



## Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Play Investment Strategy





# Contents

Contents .....	ii
Executive Summary .....	1
Development Process .....	1
Key Aims of the Investment Strategy .....	2
Play Investment Strategy Action Plan .....	2
Causeway Coast and Glens Play Investment Strategy Action Plan .....	4
1.0 Introduction .....	13
1.1 Aims of the Play Investment Strategy .....	14
1.2 Why do we need a Play Investment Strategy? .....	14
2.0 Overview of the Area .....	17
2.1 Residential Need .....	17
2.2 Tourist and Visitor Need .....	19
2.3 Current Play Provision .....	20
3.0 What is Play? .....	22
3.1 Why is Play Important .....	22
3.2 Barriers to Play .....	24
3.3 Approaches to Meeting Play Need .....	25
4.0 The Strategic Context for Play .....	27
5.0 Consultation and Community Engagement .....	29
5.1 Introduction .....	29
5.2 Methodology .....	29
5.3 Survey Findings: Children and Young People .....	30
5.4 Survey Findings: Parents and Community Representatives .....	34
6.0 Fixed Play Areas .....	41
6.1 Introduction .....	41
6.2 Classification of Fixed Play Areas .....	41
6.3 Overview of Existing Fixed Play Provision .....	42
6.4 Identification of Gaps in Fixed Play Coverage .....	44
6.4 Play Value of Existing Fixed Play Areas .....	71
6.5 Ballymoney DEA Play Value Assessment .....	79
6.6 Bann DEA Play Value Assessment .....	80
6.7 Benbradagh DEA Play Value Assessment .....	81
6.8 Causeway DEA Play Value Assessment .....	82
6.9 Coleraine DEA Play Value Assessment .....	83
6.10 The Glens DEA Play Value Assessment .....	84
6.11 Limavady DEA Play Value Assessment .....	85

6.12	Meeting the Fixed Play needs of Tourists .....	86
7.0	Standards for Design and Maintenance of Fixed Play Areas .....	89
7.1	Introduction .....	89
7.2	Underpinning Principles .....	89
7.3	Assessing Need for New Fixed Play Areas .....	90
7.4	Land Availability for New Fixed Play Development.....	90
7.5	Non-Council Funded Fixed Play Areas .....	90
7.6	Fixed Play Area Design .....	91
7.7	Accessible Play Areas .....	93
7.8	Solar Radiation .....	95
7.9	Managing Risk and Challenge in Fixed Play .....	95
7.10	Maintenance of Fixed Play areas .....	96
7.11	Consultative Process .....	99
7.12	Renewal Review Point for Fixed Play Areas .....	102
7.13	Renewal of Fixed Play Areas outside agreed life span.....	102
7.14	Partnership Working .....	102
8.0	Non-fixed Approaches to Meeting Play Need .....	104
8.1	Introduction .....	104
8.2	Appointment of a Play Development Officer.....	104
8.3	Community Play Initiatives .....	105
8.4	Play Pods .....	108
8.5	Championing Play.....	108
8.6	National Play Day .....	108
	Appendix A Overarching Policy Context for Play.....	109
	Appendix B Ballymoney DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	117
	Appendix C Bann DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	120
	Appendix D Benbradagh DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	122
	Appendix E Causeway DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	125
	Appendix F Coleraine DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	130
	Appendix G The Glens DEA Fixed Play Area Audit.....	134
	Appendix H Limavady DEA Fixed Play Area Audit .....	142
	Appendix I Design Brief.....	145

## Executive Summary

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Play Investment Strategy establishes a strategic and operational framework within which decision making will be made as it relates to the provision and maintenance of fixed play areas and the future development of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need.

In developing the strategy, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council affirms its commitment the child's right to play as articulated in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through the strategy we aim to ensure that children and young people who reside within or visit the area have access to high value play opportunities that support their growth and development whilst providing fun and enjoyment.

Central to the strategy is a recognition that play is one of the most, if not the most important activity that children and young people engage in as they grow and develop. The desire to play is a natural, fundamental part of children lives. By supporting active engagement in play through the childhood years this strategy seeks to support children's development in a number of key ways by:

- Providing fun and enjoyable means of developing physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Supporting the development of social connections and friendships through social play opportunities
- Supporting intellectual growth and the development of practical skills through the provision of creative and more challenging play opportunities
- Supporting children to develop their personal resilience through play, and
- Establishing a connection between children at play and the community in which they live.

## Development Process

In order to support the development of the strategy Council commissioned PlayBoard NI to undertake a number of key pieces of work including:

1. The completion of a play value audit of all fixed play areas maintained by the Council to identify those offering limited play value and those requiring remedial action
2. Completion of an evaluation of demographic and settlement patterns to identify potential gap areas that may require the development of fixed play provision
3. An assessment of underlying demographic demand for fixed play to identify potentially redundant fixed play areas.

## Key Aims of the Investment Strategy

Underpinning the strategy are a number of key aims which, if successfully achieved will enhance the developmental value, scope and range of play opportunities available to children and young people across the Borough.

### **Key Aims**

- a) To support all children and young people to be able to engage in both fixed and non-fixed play opportunities that meet their developmental needs
- b) To ensure that Fixed Play Areas are attractive, welcoming, safe but challenging, accessible and inclusive for all abilities offering a high level of play value through programmed capital upgrading, maintenance and renewal
- c) To ensure effective targeting of capital investment in new fixed play development at those locations which are identified as being in most need through assessment of underlying demographic need
- d) To ensure that children, young people, parents and communities have an integral role in decision making on play provision, both fixed and non-fixed
- e) To enable communities to take an active role in the development and delivery of non-fixed play opportunities through dedicated support including volunteer training, mentoring and access to 'loose-parts' play pods
- f) To highlight the benefits of play whilst encouraging adults within the wider community to recognise both the play needs and valuable contribution children make to community life
- g) Where local demographic circumstances preclude council intervention, to support communities to develop sustainable solutions to meeting local play need.

## Play Investment Strategy Action Plan

The Play Investment Strategy has an associated action plan which covers an initial five year period and is divided into two key strands, the first dealing with fixed play areas and the second with the development of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need.

The action plan will be subject to formal review at both the mid and end points of the five year period and will also be reviewed as and when new relevant opportunities arise. The action plan will be updated as and when required to reflect new legislative requirements and/or changes at a local level.

Whilst the strategy provides an estimated cost for implementation, individual decisions regarding its operational roll-out will be subject to the normal budgetary and business planning processes which seek to ensure maximum benefit from the resources we have at our disposal.

In developing the strategy extensive consultation and engagement with children and young people, parents and carers, members of the statutory and non-statutory sectors and community representatives from across the Borough. In rolling out the strategy and its actions we affirm our commitment to continued ongoing engagement in order to ensure that the decisions taken best reflect the needs of the local community.

The action plan has been included as part of the investment strategy document overleaf. The anticipated costings associated with all identified actions are set out in the table below.

Action Plan Area	Action	Projected Cost
1.3	Review of Megaw park play area and ancillary facilities to ensure full accessibility	£150,000
2.1	Develop new high value fixed play areas at 6 locations	£1,225,000
2.2	Extend and enhance existing fixed play areas at 3 locations	£850,000
2.3	Estimated costs associated with new play development at 4 locations (pending community consultation)	£500,000
3.1	Capital renewal of 11 play areas	£1,175,000
4.1	Transformation of play areas at 5 locations (dependent on community consultation)	£70,000
7.1	Development of non-fixed play services	£159,000
	<b>TOTAL ASSOCIATED INVESTMENT</b>	<b>£4,129,000</b>

## Causeway Coast and Glens Play Investment Strategy Action Plan

Underpinning the Play Investment Strategy are a number of key aims which, if successfully achieved will enhance the developmental value, scope and range of play opportunities available to children and young people.

### **Aims of the Play Investment Strategy**

- A.** To support all children and young people to be able to engage in both fixed and non-fixed play opportunities that meet their developmental needs
- B.** To ensure that Fixed Play Areas are attractive, welcoming, safe but challenging, accessible and inclusive for all abilities offering a high level of play value through programmed capital upgrading, maintenance and renewal
- C.** To ensure effective targeting of capital investment in new fixed play development at those locations which are identified as being in most need through assessment of demographic need
- D.** To ensure that children, young people, parents and communities have an integral role in decision making on play provision, both fixed and non-fixed
- E.** To enable communities to take an active role in the development and delivery of non-fixed play opportunities through dedicated support including volunteer training, mentoring and access to 'loose-parts' play pods
- F.** To highlight the benefits of play whilst encouraging adults within the wider community to recognise both the play needs and valuable contribution children make to community life.
- G.** Where local demographic circumstances preclude council intervention, to support communities to develop sustainable solutions to meeting local play need.

Covering a five year period, the strategy is divided into two key strands, the first dealing with fixed play areas and the second with the development of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need. The action plan will be subject to formal review at both the mid and end points of the five year period and will also be reviewed as and when new relevant opportunities arise. The action plan will be updated as and when required to reflect new legislative requirements and/or changes at a local level.



## Fixed Play Areas

Indicator	Action	Contributes to Aim	Responsible	Target/ Milestone	Indicative Cost
<b>1.0 Design of New Fixed Play Areas and Play Area Renewals</b>					
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch and implementation of Fixed Play Area design brief to guide the future development of new play areas and play area renewals, ensuring high levels of play value through incorporation of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active play elements</li> <li>Open spaces</li> <li>Creative play elements</li> <li>Inclusive play elements</li> <li>Awareness of Parental/carers needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A, B	PlayBoard NI		-
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with partner agencies and community organisations to encourage adoption of Fixed Play Area design brief for future Council and non-Council funded fixed play.</li> </ul>	B, D, G	Council		-
1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All designs for new play areas and those subject to renewal to give core consideration to incorporation of accessible play opportunities.</li> </ul>	A, B, C, G	Council		-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance geographical access to accessible fixed play areas through the development of additional accessible fixed play areas similar to that located at Flowerfield.</li> </ul> <p>Accessible play areas will be designed to accessible play standards and will incorporate access to toilet and changing facilities within</p>	B			

	<p>close proximity.</p> <p>In seeking to achieve this Council will :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure that the proposed new Destination Play Area in Limavady is fully Accessible with access to suitable ancillary facilities</li> <li>- Refurbish the Quay Road, Ballycastle play area to Accessible standard and ensure access to suitable ancillary facilities</li> <li>- Review the Megaw Park fixed play area and ancillary facilities to ensure it is fully accessible</li> <li>- Maintain Flowerfield to its current high standard</li> </ul>				<p>(Costed in section 2.0)</p> <p>(Costed in section 2.0)</p> <p>£150,000</p> <p>(Existing budget)</p>
1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regards to risk and challenge in play Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Adopt a risk/benefit approach to the design and development of play spaces in line with accepted good practice</li> <li>– Provide risk/benefit training for key staff to enhance understanding of the approach</li> <li>– Engage with insurers regarding the adoption of the risk/benefit approach</li> <li>– Apply the design brief (see 1.1 above) to future play area design incorporating, where appropriate more challenging play elements and features</li> <li>– Adopt more open play opportunities were permissible and feasible</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	A, B, G	Council		-

2.0 Meet identified gaps in Fixed Play Provision by Developing and Extending High Play Value Fixed Play Areas					
2.1	<p>Develop new high value fixed play sites at locations identified in the play strategy (subject to land availability) in consultation with local communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limavady Town (Accessible Destination Play Area – NEAP)</li> <li>• Waterfoot (LEAP Play Area)</li> <li>• Portrush (Destination Play Area)</li> <li>• Portrush (Play installations to stimulate play along key walkways including East and West Strands, Ramore Head etc.)</li> <li>• Waterside, Coleraine (NEAP Play Area)</li> <li>• Ballykelly (NEAP Play Area)</li> </ul>	A, C	Council		<p>£500,000</p> <p>£50,000</p> <p>£300,000</p> <p>£125,000</p> <p>£125,000</p> <p>£125,000</p>
2.2	<p>Extend and enhance existing fixed play sites in order to meet broader demographic need in line with Play Strategy and in consultation with local communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bio Park, Cloughmills (LEAP)</li> <li>• Quay Road, Ballycastle (Accessible Destination play area)</li> <li>• Rugby Avenue, Coleraine (Destination play area)</li> </ul>	A, B, C	Council		<p>£50,000</p> <p>£500,000</p> <p>£300,000</p>
2.3	<p>Complete land exploration and community consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballymoney South</li> <li>• Castleroe</li> <li>• Bushmills</li> <li>• The Cuts 1 (Coleraine)</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Costings provided are estimates for budget planning purposes only and assumes no site acquisition costs.</i></p>	C	Council		<p>£125,000</p> <p>£125,000</p> <p>£125,000</p> <p>£125,000</p>

<b>3.0 Enhance Low Play Value Fixed Play Areas through 5 Year Capital Renewal Programme</b>					
3.1	Deliver capital renewal programme in consultation with local community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landsdowne Road (PV = 290)</li> <li>• Lisnagrot (PV = 300)</li> <li>• Alexander Road/Blackburn Path (PV = 350 &amp; 475)</li> <li>• Middle Park (PV = 370)</li> <li>• Cottage Wood 1 and 2 (PV = 390 &amp; 375)</li> <li>• Garvagh Road (PV = 385)</li> <li>• Swanns Bridge (PV = 380)</li> <li>• Dhu Varren (PV = 390)</li> <li>• Daneshill (PV = 390)</li> <li>• The Warren (PV = 410)</li> <li>• Anderson Park (PV = 445)</li> <li>• Larchfield (PV = Unavailable) Renewal subject to developments within wider Kilrea area</li> </ul>	B, C	Council		£50,000 £125,000 £200,000  £125,000 £125,000 £125,000 £25,000 £75,000 £100,000 £100,000 £125,000
<b>4.0 Possible Transformation of Low Demand Sites</b>					
4.1	Deliver programme of transformation (dependent on outcomes of community consultation): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shanes Park (PV = 255)</li> <li>• Islandmoore (Ballylagan Road) (PV = 270)</li> <li>• Ballyknock (PV = 290)</li> <li>• Glenullin (PV = 335)</li> <li>• Ballanagarvey (PV = 365)</li> </ul>	D	Council		£14,000 £14,000 £14,000 £14,000 £14,000
<b>5.0 Review of Fixed Play Area Condition and Play Value</b>					
5.1	<b>Maintenance of Fixed Play Areas</b> The effective management and maintenance of both play equipment and play areas is essential if safe play opportunities are to be provided for. In line with the play strategy and in order to	D	Council	As per agreed protocol	

	<p>ensure the safety of children and young people using play areas across the Borough, Council will undertake two categories of inspection:</p> <p><b><u>Maintenance Inspection:</u></b> All Council play areas will be subject to ongoing maintenance inspections throughout the year.</p> <p>The frequency of inspection for each individual play area will be determined by four key factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of use associated with the play area</li> <li>• The time of year (to take account of seasonal increases in use due to tourism)</li> <li>• The age and condition of play equipment</li> <li>• If present, the level of vandalism associated with the play area.</li> </ul> <p>Play areas with a high level of use will be subject to inspection on a once weekly basis (more frequently during the spring and summer months when usage levels traditionally increase).</p> <p>Play areas with a lower level of use will be subject to inspection on a less frequent basis, albeit subject to increase should maintenance issues requiring more regular inspection be identified at any point.</p> <p>Sites which have a record of vandalism will also be subject to weekly inspection in order to monitor site and equipment condition until such</p>				
--	--	--	--	--	--

	<p>time as vandalism ceases to impact on the site.</p> <p>Inspections will be undertaken by trained staff and will include a range of areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual checking of equipment for obvious faults or hazards</li> <li>• Ensuring wider environment/play surfaces are free from debris that could create a hazard</li> <li>• Checking that fixings are secure</li> <li>• Lubrication of all bearings</li> <li>• Touching in any scratches to paintwork using appropriate paint</li> <li>• Repairing safety surfacing and other elements from the rest of the site</li> </ul> <p>An accurate record of all maintenance inspections will be kept by council with remedial works undertaken to address identified issues.</p> <p><b><u>Annual Inspection:</u></b> All fixed play areas will be subject to an annual maintenance inspection conducted by a qualified independent Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) inspector.</p> <p>A complete record of all annual inspections will be kept by Council with remedial works undertake to address identified issues.</p> <p><i>If any serious defects that put the safety of children at risk are identified during <u>any</u> inspection</i></p>				
--	---	--	--	--	--

	<p><i>Council undertakes to correct such defects without delay. If this is not possible, equipment will be immobilised, isolated or removed from the site. When a piece of equipment is removed on safety grounds any anchorages or foundations left in the ground will be removed or made safe along with surfacing (as required).</i></p> <p><b>Staff Training:</b> Carried out as required to ensure that staff have received appropriate training in playground inspections.</p>				
5.2	<p><b>Play Value Inspections</b> Conduct overarching play value assessment of all fixed play areas to track progress against existing baseline on a 5 yearly basis.</p>	B	Council	2021/22	
5.3	<p><b>Inclusive Play Area Review</b> Conduct a review of all play areas identifying the types of inclusive play equipment available by location. Once complete make information available for access by parents of children with disabilities.</p>	A, B	Council		
<b>6.0 Review of Demographic Need to Identify Potential Gaps/Redundant sites</b>					
6.1	Conduct a review of underlying demographic need every 5 years to support the identification of potential gap areas and/or possible redundant sites in line with the parameters established within the play strategy.	C	Council	2021/22	
<b>7.0 Non-Fixed Play development</b>					
7.1	Consider 3 year appointment of dedicated Play Development Officer within Council to oversee implementation and operationalisation of the Play	A, B, C, D, E, F	Council	2018	£35k per annum (£105k)

	Strategy including fixed and non-fixed elements.				total)
7.2	Engage pro-actively with stakeholder organisations and the wider public to highlight the importance of play, support play development etc.	F	Council	Ongoing	£2.5k per annum (£10k total)
7.3	Consider piloting of 4 community play volunteer training programme aimed at increasing understanding of play approaches and providing practical skills to support community play sessions.	D, E, F	Council	TBC	£2k per pilot site (£8k total)
7.4	Consider establishment of 4 pilot programmes aimed at promoting effective non-fixed play approaches to meeting play need (community play sessions, street play etc.).	D, E, F	Council	TBC	£4k per pilot site (£16k total)
7.5	Review and consider viability of community accessible mobile play resources (e.g. play pods) as a means of supporting community play sessions supported or promoted through the work of a play officer (initial 7 pods, 1 per DEA area)	D, E	Council	TBC	£2k per pod (£14k total)
7.6	Hold three play events as part of National Play Day (first Wednesday of each August)	F	Council	August 2018	£2k per site (£6k total)



## 1.0 Introduction

Play and the opportunity to play are essential for the growth and development of our children and young people. By engaging in quality play opportunities children are able to develop a broad range of essential skills; skills that support their social, physical and emotional well-being. Just as importantly play provides children with opportunities for fun and enjoyment and provides a means of their connecting with the wider community.

In developing the play investment strategy Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council affirms its commitment to the enhancement of play opportunities across the area.

The strategy development process has consisted of a number of key stages including:

- An assessment of the play value and demographic coverage associated with all 99 fixed play areas within the Borough alongside recommendations on both the enhancement of sites and how existing play spaces can be used more effectively for the benefit of the community
- An assessment of underlying demographic need, the identification of gaps in fixed play provision and the establishment of criteria to guide future gap analysis
- Consultation with children and young people, parents and carers, elected officials and members of the wider community aimed at identifying areas of good practice and to identify key issues impacting on children's play experiences
- Consideration of the wider strategic environment and how it impacts on the delivery of play opportunities
- The establishment of a set of core underlying principles to guide the future design and delivery of fixed play aimed at enhancing play opportunities for all children and young people, and
- The identification of a series of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need aimed at broadening the capacity of Council to meet the challenges of a largely rural area characterised by often dispersed settlement and household patterns.

The play investment strategy outlines a series of actions which will be undertaken over the coming five year period which are aimed at enhancing play opportunities for all children and young people, both resident and visiting.

This document is not a complete statement of need but rather a recommendation of where a council capital investment will result in best value for money through addressing greatest need.

### **1.1 Aims of the Play Investment Strategy**

Underpinning the play investment strategy is a number of agreed aims which have been developed through consideration of community feedback gained through the public engagement and consultation process. In reviewing the views expressed by children, young people, parents and carers the key aims of the strategy have been established as being:

#### **Key Aims**

- a. To support children and young people across the district to be able to engage in both fixed and non-fixed play opportunities that meet their developmental needs
- b. To ensure that Fixed Play Areas are attractive, welcoming, safe but challenging, accessible and inclusive for all abilities offering a high level of play value through programmed capital upgrading, maintenance and renewal
- c. To ensure effective targeting of capital investment in new fixed play development at those locations which are identified as being in most need through assessment of demographic need
- d. To ensure that children, young people, parents and communities have an integral role in decision making on play provision, both fixed and non-fixed
- e. To enable communities to take an active role in the development and delivery of non-fixed play opportunities through dedicated support including volunteer training, mentoring and access to 'loose-parts' play pods
- f. To highlight the benefits of play whilst encouraging adults within the wider community to recognise both the play needs and valuable contribution children make to community life.
- g. Where local demographic circumstances preclude council intervention, to support communities to develop sustainable solutions to meeting local play need.

### **1.2 Why do we need a Play Investment Strategy?**

The development of a play investment strategy is important as it provides us with an agreed approach to addressing barriers to play whilst also ensuring that all available resources (whether Council or non-Council) are invested in a manner that best meets play need. Key amongst these will be:

- *Establishment of Agreed Criteria to Identify Areas of Need*

The development and installation of fixed play areas has been at the core of Council's investment in play over many years. Whilst fixed play areas containing swings, roundabouts, slides etc. are the most recognisable form of play provision, given the level of capital investment required their installation is not always appropriate to an area due to the underlying levels of demographic demand.

The play investment strategy establishes a set of criteria which will be used to assess the applicability of fixed play development based on underlying population demographics and as such will guide future capital investment to ensure that it matches those areas of highest need.

- *Establishment of a Common Design Approach*

Whilst Council have traditionally been the main providers of play provision and play facilities, in recent years additional investment in fixed play has come through a number of non-Council funding routes, for example through Neighbourhood Regeneration funding or funding secured by community organisations.

Whilst additional funding has been welcomed, at times it has brought challenges in terms of the differing approaches applied to the design and development of play areas by various funders. Through this play investment strategy we establish a set of core, quality based design principles which when applied across all fixed play provision (regardless of funding source) will enhance associated play value and play delivery.

- *Responding to Changing Needs*

We fully recognise that the play needs and the type of play children and young people require changes on a continuous basis as they grow and develop. Further we recognise that locational need for fixed play provision changes over time in line with population movement.

In seeking to address this issue the strategy recognises that in some areas fixed play provision that was once essential may no longer be a priority due to decline in the number of resident children and young people. In such areas the strategy will provide us with a means of exploring with the community how best to use such sites in order to meet community need (whether play or non-play based).

The strategy recognises that, based on the Fields in Trust benchmark guidelines, there remains across the Council area a residual need for open spaces. The strategy is not therefore recommending the disposal of play spaces per se, rather it recommends where investment in new fixed play provision may have the greatest impact on meeting need.

- *Meeting Visitor Need*

Tourism is an important factor of the local economy. As a Council we recognise the need to provide play opportunities not only for our resident population but also for visitors to the area. By developing attractive, high value fixed play areas we will be able to not only meet residential need but also enhance the visitor experience.

In seeking to better meet visitor need, the strategy establishes a mechanism for identifying those play areas that currently meet visitor need and identifies locations that may require additional or enhanced fixed play provision.

- *Introduction of Non-Fixed Approaches*

Traditionally Council has focused investment in fixed play provision i.e. in the development and maintenance of play parks containing fixed play equipment.

Recognising that fixed play areas are limited as a result of both capital outlay and in their applicability to all areas, the strategy will allow Council to explore the establishment of a series of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need.

Such approaches may include the provision of non-fixed play equipment 'pods' accessible to local community organisations wishing to facilitate play sessions within the community; training in play approaches and play session delivery to support community play volunteers to deliver non-fixed play within their own area; and the exploration of the potential for street play initiatives as a means of enhancing access to safe play spaces within more built up, urban areas.

## 2.0 Overview of the Area

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council was established in 2015 following the Review of Public Administration which saw the number of Councils reduced from twenty six down to eleven. The Council covers a geographical area of approximately 2,000km<sup>2</sup>.

The Council was created from four legacy Council areas: Ballymoney Borough Council; Coleraine Borough Council; Limavady Borough Council and Moyle District Council. In order to support the administrative and electoral process the Council is divided into seven District Electoral Areas (also known as DEA's) as shown in map 1 below.



*Map 1: Map showing DEA areas within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council*

### 2.1 Residential Need

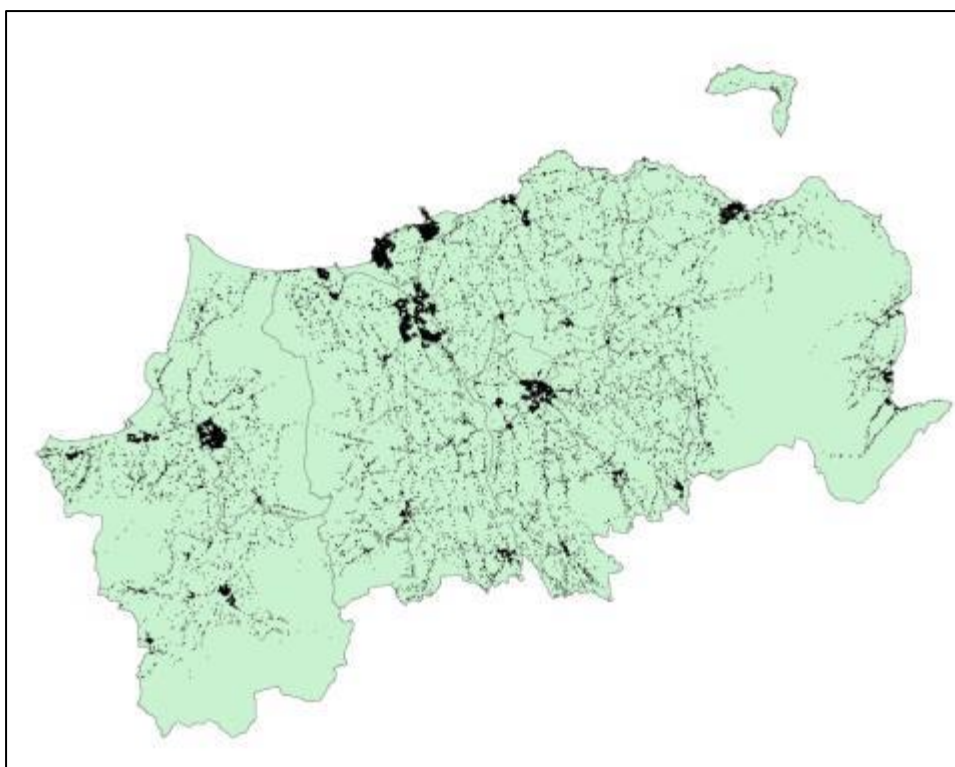
Based on the most recent projections (2016), the population of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council stands at approximately 143,525 which equates to 7.78% of the overall population of Northern Ireland. Of particular relevance to the development of the play investment strategy 28,555 (19.9%) were children or young people aged between 0 to 15 years, slightly below the Northern Ireland average of 21%. There are in total 53,722 households across the Council area.

Based on the designated Settlement Development Limits (SDL) classification the Council area is made up of a combination of rural and urban areas with the resident population located across a range of residential classifications including rural settlement based, dispersed rural living and urban residential.

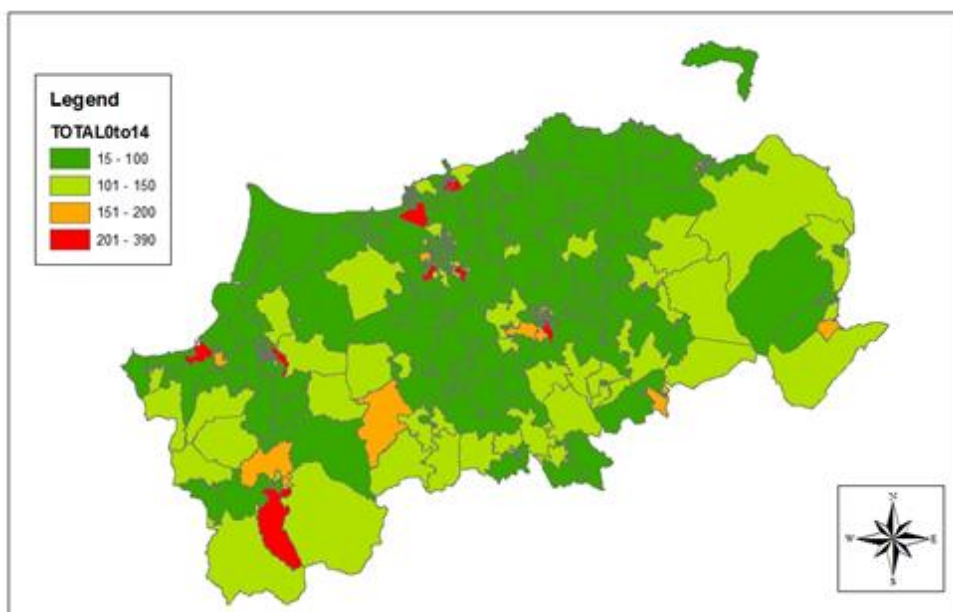
Key settlements and their associated residential household numbers include:

Settlement Name	Household Estimate (2015)
Coleraine	9842
Limavady	4759
Ballymoney	4354
Portstewart	3338
Portrush	2824
Ballycastle	2143
Dungiven	1171
Bushmills	602
Castlerock	554
Garvagh	531
Greysteel	528
Cushendall	486
Dunloy	381
Dervock	301

The Council is predominantly rural in nature as highlighted on maps 2 and 3 below and overleaf. Map 2 shows the dispersion of individual household units with darker areas indicating a higher density of households whilst map 3 shows the population density of 0 to 14 year olds residing within statistical areas across the Council.



*Map 2: Map showing distribution of individual household units across the Council area*



*Map 3: Distribution of Resident 0 to 14 years olds across the Council Area*

The dispersed nature of the resident population brings particular challenges to meeting play need through more traditional fixed means (i.e. fixed equipment playgrounds) but does offer potential for the development of non-fixed, mobile and community based approaches. Such approaches have been shown to be particularly effective in meeting play need in more rural areas.

## **2.2 Tourist and Visitor Need**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has a rich natural landscape with over 140km of coastline along the Atlantic coast from Lough Foyle to the Glens of Antrim. The Council also contains three areas of outstanding natural beauty encompassing Binevenagh, the Causeway Coast and the Glens of Antrim. The area is also home to a number of significant events including the Ould Lammas Fair, the Milk Cup, the North West 200 and the Northern Ireland International Air Show.

Given the combination of the natural environment and the wide range of cultural, sporting, entertainment and leisure attractions available, tourism is a key economic activity for the area with visitors contributing in excess of £138 million on overnight trips in 2016.

The importance of tourism to the area is emphasised by the 2016 figures which show 2.2 million visits to tourist attractions within the area with 73% of overnight stays categorised as being for holiday or tourism purposes. Based on NISRA statistics, the most significant element of overnight stays relates to Northern Ireland residents taking holidays in coastal towns such as Portrush and Portstewart.

In order to effectively meet the needs of tourists and visitors, it is essential that ongoing consideration is given to ensuring that appropriate, attractive and high value play opportunities are in place. Providing high value play



opportunities at sites of high tourism value will not only enhance facilities in terms of their appeal to visitors but has the potential to act as an additional draw to the area, supporting tourism and the resultant economic growth.

It is important to recognise that in some locations, in particular more built up urban areas, coastal towns etc. well designed and serviced fixed play areas can meet the needs of both residents and tourists. Given the specific needs of tourists, such locations are however likely to require some additional provision above and beyond that of standard fixed play areas, for example toilet and changing facilities, adequate parking, appropriate seating and (dependent on visitor numbers) access to refreshments.

## 2.3 Current Play Provision

Council's primary focus in seeking to meet play need has, and will continue to be the development and maintenance of fixed play areas. Fixed play areas are classified according to the Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play' which identifies three types of fixed play area and establishes a set of catchment distance thresholds.

TYPE OF PLAY	DISTANCE CRITERIA (METRES)
	WALKING DISTANCE
Local Areas for Play (LAPs): designated for very young children (<5 years) with the aim of providing somewhere to play close to home.	100
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to home.	400
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP): areas designated, laid out and equipped for a range of ages (0 to 14 years).	1000

There are at present 99 fixed play areas located within Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. The majority of these (97) are classified as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's), containing on average 3 to 6 pieces of fixed play equipment (e.g. swings, roundabouts, climbing frames etc.).

The remaining two fixed play sites are classified as Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's) and offer a more extensive range of fixed play equipment, accessible play opportunities and access to wider recreational activities.



## **SECTION A**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

### 3.0 What is Play?

The term play is used to describe the activities that children do in their free time. This can include any number of activities including running, jumping, climbing, chasing, fantasy and imaginative play, creative and destructive play, dressing up, playing games with others or alone and challenging play.

Whilst adults often view play as an activity restricted to certain times and locations (e.g. at a fixed play park), in reality children are always on the lookout for opportunities to play whether they be in a play area, a vacant space within a housing estate, within fields, woods or other natural locations or on the streets near to where they live.

It is important to recognise that play is different from organised activities such as those that take place at sports groups, clubs and classes which are usually adult led. In recognition of this distinction Council have therefore agreed to adopt the definition of play set out by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group in 2005:

---

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.

---

### 3.1 Why is Play Important

Play is an essential part of all children's lives contributing both to their enjoyment of childhood and to their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Through play children are able to learn about and interact with the world around them and are able to explore ideas and concepts whilst developing both understanding and new skills.

Research has clearly highlighted the importance of play for children as a means of supporting growth and development in a number of areas:

#### Physical Health

Children have an innate desire to play and the fact that most play involves movement brings with it multiple physical health benefits. By way of example running and jumping has been shown to support the development of bone density, climbing helps to develop strength and coordination whilst running and chasing games develop fitness, stamina and agility.

In addition to supporting physical growth and development, providing opportunities for children to engage in physical play represents an important means of tackling rising obesity levels. Statistics from 2014/15 showed that

across Northern Ireland 21.2% of children measured in Primary 1 were considered overweight or obese; by year 8 the figure had increased to 28%<sup>1</sup>.

At a time when childhood obesity represents one of the main public health challenges we face as a society, the importance of ensuring that children are able to follow their natural desire for physical play has never been so great.

### Development of brain capacity, learning and educational achievement

From the moment of birth and throughout childhood play is an essential aspect of the learning process. Research has shown that 75% of brain development occurs after birth and is influenced by the range and variety of play activities that children engage in<sup>2</sup>.

As they grow and develop, engaging in play supports children with regards to language development, personal awareness, emotional well-being, creativity, problem solving and the ability to learn. Throughout childhood play further enables children to explore new ideas and concepts, test their own abilities and learn new skills and knowledge about the world around them<sup>3</sup>.

### Connections to the Natural Environment

Where children are able to access and play in more natural locations, for example green/grass spaces and fields, parkland, forests, beaches etc. research has shown that they gain a greater appreciation for and connection to the natural environment<sup>4</sup>.

### Risk and Challenge

Children have a natural thirst for challenging play and will often seek it out regardless of whether or not safe provision has been made. Challenge in play allows children to test the boundaries of their limitations, develop new skills to overcome the challenges they face and develop the ability to better manage risk on an individual basis.

### Social Skills

Play has a critical role in supporting children to develop a range of essential social skills; skills that support them to establish friendships and interact positively with others. Key amongst these skills is the ability to communicate and engage with others in a positive manner; learn to negotiate, co-operate and share; deal with conflict and disagreement and develop and maintain friendships.

At a wider community level, play has been shown to contribute to active citizenship; the development of community cohesion and can be a vehicle for

---

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Agency (2016) "Children's Health in Northern Ireland"

<sup>2</sup> Prout, A. (2005) *The Future of Childhood*, Abingdon: Routledge Falmer

<sup>3</sup> Abbott, L. & Langston, A. (2005) *Birth to Three Matters*. O.U.P. Berkshire.

<sup>4</sup> Physical – Children's Play Council (2004) *Children's exercise and play A Children's Play Council Briefing March 2004* London; Children's Play Council Mental – Winnicott, D.W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

increasing cross-community and inter-generational sharing and understanding.

### Teenagers and Play

It is important to recognise that play as an activity is not restricted only to younger children but remains a key part of young people's lives right through into their late teenage years.

