

SHEERING - OPEN SPACE AUDIT**MAY 2009****CONTENTS**

Chapter 1 – Introduction	Page 2
Chapter 2 – Allotments	Page 3
Chapter 3 – Cemeteries and Graveyards	Page 4
Chapter 4 – Formal Playing Pitches	Page 6
Chapter 5 – Alternative Sites For Sport	Page 9
Chapter 6 – Informal Recreation Grounds	Page 10
Chapter 7 – Children’s Playgrounds	Page 12
Chapter 8 – Indoor Facilities For High Levels Of Use	Page 15
Chapter 9 – Community Centres and Village Halls	Page 16
Chapter 10 – Managed Open Space With Public Access	Page 17
Chapter 11 – Woodland And Semi-Natural Open Space With public access	Page 19

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.0 The audit process, described in this report, is designed to generate comparative information on different sites across the district for the following purposes:

- to provide an overview of the quality and value of spaces and facilities within each of the district's parishes;
- to influence the production of new planning policies essential in determining planning applications, guiding new development and resolving conflicts of demand or use; and
- to enable the Council to demonstrate a continuous improvement in the quality of open spaces, sport and recreational facilities in its district.

1.1 It is believed that all areas of open space, formal recreational space, and sports facilities have been identified by the audit. These have been surveyed and assessed, and conclusions reached on their value to the local community and the environment of the district.

1.2 For convenience the audit is split into the following categories, although it is recognised that some of these allow for a range of uses:

- allotments (AT);
- cemeteries and graveyards (CG);
- formal playing pitches (FP);
- alternative sites for sport (AS) ;
- informal recreation grounds (RG);
- children's playgrounds (CY);
- indoor facilities for high levels of use (IF);
- community centres and village halls (CV);
- managed open space with public access (MO);
- semi-natural open space and woodland with public access (SO);

CHAPTER 2 – ALLOTMENTS

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are currently no allotments located within Sheering parish.
- Sheering Parish Council indicates only a very small demand for allotments in the district.
- Those enquiries which Sheering Parish Council does receive are then redirected to nearby Sawbridgeworth and Harlow where provision is available.
- Those residents wishing to access such facilities will therefore need access to a personal vehicle or public transport in order to reach these facilities.

CHAPTER 3 - CEMETERIES AND GRAVEYARDS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
CG1	St Mary's Church	Church Lane, Sheering	0.46	Diocese of Chelmsford



St Mary's Church, Site CG1

ST MARY'S CHURCH (CG1)

- 3.0** Located along Church Lane to the south of Upper Sheering, this is the only site of its type within the parish. The entire southern and eastern perimeters are screened by a variety of medium sized trees whilst to the north a relatively high standing hedge achieves the same effect. The perimeter to the west runs alongside Church Lane remains predominantly open in nature which permits views into the site.
- 3.1** There is also vehicle access onto the site from Church Lane via the U-shaped track. However drivers must be particularly careful when exiting the site as blind corners are situated at both ends of the road whilst the road itself appears to be relatively busy. Alternatively, visitors may wish to park their vehicles in the car park used by the village hall to the north of the site which provides spaces for around twenty cars.

3.2 The site is predominantly grass with a number of medium sized trees which add to its overall visual appearance. Hard surfaced pathways lead from the U-shaped driveway towards the main entrance of the church located to the south of the site. One further pathway heads northwards from here towards the village hall. There are no other pathways around the site, with visitors therefore having to cross the grass to reach some parts particularly to the east. The churchyard is well signed and features a number of seating and litter bin facilities. However some of these would be hard to use for those with pushchairs or wheelchairs as it would involve having to cross the grass.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- This is a pleasant site which is well maintained and presented with no evidence of litter or vandalism.
- The sites visual amenity is enhanced by the variety of trees which dominate its borders and are spread around much of the site.
- The churchyard's accessibility is good although some parts of the site would still be difficult for those with wheelchairs or pushchairs to access.
- Those accessing the site via the U-shaped track to the west of the site must be careful when leaving the site due to blind corners on the road.
- The site is well signed and provides good amounts of seating and litter bins.
- This is the only facility of its kind within the parish and Sheering Parish Council do not indicate a need for further facilities of this type within the local area.

