
ASSET-BASED APPROACHES TO PUBLIC HEALTH

A conceptual framework for measuring community assets

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A report in which a multi-faceted conceptual framework for measuring the prevalence of community asset networks is developed and applied at a Ward level in Birmingham.

Executive Summary

The health and wellbeing of communities extends beyond the remit of individual public sector departments. Challenges faced by communities in Birmingham are complex and circumstances unique to their spatial context. The necessity for solutions to these underpins the process of addressing Birmingham's '*democratic deficit*' in health service provision.

The endorsement of a deficit-based approach to measurement has been utilised across public sectors for many years. More recently, alternative area measurement methods have become increasingly popular; especially amidst an environment in which public service provision is subject to financial pressures (McLean, 2011).

This study piloted methodological advances for the purpose of utilising an asset-based approach in the future. In particular efforts are made to formulate methods to identify, measure and realise community assets in Bartley Green, Birmingham.



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Glossary of Abbreviations

BCC	Birmingham City Council
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DoH	Department of Health
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
YLL	Years of Life Lost



1. Introduction

Conducted on behalf of Birmingham City Council, this document studies community perceptions of asset based approaches. A conceptual framework for applying an asset-based approach is developed and applied in Bartley Green, a ward in the Edgbaston constituency of Birmingham. Through evaluation of this pilot study, recommendations are made for future applications of an asset based approach for the purpose of mobilising community assets to improve public health. With methodological features which will be replicable across other areas of Birmingham, there is propensity for an asset-based approach to addressing public health concerns to become embedded in mainstream public service provision (Foot and Hopkins, 2010).

2. Measurement in Birmingham: Deficits or Assets?

2.1 Introduction: Assets and Deficits

The endorsement of an asset-based approach provides an opportunity for Local Authorities to respond to community inequalities. Asset-based approaches are embraced throughout public policy, but are often referred to as ‘community engagement’, ‘empowerment’ or ‘enablement’. Although terminology varies, these approaches recognise intrinsic assets of communities; positive capacity, knowledge, networks and skills (GCPH, 2011).

Traditionally public health policies have concentrated upon identification of community deficits and subsequent intervention on behalf of individuals (Rotegard et al. 2010; GCPH, 2011). At a local level, identification of deficits such as deprivation, unemployment and illness, has developed mechanisms for service delivery intended to alleviate these problems. The benefits of deficit models have been advocated for some time; especially regarding provision of quantifiable measurements used to justify investment. A purely deficit-based approach has arguably done little to address health inequalities of UK communities (Foot, 2012). Deficit-based measurement contributes minimally toward articulating the cause of problems, and is representative of non-contextual policy that arguably has little effect on communities and individual’s lives (O’Leary et al. 2011). Indeed in many areas health inequalities are increasing (Marmot, 2010).

An asset-based approach represents a new narrative in UK policy. Advocating an asset-based approach to public health states that communities are not simply characterised by their deficits, but also have intrinsic assets (Foot and Hopkins, 2010). The asset-based concept has seen growing enthusiasm, particularly since the publication of *‘A Glass Half Full: How an asset approach can improve community health and well-being’* by Jane Foot and Trevor Hopkins (2010).

"Asset-based approaches make value of, enhance and develop community capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential. In the asset-based approach, the glass is always half-full, not half-empty."

(Foot and Hopkins, 2010: 6)

Since the publication of a *'Glass Half Full'*, the asset approach has blossomed and seen increasing reference in reports, policy and research (Foot, 2012). In particular, key documents such as the NHS (2011) *'Co-production for health – a new model for a radically new world'* and Department of Health (2012) *'Improving outcomes and supporting transparency'* make reference to assets, and specifically their relationship to addressing social need. The growing acceptance of an asset-based approach represents a transition toward new methodological frameworks. Despite increasing recognition of assets, little guidance has been presented concerning conceptual frameworks in which to apply an asset-based approach.

In 2012 *'A Glass Half Full'* was superseded by a complimentary document titled *'What makes us healthy? The asset approach in practice: evidence, action, evaluation'* (Foot, 2012), which further progresses asset-based approaches and encourages incorporation into public policy.

The publication of the *'Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review'* provides a strategic overview of public health in the UK (Marmot, 2010). The Marmot Review identified health inequalities between communities and put forward recommendations for addressing these (Marmot, 2010). The report makes explicit reference to identifying assets, and propensity for methodologies to incorporate principles of asset-based approaches in future public policy development, but provided little guidance on how to achieve this.

2.2 What is an Asset?

An asset-based approach moves far beyond characterising neighbourhoods purely through deprivation statistics, and does not simply provide a positive twist on existing processes. Rather it builds upon what communities identify as valuable within their unique locality (IACD, 2009).

All communities, regardless of their geographical positions or social standing, have assets, although not necessary utilised to their full potential (GCPH, 2011). In order for an asset to become active, it needs to be invested and realised (Emery and Flora, 2006). When contemplating 'assets' the first consideration are often tangible and physical qualities; however in reality these constitute a small portion of what a community values.

Therefore assets can be described as the collective resources within communities which are at the disposal of individuals (GCPH, 2011). They can be social, financial, physical, environmental or human, for example; employment opportunities, education and social networks (Harrison et al., 2004). Broadly, assets can be categorised into 'types', shown in Figure 1. These categories encapsulate factors such as a social networks, organisations, and the physical and economic resources which enhance wellbeing (Foot and Hopkins, 2010).



Figure 1 Asset Categorisation (Adapted from Foot and Hopkins, 2010)

An imperative concept to the realisation of assets is the mobilisation of community-led movements that have long-term viability in identifying, utilising and networking their own innate assets (IACD, 2009). Subjective identification of assets from an external standpoint is detrimental to the process, and as such, the categories identified in Figure 1 do not represent an exhaustive list.

As well as categories, assets can operate at a variety of levels. In a broadest sense this comprises three levels, displayed in Figure 2.

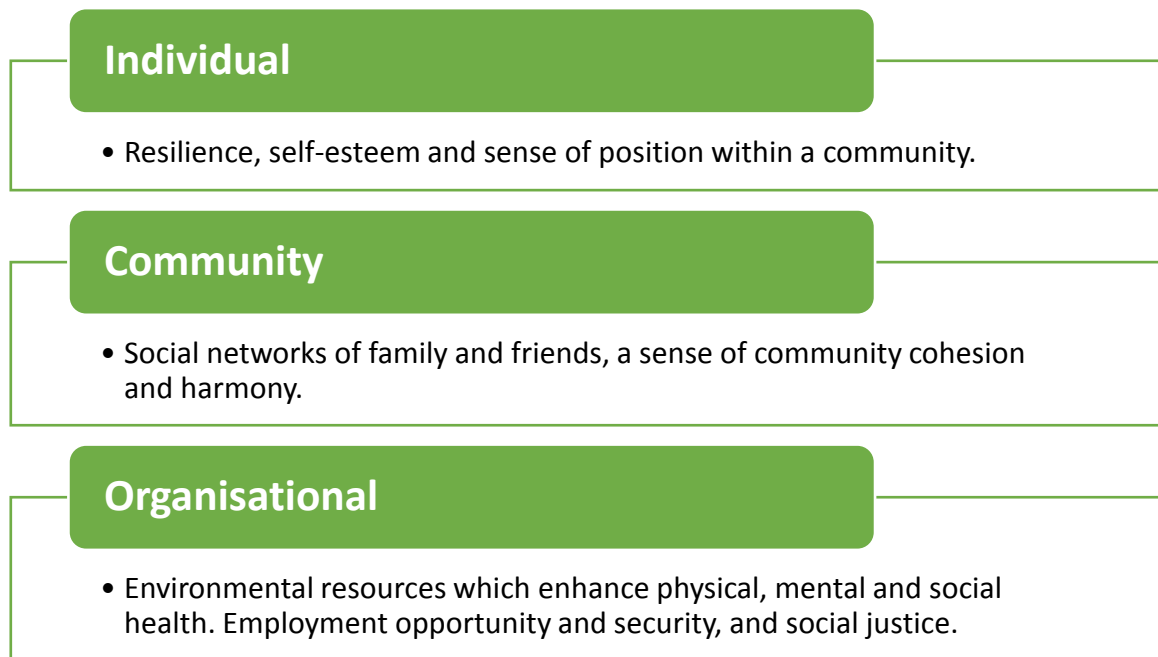


Figure 2 Operational levels of assets (Adapted from GCPH, 2011)

Through identifying categories of assets within a community, and then configuring which level these assets operate at, it is possible to evaluate individuals' exposure to assets. When an individual has the capability to utilise assets within their community, then a network of buffers which protect against life stresses and bolster mental health and community resilience is formed (Foot and Hopkins, 2010).

