



FOOTPRINT
ECOLOGY



Ashdown Forest SANGs surveys 2021

Durwyn Liley & Chris Panter

FOOTPRINT ECOLOGY, FOREST OFFICE, BERE ROAD,
WAREHAM, DORSET BH20 7PA
WWW.FOOTPRINT-ECOLOGY.CO.UK
01929 552444



FOOTPRINT ECOLOGY

Footprint Contract Reference: 654

Date: 6th January 2022

Version: Final

Recommended Citation: Liley, D. & Panter, C.. (2022). Ashdown Forest SANGs Survey 2021. Report by Footprint Ecology.

Summary

This report has been commissioned by Wealden District Council on behalf of three local authorities (Wealden, Mid Sussex and Lewes) and presents the results of visitor surveys at four greenspace sites in the vicinity of Ashdown Forest: East Court and Ashplats Wood, Horsted Green, Reedens Meadow and Walshes Park. These four sites are SANGs ('Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces'), provided to mitigate the effects of recreation (associated with new housing) on Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). The surveys provide baseline data on the SANGs and have taken place in parallel with a visitor survey at Ashdown Forest (which is the subject of a separate report).

Surveys involved counts of people and face-to-face interviews with a random sample of visitors, with a total of 32 hours of survey work conducted at each site, split to cover 2 locations at each SANG and the survey effort spread across different times of day and on a weekend day and a weekday.

A total of 336 interviews were conducted, and key findings included:

- The number of people in the interviewed groups ranged from 1-6 and the average group size (for the interviewed groups) was 1.5 people.
- 82% of interviewees had 1 or more dogs with them, with a total of 366 dogs, roughly 1.1 dogs per interviewee and 0.7 dogs per person in the interviewed groups.
- 53% of dogs were noted by the surveyor as off the lead at the time of interview.
- 98% of interviewees were on a day trip or short visit and had travelled directly from home that day.
- 78% of interviewees stated that their main activity was dog walking and overall 96% of interviewees gave walking (with or without a dog) as their main activity.
- Interviewees had generally been visiting the site where interviewed for a relatively short length of time with 67% visiting for 3 years or less. East Court / Ashplats was notable in that a higher proportion of interviewees had been visiting over a longer time period (e.g. 49% had been visiting this site for more than 10 years).
- Visits were typically short, with 85% visiting for less than an hour and no one interviewed was visiting for more than 3 hours. Visits tended to be slightly longer at the weekend.
- Interviewees had visited the interview location around 169 times on average over the past year. This value varied between sites (127 visits per year at Horsted Green, 152 visits per year at Reedens Meadow, 186 visits per year at Walshes Park and 192 visits per year at East Court / Ashplats).
- 34% of interviewees stated they visited 1-3 times per week, 24% stated they had tended to visit daily over the past year and a further 23% had visited 'most days'. In total 80% visited at least weekly.
- 77% of interviewees stated they tended to visit equally all year.
- 26% of interviewees indicated the coronavirus pandemic had changed how often they visit the location where interviewed and 22% stated that they now visit more than before.

- 53% of interviewees had travelled to the interview location by car or van and 46% arrived on foot. East Court / Ashplats was notable in that a high proportion (78%) arrived on foot and at Horsted Green a particularly high proportion (94%) had driven.
- In total 334 routes were mapped as part of the interview. Across all interviewees the median route length was 1.92km and ranged from 0.35km to 4.96km (as mapped).
- Many of the routes extended outside the site boundary, and when clipped to the SANG boundary (i.e. indicating the length actually walked/ridden within the SANG) the median was 1.75km. There were significant differences between sites, with interviewees at Horsted Green and Walshes Park tending to undertake longer walks.
- The most common reason for choosing to visit the location where interviewed (rather than another location) was close to home (50% of interviewees). The second most common reason related to the site being good for the dog/dog enjoys it (21%).
- 25% of interviewees gave Ashdown Forest as the one location they would have visited if they had not visited the site where interviewed and in total 47% of interviewees named Ashdown Forest as one of the other locations they visit.
- A particularly high proportion of interviewees at Walshes Park (69%) mentioned Ashdown Forest as an alternative location they use. Reedens Meadow was the only SANG site where Ashdown Forest was not the most commonly named alternative (it ranked third, after Chailey Common and Red House Common).
- Interviewees identified a number of changes they would like to see at each site as to how they are managed for access. More dog bins was the most common change identified (22% of interviewees) followed by improvements to path surfacing (12%). Path surfacing was particularly frequently identified at East Court / Ashplats (29% of interviewees there).
- Interviewee home postcodes ranged from 121m to 316km from the interview location. Half of all interviewees gave home postcodes within 1.16km of the survey location and 75% originated within 2.10km. Interviewees at Horsted Green (median distance 2.21km) and Walshes Park (median distance 1.18km) lived slightly further afield than the other two sites.

Tally counts were maintained at each survey location to record the number of groups and people seen by the surveyor. Key findings included:

- Across the four SANGs the tally data indicate around 40.8 groups and 63.1 people using the sites per hour on average and walking around 42.4 dogs per hour.
- East Court / Ashplats was the busiest site in terms of the number of people using the site (roughly 20.9 people per hour on average), however Walshes Park and Horsted Green had more dogs per hour and the number of groups per hour was slightly higher at Walshes Park.

The results show that the four SANGs are busy sites, popular with visitors and particularly working well to draw dog walkers (a target audience). The SANGs clearly attract a good proportion of people who would otherwise visit Ashdown Forest. Data are compared with Ashdown Forest and the comparison indicates that interviewees at Ashdown Forest tended to be in bigger groups, fewer were dog walking (and more walking), more were on their first visit and they tended to walk further and come from further afield. The postcode data reveal relatively small catchments for the sites, suggesting that the SANGs are currently unlikely to be drawing people from more than around 3-4km radius. The survey results include details of

improvements that interviewees would like to see at the SANGs and these provide useful options for future management to further the effectiveness of the SANGs as mitigation.

Contents

Summary	ii
Contents.....	v
Acknowledgements	vi
1. Introduction	1
Overview	1
Ashdown Forest.....	1
Impacts and importance of access	2
Legislative context.....	2
Mitigation for housing growth.....	3
Reasons for this survey.....	4
2. Methods.....	5
Overview	5
Survey locations	5
<i>Survey logistics.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Covid-19 considerations.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Questionnaire design.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Survey timings.....</i>	<i>9</i>
Issues affecting surveys	9
3. Visitor Interview Results.....	11
Overview of number of interviews	11
Activity (Q2 & Q3)	12
Temporal visit patterns (Q4 – Q7)	15
<i>Length of time visiting (Q4)</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Visit duration (Q5).....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Visit frequency (Q6).....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Time of year (Q7).....</i>	<i>20</i>
Effects of pandemic on visit patterns	21
Mode of transport (Q10).....	22
Routes taken on site (Q11-14)	23
Reasons for choice of location (Q14).....	30
Alternative locations visited (Q15-17)	33
Information used to plan visit (Q21).....	35
Changes in how sites are managed for access (Q22).....	36
Visitor origins (home postcodes) (Q18-20).....	39
4. Visitor Count Results (from the tallies)	45
5. Comparison with data from Ashdown Forest.....	51
6. Discussion.....	55
Context.....	55
Suggestions for enhancements and further improvements to the SANGs	56

7. References.....	58
Appendix 1: Questionnaire	59
Appendix 2: Comments relating to ideas for access management at East Court / Ashplats.....	70
Appendix 3: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Horsted Green	73
Appendix 4: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Reedens Meadow.....	75
Appendix 5: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Walshes Park.....	76

Acknowledgements

This report has been commissioned by Wealden District Council on behalf of a partnership of local authorities (Wealden, Mid Sussex, Lewes, Tunbridge Wells, Tandridge and Sevenoaks). We are grateful to the following for advice, support and discussion: James Adler (Ashdown Forest Conservators), Natalie Bumpus (Wealden District Council), Hannah Gooden (Sevenoaks District Council), Jennifer Hollingum (Mid Sussex District Council), Patrick McKernan (Natural England), Shaun Peters (Wealden District Council), David Scully (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council), Kelly Sharp (Wealden District Council), Vivienne Riddle (Tandridge District Council), Gary Webster (Lewes District Council).

Survey work was undertaken by: Abigail Dodge, Jenny Price, Jackie Lake and Mark Sumner. Thanks also to Emma Bishop, Zoe Caals and Fenella Lewin (Footprint Ecology) for data entry and survey coordination.

1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by Wealden District Council on behalf of three local authorities (Wealden, Mid Sussex and Lewes) and presents the results of a visitor survey at four different greenspaces sites around Ashdown Forest. The greenspaces are all SANGs ('Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces'), provided to mitigate the effects of recreation (associated with new housing) on Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA). The surveys provide baseline data on the SANGs and have taken place in parallel with a visitor survey at Ashdown Forest (which is the subject of a separate report).

Ashdown Forest

- 1.2 Ashdown Forest is an extensive block of common land between East Grinstead and Crowborough in East Sussex and forms one of the largest areas of continuous heathland in south-east England. The Forest is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and being located on a high sandy ridge it provides expansive views across the High Weald to the North and South Downs.
- 1.3 It is internationally important for nature conservation, reflected in its designation as an SPA due to the presence of breeding Nightjars and Dartford Warblers and as an SAC, primarily due to the heathland habitats present. The European site extends to cover around 3,000ha (the SPA is slightly larger than the SAC).
- 1.4 Ashdown Forest is the largest public access space in southeast England, and the open, uncultivated countryside provides a draw for visitors. The heathland and commons are freely open to the public and there are over 40 car parks, two long-distance footpaths (the Vanguard Way and Wealdway) and there is a visitor centre. It is also famous as the setting for the Winnie-the-Pooh stories, written by A. A. Milne.
- 1.5 The responsibility for managing Ashdown Forest lies with an independent body, the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest.

Impacts and importance of access

- 1.6 A challenging issue for UK nature conservation is how to respond to increasing demand for access without compromising the integrity of protected wildlife sites. Areas that are important for nature conservation are often important for a range of other services, including the provision of space for recreation for an increasing population. Such recreation space can be used for a wide variety of activities, ranging from daily dog walks to competitive adventure and endurance sports.
- 1.7 Visits to the natural environment have shown a significant increase in England as a result of the increase in population and a trend to visit the countryside more (O'Neill, 2019). The issues are particularly acute in southern England, where population density is highest. The Covid-19 pandemic has further had a marked effect on how people use local greenspaces and many locations across the UK have seen a marked increase in recreation use during the pandemic (Burnett et al., 2021).
- 1.8 There is a strong body of evidence showing how increasing levels of access can have negative impacts on wildlife. Issues are varied and include disturbance, increased fire risk, contamination and damage (for general reviews see: Liley et al., 2010; Lowen et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2014; Underhill-Day, 2005). The issues are not, however, straightforward. It is now increasingly recognised that access to the countryside is crucial to the long term success of nature conservation projects, for example through enforcing pro-environmental behaviours and a greater respect for the world around us (Richardson et al., 2016). Access also brings wider benefits to society that include benefits to mental/physical health (Keniger et al., 2013; Lee and Maheswaran, 2011; Pretty et al., 2005) and economic benefits (ICF GHK, 2013; ICRT, 2011; Keniger et al., 2013; The Land Trust, 2018). Nature conservation bodies are trying to encourage people to spend more time outside and government policy is also promoting countryside access in general (e.g. through enhancing coastal access).

Legislative context

- 1.9 The designation, protection and restoration of European wildlife sites is embedded in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, which are commonly referred to as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Importantly, the most recent amendments (the Conservation

of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019¹) take account of the UK's departure from the EU.

- 1.10 The Regulations provide strict protection for European sites and this extends to local plans. Regulation 105 *et seq* addresses the assessment of local plans and there is also Government Guidance on the interpretation and application of the Regulations which includes local plans². Local planning authorities, as public bodies, are given specific duties as 'competent authorities'. A competent authority should only approve a project or give effect to a plan where it can be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site(s) (or exceptionally, if there is overriding public interest and no alternatives).

Mitigation for housing growth

- 1.11 Ashdown Forest lies relatively close to a number of settlements such as Crawley, East Grinstead, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Haywards Heath, as well as a number of smaller towns such as Crowborough and Uckfield. The attractive, extensive open nature of Ashdown Forest and the right of access across much of the site means it will inevitably draw residents for recreation. Housing growth in the surrounding area, as set out in local development plans, is therefore likely to result in increased pressure on the site bringing risks of disturbance to the SPA bird interest and damage to the heathland habitat. In order to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA, the surrounding local authorities, working with the Ashdown Forest Conservators, have established a range of mitigation measures. These measures include a range of access management and monitoring at Ashdown Forest and the provision of alternative natural greenspaces ('SANGs' – Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) to deflect access.

¹ The amending regulations generally seek to retain the requirements of the 2017 Regulations but with adjustments for the UK's exit from the European Union. See Regulation 4, which also confirms that the interpretation of these Regulations as they had effect, or any guidance as it applied, before exit day, shall continue to do so.

² Habitats regulations assessments: protecting a European site. Defra and Natural England. 24 February 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site> (accessed 4 March 2021)

Reasons for this survey

- 1.12 The SANGs surveys were commissioned to provide evidence to inform future planning policy and the evidence base for Habitats Regulations Assessments of the respective local plans. The aim of the surveys is to check the use of SANGs around Ashdown Forest and collect information on any interventions necessary to ensure their effectiveness. Given the major effect of Covid on travel patterns and use of outdoor spaces, the survey will identify emerging trends and patterns of use and provide a baseline for future monitoring. A second survey report accompanies this one and documents the survey results from Ashdown Forest.

2. Methods

Overview

2.1 SANGs surveys have been undertaken alongside visitor survey work at Ashdown Forest as shown in Figure 1. The pale red and green boxes in the figure summarise the content of the survey work undertaken on the SAC/SPA that is set out in a separate, and complementary, report.

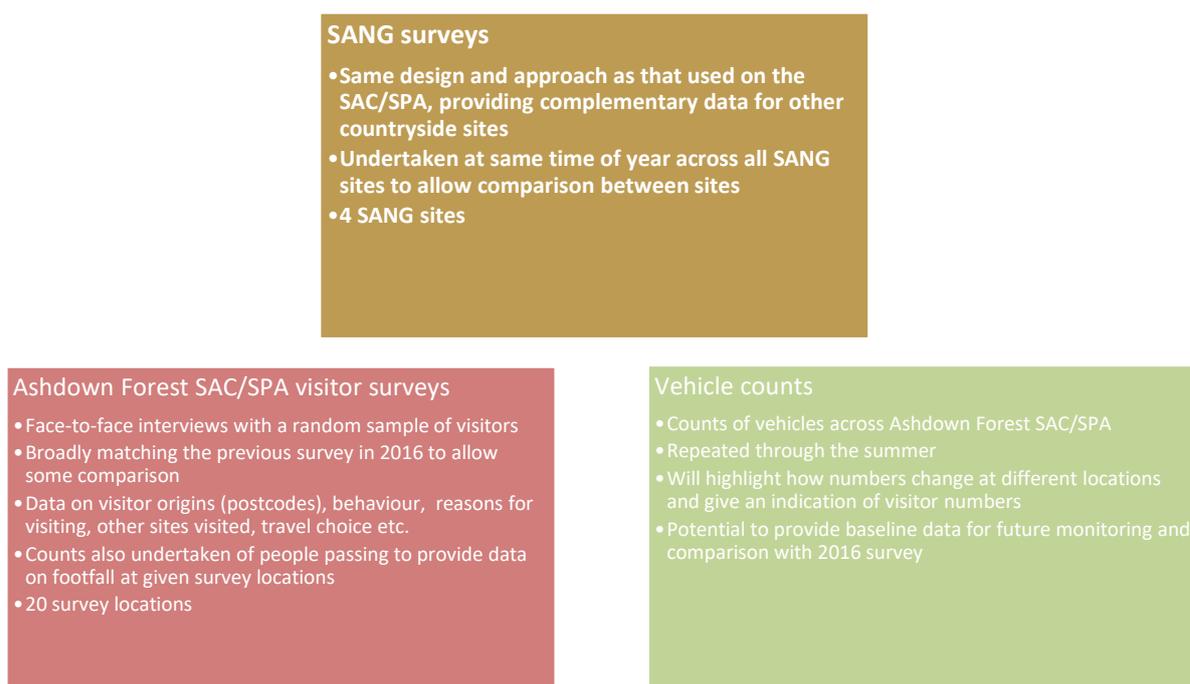
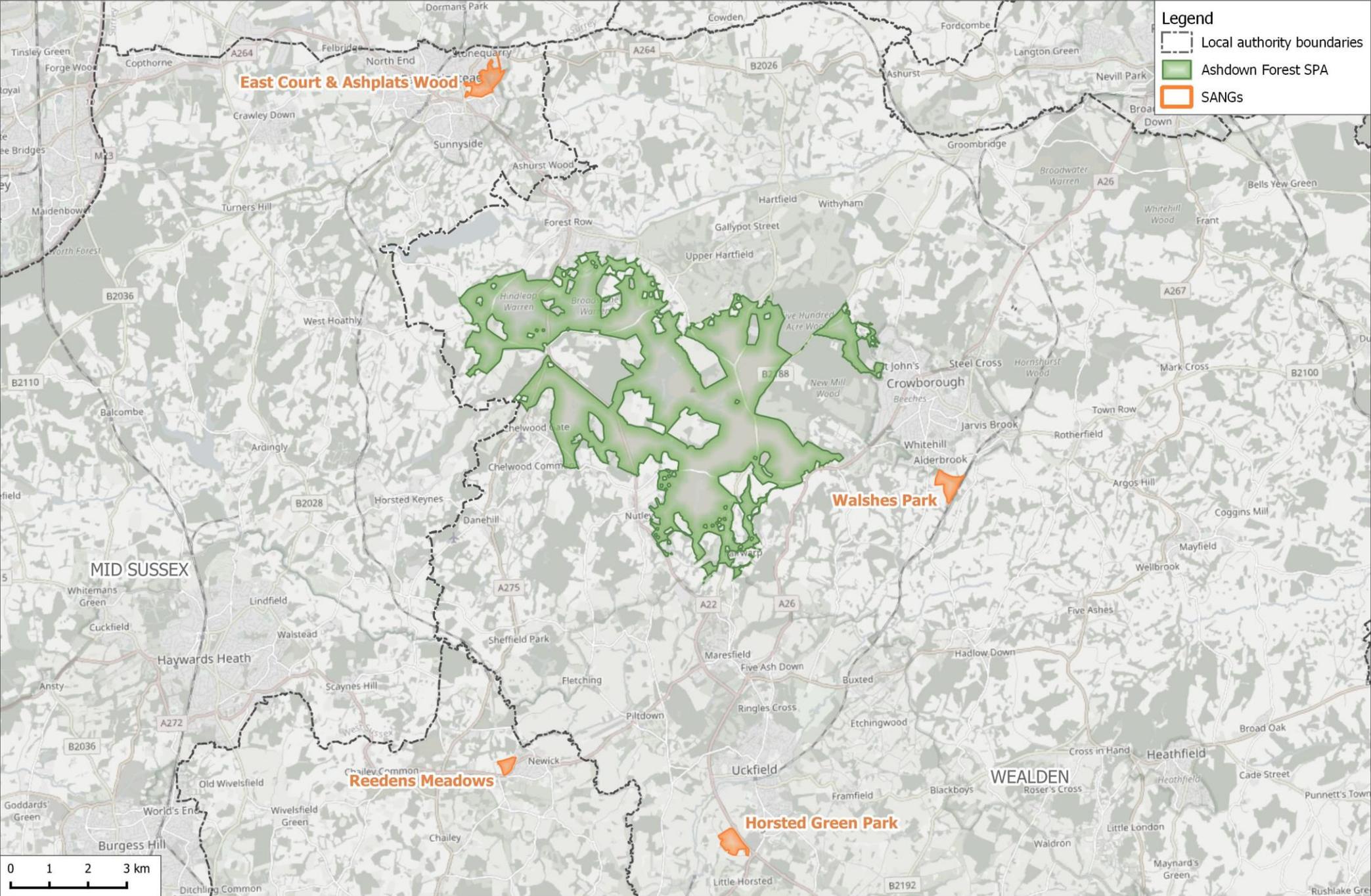


Figure 1: Summary of survey approaches

Survey locations

2.2 Surveys took place at 4 SANG sites identified by the commissioning local authorities (see Map 1). Within each SANG, 2 survey points were identified (Map 2, Table 1). These typically included the main car park and another key entry point.

Map 1: SANG Survey Sites



© OpenStreetMap contributors. Terms: www.openstreetmap.org/copyright
© Natural England copyright. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021.

Table 1: SANG survey locations.

SANG	Map Label/ID	Description
Reedens Meadows	Reedens 1	Car park, off Western Road at east of site
	Reedens 2	Pedestrian gate near southern corner, off Western Road
Horsted Green	Horsted Green 1	Main car park off Horsted Pond Lane
Horsted Green	Horsted Green 2	Just to south of underpass (under A22) on northern edge. Underpass not heavily used so survey point set into site slightly where path from underpass meets perimeter path.
East Court & Ashplats Wood	East Court/Ashplats 1	Car park to south, accessed from west near Council Offices and Ambulance station. Surveyor roaming to north as necessary to also intercept people parking near the Council Offices.
East Court & Ashplats Wood	East Court/Ashplats 2	At main path junction inside site, at 'The Glade'
Walshes Park	Walshes Park 1	At car park towards north-west corner
Walshes Park	Walshes Park 2	Entry point near north-east corner, 'Nightingales'

Survey logistics

- 2.1 Surveyors undertook counts and visitor interviews within standard 2 hour periods, standardised across survey points.
- 2.2 Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a random selection of visitors, with the surveyor selecting the next person they saw after completing the previous interview, with only one person interviewed per group or party.
- 2.3 Alongside the interview data, surveyors maintained a tally of all people passing, recording the number of groups (of any size), individuals, minors, dogs and cyclists. These counts allow a comparison across survey points in terms of visitor volume/footfall, and indicate the proportion of visitors that were interviewed at each location.

Covid-19 considerations

- 2.4 Surveys took place outside and during a period when Covid restrictions were relaxed. When carrying out interviews, surveyors followed the social distancing guidelines current at the time (2m apart, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable). Surveyors wore masks and visors to minimise the risk of transmission between them and interviewees, whilst still allowing easy communication.
- 2.5 In order to map routes, the surveyors had large (A3) laminated versions of their paper maps and were able to show these to the interviewee who

could then broadly indicate their route with their finger (refraining from touching the laminated map).

