

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OR OFFICER

This form can be used for any decision but **MUST** be used to record

- any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Councillor
- a key decision taken by a Council Officer

In these circumstances the form must be completed and passed to the Service Manager (Members' Services) no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Service Manager (Members' Services) has confirmed the decision has not been called in

1. Description of decision

That the Borough Council accepts the funding allocations for a Playbuilder scheme from April 1st 2009 - March 31st 2011 as a grant from the Home Office department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for 22 new play sites to be developed across the Borough, in accordance with the details set out in the attached report.

Playbuilder Capital		
09/10	10/11	Total
£473,336	£533,548	£1,006,884
Playbuilder Revenue		
09/10	10/11	Total
£26,177	£17,451	£43,628

2. Date of decision

16 March 09

3. Reasons for decision

To allow the draw down of grant funding from the Home Office to assist in development and delivery of 22 play site areas to provide increased and improved open access play for young people across the Borough.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The option of not taking benefit of the grant funding was considered and discounted as without the funding this work could not be delivered

5. How decision is to be funded

The project is funded completely from the grant

6. Conflicts of Interest

	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (if yes give details and date of dispensation)
None	

Signed Patricia Margaret Olney Date 16.03.09Name of Decision Taker PATRICIA MARGARET OLNEY

[This must be signed by the decision-maker or, if the decision was made by the Mayor or Councillor then the relevant Head of Service may sign it].

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Service Manager (Members' Services) as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 16.3.09Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 26.3.09

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT FOR: COUNCILLOR PAT OLNEY, ARTS, LEISURE AND DIVERSITY PORTFOLIO HOLDER

REPORT BY: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND STREET SERVICES

DATE: 10TH March 2009

Playbuilder capital and revenue funding

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Secretary for State for The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) announced through the Children's Plan an investment of £235 million across England for ensuring that every residential area has a variety of high-quality places for all children to play safely and free of charge.
- 1.2 The National Play Strategy published in 2008 sets out in detail how the capital investment programme from 2008 – 2011 for 3,500 new and refurbished play sites should reflect the needs of children, parents and the local community in every area.
- 1.3 An accelerated roll-out of the programme resulted in the expectation of local authorities like Bedford to bring the programme of work a year earlier to deliver 22 open access sites over a 2 year period from April 2009 – 2011 instead of 22 sites over a 1 year period from 2010 – 2011. A selection criteria for the identification of sites has yet to be developed. Members will be consulted at 6 monthly intervals to ratify proposed selection of sites during the 2-year project as outlined in the Playbuilder Project Plan (see attached)
- 1.4 Bedford Borough received notification of its indicative amount of capital and revenue funding available for years 1 and 2 of the programme on 27th February as outlined below: A signed Condition of Grant is required by DCSF by 1st April 2009.

Playbuilder Capital		
09/10	10/11	Total
£473,336	£533,548	£1,006,884

Playbuilder Revenue		
09/10	10/11	Total
£26,177	£17,451	£43,628

- 1.5 The Playbuilder Project Plan sets out our aims and objectives linked to Bedford Borough Plan for Play Strategy and other related strategies. The document also details an initial programme of work delivery including targets, governance arrangements, community engagement, partnership arrangements and sustainability.
- 1.6 It builds on the Council's recent Big Lottery Fund grant this year that is providing good quality play equipment at 4 rural locations and 2 full time Play Rangers for 2 years to June 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the Borough Council accepts the Playbuilder grant of £1,006,884 Capital and £43,628 revenue from DCSF

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The programme of work contributes to the following Council priorities:

- **PROTECTING AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT**
- **SAFE AND RESPECTFUL**
- **PROSPEROUS AND VIBRANT**
- **HEALTHY, ACTIVE AND ENJOYABLE**
- **A PRO-ACTIVE AND LISTENING COUNCIL**

In addition it contributes to the delivery of the North Bedfordshire Play Partnership's Play Strategy 'Plan for Play' which is a good fit with the new National Play Strategy.

- 2.2 The ability to build on existing evidence to identify play sites across urban and rural areas that can be brought up to a high level of quality and play value, will bring benefit to many local communities.

3. KEY ISSUES

Legal

- 3.1 The Playbuilder Working Group will liaise with Bedford Borough Council Finance Department to ensure that procurement rules and European Union legislation are complied with during the tender periods in relation to the larger monetary size of projects to be delivered.
- 3.2 Planning arrangements will be taken into consideration and included within each project design brief where appropriate.
- 3.3 In addition the group is inclusive of the needs of health and safety and disability access.

Policy

- 3.4 The programme of work has considered a range of policy areas including Health and Safety, Finance, Procurement, Diversity, Education and Equal Opportunities all of which have been included in the Playbuilder Project Plan

Resources

- 3.5 DCSF have contracted the services of Play England (Supported by the Big Lottery Fund and part of National Children's Board) to assist Local Authorities through a Top Tier Group to share good practice from pathfinders delivering Wave 1 of the Playbuilder grant between 2008 – 2009.
- 3.6 Bedford Design Group will assist the Playbuilder Working Group during the consultation, design and work tender process and oversee delivery of play sites
- 3.7 Section 10 of the Playbuilder Project Plan outlines how we will achieve financial sustainability. On going revenue costs for site maintenance will be addressed as follows:
- Focusing primarily on redeveloping existing sites that are already part of our inspection regime
 - Designing play features and equipment that are hard-wearing, long-lasting and require little maintenance whilst still being relevant to children's needs
 - Developing sites within the control of parish councils, housing associations and other organisations, who would take on the maintenance responsibilities
 - Selecting sites where possible that are well used and overlooked at all times, reducing the likelihood of vandalism
 - Engaging local young people in the design and maintenance of the facilities (see chapter 8)
 - Considering how current maintenance systems could be reviewed, including an investigation into the possibility of maintaining new sites within the current revenue budget

Risk

- 3.8 Risk in terms of over spending will be managed through the work programme where financial sustainability has been considered resulting in a range of options to ensure the project keeps to budget. Options include monitoring of the tender agreements, making use of joint venture and pooled resources where possible and making best use of the existing infrastructure.
- 3.9 A Risk benefit analysis forms part of the Playbuilder Project Plan in terms of managing the risk in the development of play.

4. DETAILS

Background

- 4.1 The DCSF Play Strategy recently announced its intention to bring forward the Playbuilder Programme for Bedford and other Local Authorities in England who were in Wave 3 (2010 – 2011) to Wave 2 (2009 – 2010) providing funding for a 2 year period to deliver 22 play sites.
- 4.2 The North Bedfordshire Play Partnership used existing needs analysis evidence from the Council's Plan for Play Strategy 2007 - 2010 to put a Playbuilder Project Plan together. This was signed off by the new Director of Environment and Community Services and the Deputy Director Children Services and submitted to DCSF and Play England on February 27th 2009.
- 4.3 The Playbuilder project supports the Borough's Plan for Play vision of "every child and young person, regardless of disability, ethnicity, faith or economic circumstance, will have access to a range of play opportunities in close proximity to their home".
- 4.4 The Playbuilder also contributes to a range of National Indicators in relation to Health, Positive Activities for Young People, Environment and Community Safety including the latest addition of NI 199 Children and Young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas. Specifically it will contribute towards Local Area Agreements as follows:
 - NI 56: Obesity among primary school-age children in year 6
 - NI 57: Children and young peoples participation in high quality PE and sport
 - NI 110: Young peoples participation In positive activities
 - NI 175: Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling

5. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

- 5.1 Existing results of community consultation and partner information has been used to develop the Playbuilder Project Plan. The Plan outlines in section 7 how it will engage and consult with local communities.

6. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

**Report Contact Officer: Sally Flint, Community Safety Manager
Environment and Street Services.**

Appendix: Playbuilder Project Plan.
9(4)

Bedford Borough Council

Playbuilder Project Plan

February 2009



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Part 1 Overview and strategic context

1. Overview of project

The Playbuilder investment will enable Bedford Borough Council to deliver 22 play sites¹ across the area between April 2009 and March 2011, in order to extend the opportunity to access high-quality, innovative play facilities nearby to as many children & young people as possible across the borough.

