convenient local site for some dog walkers in Uckfield, but that there

is little overlap between Ashdown Forest and Boothland Wood. For example Boothland Wood may provide a location for people short of time or who prefer to exercise their dog close to home, while Ashdown Forest may draw a different group of dog walkers, those with more time, who prefer to make a longer journey and a different experience.

5.9 Looking at where development is proposed within Uckfield, the development site SDA 1 (in the Core Strategy / Draft Strategic Sites DPD) is directly adjacent to Boothland Wood and just north of Uckfield Millennium Green. Increasing the volume of housing in this area is likely to potentially reduce the attractiveness of Boothland Wood as an alternative to Ashdown Forest. The site may well continue to provide for local dog walkers, and could well be enhanced as such, however it is perhaps difficult to envisage a SANG being created around/including Boothland Wood that would be sufficient to provide confidence of success. Depending on the exact scope of the development it may be possible to provide a link to Uckfield Millennium Green. Such an option would provide the potential for a long walk and would be likely to be attractive to residents. In order to provide a suitable 'alternative' to Ashdown Forest however it would be necessary to link the two sites in a way that created a single, contiguous unit of open space, and the area of land required may be difficult to secure.

## Lake Wood

**Table 26: Lake Wood, summary details**

| **Area** | **8.5ha** |
|---|---|
| Car parking spaces | 0 (space for 3-4 cars on the road verge, Rocks Road) |
| Infrastructure | x |
| Habitats present | Woodland, lake |
| Nature Conservation Interest | SNCI, Ancient semi-natural woodland |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | No car park |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | N/A |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | N/A |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | x |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | N/A |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | ✓ |
| Perceived safe by users | Road crossing a potential issue with link to W. Park |
| Perceived as natural space? | ✓ |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | A26 road runs along west boundary |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Under 12ha. Mixed habitats and lake provide interest |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | ✓ (Lake takes up a proportion of the total site area) |
| Urban feel avoided? | ✓ |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | none |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | x |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | ✓ (lake) |

5.10 Lake Wood is an interesting site, and clearly works as a destination in its own right. The site was once part of a large estate, and is largely ancient woodland (which has been much modified by landscaping) surrounding a man-made boating lake. Large sandrock outcrops occur round the edge of the lake and there is a Mesolithic rock shelter. The landscaping and terrain create an interesting site for visiting, and the landscaping has also increased the habitat diversity of the site. While close to busy roads, once inside the wood road noise is not too obtrusive.

5.11 Access patterns were different at Lake Wood compared to the other sites in that visitor use during the week was low but was high at the weekend. A high proportion of visits were for less than an hour, indicating that visitors tended to not spend long here. The visitors interviewed tended to visit infrequently and (compared to the other sites) a relatively small number (11 groups; 58% interviewees) were visiting to walk their dog. Also in comparison to the other surveyed sites a relatively high proportion (42%) of visitors arrived by car, and it is clear that this site draws visitors from a wider radius than the other sites.

5.12 The site is not busy, and as such has additional 'capacity', for example comparison to the 1 person per ha benchmark would suggest that the site could contribute just over 5ha towards SANG provision. The location of the wood is however such that it lies around 1.5km (or more) from the main development site (SDA 1). It is therefore within walking distance, but also at the distance at which many residents will want to drive. Parking at Lake Wood is limited, the road is quite fast and, while people park on the verge, the space is limited. Some people seem to park on the bridge, but this is not safe. The availability of parking therefore acts as a 'cap' to the potential of the site as a SANG. While there is no obvious potential to create new parking, there might be potential to link Lake Wood with West Park, in fact a tunnel used to link the two sites (but is now closed off). Finding a solution to reinstating such a link would perhaps be the only option for Lake Wood to effectively function as a SANG.

5.13 Looking at the questionnaire results it is interesting to note that none of the interviewees suggested that the parking at the site could be improved, perhaps implying that part of the 'magic' of this location is the quiet nature and relatively low-key access provision. Around a third (32%) of visitors here indicated they would visit less if the site became busier.

## Uckfield Millennium Green

**Table 27: Uckfield Millennium Green, summary details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Area | 8.9ha (excluding the recreation ground etc.) |
| Car parking spaces | Approx 25 at village hall |
| Infrastructure | Interpretation, litter bins, boardwalk over marshy area, benches, some surfaced paths (hard core). Small children's play area and playing field by village hall |
| Habitats present | Grassland, woodland, scrub, boundary trees, a pond. |
| Nature Conservation Interest | No |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | ✓ at village hall and along roadside |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | ✓ |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | ✓ |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | ✓ |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | ✓ |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | ✓ |
| Perceived safe by users | ✓ |
| Perceived as natural space? | Quite a few seats but a good 'natural' feel |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | Next to a recreation ground and children's play area |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Under 12ha. Mixed habitats, including woodland, scrub and a pond |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | No access to sw corner and a dog free picnic area |
| Urban feel avoided? | ✓ |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | ✓ |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | ✓ |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | ✓ (pond) |

5.14 Uckfield Millennium Green lies to the south of Uckfield and already provides a formal area of greenspace for residents of Uckfield. The site provides surfaced paths, a dog-free picnic area and a range of habitats.

5.15 A high proportion of visits were for less than an hour, indicating that visitors tended to not spend long here. Of all the sites surveyed, this site had the highest number of people interviewed (57 people) who stated that they visited Ashdown Forest. This may indicate that the site already draws some visitor pressure from Ashdown Forest, but also highlights that this site does not provide for all the local residents' greenspace requirements and Ashdown Forest still has a 'draw'. Also of interest from the visitor

data, a relatively high proportion of visitors (30%) indicated they would visit less if the site became busier.

5.16 The site has good parking provision (at the village hall) and is clearly popular and already has infrastructure – such as paths, boardwalk etc. – that could easily be added to enhance the site. Its potential as a SANG is therefore limited in that there is little that can be done to improve it, it already provides access and it is a small site. At 8.9ha it does not provide the kind of recreation 'experience' that Ashdown Forest provides. In the Boothland Wood section we discuss the potential for the Uckfield Millenium Green to be linked creating a contiguous SANG.

## Views Wood

**Table 28: Views Wood, summary details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Area ( | 24.3ha |
| Car parking spaces | None, but plenty of roadside parking in housing area |
| Infrastructure | Some surfaced paths, waymarked routes, interpretation, litter bins |
| Habitats present | Woodland |
| Nature Conservation Interest | SNCI, Ancient semi-natural woodland. Abuts Buxted Park SSSI. |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | No car park |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | N/A |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | N/A |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | x |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | N/A |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | Some of the terrain difficult |
| Perceived safe by users | ✓ |
| Perceived as natural space? | ✓ |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | Next to rugby club and playing fields |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Limited variety |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | Not open, would be easy to lose dog |
| Urban feel avoided? | ✓ |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | ✓ |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | x |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | x |

5.17 Views Wood is a large site compared to the other Uckfield sites. The visitor data shows a relatively high proportion of visitors interviewed here (compared to other sites) chose the site for the range of routes available. This was the only Uckfield site where visitors can get close to the guideline 2.5km circuit, and this length of walk is achievable if (as many do) visitors extend their routes into Buxted Park.

5.18 A principal issue with this site is the lack of parking. It is on the other side of Uckfield from the main area of development (SDA 1), and as such – for it to draw any new residents – good parking is essential. Existing parking is solely roadside parking within the housing estates.

5.19 Our capacity estimates (using the 1 person per ha benchmark) would suggest that Views Wood could be equivalent to nearly 15ha of SANG. The site is quiet and large areas of the site appear to be relatively underused. Within the site itself, the terrain can be difficult, which may explain why much of the site appears to be little visited. It is possible to walk round the site and avoid the steep and muddy path sections. A boardwalk is already present but there is potential to enhance the paths.

5.20 Given the size of the site and relatively low levels of use, plus the links to the surrounding countryside, we would suggest there is potential for Views Wood to be enhanced and to function as a SANG. The main problem to overcome is, however, the creation of an area to park.

## West Park

**Table 29: West Park, summary details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Area | 10.6ha |
| Car parking spaces | 8 (off Princes Close) |
| Infrastructure | Interpretation, litter bins, surfaced car-park, boardwalk |
| Habitats present | Woodland, heath,wet meadow |
| Nature Conservation Interest | SNCI |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | ✓ |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | ✓ |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | ✓ |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | ✓ |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | ✓ |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | ✓ |
| Perceived safe by users | Road crossing a potential issue with link to L. Wood |
| Perceived as natural space? | Quite an urban feel |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | A26 road runs along west boundary, urban feel |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Under 12ha. A range of habitats present (marsh, woodland) |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | ✓ |
| Urban feel avoided? | x |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | ✓ (map in car-park area) |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | ✓ |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ but an urban feel due to proximity of housing and road |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | ✓ (archaeological interest) |

5.21 West Park comprises a mosaic of habitats including improved grassland, developing broadleaved woodland, exposed rocky outcrops and a marshy area and extensive stands of Bracken. It sits on the western side of Uckfield and is relatively close – lying to the north – of SDA 1, the main area for new development. The site is managed as a nature reserve by Uckfield Town Council and is open to the public at all times.

