



Comhairle Ceantair
**an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin**
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN

DISTRICT COUNCIL



DRAFT PLAY STRATEGY

2017 - 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Play Strategy is to establish an effective strategic framework for decision making as it relates to the development, maintenance and roll-out of play opportunities (both fixed and non-fixed) across the district.

At the core of the strategy is a recognition that play is a natural, fundamental part of children and young people's lives that supports growth and development, enhances health and well-being, supports social and intellectual development, and enables children and young people to develop essential life skills. Importantly for children, play is fun.

Despite the importance of play, children and young people face a wide range of barriers and restrictions that prevent them from playing in a way that meets their needs. Such barriers range from a lack of accessible play spaces within communities to increased levels of traffic that have reduced street play opportunities; from uninspiring fixed play areas that lack challenge to a lack of provision for children with disabilities; and at a broader societal level adult intolerance of children and young people playing outdoors.

In developing the play strategy council has taken into consideration a broad range of local, regional, and international policies and strategies including Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (often referred to as the Right to Play). Furthermore, in recognition that council does not have the power to address all the issues that impact on children's play a play partnership has been established to support development and roll-out of the strategy over its five-year duration.

Process

As part of the strategy development process, council have undertaken number of key stages including:

- Conducted an audit of the play value associated with all existing fixed play areas across the district to identify those that offer a limited or restricted play experience and are in need of remedial action to enhance their play value.
- Conducted an evaluation of underlying demographic need and settlement patterns to identify gap areas that may require fixed play development over the duration of the strategy.
- Assessed underlying demographic need and settlement patterns in areas of existing fixed play provision to identify potentially redundant fixed play areas that are no longer required.
- Through a combination of online consultation surveys, public engagement events and focus groups with children and young people gathered the views of the local community regarding current and future play provision across the district.

Key Observations

- From a demographic perspective children and young people (0 to 18 years) represent a significant proportion of the district population accounting for approximately 24.6% of the resident population;
- Based on demographic and settlement patterns, fixed play development would appear historically to have been well targeted by both legacy councils in order to meet underlying population demands with no significant examples identified of development within areas with little or no underlying population demand;
- The population of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area is predominantly rural based (village, small settlement and rural dispersed) with a number of larger urban settlements including Newry City, Castlewellan, Newcastle, Ballynahinch and Downpatrick.

The dispersed rural nature of the population has implications for the play strategy as it means that fixed play is not always a viable option for meeting play need, necessitating the development by council of alternative non-fixed approaches.

- A number of potential gaps in fixed play provision have been identified across the district and these will require consideration within the council's capital planning process over the duration of the strategy.
- Based on play value assessment and analysis of underlying demographics/settlement patterns a capital upgrade programme has been identified to enhance play value levels across the lowest ranked play areas over the duration of the strategy.
- Based on play value assessment and analysis of underlying demographics/settlement patterns a number of play areas have been identified for potential removal/transformation of site due to low demand for play.
- At present the majority of fixed play sites across the district cater for children aged 0 up to 12/14 years with a lack of dedicated provision for older children and teenagers (e.g. youth shelters, congregation areas etc.).
- There is a growing lobby within the Newry City area for the development of a significant community space/recreation facility at the Albert Basin.
- A number of emerging council strategies have the potential to impact on play provision across the district, namely the Sports Facilities Strategy and Tourism Strategy.
- The emergence of the Community Planning process offers significant potential for supporting the implementation of the Play Strategy by embedding community consultation processes and ensuring that children and young people have a say in how council and its partners meet their identified play needs.

Overarching Recommendations

In addition to the individual recommendations made fixed play areas (based on play value audit findings), a number of overarching recommendations are made for consideration by the Council:

Strategic

- Community Planning Process – Children and young people represent one of the key priority groups for both the council and the wider community. Recognising the council's central role in developing community planning mechanisms under the revised local government structure, it is recommended that council recognise and incorporate consideration of play and the work of the Play Partnership within its overarching community planning structure;
- Participation of Children and Young People – It is recommended that council seek to establish a mechanism for engaging with children and young people on an ongoing basis in order to allow them to actively participate in decision relating to, or impacting upon their play experience (whether fixed or non-fixed);
- Incorporation of Play in Council Strategies – Council should ensure that the Sports Facility Strategy and Tourism Strategy incorporate consideration of play and how they can support its enhancement. Council should further that all strategies give consideration to their impact or potential impact on children and young people's play.
- Risk/Benefit Approach to Play – Traditionally, across local government health and safety considerations have led to the creation of play areas which offer minimal challenge and risk in play. Whilst consideration of risk remains important, it is now recognised at a UK level that there is a need to create play areas that offer challenge in order to nurture health, wellbeing and essential skills. This has resulted in shift towards a risk/benefit approach which focuses on a weighing up of both risk and benefits as a means of introducing more challenge in play.

As a relatively new approach neither legacy council applied a risk/benefit approach to fixed play area design. It is recommended that the council should work towards the adoption of the risk/benefit approach for use in all future fixed play development;

- Alternative Non-Fixed Approaches to meeting play need – Whilst fixed play offers an economically viable approach to meeting play need within built up residential areas they do not provide a means of addressing play need within all rural areas, particularly those with more dispersed populations. As such, it is recommended that council proceed with the development of a range of alternative non-fixed approaches. Approaches identified for consideration within the strategy include:
 1. Roll-out and extension of the Community Play Pods Initiative
 2. Development and roll-out of a number of Community Play Initiatives including:
 - Community Play Volunteers Programme

- Establishment of a Community ‘Free’ Play Sessions Programme
 - Piloting of a Street Play initiative
 - Consideration of how Council and partners can better integrate play opportunities into the Public Realm
 - Active promotion and support for National Play Day
 - Explore the potential of employing a dedicated Play Worker/Workers to support roll-out of the strategy and deliver key elements of the community play initiatives
- Design Principles – Council should implement the good practice design principles outlined within the strategy with a view to enhancing play value at existing sites and ensuring that future new development delivers a quality play experience.
 - Inclusive Play Opportunities – Council should implement the principles outlined within the strategy as they relate to ensuring that that play provision recognises and seeks to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
 - Youth Recreation Provision - There is a lack of play/recreation provision that caters for older children and teenagers across the area. It is acknowledged that not all fixed play areas are suitable for, nor indeed require dedicated youth provision (e.g. shelters); however it is recommended that council should initiate widespread consultation with older young people, engaging in active partnership with youth providers in order to determine how it can best meet their needs through the Play Strategy and emerging Sports Facility Strategy.
 - Residential Planning - Given the anticipated population growth within the area and potential new residential development it is recommended that council seek to ensure that developers incorporate suitable fixed play provision/natural green space allocations within developments as outlined in Planning Policy Statements 7 and 8.
 - Land Availability for Fixed Play – It is recognised that in some areas of fixed play need (current and future) council may not have access to land sufficient to develop fixed play provision.. In such cases council should engage with statutory partners to identify potential sites in the ownership of other bodies (e.g. schools etc.)
 - Albert Basin – It is acknowledged that the decision regarding the proposed use of the site at Albert Basin lies outside the scope and remit of the Play Strategy. It is however recommended that should community/recreational development proceed at the site further community consultation should be undertaken in respect of meeting play needs.

Operational

During the period of the Play Strategy council should initiate a programme of works aimed at enhancing fixed play provision including:

- Commence Consultation on Development of New Fixed Play Areas – The areas that have been identified as potentially requiring new fixed play development, are:
 - Mayobridge
 - Ballymartin
 - Megennis Villas
 - Kilmore
 - Barnamaghery Villas
 - Kilclief

Council should initiate consultation to confirm need and assess land availability within each area (both council and statutory partner owned).

- Commence Upgrading of Low Play Value Play Areas – 23 fixed play areas have been identified as having low play value. 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.
- Commence Consultation regarding Consolidation of Play Areas - 10 areas have been identified at which there is low play value and possible duplication of fixed play. Council should initiate consultation processes with a view to consolidation of high play value fixed play provision within these areas.
- Commence Consultation regarding Removal/Site Transformation of fixed Play in areas of low demand - 10 sites have been identified as having potentially low levels of use. Council should initiate consultation over the duration of the strategy with a view to removal and site transformation to better meet the needs of the resident population.
- Green Spaces - Where green space adjoins fixed play areas council should seek to maximise playability by enhancing the space through minor landscaping, planting, incorporation of natural materials and features etc. This would create additional natural play space for children and young people; would complement the fixed play area and would provide an alternative free play experience.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Overarching Play Strategy Capital Programme

New Fixed Play Area Development

Note: Prior to the commencement of development localised surveys will be completed to confirm level of level of need based on final identified site location and associated catchment radial etc.

DEA Area	Location	Households within Catchment Radial	Indicative Capital Cost	Year
Crotlieve	Mayobridge	163	£100,000	1
Mourne	Ballymartin	137	£100,000	2
Crotlieve	Magennis Villas	126	£100,000	3
Rowallane	Kilmore	112	£100,000	4
Rowallane	Barnamaghery Villas	106	£100,000	5
Downpatrick	Kilclief	81*	£100,000	TBD

**Decision to proceed with play area development made by Legacy Council prior to RPA based on destination status of location*

Fixed Play Area Renewal/Upgrade Programme (based on Household Number)

All renewals be subject to local area consultation in order to confirm level of demand and to enable the local community, children and young people to engage in the renewal process.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Mourne	Backfield	63	342	1
Newry	Meigh CC	76	189	1
Rowallane	Bridge Centre	74	181	1
Slieve Croob	Mourne Gdns	78	175	1
Slieve Gullion	Oliver Plunkett	86	160	1
Newry	Newtowncloghue	87	154	2
Rowallane	Lislane	70	152	2
Newry	Carrievemaclone	80	151	2
Slieve Gullion	Jonesborough	85	149	2
Crotlieve	Burren Village Green	87	140	2
Downpatrick	Killough Playing Fields	93	136	3
Slieve Croob	Drumaness	83	131	3
Rowallane	Westlands	76	125	3
Slieve Gullion	Drumintee	88	125	3
Crotlieve	Lurganare	80	118	3
Slieve Gullion	Fairview	91	112	4
Slieve Gullion	Dungormley	74	106	4
Slieve Gullion	Cullyhanna	94	102	4
Crotlieve	Innisfree	69	98	4
Slieve Gullion	Bog Road Picnic	73	92	4

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Mourne	Kittys Road	85	85	5
Slieve Gullion	Cullaville	93	85	5
Mourne	Newcastle Centre	83* *To proceed in line with future development of Newcastle Centre (date to be determined)	142	5

Fixed Play Area Renewal/Upgrade Programme (Possible Consolidation or relocation of sites based on Household Number)

All renewals will be subject to local area consultation in order to confirm level of demand and to enable the local community, children and young people to engage in the renewal process.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Crotlieve	Spelga Pk, Hilltown	94	Current site: 189 Recommend relocation to more suitable site to serve Hilltown's <u>588</u> households	1
Slieve Gullion	<u>Consolidate 4 into 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlemont Square Pond Field Fr Cullen College Square 	65 79 84 89	512	1
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raymond McCreesh Park Barcroft CC 	86 110	380	1
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windmill Road Heather Park 	92 96	351	2
Downpatrick	Radial Duplication – Assess need/potential consolidation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge Street Ardmore Avenue Marian Park 	88 94 91	234 <u>280</u> 135	2

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Rowallane	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hillfoot Toddler Hillfoot Junior 	80 88	227	3
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emmett Street Mourneview 	89 86	226	3
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Springhill Drive Shandon Park 	85 89	199	4
Mourne	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mona View Annalong 	86 89	189	4
Downpatrick	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model Farm St Dympnas 	78 83	174	5

Potential Play Area Removal/Site Transformation (based on household numbers – lowest first)

Prior to any future upgrade consultation should be undertaken with the local community to assess level of need and, if play provision is no longer required the potential removal of play site based on underlying need.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Approx. Households within Catchment	Year
Crotlieve	Clonallen Park	79	n/a*	1
Slieve Gullion	Drumilly	79	14	1
Slieve Gullion	Lisnalee	87	18	2
Mourne	Ballymaderphy	86	25	2
Slieve Gullion	Carnbane Gardens	71	34	2
Slieve Gullion	Latt Crescent	92	34	3
Mourne	Pious Hill	82	34	3
Slieve Gullion	Tullydonnell	91	43	3
Slieve Croob	Drumaroad	88	62	4
Slieve Croob	Station Avenue	62	71	4

**Removal recommendation based on duplication of catchment area*

THE PLAY STRATEGY

Foreword

Play is central to the lives of our children and young people. Through play children are able to develop and nurture their physical and mental health; establish social connections with their peers and the wider community; enhance their learning capacity and develop essential life skills.

Despite the importance of play, increasingly our children and young people face multiple barriers to fulfilling their natural play drive. These barriers can range from increased levels of traffic which restrict community and street play opportunities, to a lack of accessible spaces and places for play within communities through to a lack of tolerance and respect for the importance of play from adults within the community.

In developing this 5 year strategy for play (2017 to 2022) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council signals its clear commitment to supporting the child's right to play as articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 31).

Underpinning the strategy is recognition of the significant contribution to play made by both legacy councils prior to the establishment of new council boundaries under the review of Public Administration (RPA). Over the next 5 years council will seek to build on this important legacy through both the development and enhancement of fixed play provision whilst rolling out a series of non-fixed play approaches aimed at broadening the range and scope of play experiences open to our children and young people.

Recognising that council do not hold the powers necessary to address all of the barriers that restrict play across the district, the strategy has been developed within the framework of the wider community planning process. A play partnership has been established comprising members from a range of statutory, community and voluntary organisations and this partnership will fulfil an important role as we seek to deliver the strategy over the coming years.

In preparing the strategy we have sought to engage widely with the community through a series of mechanisms including public events, online surveys and focus groups with children and young people.

Through such engagement we have aimed to identify the main barriers that restrict children and young people's play whilst gathering views on how we can enhance play opportunities. Over the coming 5 years we will seek alongside our partners to address the range of issues identified, enhancing play for all including children with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

It is important to state at the outset that ongoing community consultation has been built into the core of the strategy. Council affirm that none of the recommendations outlined within the strategy will be enacted upon without prior local consultation which will explore the potential impacts of such action.

Additionally it should be noted that the strategy will be subject to ongoing annual review by the play partnership and will therefore be a rolling document, subject to change based on underlying demographic or social circumstances.

The main body of the document has been set out in three main sections:

Section 1: Provides an overview of the importance of play in the lives of children and young people, outlines the approaches available to meeting play need and provides an overview of the underpinning strategic and policy environment in which the strategy will operate.

Section 2: Provides an overview of the demographics and existing fixed play provision across the wider district council area and provides an overview by District Electoral Area of the play value assessment of existing fixed play areas, providing a break-down of recommended actions for each. The section also provides an overview of potential gap areas based on underlying demographic need and makes recommendations regarding new fixed play area development.

Section 2 further explores and makes recommendations regarding the development and roll-out of non-fixed play approaches aimed at enhancing the council and its partners ability to meet the play needs of children and young people across the district.

Finally section 2 explores the particular challenges that exist in meeting the play and recreation needs of young people aged in the older age bracket (15 to 18 years) and makes recommendations aimed at enhancing provision for this age group.

Section 3: Provides an overview of key the key underlying principles that will guide implementation of the strategy over the coming five years as they relate to a range of areas including play area design, community consultation, inclusivity of play and

1.0 Introduction

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has an aspiration for our children and young people to be able to play in a manner that suits their developmental needs, no matter their age, ability or the community in which they live.

In working towards fulfilling this aspiration we have sought through this play strategy to establish a mechanism for meeting the play needs of children and young people. The strategy seeks to address those needs by:

- Providing an overview of the play value and demographic coverage associated with existing fixed play areas alongside recommendations on enhancing play delivery or making more effective use of existing fixed play sites for the benefit of the community;
- Establishing a set of core underlying principles which will govern the future design and delivery of fixed play areas across the council, enhancing play experiences for children of all abilities;
- Identifying geographical gaps in fixed play provision and establishing an associated capital works program aimed at meeting identified need over the coming 5 year period; and
- Establishing a series of non-fixed play approaches aimed at broadening the ability of council to meet the specific challenges of meeting play need within a largely rural area characterized by often dispersed settlement and household patterns.

1.1 Aims of the Play Strategy

Underpinning the play 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:

- 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 programed capital upgrading 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 play 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 establish an effective partnership process for play, embedding the Play Strategy within the wider community planning process thereby enhancing its ability to connect across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors
- f. 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
- g. 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.

1.2 Why do we need a Play Strategy?

The development of a play 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 strategy enables council to establish 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 strategy we will 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.

- *Establishment of Partnership Approach to meeting Play Need*

The underlying partnership approach to the play strategy will provide enhanced opportunities for meeting play need in areas where local circumstances have prevented development, for example areas where council land is scarce. Through the partnership council will be able to explore the development of fixed play provision on land which is in the ownership of other public bodies, for example schools whose grounds may be able to offer potential for dual use fixed play provision i.e. open to both pupils attending the school and the wider community.

- *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 changes. In seeking to address this issue the strategy recognises that in some areas fixed play provision that was once essential is no longer required 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-based).

- *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 in terms of both capital outlay and in their applicability to all areas, the strategy will allow council and its partners to explore the establishment of a series of non-fixed approaches to meeting play need.

Such approaches will include the provision of non-fixed play equipment 'pods' for loaning to local community organisations 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 exploration of the potential for street play initiatives as a means of enhancing access to safe play spaces within more built up areas.

Section 1

The Importance of Play and wider Strategic Environment

2.0 What is Play?

The term play is most often used to describe those activities that children and young people engage in during their free time. Play can and does happen anywhere and at any time. In order to establish a framework for delivering and developing play, council have agreed to adopt the definition set 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.

Underpinning the strategy is a recognition that play can and does take place at any time and in any location; from a designated fixed play area to an open green space within a housing estate; and from fields, woods and natural locations to the streets in our villages, towns and cities.

2.1 The Importance of Play

The importance of play to the lives of children and young people has been highlighted through a growing body of research which highlights its positive impact in:

- Supporting positive physical and mental health development¹ and maintaining healthier lifestyles;
- Supporting the development of brain capacity² in early years enhancing learning capacity and educational achievement;
- Supporting a connection between the child and the natural environment³;
- Supporting broad holistic development incorporating areas such as physical literacy, cognitive skills and creativity⁴; and
- Enabling children and young people to assess and manage risk for themselves⁵

In addition, research has highlighted the important role of play in supporting children and young people to develop social skills; establish and maintain

¹ Hughes, B. (2001) *Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice*, London; Routledge

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

³ 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

⁴ Abbott, L. & Langston, A. (2005) *Birth to Three Matters*. O.U.P. Berkshire.

⁵ Drummond, M.J. (2002) *Assessing Children's Learning*. David Fulton. London.

friendships; grow and develop self-confidence; and increase their understanding of the world around them. Play has also been shown to contribute to active citizenship; the development of community cohesion and can be a vehicle for increasing cross-community and cross-generational sharing and understanding.

It is important to recognise that play is not restricted to younger children but remains a key part of young people's lives right through into their late teenage years. Research by PlayBoard NI carried out under the 'Young Life and Times Survey'⁶ showed that a majority of 16 year olds still equate what they do in their recreation and leisure time as being play, albeit that the activities have changed over time. The Play Strategy recognises this and takes into account the changing play needs of children and young people as they mature and develop.

2.2 Barriers to Play

All too often we make the assumption that play is something that children do naturally – and to some extent this is true. However as our lives have become more complicated, busy and risk averse the opportunities for children to play freely within the community have been reduced significantly.

As a result, despite the many benefits associated with play, many children and young people face a wide range of barriers that restrict their ability to fulfil their natural drive to play need on a daily basis. Common barriers include:

- Heavy traffic within residential areas which restricts or negates street and community play opportunities;
- A loss of accessible public open spaces which are available for children's play;
- A lack of tolerance and respect for children and young people at play from adults within the community;
- For parents of children, the conflicting time pressures and constraints associated with modern living reducing the time available for play with their children;
- An increasingly risk averse society reducing opportunities for more challenging play and restricting the play movement of children; and
- Limited opportunities for the inclusion and integration of children with disabilities or additional needs.

In developing this strategy Newry, Mourne and Down District Council not only acknowledge the barriers that restrict play but make a commitment to taking real steps towards addressing those barriers over the duration of the strategy

⁶ 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

in conjunction with our partners.

2.3 Approaches to Meeting Play Need

In seeking to meet the play needs of children and young people a variety of potential approaches are available to council and its partners. These range from formal to informal approaches including:

- **Fixed Play Areas:** 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.

Fixed play areas can be tailored towards the needs of specific age groups, for example for younger children and toddlers (rockers, sand play, low level climbing frames, slides etc.) through to more challenging play equipment for older children e.g. witches hats, zip lines etc.

Fixed play areas are typically fenced off for both safety and security purposes and can be closed at set times of the day limiting access opportunities to set times.

The Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play' (also known as the Six Acre Standards) have become the recognised tool for determining the geographical catchment served by a fixed play area. The Accessibility Benchmark Standards (ABS) are based around 3 identified types of play area:

- Local Areas for Play (LAP's)
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's)
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's)

The ABS establishes a set of distance thresholds which set the catchment area for each type of play space and help to establish the optimum location for a play area based on the target age range.

TYPE OF PLAY	DISTANCE CRITERIA (METRES)	
	WALKING DISTANCE	STRAIGHT LINE DISTANCE
Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are specifically designated and laid out for very young children (<5 years) with the express purpose of providing somewhere to play close to where they live.	100	60
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are areas of open space designated and laid out with features and equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently (5 to 12 years) close to where they live.	400	240

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) are areas of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children (including 12+) but with play opportunities for younger children as well.	1000	600
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- Non-Fixed Play

Whilst fixed play is focused on the use of play equipment which is fixed both in terms of its location (i.e. it cannot be moved freely) and in terms of its purpose (i.e. it has a limited set of play actions associated with it e.g. swinging, sliding etc.), non-fixed play (sometimes referred to as ‘free play’ or ‘loose parts’ play) refers to the wider use of available space within communities for the purpose of play.

Non-fixed play revolves around the concept of enabling children and young people to play in a manner that meets their specific play needs at a specific time 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.

Loose play parts are by definition non-prescriptive and flexible, offering limitless opportunities for children to play in a manner that meets their play need.

In supporting loose parts play the role of the adult if present (be they playworker, community volunteer, parent etc.) is to help to create the play space and assist as requested whilst not leading the play experience.

There is a growing body of evidence (Hyndman, Benson, Ullah and Telford, 2014) highlighting the benefits of loose parts play which include:

- Increasing levels of creative and imaginative play
- Children playing more co-operatively and socialising more
- Children becoming more physically active
- Supporting the development of communication and negotiation skills.

In the summer of 2016, Newry Mourne and Down District Council piloted a number of non-fixed play approaches including the provision of play training for community volunteers alongside the delivery of ‘free play’ sessions within 8 communities across the district. A further overview of the pilot and recommendation arising is provided in section 2 of the document.

- 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.

Increasingly natural play constructions are being integrated into fixed play areas which, whilst man-made are constructed from natural materials such as wood and may include natural materials such as boulders, tree logs etc. which enhance the playability of the area.

- Street Play: Street play takes place within the immediate environs of the home and is for many children the first real opportunity to explore the community in which they live through play.

Whilst street play opportunities have reduced in recent years due to increased levels of traffic and parental safety concerns, a number of approaches have been adopted which aim to bring street play back into the lives of children.

In 2012 PlayBoard delivered a street play scheme in the Torrens area of North Belfast. Through the use of community volunteers and working with a range of partners streets were closed to traffic at set times each week enabling the children to play outdoors within their own community, often for the first time.

- Public Realm Play: It is important to recognise that for children play is not something that takes place only in a designated play area – children will naturally seek play opportunities at all times regardless of where they are.

Public realm play approaches are focused on creating public environments e.g. within town centres, shopping areas etc. which are playable and encourage children to play.

- Youth shelters: Acknowledging that play remains relevant to young people into their teenage years, youth shelters represent a play approach which is focused on meeting the social and less formalised play needs of teenagers.

2.4 Playability

Playability, sometimes referred to as play affordance, relates to the inherent qualities of a location (either man-made or natural) which lend themselves to supporting and encouraging the child at play.

Playability does not simply refer to the designed function of a site or piece of play equipment. By way of example, from an adult design perspective the primary playability attribute associated with a swing is the ability for a child to sit on the seat and swing back and forth. From a child's perspective the playability value may be much greater i.e. the swing presents an opportunity to climb the frame, swing from the top bar using their arms etc. For older children the swings primary playability purpose may simply be somewhere to sit on whilst conversing socially with peers. In both cases the playability of the

equipment can lead to other concerns for play providers including concerns regarding risk, health and safety and perceived anti-social behaviour.

From a location perspective, children view the environment around them in its entirety as a potential play place; therefore a playability assessment cannot be confined to the play equipment which is present within a location or the designed play purpose. By way of example, trees and bushes within a play area can provide a stimulus for imaginative and creative play or an opportunity to gain privacy in play. A raised platform or mound may suggest to the child at play a stage or a platform for performance.

Functional items when located within a play area (or indeed the wider environment) can also have a playability value, for example a seat within a play area may be viewed by children as another play item to be climbed on, stood on, jumped off etc. Whilst the primary purpose of a fence around a play area is to regulate entry, in reality it can provide children with an additional challenging play experience, for example climbing over the top and down the other side.

It is critical in assessing the playability of a fixed play area or play location that consideration is given to the play needs of children with disabilities and differing ability levels. Children with disabilities have the same right to play as all other children, therefore it is important that an assessment of playability focuses on play opportunities/equipment directly provided for children with disabilities, whilst considering the accessibility of play in the wider environment.

2.5 Play Types

Access to a range of play types is critical for children and young people if they are to meet their natural play drive. There are 16 acknowledged play types which were devised by Bob Hughes in 2002⁷. Each play type provides the child or young person with an opportunity to, by way of example 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.

Play Type	Description
Rough and Tumble	Close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, gauging strength etc.
Socio-dramatic	Acting out real and potential experiences of a personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.
Social	Play, during which the rules and criteria for social engagement/interaction can be revealed, explored and amended.
Creative	Play with an element of surprise e.g. the transformation of information, making of new connections etc..
Communication	Play using words or gestures for example, mime, jokes, play acting, singing, debate, poetry.

⁷ Bob Hughes, published in full in 'A playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types' (PLAYLINK, second edition 2002).

Dramatic	Play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participation.
Symbolic	Play which allows control, exploration and increased understanding without a risk of being out of one's depth.
Deep	Play which allows the child to encounter risky experiences, to assess risk, develop survival skills and conquer fear.
Exploratory	Play which involves manipulative behaviours e.g. handling, throwing, banging objects etc.
Fantasy	Play which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur.
Imaginative	Play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply.
Loco motor	Movement in any or every direction for its own sake.
Mastery Play	Control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments. For example digging holes, changing the course of streams, constructing shelters, building fires
Object Play	Play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations 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 play of earlier human evolutionary stages.

2.6 Play Value Assessment

As part of the strategy development process council undertook an assessment of the overarching play value of all fixed play areas. Play value is a critical consideration as a play area with low 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. Play value assessments take into account a range of information relating to the play area and its location including:

- The range of play types supported by the play area including all ability play opportunities;
- 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.
- Accessibility of the play area for those who would wish to use it.

In conducting the assessments a number of key areas were scored including:

- Locational factors
- Accessibility factors
- Environmental factors
- Physical play opportunities
- Creative play opportunities

-
- Inclusive play opportunities
 - Social play opportunities

3.0 THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR PLAY

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

3.1 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. The child's Right to Play is specifically highlighted in Article 31 which states:

- a. "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.
- b. "That member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity"

3.2 Regional

NI Programme for Government

The NI Executives Programme for Government (PfG) is currently in development with second stage consultation closing on 23rd December 2016. Whilst still in draft form the PfG acknowledges and recognises 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 NI Executive published its Play and Leisure Policy Statement, highlighting 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.

The policy was the culmination of an inclusive, collaborative process which brought together stakeholders from across government departments, councils, the community sector and children and young people.

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 People's Strategy

Entitled 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge' the children and young people's strategy (2006 – 2016) is based around 6 key outcomes areas which if achieved will ensure that children and young people thrive and look forward with confidence to the future:

- Healthy
- Enjoying, learning and achieving
- Living in safety and with stability
- Experiencing economic and environmental well-being
- Contributing positively to community and society
- Living in a society which respects their rights.

The strategy recognizes the importance of play and adequate provision for play as a means of supporting healthy growth and development highlighting a range of benefits including improved physical health and mental wellbeing; enhanced emotional resilience; improved educational capacity; and the wider community benefits which come from children and young people being visible and active through outdoor play.

The Executive are currently in the process of developing a further 10 year strategy to run from 2016 to 2026 which will place play as one of its seven key outcome areas.

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.

Planning Policy Statements

Planning Policy Statements (PPS) form a key part of the land-use planning system, setting out the main considerations to be taken into account during the assessment of development proposals. Of particular relevance to play are PPS 7 (Quality Residential Environments) and PPS 8 (Open Space and Outdoor recreation).

- *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 the design and layout of the development, designed to a high standard and located to provide focal points and landmark features whilst respecting the amenities of proposed and existing housing
 - b. It is considered reasonable to expect developers to contribute to the cost of provision of necessary facilities and/or to set land aside for development and use by local community; and
 - 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 to meet the needs generated by that 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."

In paragraph 5.14, PPS 8 re-emphasises the importance within new housing developments of providing safe opportunities for children's play. It stresses the need for children's play areas and facilities to be located within a reasonable walking distance of where they live whilst not being located so close to dwellings that they are likely to cause nuisance for residents.

3.3 Local

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan

In its inaugural corporate plan (2015 - 2019) council identifies its mission as being to:

“Lead and serve a District that is prosperous, healthy and sustainable.”

In seeking to achieve this mission the corporate plan identifies 8 key strategic priorities, namely:

1. Become one of the premier tourism destinations on the island of Ireland
2. Attracted investment and supported the creation of new jobs
3. Supported improved health and well-being outcomes
4. Protected our natural and built environment
5. Led the regeneration of our urban and rural areas
6. Advocated on your behalf specifically in relation to those issues which really matter to you
7. Empowered and improved the capacity of our communities
8. Transformed and modernised the Council, providing accessible as well as value for money services.

Meeting the play needs of children and young people falls within a number of these corporate priority areas including:

Priority 1 “Become one of the premier tourism destinations on the island of Ireland”:

Newry, Mourne and Down District council area covers an extensive coastline and incorporates a number of areas of outstanding Natural Beauty which offer significant potential for attracting tourists to the area. Research has highlighted that over half of all overnight trips (55%) to the district are for holiday purposes, second only in Northern Ireland terms to the Causeway Coast and Glen’s district.

