

PLAY AREA STRATEGY

2003 - 2013

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SUMMARY

VISION

To create play areas in Solihull that are welcoming, safe, attractive, accessible and meet the needs of children and young people in a balanced and fair way across the Borough.

MEASURES

The Strategy has four strands: -

- **EQUITY** - by creating a more even distribution of play areas across the Borough. This will include the creation of a new hierarchy of play areas. This will comprise 4 categories of play sites - Premium (Category 1), Neighbourhood (Category 2), Community (Category 3) & Local (Category 4).
- **COMMUNITY SAFETY** - by working towards a situation where children/young people can gain comfort from a safe play environment. The Council will work in partnership with other agencies to tackle the problems of anti-social behaviour and other crimes in play areas. Sites that are not clearly visible from public viewpoints will be phased out over time.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT** - by upgrading the play area and its surroundings with the use of imaginative colour schemes, appropriate landscaping and additional resources from new funding and sponsorship. Upgrading will be planned in conjunction with a wider programme of environmental improvements to parks and open spaces in Solihull.
- **ACCESSIBILITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION** - through improvements in the 'walk to the park' such as the introduction of pelican crossings to shorten walk distances. The needs of disabled people and other disadvantaged sections of the community will be considered.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Play Area Strategy is to: -

- Deliver a more even distribution of play areas across Solihull.
- Meet the needs of children/young people living in and visiting Solihull.
- Find alternative ways of funding play area provision and attract additional resources.
- Support the Solihull Crime & Disorder Strategy and Regeneration

BENEFITS

The Strategy will deliver the following benefits to children/accompanying adults and young people (13-17 age group) in Solihull: -

- More choice in play area provision including agreed standards of service
- Facilities for young people (13-17 age group)
- Users feeling safe in the local play environment.
- An enjoyable leisure experience in an improved local environment
- Easily accessible play areas for local residents to walk to
- Better access for the disabled and people from other disadvantaged sections of the community.
- Improved access to play areas drawing people from outside the local area with a focus on public transport and cycling.

1. Introduction

The Council has provided children's play equipment in Solihull for many years. Most of these facilities can be found in the Borough's parks and open spaces. In some cases the Council has inherited these facilities through changes in local government boundaries. In others they are the direct result of the Council's investment.

Pressures on the future maintenance of these facilities come from a number of quarters and are increasing. In recent years British & European Safety Standards have required investment to be made in safety surfacing and led to the removal of items of equipment. The Council has tried to replace these items with suitable alternatives.

The importance that people attach today to a safe environment is recognised. Small children (toddlers) are likely to be accompanied by adults when using play areas. However, in the case of older children (juniors), part of the process of growing up is likely to require an element of freedom. Thus, in the case of junior equipment, it is now considered important that these sites are visible from surrounding public places. Not all sites within the Borough satisfy this criteria. Some play areas suffer increasing problems of anti-social behaviour and other crimes.

There is clear evidence that the residents of Solihull value highly the provision of children's play facilities. Yet, recent press articles and correspondence have expressed some disappointment that the style of play areas in Solihull has changed little over the last 25 years. The implications are that like for like replacement, owing to wear and tear, may not be greeted with public satisfaction. Stringent safety standards and cost, however, can make the provision of more interesting and adventurous items of equipment difficult to achieve.

The Council, in common with many other authorities, has sought to meet the needs of toddlers and juniors in making its play provision. In other words the equipment is aimed at the under 13's. One of the consequences of not making provision for teenagers or young people (mainly 13-17 age group), is that they tend to use the children's play areas as places to meet. This can lead to the use, and in some cases abuse, of equipment not designed for their age group.

The factors set out above have implications for the Council's spending decisions. Spending decisions in relation to play equipment have to be taken within the context of the overall Council Budget. In deciding how to respond, the possibility of attracting external funding through partnership working or sponsorship should be explored. Also the replacement of obsolete equipment is a significant capital cost to the Council. Alternative ways of funding, such as leasing, need to be considered.

The Council's traditional approach to play equipment provision has been to maintain existing standards and make new provision in association with strategic housing developments. Council provision is focused on the 'urban' parts of Solihull - the countryside being seen as providing opportunities to play. The parish councils make some play provision in the rural villages.

At present it is not clear whether all Solihull's residents in urban areas enjoy convenient access to children's play areas.

The purpose of this Strategy document is to: -

- Set out the current position and identify gaps in provision
- Examine current pressures and future trends
- Consider the best way forwards including future funding arrangements

2. Current Position

Existing Provision

There are currently 32 sites with children's play equipment in the Borough. These sites are identified on a Map at Appendix 1. Proposed new sites, parish council play areas and private play areas are detailed at Appendix 2. Appendix 3 identifies the names of the sites. The Council's sites are confined to the built up area of Solihull. In the rural area (primarily to the east of the M42) play facilities are mainly provided by parish councils and tend to be located within the rural settlements. In the north of the Borough there is also some provision by parish councils.

The current distribution of Council sites has evolved gradually over time. Some play areas have been planned by the Council, others acquired when local government boundaries have been altered. All of the 14 principal parks identified within the Solihull Parks & Open Spaces Strategy contain children's play areas. The remaining 15 play areas can be found on recreation grounds & larger areas of open space.

Typically, play areas in Solihull contain between 5 and 8 items of equipment. Most are fenced to exclude dogs. Several include a bench, popular with adults accompanying children. Others include grassed areas or shrub beds. The play equipment caters mainly for the needs of toddlers and juniors – those under 13 years old.

Parish council provision tends to be at a more basic level and does not generally offer equipment with high play values.

'The six acre standard' is a document published by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). It recommends a minimum standard of 0.2 - 0.3 hectares (0.5 - 0.75 acres) per 1000 population for the provision of equipped play areas. In Solihull the provision is 0.02 hectares per 1000 population. It is recognised that the profile of the local population will influence the level of provision locally. Attached at Appendix 4 are statistics that compare provision in different local authority areas with the size of the population (aged 0-15). This is useful in two ways. Firstly it takes account of the local population profile and secondly it provides an indication of how well Solihull performs compared to other areas.

New Provision

The new village under construction at Dickens Heath was planned to accommodate 850 dwellings. Current estimates predict a likely total of 1200.

The approved scheme for the Village Green includes a small play area for toddlers.

The new Marston Green park has been created in the valley of Lowbrook with access from Moorend Avenue, Coleshill Road and Chelmsley Lane. Work commenced in November 2000.

Toddler and Junior play equipment is provided on a flat area of land, close to Moorend Avenue. In addition a ball games and meeting area, targeted at young people (age 13-17), is provided. The site is clearly visible from Moorend Avenue.

In the east of the Borough the village of Balsall Common has been identified for growth. 480 new dwellings are proposed within the Council's land use plan – known as the Solihull Unitary Development Plan. On going consultation is being undertaken with Local residents on what facilities they would like to see on the open space area to the east of Kenilworth Road/north of Station Road.

In Smiths Wood the Council has been successful in attracting funding under the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Following local consultation a new play area has been created on the former Bacon Factory site near Smiths Wood Shopping Centre. The site is 0.4ha (1 acre) in size with toddler and junior facilities provided.

National Standards

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) has produced minimum standards for the provision of children's play facilities. These standards are recognised as being a useful yardstick against which local authorities can judge the distribution and content of play areas.

