

# **North Meadow, Cricklade**

## Visitor Questionnaire Survey

Prepared on behalf of

Swindon Borough Council, Cotswold District Council & Wiltshire Council

Final Report

09 March 2023

22/23-1C

# North Meadow, Cricklade

## Visitor Questionnaire Survey

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# North Meadow, Cricklade

## Visitor Questionnaire Survey

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### Contents

- 1. INTRODUCTION..... 1
  - Brief..... 1
  - Site Context ..... 1
  
- 2. VISITOR SURVEY METHODOLOGY ..... 4
  - Background to Methodology ..... 4
  - Consultation..... 4
  - Access Points ..... 4
  - Survey Effort & Timing ..... 6
  - Tally Counts..... 7
  - Interviews..... 7
  - Data Analysis..... 7
  - Limitations..... 8
  
- 3. VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS ..... 9
  - Overview ..... 9
  - Tally Counts..... 9
  - Questionnaire Surveys ..... 11
  - Catchment Analysis..... 30
  
- 4. DISCUSSION ..... 34
  - Key Findings..... 34
  - Recreational Pressure..... 35
  - Comparison to Previous Visitor Surveys..... 35
  - Summary ..... 36
  
- 5. REFERENCES..... 37

### MAPS

- Map 1**      Site Location & Context
- Map 2**      Existing Site Infrastructure
- Map 3**      Access Point Usage
- Map 4**      Top 10 Identified Alternative Sites
- Map 5**      Distribution of Open Greenspace
- Map 6a**     Recreational Pressure – Peak Season
- Map 6b**     Recreational Pressure – Off-peak Season
- Map 7a**     Visitor Origins

- Map 7b** 'Local' Visitor Origins
- Map 7c** Visitor Origins within 10km of North Meadow
- Map 8** Distances Travelled by 75% of Groups
- Map 9a** Origin of User Groups – Purpose of Visit
- Map 9b** Origin of User Groups – Mode of Travel
- Map 9c** Origin of User Groups – Mode of Travel vs Access Point

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1** North Meadow Visitor Questionnaire

# Executive Summary

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Ecological Planning & Research Ltd. undertook a visitor survey at North Meadow, a component site of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area for Conservation, located north of the village of Cricklade, Wiltshire.

North Meadow is protected by its international designation due to the presence of lowland hay meadows, which support significant populations of Snake's Head Fritillary, a nationally rare plant.

Following a recognised visitor survey methodology using tally counts and questionnaires, the visitor survey comprised of surveys within two key windows: the 'peak' season in April/May 2022 when the Snake's Head Fritillary were flowering; and in July/August 2022, the 'off-peak' season, when the meadow had been cut.

Key findings of the survey are:

- The majority of visitors travel from home to visit North Meadow;
- The majority of visitors travel from within a 1km radius of North Meadow;
- Dog walkers are the most frequent visitors to the Site, with the majority visiting at least once a week, throughout the year;
- Walkers represent another user group who visit the Site on a regular basis throughout the year;
- During the 'peak' (i.e. flowering) season, an additional cohort of visitors visit the Site to view the meadow and flowers, travel longer distances to reach the Site, but visit less frequently;
- Whilst the number of visitors arriving on foot remained consistent throughout the peak/off-peak periods, a higher proportion of visitors travelled by car in the 'peak' season; and
- Fewer visitors stray from designated pathways during the 'peak' season.

The survey results were analysed to determine the principal visitor catchments for the Site. This focussed on the majority of visitors who travelled to the Site from home, since this data sample is most representative of the user groups living on a permanent basis within travel distance of the Site, visiting the Site on a regular basis.

Three visitor catchments (defined by the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on a cumulative frequency distribution curve) were identified, pertaining to the key user groups of the Site, their mode of travel, their frequency of visitation and correspondingly the distance travelled to reach the Site:

- Dog walkers, walkers and people visiting the meadow/flowers on foot or by car travelled up to 9.4km;
- Dog walkers and walkers arriving by car travelled up to a distance of 4.2km; and
- Dog walkers and walkers travelling to the Site on foot did so from within a distance of 0.7km.

# North Meadow, Cricklade

## Visitor Questionnaire Survey

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Brief

- 1.1 Ecological Planning & Research Ltd. (EPR) was commissioned to carry out a visitor questionnaire survey at North Meadow, Cricklade, Wiltshire, which forms part of North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area for Conservation (SAC) (**Map 1**).
- 1.2 The SAC was designated in 2005 for its internationally important habitats and flora, listed in Annex I of the European Directive 92/43/EEC (the 'Habitats Directive'). This includes lowland hay meadow (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*) maintained through a traditional pattern of management. The SAC also supports a significant proportion of the UK's surviving wild Snake's Head Fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, a nationally scarce plant that is a notified feature (alongside the hay meadow) of the North Meadow, Cricklade Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 1.3 Within the Site Improvement Plan (SIP) for the SAC, Natural England has identified public access/disturbance as a 'pressure/threat' to the site and has highlighted the need to minimise the "impact of high levels of trampling" (Natural England, 2014).
- 1.4 North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC lies directly within the administrative boundary of Wiltshire Council (WC), but within close proximity to both Swindon Borough (SB) and Cotswold District (CD) (**Map 1**). The three Councils for these areas are in the process of either updating Local Plans (Wiltshire and Cotswold) or a producing a new Local Plan (Swindon). They have therefore jointly instructed this visitor survey (contract managed by Swindon Borough Council) to gather baseline information regarding visitor access patterns at North Meadow.
- 1.5 This data will inform Habitats Regulations Assessment carried out as part of the plan preparation process, as is required by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and will inform any requirement for strategic mitigation.

#### Site Context

- 1.6 North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC lies to the north-east of Swindon and south of Cirencester (**Map 1**) within the county of Wiltshire.
- 1.7 North Meadow alone covers around 44ha and is believed to support approximately 95% of the UK population of Snake's Head Fritillary (SHF) (Natural England, 2018), with approximately 500,000 flowers blooming during the short flowering season which can last just a few weeks between mid-April and early-May each year (Natural England, 2011). Alongside its designation as an SAC, North Meadow is also a SSSI, National Nature Reserve (NNR) and registered Common Land.
- 1.8 North Meadow is open to the public and includes almost 4km of designated pathways around the Site to facilitate access, including the Reedbed Walk, the River Walk and the Willow Walk

(**Map 2**). In addition to these the 'Thames Path', a 298km national trail, passes along the southern boundary of the Site adjacent to the river and which is an attraction in itself.

- 1.9 There is no official car park associated with North Meadow, the High Street leading to Cricklade upon which the main access is situated does not have any parking restrictions along its length. North Meadow is also accessible from the main village centre of Cricklade, a 15-minute walk along public footpaths which lead directly to access points along the southern boundary.
- 1.10 Due to the exceptional display of SHF, the SAC has become a popular destination for nature enthusiasts, and it is estimated that more than 6,000 people per month visit during the short blooming period (LUC, 2019).
- 1.11 The Clattinger Farm area of the SAC has not been identified as at risk from recreational pressure and has therefore not been included within this scope of work. The following visitor survey report relates specifically to the North Meadow section of the SAC, as shown on **Map 1** (hereafter referred to as the 'Site').

#### *Preceding Visitor Survey Work*

- 1.12 Visitor counts have been previously undertaken at North Meadow in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2015, with the use of an automated visitor counter (LUC, 2020). The results of these counts showed a notable increase in visitors in 2015 compared to previous years. However, natural flooding events in 2011 and 2012 are thought to have reduced visitor numbers in these years, and these counts are therefore unlikely to provide directly comparable data. Compared to the 2010 counts, the 2015 count showed a 'significant rise' in visitor numbers with 39,065 visitors recorded in 2015 compared to 18,803 in 2010.
- 1.13 A previous visitor survey was undertaken at North Meadow in 2017, to inform a nearby planning application (Ethos, 2022). The visitor survey sought to identify patterns of use on the Site, using a combination of tally counts and questionnaires.
- 1.14 Four of a total of seven access points were surveyed by Ethos, once on a weekday and once on a weekend in July and again in August. Additional questionnaires were circulated at a local tearoom (used by the Natural England guided walk), and a weekend visitor count was undertaken on two access points, plus on one off-site public footpath during the SNF flowering season.
- 1.15 The surveys recorded a mean of 11 groups entering and exiting North Meadow each hour.
- 1.16 Visitors were classified into two groups, either 'local' or 'long distance' visitors. 'Local' visitors were more likely to be regular visitors to North Meadow, and almost all were dog walkers. By comparison the 'long distance' visitors were most common during the SHF flowering season.
- 1.17 The results of the Ethos data as outlined above were considered in conjunction with the results of the 2022 visitor survey to validate patterns of behaviour; further commentary on this is provided in **Section 4** below.

#### *Visitor Survey Objectives*

- 1.18 The visitor survey undertaken by EPR in 2022, aimed to determine the:

- Number of visitors using the Site and levels of recreational pressure;
- Main user groups visiting the Site;
- Most common times of year for visiting and the frequency of visits;
- Origin of visitors to North Meadow;
- Modes of travel and distance from which visitors travelled;
- Main reasons for Site selection;
- Behaviour once on site;
- Level of conservation awareness;
- Use of alternative greenspaces; and
- Suggestions for Site improvement.

1.19 The survey design specifically sought to determine whether there were any notable changes in the pattern of visitor access and behaviour when the SHF are flowering, compared to post-hay cut when the flowers are no longer in bloom.



## 2. VISITOR SURVEY METHODOLOGY

### Background to Methodology

- 2.1 The visitor survey undertaken at North Meadow follows the methodology of the 2018 Thames Basin Heaths SPA Visitor Survey (Southgate *et al.* 2018), the methodology for which was derived from surveys undertaken across the Thames Basin Heaths in 2005 (Liley *et al.* 2005) and the Dorset Heaths in 2006 (Clarke *et al.* 2006).
- 2.2 The questionnaire was adapted from that of the 2018 Thames Basin Heaths SPA Visitor Survey (Southgate *et al.* 2018), and preceding visitor surveys, to obtain site-specific data relevant to North Meadow.

### Consultation

- 2.3 An initial meeting was held with representatives of EPR, SBC and Natural England (NE) on 30 March 2022, where methodologies and timings of the visitor survey were discussed.
- 2.4 All survey methodologies (including the questionnaire), effort and timings were agreed with SBC and NE prior to the survey.

### Access Points

- 2.5 A total of seven access points were surveyed during the course of the visitor surveys, all of which were identified prior to the surveys by NE staff working at the NNR (**Figure 2.1**). These represent all points of access and egress to the Site.
- 2.6 Access point 1 (AP1) is the main entrance to the Site for visitors arriving from the A419 and Cricklade High Street. Although there is no formal car park, informal roadside parking is available along Cricklade High Street. AP2 provides a second more southerly point of access from Cricklade High Street. AP3 is the most direct point of access to the Site along Public Rights of Way (PRoW) from the village of Cricklade located to the south. AP's 4 and 5 link to the 'Thames Path' National Trail, which runs through the Site between these AP's. PRoW's also run through AP's 4 and 5. A long-distance walk, the 'Thames and Severn Way' utilises these PRoW in its route.



**Figure 2.1: Access points at North Meadow**

## Survey Effort & Timing

2.7 In accordance with the methodology used in the 2018 Thames Basin Heaths Visitor Surveys (Southgate *et al.* 2018), each access point was surveyed for a total of 16 hours. Interviews were carried out during the following two-hour sessions, with each timeslot covered on both a weekday and weekend day:

- 07:00 – 09:00;
- 10:00 – 12:00;
- 13:00 – 15:00; and
- 17:00 – 19:00.

2.8 These survey times, spread across the day and week, are designed to capture a representative sample regarding visitation levels and patterns of access across the Site.

2.9 Survey days were timed to coincide with both the short SHF flowering season (late-April to mid-May) (herein after referred to as the ‘peak’ season), and the post-flowering season where the flowering season had finished, and the meadow had been mown and hay bales removed (hereafter referred to as the ‘off-peak’ season), to determine how the presence of the flowering SHF influences visitation rates and behaviour of visitors. Dates of surveys are shown in **Table 2.1** below.

**Table 2.1 Survey dates for access points across seasons at North Meadow**

Season	Survey Timing	Date	Access Point Covered
Peak	Weekday	25/04/2022	5, 6
		27/04/2022	7
		28/04/2022	1
		29/04/2022	2, 3, 4
	Weekend	23/04/2022	1, 2, 3
		24/04/2022	4, 5, 6, 7
Off-peak	Weekday	28/07/2022	2, 3
		29/07/2022	1, 4, 7
		03/08/2022	5, 6
	Weekend	30/07/2022	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
		31/07/2022	5, 6

2.10 Hay cut of the Site is undertaken in batches, and timescales are dictated by recent weather conditions. In 2022, the mowing and bale removal was scheduled to be completed no later than 24<sup>th</sup> July, whilst school summer holidays began on the 25<sup>th</sup> July. The off-peak survey was therefore undertaken during the school holidays, which may add an additional variable affecting visitation to the Site. However, capturing data once the Site had been mown and cleared was considered more important to the study’s objectives than the potential variability in visitation arising during the school holidays. An increase in visitation specifically due to the school holidays may be identified and accounted for through an increase of children within visiting groups.

## Tally Counts

- 2.11 Tally counts were made of the numbers of adults, children and accompanying dogs exiting through each access point during each timeslot. This information was collected to allow analysis of overall footfall at each access point and add an extra layer of data capture/validation, and to count total numbers of people not interviewed, for reasons such as:
- Visitors who refused to complete an interview;
  - Surveyor already busy interviewing another visitor; and
  - Visitor appeared to be under 16 and was not approached.

## Interviews

- 2.12 Surveyors interviewed visitors as they exited through their access point in order to obtain information about their visit. Groups of people were counted as one interview, with only one person interviewed per group, and children who appeared to be under the age of 16 were not approached if alone. The full questionnaire can be found at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.13 Maps were used to aid data collection, with visitors asked to annotate the route that they had taken during their visit. These were coded so that they could be matched to the corresponding questionnaire.
- 2.14 Metadata recorded for each interview included the group size and composition, time of day, weather conditions and the number of dogs in the group (including whether these were on or off lead).

## Data Analysis

- 2.15 Surveys were carried out by staff from EPR and Marketing Means, an independent market research company. Data collection undertaken by EPR was collected using ArcGIS Survey123 (ESRI UK), whilst data collected by Marketing Means was collected digitally and passed onto EPR in an Excel spreadsheet.
- 2.16 ArcGIS 10.8.2 (ESRI UK) was used to aid in data analysis, digitise walking routes and produce maps to visualise survey results.
- 2.17 To analyse visitor origins, postcodes were converted into eastings and northings using Grid Reference Finder's Postcode Batch Converter Tool. Partial and invalid postcodes were then removed from the dataset. The central points of the postcode areas were plotted in ArcGIS 10.8.2 (ESRI UK). ArcGIS was then used to calculate approximate (straight line) travel distances to the Site.
- 2.18 Analysis of walking routes was undertaken in ArcGIS 10.8.2 (ESRI UK) using the 'Spatial Analysis' extension to produce 'heat' maps. These maps show the areas of a site which are most frequented by visitors and are therefore most susceptible to the effects of recreational pressure.
- 2.19 Microsoft Excel was used to analyse data, calculate percentiles and produce figures to accompany the data.

## **Limitations**

2.20 The following limitations are generic limitations that are common to all visitor surveys of this type:

- Whilst the questionnaire is designed to be as simple and brief as possible, interviewees may decline to answer some questions, and some questions may be skipped by the surveyor, for example if the interviewee is in a hurry;
- The accuracy of the walked routes is dependent upon the interviewee providing an accurate representation of where they have walked, and as a result may vary;
- Some groups, such as horse-riders, cyclists etc, will be harder to intercept and therefore are likely to be under-represented; and
- Tally counts rely on surveyors being able to record all visitors as they exit the Site. Inevitably some visitors are missed, as the surveyors may be busy interviewing another group.

### 3. VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS

#### Overview

- 3.1 The weather across all surveys was generally considered to be favourable, with the majority of surveys undertaken in dry conditions. Rain was recorded in just 9% of all sessions, with persistent (light) rain recorded in only a single session.
- 3.2 No surveys were undertaken during adverse conditions which might deter visits, including the heatwaves recorded during the summer of 2022, though the summer of 2022 was generally characterised by hot dry weather.

#### Tally Counts

##### *Exit Data*

- 3.3 A total of 251 people (adults and children) were recorded exiting the Site during the peak season across the 16 hours of survey. By comparison, 132 people were recorded exiting during the off-peak season, a decrease in visitation of 47%.
- 3.4 A total of 16 children were recorded during the peak season, compared to 4 during the off-peak season. Undertaking the off-peak season survey during the school holidays did not show an increase in children visiting the Site. Children represented 7% of visitors during peak season, and just 3% of visitors in the off-peak season.
- 3.5 An average visitor rate can be calculated using total visits per season, divided by the total number of hours spent surveying. For the peak season, 15.69 people exited the site per hour, whilst the off-peak season average was approximately 8.25 people exiting per hour.
- 3.6 During the peak season, 68 dogs were recorded exiting the Site, the equivalent of 0.27 dogs per person. A total of 54 dogs were recorded during the off-peak season, equating to 0.41 dogs per person – an increase in the relative number of dogs per person compared to the peak season.
- 3.7 No cyclists, horse riders or other visitor types were recorded on Site during the course of the surveys.
- 3.8 The tally count considered all visitors as unique visitors and did not account for repeat visitors.

##### *Annual Visitation*

- 3.9 Using the exit data as outlined above, an estimate of the annual number of visits to North Meadow has been made.
- 3.10 The estimate of annual visitation assumes a four-week peak season (late-April to mid-May) during which there are approximately 14 hours of sunlight in a day. During the off-peak season, an average of 12 hours of sunlight a day has been assumed.

##### Off-peak Visitors

- 8.25 people per hour x 12 hours = 99 people per day.

- 99 people per day x 7 days = 693 people per week.
- 693 people per week x 48 weeks = 33,264 people per off-peak season.

#### Peak Visitors

- 15.96 people per hour x 14 hours= 223.44 people per day
- 223.44 people per day x 7 days = 1564.08 people per week
- 1564.08 people per week x 4 weeks= 6,256.32 people per peak season.

#### Peak + Off-peak Visitors

- 33,264 off-peak visitors + 6,257 peak visitors = **39,521 visitors per year.**

#### *Access Points*

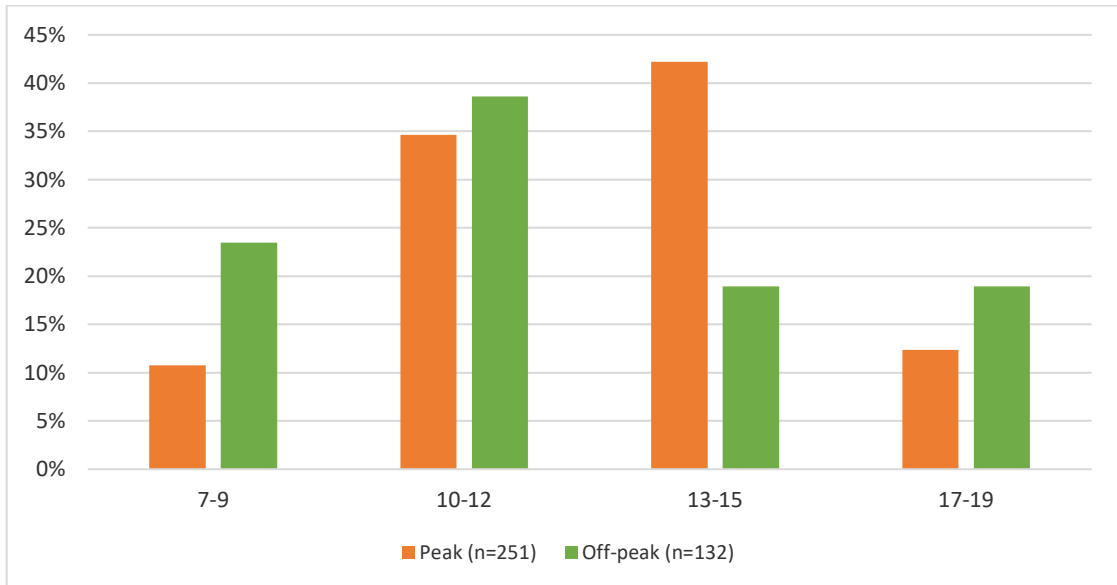
- 3.11 AP1 was used most during the peak season, with 29% of all visitors leaving through this access point. For AP2 to AP7, there was a general pattern during the peak season of decreasing access point use with increasing distance from the 'main entrance' (AP1) (**Table 3.1**).
- 3.12 During the off-peak season AP3 was the most heavily used, with 24% of all visitors exiting through this point. AP3 is the access point into the Site for people walking north from Cricklade along the PRow (**Map 2**).
- 3.13 AP1 to 4 were consistently the most used access points across both seasons, with 76% of usage during the peak season, 66% in the off-peak season, and 72% combined across both seasons. These access points are closest to the available parking on Cricklade High Street and public footpaths linking the Site to Cricklade.

