

Armagh City, Banbridge &
Craigavon Borough Council

Local Development Plan 2035

Draft Plan Strategy

TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT 7

Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

September 2026



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Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council

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¹ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

² Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of this document

This Technical Supplement brings together the evidence base that has informed the preparation of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035 draft Plan Strategy (dPS). It is one of a suite of topic based Technical Supplements that should be read alongside the dPS to understand the rationale and justification for the planning policies proposed within it.

This Technical Supplement includes key updates relating to open space, sport and outdoor recreation in the Borough, which have emerged since the publication of the Council's original evidence base Preparatory Paper. These papers provided the baseline information that formed part of the evidence base for the Council's Preferred Options Paper (POP). The POP, published in March 2018, provided an overview of the Key Issues of strategic significance affecting the Borough and the Preferred Options to address them.

This Technical Supplement also seeks to provide an update on the Council's progress in its approach to open space, sport and outdoor recreation in the Borough and the development of associated planning policies, since the publication of the POP.

In order to reflect the broad range of matters that were taken into account in the development of the Council's approach towards open space, sport and outdoor recreation in the Borough and the formulation of associated dPS planning policies this Technical Supplement has been organised into the following sections:

- **Sections 2 & 3** provide a summary of the Legislative, Regional and Local Policy Context that is relevant to the LDP, with particular emphasis on this topic area;
- **Section 4** provides an overview of open space, sport and outdoor recreation within the Borough;
- **Section 5** outlines the relevant Key Issue and Preferred Approach as detailed in the POP, alongside a summary of POP Commitments and a brief summary of some of the POP responses that were received, with a focus on those offering suggestions in respect of policy development.
- **Section 6** provides an overview of the policy review, and the ongoing consultation and engagement that has been carried out in preparation of the draft Plan Strategy policies. Furthermore, it also details the approach of neighbouring councils to open space, sport and outdoor recreation, briefly outlining their position, followed by a brief consideration of any potential conflict.
- **Section 7** summarises how the dPS policies for open space, sport and outdoor recreation (including greenways) have been developed. It provides a rationale where amendments have been made to the existing planning policies to take account of regional direction, POP feedback, consultation and engagement, where it has been considered necessary and appropriate to do so.
- **Section 8** sets out how the dPS policies for open space, sport and outdoor recreation have been prepared in accordance with the tests for soundness set out in the Department for Infrastructure's (DfI) Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017).

The information and data presented in this Technical Supplement has been derived from a number of different sources however, where possible, the most recent datasets available have been utilised.

It is important to note that this evidence base has been collated at specific point in time and therefore it may be necessary for the Council to review and update it as the plan is progressed. The notional end date of the plan period has now been amended to 2035. The Council will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that open space, sport and outdoor recreation in the Borough is managed in an appropriate and sustainable manner throughout and beyond the plan period of 2035.

Introduction to Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

Open space, sport and outdoor recreation supports many cultural, social, economic, health and environmental benefits and is therefore important to society now and in the future. Everyone, particularly children, older people and people with disabilities should have convenient access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity or simply enjoy amenity open space and have contact with nature.

Open space includes all formal, informal and passive open spaces which are of public value including parks, gardens, woodlands, forests, outdoor sports facilities such as pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens, communal green spaces within housing developments, play areas, kick about areas, green corridors and wedges, allotments, cemeteries, civic space including squares and other hard surfaced areas. It also includes blue infrastructure such as inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs.

Open space, with or without public access to it, can contribute positively to the character, appearance and quality of our urban areas and civic spaces. It offers places to play, relax, exercise and socialise, as well as venues for sport. It can encourage active travel, and healthier lifestyles (through physical activity and improved mental health), as well as assist in children's development. It can help attract business and tourism and contribute to rural and urban regeneration. Furthermore, it helps support sustainable development by providing 'green lungs', helping to improve air quality, as well as providing valuable areas for nature. It can act as a buffer between conflicting land uses, help reduce flood risk and offer visual breaks. The benefits of open space to our local communities, our economy and not least the environment are significant.

Article 2 of The Revised European Sports Charter³ defines sport as "all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, are aimed at maintaining or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels." There is wide recognition of the contribution that sport makes to a sense of local and national identity, to personal, moral and physical development, and individual enjoyment. Additionally, recognition needs to be given to the wider socio-economic and health benefits of sport and recreation including job creation, physical fitness and cross-community relationship building.

Within the Borough there is a diverse assortment of open spaces that offer important opportunities for outdoor recreation, sport and play. Whilst the Council owns and maintains a significant amount of these spaces, there are also a number of privately-owned playing fields and other recreational open spaces available, including grass and synthetic pitches at educational and sporting facilities, Nature Reserves and forests with public access, glens, National Trust properties with high quality parkland, walking and cycling networks and amenity green space provided within housing areas.

The LDP has an important role in ensuring that there is adequate provision of open space for current and future generations by protecting existing areas of open space and by supporting

³ The Revised European Sports Charter was adopted on 13 October 2021 by the Council of Europe

the delivery of new open space. This plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others.

2.0 Legislative Context

The key pieces of legislation relating to this subject area include the following:

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 2011 Act) is the principal planning legislation in Northern Ireland, which underpins the reformed two-tier planning system that commenced on 1 April 2015. It introduced the plan-led system, where the LDP is the primary consideration for decision making on all new development schemes and proposals will be required to accord with its provisions unless, exceptionally other material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations set out the sequence in which the Council's new LDP is to be prepared and provides detail on the content and procedure of each stage in the plan preparation process and independent examination.

3.0 Policy Context

International Policy Context

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights, including social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. Of particular relevance to open space, sport and recreation is the right to education, leisure, culture and the arts. The UNCRC was ratified by the UK government in 1991, committing all branches of government to ensuring that children are afforded the rights and protections contained within its articles.

The child's Right to Play is specifically highlighted in Article 31 which states that:

“Every child has the right to rest and leisure; to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. “That member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity”

Regional Policy Context

The key pieces of regional policy relating to this subject area include the following:

Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-2027 ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ (2025, Northern Ireland Executive)

The PfG ‘Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most’ outlines the NI Executives priorities for making a real difference to the lives of everyone living and working in Northern Ireland. It sets out the following three long term Missions, underpinned by a cross-cutting commitment to Peace, through which improved wellbeing, long term sustainability, and a thriving economy will be delivered.

- People: Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.
- Planet: Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.
- Prosperity: Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone, and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.

The PfG priority ‘Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment’ recognises that Lough Neagh, which is partially located within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, is one of Northern Ireland's most important natural resources and is of economic, recreational and tourism significance. The PfG highlights the significant blue-green algae blooms in Lough Neagh and acknowledges that this must be dealt with urgently. On a broader level, it also emphasises that unless the natural environment is protected, we are likely to see many more environmental crises. Actions identified within the PfG aimed at addressing this priority, include delivering the actions within the Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan, implementing Northern Ireland's first Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) and addressing climate change. The PfG commits to developing a Climate Action Plan, that will detail cross-cutting

steps to reduce carbon emissions across many sectors including energy, transport, agriculture, land use, land use change and forestry, buildings, waste and fisheries.

The PfG identifies that the strength and success of our society depends on the wellbeing of everyone and that we all should have access to the best possible opportunities, so you can live, work, and enjoy a happy, healthy life. The PfG seeks to improve the physical and mental health outcomes of Northern Ireland's population, reduce inequalities and prioritise sports and physical activity to tackle obesity.

It acknowledges that investments in new outdoor recreation and sporting facilities will provide quality and modern focal points for NI communities and so that people can be supported to enjoy active social lives. The PfG also identifies the importance of ensuring that the needs of Northern Ireland's increasingly diverse and ageing population are reflected.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

The RDS is a spatial strategy and provides an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide sustainable development. The links between a quality environment and human health and wellbeing is one of the dominant themes of the RDS.

The Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS), RG7: Support urban and rural renaissance, identifies the importance of promoting a joined-up approach to support urban and rural renaissance. It highlights the need to promote recreational space within cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure, emphasising that this is particularly important near designated nature-conservation sites as it will help reduce recreational pressure on these sites.

Furthermore, the RDS recognises that proper care of the environment provides real benefits in terms of improving health and wellbeing. Regional Guideline 11 (RG 11) supports the conservation, protection and enhancement of our built heritage and natural environment and recognises the role of open space as part of the delivery mechanism.

With specific regards to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon the RDS highlights the variety of open space and leisure offering within the Borough. It acknowledges that Banbridge has a good quality natural and built environment, excellent sports and leisure facilities and an abundance of parks and open spaces. In respect of Craigavon Urban Area, the RDS highlights its Lakeland setting and its associated leisure and tourism functions, Lurgan Park, as the largest urban park in Northern Ireland and also Oxford Island National Nature Reserve which is situated on the outskirts of Lurgan. The RDS also highlights Portadown's potential for a rediscovered and rejuvenated riverside area, a potential location for modern mixed use development area centred around leisure and town centre living.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) - Planning for Sustainable Development (Edition 2, 2025)

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement, Edition 2 (SPPS) was published in December 2025 following the conclusion of a focused review of the former SPPS (2015) on the subject of renewable and low carbon energy. Whilst the revised SPPS sets out new policy provisions for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy all other policy provisions, including those relating to open space, within the former SPPS are unchanged.

SPPS- Open space, sport and outdoor recreation

The SPPS acknowledges that the protection of existing, and provision of new, quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others.

The Regional Strategic Objectives for open space, sport and outdoor recreation are to:

- safeguard existing open space and sites identified for future such provision;
- ensure that areas of open space are provided as an integral part of new residential development and that appropriate arrangements are made for their management and maintenance in perpetuity;
- facilitate appropriate outdoor recreational activities in the countryside that do not negatively impact on the amenity of existing residents;
- ensure that new open space areas and sporting facilities are convenient and accessible for all sections of society, particularly children, older people and those with disabilities;
- achieve high standards of siting, design and landscaping for all new open space areas and sporting facilities; and
- ensure that the provision of new open space areas and sporting facilities is in keeping with the principles of environmental conservation and helps sustain and enhance biodiversity.

The SPPS directs that in plan making councils should bring forward an Open Space Strategy (OSS) that must reflect the aim, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area. Furthermore, it instructs that the LDP should be informed by a survey/assessment of existing open space provision and future needs, including both public and private open space, identifying the different needs they serve

The SPPS directs that councils should assess existing provision of open space in the plan area against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1000 population (commonly referred to as the '6-acre standard'). Furthermore, it instructs that the assessments should consider both the level of 'outdoor playing space' provision in the plan area, and the distribution and accessibility of such land use.

In relation to zoning for future needs the SPPS highlights that the following should be considered:

- accessibility to and from existing and proposed housing areas;
- the potential for any detrimental impact on biodiversity or on sensitive environmental areas and features;
- the contribution that open space can make to the quality of the environment, sense of place and community life;
- the importance of protecting linear open spaces such as pedestrian and cycle routes, community greenways, former railway lines and river and canal corridors many of which are valuable in linking larger areas of open space and providing important wildlife corridors/ecological networks;
- promoting and protecting public access to and along the coast;
- making adequate provision of green and blue infrastructure; and
- Identifying and designating areas of open space which perform a strategic function, such as landscape wedges in urban areas.

SPPS- Transportation and Land use

Strategic Objectives of the SPPS for transportation and land use planning that are relevant to this subject area are:

- promote sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need for motorised transport, encourage active travel and facilitate travel by public transport in preference to the private car;
- ensure accessibility for all, with the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired given particular consideration; and
- promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development;

SPPS- Improving Health and Well-Being

The SPPS highlights that the planning system has an active role to play in helping to better the lives of people and communities in Northern Ireland and in supporting the Executive's key priority of improving health and well-being (paragraph 4.5), acknowledging that it is widely recognised that well designed buildings and successful places can have a positive impact on how people feel and that the way in which places and buildings are configured, patterns of movement in the space around us and the level of access to quality open space are all factors that can make us feel good. It identifies that planning authorities should contribute positively to health and well-being through a number of ways including safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation; better connected communities with safe pedestrian environments and facilitating the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure. The SPPS (Footnote P81) defines green infrastructure as infrastructure 'such as parks, green spaces and street trees' and blue infrastructure as infrastructure 'such as ponds, streams and lakes'.

The SPPS acknowledges that networks of green spaces, commonly referred to as green infrastructure, provide a wide range of environmental benefits (in both rural and urban areas) including flood water storage, urban cooling, improved air quality and habitats for wildlife (paragraph 4.7). Additionally, the SPPS recognises that such networks can provide opportunities for social interaction by serving as a focal point for recreation and community activities. As such, the SPPS directs that this green infrastructure should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering on a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for communities.

Furthermore, the SPPS acknowledges that the protection of existing, and provision of new, quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others (paragraph 4.8).

It also highlights that the need for adequate private, semi-private and public amenity space is a prime consideration in all residential development and contributes to mental and physical well-being and the strengthening of social cohesion.

SPPS- Housing in Settlements

In regard to housing within settlements, the SPPS directs that design concepts should incorporate sustainable elements such as good linkages with other land uses and facilities, provision for cycling; adequate provision of open space and landscaping integrated with broader green and blue infrastructure systems (6.137).

SPPS- Natural Heritage

The SPPS directs that LDPs should seek to identify and promote green and blue infrastructure where this will add value to the provision, enhancement and connection of open space and habitats in and around settlements (6.196).

UK Marine Policy Statement

The UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) was published in September 2011 under the Marine Coastal Access Act 2009 and provides the policy framework for the marine planning system and taking decisions affecting the marine environment. The MPS provides the high-level policy context within which marine plans will be developed and 3 monitored and will ensure consistency in marine planning across the UK marine area. The MPS will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom marine area. Although the Borough does not directly connect to a coastline, waterways will have connectivity to marine areas, therefore the draft Plan Strategy has had regard to the MPS.

Draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland

The draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland has been prepared under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (MCAA) and the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (The Marine Act) and within the framework of the UK Marine Policy Statement. Published in April 2018, it provides a framework of policies to be considered by public authorities taking decisions that affect or might affect the marine area. The Northern Ireland marine area is made up of an inshore and an offshore region. The marine area comprises all marine waters including seabed, subsoil, sea loughs and tidal rivers, so far as the tide flows at Mean High Water Spring Tide. Although the Borough does not directly connect to a coastline, waterways will have connectivity to marine areas, therefore the draft Marine Plan for NI has been taken into consideration in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy.

Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPS 2): Natural Heritage

PPS 2 sets out the planning policies for the conservation, protection and enhancement of our natural heritage. Some open spaces and recreation areas are also protected by international, national and local nature conservation designations, for which PPS 2 provides operational policies.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS 3): Access Movement and Parking

PPS 3 sets out the policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes and parking. It forms an important element in the integration of transport and land use planning. The policy objectives of PPS 3 include the promotion of road safety, the restriction of new accesses and control of existing accesses onto protected routes, the promotion of a modal shift towards sustainable forms of transport, reduced reliance on the private car and the protection of routes required for new transport schemes.

Policy AMP 8 'Cycle Provision' of PPS 3 'Access Movement and Parking' states that planning permission will only be granted for development providing jobs, shopping, leisure and services, including educational and community uses where the needs of cyclists are considered, including appropriate provision of safe and convenient cycle links to existing or programmed cycle networks.

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6): Planning Archaeology and the Built Heritage

Some open spaces and recreation areas are designated as Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) and/or Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes and will also be subject to local plan policies relating to LLPAs and Policy BH 6 (PPS 6) respectively, to help maintain the intrinsic environmental value and character of such areas.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS 7): Quality Residential Developments

PPS 7 promotes high-quality design and well-planned housing developments. It highlights that a successful residential environment relies not only on the physical layout and architecture, but also on the integration of essential infrastructure—such as adequate open space within the development and strong connections to the surrounding green network.

Policy QD 1 ‘Quality in New Residential Development’ (Criterion c) requires developers to make adequate provision for public open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of a residential development. The amplification refers to the requirements of PPS 8 (Policy OS 2).

Criterion (e) of QD1 requires that all proposals for residential development provide a movement pattern that ‘supports walking and cycling, meets the needs of people whose mobility is impaired, respects existing public rights of way, provides adequate and convenient access to public transport and incorporates traffic calming measures.’

Annex A of PPS 7, outlines Local Community Development Guidelines for Urban and Rural Areas, which includes the provision of community Greenways to establish connections with nature and the countryside, and local historic features, for residents in urban and rural areas by maintaining and building up an interlinked pattern of public open spaces, play facilities and landscaped areas, woodlands and wildlife habitats, pedestrian and cycle routes, linking to rivers, canals, coastal and inland waters, as well as respecting the rural setting of towns and villages.

Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8): Open Space, Sport & Recreation

PPS 8 provides operational policy in relation to open space, sport and outdoor recreation uses. It embodies the Government’s commitment to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthier lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity.

PPS 8 acknowledges that open space, sport and outdoor recreation are important components of life. They provide many cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits and contribute positively to physical and mental health and a better quality of life.

PPS 8 defines open space as all open space of public value. The definition includes not just outdoor sports facilities, parks and gardens, amenity green space and children’s play areas, but also natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, allotments, cemeteries, green corridors and civic spaces. It includes not just land, but also inland bodies of water that offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and which can also act as a visual amenity (see Appendix 1 of this Technical Supplement).

The PPS 8 policies cover the protection of existing open space (OS 1); the provision of public open space in new residential development (OS 2); the development of proposals for outdoor recreational use in the countryside (OS 3); intensive sports facilities (OS 4); noise generating sports and outdoor recreational activities (OS 5); development of facilities ancillary to water sports (OS 6); and the floodlighting of sports and outdoor recreational activities (OS 7).

PPS 8 includes a clear presumption against the loss or removal of existing or zoned open space (OS 1). Also new residential schemes of 25 units or more, or on sites of 1 ha or more, are required to provide open space as an integral part of the development (OS 2), with a normal expectation of at least 10% of the total site area. For schemes of 300 units or more, or on sites of 15 ha or more, a normal expectation will be around 15% of the total site area. For schemes of 100 units or more, or 5 ha or more, an equipped children's play area will be required as an integral part of the development. Exceptional criteria apply in these cases.

Whilst the SPPS states that the LDP should be informed by a survey/assessment of existing open space provision and future needs, PPS 8 states that the assessment of open space should be carried out for all large settlements.

Planning Policy Statement 13 (PPS 13): Transportation and Land Use

PPS 13 guides the integration of transportation and land use, particularly through the preparation of development plans and transport plans. The primary objective of PPS 13 is to integrate land use planning and transport by promoting sustainable transport choices, promoting accessibility for all and reducing the need to travel, especially by private car.

Planning Policy Statement 15 (PPS 15): 'Planning and Flood Risk' (Revised)

PPS 15 sets out regional policies to minimise and manage flood risk to people, property and the environment. The PPS refers to the importance of open space for flood risk management purposes, including planning for storm exceedance and sustainable drainage and avoiding development in flood plains in order to facilitate the storage and convergence of flood water.

Planning Policy Statement 21 (PPS 21): Sustainable Development in the Countryside

PPS 21 sets out planning policies for development in the countryside. It states that planning permission will be granted for outdoor sport and recreational uses in accordance with PPS 8.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Creating Places - Achieving Quality in Residential Developments (DOE/now DfI) provides guidance on the design, character and layout of new housing development in Northern Ireland to support the policies in PPS 7 and 8, with open space included as a key element. It sets out the standards expected of developers in terms of design quality and sustainability.

Living Places - An Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for Northern Ireland (September 2014) set out the key qualities of good place making. It seeks to inform and inspire all those involved in the process of managing (stewardship) and place making (design) of urban places, with a view to raising standards across NI. In relation to connectivity, the design guide acknowledges that good urban places require a network of permeable routes that pass through them, giving choice to users, limiting walking distances and maintaining a flow of movement. It acknowledges that this is best achieved through an urban structure of interconnected streets and recognises that linking open spaces with a system of paths, often using rivers and former railway lines, can contribute to a valuable network of 'Green Infrastructure' whilst encouraging active travel.

Relevant Consultations

Public Consultation- Active Travel Delivery Plan (Nov 2024, DfI)

In November 2024, the Department for Infrastructure carried out a public consultation on the Active Travel Delivery Plan (The ATD Plan). The ATD Plan sets out how DfI will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure for shorter everyday journeys within urban and rural settlements over the next 10 years and beyond. Consultation closed in February 2025, however once adopted, it will complement the Strategic Plan for Greenways. It represents the first plan for the delivery of active travel infrastructure in Northern Ireland.

The ATD Plan acknowledges that over one third of journeys in Northern Ireland are less than two miles long, and two thirds are less than five miles long, with these shorter distances offering opportunities for active travel to become a practical, sustainable and attractive option. It emphasises that with access to safe, reliable, and accessible active travel infrastructure, individuals are more likely to embrace healthier alternatives to driving. Additionally, it acknowledges that the shift away from motorised forms of transport will assist in reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality, and in doing so will make an important contribution towards achieving the targets set out in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The ATD Plan defines Active Travel as: “Travelling by physically active means such as walking, wheeling, or cycling” and identifies active travel infrastructure as footways, footpaths, cycle tracks, cycle lanes, crossings, junction treatments and bridges. Greenways and shared use paths, lighting in urban areas, cycle parking, signage and wayfinding information are also included. It also acknowledges the many health, environmental, economic and social benefits of active travel.

The ATD Plan recognises that greatest potential for a modal shift is in urban areas⁴ with higher population numbers, so that that investment in active travel brings the maximum benefit possible to the greatest number of people. The assessment framework identifies a network of priority routes for delivery in addition to routes where the existing active travel infrastructure could be enhanced. It also incorporates detailed active travel network maps, detailing the priority routes (0-10 years) and future routes (10+ years). In respect of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, the ATD Plan focuses upon the Hubs of Craigavon Urban Area, Banbridge and Armagh, in addition to the Local Town of Dromore. The eight Priority Routes identified by the ATD Plan, relevant to the Borough, are detailed below:

Armagh

- Lonsdale Road/College Hill Junction via Moy Road to Settlement Limit

Banbridge

- A26 Church Road/A26 Lurgan Road (Church Square Junction to Settlement Limit)

Craigavon Urban Area

- Northway/High Street/A27 Bridge Street/A27 Lurgan Road (A4 Corcrain Road Junction to Craigavon Senior High School)
- A27 Mandeville Road/A27 Lake Road
- Rushmere Shopping Centre/Clonmeen via Drumgor Primary School
- Lower Enniskillen / Drumellan Walk

⁴ The ATD Plan is based upon the NISRA definition of urban areas i.e. areas with a population of over 5000

- Rushmere Shopping Centre/Parkmore
- Moyraverty Road/Moyraverty Road West to St Brendan's PS

The associated maps⁵ indicate the priority routes, future routes, existing routes and existing routes with potential for future enhancements. Note the ATD Plan does not identify any priority routes in Dromore, with the focus upon future routes that may be delivered such as the B2 Lurgan Road, Pound Hill and the B2 Hillsborough Road.

In terms of rural networks, the ATD Plan acknowledges that the creation of safe, accessible routes that connect residents to key amenities can be transformational, making it easier for people to move safely, reduce reliance on cars and fostering a greater sense of connection. It identifies that those who live in rural areas will benefit from the same connection types that will be most beneficial to people within urban areas. As such it aims to place emphasis on links to schools, public transport and town/ villages centres in rural areas and will utilise the same guiding principles of the assessment framework applied in larger towns to prioritise pedestrian and cycling improvements in smaller settlements.

In April 2026, DfI published the Active Travel Delivery Plan - Consultation Report which provides a high-level analysis of the responses to the public consultation

Other Strategies, Plans and Documents

Active Places Research Report 'Bridging the Gap' (2009 & 2014 (update), Sport NI)

'Bridging the Gap', assessed the adequacy of existing sports facility provision (excluding education facilities), in Northern Ireland's 26 former and 11 proposed Local Authority areas by comparison with National Facility Standards and/or the facility demand of potential users (determined by the Facilities Planning Model (FPM)). The Report identified unmet demand and shortfalls for facilities such as sports halls, swimming pools, tennis courts, facilities, and pitches in Northern Ireland at council level.

The Report also acknowledged (paragraph 5.51) that in recent years there has been an increase in the provision and use of synthetic pitches, with these facilities now complementing the use of natural grass for many sports. It also highlights that whilst the Six Acre Standard (refer to Section 4 'Borough Profile' for further information) assesses the provision of a suitable synthetic surface to equate to twice that of a grass surface of similar size Sport NI considers that 'in some instances, synthetic pitches can equate to four times that of a grass surface.' This consideration will be of particular importance when assessing the Boroughs current open space provision (refer to Section 4 'Borough Profile').

In 2014, the research report was updated, and the figures were aligned to the new Council areas, recalculating the need for a number of specific facility types, to illustrate progress in developing the sports facility infrastructure in NI. Whilst the analysis still identified a significant shortfall in provision, it only presented facility shortfall tables for pitches and sports halls. The facility shortfall tables presented in the 2009 report excluded school sports facilities due to their limited availability for community use. However, considering recent community use of schools' guidance published by Sport NI and the Department of Education, it is important to recognise the potential value of school sports facilities in addressing the facility shortfalls throughout Northern Ireland.

⁵ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/infrastructure/appendix3-armagh-city-banbridge-and-craigavon-borough-council.pdf>

Everyone's Involved - Sustainable Development Strategy (2010, Northern Ireland Executive)

Everyone's Involved- Sustainable Development Strategy *identifies* six priority areas for action which provide the framework for the actions that Departments will take in support of sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Strategy identifies that sport, and recreation has a role to play in ensuring a strong society through, promoting and improving the health and well-being of the population and improving the quality life through experiencing and participating in and accessing cultural and sporting pursuits. Similarly open space provision can contribute to the creation of a better-quality environment and way of life for the population.

Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy 2016 (Waterways Ireland and project partners, including Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council)

Five local council authorities⁶ along the Ulster Canal collaborated with the North South Implementation Body for inland waterways, Waterways Ireland, to prepare a strategy for reusing the disused waterway infrastructure in a new and imaginative way.

The Ulster Canal was formerly a navigable waterway which formed a strategically important transport link between the Lough Neagh catchment and the Erne catchment. It was to be the final link in Ireland's inland navigation system, providing a connection between the Shannon-Erne system and the Lough Neagh basin. The route between Lough Neagh and Lough Erne was 93km long, comprising navigation on the River Blackwater and River Finn and on 74km of canal with 26 locks.

The strategy proposed using the original route of the canal and other historical heritage infrastructure to connect the main market towns of central ulster by a network of high quality walking and cycling paths. The Strategy proposes to provide facilities which are fit for purpose, accommodate a range of activities that are accessible to all, are environmentally sensitive and consider heritage features.



Figure 1. Original Route of the Ulster Canal (Source: Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy)

Four of the proposed routes detailed in the Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy are of relevance:

⁶ Armagh City Banbridge Craigavon Borough Council, Cavan County Council, East Border Region Ltd, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Mid-Ulster District Council and Monaghan County Council

- Armagh to Portadown (16km in length), aimed at facilitating sustainable commuting at a whole new level across the region.
- Glaslough to Armagh (17km in length) - 95% of route would be within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council however 5% would fall within Mid Ulster District Council boundary.
- A cross border route from Monaghan to the Ulster Canal via Glaslough (10km in length)- only 5% of the route would fall within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council boundary, with 80% of the route within Monaghan County Council and 15% within Mid Ulster District Council.
- A cross border route from Monaghan to Middletown via the Ulster Canal (9km in length) – only 10% of the route would be located within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council boundary and 90% in Monaghan County Council.

‘Exercise - Explore - Enjoy’- A ‘Strategic Plan for Greenways’ (2016, DfI)

‘Exercise - Explore - Enjoy’, A ‘Strategic Plan for Greenways’ identifies that the provision of accessible and safe greenways will help lay the foundations for longer, healthier, more active lives and recognises the important role local government can play in the delivery of a greenway network as a result of their responsibilities in respect of open space and recreation. The Strategic Plan highlights that the LDP provides an opportunity to further explore, plan and zone the development of a greenway network.

The Strategic Plan defines greenways as ‘traffic free routes connecting communities to all kinds of destinations for commuting, everyday journeys or leisure and recreation’ and can include publicly owned open space, woodlands, urban landscape wedges, parks, playing fields, school grounds, private lands, golf courses, and farmland and may form part of or link to existing networks including towpaths, the National Cycle Network, walkways and trails.

It identifies that greenways offer opportunities and benefits that go well beyond transport, with the health, well-being, economic and social benefits widely acknowledged and the development of greenways for active travel and recreation forms part of many European Strategic transport, environment, health and economic policies.

The Vision of the Strategy is ‘a region where people have ready access to a safe traffic free environment for health, active travel and leisure.’ This would enable active travel to become part of everyday life and so the development of a greenway network is at the heart of this. However, the Plan also highlights that it is important they are not seen just a travel routes, but safe and secure amenity spaces where people can socialise, play or enjoy nature. Furthermore, the Strategy advises that this will require appropriate management and maintenance, in addition to integration with other modes of sustainable transport.

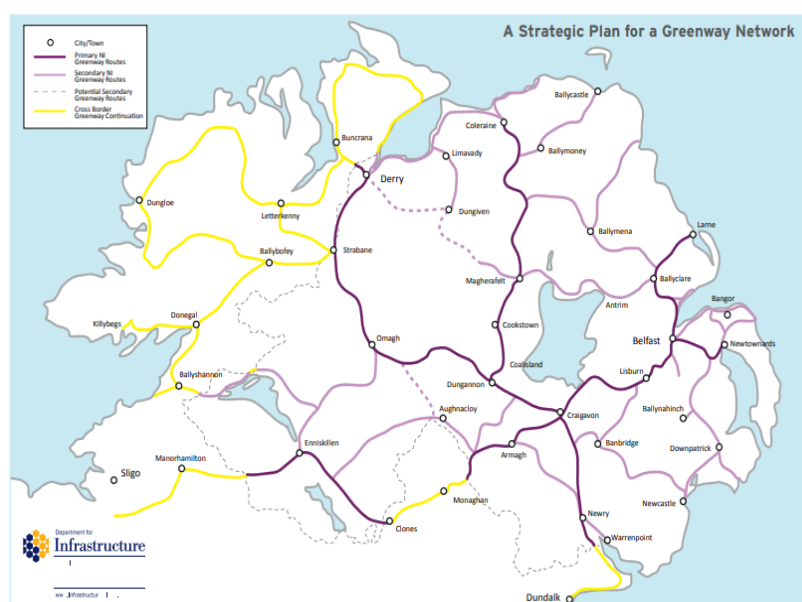


Figure 2. Primary and Secondary Greenway Routes Identified in ‘Exercise - Explore - Enjoy’, A ‘Strategic Plan for Greenways’ (DfI, 2016)

The Strategy identifies that routes could be explored to develop a Primary Greenway Network from which a Secondary Greenway Network could progressively extend across the region. The aim of the Primary Network would be to provide long distance connectivity, and the Secondary Network would be to provide wider access to greenways.

The proposed Primary Routes identified by the Strategy, as detailed in the map above, that are relevant to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough are:

- Belfast to Craigavon- 39km in length
- Craigavon to Enniskillen- 97km in length
- Craigavon to Newry – 37km in length
- Craigavon to Derry / Londonderry- 115km in length

The proposed Secondary Routes identified by the Strategy that are relevant to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough are:

- Armagh to Newry, via Markethill- 28km in length
- Banbridge to Newcastle- 36km in length
- Lisburn to Banbridge- 23km in length

The Strategy also identifies a potential cross border greenway continuation linking Armagh and Monaghan, in the Republic of Ireland. The Strategy also suggests that future plans could be to develop a third level network of ‘community paths’- to connect local communities to their local green space and neighbouring communities.

Environmental Advice for Planning Practice Guide Cemeteries, Burials and the Water Environment (2019, DAERA)

The Environmental Advice is a good practice guide for applicants and planning authorities when planning cemetery developments or extensions. It acknowledges that the development of new cemeteries / graveyards (or extensions to existing sites) has potential to impact on the

local environment and as such it is important to consider such impacts and, where appropriate, ensure that adequate site investigation and risk assessments are undertaken.

Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 (2021, NI Executive)

The Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 is designed to improve the well-being of all children and young people in Northern Ireland. It sets out the outcomes the Strategy aims to achieve for children and young people, to help every child develop to their full potential. Additionally, the Strategy sets out the specific issues affecting children and young people's lives which have been identified as requiring particular focus and the groups of children and young people who have been identified as being in greatest need of help or support.

Active Living- Strategy for Northern Ireland (2022, DfC)

The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy highlights the important role that sport, and physical activity plays in Northern Ireland, and seeks to create a vibrant, welcoming, enjoyable, inclusive and successful sector for everyone, contributing significantly to a healthier and more resilient society.

The Strategy acknowledges that improving participation in sport and physical activity is about providing access and opportunity regardless of background, ability, gender or age. As such, the Strategy highlights, and seeks to address, the various barriers that different groups of people face when considering taking up a sport or engaging in physical activity.

The Strategy also recognises that the challenges and opportunities as a result of our ageing and 'increasingly diverse population' are significant, requiring both collective and imaginative solutions. Alongside this, the Strategy highlights, and aims to address, issues associated with high levels of deprivation and poverty in certain locations, the relatively high proportion of the population who are disabled and high levels of economic inactivity.

Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland (2024, DAERA)

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP), which forms part of the Green Growth Agenda, acknowledges that Northern Ireland faces a range of local environmental challenges including habitat and species loss, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

One of the six Strategic Environmental Outcomes of the EIP, 'Healthy and accessible environment and landscapes everyone can connect with and enjoy' includes a number of actions relevant to this subject area including the promotion of the greenway network to encourage walking and cycling and reducing car dependency, and the development of a Community Trail Network & Green/Blue Places Plan in all council areas by 2028. Another Strategic Environmental Outcome, 'Thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife' seeks to enhance protection for nature and ecological connectivity, deliver biodiversity gain and support landscape scale ecosystem restoration and the integration of biodiversity values into all decision-making processes and the development of a Nature Recovery Plan to support nature recovery and climate resilience.

Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan - Blue Green Algae and Water Quality in Northern Ireland (2024, DAERA in conjunction with DfI and NIW)

The Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan addresses the specific water quality crisis experienced in Lough Neagh and other water bodies throughout Northern Ireland. It identifies

that ‘improving water quality in Northern Ireland requires action, resources and all of us working together’, including everyone taking responsibility for the waste we produce and how it is dealt with.

The Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan acknowledges that despite the protected status of Lough Neagh (ASSI, SPA and Ramsar) the existing regulatory and policy frameworks have failed to adequately protect water quality, the Lough Neagh ecosystem and our wider environment. It identifies that Northern Ireland's lakes, rivers, streams and coastline are suffering from the effects of pollution, the impacts of which, on society and the environment, are unsustainable.

The Lough Neagh Report and Action Plan identifies that the significant Blue Green Algae blooms experienced in Lough Neagh were due to several factors including pollution from agriculture, wastewater, septic tanks and industrial processes in addition to an increase in water temperature (because of climate change) and the presence of the invasive zebra mussels. It highlights that if the amount of pollution getting into Lough Neagh is not immediately addressed, there is potential for permanent adverse impacts on health and the economy.

Draft Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan 2023-2027 (2025, DAERA, on Behalf of the NI Executive)

The draft Climate Action Plan sets out a road map, consisting of fifty-two policies, proposals and actions aimed at reducing emissions and achieving the first carbon budget for Northern Ireland⁷. Policies, proposals and actions outlined within the draft Climate Action Plan that are of particular relevance to this topic include reducing vehicle emissions by shifting modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives. Greenways are one example of an alternative form of sustainable travel, which help to encourage active travel and reduce reliance on the private vehicle. The draft Climate Action Plan identifies that the Strategic Plan for Greenways, alongside a complementary behaviour change strategy, will further encourage modal shift to active travel and maximise the infrastructure investment benefits.

Additional relevant Plans, Strategies and Documents that have been considered as part of the Regional Policy Context include:

- Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015 (2007, DRD)
- Sport Matters – The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 (2009, SportNI and the former Dept. for Culture, Arts and Leisure)
- Play and Leisure Policy Statement (2009) and Implementation Plan (2011) (NI Assembly)
- ‘Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future- A New Approach to Regional Transportation’ (2011, DRD)
- ‘Fitter Future for All’ Framework 2012-2022 (2012, by the former Dept. of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)
- Our Passion, Our Place – NIEA Strategic Priorities 2012 – 2022 (2012, DoE)
- Our Great Outdoors – Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland (2014, DCAL, DETI and DoE)
- Mountain Bike Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 –2024 (2015, Outdoor Recreation NI)
- Northern Ireland Changing Gear- a Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015, DRD)

⁷ In the first carbon budget (2023-2027) greenhouse gases emissions need to reduce by an annual average of 33% from the 1990 baseline emission levels across the five-year period

Local Policy Context

The key pieces of local policy relating to this subject area include the following:

Existing Area Plans

The existing 4 statutory Area Plans covering the Borough provide the policy framework against which development proposals are considered.

- The Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004
- The Armagh Area Plan Alteration No 1: Countryside Proposals
- The Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) 2015
- The Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010
- The Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan (DSTAP) 2010

Due to the varying ages of the extant Area Plans, there are inconsistencies in approach with regards to a number of planning issues as well as the degree of emphasis in respect of the principles of sustainable development. However, the existing Plans are an important consideration in the LDP process, and as such have been considered in the development of the draft Plan Strategy. Policies within the respective Development Plans that are related to open space, sport and recreation are laid out below.

Armagh Area Plan 2004

The Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004 and AAP Alteration No 1 (Countryside Proposals) provide a planning framework for the growth and development of the Armagh area. One of the Armagh Area Plan (AAP) 2004 & Alteration No 1: Armagh Countryside Proposals objectives which is of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation is to identify land within defined limits in urban areas to 'meet planned future development requirements in respect of...open space...and community facilities.'

In addition to identifying a number of active and open space zonings in Armagh City and the towns, including the Palace Demesne and Folly Glen, the AAP identifies areas of high visual amenity or prominence, including seven open space wedges. The open space wedges are areas within the proposed development area that are deemed important because of their amenity value or particular locational merit, because they act or will act as buffer zones between different uses or because they will help retain hilltops in their present form and reduce the likelihood of over intensive urban development. The AAP acknowledges that these wedges will in most instances, be difficult to develop due to topographical and/or access constraints. The purpose of the designation is to protect the areas from undesirable development.

Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015

The Banbridge / Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) 2015 identifies that there is a wide range of facilities within the plan area including Banbridge which has excellent sports and leisure facilities, an abundance of parks and open spaces. It also acknowledges the Councils responsibility for future provision for open space, sport and outdoor recreation.

The BNMAP identifies major areas of existing open space, sport and outdoor recreation, highlighting that these areas and any other areas of existing open space, sport and outdoor recreation are safeguarded under Policy OS 1 in PPS 8 - Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation.

It also acknowledges that some open spaces and recreation areas are also designated as Local Landscape Policy Areas (LLPAs) and/or Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes.

Whilst the BNMAP does not contain any specific policies in relation to open space and recreation, objectives of the BNMAP which are of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation are to:

- facilitate integration between land use and transportation in order to reduce congestion, the need for car journeys and to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, particularly walking, cycling and public transport; and
- conserve, sustain and enhance the area's environmental qualities, local distinctiveness and sites of environmental importance in terms of landscape character and diversity, wildlife and habitats, townscape and archaeology.

Whilst the BNMAP does not include a specific policy for greenways, it acknowledges that in supporting urban and rural renaissance (RG7), the RDS places importance in promoting recreational space within cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and that new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure (green infrastructure includes parks and green spaces; blue infrastructure includes ponds, streams and lakes). It highlights that the amenity value of the natural environment if linked to green infrastructure provides opportunities for walking and cycling routes to heritage and other recreational interests and thus contributes to the health and well-being of people living in urban areas. BNMAP also protects a number of disused transport routes, including canal and rail track beds, from development.

Craigavon Area Plan 2010

The Craigavon Area Plan (CAP) 2010 acknowledges that there is a range of open space within the Craigavon Urban Area (CUA). Examples including Tannaghmore Gardens, which is of historic importance, various playing field complexes and green wedges designed as part of the urban fabric to function as buffers between the residential areas within the three component parts of the CUA. These open spaces and recreational areas form part of the urban structure of Craigavon in that they contribute to the environmental quality of the area, as well as providing for the recreational needs of residents. The CAP directs that these areas will be protected through the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8): Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation.

The CAP does not contain any specific policies in relation to open space and recreation (including greenways), outside of designating 30 ha of open space and recreational use in CUA (ROS 1) and welcoming proposals for community woodlands (ROS 2). Objectives of the CAP which are of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include:

- the integration of land use and transportation to reduce congestion, the need for car journeys and encourage a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling;
- the protection and where appropriate, enhancement of the natural environment and man-made heritage; and
- the achievement of a high quality of layout, design and landscaping in new development.

The CAP protects and safeguards rail track beds for the construction of active transport schemes and future potential public transport options, including footpaths and cycle tracks (TRAN 2 'Protection of Disused Rail Track Beds').

Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2010

The Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan (DSTAP) 2010 acknowledges the wide range of parks and children's play facilities and formal private recreational clubs including soccer, rugby, cricket, Gaelic games and golf within the plan area.

The DSTAP acknowledges that the RDS aims to promote a greater awareness of the important links between the environment, health and well-being by:

- creating healthier living environments and to support healthy lifestyles; and
- facilitating access to a range of opportunities for recreational and cultural activities.

The DSTAP (which relates to the County Armagh portion of the former DST District Council area) does not contain any specific policies in relation to open space and recreation affecting our Borough area. Objectives of the DSTAP which are of relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include:

- the integration of land use and transportation to reduce congestion, the need for car journeys and encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling;
- the promotion of development within existing settlements which benefit from ease of access to an appropriate range of services and community facilities and maximise use of existing infrastructure;
- the consolidation of the network of open space, cycleways and walkways; and
- the promotion of opportunities for sustainable leisure and tourism development.

Whilst the DSTAP does not make specific reference to greenways, it acknowledges that the open space areas are complemented by a number of walkways and cycleways.

Other Council Documents and Strategies

City / Town Centre Masterplans

Whilst the Area Plans provide the statutory planning framework for land use proposals, City / Town Centre Masterplans are non-statutory documents which focus on regeneration initiatives and public realm improvements in our town centres.

City / Town Centre Masterplans set out a vision for a particular City / Town Centre and identify key proposals for realising that vision over a set period. Prior to the publication of the Council's Place Plans, Armagh had a City Centre Masterplan in place, Banbridge Town Centre Masterplan 2016 set out the regeneration objectives for Banbridge and Dromore Town Centre Master Plan defined a vision of how Dromore town centre could be transformed 2015-30. The Masterplans informed the direction of the Place Plans and had been considered during the POP and early policy development but have since been superseded by Place Plans for each respective settlement.

The Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown Place Plans are still in the development stage, with a draft document for public consultation anticipated in early 2027. Regeneration strategies for Craigavon, Portadown and Lurgan are contained within the Craigavon Integrated Development Framework (CIDF) until the publication of the respective Place Plans.

'Our People, Our Place, Our Future' - The Councils Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027

The Corporate Plan 2023-27 sets out the vision, values and priorities of the Council and represents its aspirations and dedication to continuous improvement. It is the roadmap for delivering Council's Community Plan 2017 – 2030 and sets out the Council's commitment to uphold the highest standards of service delivery, facilities, projects, and programmes for the benefit of our people, our place and our future.

The Vision of the Corporate Plan is to create “*a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning*” aligning with the aspirations of the Community Plan.

The priority of the Corporate Plan is to improve economic, social and environmental well-being through place shaping in order to attract visitors, investors, and to encourage people to be active, with a focus on promoting health and wellbeing. The Council aims to improve participation in arts and culture and strengthen the Borough as a visitor destination as well as supporting the growth of our local economy, by securing investment in infrastructure and connectivity, and providing opportunities in skills development.

The Corporate Plan acknowledges that the environment plays a critical role in sustainably planning for the future, underpinning the wellbeing of societies, economies, and ecosystems. It also highlights the Council's commitment to addressing climate change and supporting efforts to reduce carbon emissions, generate and use energy more cleanly so that the Borough remains a progressive and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

The Corporate Plan also acknowledges the LDP as the spatial outworking of the Corporate Plan in recognition that the implementation of the LDP is one way which the Council's ambitions can be achieved.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Community Plan 2017- 2030 'Connected'

Councils across Northern Ireland have a statutory responsibility to participate and lead in Community Planning. The Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 2014 and the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 create a statutory link between the Community Plan and the LDP. It outlines that the LDP will provide ‘the spatial expression of the Community Plan.’

The Vision of the Council's Community plan is to ‘have a happy, healthy and connected community, a vibrant and sustainable economy and appealing places for living, working and learning.’

The Community Plan includes a number of Long Term outcomes that are considered relevant to open space (including greenways) including:

- **Healthy Community:** People are making positive lifestyle choices. They are more resilient and better equipped to cope with life's challenges and have a greater understanding of the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyle choices and how to protect, manage and improve their physical health; To achieve this, the Council will work collaboratively to address health inequalities throughout the Borough and across the generations. Provision of good, accessible open space is an important means to improving the health of the community.
- **Sustainable Place:** We value and protect our climate, biodiversity and natural assets. People understand the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and our Borough is on track to become net zero by 2050. In Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, the habitats, wildlife, landscapes and natural features are important assets that provide a range of opportunities for both enjoyment and economic activity, as well as environmental benefits.

The updated Community Plan recognises that our Place Plans include several actions that will contribute to the realisation of this outcome including enhancing our blue and green infrastructure and the development of allotments to increase sustainability.

The Community Plan identifies that strong, active, and confident communities are an integral part of a happy and inclusive borough. They provide the foundations on which a thriving economy can be built and provide an environment within which people can lead fulfilling lives. An engaged and participative community is both innovative and resilient. It builds and supports networks, ventures and connections that help bring people together.

Craigavon Integrated Development Framework (CIDF) 2010

The aim of the CIDF is to guide how the 3 town centres of Central Craigavon, Portadown and Lurgan will develop and thrive over the next 20 years and sets out a strategy for regeneration.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council 'Sports Facility Framework' 2016-2026⁸

The Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council 'Sports Facility Framework' aims to identify the strategic need for sports facilities in the Borough provides a framework for future prioritisation, development and provision of sports facilities at local level, to meet identified community need. The Vision of the Sports Facility Framework is that:

'Our future investment will be based on evidence of facility need and prioritised to ensure that we see the development of a range of high-quality sports facilities that drive an increase in participation across all sections of the local community.'

The community consultation process for the Sports Facility Framework highlighted a perceived need for sports clubs for indoor and outdoor provision in the Borough, identifying a current and future under supply of sport halls, swimming pools and fitness stations. However, the Framework also acknowledged that the assessment of accessibility highlights that the majority of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon communities are within the catchment area of a community accessible sports facility.

Through the framework analysis, needs assessment and consultation the Sports Facility Framework identified a number of priorities including the development of the new South Lakes Leisure Centre, the development of cycling and walking trails and investment in areas of under provision, particularly rural areas.

Appendices 2-14 provide an overview of the current sporting and recreational facility provision in the Borough.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council 'Play Strategy 2018-2026'

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council recognises the importance of ensuring that children and young people are able to play in a way that supports their developmental needs, no matter their age, ability or the community in which they live. It also acknowledges the role of the Council, alongside a broad range of stakeholder, in providing for

⁸ Developed in Partnership with Sports NI & 9 NI Councils (Ards and North Down Borough Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Mid Ulster District Council, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council, Belfast City Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and Newry Mourne and Down District Council)

play through the provision and maintenance of fixed play areas, green spaces and playing fields and the development of emerging non-fixed play approaches.

The purpose of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Play Strategy is to establish a strategic framework within which all decision making, as it relates to the provision of fixed play and the development of non-fixed play, can take place.

The strategy makes a number of key observations, including:

- Children and young people (0 to 18 years) represent a significant proportion of the district population accounting for approximately 21% of the resident population
- Fixed play development would appear historically to have been well targeted by legacy councils in order to meet underlying population demands with no significant examples identified of development within areas with little or no underlying population demand
- The rural nature of the population has implications for the play strategy as it means that fixed play is not always a viable option for meeting play need, necessitating the development by council of alternative non-fixed approaches

Whilst the strategy is an active document, which will change over time to reflect the shifting play needs of children and young people and changing demographic patterns across the council, it includes a number of overarching strategic recommendations relating to matters such as participation, design principles, inclusive play opportunities, residential planning and land availability for fixed play.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Healthy Community Action Plan (2018/19)

The Healthy Community Thematic Action Plan brings together people from a wide range of local organisations, including the public, voluntary and community sectors and local businesses to develop a shared action plan with actions we will take towards achieving the Healthy Community Outcome of the Community Plan. The Action Plan details a number of strategic actions including developing a collaborative strategy to engage everyone in physical activity and supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council 'Get Moving ABC Framework' 2020-2030 (2020)

The Get Moving ABC Framework is a collective plan to positively impact the health and wellbeing of the people living in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough.

The framework acknowledges that physical activity choices have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown with closure of gyms, leisure and community centres, parks and restrictions on 'non-essential' travel, which for some may have led to declines in overall physical activity.

Conversely, it identifies that the changing circumstances may have led to more outdoor physical activity, such as walking and cycling and greater appreciation of green spaces alongside increased interest and provision of online physical activity opportunities to support home based activity.

The Framework identifies that ten-year projections indicate that the population will grow over the coming years and the over 65 age group will see the greatest proportionate increase. With an average life expectancy of 79 years for men and 82 years for women, the Framework aims to ensure that we are not only living longer, but that we enjoy life and keep mobile for as long as possible.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Recovery and Growth Framework (2021)

The ABC Recovery and Growth Framework was launched in February 2021 and focuses on how the Council can create the right social and economic conditions to help the borough recover from the covid pandemic and drive sustainable long-term growth for the region.

It sets out a series of aims which will meet the needs of companies within the borough, such as boosting tourism and footfall in towns, and delivering support to business of all sizes, as well as longer-term interventions which will boost efficiency and competitiveness.

The Framework emphasises the regional focus on driving economic investment for Northern Ireland around key sectors such as; agrifood, health and life sciences and advanced manufacturing, where the borough already excels and which, with support to improve skills, connectivity, and productivity, can become global exemplars.

It addresses the need for a specific focus on the case for investment in sustainable roads and rail infrastructure, for urban regeneration and rural development; for education and training to upskill the talent pool; for support of technological developments including Industry and investment in manufacturing research & development; and a commitment to driving regional competitiveness through the development of a start-up and innovative business ecosystem.

These targeted actions are aimed at accelerating the borough's recovery and set it on a path of renewed inclusive growth and prosperity.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council 'Active Travel Masterplan' (2022)

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council have produced an 'Active Travel Masterplan' which considers active travel (pedestrian and cycle) between Portadown railway station and Lurgan railway station along the Craigavon greenway (principally using the Craigavon 'black paths' network) with connections to the Carn / Seagoe employment areas. It also considers provision of public bicycle parking in Armagh, Banbridge, Dromore, Portadown, Craigavon and Lurgan.

It is intended that this Active Travel Masterplan will be built upon and developed further in the future to include proposals for other areas in the Borough.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 (2022)⁹

The Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025 represents the Councils commitment to supporting older people's right to live a full, active, and healthy life and aims to ensure all residents in the borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society, and feel valued and respected, regardless of their age.

The Strategy acknowledges that as we all live longer, there are huge opportunities to create vibrant communities, develop life-long interests and aspirations and support diversity. However, it also identifies that we need to be prepared to manage the challenges and unlock the potential of our ageing population so that people stay connected, healthy and independent.

The outcomes and actions that are of particular relevance to this subject area are:

⁹ The Councils Age Friendly Strategy defines 'older people' as residents within the Borough aged 50+

Outcome 1- *As we get older, we enjoy good physical and mental health*- the promotion of physical activity, good mental health and wellbeing and the delivery of projects and activities which meet the needs of older people.

Outcome 2- *As we get older, we participate meaningfully in community life*- promoting opportunities for people to connect with each other and securing commitments to assess the age-friendliness of facilities, public spaces such as parks, town centres and community and leisure centres.

The Armagh Place Plan (2022)

The Armagh Place Plan, launched by The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership, is the first community planning led Place Shaping Plan in Northern Ireland. Place shaping improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the place, ensuring aspirations of the community are being realised.

Open Space is one of the '7 Spatial Typologies' of the Armagh Place Plan. The Armagh Place Plan identifies that open space in Armagh takes many forms such as the mall, parks, gardens, squares and sports pitches, acknowledging that they are outdoor spaces of public value. It highlights that people in Armagh recognise these as spaces with health and recreation benefits, and suggests that encouraging mixed uses, bringing Armagh cultural activities beyond the institutional buildings, and fostering new ways of learning could serve to enhance these spaces.

The Banbridge Place Plan (2024)

The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership launched the Banbridge Place Plan on 20th March 2024. The Banbridge Place Plan is designed around 5 outcomes: Bridging Banbridge, Green Banbridge, Healthy Banbridge, Creative Banbridge, and Growing Banbridge. The plan identifies 56 actions to bring about positive change in Banbridge. Themes and actions of particular relevance to this subject area include:

- Green Innovation- actions include rewilding, tree planting and carbon neutral, sustainable travel.
- Spaces, Places and Natural Environment- actions include the development of new bridges and footpaths and improved public access to green space.
- Living Here- includes actions such as the enhancement of cycling infrastructure and the maintenance and improvement of existing play spaces.

The Dromore Place Plan (2025)

The Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Planning Partnership launched the Dromore Place Plan on 7 May 2025. It outlines a strategic vision for Dromore and sets out five outcomes which are aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the residents, preserving the unique character of the area whilst stimulating economic growth.

The plan details four big ideas, and six thematic clusters comprising of thirty-seven suggested actions, serving as a road map for the community planning partners, stakeholders, businesses and local community groups, designed to help with the shaping, transformation and development of Dromore into the future.

The ideas, and associated actions, that are of particular relevance to this subject area include:

Dromore Viaduct- relevant Actions include improving opportunities for walking and cycling through the provision of new infrastructure and the improvement of routes / trails and

encouraging more dwelling time in Dromore Park through the provision of picnic tables and multi-use spaces.

Active Riversides- relevant Actions include assessing Dromore's biodiversity assets, exploring opportunities for opening access to the viaduct and the potential to create improved public areas 'under the arches' and the creation of a new footbridge across the River Lagan to alleviate congestion and facilitate active travel.

4.0 Borough Profile

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough boasts an extensive range of open space, sport and outdoor recreational facilities, some of the finest available anywhere in Northern Ireland¹⁰. This diverse assortment of open space and facilities, in both public and private ownership, contributes to the quality of life of those who live within and visit the Borough by offering important opportunities for outdoor recreation, sport and play.

Within the Borough there are a broad range of parks and children's play facilities and a wide variety of formal private recreational clubs including Gaelic games, soccer, rugby, athletics, cricket, tennis, and golf. In addition to formal sports and children's play areas, there are other opportunities available in the Borough including water-based sports such as canoeing, boating, water-skiing, kayaking, and jet skiing. The numerous lakes and rivers in the Borough and the southern shores of Lough Neagh in particular, make the Borough popular for water-based sport and recreation. Walking, cycling and other passive recreational activities are also often located along waterside locations.

Whilst the Council owns and maintains a significant amount of open space and sporting facilities within the Borough, there are also a number of privately-owned playing fields and other recreational open spaces available, including grass and synthetic pitches at educational facilities, Nature Reserves and forests with public access, glens, National Trust properties with high quality parkland, walking and cycling networks and amenity green space provided within housing areas.

In 2023, eight parks and open spaces across the Borough secured the coveted Green Flag Award status¹¹, an internationally recognised certification for environmental quality management for parks and open spaces. To achieve this prestigious accreditation, each of these parks and open spaces have achieved high standards in areas such as cleanliness, biodiversity, community involvement and safety standards, highlighting both the Councils and local communities' commitment to achieving and maintaining high quality environmental management. Green Flag Award winners within the Borough include Clare Glen, Edenvilla Park, Gosford Forest Park, Loughbrickland Park, Lurgan Public Park, Palace Demesne, Portadown People's Park, and Tannaghmore Gardens. The Palace Demesne also achieved the Green Heritage Award for the management of its historic features.

The LDP has an important role in the helping to better the lives of people and communities in the Borough, and in supporting the Northern Ireland Executive's key priority of improving health and well-being, by ensuring that the current and future recreational, sporting, and open space needs of everyone in the Borough are met.

Age Profile of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

As detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context', the SPPS acknowledges that the protection of existing, and provision of new, quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play, sporting activities, passive activity and interaction with others.

¹⁰ See Appendices 2- 14 which detail the Boroughs extensive portfolio of open space, sporting and recreational facilities

¹¹ Source: Green Flag 2023/24 Awards awarded by 'Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful', an Independent environmental Charity

As such, it acknowledges that everyone, particularly children, older people and people with disabilities should have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity or simply enjoy and have contact with nature (Paragraph 6.199). Whilst it is acknowledged that the Borough has an ageing demographic, it is worth noting that the Borough has a younger overall age profile than the NI average.

Older People

The Borough is projected to have both a growing and an ageing population during the lifetime of the plan. The 2021 Census recorded a population of 216,121 for the Borough, of this figure 50.5% of the population were female and 49.5% male. with the proportions relatively unchanged from the 2011 census. From 2011 to 2021, the Boroughs usually resident population increased by 9.5% (18,693)¹², however the population increase was greatest in the older age groups.

Between 2011 and 2021 the number of people resident within the Borough aged 65+ increased by 7,363 (26.7%) and 34% for those aged 75 years and over, which is indicative of an aging population. By comparison, the proportion of the population aged 15-29 years fell by 6.4% between 2011 and 2021.

Northern Ireland's Programme for Government 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025), detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context', outlines the priorities for making a real difference to the lives of everyone living and working in Northern Ireland. It recognises that one of the key challenges is our aging population and acknowledges that it is vital that people are supported at all stages of their lives.

The Council's Age Friendly Strategy and three-year action plan 2022 - 2025 was published in October 2022.¹³ As detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context', the Age Friendly Strategy acknowledges that as we all live longer, there are huge opportunities to create vibrant communities, develop life-long interests and aspirations and support diversity. However, it also identifies that we need to be prepared to manage the challenges and unlock the potential of our ageing population so that people stay connected, healthy, and independent.

The Age Friendly Strategy aims to ensure that all residents in the Borough can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society, and feel valued and respected, regardless of age. As such, it is vital that the LDP seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of our society by progressing policies, plans and proposals that can improve the health and well-being of everyone in our community, regardless of age or ability, therefore helping to build a strong, independent, connected, and shared society. This includes bringing forward appropriate policies that are reflective of the overall vision of the Age Friendly Strategy and help to support the Borough's ageing population.

Children and Young People

In recent years a number of key policies, frameworks and strategies have emerged at a regional level, such as the Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most', 'Fitter Future for All' Framework 2012-2022 and Making Life Better 2013-

¹² The first phase of main statistics from the 2021 Census was published by NISRA on 22 September 2022 and provides key statistics for a number of census topics such as demography, ethnicity, language, religion and housing and accommodation at Northern Ireland and Local Government District levels.

¹³ Note: The Council's Age Friendly Strategy defines 'older people' as residents within the Borough aged 50+

2023¹⁴, that recognise and highlight the importance of play, leisure, and recreational activity in supporting the lives and development of children and young people. The PfG, for example, seeks to improve the physical and mental health outcomes of Northern Ireland's population, reduce inequalities and prioritise sports and physical activity to tackle obesity and acknowledges that investments in new outdoor recreation and sporting facilities will provide quality and modern focal points for communities.

This is also acknowledged at a more local level, in the Councils Community Plan, 'Connected' 2017- 2030¹⁵, which identifies that people are our most important resource and gives a commitment to providing people centred services that will improve quality of life and health and well-being; offering varied leisure and recreational facilities; celebrating culture and arts; and supporting communities to develop a sense of belonging, safety and cohesion across our area.

The Councils Play Strategy (2018-2026) identifies that children and young people (0 to 18 years) represent a significant proportion of the Boroughs population and acknowledges that play is a natural and fundamental aspect of children and young people's lives that supports growth and development across a range of developmental areas.

As such the Play Strategy seeks to establish a strategic framework within which all decision making, as it relates to the provision of fixed play and the development of non-fixed play, can take place. A detailed overview of the Play Strategy, including its overarching strategic recommendations, is set out in Section 3 'Policy Context' (Council Documents and Strategies).

The Strategy acknowledges that despite the recognised importance of play, children and young people within the Borough often face a range of barriers that prevent them from playing in a way that meets their needs. It identifies that such barriers typically include a lack of accessible play spaces within communities; increased levels of traffic restricting street play opportunities; uninspiring fixed play areas that lack challenge and fail to engage or encourage children to play; a lack of inclusive play provision for children with disabilities and, at societal level, a lack of tolerance amongst some adults for children that play outdoors in their community.

Whilst the LDP Open Space Audit 2021, detailed below, centres upon current open space provision within the Boroughs main settlements¹⁶, the Play Strategy examines the distribution of children and young people throughout the Borough, identifying that the 'rural dispersed nature' of the Boroughs resident population brings challenges for the council in seeking to meet play need through traditional fixed approaches (equipped play parks).

Figure 3, below, sourced from the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Play Strategy 2018-2026, depicts the distribution of children and young people aged 0-14 according to small area boundaries.

It highlights the relatively dispersed rural nature of the population and the significant proportion of the overall area having less than 149 resident children or young people aged 0-14 years. The Council has identified that this will have implications for the Council and other providers

¹⁴ Further information detailed within Section 3 'Policy Context'

¹⁵ Further information detailed within Section 3 'Policy Context'

¹⁶ The Hubs (Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Urban Area (Consisting of Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan)) and Local Towns (Keady, Markethill, Tandragee, Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland)

seeking to meet play need through formal, fixed play provision which have been shown to be effective primarily in areas of higher population density.

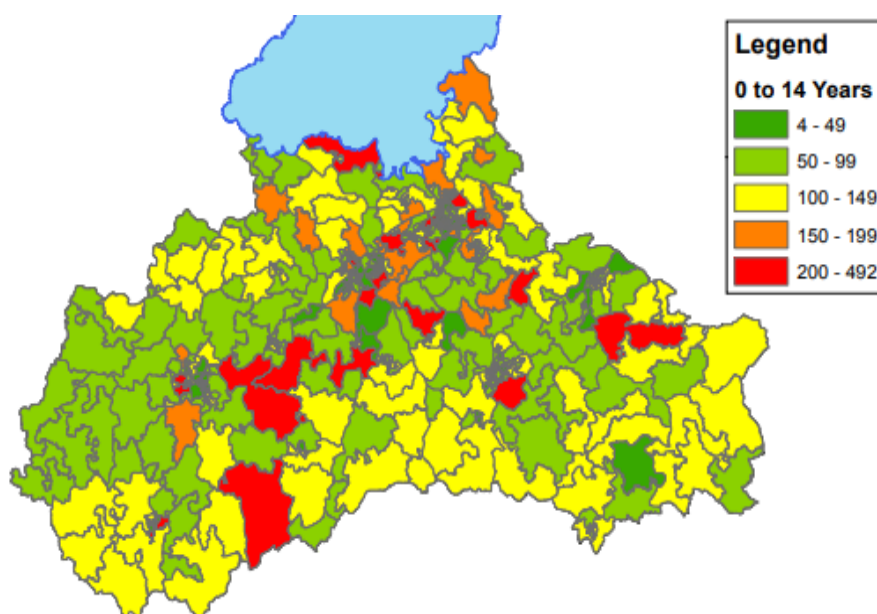


Figure 3: Distribution of Children and Young People (Aged 0-14 Years) across Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough¹⁷

The Strategy also highlights that although the ability to access play and recreation for young people between 15 to 19 years remains a key element of their physical, social and wider development, existing play provision (in the form of fixed play areas) often fails to meet the needs of this older age group, providing insufficient social engagement space or being subject to controls which restrict access by age (often to 14 years or under).

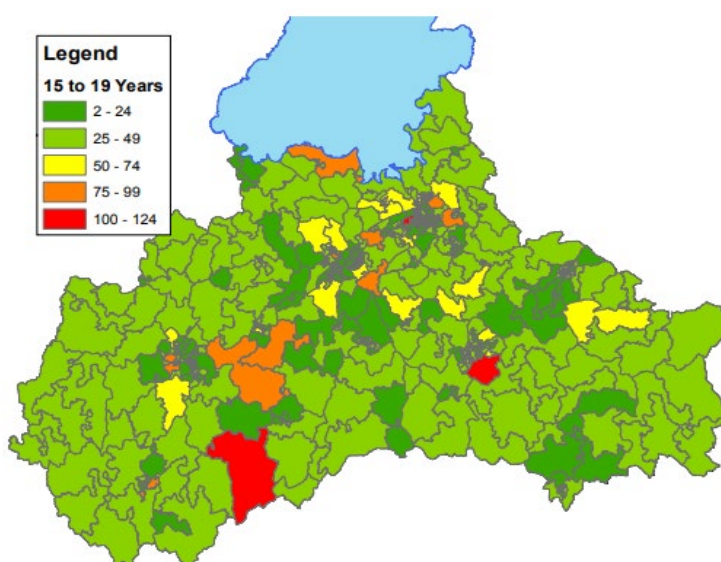


Figure 4: Distribution of Young People aged 15-19 across Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

¹⁷ Source of Information & Maps: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Play Strategy 2018-2026

Figure 4, above, sourced from the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Play Strategy 2018-2026 shows the distribution of young people aged between 15 to 19 years within the Borough.

The Play Strategy highlights that the combination of lower population numbers and the dispersed nature of the population presents a significant challenge to the council (and other providers) in meeting the play, leisure and recreation needs of the older age group.

The Play Strategy acknowledges that the demand for accessible play and recreational activities will continue to be significant over the coming years, given the growing nature of the resident population base and the number of children and young people.

In acknowledgement that play is a natural and fundamental aspect of children and young people's lives it is vital that the LDP seeks to support the delivery of new play space for children and young people, whether this is within new residential development or in locations where the Council or other public bodies identify such a need.

Health & Disability Profile of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

As referred to above, the SPSS identifies that everyone, particularly children, older people and people with disabilities should have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity or simply enjoy and have contact with nature (Paragraph 6.199).

Northern Ireland's Programme for Government 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most' (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025), detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context', outlines the priorities for making a real difference to the lives of everyone living and working in Northern Ireland. It identifies that the strength and success of our society depends upon the wellbeing of everyone and that we all should have access to the best possible opportunities, so that everyone can live, work, and enjoy a happy, healthy life.