Questionnaire design

- 2.6 The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was designed using Snap Surveys software and was conducted using tablet computers running the Snap Mobile Anywhere app. The route that the interviewee had taken on site (or was planning to take) was drawn by the surveyor onto a paper map, using a unique reference number to match it to the corresponding questionnaire data and these routes were subsequently digitised into GIS.
- 2.7 The questionnaire broadly matched that used at Ashdown Forest, allowing direct comparison. The questionnaire differed such that the questions at the end relating to the specific dog walker code of conduct at Ashdown Forest (awareness of code of conduct and whether it has influenced behaviour) were dropped and a new question was added about changes the interviewee would like to see at the SANG. This is added to ensure the questionnaire can record details as to how the SANG could be improved over time.

Survey timings

- 2.8 Each survey point was surveyed for 16 hours, with 8 hours on a weekend day and 8 hours on a weekday. On a given date only 1 survey point was covered, such that survey work was split across at least four different dates on each SANG. Surveys were split into 2 hour periods to provide breaks for the surveyors and comparable survey windows across all locations. Survey times comprised: 07:00 - 09:00, 10:30 - 12:30, 14:00 - 16:00, and 17:00 - 19:00hrs. Every effort was made to avoid severe weather conditions.
- 2.9 Surveys took place during September 2021. i.e. outside the school holiday period and therefore reflecting a time when visitor use was likely to reflect relatively 'typical' use. The SANGs are unlikely to draw holiday-makers and therefore it was important to ensure surveys avoided those times of year when use might be lower or atypical, with people away on holiday and yet weather conditions were likely to be relatively good. The session timings also broadly matched the surveys on the European site.

Issues affecting surveys

- 2.10 The surveys took place during a spell of relatively good weather, with 56 (88%) of the 2hr sessions having no rainfall at all. Three survey sessions (1 session each at Reedens Meadow 1, Reedens Meadow 2 and Walshes Park 1) had continuous rainfall for the 2 hours. In the case of the Reedens Meadow surveys the other sessions all had no rainfall and were dry while at Walshes Meadow, beside the 1 session with continuous rainfall one other session had rainfall for a quarter of the session and all other sessions there were dry.
- 2.11 At Walshes Park, there had been a number of road closures over the months preceding the survey and on the dates when the surveys were conducted. At the time of the surveys, Walshes Road was closed just to the east of the junction with Kingfisher Drive (which is where the new car park for the SANG is located). This will have influenced the results in that people may have parked more at Alderbrook Drive and avoided the new car park, however the survey location (at the entrance gate rather than the car park) should mean any effects were minimised.

3. Visitor Interview Results

3.1 This section sets out the results from the visitor interviews.

Overview of number of interviews

3.2 A total of 336 interviews were conducted, with half (169 interviews, 50%) conducted on a weekend (Table 2). The number of interviews at the weekend was higher compared to the weekday at 5 of the survey points. At Reedens Meadow more interviews (28, 58%) were conducted on weekdays compared to the weekend whereas at Walshes Park more interviews were conducted at the weekend (62, 55%).

Table 2: Number of interviews by survey location and by SANG. Grey shading indicates the weekday or weekend column with the higher value.

Survey location	Number (%) interviews on a weekday	Number (%) interviews on a weekend day	Total interviews	Already interviewed	Refusals
East Court/Ashplats 1	30 (51)	29 (49)	59	10	9
East Court/Ashplats 2	21 (53)	19 (48)	40	14	10
East Court & Ashplats Wood Total	51 (52)	48 (48)	99	24	19
Horsted Green 1	21 (53)	19 (48)	40	7	9
Horsted Green 2	17 (46)	20 (54)	37	8	6
Horsted Green Total	38 (49)	39 (51)	77	15	15
Reedens 1	19 (59)	13 (41)	32	2	11
Reedens 2	9 (56)	7 (44)	16	8	8
Reedens Meadow Total	28 (58)	20 (42)	48	10	19
Walshes Park 1	28 (47)	32 (53)	60	28	7
Walshes Park 2	22 (42)	30 (58)	52	6	10
Walshes Park Total	50 (45)	62 (55)	112	34	17
Overall Total	167 (50)	169 (50)	336	83	70

3.3 The interview lasted on average 8.8 minutes.

3.4 A total of 83 people were approached that had already been interviewed (and these were not re-interviewed). The number of people already interviewed was highest at Walshes Park (34 in total) and at East Court / Ashplats (24 in total) (Table 2).

3.5 A total of 70 people were approached and refused to be interviewed (Table 2). Refusals occurred at all locations. The number of refusals correlated with the number of interviews conducted (Pearson correlation

coefficient = 0.66, $p=0.018$), suggesting that refusals tended to be directly in proportion to the number of people approached at each location and were therefore not at particular locations. Only 1 refusal (at Reedens Meadow) was directly attributed to Covid.

- 3.6 Group size³ in the interviewed groups ranged from 1 to 6. The interviewed groups totalled 517 people, giving an average group size (for the interviewed groups) of 1.5 people. A total of 275 interviewees (82%) had 1 or more dogs with them, with a total of 366 dogs, roughly 1.1 dogs per interviewee (across all interviewees) and 0.7 dogs per person in the interviewed groups. At least 195 (53%) of the dogs were noted by the surveyor as off the lead at the time of interview. This percentage ranged markedly between the different SANG sites, with 28% of interviewee's dogs noted as off lead during the interview at Reedens Meadow and 77% at East Court / Ashplats.
- 3.7 The majority (330 interviewees, 98%) were on a day trip or short visit and had travelled directly from home that day. Of the other interviewees, 4 (1%) stated they were staying with friends and family; 1 interviewee (at Horsted Green) was staying away from home on holiday and 1 interviewee (at East Court / Ashplats) was staying locally for a hospital appointment.

Activity (Q2 & Q3)

- 3.8 Dog walking was the most frequently given main activity across all the interview data (262 interviewees, 78%) and was the most commonly cited main activity at each SANG (Figure 2), where dog walking as the main activity ranged from 74% of interviewees (Horsted Green) to 85% (at Reedens Meadow). Walking was the next most commonly cited activity (62 interviewees, 18%). Together these two activities accounted for 96% of interviewees' main activities. 5 interviewees were undertaking 'other' activities that didn't fall into predetermined categories and these included 3 taking short-cuts/passing through (2 at Reedens Meadow and 1 East Court / Ashplats), 1 training their dog (Horsted Green) and 1 just wanting a change of scenery (Reedens Meadow).

³ By group size we mean the number of people in the group, including the interviewee. While only one interview was conducted per group or party, the number of people in the group as a whole was logged.

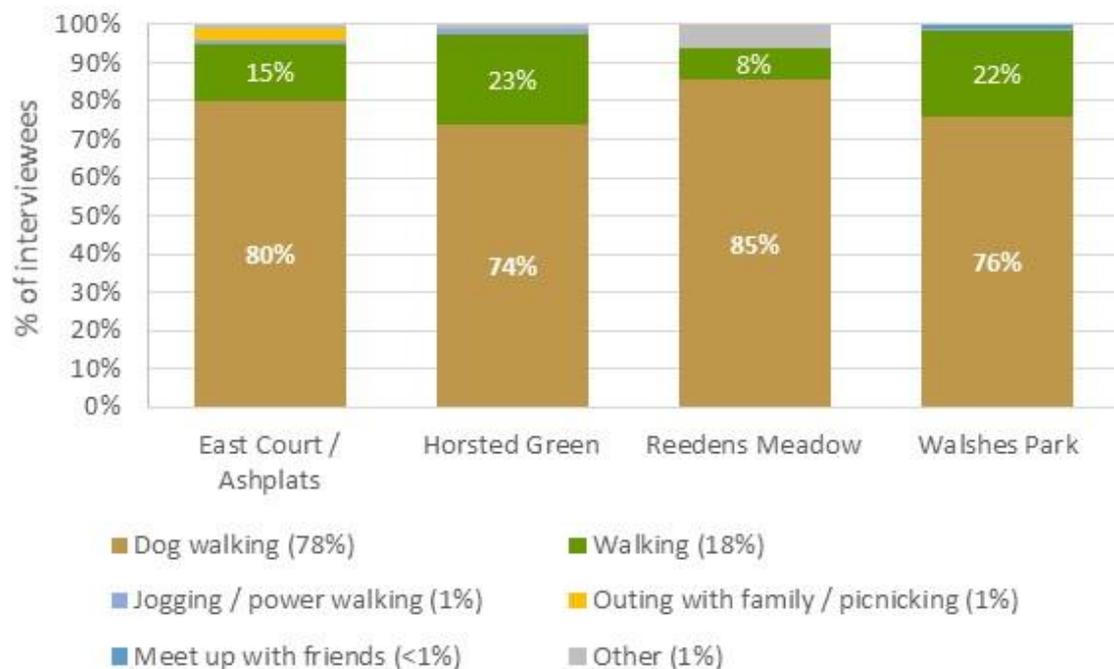


Figure 2: Percentage of interviewees by main activity, by SANG, from responses to Q1. Value labels on the graph give site specific percentages for dog walking and walking only. Percentages for all interviewees across all sites given in the legend.

- 3.9 Interviewees were also asked about any other activities they were undertaking during their visit, and these secondary activities are summarised in Table 3. Less than a third of interviewees (101, 30%) gave a secondary activity, with walking the most common (39 interviewees, 12%).
- 3.10 Including both main and secondary activities, 272 interviewees (81%) stated they were dog walking, reflecting that the SANGs are predominantly used for this activity. It should be noted that 275 interviewees (82%) actually had dogs with them. The difference relates to interviewees that had a dog with them but did not consider that they were out for a dog walk, for example one of the interviewees was training their dog.
- 3.11 ‘Other’ secondary activities that didn’t fall within the predetermined categories included 3 interviewees taking short-cuts (Reedens Meadow and East Court / Ashplats), 2 interviewees picking blackberries and/or sloes (Reedens Meadow and Walshes Park), 2 interviewees who were undertaking sports or other family members were playing sports (East Court / Ashplats), 1 ‘skimming stones’ at Horsted Green, 1 forest bathing (East Court / Ashplats), 1 skateboarding (East Court / Ashplats) and 1 having a coffee (East Court / Ashplats).

Ashdown Forest SANGs Visitor Survey 2021

Table 3: Number (%) of interviewees undertaking different activities by SANG. Percentages are derived from the total number of interviewees at each SANG and overall.

Activity type	East Court / Ashplats		Horsted Green		Reedens Meadow		Walshes Park		All sites	
	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary	Main	Secondary
Dog walking	79 (80)	3 (3)	57 (74)	3 (4)	41 (85)	2 (4)	85 (76)	2 (2)	262 (78)	10 (3)
Walking	15 (15)	18 (18)	18 (23)	11 (14)	4 (8)	6 (13)	25 (22)	4 (4)	62 (18)	39 (12)
Jogging / power walking	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	3 (1)	0 (0)
Outing with family / picnic	3 (3)	8 (8)	0 (0)	2 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3)	3 (1)	13 (4)
Meet up with friends	0 (0)	11 (11)	0 (0)	3 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (4)	1 (0)	18 (5)
Wildlife / bird watching	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (4)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (0)	8 (2)
Photography	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	2 (1)
Other	1 (1)	7 (7)	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (6)	2 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (1)	11 (3)
Total	99 (100)	49 (49)	77 (100)	24 (31)	48 (100)	11 (23)	112 (100)	17 (15)	336 (100)	101 (30)

Temporal visit patterns (Q4 – Q7)

Length of time visiting (Q4)

- 3.12 Interviewees had generally been visiting the site where interviewed for a relatively short length of time, for example across all sites 4 interviewees (1%) were on their first visit, 39 (12%) had been visiting for less than 6 months, 51 (15%) had been visiting for roughly 6 months to a year and 132 (39%) had been visiting for roughly 1-3 years. Overall, this means around two-thirds of interviewees (226, 67%) had been visiting for 3 years or less.
- 3.13 There were some marked differences between sites (Figure 3). East Court / Ashplats was notable in that a higher proportion of interviewees had been visiting over a longer time period. For example, 49 interviewees (49% of those interviewed at the site) had been visiting for more than 10 years and just 25 interviewees (25%) had been visiting for less than 3 years. At the three other SANG sites very few interviewees had been visiting for more than 10 years and the percentage visiting for less than 3 years ranged from 63% (Reedens Meadow) to 97% (Horsted Green). This is perhaps not surprising given that these sites were relatively recently created as public open spaces and previously there would have only been limited public access along Public Rights of Way, where present.

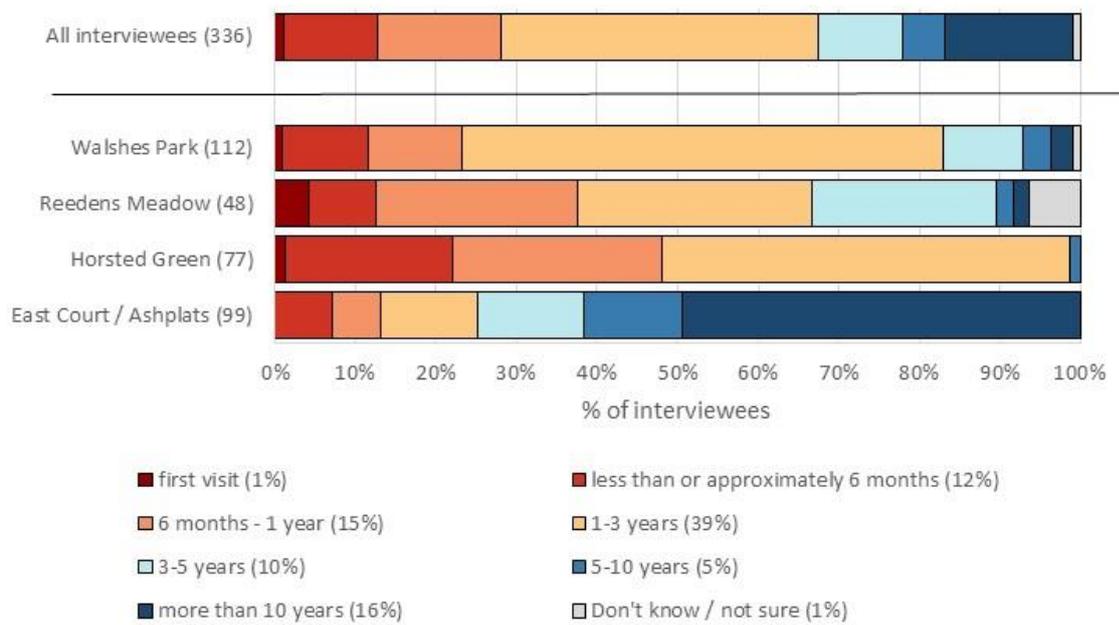


Figure 3: Percentage of interviewees and the length of time visiting the site, for all interviewees (top) and by SANG (lower), from Q4. Numbers in brackets refer to the sample size at each SANG. Percentages in the legend relate to all interviewees across all 4 SANGs.

Visit duration (Q5)

3.14 Most interviewees (233, 69%) were visiting for between 30 minutes and 1 hour (Figure 4). In total, 283 (85%) were visiting for less than an hour and no interviewees stated they were visiting for more than 3 hours. There were only small differences between the SANG sites. Reedens Meadow and East Court / Ashplats had a slightly higher proportion of interviewees visiting for less than 30 minutes (23% and 20% respectively) while East Court / Ashplats also had a slightly higher proportion visiting for more than 1 hour (19%). Based on the categorical responses relating to visit duration the typical visit duration was around 48 minutes⁴. There was little variation between sites in this estimate, which ranged from 43 minutes (Reedens Meadow) to 49 minutes (East Court / Ashplats and Horsted Green).

⁴ Calculated by assigning an estimate of time to each category: less than 30 minutes = 20mins; 30 minutes - 1hr=45 mins; 1-2 hrs=90 mins; 2-3 hrs=150mins and more than 3 hours=240mins. Typical visit duration is then the average based on the total number of interviewees that gave one of the above categories.

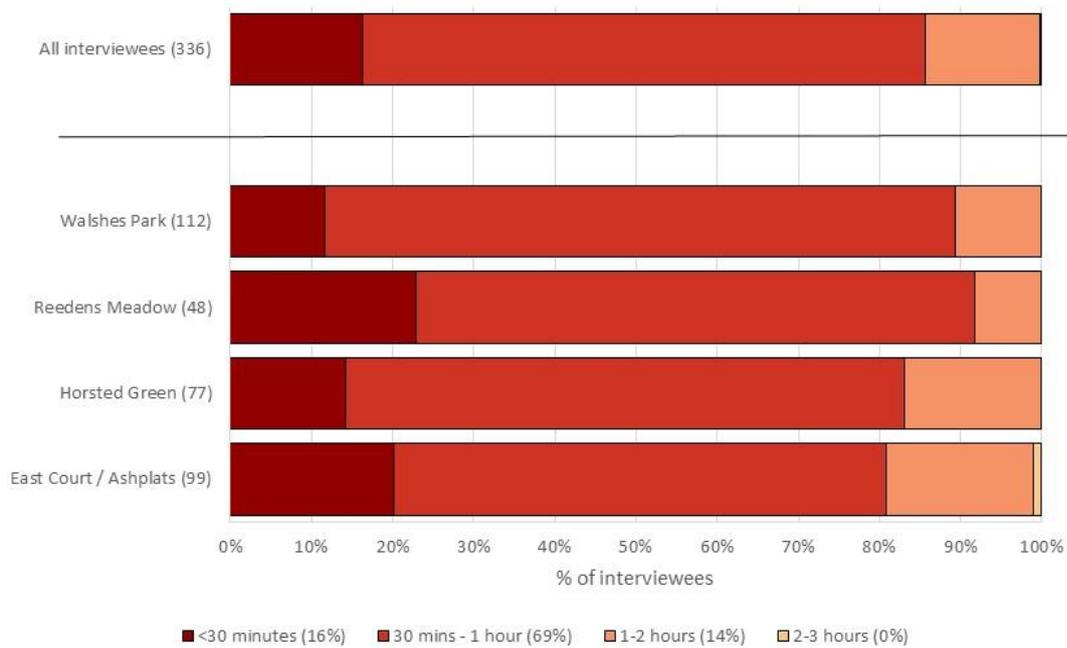


Figure 4: Visit duration, for all interviewees (top) and by SANG (lower), from Q5. Numbers in brackets refer to the sample size at each SANG. Percentages in the legend relate to all interviewees across all 4 SANGs.

3.15 Visits tended to be slightly longer at the weekend, particularly at East Court / Ashplats and Reedens Meadow (Figure 5). These 2 sites were notable in that there were a high proportion of weekday interviewees visiting for less than 30 minutes.



Figure 5: Percentage of interviewees and visit duration, for weekends and weekdays (from Q5).

Visit frequency (Q6)

3.16 Visit frequencies are summarised in Figure 6. The most commonly cited visit frequency was 1-3 times per week (the frequency for 113 interviewees, 34%). 81 interviewees (24%) stated they had tended to visit daily over the past year and a further 76 interviewees (23%) had visited 'most days'. In total 270 interviewees (80%) visited at least weekly.

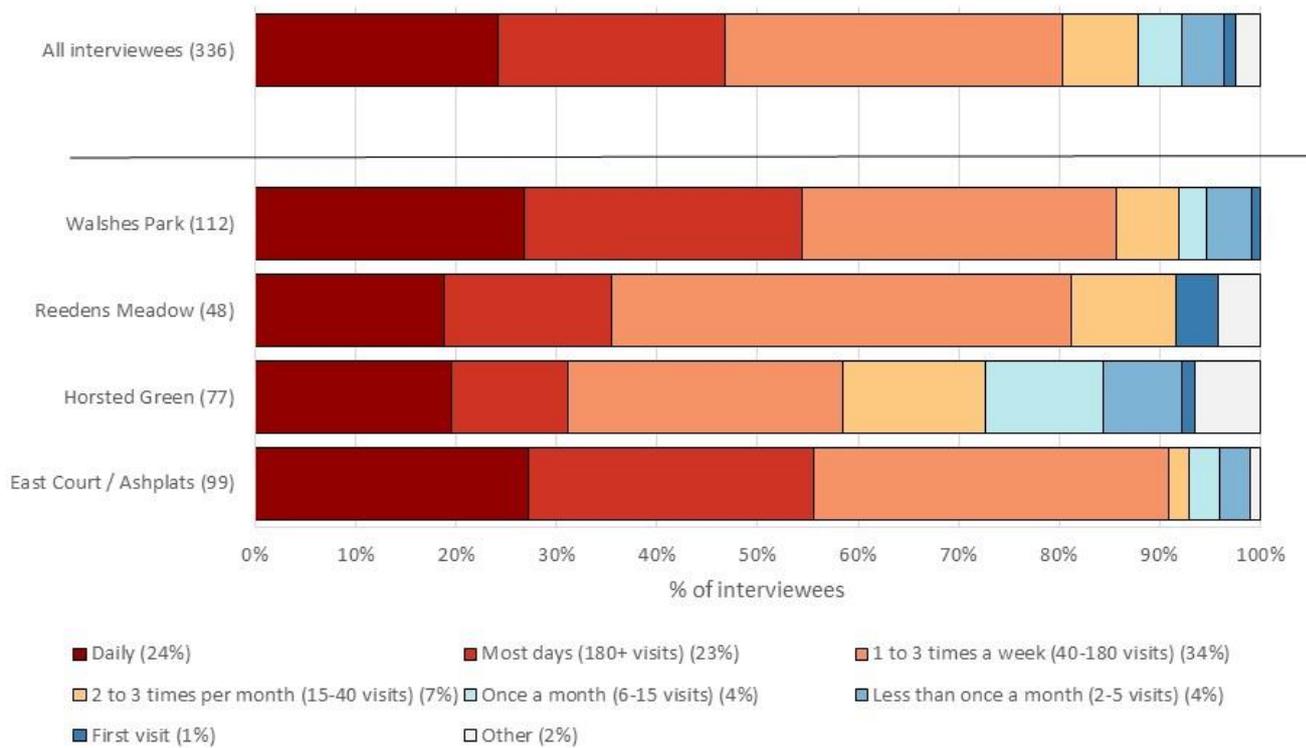


Figure 6: Visit frequency for all interviewees (top) and by location (lower). Numbers in brackets at base of bars refer to sample size. Percentages in legend for all interviewees across all SANGs. Data from Q6.

3.17 Based on the categorical responses relating to visit frequency, each interviewee had visited the interview location around 169 times on average over the past year⁵. This value varied between sites (127 visits per

⁵ Calculated by assigning an estimate of time to each category: "Daily" = 350 visits, "Most days (180+ visits)" = 200 visits, "1 to 3 times a week (40-180 visits)" = 110 visits, "2 to 3 times per month (15-40 visits)" = 27.5 visits, "Once a month (6-15 visits)" = 10.5 visits, "Less than once a month (2-5 visits)" = 3 visits and "First visit" = 1. Typical visit frequency is then the average based on the total number of interviewees that gave one of the above categories.

year at Horsted Green, 152 visits per year at Reedens Meadow, 186 visits per year at Walshes Park and 192 visits per year at East Court / Ashplats.)

