

# ARDS AND NORTH DOWN PLAY STRATEGY

## 2021-2032

Prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI  
*on behalf of 'Ards and North Down Borough Council'*



**OUTDOOR  
RECREATION**  
NORTHERN IRELAND



Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex

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## CAVEATS

Despite the current economic climate, it is hoped that expenditure for the maintenance and refurbishment of play areas in Ards and North Down Borough will be retained at an appropriate level and into the future. However, the delivery of new facilities and the upgrading of facilities as proposed in within this Play Strategy will be subject to the approval of any required business cases to receive capital funding and where possible the sourcing of external funding streams. The prioritising of the refurbishment of playgrounds is based on the findings of external Independent Inspectors and is based on the overall condition etc of each playground. Those found scoring the lowest will be prioritised first. Some of the proposed upgrades and enhancements are dependent on the other recommendations within this Play Strategy being accepted by Members and subject to the relevant public consultations. Furthermore, sites may be reprioritised due to funding becoming available which in some cases may only be applicable to rural areas (i.e. Rural Development Funding etc).

## FOREWORD

This report aims to provide a full list of all Council owned and maintained outdoor play facilities within Ards and North Down Borough and recommendations for the delivery of fixed and non-fixed play provision in the Borough for the next ten-year period.

Outdoor Recreation NI conducted a public consultation exercise and its results along with the collation of information such as the population (2011 Census) and household (LPS Household Pointer data) statistics, as well as the perusal of the relevant strategies and a review of the current best practice have informed the proposals and Action Plan outlined in the Strategy. Sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to all who contributed to the public consultation exercise.

This Strategy and associated District Electoral Area recommendations provide a comprehensive picture of the status of current and future play opportunities in the Ards and North Down Council area.

The importance of play to the physical and social development of children and young people is outlined as well as the new approaches to play provision.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outdoor Recreation NI (ORNI) was commissioned by Ards and North Down Borough Council (ANDBC) to develop a Play Strategy for the period 2021-2032. Previously the legacy Ards Borough Council produced a Play Strategy in 2007 and the legacy North Down Borough Council a Playpark Strategy in 2014. Both these documents are now out of date. A new Borough wide Play Strategy is therefore required which will set out over-arching recommendations for the next 11-years and a detailed Action Plan outlining the priorities for the next 5 years which will be subject to a review at the end of this period.

Ards and North Down has 80 play park/play areas with most located in the main centres of population. The preparation of the Play Strategy provides an opportunity to review the Council's overall play offering and investigate if the provision of facilities and services meets the needs of the residents and stakeholders and delivers on Council's wider strategic goals.

Several resources were used to assess play provision in Ards and North Down Borough namely;

- Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines
- Population data from the 2011 census
- Household pointer data from Land and Property Services (LPS)
- Independent Annual Play Inspection reports
- Council's Quarterly Play Park Condition Reports
- Community consultation and public survey

In addition, new and innovative approaches of delivering play, that would maximise efficiencies and ensure the quality and equality of access to play across the entire Council area have been considered.

Recommendations have been proposed for each of the 80 sites across Ards and North Down and these are detailed in full in **Section 7**, together with a detailed Action Plan outlining the priorities for the management, promotion and provision of play for the next 5 years.

The Play Strategy acknowledges and supports the premise purported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, *"that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child"* (Article 31).

Play is recognised as being a fundamental element in the development of children and young people. It supports their physical and mental health, develops their social and cognitive skills, resilience and connects them with their surrounding community. It is noted however that in today's society there are barriers to play with issues such as lack of time, competing activities, low play value play areas,

lack of inclusive play, lack of challenge and encouragement and parental aversion to risk being key aspects of this.

In order to incorporate play into children's and young people's lives, different approaches to play provision beyond the traditional equipped play areas have been outlined and explored. Providing a diverse suite of approaches to play needs to be incorporated into the overall play provision in the Borough. It is also important to ensure that when providing any type of play provision, the play value is carefully considered to ensure that whatever is provided offers the maximum opportunity for different types of play. Inclusive play has become an increasingly relevant element and this need must be met in all types of play provision.

It should be noted that while it is hoped that the aspirations outlined in this Play Strategy can be delivered it will require the commitment of resources in order to achieve them.

### Key Findings

Generally speaking, the historic North Down and Ards Council areas had targeted its provision across the Boroughs well and those gaps that were identified in previous strategies have been or are in the process of being covered. There are a number of areas where there are overlaps in provision and in order to ensure equality and efficiency these will be addressed in this Play Strategy. It was evident through the public consultation exercise that there is a demand for better equipped play areas and that people were willing to travel further to use a better equipped play area. A total of 62% of people said they would travel 0-5 miles to visit a play area and 52% of respondents said they travelled by car to access play areas.

An overwhelming total of 84% respondents to the online survey agreed that the current provision for older children (13 – 17 year olds) is inadequate and that additional facilities to meet this need are required.

Respondents expressed a desire for alternatives to traditional fixed play provision so that children and young people could experience more opportunities and activities associated with play. Innovative approaches to play therefore need to be developed to offer more innovative and diverse provision in the Borough.

## Action Plan

The Action Plan below outlines the key priorities for the next 5 years. It will be reviewed and updated at the end of this period in order to ensure that the aspirations of the Play Strategy are delivered where possible over the lifespan of the Strategy.

- **Cross-departmental Steering Group for Play**

Establish a steering group consisting of the relevant Council Officers across the various departments to ensure that the importance of play is recognised, and that Council's existing and proposed play provision is effectively delivered and managed in an efficient way.

- **Deliver the Annual Refurbishment Schedule**

Using the annual Independent Inspectors Assessments Scores a targeted list of play areas to be refurbished will be identified. The lowest scoring playgrounds will be prioritised. On average 3 playgrounds are refurbished annually with the current Assets and Property budget allocation. This could be increased which would result in a more sustainable refurbishment schedule given the extent of the portfolio as referred to in **Section 1.4**.

- **Provision for Older Children and Young People**

The lack of provision for the 13 -17 years old age group needs addressed and therefore a range of play areas for their use including MUGA's, skate parks, pump tracks and teen shelters and play events etc needs to be actioned. The delivery of such provision will be focused on where the need is greatest and in line with that specified in **Section 6.9** below. Full details on where the new proposed facilities are to be located is detailed in **Section 7**. The delivery of these additional facilities will be subject to financial business case approval and internal/external funding.

- **Design Guidelines**

To ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of fixed play provision in the Borough it should be in accordance with the design guidelines outlined in **Section 6.1** and should be applied in the appointment process of contractors who install play areas in the Borough. This also should apply where play provision is being developed by third parties where they should be advised to, where possible, deliver their play areas in accordance with these guidelines and the Play Strategy in general. At the core of these guidelines is the need to deliver quality play provision that has a high play value, where it is needed.

- **Inclusive Play**

It is recognised that the ability to play should be available to all regardless of age, gender and ability. The delivery of fixed and non-fixed play provision should ensure that all needs are catered for. As a minimum, 30% of equipment in fixed play areas should be classified as “inclusive” and there should be a reasonable balance of play equipment suitable for younger children 3 – 6 years and 7 – 12 years old.

- **Improve the Quality and Consolidate the Fixed Play Provision**

To meet the demand for larger, better equipped play areas which offer better quality and play value, the play provision in the Borough should be consolidated where appropriate and upgraded to serve the local need. Any over/under provision should be addressed as outlined in the District Electoral Area proposals in **Section 7**.

- **Public and Youth Consultation**

Ensure that Public Consultation including consultation with the Youth Forum or similar is central to the delivery of the recommendations of the Play Strategy to make sure that the play needs of the Borough are being met in a targeted and balanced manner.

- **Appointment of a Play Development Officer**

Subject to assessment using Council’s standard procedures and processes including a business case approval, it is proposed that a dedicated Play Development Officer is appointed by 2022, to ensure the delivery of the Play Strategy and more specifically deliver on the non-fixed approaches to play provision, to ensure a diverse and up to date approach to play provision in the Borough is successfully delivered.

- **Play Events Programme**

The celebration of the Annual National Playday in August should be recognised, and resources provided to facilitate this. A Play Events schedule should be developed and delivered to increase the variety of play provision in the Borough with the Play Development Officer taking the lead on this. More play opportunities should be incorporated into existing Council led events. Community led initiatives could also be developed. This will be subject to staff resource and funding provision.

- **Play Partnerships**

The possibility of partnership working should be explored by the Play Development Officer. It could be a useful tool in delivering play projects to a high standard and in a shorter timeframe and potentially costs. Where there is a lack of available land or over/under provision of play areas, partnerships with organisations such as the Northern Ireland

Housing Executive, Housing Associations and the Education Authority should be developed. These relationships can be facilitated through the Community Planning process also.

- **Develop Informal Play**

Play in the natural environment and the public realm should be explored by assessing what resources we already have to facilitate this, in existing play areas, parks and open spaces. Collaborative approaches to the management of the land and the features within it should be encouraged in order to deliver informal play. The possibility of Play Trails could be developed in some locations.

- **Appointment of a Play Champion**

In order to ensure the successful delivery of the Play Strategy support is needed in the form of a Play Champion selected from the Elected Members to hold Council accountable for meeting the play needs of the Borough and to provide insight and feedback to Council from the public's perspective. This should be on an annual basis.

- **Play Development Officers Forum**

Ensure the Council is represented on the Play Development Officers Forum which is hosted by Playboard NI in order to keep up to date with current developments and best practice.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

For the past number of years Ards and North Down Borough Council (hereafter referred to as ANDBC) has been delivering play in the absence of a strategic blueprint that covers the whole area. Whilst the legacy Ards Borough Council produced a Play Strategy in 2007 and the legacy North Down Borough Council a Playpark Strategy in 2014, both these documents are now out of date. However, it should be noted that these strategies did highlight under provision in the Scrabo Estate area of Newtownards and in the eastern side of Bangor. A playground at the Scrabo Estate has now been delivered and a playground at the Ashbury/Ballycrochan area on the eastern side of Bangor is in the process of being developed.

The purpose of this Play Strategy is to establish a strategic framework to guide decision making relating to play provision within the Borough over the next 10 years and enable the development of a costed Capital Investment Plan for delivery over the next 5 years.

The Play Strategy also considers provision beyond the sole factor of play value and the ability to deliver on wider Council strategic goals such as the delivery of:

- **community development programmes using outdoor play spaces as a tool for community, capacity building, neighbourhood renewal, urban and rural regeneration and the promotion of good relations**
- **outdoor related tourism and recreation development initiatives**
- **outdoor related community health and wellbeing initiatives**
- **outdoor related regeneration initiatives**
- **special projects and the potential to attract children and young people targeted events etc to the area**

The Play Strategy will:

- **ensure rate payers and visitors can avail of and contribute to a wide range of high quality, inclusive, affordable and accessible play spaces and services**
- **maximise the available resources and potential of the current play provision within the Council area**
- **maximise opportunities to deliver on wider local, regional and national strategies and implementation of the new Community Plan for the Borough; The Big Plan for Ards and North Down**

The Play Strategy seeks to compliment, enhance and support the Council’s key regeneration activities, for example the major regeneration proposed for the Queen’s Parade area of Bangor Town Centre, Bangor Waterfront, the potential development of the Whitespots Country Park in Newtownards and the extension of Greenways throughout the Borough.

In addition, recommendations also include other venues in the Council area that may have the potential to regularly host outdoor play activities or contribute to the above, or the delivery of wider health and wellbeing programmes through partnership working.

### 1.1 Project Area

ANDBC covers an area of 228 square miles including approximately 115 miles of coastline. The area is known for its rich diversity of scenic countryside which extends from Holywood on the shores of Belfast Lough to Portaferry on the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula and Killinchy to the west of Strangford Lough. The largest population centres are Bangor and Newtownards followed by Holywood, Comber and Donaghadee. There is also a vibrant network of villages, each with their own plans in place detailing how they can improve the physical and social attributes of their communities.

### 1.2 Current Provision

Within ANDBC there are 80 play parks/play areas. These include fixed playgrounds as well as MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas), skate parks and pump tracks but excludes outdoor gyms and trim trails. Table 1 shows the distribution throughout the Council area.

DEA	Number of Play Parks/Play Areas
Comber	9
Newtownards	12
Holywood and Clondeboyne	7
Bangor Central, Bangor West & Bangor East and Donaghadee	27
Ards Peninsula	25

*Table 1: Number of play parks/play areas in each DEA in ANDBC Area*

Figure 1 shows the locations of the play areas across the Borough. Figures 2 and 3 shows the location of the play areas relative to their Council Tier classification with settlement data for 0-12 year olds and 13-17 year olds added. Settlement specific existing and proposed facility maps are in **Section 7**.

In addition to the geographical location of play areas the ANDBC area has been analysed and mapped using population data (Census 2011) to show the distribution of young children aged 0-12. From Figure 3, it is evident that the more youthful areas of the Borough (brighter) include parts of Hollywood and Clandeboye District Electoral Area (DEA), Bangor DEA and the Ards Peninsula. In addition to the traditional fixed play areas for children, Council recognise the needs of older children/young people and while they do not require fixed play, the provision of 'play areas' or a facility where they can socialise with their contemporaries is deemed important. Therefore, mapping of play areas has also been carried out against population data for those aged 13-17 years to ensure that the needs of this older age group are met. From Figure 4, the greatest population of 13-17 year olds can be found in the DEAs of Hollywood and Clandeboye and parts of the Ards Peninsula.

Finally, to help assess the current provision and identify any gaps in play provision, the ANDBC area has been mapped using indicative household pointer data from Land and Property Services (LPS). Figure 5 and Figure 6 display this data for the Council area against the population of 0-12 year olds and population of 13-17 year olds respectively. This is particularly useful when reviewing the areas outside the main towns and villages. Council acknowledges that largely urban centric policies require consideration on how they impact upon rural areas and subsequently need adapted to best serve rural areas.

Using these various data sources, Council has set out to address the balance of play provision across the seven DEAs considering capacity and facilities at each site, the presence of a youthful population as well as indicative household data. This analysis is detailed in **Section 7**.

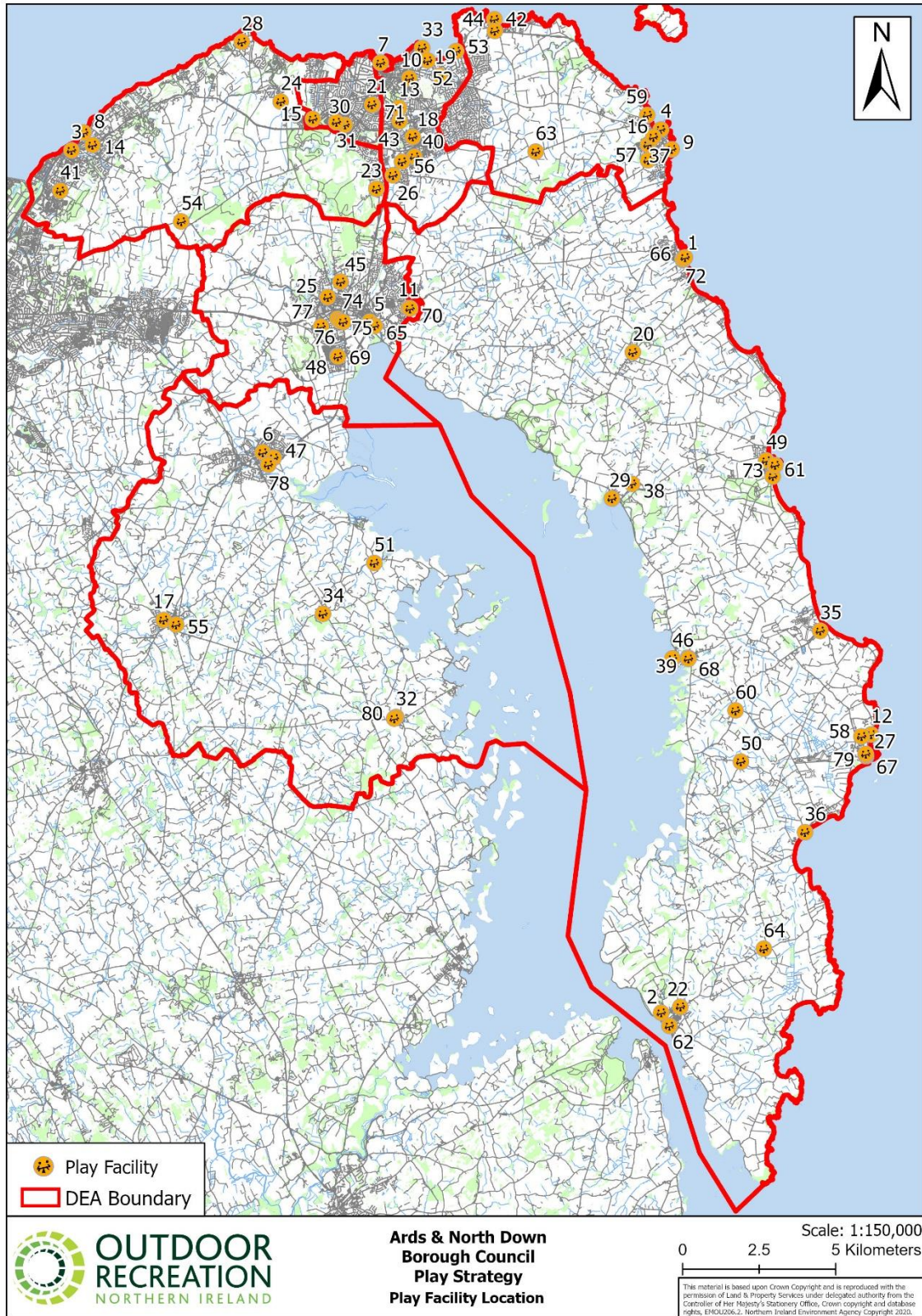


Figure 1: Play park locations in Ards and North Down Borough Council Area



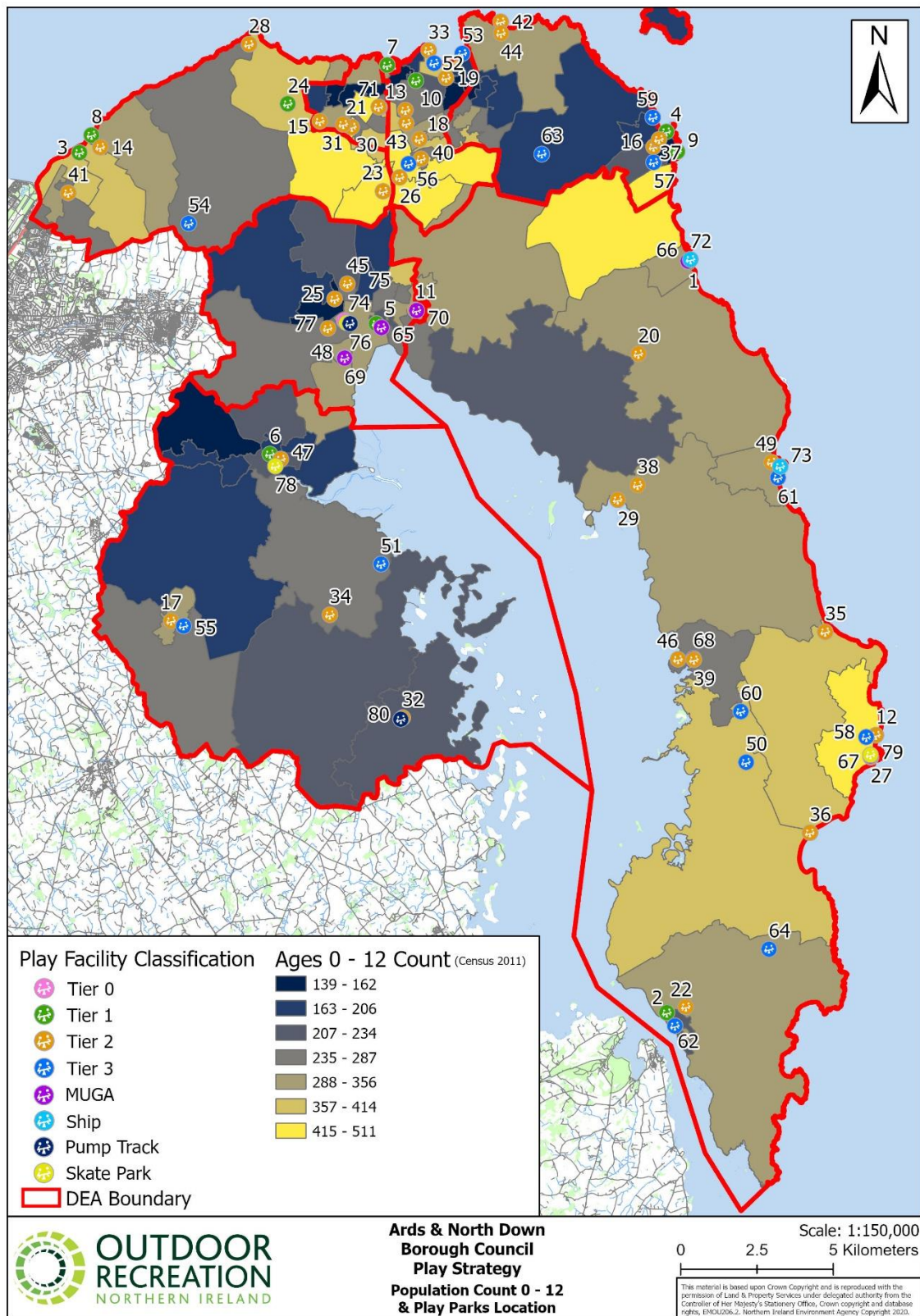


Figure 2: Play park locations categorised by ANDBC Tier Policy with population of young people aged 0-12 years

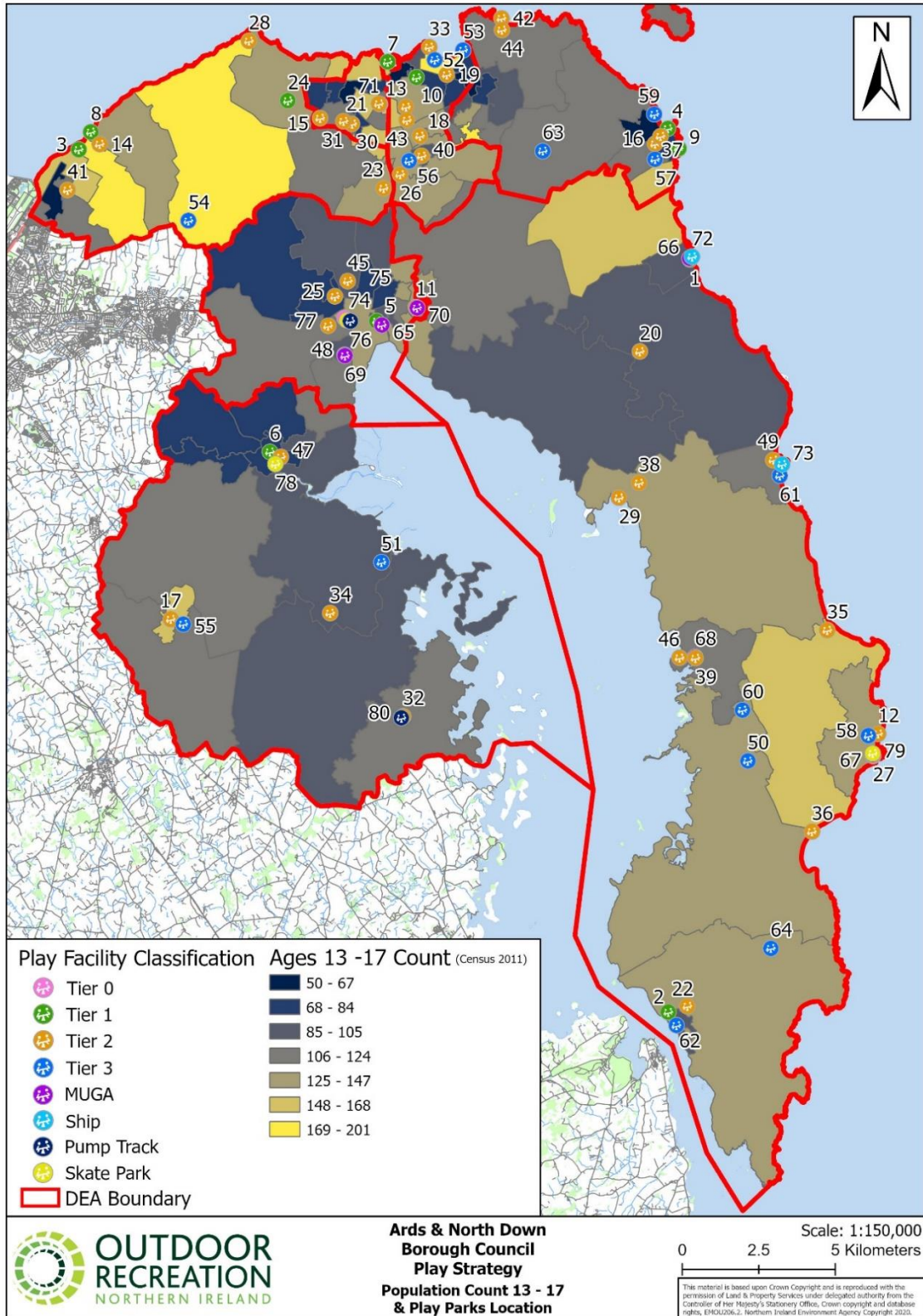


Figure 3: Play park locations categorised by ANDBC Tier Policy with population of young people aged 13-17 years

### 1.3 Council's Role in Play

To ascertain Council's role in delivering play, a workshop was held with Officers from several Council departments including, Assets and Property, Leisure and Amenities, Planning (Local Development Plan), Neighbourhood Environment, Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and the Regeneration teams. Full support from all departments, with each team committed to their role in delivering and developing play in the Borough, was noted.

The role of the **Outdoor Recreation Officer** within the Leisure Team includes the strategic management of play provision within the Borough and ensuring that in collaboration with the other departmental teams that it is fit for purpose. This is managed along with their other duties in relation to outdoor recreation. The Officer's remit includes the delivery and implementation of the Play Strategy including the identification of opportunities for play activities across outdoor spaces in the Borough as well as possible partners and funding sources. The Officer has a role in raising the profile and understanding of play as a contributor to the wider agendas of health, tourism and social inclusion among the public, landowners, statutory bodies and other recreational users. It was also noted that ANDBC does not have a dedicated Play Officer.

The **Assets and Property Team** is responsible for the delivery and maintenance of play areas in the Borough. It holds a comprehensive database of play assets with a robust tiered system and an up to date inventory of equipment and its condition (in conjunction with the Independent Inspectors Assessments). In addition, the department has a 'Policy for the Provision & Maintenance of Play Areas' which applies to all play areas across the Borough and helps ensure that equitable resources are applied, commensurate to the established need. The policy helps ensure that Council has a consistent, fair and equitable approach to the provision and maintenance of play areas throughout the Borough.

The **Park's Team** works alongside the Assets and Property Team with regards management and maintenance of play areas and recognises the impact of materials used within play areas and their impact upon their maintenance and the control of litter.

**Planning's Local Development Plan Team** has a remit to protect existing open space and recreational land, to identify new areas of land for development and address requirements in residential areas. Feeding into the Play Strategy, the planning team assess the current provision versus future need.

The **Neighbourhood Environment Team** currently open/close a small number of play areas that are required to be closed at night due to past instances of anti-social behaviour. It also responds to



incidents of anti-social behaviour across the Borough as well as being responsible for dog fouling and littering.

The **Regeneration Team** works through the Village Plans and applies for funding from sources such as the Rural Development Fund ensuring that Council priorities are identified and addressed. In some instances, the Regeneration schemes include an element of play for example Crawfordsburn, Cootehall Road and Killinchy.

The **Communities Team** is a vital direct link to the various community/advisory groups across the Borough. It has also been able to source funding for the recently added Skate Parks at Muckers Field (Comber) and New Harbour Road (Portavogie) from the Peace IV initiative.

#### 1.4 Expenditure and Resourcing

It is important to recognise that that installation, refurbishment and maintenance of fixed play areas represents a significant financial investment for the Council. Therefore, a strategic approach to the provision of play areas is essential to ensure fairness and balance of provision as well as value for money and that it is fit for purpose. The Council expenditure on play is currently managed between the Assets and Property and Parks Teams. The Parks Team closely monitors its expenditure for maintenance and ground works whilst the Assets and Property Team has clear budgets for maintenance, staff inspection costs and in addition, it has have a capital spend budget to provide refurbishment of facilities when required. See Table 2 for summary of resources available.

	Assets and Property Department	Parks Department
Cleaning and Groundworks	-	£90,000
Maintenance including external Contractor	£140,000	-
Inspections	£50,000	-
Capital Spend (for refurbishments)	£300,000	-
<b>Overall Total per annum</b>	<b>£580,000</b>	

*Table 2: Annual Council Expenditure Parks/Play Areas*



The table below outlines the indicative costs of for the installation of each type of facility.

Play Provision	Indicative Cost
Tier 0/Flagship play area	£200,000 - £250,000
Tier 1/Destination play area	£150,000 - £175,000
Tier 2/Local Facility play area	£100,000 - £120,000
Tier 3/Doorstep Facility play area	£50,000 - £60,000
Skate Park	£60,000 - £150,000
Pump Track	£60,000 - £100,000
Multi Use Games Area	£60,000 - £100,000

*Table 3: Play Provision and Indicative Cost*

It should be noted that prices are indicative and may be subject to review based on current market values and installation costs.

In total the play areas estate (80 sites) is valued at approximately £7.5 million which is based on the mid-range indicative costs (not including land values). On average the lifespan of most play areas is approximately 15 years therefore an annual investment of £500,000 would be required in order to maintain the play areas at a consistent optimal level. At present the current budget allocation of £300,000 for refurbishments represents a £200,000 a year shortfall and is not sustainable, and as a result many play areas will fall below acceptable standards and will take much longer to be refurbished. This limitation needs to be recognised and the annual capital budget increased in order to ensure the play areas portfolio is sustained at an optimal level.

It should also be noted that the delivery of new play area provision such as the installation of new MUGA/Skate Parks/Pump Tracks will require the approval of addition capital funds beyond those outlined above in the departmental budgets to facilitate their delivery or the securing of external funding.

The delivery of the non-fixed play approaches will also be dependent on additional revenues being approved such as the appointment of a Play Development Officer and the equipment/resources necessary to deliver the non-fixed approaches which is further detailed in below in **Section 6**.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed to produce this Play Strategy followed the research process outlined in Table 4. Both primary and secondary research was carried out.

Desk Research	Consultation	Report
Strategic Context	Online Questionnaire	Collation of data
Identification of trends and benefits of play	Public consultation events held in Bangor, Holywood, Comber, Newtownards and Portavogie	
Identification of international best practice benchmarking	Consultation with Council departments and officials	Formulation of detailed Strategy
	Consultation with statutory bodies and play charities	
Funding opportunities	Consultation with funding bodies	Development of recommendations
GIS mapping	Census and LPS data	

*Table 4: Methodology*

Information from desk research on local plans and policies (e.g. village plans), current provision and previous research projects within the Council area was collated with the data captured through the consultation process. In addition, the current play provision for the Borough was mapped using ArcGIS (Geographical Information System) against population data from the Census and household pointer data from Land and Property Services (LPS). All data was then analysed and as a result emerging themes were evaluated against the strategic context, benchmarking and funding opportunities to generate key recommendations and actions.

### 3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Play contributes to delivering the outcomes of several national, regional and local strategies. These are detailed in Table 5. Of particular relevance is the contribution to the Council's own Community Plan, (The Big Plan), Town Plans and Village Plans.

The Big Plan is an outcome-based Community Planning Strategy that defines long-term objectives for the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Council area. Consequently, it is imperative that the Play Strategy is led and influenced by the vision, ambition and outcomes of 'The Big Plan', existing and imminent policy documentation within Council and relevant central government departments.

Appendix A provides a brief discussion on each of these documents, identifying their specific relevance to play in the Council area.

