

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLAY AREA STRATEGY 2007-2010**

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# STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

## PLAY AREA STRATEGY 2007-2010

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out the Council's approach to the development of outdoor play facilities across the Borough. It replaces the existing Play Area Strategy produced in 1998.

1.2 The Play Area Strategy will:

- Provide a broad framework for the management and future development of play areas across the Borough.
- Help to prioritise capital and revenue investment in play provision to avoid duplication and target resources effectively to address local needs.
- Encourage public, private and voluntary sector partners to work together to enhance play provision and promote its use by the whole community.
- Inform the development of planning policy and underpin the Council's approach to securing improvements in provision via planning obligations and other mechanisms.
- Highlight the role of play in improving the health, well-being and the development of children and young people, and the contribution that provision of high quality play facilities can make to wider social and environmental agendas.

1.3 The strategy forms a companion document to the Borough's Play Strategy 2007-2012 'Play Matters', prepared by Stockton-on-Tees Children's Trust Board in June 2007. The aim of the Play Strategy is:

*"To develop locally based, easily accessible play facilities across the borough of Stockton-on-Tees both through the extension of existing provision and the development of new facilities".*

1.4 This Play Area Strategy focuses on one key aspect of play provision: sites with fixed play equipment which are accessible free of charge at all reasonable times. Such sites are mainly under the ownership and management of Stockton Borough Council, but other bodies such as parish councils also own and manage facilities within the Borough. The Strategy does not refer to play equipment within school grounds or other locations not accessible to the wider public.

- 1.5 It is recognised that while play areas are an important component of local provision, children play and learn in a variety of outdoor environments. Thus play provision will also need to be considered as part of the Council's wider commitment to "develop a new strategic vision for parks and greenspaces", as set out in the Council Plan 2007-2010. Also, this Strategy does not refer to the provision of wheeled and ball sport areas. These will be addressed through a separate strategy to be developed over the coming months.
- 1.6 Finally it should be noted that this Strategy covers a relatively short time period: 2007-2010. This reflects a medium term aspiration to incorporate the key elements of the Play Area Strategy into a single Borough Play Strategy. This would be accompanied by a detailed Action Plan, with proposals for the development and management of Play Areas informed by the Open Space Audit process, due to be completed by May 2008. A vital part of this process will be to undertake a full assessment of local needs and expectations in terms of the provision of open spaces (including play areas) and to use this information to help set local standards.

## **2. THE CASE FOR PLAY**

- 2.1 Play is vitally important to the physical, emotional, and social development of children and young people. The Borough's Play Strategy provides a more detailed overview of the value of play for children and young people, but in broad terms play can contribute towards:
- Physical and mental health
  - Creative development
  - Improved language and communication
  - Devolvement of social skills and personal relationships
  - More positive attitudes to learning
  - Enhanced awareness and knowledge of the environment
  - Increased independence and the ability to assess risks and take appropriate action

### **Why play areas matter**

- 2.2 Play areas can help to deliver many of the above benefits, encouraging children and young people to be active and to socialise. This is perhaps particularly important at a time when real or perceived barriers restrict children's access to other outdoor environments. Well-designed and suitably located play facilities act as a focal point within a community, encouraging children and their parents to mix, and helping to engender a feeling of pride in the local area.

- 2.3 From an individual point of view, improved health is perhaps the most obvious benefit derived from increased levels of physical activity. For example, the National Audit Office report 'Tackling Child Obesity – First Steps' (2006) indicated that, in formulating national policy, government should consider provision for children's play as an important contribution to reducing obesity in children and young people. The Chief Medical Officer (Department of Health) has advised that 'children and young people achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day': use of play areas can help individuals achieve that target. Indeed research continues to demonstrate a link between free play and good health.
- 2.4 But as outlined above, outdoor play can have wider benefits. For example, it can promote social-interaction and build confidence, and research has shown that through play children and young people gain a greater understanding and awareness of their local environment. 'A Child's place – why environment matters to children' (Green Alliance/Demos, 2004) recommends that children, and in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should be given greater opportunity to access good quality play areas.