As children mature into teenagers social connection becomes increasingly important and activities that were once seen as 'play' become labelled as 'recreation' as teenagers engage in activities they find personally interesting, enjoyable and satisfying.

Local research by PlayBoard NI carried out under the 'Young Life and Times Survey'<sup>5</sup> showed that a majority of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland still equate the activities they do in their recreation and leisure time as being play.

## **3.2 Barriers to Play**

Despite the benefits of play, all too often children face a range of barriers that act to restrict their ability to fulfil their natural drive to play. Common barriers identified include:

- Increased levels of traffic within residential areas which has reduced or completely removed traditional street and community play opportunities due to safety concerns.
- A reduction in and loss of accessible public open spaces which are openly available for children to play on.
- Amongst adults within the community, a lack of understanding about the importance of play and a low level of tolerance towards children playing outdoors.
- For parents and carers, the conflicting time pressures and constraints associated with modern living which have reduced the amount of free time available for play with their children.
- An increasingly risk averse society which has reduced opportunities for more challenging play and has restricted the play movement of children.
- A lack of appropriate infrastructure (e.g. fixed play areas, open recreation spaces etc.) to meet the play needs of children and young people.

---

<sup>5</sup> O'Loughlin, J., Stevenson, B. and Schubotz, D. (2011) Playscapes at 16 Young Life and Times Survey ARK Research Update, 74, pp 1-4, Belfast

- Limited opportunities for the inclusion and integration of children with disabilities or additional needs within play environments.

In developing this play investment strategy, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council not only acknowledge the barriers that currently restrict play but make a commitment to taking real steps towards addressing those barriers over the duration of the strategy.

### 3.3 Approaches to Meeting Play Need

Underlying the play investment strategy is a desire to increase the range and variety of play opportunities available to children across the Council area. Whilst traditionally Councils primary focus has been on the construction and maintenance of fixed play areas (play areas with fixed equipment e.g. swings, slides etc.) we are keen to explore a broader range of both formal and informal play approaches. These include:

- *Fixed Play Areas*: The construction and maintenance of fixed play areas (where an appropriate level of local demand can be evidenced) will remain a key part of the play investment strategy.

Fixed play areas are a type of formalised play provision based around the installation of fixed play equipment within a designated play area. Typical examples of fixed play equipment range from more traditional equipment such as swings, roundabouts, climbing frames etc. to more extensive play structures such as fort style installations and activity panels.

In order to ensure that fixed play areas provide a high level of play value and an appropriate level of challenge a design brief will be developed to guide the design of new play areas and the refurbishment of existing sites. This brief will focus on a range of areas including ensuring that sites offer accessible play opportunities for children with disabilities, integrate natural play opportunities and offer a level of challenge to support children's growth and development.

- *Non-Fixed Play*: Whilst fixed play is focused on the use of play equipment which is fixed in terms of location and purpose, non-fixed play (sometimes referred to as 'free play' or 'loose parts' play) refers to the wider use of spaces within communities for the purpose of play.

Non-fixed play enables children to play in a way that meets their play needs without the formal direction of adults or the limitations of fixed play equipment. As part of the play process children are able to make use of the wider environment (natural or synthetic) and loose parts (cardboard boxes, balls, skipping ropes, art and craft materials etc.) in order to create their own play experience.

Council are keen as part of the play investment strategy to explore mechanisms for growing and developing non-fixed play opportunities

across the borough. Areas to be considered include the recruitment of a dedicated play development officer to support the delivery of non-fixed play sessions; provision of training for members of the local community in how non-fixed play sessions can be designed and delivered on a volunteer basis; and the establishment of community accessible play pods containing play resources that can be used for non-fixed play sessions.

- *Natural Play*: Natural play approaches revolve around the use of natural landscaping and natural materials in order to create a play environment which stimulates children and young people.

Natural play opportunities may – and often do - occur without direct human intervention, for example a wooded area with bushes, trees and other vegetation can lend itself to den building, tree climbing etc.; whilst natural green spaces can provide play opportunities with minimal or no outside influence enabling children to run, jump, play with balls, play chasing etc.

As a Council with a diverse natural environment we are keen to explore how we can best support play within the environment as a means of not only increasing play opportunities, but as a way of enhancing children's connections to environment. There are at present a number of community initiatives within the area that focus on natural play and we are keen to explore with those groups how Council could support the work they are engaged in whilst seeking to expand access and opportunity.

Recognising that not all children will have access to natural landscapes that lend themselves to play, we are keen to work towards the integration of more natural materials such as wood, boulders, tree logs etc. into fixed play areas in order to enhance play value.

- *Street Play*: Traditionally playing on the streets made up a significant part of children's play experiences. Unfortunately, the rise in traffic and resultant safety concerns has reduced such opportunities for many children, particularly those living in towns and villages.

Whilst street play opportunities have reduced, a number of approaches have been piloted in both Northern Ireland and across the UK that support children to play on the streets within their community. As a Council we are keen to explore such approaches within the lifetime of the strategy including the piloting of a number of street play schemes based around volunteer supported approaches.

- *Youth Provision*: Acknowledging that play/recreation space remains both relevant and important to teenagers, Council are keen to explore ways of meeting this need through the introduction of appropriate measures including youth shelters.

## 4.0 The Strategic Context for Play

In addition to the individual and societal benefits of play, Council operates within a wider International, Regional and Local area strategic policy context.

At each strategic level a range of and policies highlight both:

- the importance of play in the lives of children and young people, and
- the obligations on government agencies to ensure that children are able to play in a way that best meets their developmental needs.

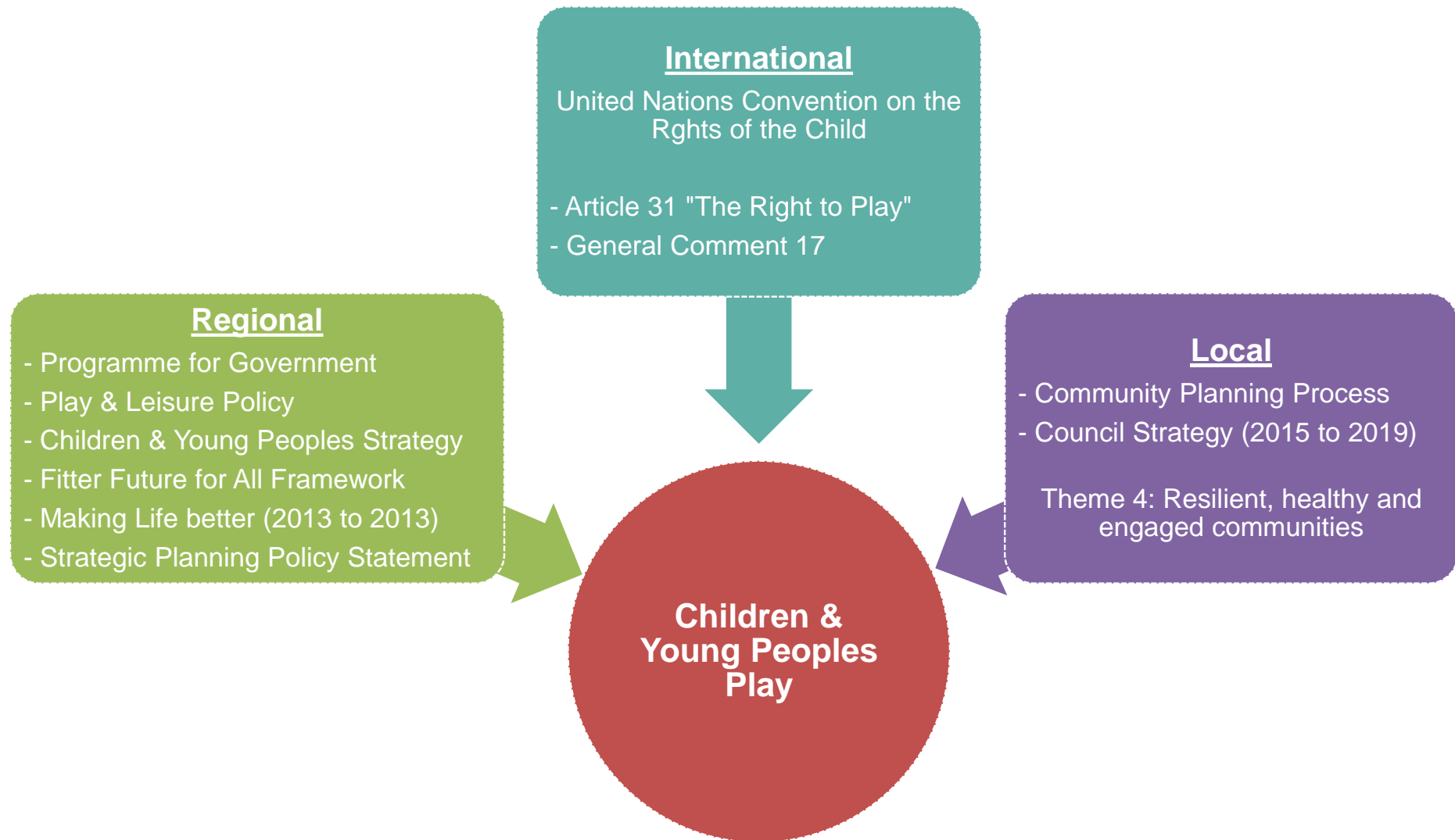
Over recent year's acknowledgement of play's critical role in shaping the lives' of children, young people and its positive impact on wider society has become more explicit at policy level regionally, nationally and internationally. It is clear that the wider policy environment both recognises the importance of play in relation to children's health and wellbeing, welfare and development and is supportive of Council's decision to establish a play investment strategy.

Critically, whilst recognising the role of Councils in meeting play need, policies consistently acknowledge that no single organisation has within its remit the capacity to address all of the issues that impact on or restrict children's play opportunities.

Responsibility for delivering play opportunities that meet the needs of children and young people lays across all policy arenas, hence the critical importance of the Community Planning Partnership as we seek to establish and roll-out the play investment strategy.

In driving the play investment strategy forward it is proposed that members of the Community Planning Partnership provide input regarding key policy initiatives that lie within their remit, whilst providing connection to existing and emerging work strands that are supportive of play.

The diagram overleaf provides an overview of the key strategies and policies with a more in-depth overview provided in Appendix A.





## **5.0 Consultation and Community Engagement**

### **5.1 Introduction**

As part of the strategy development process PlayBoard NI was commissioned to conduct consultations with parents/carers, children and young people and community providers.

The aim of the consultation was to gather the views of children and young people, parents, carers and wider community representatives on a range of issues including:

- The importance of play
- The types of play activities children and young people engage in
- Barriers to children and young people playing
- Views on the current standard of fixed play provision across the Borough and indications of fixed play need
- Views on how Council could enhance children's play experience.

Whilst a detailed break-down of the consultation will be provided to Council to support roll-out of the strategy, this section outlines the key findings.

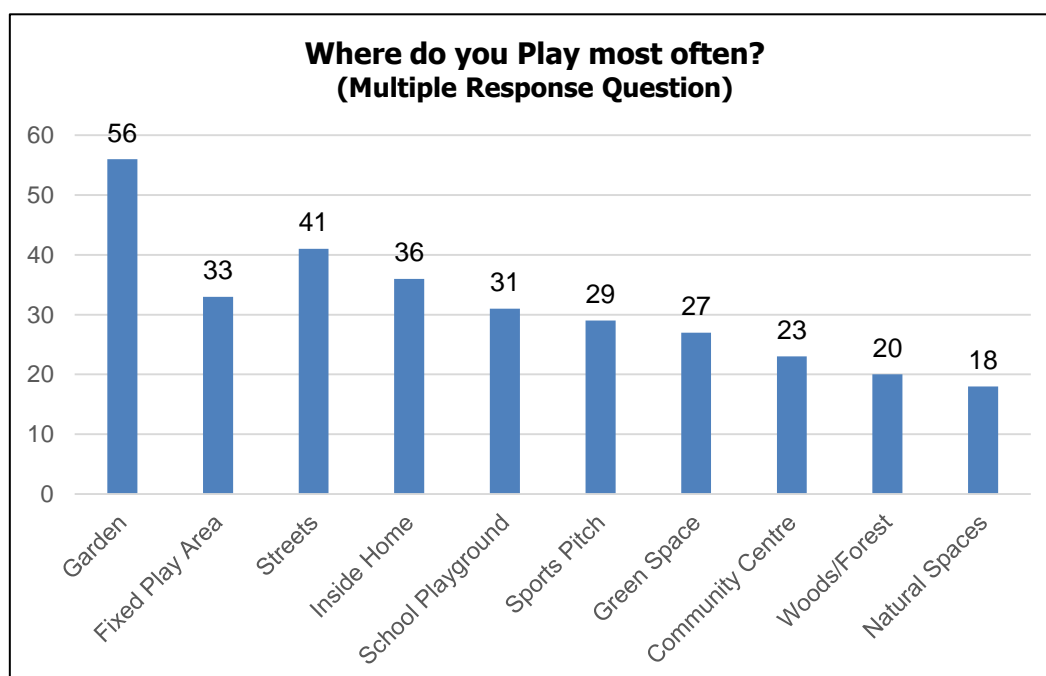
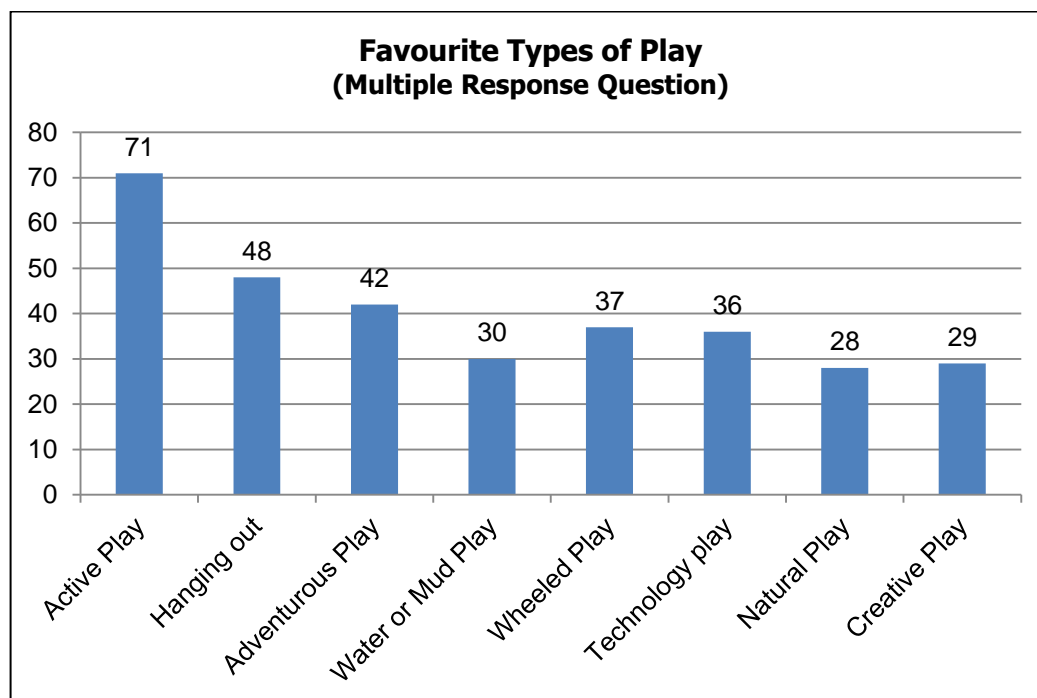
### **5.2 Methodology**

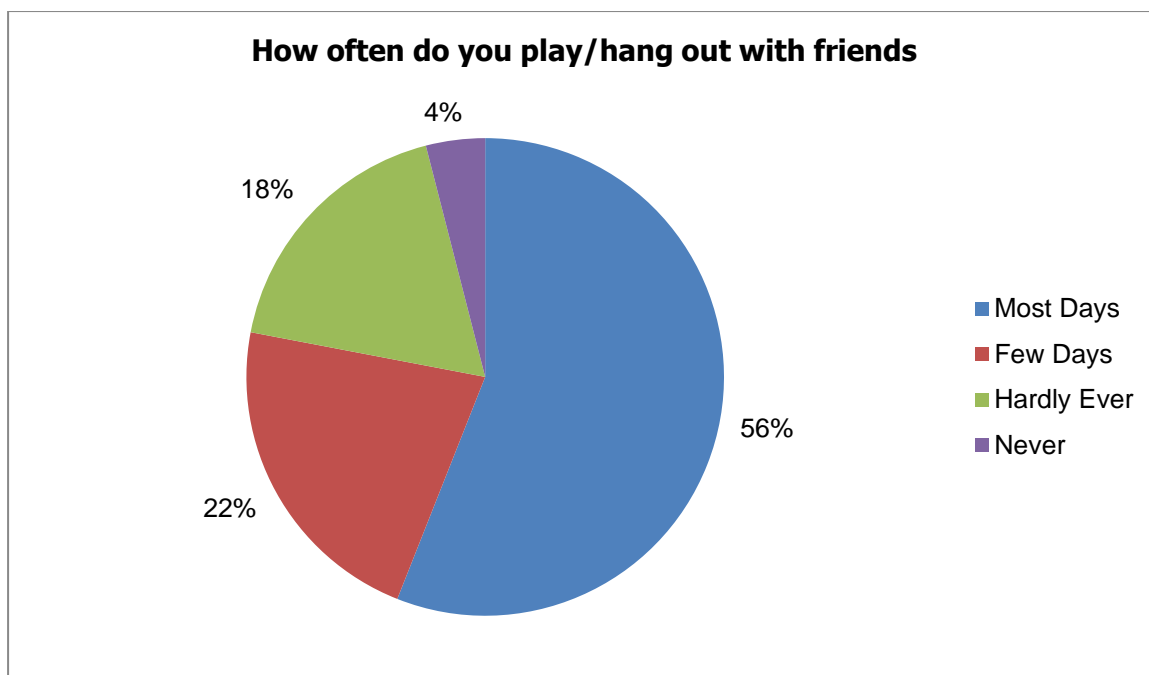
The consultation was based on a mixed methods approach and used a number approaches in order to increase the level of engagement:

- Online surveys were undertaken with dedicated surveys for three groups exploring perceptions and experiences of local play opportunities, fixed and non-fixed approaches to meeting play need, the standard of fixed play provision and areas requiring action. The total number of responses received was 400.
  - Children and Young People (88 responses)
  - Parents and Carers (301 responses)
  - Community organisations (21 responses)
- The delivery of open community consultation workshops at a number of locations:
  - Portstewart
  - Ballymoney
  - Ballycastle
  - Limavady
- Delivery of 8 focus groups with children and young people from across the Borough. The total number of children engaged with through focus group sessions was 155 including children from urban and rural areas, children with Special Educational Needs, children from BME backgrounds and older teenagers.

### 5.3 Survey Findings: Children and Young People

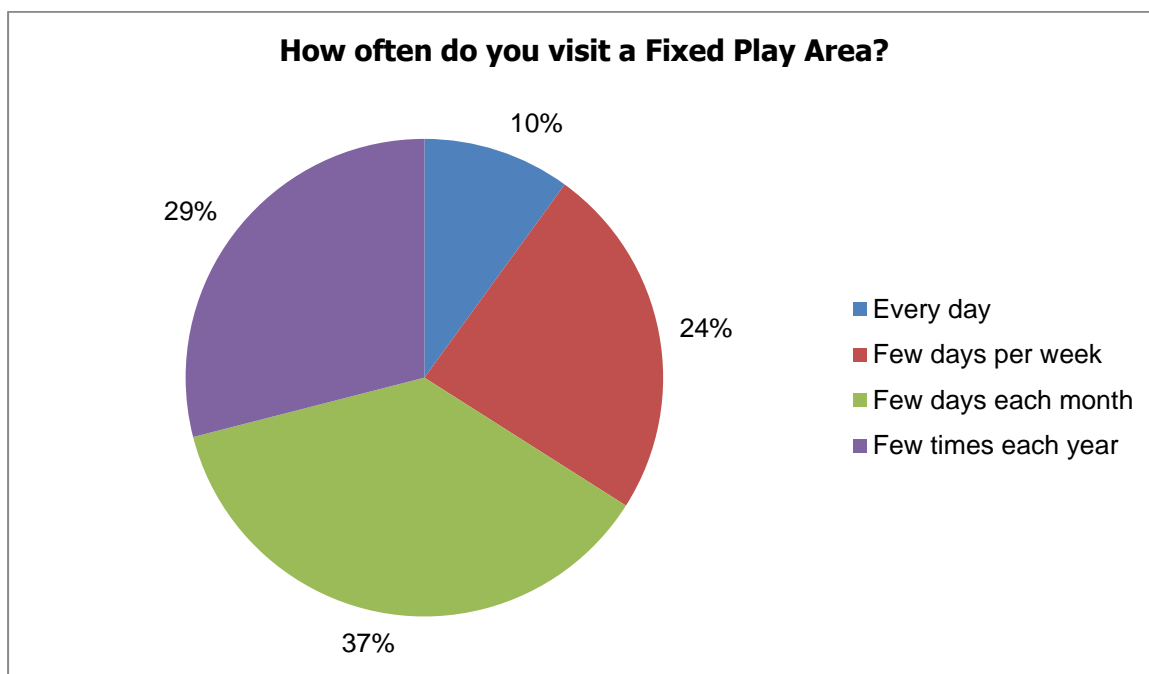
During the consultation a total of 243 children and young people participated, giving their views on a range of issues through focus groups (n=155) and completing online questionnaires (n=88).



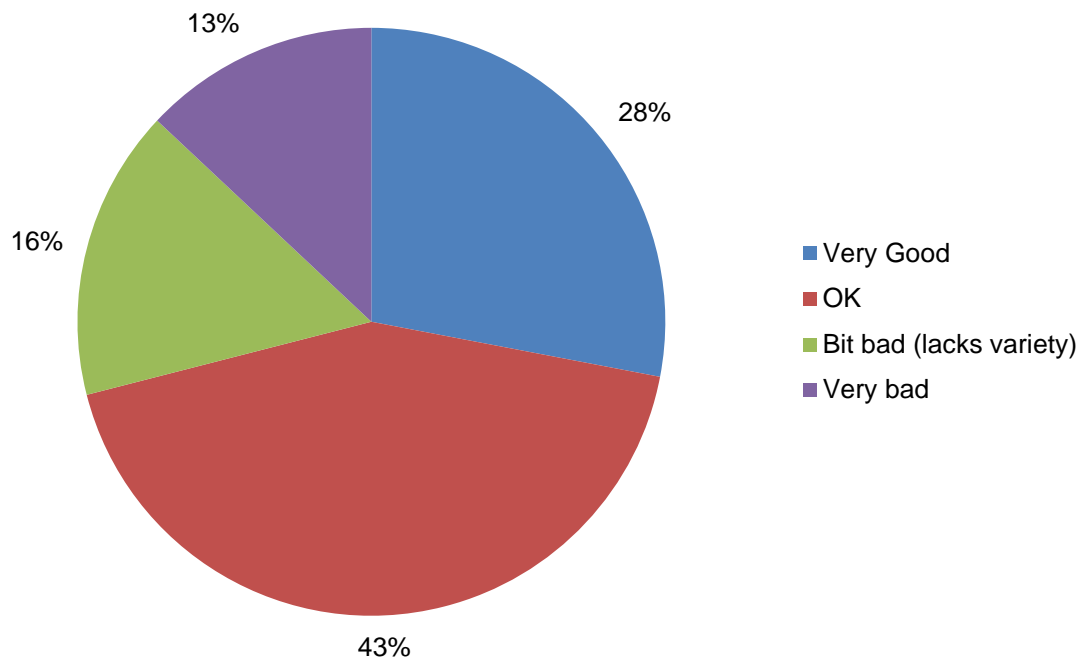


***Fixed Play Area Use***

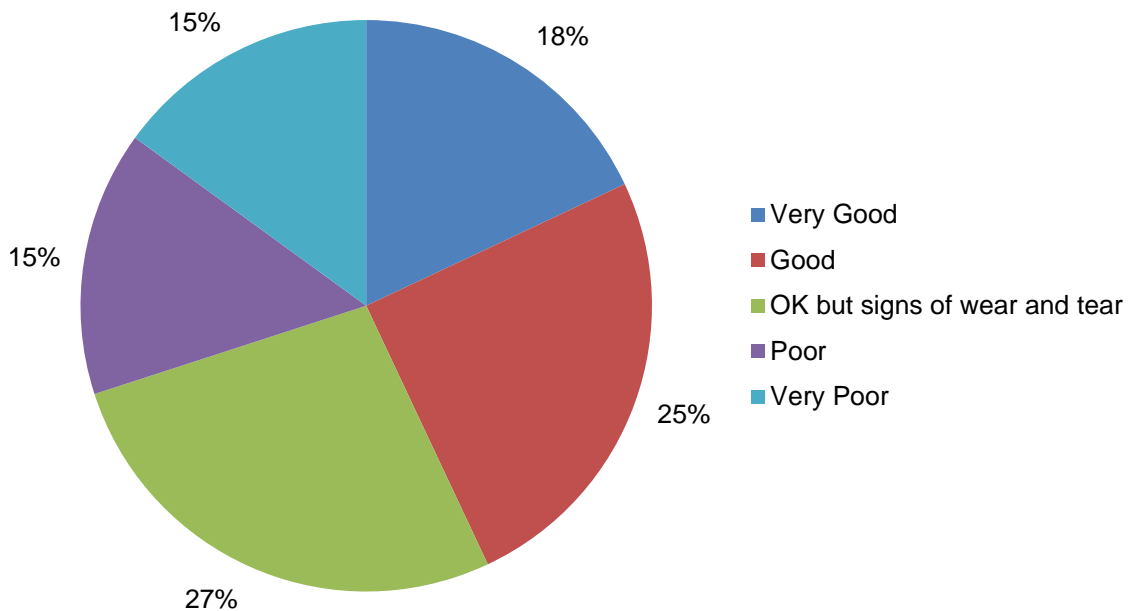
When asked specifically about play in fixed play areas, 82% of children indicated that they had visited and played at a fixed play park with 18% reporting that they had never played at a fixed play park. The majority, 76% indicated that they would like to visit fixed play areas more often.



### How Children Rate the Fixed Play Area they visit most often



### Children's views on the condition of Equipment in the Play Area they visit most often



### ***Local Green Spaces and Play***

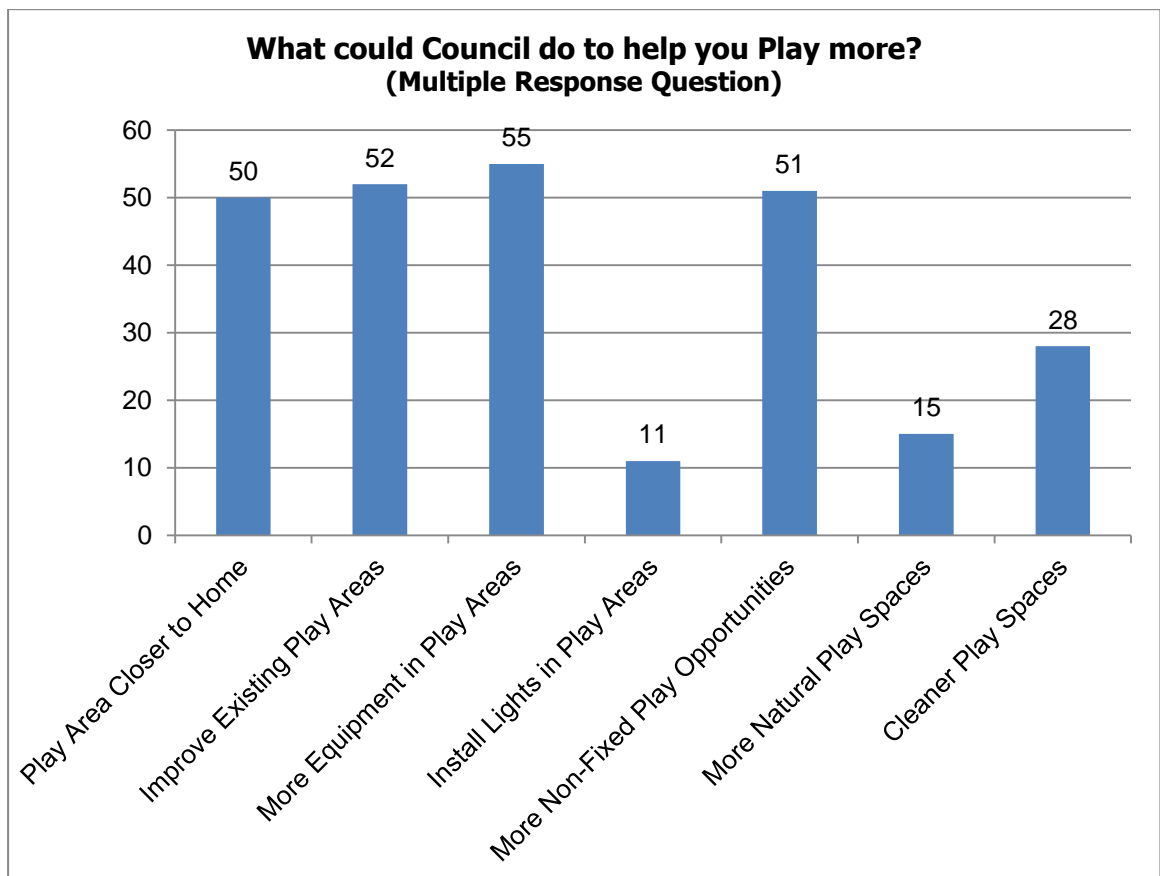
The consultation highlighted that for many children and young people locally accessible green spaces remain important as places for play with 79% indicating that they used green spaces for play on a regular basis.

When asked what they liked best about green spaces for play, children and young people identified a number of reasons:

- Safe space to run around and play with friends
- Plenty of space for playing ball games
- Space to hang out with friends
- Accessible and easy to get to
- Natural environment is fun to play in (trees, grass, shrubs etc.)
- Somewhere safe to ride a bike (away from traffic)

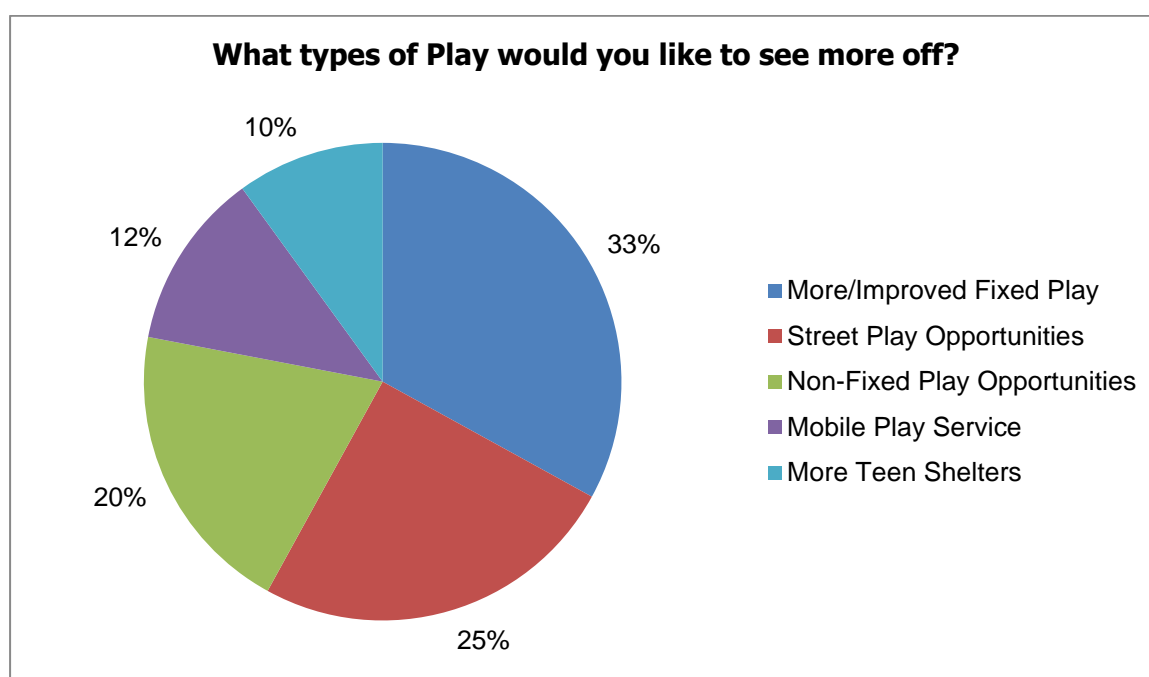
### ***What could Council do to help you Play more?***

Children were asked to indicate what they felt the Council could do in order to help better meet their play needs.



### ***What types of play would you like to see more off?***

Children were asked to indicate what types of play they would most like to see developing as a result of the play investment strategy.