'Capability' is closely linked to assets. Amartya Sen (1983) first conceptualised how an individual's material surroundings influence their life choices, and thus their 'capability' within society. An asset-based approach mobilises these capabilities and provides access to society for all areas of communities, rather than simply addressing those who are 'ill' as is the case with deficit-based approaches.

2.3 Assets and Public Health

Health characteristics in the UK are extensively correlated with economic and social inequality. On average, those living in the most deprived areas are estimated to live 7 years less than those in more affluent areas (Marmot, 2010).

Although public health policy has previously addressed community deficit, and achieved success in many regards, it has failed to capitalise on interventions which address a community's social context (GCPH, 2011). In regards to assets, health inequalities are influenced by an individual's local community, social networks and capabilities within life (Foot, 2010).

The need to concentrate efforts towards improving health and well-being, as well as preventing illness and injury, is widely recognised; entrenched visions of health as prevention of illness and injury are challenged and promotion of wellbeing becomes equally important (Foot, 2012). Health & Wellbeing Strategies recognise health service provision as not solely the responsibility of the NHS. Local Councils, third sector organisations and communities have a duty to play in provision of material, social and psychological health services.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) are used to develop Health and Wellbeing Strategies, and to commission services across local governments, the NHS and other partners, providing an overview of health and social care needs of an area.



Figure 3 Cyclical relationship between JSNA and Health and Wellbeing Strategies (DoH, 2012)

JSNA's are not an exhaustive process; they are representative of a single step in a cyclical process amongst other policies and initiatives. Firstly needs of a local area are assessed, and priorities identified, then outcomes are considered and subsequent need, thus restarting the cycle, as displayed in Figure 3.

Despite obligations to include assessments regarding assets and strengths of communities, outcomes in the quality of JSNA reports have been variable (Winwood and Kaur, 2012). Following Government guidance, Birmingham has pledged to begin delivery of a new JSNA

"A health asset is any factor or resource which enhances the ability of individuals, communities and populations to maintain and sustain health and well-being and to help to reduce health inequalities. These assets can operate at the level of the individual, family or community as protective and promoting factors to buffer against life's stresses."

Anthony Morgan (Morgan and Ziglio, 2007: 18)

which focuses on engagement and assets. Utilising an asset-based approach toward reducing health inequalities is one such way that health concerns can be addressed.

2.4 Summary

Advocated within academic literature is the role of professional practitioners who engage with communities, focusing what communities have, rather than what they don't; the result is higher levels of civic participation in identifying and addressing community need. (Foot and Hopkins, 2010). In a climate of increased public spending cuts, asset-based approaches are criticised as simply a withdrawal of Local Authority investment. However, replacement of investment in service provision is not the intention, rather attempting to empower communities to realise, and value their local assets (McLean, 2011). Asset-based working challenges the shortcomings of deficit-based approaches which 'fills the gaps' (GCPH, 2011), and emphasises value of social relationships, confidence and efficacy of communities (Foot, 2012); empowering citizens to address *sources* of community deficit, as opposed to interventionist policy treating the *symptoms* of deficit.

The fundamental principle is building upon specific community assets and strengths through engaging with, and empowering, citizen action (Foot and Hopkins, 2010). In relation to public health, promotion of face-to-face community networks, encouraging civic participation and building social capital is the desired outcome. This new narrative requires alternative methodological approaches in ensure successful implementation.

Working alongside communities as partners and empowering residents to realise intrinsic resources that promote and improve health and wellbeing is achievable (Foot and Hopkins, 2010; Foot, 2012). Assets can identify problems and activate beneficial mechanisms for promotion of health and wellbeing; leading to a mobilised community that is capable of facing ill-health, thus increasing resilience and wellbeing of residents (GCPH, 2011; Foot, 2012).

Table 1 provides an overview of deficit-based approaches and characteristics of an asset-based approach.

Table 1 Deficit Approach vs Asset Based Approach (Adapted from O’Leary et al., 2011)

Deficit Approaches (Where we are now)	Asset-based Approach (Future approach)
Identifies community deficiencies, defined by data from an external standpoint	Begins with assets within communities
Reactionary response to problems	Identifies intrinsic strengths and opportunities
Provides services	Invest in citizens and develop capacity
Advocate the role of agencies and organisations	Emphasise the role of community
View individuals as passive clients and consumers of services	Focus on the common good within communities and empower individuals to co-produce
Treat ‘ill’ individuals	Support individuals to develop their own potential
Implement policy programmes as solutions	See community residents as solutions

2.5 Project Aims

With this in mind, this project aims to identify assets in a community in Birmingham taking care not to turn it into a data collection exercise but instead allow people to contribute to their asset collection. The task is to portray and distribute this information to the community. ArcGIS will be used with the possibility of initiating an interactive map for communities to upload their own perceived assets on to.

3. Research Context: Bartley Green, Birmingham

3.1 Area Characteristics



Figure 4 Bartley Green Ward location in Birmingham

Bartley Green is a residential suburb located to the South West of Birmingham’s City Centre. It is part of the Edgbaston district constituency with a population of around 25,000, accounting for 2.4% of the city population. The ward is characterised by a large amount of green spaces and adjoining country parks.

3.2 Health Profile

Using ‘Years of Life Lost’ (YLL) (A measurement of premature mortality expressed as a rate per 10,000 people), the ward profiles statistics are largely comparable to the Birmingham average. However a higher proportion of years are lost from coronary heart diseases, cancers and chronic liver diseases. In contrast, less loss of life is reported from accidents, suicide and undetermined injury.

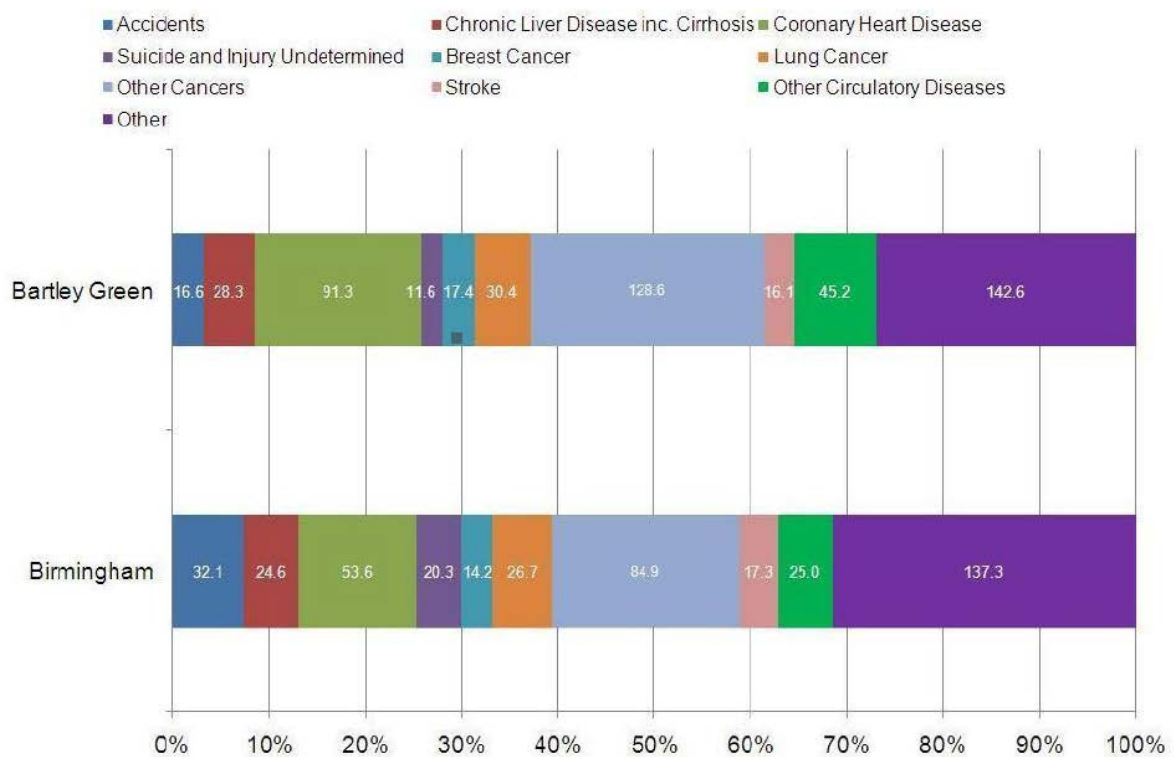


Figure 5 Years of Life Lost 2007-2009 (ONS, 2009)

3.3 Bartley Green School

The research was undertaken at Bartley Green School Specialist Technology and Sports College. It is located in the centre of Bartley Green and is a local authority maintained specialist school, catering for 11-16 year olds. In 2013 the school achieved an overall rating of 'Outstanding' through Ofsted inspections (Ofsted, 2013). The school represents an active environment which has many external links to the wider community.

