

North Norfolk Play Strategy 2007 - 2010

North Norfolk Play Strategy

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1. Executive Summary

There is no question that play is vital to the development of children and young people.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for an integrated and informed approach to play provision in its widest sense on a district-wide scale in terms of both public and private sector provision. It will enable funding streams to be effectively sourced and targeted at areas of demonstrable need. The short term objective for the strategy is to enable £200,000 of BIG lottery money provisionally allocated to North Norfolk to be accessed for projects relating to the 0 – 24 age group.

North Norfolk has particular challenges and opportunities in terms of play provision. The district is predominantly rural with a high percentage of people living in small relatively isolated settlements. Consequently this geographical isolation can present problems for people to access services and facilities but the District's unique natural environment provides a valuable resource for play.

The Strategy reinforces the case for play in a national and local context and draws on existing information relating to play taken from recent surveys and reports. In addition to the existing information further survey work has been undertaken to directly inform this Strategy.

The key issues arising out of the consultations are as follows:

- The priority age groups are children aged over 7 and young people.
- The lack of regular transport to and from facilities is limiting access to existing facilities.
- There is considerable demand for year round peripatetic, mobile play services and workers across the more rural areas of North Norfolk to provide opportunities for creative play, activities, games, workshops and meeting venues.
- Play facilities and open spaces should make more use of the natural environment and be more exciting.
- Areas of shortfall of quantity and quality of play facilities have been identified.
- Lack of confidence among young people to attend activities and events without a companion and anxieties around peer groups.

The key issues have been used to design a two phased action plan summarized as follows:

Phase 1 - January 2007 – June 2007

1. Work up at least two projects to be funded by the £200,000 BIG Lottery Funding, each project to be for a minimum of £50,000. Projects to correspond with the policy aims of the North Norfolk Play Strategy.
2. Secure approval from the Play Partnership and NNDC and apply for BIG Lottery funding.

Phase 2 - June 2007 – March 2010

1. Identify and implement further consultation.
2. Draft local play and play-space standards to support Local Development Framework.
3. Complete BIG Lottery projects and evaluate success.
4. Seek adoption of North Norfolk Play Strategy by other organizations.
5. Seek funding to implement other projects considered important but not funded in Phase 1.

A Play Partnership consisting of stakeholders from the public, voluntary and community sectors was set up to support the development of the Strategy and subsequent implementation of the action plan in terms of the following vision:

‘to enable children and young people to play freely and safely and to make imaginative and informed choices about how, where and when they play.’

2. Introduction

Purpose and scope

Play is essential in the mental and physical development of children and young people and yet modern definitions tend to restrict ‘play’ primarily to 0 – 14 year olds. It could well be very ‘un-cool’ to suggest to a 16 year old that he/she ought to play more!

Play does not necessarily have to stop in adulthood. George Bernard-Shaw said:

We don’t stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.

This Strategy is instrumental in forming an integrated and informed approach to the provision of play opportunities on a district wide scale by creating new opportunities or improving those that already exist. It primarily covers all children up to 16 years old but also extends to age 24 in some cases. It is envisaged that the strategy will provide a basis to access funding streams and effectively target resources to those areas of proven need. It seeks to identify existing provision in North Norfolk, to identify and prioritise areas of need and then to address that need in the light of contemporary guidance and best practice.

Audit Commission inspections of the Council’s cultural services, parks and open spaces have identified the need for a strategy for play and a short term objective for the strategy is to help access £200,000 of BIG Lottery funding provisionally allocated to North Norfolk.

Future Comprehensive Performance Assessments will include key performance indicators relating to the effectiveness of strategic play provision.

This Strategy has been produced using existing financial and staff resources and its format is broadly consistent with the guidance provided in ‘Planning for Play’ by the National Children’s Bureau and the Big Lottery Fund.

The Strategy will be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 will achieve the short term goal of securing the BIG Lottery funding and commissioning projects. Phase 2 will implement the Strategy on a broader basis by securing further funding to implement some of those projects considered important but not implemented in the first phase. Phase 2 will also seek to extend partnerships, achieve recognition of the Strategy among other providers, and undertake further consultation. The Strategy will be reviewed after year 1 in the light of the further consultation and reviewed in full after year 3.

Definition of play

It is clearly understood by most people what is meant by play but ‘Getting Serious about Play’ defines play as:

‘What Children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons.’

Through play children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter. Play is about enjoyment, learning, and the use, development and appreciation of a wide range of human senses.

3. The Case for play

3.1 Value and significance of play for children and young people

Play is of fundamental importance for the development of good mental and physical health of children and young people. It affects social interaction, learning and the formation of a sensible and informed approach to risk. Play has an important role in the ultimate development of well balanced and informed adults able to adequately deal with the rigours of modern living including the bringing up of their own children.