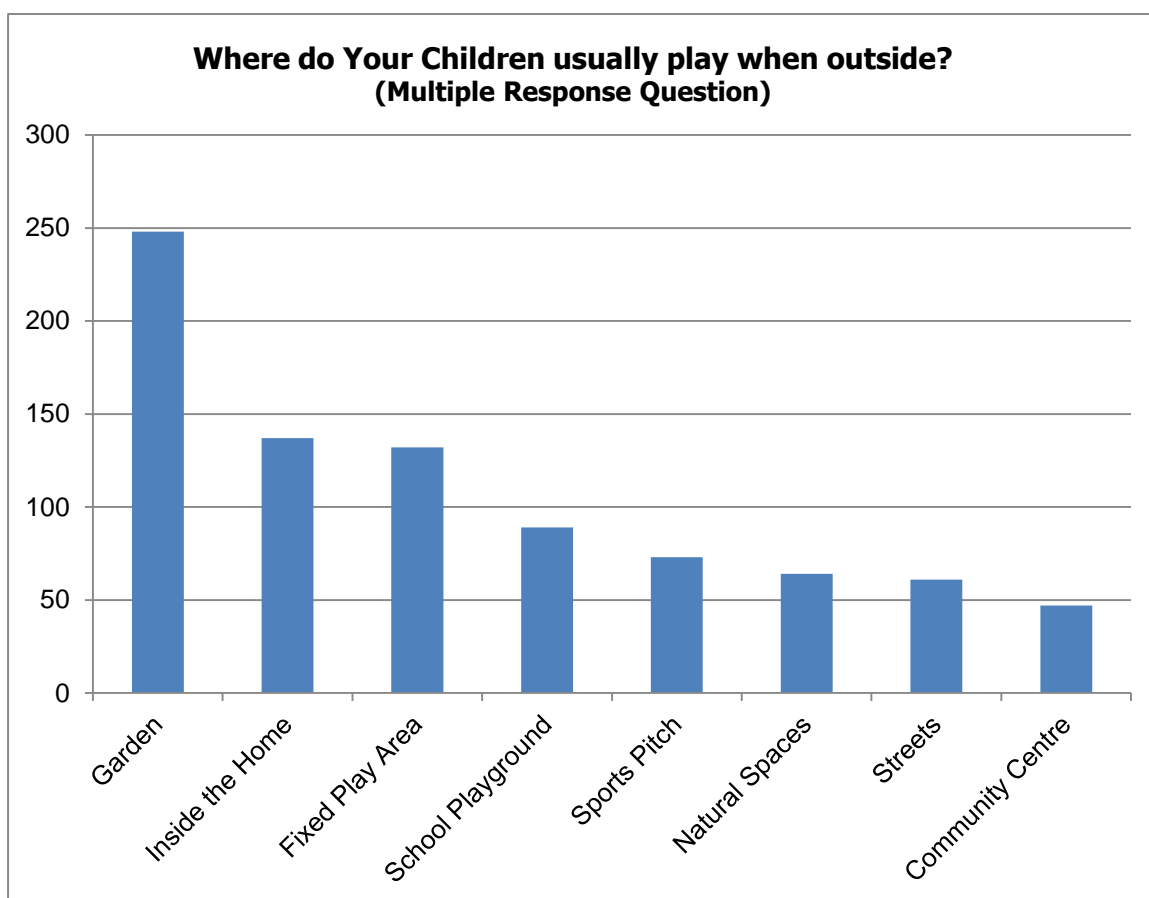
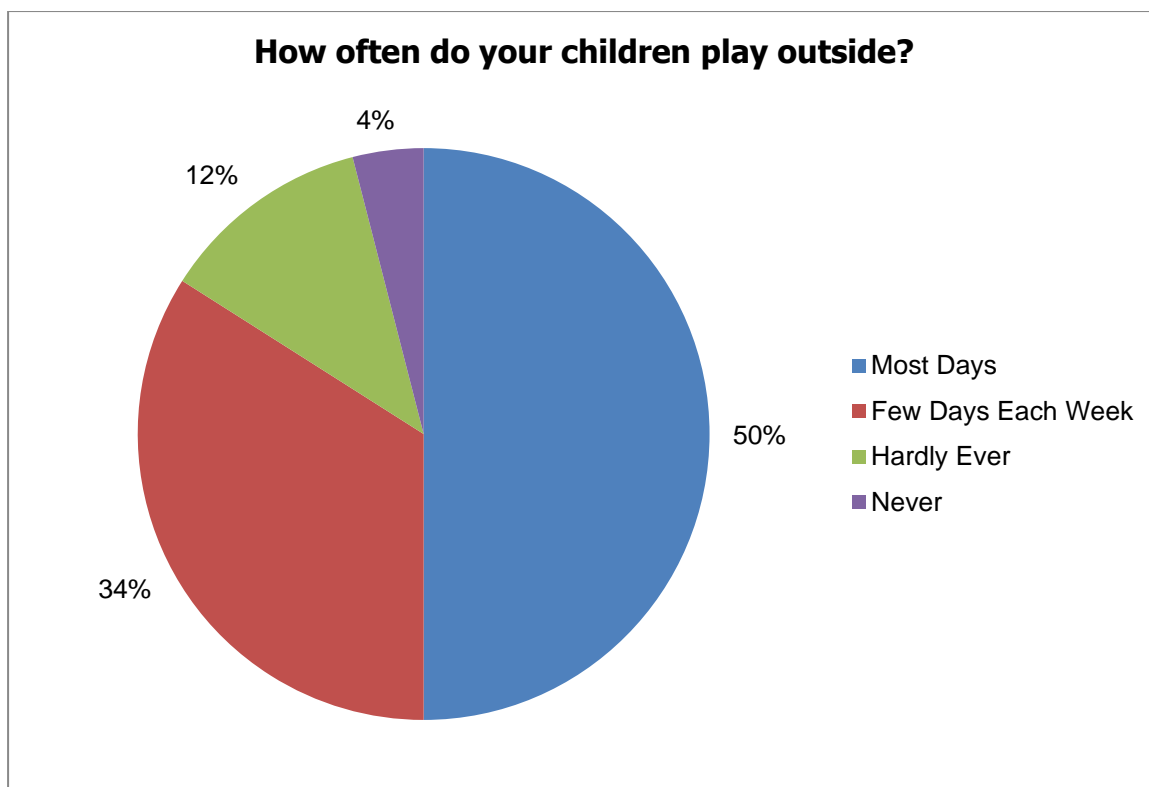
## **5.4 Survey Findings: Parents and Community Representatives**

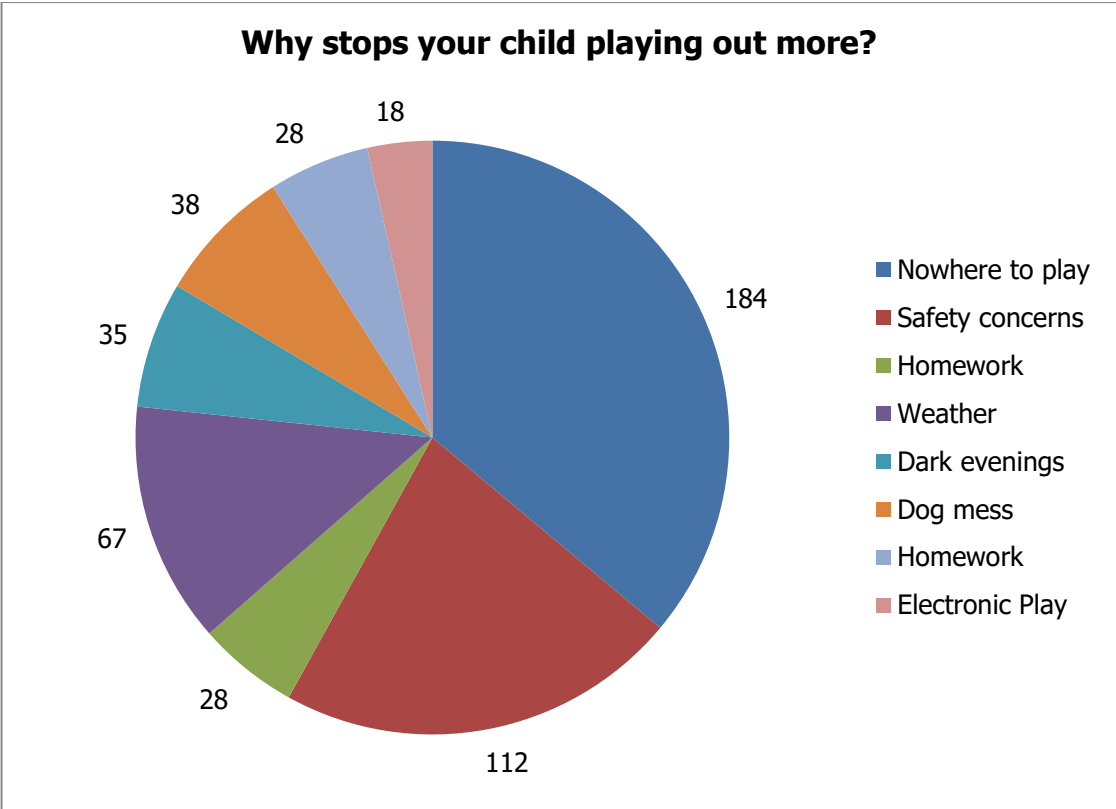
In total 301 parents, carers and community providers participated giving their views through online questionnaires with a further 36 attending focus group sessions.

### ***Importance of play***

Parents and carers were asked for their views on the importance of play for children and young people in their area. There was overall a strong recognition of the importance of play and the need to ensure that children had access to play opportunities. Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed that play was an important aspect of children's lives and that all children should have access to play opportunities.

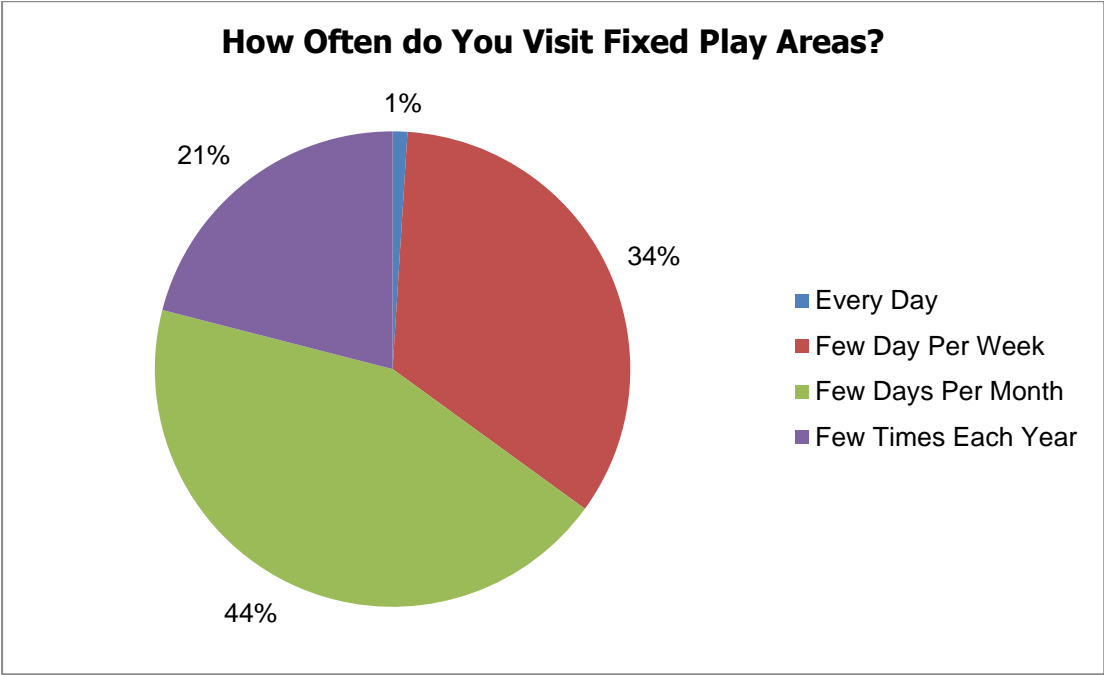
Ninety-seven percent felt that all children should have access to a variety of quality play opportunities with 73% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing that children should be involved in decision making by Council and other providers as it relates to play.





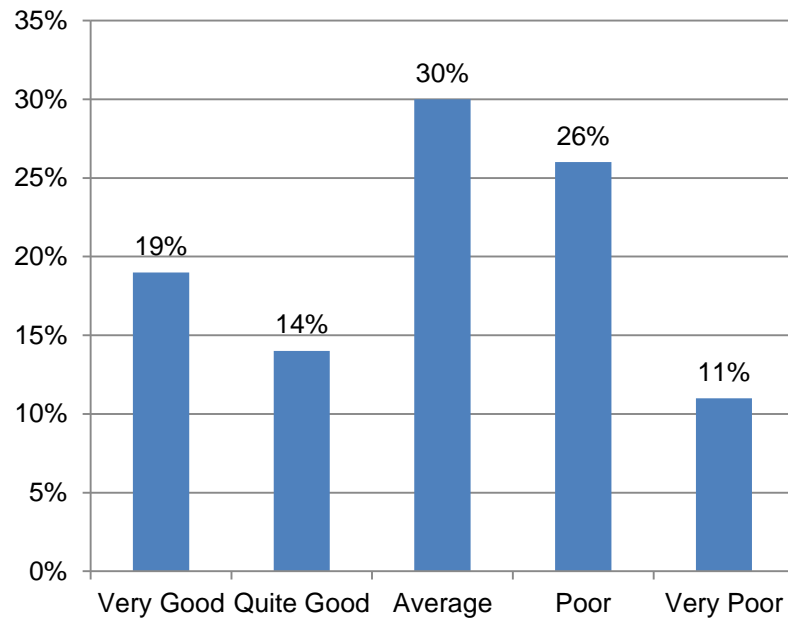
**Fixed Play Parks**

The majority of parents and carers (81%) indicated that they take their children to a fixed play park area, 7% said they did not whilst 12% indicated that they had no fixed play within travelling distance.

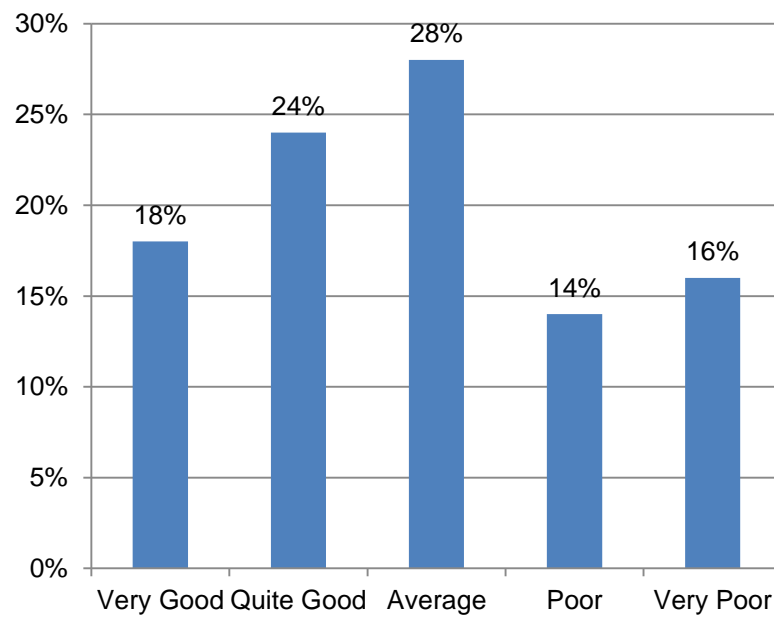


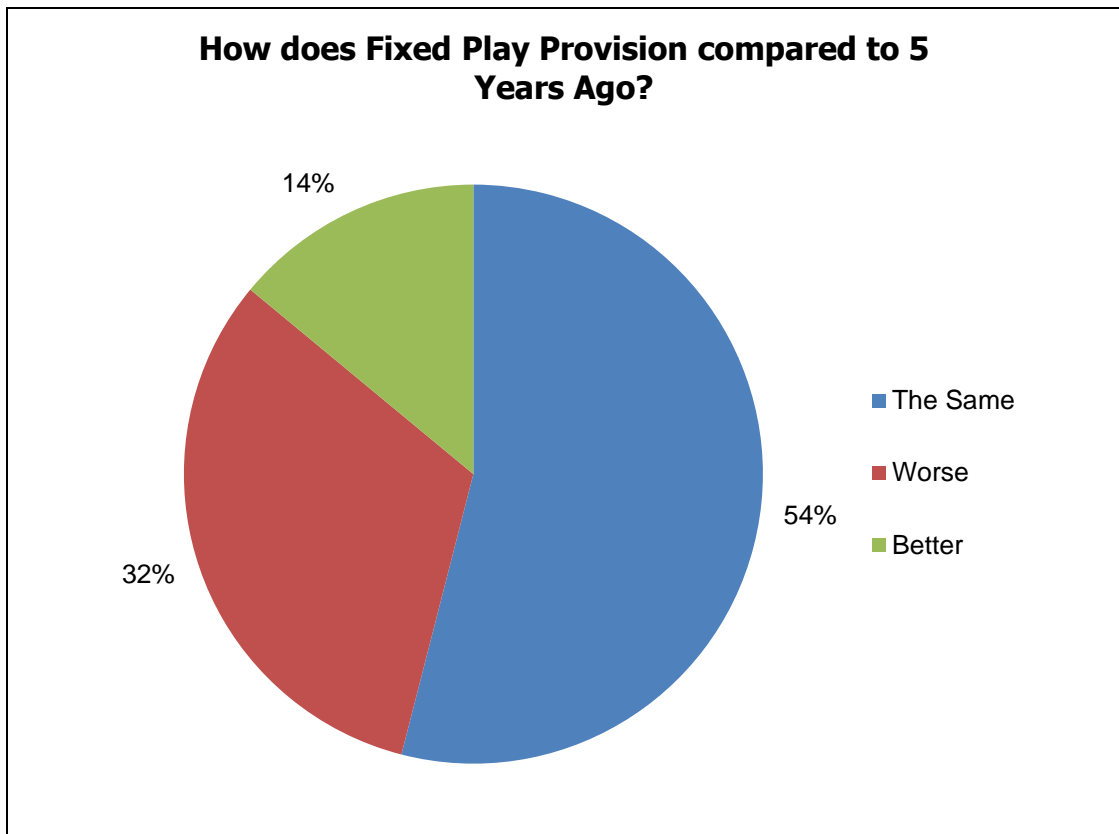


**How would you rate Fixed Play Parks on the Area overall?**



**How would you rate the condition of the Play Equipment?**



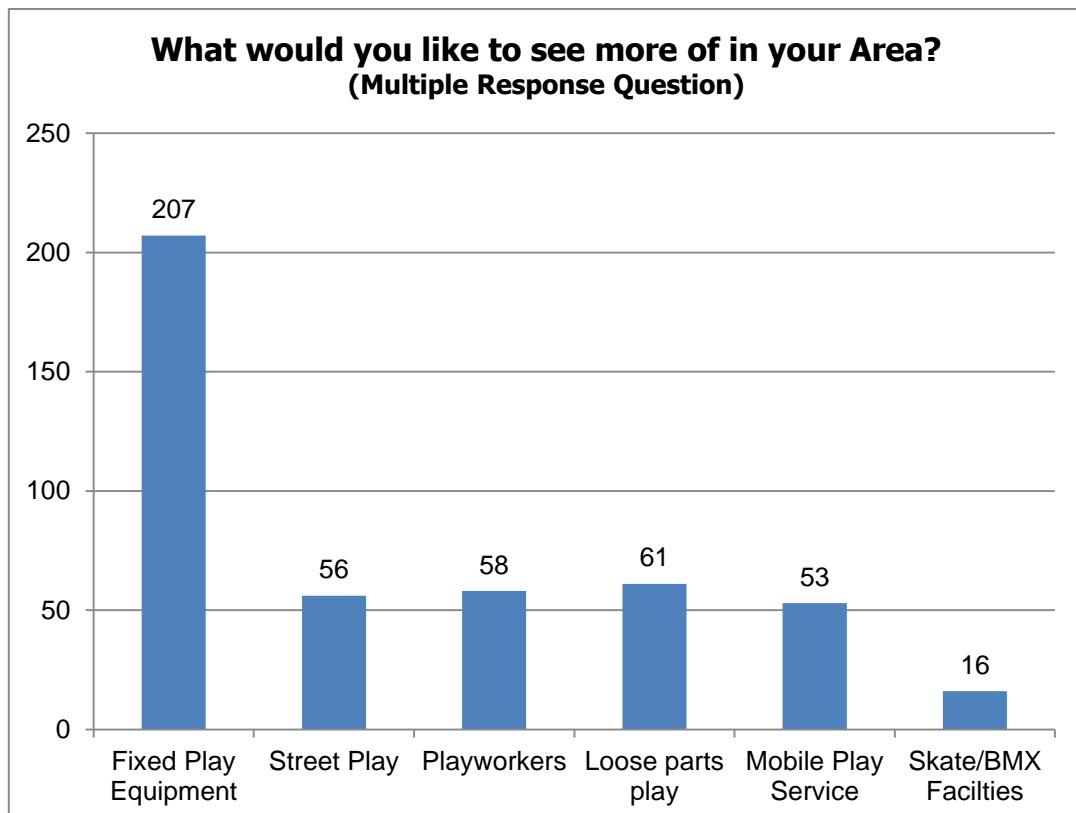
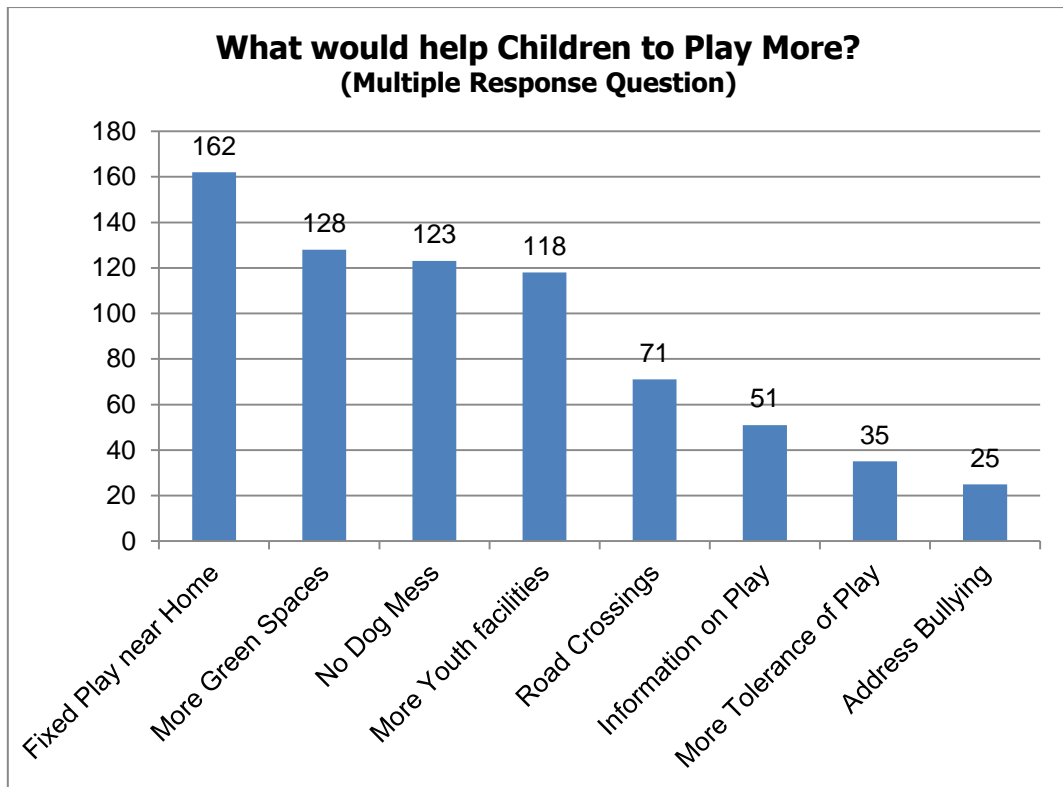


### ***Inclusive Play***

The majority of respondents, 78% indicated that in their view current fixed play provision across the council area does not cater adequately for children and young people with disabilities.

It was acknowledged by many in both the survey and at focus group sessions that Council has made significant progress within this area, for example by developing a flag ship accessible fixed play area at Flowerfield's in Portstewart and incorporating more accessible play opportunities at more recently developed sites (e.g. Megaw Park in Ballymoney).

Overall respondents indicated that the incorporation of inclusive and accessible play opportunities should be a key consideration of all future fixed play area development, whether it be at new play sites or as part of existing play area renewals.



## **SECTION B**

### **FIXED PLAY PROVISION**

## 6.0 Fixed Play Areas

### 6.1 Introduction

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is currently responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of 99 fixed play areas. These typically consist of a range of fixed play equipment (for example swings, slides, roundabouts etc.) located within a designated, often fenced off area.

The fixed play areas vary in size and scope depending on their location and the number of households they are designed to provide for. Smaller play areas often consist of 3 or less pieces of play equipment with larger sites offering 15 plus pieces of play equipment, often alongside wider parkland or recreational activities.

The development, installation and upkeep of fixed play areas represents a significant financial commitment for Council, both in terms of the initial capital outlay, ongoing renewal of equipment and long-term maintenance costs. It is therefore critical that our play areas offer a high level of play value, meeting the needs of children and parents/carers alike.

Our aim is to ensure that fixed play areas offer variety, challenge, enjoyment and inclusive play opportunities; support children's growth and development, enabling them to develop new skills and offer learning opportunities through more challenging play opportunities.

This section of the play investment strategy addresses specifically how we will seek to achieve this by:

- Establishing criteria for the identification of potential gaps in fixed play provision across the Borough and in support of the renewal process;
- Highlighting those locations identified using the criteria above as potential gap areas and outlining future actions for each;
- Identifying the fixed play areas that currently exist, their play value and setting investment proposals for the duration of the strategy;
- Setting standards for the design of new, and the maintenance of our existing fixed play infrastructure.

### 6.2 Classification of Fixed Play Areas

Fixed play areas are classified according to the Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play' (also known as the Six Acre Standards) which have been used across the UK to provide a means of determining the geographical catchment served by/or to be served by a fixed play area based on its size and scope.

The Accessibility Benchmark Standard (ABS) is based around 3 identified types of play area and establishes a set of distance thresholds which set the catchment area for each 'type' of play space.

TYPE OF PLAY	DISTANCE CRITERIA (METRES)
	WALKING DISTANCE
Local Areas for Play (LAPs): designated for very young children (<5 years) with the aim of providing somewhere to play close to home.	100
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to home.	400
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP): areas designated, laid out and equipped for a range of ages (0 to 14 years).	1000

In reviewing current fixed play areas Council have formally agreed to apply the ABS distance standard to the radial assessment of play area household coverage. The standard has therefore been applied to the review of all existing, and in the identification of potential new fixed play areas.

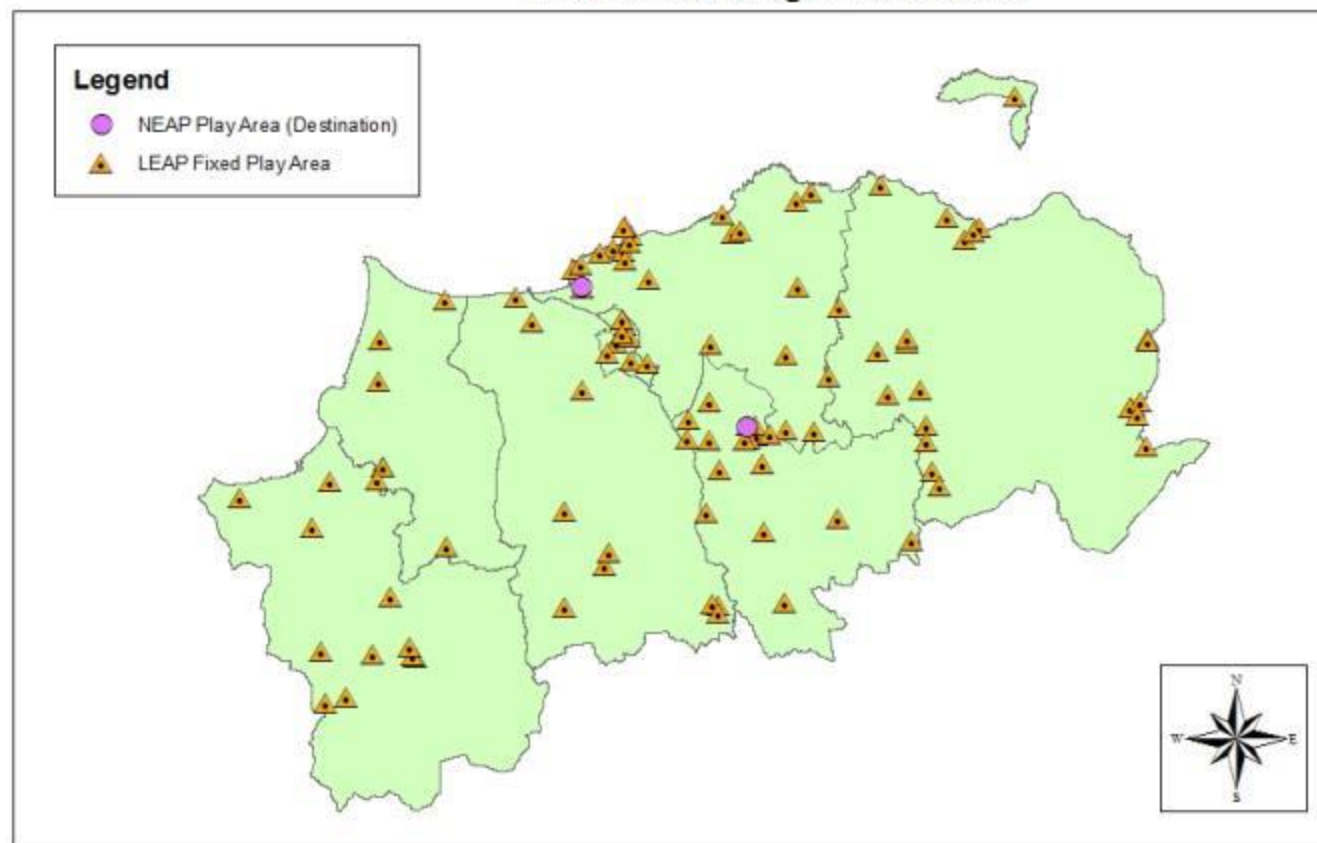
### 6.3 Overview of Existing Fixed Play Provision

There are at present 99 fixed play areas across the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (see location map overleaf). The majority of play areas (97) are classified as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's). LEAP's are open spaces which have been specifically designed and laid out with features and equipment aimed at children who are beginning to go out and play independently close to where they live.

There are also two Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's) – also known as destination play sites which are located at Flowerfield's in Portstewart and Megaw Park in Ballymoney. Flowerfield's has been designed as an inclusive play area, offering fixed play opportunities for children with a range of disabilities.

NEAP's offer an enhanced play experience and contain a wider variety of fixed play equipment that meets the needs of a broader age range up to and including early teens. In addition, NEAP's offer additional facilities including wider recreational green space, toilet and changing facilities and parking spaces.

**Map showing the Location of Fixed Play Areas across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Area**



## 6.4 Identification of Gaps in Fixed Play Coverage

In assessing the level of coverage provided by existing fixed play areas, and to support the identification of potential areas of need two key pieces of statistical and geographical information have been used:

- Population estimates and the geographical distribution of 0 to 14 year old's living within each District Electoral Area; and
- Household location data to facilitate household density analysis in line with ABS distance standards as previously outlined.

By combining both data sources those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14-year olds and a level of household density capable of supporting fixed play can be identified.

To support the identification of areas that may require new fixed play development (both now and over the duration of the strategy), at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017 Council have adopted three criteria, one for urban, one for rural areas and one to guide development in support of tourist need:

1. Criteria 1 – Urban Areas: Requires that minimum number of resident children and young people (0 to 14 years) of 150 or more within the statistical boundary;
2. Criteria 2 – Rural Areas: In recognition of lower population density levels, the minimum population criterion has been reduced to 50 children or young people (0 to 14 years) or more.
3. Criteria 3 – Tourism: In recognition of the number of tourists to the Council area, additional criteria have been established to guide the development of fixed play aimed at meeting visitor need. The agreed criteria are based on an assessment of the number of visitors to a specific site or location, consideration of the need for fixed play at the site and the proximity of existing provision.

It should be noted that the identification of a gap does not indicate a definite need for new fixed play development, rather it highlights that based on underlying demographic and household distribution a potential gap exists. In considering how a gap could be met Council will also give consideration to the expansion of existing fixed play areas within the wider location. Expansion of existing play areas could provide a sufficient increase in coverage to meet the identified need.

Prior to initiating the development of new fixed play Council will undertake a further two stage process consisting of:



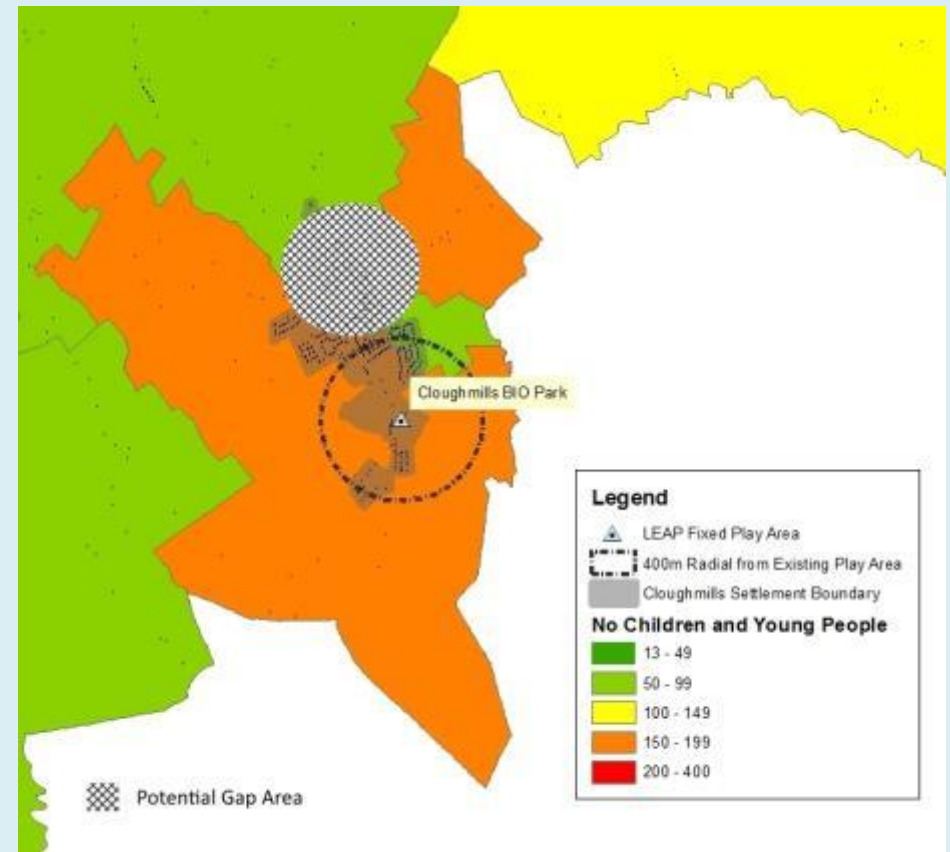
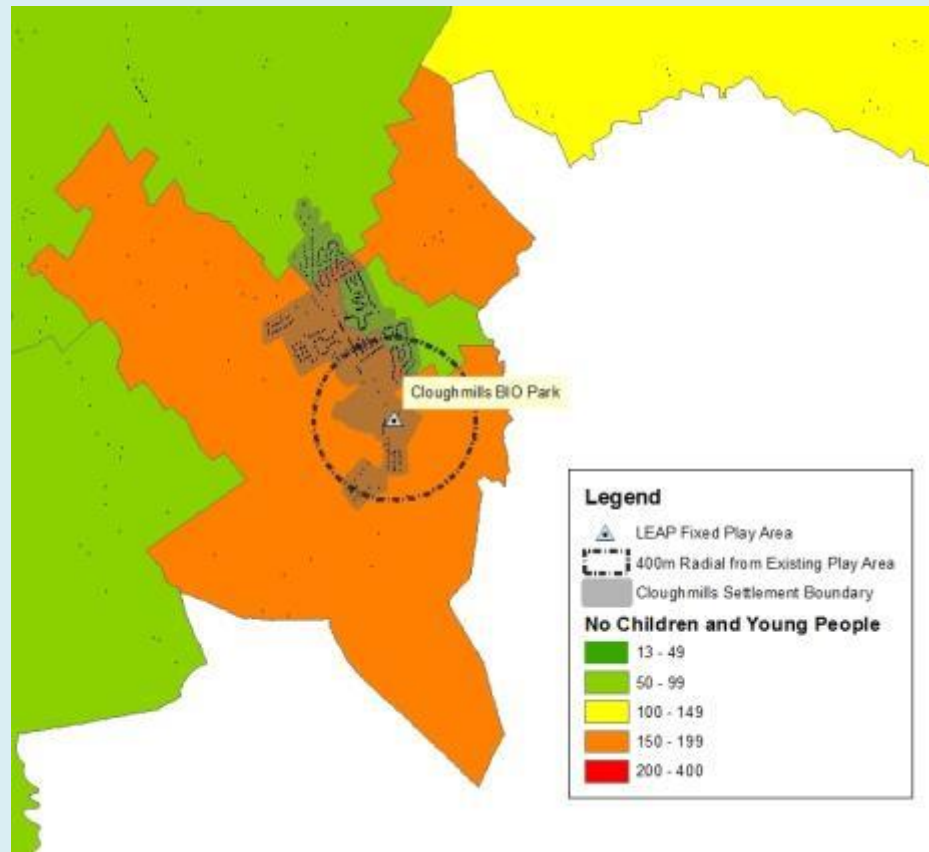
1. A review of actual need (as opposed to statistical need) in order to determine the level of demand for fixed play area development through community engagement and consultation processes.
2. The identification of potential land options that lend themselves to meeting fixed play development should demand be confirmed. This will include consideration of Council owned land, other land in ownership of public bodies that could be transferred/accessed on a partnership basis (e.g. schools) etc.

Based on the criteria adopted, 12 potential locations for new fixed play provision have been identified. Each of these locations, and any future identified needs will be subject to business case, consultation and individual investment decisions in accordance with the Councils four stage capital management process.