**Table 3.1: Proportional exit counts by access point across peak and off-peak season**

Access point	Proportional exits during peak season (n=251)	Proportional exits during off-peak season (n=132)	All exits during peak and off-peak season (n=383)	Approximate distance to access point 1 via pathways (m)
1	30%	18%	26%	0
2	18%	15%	17%	308
3	15%	24%	18%	496
4	13%	8%	11%	1,029
5	10%	16%	12%	1,398
6	5%	16%	9%	1,568
7	9%	2%	6%	531 (off-site path)

### Time of Day

- 3.14 A higher proportion of visitors exited the Site between 13:00 and 15:00 during the peak season compared to the off-peak season, with a proportionally lower number exiting early in the morning between 07:00 and 09:00 (**Figure 3.1**).



**Figure 3.1: Tally count exits by survey session**

- 3.15 During the peak season, visitors were more likely to be exiting the Site during the middle of the day (between 10:00-12:00 and 13:00-15:00) compared to off-peak where the majority of visitors (62%) were exiting the Site before 12:00.

### Weekends & Weekdays

- 3.16 The timing of visits to North Meadow were relatively consistent across both seasons, with minimal differences between weekend and weekday visits. Weekends were marginally more popular during peak season (n=251), with 56% of visits undertaken during this time, whilst weekdays were marginally busier during off-peak season (n=132) with 53% of visits undertaken during the week.

## Questionnaire Surveys

### Overview

- 3.17 Of the 383 people recorded leaving the Site (see Tally Counts above), 59 declined to take part in the questionnaire - a refusal rate of 15%. Reasons for refusal included groups that had already taken part in the survey, groups that were in a rush and did not have time, and in some instances the interviewer was already interviewing another group.



- 3.18 A total of 181 groups<sup>1</sup>, comprising 339 people (adults and children) with 116 dogs were therefore interviewed across all seven access points over both seasons. Of these, 108 groups (60%) were interviewed during the peak season, with 65% of people and 42% of dogs recorded during this time.
- 3.19 Of the 181 groups interviewed, 88 groups had at least one dog with them, with 41 groups with dogs in the peak season compared to 47 groups in the off-peak season.
- 3.20 The average group size in the peak season was 2.08 people (adults and children), and this decreased in the off-peak season where the average group size was 1.64 people<sup>2</sup>. The smallest group size recorded was 1, with the largest group being 20 people in the peak season and 10 people in the off-peak season. Just 3 groups comprised of 10 people or more across both seasons.
- 3.21 Adults aged over 60 were by far the most prevalent age group to be interviewed during the peak season, making up more than half of groups questioned. This shifted during the off-peak season, with just under half of all groups comprising adults aged between 45-59 as shown in **Table 3.2** below.

**Table 3.2: Age composition of groups interviewed across peak and off-peak season**

Age Group	Peak Season (n=221)	Off-peak Season (n=118)
Children under 16	4%	1%
Adult 16-25	4%	2%
Adult 26-45	12%	17%
Adult 46-59	29%	47%
Adult 60+	51%	31%

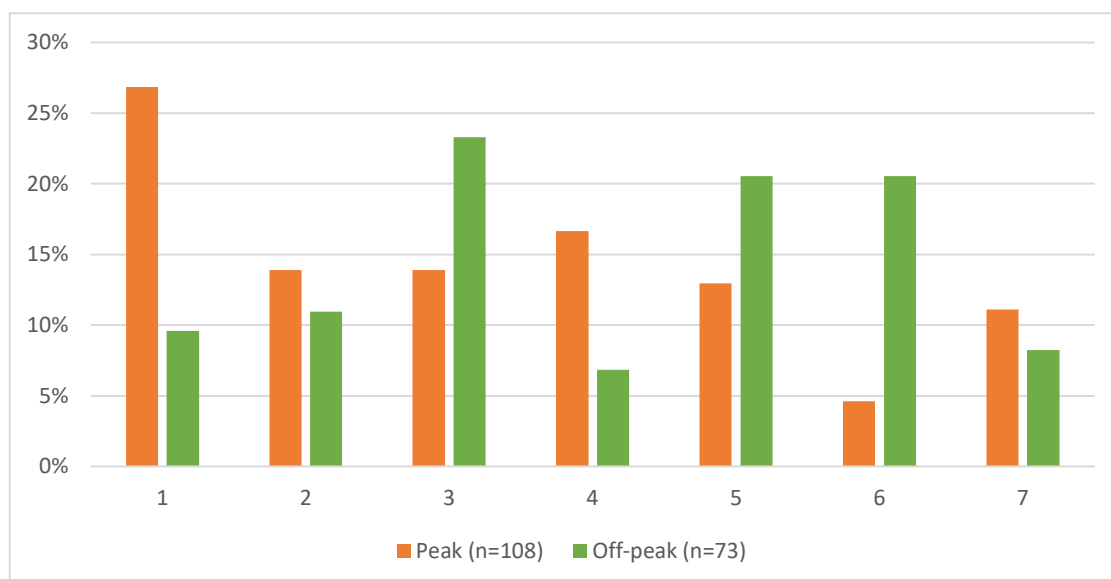
### *Access Points*

- 3.22 During the peak season (n=108), the most interviews were undertaken at AP1, with 27% of all interviews undertaken. By comparison, during the off-peak season, AP3 was the busiest, with 23% of the total interviews.
- 3.23 The use of access points was markedly different between seasons, with AP1 subject to the highest number of interviews during the peak season, whilst being one of the quieter access points during the off-peak season (Map 3). By comparison, AP3, AP5 and AP6 were the busiest points during the off-peak season (Figure 3.2).
- 3.24 The distribution of questionnaires completed during the survey was well aligned with the distribution of visitor usage across the Site, with the proportion of questionnaires undertaken at

<sup>1</sup> Each questionnaire was completed by a single 'group' of visitors. A group was not based on number of individuals and single visitors were classified as one group.

<sup>2</sup> Group sizes were not recorded for two peak season groups and one off-peak group, so average sizes are based on 106 and 72 groups, respectively.

each AP approximately correlating with the usage of that AP recorded during the tally count. In both the tally count and questionnaire survey, AP1 saw the highest proportion of visitors in the peak season, whilst AP3 was the busiest in the off-peak.



**Figure 3.2: Proportion of all interviews by access point**

### Visitor Profile

- 3.25 The majority of groups interviewed, in total 91%, had travelled from home and proportionally, there was little change between peak and off-peak season (**Table 3.3**). Just 7% across both surveys were visiting the Site whilst on holiday.

**Table 3.3: Q1. Which of the following best describes your situation today?**

Season	On Holiday/Staying away from home	Passing Through	Visiting from home	Visiting/ staying with friends or family
Peak (n=108)	7%	1%	90%	3%
Off-peak (n=73)	7%	0%	92%	1%
Total (n=181)	7%	1%	91%	2%

- 3.26 This study has focussed on understanding the patterns of access to the Site for visitors travelling from their home address. This is because this sample of visitors live on a permanent basis within travel distance of the Site, and are therefore most representative of the regular users of the Site who have the greatest potential to contribute to effects upon the Site’s special interest features. The analysis that follows therefore excludes groups who were visiting the Site whilst on holiday, whilst visiting friends or when passing through (with exclusions, ‘n’ for subsequent analysis = 164, unless otherwise specified).

### Dogs

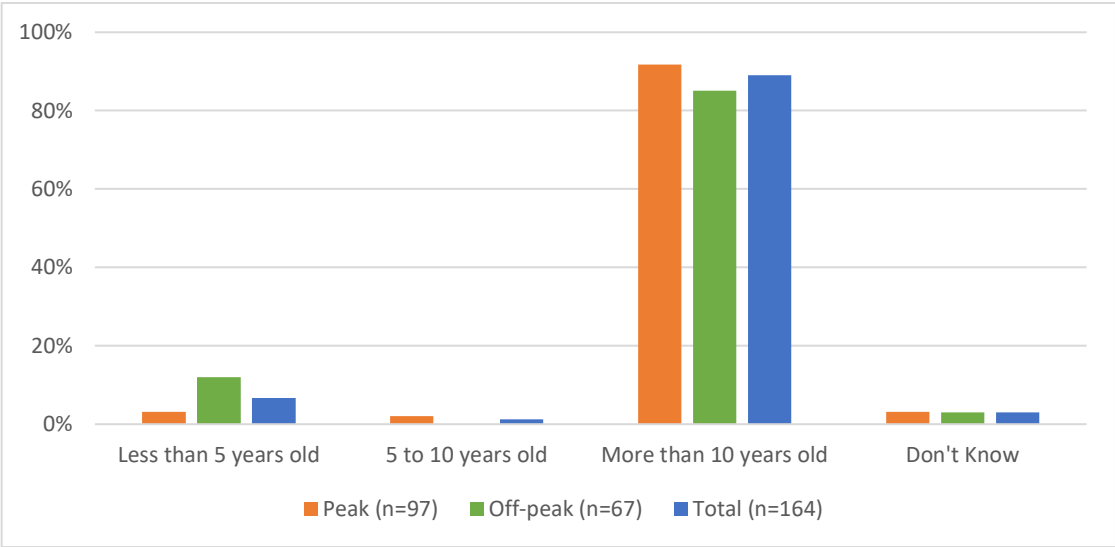
- 3.27 Of the 164 groups, 83 groups had at least one dog with them, with 39 groups with dogs in the peak season, compared to 44 groups in the off-peak season.

3.28 During the peak season (n=97) this represented 40% of groups who had one or more dogs with them compared to 66% during the off-peak season (n=67).

3.29 In addition to a higher proportion of groups with one or more dogs in the off-peak season, people were more likely to let their dogs off the lead during this time, with 70% of groups with dogs saying they let their dogs off the lead during the off-peak season, compared to just 44% during the peak season.

*Age of Home*

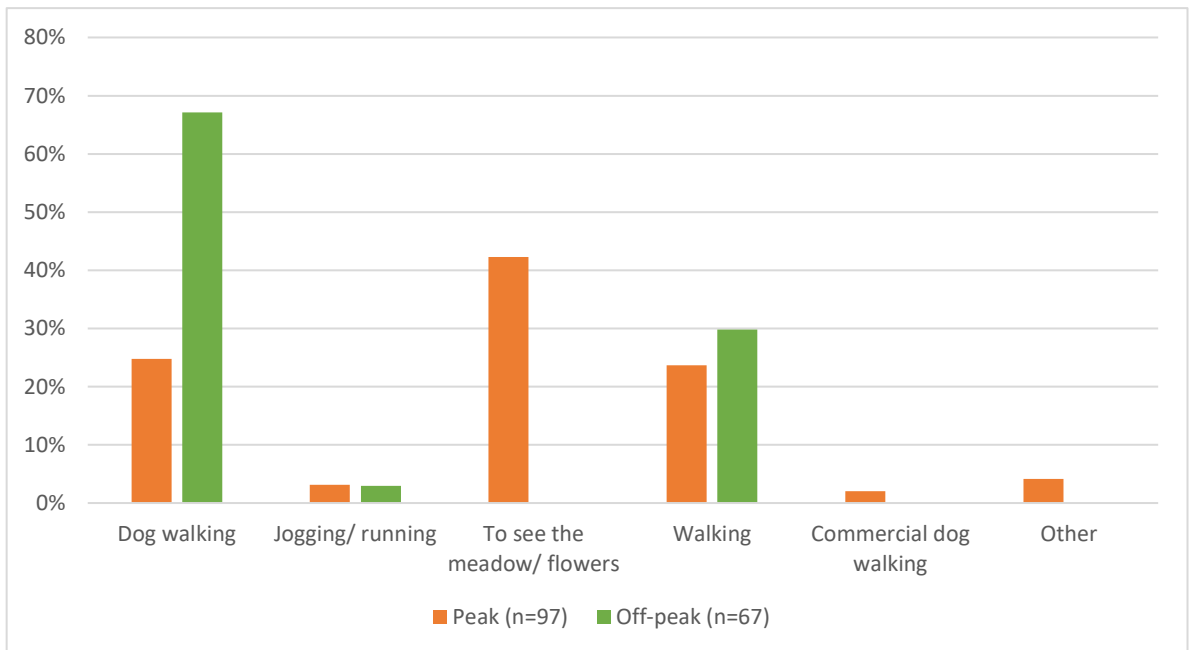
3.30 The majority of groups interviewed (n=164) said they lived in homes which are older than 10 years (89%), whilst just 7% lived in new homes (defined here as less than 5 years old). Whilst there was a minor increase in residents of new homes visiting in the off-peak season, there was minimal change between seasons overall (**Figure 3.3**).



**Figure 3.3: Q3. Can you tell me the approximate age of your home?**

*Purpose of Visit*

3.31 The survey found, as had been observed during previous survey of the Site, that there was a notable difference in the reason for visiting between seasons. During the off-peak season (n=67), most groups said that they come to the Site to walk their dog (67%). By comparison, during the peak season (n=97), 42% said that they come to view the meadow/flowers, whilst 25% said that the main reason for their visit was dog walking (**Figure 3.4**).



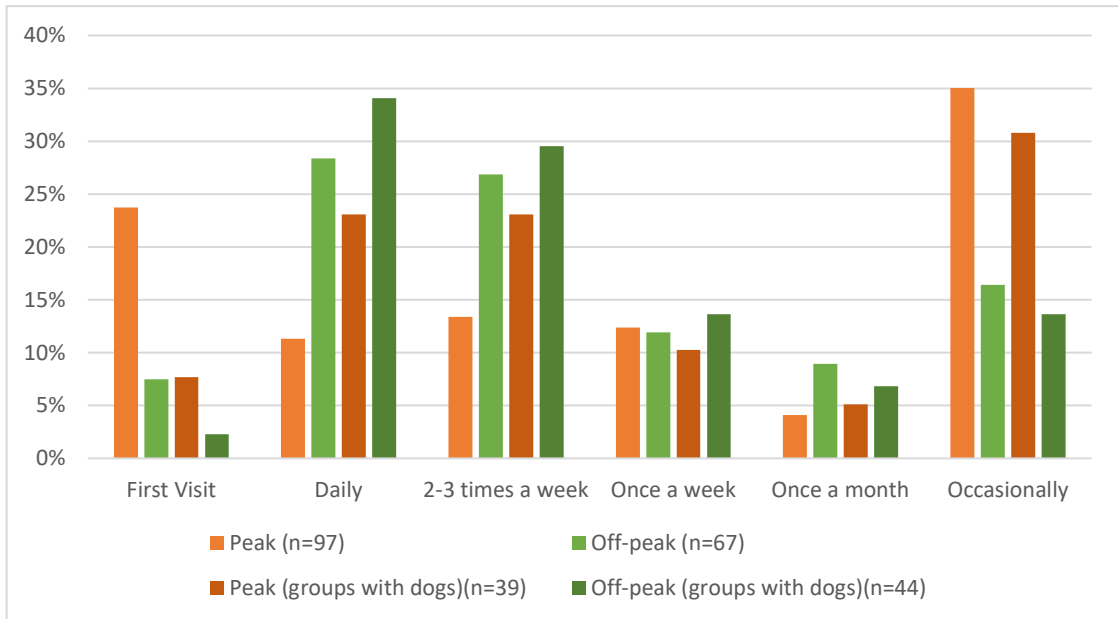
**Figure 3.4: Q4. What was the main purpose of your visit today?**

*Purpose of Visit vs Groups with Dogs*

- 3.32 Of the groups with dogs who were interviewed during the peak season (n=39), 23 groups (59%) stated that their main purpose for visiting was for dog walking compared to 11 groups (28%) with dogs who were there to see the flowers. Two groups (5%) were there for walking.
- 3.33 By contrast, groups with dogs during the off-peak season (n=44) were almost exclusively visiting for the purpose of walking their dog, with 43 groups (98%) stating so. A single group with dogs was on site for the purpose of walking (2%).

*Visit Frequency*

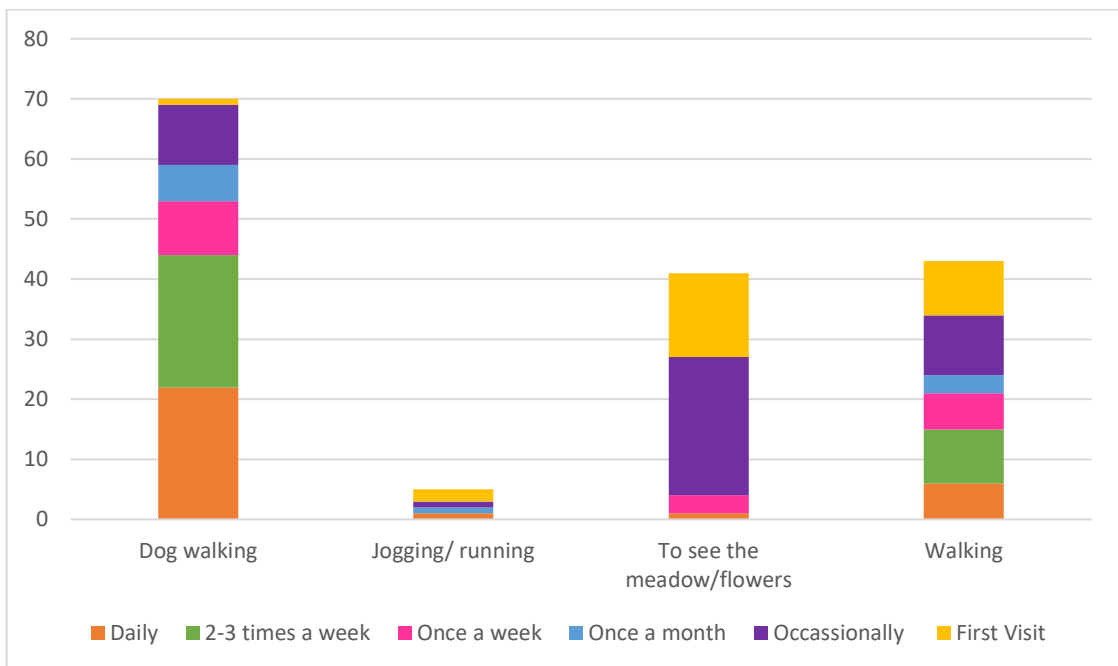
- 3.34 The survey found that groups who visit the Site during the off-peak season (n=67) were more likely to visit frequently, with 67% of these groups likely to visit either every day, 2-3 times a week or once a week.
- 3.35 By comparison, during the peak season (n=97) visitors using the Site with an equivalent frequency constituted just 37% of groups, with roughly the same percentage visiting the Site on an infrequent basis (35% visit 'occasionally', i.e. just a few times a year).
- 3.36 When looking specifically at groups with dogs, these groups were more likely to visit the Site regularly and on a frequent basis, both during the peak and off-peak seasons (**Figure 3.5**).
- 3.37 First-time visitors were most likely to visit during the peak season, with just under a quarter of all interviewees visiting the Site for the first time. However, the number of first-time visitors in the peak season was noticeably reduced in groups with dogs, with just 8% visiting the Site for the first time.