Bartley Green School was selected due to existing good relations between Birmingham City Council and Staff at the school. The School also has an adjoining community leisure centre, which is funded and run by BCC, hosting influential initiatives such as BeActive (BCC, n.d.).

It was recognised that assets have larger sphere of influence than their immediate locality, but this study was limited to studying pupils of Bartley Green School. Due to time and resource constraints it was deemed that the demographic accessible through Bartley Green School was suitable for the purpose of this study.

4. Methodology

4.1 Tangible Asset Mapping

Assets can be physical, formal, intangible, or informal. To map physical assets, a database was created of faith buildings, schools, community centres, and third sector organisations along with their relevant postcodes. Data was acquired through collaboration with Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) who provided a directory of known organisations and physical assets in Bartley Green (See Appendix A for accessed databases). A total of 48 physical assets were located and mapped using GIS software in order to evaluate the spatial distribution of assets across the ward.

The tendency for maps to become diagnostic tools that serve to operationalise interventions should be negated (O’Leary et al. 2011), as such this served as a base map from which to advance our findings

4.2 Questionnaires

As community input into the identification of assets is important in recognising their importance, questionnaires were created which provide a chance for people to acknowledge their opinions on what was important to them about Bartley Green.

Two different groups used the school facilities: pupils during the school day and local residents during weekends and evenings as sports facilities. Considering this and the different age groups targeted, two different questionnaires were produced for weekend users and pupils

4.2.1 Pupils and Staff of Bartley Green School

The school pupil respondents provided data regarding the younger demographics of Bartley Green. The questionnaire was devised in order to capture what residents of Bartley Green viewed as assets. Information was also collected regarding access to assets, and usage patterns. An example questionnaire is available in Appendix B.

A total of 52 pupils completed the questionnaire. Distributing questionnaires by visiting classrooms proved to be a successful technique; collecting a depth of data with relative ease.

Access to the school was aided considerably through BCC's close association with Bartley Green School. The visit was organised with a BCC representative, whom accompanied the researchers during the visit. Having a close association with a representative in the school proved useful in gaining access to larger groups of respondents. Had the researchers not been accompanied during the school visit then a DBS check would have been required; lengthening the process considerably.

To assess the community assets experience by the school pupils and staff the following research questions were devised. These questions provide a basis from which to evaluate the methodological processes and outcomes of this research with a view to future application of this approach.

Research Questions:

- 1. How can assets be **identified by a community**?*
- 2. How can the assets of a community be networked in a way that makes them **more accessible to local populations**?*
- 3. What methods are suitable so as to avoid entering a 'data gathering exercise' and instead invoking a system in which **local people can contribute to asset networks**?*
- 4. What is the best method for **disseminating this information** to local communities?*
- 5. What lessons can be drawn from this process for **future applications**?*

4.2.2 Community Mobilisation

In an attempt to stimulate community based asset identification a social media campaign was launched using Twitter as the primary platform. Using '#ILoveBartleyGreen' individuals were asked to tweet a photo of something they considered an asset in Bartley Green.

The basis of this component was to collect individual perceptions of community assets. When proposing the campaign to potential respondents it was important not to impose the researcher's perceptions of what constitutes an asset. Providing a broad overview which encapsulated existing assets provided the basis from which individuals could identify their own personal assets.

To aid the process, this was run in conjunction with the pupil questionnaires. Flyers were distributed along with the questionnaires in class, as well as distributed elsewhere amongst the school.

4.2.3 Local residents

This comprised out of school users of the leisure centre facilities at Bartley Green School. The questionnaire were given out on the 15th February 2014, targeting parents bringing children to football and dance lessons, members of the karate club, and Be Active badminton class users. Some people admitted that they did not live in Bartley Green but filled out the questionnaire as best they could about the area. An example questionnaire is available in Appendix C.

Also, pensioner social groups were visited. These groups had previously hosted their meetings at Bartley Green School, but had since moved to Milebrook Hall and Holloway Hall, which are located a short distance away in Bartley Green. Data was gathered using an interview approach (predominantly due to reading and writing handicaps) about pensioner's use and engagement with the Bartley Green community.

In order to map the community involvement of weekend school users and pensioners, a community index score was established. This drew on factors such as number of activities undertaken at the school/community hall, the frequency of use, the number of activities undertaken outside the school or community hall facilities and how often, the number of skills an individual declares, whether they use them in the community, their number of hobbies, and how often they undertake them, and the number of 'diverse' people they know. The table below shows how the final score is calculated:

Table 2 Method for calculating Community Index Score

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (QUESTION NUMBER ON QUESTIONNAIRE)		SCORE
NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN THE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY HALL (Q5)	Numerical	<p>So all factors are weighted equally, multiply by:</p> <p>*1/7</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">=community index score</p>
FREQUENCY OF USE (Q6)	More than once a week=4/4 Weekly=3/4 Monthly= 2/4 Less than monthly=1/4	
NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES/INTERESTS UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL/COMMUNITY HALL (Q8+Q11)	Numerical. Add number of answers to Q8 an Q11 together	
FREQUENCY OF THESE ACTIVITIES (Q12)	More than once a week= 5/5 Weekly=4/5 Monthly=3/5 Yearly=2/5 Occasionally=1/5	
NUMBER OF FRIENDSHIPS WITH 'DIVERSE FRIENDS' (Q15)	(Number of boxes ticked)/15	
NUMBER OF SKILLS DECLARED (Q9)	numerical	
USE OF SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY (Q10)	Skills used in the community= 1/1 Skills not used in the community=0/1	
		<p>TOTAL SUM OF EACH COMMUNITY INDEX SCORE IS THE OVERALL SCORE FOR THAT PARTICIPANT.</p>

A map was created using GIS software to represent the spatial distribution of community involvement and thus the spread of assets throughout Bartley Green. As introduced earlier, subjective identification of assets from an external perspective is to be avoided. The creation of a 'live' map, in which assets are continually developed and changes are represented is the desired outcome (O'Leary et al. 2011). This continual evolving process maintains enthusiasm within communities and aids toward generating ownership. If a community perceives ownership of a map, and its uses, then the potential for community mobilisation is increased. The implications of these maps are discussed in the context for Birmingham City Council.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Tangible asset map

The first map (Appendix D) was produced using data acquired from BCC data. It maps the location of schools, parks and play facilities as well as third sector organisations which were mapped by postcode. There is even spread of assets throughout Bartley Green, with some extending northwards into Quinton.

5.2 Results of the research questions for school users

The results of the school questionnaire are discussed in the following research questions:

1. How can assets be identified by a community?

Rather than quantifying each individual's community involvement, the view was to assess the presence and accessibility of assets in Bartley Green.

Identifying types of assets was a by-product of this research. Commonly identified assets included various sports clubs (most notably football, and gymnastics), musical activities and entertainment venues. However, identifying the location of these assets was not achieved. As such, mapping the spatial orientation provided no extra information. However, identifying the types of activities indicates what assets are accessible to residents in Bartley Green, providing indication of services which may be successful.

It quickly became apparent that the school was viewed as a fundamental asset to the community and a hub for activities. The school was well utilised by students outside of school hours, with the majority of uses from after school revision classes and sports clubs hosted in the adjoining leisure centre.

Recommendation:

Attempting to represent each asset in a GIS format results in a loss of information. For individual activities such as sports clubs, GIS representation is suitable. For more complex activities such as social outings, GIS mapping is not suitable. Alternative methods for presenting this type of asset information should be explored.

