

# **PLAY STRATEGY**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**2007 - 2012**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This strategy sets out the District Councils long term proposals for the development of both play facilities and activities for the next five years.

The strategy is written to complement and have regard to: the District Council's culture strategy [that includes plans for open spaces, arts and culture, leisure development and recreation services]; also regional and national strategies; the Cambridgeshire Play Strategy; 'Every Child Matters' and the 2004 Health White Paper.

The document sets out both the authority's vision for and definition of play. It acknowledges that play is an entitlement for children and young people who live in Huntingdonshire.

The strategy identifies those areas within Huntingdonshire where additional investment and support for play facilities are required. It also provides a framework for future investment to ensure play initiatives are developed in line with the authority's growth agenda and other plans and strategies.

Both during the development of this document and within the text it is acknowledged that the provision of play facilities and play activities is not something the authority can do alone. Therefore the council intends to establish a play partnership which will include representation from both the statutory and voluntary/community sectors. The aim of the partnership will be to ensure that play developments planned by all agencies are co-ordinated to ensure optimum value.

The ideas to be developed within the action plan include: appointment of a Play Co-ordinator; further engagement with children and young people in specific areas; continued support for successful established schemes; and an improvement programme for those areas identified as lacking suitable play equipment.

## INTRODUCTION

Huntingdonshire is predominantly a rural district, covering an area of approximately 350 square miles, and has a population of 156,958 based on the 2001 Census. Approximately half of the district's residents live in four market towns - Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey, with the remaining residents distributed within key settlements and rural villages.

Looking at the district's population in greater detail, over 25% of Huntingdonshire's population are aged between 0 – 19. This compares to 23% for East Cambridgeshire and Fenland, and just over 24% for South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City.

Given the rural nature of much of the district, isolation is seen as a major issue. Indeed, rural areas often lack an adequate range of services and facilities in their immediate localities. Therefore, it is important that this strategy should look to address the negative effects of isolation ensuring that all children and young people, irrespective of their location, can access play facilities.

Since the early 1970's, Huntingdonshire has accommodated a large amount of new housing and employment growth. Huntingdonshire is at the centre of the Cambridge to Peterborough growth area and managing the opportunities and pressures from growth is a continuing focus for the council. Furthermore, it is expected that Huntingdonshire will continue to accommodate a large amount of additional housing and jobs. The council's Corporate Plan, "Growing Success", recognises the need to balance the needs of new or expanding communities which will require new infrastructure and services, with those of nearby communities which might be affected by growth but which don't have the same level of services and facilities, and this again is important when considering present and future provision of cultural services and facilities.

The majority of growth has been, and will continue to be, located within the district's largest towns of Huntingdon and St Neots. Lesser scale development is planned in other market such as St Ives and Ramsey. In rural areas new development will be limited and will be restricted to a number of key settlements. In villages there will be limited growth to meet local needs. The council's Corporate Plan also states that resources will be focused upon the need to reinvigorate all of the district's towns and to assist more deprived communities, including rural areas. When considering all of these different growth pressures, it is vital that all communities have access to, and can participate in, quality play provision

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to the development of play and recreational opportunities in all localities.

Play provision in Huntingdonshire varies across the district depending on where children and young people live

Future development will be co-ordinated at district or town/parish level in order to secure the most appropriate, sustainable provision for local communities.

## **2. THE CASE FOR PLAY**

This Play strategy is intrinsically linked to the District Council's corporate plan & in particular the Culture Strategy. The Culture Strategy also includes action plans for Open Spaces, Arts and Culture, Recreation and Leisure Development and Recreation Centre Services.

This play strategy will also link to Cambridgeshire Play Strategy and "Every Child Matters". See appendix 2 for further details.

The Play strategy has been informed by a range of consultations with children, young people and parents (see appendix 1) and takes account of local and national policy initiatives and organisational priorities (see appendix 2). The map (Appendix 3) identifies the location of play facilities in Huntingdonshire.

It outlines priority targets for Huntingdonshire for 2007 – 2012 it will provide a clear framework for investment and ensure that play initiatives are developed in line with other relevant plans and strategies

## **3. A PLAY STRATEGY FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

### **3.1 PURPOSE**

- To establish play as an entitlement for children and young people in Huntingdonshire;
- To identify priorities for development necessary to secure children and young people's entitlement to play;
- To set out aims and objectives for the short to long term;
- To ensure that children and young people's entitlement to play is embedded in service planning; and
- To ensure that potential funding opportunities link to the priorities and objectives of the strategy..