Theme	Policy / Strategy
<b>Overarching Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 (NI Executive, 2016)</li> <li>– Regional Development Strategy 2035: Building a Better Future (DRD 2010)</li> <li>– Ards and North Down Borough Council Draft Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024</li> </ul>
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– NI Executive Play and Leisure Policy Statement for NI (2009)</li> <li>– Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A Fitter Future for All Framework (2012-2022)</li> <li>– Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health (2013-2023)</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Blue:Green Creatively Connected – Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration, and Economic Development; Ards and North Down (2018-2030)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Plan for Northern Ireland (Outdoor Recreation NI, 2014)</li> <li>– Sport Matters: Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 (Department for Communities)</li> <li>– Sport NI Draft Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025</li> </ul>
<b>People and Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– NI Executive Play and Leisure Implementation Plan (2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Our Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016 (Department of Health)</li> <li>– Department of Education: Early Years (0-6) Strategy (2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Community Planning Regeneration Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (Community Plan) 2017-2032</li> <li>– Planning Policy Statement 7 – Quality Residential Environments (Planning Service, Department of the Environment, 2001)</li> <li>– Planning Policy Statement 8 – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (Planning Service, Department of the Environment, 2004)</li> <li>– Masterplans for Bangor Town Centre (2011), Holywood (2014), Comber (2015), Newtownards (2019) and Donaghadee (2015)</li> <li>– Village Plans for Ballyhalbert (2018), Ballygowan (2018 – 2023), Ballywalter (2018), Carrowdore (2018 – 2023), Cloughey (2018 – 2023), Conlig (2018), Greyabbey (2018), Groomsport (2018 – 2023), Helen’s Bay and Crawfordsburn (Integrated) (2018 – 2023), Killinchy (2018 – 2023), Kircubbin (2018), Lisbane and Lisbarnett (Integrated) (2018 – 2023), Millisle (2014), Portaferry (2018), Portavogie (2018 – 2023) and Six Road Ends (Integrated) (2013), Action Plan (2016).</li> </ul>

*Table 5: Relevant Strategies and Policies to this Study*

The focused management, development and promotion of play in ANDBC over the lifespan of this Play Strategy will also contribute towards delivering the six themes outlined in Table 6.

Theme	Contribution to Policy / Strategy
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage families to be more physically active in the outdoors through enhanced provision of accessible activities, shared space and natural play facilities;</li> <li>– Provide high quality public spaces;</li> <li>– Improve mental health and increase quality of life for people with disabilities;</li> <li>– Promote children’s health and tackle childhood obesity;</li> <li>– Reduce health inequalities.</li> </ul>
<b>Economy &amp; Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improve partnership working between asset holders, private activity providers, private landowners, and clubs and individual users to maximise opportunities;</li> <li>– Placing value on town and village centres, enhancing the environmental, social and economic value of the Borough.</li> </ul>
<b>Culture, Sport &amp; Outdoor Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Contribute to a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland;</li> <li>– Increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone;</li> <li>– Improved access to, and sustainable use of, publicly-owned land in Northern Ireland for sport, physical recreation and activity tourism.</li> </ul>
<b>Connecting People and Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improve the offering to locals/visitors by improved access and interpretation;</li> <li>– Improve local partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors to provide, manage and enhance a range of play opportunities;</li> <li>– Highly accessible, affordable, flexible and diverse play opportunities and experiences;</li> <li>– Empowering communities to tackle poverty and promote community relations.</li> </ul>
<b>Our Young People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Combatting physical activity in childhood and rising levels of obesity;</li> <li>– Providing focal points in the community and opportunities for children to benefit from real social interaction and participation;</li> <li>– Prioritising the quality of provision for young children to close ability gaps that form before formal schooling begins;</li> <li>– Promote a continuum of play-based learning and development.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Connect deprived communities within local urban and rural populations to fantastic doorstep natural resources that would be free to access and enjoy;</li> <li>– Encourage inactive people, older people and people with limited mobility to be more physically active through more community trails and all-ability trails;</li> <li>– Increase opportunities for outdoor recreation participation and volunteering.</li> </ul>

*Table 6: Contribution of play to ANDBC in the broader strategic context*

## 4 TRENDS, BENEFITS AND BEST PRACTICE IN PLAY

Play is an important element in the development of children and young people supporting both their physical and mental development and helps to build their connections with society and their surroundings.

### 4.1 Play Defined

Whilst there are several opinions regarding the definition of play, several common characteristics of play can be found. These include that play is<sup>1</sup>:

- Based on a sense of free-will and control, either individually or in a group
- Motivated for its own sake rather than any external reward
- Pleasurable and positively valued
- Flexible and adaptive, using objects and rules in a variety of changing ways
- Non-literal ‘as if’ behaviour – it can rearrange or turn the world upside down
- Unpredictable, spontaneous, innovative and creative

Play England’s Charter for Children’s Play defines play as:

*‘what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, for their own reasons.’*

This definition is also used by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2004); Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) and Big Lottery Fund: Children’s Play Initiative.

### 4.2 Benefits of Play




The importance and benefits of play to children and young people is fundamental for them to develop their life skills and helps them understand their surroundings. Children can find ways to play in most situations. Play also contributes to wider social cohesion and in Northern Ireland it can be a vehicle to contribute to cross community sharing and understanding.

It is not just the very young children who need to play but rather it is an ongoing mechanism by which children and young people develop their skills and their play in society.

The benefits of play for children and young people are outlined in Table 7 overleaf.

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<sup>1</sup> Practical Guide to Play Therapy in the Outdoors (A. Chown, 2017); Extrinsic vs Intrinsic Motivation (K Cherry, 2018); Play for a Change (Play England, 2007)

	<b>Physical Benefits and Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enhances motor skill development e.g. balance and coordination</li> <li>– Maintenance of healthy weight to combat childhood obesity</li> <li>– Sun exposure effectiveness<sup>2</sup></li> <li>– Play, recreation and sport contribute to healthy growth and development<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
	<b>Mental Health and Cognitive Development</b>	<p>Much evidence from neuroscience suggests that, rather than developing specific skills that may be needed later in adult life, playing builds and shapes regions of the brain that concern emotion, motivation and reward, and developing a range of flexible responses across a number of adaptive systems that link the brain, body and the social and physical environment<sup>4</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Emotions can be expressed while held in check by the rules of the game</li> <li>– Play can help build resilience – the capacity for children to thrive despite adversity and stress in their lives</li> <li>– Children derive a sense of pleasure and reward from play which motivates them to seek out further opportunities to play at times and in places of their own choosing.</li> <li>– Play contributes to a child’s self-esteem alongside emotional and physical wellbeing and their development<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
	<b>Community Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Buildings and facilities used by play services are frequently seen as a focal point for communities</li> <li>– Play offers opportunities for social interaction for the wider community and supports the development of a greater sense of community spirit, promoting social cohesion and community volunteering</li> <li>– Increase in pro-social behaviour</li> <li>– Having time and space to play gives children the opportunity to meet and socialise with their peers</li> <li>– Environmental awareness</li> <li>– Families benefit from safe, healthier and happier children</li> <li>– Parks and green space offer the opportunity for parents and carers to spend time together</li> </ul>

*Table 7: Summarised Benefits of Play*

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Ophthalmology (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Play Types Toolkit (Play Scotland, 2017)

<sup>4</sup> The Genesis of Animal Play: Testing the limits. (Burghardt, 2005)

<sup>5</sup> Play for a Change (2007)

### 4.2.1 Community Benefits

The Children's Play Policy Forum Statement (2019) states that buildings and facilities used for play are frequently seen as a focal point for communities with play making an important contribution to community life for children and adults alike. Shared play spaces provide a venue for events alongside community volunteering which, in turn, can encourage an increase in pro-social behaviour. Play is recognised in this report as 'a powerful builder of happy, healthy, capable children. It also benefits families, communities and society.'

Successful play spaces, facilities and programmes provide venues which young people can overcome:

- **Social, educational, physical and economic inequalities**
- **Encourages responsible participation in their communities**
- **Create networks, encourage social interactions, improve communication and promotes social development and self-control**

### 4.3 Play Types

Play types can be described as the different behaviours that are seen when children are playing and there have been numerous attempts to categorise different types of play.<sup>6</sup> Good play areas include environments that encourage a wide variety of play: physical/motor play, social/dramatic play and cognitive play involving constructive play and games with rules. Each kind of play is essential to the healthy development of young children and can best be supported and enhanced in the outside playground.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Physical Play

Physical play should be made up of a diverse range of activities to allow differing play experiences for a range of ages and abilities. Children must be offered a broad range of activities and opportunities to move. These should include climbing, swinging, sliding, balancing, crawling, rocking, rotating, spinning and gliding etc. It will test their ability to assess risk and develop their coordination skills.

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<sup>6</sup> PlayTypes – Speculations and Possibilities (Hughes, 2006)

<sup>7</sup> "Play and Development." *Play and early childhood development* (Johnson & Yawkey, 1999)



### 4.3.2 Social Play

Social Play can involve finding quiet places to sit and chat requiring the provision of areas and equipment that allow children to interact socially. These should be within the play area but located sensitively to allow play in quiet places away from busy areas and equipment. Alternatively, a successful play space should offer places to hide i.e. equipment and play areas that provide small, child-size spaces or structures to allow children to physically separate themselves from their surroundings. Interaction of children with different ages and abilities is ultimately important: equipment and play-spaces should be specifically designed to enable children of different ages and abilities to enjoy them simultaneously and develop their communication skills.

### 4.3.3 Constructive Play

Constructive play involves the manipulation of materials to create things.<sup>8</sup> Exploratory play with objects, equipment or play-space offers opportunities for manipulative behaviours e.g., handling, throwing, banging objects etc. or interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements. Constructive play differs from physical play because children are doing something *with* the materials: digging in the sand to create a tunnel for little cars, siphoning water out of a water table to fill a bucket, working together to fill a wheelbarrow with rocks to create a fort. It can include sound-making items or the facilitation of imaginative, fantasy or role play: equipment and play-space that encourages the rearranges the world in a child's way (a way which is unlikely to occur outside normal play). Also, equipment offers opportunities to play where the conventional rules which govern the physical world do not apply and encourages ways of pretending to be someone or something else. Benefits of constructive play include the development of specific skills, positive self-esteem, a sense of control, problem solving skills and, in learning to plan, children learn strategy and cognitive skills.

## 4.4 Barriers to Play

While play is assumed as natural thing that children engage in and will do so in any situation, in today's context there are increasingly barriers to this activity.

- **Lack of awareness of the importance of play in children's development**
- **Dangers of traffic with an increase especially in residential areas creating road safety concerns**
- **Lack of community tolerance to play especially in relation to older children who tend to congregate in larger groups**

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<sup>8</sup> Supporting Constructive Play in the Wild (Wardle, 2005)

- Parental consent to let children play without supervision is less forthcoming with child safety concerns being paramount in an increasingly risk adverse society
- Time constraints of parents can limit how their children can access the outdoors to play
- Increased screen time of devices such as tablets and games consoles compete for children's attentions and reduces their physical activities
- Variety of play to enable disabled children to play inclusively in their communities
- Risk, or perceived risks can restrict children's ability to play freely and develop their coordination and cognitive skills, challenge themselves and develop their confidence in their abilities and test their limits

The barriers to play cannot be addressed solely by providing play facilities but rather a determined approach to raise awareness of the importance of play and the benefits that are associated with it as well as offering diverse play opportunities so that all children have the chance to engage and play freely.

#### 4.5 Play Value

When children play in an environment or with an object, they experience it in a unique way. The term 'play value' describes the value that an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to a child's play experience. The play value of a space is not dictated by its size or by its quantity of equipment but rather by the variety of ways that a child can play with the whole space. One object can be many things to a child: for example, a swing can be used to swing on, but children may choose instead to use it to sit and chat; stand on it and yell; place a collection of leaves; or even use it as a barrier to hide.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, Play England state that the 'golden rule' in designing play is a play space that is specifically designed for its location, in such a way to provide as much play value as possible. Within Play England's document 'Playable Space – Quality Assessment Tool'<sup>10</sup> the importance of location is highlighted as well as the play value and care and maintenance. Play value essentially assesses the play experiences derived from a play area, such as rocking, swinging and sliding. Play England notes that this is particularly important for children with disabilities. The surrounding environment also contributes to play value with the natural environment offering varied and alternative ways in which children can play. Natural environments can form the foundation for a play space or instead be integrated into them. For example, features such as grassy mounds, logs and boulders can have great play value to children. A tree stump may have huge play value as a spark to the imagination: a stage, a den, a prison, to jump off or lie on.

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<sup>9</sup> Free to Play: A guide to creating accessible and inclusive play spaces (Casey & Harbottle, 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Playable Space – Quality Assessment Tool, Play England (October 2009)

Ards and North Down Borough Council currently place significant emphasis on assessment of the play value of all new playgrounds when considering its tender submissions in order to ensure that a consistently high play quality is offered across the Borough.

#### 4.6 Playability

Playability or play affordance refers to the opportunities that are available for play in the urban or natural environment from the features either man made or natural that are found there. Children can find the ability to play with such features and objects or find alternative ways to experience the features from their intended purpose and incorporate that into their play activities.

Cognisance should therefore be taken when designing the street scene and the features that are incorporated into the design of the public realm and on lands managed by the Council in more natural settings to enable the playability of the features found or included there.

#### 4.7 Managing Risk

While the above types of play and issues outlined need to be fully considered when the appropriate type of play provision is being considered, cognisance needs to be given to the risk involved in play. Play involves an element of risk, as it is how children develop their decision making, coordination and cognitive skills. However, the freedom to build these skills can be curtailed due to parental/carer anxiety which may prevent children from taking part in risky or challenging play and likewise the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) feels that health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed.<sup>11</sup> However, even governing bodies acknowledge the need for a balanced approach of offering challenge and risk through play, but minimising unnecessary danger is required.

It is recognised by the Department of Health and Social Care that physical activity has a very low risk when compared the risks associated with poor health from physical inactivity<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, a balanced approach to play provision should be taken that offers a certain degree of risk and challenge but meets the necessary safety standards as specified under the relevant British and European Standards.

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<sup>11</sup> Children's Play and Leisure - Promoting A Balanced Approach, September 2012

<sup>12</sup> Start Active, Stay Active: Report on the physical activity of the UK (Department for Health and Social Care, 2011)

## 5 MEETING THE PLAY NEED

There are various approaches to meeting the play need and traditionally this tended to focus on fixed play provision i.e. equipped play areas which caters for children 12 years old and under. It is acknowledged that this approach does not now adequately cover the play need of children and young people so alternatives to fixed play provision and a diversity in play provision is required in order to deliver high quality play provision for the children and young people in the Borough.

### 5.1 Fixed/formal Play Provision

While it has been acknowledged that children can play in any location with little or no features or objects, it is recognised that for many, fixed play areas provide an important facility to enable play. Within ANDBC area currently traditional fixed play areas are the main delivery method of play provision. Fixed and formal play provision uses manufactured items bought from a supplier. These have been designed and built for purpose as play pieces. The design will have dealt with many of the inherent risks and they are often supplied with a certificate of conformity to the relevant standards.

While there is a place for local play areas which are within walking distance from the home, there is growing demand for larger, improved play facilities in the Borough. Council should therefore consider consolidating its offering where appropriate. A reduced number of better equipped sites would help improve the overall offering and the condition of the stock in play areas.

Extensive public consultation was undertaken to assess the current play provision in ANDBC area. Consultees were able to provide first hand their experience of Council play areas, express how important their local facilities are, the challenges they face, such as anti-social behaviour and poor equipment provision, as well as their aspirations for future play in the Borough. Current trends show less children travel to parks alone with more than half of those who responded to the survey travelling to their local facility by car. Over 60% of respondents were willing to travel up to 5 miles for play provision of choice with almost a further 30% willing to travel 6-10 miles to a play facility.

Traditional fixed play structures are typically clustered to suit children of certain ages and abilities normally up to the age of 12 years old. Popular structures include slides, climbing frames, roundabouts, swings and rockers. As the target age group and ability level increases, play structures begin to incorporate a degree of risk e.g. zip lines and fireman's poles.

In the Ards and North Down Borough the play area at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre is the Council's flagship play area and includes the fixed play area as well as sensory garden, skate park and pump track.

## 5.2 Alternatives to Fixed Play

Increasingly, there has been more emphasis placed on encouraging children to engage in non-fixed play. Non-fixed play is not constrained by location or purpose and refers to the wider use of available space and the environment within communities for the purpose of play. Non-fixed play facilitates and encourages physical, social and constructive elements of play and for children to make use of 'loose parts' (logs, cardboard box, balls, arts and crafts materials) to make their own play experience.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.2.1 Street Play and the Public Realm

It is important to recognise that, for children, play is not something that strictly takes place in a designated area; they will naturally seek out play opportunities regardless of where they are. Street play is, for many children, the first real opportunity to explore the community that they live in through play. Similarly, play in public realms such as town centres and shopping centres are popular. However, increased traffic and parental safety concerns in recent years have reduced these opportunities and play in the public realm is often discouraged.<sup>14</sup> As a result, children are increasingly removed from the outdoor setting for play in favour of increased screen-time and indoor play. Alarming, a 2015 study by the Wildlife Trust found that 37% of 8-10-year olds surveyed had not played outdoors in the last 6 months. It should be considered that when public realm work is being designed, cognisance is taken of the playability of the features proposed to encourage play in the street scape

## 5.3 Nature Play

Nature Play is the provision of play opportunity within a structured play area using something from the natural environment rather than a purpose-built piece of equipment. For example, the use of a tree trunk as a climbing frame or balance beam. The piece is usually modified to provide safer access and branches may be trimmed to avoid traps or limit heights.<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes formal play and nature play are found together on the same site. It is increasingly common for fixed play settings to incorporate natural materials such as wood, boulders and water to enhance the play value of the facility. The use of nature play could be considered in some of the Council's parks and open spaces which would be deemed suitable for this type of provision.

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<sup>13</sup> Supporting Constructive Play in the Wild (Wardle, 2000)

<sup>14</sup> 35% of children and 51% of adults see traffic as an issue and barrier to children being able to play safely on streets and in the public realm (Play Day Opinion Poll, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Good Practice: Wild and Nature Play (VSCG.org)

### 5.3.1 Wild Play

Wild play is opportunistic play with the child using something they encounter in the environment for play. There is no planned intention for play to be part of the management of such a feature. There may, however, be wider encouragement for this type of play through national or local campaigns.<sup>16</sup>

Woodland environments lend themselves to tree climbing and den building whilst open green spaces serving chasing and ball games.<sup>17</sup>

Although not strictly true, while formal play is more often associated with urban based play, nature and wild play are commonly found in more rural settings e.g. forest and country parks. In suitable sites natural features could be left accessible to encourage this type of play.

## 5.4 Diversity in Play Provision

New approaches to play provision are emerging that not only provide alternatives to fixed play and play informal play in the street or natural areas.

### 5.4.1 Play Trails

Play trails are generally pieces of play equipment normally more natural in essence and feature timber structures spaced out along an established path or walking trail. These play trails are shown to be a powerful motivator for people when deciding to visit a site, not just once at peak season but year-round for repeat visits. Play trails can build on the success of existing sites by increasing provision but also offering something completely unique to the visitor experience. This should consequently translate to longer stays and higher spends. Other benefits of a play trail are:

- Encourages a wider exploration of a site and therefore longer stays
- Distributes visitors out over a wider area therefore reducing congestion in any given space particularly in visitor hubs
- Provides an opportunity for structures to be added or changed over time therefore creating a regenerative attraction in the long-term
- Provides a walk trail element which appeals to a wider audience and families in particular

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<sup>16</sup> The National Trust's 50 Things to do before you're 11 ¾ campaign that aims to promote nature and outdoor play as a fund part of a healthy happy and enjoyable family life. The first thing to do on the list is to climb a tree.

<sup>17</sup> Good Practice: Wild and Nature Play (VSCG.org)

There are some suitable sites within the Council's portfolio of lands where play trails could be utilised to provide an enhanced offer.

#### **5.4.2 Play Events**

Play events range from street parties, festivals in parks or village greens, adventures in woodlands, fields, even beaches, and public events at community venues. These can range from small-scale events to thousands of children taking part in events organised in parks and open spaces. Play events can serve multiple purposes:

- **Promotion of a new or existing public space or play area**
- **Play provision for areas lacking in fixed play infrastructure or facing cuts to play services**
- **Form part of a community celebration e.g. UK Annual Playday**
- **Promotion of children's right to play**
- **Provide volunteering opportunities for the local community**
- **Integrated play across age ranges, abilities, and gender**

**Annual Playday** by Playday<sup>18</sup> falls on the first Wednesday in August every year and is a campaign that celebrates children's right to play and highlights the importance of play in children's lives. Events to mark it range from small-scale community events to thousands of children taking part in organised events in parks and open spaces.

It should be an aspiration to hold a number of events across the Borough on International Playday which would help reinforce the importance of play in the Borough and provide an enjoyable event for the children of the Borough including events targeting older children and young people as well as those suitable for younger children and opportunities for both to play together.

#### **5.4.3 Playpods**

Playpods involve a set of play materials or equipment such as garden games i.e. large sized X and O's, Connect 4, golf, sensory tents, goal target etc. which can be held in a central location and then booked for use by groups such as schools, youth groups, nursery or play schools etc.

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<sup>18</sup> Playday is a network of people passionate about children's play coordinated by Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland and PlayBoard Northern Ireland. Playday commissions comprehensive bodies of research in to attitudes towards children playing out and key factors that impact on their opportunity to do so.

They are particularly useful for rural areas where there may be no formal provision as they can be located in local Community Centres or halls etc. and used by the local community. This approach to play provision could be useful in the more rural Ards Peninsula area.

#### 5.4.4 Play Partnerships

Partnership working serves a purpose to bring together a range of interests from different bodies where resources and skills can be shared to develop common aims alongside a strategy to achieve them.<sup>19</sup> Sharing resources can be a useful tool to delivering play projects to a higher quality and in a shorter timeframe. It is well understood that poor delivery of projects can be damaging to Council reputation and the long-term development, management, and promotion of play, therefore, to deliver the best possible projects Council should seek to establish partnerships with other stakeholders. Partnership working can take a variety of forms including the establishment of Steering Groups and Partnerships. Such groups and forums can allow collaboration from relevant stakeholders such as Council, schools, play/activity providers, public and private landowners and well-established community groups. This collaborative approach is enshrined in the Community Planning process which is now the remit of the Council. The Council should avail of the opportunities and networks that this process creates to further partnership working to deliver play provision through community led play initiatives and availing of local participation.

#### 5.5 Inclusive Play

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, employers and service providers have the positive duty to make reasonable adjustments to premises and policies to provide disabled people access to goods, facilities, services or premises. In addition, public bodies in Northern Ireland have additional duties to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. They must also meet duties under the Disability Discrimination Act to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life. According to the Northern Ireland Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027, Consultation Document, the enjoyment of play and leisure was highlighted as a population outcome with children and young people with a disability highlighted as one of the groups where the greatest effort is needed: *"Children with a disability, and their families, require additional support for play and leisure activities. Their needs must be considered in relation to play provision"*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> School Improvement Through Effective Partnerships (National College for Teaching and Leadership)

<sup>20</sup> Northern Ireland Executive's Children and Young People's Strategy 2017-2027 Consultation Document



The term 'all-ability play' or 'inclusive play' highlights the social model of thinking rather than the medical model which traditionally focused on their complex needs, that disabled children needed to play in special places or in particular ways. Instead, it must be considered that children with disabilities require the same opportunities for play, variety, socialising and challenge as all other children.<sup>21</sup>

According to MENCAP, disabilities range from physical, mental, developmental or hidden. This may mean some children are confined to a wheelchair where others may have reduced mobility or manual dexterity, poor physical co-ordination, vision or hearing impairments, emotional and behavioural or learning difficulties. While various disabilities should be acknowledged, designing an environment that integrates play throughout a site, and steering away from the idea of a 'special' or separate area for use by disabled children, is preferred. Furthermore, consideration should be given not only to the child who plays but also the needs of the accompanying parents or carers, embracing the ideal that families can play together regardless of ability.

### *5.5.1 Best Practice in Inclusive Play*

Successful play spaces should, as far as reasonably possible, offer the same quality and extent of play experience to disabled children and young people as is available to those who are not disabled, whilst accepting that not all equipment can be completely accessible to everyone.<sup>22</sup> ANDBC's Policy for Play states that all play facilities should feature a minimum of 30% inclusive play structures. 'Play for All' drafted by the Disability Equality Specialist Support Agency (DESSA) outlines areas that need to be considered when designing inclusive play for children. Six principles, established by the Disability Rights Commission form the foundation of inclusive design<sup>23</sup>:

- **Ease of use**
- **Freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities**
- **Diversity and difference**
- **Legibility and predictability**
- **Quality design**
- **Consideration of safety**

Children with **physical impairments**, for example, may have difficulty with long distances, steps, steep slopes, be unsteady on their feet and liable to slip or trip and find it hard to hold on to or grip ropes or

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<sup>21</sup> Play for all – Providing play facilities for disabled children (<http://www.dessa.ie/publications>)

<sup>22</sup> Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (Play England)

<sup>23</sup> Inclusion by Design (Goodridge, ed. Douch, 2008)

poles. Therefore, they may benefit from equipment with enhanced back support, broader stairs and double width slides to accommodate a parent or carer. Low-level crawling and climbing nets, tunnels and tubes can be used by children with significant mobility impairments. They find it easier to climb on sloping netting than on vertical netting, which also allows an adult to assist and take part in the activity.

Children with **intellectual impairments** may find complex layouts difficult to navigate, may have difficulty taking turns or may display what appears to be a lack of awareness of or a heightened sensitivity to other children. Play items considered could include ground level activities, such as balance beams, spring rockers, adventure trails, play items that need co-operation and eye contact, such as seesaws, group swings, role play activities or pictograms explaining how play items may be used.

Children with **visual impairments** may benefit from play that incorporates mirrors, tactile play panels, play items which involve sound and play items with consistent and good colour contrast

Children with **hearing impairments** may not be able to hear voices of other children or adult instruction. They may be particularly unaware of things going on behind them and may need to see important information that other children can hear. Well-designed play spaces and equipment, and clear, easy-to-understand information boards may help. Safety-related audible effects, such as gravel surrounds, can be designed into the playground.

Children with **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**<sup>24</sup> will appreciate quiet places where they can rest or be alone for a while. Tunnels, playhouses and shelters offer all children the opportunity to take time out.

### **5.5.2 Accessible Toilets and Changing Facilities**

It was noted through consultation that adequate changing facilities and toilets are equally important to inclusive play structures when considering all-ability play provision. MENCAP is a member of the Changing Places consortium and supports the installation of Changing Places toilets in public buildings. A Changing Places toilet facility provides sanitary accommodation for people with multiple and complex disabilities who may have one or two assistants with them<sup>25</sup>. Such facilities require significant capital investment and therefore their development should be considered only in key locations where that location offers a wide range of activities for families to enjoy. Advice gained from the Mae Murray

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<sup>24</sup> Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a term used to describe a number of symptoms and behaviours which affect the way in which a group of people understand and react to the world around them. It's an umbrella term which includes autism, Asperger syndrome and pervasive developmental disorders (autism.org.uk).

<sup>25</sup> Changing Places: The Practical Guide, Changing Places Consortium. The CP guide outlines planning and design concepts including the specific equipment required in order to be awarded a CP accreditation. Construction costs are also detailed and well as the management and maintenance of the facility.

Foundation suggested that families travelling with a child or young person with a disability prefer to go to a destination where they can spend at least half a day or longer to make their journey worthwhile, so places which can offer a range of attractions and activities should be first considered (the same approach applies to highly specialised equipment such as the installation of wheelchair swings, for example). The Strategy for the Provision of Public Toilets 2017 further sets out the Council's approach to this issue. Generally, ANDBC area is well catered for in comparison to other Council areas.

## 5.6 Provision for Older Children and Young People

The benefits of outdoor play have been recognised throughout various research findings including improved physical and emotional development as well as cognitive benefits such as reduced levels of anxiety and depression. Research studies often focus on 'children' and play areas that are typically designed for those under 12 years old, but it should also be considered that, for older children and teenagers, the outdoor setting is perceived as the most important environment for physically active play.<sup>26</sup>

Older children and teenagers may not call it 'play' but could benefit more so from 'play areas' that foster improved social skills and creativity as well as having a positive effect on mental health and well-being. The offering would be less conventional than the standard fixed play equipment as young teenagers don't want to be seen as 'playing' but equally need a facility where they can socialise with their contemporaries. While recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all facility that meets the needs of all young people, there are usually few other community spaces where they can 'hang-out', despite this being a vital part of adolescent social development.<sup>27</sup>

To divert older children and young people from anti-social behaviour, considerations for what young people want and what the community can provide is important. While anti-social behaviour is not to be condoned, recognition should be given to the fact that teenagers congregating is normal behaviour and does not always result in anti-social behaviour. Providing play provision that offers older children an opportunity for diversionary activities, and also a safe space in which to 'hang out' should be recognised. Research commissioned by CABI Space shows that 'place-making' i.e. improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and other public space is a more effective solution to anti-social behaviour than increasing security measures which are counter-productive in encouraging young people to 'break in' and vandalise.

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<sup>26</sup> Open Space, 2006

<sup>27</sup> "Facets of Adolescents' Loneliness" (Chipeur & Pretty, 2000)

A Play Events Programme could include, for example, taster sessions in pump tracks or skate parks or by working in partnership with activity and play providers across the Borough to offer alternative 'play'.

When planning such provision for older children, it is important that the following is considered:

- **As the target end-users, older children and young people are consulted in the planning and design process**
- **Integrated 'play' crosses older age ranges, abilities, and genders**
- **Positioning of facilities within well-lit, highly visible and central areas to inhibit anti-social behaviour and vandalism**
- **Potential community representative or key holder for facility to encourage buy in/ownership**

### **5.6.1 Urban Sports Parks**

Designated areas for urban sports, such as pump tracks, skate-parks and BMX parks, have a multitude of benefits for health and wellbeing. While such activities are associated with adolescents, a skate-park can be enjoyed by people of all ages in the community. Urban sports provide physical activity for children and young people that is particularly attractive for those not involved or not interested in traditional team sports. Such provisions provide a safe and challenging place for wheeled sports participants to develop their skills and recognise those of accomplished participants. Moreover, these areas also serve as positive environments for young people to develop camaraderie and push themselves against each other in their sports.

While the typical playground caters to younger children, groups of adolescents using play spaces are often stereotyped as being 'up to no good'.<sup>28</sup> Restrictive signage and bans on skateboarding in the public realm reinforce the negative community perceptions of the activity as an unproductive pursuit and which encourages anti-social behaviour.<sup>29</sup> However, research shows that the introduction of skateparks and pump tracks can provide additional benefits to the borough which include:

- **A reduction in anti-social behaviour - it has been emphasised that the creativity and entrepreneurial nature of the skating scene in England has been harnessed to reinvigorate fading areas and its presence is used to provide 'natural surveillance'**<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Dispelling Stereotypes... Skate Parks as a Setting for Pro-Social Behaviour among Young People (Wood, 2014)

<sup>29</sup> Moral Panics and Urban Renaissance (Rogers & Coaffee, 2005)

<sup>30</sup> The Accidental Youthclub: Skateboarding in Newcastle-Gateshead (Jenson, 2012)

- **Economic benefits - wheeled sports are popular spectator sports and have the potential to attract tourism by way of out-of-town visitors and as a destination for family outings<sup>31</sup>**

### **5.6.2 Multi-Use Games Areas**

Multi-use games areas (MUGAs) have become increasingly popular in recent years serving as an alternative to 3G football pitches across many sectors such as schools, local authorities, holiday parks and council boroughs. MUGAs are set apart from standard 3G pitches by their allowance for a range of design specification i.e., standard mesh fencing accommodating goal posts and surface markings for games including football, netball, basketball and tennis. Benefits of MUGAs as a leading option among facilities for young people include:

- **Construction to accommodate a wide range of choices of games and sports**
- **A smart choice when space is limited**
- **Cost-saving versus the development of multiple play spaces**
- **Physical and mental wellbeing is associated with physical play**
- **Low maintenance, durable and long-lasting**

It should be noted that while the above provides a comprehensive overview of the considerations and types of play provision that is available or can be delivered, play is an evolving entity and new approaches to play may emerge over the course of the Play Strategy.