CHAPTER 4 - FORMAL PLAYING PITCHES

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
FP1	Upper Sheering Playing Fields	The Street, Sheering	1.66	Sheering Parish Council
FP2	Sheering Football Ground	The Street, Sheering	1.63	Privately Owned



Upper Sheering Playing Fields, Site FP1

UPPER SHEERING PLAYING FIELDS (FP1)

- 4.0** Situated to the north of Upper Sheering this site is accessible to pedestrians from both The Plashets to the west and The Street to the south. There is also vehicular access from The Street onto a well surfaced car park which holds around thirty cars to the south of the site. A hard surfaced footpath runs between the two pedestrian entrances to the site allowing access for those with wheelchairs and pushchairs. The playing field is entirely surrounded by high hedges and trees which screen it from the residential homes to the west as well the farmland to the north and east.
- 4.1** The site is primarily used by the local cricket club. It is also used by the local primary school and offers a variety of play equipment (CY1) which is located predominantly around the northern and western perimeters of the site.

- 4.3** The site does provide adequate amounts of seating and dog bin facilities. Signage at the main vehicle entrance is clear. In addition the hall/pavilion at the southern end of the site to the east of the car park appears to be in a decent condition and is well maintained. A small wood is located towards the north of the site where a number of extra paths have been created for children to ride their bikes. This area also appears to suffer from significant amounts of litter.



Sheering Football Ground, Site FP2

SHEERING FOOTBALL GROUND (FP2)

- 4.4** Located towards the end of an uneven gravel track this site is entirely made up of open grass land. The site comprises a single full sized football pitch and a smaller five a side pitch located towards the west. The five a side pitch is surrounded by floodlights. The full size pitch is bordered by a white metal railing for spectators to stand around. A small clubhouse and changing room is located towards the north east corner of the site. Overall the site appears to be well looked after and in good condition.
- 4.5** Vehicle access to the site is a problem. There are few places for visitors to park as the gravel track which leads up to the site is also used by local residents for car parking. Furthermore access leading up to or within the site would not be easy for those people with pushchairs or wheelchairs given the lack of any adequately surfaced footpaths. Although there are

no litter bins the site appears to be free from litter and furthermore given its rural setting surrounded by trees and open countryside provides a very peaceful environment to enjoy sport in.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There is a good amount of formal playing pitches within the parish, especially considering its rural nature.
- Both sites appear to be well maintained although some of the children's facilities in Upper Sheering Playing Fields (FP1) appear rather worn and are due to be removed relatively soon (See CY1).
- One issue with both of the sites concerns their accessibility as neither provide adequate hard surfaced pathways which would help to ensure that even those with pushchairs and wheelchairs have full access.
- Unfortunately Sheering Parish Council has no plans to undertake such work at the moment given its cost and the fact that residents have not raised this themselves as a major issue.
- Parking facilities are restricted for those wishing to use Sheering Football Ground (FP2).
- The local parish council are keen however to point out that all litter is removed swiftly by the local handyman when spotted.
- The parish council is concerned with the amount of litter found in the small wood to the north of Upper Sheering Playing Fields (FP1) and a groundskeeper regularly clears any litter left on the fields.
- According to the local parish council, a new skateboard ramp would be well received however there are currently no suitable locations for such a facility within the parish.

CHAPTER 5 – ALTERNATIVE SITES FOR SPORT

- There are no alternative sites for sport located within Sheering.
- Given its rural nature, relatively small local population and close proximity to Harlow, Sheering Parish Council does not indicate a demand for the provision of any new alternative sites for sport within the parish.
- Residents wishing to use sites of this type of open space will need access to their own vehicles or public transport to travel to Harlow or some of the neighbouring parishes such as Ongar and North Weald, where further facilities of this type are located.

CHAPTER 6 – INFORMAL RECREATION GROUNDS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
RG1	Lower Sheering Playing Fields	Sheering Lower Road, Lower Sheering	0.29	Sheering Parish Council



Lower Sheering Playing Fields, Site RG1

LOWER SHEERING PLAYING FIELDS (RG1)

- 6.0** Located to the west of Sheering Lower Road close to the junction with Back Lane, this site is essentially divided into two separate fields. The smaller of these to the east is entirely made up of grass and is surrounded by tall wire mesh with a single entrance. The site is accessed by walking along the pedestrian pathway to the north and turning south through a large metal gate into the larger of the two fields.
- 6.1** The larger field meanwhile is again entirely made up of grass and is surrounded by very high wire mesh fencing. Inside the larger field there are various children's facilities including playground equipment, a basketball court and a small football pitch with goalposts. This equipment appears to be in decent condition and all of the playground equipment is surrounded by rubber surfacing.