**Figure 3.5: Q5. How often do you visit North Meadow?**

*Visit Frequency vs Purpose of Visit*

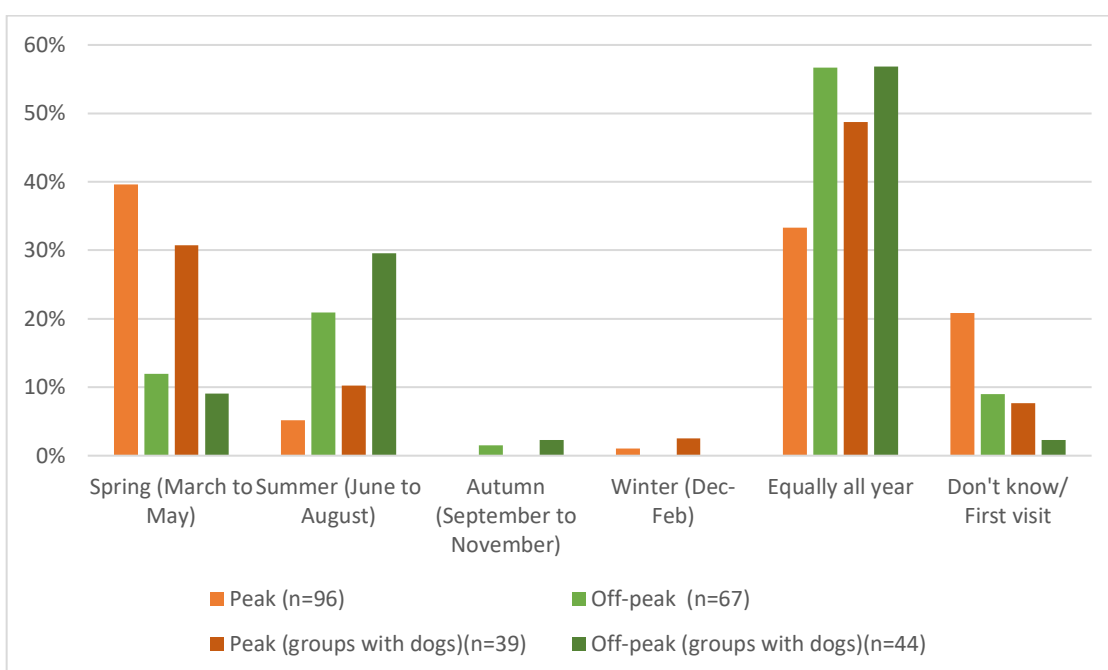
- 3.38 Taking the peak and off-peak data together, dog walkers (n=69) were the most likely demographic of visitors to attend the Site frequently, with 75% of dog walkers visiting once a week or more, of which a subset (32%) visit daily (Figure 3.6).
- 3.39 Those whose main purpose was to see the SHF (n=41) were generally infrequent visitors, with 90% attending the Site occasionally, or it being their first visit.



**Figure 3.6: Frequency of visit against purpose of visit**

### Time of Year

- 3.40 Of those who were interviewed in the off-peak season (n=67), the majority of groups (57%) said that they visited equally all year around, and this remained consistent in just those groups with dogs (57%).
- 3.41 Groups who were interviewed during the peak season (n=96) were most likely to visit in the spring (40%), which coincides with the peak season survey period when the SHF are in flower. However, as a subset of this data, groups with dogs who were interviewed during the peak season (n=39) were more likely to visit all year around (49%).
- 3.42 Autumn and winter were the least popular seasons for people to visit (**Figure 3.7**).



**Figure 3.7: Q6. Do you tend to visit here more at a particular time of year?**

### Mode of Transport

- 3.43 Of the groups interviewed during the peak season (n=95), 55% travelled to the Site by car. In the off-peak season (n=67) this decreased to 31% (n for drivers: peak=52, off-peak=21). Between the peak and off-peak season, the number of visitors arriving by foot (peak n=43, off-peak n=46) remained largely consistent, with a minor increase of approximately 7% in the off-peak season.
- 3.44 AP1 recorded the highest proportion of car users, with 42% of visitors arriving by car during the peak season (**Table 3.4**). By contrast, AP3 and AP4 recorded the highest proportion of visitors arriving by foot.
- 3.45 During the off-peak season (**Table 3.5**), AP1 still saw the highest percentage of car users, although with a lower relative proportion compared to the peak season. AP3 and AP5 had the highest proportion of visitors arriving on foot.

**Table 3.4: Modes of travel by access point (peak)**

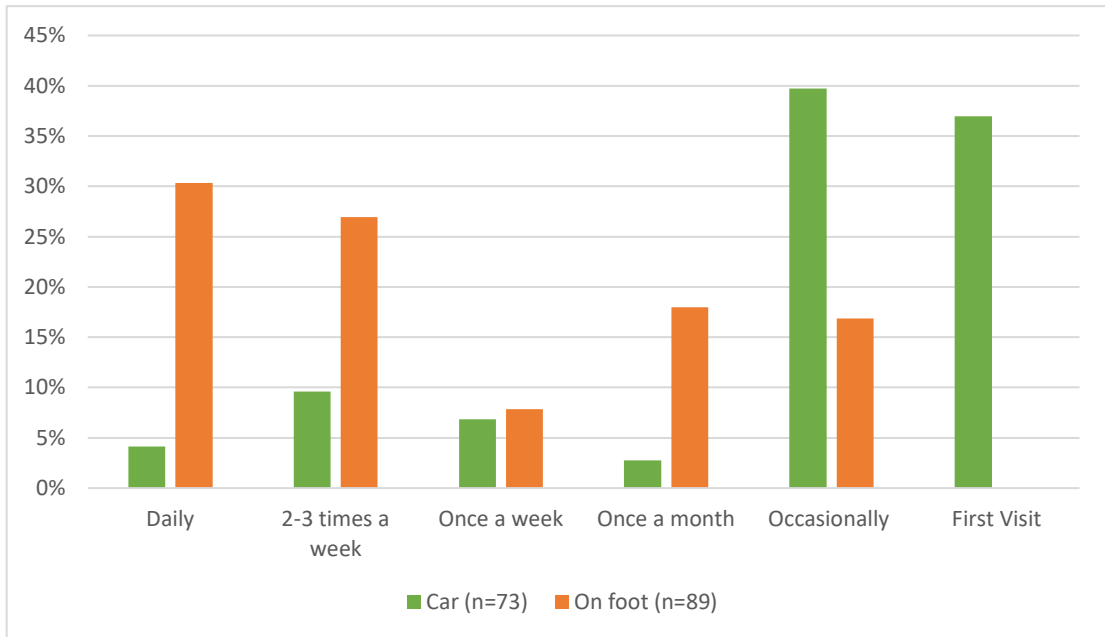
Access Point	Total n by AP	Car, n by AP (% of total by car)	Foot, n by AP (% of total on foot)
1	27	22 (42%)	5 (12%)
2	12	6 (11%)	6 (14%)
3	14	4 (8%)	10 (23%)
4	16	5 (10%)	11 (26%)
5	11	5 (10%)	6 (14%)
6	4	0 (0%)	4 (9%)
7	11	10 (19%)	1 (2%)
All Access Points	95	52 (100%)	43 (100%)

**Table 3.5: Modes of travel by access point (off-peak)**

Access Point	Total n by AP	Car, n by AP (% of total by car)	Foot, n by AP (% of total on foot)
1	7	5 (24%)	2 (4%)
2	7	4 (19%)	3 (7%)
3	16	1 (5%)	15 (33%)
4	5	1 (5%)	4 (9%)
5	14	4 (19%)	10 (22%)
6	12	4 (19%)	8 (17%)
7	6	2 (9%)	4 (9%)
All Access Points	67	21 (100%)	46 (100%)

*Mode of Transport vs Visitor Frequency*

- 3.46 Visitors travelling on foot (peak and off-peak combined, n=89) visit the Site more frequently than those who travel by car (n=73). Of the visitors travelling by foot, 65% visit at least once a week (sum of counts for 'daily', '2-3 times a week' and 'once a week'). In comparison, only 21% of visitors who travel by car visit the Site at least once a week (sum of counts, as above) (**Figure 3.8**).

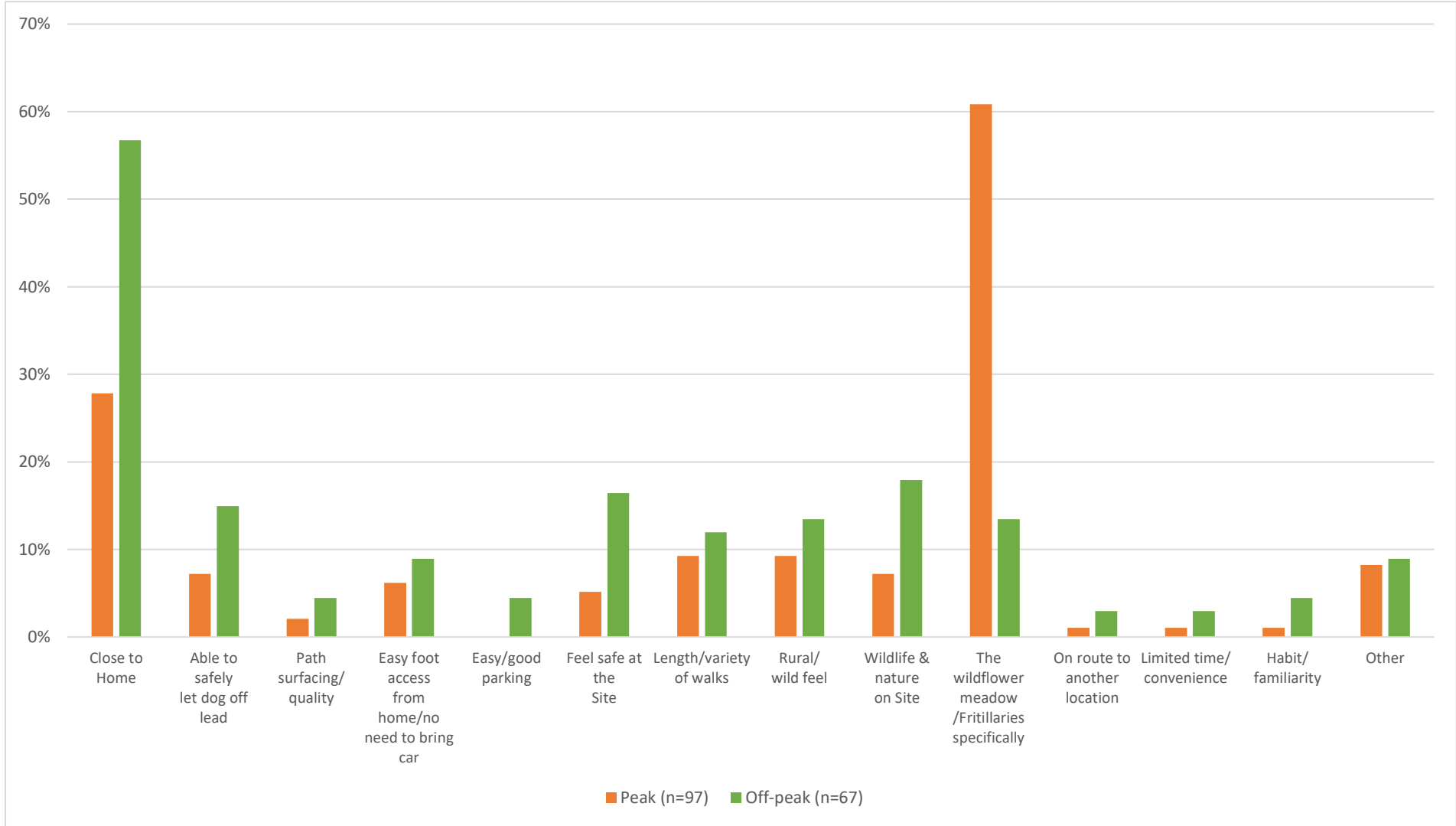


**Figure 3.8: Mode of transport compared to frequency of visit**

*Reasons for Choosing North Meadow Over Other Sites*

- 3.47 When asked why they had chosen to visit North Meadow over other sites, 61% of groups interviewed during the peak season said that they chose to visit specifically due to the presence of the lowland meadow and the SHF. Once the flowers were no longer in bloom, and the Site had been mown, a small number of groups (13%) still cited them as a key reason for visiting in the off-peak season (**Figure 3.9**).
- 3.48 The fact that the Site was ‘close to home’ was the most cited reason for visiting North Meadow compared to other sites during the off-peak season, with 57% of groups giving this answer. By comparison, this was the second most popular answer during the peak season, with 28% of groups choosing the Site as it is close to home.
- 3.49 Although visitors are asked to keep dogs on leads, 15% of groups interviewed in the off-peak season, and 7% of groups in the peak season, said that they visit the Site as they are able to safely let their dog off the lead.





**Figure 3.9: Q8. What made you decide to come here today rather than visiting another local site?**

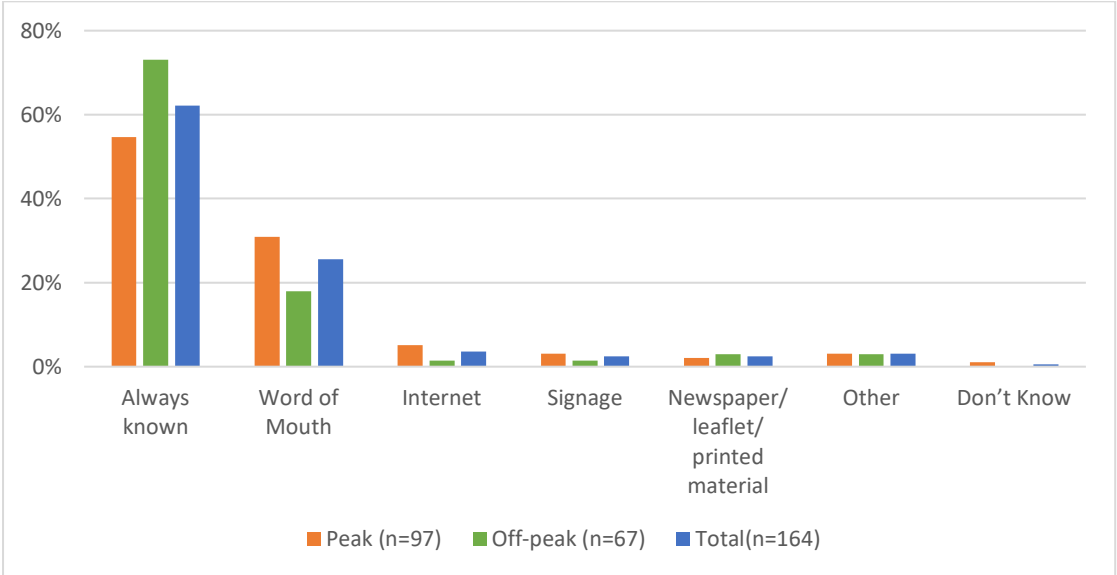
3.50 Other reasons for visiting the Site included:

- Visiting friends (1 response);
- Recommended by a friend (1 response);
- Planning a treasure hunt (1 response);
- It is quiet (2 responses); and
- Following the Thames Path (6 responses).

*Awareness of Site*

3.51 The most common way for groups to hear about the Site was to either have always known about it, or to have heard by word of mouth, with 62% and 26% of responses respectively across both seasons (n=164) (**Figure 3.10**). The remaining options represented less than 13% of responses.

3.52 Whilst those who visited in the off-peak season were more likely to already know about the Site, this was still the most common response in the peak season.

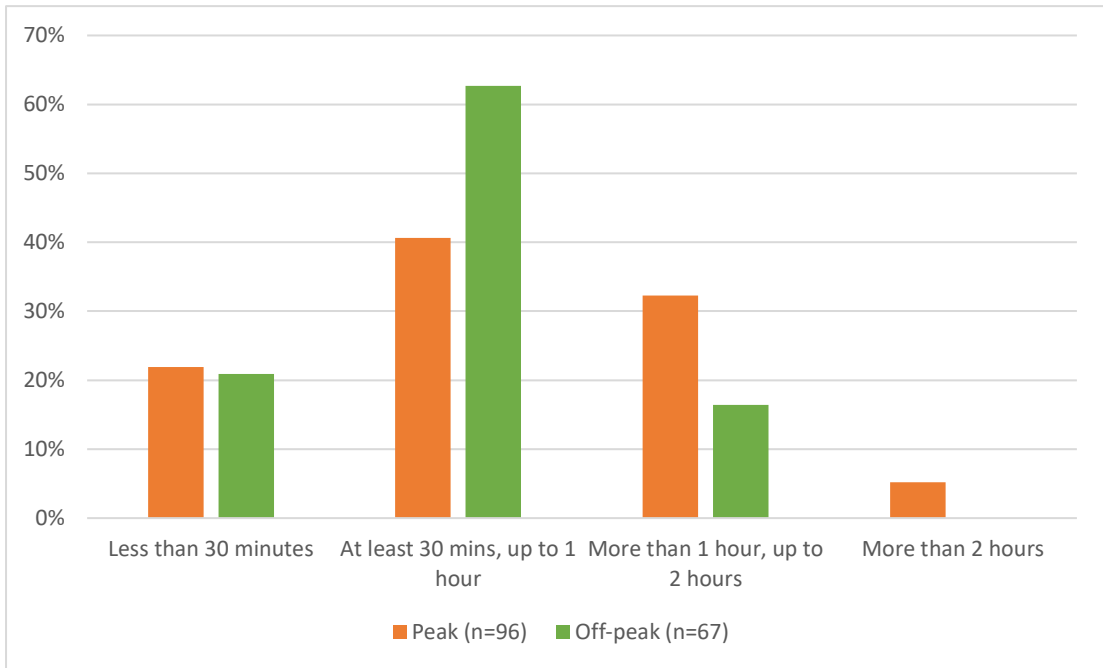


**Figure 3.10: Q9. How did you hear about this site?**

*Time on Site*

3.53 The survey found that those who visit during the off-peak season generally spent a shorter amount of time on Site, with 84% of groups spending less than an hour visiting (which includes the count of those visiting '30 mins to one hr') (**Figure 3.11**). None of the groups interviewed spent more than 2 hours on Site during the off-peak season. The majority, 62%, spent between 30 minutes to one hour on Site.