Time of year (Q7)

3.18 The majority of interviewees (260 interviewees, 77%) stated they tended to visit equally all year, and there was very little variation in this percentage between sites (range from 76% at Walshes Park to 81% at Horsted Green). For those interviewees that did tend to visit at a particular time of year, the summer was the most common response (45 interviewees, 13%). East Court / Ashplats and Walshes Park were notable in having a slightly higher percentage of interviewees indicating they tended to visit more in the summer (17 and 16% respectively, see Figure 7). Horsted Green had the highest proportion of interviewees who stated they tended to visit in the winter (9%) while no-one interviewed at Reedens Meadow stated that they tended to visit more in the winter.

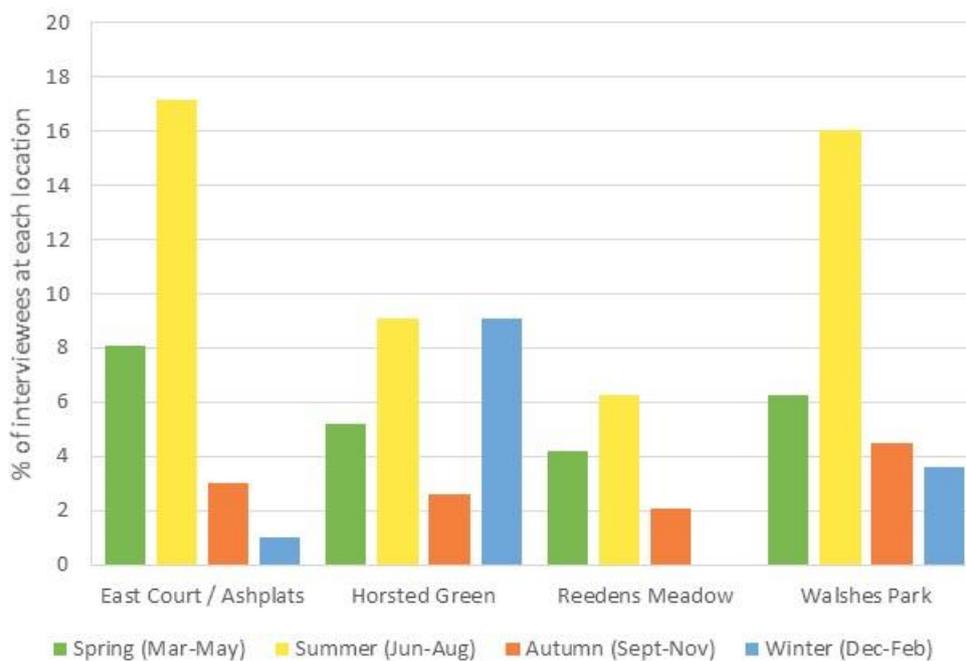


Figure 7: % of interviewees and time of year that they tend to visit the SANG (those 260 interviewees that answered “equally all year” and those on their first visit / didn’t know (n=23) are excluded). Data from Q7.

3.19 Comparing activity types, dog walkers were the main group to visit equally throughout the year, with 80% of those (across all sites) who cited dog walking as their main activity giving this response. For comparison, for those walking, 69% of interviewees stated they visited equally all year.

Effects of pandemic on visit patterns

3.20 Across all interviewees, 88 interviewees (26%) indicated the coronavirus pandemic had changed how often they visit the location where interviewed, with 75 interviewees (22%) indicating that they now visit more than before (Figure 8). Reedens Meadow is notable in that no interviewees stated they visited less as a result of the pandemic and a relatively high proportion (42% of those who were able to answer the question) were visiting more.

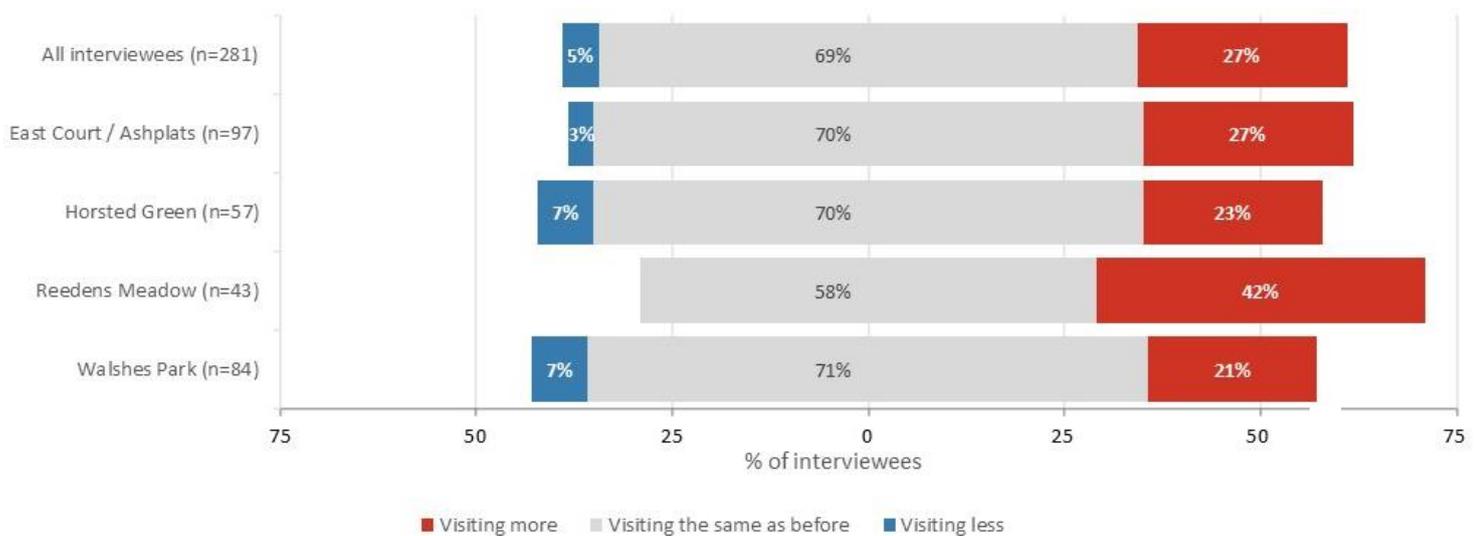


Figure 8: Effect of the coronavirus pandemic and percentage of interviewees visiting more, less or the same (from Q9). Top bar is all interviewees and lower 4 bars are for different locations. Row labels give sample sizes (which exclude those who didn't know or were on their first visit).

3.21 The data suggest that those who have started visiting more as a result of the pandemic are those that previously tended to visit relatively infrequently (Figure 9), particularly those who visit once a month (62% of those who could indicate how often they visited prior to the pandemic, now visit more). For the more regular visitors, such as those that visited at least daily prior to the pandemic, only 7% now visit more frequently. This pattern was consistent across all four SANGs, with the % of daily visitors who stated they now visit more frequently as a result of the pandemic ranging from 0 (Horsted Green and Reedens Meadow) to 11% (East Court / Ashplats).

3.22 By assigning a set number of visits to each frequency category (see para 3.17) it is possible to derive a rough estimate of the difference in the

number of annual visits each interviewee made pre-pandemic compared to when the survey was conducted. This gives a rough estimate of 44 additional visits per year per interviewee. Reviewing the comments, it is clear many interviewees had moved to the area or started visiting recently, which partly explains the marked increase in recent use across sites.

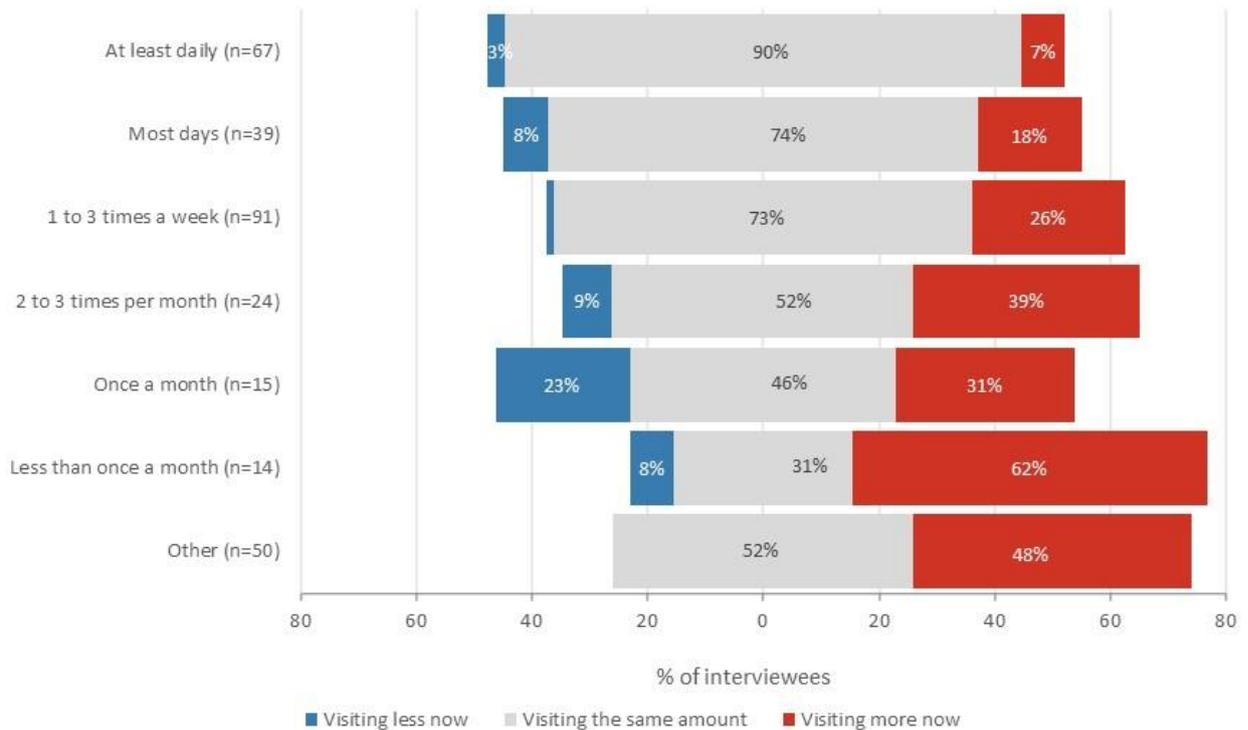


Figure 9: Frequency with which interviewees visited prior to the pandemic (from Q8) and whether the coronavirus pandemic has changed visit patterns. Data pooled across all sites. Values in brackets are sample sizes. Those who were on first visit or didn't know are excluded.

Mode of transport (Q10)

- 3.23 Across all sites combined, just over half of interviewees (179 interviewees, 53%) had travelled to the interview location by car or van and just under half had travelled on foot (156 interviewees, 46%). The only other mode of transport recorded was 1 interviewee at Walshes Park who had arrived by mobility scooter.
- 3.24 There was some variation between sites (Figure 10), with Horsted Green being notable as 94% of interviewees had travelled to the site by car/van.

By contrast at East Court / Ashplats less than a quarter (22%) of interviewees had arrived by car/van.

3.25 The mean group size for those who had arrived by car was 1.6 people.

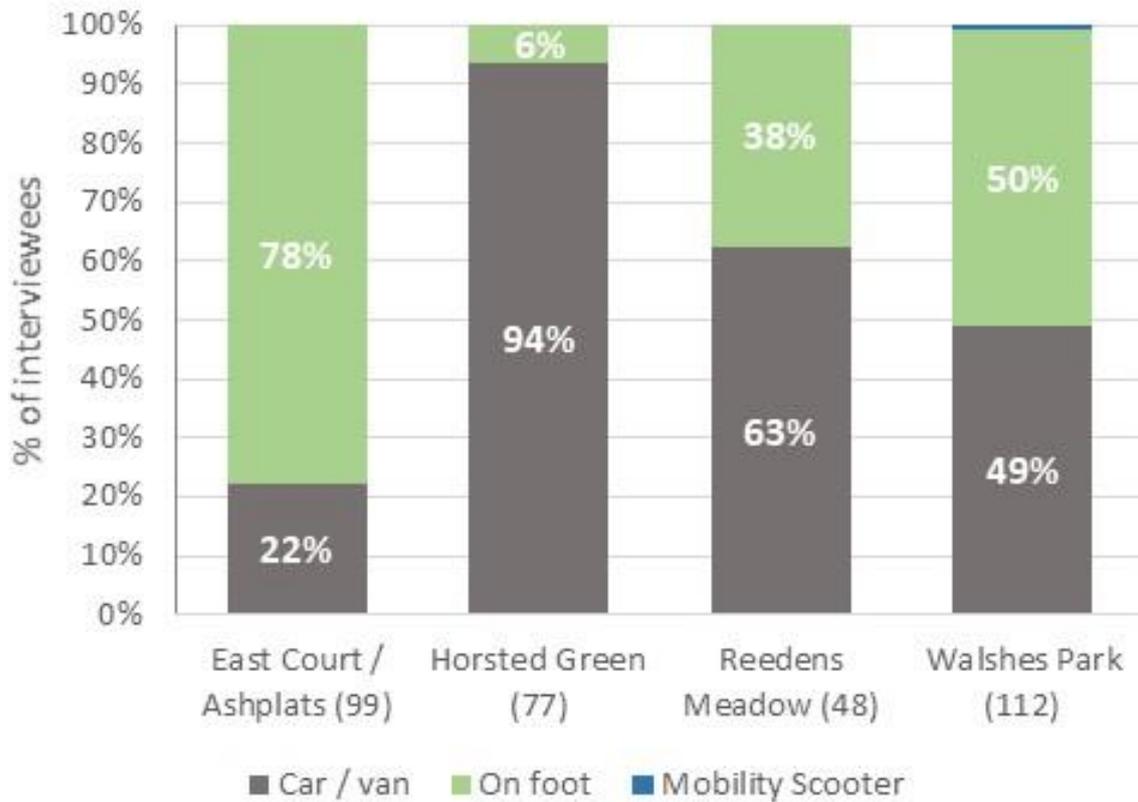


Figure 10: Number of interviewees by mode of transport and survey location. Labels give the % arriving by car and on foot at each survey location (from Q10).

3.26 Across all sites combined, there was some indication that those who were dog walkers tended to travel by car more compared to those who were walking. Of the 262 interviewees that gave dog walking as a main activity, 151 (59%) had travelled by car / van while for the 62 whose main activity was walking, 26 (42%) had travelled by car/van.

Routes taken on site (Q11-14)

3.27 Across all sites combined, most interviewees (253, 75%), stated that the route they had followed or intended to follow that day was similar to their usual route (Table 4). 42 interviewees (13%) stated that the route was

much shorter than normal while the route was much longer than normal for 7 (2%). The remaining interviewees were unsure, had no typical visit or were visiting for the first time. East Court / Ashplats was notable in that a relatively high proportion (16%) were unsure or didn't have a typical visit, while at Reedens Meadow and at Walshes Park a relatively high proportion (83% and 84% respectively) were following a route similar to their normal route.

Table 4: Number (%) of interviewees and responses to Q11, Is/was your route similar to your usual route when you visit here for [main activity being undertaken], by site.

Row Labels	East Court / Ashplats	Horsted Green	Reedens Meadow	Walshes Park	All sites
First visit	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (4)	1 (1)	4 (1)
Much longer than normal	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (2)	3 (3)	7 (2)
Much shorter than normal	17 (17)	15 (19)	4 (8)	6 (5)	42 (13)
Not sure / no typical visit	16 (16)	5 (6)	1 (2)	8 (7)	28 (8)
Yes, normal	64 (65)	55 (71)	40 (83)	94 (84)	253 (75)
Total	99 (100)	77 (100)	48 (100)	112 (100)	336 (100)

3.28 The majority of interviewees 228 (68%) stated that they stayed on paths during their visit and 103 interviewees (31%) stated that they went off paths. Reedens Meadow was notable (Figure 11) in that 96% of interviewees stated that they stayed on paths (or intended to stay on paths) during their visit.

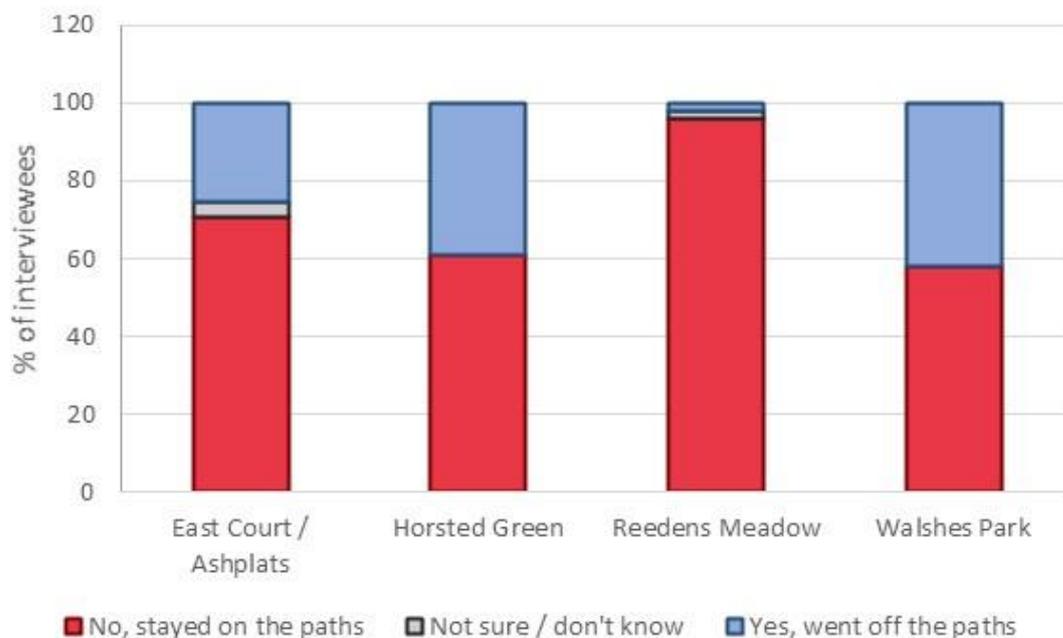


Figure 11: % of interviewees that stayed on paths or strayed from paths during their visit (from Q12) by site.

3.29 In total 334 routes were mapped as part of the interview. These are shown in Maps 3 and Map 4. Map 3 shows the raw data, with the intensity of the blue lines (light to dark blue) reflecting the number of lines intersecting. Map 4 summarises the route density based on a 200m grid. Across all interviewees the median route length was 1.92km and ranged from 0.35km to 4.96km (as mapped). Many of the routes extended outside the site boundary, and when clipped to the SANG boundary (i.e. indicating the length actually walked/ridden within the SANG) the median was 1.75km.

3.30 Route length data are summarised by site in Figure 12 and by activity (pooled across sites) in Figure 13. There were significant differences between sites (e.g. using clipped routes, Kruskal-Wallis $H=24.68$, 3 d.f., $p<0.001$), with the longest routes at Horsted Green and Walshes Park (median route length clipped to boundary 1.95km and 1.82km respectively). Comparing between activities (data pooled across sites), the median value for dog walkers was 1.81km and for walkers 1.60km.

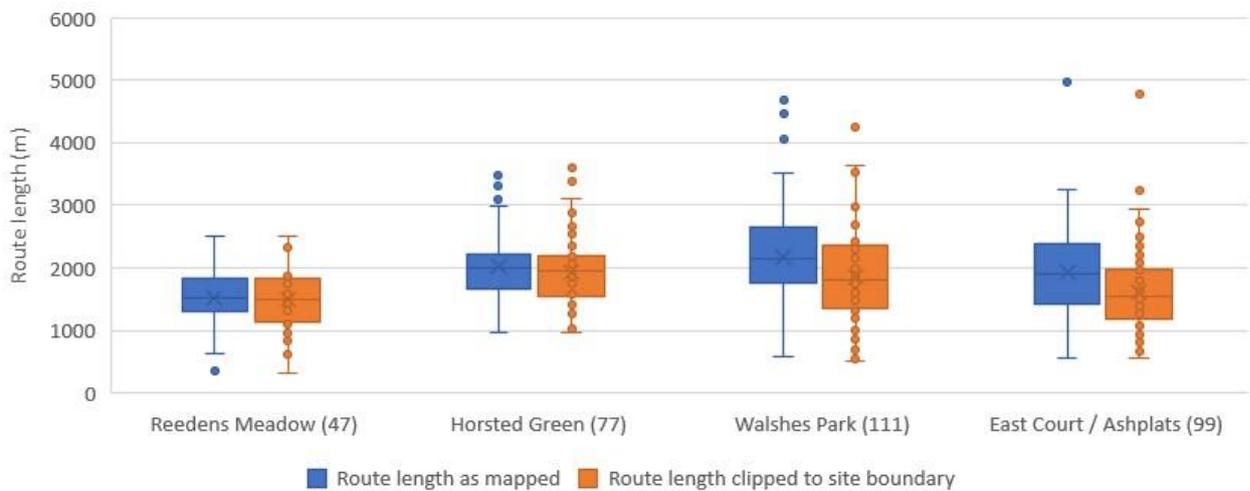


Figure 12: Route lengths (clipped to SANG boundary) by site. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range and the whiskers the maximum and minimum values. Numbers in brackets are the number of interviewee routes at each site.

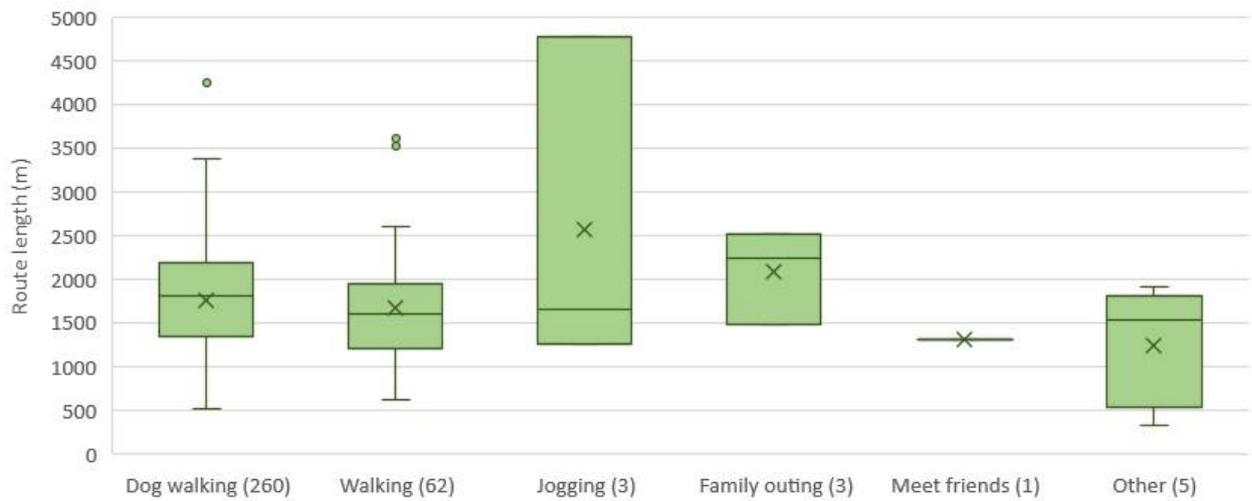


Figure 13: Route lengths (clipped to site boundary) by activity. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range and the whiskers the maximum and minimum values. Numbers in brackets are the number of routes for each activity type.

