

Milton Keynes Council Play Area Action Plan: 2013 - 2023



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Appendix

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this Play Area Action Plan is to guide the improvement of existing play area facilities and to identify new opportunities for future facilities across the Borough. This document has been prepared by the Council as an output of a review group established in December 2012 to consider the councils approach to the provision of new and existing fixed play areas¹.

1.2 This document sits under the Milton Keynes play Framework, which was approved by Council in 2012. The Play Framework² vision and aims for development of play for Children and young people and sets the context for this document.

1.3 This Plan relates closely to the Milton Keynes Public open Space framework and the Milton Keynes Local Plan, which was approved by Council in 2005, and which sets out standards for the provision of play areas across the borough. The action plan also takes on board recommendations made Review of Wheeled Sports Provision within Milton Keynes.³

1.4 Having set the development of play areas in context, and in recognition of the financial restrictions facing public authorities, the Action Plan sets out proposals designed to deliver the aims set out in the Play Strategy and fulfil as far as possible the standards set out in the Local Plan. In this document, where the term “children” is used, it applies to children and young people aged 0-16 years of age.

¹ <http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=37959>

² <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/mkcouncil/documents/Play-framework.pdf>

³ <http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=37208>

2.0 Aims of the Play Area Action Plan

2.1 Play enables children to develop their physical and learning capabilities as they develop and grow. Play may occur in many settings and even within public open space this should not be limited to designated play spaces, symbolised by the presence of equipment. However, such fixed play spaces are important foci not only for children's play but also the creation of social links which is a benefit to children, accompanying adults and the wider community.

2.2 The design of a play area is critical as its impacts, both positive and negative, will be felt for many years. For example the space available for play, the numbers of users and their ages, the immediate environment and the type of housing.

2.3 All those involved in creating, using and maintaining play areas, councillors, developers, residents, maintenance teams etc have a common goal, to ensure the installation is successful and sustainable. The main focus of the action plan is to address:

1. Follow the recommendations made by the Play area Review group, commissioned by the Over View and Scrutiny Committee established to consider the Council's approach to the provision of new and existing fixed play.
2. Picks up and references the aims and vision set out in the Play (Strategy) Framework, (2006, 2012)
3. Provides the historical context and trends in provision and demand.
4. Sets out a vision for future play area provision.
5. Prioritises future investment taking cognisance of the current budgetary position.
6. Set out the methodology for a play area impact assessment to ensure all sites contribute positively to the overall play opportunity.
7. Proposes a detailed corporate action plan for refurbishment, replacement, removal or creation of new play areas designed to meet the standard set out in the Local Plan.
8. Sets out the role and potential for district play provision, creating destination sites capable of delivering the needs of a large catchment.
9. Details the approach to wheeled sport, in particular site and impact assessment methodology.
10. Acts as an advocacy document for investment in and maintenance of play areas.

3.0 Strategic context

3.1 Vision

The vision for this action Plan is:

“Milton Keynes will plan and manage high quality, accessible play spaces that contribute sustainably and positively to community wellbeing”.

They should be

1. Well designed – to encourage play and community cohesion, aesthetic but maintainable within budget
2. Well located – where possible near to other community facilities, sited to ensure the negative impacts are minimised and linked to good pedestrian and cycle networks.
3. Well regarded – communities value the sites and have ownership of them, are engaged in the planning, design and maintenance of the spaces.

3.2 Play in partnership: a strategy for Milton Keynes

The Play Partnership provides the steer for play in Milton Keynes, the group is comprised of members from a number of key partners including the Play Association, Parks Trust and the Council. The Milton Keynes Play Framework gives an understanding about the definition and importance of Play in the development of children and young people.

Figure 1. Play area context: some of the linkages between play and other functions of the council and its partners. Play is key to both the physical and cognitive development of young people and successful play areas can help to regenerate areas and increase community cohesion



4.0 Play standards

4.1 The Council's standards for open space and Play areas in Milton Keynes are shown in Table 1. They are based on standards in the Milton Keynes Planning Manual (1992) and the replacement Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005). They reflect recommendations and priorities in the recent Milton Keynes Council Leisure Facilities Strategy 2003-2008 (2003) and the Playing Pitch Strategy (2003). They are also based on advice in PPG 17⁴, the accompanying Good Practice Guide, Circular 5/2005 and the emerging Milton Keynes Public Open Space Framework.

