

Strategy for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Outdoor Play Provision 2025

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of this strategy

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to the management and development of its outdoor play provision in the Borough. It aims to:

- **Maintain a range of good quality play areas**
- **Achieve a fair and equitable distribution of outdoor play provision across the Borough**
- **Deliver welcoming, accessible and inclusive play spaces, while acknowledging that not all sites can cater for all needs and abilities**
- **Ensure the overall scale of provision is at a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resource**

1.2 Scope

The strategy focuses primarily on Council-owned outdoor play areas which can be accessed free of charge by the public and which are generally available for use during daytime and evenings. However, it also takes account of other play provision which is freely available for public use, including play areas managed by third parties and informal sport facilities (e.g. multi-use games areas) managed by the Council or third parties. It is important to consider the location and nature of Council-owned play areas in the context of this alternative provision.

While play areas are used predominantly by children and young people, it is important to recognise that there are some facilities which can be enjoyed by adults too. It should also be highlighted that other outdoor environments such as parks and natural green spaces can have a high play value, even though no play equipment may be present.

Privately operated play facilities, and equipment within school grounds or other areas not accessible to the public, are not within the scope of the strategy, but these do provide additional opportunities for play in some communities.

1.3 What is play and why is it important?

Through play children and young people develop social, physical and cognitive skills, resilience and creativity, as well as learning to make decisions and manage risk. Play England's Charter for Play describes play as 'what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons'. Under this Charter, Play England also summarises the many benefits of play, highlighting that "recent research suggests that children's access to good play provision can:

- increase their self-awareness, self-esteem and self-respect
- improve and maintain their physical and mental health
- give them the opportunity to mix with other children
- allow them to increase their confidence through developing new skills
- promote their imagination, independence and creativity
- offer opportunities for children of all abilities and backgrounds to play together
- provide opportunities for developing social skills and learning
- build resilience through risk taking and challenge, problem solving, and dealing with new and novel situations
- provide opportunities to learn about their environment and the wider community.”¹

1.4 The value of outdoor play provision

Play areas and informal sport facilities provided by the Council and others provide opportunities for many different types of outdoor play.

Outdoor play benefits children and young people in many ways:

- It allows children and young people to learn physical skills that may be difficult to practice at home. This could include jumping, climbing, cycling, skating, or informal team sports.
- It encourages independence and decision-making. Because outdoor play typically has less structure than indoor activities, children can direct their own activities.
- Compared to home or school a play space is a relatively unfamiliar environment, so children have to think creatively about play. They may use their imagination to invent games that make use of the space.
- When playing with others, children have to learn how to cooperate with each other. For example, they may have to work together to decide how to share equipment and space, and which games to play.
- Being in an outdoor environment enables children to use a wide range of senses. They can experience natural elements through touch, smell, sight and hearing, stimulating sensory development and awareness

¹ Play England (2018): [Charter For Play — PlayEngland](#)

- Children can challenge themselves and learn to assess and navigate minor risks. This builds confidence and helps them develop skills needs to handle different situations.

A well-deigned play space can offer a wide range of play experiences in a relatively small, safe and stimulating environment, and unlike some other leisure facilities, most play areas are located within areas of public open spaces meaning they can be accessed free of charge by the whole community. In addition to their play value, they often deliver wider benefits; for example, they provide places where children and adults of different ages and backgrounds can interact, and they add to the overall value of the Borough's parks and green spaces, encouraging people to visit and enjoy these spaces.

Finally, we shouldn't overlook the play value of other outdoor settings, such as green spaces areas of public realm. Locations in the Borough such as the water feature in Stockton High Street, areas of amenity grassland and woodlands are all provide stimulating play environments, whether that is paddling in summer, sledging in winter or enjoying all kinds of games and activities throughout the year.

1.5 Strategic context

There is no legal requirement for a local authority to provide outdoor play areas or informal sport facilities. However, councils obviously have a very long history of providing outdoor play spaces and there is a public expectation that they should do so. The way that this Council develops and manages outdoor play provision can help to deliver against a number of priorities set out in the Council Plan 2024², including:

- **Creating a fairer Stockton-on-Tees and reducing inequality³** - e.g. by targeting resources at those areas in greatest need and helping to ensure all our children ensuring that
- **Improving population health outcomes** – e.g. by providing good quality play spaces which promote physical and mental health and wellbeing
- **The best start in life to achieve big ambitions** - e.g. by creating safe and inclusive play spaces which families can enjoy and which help to improve the health and development of children and young people.
- **A great place to live, work and visit** - e.g. by working with partners and communities to improve the places and spaces that impact people's lives.

² [Our five priorities - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)

³ [A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework 2021 to 2031 \(PDF\) \[1MB\]](#)

2. CURRENT AND PLANNED OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

2.1 Quantity and types of provision

Play areas

The Borough currently has 56 play areas which are available for the public to use free of charge at all reasonable times⁴:

- 40 are owned and managed by Stockton Borough Council,
- 9 are owned by town / parish councils but managed by the Borough Council.
- 7 are owned and managed by housing developers / management companies.

There are also plans for a further 12 play areas to be delivered over the next few years (3 to be provided by the Council and 9 to be provided by housing developers) although this is subject to change.

Existing and planned play areas are listed and mapped at **Appendix A**.

Play areas vary in size from very small sites with a limited amount of equipment, through to large sites which offer a diverse range of equipment and play environments. Most are located in parks or other areas of green space. This strategy categorises play areas as follows, based mainly on the scale of provision measured in 'Play Units' (see **Appendix B** for details of how these scores are calculated) and other characteristics of the site:

- Destination play areas
- Neighbourhood play areas
- Doorstep play areas

These classifications relate closely to those developed by Fields In Trust⁵ which are often used in the planning system and by some local authorities and housing developers.

Further details and examples are shown below. As these illustrations show there can be significant variations in the scale of provision within these categories. Also it should be noted that Play Unit scores are only an indicator of the relative size and scale of play areas and are not a true indicator of 'play value' or how inclusive or accessible a site is; those issues are covered in **Section 2.3**

⁴ Data from March 2025

⁵ Fields in Trust recognise a further category which captures sites that are smaller than a Doorstep Play Area or 'LEAP'. This is defined as a Local Area for Play or 'LAP' and may contain no play equipment at all but includes "demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged" (Fields in Trust⁵). However, this strategy does not take into consideration such sites.
[Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play | Fields in Trust](#)

Destination play areas (currently 4 with 1 planned)

- offer an extensive range of equipment, equating to over 45 Play Units
- may offer a range of play environments.
- generally designed to meet the needs of all age ranges, from toddlers (5 years or younger), to juniors (aged 5-11) and teenagers.
- always located within a larger green space or park with supporting infrastructure including toilets, catering and car parking.
- may be used by accompanied and unaccompanied children
- serve a large catchment area

Examples of destination play areas:



Preston Park (64 play units)



John Whitehead Park (49 play units)

Neighbourhood play areas (currently 16)

(equates broadly to Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play or 'NEAP' as defined by Fields in Trust)

- offer a moderate range of equipment, equating to 20 or more Play Units
- may offer a range of play environments
- generally designed to meet the needs of juniors (aged 5 to 11 years), although they may also cater for toddlers and teenagers too.
- often located within a larger green space or park and may have some supporting infrastructure (e.g. seating, car parking)
- may be used by accompanied and unaccompanied children
- serve a moderate catchment area

Examples of neighbourhood play areas:



Victoria Park (36 play units)



Windmill Park (27 play units)

Doorstep Play Areas (currently 36 with 11 planned)

(equates broadly to Locally Equipped Area for Play or 'LEAP' as defined by Fields in Trust)

- offer a limited range of equipment, equating to fewer than 20 Play Units
- generally do not offer a range of play environments
- generally designed to meet the needs of toddlers (aged 5 years or younger) but may cater for some older children too.
- usually not part of a larger green space or park and with very limited supporting infrastructure (e.g. seating)
- normally only used by accompanied children
- serve a small catchment area

Examples of doorstep play areas:



Hazeldene (18 play units)



Hartburn (9 play units)

Informal sport facilities

While this strategy is primarily focused on the provision of play areas, it is important to take account of existing and planned informal sport facilities since these add to the overall play 'offer' across the Borough. Furthermore, in many cases informal sport facilities are located immediately adjacent to play areas, so this may be a factor when considering how sites are used and managed.