Play includes a wide range of experiences such as:

Stimulation of the senses, free movement, emotions, role plays, social interactions, effects of weather and seasons, building and demolishing, competing with others and working in teams.

Bob Hughes in ‘Play Environments: A Question of Quality’, identifies criteria for an enriched play environment and these are listed below.

- A varied and interesting play environment
- Challenge in relation to the physical environment
- Playing with the natural elements – earth, water, fire, air
- Movement – e.g. Running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing
- Manipulating natural and fabricated materials
- Stimulation of a wide range of senses
- Experiencing change in the natural and built environment

- Social interactions
- Playing with identity
- Experiencing a range of emotions

Play can be provided for in a variety of places such as:

Green spaces, play schemes, out of school schemes, outreach play services, mobile play services, sports-fields, adventure playgrounds and at home.

The concept of play is therefore wide ranging and applies to the whole environment. Any play initiative must therefore not be restricted to the traditional provision of swings, slides and climbing frames in the local park.

3.2 Play and risk

In recent years play providers particularly local authorities have, because of fear of litigation, sought to eliminate risk from play spaces. This has often resulted in play spaces becoming uninteresting and unchallenging and incapable of providing an enriched play environment. Uninteresting play areas mean that children and young people will look for risk elsewhere, possibly in far more dangerous situations such as near railway lines or busy roads. Play providers have a responsibility to minimise this 'risk transfer' by managing risk and providing challenge in a safe environment. The risk-averse culture may be changing. PLAYLINK, an organisation that works with local authorities and other organisations regarding play, recently commissioned legal advice on standards which concluded that:

'The proper approach to British or European Standards is not to regard them as laying down a compulsory standard to be followed slavishly in all cases but as a guideline demonstrating the general consensus as to what would constitute sensible precautions in any given case. If a rational process of risk assessment together with a balance of cost, risk and benefit, can justify departure then there would be no failure to exercise reasonable care.'

The advice also concluded that PLAYLINK was entitled to emphasise in its play strategy the need to balance the risk of injury, with the benefits to children and young persons of undertaking play activities within an acceptable level of risk. This would depend upon providing a careful risk assessment that had resulted in the conclusion that it is permissible for play to involve risk by reason of the resulting benefits.

4. Context

4.1 The national context

It is accepted that play is fundamental to children's lives in terms of physical, mental and social development. There are several national organisations committed to promoting play such as: The Children's Play Council, National Playing fields Association, Play England and Greenspace.

The right to play is enshrined for all children and young people up to 18 years old in the UN Convention on the rights of the child ratified by the UK government in 1991. Article 31 states:

Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

In recent years the interests of children and young people have been high on the Government's agenda and this has been developed through the Every Child Matters initiative.

Every Child Matters was a green paper published in 2003, part of which contained questions posed to children, young people and adults. Answers to the questions resulted in five aims being identified, which were:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Every Child Matters: Change for Children followed. This was the government's vision of a shared programme of change for children and young people and of enhancement in the way professionals work together to provide children's care. This programme involves everyone who works with children. It includes teachers, doctors, social workers, youth workers and many others. The overarching purpose is to make sure children and young people can have a good life, whoever they are, and no matter what problems they may face.

The five aims were then enshrined in the Children Act 2004 which means that it is now law that these must be treated as a priority by those involved in provisions for children.

'Best Play', published by the National Playing Fields Association proposes that play provision should have the following objectives:

1. To extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
2. To manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
3. To maximise the range of play opportunities.
4. To foster independence and self esteem.
5. To foster children's respect for others and to offer opportunities for social interaction.

6. To foster the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.
7. To recognise the child's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that need.

In November 2004 the government white paper 'Choosing Health' aimed to improve health and prevent disease. It recognised play's unique contribution to this agenda and highlighted that 'action by local authorities working with local communities, businesses and voluntary groups to tackle health issues makes a difference to the opportunities for both adults and children to choose healthier lifestyles.

Natural England, a new statutory Agency, was created in October 2006 through a partnership of the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Agency. Natural England's aim is to conserve and enhance the value and beauty of the natural environment and promote access, recreation and public well-being for existing and future generations. Key areas of Natural England's work relate to promoting the natural environment for play.

In 2001, a Mori survey for the Audit Commission showed that 'activities for young people' was ranked by adults as the single most requested improvements in local services. Facilities for young people ranked ahead of health, education and housing and probably reflect the view that bored teenagers can cause trouble. Other surveys have shown that many adults, although believing that they had many more play opportunities when they were younger, are reluctant to let their children out because of concerns over safety and crime.