5.22 This site had a high proportion (63%) of visitors who stated that they also visited Ashdown Forest and perhaps surprisingly there were more people interviewed here (and that visit Ashdown Forest) than at Crowborough Ghyll (which is much closer to the SPA). This would suggest that the site does have some potential as a SANG.

5.23 The site was one of the busiest site and our capacity estimates suggest the site may not be able to accommodate more visitors before it feels busy. Potential further issues which limit this sites SANG potential relate to the sites relatively small size, the presence of the A26 along the western boundary and relatively limited parking (8 spaces). The site is also an SNCI and grazing is the best long term management for the habitats present. Grazing the site does not necessarily mean it could not function as a SANG, but careful consideration would be required to ensure grazing management and access did not conflict.

### Uckfield Sites together

5.24 Given that all the sites in Uckfield already have access, and for some of them the potential for enhancement is limited, the question is therefore to what extent can the Uckfield sites 'work'. Wealden District Council, developers and Natural England will need to work closely together to agree a way forward. In isolation most of the sites in Uckfield (with the exception of Views Wood) are small or have issues with parking (Views Wood and Lake Wood). However, there is potential to link the sites together to form bigger units but this may prove impractical or expensive.

5.25 A further issue of concern is the nature conservation interest. Ancient woodland is sensitive to heavy footfall, with the ground flora in particular being vulnerable to impacts from trampling (Lowen *et al.* 2008; Liley *et al.* 2010). We recommend that an ecological assessment is undertaken of the Ancient Woodland SNCI sites, and this should be undertaken during April/May when the trampling of the woodland flora can be assessed. Additional visitor use where sensitive ecological features are present would be undesirable.

## Crowborough Ghyll

**Table 30: Crowborough Ghyll, summary details**

| | |
|---|---|
| Area | 39.7ha |
| Car parking spaces | 3 car-parks with 34 spaces total |
| Infrastructure | Interpretation, footbridges, dog bins |
| Habitats present | Woodland, grassland, stream. |
| Nature Conservation Interest | SNCI, ASNW |
| Adequate parking? (or local, on-foot visitors only). | ✓ |
| Car parks must be easily and safely accessible | ✓ |
| Safe access between car park and the SANG. | ✓ |
| Access points appropriate to intended users | ✓ |
| Footpath links with local development | ✓ |
| Circular walk from car-park? | ✓ |
| A circular walk of 2.5km? | x |
| Paths easily used and well maintained | Some paths muddy |
| Perceived safe by users | ✓ |
| Perceived as natural space? | ✓ |
| Free from unpleasant visual, auditory or olfactory intrusions? | Adjacent to a sport's field |
| If above 12ha, then a range of habitats present | Mainly woodland |
| Access within site largely unrestricted? | ✓ |
| Urban feel avoided? | ✓ |
| SANGS should be clearly sign-posted and advertised. | x |
| Signage outlining site layout and routes | ✓ (maps) |
| Ability to take dogs from car-park safely off lead | ✓ |
| Naturalistic space | ✓ |
| Focal point such as view point or water feature | ✓ (the Ghyll) |

5.26 Crowborough Ghyll is a wooded stream valley with heathy upper slopes. It is the closest of the surveyed sites to Ashdown Forest and differs from the other surveyed sites in terms of its size (nearly 40ha) and existing parking capacity (about 34 spaces). There is an extensive path network through the wood, but the site seems particularly 'quiet' and relatively under visited. Interestingly it was the only site where anyone interviewed indicated they would visit more if the site was busier.

5.27 As with other sites, the overriding factor underlying the interviewees's choice of location here was 'close to home'. However, compared to other sites, Crowborough Ghyll is clearly also chosen because there are few other people, a range of walks are available, it is their nearest greenspace and for some crossing the site provides a shortcut.

5.28 Given the large size and the ease of parking there is concern that it is difficult to enhance the site further in order to draw visitors from Ashdown Forest. However, Crowborough Ghyll had the highest proportion of interviewees who indicated that they thought changes could be made to the site to enhance it for access. The main suggestions were relating to the path network.

5.29 Using our benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour, Crowborough Ghyll would appear to provide a SANG area equivalent to around 34ha. Given that there are around 300 dwellings proposed for the town (this is the total for locations SDA 8, 9 and 10 within

the Core Strategy), it would seem – on paper at least – the site has sufficient capacity to release the development. The key issue with the site is whether it can be enhanced sufficiently to attract the additional recreational use. At least two-thirds (67%) of the people interviewed here also visited Ashdown Forest, so there is clearly 'overlap' between the sites.

# 6. Discussion

## Importance of Greenspace

6.1 Access to the countryside has health benefits (English Nature 2002; Morris 2003; Bird 2004; Pretty et al. 2005), can provide inspiration (Tansley 1945; Snyder 1990; Hammond 1998; Saunders 2005) and is important in generating understanding and awareness of countryside issues and conservation (e.g. Miller & Hobbs 2002; Thompson 2005; Robinson 2006). Increasingly those who are involved in the management of the countryside are aware of the need to engage with local communities and of the importance that people place on the quality and accessibility of the countryside around where they live. It is also being recognised that there are a range of different services that countryside sites can provide. There is therefore a wider benefit to SANGs provision which may include health benefits to the local community, improved air quality, flood protection, soil protection, buffering of water courses and a more attractive area for local people to live in.

6.2 Recognising this wider context it is necessary to review the six SANGs sites that are the focus of this report and consider their likely effectiveness in terms of the Habitat Regulations and the need to reduce visitor pressure at Ashdown Forest. In terms of this mitigation, SANGs are envisaged to be a component of a mitigation strategy, and other measures will include contributions to on-site measures at Ashdown Forest. Mitigation must be proportionate to the impacts, and SANGs will be required for both windfall development together with development proposed in the Core Strategy Local Plan.

6.3 In terms of levels of use, the survey results indicate that the surveyed sites are not overly busy. Current levels of access are relatively low and some of the sites in particular are 'quiet'. The key questions are:

- Given that the sites already have public access and access provision, is it possible to enhance them further?
- Will those enhancements work to draw visitors that would otherwise visit Ashdown Forest?

## Potential changes to the surveyed sites

6.4 Ashdown Forest is a large, extensive block of semi-natural habitat that has a clear draw and attraction for visitors. The surveyed sites in comparison are relatively small, mainly wooded and located at the edge of settlements and in most cases adjacent to housing. Currently the majority of people are visiting the sites on foot, walking from their homes.

6.5 In total, 210 (58%) interviewees stated that they also visited Ashdown Forest and the majority of these people visited Ashdown Forest in their cars. This seemingly indicates that the surveyed sites do attract the kind of visitors that also visit Ashdown Forest, but that Ashdown Forest still has a particular draw and is widely used. The draw of Ashdown Forest is such that people are prepared to travel there by car, rather than use the more local sites on their doorstep and accessible by foot.

6.6 From the survey results we can identify the following enhancements which may help in terms of the ability of the surveyed sites to act as SANGs:

- More formal parking at Views Wood to draw people who might visit from further away and travel by car
- Improvements to the path network in Crowborough Ghyll, in particular with the aim providing a clear route of over 2km and facilitating access within the steeper parts of the site, without creating too much of an urban or managed feel.
- Linking West Park and Lake Wood (either through the existing tunnel or via a bridge, should this be viable and acceptable).
- Linking Boothland Wood and Uckfield Millennium Green so that they feel 'contiguous'.

6.7 The latter two bullet points may be difficult and expensive. With the case of Boothland Wood and Uckfield Millennium Green the two sites are too small to function as SANGs on their own. In addition, further development in the area is likely to result in both sites becoming more 'urban' in feel and they are unlikely to compete with the scale and wild feel of Ashdown Forest. Only by significantly increasing their scale are they likely to work as a viable alternative. In the case of Lake Wood and West Park, the road and adjacent housing means that West Park does have quite an urban feel, and again we have concerns that this is likely to deter visitors – at least those visitors who are prepared to get in their car to drive to Ashdown Forest. Lake Wood has a different 'draw' and is an interesting site in its own right. The issue here is parking, and it may be that direct links between West Park and Lake Wood, with good parking provision, may work. The difficulty in this case would be creating that link in a sensitive and appropriate way. Overall, Views Wood and Crowborough Ghyll have the best potential to be enhanced for SANGs provision.

