

Play Strategy: Update on Spatial Gap analysis / Play Value Audits	10th October 2017
To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Resilient, healthy & engaged communities
Outcome	Citizens will have access to Council recreational facilities and protected natural environments which help them to develop their physical, emotional and cognitive health
Lead Officer	Head of Sport & Wellbeing
Cost: (If applicable)	N/A

The purpose of this report is to:

- **Update members on the key findings of spatial analysis and play value audits.**
- **Present Members with the information to support a decision on the demographic criteria that could be applied to the anticipated Play Strategy.**

Background

In March 2017 Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council commissioned PlayBoard NI to develop an overarching Play Strategy for the Borough.

The purpose of the commission was to:

1. Conduct a quantitative and spatial audit of current fixed play provision, identifying areas of inadequate or over provision of fixed play.
2. Complete an audit of the play value associated with each of the 99 council owned fixed play areas within the council.
3. Undertake community engagement on the issue of play and play delivery in order to influence the development of an overarching play strategy.
4. Provide strategic recommendations to council in the form of a Play Strategy that makes recommendations regarding the future provision of play, both fixed and non-fixed.

As part of the ongoing project PlayBoard NI representatives have:

- Visited all 99 fixed play facilities and reported on condition and play value.
- Hosted public consultation events across the Borough.
- Met with special interest groups.
- Delivered a Councillor's Play Workshop; and
- Presented options and implications to the Councillors in their DEA groups.

Gap Identification

The discussion paper attached at **Annex A** sets out the Fields in Trust definitions of types of fixed play facilities and their associated distance criteria. It also identifies how population estimates and household location data can be used to identify potential gaps in fixed play provision. Based on the initially proposed criteria this work identifies the need for additional/expanded provision in the following areas:

DEA	Location	Comments
Ballymoney	Cloughmills	Consider initial expansion of Bio-Park
	South Ballymoney	Possible land issues
Bann	Castleroe	Review in line with wider Coleraine DEA proposals
Benbradagh	Ballykelly	Possible land issues
Causeway	Portrush	Consider site to the rear of Portrush PS
	Bushmills	Possible land issues
Coleraine	Waterside	Consider partnership with schools
	The Cuts 1	Demand to be tested
	Knocklyn	Possible redevelopment of Rugby Avenue site
The Glens	Ballycastle West	Possible land issues
	Waterfoot	Consider green space identified by community (possible land use planning restrictions)
Limavady	Limavady Town	Development of Destination accessible play area Possible further need – test post destination play site development

Play Value

Play value is a critical consideration as a play area with low play value has little appeal for children, is likely to have low levels of usage and will not enhance children's play experiences or support their development.

The attached paper sets out the key findings from the Play Value Audit at a Council wide level with a score for each play individual area. The full Fixed Play Area Play Value Audit is available in the Member's Library. Those play areas scoring 50% or below are considered to have an inadequate level of play value. 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. 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.

Upgrading of Low Play Value Play Areas

Fourteen fixed play areas (including amalgamation of Cottagewood 1 and 2) have been proposed for renewal/upgrading during the first 5 years of the strategy due to low play value.

The sites included are:

- Lisnagrot
- Feeney Picnic Area
- Garvagh Road
- Landsdowne Road
- Dhu Varren (partial – replace old, worn equipment)
- The Warren
- Daneshill
- Rugby Avenue (Consideration for destination play area)
- Anderson Park
- Middle Park
- Cottagewood 1 and 2 (Amalgamate and renew)
- Quay Road (To destination play area)
- Swanns Bridge
- Larchfield Gardens

Site Transformations

5 sites have been identified as having potentially low levels of demand coupled with low play value. The sites identified are:

- Ballynagarvey
- Glenullin
- Islandmoore
- Shane's Park
- Ballyknock

DEA Area Workshops

During the month of August the initial findings of the spatial analysis and play value audits were presented to each DEA group providing an opportunity to discuss the findings and to seek clarification on underlying matters including the implications of the illustrative criterion for gap identification. The key points raised by Councillors in these sessions are included in the paper at **Annex A** and are reflected in options' assessment and recommendations below.

Options for Identification of Residential Play Gaps

One of the key issues to be resolved prior to the finalisation of the Draft Play Strategy for Member's consideration is the establishment of an underlying set of criteria to be applied by Council to support the identification of gaps in residential fixed play provision both now and in the future.