Equality is also one of the central cross cutting themes of Connected, the Councils Community Plan, highlighting the Councils commitment to promoting equality, good relations and inclusion, factors that are central to improving the quality of life for everyone and essential for creating a welcoming, confident, and safe community.

Approximately 22% (48,726) of the boroughs resident population had a limiting long term health problem or disability on Census Day 2021, a slight increase from 20% (39,861) recorded in the 2011 Census.

NISRA reports that this increase is in part a reflection of our ageing population, as the results disaggregated by broad age bands indicate that the prevalence of a limiting long-term health problem or disability is related to age¹⁸. Almost 57% of the population aged 65+ in the borough in 2021 had a limiting long-term health problem or disability compared to 6% of those aged between 0-14.

In respect of play space, the Councils Play Strategy acknowledges that despite some progress in recent years, children with disabilities still face significant barriers to accessing play opportunities. It highlights that inclusive play means more than simply providing physical access to play areas or open spaces; to be truly inclusive a play area must be open and accessible to all, providing high quality physical, creative and social play opportunities for children regardless of their needs and abilities. Considering this, one of the overarching recommendations of the Play Strategy is to provide inclusive play

¹⁸ Census 2021 Main statistics for Northern Ireland - Statistical bulletin - Health (nisra.gov.uk)

opportunities, in acknowledgement that play provision should seek to recognise and meet the needs of children with disabilities.

The LDP will have an important role in ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired is given appropriate consideration, including in the accessibility, design and layout of new development and in the provision of facilities provided to cater for the particular needs of people with disabilities.

Local Development Plan - Open Space Audit 2021

The SPSS (paragraph 6.204) directs that the LDP should be informed by a survey / assessment of existing open space provision and future needs, including both public and private open space¹⁹, identifying the different needs that they serve.

Whilst the SPSS also directs that Councils should generally focus on open spaces within or adjoining urban areas it highlights that the assessment of existing open space provision may also consider outdoor recreational facilities in the countryside²⁰.

Furthermore, the SPSS advises that Councils should take account of the provision and role of other forms of open space, such as children's play areas, and the availability of indoor sports facilities highlighting that the distribution and accessibility of such spaces and facilities together with the amenity value, environmental assets and linkages they provide will be important considerations²¹.

The recommended standards for open space, sport and recreation, against which the existing provision of open space in the Borough has been assessed, are set out below. This is followed by the methodology and findings of the LDP Open Space Audit 2021.

Standards for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Fields in Trust – The Six Acre Standard

Relevance of the Fields in Trust (FIT) Standards in Planning National planning policy in Northern Ireland recognises the importance of providing accessible, high quality open spaces to achieve sustainable development. The FIT Standards (formerly referred to as the NPFA 'Six Acre Standard') are recognised across the UK as a common approach for delivering accessible, high quality open space, sport and play provision in line with national planning policy. Fields in Trust can also be used to assess and analyse current provision levels and identify where this does not currently meet the FIT Standards.

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) was rebranded in 2007 as Fields in Trust (FIT) and the publication of 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' (2008, Fields in Trust) superseded all previous editions of the 'Six Acre Standard'.

The Six Acre Standard was established as a guide to ensure that sufficient land is set aside in appropriate locations to enable the population to participate in sports, outdoor play, games

¹⁹ Appendix 1 sets out PPS 8s definition of 'open space' and provides an overview of the various functions open space can perform.

²⁰ PPS 8 directs that the 'assessment of open space will be carried out for all large settlements' (Paragraph 4.7) and the NPFA does not require a quantitative assessment of recreation within smaller settlements of populations less than 1000. As such the 2021 LDP Open Space Audit focused upon the three Hubs and six Local Towns.

²¹ See Appendices 2- 14 which detail the Boroughs extensive portfolio of open space, sporting, and recreational facilities

and other physical recreation. It is important to note that the Six Acre Standard is not a legislative requirement, but this standard is commonly used as a benchmark in spatial planning throughout the United Kingdom.

The SPPS directs, in preparing LDPs councils should assess existing provision of open space in the plan area against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1000 population (commonly referred to as the '6-acre standard') (Paragraph 6.209). The SPPS also requires that the assessment should consider both the level of 'outdoor playing space' provision in the plan area, and the distribution and accessibility of such land use.

The key benchmark standard recommendation of the NPFA 'Six-acre standard' remains under the FIT guidance as 6 acres (2.4 ha) per 1000 of the urban population. This benchmark of 2.4 ha per 1000 of the population is identical to the NPFA recommendation (1.6 ha outdoor sport & 0.8 ha children's playing space).

The Fields in Trust (FIT) guidance refers to open space as land and facilities used for outdoor sport and play. The FIT definition of outdoor playing space is 'space that is accessible and available to the general public, and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation and play'.

The total Six Acre Standard should be met by ensuring land is available for outdoor sport and children's play in the manner set out below:

(A) Outdoor Sport: 1.6 hectares (i) Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletic tracks and miscellaneous sites such as training areas in the ownership of councils; (ii) Facilities as described in (i) above within the educational sector which are available for public use by written agreement; and (iii) Facilities as described in (i) above within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, which serve the leisure time needs for outdoor recreation of their members, or the public. Note: - Included within the standard for outdoor sport is a specific allocation of 1.2 hectares per 1000 people for pitch sports.	(B) Children's Playing Space: 0.8 hectares (i) Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focussed opportunities for outdoor play; and (ii) Casual or informal playing space within housing areas.
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(Source: Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8) Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation)

In summary, the Total FIT (2008) Outdoor Sport & Playing Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha) is as follows:

2008 FIT Outdoor Sport recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2008 FIT Outdoor Children's Playing Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2008 FIT Total Outdoor Sport & Children's playing space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)
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1.6	0.8	2.4

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play- beyond the Six Acre Standard (2015, Fields In Trust)

'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play- beyond the Six Acre Standard' was published in 2015 following a study that was undertaken to establish whether earlier FIT guidance, discussed above, remained fit for purpose. It was also updated to reflect policy changes including the National Planning Policy Framework and includes recommendations on the provision of amenity and natural green space.

Whilst the 2015 guidance retains similar headline rates of provision, it draws out new recommendations for accessibility, the application of standards and the minimum dimensions of formal outdoor space. It also differs from the original '6 acre standard' guidance in that it includes standards for provision of informal outdoor space, made up of parks, amenity and natural lands. Additionally, it recommends that account should be taken of the intensity of use of a particular facility when considering the quantity guidelines, acknowledging that it may be appropriate to relax the quantum where facilities support a high intensity of usage (such as MUGAs). The new guidance also no longer differentiates between urban and rural areas, clarifying that the quantity guidelines can be applied across all urban and rural settings.

The Fields in Trust policy framework detailed in the 2015 Guidance also supports the sustainability benefits associated with outdoor spaces including the conservation of natural resources such as air, water, soil and biodiversity and sustainable consumption and production.

Open space typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ² (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	* Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards. * Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation¹. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Play England Quality Tool.
All outdoor sports ¹	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25 See table 4 for recommended minimum sizes	LAPs - 100m LEAPs - 400m NEAPs - 1,000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

Table 1: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England (2015, Fields in Trust) - Recommended benchmark guidelines – Formal Outdoor Space²²

²² Source: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England (2015, Fields in Trust)

The benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor space recommended by the updated 2015 guidance is detailed in Table 1, above. 'Formal outdoor space' includes a number of open space typologies including playing pitches and equipped play areas. The 2015 guidance recommends a total of 2.15 ha of formal outdoor space per 1000 of the population, compared to 2.4 ha per 1000 of the urban population as set out the SPPS (paragraph 6.209) and as detailed in the 2008 FIT standards, which are referred to above.

Open Space Typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ³ (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Parks and Gardens	0.80	710m	* Parks to be of Green Flag status. * Appropriately landscaped. * Positive management. * Provision of footpaths. * Fields in Trust protection. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime.
Amenity Green Space	0.60	480m	
Natural and Semi-Natural	1.80	720m	

Table 2: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England (2015, Fields in Trust) - Recommended benchmark guidelines – Informal Outdoor Space²³

The benchmark guidelines for informal outdoor space, incorporating parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural and semi-natural, recommended by the 2015 guidance is detailed in Table 2, above. The 2015 guidance recommends a total of 3.2 ha of informal outdoor space per 1000 of the population.

In summary, the total FIT (2015) Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha) is as follows:

2015 FIT Formal Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2015 FIT Informal Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2015 FIT Total Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)
2.15	3.2	5.35

Local Development Plan - Open Space Audit 2021 Methodology

²³ Source: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England (2015, Fields in Trust)

Each of the Borough's three Hubs and six Local Towns²⁴ have been surveyed and assessed against the FIT (NPFA) recommended standard for outdoor sport and children's play space²⁵. This information has been captured on Geographical Information System (GIS) and an audit was carried out, detailing number of sites, their type and size in a spreadsheet for each of these nine larger settlements.

The information presented in the following sections, and in the relevant associated Appendices, provides an overview of the uptake of open space zonings²⁶ as per the legacy plans (as detailed in Chapter 3 'Policy Context' of this Technical Supplement) and an overview of the existing open space, outdoor sport and recreation provision in the Borough.

It is important to note that the current open space provision and recommended level of open space to 2035 has been assessed against both the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision and the revised FIT (2015) benchmark recommendations as referred to above.

Whilst this information provides an updated position to that detailed in Preparatory Paper No. 10 'Open Space, Recreation and Leisure' (May 2016), including the findings of the 2015 LDP Open Space Audit, it is important to note that this information has been collated at a specific point in time and therefore, it will be necessary for the Council to review the open space, outdoor sport and recreation provision in the Borough at a later stage in the process so to ensure that the LDP is founded on the principles of soundness.

Table 3: Overview of Children's play space and outdoor sports (Ha) provision within the Borough

Legacy council areas breakdown	Armagh	Banbridge	Craigavon	Borough Total (Ha)
2021 Children's Play Spaces (Ha)	10.01	6.89	41.98	58.88
2021 Outdoor Sports (Ha)	35.62	19.68	66	121.3

Whilst the following sections explore the findings of the 2021 LDP Open Space Audit in greater detail, the 2021 audit indicates that there is approximately 180ha of outdoor recreation space currently within the hubs and local towns, of which approximately 59ha is dedicated to children's play space and approximately 121ha is dedicated to outdoor sports (see Table 3 above).

LDP Update - Zoned Open Space Uptake²⁷

Uptake of Zoned Open Space Lands within Hubs as per Legacy Area Plans

²⁴ Hubs – Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Urban Area (Consisting of Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan), Local Towns (Keady, Markethill, Tandragee, Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland)

²⁵ PPS 8 directs that the 'assessment of open space will be carried out for all large settlements' (paragraph 4.7) and the NPFA does not require a quantitative assessment of recreation within smaller settlements of populations less than 1000. As such a full FIT assessment was only carried out in respect of the three Hubs and six Local Towns.

²⁶ Within the hubs, local towns, villages and small settlements

²⁷ Source: LDP Open Space Audit reviewed 2021

Within the Legacy Armagh Area Plan 2004 (AAP 2004) and the Alteration No 1: Armagh Countryside Proposals, approximately 15.2ha of land was zoned for Active Open Space so to provide additional playing fields and play areas adjacent to existing facilities. These zonings are located within Armagh City (two zonings) and adjacent to the village of Milford, approximately 700m southwest of the Settlement Development Limit (SDL) of Armagh City.

The uptake of zoned open space (identified as proposed active open space within the AAP 2004) within Armagh City is detailed in Table 4, below, which indicates that all the land zoned for open space within the legacy plan has been developed for recreational purposes.

Within Armagh City, one of the zonings is located at Sherries Field Cathedral Road measuring approximately 4ha and the other is located at Ardmore Recreation Centre which measures approximately 6.3ha²⁸, both of which are fully utilised. The Milford zoning presently accommodates community allotments and a football pitch measuring approximately 4.9ha.

Table 4: Uptake of Zoned Open Space within Hubs as per Legacy Area Plans

Settlement	Total Area (ha) Zoned	Area (ha) Developed for Recreation	Area (ha) Developed for Other Uses	Area (ha) Undeveloped	Legacy Area Plan Designations
Armagh Area Plan 2004 - Hub					
Armagh City	15.2	15.2	00	00	Identified within AAP 2004 as Proposed Active Open Space (AAP 2004 included the playing fields adjacent to Milford as a part of the zoned open space for Armagh City)
Banbridge/ Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 - Hub					
Banbridge Town	0.49	0.49	00	00	Identified within BNMAP 2015 as Zoning BE 38 Recreation and Open Space
Craigavon Area Plan 2010 - Hubs					
Craigavon Urban Area (CUA) Total: Below details the 3 CUA elements.	35*	11.6	1.4	22	Identified within CAP 2010 as Land zoned for Open Space
• Central Craigavon (inc. Aghacommon)	11.9	0.0	0.6	11.3	*Including the undeveloped Parkmore lands as existing O/S instead of zoned O/S as per CAP 2010.
• Lurgan	5.1	0.0	0.0	5.1	

²⁸ Open Space zoning Ardmore was incorrectly recorded as 5.6ha in the AAP 2004. Recently recalculated as part of the Open Space Audit and is noted as 6.3ha

• Portadown	18	11.6	0.8	5.6	
Overall Hubs Total (ha)	50.69	27.29	1.4	22	

Within the Legacy Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan (BNMAP) 2015 only one area of land was Zoned for Open Space (identified as Recreation and Open Space by BNMAP 2015) within Banbridge Settlement Development Limit. The Gate Lodge (Council Office) measures approximately 0.49ha and is located at the former hospital site, Ballygowan Road Banbridge.

This landscaped amenity open space area has been developed and is publicly accessible. The uptake of zoned open space within Banbridge Town is also detailed in Table 4, above, which indicates that all the land zoned for open space within the legacy plan has been developed for recreational purposes.

Within the legacy Craigavon Area Plan 2010 (CAP 2010) there is approximately 35ha of land zoned for Recreation and Open space within the Craigavon Urban Area. The Craigavon Urban Area includes the three main hubs of Central Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown. As the three areas are individually represented; it will be important to break down the open space zonings within each area. The uptake of zoned open space within Craigavon Urban Area is also detailed in Table 4 which includes the breakdown for Central Craigavon, Lurgan and Portadown.

The CAP 2010 zoned two sites for open space within Central Craigavon, measuring approximately 11.9ha in area. The first portion of land measures approximately 6.7ha and is located adjacent to Aghacommon. The site is undeveloped grassland with the exception of 0.6ha which has been developed for residential use

The second area zoned for open space within Central Craigavon is located adjacent to and north / northeast of Parkmore and is an area identified within the CAP 2010 as Existing Open Space measuring approximately 5.2ha²⁹. This area remains undeveloped and there are no historical or live applications relating to this site.

The CAP 2010 zoned one area of open space within Lurgan, located adjacent and west of New Line Graveyard measuring approximately 5.1ha³⁰ in area. This area remains undeveloped and there are no live applications relating to the site.

Within Portadown four areas were zoned for open space. 2.4ha of open space was zoned within Rectory Park (which includes a play park), 1.6ha has been developed for open space purposes, however, 0.8ha was developed for residential development. The Corcrain area had 8.1ha zoned for open space, which is currently being utilised as such. The Corcrain zoning also includes Corcrain Woodland Trail, which is owned by the Woodland Trust. Bann Meadows has an area of 5.6ha of land zoned or open space, which remains undeveloped, however, it is also designated as a Flood Pondage Area within the CAP 2010. Edenvilla has an area of 1.9ha zoned for open space, which is divided into two portions. Edenvilla

²⁹ The Craigavon Area Plan 2010 (Page 89 of CAP 2010) identifies 'Parkmore Open Space' as existing open space measuring 5.2ha in area. However, unlike the other areas of existing open space identified in the Craigavon Urban Area, the land at Parkmore has not been developed or utilised for open space purposes. As such, for the purposes of the LDP Open Space Audit, Parkmore Open Space will be considered as zoned open space as opposed to existing open space. This will ensure that the audit and its findings are based on more accurate categorisation of the Boroughs open space zonings.

³⁰ Although the CAP 2010 recorded this area as 6.2ha it has been remeasured as part of the review for accuracy.

Park Multi Sports Pitch which measures approximately 0.6ha is located within the northern portion of the zoning. The southern portion measures approximately 1.3ha and incorporates Edenvilla Woodland Trail.

Uptake of Zoned Open Space Lands within Local Towns as per Legacy Area Plans³¹

The Armagh Area Plan 2004 identified active open space zonings within its Local Towns. The uptake of these open space zonings within Keady, Markethill and Tandragee is detailed in Table 5, below.

Within Keady there are two separate areas zoned for active open space, totalling 3.2ha. 1.0ha has been developed for residential and business purposes, however 2.2ha remains undeveloped. The AAP 2004 zoned one area for active open space within Markethill measuring approximately 1.2ha. It is located to the west of Markethill Bowling Green, however, it remains undeveloped.

Tandragee had an area of 10.7ha zoned for active open space; 7.7ha of which was developed to accommodate Tandragee Recreation Centre (consisting of one full 3G pitch for soccer, two grass pitches and a play park). Of the remaining active open space zoning, 0.3ha has been developed as a car park and another 0.3ha has been developed for education (Tandragee Nursery School). 2.4ha of the zoned active open space within Tandragee remains undeveloped.

undeveloped.					
Settlement	Area (ha) Zoned	Area (ha) Developed for Recreation (ha)	Area (ha) Developed for Other Uses	Area (ha) Undeveloped	Legacy Area Plan designations
Armagh Area Plan 2004 - Local Towns					
Keady	3.2	0.0	1.0	2.2	Identified within AAP 2004 as Proposed Active Open Space
Markethill	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.2	
Tandragee	10.7	7.7	0.6	2.4	
Banbridge/ Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 - Local Towns					
Dromore	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	No new O/S land zoned in BNMAP 2015 local towns
Gilford	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Rathfriland	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Craigavon Area Plan 2010 - Local Towns					
No Local Towns identified within the Craigavon Area Plan 2015					
Local Towns Total (Ha)	15.1	7.7	1.6	5.8	

Table 5: Uptake of Zoned Open Space within Local Towns as per Legacy Area Plans

³¹ Source: LDP Open Space Audit 2021

As detailed in the Table above, no Recreational and Open Space zonings were identified within the local towns of Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland as per the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015.

The Craigavon Area Plan 2010 did not identify Local Towns.

Uptake of Zoned Open Space Lands within Villages as per Legacy Area Plans³²

Table 6, below, details the uptake of zoned open space within the Boroughs villages, as per the legacy plans.

Three villages (Clonmore, Derrylee and Tamnamore (located within Co. Armagh) were transferred from Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council through the NI Review of Public Administration in 2015. These three villages identified within the Dungannon & South Tyrone Area Plan 2010 had no land zoned for open space.

It is also important to note that no land was designated for active open space / recreation and open space in any villages by the legacy Armagh Area Plan 2004 or legacy Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015.

Settlement	Area (ha) Zoned	Area (ha) Developed for Open Space	Area (ha) Developed for Other Uses	Area (ha) Undevelope d	Legacy Area Plan designation s
Armagh Area Plan 2004 - Villages					
No land designated in Armagh Villages for Proposed Active Open Space as per AAP 2004. * land zoned adjacent and northeast of Milford Village Settlement Development Limit was included within the Armagh City Open Space calculation in line with provision in AAP 2004.					
Banbridge/ Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015 - Villages					
No land designated in Banbridge Villages for Recreation and Open Space as per BNMAP 2015					
Craigavon Area Plan 2010 - Villages					
Aghacommon (V)	Recorded within Central Craigavon Open Space land (Table 1)				Identified within CAP 2010 as Land zoned for Open Space
Aghagallon (V)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Bleary (V)	0.48	0.48	0.0	0.0	
Dollingstown (V)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Donaghcloney (V)	0.74	0.74	0.0	0.0	
Drumnacanny (V)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Magheralin (V)	1.17	1.17	0.0	0.0	
Waringstown (V)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Total	2.39	2.39	0.0	0.0	
Dungannon and South Tyrone Area Plan 2010 – Villages					

³² Source: LDP Open Space Audit 2021

No land zoned land for open space in Clonmore, Derrylee or Tamnamore (Co Armagh element)
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Table 6: Uptake of Zoned Open Space in Villages as per Legacy Area Plans

As highlighted above, the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 was the only legacy plan to zone areas of open space within its villages. However, out of the eight identified villages only four had lands zoned for open space. It is important to note that Aghacommon was recorded under the Central Craigavon calculations in order to align with the approach of the 2015 LDP Open Space Survey³³.

A total of 2.39ha of open space was zoned in Bleary, Donaghcloney and Magheralin, all of which continues to be utilised for open space purposes. Within Donaghcloney 0.74ha was zoned as open space with approximately 0.1ha accommodating a Council owned Play Park and MUGA, and the remaining area utilised for play. Magheralin has two separate areas zoned as open space, the first is Claredon Park, which provides a walking circuit of 0.72ha for residents, and the second is located at Malcolmson Park with approximately 0.45ha dedicated to a Council owned play park and MUGA. Bleary has an area of 0.48ha zoned for open space, which is used as a village green area.

Uptake of Zoned Open Space Lands within Small Settlements as per Legacy Area Plans³⁴

Table 7, below, details the uptake of zoned open space within the Boroughs small settlements, as per the legacy plans. It is important to note that no land was designated for active open space / proposed recreation and open space in any small settlements by the legacy Armagh Area Plan 2004 or legacy Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015.

Settlement	Area (ha) Zoned	Area (ha) Developed for Open Space	Area (ha) Developed for Other Uses	Area (ha) Undeveloped	Legacy Area Plan designations
Armagh Small Settlements					
No land designated in Armagh Small Settlements for Proposed Active Open Space as per AAP 2004 or AAP 2004: Alteration No 1					
Banbridge Small Settlements					
No land designated in Banbridge Small Settlements for Proposed Recreation and Open Space as per BNMAP 2015					
Craigavon Small Settlements					
Derrymacash	0.51	0.51	0.0	0.0	

³³ The methodology and findings of the 2015 LDP Open Space Survey is detailed in Preparatory Paper No. 10 'Open Space, Recreation and Leisure'.

³⁴ Source: LDP Open Space Audit reviewed 2021

Gibson's Hill	0.51	0.51	0.0	0.0	Identified within CAP 2010 as Land zoned for Open Space
Maghery	5.1	4.7	0.4	0.0	
Milltown (Co. Armagh)	0.14	0.14	0.0	0.0	
Tartaraghan	1.0	0.9	0.1	0.0	
The Birches	0.39	0.29	0.1	0.0	
Total	7.65	7.05	0.6	0.0	

Table 7: Uptake of Zoned Open Space in Small Settlements as per Legacy Area Plans

As highlighted above, the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 was the only legacy plan to zone areas of open space within its small settlements. Of the sixteen identified small settlements in the CAP 2010, only six had land zoned for open space as per Table 7, above.

Derrymacash and Gibsons Hill both had approximately 0.51ha of zoned open space within each of their settlement limits and both have been fully utilised. Gibsons Hill has a playing field with goal posts and within Derrymacash the open space includes Wolf Island Play Area and a maintained grass area.

Within Maghery 5.1ha of land was zoned for open space, including Maghery County Park and playing fields, which includes a play park, MUGA and jetty. Of this 5.1ha zoning, 4.7ha has been utilised for open space purposes with 0.4ha accommodating residential development.

0.14ha of open space was zoned within Milltown (Co. Armagh) by the CAP 2010, consisting of a maintained grassed area. There is also a play park serving the small settlement, adjacent to and north of the zoned open space lands.

Within Tartaraghan, 1ha of land was identified within the CAP 2010 as zoned open space. 0.9ha of the zoned land was developed for open space purposes. The remaining 0.1ha has been developed for a car park and building associated with the adjacent Church.

The Birches also had an area of 0.39ha zoned for open space, 0.29 of which was developed for open space, which included a recent Council owned play park (opened October 2023), with the remaining 0.1ha being developed as a car park to serve the local primary school.

Summary 2021 LDP Audit of Zoned Open Space Uptake as per Legacy Area Plans³⁵

Table 8, below, provides an overview of the quantity (ha) of open space zoned within the Legacy Area Plans that has been developed for open space, remains undeveloped or lost to other uses.

Table 8: Overview of Zoned Open Space Uptake as per Legacy Area Plans

³⁵ Source: LDP Open Space Audit reviewed 2021

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough	Area (ha) Zoned	Area (ha) Developed for Open Space	Area (ha) Developed for Other Uses	Area (ha) Undeveloped
Hubs	50.69	27.29	1.4	22
Local Towns	15.1	7.7	1.6	5.8
Villages	2.39	2.39	0	0
Small Settlement	7.65	7.05	0.6	0
Total	75.83	44.43	3.6	27.8

As detailed in Table 8, none of the Borough's villages or small settlements have any zoned open space remaining. All the land zoned for open space within the villages and small settlements has been utilised for such purposes except for 0.6ha within the small settlements which has been developed for alternative uses.

As discussed previously, the Craigavon Area Plan 2010 did not designate Local Towns and no recreational and open space zonings were identified within the Local Towns of Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland in the Banbridge, Newry and Mourne Area Plan 2015. As such the 15.1ha of zoned land in the Local Towns, identified in Table 8 above, relates to Keady, Markethill and Tandragee. Of this 15.1ha of active open space zoned within the legacy Armagh Area Plan 2004, 5.8ha remains undeveloped.

The Armagh Area Plan 2004 zoned 1.2ha of land for active open space within Markethill which remains undeveloped.

Within Keady, the Armagh Area Plan 2004 zoned 3.2ha of land for active open space. However, none of this land has been developed for its intended purpose, with 1ha developed for alternative uses and 2.2ha remaining undeveloped.

Of the 10.7ha of land zoned for active open space in Tandragee, 7.7ha has been developed to accommodate the Tandragee Recreational Centre, which includes a MUGA, Play Park and grass playing fields. 0.6ha of the land zoned for active open space has been developed for other uses, with 2.4ha of the zoned land undeveloped.

As detailed in Table 8 above, the Hubs have the majority of the remaining undeveloped zoned open space, with 22ha of zoned open space lands currently undeveloped. All of this undeveloped zoned open space is entirely located within the Craigavon Urban Area, with 11.3ha of these lands located within Central Craigavon, 5.6ha located within Portadown and 5.1ha located within Lurgan.

As detailed in Table 8, of the total 75.83ha zoned for active/ recreational use by the Legacy Area Plans, 44.43ha has been developed for recreational purposes as playing fields, play parks, MUGAs or recreational centres. Approximately 3.6ha of land developed has been developed for of uses including residential, educational and business.

The remaining undeveloped land measures approximately 27.8ha is located within the Hubs and Local Towns. As highlighted above, all of the undeveloped zoned open space

land within the Hubs lie within the Craigavon Urban Area (22ha) and the remaining 5.8ha of zoned active open space is located within the three local towns of Keady, Markethill and Tandragee. There was only one zoned open space site within the BNMAP 2015, a landscaped amenity open space at the Banbridge Gate Lodge (Zoning Ref: BE38).

Children's Play Space Provision in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Children's Playing Space

Children's play space contributes to the health, well-being, and overall development of children. Outdoor children's play facilities vary from formal equipped children's playgrounds to kick-about areas, MUGAs and outdoor gyms. Most facilities provided by the Borough Council are located in the Hubs and Local Towns with lesser provision in the Villages and Small Settlements, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: No. of equipped Children's Play Spaces provided by the Council		
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Settlements	Number of Children's Playspaces	
	LEAPS	NEAPS
Hubs		
Armagh City	2	9
Banbridge	5	2
Craigavon Urban Area		
• Central Craigavon	4	3
• Lurgan	5	4
• Portadown	9	4
Hubs Overall Total	25	22
Local Towns		
Keady	0	1
Markethill	1	1
Tandragee	0	1
Dromore	3	1
Gilford	1	1
Rathfriland	3	1
Local Towns Overall Totals	8	6
Villages		
Armagh Villages	8	2
Banbridge Villages	1	3
Craigavon Villages	2	4
Villages Overall Total	11	9
Small Settlements		
Armagh Small Settlements	8	0
Banbridge Small Settlements	5	0
Craigavon Small Settlements	4	2

Small Settlements Overall Total	17	2
Outside Settlement Development Limits		
Banbridge (nearest settlement is Finnis) • Finnis Play Park, adjacent & northwest of Mossvale Terrace	1	0
Lurgan (Nearest settlement CUA) • Kinnego Marina Play Area; • Oxford Island Play Park	0	2
Keady • Carnagh Forest Park	0	1
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Overall Total	62	42

Two factors are of particular importance when assessing the level of children's play space provision within the Borough: the overall quantum and the spatial distribution of play facilities.

Distribution of Children's Playing Space in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Table 10, below, details the Fields In Trust (FIT) recommended maximum accessibility distances for children's play spaces, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Whilst both quantum and spatial distribution are both important considerations, the spatial distribution of play space provision is deemed to be more important as it relates to FIT reasonable access guidelines from home to children's play facilities within the various settlements.

In assessing the distribution of children's playing space, distance needs to be calculated on the basis of walking time from children's homes. Fields in Trust recommends different travel times, dependent upon the nature of the facilities and defines a three-tier hierarchy of play space including Local Areas for Play (LAP), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP).

Table 10: FIT Walking Distances to Children's Playing Space³⁶

Type of Space	Distance Criteria (Metres)	
	Walking Distance	Straight line Distance
LAPs: Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces – for play and informal recreation	100	60
LEAPs: Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play & informal recreation.	400	240
NEAPs: Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation & provision for children and young people.	1000	600

The actual extent of the areas served by Local Areas of Play (LAPs) have not been analysed as part of the LDP 2021 Open Space Audit because the catchment radius of one minute (60 metres) is very small. However, the overall distribution of the LAPS within each

³⁶ Source: Fields in Trust (Formerly NPFA), 2008

settlement is detailed and assessed as part of the Hubs and Local Towns FIT 2021 Open Space Audit.

The distribution of children's play space is of most significance in the Hubs and Local Towns (Appendix 2). Due to the smaller size of the other settlements, it is likely that any play space is reasonably accessible to the whole settlement. Appendix 2 details the equipped children's play parks located within in the Boroughs settlements. In addition to equipped play areas, there are a number of Multi-Use Games Areas within the Borough as detailed in Appendix 8.

Table 11: Children's Play Space (NEAPS & LEAPs) within the Boroughs Hubs & Local Towns

No of Children's Playing Spaces	3 x Hubs	6 x Local Towns	Villages	Small Settlements & Rural Area
LEAPs	25	8	11	18
NEAPs	22	6	9	5
Total	47	14	20	23

Table 11 details the FIT recommended maximum walking distances to various categories of play areas. The key levels of provision are Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP: 240m catchment) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP: 600m catchment). This recommended walking catchment has been applied to settlement maps for each of the three Hubs and six Local Towns and is detailed in Appendix 2. These maps highlight specific issues in respect of equipped playground and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) provision within the Borough.

Dromore has relatively good provision within the western side of the town but lacks provision around the modern housing developments to the northeast / east along the Hillsborough, Milebush and Mossvale Roads, to the south and southeast along the Diamond Road and to the east along the Dromara and Mount St / Mound Roads.

Gilford's main provision deficiency is associated with the housing developments located within the northern portion of the town, along Hunter's Hill Road, and within the south and southwestern portion of the town along the Whinny, Stramore and Tandragee Roads.

Whilst Keady benefits from the provision of shared leisure facilities located at St. Patrick's High School, the town only has one equipped play area. This is located in the central 'Glen' area and as a result there are significant areas to the east and south of peripheral housing, along the Tassagh, Annavale, Granemore and Darkley Roads, that are beyond the recommended FIT walking distance.

Markethill and Rathfriland are both well provided for in respect of play provision. Within Markethill there is only a small area of housing to the northwest of the town, the northern portion of Mill Place Manor, which is beyond the recommended NEAP walking catchment. Within Rathfriland, there is only a small area to the southeast and southwest of the town, and to the northwest, along Loughbrickland Road, which is beyond the recommended NEAP walking catchment.

Tandragee has only one equipped play area which is located adjacent to the Tandragee Recreation Centre therefore leaving significant areas to the northwest along the Armagh and Portadown Roads lacking in provision. There are also areas to the south of the town, along the Markethill and Glebe Hill Road (Glebe Hill Manor), which are beyond the LEAP

and NEAP recommended FIT walking distances. It is important to note that although there are significant areas lacking in provision there is a recreational centre located within the town which offers a range of facilities available to the local community. Appendix 4 provides an overview of the facilities and services available within the Boroughs recreational centres.

In relation to the Hubs, Armagh City has three clear areas which are not located within the recommended FIT walking distance. These are located to the northeast along the Portadown Road, southeast along the Newry Road and to the south along the Keady Road. The Ardmore Recreation Centre, which is located off the Newry Road, helps to compensate for part of this shortfall due to the variety of facilities on offer (as detailed in Appendix 4) to the local community.

Within Banbridge there are five equipped playparks (LEAPs) and one neighbourhood play area (NEAP) which offer reasonable provision throughout the town, other than areas within eastern and western / southwestern portions of the town. Some portions of residential areas along Castlewellan Road, Dromore Street, Newry Road and Ballygowan Road are all located outside the recommended walking distance as per the FIT standards. A significant area of Banbridge, to the south along Newry Road and towards the west and north of Scarva Road is located outside the recommended walking distance as per the FIT standard.