The NPFA identify 3 categories of play area: -

- **Local Area for Play (LAP)** – *A low key games area. Aimed at 4-6 year olds and younger children for play activities close to home. Catchment area = 1 minutes walking time for an accompanied child or approximately 100m walking distance*
- **Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)** – *A small play area with about 5 types of equipment. Aimed at 4-8 year olds. Consider needs of under 4's and slightly over 8's. Catchment Area = 5 minutes walking time for an accompanied child, or approximately 400m walking distance.*
- **Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area (NEAP)** – *A larger play area with about 8 types of equipment. Aimed at 8-14 age group. Facilities for wheeled and ball play should be provided. Catchment Area = 15 minutes walking time for either accompanied or unaccompanied children which is about 1000m walking distance.*

The NPFA also apply the concept of **Play Value**. This is an attempt to assess the quality of the play provision. The **Play Value** is a score based on an assessment of: -

- the number of items of equipment
- the number of different activities that can be performed within that playground
- the total number of activities that can be performed

The Council annually obtains an assessment of its play facilities from the NPFA. Appendix 5 sets out the current play area provision in Solihull in relation to the NPFA classifications and gives current play value scores. Appendix 5 groups existing play areas into defined geographical areas (zones) which reflect the areas chosen to define the Park Action Groups in relation to the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. This Appendix includes the play value scores of each site. The zones are identified in the Map A (Appendix 1).

Appendix 6 identifies play areas with low, medium and high scores respectively, to assist with identifying the gaps in current provision.

Identifying the gaps

Using the Audit Commission guidelines, Solihull has a below average number of plays areas for the under 12's when benchmarked against comparable authorities. However this is a qualitative measure, not taking into account the quality of play provision provided at each location. It is therefore considered that quality of provision should be a key factor within the determination of the location of play areas. The NPFA play value scores provide a framework upon which the play value for a particular facility can be measured, linked to the development of a hierarchy of provision across the Borough.

The NPFA emphasise that the deciding factor when locating children's play areas is time. Quite simply, for example, a group of houses outside of a desired straight-line distance may well be within an acceptable walking distance because of the provision of a pelican crossing. This means that access improvements of this type could lead to more residents enjoying easy access to Solihull's play areas.

The recommended NPFA standards for the 3 categories of play area (NEAPS, LEAPS & LAPS) were set out in the previous section (national standards).

For the purpose of identifying gaps in current provision the assumption has been made that public access to play areas is fairly easy within the built up area of Solihull. This means that walking distances have been used to identify catchment areas for the sites. In order to make this a valid basis for assessment it will be recommended that an accessibility audit is carried out during the life of this Strategy. This information has then been supplemented from two sources in order to identify gaps: -

- the **play value** scores of individual play areas;
- the different types of play facility (LAPS, LEAPS & NEAPS) within **different areas of the Borough**;

A detailed analysis of the findings is set out at Appendix 8. The main conclusions are as follows: -

- The **north** of the Borough is generally well provided with play areas. The creation of the new park at Marston Green has meant that most households in the north of the Borough live within 1 kilometre of a neighbourhood play facility (NEAP), or 400 metres of a local play facility (LEAP).
- In the **south** of the Borough there are gaps in provision. Firstly, one 'gap' can be identified running through the central part of the built up area, taking in parts of Silhill, St Alphege, Shirley East, West and South. Secondly, the lack of any neighbourhood (NEAP) sites in the Knowle/Dorridge area means that a number of households in the Knowle & Packwood Wards live outside the recommended walking distance of a children's play area.
- Catchment areas overlap in some areas. This leads to a duplication in provision. The following sites could be reviewed to see whether or not to continue the provision of a play area in these locations: - Colebank, Barn Lane, Brookside, Palmers Rough, Elmdon Coppice & Bentley Heath.
- There are no play area sites with high play values in any of the Shirley Wards.
- Dicken's Heath Village is only served by one toddler play area. This will mean that there will be no provision for the over 4's.

3. PRESSURES AND TRENDS

Safety Standards

A challenge is presented by ever more demanding safety standards. In recent years this has resulted in the removal of roundabouts and swings that are made up of a combination of cradle seats for toddlers and flat seats for older children. In the case of roundabouts the problem was the lack of a mechanism to regulate the speed. In the case of the swings it is now a requirement that toddler and junior equipment is separated. Unfortunately lack of space at some locations will not allow for replacement of the same range of facilities without extending the size of the total play area.

With the introduction of the European Safety Standards for Outdoor Playground Equipment (EN1176 and EN1177) in January 1999 came ever more demanding safety standards. The main difference between these standards and the previous British standards is primarily in relation to impact absorbing surfacing, the spacing between play structure and the height at which there is a need to provide barriers with guard rails to prevent falls.

Clarification in respect of the implementation of the new safety standards has been sought from RoSPA reputable independent safety advisory body. RoSPA stated that:

*“The new European standard was published on 1 January 1999 when existing standards were withdrawn. There are a number of areas where existing equipment may fail the new standard. **This does not mean that equipment has suddenly become dangerous or that remedial action is required.**”*

“The new Standard is not mandatory or retrospective”

However even though the new European Standard is not mandatory or retrospective there is a clear need to plan for replacement equipment to ensure that compliance is met within a realistic time scale through a policy of removal or replacement. Therefore there is a clear implication of increased costs based upon the need for a developed programme of play area improvements linked to compliance with the new European Safety Standards. .

An example where the new standards effect existing play area provision is that of slides in Solihull where a number are built on embankments. It is a requirement under the new European Safety Standards to provide safety surfacing underneath all slides. This will ultimately mean removal of existing embankments as it is not feasible to install safety surfacing in these locations.

In 1999/2000 the Council agreed a 3-year programme of play area improvements. In financial terms this has required £52,000 to be allocated from the Revenue Budget and £77,000 from the capital programme for 1999/2000. This has still left the difficult sites where like for like replacement is not possible.

In respect of safety the NPFA annually independently audit the Council’s play equipment and this is linked to a daily inspection of all play areas by operatives trained in play area inspections. All data in respect of play area inspections is recorded on the Councils NPFA Playsafe Database System.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act introduced in 1995 gives disabled people rights in the areas of:-

- Employment
- Access to goods, facilities and services
- Buying or renting land or property

As of October 2004 Part III of the Act requires that organisations may have to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features within premises to overcome barriers to access. Within the definition of premises are not just buildings and indoor facilities but also high streets, parks and open spaces. Adjustments could relate to steps, seating, access points, paths and equipment as such the introduction of the Act could well impact on play provision within Solihull. In such instances the Disability Rights Commission recommends the undertaking of an access audit in respect of facilities and equipment to identify any reasonable adjustments required prior to the introduction of Part III of the Act.

eGovernment

The Government has placed a duty upon Local Government to recognise and where practicable utilise new technology, especially through eCommerce. The Authority, through the commitment to the use of the NPFA Play Safe System has set the framework for inspection, monitoring and assessment of play provision using the latest IT systems available, including the use of handheld data capture units. In relation to play areas there is a need to increase access to relevant information on services provided via existing Web Pages and service areas, including availability of two way communication via the internet.