In order to effectively meet the needs of families visiting the area, it is essential that ongoing consideration is given to ensuring that appropriate, attractive and high value play opportunities are in place to meet the needs of children and young people visiting the area. Providing high value play opportunities will support council to deliver against priority 1 by extending the tourism ‘offer’ to more effectively meet the needs of families visiting the area.

Priority 3 ‘Supported improved health and well-being outcomes’

The opportunity for children and young people to engage in regular, active physical play from birth and throughout their growth and development 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 corporate priority 3.

Community Planning

Introduced under the Review of Public Administration, Community Planning is a new responsibility for Councils and brings local authorities in Northern Ireland into line with their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales.

Community planning provides a framework for councils, government departments and other public bodies to engage with local communities and the voluntary and community sectors with a view to developing and implementing a shared vision for the area.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council’s draft Community Plan is entitled “Living Well Together” and aims to provide a framework for collaborative working in order to support positive change for communities. The vision of the Community Plan is that:

"Newry, Mourne and Down is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people's needs"

In seeking to achieve its vision the draft community plan highlights 5 underlying positive outcomes for the community, namely:

1. All people in Newry, Mourne and Down get a good start in life and fulfil their lifelong potential
2. All people in Newry, Mourne and Down enjoy good health and Wellbeing
3. All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from prosperous communities
4. All people in Newry, Mourne and Down benefit from a clean, quality and sustainable environment
5. All people in Newry, Mourne and Down live in respectful, safe and vibrant communities.

Community involvement within the process is critical and a statutory requirement is placed on community planning partnerships to ensure that the views of the community are sought and taken into account as part of the process. Statutory guidance highlights a particular need for partnerships to *'encourage and promote the role that can be played by children and young people in community planning'* highlighting the need for partnerships to establish appropriate methods of engaging with, and involving children and young people within the process.

In seeking to drive the play strategy council established a Play Partnership group in April 2016. Given the underlying need to maintain the partnership approach to meeting play need it is recommended that the play strategy be embedded within the existing community planning process providing access to the established, high level, cross-sectoral representation in the community planning partnership.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Sports Facility Strategy

In 2016 Newry, Mourne and Down District council initiated the development of a Sports Facility Strategy for the district. The sports facility strategy is of particular relevance to the play strategy as it incorporates a range of areas of recreation that appeal in particular to the play needs of older young people i.e. the 15 to 18 year old age group.

All too often play is viewed as an activity that is only of interest to children in their early years and up to early secondary education stage. This perception has traditionally been reinforced by society, for example through age based exclusions placed around fixed play areas which often limit the age of users to 14 years and below and the closure of fixed play areas in the early evening.



Engagement with teenagers as part of the strategy development process highlighted that for them play remains a very relevant and valuable part of their lives. Whilst the types of play they engage in may change it remains important for:

- Providing opportunities to socialise with their peers
- Remaining active and engage in informal recreational activity (kicking a ball about, climbing etc.)
- Hanging out with friends within the community
- Fun and relaxation

For many teenagers the main challenge they face in meeting their play and recreation needs is the lack of a space they can hang out in with their friends, a space with shelter and seating that enables them to hang out with their peers

The Sports Facility Strategy makes a number of recommendations aimed at supporting the development and provision of sports facilities at local level to meet community need. These include:

Recommendation	Relevance to Play Strategy
(6) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council undertakes a review of its community centres to assess options for the long term of sports and physical activity provision at these facilities; as well as locations for future provision given the population growth expected.	<p>During community engagement the potential was highlighted for community centres to provide safe, accessible and sheltered opportunities for teenagers to ‘hang out’ and engage in recreational activity within their own community.</p> <p>Barriers to their use for this purpose included overly restrictive opening and closing times, insurance considerations, lack of centre supervisory capacity or volunteer base.</p>
<p>Recommendation: The Sport Facility Strategy, in conducting its review of community centres, should incorporate consideration of the wider recreational needs of teenagers, including an exploration of the potential for community centres to open on an extended basis to provide safe, sheltered spaces for teenagers to engage in formal and informal recreational activity.</p>	

Recommendation	Relevance to Play Strategy
(8) Areas of population growth/areas without access to other formal sports facilities should have access to a MUGA or outdoor recreational grass sports area as minimum provision.	For teenagers Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA's) offer an opportunity to engage in light, non-formalised recreational activity which supports physical health and wellbeing. In addition MUGA's provide meeting points and, where teen shelters are incorporated can provide a hang-out area supporting social connections.
Recommendation: The Sport Facility Strategy, in rolling out its recommendation should ensure that consideration is given to the incorporation of teen shelters where need is identified as a means of enhancing recreational provision for teenagers.	

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Tourism Strategy

There can be little doubt that the provision of quality play opportunities, particularly at locations which are attractive to visitors (e.g. seaside towns and villages, beaches, forest parks etc.) enhances the tourism potential of the council area. Slieve Gullion play area has proven to be particularly successful in establishing itself as a destination play location, attracting repeat visitors from across the wider district and beyond.

In conducting an assessment of current fixed play provision this strategy has focused primarily (although not exclusively) on the underlying demographic needs of the resident population. Underlying residential need has also been the primary focus for identifying areas requiring the development of new fixed play provision.

The background report for the Newry, Mourne and Down Tourism Strategy notes the importance of play, highlighting the the introduction of the adventure play concept at Castlewellan and Tollymore Forest Parks and proposals to introduce imaginative play opportunities at Kilbroney as indications of plays positive influence on tourism.

Given the natural landscape within the district, opportunities for the further growth of innovative play approaches which capitalise on the unique outdoor environment are significant.

Recognising the limitations of the capital resources available to support the roll-out of the play strategy, it is critical that the emerging Council Tourism Strategy both recognises the role of play provision in enhancing the areas appeal to tourists and visitors and seeks to supports play development at key locations.

3.4 Summary

Over recent year's acknowledgement of play's critical role in shaping the lives' of children, young people and 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 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 Play Partnership as we seek to establish and roll-out the play strategy. Members of the play partnership will 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.

Section 2

Assessment of Fixed Play Provision, gaps in fixed play provision and recommendations relating to the development of non-fixed play approaches

4.0 LOCAL AREA CONTEXT

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council was established in 2015 following the Review of Public Administration. The council is the third largest in Northern Ireland and is primarily made up of the former Newry and Mourne District and Down District Council areas with the inclusion of the electoral ward of Ballyward which previously sat under Banbridge District Council.

The council area is located in the Southeast of Northern Ireland incorporating parts of both County Down and Country Armagh and contains a number of areas of outstanding natural beauty including the Mourne Mountains and a coastline which stretches from Strangford Lough to Carlingford Lough.

Based on the most recent census of the population, the overall population of the council area on the 27th March 2011 was 172,000 equating to 10% of the overall population of Northern Ireland. The census further highlighted that 23% of the population were aged under 15, slightly above the Northern Ireland average which sat at 21%.

The 2015 population estimate for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council highlights an expected level of population growth to 175,974⁸ with an anticipated increase to 191,833 by the year 2025. The District has a higher than average birth rate of 74 per '000 population (compared to a regional average of 67 per '000) highlighting the increasing nature of the resident population base.

With regards to children and young people, the number of under 16 year olds residing within the district was projected in 2015 to be 39,740 with an anticipated increase to 41,924 by 2025.

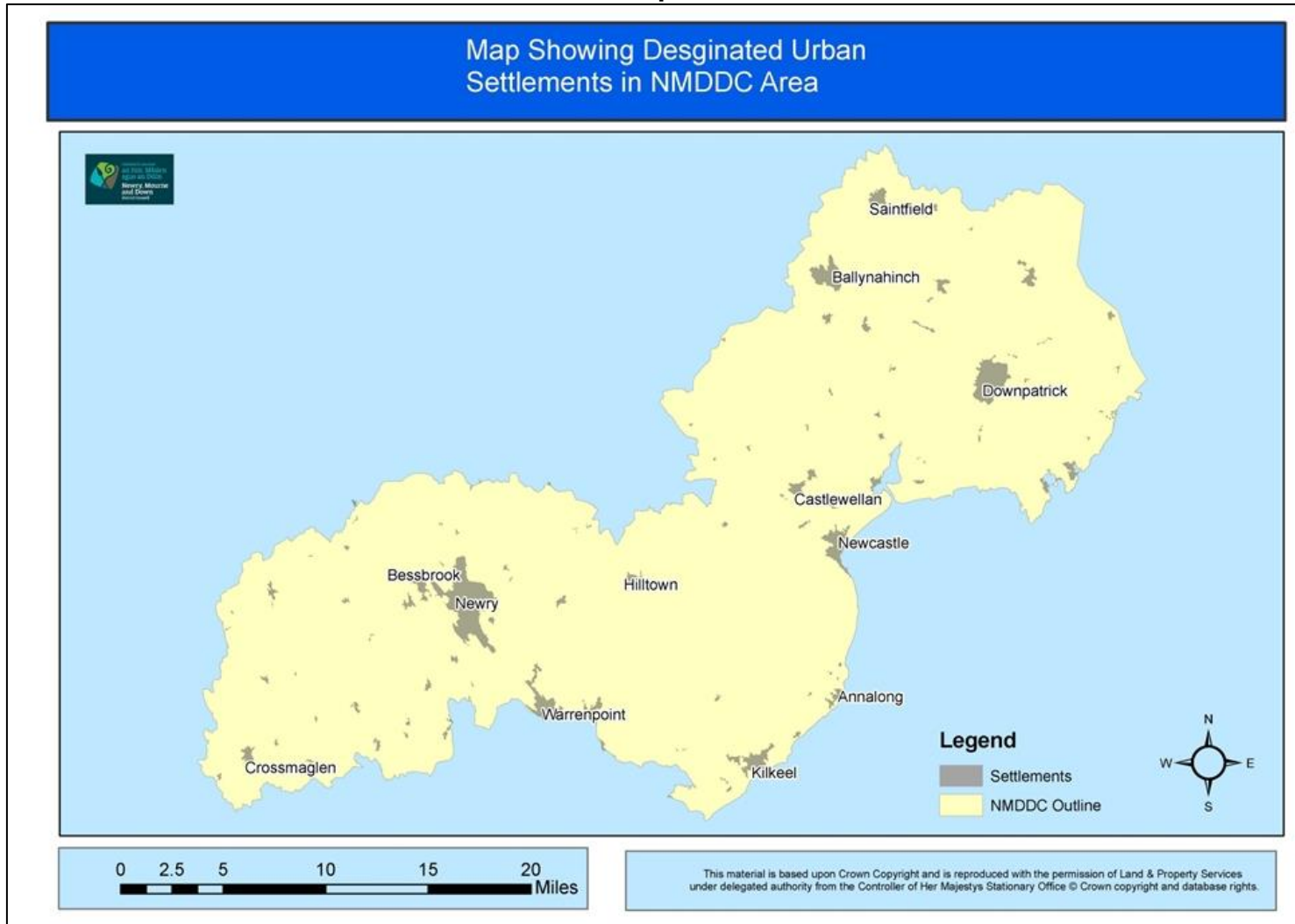
The district council is divided into 7 District Electoral Areas (DEA's).

DEA Area Name	Estimated Population Level
Slieve Gullion	26,388
Newry	28,456
Crotlieve	25,554
The Mournes	30,843
Slieve Croob	20,373
Downpatrick	22,291
Rowallane	22,069
TOTAL	175,974

Based on the designated Settlement Development Limits (SDL) classification the council area comprises a combination of rural and urban areas with the population located across a range of residential classifications including rural settlement based, dispersed rural living and urban residential. Map 1 (overleaf) shows the location of the main settlements within the District.

⁸ Source: Community Plan Base Line Information

Map 1



Estimated populations for settlements identified within the SDL include:

Settlement Name	
Newry	26,893
Downpatrick	10,874
Warrenpoint/Burren	8,819
Newcastle	7,743
Kilkeel	6,521
Ballynahinch	5,715

The district is categorised as being predominantly rural in nature, with an associated low population density of 1.6 people per hectare. The dispersed nature of the population brings particular challenges to meeting play need through fixed means (i.e. fixed playgrounds) but does offer potential for the development of non-fixed, mobile and community based approaches to meeting play need.

Map 2 (overleaf) shows the distribution of children and young people aged 0 to 14 years residing within the Newry, Mourne and Down area mapped by small area (based on 2011 census). The map highlights the dispersed nature of the population, with a significant proportion of the overall area having less than 149 children or young people aged 0 to 14 years. This has implications for council and other providers seeking to meet play need through formal, fixed play provision (i.e. playgrounds) which have been shown to be effective primarily in areas of higher population density.

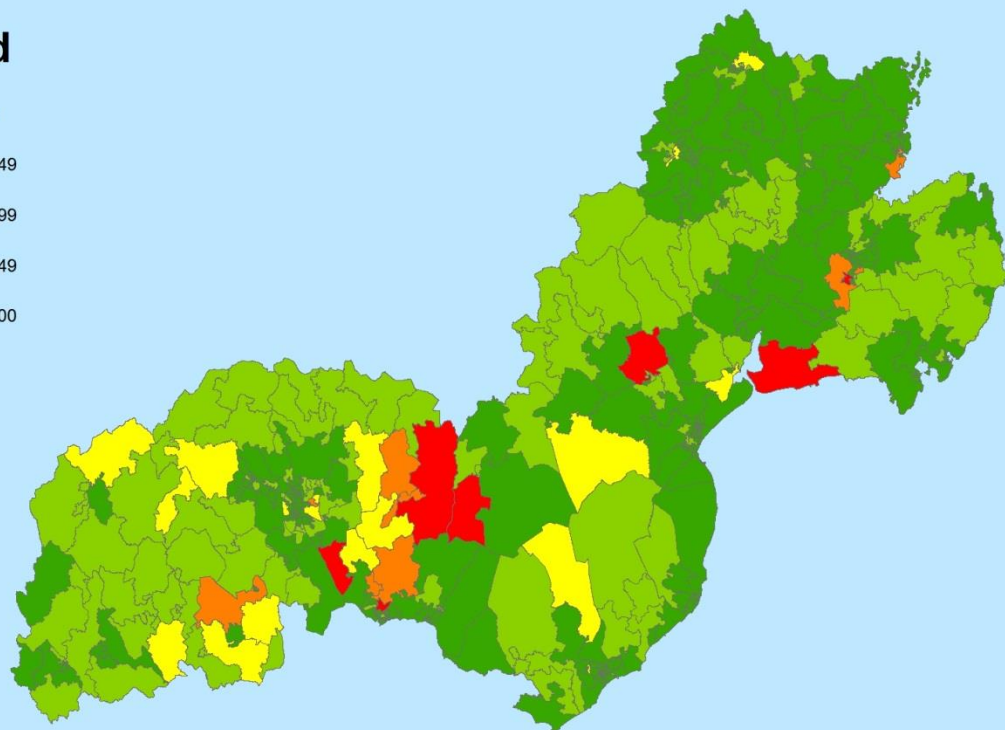
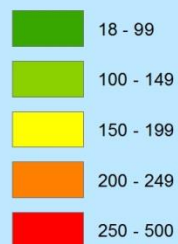
Map 3 (also overleaf) shows the distribution of young people aged between 15 and 18 years of age residing within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area. For this group the ability to access play and recreation opportunities remains a key element of physical, social and wider development. Existing play provision (in the form of fixed play areas) often fails to meet the needs of the group, providing insufficient social engagement space or being subject to controls which restrict access by age (often to 14 years or under). In addition to the barriers facing the group, the combination of lower population numbers and the dispersed nature of the population presents a significant challenge to council and other providers in meeting the play, leisure and recreation needs of the group.

Given the growing nature of the resident population base and the number of children and young people, it is clear that the demand for accessible play opportunities, both formal and informal will continue to be significant over the coming years.

Map 2

**Distribution of Children and Young People aged between 0 to 14 Years
across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**

Legend

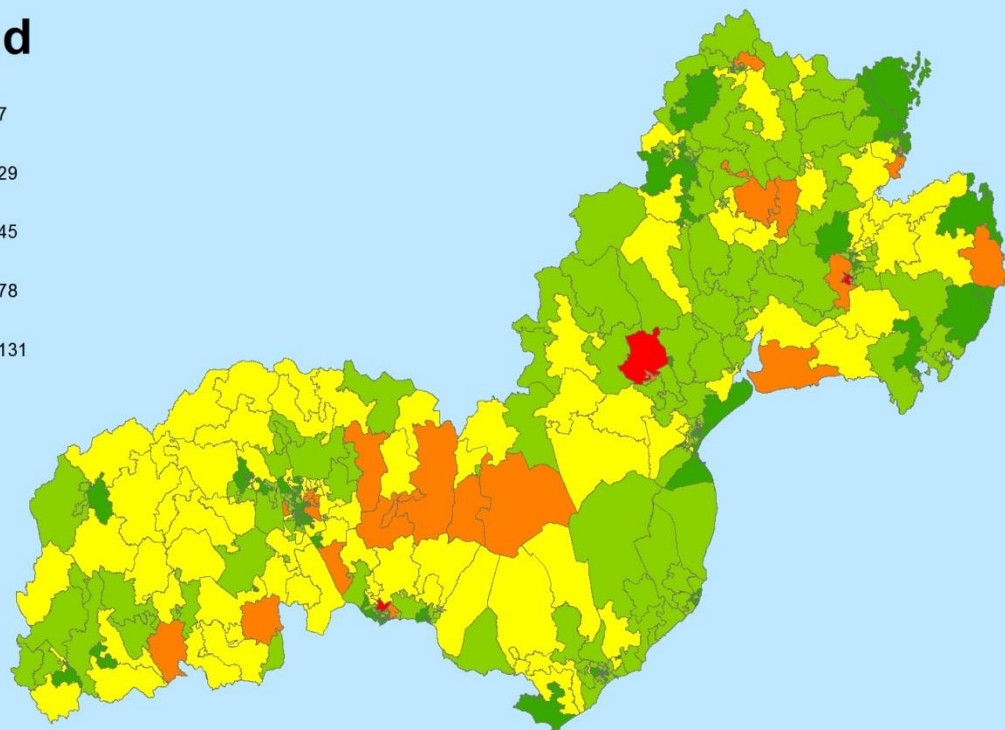
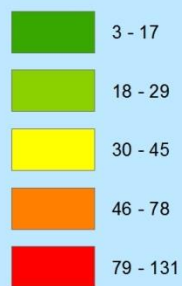


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Map 3

Distribution of Young People aged between 15 to 18 Years
across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Legend



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5.0 FIXED PLAY PROVISION

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.

Fixed play areas are typically fenced off for both safety and security purposes and can be closed at set times of the day limiting access opportunities to set times. Fixed play areas can be tailored to meet needs of specific age groups, for example for younger children and toddlers (through rockers, sand play, low level climbing frames, slides etc.) through to more challenging play equipment for older children e.g. zip lines etc. Play areas may also incorporate within their environs provision for older teens, for example through the provision of a covered hang-out or seated area.

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.

Whilst the broader council play strategy is focused on both fixed and non-fixed play provision, council recognise that fixed play and its ongoing maintenance has traditionally, and is likely to remain for some time been the key area of financial investment in play.

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 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) are designated and laid out for very young children (<5 years) with the express purpose of providing somewhere to play close to where they live.	100	60
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are areas of open space designated and laid out with features and equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently (5 to 12 years) close to where they live.	400	240

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) are areas of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children (including 12+) but with play opportunities for younger children as well.	1000	600
---	------	-----

In seeking to meet play need both legacy councils invested capital and revenue funds in order to install and maintain 107 fixed play areas. Of these 106 are classified as being LEAP's (based on Six Acre Standards) with 1 NEAP located at Slieve Gullion. The current stock of fixed play areas ranges from small, contained play parks with a low to mid-level (3 to 7 pieces) of play equipment located within rural area and areas of low population density through to more extensive play parks containing 10+ piece of equipment and wider non-fixed play opportunities (e.g. green space, natural play opportunities).

Map 4 overleaf shows the locations of existing fixed play areas whilst maps 5 and 6 (also overleaf) show the location of fixed play areas relative to the underlying population demographics for children and young people aged 0 to 14 years and 15 to 18 years. Recognising the data contained within the census dataset dates from 2011, assessment of location against demographic need has been supplemented by introducing household pointer data from 2016. This allows for an additional analysis of demographic coverage using household distribution patterns (with less dispersed patterns indicating higher population levels). Maps 7 and 8 show the location of fixed play areas mapped against household pointer data.

It should be noted that in order to assess current coverage levels, and to identify potential gap areas, council established two criteria to determine those areas which potentially require fixed play provision:

- General Requirement for Fixed Play: A minimum of 150 resident children or young people cross-checked against household pointer data (settlement pattern analysis)
- Rural Areas: Given the dispersed rural nature of the district an additional rural assessment level of a minimum 100 children or young people was introduced with cross-checking against household pointer data to support settlement pattern analysis.

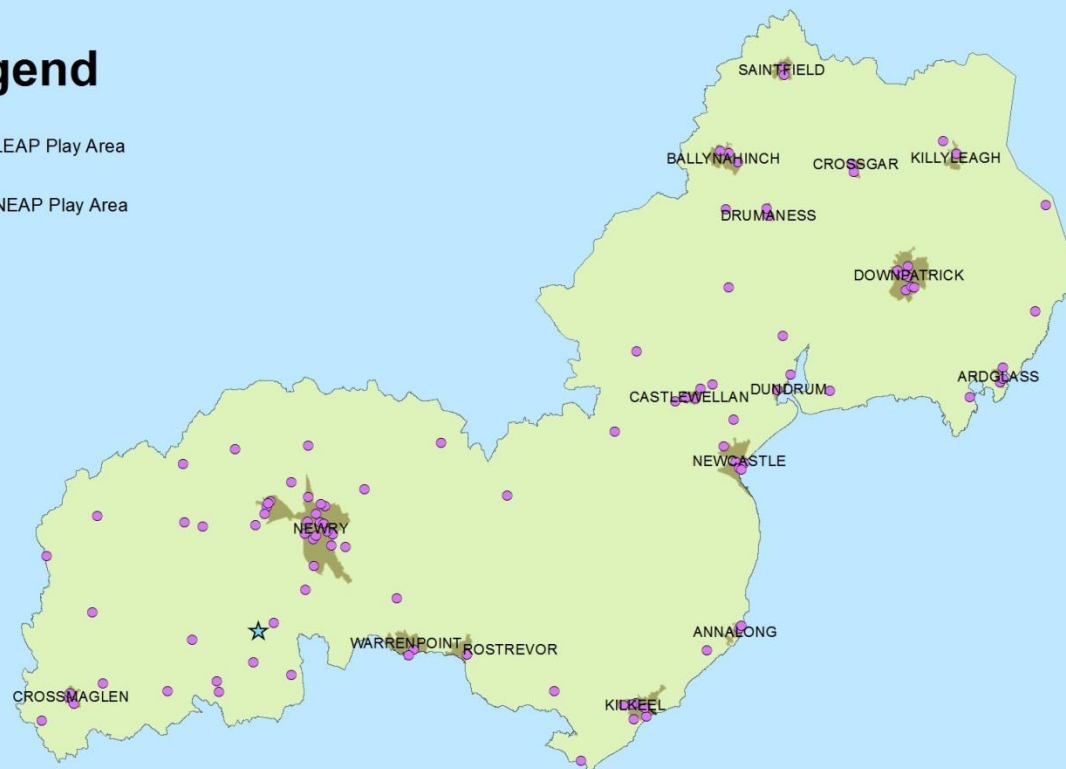
With regards to the location maps provided over the subsequent pages a number of key observations can be made:

Map 4

Location of Existing Fixed Play Areas

Legend

- LEAP Play Area
- ☆ NEAP Play Area



9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

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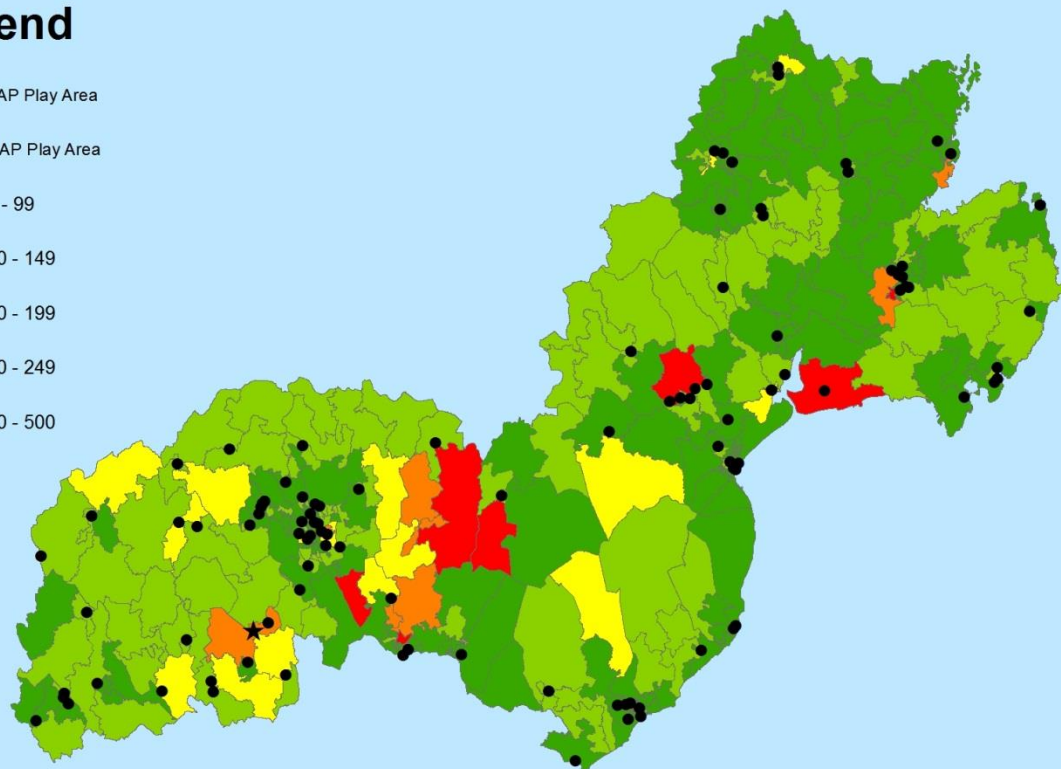
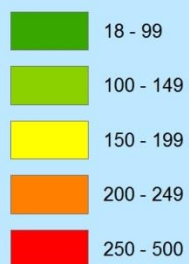
Map 5

Location of Existing Fixed Play Areas mapped against location of Children and Young People aged between 0 to 14 Years

Legend

● LEAP Play Area

★ NEAP Play Area



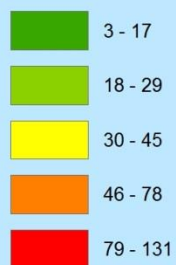
9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

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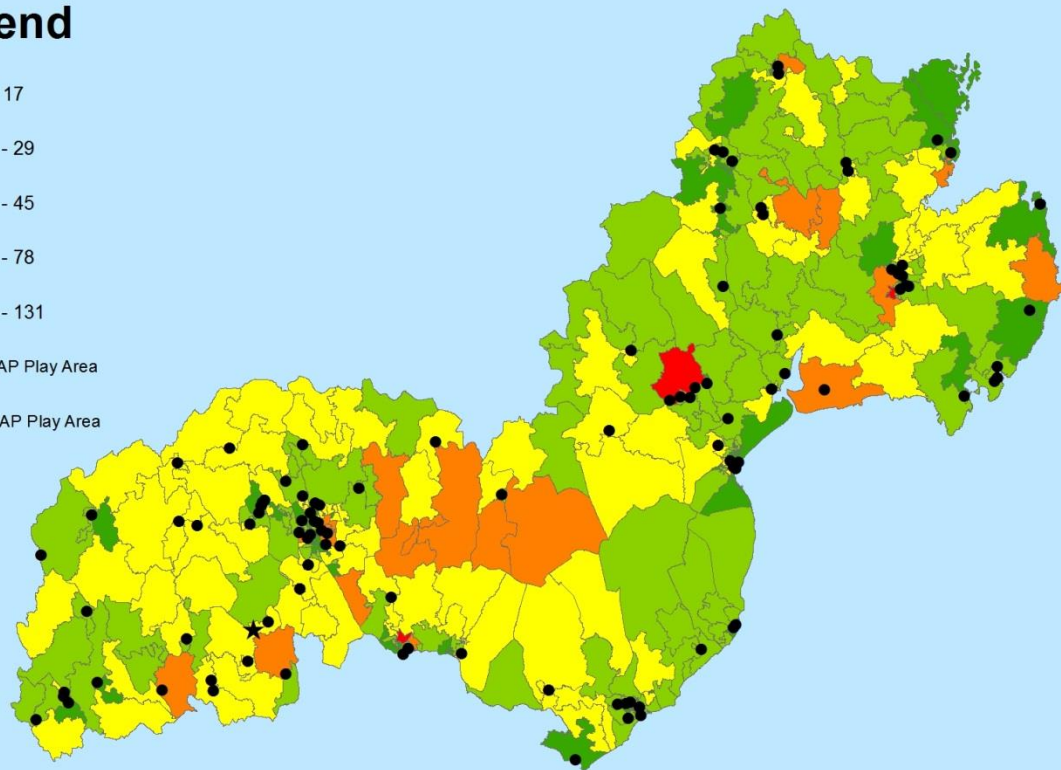
Map 6

Location of Existing Fixed Play Areas mapped against location of
Young People aged between 15 to 18 Years