### **5.6.3 Teen Shelters**

Teenage play is predominantly social, and they have the freedom to decide for themselves or as a group how to have fun. Analysis of teenage behaviour during play shows that their behaviour mimics and practices being an adult, which is a positive for their development. Teen shelters give older children and teenagers a safe and comfortable place to meet their friends with the added benefit of the site being specifically chosen. In turn, older teenagers can call these spaces their own, but they should be positioned in well-lit, easily visible areas so to discourage anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

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<sup>31</sup> The Benefits of a Skatepark: Skatepark Task Group Report (wiltshire.co.uk)

## 6 PLAY PROVISION DEVELOPMENT

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities designated for the purposes of the Act to comply with the Equality of Opportunity duty. This requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity among the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without.<sup>32 33</sup>

With regards open space and equipped play areas, this duty must however be considered alongside assessing the need for fixed play provision and adopting the accessibility benchmarking as detailed by Fields in Trust (the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association (NFPA)). Its standards for playground provision in the UK, 'The Six Acre Standard', is widely recognised as a planning tool for local authorities and Councils. It classifies fixed play (under its benchmark guidelines for open space and equipped play areas) based on walking time from the home as well as the nature of the play facility.

Nature of Play Facility	Walking Time	Pedestrian Route	Straight Line Distance	Recommended Minimum Activity Zone
<b>LAP</b> Local Area for Play	1 minute	100 metres	60 metres	100m <sup>2</sup>
<b>LEAP</b> Locally Equipped Area for Play	5 minutes	400 metres	240 metres	400m <sup>2</sup>
<b>NEAP</b> Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play	15 minutes	1000 metres	600 metres	1000m <sup>2</sup>

*Table 8: Walking time and straight-line distances from the home to fixed play provision*

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<sup>32</sup> Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 - A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)

<sup>33</sup> Under Section 75 Mid Ulster Council have a duty to promote equality of opportunity for all persons in relation to employment or in accessing goods, facilities or services (such as health services, housing, education, justice, policing).

**Local Areas for Play (LAP)** are doorstep play spaces that are specifically designed for very young children to play close to where they live. LAPs do not require play equipment, as such, but rely more so on demonstrative features to indicate that play is encouraged.

**Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)** are equipped play spaces used by the immediate local community. These areas are specifically designated and are laid out with features including equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently close to where they live.

**Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)** are areas of open play spaces designated mainly for older children but with opportunities for younger children as well. A NEAP can provide a greater variety of opportunity for both structured active play and informal passive play; it can provide some play equipment while providing some open space for ball games or wheeled activities such as cycling or skateboarding.

The revised 2015 guidance no longer differentiates between rural and urban areas, but it is recommended that these guidelines should be used to assist in planning the delivery of play areas while taking account of local circumstances. In addition, the above types of play spaces can also be complemented by other facilities including Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and urban sports parks (Skate Parks and bike Pump Tracks).<sup>34</sup>

In addition to 'The Six Acre Standard', ANDBC has its own policy for the 'Provision and Maintenance of Play Areas'. In order to carry out a full analysis of Council's play facilities, the Tier system used was likened to the Fields in Trust Guidelines whereby play facilities are categorised in relation to walking distance from the home.

The purpose of this 'Tier' policy is to ensure the Council is consistent, fair and equitable in the provision and maintenance of play areas throughout the Borough. The radial catchment areas referenced below corresponds with the attributing circles around the tiered playgrounds in the detailed DEA maps as outlined in **Section 7** below. It should be noted that these catchments are more applicable to urban settings such as towns, villages and small settlements, for rural provision please refer to the rural policy as outlined in **Section 6.4** below.

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<sup>34</sup> Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Six Acre Standard

Tier	Attributes	Catchment Area
<b>Tier 0</b> <b>Flagship Play Area</b>	One that will be an attraction in its own right and that children and families will travel to from the entire Borough and from further afield (Example: Ards Blair Mayne, Newtownards).	Borough wide attraction and also from outside the Borough
<b>Tier 1</b> <b>Destination Play Area</b>	A larger recreation space or facility within key population areas or tourist destinations (Example: Lemons Wharf, Donaghadee).	Serves the settlement within which it is located and from further within the Borough and beyond (Primary Radial Catchment Areas 1.5 km).
<b>Tier 2</b> <b>Local Facility</b>	A larger space available within settlements centres/local hubs (Example: Anchor Park, Portavogie).	Serves the local population (Primary Radial Catchment Area 600m).
<b>Tier 3</b> <b>Doorstep Facility</b>	A small space within sight of homes (Example: Steel Dickson Park, Portaferry).	Serves the immediate population (Primary Radial Catchment Area 240m).

*Table 9: ANDBC Tier Policy*

In addition to Council's Tier Policy and the Six Acre Standard guideline, other resources were used to assess play provision in ANDBC, namely;

- Population data from the 2011 census - to access the number of young people in a given area
- Household pointer data from Land and Property Services (LPS) - to show the density of housing
- Independent Annual Play Inspection
- Council Play Park Quality Quarterly Inspection Audit
- Community consultation and public survey



## 6.1 Design Guidelines for Fixed Play

In order to ensure consistency across the Borough, the Council has a robust tendering process which is utilised when refurbishing or installing playgrounds and which ensures that all new and refurbished playgrounds adhere to the same standards and include principles such as inclusive play and a balance of equipment suited different age ranges etc. This criterion will be applied to all fixed play areas that are delivered by the Council through the successful tenderers. It should be noted that this criterion should also be applied to any play areas that are developed by third party providers such as housing associations, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or private developers, to ensure consistency of provision across the Borough. The key design principles to be utilised are:

### Siting and location

- The location should enhance its setting, be sympathetic to its surroundings and compliment adjacent land uses
- Play Areas should be sited in locations that are easily accessible and highly visible to deter anti-social

### Design Concept

- Access and egress points should integrate into the surroundings and be accommodating for all users including those who are disabled, have sensory impairments, or require the use of buggies etc
- The layout and circulation should be intuitive and provide adequate space to visit and play for all users
- The play area should respect the local character and context
- The play area design should inspire and provoke creativity and engage young people's imagination
- A surfacing plan is required for critical and non-critical fall areas that uses a mix of materials and textures

### Play Value

- A high level of play value should be included in the design and proposed equipment to ensure that there are multiple opportunities for physical, creative and social play experiences
- Additional features such as natural play, sound making items and items that encourage imaginative, fantasy, role making, objective/exploratory and social play should be included.
- Quiet places to sit, chat or hide should be included
- Opportunities for the interaction of children of different ages should be included
- There must be a minimum of 30% inclusive physical play provision within the proposed physical play equipment

## General Requirements

- The play area must include a minimum of two pieces of equipment that is new to the market within the last two years (only one piece for Tier 3)
- Clear sight lines must be retained from the adjacent roads
- If perimeter fences are proposed they should be at a 1.2m minimum with two self-closing (inward opening) gates
- A minimum number of pieces of equipment providing play activities for 3-5 year olds (junior) and 6 years and above (senior) must be provided as follows:
  - Tier 1: 5 pieces each for junior and senior age groups
  - Tier 2: 3 pieces each for junior and senior age groups
  - Tier 3: 2 pieces each for junior and senior age groups
- The play area must include at least one junior and one senior multi-unit (does not apply to Tier 3)
- The play area must include at least one swing with provision for both junior and senior users
- The proposed equipment and ancillary equipment must be vandal resistant, durable, tamper resistant, long life and require minimal maintenance
- The primary equipment material for the play area must be resistant to corrosion and a minimum 5 year warranty against corrosion must be provided
- The safety surfacing (EPDM) must be used for critical fall areas and use standard RAL colours
- All necessary replacement items should be readily available for the anticipated lifespan of the specified items
- A minimum of three decorative surfaces must be used outside the critical fall areas (minimum 50% of surface area), each one making up at least 10% of that area available
- Consideration of shaded areas to protect from solar radiation should be included where possible
- Landscaping and landform should be easily maintainable

It should be noted that requests for additional equipment to be added to existing playgrounds outside of a playground refurbishment process will not normally be considered. Additions of extra equipment may alter the Tier in which a playground is classified and also create issues in relation to critical fall areas, equipment spacings and would require a reassessment of the playground by the Independent Inspector.

### 6.1.1 Ancillary Provisions

Ancillary provisions in fixed play areas should include the following:

- **Seating**

Some seating provision for accompanying adults should be provided and generally a minimum of two seats with backs is deemed adequate for playgrounds.

- **Bins**

A least one bin should be provided for each play area.

- **Signage**

Signage is required at play spaces, particularly at access points to communicate that the park may be 'smoke free', doesn't welcome dogs, contact details of the operator etc. Currently some play areas in the Borough have signage relating to the age zones and equipment within the play area and it is hoped to extend this to all play areas within the Borough.

- **Floodlighting**

Lighting is an optional provision to maximise the use of a play facility, although more commonly associated with MUGA's<sup>35</sup>/Skate Parks/Pump Tracks given that they are generally used by older children and young people and so they are used later into the evenings. However, floodlighting may need to be tempered to an acceptable level in dense urban areas in terms of nuisance and would require planning approval etc. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that by lighting play areas it can attract inappropriate use by older children and young people. The current position in ANDBC is that playgrounds are not additionally lit beyond any indirect lighting from adjacent street lighting and that MUGA/Skate Parks/Pump Tracks are lit seasonally until 9pm.

### 6.2 Fencing

The installation of fences around playgrounds will be determined on a case-by-case basis and the type of fencing, if applicable, will be considered based on the circumstances present at the site. For example, in sites near busy roads, robust fencing should be installed. However, in more natural sites where

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<sup>35</sup> A Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) is an alternative to a 3G football pitch favoured due to its use for multiple different activities and saving in land usage. More information on MUGAs is included in Section X.

children require only a sense of boundary and the presence of dogs is unwanted, alternatives such as perimeter planting could be considered.

RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) states that not all playgrounds need fencing and not all fence types are suitable for playgrounds. The location of the area (e.g. rural woodland) may restrict the use of metal fencing and conversely may be subject to vandalism. Similarly, fencing that is higher than necessary may present challenge and subsequently fuel anti-social behaviour, proving to be counterproductive.

At present there are 10 playground sites across the borough where 3m high fences are installed and these sites are locked up in the evenings and reopened in the mornings by the Neighbourhood Environment Team (NET). In most instances these sites are not ideally located in terms of being visible or easily observed and this has contributed to the issues that are experienced at them requiring them to be locked up to deter anti-social behaviour. It is an aspiration to address this issue when then these sites are due for refurbishment, with a view to possible relocation to negate the need for 3m fences and securing at night. The installation of 3m fences should be an absolute last resort.

Recent trends and research indicate that increasing security measures, including erecting higher fencing around play parks, is counter-productive and increases anti-social behaviour by encouraging break-ins and vandalism. Rather, improving the design, location, maintenance and supervision of parks and other public space is a more effective solution to anti-social behaviour.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, any new play areas in the Borough should be carefully considered in terms of their location to try and minimise issues relating to anti-social behaviour. The installation of fences will be considered in the following circumstances:

- **To help contain children within the play area where the site is located close to a road (1.2m high fence)**
- **Allied with good gates to keep dogs off the play area (1.2m high fence)**
- **In locations where children can be given a sense that it is their area and separate from the surroundings**
- **Where there is a demonstrated record of ASB incidents that have been logged by the NET or the PSNI (3m high fence)**

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<sup>36</sup> Research commissioned by CAGE Space

If the play area requires fencing, then this warrants at least one self-closing gate that opens *into* the park to slow down any children leaving the park unsupervised. Also, if a play area requires to be secured at night this will be facilitated by the NET which due to limited resources, the area it has to cover, and other duties, cannot accommodate requests for play areas to be locked/opened at specific times.

### 6.3 Provision of Non-Council Play Areas

Where play areas are being installed by other third parties, such as developers, housing associations or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive etc., they should, where possible, follow the guidelines as set out above in Section 6.1 and consult with the Council at the earliest opportunity. There should be no assumption by third parties that the Council will assume the management and maintenance of such facilities once they are installed. The Council will consider on a site specific basis if it will agree to take over the management and maintenance of the play area once constructed. The existing play provision in the area will be a key determining factor in this consideration. If it is deemed that there is sufficient play provision already provided by the Council in the area, then the management and maintenance of any new play provision will not be taken on board. Conversely if it is deemed that there is a lack of play provision in the area then the Council may agree to take over the management and maintenance of the third party play area, if it is satisfied that the location and standard meets the Council's expectations.

Another option that may be considered is that of entering into a Section 76 Agreement in relation to Developer Contributions, as outlined under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, with a housing developer to either replace or upgrade a nearby play area that will continue to serve the public but also any new housing development. If the third party reasonably contributes to the costs of any upgrade or refurbishment, the Council could then agree to assume the responsibility of the management and maintenance of the play area going forward, by legal agreement.

### 6.4 Rural Provision

Providing fixed play areas in rural settings needs to be measured and balanced against a range of factors including those outlined above in terms of demographics, distance to other settlements and playparks, as well as the need for land acquisition and budget constraints etc. In rural areas households tend to be generally dispersed within the landscape. In some cases, clusters of dwellings are defined as Small Settlements in terms of the settlement hierarchy which is outlined in the relevant Local Development Plan. The approach in other Council areas in Northern Ireland is to only provide formal fixed play provision in settlements which are classified as Villages and above. In planning terms, the need for play areas is outlined under Planning Policy Statement 8, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (Policy OS 2, Public Open Space in New Residential Development). This is a useful benchmark to consider along with the previously mentioned considerations when determining the need for play provision.

Therefore, a fixed play area will be considered if a Small Settlement has:

- **More than 100 residential units within the defined settlement limit (as delineated by the Area Plan)**
- or
- **Minimum of 100 residential units within the catchment radial of the play area**

If a Small Settlement meets the criterion and in conjunction with the other considerations as outlined above then the installation of a play area will be considered if suitable land can be acquired if the Council does not have any other land available within the settlement. If a play area is deemed necessary, then it is considered that a Tier 3/Doorstep Facility would be appropriate.

Alternatives to fixed play provision can be deployed in rural areas such as exploration of Play Partnerships with schools (if they have play areas), Play Events and Play Pods which have been discussed previously within the Play Strategy.

Any play areas that are currently located in Small Settlements which doesn't meet the criteria as outlined above will be reviewed in due course or when they reach the end of their equipment life.

## **6.5 Public Consultation**

Where new play areas (fixed playgrounds) or play provision (such as MUGA's /Skate Parks/Pump Tracks) are proposed or where there are proposed changes to a playground such as relocation or upgrade, a public consultation exercise will be undertaken to establish a preferred site (if applicable) and the type of equipment/facility or local preferences which could be incorporated into the design etc.

If consideration is being given to the removal of any play areas during the lifetime of the Play Strategy due to low demand, demographics or in conjunction with new proposals etc, public consultation will be undertaken to consider the preferences of the local population as to how the land should be transformed.

When appropriate consultation with the Youth Forum should be sought on proposals relating to play provision in the Borough, both in relation to fixed and non-fixed play provision approaches.

## **6.6 Management and Maintenance**

Fixed play areas generally consist of a range of equipment and surfaces all of which experience wear and tear through usage and therefore require regular maintenance and ultimately replacement over their lifespan. The Council is required to ensure that these play areas are fit for purpose and that they meet the necessary legal and safety standards (British and European Standards). In order to ensure that the play areas are compliant the Council undertakes the following:

- All equipment supplied/installed complies with the relevant safety standards
- Regular inspections are carried out by the appropriate competent staff to review the condition of the equipment and surfacing etc. and remedial action taken to rectify any defects
- Quarterly formal inspections are undertaken by the appropriate staff/inspector in order to establish a more rigorous quality control check to highlight any areas of concern
- Annual inspections are carried out by a qualified Independent Inspector to assess the status of the equipment lifespan, condition of the ancillary items and surfacing and to recommend any necessary replacement or remedial works

Consideration should be given to landform and landscaped areas during the design stage as they will also require maintenance in terms of weeding and grass cutting etc., which require resources for their management in terms of equipment, materials and staff time. However, new concepts should be embraced, and existing sites could be looked at retrospectively to establish if underused areas adjacent to play areas could be repurposed to encourage a wider range of play.

## 6.7 Play Development Officer

As has been demonstrated throughout the course of this Play Strategy the importance of play to the development of children and young people is significant and has wider community benefits. In order to fully deliver on all the elements contained in the Play Strategy the appointment of a dedicated Play Development Officer would be necessary especially to deliver fully the non-fixed play initiatives outlined within the Play Strategy. The role would involve the following:

- Oversight of the management and delivery of the Play Strategy
- Building and developing internal connections between Council departments and teams to enable the delivery of play provision using Council assets, especially in relation to informal or non-fixed play approaches and the better use of shared spaces
- Ensure that play is a consideration in all projects, activities, and strategies that the Council is planning or is responsible for delivering and raise the profile of play
- Continually oversee and assess the existing fixed play provision to ensure that it is fit for purpose
- Develop external connections to maximise the opportunities for play within the Borough through the Community Planning process etc.
- Create, develop and build partnerships with external bodies to deliver play within the Borough, such as schools and housing associations etc.

- Develop and deliver pilot community play initiatives
- Engage with local Community Groups to help establish community led play activities, such as Play Pods, Play Events, Community Play Volunteers and support the management of these initiatives
- Pursue sources of funding to help deliver additional or complementary play provision in the Borough
- Keep up to date with advances in play approaches, regulation and legislation and research
- Provide advice and guidance for children, young people, their parents/carers and their communities in relation to the importance of play and its delivery in all forms
- Liaising with the Play Champion to ensure the relevance and significance of play within the Borough

Out of the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland six have dedicated Play Development Officers, the others including ANDBC have no dedicated Play Development Officer but rather the remit for playgrounds sits within the respective Parks and Amenities departments (this varies among the remaining Councils) and is encompassed into an Officer's role alongside their other duties and responsibilities. It is envisaged that the Play Development Officer would sit within the Leisure Services Team under the management of the Outdoor Recreation Officer. The appointment of such an officer would be subject to the Council's standard procedures and submission/approval of a business case for the financial contribution.

## 6.8 Play Champion

Play is an emotive issue and the public consultation exercise revealed that local people within AND feel strongly about play provision in the Borough. However, communities often felt they did not see the outcomes they had hoped for after engaging in public consultation. To ensure that the needs of children and young people and local communities are met and that the recommendations of the Play Strategy are implemented, the profile of play needs to be raised and promoted within the Council and the Borough. The appointment of a Play Champion was proposed in the Ards Borough Council Play Strategy (2007) but was never consistently realised.



To support the strategic recommendations and campaign internally/externally for children’s play rights<sup>37</sup>, a Play Champion is recommended to be drawn from the Elected Members within the Council. The purpose of the Play Champion would be to hold Council accountable for delivering the new Play Strategy but also to represent their community at a local level by identifying play issues, potential actions and solutions and reporting back to Council or relevant Committee. The Play Champion would be a key consultee when planning any key changes to play provision within the Council area and help publicise good news stories in relation to play in the Borough. The Play Champion would help ensure that Elected Members support play related initiatives across the Borough.

## 6.9 Older Children Provision

It is highly evident that the historical provision of play in the legacy North Down and Ards Borough Councils focussed mainly on playgrounds which generally catered for children up to the age of 12 years old. There were a few Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA’s) located around each legacy Borough, but it is not considered sufficient provision for older children and young people. A total of 84% of the respondents to the public consultation exercise stated that there was not enough provision for older children and young people within the Borough. The Council recognises this and has recently delivered some skate parks and pumps tracks but more provision is required.

Therefore, additional facilities are proposed in order to adequately and fairly meet the needs of older children and young people across the Borough. The delivery of such provision is to be focused in areas which are identified as having a higher concentration of older children (from the census data). It will also follow the settlement hierarchy with the larger settlements (in terms of population) being provided for as a priority and also to provide an even geographical spread across the Borough. The availability of Council owned land or the acquisition of additional land (and its associated implications and costs etc) is also a consideration for locating such facilities. For example, Bangor only has one MUGA and Holywood and Donaghadee have no provision at all for older children at present, with Holywood having one of the highest concentrations of older children in its DEA and across the Borough. The aim

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<sup>37</sup> Children and young people have the right to play under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): **“Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.”**

is to provide an even distribution of such facilities across the Borough with those having the greatest need (population/demographic) being provided for in the first instance.

The delivery of the provision for older children will require the securing of additional capital funds to construct them by completing the required business cases for approval. There may be opportunities to deliver such facilities using external funding which may be location specific (such a Village Renewal funding etc.). In some instances, the delivery of this additional older children provision will be in conjunction with other proposals at a settlement level in terms of upgrades and removals etc. Public consultation exercises will be undertaken in the proposed locations to establish the type of facility that the local community would like to see delivered and where it should be located.

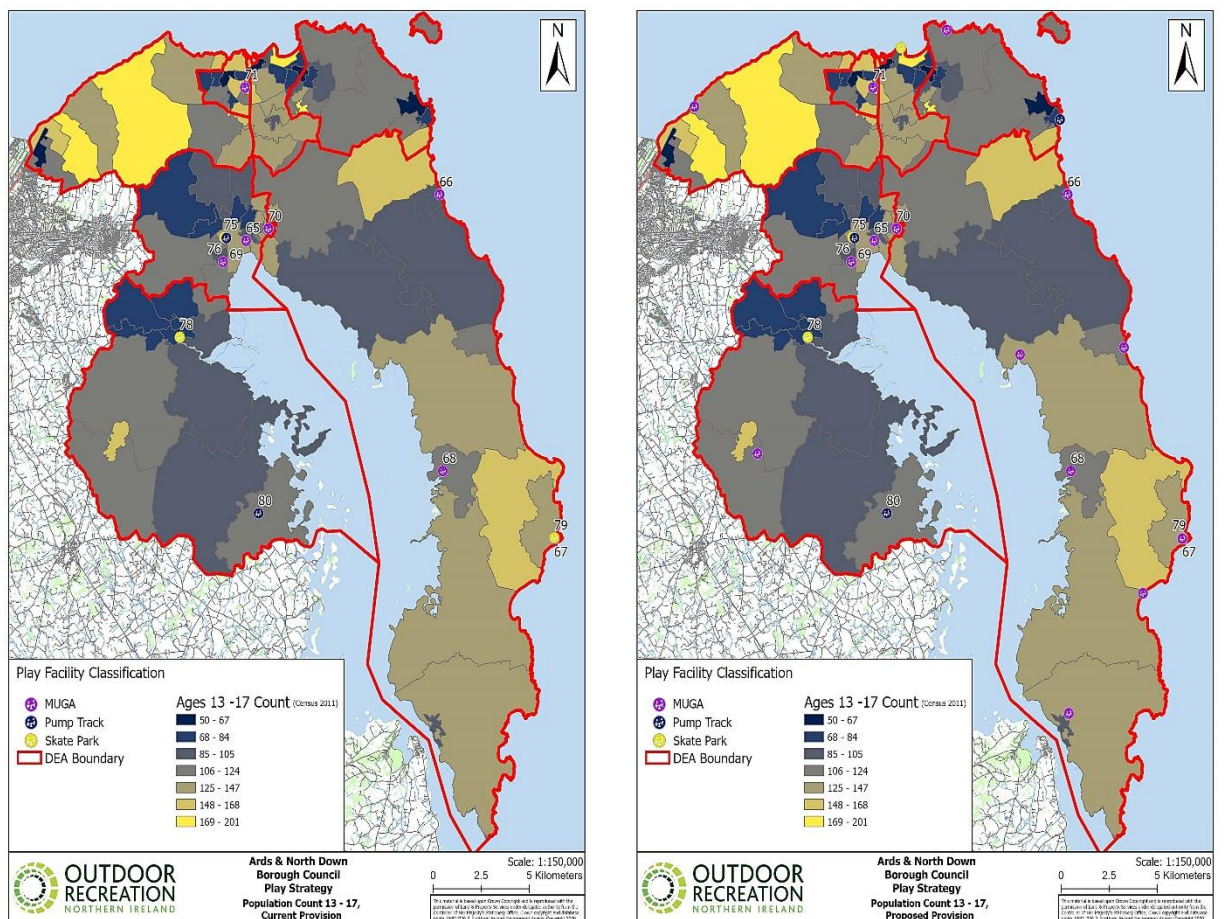


Figure 4: Existing and proposed older children and young people provision.

More detail on the specific locations of the provisions for older children and young people is detailed below in **Section 7**. It should be noted that some of the proposed provision has a MUGA symbol, but the actual type of facility delivered will be determined via public consultation exercises.

Careful siting of such facilities needs to be considered to minimise any adverse impacts on residential amenity and to ensure the site can be easily monitored in terms of anti-social behaviour. The scale of any such provision should also be commensurate to the scale of the settlement in which it is to be located.

## 7 DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA PROPOSALS

What follows are the relevant maps pertaining the existing and proposed fixed play provision in each District Electoral Area (DEA). It should be noted that the Bangor DEA's have been grouped together to give a more complete overview of the settlement. In conjunction with the locations of the play areas, the maps also display the population of 0-12 year olds as well as household pointer data from Land & Property Services (LPS). The associated tables for each DEA outline the proposed actions for each settlement. The tables are arranged in terms of settlement hierarchy determined by their population size (based on the 2011 census).

The play areas are shown in terms of their classification Tiers 0-3. Also depicted is the **primary radial catchment area** for each type/level of playground:

- **Flagship/Tier 0:** **Borough wide and beyond**
- **Destination/Tier1:** **1.5km/Settlement**
- **Neighbourhood NEAP/Tier2:** **600m**
- **Local LEAP's/Tier 3:** **240m**

The primary radial catchment area circles on the maps below will demonstrate where there is a lack of provision or if there is over provision in the area and the proposed maps will demonstrate how the recommended changes will relate the future provision. It should be noted that these primary radial catchment areas are indicative only and that playgrounds have an actual wider catchment area than those specified. Other facilities such as MUGA's/Skate Parks/Pump Tracks are also plotted but these don't have a catchment area attributed to them, rather their distribution is based on a hierarchical settlement, demographic and geographical approach as outlined above in **Section 6.7**.

It should be noted that all proposals outlined below will be subject to the required public consultation procedures and Member approval. Also, to note is that proposed new facilities and upgrades etc. will require the approval of the necessary business cases for capital revenue in conjunction with the wider settlement proposals being agreed by Members. The refurbishments of playgrounds are determined by the Annual Scores from the Independent Inspector Assessments, with the least scoring playgrounds being prioritised.

The proposals are based on all of the findings and analysis contained within the Play Strategy with the overriding outcome being that people want to have a better quality play experience and are willing to travel further to avail of it. Therefore, the consolidation, upgrades and additions proposed are designed to deliver a better quality play offer.

## 7.1 Ards Peninsula (DEA Population 24,340)

With parts designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Ards Peninsula offers a coastal element to its play provision with many playgrounds located in the coastal towns and villages. With 25 play facilities, the Ards Peninsula DEA has a large number of play park/areas, but these are located across the largest land area in the Borough.

### 7.1.1 Portaferry (Population 2,514)

There are plans for a new Pump Track (or similar) to be installed adjacent to the playground at Cloughey Road to serve the older children/young people demographic of the settlement. It is proposed to relocate the playground in Castle Park to a location along the Lough Shore Road close to the entrance of Nugent's Wood/Rope Walk to increase the tourism potential of the site. It is considered that once the Pump Track (or similar) has been installed Portaferry will have adequate provision for all age groups in terms of provision.

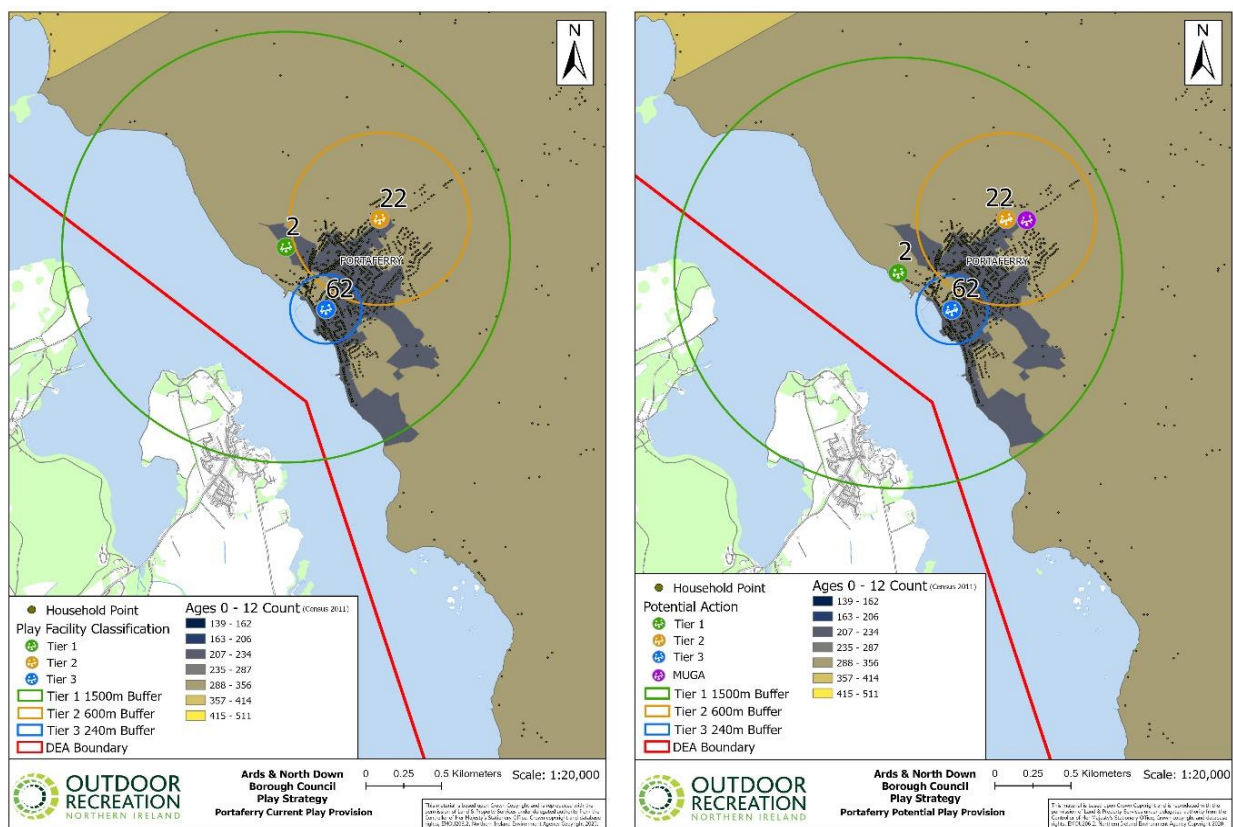


Figure 5: Portaferry Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.2 Millisle (Population 2,318)

The Tier 1 facility at Ballywalter Road (Millisle) will continue in its current form and will remain a Tier 1 facility. The MUGA and the Ship will also continue in their current form. It is considered that there is adequate provision in Millisle for children and older children/young people.