Within the Craigavon Urban Area, consideration is given to Portadown, Central Craigavon and Lurgan. Within Portadown, a number of areas within the northeastern, southeastern, southern and southwestern portions appear to be beyond the recommended FIT walking distance for outdoor play areas. These include residential areas located along Mahon, Tandragee, Gilford, Lurgan and Old Lurgan Roads. Please note that the Kernan / Drumnagoon area has recently benefitted from the provision of a new children's play park, which complements the existing outdoor facilities provided within the Central Sports Area (Kernan Playing Fields).

Within Central Craigavon, there are two main areas that appear to be beyond the recommended FIT walking distance for outdoor play areas. One area is located along the Balteagh Road, however it is located in close proximity to the Craigavon Lakes and as such benefits from the provision of water sport facilities in addition to the newly constructed South Lakes Leisure Centre. The second area beyond the recommended FIT walking distance for outdoor play areas is located to the south of Central Craigavon and generally relates to Moyraverty, an area which includes both long established and new residential developments such as Garrymore, Clanrolla, Dicksons Wood and Old Fort Lodge.

Within Lurgan, there appears to be four locations, mainly associated with residential areas, that are beyond the recommended FIT walking distance for outdoor play areas. One area is located to the south of Lurgan and relates to a large residential area situated between the Banbridge Road and the Gilford Road. Another area is located to the west of Lurgan, along the Portadown Road and Francis Street, with a further area located to the northwest of Lurgan along the Silverwood, Kiln and Lough Roads. Due to new residential development under construction to the north / northeast of Lurgan, along the Cornakinnegar and Kilmore Roads, there are additional areas located outside the recommended walking distance as per the FIT Standards.

Within the Borough, all the settlements with a population between 500 and 1000 (based on the 2021 Census) have an equipped children's playpark. Of the settlements that have a population between 300 and 500 (2021 Census), Ballymacmaine, Blackscull, Derryhale, Derrymore and Derrytrasna settlements do not have an equipped children's playpark. All playparks within the Borough are detailed in Appendix 7.

Open Space Provision in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Vs FIT Standards

As detailed at the outset of this Chapter (Standards for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) the 2008 FIT guidance for outdoor sport and playing space ('Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play', Fields in Trust 2008) made the following recommendations in respect of outdoor sport and children's playing space provision (per 1000 of the population (ha)):

2008 FIT Outdoor Sport recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2008 FIT Outdoor Children's Playing Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2008 FIT Total Outdoor Sport & Children's playing space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)
1.6	0.8	2.4

Table 12 below details the open space provision in the larger settlements within the Borough³⁷ against the SPPS, PPS8 and FIT (2008) benchmark recommendations. Our larger settlements were surveyed by the LDP Team in 2021/22. Table 12 projects the settlements 2021 Census populations to 2035 (end of Plan period) using NISRA population projection growth data. The estimated 2035 settlement populations are then used to calculate the recommended FIT (2008) open space level of provision in hectares (ha) – i.e., 2.4ha per 1000 population. It contains details of open space under / over provision for outdoor sport (1.6ha per 1000 popn), outdoor children's play space (0.8ha per 1000 popn) and the overall provision of outdoor sport and children's play space (2.4ha per 1000 popn).

The following should also be read alongside the information detailed below in Table 13 Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Settlement Open Space Audit (Existing Provision Vs 2015 FIT guidance Standards: 5.35ha per 1000 popn) and its associated text. Table 13 details the Boroughs open space provision against the revised FIT (2015) benchmark recommendations as referred to at the outset of this chapter (Standards for Open Space, Sport and Recreation).

³⁷ The 3 x hubs and 6 x local towns

Table 12: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Settlement open space audit (Existing Provision Vs 2008 FIT guidance Standards: 2.4ha per 1000 popn)

Settlement	2021 Census Settlement popn	Settlement Population projection estimate to 2035*	2021 LDP survey: outdoor sport total (ha) - FIT 2008 1.6ha per 1000 popn**	Estimated 2035 outdoor sport total (ha) requirement based on 2035 projected popn - FIT 2008 1.6ha per 1000 popn	2035 playing fields total (ha) provision - FIT 1.6ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision	2021 play space total (ha) - FIT 2008 0.8ha per 1000 popn**	Estimated 2035 play space total (ha) requirement based on 2035 projected popn - FIT 2008 0.8ha per 1000 popn	Total 2035 play space (ha) provision - FIT 0.8ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision	Total 2035 (playing fields & play space) settlement provision (ha) - FIT 2008 standards of 2.4ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision.
Armagh	16438	18125	20.35	29	-8.65	5.49	14.5	-9.01	-17.66
Banbridge	17248	19018	9.14	30.43	-21.29	3.64	15.21	-11.57	-32.86
Central Craigavon	72721	80182	66	128.29	-62.29	41.98	64.15	-22.17	-84.46
Keady	3327	3668	5.85	5.87	-0.02	1.48	2.93	-1.45	-1.47
Markethill	1906	2102	3.12	3.36	-0.24	2.1	1.68	0.42	0.18
Tandragee	3543	3907	6.3	6.25	0.05	0.94	3.13	-2.19	-2.14
Dromore	6492	7158	5.83	11.45	-5.62	0.64	5.73	-5.09	-10.71
Gilford	1957	2158	2.09	3.45	-1.36	2.15	1.73	0.42	-0.94
Rathfriland	2489	2744	2.62	4.39	-1.77	0.46	2.2	-1.74	-3.51
Total	126121	139061	121.3	222.5	-101.2	58.88	111.25	-52.37	-153.57
	* Settlement population projection estimate to 2035 = 2021 Settlement census popn x average ABC Borough projected popn growth (%) 2021-35.								
	**ABC Open Space provision in larger settlements surveyed in 2021 / 2022.								
	*** Issues in sourcing the popn of the 3 x component parts of CUA (ie Portadown, Central Craigavon & Lurgan) -NISRA only provides the overall CUA figure								

Open space provision within the Boroughs larger Settlements

The following paragraphs, to be read alongside Table 12 above, consider open space provision in the Boroughs larger settlements³⁸ against the SPPS, PPS8 & FIT (2008) benchmark recommendations.

Open space provision within the Hubs

Armagh City

Armagh City has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Armagh City currently has 20.35ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 8.65ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (29ha). Armagh City currently has 5.49ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 9.01ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (14.5ha).

The overall recommended Armagh City level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 43.5ha. There is currently an overall under provision of 17.66ha of open space lands in Armagh City (25.84ha).

Banbridge Town

Banbridge Town has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Banbridge Town currently has 9.14ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 21.29ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (30.43ha). Banbridge Town currently has 3.64ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 11.57ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (15.21ha).

The overall recommended Banbridge Town level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 45.64ha. There is currently an overall under provision of 32.86ha of open space lands in Banbridge Town (12.78ha).

Craigavon Urban Area (including Portadown, Central Craigavon & Lurgan)

Craigavon Urban Area has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Craigavon Urban Area currently has 66ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 62.29ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (128.29ha). Craigavon Urban Area currently has 41.98ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 22.17ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008 level of provision in 2035 (64.15ha).

³⁸ The 3 x hubs and 6 x local towns

The overall recommended Craigavon Urban Area level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 192.44ha. There is currently an overall under provision of 84.46ha of open space lands in Craigavon Urban Area (107.98ha).

Open space provision within the Local Towns

Armagh Local Towns

Keady

Keady has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Keady currently has 5.85ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 0.02ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (5.87ha). Keady currently has 1.48ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 1.45ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (2.93ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space for Keady to 2035 (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 8.8ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 1.47ha of open space lands in Keady (7.33ha).

Markethill

Markethill has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Markethill currently has 3.12ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 0.24ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (3.36ha). Markethill currently has 2.1ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 0.42ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (1.68ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 for Markethill (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 5.04ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 0.18ha of open space lands in Markethill (5.22ha).

Tandragee

Tandragee has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Tandragee currently has 6.3ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 0.05ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (6.25ha). Tandragee currently has 0.94ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 2.19ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (3.13ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 for Tandragee (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 9.38ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 2.14ha of open space lands in Tandragee (7.24ha).

Banbridge Local Towns

Dromore

Dromore has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Dromore currently has 5.83ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 5.62ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (11.45ha). Dromore currently has 0.64ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 5.09ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (5.73ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 in Dromore (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 17.18ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 10.71ha of open space lands in Dromore (6.47ha).

Gilford

Gilford has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Gilford currently has 2.09ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 1.36ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (3.45ha). Gilford currently has 2.15ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 0.42ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (1.73ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 in Gilford (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 5.18ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 0.94ha of open space lands in Gilford (4.24ha).

Rathfriland

Rathfriland has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

Rathfriland currently has 2.62ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 1.77ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (4.39ha). Rathfriland currently has 0.46ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 1.74ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (2.2ha).

The overall recommended level of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 in Rathfriland (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 6.59ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 3.51ha of open space lands in Rathfriland (3.08ha).

Overall Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Open Space Provision

The 3 Hubs (Armagh City, Banbridge Town and Craigavon Urban Area) and 6 Local Towns (Keady, Markethill, Tandragee, Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland) have been surveyed in relation to current open space provision and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2008 guidance benchmark provision.

The current total for the 9 settlements is 121.3ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 101.2ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (222.5ha). The total for the 9 settlements currently has 58.88ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 52.37ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2008) level of provision in 2035 (111.25ha).

The overall recommended total of outdoor sport and children's playing space to 2035 for the 9 settlements level (FIT guidance 2008 =2.4ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 333.75ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 153.57ha of open space lands in the 9 settlements (180.18ha).

Of the overall recommended 2008 FIT provision (Formal & Informal Outdoor Space: 2.4ha per 1000 population), it is notable that all of the settlements, other than Markethill present as under provision to 2035, to some degree.

In recent years there has been an increase in the provision and use of synthetic pitches, with these facilities now complementing the use of natural grass for many sports³⁹. Whilst the Six Acre Standard assesses the provision of a suitable synthetic surface to equate to twice that of a grass surface of similar size Sport NI considers that 'in some instances, synthetic pitches can equate to four times that of a grass surface.'

This is an important consideration when evaluating the level of under provision detailed above, as is recognising the potential value of available school sports facilities in addressing shortfalls within the Borough.

Borough Open Space Provision Vs the revised FIT (2015) benchmark

The 5.35ha per 1,000 population is the revised benchmark published by Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association) in 2015. It serves as a quantitative guideline for planners to ensure there is sufficient public green areas for community recreation and sports. This FIT standard was updated in 2015 from the original 6 acre standard (2.4ha per 1000 population) and includes informal and formal elements. A key difference in the revised standard is the incorporation of parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural and semi-natural areas in the informal outdoor space calculation.

The following section details the Boroughs open space provision against the revised FIT (2015) benchmark recommendations as referred to at the outset of this chapter (Standards for Open Space, Sport and Recreation).

An overview of 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Beyond the Six Acre Standard England' (2015, Fields in Trust) and the updated recommended benchmark guidelines for both formal and informal outdoor space is detailed above. Guidance containing similar FIT recommended open space standard have since been published for Scotland, Wales & NI.

The 'formal outdoor space' category within the 2015 guidance comprises a number of open space typologies including playing pitches and equipped children's play areas. The benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor space recommended by the updated 2015 guidance is detailed in Table 1.

Whilst the 2008 FIT standards recommended a total of 2.4 ha of Outdoor Sport and Children's playing space per 1000 of the urban population (comprised of 0.8ha for outdoor children's

³⁹ The Active Places Research Report 'Bridging the Gap' (2009, Sport NI), detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context'

playing space and 1.6ha of outdoor sport per 1000 of the population), as set out in the SPSS, the 2015 guidance recommended a total of 2.15 ha of formal outdoor space per 1000 of the population (includes both playing pitches and equipped play areas).

In respect of informal outdoor space, incorporating parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural and semi-natural, the 2015 guidance recommended a total of 3.2 ha of informal outdoor space per 1000 of the population.

In summary, the total FIT (2015) Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha) is as follows:

2015 FIT Formal Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2015 FIT Informal Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)	2015 FIT Total Outdoor Space recommended provision per 1000 population (ha)
• Parks & Gardens • Amenity Green Space & • Natural & Semi-Natural	• Outdoor Sports • Equipped Play Areas & • Other Outdoor Provision	• Total Outdoor Space (Formal & Informal)
2.15	3.2	5.35

Open space typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ² (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	* Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards. * Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation¹. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Play England Quality Tool.
All outdoor sports ¹	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25 See table 4 for recommended minimum sizes	LAPs - 100m LEAPs - 400m NEAPs - 1,000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

Table 13 below, details the open space provision in the Boroughs larger settlements⁴⁰ against the revised FIT (2015) benchmark recommendations which were published after the SPSS was adopted. Our larger settlements were surveyed by the LDP Team in 2021/22.

Table 13 projects the settlements 2021 Census populations to 2035 (end of Plan period) using NISRA population projection growth data. The estimated 2035 settlement populations are then used to calculate the recommended FIT (2015) open space level of provision in hectares (ha) – i.e., 5.35ha per 1000 population. It contains details of open space under / over provision for

⁴⁰ The 3 x hubs and 6 x local towns

formal outdoor sport (1.6ha per 1000 popn), formal outdoor play space (0.55ha per 1000 popn), informal outdoor space (3.2ha per 1000 popn) and the overall provision of outdoor space (5.35ha per 1000 popn).

This information should also be read alongside the information detailed above in Table 12 and its associated text. The information above details the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough open space provision against the SPPS, PPS8 and the original FIT (2008) open space benchmark recommendations.

**Table 13: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Settlement open space audit (Existing Provision Vs 2015 FIT guidance
Standards: 5.35ha per 1000 popn)**

Settlement	2021 Census Settlement popn	Settlement Population projection estimate to 2035*	2021 LDP survey: formal outdoor sport total (ha) - FIT 2015 1.6ha per 1000 popn**	Estimated 2035 formal outdoor sport total (ha) - requirement based on 2035 projected popn - FIT 2015 1.6ha per 1000 popn	2035 formal outdoor sport total (ha) provision - FIT 2015 1.6ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision	2021 formal outdoor play areas & other outdoor provision total (ha) - FIT 2015 0.55ha per 1000 popn**	Estimated 2035 formal play areas & other outdoor provision total (ha) requirement based on 2035 projected popn - FIT 2015 0.55ha per 1000 popn	Total 2035 formal play areas & other outdoor provision (ha) - FIT 2015 0.55ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision	2021 LDP survey: amenity space total (ha) - FIT 2015 informal outdoor space 3.2ha per 1000 popn**	Estimated 2035 informal outdoor space provision total (ha) requirement based on 2035 projected popn - FIT 2015 3.2ha per 1000 popn	Total 2035 informal outdoor space (ha) provision - FIT 2015 3.2ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision	Total 2035 (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) settlement provision (ha) - FIT 2015 standards of 5.35ha per 1000 popn = over (+) / under (-) provision
Armagh City	16438	18125	20.35	29.00	-8.65	5.49	9.97	-4.48	179.55	58.00	121.55	108.42
Banbridge	17248	19018	9.14	30.43	-21.29	3.64	10.46	-6.82	83.1	60.86	22.24	-5.86
CUA***	72721	80182	66	128.29	-62.29	41.98	44.10	-2.12	732.04	256.58	475.46	411.05
Keady	3327	3668	5.85	5.87	-0.02	1.48	2.02	-0.54	14.29	11.74	2.55	1.99
Markethill	1906	2102	3.12	3.36	-0.24	2.1	1.16	0.94	264.15	6.72	257.43	258.13
Tandragee	3543	3907	6.3	6.25	0.05	0.94	2.15	-1.21	48.49	12.50	35.99	34.83
Dromore	6492	7158	5.83	11.45	-5.62	0.64	3.94	-3.30	18.33	22.91	-4.58	-13.50
Gilford	1957	2158	2.09	3.45	-1.36	2.15	1.19	0.96	5.59	6.90	-1.31	-1.71
Rathfriland	2489	2744	2.62	4.39	-1.77	0.46	1.51	-1.05	4.12	8.78	-4.66	-7.48
Total	126121	139061	121.3	222.50	-101.20	58.88	76.48	-17.60	1349.66	445.00	904.66	785.86

Open space provision within the Boroughs larger Settlements Vs the revised FIT (2015) benchmark

The following paragraphs, read alongside Table 13 above, consider open space provision in the Boroughs larger settlements⁴¹ against the FIT (2015) benchmark recommendations.

Open space provision within the Hubs Vs the revised FIT (2015) benchmark

Armagh City

Armagh City has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Armagh City currently has 20.35ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 8.65ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (29ha). Armagh City currently has 5.49ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 4.48ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (9.97ha). Armagh City currently has 179.55ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 121.55ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (58ha).

The overall recommended Armagh City level of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 96.97ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 108.42ha of open space lands in Armagh City (205.39ha).

Banbridge Town

Banbridge Town has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Banbridge Town currently has 9.14ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 21.29ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (30.43ha). Banbridge Town currently has 3.64ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 6.82ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (10.46ha). Banbridge Town currently has 83.1ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 22.24ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (60.86ha).

The overall recommended level of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Banbridge Town (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 101.75ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 5.86ha of open space lands in Banbridge Town (95.88ha).

Craigavon Urban Area (including Portadown, Central Craigavon & Lurgan)

Craigavon Urban Area has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Craigavon Urban Area currently has 66ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 62.29ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (128.29ha). Craigavon Urban Area currently has 41.98ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 2.12ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (44.1ha). Craigavon Urban

⁴¹ The 3 x hubs and 6 x local towns

Area currently has 732.04ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 475.46ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (256.58ha).

The overall recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Craigavon Urban Area (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 428.97ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 411.05ha of open space lands in Craigavon Urban Area (840.02ha).

Open space provision within the Local Towns Vs the revised FIT (2015) benchmark

Armagh Local Towns

Keady

Keady has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Keady currently has 5.85ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 0.02ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (5.87ha). Keady currently has 1.48ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 0.54ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (2.02ha). Keady currently has 14.29ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 2.55ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (11.74ha).

The overall recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Keady (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 19.63ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 1.99ha of open space lands in Keady (21.62ha).

Markethill

Markethill has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Markethill currently has 3.12ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 0.24ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (3.36ha). Markethill currently has 2.1ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 0.94ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (1.16ha). Markethill currently has 264.15ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 257.43ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (6.72ha).

The recommended overall quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Markethill (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 11.24ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 258.13ha of open space lands in Markethill (269.37ha).

Tandragee

Tandragee has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Tandragee currently has 6.3ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 0.05ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (6.25ha). Tandragee currently has 0.94ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 1.21ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (2.15ha). Tandragee currently has 48.49ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 35.99ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (12.5ha).

The overall recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Tandragee (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 20.9ha. Overall, there is currently an over provision of 34.83ha of open space lands in Tandragee (55.73ha).

Banbridge Local Towns

Dromore

Dromore has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Dromore currently has 5.83ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 5.62ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (11.45ha). Dromore currently has 0.64ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 3.3ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (3.94ha). Dromore currently has 18.33ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 4.58ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (22.91ha).

Overall, the recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Dromore (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 38.3ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 13.5ha of open space lands in Dromore (24.8ha).

Gilford

Gilford has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Gilford currently has 2.09ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 1.36ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (3.45ha). Gilford currently has 2.15ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 0.96ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (1.19ha). Gilford currently has 5.59ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 1.31ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (6.9ha).

The overall recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Gilford (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 11.54ha. Overall, there is currently an under provision of 1.71ha of open space lands in Gilford (9.83ha).

Rathfriland

Rathfriland has been surveyed in relation to current open space provision, and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

Rathfriland currently has 2.62ha of formal outdoor sport lands which is 1.77ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (4.39ha). Rathfriland currently has 0.46ha of outdoor playing space lands which is 1.05ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (1.51ha). Rathfriland currently has 4.12ha of informal outdoor space lands which is 4.66ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (8.78ha).

The overall recommended quantity of open space (formal outdoor & informal outdoor space) lands to 2035 for Rathfriland (FIT guidance 2015 =5.35ha per 1000 population benchmark provision) is 14.68ha. Overall, that is a current under provision of 7.48ha of open space lands in Rathfriland (7.2ha).

Overall Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Open Space Provision Vs the revised FIT (2015) benchmark

The 3 Hubs (Armagh City, Banbridge Town and Craigavon Urban Area) and 6 Local Towns (Keady, Markethill, Tandragee, Dromore, Gilford and Rathfriland) have been surveyed in relation to current open space provision and the above table considers the recommended level of open space to 2035 against the FIT 2015 guidance benchmark provision.

The total for the 9 settlements currently has 121.3ha of outdoor sport open space lands which is 101.2ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (222.5ha).

The total for the 9 settlements currently has 58.88ha of outdoor children's playing space lands which is 17.6ha less than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (76.48ha).

The total for the 9 settlements is currently 1349.66ha of outdoor informal space lands which is 904.66ha more than the recommended (FIT guidance 2015) level of provision in 2035 (445ha).

In conclusion, the total formal and informal open space quantity currently provides an over provision of 785.86ha of open space lands in the 9 larger settlements (1,529.84ha) against the recommended quantity of 743.98 ha (FIT 2015: 5.35ha per 1000 population).

Of the overall recommended FIT provision (Formal & Informal Outdoor Space: 5.35ha per 1000 population), it is notable that all 4 Banbridge legacy Council settlements present as under provision to 2035, whilst the Craigavon Urban Area (CUA) and the 4 x Armagh legacy Council settlements present as over provision to 2035.

As highlighted previously, there has been an increase in the provision and use of synthetic pitches in recent years, with these facilities now complementing the use of natural grass for many sports⁴².

Whilst the Six Acre Standard assesses the provision of a suitable synthetic surface to equate to twice that of a grass surface of similar size Sport NI considers that 'in some instances, synthetic pitches can equate to four times that of a grass surface.' This is an important consideration when evaluating the level of under provision detailed above, as is recognising the potential value of available school sports facilities in addressing shortfalls within the Borough.

⁴² The Active Places Research Report 'Bridging the Gap' (2009, Sport NI), detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context'

Revised FIT (2024) Standards

Since the 2021 LDP Open Space Survey was carried out and analysed, Fields in Trust (FIT) published new benchmark guidelines (Fields in Trust Standards Creating great spaces for all, 2024.⁴³) for the calculation of the quantity and accessibility of open space, outdoor sports and play spaces. Whilst some of the categories within the revised guidelines have changed, the revised FIT standards include the same overall total minimum provision (minimum of 5.35 hectares per 1000 population).

The findings and analysis of the 2021 LDP Open Space Survey reflect a specific point in time. As the LDP is progressed the Open Space Audit will be updated and reassessed against the FIT (2024) benchmark standards to ensure that any changes in population, provision, accessibility and quality are fully reflected.

It is important to note that the 2021 LDP Open Space Survey relates solely to the Borough's three Hubs and six Local Towns and the findings presented represent a high-level quantitative assessment. The remaining settlements within the Borough have not been included in this calculation. Consequently, the figures presented should not be regarded as representing the total quantity of open space provision across the entire Borough.

It should also be recognised that the assessment focuses on audited open space provision within the Borough's three Hubs and six Local Towns and does not capture the full range of open space and recreational assets available across the Borough. In particular, the assessment does not include a number of outdoor sports facilities located within the open countryside, sports clubs serving the wider rural area, rural parks, country parks, forestry and woodland recreation areas, walking and cycling routes, greenways, waterways, school sports facilities with community access, or other informal recreational spaces located outside the settlement limits. These facilities make an important contribution to the Borough's overall open space network and recreational offer and should be considered when assessing the availability of open space opportunities available to residents across the Borough as a whole.

Amenity / Passive Recreation Provision in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

In addition to outdoor sports, the Borough boasts a variety of amenity / passive recreation areas within settlements such as green areas, parks, and golf courses. Traditionally, there was no established benchmark to appraise amenity / passive recreation provision, but the revised Fields in Trust (FIT) 2015 guidance recommends 3.2ha per 1000 population for informal outdoor space. This broadly equates to green areas in and around housing, parks, woodland, golf courses, green corridors, allotments, and community gardens.

This level of recommended informal outdoor space provision guidance is considered above. These areas are valuable in providing amenity and recreation opportunities for those who do not partake in formal outdoor sports and to help compensate, where an active shortfall exists. The inclusion of the amenity / passive recreation element within the updated FIT 2015 guidance benchmark is particularly important with an ageing population and the acknowledgement that there is a significant element of the population who will have different open space and recreational needs to that provided by the traditional playing fields and play areas.

There are a number of walks, canal /riverside walks and cycle routes across the Borough as well as incidental and larger areas of open space such as rural parks which serve as

⁴³ [Fields in Trust Standards: Creating great spaces for all](#)

amenity open space. Appendices 9- 14 detail the Boroughs extensive portfolio of open space, sporting and recreational facilities, including towpaths, walking and cycling routes.

In zoning for future needs, it will be vital to take account of the importance of protecting urban linear open space such as pedestrian and cycle routes, community greenways, former railway lines and river and canal corridors many of which are valuable in linking larger areas of open space and providing important wildlife corridors/ecological networks.

Indoor Recreation and Leisure Provision in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

In addition to outdoor recreation provision, indoor sport-based recreation is primarily provided by Leisure, Recreation and Community Centres within the Borough (See Appendices 3- 5). However, some schools, football clubs, church halls and hotels also offer indoor facilities for public use including indoor halls, gym facilities, swimming pools, climbing walls and bowling.

As illustrated in Appendices 3-5, indoor recreation provision is generally good within the Hubs and Local Towns, however, there are other facilities elsewhere in the Borough, such as Richhill Recreational Facility, which have an important role in serving their rural communities.

It is important to note that the Leisure Centres/ Recreation Centres/ Community Centres detailed in Appendices 3-5 provide a varying range of facilities and services relative to the size of their catchment.

The Borough also benefits from a variety of other leisure facilities including museums, outdoor activity centres, heritage centres, art galleries and entertainment venues across the Borough, some of which have links to tourism.

Site Based Facilities within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is only one of a number of bodies with statutory responsibility for the provision of adequate recreational facilities within the Borough.

Other bodies that contribute to the provision and development of sport, recreation and open space facilities in the Borough include local sports clubs, educational establishments, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The NI Forest Service (DAERA), the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Waterways Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

Public Bodies own or manage significant land holdings and there are two types of public access in the Borough. Firstly, accesses associated with site-based facilities such as forest parks, urban parks and lakes that are generally owned and managed by public bodies and secondly, accesses intended to provide opportunities to explore wider areas of the open countryside.

Appendices 10-12, provide detail on the following types of site-based facilities located within the Borough:

- Appendix 10- Woodlands within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough – Council owned, DAERA⁴⁴ Forest Service and Woodland Trust Facilities

⁴⁴ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

- Appendix 11- NIEA managed Sites within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough
- Appendix 12- National Trust Facilities & sites managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Greenways

The SPPS acknowledges that the planning system has an active role to play in helping to better the lives of people and communities in Northern Ireland and in supporting the Executive's key priority of improving health and well-being. As such, it directs that, where appropriate, councils may bring forward local policies that contribute to improving health and well-being as well as those which promote social cohesion and the development of social capital, the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities.

The SPPS identifies that local authorities can help to improve health and wellbeing of citizens through the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure in addition to safeguarding and facilitating quality open space, sport and outdoor recreation.

In zoning for future needs the SPPS highlights the importance of protecting linear open spaces such as pedestrian and cycle routes, community greenways, former railway lines and river and canal corridors many of which are valuable in linking larger areas of open space and providing important wildlife corridors/ecological networks.

The creation and protection of greenways also complements the Regional Strategic Objectives for transportation and land use planning which seek to promote sustainable patterns of development that reduce the need for motorised transport, encourage active travel and facilitate travel by public transport in preference to the private car.

'Exercise - Explore – Enjoy- A Strategic Plan for Greenways' (DfI, 2016⁴⁵), defines greenways as 'traffic free routes connecting communities to all kinds of destinations for commuting, everyday journeys or leisure and recreation'.

It identifies that greenways can include publicly owned open space, woodlands, urban landscape wedges, parks, playing fields, school grounds, private lands, golf courses, and farmland and may form part of or link to existing networks including towpaths, the National Cycle Network, walkways and trails.

Whilst this section focuses upon greenway development, and attitudes towards walking and cycling, within the Borough Appendices 13, 14 and 15 provide an overview of the broad range of facilities within the Borough that help to encourage active travel options, provide car free linkages and facilitate access to the wider countryside including walking routes, cycle networks and canals / waterways.

Appendix 14, also includes a map detailing the Craigavon 'Black Path' cycle and pedestrian network which links the neighbourhoods of the Craigavon New Town to Portadown and Lurgan.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Boroughs Greenway Network

The Strategic Plan for Greenways (DfI, 2016) identifies that the provision of accessible and safe greenways will help lay the foundations for longer, healthier, more active lives

⁴⁵ Refer to Section 3 'Policy Context' for further detail

and recognises the important role local government can play in the delivery of a greenway network as a result of their responsibilities in respect of open space and recreation.

The Strategy identifies that routes could be explored to develop a Primary Greenway Network from which a Secondary Greenway Network could progressively extend across the region. The aim of the Primary Network would be to provide long distance connectivity, and the Secondary Network would be to provide wider access to greenways.

The proposed Primary Routes identified by the Strategy that are relevant to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough are:

- Belfast to Craigavon- 39km in length
- Craigavon to Enniskillen- 97km in length
- Craigavon to Newry – 37km in length
- Craigavon to Derry / Londonderry- 115km in length

The proposed Secondary Routes identified by the Strategy that are relevant to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough are:

- Armagh to Newry, via Markethill- 28km in length
- Banbridge to Newcastle- 36km in length
- Lisburn to Banbridge- 23km in length

Additionally, the Strategy suggests that future plans could be to develop a third level network of 'community paths'- to connect local communities to their local green space and neighbouring communities and also highlights that the LDP provides an opportunity to further explore, plan and zone the development of a greenway network.

The proposed greenway network, as identified by the Strategic Plan for Greenways is detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context'.

Walking and cycling in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

The Active and Sustainable Travel in Northern Ireland Report (2022, DfI) presents findings from the 2020/21 Continuous Household Survey in relation to public attitudes to walking, cycling, public transport, and electric vehicles in Northern Ireland. It is used to assist the Department in focusing its policies on 'addressing the key issues that prevent people from taking up active and sustainable travel and to encourage more people to use active and sustainable methods of travel'.

Key Findings of the report, in respect of walking and cycling in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, include:

- 75% of the respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area are satisfied with the current provision for walking and walkers in the Borough (4th highest out of 10 NI Council areas⁴⁶)
- 66% of the respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area are likely to walk short journeys (up to 3km / 2 miles)
- 56% of the respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area are satisfied with the current provision for cycling and cyclists in the Borough
- 27% the respondents in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council area are likely to cycle short journeys (up to 5km / 3 miles)

⁴⁶ due to small sample size, figures for Fermanagh and Omagh are not available.

Whilst the findings of the Active and Sustainable Travel in Northern Ireland Report indicate an overall satisfaction with the current provision for walking and walkers / cycling and cyclists in the Borough it is evident that there is scope to encourage more people to use active and sustainable modes of travel.

The delivery of an accessible and well-connected greenway network for our Borough, potentially incorporating the Primary and Secondary⁴⁷ routes identified above, complemented by a third level network of 'community paths', would not only support this modal shift away from private car usage towards active travel but will also improve the lifestyle and physical health of our communities by putting walking and cycling at the heart of local transportation.

Greenway Consultations, Development Programmes and Feasibility Studies

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Public Consultation- Ulster Canal Greenway

The first phase of the Ulster Canal Greenway project opened in 2013. The 4.5km route travels from the east to west of Monaghan Town along the disused Ulster Canal. In 2016, Phase 2 of Ulster Canal Greenway secured funding of €4.95m through the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme in 2016 (refer to Appendix 16 for further detail).

In October 2020 the Council (in conjunction with the contracting authority Monaghan County Council) gave notice of its intention to apply to develop the cross-border greenway from Monaghan Town to Middletown, County Armagh.

In addition to improving connectivity between communities on both sides of the border, it was intended that the Greenway would encourage active travel in preference to vehicular transport and promote the area as a walking / cycling tourist destination.

Planning permission was granted in 2022 for a greenway linkage from Annagola Bridge in Middletown to Ardgonnell Bridge, on the border at the River Cor along the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council stretch of canal. This linkage will connect Middletown to the Monaghan greenway and further along the route of the Ulster Canal.

Information on the Ulster Canal Greenway Strategy 2016 (published by Waterways Ireland and its project partners) is detailed within Section 3 'Policy Context'.

Greenway Development and Delivery Programme- Sustrans Greenway Assessment

In January 2022, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) announced it had awarded Sustrans a grant of £50,000 to carry out an assessment of the current state of greenway development across Northern Ireland and to develop a phased programme for greenway delivery with Councils.

This project incorporated the development and operation of a Project Management Framework for the co-ordination and delivery of the overall greenway programme, the provision of technical advice and advice on stakeholder consultation to Councils and support for Councils in the delivery of future greenway schemes.

Sustrans consulted with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council in February 2022 to gain an understanding of the current greenway development and delivery activity

⁴⁷ Subject to feasibility studies, availability of funding, and any relevant permissions

being undertaken within the Borough and to develop an appreciation of any barriers and opportunities experienced by the Council.