The establishment of appropriate criterion is of critical importance. By way of example, setting the demographic limit too high is likely to result in very little, if any future fixed play development and would impact more significantly on rural communities. Setting the level too low could result in levels of need being identified at multiple sites, impacting both financially (with increased capital expenditure required), potentially causing duplication of provision within settlements and mitigating councils desire to enhance high play value provision by spreading capital resources thinly to develop multiple, smaller, low play value sites.

It should also be noted that public consultation highlighted that many residents are willing to travel further distances in order to access higher value play sites with a wider range of activities and support services. The attached paper sets out options and implications for 3 criteria and makes recommendations as follows:

Criterion 1: Radial Catchment

That council apply the ABS standards which, despite some concerns regarding their appropriateness in a Northern Ireland context are embedded within the planning system and have national recognition.

Criterion 2: Demographic Thresholds

In order to be eligible for consideration for fixed play provision:

- Urban areas would need to meet minimum threshold of 150 resident children or young people aged between 0 to 14.
- Rural areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 50 children or young people aged 0 to 14 years.

Criterion 3: Residential Household Coverage.

Apply existing planning regulation level of 100 units for LEAP fixed play development with tailored approach to meeting play need in areas below 100 units.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the work undertaken to date to audit the Council's fixed provision.
- Agree the 3 criteria recommended above and approve their application to the upcoming Draft Play Strategy for Member's future consideration.

ANNEX A

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Play Audit Summary Report and Play Strategy Criteria Proposals

Prepared by PlayBoard NI, September 2017

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on the key findings of spatial analysis and play value audits completed as part of the development of an overarching Council Play Strategy; and
- Propose demographic criteria for use in the preparation of Draft Play Strategy

2.0 Background

In March 2017 Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council commissioned PlayBoard NI to develop an overarching Play Strategy for the Borough.

The purpose of the commission was to:

5. Conduct a quantitative and spatial audit of current fixed play provision, identifying areas of inadequate or over provision of fixed play
6. Complete an audit of the play value associated with each of the 99 council owned fixed play areas within the council
7. Undertake community engagement on the issue of play and play delivery in order to influence the development of an overarching play strategy
8. Provide strategic recommendations to council in the form of a Play Strategy that makes recommendations regarding the future provision of play, both fixed and non-fixed.

This report focuses on areas one and two of the commission and provides an overview of key play value audit findings and highlights areas of potential under-provision in fixed play.

As part of the ongoing project PlayBoard NI representatives have:

- Visited all 99 fixed play facilities and reported on condition and play value
- Hosted public consultation events across the Borough
- Met with special interest groups
- Delivered a Councillor's Play Workshop; and
- Presented options and implications to the Councillors in their DEA groups

3.0 Fixed Play Areas

Fixed play is for many the most familiar form of the play provision and is based around the installation of fixed play equipment within a designated play area. Typical examples of equipment found within fixed play areas includes traditional equipment (for example swings, roundabouts etc.) to more extensive climbing structures, activity panels and sensory play items.

The development and installation of fixed play areas represents a significant financial commitment, both in terms of the initial capital outlay and ongoing maintenance costs. It is therefore critical that a strategic approach is applied to both the ongoing management of existing play areas and to the establishment of new fixed play areas, whether through council or non-council funding.

Fixed play areas are typically classified according to the Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play' (also known as the Six Acre Standards) which provide a means of determining the geographical catchment 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	STRAIGHT LINE 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	60
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to home.	400	240
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP): areas designated, laid out and equipped for a range of ages (0 to 14 years).	1000	600

There are at present 99 fixed play areas within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. The majority of play areas (97) are classified as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's), providing a range of fixed play opportunities for children and young people aged between 0 to 10/12. Two Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's) – also known as destination play sites are located at Flowerfield's in Portstewart and Megaw Park providing a more extensive play experience for an age range up to 14 years.

4.0 Spatial Audit and Potential Gap Identification

In order to identify potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

- Population estimates and geographical distribution of 0 to 14 year old's living within each DEA area; and
- Household location data in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

It should be noted that the identification of a gap does not indicate a definite need for fixed play development, rather it highlights that based on underlying demographic and household distribution factors a potential gap exists. Prior to initiating the development of new fixed play council should undertake a localised assessment of need, engaging with the local population to determine the true level of need, underlying age groups etc.