6.2 However there is no hard surfaced paths making access more difficult for those with pushchairs and wheelchairs. Despite the presence of rubbish bins, there is also a problem with litter, particularly around the children's playground facilities. Adequate signage is apparent around the site, although some of these signs have been vandalised and covered in graffiti. Any graffiti, when discovered, again is removed by the local groundskeeper.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- This is the only facility within the parish which is specifically an informal recreation ground.
- When not used by the local cricket club, Upper Sheering Playing Fields (FP1) can also be used as a informal recreation ground.
- The sites appears to be well maintained and is clean tidy and in good condition.
- One issue with the site concerns their accessibility as it does not provide adequate hard surfaced pathways which would help to ensure that even those with pushchairs and wheelchairs have full access.
- Another issue with the site regards the main entrance which is left wide open and therefore places those children using it at risk from dogs which could potentially enter the site.
- Sheering Local Parish Council indicate that unfortunately it is not practical to shut the gate at the site as there is nobody to take on the role. A different style entrance gate has been trialled in the past but was unsuccessful.

CHAPTER 7 – CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUNDS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
CY1	Upper Sheering Playing Fields Playground	The Street, Sheering	0.13	Sheering Parish Council
CY2	Lower Sheering Playing Fields Playground	Sheering Lower Road	0.03	Sheering Parish Council



Upper Sheering Playing Field Playground, CY1

UPPER SHEERING PLAYING FIELD PLAYGROUND (CY1)

- 7.0** This site is situated to the north of Upper Sheering Playing Fields. It is clear this is not a typical children’s playground. There is no perimeter fencing surrounding the play equipment for the youngest children. At a minimum these facilities should be protected so that those young children using them are not placed at risk from coming into contact with dogs whose owners frequently use the rest of the playing fields.
- 7.1** There is no hard surfaced pathways leading to the playground. As a result, those people with pushchairs or wheelchairs may find it much more difficult accessing the site particularly during colder and wetter months. The facilities themselves appear to be in good condition with perhaps the exception of some swings to the north west of the site which seem to be a little worn. However there appears to be a fairly significant

litter issue around this part of the site. This could be partly addressed through the provision of litter bins which are in closer proximity to the playground

- 7.2** The provision of some seating within close proximity to the playground would also be beneficial as would the erection of some signs to indicate such items as the terms of use for the site. Finally, there is adequate rubber surfacing around most of the play equipment. However the older swings to the north west of the playing fields have concrete surrounds, a potential hazard to users.



Lower Sheering Playing Field Playground, Site CY2

LOWER SHEERING PLAYING FIELD PLAYGROUND (CY2)

- 7.3** Located to the south of Lower Sheering between Ladywell Prospect and The Street, again this is a rather unconventional playground. Play equipment is spread out over a wide area, with facilities for young children mixed in with a variety of other facilities for older children. Fencing surrounds the perimeter of the site. There was no signage indicating opening and closing times. However there was some other signage warning against people taking dogs into the site and playing golf within the site. These signs appeared rather worn in appearance and have also been vandalised with graffiti.
- 7.4** With the main entrance gate left open there is a chance that dogs may run into the site and therefore young children using the play equipment should remain under constant adult supervision. One other issue with

the site regards the fact that whilst all of the facilities for young children have adequate rubber surfacing around them, there are no hard surfaced paths leading up to these facilities. As a result, users must walk across the grass to use them and this may be particularly difficult for those people with pushchairs or wheelchairs.