6.8 Potential enhancements to the sites should relate to improving the experience for visitors and making the sites more attractive to visitors. They should also involve infrastructure, such as improved path networks, to ensure the sites can absorb additional pressure. As such any improvements should be beneficial for both landowners and visitors and, we would hope, welcomed by stakeholders.

### Estimating 'Capacity'

6.9 A challenge with the approach of SANGs is to estimate what changes to existing sites are necessary and in particular to what extent any changes will result in the efficacy of a site functioning as a SANG.

6.10 With new SANG provision there has been much discussion about how to link the amount of SANG (hectares) to a figure for the number of houses. There are clearly minimum sizes of sites that are likely to be effective – for example to create a circular walk of around 2.5km would require a circular parcel of land approaching 40ha in size. Aside from such figures, the rate of provision of 8ha per 1000 additional residents is now widely accepted. A level of 8ha is based on new provision, and from this it is possible to suggest that, for example, where new housing is likely to house 5000 new

residents in an area, then the SANGs provision necessary would be 40ha. This 'per ha standard' provides a means of determining how much additional greenspace developers should provide. It does not necessarily guarantee a SANGs effectiveness. Indeed, there may be instances where a smaller site (if more attractive and in a better location) works much better than a larger one.

6.11 The 8ha per 1000 standard is based on the Thames Basin Heaths, and originates from Greater London Authority (GLA) open space standards, the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) standards for formal and informal open space and Natural England's own ANGSt model for accessible natural green space (see Burley 2007 for discussion and background), rather than any specific work on the space required for people to undertake recreation that takes place on the SPA. It would also seem that the standard draws from two individual developments in the Thames Basin Heaths where open space provision seemed adequate (again, see Burley 2007). In his report regarding the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the draft delivery plan, Burley is particularly critical of the evidence for SANGs standards, highlighting that "*virtually no work has been undertaken to establish the carrying capacity of the SPA and very little work to identify the capacity of alternative spaces identified as potential SANGs*" and that there was "*very limited evidence available on which to base the scale of SANGs provision*"[6].

6.12 Relatively little has changed since 2007, and while a focus still in the Thames Basin Heaths, the 8ha per 1000 standard has not been adopted in other locations. Many other local authorities – such as those around the Dorset Heaths –have instead focused on the design criteria and quality of potential SANGs, rather than specify a precise area. This approach has been supported by Natural England. The 8ha standard, where used, does apply to new development and new SANGs provision, and it is therefore not directly relevant to calculating existing capacity.

6.13 We have estimated visitor rates for each of the surveyed sites in relation to their size and suggest that the sites are not currently especially busy – with the exception of West Park which exceeds our benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour. We have refrained from estimating capacity in terms of a set number of additional people and we have also refrained from trying to equate any capacity on the sites to a per ha standard for new greenspace provision.

6.14 The approach of using a benchmark of 1 person per ha per hour is intuitive and sensible in that it helps identify a level of access at which a site appears busy. This can then be considered in relation to the character and features present at the site. For example, if a site is open in character it is likely to feel busier than dense woodland. Alternatively, it may be necessary to reduce capacity on a woodland site to protect the ecological features within the site. Overall, this will need to be considered on a site-by-site basis.

[6] Quotes are from para 4.3.36 in Burley (2007)

6.15 In order to function as a SANG sites must provide a realistic alternative to Ashdown Forest and draw users that would otherwise use Ashdown Forest. This is difficult to assess and will depend only in part on how busy a site is. To refer to site capacity can therefore be misleading. Clearly sites with existing access, if being put forward as SANGs, must be able to accommodate additional visitors without being so busy that people are deterred from visiting. The danger being that visitors may stop using the site and may even choose to visit the SPA more often. Yet whether a site feels busy or not will depend only in part in the total number of people visiting; aesthetics, character, habitat type, shape and a range of other factors will also play a part. These factors need to be carefully considered when assessing capacity and also on a site by site basis.

6.16 While we can demonstrate that the surveyed sites are mostly not busy, this does not guarantee that the sites will function effectively as SANGs. The SANGs guidelines provided in Appendix 1 together with other associated evidence should be used to measure the potential effectiveness of a SANG. We have considered each site against the guidelines and have considered potential improvements that could be made to the sites Further dialogue is therefore required with Wealden District Council (as the competent authority), Natural England and local stakeholders to consider each proposed SANG on a site by site basis. Factors to consider include current levels and types of use, the potential to secure access to the site in perpetuity, their future management, potential enhancements, their potential to absorb additional visitors and whether enhancement to these sites will be practical to implement, cost effective and likely to be effective as part of an overall mitigation strategy (that includes on-site management measures too). The quality of any proposed SANG, whether an already existing accessible site or new site, will be an important factor if a SANG is to be effective to divert visitors from using the Ashdown Forest SPA.

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## 8. Appendix 1: SANGs Guidance (provided by Wealden District Council)

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

# Wealden DC SANGS survey

Good am / pm. Please could you spare me a few minutes to take part in a short survey about your visit today. The survey is being conducted for Wealden District Council, to look at current recreational use of the area.

**Q1 Which of the following best describes your situation today?** *Read list. Tick one only.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1 On holiday |
| | 2 Visiting from home |
| | 3. Visiting from a friends/relatives house |
| | 4. Other |

| Main | Other | **Q2 What is the main activity you are undertaking today?** *Do not prompt.* ***Tick only one main activity &*** *as many other activities as visitor gives* |
|---|---|---|
| | | 1 Dog walking |
| | | 2 Walking |
| | | 3 Jogging |
| | | 4 Wildlife watching |
| | | 5 Professional dog walking |
| | | 6 Cycling |
| | | 7 Passing through / short cut |
| | | 8 Other/further detail: |

**Q3 Do you tend to visit this area at a certain time of day?** *Multiple ok*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1 Before 9am |
| | 2 Between 9am and 12 |
| | 3 Between 12 and 3pm |
| | 4 Between 3 and 5pm |
| | 5 After 5pm |
| | 6 No / Don't know / first visit |

**Q4 How long have you spent / will you spend in the area today?** *Tick one only.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1. Less than 30 mins |
| | 2. 30mins—1 hour |
| | 3. 1 hour—2 hours |
| | 4. 2 or more hours |
| | 5. Other (pls detail): |

**Q5 How frequently do you visit this site?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1. More than once a day |
| | 2. Daily |
| | 3. Most days |
| | 4. Once a week |
| | 5. 2 to 3 times a month |
| | 6. Other: (pls detail): |

**Q6 Do you tend to visit this area more at a particular time of year for** [*insert activity*]**?** *Multiple answers ok*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1. Spring |
| | 2. Summer |
| | 3. Autumn |
| | 4. Winter |
| | 5. Don't know / 1st visit |
| | 6. Equally all year |

**Q7 How did you get here today?** *Tick one only.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1. Car/Van |
| | 2. On Foot |
| | 3. Bicycle |
| | 4. Other |

**Q8 How long have you been visiting this site?** *Tick one only.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 1. Less than a year |
| | 2. Between 1—2 years |
| | 3. Between 2 and 3 years |
| | 4. Other (pls detail): |

**Q9 What makes you come here, specifically, rather than another local site?** *Tick all responses given by visitor in 'other' column. Do not prompt. Tick closest answers then ask* 'Which would you say had the most influence over you choice of site visit today? *Tick category in 'main'*

| Main | Other | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 1 Close to home |
| | | 2 Habit |
| | | 3 Nearest green space to home |
| | | 4 Wildlife interest |
| | | 5 Short cut to another location |
| | | 6 Ability to let dog off lead |
| | | 7 Quiet/tranquillity |
| | | 8 Feel safe |
| | | 9 Range of different walks available |
| | | 10 Easy to park |
| | | 11 No parking charges/cheap parking |
| | | 12 Few other people |
| | | 13 Other people, meeting friends etc. |
| | | 14 Other reason (*write reason*): |

**Now I'd like to ask you about your route today. Looking at the area shown on this map, can you show me where you parked (if travelling by car) or where you started your walk and the route you have taken / Will take.** *Probe to ensure route accurately documented. Use* P *to indicate where visitor parked,* E *to indicate start point &* X *to mark exit; mark route with a line. Use solid line for actual route and dotted line for expected / remaining route. If part of a longer walk please map expected route.*

**Q10 Is/was your route today reflective of your usual route?** *Tick one, do not prompt.*

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 Yes, normal | | 2 Longer than normal | | 3 Shorter than normal | 4 Not sure/no typical visit |

**Q11i) Aside from here, do you visit any other places for *{insert activity in Q2)*? *IF YES:* Please could you name the locations you visit most often?** *Please ask interviewee to spell place names as we need to identify the sites on a map.* Thank you. When you visit ***{insert location name given in 10i (1)}*** How do you usually travel there? *Enter response in Q10b* then ask How often on average to you go there? *Categorise and Enter response in Q10c frequency column. Repeat up to four times.*

| 11a) Name of Site (pls give as much detail as possible, nearby town or village, road name etc ) | 11b) Travel (1=Car, 2=Foot, 3=Bike, 4= Other) | 11c) Frequency 1. =More than once a day, 2=Daily, 3=Most days, 4= Once a week, 5= 2 to 3 times a month 6= Other |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |

*If Ashdown Forest is not given in Q10, ask*: **Do you ever visit Ashdown Forest for *{insert activity from Q2}* ?** *Do not prompt*

| 1. Yes/often | 2. Occasionally/sometimes | 3. No/Never | 4. Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|

**Q12 Is there anything that could be done to enhance this site for access?** *Do not prompt/read out. Categorise based on response(s).*

| | TICK | Comment/details |
|---|---|---|
| 1 No changes/nothing | | |
| 2 Scrub/tree management | | |
| 3 Path surfacing/signposting/routes | | |
| 4 Better parking/parking improvements | | |
| 5 Dog bins/issues with dog fouling | | |
| 6 Litter bins/issues with litter | | |
| 7 Safety issues/antisocial behaviour | | |
| 8 Other | | |

**Q13 if the following changes occurred, would you spend more or less time here for [*insert main activity*]?** *Read out each type of change in turn.*

| | more | less | unsure | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site is busier with more people | | | | |
| Removal of some trees scrub to make site more open | | | | |
| Better path surfacing and marked routes | | | | |
| Provision of formal car parking | | | | |
| Dogs required to be on leads | | | | |
| Requirement to pick up after dogs | | | | |
| Presence of a warden/ranger | | | | |

**Q14 What is your full home postcode?** *(this is the most important piece of information required from the survey, please make every effort to record correctly)*

*If visitor unable/refusal to give postcode*: **Ask 'What is the name of the nearest village/town?**

**Q15 How many of your party fall into each category**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 Full time education | | 4 Looking after family |
| | 2 Part time employment | | 4 Retired |
| | 3 Full time employment | | 5 Unemployed |

**Q16 How many of your party fall into the following age categories?** *Enter number of people per category*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 Under 18 | | 3 41-65 |
| | 2 18-40 | | 4 Older than 65 |

**To complete once interview has finished.**

| Q'aire Number: | Interview location: | Group size (total people): |
|---|---|---|
| Surveyor: | Site name: | Number of dogs: |
| Time: | Route Mapped Y / N: | Dog(s) seen off leads? Y/N |
| Date: | Interview conducted part way through route (tick if yes) | |

## Appendix 3: Survey Dates

| | | Survey Location | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Day of week | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Total |
| 26/10/2012 | Friday | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| 27/10/2012 | Saturday | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| 28/10/2012 | Sunday | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| 29/10/2012 | Monday | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 4 |
| 01/11/2012 | Thursday | | | | 4 | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| 02/11/2012 | Friday | | | 4 | | | 4 | | | | | | | 8 |
| 03/11/2012 | Saturday | | | 4 | | | 4 | | | | 4 | | | 12 |
| 04/11/2012 | Sunday | 4 | | | 4 | | | | | | | 4 | | 12 |
| 05/11/2012 | Monday | 4 | | | | | | | | | | 4 | | 8 |
| 06/11/2012 | Tuesday | | | | | | | | | | 4 | | | 4 |
| 08/11/2012 | Thursday | | | | | | | 4 | 4 | | | | | 8 |
| 09/11/2012 | Friday | | | | | 4 | | | | 4 | | | | 8 |
| 10/11/2012 | Saturday | | | | | | | 4 | 4 | | | | | 8 |
| 11/11/2012 | Sunday | | | | | 4 | | | | 4 | | | | 8 |
| Total | | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 96 |

## Appendix 4: Other Comments About Enhancement of Sites

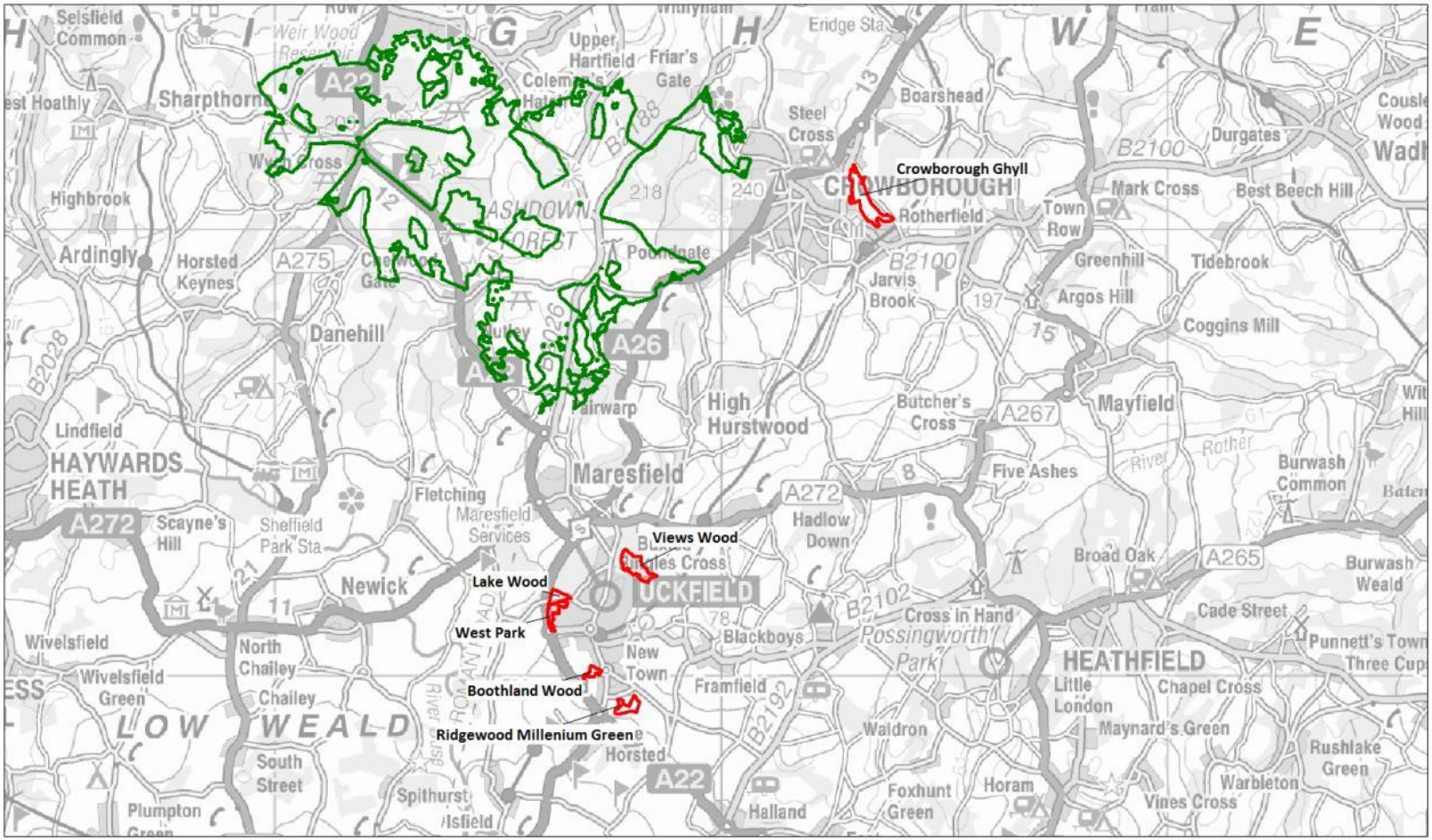
In this appendix we summarise the "Other" free text responses to question 12.

| Other Suggestions for Changes to Enhance Access (from question 12) |
|---|
| **Boothland Wood** |
| Can't use pushchair apart from southern main entrance |
| Improve surface of in road - not happy with carpet shop blimp - too high |
| Not enough people clean up |
| Road to park is potholed |
| Road too potholed (approach road to Victoria) |
| **Crowbrough Ghyll** |
| Benches |
| Concern that they will be controlled (paths) as has happened at the country park where can no longer roam |
| Contact number for ranger in emergencies |
| Happy to use dog bins if installed |
| Kissing gates at CP not wide enough for buggies |
| Remove gate at entrance or make locking up times more obvious |
| Result of wildlife survey would be useful. Would like to know what's here |
| **Lake Wood** |
| Magical place best not to let it get too busy |
| Public angling space - wouldn't be abused if well managed |
| **Uckfield Millennium Green** |
| Better communication of changes to site |
| Better links with other footpaths beyond boundaries of Millenium Green |
| Educate dog walkers to pick up after their dogs |

| **Other Suggestions for Changes to Enhance Access (from question 12)** |
|---|
| Educate people to pick up after dogs |
| Feel site will be busier when hospital land is built on |
| Happy with site generally |
| Improve signage |
| Like the variety of walks that are being created |
| Make sure people clear up after their dogs |
| Natural site - minimal management needed |
| Not sure if footpaths work well, otherwise happy |
| Not to enforce dogs on leads, dog owners should pick up mess - enforce |
| Planting a few native trees and shrubs especially berry species |
| Would be good if could be made bigger |
| **Views Wood** |
| Could be more responsive when fallen trees need clearing. Prevent access by mountains bikers |
| Entrance barriers. No problem with motorbikes |
| Fly tipping |
| Generally well looked after |
| Kissing gate doesn't give easy access to wheelchairs |
| Like to see the coppicing |
| Maintained really well, much better |
| More benches could be good for less able |
| More educational information could be useful for those wanting to learn about countryside (adult and children) |
| More woodland activities would be great |
| Mulch or similar at access points if muddy |
| Need to check bridges for safety |
| No urbanisation please |