The Borough currently has 25 sites with informal sport facilities which are available for the public to use free of charge at all reasonable times (excluding goal posts on areas of green space) ⁶:

- 21 sites are owned by Stockton Borough Council,
- 1 owned by a town / parish council
- 3 owned by housing developers / management companies

There are also plans for a further 4 informal sport facilities to be provided over the next few years (1 to be provided by the Council and 3 by housing developers), although this is subject to change.

Existing and planned informal sport facilities are listed and mapped at **Appendix C**.

The facilities at these sites range in scale from large wheeled sport facilities through to small kick walls. Some sites have more than one type of facility and as with play areas, most informal sport facilities are located in parks or other areas of green space.

The Borough has four main categories of provision:

- Multi-use games areas (MUGAs)
- Kick walls / other surfaced games areas
- Wheeled sport facilities
- Outdoor gyms / trim trails

Further details and examples are shown in **Appendix D**.

⁶ Data from March 2025

2.2 Distribution and access to play provision

The plans at **Appendix E** show indicative 'catchment areas' for current and planned play areas and informal sport facilities, based on the distances residents are likely to travel to access the categories of provision as shown in the following table. These distances are derived from local research carried out part of the Stockton-on-Tees Open Space Assessment and Strategy, 2017⁷. The catchments represent true walking distances using roads and footpaths.

<i>Destination play area</i> Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 2400m (a 30 minute walk time), although people may also cycle, drive or use public transport and travel from a wider catchment area.
<i>Neighbourhood play area</i> Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 1000m (a 12½ minute walk time), although people may also cycle, drive or use public transport and travel from a wider catchment area.
<i>Doorstep play area</i> Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 400m (a 5 minute walk time). It is not anticipated that many people would travel longer distances by car, cycle or public transport specially to access these sites.
<i>Informal sport provision</i> Likely to serve a catchment area of approximately 1200m (15 minute walk time), although larger or more specialist facilities such as the skate park at Preston Park attract users from a much wider catchment area. Conversely, users are unlikely to walk 15 minutes to access a small kick-wall or single basketball net.

Of course the distances people travel to specific facilities will vary greatly due to individual circumstances and the characteristics of each site. But applying these standard catchment areas provides an indication of which areas may be well-served or poorly-served by existing and planned play provision.

The plans also indicate where they may be some potential duplication in provision where catchment areas overlap. However, this catchment mapping does not take account of the quality and exact nature of the facilities available, so overlapping catchment areas does not necessarily reflect duplication of provision; e.g. a community may be located within the catchment of both a small Doorstep Play Area and a larger Neighbourhood Play Area, but they may have a totally different range of equipment and may serve different age groups.

⁷ These distances are derived from local research carried out part of the Stockton-on-Tees Open Spaces Strategy, 2017: [Stockton-on-Tees Open Space Assessment Report Part 1 March 2017](#) [Stockton-on-Tees Open Spaces Strategy Part 2 March 2017](#)

2.3 Play value, inclusivity and accessibility

Play value

The Council commissions RoSPA to undertake Play Value Assessments for all existing play areas and at the design stage for any planned provision. Detailed assessment criteria are set out under the following headings, and a full list of criteria is included at **Appendix F**:

- Site overall (excluding equipment)
- Ambience
- Provision for toddlers (if applicable)
- Provision for juniors (if applicable)
- Provision for teenagers (if applicable)

Many play areas, especially ‘doorstep’ sites and smaller ‘neighbourhood’ sites have not been designed to be used by all age ranges, and most ‘doorstep’ sites are targeted at younger children. So these assessments only calculate the play value for those age groups for which the site is designed. Total scores are then calculated for relevant age categories, resulting in an overall rating of excellent, good, average, below average or poor.

While some play areas may not be designed for (and therefore not assessed by) juniors or teenagers, some sites may also include informal sport facilities which do cater for those age ranges.

Informal sport facilities are not assessed in this way but tend to be used more by juniors and teenagers.

Inclusivity and accessibility

The Sensory Trust defines ‘inclusive play’ as providing opportunities for all children to play ‘regardless of ability and background’⁸. It is stressed that “Inclusive play doesn’t mean that every element is accessible to everyone, but it does mean that the combination of experiences adds to something equally great for each child. Some children can’t climb to the top of a rope, some don’t want to, others really need to. The same is true with quieter, more creative activities. Diverse and flexible opportunities are needed”.

There has been no overall assessment to determine how inclusive or accessible existing play areas are to children and young people with disabilities, but the design and location of equipment, and surfacing in and around play areas, will restrict access for some and prevent some children and young people from playing alongside others. 24 Council sites (from a total of 40) contain equipment which is deemed to be ‘inclusive’, enabling children with a wide range of abilities to use it, although it is accepted that not all equipment will be accessible to all people. Examples of such equipment are shown in **Appendix G**.

⁸ [Guide to inclusive play - Sensory Trust](#)

3. CHANGES IN OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

The Borough's outdoor play provision has evolved over several decades; some play areas being subject to several phases of renewal while in other cases the equipment or layout has not changed for many years. Some sites have been decommissioned when it hasn't been possible to replace failing equipment or when other alternative facilities have been provided.

In recent years any new play provision, or improvements to existing sites, have been delivered through one of the following mechanisms (or a combination of these):

- Through new housing developments, with new play areas or informal sport facilities being integrated into the new development or by contributing to 'off-site' provision delivered by the Council and funded through Section 106 agreements⁹.
- External funding secured through various grants or central government funding¹⁰.
- Local authority funding, through the Borough Council and town/parish councils.

Most current schemes are delivered through the following process:

- If the project is to be delivered in a new location (as opposed to improvements to an existing site) an options appraisal is carried out to determine a preferred site which is both feasible and eligible under the terms of the available funding (e.g. Section 106 funds must be allocated to a site within reasonable proximity to the housing development it is designed to serve). A final site is agreed in consultation with the relevant ward councillors.
- A design brief is developed in liaison with relevant officers, partner organisations and in consultation with ward councillors. This sets out the broad aspirations for the scheme, which will generally aim to achieve a RoSPA play value rating of 'good' or 'excellent' for the target age range. The brief also confirms the available budget.
- Potential suppliers are invited to submit costed designs in accordance with the design brief
- Designs are reviewed by officers and, if acceptable, forwarded to members of the Stockton Parent Carer Forum for comment
- Designs are also submitted to RoSPA to undertake a play value assessment
- The preferred design is forwarded to ward councillors for comment.
- Once agreed, planning consent is sought if required.
- An order is placed with the preferred supplier to implement the scheme.

New play areas and informal sport facilities which form part of a housing development are approved through the formal planning process. In the past the Council often agreed to the title-transfer of these sites from the housing developer, with a requirement that a commuted lump sum was paid to the Council to cover on-going management and maintenance costs. However, in recent years most developers have chosen to appoint private management companies to maintain these sites rather than transfer to the Council.

⁹ Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.

¹⁰ This includes a total of £1,119,903 capital funding (and £44,673 revenue funding) received by the Council between 2008 and 2011 through the government's Playbuilder programme.

Most recent improvements to Council-owned play areas have been funded primarily through Section 106 contributions. This has included major refurbishments at sites such as Ropner Park (see **Figure 2**), Redbrook Park and Harold Wilson recreation ground.



Figure 2: New equipment and safety surfacing installed at Ropner Park in 2024

As at March 2025 a number of schemes are being developed to increase or improve play provision across the Borough, and all planned schemes are listed in **Appendices A and B**. This includes new play areas in south Billingham and south Norton, both aimed at addressing current gaps in provision

The most significant scheme is the development of the Stockton Waterfront Urban Park (due to open 2026), where play provision is fully integrated into the entire design (see **Figure 3**). The upper park will have a large, dedicated play area comprising a wide range of play equipment and features. This will include two towers, incorporating slides and other play elements. These are to be connected by accessible walkways, allowing interactive play below, within and above the structures. There will be smaller 'totter trails' for younger children as well as a water play extension and a swing structure.

Children will be taken on a journey of discovery throughout the wider park with 'play on the way' features including a large six metre slide down the amphitheatre, making the most of the descent between High Street and riverside. Provision of play features in the lower park, closest to the river, are aimed at older children with climbing boulders, swings and hammocks.