### **Links to the wider social and environmental agendas**

- 2.5 *Anti-social behaviour* - Many children and young adults complain that they do not have access to adequate and usable open space. Often communities can be hostile to the provision of play space for fear that it encourages anti-social behaviours. However, research by CABE Space (a division of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) demonstrates that 'place making' (improving the design, maintenance and supervision of parks and open spaces) can be a very effective solution to anti-social behaviour issues.
- 2.6 *Inequality and Exclusion* - There is increasing evidence that ethnic minorities and disabled children encounter significant physical and cultural barriers to using play areas in their local environment. Quality play area provision can be open and accessible to all and takes positive action in removing disabling barriers so that all children and young people can participate.
- 2.7 *Environmental quality* - It is repeatedly identified that both parents and children wish to see an improved facilities and more choice in terms of places to visit and things to do. 'Boring' or 'run down' play areas and parks are significant barriers to play, and detract from the overall environmental quality of an area, leading to further decline and a sense that 'nobody cares'.

### 3. POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 3.1 Stockton's Play Strategy provides the detailed policy and strategic context for the development of play within the Borough. This section highlights some of the key documents and issues.

#### National Context

- 3.2 *'Every Child Matters: Change For Children'* (2004) defines the government aims for every child, whatever their background or their circumstance, as having the support to:
- Be Healthy
  - Stay Safe
  - Enjoy and Achieve
  - Make a Positive Contribution
  - Achieve Economic Well Being.

Equitable access to play facilities can contribute towards all these outcomes, with the possible exception of achieving economic well-being. Children and young people often identify the need for 'things to do and places to go': well-designed and accessible play facilities can help to address that need.

- 3.3 *Liveability / Cleaner, Safer, Greener* - Local and regional government are the ambition of creating communities where people want to live and work, now and in the future. Providing opportunities for play is recognised as an important component of the 'liveability' and Cleaner, Safer, Greener' agenda.
- 3.4 *PPG 17 (Planning Policy Guidance note 17, Open Space Sport and Recreation)* - aims to safeguard open spaces and playing fields. It provides guidance to local authorities on how they should address the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities (see section 4.9).

#### Local Context

- 3.5 *Stockton Community Strategy* – The Play Area Strategy relates primarily to the following theme within the existing Community Strategy: "To promote the health, well-being and achievement of children and young people, and tackle inequalities and disadvantage experienced by some children and their families". Over the coming months it will be important to relate the Strategy to the core themes within the new Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2021.
- 3.6 *Children and Young People's Plan (2006)* - This ambitious Plan has at its heart the five key outcomes defined by Government in the Children Act 2004 and 'Every Child Matters' (see 3.2), namely that children should:

- be healthy (physical and mental health, including healthy lifestyle choices);
- safe (from accidental or deliberate harm);
- enjoy and achieve (at school and at play, including experience of sport and culture);
- make a positive contribution (take part in community life and avoid anti-social or offending behaviour);
- achieve economic well being (improving access to education, employment and training).

3.7 *Countryside and Greenspace* – Objective 4 of the Council’s ‘Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Strategy 2001-2005’ emphasised the need to improve play provision in the Borough. It identified a need for a review of the location and community value of play facilities and to use this to inform proposals for the development and upgrading of sites.

A new strategic vision for the Borough’s parks, countryside and greenspaces is to be developed during 2007/08 and it is likely that the recommendation will be for the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy to cover the period 2008-2013. If agreed by Cabinet this will form the overarching strategy for the management and development of all the Borough’s open spaces, including play areas and play spaces. Addressing play provision in the context of a ‘green infrastructure’ approach would ensure that wider environmental and social factors were given full consideration when planning play provision. It would also need to recognise that play provision is not restricted to dedicated play areas, and that many formal and informal greenspaces have immense play potential if managed and developed appropriately.

3.8 *Neighbourhood Matters Strategy* - emphasises the value of attractive green spaces with good leisure facilities, and community consultation often highlights a strong public desire for leisure provision aimed at young people. The Local Action Plans and Area Partnership Boards regularly highlight the value of high quality play provision.

#### **4. EXISTING PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT**

4.1 At present there are 38 no. fixed equipment play areas on publicly owned land in the Borough (excluding play areas on school grounds). These are identified on the attached plan.

4.2 Most are owned and maintained by Stockton Council. Other organisations such as parish councils own play areas, some of which are maintained by Stockton Borough through Service Level Agreements.