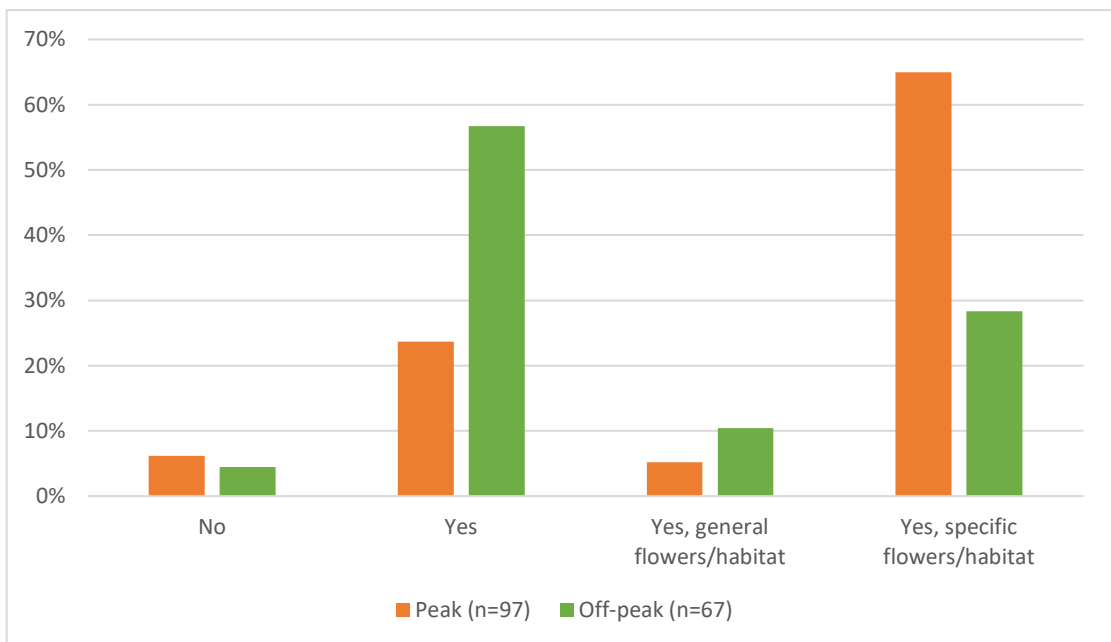
3.54 Whilst the majority of groups in the peak season also spent 30 minutes to one hour on Site (41%), they were more likely to spend longer visiting, with 38% of groups spending more than an hour on Site, including 5% who spent more than 2 hours at the meadow.



**Figure 3.11: Q10. How long have you spent on site today?**

*Awareness of Protected Status*

- 3.55 The survey found that most people who visit North Meadow were aware that the Site is protected, with 93% of groups indicating so (n=164).
- 3.56 There was a distinct difference, however, in the proportion of groups who were aware of the specific reasons for designation between the peak and off-peak season. During the peak season 65% of groups indicated that they were aware that the Site was designated for the specific habitats and flowers, compared to just 28% in the off-peak season (**Figure 3.12**).



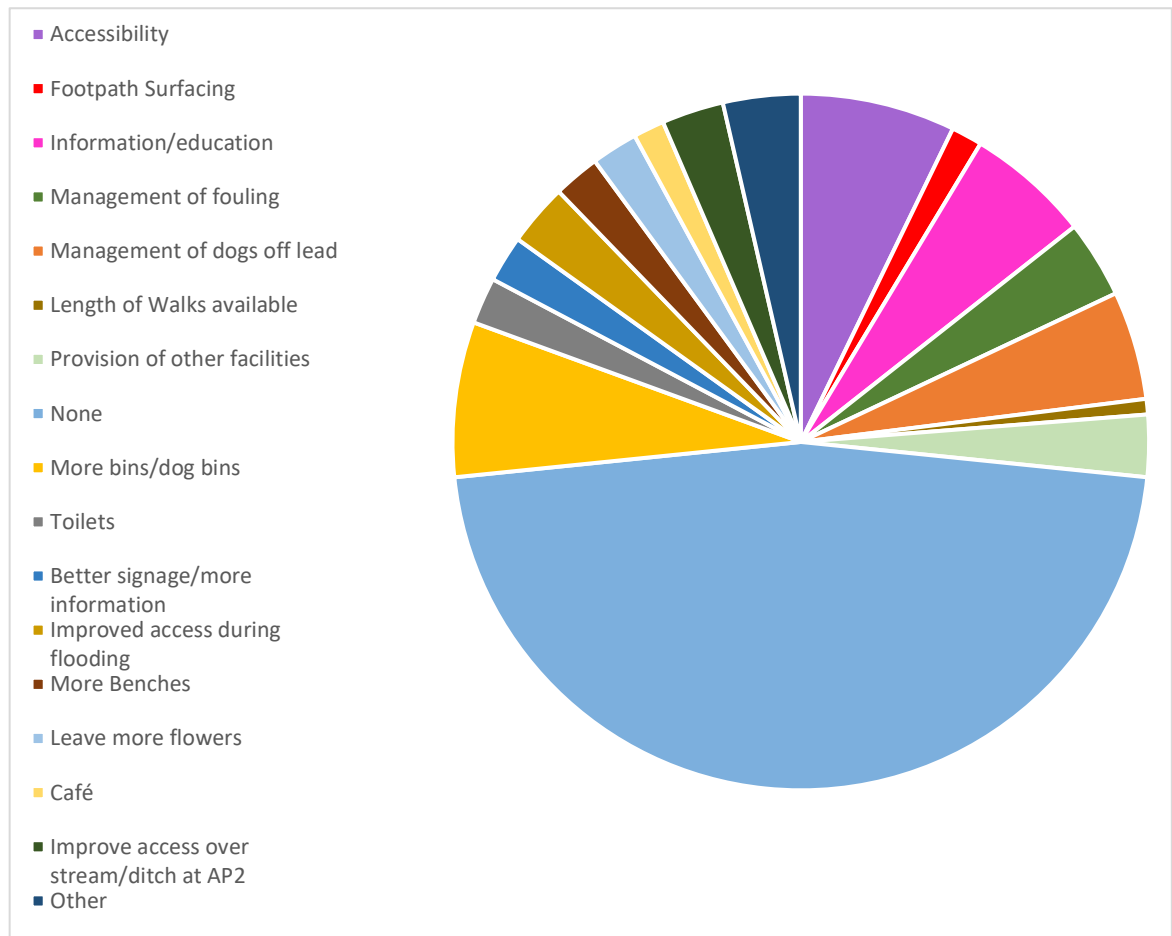
**Figure 3.12: Q16. North Meadow is a nature reserve, are you aware of why it is protected?**

### *Awareness of Protected Status vs Purpose of Visit*

3.57 Those who visit the Site for the purpose of seeing the flowers were more likely to have an understanding of why the Site is protected, compared to other visitors. 83% of those who visit to see the flowers were aware of the specific habitats/flowers for which the site is designated, compared to 39% of other visitors.

### *Improvements*

3.58 All groups were asked what improvements they thought would benefit North Meadow (n=139). The majority of interviewees did not believe that the Site required any improvements (**Figure 3.13**).



**Figure 3.13: Q17. Is there anything you think could be improved at North Meadow?**

3.59 27% of groups provided an 'other' response, which included the suggestions below:

- Improved access over stream/ditch at AP2 (4 responses);
- Improved access during flooding events (3 responses);
- Toilets (3 responses);
- More bins/dog bins (10 responses);
- More benches (3 responses);
- Leave more flowers (3 responses);

- Café (2 responses);
- Path across the meadow (1 responses);
- Remove livestock in winter (1 response); and
- Better signage/more information (3 responses).

*Alternative Sites*

3.60 North Meadow was the first choice of recreational destination for the majority of groups who were interviewed, with 70% agreeing with this statement (n=164).

3.61 For those who said the Site was not their first choice of places to visit, the response was reasonably consistent across all groups (**Table 3.6**).

**Table 3.6: Q18. Is North Meadow your first choice of places to visit in the area?**

Groups	Yes	No
Total (n=164)	70%	30%
Peak (n=97)	72%	28%
Off-peak (n=67)	67%	33%
Peak (groups with dogs) (n=39)	79%	21%
Off-peak (groups with dogs) (n=44)	75%	25%

3.62 120 groups, approximately 66% of all those interviewed (n=108), cited at least one alternative site that they frequented other than North Meadow, with 50 identifiable sites recorded (**Figure 3.14**). 66 groups interviewed in the peak season (68%), and 54 groups in the off-peak season (78%) identified at least one alternative site.

3.63 Of those groups with dogs (n=83), 61 groups (73%) identified at least one site.



**Figure 3.14: Identified alternative sites, with size representative of number of mentions.**

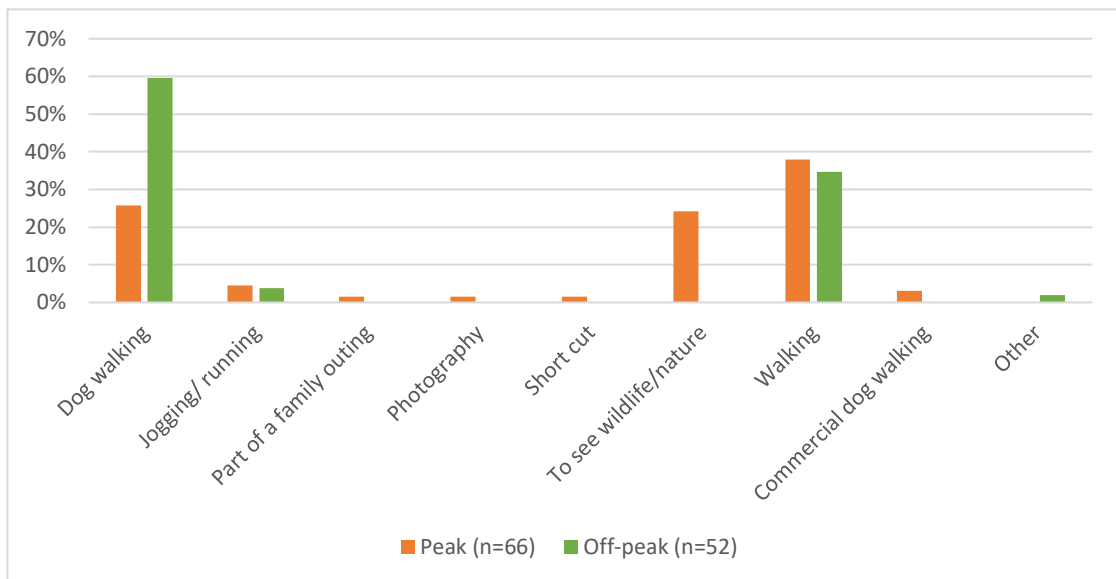
3.64 The top eight most commonly named alternative sites are listed in **Table 3.7** below and shown on **Map 4**.

**Table 3.7: Alternative sites visited by interviewed groups**

Site	Count	Rank
Old Railway Line	23	1
Cotswold Water Park	14	=2
Thames Path	14	=2
Cricklade	9	3
South Cerney	7	4
Cerney Wick	6	5
Millennium Lakes/Wood	5	6
Ashton Keynes	4	=7
Down Ampney	4	=7
Lydiard Park	4	=7
Fairford	3	=8
Lechlade	3	=8

3.65 In some instances, answers were too vague to accurately estimate location (e.g. ‘bridleway’, ‘woodland’) and these answers were excluded from the analysis.

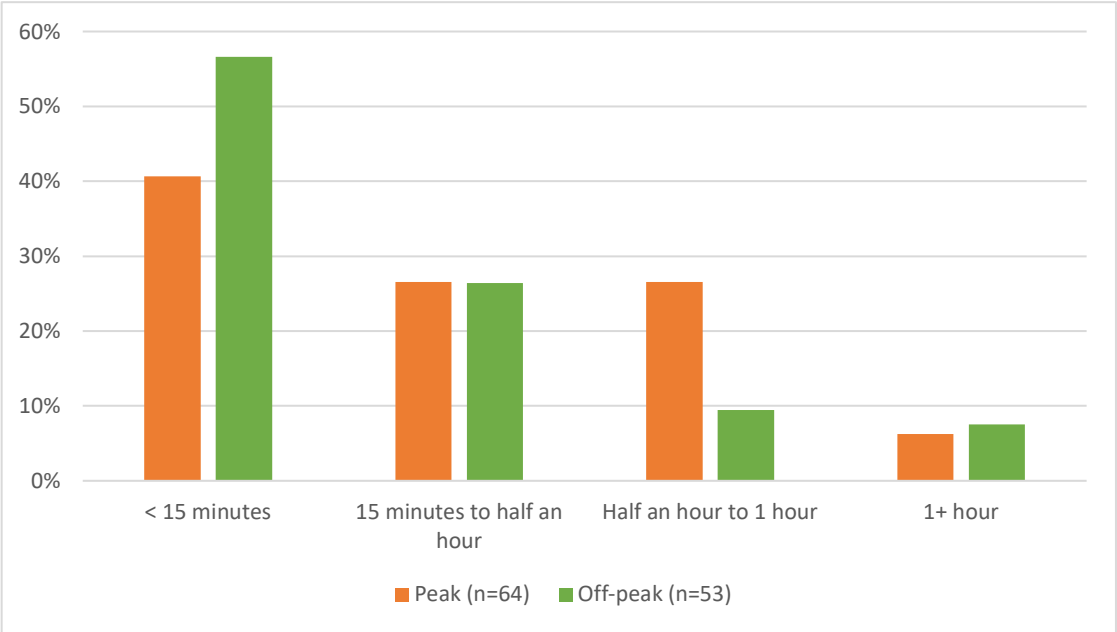
3.66 Groups interviewed during the off-peak season who identified an alternative site (n=52<sup>3</sup>) were most likely to visit these other sites for the purpose of dog-walking (60%), whilst in the peak season (n=66), the majority groups were visiting other sites for the purpose of walking (37.88%), followed by viewing wildlife/nature (24%). Of the groups interviewed in the off-peak season who identified an alternative site, none were visiting other sites to view wildlife/nature (**Figure 3.15**).



**Figure 3.15: Q20. Can you tell me the main purpose of your visits to these other sites?**

<sup>3</sup> Two groups who identified an alternative site did not identify their main purpose for visiting these sites.

3.67 The majority of groups interviewed who identified an alternative site (n=108) travelled for less than half an hour to visit these sites (67% of respondents in the peak season (n=64), and 83% in the off-peak season (n=53<sup>4</sup>)) (Figure 3.16).

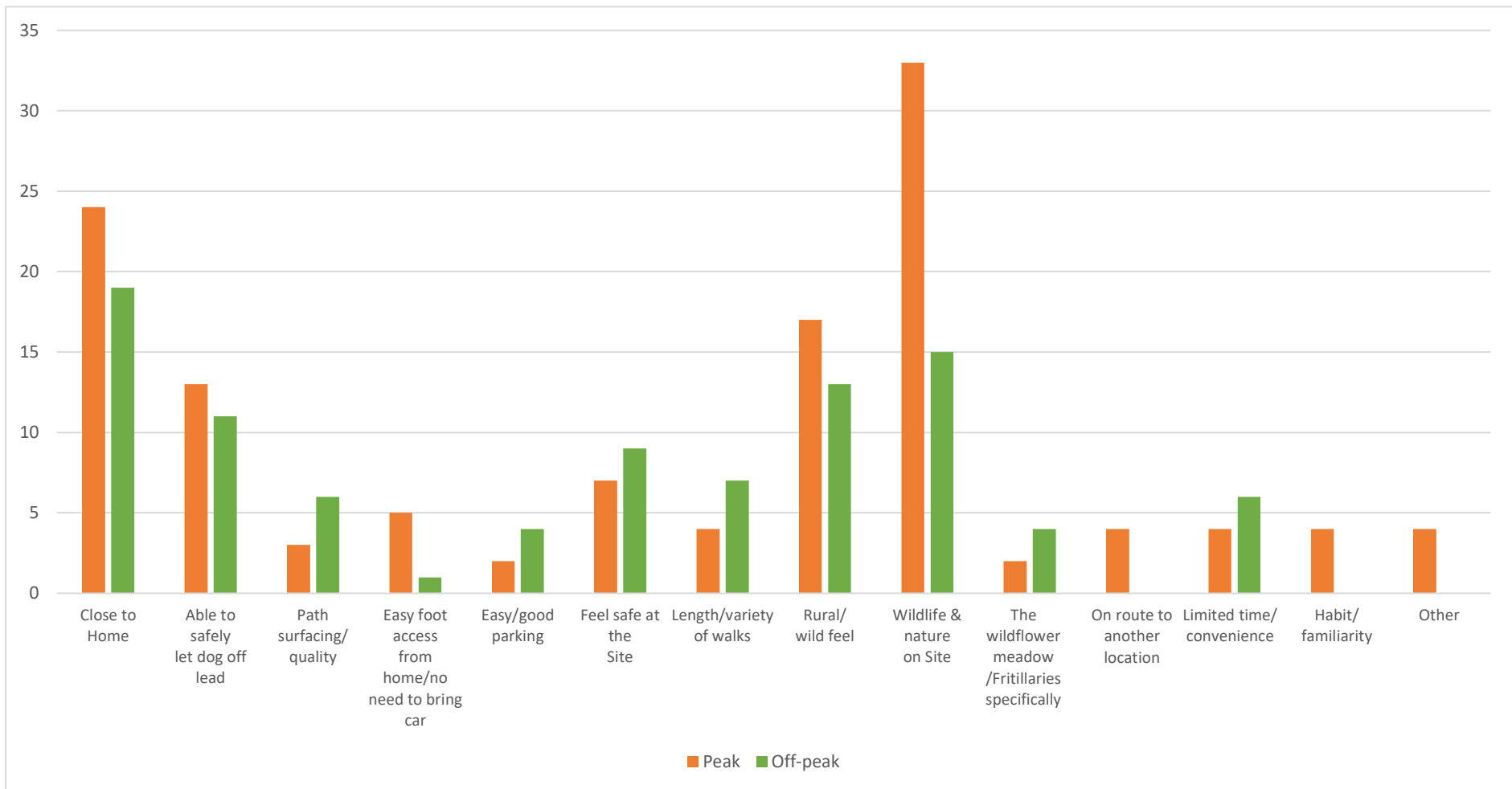


**Figure 3.16: Q22. How long do you typically travel from your home to reach these other sites?**

3.68 When asked what attracted them to the alternative sites named, ‘wildlife and nature’ was given as a reason by 50% of groups who identified an alternative site during the peak season (n=66), followed by ‘close to home’ as the second most popular answer (36%) (Figure 3.17). By contrast, those who identified an alternative site in the off-peak season (n=54) visited these sites as they were ‘close to home’ (35%), for the ‘wildlife and nature’ (28%) and the ‘rural/wild feel’ (24%).

3.69 In addition to the above sites, public open greenspace within the vicinity of North Meadow was identified by each local authority. Map 5 demonstrates the distribution of visitors against these sites.

<sup>4</sup> One group who identified an alternative site did not provide time travelled to the site.



**Figure 3.17: Q21. What is it that attracts you to visit these sites?**



### *Walking Routes*

- 3.70 Interviewees were asked to map the route they had walked that day. For the purposes of identifying hotspots in recreational pressure, the walking routes of all groups were analysed.
- 3.71 A total of 181 annotated maps were digitised, including 106 from the peak season, and 75 from the off-peak season. In a small number of cases, routes were unclear, and educated assumptions were made to determine the likely walking route.
- 3.72 Walking lengths were similar between seasons, with an average distance covered of 1.63km in the peak season, compared to 1.62km in the off-peak season (**Table 3.8**).