3.31 Factors influencing choice of route are summarised in Figure 14. The most common factor related to the activity undertaken and typically this related to the dog (cited by 95 interviewees, 28%). The second most commonly cited factor was previous knowledge of the area or previous experience (75 interviewees, 22%). Comparing between sites, previous knowledge of the area / experience was particularly relevant for those visiting Walshes Park (cited by 85% of the interviewees there) while maximising the route length featured particularly at Horsted Green (cited by 54% of interviewees at that site). The 'other' factors included a diverse range of reasons, including avoiding water, 'random', 'just wandering' and 'exploring'.

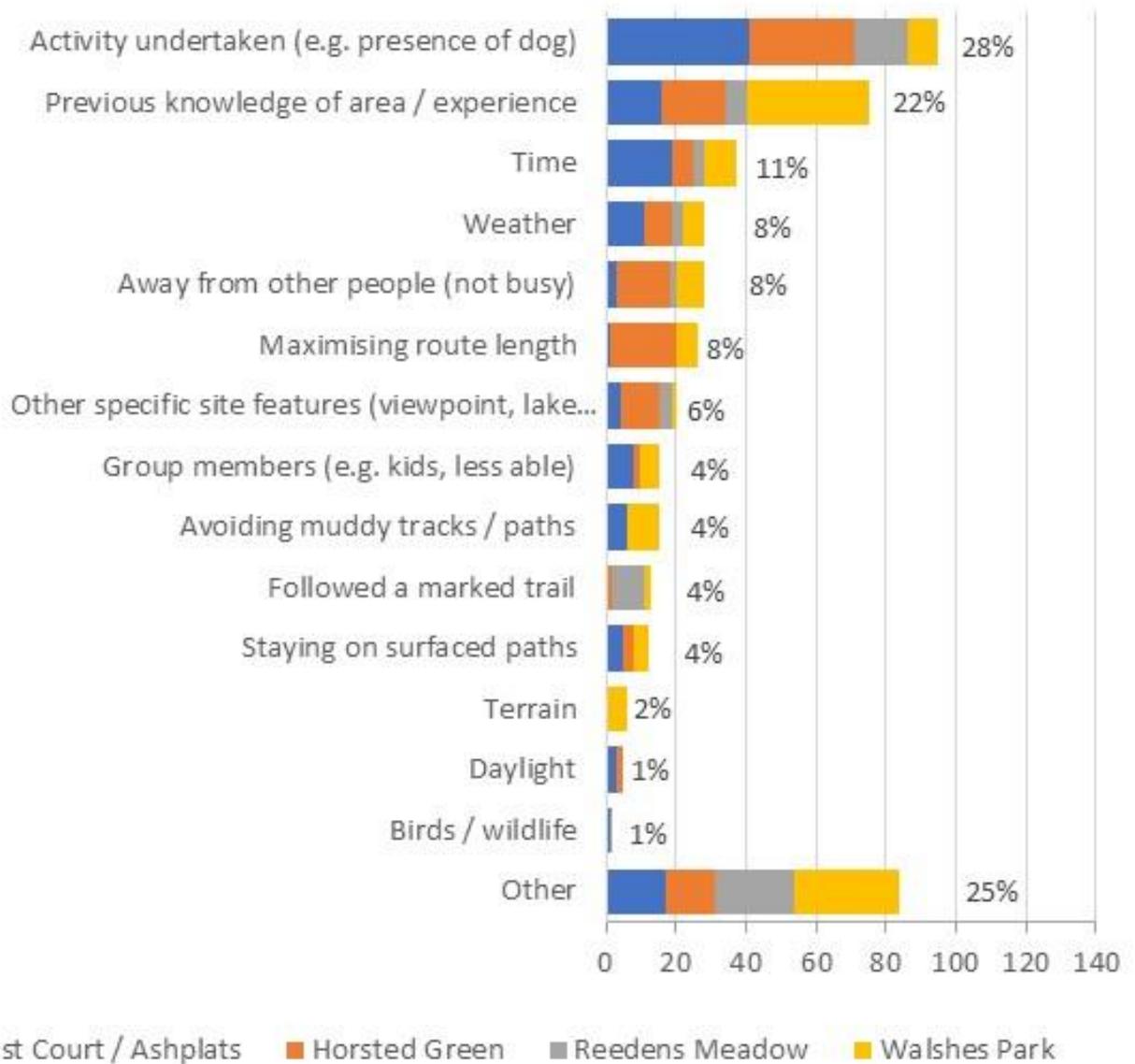
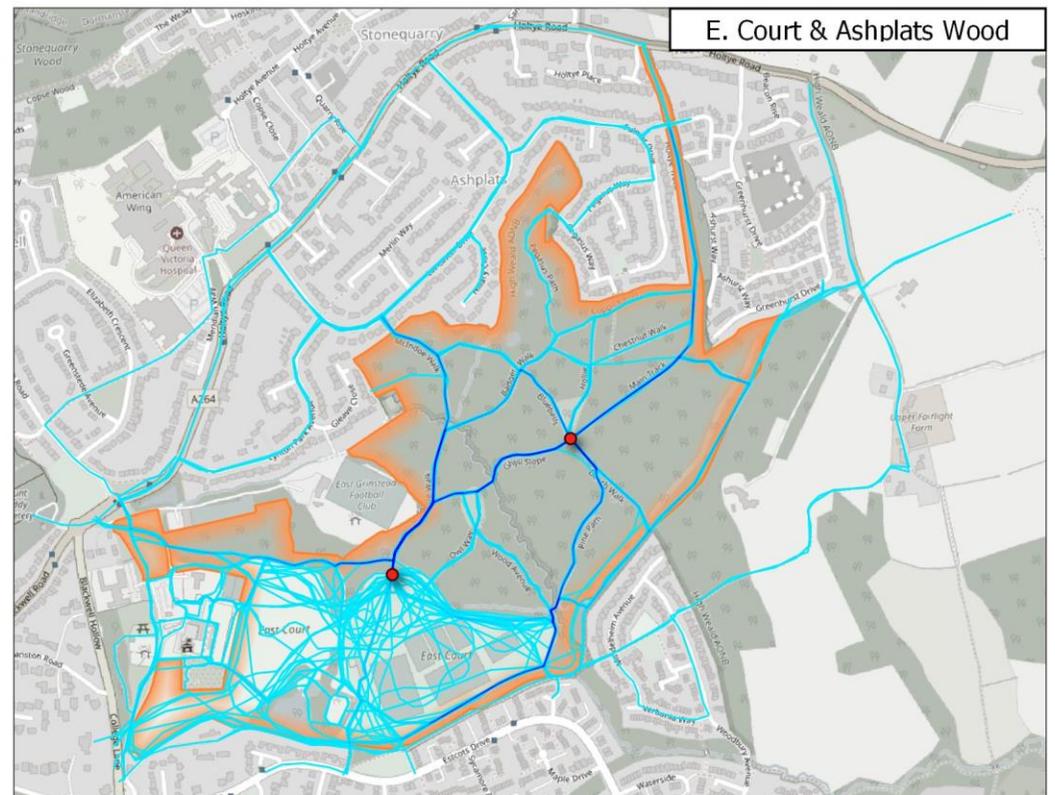
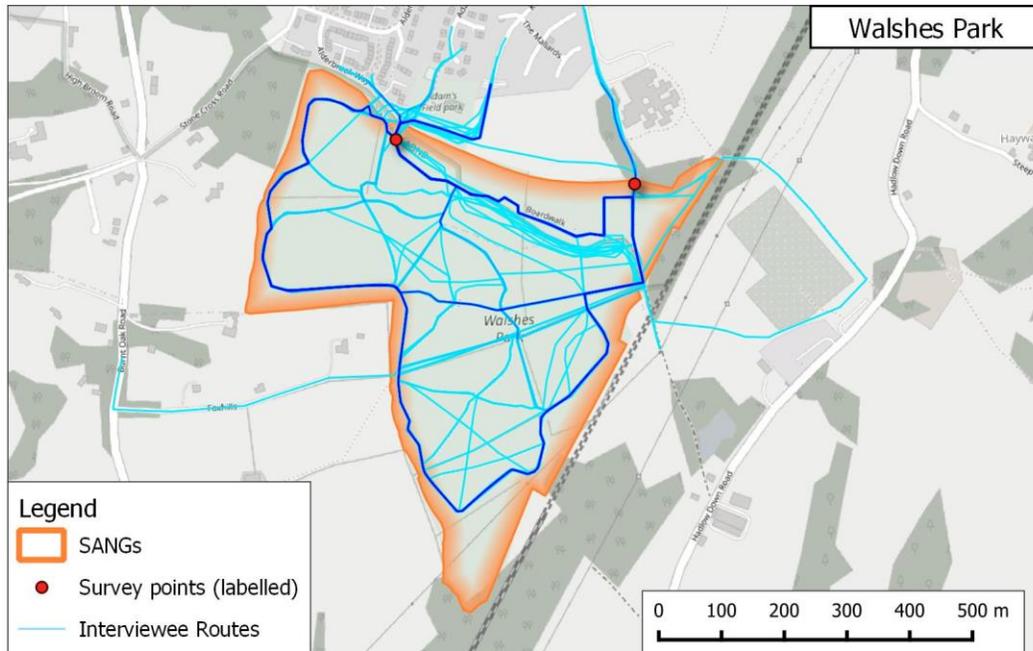
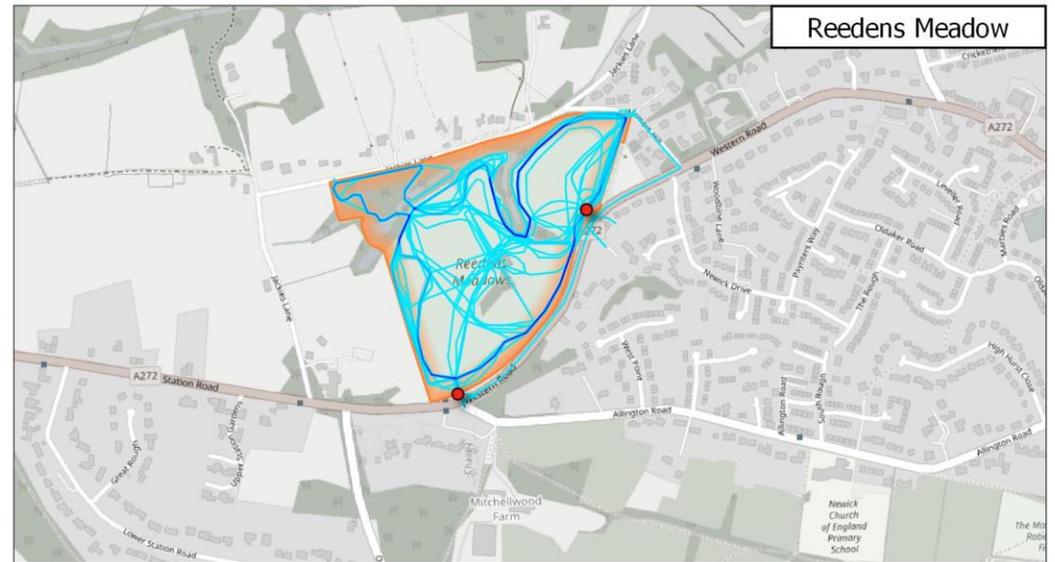
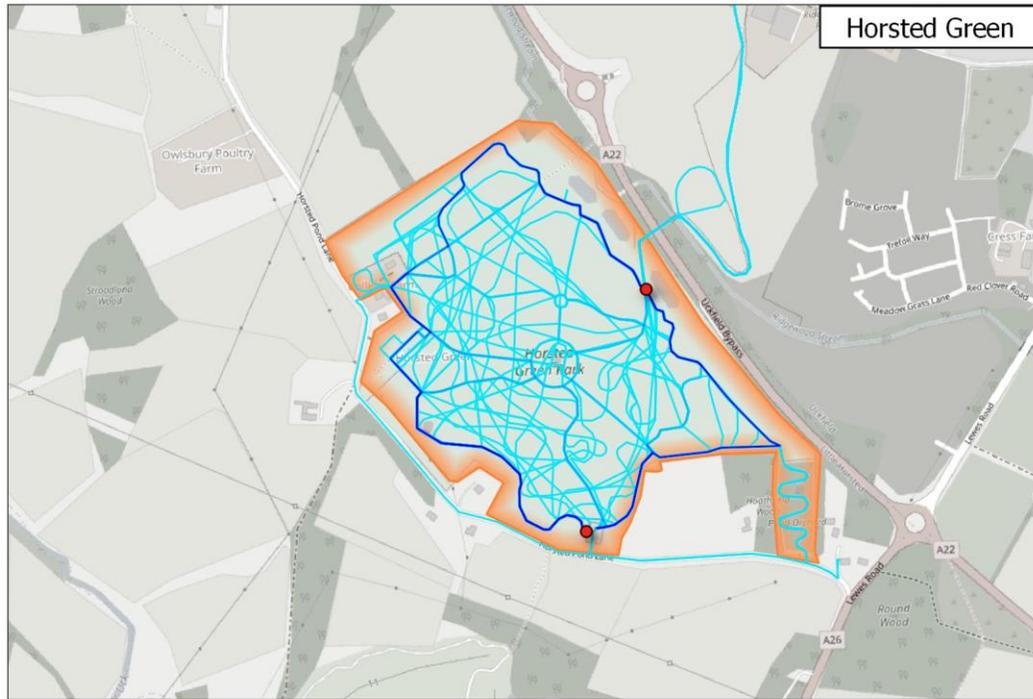


Figure 14: Factors influencing route choice (from Q13). Categories based on pre-determined list with additional categories added to include commonly cited 'other' responses recorded as free text and picked up after reviewing the data. Value labels give the overall percentage of interviewees who cited given factor. Interviewees could cite more than one factor and therefore percentages exceed 100.

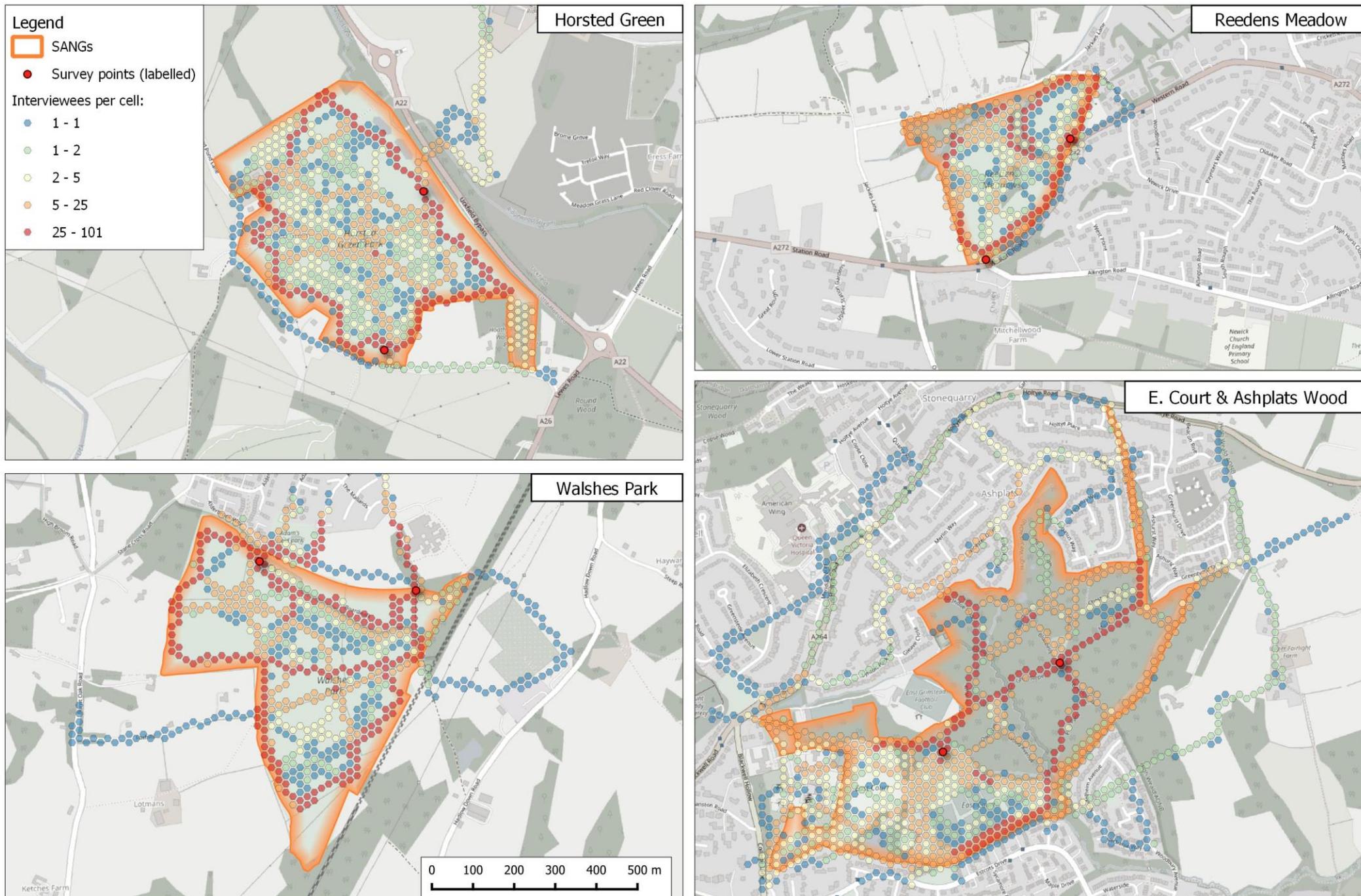
Map 3: Interviewee route lines, with darker colours to indicate heavily overlapping routes.



- Legend**
- SANGs
 - Survey points (labelled)
 - Interviewee Routes



Map 4: Interviewee route lines summarised using a 20m hexagonal grid used to show route density and quantify the number of routes per cell.



Reasons for choice of location (Q14)

3.32 Interviewees gave a wide range of reasons for choosing to visit the location where interviewed rather than another location (Figure 15); close to home was however the most common reason, cited by half of all interviewees (167 interviewees, 50%). The second most common reason related to the site being good for the dog/dog enjoys it.

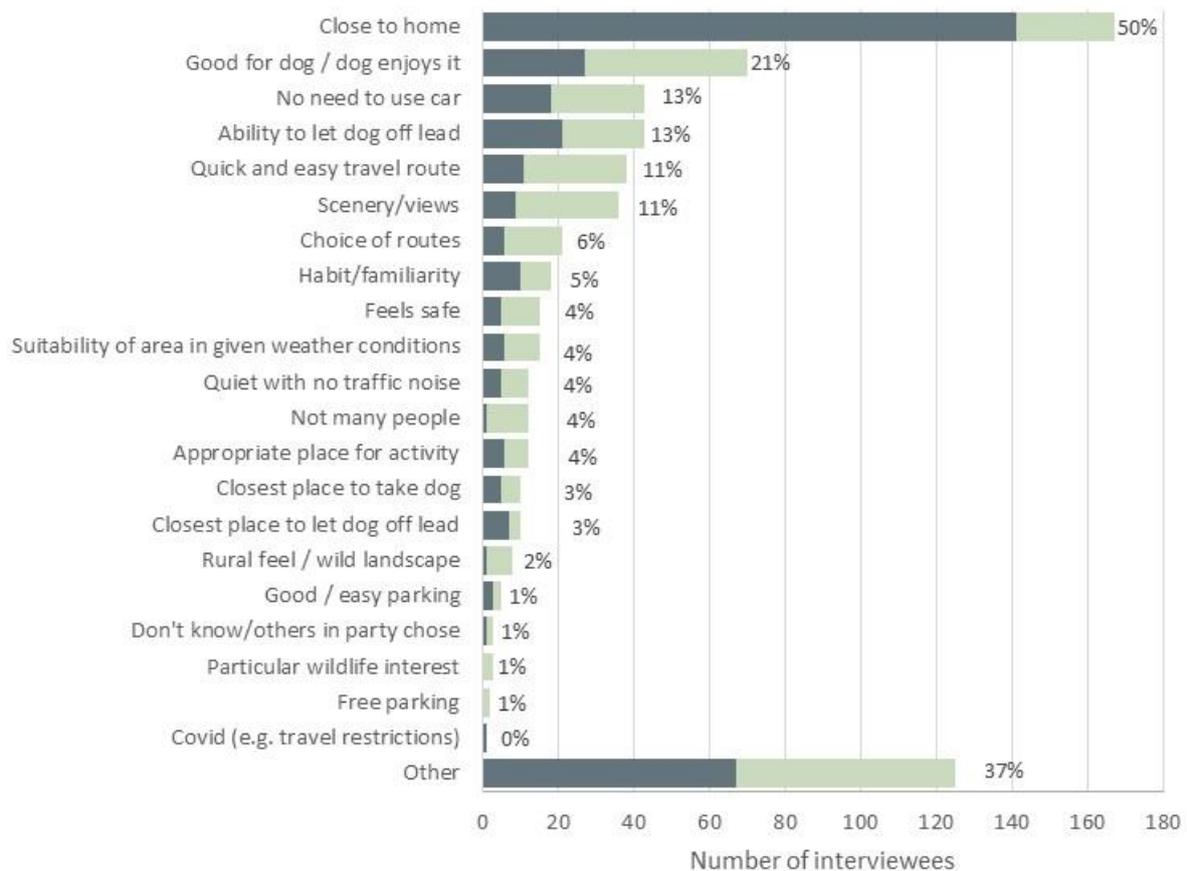


Figure 15: Reasons for visiting the specific location where interviewed that day rather than somewhere else (Q14). Interviewees were asked for one main reason and could give multiple other reasons. Responses categorised by surveyor. Value labels give the percentage of all interviewees who cited the reason (main or other).

3.33 From a review of the free text responses relating to 'other' reasons it was clear that convenience was a key factor, with 12 interviewees (3%) specifically mentioning convenience or referring to the ease of visiting in relation to their lifestyle, for example 4 interviewees at East Court/Ashplats included a walk in their school run. For 25 interviewees (7%) the 'other' reasons related to the dog and related to specific site

attributes such as water for swimming (5 interviewees, 1%), secure for the dog (5 interviewees, 1%) or the absence of livestock (3 interviewees, 1%).