In November 2024, DfI carried out a public consultation on the Active Travel Delivery Plan (The ATD Plan), which will set out how DfI will prioritise and deliver high-quality active travel infrastructure for shorter everyday journeys within urban and rural settlements over the next 10 years and beyond. It is anticipated that once adopted, it will complement the Strategic Plan for Greenways. The Active Travel Delivery Plan assessment framework identifies a network of priority routes for delivery within the Borough in addition to routes where the existing active travel infrastructure could be enhanced. Further detail on the Active Travel Delivery Plan is detailed within Section 3.0 of this Technical Supplement.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Greenway feasibility studies

In August 2018 the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Public Health Agency announced funding of £200,000 to develop plans for eight new Greenway schemes.⁴⁸

The 'Small Grants Programme for Greenways' awarded £25,000 for the development of detailed designs for each project proposal across the four council areas of Newry, Mourne and Down, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon and Causeway Coast and Glens.

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council secured funding to conduct feasibility and design studies for four potential greenway routes across the borough. Stretching a total distance of 109km the proposed greenways would aim to offer traffic-free paths for everyone whether it's for health, recreation or commuting.

The four Greenway feasibility projects funded in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough were as follows:

1. Aghalee to Portadown - approximately 20km of greenway offering healthy travel and recreation options for people to enjoy taking in areas of interest like Craigavon Lakes, Tannaghmore Gardens, Oxford Island and the villages of Aghagallon and Aghalee.

This proposed 20km route also 'bridges the gap' between the eastern linkage from Aghalee to Moira Train Station (with plans extending to Lisburn and Belfast) via the existing Broadwater towpath, and to the south via the Portadown-Newry Canal (and beyond).

Further linkages are being explored between Portadown and Armagh/Caledon, and West to the Moy. The proposed greenway follows the corridor of (and would supersede) EuroVelo 1, an increasingly popular bicycle touring route, and National Cycle Network route 9 which is popular with day trippers and commuters.

2. Banbridge to Scarva - approximately 8km of greenway that would effectively provide a gateway to a major traffic-free network of regional greenways including the Portadown-Newry canal, as well as being a fantastic amenity in its own right for the residents of Banbridge, Scarva, and surrounding areas.
3. Portadown to Caledon - approximately 56km of greenway that would have the potential of linking Armagh City Centre with Portadown Town Centre creating an important active travel link for commuters, as well as opening up transport hubs to rural populations.

⁴⁸ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/ps200000-investment-eight-new-greenway-designs>

4. Portadown to Moy - approximately 25km of greenway that would open a significant link to the west in line with Department of Infrastructures Strategic Plan for Greenways.
This greenway proposal could serve to link some of the Borough's most visited tourist attractions in a healthy and sustainable way, attracting day-trippers and passing cycle tourists to Dan Winter's House, Address House, the Argory and the Moy. The route proposal offers possibilities for cycle commuting to Portadown and Moy (and beyond) for work or to the train station, giving local people and visitors alike fantastic opportunities to get more active

Current Status

As of January 2024, significant progress has been made in respect of the Craigavon to Aghalee greenway project. Detailed designs (project reports) have been completed by AECOM and pre-application discussions are taking place with the Councils Planning Department in preparation for the next stages of the project, competition and submission of the planning application.

Although a high-level Greenway Desktop Survey of the Borough was carried out in 2022/23* to inform the LDPs approach towards greenways, work is currently ongoing on between the Council and DfI to further consider the development of greenway projects within the Borough. This involves feasibility studies, route considerations and planning permission requirements.

In recent years the Council has also availed of funding⁴⁹ to establish projects aimed at improving active travel infrastructure within the Borough. Information on the Councils Active Travel Masterplan (2022) and the 'Small Settlements- Active Travel Masterplan' (in development with as of 2023), is detailed in Section 3 'Policy Context'. Both masterplans highlight the Councils commitment to encouraging active travel in the Borough through enhancing walking, cycling and connectivity measures.

To align with SPSS direction and support the Councils ambitions to encourage and promote active travel within the Borough it will be important for the LDP to bring forward appropriate policies and proposals aimed at:

- Supporting the delivery and protection of greenways;
- Ensuring new development provides safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle linkages;
- Safeguarding disused transport routes where there is a reasonable prospect of re-use for future transport purposes and where this is not the case, support proposals for alternative purposes such as a recreational, nature conservation or tourism related use; and
- Supporting walking and cycling in new residential development by connecting to existing or planned networks (including greenways), providing adequate and convenient access to public transport, respecting existing public rights of way and incorporating traffic calming measures.

Cemeteries

As with all Northern Ireland Councils, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council is bound by the Burial Ground Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992, which detail strict guidance in terms of the functions of a council in relation to its burial grounds.

⁴⁹ The Active Travel Masterplan project is part of the Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Project funded by DfC and DfI. The Small Settlements- Active Travel Masterplan is a funded project under the wider Covid Recovery Small Settlement Regeneration Programme. Funding was awarded by the Department for Communities, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and Department for Infrastructure.

In Northern Ireland there are two crematoriums, Roselawn Cemetery, which is under the control of Belfast City Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Crematorium. The cremation rate in Northern Ireland is only 21.8%.⁵⁰, significantly lower than the UK cremation rate (78.19%).

Cemetery Provision in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

The majority of cemeteries and burial grounds in the Borough are provided by local churches of various denominations. However, public cemeteries are also provided and maintained by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council. There are currently 31 cemeteries owned / operated by the Council.⁵¹

Table 14 below indicates that only 6 of the 31 cemeteries provided and maintained by the Council have available plots, with a total of 5233 plots currently available. As a result of recent expansion, which opened in 2018, Kernan Cemetery (Portadown) accounts for 1930 of the available plots.

Cemetery	Available Plots	Remaining Life Span (Years)	Spare Acreage
Kernan, Portadown	1930	23.14	10 Acre Agricultural Lease
New Line, Lurgan	262	4.08	18 Acre Agricultural lease
Ballynahone Armagh	679	42.97	4 Acres
The Orchard, Armagh	158	10.82	Neighbouring land to be acquired
Banbridge	2014	45.36	Neighbouring land to be acquired
Dromore	190	12.34	3 Acre Agricultural lease
Total	5233		

Table 14: Cemetery Provision in the Borough

Three of the cemeteries, Kernan (Portadown), Ballynahone (Armagh) and Banbridge have significant remaining capacity, with an estimated life span of 23 years, 42 years and 45 years respectively. This is considered to be more than adequate burial provision for the plan period.

Whilst Dromore and The Orchard (Armagh) cemeteries only have remaining capacity for 10-12 years, this is also more than adequate burial provision for the plan period. It is important to note in respect of both Banbridge and The Orchard cemeteries neighbouring land is to be acquired.

New Line Cemetery, Lurgan, only has 262 available plots remaining with an estimated remaining life span of 4 years. Given the timeframe of the LDP, until 2035, the current capacity

⁵¹ [Cemeteries - Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council \(armaghibanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk\)](http://armaghibanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk)

of New Line Cemetery will not suffice for the incoming plan period. However, it is expected that a business case will be put forward detailing an extension requirement for New Line cemetery.

25 cemeteries owned / operated by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council do not have any available plots and have closed for new openings (see Appendix 4). None of the cemeteries detailed in Appendix 17 have any expansion potential, however, it is important to note that there may be limited potential in the form of “re-openings” of existing family plots. As such, Lynastown Cemetery, Craigavon, is the only cemetery to have completely closed.

Appendix 18 details the planning applications for cemetery extensions that have been submitted to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council for consideration between 2015 and 2024.

Council may wish to zone land in the Local Policies Plan to accommodate new cemetery provision. Alternatively, the council may decide not to zone land but to allow any application for such development to be assessed on its own merits against existing planning policies. The approach to cemetery provision will be considered in consultation with the relevant Council Departments and any other relevant party, such as NIEA Water Management Unit.

Cemetery Provision- Environmental Considerations

When planning for new cemetery provision it is important to consider the impact such development will have on the environment. Relevant environmental considerations include⁵²:

- Groundwater contamination (from organic matter and chemicals, such as embalming fluid)- which is particularly important if there is a groundwater or surface water fed drinking water source in the locality.
- Contaminated water / groundwater entering a river system causing degradation of the aquatic environment and impact on aquatic ecosystems and fisheries
- mobilisation of sediments from excavated/cleared areas and soil stockpiles
- habitat damage and loss from development footprint
- species disturbance and/or displacement
- alterations to surface water hydrology caused by compaction of soils and an increase in the surface area of impermeable (or slowly permeable) surfaces, removal of site vegetation resulting in a subsequent increase in surface runoff which may, in turn, increase the risk of flooding and soil erosion

DAERAs Environmental Advice for Planning Practice Guide Cemeteries, Burials and the Water Environment, as referred to in Section 3.0 ‘Policy Context’, is useful guidance document for applicants and planning authorities when planning cemetery developments or extensions, as it addresses the main areas and issues to be considered when assessing the potential impact on groundwater.

⁵² Source: DAERA, Cemeteries: Key environmental considerations

5.0 Preferred Options Paper

The Council published its Preferred Options Paper (POP) in March 2018. The main purpose of the POP was to promote focused debate on key issues of strategic significance likely to influence the direction of future development within the Borough, so to inform the next stage in the LDP process, the Plan Strategy.

The POP outlined the vision and strategic objectives of the Plan, along with 38 Key Issues and the possible options available to address them, including the Council's Preferred Option. The Key Issues emerged from our evidence base; from engagement with Elected Members and Section 75 Groups; and from formal and informal consultation with Statutory Consultation Bodies. In order to inform the POP, a preliminary review of operational planning policy was also carried out, with a commitment to complete a more detailed policy review in advance of the Plan Strategy.

The POP did not cover every issue, policy and proposal that will be included in the LDP. Instead, the POP focused upon the main planning issues that had been identified through the work undertaken in developing the evidence base for the LDP, including consultation with statutory consultees and council officials, workshops with Elected Members and through the Community Plan process.

A total of 201 responses, from members of the public and statutory consultees, were received during the 9-week public consultation period, these included a wide range of comments in relation to the POP, supporting documents and the POP consultation process.

Key issues

SOC 4 'Protecting Open Space'

SOC 5 'Facilitating open space / play provision in new largescale residential developments'

ECN 18 'Promoting and Enhancing Access to Greenways'

Key Issue SOC 4 'Protecting Open Space'

Preferred Option

The preferred approach to Key Issue SOC 4 was to protect existing open space (in addition to identifying and zoning land for new provision) in line with existing policy and regional direction, tailored to meet local circumstances. Key Issue SOC 4A primarily focused on the protection of existing open space, as currently dealt with under Policy OS 1 (PPS 8).

The preferred approach also acknowledged that the Council is required to bring forward an Open Space Strategy as part of its LDP that reflects the aims, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, but tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area. It highlighted that the plan process allows for the review of both existing and zoned open space provision and policies, in addition to identifying and safeguarding land for new open space where needed through zoning.

The POP identified that a review could allow for some of our open space to be re-evaluated to assess its continued suitability for protection or whether there is scope to consider more sustainable uses. However, given that the protection of existing open space is a fundamental objective of the LDP, in line with regional direction in the SPPS, this re-evaluation will be limited to the following category of open space.

The POP identified that initial appraisal work suggested that in some of the main settlements, particularly in the Craigavon Urban Area, there may be an over-provision of informal green space in and around some of the long-established public housing estates (built by the NI Housing Executive in the 1960s-1980s). The POP identified that the over provision of informal green space could take the form of both larger strategic areas and smaller spaces, the nature and scale of which can be difficult to manage.

The POP highlighted that there could be substantial community benefit in appropriate redevelopment of these particular areas, perhaps helping to facilitate key community facilities and infrastructure, including sports or recreation, or specific local social housing need. Furthermore, the POP suggested that it could offer improvements to the physical environment of these residential areas, making them safer and more manageable long term. In addition, appropriate re-development would also reduce on the need for greenfield land elsewhere, thus contributing to wider sustainable development.

The POP identified that an assessment of the overall stock of open space in these areas of focus, in consultation with NIHE and any other landowners, could help identify any suitable lands, acknowledging that the success of the preferred approach depends on this further engagement. The POP also confirmed that any viable re-development opportunities should not result in a shortage of open space, or otherwise impact on the area's amenity, character or biodiversity, or contribute to flood risk. Furthermore, the POP clarified that beyond the limited identified areas for further appraisal, there will be a presumption against the loss of open space, existing or zoned, subject to a review when preparing the LDP Open Space Strategy.

Summary of POP Commitments

The POP detailed the following commitments in respect of SOC 4 (Protecting Open Space):

- Development of an Open Space Strategy to reflect the aims, objectives, and policy approach of the SPPS, but tailored to the specific circumstances of the plan area.
- Review of both existing and zoned open space provision and policies in addition to identifying and safeguarding land for new open space where needed through zoning.
- Re-evaluation of open space in and around long-established public housing estates to assess its continued suitability for protection or whether there is scope to consider more sustainable uses states that this will be carried out involving consultation with NIHE and any other landowners.
- Provision of a clear definition of open space to aid interpretation of policy in the determination of planning applications.

POP Representations

Of the 201 representations received, 44 made comment in respect of Key Issue SOC 4. Half of the respondents (50%) were unsupportive of the preferred approach, with only 41% of the responses categorised as being generally supportive, and the remaining 9% categorised as non-committal or unclear. Many of the respondents that were supportive of the preferred approach did not substantiate or justify their support. However, one response acknowledged that the protection and enhancement of existing open space (and the provision of new open spaces) 'promotes active and healthy lifestyles and the conservation of biodiversity' (POP ref 148) whilst another considered that 'selective redevelopment of portions of open space, particular within large estates, can deliver positive effects in terms of estate restricting, reductions in anti-social behaviour and meeting high levels of housing need' (POP ref 174).

One of the responses, categorised as unsupportive, considered that the loss of open spaces within urban areas should be resisted, highlighting that because an area is currently underused or difficult to manage should not be a justification for its loss. Instead, it suggested that these areas of open space should be encouraged to make a positive contribution to the local neighbourhood and biodiversity (POP ref 135). Another response highlighted that cannot be assumed that the biodiversity in green fields is higher than in urban open space (SA ref 001) and as such any re-evaluation of open space should include an ecological assessment to establish the significance of any loss.

In addition, there were a small number of non-committal responses (4 No.), that did not offer a specific opinion on the preferred approach but made recommendations or suggestions in respect of SOC 4. One acknowledged that there are a number of existing underused open spaces in the borough around heritage assets, such as historic graveyards, highlighting that the LDP provides an opportunity to capture the potential of accessing these as distinct, peaceful places for the enjoyment and benefit of the local community (POP ref 080). Another response recommended that the Council should seek to promote and plan for the creation of a network of open spaces and green and blue infrastructure throughout all the settlements within the Plan area, forming linkages of wildlife corridors, pedestrian routes, and cycleways, sitting and play areas and encouraging biodiversity through new tree and shrub planting, wet areas and ponds (POP ref 082).

One of the respondents, although it considered that there is an issue of over provision of informal green space in long established public housing estates, highlighted that the loss of existing open space should only be appropriate where it is demonstrated that redevelopment would bring substantial community benefit that outweighs the loss of the open space; or where it is demonstrated that the loss of open space would have no significant detrimental impact (POP ref 113). The respondent urged the Council to consider how the potential loss of existing open space aligns with strategic policy and referred to the existing Protocol between the Department and the NIHE, highlighting that continuation of the protocol would require a new agreement to be negotiated between the Council and NIHE.

A significant number of respondents stated that they were supportive of SOC 4B, an alternative approach to Key Issue SOC 4. SOC 4B suggested that the current approach is continued by protecting existing open space provision in line with existing policy (in addition to identifying and zoning land for new open space provision). However, no justification was provided to explain why SOC 4B was the preferred option for these respondents.

Consideration of Preferred Option SOC 4A

Having regard to the issues raised through the POP consultation, it is considered appropriate to retain SOC 4B as the Council's chosen policy option. The approach is consistent with the regional policy direction set out in the SPPS and the retained operational policy approach in PPS 8, both of which emphasise the protection of existing open space, alongside the identification and safeguarding of land for new provision where a need is identified.

The consultation responses indicate a notable level of concern in relation to the preferred approach under SOC 4A, with over half of respondents expressing opposition, primarily due to the perceived potential for the unjustified loss of open space, particularly within urban areas. These representations highlight the value placed on open space by local communities, not only in terms of recreation and amenity, but also for biodiversity, health and wellbeing, and local environmental quality. In this context, SOC 4B provides a more precautionary and robust approach, ensuring that existing open space is protected from unnecessary loss.

While it is acknowledged that SOC 4A sought to introduce a degree of flexibility through the potential re-evaluation of certain areas of open space, particularly within long-established housing estates, it is considered that such an approach introduces uncertainty and potential risk in the absence of a fully developed evidence base. Furthermore, concerns raised by respondents in relation to biodiversity value, amenity impacts and the incremental erosion of green infrastructure reinforce the need for a clear and unambiguous policy position.

SOC 4B maintains the established principle of protecting open space, ensuring continuity with existing policy and avoiding any perception that open space may be released for alternative uses without robust justification. This approach aligns with the strategic objective of promoting sustainable development by safeguarding green infrastructure, supporting active lifestyles, and contributing to climate resilience and environmental quality across the Borough.

Importantly, the selection of SOC 4B does not preclude the Council from undertaking a comprehensive review of open space provision to inform the Local Policies Plan. This work will provide an evidence-based assessment of the quantity, quality, accessibility and distribution of open space, and will help identify areas of deficiency and opportunities for enhancement or improved provision. The findings will inform site-specific zonings and designations, ensuring that decisions are made in a structured and transparent manner, supported by robust evidence and stakeholder engagement.

On balance, SOC 4B is considered to provide the most appropriate and defensible policy approach at this stage of the plan-making process. It ensures a strong presumption in favour of retaining open space, responds directly to the concerns raised through consultation. It is therefore recommended that SOC 4B is taken forward as the preferred option.

Key Issue SOC 5 ‘Facilitating open space / play provision in new largescale residential developments’

Preferred Option

The preferred approach to Key Issue SOC 5 was to bring forward a locally tailored approach towards open space / play provision in new largescale residential developments. The preferred approach sought to amend the existing criteria for play park provision in largescale residential developments to increase provision in larger schemes to more than one equipped play area (as currently required in existing policy), as well as provide the option for Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), where appropriate, unless otherwise specified in LDP Key Site Requirements.

The POP acknowledged that new largescale residential developments are an important opportunity to deliver equipped play areas, particularly in light of the projected increase in the population of children and young people across the Borough, over the plan period, as well as the growing problem of childhood obesity.

The POP identified that such facilities are best provided as an integral part of a development, where they are designed in a comprehensive and linked way with accessibility, safety, and amenity considerations to the fore, rather than introducing new facilities to an established residential area afterwards.

Whilst the POP considered that the existing policy-led approach to on-site play park provision in residential developments, as set out in Policy OS 2 (PPS 8), should be carried forward, it recommended that the approach should be tailored in order to better meet specific local needs.

The POP acknowledged that current policy (OS 2 in PPS 8) states that for residential development of 100 units or more, or for sites of 5 hectares or more, an equipped children's play area [singular] will be required as an integral part of the development. However, it also highlighted that in much larger developments, or equivalent housing zonings, a single play park may not be sufficient to cater for the scale of development and the needs of the area. Furthermore, the POP acknowledged that this level of provision would become less and less suitable as the scale of the development increases.

The preferred approach would seek to amend this policy to ensure that additional provision is made on even larger schemes (well in excess of 100 units) that is proportionate to the scale of development. The POP suggested that this could be addressed by introducing a pro rata figure into the policy wording whereby an additional play area is required for each set number of units.

In addition, the POP suggested that the policy wording could be broadened to include the provision of Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) in certain residential schemes in addition to suitable equipped children's play space, highlighting that such facilities would cater for older children, particularly in larger developments, where more than one play area is appropriate.

The POP identified that the preferred option would also allow for Key Site Requirements (KSRs) to be used on housing zonings, at the Local Policies Plan stage (second LDP stage), to set out site-specific requirements in terms of the level and nature of play provision needed, if any, including if developer contributions are required. Utilising KSRs would allow for the general policy provisions to be set aside in order for play provision to be assessed on a site-by-site basis, taking into account the Council's Play Strategy.

The POP also addressed the issue of management and maintenance arrangements for areas of public open space in new residential development, as currently dealt with in Policy OS 2 (PPS 8). It highlighted that recent experience within the Borough shows that a number of residential developments that are now occupied have unmaintained communal open spaces, as a result of management and maintenance programmes having either ceased, or agreements having either broken down over time, or most likely never to have been implemented. As such, the POP identified that a more robust mechanism is needed to secure successful long-term management and maintenance arrangements across all new developments, where applicable, to prevent similar failings happening again.

Summary of POP Commitments

The POP detailed the following commitments in respect of SOC 5 'Facilitating open space / play provision in new largescale residential developments':

- Increase provision for play parks in largescale residential developments to more than 1 equipped play area (as required in existing policy) as well as provide the option for multiuse games (MUGAs) where appropriate.
- Use of KSRs on land zonings at LPP stage to set out specific requirements in terms of the level and nature of play provision needed and if development contributions would be required.
- Development of a more robust mechanism to secure successful long-term management across all new developments- the council will take further advice ahead of the DPS on how this issue can be addressed effectively in detailed policy.
- Play Park Provision- bring forward a locally tailored approach included bringing forward an amendment to the existing criteria for play park provision in largescale residential developments to increase provision in larger schemes to more than one equipped play

area- the POP states this could be achieved by introducing a pro rata figure into the policy wording.

- Council could possibly agree or opt to take over the management and maintenance of the play area / MUGA, where it fits in with its overall Play Strategy, providing it meets certain standards of size, layout and design as agreed at planning stage.

POP Representations

Of the 201 representations received, only 35 made comment in respect of Key Issue SOC 5. There was a high level of support for the preferred approach to Key Issue SOC 5, with 80% of the responses categorised as being generally supportive and only 9% of the responses categorised as being unsupportive of the preferred approach. 11% of the responses were non-committal or unclear.

Whilst many of the responses did not substantiate their support, one of the respondents highlighted the importance that new developments should seek to conserve wildlife habitats, existing trees and quality vegetation and promote further biodiversity by providing open space with uncultivated areas and green corridors (POP ref 174). Another respondent considered that new housing schemes over a specific threshold should include open space and leisure and that open space, in new housing developments, should be of sufficient quality and quantity (POP ref 148). In respect of the KSRs, one respondent highlighted that the preferred approach would allow for the general policy provisions to be set aside in order for play provision to be assessed on a site-by-site basis, considering the Play Strategy and would provide direction on larger zonings (POP ref 147).

One of the respondents welcomed a tailored approach towards open space and play provision, however highlighted that this should be done on the basis of a sound assessment and understanding of existing provisions within the existing residential / urban areas. The respondent also suggested that in determining the appropriate level of provision, the capacity of the site and the impact of such a requirement on the viability of developments should be considered (POP ref 112). Another respondent was supportive of a survey of existing and future needs be carried out, highlighting that quantity, quality and capacity of the sites, related to population projections and housing requirement, are important considerations (POP ref 119), and also suggested that consideration should be given to alternative provision (off-site contributions) which could allow for improvements to existing / underperforming open space and play provision.

Another respondent was encouraged that the preferred approach sought to require more provision than currently sought by the SPPS, however stated that the exact nature of the relationship between the general policy and key site requirements would benefit from further clarification as a range of possible approaches are set out in the justification (key site requirements, developer contributions and dealing with sites on a case by case basis). Clarification will also be required on when the general policy provisions may be set aside for play provision to assess on a case-by-case basis. The respondent also advised that the Council needs to ensure the approach to SOC 4 and SOC 5 complement each other and that the policy direction reflects the SPPS (POP ref 113).

One of the respondents raised concerns that unless there are methods devised to prevent developers from bringing forward smaller (open space / play provision) schemes that avoid the requirements, the proposals will be ineffective (POP ref 188).

Another respondent considered that provision of several equipped play areas throughout a housing development would result in a disproportionate financial burden, with management / maintenance and anti-social behaviour concerns for residents. This respondent considered SOC 5C, a council led approach, to be the appropriate course of action (POP ref 185).

One of the respondents, whilst supportive of preferred approach, considered that proposed new residential developments which have been submitted to planning should not be allowed to include existing open space/play park which happens to be nearby (POP ref 001). Another (POP ref 079) suggested that provision should consider the needs of older children whilst another (POP ref 135) suggested that some thought should also be given to the fact that that by 2030, 19% of the Boroughs population will be over 65 years old and as such any provision of open space within large residential development should have regard to this fact in terms of its accessibility and design.

Consideration of Preferred Option SOC 5A

Having regard to the consultation responses and the wider policy context, it is considered appropriate that SOC 5B is taken forward as the Council's preferred policy direction. This approach retains the existing policy framework set out in Policy OS 2 (PPS 8), which requires the provision of equipped children's play areas within largescale residential developments, while ensuring consistency with the SPPS.

The consultation responses indicate a high level of support (78%) for the preferred approach under SOC 5A, however, many of these responses were not accompanied by substantive justification. In contrast, a number of more detailed responses raised important concerns regarding deliverability, viability, and practical implementation. In particular, concerns were expressed in relation to the financial burden associated with increased on-site provision, long-term management and maintenance responsibilities, and the potential for anti-social behaviour associated with multiple play facilities. These issues are material considerations which must be carefully balanced when formulating policy.

While SOC 5A sought to introduce a more locally tailored and enhanced level of provision, including multiple play areas or MUGAs within larger developments, it is considered that the introduction of prescriptive or pro rata requirements at the Plan Strategy stage could result in unintended consequences. These include impacts on scheme viability, particularly in marginal locations, and the potential for developers to avoid policy thresholds by subdividing sites. Furthermore, the consultation highlighted uncertainty regarding the relationship between general policy requirements, Key Site Requirements (KSRs), and the role of developer contributions, indicating that further clarity and evidence would be required to support such an approach.

SOC 5B provides a clear, established, and well-understood policy framework, ensuring that play provision continues to be delivered as an integral part of new residential development, in line with existing regional policy. It avoids introducing additional complexity or rigidity at this stage, while still enabling flexibility in how play provision is delivered on a site-by-site basis through the development management process.

Importantly, the selection of SOC 5B does not preclude the Council from enhancing or refining its approach to play provision through other mechanisms. The preparation of the Council's Play Strategy, alongside any future evidence base work, will provide an opportunity to assess the adequacy, distribution and quality of existing facilities across the Borough. This, in turn, can inform more targeted interventions, such as site-specific Key Site Requirements at Local Policies Plan stage, or the use of developer contributions where appropriate, particularly in relation to larger zonings.

In addition, the continued application of OS 2 allows the Council to place appropriate emphasis on the quality, design, accessibility and safety of play provision, rather than focusing solely on quantum. This is consistent with consultation responses which highlighted the importance of ensuring that open space and play areas are fit for purpose, inclusive, and responsive to local needs, including those of different age groups and changing demographics.

On balance, SOC 5B is considered to provide the most appropriate and proportionate approach at this stage of the plan-making process. It ensures continuity with established policy, responds to key concerns raised through consultation, and maintains flexibility to adapt and refine provision through the Local Policies Plan and supporting strategies. It is therefore recommended that SOC 5B is taken forward as the preferred option in the Plan Strategy.

Key Issue ECN 18 ‘Promoting and Enhancing Access to Greenways’

Preferred Option

The preferred approach to Key Issues ECN 18 was to identify and protect accessible and safe Greenways in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car, connect people and places through active travel and enable ecological linkages.

The POP acknowledged that the identification and promotion of greenways would assist in delivering a number of the Councils objectives, including a commitment to connecting all areas of the Borough which will ultimately result in a healthier and more resilient population. Furthermore, it identified that the preferred approach is in keeping with regional strategic direction which requires that the Council consider the importance of protecting linear open spaces such as pedestrian and cycle routes and community greenways, recognising the potential to provide a range of benefits, that extend beyond transportation.

The Councils Preferred Options Paper identified that there are 2 types of greenways: Strategic Greenways which connect towns, cities, villages and countryside across all eleven Council areas, and Community Greenways which are intended to provide linkages between urban areas of open space and the countryside. Additionally, the POP identified that greenways may also provide linkages between neighbourhoods and local services and facilities.

The approach to Greenways was supported and complemented by the approach in related subject areas, including those relating to Open Space, Landscape (Identifying and protecting Local Landscape Policy Areas / Identifying and Protecting Urban / Rural Landscape Wedges) and the promotion of Active Travel (Key Issues SOC 4, SOC 5, ENV 5, ENV 6 and ECN 17).

Summary of POP Commitments

The POP detailed a number of commitments that were relevant to ECN 18 ‘Promoting and Enhancing Access to Greenways’:

- Protect and enhance open space- open space, which includes formal and informal active and passive open space of public value- including outdoor sports facilities, parks and gardens, amenity green space in urban areas, children’s play areas, green corridors, allotments and cemeteries.
- Identify new opportunities for open space and recreational facilities. For example, this may include the linking together of natural and man-made open spaces to create an interconnected network that helps improve connectivity within urban areas and access to

the surrounding rural area, encourage safer active travel and opportunities for physical activity, enhance amenity, provide wildlife corridors and support sustainable development.

- Enhancement of the green network
- Identify and protect linear open spaces such as pedestrian and cycle routes, community greenways and river and canal corridors and ensure that greenways are integrated with other modes of sustainable transport and other land uses.
- Promote sustainable patterns of development which reduce the need to travel by car, through encouraging a modal shift towards alternative transport, including walking, cycling and public transport.
- Improved integration between transportation and land use.

POP Representations

Of the 201 representations received, only 27 made comment in respect of Key Issue ECN 18. However, there was a high level of support for the preferred approach with 89% of the responses categorised as being generally supportive. Only 7% of the responses were unsupportive of the preferred approach and 4% of the responses were categorised as being non-committal or unclear.

Whilst many of the responses did not substantiate or justify their support, one of the respondents considered that the preferred option provides an excellent opportunity to develop a significant Greenway network within the Borough (POP ref 109). Another respondent highlighted that the provision of green infrastructure is critical in promoting active travel and providing a shared space; defined walking routes and positive use of inland waterways creates opportunities for leisure and tourism and should be evaluated, upgraded and expanded as part of the plan process (POP ref 148).

One of the respondents noted that the preferred approach is predicated on the need to identify and protect linear open spaces and considered that the retention of disused transport corridors is a key element to the delivery of such greenways (POP ref 135). Another respondent, whilst strongly agreeing with the protection of greenways, suggested that more emphasis should be placed upon the protection of open space as greenways or wildlife corridors that may not necessarily be a means of connecting people to places, as much as connecting them to nature (POP ref 064).

Only 2 No. of the responses received in respect of ECN 18 were categorised as being unsupportive of the preferred approach, one of which disagreed that the preferred approach would improve connectivity and promote more sustainable patterns of travel and the other considered that greenways are not often a practical means of travel, with more use in tourism (POP ref 006).

One of the respondents advised that without a review of potential greenways they were unable to provide further comment, however highlighted that the historic environment forms an important role in defining open space within the Borough (POP ref 080). As such, the respondent advised that it will be important to include provision to protect heritage assets which form part of linked open spaces, or historic routeways or railways so that their local heritage value and distinctiveness is captured. The respondent also welcomed spatial connectivity and advised that any planning guidance for this should factor in the potential for heritage led development within the process. Furthermore, the respondent recommend that the Council utilise HED Datasets to identify heritage assets, archaeology sites and listed buildings and so on, where new areas of open space and so on could be designated.

Another of the respondents (POP ref 074) acknowledged their support for the preferred approach, however highlighted that they would like to see the council work with adjacent councils to ensure that, where opportunities exist, Greenway linkages across the Council boundary are enabled.

Consideration of Preferred Option ECN 18A

The Council has a pivotal role in enabling the delivery of an accessible and well-connected sustainable greenway network for our Borough that will not only encourage a modal shift from private car usage to public transport and active travel but will also improve the physical health of our citizens. A commitment to the development of the network is already evident through the Greenway Feasibility and Design Studies that have been undertaken by the council.

Including a policy for greenways in the LDP would also assist the Council in the delivery of numerous outcomes that are set out in the Community Plan, including the provision of good, accessible open space so that people are encouraged and enabled to make positive lifestyle choices.

The high level of support for the preferred approach (89%) demonstrates a clear consensus that the protection, enhancement and expansion of greenways and associated networks is a key priority. Representations emphasised the importance of greenways in promoting active travel, improving connectivity, supporting tourism and leisure, and contributing to wider environmental and health outcomes. In particular, respondents highlighted the need to safeguard linear corridors, including disused transport routes, river and canal corridors, and wider green infrastructure networks, recognising their strategic importance in delivering connectivity across the Borough.

Indeed, the many benefits of, and opportunities for, blue and green infrastructure were highlighted in a number of POP responses, across a range of topic areas. Some of the comments that were received in respect to other Key Issues highlighted:

- The opportunity to incorporate blue and green infrastructure in well planned housing schemes, along with initiatives to facilitate issues of 'Open Space' and 'Movement', with potential wins for biodiversity (POP Ref 082, in respect of Key Issue SOC 1 'Urban Housing')
- There may be opportunities to obtain biodiversity gain and create 'green linkage/ blue/ green infrastructure (POP Ref 082, in respect of Key Issue SOC 3 'Design and Place-making').
- The use of blue and green infrastructure to assist in improving amenity (POP Ref 113, in respect of Key Issue SOC 3 'Design and Place-making').
- The crucial role that green and blue infrastructure can play in supporting healthy communities, supporting wildlife and mitigating the effects and causes of climate change....it is not just about improved or enhanced provision, but also accessibility (POP Ref 135, in respect of Key Issue SOC 6 'Community and Cultural Facilities').
- The retention/enhancement of Local Landscape Policy Areas can include green and blue infrastructure, riverbanks and shorelines, woodland and trees, all of which make a positive contribution to the Borough's biodiversity (POP Ref 135, in respect of Key Issue ENV 5 'Local Landscape Policy Areas').
- The Council should seek to promote and plan for the creation of a network of open spaces and green and blue infrastructure throughout all the settlements within the Plan area,

forming linkages of wildlife corridors, pedestrian routes, and cycleways, sitting and play areas and encouraging biodiversity through new tree and shrub planting, wet areas and ponds (POP Ref 082, in respect to SOC 4 'Protecting Open Space').