## **Potential Gap Area 1**

<b>DEA Area</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Overview</b>	<b>Action</b>
Ballymoney	Cloughmills	<p>Potential gap area incorporates the settlement of Clough Mills which in 2015 had a residential base of 1,309 individuals residing within 514 households.</p> <p>Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified area was 233. The area currently has 1 fixed play area which is located at Clough Mills Bio Park (see map overleaf).</p> <p>The population within the identified area is largely centred around the settlement of Clough Mills. The existing fixed play provision at Clough Mills Bio Park provides a level of radial coverage, however based on household pattern analysis additional provision <u>may</u> be required to provide coverage for those dwellings to the north of the village which fall outside of the radial catchment area.</p> <p>The maps overleaf show the area identified as potentially requiring additional provision.</p>	<p>Undertake community consultation to determine whether additional provision is required.</p> <p>Should additional need be identified Council should consider the enhancement of the play area at the bio park to increase its radial coverage area to meet identified need.</p>

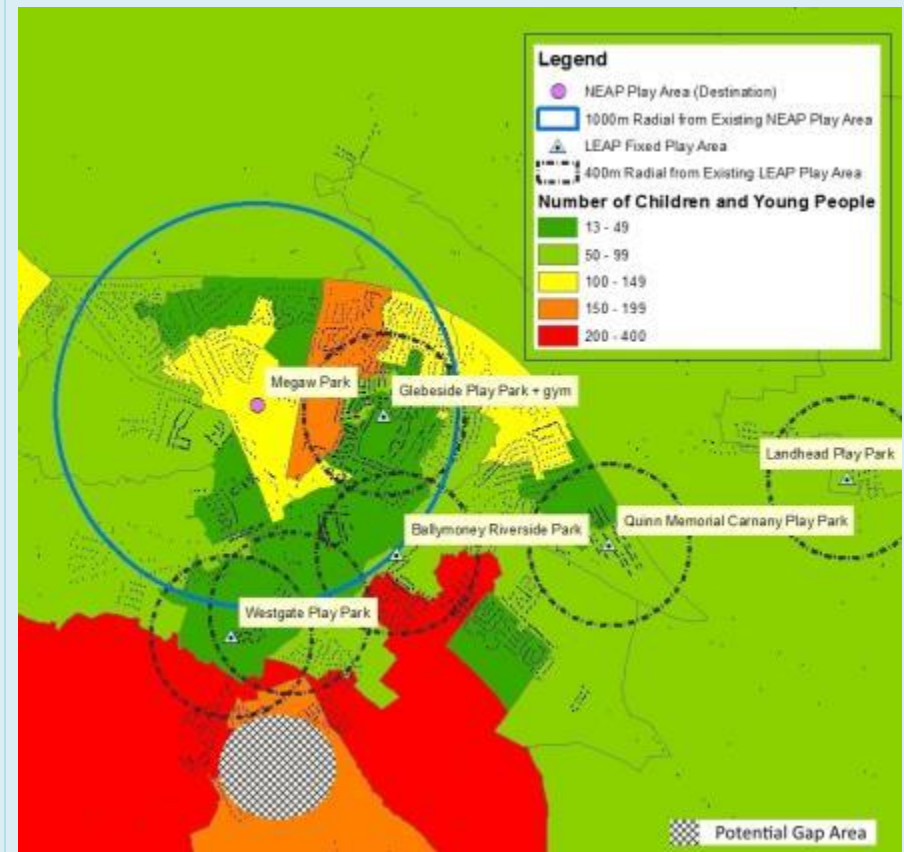
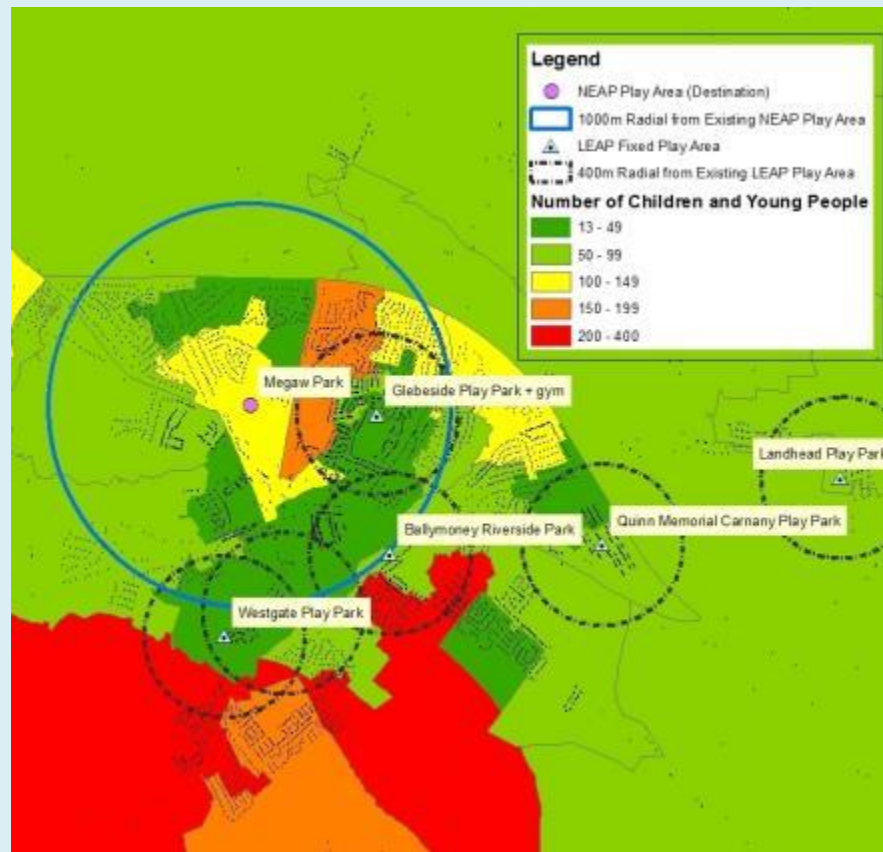
## Map showing Potential Gap Area 1



## **Potential Gap Area 2**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Ballymoney	South Ballymoney	<p>Potential gap area 2 is located to the south of Ballymoney town and is denoted on the maps overleaf. In overall terms, Ballymoney is generally well catered for in terms of fixed play area coverage with 6 play areas including 1 NEAP (destination) play area at Megaw Park.</p> <p>Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the overall identified area was 591, although a number of these reside within existing catchments associated with Westgate, Seymour, Riverside, Quinn Memorial, Torrens and Fulton Play areas.</p> <p>Statistically there does appear to a potential gap to the south of Ballymoney (area including Cambourne Park/Drive, Millgrange and Bannview.</p> <p>The maps overleaf show the area identified as potentially requiring additional provision.</p>	<p>The area of interest has been subject to private housing development indicating possible space issues.</p> <p>Council to review land availability prior to conducting focused local community consultation should suitable land be available.</p> <p>Should land be unavailable, Council to consider the expansion of existing neighbouring fixed play areas to better meet need.</p>

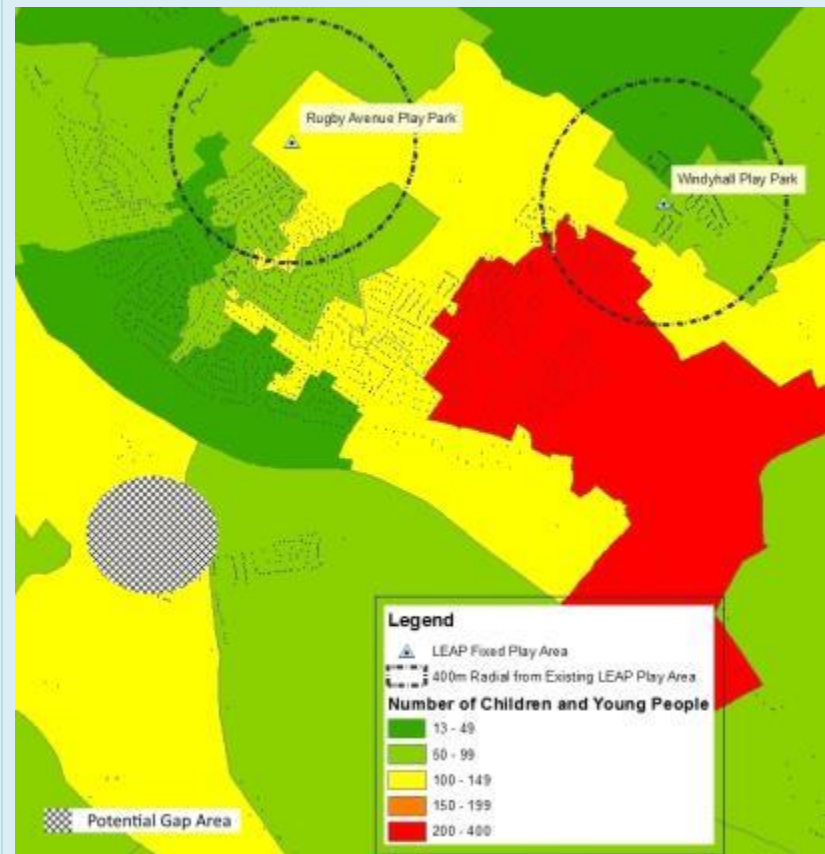
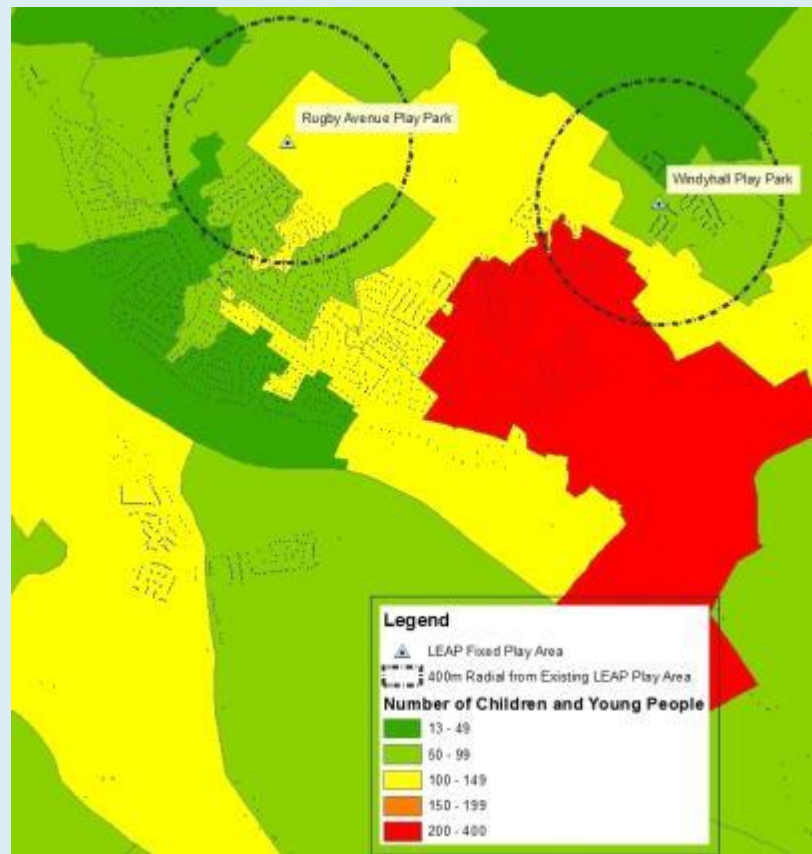
## Map showing Potential Gap Area 2



### **Potential Gap Area 3**

DEA	Location	Area Review	Action
Bann	Castleroe	<p>Potential gap area is located at the border between Bann and Coleraine DEA's.</p> <p>There is 1 defined settlement within the area, Castleroe which, based on 2015 population estimates, had 179 households with the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified yellow area identified as 104. The nearest fixed play provision is at Windy Hall in Coleraine DEA.</p> <p>Based on underlying demographics and settlement formation a potential gap in fixed play provision exists within the area.</p>	Council to assess demand for fixed play provision through community consultation and review land possibilities in line with neighbouring Coleraine DEA proposals.

### Map showing Potential Gap Area 3

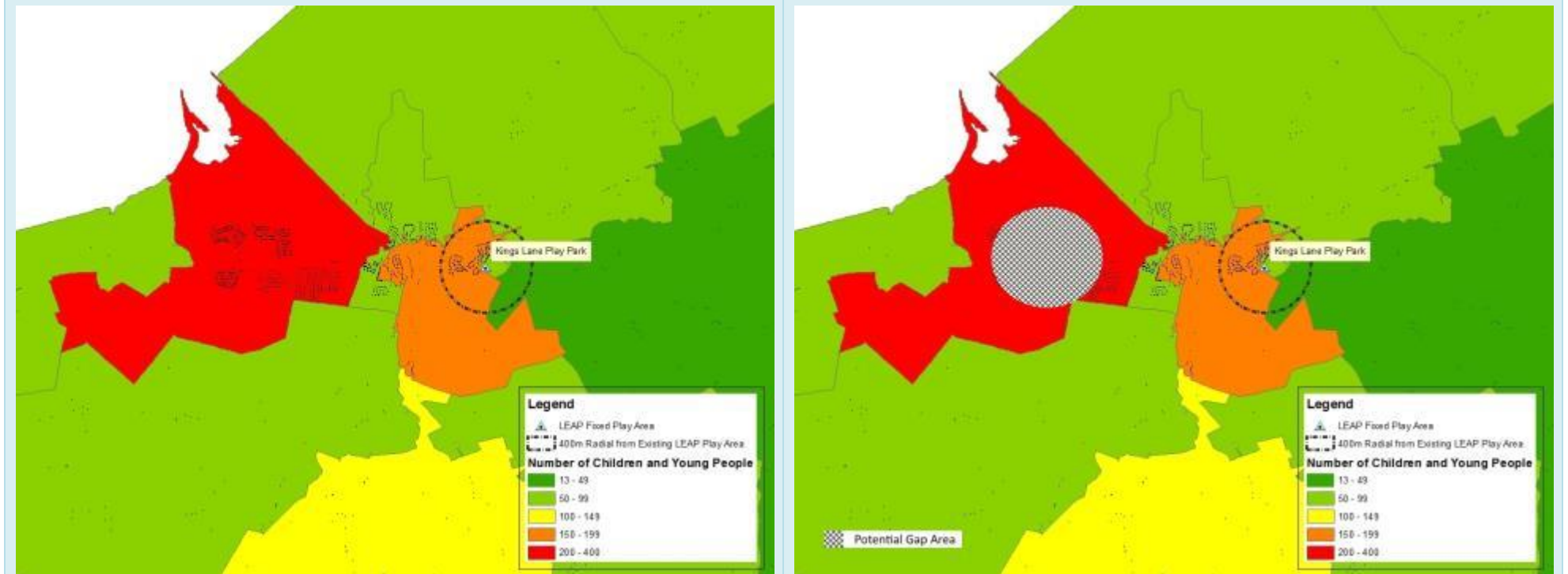


## **Potential Gap Area 4**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Benbradagh	Ballykelly	<p>Potential gap area is located in the settlement of Ballykelly which, according to 2015 estimates had 2,103 households and 758 residents.</p> <p>Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified red area (see maps overleaf) was 297 with 155 within the orange zone. The central belt zone which links the two had a total of 131 children residing within it. There is currently one play area in Ballykelly (Kings Lane play area).</p> <p>Analysis of household distribution highlights a potential need for additional fixed play provision. The current play area at Kings Lane provides radial coverage for a only small proportion of the overall area with need most apparent within the red highlighted zone which has been subject to residential growth in recent years.</p>	<p>The area of interest has been subject to private housing development indicating possible space issues.</p> <p>Council to review land availability within the identified red area to determine whether a potential site can be identified before proceeding with community consultation.</p>



## Map showing Potential Gap Area 4

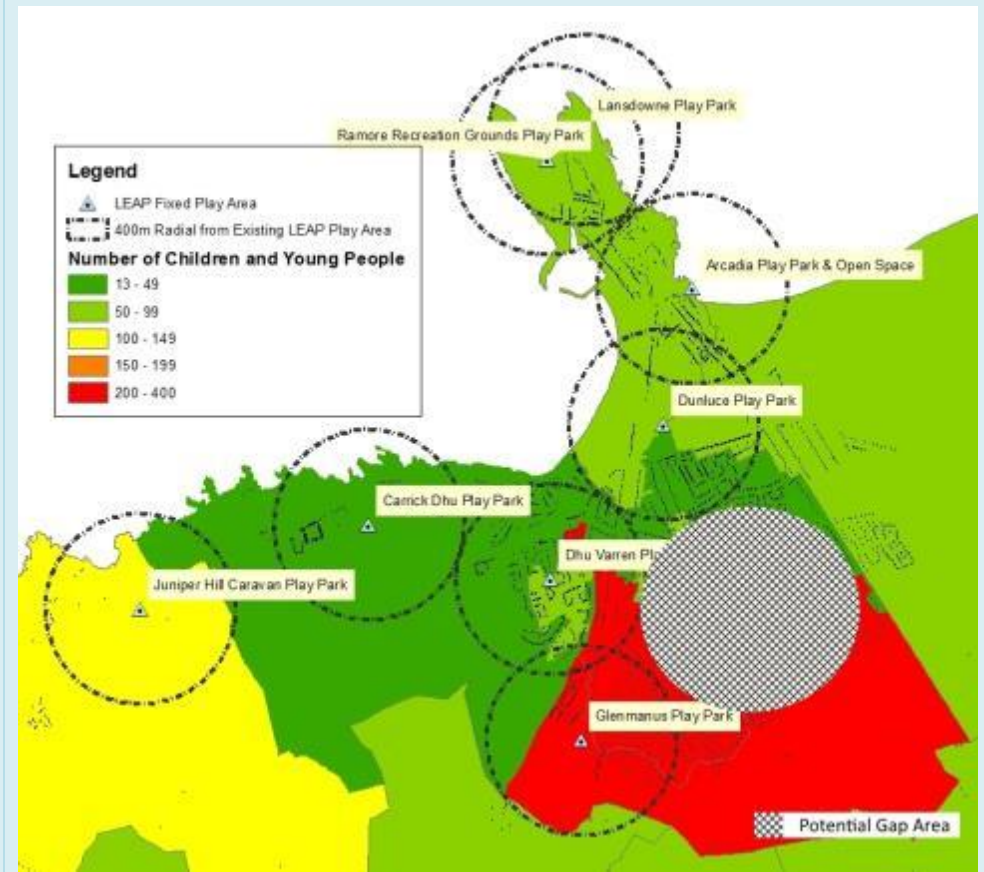
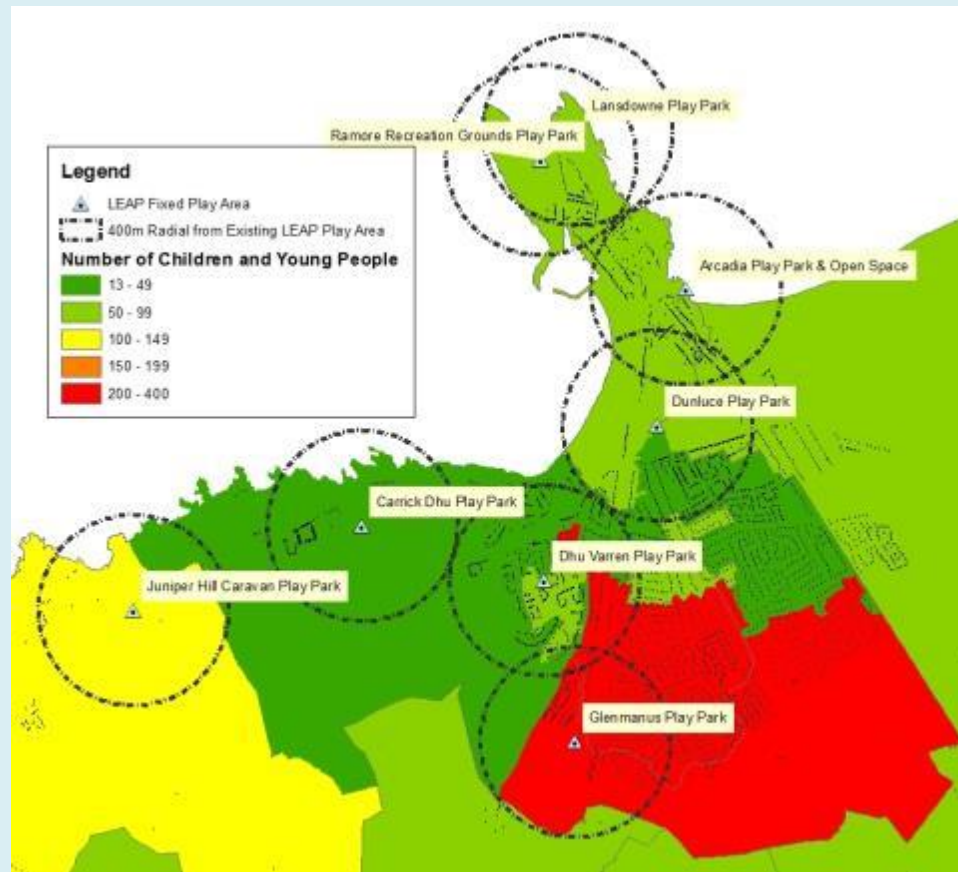


## **Potential Gap Area 5**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Causeway	Portrush	<p>The area includes Portrush which in 2015 had an estimated population of 6,442 residing within 2,821 households. Based on 2015 population estimates, the number aged 0 to 14 residing within the area identified in red on the map below was 530.</p> <p>Current fixed play provision tends to be estate base (Dhu Varren) or primarily aimed at tourist need (Arcadia, Dunluce, Landsdowne etc.). Ramore play area, the highest in terms of play value is located away from the main residential areas by the shore – an area which is exposed to the elements during the winter months.</p> <p>Consultation highlighted a lack of high value play within Portush and identified an active lobby for a facility that supports skateboarding and urban sports within the area.</p> <p>In addressing the issue it is recommended that Council consider the establishment of a new destination play area for Portrush which would offer high play value and incorporate wider site elements that would meet the needs of the skateboarders and the urban sports lobby. Such a site would significantly enhance play provision for residents and would offer a significant destination site for tourists</p>	Council to explore the potential of developing a new play area at the identified site (or alternative if preferable location is available).

		<p>and visitors to the area.</p> <p>In reviewing locations, a site to the rear of Portrush Primary School has been identified which would lend itself to such development providing the land could be secured. Positive aspects of the site include that it is contained within a dip (reducing issues relating to the natural elements that could deter usage), has abundant nearby parking at the Dunluce Centre and is extensive enough to incorporate the development of skate/urban sports opportunities.</p> <p>A sufficiently high value play area would increase its radial coverage to a minimum of 1,000m (see blue radial in map above) and would help to meet the gap in residential provision.</p> <p>Given the high volume of tourists visiting the area on a seasonal basis, in addition to the development of a new destination play area it is recommended that Council develop a number of play installations along key walkways (including East and West Strands, Ramore Head) to stimulate play and playful activities.</p>	
--	--	---	--

## Map showing Potential Gap Area 5



## **Potential Gap Area 6**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Causeway	Bushmills	<p>Potential gap area is located to the southern side of Bushmills town. Based on population estimates the resident population of Bushmills in 2015 was 1,292 individuals residing within 600 households.</p> <p>There are at present two fixed play areas in Bushmills, one located at Bushmills Community Centre and one at Dundarave; neither's radial catchment area covers the area identified. The number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified area was 162.</p> <p>Analysis of the population base and household pattern within the identified area suggests that there may be an underlying demand for fixed play provision, however it is noted that the area is highly residential and as such land availability is likely to be a consideration.</p>	<p>In recognition of the apparent underlying demand, Council should in the first instance review land options.</p> <p>Should land be available Council should undertake a consultation to provide an indication of need and support within the catchment area prior to final decision making regarding the development of a new play area.</p>

## Map showing Potential Gap Area 6

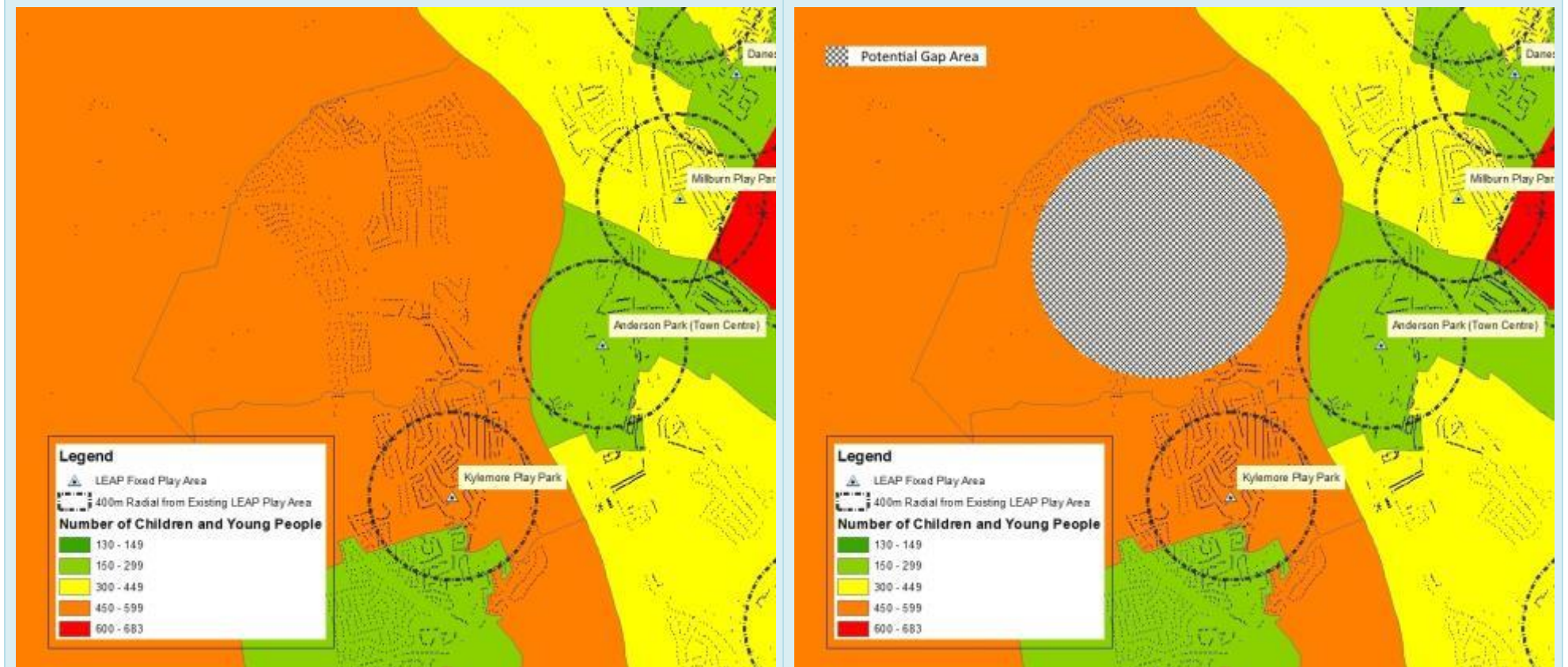


## **Potential Gap Area 7**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Coleraine	Waterside	<p>Potential gap is located within the Waterside SOA. The estimated number of 0 to 14 years olds residing within the SOA in June 2016 was 493 within 1,144 domestic household. The area is not currently served by a fixed play area.</p> <p>Given the number of children and young people within the identified area, household density and the lack of fixed play it is recommended that the area be considered for the development of a new fixed play area.</p> <p>In making this recommendation it is recognised that the area is primarily residential, making the availability of suitable land a potential issue. It is noted that there are primary (D H Christie Memorial PS) and secondary schools (Coleraine Grammar School, Loreto College and Coleraine College) within the location with green space areas which could facilitate fixed play.</p>	<p>Council to explore possible partnership agreement with one of the existing educational institutions in order to facilitate fixed play development on a partnership basis.</p> <p>Should this not be possible Council to give consideration to other land acquisition opportunities.</p>



## Map showing Potential Gap Area 7

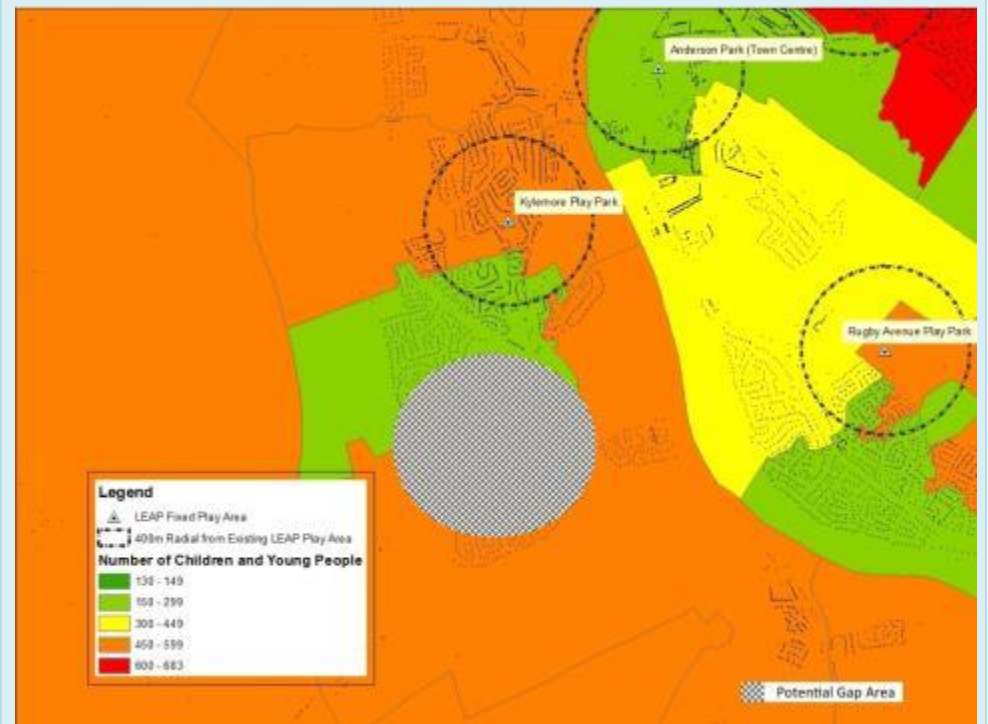




## **Potential Gap Area 8**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Coleraine	The Cuts 1	<p>The area identified falls within the Cuts 1 Super Output Area and is not currently served by a fixed play area. The estimated number of 0 to 14-year olds in 2015 was 510 living within 836 households.</p> <p>It is recognised that Council does not currently own any suitable land within the identified area, therefore any future development would be dependent on securing a suitable site.</p>	Council to review land options prior to proceeding to community consultation should a suitable site be identified.

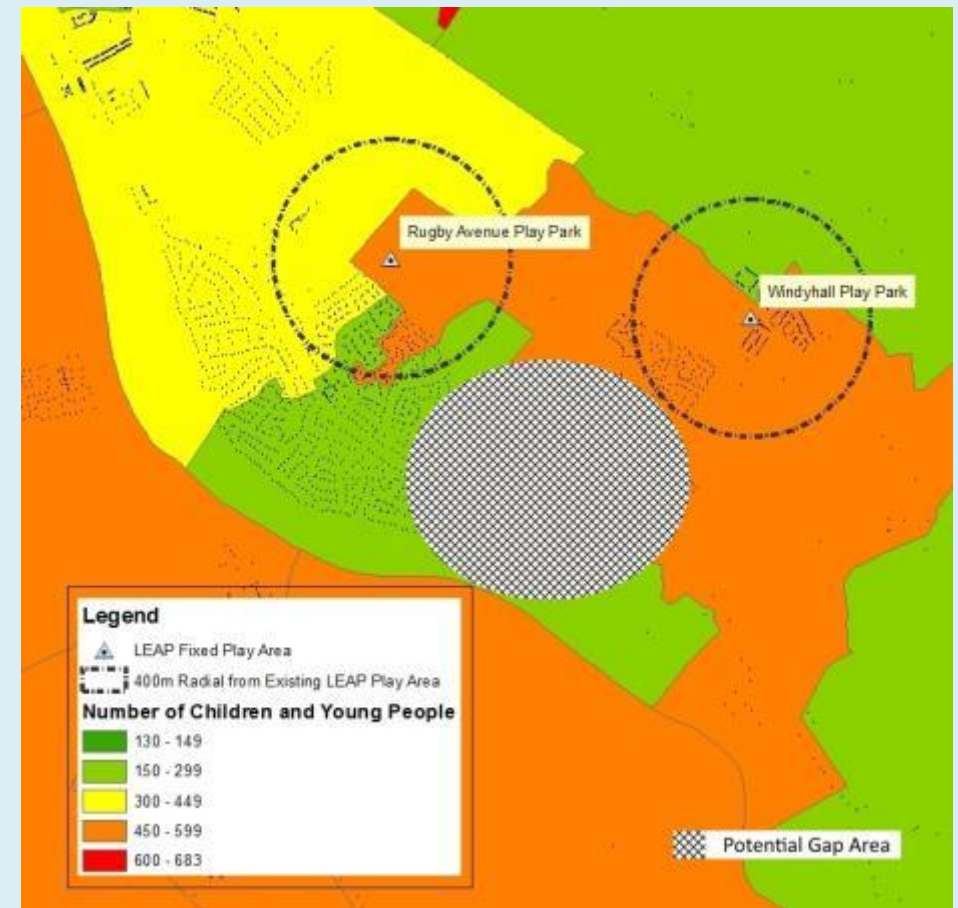
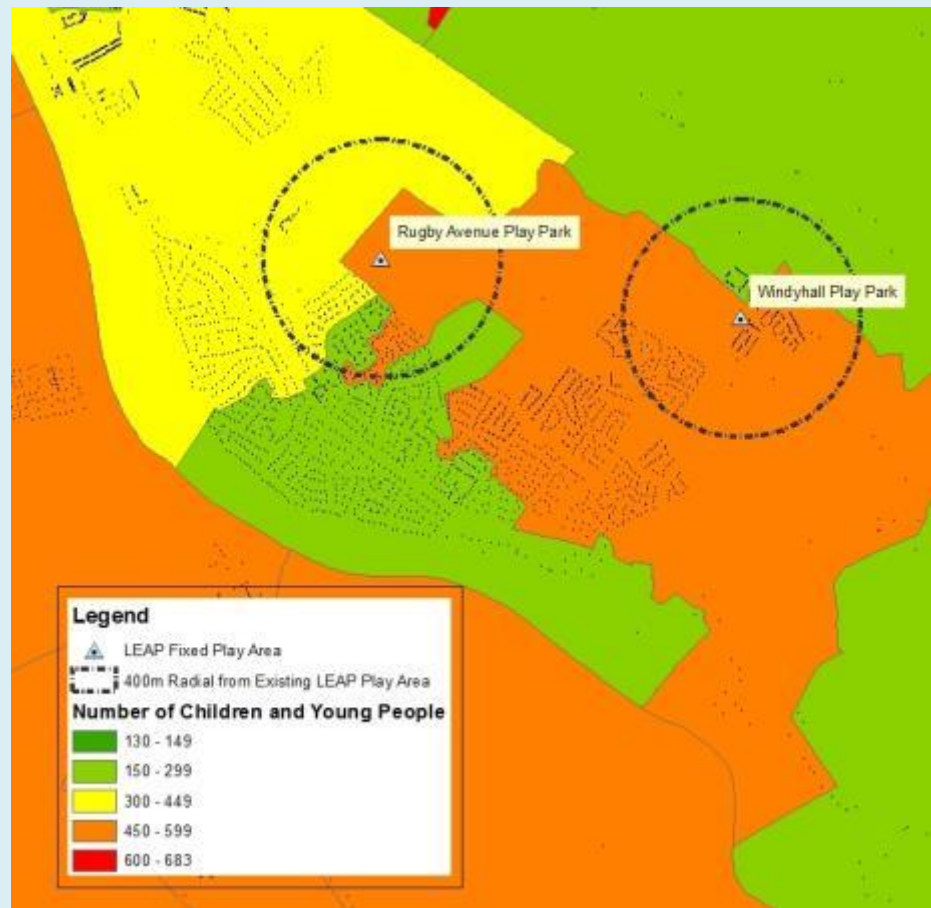
## Map showing Potential Gap Area 8



## **Potential Gap Area 9**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Coleraine	Knocklyn	<p>Potential gap area contains two Super Output Area's, Knocklyn 1 and Knocklyn 2. The estimated number of 0 to 14 years olds residing within Knocklyn 1 SOA in June 2016 was 528 with 274 in Knocklyn 2.</p> <p>Knocklyn 1 SOA is partially covered by the radials emanating from Rugby Avenue playpark and Windy Hall playpark; however coverage is largely peripheral. Knocklyn 2 SOA is partially covered by Rugby Avenue playpark however again coverage is peripheral.</p> <p>There is potential for the redevelopment of the play area located at Rugby Avenue, which given its wider recreational function has scope for the development of a NEAP level (destination play) site.</p>	Council to identify options for the development of a new fixed play area within the identified gap area to include the redevelopment of Rugby Avenue to a NEAP level site.