4.3 The Council’s current approach to the provision of fixed play equipment has been informed very much by the Borough’s Play Area Audit Report,

1998. More recently the Open Space Audit (2004-07) has provided an overall assessment of play area provision within Stockton.

### **Play Area Audit and Strategy (1998)**

- 4.4 The Audit highlighted the poor state of play sites across the Borough. Many of the sites contained equipment that was old or obsolete and suffered from serious public nuisance problems.
- 4.5 Based on the audit findings it was recommended that sites should be categorised within a new hierarchy, as follows:
- Destination sites – high quality, well-equipped areas with innovative provision, located in a park or recreation ground and serving a large catchment area. These sites provide additional facilities such as toilets and refreshment outlets, and usually benefit from an on-site ranger service and are monitored via CCTV.
  - Neighbourhood sites – as above, but serving a smaller catchment area and with fewer additional facilities on site.
  - Doorstep sites – smaller stand-alone equipped play areas that have a reduced range of equipment and serve a local catchment area.
- 4.5 It was recommended that this hierarchy be used as a basis for targeting limited revenue resources, ensuring that the funds allocated to Destination and Neighbourhood sites reflected their strategic significance and larger catchment areas.
- 4.6 During November 2000 the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) were commissioned to undertake inspections on all play areas. They were specifically requested to examine the risk associated with individual play items. The subsequent report highlighted problems with a number of sites and it was agreed that various items of equipment would be removed.
- 4.7 A further review was commissioned through ROSPA in December 2001 and it was clear that the closure of a number of sites was necessary following an evaluation of the detailed report.
- 4.8 As a result of this process 28 play sites have been closed between 2002-2007, and over 30 individual play items removed from sites currently open to the public. This rationalisation has created a network of play facilities which can be effectively monitored and maintained to a high standard.

### **Stockton Open Space Audit 2004-07**

- 4.9 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) states that 'local authorities should undertake robust assessments of existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities'. The

suggested typology includes a wide range of open spaces which may be of public value, including play areas.

4.10 The Companion Guide to PPG17 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002) recommends that local assessments and audits of open spaces (including play areas), are carried out in five stages:

- 1) Identifying Local Needs
- 2) Auditing Local Provision
- 3) Setting provision standards
- 4) Applying provision standards
- 5) Drafting policies

4.11 The Council commenced a Borough-wide audit in 2004, focusing on Stage 2 of this process. However, while this process has 'scored' all open spaces on the basis of a series of set criteria, it is not yet possible to define an 'acceptable' percentage score until a needs assessment is carried out and local standards for play provision are set (see Section 7).

4.12 The Open Space Audit does, however, highlight that the condition of play areas varies greatly, from those with limited, older equipment (e.g. Willey Flats Play Area, Yarm) to large, modern play areas with state of the art equipment (e.g. Ropner Park). Also play areas on average score lower for 'visual amenity' than most other categories of open space.

### **Management and Maintenance Issues**

4.13 All equipment currently located within the Borough has been installed according to the appropriate BS (British Standards) or EN (European) standards. Prior to 1 Jan 1999 equipment installed complied with BS 5695 and 7188, while equipment installed post January 1999 complies with EN 1176 and 1177 standards for play.

4.14 The British and European safety standard EN1176 and the Health and Safety Executive strongly recommend that all play areas have at least one inspection every year from an independent suitably qualified body. Since 2000 Stockton Council has used inspectors from ROSPA to carry out annual inspections. All ROSPA inspectors are qualified and hold the Annual Inspectors Examination as set by the Register of Play Inspectors International Ltd. (RB11). This meets legal and insurance responsibilities as well as complying with the requirements of EN1176.

4.15 As part of the Councils Public Liability Insurance, an annual inspection is also carried out by a representative of the council's insurance company (Suitable qualified to RPII for Operational Inspections). Any serious defects are reported to the council within 24 hours. This will be followed up with a written Schedule Inspection Summary & a Report of Examination Of Play Equipment.