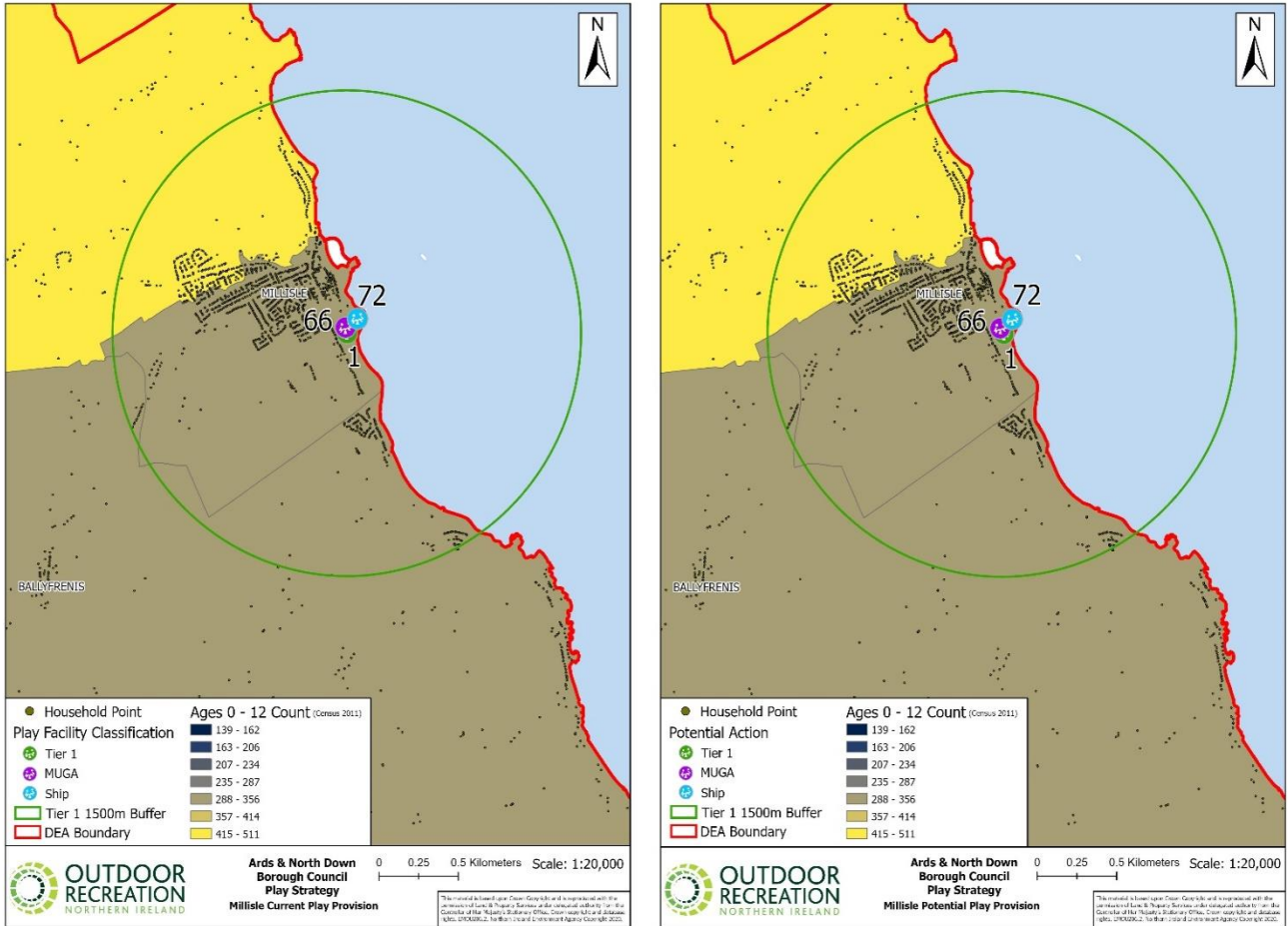


Figure 6: Millisle Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.1.3 Portavogie (Population 2,122)

Given the facilities at Anchor Park and New Harbour Road, Lawson’s Park, Portavogie, is considered to be surplus and will be removed, this was also a recommendation in the previous Ards Borough Council Play Strategy (2007). However, concerns raised in relation to the need for a crossing point on Springfield Road to Anchor Park have been noted and delivery of a safer crossing is an Action Point to be pursued. A new Skate Park has been installed at New Harbour Road adjacent to the existing MUGA. It is considered that Portavogie is well catered for in terms of younger and older children play provision and no further additions are proposed.

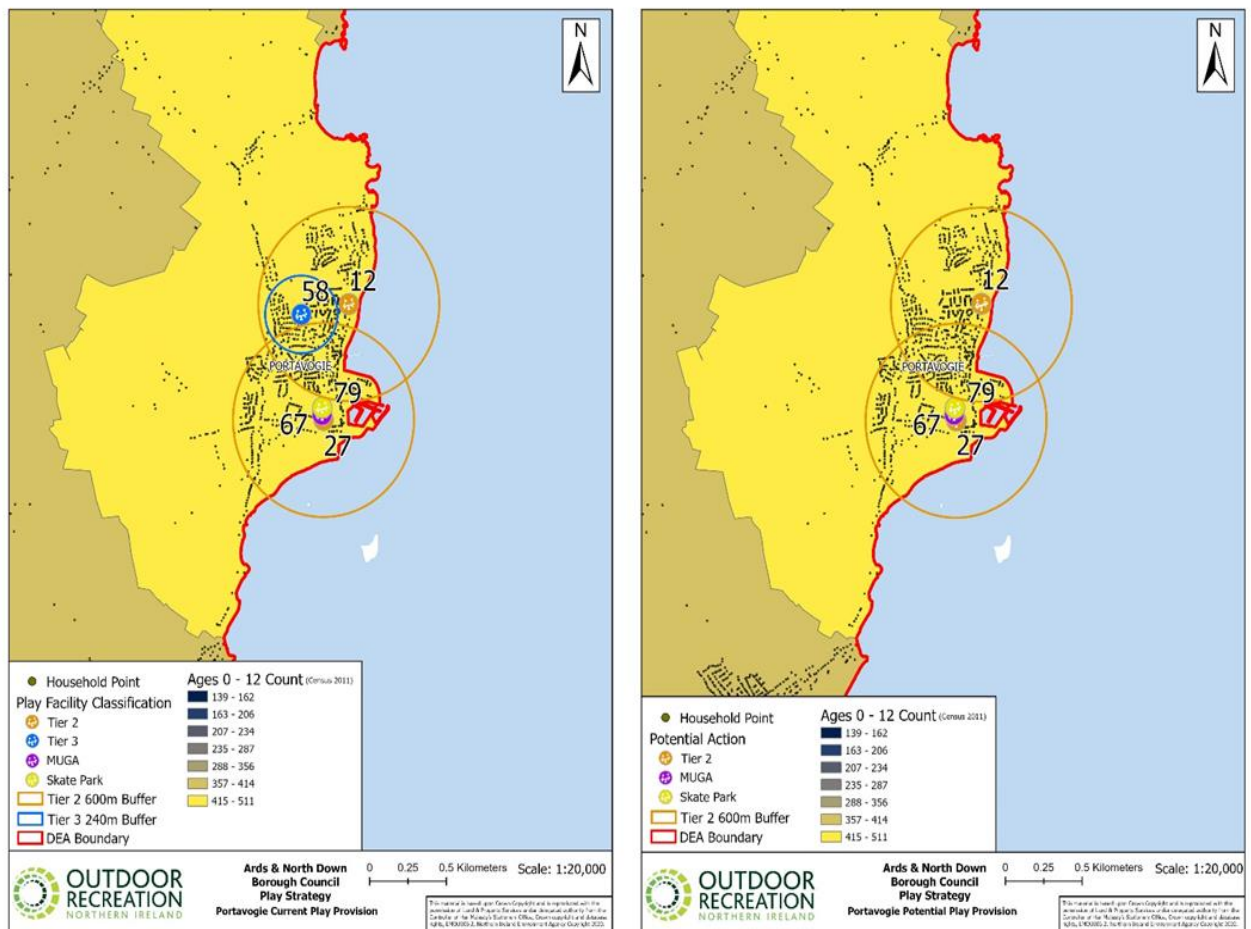


Figure 7: Portavogie Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.4 Ballywalter (Population 2,027)

A Tier 1 play area is proposed for Ballywalter by upgrading the site at Springvale Road, which is currently a Tier 3, to serve the entire settlement and increase the tourism potential of the area given its location adjacent to the beach. It will also consolidate and improve the play provision offer. The proposed upgrade of the site at Springvale Road will be dependent on the smaller facility at Windy Ridge being removed as it will be considered surplus. There is also the potential to install a MUGA on one of the tennis courts to serve the older children/young people of the settlement if the business case approval is forthcoming or if external funding is secured.

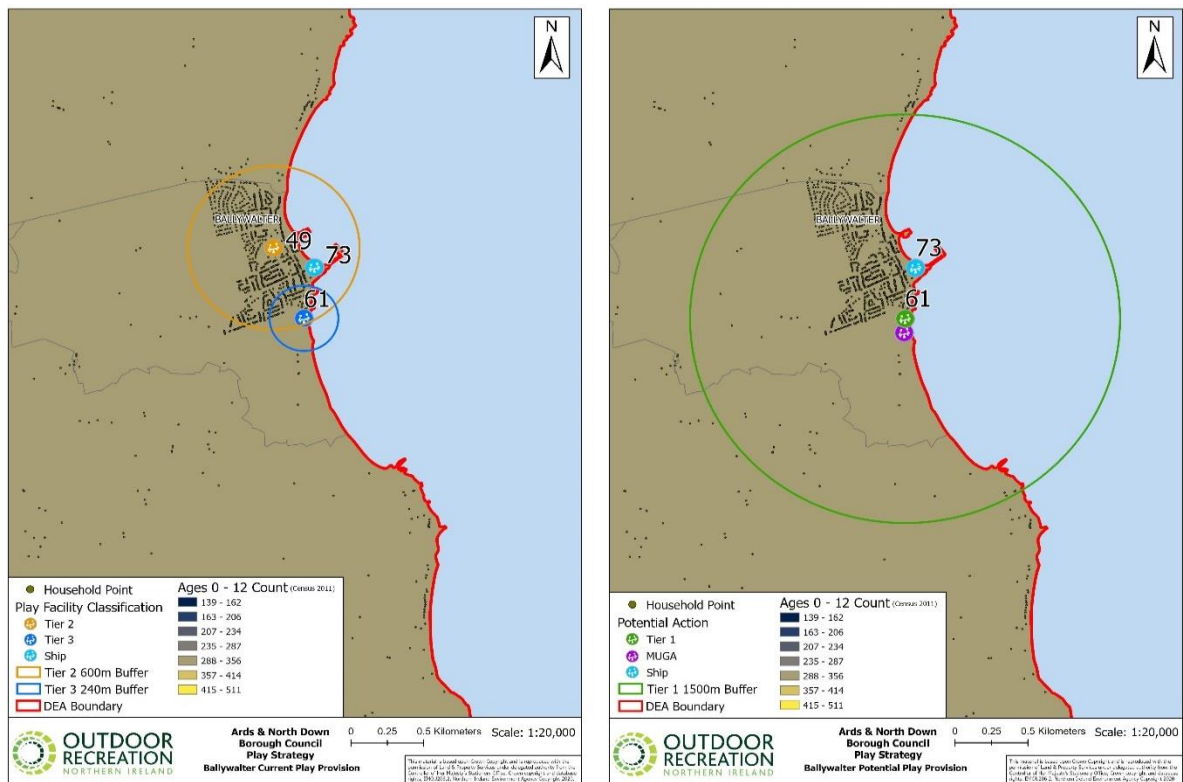


Figure 8: Ballywalter Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.1.5 Kircubbin (Population 1,153)

In Kircubbin, The Green has the potential to be upgraded to a Tier 1 facility to serve the entire settlement and to increase the tourism potential of the area. The upgrade will consolidate and improve the play provision offer in the settlement. The upgrade of the site at The Green will be dependent on the removal of the smaller facility at Parsonage Road as it will be considered surplus. Similarly, the MUGA at Parsonage Road could be upgraded to a full MUGA (the playground will need to be removed to accommodate this). Alternatively, the MUGA (or similar facility) could be relocated to The Green as it would be considered to be a better location for this type of facility in terms of visibility and access. (Please note No. 60 on the maps relates to Rubane which is dealt with separately below).

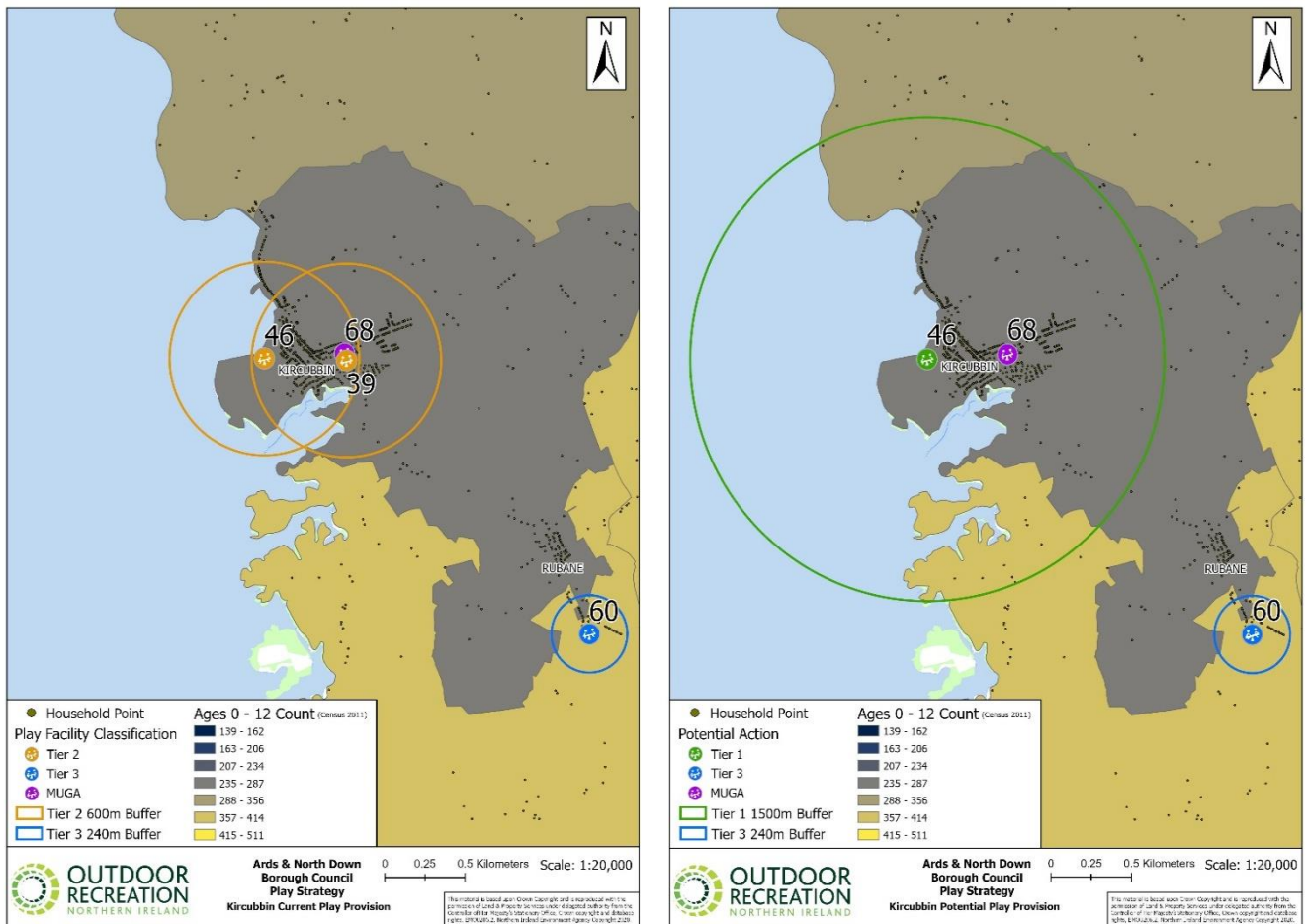


Figure 9: Kircubbin Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.6 Cloughey (Population 1,075)

In Cloughey, the play park area at Main Street will be upgraded to a Tier 1 facility and adjacent to that it is proposed to install a MUGA (or similar) to serve the older children/young people demographic in the settlement. Cloughey is a well-used facility given its proximity to the beach so there is tourism potential associated with the site also.

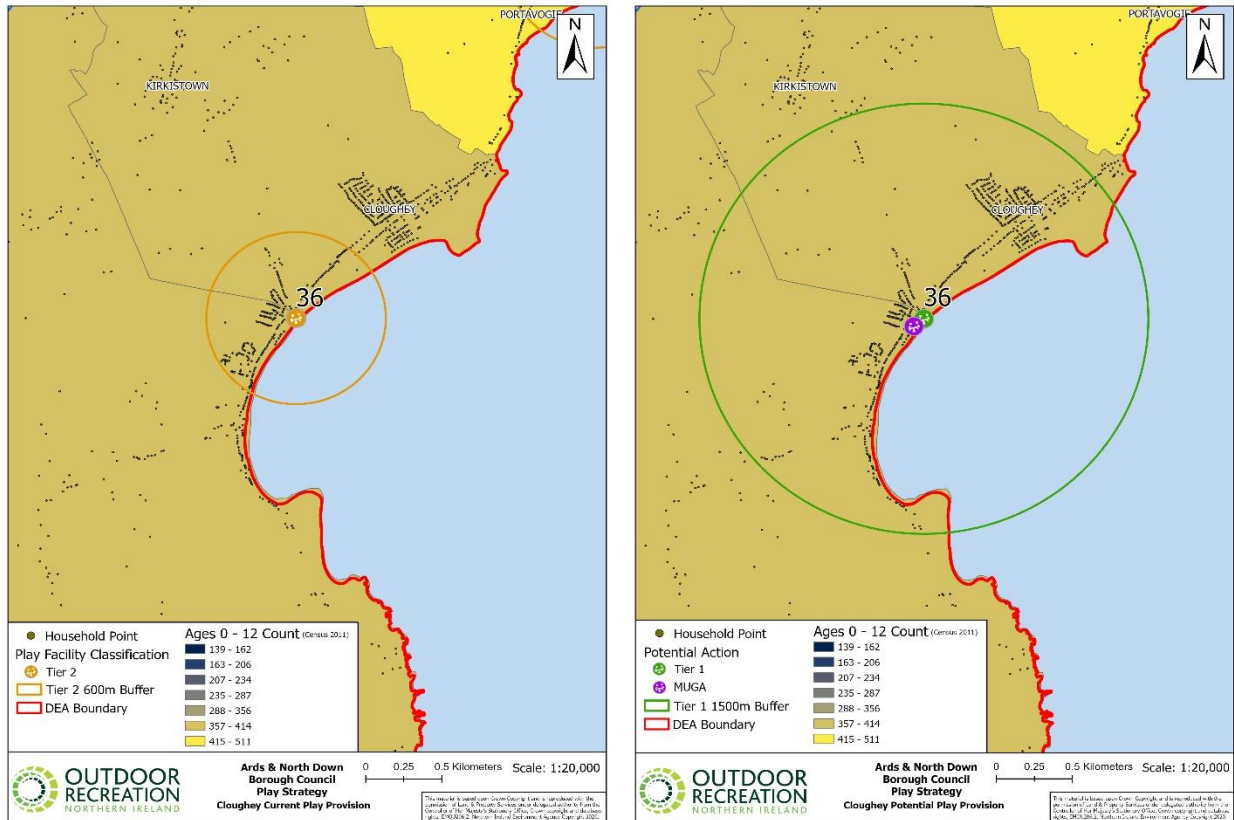


Figure 10: Cloughey Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.7 Ballyhalbert (Population 1,026)

The play facility in Ballyhalbert will undergo an upgrade to a Tier 1 facility to serve the entire settlement and increase the tourism potential of the area.

It should be noted that in April 2018 decision was taken at the Regeneration and Development Committee not to proceed with a MUGA in Ballyhalbert as part of the Village Renewal funding proposals. It was agreed that consultation would be undertaken as part of the development of the Play Strategy. A total of 1.5% of all respondents to the online survey were from Ballyhalbert and some residents attended the public consultation event held in Portavogie. No request for a MUGA in Ballyhalbert was submitted. It is not proposed as part of this Play Strategy to recommend delivery of a MUGA in Ballyhalbert as there are many other locations which are considered a priority for the development of older children provision as identified in **Section 6.9** above.

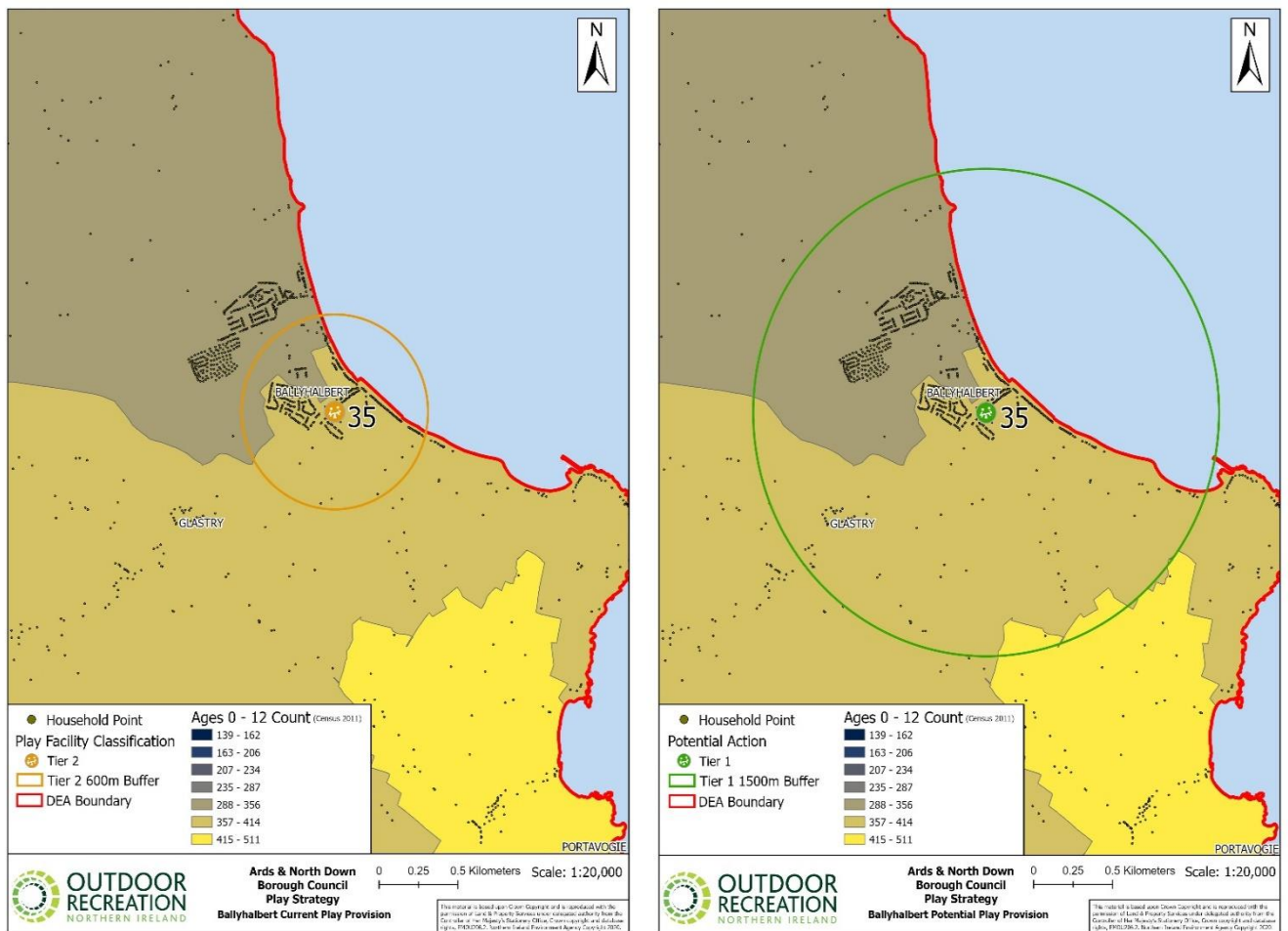


Figure 11: Ballyhalbert Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.8 Carrowdore (Population 960)

The Tier 2 site at Carrowdore has recently been refurbished and will remain in its current form for the lifespan of this Play Strategy.

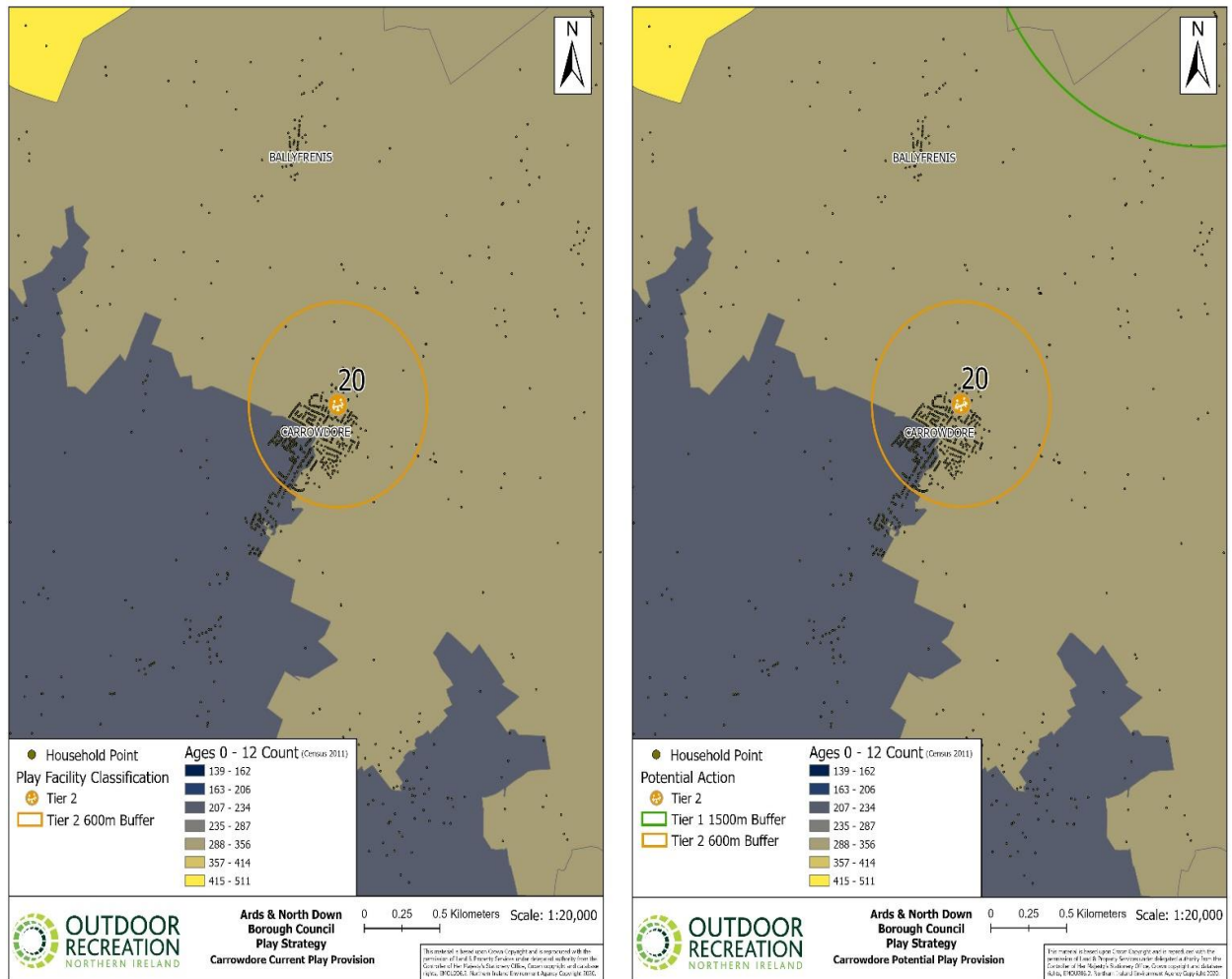


Figure 12: Carrowdore Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.9 Greyabbey (Population 939)

The Tier 2 site at Island View, Greyabbey, has the potential to be upgraded to a Tier 1 facility with the potential installation of a MUGA on one of the nearby tennis courts. As a result of these proposals, the play facility at North Street Greyabbey will be rendered surplus and will be removed.

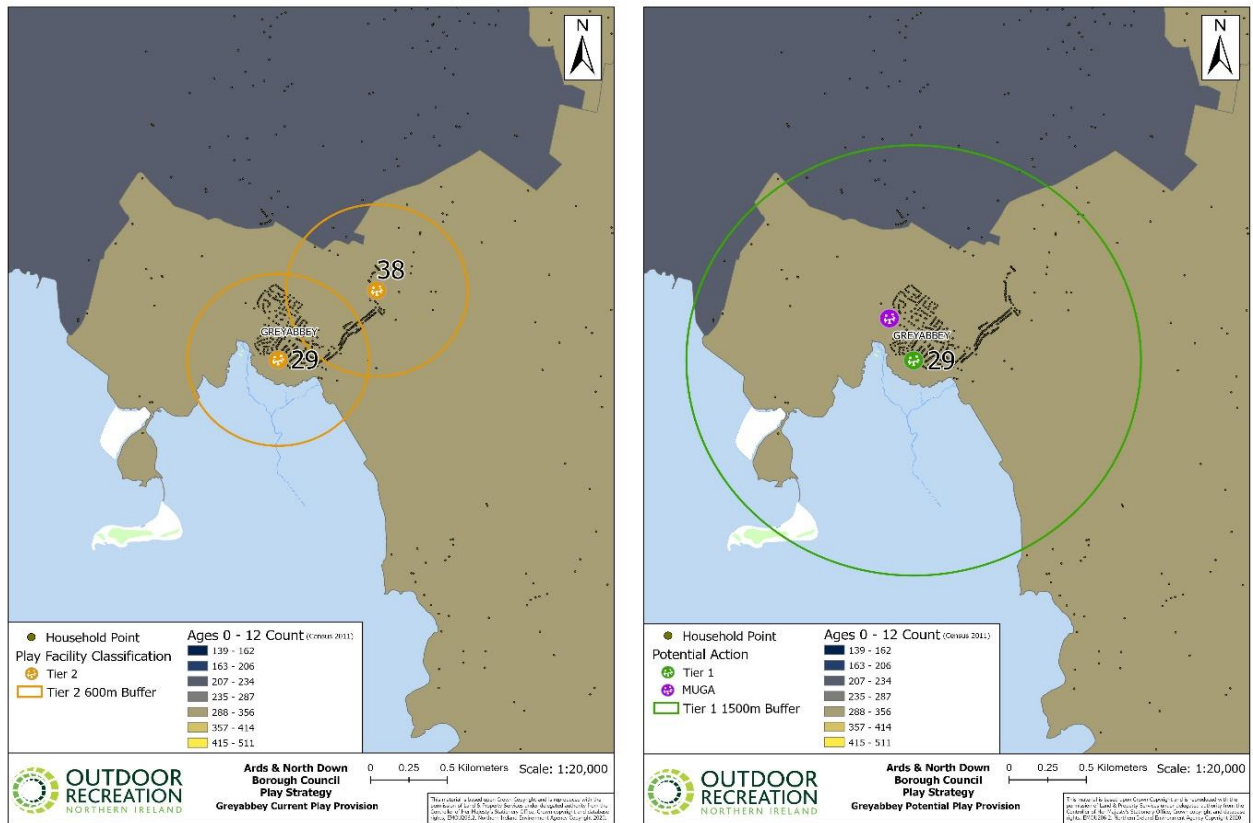
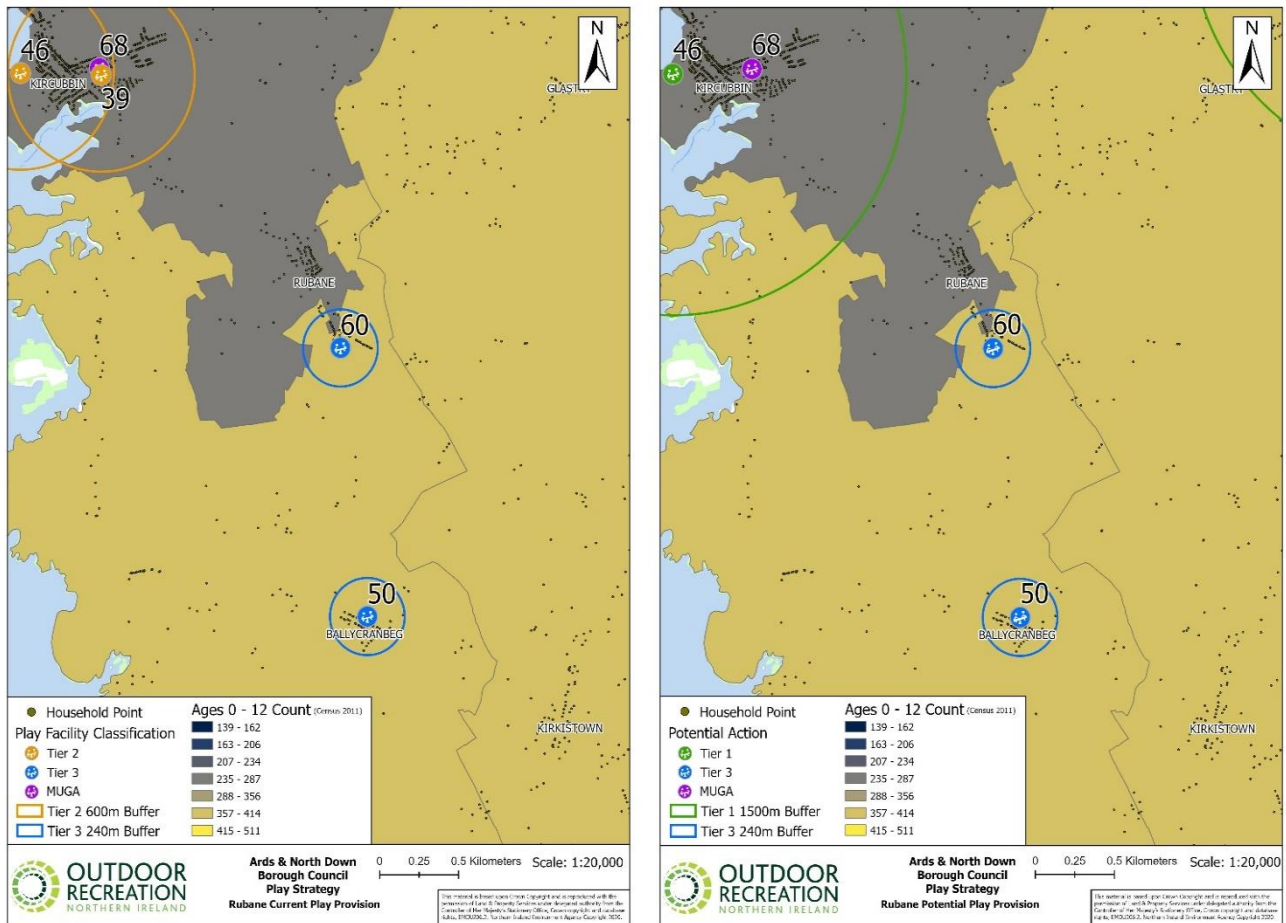


Figure 13: Greyabbey Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.1.10 Rubane, (Population 216)



It is noted that the location of the play area in Rubane (No. 60) is not ideally situated to include the settlement in its radial catchment area. Council will look into the possibility of an alternative site as part of the Action Plan. Rubane is 1.4 miles from Kircubbin so the residents will be able to avail of the proposed Tier 1 facility as indicated by the responses to the questionnaire where 62% of respondents stated they would be willing to travel 0-5 miles to visit a playground.