Table 1: Open Space Standards in Milton Keynes (Local Plan, 2005)

Category	Per 1,000 population	Catchment	Characteristics
Local Play Areas	0.35 hectares	300 metres	Mainly for children up to age 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsupervised play close to home • Located at 500m intervals • Active Zone should be at least 20m from residential property boundaries and 30 metres from roads • Approximately 5 items of play equipment and small games area
	0.6 hectares	600 metres	For all children, but emphasis on 8+ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For unsupervised play • Located at 1,000 metre intervals • Active Zone should be at least 40m from residential property boundaries and 30m from roads • Approximately 8 items of play equipment and ball games area, goal wall, cycle area; larger more adventurous equipment. • The inclusion of youth shelters, wheeled sports facilities and multi-games walls for teenagers is essential
Neighbourhood Play areas			
District Scale play Areas	PROPOSED IN Pay Action Plan (Not presently in Local Plan)	5 km	For all – Multi generational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For unsupervised play • Facilities for a prolonged stay including free to access toilets and shelter. Car parking and refreshments • Should be accessible by the whole community, in terms of arrival and stay. • A wide range of play experience which compliment the surroundings, that provide challenge and provide a significant opportunities for meeting, imagination, role play and manipulation of the environment • Potential to include larger wheeled sports facilities and other facilities for teenagers. Will require innovative funding mechanisms to ensure sustainability

⁴ PPG 17 has now been superseded by the National Planning Policy framework

4.2 The Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance for Leisure sets out the Council’s approach to the provision of open space, sport and recreation in conjunction with new housing development. The guidance details how the Council will implement Local Plan policies for these topics. The Council will seek on site provision, or contributions to off-site provision or upgrading, at levels identified in the local open space standards in Table 1.

4.3 For sites of 10 to 49 dwellings, on-site provision will not normally be sought. For sites of 50 to 199 dwellings, on-site provision for Local Play Areas and Local Parks will normally be sought. For sites of 200 dwellings or more, on site Neighbourhood Play provision will also normally be sought. Where schemes are too small for play provision and/or open space to be provided an off site contributions will be sought. This contribution will be used for improvements to existing play areas or open spaces within the catchment of the development as laid out in the Local Plan.

4.4 The Public Open Space Framework (POSF) approved by the Council in April 2013 included action on children’s play:

PPA1 Provide high quality, accessible plays opportunities for all age groups and abilities

- Audit all play spaces for accessibility and play value by 2014
- Publish a comprehensive list of play area provision across the Borough by 2014
- Develop a costed plan to provide strategic large scale play sites across the Borough by 2014

PPA2 Involve children and young people in the design and development of play spaces

- Establish a young person’s forum (potentially part of the Youth cabinet) to inform the location and design of play spaces and create new methods of delivery by 2014.
- Establish qualitative guidelines for the design of play spaces and wheeled sports by 2014



Play occurs in many places and is not restricted to official play areas. It is important that children can appropriate spaces within their community to freely act out their own play. Developments should include these “loose fit” spaces that may primarily be designed as landscape buffers, ecological corridors or character landscape but also create playful landscape.

5.0 Current management and resources

5.1 The Council currently manages 492 sites across the Borough, the Parks Trust are to be offered all new play areas in the growth areas, at present they have four in Broughton three in Oxley Park and one each at Willen Lake and Monkston. Therefore, there are a total of 501 public play areas across the Borough (June 2013) . There are an additional 52 play sites that have had their equipment removed at end of functional life span, these require landscape works to return them to quality public open space.

5.2 Additionally, infill development occurs, some of which triggers the inclusion of play provision. Through section 106 (Town and Country planning act 1990) developers can be required to either build or contribute towards play provision. In some cases this has created play areas unnecessarily when they could have been served by an existing provision.

5.3 FIX-IT is the Council service which is responsible for the maintenance and inspection of the Councils play area stock and other public realm assets

- Manages 492 sites and 5337 listed assets, recorded on a dedicated data base.
- Approximate values of asset £14.15 million, sites subject to yearly external inspection.
- Team of 7 operatives, 7 assistants and one manager – budget of 200k for spares and maintenance – equates to £406 per site on spares parts and refurbishment.
- Present condition of play assets includes play equipment, safer surfacing and ancillaries
 - Poor 707 items 17%
 - Average 2513 items 61%
 - Good 456 items 11%
 - As new 426 items 11%

5.4 Additional to the revenue budget for FIX-IT the Council also contributes to capital investment. There a number of mechanisms for this:

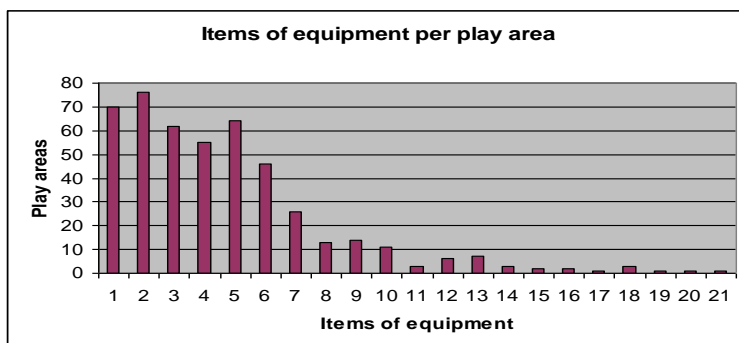
- Parish play area fund 50:50 fund worth a total of 100k
- Play area equipment review and improvement fund - 100k per annum budgeted for 5 years (2013 – 2018) to address play area issues
- Section 106 funds – Where appropriate used to enhance existing sites

5.4 As part of the Councils response to the localism Bill (2012) the capital asset transfer programme has been established. Parishes and Town Councils are being consulted on their interest on taking on assets which includes play areas. For this to become a reality the stock of play areas must meet the needs and resources of the communities they serve.

6.0 Audit and draft proposals

6.1 An audit of play areas was carried out in 2009, this included risk, play value equipment, site opportunities, constraints and brief recommendations. Whilst this audit requires updating it was clear that many sites fell short of the Local Plan standard in terms of quality, but far exceeded it in terms of quantity. The main reason for this disparity is that many sites were built prior to the Local Plan standards and represent an earlier understanding of needs and play.

Chart 1: Items of equipment by site



Over 260 sites contain less than 5 items of equipment, the threshold for a Local Play Area as stipulated in the local plan. Whilst some sites will have the potential to be improved others will not, due to limitations in the site or proximity to homes.

6.2 There are a large number of sites with few items of equipment. This is a historical legacy which predates the Local Plan. It should be borne in mind that children will and should have the option to play in a variety of settings and whilst a piece of play equipment can be an important symbol to this intention it is not essential. Moreover these sites offer low play value in terms of their equipment and a limited age range but still require regular risk assessments and repairs a financial cost that out ways the fixed play value. Through a more focused analysis of play types and catchment areas gaps in provision or duplications can be identified.

Map 1 Distribution play areas in the urban districts



*Circles indicate the catchment of the play site, colour of circle represents the type of play facility
 Red – LAP (defunct planning category)
 Blue: Local Play
 Green: Neighbourhood play.*

7.0 Design and maintenance policies

7.1 The approach to the design of play areas should follow a multi - professional ethos, including all those who will be involved in the play area over its life i.e. Landscape architects, environmental health officers (noise), maintenance staff, Police officers, play and community workers. There may be opportunities to include public art or ecological elements in the design, these create additional interest in the design and offer further opportunities for engagement with the community.

7.1.1 The main reason for the play area is to promote children's play and therefore the process should be child centred, based on their desires, expectations, how they play and what they need to get out of the play experience. Designs are also governed by the need to meet the play standard BS EN 1176 Parts 1 to 11. The choice of equipment and layout of the play space needs to allow for inclusion, allowing as wide a range of children to play together as possible. The play space must be sustainable, meet consulted needs and not be easily vandalised.

The 10 principles for designing successful play spaces⁵

Successful play spaces...

- are 'bespoke'
- are well located
- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution.

7.1.2 Whenever considering the design or substantial enhancement of a site a design brief should be produced to encompass the overall approach. The brief should include an assessment of the opportunities and constraints of the site and the process of design must address each of the ten principles. For any new development the play facilities should be clearly designed and indicated before any occupations.

Policy P1

The design of play spaces must be accompanied by a design brief and consider future management and whole life costs. For any new development the play area design must be fully developed and publicised before occupation occurs.

⁵ Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces. <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/design-for-play.aspx>

7.2 Play and Risk

7.2.1 Play is unusual in that it is one of the few areas that the Health and Safety Executive have accepted that it is desirable to have some degree of acceptable risk present. Children need and want to take risks during active play. Quality play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities, striking a balance between the risks and the benefits. This is done through risk assessment which:

- Ensures the likelihood of serious injury is extremely low
- Makes sure potential hazards are clear
- Uses practical ways to manage reasonable risk

7. 2.2 Lord Young's Cabinet report 'Common Sense Common Safety' (2010) highlights the importance of children being able to experience risk and endorses the use of risk-benefit assessment and proposed a review of legislation, so that play areas will no longer be covered by regulations designed to cover workplaces.

*“Safety in play provision is not absolute and cannot be addressed in isolation. Play is first and foremost for children and if it is not exciting and attractive to them it will fail, no matter how ‘safe’ it is. Designers, managers and providers will need to reach compromises in meeting these sometimes conflicting goals.”*⁶

*“... safety must be considered at all stages of play provision but inevitably there will be risk of injury when children play, as there is risk of injury in life generally. We must not lose sight of the important developmental role of play for children in pursuit of the unachievable goal of absolute safety.”*⁷

7.2.3 Some of these ideas have been implemented in recent projects under the Playbuilder programme but are evident in much earlier Development Corporation landscape schemes. Where it is proposed to remove isolated pieces of fixed play equipment the inclusion of glacial boulders or similar features can assist in signifying the space is still “playable”.

Policy P2

The design of play spaces and their future management will adopt risk-benefit analysis as part of the design and management approach.

⁶ Managing Risk in Play Provision, Play Safety Forum, National Children’s Bureau, 2002

⁷ Health and Safety Executive, in Managing Risk in Play Provision, 2002 A risk-benefit analysis (a detailed study of the risks inherent in play areas measured against the potential benefits to children’s development) should therefore be carried out at the design stage of all new play facilities.

7.3 The impact of Play Spaces

7.3.1 Whilst on the whole play areas should be areas of positive activity, allowing children to freely vent their physical, cognitive and emotional impulses. There will at times be negative issues surrounding these areas. Issues such as anti-social behaviour might occur; but these could indeed crop up in any number of places and spaces, and should be dealt with in an appropriate manner. However, some negative impacts could well be foreseen and should be designed out, for example noise impact, the need for car parking and the relationship to surrounding homes and buildings.

7.3.2 Play Area Impact Assessment (PAIA) is a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects arising from a proposed development and as a means to ensure an appropriate⁸ play provision is available for residents. All new proposed play areas will require an assessment as will any existing sites due to undergo significant change or investment, typically in excess of £20,000. The level of impact assessment will be determined both by the type of play area proposed, as set out in the Local Plan and the context of the site; by virtue of factors such as its effect on the neighbouring properties, size, nature or location.

The requirement for EIA comes from recommendations of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee subsequently agreed by Cabinet in January 2013:

- Play Area Impact Assessment be carried out to ensure that the proposals are 'Fit for Purpose'.
- Engage and consult when considering substantial alterations to the play provision, including the removal of play areas
- Wheeled sport - their location should be decided using a strategy that includes criteria for acceptable site locations and must consider a wheeled sport hierarchy
- That a policy be drawn up for the provision and allocation of strategically placed destination parks
- That the Council adopts a policy for the replacement and upgrading of end of life play equipment and that a Capital Budget set up for this ongoing purpose.

Policy P3

A Play area Impact assessment is carried out on all new and substantial altered Play spaces (Appendix1).

⁸ Appropriate means the supply and type accords with Local Plan Policy and the quality is assessed as acceptable by the impact assessment.

7.4 Wheeled sport provision

7.4.1 The term Wheeled sport can cover a wide variety of provisions, from tarmac training circuits designed for young children to learn basic bike skills to large concrete skate board and BMX areas. The Local Plan stipulates the inclusion of wheeled sport for Neighbourhood Play areas along with other activities for teenagers.

7.4.2 Given the noise and longer hours that these areas are used an impact assessment will be required. Presently in Milton Keynes there are large skate type facilities that are linked with play provision, but there are others: Willen Road, Newport Pagnell and the Buszy, in CMK, that are stand alone sites and some distance from dwellings. Larger wheeled sports provision will attract an audience from a wider catchment and thus need to be linked to district scale play provision have access to public transport and provide car parking and other facilities.

7.4.3 A recent review of wheeled sports facilities (2013) within Milton Keynes concludes that whilst the council's Policy is robust when compared against national and good practice guidance many of its sites have been significantly further away from properties than the stated 40m minimum. Case studies of other sites outside Milton Keynes generally provide a large buffer zone of at least 100m and/or noise assessments. Therefore rather than a minimum distance a noise assessment will be required to ascertain the level of disturbance for any wheeled sport facility intended for teenage use.

Policy P4

An Impact assessment is carried out on all new wheeled sports provision, following the procedure set out in appendix 2.



a



b

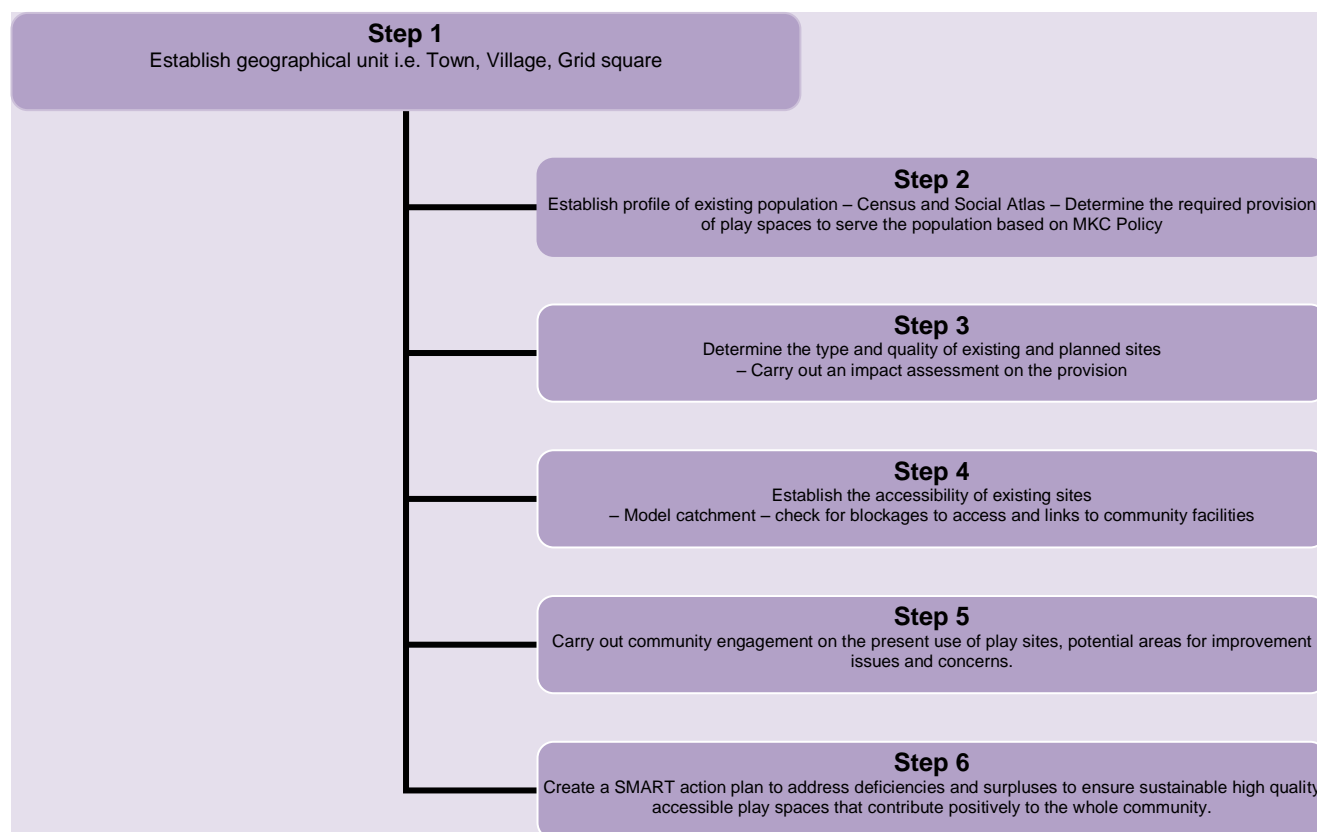
- a- The Buszy – the project came about as a response to skate in CMK and the skaters self appropriated site, this old bus station is now a hub for teenage activity and includes MAD a charity working with young people
- b- Newport Pagnell Skate park, came about through the need of young people and the support the Town Council from amongst others, young people were helped in a successful funding bid to replace the old wooden ramps with concrete, ensure a greater sustainability of the site – *Image from Roy Pink Cycles*

7.5 Play area development plan

6.51 With the aid of Geographic information systems (GIS) it has been possible to plot all equipped play areas within the Borough. Using the access definitions from the Local Plan it has also been possible to plot the catchments of the play areas which identify the “coverage” of equipped play provision and the areas of deficiency.

7.5.2 The mapping data demonstrates generally there is a good spread of equipped play areas in the Borough. However, in some areas there is a duplication of poorly performing sites and a lack of good quality neighbourhood play provision. Additionally the play areas are all recorded on a data base called “PSS public sector software”, not only does this record all site inspection and works it also contains an asset list and a play value score.

Figure 6.5 Identifying, mapping, audit and planning of play area provision



7.5.3 From this analysis a plan produced to address the under and over provision and locate suitable sites to be removed, improved or created. The plan will include engagement with the community, a budget and source of funds and a timeline to deliver the changes. The benefits of the delivered plan will be a range of high quality play opportunities for all ages and ability whilst ensuring the financial sustainability.

Policy P5

All areas of Milton Keynes to under go systematic evaluation of their play provision to ensure they comply with the access and quality standards laid out in the Local Plan, meet the needs of the community and are financially sustainable.

7.6 District Scale Play Sites

7.6.1 Distinct Scale Play Sites (DSPS) are ones that offer a broad range of activities for all ages groups and abilities. The scope of the attraction and its wider setting would typically make visits extended and thus warrant the additional effort in getting there. The play area may well co-locate within an existing park, country park or large open space. There should be access to facilities such as toilets; car parking and refreshments. District locations should also be well connected to the Redway network and public transport to offer the widest possible catchment and accessibility.

7.6.2 The provisions should be accessible to the whole community, in particular toilets are often a barrier to access for the less able and therefore facilities need to be inclusive. To ensure these facilities can be maintained sustainably novel funding mechanisms will need to be developed, i.e. partnerships with commerce to deliver refreshments, private hire of some facilities at certain times etc. There is also an opportunity through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to pump prime such sites.

CASE STUDY

Emberton Country Park

The Country Park is some 10 miles North East of Milton Keynes offering a wide range of activities all year round. The park can be accessed by Car or Bus, taking approximately half an hour from the Centre of MK, it is also liked to by a new cycle way to the wider Redway network . Those who arrive by foot or bike are free to enter, although a charge is made for car parking.

The park has a number of play areas of different types, including a “Gravel Extraction Experience” that allows children to explore the loos materials and an inclusive play site with equipment for all ages and abilities.



The park is able to financial sustain itself through the car parking fees, camping and rent from the cafeteria. Additionally the park is used for the highly successful “Big Cow” triathlon series which widens the parks interest and attracts additional revenue.

Policy P6

District scale sites need to be planned and sustainably funded to provide high quality destination sites. These sites should provide inclusive multi-generational play opportunities and offer the potential to host noisy and boisterous activities such as skateboarding without negative impacting wider community.

7.7 Maintenance of play areas

7.7.1 Play equipment requires regularly inspection by suitably qualified staff and remedial work actioned promptly. The inspection regime should not be slavish, but based on good data collection, which builds overtime to indicate those sites requiring more or less visits. The data is captured on the PSS database which records all inspections, items of equipment, risk assessment and work carried out. It also provides a legal platform for any insurance claims as the inspections all contain electronic signatures. Additionally an external inspection is carried out annually to ensure standards are maintained and independently assessed.

7.7.2 There are a variety of other maintenance tasks which are required on a regular basis in order to keep play areas functioning in a safe and effective manner. These tasks are mainly the responsibility of the FIX IT TEAM based in Public Realm services and consist of

- cleansing - removal of litter, broken glass, removal of graffiti;etc;
- regulation and/or topping up of loosefill (wood chip or sand)
- removal of weeds
- replacement of damaged litter bins and other items of associated infrastructure

7.7.3 Until recently nearly all public play areas were managed by MKC however more are now managed by the Parks Trust following a cabinet decision to pass the leasehold of public open space in the growth areas to the Trust. Following the Localism Act and the Councils asset transfer policy potentially more organisations could manage play areas. All organisations need to work together to ensure the public have access to high quality play spaces and support and learn from one another.

7.7.4 Maintenance budgets are in place to deal with graffiti and the mainly minor acts of vandalism that take place in play areas. In recent years however, equipment costing tens of thousands of pounds has been destroyed in serious acts of vandalism. It is not feasible for major losses to be made up from maintenance (revenue) budgets, and instead play areas may need to be redesigned and built using project (capital) funds. The Council's capital funds are in increasingly short supply, and this may mean substantial delays in restoring play areas to full usability. Through process of site analysis play areas should become more sustainable and more highly valued by the communities they serve.

























Policy P7

All play areas will be regularly inspected and maintained in a safe and clean condition that is fit for purpose and the whole life cost of the play area will be calculated and secured for any new play area. Those organisations responsible public play areas work together to ensure the highest quality of provision.

8. Delivery plan

8.1 Delivering the vision for Milton Keynes Play Areas is a long term objective. It is not feasible for all of the Action Plan outcomes to be achieved within short timescales. The collective improvement for play areas to take account of demographic change or environmental enhancement for example, requires a range of coordinated approaches. Although action is required immediately, the realisation of outcomes will remain a much longer term objective.

8.2 Even the management and quality improvement of sites, to meet a baseline of quality for local people across the Borough, is a significant challenge. This will only be achieved step by step, through a consistent management approach, over ten years or more. This is the reason why a long term strategic plan is required: to maintain that focus and provide a direction for all partner resources.

Action Plan	Years 2013 - 2016	Years 2015 - 2018	Years 2019 - 2022	Years 2023 -
Policy P2 The design of play spaces and their future management will adopt risk-benefit analysis as part of the design and management approach.				
Policy P3 A Play area Impact assessment is carried out on all new and substantial altered Play spaces (Appendix1).				
Policy P4 An Impact assessment is carried out on all new wheeled sports provision, following the procedure set out in appendix 2.				
Policy P5 All areas of Milton Keynes to under go systematic evaluation of their play provision to ensure they comply with the access and quality standards laid out in the Local Plan, meet the needs of the community and are financially sustainable.				
Policy P6 District scale sites need to be planned and sustainably funded to provide high quality destination sites. These sites should provide inclusive multi-generational play opportunities and offer the potential to host noisy and boisterous activities such as skateboarding without negatively impacting wider community.				
Policy P7 All play areas will be regularly inspected and maintained in a safe and clean condition that is fit for purpose and the whole life cost of the play area will be calculated and secured for any new play area. Those organisations responsible public play areas work together to ensure the highest quality of provision.				

Key: The darker arrows indicate the main stages of delivery. The 10 year plan which follows defines the high level actions, timings and key partners who will be needed to support delivery of the priorities within each theme.

Appendix: 1 The identification of risk summary

Risk of failure	Cause
The play area is a cause of disturbance to the people living nearby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The play area is too close to any residential housing nearby (living rooms, bedrooms, terrace gardens, etc.) • Some items of equipment create noise, either due to the equipment itself (noises caused by bearings or friction) or due to wear (squeaking) • Some items of equipment can create gathering crowds (multisports, skate parks, etc.) • Poorly phased with new development, delay may induce spike in usage. • A full impact assessment has not been carried, in particular assessment of noise – Third party is required for teenage wheeled sport provision
The play area is a source of conflicts or accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The play area design has not taken into account the diversity of the potential users (age groups of the children and adolescents, parents) • The area capacity is not suitable (insufficient quantities of equipment and furniture) • The play area is too multipurpose (separation between the sections not marked out clearly enough i.e teen and toddler equipment installed together) • The surfacing is not suitable for the types of equipment installed • Absence of suitable protection (fences, open spaces, noise screens, etc.)
The play area is hardly used or not used at all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equipment is not attractive enough or the play area is dirty (dog excrement, litter on the playing surfaces, etc.) • The surroundings are unpleasant (noise, draughts, open spaces neglected, etc.) • The absence of furniture enabling people to rest and relax • The play area is a long way away from the residential areas, so not many people go there or it lacks passive surveillance.
The play area has been damaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equipment is not suitable (age groups too limited, equipment fragile or easily damaged) • The number of users has been underestimated (there is not enough play equipment) • The schedule for the inspection and maintenance operations is not suitable • The area lacks an alternative play site for older children

Appendix: 2 Play Area Impact Assessment

Play Area Impact Assessment						Additional Comments	
Location/Site Name			Date				
Location - Please Tick	Suburban		Rural		Urban		
Density - Please Tick	Low		Medium		High		
Ongoing maintenance - Please Tick	5 - 10 years serviceable lifespan for existing/new site		10 – 15 years serviceable lifespan for existing/new site		15 - 20 years serviceable lifespan for existing/new site		
Criteria							
New or existing site (Please tick)	Yes			No			
Type	LAP		Local Play		Neighbourhood Play		
	Score: 1= low score			5= high score			
	1	2	3	4	5		
Compliance with the Local Plan in terms of; Type of Play Area, Area; Distance from dwellings	Low compliance; site meets only a few requirements of the Local Plan		Partly compliant; site meets some or almost all of the requirements of the Local Plan		Fully compliant; sites meets all of the requirements of the Local Plan		
Constraints							
	Constraints in terms of Covenants, TPO, easements, reserved site		Some constraints in terms of Covenants, TPO, easements, reserved site		No or very few constraints in terms of Covenants, TPO, easements, reserved site		
Physical Quality							
Site installations	Very few or no installations and equipment are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		Some of the installations and equipment are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		All site installations and equipment are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		
Landscape	Very few or no soft and/or hard landscape are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		Some of the soft and/or hard landscape are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		All soft and/or hard landscape are well maintained or maintainable (if new)		

Improvements	There is very little scope and opportunities for improvement or change over time		There is some scope and opportunities for improvement or change over time		There is good scope and opportunities for improvement or change over time		
Economic improvement	The site is not providing, or is not economically able to provide a significant play opportunity for its locality		The site has the potential to provide, or is economically able to provide a significant play opportunity for its locality		The site is providing, or is economically able to provide a significant play opportunity for its locality		
Inherent Qualities							
Location	Poor location – poor light and visibility		Good location – good light and visibility		Excellent location – excellent light and visibility		
Light/Shade	The Play Area has poor natural shade		The Play Area has some natural shade		The Play Area has good amounts of natural shade		
The built environment	There is a poor relationship with the built environment and local dwellings		The relationship with the built environment and local dwellings is good but improvements could be made		There is a good relationship with the built environment and local dwellings, and no improvements are necessary		
Inherent Defects							
Evidence of crime, vandalism and/or significant misuse	No score necessary. Please liaise with the appropriate Police Officer						
Accessibility /Security							
Local connections	Poor access/connection with the locality and other play facilities, improvements are necessary		Good access/connection with the locality and other play facilities, improvements are necessary		Excellent access/connection with the locality and other play facilities, improvements are necessary		
Access Improvements	Access can be improved with great difficulty (score 2) or it cannot be improved (score1)		Access can be improved with some difficulty		Access can be improved easily		

Surveillance	Few public routes to the site are overlooked, and there is poor surveillance	Some public routes to the site are overlooked, and there is good surveillance	Public routes to the site are overlooked, and there is good surveillance
Local Public Views			
Discussion / questioning must be structured and focused	Detail the approach to community engagement (no score necessary):		
Is there a significant difference of opinion locally on the value of the play area – is it likely to cause conflict	Please BRIEFLY describe (no score necessary):		
What is the Ward member / Town/ Parish council view	Please BRIEFLY describe (no score necessary):		
Possible Alternative Uses			
Does the new play area or proposed change require a noise impact assessment, access design statement or other	Please BRIEFLY detail (no score necessary):		

Total score	
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Date of Evaluation Officer.....
 Identification of key stakeholders other relevant officers – confirm circulation and comment

 Date
 Photographic Record

Notes on using the Play Area Impact Assessment:-

- Assessments should be undertaken by not less than 2 appropriately qualified officers to provide consistency, capability and objectivity.
- Ensure all those involved in the life of the site are identified and consulted
- Evaluations should be structured, objective, quantified and recorded.
- Evaluations should consider local area, grid or multiple grid square coverage to provide a local and “strategic” analysis of provision and needs.