Legend



- LEAP Play Area
- ★ NEAP Play Area



9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

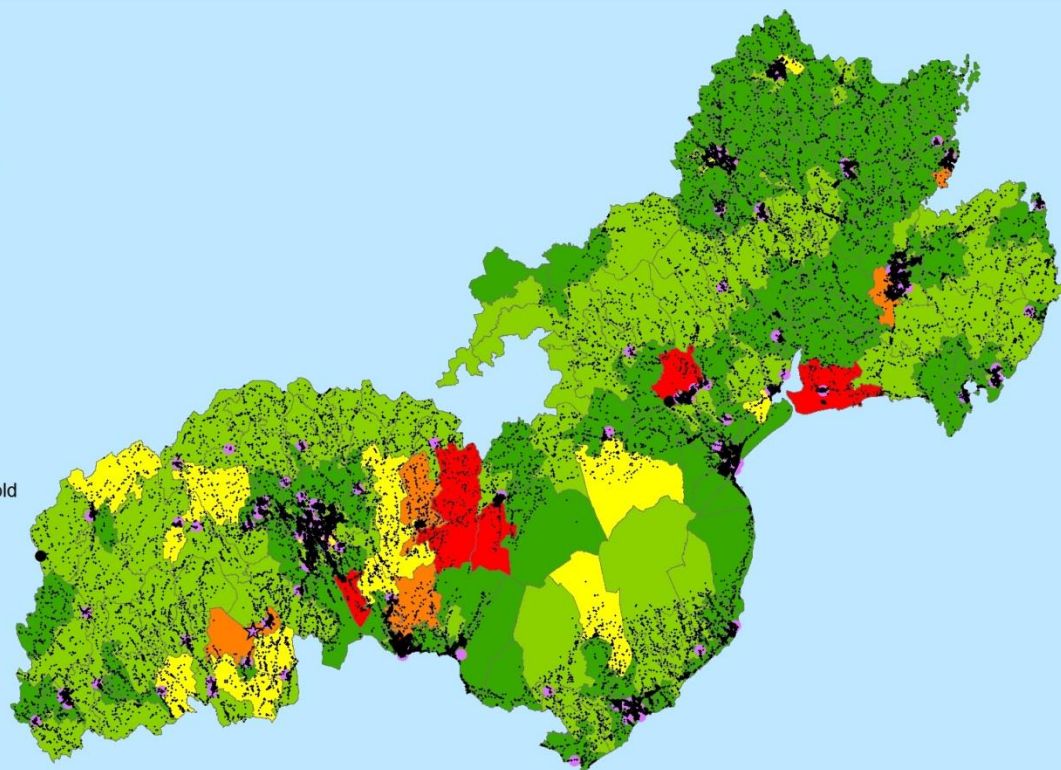
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Map 7

Location of Existing Fixed Play Areas mapped against Household Pointer Data and Number of Children and Young People aged between 0 to 14 Years

Legend

- LEAP Play Area
- ☆ NEAP Play Area
- 18 - 99
- 100 - 149
- 150 - 199
- 200 - 249
- 250 - 500
- NMD_Household











9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

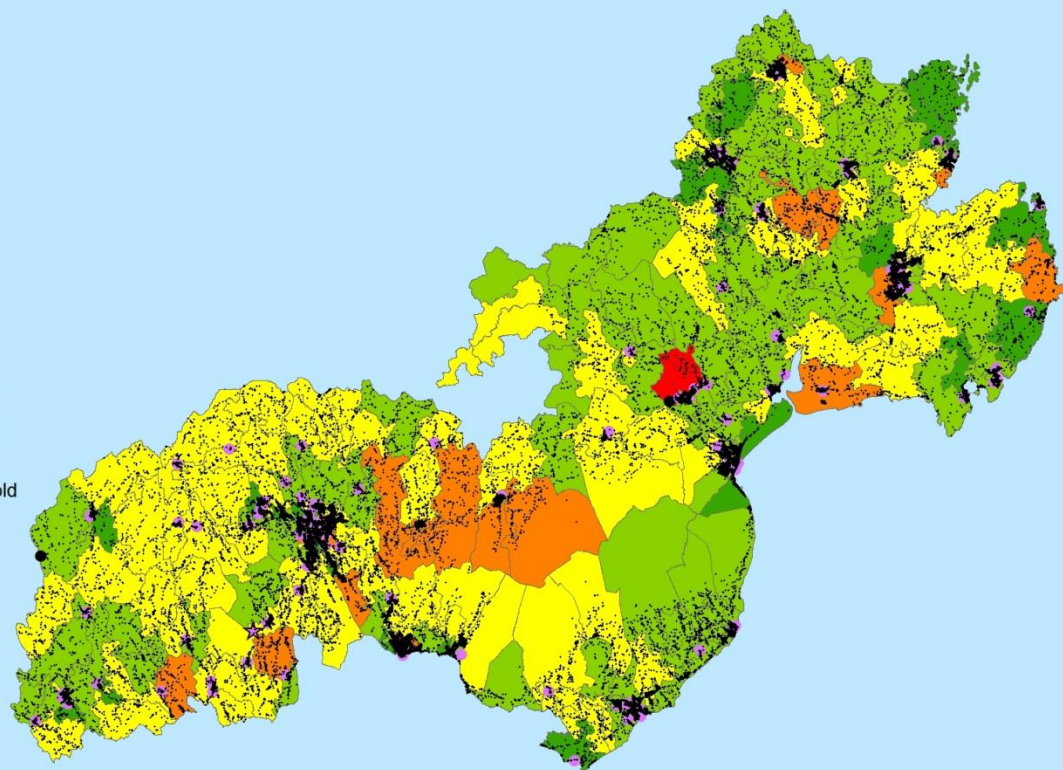
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Map 8

Location of Existing Fixed Play Areas mapped against Household Pointer Data and Number of Young People aged between 15 to 18 Years

Legend

-  3 - 17
-  18 - 29
-  30 - 45
-  46 - 78
-  79 - 131
-  LEAP Play Area
-  NEAP Play Area
-  NMD_Household



9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

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- In line with expected practice, legacy council fixed play area development has largely focused on settlements and areas of higher population density where the number of children and young people (i.e. potential users) will be greatest.
- Under the general requirement for fixed play criteria, analysis at district wide level highlights a number of potential gap areas (areas denoted on map 5 and map 7 in yellow, orange or red) – these are further explored in the subsequent sections of the strategy which focus on each individual DEA area.
- Under the rural requirement for fixed play, areas denoted in light green on maps 5 and 7 require further exploration (see DEA sections of the strategy).

5.1 Quality of Fixed Play Provision

In assessing the degree to which fixed play provision meets the needs of the local population it is important to consider not only the location of play areas but the play associated with each. Play value is a critical consideration as a play area with low 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. Play value assessments take into account a range of information relating to the play area and its location including:

- The range of play types supported by the play area including all ability play opportunities;
- 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.
- Accessibility of the play area for those who would wish to use it.

In total 107 play value assessments were undertaken on behalf of council by Play Services Ireland. In conducting the assessments a number of key areas were scored 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 was 175, however it should be noted that a perfect score is highly unlikely due to the range and scope of the areas being assessed. An overview of key audit findings can be found in the table below.

Criteria	No. of Play Areas
Highest Scoring Fixed Play Area	Slieve Gullion: 156 (89%)
Lowest Scoring Play Area	Station Avenue, Castlewellan: 62 (35%)
Total No. scoring below 87.5 (50%)	39
Total No. scoring between 87.6 and 105 (51% to 60%)	35
Total No. scoring 61% or above	34

With regards to those play areas scoring 50% or below, the play value assessment highlights an inadequate level of play value. This has 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.

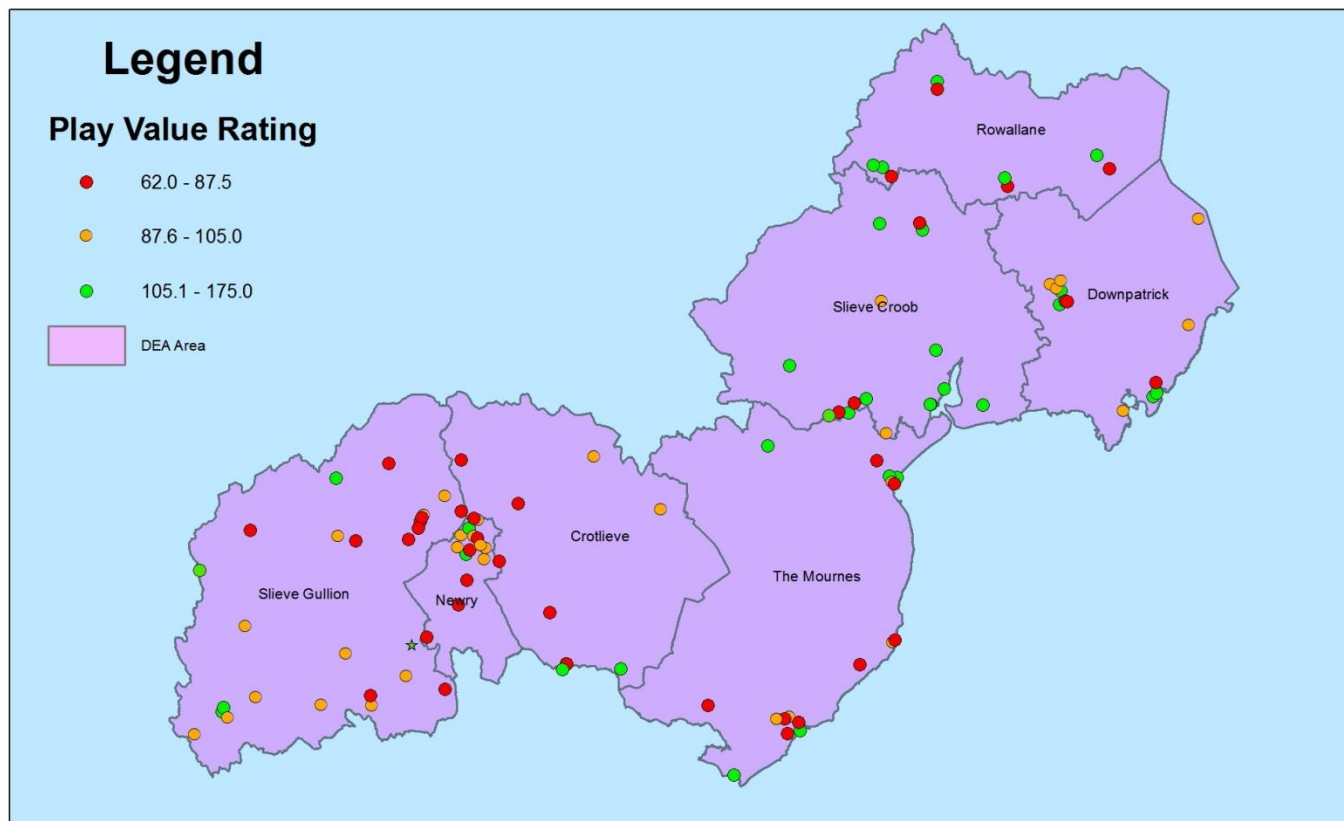
Play areas falling within this category (providing that continued demographic need can be demonstrated) are in need of upgrade or remedial actions aimed at enhancing play value during the lifetime of the strategy.

Play areas scoring between 51% and 60%, whilst of marginally higher play value than those outlined in 6.13 are still of an inadequate level and will require upgrade/remedial action during the lifetime of the strategy, providing that continued demographic need can be ascertained.

Play areas scoring above 61% represent an adequate level of play value for the present, however council should aim to achieve a minimum play value score of 75% for all play areas in the long term). At present such areas should be monitored and maintained to ensure no further degradation of play value. Map 9 overleaf shows the location of play areas categorised by their play value score.

Map 9

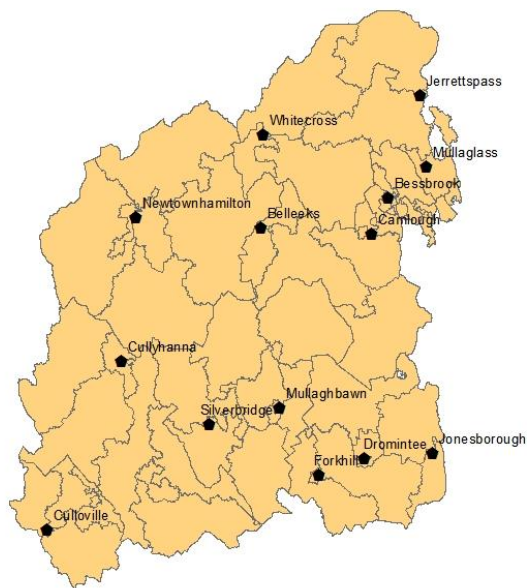
Fixed Play Areas categorised by Overall Play Value Score



DEA Name: Slieve Gullion

Population and Household Overview

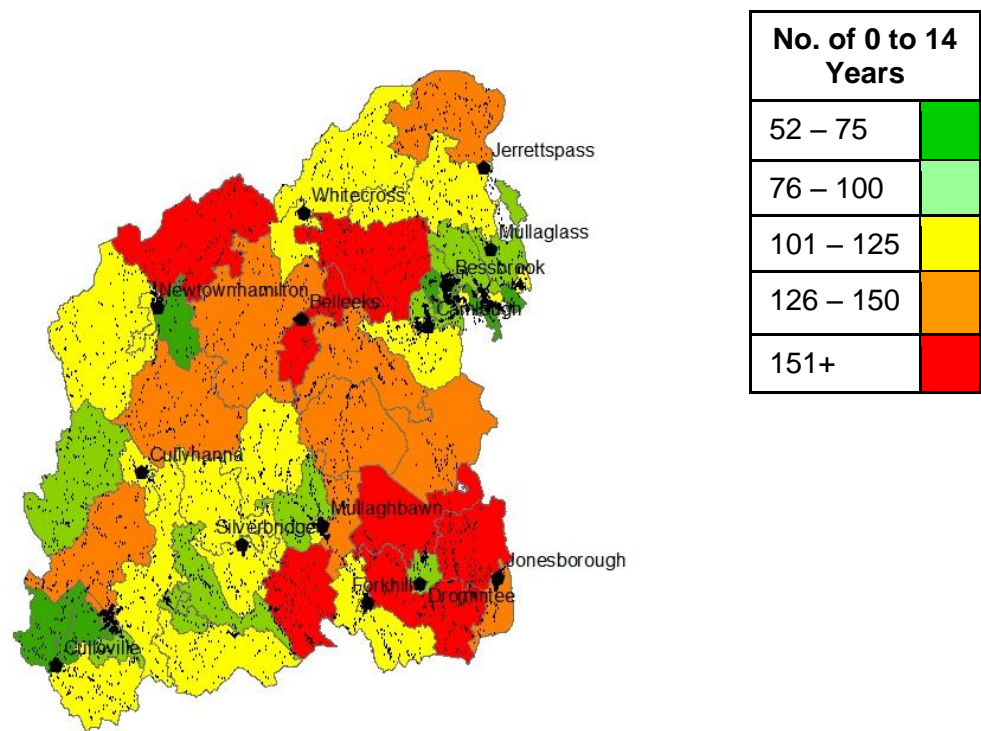
Slieve Gullion is a predominantly rural DEA located in the legacy Newry and Mourne District Council Area. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) is 26,388 resident individuals.



In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

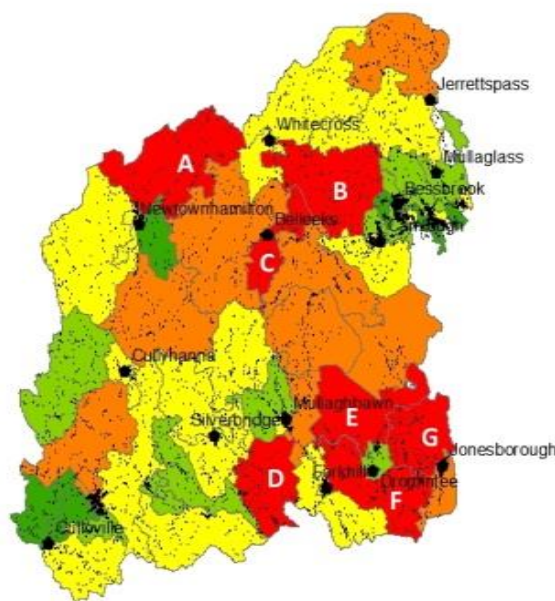
1. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
2. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

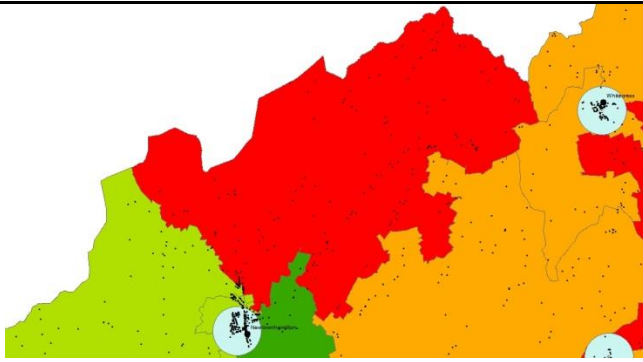
By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those small areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



Based on population figures a number of potential gaps areas have been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) - these areas have been denoted above in red. In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.

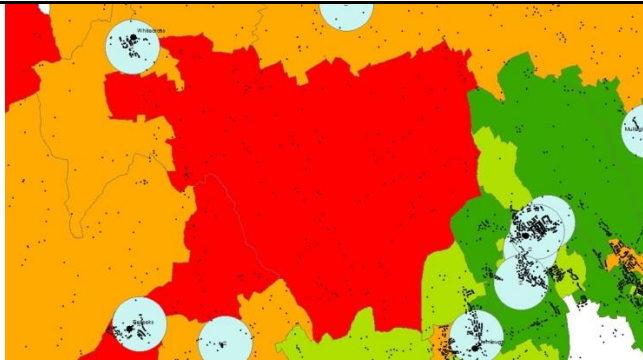
The map below identifies those areas meeting criteria 1.





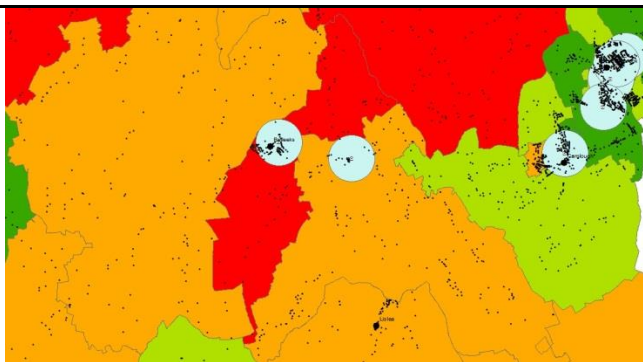
Area A

Analysis of household pointer data and settlement spread within the area indicates that at present, given the dispersed nature of the population further fixed play development would not represent a viable method for meeting play need.



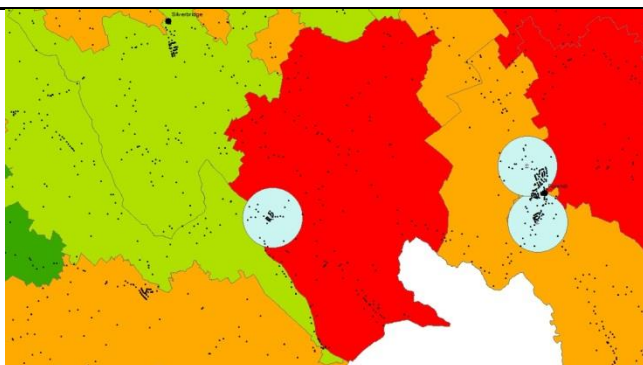
Area B

Analysis of household pointer data and settlement spread within the area indicates that at present, given the dispersed nature of the population further fixed play development would not represent a viable method for meeting play need.



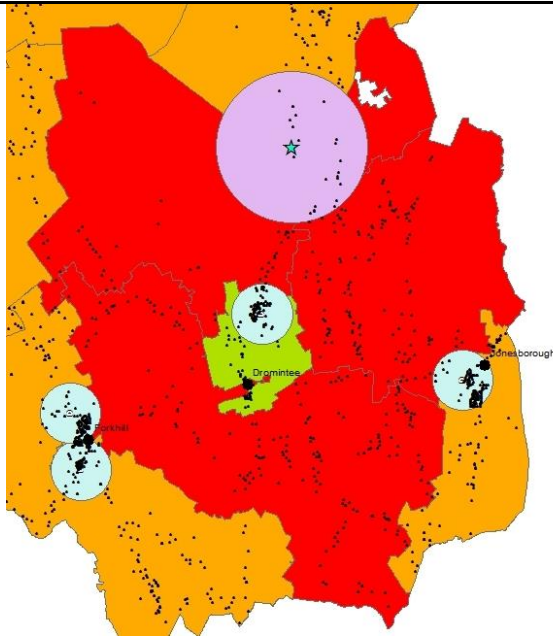
Area C

Analysis of household pointer data and settlement spread within the area indicates that at present, given the dispersed nature of the population further fixed play development would not represent a viable method for meeting play need.



Area D

Analysis of household pointer data and settlement spread within the area indicates that at present, given the dispersed nature of the population further fixed play development would not represent a viable method for meeting play need.



Areas E, F and G

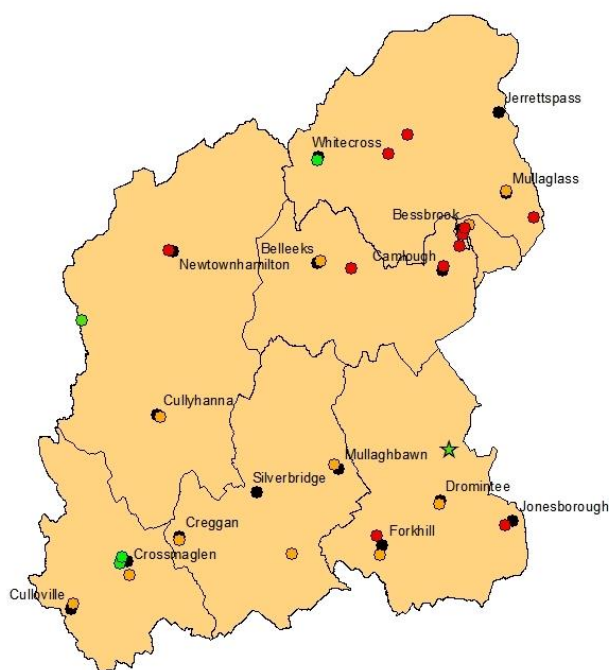
Analysis of household pointer data and settlement spread within the area indicates that at present, given the dispersed nature of the population further fixed play development would not represent a viable method for meeting play need.

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household location at the reduced rural criteria did not identify any further eligible areas for new fixed play development. Under the overarching strategy council will continue to review settlement growth and development in order to identify the point at which new fixed play development may be required.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Slieve Gullion 26 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location (based on settlement pattern – see map overleaf) indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Yellow
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 10 play areas scored under 87.5.

Ward	Play Area	Play Value
Bessbrook	Charlemont Sqaure	65
Whitecross	Carnbane Gdns	71
Forkhill	Bog Road Picnic	73
Newtownhamilton	Dungormley	74
Camlough	Drumilly	79
Bessbrook	Pond Field	79
Camlough	Fr Cullen	84
Forkhill	Jonesborough	85
Camlough	Oliver Plunkett	86
Whitecross	Lisnalee	87

→ 11 play areas scored between 87.6 and 105

Ward	Play Area	Play Value
Forkhill	Dromintee	88
Bessbrook	College Square	89
Forkhill	Fairview	91
Mullaghbabane	Tullydonnell	91
Whitecross	Latt Crescent	92
Crossmaglen	Cullaville	93

Newtownhamilton	Cullyhanna	94
Mullaghbane	Conway Park	98
Crossmaglen	Lismore Park	99
Mullaghbane	Creggan	101
Camlough	Belleek Play Area	105

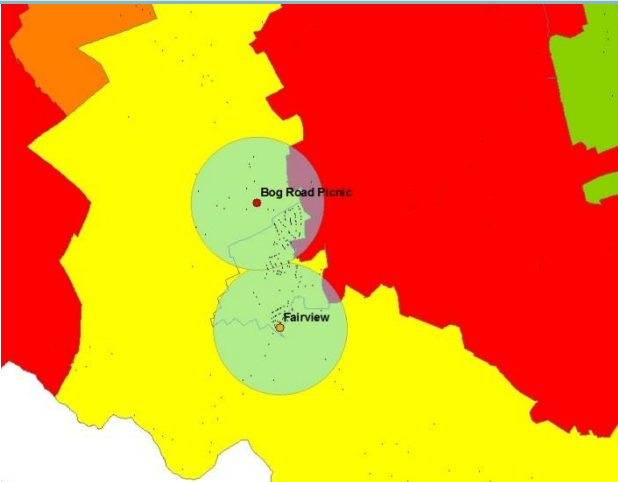
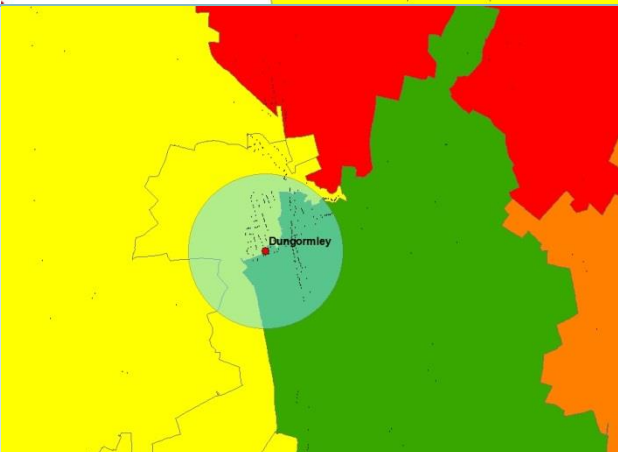
→ 5 play areas scored 106 or above

Ward	Play Area	Play Value
Whitecross	Whitecross	106
Crossmaglen	Ardross	110
Crossmaglen	Rathview	113
Newtownhamilton	Altnamackin	115
Forkhill	Slieve Gullion	156


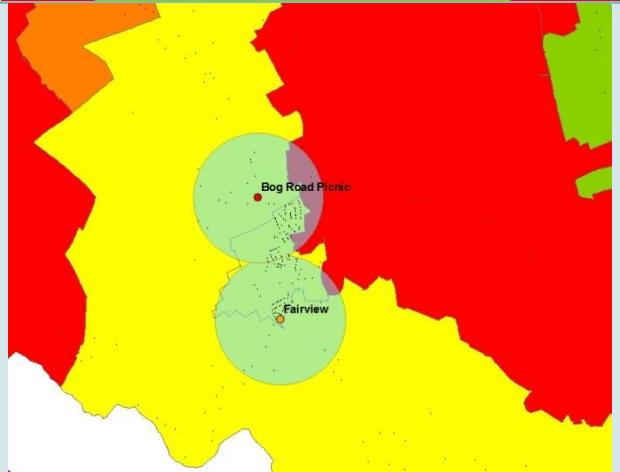
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

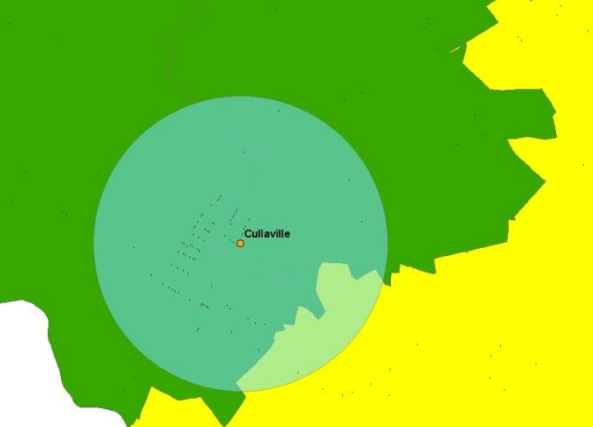
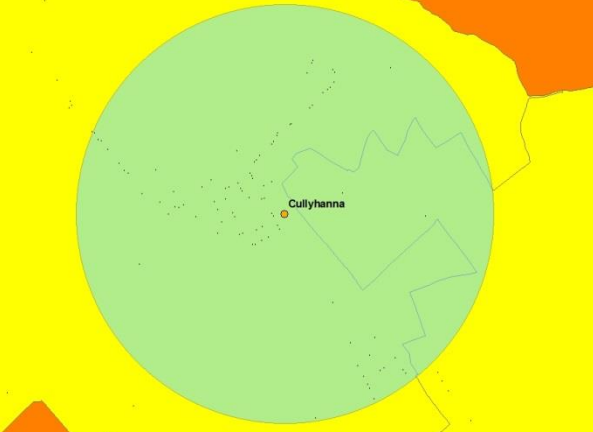
The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Slieve Gullion ward. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.



Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low or Mid Value Play Areas

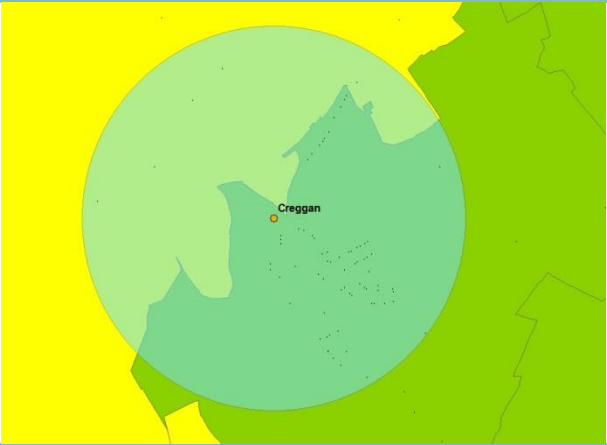
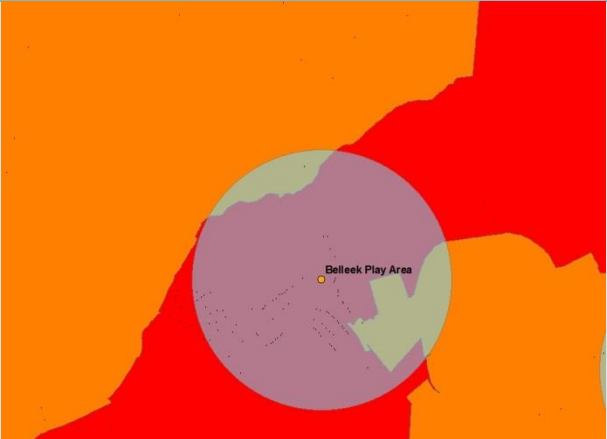
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Bog Road Picnic	73	<p>Bog Road picnic area is aimed at a combination of local residents and visitors to the area.</p> <p>Given its dual purpose i.e. meeting residential and visitor play need it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/enhanced to increase play value of the site.</p>	£25,000 - £65,000	tbc
	Dungormley	74	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc

	Jonesborough	85	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>		tbc
	Oliver Plunkett	86	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc

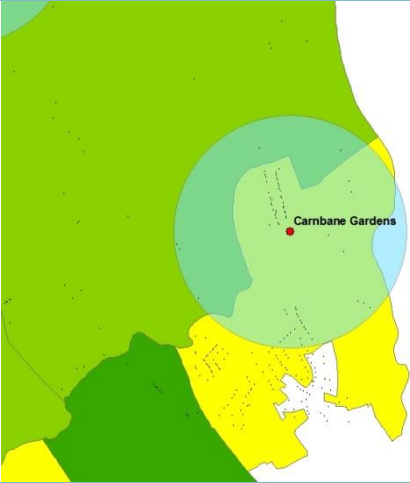

	Drumintee	88	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc
	Fairview	91	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc

	Cullaville	93	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc
	Cullyhanna	94	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc

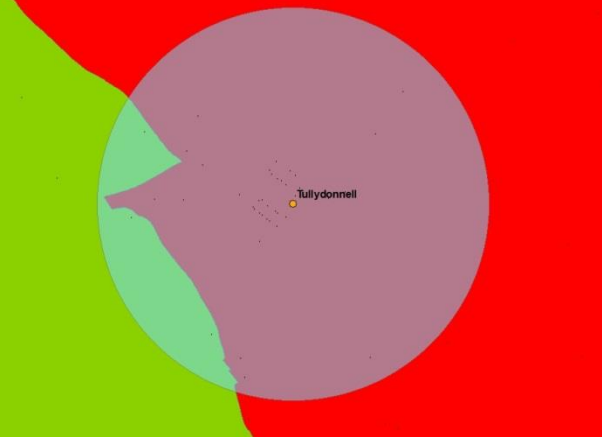
	Conway Park	98	<p>With a play value assessment of 98, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
	Lismore Park	99	<p>With a play value assessment of 99, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

 <p>A map showing the Creggan area, which is highlighted in a light green circle. The surrounding area is colored yellow and green. The name 'Creggan' is labeled on the map.</p>	Creggan	101	<p>With a play value assessment of 101, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
 <p>A map showing the Belleek Play Area, which is highlighted in a light purple circle. The surrounding area is colored orange and red. The name 'Belleek Play Area' is labeled on the map.</p>	Belleek Play Area	105	<p>With a play value assessment of 105, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing


Proposed Action: Potential Removal/ Transformation of site based on Community Consultation

	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Carnbane Gardens	71	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc
	Drumilly	79	<p>Located in a rural location with low population density, initial analysis indicates that there may be insufficient demand for the play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc

 <p>A map showing the Lisnalee play area. The play area is a light green circle on a yellow background. A red dot marks the location of Lisnalee within the circle.</p>	Lisnalee	87	<p>The play area is located in a rural location with low population density. Initial analysis indicates that there may be insufficient demand for the play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/ transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc
 <p>A map showing the Latt Crescent play area. The play area is a light green circle on a green background. A red dot marks the location of Latt Crescent within the circle.</p>	Latt Crescent	92	<p>The play area is located in an area of low population density. Initial analysis indicates that there may be insufficient demand for the play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/ transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc

	Tullydonnell	91	<p>The play area at Tullydonnell is located within a rural area and scored 91 in the play value assessment. Given the rural nature of the location household numbers within the catchment area are relatively low.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be included within the renewal programme pending confirmation of local need at local consultation stage.</p>	£25,000 - 65,000	tbc
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Proposed Action: Consolidation of existing play area provision in Bessbrook (to include removal of 2 sites and retention/upgrading of 2 remaining sites). Consideration to be given to relocation of remaining sites to better meet public need.

