



Huntingdonshire District Council

Thematic Gap Analysis

Private & Confidential

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1. Executive Summary

This Gap Analysis Report forms part of Huntingdonshire District Council's 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment. Its purpose is to highlight strengths in the current play offer and identify opportunities to further enhance access, quality, inclusivity, and overall sufficiency. The findings draw on site audits, community engagement, and geospatial analysis to inform future planning and investment.

A total of 38 sites were assessed through professional Health and Safety audits carried out by Handsam, complemented by surveys, interviews, and focus groups with children, parents, carers, and stakeholders. The assessment confirms that many parks are well-used, popular, and generally safe, while also pointing to practical areas where targeted improvements could add further value.

Key findings include:

- Many play areas are well maintained and provide valued opportunities for families, with evidence of high levels of local use and satisfaction.
- Some rural villages and new housing developments would benefit from additional accessible, walkable play areas.
- Health and Safety inspections identified issues such as worn surfacing, signage, or ageing equipment at some sites, but urgent risks are managed promptly through established inspection processes.
- There is clear opportunity to increase the consistency of accessible and inclusive play features across the district.
- Facilities for younger children are well established, with scope to grow provision that meets the needs of older children and teenagers.
- Toilets, seating, lighting, and shade are highly valued and could be extended to encourage longer visits and wider use.
- A small number of sites were raised in community feedback as needing improvement, aligning with audit findings and providing clear priorities for action.

All findings are summarised in a comprehensive Gap Analysis Table. These feed directly into the Strategic Improvement Plan, which sets out proportionate, prioritised actions to enhance sufficiency, equity, and long-term sustainability of play in Huntingdonshire.

2. Introduction

This Gap Analysis Report forms a central component of Huntingdonshire District Council's 2025 Play Sufficiency Assessment. It identifies where current play provision falls short in meeting the needs, rights, and preferences of children and young people across the district, with a view to informing future planning, investment, and improvement strategies.

Underpinning this analysis is the principle that play is a fundamental aspect of childhood. Access to safe, inclusive, and stimulating play environments contributes directly to children's physical health, emotional wellbeing, social development, and sense of belonging in their communities. The Welsh Government's statutory framework for play sufficiency, while not directly mandated in England, provides a useful model in recognising the need for multidimensional, locally responsive approaches to assessing and improving play opportunities.

In line with this approach, the gap analysis has been designed to evaluate not only the quantity and geographic distribution of play spaces, but also the quality, inclusivity, accessibility, and sufficiency of these spaces from both a technical and experiential perspective. The analysis has been guided by a core question: Do children in Huntingdonshire have access to high-quality, inclusive, and welcoming play opportunities, regardless of where they live, how old they are, or what their needs may be?

As part of the consultation, respondents referenced a number of play areas not managed by HDC. These have been retained to give a holistic view of the wider play landscape, but are identified below:

- Judith's Field
- Butcher Drive
- Millfields Park
- Warboys Park
- Roman's Edge
- Alconbury
- Crescent

- Dunnock Way

The maintenance and planning of these parks does not fall within the remit of Huntingdonshire District Council. However, they should be considered within council-wide strategic planning through collaboration with the relevant authorities where possible, in order to provide the best possible landscape of play provision for the communities served by HDC.

2.1 Methodology Overview

This report draws upon multiple data sources, including:

- Health and Safety (H&S) Audits: Detailed site inspections by Handsam Ltd, assessing physical safety, maintenance, compliance with EN1176 standards, and remedial needs.
- Community Engagement: Surveys with children (Early Years through to KS4), parents, carers, childminders, and key stakeholders, including open-text feedback on park quality and access.
- Qualitative Research: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with parents, carers, and professionals working with children and families.
- Observational Analysis: Onsite observations to assess play distribution, walkability, and proximity to areas of need (e.g., deprivation, rural isolation, new developments).

This mixed-methods approach enables both a granular, site-specific analysis and a high-level synthesis of systemic issues affecting play sufficiency across the district.

2.2 Scope and Limitations

While this analysis includes 38 audited sites and draws upon engagement from hundreds of local respondents, it does not yet include all play spaces within the district. Some areas may not have been captured through engagement or audit due to resource or time constraints. Further, community perception data is richer in urban centres and areas of recent development, while feedback from more rural or isolated communities was more limited.

Despite these constraints, the analysis offers a strong and representative evidence base for identifying strategic priorities and urgent needs. It also lays a clear foundation for future play audits, community engagement, and co-design processes.

3. Findings from Observational and Geographic Analysis

3.1 Overview of Geographic and Demographic Distribution

A separate geographic gap analysis is given in the Geographic Gap Analysis of Play Sufficiency.

3.2 Observed Use Patterns and Spatial Demand

Observations of 52 play areas, conducted between 14–17 April 2025, revealed clear differences in levels of use. Popular destinations such as Hill Rise Skate Park (St Ives), Hinchbrook, and Riverside Park frequently attracted 20–29 users during visits, demonstrating strong community demand and high visibility. Other sites were observed to have lower footfall, with more than 40% showing no children present at the time of the visit. These patterns may reflect local demographics, the timing of observations, or the limited appeal of equipment, and point to opportunities for increasing the relevance and attractiveness of provision in some areas.