4.2 Profile of the Council area

North Norfolk is a large rural district covering 373 square miles including a 43 mile long coastline, part of which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural beauty. A large proportion of the Norfolk Broads are within the district. There are no major urban centres and almost half the population of about 98,800 lives in the seven small market and resort towns of Cromer, Fakenham, Holt, North Walsham, Sheringham, Stalham and Wells-next-the-sea. North Walsham is the largest town, having a population of 12,000. North Norfolk is fifth highest of all councils in England for the percentage of people living in villages, hamlets or isolated settlements. The District Council is based at Cromer.

In North Norfolk the age structure is older than the national average, having the highest percentage of people aged 70 and over in the country. 24.24% of the population are under 25 years old in North Norfolk compared with 31.07% nationally. This has meant that investment has often been targeted at older age groups and young people have been less of a priority.

15.05% of the population is under 15 years old compared with 18.89% nationally. However there are differences when individual wards are considered. Briston, Chaucer, Corpusty, Erpingham, North Walsham, Scottow, Wensum and Worstead have child densities about the same the national average at around 19% to 20%.

Population projections suggest that the population of the district will continue to age.

The number of people in North Norfolk categorised as 'in good health' is 4.6% less than the national average. However this indication of poor health is likely to be as a result of the age structure of the population as a whole and not indicative of poor children's health.

North Norfolk ranked 180 out of 354 local authorities based on the average deprivation scores in 2004 (where 1 is the most deprived) No areas fall within the 10% most deprived in the country. Just one area within Cromer town falls within the 11 – 25% most deprived. There are pockets of deprivation, especially in the North Walsham area and rural deprivation is scattered across the district as a whole. One of the biggest factors contributing to deprivation is poor access to services. Parts of the District have received European funding to tackle deprivation but the majority of the funding has been invested in large centres of population in the region such as Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Kings Lynn and has not reached rural areas.

Average earnings are relatively low as are levels of educational qualifications, with the 2001 census showing that 51.4% had low or no qualifications. At 2%, unemployment is below the national average of 2.5 per cent. North Norfolk is a low crime area and most indicators show a fall in crime between 2003/4 and 2004/5.

4.3 The local context

Various district and county wide strategies that include or refer to children's play have been written over the last few years, and the most relevant ones are identified as follows:

Norfolk Children and Young People's Plan 2006 – 9

This plan has been produced by the County Children and Young People's Partnership which sits under the umbrella of the County Strategic Partnership and the work taken forward through Norfolk Ambition, the County Council's strategy.

Extensive consultation with children and young people was undertaken with respect to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda and the North Norfolk Play Strategy is instrumental in helping deliver this plan particularly in terms of:

- Extended Schools – a range of inclusive activities often extending beyond the school day to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community. Most schools in Norfolk are delivering some aspects of extended activities and it is expected that all will do so by 2010
- Being Healthy - focus needs to shift from dealing with consequences to preventing things from going wrong in the first place. It recognises the importance of emotional security and positive relationships
- Staying Safe - a sensible approach to risk
- Enjoying and Achieving – The plan seeks to promote inclusive participation in leisure and recreational activities and recognises that the Norfolk Best Value Performance Indicator, Customer Satisfaction Survey 2003 identifies that activities for teenagers was of high importance for local people and needed improving

Sustainable Community Strategy 2006 - 9

This is the strategy of the North Norfolk Community Partnership which supports the development of seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) in North Norfolk.

The strategy recognises that more activities are needed for the young, many villages have lost their amenities and that a lack of activities can result in loss of self esteem, antisocial behaviour and low aspirations.

North Norfolk Community Action Plan (2006-9)

This is the action plan of the Sustainable Community Strategy and ref 0607-22 identifies four areas of action:

- Create, improve and develop children and young people's free local play spaces and provide good inclusive and accessible children's play services and facilities
- Work with LAP representatives to identify need, existing facilities and shortfalls in area. Focus groups of young people to be identified
- Work towards provision of new / improved facilities provided across district
- Work towards approving use of funds across the district according to need

North Norfolk District Council Corporate Plan 2006 – 9

The Corporate Plan recognises the importance of physical activity in improving health and that by encouraging a greater interest in physical activity, the council can contribute to better personal health and wellbeing. It recognises the importance of innovative services, equality of access and targeting the most deprived areas. A specific target relating to play is:

To provide 7 new play and leisure facilities for young people by 2008.

Norfolk Local Area Agreement

From April 2006 the New Norfolk Local Area Agreement (LAA) between the government and the County of Norfolk seeks to improve partnership working and make 'on the ground' improvements for local people.

Play development is supported through:

Outcome 1.1.a – Improved mental health well being for young people in Norfolk

Outcome 1.1.b – Healthier, more active children and young people.

North Norfolk Local Plan

The Local Plan gives planning guidance to developers and policies relating specifically to play are as follows:

102: Proposed playing spaces – lists areas proposed for play.

103: Applications for new play spaces – gives guidance on access, sustainability and appropriateness.

104: Retention of play space- protects existing play spaces.