This project will contribute to the delivery of the North Bedfordshire Play Partnership's play strategy, 'A Plan for Play', which itself is a good fit with the new National Play Strategy. It will build on the sites already delivered through the BIG Lottery play programme in the borough. Play is also reflected in, and contributes to, other key plans and strategies covering the Borough, such as the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

In preparing 'A Plan for Play', the Play Partnership conducted a needs analysis and community consultation exercise, which will assist us in identifying sites across the urban and rural areas. Our approach to identifying sites will be to address geographical gaps in provision; to bring sites up to a high level of quality and play value; to ensure that all sites are as inclusive as possible for children & young people of all needs and abilities; and to ensure that we invest in locations where enhanced play opportunities will have the most benefit.

In order to ensure that we can deliver 22 sites within a challenging 2-year timeframe, we will focus mainly on existing sites already in Borough Council ownership, which will not throw up ownership and planning issues. In the rural area we will work in partnership with parish councils that own sites. This will also be more financially sustainable as it will not lead to too great an increase in ongoing maintenance costs.

Our approach to developing play sites will be based on established good practice as laid out in recent guides, which corresponds well with our existing ways of working. Through a collaborative process we will ensure community engagement; innovation; access; inclusivity; and safety while allowing reasonable risk.

Bedford Borough Council will become a unitary authority from 1 April 2009, and this will facilitate the working across service departments that will be essential for success. The Playbuilder project will be overseen by the North Bedfordshire Play Partnership, and monitored on a day-to-day basis by a steering group reporting to the Partnership. Bedford Borough Council will be accountable for delivery and will employ a Project Manager for this purpose.

¹ Throughout this document we have adopted the term 'play site' to refer to a place offering high-quality play experiences to all, whether equipped or not.

2. Strategic context

2.1 National Play Strategy

The Play Strategy, launched in December 2008, declares the government's aim "for all children to be able to enjoy a range of safe and exciting places to play close to where they live." The "immediate priority" for 2008-11, for which the Playbuilder investment has been allocated, is "to increase the availability of safe, exciting and inclusive play facilities, putting the needs of local communities at the heart of the design process and improving facilities in the areas where children need them most."

These principles run through this project plan as follows:

- New play sites will be developed, and existing sites transformed
- Play facilities will be exciting yet still safe (we outline our approach in Part 3)
- We are placing a major emphasis on inclusivity, particularly for disabled children (see chapter 8)
- All play sites will be designed in collaboration with local communities
- Sites will be selected on the basis of a needs analysis addressing qualitative and quantitative gaps in provision

2.2 Bedford Borough Council's Strategic Approach to Play

'A Plan for Play' – Bedford Borough's Play Strategy

In August 2007, the North Bedfordshire Play Partnership published its play strategy, 'A Plan for Play'. Its Vision for Play is that "every child and young person, regardless of disability, ethnicity, faith or economic circumstance, will have access to a range of play opportunities in close proximity to their home".

The aims of 'A Plan for Play' tie in well with the national Play Strategy:

Bedford play strategy aim	Correspondence to national strategy
1. Increase access and decrease barriers to enjoyable experiences in play and recreational opportunities for all children & young people throughout urban & rural areas within the Borough of Bedford	Chapter 3: More places to play (particularly investment through Playbuilder)
2. Ensure A Plan for Play informs and influences future planning and design processes and that more children & young people participate in planning for play	Chapter 6: Child-friendly communities (e.g. new web-based guidance to bring together best practice for planning officers on supporting play)
3. Recognise the value of the natural environment through A Plan for Play and encourage its increased use for free play opportunities	"Parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used" (part of Vision for play).
4. Promote & raise better awareness of the values of play strategically, operationally & publicly through partnership working	Chapter 7: Embedding play in local priorities (e.g. new national indicator 199)
5. Make play opportunities equally accessible to those experiencing disadvantage by involving, engaging and raising the confidence of children & young people and encourage increased participation	Chapter 4: Supporting play throughout Childhood (e.g. funding requirements for disabled children)
6. Offer and provide more children & young people with stimulating and challenging environments that include acceptable risk	Chapter 5: Playing safely (DCSF publishing guidance on proportionate risk management)

Sustainable Communities Strategy

Bedford Borough is currently covered by the Bedfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy. This includes, under Make a Positive Contribution, an action to “develop new activities and facilities with young people”. This action has been carried over into the draft refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Bedford Borough from April 2009, on the basis that it was identified as a community priority in two separate surveys in recent years. We will work to ensure that play policies and outcomes are appropriately reflected elsewhere in the Strategy.

Local Area Agreement

This Playbuilder project can contribute to the following indicators in Bedford's LAA:

- NI 56: Obesity among primary school-age children in year 6
- NI 57: Children and young people's participation in high-quality PE and sport
- NI 110: Young people's participation in positive activities
- NI 175: Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling (local indicator)

Bedford Borough Council's Sports Development Strategy

'Keeping Bedford Active' is the Sports Development Unit's strategy for 2008-09. It includes the following actions for play:

Under Action aim B2: “To operate a mobile play scheme in rural areas of the Borough and a timetable of Play Scheme venues as part of the summer programme” (p.8)
Under Action aim D3: “To deliver a playscheme programme across the Borough that offers children the opportunity to take part in supervised play.” (p.14)

Bedford Borough Council's Greenspace strategy

The Council's Greenspace Strategy was adopted in 2007 and provides a framework that will help to improve and sustain all of the Borough's publicly accessible greenspaces. Public consultation undertaken as part of the associated PPG17 study showed that 23% of respondents visit greenspaces to visit children's play sites, and that many sites are valued for informal activities that can often be of a play nature.

The Greenspace Strategy identifies the production of a play strategy (see 2.2 above) as the principle mechanism for addressing play issues, but some more detailed issues and actions are included in a series of sub-area sections. These sections reflect some of the findings from the PPG17 study e.g. addressing gaps in the provision of facilities and accessibility issues. Further detail on these matters is included under the needs analysis at the beginning of Part 2.

The Strategy also provides the context and policy support for developing the Bedford Green Wheel (see case-study after 8.3).

2.3 Links to other local plans & strategies

Local Development Framework (LDF)

The LDF sets the framework for spatial planning within the Borough. The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan is the key Development Plan Document (DPD) containing the higher-level strategic policies, including:

CP 22 Green Infrastructure (GI): covers the protection of existing GI, and the provision or contribution towards new GI by developers, with regard to the Greenspace strategy (above).

CP 30 Community infrastructure: lists play provision as part of the infrastructure to which developers would be expected to contribute where necessary.

Transport Strategies

The Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan is due to be reviewed during 2009/10. This will provide an opportunity to ensure that access to play sites is considered in developing and delivering schemes, particularly in the context of public transport, cycling and walking, as well as road safety, traffic calming and pollution.

The Council will also continue to seek to improve safe access to play sites and greenspaces through its broader sustainable transport programme of work.

North Bedfordshire Community Safety Strategy 2008-2011

A key priority in this strategy, developed by the North Bedfordshire Community Safety Partnership is “reducing the number of disengaged young people”, through “provision of sustainable positive activities for children and young people”, and “support for parents enabling them to fulfil parental responsibilities” (p.16). The strategy highlights the BIG Lottery investment that has enabled the Borough Council to employ 2 new Play Rangers from 2008 to 2010, provide new enhanced play sites, and actively engage young people aged 5 – 13 years through natural outdoor play, encouraging positive activities and behaviour.

Children and Young People’s Plan

The Bedfordshire Children & Young People’s Plan has a target to “develop new activities and facilities with young people” (see also Sustainable Communities Strategy, above), and identifies the work already undertaken in implementing District Play Strategies. The Plan is informed by a comprehensive consultation undertaken by the Children & Young People’s Involvement Network, in which children & young people identified “setting up free time activities” as one of their top priorities (particularly among the 13-15 age group).

Bedfordshire Obesity Strategy 2008-11

Bedford Borough has a higher proportion of 10-11 year old children (Year 6) who are obese (17.4%) than for the county (15.1%) and the East of England (16.3%).

Actions in the strategy include:

- “Improved access and encouragement to use outdoor play spaces” for birth to 4 years (p.42)
- “Increase awareness of the 1 hour a day physical activity message and range of activities that are available within the local community” for 4 to 11 years (p.44)

2.4 Strategic fit with Lottery Play projects

Both the Playbuilder proposals and the BIG Lottery play projects are based on Bedford Borough's play strategy, 'A Plan for Play' (see 2.2), the preparation of which involved an extensive audit and consultation. For the BIG Lottery portfolio, a number of rural parishes were selected (Great Barford, Colmworth, Bolnhurst and Keysoe, and Shortstown) where there was nothing (or very little) in terms of usable, accessible and equipped play space.