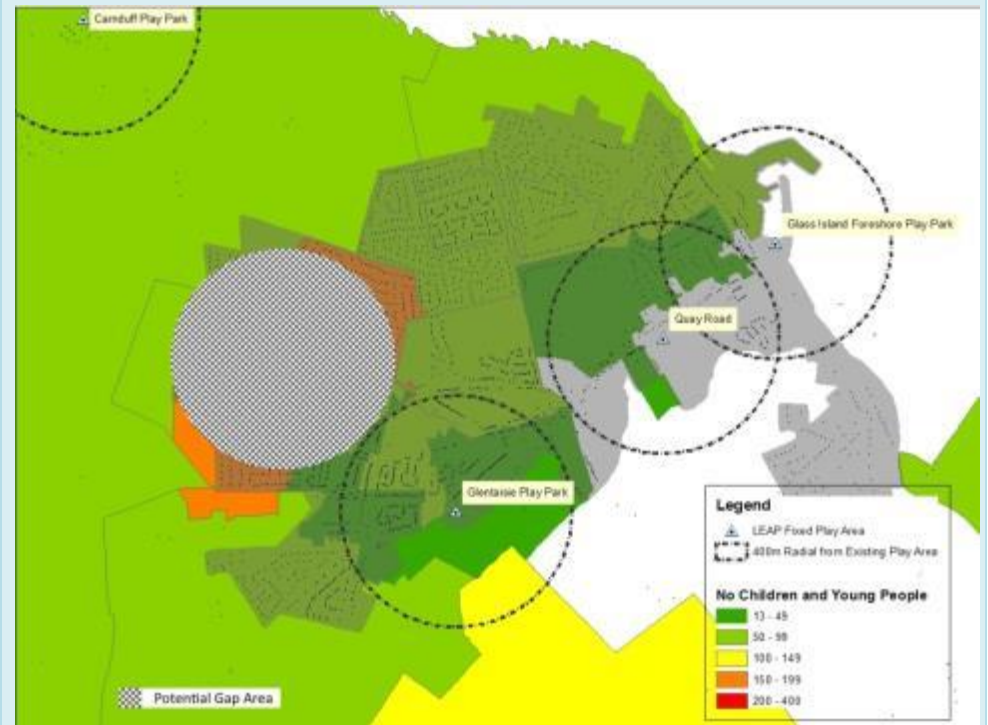
## Map showing Potential Gap Area 9



## **Potential Gap Area 10**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
The Glens	Ballycastle West	<p>Potential gap area is located at Ballycastle.</p> <p>In 2015 Ballycastle had an estimated resident population of 5,238 individuals residing within 2,146 households. Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the settlement area was 818.</p> <p>The area is currently served by three fixed play areas Glass Island Foreshore, Quay Road and Glentaisie. The Quay Road site offers significant potential for the development of a NEAP (designation) play area which would serve both the resident population and visitors/ tourists to the area.</p> <p>A potential gap has been identified to the west of the town (see maps overleaf) which would partially be addressed by the upgrade and redevelopment of Quay Road to NEAP standard.</p>	<p>Based on its current low play value and the need to provide wider coverage within the area Council will progress to renewal of the Quay Road site to full NEAP/destination status.</p> <p>In line with the play strategies aim of increasing geographical access to accessible fixed play opportunities the site will be developed to accessible play standards (in line with those applied at the Flowerfield site).</p> <p>Post renewal of Quay Road a gap area may still remain to the west of the town and Council will need to conduct a further review following completion of the Quay Road upgrade.</p>

## Map showing Potential Gap Area 10

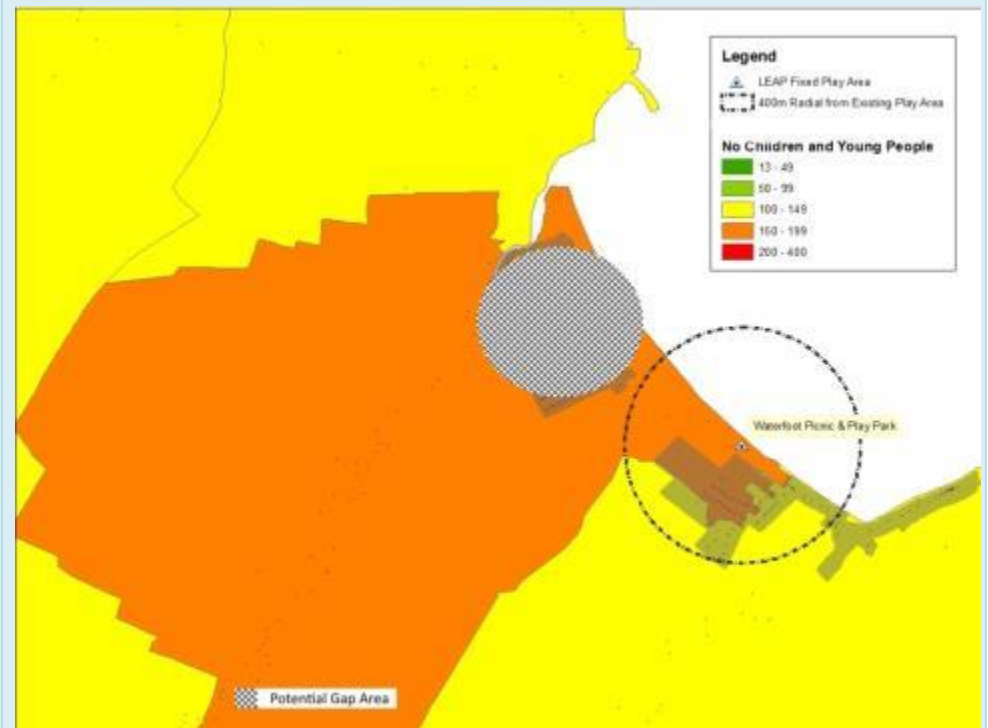
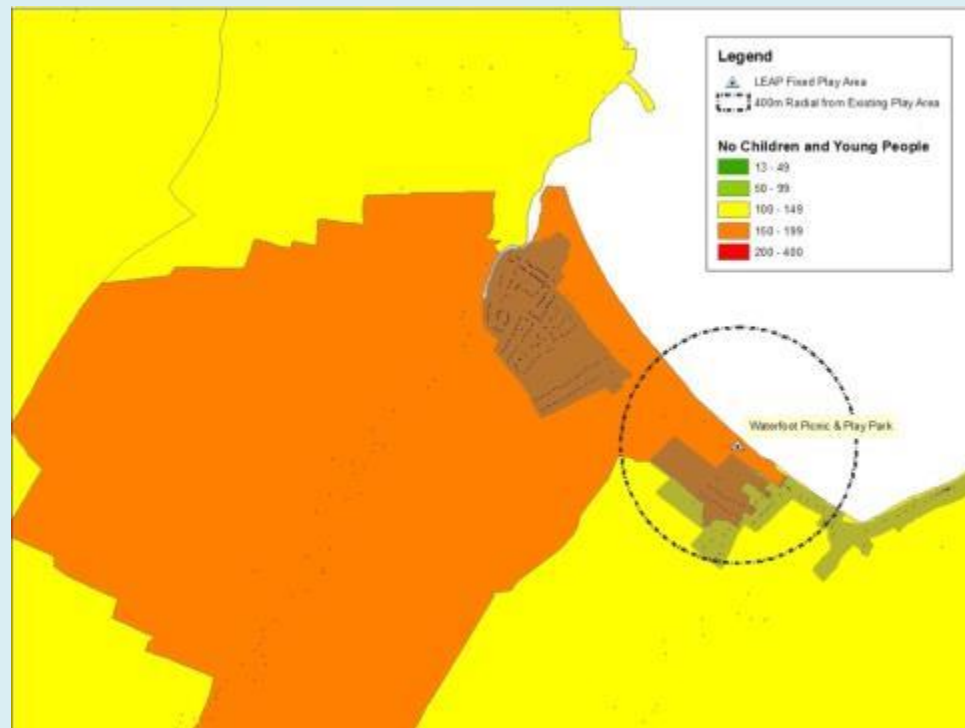




### **Potential Gap Area 11**

DEA	Location	Area Review	Action
The Glens	Waterfoot	<p>Potential gap area is located at the settlement of Waterfoot which in 2015 had an estimated population of 524 individuals residing within 204 households. Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified area (denoted in red on the map below) was 152.</p> <p>The area is currently served by one fixed play area which is located just along the coast from Waterfoot at the picnic area and predominantly serves tourist and visitors to the area. Road safety concerns have been raised by residents of Waterfoot who highlight the distance of the play area from the main housing estates and the need to cross a busy road.</p> <p>It should be noted that the legacy Council identified the development of new fixed play provision within Waterfoot as one of its key final actions prior to creation of the new Council.</p>	Council to explore options for the provision of a fixed play area within the main settlement of Waterfoot.

## Map showing Potential Gap Area 11

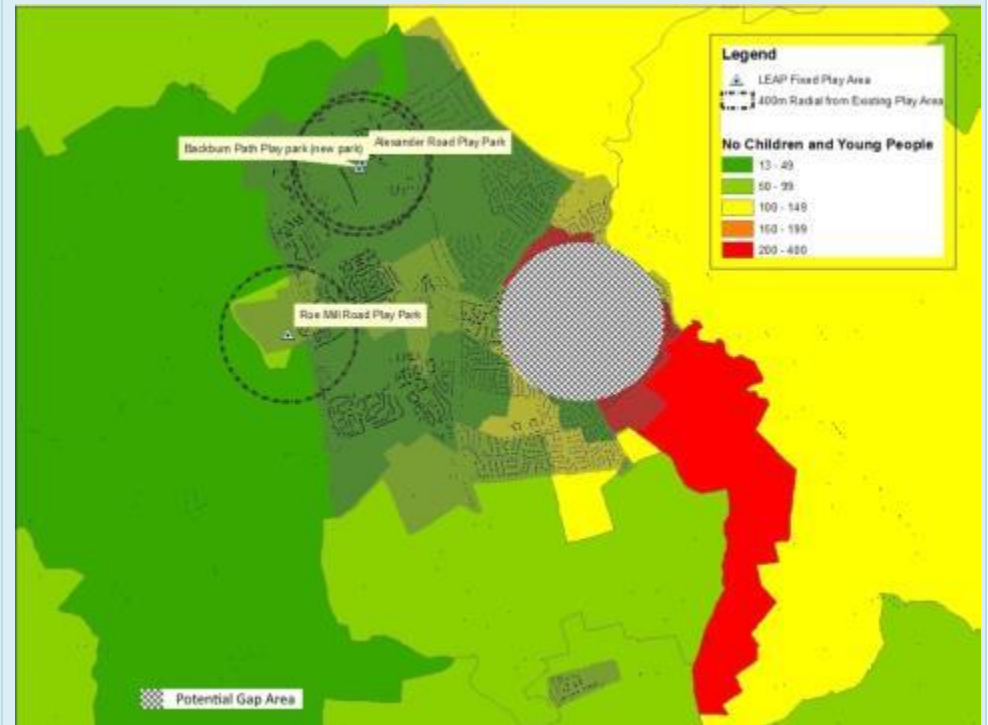
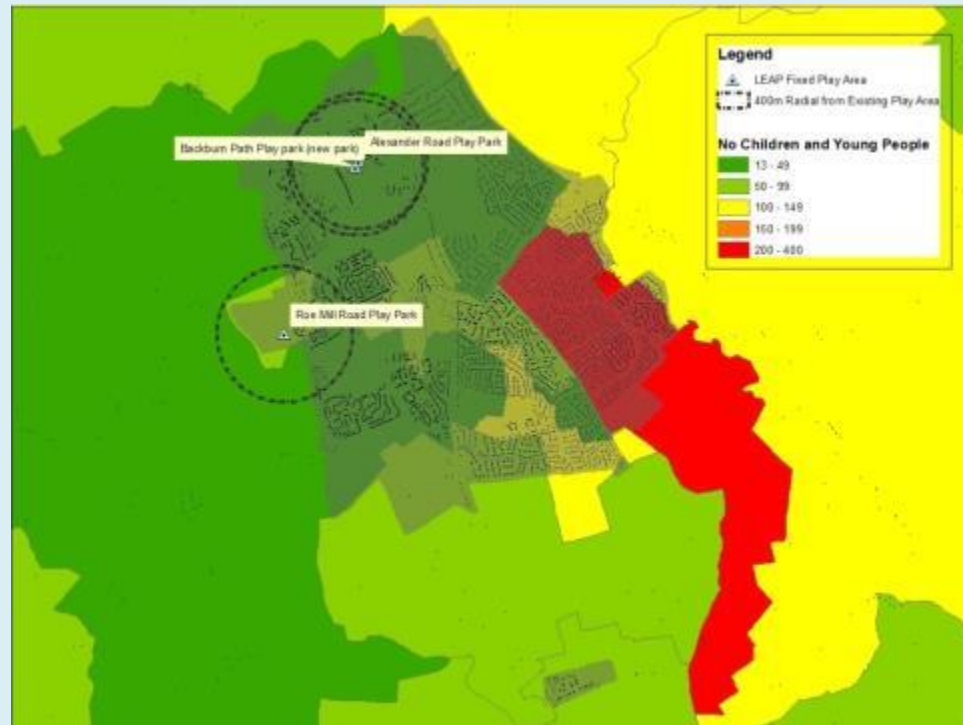




## **Potential Gap Area 12**

<b>DEA</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area Review</b>	<b>Action</b>
Limavady	Limavady Town	<p>Potential gap is located within Limavady Town. Based on 2015 population estimates, the number of children aged 0 to 14 residing within the identified red area was 287, whilst the yellow area contains 100 children aged 0 to 14 years. In addition, review of underlying statistics within adjoining areas highlights an additional 245 children falling outside radial catchments emanating from existing play areas.</p> <p>At present fixed play provision is primarily located to the north-west of the town at Alexander Road, Blackburn Path and Roe Mill Road.</p> <p>There is a need for additional fixed play provision within Limavady town. Current provision is rated at low to fair in terms of play value and does not provide radial coverage for a significant proportion of children and young people within the town, particularly those residing in the south east.</p>	<p>Council to initiate a land search to identify potential sites for the development of a new, high value play area within Limavady with a focus on the identified gap areas.</p> <p>In line with the play strategies aim of increasing geographical access to accessible fixed play opportunities the site will be developed to accessible play standards (in line with those applied at the Flowerfield site).</p> <p>Dependent on the final location and designation of the play area (local or destination scale) additional fixed play provision may be required alongside renewal of current sites.</p>

## Map showing Potential Gap Area 12



## 6.4 Play Value of Existing Fixed Play Areas

As part of the strategy development process PlayBoard NI undertook an assessment of the play value of all fixed play areas. Play value is a critical consideration in assessing the degree to which play areas meet the needs of children. By way of example, a play area with a low level of play value will provide little appeal to children and young people, is likely to have low levels of usage and will not enhance children's play experiences or support their development.

The play value of a site is impacted on by a range of factors including:

1. The variety, range and age span provided for by the fixed play equipment within the play area
2. The condition of the play equipment
3. The range of play types supported by the play area including the availability of all ability play opportunities
4. Wider locational and site factors including the attractiveness of the site for play, overall condition, indicative level of usage, damage to equipment through vandalism, environmental factors etc.
5. Accessibility of the play area for those who would wish to use it.

Play value audits were undertaken by PlayBoard NI and gave consideration to a number of key areas including:

Areas Assessed	Description
Locational factors	Attractiveness and welcoming nature of the play setting; level of community oversight; vandalism and cleanliness of site; level of perimeter fencing etc.
Accessibility factors	Condition of pathway surfaces; condition of play surfaces; entrance and layout accessibility etc. (inclusive play opportunities assessed separately)
Environmental factors	Presence or not of natural vegetation e.g. trees, bushes, shrubs etc.; grass levels; presence of sunny, shaded and sheltered areas; ground modelling; presence of natural play opportunities e.g. rocks, logs etc.; water play opportunities.
Physical play opportunities	Review of physical play opportunities afforded by the play area; range of play equipment available.

Creative play opportunities	Presence of sand, soil or mud play; water play opportunities; presence of loose play parts; opportunities for pretend play (e.g. natural spaces and places that stimulate the imagination, materials which can be manipulated etc.).
Inclusive play opportunities	Presence, scope and scale of inclusive and accessible play opportunities for children with disabilities.
Social play opportunities	Presence of quiet places to sit/chat/think; places to hide; opportunities to interact with a children of different ages and abilities; focused recognition of the social aspect of play for older children e.g. teen shelter.

Under the scoring system the maximum play value score possible for a play area was 800 with 4 underlying categories:

### **1. Play Areas offering Low Play Value (399 and under)**

Play areas scoring 399 or below are considered to offer a low level of play value. Typically, this will be due to a number of factors including:

- A lack of variety in the range of fixed play equipment available within the play space limiting its play value and reducing repeat visits
- Poor condition of fixed play equipment (due to age/wear and tear) e.g. rotting wood, corroded metal components, broken components etc.
- Deliberate damage to play equipment or the wider site environs, for example vandalism and graffiti which detracts from the site as an area for play
- Wider site aspects, for example poor or restrictive access to the play area, poorly maintained grass/greenery or other natural components.

Play areas falling within this category have a number of implications, namely:

- Children and young people are unlikely to gain any significant developmental benefit or enjoyment from using the play equipment contained within the play area
- Levels of usage and repeat visits are likely to be low due to the lack of play value on offer and the failure to meet the play needs of users

- From a financial perspective, given their low level of play value continued expenditure on maintenance of such sites represents a poor use of funds given the likely low level of usage.

Play areas falling within this category (providing that continued demographic need can be demonstrated) are generally in need of upgrade or remedial actions aimed at enhancing play value during the lifetime of the strategy.

## **2. Play Areas offering Lower Mid Play Value (400 to 479)**

Play areas scoring between 400 and 479, whilst of slightly higher play value still a limited of play opportunities are likely to require some immediate remedial action above regular maintenance in order to address underlying issues that reduce their play value.

Sites falling within this category are likely to require future renewal or upgrade within the lifetime of the play investment strategy, providing that continued demographic need can be ascertained.

## **3. Play Areas offering Upper Mid Play Value (480 to 599)**

Play areas scoring 480 to 599 represent an adequate level of play value for present, however Council should continue to maintain and monitor such sites for reduction in play value on a regular basis to ensure that there is no degradation.

## **4. Play Areas offering High Level of Play Value (600+)**

Sites scoring above 600 are deemed to have a high play value and do not require any immediate action beyond ongoing maintenance and regular monitoring of play value.

The table below sets out the key overall findings for the area whilst the play value score and rank for all 99 play areas can be viewed overleaf.

Criteria	No. of Play Areas
Highest Scoring Fixed Play Area	Flowerfields (675)
Lowest Scoring Play Area	Shanes Park (255)
Unassessed due to poor condition	Larchfield Gardens (closed)
No. scoring 399 or under (Low level of play value)	26
No. scoring between 400 and 479 (Lower Mid level of play value)	38
No. scoring between 480 and 599 (Upper Mid level of play value)	29
No. scoring 601 to 800 (High level of play value)	5

Rank	Play Area	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
1	Flowerfields	90	70	110	190	25	120	50	20	675
2	Megaw	100	55	95	190	25	115	45	25	650
3	Glass island	95	65	65	190	15	115	55	15	615
4	Elms playpark	105	65	75	165	25	120	35	25	615
5	Ballymoney Riverside	90	60	95	175	25	105	40	20	610
6	Drumbolcan	105	40	85	185	25	95	35	25	595
7	Lisnagunouge	90	45	80	180	25	95	40	20	575
8	The Crescent	90	65	50	175	25	115	40	15	575
9	Arcadia	70	75	65	175	15	95	45	15	555
10	Carrick Dhu	70	45	95	170	25	105	25	20	555
11	Cloughmills	90	55	60	180	15	95	45	15	555
12	Drumaheglis	85	50	65	170	25	120	25	15	555
13	Ballintoy	100	40	75	165	25	100	25	20	550
14	Articlave	85	25	105	155	15	120	15	20	540
15	Windy Hall	85	45	65	150	25	105	35	20	530
16	Glebeside	90	35	70	160	25	105	25	20	530
17	Liscolman	100	25	70	175	25	85	25	20	525
18	Craiglea	105	40	85	145	20	95	15	20	525
19	Stranocum	90	25	90	175	25	85	15	15	520
20	Ramore	75	40	85	165	20	85	30	15	515
21	Benone	75	45	70	175	25	80	25	20	515
22	Glenmanus	90	45	55	175	25	80	25	15	510
23	Feeney	85	30	70	175	20	80	20	20	500
24	Juniper Hill	85	30	70	170	20	85	25	15	500
25	Burnfoot	85	40	60	160	25	85	25	15	495
26	Dernaflaw	75	45	75	145	25	85	25	20	495

Rank	Play Area	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
27	Quay Road	85	30	85	145	25	80	25	20	495
28	Glentaisie	90	25	60	150	25	85	40	20	495
29	Dervock	90	20	85	165	25	80	15	15	495
30	Portballintrae	80	35	65	175	25	80	15	15	490
31	Magilligan	90	40	65	165	20	65	25	20	490
32	Cushendun Bay Road	75	30	70	165	25	70	30	20	485
33	Rathlin	65	35	70	170	15	90	20	20	485
34	Foreglen	90	45	55	130	25	95	25	15	480
35	Castlerock	85	35	55	165	20	75	20	20	475
36	Blackburn Path	90	35	55	150	25	85	15	20	475
37	Kings Lane	90	35	65	145	20	75	25	15	470
38	Turnarobert	70	35	65	155	25	80	25	15	470
39	Millennium Park	75	20	65	165	25	80	20	20	470
40	Bushmills	80	30	55	165	25	80	20	15	470
41	Millburn	95	25	65	150	25	75	15	15	465
42	Seacon	95	35	60	165	15	65	25	5	465
43	Westgate	75	35	60	155	25	75	25	15	465
44	Clintyfinnan	75	25	60	180	10	80	15	15	460
45	Erinvale	80	25	65	160	25	80	15	10	460
46	Mosside	85	25	65	145	25	85	15	15	460
47	Macfin	85	35	60	165	15	65	25	10	460
48	Willowdale	85	20	65	155	25	80	15	15	460
49	Legg Green	65	40	60	165	25	55	30	15	455

Rank	Play Area	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
50	Rockend	85	30	55	170	20	70	15	10	455
51	Dunluce	75	20	55	185	10	85	15	10	455
52	Waterfoot	65	30	65	155	25	75	20	15	450
53	Landhead	85	20	55	170	25	70	15	10	450
54	Lyttlesdale	80	30	60	150	20	75	15	20	450
55	Drumsumn playpark	65	25	60	145	25	90	25	15	450
56	Quinn Memorial	80	25	65	155	25	70	15	15	450
57	Seymour	85	20	70	150	25	70	15	15	450
58	Anderson Park	65	45	60	140	15	70	35	15	445
59	Fulton	85	25	55	160	25	65	15	15	445
60	Curragh Road	55	20	55	150	25	95	25	15	440
61	Armoy Riverside	65	25	55	150	25	90	15	15	440
62	Boleran	70	25	50	155	25	85	15	15	440
63	Ballybogey	80	30	55	140	25	75	15	15	435
64	Greysteel	65	30	55	150	20	70	25	15	430
65	Harpurs Hill	90	25	55	145	25	65	15	10	430
66	Dundarave	85	20	70	135	25	65	15	15	430
67	Dunloy	70	20	60	155	10	85	15	15	430
68	Greymount	90	35	50	160	10	60	15	10	430
69	Killyrammer	75	20	55	150	25	75	15	10	425
70	Mettican	90	25	40	145	25	60	15	15	415



Rank	Play Area	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
71	The Warren	70	20	50	155	25	65	15	10	410
72	Kylemore	85	25	60	120	25	55	15	15	400
73	Rugby Avenue	80	20	60	150	15	45	15	10	395
74	Glack	60	25	70	155	15	40	15	10	390
75	Cottagewood No 1	50	30	50	150	20	65	15	10	390
76	Daneshill	85	20	50	125	25	60	15	10	390
77	Dhu varren	70	15	50	135	25	65	15	15	390
78	Macosquin	80	20	65	120	15	65	15	10	390
79	Garvagh Road	65	20	55	120	15	80	15	15	385
80	Fernbank	20	20	40	165	25	90	20	5	385
81	Swanns Bridge	30	15	40	145	15	105	25	5	380
82	Cottagewood No 2	50	20	50	150	20	60	15	10	375
83	Roe Mill road	60	20	50	130	20	70	15	10	375
84	Torrens	15	20	40	165	25	80	20	5	370
85	Finvola Park	40	35	45	145	5	80	15	5	370
86	Middlepark	40	15	60	145	15	70	15	10	370
87	Ben Vista	15	20	40	165	25	80	20	5	370
88	Currysheskin	60	15	35	155	15	65	15	10	370
89	Balnagarvey	60	20	55	150	5	45	15	10	365
90	Carnduff	50	15	20	155	25	70	15	5	355
91	Alexander Road	45	15	45	150	20	50	15	10	350
92	Glenullin	70	25	55	95	5	55	15	15	335
93	Lisnagrot	55	20	35	135	5	25	15	10	300

Rank	Play Area	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
94	Feeney Picnic Area	15	15	30	130	5	70	20	5	290
95	Ballyknock	50	15	40	135	5	25	15	5	290
96	Landsdowne	15	15	30	130	20	60	15	5	290
97	Ballylagan Road	40	15	40	115	5	30	15	10	270
98	Shanes Park	15	5	30	140	15	30	15	5	255
99	Larchfield Gardens									CLOSED

## 6.5 Ballymoney DEA Play Value Assessment

Ballymoney District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the North of the overall Council area and comprises seven wards – Route, Ballymoney East, Ballymoney North, Ballymoney South, Dunloy, Rasharkin and Clogh Mills.

There are at present 17 fixed play areas located within Ballymoney DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 2 are rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 4 fall within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 9 fall within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480)
- 2 fall within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Balnagarvey	365
	Torrens	370
	Dunloy	430
	Greymount	430
	Fulton	445
	Seymour	450
	Quinn memorial (Carnany)	450
	Willowdale	460
	Macfin	460
	Seacon	465
	Westgate	465
	Glebeside	530
	Cloughmills	555
	Drumahelglis	555
	Drumbolcan	595
	Ballymoney Riverside	610
	Megaw Park	650

Play Value Category	
Low	
Lower Mid	
Upper Mid	
High	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made regarding immediate and future action required by Council for each fixed play area. Actions range from possible removal/transformation in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Ballymoney DEA area can be found in Appendix B of this document.

## 6.6 Bann DEA Play Value Assessment

Bann District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the Centre West of the overall Council area and comprises five wards – Castlerock, Macosquin, Aghdowey, Garvagh and Kilrea.

There are at present 9 fixed play areas located within Bann DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 0 are rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 2 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 4 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 3 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Larchfield Gardens	–*
	Lisnagrot	300
	Glenullin	335
	Macosquin	390
	Mettican	415
	Boleran	440
	Lyttlesdale	450
	Castlerock	475
	Craiglea	525
	Articlave	540

Play Value Category	
Low	
Lower Mid	
Upper Mid	
High	

*\* Larchfield Gardens closed due to poor condition on health and safety grounds therefore play value assessment not available however indicatively low on grounds of condition*

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made regarding immediate and future action required by Council for each fixed play area within the Bann DEA.

Actions range from possible removal/transformation of site in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment/enhancement for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Bann DEA area can be found in Appendix C of this document.

## 6.7 Benbradagh DEA Play Value Assessment

Benbradagh District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the South West of the overall Council area and comprises five wards – Greysteel, Ballykelly, Altahullion, Dungiven and Feeny.

There are at present 11 fixed play areas located within Benbradagh DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 0 are rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 3 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 4 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 4 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Feeney Picnic Area	290
	Finvola Park	370
	Garvagh Road	385
	Glack Road	390
	Greysteel	430
	Curragh Road	440
	Kings Lane	470
	Foreglen	480
	Burnfoot	495
	Dernaflaw	495
	Feeney	500

Play Value Category	
285 - 400	
401 - 480	
481 - 600	
601 - 800	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made regarding immediate and future action required by Council for each fixed play area within Benbradagh DEA.

Actions range from possible removal/transformation of site in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment/enhancement for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Benbradagh DEA area can be found in Appendix D of this document.

## 6.8 Causeway DEA Play Value Assessment

Causeway District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the North of the overall Council area and comprises seven wards – Portstewart, Atlantic, Hopefield, Portrush and Dunluce, Giant's Causeway, Dundooan and Dervock.

There are at present 22 fixed play areas located within Causeway DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 1 is rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 10 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 7 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 4 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Ballylagan Road	270
	Landsdowne playpark	290
	Currysheskin	370
	Dhu varren playpark	390
	The Warren playpark	410
	Killyrammer	425
	Dundarave	430
	Ballybogey playpark	435
	Landhead	450
	Dunluce playpark	455
	Bushmills	470
	Portballintrae	490
	Dervock Riverside	495
	Juniper Hill caravan	500
	Glenmanus playpark	510
	Ramore	515
	Liscolman	525
	Carrick Dhu playpark	555
	Arcadia playpark	555
	The Crescent playpark	575
	Lisnagunouge	575
	Flowerfields	675

Play Value Category	
Low	
Lower Mid	
Upper Mid	
High	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made for each fixed play area within Causeway DEA. Actions range from possible removal/ transformation of site in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment/ enhancement for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Causeway DEA area can be found in Appendix E of this document.

## 6.9 Coleraine DEA Play Value Assessment

Coleraine District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the Centre of the overall Council area and comprises six wards – University, Waterside, Quarry, Mountsandel, Churchland and Windy Hall.

There are at present 8 fixed play areas located within Coleraine DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 1 was rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 2 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 3 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 2 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Daneshill	390
	Rugby Avenue	395
	Kylemore	400
	Harpur's Hill	430
	Anderson Park	445
	Millburn	465
	Windy Hall	530
	Elms	615

Play Value Category	
Low	
Lower Mid	
Upper Mid	
High	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made regarding immediate and future action required by Council for each fixed play area within Coleraine DEA.

Actions range from possible removal/transformation of site in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment/enhancement for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Coleraine DEA area can be found in Appendix F of this document.

## 6.10 The Glens DEA Play Value Assessment

The Glens District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the North of the overall Council area and comprises five wards – Kinbane, Ballycastle, Torr Head and Rathlin, Loughguile and Stranocum and Lurigethan.

There are at present 24 fixed play areas located within The Glens DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 1 was rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 5 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 12 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 6 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Shanes Park	255
	Ballyknock	290
	Carnduff	355
	Middlepark	370
	Ben Vista	370
	Cottagewood 2	375
	Fernbank	385
	Cottagewood 1	390
	Armoy Riverside	440
	Legg Green	455
	Waterfoot	450
	Rockend	455
	Mossie	460
	Erinvale	460
	Clontyfinnan	460
	Turnarobert	470
	Millennium Park	470
	Rathlin	485
	Cushendun Bay Road	485
	Quay Road, Ballycastle	495
	Glentaisie	495
	Stranocum	520
	Ballintoy	550
	Glass Island Foreshore	615

Play Value Rating	
Low	
Lower Mid	
Upper Mid	
High	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made for fixed play areas within the DEA. The full list of recommendations for the Glens DEA area can be found in Appendix G of this document.



## 6.11 Limavady DEA Play Value Assessment

Limavady District Electoral Area (DEA) is located to the West of the overall Council area and comprises five wards – Magilligan, Roeside, Coolessan, Greystone and Drumsurn.

There are at present 7 fixed play areas located within Limavady DEA. Following completion of the play value audits:

- 0 are rated as having a high play value (scoring above 601 out of 800)
- 2 within the upper mid category (481 to 600)
- 2 within the lower mid category (scoring between 401 and 480) and
- 3 within the lowest play value category (400 or less).

PV Category	Play Area	Play Value
	Roe Mill Road	375
	Swanns Bridge Road	380
	Drumsurn	450
	Blackburn Path	475
	Magilligan	490
	Benone	515

Play Value Category	
285 - 400	
401 - 480	
481 – 600	
601 - 800	

Based on the play value audit a number of recommendations have been made regarding immediate and future action required by Council for each fixed play area within Limavady DEA area.

Actions range from possible removal/transformation of site in cases of low demand/low play value; refurbishment/enhancement for those with continued demand but low play value to maintain and monitor for those with adequate current play value. The full list of recommendations for the Glens DEA area can be found in Appendix H of this document.

## 6.12 Meeting the Fixed Play needs of Tourists

Recognising the importance of tourism to the Council area, the play investment strategy has established a specific strand of activity aimed at ensuring that visitors to the area have access to fixed play opportunities that enhance their stay.

The strategy recognises that the provision of fixed play opportunities aimed at enhancing visitor experiences and the provision of fixed play for the residential population are not mutually exclusive. Quality, high value and well located fixed play sites are perfectly capable of meeting both residential and tourism demand throughout the year.

In establishing criteria to support the development of fixed play to meet visitor needs a number of specific considerations have been taken:

- Level of site demand: Not all tourist sites or locations lend themselves to or are attractive to families with children and therefore are likely to have a low level of demand for fixed play provision. Whilst such sites cannot be fully discounted from consideration for play provision, they should have a reduced level of priority over other more family friendly locations.
- Environmental Considerations: Given the importance of the natural environment to tourism in the area it is critically important that fixed play development is sympathetic to its wider surroundings. This should include consideration of natural construction materials (wooden frames etc.), use of natural features (boulders, logs, vegetation and planting etc.) and a creative connection to the site (environment/history etc.) if possible.
- Seasonality: Tourism by its very nature is seasonal therefore consideration of fixed play development needs to take into account the fact that for a proportion of the year the site is likely to have low or in some cases no use. Whilst low or no use out of season is not a reason to not provide a fixed play area, it does have implications for wider site maintenance issues which need to be taken into consideration.

In seeking to meet visitor need the strategy has, as part of the play value assessment process, reviewed all existing fixed play areas in order to identify their suitability to meeting tourist need. This process has focused on consideration of a number of factors including:

- The location of the play area – is it located in an area which currently attracts tourists, is it located on the route to a tourist site (e.g. along a coast road) etc.
- The capacity of the park to meet the play needs of tourists assessed against the existing size of the play space, existing equipment base

and support facilities (parking, toilets etc.)

- The condition and aesthetic qualities of the play area and the likelihood of it providing an attractive location for tourists to visit/use.

As a result of the process play areas that are currently capable of meeting tourism need have been identified alongside those with the potential to meet tourism need should remedial works/enhancement be undertaken.

As noted previously not all tourist sites or locations require fixed play provision; it is also acknowledged that Council are not always in the best position to identify those tourist locations that would benefit the most from fixed play. The establishment of an effective partnership working process will therefore be central to the identification of gaps in the provision of fixed play at tourism sites.

Working in partnership with service providers and those organisations engaged directly in the management of tourist and visitor sites (e.g. the National Trust, Forest Service NI etc.) Council will work to establish list of potential gap sites. Potential gap sites will then be assessed against an agreed set of criteria including:

- The nature of the site (i.e. is the site likely to attract families or those with children and young people who would benefit from or seek out fixed play provision as part of the visitor experience)
- Proximity to existing fixed play site/sites that lend themselves to meeting tourist need
- Level of onsite infrastructure e.g. presence of toilets and baby changing facilities, café/refreshments outlets etc.
- An assessment of historical visitor numbers to identify those sites with the highest potential level of need based on number of visitors

Having completed an assessment of tourist site locations and established a priority listing of those potentially requiring fixed play provision, Council will conduct appropriate radial assessment of current fixed play provision. In line with the NEAP classification radial assessment will be carried out at a 1,000m level.

Once complete, existing fixed play areas which fall within the catchment radial will be reviewed to assess their capacity to meet visitor need (including consideration of car parking provision, presence of toilets/changing facilities etc. Should any of the sites have the potential to meet identified tourist need their future design/renewal will take into account the additional needs of tourists and visitors.

Should no fixed play areas fall within the catchment radial, Council and the wider partnership will undertake a review of the wider location to identify whether an appropriate site exists that could, if developed meet tourist need.

## 7.0 Standards for Design and Maintenance of Fixed Play Areas

### 7.1 Introduction

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to creating and maintaining fixed play areas that encourage and support children to experience a wide variety of play opportunities within progressive and challenging environments.

This section of the play investment strategy sets out the standards we as a Council aspire to achieve as we aim to enhance play provision across the Borough.

### 7.2 Underpinning Principles

In seeking to ensure that play areas deliver an effective and positive play experience for all children Council have agreed a number of overarching principles that will underpin the provision of fixed play:

- Accessibility: Safe, convenient access to play areas will be provided through appropriate placement and by providing access for people with a range of abilities.
- Site Selection: Where possible play areas will be placed in appropriate open space settings and will consider highly visible and high-profile sites for the development of play opportunities.
- Quality of provision: Priority will be given to developing play areas of high quality that are distributed according to demographic need and that do not duplicate existing provision.
- Diversity: A diverse range of play opportunities are provided to create variety within the community and cater for children of varying ages and abilities.
- Quality: Quality playground equipment and settings provided that facilitate interesting and stimulating play experiences for children and families.
- Safety: Playgrounds developed, managed and maintained to a safe standard and in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations.
- Integrated Play: A range of ages from young children through to older adults will be provided through the range of regional, district and local playgrounds.
- Partnerships: Partnership opportunities will be supported where it is in the best interests of the community, accessibility to play opportunities is enhanced, and play areas are developed to a high quality.
- Amenities: The provision of supportive infrastructure will be consistent with the classification of each playground (local, district and regional).

### **7.3 Assessing Need for New Fixed Play Areas**

As outlined in section 6.4 Council has identified a number of geographical locations which, based on the criteria applied may require the development of new fixed play provision. These sites will be subject to further actions under the strategy as outlined previously.

The criteria established for the identification of gaps in fixed play provision will continue to be applied for the duration of the play investment strategy. Further reviews of need will be undertaken on an annual basis to identify potential new gaps as they arise.

### **7.4 Land Availability for New Fixed Play Development**

Should demand for a new play area be identified within a location Council will initiate a review of all available site options in order to identify the most appropriate location.

In undertaking this review Council will consider land under its own ownership and will also engage with wider public bodies to identify potential sites not currently in the ownership of Council but which may lend itself to fixed play development.

Such engagement will also include discussions with potential partner organisations which may have available land and a mutual interest in fixed play development, for example primary and/or secondary schools.