### **3.2 VISION:**

All Children and young people in Huntingdonshire are able to access a range of play opportunities suited to their needs and interests

### **3.3 PLAY DEFINITION:**

What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons.

Play is fundamental to children and young people's lives. It can happen any time, any place, anywhere.

People play to :

- to have fun
- be challenged
- be with others or alone
- relax
- feel free
- explore how they feel
- express themselves
- to deal with trauma and emotional health
- because they want and need to

### **3.4 PLAY PROVISION IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

A space, some facilities or equipment or set of activities intended to give children and young people as much choice, control and freedom as possible within reasonable boundaries. This is sometimes best achieved with adult support, guidance or supervision. The children and young people may themselves choose play involving certain rules or, in some cases, informal sport.

Children need and want to take risks when they play.

Huntingdonshire District Council aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, the council will manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.

### **3.5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:**

In line with the definition adopted in the UN convention on the Rights of the Child, this strategy defines children and young people as being under the age of 18 years.

Local consultation with children and young people suggests that different provision is needed at different ages. Consequently, action plans to support this strategy will consider initiatives in 3 age groups

- Under 10 years
- 10 – 14 years
- 14 – 18 years

## **4. THE OBJECTIVES OF PLAY PROVISION IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

HDC is committed to the provision of good quality play opportunities that provide opportunities that take risks test boundaries, learn social interaction/social skills whilst following established health and safety.

For quality standards refer for Annex4

### **4.1 All play initiatives should:-**

- Include children and young people and parents where appropriate in planning and development
- Be accessible, taking account of the diverse needs of children and young people
- Maximise the range of good quality play opportunities
- Ensure sustainability by embedding in key strategies and plans of the council
- extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it
- recognises the children and young peoples need to test boundaries and manages the balance between risk and safety.

These objectives are based on consultations that have taken place in Huntingdonshire with children, young people and adults. A full list of consultations can be found at Appendix 1.

### **4.2 Key points from consultation**

- Overall provision of play grounds and equipment in Huntingdonshire for younger children is above average, however provision in specific areas is below average or non-existent
- Maintenance of play facilities was often sited as a problem, particularly misuse by older young people;
- There was an overall perception of insufficient facilities especially for young people (over 10 years of age);
- There are few quality facilities for children and young people in rural areas;
- Lack of public transport means children and young people can't participate in activities unless they are close to where they live;

- Children and young people identified personal safety eg bullying and intimidation, as key barriers to accessing play opportunities.
- It is acknowledged the children and young people in different age groups, under 10yrs, 10 -14yrs, 14 – 18yrs, require different interventions; and
- there is a need for targeted work to address special interests e.g. arts or specific community safety issues

## **5. EVALUATION AND MONITORING -**

A robust monitoring and evaluation process will be set up for all initiatives for further details refer to action plan annex?

## **6. PLAY PARTNERSHIP**

The council will establish a play partnership for Huntingdonshire that will include representatives from both the statutory and voluntary and community sector. The play partnership will ensure play developments planned by other agencies both statutory and voluntary are co-ordinated to ensure optimum value.



## CONSULTATIONS

### Accessibility in Rural Huntingdonshire

**Alice Watson. Huntingdonshire District Council Feb 2006**

Based on adult perceptions of what young people need.

Few facilities for young people in most villages especially for teenagers

- Proposed solution is community transport service but adults split on whether this would be a good idea
- There is an assumption by those with children and about those who have children that parents who live in rural areas expect to provide lifts to their children but these are exclusively to organised activities eg sports clubs there is no mention of lifts purely to 'play'. Linked to this there seems to be an assumption that young people want or need to do 'organised' activities rather than just hang out

### Extended Schools Survey

**Allan Whyte. Office of Children and Young People's Services**

512 young people participated - 9% from Hunts (St. Neots)

#### Top Sports

Trampolining  
Gymnastics  
Football  
Badminton  
Using the gym

#### Top arts and learning

Outings  
Drama  
Dance  
Internet  
Making videos

### Barriers to Participation

- Young people living in rural areas had problems accessing activities after school as they rely on the school bus and there are no other public bus routes that would get them home
- Being forced to do it – 28%
- Cost – 21%. 50% thought £2 was a reasonable cost.
- Who runs the activity – 15%
- Activities being competitive – 10%. There is a fear of bullying and intimidation both in group activities and in terms of going to places where there might be unfamiliar people. Prefer some kind of adult supervision

Young people with disabilities want same activities as other young people

### Annual Consultation.

**Claire Sides. Huntingdonshire District Council. April 2005**

18 young people aged 11-18 participated in a day of consultation activities based on HDC priorities

11-13 yr olds thought litter, dog fouling, graffiti and abandoned cars were a big problem in the area

14-18 yr olds thought there were not enough parks and open spaces

There was a perceived threat from 'druggies' particularly in relation to the Oxmoor area of Huntingdon

11-13 yr olds want opportunities to do constructive graffiti

14-18 yr olds want more opportunities to play, watch and listen to live music

## **Make a Difference Consultation January 2004**

### **Claire Keck for Ramsey Area Partnership**

Several initiatives designed to gain views and ideas of young people were included.