The aim of the BIG Lottery play projects is to provide "a safe place to be, where children are able to go freely without fear of crossing roads, local housing and the local community will provide informal supervision and a friendly face. Children will have somewhere local to go that is exciting and provides a wider range of opportunities for play by using both equipment and the local environment." These principles will be carried forward into the Playbuilder projects. We will also build on the engagement methodology employed for the BIG Lottery projects in developing the Playbuilder sites.

Going forward, the BIG Lottery and Playbuilder projects will be monitored alongside each other by the Play Partnership.

Part 2 Play sites to be developed

3. Needs analysis

A needs analysis was carried out for 'A Plan for Play' and the Greenspace strategy, looking particularly at quantity and geographical coverage; quality; and inclusivity. This analysis will form the initial basis of our selection of sites to take forward through this investment (see Chapter 4); although we will be carrying out further and ongoing needs analysis work (see 3.4).

3.1 Quantity and geographical coverage

Bedford Borough Council currently owns and maintains 81 play sites in Bedford and Kempston with facilities for toddlers, juniors and teens.

This generally breaks down into:

- Equipped space catering for the needs of children up to and around 12 years
- Informal recreation for, broadly, the 13 to 17 age group (might include skateboard parks, basketball courts and 'free access' Multi Use Games Areas or MUGAs)

In practice there will always be some overlap, as younger children use equipment aimed for older persons and vice versa.

As well as council sites there are play sites in the borough owned by other organisations. In the urban area 11 small play sites belong to Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association, whereas village play sites generally belong to the local Parish Council. In all areas, developers may have maintenance responsibilities for play facilities provided with new developments.

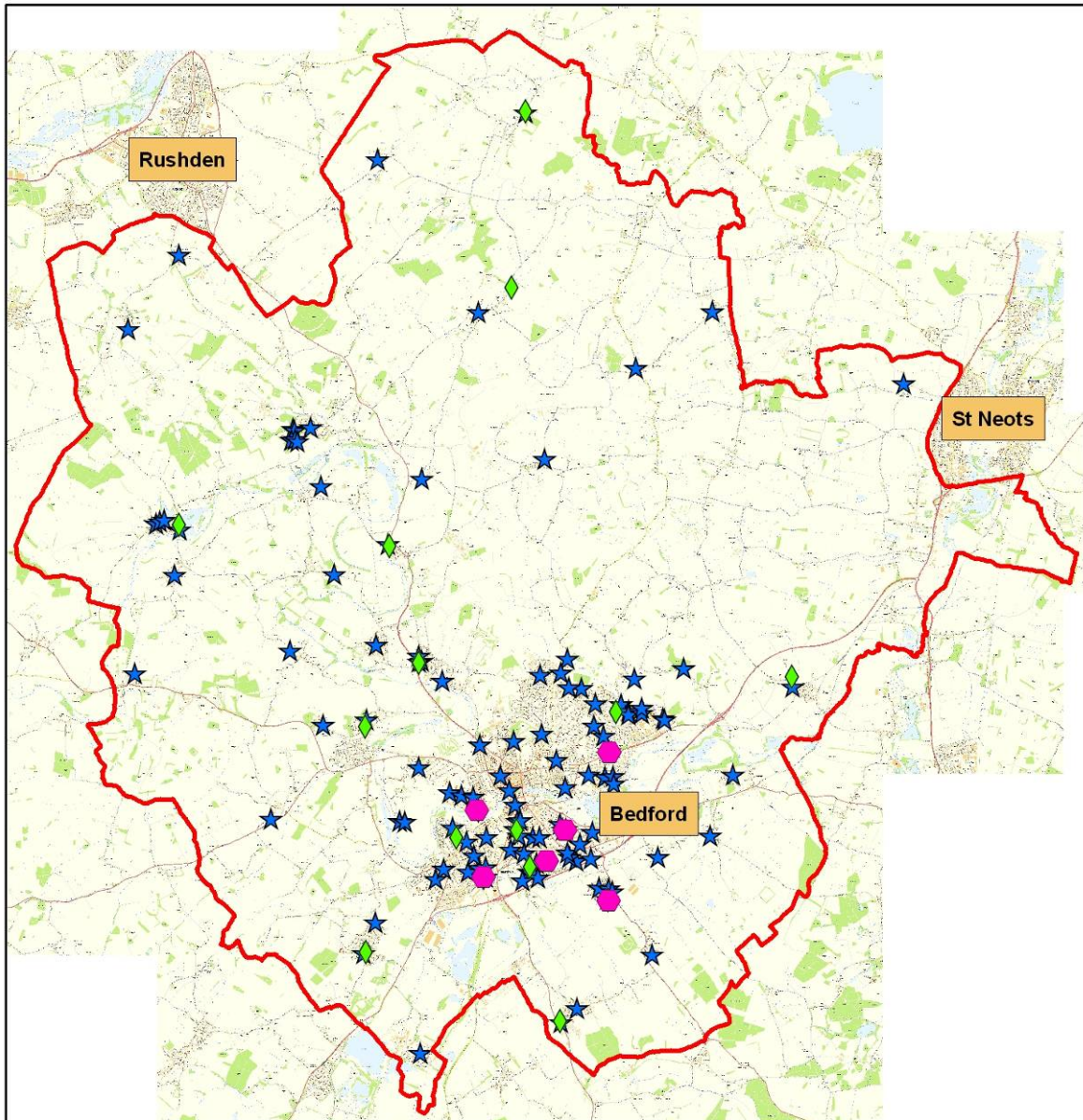
Bedford Borough Council's adopted standard for play provision is for all pre-teens to have a play site within 300 metres straight-line distance (5 minute walk time), and young people within 1000 metres straight-line distance (15 minute walk time).

Catchment mapping for fixed play sites was carried out as part of the PPG17 open/green space study (see Figs 1 and 2, overleaf). Applying the 300m standard, some urban wards are currently not as well provided for as others, including parts of Putnoe; Brickhill; Harpur; Castle; and Kingsbrook.

The Play Strategy also identifies a shortfall in provision in some of the rural areas of the borough. New and improved play facilities at Great Barford, Colmworth and Bolhurst and Keysoe, funded through the BIG Lottery, have started to address this shortfall, but further opportunities exist to strengthen play provision on rural sites in partnership with Parish Councils.




This analysis does not however paint the full picture, as some of the locations may not have formal equipped play sites, but have better access to open green space, particularly in rural areas. The Council has also created facilities or environments that could be used for natural play while not actually being promoted as play features (examples include leaving modified tree stems from felling work and a timber labyrinth at an urban country park).