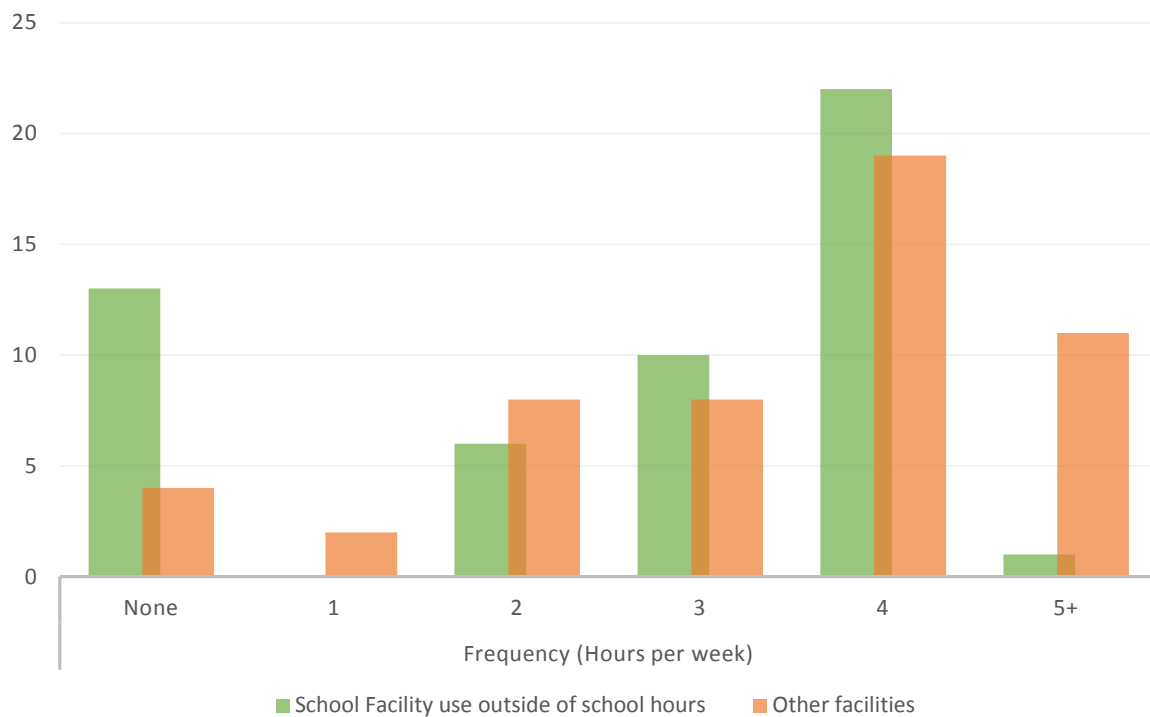


Figure 6 Facility use in and outside of school

Per week more time was spent using facilities outside of the school environment. A large number of the respondents identified local parks as a good asset, especially relevant to Bartley Green due to the presence of lots of green space. Other assets identified included various sports clubs, entertainment complexes such as cinema and bowling, and religious activities.

Encouraging individuals to identify assets has proven difficult. From the data analysis process it is apparent that individuals identify common assets such as sports clubs and

physical facilities with relative ease. More obscure assets such as social networks and unquantifiable skills remain unaccounted for.

Utilising a measure of friendship diversity it is apparent that younger generations in Bartley Green show a degree of ethnic-mixing, shown in Figure 7. Using this data it is possible to predict the capability of individuals to access asset networks which may not previously have been available to them if they had a narrow friendship group.

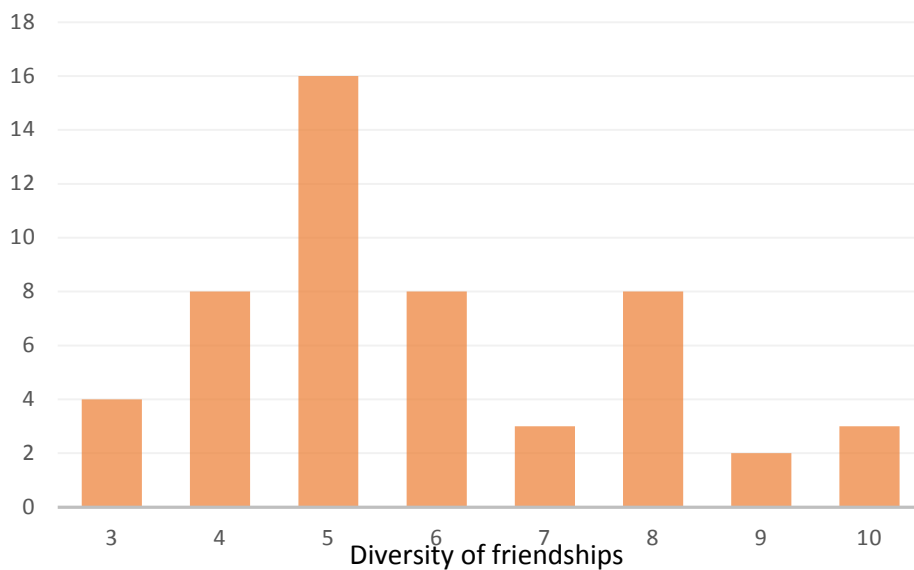


Figure 7 Friendship diversity

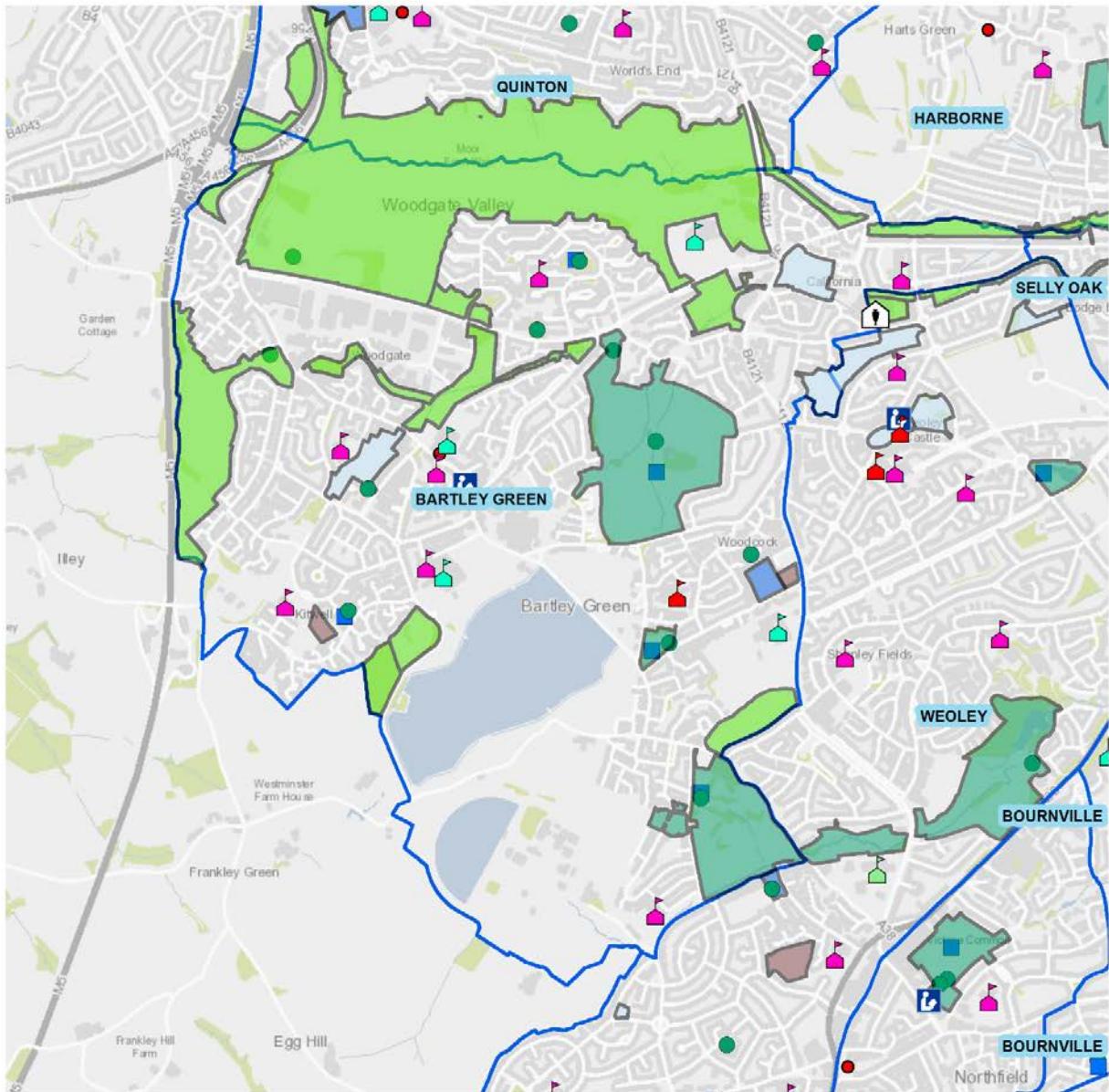
Recommendation:

Encourage individuals to think beyond tangible, physical assets. An opportunity to do so may be to distribute asset-based information prior to completing questionnaires. For example, a flyer or poster. Whilst avoiding subjectively identifying assets in a community.