Young people want to see a reduction in crime and named specific places where they do not feel safe especially at night

Street lighting needs improving

Public transport is poor and young people cannot access leisure, education and employment opportunities

There are few facilities for young people in the Ramsey area

## **Smart People Like Arty Things.**

### **Viv Peters, Huntingdonshire District Council. March 2003**

127 young people aged 11-19 were interviewed by Peer Researchers about arts provision in Hunts

- Want more arts opportunities in the district
- Access to existing provision needs to be better
- Arts provision needs a targeted approach
- Access to information about arts provision needs to be improved

## **Youth Matters consultation –Hunts Information. Summer 2005. Office of Children and Young People's Services**

Completed by 11-19yr olds

Activities they want to do

- Ice skating
- Bowling
- Cinema

Where they currently meet friends

- Town Centre
- Youth Club
- Mate's House
- Park

Where they would like to meet friends

- Town
- Park

### Surveys including young people under 14

<p>HuntsNet (1) Primary Schools in Huntingdon – Approx 400 young people</p>	<p>Changing the Landscape (2) Cambs wide – 448 young people, 40 from Hunts</p>	<p>Speaking Up 6-11yrs (3) Young people with disabilities, Cambs wide – 64 young people</p>	<p>Getting it Right (4) 5 – 19 yrs Cambs wide 1,800 young people</p>
<p><b>Top 5 activities they want at leisure centre</b></p> <p>Swimming Football Trampolining Arts/crafts Gymnastics</p>	<p><b>Top 5 sports and arts activities they want after school</b></p> <p>Trampolining Gymnastics Football Badminton Using the gym</p> <p>Outings Drama Dance Internet Making videos</p>	<p><b>Top interests for after school activities</b></p> <p><b>Music</b> Keyboards Karaoke machine CD's Dancing Disco</p> <p><b>Playing</b> Dolls Postman pat toys Tweenies toys Cars Teletubbies Party Play</p> <p><b>Skills</b> Cooking Computers</p>	<p><b>Enjoy and Achieve</b></p> <p>More things to do for all ages</p> <p>More things for families to do together</p> <p>Improved access to existing or nearby facilities (cost and transport)</p>

#### Barriers to participation

- Transport
- Feeling they have to do it
- Cost
- Activity leaders
- Fear of bullying or intimidation

#### Structured or unstructured activities?

- Many want adult supervision

## **Getting It Right.**

### **Office of Children and Young People's Services. October 2005**

Young people were consulted on the key themes from the Children and Young People's Plan.

- Cheaper or free public transport
- Transport at more regular and appropriate times
- Transport that goes to entertainment venues
- Independent travel for young people with disabilities
- Alternative activities (will reduce drug and alcohol use)
- Reduce stress by providing more places to go and things to do
- More things for all ages to do
- More things for families to do together
- Improved access to existing or nearby facilities eg cost, transport
- Safe and secure environments – lighting CCTV adult presence, absence of traffic
- Reduce bullying by providing more things to do
- Better equipment in schools

## **What Children and Young People want to do at Huntingdon Leisure Centre. Louise Clewes and Bevis Moynan.**

### **Huntingdonshire District Council. July 2006**

299 surveys completed with children and young people in Huntingdon schools

Most popular activities primary school children wanted to do

- Swimming
- Football
- Trampolining
- Arts and crafts

Most popular activities that secondary school students wanted to do

- Football
- Trampolining
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Badminton

## **PMP August 2006**

An overall perception of insufficient facilities particularly for children and young people. Size of facility is relatively consistent across the district although average size of provision in Huntingdon and Yaxley is smaller than in other areas

Quality of provision is perceived to be good on 45 sites but misuse, vandalism and graffiti are main quality issues. In some areas over 50% of sites suffer from vandalism. Generally maintenance is good

Geographical distribution of facilities is good although there are localised accessibility deficiencies in some market towns and key centres for growth. There are also indications of demand for facilities in some smaller settlements.