- 3.34 Reasons for site choice by site are shown in Figure 16. It can be seen that proximity to home was the commonest reason given at all sites, but was less commonly cited at Horsted Green compared to the other locations (cited by 39% of interviewees at Horsted Green and by at least 50% of interviewees at other sites).

Ashdown Forest SANGs Visitor Survey 2021

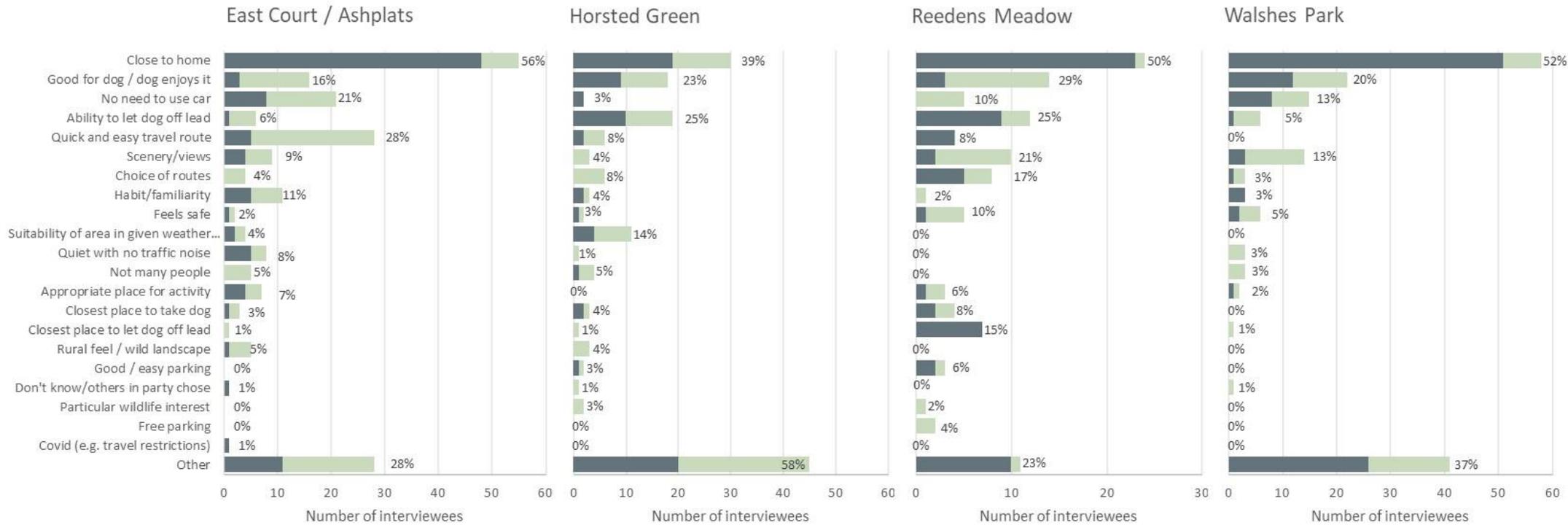


Figure 16: Reasons for visiting the specific location where interviewed that day rather than somewhere else (Q14). Interviewees were asked for one main reason and could give multiple other reasons. Responses categorised by surveyor and ranking is the same as in the previous figure. Value labels give the percentage of all interviewees who cited the reason (main or other) at each site.

Alternative locations visited (Q15-17)

3.35 When asked about alternative locations that they would have visited that day if they couldn't visit the location where the interview took place, 292 interviewees (87%) named a site (Table 5).

Table 5: Number (%) of interviewees by site naming alternative locations (from Q15).

Site	Not sure / don't know	Nowhere / wouldn't have visited anywhere	Site named	Total
East Court / Ashplats	5 (5)	6 (6)	88 (89)	99 (100)
Horsted Green	3 (4)	7 (9)	67 (87)	77 (100)
Reedens Meadow	7 (15)	5 (10)	36 (75)	48 (100)
Walshes Park	3 (3)	8 (7)	101 (90)	112 (100)
All sites	32 (10)	26 (8)	292 (87)	336 (100)

3.36 The list of alternatives – as given by the interviewees – was reviewed and standardised to give a specific site where possible. For example, some responses were likely to be the same location but given different names – for example “Seven Sisters” and “Cuckmere Haven”. For some locations, such as “South Coast” or “Seafront” or “the Down” no specific site was assigned.

3.37 Interviewees were asked to give one single location and then up to two additional locations. Ashdown Forest was by far the most commonly named alternative location (Figure 17), named by nearly half (149 interviewees, 47%) interviewed. Of these, 85 interviewees (25%) named Ashdown Forest first.

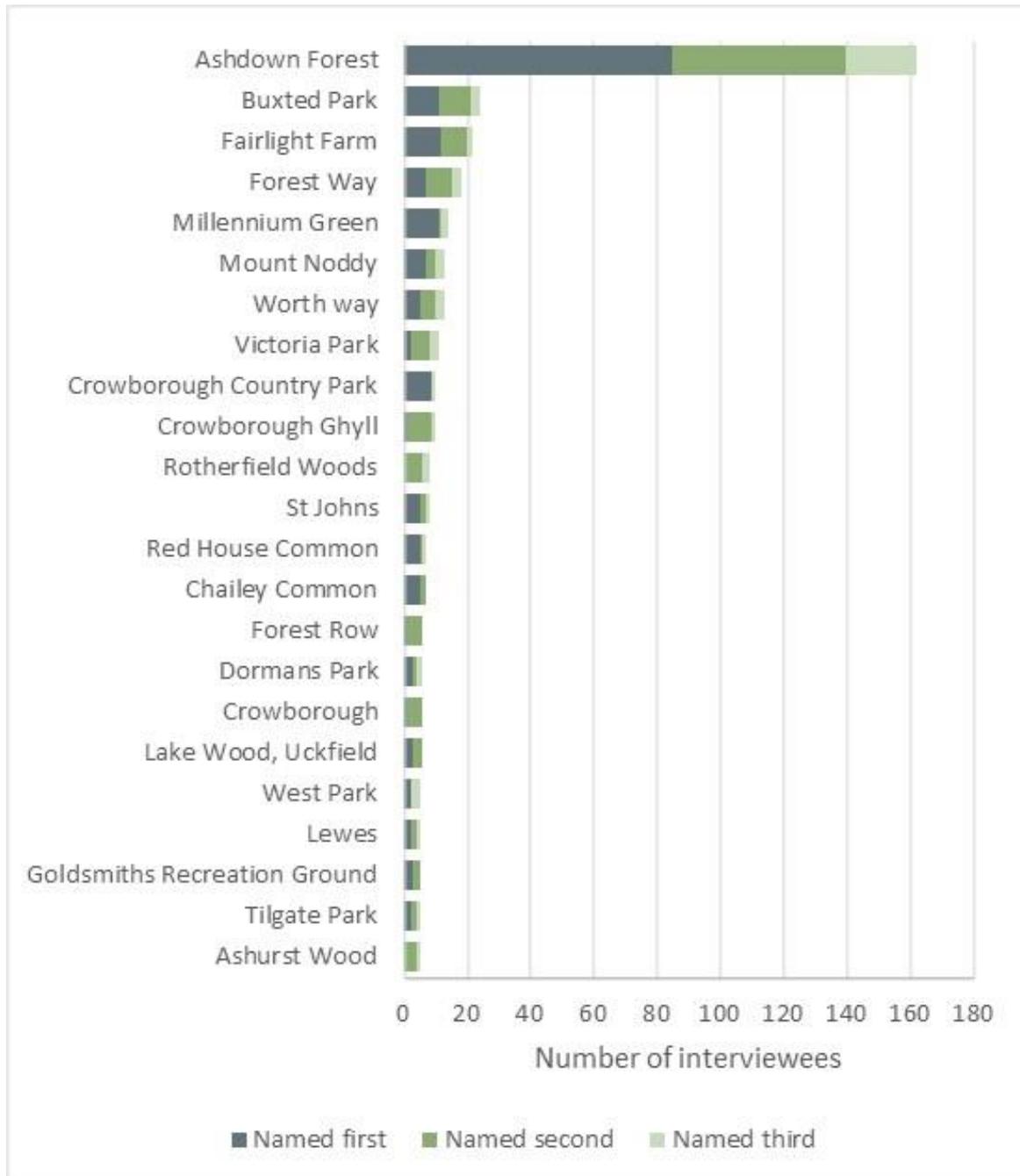


Figure 17: Alternative locations named by interviewees. All sites named by at least 5 interviewees are listed. From Q15-Q17.

3.38 There were some differences between sites (Table 6, Figure 18), with only 5 interviewees (10%) at Reedens Meadow mentioning Ashdown Forest while 77 interviewees (69%) at Walshes Park mentioned Ashdown Forest. Reedens Meadow was the only SANG site where Ashdown Forest was not the most commonly named alternative (it ranked third, after Chailey Common and Red House Common).

Table 6: Number (%) of interviewees who gave Ashdown Forest as an alternative location they would visit, by site. Data from Q15-Q17).

	Total interviews conducted	Ashdown Forest first named site	Ashdown Forest second named site	Ashdown Forest third named site	Ashdown Forest named
East Court / Ashplats	99	19 (19)	14 (14)	6 (6)	39 (39)
Horsted Green	77	11 (14)	19 (25)	8 (10)	38 (49)
Reedens Meadow	48	2 (4)	2 (4)	1 (2)	5 (10)
Walshes Park	112	53 (47)	18 (16)	6 (5)	77 (69)
All sites	336	85 (25)	53 (16)	21 (6)	159 (47)

East Court/Ashplats

- Ashdown Forest (39%)
- Fairlight Farm (22%)
- Forest Way (18%)
- Worth Way (13%)
- Mount Noddy (13%)

Horsted Green

- Ashdown Forest (49%)
- Buxted Park (31%)
- Millennium Green (18%)
- Victoria Park (12%)
- Lake Wood, Uckfield (8%)

Reedens Meadow

- Chailey Common (15%)
- Red House Common, Lewes (15%)
- Ashdown Forest (10%)
- Lane End Common (6%)
- Memorial Common (6%)

Walshes Park

- Ashdown Forest (69%)
- Crowborough Ghyll (9%)
- Crowborough Country Park (8%)
- Rotherfield Woods (7%)
- St Johns (7%)

Figure 18: Top five alternative locations named at each SANG. From Q15-Q17.

Information used to plan visit (Q21)

3.39 Few interviewees stated that any information or recommendations had helped them plan their visit on the day of the interview (Table 7), and it was clear from the free text responses to Q17 that many visitors knew the sites well from visiting for many years and didn't need information to plan their visit. This was particularly the case at East Court / Ashplats where no interviewees had used any information to plan their visit.

3.40 Where interviewees had used information/recommendations, word of mouth was the most common source (21 interviewees across all sites, 6%), and was particularly relevant at Horsted Green (11 interviewees, 14%) and Reedens Meadow (9 interviewees, 19%). For those interviewees who provided specific details about the word of mouth recommendation, 2 different interviewees specifically mentioned their dog trainer, while others included family members and friends. For the 3 interviewees that had used the internet, Google Maps and Facebook were the websites referred to.

Table 7: Number (%) of interviewees at each site and information/recommendations used to plan the visit that day (from Q21).

Information source	East Court / Ashplats	Horsted Green	Reedens Meadow	Walshes Park	Total
Word of mouth recommendation	0 (0)	11 (14)	9 (19)	1 (1)	21 (6)
Internet/website	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4)	1 (1)	2 (1)
Interpretation board in car park/signs at entrance	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Information from housing developer	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Changes in how sites are managed for access (Q22)

3.41 Interviewees identified a number of changes they would like to see at each site as to how they are managed for access. Interviewee's responses were categorised by the surveyor into a number of pre-determined categories and additional information recorded as free-text responses.

3.42 The categorised responses are shown in Figure 19. It can be seen that more dog bins were the most common change across all sites combined (mentioned by 74 interviewees, 22%) and were frequently cited at all sites. Improvements to path surfacing was the second most commonly cited change (43 interviewees, 12%), and was particularly cited by those at East Court/Ashplats (29 interviewees, 29%). The other site-specific issue related to more parking at Horsted Green, where the change was identified by 12 interviewees (16%).

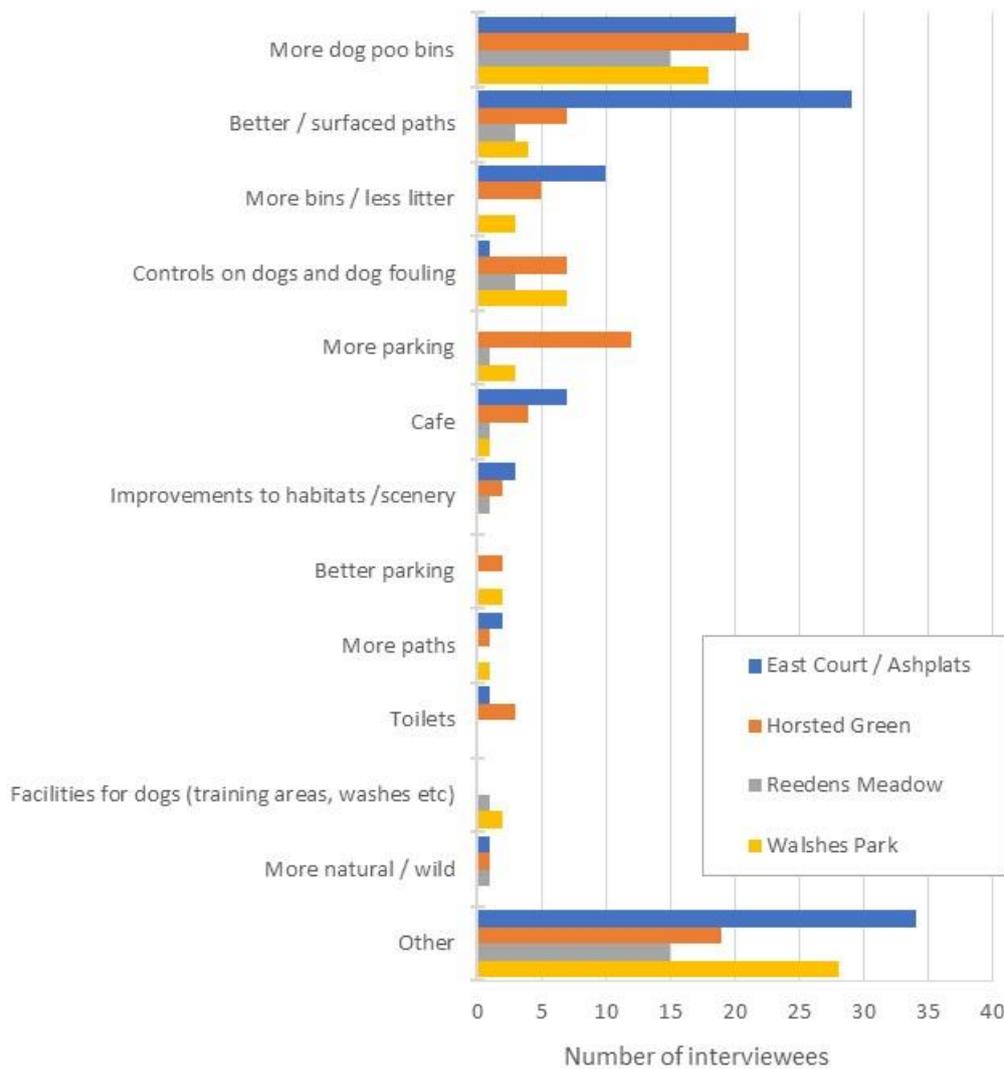


Figure 19: Changes interviewees would like to see as to how each site is managed for access. Data from Q22. Figure shows responses as categorised by the surveyor using pre-determined categories.

3.43 Free-text responses provided further details or ‘other’ changes that did not fit with the pre-determined categories. These free-text responses are listed for each site in Appendices 2-5 and the appendices differentiate between those comments made by those interviewees who stated they also visit Ashdown Forest (who are a target audience for the SANGs).

3.44 Selected key points from the free text responses include:

- Concerns were raised by 7 interviewees at East Court / Ashplats about the steps, which need repair/improvements.
- Muddy paths were identified by 9 interviewees as an issue they would like to see improved at East Court / Ashplats.
- Cutting back vegetation around the paths was identified by 7 interviewees at East Court / Ashplats.

- Other suggestions at East Court / Ashplats identified by small numbers of interviewees were: addressing anti-social behaviour, concerns about litter and need for litter bins (although one interviewee also mentioned that they see lots of litter pickers), water quality in the ponds/stream and more/better signposts and waymarking.
- At Horsted Green, additional dog bins and parking dominated changes requested. With respect to parking, the changes requested included additional parking provision (a second car park), and better marked bays. At least 2 interviewees stated they had been unable to park at times because the car park was full.
- 2 interviewees wished to see camper vans stopped from using Horsted Green overnight;
- At Horsted Green 3 interviewees wanted to see changes to the paths and surfacing which they stated have deteriorated over time.
- Other changes at Horsted Green included opening up the site to professional dog walkers (1 interviewee), more cutting of the paths/wildflower areas (after flowering) (3 interviewees), additional water taps (2 interviewees) and seating (1 interviewee).
- At Reedens Meadow a common theme (responses from 9 interviewees) related to safety around the road, with concerns identified relating to dogs running onto the road and road crossings for pedestrians. Changes suggested included more secure gates, better fencing, reduced speed limits etc.
- 5 interviewees identified a need for changes in management relating to dog fouling, with suggestions for new bins, more emptying of existing bins and information on responsible dog walking.
- At Walshes Park, the entry points were a common theme, with a range of comments relating to a pinch-point at the main entrance where people sometimes have to queue and the need to put dogs on a lead when moving from the car park to the gate (past the playground). One interviewee had failed to find the car park (which is separated from the entrance).
- Making the boundaries secure for dogs were a change suggested by 5 interviewees, with suggestions also for a dedicated fenced area for dogs to run loose.
- Changes to the paths at Walshes Park included addressing the slippery boardwalk (particularly near main entrance) (3 interviewees) and some mention of gravelled paths being washed away by rain (3 interviewees).

Visitor origins (home postcodes) (Q18-20)

3.45 A total of 319 interviewees (95%) gave full valid postcodes that could be plotted in GIS. For each interviewee postcode the linear distance was calculated from the home postcode to the survey point at which the interview took place. Data are summarised for different types of visitor in Table 8. The distances range from 121m to 316km, with half of all interviewees giving home postcodes within 1.16km of the survey location and 75% originated within 2.10km.

Table 8: Summary statistics for different groups of interviewees and the distance from the survey point to home postcode (km).

	Category	N	Mean (\pm 1 SE)	Range	Median	Q3
	All interviewees	319	3.90 (+1.17)	0.12-315.71	1.16	2.10
Visit type	Day trip/short visit from home	314	2.25 (+0.24)	0.12-52.7	1.14	2.08
Main Activity	Dog walking	250	3.2 (+0.82)	0.12-193.19	1.17	2.21
	Walking	58	7.09 (+5.42)	0.12-315.71	1.25	1.92
Visit frequency	Daily	73	1.09 (+0.11)	0.12-4.95	0.76	1.48
	Most days	74	1.33 (+0.18)	0.12-9.39	0.83	1.7
	1-3x per week	24	4.52 (+1.06)	0.45-14.44	2.18	2.08
	2-3x per month	24	4.52 (+1.06)	0.45-16.68	2.18	6.97
	Once a month	14	7.58 (+3.7)	1.01-52.69	1.84	16.68
Site	East Court / Ashplats	97	4.61 (+3.25)	0.25-315.71	0.71	1.04
	Horsted Green	73	6.97 (+2.71)	0.66-193.19	2.21	4.55
	Reedens Meadow	46	2.69 (+0.47)	0.12-11.07	0.69	4.81
	Walshes Park	103	1.59 (+0.23)	0.12-16.68	1.18	1.68

3.46 Maps 5-8 show the postcode data – by visit type (Map 5), by main activity (Map 6) and by site (Map 7). In Map 5 the inset shows the whole postcode data with the exception of two outliers: a single postcode near Coventry and one near Chichester. Map 8 includes voronois drawn around the SANGs and Ashdown Forest. The voronois define the area that is closer to each SANG rather than Ashdown Forest. Therefore, any postcodes that are in the orange shaded area (representing the voronois for the SANGs) are closer to a SANG than they are to Ashdown Forest. The interviewee postcodes outside the orange voronois are therefore people who live closer to Ashdown Forest rather than a SANG (yet have still chosen to visit the SANG).

3.47 The maps show a clear cluster of use around each SANG, highlighting relatively local use, for example East Court /Ashplats is visited

predominantly by those living in the nearby parts of East Grinstead while Walshes Park draws visitors primarily from the adjacent parts of Crowborough. The voronois highlight that the SANGs predominantly draw visitors who live closer to the SANGs than they do to Ashdown Forest, however there are residents from the north side of Crowborough, Nutley and Maresfield who visit the SANGs despite Ashdown Forest being closer to where they live.

3.48 The differences between the sites are also shown in Figure 20. As the figure shows, there were significant differences between SANGs in the distances from home postcode to survey location (Kruskal-Wallis $H=69.89$, 3 d.f., $p<0.001$) with Horsted Green drawing visitors from the furthest afield (median 2.21km) and Reedens Meadow have the smallest draw (median = 0.69km).

