

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Godmanchester & St Neots - Needs Analysis of Green Space & Play Facilities.
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy & Growth) – 8 March 2016
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor Robin Carter – Executive Councillor for Operations & the Environment
Report by:	Alistair Merrick – Interim Head of Service (Operations)
Ward(s) affected:	Godmanchester & St Neots

Executive Summary:

1. The report provides the opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the green spaces and play needs analysis for Godmanchester and St Neots before they are adopted.
2. The Green Space and Play Needs Analysis for Godmanchester is the needs analysis work completed for Godmanchester of current provision against the benchmarks for provision. The conclusions reached are as follows:
 - **Open Space Provision:** Overall there is sufficient green space provision in Godmanchester and it is quite well distributed throughout the town. The new development proposed at Bearscroft Farm to the east of the town will provide some additional green space, although sites have not been confirmed. However, there is deficient in natural and semi-natural areas, however there are a number of amenity green space sites for example Wigmore Farm where the wildflower areas could be extended to provide the biodiversity element needed. There is also a deficiency showing for parks and gardens but there are no more sites that lend themselves for this purpose.
 - **Play Provision:** There is currently a deficient in the town but with the addition of the play areas proposed for the Bearscroft Farm Development, Godmanchester will have sufficient play provision. Subsequently only the north of the town would benefit from an additional play area but there is not a site that could accommodate this. However, if there is an opportunity to upgrade a LEAP play area to a NEAP play area in the north-west, this would assist with the coverage. The funding to increase the size and play designation of a LEAP to a NEAP would need to be funded through securing a Section 106 funding from local developments.
3. The Green Space and Play Needs Analysis for St Neots is the needs analysis work completed for St Neots of current provision against the benchmarks for provision. The conclusions reached are as follows:

- **Parks and Gardens:** The green space provision for parks and gardens is only showing as deficient in the Eaton Socon and Eynesbury wards. However, the total green space in both of these wards is considerably above the policy requirements so no action is recommended.
- **Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (N&SN):** All the wards in St Neots are well provided for as far as natural and semi natural green space is concerned so again no action is recommended.
- **Allotments and Community Gardens (A&CG):** There are no allotments or community gardens in Eaton Socon, and Eaton Ford and Eynesbury are showing as deficient in this provision. Although the policy requirement for St Neots as a whole is on a par with what is currently being provided, when the private sites are included, there are many residents who would not be able to access a site close to their home. With amenity green space being above the policy requirement in each ward it is recommended that consideration should be given to converting some of the amenity green space to allotment sites or a community garden, for example the green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford or the western side of Regatta Meadows.
- **Amenity Green Space and Green Corridors:** Amenity green space is in abundance in all of the St Neots wards, well above the policy requirements and it is quite well distributed with a good number of Green Corridors to connect the green spaces, so no action recommended.
- **Play Provision:** There is a deficient in the town, although the existing play areas are well distributed throughout the wards, with the exception of Eaton Ford where it is distinctly lacking. Therefore it is recommended if funding becomes available there is amenity green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Ford that could be considered for play provision following consultation or part of Regatta Meadows could also be an option

Recommendation(s):

1. The Panel are invited to make comments that will be included in the future reports to Cabinet concerning the needs analysis work carried out and the consequent recommendations for the future development priorities of green space and play facilities should resources become available.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report provides the Panel with the opportunity for the Panel to scrutinise the green space and play needs analysis work for Godmanchester and St Neots before it is adopted.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report allows the Panel to scrutinise the further needs analysis work that has been done for Godmanchester and St Neots. This work is a continuation of the programme of needs analysis work being done to establish the priorities for the future development of green space and play facilities across the District.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