Across the main play space and the wider park there will be a total of nine swings including various seat types for all ages and abilities. There will also be opportunities for children to engage with waterplay and loose fill material such as sand.

There has been a focus on designing a park and play area which is both accessible and inclusive, ensuring it is a space that everyone can enjoy. The play provision has been assessed by RoSPA and rated 'excellent' for play value. When complete it will become the Borough's largest 'destination' play area.



Figure 3: Examples of play provision within Stockton Waterfront Urban Park, due to open 2026

4. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

4.1 Inspections, repairs and maintenance

The Council has a legal responsibility to ensure all play areas and informal sport facilities are safe to use¹¹. Regular inspections and maintenance of facilities are carried out to ensure compliance with the British and European Standards for playground equipment and surfacing. BS EN1176 sets out standards for “good practice in the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of playground equipment in public spaces. The standards recognise that ‘good risks’ are an important part of children’s play and the main aim is to reduce ‘bad’ risks – which are those that children and their parents (or other carers) cannot realistically foresee or avoid¹².

Inspections for play areas and informal sport facilities are carried out as follows:

Scheduled routine (visual) inspections carried out by council staff	Weekly or fortnightly (depending on levels of use and how prone it is to damage and vandalism)
Scheduled detailed inspections carried out by council staff	Quarterly
Independent inspections (in line with BS EN1176), usually undertaken by RoSPA	Annually
Reactive inspections	When required

These inspections identify any equipment, safety surfacing or other items which require maintenance or repair. Such repairs are funded through the Council’s revenue budget for parks, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments and represent a significant pressure on that budget (£114,000 in 2024/25). Due to those budgetary pressures it is sometimes necessary to remove equipment rather than repair or replace items.

The Council also has service level agreements in place to undertake inspections on a number of sites owned by town and parish councils. Those costs, and the costs for any necessary repairs, are recharged to those councils.

Unfortunately, in addition to normal ‘wear and tear’ there are occasions when facilities are subject to deliberate damage which can be very costly to repair. For example, damage to the play area at Newham Gange Park in 2023 led to entire sites being temporary closed until repairs costing over £31,000 could be implemented. Other sites are prone to repeated smaller-scale damage which represents an on-going drain on limited resources, and in some cases results in equipment being removed as illustrated in **Figure 4**.

¹¹ Relevant legislation includes the Health & safety at work act 1974, management of health and safety at work reg 1999 and the Occupier’s liability act (revised 1984)

¹² [childrens-playground-stds-hi-res.pdf](#)



Figure 4: Swings permanently removed due to repeated damage at Bishopsgarth Park

Irrespective of normal wear and tear and deliberate damage, all equipment, safety surfacing and infrastructure has a limited lifespan and generally needs to be replaced after a period of 15 to 25 years. Given that a number of our play areas were created or improved with funding under the government's Playbuilder programme between 2008 and 2011 it is anticipated that a high proportion of the equipment installed at that time is likely to reach the end of its natural lifespan in the next 10 to 15 years. However, often it is only feasible to replace these assets if external capital funding can be secured through one of the mechanisms identified in **Section 3**, and it is not possible to secure funding for all sites in this way.

4.2 Grounds maintenance and cleansing

In addition to the maintenance of play equipment, safety surfacing and informal sport facilities the Council also commits resources to associated grounds maintenance and cleansing operations. The Council undertakes these activities on parish and town council sites as well, but unlike inspections / repairs of play provision, these costs are not recharged to the respective town/parish councils with the exception of a service level agreement which covers Yarm Town Council's Layfield play area.

4.3 Safety and security

The Council's Community Services maintain records of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in and around play areas and informal sport facilities. Many sites are monitored by CCTV cameras.

5. PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL OUTDOOR PLAY PROVISION

5.1 Principles guiding the distribution, range and quality of outdoor play provision

Principle 1: We aim to have a network of outdoor play provision which, taken as a whole, provides play opportunities to all our residents (including consideration of age group relevance and physical/sensory accessibility).

Principle 2: Larger 'destination' and 'neighbourhood' sites will be prioritised over small 'doorstep' sites because of cost effectiveness and the increased likelihood that they can incorporate features that are accessible to a wide range of users.

Principle 3: We will prioritise quality and 'play value' over quantity of provision.

Principle 4: We aim to achieve an equitable distribution of play sites, informed by need and at locations likely to serve the most users.

Principle 5: New or improved play facilities should only be considered where there are significant 'gaps' in provision, or where existing sites have poor play value.

Principle 6: We aim to limit the overall scale of provision to a level which is sustainable in terms of Council resources for management and maintenance

5.2 Principles underpinning the design, development and management of play provision

Principle 7: Play provision should be designed and maintained to be as welcoming, accessible and inclusive as possible, but we recognise that individual sites cannot meet all needs.

Principle 8: The Council will only support the development of new play provision if:

- it aligns with our strategic aims (in accordance with Principles 4 to 6)
- external capital funding can be secured
- it will achieve 'good' or 'excellent' play value (based on RoSPA assessment)

- funding is secured to cover inspection and maintenance for the anticipated lifespan of the equipment (e.g. a commuted lump sum if the site is to be title-transferred to the Council).

Principle 9: We recognise that demand and Council resources can change and we should not assume that play areas are necessarily permanent. All sites will be subject to a review of viability and suitability every ten years (this is in addition to safety and maintenance inspections)

Principle 10: When considering the creation of a new play area or the removal of an existing one, we will consult and engage local communities to fully understand the impacts of the change

Principle 11: Where resources allow we will seek to deliver measures that enhance the value of existing provision, such as improved toilets and changing places, landscaping and improved access and security

Principle 12: Where feasible we will implement other measures which encourage outdoor play, aside from the provision of play areas and informal sport facilities. For example, creating play environments in areas of public realm and 'natural' play spaces in parks and green spaces.

6. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING AND PLANNED PROVISION

To address the key aims of this strategy a comprehensive analysis of existing and planned play provision is required. Based on the principles set out in **Section 5.1** this will inform the future scale, nature and distribution of play provision in the Borough. A key purpose of this analysis is to identify priority sites for retention, as well as sites that may need to be decommissioned in order to achieve an overall level of provision which is sustainable in terms of Council resource.

The analysis takes into consideration the following data and information, with a site-by-site summary provided in **Appendix I**:

- a) *Play needs index* – which provides an approximate indication of the need or demand for outdoor play provision. It is calculated by combining three data sets, to generate a single value:
 - Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)
 - Proportion of population under 16 years of age
 - Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) health dataThe play needs index values are mapped against existing and planned play provision in **Appendix H**.
- b) *Scale of existing provision* - based on the 'play unit' scores for each site (see **Appendix B**).
- c) *Number of 'inclusive' play items* – the number of pieces of equipment which are assessed as 'inclusive', enabling children with a wide range of abilities to use them (see **Section 2.3** and **Appendix G**).
- d) *Number of households in catchment areas* - based on both 400m and 1000m catchments as mapped in **Appendix E**. Both catchment sizes have been applied to all sites (irrespective of whether they have been categorised as 'neighbourhood' or 'doorstep' sites) because this may help to determine whether there are any small doorstep sites which have the potential to serve a wider area, and whether any neighbourhood sites are primarily serving a more local area.
- e) *Play value for different age ranges* based on the RoSPA assessments (see **Section 2.3** and **Appendix F**).
- f) *Vandalism* - sites have been assessed by Community Services to identify those which are most prone to vandalism
- g) *Life expectancy of equipment and estimated replacement costs* - this provides an indication of when some or all the equipment and safety surfacing is likely to need replacing and the estimated costs for doing so based on current prices.
- h) *Provision of any informal sport facilities at the site* – whether the play area is located immediately adjacent to a multi-use games area, kick wall or other surfaced games area, wheeled sport facility or outdoor gym / trim trail. The presence of such facilities may have a bearing on how the play area is used and managed.

- i) *Proximity to other play areas* - other play areas within a 1000m catchment of a give site are listed, along with the walking distances between the two locations. This gives an indication of where there may be a duplication of provision in a given area, although it is possible that two sites are offering very different play experiences.