The early years cohort (babies to KS1) was consistently the most visible age group, aligning with national trends in play behaviour. Older children, particularly those in KS3 and above, were less frequently observed. Youth-focused features such as MUGAs and fitness areas were often underused, suggesting scope to refresh or co-design spaces that better meet the preferences of teenagers and young people.

3.3 Quality, Accessibility, and Inclusivity of Provision

From the combined observational and dataset analysis, accessibility emerges as an area of both strength and opportunity. Seventeen of the 52 observed sites offered equipment accessible to children with physical disabilities, though provision was inconsistent across the district. Some inclusive features, such as the wheelchair swing at Hinchbrook Sensory Park, illustrate positive practice but were not always fully usable at the time of observation. Surfacing was generally strong, with 87% of sites offering some form of soft surfacing, although only a quarter provided full-coverage surfaces suitable for mobility-impaired users.

Sensory and imaginative play features are available in several locations but remain limited overall. Just nine sites offered intentional sensory elements such as tactile panels or musical features, suggesting scope to enhance provision for neurodivergent children and those with sensory processing needs. In addition, many of the most desirable play features — such as tall slides or zip lines — remain

inaccessible to children with restricted mobility, reinforcing the need for a more consistently inclusive design approach.

4. Findings from Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Survey Responses

The survey responses provide valuable insights into the lived experiences, preferences, and perceived barriers regarding children's play in Huntingdonshire. The breadth of respondents, including children across age groups, early years carers, and stakeholders, enables a rich analysis of play sufficiency from multiple perspectives.

4.1.1 Patterns of Use and Preferred Spaces

Across all age groups, playgrounds with equipment remain the most popular settings for play, with particularly high preference among Key Stage 1 (KS1) and under 5s. Naturalistic spaces such as grassy areas, woodlands, and places with trees also featured prominently, especially among older children (KS3–KS4), indicating a desire for more informal and self-directed outdoor environments. Access to bike/scooter/skate parks and sports pitches was more significant for older children, aligning with their developmental needs for active, independent, and social recreation.

Frequency of park usage varied by age. While many KS1 children reported visiting parks twice a week or more, KS3–KS4 respondents showed reduced frequency, with a substantial proportion only using parks occasionally.

4.1.2 Access and Inclusivity

Survey results revealed strong evidence of geographic and transport-based inequity. While a majority of children in all age groups reported being able to walk or cycle to their preferred parks, a notable number relied on adults for transport – especially under 5s and KS1 children. For a small but important minority, parks were perceived as not being nearby or not safe enough to access independently, raising questions about local distribution and connectivity of provision.

The accessibility of facilities for children with disabilities emerged as a major concern in both the childcare provider and stakeholder surveys. Comments highlighted the lack of inclusive equipment (such as wheelchair-accessible swings), inaccessible surfaces, and limited provision for children with sensory or mobility impairments. Some childcare professionals described having to avoid certain parks entirely due to poor design or maintenance, which limits equitable access.

4.1.3 Quality, Condition, and Safety

A recurring theme in all surveys was the concern over aging or poorly maintained equipment. Specific locations like Stukeley Meadows and Slepe Park were cited multiple times as having damaged or inaccessible play structures, with broken climbing frames and missing pieces noted. These quality concerns were linked not only to safety but also to reduced usage, as children avoid equipment that is boring, broken, or perceived as unsafe.

Survey data also revealed safety perceptions varied by age group. While most younger children and their carers felt safe in parks “most of the time,” responses from older children were more mixed. Some mentioned antisocial behaviour, lack of lighting, or insufficient visibility as contributing to unease – particularly in underused or poorly overlooked spaces.

4.1.4 Equipment Preferences and Unmet Needs

Swings consistently emerged as the most popular equipment type across all age groups, followed by climbing frames, slides, and spinning equipment. Conversely, seesaws and metal climbing frames were frequently mentioned as underused or unsuitable, especially where they were outdated or not age appropriate.

Older children expressed a desire for more adventurous, active, and social spaces, such as trampolines, obstacle courses, outdoor gyms, or shelters. Meanwhile, under 5s and their carers requested more toddler-friendly, sensory, and imaginative equipment. Across several surveys, respondents advocated for age-segregated spaces to avoid conflict and to better meet different developmental needs within the same site.

4.1.5 Stakeholder and Provider Perspectives

Stakeholders reinforced many of these findings, noting limited variety in provision, lack of targeted equipment for older children, and missed opportunities to incorporate inclusive or community-building features like table tennis, musical play items, or nature-based features. Childcare providers highlighted that overcrowding in popular parks – particularly those with limited alternative sites nearby – creates strain and reduces quality of experience for users.

4.2 Data from one-to-one interviews

In-depth interviews with three local childminders provided detailed, place-based insights into the barriers and enablers of play in Huntingdonshire. Their feedback focused heavily on specific parks,

revealing patterns in usage, access, maintenance, inclusivity, and design that speak directly to sufficiency and equity across the district.

4.2.1 High-use Parks with Infrastructure Gaps

Several parks were frequented due to their proximity and basic functionality, yet all presented issues undermining their full potential. Coneygear Park and Burley Hill Park, both used frequently by childminders, were reported to have issues with enclosure, essential amenities like toilets and seating, and surfacing.

4.2.2 Access Barriers and Spatial Inequities

Access constraints emerged as a major theme. Parks such as Pitts Park and Wheatfields Park – despite being within geographic reach – are practically inaccessible due to poor surfacing or lack of pedestrian infrastructure. A park on a new estate was described as too distant and disconnected for regular use, particularly for childminders travelling on foot with pushchairs or multiple children.