- 4.16 Stockton Borough Council is not responsible for the management of all play areas in the Borough, and importantly the long-term retention of non-Council sites cannot be guaranteed.
- 4.17 Stockton Council's Care For Your Area team are responsible for the day-to-day operational maintenance and inspection of most of the sites in the Borough, and work closely with other sections of the Council and Parish Councils to keep these sites operational.
- 4.18 With regard to the Stockton Borough Council managed sites, inspectors carry out visual inspections of all play areas every 5 to 10 working days. All Stockton Councils inspectors hold the Routine Inspectors Qualification as set by the Register of Play Inspectors International Ltd. (RB11)

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Stockton's Play Strategy (2007) summarises the wide range of consultation processes that have been adopted by the Council and its partners in recent years relating to play and associated greenspace issues. This includes a Youth Viewpoint Questionnaire on Play Areas in November 2006.
- 5.2 These consultations show that children and young people in the Borough share many of the same concerns:
- There are not enough parks or play areas
  - Most parks are too far out - they are inaccessible!
  - There are not enough places to "Chill Out" / area for older groups
  - A permanent skate park / stunt bike area
  - Being intimidated by large groups in parks

They also show that children want the following:

- More control and choice over what is on offer in their area
  - Access to free activities
  - Mobile play facilities
  - More localised provision
  - Free transport to help access facilities
  - More information on what is on in their area
  - To be able to use school facilities outside of school hours
  - Better access for children with disabilities
  - To feel safe / CCTV cameras
  - To be challenged
- 5.3 Involving young people and children in the development of children's play has been an integral part of the successful regeneration and restoration of town parks to date. This has involved local schools, youth groups and resident associations working in partnership with landscape architects and

play area designers. A higher level of engagement with the Youth Assembly and work with the Council's Youth Services Team will develop over the term of the strategy, linked to wider consultation and engagement processes being developed under the 'Participation, Involvement and Consultation (PIC) Strategy' and associated action plan (under the Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09). The PIC Strategy aims to involve children and young people in shaping services to meet their needs, and focuses on four key issues:

- building capacity – through better staff training on involvement of children and through involving children themselves in staff recruitment more widely;
- influencing policy development – increasing the robustness of the wide range of consultation activity which involves children, for example by formally identifying all Council plans which require input and involvement of children;
- practice and promotion – to promote positive images of children and young people as stakeholders and to develop children-friendly versions of the Children's Trust strategy and action plan and review these;
- developing further consultation mechanisms with harder to reach children and young people such as those with disabilities.

5.4 As with the Play Strategy there has been no specific public consultation carried out in relation to this specific document, but as mentioned above it has been informed by the Council's on-going consultation processes with children and young people and adults. In addition the Council will consult locally on the implementation of any specific proposals set out in the 'Priorities for Development' section of the report (Appendix 1), following the guidance set out in the corporate Consultation Strategy.

## **6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

6.1 'Best Play' (National Playing Fields Association, Playlink and the Children's Play Council, 2000) sets out a series of broad objectives for play provision. Wherever possible the Council should seek to achieve these objectives through the provision of play areas across the Borough. 'Best Play' suggests good play provision should:

- 1) extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it;
- 2) recognise the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need;
- 3) manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm;
- 4) maximise the range of play opportunities;
- 5) foster independence and self-esteem;
- 6) foster children's respect for others and offer opportunities for social interaction;
- 7) foster the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.

- 6.2 More specifically the Council will seek to achieve a number of key objectives through the implementation of this Strategy. These are summarised under four broad themes.
- Equity
  - Community Safety
  - Environmental Quality
  - Accessibility and Social Inclusion
- 6.3 In delivering the Priorities for Development set out in Appendix 1, the Council will seek to achieve the 9 strategic objectives outlined below.

### ***Equity***

- 6.4 Most neighbourhoods in the Borough are served by existing facilities, a fairly even distribution having been achieved through the closure process since 1998. Upon completion of the Open Space Audit the Council will be able to identify areas of deficiency in quantifiable terms, and set local standards for provision and accessibility.

Objective 1 - Provide an appropriate number of high quality and diverse equipped play areas across the Borough. The focus for development will reflect the need for larger play areas with wide ranging facilities that serve a greater catchment and population.

Objective 2 - Ensure that all children and adults living in the Borough enjoy convenient access to a full range of quality play sites as close to home as is reasonably practicable.

### ***Community Safety***

- 6.5 The safety of facilities is determined by two main factors: the degree of risk offered by the equipment itself and environmental issues such as the proximity of roads, fencing and so on. A ROSPA risk rating has been given to each play area, and in addition the council's insurers undertake a rolling programme of inspections of all equipped play facilities and report on necessary action. None of the Council's sites are supervised though six sites have a ranger service present. CCTV monitoring covers eight sites.