105: Playing space in new housing developments – sets quantitative standards based on the number of dwellings constructed in terms of the NPFA Six acre Standard.

The Local Plan will be superseded by the Local Development Framework (LDF) in 2008 and it is anticipated that this Strategy will inform the LDF.

PPG 17

Planning Policy guidance is the interpretation that the government suggests local authorities place on the planning legislation. PPG 17 deals with public space and play issues. The guidance states that:

Open Spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sports and interaction with others.

Play Partnership

In order to support the development of the Play Strategy it was considered important to establish a Play Partnership for North Norfolk. A play partnership is simply a means of bringing together people from statutory, voluntary and community organizations that are interested in improving children's play opportunities, environment, facilities and resources. The role and responsibilities of organizations invited to join the play partnership was agreed as follows:

Role and Responsibilities

1. To contribute towards the development of a play strategy for North Norfolk.
2. Agreeing a vision for play.
3. Share knowledge, information and experience.
4. Report partnership progress to own and associate organisations.
5. Consult with and involve as appropriate children, young people and other relevant organisations.
6. Contribute towards the play audit.
7. Agree process for adoption of strategy.
8. Encourage other relevant organisations to sign up to strategy.
9. Prioritise actions.
10. Source funding for implementation of actions.
11. Implement, monitor and evaluate strategy. To secure the Big Lottery funding of £200,000 allocated to North Norfolk for play.
12. Support the development of the bid portfolio.
13. Identify criteria for projects.
14. Agree projects for portfolio.
15. Help, support and develop projects.
16. Establish tendering process as appropriate.
17. Monitor and evaluate projects.
18. Source additional funding as required.

Vision for Play

At its first meeting the Play Partnership agreed that its vision for play would be:

'to enable children and young people to play freely and safely and to make imaginative and informed choices about how, where and when they play.'

Play partnership members are listed in appendix 2

5. Review of community engagement

A quantity of useful information already existed prior to the commencement of the Play Strategy. The OPERA Community Research Report and seven Whole Settlement Strategies both consulted sectors of the community on play related issues.

OPERA Report

Produced in 2005, this report was commissioned to seek the priorities of residents to inform the community strategy.

The report provides mixed messages regarding play :

- ‘Residents across all age groups and locations consider it critical that more activities are made available for young people in their local area’
(The research did not engage with people under the age of 15 years)
- ‘All felt there were sufficient parks and playgrounds for young children’,
- ‘Across all the groups however, a gap was identified in relation to older children (12 – 15 years old) whose needs are unfulfilled due to the lack of open space such as skate parks.’
- ‘Overall, because the district delivers so well in terms of open spaces they become less of a priority or concern to residents’

Whole Settlement Strategy

In 2003 North Norfolk District Council adopted seven Whole Settlement Strategies. The strategies included consultation responses from stakeholders to guide the future development of the seven towns including their immediate hinterlands. The strategies are being used to inform the Local Development Framework which is in the process of being drafted. The detailed policies contained in the LDF will provide planning guidance until 2021.

In order to complete the whole settlement strategies, key stakeholder groups were consulted to ascertain their priorities.

All areas reported a great need for more youth activities and transport to access activities was also an issue. Public open spaces were considered a valuable asset especially where they could be used to support BMX and skateboard activities.

Some of people’s requirements have already been met with the provision of new leisure centres at Fakenham and North Walsham.

Young People’s Arts Consultation in North Norfolk.

This report’ produced in November 2006 for the Council’ sought feedback from children and young people living in the district to identify the following:

- What arts activities young people would like to access
- Why they want to do them
- Factors which prevent them from doing them

- When they would like to do them
- If and how much they are willing to pay for them

The most popular activities were: graffiti art, film making, hip hop dance, drama and d-jing.

38% of young people said that the reason for non participation was lack of confidence to attend without a companion and anxieties around peer groups. A further 50% of young people said they did not have time or could not be bothered.

In summary, the study revealed that young people are interested and keen to access arts activities. The challenge is to find more effective ways of promoting activities, alleviating young people's anxieties and fears and overcoming the practical barriers of cost and transport. In addition it was evident that young people want opportunities that are flexible experiential and flexible.

Further consultation to support the Play Strategy

Local Area Partnerships

In order to provide information to specifically inform this strategy a consultation was carried out with the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs).

In August 2006 each of the seven LAPs were contacted by letter seeking their views and those of their respective communities.

The letter asked for information on the communities priorities, areas of need and target age groups. The letter was deliberately non restrictive to encourage original suggestions.

Each of the seven LAPs provided information from their individual consultations with their local communities and partners and this is summarized as follows:

Whilst there appeared to be a general wish to see traditional equipped play areas 'improved', all area partnerships cited activities for teenagers as being needed. There are obvious issues surrounding the availability of transport to access activities. There were numerous requests for mobile play or mobile activity provision such as mobile disco. or recording facilities and some sort of mobile peripatetic sports, PE and games service.