### **7.5 Non-Council Funded Fixed Play Areas**

Whilst Council has traditionally been the primary provider of fixed play areas it is recognised that in recent years capital funding has been made available for fixed play development from a range of non-Council sources for example through the Departmental Rural Development Programme. Such funding is often accessible only to community based organisations through open application processes.

Council welcomes such opportunities as a means of meeting play need and commits to supporting those communities seeking to make application through the provision of application support and guidance on good practice in play design.

Should an application for fixed play development be successful, Council agrees to undertake responsibility for post installation maintenance and inspection of the facility, providing the play area meets the design standards within the play investment strategy and associated design guidance document.

For such fixed play areas which have already been constructed and are under the management of community organisations, Council agrees to enter into

discussions regarding how it can best support the maintenance of those sites. This may include undertaking responsibility for maintenance and inspection requirements should it be required.

## 7.6 Fixed Play Area Design

Achieving variety and diversity in the range of play opportunities available within a play space are both essential requirements in for an effective fixed play area.

Studies have highlighted that many children view much of the fixed play equipment they encounter as both boring and unchallenging. Research has indicated that the average time children spend engaging with fixed play equipment prior to boredom setting in ranges from 11 to 15 minutes with approximately 93% of their time within a play area spent on non-fixed play.

Despite these concerns, fixed play equipment does still have relevance in that children are attracted to it and it can, when designed appropriately fulfil play needs.

In designing an effective play space four key elements are required:

1. **Active Play:** Provision of equipment or other natural play elements that allow children to engage in aerobic activity, develop co-ordination and balance, develop gross/fine motor skills etc. as well as supporting social and sharing play opportunities. This may include the provision of informal sporting elements for example goal posts, basketball hoops etc.
2. **Open Space:** Open spaces provide opportunities for informal ball games, chasing/running around and spontaneous physical and social play activities. It is important that open spaces are incorporated and protected within the play area planning process. Open spaces often appeal to older children and teenagers and adequate provision should be made to cater for the needs of this older age group.
3. **Adult Supervision:** In considering play space design it is important to recognise the needs of those carers who are accompanying their child to the location. This includes the provision of adequate seating that allows for easy visual supervision as well as providing a degree of comfort and access to amenities appropriate to the size and scale of the play area. Not only will this make the carers stay more comfortable, it has been shown that if a play area appeals to carers, the child's stay will be extended, more fulfilling and more likely to repeated on a more regular basis.
4. **Creative/Explorative Spaces:** Providing creative/explorative spaces encourages children to explore, develop a sense of wonder, engage and interact with the natural or built environment, engage in make-believe play and ultimately take greater control over their own play experience.

Importantly, incorporating creative elements ensures that the child can change their play experience on each subsequent visit to the play area.

The challenge for Council is to ensure that, as far as possible given the limitations of sites and locations, these four elements are incorporated into play area design.

The guidance document '*Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*' was developed by Play England in association with the Free Play Network and explains how good play spaces can give children and young people greater freedom to play creatively, whilst enabling them to experience risk, challenge and excitement.

In designing new fixed play areas Council will, where appropriate apply the 10 guiding principles outlined in '*Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*':

1. Designed to enhance its setting whether it be in a park, open green space or within an urban landscape
2. Located in the best possible place where children naturally gravitate to play, away from dangerous roads but near through routes and well-used access routes
3. Close to nature, providing opportunities for children to engage with the natural environment and natural play materials
4. Provide a wide range of play experiences enabling children of all ages, abilities and interests to play in a way that meets their needs
5. Are accessible and enable disabled and non-disabled children to play together
6. Meet wider community needs and are accepted as an integral part of the community
7. Enable children of all ages to play together where space permits
8. Build opportunities for children to challenge themselves through play
9. Are appropriately maintained to ensure high play value and environmental sustainability
10. Continues to meet children's play need as they mature and develop.

As part of the strategy development process Council have commissioned the development of a good practice guide that will outline core considerations for all new play area development within the Borough.



## 7.7 Accessible Play Areas

All children have the right to access appropriate play opportunities. A fundamental aspect of the play investment strategy will be working to ensure that that fixed play opportunities are available for children of all abilities, including those with complex needs.

Accessible and inclusive play means more than simply providing children and families with physical access to play areas and equipment. In order to be truly inclusive a play area must offer a wide range of high quality physical, creative and social play opportunities for children regardless of their needs and abilities.

The benefits of universally accessible play areas are well established for children of all abilities:

- *Inclusive play areas have been shown to be more fun:* Due to the more creative approach applied to the design of accessible and inclusive play equipment they often offer a greater level of variety, higher level of play value and are more engaging for children and young people in the longer-term.
- *Inclusive play areas support inclusive communities:* Accessible play areas do not segregate children based on ability; rather they encourage children of all abilities to come together through play, supporting the development of mutual understanding, friendships and a sense of community.
- *Inclusive play areas encourage creativity:* Inclusive and accessible play areas encourage children to play creatively as they include elements that engage with a wider range of senses and involve equipment that can be used in different ways by different users.

Whilst dedicated accessible play provision has been developed at the Flowerfield site in Portstewart and inclusive play features have been incorporated into a number of play areas across the Borough, children with disabilities still face significant barriers in accessing play opportunities.

With a view to enhancing accessible play provision Council are committed to developing fixed play environments that offer a range of sensory experiences, have accessible play equipment and offer opportunities for all children to extend their capabilities and explore possibilities through play. Whilst specialised play equipment may be required in certain circumstances Council will work at all times towards ensuring that where possible play equipment is multi-functional and open to all abilities.

As part of the strategy Council will enhance geographical access to accessible fixed play through the development and maintenance of accessible play areas

at a number of locations, namely:

1. *Limavady* – the proposed destination play area to be developed in Limavady will be designed to accessible standards similar to that at the Flowerfield site
2. *Ballycastle (Quay Road)* - The refurbishment of the play area at Quay Road in Ballycastle will be competed to accessible standards similar to that at the Flowerfield site
3. *Megaw Park* – Whilst the park currently contains a number of inclusive play features a review will be undertaken with a view to enhancing the site to accessible standards
4. *Flowerfield* – Council will continue to maintain the Flowerfield site to ensure the highest possible standards are maintained.

In developing accessible play areas, in addition to the provision of accessible play equipment, sites will be developed to ensure that parents and families have access to toilet and changing facilities on-site.

In addition to the focused development of new accessible play facilities as outlined above, the upgrading of existing fixed play areas will ensure that core consideration is given to the needs of children with disabilities including (but not restricted to):

- The provision of multi-ability fixed play equipment which offers play opportunities for children of a wide range of ability levels.
- Presence of at least 1 ground level, accessible and inclusive moving fixed play piece, for example ground level seated roundabout, ground level and wheelchair accessible play trampoline.
- The incorporation of a variety of sensory play elements (visual, sound and tactile).
- The use of gentle landscaping and the incorporation of natural play elements.
- Creation of a play space that allows for and encourages play interaction between all children regardless of individual ability or disability.
- Non-Council funded fixed play installations seeking post-installation maintenance agreements must give core consideration to the needs of children with disabilities including (but not restricted) to the above.

## **7.8 Solar Radiation**

There is an increased level of awareness of the risks associated with prolonged exposure to solar radiation. Consequently, there is an increased expectation that shade and shelter will be provided in and around play areas.

Where possible, the design and siting of playgrounds will seek to locate play equipment near existing shade (e.g. trees), will incorporate the planting of new trees or will provide artificial shelter.

## **7.9 Managing Risk and Challenge in Fixed Play**

Children and young people have a natural thirst for challenging play. It is through challenge and risk in play that they test the boundaries of their limitations; develop new skills to help them meet and overcome the challenges they face and develop the ability to better manage risk based on individual capacity.

Unfortunately for many children growing adult anxiety over their safety has significantly reduced children's opportunities to challenge themselves through risky play. These fears rest not only with parents and guardians, but also with play providers where the fear of blame or litigation over injury has often led to a watering down of challenge and risk based play opportunities.

In reality, removing elements of risk and challenge from play impacts negatively on children, reducing their capacity to address and deal with the risks and challenges they face as they grow up. In making a case for a more balanced approach to offering challenge and risk through play, most experts agree that:

- Risky and challenging play does not automatically equate to dangerous play;
- Encounters with risk and challenge through play supports children to learn from an early age how to manage those risks and challenges. If the experience is removed, a valuable learning opportunity is missed;
- Children have a natural appetite for risk-taking which, if not fed through the provision of appropriate challenging play opportunities can lead them to seek out situations which expose them to greater risk;
- From the perspective of a risk-benefit approach, engaging in active, outdoor play with an element of risk brings other health and developmental benefits. In such cases it is argued that the benefits of the activity outweigh the often minimal risk of injury or harm; and
- In the longer-term, exposure to risk and challenge through play has been shown to have a range of benefits for the individual child including the development of resilience, self-reliance and has been connected to

entrepreneurialism.

The implementation guide 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' advocates for, and provides access to an implementation toolkit for play providers aimed at supporting them to introduce a 'Risk Benefit' approach to play provision. The adoption of a Risk Benefit approach has been endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive at both UK and Northern Ireland level and is supported by the NI Executive.

The risk benefit approach reviews the potential risk involved in using a play space and the equipment contained within it against the potential benefit to the child of playing there.

As part of the play investment strategy Council will move towards full adoption of a risk benefit approach to fixed play provision. Adoption of risk benefit will enable Council to move away from a more risk averse approach which has focused on the elimination of challenge, sometimes to the detriment of children play experiences and their development.

In working towards adoption, Council will undertake a number of key actions:

1. Adopt a risk/benefit approach to the design and development of play spaces in line with accepted good practice
2. Provide risk/benefit training for key staff to enhance understanding of the approach
3. Engage with insurers regarding the adoption of a more balanced risk/benefit approach to meeting play need
4. Apply the councils design brief to future play area design (both renewals and new play areas) incorporating where appropriate more challenging play elements and play features
5. Adopt more open approaches to meeting play need where permissible and feasible.

## **7.10 Maintenance of Fixed Play areas**

Fixed play areas include a wide variety of components ranging from more traditional playground equipment including slides, swings, climbing frames etc. through to ancillary items such as fences, gates, litter bins and bicycle racks.

Council has a legal and moral responsibility for ensuring that fixed play areas for which it is responsible are planned, designed and maintained in a safe condition. In order to meet its responsibilities Council must adhere to two European standards for play equipment *BS EN 1176:2008 (Playground*

*Equipment and Surfacing) and BS EN 1177:2008 (Impact attenuating playground surfacing – determination of critical fall height).*

It is important to note that whilst the standards are designed to ensure safety they are not designed to eliminate risk in play. The purpose is to ensure that children and young people are able to engage in adventurous and challenging play without coming to harm as a result of poorly designed or badly planned play facilities.

The standards represent best practice and provide a basis for Council to defend itself in cases of litigation for injury resulting from an accident within a fixed play area which involves play equipment or ancillary items.

In order to ensure that a strategic approach is adopted to the management and renewal of all fixed play areas, the play investment strategy establishes a set of core principles which will guide the maintenance of fixed play areas.

In order to ensure that Council fully meets its legal obligations with regards to the maintenance of fixed play areas play area inspection will be conducted on the basis outlined below:

- **Maintenance Inspection:** All Council play areas will be subject to ongoing maintenance inspections throughout the year.

The frequency of inspection for each individual play area will be determined by four key factors:

1. The level of use associated with the play area
2. The time of year (to take account of seasonal increases in use due to tourism)
3. The age and condition of play equipment
4. If present, the level of vandalism associated with the play area.

Play areas with a high level of use will be subject to inspection on a once weekly basis (more frequently during the spring and summer months when usage levels traditionally increase).

Play areas with a lower level of use will be subject to inspection on a less frequent basis, albeit subject to increase should maintenance issues requiring more regular inspection be identified at any point.

Sites which have a record of vandalism will also be subject to weekly inspection in order to monitor site and equipment condition until such time as vandalism ceases to impact upon the site.

Inspections will be undertaken by trained staff and will include a range of areas including:

- Visual checking of equipment for obvious faults or hazards
- Ensuring wider environment/play surfaces are free from debris that could create a hazard
- Checking that fixings are secure
- Lubrication of all bearings
- Touching in any scratches to paintwork using appropriate paint
- Repairing safety surfacing and other elements from the rest of the site

An accurate record of all maintenance inspections will be kept by council with remedial works undertaken to address identified issues.

- **Annual Inspection:** The British and European safety standard BS EN1176 and the health and Safety Executive strongly recommend that all play areas have at least one inspection each year from an independent suitably qualified body.

In order to comply with recommended good practice all fixed play areas within the Borough will be subject to an annual maintenance inspection conducted by a qualified independent Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) inspector.

A complete record of all annual inspections will be kept by council with remedial works undertaken to address identified issues.

It should be noted that if any serious defects that put the safety of children at risk are identified during any inspection Council undertakes to correct such defects without delay. If this is not possible, equipment will immobilised, isolated or removed from the site. When a piece of equipment is removed on safety grounds any anchorages or foundations left in the ground will be removed or made safe along with surfacing (as required).

In supporting the inspection process, staff training will be provided on an ongoing basis by an appropriately qualified training provider in order to ensure that staff are able to meet the maintenance inspection requirements as outlined.

### *Maintenance Budgets*

In addition to the initial costs for installation and renewal of fixed play areas it is important to note that each fixed play area requires ongoing annual maintenance to address general wear and tear issues, replace broken components and in more extreme circumstances replace vandalised play equipment, surfacing or ancillary items.

The actual maintenance costs associated with each play area will be dependent on a number of factors including the overall size of the play area site, the level and style of play equipment contained; the type of surfacing used and the amount of ancillary items on site. In addition certain unknown

factors must be taken into account including potential for vandalism and deliberate damage to the play area.

Research indicates that the average maintenance cost per play area per year is approximately £3,000. This figure is based on a recognition that some play areas will require only minimal maintenance whilst others will require more significant levels.

Based on the average cost indicator, with 99 play areas across the area council should seek to make available an overall budget for maintenance of £297,000.

### **7.11 Consultative Process**

As noted previously, fixed equipment play areas are expensive to develop and install and require a long-term maintenance commitment in order to ensure that equipment remains in satisfactory working order.

Where Council is to make an investment in a new fixed play area or in the renewal of an existing fixed play area it must be assured – as far as possible – that there is a sufficient level of local demand and that a fixed play area will meet the play needs of children in the area, both now and in the immediate future.

The play investment strategy has identified a number of key recommendations relating to the potential development of new fixed play areas. In order to ensure that there is a sufficient level of demand within an identified area Council will undertake a local area survey aimed at identifying the number of potential users of a fixed play area and the age breakdown of children residing within the area.

Should demand be proven, Council will initiate an agreed consultation process aimed at ensuring that any new fixed play provision is targeted at the optimum location and meets the needs of children, young people and communities within the area. The process will incorporate a number of key stages as outlined overleaf.

In the case of potential removal or transformation of a play area, Council will engage with local communities in order to determine the true level of demand for fixed play within the area (through for example house to house survey). This will help to update the available demographic data which has been used in the strategy and will ensure an accurate reflection of local need.

Should it be determined that there is no longer a need for a fixed play area within a specific location Council will initiate a consultation process aimed at ensuring that communities have a say in the transformation of the site to maintain value for the community.

Where a play area has been identified for upgrade Council will seek to engage with the community as part of the redevelopment process and will work to ensure that children and young people, parents, and carers and the wider public within the area are able to feed their views into the process of design and development.

Where a play area has been identified for upgrade/renewal Council will seek to engage with the community as part of the redevelopment process. This will include working to ensure that children and young people, parents/carers and the wider public within the area are able to feed their views into the process of design and renewal.



### Stage 1: Review of Demographic Need and Land Availability

- Council recognise that fixed play areas do not always represent the most appropriate mechanism for meeting play need - particularly in areas of low population density or dispersed residential population.
- In order to determine the level of potential need for fixed play Council will undertake a demographic review of the area to identify the potential user base and underlying age profile.
- In reviewing demographics, Council will apply the appropriate ABS radial measurement from the identified location. In order to be eligible for consideration for a new fixed play area the level of demographic need within urban areas must be equal to or in excess of 150 children and 50 in the case of rural.
- Installing a fixed play area requires a suitable piece of land in terms of both size and location. Council will complete a land use survey of the area in order to ascertain whether suitable land is available, either in ownership of Council or a statutory partner e.g. a school.
- If land is in the ownership of a statutory partner Council will hold preliminary discussions regarding potential land transfer to Council or, in the case of a school the co-location of community accessible fixed play *should* local demand for fixed play be confirmed.

### Stage 2: Community Consultation

- Where demographic need for fixed play has been demonstrated and a potential location identified, Council will conduct a community consultation. Consultation will be conducted through an appropriate mechanism (e.g. house to house survey, community meeting) and will be integral to assisting Council in:
- Informing the community of the proposed development of fixed play provision;
- Determining the views of the community on the development of fixed play including identifying any opposition to the development of fixed play
- Gathering the views of the community on the appropriateness of the identified potential location for fixed play;
- Encouraging community discussion and debate on the issue;
- Reviewing plans and seeking the views on the community as the process develops.

### Stage 3: Participation of Children and Young People

- Council recognise that children and young people are the experts when it comes to play. In keeping with our commitment to participation, Council will proactively seek to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to become involved in the play area development process. This will include:
- The identification of play types, activities and play experiences that the fixed play areas should seek to provide;
- The identification of fixed play equipment that best meets their play needs;
- Opportunities to become actively engaged in the design and layout of the fixed play area as it develops.

**Proceed to Design and Installation**

### 7.12 Renewal Review Point for Fixed Play Areas

Whilst acknowledging that each individual fixed play areas life span will be dictated to some degree by the level of use, wear and tear it receives, the agreed **standard life span review point** for a fixed play area will be **15 years** from initial installation.

Once a fixed play area reaches the 15 year review point it will be assessed in terms of both its play value and its physical condition. Should the play area be found to have a sufficiently low play value or to be in an inadequate physical condition it will become eligible for replacement **provided** that an underlying, continued demographic need can be demonstrated. Should the review identify that the level of play value remains sufficiently high and the physical condition good, Council will continue to monitor both aspects on an annual basis until the play area becomes eligible for replacement.

Should a fixed play area be identified through review as being eligible for replacement, in order to demonstrate continued underlying need Council will undertake an assessment of local demographics against the agreed accessibility framework. This process will also include a wider review of the location of other fixed play areas within in order to ensure that duplication of provision does not occur.

### 7.13 Renewal of Fixed Play Areas outside agreed life span

Council recognises that in some cases a fixed play area may require complete renewal in advance of the 15 year life cycle being reached. This may be due to a number of reasons including a high level of usage resulting in premature degradation of the play equipment beyond a maintainable standard, vandalism or unforeseen natural events.

Council will review on an ongoing basis maintenance inspection reports in order to identify those fixed play areas which fall into this category and will initiate at the appropriate point a review of underlying need incorporating an assessment of local demographic need, the agreed accessibility framework and fixed play provision within the wider locality.

### 7.14 Partnership Working

In seeking to deliver enhanced play opportunities Council is committed to working in partnership with statutory, non-statutory and community based organisations.

This commitment to partnership working is based on a recognition that whilst Council has a clear role in the development and maintenance of fixed play areas, the strategic and operational decisions made by other organisations as well as underlying attitudes towards play at community level all impact on children play experiences.

By working in partnership with other organisations and communities it is our intention to:

- Bring together those organisations and stakeholders who are interested and/or involved in play delivery or who through their decisions have an influence on play opportunities
- Engage with key stakeholders on an ongoing basis and realise the potential offered by collaborative working to enhance play across the Borough
- Identify potential resourcing opportunities and, in line with the Children's Services Cooperation Act, consider the potential pooling of budgets to better meet play need
- Where new play areas are required, consider cross-partnership land options e.g. dual access play areas located on school grounds with open access to the community out of school hours, land transfer to council etc.
- Engage fully with local communities and ensure that children, young people, parents/carers and wider community members have an opportunity to influence decisions relating to play and the roll-out of the play investment strategy.

At a strategic level the play investment strategy fully recognises and acknowledges the importance of the Community Planning process and the existing Community Planning partnership grouping. Council will seek to embed the work of the play investment strategy within the Community Planning process in order to maximise the existing partnership structure and reduce duplication where possible.

## 8.0 Non-fixed Approaches to Meeting Play Need

### 8.1 Introduction

One of the underlying, long term aims of this Play investment strategy is to create a public environment which is more conducive to, and supportive of children and young people at play.

As stated previously, for children play and the drive to play is a constant part of their everyday lives. A key focus for the strategy period will be to work towards the creation of more play friendly and playable communities which recognise and celebrate play as a key aspect of community life.

In seeking to deliver this aim Council will consider the roll out of a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing understanding about the importance of play, championing play and its role within society and supporting the development non-fixed, community based approaches to meeting play need.

This section highlights a range of potential approaches available to Council as it seeks to enhance non-fixed play across the Borough. In assessing the appropriateness of each approach, Council will undertake and complete a full business case assessment.

### 8.2 Appointment of a Play Development Officer

A Play Development Officer, if appointed would be responsible for leading the roll-out of the overarching play investment strategy; engaging internally with Council departments and staff teams and engaging externally with statutory, community and voluntary representatives. The officer would act as the key focal conduit within Council for all matters relating to the play investment strategy and would act as a key point of contact for the wider community.

#### 1. *Internal Council Focus*

Within Council the Play Development Officers role would revolve around providing an internal focus on play, engaging with and supporting departments across Council to develop a culture of:

- Understanding of the importance of play for children, young people, families, local communities and visitors to the area;
- Recognition of the impact broad Council activities have on increasing or decreasing play opportunities;
- Ensuring that consideration of play need is built into strategic thinking and operational activity across Council; and
- Developing innovative approaches to enhancing access to play opportunities across the Council in its entirety.

## *2. External Organisations*

In addition to developing the capacity of Council departments to better meet play need, the Play Development Officer would lead on the development of connections to other organisations involved in the community planning partnership who have an interest in, or whose work impacts on play across the Council area.

The Play Development Officer would support the development of partnership action as it impacted on play within the overarching Community Planning process, monitoring progress and identifying gaps within the partnership structure.

With a view to developing the capacity of the Council to further enhance play opportunities, the Play Development Officer would support the identification of potential sources of funding to enhance play opportunities.

## *3. Community Focus*

The Play Development Officer role would act as the key liaison point for children, young people and communities in relation to the development of play opportunities across the Council area. This could include:

- Leading on participative engagement with children and young people to ensure that they have a voice in the roll out of the play investment strategy and in the development of further play opportunities;
- Pro-actively engaging with communities, parents and carers regarding the importance of play in the lives of children and young people; and
- Providing guidance and support for those wishing to develop non-fixed approaches to play within their community; and
- Liaison with play providers to identify local need as it relates to training and qualifications.

## **8.3 Community Play Initiatives**

Council recognise that for many children and young people the most accessible play spaces are those located in the area in which they live. These can take the form of a communal green space, a playing field or may simply be the street on which they live.

Across the Council area there exist communal and shared spaces within communities which could, with an element of support be better utilised for play by children and young people.

In seeking to maximise use of such spaces for play the Play Development Officer could work to establish pilot community play initiatives aimed at testing the level of demand for non-fixed play and its impact on meeting play need. Such pilots' would include working in partnership with local statutory agencies and the wider community and voluntary sectors with a view to removing barriers to play on communal spaces and enhancing sites to offer increased play value.

Following the evaluation of pilot site impact, the further roll-out of non-fixed approaches could then be considered by Council. Approaches open for consideration as pilot approaches include:

- *Community Play Volunteer Programme*  
Under community play volunteer programmes members of the community are provided with training and support aimed at enabling them to take a lead role in planning and delivering play sessions within the community. Areas covered by training include:
  - An overview of play theory and play types; the importance of positive play to children and wider communities; and the role of positive play in promoting shared, inter-community use of spaces;
  - An overview of health and safety considerations and an exploration of risk benefit approaches to the planning and delivering of outdoor based community play sessions;
  - Methodologies, approaches and techniques to be used in the planning, delivery and evaluation of community based play sessions;
  - Opportunities to engage in practical outdoor play based session enabling volunteers to consider the range and variety of play types available within outdoor, community settings - supporting participant planning for the supported play sessions;
  - Council provision of community accessible play pods containing a range of loose parts play materials which can be used by children to create their own play experience.

Training would be open to members of community groups from across the district who would self-nominate. Following training volunteers would be supported to deliver 'free' or non-fixed play sessions within their local area, utilising those spaces which lend themselves to children and young people's play.

- *Street Play*

Recognising the factors that restrict opportunities for outdoor play in built up urban areas (traffic, adult intolerance of children and young people at play etc.), street play projects have been shown to be effective in opening up streets for safe play.

Using existing examples of good practice, pilots would work with supportive local communities to establish street play projects based around:

- The closure of streets for a set time period (1 to 3 hours) on set days to enable children and young people to play freely on the road and pavement within their community without risk from traffic;
- Supporting community play volunteers through training and support to oversee and support street play sessions;

- *Play in the Public Realm*

Council recognise that play can and does take place at a wide variety of locations and at any given time. Across the Council area we have an abundance of public spaces which could lend themselves more clearly to play and could more actively promote play activity. These spaces range from retail and town centres to parks and forests.

As part of the Play investment strategy Council will work to enhance the playability of the public realm by:

- Engaging with those public bodies that have ownership of the public realm (buildings, pathways, town centres etc.) to explore how play can be better facilitated and encouraged within such areas;
- Pilot a number of town centre initiatives aimed at integrating play opportunities within retail centres, enhancing playability and promoting the areas as being more family friendly;
- Pro-actively promoting the integration of play friendly design approaches in all future public realm developments;
- Through adherence to planning guidance ensure that private housing developers provide sufficient spaces for play in all future residential developments;
- Provide play training for those Council and statutory officers whose role impacts on the public realm e.g. Park Wardens, Town Centre Managers etc.

## **8.4 Play Pods**

With a view to supporting the development of community play initiatives, Council will review and consider the viability of providing community accessible mobile play resources (for example all-ability play pods) as a means of supporting community play sessions, supported or promoted through the work of a play officer.

## **8.5 Championing Play**

As a Council we are committed to championing play by raising its profile and encouraging partner organisations and communities to place a greater value upon it.

By actively championing play we aim to increase understanding of its critical importance to the lives of children and young people, ultimately supporting the development of a play friendly community that values play and expects to see children playing outdoors and within the public realm.

Over the period of the Play investment strategy, Council will deliver a number of key activities aimed at promoting the strategy and championing play, namely:

- Hold a public launch of the Play investment strategy to raise awareness of the strategy and its key objectives
- Disseminate and make available information relating to the importance of play to the growth and development of children and young people to stakeholder organisations across the community and statutory sectors, including existing partnership bodies

## **8.6 National Play Day**

National Play Day takes place on the first Wednesday of August each year and provides a national focus on children and young people's play.

Each year hundreds of play celebration events take place across the UK ranging from large scale play days to smaller community play events. Over recent years each of the legacy Councils have promoted and supported a range of events on National Play Day.

As part of the strategy Council commits supporting national play day, hosting a minimum of 3 play day events which, in addition to providing a range of play opportunities will provide a focus for positive media coverage of play. In addition to holding events Council will promote national play day and will encourage community organisations and other providers to hold events celebrating the importance of play.



## **Appendix A**

### **Overarching Policy Context for Play**

In addition to the individual and societal benefits of play, Council operates within a wider International, Regional and Local strategic context which highlights the importance of meeting play need.

## International

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights.

The UNCRC was ratified by the UK government in 1991, committing all branches of government to ensuring that children are afforded the rights and protections contained within its articles. In developing the play investment strategy council has given due consideration to the articles contained within the UNCRC, with a specific focus on a number of key articles, namely:

- **Article 31:** Focuses on the child's right play stating that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- **Article 23:** Focuses on the right of children with disabilities and states that disabled children have the right to dignity, self-reliance and active participation in the community.
- **Article 12:** Focuses on the right of children and young people to have an opinion and to be able to express their views on matters and issues that concern them. Their age, maturity and ability should be taken into account, and if necessary, they should receive support to express their views.

In addition to the UNCRC, consideration has been given to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in particular:

- **Article 7:** Children with disabilities have the right of full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children
- **Article 9:** People with disabilities have the right to equal access to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, facilities and services
- **Article 3:** People with disabilities have the right to equal access to play, recreation, sporting and leisure activities.

## Regional

### NI Programme for Government

Whilst the NI Executive is not currently sitting, the draft Programme for Government acknowledged play as an important aspect of childhood noting its importance in terms of development, well-being and enjoyment of childhood.

### *NI Executive Play and Leisure Policy and Implementation Plan*

In 2009 the Executive published its Play and Leisure Policy Statement which highlighted its commitment to delivering against the play and leisure needs of children and young people. This was followed in March 2011 by the Executive's endorsement of the 'Play and Leisure Policy' and an associated implementation plan.

At the heart of the policy is a recognition that play is not only critical to the individual child in terms of their health and wellbeing; but also that play has a key role in creating cohesive communities and tackling a range of issues including anti-social behaviour, inter-generational issues and the legacy of community division left over by the troubles. The policy recognises and highlights the importance of risk in play to allow children to explore boundaries and test abilities in such cases where it can be shown that the benefits to the child outweigh the potential risks

### *NI Children and Young Peoples Strategy (2017 to 2027)*

The Department of Education have responsibility for the roll-out of the new ten-year Children and Young Peoples Strategy which will run from 2017 to 2027.

The strategy is aligned to the eight parameters of children's well-being as identified within the Children's Services Co-operation Act (2015) and includes as one of its key outcome areas the enjoyment of play and leisure.

### *DHSSPS Fitter Future for All Framework (2012 – 2022)*

The overarching aim of 'Fitter Future for All' is to support people to make healthy choices, reducing overall levels of obesity and improving health and wellbeing amongst the general population.

The Strategy recognises the critical role of play in reducing childhood obesity levels and highlights the importance of rural and natural landscapes as well as urban design and planning in delivering playable, green infrastructure (which encourages outdoor activity levels), accessible play areas and play activities, and active travel routes.

### *Making Life Better (2013 – 2023)*

'Making Life Better' outlines the NI Executives objective of creating the conditions for individuals, families and communities to take greater control over their lives, enabling and supporting them to lead healthy lives.

The focus of 'Making Life Better' is on collaborative working between individuals, communities and partner organisations to address the range of factors that impact on health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland. Underpinning 'Making Life Better' are 6 key themes:

1. Giving Every Child the Best Start
2. Equipped Throughout Life
3. Empowering Healthy Living
4. Creating the Conditions
5. Empowering Communities
6. Developing Collaboration

The importance of play is outlined under outcome 2 of thematic area 1 entitled 'Healthy and confident children and young people' which gives a commitment to *"Promote the benefits of play and leisure and increase opportunities for children and young people to enjoy it"* on a cross-government basis including key Executive departments and local government.

### Strategic Planning Policy Statement

The planning system has been reformed and restructured from a unitary system where planning powers rested with the Department to a two-tier model of delivery whereby Councils have responsibility for the implementation of key planning functions.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) was published on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and reduces 20 separate planning policy statements to one, setting out objectives for open space, recreation and leisure. The SPPS also states how the Local Development Plan plays a role in terms of open space i.e. adequate provision for green and blue infrastructure, identification and designation of areas of open space etc.

Under the SPSS the policy provision of PPS 7 (Quality Residential Environments) and PPS 8 (Open Space and Outdoor recreation), both of which have relevance to the provision of play space are retained.

- *PP7 (Quality Residential Environments)*  
PPS 7 highlights the need for developers to consider the play needs of future residents within development plans outlining that:
  - a. Play facilities should be seen as part of local neighbourhood facilities and (where required) should be incorporated into design and layout, designed to high standard and located to provide focal points and landmark features
  - b. It is considered reasonable to expect developers to contribute to the cost of provision and/or to set land aside for use by local community;
  - c. Regard should be given to integrating pleasant, attractive and landscaped areas of open space, including children's play-spaces, as an intrinsic element of any new residential development.
- *PPS 8, (Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation)*  
PPS 8 develops on the strategic guidelines included in PPS7 and states:  
  
*"For residential development of 100 units or more, or for development sites of 5 hectares or more, an equipped children's play area will be required as an integral part of the development. The Department will consider an exception to this requirement where an equipped children's play area exists within reasonable walking distance (generally around 400 metres) of the majority of the units within the development scheme."*

Paragraph 5.14 emphasises the importance of providing for children's play stressing the need for play areas to be located within a reasonable walking distance of where they live whilst not being located so close to dwellings that that they are likely to cause nuisance for residents.

## Local

### *Community Planning*

Introduced under the Review of Public Administration, Community Planning is a new responsibility for Council requiring it *"...to initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate in community planning for its district."*

Community planning aims to develop a long term vision and plan for the area based on an analysis of overarching needs, priorities and opportunities. The process involves a wide range of partners including, amongst others the PSNI, Tourism NI, Education Authority, Health and Social Care Trust and Housing Executive. The Community Plan will act as a strategic planning tool and will be the over-arching process framework for partnerships and initiatives in the area and at a local and neighbourhood level.

As part of the community planning process Council undertook a series of public engagement meetings in June 2016 which identified a number of key issues for the partnership including:

- A lack of well-resourced and high value play areas;
- A lack of accessible play areas for children with disabilities; and
- A lack of green spaces within urban areas that lend themselves to play and recreation.

### *Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Strategy (2015 to 2019)*

The Council's strategy sets the direction and standards for Council to take over the period 2015 to 2019. Within the strategy Council identifies its mission as being to:

---

"Improve the quality of life and well-being for all of our citizens and visitors by:

- Providing effective and sustainable local public services
  - Accelerating our economy and improving our economic prosperity
  - Placing local communities at the heart of decision making
  - Protecting and enhancing our unique natural environment and assets; and
  - Advocating for the area and our citizens in both local and international arenas.
- 

In seeking to achieve this mission the strategy identifies five key strategic themes:

Strategic Theme	We Will Achieve These Outcomes by 2019
<b>Leader and Champion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Elected Members will provide civic leadership to our citizens, working to promote the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit;</li> <li>• We will establish key relationships with Government, agencies and potential strategic partners in Northern Ireland and external to it which helps us to deliver our vision for this Council area</li> </ul>
<b>Accelerating our economy and contributing to prosperity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will work with its partners to maximise business start-up opportunities and encourage existing enterprises to grow and prosper;</li> <li>• The Council will work with partners to maximise investment funding opportunities from external sources including; the Northern Ireland Assembly, the European Union, the Rural Development Programme, and from private sector financing.</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation and Transformation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will continuously examine and introduce ways to provide services in more accessible and efficient ways;</li> <li>• The Council will embrace new technologies and processes where they can bring about better experiences for citizens and visitors.</li> </ul>
<b>Resilient, healthy and engaged communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council will work to support healthy lifestyle choices for all citizens;</li> <li>• Citizens will have access to Council recreational facilities and protected natural environments which help them to develop their physical, emotional and cognitive health</li> <li>• Council will work to develop and promote stable and cohesive communities across the Borough.</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting and enhancing our environments and assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All environments in the area will benefit from pro-active decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough;</li> <li>• Our citizens will be given the maximum opportunity to enjoy our natural environments;</li> <li>• Our natural assets will be carefully managed to generate economic and social returns without compromising their sustainability for future generations.</li> </ul>

Meeting the play needs of children and young people falls primarily within strategic theme 4 'Resilient, healthy and engaged communities'.

#### **Strategic Theme 4: Resilient, healthy and engaged communities**

Strategic theme 4 focuses on supporting citizens to make healthy lifestyle choices and the provision of recreational facilities. As previously noted, the opportunity for children to engage in regular, active physical play from birth and throughout childhood has been shown to be one of the most effective ways of improving health and wellbeing. Physical play encourages children to be more active, helping to reduce childhood obesity; improving self-confidence and impacting positively on mental health.

Furthermore, research has shown that patterns of physical activity established through childhood play impact on activity levels in later life. By enabling children to be more active through play it is possible to introduce healthy lifestyle and exercise patterns which persist into adulthood.

In their report 'Start Active, Stay Active' (2011) the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers highlight the importance of active play opportunities in improving health and wellbeing noting:

- *"Younger children begin their active lives through play"*
- *"Children of pre-school age who can stand and walk need opportunities to play that allow them to develop their fundamental movement skills and master their physical environment"*
- *"Physical activity, especially in the form of play, is a basic and essential behaviour that must be fostered and encouraged during the first five years of life"*
- *"Young children also need the freedom to create their own opportunities for active play, lead their own activities, direct their own play and engage in imaginative play"*

Ensuring that children and young people are afforded opportunities to engage in both formal and non-formal play opportunities within the community will be critical in supporting Council as it seeks to meet strategic theme 4.