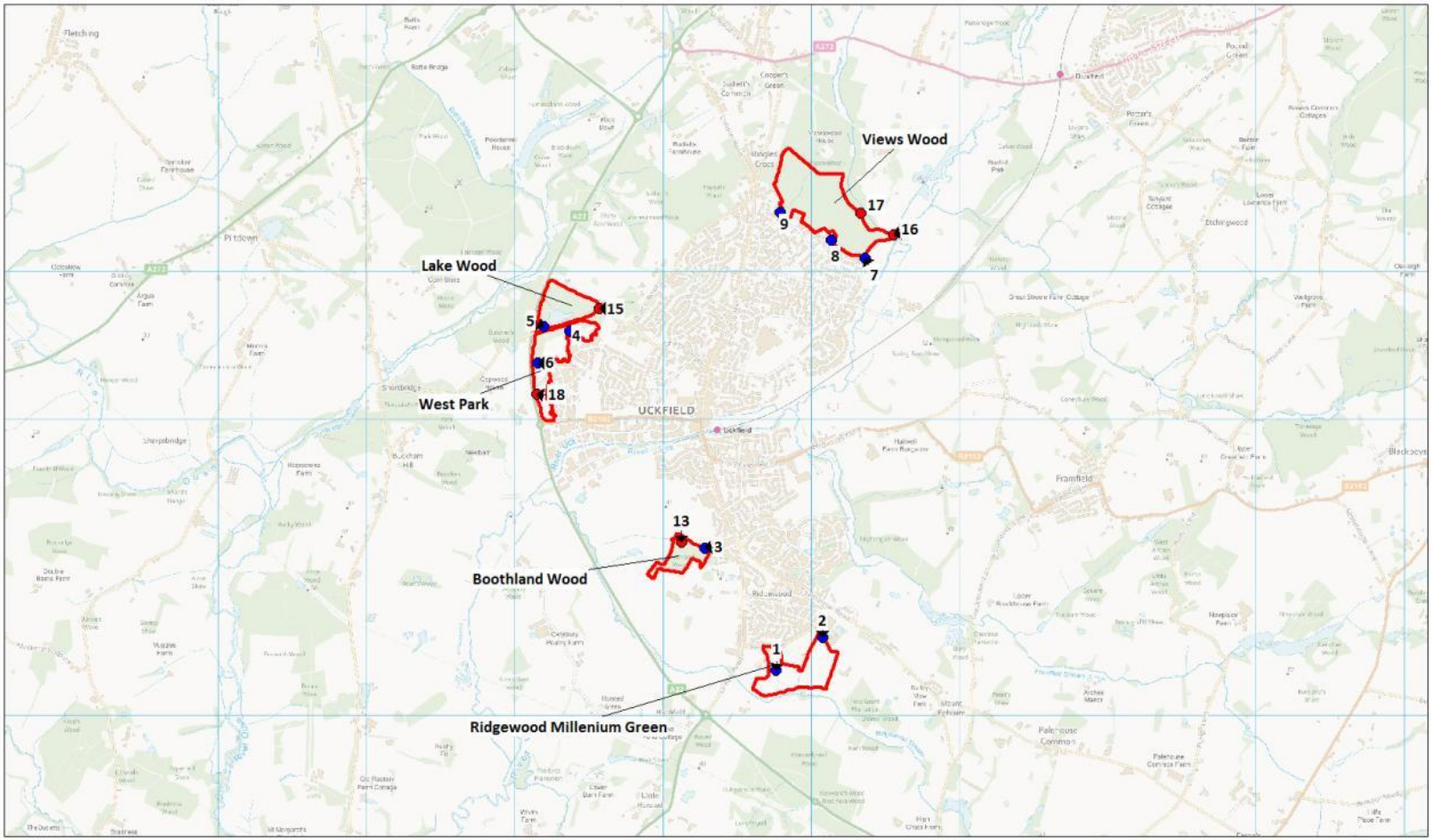
| **Other Suggestions for Changes to Enhance Access (from question 12)** |
|---|
| Prefer to see a natural woodland |
| Used to be able to use field alongside stream but cant now because of stock |
| Would like to see the ash trees checked for disease |
| Wouldn't like to see dog restrictions |
| **West Park** |
| A couple of seats for elderly people to rest |
| Benches for the elderly |
| Could be improved for less able people - paths balanced between countryside and urbanisation |
| Could the park be fenced in - dangerous at southern end (A22) |
| General maintenance not as good recently, Fencing not good - fencing off of A22 could be better |
| Get a ranger and clear things out |
| Install a few benches for the less able |
| Leave it alone - let nature take its course |
| Need another dog bin to save carrying bag around |
| Picnic areas for young families, seats to rest on |
| Please don't graze - no need for animals. Only children and dogs. If sheep are used, install proper stock fencing |
| Sign for no bike riding has deteriorated so looks like you can bike here |
| Stop building more fences and boardwalks - urbanisation |
| Would prefer if sheep weren't here to graze - trampling wild flowers |

# Maps




**Map 1: Survey Sites**

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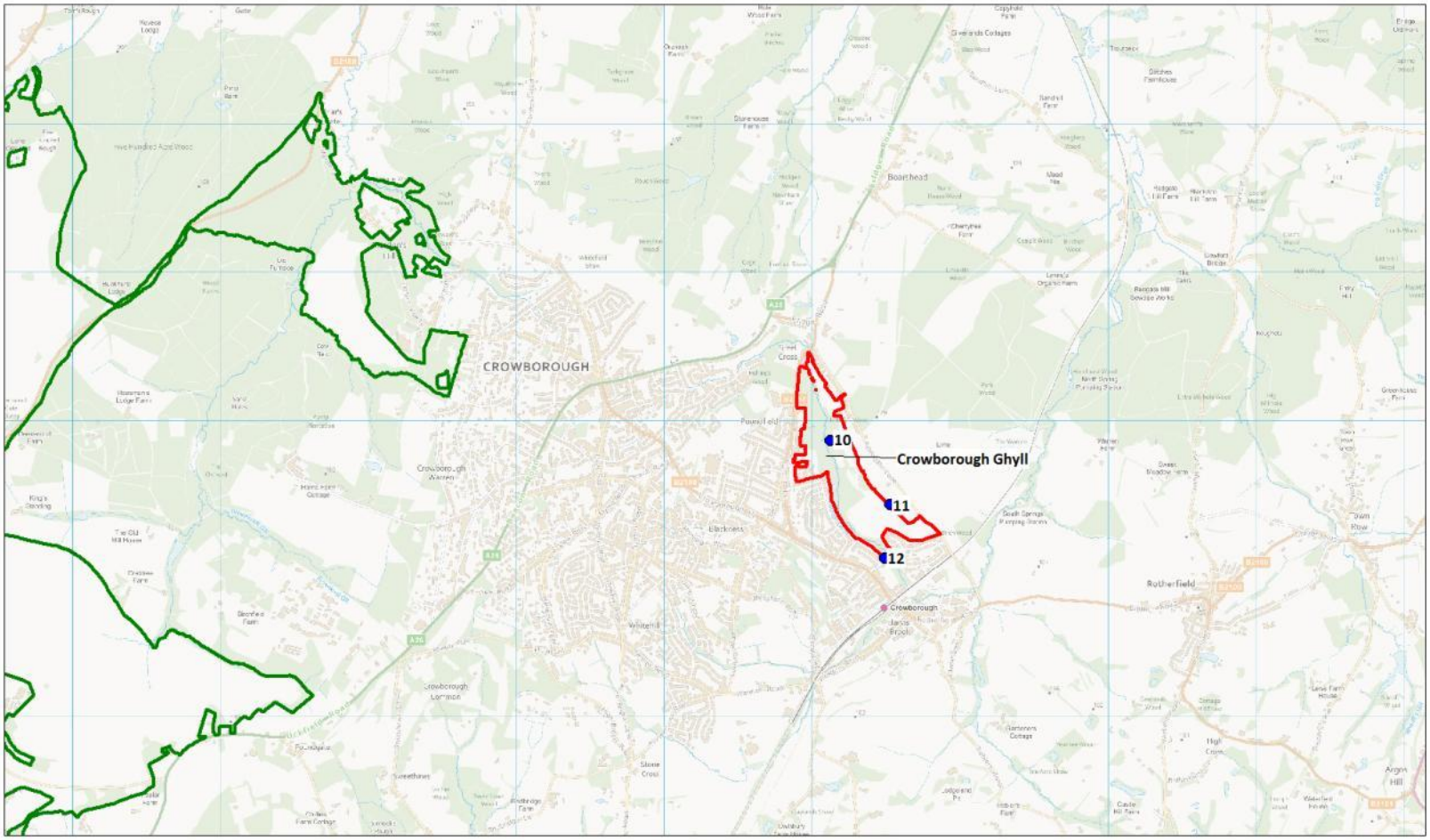