4.2.3 Safety and Site Avoidance

Reported safety concerns led to certain parks being entirely avoided. Hill Rise Park was described in distressing terms due to past vandalism, broken equipment, and traumatic associations. Priory Park, while the focus of a local improvement campaign, was deemed inappropriate for younger children due to outdated, unsafe, and high-level metal equipment.

4.2.4 Inclusive Play: Persistent Gaps and Isolated Success

Across all interviews, inclusivity was a prominent concern. Few parks provided any features accessible to children with additional needs. Warner's Park was the only site recalled as once having an accessible swing – now broken. In contrast, Howitts Lane Park stood out as the only park described as truly inclusive, offering positive, multigenerational play for all abilities.

4.2.5 Design Quality and Age Appropriateness

Several parks were appreciated for overall design but still failed in meeting specific age group needs. For example, Loves Farm Parks were praised for aesthetics and material choice but fell short in accessibility for toddlers due to high platforms and poor surfacing transitions. Similarly, Papworth Park's splash pad and large equipment appealed to older children but lacked enclosure and sat adjacent to roads and ditches.

4.2.6 Innovative Models and Cross-boundary Use

Childminders referenced other play spaces outside the immediate HDC area as both aspirational and practically necessary. Parks in Sandy and Abbott's Lee were mentioned, with the latter noted for its enclosure and green setting but described as under-maintained. One childminder drew attention to a New Zealand-based community-funded park, highlighting the potential of co-designed, locally led models that could be replicated within Huntingdonshire to deliver more inclusive and imaginative play environments.

4.3 Findings from focus groups

The focus groups with parents and carers in Huntingdonshire offer rich qualitative insight into how families experience local play provision. These discussions reveal both recurring strengths and persistent challenges, especially when considering the day-to-day realities of accessing and using local parks with children of varying ages and needs.

4.3.1 High-use Parks with Infrastructure Limitations

Several parks, including Riverside Park, Coneygear Park, and the Boat Park in St Neots, were described as central to family routines, benefiting from location, equipment variety, or proximity to social amenities. Riverside Park in particular forms part of what was described as the "holy trifacta" of St. Neots play areas, frequented due to its accessibility and the presence of nearby cafés. However, despite high use, these parks commonly lack essential infrastructure. At Riverside Park, the distance between play zones and toilet facilities was flagged as particularly problematic for families with younger children. Coneygear Park, while appreciated for its recent improvements and play value, was reported to have safety concerns, with lighting and the former condition of key features like the bridge undermining confidence in the site. The "Boat Park", though valued for catering to multiple age groups, was seen as potentially insufficient as children grow older and seek more diverse or challenging experiences.

4.3.2 Age and Gender Inclusivity in Play Design

Parents consistently noted that existing provision tends to meet the needs of children up to about the age of eight or nine, but fails to offer sufficient stimulation or safe social environments for older children. The issue of age-appropriateness was compounded by gendered differences in how children engage with space. Rocket Park, for example, was praised for including a sandpit and swing circle suitable for younger children and older girls. However, concerns were raised about lighting,

cleanliness, and the lack of public toilets, which limit how older children – especially girls – can use the space independently or comfortably. These reflections align with external campaigns such as “Make Space for Girls” and international models from Germany and Sweden, where park design explicitly considers how teenage girls and other less-dominant groups use public space. Participants in both groups articulated a need for more considered, inclusive design features, including circular seating areas, informal hangout zones, and lighting that supports safe, extended use.

4.3.3 Access, Parking, and Site Maintenance

Although parents generally reported good walkability to their nearest parks, often within ten minutes, accessibility was not always equitable or practical. Sites like Hinchbrook Park and Loves Farm were flagged for poor or confusing parking, while others lacked sufficient gates or enclosure to make parents feel secure when supervising younger children. Ackerman Street Park was cited as a site with limited visual appeal and minimal facilities, with some equipment appearing worn or insubstantial. Cleanliness, durability, and the capacity of spaces to accommodate families for more than brief visits were seen as defining features of a quality play environment. Where these were lacking, families reported reduced enjoyment or outright avoidance of those sites.

4.3.4 Sanitation and Toilet Provision

The absence of toilets was a major source of frustration, especially for those with younger children. This was not isolated to rural or low-traffic parks, but was also reported at well-used spaces like Rocket Park and the unnamed “Jeep Park” near the football ground. In some cases, parents noted that toilet blocks were too far from the actual play areas to be usable in urgent situations. In others, the issue was not only distance but also lack of cleanliness or accessibility.

4.3.5 Inclusivity

Participants in both groups commented on the lack of wheelchair-friendly paths, ramps, or equipment. Although some swings and sensory elements existed, these were generally not maintained or visible in the majority of parks discussed. Parents described this as a “*massive gap*,” noting that the district is falling short of offering equitable opportunities for children with disabilities.

4.3.6 Desire for Aesthetic and Imaginative Design

Across both groups, there was a clear appetite for more aesthetically engaging and creatively designed play areas. Parents criticised the uniformity of many local parks, describing them as “*samey*” –

dominated by metal and plastic equipment in primary colours with minimal landscaping or variety. In contrast, external sites such as Burley House and Anglesey Abbey were praised for their natural materials, large wooden structures, and imaginative layouts. These sites were seen as aspirational, offering opportunities for risky play, imaginative engagement, and experiences that evolve as children grow.