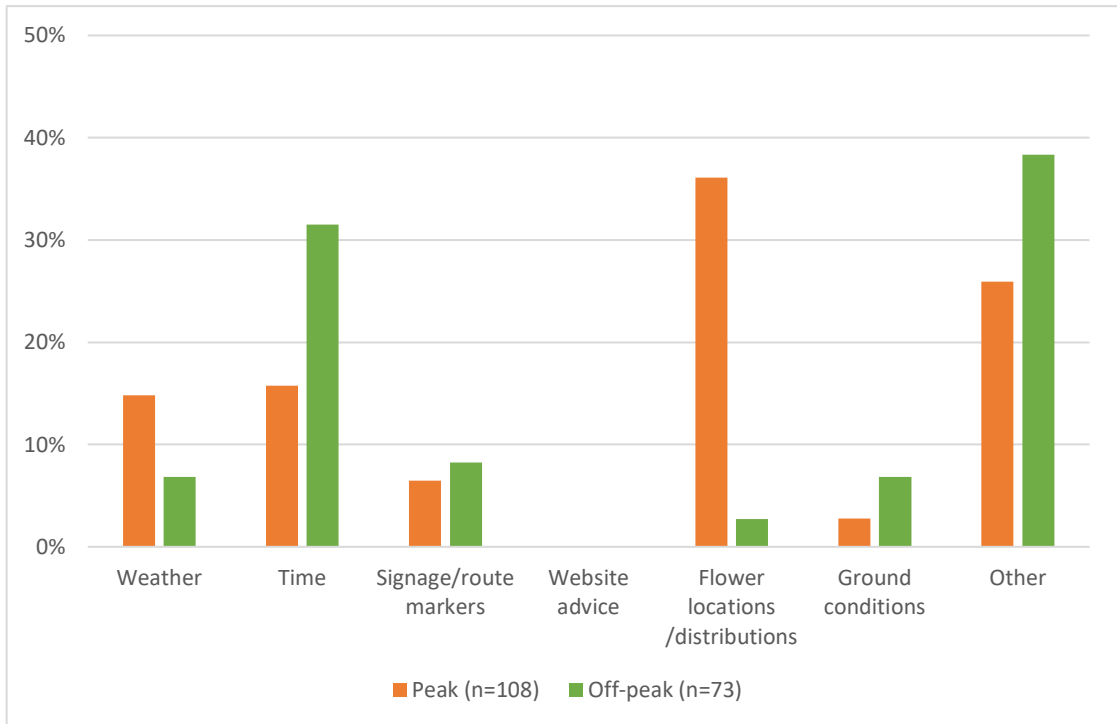
**Table 3.8: Walking distances**

Season	Minimum Walk Distance (km)	Average Walk Distance (km)	Maximum Walk Distance (km)
Peak (n=106)	0.16	1.63	3.33
Off-peak (n=75)	0.36	1.62	3.46

- 3.73 **Maps 6a** and **6b** indicate the levels of recreational pressure exerted across the Site during the peak and off-peak seasons, respectively.
- 3.74 For the majority of groups who had visited the Site previously, the walk undertaken on the day of the interview represented their normal route. This did not change notably across the peak (50%) or off-peak season (59%).
- 3.75 There was a higher proportion of groups who either had no typical route, or were unsure if their route was 'typical', during the peak season (38%) compared to the off-peak season (21%).

### *Factors Influencing Choice of Route*

- 3.76 The presence of the flowering SHF and lowland meadows was most likely to influence the routes walked by those visiting during the peak season (n=108), with 36% of groups citing this as a reason (**Figure 3.18**). During the off-peak season (n=73), groups were more likely to be influenced by time (32%) or 'other' reasons (38%). 'Other' reasons cited, across both seasons, included:
- Mobility issues (2 responses);
  - Habit (3 responses);
  - Wanting to walk by the river (2 responses);
  - Presence of cattle (1 response); and
  - Consideration for dog (9 responses).



**Figure 3.18: Q13. What (if anything) influenced your choice of route today?**

3.77 Across both seasons, 13 groups (7%) said that nothing in particular influenced their route. No groups, in either season, said that they were influenced by the website advice on routes.

#### *Visitor Origins*

3.78 For those visitors travelling from home, a total of 155 valid postcodes were gathered during the course of the questionnaire surveys (with 9 given postcodes having been discounted as invalid), representing a 95% capture rate. The distribution of these postcodes is shown on **Map 7a** and **Map 7b**.

3.79 The highest proportion of visitors originated from within Wiltshire Council, with 66% of postcodes. This was followed by Swindon Borough Council with 15% of visitors and Cotswold District Council with 6%.

3.80 Across both seasons (n=155), the majority (53%) of all groups originated from within 1km of the Site. This was higher in the off-peak season (n=90) (65%) and lower in the peak season (n=65) (44%).

3.81 During the peak season, a relatively high proportion of groups (34%) had travelled from further than 10km. During the off-peak season, this decreased considerably, with just 12% of groups having travelled 10km or more (**Table 3.9; Map 7c**).

**Table 3.9: Count of visitor number by travel distance band**

Distance Travelled	Peak	Off-peak
0 – 1km	40	42
1 – 5km	8	6
5 – 10km	11	9
10km +	31	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>65</b>

- 3.82 The shortest distance travelled in both seasons was just under 90m. The longest distance travelled varied substantially across seasons. In the peak season one group had travelled more than 100km to reach the Site, compared to a maximum travel distance of just under 50km during the off-peak season (**Table 3.10**).

**Table 3.10: Distances travelled to the Site**

Season	Mode of transport	Minimum (km)	Maximum (km)
Total	Car	0.55	104.7
	Foot	0.09	23.1
Peak Season	Car	0.55	104.7
	Foot	0.09	23.1
Off-peak Season	Car	0.94	49.9
	Foot	0.09	10.4
Peak (groups with dogs)	Car	0.77	56.6
	Foot	0.09	23.1
Off-peak (groups with dogs)	Car	0.94	11.5
	Foot	0.09	10.4

### Catchment Analysis

- 3.83 The cumulative frequency of the distances travelled to reach a site can be used to define visitor catchments. The 75<sup>th</sup> percentile figure taken from a cumulative frequency distribution curve defines the distance from within which 75% of visitors have travelled to reach a site. Such a figure is typically used for catchment analysis (Liley *et al.* 2013; Southgate *et al.* 2018). This is because it excludes the upper distances travelled by only a few visitors that skew calculated averages, providing a more representative understanding of predominant travel patterns.
- 3.84 A single group, comprising of one person visiting from home, had travelled by bus/coach to the Site. This distance has been discounted from the catchment analysis as it is not known where the coach began its journey or how many stops it made along the way and is not comparable to a direct journey made by a private vehicle.
- 3.85 As has been outlined in preceding sections of this report, dog walkers and walkers are the key user groups who visit the Site frequently, throughout the year. **Table 3.11** below shows that, when subdividing these two user groups on the basis of mode of transport, dog walkers arriving on foot are the most frequent visitors, followed by walkers on foot, followed by dog walkers and walkers arriving by car. Whilst visitors coming to the Site to view the SHF make up the majority

of visitors in the peak season (as outlined in paragraph 3.31), thereby representing a third key user group, the data below shows that these visitors visit the Site infrequently and would therefore account for a low number of visits across any one year. The remaining groups (i.e. those not outlined above) comprise of just 5% of respondents.

**Table 3.11: Respondent count of frequency of visit against purpose of visit and mode of travel**

		Frequency of visit						
Purpose	Travel	Daily	2-3 times a week	Once a week	Once a month	Occasionally (a few times a year)	First visit	Total (% of total n=146)
Dog walking	Car	2	5	4	2	6	1	20 (14%)
	On foot	18	16	4	4	4		46 (31%)
Walking	Car	1	1	1		3	9	15 (10%)
	On foot	5	8	5	3	5		26 (18%)
To see the meadow/flowers	Car					15	14	29 (20%)
	On foot	1		3		6		10 (7%)
<b>Total (% of total n=146)</b>		<b>27 (19%)</b>	<b>30 (20%)</b>	<b>17 (12%)</b>	<b>9 (6.2%)</b>	<b>39 (27%)</b>	<b>24 (16%)</b>	<b>146</b>

3.86 As the most frequent regular users of North Meadow, these groups are considered the most representative examples of activity on the Site, and as such catchment analysis has been based on these groups.

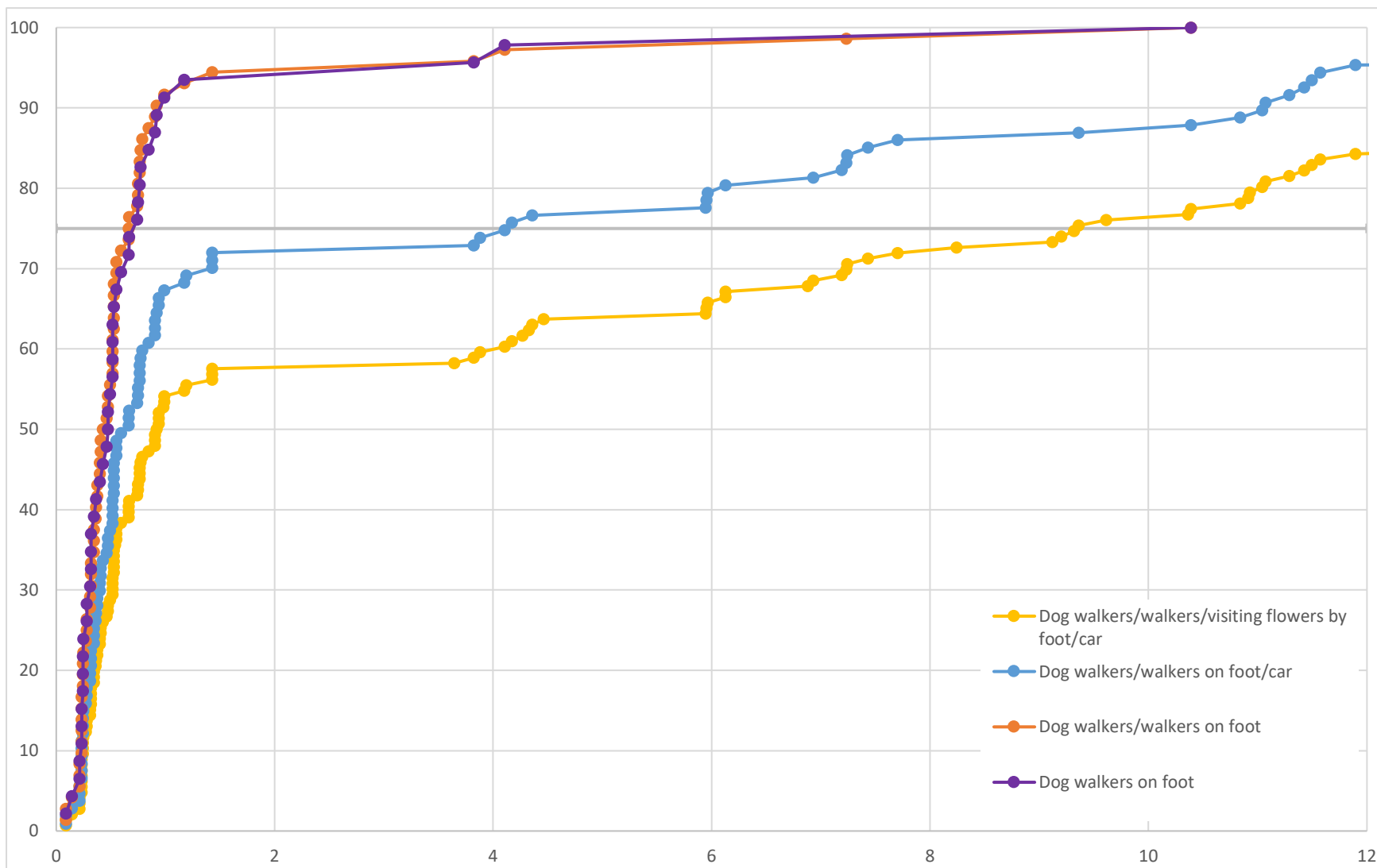
3.87 **Figure 3.19** below presents the cumulative frequency distribution curve for the key user groups who visit North Meadow, as described above, with further subdivisions of groups in line with increasing frequency of visitation. For consistency, travel distance is taken as the linear distance from the home postcode to the closest boundary of the Site. The 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles shown in **Figure 3.19** are summarised in **Table 3.12** and are depicted on **Map 8**.

**Table 3.12: Distances travelled to Site by 75% of groups**

User Group	75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile of Distance Travelled (km)
All key user groups: dog walkers/walkers /visiting flowers by foot/car	9.4km
Dog walkers/walkers on foot/car	4.2km
Dog walkers/walkers on foot	0.7km
Dog walkers on foot	0.7km

3.88 As can be seen from the summary table above, when excluding infrequent visitors who visit the Site to see the meadow/flowers, the visitor catchment decreases markedly.

3.89 **Maps 9a – 9c** show the origin of user groups as outlined above.



**Figure 3.19: Cumulative frequency distribution - linear distance between site and home postcode (figure truncated at 12km), with 75<sup>th</sup> percentile**

## 4. DISCUSSION

### Key Findings

- 4.1 The visitor survey undertaken at North Meadow recorded higher levels of visitation during the flowering of the SHF, with an increase in visitation of 90% compared to the off-peak season.
- 4.2 The majority of visitors to the Site come from home (regardless of the distance) and are not on holiday in the area; this was the case both during the peak and off-peak season. This indicates the type of residential development that could, if located in close proximity to North Meadow, contribute to increased levels of public access and therefore recreational pressure.
- 4.3 Further to the above, the profile of the 'typical' visitor was observed to change between the peak and off-peak season. Those visiting during the peak season comprised of a smaller proportion of dog walkers, relative to the proportion observed in the off-peak season, despite overall numbers of dog walkers being consistent across the seasons. This means that the higher numbers of visitors recorded during the peak season were represented by those visiting to visit the meadow and SHF flowers, and whose principal purpose for visiting was not for dog walking. These visitors were more likely to include first time or occasional visitors, who had travelled longer distances to reach the Site, and who spent more time on Site once there.
- 4.4 Whilst groups during the off-peak season comprised of a higher proportion of dog walkers compared to the peak season, there were a consistent number of dog walking groups throughout the year. This suggests that visitors to North Meadow are represented by a core group of 'local' dog walkers who use the Site year round as their first choice for walks, and do so regularly, with a greater frequency than other user groups.
- 4.5 Of the dog walkers who use the Site, many visitors allow their dogs off the lead, particularly in the off-peak season where more than half of dog walkers were observed to do so. This is despite the presence of prominent signs requesting visitors to keep dogs on leads at all times. During the off-peak season, without the presence of the flowering SHF, it can be inferred that visitors do not see the harm in letting their dogs roam. The Site is large, open, well contained and quiet – all highly desirable characteristics known to be sought by dog walkers.
- 4.6 The lower proportion of dogs observed to be 'off-lead' in the peak season is likely to be influenced by the obvious presence of the SHF flowers, increased signage reinforcing the request to have dogs on lead, and a higher number of visitors on Site creating a feeling of 'peer pressure' to adhere to the rules. Despite this, just over 35% of dog walkers let their dogs off the lead in the peak season.
- 4.7 Although North Meadow has no formal car park, 55% of visitors in the peak season arrived by car, indicating that the lack of car park is not a deterrent to potential visitors. The majority of these visitors were exiting the Site at AP1, suggesting that they are likely taking advantage of the lack of parking restrictions along the High Street. The North Meadow website does note that roadside parking is available outside AP1<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://crickladedecourtleet.org.uk/visitor-information/location/>

- 4.8 By contrast, most visitors who arrived on foot did so at AP2 and AP3. Given that these APs link directly to Cricklade, it is likely that these people were visiting from the village. The Thames Path and Thames and Severn Way also connect with this section of the Site, and visitors may have been walking this trail.
- 4.9 Of those travelling to Site by foot, some notably high distances were travelled, with a maximum distance of 23km reported during the peak season. Whilst it is not inconceivable that visitors may have walked this far, it is potentially more plausible that they had driven to a nearby location, such as Cricklade, and then walked to the Site. Any future visitor surveys should therefore seek to clarify this.

### **Recreational Pressure**

- 4.10 **Maps 5a** and **5b** illustrate the areas of North Meadow that were subject to the highest levels of recreational pressure, as analysed from the survey results.
- 4.11 During the peak season, **Map 6a** shows that the majority of groups interviewed stayed within the designated pathways, with just a small number of deviations. As a result, the highest levels of recreational pressure within the Site can be seen along The River Walk, the main circular route.
- 4.12 By comparison, **Map 6b** indicates that recreational pressure was more widely distributed across the Site during the off-peak season. A higher proportion of visitors had left the designated pathways and were more likely to cross the centre of the Site. The River Walk adjacent to the River Thames remained subject to highest recreational pressure, although this had decreased on other parts of the walk compared to the peak season. It is likely that during the off-peak season, as the SHF are no longer flowering, visitors do not see the harm in crossing the meadow since there are no flowers to damage. This is despite signs (albeit less numerous) still being present asking visitors to remain on the designated footpaths. Whilst visitors leaving the paths in the off-peak season would not trample SHF flowers, increased use of shortcuts may create desire lines across the Site, which may then encourage other visitors to use these routes on a more permanent basis resulting in more widespread footfall across the Site with related pressure on the vegetation and flora.

### **Comparison to Previous Visitor Surveys**

- 4.13 The results of the 2022 visitor survey largely align with the findings of the 2017 visitor survey undertaken by Ethos.
- 4.14 Both surveys have reported that dog walkers are the most regular users of the Site, with these tending to be local people, as demonstrated by the large numbers arriving on foot (**Figure 3.10**). The Site being 'close to home' was cited in both surveys as being a key reason for site selection.
- 4.15 By contrast, the surveys found that those who visit the Site primarily to view the SHF are likely to have travelled a larger distance but they visit far less frequently.

Walking routes mapped during the 2022 surveys show that whilst visitors often kept to designated pathways during the SHF flowering season, visitors did venture from these pathways once the Site had been mown (**Map 6a** and **6b**). By contrast, Ethos found that visitors did not cross through the Site in either survey period (neither of which was during SHF flowering). Both



surveys found the short section of the Thames Path to be the most frequently used section of pathway.

## **Summary**

- 4.16 The visitor survey at North Meadow SAC collected data on levels and patterns of visitor access during the peak season when the SHF were in bloom, and during the off-peak season after the meadow had been cut.
- 4.17 The survey recorded substantially more visitors during the peak season, specifically people visiting for the purpose of viewing the SHF and lowland hay meadow.
- 4.18 However, the most consistent frequent use of the Site was from local dog walkers and walkers, the majority of whom use the Site at least weekly and all year-round.
- 4.19 The highest levels of recreational pressure were most concentrated along pathways around the periphery of the Site during the peak season. Recreational pressure was lower during the off-peak season, but was more widespread across the Site.
- 4.20 Three visitor catchments (defined by the 75th percentile on a cumulative frequency distribution curve) were identified, pertaining to the key user groups of the Site, their mode of travel, their frequency of visitation and correspondingly the distance travelled to reach the Site:
- Dog walkers, walkers and people visiting the meadow/flowers on foot or by car travelled up to 9.4km;
  - Dog walkers and walkers arriving by car travelled up to a distance of 4.2km; and
  - Dog walkers and walkers travelling to the Site on foot did so from within a distance of 0.7km.

## 5. REFERENCES

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- Southgate J., Brookbank R., Cammack K. and Mitchell, J. (2018). *Visitor Access Patterns on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA: Visitor Questionnaire Survey 2018*. Natural England Commissioned Report. Ecological Planning & Research Ltd, Winchester.