In identifying gaps an initial demographic criterion was established wherein in order to be eligible for consideration for new fixed play development the number of resident children and young people (0 to 14) within an urban area should be 150* or more. In the case of rural areas, in recognition of lower population density levels this has been reduced to 100* children or young people (0 to 14) or more.

* The criterion was established for illustrative purposes to support the initial assessment of spatial need – options for the final assessment criterion are included for consideration in section 7.0 of this report.

Areas identified as potentially requiring additional/expanded fixed play provision (based on the initial criterion) are:

DEA	Location	Comments
Ballymoney	Cloughmills	Consider initial expansion of Bio-Park
	South Ballymoney	Possible land issues
Bann	Castleroe	Review in line with wider Coleraine DEA proposals
Benbradagh	Ballykelly	Possible land issues
Causeway	Portrush	Consider site to the rear of Portrush PS
	Bushmills	Possible land issues
Coleraine	Waterside	Consider partnership with schools
	The Cuts 1	Demand to be tested
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Limavady	Limavady Town	Development of Destination accessible play area Possible further need – test post destination play site development

In seeking to progress development within each area, council should initiate a localised analysis of each area in order to:

- Identify potential land options that lend themselves to meeting fixed play development requirements. This should 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.)
- Complete a review of actual need on the ground (as opposed to statistical need) to determine the level of support for such development at community level through community engagement processes.

5.0 Play Value Audit

Play value is a critical consideration as a play area with low play value has little appeal for children, is likely to have low levels of usage and will not enhance children’s play experiences or support their development.

In conducting the play value audits, a number of key areas were assessed and allocated a rating including:

- Locational factors

- Accessibility factors
- Environmental factors
- Physical play opportunities
- Creative play opportunities
- Inclusive play opportunities
- Social play opportunities

The maximum score possible for a play area is 800, however it should be noted that a perfect score is highly unlikely due to the range and scope of the areas being assessed.

The result of the play value audits are presented within this section of the report on an overarching council basis. A more comprehensive overview report has also been produced whilst DEA groups have also had an opportunity to review the findings for their specific DEA area.

The table below sets out the key findings from the play value audit at a council wide level whilst the tables on the subsequent tables outline the scores for each play individual area.

Criteria	No. of Play Areas
Highest Scoring Fixed Play Area	Flowerfields, Portstewart (675)
Lowest Scoring Play Area	Shanes Park (255)
Unassessed	1 Play Area (Larchfield Gdns) closed pending renewal
Total No. scoring 399 or below (equates to a poor level of play value)	26
Total No. scoring between 400 and 479 (equates to a fair level of play value)	38
Total No. scoring between 480 and 599 (equates to a good level of play value)	29
Total No. scoring 601 to 800 (equates to a high level of play value)	5
Key Action – Maintain and Monitor in line with renewal cycle	79
Key Action – Renewal within strategy timeframe	14 (including amalgamation of Cottagewood 1/2)
Key Action – Possible Site Transformation within strategy timeframe	5

ANNEX A

Rank	Play Area	Postcode	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
1	Flowerfields	BT55 7HU	90	70	110	190	25	120	50	20	675
2	Megaw	BT53 6BP	100	55	95	190	25	115	45	25	650
3	Glass island foreshore	BT54 6BN	95	65	65	190	15	115	55	15	615
4	Elms playpark	BT52 2QE	105	65	75	165	25	120	35	25	615
5	Ballymoney Riverside	BT53 7AG	90	60	95	175	25	105	40	20	610
6	Drumbolcan	BT44 8RX	105	40	85	185	25	95	35	25	595
7	Lisnagunouge	Bt57 8sr	90	45	80	180	25	95	40	20	575
8	The Crescent	Bt55 7ab	90	65	50	175	25	115	40	15	575
9	Arcadia	BT56 8AB	70	75	65	175	15	95	45	15	555
10	Carrick Dhu	Bt56 8ls	70	45	95	170	25	105	25	20	555
11	Cloughmills	BT44 9LF	90	55	60	180	15	95	45	15	555
12	Drumaheglis	BT53 7QN	85	50	65	170	25	120	25	15	555
13	Ballintoy	Bt54 6nr	100	40	75	165	25	100	25	20	550
14	Articlave	Bt51 4uu	85	25	105	155	15	120	15	20	540
15	Windy Hall	BT52 1TT	85	45	65	150	25	105	35	20	530
16	Glebeside	BT53 6ET	90	35	70	160	25	105	25	20	530
17	Liscolman	Bt53 8dt	100	25	70	175	25	85	25	20	525
18	Craiglea Gdns	Na	105	40	85	145	20	95	15	20	525
19	Stranocum	Bt53 8pg	90	25	90	175	25	85	15	15	520
20	Ramore	BT56 8BB	75	40	85	165	20	85	30	15	515
21	Benone	BT49 0LQ	75	45	70	175	25	80	25	20	515
22	Glenmanus	Bt56 8hu	90	45	55	175	25	80	25	15	510
23	Feeney	BT47 3TS	85	30	70	175	20	80	20	20	500
24	Juniper Hill	Bt55 7pt	85	30	70	170	20	85	25	15	500
25	Burnfoot	Bt49 9lj	85	40	60	160	25	85	25	15	495
26	Dernaflaw	Bt47 4pp	75	45	75	145	25	85	25	20	495