Objective 3 - Provide play areas across the Borough in which children and parents feel safe and confident in play.

Objective 4 – Reduce disturbance to local residents from anti-social behaviour and other crimes such as alcohol and drug abuse, through good design and other measures.

Objective 5 – Eliminate unacceptable levels of risk to users at all play areas in line with Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) standards and recommendations

### ***Environmental Quality***

- 6.6 Environmental factors are important for play. A secluded site with poor natural surveillance, or a vandalised site will be less attractive to genuine users, whereas a well maintained site, with an open aspect and trees and colour will be more appealing. Each site in the Borough has been assessed in terms of its environmental quality.

Objective 6 - Provide attractive play areas in a welcoming well-maintained environment that will encourage all users to stay longer, enjoy and return to in future.

### ***Social Inclusion and Accessibility***

- 6.7 All play areas in the borough achieve at least a satisfactory rating for accessibility through Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) ratings. Other measures to improve accessibility for all have been assessed, for example a road can prove to be a significant barrier to children accessing a play area.

Objective 7 – Provide convenient and safe pedestrian access for all children and accompanying adults to a range of facilities within their locality.

Objective 8 – Improve access to play facilities for disabled people and people from disadvantaged sections of the community.

Objective 9 – Provide convenient and safe car parking, public transport and cycle access to larger play sites that draw people from a wide catchment area.

## **7. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY AREAS IN STOCKTON**

- 7.1 Until completion of the Open Space Audit process (in May 2008) and the development of an overarching strategy for the Borough's green infrastructure, the Council's approach to the development of play areas will be informed by:

- The existing national and local policy framework described in this document.
- Recent consultation feedback as highlighted in the overarching Play Strategy,
- Local consultations carried out in respect to individual parks and sites.

7.2 The Council will continue to manage and develop a network of play areas on the basis of the existing hierarchy of sites, namely:

- Destination Sites
- Neighbourhood Sites
- Doorstep Sites

These sites are listed in **Appendix 1**.

7.3 The Council will continue to focus resources primarily on the development of new and improved play areas at Destination and Neighbourhood Sites. . This includes facilities at John Whitehead Park (Billingham), Preston Park, Wynyard Woodland Park and Romano Park (Ingleby Barwick), reflecting the Council's priorities under its current Parks Regeneration Programme.

7.4 A network of high-quality Doorstep Sites will be maintained across the Borough, and the Council may pursue opportunities to enhance these sites where appropriate (for example, through the use of developer contributions). Ensuring high standards of maintenance at all sites remains a priority, and in a limited number of cases removal of equipment may be necessary. Such operational decisions would be taken in consultation with local Ward Councillors and informed by local knowledge. The Council will continue to adopt the approach set out in the former Play Area Strategy that duplication in provision should be avoided.

7.5 Through the development of this hierarchy of sites the Council will seek to achieve the nine Strategic Objectives set out in Section 6.

## **8. DESIGN, PLANNING AND DELIVERY MECHANISMS**

### **Design Principles**

8.1 There are always new approaches to the design and layout of outdoor play areas, and currently a number of organisations and professionals are promoting a more 'naturalistic' approach to play provision; for example, by integrating play equipment into the wider landscape and maximising the play potential of the natural environment. The Council will seek to adopt innovative approaches to play provision where appropriate, and always seek high standards in terms of design and safety.

8.2 An existing Play Area Design Guide sets out the principles for the installation of new play areas in the Borough. These guidelines will be the

subject of review over the lifetime of strategy to reflect modern, innovative approaches to play provision.

- 8.3 It is essential that all equipped play areas comply with ROSPA guidelines on safety. Where equipment fails to meet these standards all renovations, replacements and new play areas need to conform to British Standards for Play equipment: BSEN1176 and BSEN1177.