- River corridors should be protected to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on biodiversity or on sensitive environmental areas and features (POP Ref LDP/POP/REF/135, in respect to ECN 10 'Tourism Development').

The range of comments received, in respect of ECN 18 and other subject areas, highlights the importance of green and blue infrastructure as a cross-cutting theme to be addressed through the LDP. The Council recognises that the creation, protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure makes an important contribution towards furthering sustainable development by utilising natural sites and corridors as multifunctional spaces and infrastructure, that not only protect and enhance biodiversity but also support the economic activity and provide local communities with opportunities for active travel and recreation.

Having regard to the outcomes of the POP consultation, it is considered that the proposed policy approach to protecting and enhancing the green and blue infrastructure network (OSR 8) represents an appropriate and robust response to Key Issue ECN 18. This would also assist government objectives in putting walking and cycling at the heart of local transport, public health and wellbeing and wider government strategies for the benefit of society, the environment and the economy as a whole

In the development of the LDP's Open Space Strategy, and its associated operational policies for open space, outdoor sport and recreation, careful consideration was given to how sites and corridors that form part of the existing and planned green and blue infrastructure network within the Borough will be safeguarded and enhanced through the LDP. The proposed policy wording provides a strong and unambiguous framework for the protection of these assets by safeguarding existing and planned green and blue infrastructure networks from fragmentation, severance or inappropriate development. This directly responds to concerns raised through consultation regarding the need to protect established and potential corridors, including disused transport routes, which are often critical to the delivery of future greenway linkages.

The policy also reflects the broader aims of the SPPS in promoting sustainable patterns of development and reducing reliance on the private car by facilitating a shift towards walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of transport. By requiring development proposals to avoid prejudicing the integrity, accessibility and expansion of the network, the policy ensures that opportunities to enhance connectivity and promote active travel are not compromised over the lifetime of the plan.

Importantly, the approach incorporates an appropriate degree of flexibility through the exceptional circumstances, which allows for alternative routes to be considered where it can be clearly demonstrated that the overall integrity and functionality of the network will be maintained or enhanced. This ensures that the policy is not unduly restrictive, while still maintaining a strong presumption in favour of protection.

The inclusion of requirements for mitigation and enhancement is also considered critical. By requiring development proposals to mitigate potential adverse impacts and, where appropriate, deliver improvements to the network, the policy moves beyond simple protection and supports the ongoing enhancement of green and blue infrastructure. This responds directly to representations which emphasised the role of green infrastructure in delivering biodiversity benefits, wildlife corridors, recreational opportunities, and improved environmental quality.

Additionally, the LDP will encourage the provision of on-site linkages to the green and blue infrastructure network as an integral part of new development (where possible), in recognition of the Council's commitment to furthering sustainable development, supporting health and well-being, improving connectivity and enhancing opportunities for active travel within the Borough. This approach will also ensure that new development contributes positively to the wider network, creating integrated communities and improving both local accessibility and strategic connectivity.

The approach also allows for the recognition of wider assets within the network, including heritage features and historic routes, reflecting consultation feedback regarding the importance of the historic environment in shaping and enhancing green infrastructure. This ensures that the policy supports a holistic and multi-functional approach to green and blue infrastructure.

The LDP approach towards green and blue infrastructure has taken account of regional planning policy and guidance the Council's Community Plan 'Connected' and feedback received through the POP process. Furthermore, given that green and blue infrastructure is important cross-boundary issue, careful consideration has been given to the approach of neighbouring councils, to ensure that the delivery of better connected and comprehensive routes are supported, both within and outside the Borough.⁵³

On balance, the proposed policy approach is considered to provide a clear, consistent and evidence-based framework that protects existing assets, facilitates future expansion, and ensures that new development contributes positively to the network. It is therefore an appropriate and justified response to ECN 18.

The location of designated community greenways will be set out in the Local Policies Plan alongside more detailed proposals for strategic greenways.

For further detail on the POP responses, and the Council's consideration, refer to the POP Public Consultation Report, available on the Council's website.

⁵³ The Borough adjoins the boundary of five neighbouring Council areas: Mid Ulster District Council, Newry Mourne and Down District Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (by Lough Neagh) and Monaghan County Council in the Republic of Ireland. Examples of green and blue infrastructure of shared interest include Lough Neagh, River Bann, River Blackwater, River Lagan, Newry Canal Towpath and Ulster Canal Greenway.

6.0 Stakeholder Development

Internal Stakeholders

Planning Officers in Development Management and Enforcement Sections

Consultation was carried out with planning officers in the Planning Department's Development Management and Enforcement Sections as part of the policy review process; to establish any difficulties they experienced in the application of existing planning policies and to provide an opportunity to critique the draft policies. Officers' views were taken into consideration in finalising draft policies prior to being presented at Council Members workshops.

Other Council Departments

Representatives from relevant Council departments have been engaged to ensure that due account has been taken of Council's Community Plan, as well as other Council strategies and initiatives.

This engagement was undertaken by way of individual meetings with council departments, in particular the Community Plan Team to ensure account was taken of the Council's Community Plan.

A meeting also took place with a 'Project Management Team.' The Project Management Team was comprised of Officers from a range of council departments, including Community Plan, Tourism, Economic Development, Environmental Health and Environmental Services.

Elected Members

Section 8 (7a) of Part 2 (Local Development Plans) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Plan Strategy to be adopted by resolution of the Council. As such, Elected Members have been engaged throughout the LDP process, including the preparation of the draft dPS policies.

Engagement with the Elected Members has been facilitated through a series of workshops held between 2019 and 2026. That engagement included the draft open space, sport and outdoor recreation policies set out below:

- Policy OSR 1- Protection and Provision of Open Space
- Policy OSR 2- Public Open Space in new Residential Development
- Policy OSR 3- Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside
- Policy OSR 4- Intensive Sports Facilities
- Policy OSR 5- Noise Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities
- Policy OSR 6- Development of Facilities ancillary to Water Sports
- Policy OSR 7- The Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities
- Policy OSR 8- Green and Blue Infrastructure

Whilst there was general agreement with the draft policy wording, Elected Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that the planning policy for green and blue infrastructure (OSR 8) is sufficiently flexible so to allow for new greenway routes as they emerge. Draft Policy OSR 8 Green and Blue Infrastructure was subsequently reviewed, and it was determined that the draft policy would help to support the provision of a well-connected and comprehensive routes that extend to, and complement, existing or planned networks both within and outside the Borough.

External Stakeholders

Government departments and agencies

Section 8 (5) of Part 2 (Local Development Plans) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Plan Strategy to take account of the RDS, any policy and guidance issued by the Department and other relevant government strategies and plans. As such the Council has engaged key consultees representing relevant central government departments and agencies in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy policies.

Cross Boundary Context and Consideration of Neighbouring Council Approaches

In developing draft-planning policies for open space, sport and outdoor recreation, consideration has also been given to the approaches of adjoining Councils.

The Borough adjoins the boundary of five neighbouring Council areas, 4 of which are in Northern Ireland and one of which is in the Republic of Ireland:

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (by Lough Neagh);
- Newry Mourne and Down District Council;
- Mid Ulster District Council;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; and
- Monaghan County Council, in the Republic of Ireland.

The Preferred Options Papers (POPs), supporting evidence base and draft Plan Strategies (where published) of adjoining Councils have been taken account of, in addition to regional guidance, in order to identify any cross-boundary issues / conflict.

Table 15, below, outlines adjoining Councils position in regard to open space, sport and outdoor recreation, including greenways.

Adjoining Council	Position
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) published its Local Development Plan- draft Plan Strategy on 28 June 2019 for a four week period of pre-consultation. A formal period of public consultation also ran from 26 July 2019 to 20 September 2019. The Draft Plan Strategy was submitted to DfI on 8th March 2021. The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) have now completed their Independent Examination of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Councils Draft Plan Strategy, with hearings held during May and June 2022. Strategic Objective 10 of ANBC dPS is to 'Promote the protection and accessibility of our open spaces'. ANBC acknowledges that open spaces should be protected and accessible for all to enjoy and that the creation of accessible green networks within, around and linking settlements will help promote health and wellbeing, as well as enhancing biodiversity opportunities

	ANBC operational policies of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include Strategic Policy 5 'Community Infrastructure', DM23 'Protection of Open Space', DM17.6 'Public Open Space provision in New Residential Developments' and Strategic Policy 3 'Transportation and Infrastructure'. Strategic Policy 5 identifies the Councils commitment to ensuring that all communities have access to health, education, community, and recreational facilities as well as parks and other open spaces that meet the needs of the communities they serve, highlighting that the Council will operate a presumption against the loss of existing community infrastructure, including open space of public value, to competing uses. The dPS identifies that the Council will bring forward land allocations in the LPP to address any deficiencies identified in open space provision, as well as to meet any needs identified by statutory health and education authorities for future facilities and development. In addition, ANBC will expect new development proposals to facilitate and improve linkages and accessibility to local community infrastructure and help maximise opportunities to promote healthy and active lifestyles. Furthermore, all major residential development proposals will be required to support active travel options, encourage the reduction in use of the private car, provide adequate public open space, demonstrate high quality design and promote balanced communities and the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods. Strategic Policy 3 'Transportation and Infrastructure' identifies that 'continued investment in new and improved cycling routes and Greenway links' is a key priority in order to improve the overall connectivity of the Borough. ANBC will promote appropriate opportunities for the reuse of disused transport routes, such as disused railway lines or waterways and will operate a presumption against development that would prejudice their reuse for transport or recreational purposes. On 3 July 2025 ANBC adopted their Local Development Plan 2030 - Plan Strategy, in accordance with Section 12 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 24 of The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	Newry Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) published its Local Development Plan 2035 draft Plan Strategy in June 2025. The consultation period was carried out over a twelve-week period, from Friday 27 June 2025 to Monday 22 September 2025 NMDs Open Space Strategy sets out their approach to the protection, enhancement and management of open space in the district. NMDs strategic approach to open space is set out within the LDP's objectives which are to protect and enhance the provision of open space across the district to support health and wellbeing and to provide for quality public spaces and 'shared spaces' that are accessible to all. These objectives are supported by Strategic Policy OSS1 Protecting and Enhancing Open Space and the operational policies. Strategic Policy OSS1 seeks to protect and safeguard existing areas of public open space and meet the

	requirements for new open space and recreation facilities. It also seeks to provide adequate and well-designed open space in new residential development and promote outdoor recreational activities in the countryside which are appropriate and sustainable. Additionally, and of particular relevance to ABC Borough, NMD seeks to protect green and blue infrastructure, for example parks, gardens and linear open space such as pedestrian and cycle routes/walkways and river corridors that have open space value, as well as the protection of disused transport assets to enable their future use as Greenways. The draft Plan Strategy acknowledges that the creation of such links can help to provide a network of recreational facilities across the district and into adjoining authorities. NMDs strategy is supported by a suite of open space policies, OS1-OS10, which provide policy direction on a broad range of proposals including open space in new residential development, the protection of open space, recreation in the countryside and noise generating sports. Whilst the policies generally align with PPS 8, the draft Plan Strategy also includes policy OS8 'Green and Blue Infrastructure' which seeks to protect designated strategic or community greenways from development which could prejudice their retention, enhancement or further development and protect existing and potential sites and corridors that form part of the network of green and blue infrastructure network. Policy OS9 provides the policy direction for Community Growing Spaces and Allotments, whilst Policy OS10 sets out the planning considerations for cemeteries and burial spaces.
Mid Ulster District Council	Mid Ulster District Council published its Local Development Plan 2030 – Draft Plan Strategy on 22nd February 2019, the Council re-consulted on its Draft Plan Strategy, which closed at 5pm on 24th September 2020. The draft Plan Strategy has now been submitted to the Department for Infrastructure on 28th May 2021. MUDCs dPS attaches great importance to the retention of existing open spaces, the creation of attractive new spaces and the promotion of more opportunities to participate in sport and outdoor recreation. It acknowledges that this will be achieved by identifying important parcels of open space to be protected, zoning of new open space and by formulating policy to require open space to be provided by the developer in new housing developments. Furthermore, MUDC recognises the benefits of dual use of open spaces and are working with the Education Authority to share sports pitches in addition to working with the NIHE to facilitate children's play provision on land under their control. MUDC also acknowledges the link between open space, transport and the environment and as such the aim of the Open Space Strategy is to protect not only parks and gardens but also linear open spaces such as pedestrian walkways. SPF 10 seeks to 'Facilitate the protection of vulnerable landscapes and conservation interests, from inappropriate and over dominant development while promoting adequate provision of open space and

	landscaping integrated with broader green and blue infrastructure systems.' MUDC policies of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include: OS1 Protection of Open Space, OS2 Protection of River Corridors, OS3 Outdoor Sport and Recreation, OS4 Indoor Sport and Intensive Outdoor Sports Facilities, and HOU2 Quality Residential Development. The policies are aimed at providing better quality of open space within residential developments, placing value on the environment, enhancing it for children and helping to create safer environments and communities. HOU 2 requires that Developments should improve accessibility by adequately catering for motor vehicles but also encouraging other alternative modes of transport to meet the needs of those without a car. It requires that development proposals should create a safe and sustainable environment for current and future occupiers by providing connections and linkages to schools, community facilities, and public transport networks that connect to the wider community and blue green infrastructure to avoid insular developments. In specific regards to greenways within the District, MUDC identifies the potential for Ulster Canal (Caledon – Moy) and Clogher Valley Greenways and also the potential for a greenway along the route of the former Great Northern Railway. One of the Outcomes of the LDP, in relation to 'Enhancing the environment and improving infrastructure' is that more greenways will be created, whilst safeguarding the canals and main riverbanks for future use.
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	The draft Plan Strategy was published for formal consultation on Friday 8th November 2019, and it was submitted to the Department for Infrastructure on 22nd March 2021. Independent examination of the dPS began on 28th March 2022 and the public hearing sessions completed in May 2022. LCCC dPS outlines a number of actions (Plan Objective D) aimed at supporting open space, sport and recreation within the Council area: • Support the recreation and leisure offer to grow in a sustainable manner • Protect and enhance open space recognising its value in promoting health and well-being and resolving flood issues through the introduction of sustainable urban drainage infrastructure • Support and encourage accessibility to open space including the Lagan Valley Regional Park and Lagan Navigation as key assets within the Council area. LCCC strategic policies of particular relevance to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include Strategic Policy 17 'Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation' which seeks to support development proposals that protect and enhance existing open space and provide new open space provision, support and protect a network of accessible green and blue infrastructure and support and promote the

	development of strategic and community greenways. LCCCs LPP will identify existing areas of open space and potential new areas requiring protection as part of the future open space provision. In addition, further work in reviewing existing and future community greenways will also be undertaken as part of the LPP. The operational planning policies relevant to open space, sport and outdoor recreation include HOU5 'Public Open Space in New Residential Development', OS1 'Protection of Open Space', OS2 'Intensive Sports Facilities', OS3 'Noise-Generating Sports and Outdoor Recreational Activities', OS4 'Facilities ancillary to Water Sports', OS5 'Floodlighting of Sports and Outdoor Recreational Facilities' and OS6 'Outdoor Recreation in the Countryside'. The LDP operational policies will require, where necessary, the provision of open space appropriate to the nature and scale of development proposals. The operational planning policies of particular relevance to greenways include TRA5 'Strategic Greenways and Disused Transport Routes' and also TRA8 'Active Travel Networks and Infrastructure Provision.' TRA5 'Strategic Greenways and Disused Transport Routes' will not permit development that would prejudice Strategic Greenways, or the future reuse of a disused transport route identified in the Local Development Plan for transport or recreational purposes. In acknowledgement that Active travel can help to mitigate and adapt to climate change, improve connectivity, and promote more sustainable patterns of transport and travel TRA8 'Active Travel Networks and Infrastructure Provision' will only permit development proposals where public transport, walking and cycling provision forms part of the development proposal. On 26th September 2023 LCCC adopted their Local Development Plan 2030 - Plan Strategy, in accordance with Section 12 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 24 of The Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
Monaghan County Council	Monaghan County Council adopted its County Development Plan 2025 - 2031 on 26 May 2025. The Plan sets out a number of cycling and walking objectives, aimed at promoting and facilitating the sustainable development of walkways, cycleways and recreational routes throughout the County. Of particular relevance is objective CFO 17 which seeks to develop, in co-operation and consultation with adjoining Local Authorities and cross border bodies, sections of the Ulster Canal Greenway Network to connect the main urban centres throughout central Ulster. The importance of outdoor recreation spaces and facilities are recognised by the County Council as being essential for the health and wellbeing of our population. The Plan recognises the importance of outdoor recreation spaces and facilities as being essential for health and wellbeing, acknowledging that such spaces and facilities should be accessible to both the rural and urban population of the County and must be protected from unacceptable development for current and future users. As such the

	Plan will resist development on, or the removal of existing playing fields, pitches and designated areas of public open space. The Plan includes a suite of recreation, parks and public open spaces objectives: - CFO 20 which seeks to protect established/historic railway corridors and other disused transport infrastructure routes primarily for strategic infrastructure provision and recreational development; - CFO 21 which aims to protect and enhance public open spaces and established recreational green areas; - CFO 22 which seeks to support the protection of lands zoned as amenity/open space; and - CFO 23 which aims to promote and support the development of cycling facilities, including a potential pump track, at appropriate locations.
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Table 15: Adjoining Councils Position – Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation

The Council has responded to the neighbouring Council Preferred Options Papers and Draft Plan Strategies, as they have been published.

Although there are some differences in the draft policy wording of adjoining Councils dPSs, it is not considered that there are any significant conflicts with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Councils Draft Plan Strategy insofar as it relates to open space, sport and outdoor recreation (including greenways).

7.0 Draft Plan Strategy Policy Approach

As analysed above, the Council's draft Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8) and relevant draft policy provisions within the suite of General Policies and Design and Placemaking Policies have evolved from a review of extant regional planning policies, other key policy and guidance documents, the POP, responses to the POP and a series of engagements with key stakeholders, including the following:

- Key statutory consultees.
- Elected Members of the Council.
- Officers from the Development Management section of the planning department; and
- Officers from other relevant departments of the Council.

In preparing the draft policies, the Council has taken account of a range of relevant matters, including the following:

- The RDS (in particular RG7 and RG 11) and SPPS (in particular paragraphs 6.199 - 6.213).
- Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8): Open Space, Sport & Recreation along with all other relevant Planning Policy Statements (as detailed in the Regional Policy Context) and the extant development plans within Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough.
- The Council's Community Plan (especially in terms of the Plan's commitment to deliver a sustainable place and the Long / Short Term outcomes of relevance to this subject area including 'Healthy Community' (People are making positive lifestyle choices), 'Confident Community' (We have improved the promotion, accessibility and use of local assets, services and facilities) and 'Enhanced Place' (Our physical and environmental assets are accessible), ongoing council initiatives and the neighbouring council context.
- The adopted /draft Plan Strategies of neighbouring councils – the draft policies are not considered to conflict with any of those.

In preparing the dPS, a range of general planning considerations, including design, integration and amenity, were incorporated into the General Policies or Design and Place-making Policies of the draft Plan Strategy⁵⁴. This approach consolidates and streamlines requirements that were previously repeated across multiple Planning Policy Statements and subject policy areas within the Strategic Planning Policy Statement. It improves the structure, clarity and usability of the Plan while maintaining the existing policy objectives and regional policy direction. The draft policies have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), the findings of which are set out in the accompanying SA Environmental Report.

In conclusion, the draft policies are founded on a robust evidence base which includes baseline information contained in this Technical Supplement, the POP, responses to the POP and subsequent engagement with consultees, including DfI Rivers.

⁵⁴ Exceptions to the General Policies and Design and Place-making Policies are set out in the dPS.

8.0 Soundness

The LDP has been prepared in accordance with the tests of soundness set out in the DfI's Development Plan Practice Note 6: Soundness (Version 2, May 2017). The draft Plan Strategy, insofar as it relates to the draft Open Space Strategy (SGS 9) and draft Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), is considered to be sound, as it satisfies the relevant tests of soundness, as summarised in Table 16 below:

Table 16: Consideration of Soundness

Procedural Tests	
P2	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have evolved from the POP and have taken account of responses to the POP and the POP Consultation Report.
P3	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, including a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Further details are included in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.
Consistency Tests	
C1	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have taken account of the RDS and in particular RG 7 and RG 11.
C2	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have taken account of the Council's Community Plan, particularly in terms of the Plan's commitment to deliver a sustainable place and the Long term outcomes of relevance to this subject area including 'Healthy Community' (People are making positive lifestyle choices), 'Confident Community' (We have improved the promotion, accessibility and use of local assets, services and facilities) and Sustainable Place.
C3	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have taken account of existing planning policies as contained within the SPPS, in particular paragraphs 6.199 - 6.213, along with Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8): Open Space, Sport & Recreation.
C4	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have taken account of the existing development plans within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, ongoing Council initiatives and the neighbouring council context, including the Republic of Ireland.
Coherence and Effectiveness Tests	
CE1	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 have taken account of the emerging LDPs of our neighbouring Councils in Northern Ireland and neighbouring council in the Republic of Ireland (Monaghan County Council) and are not considered to be in conflict with those.
CE2	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2 are founded on a robust evidence base which includes the baseline information contained in this technical supplement, the POP and responses to it and subsequent consultation with consultees, including DfI.

CE3	As part of the Council's ongoing monitoring framework the total amount of space for green and blue infrastructure, number of planning permissions granted on zoned Open Space and the delivery of schemes which support Active Travel (Walking, cycling and public transport) will be monitored and assessed against relevant indicators to determine whether the strategy and policies are being implemented effectively, remain appropriate and continue to support the Plan's objectives. Monitoring findings will inform the future review of the Plan and any necessary policy intervention.
CE4	The Open Space Strategy (SGS 9), Open space, Sport and Outdoor recreation policies (OSR 1-8), GP 1-4 and DES 1-2-will be reviewed at Plan Review stage. Where appropriate, the need for flexibility has been built into the strategic approach and draft policies to allow for changing circumstances. Local Policies Plan stage will provide further opportunity to review existing and introduce new local policies, provided this is underpinned by robust evidence base and is consistent with the adopted Plan Strategy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. PPS 8 Definition of Open Space

A1 For the purposes of this Planning Policy Statement, open space is taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

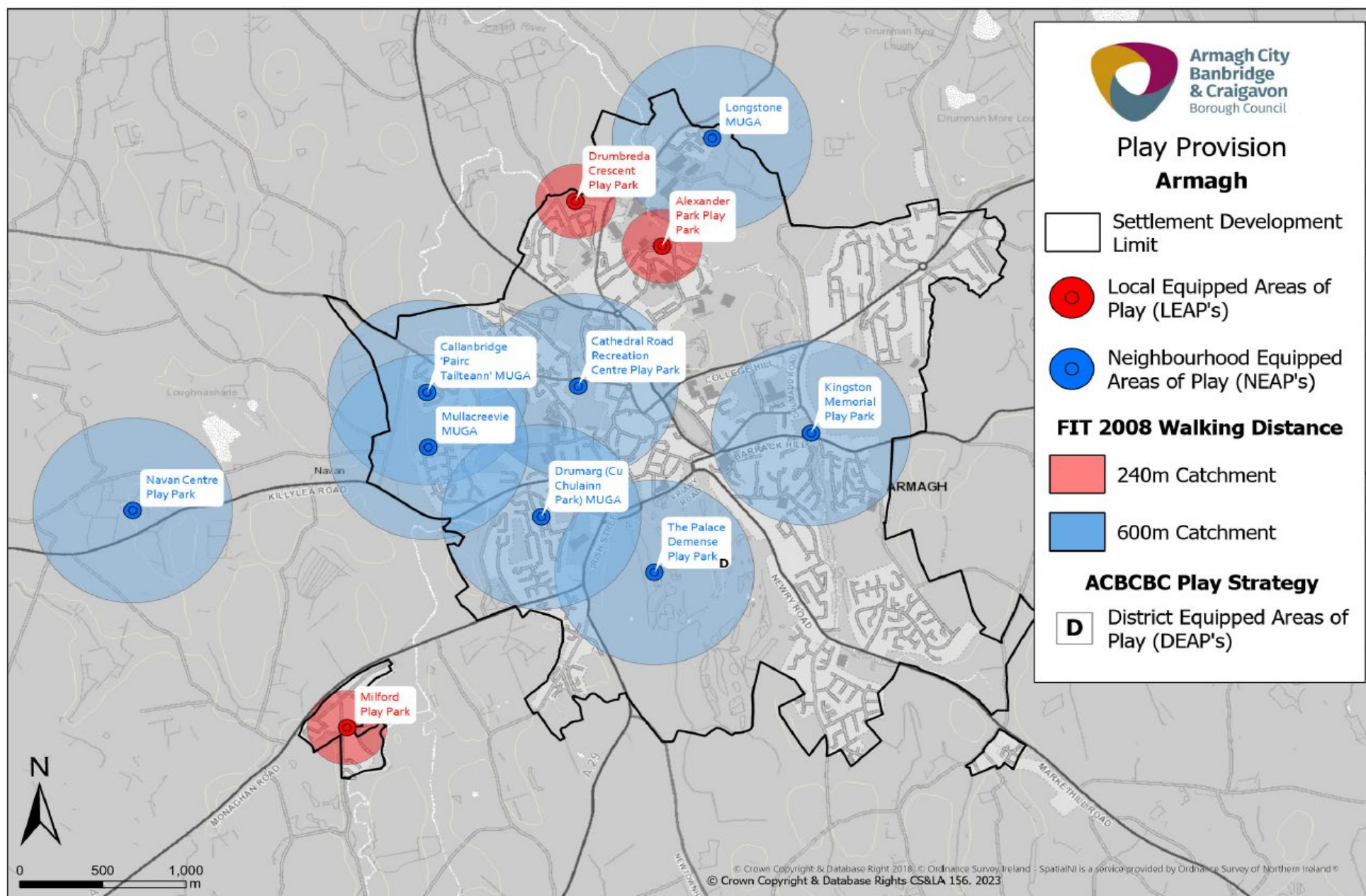
A2 The following typology illustrates the broad range of open spaces that are of public value:

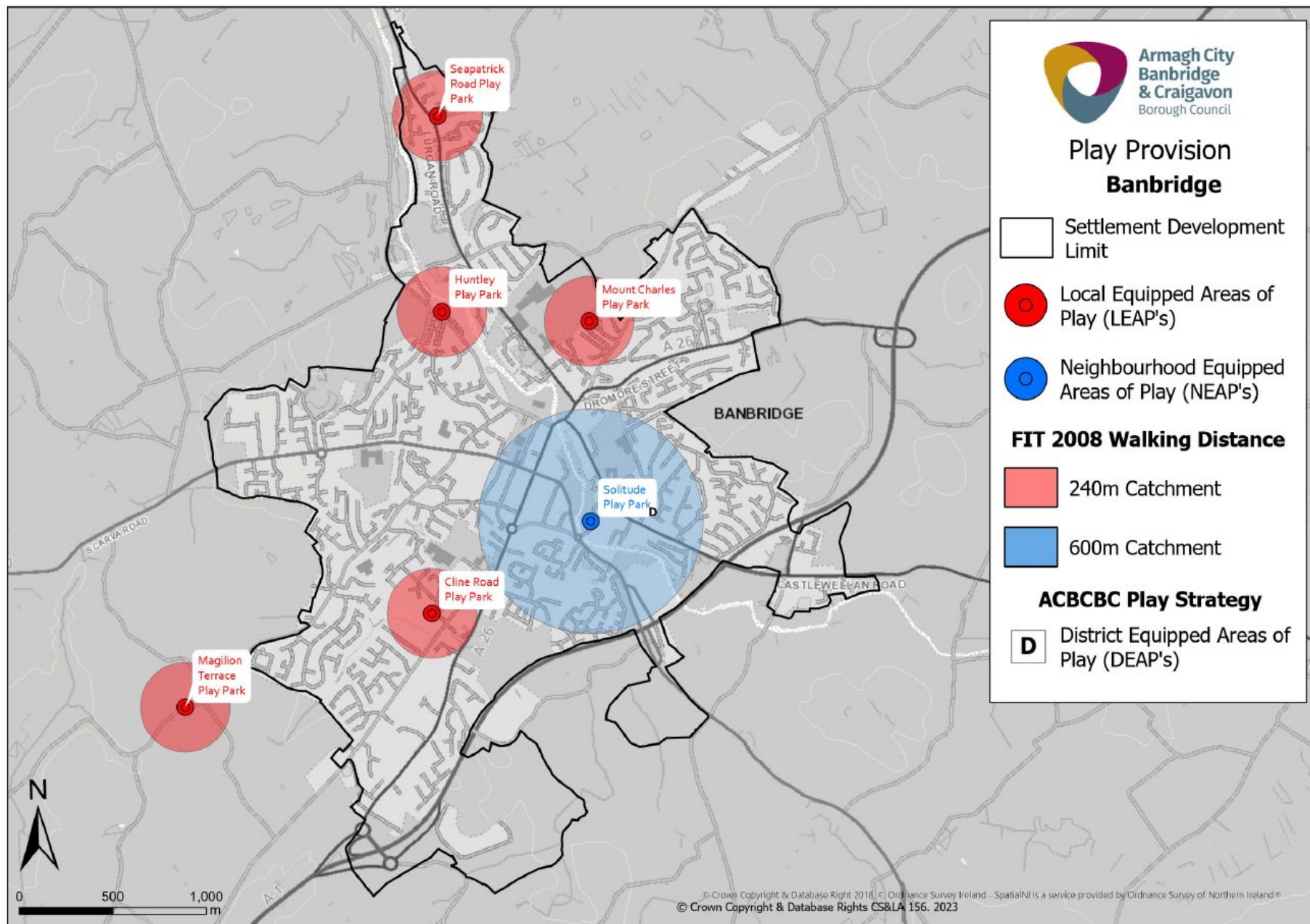
- (i) parks and gardens – including urban parks, country parks, forest parks and formal gardens;
- (ii) outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned) – including tennis courts, bowling greens, sport pitches, golf courses, athletic tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas;
- (iii) amenity green space (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) – including informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens;
- (iv) provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, kick about areas, skateboard parks and outdoor basketball hoops;
- (v) green corridors – including river and canal banks, amenity footpaths and cycleways;
- (vi) natural and semi-natural urban green spaces – including woodlands, urban forestry, grasslands (e.g. meadows), wetlands, open and running water, and rock areas (e.g. cliffs);
- (vii) allotments and community gardens;
- (viii) cemeteries and churchyards; and
- (ix) civic spaces, including civic and market squares and other hard surface areas designed for pedestrians

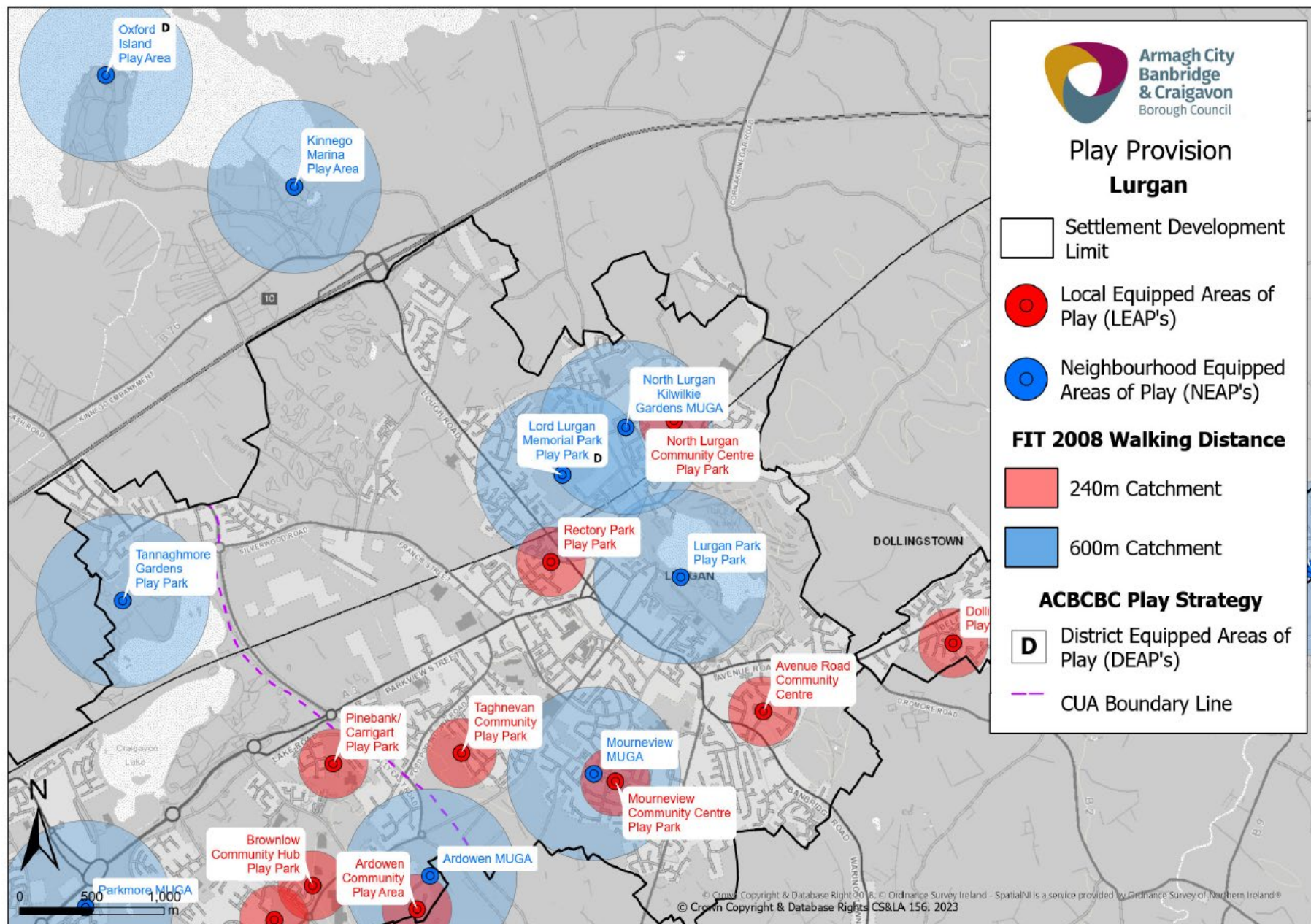
The Department recognises that most areas of open space can perform multiple functions. These will be taken account of when applying the policies of this Statement. These include:

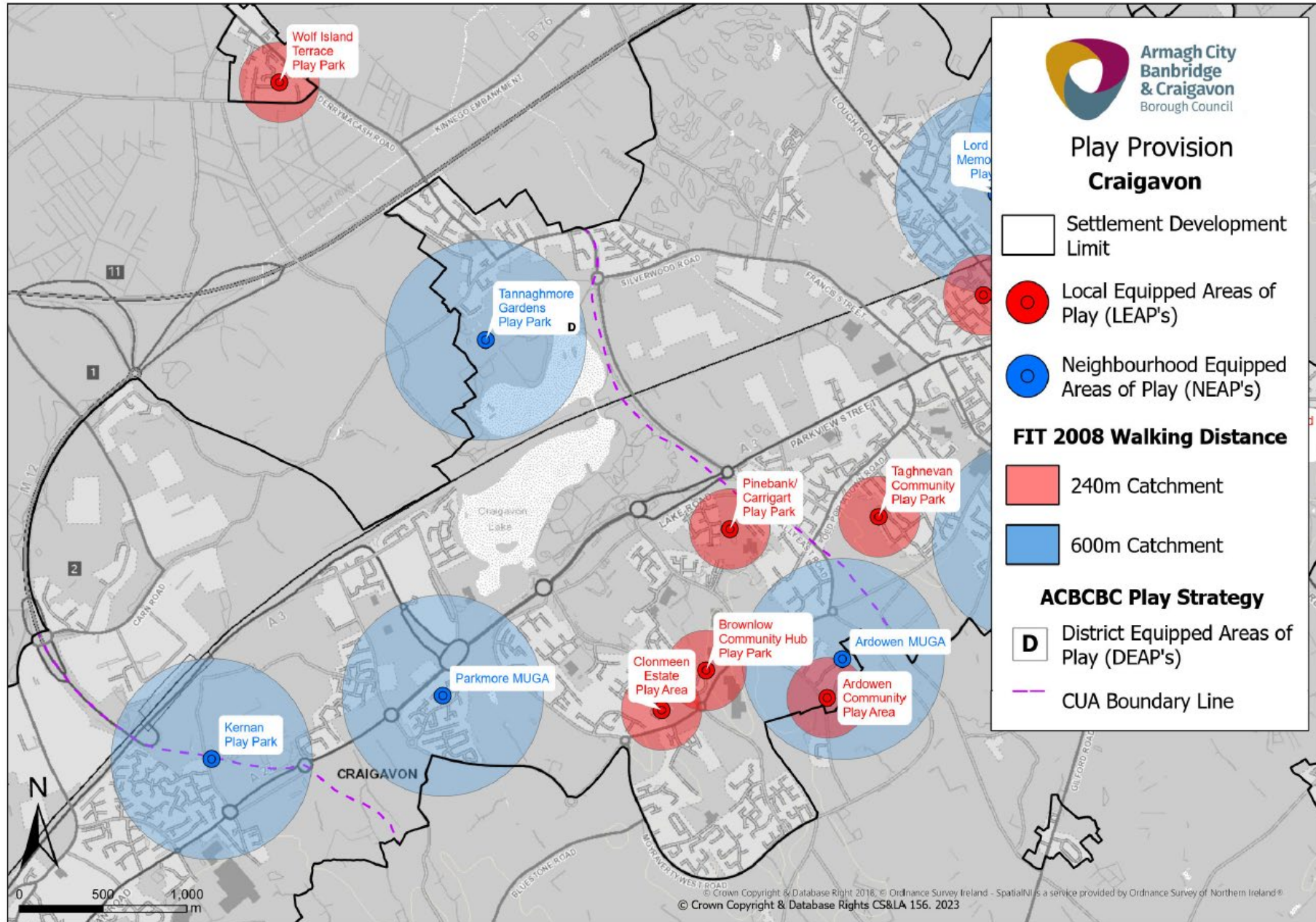
- (i) strategic functions - defining and separating urban areas; providing community greenways, 'green lungs' or landscape buffers within urban areas; better linking of town and country; and serving recreational needs over a wide area;
- (ii) urban quality - helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive green spaces close to where people live;
- (iii) promoting health and well-being - providing opportunities to people of all ages for informal recreation, or to walk, cycle or ride within parks and open space or along paths, bridleways and canal banks. Allotments may provide physical exercise and other health benefits;
- (iv) havens and habitats for flora and fauna – sites may also have potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy;
- (v) as a community resource – a place for congregating and for holding community events; and
- (vi) as a visual amenity – even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape.

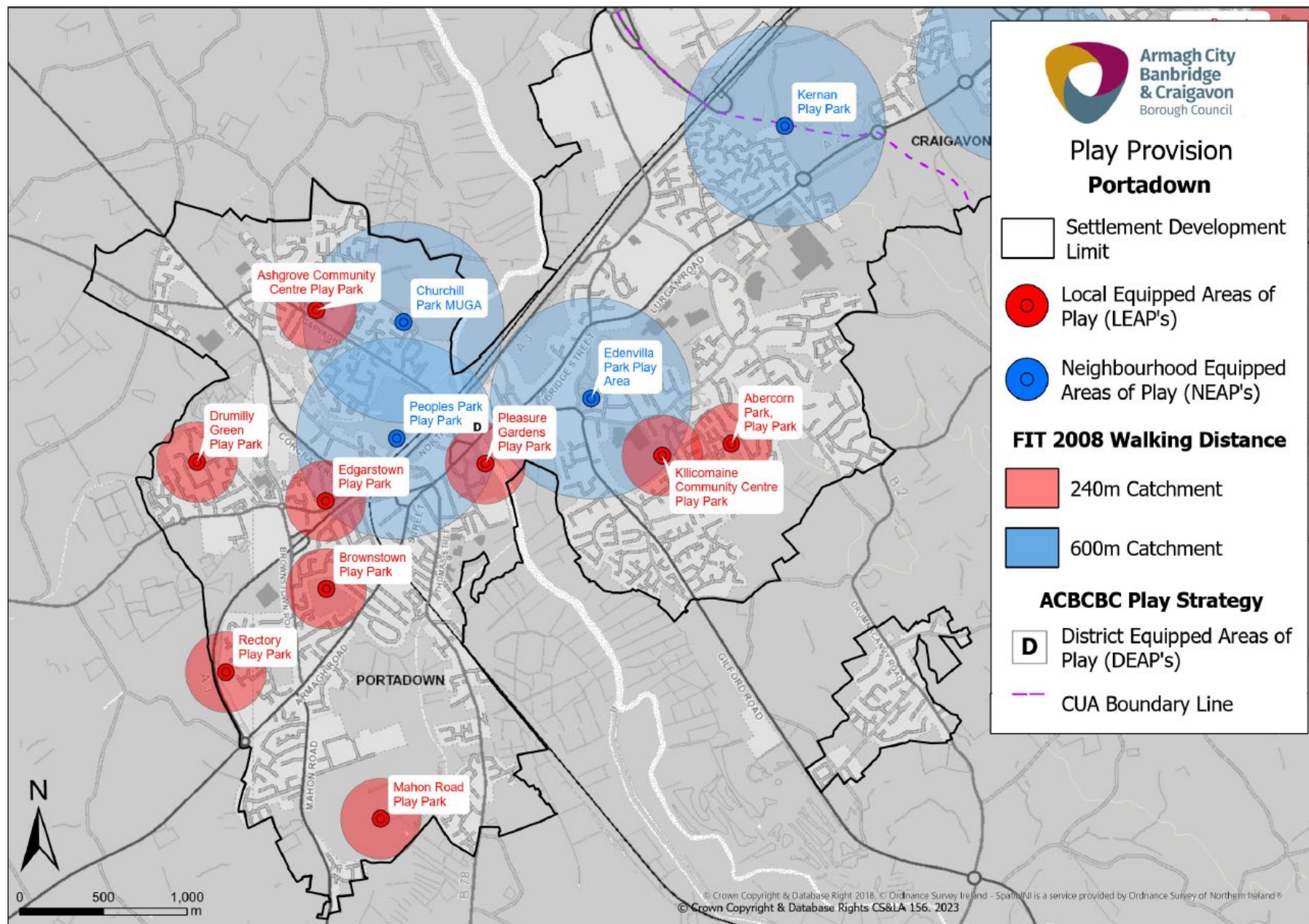
**Appendix 2. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Hubs
& Local Towns Play Park Provision (LEAPS & NEAPS) maps & FIT
Catchment Areas**

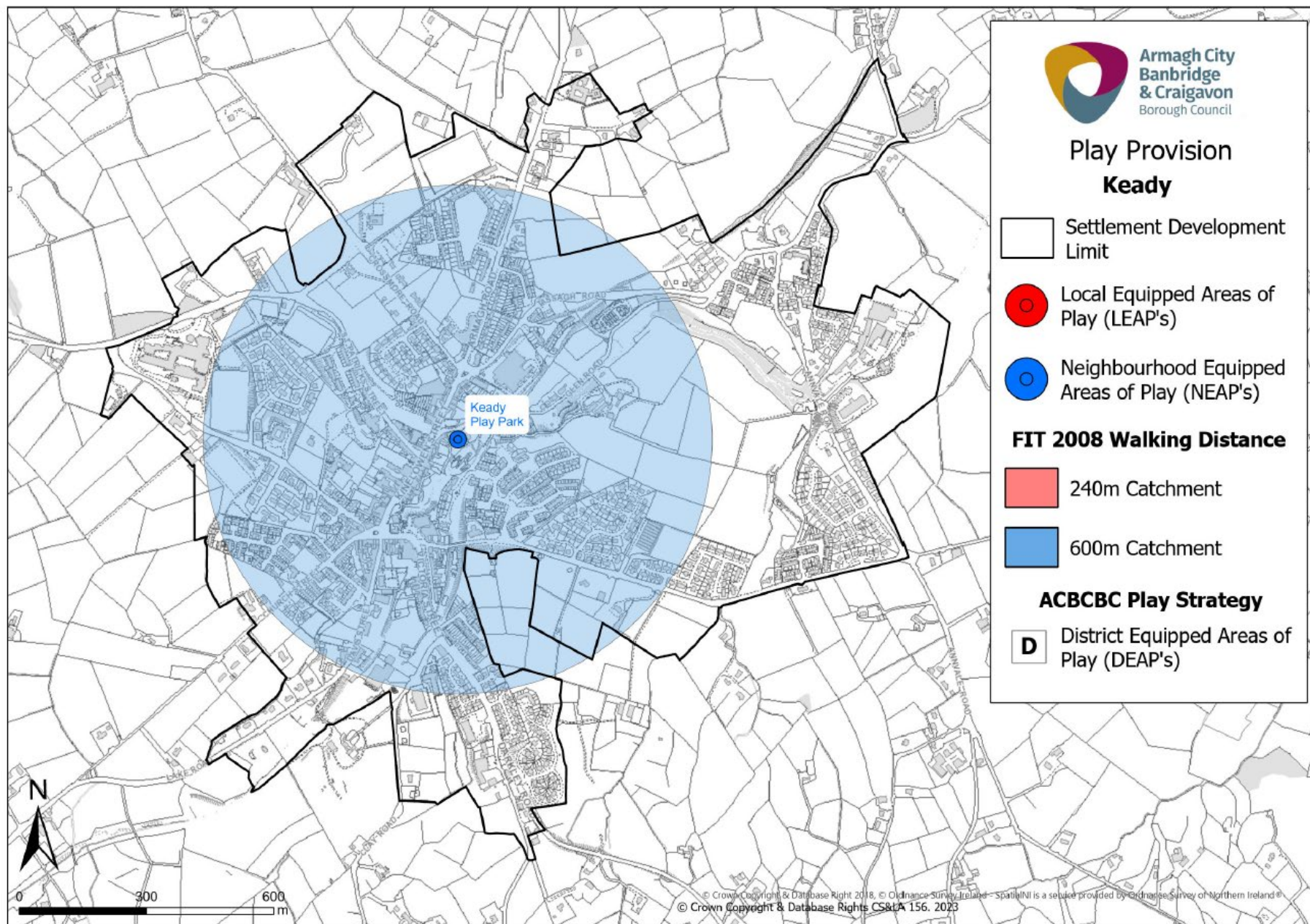


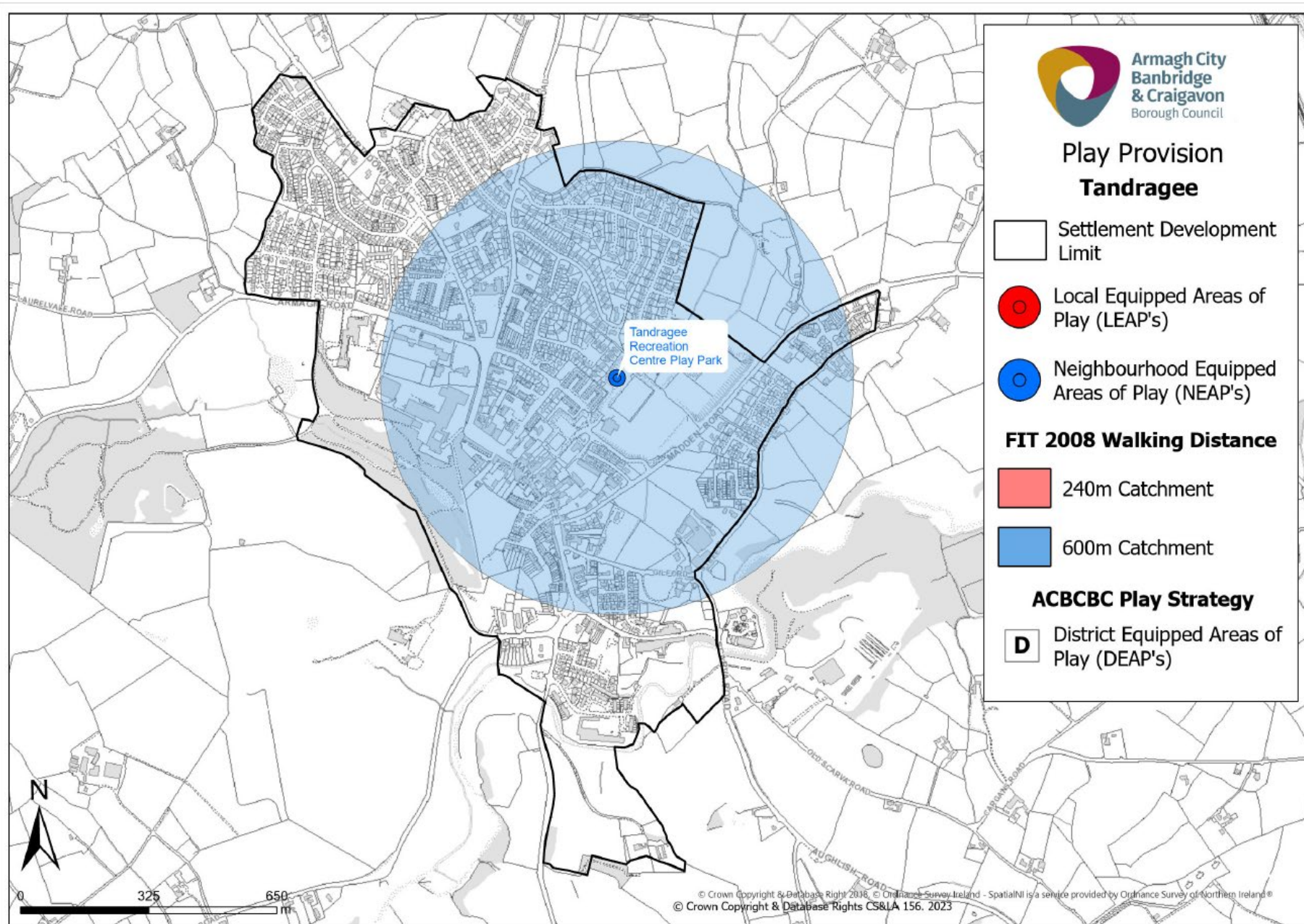


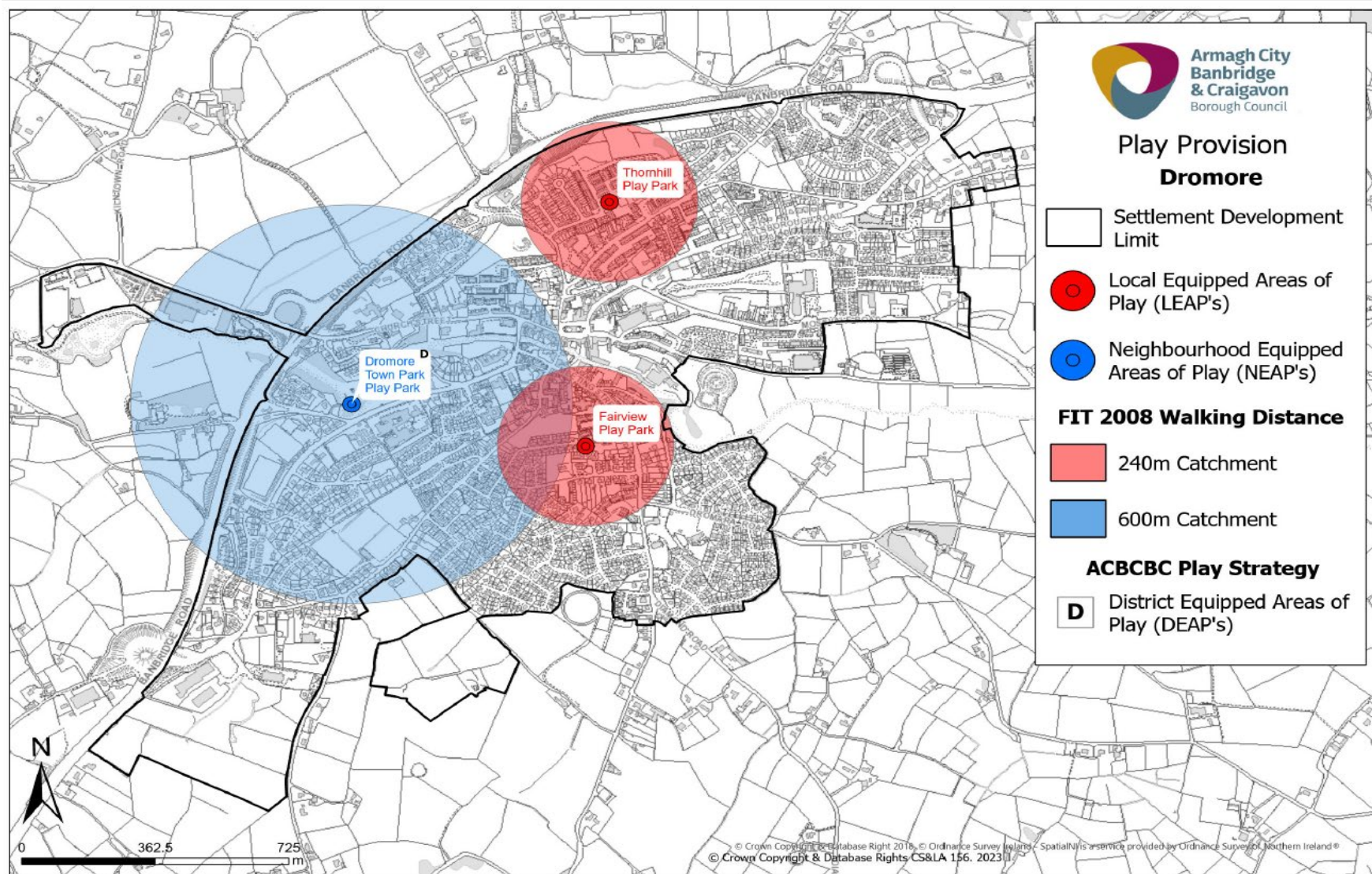


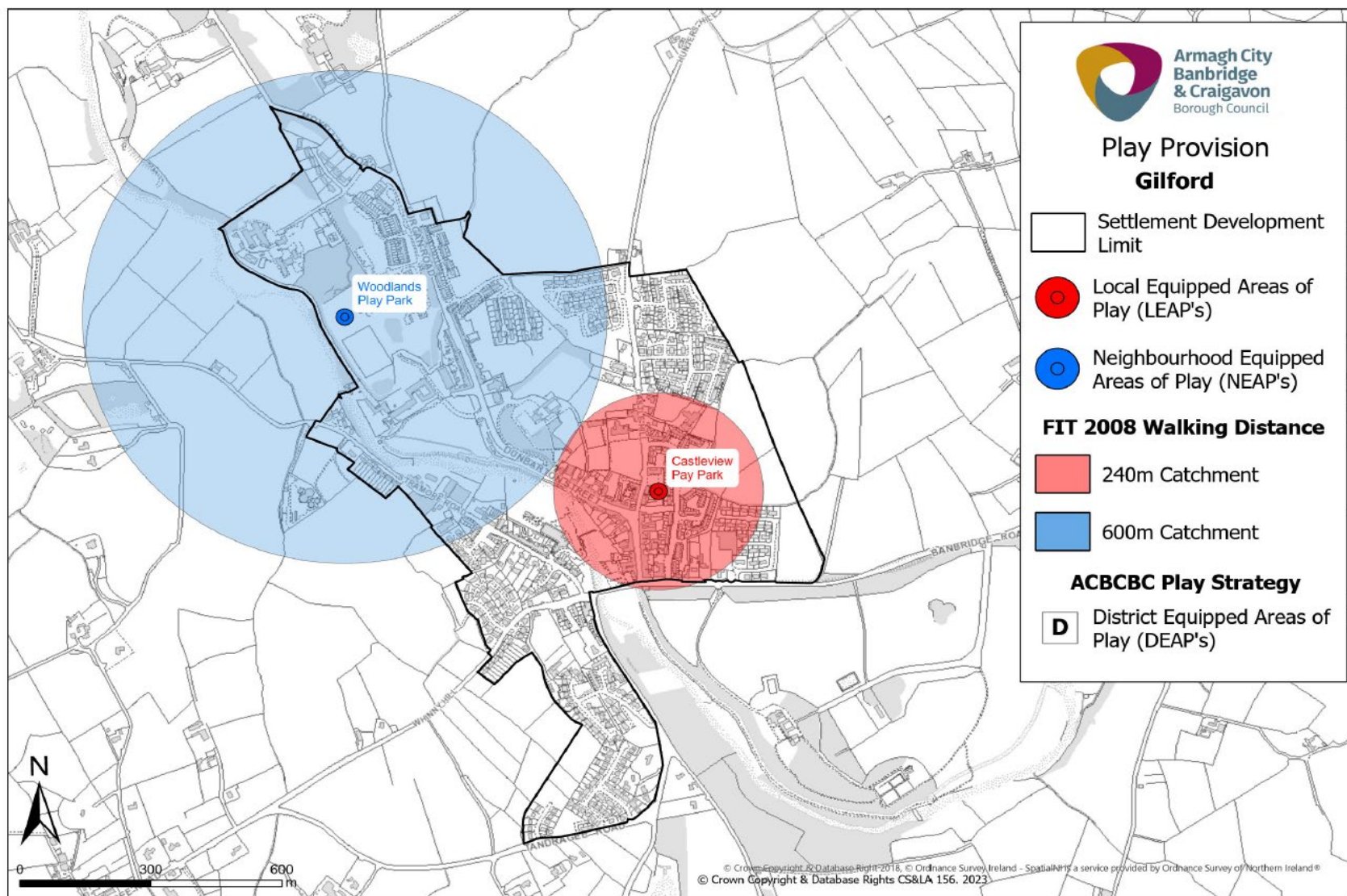


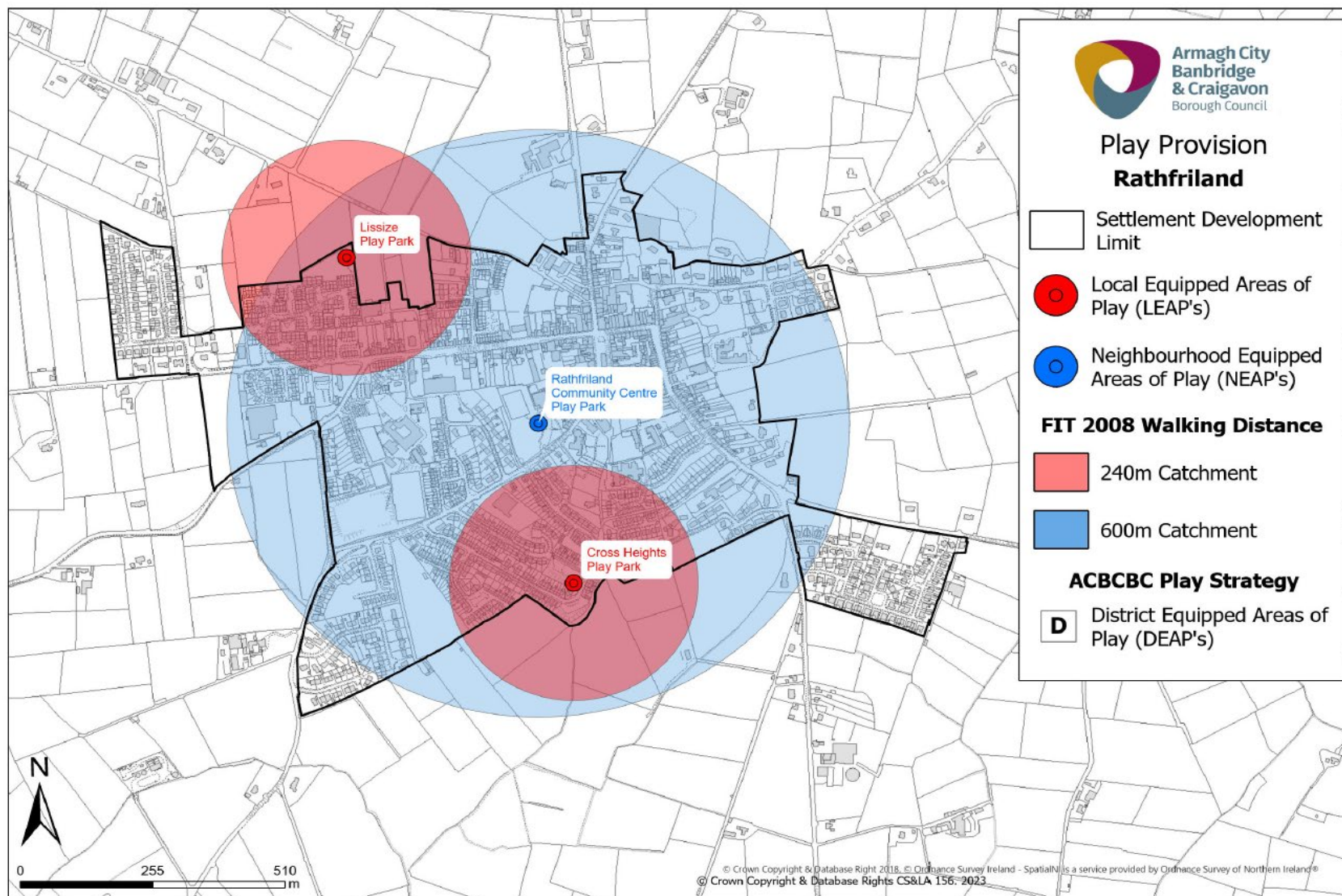












Appendix 3. Community Centres within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

	Armagh		Banbridge		
Facility / Service	Dobbin Street Community Centre	Tommy Makem Arts Centre Keady	Dromore Community Centre	Gilford Community Centre	Rathfriland Community Centre
3G Pitch	No	No	No	No	Yes – 1 Full size Floodlit 3G Pitch
MUGA	No	No	No	No	No
Grass Pitches	No	No	2	No	No
Changing Room	No	No	Yes – inc Team and Officials	No	Yes
Gym	No	No	Yes – Life Fitness Equipment	Yes – Life Fitness Equipment	Yes – Life Fitness Equipment
Sports Hall/ Main Hall	Yes	Yes	4-court Sports Hall	4-court Sports Hall	1-court Sports Hall
Party facilities with Kitchen Facilities	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Games Room	No	No	Yes	No	No
Meeting/ Committee Room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multi-purpose Room	No	Yes	No	No	No
Bowling (Indoor)	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Bowling Green	No	No	No	No	Yes
Climbing Wall	No	No	No	Yes	No
Dedicated Walking Trail	No	No	No	Yes - Riverside Trail	No
Dedicated Cycling Trail	No	No	No	Yes – inc. Pump Track for BMX	No

Running Track	No	No	No	No	No
Outdoor Fitness Station	No	No	No	Yes	No
Outdoor Play Area	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sensory Garden/ Allotments	No	No	No	No	No
Basketball/ Tennis Courts	No	No	No	No	No
Pre-School/ Afterschool	No	Yes	No	No	No
Shared Facility	No	No	Yes – Ferris Park (shared with Dromore High School) : Astro & Grass Pitch; 2 Artificial Tennis Courts; Pavilion with committee & changing rooms.	No	No

Craigavon Urban Area									
Facility / Service	Bleary Business & Community Centre	Brownlow Community Hub	Avenue Road Community Centre	Mourneview Community Centre	North Lurgan Community Centre	Taghneva Youth & Community Centre	Ashgrove Community Centre	Brownstown Park Community Centre	Killicomaine Jubilee Community Centre
3G Pitch	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes – 3G Floodlit Pitch	No
MUGA	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Grass Pitches	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Changing Room	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Gym	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Sports Hall/ Main Hall	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party facilities with Kitchen Facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Games Room	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Meeting/ Committee Room	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multi-purpose Room	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Bowling (Indoor)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Bowling Green	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Climbing Wall	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dedicated Walking Trail	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dedicated Cycling Trail	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Running Track	No	No	No	No	No	No		Yes	No
Outdoor Fitness Station	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Outdoor Play Area	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sensory Garden/ Allotments	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Basketball/ Tennis Courts	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Pre-School/ Afterschool	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Shared Facility	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Appendix 4. Recreation Centres within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Facility / Service	Ardmore Recreation Centre	Cathedral Road Recreation Centre	Keady Recreation Centre	Richhill Recreation Centre	Tandragee Recreation Centre
3G Pitch	Yes – 1 Full size floodlit 3G Pitch	Yes – 1 3G Floodlit All weather synthetic Pitch	Yes – 1 Full size Floodlit 3G Pitch	Yes – 1 3G Pitch	Yes – 1 Full size Floodlit 3G Pitch
Grass Pitches No.	3	1 (Full size GAA pitch)	No	1 (Full size grass pitch)	2
Changing rooms for pitches	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Gym	No	No	Yes – Matrix and Life Fitness Equipment	No	Yes – Life Fitness Equipment
Sports Hall/ Main Hall	No	No	3-court Sports Hall	3-court Sports Hall	3-court Sports Hall
Meeting/ Committee Room	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Party Room with Kitchen Facilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multi-activity Rooms	2	1	No	No	No
Outside Play area	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Pre-school/ Afterschool	No	No	No	No	Yes
Bowling Green	No	No	No	Yes	No
Tennis Courts	No	No	Yes	No	No