- 7.5** The site does appear to be in a good condition and is clearly well maintained given the fact that it is clean and tidy with only a minimal amount of litter evident. Furthermore, adequate seating and litter bins are provided whilst the play equipment appears to be in decent condition with only a single obvious incidence where vandalism has taken place on a set of monkey bars.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- Both playgrounds within the parish offer an excellent range of children's facilities which are predominantly very new and in good condition.
- Accessibility at both playgrounds is difficult for those with pushchairs and wheelchairs as there are no hard surfaced footpaths.
- Sheering Parish Council however has no plans to undertake such work at the moment given its cost and the fact that locals have not raised this as a major issue.
- Security could be improved on both sites but particularly in Upper Sheering Playing Field Playground (CY1) where there is no perimeter fencing to protect young children using the site from dogs which are also frequently found on the site. Unfortunately however the facilities on this site are believed to be too spread out for the provision of fencing around them to be feasible.
- Upper Sheering Playing Field Playground (CY1) would perhaps benefit more from the provision of more seating and litter bins in closer proximity to the children's facilities on offer. This would help to tackle the significant amount of litter which can be found in the area.
- Upper Sheering Playing Field Playground (CY1) also lacks any form of signage.
- There is evidence of vandalism to the facilities within Lower Sheering Playing Field Playground (CY2).
- According to Sheering Parish Council there is no demand locally for further provision of this type of facility.

CHAPTER 8 – INDOOR FACILITIES FOR HIGH LEVELS OF USE

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are no indoor facilities for high levels of use within Sheering.
- Sheering Parish Council has indicated that there is no demand for a facility of this type within the parish given that it is situated very close to Harlow which offers provision of this type of facility.
- Residents wishing to access indoor facilities for high levels of use should find doing so relatively easy regardless of having a car, given the good public transport system in the local area.

CHAPTER 9 – COMMUNITY CENTRES AND VILLAGE HALLS

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are currently no village halls or community centres in Sheering parish.
- Sheering Parish Council has been saving funds for a number of years to build a Community Hall in Lower Sheering to be used when sufficient land becomes available. A potential site or suitable timetable has not currently been identified yet.
- A variety of other halls outside of the parish are located nearby in both Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford.

CHAPTER 10 - MANAGED OPEN SPACE WITH PUBLIC ACCESS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
MO1	Land to the east of the River Stort	Luxford Place, Lower Sheering	0.30	Epping Forest District Council

LAND TO THE EAST OF THE RIVER STORT (MO1)

- 10.1** Situated between the River Stort and Luxford Place, this is an area of amenity green space which is entirely made up of grass. The site is surrounded to the west by dense trees and shrubs and to the east by a private fenced area of semi wild vegetation. There is one main entrance to the north, a wooden gate, which allows access for both pedestrians and maintenance vehicles. A further entranceway is located to the south west of the site however this remains locked to prevent site users from entering onto the privately owned land beyond. Upon entering, it is clear that this site is very well maintained. The relatively enclosed surroundings further emphasise the tranquillity of this open space.
- 10.2** Whilst signage has recently been added to the site, there are still no provision of litter bins. These would not only help to keep it tidy but would also give people visiting it a better opportunity to enjoy the peaceful setting. The site is only accessible by walking along a grass path and through the entrance gateway, neither of which would be easily negotiable for those members of the public with wheelchairs or pushchairs.