Safe Environment

The Council has a representative panel of 1000 residents that it uses as a sounding board of public opinion. The Panel was recently asked to identify the 3 features or facilities most important to them in their local environment. By far the most important feature recorded was Community Safety and Policing. Anti-social behaviour and other crimes, such as drugs and alcohol abuse, are causing increasing problems in some play areas. Much of this activity occurs after dark. The problem cuts across the boundaries of a number of agencies - the Council, the Police, Health Authority & Probation Service.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) launched a *Safe Open Spaces Campaign* in August 1999. They are now working closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) and interested local authorities to help improve safety provisions in local parks and open spaces.

Some local authorities have introduced a number of local initiatives that involve measures to ensure the provision of safe open spaces. Set out in Appendix 9 is a schedule that highlights some of these initiatives.

Not all play areas in Solihull are ideally located for a safe environment. Whilst it is reasonable to expect most younger children to be accompanied by adults that is not the case with older children. An important part of growing up includes opportunities to experience some freedom. Play areas that are not highly visible from surrounding public places are unlikely to give children, and their parents, the necessary feeling of security.

An example is Bentley Heath Recreation Ground. It is tucked away in a corner of the site behind the tennis courts. The NPFA status of the play area is currently a LEAP. It mainly meets the needs of the 4-8 age group. Relocation to a more suitable site within the recreation ground and repeating the current level of provision would cost about £70,000.

An alternative approach might be to use the site for another purpose – such as a ball games/meeting area for young people (aged 13-17). The needs of this age group are considered below. It is not as critical for this age group to be on a highly visible site.

The Council recently carried out extensive public consultation on parks and open spaces in Solihull. The Council published its Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (1999–2004) in May 1999. In response to public feedback the Council has included the following statement: -

'Make a commitment to increase Council presence within parks and open spaces through Park Rangers/Wardens'.

Supervised play provision

It is clear that local initiatives in other areas have gone further than measures to help children feel safe. Supervised play means engaging specialists skilled in the development of children through play activity. Specialist supervision could also enable the provision of more challenging items of equipment.

The Council has identified children's play as a key issue in the Solihull Sports and Recreation Plan. The Plan acknowledges that most of the current facilities in Solihull are based in parks. It is stated that 'If children's play is to become an acknowledged element in its sports and recreation planning the Council will need to review play provision generally and identify effective ways for managing the opportunities and difficulties that children's play provision poses.' The Solihull Sports and Recreation Plan is currently under review as part of the development of a new Leisure Plan for Solihull, encompassing indoor and outdoor recreational activities and provision.

The concerns about children spending long hours in sedentary leisure pursuits, such as computer games and television/video watching are well documented. Also there is a perception that the rigours of the school curriculum have led to play activity being marginalised. In these circumstances it is important that the Council continues to provide opportunities for children to develop through play.

Young People (13-17 age group)

Play provision in Solihull has traditionally focused on the needs of juniors and toddlers. Solihull is similar to many other authorities in this respect. However, not catering for the needs of young people (13-17 age group) can give rise to problems. Less suitable places are found to congregate such as street corners or children's play equipment. This can lead to the use and sometimes abuse of equipment not intended for them.

Nuisance/Anti-Social Behaviour has been identified as one of the main areas of concern in Solihull's Crime & Disorder Strategy published in April 1999. As one of the partners, the Council has agreed to carry out a number of actions as a contribution towards reducing anti-social behaviour. The Council will: -

- *Create meeting areas for young people in agreed locations as an alternative to street gatherings*
- *Provide diversionary activities for young people in conjunction with the 'Parks Strategy'*

The Council is not saying that all young people cause nuisance/anti-social behaviour. Often it is the few who give the many a bad name. Equally it should not be the case that provision of facilities is only being considered as a response to problems of anti-social behaviour. Simply it is the right thing to do to consider the needs of all sections of the community.

As part of the recent public consultation about parks and open spaces 500 residents of Solihull were interviewed. There was a strong feeling that greater use could be made of parks and open spaces in Solihull. More events and meeting areas for young people were popular requests.

The Council has responded to these pressures where opportunities have arisen. In the following areas facilities for young people have been provided: -

- *Lanchester Park*
- *Chapelhouse Recreation Ground*
- *Marston Green Park – ball games and meeting area provided in addition to toddler and junior equipment*

Meeting areas for young people are starting to emerge across the country. These areas can be fairly simple such as a circle of stones or logs around which to congregate and socialise. Purpose built shelters that provide protection from the elements are now being marketed.

Activities can also be provided in these meeting areas. A single basket ball hoop or a 'wonder wall' to kick a ball against for example.

It is important that young people are involved in the design of these new play facilities. Their involvement will assist in gaining ownership and respect for the equipment and promote higher levels of usage. The Parks Action Group for Young People, affiliated to the Solihull Youth Council, will provide a suitable forum for co-ordinating the involvement of young people.

Skate Parks

Many requests for skateboarding facilities to be provided in Solihull have been received in recent years. The Parks Strategy Consultation in 1998 provided significant evidence of demand and this has been supplemented by petitions and presentations from young people to the Council.

There is also a willingness by young people to become involved in the design of skateboarding facilities.

The situation at present is not ideal. It is clear from recent consultation that the lack of provision locally means that young people living in Solihull are travelling significant distances, to locations such as Stratford, to use skateboarding facilities.

Providing facilities locally would give rise to a number of benefits. Firstly it would reduce the need for young people in Solihull to travel. This would contribute towards the principles of sustainability. Secondly, the existence of a dedicated facility would help to control the current practice of skateboarding in inappropriate locations such as the Town Centre.

The issue then arises as to where provision should be made and how it should be funded. Funding is considered in Chapter 5.

Skateboarding is an activity that has the potential to draw young people from a wide area. The facility recently provided at Stratford is evidence of the attraction. Therefore it is important that skateboarding facilities of a significant scale – such as dedicated skate parks like the facility at Stratford - are provided in sustainable locations that are easily accessible by public transport. It is also important to recognise that skateboarding is an activity that carries with it a risk of injury and therefore locations close to existing sports facilities that offer the support of first aid facilities would be helpful.

In order to address the demands for skateboarding facilities a hierarchy has been developed based upon two facility levels:

Principal Skateboard Park – similar to the facilities provided at Nuneaton and Stratford upon Avon. These will provide a wide range of equipment from small 'beginner' units through to fast, highly challenging ramps in order to allow the full range of skill levels to be catered for within the park.

Local Skateboard Park – providing between 4 and 6 pieces of equipment including half or quarter pipe, jump ramp and grind rails.

The costs of providing a dedicated principal skate park mean that two facilities at the most would be feasible across the Borough. This skate park provision could then be supplemented by the localised skateboard facilities in other park locations with individual items of equipment such as 'half pipes' where skateboarders could hone their skills. A Map of existing and proposed skate park facilities is set out at Appendix 11.

Public expectations

A safe place in which to live and the provision of meeting areas for young people has already been mentioned as important issues for today in the opinion of Solihull residents.

The parks strategy consultation in 1998 also highlights the importance that local residents place on children's play areas. Whilst all facilities in parks and open spaces are valued by all residents, children's playgrounds, seating and areas for ball games are considered the *most important*.

