



## Summary Briefing Note on Surrey Heath residents use of the Aldershot Military Lands

### Who uses the land?

Over **3100 people replied from within the Surrey Heath** constituency. Surrey Heath land users have particularly strong representation from areas that are constrained by urban areas to the west, meaning that their immediately available green spaces are the military lands (GU12, GU16, and GU15). Land users are **more likely to be female** than male (57% to 41%) and the average user is likely to be **46 years old or older** (59% of respondents).

### Which areas of lands are used by which groups of residents?

**Surrey Heath residents make extensive use of the military lands.** Analysis shows that **residents favour the areas nearest to where they live.** Overall the **most popular areas** for Surrey Heath residents were: **Ash Ranges Range Complex (53% of respondents)**, Ash Ranges flag controlled area (53%), Barossa Common (38%), Deepcut (36%), Bagshot Heath South (34%), and Tunnel Hill (33%).

The popularity of each area varies considerably by postcode area – for **GU12 (roughly the Parish of Ash)**, **84% of the 1188 respondents used the Ash Ranges Range Complex.** A full breakdown for GU12 can be found attached to this summary.

### How often do people use the lands?

Residents of Surrey Heath constituency spend a great deal of time on the military lands – the **average respondent to the survey spent 6.2 hours per week** on the lands. Across the Surrey Heath respondents as a whole the **total number of hours spent on the land was 19,600 hours per week.**

The overwhelming majority of respondents were using the lands **at least once a week** (89%), with 38% of respondents using the lands two or three times a week, and **31% of respondents using the lands daily.** When they visited the lands **94% of residents would stay for at least one hour**, with the most common duration being one to two hours.

### What do people use the lands for?

Almost all **Surrey Heath respondents said they used the lands for multiple purposes.** There was an extremely wide variety of activities (200 activities were counted in the 'Other' category) that took place on the lands – some expected (walking, cycling) and others less so (astronomy, butterfly surveying, and litter picking).

The most popular activities for Surrey Heath residents were: **walking (88% of respondents)**, enjoying the outdoors (52%), **dog walking (48%)**, family time (46%), **cycling (42%)**, running (33%), and wildlife watching (29%).

### Are land users engaged in the byelaws review process?

The **68% of Surrey Heath residents are aware of the forthcoming (and long delayed) byelaws review.** This compares well with the overall survey percentage of 64% of respondents being aware of the review. **2646 respondents (83%) from Surrey Heath took the time to write an explanation** as to why they value the lands – a very small sample of these can be found on subsequent pages of this summary. The high awareness amongst residents and percentage that took the time to write out why they valued the land suggests that **the number of byelaw consultation responses will be very high from Surrey Heath.**

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## About the survey

The questionnaire conducted by the #Saveyourwoods campaign team had ten questions and was designed to provide general information on how local residents used the areas of military land covered by the Aldershot Military Lands Byelaws 1976 for the three months prior to July 2020. The questionnaire was primarily distributed on the Facebook social network. **The questionnaire received 10,899 responses** from the 11<sup>th</sup> July and when the survey was closed (mid-August). Until the undertaking of this survey **there had not been any large scale investigation into how the local populations use the lands** covered by Aldershot Military Lands Byelaws 1976.



## Why do residents value their use of the lands?

**The below are a small number of the 2646 written comments the survey received.**

“As an ex- military family we love the woods especially in Deepcut where we have spent a lot of time as a family”  
*GU15 Resident*

“It feels like this land is my lungs, my friend, my meditation, my happiness.”  
*GU15 Resident*

“I am 73 years old I have played, rode, walked and ran on ash ranged most of these years. I now walk the same areas with my grandson as I did with my sons. I hope my grandson kids can do the same in the future.”  
*GU12 Resident*

“As a serving Army officer I am aware of these lands for both my work but as importantly for the recreation activities they provide. The importance that the military place on the mental wellbeing of their people should be reflected in providing access to not only the military but the local community who access this vital resource to enjoy this unique environment to maintain their mental health by enhancing their leisure activities. I use these lands to get away from it all on my mountain bike and cannot over emphasise how access to these areas has allowed me to 'recharge my batteries' and maintain my physical and mental wellbeing which in turn allows me to be more productive at work but more importantly, to be a better Father and husband at home. Access to these lands by the public must be preserved for the good of both the community and the military.”  
*GU24 Resident*

“Because there is a duty and covenant by the military who took these lands from the people. I have had a 70 year use of them and immeasurable pleasure. Any other recreational area is already under pressure.”  
*GU12 Resident*

“Beautiful open countryside. Paid and maintained by my tax contribution, used to train future soldiers and allow me as a veteran a place of quiet and calm”  
*GU15 Resident*

“The lands are an outstanding source of natural beauty for everyone to enjoy. I understand that the military needs training lands I really do but to take the whole lot away from the British public and then, let's be honest hardly actually use the lands for training is a little unfair. From what I see there are very few people who disrespect the land, and it should be welcomed that we use the land alongside the military. We are after all one nation. The land allows me time to pursue outdoor activities with my kids in a peaceful environment and if the areas are closed off most people will be forced to one location which will then result in overcrowding.”  
*GU16 Resident*