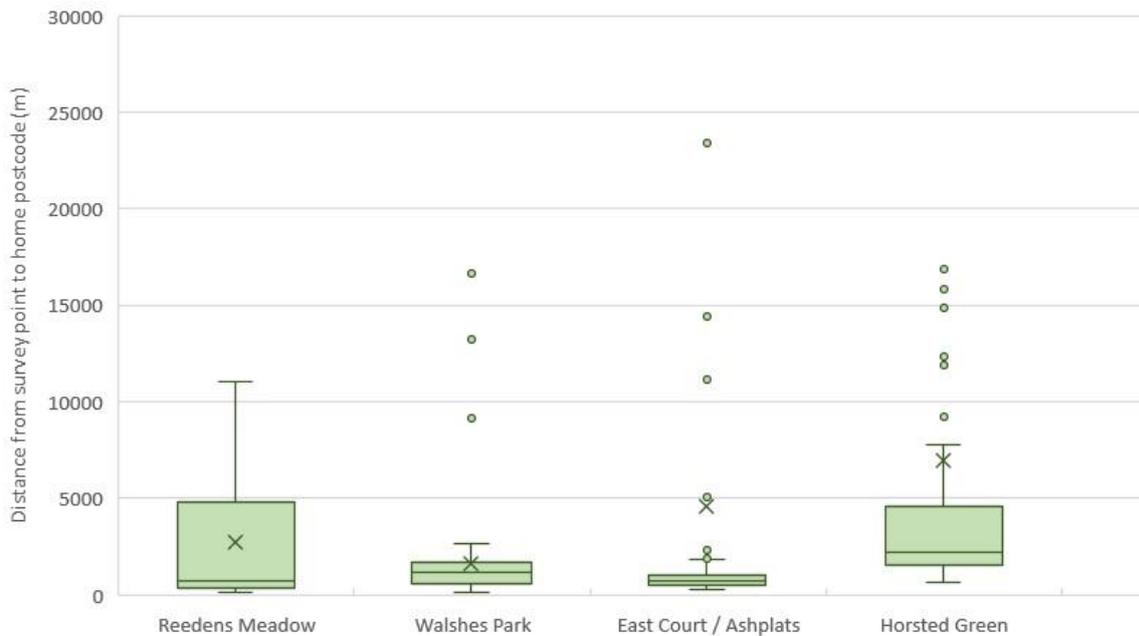
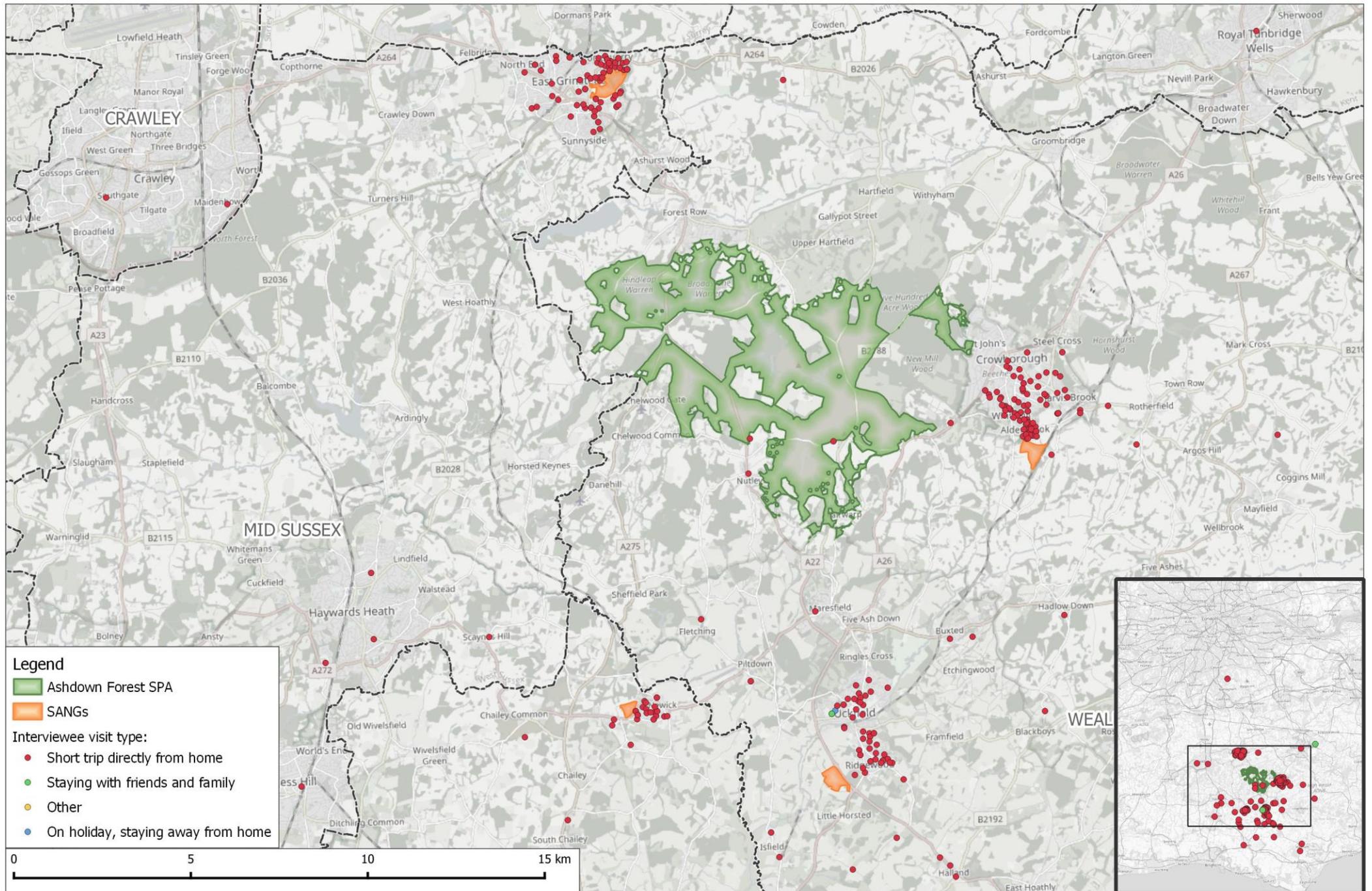
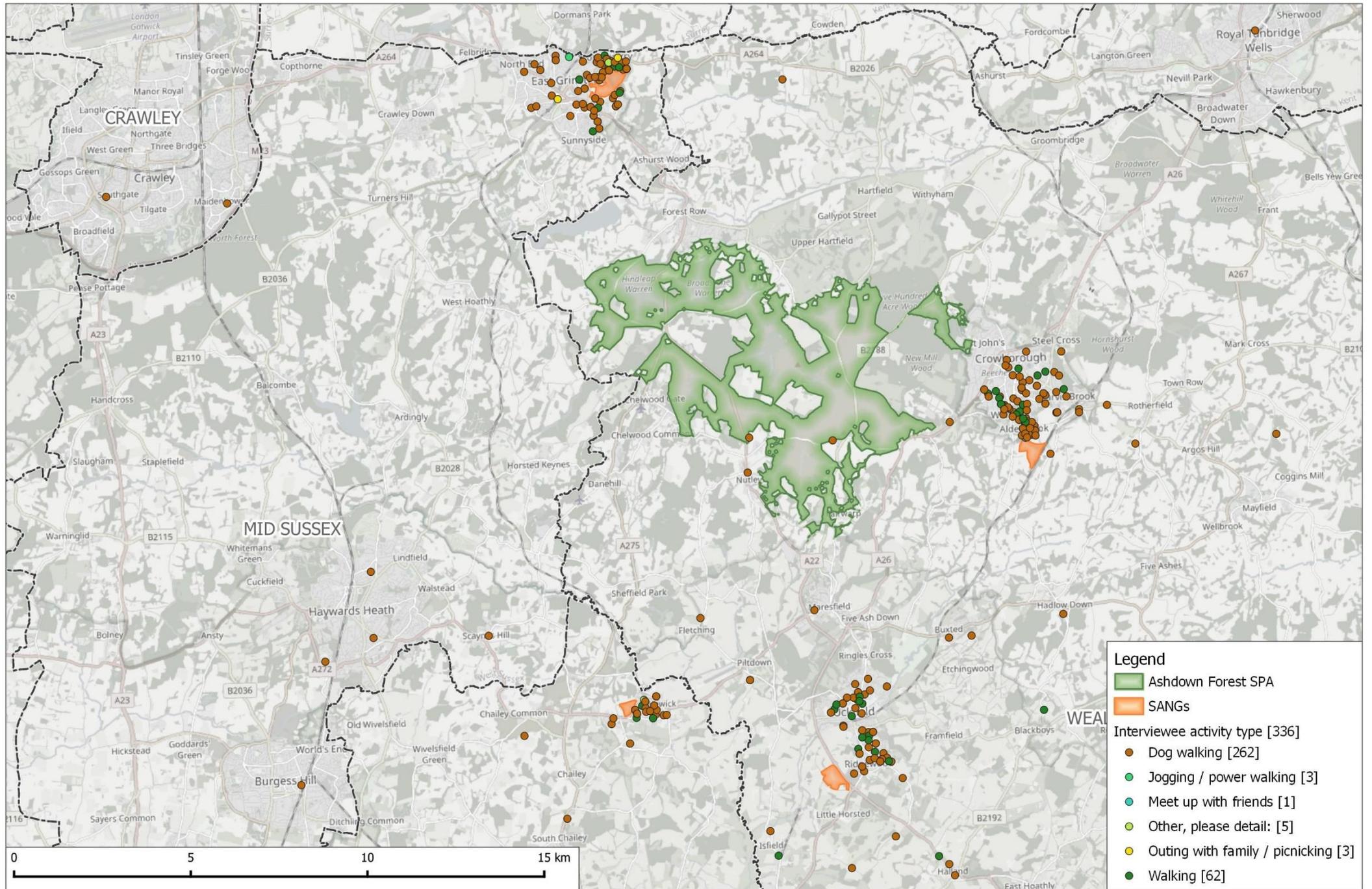


Figure 20: Distances from interviewee home postcode to survey location, by SANG. Horizontal lines show the median, crosses indicate the mean, the boxes show the interquartile range and the whiskers the maximum and minimum values. Note the y axis is truncated and three outlier values fall beyond the scale as shown.

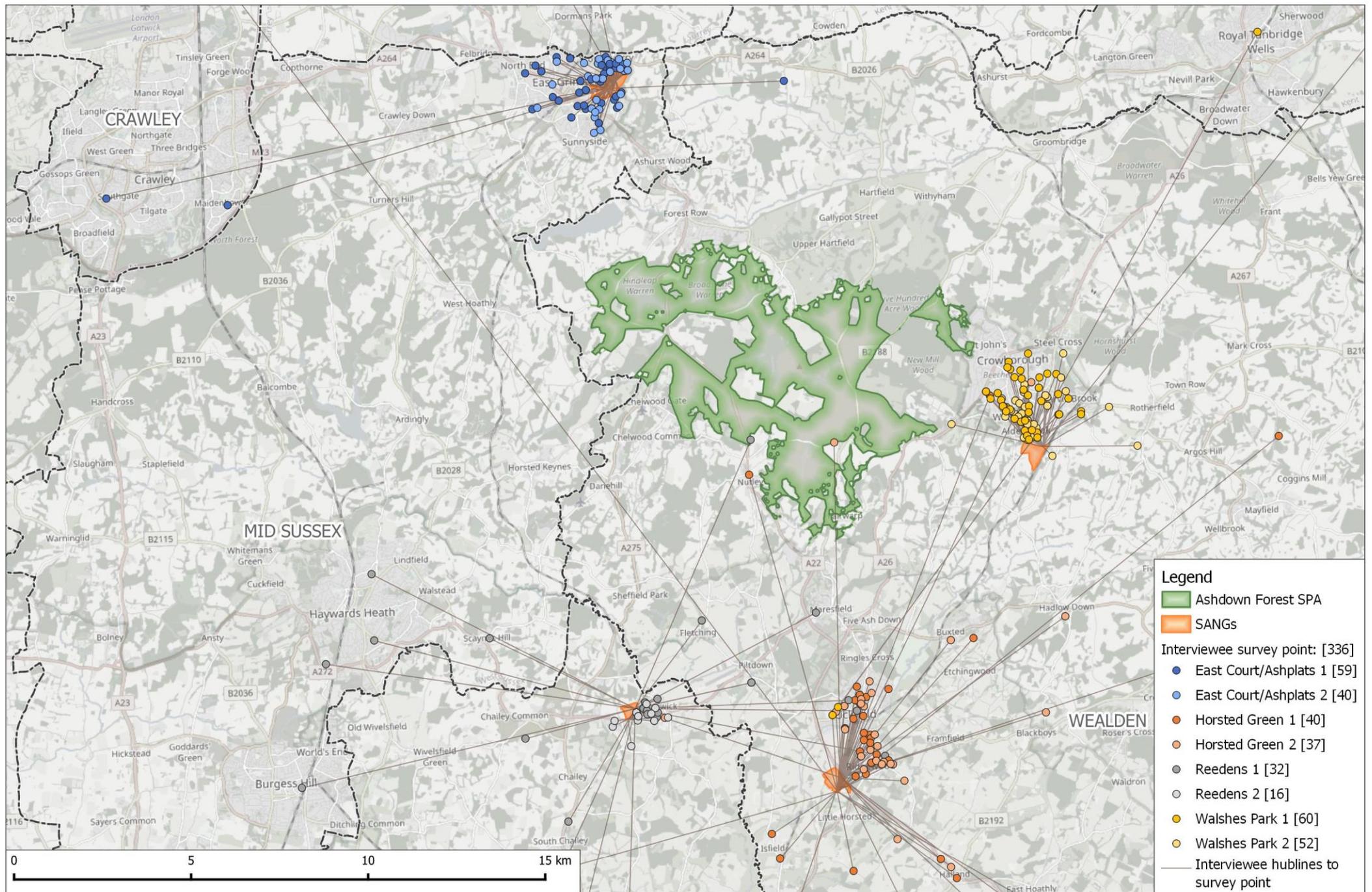
Map 5: Interviewee postcodes, by visit type.



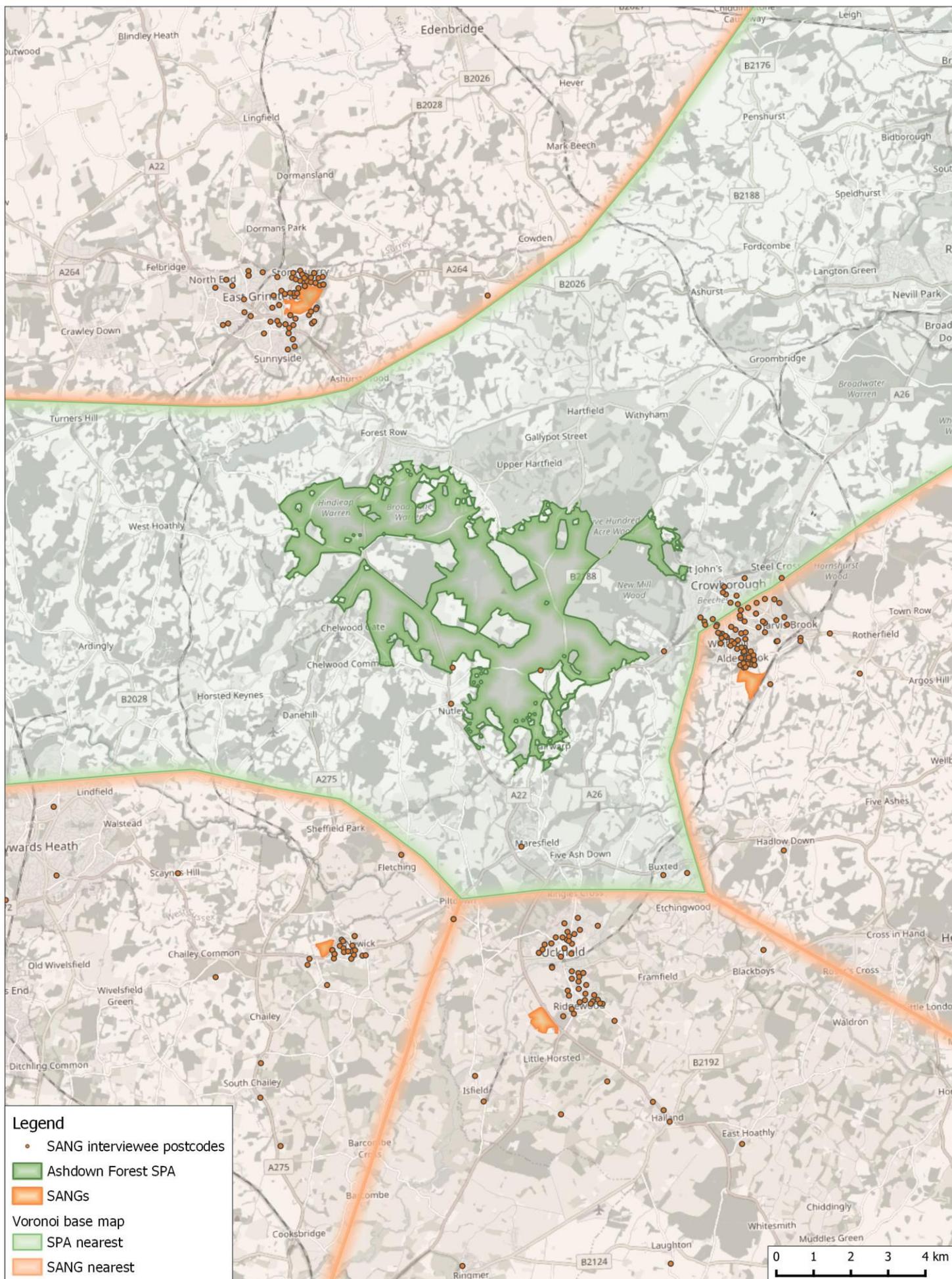
Map 6 : Interviewee postcodes, by main activity.



Map 7: Interviewee postcodes, by survey point with hublines drawn between postcode and survey point.



Map 8: SANG visitor survey postcodes and voronoi polygons to show which areas are closer to the SANG than the SPA.



4. Visitor Count Results (from the tallies)

- 4.1 Tally data are summarised in Table 9. In total, 544 groups were noted entering across all the survey points and 590 groups leaving. In addition, 237 groups were counted passing the surveyors (e.g. where the surveyor was standing inside a site). Those passing could include those that entered the SANG at a different point, for example at Horsted Green 2, the northern survey point near the underpass, a total of 114 people were counted passing and just 8 groups entered the site here (via the underpass) and 9 groups left. At this survey point the 114 are therefore likely to have all entered the site at the car park. Similarly, the 10 people counted passing at the survey point at East Court and Ashplats 1 were people who had passed by, for example walking from the East Court House direction. At East Court and Ashplats 2 the survey point was in the middle of the woods, at a major path junction and therefore all the people there (99 groups) were passing, as it is impossible to enter or leave at that location.
- 4.2 The busiest location in terms of the number of groups entering or passing was Walshes Park 1, just inside the SANG by the main entrance point at that site. A total of 182 groups (264 people) were counted entering or passing here – equivalent to 11.4 groups or 16.5 people per hour (16 hours of survey work).
- 4.3 Drawing solely from the combined data of people passing and people entering at each location, the total number of groups was 781 and total people was 1210, giving a typical group size of 1.5 people. 825 dogs were counted entering or passing and 189 minors, meaning an average group contained 1.1 dogs and 0.24 children.

Ashdown Forest SANGs Visitor Survey 2021

Table 9: Summary of tally data. Entering are those starting their visit at the survey point (e.g. parking at given car park); those leaving are those exiting the site at the given location (e.g. returning to cars) and passing through are those that pass the surveyor having not started at that location, e.g. a mountain bike or walker that passes through a car park.

Survey point	Entering					Leaving					Passing through				
	Groups	Head count people inc minors	Total dogs	Total minors	Total bikes	Groups	Head count people inc minors	Total dogs	Total minors	Total bikes	Groups	Head count people inc minors	Total dogs	Total minors	Total bikes
East Court & Ashplats 1	85	148	46	69	3	107	165	70	67	2	10	12	5	0	0
East Court & Ashplats 2											99	174	107	50	0
Horsted Green 1	157	248	192	12	0	157	253	188	19	1	1	1	1	0	0
Horsted Green 2	8	9	6	0	0	8	9	4	0	0	114	176	137	10	0
Reedens Meadow 1	52	72	66	3	0	46	65	65	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reedens Meadow 2	25	34	29	2	0	22	28	21	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Walshes Park 1	169	240	176	23	0	173	266	175	31	0	13	24	8	6	0
Walshes Park 2	48	72	52	14	0	77	139	79	21	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	544	823	567	123	3	590	925	602	142	5	237	387	258	66	0

- 4.4 Tally data are shown in Figure 21 split by weekday and weekend day and by survey point. The data shown broadly represent the total numbers entering the sites. For most sites these data are simply the totals logged as entering at each of the survey points (as the survey points covered the main access points onto each site). At East Court / Ashplats there are many more entry points than the other sites and one of the survey points was inside the site at a major path junction (i.e. all people were passing); and at the other, people were counted as entering if coming from the car park, but there were also people passing that had entered at additional entry points. As such this site is more complex and the totals therefore reflect the number of people entering and passing combined. The totals at that site do therefore need to be treated with some caution as it is not possible to work out how many people might pass both survey points and, given the number of entry points, it is also possible for people to enter the site and walk round it without passing either of the survey locations.
- 4.5 It is interesting to note from Figure 21 that the SANGs sites are reasonably busy on both weekdays and weekends and both Horsted Green and Reedens Meadow tend to be busier on weekdays compared to weekend days.

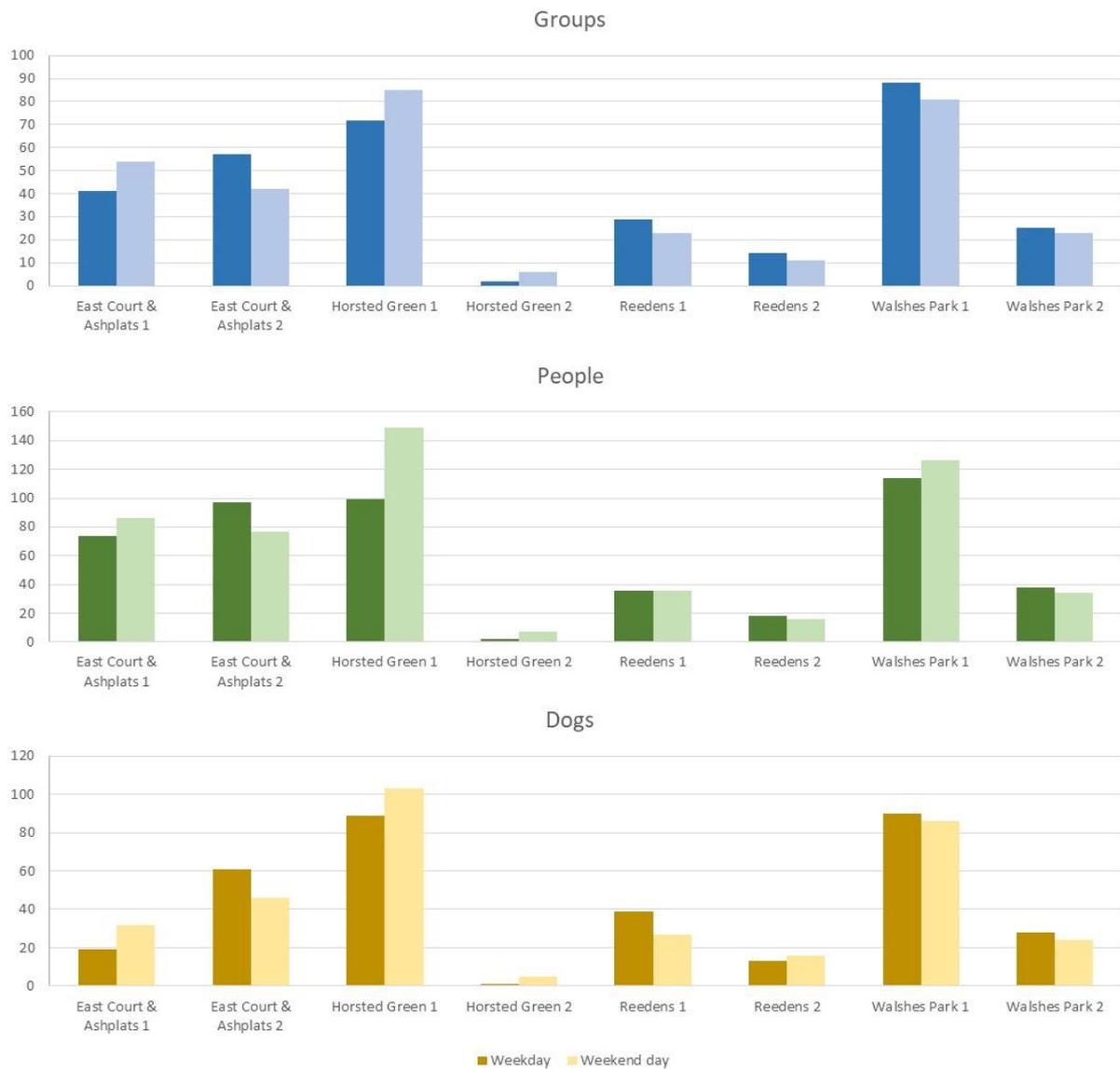


Figure 21: Tally count data by weekday (always the darker shading) and weekend day for people entering (or entering and passing at East Court / Ashplats), by survey point.