Partner consultation group event January 2007

Action points agreed:-

1. Develop the capacity of providers to work with children and young people:

2. encourage adults in the community to understand the benefits of children and young people participating in play activities:
3. ensuring play opportunities are included in specifications for all projects:
4. ensuring external funding agreements are developed in line with the play strategy:
5. increase accessibility of play facilities; and
6. develop facilities/opportunities in specific areas of need
  - high population of children and young people and few facilities
  - areas of deprivation
  - rural areas with limited access to facilities and no plans for development
  - areas with high incidents of ASB.

## Key Local and National Policy Documents

**The UN Convention on the rights of the child 1989** “gives all children the right to rest and leisure; to engage in age appropriate play and recreational activities”.

**The Children Act 2004** “recognised the need to make better provision for children’s play as a theme that cuts across a range of policy areas, from planning, open space and transport to health, education and childcare. Most significantly the enjoyment of recreation, including play is one of the outcomes for children that authorities are required to consider in drawing up co-ordinated children and young peoples plans”.

**Getting Serious About Play 2004** A review of children’s play to advise central government on the use of lottery funding for play “recommended that authorities should take the opportunity to improve the planning and operation of play facilities across their respective areas in partnership with other local agencies”.

**2004 Health White Paper** noted that “many children appear to have less time been physically active and that this inactivity is a contributing factor to the rise in obesity among children and young people”

### **Every Child Matters. 2003**

Sets out 5 outcomes which services should work towards, based on consultation with children and young people – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being.

### **Youth Matters. 2005**

Proposes integrated services around young people’s needs. Advocates national standards that would require local authorities to provide

- Access to 2 hours per week of sporting activity
- Access to 2 hours a week of other constructive activities in clubs, youth groups or classes
- Opportunities to contribute to their communities through volunteering
- A wide range of other recreational, cultural, sporting and enriching experiences
- A range of safe and enjoyable places in which to spend time

### **Huntingdonshire Children’s and Young Peoples Plan**

Increase number of yp participating in sport and physical activity each week

1.1H Implement the play strategy with a focus on creating more physical play opportunities for children and their families

3.1 ensure that the development of new communities in Cambridgeshire is accompanied by the supply of high quality facilities for cyp

3.4 increase the range of extended services provided by schools and other providers

4.1 develop and implement a comprehensive sports, arts and cultural strategy

4.2 improve provision for young people in response to 'Youth Matters' including sport and recreation

4.7 Increase accessibility of services through better use of existing transport resources

### **Huntingdonshire District Council Corporate Objectives**

Corporate Aim – Healthy Living, Objective:- To promote healthy lifestyle choices

Corporate Aim - Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities, Objective:- To enable residents to take an active part in their communities.

### **Huntingdonshire Community Strategy**

Increase the number of people using cultural and leisure services

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop existing and new opportunities for cultural and leisure activities
- Improve access to opportunities for physical activity and cultural enrichment that promote good health and mental well being
- Increase the number of cultural and leisure opportunities for young people
- Improve the understanding of and access to the countryside and the heritage of the landscape
- Increase opportunities for pursuing healthy lifestyles through culture and leisure, including encouraging walking and cycling

## **ANNEX 4**

### **Quality Standards**

All new play area/site the design will be in accordance with the general principles of the national Playing Field Association's Six Acre Standard 2001 (NPPFA), the Local Plan and other planning requirements.

Design:-

When planning and designing new fixed facilities the council will ensure they meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the equipment will conform to European Standard BSEN 1176 and any surfacing be certified to European Standard BSEN 1177.

All fixed play facilities will have a post installation inspection report from RoSPA to check that it all conforms and are safe.

All fencing at fixed sight facilities must be dog proof- galvanised steel bow top with a hydraulic self-closing gates.