Fig.1 Play Facilities in Bedford Borough



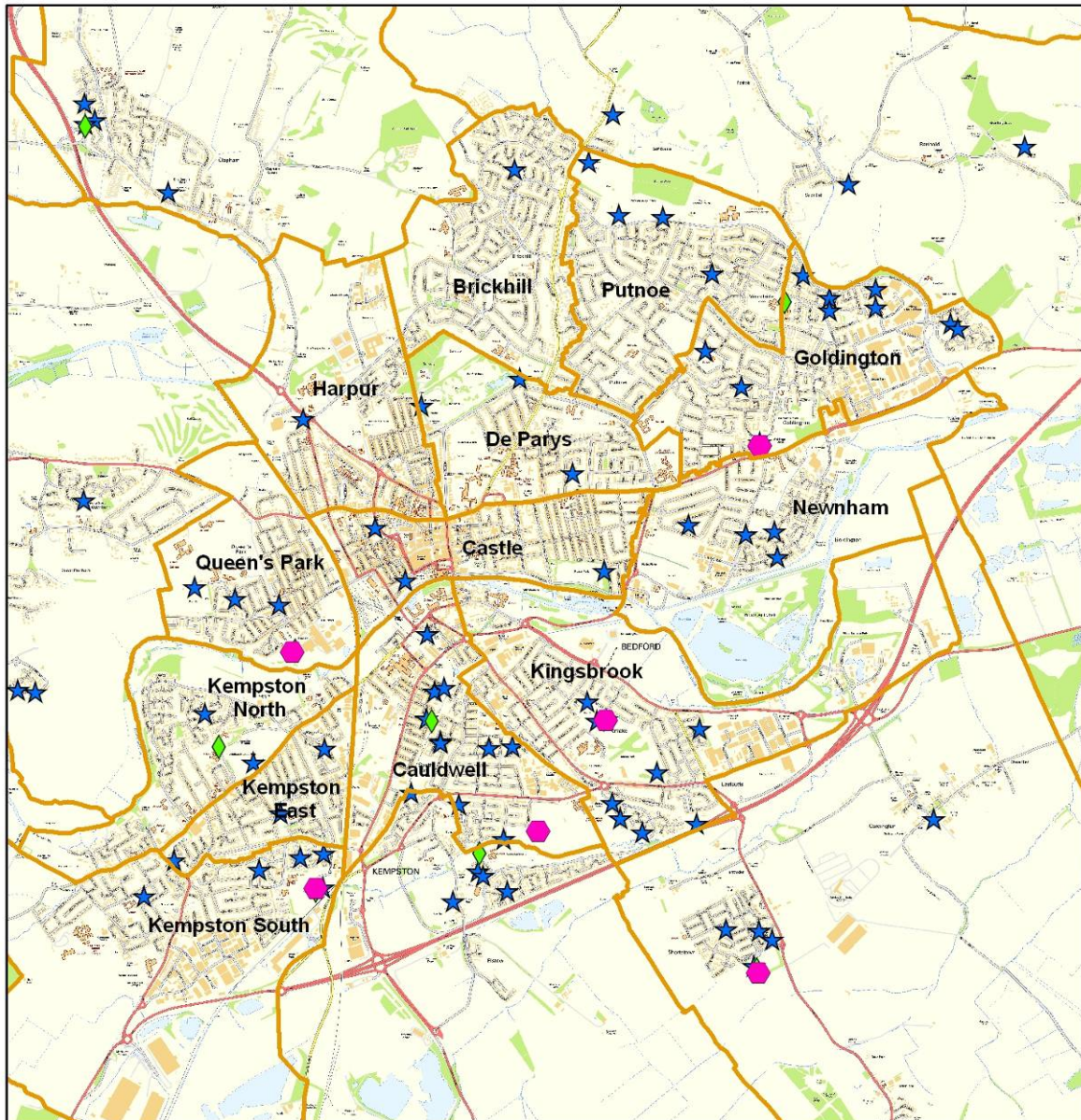
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Play Facilities in Bedford Borough

-  Skateboard Park
-  Multi-use Games Area
-  Play Area

The urban area is shown in larger scale in Fig.2 overleaf.

Fig.2 Distribution of Play Facilities in Bedford & Kempston (i.e. urban area only)



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Distribution of Play Facilities in Bedford & Kempston

-  Ward boundary
-  Skateboard Park
-  Multi-use Games Area
-  Play Area

3.2 Quality

While the number of play sites is important, we believe that most important is the 'play value' offered by each location. Bedford's play sites have been assessed for play value, which has indicated sites where new investment could increase the play benefits offered.

Another element of quality is the condition of facilities and equipment. Bedford's equipped play sites are generally in good condition. Where new facilities have been installed, they are 'play safe' and offer a range of equipment with good play value. Older equipment is in reasonable condition and well maintained. The quality and quality of related ancillary facilities such as seating and toilets varies across the range of play sites and where possible the Council seeks to improve them.

The Borough Council implements a 'Play Area Refurbishment Programme' for the sites it manages, which seeks to deliver improvements to the quality of play sites. The annual budget for this is £170,000 (07/08), covering play site inspection, routine and non-routine repairs, general maintenance and minor elements of replacement. Priorities include works to improve access for children of all abilities in line with ODPM guidance published in 2003 – 'Developing Accessible Play'.

By the end of the 2008/2009 financial year, all play sites will have received some qualitative improvement. However, some of the initial improvements are now in excess of 15 years old and require replacement.

3.3 Inclusivity

In 2005 the Borough Council invited parents, carers, special schools and others looking at the issues around the accessibility of play sites to be involved in deciding the best way to provide facilities for children of varying abilities. Since the limited availability of funding would not permit the refurbishment of all sites managed by the council to the same high standard of provision, the results of the consultation were used to inform priorities.

Three locations were chosen for investment at that time, giving a good geographical spread: Mowsbury Park, Bedford Park, and Addison Howard Park. Three other play sites were identified as having particular potential to make their equipment more inclusive: Goldington Green, Jubilee Park (South) and Miller Road. All sites were made more accessible, particularly through surfacing of paths and widening of gates to allow wheelchair access. There may still be improvements that can be made at some sites.

3.4 Further needs analysis

In the process of identifying our sites (see Chapter 4), we will carry out further needs analysis work looking at the following:

- Areas of deprivation where play provision could have greater social benefit
- Crime / anti-social behaviour 'hot spots'
- Capacity of existing sites relative to demand at busy times
- Potential to enhance open green spaces without facilities for natural play purposes
- The quality and condition of ancillary facilities, e.g. toilets, parking
- Ability of the surrounding infrastructure to cope with an influx of people

This will inform our identification of later Playbuilder sites, ensuring that we are maximising the value of our investment.

4. Identification of sites

4.1 Overall approach

The delivery of 22 new or improved play sites by the end of March 2011 will be challenging. For this reason we will depend on sites that can be brought forward without major impediment to delivery, such as the need to assemble and secure land.

Therefore we propose to focus primarily on improvements to existing play sites and open spaces where ownership and planning issues should not adversely impact on the delivery of schemes. In practice, most of the sites selected for investment will already be in Borough Council ownership, although some may belong to parish councils (see below). This approach will also build in a degree of sustainability for the sites in terms of maintenance, as some revenue provision will already be available.

Specific sites for investment will always be approved by elected members.

4.2 Initial sites

We have already started work on identifying 8 to 10 sites in the urban area of the borough, based principally on our initial needs analysis as follows:

- Geographical coverage: to ensure that the 300m and 1000m standards are met as far as possible
- Quality: with existing sites, to prioritise those in most need of redevelopment
- Inclusivity: to prioritise sites that are most accessible to all children & young people

The first six sites to be proposed will be drawn from this shortlist, and will be approved by members within the next few months. The others could all be brought forward in the first year (2009-10), if this is necessary to meet our implementation targets in the early part of the programme (see chapter 5).

4.3 Later sites

During Year 1, we will identify the 12 to 14 sites for inclusion in later phases, starting in autumn 2009. We will provide a robust rationale for our selection of sites by balancing a number of considerations:

- The initial needs analysis, and wider needs analysis outlined in 3.4
- What local communities have told us (see 7.2)
- Our own local knowledge built up by our officers, rangers and partners

We are also committed to developing, with a third sector organisation, a public play area site targeted particularly at children on the autistic spectrum, which can be integrated within a play landscape providing for children of all abilities. Discussions have already commenced, and, subject to receiving approval for the wave 2 funding, we would aim to implement the scheme in Year 2.

In the rural areas of the borough, we propose to identify sites with Parish Councils, who would also take on board the ongoing maintenance. This is a model that has been successfully rolled out as part of our BIG Lottery Play Bid, and will be extended to bring in further Parish Councils at the earliest possible stage. While we would expect these sites to be delivered in Year 2, some Parish Councils may well have proposals that are sufficiently far advanced to be included in the year 1 delivery programme, e.g. opportunities identified in parish plans.

5. Milestones, targets and timeline

5.1 Project milestones

All play sites will be developed and designed in accordance with Play England's Design for Play Guide, in particular its 10 design principles for successful play spaces.

Each project will undergo a series of four timetabled project milestones, based on Play England's design cycle:

Milestone	Commentary	Timetable
Engage	Interactive meetings to determine the design principles for the play site, to be incorporated into design brief. Local community champion(s) to be identified if possible. (See Chapter 5 for more information).	Months 1 & 2
Design & Tender	Collaborative design process with local children & young people and members of the wider community, leading to creation of design brief. Designs and contract management will be carried out by our specialist in-house design team. Designs will be approved by the project steering group and contractors will be invited to tender for the construction of the works. The steering group will recommend the contract. The tender process and assessment of submissions shall take approximately 6 weeks.	Months 3 to 6
Construct	To include all pre site work.	Months 7 to 9
Launch & Evaluate	Date of opening event to be identified well in advance with appropriate engagement/involvement of Ministers, MPs, Elected members and children. Project debrief and evaluation, to cover all aspects of project delivery in addition to project outcomes.	Months 10 & 11

Our approach is described in more detail in part 3.