Based on the above analysis Council-owned play areas will be categorised as follows:

Category		Detail
1	Priority site to be retained / New site planned or under development	Sites which the Council will prioritise for maintenance and replacement of equipment, safety surfacing and other infrastructure. In most cases we will seek to maintain or improve current play value.
2	Retain subject to availability of resources	Sites which will be maintained in a safe condition but where equipment will only be replaced if resources allow
3	Phased decommission and re-purpose site	Sites where we will remove individual items of play equipment once they require repairs or would need to be replaced. The entire site may be decommissioned at an earlier stage subject to local consultation. In all cases once approximately 75% of play units are removed it is recommended that the entire site is decommissioned.
4	Sites to be reviewed in parallel	One site to be priority for retention / one for phased decommission

7. PROPOSED ACTIONS – BY LOCATION

To be completed following the adoption of principles.

8. PROPOSED ACTIONS - DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY PROVISION

The following cross-cutting actions will complement the site-specific proposals set out in **Section 7**.

1) We will continue to adopt the Play England's 10 principles for creating successful play spaces¹³, i.e. Successful play spaces:

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

2) We currently engage with Stockton Parent Carer Forum when planning and developing new sites but we will increase our community engagement with a particular focus on involving our children and young people in the design and development of play spaces.

3) In line with the principles set out in **Section 5** we will seek to secure funding (e.g. through town / parish councils, external grants and ward-based budgets) and work with partners to address any remaining 'gaps' in the current network of provision, or to improve existing sites. We will prioritise those areas in greatest need for outdoor play provision.

4) Where funding is secured to improve existing play areas we will seek to achieve good or excellent play value, as assessed by RoSPA.

5) We will design sites in ways which will minimise future maintenance costs, and which are resistant to damage and mis-use.

6) Where feasible we will consider whether the provision of 'natural' play environments provides a suitable alternative to the provision of formal play areas.

7) We will seek opportunities to add value to existing play provision through the development of other infrastructure and services (e.g. provision of catering, toilets, changing places and so on).

8) We will encourage housing developers to design play areas which achieve good or excellent play value.

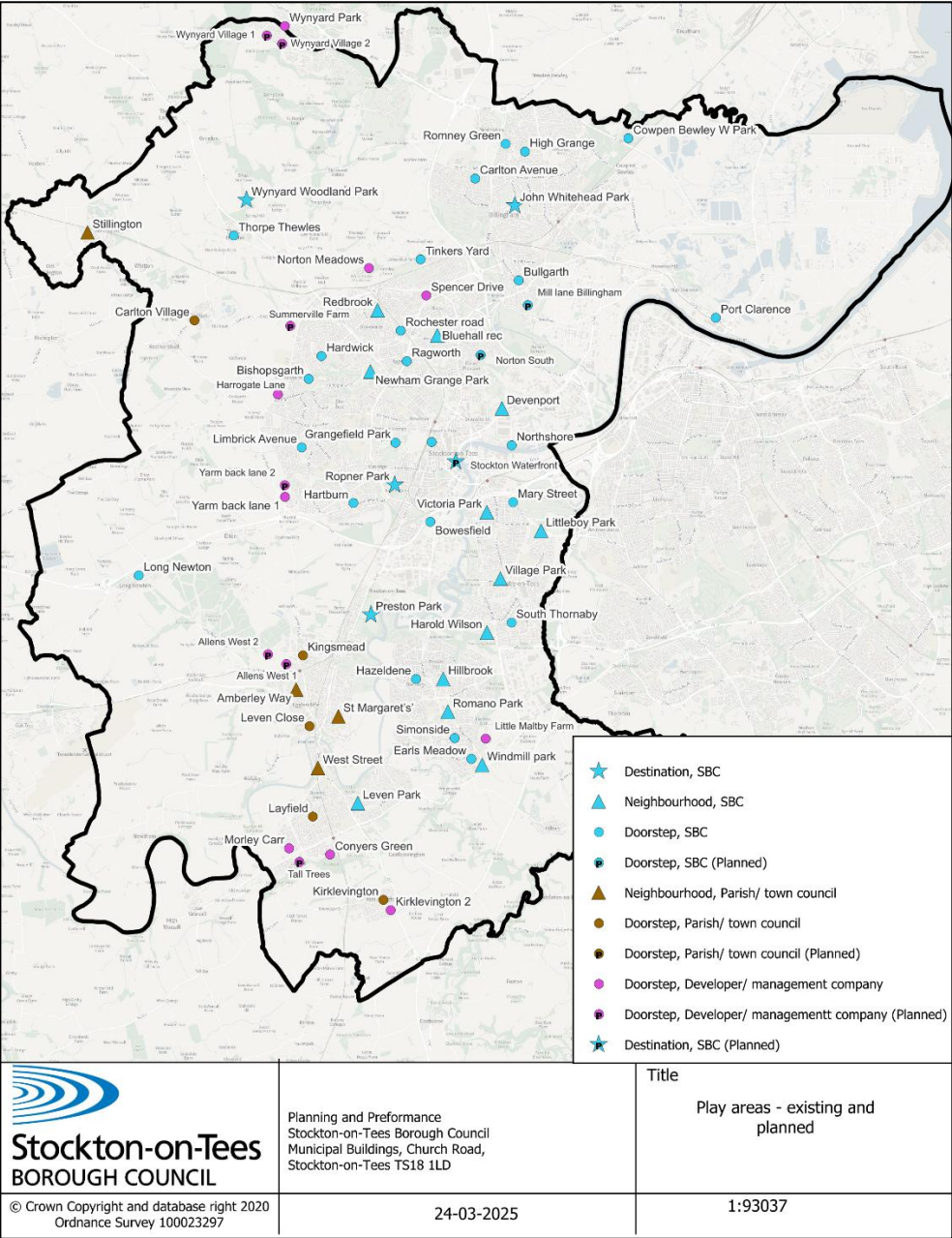
¹³ Play England - Design for play [Design for Play — Play England](#)

9. PROPOSED ACTIONS - MANAGEMENT OF PLAY PROVISION

The following cross-cutting actions will complement the site-specific proposals set out in **Section 7**.

- 1) We will explore the possibility of parish / town councils or other third parties contributing to the cost of maintaining play areas, in addition to those councils which already adopt this approach.
- 2) If feasible we should seek to strengthen links to local residents, businesses and users to create a greater sense of community 'ownership' of sites and facilities. This may help to reduce some of the damage which is a significant drain on our limited resources. We also want to engage people in decision-making regarding the future of a site as equipment needs to be removed.
- 3) As we reduce the number of sites to be retained we will introduce a more proactive approach to carrying out repairs and maintenance of remaining assets.

Appendix A:
Existing and planned play areas (March 2025)



Existing play areas (March 2025)

Site (<i>planned sites in italics</i>)	Ward	Town/ Village	Designation	Play units	Owner
Amberley Way	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Neighbourhood	20	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Bishopsgarth	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Doorstep	13	SBC
Bluehall Rec	Norton Central	Stockton	Neighbourhood	23	SBC
Bowesfield	Eaglescliffe East	Stockton	Doorstep	4	SBC
Bullgarth	Billingham South	Billingham	Doorstep	6	SBC
Carlton Avenue	Billingham West	Billingham	Doorstep	12	SBC
Carlton Village	Northern Parishes	Carlton	Doorstep	N/A	Carlton PC
Conyers Green	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park	Billingham East	Billingham	Doorstep	11	SBC
Devonport	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Neighbourhood	23	SBC
Earls Meadow	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	8	SBC
Grangefield Park	Grangefield	Stockton	Doorstep	16	SBC
Hardwick	Harwick & Salters Lane	Stockton	Doorstep	18	SBC
Harold Wilson	Village	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	37	SBC
Hartburn	Hartburn	Stockton	Doorstep	9	SBC
Hazeldene	Ingleby Barwick North	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	18	SBC
High Grange	Billingham North	Billingham	Doorstep	12	SBC
Hillbrook	Ingleby Barwick North	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	28	SBC
John Whitehead Park	Billingham Central	Billingham	Destination	49	SBC
Kingsmead	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	23	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Kirklevington	Yarm	Kirklevington	Doorstep	16	Kirklevington & C L PC
Kirklevington 2	Yarm	Kirklevington	Doorstep	N/A	Housing developer / management company
Layfield	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	15	Yarm TC
Leven Close	Eaglescliffe West	Eaglescliffe	Doorstep	13	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Leven Park	Yarm	Yarm	Neighbourhood	20	SBC
Limbrick Avenue	Fairfield	Stockton	Doorstep	1	SBC
Littleboy Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	29	SBC
Long Newton	Eaglescliffe West	Long Newton	Doorstep	6	SBC
Mary Street	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Doorstep	4	SBC
Mill Lane - Stockton	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Doorstep	15	SBC
Morley Carr	Yarm	Yarm	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Newham Grange Park	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton	Neighbourhood	20	SBC
Northshore	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton	Doorstep	9	SBC
Norton Meadows	Norton West	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company
Port Clarence	Billingham South	Billingham	Doorstep	19	SBC
Preston Park	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	Destination	64	SBC