Parish Council Survey

After the consultation had been carried out it became evident that the anticipated request for information had not reached all of the parishes. The LAPs are at differing stages of development and in some cases the necessary communications infrastructure may not have been in place for them to effectively engage with others.

A letter requesting information was subsequently sent to each parish council in case the original request made to the LAPs had not reached parish level.

The parishes reported a need for activities for teenagers, a dedicated person to promote play and recreation. Areas for skateboarding and cycling were also needed

with improved and more exciting play facilities. It is not known if this information included feedback from children and young people.

Voluntary sector consultation

Approximately 50 organizations providing play services in the voluntary sector were contacted. Very limited feedback was received and further consultation will be carried out through the action plan of this strategy.

Pre-school and nursery provision

33 organizations were contacted through the Norfolk County Council data base and feedback was also forthcoming via the parish council survey.

Play and adventure play facilities with a natural theme appeared to be needed by these organizations quite commonly. However people involved in this provision for young children still made the point that activities for teenagers was important.

Uniformed Clubs.

There is a well developed network of uniformed clubs such as guides, scouts, army cadets etc. especially for younger ages. These organizations offer a particular style of service and activity which tends to be structured and supervised.

Engaging directly with children

The views of children are essential in developing a meaningful strategy. However, it is important not to raise aspirations without a guarantee of being able to deliver a project to satisfy those aspirations. The Play Partnership considered that the most appropriate way to consult children would be for the Council's Community Development worker to visit a number of schools and ask the children to provide artwork depicting their ideas of what good play might be like.

All primary schools in the district were contacted and six agreed to participate.

The children were encouraged to talk about play and the meaning of play and what they would like if they had the opportunity.

They were given card, paper, crayons, felt pens, glue, tissue and crepe paper and asked to put their ideas down.

Some of the ideas were expected, such as adventure play grounds and traditional play equipment. There was a variety of different climbing ideas, such as dinosaurs, walls, nets and towers together with tunnels, stepping logs and monkey bars. There were requests for a skate park, cricket pitch, basket ball hoops and a running track. Some of the more unusual ideas were: a tree to climb in, a tree house, a willow house, ponds and fountains, play tents, shelters and a sand pit.

In order of preference, the most popular requests were: swings, slide, play house, climbing activities and water activities.

Engaging directly with young people

The Council's Community Citizenship Coordinator worked with a total of 73 young people between the ages of 11 and 18 together with a young parents group to

determine their needs and priorities. The respondents were mainly from North Walsham, Stalham, Holt and Wells.

93 per cent said that there was not enough to do and the following requests are given in order of priority.

Sports facilities 53%
Youth Club 42%
Youth Bus with range of equipment on board 38%
Youth Shelter 34%
Cyber Café 27%
Skate Park 12%

It is significant that in this survey the young people have not rated skate parks as being particularly important.

There was the greatest support for activities to be available on Fridays and Saturdays between 7:30PM and 10:00PM and lesser support for earlier in the week and earlier in the day.

'Norfolk Blurb' is a website first launched in 2003. It is created by young people for young people and is funded by 'Transforming Youth Work', a four year project launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) and the Home Office. It consists of articles on a range of topics. Questions relating to the Play Strategy have been placed on the website. Any forthcoming feedback will be used to further inform the strategy and subsequent projects.

6. Local provision examined

Atkins Survey

In 2004 the Council commissioned Atkins to carry out an open spaces and recreation study.

The study was to provide baseline data and recommendations to support a future strategy for public open space and play provision and also to inform the local plan review and production of the local development framework.

The study involved an audit of over 250 open spaces in the district and assesses their respective catchment areas, quality, value and whether provision is meeting local needs. Access issues and demographics are considered in the study. The study develops local standards and measures to address deficiencies in open space provision. In developing local standards a combination of the 'Hierarchy' approach set out in 'The Government's companion guide to PPG 17' and a modified NPFA standard. (see appendix 1)

The study included all open spaces rather than just those managed by the local authority.

This study is of great relevance to the Play Strategy because in addition to any intrinsic, landscape or heritage value, open space, whether dedicated play space or not, has an important role in serving children's and young peoples play needs.

Chapter 3 looked at the communities' views and aspirations for public space through the use of telephone surveys and focus groups.

There was clear recognition that public open space contributes to people's quality of life

The study did not consult people under 15 years old but 15- 24 year olds, a relevant age group for the Play Strategy were consulted. This group tended to be less satisfied with the quality of public space than older groups but was the largest group to access public spaces by cycle (39%) or on foot (20%). Reasons for non use were: distance to travel, inability to gain access, lack of interest or not enough to do at the facilities. Respondents made suggestions about how existing spaces could be improved and the main ways for improvement were cleanliness, better access and cycle routes and more attractions.