Figure 14: Rubane and Ballycranbeg Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.1.11 Ballycranbeg, (Population 82)

There will be no change to the play area at Ballycranbeg (No. 50) which is displayed on the above map. It will be reviewed in line with the Rural Provision Policy (Section 6.3) at the end of the equipment life.

### 7.1.12 Tullymally (Ballygalet), (Population 90)

There would be no change to the play area at Tullymally. It will be reviewed in line with the Rural Provision Policy (Section 6.3) at the end of the equipment life. Tullymalley is only 2.3 miles from Portaferry so the residents will also be able to avail of the new proposed Tier 1 facility as indicated by the responses to the questionnaire where 62% of respondents stated they would be willing to travel 0-5 miles to visit a playground.

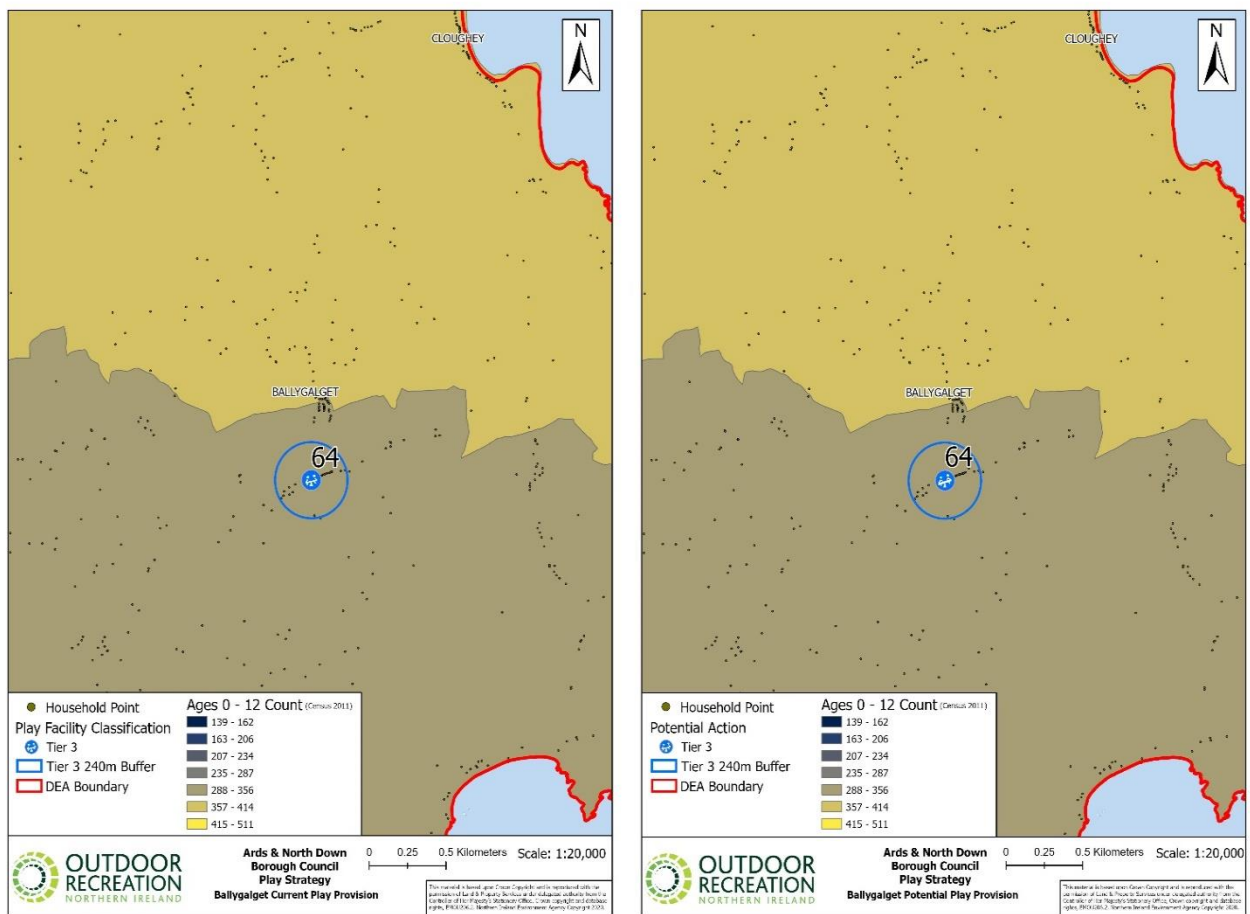


Figure 15: Tullymally (Ballygalet) Current and Potential Play Provision

Table 10 overleaf provides full details of the play parks/play areas in the Ards Peninsula DEA along with proposed recommendations for each site.

Reference Number/ Name	Facility Type	Commentary	Action
<b>Portaferry</b>			
<b>2</b> <b>Castle Park</b> <b>Portaferry</b>	Destination Tier 1	It is proposed to relocate the play provision at Castle Park to a location along the Lough Shore Road.	<b>Refurbishment and relocation</b>
<b>22</b> <b>Cloughey Road</b> <b>Portaferry</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The facility at Cloughey Road will continue in its current form and holds potential for the development of a skate park/MUGA/pump track.	<b>Skate park/MUGA/Pump track install</b>
<b>62</b> <b>Steele Dickson Park</b> <b>Portaferry</b>	LEAP Tier 3	Recently refurbished and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>64</b> <b>Tullymally Road</b> <b>Portaferry</b>	LEAP Tier 3	The play provision at Tullymally Road will continue in its current form. It will be reviewed in line with the Rural Provision policy (Section 6.3) at the end of the equipment life.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Millisle</b>			
<b>1</b> <b>Ballywalter Road</b> <b>Millisle</b>	Destination Tier1	The Tier 1 facility at Ballywalter Road will remain in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>



<b>66</b> <b>Ballywalter Road Millisle</b>	MUGA	The MUGA at Ballywalter Road will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>72</b> <b>Millisle Ship</b>	SHIP	The Millisle Ship will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Portavogie</b>			
<b>12</b> <b>Anchor Park Portavogie</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Anchor Park will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>27</b> <b>New Harbour Road Portavogie</b>	NEAP Teir 2	The play area will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>58</b> <b>Lawson Park Portavogie</b>	LEAP Tier 3	Considering the provision at Anchor Park and New Harbour Road, Lawson Park is considered surplus to requirements and will be removed, a road crossing on Springfield Road will be pursued.	<b>Removal</b>
<b>67</b> <b>New Harbour Road Portavogie</b>	MUGA	The MUGA at New Harbour Road will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>79</b> <b>New Harbour Road Portavogie</b>	SKATE PARK	A new skate park has recently been installed.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

<b>Ballywalter</b>			
<b>49</b> <b>Windy Ridge</b> <b>Ballywalter</b>	NEAP Tier 2	It is proposed to upgrade the play area at Springvale Road to Tier 1 facility, therefore Windy Ridge will be surplus and removed.	<b>Removal</b>
<b>61</b> <b>Springvale Road</b> <b>Ballywalter</b>	LEAP Tier 3	The site at Springvale is to be upgraded to a new Tier 1 facility. There is also the potential for a MUGA to be developed on one of the adjacent tennis courts.	<b>Upgrade/MUGA install</b>
<b>73</b> <b>Ballywalter Ship</b>	SHIP	The Ballywalter Ship will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Kircubbin</b>			
<b>39</b> <b>Parsonage Road, Kircubbin</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Considering the proposed upgrade of the playground at The Green to a Tier 1, alongside the proposed upgrade of the MUGA at Parsonage Road, the Parsonage Road play site will be surplus to requirements and will be removed.	<b>Removal/ upgrade MUGA</b>
<b>46</b> <b>The Green, Kircubbin</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The play facility at The Green will be upgraded to a Tier 1 and the signage needs improved to improve its tourism potential.	<b>Upgrade</b>
<b>68</b> <b>Parsonage Road</b> <b>Kircubbin</b>	MUGA	It is proposed to upgrade this to a full MUGA following the removal of the play area and the upgrade of the site at The Green. There is the potential to relocate it to The Green and consider this site for alternative use/disposal.	<b>Upgrade/relocation</b>

<b>50</b> <b>Ballycranbeg</b> <b>Kircubbin</b>	LEAP Tier 3	The site at Ballycranbeg has recently been refurbished. It will be reviewed in line with the Rural Provision policy (Section 6.3) at the end of the equipment life.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Cloughey</b>			
<b>36</b> <b>Main Street</b> <b>Cloughey</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The play area will be upgraded to a Tier 1 to cover the entire settlement and improve its tourism potential. A skate park/MUGA/pump track is considered for the future.	<b>Upgrade/MUGA/skate park/pump track install</b>
<b>Ballyhalbert</b>			
<b>35</b> <b>High Street</b> <b>Ballyhalbert</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The play site at High Street Ballyhalbert holds potential to be upgraded to a Tier 1 facility to serve the surrounding growing settlement and tourism potential. The signage needs improving so that tourists on the coast road know that it is there.	<b>Upgrade</b>
<b>Carrowdore</b>			
<b>20</b> <b>Carrowdore</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Recently refurbished, Carrowdore will remain in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

<b>Greyabbey</b>			
<b>29</b> <b>Islandview,</b> <b>Greyabbey</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The playground will be upgraded to a Tier 1. There is the potential to provide a MUGA on the tennis courts at the nearby Community Centre.	<b>Upgrade/MUGA install</b>
<b>38</b> <b>North Street,</b> <b>Greyabbey</b>	NEAP Tier2	The play facility at North Street will be surplus and will be removed based on Island View being upgraded.	<b>Removal</b>
<b>Rubane</b>			
<b>60</b> <b>Rubane</b>	LEAP Tier 3	Rubane will continue in its current form with the potential of its relocation explored.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

*Table 10: Ards Peninsula North and South Play Recommendations*

## 7.2 Bangor & Donaghadee (Bangor West, Bangor Central & Bangor East)

Bangor West and Bangor Central are two of the most densely populated DEAs within ANDBC area. Incorporating Bangor East and Donaghadee, these three DEAs have a total population of 67,550 residents with a total of 27 play sites.

### 7.2.1 Bangor (Population 61,011)

Bangor West and Bangor Central have pockets of highly youthful areas and while there is some overlap in play provision (according to the Six Acre Standard), the majority of play sites serve their distinct communities and therefore there is a need to retain multiple sites. In contrast there are some areas, particularly in Bangor West DEA, that could be considered as being under-provided for. However, it should be noted that these areas are not particularly youthful in their population make up. Furthermore, Bangor West has the added benefit of being in close proximity to the Tier 1, Pickie Park which is likely to undergo refurbishment as part of the Bangor Waterfront scheme. It is likely that the site at Kingsland (in the DEA of Bangor East and Donaghadee) will also benefit from the Bangor Waterfront scheme with the potential for a new skate park to be installed in the Kingsland area. Alongside Pickie, Ward Park which is also a Tier 1 play area will serve the high density of housing within a relatively youthful catchment area. However, Ballyholme is considered to be surplus and will be removed and the Council will consider the land for alternative use. Council has plans for the installation of a new Tier 2 play facility in the Ashbury/Ballycrochan area to address the gap in provision identified in the previous strategy.



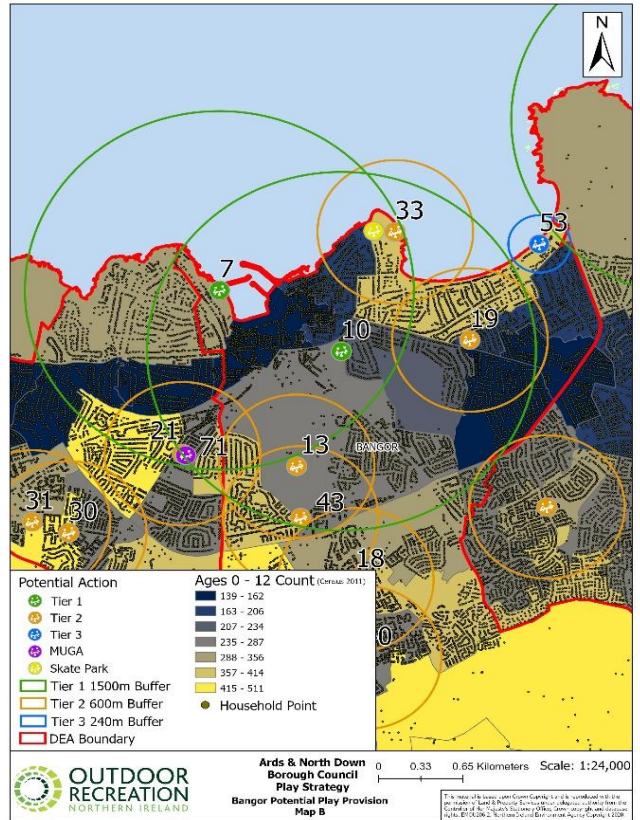
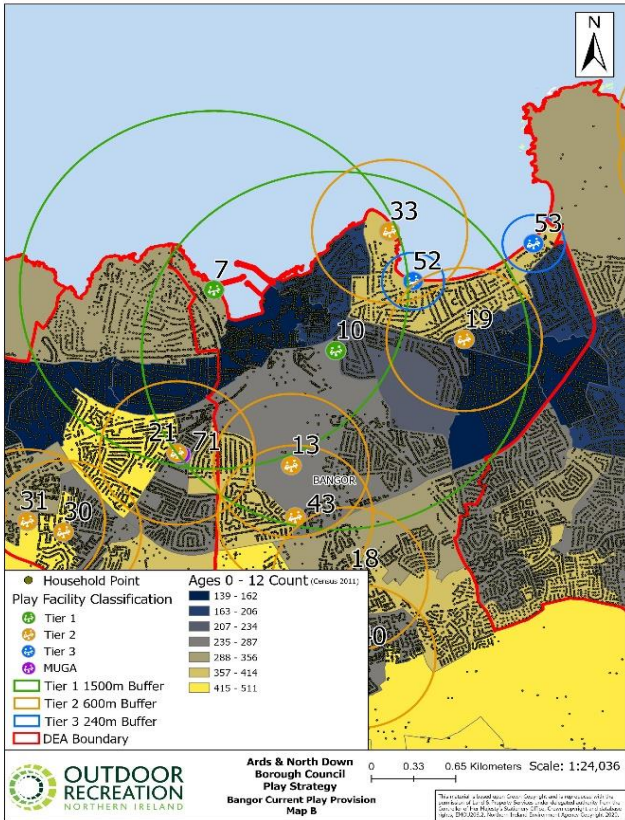


Figure 16: Bangor Current and Potential Play Provision Map A

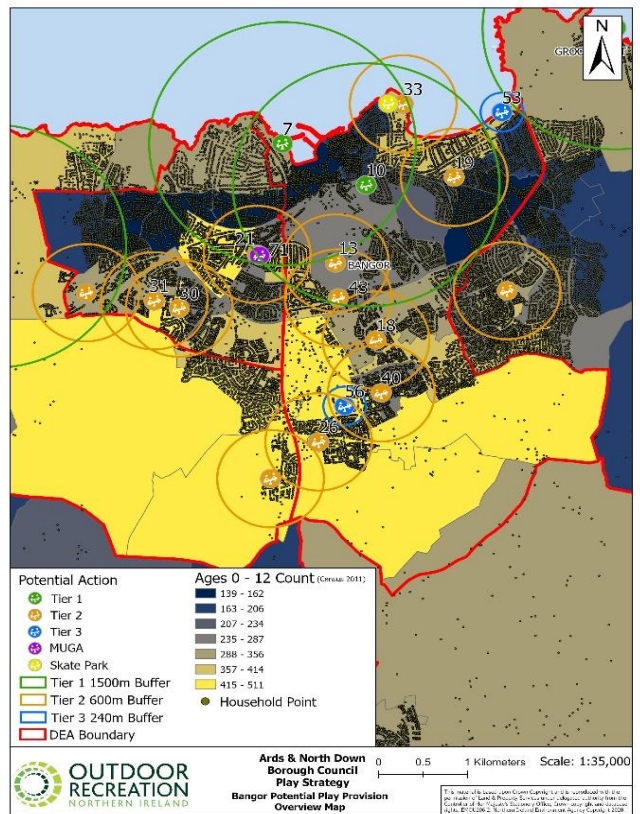
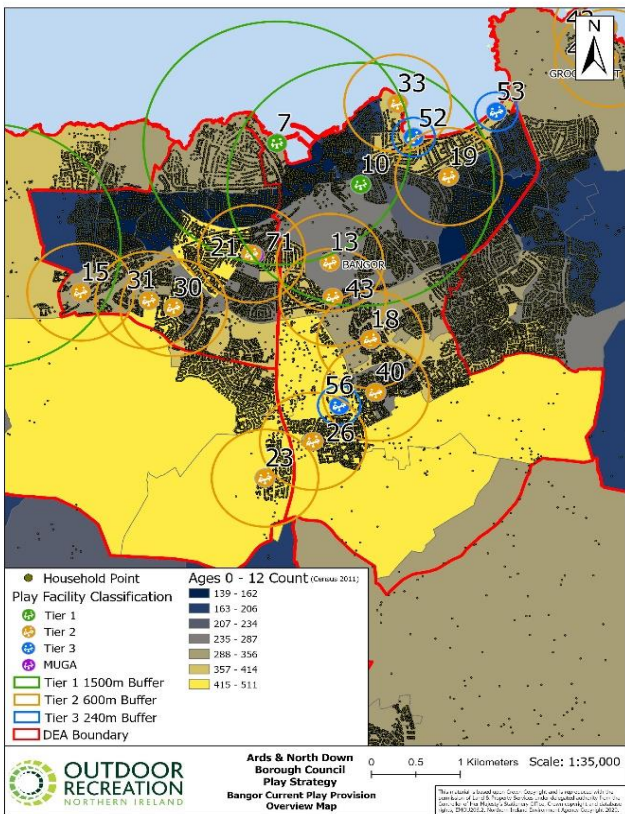


Figure 17: Bangor Current and Potential Play Provision Map B



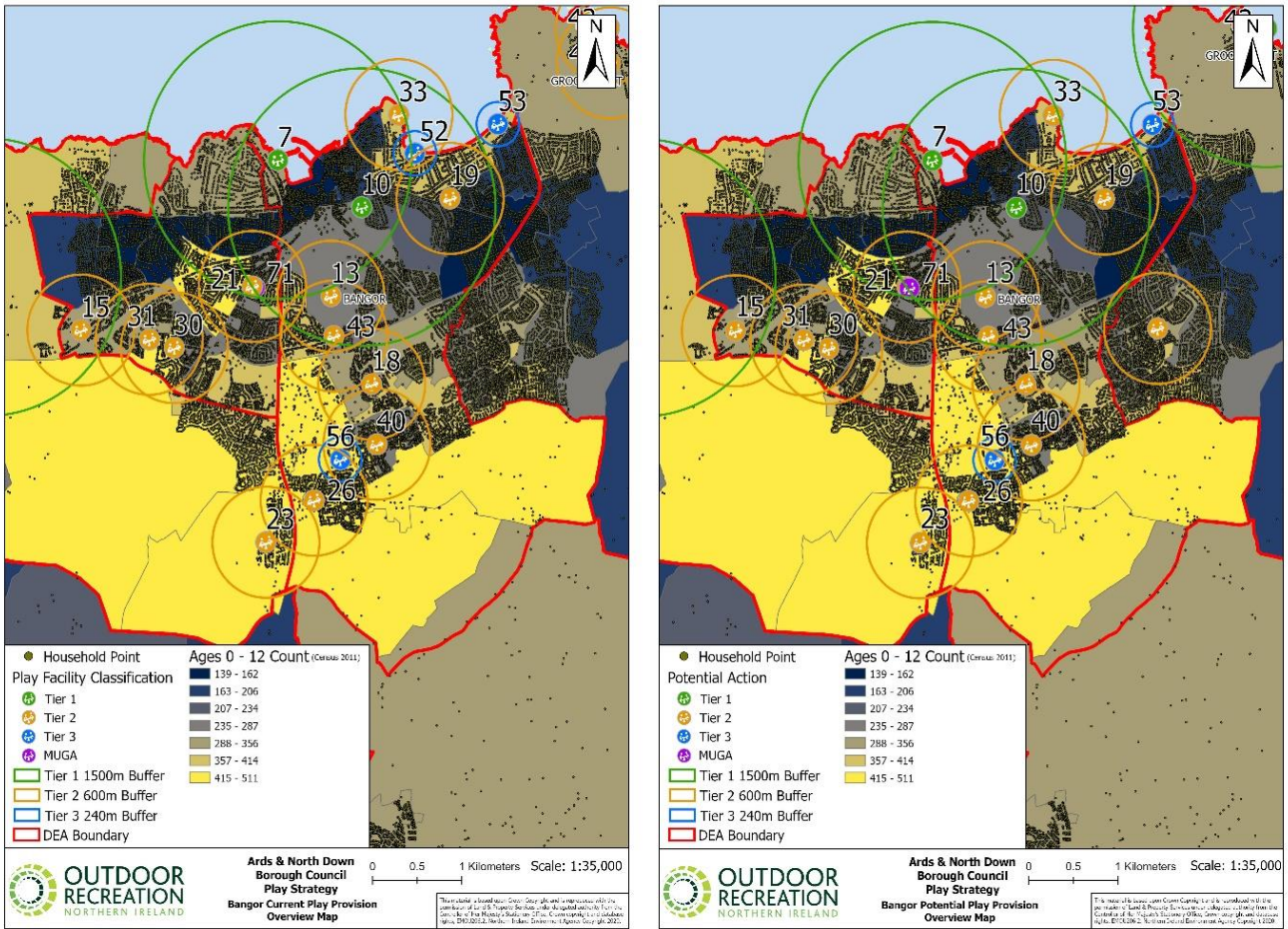


Figure 18: Bangor Current and Potential Play Provision Overview

### 7.2.2 Donaghadee (Population 6,869)

In Donaghadee there is an overprovision of play areas. The play area at Pinks Green is considered surplus and will be removed given its proximity to Lemons Wharf. Given the proximity of Beechfield and Northfield alongside the provision at Lemons Wharf, Beechfield is considered surplus. Northfield serves the high-density housing in its area. Hunts Park is being retained but it is recognised that this area maybe be subject to regeneration in the future, as proposed in the Donaghadee Masterplan and the potential greenway passing this location. There is currently no provision for older children in Donaghadee. There is the potential for such provision at The Commons and or Hunts Park in the form of a skate park/MUGA/pump track.

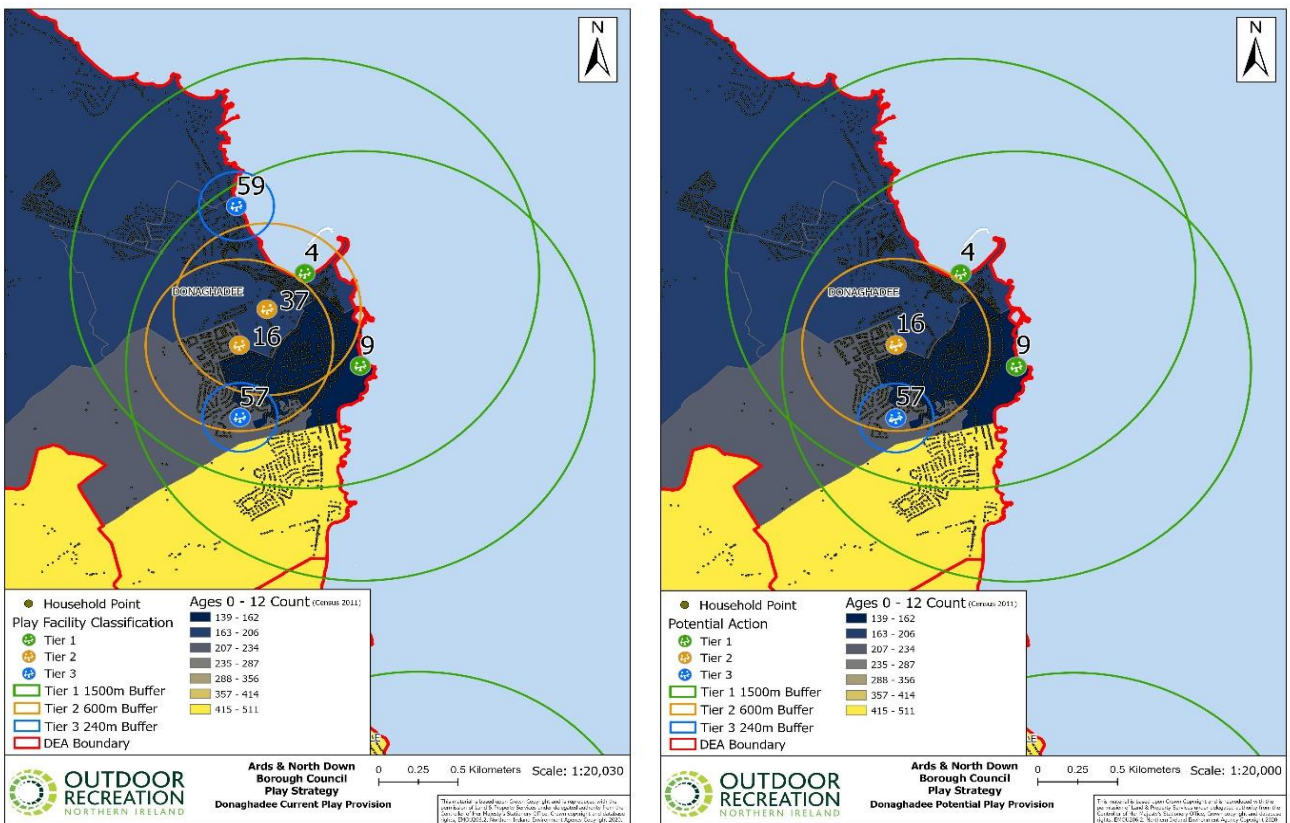


Figure 19: Donaghadee Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.2.3 Groomsport (Population 3,005)

It is proposed to upgrade the play area at Groomsport Seafront to a Tier 1 facility and there is the potential for a MUGA to be installed on one of the tennis courts. Subsequently the facility at Springwell will be considered surplus to and removed.

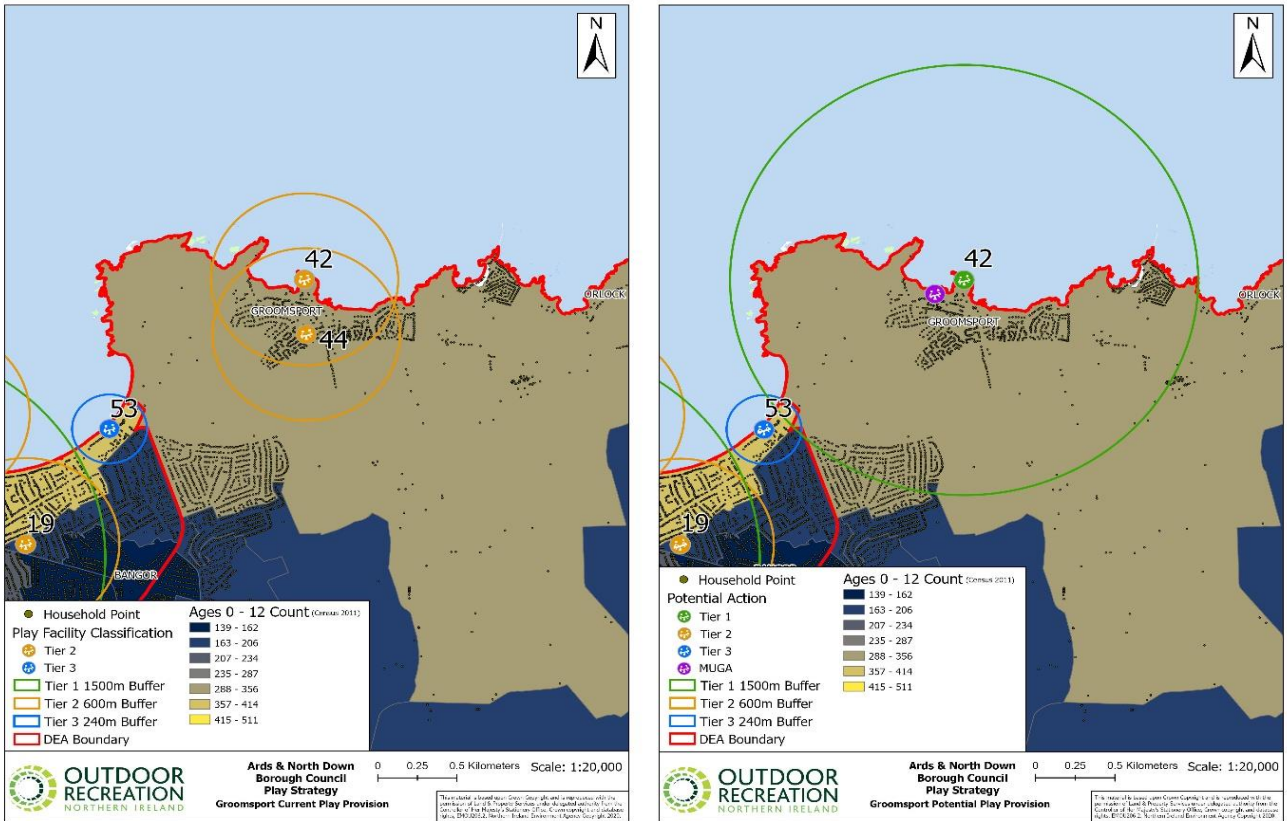


Figure 20: Groomsport Current and Potential Play Provision

7.2.4 Cotton (No population data available)

There will be no change to the play area at Cotton.