5.2 Indicative timeline

We will batch sites together into four phases across the two years of the programme, in order to create economies of scale for management and tendering purposes. We have timetabled construction of sites to avoid the wet and cold months of January and February.

Phase / Sites	Year 1: 2009/10												Year 2: 2010/11											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Phase 1: sites 1 to 6	Engage		Design & Tender			Construct				Launch & Evaluate														
Phase 2: sites 7 to 10		<i>(Sites to be identified)</i>				Engage		Design & Tender			Construct		Launch & Evaluate											
Phase 3: sites 11 to 16		<i>(Sites to be identified)</i>							Engage		Design & Tender			Construct		Launch & Evaluate								
Phase 4: sites 17 to 22		<i>(Sites to be identified)</i>									Engage		Design & Tender			Construct			Launch & Evaluate					

5.3 Milestone targets

This shows (on a cumulative, quarterly basis) how we will reach our total of 22 sites over the two-year period.

Milestone complete	Year 1: 2009/10				Year 2: 2010/11			
	Q1 Apr-Jun	Q2 Jul-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-Mar	Q1 Apr-Jun	Q2 Jul-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-Mar
Engage	6 sites		10 sites	16 sites	22 sites			
Procure		6 sites	10 sites		16 sites	22 sites		
Design & Tender			6 sites	10 sites		16 sites	22 sites	
Construct				6 sites	10 sites		16 sites	22 sites
Launch & Evaluate				6 sites		10 sites	16 sites	22 sites

Part 3 Our approach to play development

“A successful play space is a place in its own right, specially designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible.”

Design for Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces, Play England 2008.

6. Innovation

If we are to achieve a step-change in play provision, we must innovate to deliver significant improvements on what is currently in place, learning the lessons of our own past experiences as well as good practice from elsewhere. We will pursue innovation as a cross-cutting principle in all our play site project development work, from stakeholder engagement and design to construction and launch stages. Our approach will involve a number of elements as outlined below.

6.1 Design-led approach

Each site will be subject to a creative approach involving designers and/or landscape architects from the outset. This will involve taking a holistic view of each play site, maximising the use of its existing natural assets and integrating the facilities within the wider public realm.

6.2 User involvement

Our experience shows that engaging communities in play site design produces the most innovative results (see Offa Road case study, overleaf). Our collaborative design process will combine the insights and expertise of our professional team with the real needs and creativity of our children & young people, as well as the views of parents and carers. This will avoid a ‘lowest common denominator’ approach in favour of more inspiring facilities which have the buy-in of users from the outset. (See Chapter 7 for more information on engagement.)

6.3 Risk-benefit analysis

Our approach is based on the management, rather than total elimination, of risk. This is because we believe that enabling children and young people to take ‘reasonable’ risk provides for more challenging and creative play, through which they will also learn to ensure their own safety. The use of risk-benefit analysis will enable us to design facilities which might otherwise have been ruled out under a more restrictive approach. (Please see Chapter 9 for more information on how we will employ this approach).

6.4 Cross-fertilisation

Our enhanced working across service departments (see 11.2), and public and voluntary & community sectors, will itself deliver innovation, as insights from different fields are harnessed to address common issues, and more demands are placed upon play provision to contribute to a range of community priorities.

Innovation and engagement case study: Offa Road play area, Cauldwell, Bedford

In November 2008, a multi-agency meeting was held to address issues of drug dealing, criminal damage, arson, and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the Offa Road play area site. There was a view in the community that the area was not sufficiently patrolled; one resident in particular had constant problems and no longer reported to the police for fear of reprisals. It was agreed to consult local young people about redeveloping the site.

In December, Bedford Design Group carried out a consultation with young people from Cauldwell and Kingsbrook. They were very motivated to redevelop the play area and opted for the completion of an all weather ball court with floodlighting, a replacement youth shelter, dynamic play equipment, public art and environmental improvements. Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association worked with the young people to access funding totalling £108,000 from the Borough Council and County Council Youth Bank.

The Communication Plan included a notice board on site, advisory leaflets to local residents and an article in the Bedford News to all residents in the Borough as a positive activity by young people to curb incidents of ASB.

The final plan has been signed off by the young people and will be delivered by April 2009. It includes play facilities that are open access and safe, while minimising noise or disturbance to local residents.

7. Engagement

“Through children and communities’ involvement in the design and planning of these spaces, play areas will be valued locally and continue to reflect the distinct needs of each community.” National Play Strategy

7.1 Community engagement in Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough Council has been committed for many years to engaging its communities, which, when it comes to play provision, have already had significant influence on the planning, design and implementation of services. The Play Strategy was written with the active involvement of children & young people; during consultation the Play Partnership took care to ensure that all work carried out represented the views of children & young people themselves rather than being influenced by adult direction. The views of local adults, including parents and carers, were also taken into consideration.

From April 2009, the new unitary authority and its partners will reaffirm their overall commitment to community engagement, not least by adding National Indicator 4 (% of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality) to the Local Area Agreement, in addition to National Indicator 3 (increasing civic participation) which is to be carried over from the Bedfordshire LAA. Bedford Borough Council has expressed its interest in being a Taking Part Pathfinder area (joint with Central Bedfordshire), which would see it develop new ways of engaging people as active citizens in the area. This would involve a comprehensive engagement strategy across all strategic partners and service areas.

7.2 Engaging local communities in Playbuilder

We will engage local communities in identifying the later sites for investment (see Chapter 4), capitalising on our existing community links developed through the Play Strategy consultation, as well as our ongoing engagement through Park and Play Rangers.

On the level of individual play site developments, we will adopt the following methodology for engaging the local community, from the initial engagement through to ongoing engagement after the opening of the site. This will be tailored to each site as part of the detailed project planning (see 11.5). Engagement will generally be driven on the ground by Bedford Borough Council’s Street Rangers, Park Rangers and/or Play Rangers as appropriate, in collaboration with local VCS organisations. We will also seek to involve elected members in their emerging role as community champions.

Initial engagement

The first milestone for each project is Engage, which will involve interactive meetings with local children, young people and adults to determine the overall design principles for the play site. We will aim to identify one or more local community champions for each play site (or group of sites) from these participants, who would help to monitor delivery and liaise with local people. This stage will have reference to stakeholder engagement models such as CABE’s Spaceshaper Toolkit and ‘What Would You Do With This Space?’ guide, and Play England’s Neighbourhood Play Toolkit, as appropriate.

Collaborative design

We will take a collaborative approach to the design stage, so that we incorporate the creative ideas of young people and adults as well as meeting their needs – this is likely to increase the buy-in of local young people from the start. This stage will be led by Bedford Borough Council's specialist in-house design team, which will also contact other professionals (e.g. creative artists) as required to guarantee an innovative approach.

Ongoing engagement

For each play site, some mechanism for ongoing engagement will be developed, linked to Bedford Borough Council's teams of Street & Park Rangers, who already offer a range of free activities on a local street basis encouraging young people to participate and take ownership of their local area and reduce anti-social behaviour. There is potential here to expand the existing Junior Park Ranger Scheme, which works in conjunction with Park Rangers to help children tackle the environmental issues caused by anti-social behaviour.

Hard to reach groups

We will make specific efforts to target hard to reach groups who are often less well represented in engagement exercises, such as older teenagers, disabled children and black & minority ethnic communities. This will include organising structured activities on site to appeal to each target group – for example street dance to attract girls, who tend to use play sites less. We will use existing mechanisms as far as possible, for example the engagement network and Safer Neighbourhood areas. We will ensure that disabled children are directly involved in the design of play sites (see 8.2).

7.3 Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) involvement

VCS involvement is integral to this project on two main levels:

Governance & management

A number of VCS organisations are represented on the North Beds Play Partnership. This includes the two leading Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIO) for the sector (Mid & North Beds CVS and BRCC), and the Voluntary Organisations Consortium (VOC – the specialist LIO for VCS organisations working with children & young people). The VCS is also well represented within the overall Bedford Partnership Board structure.

Engagement and collaborative design

We will work with specific interest groups to address particular needs. For example, Autism Bedfordshire is represented on the Play Partnership, and we will seek their advice and involvement concerning how best to make play facilities accessible to children with autism (see also 8.1).