4.6 The tally data are also summarised by SANG in Figure 22, which shows the same data but combined for each SANG and expressed as an estimate of the total visitor rate at each site (using the amount of survey effort at each location – 16 hours). Noting the caveats made earlier, the figure indicates that East Court / Ashplats is the busiest site in terms of people, however Walshes Park and Horsted Green have more dogs per hour. East Court / Ashplats is the site with the highest rate for minors. Across the four sites together, the totals indicate around 40.8 groups and 63.1 people using the sites per hour on average and walking around an average of 42.4 dogs per hour.

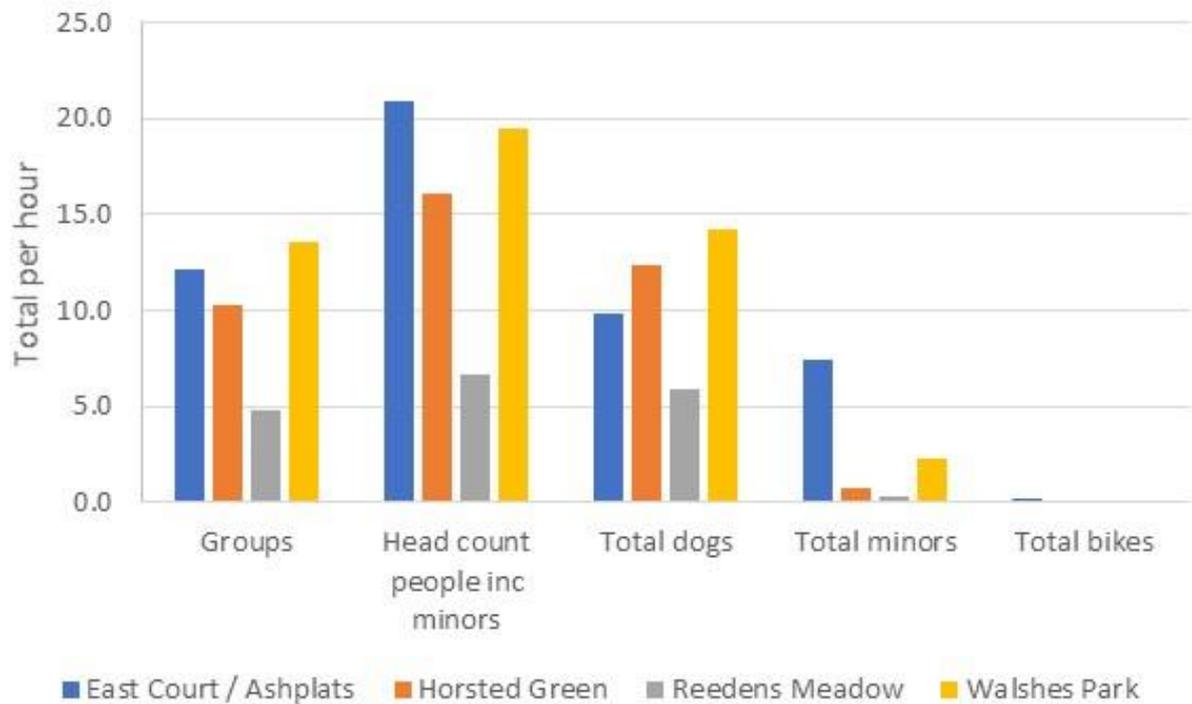


Figure 22: Totals of groups, people ('head count'), dogs, minors and bikes at each site per hour. We have combined the data, totalling the counts of those entering each survey point for each site. At East Court / Ashplats the totals also include those passing as one of the survey points was inside the site and near the middle rather than at an entry point. Totals are then adjusted to give an hourly rate by dividing by 16 (total hours at each survey point).

4.7 The number of groups recorded entering by time period and type of day are shown in Figure 23, with the colours reflecting the different SANGs. It can be seen that on the weekdays the peak numbers entering were in the late afternoon session, after 5pm. By contrast at the weekends visitor numbers peaked during the late morning. While weekdays are generally busier at most times of day, weekend late mornings are actually the times when use peaks.

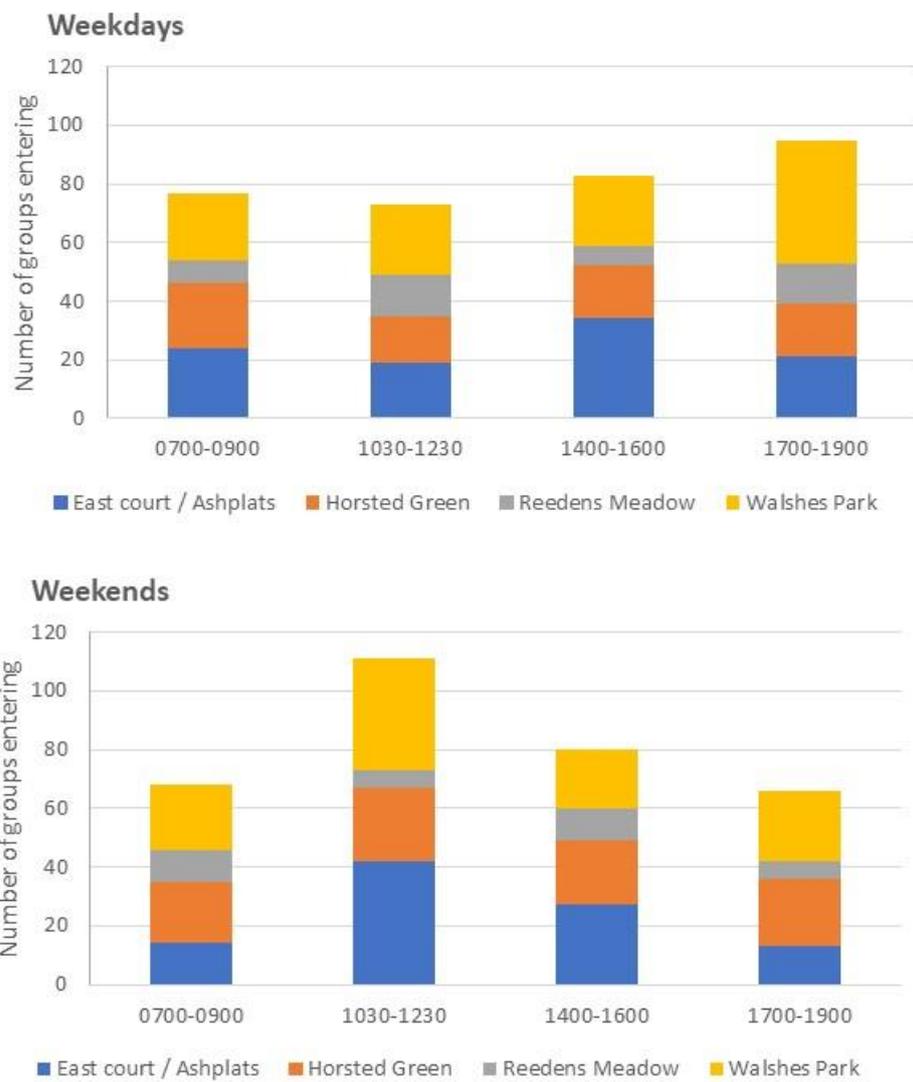


Figure 23: Number of groups entering by time period, type of day and site. As with previous figures, data for all sites are those entering, while for East Court & Ashplats the number passing are also included.

5. Comparison with data from Ashdown Forest

- 5.1 The surveys at the SANGs replicated those undertaken at Ashdown Forest in 2021 (see separate report). The Ashdown Forest questionnaire was identical apart from slightly different questions towards the end that were specific to Ashdown Forest (relating to the dog walker code of conduct at Ashdown Forest and use of the visitor centre at Ashdown Forest) and the Ashdown Forest questionnaire did not include Q22 (which relates to changes the interviewee would like to see at the SANG).
- 5.2 At Ashdown Forest, 20 different survey points were surveyed, with the surveys taking place during July and August. Survey approach at each survey point was the same as that undertaken at the SANGs, with 16 hours at each spread over daylight hours. Each of the 20 survey points at Ashdown Forest was surveyed on a weekday outside the school holidays and a weekend day during the school holidays.
- 5.3 In Table 10 we provide a summary of selected metrics, drawing on the relevant data from the two surveys. The metrics indicated with bold text are those where the data from Ashdown Forest is clearly different. It can be seen that the interviewees at Ashdown Forest tended to be in bigger groups, fewer were dog walking (and more walking), more were on their first visit and they tended to walk further and come from further afield.

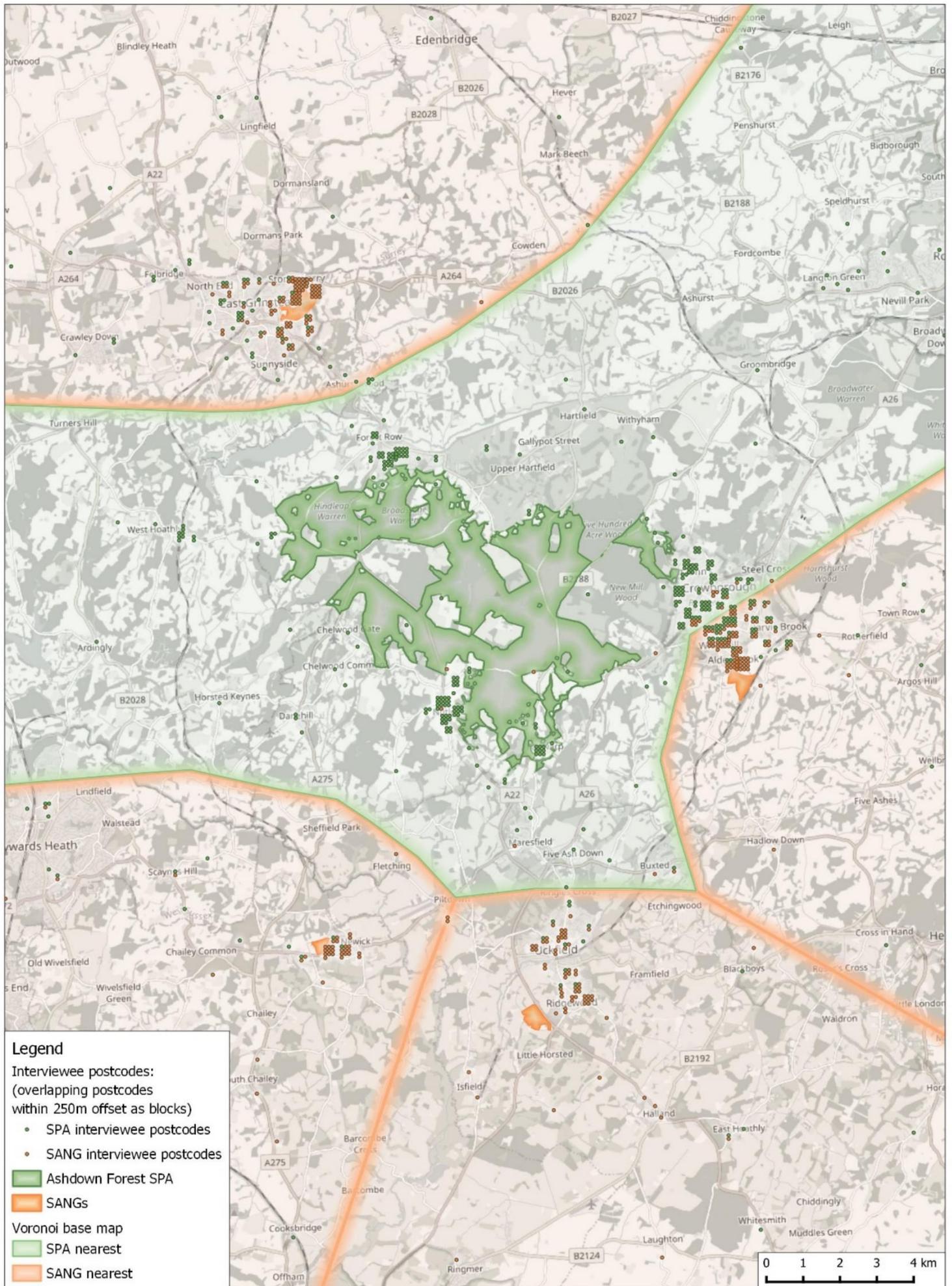
Ashdown Forest SANGs Visitor Survey 2021

Table 10: Selected metrics from the Ashdown Forest survey in 2021 and the SANGs survey. Data for Ashdown Forest is for all survey points. 'Home only' indicates the metric is extracted only for those on a short visit/day trip directly from home. Bold text indicates those metrics where the data for Ashdown Forest is outside the range of the equivalent individual values for any of the 4 SANGs and at least 10% different from the figure for all SANGs combined.

Metric	Ashdown Forest	All 4 SANGs combined	East Court / Ashplats	Horsted Green	Reedens Meadow	Walshes Park
Number of survey points	20	8	4	4	4	4
Number of interviews	549	336	99	77	48	112
Number of interviews (home only)	518	330	98	75	48	109
Average group size (interview data, home only)	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.4
% of interviewees visiting on their own (home only)	25	38	31	48	45	38
% dog walking stated main activity (home only)	59	78	81	75	85	76
% walking stated main activity (home only)	31	18	14	23	8	22
% visiting daily (home only)	21	18	17	11	15	24
% visiting at least weekly (home only)	57	60	71	37	60	64
% on first visit (home only)	7	1	0	3	4	0
% arriving by car (home only)	80	53	21	93	63	50
% that stated they went off paths (home only)	22	28	23	34	2	42
Median route length (m) (home only)	2499	1767	1541	1952	1494	1817
% stating close to home main reason for site choice (home only)	26	42	49	24	48	46
median distance survey point to home postcode (km) (home only)	5.0	1.1	0.71	2.2	0.7	1.2
75th percentile survey point to home postcode (km) (home only)	11.4	2.1	1	4.2	4.8	1.7
% visiting who live within 1.5km	24	57	81	23	58	60
% visiting who live within 5km	48	85	94	73	73	91
% of dogs seen off lead by surveyor (home only)	43	54	77	41	28	54

- 5.4 The postcode data from the Ashdown Forest survey are shown alongside the SANGs postcodes in Map 9, which also includes the voronoi polygons shown in Map 8 (i.e. showing which areas are closer to SANGs than Ashdown Forest). The two colours used for the postcode data (orange for SANGs and green for Ashdown Forest) differentiate the two data sets. Where the postcodes are in close proximity or overlap they have been offset, to allow direct comparison (i.e. there are green dots hiding orange dots, or vice versa). It can be seen that the SANGs clearly draw visitors from the same areas that people visit Ashdown Forest and that in the vicinity of each SANG, the orange colour clearly dominates, highlighting that those people living close to the SANG are using the SANG and few are visiting Ashdown Forest.

Map 9: SANG postcodes shown in relation to the postcodes of visitors to the SPA.



6. Discussion

- 6.1 The results indicate that the SANGs are all well used, popular destinations that in particular are drawing high numbers of dog walkers – a key audience. The survey locations were generally busier than those surveyed at Ashdown Forest – for example the tally data for the main entrances at both Horsted Green and Walshes Park had more groups entering than any of the Ashdown Forest survey points.
- 6.2 With 25% of interviewees giving Ashdown Forest as the one location they would have visited if they had not visited the site where interviewed, and in total 47% of interviewees naming Ashdown Forest as one of the other locations they visit it is clear that at least a reasonable proportion of those using the SANGs would otherwise be visiting Ashdown Forest. As such the results indicate that the SANGs are fulfilling the role for which they have been designed.
- 6.3 The postcode data show those using the SANGs are particularly local and the catchments are relatively discrete for each SANG, with few visitors living beyond 3-4km from each SANG.
- 6.4 At each of the surveyed sites, improvements have been taking place over time and will continue as part of the on-going management of the sites. The SANGs provide mitigation for new housing in-perpetuity and in some cases that housing is yet to be built. As such, these surveys are important in helping to identify future management and any short-term issues are addressed.

Context

- 6.5 The survey results from 2021 provide a snapshot of visitor use at the SANG sites during the early part of autumn 2021 and coincide with the visitor surveys of Ashdown Forest. The survey took place after restrictions relating to Covid had been relaxed but at a time where the pandemic may still have been affecting people's decisions regarding travel and where to go.
- 6.6 It is widely recognised that the pandemic has had a marked effect on how people use local greenspaces (Burnett et al., 2021; Natural England and Kantar Public, 2021; Randler et al., 2020). Outdoor space – during the pandemic – has become the safe place and default location for many for

exercise and for socialising, and there is a continued and growing importance of urban green spaces in particular as spaces to connect with nature and each other. Long term monitoring will therefore be important to pick up emerging trends and the drivers behind those trends.

- 6.7 It is interesting to note that a relatively high proportion of interviewees to the SANGs were visiting on foot, and the lockdowns may have resulted in more people becoming familiar with local greenspaces. With growing awareness of the health and environmental benefits of more active travel choices and limiting car use, such local use of greenspaces may continue to grow.

Suggestions for enhancements and further improvements to the SANGs

- 6.8 The SANGs are actively managed for access and all sites have regular works and maintenance, with improvements scheduled over time.
- 6.9 The relatively limited catchments of the SANGs potentially suggests that more SANGs may be needed to provide mitigation for growth that is scattered over a wide area. Alternatively measures to draw visitors from further afield to use the SANGs is relevant. For example, it is apparent that visitors from further afield pass the SANGs in order to visit Ashdown Forest. Wider promotion of the SANGs could be undertaken through targeted work with dog walkers and others at Ashdown Forest, for example through guided walks, events etc.
- 6.10 The results highlight a range of site-specific measures that interviewees would like to see at each SANG. These are listed in full in the appendices and are likely to be useful in informing future works at each site to further enhance them. Selected key points include:
- A general desire among interviewees to see more dog bins at sites (especially Horsted Green)
 - Improvements to paths at East Court/Ashplats, in particular the steps up from the ghyll;
 - Vegetation management to open the paths more in parts of the wood at East Court / Ashplats;
 - Further parking provision at Horsted Green (note that this is planned);
 - Cutting back vegetation some more at Horsted Green;
 - Restricting campervans from overnight parking at Horsted Green;

- Better security for dogs off lead at Reedens Meadow, particularly around the car park to limit the risk of dogs running onto the road;
- Review of the main entry point at Walshes Park which appears to be a pinch point, and some dog walkers felt uncomfortable passing the children's play area ;
- Better signage and promotion of the new car park location at Walshes Park;
- Secure boundaries to contain dogs at Walshes Park and potentially a dedicated fenced area for dogs to run in;
- Some path maintenance at Walshes Park where the gravelled paths have been washed away and where the boardwalk is slippery.

7. References

- Burnett, H., Olsen, J.R., Nicholls, N., Mitchell, R., 2021. Change in time spent visiting and experiences of green space following restrictions on movement during the COVID-19 pandemic: a nationally representative cross-sectional study of UK adults. *BMJ Open* 11, e044067. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-044067>
- ICF GHK, 2013. The economic impact of Natural England's National Nature Reserves (Natural England Commissioned Report No. NECR131).
- ICRT, 2011. The Economic Potential of Nature Tourism in Eastern Yorkshire. Leeds.
- Keniger, L.E., Gaston, K.J., Irvine, K.N., Fuller, R.A., 2013. What are the Benefits of Interacting with Nature? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 10, 913–935. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph10030913>
- Lee, A.C.K., Maheswaran, R., 2011. The health benefits of urban green spaces: a review of the evidence. *J Public Health* 33, 212–222. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdq068>
- Liley, D., Lake, S., Underhill-Day, J., Sharp, J., White, J., Hoskin, R., Cruickshanks, K., Fearnley, H., 2010. Welsh Seasonal Habitat Vulnerability Review. Footprint Ecology / CCW.
- Lowen, J., Liley, D., Underhill-Day, J., Whitehouse, A.T., 2008. Access and Nature Conservation Reconciliation: supplementary guidance for England.
- Natural England, Kantar Public, 2021. Impact of Covid-19 on engagement with green and natural spaces (Natural England Report No. PANS003). The People and Nature Survey for England.
- O'Neill, R., 2019. Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment – The national survey on people and the natural environment. Headline report 2019 (NECR No. 275). Natural England and the Office for National Statistics.
- Pretty, J., Griffin, M., Peacock, J., Hine, R., Selens, M., South, N., 2005. A countryside for health and well-being: the physical and mental health benefits of green exercise. *Countryside Recreation* 13, 2–7.
- Randler, C., Tryjanowski, P., Jokimäki, J., Kaisanlahti-Jokimäki, M.-L., Staller, N., 2020. SARS-CoV2 (COVID-19) Pandemic Lockdown Influences Nature-Based Recreational Activity: The Case of Birders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, 7310. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17197310>
- Richardson, M., Cormack, A., McRobert, L., Underhill, R., 2016. 30 Days Wild: Development and Evaluation of a Large-Scale Nature Engagement Campaign to Improve Well-Being. *PLOS ONE* 11, e0149777. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0149777>
- Ross, K., Liley, D., Austin, G., Clarke, R.T., Burton, N.H., Stillman, R.A., Cruickshanks, K., Underhill-Day, J., 2014. Housing development and estuaries in England: developing methodologies for assessing the impacts of disturbance to non-breeding waterfowl. Footprint Ecology, unpublished report for Natural England.
- The Land Trust, 2018. The Economic Value of Greenspaces. The Land Trust.
- Underhill-Day, J.C., 2005. A literature review of urban effects on lowland heaths and their wildlife. *English Nature*, Peterborough.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire



Ashdown Forest Visitor Survey

Good am/pm. I am undertaking a survey for local authorities to better understand which local countryside sites people visit and why. Can you spare me a few minutes please?