ANNEX A

Rank	Play Area	Postcode	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
27	Quay Road, Ballycastle	BT54 6BJ	85	30	85	145	25	80	25	20	495
28	Glentaisie	Bt54 6as	90	25	60	150	25	85	40	20	495
29	Dervock riverside	Bt53 8bb	90	20	85	165	25	80	15	15	495
30	Portballintrae	Bt57 8ru	80	35	65	175	25	80	15	15	490
31	Magilligan	BT48 0LA	90	40	65	165	20	65	25	20	490
32	Cushendun Bay Road	BT44 0PJ	75	30	70	165	25	70	30	20	485
33	Rathlin	BT54 6RS	65	35	70	170	15	90	20	20	485
34	Foreglen	Bt47 4pj	90	45	55	130	25	95	25	15	480
35	Castlerock		85	35	55	165	20	75	20	20	475
36	Blackburn Path	Bt49 0BW	90	35	55	150	25	85	15	20	475
37	Kings Lane	Bt49 9jy	90	35	65	145	20	75	25	15	470
38	Turnarobert park	Bt53 8sd	70	35	65	155	25	80	25	15	470
39	Millenium Park	BT44 9JN	75	20	65	165	25	80	20	20	470
40	Bushmills	BT57 8QG	80	30	55	165	25	80	20	15	470
41	Millburn	BT52 2AN	95	25	65	150	25	75	15	15	465
42	Seacon	BT53 6QW	95	35	60	165	15	65	25	5	465
43	Westgate	BT53 6LD	75	35	60	155	25	75	25	15	465
44	Clintyfinnan	Bt53 8uw	75	25	60	180	10	80	15	15	460
45	Erinvale	BT53 8XX	80	25	65	160	25	80	15	10	460
46	Mosside	Bt53qd	85	25	65	145	25	85	15	15	460
47	Macfin	BT53 6QT	85	35	60	165	15	65	25	10	460
48	Willowdale	BT53 7LX	85	20	65	155	25	80	15	15	460
49	Legg Green	BT44 0NG	65	40	60	165	25	55	30	15	455

Rank	Play Area	Postcode	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
50	Rockend	Bt44 9jf	85	30	55	170	20	70	15	10	455
51	Dunluce	BT56 8BF	75	20	55	185	10	85	15	10	455
52	Waterfoot	BT53 8SD	65	30	65	155	25	75	20	15	450
53	Landhead	Bt53 7hq	85	20	55	170	25	70	15	10	450
54	Lyttlesdale	-	80	30	60	150	20	75	15	20	450
55	Drumsumn playpark	Bt49 0ls	65	25	60	145	25	90	25	15	450
56	Quinn Memorial	BT53 7HP	80	25	65	155	25	70	15	15	450
57	Seymour	BT53 6LL	85	20	70	150	25	70	15	15	450
58	Anderson Pk	BT52 1PS	65	45	60	140	15	70	35	15	445
59	Fulton	BT53 7PU	85	25	55	160	25	65	15	15	445
60	Curragh Road	Bt47 4sx	55	20	55	150	25	95	25	15	440
61	Armoy Riverside	Bt53 8xq	65	25	55	150	25	90	15	15	440
62	Boleran	Bt53 7ph	70	25	50	155	25	85	15	15	440
63	Ballybogey	Bt53 6nt	80	30	55	140	25	75	15	15	435
64	Greysteel	BT47 4TD	65	30	55	150	20	70	25	15	430
65	Harpurs Hill	BT52 2EL	90	25	55	145	25	65	15	10	430
66	Dundarave	Bt57 8sd	85	20	70	135	25	65	15	15	430
67	Dunloy	BT44 9AF	70	20	60	155	10	85	15	15	430
68	Greymount	BT53 7LQ	90	35	50	160	10	60	15	10	430
69	Killyrammer	BT53 8NB	75	20	55	150	25	75	15	10	425
70	Mettican	Bt51 5hn	90	25	40	145	25	60	15	15	415