## Map 2: Survey Locations, Uckfield Sites

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

Automated Counter (5)
Interviews/Tally (12)

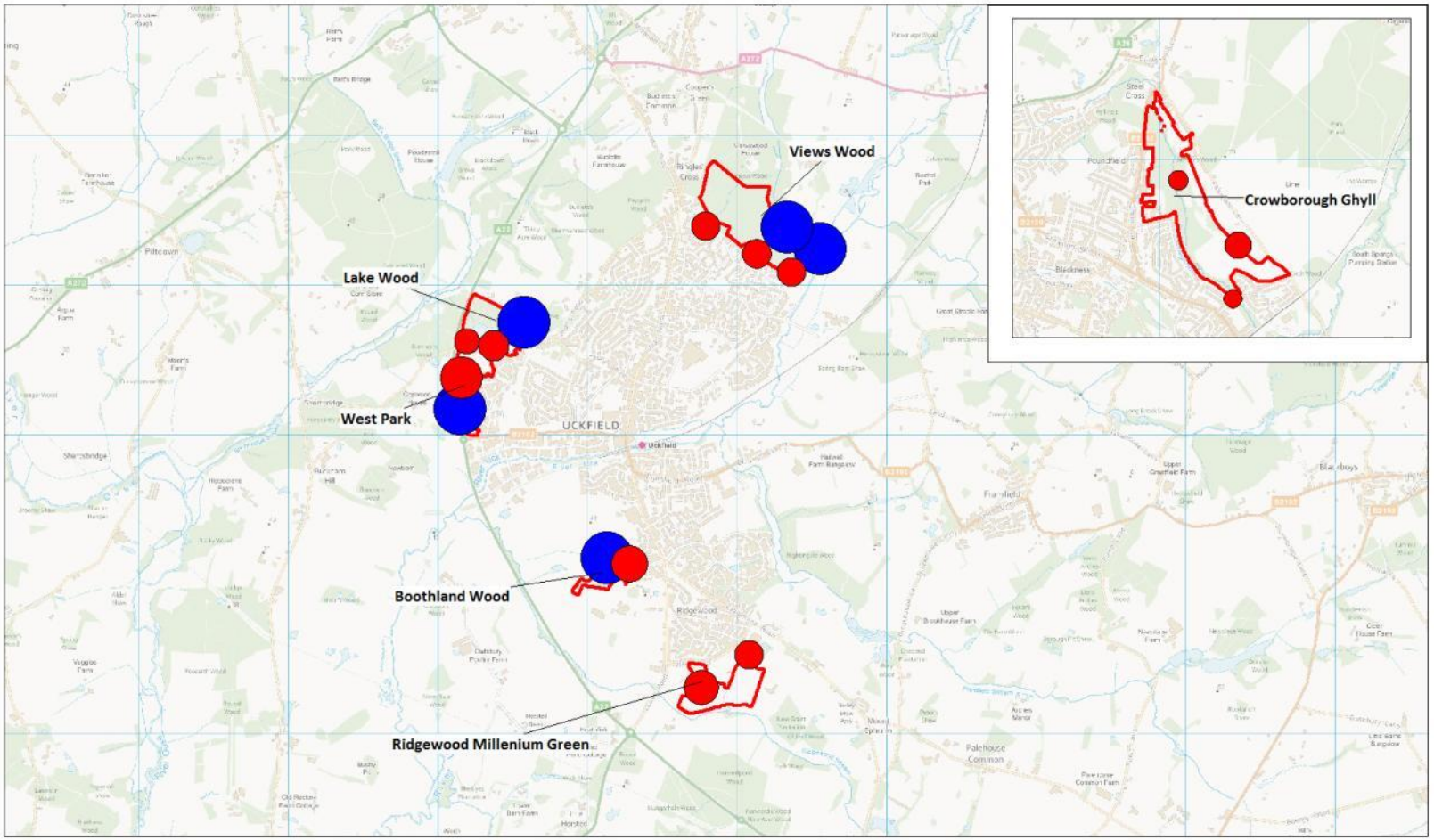
Ashdown Forest SPA

Survey sites




**Map 3: Survey Locations, Crowborough Ghyll**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

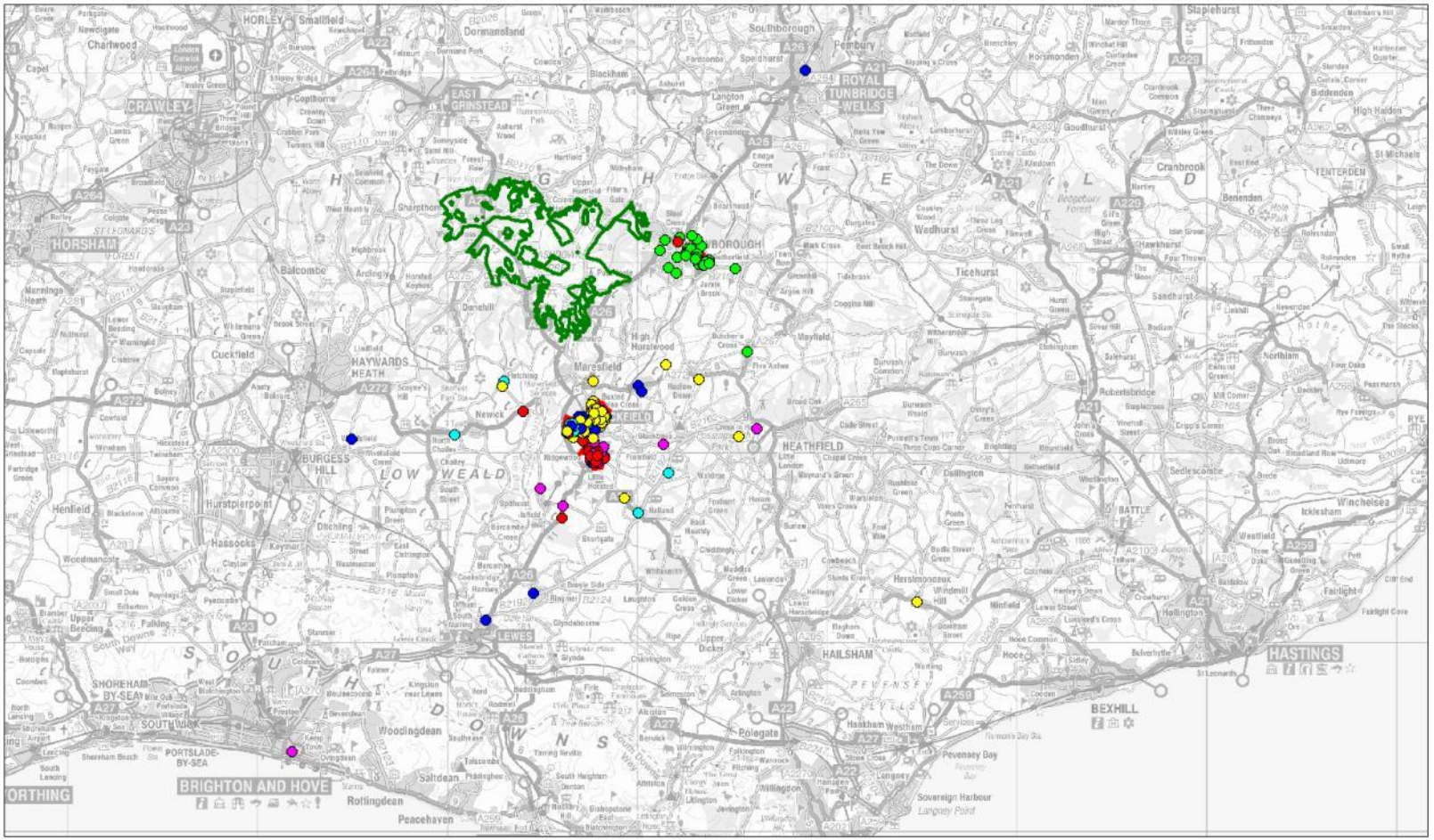



**Map 4: Visitor rates (people per hour)**
**Data from Tally counts (red) and counters (blue)**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