8. Access and inclusivity

8.1 An inclusive approach

Two of the aims of 'A Plan for Play' are as follows:

- "Increase access and decrease barriers to enjoyable experiences in play and recreational opportunities for all children & young people throughout urban & rural areas within the Borough of Bedford"
- "Make play opportunities equally accessible to those experiencing disadvantage by involving, engaging and raising the confidence of children & young people and encouraging increased participation"

Increasing accessibility for all children and young people is thus key to our approach. The starting-point is that all sites developed through the Playbuilder investment will offer open access, with all children free to come and go at all times, free of charge.

In order to maximise the benefits of our Playbuilder investment, we need to go further by focusing on increasing access to two groups that use play sites less than others: girls and minority ethnic groups. Through our engagement and collaborative design activities we will ensure that the specific needs and barriers of these groups are addressed.

Another element of our inclusive approach is that we will aim to meet the needs of all groups across the range of sites, particularly in the urban area where people can access a number of sites on foot or by public transport. In other words, since it is not realistic for every site to address every need, we will differentiate sites to maximise their appeal to different groups.

One example of this is that children on the autistic spectrum have specific needs, particularly for enclosed spaces where they can feel safe and be easily supervised. Enclosed spaces have their drawbacks and we would not develop all of our sites in this way; however, we would seek to make a proportion of our sites 'autism-friendly', and communicate this through groups such as Autism Bedfordshire.

8.2 Improved access for disabled children

Bedford Borough Council believes that successful play spaces should, as far as is reasonably possible, offer the same quality and extent of play experience to disabled children and young people as is available to those who are not disabled, whilst accepting that not all equipment can be completely accessible to everyone.

This is principally about ensuring that our play sites are designed in a way to be appealing and accessible to a range of different needs and abilities. We will follow the principles of inclusive design established by the Disability Rights Commission, as set out in 'Inclusion by Design' (Goodridge, ed. Douch, 2008). As outlined in 7.1, we will engage disabled children in the planning and design of sites, in partnership with organisations such as Autism Bedfordshire and Bedford Mencap, to ensure that their views, needs and ideas are fully incorporated.

Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Break Transformation Programme

Bedford Borough Council is receiving £723,103 revenue and £274,520 capital funding over 2009-11 towards the transformation of short break services for disabled children in the borough. The new and redeveloped play sites will be a key way of providing excellent play opportunities for disabled children while offering respite to parents and carers. These breaks have been identified as the highest priority service for families with disabled children.

As part of the consultation for this Programme, in January 2009 a range of children across the borough were asked about access to play and open space. Responses can be summarised as follows:

- More parks / more places to play in parks
- Better play areas / parks
- Chill-out zones and seats in parks / different 'zones' for each age group
- Better lighting near parks
- Stop vandalism / graffiti / litter / ASB / gangs hanging around
- Sports facilities, e.g. football pitch, wrestling ring, skate parks, tennis courts
- More wildlife areas (e.g. ducks and swans) / flowers / bushes
- More car parking places near to parks and fields
- More play schemes for all ages
- Better ramps / lower kerbs to and from parks for wheelchairs

Through the engagement of disabled children in design, we will ensure that our sites are suitable as destinations for short breaks, by offering a range of inclusive and accessible facilities and opportunities for natural play.

8.3 Safe access to sites

We will use our Playbuilder investment to ensure that as many children and young people as possible across the borough have easy access to high-quality play provision. This means that they (and their parents, for younger children) must be able to get to play spaces safely by foot and bicycle; and to have confidence that this is the case. We can apply lessons here from 'Safe Routes to Schools' and 'Bike It' projects delivered by Sustrans within the Borough.

We will conduct an access audit for each site to check that the following are in place:

- Pedestrian and cycle crossing points over roads that have to be crossed to access the site
- Links to nearby walkways and cycle routes
- Sufficient lighting and signposting
- Sufficiently wide, clear pavements en route to the site
- Good quality, secure cycle parking

We will consult officers in traffic planning, engineering, road safety and school travel at an early stage in order to ensure feasibility and link into strategies and works programmes (see chapter 11). Our engagement of children and young people (see Chapter 7) will include identifying the routes they take to access sites, as well as any safety fears and other barriers to walking, cycling or taking the bus.

In areas where road safety is a specific community concern, we will seek to restrict traffic speed to 20mph and below in and around play sites, and to implement traffic-calming measures where resources allow. The Police will be engaged in the Playbuilder project and will be able to advise on further enforcement procedures.

Access to greenspace case study: Bedford Green Wheel

The Green Wheel initiative will build upon the existing network of cycleways and paths and improve traffic free access to urban greenspaces across Bedford and Kempston. Based on a 'green M25' around the urban edge the Wheel will seek to enhance recreational, conservation and heritage potential where possible. It will necessitate a phased delivery programme using a range of funding sources but some of the early implementation will build upon the existing network to significantly improve safe and enjoyable access to greenspaces and play sites. The emerging Local Development Framework provides policy support for the delivery of the Green Wheel. Further information including a preliminary map is available at www.bedfordgreenwheel.org.uk

9. Safety

9.1 Designing for safety

Children & young people have arguably become over-protected in recent years, with a negative impact on their ability to manage their own risk. Play provision has been particularly susceptible to this, with fear of litigation leading to play providers removing most forms of risk from play sites, where accidents are actually far less frequent than with other forms of physical activity such as sports.

There is evidence that if play provision is not challenging enough, children will seek out risks elsewhere, in environments that are not controlled or designed for them. This is particularly relevant to the 8-13 and 13-18 age groups, which are less likely to be under parental supervision, and will crave greater physical challenges than younger children.

Our aim, as expressed in 'A Plan for Play', is to "offer and provide more children & young people with stimulating and challenging environments that include acceptable risk".

In designing play spaces, we will adopt the risk-benefit assessment approach advocated by Play England², which considers the benefits to children as well as the risks. The approach allows us to find the right level of risk, providing challenge whilst offering protection from unacceptable harm, and will satisfy the legal requirement for a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment. Our collaborative design process will enable users to be involved in assessing their own risks.

A risk-benefit judgement is formed by balancing the following assessments:

Assessment of benefit

This would be in the widest sense: the direct play benefits for children and young people, such as physical and mental well-being, fun, social interaction and learning; and the more indirect benefits for others such as strengthening communities, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, and support for parents and carers. The benefits are likely to be higher if play opportunities are made as attractive as possible to the widest possible group of people.

Assessment of risk

Risks can be divided into 'good' risks (which challenge children without danger of serious harm) and 'bad' risks (which have no obvious benefits, and should be removed as far as possible). These risks will be assessed by our own experts at design stage, using industry standards as guidance where relevant. (Strict compliance is not necessary where benefits outweigh the risks, and we will not avoid play features on the basis that they are not explicitly described in the standards.) A range of local factors will be considered in each case, concerning the characteristics of the site and the likely users.

Options for managing the risk will also be assessed, on the basis of their advantages and drawbacks. Depending on the nature of the risk, these might include doing nothing; monitoring; mitigation; or removal.

The risk-benefit assessment will be reviewed regularly as part of the Borough Council's inspection regime, involving checks by qualified staff and annual inspection by an external safety organisation.

² This approach is described in detail in *Managing Risk in Play Provision*, Play England 2008

9.2 Crime and anti-social behaviour

One of the many objectives for investing in play sites is to provide a diversion from criminal and anti-social behaviour among young people. However, if left unchecked, play sites can themselves become the focus of this behaviour (see Offa Road case study). As well as being a problem in its own right, this can put off children, young people and their families from using play sites, or, worse, lead to physical or psychological harm.

We will consider the potential for crime and ASB within our risk-benefit assessment for each site, in consultation with the Police and our Rangers. Our approach to avoiding these issues will be as follows:

- Engaging children & young people in the design of each space (see Chapter 7), which has been shown to reduce vandalism and other criminal behaviour on site
- Providing adequate management, supervision and maintenance of each area
- Liaising with neighbourhood police officers and community representatives, for example through Community Safety Fora, to address and tackle issues as they arise

With regards to the last point, it is important that we develop a shared understanding with professionals and residents alike of the nature of unstructured play and the need for children and young people to be able to take risks, so that supervision is appropriate and does not reduce the benefits of play.