Rank	Play Area	Postcode	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
71	The Warren	Bt55 7hd	70	20	50	155	25	65	15	10	410
72	Kylemore	BT51 3HG	85	25	60	120	25	55	15	15	400
73	Rugby Avenue	BT52 1JL	80	20	60	150	15	45	15	10	395
74	Glack	BT49 9NA	60	25	70	155	15	40	15	10	390
75	Cottagewood No 1	BT44 0NB	50	30	50	150	20	65	15	10	390
76	Daneshill	BT52 2QA	85	20	50	125	25	60	15	10	390
77	Dhu varren	Bt56 8bq	70	15	50	135	25	65	15	15	390
78	Macosquin	Bt51 4nf	80	20	65	120	15	65	15	10	390
79	Garvagh Road	Bt47 4ub	65	20	55	120	15	80	15	15	385
80	Fernbank	Bt53 8uu	20	20	40	165	25	90	20	5	385
81	Swanns Bridge	Bt49 9ef	30	15	40	145	15	105	25	5	380
82	Cottagewood No 2	BT44 0NB	50	20	50	150	20	60	15	10	375
83	Roe Mill road	Bt49 9bq	60	20	50	130	20	70	15	10	375
84	Torrens	BT53 7DE	15	20	40	165	25	80	20	5	370
85	Finvola Park	Bt47 4sx	40	35	45	145	5	80	15	5	370
86	Middlepark	BT44 0SQ	40	15	60	145	15	70	15	10	370
87	Ben Vista	Bt44 9jh	15	20	40	165	25	80	20	5	370
88	Currysheskin	BT57 8SY	60	15	35	155	15	65	15	10	370
89	Balnagarvey	BT53 7PH	60	20	55	150	5	45	15	10	365
90	Carnduff	Bt54 6ln	50	15	20	155	25	70	15	5	355
91	Alexander Road	Bt49 0BW	45	15	45	150	20	50	15	10	350
92	Glenullin	Bt51 5sb	70	25	55	95	5	55	15	15	335
93	Lisnagrot	Bt51 5ea	55	20	35	135	5	25	15	10	300

Rank	Play Area	Postcode	Physical Play	Creative Play	Social Play	Location Factors	Accessibility Factors	Features	Environment	Risk & Challenge	Total Play Value
94	Feeny Picnic Area	Bt47 4su	15	15	30	130	5	70	20	5	290
95	Ballyknock	Bt53 8yd	50	15	40	135	5	25	15	5	290
96	Landsdowne	BT56 8AY	15	15	30	130	20	60	15	5	290
97	Ballylagan Road	BT52 2PQ	40	15	40	115	5	30	15	10	270
98	Shanes Park	BT44 0PW	15	5	30	140	15	30	15	5	255
99	Larchfield Gardens										CLOSED

ANNEX A

With regards to those play areas scoring 50% or below, the play value assessment highlights an inadequate level of play value. Whilst the reasons for the low play value score varies from site to site, a number of contributing factors have been identified 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 with an inadequate level of play value 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.

Play areas scoring between 400 and 479, whilst of marginally higher play value are likely to require some immediate remedial action above regular maintenance in order to address underlying issues that reduce their play value. Such sites are also likely to require future renewal or upgrade within the lifetime of the play strategy, providing that continued demographic need can be ascertained.

Play areas scoring 480 to 599 represent an adequate level of play value for the 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.

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.