5 People/hits per hour
2.5 People/hits per hour
0.5 People/hits per hour

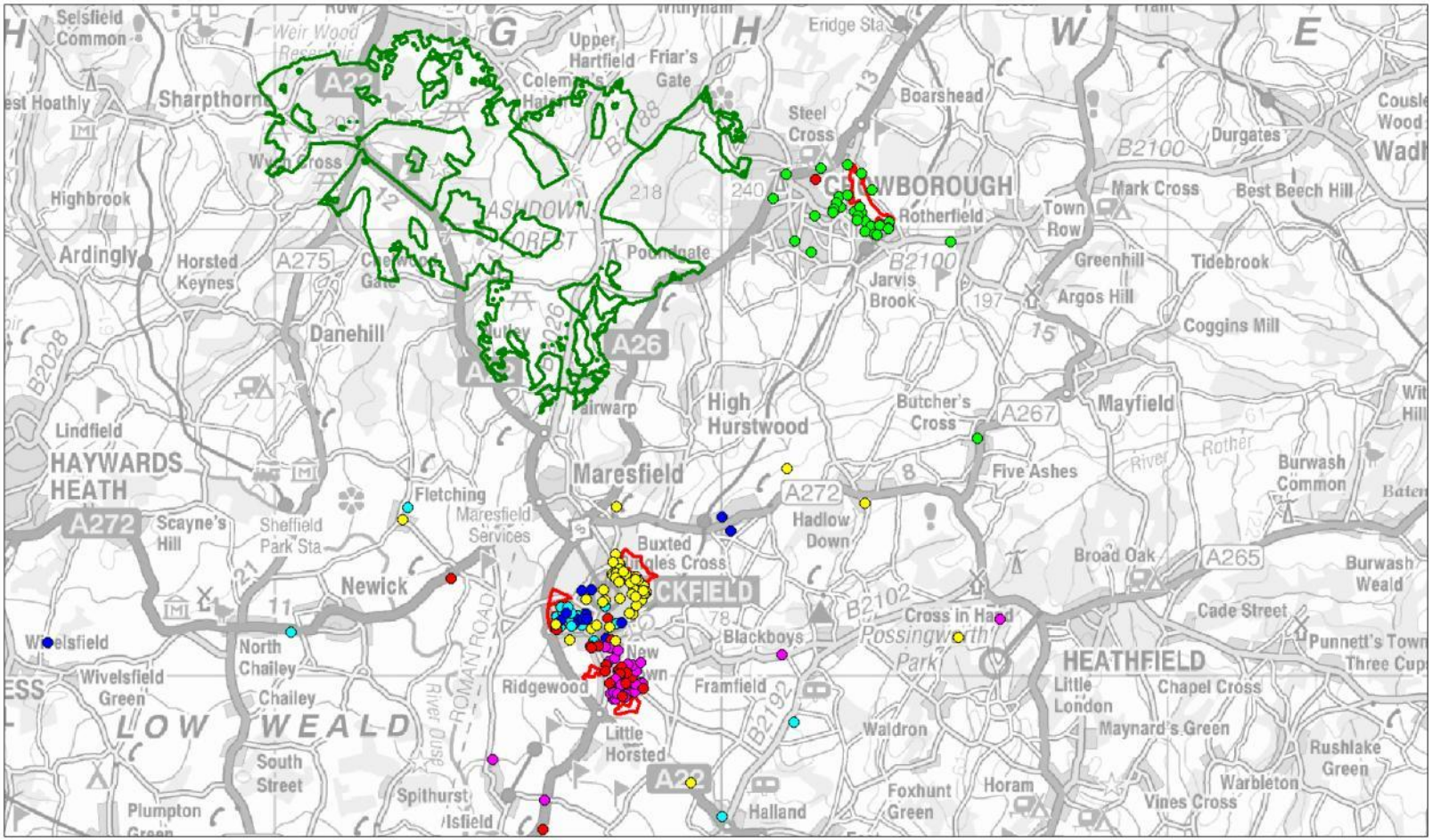
Ashdown Forest SPA
Survey sites




**Map 5: Home postcodes of interviewees, by site (1 postcode (London) off map)**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

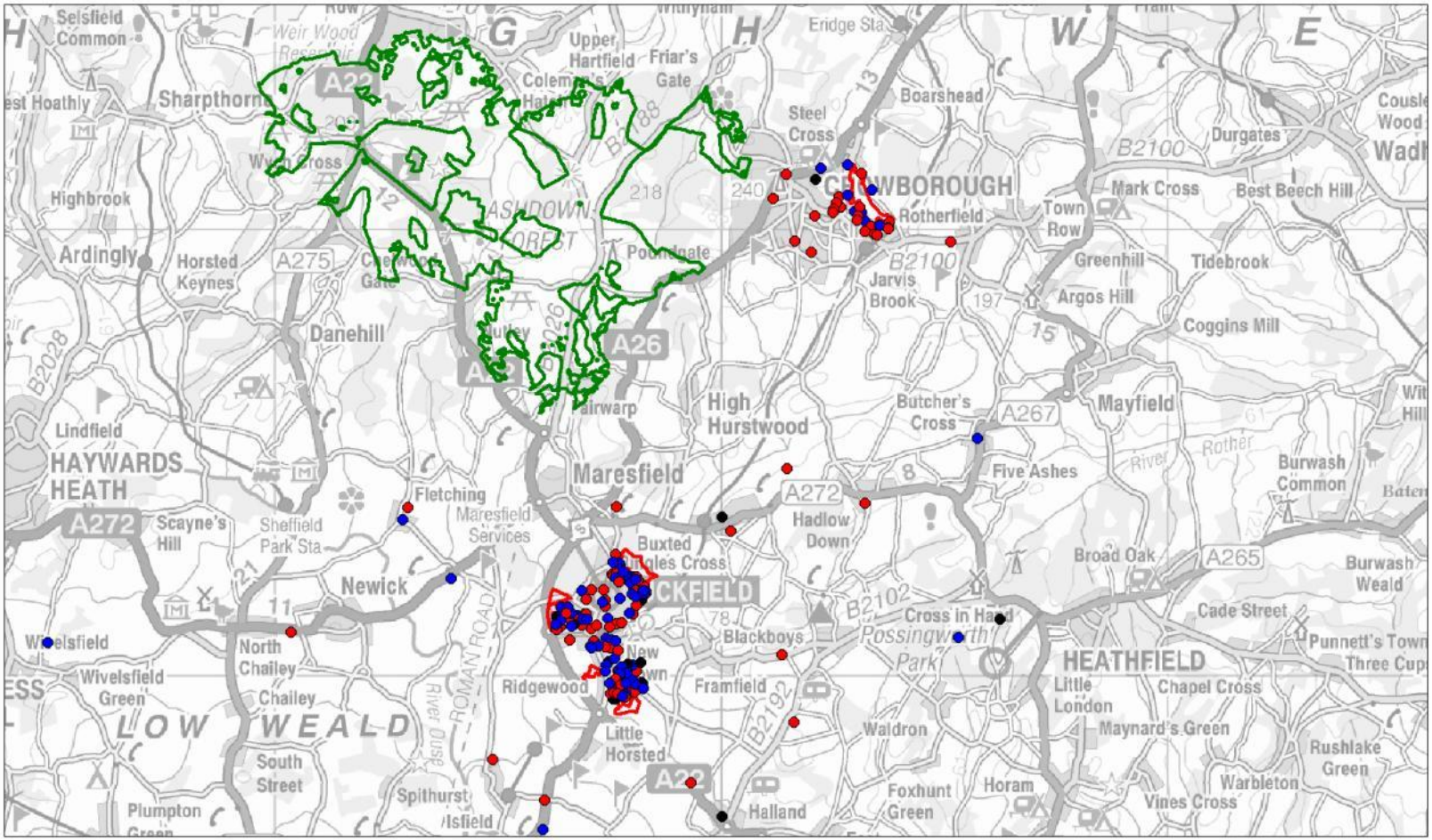
- Boothland Wood (27)
- Crowbrough Ghyll (61)
- Lake Wood (18)
- Ridgewood Millenium Green (70)
- Views Wood (85)
- West Park (63)
- Ashdown Forest SPA
- Survey sites




**Map 6: Home postcodes of interviewees, by site**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

- Boothland Wood (27)
- Crowbrough Ghyll (61)
- Lake Wood (18)
- Ridgewood Millenium Green (70)
- Views Wood (85)
- West Park (63)
- Ashdown Forest SPA
- Survey sites