The focus groups identified some qualities to which open space planning should aspire and these were:

- Inviting – to all sectors of the community.
- Imaginative – producing a variety of experiences.
- Challenging – not simply imposing regular types of spaces but including activities for people within spaces.
- Involving – Implemented and planned by the communities that they serve.
- Reflective – Reflective of the size of the settlement and the development to which they relate.

Chapter 5 considers assessment of supply of open space in terms of distribution and the hierarchy of type and the findings are summarized as follows:

249 open spaces were identified comprising of 2744ha and amounting to 0.3% of the total area of the District.

In terms of public open space shortfalls, the report states that there are large areas of the District that are deficient. It is, however, stated that many areas are sparsely populated but there is often good access to the wider countryside through a network of public paths. Priority for future park provision should therefore be given to the larger settlements where threshold populations could justify extra provision. Distances between home and open spaces have been given. Poor distribution could be tackled by negotiating the use of non-public open space or upgrading and diversifying the roles of existing areas. The use of developer contributions for on-site and off-site provision should be utilized to the maximum.

The audit clearly identifies open spaces in terms of:

- Existing structural role
- Potential for improvement

- Potential for introducing other open space uses
- Potential to improve accessibility
- Potential for improved landscaping
- Potential to improve historic value
- Potential to improve pitch provision

Chapter 6 relates to children's play areas specifically and considers the merits of traditional equipped play areas, safety and risk, gender and age issues. It looks at existing levels of provision in terms of national and local guidance, catchment areas, condition of equipment. The findings of the survey are as follows:

By looking at levels of use and travel patterns, the catchment area radii are 800 – 1200metres suggesting that existing provision of actual play areas within the 7 main settlements is adequate and resources should be used for improvements and repairs. However, 21 villages lack a play area altogether. 14% of the play areas surveyed were in poor condition (none NNDC managed). There are also settlements that have poor access to the open space that is necessary for outdoor play.

The report suggests that support be given to local communities for play provision, facilities in poor condition be upgraded and particular attention be given to those areas lacking in play provision especially when new developments are planned. The target suggested is that 'all residents should have access to a children's play area within 800m in main settlements and 1200m for villages.'

21 settlements, all predominantly rural were identified as having no play provision at all. Existing play provision that would benefit from upgrading was also identified.

North Norfolk District Council contributes to the District's overall play provision in the following ways:

Direct provision of public open space and play areas.

The Council manages an extensive portfolio of approximately 400hectares of public open space. This consists of woodlands, parks and amenity spaces together with 31 equipped play areas.

Upon formation of the District Council in 1974 some of the land and facilities managed by the out-going urban and rural district councils were transferred to the new authority and some were transferred to the respective parish council ownership. Over the years the council has acquired further play areas mainly through Town and Country Planning Act section106 and Open Spaces Act agreements with developers. In the absence of any specific open spaces or play strategy such provision has sometimes been inappropriate in terms of location in relation to target communities or simply poor for the purposes of meaningful play.

The budget for the maintenance of the council's play areas was £49,000 in 2005/6 and £39,000 for 2006/7 (only £2.62 per child under 15 years). The budget includes repairs and renewals, inspection, and a proportion of salaries. In early 2006 some of the Councils play areas on local authority housing land transferred under Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) to a new housing trust hence the reduction in budget.

It is accepted that outdoor play takes place over much of the Council's amenity land and not just in dedicated play areas. There may be opportunities to improve this wider resource for play.

RoSPA Report

In 2006 North Norfolk District Council commissioned RoSPA to undertake an assessment of its own 31 play areas in terms of compliance with the safety standard EN 1176, standard of general maintenance and their suitability for use by people with disabilities.

The findings of the report form an action point of this Strategy.

Countryside events

The Council stages about 30 events each year using public spaces as a recreational resource. Most of the events take place at Holt Country Park which has held the 'Green Flag' Award since 2005. Events include: shelter building, making tiny river craft, outdoor games and dressing up. Activities are supervised by the Council's Rangers and volunteers.

Arts events

The Council organizes around 200 events each year and many of these are targeted at young people. Guitar, pop and rock workshops, puppet making and dance workshops are available over the District.

Leisure opportunities

The Council manages a number of leisure centres including two swimming pools. Outreach work is also undertaken by dedicated staff. Activities include: after school sports clubs, badminton, touch rugby, youth games and coaching is often provided. There are activities mainly aimed at the tourist trade situated within parks and gardens in the resort towns, such as putting, but these activities are not free and may indeed restrict other more meaningful play opportunities from taking place in those locations.

The countryside, leisure and arts opportunities described above are not all strictly 'play' as defined in this strategy because in this case play should be cost free, free of formal rules and participants should be free to come and go. Clearly, some of the above opportunities have certain constraints, such as structure and direction given by adults. However these events and activities do have the potential to develop participants in many of the ways that can be attributed to play in its wider sense and helps to fill some of the gaps identified during consultations with young people.