The Council has involved local people in its efforts to improve parks and open spaces in Solihull. An important part of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is the identification of improvements that could be made to individual parks. 6 Park Action Groups were set up in the summer of 1999 and have acted as advisors to the Council's Leisure Committee. As a result of their work 6 action plans have been created. Young persons meeting areas came out as top priority in 3 cases: Burtons Farm, Job's Close Park and Tudor Grange Park. The important part that Park Rangers/Wardens can play in helping to promote a safe environment in parks was again emphasised.

During the consultation process comments were made about existing play areas. Recent articles have also appeared in the local press.

Tudor Grange has been described as 'bland and unattractive in comparison to recent improvements in neighbouring areas like Stratford and Warwick'.

Shirley play area it is said 'has changed little from when I was a child – some 25 years ago'.

There is often the temptation to think that problems can only be solved by buying additional equipment. However the results of a recent survey carried out by a local Beaver Group (boys aged 5-7) makes an important point. 14 boys were asked to identify the items of equipment that they liked the most in the Malvern Park play area. Second behind the slide was the 'other' category that was more popular than the swings, multi-play and rocket – between them probably costing £40,000. The 'other' was identified as the ***bushes in the middle of the play area***.

This also emphasises the importance of looking at the surroundings of the play area. Whilst it may have been games of hide and seek that attracted the boys to the bushes there is also the overall appearance of the play area to consider. Indeed it is important that the adults accompanying children find the play area a comfortable place to be. If not, visits are likely to be kept short.

The years ahead

A picture is beginning to emerge of what play area provision could look like in Solihull in the years ahead. We should be aiming for

- A new and more equitable distribution of play areas across the Borough.
- Safe playing environments for children of all age groups (toddlers & juniors) in Solihull where sites are clearly visible from public places and the problems of anti-social behaviour and other crimes are minimised.
- The needs of young people (age 13-17) are taken into account by providing separate areas for them to meet, preferably including some activities, away from the children's play areas. Young people also help to shape the design of the facilities.
- The provision of skateboarding facilities in Solihull
- More residents enjoying easy access to play areas across the Borough.
- Better access to play facilities for the disabled and people from other disadvantaged sections of the community.
- Attractive play areas – move away from the engineered approach – create places in which both children and accompanying adults want to stay through environmental enhancement.

These aims for the years ahead can be expressed in the following vision: -

'To create play areas in Solihull that are welcoming, safe, attractive, accessible and meet the needs of children and young people in a balanced and fair way across the Borough.'

4. STRATEGY IN DETAIL

It is possible to draw some conclusions from the preceding chapters. Children's play areas make an important contribution to the quality of life in Solihull. There is sound evidence to show that they are valued highly by the local community.

However, stringent safety requirements and public expectations are making it difficult to maintain the desired standard of provision. The challenge for the Council is to respond to these pressures in a way that makes effective use of public resources. Indeed it is incumbent on the Council to explore alternative ways of funding play areas in order to deliver best value to the people of Solihull. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter 5.

Options

There appears to be 2 approaches to the way forward.

1. **'Maintaining' current pattern of play provision** - Retain the existing pattern of sites across the Borough. Retain the existing level of provision on each site - replacing equipment on a like for like basis. Continue as we have in the past.
2. **'Varying' the pattern of play provision** – Take account of the gaps identified in the current provision. Work towards a new and balanced pattern of play area provision across the Borough. Work towards a hierarchy of play area provision across the Borough to attain varying levels of provision. Consider removal of sites where duplication exists.

It is becoming clear that **'Maintaining'** cannot be sustained in the future. The current approach will not enable the Council to respond to the pressures and gaps in the current provision identified in Chapters 2 and 3.

'Varying', on the other hand, will provide a measured response that addresses the pressures and gaps.

Strands

It is possible to pull out 4 strands to the way forward.

EQUITY – COMMUNITY SAFETY - ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT – ACCESSIBILITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Set out below is a statement of what the Council is trying to achieve within each strand. Also a package of actions is identified. In some cases targets have been set against which the public can judge the progress the Council is making.

EQUITY

The Council wants to achieve: -

- *All children/accompanying adults within the Borough living within a reasonable walking distance of a play area site that meets the needs of their age group. 'Reasonable walking distance' defined as the recommended NPFA distance.*
- *Variation in the level of play provision across the Borough so that children/accompanying adults in different parts of the Borough enjoy convenient access to the full range and quality of play area sites as close to home as reasonably possible.*

Target 1: Commence implementation of new play area classification by April 2003 and complete on a phased basis by January 2013

The current pattern of play area provision across the Borough is not equitable. Some residents living in the built up area are spoilt for choice, others do not have a play area within the recommended NPFA walking distance. The quality of play areas also varies in a random pattern across the Borough.

Changing the pattern to a more equitable distribution would contribute towards the aims of Local Agenda 21. Meeting local needs locally without having to rely on the motor car for access would also be consistent with the aims of the Council's Environment Strategy.

The Council will establish the following hierarchy of play area sites across Solihull: -

- **Premium sites (Category 1)** - at least one to be provided within each of the 6 zones identified on Map A (Appendix 1). These sites will provide a full range of play facilities - toddler, junior and young people's (age 13-17) facilities. These sites are likely to draw people from a wider area than 1km.
- **Neighbourhood sites (Category 2)** - NEAP sites with toddler and junior equipment. The catchment area for residents walking to this facility is considered to be 1000m (1 km).
- **Community sites (Category 3)** - This category will include LEAPs & LAP's. The catchment area for residents walking to this facility is considered to be 400m.
- **Local sites (Category 4)** - Situated close to housing areas and particularly tower blocks in the north of the Borough to support Regeneration. Also in the south in the areas where 'gaps in provision' have been identified.

The new hierarchy of play areas will enable the Council to address the needs of young people (aged 13-17). Skateboard solutions are proposed to be provided through the introduction of 2 new skateparks – close to the existing sports centres in the South and North of the Borough respectively.

The future provision of play areas in Solihull based on this new classification is included at Appendix 5 and illustrated on Map B (Appendix 2).

THE COUNCIL WILL

- ***Prepare a work programme to implement the new range of play areas set out in Appendix 7***
- ***Publish a play area charter to set out the standard of play provision that users should expect on different sites***
- ***Review the future of sites where duplication exists to consider how they should be re-cast***
- ***Carry out public consultation with local residents before securing the complete removal of play areas and the use of the land for another purpose***
- ***Monitor and review the play area classification, set out in Appendix 7, every year***
- ***Facilitate the provision of skateboarding facilities in Solihull as follows – 2 skateparks to be provided (one in the north and one in the south in close proximity to existing sports centres) and the provision of individual items of skateboarding equipment in all 'Premium' parks.***

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Council wants to achieve: -

- *Children and parents feeling confident that play areas in Solihull are a safe environment in which to play.*

- *Reduced disturbance to local residents from anti-social behaviour and other crimes such as drug and alcohol abuse.*

Target 2 –Implement safety measures in play areas and report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet annually

Target 3 - By 2003 Park Ranger Service on all Premium play area sites. The service to be linked to education, community safety and community involvement

Target 4 - Annual reductions in the number of recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour and other crimes such as drug and alcohol abuse in Solihull's play areas

It has been shown that personal safety is the most important feature of the Solihull environment to residents. Sadly children are perceived as being increasingly vulnerable today and therefore the Council will do its utmost to promote safe playing environments for children.