Land to the east of the River Stort, Site MO1

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

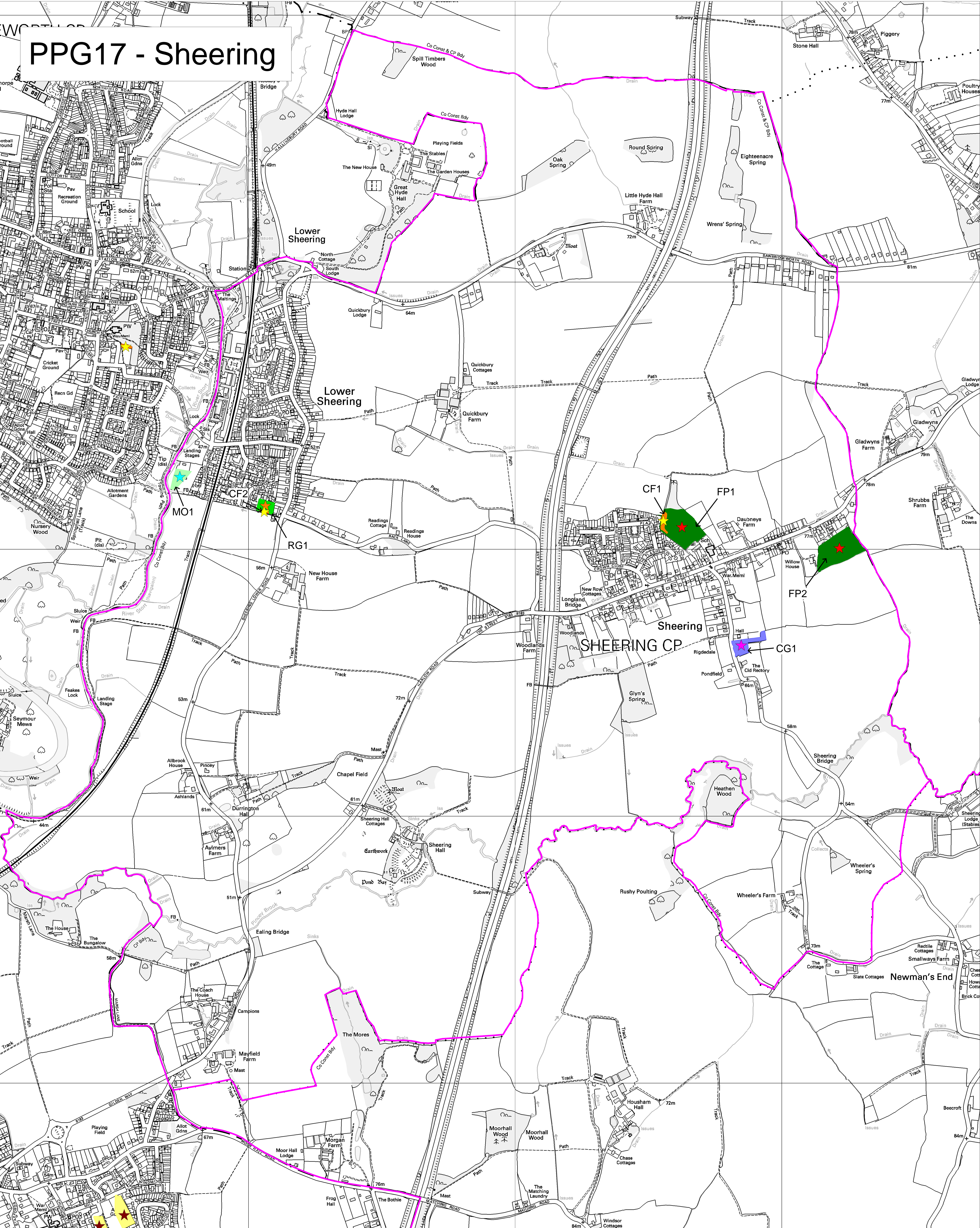
- This very clean, tidy and well maintained.
- The site does not contains any seating or litter bins, although it is large enough to justify having such facilities on it.
- Accessibility to The Land to the East of The River Stort (MO2) is restricted by the lack of any hard surfaced paths and a large wooden gate which is only suitable for able bodied persons to pass through.
- Given the rural nature of the parish and the fact that Sheering parish Council has not noted any further demand for such facilities, this would suggest that there is currently no need for further provision locally.

CHAPTER 11 - WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL OPEN SPACE WITH PUBLIC ACCESS

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- Despite the rural nature of Sheering Parish, there appear to be no areas of publicly accessible woodland or semi-natural open space in the area.
- The parish however is criss-crossed with multiple public footpaths giving access to the open countryside.
- These enable locals and visitors alike excellent opportunities to enjoy the areas beautiful natural landscape.
- Residents wishing to visiting the closest actual sites under this category however will need to use their own vehicles or access local public transport services.

PPG17 - Sheering



Parish: Sheering

Area: 835 Hectares Scale: 1:45,000 @ A0

The material contained in this plot has been reproduced from an Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery. (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. EFDC licence No.100018534

County Series Maps (c) Crown Copyright Landmark Information Group Ltd NG 00234
 British Geological Survey data - (c) Copyright Natural Research Council 2001/91 IPR/16-26DX
 Cities Revealed (R) Copyright GeoInformation Group 1932

Key	
	Allotments (AT)
	Cemeteries and Graveyards (CG)
	Formal Playing Pitches (FP)
	Alternative Sites For Sport (AS)
	Informal Recreation Grounds (RG)
	Children's Playgrounds (CY)
	Indoor Facilities For High Levels Of Use (IF1)
	Community Centres and Village Halls (CV)
	Woodland and Semi-Natural Open Space with Public Access (SO)
	Managed Open Space with Public Access (MO)
	Epping Forest
	Parish Boundary
	Denotes Membership Only Facilities

Date: 4th January 2010