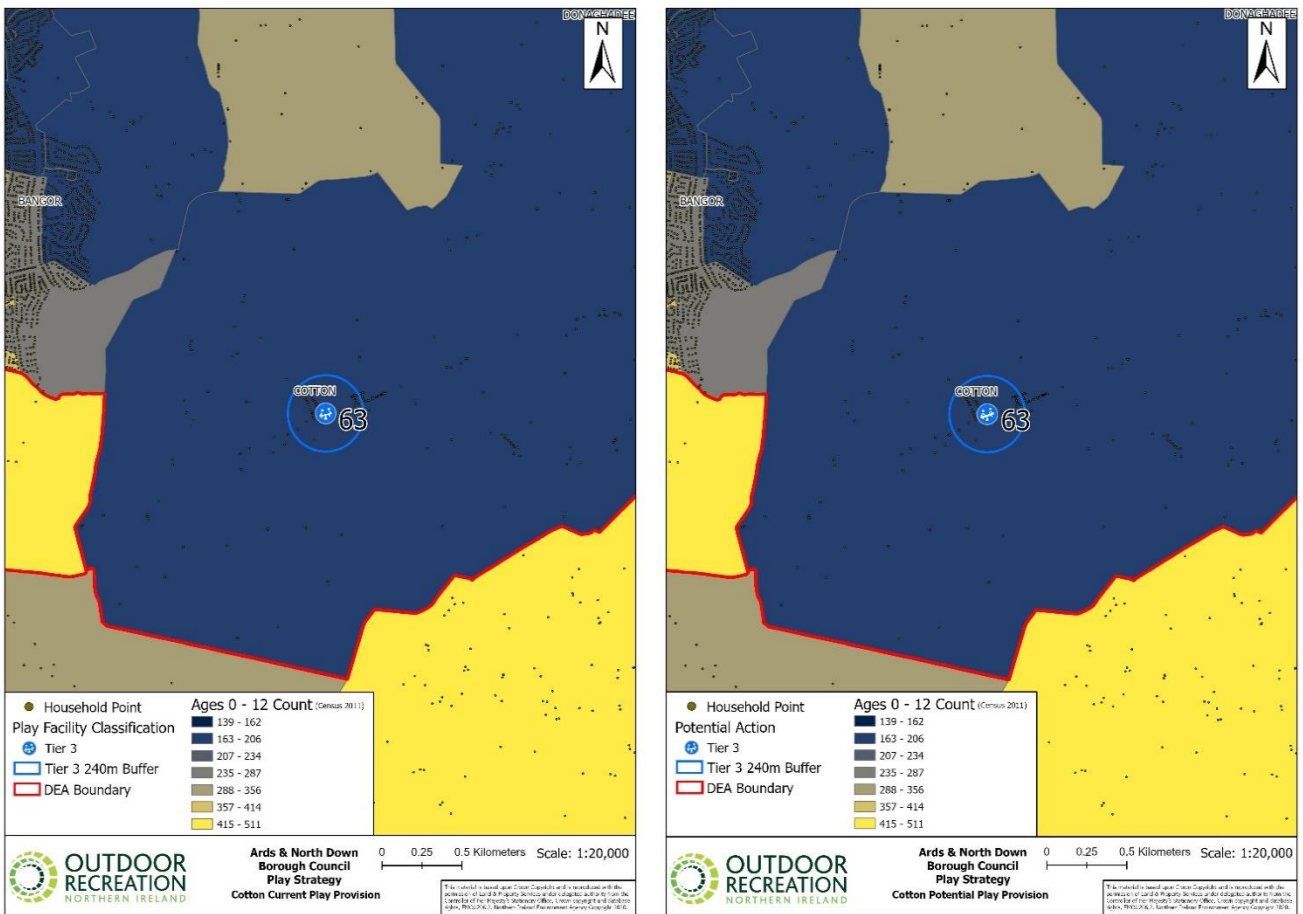


Figure 21: Cotton Current and Potential Play Provision

Table 11 overleaf provides full details of the play parks/play areas in the Bangor and Donaghadee DEA's along with proposed recommendations for each site.

Reference Number/ Name	Facility Type	Commentary	Action
<b>Bangor</b>			
<b>7 Pickie Bangor</b>	Destination/SAP Tier 1	A popular site with locals and tourists alike, Pickie Park will support the potential re-development of Bangor Waterfront serving the high density of housing within a relatively youthful catchment area.	<b>Will form part of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment</b>
<b>10 Ward Park Bangor</b>	Destination/SAP Tier 1	An important site for the Borough, Ward Park will serve the high density of housing within a relatively youthful catchment area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>13 Aurora Bangor</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Sited at the leisure centre, Aurora is a well-used site. However, Council acknowledges that the play area requires upgrade with plans to refurbish the site later in 2021.	<b>To be refurbished</b>
<b>15 Bangor Sportsplex</b>	NEAP Tier 2	The play facility at Bangor Sportsplex is well used and it will remain in its current form, continuing to serve the relatively youthful population which surrounds the site.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>18 Bloomfield Bangor</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Bloomfield will continue in its current form as it serves a higher density local population.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>19 Brice Park Bangor</b>	NEAP Tier 2	Brice Park will continue in its current format, serving the high density of housing surrounding the facility.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

21 Clandeboye Bangor	NEAP Tier 2	This play facility has been refurbished within the last five years and is well used by the local population.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
23 Conlig	NEAP Tier 2	The park at Conlig will remain in its current form. While there is overlap with neighbouring play sites, the road network dictates the need for a play site on both sides of the road.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
26 Green Road Conlig	NEAP Tier 2	Similar to neighbouring play sites, the site at Green Road is in close proximity to other play facilities. However, these sites serve high density, youthful populations in distinct communities and therefore will remain in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
30 Kilcooley Community Centre Bangor	NEAP Tier 2	The play area at Kilcooley Community Centre will remain in its current format.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
31 Kilcooley Square Bangor	NEAP Tier 2	Kilcooley Square will continue in its current and the potential of a play partnership with the adjacent school will be explored.	<b>Potential play partnership</b>
33 Kingsland Bangor	NEAP Tier 2	The play facility at Kingsland will remain as an important play area for the local community. The play park is well used and caters for a relatively youthful population. There are plans to review Kingsland as part of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment and possibly its relocation in the general Kingsland area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

40 Rathgill Bangor	NEAP Teir 2	The play provision at Rathgill has been installed in the last five years and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
43 Skipperstone Bangor	NEAP Tier 2	Skipperstone will continue in its current form serving the high-density housing in the area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
52 Ballyholme Bangor	LEAP Teir 3	Ballyholme is considered surplus given the proximity of Banks Lane and Kingsland and will be removed. Council will consider the land for alternative use as part of the wider Bangor Waterfront redevelopment.	<b>Removal</b>
53 Banks Lane Bangor	LEAP Teir 3	Its proximity to the beach means that Banks Lane is a well-used site and holds potential for enhancement. While the site cannot be increased in size the Banks Lane area will be enhanced as part of the Bangor Waterfront redevelopment.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
56 Fort Park Bangor	LEAP Teir 3	Similar to neighbouring play sites, the smaller play site at Fort Park is in close proximity to other play facilities. However, these sites serve high density, youthful populations in distinct communities and therefore will remain in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
71 Clandeboye Bangor	MUGA	Clandeboye MUGA will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

<b>Donaghadee</b>			
<b>4</b> <b>Lemons Wharf</b> <b>Donaghadee</b>	Destination/SAP  Tier 1	Lemons Wharf is a popular coastal play site that is well used. While the mapping shows that it is not in a particularly youthful area, this site is important to visitors and tourists alike.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>9</b> <b>The Commons</b> <b>Donaghadee</b>	Destination/SAP  Tier 1	The Commons is an important site in Donaghadee. It is well used and includes tennis courts and trim trail which the proposed greenway will pass this site. There are also plans for a skate park/MUGA/pump track to be installed at this site.	<b>Management and maintenance/Skate park/MUGA/pump track install</b>
<b>16</b> <b>Beechfield,</b> <b>Donaghadee</b>	NEAP  Tier 2	Given the proximity of Beechfield and Northfield (and also Lemons Wharf) and the low population of 0-12-year olds in the surrounding area, Beechfield is considered surplus and will be removed.	<b>Removal</b>
<b>37</b> <b>Northfield,</b> <b>Donaghadee</b>	NEAP  Tier 2	Northfield will remain to serve the high density housing in its area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>57</b> <b>Hunts Park,</b> <b>Donaghadee</b>	LEAP  Tier 3	The small play area at Hunts Park will continue in its current form. Council recognises the potential of this area for future development which may be incorporated into a larger regeneration scheme or as part of the proposed greenway. There is the potential to instal a skate park/MUGA/pump track in this location.	<b>Management and maintenance potential redevelopment/skate park/MUGA/pump track install</b>
<b>59</b> <b>Pinks Green</b> <b>Donagahdee</b>	LEAP  Tier 3	The small play area at Pinks Green is considered surplus and will be removed.	<b>Removal</b>

<b>Groomsport</b>			
<b>42</b> <b>Seafront</b> <b>Groomsport</b>	NEAP Teir 2	The play facility at Groomsport Seafront is well used by locals and tourists alike and offers the potential to be upgraded to a Tier 1 site. There is also the potential convert one of the adjacent tennis courts to a MUGA.	<b>Upgrade/MUGA install</b>
<b>44</b> <b>Springwell</b> <b>Groomsport</b>	NEAP Teir 2	Given the potential upgrade of the play facility at Groomsport Seafront, the play facility at Springwell will be considered surplus and will be removed.	<b>Removal</b>
<b>Cotton</b>			
<b>63</b> <b>Cotton</b>	LEAP Teir 3	The play facility at the Cotton will continue in its current form to serve the surrounding rural area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

*Table 11: Bangor and Donaghadee Play Recommendations*

### 7.3 Comber

The DEA of Comber has 19,020 residents. Play provision in the Comber DEA is located around the centres of Comber, Ballygowan, Killinchy and Lisbane with a total of 9 play sites.

#### 7.3.1 Comber (Population 9,071)

Despite ongoing development, Comber still retains a large proportion of its green space, in particular the Enler River walkways with the Comber Greenway is also now a major asset for the town. The Comber Town Masterplan notes that the Greenway terminates short of Comber Town Centre and linking the Greenway to the Town Centre and beyond, continues to be a core aspiration, something which the Council is pursuing at present.

Within Comber itself, there are two main play areas, Lower Crescent and Upper Crescent. Lower Crescent has been recently refurbished and there is the potential for Upper Crescent to be moved to Muckers Field beside the new skate park which was installed as part of the Peace IV scheme to reduce overlap and provide more reaching coverage in provision to the south east and to provide provision for the Enler Village.

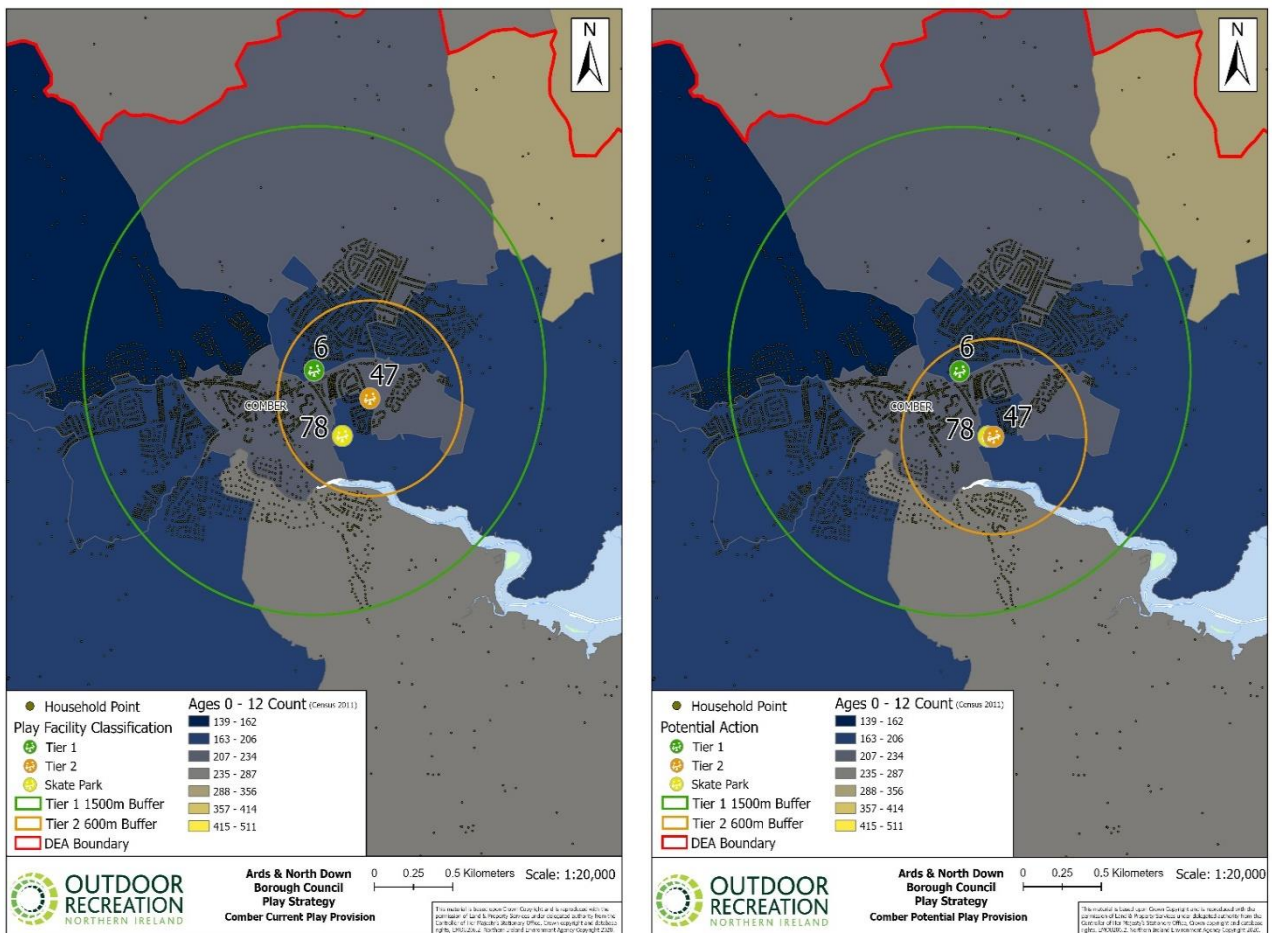


Figure 22: Comber Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.3.2 Ballygowan (Population 2,957)

Within Ballygowan, the facility at Belfast Road will continue in its current form and serve the local town and surrounding area. Dickson Park will also continue in its current form. The potential to add facilities for older children and young people will be explored in the future close to the playing fields at Moss Road. If this project doesn't continue there is the potential to upgrade either Belfast Road or Dickson Park and in the future and to add provision for older children.

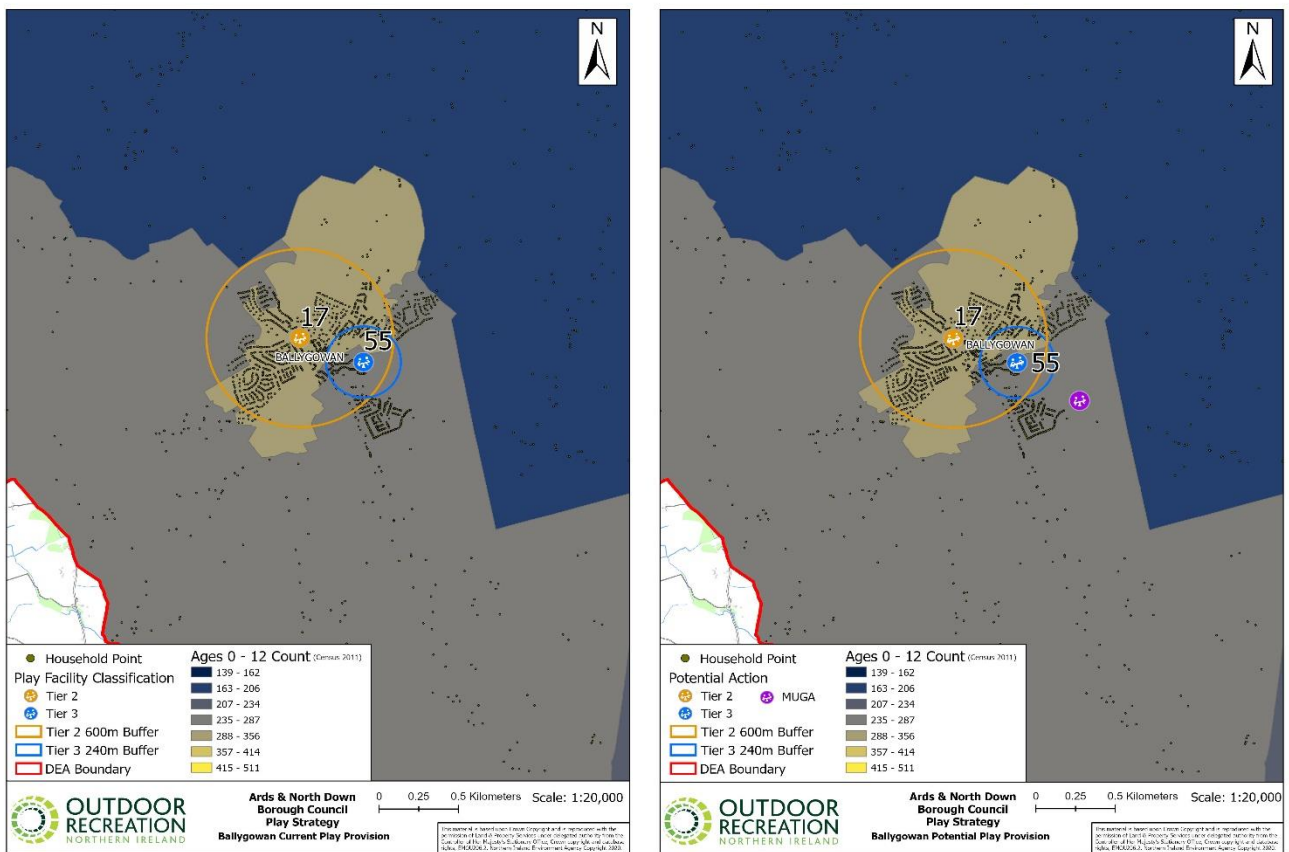


Figure 23: Ballygowan Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.3.4 Killinchy (Population 539)

Killinchy has one Tier 2 play area which has recently been refurbished. A pump track has been added as a result of receiving Village Renewal funding and the adjacent kickabout area has had its drainage improved and nets replaced. It is considered that Killinchy has adequate play provision.

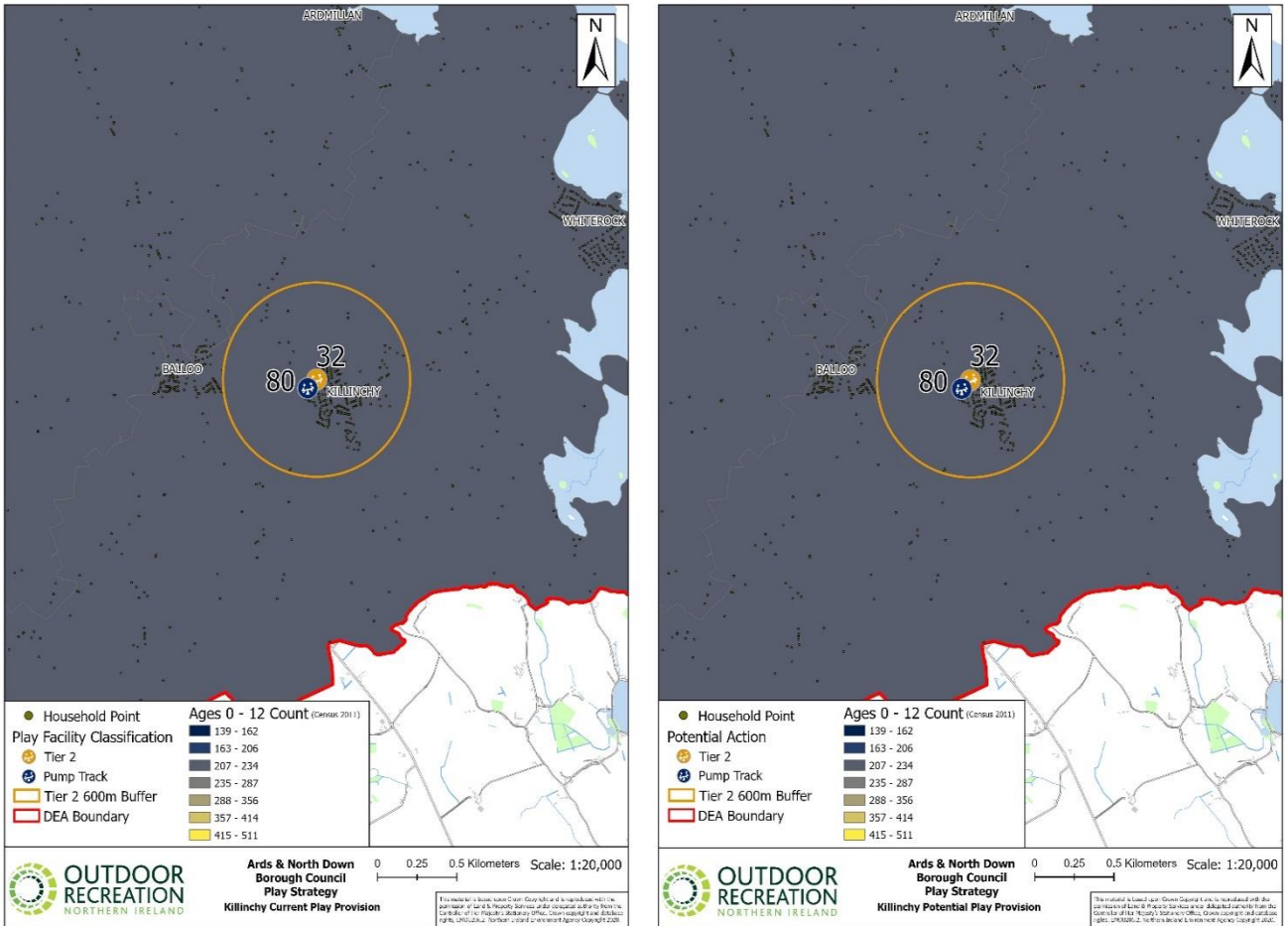


Figure 24: Killinchy Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.3.5 Lisbane (Population 430)

There will be no change to the play area at Lisbane and it will continue to serve this small settlement.

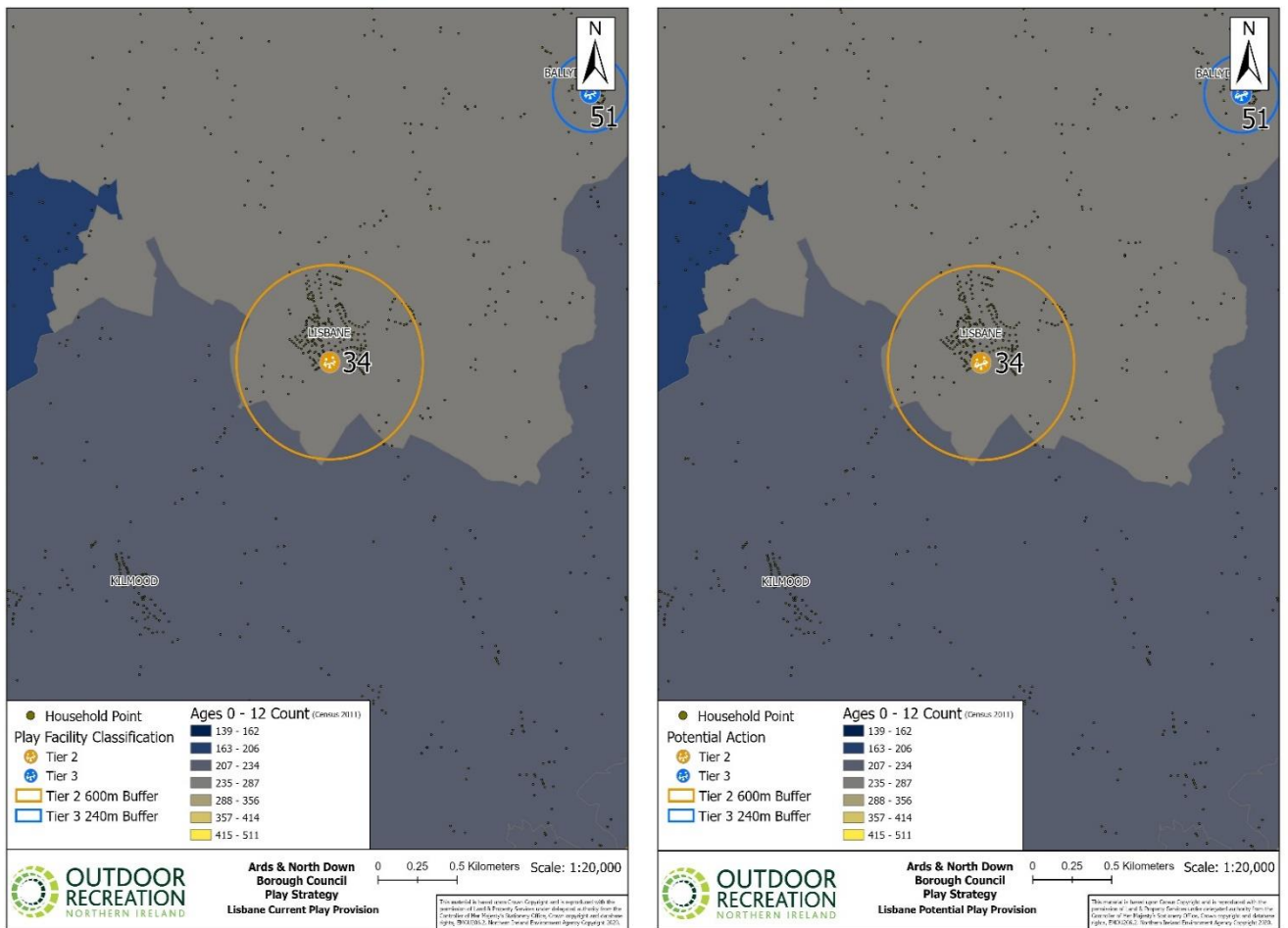


Figure 25: Lisbane Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.3.6 Ballydrain (Population 123)

There will be no change to the play area at Ballydrain (No. 51) but the site will be reviewed in line with the Rural Provision policy outlined in Section 6.3 at the end of the equipment life.

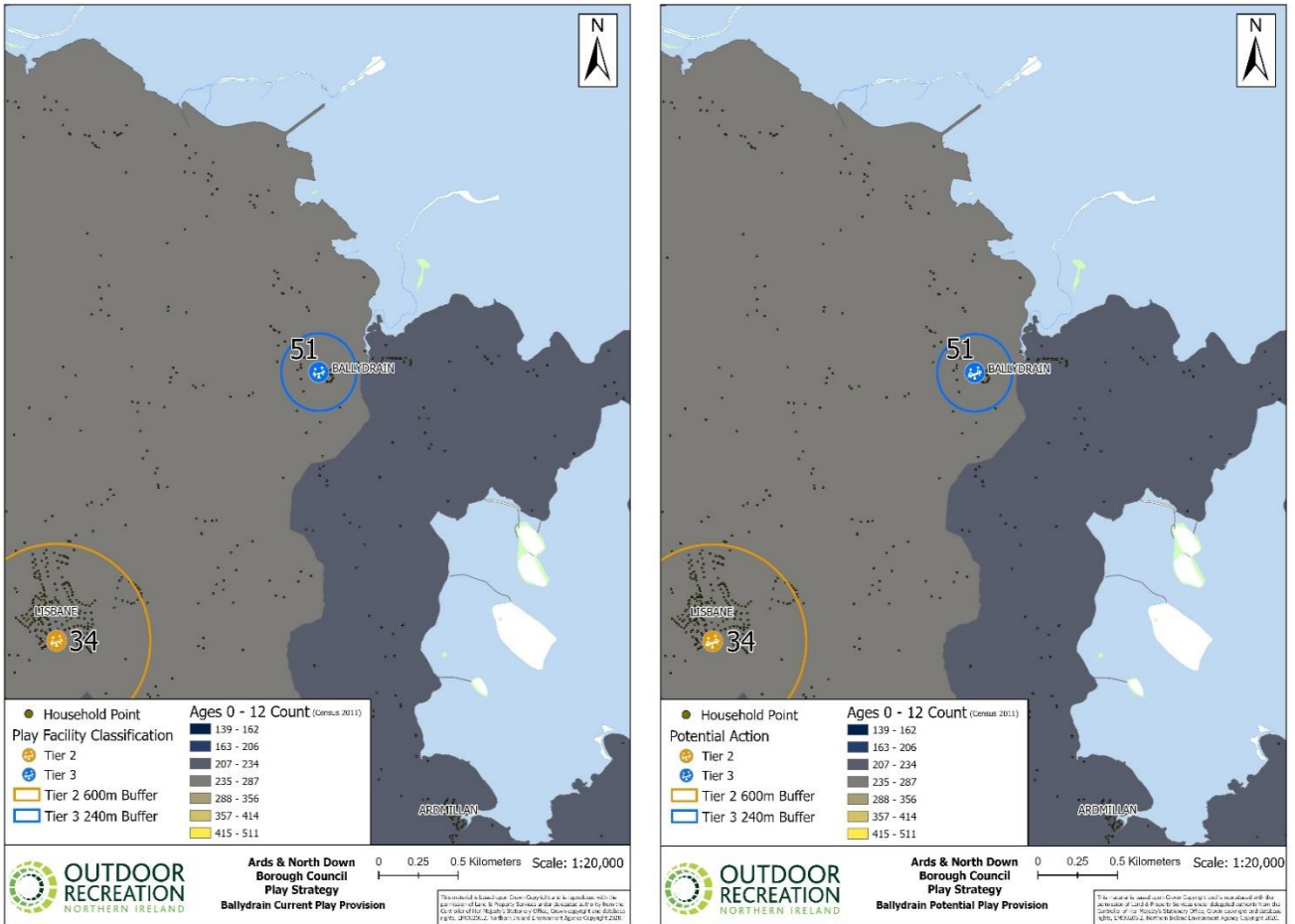


Figure 26: Ballydrain Current and Potential Play Provision

Table 12 overleaf provides full details of the play parks/play areas in the Comber DEA along with proposed recommendations for each site.

Reference Number/ Name	Facility Type	Commentary	Action
<b>Comber</b>			
6 Lower Crescent Comber	Destination Tier 1	The play facility at Lower Crescent was recently updated and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
47 Upper Crescent, Comber	NEAP Tier 2	The provision at Upper Crescent has the potential to be relocated to Muckers Field to reduce overlap of provision with Lower Crescent and provide coverage to wider area of Comber including the Enler Village development to the east of the site, with the possibility of this being done in conjunction with the developer.	<b>Relocation</b>
78 Muckers Field Comber	Skate Park	A skate park has recently been installed in Muckers Field.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Ballygowan</b>			
17 Belfast Road, Ballygowan	NEAP Tier 2	The play facility at Belfast Road, Ballygowan, will continue in its current form. If the Moss Road proposals are not delivered, then the potential to upgrade this site will be considered.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

55 Dickson Park Ballygowan	LEAP Teir 3	Given the high density of households and the relatively youthful population of Ballygowan, Dickson Park will remain in its current form and will supplement the provision at Belfast Road. The potential for provision for older children will be considered in the future at the Moss Road site, if this does not go ahead this site may be considered for an upgrade.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Killinchy</b>			
32 Killinchy	NEAP Teir 2	Play area has recently been replaced and the adjacent kick about area has had drainage improvements. It will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
80 Killinchy	PUMP TRACK	A new pump track has been installed through external funding.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Lisbane</b>			
34 Lisbane	NEAP Teir 2	Lisbane will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Ballydrain</b>			
51 Ballydrain	LEAP Teir 3	Ballydrain will continue in its current form and will be reviewed at the end of the equipment life in line with the Rural Provision policy (Section 6.3).	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

*Table 12: Comber Play Recommendations*



## 7.4 Hollywood and Clondeboye (Population 20,800)

With a relatively youthful population, the play provision within the DEA of Hollywood and Clondeboye is positioned mainly around coastal locations where the housing density is at its highest. There are 7 play sites within Hollywood and Clondeboye area.