Some play area sites in Solihull are tucked away and not clearly visible from outside the park/open space. Best practice would suggest that children's play areas are sited in clearly visible locations. Being clearly visible is not as important for older children, or as we have called them - young people (aged 13 –17). There may be an opportunity therefore to re-use the sites of any relocated play areas as young persons meeting areas.

The Council has made a commitment to an increased presence in Solihull's Parks and Open Spaces through Park Rangers. An important part of the duties of this person would be keeping an eye on the children's play areas.

Some local authorities have gone further than the provision of a visible presence. Schemes include active supervision of children's play in order to assist in children's development.

The Council will

- ***Carry out a safety audit of the play area sites in Solihull including an assessment of the needs of the disabled and people from other disadvantaged groups in the Community.***
- ***Prepare a work programme to implement appropriate safety measures***
- ***Explore the possibility of introducing specialist supervised play on selected sites within Solihull.***
- ***Consult with the local community to identify play areas where problems of anti-social behaviour and other crime is causing nuisance***
- ***Work in partnership with other agencies, such as Solihull Police, the Health Authority and Probation Service, to tackle the problems of anti-social behaviour and other crime***

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

The Council wants to achieve: -

- *Attractive and welcoming play area sites that are set in well- maintained surroundings in order to encourage children and accompanying adults to stay longer and enjoy the local environment of the play area.*

- *Sponsorship and additional sources of funding to help achieve play areas fit for the 21st century.*
- *Well-used play areas that make the best use of available resources*

Target 5 – By 2013 implement environmental enhancement programme on all play area sites

Target 6 - To attract new sources of funding each year to support the work programme

Well-used play areas are a rewarding site to see. Finding out what users want is an important step in this process. The information will be vital when deciding the most effective ways of using resources.

However, it is not only the items of equipment that determine the quality of the play experience. The surroundings make a vital contribution. Therefore the Council intends to take a broader view of children's play area sites. The play area itself and the local environment that provides its setting will be looked at together.

For example simple improvements such as bright painting schemes or appropriate landscaping can help to uplift a play area that can tend to be dominated by metal and concrete. Improvements will be carried out in conjunction with an environmental improvement programme in Solihull's parks and open spaces.

Participating in play activities can make an important contribution to the quality of life of children and their parents. In essence, what the Council does with play provision can influence the well being of this important section of the community. In the north of the Borough enhanced play area provision can make an important contribution to the Regeneration of the area. A Regeneration Zone has been identified by Advantage West Midlands and includes the Wards of Smiths Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood. The issue of funding and sponsorship to secure the desired improvements will be considered further in the next Chapter.

The Council will

- ***Prepare an environmental enhancement programme for all play area sites to make them more appealing to children***
- ***Establish a funding programme and make applications***
- ***Identify new sources of funding/sponsorship and establish links with the corporate funding team***
- ***Use partnership working with the business community, community groups and the voluntary sector in order to maximise opportunities for enhancement***
- ***Seek the views of users on the type of facilities provided in play areas***

ACCESSIBILITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Council wants to achieve: -

- *Convenient and safe pedestrian access for all children/accompanying adults to a broad range of play areas within their local area*
- *Improved access to play areas for disabled people and other people from disadvantaged sections of the community*
- *Convenient and safe car parking, public transport and cycling facilities for those larger play area sites that draw people from beyond the local catchment area.*

Target 7 – By 2013 implement improved public accessibility to all play area sites

The NPFA recognise the importance of the journey to the play area facility for children and accompanying adults. A major road or other physical barrier without a convenient crossing point could take a play area beyond a reasonable walking distance for local children/accompanying adults.

A simple measure such as the provision of a pelican crossing can make play areas more accessible to local residents. Engineering works such as footpath modifications and dropped kerbs can assist the movement of prams and wheelchairs to play areas.

The analysis carried out in Chapter 3 made the assumption that Solihull's play areas are already accessible and therefore the NPFA maximum walking distances can be used to identify catchment areas – 1000m (1km) for a NEAP site, 400m for a LEAP, 100m for a LAP. These distances shall define the areas for study within which the accessibility audits will be carried out.

The Council will

- ***Carry out an accessibility audit of all play area sites in Solihull.***
- ***Prepare a work programme to implement appropriate accessibility improvements***
- ***Ensure that every Premium site has at least 1 item of equipment that meets the needs of disabled people***
- ***Ensure that the needs of disabled people and other people from disadvantaged sections of the community are taken into account when implementing access improvements***

5. Funding

Chapter 4 demonstrated what the Council will do in order to respond to the pressures and trends that are facing play area provision in Solihull. It also highlighted the contribution that enhanced play area provision can make to the well being of the local community and to the process of Regeneration in the North of the Borough.

This Chapter will consider how these proposals can be funded.

Capital/Revenue Budgets

The current practice is for the Council to purchase play equipment and pay for its maintenance throughout the built up areas of Solihull. Play areas must compete with other services for a share of the Council's budget. In practice this will mean a Capital bid where new play equipment is being provided.

The result of the existing process is that the Council owns the equipment and is liable for its maintenance and repair. However ownership and responsibility for maintenance is not the most important factor in play area provision.

What is important is an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the local community and matching to resources in a way that delivers best value to local people.

It is becoming recognised that facilities such as young persons meeting areas make an important contribution to broader issues like community safety. Also, children's play contributes to the wider aim of a healthy nation. Funding is now becoming available. New sources of funding are now becoming available to compliment the Parks Budget. Regeneration and the New Opportunities funds to name two emerging areas.

Also, Solihull's Citizen's panel recently judged community safety to be the most important feature in the local environment. The lofty position amongst community priorities should translate into a larger share of the public purse. Accordingly resources beyond the Parks Budget should be used to support initiatives such as young persons facilities.

Leasing

Best Value requires local authorities to find the most economic, efficient and effective ways of delivering services. Partnership working with another provider should be explored. Also leasing utilises revenue rather than capital funds.

The Council can obtain equipment for a small initial outlay. Ownership remains with the leasing company and therefore the Council has one less depreciating asset and the advantage of spreading the associated costs of the play area over a number of years.

Other advantages include, fixed payments during the life of the agreement, preserves capital funds and guards against changes that necessitate the upgrading of equipment - such as the more stringent health and safety legislation.

It is not just equipment that can be leased. The whole play area including equipment, installation, safer surfacing and even maintenance can be leased over an agreed period. An example of the leasing costs of a non-maintained play area is: -

Equipment Cost	25k
Installation Cost	10k

Impact absorbing surface	15k
TOTAL	50k
<i>Leasing Conversion - lease term 7 years</i>	
Lease Value	50k
<i>Payment profile 1x7</i>	
Initial Rental	9.5k
7 Annual Rentals @	9.5k

Sponsorship/Advertising

The Council has used sponsorship in other areas such as the provision of floral displays on roundabouts and some of the flower tubs in the town centres of Solihull and Shirley.

This involves the erection of a small plaque to acknowledge the sponsor.

Items of play equipment could be sponsored in a similar way.

Children and accompanying adults can spend a long time within a play area. In that sense they are a captive audience to companies/organisations who might wish to promote their name or products. This would bring added revenue that could be spent in supporting the aims of this Strategy.

The Council would need to decide where it strikes the balance between subtle advertising of a sponsor's name and the louder form of product advertising that we see on our streets today.