2. How can the assets of a community be networked in a way that makes them more accessible to local populations?

In order for assets to be realised to their full potential it is important that residents have equal opportunity to access these assets. Identifying tangible assets prior to conducting primary research provided a baseline from which to evaluate the spatial orientation of activities. Figure 8 displays the assets which were identified. These assets were identified using existing database accessible via BCC servers, and were supplemented by data collected from BVSC and further data collected by the researchers. Alongside the existing asset database, an additional 40 physical assets were identified by the researchers.

During collection of this data a 'bleed' technique was used; involving collecting asset information for adjoining areas as well as those within Bartley Green. As was exemplified with the spatial location of respondents, not all reside within the Bartley Green Ward, although many remained after school hours to utilise community assets. Therefore extending research beyond administrative boundaries provides a more realistic representation of individual activity and mobility.



Key













- | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|---------------------------------|
|  | Nursery Schools |  | Allotments |
|  | Primary Schools |  | Games Court |
|  | Secondary Schools |  | Play area |
|  | Special Schools |  | Museums |
|  | Leisure Centres |  | Libraries |
| | |  | Country Parks & Nature Reserves |
| | |  | Parks and Gardens |
| | |  | Recreation Grounds |
| | |  | Public Green Space |

Figure 8 Physical Assets in Bartley Green

Recommendations:

Identifying an asset baseline should not narrow search opportunities. During representation of the information it is important to retain a depth of information. Careful categorisation of assets should be used in order to avoid losing relevant information.

Expanding search criteria beyond administrative boundaries is important in order to assess mobility patterns of individuals and represent community boundaries.

In order to fully assess the extent of these activities future studies would benefit from collating information regarding where activities were undertaken. In doing so it could be determined how far users travel to certain facilities, and would also bring to light a gap in service provision within the community. For example, those participating in certain sports clubs may have to travel to adjoining areas. Collating this information with more in-depth demographic information would provide the required information regarding accessibility to assets. Obtaining this information would subsequently provide avenue to address issues were the capability of individuals to engage with assets may be hindered due to their circumstances, for example transportation links.

Recommendation:

Gathering locations of origin and destination points will provide opportunity to assess the accessibility of assets to various demographic groups within communities.

Whilst networking assets may appear to be a desired outcome, it should not remain a priority. Rather a successful asset network will improve individuals' capability to engage with assets within the community. In doing so an individual's social mobility will be improved and they will retain personal choice as to which activities they wish to engage in.

3. What methods are suitable so as to avoid entering a ‘data gathering exercise’ and instead invoking a system in which local people can contribute to asset networks?

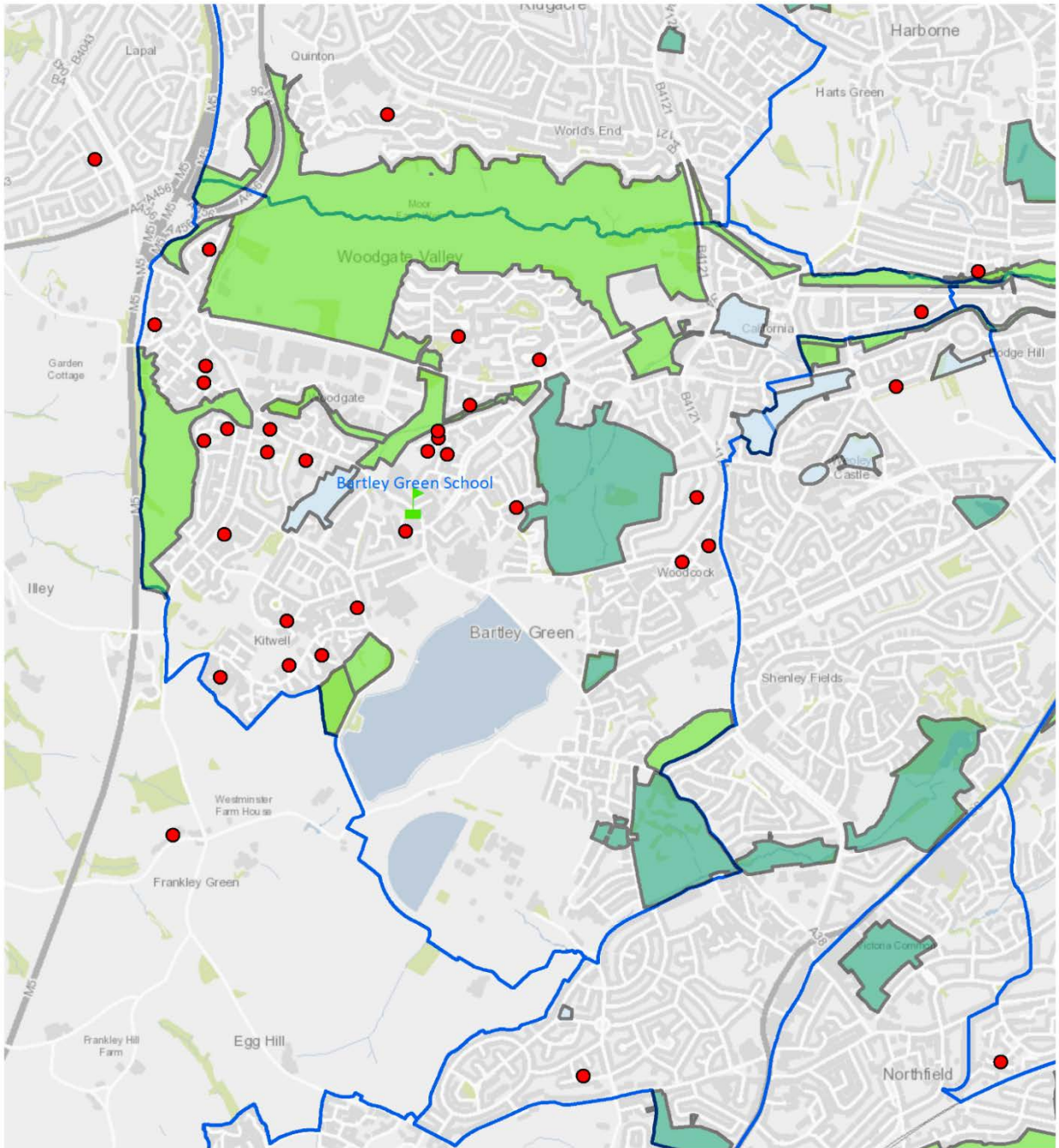
Methods used during this study provided a depth of data over a short space of time. Utilising methods which allow access to large numbers of respondents is crucial in order to obtain sufficient depth of information. As shown in Figure 9, the majority of respondents reside close to Bartley Green School. Although useful, information regarding where individuals reside is of narrow use. Rather the location of an individual’s activity would be more useful. In this case, an area in which an individual is highly active is more likely to produce successful community mobilisation. As aforementioned, reliance on administrative boundaries should be avoided as this does not fully represent an individual’s mobility patterns.

Caution should be aired in relying on postcode information as accuracy cannot be guaranteed. During data-analysis three postcodes did not register. With a sample size of 52 this represents a small proportion. However, if employed on a larger scale this could result in a loss of results accuracy due to data gaps.

Formation of questionnaire topics is particularly important prior to undertaking primary data collection. Questions should be carefully formulated with a vision toward how they will be utilised during the data analysis stage. One method of ensuring useful information is obtained is to collate questions into ‘themes’. In this study, questions were devised with the view of being used as comparators during data analysis. Questions 6-9 (See Appendix A) were formulated to be used as comparative questions, providing information which would complement the other, as displayed in Figure 9.

Recommendation:

The use of pilot studies to determine the nature of results which will be received.



Key



-  Bartley Green School
-  Respondents Location

Figure 9 Spatial location of questionnaire respondents

Whilst questionnaires are one component of this research process they were not the only one. Efforts to develop a social media campaign were unsuccessful but highlighted potential for future employment of this methodology. A social media campaign has the advantage of providing an easily accessible platform to residents. On the contrary, questionnaire data requires analysis, and upon completion provides only a 'snapshot' of results.

Recommendation:

Employ other techniques alongside questionnaires in order to stimulate and encourage community mobilisation. Questionnaires will provide supplementary data, whilst alternative methods will produce longer lasting effects.

4. What is the best method for disseminating this information to local communities?

During the research period the researchers also had opportunity to interact with many of the respondents, both pupils and staff. This was an important opportunity as it provided avenue to gather additional information which would not have been collected through using questionnaires alone.

Engaging with leadership figures such as these is important in order to encourage long-term community mobilisation. Their position within a community provides a viewpoint which can be used to guide future research. Consultation with community leaders prior to undertaking research would provide foresight to direct formulation of questionnaire topics.