MAP 1 Site Location & Context

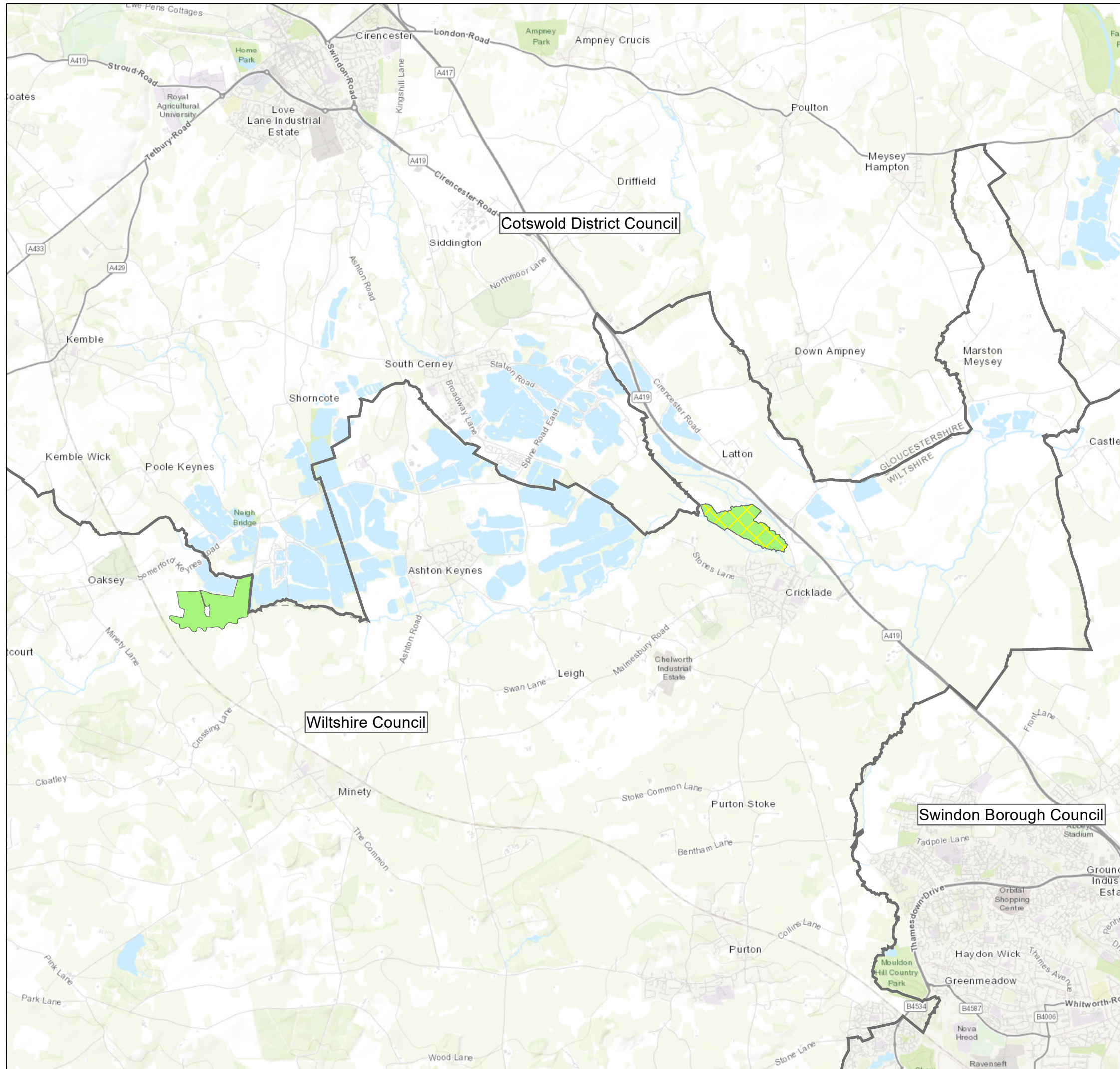
KEY



North Meadow



North Meadow & Clattinger Farm



SCALE: 1:58,500 at A3










CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 26 January 2023

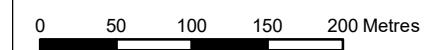
MAP 2 Existing Site Infrastructure

KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Access Point (with ID)
-  The Reedbed Walk
-  The River Walk
-  The Willow Walk
-  Thames Path National
-  Public Rights of Way



SCALE: 1:5,000 at A3






CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 26 January 2023

MAP 3 Access Point Usage

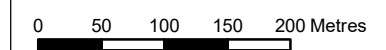
KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Peak season
-  Off-peak season

Based on number of questionnaires completed at each access point.



SCALE: 1:6,000 at A3

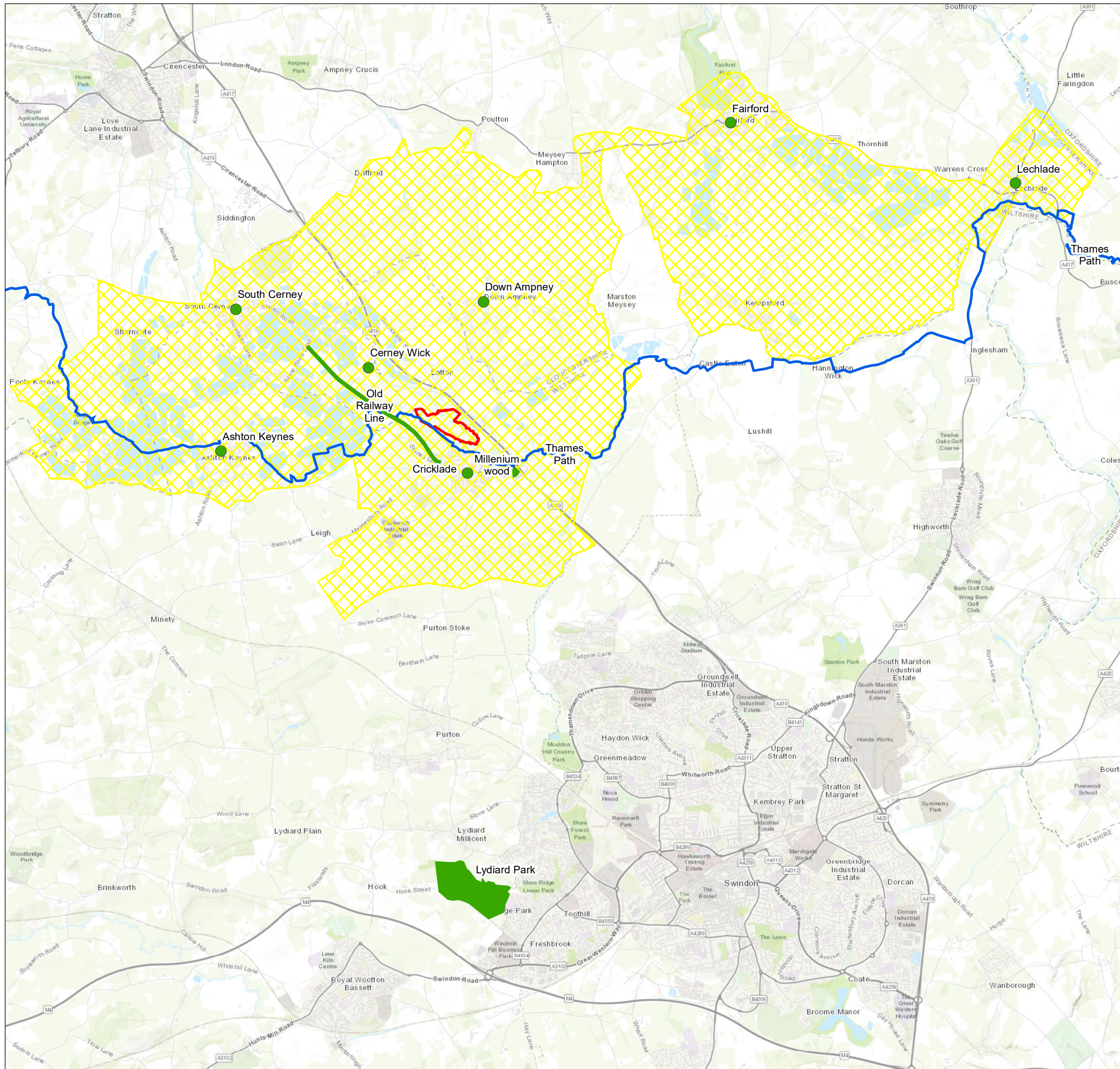


CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council



PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

MAP 4 Top 10 Identified Alternative Sites



KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Indicative Locations of Alternative Sites
-  Cotswold Water Park
-  National Trail

MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:80,000 at A3




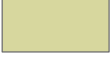




CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

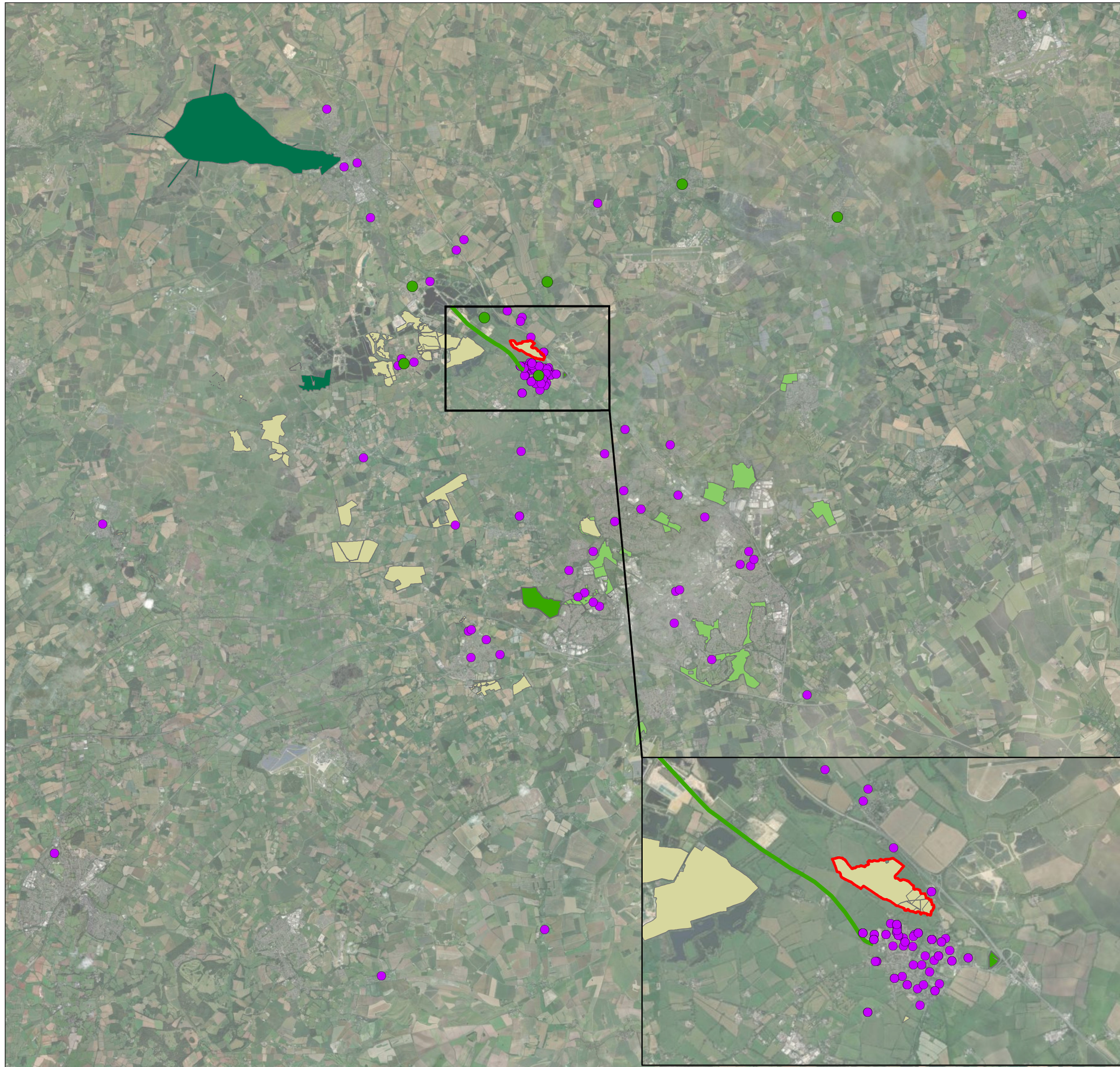
PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

# MAP 5 Distribution of Open Greenspace

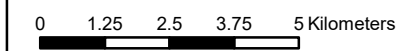
## KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Open Greenspace\* - Wiltshire Council
-  Open Greenspace - Cotswold District Council
-  Open Greenspace - Swindon Borough Council
-  Indicative location of alternative sites identified by visitors to North Meadow
-  Visitor Origin



\*not all sites can be confirmed as public access

MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:146,500 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

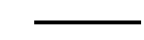
DATE: 09 March 2023

MAP 6a Recreational Pressure - Peak Season

KEY



North Meadow



Designated pathways



Access Point (with ID)

Recreational Pressure

m/m<sup>2</sup>



0.02 - 0.50



0.50 - 1.00



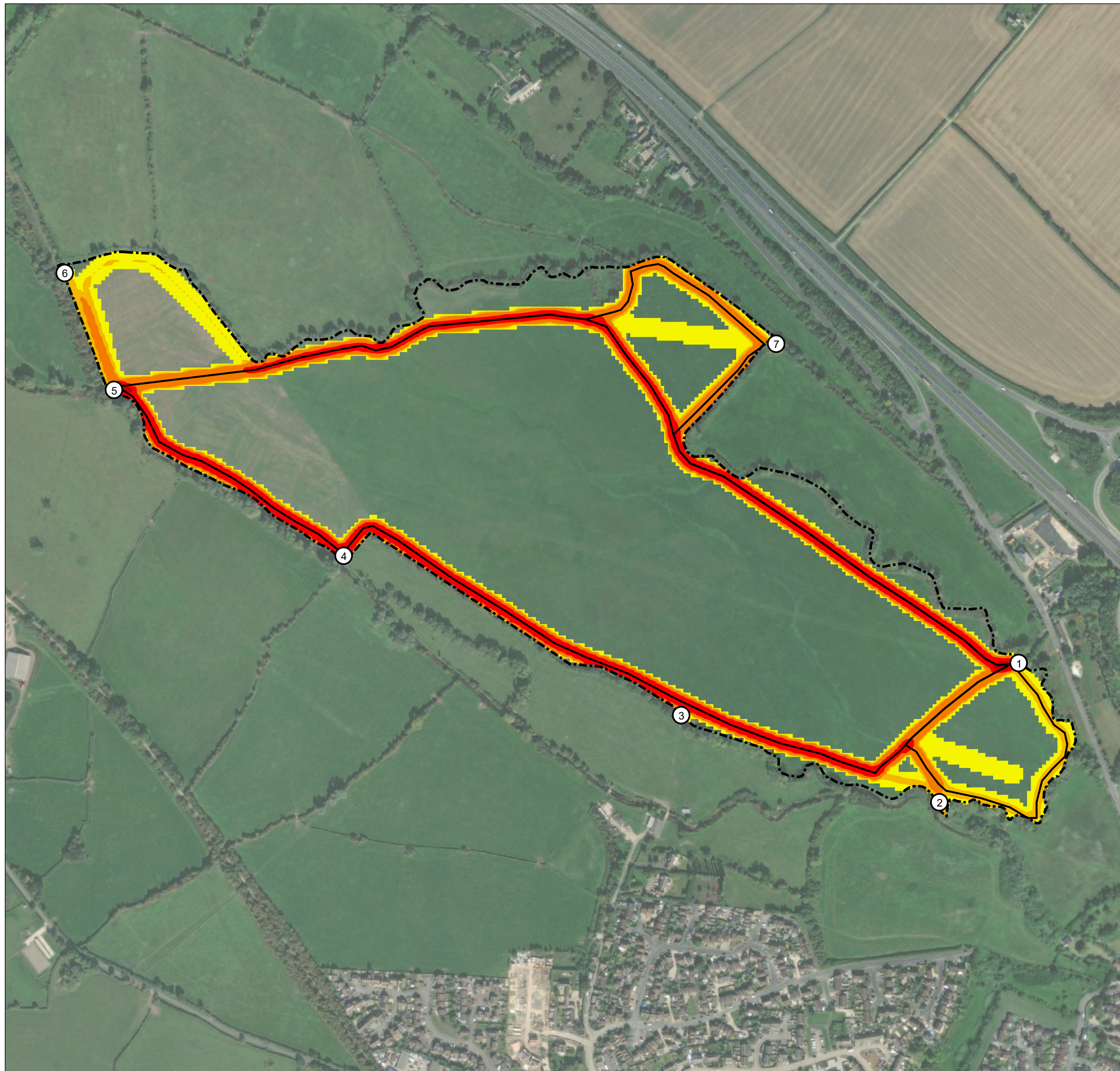
1.00 - 2.50



2.50 - 4.50



4.50 - 6.20



SCALE: 1:5,000 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

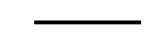


MAP 6b Recreational Pressure - Off-peak Season

KEY



North Meadow



Designated pathways



Access Point (with ID)