Multiple site assessments should be undertaken in similar conditions or allowance made for variation in conditions.

- A structured local view/opinion is necessary for completeness.
- Costs/benefits will need to be considered against the evaluation outcomes in determining priorities for future service resources.
- Evaluations will be reviewed by L&CSM to ensure moderation, a costs : benefits appraisal and area/strategic overview
- Evidence, findings and conclusions must be objective, robust, open to examination and challenge.
- A photographic record is required for each play area site.
- The scoring system is a guide and to highlight existing status and relative values rather than a definitive statement of contribution to the play area service.

Action plan

Once completed the action plan should demonstrate

- an overall improvement in play value for the given geographical area
- a more financially sustainable play provision
- the community has been engaged and informed throughout the process

Appendix: 3 Wheeled sport impact assessment

A wheeled sport impact assessment will need to be produced for any new wheeled sports provision as laid out in table A2.

Table A2

<i>Site Appraisal</i>	<i>Site selection, options and criteria</i>	Documentation
Skate Design Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the site aimed advanced users, improvers and beginners will require different elements and to ensure it is continued to be used What is the intended age range – a large site should cater for all ages from 8 to 30 Suitable for skateboarders, BMX users and inline skaters Comply with the BS safety regulations to obtain ROSPA certificate Made from concrete with metal grinding edges, where possible to ensure extended life Earth bunds for noise reduction and drainage are important considerations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design brief Equalities impact assessment
Safety / Visibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First aid, phone access and emergency service access are other key requirements To deter undesirable activities must be visible from outside the site, this maybe through passive surveillance, i.e. from redways, youth clubs, cafeterias or CCTV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessment
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency vehicles need easy access. Mud is a major hazard in skate parks and so easy hard access is required. Public Toilets should be close by. Consider the impact to residents and the safety of users as they access and leave the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and Access Statement⁹
Closeness to Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Noise Impact Assessment must be carried out by an independent expert if the facility is to be used by teenagers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Noise Impact Assessment
Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the setting up of a skate user group, this will require a separate revenue budget to ensure sustainability Coaching is seen as very important to encourage new users to be safe and more experienced users to develop their skills. This could be a peer lead project but will still require training and support Sums need to be allocated each year for tuition at all levels of skill A legal graffiti wall will be provided to help reduce illegal graffiti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User group strategy

⁹ A separate Design and access statement and noise impact assessment may not be required if it can be demonstrated that the wheeled facility is aimed at the very young i.e. a cycle training

Appendix 4

History of play provision in Milton Keynes

In the 1970s the new town grid pattern was laid out. The play areas were generally very basic, with lots of static play equipment such as Jungle Gym climbing frames, commando arch ladders and slides. Equipment was heavy, manufactured from steel and cast iron, and no thought was given at this time to safer surfaces. Concrete or tarmacadam surfaces were the preferred play bases. However, some play areas had a more involved design approach with pieces of equipment being made bespoke and included staffed adventure play areas. The provision between estates was variable but tended towards lots of small sites, the idea being children would use the both locally and as part of a journey, to school or the local shops.

The new play standard BS EN 1176 1-11 replaced BS 5696 in 1998 bringing with it risk assessments and a tighter standard for play equipment manufacture and management of play areas, to match the growing demand for safe play areas. Also over time the breath and range of play equipment increased the types of equipment and the numbers of manufactures. This brought issues with overall quality, spare part issues and some manufactures stopping production.

In the past local authorities have tended to install or adopt large numbers of small play spaces containing one or two pieces of toddler equipment, which many authorities still retain. However this type of facility tends to attract a high level of complaints and vandalism as they suffer from misuse by older children who are not catered for. The removal of this type of play area began to occur when they became unsustainable, allowing resources to be concentrated on larger local and neighbourhood play spaces which could cater for a wider age range. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of play areas per head of population, but an increase in the quality of provision.

Play Equipment has changed in design and function to keep pace with our ever changing world. New materials, design, colour and technology are now integrated into the play experience. Children's needs and aspirations are more sophisticated than the early 1970s and this is reflected in the types of play now offered, and now the whole play environment is considered along with providing controlled risk and excitement to encourage good healthy sustainable play.



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