5. Findings from Health & Safety Evaluations

As part of the broader assessment of play sufficiency across Huntingdonshire, independent Health and Safety (H&S) audits have been undertaken for a representative sample of play areas by Handsam Ltd. These detailed site inspections evaluate compliance against EN 1176 playground safety standards and general best practice, identifying potential hazards, infrastructure deterioration, and recommended actions for improvement.

The audits provide a technical layer of data that complements the observational, qualitative, and usage data gathered through community engagement and mapping. Each audited site receives a physical condition score and itemised action plan, prioritising necessary repairs, refurbishments, and site management improvements. For example, Priory Park scored 86.56%, with actions including replacement of a damaged zip wire sleeve and repairs to surface trip hazards. Crocus Way scored significantly lower at 61.58%, with key concerns including incomplete signage, deteriorating surfacing, and lack of certification documentation. Hull Way, in contrast, was assessed at 94.46% and deemed safe with only minor remedial suggestions, highlighting its suitability as a model of good practice.

These findings reinforce and validate user-reported concerns about safety, access, and infrastructure quality across the estate. Where qualitative data highlighted feelings of neglect or discomfort at specific sites, the audits often uncovered corresponding material safety risks or deficiencies. These audits should be considered alongside the council's internal health & safety audits before being actioned.

6. Conclusions

This synthesis brings together insights from observational fieldwork, mapping, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and technical audits to highlight district-wide opportunities for strengthening play sufficiency. While many sites are well-used and demonstrate strong practice, the combined evidence also points to recurring themes where targeted action could deliver the greatest impact.

6.1.1 Geographic Disparities and Transport Barriers

Provision is unevenly spread across the district. Families in new housing areas and rural settlements often have fewer local play options, sometimes relying on car travel. In places such as St Ives and Godmanchester, older sites are less walkable for families with prams or multiple children. By contrast, urban centres benefit from higher walkability. Improving connections — through better pedestrian routes and more accessible estate layouts — would extend safe, independent access to play.

6.1.2 Infrastructure Deterioration and Safety Concerns

Health and Safety audits and community feedback highlighted maintenance issues such as surfacing, toilet access, and fencing at some sites. Even well-used parks like Coneygear and Riverside were reported as needing improvements in supporting infrastructure. Concerns raised around sites such as Priory and Hill Rise underline the value of a consistent maintenance plan, which could further enhance community confidence and ensure parks remain welcoming, safe spaces for all users.

6.1.3 Insufficient and Uneven Inclusive Design

Inclusive play is an emerging strength in a small number of parks, such as Howitts Lane, but is not yet consistent across the district. Families of children with disabilities highlighted the need for more accessible surfacing, sensory play features, and equipment that promotes social inclusion across age groups. Addressing these gaps represents a clear opportunity to extend dignity, equity, and enjoyment to more children.

6.1.4 Age Appropriateness and Play Value Gaps

Provision for early years is strong and widely valued, but older children and teenagers have fewer options. MUGAs, skate ramps, and outdoor gyms are sometimes underused, reflecting a need for more engaging, co-designed youth spaces. At the other end of the spectrum, toddlers occasionally

face barriers when equipment is not suitably adapted. Expanding variety and imaginative features across age groups would maximise play value and long-term engagement.

6.1.5 Facilities, Toilets, and Dwell-Time Constraints

Amenities such as toilets, seating, lighting, and shade were consistently highlighted as priorities by families. Even at otherwise popular parks like Riverside and Coneygear, limited facilities shorten visits and reduce accessibility, particularly for carers with multiple children or additional needs. Modest improvements in amenities would significantly enhance comfort, safety, and dwell time, allowing play areas to function as more inclusive community hubs.

6.1.6 Maintenance, Visibility, and Confidence in Provision

Responsive maintenance is a visible marker of quality. Community feedback indicated that broken or ageing equipment, even if not unsafe, can undermine perceptions of care and reduce use. This is most critical in high-deprivation areas where reliance on public play spaces is greatest. Consistent communication and timely repairs can help sustain community trust, ensuring that play areas are not only safe but also perceived as well cared-for and valued.

7. Gap Analysis Table

This section presents a detailed summary of individual play sites audited as part of the Huntingdonshire Play Sufficiency Assessment. It draws together data from Handsam Health and Safety inspections, community and stakeholder engagement activities, and site observations. The table provides a structured, evidence-based comparison of each park's physical condition, compliance with safety standards, and alignment with community expectations and experiences.

Each park entry includes location, audit score (where available), a summary of current physical condition, insights gathered from surveys, interviews, and focus groups (where applicable), identified issues from the H&S audit, recommended actions, and a RAG rating.

7.1.1 Rationale and Structure

The rationale behind this table is to synthesise complex, multi-source data into a clear decision-making tool that supports prioritisation, funding, and strategic improvement planning. While some parks are technically compliant, they may still be failing to meet local needs due to design, age-inappropriateness, lack of amenities, or accessibility gaps. Conversely, parks flagged as high priority may have strong community value but face serious safety or maintenance concerns.

This format allows the Council to not only identify physical deficits but also understand how these intersect with lived experience, equity of access, and sufficiency outcomes. In doing so, the table supports both reactive (repairs, resurfacing, signage) and proactive (inclusion, co-design, redesign) planning.