### Current position

6.1 The provision for children and young people across Huntingdonshire is summarised in Table 6.1 below:

**Table 6.1 – Quantity of provision for children and young people**

Analysis Area	Quantity of Provision	Provision per 1000 population	Average size of facility	Key Sites
St Neots	27 sites	0.71	7.7 pieces of equipment	Skate park is well used site and example of good practice. Large sites also in Priory Park and Riverside Park. Nine sites with over 10 pieces of equipment, the largest of which is Rocket Park. Over 50% of provision is located in St Neots town.
Huntingdon and Godmanchester	40 sites	0.99	5.5 pieces of equipment	Central site in Riverside Park for teenagers. There are seven sites with over 10 pieces of equipment which are significant sites despite this, a number of facilities only have one piece of equipment. Scale of facilities is therefore not consistent. The largest site is on Nursery Road. 50% of the sites are located in Huntingdon Town.
St Ives	19 sites	0.62	7.5 pieces of equipment	Central locations in Hill Rise Park and Warners Park. There are five sites with over 10 pieces of equipment, the largest of which is in Hilton. Eight of the facilities are focused in the market town of St Ives.
Ramsey	15 sites	0.75	7.5 pieces of equipment	Two larger sites in Ramsey (Mill Lane) and Warboys. Six facilities are in Ramsey.
Yaxley and Sawtry	16 sites	0.58	5.6 pieces of equipment	Yaxley Skatepark is important provision for teenagers. Two sites have over 10 pieces of equipment – one in Yaxley and one in Sawtry.

6.2 Key issues arising from the analysis and assessment of the quantity of provision for children and young people include:

- assessment of the provision per 1000 population across the district highlights that there are variations in provision, although the overall level of provision is good
- as may be expected, with the exception of St Ives, provision is higher in the more urban areas of the district. Huntingdon and



Godmanchester has the highest level of provision in the district and provision is also high in St Neots. St Neots also contains the skate park, which consultation suggests that people travel significant distances to use.

- reinforcing the rural more dispersed nature of Yaxley and Sawtry and Ramsey, provision is lower in these areas, particularly in Yaxley and Sawtry. This suggests that not all villages have provision.
- size of facilities is consistent across the district, although facilities in Yaxley and Huntingdon and Godmanchester are much smaller than in the other three areas. The variation in sizes of facilities is particularly noticeable within Huntingdon and Godmanchester, where despite there being 10 facilities with over 10 pieces of equipment, there are many with only one piece.

6.3 Findings from the consultation regarding the quantity of provision include:

- analysis of the household survey indicates that there are mixed opinions regarding the quantity of provision. There were strong opinions that provision for teenagers was insufficient, a perception shared by 61% of residents. Residents at some drop in sessions also felt there to be some areas of deficiency, in particularly areas mentioned at drop in sessions as being deficient in provision for children and young people included Bury, Ramsey, St Ives, St Neots and Yaxley.
- Parish Councils also highlighted deficiencies in provision, with only 33% feeling that the quantity of provision was good or excellent
- these mixed opinions are reinforced by the varying spread of provision across the district.

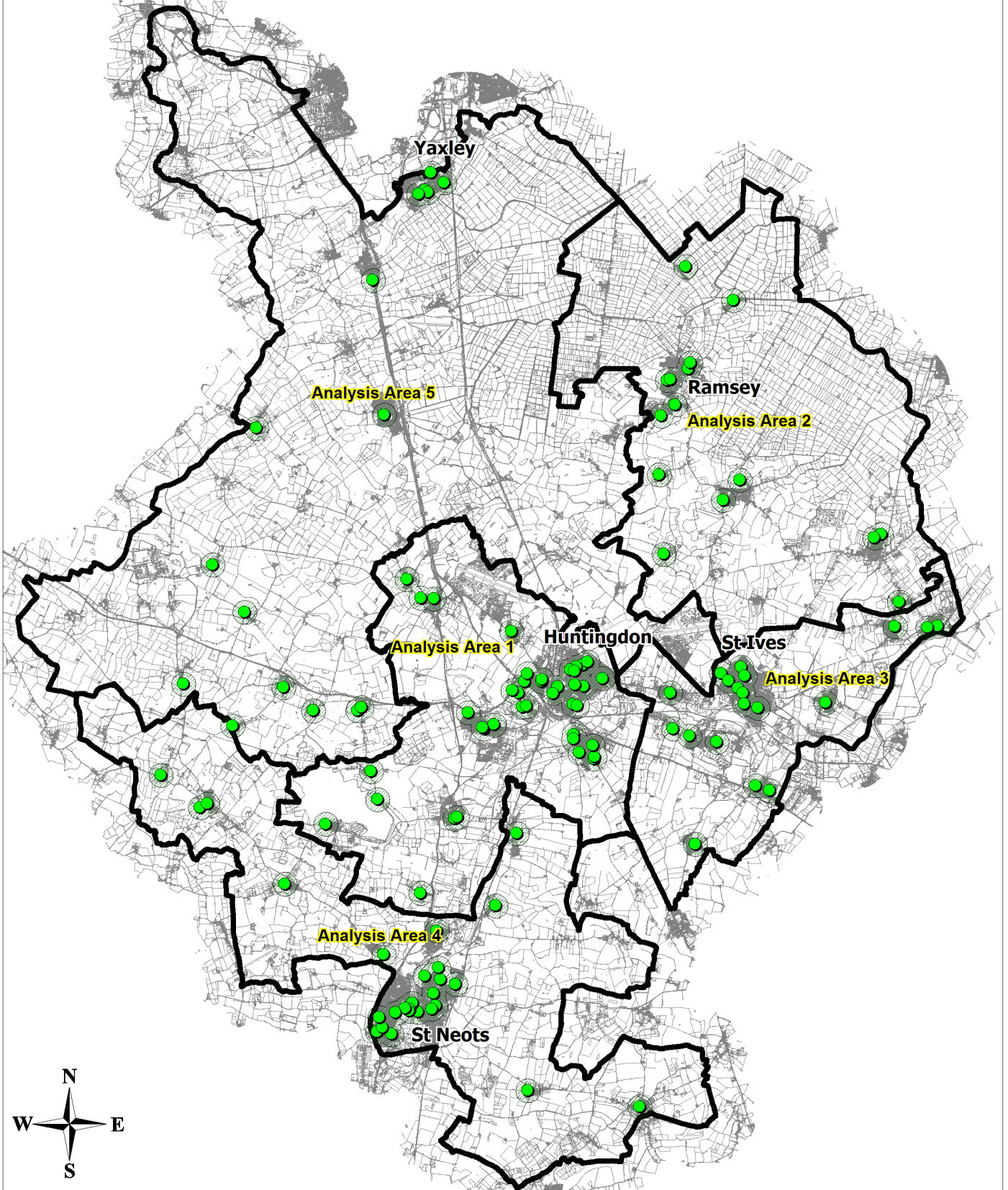
6.4 The quality of provision for children and young people in the district is set out in table 6.2 below.