Ragworth	Roseworth	Stockton	Doorstep	8	SBC
Redbrook	Roseworth	Stockton	Neighbourhood	26	SBC
Rochester Road	Roseworth	Stockton	Doorstep	5	SBC
Romano Park	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	57	SBC
Romney Green	Billingham North	Billingham	Doorstep	4	SBC
Ropner Park	Ropner	Stockton	Destination	68	SBC
Simonside	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Doorstep	4	SBC
South Thornaby	Stainsby Hill	Thornaby	Doorstep	15	SBC
Spencer Drive	Norton North	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer
St Margaret's	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	Neighbourhood	35	Egglescliffe & Eaglecliffe PC
Stillington	Northern Parishes	Stillington	Neighbourhood	23	Stillington PC
Thorpe Thewles	Northern Parishes	T Thewles	Doorstep	14	SBC
Tinkers Yard	Norton North	Stockton	Doorstep	15	SBC
Victoria Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	36	SBC
Village Park	Village	Thornaby	Neighbourhood	25	SBC
West Street	Yarm	Yarm	Neighbourhood	22	Yarm TC
Windmill Park	Ingeby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick	Neighbourhood	27	SBC
Wynyard Park	Northern Parishes	Wynyard	Doorstep		Developer / management company
Wynyard Woodland Park	Northern Parishes	Thorpe Thewles	Destination	50	SBC
Yarm Back Lane 1	Hartburn	Stockton	Doorstep	N/A	Developer / management company

Planned play areas (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town/ Village	Designation	Play units	Owner
<i>Allens West 1</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Allens West 2</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Harrogate Lane</i>	<i>Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree</i>	<i>Stockton</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Little Maltby Farm</i>	<i>Southern Villages</i>	<i>Ingleby Barwick</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Developer / management company</i>
<i>Mill Lane - Billingham</i>	<i>Billingham South</i>	<i>Billingham</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>SBC</i>
<i>Norton South</i>	<i>Norton South</i>	<i>Stockton</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>SBC</i>
<i>Stockton Waterfront</i>	<i>Stockton Town Centre</i>	<i>Stockton</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>TBC</i>	<i>SBC</i>
<i>Summerville Farm</i>	<i>Harwick & Salters Lane</i>	<i>Stockton</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Tall Trees</i>	<i>Yarm</i>	<i>Yarm</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Wynyard Village 1</i>	<i>Northern Parishes</i>	<i>Wynyard</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>		<i>Developer / management company</i>
<i>Wynyard Village 2</i>	<i>Northern Parishes</i>	<i>Wynyard</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>		<i>Developer / management company</i>
<i>Yarm Back Lane 2</i>	<i>Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree</i>	<i>Stockton</i>	<i>Doorstep</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Developer / management company</i>

Appendix B: Play unit scores

Individual items of play equipment are allocated a play unit score based on the approximate number of people who can use the equipment at the same time (1, 2, 3 or 4 or more), e.g.



2 users = 2 play units



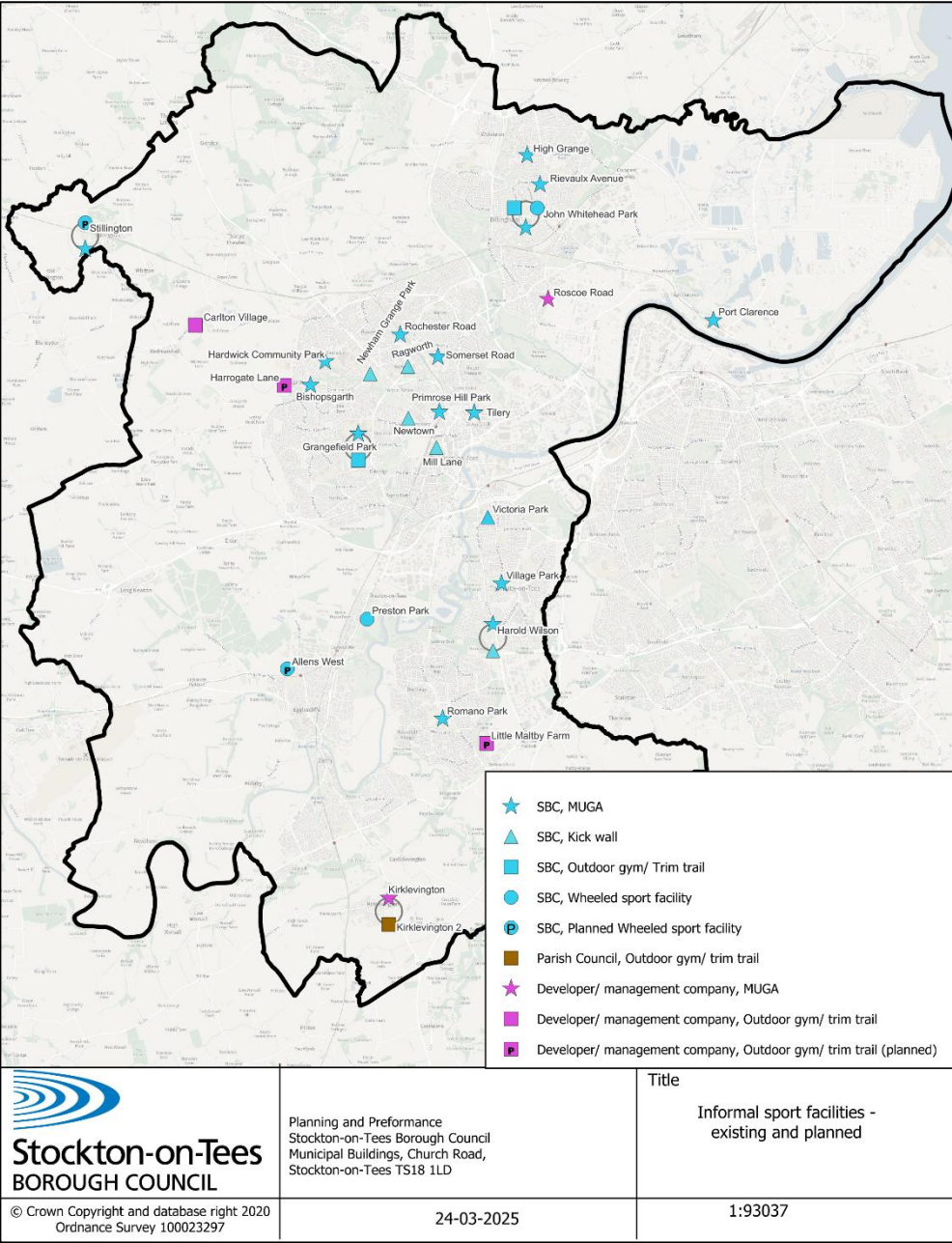
3 users = 3 play units



4 users or more = 4 play units

Appendix C:

Existing and planned informal sport facilities
(March 2025)