Recommendation:

Building a strong relationship with community leaders and gathering qualitative data through this, provides unprecedented avenue from which to supplement research with information which would not be collected from questionnaires.

Disseminating information to communities has proven a difficult topic to investigate. As mentioned questionnaires provide little ability for communities to influence research outcomes and retains a top-down stance in which the “expert” (researcher) studies the “subject” (communities).

Recommendation:

Provision, rather than collection, should be aimed for. Disseminating implies an end-product. Rather a long-term relationship should be constructed with communities and community leaders in which liaison through transparent platforms

5. What lessons can be drawn from this process for future applications?

The use of social media and its increasing presence in everyday life allows new opportunities for research. Although the social media campaign was unsuccessful in this context there remains propensity for this type of data gathering technique to be employed in the future.

The benefits of this method are clear;

- Rapid access to a range of respondents,
- Readily available to the majority,
- Transparent process, allowing the public access to information as it is gathered,
- Requires very little funding,
- Propensity for longitudinal study application.

However, it should be noted that in the context of a secondary school Twitter was deemed to be a suitable platform. In other demographic groups it may not be suitable, such as the old aged groups that were also included in the wider research process.

The time period in which this research was undertaken was the major constraining factor. Access to the school was limited, and as such promotion of the media campaign was not completed to its full extent. To ensure a successful uptake of social media campaigns such as this it is vital to maintain a sustained effort to encourage uptake.

5.3 Assets from the local residents

In total there were over 60 responses to the questionnaire. Of the people interviewed, many cited the reservoir and open green spaces as one of their favourite things about the area. The older generations especially gained much enjoyment from being able to get out into the open countryside. The local youth clubs were recognised as an important asset, as was the sense of community about the place and the friendships within the area. When questioned about friendships, the pensioner groups explained that most, if not all, of their friends were the other people in their group. When recognising diverse friendships, many had connections with different people through their family and children rather than a direct friendship with someone of another religion, race, age or sexuality. Many pensioners had family still within Bartley Green or close by, which remained their point of contact for community involvement.

A map was produced (Appendix E) using the calculated community index score for each participant and mapped against their postcode. People interviewed came from all across the ward and there appears to be no dominant cluster of community involvement. It was observed that people were disinclined to list their skills, presumably as they had not been self-identified. The best results here were achieved when the participant completed the questionnaire in an interview style (usually due to forgotten reading glasses, or poor literacy skills) as the interviewer was able to ask reactive questions regarding their skills (although it is understood that the identification of a skill is then the responsibility of the interviewer rather than the participant).

Community involvement in Bartley Green was generally low (figure 10), with most people's score below the median percentage. However most everyone had some degree of community involvement.

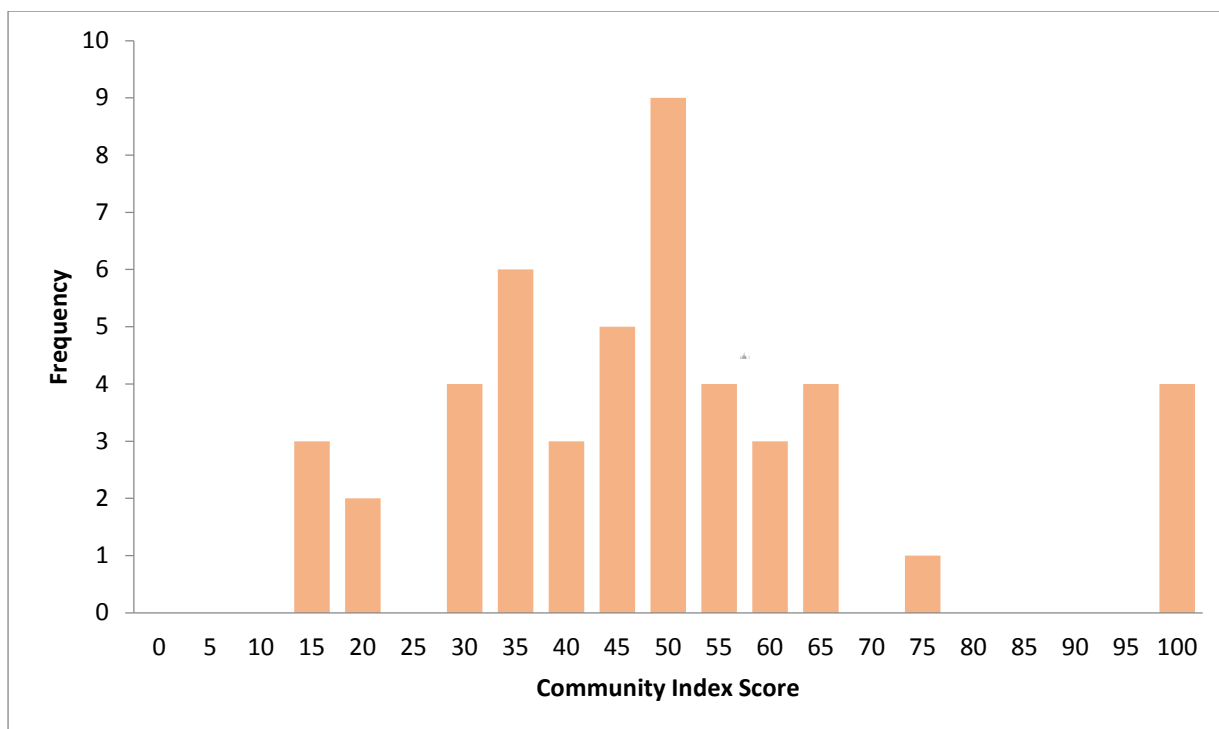


Figure 10: frequency distribution of Community Index Scores as a percentage of total participants

Appendix F combines the previous two maps in order to observe spatial correlation between community involvements, skills acquired, diversity of friendships and acquaintances and proximity to third sector organisations. There is a large amount of community involvement in central Bartley Green which correlates with numerous third sector organisations. However, people who are most involved in the community live in the south east corner of the ward, again correlating with several third sector organisations. The housing estate just south of Woodgate Valley Country Park has a few third sector organisations yet little community involvement. It is surprising that no-one who lived here was interviewed; this may be an indicator of their levels of community involvement. Ultimately, both factors follow a largely similar pattern, the biggest community hubs are where the housing estates are. It is recognised that residents can drive to third sector activities, schools, volunteering and sports clubs (many people interviewed at the school over the weekend had driven) therefore positive (or negative) correlation may not be significant, although a prevalence of community involvement opportunities within the area may encourage people to participate.

5.4 Recommendations

This research is only useful so long as Birmingham City Council can use it to promote and increase assets in Bartley Green. Some of the stand-out findings from the results of the local residents' questionnaire indicate that there is a strong sense of community in Bartley Green, and lots of pride in the area. People are engaging with voluntary activities such as social clubs and the sports clubs the school offers at weekends. There are multiple youth and pensioner clubs and a number of designated community centres for these activities. With pensioners in particular some of their only friends come from the social clubs and the council should fight hard to keep them running. The amount of third sector organisations and physical assets in the area roughly matches community involvement and therefore, in theory, increased mental and physical health. These clubs need a community leader to organise and maintain the club, so in order for these clubs to survive the council should ensure it is as easy as possible to run them. A pertinent next step would be to ask community leaders "What would make your role easier?" Obviously not all assets have been quantified and there is still work to do to understand the intricate network of relationships that improve mental resilience residents.

The badminton coach for the Be Active classes run at the school over the weekends, pointed out that despite there being lots of free sports facilities, fitness classes and court hire, numbers were still low. The people using the facilities over the weekend were a range of ages and backgrounds, providing a huge asset to the people of Bartley Green; however, only people who attended the classes were those that already used the facilities for something else. They are unable to attract people with no prior ties to the school, primarily due to a lack of advertising. The Badminton coach suggested newspaper adverts or leaflets through doors promoting the free circuit training sessions or free hire of the courts. Although an initial cost would be high, this would go far in improving the health of the residents.

As part of the solution to this problem, interviewees were asked whether they would use an interactive map listing community organisations and activities. 72% of those who responded said they would. Others suggested creating posters or leaflets to leave in libraries and

leisure centres. As the map would need to be owned by the community and added to by them, ideas include uploading information on an online community. As there is a danger that this may exclude people who do not have internet access, it could also be possible to place an interactive touch screen map in a central place in Bartley Green which advertises community events, provides a sense of cohesiveness and promotes assets.

6. Key Action Points

1. Perception

It was apparent that many people have a preconception of services BCC delivers. To fully benefit from an asset-based approach it is important that this image is changed and the services people expect are in alignment with BCC's aspirations.