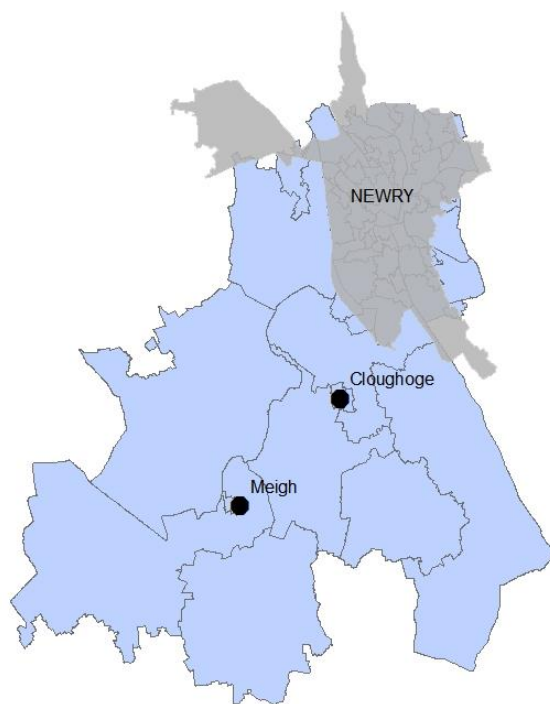
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Charlemont Square	65	Bessbrook is currently served by 4 fixed play areas all of which are of low play value.	£130,000	tbc
	Pond Field	79	Analysis of current play area locations and population spread indicates that rather than upgrading the 4 existing play areas it would be more effective long term to consider consolidation down to 2 play areas (with potential relocation of remaining sites) and upgrade/installation to high play value standard.		
	Fr Cullen	84			
	College Square	89			
			Community consultation should be initiated in order to explore the potential options available and to assess the level of support for consolidation/upgrading within the local community.		

Proposed Action: Maintain and Monitor					
Ward	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Whitecross	Whitecross	106	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	-
Crossmaglen	Ardross	110	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	-
Crossmaglen	Rathview	113	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	-
Newtownhamilton	Altnamackin	115	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	-
Forkhill	Slieve Gullion	156	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	-

DEA Name: Newry

Population and Household Overview

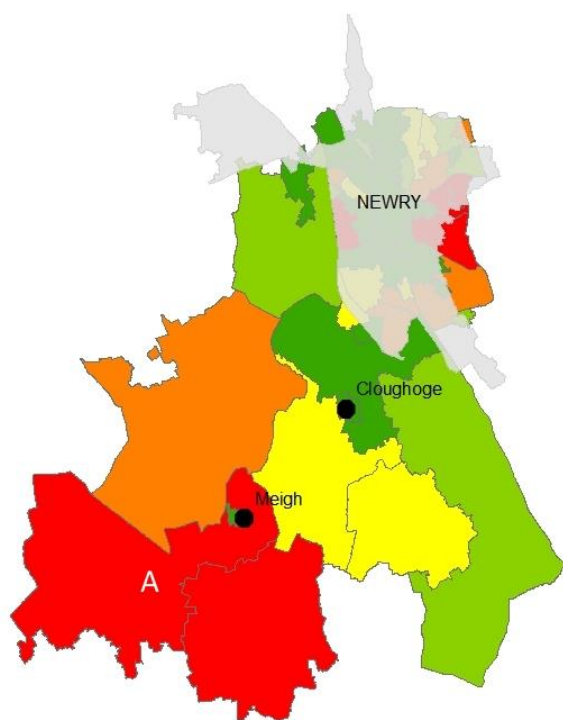
Newry DEA covers a combined urban/rural area and incorporates a significant proportion of the city of Newry. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) was 28,456 resident individuals.



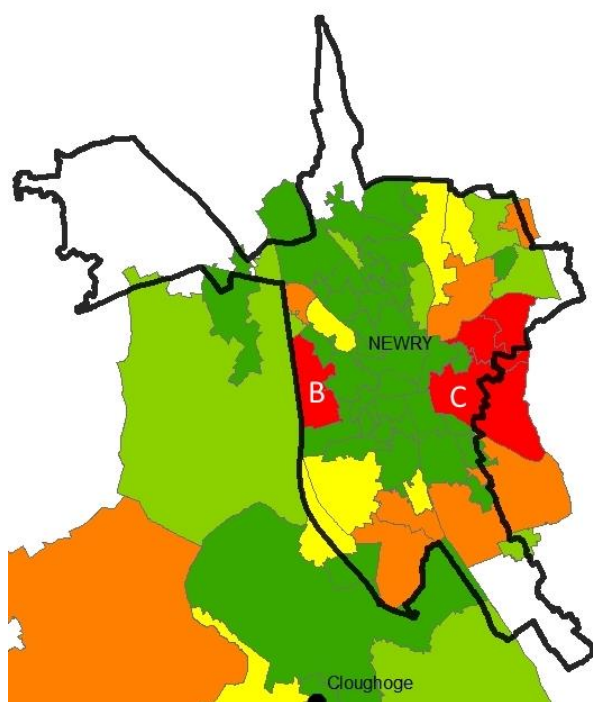
In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

1. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
2. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

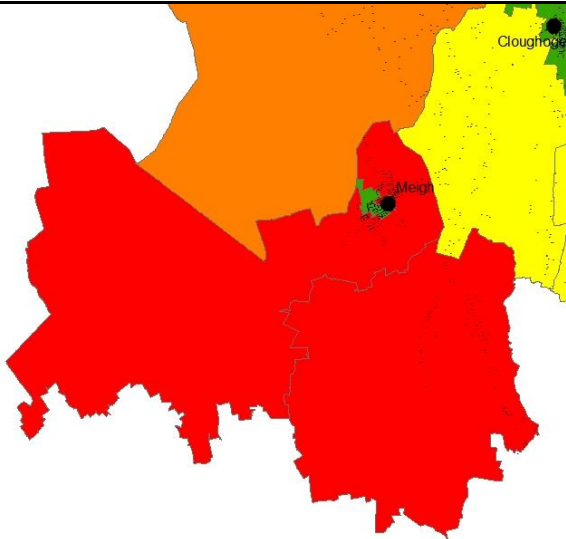
By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



No. of 0 to 14 Years	
52 – 75	Green
76 – 100	Light Green
101 – 125	Yellow
126 – 150	Orange
151+	Red



Based on population figures a number of potential gap areas (denoted in red on the maps above) have been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children). In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.



Potential Gap Area A

Potential gap area A is located to the south of the DEA area. Analysis of household patterns within the identified area highlights that the majority of households are located around the village of Meigh, contributing the high number of 0 to 14 year olds identified by the GIS system. Meigh currently has 1 fixed play area which scored 75 in the play value assessment. Whilst this is low it does indicate that a site is present which could meet local demand albeit requiring upgrade.

Analysis of household pointer data across the remainder of the area indicates that, given dispersal patterns no new fixed play areas are required at present.

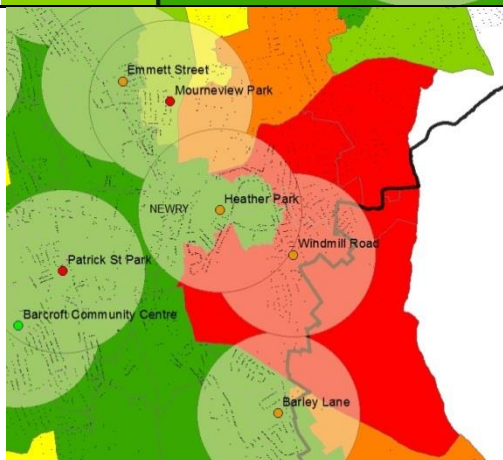


Potential Gap Area B

Potential gap area B is located to the west of the city with the majority of the population residing within the catchment radial associated with Martins Lane play area which was assessed as having a play value of 103.

Households to the south of the identified area fall into the catchment radial for Barcroft Community Centre play area

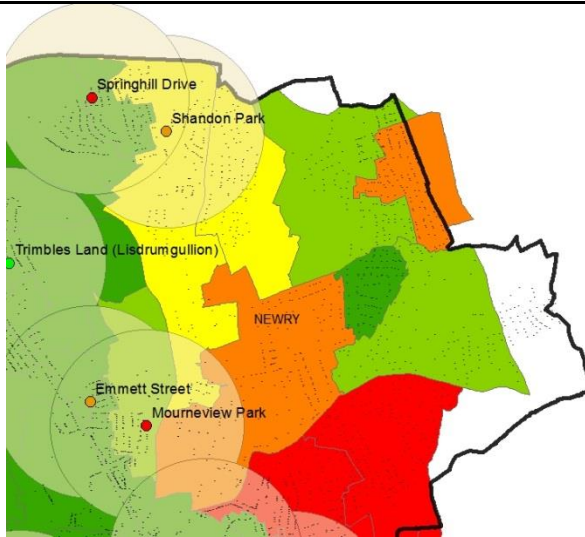
Based on household distribution no new fixed play areas are required at present.



Potential Gap Area C

Located to the East of the DEA area, potential gap areas C is partially served by 2 existing play areas, Heather Park (PV score 96) and Windmill Road (PV Score 92).

At present an area of housing the north easts of the area denoted in red falls outside the catchment radial for existing play provision. Enhancement of existing provision (in particular at Windmill Road) has the potential to extend the radial coverage area, increasing population coverage whilst reducing the need for new play development.



Note:

The area denoted on the map is located to the north east of the city and currently does not meet the minimum requirements for new play provision based on the available demographic data. It is however acknowledged that further housing development has taken place within the area following collection of the most recent demographic data.

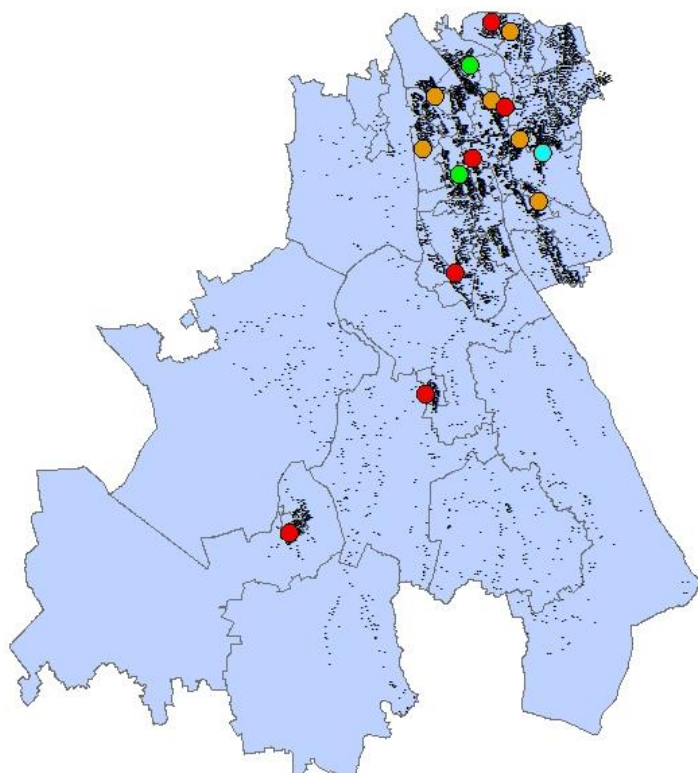
It is recommended that council should undertake a local consultation within the area to provide an updated overview of demographic need within the area in order to allow for an assessment of play need based on updated demographic data.

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household location at the reduced rural criteria did not identify any further eligible areas for new fixed play development. Under the overarching strategy council will continue to review settlement growth and development in order to identify the point at which new fixed play development may be required.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Newry DEA 15 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location based on settlement pattern indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Yellow
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 6 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Meigh CC	75
Carrivemaclone	80
Springhill Drive	85
Raymond McCressh Park	86
Mourneview Park	86
Newtowncloghue	87

→ 7 play area scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Emmett Street	89
Shandon Park	89
Windmill Road	92
Heather Park	96

Barley Lane	99
Derrybey	103
Martins Lane	103


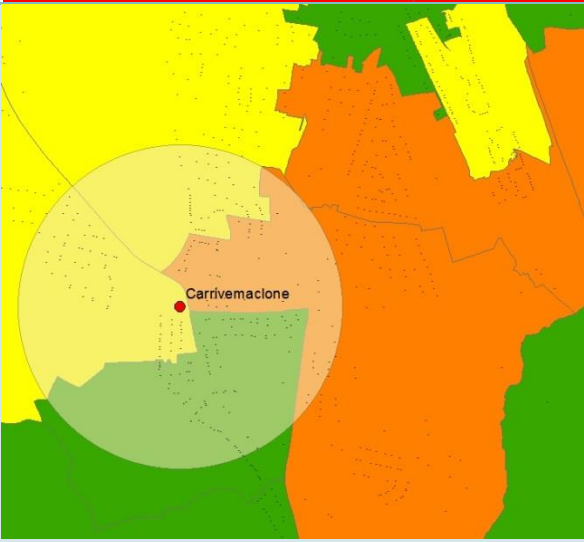
→ 2 play areas scored 106 or above

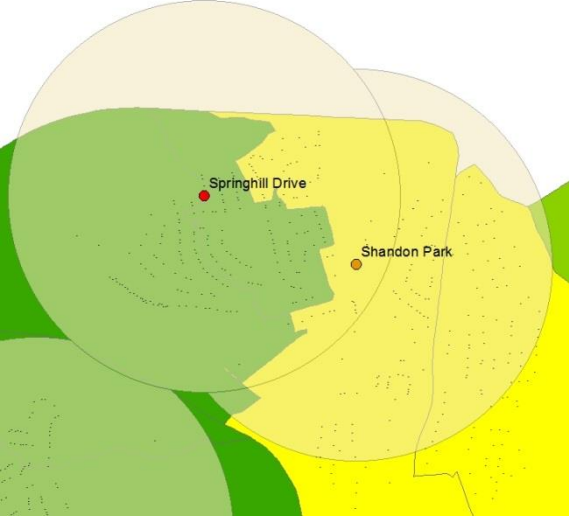
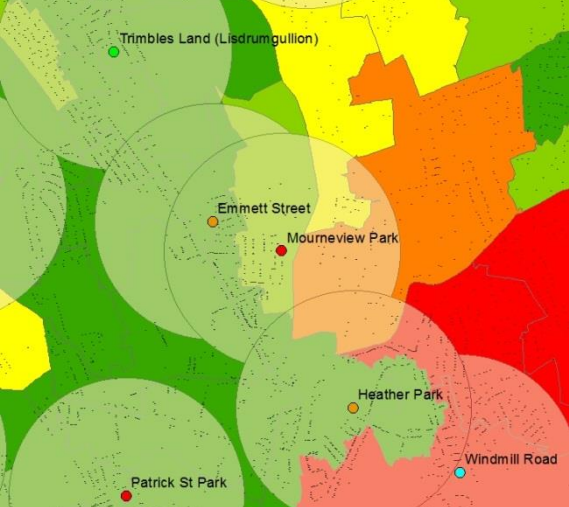
Play Area	Play Value
Barcroft CC	110
Lisdrumgullion	110

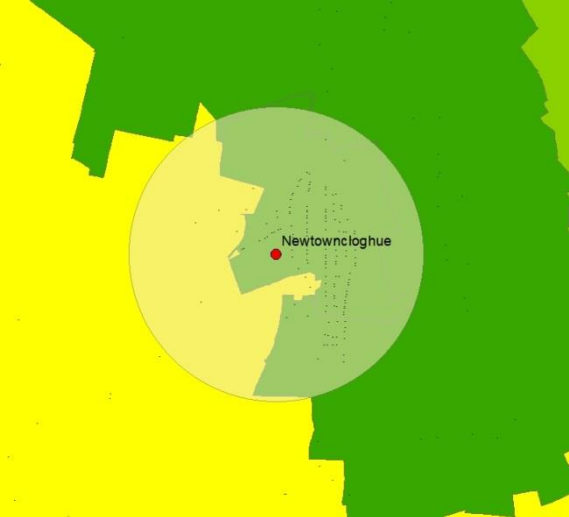
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

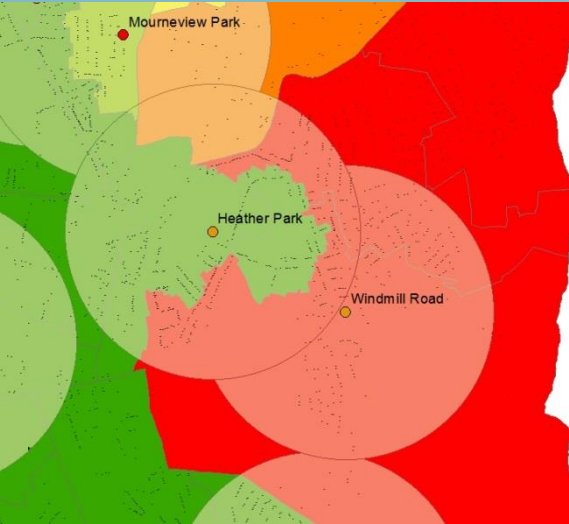

The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Newry DEA. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

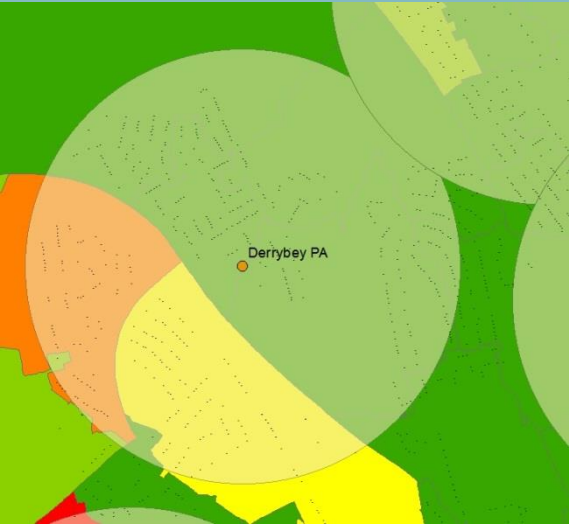
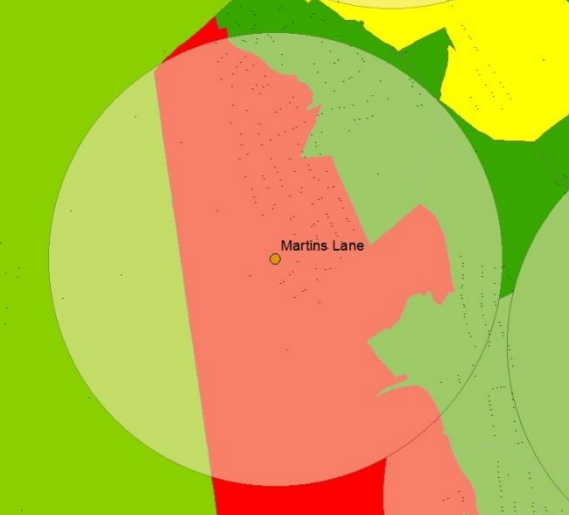
Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low or Mid Value Play Areas


	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Meigh CC	75	<p>The play area at Meigh scored 75 in the play value assessment highlighting a need for enhancement and upgrade.</p> <p>Analysis of underlying demography and household placement indicates that the play area is still required.</p> <p>Given the low play value and level of demand it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Carrievemaclone	80	<p>The play area at Carrievemaclone scored 80 in the play value assessment highlighting a need for enhancement and upgrade.</p> <p>Analysis of underlying demography and household placement indicates that there remains a need for fixed play provision within the area. With a view to extending coverage it is suggested that council should consider potential relocation of the site prior to upgrade providing increased coverage for the area denoted on the map in orange.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

	<p>Springhill Drive Shandon Park</p>	<p>85 89</p>	<p>Springhill Drive (PV score 85) and Shandon Park (PV score 89) are located within relatively close proximity to each other with overlapping catchment radials.</p> <p>Demographic analysis and household patterns indicate that there does remain a need for fixed play provision within the area, however it is suggested that a single, high play value site would offer greater potential for meeting play need.</p> <p>It is recommended that council should proceed to consultation regarding consolidation of the two play areas onto 1 site prior to upgrade.</p>	<p>£25,000 to 65,000</p>	<p>tbc</p>
	<p>Emmett Street Mourneview</p>	<p>89 86</p>	<p>Emmett Street (PV score 89) and Mourneview Park (PV score 86) are located within close proximity to each other with overlapping catchment radials.</p> <p>Demographic analysis and household patterns indicate that there does remain a need for fixed play provision within the area, however it is suggested that a single, high play value site would offer greater potential for meeting play need.</p>	<p>£25,000 to 65,000</p>	<p>tbc</p>

			It is recommended that council should proceed to consultation regarding consolidation of the two play areas onto 1 site prior to upgrade.		
	Newtowncloghue	87	<p>The play area at Newtowncloghue scored 87 in the play value assessment highlighting a need for enhancement and upgrade.</p> <p>Based on current demographic information it is recommended that council should proceed to consultation to ensure that there remains a sufficient level of demand for the play area prior to proceeding to upgrade should need be confirmed.</p>	Dependent on community consultation	tbc

	<p>Windmill Road</p> <p>Heather Park</p>	<p>92</p> <p>96</p>	<p>Windmill Road (PV score 92) and Heather Park (PV score 96) are located within relatively close proximity to each other with overlapping catchment radials.</p> <p>Demographic analysis and household patterns indicate that there does remain a need for fixed play provision within the area, however it is suggested that a single, high value site would offer greater potential for meeting play need than low level upgrades to existing sites.</p> <p>It is recommended that council should proceed to consultation regarding consolidation of the two play areas onto 1 site prior to upgrade.</p>	<p>Revenue Maintenance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Barley Lane</p>	<p>99</p>	<p>With a play value assessment of 99 it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	<p>Revenue Maintenance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	Derrybeg	103	<p>With a play value assessment of 103 it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
	Martins Lane	103	<p>With a play value assessment of 103 it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

Proposed Action: Potential Removal/Transformation of site based on Community Consultation					
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Raymond McCreesh Park	86	<p>Raymond McCreesh Park (PV score of 86) is located in close proximity to Barcroft CC (PV score of 110) with partial cross-over of catchment radials.</p> <p>Given the duplication of provision it is recommended that council initiate local consultation within the catchment area in order to determine the most appropriate location for fixed play with a view to consolidation from 2 to 1 sites.</p>	-	tbc
	Barcroft CC	110			

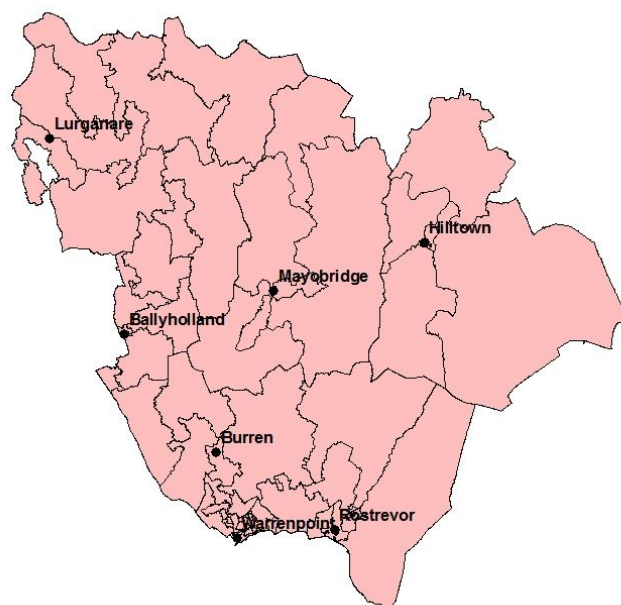
Proposed Action: High Play Value - Maintain and Monitor

Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Lisdrumgullion	110	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

DEA Name: Crotlieve

Population and Household Overview

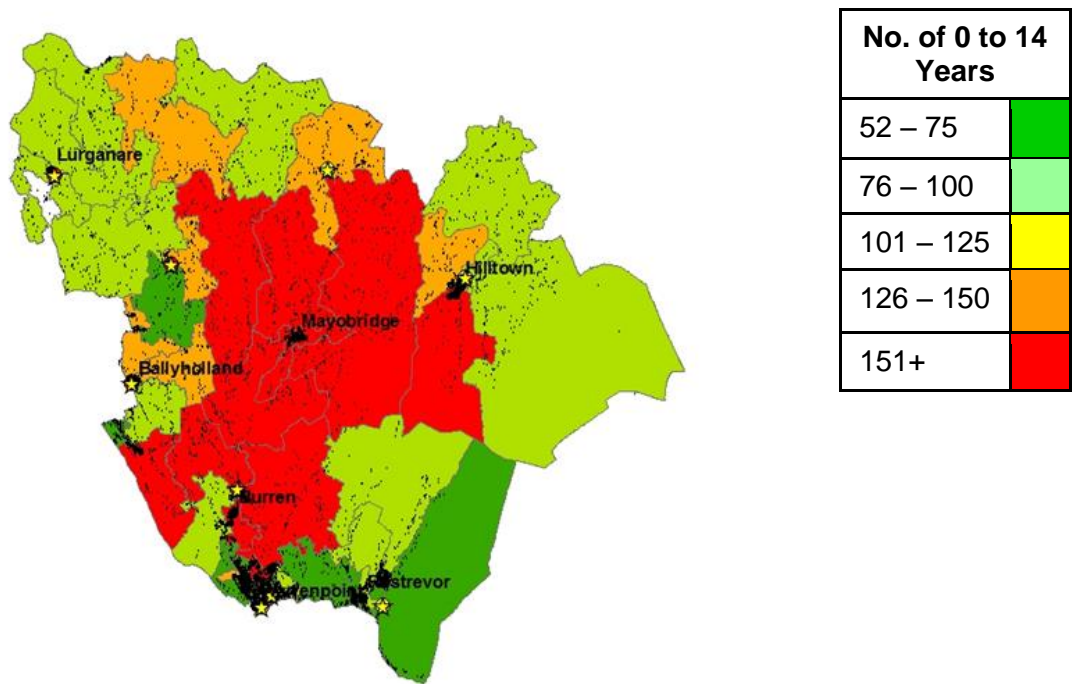
Crotlieve is a predominantly rural DEA located in the legacy Newry and Mourne District Council Area. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) is 25,554 resident individuals.



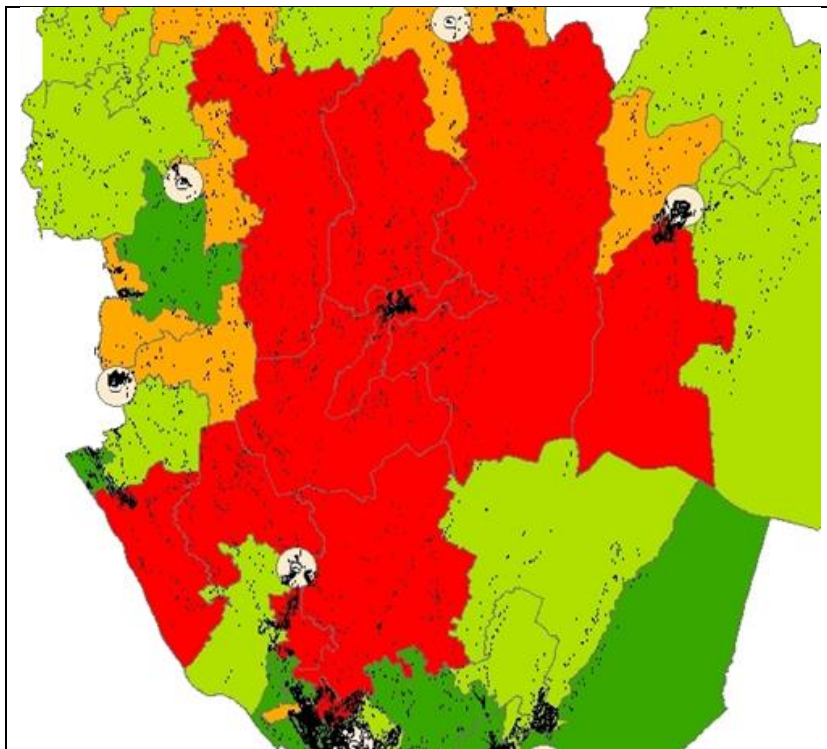
In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

3. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
4. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those small areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



Based on population figures a mid-portion of the DEA (denoted in red on the map above) has been identified as having a potential gap in fixed play provision based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children). In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.



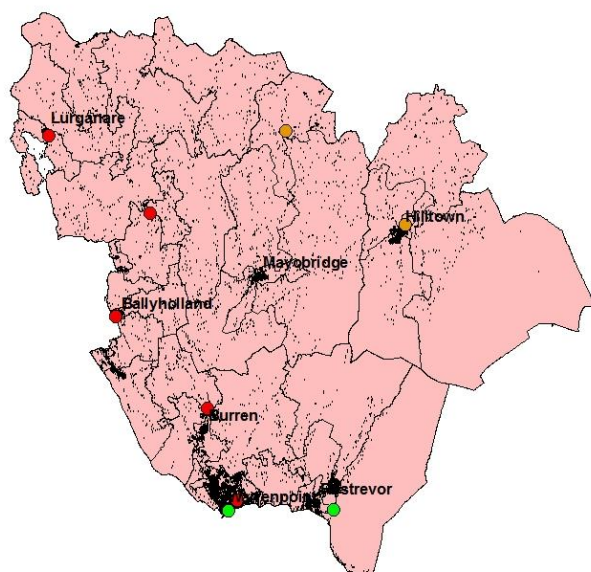
Analysis of household pointer data highlights that whilst the population numbers across the identified geographical area are sufficient to meet criteria 1, household spread and settlement patterns limit potential the development of a new fixed play site to Mayobridge which does not currently have any fixed play provision. It is recommended that council progress to the identification of a suitable site for fixed play development within Mayobridge and initiate focused community consultation as part of the design process within year 1 of the strategy (2017/18).

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household distribution and pattern at the reduced rural criteria identified the need for 1 additional new play areas to be located at Magennis Villas.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Crotlieve DEA 10 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location (based on settlement pattern – see map overleaf) indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Yellow
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 5 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Granite View	66
Innisfree	69
Clonallen Park	79
Lurganare	80
Burren Village Green	87

→ 3 play areas scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Spelga Park (Hilltown)	94
Barnmeen	103
Ringmacilroy	105

→ 2 play areas scored 106 or above

Play Area	Play Value
Warrenpoint Park	106
Kilbroney Play Area	123

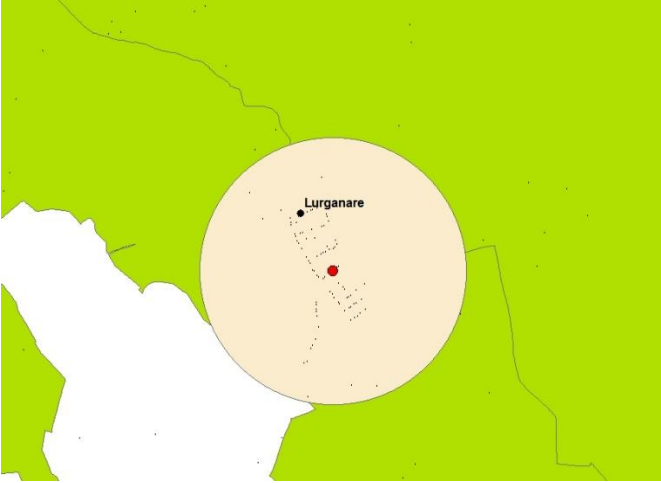
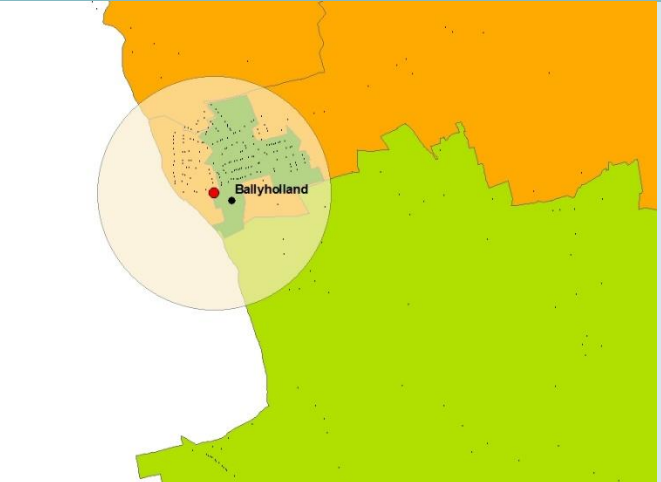
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

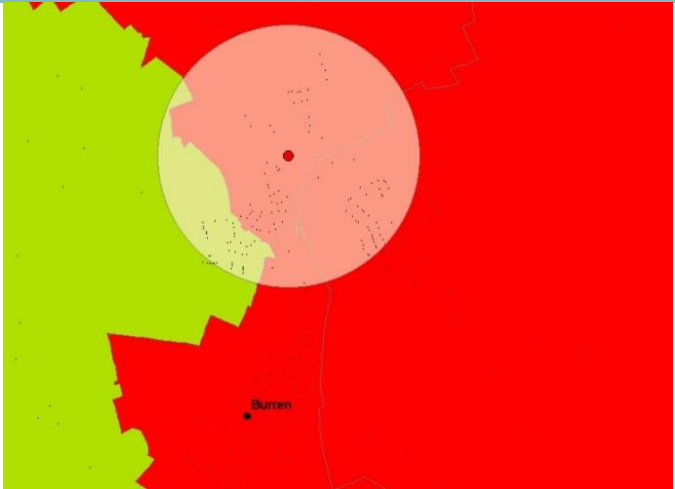
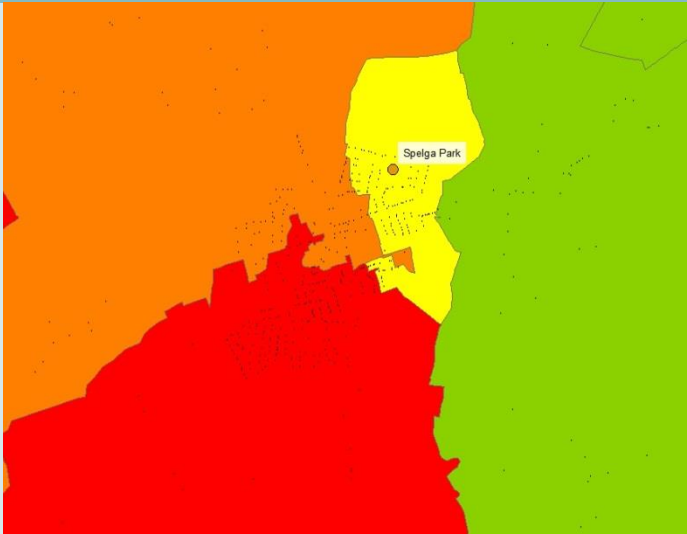
The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Crotlieve ward alongside the establishment of a new play area at Mayobridge. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

Recommendation: Establish new Fixed Play Area

Location	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
Mayobridge	Population and settlement pattern analysis identifies a clear need for the development of a fixed play area within Mayobridge. Council should commence identification of a suitable location and initiate community consultation as outlined within the play strategy as it relates to the design of new fixed play provision.	£100,000	tbc
Magennis Villas	<p>Based on the agreed rural criteria population level and settlement pattern analysis identifies a need for the development of a fixed play area at Magennis Villas.</p> <p>Council should commence identification of a suitable location and initiate community consultation as outlined within the play strategy as it relates to the design of new fixed play provision.</p>	£100,000	tbc

Recommendations: Low/Mid Value Play Areas

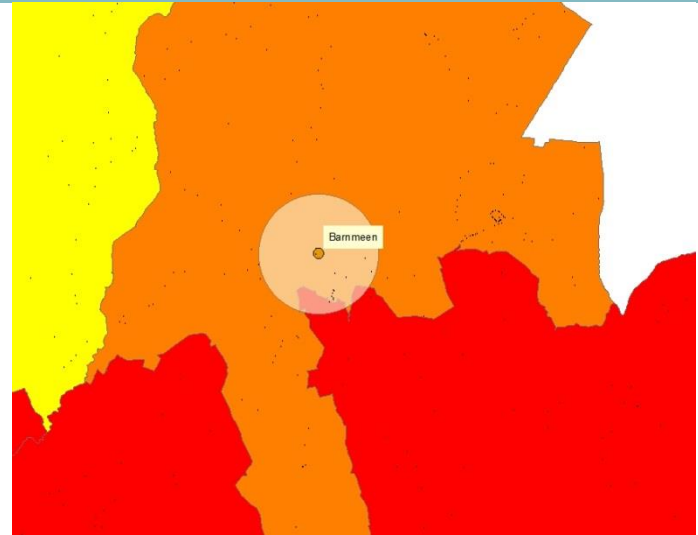
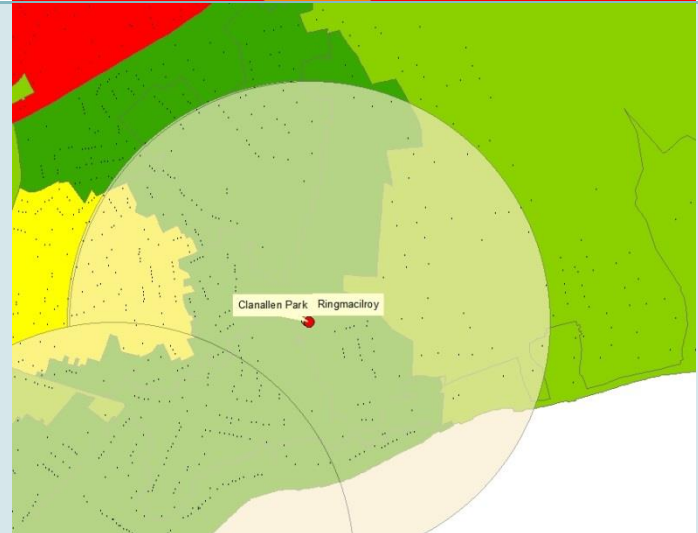
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Lurganare	80	Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area. Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Innisfree	69	Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area. Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

	Burren Village Green	87	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area. Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Spelga Park (Hilltown)		<p>The play area located at Spelga Park in Hilltown scored 94 on the play value assessment indicating a need for upgrade within the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>Analysis of demographic need and household patterns suggests a high level of demand for play within the Hilltown area. This raises concerns regarding the current location of the play area within a residential estate. Enhancement of the play area to the level required to meet need is likely to increase usage levels, increase traffic levels within Spelga Park and would require the development of dedicated parking. The current site is therefore felt to be unsuitable for the required upgrade.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

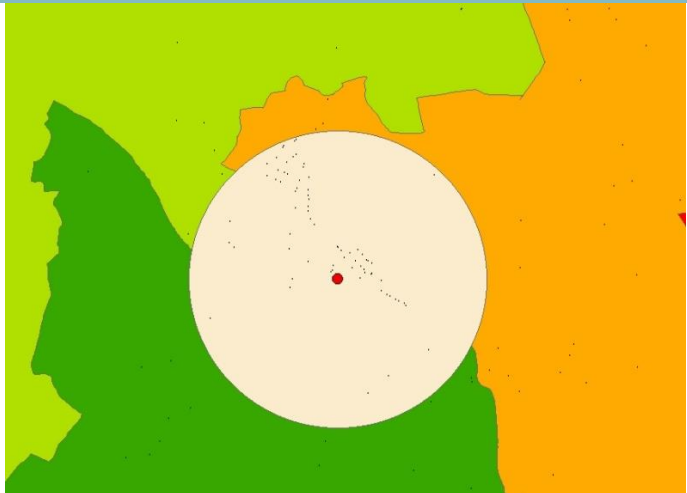
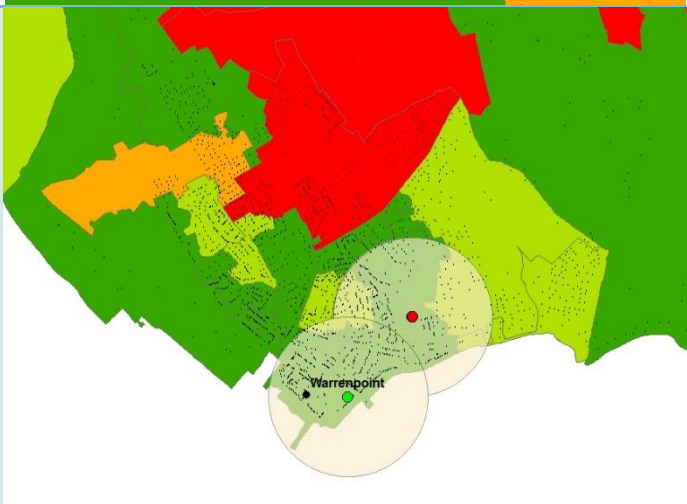
It is recommended that council should consider possible alternative locations within Hilltown for the development of a new high value play area sufficient for meeting demand. Should an alternative location not be available, upgrading of the existing site should proceed, but with due sensitivity to potential impact on residents.

It is further acknowledged that the existing play area has been at its present location for 20 years. Consultation should be initiated with Spelga Park residents to consider potential removal of the play area (assuming an alternative site can be found for play area development) and transformation of the current site to best meet resident's needs.

Given the level of population demand it is recommended that the process should commence early within the strategy phase.

	Barnmeen	103	<p>With a play value assessment of 103, it is not anticipated that the Barnmeen play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
	Ringmacilroy	105	<p>With a play value assessment of 105, it is not anticipated that Ringmacilroy play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

Proposed Action: Potential Removal/ Transformation of site based on Community Consultation

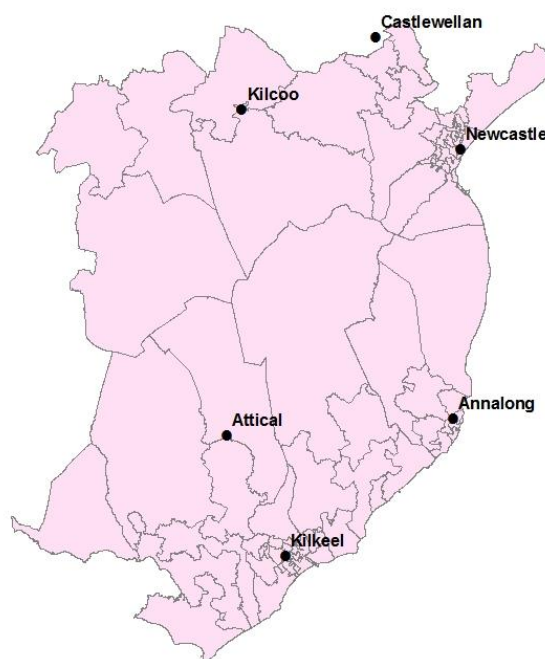
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Granite View	66	Located in a rural location with low population density, initial analysis indicates that there may be insufficient demand for the play area to support upgrade/renewal. It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/ transformation of the site.	-	tbc
	Clonallen Park	79	<p>Clonallen Park fixed play area is located in close proximity to Ringmaciroy FPA. Given its low play value it is recommended that it should be considered for removal on the basis of duplication. Any further investment in fixed play equipment should be focused on further enhancement of Ringmaciroy.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/ transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc

Proposed Action: High Play Value - Maintain and Monitor				
Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Warrenpoint Park	106	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Kilbroney Play Area	123	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

DEA Name: Mourne

Population and Household Overview

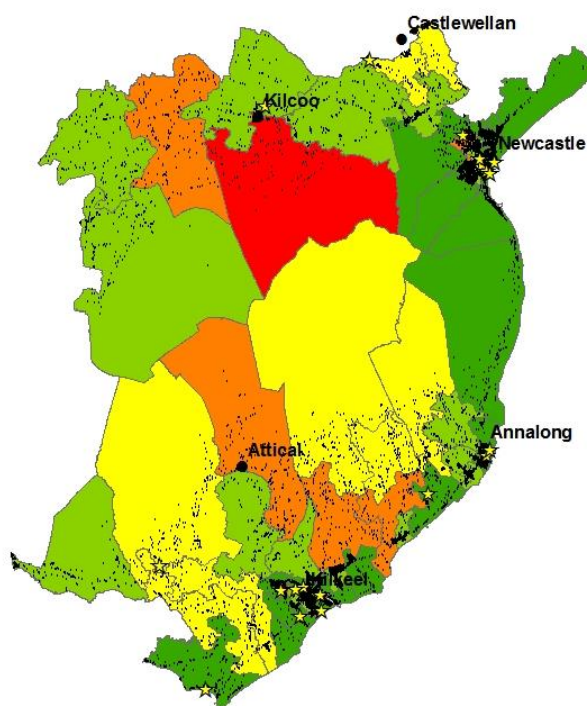
Mourne DEA is a predominantly rural ward located within the legacy Down District Council area. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) was 30,843 resident individuals.



In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

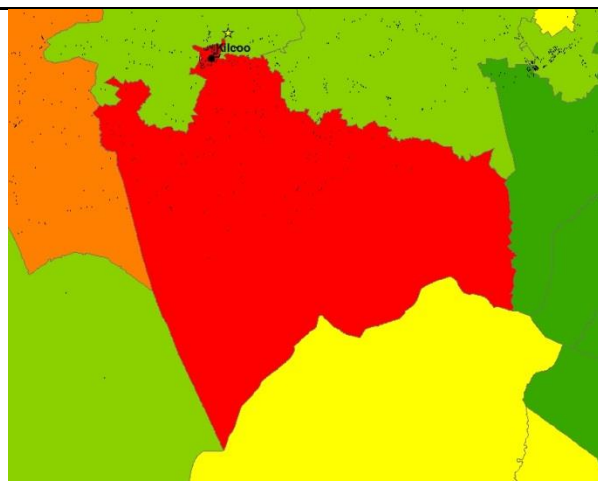
5. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
6. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



No. of 0 to 14 Years	
52 – 75	Green
76 – 100	Light Green
101 – 125	Yellow
126 – 150	Orange
151+	Red

Based on population figures 1 potential gap area (denoted in red on the map above) has been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children). In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.



Analysis of household patterns within the identified area highlights that the majority of households are located to the north of the area around Kilcoo village. Kilcoo currently has a play area assessed as being of high play value (117 PV score).

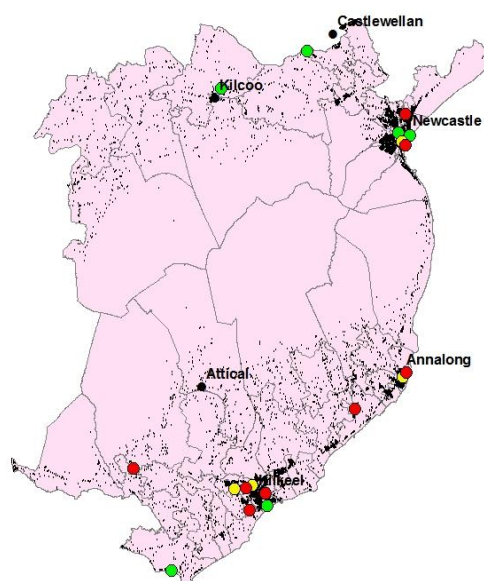
Analysis of household pointer data therefore indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present, however council should continue to monitor population growth within the area denoted in red.

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household distribution and pattern at the reduced rural criteria identified the need for 1 additional new play area to be located at Ballymartin.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Mourne DEA 18 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location based on settlement pattern indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Yellow
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 8 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Backfield	63
Pious Hill	82
Newcastle Centre	83
Kittys Road	85
Hillside Drive	85
Mona View	86
Ballymaderphy	86
Rooney Road	87

→ 4 play area scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Marine Park	89
Bencrum	97
Scrogg Road	98
Castle Park	105

→ 6 play areas scored 106 or above

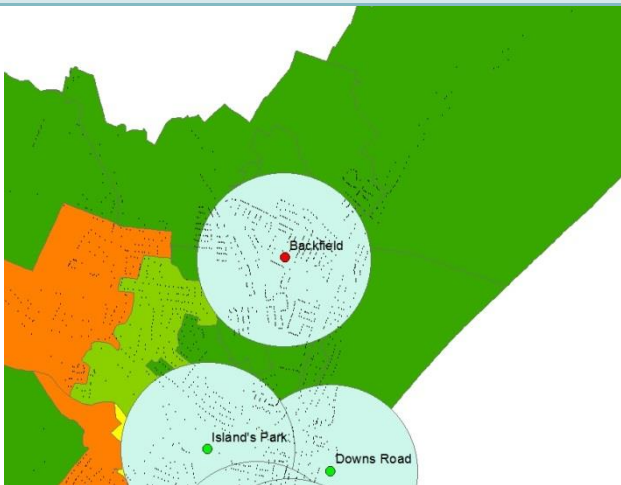
Play Area	Play Value
Island's Park	107
Downs Road	113
Kilcoo GAC	117
Cranfield Amenity Centre	118
Mourne Esplanade	122
Burren Bridge Road	124

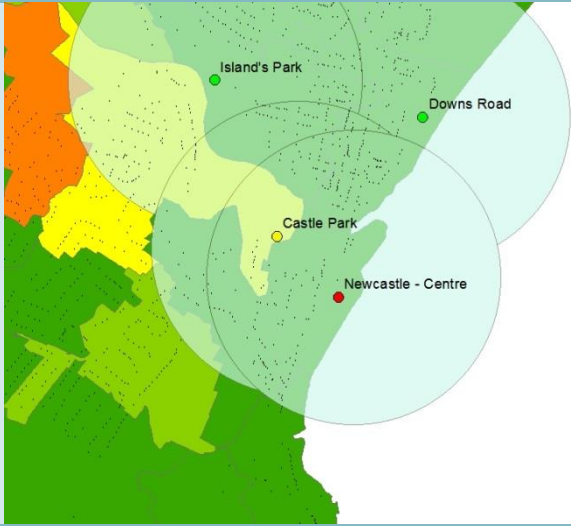
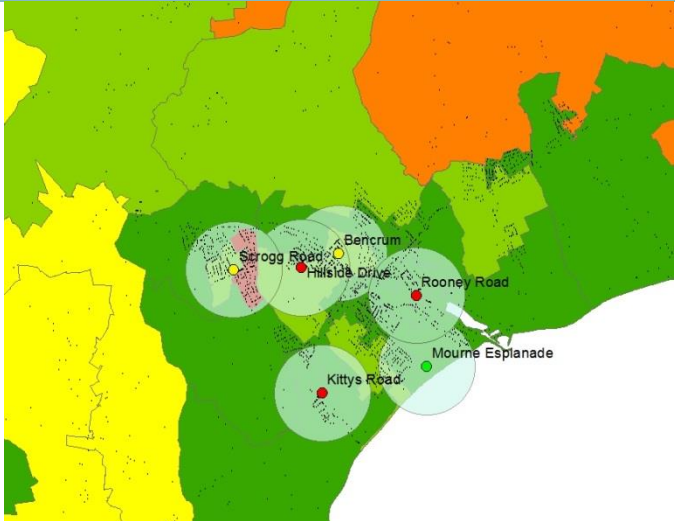
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

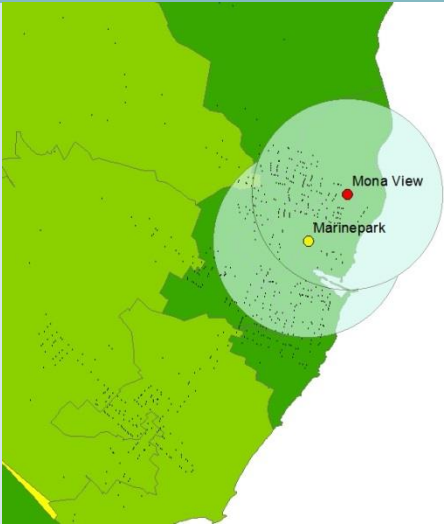
The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Mourne ward. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

Recommendation: Establish new Fixed Play Area			
Location	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
Ballymartin	<p>Based on the agreed rural criteria population level and settlement pattern analysis identifies a need for the development of a fixed play area at Ballymartin.</p> <p>Council should commence identification of a suitable location and initiate community consultation as outlined within the play strategy as it relates to the design of new fixed play provision.</p>	£100,000	tbc

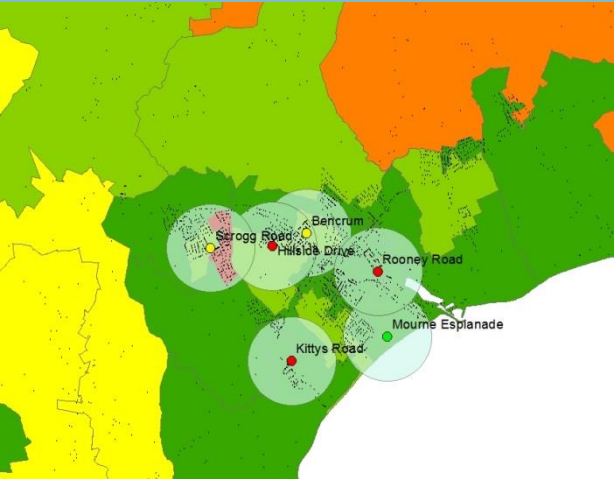
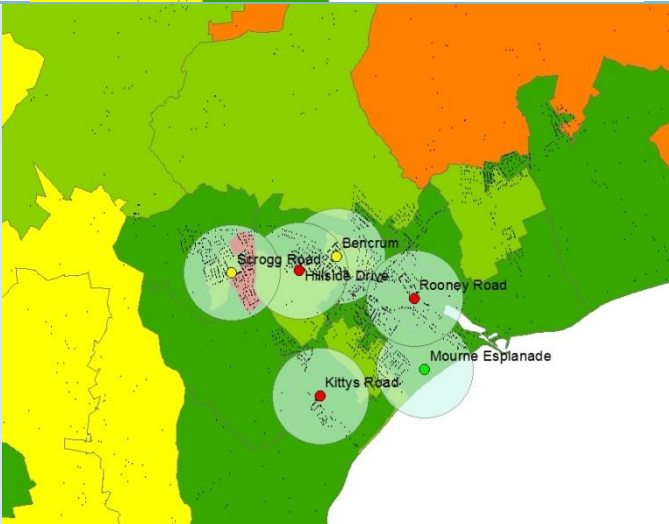
Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low or Mid Value Play Areas

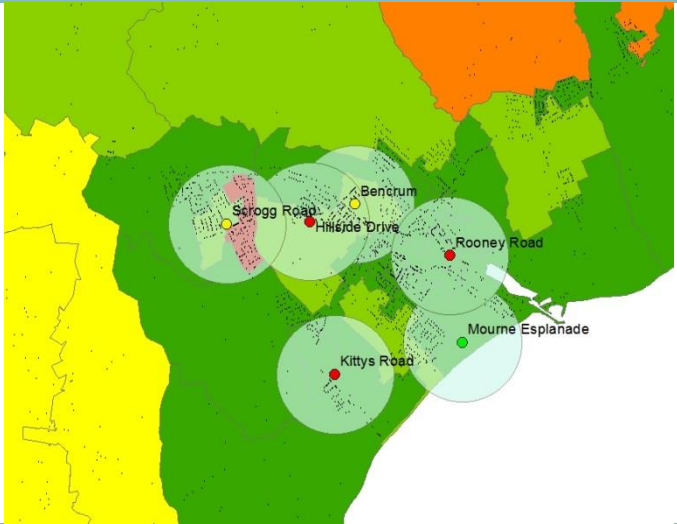
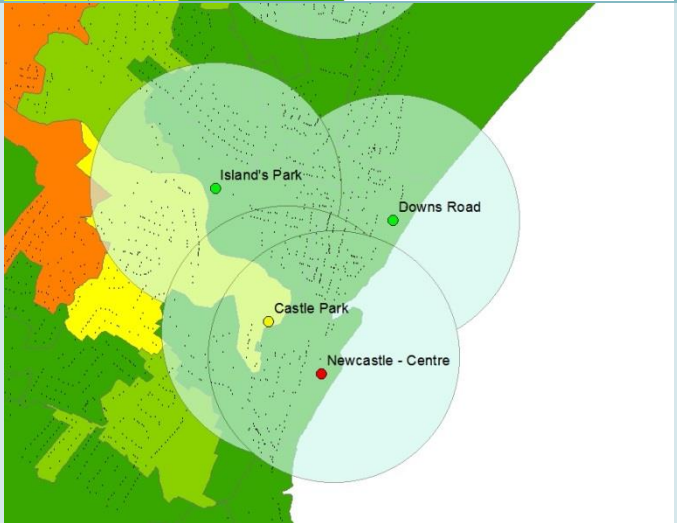
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Backfield	63	<p>Backfield play area is located in Newcastle and was assessed as having a play value score of 63. This places it as one of the lowest play sites in terms of play value within the overall council area.</p> <p>From a demographic perspective the area covered by the catchment radial shows a relatively low number within the 0 to 14 year age band, however there is sufficient household spread/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Based on its low play value score the play area does need to be replaced – if it is to be retained. It is recommended that local community consultation should be undertaken to assess the level of need for the play area and to assess the underlying age profile of the population. Should sufficient need be demonstrated council should progress to upgrade/renewal.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

	Newcastle Centre	83	<p>Newcastle Centre play area scored 83 in the play value assessment.</p> <p>The play area has a dual role providing access to fixed play for both residents of the wider Newcastle area and for tourists visiting the area.</p> <p>Given its dual role and function and low play value score it is recommended that the play area be upgraded to high play value.</p>	Dependent on community consultation	tbc
	Hillside Drive	85	<p>Funding for the upgrading of the play area located at Hillside Drive has been secured through a third party funder by the local community group.</p>	-	-

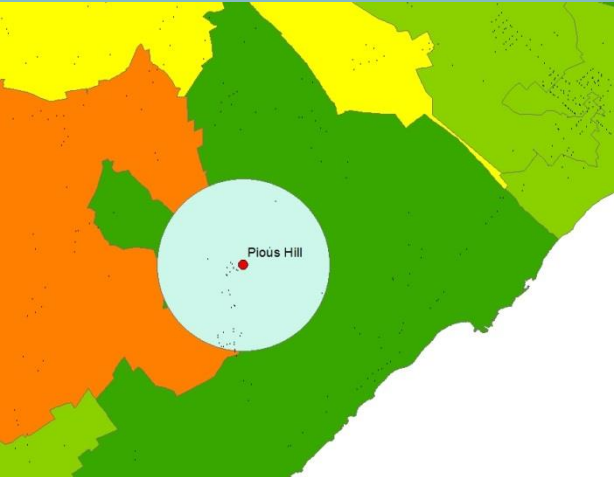
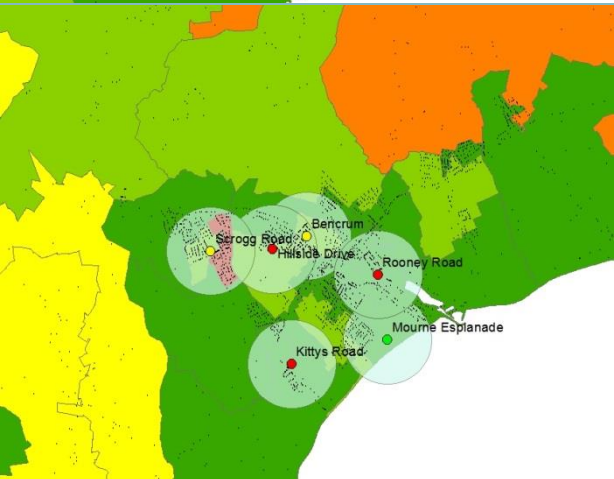