Private sector play provision

There are some private play operators in the district offering seasonal or year round play opportunities. These include: Funstop at Cromer and Elephant Play Barn at Knapton.

Clearly, these providers cannot offer 'cost free play' because they need to make a commercial return but they do make a positive contribution to the overall play product.

Pre-school and nursery provision

Pre-school and nursery provision is distributed throughout the district. This provision tends to correspond with existing patterns of demand with larger areas of

population supporting a greater number and variety of opportunities and extensive areas of a low proportion of target communities supporting no provision at all.

Sustainability of existing and future play provision.

In 2006 the National Children's Bureau carried out some research into examining how play provision could be sustained once a particular project was in place. The report concluded that it was unrealistic to expect local play projects to raise enough funds to be self supporting without local or central government support. However there was some scope for local fundraising and this could be enhanced by play providers developing their own skills in management, development and fundraising.

7. Key issues and priority areas arising out of the consultations and surveys

- The priority age groups are children aged over 7 and young people.
- Transport to and from facilities is limiting access to existing facilities.
- There is considerable demand for year round peripatetic, mobile play services and workers across the more rural areas of North Norfolk to provide opportunities for creative play, activities, games, workshops and meeting venues.
- There are requests for more exciting open spaces and traditional play areas.
- Play facilities should make more use of the natural environment.
- Areas of shortfall of quantity and quality of play facilities have been identified.

8. Play policy statements

North Norfolk District Council is committed to the following play policy aims

- To recognize that play is important for the social, mental and physical well being of children and young people.
- To develop opportunities for children's and young people's cost free play that offers choice, where participants are free to come and go, is accessible and inclusive.
- To target new provision at proven areas of need.
- To recognize the importance of the unique natural environment of North Norfolk as a resource for play.
- To encourage other play providers to adopt the vision and aims of this Strategy.

- To maximize the opportunities to secure new and appropriate play services and facilities through relevant income streams such as the town and country planning process.
- To ensure that we engage the views of children and young people in any future provision.

9. Action plan

The action plan for this Strategy will be implemented in two phases and the strategy will be active from 21 February 2007 when it is anticipated that it will be approved at Full Council. The Strategy will be reviewed and amended in March 2008 in the light of further information received as part of the action plan. The current Strategy will expire on 31st March 2010.

Phase 1 - January 2007 – June 2007

1. Work up at least two projects to be funded by the £200,000 BIG Lottery Funding, each project to be for a minimum of £50,000. Projects to correspond with the policy aims of the North Norfolk Play Strategy.
2. Secure approval from the Play Partnership and NNDC and apply for BIG Lottery funding.
3. Further consultation to support projects as necessary.
4. Apply for BIG Lottery Funding By 12th March 2007.
5. Work up performance indicators for play provision.

Phase 2 - June 2007 – March 2010

6. Identify and implement further consultation.
7. Draft local play and play-space standards to support Local Development Framework.
8. Complete BIG Lottery projects and evaluate success.
9. Seek adoption of North Norfolk Play Strategy by other organizations.
10. Produce condensed and illustrated version of the North Norfolk Play Strategy for wider distribution.
11. Seek funding to implement other projects considered important but not funded in Phase 1.
12. Prioritize the findings of the RoSPA Report and produce a schedule for its phased implementation.

13. Achieve 'Advanced' rating for local performance indicator LIB115 which relates to the effectiveness of strategic play policy.

Criteria for assessing projects.

- the project is to be cost free at the point of use.
- the project is targeting areas of established need.
- the degree to which the project can be sustained once the lottery funding has been used.
- the project is consistent with the policies of the strategy and needs identified within.

at least three of the following criteria (BIG lottery requirement):

1. More children will take part in a wider range of good inclusive and accessible play experiences.
2. Children will have more choice and control over their play.
3. Children will develop greater well-being through play including healthy growth, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.
4. Children will achieve greater independence and self-esteem through play.
5. Children will acquire greater social skills and respect for others through play.
6. Children will be able to test boundaries, be challenged and take risks through play while kept safe from harm.
7. More children experiencing barriers to free play will be included in mainstream play provision (for example girls, children and young people from ethnic or religious minorities, children in care, children of refugees and homeless families and those living in rural areas).
8. Local communities especially children, will have greater involvement in designing, planning and running play projects.