#### **Summary**

Over recent year's acknowledgement of play's critical role in shaping the lives' of children, young people and its positive impact on wider society has become more explicit at policy level regionally, nationally and internationally. It is clear that the wider policy environment both recognises the importance of play in relation to children's health and wellbeing, welfare and development and is supportive of Council decision to establish a play investment strategy.

Critically, whilst recognising the role of Councils in meeting play need, policies consistently acknowledge that no single organisation has within its remit the capacity to address all of the issues that impact on or restrict children's play opportunities.

Responsibility for delivering play opportunities that meet the needs of children and young people lies across all policy arenas, hence the critical importance of the Community Planning Partnership as we seek to establish and roll-out the play investment strategy. It is proposed that members of the Community Planning Partnership provide input regarding key policy initiatives that lie within their remit, whilst providing connection to existing and emerging work strands that are supportive of play.



## **Appendix B**

### **Ballymoney DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Observations	Actions
Ballnagarvey	365	Overall, the site offers a low level of play value, is in poor condition and has a low level of indicative demand within the local area.	Consultation with a view to site transformation
Torrens	370	Recently transformed from a fixed play area into a community space incorporating a single basket swing (hence low play value score).	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Dunloy	430	Equipment in good condition and offers fair level of play value albeit primarily for younger children. Future review to consider broadening scope of play opportunities.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Greymount	430	Equipment is in good condition and offers a fair level of play value. Demand appears low and prior to future refurbishment consultation should be undertaken re: possible site transformation.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle  Possible future transformation dependent on demand.
Fulton Play Park	445	Equipment in good condition, offers fair play value and remains a local demand for play.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Seymour	450	Equipment in good condition, offers fair play value and remains a local demand for play.	Review summer closing time (closes at 5pm)  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Quinn Memorial (Carnary)	450	Some conditional issues noted with fixed play equipment which require addressing. Site offers fair level of play value although demand appears to be relatively low and should be reviewed prior to future refurbishment.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle with possible future transformation of site dependent on demand.
Willowdale	460	Equipment in good condition, offers fair play value (albeit aimed primarily at younger children) and remains a local demand for play.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle

Macfin	460	Equipment in good condition, offers fair play value although demand appears to be relatively low and should be reviewed prior to future refurbishment.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle  Possible future transformation dependent on demand.
Seacon	465	Recent installation with equipment in good condition and offering a fair level of play value. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested through consultation prior to future refurbishment.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle  Possible future transformation dependent on demand.
Westgate	465	Equipment in good condition with fair level of play value and continued level of demand.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Glebeside	530	Equipment is in good condition and site offers a good level of play value. Demand appears to remain for fixed play within the area.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Cloughmills Bio Park	555	Equipment is in good condition and site offers a good level of play value. Demand appears to remain for fixed play within the area. If possible, expansion would increase radial coverage incorporating a wider household base, meeting possible gap in provision.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Possible expansion to increase radial coverage.
Drumaheglis	555	Equipment is in good condition, offers a good level of play value and is primarily aimed at those using the nearby caravan park.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Drumbolcan	595	Equipment is in good condition and site offers a good level of play value. Demand appears to remain for fixed play within the area.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Ballymoney Riverside	610	Destination site, equipment in good condition and site offers a high level of play value (albeit aimed more at younger children). Demand remains for fixed play within the area.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Megaw Park	650	Destination site, equipment in good condition and offering a high level of play value.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

## **Appendix C**

### **Bann DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Observations	Actions
Lisnagrot	300	Equipment and site in very poor condition offering a very low level of play value. Site is located adjacent to Kilrea Primary School enhancing the level of demand beyond solely residential. Site offers dual development potential with the Primary School.	Council to engage with Primary School to explore partnership potential prior to considering the site for refurbishment.
Glenullin	335	Equipment in poor condition with equipment/safety surfacing missing. Play value is very poor and the site is in need of renewal, however demand appears to be low and should be tested prior to refurbishment.	Consultation to assess demand with site transformation as an option.
Macosquin	390	Equipment shows signs of deterioration alongside surfacing issues (including uneven tiles, moss covered surfaces). Low play value is reflected by the condition of the equipment. Residential demand appears to remain for the site.	Remedial action to address equipment/surfacing issues.  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Mettican	415	Equipment in good condition with site offering a lower mid-level of play value albeit mainly for younger children.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle. Test demand prior to future renewal.
Boleran	440	Equipment showing signs of deterioration and is aimed mainly at younger children. Demand appears to be relatively low.	Maintain and Monitor. Possible transformation at next renewal.
Lyttlesdale	450	Equipment is in good condition and offers a lower mid-level of play value. Demand appears to remain for the site.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Castlerock	475	Equipment generally in good condition with a fair level of play value. Residential demand appears relatively low, however coastal location suggests seasonal demand for the site.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Craiglea Play Park	525	Equipment generally in good condition with a good level of play value. Demand appears to remain for the site.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Articlave	540	Equipment is of recent installation, is in good condition and offers a good level of play value. Demand appears to remain.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

## **Appendix D**

### **Benbradagh DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Comments	Actions
Feeney Picnic Area	290	Low play value site consisting of minimal fixed play equipment (2 rockers), signs of degradation located by riverside picnic area.	Remove and replace fixed equipment with natural play equipment more in-keeping with natural setting
Finvola Play Park	370	Equipment is of fairly recent installation and is in good condition, albeit restricted in terms of play value and age appeal (5 rockers and creative seating area).	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Garvagh Road Play Park	385	Limited variety of play equipment and condition (signs of wear and tear) leads to low play value score. Demand is sufficient to maintain fixed play provision.	Renewal of fixed play area.
Glack Play Area	390	Limited variety of play equipment available is in good condition. Demand appears to be sufficient however would need to be tested prior to any future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Greysteel	430	Range of fixed play equipment available (albeit suited more towards younger children) in fair condition (some wear and tear in evidence alongside signs of vandalism) offering fair play value. Demand is sufficient to maintain fixed play provision.	Address maintenance/condition issues.  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Curragh Road Play Park	440	Range of equipment available in fair condition (signs of weathering, peeling paint etc.) offering fair level of play value. Demand is sufficient to maintain fixed play provision.	Address maintenance/condition issues  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Kings Lane Play Park	470	Range of fixed and non-fixed play opportunities available on-site with fair play value. Equipment in largely good condition although swing seat missing. Demand sufficient to maintain site.	Address maintenance/condition issues  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

Foreglen	480	Site was installed fairly recently and offers a fair level of play value with a range of play equipment available, all of which is in good condition. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to any future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Burnfoot	495	Site offers a decent level of play value with a range of play equipment available, all of which is in good condition. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to any future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Dernaflaw Play Park	495	Site offers a good level of play value with a range of play equipment available, all of which is in good condition. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to any future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Feeney Play Park	500	Recently upgraded site, offers a decent level of play value with a range of play equipment available, all in good condition. Demand appears sufficient to maintain site at its current location.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.



## **Appendix E**

### **Causeway DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Comments	Recommendation
Islandmoore, Ballylagan Road	270	Low play value site with a limited range of ageing play equipment which is in very poor condition. Demand appears to be low within the radial catchment area.	Proceed to community consultation to include possible transformation of site for wider community use.
Landsdowne Road, Portrush	290	Low play value site consisting of 2 swing sets. Site is exposed and condition of equipment is very poor. Location would lend itself to installation of natural play equipment that would enhance the natural environment and increase play value.	Removal of existing swing bays and replacement with natural play equipment in keeping with environment.
Currysheskin	370	Equipment is in good condition but offers a limited range of play opportunities. Residential demand appears to be low, however there is evidence of use. Given condition site should be maintained pending review of demand prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle with review of demand prior to renewal.
Dhu Varren Play Area	390	Site has combination of old and new equipment with the old in poor condition with some missing components. Remains a demand for fixed play within the area.	Replacement of older equipment and enhancement of wider site.
The Warren, Portstewart	410	Play area offers a range of equipment aimed mainly at younger children. Equipment is showing signs of wear and tear with some wood rot and metal corrosion which detracts from the site. One piece of equipment missing (see saw). Appears to remain a need for fixed play but should be tested prior to renewal.	Review of demand for fixed play and renewal if confirmed.
Killyrammer Play Area	425	Offering a fair play value, fixed play area is in good condition and is supplemented by a large green space area. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Test demand prior to future renewal.

Dundarave	430	Site offers a fair level of play value with equipment in good condition (although some vandalism and graffiti noted). Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Ballybogey Play Area	435	Combination of fixed play equipment (in good condition) and MUGA provision offering a fair level of play value. Demand appears sufficient to maintain site.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Landhead Play Area	450	Site offers a combination of fixed play equipment (mainly for younger children) with nearby ball games area. Equipment is in generally good condition. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Dunluce Play Area, Portrush	455	Dunluce Play Area offers a fair level of play value. The site has a limited amount of fixed equipment on offer, aimed mainly towards younger children. The site features a lot of grass and undulating surfaces; however the condition of the equipment and lack of variation lowers the overall play value score.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Possible removal should new play development take place within Portrush
Bushmills	470	Bushmills play area is located at the community centre and offers a fair level of play value. The play area and equipment are generally in good condition. Whilst the resident population is low, it should be noted that the play area is located away from the main residential area adjacent to the community centre which suggests that its primary users will be those attending events at the centre.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Portballintrae	490	Site offers a good level of play value with the fixed equipment in place providing a degree of challenge to mainly younger children. The site features an adjacent grassy area that could be used for both ball play and social play increasing the overall score. Equipment in generally good condition although 1 piece had been removed at time of audit. Residential	Replace missing equipment  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

		demand is supplemented by seasonal demand from tourists.	
Dervock Riverside Play Area	495	Dervock Riverside play area offers a good level of play value albeit that there is no inclusive play provision. The type and range of fixed play equipment is primarily aimed at younger children offering a fair level of challenge for this group. Ball play/gym area offers opportunity for non-fixed and social play.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Juniper Hill Caravan Park Play Area	500	Site offers a fair to good level of play value. The site has a good variety of fixed equipment on offer; however there are limited opportunities for non-fixed play. The site is aimed mainly towards younger children. Demand is primarily seasonal from the adjacent caravan park.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Glenmanus Play Area, Portrush	510	Site offers a good level of play value. The site has a variety of fixed equipment on offer, with opportunities for non-fixed play in the nearby playing field. The site is aimed mainly towards younger children. The site is well integrated into the surrounding area and as such is a welcoming location for play. Demand appears sufficient to maintain site.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Ramore	515	Site offers a good level of play value with a number of pieces of fixed play equipment which would appeal to a range of age groups. In addition the site has green space which lends itself to non-fixed play. Equipment in relatively good condition although some wood rot was noted.	Remedial works to improve site and address equipment issues  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle
Liscolman	525	Site offers a good level of play value. The fixed equipment provides a challenge for both younger and older children, while the ball play area provides non-fixed/social play opportunities. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Carrick Dhu Play Area	555	Located within Carrick Dhu caravan park, play area is in good condition and offers a good level of play value incorporating a combination of fixed play equipment. The equipment is in	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

		good condition and does not require renewal at this stage.	
Arcadia Play Area	555	Site offers a combination of fixed play equipment alongside sand and water play which enhances its play value. The play area offers a pleasant play environment and is a welcoming location. Site has a high level of seasonal demand.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Lisnagunogue	575	Offers a good level of play value. The fixed equipment in place provides more challenging for both younger and older children, while also being constructed out of natural materials.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
The Crescent Play Area, Portstewart	575	Offers a good level of play value with a range fixed equipment, mainly aimed towards younger children. Site allows for non-fixed play such as ball games and, due to its setting supports opportunities to change the environment through play using the nearby sand /water.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Flowerfields	675	<p>Site offers a high level of play value with an extensive variety of accessible fixed play equipment on offer. Site provides opportunities for children to experience challenging play and is an attractive location for play. Demand is very high from both residents and beyond – Flowerfield’s is a destination play site.</p> <p>It was noted that some issues have arisen regarding teens using the site. Introduction of a teen shelter or similar (on-site or at an alternative location) may address concerns regarding vandalism whilst enhancing teen provision.</p>	<p>Extension of play area to better meet high level of on-site demand</p> <p>Introduction of teen shelter on site/alternative location within Portstewart</p> <p>Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.</p>

## **Appendix F**

### **Coleraine DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Comments	Recommendation
Daneshill	390	The play area offers a range of fixed play equipment; however, the condition is poor with a number of issues noted including rusting metal, peeling paint, damaged equipment and vandalism/graffiti. There remains a demand for fixed play within the area.	Site renewal.
Rugby Avenue	395	Offering a low level of play value, the site is located on the periphery of an extensive residential area with an evidenced demographic need for play provision. The play area (in its current form) appears to have a relatively low level of use and offers a limited range of fixed play equipment which is beginning to show signs of deterioration.  The site does offer significant potential as a possible destination play site due to its extensive green space and ample parking.	Renewal of site with consideration for upgrade to NEAP destination play area based on wider site characteristics.
Kylemore	400	Scoring low to fair in the play value audit, site offers a variety of fixed play equipment aimed at a range of ages from toddler through to senior levels.  Whilst the equipment is generally in good condition (scoring 8 out of a possible 10 in its most recent maintenance inspection) the park has been subject to vandalism with broken equipment and graffiti in evidence.	Repair/replace broken equipment and remove graffiti  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Harpur's Hill	430	Offering a fair level of play value, the play area offers a range of fixed play equipment covering toddler, junior and senior levels and is generally in good condition.  It is noted that the site has been subject to vandalism and at	Replace removed swing seats  Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

		time of inspection some equipment (swing seats) had been removed.	
Anderson Park	445	<p>Play area has 2 zones - 1 for toddlers and younger children with zone 2 aimed at the older age group. The site appears to have an overall high level of usage reflected in the equipment condition (wear and tear including rust, peeling paint and low level loose surfacing). Evidence of vandalism including graffiti and it was noted that within the wider park area a number of wooden items has been set on fire.</p> <p>As a town centre park Anderson Park in its current condition does not capitalise on its natural environment and considerable scope exists for the establishment of a larger scale destination play area that would have broader appeal</p>	Redevelopment with a view to creating a more expansive outdoor play experience which capitalises on the natural park environment, appeals to a broad range of age groups and meets a range of ability levels.
Millburn	465	Play area offers a range of fixed play equipment covering toddler, junior and senior levels and is generally in good condition. The site has a fair level of usage and has an adjoining green space facilitating free play. Site also has a Multi-Use Games Area which offers leisure opportunities for older teens. It is noted that the site has been subject to vandalism and at time of inspection some equipment (swing) had been removed.	<p>Replace missing equipment</p> <p>Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.</p>
Windy Hall	530	Installed in 2015, the site offers a good level of play value with a variety of play equipment for a range of ages and incorporates cycle racks to facilitate independent travel by children to the play area. In addition, the site offers non-fixed play opportunities on adjacent short grass area with a Multi-Use Games Area available for older teens.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Elms Play Park	615	Site offers a good level of play value with a wide range of fixed play equipment supplemented by a green space area offering	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.



		<p>non-fixed play opportunities. The play area offers a number of accessible play opportunities including ground level carousel, I-Play, Play Panels, talk tubes and basket swing. Equipment is in good condition and there is sufficient demand for fixed play at the site.</p>	
--	--	--	--

## **Appendix G**

### **The Glens DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Comments	Action
Shanes Park	255	Site consists of the remnants of an older park which has had various pieces of equipment removed and not replaced. Equipment is of very poor quality and offers little variety of play.	Community consultation regarding level of demand with possible transformation of site for wider community use.
Ballyknock	290	Site offers a low level of play value, partially due to the limited range of fixed play equipment present on site and partially due to the age and condition of the equipment. Analysis suggests a low level of demand for the facility with 32 households falling in to the catchment radial.	Community consultation regarding level of demand with possible transformation of site for wider community use.
Carnduff	355	Whilst site is relatively new play value is low due to limited nature of the equipment. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future upgrade.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Review of demand for fixed play prior to future renewal.
Middle Park	370	Site scores a low 370 in its play value assessment primarily due to the poor condition of equipment, evidence of broken and/or damaged components and an unattractive play environment. There is a level of demand that would justify retention and upgrade of the site.	Renewal and upgrade of play area.
Cottage Wood 1	390	Cottage Wood 1 and 2 play areas scored relatively low on the play value assessment	Amalgamate existing 2 play areas and renew with focus on

Cottage Wood 2	375	<p>due to a combination of ageing equipment, lack of variety/play opportunity, damage/wear and tear to equipment and the split nature of the site.</p> <p>The play areas are located within Cottage Wood, an area of natural beauty. The current play areas do not currently integrate into the wider natural environment and do not enhance the wider site.</p>	natural play equipment and surfacing.
Ben Vista	370	Site recently transformed from a play area to a community space with play provision (basket swing). Demand is low, in keeping with decision to transform the site.	Maintain and monitor
Fernbank	385	Site recently transformed from a play area to a community space with play provision (basket swing). Demand is low, in keeping with decision to transform the site.	Maintain and monitor
Armoy Riverside	440	<p>Located by the river and across the road from the riverside site is at an ideal location for both residents and visitors to the area. The play area scored a fair play value rating offering a variety of play equipment which is in relatively good condition, albeit beginning to show its age. Demand for the site comes from both residents and visitors to the area.</p>	<p>Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.</p> <p>Future renewal to consider natural play equipment to fit in with the wider environment of the site.</p>
Legg Green	455	Located by the seafront, Legg Green play area incorporates a number of pieces of inclusive fixed play equipment increasing	Replace missing components and repair broken equipment

		its play value for children with disabilities. Whilst offering a fairly wide range of play equipment the sites play value is diminished by the condition of some pieces of equipment. This may be due in part to the sites exposed location.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Waterfoot	450	Play area offers a fair level of play value with a range of equipment which is in relatively good condition. Site is located outside of Waterfoot village and has seasonal use from tourists to the area.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Rockend	455	Play Park area offers a fair level of play value with the fixed equipment onsite catering mainly for younger children. Site allows for limited non-fixed play on adjacent short grass area. Demand appears sufficient to retain site, however should be tested prior to future upgrade.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Review of demand for fixed play prior to future renewal.
Mossie	460	Mossie play park offers a fair level of play value. The fixed equipment in place could provide a degree of challenging play for both younger and older children. The site features an adjacent grassy area that could be used for both ball play and social play increasing the overall play value score. Demand appears to low and should be tested prior to future renewal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.  Review of demand for fixed play prior to future renewal.
Erinvale	460	Site offers a fair level of play value with a	Maintain and Monitor within

		<p>variety of fixed play equipment which is primarily geared towards young and primary school children. The adjacent ball play area offers some opportunity for non-fixed play and social play for a varied age range of children.</p> <p>Demand appears to low and should be tested prior to future renewal.</p>	renewal cycle.
Clintyfinnan	460	<p>Clintyfinnan play area offers a fair level of play value, the fixed equipment in place may provide a challenge for very young children, while the grass areas adjacent to the site offers some opportunity for non-fixed play and ball games however limited space available may impact the equipment.</p> <p>Demand appears sufficient to retain site, however should be tested prior to future upgrade.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Turnarobert	470	<p>Site offer a fair level of play value offering a range of play equipment aimed mainly at younger age groups. Site does not allow for non-fixed play; however, equipment is in good condition.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Millennium Park	470	<p>Millennium play park offers a fair level of play value with a range of equipment aimed at a broad age range including rockers, multi-unit, swing and see saw. Equipment is in good condition.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

		Demand appears sufficient to retain site, however should be tested prior to future upgrade.	
Rathlin Island	485	Play area offers a good level of play value comprising a range of play equipment that would meet the needs of children aged 12 years and under. The site is generally in good condition with demand both residential and seasonal.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Cushendun Bay Road	485	Cushendun Bay Road play park offer a good level of play value with a variety of good quality equipment which would appeal to a variety of age groups.  The site is in good condition and benefits from its natural setting and adjacent green/picnic space.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Glentaisie	495	Glentaisie play area offers a good level of play value with the combination of varied fixed equipment and the dedicated ball play area allowing versatility in play. Play value is reduced slightly by the use of non-natural materials for the fixed equipment and the lack of social seating.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Quay Road Ballycastle	495	Quay Road site offers significant potential as a neighbourhood (destination) play area with both residential and seasonal demand.	Renewal and upgrade of Quay Road to Destination status.

		<p>Whilst it scores fair on the play value scale, a combination of ageing and broken equipment reduces its play value.</p> <p>Whilst the site could be maintained for a number of years, given the identification of a gap in provision within the Ballycastle area it is recommended that Council should proceed to upgrade of the site to destination status.</p>	
Stranocum	520	<p>Stranocum Play Park offers a good level of play value albeit that the play equipment would appeal primarily to the younger age group. The site allows for non-fixed play within the adjacent Multi-Use Games Area. The use of wooden materials for fencing and paving stones for the access routes help to create a welcoming site for play. The surrounding trees and shrubbery also help integrate this play area into the wider area.</p> <p>Demand appears sufficient to retain site, however should be tested prior to future upgrade.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Ballintoy	550	<p>Ballintoy Play Area offers a good level of play value due to the range of fixed play equipment present on site and the presence of a Multi-Use Games Area. The site offers a pleasant wider environment and is a welcoming location for play.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.



		Whilst demand appears relatively low it is recognised that there is additional tourism value to having a play area located in Ballintoy.	
Glass Island Foreshore	615	<p>Glass Island Foreshore play area offers a high level of play value with the combination of sand surfacing and wooden fixed equipment giving a natural feel to the play area and complementing the wider environment.</p> <p>A number of small grassy areas nearby provide opportunities for non-fixed play/ball and social play for a varied age range of children. The close proximity of the coast can also be factored into the broader play value of the site as it provides ample opportunities for water play. Demand is both residential and seasonal.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

## **Appendix H**

### **Limavady DEA Fixed Play Area Audit**

Play Area	Play Value Score	Comments	Action
Alexander Road	350	Low play value site located adjacent to higher play value play area at Blackburn path with limited play equipment. Sufficient demand within wider area for fixed play.	Maintain site pending renewal of Blackburn path play area at which stage Alexander road should be removed/integrated into the renewed play area.
Roe Mill Road	375	Low value play site offering limited range of equipment aimed mainly at younger children which is showing signs of wear and tear.	Maintain and monitor pending renewal.
Swanns Bridge	380	Low play value site consisting of minimal fixed play equipment (3 rockers). Equipment is in fair condition with some non-fixed play opportunities on site.	Removal of equipment and replacement with natural play equipment.
Drumsum	450	Fair value play area offering limited range of play equipment supplemented with recreational outdoor gym equipment. Equipment is in good condition.	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.
Blackburn Path	475	Fair play value site that offers a good variety of play equipment. Equipment is in fair condition but is showing signs of degradation. Zip line was absent on day of audit.	Replace zip line and maintain and monitor site pending future renewal.  Consideration to be given to use of natural play equipment and surfacing to complement natural environment + possible dispersal of equipment within wider parkland environs.
Magilligan	490	Site offers a fair to good level of play value	Maintain and Monitor within

		with a range of play equipment available in generally good condition. Demand appears to be relatively low and should be tested prior to future renewal through consultation.	renewal cycle.  Test demand prior to future renewal.
Benone	515	<p>Located at Benone tourist complex, the play area consists of a swimming/paddling pool and fixed play equipment located within the inner court of the complex.</p> <p>Site offer a good level of play value with a variety of play equipment for a range of ages and abilities.</p>	Maintain and Monitor within renewal cycle.

# **Appendix I**

## **Design Brief**

## **Introduction**

This design brief has been developed to help guide those engaged in the design and development of fixed play areas across the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.

The brief provides an overview of the underpinning principles that should be considered and applied when designing play spaces and highlights council expectations as they relate to maximising play value.

## **Who is the Design Brief For?**

The design brief has been developed by PlayBoard NI on behalf of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council to support the roll-out of its play investment strategy.

In addition to guiding the enhancement and development of council owned play areas, the design brief should also be viewed by external organisations (community or otherwise) who are seeking to develop fixed play areas as the standard to be met in terms of underlying design principles.

## **Why has it been developed?**

At present Council has responsibility for the maintenance of 99 fixed play areas. As part of the overarching review that supported development of the play investment strategy, a number of these sites have been identified for upgrade over the coming five years. In addition the strategy has identified a number of gap areas which may require the development of new fixed play provision over the duration of the strategy.

The design brief has been developed to provide those involved in the design of fixed play areas with an overview of the key considerations that should be taken into account as part of the design process.

## **What is it designed to do?**

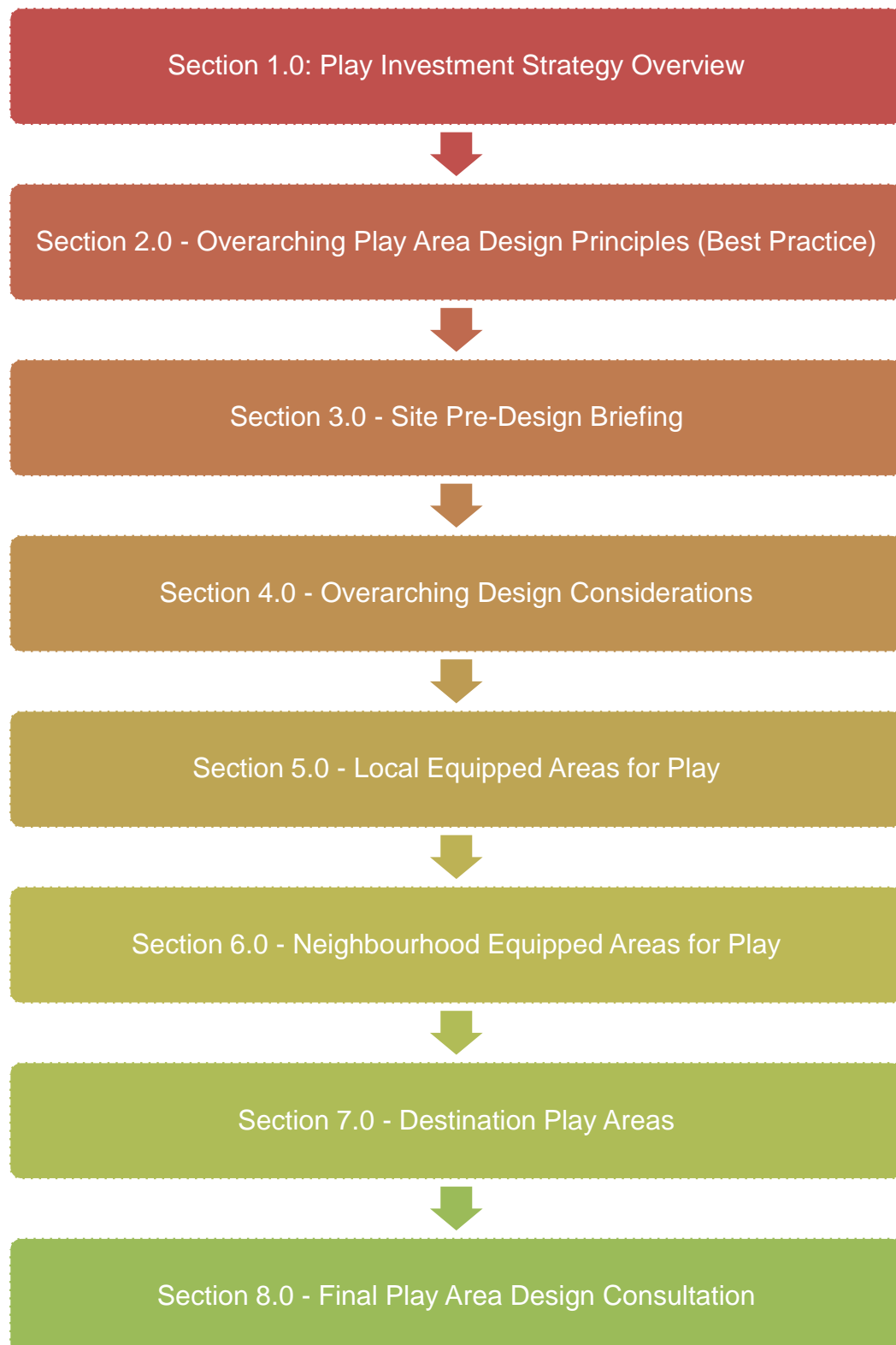
The design brief aims to support the development of play areas that will meet the play needs of children and young people whilst recognising the unique nature of each individual site and location.

Underpinning the design brief is a recognition that effective fixed play areas do not need to be large and complex in order to offer quality play experiences. With creativity, imagination, good planning and an understanding of the underlying play needs of children and young people even the smallest of play areas can offer excitement, stimulation and a high level of play value.

Recognising the variability that exists between different play area sites in relation to topography, size, scope etc. the brief should be viewed not as a strict set of criteria, rather as a set of guiding principles and approaches which aim to maximise the unique qualities of each site whilst delivering innovative and creative play spaces.

It is hoped that the design brief will support designers and design teams as they, through the addition of creative input and technical knowledge support us to establish high play value, innovative fixed play sites that meet the needs of all children and young people.

The design brief is divided into a number of sections:



## 1.0 Play Investment Strategy

In 2018 Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council agreed a five year Play Investment Strategy which outlined the framework within which council will work to enhance its existing portfolio of fixed play areas and develop new play areas to meet identified need.

The recommendations contained within the strategy resulted from a comprehensive review process which included the:

- a) Completion of play value audits for all fixed play areas maintained by the Council identifying those offering limited play value
- b) Completion of demographic and settlement pattern analysis to identify potential gaps that may require the development of fixed play provision
- c) An assessment of underlying demographic demand for fixed play to identify potentially redundant fixed play areas.

### 1.1 Overview of Fixed Play Provision

Council play provision has traditionally focused on the provision of fixed play areas and there are at present 99 fixed play areas which vary in terms of size and scope depending on their location and the number of households they are designed to provide for.

Fixed play areas across the council have been classified according to the Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play'.

TYPE OF PLAY	DISTANCE CRITERIA (METRES) WALKING DISTANCE
Local Areas for Play (LAPs): designated for very young children (<5 years) with the aim of providing somewhere to play close to home.	100
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to home.	400
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP): areas designated, laid out and equipped for a range of ages (0 to 14 years).	1000

*'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play', Fields in Trust*

Based on the Fields in Trust Standards the majority of play areas (97) are classified as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's). There are currently two high play value Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's)/Destination Play Areas which are located at Flowerfield in Portstewart and Megaw Park in Ballymoney.

The Flowerfield site has been designed as an inclusive and accessible play area, offering fixed play opportunities for children with a range of ability levels.



## 1.2 Play Value of Fixed Play Areas

Through the play investment strategy Council's overall aim is to enhance the play value associated with all fixed play areas. As part of the strategy development process PlayBoard NI undertook an assessment of play value for all fixed play areas.

The play value of each site was assessed against a range of factors:

- Location: Consideration of the attractiveness and welcoming nature of the site; level of community oversight; incidences of vandalism; cleanliness of site; boundaries and fencing etc.
- Accessibility: The condition of pathways; condition of play surfaces; entrance and layout accessibility (note: inclusive play assessed separately)
- Environment: Presence or not of natural vegetation e.g. trees, bushes, shrubs; grass levels; presence of sunny, shaded and sheltered areas; ground modelling; presence of natural play opportunities e.g. rocks, logs; water play opportunities.
- Physical Play: Review of physical play opportunities afforded by the play area; variety of play equipment available; age ranges provided for
- Creative Play: Presence of sand, soil or mud play; water play opportunities; presence of loose play parts; opportunities for pretend play (e.g. natural spaces and places that stimulate the imagination, materials which can be manipulated etc.).
- Inclusive Play: Presence, scope and scale of inclusive and accessible play opportunities for children with disabilities.
- Social Play: Presence of quiet places to sit/chat/think; places to hide; opportunities to interact with children of different ages and abilities; focused recognition of the social aspect of play for older children e.g. teen shelter.

As part of the investment strategy play value assessments of all play areas will be undertaken on a five yearly basis; designers should give consideration to the identified assessment criteria when designing play areas with a view to maximising play value.

## 2.0 Overarching Play Area Design Principles

This section of the design brief provides an overview of accepted good practice principles as they relate to the design of high play value play areas.

In addition to the broader guidance contained within this design brief, designers should ensure that they give consideration to the overarching principles outlined below.

### 2.1 'Design for Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces'

'*Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces*' was developed by Play England in association with the Free Play Network.



The Guide explains how well designed, high play value play spaces can give children and young people greater freedom to play creatively whilst also enabling them to experience risk, challenge and excitement.

The guidance contained within '*Design for Play*' remains at the core of good practice in terms of developing effective play spaces.

Underpinning '*Design for Play*' is 10 guiding principles which designers should seek to incorporate into the design process, namely:

- a) Play Areas should be bespoke: There is no one size fits all solution when it comes to designing an outdoor play space - each individual play space should be designed to fit in with its surroundings and to enhance the local environment. Designers should seek to make the most of the space available, identifying how the play area can integrate best with its natural surroundings and the wider features of the site.
- b) Play areas should be well located: Whilst recognising that availability of locations may be restricted, play areas should be situated (as far as possible) where they have the best chance of being used, where children naturally gravitate towards to play, away from dangerous roads but accessible to all etc.
- c) Play Areas should allow a connection to nature: Play areas should seek to incorporate play opportunities which allow children to engage with the natural environment. This can be achieved within both urban and rural areas through the effective use of planting (trees, bushes, grass etc.), the incorporation of natural play opportunities (mud, sand etc.).
- d) Provide a wide range of play experiences: The most successful play spaces are those that can be used in different ways by children and young people of different ages and interests. Play areas should be designed to meet the play needs of a range of age groups, ability levels and play

interests. It is also important in designing a play area to recognise that play areas can be important social spaces for parents and carers.

- e) Play Areas should be Accessible: Play areas should be designed to be both accessible in terms of physical access to the site and in terms of the play activities available. As far as possible play areas should enable disabled and non-disabled children to play together and parents/carers who are themselves disabled should be able to gain access to play spaces if they are to accompany their children.

With regards to play equipment, whilst on occasion specialised play equipment to meet specific needs may be introduced, designers should seek to use accessible play equipment which offers play potential for a range of abilities.

- f) Meet wider Community Needs: If a play area is to be successful in the long-term it is important that it is seen as being an integral part of the community. As such, community engagement which includes children and young people, parents/carers and the wider community is critical to ensuring the design best meets the needs of the area in which it is located.
- g) Allow children of different ages to play together: Where space permits, and with consideration given to specific safety concerns, play areas should be designed in order to allow children of all ages to play together.
- h) Build opportunities for challenge: By introducing elements of challenge and manageable risk into the play area children are able explore new play experiences, incrementally judge risks, gauge their own physical limits and practice their own personal responsibility.
- i) Are maintained for play value and environmental sustainability: Play areas should be subject to regular, ongoing inspection to ensure that potential health and safety issues are identified and addressed as soon as possible. Play equipment should, where possible be constructed using environmentally sustainable materials.
- j) Meet the Changing Play Needs of Children: Play areas should be designed with a view to ensuring that children's experiences can change to meet their evolving play need, remaining fresh and exciting as they grow and develop. Designers should seek to achieve this by designing in 'slack space' – areas with no pre-defined function - into the layout.

## **2.2 The Six Principles of Inclusive Design**

All children and young people have the right to be able to access play opportunities that meet their needs regardless of individual ability. A fundamental aspect of the council's play investment strategy is to work towards ensuring that fixed play areas offer play opportunities for all children including those with disabilities.

In order for children with disabilities to be able to access inclusive play spaces good practice must be embedded from the outset of the design process.

It should be noted that unless a site is specifically designed to fully meet accessible play standards not all play areas will be able to be adapted or designed to meet every need; nor will every item of play equipment be suitable for all children.

The six principles of inclusive design were designed by the Disability Rights Commission (now incorporated in the Equality and Human Rights) and should be considered as part of the design process. The principles are:

- 1) Diversity and Difference: It should be recognised that disabled people are not a homogenous group and that even within impairment types children will have different abilities.
- 2) Ease of Use: No one should be forced to exert undue effort, experience discomfort or a loss of dignity. This has specific implications for the location and orientation of a site, as well as the choice of materials.
- 3) Freedom of Choice and access to mainstream activities: Independent access should be available, but equally support and assistance should be provided to those who might require it; and should be provided on the users' terms.
- 4) Quality: Aspects of design incorporated to meet the specific requirements of disabled people should be produced to a standard equal to that in the remainder of the development.
- 5) Legibility and Predictability: Incorporation of illustrated site plans are useful as an aid to enable people to orientate themselves. Where signs are essential they should be made available in alternative formats – including braille and pictures – so as to include as many children as possible.
- 6) Safety: Environments must be safe whilst still inspiring a sense of risk and challenge. This will have implications for the design of lighting, the use of particular materials, finishes and tones that may enhance or undermine the ability of people with a visual impairment to read spaces.