“With the increase in house building locally any open space which is home to wildlife and can be used for outdoor activities is becoming more and more valuable.”  
*GU12 Resident*

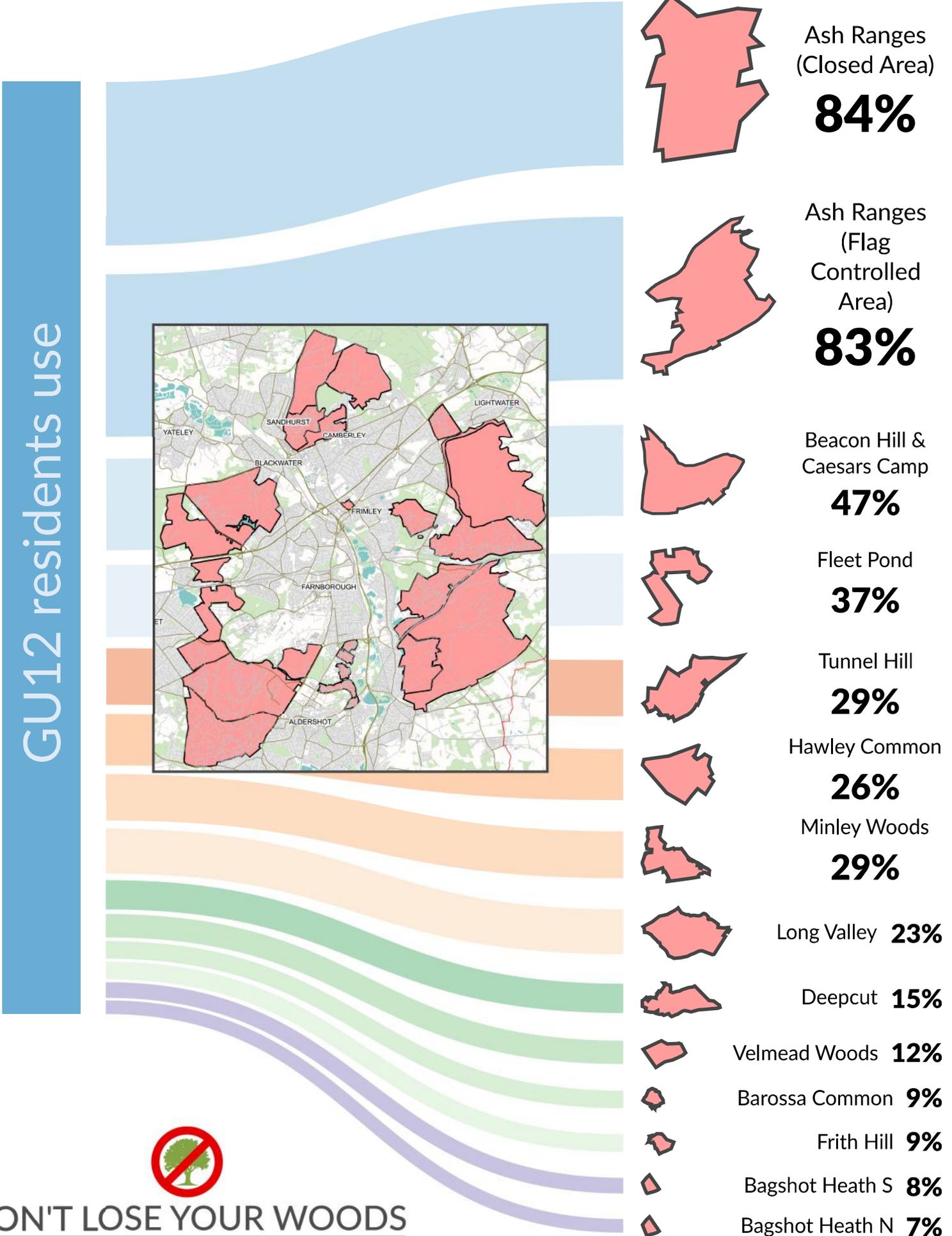
“I have used the land for cycling and walking for over 30 years, it's part of my life. Access to large areas of unspoilt and natural environments are absolutely essential for my mental health and wellbeing, I believe the lack of local and easily accessible areas of true wild forests and woods are responsible for the mental health crisis which is especially prevalent in the south of England. The military lands are a local lifeline for me.”  
*GU16 Resident*

“Used to be able to take my Mother but unable to as she is in a wheelchair so unable to push on the uneven services over the controlled flagged area now.....so have to drive further away to parks where as I live just across the road from the entrance to the closed off part that's why we moved here because of the ranges.”  
*GU12 Resident*

“This is the reason we moved here and use these lands 3 times a day, we respect the military when present , but would be lost without access to these lands”  
*GU16 Resident*

# Percentage of GU12 residents that use each military area

In July 2020 we surveyed local residents to find out how they used the local military lands - the survey received **11 thousand responses**, with 1200 replies from GU12. This is how the residents of GU12 use the lands...



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