7.1.2 RAG Rating System

The H&S RAG rating is based solely on audit score and the nature of issues identified in the Handsam site assessments. This provides an objective technical safety and compliance rating. The RAG ratings are:

- Green — high-performing site with full or near-full compliance. No significant safety or maintenance issues. Score of or above 93% according to Handsam.
- Amber — generally compliant but with minor to moderate issues (e.g. wear, missing signage, surface wear). Score of 85-92.99% according to Handsam.

- Red — Site has significant safety concerns or multiple compliance failures. Urgent action needed. Score below 85% according to Handsam.

7.1.3 Using the Table

This table should be read in conjunction with the Strategic Improvement Plan, which translates these findings into recommended actions, proposed timescales, and resource planning. The parks identified as Red represent high-priority cases where safety, usability, or sufficiency are significantly compromised. Amber sites require investment to prevent further deterioration or to enhance underperforming but valued spaces. Green sites are broadly compliant but may still benefit from routine enhancements or inclusive design upgrades.

Park Gap Analysis Table

Park Name	Location	Audit Score (%)	Condition Summary	Community Insight	Identified Issues from H&S	Recommended Actions	H&S RAG
Bawllins	St Neots	95.81 %	Structurally sound; limited safety concerns		Missing installation certificate; gate closure too slow; raised manhole cover	Obtain installation certificate; adjust gate closure mechanism; cordon off area around raised manhole	Amb er
Bevan Close	Huntingdon	73.44 %	Poor overall condition; multiple areas fenced off		Equipment fenced off; missing installation certificate; trip hazards from ongoing works; no warning signs at substation; missing D bolt load indicators	Repair or remove out-of-use equipment; provide certificate; install Chapter 8 barriers; add substation signage; mark D bolts	Red

Crocus Way	Yaxley	61.58 %	The full site needs a full refurbishment.		Missing installation certificate; missing manufacturer's plates on equipment	Obtain installation certificate; affix manufacturer's plates	Red
Furrowfields	St Neots	90.17 %	Generally good condition with no major hazards		Missing installation certificate; wooden borders need maintenance; flaking paint; missing manufacturer's plates	Provide installation certificate; maintain wooden posts; repaint surfaces; affix missing ID plates	Amb er
Grassland Area	Huntingdon	96.53 %	Very good condition; minor aesthetic concern noted		BBQs showing signs of age	Consider replacing BBQ units	Amb er

Great High Ground	St Neots	94.16 %	Good condition; no physical issues noted		Missing installation certificate	Obtain original installation certificate	Green
Henbrook Linear Park	St Neots	90.79 %	Generally functional; minor safety concerns		No installation certificate; damaged seesaw spring; worn rocker handles; worn swing seats; minor surfacing damage	Provide certificate; repair or replace damaged equipment; monitor surfacing	Amb
Hill Rise Park	St Ives	86.12 %	Functioning but with multiple safety issues	Negative reception; concerns on play quality; vandalism; unsafe	Broken fencing; loose gate stop; missing fixings; uneven surfacing; equipment wear; missing documentation	Replace fencing; fix gate and surface; add plates; monitor and repair damaged elements	Amb
Hill Rise Skate Park	St Ives	72.93 %	Generally compliant; minor wear and	Negative reception; concerns on play quality; vandalism; unsafe	Missing installation certificate; movement in grind rail; worn surfaces;	Provide documentation; address loose fittings; resurface entry/exit; remove graffiti	Red

			structural issues		graffiti; trip hazard from edge		
Hinchingbrooke Park Main Playground	Huntingdon	86.22 %	Satisfactory condition with several significant remedials	Regular visits; children enjoy it; site of recent injury due to uneven surfacing; safety hazard near large slide and café area	Missing installation certificate; damaged see saw; illegible ID plate; unsafe gates (finger traps); splintering wooden fence; unclear D bolt load markings	Provide certificate; replace see saw; make pivot safe in interim; replace gates and wooden fence; mark load-bearing D bolts clearly	Red
Hinchingbrooke Park Old Playground	Huntingdon	74.26 %	Unsatisfactory condition; ageing infrastructure		Missing installation certificate; no safety signage; deteriorating wooden elements; no fencing or gates	Provide certificate and signage; monitor and plan to replace decaying timber; consider secure enclosure for safety	Red
Hinchingbrooke Park Outdoor	Huntingdon	95.95 %	Very good condition; minor		Missing installation certificate; two missing	Provide installation certificate; replace missing gym items;	Green

Gym Equipment			equipment issues		equipment units; trip hazard from base plates	address trip hazard from plate edges	
Hinchingbrook Park Sensory Play Area	Huntingdon	89.58 %	Satisfactory condition; key item currently quarantined	Occasionally visited; valued for nature and considered safe; large site and limited access split groups; not buggy-friendly	Missing installation certificate and signage; main swing padlocked and out of use;	Repair swing and reinstate safely; provide installation certificate; install safety signage including contact details; affix manufacturer ID plates	Amb er
Hinchingbrook Park Woodland Play Area	Huntingdon	92.17 %	Well-maintained with minor documentation and signage issues		Missing installation certificate; no safety signage;	Provide original installation certificate; install safety signage with name and contact number; affix manufacturer ID plates	Amb er