Upgrading of Low Play Value Play Areas

Fourteen fixed play areas (including amalgamation of Cottagewood 1 and 2) have been identified for renewal/upgrading during the first 5 years of the strategy due to low play value. The sites included are:

- Lisnagrot
- Feeney Picnic Area
- Garvagh Road
- Landsdowne Road
- Dhu Varren (partial – replace old, worn equipment)
- The Warren
- Daneshill
- Rugby Avenue (Consideration for destination play area)
- Anderson Park
- Middle Park
- Cottagewood 1 and 2 (Amalgamate and renew)
- Quay Road (To destination play area)
- Swanns Bridge
- Larchfield Gardens

Council should initiate a capital work programme aimed at enhancing play value at these sites incorporating consultation with children, young people and the local community as part of the process.

Site Transformations

5 sites have been identified as having potentially low levels of demand coupled with low play value. The sites identified are:

- Ballynagarvey
- Glenullin
- Islandmoore
- Shane's Park
- Ballyknock

Council should initiate consultation over the duration of the strategy with a view to site transformation to better meet the needs of the resident population.

6.0 DEA Area Workshops

During the month of August the initial findings of the spatial analysis and play value audits were presented to each DEA group providing an opportunity to discuss the findings and to seek clarification on underlying matters including the implications of the illustrative criterion for gap identification.

During discussions, a number of key points were noted:

- With regards to Coleraine DEA, the criterion for identification of a play gaps (minimum 150 children aged 0 to 14) was found to be appropriate given the underlying urban nature of the DEA and demographic patterns.
- Common across all other DEA areas was a level of concern at the setting of a minimum level of 100 children aged 0 to 14. Given the rural nature of DEA areas it was felt that the setting of such a level would disadvantage more isolated areas. PlayBoard were asked to consider possible options for presentation to committee aimed at addressing this issue (see section 7.0 of

this report).

- The townland of Aghadowey was identified as an area of particular interest and PlayBoard have been asked to conduct a further analysis of the area.
- Across all DEA groups there was a recognition that fixed play provided only one option for meeting play need and there was a general agreement that council should consider non-fixed models of delivery as a means of enhancing play delivery across the borough.
- In line with public consultation findings, there was a preference across all DEA areas for the focusing of investment on the development of higher value fixed play sites, including the establishment of a number of new destination play areas.

Such sites would offer a greater variety of play opportunities for a broader age range, meeting the needs of both residents and visitors/tourists to the area.

- All DEA areas agreed (in line with public consultation findings) that future renewal and new fixed play provision should include accessible play equipment, ensuring that children with disabilities had greater access to fixed play opportunities.
- There was broad recognition of the need to provide recreational activity opportunities for teenagers who had outgrown traditional fixed play areas. This included recognition of the need to provide for the needs of specific groups e.g. urban sports, skateboarders etc. as well as providing teen hang-out spaces.

7.0 Options for Identification of Residential Play Gaps

One of the key issues to be resolved prior to the finalisation of the play strategy is the establishment of an underlying set of criteria to be applied by council to support the identification of gaps in residential fixed play provision both now and in the future.

Recognising the value of tourism to the council area, an additional consideration will be built into the play strategy recognising that the presence of a natural site or tourist feature may benefit from the development of a fixed play area. This section of the report deals with residential demand only.

In identifying gaps in residential provision three pieces of information are utilised:

- The size of the radial catchment area associated with each play area (based on LAP, LEAP or NEAP designation) which used to identify user range.
- Underlying demographic information relating to the number of 0 to 14 year olds resident within an identified area.
- Household distribution and settlement form.

The establishment of appropriate criterion is of critical importance. By way of example, setting the demographic limit too high is likely to result in very little, if any future fixed play development and would impact more significantly on rural communities. Setting the level too low could result in levels of need being identified at multiple sites, impacting both financially (with increased capital expenditure required), potentially causing duplication of provision within settlements and mitigating councils desire to

enhance high play value provision by spreading capital resources thinly to develop multiple, smaller, low play value sites.

It should also be noted that public consultation highlighted that many residents are willing to travel further distances in order to access higher value play sites with a wider range of activities and support services.

7.1 Criterion 1: Radial Catchment

With regards to radial catchment area, council is at liberty to determine and set its own radial catchments as a measure of population coverage from each fixed play area. By way of options, two have been identified as being potentially open to council.

Option 1: Fields in Trust Accessibility Benchmark Standard

The Fields in Trust Accessibility Benchmark Standard (ABS) is applied across Great Britain as the standard measurement of radial catchment area associated with fixed play provision dependent on size.

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

Whilst the ABS is accepted as the standard measure in GB, in a Northern Ireland context it has been highlighted that it fails to take into account the rural nature of household distribution and settlement formation. It should be noted that the ABS are recognised within the planning system and to use a separate set of criteria may lead to inconsistency of application between public and private provision within residential estates.

Option 2: Tailored Radial Catchments

Recognising the limitations of the ABS in a Northern Ireland context, one council has applied a tailored set of radial catchments.

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.	600
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to home.	1000
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP): areas designated, laid out and equipped for a range of ages (0 to 14 years).	5000

Whilst option 2 has been tailored to suit a specific set of localised circumstances and


aims to support the development of high play value sites that meet the needs of both urban and rural communities, it does lack the national recognition afforded to the ABS within the planning system. This potentially could lead to inconsistency of application between public and private developments.

Recommendation: That council apply Option 1 – the ABS standards which, despite some concerns regarding their appropriateness in a Northern Ireland context are embedded within the planning system and have national recognition.

7.2 Criterion 2: Demographic Thresholds

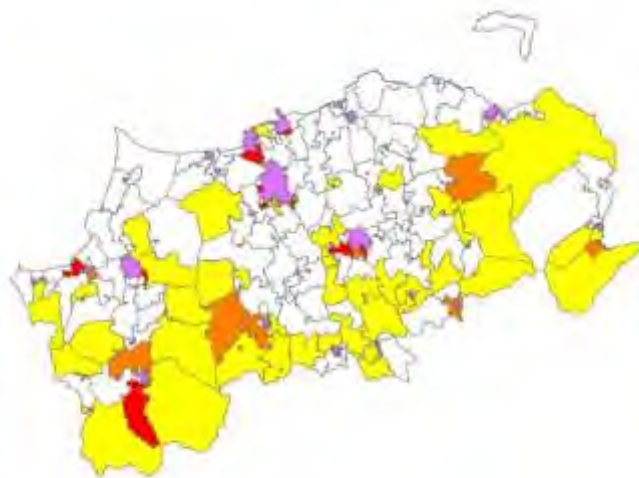
With regards to demographic thresholds, it was agreed in the early stages of the process that council would set two levels, one for more densely populated urban areas with a lower one for more dispersed rural areas. In setting the two levels the aim was to ensure that rural areas were not disadvantaged by a minimum population level that would exclude rural areas from consideration.

In reviewing available options, PlayBoard considered two demographic threshold models that are currently being applied within Northern Ireland councils with an additional option which aimed to take into account the views of elected officials and the wider public as expressed within the public consultation process. It should be noted that meeting the demographic threshold is not the only requirement for fixed play development, in addition household distribution must be appropriate.

<p>Option 1:</p>	<p>Under option 1 designated urban areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 200 resident children or young people aged between 0 to 14 in order to be considered for fixed play provision.</p> <p>In order to be eligible for consideration for fixed play provision rural areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 150 children aged 0 to 14 years.</p>
<p>A review of the implications of setting a rural threshold of 150 children highlights that a significant proportion of rural areas within the council area would become ineligible for future play development (note: non-colour coded areas below fail to meet the 150 rural threshold).</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Following review of option 1 it has been determined that the adoption of the threshold as outlined would run contrary to the concerns expressed by elected members regarding rural areas being disadvantaged in relation to fixed play provision. The impact would be particularly felt in more dispersed rural areas.</p>	

Option 2:	<p>Under option 2 designated urban areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 150 resident children or young people aged between 0 to 14 in order to be considered for fixed play provision.</p> <p>In order to be eligible for consideration for fixed play provision rural areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 100 children or young people aged 0 to 14 years.</p>
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A review of the implications of setting a rural threshold of 100 children highlights that a proportion of rural areas within the council area would become ineligible for future play development (note: non-colour coded areas below fail to meet the 100 threshold).



Whilst option 2 improves the situation over option 1, a fair proportion of rural areas would remain outside the scope of the threshold. This would run contrary to the wishes of elected officials and would impact on rural areas.