Existing informal sport facilities (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town / Village	Type:				Owner
			Wheeled sport facility	Multi use games area	Kick wall / other surfaced games area	Outdoor gym / trim trail	
Bishopsgarth	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton		✓			SBC
Carlton Village	Carlton	N Parishes				✓	Housing developer / management company
Grangefield Park	Grangefield	Stockton		✓		✓	SBC
Hardwick Comm Park	Hardwick	Stockton		✓			SBC
Harold Wilson	Village	Thornaby		✓	✓		SBC
High Grange	Billingham North	Billingham		✓			SBC
John Whitehead Park	Billingham Central	Billingham	✓	✓		✓	SBC
Kirklevington	Yarm	Kirklevington				✓	Kirklevington & C L PC
Kirklevington 2	Yarm	Kirklevington		✓			Housing developer / management company
Mill Lane	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton			✓		SBC
Newham Grange Park	Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	Stockton			✓		SBC
Newtown	Newtown	Stockton			✓		SBC
Port Clarence	Billingham South	Billingham		✓			SBC
Preston Park	Eaglescliffe East	Eaglescliffe	✓				SBC
Primrose Hill Park	Newtown	Stockton		✓			SBC
Ragworth	Roseworth	Stockton			✓		SBC
Rievaulx Avenue	Billingham Central	Billingham		✓			SBC
Rochester Road	Roseworth	Stockton		✓			SBC
Romano Park	Ingleby Barwick South	Ingleby Barwick		✓			SBC
Roscoe Road	Billingham South	Billingham		✓			Housing developer / management company
Somerset Road	Norton Central	Stockton		✓			SBC
Stillington	Northern Parishes	Stillington		✓			SBC
Tilery	Stockton Town Centre	Stockton		✓			SBC
Victoria Park	Mandale & Victoria	Thornaby			✓		SBC
Village Park	Village	Thornaby		✓			SBC

Planned informal sport facilities (March 2025)

Site	Ward	Town / Village	Type:				Owner
			Wheeled sport facility	Multi use games area	Kick wall / other surfaced games area	Outdoor gym / trim trail	
<i>Allens West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe West</i>	<i>Eaglescliffe</i>		✓			<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Harrogate Lane</i>	<i>Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree</i>	<i>Stockton</i>				✓	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Little Maltby Farm</i>	<i>Southern Villages</i>	<i>Ingleby Barwick</i>				✓	<i>Housing developer / management company</i>
<i>Stillington</i>	<i>Northern Parishes</i>	<i>Stillington</i>	✓				SBC

Appendix D: Types of informal sport provision

Multi-use games area (currently 17 with 1 planned)

- Offer surfaced and fenced areas for playing a variety of ball games such as football, basketball and cricket



e.g. Multi use games area at John Whitehead Park

Kick wall / other surfaced games area (currently 6)

- Offer surfaced areas playing a variety of ball games such as football, basketball and cricket, but may not be fenced



e.g. Surfaced games area at Victoria Park

Wheeled sport facility (currently 2 with 1 planned)

- Can generally accommodate users with BMX bikes, skateboards, inline skates and skateboards



e.g. Skate park at Preston Park

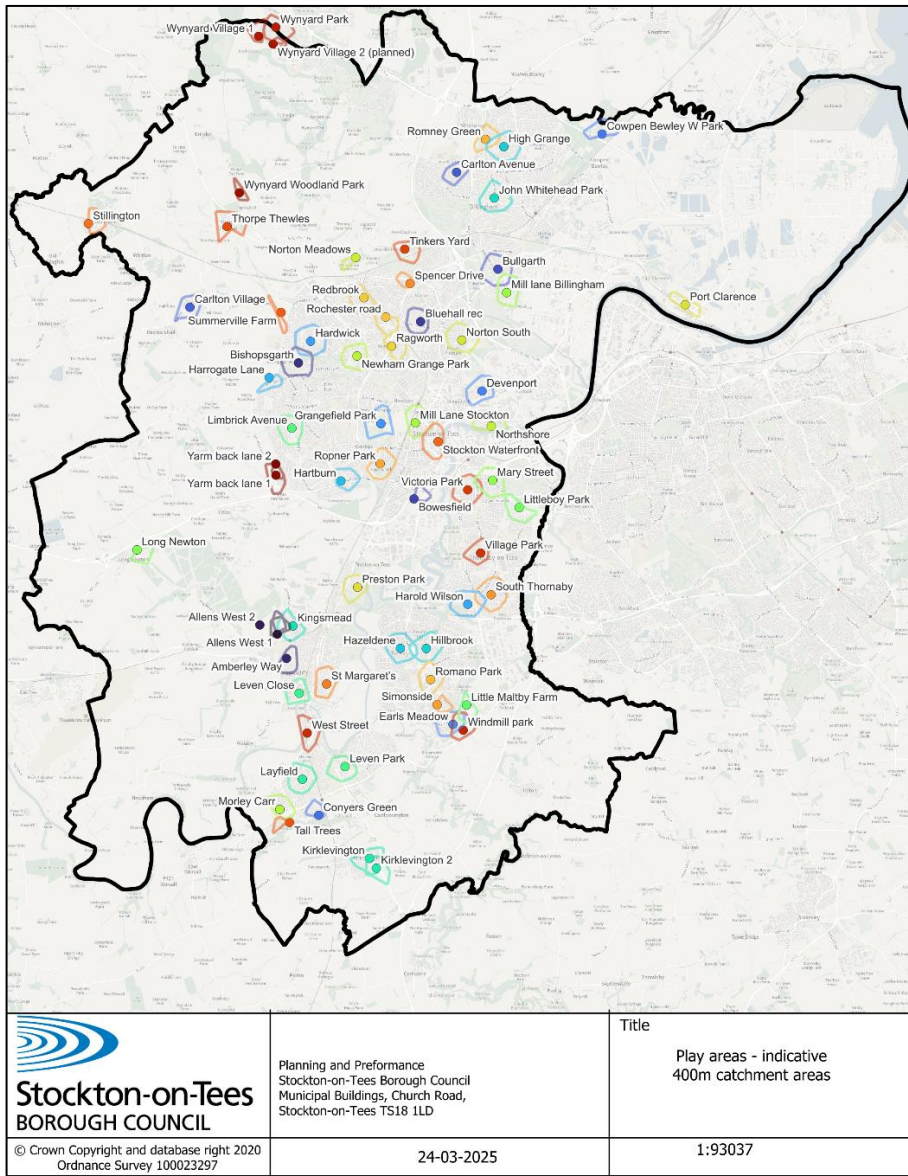
Outdoor gym / trim trail (currently 4 with 2 planned)

- Offer a range of equipment enabling users to exercise in the outdoors

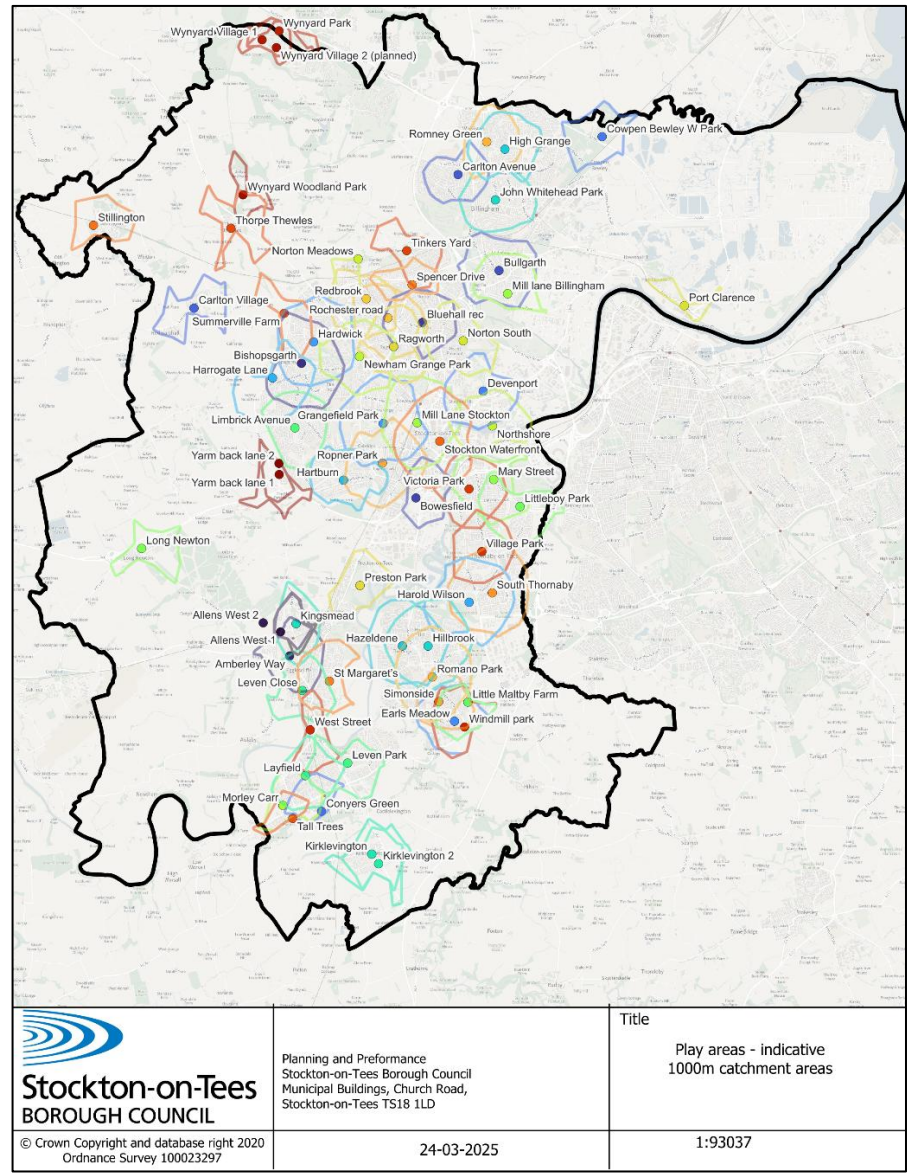


e.g. Outdoor gym at John Whitehead Park

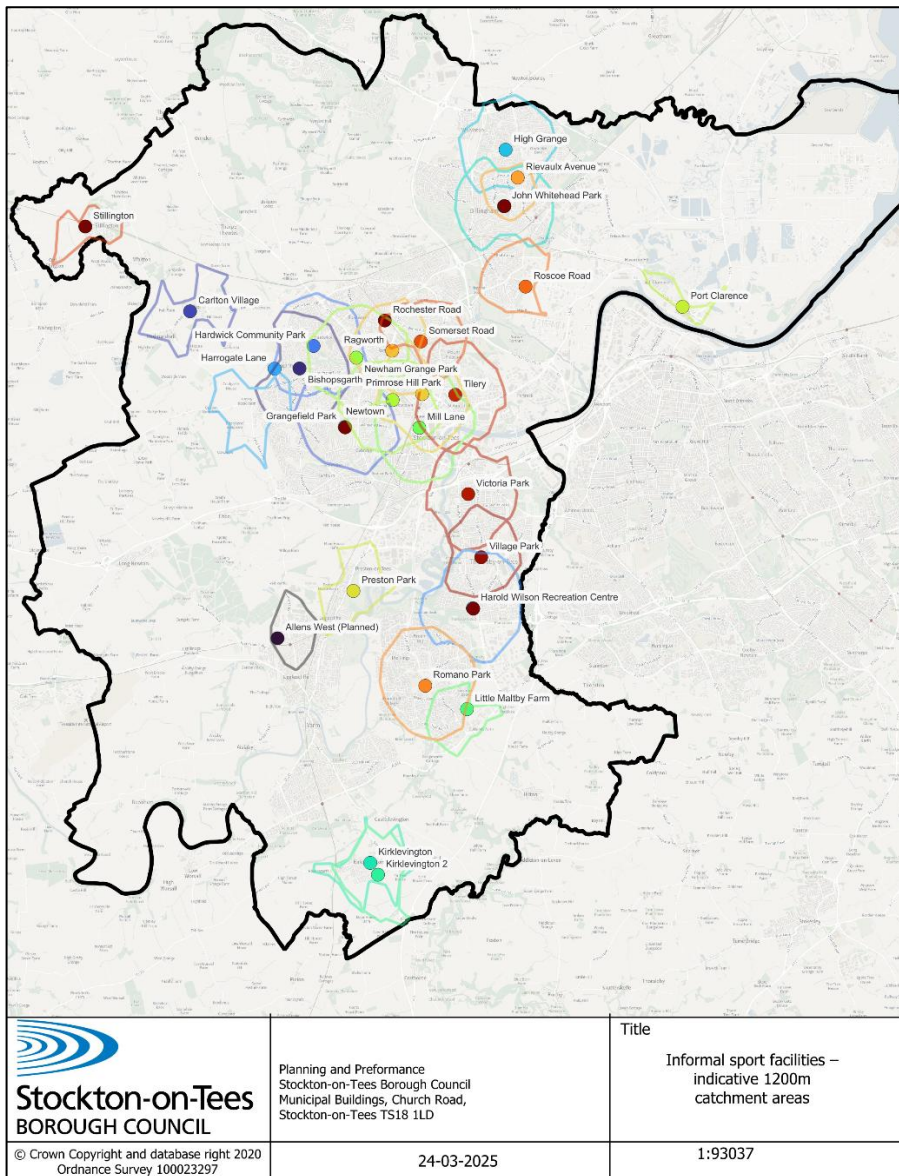
Appendix E: Indicative catchment areas for existing and planned play provision



Play areas: 400m catchments



Play areas: 1000m catchments



Informal sport facilities: 1200m catchments

Appendix F: RoSPA play value assessment criteria (worked example)

PLAY VALUE ASSESSMENT

Site: Littleboy Park Play Area

Date: 29.02.2024

The Play Value of each element of the site should be looked upon individually and assessed against the purpose that the operator has designated for the site (ie Toddler, Junior, Mixed, Teenage etc). The Operator should aim for a minimum rating of Good for: the Site Overall, Ambience, and for those age groups for which the site is designed. As can be seen from the indicated maximum score some elements have greater play value than others.

SITE OVERALL (Ignoring Equipment)		
	Max	Score
Social Safety	4	4
Physical safety	4	4
Pollution free	1	
Noise free	2	
Min of Two gates (Pedestrian) – Area 1 has 2 gates & Area 2 has 1 gate	3	3
Gates suitable for wheelchairs	2	2
Vehicle access gate	1	
Emergency vehicle access	2	1
Age Separation	4	2
Ground Contours	3	1
Shade present	1	1
Shelter (all ages)	2	1
Access for disabled – path leads to both areas and the grass inside	3	3
Suitability	2	2
Quality	3	3
Adult Seats (score extra 1 if arm rests)	1	1
Suitable litter bins	1	1
Environmental suitability	2	2
Locally related	3	
Ethnic	3	
Use of planting	2	1
Wild Flowers	3	2
Trees	3	1
Long Grass	3	3
Orientation	1	1
Appropriate signage	1	1
Colour suitability	2	2
Open Space – outside fenced area	3	3
Wheelchair friendly surfacing linking items – grass between units	4	4
TOTAL	69	48
Excellent = 47+	Good = 36-47	Average = 29-35
OVERALL SITE ASSESSED AS EXCELLENT		

Ambience		
	10	7
Visual appeal	2	2
Condition (litter and graffiti)	2	2
Layout	2	2
TOTAL	14	11
Excellent = 10+	Good = 8-10	Average = 6-7
OVERALL AMBIENCE ASSESSED AS EXCELLENT		

Toddlers		
Balancing	1	1
Crawling (short tunnels etc)	1	1
Rocking	1	1
Rotating	1	1
Sliding	1	1
Swinging	1	1
Sand Play	6	
Water Play	6	
Sensory Items	3	2
Textural variety	2	1
3+ Primary Colours	2	2
Toddler seating	1	1
Imaginative play (Area lending to use of child's imagination)	5	4
Interactive ability (Items encouraging group play)	2	2
Parental Seating (in Toddler section)	1	1
TOTAL	34	19
Excellent = 22+	Good = 18-22	Average = 13-17
OVERALL TODDLER ASSESSMENT = GOOD		