**Table 6.2 – Quality of provision for children and young people in Huntingdonshire**

<b>Analysis Area</b>	<b>Site Quality</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
St Neots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 50% of sites considered to be good – the highest proportion in the district</li> <li>○ despite this – 27% are poor – also the highest proportion in the district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4 sites are considered to be poorly maintained. Despite this, on the whole maintenance in St Neots is good</li> <li>○ St Neots has the highest incidence of vandalism in the district, with 55% of sites experiencing at least some degree of vandalism</li> <li>○ none of the sites have parking facilities</li> <li>○ 37% of sites have some access suitable for the disabled</li> </ul>
Huntingdon and Godmanchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ overall quality of sites good – only 19%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 25% of sites have no seating – this is important as most parents accompany</li> </ul>

	<p>considered poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 42% good</li> </ul>	<p>their children to sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ maintenance is good on the whole – only 4 sites considered poor</li> <li>○ main issue is vandalism and graffiti (16 sites)</li> <li>○ personal safety perceived to be poor on five sites</li> </ul>
St Ives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ only 1 site considered to be poor</li> <li>○ 37% of sites are good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 63% of sites are considered to be well laid out</li> <li>○ sites are well maintained - only one site considered to be poorly maintained (Hemingford Grey) – the only site also rated as poor overall</li> <li>○ like other areas, vandalism is a problem (37% of sites). Litter is more of a problem in St Ives than in others</li> <li>○ only two sites do not have seating, although no sites have facilities for storing cycles</li> <li>○ good perception of personal safety</li> </ul>
Ramsey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ highest quality sites in the district – no sites rated poor</li> <li>○ 40% of sites good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ almost 50% of sites offer some facilities for disabled children</li> <li>○ quality of maintenance is high – there are no sites considered poorly maintained</li> <li>○ 50% of sites have suffered from vandalism although litter is only evident at 2 sites, again reinforcing the high quality maintenance</li> </ul>
Yaxley and Sawtry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ lowest proportion of good sites – only 20%</li> <li>○ 27% poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ lowest proportion of good sites is reflected in the quality ratings – 25% considered to be poorly maintained although 38% were good</li> <li>○ 44% of sites suffered from vandalism and 31% were considered to be poor in terms of personal safety</li> <li>○ 25% of sites have some equipment that is accessible to disabled groups.</li> </ul>

**Overview Map, Analysis Areas and Open Space Type Catchments,  
Children & Young People**



Children & Young People



Catchment - Outdoor Sports Facilities - Pitches and Tennis  
(720m buffer)



Analysis Areas



Mastermap



**ACTIVE**

*Bringing data to life*