Recreational Pressure

m/m<sup>2</sup>



0.02 - 0.50



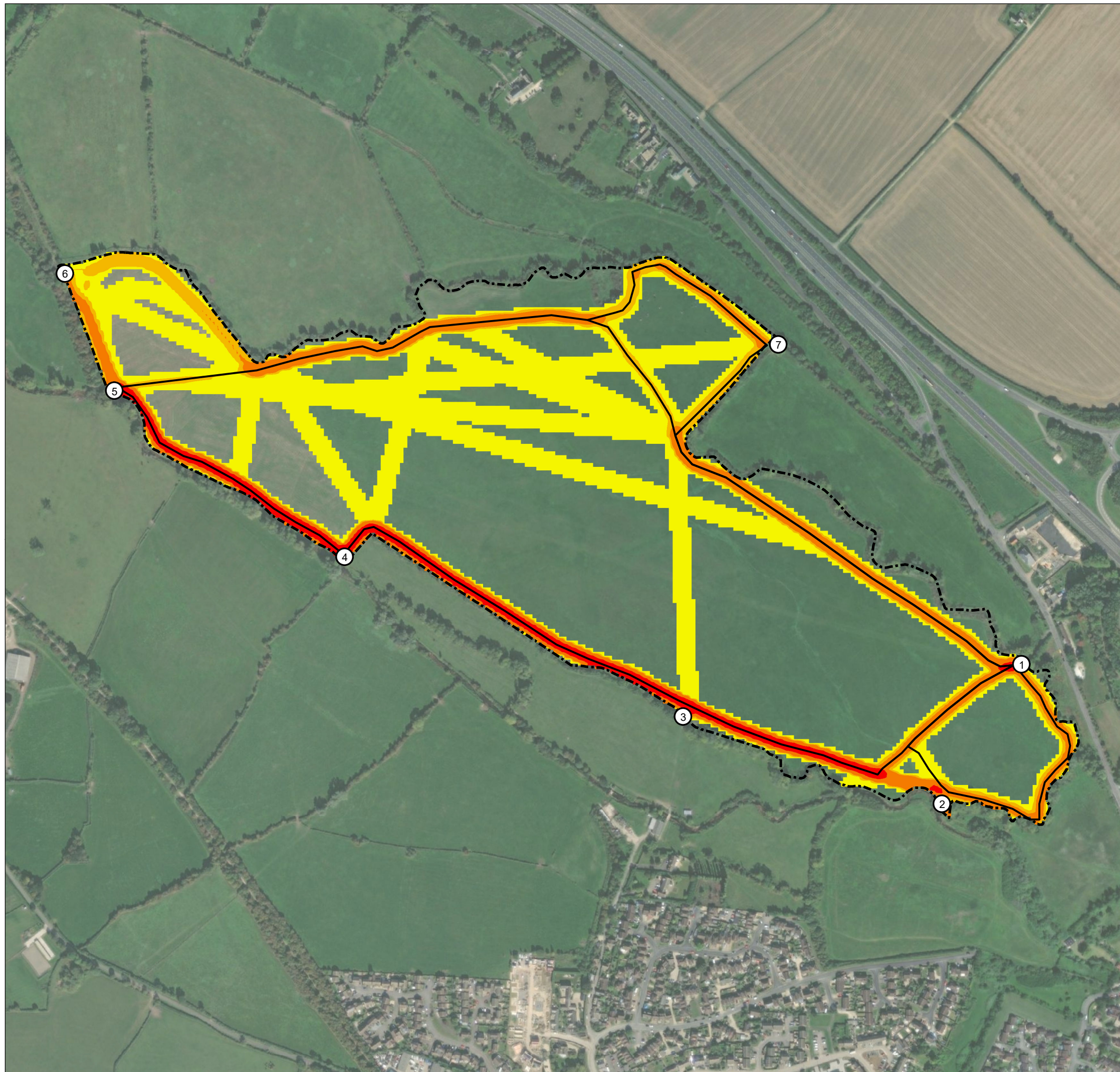
0.50 - 1.00



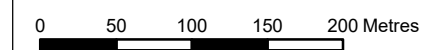
1.00 - 2.50



2.50 - 4.50



SCALE: 1:5,000 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council




PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

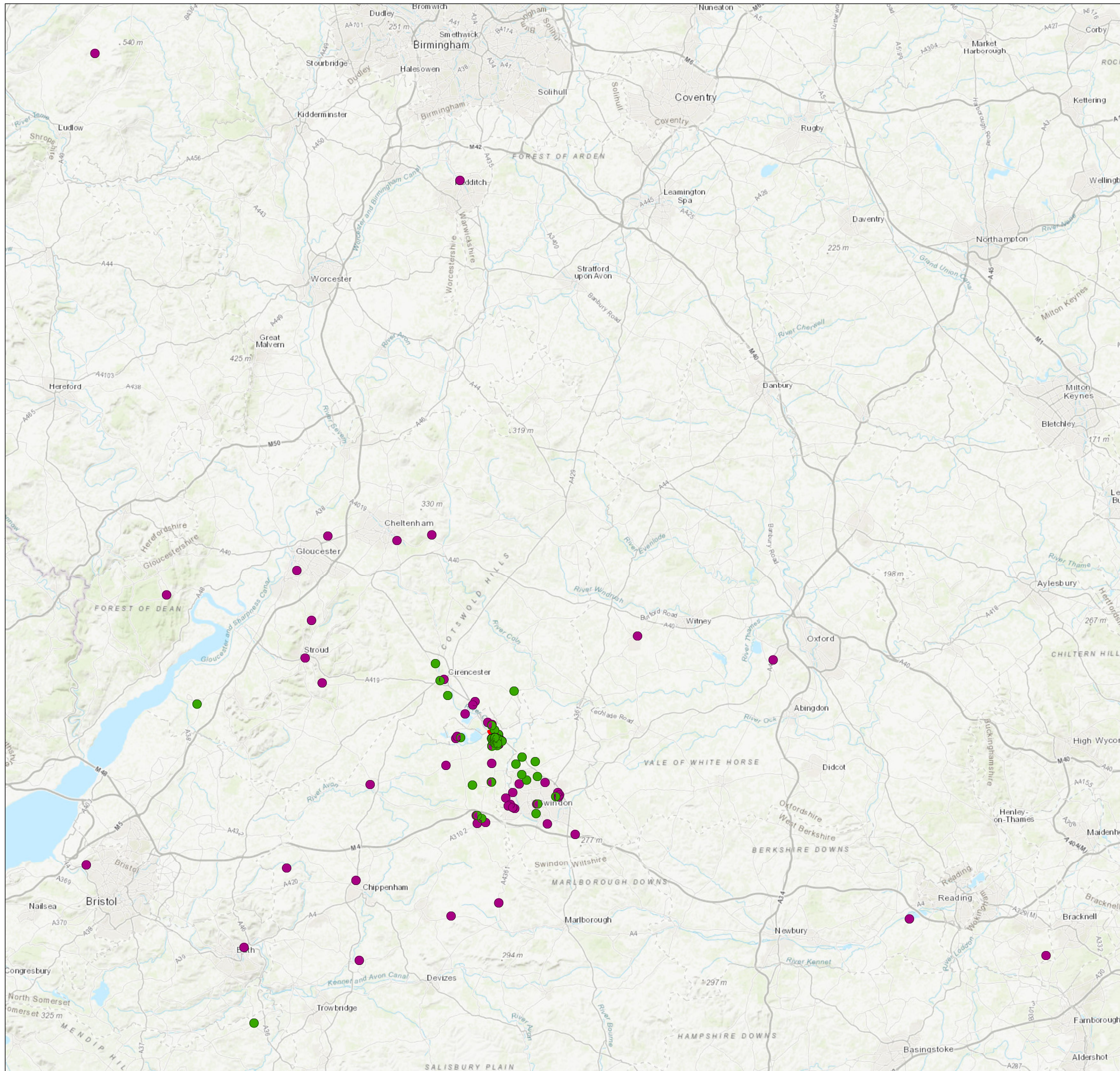
DATE: 09 March 2023

Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

# MAP 7a Visitor Origins

## KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Visitor Origin Off-peak Season
-  Visitor Origin Peak Season



MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:505,000 at A3







CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

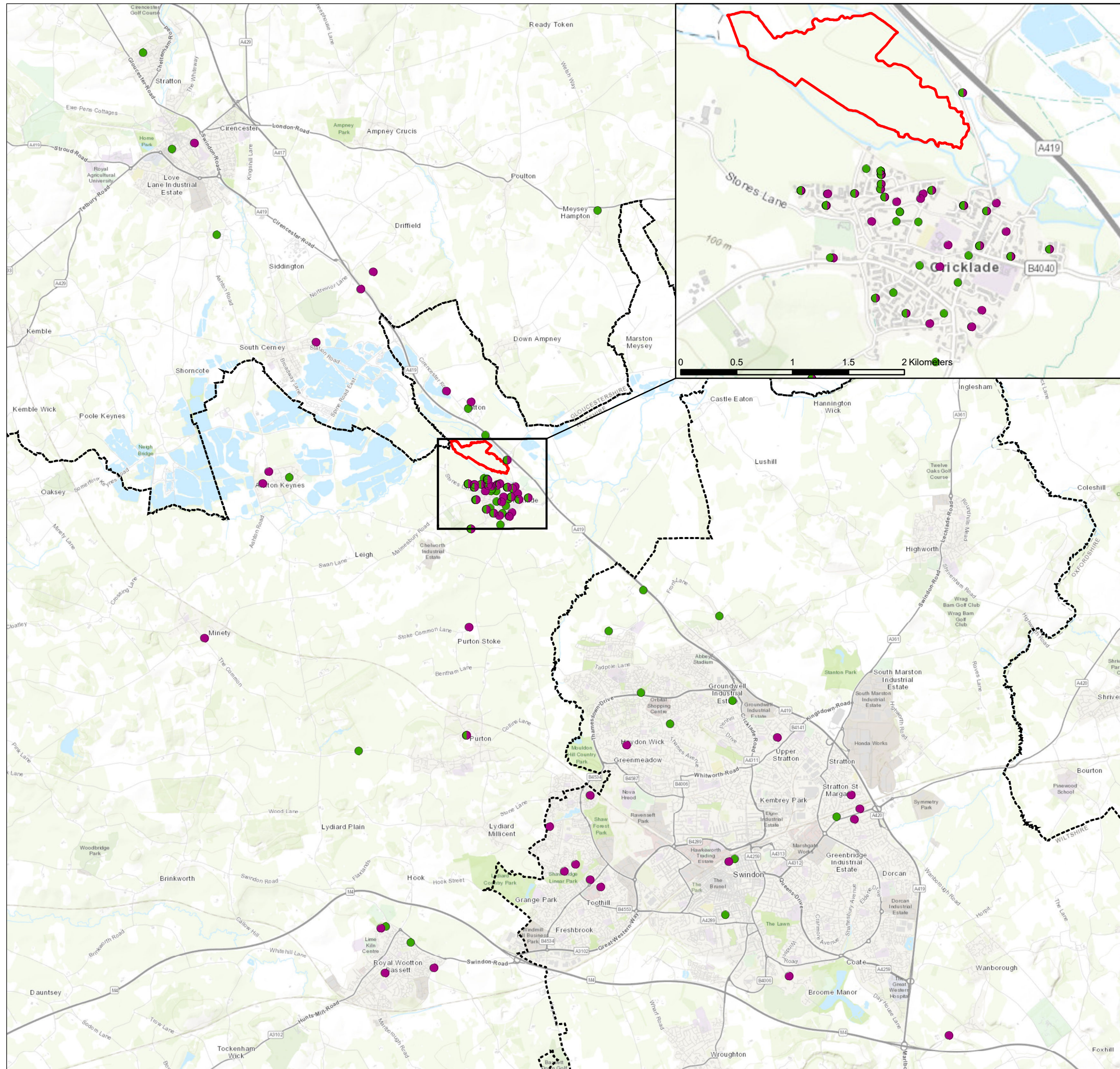
PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

MAP 7b 'Loca'l Visitor Origins

KEY

-  North Meadow
-  Local Authority boundary
-  Visitor Origin Peak Season
-  Visitor Origin Off-peak Season



MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:87,500 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

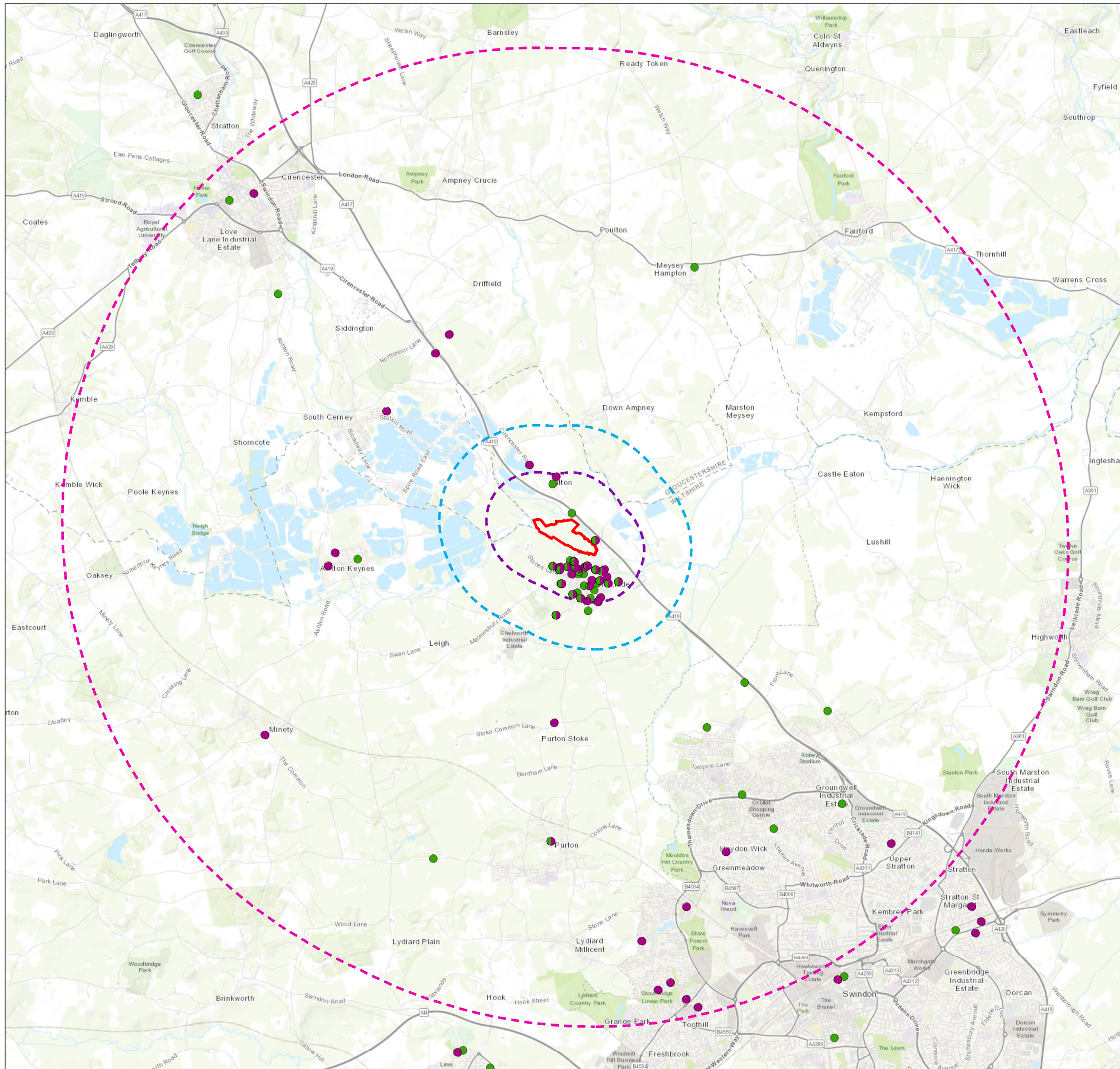
PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

MAP 7c Visitor Origins within 10km of North Meadow

KEY

-  North Meadow
-  1km linear distance to North Meadow
-  2km linear distance to North Meadow
-  10km linear distance to North Meadow
-  Visitor Origin Peak Season
-  Visitor Origin Off-peak Season



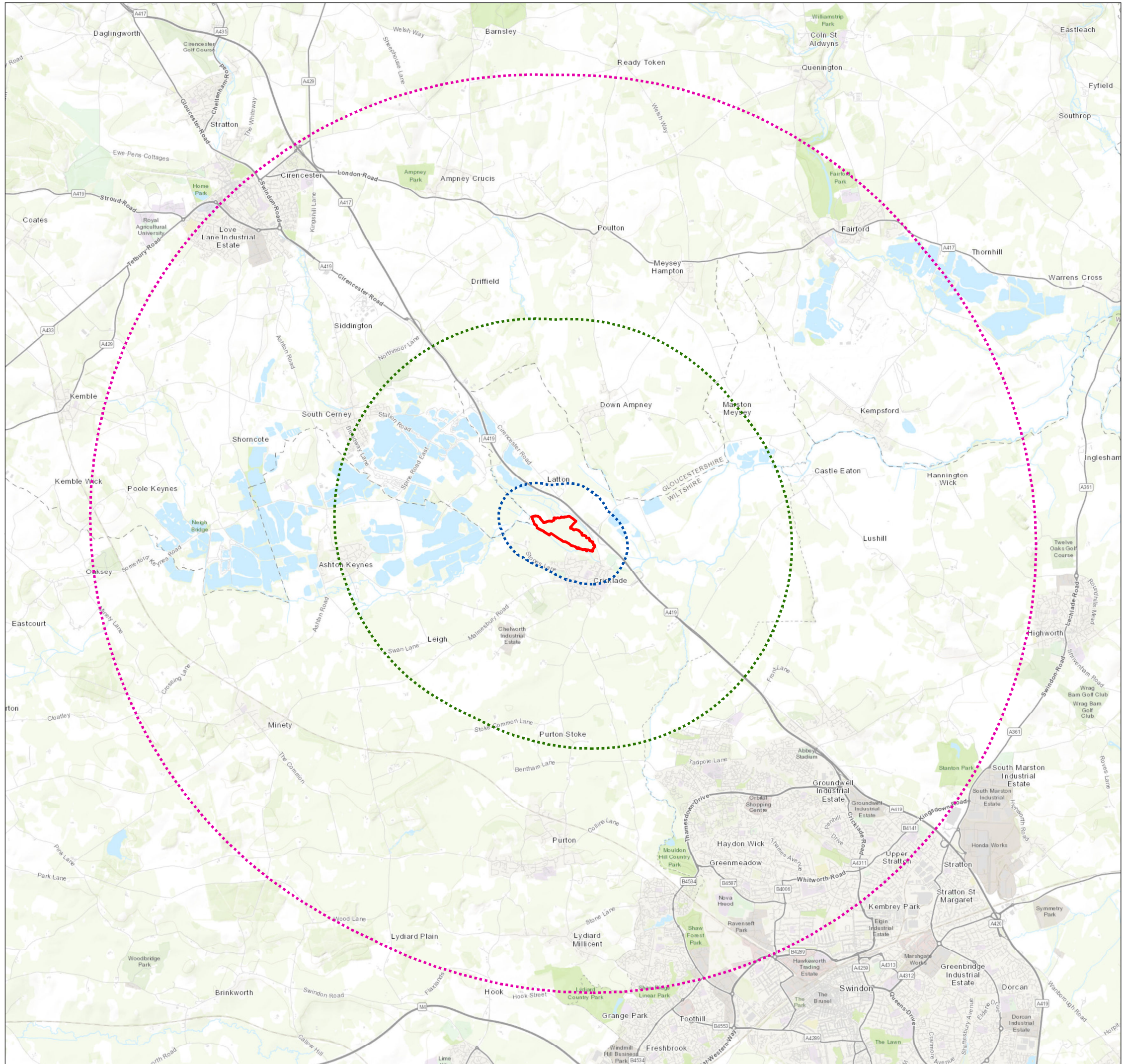
MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:80,000 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023



MAP 8 Distances Travelled by 75% of Groups

- KEY**
- North Meadow
  - Dog walkers on foot; Dog walkers/walkers on foot
  - Dog walkers/walkers on foot/car
  - Dog walkers/walkers /visiting flowers by foot/car

MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:80,000 at A3








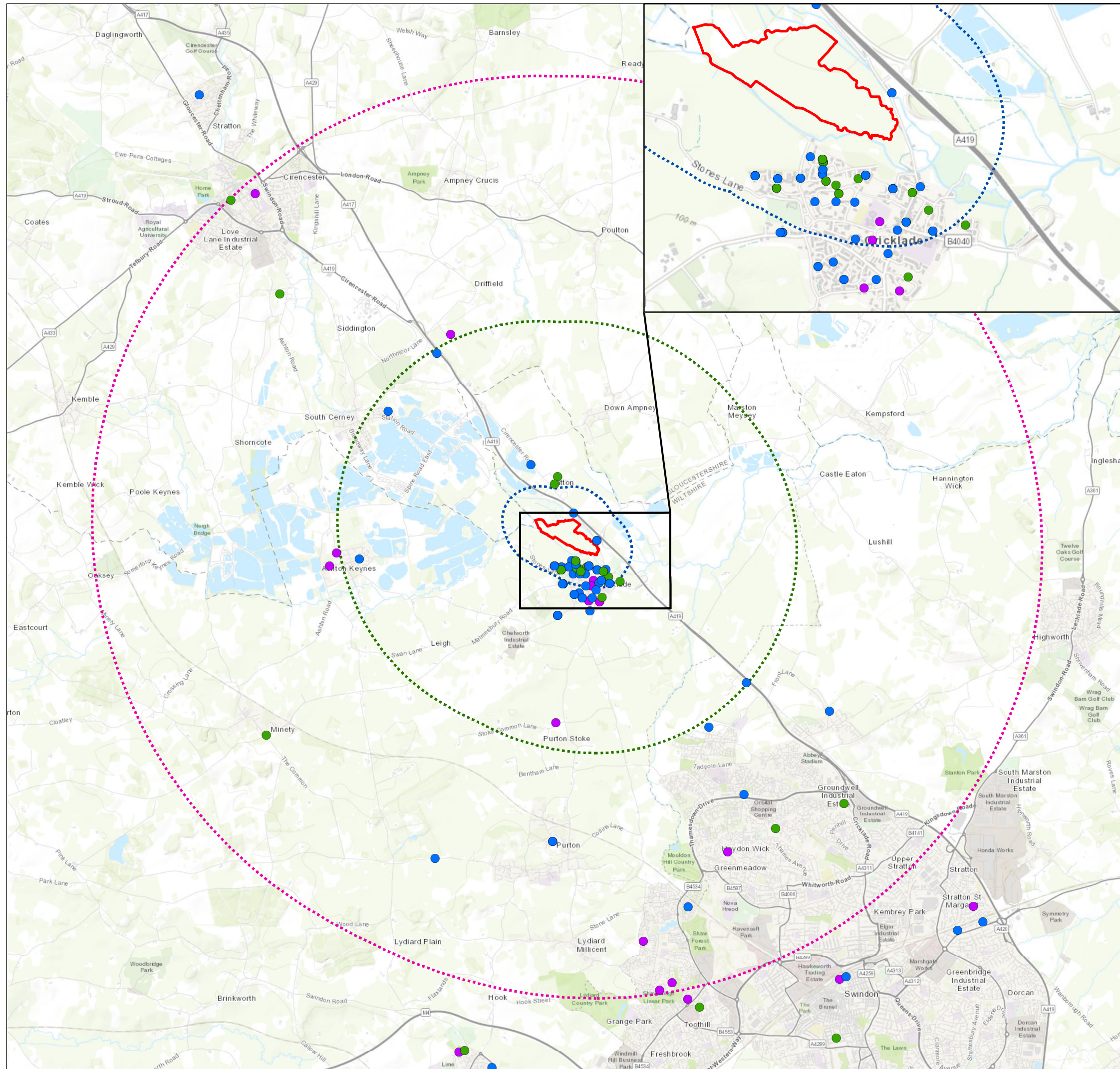
CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council  
 PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade  
 DATE: 09 March 2023