Option 3:	<p>Under option 3 designated urban areas would need to meet minimum threshold of 150 resident children or young people aged between 0 to 14 in order to be considered for fixed play provision.</p> <p>In order to be eligible for consideration for fixed play provision rural areas would need to meet a minimum threshold of 50 children or young people aged 0 to 14 years.</p>
<p>A review of option 3 highlights that setting a level of 50 for rural areas would increase the number of areas meeting the demographic threshold for fixed play development (note: non-colour coded areas below fail to meet the 100 threshold).</p> <div data-bbox="507 607 1166 1093" data-label="Figure"> </div> <p>Whilst a number of areas still fall outside of the demographic threshold, the low level of demand coupled with a dispersed household pattern means that fixed play would not be an appropriate means of meeting play need within these areas. It should be noted that setting a level of 50 does present some design issue in terms of ensuring that any fixed play development would meet the needs of a sufficiently broad age range to provide a high value play site.</p> <p>It should also be noted that meeting the demographic criteria does not on its own justify fixed play development within an area, a level of household distribution appropriate to fixed play must also be in place.</p> <p>Following review, option 3 is viewed to be the most appropriate threshold.</p>	

Option Recommendation

It is recommended that Council apply option 3 as this provides the most adequate range of coverage for the area.

7.3 Criterion 3: Residential Household coverage.

In order for fixed play areas to be most effective (in terms of meeting residential play need and from a capital investment perspective) an underlying resident population base is required. For that reason, fixed play areas tend to be located in areas of higher household density such as towns, villages and hamlets.

For new residential developments, current planning guidance requires that developers provide integral public open space in developments of 25 units or more. The normal expectation is that public open space will be provided of a size at least 10% of the total site area.

For residential developments of 100 or more units (or for developments of 5 hectares or more), an equipped children’s play area is required providing there is no other play area within 400m of the majority of units within the development site.

Guidance issued by Fields in Trust recommends a series of minimal benchmark standards for designated play space.

Scale of Development (no. dwellings)	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
5-10	Yes			
10-200	Yes	Yes		Contribution
201-500	Yes	Yes	Contribution	Yes
501+	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes

In reviewing the number of households within an area the radial catchment level discussed in section 7.1 should be used from the location of a potential play site to provide a means of measuring the level of household coverage for a proposed site.

The key issue for council is to establish a household criterion that adequately meets the needs of more rural areas, whilst avoiding the possibility of oversupply of low play value fixed play sites that do not meet local need. In reviewing possible options, three have been identified.

Option 1:	Apply Fields in Trust Recommendations
Fields in Trust recommendations set out a series of development sizes (in terms of dwellings) and identifies a recommended level of play provision (LAP, LEAP, NEAP and MUGA) based on that size (see table above).	
From a rural perspective, review of the household levels identified highlights a need for further clarification of the level of play provision required for the dwelling range most applicable to rural areas i.e. 10 to 200 dwellings. Given the need for clarification, option 1 is discounted, albeit that the guidance will be incorporated into option 3 as a basis for a tailored approach.	

Option 2:	Apply existing planning regulation level of 100 units for fixed play development
As outlined, current planning regulations identify a need for fixed play provision in new developments of 100 or more units (or 5 hectares or more in size). Applying such a level to existing residential areas would give consistency of approach between new and existing residential areas.	
It should be noted that for areas of under 100 households there is still a requirement under planning guidance for the provision of public open space to facilitate children’s play. Given the specific needs of rural areas it is felt that a more tailored approach to meeting play need in existing locations is required, therefore option 2 is discounted.	

Option 3:	Apply existing planning regulation level of 100 units for LEAP fixed play development with tailored approach to meeting play need in areas below 100 units.
<p>Based on the Fields in Trust guidance, and retaining the 100 dwelling threshold identified within planning guidance for LEAP provision, option 3 introduces a scaled approach to meeting play need for areas of less than 100 dwellings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas up to 50 households: Consideration for provision of LAP style open space play provision (i.e. green space 10m x 10m with no fixed play equipment). • Areas of between 50 to 99 households: Consideration for provision of LAP style open green space supplemented with a number of pieces of fixed play equipment in keeping with local play need. • Areas of 100+ households: Consideration for provision of LEAP fixed play area (in line with planning guidance) <p>It is felt that application of such a scale would provide a more effective means of meeting play need within rural areas maintaining connection to current planning guidance for new developments, whilst also recognising the potential restrictions facing rural areas.</p>	

Option Recommendation

It is recommended that Council apply option 3.