### 7.4.1 Hollywood (Population 11,257)

Hollywood offers two Tier 1 facilities including 'Johnny the Jig' and Seapark and Tier 2 play areas at Ballymenoch and Redburn. While these sites are well used, Seapark holds further potential for the development of a skate park/pump track or a MUGA on one of the adjacent tennis courts to address the under provision of facilities for older children and young people in Hollywood, considering it has the highest concentration of older children in the Borough within its DEA. It is considered that there is adequate provision for younger children.

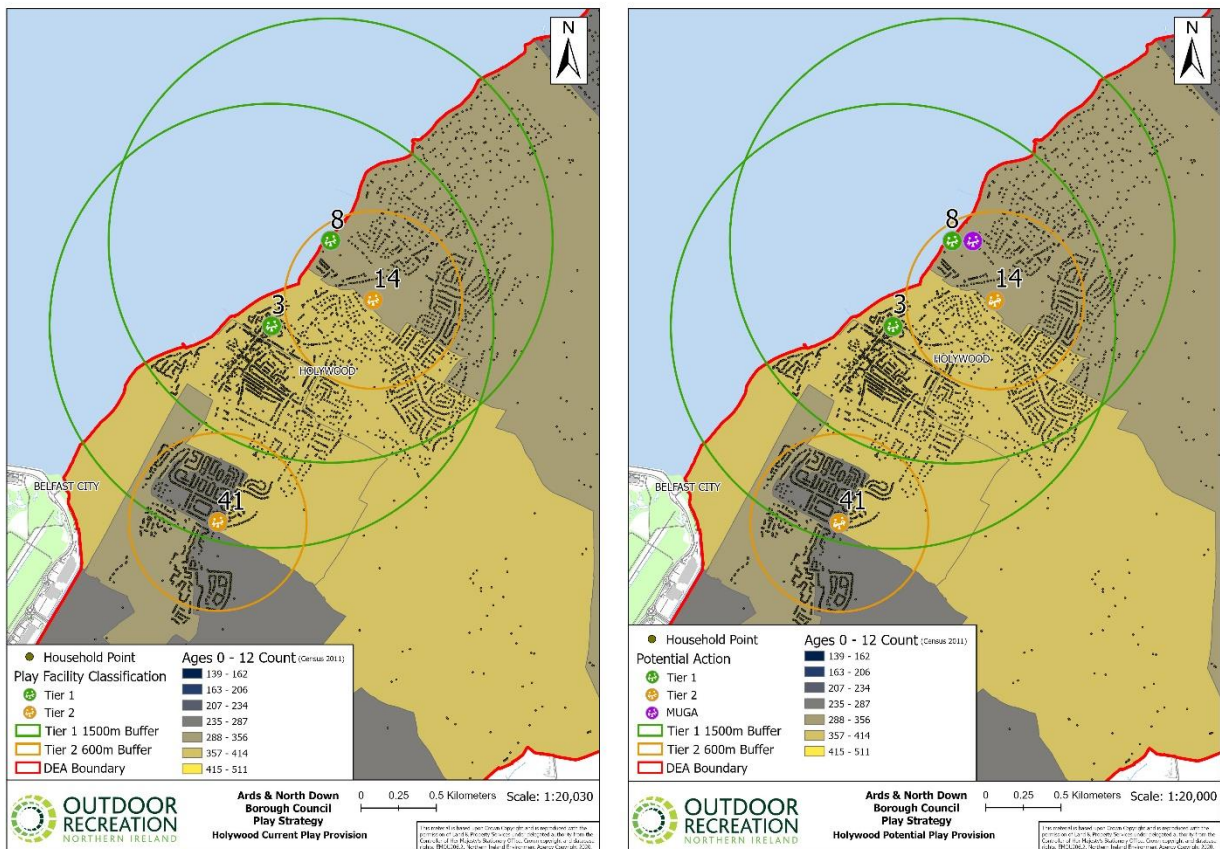


Figure 27: Hollywood Current and Potential Play Provision



### 7.4.2 Helen's Bay (Population 1,390)

The Tier 2 site at Helen's Bay serves a relatively youthful population and will continue in its current form. The newly installed Tier 1 facility at Cootehall Road, Crawfordsburn (No. 24) also includes the south eastern portion of Helen's Bay in its radial catchment area.

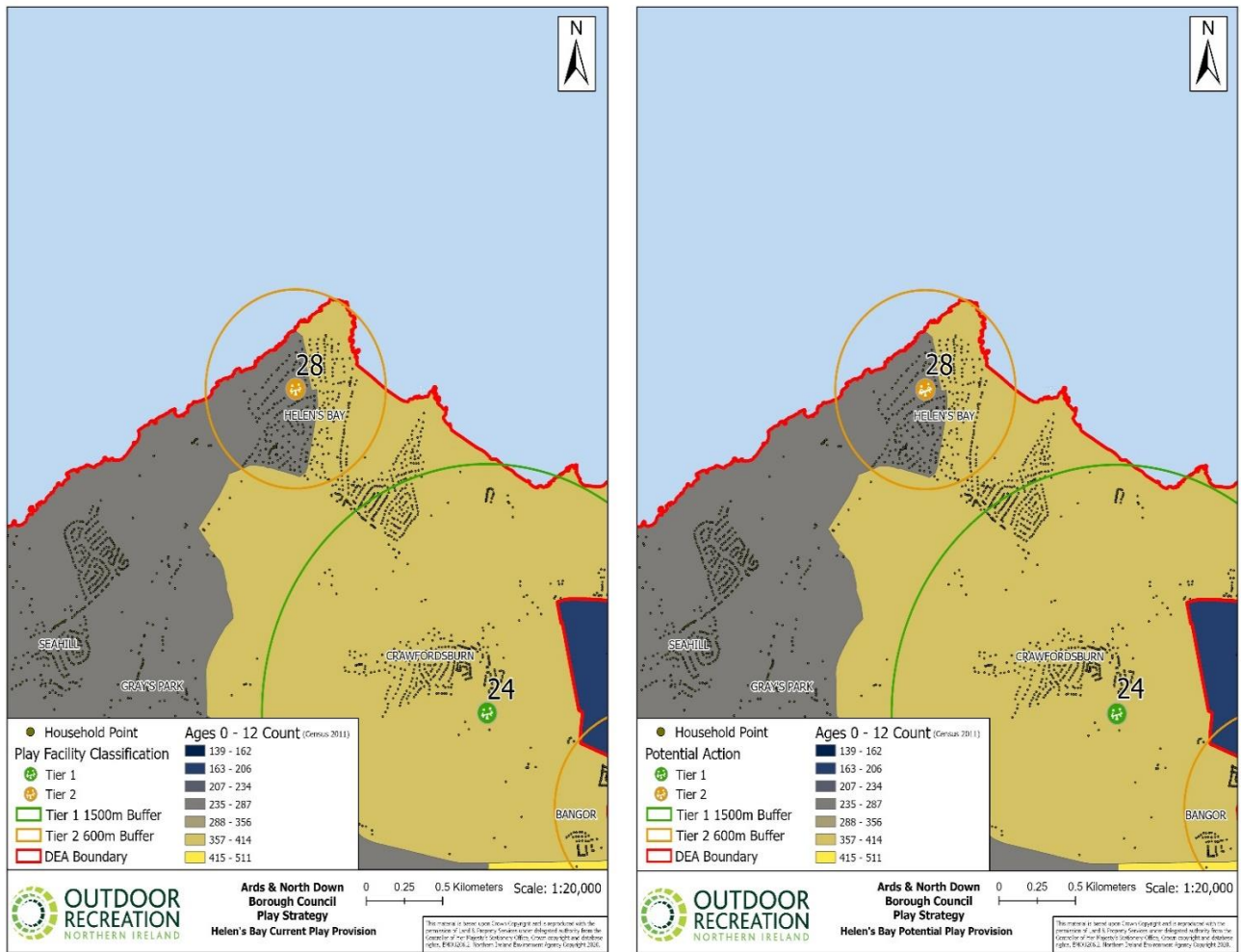


Figure 28: Helen's Bay Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.4.3 Crawfordsburn (Population 587)

External funding was obtained to upgrade the play area at Crawfordsburn from a Tier 2 to a Tier 1 to serve locals and tourists in the village. This upgrade now extends its radial catchment area to include a portion of Helen’s Bay to the west and Bangor to the east.

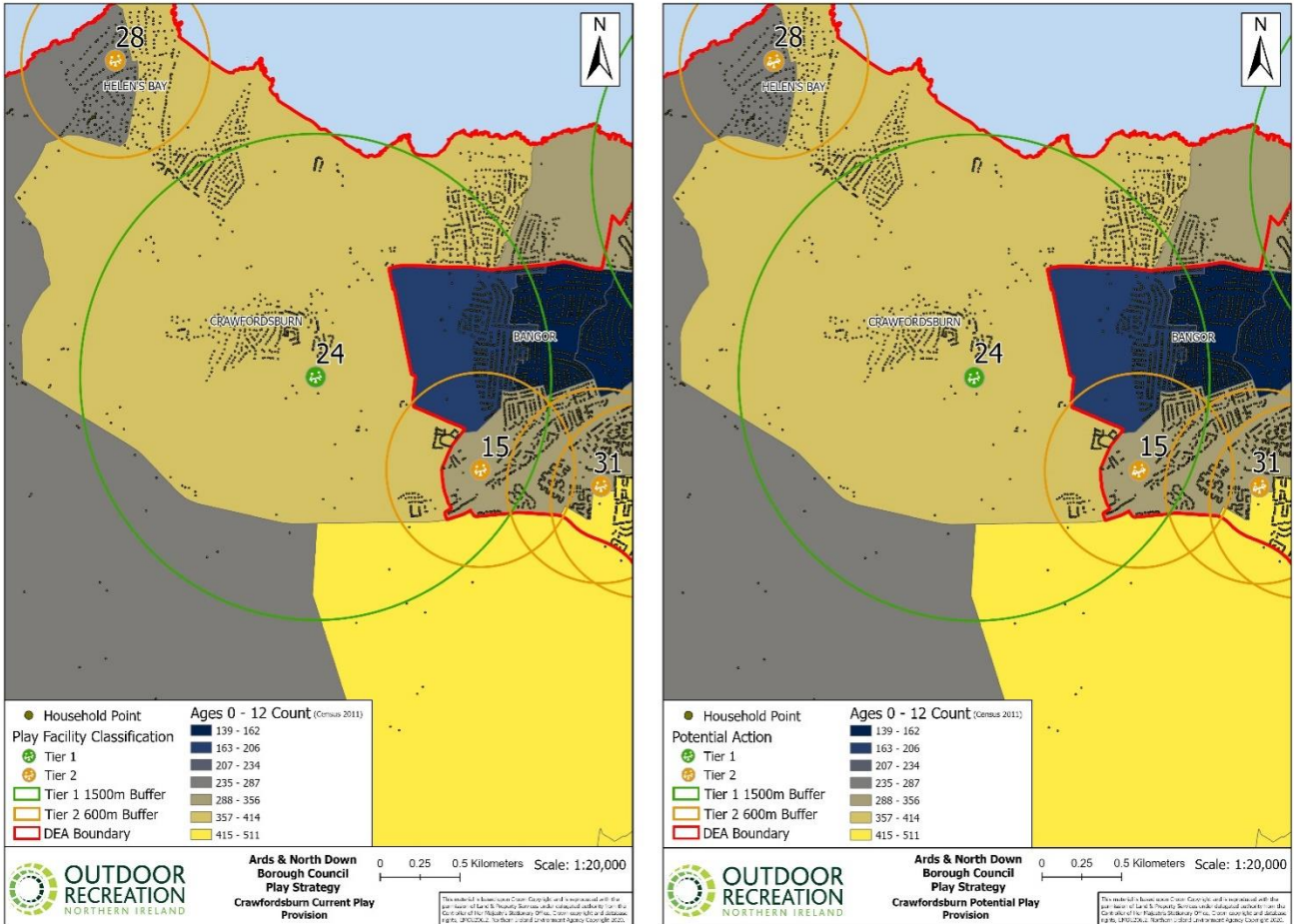


Figure 29: Crawfordsburn Current and Potential Play Provision

### 7.4.4 Craigantlet (No population data available)

The Tier 3 play area at Craigantlet will continue in its current form and will be reviewed at the end of the equipment life in line with the Rural Provision policy outlined in Section 6.3.

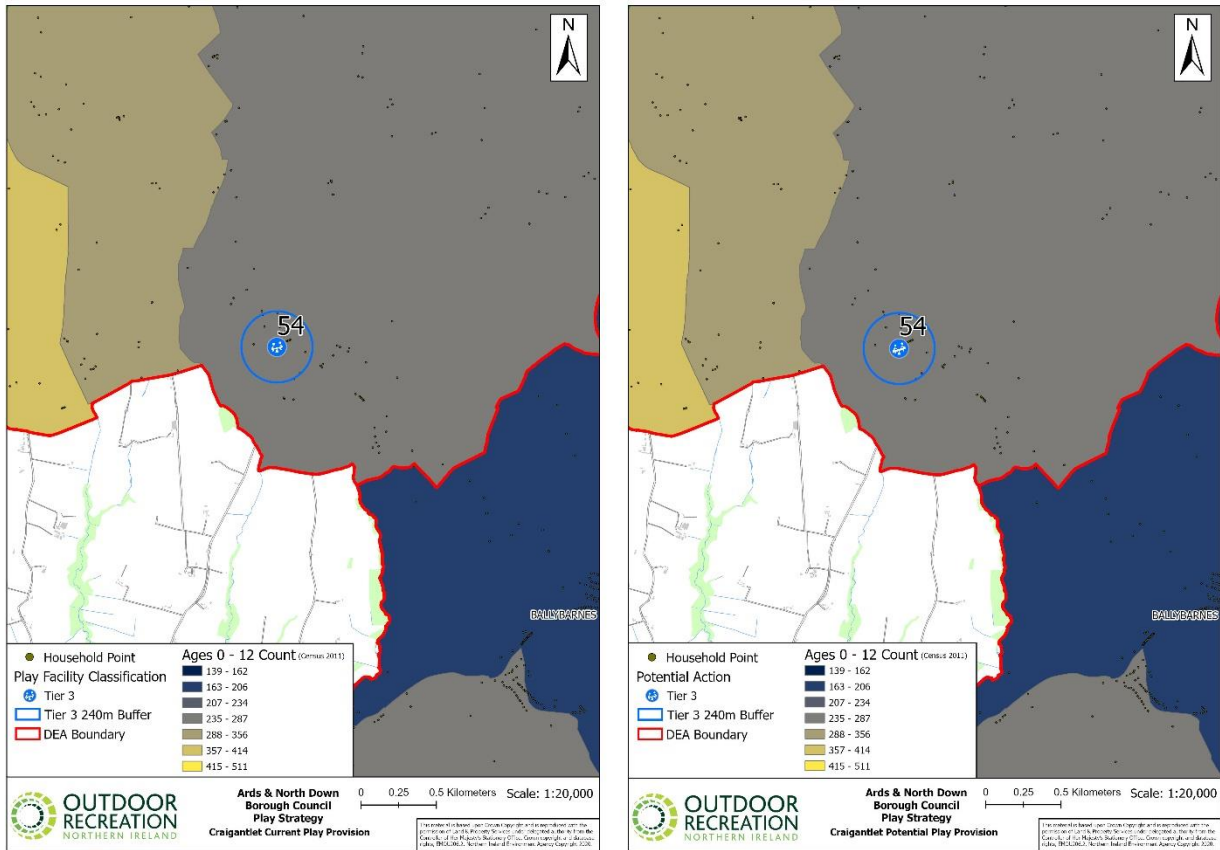


Figure 30: Craigantlet Current and Potential Play Provision

Table 13 overleaf provides full details of the play parks/play areas in the Holywood and Clondeboye DEA along with proposed recommendations are for each site.

Reference Number/ Name	Facility Type	Commentary	Action
<b>Hollywood</b>			
3 Johnny The Jig Holywood	Destination Tier 1	Johnny the Jig is a well-used play facility, serving the youthful and densely populated area and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
8 Seapark Holywood	Destination Tier 1	The playpark at Seapark is well used and continues to be popular with visitors and locals, serving the youthful and densely populated area. There is the potential to add a skate park/pump track in this area or a MUGA on one of the adjacent tennis courts.	<b>Skate park/MUGA/pump track install</b>
14 Ballymenoch Holywood	NEAP Tier 2	Ballymenoch play park will remain in its current form located in the wider Ballymenoch Park and will continue to serve the relatively youthful population in the surrounding area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
41 Redburn Holywood	NEAP Tier 2	The play area at Redburn Community Centre will continue in its current form serving the relatively youthful and densely populated area.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Helen's Bay</b>			
28 Helen's Bay	NEAP Tier 2	The site at Helen's Bay will continue in its current form and will continue to serve the relatively youthful population.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

<b>Crawfordsburn</b>			
<b>24</b> <b>Cootehall Road</b> <b>Crawfordsburn</b>	Destination  Tier 1	Cootehall Road has recently been upgraded to a Tier 1 to help serve the tourism potential in the area with Crawfordsburn Country Park and Crawfordsburn Inn in the surrounding vicinity. Additional signage is required also.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
<b>Craigantlet</b>			
<b>54</b> <b>Craigantlet</b>	LEAP  Tier 3	The small play area at Craigantlet will be reviewed at the end of the equipment life in line with the Rural Provision policy outlined in Section 6.3.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

*Table 13: Hollywood and Clandeboye Play Recommendations*



## 7.5 Newtownards

The DEA of Newtownards has a population of 29,170, with 12 play parks/play areas. The previous area of under provision highlighted in the extant Ards Play Strategy has been remedied by the installation of a new Tier 2 play area in the Scrabo Estate.

### 7.5.1 Newtownards (Population 29,170)

Newtownards has recently benefited from a Tier 0 Flagship facility at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre (ABMWLC) which has a catchment area covering the entire Borough and beyond (see the insert map on the maps below). The site offers an extensive fixed play area with accessible and sensory facilities, skate park and pump track. MUGA's are located at Londonderry Park, Abbots Estate and the West Winds. There may be the potential for some sort of natural play/adventure facilities at Whitespots Country Park in the future, but this will be dependent on the proposals for Whitespots and external funding.

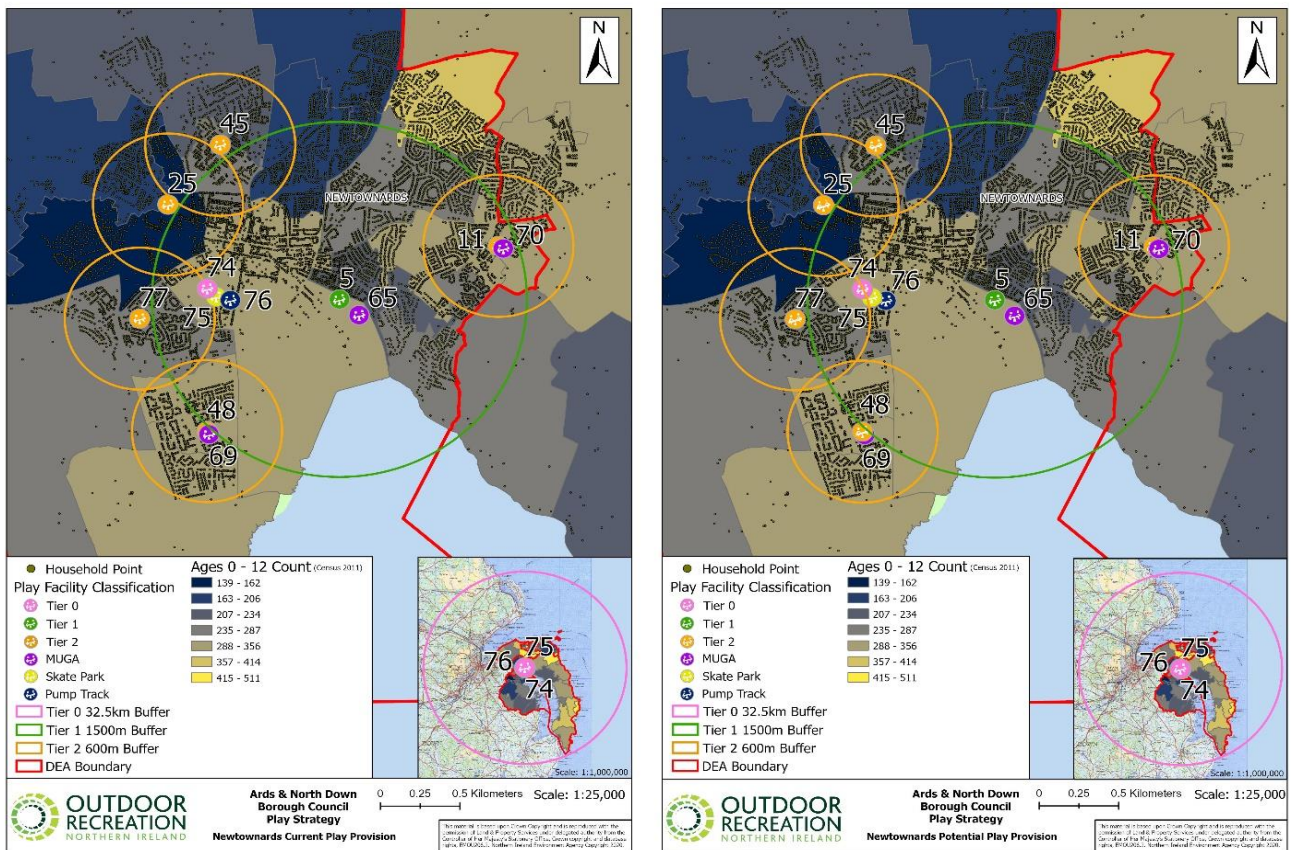


Figure 31: Newtownards DEA Current and Potential Play Provision

Table 14 overleaf provides full details of the play parks/play areas in the Newtownards DEA along with proposed recommendations for each site.

Reference Number/ Name	Facility Type	Commentary	Action
<b>Newtownards</b>			
74 ABMWLC Newtownards	Flagship Tier 0	This is the largest and best equipped play area in the Borough. Along with the adjacent skate park and pump track it has a Borough wide and beyond draw.	Management and maintenance
5 Londonderry Park Newtownards	Destination Tier 1	As a Tier 1 site, the play facility at Londonderry Park is a valuable resource serving the surrounding area and further afield.	Management and maintenance
11 Abbot Gardens Newtownards	NEAP Tier 2	The site at Abbot Gardens will continue in its current form and will serve the relatively youthful population in the area.	Management and maintenance
25 Glenford Park, Newtownards	NEAP Tier 2	Glenford Park is to be incorporated into the proposed new Park and Ride facility, possibly in a slightly different location.	Management and maintenance
45 The Glen, Newtownards	NEAP Tier 2	The Glen, Newtownards, is a well-used play facility that serves the surrounding housing estate. This site will continue in its current form.	Management and maintenance
77 Scrabo Estate Newtownards	NEAP Tier 2	The Scrabo Estate play area has recently been installed and will continue in its current form.	Management and maintenance
48 West Winds Newtownards	NEAP Tier 2	West Winds will continue in its current form.	Management and maintenance



65 Londonderry Park Newtownards	MUGA	The MUGA at Londonderry Park will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
69 West Winds Newtownards	MUGA	The MUGA at West Winds is well used and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
70 Abbots Gardens Newtownards	MUGA	The MUGA at Abbots is well used and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
75 ABMWLC Newtownards	Skate Park	The skate park is well used and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>
76 ABMWLC Newtownards	Pump Track	The pump track is well used and will continue in its current form.	<b>Management and maintenance</b>

*Table 14: Newtownards Play Recommendations*

## 8 ACTION PLAN

This Play Strategy has afforded the opportunity to review in detail the play sites across AND and prepare an over-arching strategic approach to the delivery of play provision in the Borough. A 5-year Action Plan to identify the priorities over the first half of the Strategy has been outlined below. This Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed in advance of the first half of the lifespan of the Strategy and the actions reprioritised where necessary. On initial review, the Council appears well provided for in terms of fixed play provision, with the main population centres having the greatest number of facilities for 0-12 year olds. However, a lack of provision for older children and young people has been identified, as well as an acknowledgement that trends have changed in relation to play provision and there are other, and in some cases, better ways to address play needs especially in rural areas. There is also a desire for bigger and better-quality play provision that people are willing to travel further to use.

The main priorities for the first phase of the Play Strategy are as follows:

- **Cross-departmental Steering Group for Play**

Establish a steering group consisting of the relevant Council Officers across the various departments to ensure that the importance of play is recognised, and that Council's existing and proposed play provision is effectively delivered and managed in an efficient way.

- **Deliver the Annual Refurbishment Schedule**

Using the annual Independent Inspectors Assessments Scores a targeted list of play areas to be refurbished will be identified. The lowest scoring playgrounds will be prioritised. On average three playgrounds are refurbished annually with the current Assets and Property budget allocation. This could be increased which would result in a more sustainable refurbishment schedule given the extent of the portfolio as referred to in **Section 1.4**.

- **Provision for Older Children and Young People**

The lack of provision for the 13 -17 years old age group needs addressed and therefore a range of play areas for their use, including MUGA's, skate parks, pump tracks and teen shelters and play events etc., needs to be actioned. The delivery of such provision will be focused on where the need is greatest and in line with that specified in **Section 6.9**. Full details on where the new proposed facilities are to be located is detailed in **Section 7**. The delivery of these additional facilities will be subject to financial business case approval and internal/external funding.

- **Design Guidelines**

To ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of fixed play provision in the Borough it should be in accordance with the design guidelines outlined in **Section 6.1** and should be applied in the

appointment process of contractors who install play areas in the Borough. This also should apply where play provision is being developed by third parties where they should be advised to where possible, to deliver their play areas in accordance with these guidelines and the Play Strategy in general. At the core of these guidelines is the need to deliver quality play provision that has a high play value, where it is needed.

- **Inclusive Play**

It is recognised that the ability to play should be available to all regardless of age, gender and ability. The delivery of fixed and non-fixed play provision should ensure that all needs are catered for. As a minimum, 30% of equipment in fixed play areas should be classified as “inclusive” and there should be a reasonable balance of play equipment suitable for younger children 3 – 6 years and 6 – 12 years old.

- **Improve the Quality and Consolidate the Fixed Play Provision**

To meet the demand for larger, better equipped play areas which offer better quality and play value, the play provision in the Borough should be consolidated where appropriate and upgraded to serve the local need. Any over/under provision should be addressed as outlined in the District Electoral Area proposals in **Section 7**.

- **Public and Youth Consultation**

Ensure that Public Consultation, including consultation with the Youth Forum or similar is central to the delivery of the recommendations of the Play Strategy to make sure that the play needs of the Borough are being met in a targeted and balanced manner.

- **Appointment of a Play Development Officer**

Subject to assessment using Council’s standard procedures and processes including a business case approval, it is proposed that a dedicated Play Development Officer is appointed by 2022, to ensure the delivery of the Play Strategy and, more specifically, deliver on the non-fixed approaches to play provision, to ensure a diverse and up to date approach to play provision in the Borough is successfully delivered.

- **Play Events Programme**

The celebration of the Annual National Playday in August should be recognised, and resources provided to facilitate this. A Play Events schedule should be developed and delivered to increase the variety of play provision in the Borough with the Play Development Officer taking the lead on this. More play opportunities should be incorporated into existing Council led events. Community led initiatives could also be developed. This will be subject to staff resource and funding provision.

- **Play Partnerships**

The possibility of partnership working should be explored by the Play Development Officer. It could be a useful tool in delivering play projects to a high standard and in a shorter timeframe and potentially costs. Where there is a lack of available land or over/under provision of play areas, partnerships with organisations such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations and the Education Authority should be developed. These relationships can be facilitated through the Community Planning process also.

- **Develop Informal Play**

Play in the natural environment and the public realm should be explored by assessing what resources Council already has to facilitate this, in existing play areas, parks and open spaces. Collaborative approaches to the management of the land and the features within it should be encouraged in order to deliver informal play. The possibility of Play Trails could be developed in some locations.

- **Appointment of a Play Champion**

In order to ensure the successful delivery of the Play Strategy support is needed in the form of a Play Champion selected from the Elected Members to hold Council accountable for meeting the play needs of the Borough and to provide insight and feedback to Council from the public's perspective. This should be on an annual basis.

- **Play Development Officers Forum**

Ensure the Council is represented on the Play Development Officers Forum which is hosted by Playboard NI in order to keep up to date with current developments and best practice.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Strategic Context

The following synopsis gives a brief description of how play across ANDBC area contributes towards the delivery of key international, regional and sub-regional policies and strategies.

<b>International Strategic Context</b>
International policies of relevance in terms of reach and impact to the development of play in Ards and North Down are summarised below.
<p><b><i>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 31), (1992)</i></b></p> <p>The basic principle underlying the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, often referred to as the UNCRC (<i>defined as being 18 years or younger in Article 1</i>) are born with the same fundamental rights as all humans, with a number of additional rights due to their vulnerability.</p> <p>Article 31 of the UNCRC formally recognises the child’s right to play and engage in recreational activities, including cultural activities and the arts. Article 31 states:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">13.1. States Parties recognise the right of the child 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.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">13.2. States parties 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.</p> <p>The convention has 54 Articles in total. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments must work together to ensure that all children can enjoy their rights.</p>

## Regional Strategic Context

Northern Ireland-wide policies and strategies of relevance, in terms of reach and impact, to the development of play in Ards and North Down are summarised below.

### ***Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021 (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016)***

The draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework sets out the aspirations of the Executive for society and provides a strategic context for other key strategies and policies. The PfG was also to shape the development of the Executive's budget over the course of the current mandate and provide a mechanism for ensuring funds are best directed to where they can contribute most.

The Framework contains 14 strategic outcomes and connect to every aspect of government, including the attainment of good health and education, economic success and building confident and peaceful communities. The following outcomes are of relevance to the proposed project:

- Outcome 1: Prosper through a strong, competitive (regionally balanced) economy
- Outcome 2: Live and work sustainably – protecting the environment
- Outcome 3: Have a more equal society
- Outcome 4: Enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- Outcome 5: Are an innovative, creative society where people can reach their full potential
- Outcome 7: Have a safe community where we respect the law and each other
- Outcome 8: Care for other and help those in need
- Outcome 9: Are a shared society that respects diversity
- Outcome 10: Are a confident, outward-looking society
- Outcome 11: Have high quality public services
- Outcome 12: Create a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest
- Outcome 13: Connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
- Outcome 14: Give our children and young people the best start in life.

These outcomes are supported by 42 indicators, with each indicator accompanied by a measure which is largely derived from existing statistics to monitor performance. The following indicators are of relevance to this project:

- Indicator 6: Improve mental health  
(Measure: % of population with GHQ12 scores  $\geq 4$  (signifying possible mental health problem))
- Indicator 15: Improve child development  
(Measure: % of children who are at the appropriate stage of development in their immediate pre-school year)
- Indicator 27: Improve cultural participation  
(Measure: % engaging with arts/cultural activities in the past year)
- Indicator 30: Improve our attractiveness as a destination and our international reputation

(Measure: Total spend by external visitors)

- Indicator 31: Increase shared space

(Measure: % who think leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are 'shared and open' to both Protestants and Catholics)

- Indicator 42: Increase quality of life for people with disabilities.

(Measure: Average life satisfaction score of people with disabilities)

Key to the success of the PfG is the ability of Departments to work collaboratively with not only themselves but also with other public bodies and the voluntary and private sector.

### ***NI Executive Play and Leisure Policy Statement for NI (2009)***

OFMDFM's ten year Play and Leisure Policy Statement published in 2009 sets out the NI Executive's commitment towards ensuring 'a happier and healthier future for all children and young people'. The Strategy has its foundations in the UNs Convention on the Rights of the Child which was ratified by the UK Government in December 1991 and which recognised the importance of play and leisure activities for the child

It recognises that play is a 'powerful medium for teaching values to children of all ages' and recognises that good play and leisure opportunities can help improve quality of life and safety in neighbourhoods, tackle obesity, promote children's health and well-being, support children's development and build community cohesion.

It sets out a vision for play as:

To recognise, respect and resource play is to recognise, respect and value childhood'

The Statement also recognises that some vulnerable groups including those in poverty and those with disabilities may need additional support to gain maximum benefit from play.