9.3 Increasing parental and child confidence

In order to attract higher numbers of children and young people to the borough's play sites, we must increase the confidence of both parents and children that they are safe and can be accessed safely.

Some of this is about awareness and public information. We will ensure that play is built into any safety awareness campaigns targeted at families, and also that the safety message is put out in our publicity for the new play sites.

Confidence will also be developed through our community engagement (Chapter 7), as parents and children will be able to see their views incorporated and fears addressed in the development of play sites. This will be continued through the ongoing engagement by our Ranger service. Developing relationships will build trust, which should further flourish through word-of-mouth within communities.

The physical environment gives out a clear message: clean, well maintained roads and pavements en route to sites will create a more welcoming environment, as well as satisfactory maintenance of the play facilities themselves.

Finally, nothing will increase confidence so much as parents and children having good experiences of the play facilities and surrounding environment each time they visit. As well as ensuring that design and maintenance are of a high quality, we will ensure appropriate supervision where required (whether through Rangers or volunteers) that enables the needs of all users to co-exist as far as possible.

10. Sustainability

10.1 Financial sustainability

The Playbuilder investment offers a one-off opportunity to make a significant improvement to the accessibility of high-quality play opportunities across the Borough. Making the most of the investment over the long-term involves ensuring that our plans are financially sustainable.

The Borough Council has built a good reputation for its effective use of resources, and as it becomes a unitary authority it has been able to keep its council tax increase for 2009/10 below 1%. It is vital that we improve our play offer without taking on an unsustainable expansion of either our inspection regime or refurbishment programme. This will be achieved as follows:

- Focusing primarily on redeveloping existing sites that are already part of our inspection regime
- Designing play features and equipment that are hard-wearing, long-lasting and require little maintenance whilst still being relevant to children's needs
- Developing sites within the control of parish councils, housing associations and other organisations, who would take on the maintenance responsibilities
- Selecting sites where possible that are well used and overlooked at all times, reducing the likelihood of vandalism
- Engaging local young people in the design and maintenance of the facilities (see chapter 8)
- Considering how current maintenance systems could be reviewed, including an investigation into the possibility of maintaining new sites within the current revenue budget.

These sustainability issues will be a key consideration at the beginning of the planning for each site, so that a tailored approach can be taken in each case.

As we take over the assets and functions of Bedfordshire County Council within the Borough area, we should also be able to integrate play ever more closely within the wider management of the public realm, and develop the play potential of other capital assets.

10.2 Environmental sustainability

The council has adopted a Sustainable Development Action plan that sets out a number of objectives and actions relating to the sustainable management of relevant assets such as parks and open spaces. Within this context, we will minimise and mitigate the environmental impact of our play developments as follows:

Potential impact	How addressed
Increased congestion and/or carbon emissions incurred by increased car use to access sites	Assess whether sites could benefit from non-vehicular transport links in the vicinity. Integrate with Bedford Green Wheel proposals
Increased carbon emissions/waste incurred by sourcing/transport/disposal of materials and equipment	Consider whole life environmental impact of materials – sourcing, manufacture, maintenance, disposal/reuse. Design brief to specify use of easily recycled materials and waste plan for the removal of obsolete equipment and surfacing with the objective to reuse or recycle as far as possible. Toxic materials to be avoided. Use locally produced materials and local suppliers where appropriate, in order to reduce transport.
Increased carbon emissions incurred by refurbishment/construction/maintenance	Minimisation of energy and water use during construction/refurbishment and ongoing management of the play space. All suppliers appointed must have environmental policies and accreditation.
Impact on wildlife and biodiversity	Conservation, and ideally enhancement, of wildlife habitats in and around the play space
Visual impact of play features and equipment	All new features and equipment to be designed in sympathy with the surrounding environment. Green spaces to be promoted as places for play.
Increased noise for local residents due to new sites, or increased use of existing sites	Focus primarily on existing sites. Consider acoustics in design of the space.

11. Governance and management arrangements

11.1 Governance

"[Improving play provision through Playbuilder] will require a strategic approach to play across the local area, with the full involvement of children, local communities and the third sector in decision-making. Delivering excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children will require working closely with the broader Local Strategic Partnership on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space, in order to promote communities that are more child-friendly."

Statutory Guidance on Children's Trusts, DCSF, 2008

Bedford Partnership Board

As the Local Strategic Partnership for Bedford, the Board has overall responsibility for delivering the Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Area Agreement. From April 2009 it will have seven thematic partnerships as outlined in Fig.1 overleaf.

Bedford Children's Trust

A Children's Trust for Bedford Borough will be created during 2009/10. Once operational, it will oversee the delivery of the play strategy through the North Bedfordshire Play Partnership (see below), in order to ensure the full contribution of play to the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. Up to that point, that role will be taken by its precursor: the Children & Young People thematic partnership.

North Bedfordshire Play Partnership (NBPP)

NBPP created Bedford Borough's play strategy, and now monitors its delivery. It has a membership of 16 individuals representing Bedford Borough Council, Bedfordshire County Council (until April 2009), Parish Councils, and the voluntary and community sector (including disability groups). Through its membership, the Partnership feeds into a further 39 multi-agency meetings.

In April 2009, the membership of the Partnership will be refreshed in order to include a wider range of stakeholders. The organisations represented will be as follows:

Bedford Borough Council (see 11.2)

NHS Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire Police

Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils

Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association

Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (incorporating Bedfordshire Playing Fields Association)

Mid & North Beds CVS

Bedford Mencap

Autism Bedfordshire

Team Beds & Luton

Voluntary Organisations Consortium for Children & Young People

Bedford Borough Council

Bedford Borough Council will be a unitary authority from April 1 2009, and will take on Bedfordshire County Council's functions within the borough.

The Council is the accountable body for the Bedford Partnership Board, and, as part of this function, will have ultimate responsibility for delivering the play strategy. It also has direct responsibility for the delivery of the Playbuilder project. As the transition to unitary status nears completion, we will identify the most appropriate department to take on this responsibility – this will be either Environment & Street Services or Children's Services, with the other department playing a supporting role.

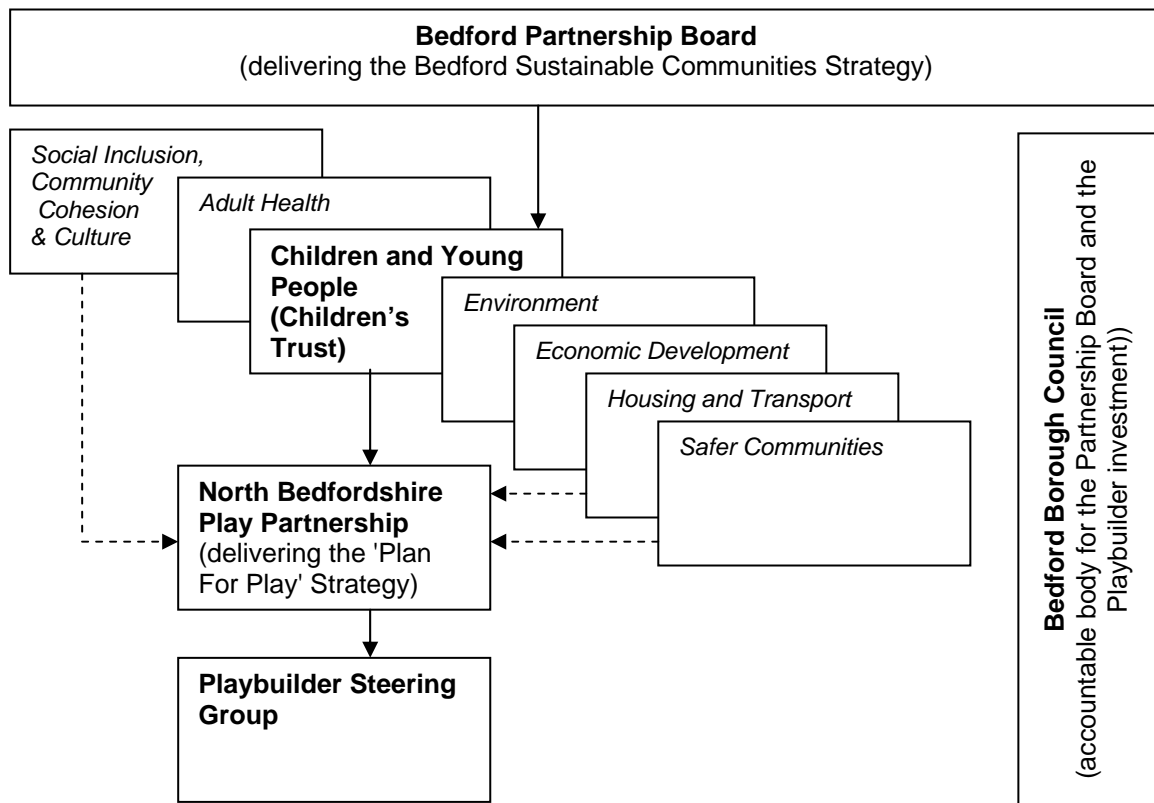
The main decision-making body of the Council is the Executive, consisting of the elected Mayor of Bedford (Frank Branston) and a cabinet of councillors appointed by him. The Executive will be the body that authorises capital expenditure under the Playbuilder project, in line with its capital expenditure procedures.