### **Planning considerations**

- 8.4 The inclusion of appropriate planning policy statements in the Local Development Framework will help to achieve the delivery of accessible, high quality play facilities in the Borough. The following statements are for guidance only and will need to be developed further as the Open Space Audit process provides a more robust evidence of local need:

- SBC will only support the development of new neighbourhood or destination sites associated with new developments. These sites must be in large areas of suitable open space or a park.
- If an existing play area lies within 2km of any new development resources should be provided for the expansion or improvement of the existing facility, SBC to determine the appropriate nature on an individual basis.
- SBC will not support the piecemeal development of small doorstep sites associated with new developments.
- New or expanded play areas shall conform to SBC design standards and shall have CCTV cameras, security fencing etc, where appropriate.

- 8.5 Policy Statements for Title Transfer of land to Stockton Council also need to be developed. For example, the statements might include:

- Commuted lump sums for the management, maintenance of new or expanded facilities shall be applied according to appropriate guidelines (as set out in the Play Area Design Guide currently undergoing review).
- SBC shall not adopt responsibility for play areas that are developed in a piecemeal fashion

- 8.6 In recent years various new play areas have been delivered through the planning process, often through Section 106 Agreements with developers. Future opportunities for securing new play areas through this process include:

- Stockton North Shore and surrounding area, Bowesfield Area,
- Boathouse Lane Area – SBC will support the development of neighbourhood sites in these areas.
- West Stockton/North Stockton – Should the limits of development in the review of the LDF change, provision should be made for the installation of a minimum of 1no. new neighbourhood site in each area.

## **Funding for the Development of Play Areas**

8.7 Funds for delivery of new play facilities or upgrading of existing facilities may be secured from a variety of sources, for example:

- External funding bids, such as the Big Lottery and Landfill Tax.
- Via partnership working with community organisations and parish councils, who may be able to access, funding streams unavailable to the Council.
- Stockton Council capital resources.
- Funds available through housing and other regeneration programmes.
- Via other statutory bodies and partnerships, such as Primary Care Trusts and Childrens Centres.
- Private sector sponsorship.
- Planning gain contributions.

## **9. MONITORING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

9.1 Existing and new mechanisms will be used to monitor customer satisfaction with the Borough's play areas and to provide other information to inform future management and development of play facilities, for example:

- Use of 'Greenstat' – a national benchmarking forum created through Greenspace, which will allow users of play areas to feedback on the quality and condition of the facilities.
- Stockton Council undertook a resident's panel survey relating to Childrens Play facilities in the summer of 2006, which will be repeated at the end of during the period covered by this strategy.
- MORI polls will be conducted biennially to ascertain customer satisfaction relating to play area provision.
- Play equipment will be the subject of an annual ROSPA review.

9.2 Specific Performance Indicators could be developed related to play areas. These might include

- Numbers using and times spent at specific facilities.
- Percentage of residents / children and young people satisfied with local provision.
- Involvement of community groups in developing facilities.
- Cost of developing/maintaining facilities related to usage.

## **10. FUTURE REVIEW AND PROPOSED INTEGRATION WITH THE BOROUGH PLAY STRATEGY**

- 10.1 As described in Section 4 Stockton Borough Council has yet to complete the full Open Space Audit Process in accordance with the recommendations set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 17. The existing Open Space Audit provides an assessment of existing open space provision, but no work has yet been undertaken to assess local need for different types of open space. This 'needs assessment will be completed by May 2008 and will form an essential step in the process of setting local standards for the provision of play areas and other types of open space (e.g. a minimum of one Destination Site to be within X km of every household in the Borough, or per X no population).
- 10.2 Once complete the Open Space Audit will inform a review of this Play Area Strategy. It is suggested that at this stage (probably in 2009/10) the Play Area Strategy and Play Strategy are brought together into a single document. Linked to the new Strategy the Council would prepare a comprehensive Action Plan for the Borough's Play Areas, informed by the needs assessment and local standards set through the Open Space Audit process.
- 10.3 The Open Space Audit will also contribute towards the development of a new strategy for Stockton's parks, countryside and greenspaces. The Council Plan 2007-1010 includes a commitment to "develop a new strategic vision for parks and greenspaces", and subject to the necessary approvals this could take the form of a Green Infrastructure Strategy. Again this document would inform any future strategy revision, and could also focus on the 'play potential' of other open spaces, encouraging a more holistic approach to outdoor play in the Borough.

## APPENDIX 1 – PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section sets out a series of priorities for development, based on the approach set out in Section 7 of the Strategy. The locations of all sites are shown on the attached plan.