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and

MAP 9a Origin of User Groups - Purpose of Visit

KEY

-  North Meadow
-  0.7km linear distance to Site boundary
-  4.2km linear distance to Site boundary
-  9.4km linear distance to Site boundary
-  Dog walking
-  To see the Meadow/Flowers
-  Walking



MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:80,000 at A3









CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

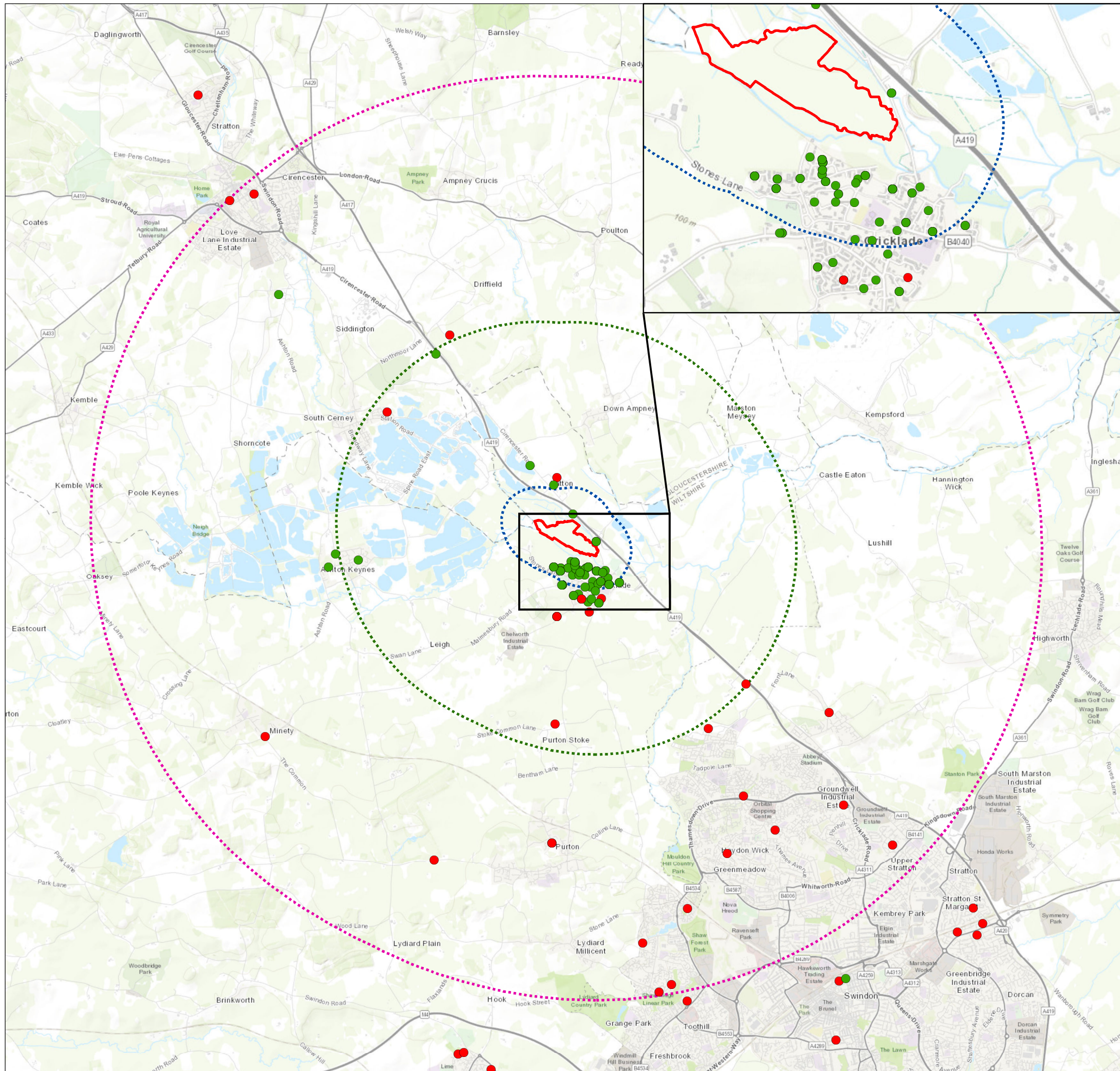
PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023

# MAP 9b Origin of User Groups - Mode of Travel

## KEY

-  North Meadow
-  0.7km linear distance to Site boundary
-  4.2km linear distance to Site boundary
-  9.4km linear distance to Site boundary
-  Car
-  On Foot



MAIN FRAME SCALE: 1:80,000 at A3







CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade








DATE: 09 March 2023

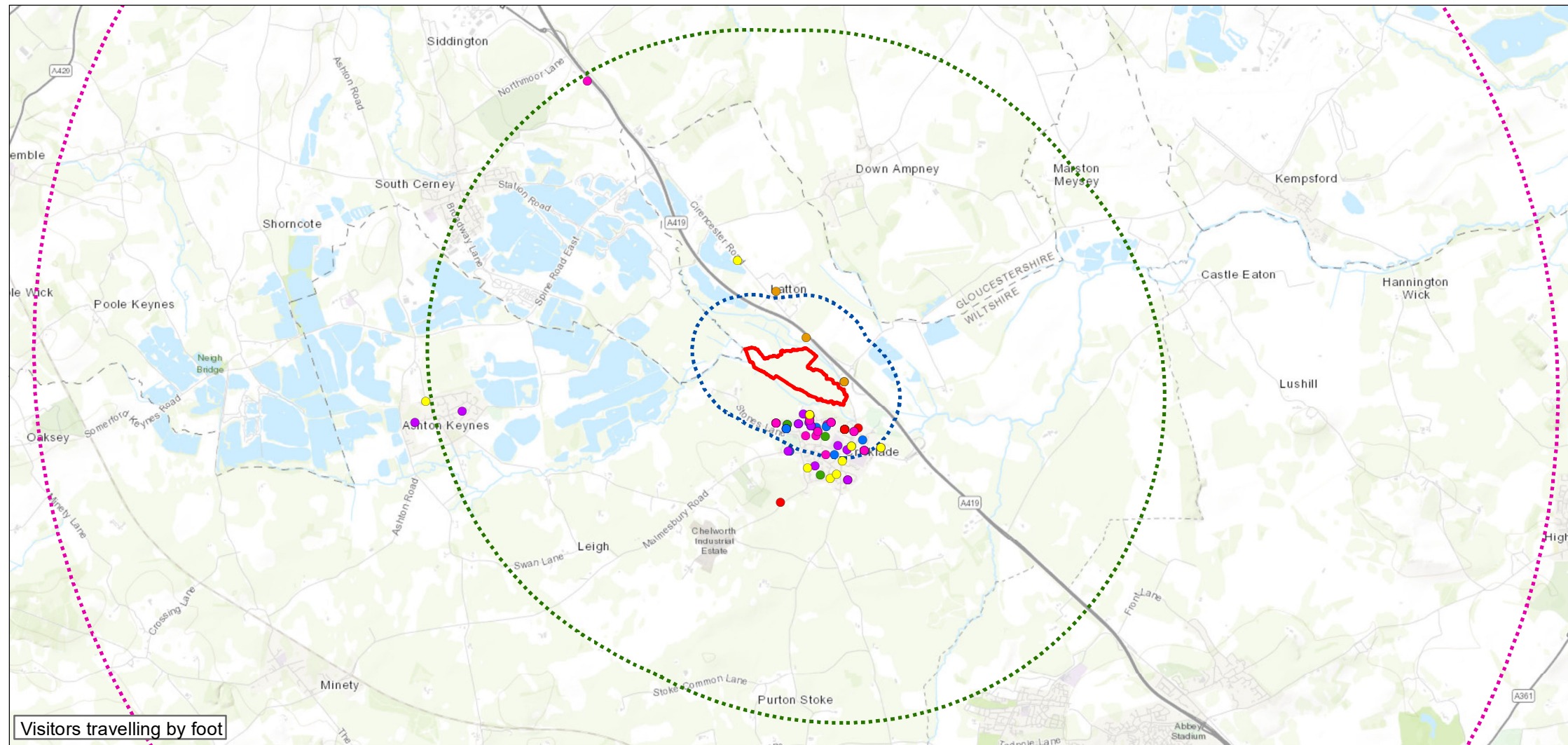
MAP 9c Origin of User Groups – Mode of Travel vs Access Point

KEY

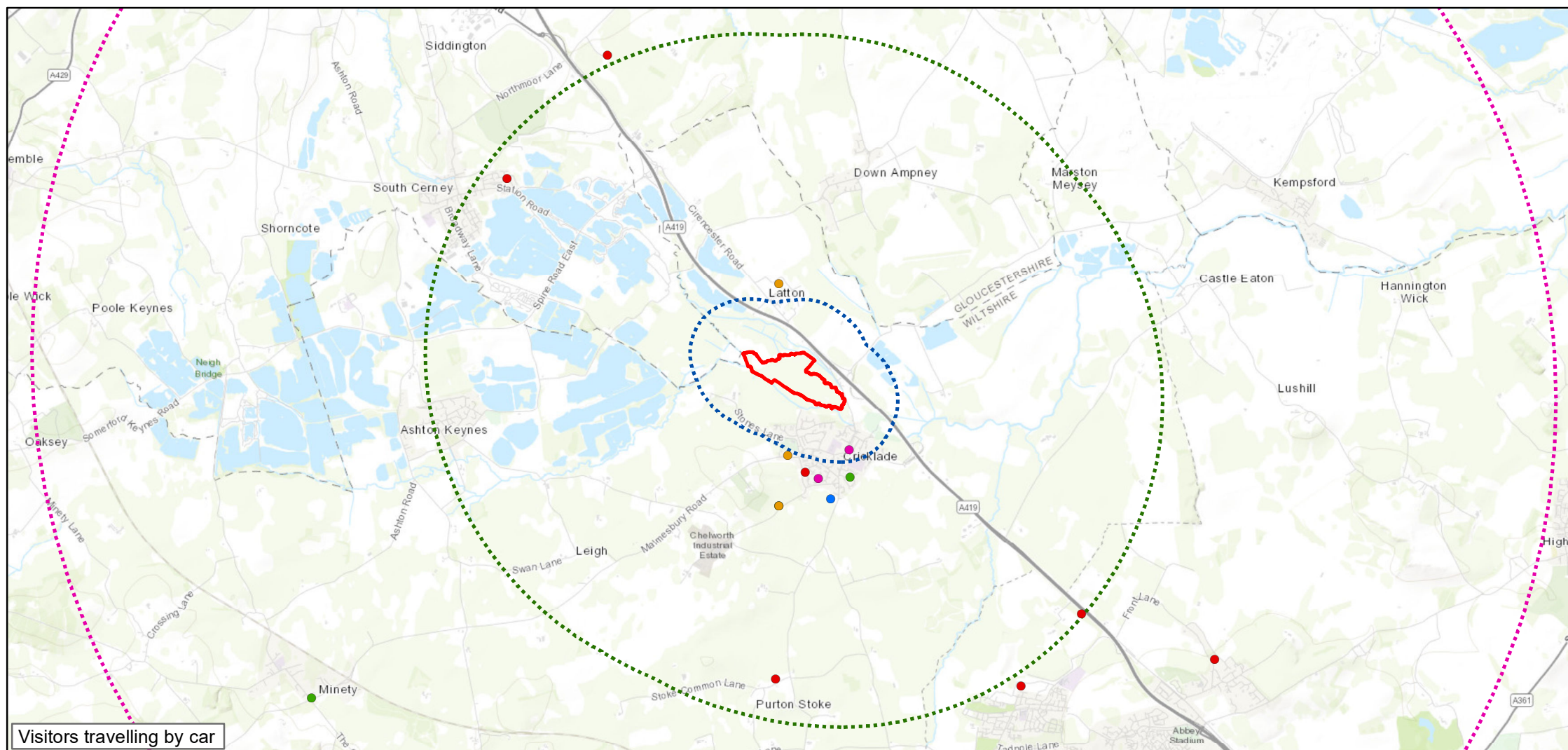
-  North Meadow
-  0.7km linear distance to Site boundary
-  4.2km linear distance to Site boundary
-  9.4km linear distance to Site boundary

Access Point

-  1
-  2
-  4
-  3
-  5
-  6
-  7



Visitors travelling by foot



Visitors travelling by car

SCALE: 1:70,000 at A3



CLIENT: Swindon Borough Council

PROJECT: North Meadow, Cricklade

DATE: 09 March 2023



## **Appendix 1**

### **North Meadow Visitor Questionnaire**

---

# VISITOR SURVEY – North Meadow

## Metadata

Interviewer:

Interview ID Code:

Date:

Access Point:

Time:

Weather Conditions:

How many adults and children are present in the group? (Give a number of each age group)

Children under 16	
Adult 16 – 25	
Adult 26 – 45	
Adult 46 - 59	
Adult 60+	

How many dogs are in the group?

Number of dogs	
Number of dogs off lead	

**Intro:** “Hello, could you spare me a couple of minutes to answer some brief questions regarding your visit to North Meadow. This is part of a study of visitor access patterns, so we understand better how people are using the land. All data gathered is completely anonymous and will be used solely for the research purposes mentioned”

### 1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SITUATION TODAY?

Tick one

- Visiting from home
- On holiday, staying away from home
- Visiting/ staying with friends/ family
- Other (free text)

### 2. SO WE CAN ANALYSE VISITOR ACCESS PATTERNS, PLEASE COULD YOU TELL ME THE POST CODE OF WHERE YOU ARE VISITING FROM TODAY?

- this data is used to identify general areas, and does not identify exact addresses

[try to obtain full postcode where possible – this provides very important information. If they are unwilling to provide this, try to obtain the name of the village/town/holiday site as an alternative?]

### 3. CAN YOU TELL ME THE APPROXIMATE AGE OF YOUR HOME?

Tick one

- Less than 5 years old
- 5 to 10 years old
- 11+ years
- Don't know/not applicable

### 4. WHAT WAS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF YOUR VISIT TODAY?

Tick one

- Dog walking
- Commercial dog walking
- Walking
- To see the meadow/flowers
- Jogging / running
- Cycling
- Part of family outing
- Shortcut
- Other

### 5. HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT NORTH MEADOW?

Tick one

- First Visit
- Daily
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Occasionally (a few times a year)

### 6. DO YOU TEND TO VISIT HERE MORE AT A PARTICULAR TIME OF YEAR?

Tick one

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

**7. HOW DID YOU TRAVEL HERE?**

*Tick one*

- On foot
- Car
- Van
- Campervan
- Bus/Coach
- Motorcycle
- Cycle
- E-cycle
- Other

**8. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO COME HERE TODAY RATHER THAN VISTING ANOTHER LOCAL SITE?** multiple answers ok

<input type="checkbox"/> Close to home	<input type="checkbox"/> The wildflower meadow/Fritillaries specifically
<input type="checkbox"/> Able to safely let dog off lead	<input type="checkbox"/> On route to another location
<input type="checkbox"/> Path surfacing / quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited time / convenience
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy foot access from home / no need to bring car	<input type="checkbox"/> Habit / familiarity
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy/good parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls give details below)
<input type="checkbox"/> Feel safe at the Site	
<input type="checkbox"/> Length/variety of walks available	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rural / wild feel	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife and nature on site	

**9. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS SITE?**

*Tick one*

- Always Known
- Word of Mouth
- Internet
- Signage
- Newspaper/leaflet/printed material
- Other
- Don't know

**10. HOW LONG HAVE YOU SPENT ON SITE TODAY?**

*Tick one*

- Less than 30 mins
- 30 mins-1 hr
- 1-2 hrs
- 2+ hours

**11. USING THIS MAP, PLEASE COULD YOU SHOW ME WHERE YOU HAVE WALKED TODAY, INCLUDING WHERE YOU ENTERED THE SITE?**

Show visitor aerial photograph and annotate copy, including the access route they entered from.

If they will only provide the walk name, note below.

- Willow Walk
- Reedbed Walk
- River Walk
- An off-path route
- Other/Thames Path

**12. WAS YOUR ROUTE TODAY YOUR TYPICAL ROUTE WHEN YOU VISIT?**

*Tick one*

- Yes, normal
- Longer than normal
- Shorter than normal
- Not sure/no typical visit

**13. WHAT (IF ANYTHING) INFLUENCED YOUR CHOICE TO ROUTE TODAY?**

*Tick one*

- Weather
- Time
- Signage/route markers
- Website advice
- Flower locations/distribution
- Ground conditions
- Other

**14. (IF VISITOR HAS A DOG) DO YOU LET YOUR DOG(S) OFF LEAD WHILST ON THE SITE?**

*Tick one*

- No
- Yes

**15. DID YOU OR YOUR DOG(S) LEAVE THE MARKED FOOTPATHS/TRACKS DURING YOUR VISIT TODAY?**

*Tick one*

- No
- Yes, me and dog(s)
- Yes, just the dog(s)

Don't know

**16. NORTH MEADOW IS A NATURE RESERVE, ARE YOU AWARE OF WHY IT IS PROTECTED?**

Tick one

- No
- Yes
- Yes, general flowers / habitat
- Yes, specific flowers / habitat

**17. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU THINK COULD BE IMPROVED AT NORTH MEADOW?**

Tick one

- Accessibility (car parking etc)
- Length/variety of walks available
- Footpath surfacing
- Provision of other facilities/features (please give details below)
- Information/education about habitats and features on site
- Management of dogs off lead
- Management of dog fouling
- Other (please give details below)

**18. IS NORTH MEADOW YOUR FIRST CHOICE OF PLACES TO VISIT IN THE AREA?**

Tick one

- No
- Yes

**19. ASIDE FROM HERE, DO YOU VISIT ANY OTHER PLACES FOR THE SAME PURPOSE? IF YES: PLEASE COULD YOU NAME UP TO THREE OF THE MOST VISITED SITES?**

- Yes: Name site and/or describe location below (e.g. if unnamed local greenspace)

1.  
2.  
3.

continue to next question

- No: end of questionnaire

**20. CAN YOU TELL ME THE MAIN PURPOSE OF YOUR VISITS TO THESE OTHER SITES?**

Tick one

- Dog walking
- Commercial dog walking
- Walking
- To see wildlife/nature

- Jogging / running
- Cycling
- Part of family outing
- Shortcut
- Other

**21. WHAT IS IT THAT ATTRACTS YOU TO VISIT THESE SITES?** multiple answers ok.

<input type="checkbox"/> Close to home	<input type="checkbox"/> On route to another location
<input type="checkbox"/> Able to safely let dog off lead	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited time / convenience
<input type="checkbox"/> Path surfacing / quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Habit / familiarity
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy foot access from home / no need to bring car	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure on site (pls give details)
<input type="checkbox"/> Easy/good parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (pls give details below)
<input type="checkbox"/> Feel safe at the Site	
<input type="checkbox"/> Length/variety of walks available	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rural / wild feel	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife and nature on site	

**22. HOW LONG DO YOU TYPICALLY TRAVEL FROM YOUR HOME TO REACH THESE OTHER SITES ?**

Tick one

- <15 minutes
- 15 mins to half an hour
- Half an hour to 1 hour
- 1+ hour

**23. AND HOW DO YOU TRAVEL FROM HOME TO REACH OTHER SITES?**

Tick one

- On foot
- Car
- Van
- Campervan
- Bus/Coach
- Motorcycle
- Cycle
- E-cycle
- Other

**END OF QUESTIONNAIRE: THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME**