

Provision for children and young people

Definition

- 9.1 This type of open space includes areas such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people. An example of an area for children and young people is shown in picture 9.1 below.

Specific strategic context and consultations

- 9.2 Although the Council does not currently have a play strategy, it is clear that play areas are an important priority for the Council.
- 9.3 The Best Value Performance Plan 2003 highlights the achievements of the Council during the year, including the development of a new play area at Roman Way. Council dedication to the provision of play areas is further echoed through the target for 2004 to begin a programme of renovation on existing play areas. Since the beginning of 2004 Goodwood Close and Burford Green Play Areas have both been completed.
- 9.4 A number of consultees highlighted the perceived lack of provision of open space for young people and children, particularly teenagers and young adults. It appeared that this was a particular problem within the Western analysis area, containing Lutterworth and Broughton Astley, primarily within Broughton Astley Parish.

Quantity

- 9.5 All play areas were audited specifically where equipment was provided. Frequently equipped play areas were found to be located amongst a larger area of amenity greenspace. This greenspace has been audited as amenity greenspace and not as a play area. Therefore any calculations and standards within this local needs PPG17 study refer specifically to equipped play areas, ball courts and skateboard areas and are measured separately to amenity greenspace.
- 9.6 The Local Plan contains several policy statements that relate to the provision for young people and children, and breaks down the outdoor playing space standard of 2.43 hectares per 1000 population into 0.6 – 0.8 hectares of outdoor playing space for children. However this standard includes the amenity greenspace around equipped play areas and therefore is not comparable to any local standard that is set as a result of the audit and analysis.
- 9.7 The plan states that the proposed location must be given at the time of the full planning application. It is suggested that if the proposed play space land is split between different sites, the main area should have a minimum site area of 1.2ha, and other subsidiary elements should be a minimum of 0.4ha. Again these standards relate to children's play space rather than specifically equipped areas.

Setting provision standards

- 9.8 The process for setting local quantitative standards is described within PPG 17 Companion Guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' and this process has been followed in order to set a local standard for the district of Harborough. A diagrammatic format of this process is provided within Appendix C – 'Quantity Standards' along with a summary of all calculations.

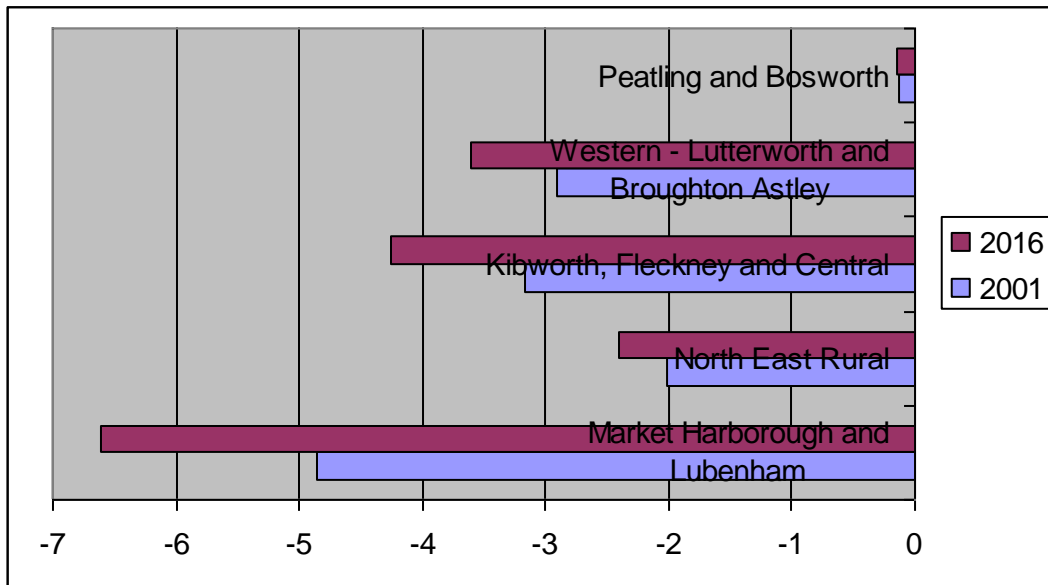
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- 9.9 There are national standards for children’s play space provided by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which suggests 0.81ha per 1,000 population is provided. The current quantitative standards set by the district council are based upon this recommendation.
- 9.10 As indicated previously, the Local Plan and National standards include the amenity greenspace surrounding play areas, in addition to the equipped area. These standards are therefore not directly comparable with the audit undertaken and the local provision standards developed for this local needs assessment PPG17 study, which are outlined below.
- 9.11 Current levels of provision for young people and children in the district amount to 9.92 hectares, which equates to a total of 0.13 hectares per 1000 population.
- 9.12 Although 41% of respondents suggested that provision for young people was about right, the majority (59%) indicated that there was a deficiency with no responses suggesting there was a surplus of provision. This percentage of deficiency responses was the highest of any open space type. These figures were also supported by all other forms of which specifically suggested the shortage was more to do with teenage provision than provision for the younger children.
- 9.13 With the exception of Market Harborough and Lubenham area, over 50% of consultation responses in each area suggest that there is a deficiency of provision for young people and children. More specifically, those areas that had higher responses of deficiency have a provision of less than 0.2 ha per 1,000 population suggesting any local standard should be above this level of provision. Peatling and Bosworth had an equal number of responses suggesting provision was about right and deficient with a provision level of 0.27 ha per 1,000 population suggesting a local standard should be above this but not too much higher.
- 9.14 There are no significant differences in the level of provision and perceived local need for provision for children and young people between the rural and the more urban areas of the district, suggesting the same standard could be applied to the whole of the district. In fact one of the key points from the more qualitative consultation through the neighbourhood ‘drop-in’ sessions was that there is a demand for play areas even in small village settlements and therefore this type of open space is could be expected to be realistically provided equally in both urban and rural areas.
- 9.15 A provision standard for this type of open space should be realistic. For example, 1 ha of equipped play area would be a very large provision (bigger than a football pitch and would be unrealistic). Therefore given the above statistics a local standard of 0.3 ha would improve the provision but also probably achievable and realistic. This equates to about a 17m x 17m of equipped play area per 1,000 population.
- 9.16 Based on the analysis, consultation and existing levels of provision it is therefore suggested that for the district of Harborough **a provision standard of around 0.3 ha per 1,000 population** is provided.

Applying provision standards

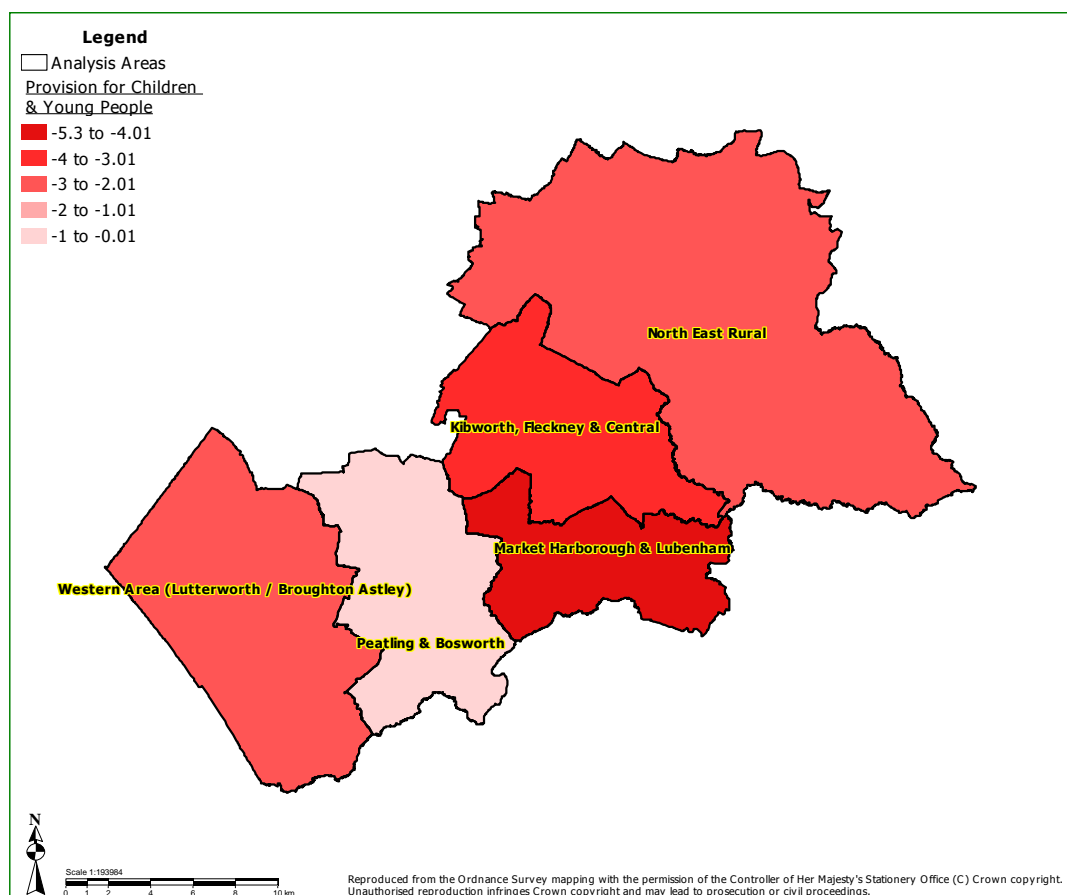
- 9.17 Based on a provision standard of 0.3 hectares, there is a total deficiency of 13.5, rising to almost 15 by 2011.
- 9.18 Figure 9.1 overleaf highlights the levels of undersupply of provision for young people and children within the district.

Figure 9.1 –Deficiency of provision for children and young people in hectares by analysis area



- 9.19 The key issues that arise from the application of standards are:
- with the exception of Peatling and Bosworth, the deficiencies in all areas are proportionately large
 - the largest deficiency of provision for children and young people is in Market Harborough, where there is a shortfall of 4.85 hectares
 - shortfalls in Lutterworth and Broughton Astley will increase to 3.61 hectares by 2016, supporting the findings from the consultation that there may be a requirement for additional sites.
- 9.20 Consultation has indicated that there is a shortfall of provision for young people and children, however the main shortfalls are focused in the upper end of this typology – provision for teenagers. It is recommended that detailed investigation is undertaken into the actual split and the demand for additional provision. This will ensure that the needs of teenagers are not ignored. This approach is highlighted within PPG17.
- 9.21 Full details of the application of quantity standards for young people can be found in Appendix C.
- 9.22 Figure 9.2 overleaf demonstrates the surplus / deficiencies within each analysis area based on the provision standard of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population for 2004. All maps are provided in Appendix O including projection surplus and deficiency maps for 2016 based on future populations.

Figure 9.2 - Current Surplus & Deficiency of Provision for Children and Young people by Analysis Area (2004)



Quality

- 9.23 66% of sites for young people and children in the district are considered to be of either good or very good quality. Only 14% of sites are rated as poor or very poor.
- 9.24 In Market Harborough and Lubenham, 64% of sites for children and young people are considered to be good or very good quality. Both Goodwood Close Play Area and Burford Green Play Area in the Market Harborough urban area are rated as very good, as is the Village Hall play area in Lubenham.
- 9.25 Goodwood Close and Burford Green Play Areas have both recently been opened at a cost of £27,000 and £26,000 respectively.
- 9.26 North East Rural is the only area to have none of its sites for young people and children rated as poor. In addition 77% of its sites are considered to be good or very good. The Millennium Green play area in Hungarton is considered to be of particularly good quality.
- 9.27 The Kibworth, Fleckney and Central region is perhaps the biggest area of concern with 43% of its play areas considered as poor or worse. The two play areas in Fleckney are rated as very poor.
- 9.28 A number of sites for young people and children come in for some criticism within the Western Area and Peatling and Bosworth such as the play area in Gilmorton and

Byre Crescent and Cottage Lane play areas in Broughton Astley. Overall however, in the Western area there is general satisfaction with the quality of sites for young people and children with 73% rated as good or very good.

Accessibility

- 9.29 Accessibility of provision for children and young people in the district as a whole is excellent as 80% of sites are rated as good or very good. Only 7% of sites are rated as poor or very poor. This is the second lowest percentage of sites rated negatively of all open space types suggesting that along with cemeteries and churchyards, play areas are the most accessible type of open space within the district of Harborough.
- 9.30 Consultation has identified that wheelchair access to some playgrounds is difficult. Accessibility for the disabled, to and within sites of play provision, should therefore be considered in any future improvements or new developments.
- 9.31 Only 4 sites in total were deemed to have poor or very poor accessibility. These were Gilmorton play area, Bellfields Road Recreation Ground play area in Market Harborough, Harrisons Field playground in Claybrooke and a play area attached to a public house in Peatling Parva.
- 9.32 The two areas with the best accessibility were North East Rural and Peatling and Bosworth with 78% and 73% of ratings good or very good respectively.

Catchment

- 9.33 Catchment areas have been used to identify appropriate accessibility standards for play areas.
- 9.34 The Local Plan identifies the recommendations for play provision adopted by the NPFA, suggesting:
- local area for play – unsupervised open space for children – within one minute walk from the house
 - local equipped area for play – unsupervised equipped area for play for children of early school age – within a five minute walk of home
 - neighbourhood equipped area for play – unsupervised site equipped primarily for older children but with opportunities for younger children – within 15 minutes walk of home.
- 9.35 Based on consultation responses, the mean, median and modes are outlined in table 9.1 overleaf. In addition, in accordance with PPG17, the time that 75% of the population is willing to travel is also shown.

Table 9.1 Time prepared to travel

Overall - Harborough District - Parish Councils							Members
	Median	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	75%	General Consensus
Walk	10	10	5	5	20	10 minutes	5 minutes
Cycle	5	5	5	2	10		
Bus	10	11	10	2	30		
Car	5	7	5	1	15		

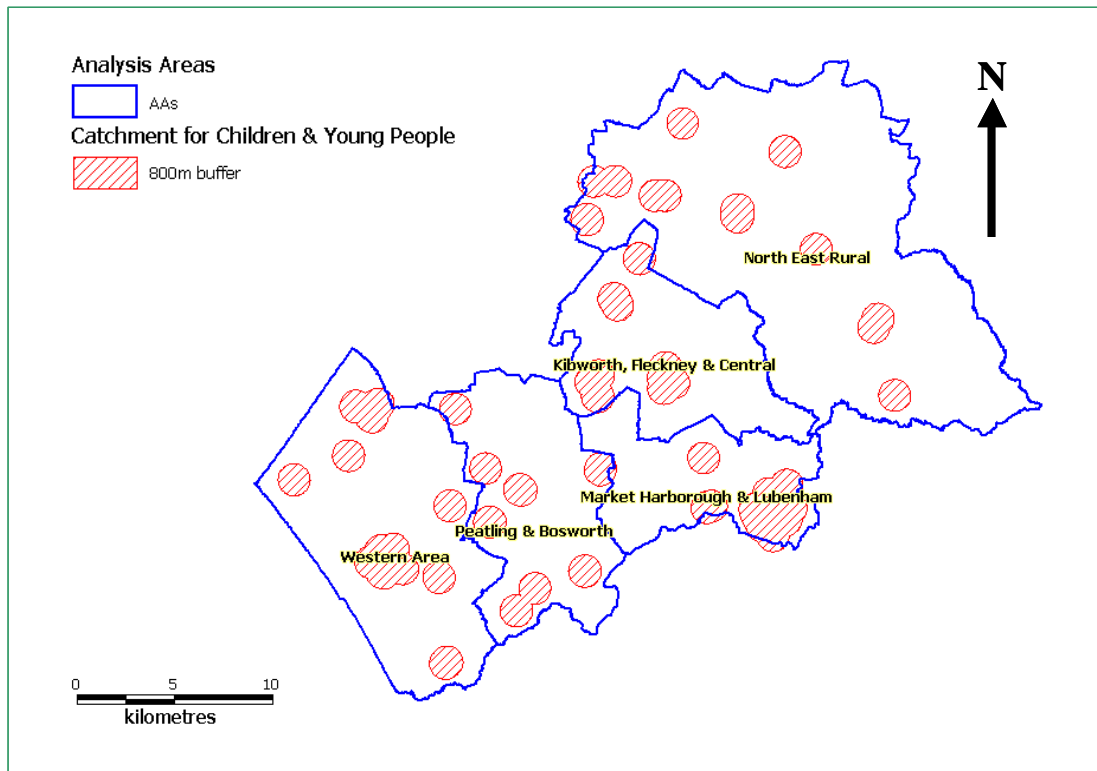
- 9.36 Again, and similar to amenity greenspace, local needs and expectations suggest that play provision is a local amenity and should be located close to places of residence.
- 9.37 Most consultees expect to be able to walk to a play area, rather than drive, cycle or use public transport.
- 9.38 Consultation highlighted that residents expected to be able to walk to a play area within 5 to 10 minutes. There was a feeling that an adequately sized play area should be provided within this catchment but people are more prepared to travel to larger sites with more equipment. Some people indicated that a walk of up to 20 minutes is acceptable, however the modal response was 5 minutes.
- 9.39 75% of those consulted are willing to travel up to 10 minutes to use a play area. This suggests, as shown in summary table 9.2 below, that play areas should be located within 400 – 800 metres of their residents.

Table 9.2 Recommended Accessibility Standard

Local Standard – Play Areas	
Recommended Travel Time	Estimated equivalent distance
5 - 10 minute walk	400m - 800m

9.40 Figure 9.3 below illustrates the application of this standard to the provision of children and young people within the district. All maps are provided in Appendix O which demonstrates clearly the areas outside the recommended catchment area.

Figure 9.3 - Accessibility Threshold – Provision for Children and Young People



9.41 As can be seen in Figure 9.3, there are many areas within the district that are outside of the recommended catchment area although many of these maybe very rural where a limited number of people live.

Assessment of value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

9.42 Children’s play areas are a popular use of open space, and as highlighted previously, both the quality and accessibility of most sites within the district is considered to be good.

9.43 A number of sites have high levels of usage in addition to very good quality and very good accessibility. These sites are of high value to the community and should be protected. They include:

- The Headland Recreation Ground Play Area, Market Harborough
- Roman Way Play Area, Market Harborough
- Sherrard Road Play Area, Market Harborough
- Little Bowden Play Area, Market Harborough
- Logan Street Recreation Play Area, Market Harborough
- Welland Park Play Area, Market Harborough (see picture 9.1 below)
- Billlesdon Primary School Play Area

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- Village Play Area, Gaulby Way - Stoughton
- Houghton on the Hill Playing Field Play Area.

Picture 9.1 – Welland Park play area – example of good practice



- 9.44 Most sites that have a high level of use usually have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. The majority of sites with a low level of use have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. Cottage Lane Play Area and the Childrens Play Area in Lubenham are exceptions to this – they have high use and accessibility, despite their poor quality.
- 9.45 There are no sites for young people and children where usage is low and both quality and accessibility are either very poor or poor, or very good or good. However there are four playgrounds in the district where accessibility is not a problem but they have low usage and are of poorer quality. The quality of these sites should be enhanced in order to increase usage and improve the value of the site. Sites in this category include:
- Village Hall and Small Play Area - Little Stretton
 - Folly Field Play Area – Mowsley

Picture 9.2 – Little Stretton play area – low usage, and poor quality and accessibility



9.46 In addition, there are a number of sites in the district where despite high quality and accessibility usage is poor. Investigations should be made into the reasons why, and as to whether their current purpose is appropriate. These sites include:

- Tilton Play Area
- Orchard Road - Lutterworth
- Public House Garden and Play Area - Swinford
- Hog Lane Play Park - Hallaton

Summary

9.47	Children's play areas are a popular use of open space, and as highlighted previously, both the quality and accessibility of most sites within the district is considered to be good.
9.48	Consultation indicated that there was felt to be a deficiency of provision, particularly for teenagers. The application of a local standard of 0.3 ha per 1000 population has been suggested. When applying this standard, all areas have an undersupply of provision, the largest of which is in Market Harborough and Lubenham, equivalent to 4.85 hectares in total.
9.49	It is suggested that play areas are relatively local facilities, and 75% of people expect to walk to a small play area within 5 – 10 minutes of their home.

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| 9.50 | There are therefore many areas that lie outside of this catchment although the areas covered centre around the main urban areas where the majority of population reside. |
| 9.51 | 66% of sites within the district were rated as good or very good in terms of quality, and accessibility was also indicated to be high. Despite this, there are a number of sites which require investigation and / or improvement, as they are currently used less frequently than other sites. |