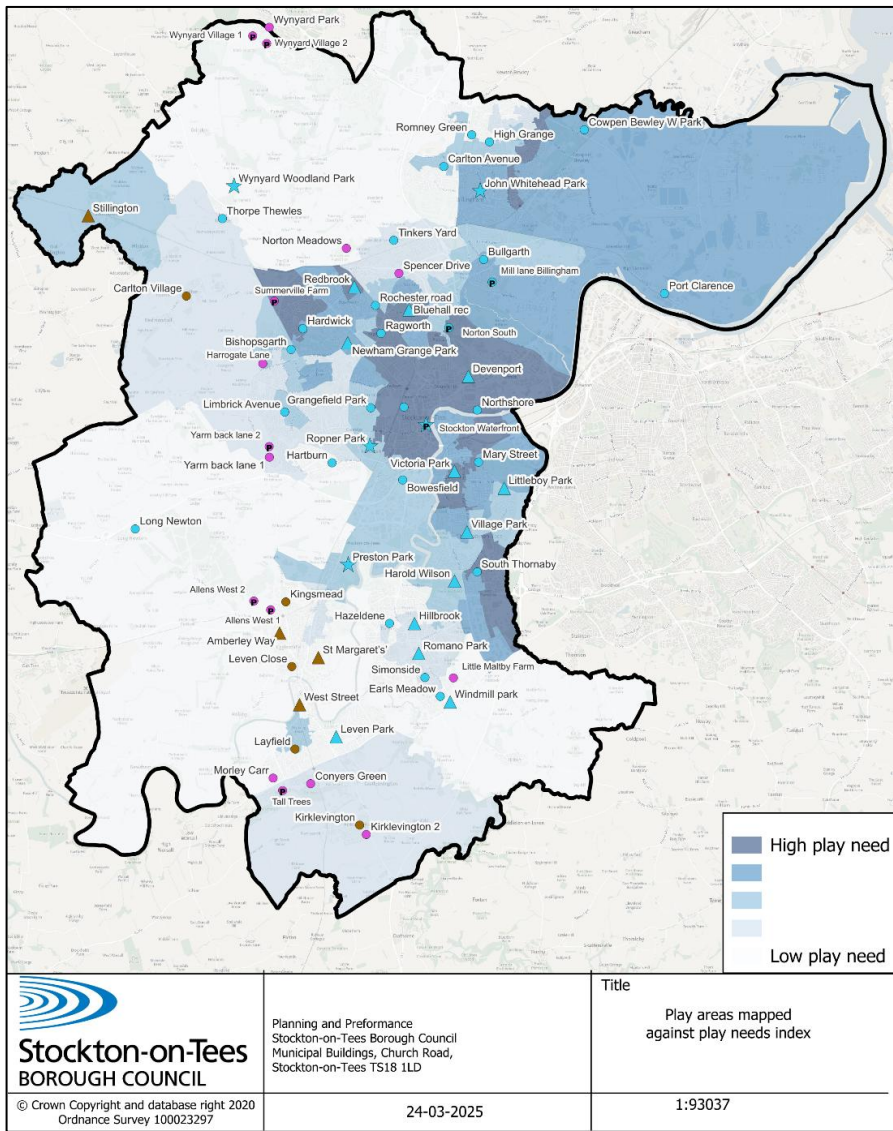
Juniors		
Balancing	2	1
Crawling (Short tunnels)	1	1
Rocking	1	1
Rotating	1	1
Rotating (Multi User ie roundabouts etc)	2	2
Rocking and rotating (Mobius, Waltz etc)	4	2
Sliding conventional (ie slide etc)	1	1
Sliding (firemans pole etc)	1	1
Swinging (Single)	1	1
Swinging (Group)	2	
Gliding (Aerial runways etc)	2	
Hanging	1	
Climbing	2	2
Gymnastics	1	
Agility (Clatter bridges etc)	2	1
Ball Play (Basketball/netball/football) – open space, basketball & cricket wicket	4	
Sand Play	4	
Water Play	4	
Sensory items	2	1
Textural variety	2	1
Wheeled Play (for bikes, skateboards etc)	6	
3+ Primary colours	1	1
Interactive ability (Items encouraging group play)	4	3
Junior Seating	1	1
Imaginative play (Area lending to use of child's imagination)	4	3
Educational Play (abacus etc)	1	
Ground Graphics (Hopscotch etc)	2	1
TOTAL	59	25
Excellent = 40+	Good = 32-40	Average = 26-31
OVERALL JUNIOR ASSESSMENT = BELOW AVERAGE		

Appendix G: Examples of inclusive equipment and surfacing

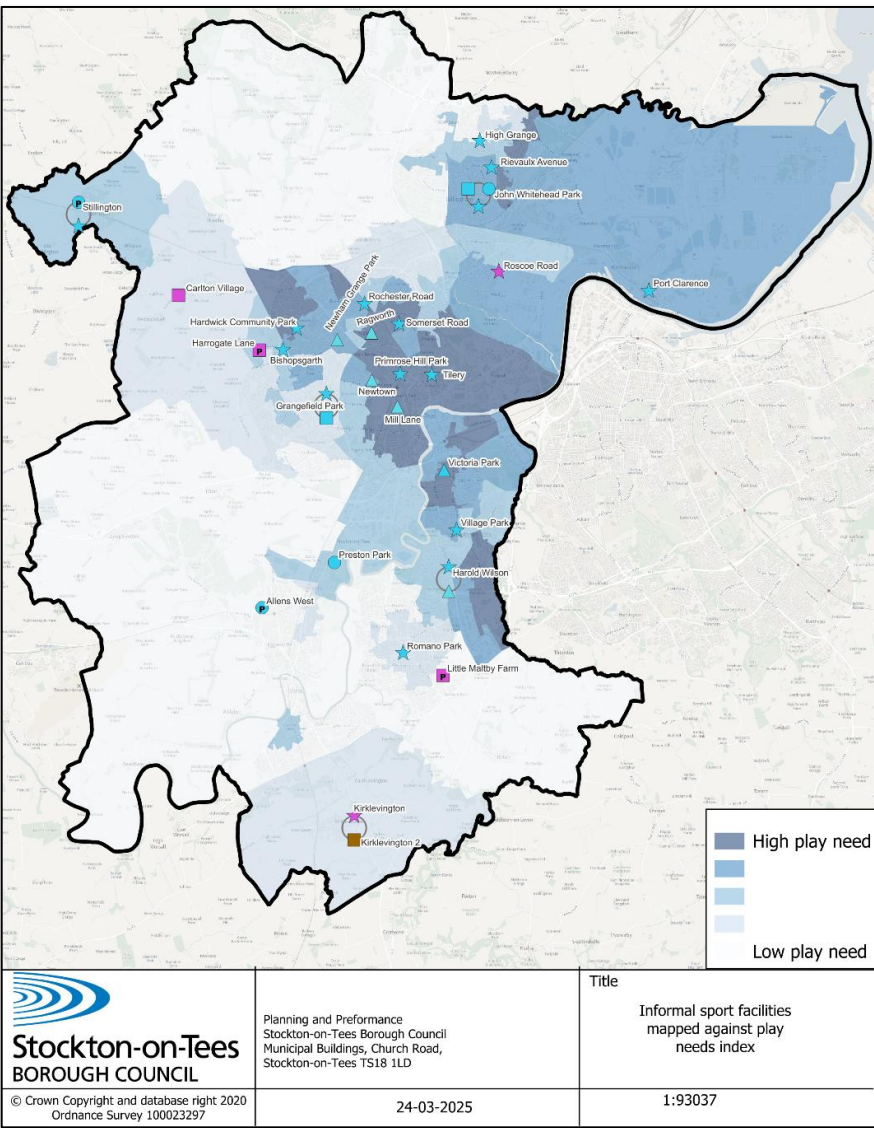


Examples of inclusive play equipment and surfacing (left: basket swing at Romano Park / right: flush carousel at Victoria Park)

Appendix H: Play provision mapped against play need index



Play areas



Informal sport facilities

Appendix I: Analysis of existing and planned play areas

Site	Owner	Town/ Village	Play Needs Index	Classification / play units	No. inclusive play items	No. households in 400m catchment	No. households in 1000m catchment	Play value					Vandalism	Estimated replacement costs £			Informal sports facilities on site	Other play area within 1000m catchment	Proposed Actions (SBC sites only) Further details in Section 6.2
								Overall site Rating	Ambience Rating	Toddlers Rating	Juniors Rating	Teens Rating		0 to 4 years	5 to 10 yrs	10 yrs +			

Play needs index
5 = Very high
4 = High
3 = Medium
2 = Low
1 = Very low

Classification
Destination: 45 or more play units
Neighbourhood: – 20 or more play units
Doorstep: 1 to 19 play units

No. inclusive play units
1 = no units
2 = 1-2 units
3 = 3-4 units
4 = 5-6 units
5 = 7 or more units

No, Households in 400m catchment
1 = Very Low
2 = Low
3 = Medium
4 = High
5 = Very High

No, Households in 1000m catchment
1 = Very Low
2 = Low
3 = Medium
4 = High
5 = Very High

RoSPA Play Value score
1 = Poor
2 = Below average
3 = Average
4 = Good
5 = Excellent

Vandalism (current – not historical)
1 = High incidence
3 = Medium incidence
5 = Low or or zero incidence