Hull Way (24 & 25)	St Neots	94.46 %	High standard; minimal non-compliance noted		Missing installation certificate; no safety signage	Provide missing certificate and install safety signage	Green
Kester Way (MUGA)	St Neots	94.81 %	Good condition; structurally sound with minimal issues		Missing installation certificate; area not secure out of hours	Obtain installation certificate; consider out-of-hours security options	Ambler
Maryland Avenue	Huntingdon	90.74 %	Good overall condition with multiple minor issues		Missing installation certificate; incomplete fencing; gates fail to close; trip hazards from soft pour; worn slide; unsuitable	Provide certificate; repair fencing and gates; fix surface and fall zones; monitor and maintain slide condition	Ambler

					surface under climbing frame		
Maule Close	St Neots	92.90 %	Well- maintained; generally safe		Missing installation certificate; no manufacturer plates; gate lacks auto closer; undulating surface near equipment	Obtain certificate; fix gate auto closer; install ID plates; repair surfacing to address trip hazard	Amb er
Mayfield Crescent	Huntingdon	87.62 %	Satisfactory overall; minor damage and surfacing issues		Missing installation certificate; trip hazards from undulating surface; missing D bolt load markings	Provide certificate; address surface hazards; clearly mark load- bearing bolts	Amb er

Oxmoor Lane	Huntingdon	93.08 %	Satisfactory overall with minor remedials required		Missing installation certificate; surface degradation causing trip hazard; unclear D bolt load indicators	Provide certificate; repair soft pour surface; label load-bearing D bolts	Amb er
Priory Park St Neots	St Neots	86.56 %	Generally satisfactory; localised damage	Popular for natural play; supports demand for outdoor; no inclusive features; not safe for toddlers	Missing zip wire sleeves; missing installation certificate; loose gate; damaged surfacing	Replace sleeves; fix gate; install ID plates; resurface to remove trip hazards	Amb er
Riverside Park	Huntingdon	90.48 %	Good condition; minor compliance and surface issues		Missing installation certificate; gate not lockable; unclear D bolt markings; surface shrinkage causing trip hazards	Provide certificate; fix gate locking mechanism; label D bolts; repair surface to remove trip risks	Amb er

Riverside Park (Indoor Bowls Club)	St Neots	85.94 %	Mixed condition; multiple remedial needs		Missing installation certificate; tree overgrowth; fast-closing gate; surface shrinkage; paint/rust issues; missing load-bearing indicators	Provide installation certificate; conduct tree survey; adjust gate timing; resurface shrunk areas; repair paint/rust; ensure bolts meet standards	Amb er
Riverside Park Coneygeare	St Neots	56.84 %	Poor condition: safety issues identified	Popular for younger children; limited inclusivity and enclosure	Missing installation certificate; no ID plates; damaged see saw and swings; surface trip hazards	Obtain certificate; affix plates; repair or remove unsafe equipment; resurface key areas	Red
Riverside Park St Neots	St Neots	80.68 %	Mixed condition; several areas need repair	Highly favoured; varied accessibility, low for wheelchair users; toilets far away	Missing installation certificate; worn surfacing; loose swing roller; missing bolts and ID plates	Tighten bars; refill surfaces; replace swing parts; install plates; monitor wear	Red

Rowell Way	Sawtry	63.99 %	Well-maintained; issues with documentation and fixings		Missing installation certificate; manufacturer's plates not visible; surface fixings exposed	Provide certificate; affix ID plates; repair surface bolts	Red
Sapley Fields	Huntingdon	94.73 %	Well-maintained with minor compliance issues		Missing installation certificate; exposed metal drain; missing load-bearing indicators on bolts	Provide certificate; repair/cap exposed drain; ensure D bolts are clearly marked	Amb er
Scott Drive	Yaxley	98.14 %	Fully compliant; recently installed equipment		Missing installation certificate; no manufacturer's plates on equipment	Provide installation certificate; affix manufacturer's plates	Green

Shackleton Way	Yaxley	87.08 %	Functional but aging; moderate repair needs		Missing installation certificate; overgrown foliage; gate not auto-closing; damaged surfaces; trip hazard	Address gate timing; clear foliage; repair surfacing; ensure smooth travel run; install ID plates	Amb er
Signal Road	Ramsey	90.31 %	High compliance with minor maintenance needs		Missing installation certificate and manufacturer's plates; weeds; surface wear	Provide documentation; remove weeds; monitor surfacing condition	Amb er
Stokes Drive	Godmanches ter	86.32 %	Satisfactory overall; some surfacing and compliance issues		Missing installation certificate; overgrown bushes; insufficient bark surfacing; unclear D bolt markings	Provide certificate; trim vegetation; top up bark to 100mm; label load-bearing D bolts	Amb er

Stukeley Meadows	Huntingdon	90.59 %	Structurally sound with multiple minor compliance issues		Missing installation certificate; gate finger trap risk; surface gaps; missing steel caps; exposed bolts; cable wear	Provide certificate; correct gate stopper; infill surface; replace caps; protect bolts; monitor cables	Amb er
The Whaddons	Huntingdon	84.07 %	Satisfactory condition but impacted by cleanliness and wear		Missing installation certificate; no signage; loose bolts; trip hazards; rotting seating; surface damage; litter and sharp waste	Provide certificate and signage; tighten bolts; repair surface and seating; increase inspection frequency to manage waste	Red
Top Birches	St Neots	77.90 %	Very good condition; compliant structure		Missing installation certificate; no safety signage	Provide required documentation and install signage	Red