Regeneration

Part of the North of the Borough is included within a Regeneration Zone (RZ). The RZ has been identified by the Regional Economic Body (Advantage West Midlands).

The Government recognises that social, environmental and economic factors can all contribute towards the process of Regeneration. These factors will also influence the sense of well-being and overall quality of life within communities.

The Council considers that play areas within the RZ should enjoy the benefits of additional funding in order to help the Regeneration process.

The provision of local areas for play close to high density housing, such as tower blocks, will be considered as a way of contributing to the social well being of children in the north.

Rationalisation

The Strategy intends to achieve a more balanced provision of play areas across the Borough and an improved quality through the creation of 'premium play area' sites.

Currently there is duplication in some areas where play area sites meet the needs of the same households.

The phased removal of some of the sites will help reduce the equipment replacement and maintenance burden.

These funds can then be used to help support the measures proposed in the Strategy.

Partnership

The Government is encouraging local authorities to explore the benefits of partnership working in delivering local services.

For this reason the Council will consider new arrangements for the provision and maintenance of play equipment, discussing with potential providers ways of delivering what is needed at a reasonable cost.

In the rural villages this will include discussions with parish councils to find ways of improving the service.

Developer Contributions

Developers of larger housing sites normally make a contribution towards local infrastructure improvements arising from the development. Contributions can include road improvements, public open space and educational facilities.

It would be desirable to seek contributions arising from developers where gaps in play provision exist and to help support the improvements set out in the Action Plan in Appendix 10. The framework for such is set out in the Solihull Unitary Development Plan (First Deposit January 2002) which sets out the minimum standard expected for play areas. In addition the UDP identifies mechanisms to support improvements to the quality of existing play areas or provision of new play areas where a gap has been identified within the play strategy.

6. WAY FORWARD

Making it happen

The Strategy in detail sets out what the Council is trying to achieve, targets to help measure performance and what actions will be done. The action plan is set out at Appendix 10.

The Strategy has a 10-year life. The Council believes that the implementation of the proposals over the next 10 years will move children's/young people's play areas in Solihull towards the stated aim of being **welcoming, safe, attractive, accessible and meeting the needs of children/ young people in a balanced and fair way across the Borough.**

Benefits for people in Solihull

Progress towards achieving this aim will be monitored and the success of the actions evaluated. The Strategy will be reviewed in 2013.

The intended benefits for the people in Solihull will be: -

- More choice in play area provision and the assurance of clear standards of service.
- Facilities to meet the needs of young people (13-17) in Solihull for the first time including provision for skateboarding.
- Perceptions of safer playing environments arising from the introduction of park rangers and through partnership working with other agencies to reduce problems of anti-social behaviour and other crimes.
- Improvement in the environment of the play area and it's surroundings to help provide greater enjoyment from the leisure experience.
- Easier pedestrian access to local play areas for households throughout the built up areas of the Borough.
- Better access for disabled people and people from disadvantaged sections of the community.
- For play areas that attract people from wider than the local area, improvements to public transport access, cycling and car parking will be explored.

APPENDICES

1. Map A - Existing play area provision in Solihull. NPFA catchment areas identified and zones used for analysis
2. Map B - Proposed play area provision in Solihull
3. Schedule identifying the names of all existing and proposed play area sites provided (or to be) by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
4. Play Areas – comparative information
5. Current play area provision in Solihull - key statistics
6. Play area sites graded by play value
7. Future play area provision in Solihull - includes planned improvements and costs
8. Detailed analysis of the gaps in current provision
9. Local initiatives in other areas
10. Action Plan
11. Map C – Existing and Proposed Skate Park provision within Solihull

APPENDIX 1

**MAP A - EXISTING PLAY AREA PROVISION IN SOLIHULL. NPFA
CATCHMENT AREAS IDENTIFIED AND ZONES USED FOR ANALYSIS**

APPENDIX 2

MAP B - PROPOSED PLAY AREA PROVISION IN SOLIHULL

APPENDIX 3**ALL EXISTING AND PROPOSED PLAY AREA SITES PROVIDED (OR TO BE) BY SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

No.	Location	Existing / Proposed
1.	Beechcroft	E
2.	Lanchester Park	E
3.	Burton Green	E
4.	Wells Walk	E
5.	Kingshurst Park	E
6.	Babbs Mill	E
7.	Colebank Park	E
8.	Forth Drive	E
9.	Meriden Park	E
10.	Bluebell Recreation Ground	E
11.	Chapelhouse Recreation Ground	E
12.	Brookside Recreation Ground	E
13.	Barn Lane Recreation Ground	E
14.	Olton Jubilee Park	E
15.	Elmdon Park	E
16.	Elmdon Coppice	E
17.	Elmdon Heath Recreation Ground	E
18.	Hermitage Road Recreation Ground	E
19.	Langley Hall Park	(currently out of commission)
20.	Palmers Rough	E
21.	Shirley Park	E
22.	Tudor Grange Park	E
23.	Brueton/Malvern Park	E
24.	Colebrook	E
25.	Hillfield Park	E
26.	Jobs Close Park	E
27.	Bentley Heath Recreation Ground	E
28.	Hanbury Road Recreation Ground	E
29.	Dorridge Park	E
30.	Smiths Wood Shopping Area	E
31.	Marston Green Park	E
32.	Balsall Common	P

APPENDIX 4

PLAY AREAS - COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

	No. Play Areas	Population (0-15)	Ratio	Net Expenditure* (excl. capital charges) £000	Area of facilities (hectares)
SOLIHULL	31	40,263	1:1299	2,348	618
BARNET	65	62,253	1:957	3,031	783
COVENTRY	31	62,479	1:2015	1,673	884
EALING	67	62,426	1:931	–	–
REDDITCH	56	17,749	1:317	890	722
WALSALL	86	52,600	1:617	3,078	–
CANNOCK CHASE	42	18,040	1:430	744	40
DUDLEY	57	62,300	1:1093	2,779	–
BRACKNELL FOREST	73	24,700	1:338	537	283
SEFTON	64	52,649	1:823	3,574	1,298
TAMESIDE	44	38,000	1:864	–	–
GREENWICH	21	49,437	1:2354	4,678	569
SWINDON	-	39,650	-	2,599	280
DONCASTER	116	57,506	1:496	1,685	1,273
SUNDERLAND	-	61,383	-	5,433	447
WAKEFIELD	-	66,948	-	4,069	1,123
BEXLEY	28	45,786	1:1635	2,959	638
ROTHERHAM	-	53,424	-	2,041	586
HARROW	27	44,374	1:1644	1,877	571
RICHMOND	37	33,606	1:908	2,276	460
SUTTON	53	32,547	1:614	2,245	402
TRAFFORD	-	46,263	-	2,815	502
ST HELENS	44	35,680	1:811	2,173	685

NPFA 6-acre standard: 0.2-0.3 hectares of equipped play areas/000 population
Solihull Population: 205,600
To comply with Standard: 41-62 hectares (103-154 acres)
Actual Provision: 5 hectares (12.4 acres)

* Net expenditure on Urban Parks and Open Spaces
(Source of data: CIPFA Leisure & Recreation statistics 2000-01 estimates)