There are two Executive Committee Member Portfolio Holders relevant to play, currently these are:

Cllr Pat Olney (Arts, Leisure & Culture)
 Cllr Margaret Davey (Community Safety)

The Executives have responsibility for implementing the Council's key policies and strategies dealing with play and outdoor space. The Community and Culture PRD committee acts as critical friend to the Executive in respect of the delivery of the North Beds Community Safety Strategy and the Plan for Play strategy.

Fig.1 Playbuilder governance structure



11.2 Working across service departments

While play will be the overall responsibility of one department within the new authority, it must also have a high profile in other service areas such as planning, environment and sports/leisure. The Play Partnership will provide the key mechanism for ensuring cross-departmental working for play within the new authority. Service areas represented on the Partnership will include the following:

- Children's Services (including Early Years / Children's Centres, Extended Schools, Youth Service)
- Environment & Street Services (including Countryside Access / Greenspace / Parks; Transport; Sports Development; Planning; Health & Safety)
- Finance & Resources (Finance, Procurement)
- Access
- In-house design team

In terms of the delivery of this project, cross-departmental will be achieved through the project steering group (see 11.3). All relevant departments and officers will be issued with this project plan and actively engaged by the Project Manager from the start, so that issues can be addressed at the appropriate stage.

11.3 Project management

This project will be overseen on an operational level by a steering group, meeting every two months to assess progress on all projects and work through any matters arising.

The steering group will report to the North Beds Play Partnership and will comprise:

- Senior Responsible Officer
- Project Manager
- Landscape Architect
- Maintenance Officer
- North Beds Play Partnership representatives x 2
- Community champion(s)
- Play England representative

Representatives from Planning, Procurement, Finance, and Health and Safety will also be invited to attend meetings where required.

The steering group's principal responsibilities will be as follows:

- Monitoring of the overall Playbuilder project to ensure that it meets its objectives
- Approval of design briefs, final designs and other key project documents
- Delegated responsibility for the authorisation of project expenditure agreed by the Executive, in line with the project plan and the Council's financial controls
- Authorisation of changes to individual project plans, including premature closure or extensions on deadlines or budget

11.4 Staffing

The Playbuilder project will be delivered by a part-time Project Manager on a fixed-term contract from 2009-11, paid for by the revenue funding of £45,000.

The Project Manager will report to the Senior Responsible Officer for this project: provisionally the Greenspace Manager. This person will champion the project within the authority and take responsibility for its successful delivery on behalf of Bedford Borough Council, including the chairing of the steering group.

The Project Manager will manage the delivery of the Playbuilder project on a day-to-day basis. Specific responsibilities will include the following:

- Review, update and monitor progress against this Playbuilder project plan
- Lead on implementation of the project plan for each site, from community engagement through to completion
- Identify and manage risks, and take action where necessary, in order to ensure successful completion on time and on budget
- Act as main point of contact with key stakeholders, e.g. Play England and DCSF
- Produce and manage Communications Plan
- Provide regular reports to the project steering group, and maintain project history for audit purposes
- Ensure that evaluation is carried out effectively

11.5 Site development and design process

In developing each site, we will use the following checklist, which can be further developed for each site as part of the design and consultation:

- Community / VCS Engagement plan
- Needs analysis
- Design approach
- Access / inclusivity
- Safety / risk-benefit assessment
- Sustainability
- Site history / surveys
- Links with wider strategic approach for the neighbourhood (e.g. environment, leisure, planning, transport and housing)
- Any planning or ownership issues

12. Risk analysis

We have identified the following principal risks to delivery of the programme:

Description of risk	Impact	Probability
Projects exceed budget allocations and Playbuilder programme is calculated to overspend	High	Low
Failure to adhere to project budget or project management procedures & schedules	High	Medium
Projects do not fulfil public expectations	High	Low
Loss of project manager (PM) at critical stage of DCSF Playbuilder Programme delivery.	Medium	Low
Failure to gain buy-in across service departments and strategic partners	Medium	Low

Measures to manage these risks will be developed once the project management structure for Playbuilder is in place.

13. Evaluation & sharing of best practice

13.1 Evaluation

Individual Project Evaluation

The development of each individual play site will be evaluated at the Launch & Evaluate stage at the end of the process. This will review and debrief the process of developing the play site at each stage, and identify lessons to be applied in future as well as good practice to be replicated and disseminated. In order to inform this we will gather quantitative and qualitative data throughout each project relevant to community engagement and involvement, design and innovation, partnership working, tendering and construction, and the project launch.

Overall Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is already central to the delivery of 'A Plan for Play', with update reports being given every 6 months to the NBPP. The consultation and audit work undertaken in the preparation of the strategy helped to set a baseline for play that will assist the assessment of improvements in play provision through this Playbuilder project.

The Playbuilder project will contribute to the 6 performance indicators identified in 'A Plan for Play':

1. Number of sites where access to play opportunities for children and young people has been improved.
2. The number of children and young people involved in helping to develop local play guidance and play standards.
3. Number of natural environment areas where play is encouraged.
4. Number of partners engaged with the NBPP Partnership report
5. Number of play sites that provide equipment accessible to children of all abilities.
6. The % of children and young people that have access to at least three different types of space or facility, within the distances set out in the borough council recommended access standards, at least one of which is a dedicated place for informal recreation

From 2009/10, the Council will have to report on the new indicator, NI 199: Children and young people's satisfaction with parks and play areas, which will enable us to measure overall satisfaction levels as well as those for individual play sites. We have already developed a satisfaction measurement tool through 'A Plan for Play', with the baseline being set in summer 2008.

Our Evaluation Plan for the Playbuilder investment is as follows:

Indicator	Data gathering method	Timeframe/Frequency
Number of children using the play facilities and time spent (broken down by gender, ethnicity, age and disability)	Play consultation with children and young people	Annual
	Observation by Rangers as part of feedback reports	Annual
Children and young people's satisfaction levels with play areas (LAA NI 199)	Play consultation with children and young people	Annual
Parental satisfaction levels with play areas	Play consultation with parents	Annual
Play value and accessibility of play sites	Independent assessment by external evaluators	December 2011

In addition to the above, consultation with children and young people will continue to be fed back to the NBPP from a range of existing sources including Street & Park Rangers, Youth Forums, Access Group, Junior Park Rangers, Community Safety Forums, VCS organisations, and Parish and Community Councils.

13.2 Sharing of best practice

We will share best practice identified through the above evaluation process through active representation at regional events organised by Play England, such as the regional play conference, as well as submitting articles or case studies for inclusion in its email newsletter, Play in the East of England.

14. Financial forecast (indicative)

14.1 Year 1: 2009-10

Phase / sites	Work delivered in 2009-10	Forecast expenditure	
		Capital	Revenue
Phase 1: sites 1 to 6	Engagement through to construction	£275,000	£22,500
Phase 2: sites 7 to 10	Engagement to start of construction	£100,000	
Phase 3: sites 11 to 16	Engagement only	£0	
Totals		£375,000	£22,500

14.2 Year 2: 2010-11

Phase / sites	Work delivered in 2010-11	Forecast expenditure	
		Capital	Revenue
Phase 2: sites 7 to 10	Finish construction	£100,000	£22,500
Phase 3: sites 11 to 16	Design & tender through to construction	£275,000	
Phase 4: sites 17 to 22	Engagement through to construction	£275,000	
Totals		£650,000	