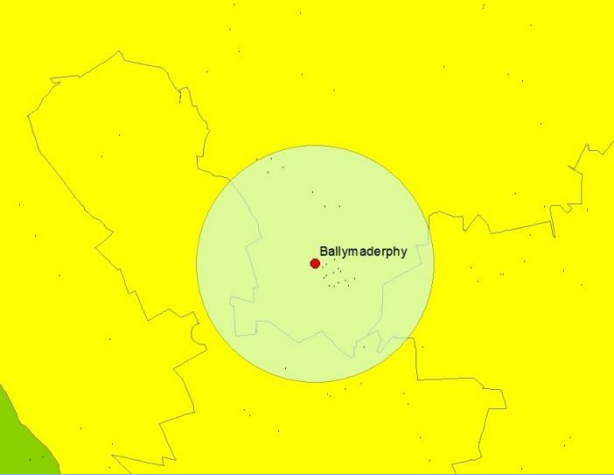
Mona View	86	Mona View (PV 86) and Marine Park (89) fixed play areas are located within Annalong. Radial catchment analysis indicates that there is some duplication in population coverage.	£65,000 (assuming consolidation to 1 site)	tbc
Marine Park	89			
(Both Annalong)		<p>Given the low play values associated with each site and the level of household duplication, it is recommended that council should consolidate fixed play delivery within the area, replacing the 2 existing sites with 1 fixed play area of high play value.</p> <p>Based on achieving the highest level of radial coverage it is recommended that upgrade should focus on the Marine Park site.</p> <p>As with all potential removals, local consultation should be undertaken regarding the recommendation to assess local views..</p>		

	Kittys Road	85	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the fixed play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to final decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc
	Ben Crom Place	97	<p>With a play value assessment of 97, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

	Scrogg Road	98	<p>With a play value assessment of 98, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
	Castle Park	105	<p>With a play value assessment of 105, it is not anticipated that the play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

Proposed Action: Potential Removal/Transformation of site based on Community Consultation

	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Pious Hill	82	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the fixed play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc
	Rooney Road (Kilkeel)	87	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the fixed play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc

 <p>A map showing a yellow area with a green circular region in the center. A red dot within the green circle is labeled 'Ballymaderphy'. The map shows some irregular boundaries and a small green area at the bottom left corner.</p>	Ballymaderphy	86	<p>Population and household spread analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the fixed play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to a final decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc
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Proposed Action: High Play Value - Maintain and Monitor				
Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Island's Park	107	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Downs Road	113	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Kilcoo GAC	117	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Cranfield Amenity Site	118	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Mourne Esplanade	122	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Burren Bridge Road	124	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

DEA Name: Slieve Croob

Population and Household Overview

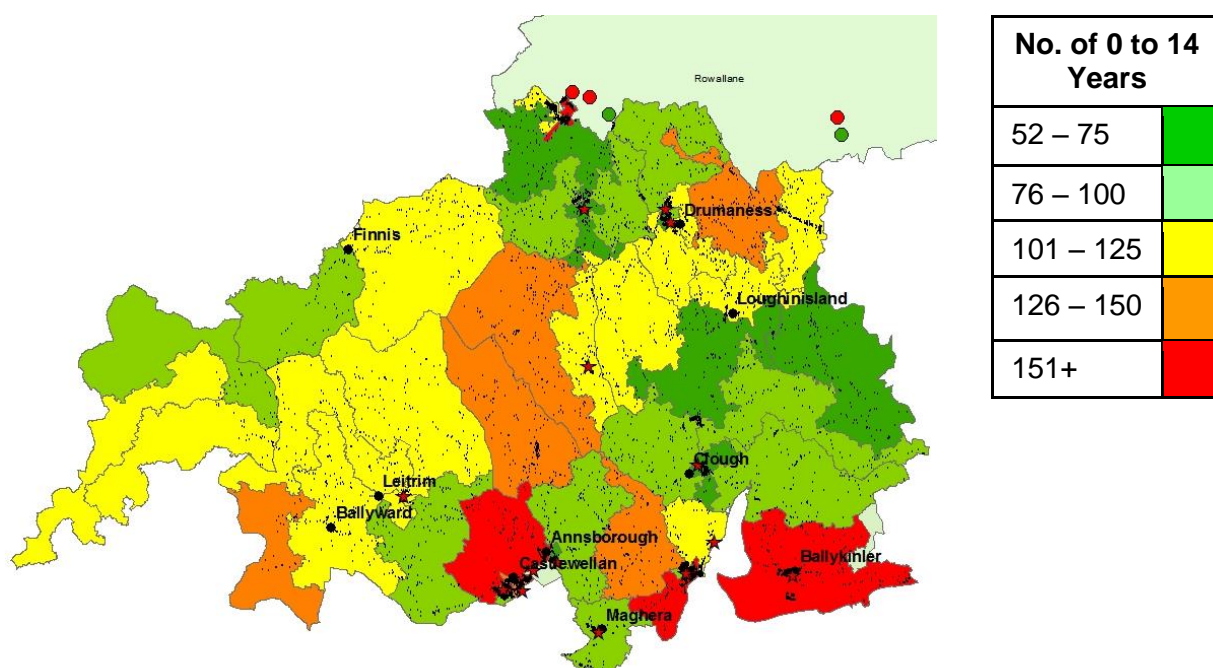
Slieve Croob is a predominantly rural ward which encompasses a number of geographical areas (contained within the Ballyward electoral ward) which transferred from the legacy Banbridge District Council under the Review of Public Administration. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) was 20,373 resident individuals.



In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

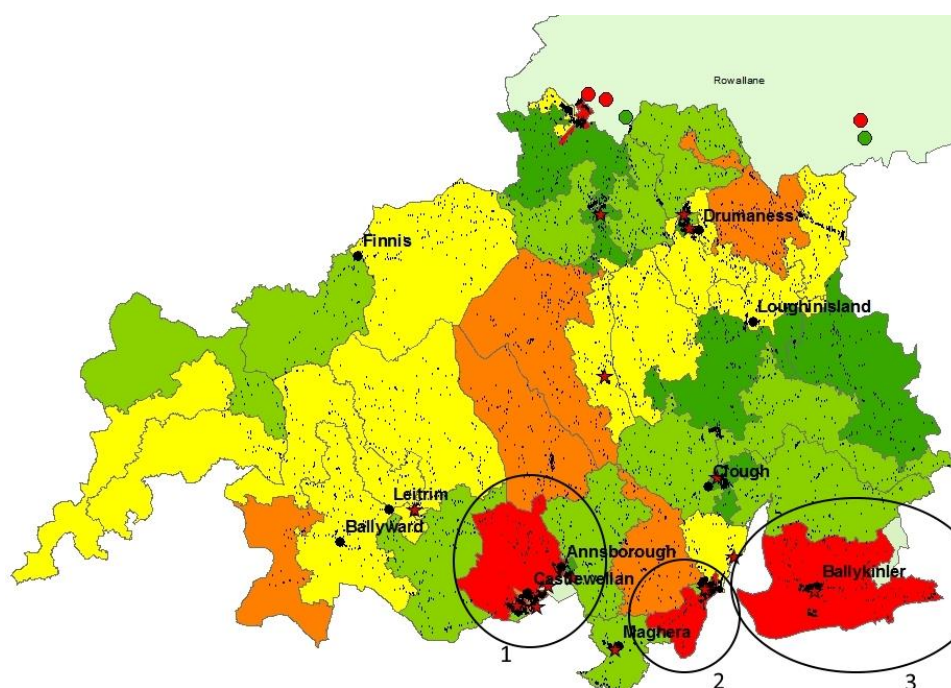
7. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
8. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

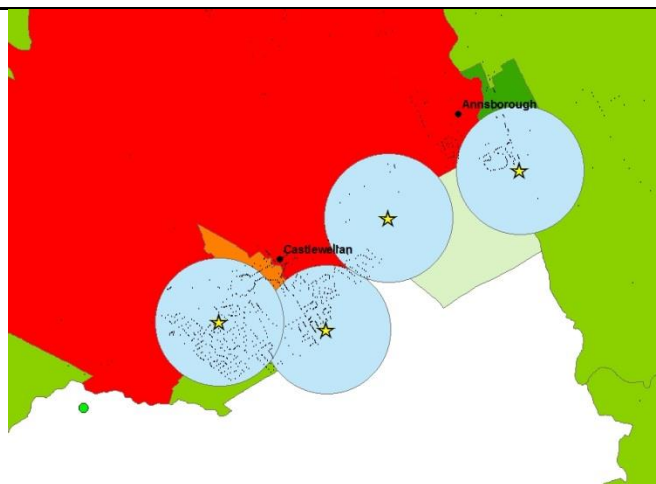
By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



Based on population figures a number of potential gap areas have been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) - these areas have been denoted above in red. In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.

The map below identifies those areas meeting criteria 1.

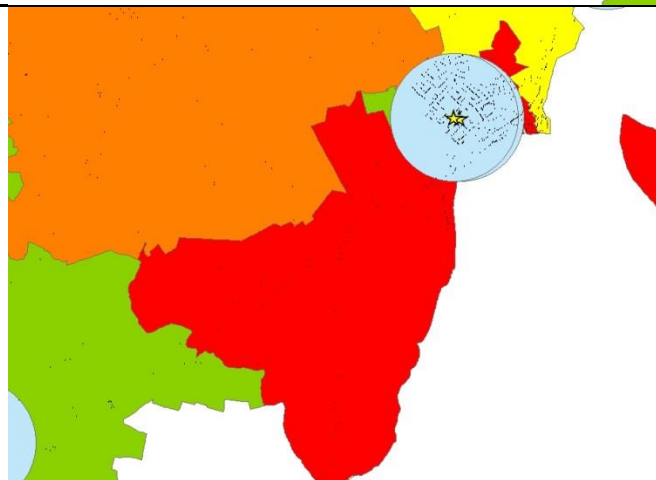




Area A

Area A is located at Castlewellan.

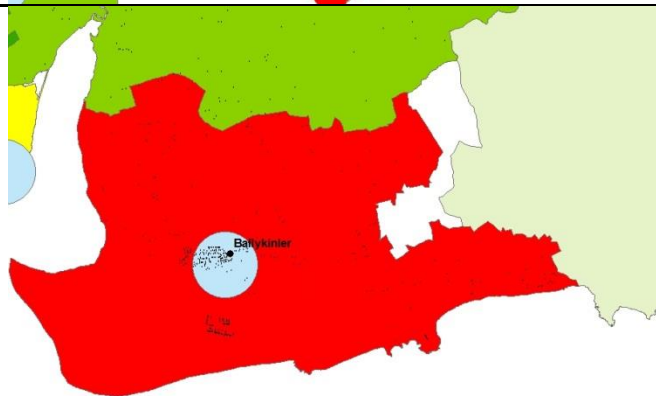
Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present.



Area B

Area B incorporates the settlement of Dundrum and its surrounding rural area.

Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present.



Area C

Area C incorporates the settlement of Ballykinler and the surrounding rural area.

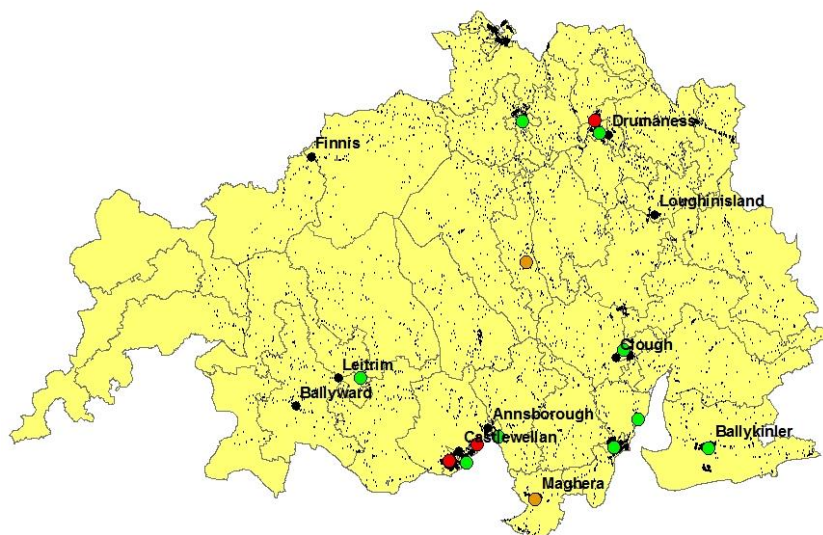
Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present.

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household location at the reduced rural criteria did not identify any further eligible areas for new fixed play development. Under the overarching strategy council will continue to review settlement growth and development in order to identify the point at which new fixed play development may be required.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Slieve Croob DEA 15 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location based on settlement pattern indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Orange
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 3 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Station Avenue	62
Mourne Gardens	78
Drumaness	83

→ 2 play areas scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Drumaroad	88
Maghera	103

→ 10 play areas scored 106 or above

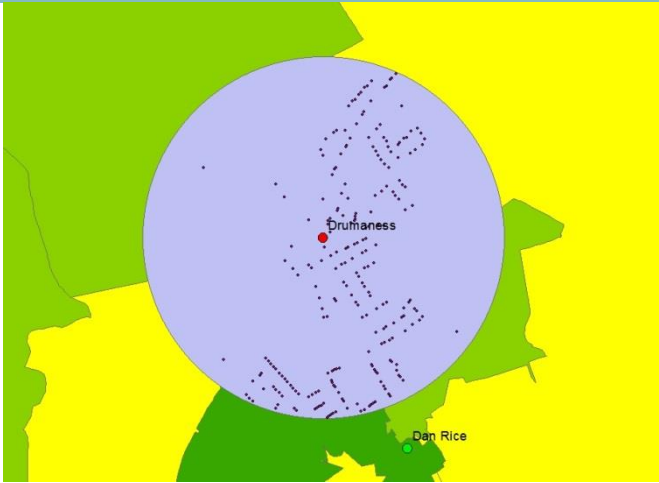
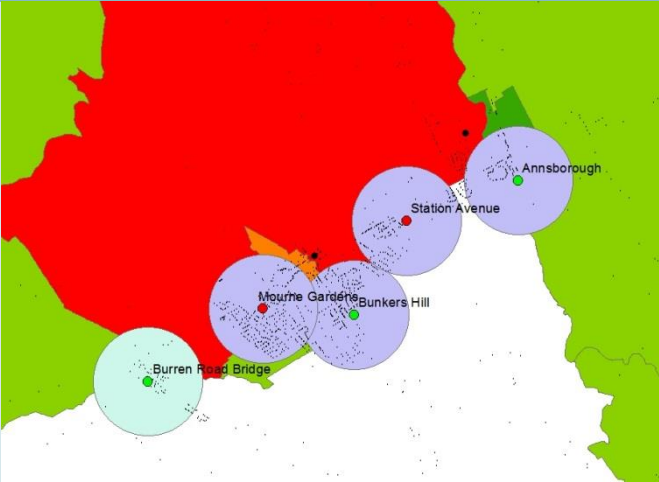
Play Area	Play Value
Inner Bay (Dundrum)	108
Ballykinlar	111
Saul GAC	116
St Donalds Walk	116
Bunkers Hill	116
Clough	118
Annesborough	119

Dan Rice Play Area	123
Spa	124
Leitrim	128


To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

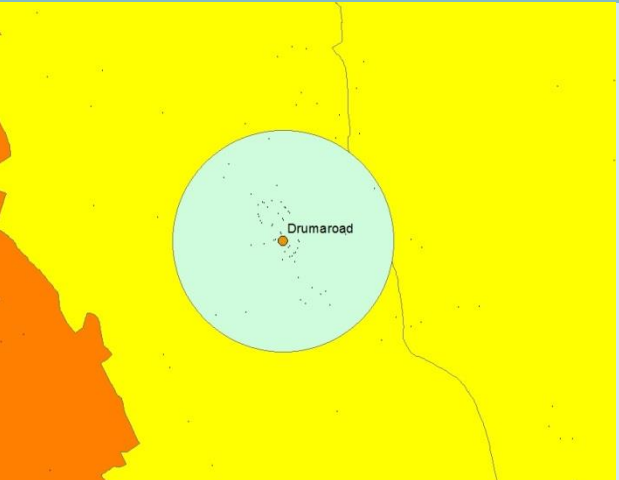
The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Slieve Croob ward. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

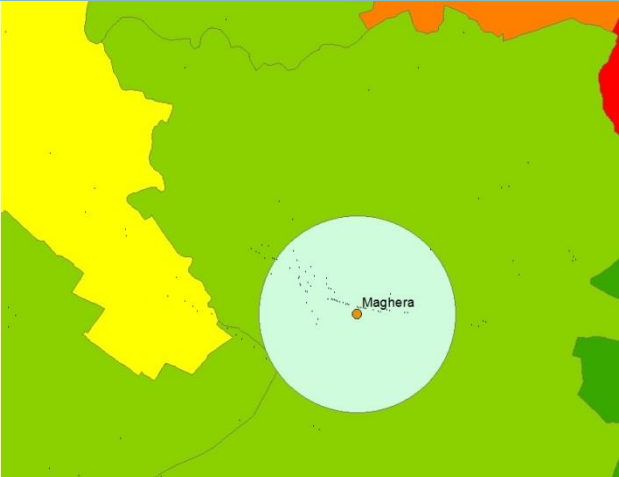
Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low Value Play Area

	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Drumaness	83	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Mourne Gardens	78	<p>Sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

Proposed Action: Potential Removal/Transformation of site based on Community Consultation

	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Station Avenue	62	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>Given the availability of other fixed play areas within Castlewellan and low play value score of the site it is recommended that consultation be initiated to determine actual demand with the option of removal/site transformation in order to better meet the needs of the local community.</p>	-	tbc

	Drumaroad	88	<p>Based on the scoring criteria Drumaroad play area falls just outside of the lowest category for play value by 0.5 points.</p> <p>Analysis of underlying demographics and household spread suggests a potentially low level of demand.</p> <p>Prior to upgrade council should undertake a house to house survey to confirm demand for the site.</p>	-	tbc
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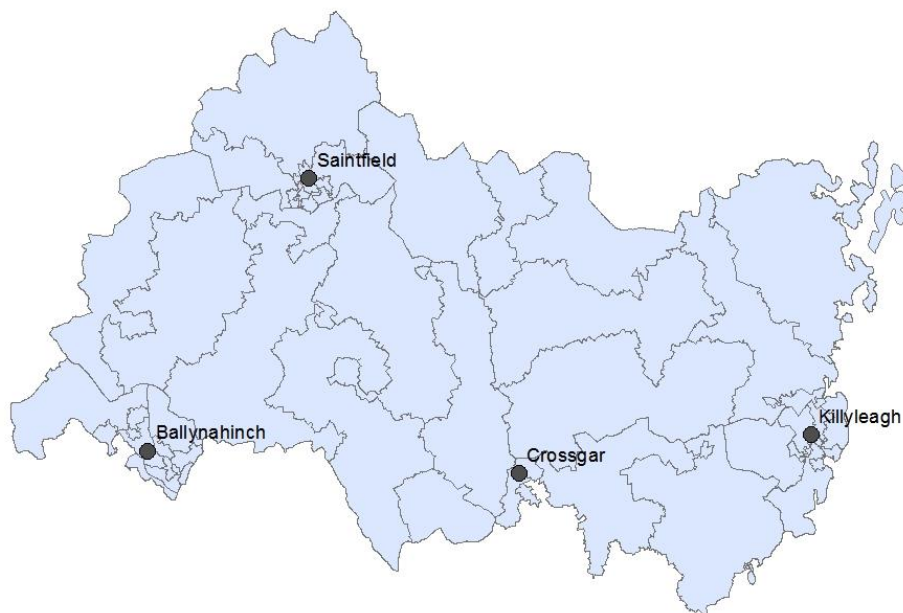
Proposed Action: Mid Play Value					
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Maghera	103	<p>Maghera play area falls into the upper end of the mid play value scoring category.</p> <p>Whilst no action is required at present, it is recommended that council continue to monitor and review play value and condition on an annual basis to determine such time that upgrade becomes necessary.</p>	-	Ongoing review

Proposed Action: Maintain and Monitor				
Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Inner Bay (Dundrum)	108	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Ballykinlar	111	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Saul GAC	116	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
St Donalds Walk	116	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Bunkers Hill	116	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Clough	118	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Annesborough	119	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Dan Rice Play Area	123	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Spa	124	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Leitrim	128	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

DEA Name: Rowallane

Population and Household Overview

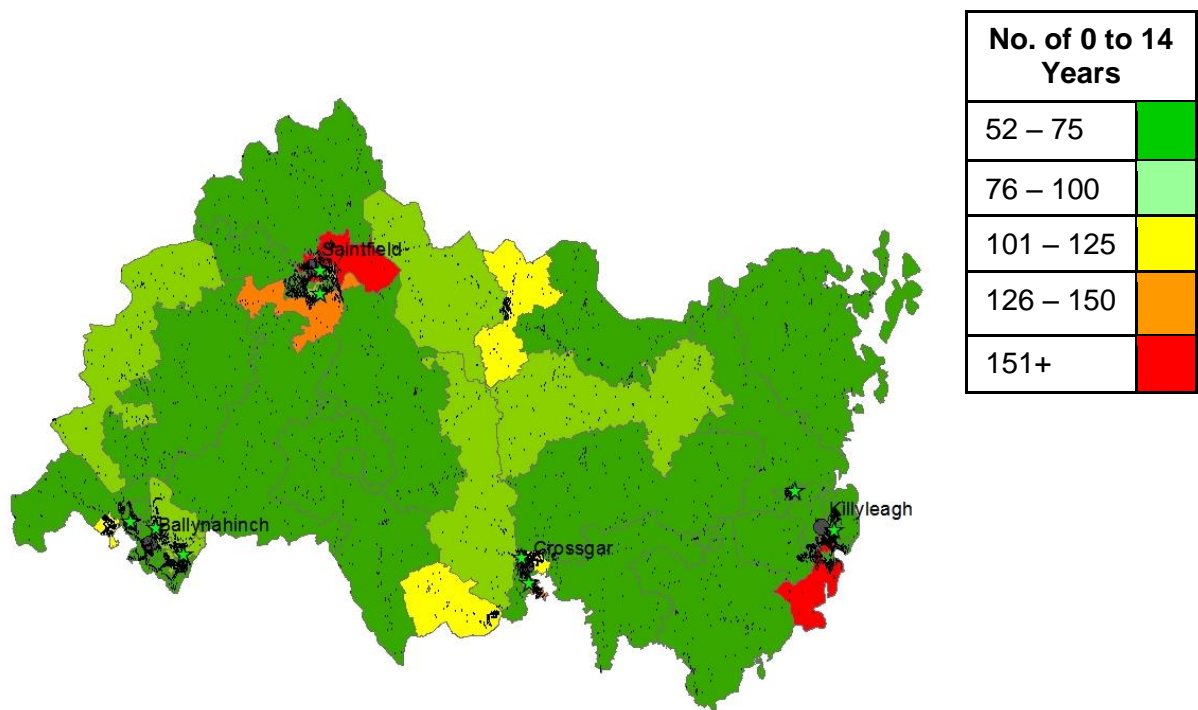
Rowallane is a predominantly rural ward located within the legacy Down District Council area. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) was 22,069 resident individuals.



In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

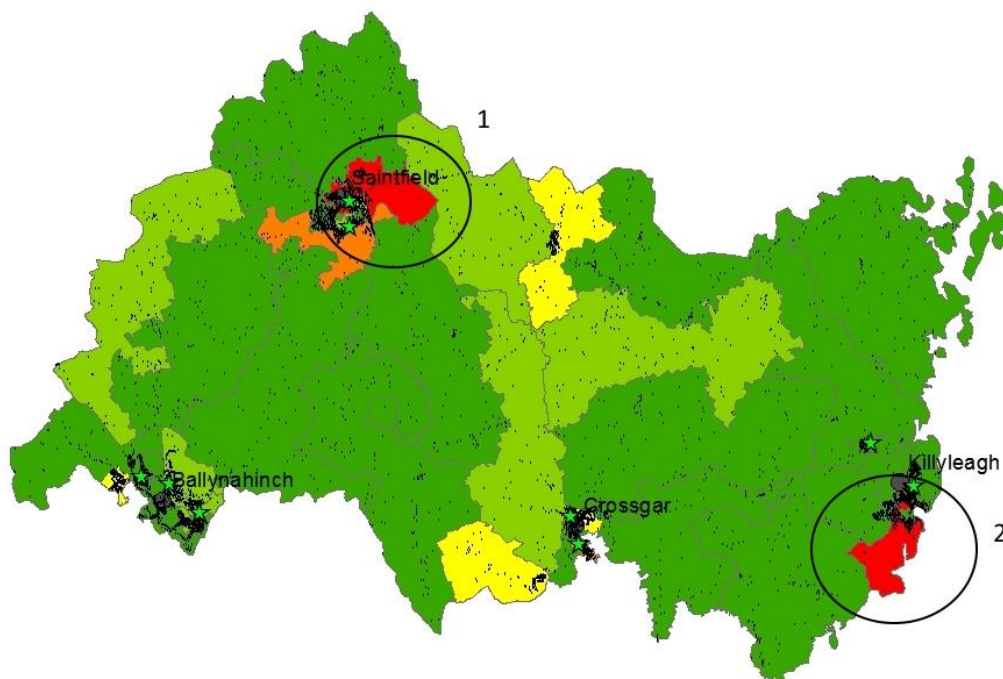
9. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
10. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

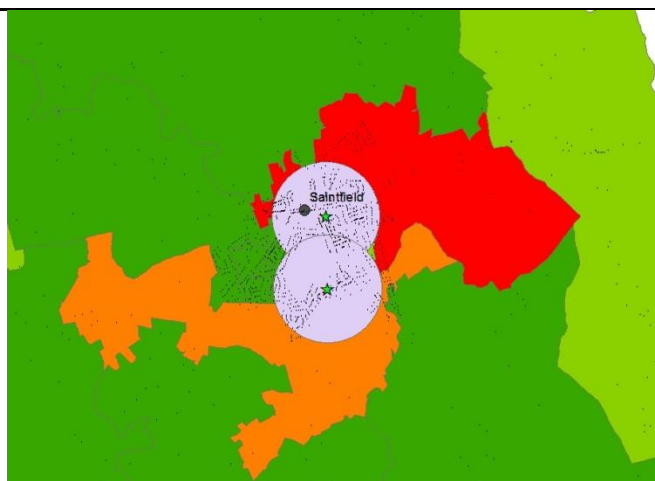
By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



Based on population figures a number of potential gap areas have been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children). In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.

The map below identifies those areas meeting criteria 1.

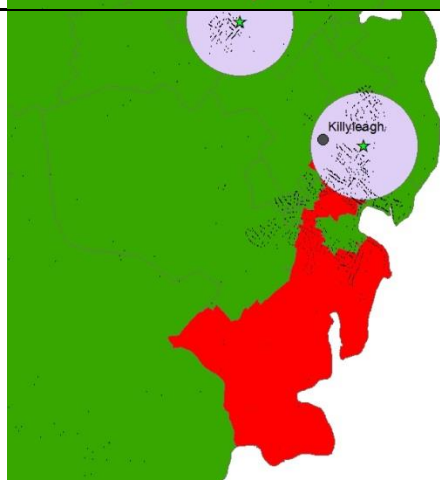




Area A

Area A is located at Saintfield.

Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present.



Area B

Area B is located at Killyleagh.

Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision (whilst of low play value) if enhanced in size and scope would increase radial coverage, taking in an increased number of households and meeting demand. No new fixed play development is required at present, however this should be reviewed post upgrade of the existing play area.

In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household distribution and pattern at the reduced rural criteria identified the need for 2 additional new play areas to be located at Barnamaghery Villas and Kilmore.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Rowallane DEA 10 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location based on settlement pattern indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Orange
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 4 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Lislane	70
Bridge Centre	74
Westlands	76
Hillfoot Toddler	80

→ 1 play area scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Hillfoot Junior	88

→ 5 play areas scored 106 or above

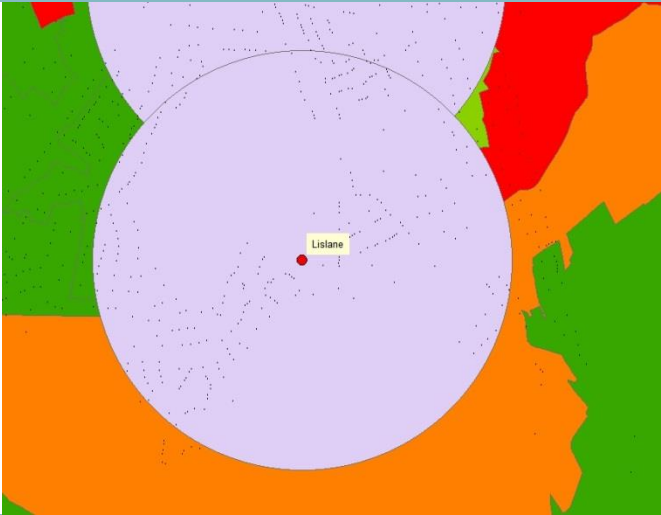

Play Area	Play Value
Langley Road	107
Newline	110
Shrigley	117
Anika Rice	122
Lislea Drive	132


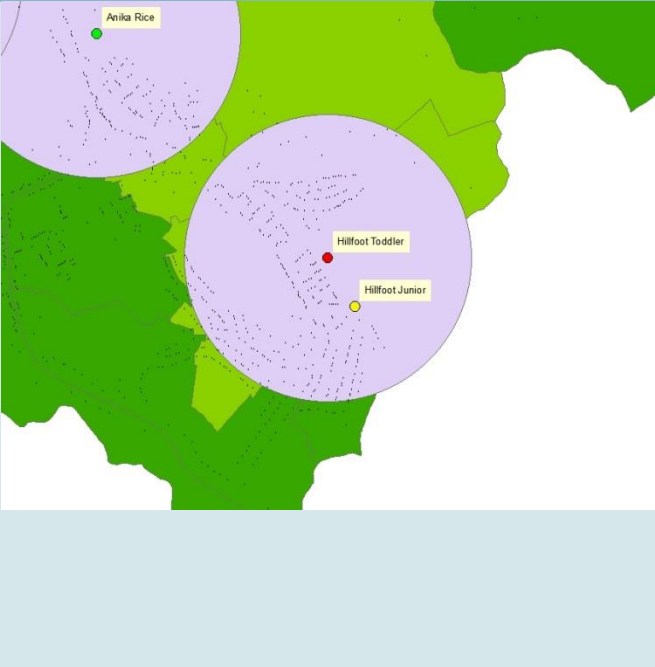
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Rowallane ward. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

Recommendation: Establish new Fixed Play Area			
Location	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
Barnamaghery Villas	<p>Based on the agreed rural criteria population level and settlement pattern analysis identifies a need for the development of a fixed play area at Barnamaghery Villas.</p> <p>Council should commence identification of a suitable location and initiate community consultation as outlined within the play strategy as it relates to the design of new fixed play provision.</p>	£100,000	tbc
Kilmore	<p>Based on the agreed rural criteria population level and settlement pattern analysis identifies a need for the development of a fixed play area at Kilmore.</p> <p>Council should commence identification of a suitable location and initiate community consultation as outlined within the play strategy as it relates to the design of new fixed play provision.</p>	£100,000	tbc

Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low Value Play Area

	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
	Lislane	70	<p>There is within the associated radial sufficient population and household spread/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/enhanced to increase its play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Bridge Centre	74	<p>Within the radial catchment there is sufficient population and household base/distribution to retain the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/ enhanced to increase play value rating. In upgrading the site it is recommended that the size and scope should be enhanced, broadening the radial catchment area to approx. 750m, thereby increasing population coverage and better meeting play need within the wider area.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

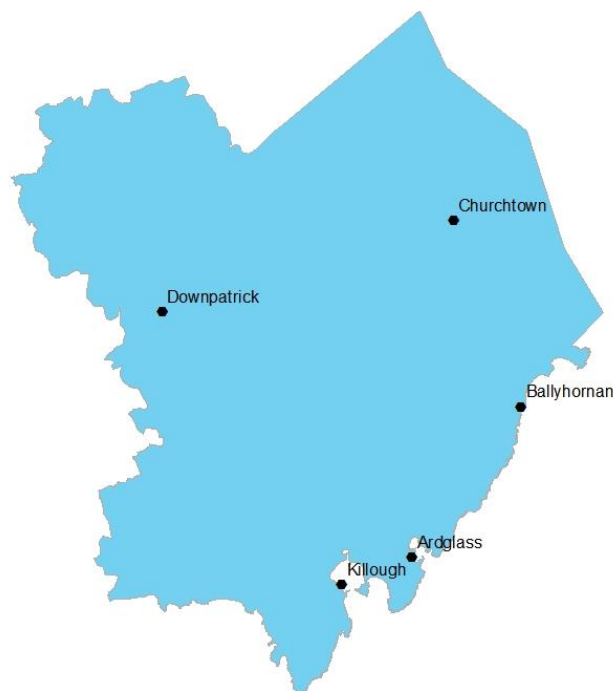
	Westlands	76	<p>Located within Crossgar, Westlands play area was assessed as having a play value score of 76 indicating a need to upgrade/enhance. A review of underlying demographics and settlement patterns indicates a continued need for the play area.</p> <p>Given the low play value and continued level of need it is recommended that the play area be upgraded/enhanced to increase its play value rating.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc
	Hillfoot Toddler Hillfoot Junior	80 88	<p>Given their close proximity on the same site both Hillfoot play areas have been considered as a single entity.</p> <p>Review of underlying demographics indicates that there remains an underlying need, however it is recommended that a local survey be conducted to provide an up-to-date overview of need within the area (including age profile).</p> <p>Given the low play value scores associated with each it is recommended that, pending local survey, a single play area be established to cover both toddler and junior play needs replacing the existing 2.</p>	£25,000 to 65,000	tbc

Proposed Action: Maintain and Monitor				
Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Langley Road	107	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Newline	110	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Shrigley	117	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Anika Rice	122	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Lislea Drive	132	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

DEA Name: Downpatrick

Population and Household Overview

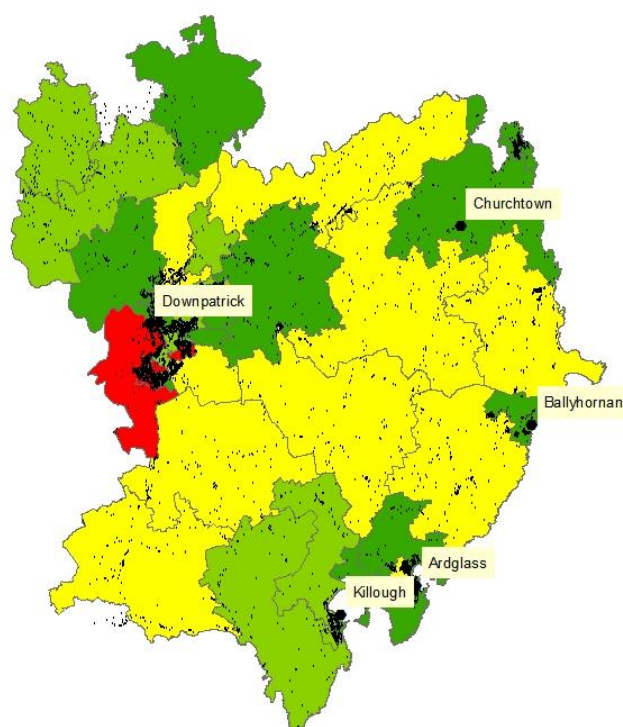
Downpatrick DEA is a predominantly rural ward located within the legacy Down District Council area. The overall population estimate for the DEA (2015) was 22,291 resident individuals.



In assessing the level of coverage afforded by existing fixed play areas, and in order to assess potential areas of need for new fixed play provision two key pieces of population data have been utilised:

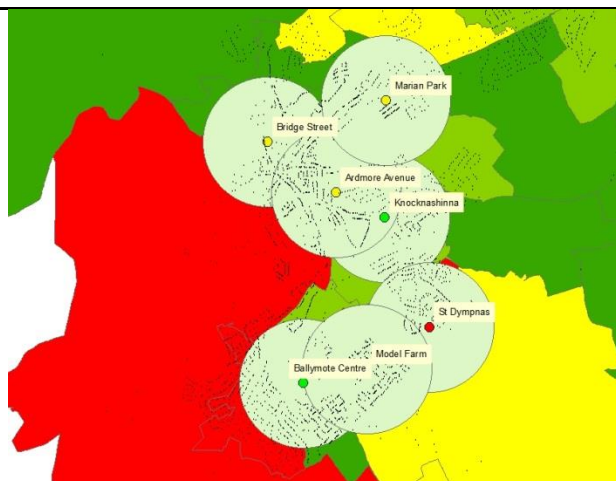
1. Population data from the 2011 census data highlighting number of 0 to 14 year olds mapped by small area boundaries; and
2. In recognition of the age of the census data available, household location data from September 2016 in order to facilitate settlement analysis.

By combining both data sources it is possible to identify those areas with a higher number of resident 0 to 14 year olds and conduct an assessment of household density/spread – a key factor in determining the appropriateness of fixed play for an area.



No. of 0 to 14 Years	
52 – 75	Dark Green
76 – 100	Light Green
101 – 125	Yellow
126 – 150	Orange
151+	Red

Based on population figures 1 potential gap area (denoted in red on the map above) has been identified based on criteria 1 (150 or more resident children). In order to be considered eligible for fixed play development an area would also be required to meet established PPS 8 criteria of a minimum 100 households within a 400m radial of a development site. It should be noted that in assessing potential gap areas consideration has also been given to existing fixed play provision and coverage radials.



Downpatrick urban area is currently served by 7 fixed play areas which provide a good level of population coverage based on household spread and distribution. The area denoted in red as an area of potential need is partially covered by the radial associated with Ballymote Centre.

Analysis of household pointer data, settlement spread and the radial catchments associated with existing fixed play areas indicates that current provision is sufficient. No new fixed play development is required at present, however council should continue to monitor population growth within the area denoted in red.

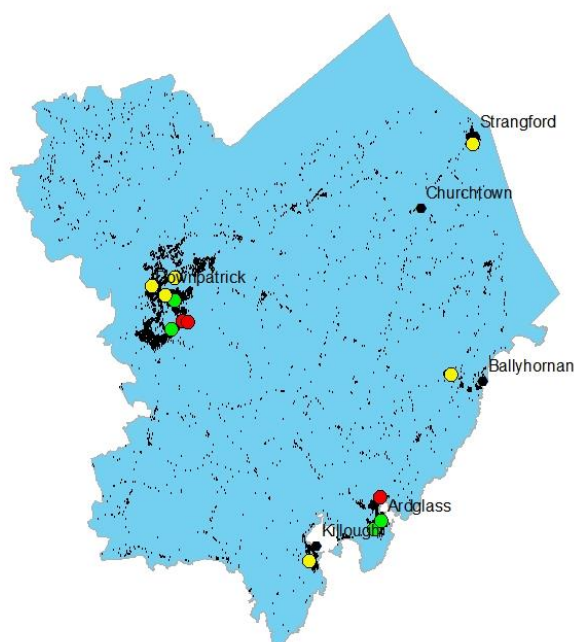
In addition to analysis under criteria 1 (150 or more resident children) a further analysis was conducted using the reduced rural criteria of 100 to 149 children aged 0 to 14 years.

Analysing population levels alongside household location at the reduced rural criteria did not identify any further eligible areas for new fixed play development. Under the overarching strategy council will continue to review settlement growth and development in order to identify the point at which new fixed play development may be required.

It should be noted that a commitment was made by the legacy Down District Council to the development of a fixed play area at Kilclief. The process of identifying an appropriate location has been ongoing, planning processes have been initiated and development of the fixed play area should proceed under the play strategy.

Existing Fixed Play Areas

There are within Downpatrick DEA 13 existing fixed play areas. Analysis of location based on settlement pattern indicates that these have been developed primarily to serve settlement based populations.



Play Value Rating	
0 to 87.5	Red
87.6 to 105	Yellow
106 to 175	Green

Analysis of play value indicates that:

→ 3 play areas scored under 87.5.

Play Area	Play Value
Model Farm	78
St Dympnas	83
Seaview	86

→ 6 play area scored between 87.6 and 105

Play Area	Play Value
Bridge Street	88
Killough Playing Fields	93
Ardmore Avenue	94
Bishops Court	96
The Links	105

→ 4 play areas scored 106 or above

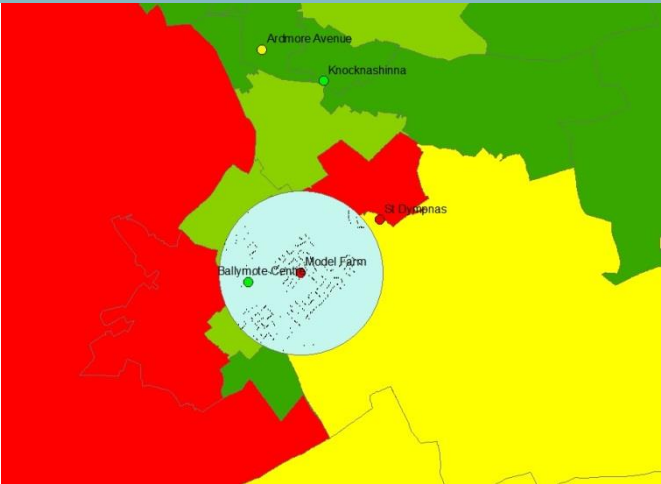
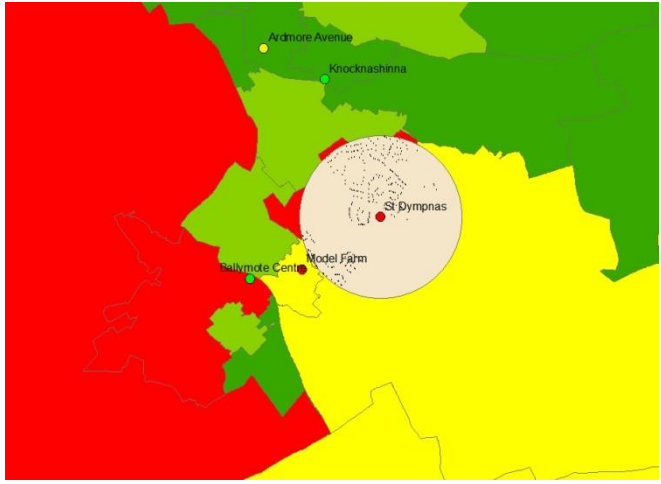
Play Area	Play Value
Quay Street	113
Ballymote Centre	127
Ardglass P. Fields	129
Knocknashinna	130

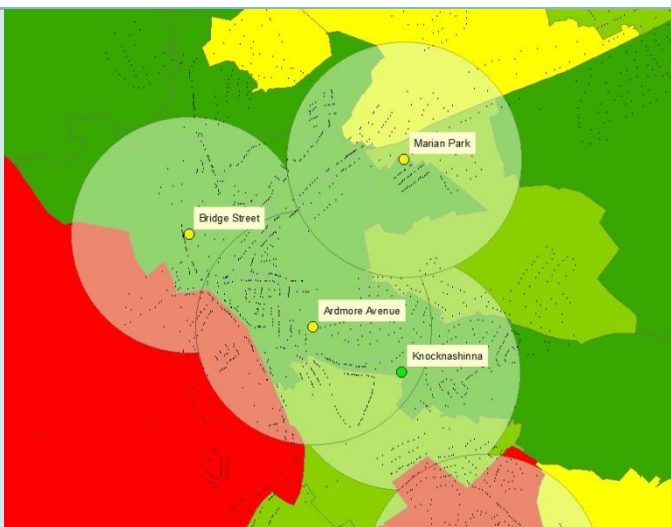
To support the development of a capital work programme focused on the upgrade and renewal of existing play areas of low play value, further population level analysis was conducted. The aim of this analysis was to identify those fixed play areas which, whilst of low play value remain relevant to the needs of the local population, and to identify potentially redundant sites i.e. play area which are no longer required within an area based on underlying demography.

The table overleaf sets out key recommendations relating to each play area within the Downpatrick ward. It should be noted that prior to any action being taken by council additional localised community consultation will take place in order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to make their views known on the recommendation or to put forward an alternative proposal.

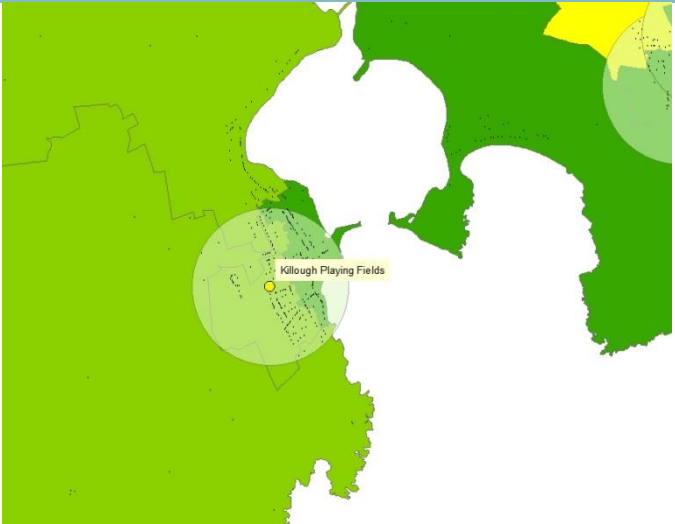
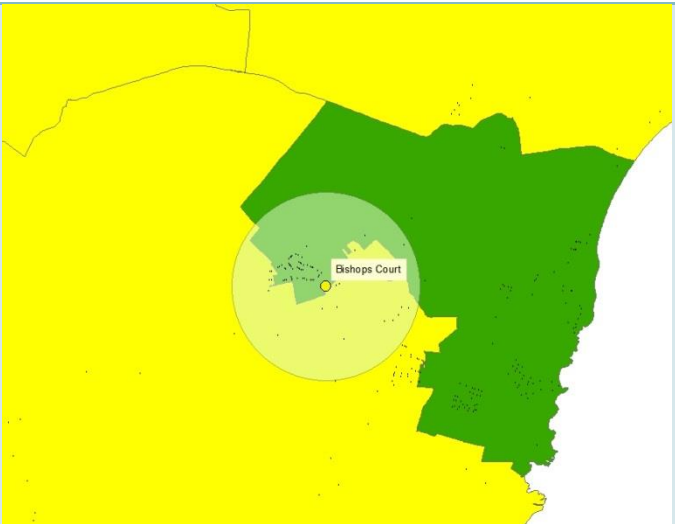
Recommendation: Establish new Fixed Play Area			
Location	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
Kilclief	Based on commitments made by the legacy council a new fixed play area should be developed at Kilclief in line with secured planning permission.	£100,000	tbc

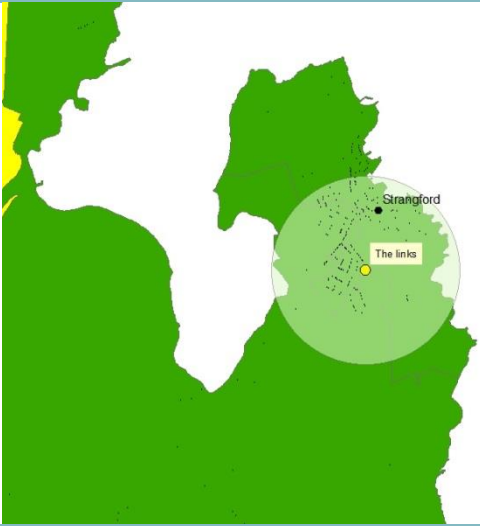
Recommendation: Renewal/Upgrade of Low or Mid Value Play Areas

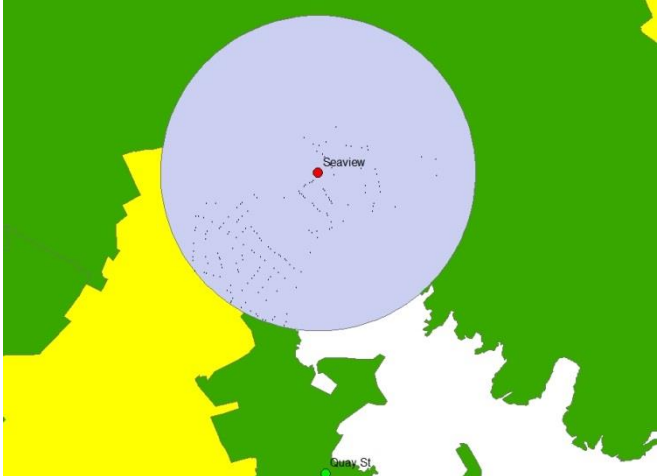
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Overview	Indicative Cost	Year
 	Model Farm	78	<p>Model Farm and St Dympnas fixed play areas are located within less than 400m from each other and both scored low on the play value assessment.</p> <p>Whilst there is within the associated radials sufficient population and household spread/distribution to retain both play areas it is suggested that an opportunity exists to amalgamate the 2 play areas onto a single site, thereby maximising population coverage and providing a higher value and more extensive fixed play experience.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the wider area includes high value fixed play provision at the Ballymote centre (PV 127) which at present offers a more attractive play opportunity for residents.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation should be undertaken to determine the level of localised need within the wider area to include exploration of support for a single site to replace both existing prior to upgrade and enhancement.</p>	£100,000 (based on enhanced single site approach)	tbc
	St Dympnas	83			



Bridge Street	88	Bridge Street, Ardmore Avenue and Marian Park are all located within Downpatrick urban area.	Dependent on community consultation	tbc
Ardmore Avenue	94	<p>A review of population/household distribution and the radial coverage area associated with each highlights a degree of crossover in the catchment areas, particularly in relation to Bridge Street and Ardmore Avenue.</p> <p>Based on play value scores, the 3 play areas would require upgrading within the lifetime of the strategy, however underlying demographics suggest that the number of children aged 0 to 14 within the catchment area of each play area are relatively low. It is recommended that prior to any upgrade of provision a local consultation should be undertaken to determine the level of real need within the area with potential consolidation of play areas to address duplication.</p>		
Marian Park	91			

 <p>A map showing the Killough Playing Fields area. The area is highlighted in green, indicating it is a play area. The map shows the coastline and surrounding land.</p>	Killough Playing Fields	93	<p>Serving the settlement of Killough, the play area scored 93 in the play value assessment highlighting a need to consider upgrade during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>From a demographic perspective the population appears to have a relatively low number of 0 to 14 year olds, however it should be noted that further housing development has taken place since the 2011 census leading to an increase in household numbers. Given the lack of additional fixed play provision within the wider area it is recommended that the play area be retained with a view to upgrade towards the mid/end point of the play strategy.</p>	£25 to 65,000	tbc
 <p>A map showing the Bishops Court area. The area is highlighted in green, indicating it is a play area. The map shows the coastline and surrounding land.</p>	Bishops Court	96	<p>Bishops Court play area scored 96 in the play value assessment, indicating that it is not in immediate need of upgrade.</p> <p>Over the duration of the strategy the play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

 <p>A map of Strangford, Northern Ireland, with a green circular inset highlighting the location of 'The Links'. The inset map shows a golf course layout with a yellow dot marking the specific area of interest.</p>	The Links	105	<p>With a play value assessment of 105, it is not anticipated that the Links play area will require upgrading during the lifetime of the strategy.</p> <p>The play area should be subject to continued play value and maintenance assessment to ensure no degradation of play value score and that ongoing remedial action is taken as required.</p>	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
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Proposed Action: Potential Removal/Transformation of site based on Community Consultation					
	Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
	Seaview	86	<p>Initial population analysis indicates that there may be insufficient need for the fixed play area to support upgrade/renewal.</p> <p>It is recommended that local consultation be undertaken to determine level of need prior to decision regarding enhancement or removal/transformation of the site.</p>	-	tbc

Proposed Action: High Play Value - Maintain and Monitor				
Site Name	Play Value Rating	Proposed Action	Potential Cost	Year
Quay Street	113	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Ballymote Centre	127	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Ardglass Playing Fields	129	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing
Knocknahinna	130	No immediate action required. Maintain and monitor to protect against reduction of play value.	Revenue Maintenance	Ongoing

6.0 NON-FIXED AND LOOSE PARTS PLAY

The loose parts approach to addressing play need represents a low cost, high impact and mobile method of delivering non-fixed play within communities. The mobile or transportable nature of the approach lends itself particularly well to meeting play need within rural and more sparsely populated areas where fixed play provision is unsuitable and associated costs are prohibitive.

For children, loose parts play is particularly attractive as it allows them to create and mould a playscape that is limited only by their imagination. It is this degree of flexibility combined with the level of control the child has over shaping the play experience that makes the approach so appealing to children and young people.

For parents and carers loose parts play offers an opportunity to avail of enjoyable and beneficial play experiences within their own area, whether it takes place within a park, on a green space, on a vacant piece of land or as part of the streetscape.

6.1 Community Play Pilot

During the months of July and August 2016 PlayBoard NI were commissioned to deliver a series of 4 community 'loose parts' 'free' play sessions at 8 locations across the district. Sessions were delivered at:

1. Glen GAC
2. Kittys Road
3. Shamrock Youth Club
4. Jonesborough
5. Ballymartin
6. Derrybeg Community Centre
7. Dorsey Emmets
8. Ballykinlar

Sessions were open to children and young people of all ages with the only requirement being that children under the age of 4 were accompanied by an adult for the duration of each session. Sessions were 2 hours in length and took place on a weekly basis over a 3/4 week period at each location dependent on local circumstances.

Play sessions were facilitated by members of PlayBoard's Play Development team with the support of a number of community play volunteers who had received play training as part of the overall pilot scheme.

Community Play Volunteer Training Session

At the outset of the pilot 9 community volunteers expressed an interest in undertaking play training with a view to gaining an insight into the planning and delivery of community based 'free play' sessions.



Volunteer training focused on a number of key areas aimed at developing knowledge and skills across a number range of areas including:

- Underlying play theory, play types, and the importance of free play;
- An overview of health and safety considerations and an exploration of risk benefit approaches to delivering free play; and
- Methodologies, approaches and techniques to be used in the planning, delivery and evaluating free play session.

Volunteer training was supplemented through volunteers having an opportunity to actively engage within play sessions, thereby enhancing practical experience of delivering free play.

Loose Parts Play Sessions

Overall 834 children and young people attended loose parts play sessions delivered over the duration of the pilot. Weekly sessional attendance figures are detailed in the table below. Weekly variation in attendee numbers were influenced by a range of factors, for example 1 session at Dorsey Emmets had nil attendance due to severe rain and stormy weather.

The Glen

Week 1	46
Week 2	32
Week 3	56
Week 4	32

Kitty's Road

Week 1	17
Week 2	15
Week 3	27
Week 4	38

Shamrock Youth club

Week 1	36
Week 2	69
Week 3	54
Week 4	26

Jonesborough

Week 1	25
Week 2	29
Week 3	11
Week 4	21

Ballymartin

Week 1	13
Week 2	21
Week 3	40

Derrybeg Community Centre

Week 1	14
Week 2	12
Week 3	25

Dorsey Emmets

Week 1	0 (Due to Poor Weather)
Week 2	11
Week 3	31
Week 4	27

Ballykinlar

Week 1	16
Week 2	16
Week 3	19
Week 4	50

McClelland Park

Single Session	5
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Sessions took place outdoors on green space areas within communities with the focus on encouraging physical outdoor and social play types alongside a variety of creative and artistic play opportunities.

Sessions were planned to include a wide variety of play activities aimed at encouraging children and young people of all ages to get involved. From the perspective of age range, attendees varied from as young as 6 months up to late teens (17 and 18 years).

Activities available included:

Physical Play

- Bat and ball games
- Tug of war
- Football
- Rugby
- Skipping
- Running and jumping
- Hula Hoops
- Assault course
- Parachute games

Artistic and Creative Play

- Painting
- Craft making
- Modelling Clay

Imaginative Play

- Dressing Up
- Mask painting
- Story telling
- Fire pit and toasting marshmallows

Messy Play

- Water Play
- Foam Play
- Sock bubbles

Creative Play

- Den building
- Loose parts construction

Feedback and Evaluation

Overall feedback for the pilot was very positive with the children and young people welcoming both the variety of play opportunities available and the opportunity to play outdoors within their own community. Children and young people highlighted that sessions not only enabled them to play with existing friends but also allowed them to make new friends from across the wider community.



Adults attending/dropping off their children to the session indicated a high level of appreciation for the programme and indicated that they would like to see the approach adopted within the pilot extended, particularly in those areas where fixed play sites were not available or were of low play value.

Attendance at sessions was consistently high with reductions generally due to inclement weather conditions. On a number of wet, rainy days some parents expressed surprise that outdoor play sessions were to continue despite the wet conditions.

Whilst the wet conditions were initially challenging for some of the parents (who were not used to letting their children play for prolonged periods outdoors in the rain) the children enjoyed the new play opportunities presented including messy and water play. As the pilot progressed parents/guardians became more open to the play opportunities presented by wet weather indicating that their children had enjoyed the sessions.



Both children and adults/guardians indicated that they welcomed the loose parts/free play nature of the programme which they felt offered the children a

degree of variety and freedom to play in a way which suited their needs without the limitations of more formalised or fixed play approaches.

6.2 Recommendations for Loose Parts Approach in Strategy

The play strategy is predicated on an understanding that a mixed approach to delivering against play need is desirable as it enables councils and its partners to be flexible in the approaches they adopt to meeting play need.

By its very nature fixed play provision will always be limited in its scope and ability to meet play need due to the capital costs associated with its installation and the need to establish minimal population and demographic coverage.

Under the play strategy, and building on the work already piloted over the summer months of 2016, council will seek to roll out a series of initiatives aimed at supporting the development of non-fixed, community based approaches to meeting play need.

1. Community Play Pods

Following on from the pilot programme Council have purchased 10 'loose parts' Play Pods containing a wide range of play equipment which can be easily transported to and from community locations for use in play sessions. Play pods are stored a council property within each DEA and will be available for booking by community groups. Guidance on the use of play pods will be issued.

2. 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 could take the form of a communal green space or 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.

As part of the play strategy, council will work to further explore the potential of community play initiatives, building on the work already commenced through the 2016 pilot.

Working with partners and local communities, council will identify geographical areas that potentially lend themselves to non-fixed play approaches and will seek to support communities to enhance such spaces.

Pending evaluation of impact, the further roll-out of non-fixed approaches will be considered across the wider council area over the duration of the play strategy.

Approaches to be rolled-out under this strand of the play strategy include:

- *Community Play Volunteers*
Building on the pilot training delivered over the summer of 2016, council will initiate a further round of community play volunteer

training.

Training will be open to members of community groups from across the district who will self-nominate and will focus on a range of areas aimed at developing each individuals knowledge and skills base across a number of key areas, including:

- Providing an overview of underlying play theory; 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 providing volunteers with an opportunity to consider the range and variety of play types available within outdoor, community settings - supporting participant planning for the supported play sessions.

The overarching aim of the initiative will be to establish a skilled play volunteer base across the district that will be able to utilise play pods and support the delivery of community play initiatives both within their own, and in other communities.

- *Community Play Sessions*
Building on the 2016 pilot, council will seek to roll-out a further series of community based free-play sessions over the summer months (running from July through August). Sessions will be focused on communities and areas which currently do not have access to fixed play provision and which, due to the population constraints of fixed play are unlikely to fall under the criteria for fixed play development established within the strategy.

In line with the 2016 pilot, sessions will be outdoors and will focus on the use of loose part play materials in order to create a playscape that can be manipulated by children and young people of all ages to suit their individual play needs. In line with the 2016 pilot, each area identified will receive up to 4 play sessions and a focus will be on ensuring that the play volunteers have a key role to play in supporting the planning, development and delivery of the initiative.

- *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, council will seek to establish a pilot street play initiative that will work with the local community to explore the potential impact of the approach to meeting play need in built up areas.

Working with partners across the play partnership the pilot will incorporate a number of key strands namely:

- 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;
- Support for local community play volunteers to oversee and support street play sessions through the provision of focused training and support;
- Council provision of mobile play equipment pod containing a range of loose parts play materials which can be used by children to create their own play experience.

- *Play in the Public Realm*

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

As part of the Play Strategy, and through the community planning partnership 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 PPS7 and PPS8, 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 playability of the public realm e.g. Park Wardens, Town Centre Managers etc.
- *National Play Day*
National Play Day takes place on the first Wednesday of August each year and provides a national focus for 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 this strategy Council give a commitment to:

- Host a minimum of 3 large scale community play day events which, in addition to providing a wide range of play opportunities, will provide a focus for positive media coverage of the importance of play;
- Explore the potential for existing small grants programme (within council and across the play partnership) to provide communities financial assistance to support community and voluntary groups to run their own Play Day celebration events;
- Promote Play Day through the existing network of childcare providers and community groups across the council area.