Weston Court	St Neots	92.88 %	Generally good condition with minor hazards		Missing installation certificate	Provide original installation certificate; replace or repair broken fence panels at rear; remove leaf mulch under swings to eliminate slip hazard	Amb er
Wigmore Farm Infant	Godmanches ter	95.31 %	Good condition with limited minor issues		Missing installation certificate; no safety signage; unclear D bolt markings	Provide certificate; install appropriate signage; clearly mark load-bearing D bolts	Amb er
Wigmore Farm Junior	Godmanches ter	92.48 %	Good condition with minor compliance concerns		Missing installation certificate; slow-closing gates; unclear D bolt markings; minor surfacing damage	Provide certificate; service gates for 4–8s closure; label D bolts; repair soft pour trip hazard	Amb er

Woodridge	St Neots	Not listed	Functionally compliant with moderate risks		Surface damage; missing certificate; no safety signage; fencing damage; missing plates	Repair surfacing; install ID plates; replace fencing; provide certificate and signage	Red
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8. Appendices

Stakeholder Engagement Tables

Table 1 Specific parks mentioned in the surveys

Park Name	Survey Source(s)	Perceived Quality/Use	Geographic Context	Notes
Riverside Park	KS1, KS3–KS4, Under 5s	Highly favoured; wide use; accessible	St Neots	Model site for inclusive, high-quality provision; use as benchmark for urban investment
Priory Park	KS3–KS4	Popular for natural play and open space	Huntingdon area	Supports demand for naturalistic, older-child-friendly play
Hill Rise Park	KS3–KS4	Mentioned negatively; “not very good”	St Ives	Qualitative concerns; potential site for targeted improvement
Coneygear Park	Stakeholder	Popular, especially for younger children	Huntingdon North (high deprivation)	Performs well in deprived area; ensure maintenance and age-range inclusivity

Spider Park	Stakeholder	Strong for younger children; lacks features for older users	Godmanchester	Highlights age-appropriateness gap; potential for youth-oriented retrofit
Millfields Park	KS3–KS4	Positive mention	Ramsey (high need area)	Effective in a deprived area; maintain and monitor for increasing demand
Hen brook Park	KS1, Under 5s	Noted as used	Little Paxton area	Community reliance suggests need for quality monitoring and potential upgrade
Hail Weston (Rocket Park)	KS3–KS4	Cited as used by older children	Hail Weston (rural area)	Indicates rural use pattern; assess for transport/access gaps
Willow Bridge / Brookfields Way	KS1, Under 5s	Mentioned by name; limited data	Possibly smaller estates or local greenspace	Community dependence likely; potential micro-scale investment opportunity
Pocket Park (unspecified)	KS1, KS2	Mentioned positively	General	Suggest local value in smaller spaces; further mapping needed to assess equity

Table 2 Specific parks mentioned in interviews

Park Name	Mentions & Observations	Issues Identified	Notes
Coneygear Park	Closest to home; used frequently due to walkability	Not enclosed (next to road); deteriorating surfacing; unsafe for non-walkers; no toilets or benches	Lacks enclosure, safety and amenities despite high usage; priority for safety and accessibility
Pitts Park	Used due to open space and some sensory equipment	Inaccessible for young children; stone driveway; difficult pushchair access	Accessibility and suitability concerns for younger children and children with additional needs
Hartford School Park	Within walking distance; includes roundabout for sensory play	Uneven surfacing with a large hole; swing removed and misused; unsafe elements	Urgent maintenance and age-appropriate improvements needed
Hill Rise Park	Avoided due to vandalism and unsafe environment	Glass, broken equipment, burnt tree, unsafe nature area	High-priority for safety and restoration; significant deterrent to use

Hill Rise Park (mention 2)	Avoided due to past trauma and lack of amenities	Perceived as unsafe; no toilets; no shade	Poor perception and inadequate facilities may suppress use; requires safety and comfort investment
Hinchingbrooke Park	Valued for nature-based activities (pond dipping, open water)	Shared with dog training classes, no published schedules, safety concerns	Highlight shared space conflict and need for coordinated scheduling and information sharing
Hinchingbrooke Park (mention 2)	Regular visits; children enjoy it; site of recent injury due to uneven surfacing	Grounding is poor; uneven surfaces causing falls; safety hazard by large slide and café area	Safety and maintenance priority; high-use site justifies investment
Hinchingbrooke Park (mention 3)	Occasional visit via two buses; only feasible in holidays	Transport barriers make access difficult with small children	Highlights the need for more localised quality provision in St Ives
Riverside Park	Accessible, enclosed, includes various slide sizes	Not suitable for wheelchair users; inaccessible equipment; locked toilets; allergen exposure risks	Mixed-quality site; accessible for some but fails on inclusivity and amenities

Riverside Park (mention 2)	Frequently used	Not detailed in this interview	Inclusion in triangulated high-use parks; further cross-checking required
Papworth Park	Visited in the past; splash pad and large equipment appealing for older children	Not enclosed; adjacent to road and ditch; uncertain scheduling of splash pad use	Underscores need for better communication, enclosure, and multi-age suitability
Grafham Water	Previously used for bike hire and extended outings	Bike hire discontinued; now inaccessible for full-day activities with younger children	Illustrates loss of valuable infrastructure; potential for reactivation or alternative provision
Burley Hill Park	Most frequently visited; accessible and green; valued for little ones' independent play	Surfacing lifting due to water ingress; trip hazard; limited shade; only one bench; needs more inclusive features	High-usage site with safety and amenity gaps; strong candidate for targeted infrastructure upgrade
Wheatfields Park	Nearby but avoided due to lack of path and outdated features	No access path; must cross muddy field; unsafe equipment (e.g. high climbing frame, worn roundabout)	Accessibility and quality concerns suggest it's failing for target age group