- Q1 Firstly I'd like to ask about your visit today.
- Are you on a day trip/short visit and travelled from home ... if no**
 - Are you on a short trip & staying with friends or family ... if no**
 - On holiday in the area, staying away from home... if no**
 - If none of the above, How would you describe your visit today?**

Details

Q2 What is the main activity you are undertaking today? *Tick closest answer. Do not prompt. Single response only. Ensure activity rather than reason for undertaking (e.g. not "health", "relaxing" etc.)*

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Jogging / power walking
- Outing with family / picnicking
- Cycling
- Wildlife / bird watching
- Fishing
- Photography
- Meet up with friends
- Visiting the information centre
- Horse Riding
- Other, please detail:

Further details

Q3 Are there any other activities you or the people with you will be undertaking today? *Tick closest answers. Do not prompt. Multiple responses possible. Ensure activity rather than reason for undertaking (e.g. not "health", "relaxing" etc.)*

- Dog walking
- Walking
- Jogging / power walking
- Outing with family / picnicking
- Cycling
- Wildlife / bird watching
- Fishing
- Photography
- Meet up with friends
- Visiting the information centre
- Horse Riding
- Other, please detail:

Further details

Q4 **How long have you been visiting this location?** *Single response only. Do not prompt.*

- first visit
- less than or approximately 6 months
- less than or approximately 1 year
- less than or approximately 3 years
- less than or approximately 5 years
- less than or approximately 10 years
- more than 10 years
- Don't know / not sure

Q5 **How long have you spent / will you spend here today?** *Single response only. Do not prompt.*

- less than 30 minutes
- between 30 minutes and 1 hour
- more than 1 hour to 2 hours
- more than 2 hours to 3 hours
- more than 3 hours
- Don't know / not sure

Q6 **Over the past year, roughly how often have you visited this location?** *Tick closest answer, single response only. Only prompt if interviewee struggles.*

- Daily
- Most days (180+ visits)
- 1 to 3 times a week (40-180 visits)
- 2 to 3 times per month (15-40 visits)
- Once a month (6-15 visits)
- Less than once a month (2-5 visits)
- Don't know
- First visit
- Other, please detail

further details:

Q7 **Do you tend to visit this area more at a particular time of year for [insert given activity]?** *Multiple answers ok.*

- Spring (Mar-May)
- Summer (Jun-Aug)
- Autumn (Sept-Nov)
- Winter (Dec-Feb)
- Equally all year
- Don't know
- First visit

Q8 **Before the pandemic, roughly how often did you visit this location?** *Tick closest answer, single response only. Use example frequency or estimate of visits per year. Do not prompt.*

- More than once a day (365+ visits a year)
- Daily (300-365 visits)
- Most days (180-300 visits)
- 1 to 3 times a week (40-180 visits)
- 2 to 3 times per month (15-40 visits)
- Once a month (6-15 visits)
- Less than once a month (2-5 visits)
- Don't know
- First visit
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q9 **Has the coronavirus pandemic changed how often you visit this location?** *Await answer and If yes follow with Have your visits increased or decreased? Do not prompt. Single response only.*

- No, visiting the same as before
- Don't know
- Yes, visiting more
- Yes, visiting less

Further details:

Q10 **How did you get here today?** *What form of transport did you use? Single response only.*

- Car / van
- On foot
- Public transport
- Bicycle
- Other, please detail

further details (and if multiple modes of transport mentioned, record main one and note others below):

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 started your visit today, the finish point and your route please? Probe to ensure route is accurately documented. Use P to indicate where the visitor parked, E to indicate the start point and X to indicate the exit. Mark the route with a line; a solid line for the actual route and a dotted line for the expected or remaining route. If they have followed a particular route please note this in free text at end of interview.

Q11 **Is / was your route today similar to your usual route when you visit here for [insert given activity]?** *Tick closest answer, do not prompt. Single response only.*

- Yes, normal
- Much longer than normal
- Much shorter than normal
- Not sure / no typical visit
- First visit

Q12 **Did you / do you plan to go off the paths during your visit today?** *Tick closest answer, do not prompt. Single response only.*

- Yes, went off the paths
- No, stayed on the paths
- Not sure / don't know

Q13 **What, if anything, influenced your choice of route here today?** *Tick closest answers, do not prompt. Multiple responses ok.*

- Weather
- Grazing animals/fences/grazing enclosures
- Daylight
- Time
- Away from other people (not busy)
- Group members (eg kids, less able)
- Avoiding muddy tracks / paths
- Staying on surfaced paths
- Followed a marked trail
- Previous knowledge of area / experience
- Activity undertaken (eg presence of dog)
- Other specific site features (viewpoint, lake etc.)
- Birds / wildlife
- Interpretation / leaflets
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q14 **Why did you choose to visit this location today, rather than somewhere else?** *Tick all responses given by visitor in the 'other' column. Do not prompt, tick closest answers. Then ask Which single reason would you say had the most influence over your choice to visit here today? Tick only one main reason. Use text box for answers that cannot be categorised and for further information.*

	Other	Main
Don't know / others in party chose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Close to home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No need to use car	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quick & easy travel route	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good / easy parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Free parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Particular facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choice of routes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feels safe here	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quiet, with no traffic noise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not many people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scenery / variety of views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rural feel / wild landscape	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Habit / familiarity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Particular wildlife interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good for dog / dog enjoys it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ability to let dog off lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Closest place to take dog	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Closest place to let dog safely off lead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appropriate place for activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suitability of area in given weather conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COVID (e.g. can't travel, being outside)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please detail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Further details:		

Q15 **Could you name the one location outside Ashdown Forest you would have visited today for [insert given activity] if you did not visit here? Do not prompt, tick closest answer.**

- Not sure / Don't know Go to Q18
- Nowhere / wouldn't have visited anywhere Go to Q18
- Site Named

Record site name:

Please can you name up to 2 other locations outside Ashdown Forest you also visit for [given activity]?

Q16 Name of Site 2

Q17 Name of Site 3

Q18 **What is your full home postcode? This is an important piece of information, please make every effort to record full postcode correctly. If necessary add *This will only be used to tell us roughly how far you have travelled today***

Q19 *If visitor is unable or refuses to give postcode:* **What is the name of the nearest town or village?**

Q20 *If visitor is on holiday ask:* **Which town / village are you staying in?**

Q21 **Did any information or recommendations help you plan your visit here today?** *Do not prompt, multiple answers ok. Tick closest and log further details (particularly if specific sources referred to).*

- Word of mouth recommendation
- Visitor centre
- Internet/website
- Leaflet
- Guidebook
- Social media (Twitter/Facebook/Instagram etc.)
- Ordnance Survey map (online or paper)
- App (e.g. Strava, ViewRanger etc.)
- Other or further details

Further details:

Q22 **Are there any changes you would like to see here with regards to how this area is managed for access?** *Do not give options, tick closest option(s).*

- More parking
- Better parking
- More paths
- Better / surfaced paths
- Separate paths for cyclists/ walkers
- More bins / less litter
- More dog poo bins
- Controls on dogs and dog fouling
- Facilities for dogs (training areas, washes etc)
- Toilets
- Cafe
- Improvements to habitats /scenery
- More natural / wild
- No changes - leave as it is
- Not sure/ don't know
- No comments
- Other, please detail

Further details:

Q23 **Finally, do you have any other suggestions or improvements you would like to see here?** *Free text*

That is the end of the survey. Thank you very much for your time.

To be completed by surveyor after interview

Q28 Survey details

Surveyor initials

Survey location code

MapRef for Route

Q29 Gender of interviewee

Female

Male

Unsure

Total number in interviewed group

Total males

Total females

Total number of dogs

Number of dogs off lead

Q30 **Surveyor comments.** *Note anything that may be relevant to the survey, including any changes to the survey entry that are necessary, eg changes to answers.*

Appendix 2: Comments relating to ideas for access management at East Court / Ashplats

Comments relating to Q22 and changes the interviewee would like to see with regards to how the site is managed for access. Grey shaded cells reflect comments from interviewees who stated they also visit Ashdown Forest.

No, it's pretty good now. Some muddy paths could be improved.
Fence up the side is an eyesore and forces the deer to have to go different ways.
It's very well managed. See lots of litter pickers.
Also surfaced footpath around the grass.
Cut back footpaths so they are wider. More man-made paths where they can so you can walk in the winter. Dog bin by the walkway on Lancaster drive. Bins need emptying more.
I don't like the two smelly ponds. Otherwise it's great.
Keep the access open. No houses or anything
The soggy bits in the woods get so bad it's hard to walk in the winter. If these were repaired more, people wouldn't have to walk on the grass. Because of park run, the grass path gets wider.
Paths too muddy to walk/steps difficult in the winter. Shopping trolleys get thrown into the river and ponds. Overgrown bramble.
More regular management of the woodland paths and drainage of the ditches so it becomes a flood plain. We need more dog bins, I'm sick of seeing dog bags hanging in trees.
Access for the disabled to the wood. Path from the Holtie track should be surfaced and you could have a bench here in the glade would make it more accessible. But you don't want it over managed
There's a lot of litter. My dog cut his paw on broken glass.
It's very well managed.
I think it's really good for access as there's so many options for people. Poo bin needed by entrance to Lancaster Drive.
Love it.
Keep it untouched as it can be.
Main pathway from Holtie road needs either cutting back or resurfacing. I bring secateurs sometimes to cut my way through. This would make it easier.
Security camera isn't working in the car park. More police presence is needed here. The drug use is outrageous.
There's no dog bins in the woods.
On entrance to Lancaster drive. A footpath for school kids to cut across the grass as it gets very muddy in winter. Better footpaths for winter in the woods. More of an emphasis on picking up after dogs.
Dog bin by Lancaster drive. There's nothing at the end.
More litter bins instead of poo bins. A few more benches.
I would like them to maintain the paths, especially for winter.
More of what they've already done to some of the paths. Some places are horrendous in the winter.
I think it's done very well.

A bit of reinforcement on the entrance to the grass (ground surface) as it can get really muddy in the winter.

It gets very muddy and wet in places in the winter. The litter is a problem but I don't know what you can do.

The steps and paths are very well maintained. It would be nice if they have the money to keep doing maintenance.

It can get very muddy. Also needs more signposts and we got lost once

People with less mobility would struggle with steps.

Stone path in the entrance from Sterling Way. It's the most used entrance. There should be a stone path from Sterling Way to the Holtye Road.

They could improve the steps. They are hard to walk up

Cancel the park run on a Saturday morning, because it messes up the ground. Or could they vary the route to protect the ground. The ghyll steps need some work.

It would be lovely if it was less muddy. Maybe more gravel on paths?

Clear the vegetation and level the footpaths with the woodchip. Poo bin at the bottom near the bridge.

There should be emergency access only to the road, and pavilion. Shutting it down would encourage sustainable travel.

As long as the paths are maintained its ok.

I know the new lady up at the top doesn't like people in the car park, but we've always parked there. I think it should be allowed.

East court is good for access. The footpath between the two bridges at the bottom needs fixing now. Some of the paths are a bit overgrown as well.

Footpaths are very dangerous in winter. There is no poo bin at the Lancaster Drive entrance.

Teenagers hanging around a lot in the evenings, and there's lots of litter in the morning.

Loose grass has been terrible everywhere. More regular grass cutting would fix that.

The ghyll steps need renewing, there's some missing. But otherwise I like wildness of it.

Paths do get overgrown. The pond with the duckweed needs a clean.

Where the new steps are it would be nice to have a connecting path so you can do a larger circular walk. I think the water quality in the stream and ponds is quite low. Covered bins are needed.

Another playground for children up here in the woods. There's never enough poo bins.

The footpath of the top near Holtye Road has no proper surfaced path and it should. The management of the woods has been variable. The same bit of path is only cut back in parts and not repaired.

Clear back vegetation on footpaths. The grass gets cut but not the paths. They get overgrown.

Dog poo wardens to check people are picking up.

More litter bins.

The paths in the wood get very muddy. The top road down should be gated and closed in the evenings because of the activities that go on!

Not enough dog bins.

I would love to see a surfaced path around the grass area here so you could walk round it more easily in the winter. There is a lot of soil erosion on the woodland paths making them really uneven.

Some of the main pathways to be weather proofed. They take forever to dry in.

Could they improved the surfacing at the entrance. One lady slipped and broke her ankle.

I think its managed fantastically.

It can be a bit overgrown, but you expect that.

Hardcore paths could be extended so you could walk all year round.

The Holtye track is very overgrown. I've got used to it but it's a bit narrow. I'm not sure what has happened to the roots on the path. It's very uneven.

Permanent cafe set up. Pizza van or food trucks at the weekend would be nice.

Maintain the paths, put more stone on the muddy bits.

More litter bins needed up by the seats by the house.

More dog bins within the woods e.g. the glade.

Managed well.

We're impressed with the width of the paths, and the lack of litter.

No, we need places like this as they are. As long as you keep the paths open.

Need a dog bin on McIndoe walk.

Appendix 3: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Horsted Green

Comments relating to Q22 and changes the interviewee would like to see with regards to how the site is managed for access. Grey shaded cells reflect comments from interviewees who stated they also visit Ashdown Forest. Note that since the survey work was undertaken height restriction posts have been added and other improvements have also been instigated. A second car park is also planned in the future.

Bigger car park
Good that they've added the wooden rails to stop parking in front of gate
More gravelled paths across fields. Otherwise perfect as it is.
Access really good. People need to pick up dog mess - perhaps needs better signage
Needs to be more secure for dogs; path under underpass has no gate on other side. Corner by College Farm needs sprung swing gate that dogs can't open. There's an area of scrub in northern corner that could be managed.
Keep out camper vans
Signs reminding people to clear up after dogs.
Access onto main road is a bit dodgy, difficult junction
Another water tap inside park. Area of path in SE corner of site gets boggy in wet weather forcing people to walk on grass. Needs some hardcore
Access from Ridgewood has been diverted because of building work, got confused trying to walk here and one point nearly turned back
Camper vans were using the car park and emptying out toilets here
Dog bins need to be scattered through park.
There's only one place to get rid of poo bags. Bins on this side of park would be good. Really well done, appreciate the water taps.
Council have done well. Orchards will be great when they are established and the statues are good
Know that residents on Horsted Pond Lane don't like it
Paths need maintaining - rain causes dips in paths, making it hard for prams and wheelchairs
Poo bins at this end of park.
Would like the emphasis to be on wildlife. Could take away some paths to create more undisturbed space for skylarks etc.
Very good
Noticed increase in dog mess lying around. Bin by underpass.
Paths aren't as good as when opened, getting uneven
Almost impossible to walk to site so more parking needed. Know that residents are getting annoyed by lane being blocked so bigger car park should help.
Some trees by bypass were planted too late and have died. Paths are getting washed away
Poo bins in this part of park
After wildflowers, cut and clear vegetation - gets stuck in dog's fur and is difficult to remove. Dog bins and water tap over this side of park

Location of car park different.
More seating to enjoy the scenery in good weather
Car park not big enough, due to get another on the other side of bypass and hope this happens
Should be more wheelchair-friendly: gate can't be accessed by wheelchair. Lighting to make it safe for women at night/winter evenings
Gate from car park doesn't go down to ground - dogs can get under and run into car park. Could use quad bike to empty additional dog bins
Shame there's no exit from pond orchard except onto the lane - have to put dog back on lead to walk along lane and re-enter via car park. Picnic benches in park would be nice.
Additional passing place in the lane. Have to time visits carefully because car park can fill up.
Open up to professional dog walkers
Poo bin this side of park
Marked parking bays to alleviate bad parking. Paths are good
Dog bins need to be right inside park. Noticed that when edges of meadow cut there was less poo on paths.
Understand there's meant to be another car park. This one gets busy
Like that it feels natural and wild
Sometimes can't get access as car park full and have to go elsewhere
Really value the area. Why are there not car parks and access from bypass, would ease the pressure on the lane. Bins this side of the park for dog poo.
Poo bins deeper in park away from entrance.
Good for me but aware residents of lane not very happy about it. A couple more poo bins inside park would encourage people to pick up.
Believe there are plans for another car park. Extra parking capacity is needed
Really nice facility. Like that it's so safe for dogs
Noticed they have stopped mowing paths through. Disabled access is good
Very good
Orchard paths getting grown over, other paths have weeds growing up
Amount of dog mess on paths and grassy areas is disgusting. Shame car park isn't bigger
Managed really well

Appendix 4: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Reedens Meadow

Comments relating to Q22 and changes the interviewee would like to see with regards to how the site is managed for access. Grey shaded cells reflect comments from interviewees who stated they also visit Ashdown Forest.

Footpath needs gate to prevent dogs running into road. More secure for dogs.
Gates have opened in by themselves. Gate maintenance.
Safe road crossings, reduced speed limits and traffic islands as originally planned. Lots of fences, hedges, lampposts crashed into. Cars rear ended. Accidents involving pedestrians and vehicles.
Tap for clean water for dogs.
Worried about road due to heavy/ busy traffic. Aware of dogs being killed up by pedestrian gate.
Cattle grid to slow vehicles and some way to hinder dogs from running out of carpark when exiting vehicles- worried about excited dogs jumping from car before they can be restrained with the
Gate hooks are too high and difficult to access from one side. Needs stock fencing to prevent dog escapes on gates.
Locks on the gates for kissing gates.
More secure gates for dogs- large dogs can get under gate to road. Dogs have been run over by getting under gate.
Road is busy and dangerous to cross and needs a road crossing and speed reductions
Dog bins at point 8. Paths are potholed and need repairing.
Repair to entry points.
More site interpretation, visitor information.
More info panels about responsible dog use
Bigger and more signs for commercial dog walkers. lack of etiquette.
Really long grass in summer for dogs, bit too long in terms of mating coats with grass seeds.
Continuous management for conservation and wildlife
More emptying of current poo bins.
Poo bins in other locations in park
Just keep it green and natural and continue to encourage wildlife.
Northern end for poo bins.
Dog bins at point 8 gate needs improvements.
More people should pick up poo.
Really well maintained and open space.

Appendix 5: Comments relating to ideas for access management at Walshes Park

Comments relating to Q22 and changes the interviewee would like to see with regards to how the site is managed for access. Grey shaded cells reflect comments from interviewees who stated they also visit Ashdown Forest. Note that there is ongoing management at the site and new signage is planned in 2022.

Access good though metal gates are noisy
Can get very overgrown in some areas making paths difficult to use
Loss of car park makes it difficult. Boardwalks make it very accessible as it can be boggy
Could mow more, concerned that children will find dog poop in the long grass where people don't pick up
Additional access to the new car park would be good
In winter the boardwalk is slippery and because of the way the access is set up you have to enter using the boardwalk - needs addressing
Can be an issue of out of control dogs, maybe some signage to encourage better behaviour
Could make the site bigger - include the fields near Kingfisher Drive car park, too much building work on green fields, need all the fields
Would be good to replace the information board which gave info about the routes marked across the site with red, blue and yellow arrows - used to be in the old car park
Would be good if boundary was secure all round - there are gaps where dogs have escaped. Or perhaps a fully fenced area within the site for dogs to go off lead?
Public education
One narrow main entrance can be a bit of an issue - makes a pinch point, may have been better to keep the original entrance as well
Access from new car park could be direct rather than through the play area where need to put dogs on a lead - could be straight into park so dogs can be off leads from car park
Would be good if the park was properly secure so that dogs can't get out.
Had no idea there was a car park so sometimes parks on the road in the estate.
Access gates for mobility scooters with padlocks work well. Could extend the boardwalk so can access more of the site when the weather is bad and it's wet underfoot.
Provide dog poo bags to encourage more people to pick up after their dogs
Gravel tracks are really difficult for buggies so a flat surfaced path for a longer distance would be wonderful
Parking at bottom of Alderbrook Way by visitors difficult for residents, better security on boundaries to keep dogs safe would be good.
Big park and not many bins
Too overgrown with brambles and holly and balsam, more benches needed in shaded spots
New car park is great, tho diff for older people as further from site and often they will road park close to old car park site
New car park makes it much easier to access now, play area is great
Access walking down the lane from the new dev can be difficult due to buses in the morning - need to watch the traffic

route into site from the new car park without going through the children's play area would be good - why risk dog fouling in that area?
More than one gate onto site is required. Often a queue at this gate of dog walkers trying to enter and leave. Plus entry for mobility scooters is difficult. Perhaps there could be another gate?
Gravel path prob not very easy in wheelchair. Plus might have been better to keep the former car park and make it disabled parking only to help with easy access
Extra access
New car park is good need a bin there.
Another poo bin at the further end of the site would be useful
Boardwalk can be slippery in the ice.
Bins scattered around would be good might stop people dropping bags around the site
The paths here are good - done a great job with them
Another poo bin at a diff point in the site would be good
Well maintained though some pathways need attention due to rain damage
Really pleased with the set up here
Some of the paths need some attention, surface washed away
Paths and boardwalk are all very well done
Repair to washed out path at far end of site would be good as it's quite hazardous
No it's great, will be great for when baby born and can use the buggy here
Access managed really well enables use of mobility scooters etc
Far gate exiting the site towards Hadlow Down Road has not got a latch and have lost dogs a couple of times as the gate has been left open
More maps on site so know where to go
More exits would be good. Would like a secure fenced area for dogs to be off lead.
Fences need to be checked so dogs stay inside
Might be nice if grass was cut more often, might be nice for a swimming area for dogs, undercover shelter for bad weather
Path to new car park is difficult for older people and should be improved, also some paths damaged by flooding and need fixing
More poo bins inside the site as people often Leave bags. Aware there was a new car park but didn't know where it was so parked roadside.
A few paths need some work where been washed away
Make the gates secure so dogs can't get underneath them, also latches removed on the main gate mean that often it's left open - replace the latches please
Extra boardwalk where there is an unofficial muddy path the other side of the stream could be useful
Parking is now better, boardwalk icy in winter at entrance
Improvement needed to bottom path where water has eroded a big rut
Was not aware of new car park at Kingfisher and worried about annoying residents with road parking
Seating in the shade would be good
Lots of people do not pick up after their dogs which is not good
Totally understand why the first car park was shut in terms of annoying local residents but not sure where the new car park is