3. Play Development Role

In recognition of the importance of play to the lives of our children, young people and communities, council will explore the potential impact of recruiting a dedicated Play Development Officer to oversee roll-out of the play strategy

If appointed a Play Development Officer would be responsible for leading the roll-out of the Play Strategy; engaging internally with council departments and staff teams and externally with statutory, community and voluntary representatives. The officer will act as the key focal conduit within council for all matters relating to the play strategy.

The Play Development Officer would provide 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 and local communities;
- 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.

In addition to developing the capacity of council departments to better meet play need, the Play Officer would be responsible for developing connections to other organisations involved in the play strategy and wider community planning partnership who have an interest in, or whose work impacts on play across the council area.

With a view to developing the capacity of the council, its partner and wider community groups to further enhance play opportunities, the Play Development Officer would have a responsibility for identifying potential sources of funding which could support the development of a fixed and non-fixed play across the district.

7.0 PLAY AND RECREATION NEEDS OF OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The activities that older children and young people engage in during their free time is vitally important to their growth and development. As children grow older social connections to peers becomes increasingly important and what was once seen as play becomes 'recreation' as teenagers engage in activities and past-times that they find personally interesting, enjoyable and satisfying.

Providing opportunities for older children and young people to meet their recreation needs provides a challenge not only for council but also for partners across the statutory and community sectors and for society as a whole.

Research undertaken across Northern Ireland as part of the Young Life and Times research programme (entitled "Playscapes at 16") highlighted that for many older children the main difficulties they face in terms of meeting their recreation needs include:

- Negative attitudes towards teenagers 'hanging out' in public places and/or in their own community leading to them being moved on to other areas
- Prohibitive costs associated with more formal recreation activities e.g. those provided through leisure centres, private providers etc.
- A lack of appropriate spaces within communities to 'hang out' i.e. a lack of shelter, seating etc.
- For those living in rural areas, difficulty in accessing urban based recreation activities due to the limitations of public transport.

As previously highlighted within the strategy, play is often viewed as an activity that is only of interest to children in their early years and up to early secondary education stage.

The perception that play is of interest to younger children only has often been reinforced by age related restrictions placed on, by way of example fixed play areas many of which have an upper age limit of 14 years placed upon them and are locked set times.

Whilst it is true that for many older children the fixed play equipment contained within the play area no longer holds an appeal, the area itself can have value as an accessible hang-out spot with seating opportunities within the community. By limiting access to fixed play areas based on age or at set times we are denying older children with an opportunity to socialise within the community in which they live.

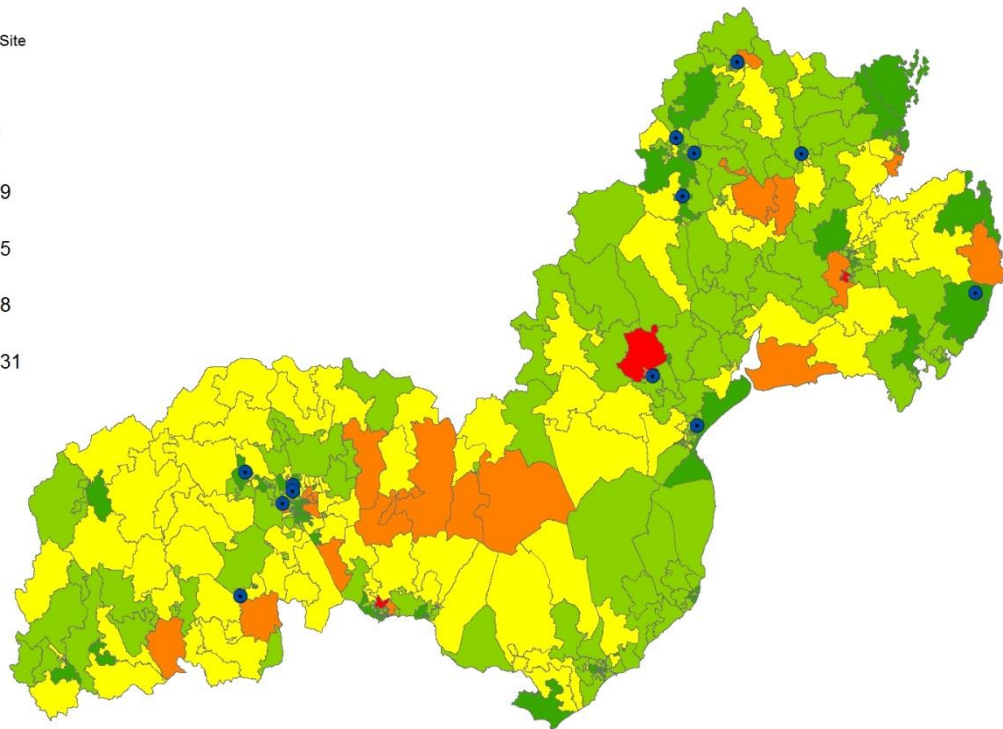
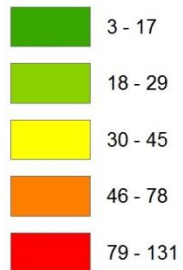
Beyond fixed play areas, the main council based provision across the district for older children and young people comes in the form of 13 Multi Use Games Areas.

Location of Multi Use Games Areas mapped against Population aged 15 to 18 Years

Legend

● MUGA Site

15 to 18 Use



10 5 0 10 Miles

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7.1 During the strategy development process older children and teenagers across the district affirmed the importance of play and recreation to their lives highlighting its importance in relation to:

- Enabling them to hang out in their community and providing opportunities for them to socialise with their peers thereby sustaining and developing social connections
- Remaining active through engage in both formal and informal recreational activity (ranging from attending clubs and formal sports activity through to simply kicking a ball about on a green space area, walking etc.)
- Fun and relaxation.

Despite the importance of recreation, young people expressed the view that all too often they feel that their needs are ignored and their views are not sought about how council and other providers could best meet their needs. There was a clear sense that not only do young people want to have a say in the decision-making process but that they are willing to support providers in identifying and meeting need.

During the engagement process, older children highlighted consistently that the main challenge they face in meeting their play and recreation needs is a lack of a dedicated space with shelter and seating that enables them to hang out with their peers. Responses to the online survey and engagement at focus group level from the older age groups almost exclusively highlighted the need for shelters with seating to enable teens to hang out with their peers.

During the engagement phase the development of a skateboard area was also highlighted as being particularly relevant to the recreation needs of older children within the district.

Within rural areas it was noted that community centres and other community venues which had the potential to provide an indoor space for older children and young people to come together for recreation are all too often closed when they are most needed. Exploration highlighted a number of issues which would need to be addressed within this area including the need to have available staffing to open and close centres and the limitations of existing insurance cover which restricts use of community venues.

7.2 Recommendations for Older Children and Young People

Arising from the process to date a number of key recommendations arise, namely:

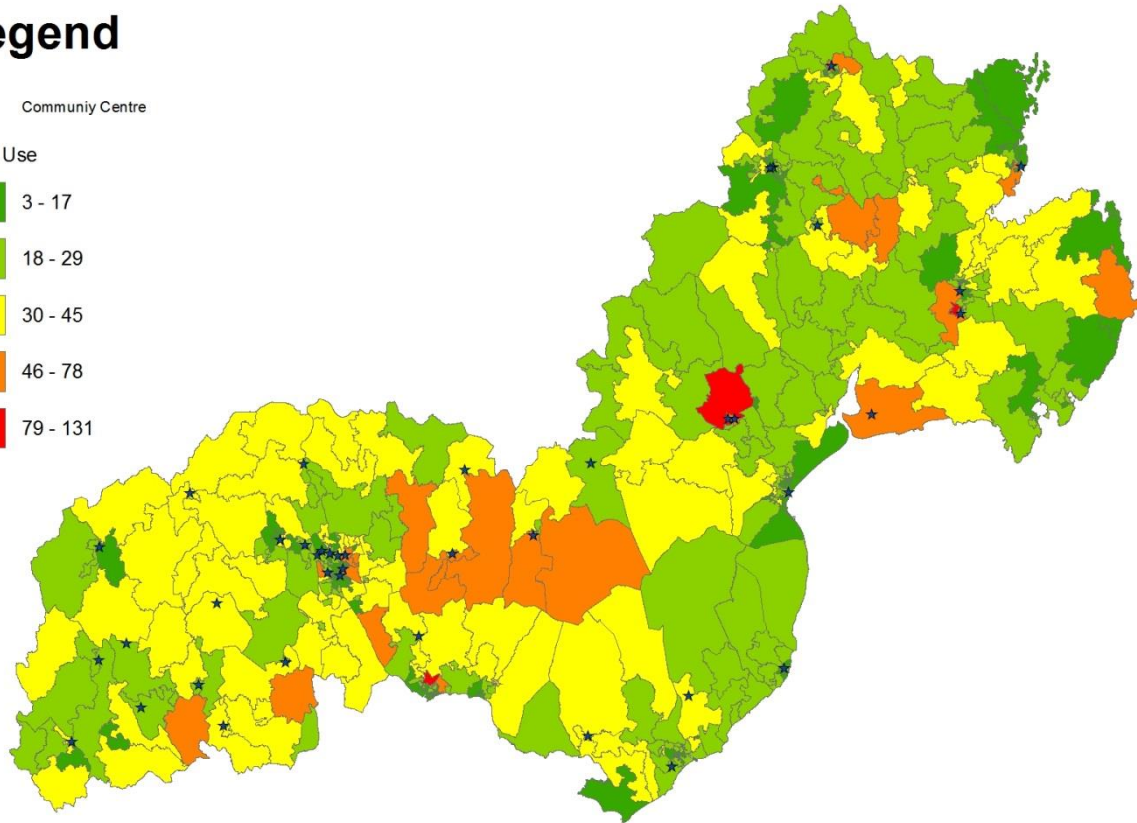
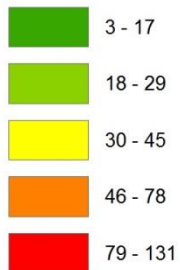
- Council to review the provision of teen shelters against need and incorporate teen shelters into future design of play spaces/community places where a need has been identified within the community.

Location of Community Centres mapped against Population aged 15 to 18 Years

Legend

★ Community Centre

15 to 18 Use



9.5 4.75 0 9.5 Miles

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- Council to review the potential for increasing access to community centres at times when older young people most need them to provide shelter and space for recreational activity/hanging out.
- Council to initiate a review of need for formalized skateboard provision within the district.
- Council to establish an ongoing mechanism for gauging the needs of the older age group, ensuring that they have an opportunity to identify their needs and engage within the decision-making process.

Meeting the recreation needs of older children and young people can only partially be addressed within the realms of the play strategy. The issue also has a relevance not only within the emerging council Sports Facilities Strategy but will require focused partnership engagement across all sectors in order to establish a single, coherent and strategic approach to meeting the needs of the group.

Such an approach requires input from a range of agencies including the PSNI (for example with regards to the moving on of teenagers hanging around within communities); Youth Service (with regards to ongoing youthwork initiatives/opportunities within the area); the community and voluntary sector (in relation to existing services, opportunities and accessible locations); Education sector with regards to the scope for making better use of school grounds etc. It is suggested that the Play Partnership has the potential to drive further discussion with regards to how best to meet the recreation needs of the age group.

SECTION 3

Key Underlying Principles for Fixed Play Provision

8.0 KEY UNDERLYING PRINCIPALS FOR FIXED PLAY AREAS

In developing and maintaining fixed play provision the key challenge is to ensure that play areas deliver an effective and positive play experience for all children, young people and their parents/guardians.

In order to meet play need play areas must deliver enjoyable and versatile play experiences that enabling children and young people to develop their physical health and wellbeing, support their growth and development and enhance the acquisition to skills and abilities.

Section 3 of the strategy establishes the key underlying principles that will underpin the further development of fixed play across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

8.1 Assessing Need for Fixed Play

Within the strategy council has identified a number of locations which, based on the criteria applied are eligible for the development of new fixed play provision. As a rolling strategy council will over the coming 5 year period continue to review the need for additional fixed play provision across the district. This review process will be based around the criteria established within the strategy i.e. minimum of 150 children aged between 0 to 14 residing within the associated catchment radial from a potential play site (100 for rural areas) and a minimum of 100 households within radial (as per PPS guidance).

In applying distance radials have adopted and will continue to apply the Fields in Trust 'Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Play' (also known as the Six Acre Standards). The Accessibility Benchmark Standards (ABS) are the recognised tool for determining the geographical catchment served by a fixed play area and are based around 3 identified types of play area:

- Local Areas for Play (LAP's)
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's)
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's)

The ABS establishes a set of distance thresholds which set the catchment area for each type of play space and help to establish the optimum location for a play area based on the target age range.

TYPE OF PLAY	DISTANCE CRITERIA (METRES)	
	WALKING DISTANCE	STRAIGHT LINE DISTANCE
Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are specifically designated and laid out for very young children (<5 years) with the express purpose of providing somewhere to play close to where they live.	100	60
Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): areas of open space designated and laid out with features and equipment for children beginning to go out and play independently (5 to 12 years).	400	240

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP) are areas of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children (including 12+) but with play opportunities for younger children as well.	1000	600
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8.2 Non-Council Funding for Fixed Play

It is important to note that minimum population criteria applied within the strategy does not preclude community organisations from seeking third party funding for the development of fixed play – it applies only to capital investment by council.

Community organisations within areas which fail to meet the minimum criteria as outlined within the strategy i.e. areas with populations below 150 (and 100 for rural areas) may apply for third party funding to appropriate funders (e.g. through Rural Development Funding strands, Big Lottery Fund etc.).

Should a community organisation seek funding from an external body for fixed play development council commit to working in partnership to support funding applications (through by way of example providing written letter of support, negotiating post installation maintenance agreements etc.) providing the applicant group agrees to adhere to the good practice guidelines outlined within this section of the strategy.

8.3 Land Availability for Fixed Play

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

In undertaking this review council will engage with the wider play partnership in order to identify potential sites not in the ownership of council but for which there is potential for land transfer from another public body. An example of a potentially viable option in an area of low or nil council land availability includes the development of a fixed play area on school grounds with joint community and school access points.

8.4 Designing Fixed Play Areas

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 be 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 key 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.

The guidance is underpinned by ten guiding principles for creating a successful play space:

Successful Play Spaces are...

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
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-
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.
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The guidance recognises that not all current or prospective locations for play lend themselves to full adherence to the design principles. It is not always possible for council to choose an ideal location for play due to issues of land ownership, nor is it always possible to reconfigure existing play areas due to space or environmental considerations. The principles do however provide a sound basis for the design, evaluation and development of fixed play areas.

The guide *'Best Play – What Play Provision should do for Children'* was developed at UK level through funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and is endorsed by the main play organisations across the UK including PlayBoard NI. The guide contains seven key objectives that providers should seek to achieve in developing good play opportunities:

1. The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. The provision recognises that child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.
3. The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
4. The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.
5. The provision fosters independence and self-esteem.
6. The provision fosters children's respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction.

7. The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council recognise the need to ensure that play areas adhere to good design practice. Council will therefore apply (as far as possible) the ten underpinning principles and seven key objectives as outlined for creating a successful play space, both in terms of developing new and renewing existing fixed play areas. Further, as detailed at 8.2 of this document council will require non-council funded fixed play installations seeking post-installation maintenance agreements to adhere to the 'Design for Play' principles.

8.5 Inclusive Play

A fundamental aspect of ensuring accessibility to play for all is the need to ensure that play areas offer opportunities for children and young people to play together regardless of individual ability or disability levels.

The provision of inclusive play is a legal requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 which laid down rights for disabled people to have the same access to 'goods and services' as other members of the public. From 2004 the DDA also required schools and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to overcome barriers and to ensure that disabled children and young people are not disadvantaged.

Despite some progress in recent years, children with disabilities still face significant barriers to accessing play opportunities. Some of these barriers are practical or environmental, for example physical access issues, whilst others are attitudinal or social in nature.

Inclusive play means more than simply providing physical access to play areas or open spaces. In order to be truly inclusive a play area must be open and accessible to all, 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 opportunities for all children to extend their capabilities and explore possibilities through play. Expensive, specialised equipment is rarely needed; rather equipment should be multi-functional and open to all abilities e.g. inclusive roundabouts etc.

In developing new fixed play areas and upgrading existing fixed play areas council will seek to 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 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 an encourages play interaction between all children and young people regardless of individual ability or disability.

In line with 8.2 of this document, council will require non-council funded fixed play installations seeking post-installation maintenance agreements to give core consideration to the needs of children with disabilities including but not restricted to the above.

8.6 Risk and Challenge in 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' was developed by the Play Safety Forum which includes representation from the 4 national play organisations (PlayBoard NI, Play Scotland, Play England and Play Wales), Fields in Trust, the Association of Play Industries and the Health and Safety Executive.

The guide was developed based on a recognition that children need and will often seek challenge through play, often choosing locations that may place them in an inherently risky situation. The publication offers guidance to play providers on how they can develop a risk management approach that takes into account the benefits children gain from engaging in challenging, sometimes risky play experiences.

'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. By adopting a 'Risk Benefit' approach providers are better able to offer and enable children and young people to take part in challenging, exciting play opportunities whilst ensuring that they are not exposed to an unacceptable level of risk of harm. 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.

In acknowledging the importance of risk and challenge in play Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commits to the adoption over the lifetime of this strategy of a 'Risk Benefit' approach to fixed play provision.

In working towards implementation of a 'Risk Benefit' approach council will pay close regard to the guidance and assessment procedures issued by the Play Safety Forum and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive.

8.7 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 strategy establishes a set of core principles which will guide the maintenance of fixed play areas.

- Regular Inspection: Dependent on the level of usage and/or identified issues regular inspections which will be conducted by trained staff in order to review equipment's basic condition and to identify any faults arising from breakage, vandalism etc. Following each inspection a written report will be completed and remedial works undertaken to address any identified issues.
- Annual Maintenance Inspection: All fixed play areas will be subject to an annual maintenance inspection conducted by an independent external specialist in order to identify those pieces of equipment and/or ancillary items requiring replacement or remedial works in order to comply with statutory health and safety requirements.

Annual maintenance inspections will be required to provide an overarching risk benefit assessment alongside an assessment of each individual fixed play areas remaining life span in order to assist with the capital renewal process.

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

8.8 **Renewal and Upgrading of Fixed Play areas**

The Play Strategy has provided an overarching assessment of all fixed play areas and has made recommendations regarding those that require upgrading/renewal based on their current condition and play value rating.

With a view to embedding an effective criteria to guide the future upgrading of fixed play areas, the strategy has established a **standard review point** for all fixed play area of **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 and that this meets the criteria established within the strategy. Should the review identify that the level of play value is adequate and the physical condition good council will continue to monitor both aspects on an annual basis.

Renewal of fixed play areas outside agreed life span

It is recognised 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.

8.9 Vandalism

Vandalism of fixed play areas and equipment contained within remains a key issue for council and for local communities. Across the district the key cause of deteriorating, unsafe or badly damaged play equipment is vandalism and whilst council will always seek to remedy the effects of vandalism through its maintenance function it is important that the root causes of vandalism are identified and addressed.

Council will, through its regular inspection regime maintain an overview of vandalism within play areas in order to identify those play areas that are consistently being affected. Once an area has been identified council will engage with members of the local community and wider statutory partners in order to identify the causes of repeat vandalism and establish a means of addressing the core issue.

Where a play area is subject to repeated vandalism despite attempts to resolve the issue council may give consideration to the removal/non-replacement of targeted play equipment until such time as the issue can be addressed satisfactorily.

8.10 Community Consultation on Fixed Play

This document provides an overview of key recommendations regarding each existing fixed play area across the district. In some cases these refer to upgrade and renewal, in others they refer to potential removal or transformation of the site based on underlying levels of need. In addition it makes recommendations regarding the development of new fixed areas within a number of locations.

In order to ensure that communities have an opportunity to give their views on both the potential development of new and the upgrading of existing play sites council will implement a rolling programme community consultations.

New Fixed Play Area Development

In the case of potential new play areas council will engage with local communities in order to:

- Inform the community of the proposed development of fixed play provision within their area and to identify and seek views on potential site locations

- Determine the views of the community on the development of fixed play including identifying any opposition to the development of fixed play within the area
- Gather the views of the community on the appropriateness of the identified potential location for fixed play
- Encourage community discussion and debate on the issue of play and fixed play within the community
- The identification of specific play needs within the community, for example in relation to disability
- Review plans and seeking the views on the community as the process develops towards play area design and development.

In addition to broader community consultation, council will actively seek to ensure that the views of children and young people who live locally are taken into account with regards to:

- The need for and the appropriateness of fixed play for the area
- Views on potential sites and locations for fixed play development
- The identification of play types, activities and play experiences that the fixed play area should seek to provide
- Opportunities to become actively engaged in the design process with regards to the site layout, landscaping and play equipment.

Removal/Transformation of Existing Play Area

In the case of potential removal of a play area, council will engage with local communities in order to determine to 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 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.

Upgrade of Existing Play Area

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.

9.0 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the period of the strategy (2017 to 2022) Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will implement a series of actions aimed at enhancing opportunities for play and recreation, both fixed and non-fixed across the borough. These will include:

Strategic

- Community Planning Process – Children and young people represent one of the key priority groups for both the council and the wider community. Recognising the council's central role in developing community planning mechanisms under the revised local government structure, it is recommended that council recognise and incorporate consideration of play and the work of the Play Partnership within its overarching community planning structure;
- Participation of Children and Young People – It is recommended that council seek to establish a mechanism for engaging with children and young people on an ongoing basis in order to allow them to actively participate in decision relating to, or impacting upon their play experience (whether fixed or non-fixed);
- Incorporation of Play in Council Strategies – Council should ensure that the Sports Facility Strategy and Tourism Strategy incorporate consideration of play and how they can support its enhancement. Council should further that all strategies give consideration to their impact or potential impact on children and young people's play.
- Risk/Benefit Approach to Play – Traditionally, across local government health and safety considerations have led to the creation of play areas which offer minimal challenge and risk in play. Whilst consideration of risk remains important, it is now recognised at a UK level that there is a need to create play areas that offer challenge in order to nurture health, wellbeing and essential skills. This has resulted in shift towards a risk/benefit approach which focuses on a weighing up of both risk and benefits as a means of introducing more challenge in play.

As a relatively new approach neither legacy council applied a risk/benefit approach to fixed play area design. It is recommended that the council should work towards the adoption of the risk/benefit approach for use in all future fixed play development;

- Alternative Non-Fixed Approaches to meeting play need – Whilst fixed play offers an economically viable approach to meeting play need within built up residential areas they do not provide a means of addressing play need within all rural areas, particularly those with more dispersed populations. As such, it is recommended that council proceed with the development of a range of alternative non-fixed approaches. Approaches identified for consideration within the strategy include:

- Roll-out and extension of the Community Play Pods Initiative
- Development and roll-out of a number of Community Play Initiatives including:
 - Community Play Volunteers Programme
 - Establishment of a Community 'Free' Play Sessions Programme
 - Piloting of a Street Play initiative
 - Consideration of how Council and partners can better integrate play opportunities into the Public Realm
 - Active promotion and support for National Play Day
 - Explore the potential of employing a dedicated Play Worker/Workers to support roll-out of the strategy and deliver key elements of the community play initiatives
- Design Principles – Council should implement the good practice design principles outlined within the strategy with a view to enhancing play value at existing sites and ensuring that future new development delivers a quality play experience.
- Inclusive Play Opportunities – Council should implement the principles outlined within the strategy as they relate to ensuring that that play provision recognises and seeks to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- Youth Recreation Provision - There is a lack of play/recreation provision that caters for older children and teenagers across the area. It is acknowledged that not all fixed play areas are suitable for, nor indeed require dedicated youth provision (e.g. shelters); however it is recommended that council should initiate widespread consultation with older young people, engaging in active partnership with youth providers in order to determine how it can best meet their needs through the Play Strategy and emerging Sports Facility Strategy.
- Residential Planning - Given the anticipated population growth within the area and potential new residential development it is recommended that council seek to ensure that developers incorporate suitable fixed play provision/natural green space allocations within developments as outlined in Planning Policy Statements 7 and 8.
- Land Availability for Fixed Play – It is recognised that in some areas of fixed play need (current and future) council may not have access to land sufficient to develop fixed play provision.. In such cases council should engage with statutory partners to identify potential sites in the ownership of other bodies (e.g. schools etc.)

- Albert Basin – It is acknowledged that the decision regarding the proposed use of the site at Albert Basin lies outside the scope and remit of the Play Strategy. It is however recommended that should community/recreational development proceed at the site further community consultation would be required in respect of meeting play needs.

Operational

During the period of the Play Strategy council should initiate a programme of works aimed at enhancing fixed play provision including:

- Commence Consultation on Development of New Fixed Play Areas – The areas that have been identified as potentially requiring new fixed play development, namely:
 - Mayobridge
 - Ballymartin
 - Megennis Villas
 - Kilmore
 - Barnamaghery Villas
 - Kilclief

Council should initiate consultation to confirm need and assess land availability within each area (both council and statutory partner owned).

- Commence Upgrading of Low Play Value Play Areas – 23 fixed play areas have been identified as having low play value. 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.
- Commence Consultation regarding Consolidation of Play Areas - 10 areas have been identified at which there is low play value and possible duplication of fixed play. Council should initiate consultation processes with a view to consolidation of high play value fixed play provision within these areas.
- Commence Consultation regarding Removal/Site Transformation of fixed Play in areas of low demand - 10 sites have been identified as having potentially low levels of use. Council should initiate consultation over the duration of the strategy with a view to removal and site transformation to better meet the needs of the resident population.
- Green Spaces - Where green space adjoins fixed play areas council should seek to maximise playability by enhancing the space through minor landscaping, planting, incorporation of natural materials and features etc. This would create additional natural play space for children and young people; would complement the fixed play area and would provide an alternative free play experience.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Overarching Play Strategy Capital Programme

New Fixed Play Area Development

Note: Prior to the commencement of development localised surveys will be completed to confirm level of level of need based on final identified site location and associated catchment radial etc.

DEA Area	Location	Households within Catchment Radial	Indicative Capital Cost	Year
Crotlieve	Mayobridge	163	£100,000	1
Mourne	Ballymartin	137	£100,000	2
Crotlieve	Magennis Villas	126	£100,000	3
Rowallane	Kilmore	112	£100,000	4
Rowallane	Barnamaghery Villas	106	£100,000	5
Downpatrick	Kilclief	81*	£100,000	TBD

**Decision to proceed with play area development made by Legacy Council prior to RPA based on destination status of location*

Fixed Play Area Renewal/Upgrade Programme (based on Household Number)

All renewals be subject to local area consultation in order to confirm level of demand and to enable the local community, children and young people to engage in the renewal process.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Mourne	Backfield	63	342	1
Newry	Meigh CC	76	189	1
Rowallane	Bridge Centre	74	181	1
Slieve Croob	Mourne Gdns	78	175	1
Slieve Gullion	Oliver Plunkett	86	160	1
Newry	Newtowncloghue	87	154	2
Rowallane	Lislane	70	152	2
Newry	Carrievemaclone	80	151	2
Slieve Gullion	Jonesborough	85	149	2
Crotlieve	Burren Village Green	87	140	2
Downpatrick	Killough Playing Fields	93	136	3
Slieve Croob	Drumaness	83	131	3
Rowallane	Westlands	76	125	3
Slieve Gullion	Drumintee	88	125	3
Crotlieve	Lurganare	80	118	3
Slieve Gullion	Fairview	91	112	4
Slieve Gullion	Dungormley	74	106	4
Slieve Gullion	Cullyhanna	94	102	4
Crotlieve	Innisfree	69	98	4
Slieve Gullion	Bog Road Picnic	73	92	4

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Mourne	Kittys Road	85	85	5
Slieve Gullion	Cullaville	93	85	5
Mourne	Newcastle Centre	83* *To proceed in line with future development of Newcastle Centre (date to be determined)	142	5

Fixed Play Area Renewal/Upgrade Programme (Possible Consolidation or relocation of sites based on Household Number)

All renewals will be subject to local area consultation in order to confirm level of demand and to enable the local community, children and young people to engage in the renewal process.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Crotlieve	Spelga Pk, Hilltown	94	Current site: 189 Recommend relocation to more suitable site to serve Hilltown's <u>588</u> households	1
Slieve Gullion	<u>Consolidate 4 into 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charlemont Square Pond Field Fr Cullen College Square 	65 79 84 89	512	1
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raymond McCreesh Park Barcroft CC 	86 110	380	2
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Windmill Road Heather Park 	92 96	351	2
Downpatrick	Radial Duplication – Assess need/potential consolidation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridge Street Ardmore Avenue Marian Park 	88 94 91	234 <u>280</u> 135	3

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Indicative Households	Year
Rowallane	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hillfoot Toddler Hillfoot Junior 	80 88	227	3
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emmett Street Mourneview 	89 86	226	4
Newry	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Springhill Drive Shandon Park 	85 89	199	4
Mourne	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mona View Annalong 	86 89	189	5
Downpatrick	<u>Consolidate 2 into 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model Farm St Dympnas 	78 83	174	5

Potential Play Area Removal/Site Transformation (based on household numbers – lowest first)

Prior to any future upgrade consultation should be undertaken with the local community to assess level of need and, if play provision is no longer required the potential removal of play site based on underlying need.

DEA Area	Location	Play Value Rating	Approx. Households within Catchment	Year
Crotlieve	Clonallen Park	79	n/a*	1
Slieve Gullion	Drumilly	79	14	1
Slieve Gullion	Lisnalee	87	18	2
Mourne	Ballymaderphy	86	25	2
Slieve Gullion	Carnbane Gardens	71	34	2
Slieve Gullion	Latt Crescent	92	34	3
Mourne	Pious Hill	82	34	3
Slieve Gullion	Tullydonnell	91	43	3
Slieve Croob	Drumaroad	88	62	4
Slieve Croob	Station Avenue	62	71	4

**Removal recommendation based on duplication of catchment area*

Indicative Budget for 2017/18 based on Draft Capital Plan

In developing the draft capital budget it is recognised that the cost associated with each individual fixed play area renewal will be site dependent within a projected scale of £25,000 to £65,000. In developing the budget below the projected budget per site has been placed at a mid-point cost of £45,000 per site.

Capital Budget Area	Projected No. of Locations/Play Areas	Cost per Site	Renewal Cost Projection based on mid-point of £45k
New Fixed Play Area	1	£100,000	£100,000
Renewal of Low Play Value/lower Mid Play Value	5	£45,000	£225,000
Consolidation of sites (includes removal and renewal)	3 Removals (2 Bessbrook and 1 Hilltown)	£7,500	£22,500
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bessbrook 4 to 2 Hilltown Relocation 	3 Upgrades/relocations (2 Bessbrook and 1 Hilltown)	£45,000	£135,000
Potential removal/ transformation	2	£7,500	£15,000
TOTAL PROJECTED			£497,500