2. Compliment, not replace

Upon discussion of asset-based approaches with staff and students many were sceptical of its position within policy. Reiterating that the asset-based approach is to be delivered alongside rather than directly replace existing services is vital (Foot and Hopkins, 2010:12).

3. Community Centred

In order for the asset-based approach to succeed it is important to have the support of local community leaders, ensuring long-term viability of the project. In this instance the researchers had contact with community leaders, but had little opportunity to extend their relationship beyond initial meetings. Additionally, once the asset based approach had been explained, many agreed with the concept, recognising the link with health and wellbeing. This process takes time and future applications of this method must appreciate this.

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Appendix A: Physical asset databases

Websites utilised during the collection of asset information;

- www.birmingham.gov.uk
- www.friendsofbartleygreen.org
- www.hollowayhall.org.uk
- www.birminghamfaithmap.org.uk
- www.bvsct hirdsectordatabase.org
- www.ons.gov.uk
- And various other organisation websites

Appendix B: Example Student Questionnaire

Birmingham City Council is undertaking research about the role communities play in improving people’s health. Part of this involves understanding how much people engage in local leisure activities and how supported they feel by their friends. In this questionnaire we want to know how you like to spend your free time, and how much you feel part of a community in Bartley Green. It is completely anonymous but please be as honest and detailed as possible. Do not worry if you can’t answer one of the questions. Eventually the results will be mapped and available online.

1. Are you male or female?

2. School year?

3. What is your postcode and road name? (This is so we can map everyone’s answers)

.....

4. How do you get to school each day? (please circle)

walk cycle bus train parents drive friend’s parents drive

Other.....

5a. What hobbies do you have? E.g. sports, musical instruments, craft etc.	5b. How many hours do you spend doing these hobbies per week?
<i>E.g. Football</i>	<i>1 hour a week</i>

6. Do you ever use the school building after the school day finishes? What do you use it for?

.....

7. What facilities do you use outside of school? E.g. park, youth centre, church

.....

8. How much time do you spend using them? (Please circle)

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| A few times a year | Once a week | |
| Once a month | Up to 3 times a week | |
| Once a fortnight | More than 3 times a week | Everyday |

9. What is the best thing about living in Bartley Green?

.....
.....

10. Do you have a part time job in Bartley Green (volunteering or paid)? If so, what do you do?

.....

11. How do you know most of your friends?

- School Your neighbourhood Sports club Religious activities
Other.....

12. How far away from you do your closest friends live?

.....
.....

13 a. Do you want to live in Bartley Green when you leave school? Yes No

b. What are the reasons behind your answer?

.....
.....

12. Are you friends with someone who... *(Indicate all that apply)*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Has recently moved to the area, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is Asian, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender community, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is a community volunteer, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is White, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is of a different faith, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is Black, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is at least 20 years older than yourself, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is Hispanic, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is at least 40 years older than yourself, |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Has a disability |

Thank you very much

Appendix C: Example of the Local Resident Questionnaire

Asset Mapping Questionnaire

Birmingham City Council is currently undertaking research that is looking towards increasing community activity. An important part of this research is identifying what features local communities view as an asset. An 'asset' can be anything, and depends on your individual viewpoint. For example some may view local parks, voluntary organisations, individual skills or social groups as assets.

1. Please circle as appropriate:

Are you: Male Female

Age: 0-10 11-14 14-18 19-24 25-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60+

2. What is your postcode and road name? B15 4 11 11

3. Occupation: Teacher

4. What qualifications do you have?
.....

5. What activities do you undertake at the school?
.....

6. How often do you use the facilities at the school (please circle)?

More than once a week / weekly / monthly / less than monthly

7. What other activities would you like the school to offer?
.....

8. Do you undertake activities outside of the school environment? E.g. evening classes, book clubs. Please name them
.....
.....

9. What skills do you have? Either at work, or at home?
.....
.....

10. How do you use these skills in the community?
.....
.....

11. What are your hobbies or interests and where do you take part in them?
.....
.....

9. How much time do you spend doing these activities in the community?
WEEKLY

Occasionally Yearly Monthly More than once a week

10. Do you go elsewhere to participate in any similar activities or events? If so, where?

.....
.....

11. How do you know most of your friends?

E.g. sports or social clubs, faith communities, pub quiz teams, allotment groups, through work

.....
.....

This question assesses the friendship networks between individuals within a community.

12. Would you consider yourself to have a friendship with someone who... (Indicate all that apply)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Business owner, | <input type="checkbox"/> is White, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is at least 20 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Receives welfare, | <input type="checkbox"/> is Black, | younger than yourself, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Has recently moved to | <input type="checkbox"/> Is Hispanic, | <input type="checkbox"/> Has a disability |
| the area, | <input type="checkbox"/> is Asian, | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other (Please state |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is of the Lesbian, Gay, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is a community leader, | |
| Bisexual Transgender | <input type="checkbox"/> Is of a different faith, | |
| community, | <input type="checkbox"/> Is at least 20 years older | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is a manual worker, | than yourself, | |

13. What is the best thing about living in Bartley Green?

E.g. Particular buildings, organisations, community events or simply networks of individuals

.....
.....
.....

14. Do you intend to continue to live in Bartley Green? If so, for how long?

.....
.....

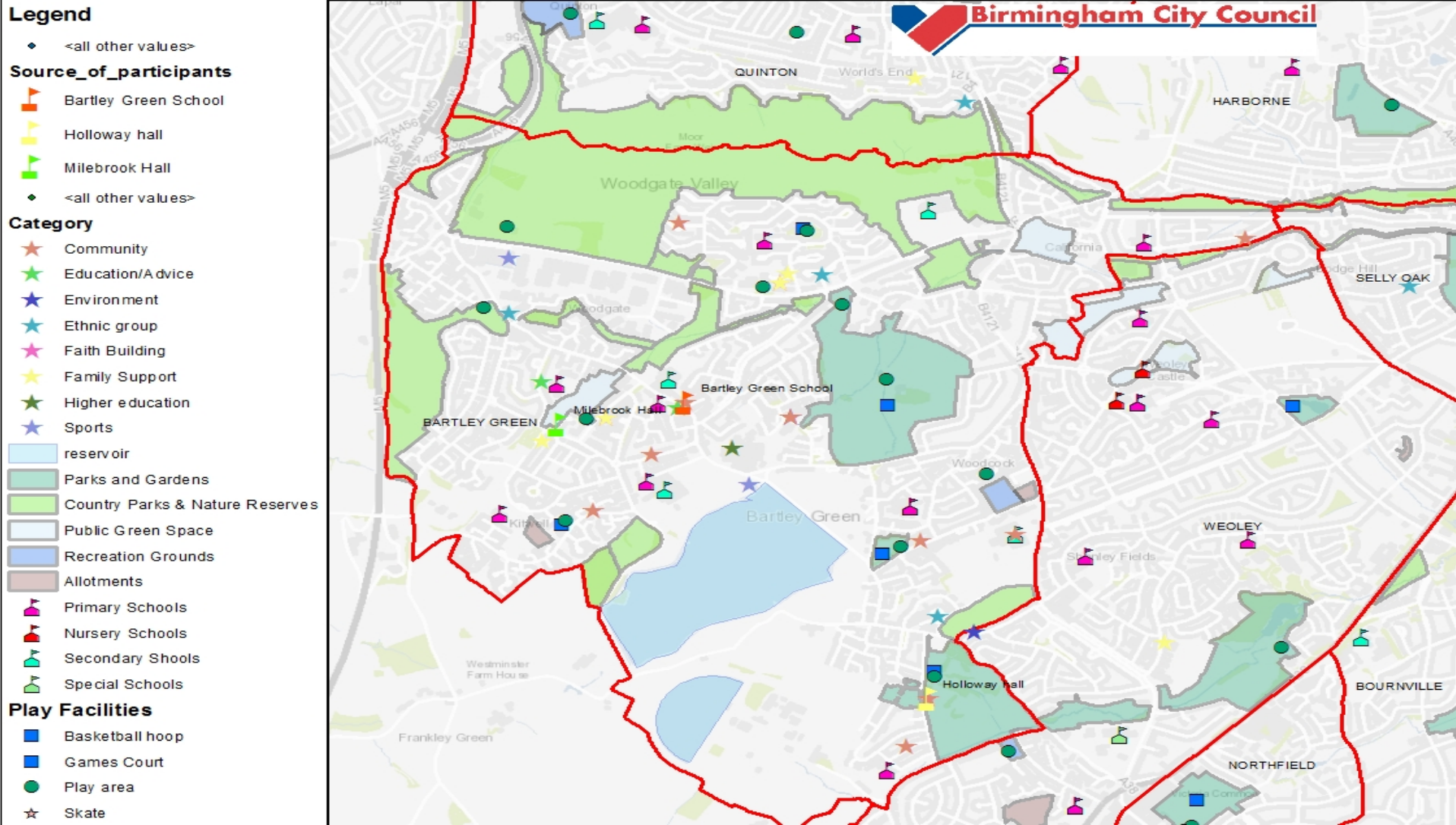
15. If an interactive map was available to see what kind of skills and networks were available in Bartley green, would you use it? If not, can you suggest anything you may use?