Appendix 1

Public Parks Hierarchy

Type of open Space	Definition
Country Parks Mainly car based visits for those living more than 15 minutes walk away.	60 hectares Serve as regional attractions. Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland, or ii) formal park providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 ha for other pursuits. Adequate parking. Country Parks will also serve as District Parks for those living with 1200m and as Neighbourhood Park for those living within 400m (Main settlements) or 800m (other areas).
District Parks Mainly car based visits for those living more than 15 minutes walk	15-50ha 1.2km Landscape setting with a variety of natural features and a range of facilities including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits. Some car parking. These will operate as a neighbourhood park for those within 400m (Main settlements) or 800m (Other areas).
Neighbourhood Parks Pedestrian Visits by those living within 10 minutes walk	3-15ha 0.8km (7 Main Settlements) 1.2km (Areas outside principal Settlements) Provision for court games, important children's play function, sitting-out areas, nature conservation, landscaped environment, and playing fields if the parks are large enough. Indicative catchment area (refined to take into account barriers of access) 560m (Main settlements), 840m (Other areas).
Small Local Parks including Children's play/pocket parks Pedestrian visits, especially by old people and children, particularly valuable in high density areas	0.5-3ha 0.4km (7 Main Settlements) 0.8km (Areas outside principal settlements) Gardens, sitting out areas, children's playgrounds or other areas of a specialist nature such as nature conservation. Indicative catchment area (refined to take into account barriers of access) 280m (Main Settlements), 560m (Other areas).
Linear Open Spaces Pedestrian visits	Variable Where feasible River and canal banks, canal towpaths, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, paths, disused railways and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreation, including nature conservation. Often characterized by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.
Provision for children and young people (incorporated into public parks hierarchy)	Play areas including LAPs, LEAPs and NEAP,s skateboard parks, basketball goals and teenage shelters. Many of these spaces have been incorporated into the small local parks typology due to the similarity of such spaces.

Natural or semi natural greenspace	Woodland (coniferous, deciduous, mixed) and scrub, grassland (e.g. downland, meadow), heath or moor, wetlands (e.g. Marsh, fen), open and running water, wasteland (including disturbed ground), bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs, quarries, pits) and beaches.
Greenspaces within grounds of institution	Open space located within the grounds of hospitals, universities and other institutions which are accessible to the general public or some sections of the public. This definition also includes education sites where there is only hard surface and or amenity open space (no pitch sports provision).
Amenity greenspace	Includes informal recreational spaces and housing green spaces. A large number are formed by village greens. This category includes greenspaces in and around housing areas.
Allotments	Open spaces where the primary use is allotment gardening or community farming.
Cemeteries and churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards which include an element of greenspace.
Civic spaces and pedestrian areas	More formally laid out hard surfaced public spaces including squares pedestrian streets, sitting out areas. These spaces do not normally have a formal recreational function.
Outdoor sports facilities and playing fields	Those sites which are not located within a public park and where the primary role is for formal recreation. Sites include tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, athletic tracks, school playing fields, other institutional playing fields and outdoor sports areas. Categorized by ownership i.e. public/private/education.
Other	Agricultural land and former airfields which perform a structural or amenity role.

Appendix 1 continued

National Playing Fields Association 'Six Acre Standard 2001'

Children's play provision within the District should be of adequate quality and provide the range of facilities associated with the size of the facility. The Council's guidelines for design standards of children's play spaces should be consistent with the NPFA 6 acre Standard (2001) of 0.8ha children's play space per 1000 population, and used to assess levels of adequacy in terms of the range and quality of provision.

The NPFA "Six Acre Standard 2001" suggests that 3 types of equipped Children's Play-space be provided.

LAPs (Local Areas for Play) are designed to provide low-key activities of children aged up to 6 close to their homes. These are small open spaces of approximately 0.04ha (20mx20m) within housing areas and overlooked by nearby housing. It can be difficult to create usable spaces and at the same time avoid disturbance of nearby residents caused by the use of LAPs by children of all ages. For these reasons the use of LEAPs and NEAPs is considered to be a more appropriate and practical form of provision.

LEAPs (Local Equipped Areas for Play) are designed to provide equipment for children aged 4-8, or sometimes younger. LEAPs should be located so that they are easily and safely accessible to users and ideally they should serve a wider area. They should be a minimum 400 sqm in size, include at least 5 pieces of equipment, have safety surfacing and be surrounded by dog-proof safety fencing. The distance between a LEAP and the nearest residential boundary should be a minimum 20m. A LEAP (0.04ha), including its buffer zone (0.46ha), should extend to a minimum 0.50ha.

NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) are designed to provide equipment mainly for children aged 8 upwards. NEAPs should be located such that they are easily and safely accessible to users. Ideally this means they should serve a wider catchment area than LEAPs. They should be a minimum 1,000 sqm in size, include at least 8 pieces of equipment on safety surfacing (approx. 500sqm) and include a hard surfaced multi-safety fencing. The distance between the NEAP and the nearest residential boundary should be a minimum 30m. Therefore a NEAP (0.1ha) including buffer zone (0.9ha) extends to a minimum 1.00ha.

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