## 2.3 Play Types

The play value of a play area will to a large extent be affected by the range of play types that have been made available within it. There are 16 identified play types which were devised by Bob Hughes in 2002<sup>6</sup>. Each play type provides the child with an opportunity to explore new experiences; develop and learn new skills and abilities; engage socially with other children, young people and adults and stimulate their imagination and creativity. Designers

---

<sup>6</sup> Bob Hughes, published in full in 'A play worker's Taxonomy of Play Types' (PLAYLINK, second edition 2002).

should seek to reflect a range as wide a range of play types as possible within the confines of the space available.

Play Type	Description
Rough and Tumble/Contact Play	Close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, gauging strength etc.
Socio-dramatic/ Make-believe	Acting out real and potential experiences of a personal, social or interpersonal nature.
Social/Playing with rule	Play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement/interaction can be revealed, explored and amended.
Creative and inventive play	Play with an element of surprise e.g. the transformation of information, making new connections etc.
Communication	Play using words or gestures for example mime, jokes, play acting, singing etc.
Dramatic	Play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participation.
Symbolic or imaginative play	Play which allows control, exploration and increased understanding without a risk of being out of one's depth.
Deep/thematic play	Play which allows the child to encounter risky experiences, to assess risk, develop survival skills and conquer fear.
Exploratory and investigative play	Play which involves manipulative behaviours e.g. handling, throwing, banging etc.
Fantasy	Play which rearranges the world in the child's way.
Imaginative and pretend play	Play where the conventional rules which govern the physical world, do not apply.
Loco motor play	Movement in any or every direction for its own sake.
Mastery Play	Control of the physical environment for example digging holes.
Object Play	Play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulation and movements.
Role Play	Play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.
Recapitulative Play	Exploration of history, rituals, stories, fire etc. enabling access to earlier human play.

## 2.4 Core Components of Effective Play Space Design

From the review of relevant documentation, guidance and principles relating to the design of effective outdoor play spaces three consistent factors are evident. Designers should seek to incorporate consideration of these factors into the planning and design process in order to ensure that the highest level of play value is achieved given the space available.

## Play Value

Play value is affected by a range of factors including the variety of play types and play opportunities that are possible and the overall attractiveness of the space. An outdoor play space with low play value will be less appealing and the play experience is likely to be less positive and enjoyable for the child.

in seeking to enhance play value, designers should seek to incorporate a variety of play opportunities including:

**Active Play:** Provision of play equipment or other natural play elements that allow children to engage in aerobic activity, building strength, developing co-ordination and balance, developing gross/fine motor skills etc.

**Social Play:** Opportunities for social interaction between children at play. Sites should allow children the freedom to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, to cooperate, to compete through play etc.

**Sensory Play:** Play areas should offer children access to a range of sensory experiences e.g. by incorporating sound/music making, visual stimulants and access to different textures, smells etc. through natural elements etc.

**Open Space Play:** Even in restricted fixed play areas it is important to incorporate open space elements that offer opportunities for informal play such as chasing/running and more spontaneous physical and social play.

**Creative/Explorative Play:** Creative/explorative spaces encourage children to explore, interact with the environment, engage in make-believe play and take control over their play experience.

**Challenge in Play:** Children have a natural urge to challenge themselves through play. It is this urge that impels them to go beyond routine, familiar play activities that soon become boring. Play spaces should enable children to experience challenge in play in within a managed, safe environment.

## Accessibility/inclusion

In order to be truly inclusive a play space must be accessible to all children, providing high quality physical, creative and social play opportunities for children regardless of their needs and abilities.

The play environment should provide a range of sensory experiences, have open access to play opportunities and offer possibilities for all children to extend their experience and explore limits through play.

If fixed equipment is in place it should be multi-functional and accessible to all abilities for example supported high back swings with harness, slides wide enough for two people to use with rampe access etc. Whilst specialised equipment is not always needed on every site, consideration should be given to its incorporation at larger scale and destination play areas with a view to meeting the play needs of children and young people with complex needs.

The issue of accessibility and inclusion is explored in further detail within the design brief at section 4.0.

### **Amenities**

An important element to consider in designing the play space is the levels of amenities required in order to meet the needs of parents and carers.

Consideration should include the provision of adequate seating that allows for easy visual supervision of children at play as well as providing a degree of comfort and access to amenities appropriate to the size and scale of the play area. Not only will this make the carers stay more comfortable, it has been shown that if a play area appeals to carers, the child's stay will be extended, more fulfilling and more likely to be repeated on a more regular basis.

For larger NEAP/destination play areas and for inclusive play areas consideration should also be given to the provision of accessible toilet and changing facilities.



### 3.0 Site Pre-Design Brief

The most successful outdoor play spaces are designed with specific reference to their location, their surroundings and the underlying needs of the children, young people and wider community who will use it. Fixed play equipment and wider site features should therefore be designed to complement and enhance the outdoor space as well as meeting the expressed play needs of local users.

In seeking to support the design of quality outdoor fixed play areas, council will provide the appointed designer with a site pre-design brief. This will provide the designer with the information they require in order to progress the design process.

Each pre-design brief will encompass a range of information, all of which has a potential impact on the design of the play area. Each brief will include a number of sections:

#### Background and Site Overview

The first section will provide the designer with a brief overview of the identified site location including:

- The history of the site (in terms of its prior use for play or otherwise), the categorisation of the site within the play investment strategy (e.g. new, upgrade, transformation), user focus (residential or tourist) etc.
- An overview of the size and scale of the site including a site diagram noting key access points and other significant features including roadways, car parking, housing developments, schools, existing boundary fencing etc.
- Photographs showing the site from a range of different perspectives.

#### Current Play Facilities and Wider Site features

If present, the brief will provide an overview of existing play equipment and features including a copy of the most recent site maintenance inspection report and an overview of site history in terms past levels of vandalism etc.

Any further site features that may limit or enhance the play area design process will also be noted, for example:

- Site topography
- Existing vegetation and tree levels
- Natural water sources or features onsite
- Identified site constraints including areas that are out-of-bounds or potentially unsafe.



### Who is the Play Area for?

Prior to developing each site specific design brief, council will undertake a series of local consultations aimed at collecting the views of children, young people, parents/carers and wider community members. The aim of the process will be to:

- Identify underlying levels of residential demand for play and establish need based on specific age groups
- identify specific user needs the play area should seek to provide for (for example specific needs of children with a disability)
- identify any wider site issues identified by the local community

### Specific Design Requirements

Based on the findings of the consultation process the brief will provide an indication of the types of play features users would like to see incorporated into the design, should the site layout/scope allow it.

This will include an indication of the preferred style of play area (e.g. natural, modern, traditional), the identification of specific pieces of play equipment the user group would like incorporated into the design should the site allow etc.

In designing each play space the designer should make reference to the pre-design brief and seek, as far as possible given the limitations of each site, to reflect the identified needs of the local community.

## 4.0 Overarching Design Considerations

This section of the design brief provides an overview of key design considerations that should be taken into account when developing new, and redeveloping existing play areas.

Recognising that each play area design will be unique and subject to a range of factors including its location, the size of space available, the views of children/young people and the local community etc. the guidance should be tailored to each specific site.

### 4.1 General Design Principles

In 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' Fields in Trust identify a number of design principles that should be applied regardless of the size and scope of the play area (i.e. LEAP or NEAP). Designers should pay cognisance to these principles which state that children's play areas should be:

- Appropriate to the needs of the local community
- Accessible for every child within the appropriate walking time for LEAPs and NEAPs
- Accessible without having to cross main road, railways or waterways
- Sited in open, welcoming locations
- Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible from pedestrian routes
- Sited on land of natural topography or on land capable of being landscaped for the type of play experiences intended
- Designed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- Designed so that any high climbing structures are as far as possible from nearby dwellings and any potential visual intrusion is minimised
- Integrated, as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting to provide separation from nearby dwellings
- Visible from nearby dwellings or well used pedestrian routes
- Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface
- Surfaced in a manner fitting to the intensity of use
- Provided with seating for accompanying adults, carers and siblings

- Designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experiences that may include equipment and other features providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, play with natural materials such as sand and water, ball games, wheeled areas or other activities
- Designed with appropriate physical features on the perimeter to enable recognition as a play area.

## 4.2 Fixed Play Equipment

Children and young people enjoy using play equipment and the range of play opportunities it offers, particularly where it provides a degree of challenge and developmental support based on their age and ability.

Play equipment is particularly good at providing children with opportunities to engage in more active play which would not ordinarily be available to them within the home or wider community, for example climbing, swinging, sliding or rotating.

Play equipment can broadly be categorised into a number of number of types:

**Traditional Playground equipment:** Essentially this category covers what many would view to be the standard types of equipment available within traditional play areas. Included are swings, slides, roundabouts, see-saws, rockers and climbers. Traditional play equipment comes in a variety of materials including steel and natural timbers, and a range of designs from contemporary/modern through to more traditional.

**Multi-play Units:** Multi-play units can accommodate several children at once providing opportunities for social and co-operative play. Typical play activities are sliding, climbing, crawling and balancing. The type of equipment can vary from bright multi-coloured units through to those of more natural, wooden construction.

**Electronic Play Systems:** Electronic play systems seek to combine children and young peoples interest in digital technology with an opportunity to increase their level of physical activity through interactive and social games.

**Inclusive Play Equipment:** Inclusive play equipment enables children with disabilities and special needs to engage in active play alongside other children and young people. When designing a play area it is important to consider the needs of children with additional needs and incorporate play equipment and opportunities that meet a broad range of abilities and needs.

In designing play areas and selecting equipment for inclusion designers should consider the age profile and expressed needs of the local community as identified within the pre-design brief.

In order to maximise play value the design should seek to offer children with access to a variety of different play equipment types that meet the full range of identified developmental play needs.

Play equipment (in terms of the construction materials used, the design style etc.) should be chosen to integrate with the wider site, enhancing its appeal and making the space an attractive one for children to play in.

All equipment must conform to BS EN 1176 (Playground equipment and surfacing) and should be supplied with the relative certificates for each piece of equipment to confirm such compliance.

In line with council's aim of ensuring that accessible and inclusive play opportunities are available designers should seek to ensure that inclusive play equipment/opportunities are available within each play area.

All equipment must be labelled with a permanent stamp/identification plate, which clearly shows the manufacturers name and address, the date of manufacture, the equipment reference number and the date and number of the European Standard.

#### **4.3 Safety Surfacing**

Appropriate safety surfacing should be provided within the play area. The European Standards covering impact absorbent (also known as impact attenuating) surfacing (IAS) and equipment were revised in 2008 as follows:

- EN 1176 – Playground equipment and surfacing (all the requirements/recommendations for the provision of surfaces – some were previously covered in EN 1177)
- EN 1177 – Impact attenuating playground surfacing –determination of critical fall height (now just giving methods of testing).

Where a protective surface is provided In terms of surfacing, it should have been tested in accordance EN 1177 (Impact attenuating playground surfacing – determination of critical height).

If a new play area with safety surfacing and play equipment is being established it must be checked for compliance with the existing standards as part of a post-installation inspection. The inspection must be carried out by an Independent RPII (Register of Play Inspectors) inspector who will ensure that the play area and equipment has been built and installed correctly and that it meets the required standards.

Based on experience, councils preferred surface type in most cases will be wet-pour. Whilst wet-pour is more expensive to install it has been shown to be preferable from a maintenance perspective whilst the range of colours available can enhance most play equipment whether it be of modern or natural construction.

Whilst wet-pour is the council's preferred option certain sites may lend themselves to consideration of natural surfacing options providing a valid case can be made. In such cases designers will be advised of the potential to incorporate natural surfacing prior to commencement of the design process.

The table below provides an overview of the main advantages and disadvantages of the main surfacing types which may be considered as part of the design process.

Surface	Advantages	Disadvantages	Cost
<b>Preferred Option for Majority of Sites</b>			
Wet-pour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low maintenance</li> <li>• Resistant to wear in daily use</li> <li>• Good for wheelchair access</li> <li>• Easy visibility of debris on surface</li> <li>• Can be used to surface mounds</li> <li>• Long life span</li> <li>• Coloured graphics and ground-based games can be included</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to inspect foundations</li> <li>• May increase surface water run-off compared to loose-fill materials though wet-pour systems are generally porous</li> <li>• High capital outlay and expensive to repair</li> <li>• Can be ignited if a bonfire is constructed on the surface (otherwise should meet flammability test in BS 7188)</li> <li>• May contain materials which need special disposal</li> <li>• Potential for friction burns</li> </ul>	High
<b>Natural Options (Only to be considered if advised by Council)</b>			
Grass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily available</li> <li>• Environmentally friendly</li> <li>• Vandal resistant</li> <li>• Likely to be better for drainage than bound surfaces, dependent on soil types and water table</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very vulnerable to erosion and wear</li> <li>• Regular maintenance required</li> <li>• Impact absorbency will vary depending on soil types and conditions</li> <li>• On new sites there may be an issue with debris rising to the surface</li> </ul>	Very low
Bark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be sustainably sourced</li> <li>• Very good impact absorbency Low friction for those with restricted mobility</li> <li>• Vandal resistant</li> <li>• Easy inspection of foundations Good for drainage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher maintenance costs</li> <li>• Needs regular topping up</li> <li>• Can get dirty</li> <li>• Poor for wheelchair access</li> <li>• Poor visibility of debris</li> <li>• Can leave foundations exposed</li> <li>• Will need membrane underneath and retaining edge which could impede drainage</li> </ul>	Medium

#### **4.4 Boundaries and Fencing**

Whilst there is no legal requirement for the installation of boundary fencing, the majority of fixed play areas across the council area have been developed with fencing in order:

- To contain children within the relative safety of the play area and give a sense of security to parents/carers
- When allied with gates, prevent dogs from entering the play area
- To give children a sense that the play area is their space and is separate from the wider surroundings.

Recognising the above, it is however also acknowledged that fencing can detract from the appeal of a play area by segregating it from its wider surroundings and discouraging its use - particularly if poorly designed or made from inappropriate materials.

As council seeks to enhance the play value of its fixed play areas there is a recognition that fencing is not always a necessary component. In designing the play area designers should give consideration to a number of key questions:

- Does the play area require to be fenced in? If so what is the purpose of the fence?
- Is a fence necessary or would another form of boundary be just as effective (e.g. hedging)?
- What type of boundary would add play value and complement the look of the setting?
- How could the presence of dogs be dealt with positively on the site without the use of fencing and gates?

If it is determined that fencing is required consideration should be given to the type of fencing and the materials to be used. By way of example, for a natural play space within a rural area wooden fencing is likely to enhance the site whilst metal fencing may detract from it. Regardless of the fence to be used, in all cases fences should be constructed and erected in accordance with BS 1722.

#### **4.5 Natural Play Elements**

Incorporating natural elements into play spaces can make them more aesthetically appealing and attractive to both children and adults whilst enhancing the inherent play value of the site by introducing natural sensory play elements.

Research has highlighted the benefits children gain from being able to access and play within natural environments and in play spaces which incorporate natural features.

In terms of fixed play areas, designers should consider how natural elements can be introduced through, by way of example the introduction of wooden play equipment, grassy mounds, appropriate planting and the use of wooden logs and boulders as playable features. The inclusion of such elements can help to make the play space more attractive whilst also increasing its play value.

Designers should also consider the inclusion of appropriate planting as a means of enhancing the site by attracting birds and other wildlife, creating for children opportunities to connect to the wider natural environment while increasing the appeal of the play area.

### ***Locational Considerations***

Some locations, particularly those within rural areas or those located at sites of natural beauty lend themselves in particular to the development of more natural play spaces.

Within such spaces designers should seek to ensure that the design gives consideration as to how the play space can enhance the wider natural environment through the use of natural materials. This should include consideration of natural play equipment, natural surfacing, sympathetic planting and landscaping.

It should however be noted that regardless of location (whether rural or urban) designers should seek to incorporate natural elements into the design process. Urban play areas in particular benefit significantly from the incorporation of natural elements which can help to soften the hard urban landscape whilst introducing natural play experiences.

### ***Use of Wooden Play Equipment***

The introduction of wooden play equipment to the play area is one of the most obvious ways of introducing natural materials into a play area. Wooden equipment offers a number of benefits including:

- Tends to be more aesthetically pleasing, particularly in natural environments and rural locations.
- Imaginatively designed wooden play structures can help fuel children's imagination encouraging fantasy and role play.
- At a time when many children are losing contact with nature, the opportunity to play on wooden play equipment can introduce new sensory and tactile experiences.
- As a renewable and sustainable material the use of wooden play equipment is more environmentally friendly.



In determining whether or not using wooden play equipment represents a viable option for the play area, designers should give consideration to a number of key factors including:

1. Location: The location of the play area in relation to the surrounding environment. Within countryside and more natural landscape areas wooden play equipment will better complement and fit in with the natural surroundings.
2. Consultation: The views of children, young people, parents/carers and the wider community in terms of their preference on the type of material to be used for the play equipment.
3. Vandalism: For existing play areas, a review should be undertaken of vandalism to the play area and wider site. By way of example, if there is a history of fires being set maliciously the equipment may be at risk of destruction through fire.

### ***Non-Fixed Play Equipment Natural Playable Features***

Regardless of whether wooden play equipment is to be used, when designing the play space thought should be given to the inclusion of natural, playable features within the confines of site.

Incorporating fallen or cut down tree trunks, boulders and other hard landscaping features within the play area can offer children and young people significant play value, including opportunities to:

- Practice climbing and balancing on natural uneven objects which they may be unfamiliar with
- Experience the texture and feel of different natural objects as they climb and play on them, and
- Sit and hang out alone or with friends.

If such natural features are to be used it is important that the condition of tree trunks, boulders and other hard landscaping features are assessed regularly, with maintenance protocols adjusted to take into account the ageing process, natural degradation of materials and naturally occurring vegetative growth on surfaces such as moss etc.

If boulders are to be used they should be firmly bedded into the ground and care taken to ensure that they are rounded with no sharp edges to reduce the risk of harm or injury. Care should also be taken in selecting boulders as some are more susceptible to frost, others are very hard and brittle breaking off with sharp ages whilst others are soft and weather rapidly.



#### **4.6 Ground Modelling and Natural Gradients**

All too often the play spaces our children are familiar with are completely flat with no variation in ground level (mounds, gentle gradients or hollows).

In designing a play area the designer should consider whether the play value of the space could be enhanced through the use of existing, or the introduction of different levels and groundwork features. Creating such variation in ground level can help to introduce variety and encourage children to explore the site in its entirety.

By way of example, incorporating a mound can create a vantage point, hollows or tunnels create secret spaces within which children can hide and play whilst gentle gradients encourage children to run, jump and use the space in its entirety.

Where a site is located on or incorporates a natural slope, consideration should be given as to how the feature could be best used to support and enhance the play experience.

#### **4.7 Planting**

Incorporating trees, shrubs, plants and long grasses into the play area not only helps to give it a sense of character, it introduces seasonality (bringing constant change) and offers additional play opportunities. In addition, planting can offer a sense of enclosure; can help to zone the play space; can provide shade and shelter from the elements and can help to reduce erosion on mounds/gradients etc.

Plants also add texture, scent and colour to the play space and will also attract different insects such as butterflies, birds and other wildlife. It is important in selecting plants for the play space that the focus is placed firmly on their playability, in other words the plants should be seen as something for the children to play with. For that reason, plants should be chosen that are:

- Fast growing allowing them to become quickly established
- Easy to maintain with minimal need for pruning or cutting back
- Resilient and hard wearing
- Safe to handle and play with - avoid plants that are uncomfortable to touch (for example those with thorns or leaves with sharp, serrated edges), contain poisonous substances or that can cause skin irritation.

Guidance on plants that might be suitable within play areas can be found in the table overleaf.

Latin Name	Common Name	Features
<b>Trees and Shrubs</b>		<b>Multi-stemmed and feathered trees may be better for climbing once mature</b>
Betula utilis jacquemontii	Birch	Paper-thin peeling bark, catkins
Buddleja davidii	Butterfly bush	Strongly scented flowers which attract butterflies
Corylus avellana	Hazel	Catkins, nuts
Pinus radiata	Monterey Pine	Soft bright green needles
Populus tremula	Aspen	Sound of wind through leaves, catkins
Salix alba	White willow	Vivid stem colours, good for making structures such as tunnels
Salix caprea	Pussy willow	Soft velvety catkins
Salix matsudana tortuosa	Corkscrew willow	Twisted stems
<b>Grasses and Bamboos</b>		<b>Consider planting more invasive species inside barriers which will prevent spread of roots</b>
Arundo donax versicolor		A tall variegated grass
Briza maxima	Greater quaking grass	Seed heads and winter effect
Pleiblastus auricomus		Evergreen bamboo with purple stems and yellow leaves
Stipa gigantea	Golden Oats	Tall evergreen grass
Phyllostachys flexuosa	Zigzag bamboo	Very tall evergreen bamboo with zigzag stems; larger bamboos good for making wind chimes
<b>Herbaceous and Annuals</b>		
Bergenia cordifolia	Elephant's ears	Tough leathery leaves
Hypericum calycinum	Rose of Sharon	Large yellow flowers, can be invasive
Lavandula spica/	English Lavender	Colour, scent, flower shape angustifolia
Mentha spicata	Spearmint	Leaves to smell
Stachys byzantina	Lambs' ears	Silky leaves to stroke
Fragaria vesca	Wild strawberry	Colourful fruit
Lunaria annua	Honesty	Flowers and papery seed-heads

## 4.8 Risk and Challenging Play

Children of all ages and abilities have a natural urge to play, and in that play to challenge themselves. The very act of play impels them to go beyond the routine meaning that familiar play activities can quickly become boring.

When children are not challenged appropriately they will often seek risks in uncontrolled or unsafe environments. Given that children will actively seek out more challenging, adventurous and exciting play opportunities it is important that play areas respond to this natural drive by offering a stimulating, challenging play environment.

In seeking to meet children's natural desire for challenge play area designers should, through the use of appropriate design and innovative materials seek to develop spaces that allow children to experience appropriate levels of challenge within a managed, safe environment. Designs should seek to emphasise good risk whilst removing bad risk.

Good Risk	Bad Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Play equipment that encourages children to climb, clamber, swing and balance helps children to develop physical co-ordination</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poorly manufactured equipment that is weak or doesn't work properly making it likely to break or cause injury</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inclines and challenges in height help children to overcome fears gradually and at their own pace</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard surfaces that offer no play value and pose an actual danger to children as they inevitably fall</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities to explore, build and use role-play can enhance their creative and imaginative skills</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharp edges, holes and gaps where fingers or other body parts can get stuck pose an imminent threat to children</li></ul>

In considering risk and challenge in play it is important to remember that children are likely to have accidents when playing and that minor and easily healed injuries are not necessarily a problem. The aim should be to reduce the potential for more serious injury whilst meeting the natural urge for challenging play.

### ***Risk-Benefit Approach***

In designing a more challenging play space it may be useful to consider adopting the risk-benefit approach which recognises the benefits of a child having access to a particular managed risk.

By way of example, in using a climbing frame a child exposes themselves to the risk of slips and falls from the equipment. In order to manage this risk a number of actions may be taken, for example putting Impact Attenuating Surfacing in place, ensuring there are adequate hand and foot holds etc.

On the benefits side consideration should be given to why we let children use the climbing frame in the first place. Likely benefits include building physical strength, learning about balance and coordination, learning how to assess and manage risks on a personal level and experiencing the thrill of climbing to

a height.

To support application of a risk-benefit approach the Play Safety Forum has produced a practical tool that enables the balancing of the benefits of a play activity with its inherent risks.

The Risk-Benefit Assessment Form builds on the guidance document 'Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide (2nd edition)' which was published in 2013.

The Risk-Benefit Assessment Form can be accessed online at:  
<http://www.playengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/psf-risk-benefit-assessment-form-worked-example.pdf>

When designing a play area that seeks to meet children's natural desire for challenge above and beyond standard play area designs, parents/carers should be made aware of the level of challenge within the play space and the benefits for children of engaging in such activities.

Such engagement should ideally take place during the community consultation process, for example at the presentation of the draft design. By engaging with parents/carers during the design process the designer and the council will have an opportunity to highlight the importance of risk and challenge in play alongside its inherent benefits to children's development.

## 5.0 Local Equipped Areas for Play

A Local Equipped Area for Play (often referred to as a LEAP) is an area of open space specifically designated and laid out with playable features including equipment for children who are beginning to play independently close to their home.

Generally designed for use by children aged between 4 and 12 years, but with due consideration to the needs of other age ranges and user profiles as required, LEAPs should offer a minimum activity zone of 400m<sup>2</sup>.

Traditionally LEAPs were defined by having a minimum of 5 types of play equipment available; in recognition of the merits of non-fixed play this has recently been amended by Fields in Trust to the provision of at least six play experiences from the table below.

Fields in Trust Identified Play Experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balancing</li><li>• Rocking</li><li>• Climbing</li><li>• Overhead activity</li><li>• Sliding</li><li>• Swing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jumping</li><li>• Crawling</li><li>• Rotating</li><li>• Imaginative play</li><li>• Social play</li><li>• Play with natural materials</li></ul>

In order to meet the required number of play experiences LEAPs should be designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play environment making use of the natural site characteristics supplemented by landscaping (as required) and the provision of play equipment. Dependent on site size, space may be allocated for specific activities such as ball games, wheeled sports or meeting places.

As LEAPs are often used for more boisterous games they should be designed to ensure that there is adequate space for non-fixed physical activities such as running and playing non-fixed games. Due to the activity and noise level often associated with LEAPs care should be taken to ensure that the play area is properly located to reduce the possibility of it becoming a source of nuisance to other residents.

The main characteristics associated with a LEAP are:

- It is intended primarily for children who are beginning to go out and play independently
- It is within 5 minutes walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and

around play equipment or structures as appropriate

- The recommended minimum activity zone is 400 sq m
- A buffer zone of 10 metres minimum depth should normally separate the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A minimum of 20 metres should normally be provided between the activity zone and the habitable room façade of the nearest dwelling. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
  - The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
  - The siting of features including equipment within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens or dwellings, potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance.
- The buffer zone should include varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- The LEAP should be designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, and play with natural materials such as sand and water, or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision though provision for a minimum number of six play experiences is recommended
- There is adequate space within the area of the LEAP to allow children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
- Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the LEAP is enclosed there should be two, outward-opening, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the LEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the LEAP
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the facility operator should be provided with an invitation to report any incident or damage to the LEAP or the play equipment.

With a view to enhancing accessibility and inclusion, LEAPs should additionally incorporate:

- Play equipment that is inclusive and offers a choice of play experiences for children with different abilities. These may include lower-level nets for crawling/scrambling/lying on; swings with support (cradle, nest swings or dependent on identified need specialist swings), roundabouts that are flush to the ground, play panels that are low level and tactile, access ramps to some equipment to enable children to get higher if they are not able to climb independently, double width access steps with rails and double-width slides
- Pathways to the entrances of the site
- Sufficient circulation space for wheelchairs (and buggies) to move around and between the equipment
- Seating for parents, carers and families – some with access for wheelchairs.

In designing a LEAP the overarching design considerations detailed in section 4 of this brief should be considered and applied as appropriate based on:

1. The topography and geographical location of the site
2. The size and scope of the site to be used, and
3. The findings and recommendations of the community engagement process undertaken at the outset of the design phase

With a view to aiding the design process a number of examples of LEAP designs have been included over the coming pages of the brief. These are produced purely to provide an overview of LEAP designs and to give an indication of the associated costs of each. All designs have been produced for illustrative purposes only and are used by kind permission of Wicksteed Playscapes.



## LEAP Design Example 1



## Play Area Description

Incorporates a range of playable features including natural and manufactured equipment, natural features (fallen log) and a free space/games area.

The design delivers against a range of play experiences including:

1. Social play
2. Balancing
3. Rocking
4. Climbing
5. Overhead activity
6. Sliding
7. Swinging
8. Jumping
9. Play with natural materials

Inclusive play is catered for through the use of the timber basket swing.

**Estimated Cost:** £30,000  
(as at May 2018)



## LEAP Design Example 2



### Play Area Description

Adopting a more traditional approach to play area design, example 2 incorporates a range of playable features including equipment and a free space/games area.

The design delivers against a range of play experiences including:

1. Balancing
2. Rocking
3. Climbing
4. Sliding
5. Swinging
6. Jumping
7. Rotating
8. Social play

**Estimated Cost:** £40,000  
(as at May 2018)

### LEAP Design Example 3



### Play Area Description

Incorporates a range of playable features including primarily timber based equipment, natural features (fallen log) and a free space/games area.

The design delivers against a range of play experiences including:

1. Balancing
2. Rocking
3. Climbing
4. Overhead activity
5. Swinging
6. Jumping
7. Rotating
8. Social play
9. Play with natural materials

Inclusive play is catered for through the use of the timber basket swing.

**Estimated Cost:** £30,000  
(as at May 2018)



## 6.0 Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play

A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (often referred to as a NEAP) is an area of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped for the whole spectrum of users of the play area including play and recreation opportunities for older as well as younger children. A NEAP should be sufficiently large to enable the inclusion of play opportunities that can not be provided within a LEAP with a minimum activity area of 1,000m<sup>2</sup>.

As with LEAPs, NEAPs traditionally were defined by the number of pieces of play equipment available, in this case at least 8. In recognition of the merits of non-fixed play this has recently been amended by Fields in Trust to the provision of at least nine play experiences from the table below.

Fields in Trust Identified Play Experiences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balancing</li><li>• Rocking</li><li>• Climbing</li><li>• Overhead activity</li><li>• Sliding</li><li>• Swing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jumping</li><li>• Crawling</li><li>• Rotating</li><li>• Imaginative play</li><li>• Social play</li><li>• Play with natural materials</li></ul>

Given its focus on providing for the older age group as well as younger children, NEAPs should be designed to provide a greater variety of opportunity for both active and passive play than would be possible within a LEAP.

By way of example, a NEAP may include play equipment, provision of a multi-use games area (MUGA), skateboard area or green space adequate for meeting a range of recreational activities. Recognising that as children move towards their teenage years they will increasingly seek out opportunities to meet and socialise with friends away from home, a NEAP may include a teen shelter (covered seated area). The area should further be capable of meeting the needs of children with a range of impairments.

The main characteristics associated with a NEAP include:

- It is intended primarily for use by older children of relative independence, who have the freedom to range further from home
- It is within 15 minutes' walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well drained site, with both grass and hard surfaced areas, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and around play equipment or structures as appropriate

- The recommended minimum activity zone is 1000 sq m, comprising an area for play equipment and structures, and a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sq m (the minimum needed to play 5-a-side football)
- A buffer zone of 30 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A greater distance may be needed where purpose-built skateboarding facilities are required. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
  - The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
  - The siting of equipment and features within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens and dwellings and potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance
- The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- It is designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment and other features providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, play with natural materials such as sand and water, ball games, wheeled areas or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision, though provision for a minimum number of nine play experiences is recommended
- There is adequate space within the area of the NEAP to allow for children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
- The question of enclosure is one for the manager but the boundaries should be recognisable by landscaping. Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the NEAP is enclosed there should be two, outward-opening, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the NEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the NEAP
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the facility operator should be provided with an invitation to report any

incident or damage to the NEAP and the play equipment

- Convenient and secure parking facilities for bicycles should be provided

To enhance accessibility, NEAPs should have:

- Car parking, with disabled bays next to the access route
- Play equipment that is inclusive, by offering choice of play experiences for children with different abilities. These may include lower-level nets for crawling/scrambling/lying on; swings with support (cradle, nest swings or possibly specialist swings), roundabouts that are flush with the ground, play panels that are low-level and tactile, access ramps to some equipment to enable children to get higher if they cannot climb independently, double width access steps, with rails and double-width slides
- Pathways to the entrances
- Flat entrances with gates of at least 1m width to allow for wheelchair access
- Self-closing gates, closing in between 3 and 5seconds (to allow time for access with wheelchairs or prams/buggies)

In designing a NEAP the overarching design considerations detailed in section 4 of this brief should be considered and applied as appropriate based on:

1. The topography and geographical location of the site
2. The size and scope of the site to be used, and
3. The findings and recommendations of the community engagement process undertaken at the outset of the design phase

With a view to aiding the design process a number of example of NEAP designs have been included over the coming pages of the brief. These are produced purely to provide an overview of NEAP designs and to give an indication of the associated costs of each. All designs have been produced for illustrative purposes only and are used by kind permission of Wicksteed Playscapes.

## NEAP Design Example 1





**Description:** The overall recreation space includes a play area and multi-use games area connected via a pathway. The play area offers a wide range of play experiences for children up to 14 years including balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, rotating and social play. Recognising the higher age range the design incorporates a number of more challenging play features including the hurricane swing, flymobile, streetboard and cableway. Inclusive play is incorporated through the basket swing and wide slide which is designed to enable children with special needs to be assisted by friends or carers.

**Estimated Cost:** £100,000 (as at May 2018)

### NEAP Design Example 2



**Description:** The overall recreation space includes a play area and multi-use games area. The play area offers a wide range of play experiences for children up to 14 years including balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, rotating and social play. Through the incorporation of more challenging play features such as the crows nest, crusader swing and Trojan climber the site offers a range of more challenging play experiences. The site is fully DDA accessible. Recognising the demand for skate based activities the site includes a skate zone adjacent to the MUGA. For teens a sheltered, seated area has been incorporate on the periphery of the site.

**Estimated Cost:** £120,000 (as at May 2018)

### NEAP Design Example 3





**Description:** Divided into discreet zones based on age group and ability, example 3 aims to provide play opportunities for all on one single site. The combined play area offers a wide range of play experiences for children up to 15 years including balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, rotating and social play. Play activities introduce growing levels of associated challenge as children grow and progress by age and development. The inclusive area includes an accessible multi unit with wide slide, ground level roundabout and supported swing.

**Estimated Cost:** £80,000 (as at May 2018)

## 7.0 Destination Play Areas

A 'destination' play area is a play space located within a key site such as a park which attracts visitors on a regular basis. A 'destination' play area aims to provide a facility for families and other visitors to enhance their experience and prolong the amount of time they spend at the location.

'Destination' play areas tend to be larger than NEAPs, have car parking facilities, offer a greater variety of fixed play equipment and often offer access to facilities such as cafes, public toilets and changing areas. Destination sites should be designed to be fully accessible with a range of playable features for children with disabilities.

'Destination' play areas should be designed to offer a highly stimulating play experience offer a variety of play experiences which are not ordinarily found within LEAP's or NEAPs. The play area should appeal to children and young people of all ages.

In designing a 'destination' play area the overarching design considerations detailed in section 4 of this brief should be considered and applied as appropriate based on:

1. The topography and geographical location of the site
2. The size and scope of the site to be used, and
3. The findings and recommendations of the community engagement process undertaken at the outset of the design phase

With a view to aiding the design process an example of a 'destination' play area design has been included overleaf. The example is produced purely to provide an overview of a 'destination' play area designs and to give an indication of the associated cost. The design has been produced for illustrative purposes only and is used by kind permission of Wicksteed Playscapes.

## Destination Design Example



**Description:** The play area offers a wide range of exciting and challenging play opportunities for all ages and abilities. In terms of surfacing the site uses a combination of coloured wetpour with inlaid graphics and grass matting. Self-binding gravel is used for the seating/chill out area. All tarmac paths are wheelchair accessible and suitable for buggies/prams.

The site features a range of play equipment including multi play units with nautical themed panels, Crusader rope swing, zig zag twisters, sensory play, Surf Rider, 4 saw seesaw, 2 steel cableways allowing children to race each other and multi play unit for younger children, boasting 17 play features. In terms of inclusive play the play area incorporates multi-play units with wide slide, crawl tunnel, ramps etc., basket swing, accessible roundabout, ground level trampolines, sensory play including play panels, musical instruments and low level wetpour mounds for crawling, jumping, lying on and 2 wheelchair accessible picnic tables.

**Estimated Cost:** £200,000 (as at May 2018)

## **8.0 Final Play Area Design Consultation**

In line with the council's agreed consultation process, the draft design for each play area will be presented to the wider community including children and young people, parents/carers and wider community representatives for final agreement.

The purpose of this process will be:

- To present the initial draft design to the main user group who were involved in the pre-design consultation process for comment and further development if required
- To note any additional requirements which were identified subsequent to the pre-design consultation phase and consider for inclusion in the final design
- Should identified requirements from the pre-design consultation not be feasible for inclusion within the design, to explain the rationale for omission be it based on size/scope of the site, safety reasons etc.