APPENDIX 5

PLAY AREAS IN SOLIHULL - CURRENT PROVISION

Zone	Wards	Pop. 0-15	% Total 0-15 Pop.	No. of Play Areas	Ratio	Location (No.)	NPFA Classification	Play Value
1	Castle Bromwich Smiths Wood Kingshurst	8068	20%	6	1 : 1344	Beechcroft (1) Lanchester Park (2) Burton Green (3) Kingshurst (5) Smiths Wood (30) Babbs Mill (6)	NEAP NEAP NEAP NEAP NEAP NEAP	32 28 37 23 39 41
2	Chelmsley Wood Fordbridge Bickenhill (Marston Green Village only)	6077	15%	8	1:760	Colebank (7) Forth Drive (8) Meriden Park (9) Bluebell Rec. (10) Brookside Rec. (12) Chapelhouse Rec. (11) Marston Green Park (31) Wells Walk (4)	LEAP NEAP NEAP LEAP LEAP NEAP NEAP LEAP	23 44 46 23 27 41 41 n/a
3	Knowle Dorridge	4649	12%	4	1:1162	Jobs Close (26) Bentley Heath Rec. (27) Hanbury Road(28) Dorridge Park(29)	LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP	39 33 35 31

Zone	Wards	Pop. 0-15	% Total 0-15 Pop.	No. of Play Areas	Ratio	Location (No.)	NPFA Classification	Play Value
4	St Alphege Silhill	4454	11%	3	1:1485	Brueton/Malvern (23)	NEAP	41
						Tudor Grange (22)	NEAP	39
						Hermitage Road (18)	NEAP	24
5	Olton Lyndon Elmdon (excluding Damsonwood Estate)	5897	15%	6	1 : 983	Olton Jubilee (14)	NEAP	46
						Barn Lane (13)	NEAP	36
						Elmdon (15)	NEAP	41
						Langley Hall (19)	NEAP	35
						Elmdon Coppice (16)	LEAP	28
						Elmdon Heath (17)	LEAP	30
6	Shirley East Shirley South Shirley West	7824	19%	4	1 : 1956	Shirley Park (21)	NEAP	36
						Hillfield Park (25)	NEAP	28
						Palmers Rough (20)	LEAP	29
						Colebrook Rec. (24)	LEAP	25

APPENDIX 6

PLAY AREA SITES GRADED BY PLAY VALUE

Play Values	Sites (NPFA Category)
HIGH (over 40)	Meriden Park (NEAP) , Olton Jubilee Park (NEAP), Forth Drive (NEAP), Elmdon Park (NEAP), Babbs Mill Park (NEAP), Malvern Park (NEAP), Chapelhouse Recreation Ground(NEAP), Burtons Green (NEAP), Marston Green (NEAP).
MEDIUM (30 – 40)	Jobs Close Park (LEAP), Tudor Grange Park (NEAP), Shirley Park (NEAP), Barn Lane (NEAP), Hanbury Road (LEAP), Dorridge Park (LEAP), Bentley Heath Recreation Ground (LEAP), Langley Hall (NEAP), Beechcroft (NEAP), Elmdon Recreation Ground (LEAP), Smiths Wood (NEAP).
LOW (under 30)	Elmdon Coppice (LEAP), Brookside Recreation Ground (LEAP), Lanchester Park (NEAP), Bluebell Recreation Ground (LEAP), Colebank Park (LEAP), Kingshurst Park (NEAP), Palmers Rough (LEAP), Hillfield Park (NEAP), Colebrook Recreation Ground (LEAP), Hermitage Road (NEAP), Wells Walk (LEAP).

APPENDIX 7

PROPOSED PLAY AREA PROVISION

Zone	Wards	Play Area Locations (No.)	New Category (No.)	Changes	Improvement Works	Cost (In addition to maintenance & routine upkeep)
1	Castle Bromwich	Burton Green (3)	Premium (1)	As existing	New provision provided in 2002	-
	Smiths Wood	Lanchester Park (2)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£150,000
		Babbs Mill (6)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£180,000
	Kingshurst	Beechcroft (1)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£100,000
		Kingshurst (5)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£70,000
		Smiths Wood Shopping Centre (30)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	New provision provided in 2001	-

Zone	Wards	Play Area Locations (No.)	New Category (No.)	Changes	Improvement Works	Cost (In addition to maintenance & routine upkeep)
2	Chelmsley Wood	Meriden (9)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Provision of new toddler, junior and young peoples activities	£350,000
	Fordbridge	Marston Green Park (31)		As existing	New provision provided in 2000	-
	Bickenhill (part)	Chapelhouse (11)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£180,000
		Forth Drive (8)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£150,000
		Bluebell (10)	Neighbourhood (2)	Upgrade from LEAP standards (Community) to NEAP standards	Provision of additional equipment to meet Neighbourhood standard	£50,000
		Wells Walk (4)	Community (3)	As existing	New provision provided in 2001	-
		North Solihull Sports Centre	Principal Skate Park	New Facility	Provision of Principal Skate Park Facility	£80,000
	Colebank (7)	TO BE REVIEWED				
	Brookside (12)	TO BE REVIEWED				

Zone	Wards	Play Area Locations (No.)	New Category (No.)	Changes	Improvement Works	Cost (In addition to maintenance & routine upkeep)
3	Knowle	Job's Close (26)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Replacement of existing equipment and provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard, including young peoples facilities	£200,000
	Packwood	Dorridge Park (29)	Community (3)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£150,000
		Hanbury Road (28))	Community (3)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£100,000
		Bentley Heath (27)	TO BE REVIEWED			
4	St Alphege	Tudor Grange (22)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Replacement of existing equipment and provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard including principal skate park	£300,000
	Silhill	Malvern/Brueton (23)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Replacement of existing equipment and provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard	£200,000
		Hermitage Road (18)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£150,000
Zone	Wards	Play Area Locations (No.)	New Category (No.)	Changes	Improvement Works	Cost (In addition to maintenance & routine upkeep)

5	Lyndon	Elmdon (15)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Replacement of existing equipment and provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard, including young peoples facilities	£200,000	
	Elmdon	Olton Jubilee (14)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard, including young peoples facilities	£80,000	
	Olton Bickenhill	Langley Hall (18)	Neighbourhood (2)	New provision	Provision of Toddler Facilities	£100,000	
		Elmdon Heath (17)	Community (3)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£100,000	
		Barn Lane (13)	TO BE REVIEWED				
		Elmdon Coppice(16)	TO BE REVIEWED				
	Meriden	Balsall Common Park	Premium (1)	New provision	Provision of Toddler and Junior Facilities	£100,000	
6	Shirley South	Shirley Park (21)	Premium (1)	Upgrade	Provision of additional equipment to meet Premium standard, including young peoples facilities	£150,000	
	Shirley East	Hillfield Park (25)	Neighbourhood (2)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£100,000	
	Shirley West	Colebrook Rec (24)	Community (3)	As existing	Refurbishment of existing equipment to maintain play value	£100,000	
		Palmers Rough (20)	TO BE REVIEWED				
					ESTIMATED 10 YEAR GRAND TOTAL	£3,340,000	
					Estimated Annual Funding Requirement (excluding sites under review)	£334,000 P/A	

APPENDIX 8

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF GAPS IN CURRENT PROVISION

General observations - overview

- There are **19 NEAP** sites in Solihull - 10 north of the A45 and 9 south. There are **12 LEAP** sites – 4 north of the A45 and 8 south. There are currently no **LAP** sites. These are low-key areas aimed at younger children. The proposed new area at Dickens Heath will be the first example in the Borough.
- There are 9 sites in Solihull with high **play values**. These are all NEAP sites – 6 north of the A45 and 3 south. 11 sites have medium **play values** and 11 sites low **play values**.
- The creation of the New Marston Green Park has meant that *comprehensive play area coverage - identified by 'walk distance' catchment areas – has been achieved north of the A45.*
- *South of the A45 and West of the M42 there are households living outside of the catchment areas.* The gap is aligned on a North East/South West axis on a line between Land Rover (Lode Lane entrance) and Dog Kennel Lane/Blackford Road.
- East of the M42 (Knowle & Dorridge) there are no NEAP sites. *This means that play provision beyond the age of 8 is limited. A significant number of households live outside the catchment areas of these 4 sites.*
- *Council play provision is limited to the built up area of Solihull.* In the rural areas there are some play areas provided by parish councils.

Specific areas

North of the A45

- North of Cooks Lane there are 7 play area sites. All of them are NEAP sites. However, only one (Babbs Mill) has a **high** play value.
- South of Cooks Lane and North of the A45 there are also 7 play area sites. 4 of them are NEAP sites and 3 are LEAP sites. The 4 NEAP sites **all** have **high** play values. However, they are located close together – all within a 1mile radius – and therefore have overlapping catchment areas. *This means that they cater for the needs of the same people.* The 3 LEAP sites all have low play values.
- The play area at Smiths Wood Shopping Centre has meant that 3 play area sites will be within a radius of 200 metres. *The result is that the needs of the same people will be catered for.*
- Neither Colebank nor Brookside play areas contribute to the catchment area coverage. This is because adjacent NEAP sites already provide this coverage. Bluebell, on the other hand, does draw in households not otherwise covered.

South of the A45/West of the M42

- Olton Jubilee and Barn Lane are both NEAP sites. *They are located within 400m of each other and meet the needs of virtually the same households.*
- *A number of households in the 3 Shirley Wards live outside the catchment areas of any play area sites. In addition there are no sites with a high play value score in these wards.*
- The new provision in Dickens Heath will not cater for the needs of children beyond the age of 4.

East of the M42 (Knowle & Dorridge)

- General observations have already been made about this area. The 4 LEAP sites that do exist are well spaced and cater for the needs of discrete parts of the built up area. Currently there is no Authority provision within Balsall Common for fixed play. The proposal to site a new play area at Balsall Common Park will provide facilities for toddler, junior and young people in this area.

APPENDIX 9

LOCAL INITIATIVES IN OTHER AREAS

Local Authority	Initiatives	Benefits
EPSOM & EWELL	'Parks for all' & '5 star award scheme' - martial arts centres introduced in 2 local parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved park usage • Safer environment - reduced vandalism and less police time spent in parks
HARTLEPOOL	Britain's first 'Safe Parks Project' - partnership between community activist, Council and local TEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of greater public safety
LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM	Innovative Parks Constabulary Scheme - highly mobile park constables with semi-police powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88% approval rating from park users - uniformed presence made parks feel safer
STIRLING DISTRICT	Attempted to make all play areas accessible for children with disabilities - 1 playground incorporated equipment for children with cerebral palsy. Also on-site carers in summer months when play sessions are offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site carers/supervised play sessions found to be more appropriate than fixed equipment for children with disabilities
SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT	Community safety audit uncovered concerns about young people's activities - young people's action group set up to recommend improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-activity days planned including arts/community safety projects
SWANSEA CITY	Employed park rangers and provided supervised play sessions for children - rangers are police vetted and trained in child protection issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public feel reassured and safer in the parks while the number of reported incidents have been significantly reduced

APPENDIX 10 - ACTION PLAN

TARGETS	ACTIONS	START DATE	FINISH DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
EQUITY				
<p>1. Commence implementation of new play area classification by April 2003 and complete on a phased basis by January 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a work programme to implement the new play area classification set out in Appendix 7 (including the introduction of 2 skateparks and individual items of equipment into all 'Premium' parks) • Publish a play area charter for Solihull • Consultation on the future of play areas that are 'under review' to see how they should be recast and integrate into Appendix 5 and the agreed work programme • Public consultation on any sites considered for removal • Annual review of progress towards the new play area classification in Appendix 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2003 • April 2004 • July 2003 • After July 2003 • September each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme implemented on a phased basis and completed by December 2013 • Draft to Environment and Leisure Cabinet December 2003. Publish charter April 2004 • Complete examination of sites by July 2013 • 2013 • Report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet November each year 	<p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p> <p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p> <p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p> <p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p>

COMMUNITY SAFETY				
<p>2. Implement safety measures in play areas and report to Cabinet annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with current daily playground inspection of all play equipment • Carry out annual independent safety audit • Prepare a work programme to implement safety measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily • April each year • August each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily • August each year • Complete works by April the following year 	<p>Zone Co-ordinator (Horticulture)</p> <p>Zone Co-ordinator (Horticulture)</p> <p>Zone Co-ordinator (Horticulture)</p>
<p>3. By 2003 Park Ranger Service on all Premium play area sites. The service to be linked to education, community safety and community involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the new park ranger service in Solihull • Prepare a report on the issue of play leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment in Parks Strategy 1999-2004 • December 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2003 • Report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet June 2003 	<p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p> <p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p>
<p>4. Annual reductions in the number of recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour and other crimes such as drug and alcohol abuse in Solihull's play areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement system for recording incidents of anti-social behaviour in Solihull's play areas • Consultation with the local community through Park Action Groups and other mechanisms to identify problem sites. • The Council to actively pursue partnership working with other agencies to help tackle the problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 2003 • Park Action Groups to meet at least four times a year • Establish contacts with key agencies by September 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2004 • Ongoing • Agree a mechanism for partnership working by April 2004 	<p>Head Park Ranger</p> <p>Zone Manager (Landscape)</p> <p>Zone Manager (Community)</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT				
5. By 2013 implement environmental enhancement programme on all play area sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an environmental enhancement programme for all play area sites to make them more appealing to children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft programme to Environment and Leisure Cabinet by July 2004 	Zone Manager (Landscape)
6. To attract new sources of funding each year to support the work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a funding programme and make applications Identify new sources of sponsorship/funding and establish links with the corporate funding team Report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet on the issue of leasing play equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2003 December 2003 December 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver new sources of funding each year Draft report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet March 2004 	Head of Community Services Zone Manager (Landscape)
ACCESSIBILITY & SOCIAL INCLUSION				
7. By 2013 implement improved public accessibility to all play area sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an accessibility audit of all play area sites in line with DDA Part III Prepare a work programme to implement appropriate accessibility improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2003 January 2005 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2004 Complete by 2013 	Head of Transport & Highways / Zone Manager (Landscape) Head of Transport & Highways / Zone Manager (Landscape)
8. eGovernment Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Web Pages and methodology for two way communication via internet in respect of Play Areas within Solihull 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	Zone Manager (Landscape)

APPENDIX 11

MAP C – EXISTING AND PROPOSED SKATE PARK PROVISION WITHIN SOLIHULL