Warner's Park	Previously had accessible swing (now broken)	Lack of maintained inclusive equipment; swing has been broken for a long time	Unmet need for inclusive provision in this area
Unnamed New Estate Park	New estate park visited once; too far with young children on foot	Poor geographic access; inadequate public transport	Illustrates spatial play desert in new developments without supporting infrastructure
Priory Park	Avoided due to disrepair; not friendly for small children; active local efforts to improve via charity	Equipment removed; metal structures too high; unsafe for toddlers; no inclusive features	Significant age-appropriateness and inclusivity gaps; community co-production opportunity
Loves Farm Parks	Praised for wooden equipment and design	Slides hard to access for toddlers; rope climbs too high; poor platform design for early years	Valued spaces but poor design for younger children; refine equipment to support full age range
Howitts Lane Park	"Best park in the area"; inclusive for all ages and abilities	None identified in this interview	Model example of inclusive design; ideal benchmark for future development

Sandy Area Parks	Mentioned as part of wider usage	Not specified	Possible inter-authority usage; check provision coordination if in another district
Abbott's Lee Park	Naturally enclosed grass area noted positively	Described as "looking very old"; unsure if HDC-managed	Suggests a potentially under-maintained site outside HDC's scope; still relevant for rural access
Unnamed New Zealand Park (external)	Cited as inspiring example of community-funded park with engraved fences	Not local; used as an ideal model	Opportunity to pilot community co-designed park model in Huntingdonshire

Table 3 Parks mentioned in focus groups

Park Name	Mentions & Observations	Issues Identified	Notes
Riverside Park	Most frequently used; part of the "holy trifecta" of St Neots play areas;	Toilets located far from some play zones; accessibility for sudden toilet	High-use site with good location but lacks adequate toilet access; importance of closer

	10,min walk; multiple playgrounds; amenities like ambience café nearby	needs is poor; shared use of space by varied age groups	amenities and infrastructure for families with young children
Coneygear Park	Used regularly; seen as a novelty after a gap; has a “spinny thing” liked by children	Previously had broken bridge (long repair time); now fixed; some lighting and safety concerns; perceived as more suited for younger children	Popular, but historically under-maintained; requires consistent investment in infrastructure and lighting for comfort and perceived safety
Hinchingbrooke Park	Occasionally used for forest school; known for dispersed play features (e.g. duck and zip line)	Parking is a major issue during peak times; large site means children split between areas, hard for parents to supervise	Design appreciated but practical constraints hinder usage; highlights value and complexity of larger multi-feature parks
Hinchingbrooke Park (mention 2)	Occasionally visited; valued for nature; considered safe and well-maintained	Not buggy-friendly; limited public transport; large layout splits groups; parking issues at peak times	Valued, but practical access and supervision challenges; highlights need for multi-age design
Boat Park (St Neots)	Regularly visited; next to ambience café and parking; offers variety of equipment for different ages	Only one picnic bench; potential crowding; equipment caters well for	Well-used and centrally located; could benefit from expanded seating and diverse equipment for growing children

		now but may not suffice as children age	
Rocket Park (St Neots)	Known for sandpit and swing circle; good for younger children; older girls like swings	Poor lighting; limited toilets; older equipment and cleanliness issues (bird droppings)	Gender-sensitive design highlighted; sanitation and lighting improvements would improve experience
Ackerman Street Park	Occasionally used; perceived as small and plasticky	Equipment longevity questioned; only one bench; fenced-off parts noted in past	Moderate use with safety and comfort concerns; equipment materials and facilities need reassessment
Loves Farm Park	Occasionally used; includes “big prior chips”	Parking is difficult; design does not reflect inclusive or gender-aware guidance	Access and inclusivity barriers noted; model for revisiting inclusive design standards
Unnamed Park by Football Ground (Jeep Park)	Identified by feature (wobbly jeep); close to Rocket Park	Swings under trees often dirty; old, metal slides perceived as risky; overall feel is “not favourite”	Perceived age and condition suggest need for maintenance and design refresh

Burley House (external)	Praised for scale and wooden equipment; considered imaginative and suitable for a range of ages	None directly noted (external site)	Serves as a benchmark for aspirational design; use of natural materials and adventure play noted
Anglesey Abbey (external)	National Trust park with high-quality wooden play equipment	Not local; referenced positively	Cited as inspiration for layout and material use; encourages consideration of natural aesthetics and risk-based play
Somersham Park	Main park used due to locality; includes skate ramp, exercise equipment, and green space	Basic infrastructure only; perceived as boring for older children; limited seating and no toilets	Lacks age-appropriate provision for 10–18s; limited facilities reduce dwell time and engagement
Hill Rise Park	Used in the past; currently avoided	Repeated sewage issues; antisocial behaviour; no toilets or refreshments; unsafe and unsupervised	High-priority for safety and infrastructure renewal; perception of neglect and disrepair