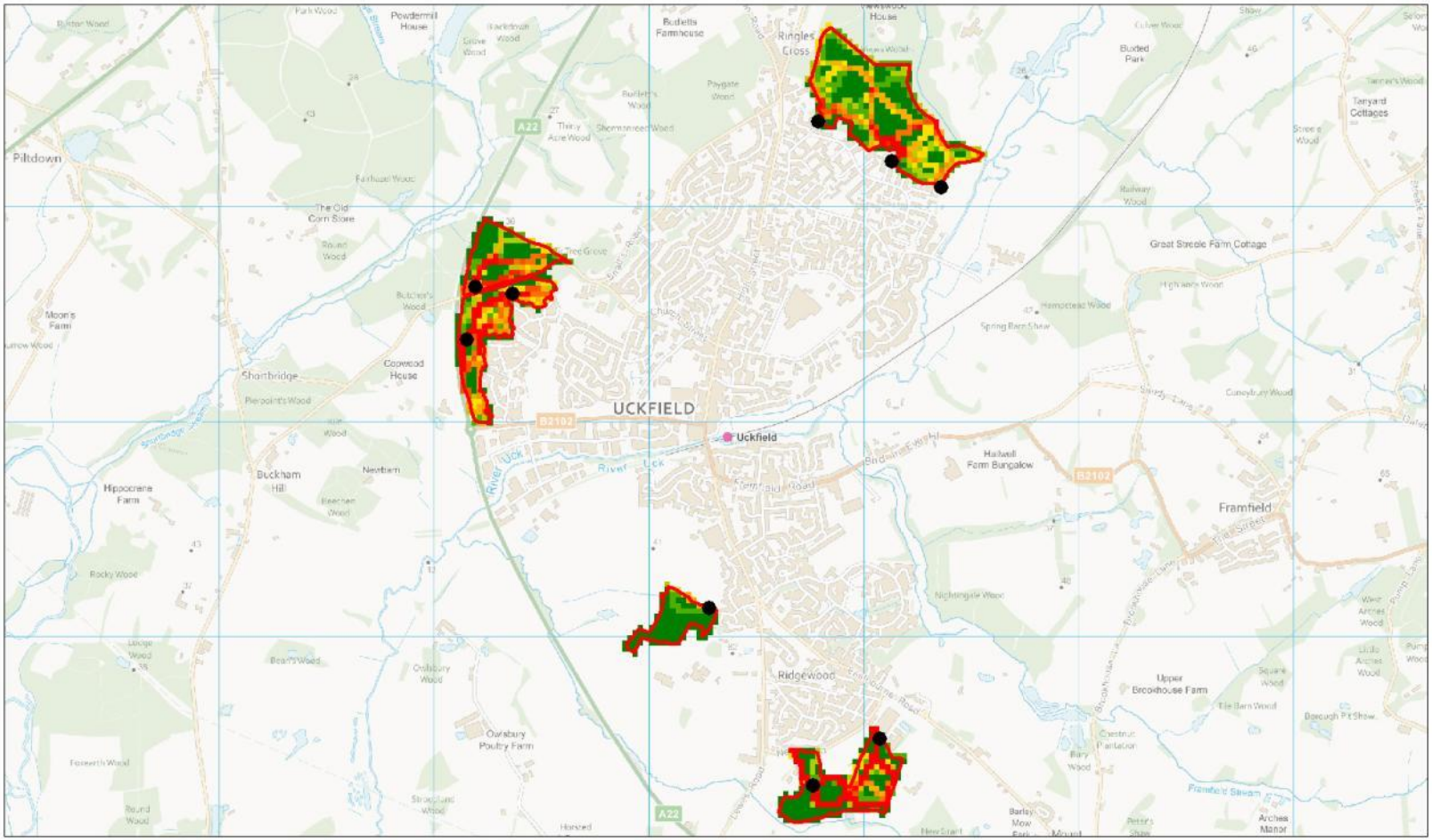

**Map 7: Interviewees who also visit Ashdown Forest**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

- Not at all (29)
- Yes, Prompted (104)
- Yes, Unprompted (191)

Ashdown Forest SPA

Survey sites




**Map 8: Spatial distribution of people within sites**

**Uckfield Sites**

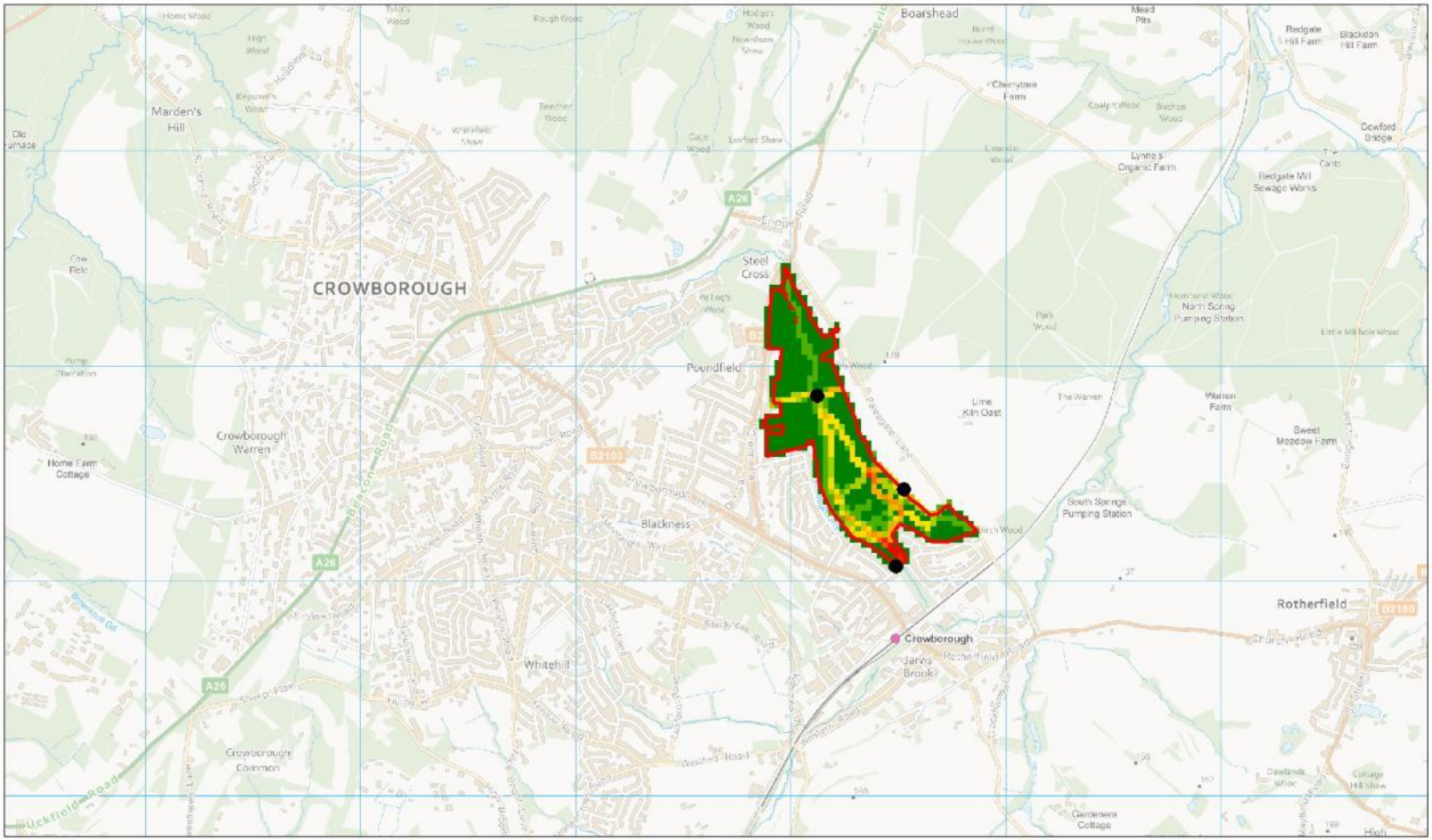
Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

**Footfall (number of people)**

- 45 to 95 (134)
- 40 to 45 (29)
- 35 to 40 (30)
- 30 to 35 (46)
- 25 to 30 (55)
- 20 to 25 (107)
- 15 to 20 (155)
- 10 to 15 (153)
- 5 to 10 (253)
- 0 to 5 (994)

Survey sites

Interview locations




**Map 9: Spatial distribution of people within sites Crowborough Ghyll**

Contains Ordnance Survey Data. Crown Copyright and database right 2012.

**Footfall (number of people)**

- 45 to 95 (134)
- 40 to 45 (29)
- 35 to 40 (30)
- 30 to 35 (46)
- 25 to 30 (55)
- 20 to 25 (107)
- 15 to 20 (155)
- 10 to 15 (153)
- 5 to 10 (253)
- 0 to 5 (994)

Survey sites

Interview locations