### 1. Destination Sites

**Wynyard Woodland Park, Thorpe Thewles** - Investment at the site will focus on replacing a number of items near the car park area and creating a new modern innovative playscape which is integrated into the landscape of the site. The equipment will serve a wide age range and encourage users to experience and explore the wider park. Redesign of the site will also facilitate disabled access.

**Preston Park** – It is envisaged that development of new play facilities will be delivered through the existing proposals for the regeneration of this historic parkland, which has recently been the subject of a comprehensive community consultation.

**Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park** – As other facilities already exist, such as a visitor centre, car park and nature trails, the installation of play equipment here would create a new destination site. These recommendations would be subject to planning consents and other approvals.

**Romano Park, Ingleby Barwick** - The proposed 'Landscape for Play' at Romano Park will be an integral part in the creation of a destination site that will serve the whole of the Ingleby Barwick community. Linked to the wider neighbourhood by a series of footways and cycle paths the play feature will be complimented by other park facilities such as a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), football pitch, improved landscaping and seating. The play area will be designed around the existing landscape and use topographical features to fashion an organic playscape that will meet the needs of a wide range of users.

**John Whitehead Park, Billingham** - The first phase of the regeneration of the park will take place in the winter of 2007/08. The existing play facilities will be removed and replaced with a variety of modern and innovative equipment serving a wide age range, covered by CCTV. The new play facilities will be the first step in providing a new destination site in the heart of Billingham, encouraging more people to visit, to stay longer, and to return more frequently.

**Ropner Park, Stockton** - Situated in the recently restored town park, this play area sets a benchmark for the development of facilities within the Borough. No new developments planned at present.

### 2. Neighbourhood Sites

**Broomwood, Ingleby Barwick** - The Open Space Audit and the Ingleby Barwick Open Space Development Plan both identify a shortfall in adequate play provision in Ingleby Barwick. A new neighbourhood site is to be created on land in the Broomwood area, to be developed by Persimmon Homes and managed by the Council. The site is linked to a good network of cycle routes, will have CCTV coverage and will cater for a wide age range.

**Newham Grange Park, Stockton** - A new play area was installed in the heart of the park in Spring 2007. Further proposals for the park include the construction of a 40-space car park adjacent to the new equipment coupled with extensive environmental improvements. Improved pedestrian access options need to be assessed on Darlington Back Lane.

**Village Park, Thornaby** - New equipment with CCTV coverage was installed in the park in 2005. A masterplan with proposals for further development of the park has recently been the subject of community consultation and proposes the development of a play trail around the periphery of the park. Improved pedestrian access options are to be explored on Thorntree Road.

### **3. Doorstep Sites**

As outlined in Section 7 of the Strategy an extensive network of Doorstep Sites will be maintained across the Borough. Upon completion of the 'Needs Assessment' and the wider 'Open Space Audit' a detailed action plan for this network will be produced. In the interim, decisions regarding the development and management of these sites will be based on local knowledge. In a limited number of cases removal of equipment may be proposed in order to maintain the necessary high standards and avoid duplication in provision (and hence ensure effective use of resources). Such changes would be subject to local consultation.

The Borough's Doorstep Sites are:

#### *Stockton Area*

- Limbrick Avenue/Greenvale
- Hardwick Community Centre
- Mill Lane
- Tees Barrage
- Ragworth
- Devenport, Portrack
- Darlington Back Lane
- Swainby Road

#### *Billingham Area*

- Carlton Avenue
- High Grange
- Romney Green

- Billingham Town Centre
- Clarences Community Farm

*Thornaby and Ingleby Barwick Area*

- Thornaby Community Centre
- Victoria Recreation Ground
- Littleboy Park
- Earls Meadow, Ingleby Barwick
- Simonside, Ingleby Barwick

*Yarm and Eaglescliffe area*

- Layfield (Willey Flatts) West Street, Yarm
- Amberley Way, Eaglescliffe
- St Margaret's, Eaglescliffe
- Leven Close
- Kingsmead

*Villages*

- Long Newton
- Carlton Village
- Stillington
- Mount Pleasant, Stillington
- Hilton Village
- Kirklevington Village

*The following play areas are proposed as part of new developments – detailed proposals to be developed:*

- Ringwood, Ingleby Barwick
- Blakeston Lane, Stockton