Appendix 5. Leisure Centres within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Facility / Service	South Lake Leisure Centre	Orchard Leisure Centre	Banbridge Leisure Centre
Swimming	• 50m Flexible design swimming pool • 17m Training Pool • Kids Leisure area with three fun slides	• 25m 6 lane swimming pool • 12.5m warmer learner pool	• 25m 6 lane swimming pool • 8.5m Learner pool • 10.5 Leisure pool • 8m toddler pool • 50m winding water slide
Gym	1000sqm Gym	Life Fitness Equipment	Life Fitness Equipment
Cycling Studio	44 Bikes	No	No
Dance/ Fitness Studio	Yes	No	No
Sports Hall	8-court pre-marked sports hall with retractable seating	3-court sports	6-court sports hall
Activity Rooms	2	No	No
Squash Courts	2	0	3
Health & Wellbeing Suite	Includes: - Spa Area - Sauna - Steam Room -Spa Pool -Private Treatment Rooms -Relaxation Zone	Relaxation Suite - Sauna - Steam Room - Jacuzzi	New sauna to be completed early Autumn - Sauna - Steam Room
Indoor Soft Play Area	Yes	Yes	No
Sensory Room	Yes	No	No
Cafe	Yes	Yes	Yes
MUGA	No	No	1
All Weather Pitch	No	No	1 includes floodlights
Meeting Room	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix 6. Main outdoor sport activities in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Sports Forum	
American Football	Kayaking/ Canoeing
Angling	Martial Arts
Archery	Motorcycling Racing (Off Road)
Athletics	Netball
Badminton	Pool
Basketball	Rambling
Bowls (Indoor)	Road Bowling
Bowls (Lawn)	Rowing
Boxing	Rugby
Camogie	Running
Clay Pigeon Shooting	Sailing
Cricket	Snooker
Cycling	Special Olympics
Equestrian	Swimming
Futsal	Table Tennis
Gaelic Football	Taekwondo
Golf	Tennis
Gymnastics	Triathlon
Hockey	Tug of War
Hurling	Volleyball
Judo	Wheelchair Basketball
Karate	

Appendix 7. Outdoor play parks in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough by Legacy Council Area

Play Area	Address	LEAPs/ NEAPs	Legacy Council
Abercorn Park	Southeast of 35 Abercorn Park, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Aghagallon Play Area	Southeast of 26 Lagan Gate, Aghagallon	LEAP	Craigavon
Ardowen Play Area	Southeast of 606 Ardowen, Craigavon	LEAP	Craigavon
Ashgrove Play Area	To the rear of Ashgrove Community Centre, Garvaghy Road, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Avenue Road Play Park	South of Avenue Road Community Centre, Carrick Drive, Lurgan	LEAP	Craigavon
Bleary Play Park	Bleary Business & Community Centre, 1 Deans Road, Bleary	NEAP	Craigavon
Brownlow Hub Play Park	Northwest Brownlow Community Centre, Brownlow Road, Craigavon	LEAP	Craigavon
Brownstown Park Play Area	North of Brownstown Jubilee Community Centre, Brownstown Park, Brownstown Road, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Clonmeen Play Park	Northeast of 701- 705 Clonmeen, Craigavon	LEAP	Craigavon
Dollingstown Play Park	Seyton Park, Dollingstown	LEAP	Craigavon
Donaghcloney Play Park	Irwin Place, Lisnasure Road, Donaghcloney	NEAP	Craigavon
Drumilly Green Play Area	Southeast of 101 Corcraan Drive, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Edenvilla Park Play Area	Bachelors Walk, Portadown	NEAP	Craigavon
Edgarstown Play Area	Northwest of 119 West Street, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Killicomaine Community Centre Play Park	32a Festival Road, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Kinnego Marina Play Area	Kinnego Marina, Oxford Island, Kinnego Embankment, Craigavon	NEAP	Craigavon
Kernan Play Park	Southeast of Kernan Cemetery, Kernan Hill, Portadown	NEAP	Craigavon
Lord Lurgan Play Park	Lord Lurgan Memorial Park, Victoria Street, Lurgan	NEAP	Craigavon
Loughview Terrace (Maghery)	Northeast of 12 Loughview Crescent, Milltown	LEAP	Craigavon
Lurgan Public Park	Windsor Avenue/ Avenue Road, Lurgan	NEAP*	Craigavon
Maghery Country Park	Southeast of Maghery Sean McDermotts GAA Club, Maghery Road, Maghery	NEAP	Craigavon
Mahon Road Play Park	60m northwest of 1 Clendinning Avenue, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Malcomson Park Play Area	East 66 Malcolmson Park, Magheralin	NEAP	Craigavon
Mourneview Community Centre Play Park	Rear of Mourneview Community Centre, Pollock Drive, Mourneview, Lurgan	LEAP	Craigavon

North Lurgan Play Park	Southeast of North Lurgan Community Centre, Levin Road, Lurgan	LEAP	Craigavon
Oxford Island Play Park	Oxford Island (Discovery Centre) Annaloist Road, Lurgan	NEAP*	Craigavon
Pinebank/ Carrigart Play Park	Southeast of 613 Pinebank, Craigavon	LEAP	Craigavon
Pleasure Gardens Play	Meadows Lane, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Portadown People's Park	Park Road/ Garvaghy Road, Portadown	NEAP*	Craigavon
Rectory Play Park	West of 42 Hobson Park, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Scotch Street Play Area	Northwest of 1 Timakeel Grove, Scotch Street, Portadown	LEAP	Craigavon
Taghnevan Play Area	Adjacent and Southeast of Taghnevan Youth and Community Centre, Glenholme Park, Taghnevan	LEAP	Craigavon
Tannaghmore Gardens & Animal Farm	Southeast of (Fairview) 42 Kilvergan Road, Craigavon	NEAP*	Craigavon
The Birches Play Park	Northeast of 21-22 Robinsonstown and adjacent and north of The Birches Primary School, The Birches	LEAP	Craigavon
Wakehurst Play Area	Charles Street, Lurgan (Rectory Park)	LEAP	Craigavon
Waringstown Play Park	Cambrai Drive/ Churchill Place Waringstown	NEAP	Craigavon
Wolf Island Play Area	Southwest of 42 Wolf Island Terrace, Derrymacash	LEAP	Craigavon
Annaclone Play Park	North of 2-8 (evens only) Frazer Park, Annaclone, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Ashfield Play Park	Rear of 1-12 New Houses, Killysorrell Road, Ashfield, Dromore	LEAP	Banbridge
Castleview Play Park	Rear of 101-106 Castleview, Gilford	LEAP	Banbridge
Cline Road Play Park	Northwest of 66A Cline Road, Old Newry Road, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Corbett Lough Play Park	Corbett Lough, Aughnacloy Road, Banbridge	NEAP	Banbridge
Cross Heights Play Park	Northeast and adjacent to 68 Spelga Drive and southwest of 56 Cross Heights, Rathfriland	LEAP	Banbridge
Dromore Town Park Play Park	Dromore Town Park, Banbridge Road, Dromore	NEAP*	Banbridge
Ervine Place Play Park	East of 4 Enagh Road, Waringsford	LEAP	Banbridge
Fairview Play Park	Rear of 9-12 Wallace Park, Dromore	LEAP	Banbridge
Finnis Play Park	Adjacent northwest of Mossvale Terrace, Ardtanagh Road Finnis, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Huntly Play Area	Adjacent and northwest of 1 Golf Terrace, Huntly Road, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Katesbridge Play Park	East of 6 Ardrin Road, Katesbridge, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Kinallen Play Park	South of Four Hill Primary School, Tullinisky Road, Kinallen, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Knock Terrace Play Area	Knock Terrace, Lisnacroppan Road, Rathfriland	LEAP	Banbridge

Lawrencetown Play Park	Northwest and North of 190 Banbridge Road, Lawrencetown, Banbridge	NEAP	Banbridge
Lenaderg Play Park	Northwest of 46 Hillside Crescent, Lenaderg, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Lissize Avenue Play Park	North of 44-52 (evens only) Lissize Avenue, Rathfriland	LEAP	Banbridge
Loughbrickland Play Park	Southeast of 9 Poyntzpass Road, Loughbrickland	NEAP	Banbridge
Maglion Terrace Play Park	West of 12 Maglion Terrace, Ballygowan, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Millstone Close Play Park	Northeast of 14 Milestone Close, Moneyslane	LEAP	Banbridge
Mountcharles Play Park	Land to the northeast of 32 & 33 Mount Charles, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Rathfriland Community Centre Play Park	Rathfriland Community Centre, John Street, Rathfriland	NEAP	Banbridge
Scarva Park Play Park	North of Scarva Primary School, Legananny Road, Scarva	NEAP*	Banbridge
Seapatrick Play Park	Southwest of 1-10 Seapatrick Avenue, Seapatrick, Banbridge	LEAP	Banbridge
Solitude Play Park	Rathfriland Street, Banbridge	NEAP*	Banbridge
Thornhill Play Park	North of 86 Maypole Park, Dromore	LEAP	Banbridge
Woodlands Play Park	West of 35-42 Woodlands, Gilford	NEAP	Banbridge
Alexander Park Play Park	South of 13 Station Road (The Firs Playschool) Armagh	LEAP	Armagh
Annahugh Play Park	Southwest of 1 Annahugh Park, Annahugh	LEAP	Armagh
Blackwatertown Play Park	South of 13-16 Avonmore, Blackwatertown	LEAP	Armagh
Carnagh Forest Park	Castleblayney Road, Keady	NEAP	Armagh
Cathedral Road Recreation Centre Play Park	20 Cathedral Road, Armagh	NEAP	Armagh
Clady Play Park	South of 27-30 Mourneview, Cladymore	LEAP	Armagh
Darkley Play Park	71 Moss Row, Darkley Primary School, Darkley	LEAP	Armagh
Derrynoose Play Park	Adjacent to Our Lady's and St Mochua's Primary School, Derrynoose	LEAP	Armagh
Drumbreda Play Park	18-23 Drumbreda Crescent, Armagh	LEAP	Armagh
Drumnahunshin Play Park	West of 32-34 Broomhill, Broomhill	LEAP	Armagh
Glenanne Play Park	Mossfield Estate, Glenanne	LEAP	Armagh
Gosford Forest Park	Gosford Forest Park, Gosford Road, Markethill	NEAP*	Armagh
Hamiltonsbawn Play Area	Hamiltonsbawn Primary School, 113 Annareagh Road, Hamiltonsbawn	LEAP	Armagh
Keady Play Park	Southeast of 7 Glen Road, Keady	NEAP	Armagh
Killylea Village Park	Esker Park, Killylea	LEAP	Armagh
Laurelvale Play Park	West of 15 & 15A Laurel Heights, Laurelvale	LEAP	Armagh
Loughgall Country Park Play Park	11-14 Main Street, Loughgall	NEAP*	Armagh

Loughgilly Play Park	Northwest of Neills Avenue, Loughgilly	LEAP	Armagh
Markethill Play Park	North of Markethill Primary School, 14 Mowhan Road, Markethill	NEAP	Armagh
Middletown Play Park	South of 12 Ivy Park, Middletown	LEAP	Armagh
Milford Play Park	North of 66A Hill Street, Armagh	LEAP	Armagh
Mountnorris Play Park	Northwest of 25 Main Street, Mountnorris	LEAP	Armagh
Mullaghbrack Play Park	West of 10 Mullaghbrack Terrace, Mullaghbrack	LEAP	Armagh
Navan Centre Play Park	The Navan Centre, Killylea Road, Armagh	NEAP	Armagh
Palace Stables and Demesne Play Park	The Palace Demesnes, Friary Road, Armagh	NEAP*	Armagh
Poyntzpass Play Park	Southwest of Poyntzpass Primary School, Tandragee Road, Poyntzpass	LEAP	Armagh
Richhill Village Play Park	The New Line, Richhill	NEAP	Armagh
Tandragee Recreation Centre Play Park	24 Madden Road, Tandragee	NEAP	Armagh
The Kingston Memorial Park	East of 48 Barrack Hill, Armagh	NEAP	Armagh
Tullysaran Play Park	South of 5 Milltown Road, adjacent to our Lady's Primary School, Artasooly	LEAP	Armagh
Note: * indicates DEAPs – District Equipped Areas of Play as per ACBCBC Play Strategy, which have been recorded as NEAPs as per Fit Standards for the purpose of this technical supplement			

Appendix 8. Multi-Use Games Area (MUGAs) in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough by Legacy Council Area

Name	Address	Legacy Council
Ardowen Monbrief MUGA	Northeast of 636 Ardowen, Craigavon	Craigavon
Blackwatertown MUGA	Southeast of 13 Avonmore, Blackwatertown	Armagh
Bleary MUGA	1 Deans Rd Bleary Business and Community Centre, Bleary	Craigavon
Brownstown Park MUGA	Brownstown Community Centre 35 Brownstown Park, Portadown	Craigavon
Callanbridge 'Pairc Tailteann' MUGA	South of 38 - 41 Callan Bridge Park, Armagh	Armagh
Churchill Park MUGA	East of 14 Churchill Park, Portadown	Craigavon
Clady MUGA	Southwest of 4 Mourneview, Cladymore	Armagh
Clonmeen MUGA	Northeast of 608 Clonmeen, Craigavon	Craigavon
Donaghcloney MUGA	North/ Northwest of Irwin Place, Donaghcloney	Craigavon
Drumbreda Park MUGA	Northwest of 24 - 26 Drumbreda Crescent, Armagh	Armagh
Drumarg (Cu Chulainn Park) MUGA	Drumarg Park, Armagh	Armagh
Kingston Memorial MUGA	Northeast of 48 Barrackhill, Armagh	Armagh
Killicomaine Community Centre MUGA	Northeast of 32a Festival Road, Portadown	Craigavon
Lawrencetown MUGA	South of 7 - 10 Millar Park, Drumnascamph Road, Lawrencetown	Banbridge
Longstone MUGA	Northeast of 37 Drumsill Park, Armagh	Armagh
Magheralin MUGA	Northeast of 84 - 87 Malcolmson Park, Magheralin	Craigavon
Maghera MUGA	Maghera Country Park, Maghera Road, Maghera	Craigavon
Markethill P.S. MUGA	Adjacent to and North of Markethill Primary School, 14 Mowhan Road Markethill	Armagh
Mourneview MUGA	Dickson Primary School, Pollock Drive, Lurgan	Craigavon
Mullacreevie MUGA	North of 70-80 Mullacreevie Park, Armagh	Armagh
North Lurgan Kilwilkie Gardens MUGA	Kilwilkie Gardens Lurgan	Craigavon
Parkmore MUGA	West of 102 Parkmore, Craigavon	Craigavon
Peoples Park MUGA	North of 63 Park Road, Portadown	Craigavon
Richhill Recreation Centre MUGA	The New Line, 22 New Line, Richhill	Armagh
Scotch Street MUGA	East of Stewarts Terrace, Scotch Street, Portadown	Craigavon
Taghnevan MUGA	36 Glenholme Park, Taghnevan Community Centre, Lurgan	Craigavon
Laurelvale MUGA	The Pond, Southwest of 5 and 7 Velton Lawns, Laurelvale	Armagh
Thornhill MUGA	East of 83 - 86 Maypole Park, Dromore	Banbridge

Appendix 9. Walking areas/ parks within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

No.	Walking Area / Parks	Legacy Council	Type	Distance (miles)	Types of Surfaces
1	Armagh Palace demesne inc 'Garden of the Senses'	Armagh			Parkland
2	Argory Blackwater River Walk	Armagh	Circular	1.5	Variety of Surfaces
3	Argory Lime Tree Walk	Armagh	Circular	1	Variety of Surfaces
4	Bann Boulevard	Craigavon	Linear	0.8	Flat, Tarmac Surfaces
5	Ballyroney Lacken Bog Walk	Banbridge	Circular	3.8	Hill/ Lakeland
6	Brackagh Bog	Craigavon	Circular	2.9	Unsurfaced Paths
7	Brownstown Park	Craigavon			
8	Carnagh Forest: Boundary Trail	Armagh	Circular	2	Compact Gravel and Tarmac Paths
9	Carnagh Forest: Carnagh Lake Trail	Armagh	Circular	0.9	Compact Gravel Paths
10	Carnagh Forest: Jointy's Lake Trail	Armagh	Circular	0.6	Compact Gravel Paths
11	Carnagh Forest: McCall's Lake Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.3	Compact Gravel Paths
12	Clare Glen	Armagh	Circular	1.1	Flat, Gravel Paths
13	Coney Island	Craigavon			Woodland
14	Craigavon Lakes	Craigavon	Circular	3	Variety of Surfaces and Shared Paths
15	Darkley Forest: Aughnagurgan Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.4	Compact Gravel Paths
16	Darkley Forest: Maintain Lodge Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.9	Compact Gravel Paths
17	Dromore Town Park	Banbridge			
18	Edenvilla Park	Craigavon			
19	Gilford Riverside Trail	Craigavon	Circular	0.3	Surfaced Flat Trail
20	Gosford Forest Park: Arboretum Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.1	Woodlands
21	Gosford Forest Park: Boundary Trail	Armagh	Circular	3.4	Woodlands
22	Gosford Forest Park: Castle Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.8	Woodlands
23	Gosford Forest Park: Deer Park Trail	Armagh	Circular	1.2	Woodlands
24	Huntly Wood	Banbridge	Circular	0.75	Woodlands
25	Keady Glen	Armagh	Linear		Wooded Area
26	Lord Lurgan Park	Craigavon	Circular		Parkland
27	Loughbrickland Historic Trail	Banbridge	Circular	1.8	Village Trail and Off Road Sections
28	Loughbrickland Walk (Whyte's Estate)	Banbridge	Circular	2.2	Woodland Trail and Rough Lane
29	Loughbrickland Park	Banbridge	Linear		Park/ landscaped area

30	Loughgall Country Park: Bridlepath	Armagh	Circular	4.2	Tarmac Country Lane
31	Loughgall Country Park: Lakeside Path	Armagh	Circular	1.4	Tarmac, Fine Stone, Boardwalk
32	Loughgall Country Park: Orchard Walk	Armagh	Circular	1.7	Fairly Flat Tarmac Road
33	Lurgan Park	Craigavon	Circular	1.5	Gravel Paths, Optional Dirt Paths
34	Maghera Country Park	Craigavon	Linear		Riverside
35	Newry Canal Way (Portion of the Ulster Way)	Various	Linear	19.5	90% Towpath and 10% Minor Road
36	Old Lagan Canal Towpath (Aghagallon)	Craigavon	Linear	1.5	Towpath
37	Oxford Island	Craigavon	Circular	4.1	70% Traffic Free Paths
38	Peatlands Walk	Craigavon	Circular	5.8	Tarmac Road, Wood Chip Paths
39	Peatlands Woodland Walk	Craigavon	Circular	3.9	Tarmac and Gravel Roads, Boardwalks
40	Peatlands Bog Walk	Craigavon	Circular	2.5	Tarmac Road and Wood Chip Paths
41	Peatlands Lakeland Walk	Craigavon	Circular	1.1	Boardwalk and Wood Chip Paths
42	Peatlands Parkside Walk	Craigavon	Circular	1.4	Tarmac Roads and Boardwalk Paths
43	Peoples Park Portadown	Craigavon	Circular		Landscaped area with water features
44	Portmore Lough	Craigavon	Linear	0.6	Woodland/ Meadows
45	Scarva to Aughnacloy (Portion of the Ulster Way)	Banbridge	Linear	37.7	Rural Roads and Woodland Paths
46	Slantry Wood	Craigavon	Linear		Woodland
47	Solitude Park and Banbridge Riverside Walk	Craigavon	Linear	2.7	Mixed Surfaces
48	Tannaghmore Gardens	Craigavon	Circular		Landscaped Gardens

Appendix 10. Woodlands within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough – Council owned, DAERA⁵⁵ Forest Service and Woodland Trust Facilities

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council owned woodlands	
1	Clare Glen Woodland, Clare
2	Coney Island, Maghery
3	Huntly Wood, Banbridge
4	Loughbrickland House, Loughbrickland
5	Lurgan Park, Lurgan
6	Oxford Island, Lurgan

DAERA Forest Service woodlands	
1	Carnagh Forest Park, Carnagh
2	Drumbanagher Forest, Poyntzpass
3	Gosford Forest Park, Markethill
4	Loughgall Forest, Loughgall
5	Seagahan Forest, Ballylane Lough Armagh
6	The Fews Forest, Mountain Lodge Road

Woodland Trust woodlands	
1	Ballymaganlis Wood, Dromore
2	Corcrair Community Woodland, Portadown
3	Cranagh Wood, Armagh
4	Markethill Wood, Markethill
5	Taghnevan Community Woodland, Lurgan

Source: [Woods - Visiting Woods - Woodland Trust](#)

⁵⁵ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Appendix 11. NIEA⁵⁶ managed Sites within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

NIEA - National Nature Reserves		
1	Brackagh Bog, Brackagh Moss Road Portadown	Originally a raised bog, over 300 years of turf cutting, have left Brackagh Moss a maze of pools, drainage channels and peat ramparts. Most of the reddish acid bog peat was removed, exposing older, black, base-rich fen peat underneath. This variety in soils has resulted in an extremely varied flora.
2	Mullenakill and Annagarrieff, Peatlands Park	Mullenakill is a 8000 year old raised bog, within whose waterlogged 9m deep core lies the remains of past surface vegetation. Fed only by rainfall, the acidic bog supports a group of highly specialised plants. Annagarrieff Wood lies at the heart of this reserve, having survived as a hunting preserve for over 200 years. Although felled on occasion, it has never been farmed and most native tree species are present. Oak and birch predominate but rarities such as yew, aspen and alder buckthorn may be seen.
3	Oxford Island Lough Neagh, Kinnego Embankment	Oxford Island is a peninsula on the south-east shore of Lough Neagh. The nature reserve supports a wide range of habitats including wet meadows, reedbeds, woodlands and shoreline scrub, all of which are typical of the lake shore.

Source: [Nature Reserves | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](http://daera-ni.gov.uk)

⁵⁶ Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Appendix 12. National Trust Facilities and sites managed by the RSPB⁵⁷ within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

National Trust		
1	The Argory, 144 Derrycaw Road, Dungannon	Atmospheric Irish gentry house and wooded riverside estate
2	Address House, 64 Address Road, Annaghmore	17th-century house with elegant 18th-century decoration and a traditional farmyard

Source: [Northern Ireland | National Trust](#)

RSPB		
1	Portmore Lough, Lower Ballinderry	This lowland, wet-grassland reserve boasts stunning open views across the Lough, backdropped by the wider landscape. Open water meets reedbed and fen before flooding out onto wet grassland at Portmore.

Source: [Portmore Lough | The RSPB](#)

⁵⁷ Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Appendix 13. Walking routes, towpaths and cycling networks within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

The Ulster Way

The Ulster Way, Northern Ireland's only long distance walking route, passes through the centre of the Borough. There are two sections, a quality off-road section between Portadown and Newry along the Newry Canal and an on-road link section between Scarva and Aughnacloy as detailed below:

The Newry Canal (Quality section)

The Newry Canal Way is an 18-mile long section between Newry and Portadown exploring the restored towpath of the historic Newry Canal. This is a journey through the industrial heritage as well as the rolling countryside of southeast Ulster, and it offers walkers the chance to see a variety of birds and aquatic life. The firm, flat surfaces make this route well suited to all levels of walker.

Scarva to Aughnacloy (Link section)

Link Section linking Quality Section – Newry Canal Way to Quality Section – Sliabh Beagh Way; following an intricate series of rural roads taking in Tandragee, Clare Glen, Armagh, Killylea and Caledon. There are transport links between these Quality Sections (Data Source: <http://www.walkni.com/ulsterway>).

The National Cycle Network

The National Cycle Network is a Millennium Project, the aim of which is to provide a safe, attractive, high quality network of traffic-free paths and traffic calmed roads running through and connecting to major urban centres of the United Kingdom. It will also provide a major new amenity for walkers and people with disabilities. The charity Sustrans is co-ordinating the project, which involved a partnership with District Councils, land-owning bodies, Government Departments and specialist and local interest groups.

The following is a list of the National Cycle Routes in the Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Borough:

- **Newry Canal (Route 9)** – This cycle and walking route travels along the Newry Canal Towpath from the Bann Bridge in Portadown to the Town Hall in Newry along a 20 mile path. The towpath passes through Scarva and Poyntzpass.
- **National Cycle Network Route 91** – Opens in sections of Portadown, links to Armagh City, Monaghan, Clones, Lower Lough Erne and Enniskillen.
- **Loughshore Trail (Route 94)** – This route starts at Maghery, travels through Portadown and back towards the Lough at Kinnego Marina (Oxford Island). The route then follows the Lough up towards Antrim past Aghagallon and Gawleys Gate past Portmore Lough where it leaves the Borough.

(Source: [Belfast to Lisburn, Lagan Towpath \(Route 9\) - Sustrans.org.uk](#); [Route 91 - Sustrans.org.uk](#); [Lough Neagh, Antrim to Randalstown \(Route 94\) - Sustrans.org.uk](#)).

There are other local cycle routes that within the Plan Area that contain elements of and link into one or more of the National Cycle Routes further details are available at the following websites <https://getactiveabc.com/activities/cycling/>; www.sustrans.org.uk; <https://outmoreni.com/map/>

Appendix 14. Other Networks / Greenways within Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough

The Craigavon Community Greenway Project saw the revitalisation of the seven mile cycle corridor linking Portadown and Lurgan towns' train stations as well as linking the three town centres, the Carn and Seagoe Industrial Areas, Craigavon hospital and the surrounding local communities. The Portadown to Lurgan project installed three toucan crossings, saw the refurbishment of eight underpasses as well as widening and enhancing the path with lights and signs, additional cycle lanes, resurfacing, markings, and landscaping.

The Craigavon 'Black Path' cycle & pedestrian network which links the neighbourhoods of the Craigavon New Town to Portadown and Lurgan in dedicated car-free pathways is illustrated in the diagram below.



Appendix 15. Canals & Waterways Ireland

The following Canals run through portions of the Borough. The canals linked Lough Neagh and Portadown to Newry and the Irish Sea (Newry Canal), Lough Neagh to Belfast Lough (Lagan Canal) and the Ulster Canal (Lough Neagh @ Maghera to Lough Erne and the Shannon). Angling, boating, jet skiing, canoeing, cycling, walking, rowing and sailing are all available along these waterways. Service facilities along the route are provided at Oxford Island on Lough Neagh, Scarva Visitors Centre on the Newry Canal and various points along the Lagan Towpath.

(Data Source: <http://www.waterwaysireland.org>)

Ulster Canal

The Ulster Canal is a disused canal running through part of County Armagh, County Tyrone and County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland and County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland. The Ulster Canal links to Lough Neagh and the River Bann within the Borough, and a portion of the Canal still exists between Charlemont and Blackwatertown. In the early 19th Century the idea of linking the lowlands around Lough Neagh with the Erne Basin and the River Shannon system became popular with the more progressive landowners and merchants of Armagh, Monaghan and Fermanagh. The Ulster Canal was built between 1825 and 1842 and was 74 km (46 mile) long with 26 locks. It ran from Charlemont on the River Blackwater to Wattle Bridge on the River Finn, south-east of Upper Lough Erne.

Planning permission was granted in 2022 for a greenway linkage from Annagola Bridge in Middletown to Ardgonnell Bridge, on the border at the River Cor along the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council stretch of canal. This linkage will connect Middletown to the Monaghan greenway and further along the route of the Ulster Canal.

Newry Canal

The Newry Canal was built to link the Tyrone coalfields (via Lough Neagh and the River Bann) to the Irish Sea at Carlingford Lough near Newry. It was the first summit level canal to be built in Ireland or Great Britain. It was authorised by the Commissioners of Inland Navigation for Ireland and was publicly funded. It was opened in 1742, but there were issues with the lock construction, the width of the summit level and the water supply. Below Newry, a ship canal was opened in 1769, and both Newry and the canal flourished. The canal closed in 1936 and most of it was officially abandoned in 1949, with some in 1956. The ship canal closed in 1966 and the Authority was wound up in 1974.

Two sections of the redundant canal were bought by local authorities, for two pounds each, and the middle section was given to another two local authorities. The ship canal has been reopened for use by pleasure craft, and there have been attempts to reopen the Newry Canal, which have not yet been successful. The towpath between Portadown and Newry has become part of a long-distance footpath and also part of the National Cycle Network. Some restoration has taken place, and the canal has become a haven for wildlife. Parts of it are also used for coarse fishing.

Lagan Canal

The Lagan Canal was a 27-mile canal built to connect Belfast to Lough Neagh. The first section, which is a river navigation, was opened in 1763, and linked Belfast to Lisburn. The second section from Lisburn to Lough Neagh includes a small amount of river navigation but was largely built as a canal. At its peak it was one of the most successful of the Irish canals, but ultimately it was unable to compete with road and rail transport, and the two sections were

closed in 1954 and 1958. The central section from Sprucefield to Moira was destroyed by the construction of the M1 motorway in the 1960s. Responsibility for most of it remains with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, although the section between Aghalee Bridge and Lough Neagh, including the final ten locks, passed into private ownership. There is an active campaign to re-open the canal, including reinstatement of the central section. The portion of the Canal between Aghalee Bridge and Lough Neagh is within the Borough.

There are proposals to restore the canal to once again provide a navigable link between Belfast and Lough Neagh. The Lagan Canal Restoration Trust was a logical development of this aspiration and was formed as a company limited by guarantee in 2008 with representatives from the four legacy councils which administer the areas through which the canal runs, and other key partners, including Northern Ireland Government Departments, local interest groups and the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland. The principal objective of the Lagan Canal Trust is to re-open the Lagan Navigation from Belfast Harbour to Lough Neagh.

A small section of the canal near Lisburn Civic Centre, which includes Lock 12, has been restored to navigable condition, and there are three major sections of towpath which can now be accessed by the public. All of the locks and many of the other structures associated with the canal are scheduled monuments, which gives them statutory protection. A 0.95-mile stretch of the towpath has been reopened at Aghagallon, following work by the legacy Craigavon Borough Council to obtain access rights. Since the closure of the canal, the section between Aghalee and Lough Neagh has been privately owned, and this is the first part of that section where public access has been restored.

Appendix 16. INTERREG VA Programme- Ulster Canal Greenway (Phase 2 Project)

INTERREG VA funding was secured by Waterways Ireland, Monaghan County Council, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council and East Border Region Ltd.

The project related to the delivery of approximately 20 km of greenway along the route of the Ulster Canal between Smithborough, Co. Monaghan and Middletown, Co. Armagh and a further 2 km of greenway was proposed along the route of the N2 Monaghan Town Bypass. The greenway will tie-in to the existing 4 km of greenway constructed in 2013 in Monaghan Town.

The project was developed through an existing signed Memorandum of Understanding between:

- Monaghan County Council (Contracting Authority);
- Armagh, Craigavon & Banbridge Borough Council;
- Waterways Ireland; and
- East Border Region.

Goals of the Ulster Canal Greenway:

- To enable more sustainable mobility resulting in reduced energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- Increase cross-border commuting by cycling or walking from 2.7% to 10% by 2023.
- Implement a Greenway Activity Programme to have 1,500 participants under the themes of Sustainable Transport, Active Travel, Healthy Living and Social Cohesion.
- Planned activities will include organised walks and cycles, charity events, cycling lessons, training events, festivals and more

Appendix 17. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council owned / operated Cemeteries with no available plots and expansion potential

Cemetery	Full Capacity/Closed	Expansion Potential
Aghagallon	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Donaghcloney	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Magheralin	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Seagoe	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Shankill	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Lynastown	Closed	No expansion land available
Acton	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Ballymacnabb	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Bully's Acre	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Derrynoose	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Eglis	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Granemore	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Kilbracks	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Kilmore	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Loughgall	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Tassagh	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Temple	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Toby Jug	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Tartaraghan	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Tullysarron	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Old Annaclone	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Drumadonnell	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Dechomet	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Moneyshane	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available
Seapatrick	Existing Right Only	No expansion land available

Appendix 18. Planning Applications for cemetery extensions in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2015-2024

Planning Application Reference	Location	Proposal	Status
LA08/2024/0577/F	North and immediately adjacent to 30 Cloncarrish Road, Portadown, Craigavon	Erection of new graveyard, includes for 179 plots, internal vehicular access road and all associated site works.	Permission Granted
LA08/2023/2170/F	Lands immediately west of St Aidan's Parish Church (Church of Ireland), Kilmacanty Road, Kilmore, Armagh, BT61 8NH	Extension to existing graveyard with associated pathways and internal vehicular access	Permission Granted
LA08/2022/0507/F	Drumcree Church, Portadown	Proposed extension. graveyard	Permission Granted
LA08/2021/1487/F	Adjacent to the parish centre, Tandragee	Extension to existing graveyard	Permission Granted
LA08/2021/0963/F	St Marys Roman Catholic Church & Cemetery, Maghery	Extension to existing graveyard.	Permission Granted
LA08/2021/0253/F	St John the Baptist Church and Cemetery, Portadown	Extension to existing cemetery	Permission Granted
LA08/2019/0357/F	St Patricks Parochial House, Aghagallon	Proposed extension of existing cemetery	Permission Granted
LA08/2018/0206/F	St Patricks Church, Keady	Proposed extension to existing cemetery.	Consultations Issued
LA08/2015/0377/F	RC Parish Cemetery, Armagh	Proposed extension to existing cemetery for the provision of 960 burial plots	Permission Granted

N/2015/0181/F (Proposal was initially submitted to Craigavon Divisional Planning Office However was determined by Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough following the transfer of planning functions to local council in 2015.	Lands to the south of Kernan Cemetery 37 Kernan Hill Road Portadown	Extension to Cemetery and associated site works	Permission Granted
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INTERESTED IN DEVELOPMENT

in the Armagh City,
Banbridge and
Craigavon Borough

Please contact

ABC Planning Department - Local Development Plan Team
at Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

 0300 0300 900

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