.....
.....

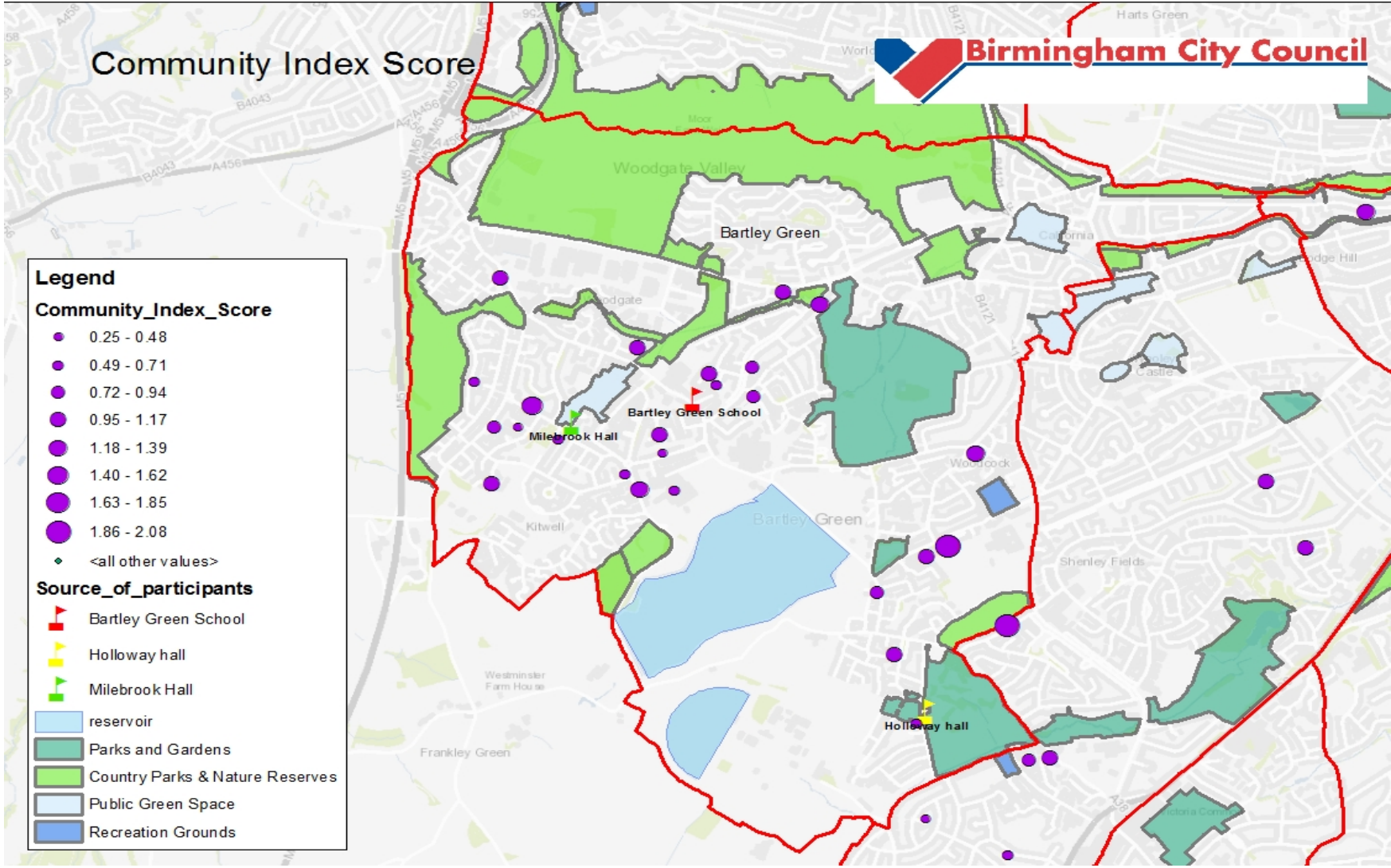
Comments;

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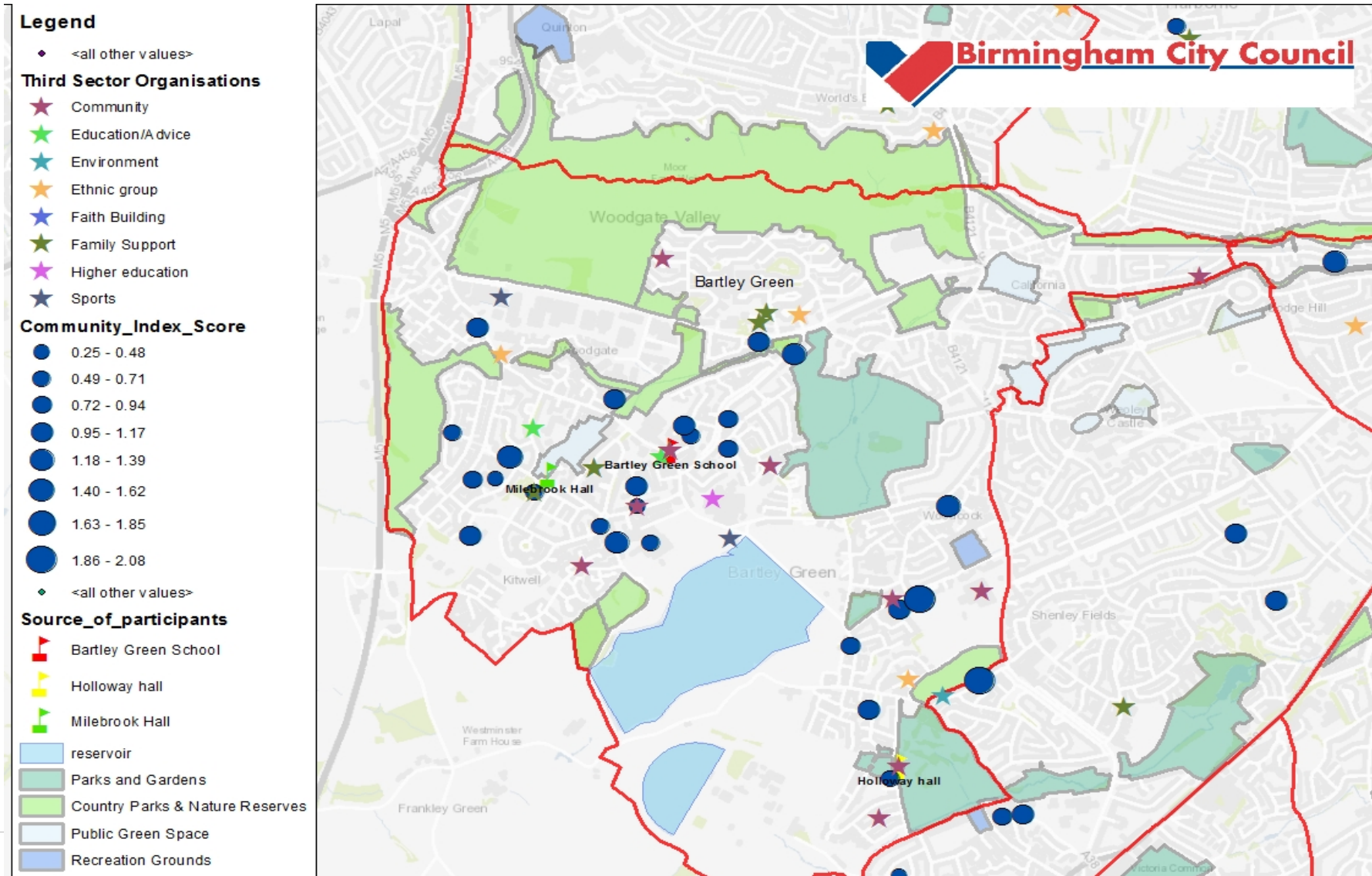
Appendix D: Location of tangible assets



Appendix E: Community Index Score Map



Appendix F: Combination of Community Index Score and tangible assets



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