### ***NI Executive Play and Leisure Implementation Plan (2011)***

Consistent with 'Our Children and Young People – Our pledge', OFMDFM's 2011 Play and Leisure Implementation Plan includes the following key principles:

**Accessibility** – there should be sufficient provision of, and transport to and from places and spaces for play and leisure.



**Affordability** – costs associated with play and leisure should be affordable.

**Flexibility** – service providers should be flexible in delivering play and leisure opportunities based on the views of children and young people.

**Diversity** – through play and leisure there should be access to a range of people, places, spaces, opportunities and experience.

**Integration** – play and leisure opportunities should support building community cohesion.

**Inclusion** – irrespective of race, ethnic origin, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability religion or age, all children and young people should have an equal opportunity to be involved in play and leisure.

**Quality** – all play and leisure activities and places should be fit for purpose and meet quality standards.

**Participation** – all children and young people can participate actively in decision that may affect their play and leisure.

***Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety: A Fitter Future for All Framework (2012-2022)***

Obesity is a major public health challenge facing Northern Ireland and this Framework aims to empower people to make healthier choices by creating an environment that supports a physically active lifestyle and healthy diet. It recognises the factors that underpin weight gain are complex and cover factors such as social and individual psychology, physiology, food consumption, individual activity and built environment.

In addition, many wider determinants of poor health such as health inequalities, poverty, mental health, deprivation and structural barriers also play an important role. Of relevance, the Strategy outlines how environmental factors affect choices and behaviours, for example lack of access to green space reduces physical activity opportunities. Other barriers include poor urban environments, limited safe play facilities and community safety, and sedentary lifestyles.

### ***Our Great Outdoors: The Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (2014)***

Commissioned by Sport NI and Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), this Action Plan highlights the importance of making the outdoors accessible to everyone and the opportunities that there are to participate, not only in rural areas but also in the urban fringes.

Due to the recognition that access to green space enhances physical health and mental wellbeing, and addresses issues associated with social exclusion, rural and urban deprivation and community cohesion, the vision of the Action Plan is “a culture of dynamic, sustainable outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland”.

It provides key recommendations for actions and challenges that need to be addressed to make Northern Ireland a place where outdoor recreation can deliver:

- Healthy active lifestyles for local people from all communities
- Economic growth through encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the outdoors and
- Protection of landscapes and ecosystems for future generations.

To achieve this vision, the aim is for Northern Ireland to be a place where:

- There are increasing opportunities and improved access and infrastructure for sustained and increased participation for everyone in a broad range of outdoor recreation activities
- There are accompanying benefits to local communities, especially those who are socially excluded in terms of health, social inclusion, cohesion, equality, and economic development
- People enjoy the outdoors and show a high degree of responsibility for themselves, towards others and towards the environment they are using, and play their part in maintaining, supporting and enhancing our environment and heritage.

### ***Sport Matters: Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019***

Whilst Northern Ireland’s environment provides conditions of international quality for a range of activities, Sport Matters recognises that not everyone will wish to achieve in performance sport and the Strategy encourages the development and use of open spaces for a variety of informal recreational and outdoor pursuits. Being out in the fresh air enjoying the scenery, whilst taking exercise, is recognised as important elements of Sport Matters. The Strategy acknowledges that the natural environment provides many opportunities for a range of sporting and physical recreation activities but that access issues exist.

In aspiring to the target that “by 2019 Northern Ireland will have developed a range of new, improved and shared sports facilities to a standard comparable with other similar regions of the UK’, the Strategy indicates that this will require:

- public access to and sustainable use of, publicly owned lands across Northern Ireland for sport, physical recreation and activity tourism (2015 target included in the Strategy);
- a planning system which facilitates and protects the provision of spaces for sport and physical recreation by following Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space Sport and Outdoor Recreation (2019 target included in the Strategy).

Sport Northern Ireland has also approved a position statement regarding access to the natural environment in support of targets set out in the Sport Matters Strategy. The objective is to communicate Sport Northern Ireland’s position on the importance it attaches to outdoor recreation through:

- promoting the best possible access to the natural environment for sport and physical recreation within the confines of existing legislation and organisation of the land ownership prevalent in Northern Ireland.
- encouraging and supporting full access for responsible and sustainable recreation on public land through the development of policy frameworks by other public bodies – especially those that are custodians of public land.

Sport NI have since published a further document which aims to set out key themes and essential requirements needed to further develop sport in Northern Ireland from 2020-2025. Their mission statement is “by 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised by all”.

SportNI strive to work with partners to implement an inclusive and welcoming sport culture from one which is focused on compliance and targets. The cornerstones of this approach are:

- Building a positive sport culture in NI
- Wellness and wellbeing
- Women in sport
- Inclusion in sport

***Our Children, Our Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2006)***

OFMDFM’s 10-year strategy for children and young people published in 2006, sets out 6 high level outcomes namely:

- Healthy

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

Play links directly to these outcomes in the following way:

**Healthy:** Play, especially outdoors, offers many opportunities for physical activity. Physical inactivity and rising levels of childhood obesity in NI is of major concern. To get the maximum developmental and experiential benefit from their play children need to have access to a range of play experience and opportunities and be involved in different and distinctive types of play. It is recognised that play also enhances the mental health of children and highlights the importance of children being able to play, take risks and to use their own initiative.

**Enjoying, learning and achieving:** in early childhood, most of children's learning is acquired through play. It allows children and young people to explore boundaries, test abilities, use initiative, take risk and make mistakes without fear of failure. The Statement states that since the essence of play is about fun, enjoyment and achievement it is important to work to create spaces both in rural areas and in a range of setting where children are enjoying themselves and having fun.

**Contributing positively to community and society:** facilities used for play are frequently seen as focal points for communities and offer opportunities for real social interaction for children and for the wider community and supports the development of a greater sense of community spirit.

**Living in safety and with stability:** communities where play is configured to maximise informal contact among neighbours, the streets are safer, children are taken better care of, people are generally happier with their surroundings and there is increased social participation in local activities and reduced risk of crime, graffiti and violence.

**Experiencing economic and environmental well-being:** people who acquire more skills become more able. Play is recognised as being central to acquiring skills and developing one's ability.

***Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) – Quality Residential Environments (2001)***

PPS 7 sets out the regional planning policies for achieving quality in new residential development and advises on the treatment of this issue in development plans. It applies to all residential development proposals except for proposals for single dwelling in the countryside.

It recognises that new residential development can threaten local character and identity and that developments have tended to be designed around the requirements of the private car and often lack adequate provision of open space or landscaping. Consequently, all residential developments are expected to conform to certain criteria including:

- adequate provision is made for public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of the development.

More specifically it states that integrating pleasant, attractive and landscaped areas of public open space, including children’s play spaces, is as an intrinsic element of any new residential development as open space not only has recreational and social benefits but is also considered vital to the overall design quality of the development. It can help promote biodiversity and contributes to the creation of an attractive, sustainable and varied residential environment, helping to ‘green’ an area, soften any environmental impact and foster a sense of community.

***Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8) - Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (2004)***

PPS 8 sets out the regional planning policies for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation and advises on the treatment of these issues in development plans. It embodies the Government’s commitment to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthier lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity.

Open Space is defined in PPS8 as:

‘all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canal, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity’.

Open space, sport and outdoor recreation are important components of life providing many health, cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits. Open space can enhance the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism and thereby contribute to the process of urban regeneration. The use being made of the countryside for a range of sporting and outdoor recreational activities, particularly where these are associated with farm diversification, can contribute to the process of rural regeneration and help promote natural resource tourism.

Consequently, retaining open space, creating new open space and promoting more opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation in the future is of significant importance.

***Department of Education: Early Years (0-6) Strategy (2010)***

DoE’s strategy highlights that young people are a priority for the Executive and Assembly. Early Years has a key role in contributing to the target of reducing measurable gaps in educational outcomes between highest and lowest attainers.

Quality of provision and outcomes is a key priority and there is much evidence to suggest that ability gaps open up early formal schooling begins. Those involved in pre-school provision and in delivering Foundation Stage of the primary curriculum are recommended to focus on a continuum of play-based learning and development.

***Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health (2013-2023)***

This ten-year public health strategic framework provides direction for policies and actions to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland. The framework builds on the *Investing for Health Strategy 2002/2012* and aims to achieve better health and wellbeing for everyone and reduce inequalities in health. The report highlights that action should be focused on individuals, families and communities in

their social and economic context with emphasis given to children and young people under the themes of 'Giving Every Child the Best Start' and 'Equipped Through Life'.

The framework is structured under 4 additional themes:

- **Empowering Healthy Living** with focus to embed prevention across Health and Social Care services
- **Creating the Conditions** addresses the wider structural, environmental and social conditions impacting health at a population level
- **Empowering Communities** to develop the economy, tackle poverty and promote community relations
- **Developing Collaboration** considers three areas of work (in relation to food, space/place and social inclusion) and how they have the potential to bring together communities and a local level, supported at a regional level.



## Sub-Regional Strategic Context

Consideration has been given to relevant Council strategic documents and the positive benefits and impact outdoor recreation can make on the objectives of the Council’s Community Plan, Integrated Economic Development Strategy and the emerging Tourism Strategy.

### *The Big Plan for Ards and North Down (Community Plan) 2017-2032*

The aspiration vision for 2032 is that “Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to live.”

Outdoor recreation fits into all five outcomes of the ANDBC’s Community Plan. The outcomes are outlined below:

Outcome	
All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ANDBC will work towards this outcome by making Ards and North Down a great place for children and young people to thrive, and where it is easy to acquire the skills for life and learning, life and work.</li> <li>– Improving the early years’ experience for children and their families is key to addressing some of the most challenging problems such as poverty, poor health, social interaction issues, poor attainment and anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>
All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ANDBC will work towards this outcome by empowering people to take control of their personal wellbeing and make better life choices by increasing opportunities for people to adopt more active lifestyles</li> <li>– The ability for someone to enjoy good health and wellbeing is dependent on several factors including genetics, lifestyle choices and access to services. The Big Plan will focus on early intervention of physical and mental illness by encouraging better wellbeing and regular physical activity through actioning ‘green prescription’.</li> </ul>
All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ANDBC will work towards this outcome by increasing the number of quality shared spaces, developing greater respect among communities and cultures and ensuring people are safe in their homes, within their community and all public spaces</li> <li>– Public open spaces should be views as either a quality shared or neutral space. People should be comfortable and feel welcome no matter where they go.</li> </ul>

<p>respected, safe and secure</p>	
<p>All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ANDBC will work toward this outcome by addressing deprivation and ensuring people have the financial resources to meet their everyday needs by growing a sustainable economy with a skilled workforce, access to employment and effective economic investment</li> <li>- There is little point in having a highly functioning local economy if the people who live here are not the beneficiaries. The Big Plan will focus on attractive towns and village centres and vibrant and accessible leisure and tourist facilities.</li> </ul>
<p>All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ANDBC will work towards this outcome by improving the quality of the physical and digital environment by increasing connectivity, meeting peoples housing and transport needs and enriching people’s access to and enjoyment of natural and historical spaces.</li> <li>- Delivery of the Big Plan needs to consider the implications of changes to environment and factor these into the design and delivery of future services and infrastructure.</li> <li>- There are lots of opportunities to create a connected green infrastructure that protects and enhances biodiversity while also enabling people to benefit from exposure to well-kept green shared spaces</li> <li>- People feel safe and are less anxious if their neighbourhoods are clean and pleasant places with no evidence of dog fouling, littering or anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>

### **Ards and North Down Borough Draft Council Corporate Plan (2020 -2024)**

This Plan builds on its predecessor and enshrines the aspirations of the Council’s Big Plan and outlines its purpose, priorities and objectives. It describes the Council’s ambitions for how local services will be delivered more efficiently and effectively for everyone. It is supported with detailed Operational Plans and is regularly reviewed through the Council’s performance management processes.

The Ards and North Down Play Strategy has relevance to all six objectives in the Corporate Plan by helping to meet Key Performance Measures. Objectives, KPMs and Success Measures which the Play Strategy has relevance to are outlined below.

Objective	Key Performance Measure	Success Measures
<p><b>Prosperity</b> – Growing our Economy</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Target inward investment business</li> <li>- Promote and support local enterprise including start-up, incubation and business development programmes</li> <li>- Attract investment in infrastructure to create the conditions for business growth</li> <li>- Promote the development of visitor experiences and infrastructure (accommodation, transport)</li> <li>- Invest in Bangor Waterfront redevelopment</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and deliver a Borough marketing and communications strategy to attract investment, visitors and new residents</li> <li>- Develop a new events strategy with tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £ms investment delivered</li> <li>- No of businesses supported</li> <li>- Number of jobs created from the ‘Start a Business’ Programme</li> </ul>

	<p>focused programme seeking to maximise impact and return on investment</p> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop collaborative networks across our businesses and other partners</li> <li>- Work with partners to encourage infrastructure and business investment in the Borough including exploring public private partnerships</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Environment</b> – Growing a cleaner, greener local and global environment</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in our parks</li> <li>- Promote responsible behaviours and tackle problem areas for littering and dog fouling</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incentivise behavioural change through a revised recycling community investment fund</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote and support community based initiatives such as Live Here Love Here</li> </ul> <p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of planning policies for environmental protection</li> <li>- Promote accessible beaches</li> <li>- Invest in wildlife habitat improvement projects and manage our own open spaces to protect and enhance biodiversity</li> <li>- Develop blue and green routes and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LEAMS cleanliness index score (Rolling 12-month period)</li> <li>- £s investment through initiatives</li> <li>- £ms investment in environmental improvement projects</li> <li>- Number of environmental awards</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in public realm and placemaking</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a Parks/Open Space and Outdoor Recreation strategy</li> <li>- Develop coastal management plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with partners to develop and maintain heritage assets under a built heritage strategy</li> <li>- Advocate for sustainable transport</li> <li>- Work with partners to implement the Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Strangford Lough</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Opportunity</b> – Growing the lifelong potential of our community</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote partner schemes such as Prince’s Trust, Young Enterprise, Business in the Community programmes etc</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and deliver skills, apprenticeship and volunteering programme</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <p>Strengthen partnerships with local schools and colleges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Council apprenticeships</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pride</b> – Growing empowerment, respect and safety of our community</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of environmental Incentivise behavioural change through a revised recycling community investment fund</li> <li>- Community events programme</li> <li>- Promoting cultural heritage including education, grants and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £s invested through local programmes such as live here love here, recycling investment fund and participatory budgeting</li> <li>- % of Residents who feel they have an influence when it comes to local decisions</li> <li>- Number of people formally or informally volunteering</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support social enterprises</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the development of local community budgets using participatory budgeting</li> <li>- Review opportunities for innovation in services e.g. social mentoring scheme</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community empowerment/resilience programme</li> <li>- Continue to support Youth Council</li> <li>- Develop and promote volunteering opportunities within Council and with partner organisations</li> </ul> <p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote facilities and activities for target groups</li> <li>- Integrate tackling ASB into design of new Council facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engagement with and investment in facilities for hard to reach age groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement 'tackling paramilitarisation' programme along with partners</li> <li>- Work in partnership with PSNI and other agencies through PCSP</li> <li>- Work with partners to provide effective youth services</li> <li>- Promote and support resilience of communities for severe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of interventions through the Antisocial Behaviour team</li> </ul>
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	<p>weather incidents and other emergencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- £s invested through local programmes such as live here love here, recycling investment fund and participatory budgeting</li> <li>- % of Residents who feel they have an influence when it comes to local decisions</li> <li>- Number of people formally or informally volunteering</li> <li>- Number of interventions through the Anti-social Behaviour team</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Life</b> - Growing the health and wellbeing of our residents</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote use of outdoor spaces</li> <li>- Target leisure provision for hard to reach groups</li> <li>- Promote mental health through Take 5 initiative</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop leisure infrastructure and services e.g. greenways, blueways, parks, considering potential bike scheme and/or wellbeing hub</li> <li>- Develop an allotment strategy and support community gardens/allotments</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop partnerships with other agencies to promote health and wellbeing and empower people to take control of their own wellbeing</li> <li>- Promote health in the business community</li> <li>- Support Sports Clubs to provide fit for purpose facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of visits in Council owned leisure facilities</li> <li>- Numbers attending programmes funded by Council</li> <li>- % Residents participating in exercise (sports and physical activity) to minimum recommendations and above</li> <li>- Numbers on the mind body and business programme</li> <li>- Number of community gardens/allotment plots</li> </ul>

<p><b>Excellence</b> - Growing a high performing Council</p>	<p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop customer service including online/mobile service offering</li> <li>- Improve resident engagement including through a Youth Council and trialling resident panels</li> <li>- Target growth of income including external grants</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus our policies, practices and systems on customer service</li> <li>- Digital transformation through harnessing new technology</li> <li>- Seek external accreditation such as Customer Service Excellence</li> <li>- Adopt a more commercial approach including the use of our estate, exploring the development of assets to provide best value for money;</li> <li>- Review our structure and staffing policies to ensure we are agile and aligned to our priorities</li> <li>- Focus our governance model (including policies and practices on planning, budgeting, recruitment, reporting etc) to encourage and reward a culture of continued performance improvement including transparency, focus and alignment</li> <li>- Invest in technology to support mobile working and a paperless office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer Service Excellence (or equivalent) accreditation status</li> <li>- No of complaints per 1000 head of population</li> <li>- Number of Services with managed online presence</li> <li>- Income sourced per head of population</li> <li>- % payments to suppliers within 30 days</li> <li>- Cost/head of population</li> <li>- % staff attendance</li> <li>- % time invested in learning and development</li> <li>- IIP Accreditation (or equivalent) status</li> <li>- % staff participating in health and wellbeing activities</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Target efficiency savings including fleet and office accommodation</li> </ul> <p><b>Together:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review our service models including opportunities for greater use of partnerships</li> <li>- Plan our services collaboratively each year, aligned to the Corporate Plan</li> <li>- Explore the development of local community budgets using participatory budgeting</li> <li>- Work with partners to consider viability of local customer hubs for Work with partners to consider viability of local customer hubs for offline access to public services</li> </ul> <p><b>Growing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop apprenticeships and placement programmes</li> <li>- Promote and support staff volunteering</li> </ul> <p><b>Better:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in talent development through mentoring and coaching staff and continued learning and development</li> <li>- Review our office accommodation considering if this is fit for the future</li> <li>- Focus our policies, practices and systems on being a great place to work</li> <li>- Seek external accreditation such as Investors in People</li> <li>- Review employee recognition to encourage</li> </ul>	
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	<p>consistency and a clearer link to performance</p> <p><b>Together:</b> Develop approaches to promote cross-council working</p>	
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***Blue:Green Creatively Connected Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development; Ards and North Down 2018-2030***

This Integrated Strategy for Ards and North Down sets out a vision for tourism, regeneration and economic development in a strategic context. It builds on extensive work by the Council and its partners to date and takes its lead from the Community Plan for Ards and North Down. The Play Strategy combines the core strengths of the Borough to convey a fresh approach to how Ards and North Down is developed, promoted and celebrated as a place in which to live, work, visit and invest. The relevant strategic propositions to the Play Strategy are as follows:

	Value Proposition	Key Elements	Audience	Locations	Impact
Strategic Propositions	Consistently working to enhance our quality of place, connections and creativity.	Sustainable planning and design – Place-based approach.	Local communities and business; potential investors and the develop and construct sector.	Upholding and increasing the quality of all locations in the Borough.	Enhancing the environmental, social, and economic value of our Borough, its landscapes, towns and villages.
	Quality of life and environment.		Domestic; time together		

*Table 15: Strategic Context*

## APPENDIX B: Summary of Online Survey Findings

As part of the wider consultation plan, an ANDBC Play Strategy Survey was hosted on Survey Monkey between 26 November 2019 and 13 December 2019. The survey which comprised 21 primary questions was promoted through various channels such as websites and social media and was completed by 298 members of the community.

**Q1: In which village/town of Ards and North Down do you live/what is your postcode (if in a rural area)?**

Location	Respondents	%
Bangor	76	26
Newtownards	32	11
Cloughey	24	8
BT22	23	7
BT19	14	5
BT23	11	4
Hollywood	11	4
Portavogie	9	3.5
Comber	8	3
BT20	7	2.5
Portaferry	7	2.5
Donaghadee	6	2
Millisle	6	2
Conlig	6	2
Rubane	4	1.5
Ballyhalbert	4	1.5
Kircubbin	4	1.5
Ballywalter	3	1

Note: 12% did not specify their location.

Q2. Do you use play parks? This includes skate parks, pump tracks and MUGAs in the Ards and North Down Council area.

Answer	Respondents	%
Yes	269	91
No	28	9

Q3. Why do you not use play parks in Ards and North Down (Multiple Answers Permitted)?

Answer	Respondents	Frequency
Have no need to go to a play park	11	44
Anti-social behaviour	6	24
Equipment in poor condition	5	20
Poor facilities	5	20
Other	3	12
No public transport	2	8
Lack of inclusion	2	8
No personal transport	1	4
No safe off-road walk route to park	1	4

- Other:
  - Physically disabled
  - Too old – we need play for elderly e.g. outdoor gyms
  - *“I live in Donaghadee and secretary of Donaghadee Youth. We have 40 children playing football and no facilities like a MUGA pitch is not in Donaghadee. The old hockey pitch at Crommelin park would be ideal. It's currently not fit for purpose. Our kids urgently required an area for coaching and training.”*

Q4: Please state which play park/skate park/pump track/MUGA you use most often.

Play Facility	Respondents
Ards Blair Mayne	36
Cloughey	24
Ward Park	21
Kingsland	16
Pickie Park	15
Ballyholme	12
Portavogie	11
Londonderry Park	6
Millisle	6
Clandeboye	5
Portaferry	5
Seapark	4
Ballykillane	3
Commons	3
Comber	3
Rubane	4

Q5: How often would you visit this play park/skate park/pump track/MUGA?

Location	Respondents	%
Every day	12	6
A few times a week	69	35
About once a week	45	23
A few times a month	47	24
Once a month	9	5
Less than once a month	13	7

Q6: How far is this play park/skate park/pump track/MUGA?

Distance	Respondents	%
Less than 0.5 mile	47	24
0.5-1 mile	55	29
1-1.5 miles	27	14
1.5-2 miles	27	14
3-5 miles	27	14
5+ miles	10	5

Q7: How do you travel to this facility?

Answer Choice	Respondents	%
Car	102	52
Walk	87	44
Bike	5	3
Mobility Scooter	1	1

Q8: What is your primary reason for visiting this facility?

Reason	Respondents	%
To get the children outdoors for half an hour	126	64
Have a fun day out with the family	30	15
To get some fresh air	22	11
Exercise	15	8
To meet friends/socialise	4	2

Q9: On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate this facility?

Average rating: **3.13** (197 respondents)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Respondents were requested to provide a rating of the 'play park/skate park/pump track/MUGA you use most often' (as indicated in question 4). However, due to a small sample size it is not possible to provide a rating for each site. It has therefore been presented as an average rating for all sites within Ards and North Down Borough Council.



Q10: Additional Comments (Open Answers Permitted).

Comment	Frequency
Cloughey play park is outdated and needs better equipment and facilities	11
Anti-social behaviour is off-putting	9
More equipment and facilities are required for older children	9
Better inclusive play equipment and facilities are needed i.e. accessible toilets	7
Most parks are outdated	7
Most parks have limited equipment	6
Londonderry Park needs to be upgraded	6
More equipment and facilities required for younger children	6
More skate parks needed for older children	3
Ards Blair Mayne play park is good	3
Play Strategy should consider non-fixed play and natural play parks	2
Rubane play park needs to be upgraded	2
Play facilities are needed in Hunts Park	2
Pickie Park has good equipment and facilities	2
Ward Park is good	1
Kingsland Park has excellent facilities	1
AND Borough Council provides excellent inclusive play	1

Increased security needed at Ards Blair Mayne play park	1
Parks are clean and well-maintained	1
Play parks are becoming to safe – more risk needed	1
Groomsport play park is run down and needs upgrading	1
More indoor play options needed	1

Q11: What play facilities/play opportunities would you like to see in Ards and North Down in future (Open Answers Permitted)?

Response	Frequency
Urban sports parks (BMX, skate-parks, pump tracks)	16
More inclusive play equipment for those with more complex needs	13
More facilities and equipment for older children	10
More toddler-friendly play equipment	9
Natural play	8
More facilities and equipment for younger children	7
Non-fixed play alternatives	6
More pop-up events and activities	6
Accessible-for-all facilities i.e. Changing Places toilets	6
Adventure play	5
More free green space provision	5
Ziplines	4
Water play	4
MUGAs	4
Outdoor gym equipment	4
Sheltered areas within outdoor play parks	3
More provision for rural areas	3
Social spaces for older children	2
Hands on learning (community gardens, science museum events)	2
Maze	2
Play trails	2

More risk integrated in to play parks	2
Street play	1
Indoor play	1
Outdoor family event space	1
Climbing wall	1
More lighting of play parks	1

Q12: How far would you travel from your home address of the above (Q11) was provided in Ards and North Down?

Distance	Respondents	%
0-5 miles	117	62
6-10 miles	51	27
11-15 miles	16	8
16-20 miles	6	3

Q13: Do you think there is enough provision for older children in Ards and North Down?

Answer	Respondents	%
Yes	30	16
No	164	84

Q14a: Do you think playgrounds should have fences around them?

Answer	Respondents	%
Yes	180	92
No	14	8

Q14b: Explain why.

Response	Frequency
Safety	136
To keep dogs out	39
To prevent anti-social behaviour	18

Q15: Please provide any further comments or observations you feel are important to the future development of play provision in Ards and North Down (Open Answers Permitted).

Response	Frequency
Cater for a wider age range	7
Natural play	5
Management of anti-social behaviour	5
Strict 'no dog' policy in play parks	4
Less emphasis on playparks and more focus on alternatives	4
More variety of play equipment	3
Snack station/kiosk provision	3
More accessibility and inclusive play for all children	3
More provision in rural areas	3
Increased focus on education through play	3

Encouragement of environmental stewardship through play	3
Sheltered areas	2

Q16: Please select you age bracket.

Age	Respondents	%
Under 16	5	3
16-25	4	2
26-35	54	27
36-45	92	47
46-55	14	7
55+	27	14

Q17: Please select you gender.

Gender	Respondents	%
Male	42	22
Female	153	78

Q18: Please state the age range of the children in your household in the following groups (Multiple Answers Permitted).

Answer	Respondents
Under 4	104
5-8	96
9-12	69

13+	49
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Q19: Do any of your children have a disability?

Answer	Respondents	%
Yes	32	16
No	163	84

Q20: What age is the child who has a disability?

Answer	Respondents
Under 4	8
5-8	10
9-12	6
13+	8

Q21: What is their disability?

Answer	Respondents
Learning	16
Physical	10
Hidden	8
Mental Health	3
Social	3
Hearing	1
Sight	0

## APPENDIX C: Feedback from Public Consultations

Table 11 summarises the feedback received from the public consultation meetings held in Newtownards, Comber, Bangor (covering Bangor and Donaghadee), Holywood and Portavogie.

CONSULTATION		
Site / Issue	Status Quo	Opportunities
<b>Upper Crescent (Comber)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Also known as Cherry Valley</li> <li>– Objections to a proposed BMX park (Peace IV-funded)</li> <li>– Complaints of anti-social behaviour particularly under the nearby bridge</li> <li>– To reach the play park many children must cross a busy street and parking is at capacity because parents drive their children there</li> <li>– Facilities have not increased in line with the population of Comber</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Housing Executive is amenable to works being carried out and has a good working relationship with ANDBC. There may be opportunity for NIHE to pass responsibility to Council for projects once finished</li> <li>– Improved road safety measures</li> </ul>
<b>Lower Crescent (Comber)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This is the only provision on the western Glen Road area of Comber and there is only very limited play equipment – a couple of swings and slide</li> <li>– There is no fence around the park and no ramps on the surrounding road</li> <li>– The park is too close to local housing and is too small to attract outside visitors so there is no scope for on-site toilets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved equipment</li> <li>– Installation of fencing and road safety measures</li> <li>– Increased provision would take the congestion from Upper Crescent and relieve parking issues</li> <li>– Upgrade facility before introducing new parks to Comber</li> </ul>
<b>Gaps in provision</b>	–	–



<b>Fencing around play parks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Fencing around most parks in ANDBC area</li> <li>– No fencing at Aurora currently</li> <li>– Chestnut pole fencing is not robust enough and gets dislodged easily (currently at Ards Blair Mayne toddler play area)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unanimous support for low level fencing to keep children in and dogs out</li> <li>– Can be subtle and complemented with good lighting and road safety measures</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Agreed that there is not enough provision for disabled children</li> <li>– Basket swings in some parks -however they don't suit everyone as disabled children become too heavy to be lifted into them as they get older</li> <li>– The Peninsula is popular with families with disabled children because of its flat shoreline walks</li> <li>– Groomsport's accessible beach is a huge step in the right direction for Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Wheelchair swings are not cost-effective outside destination play parks and money can be better spent in lower tiers</li> <li>– Too much DDA-compliant equipment is seen as unnecessary, takes up a lot of space and is considerably more expensive</li> <li>– Equipment designed to accommodate wheelchairs are essential</li> <li>– Would be ideal to enhance already-popular shoreline walks on the Peninsula with inclusive play parks and facilities</li> <li>– Changing Places facilities are a good investment as they can be used by disabled adults and older people too</li> </ul>
<b>Play Provision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Developers currently must provide a play park when they build 100+ dwellings</li> <li>– Overall, the Borough has seen very little updates to its parks and poor choices of equipment, gaps in provision such as Ballycrochan/Ashbury and Scrabo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Council to review planning proposals to ensure developers have some degree of responsibility or work alongside developers to create appropriate provision</li> <li>– Opportunity to address gaps as well as consolidating providing by creating a smaller number of better facilities given the propensity to travel</li> </ul>
<b>Outdoor Gyms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Parks and Leisure find that outdoor fitness equipment is popular and well-used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– New models from multiple suppliers although damage caused by coastal weather must be considered</li> <li>– Outdoor gyms provide activities that children, young people and adults can do together – these falls under sports development within Council</li> </ul>
<b>Procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Council is aware that they need to place more weight in tender documents on sourcing play equipment locally</li> </ul>
<b>Luke's Point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Perfect spot for a skate park and natural play facilities</li> </ul>

<b>Natural Play</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Council hasn't considered natural play to date as lifetime costs and maintenance must be taken into consideration</li> <li>– Natural play is popular in Mount Stewart (National Trust)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Luke's Point, Cairn Wood and Strickland's Glen are ideal locations for natural and wild play</li> <li>– Cairn Wood's proposed multi-use trail is the perfect spot for a natural play trail</li> </ul>
<b>Partnerships with schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– No agreements in place to date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Potential for Rathmore School to open its park to the public however there is no potential for double-access points</li> <li>– Evidence of this kind of agreement working well in Cookstown</li> <li>– Potential to share space with Ballywalter and Ballyhalbert schools</li> </ul>
<b>Cloughey Play Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Used by local children</li> <li>– Used by caravanners and holiday-makers</li> <li>– Previously had 4 sets of swings - now only 2</li> <li>– Palm trees attract bees</li> <li>– Since 2007, Cloughey's population has grown from 900-4100 and the play provisions have only decreased rather than increased with the number of households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Must not be removed because of this Strategy</li> <li>– If, and when, Cloughey's play park is upgraded, it should be tiered higher to account for the population growth and popularity of the area with holiday-makers</li> </ul>
<b>Lawsons Park/ Anchor Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lawsons Park, issue about road crossing and the site at Anchor Park being exposed in rough weather</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Investigate improved road safety measures</li> <li>– Hedging around parks close to the shoreline to protect from sea winds</li> </ul>
<b>Ballyhalbert</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Essentially made up of two villages</li> <li>– Park is good but access is poor</li> <li>– Large percentage of the population are teenagers but there are no provisions for them</li> <li>– Glasyry has more provisions and residents of Ballyhalbert must travel there to avail of them</li> <li>– "One family moves to Ballyhalbert per week on average"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Council should examine the potential to link with Ballyhalbert and Ballywalter schools to share play spaces</li> </ul>

*Table 16: Feedback from Public Consultation*