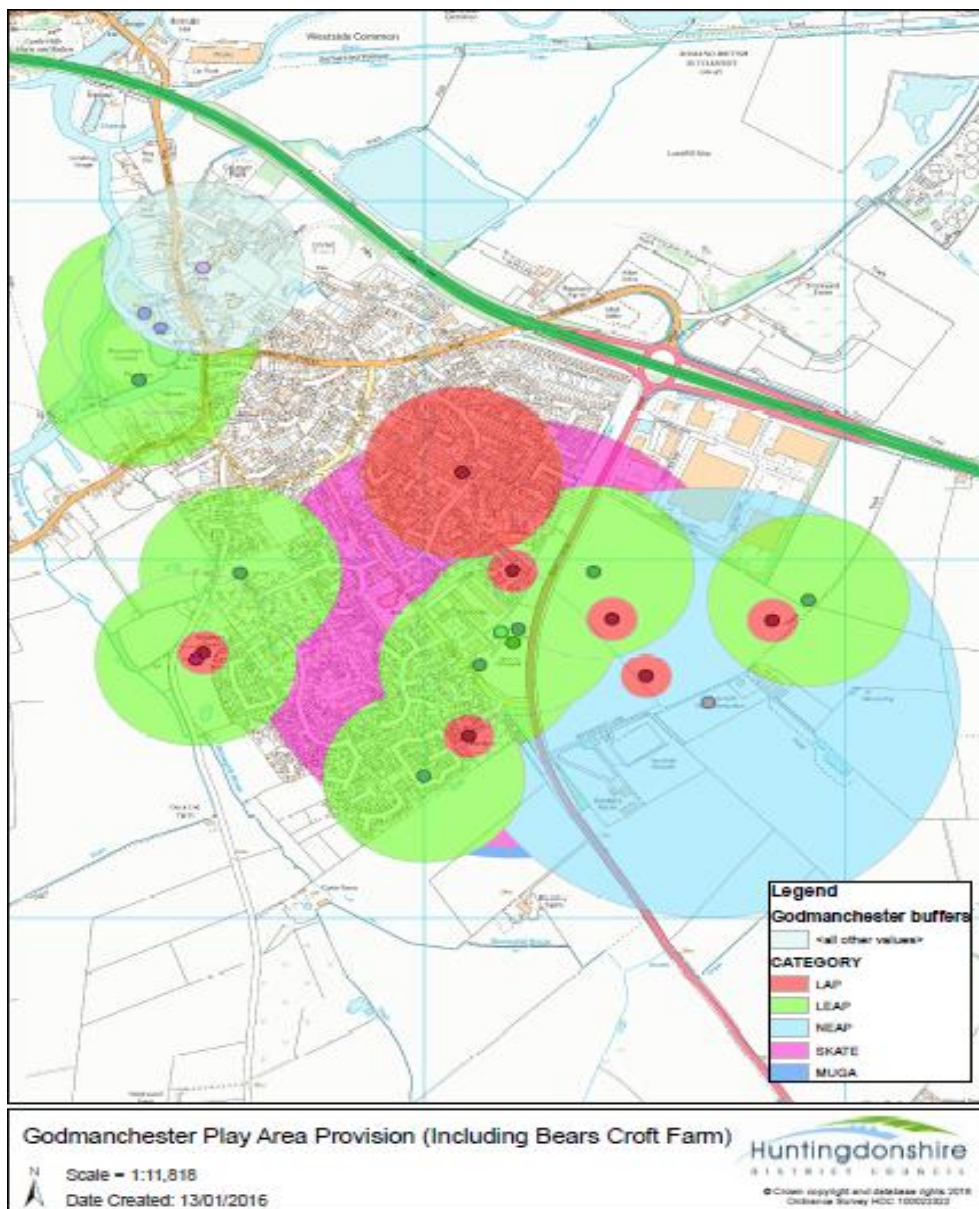
- 3.1 **Godmanchester** is a picturesque small town situated to the south of Huntingdon with a population of approximately 6,816. It is built on the site of an old Roman town and has probably been occupied continuously for more than 2,000 years. It has some interesting historical features such as the Chinese Bridge linking the town to the water meadow. Detailed below is the outcome of the needs analysis work that confirms the current levels of deficiency of provision in open space against planning policy benchmarks for such provision.

Green Space Provision (ha)	Policy	Actual (ha)*
Parks & Gardens	3.27	0.09
Green Corridors	0.00	0.41
Natural & Semi Natural	1.57	0.00
Allotments & Community Gardens	2.18	3.52
Amenity Green Space	7.43	9.66
Total Green Space	14.45	13.68
Play Provision (ha)		
Total	1.70	0.57

* HDC, TC & PC and 3rd party ownership all included

- 3.2 Overall there is sufficient green space provision in Godmanchester and it is quite well distributed throughout the town. The new development proposed at Bearscroft Farm to the east of the town will provide some additional green space, although sites have not been confirmed. However, there is deficient in natural and semi-natural areas, however there are a number of amenity green space sites for example Wigmore Farm where the wildflower areas could be extended to provide the biodiversity element needed. There is also a deficiency showing for parks and gardens but there are no more sites that lend themselves for this purpose.

3.3 Play provision is deficient in the town but with the addition of the play areas proposed for the Bearscroft Farm Development, Godmanchester will have sufficient play provision. Subsequently only the north of the town would benefit from an additional play area but there is not a site that could accommodate this. However, if there is an opportunity to upgrade a LEAP play area to a NEAP play area in the north-west, this would assist with the coverage. The funding to increase the size and play designation of a LEAP to a NEAP would need to be funded through securing a Section 106 funding from local developments.



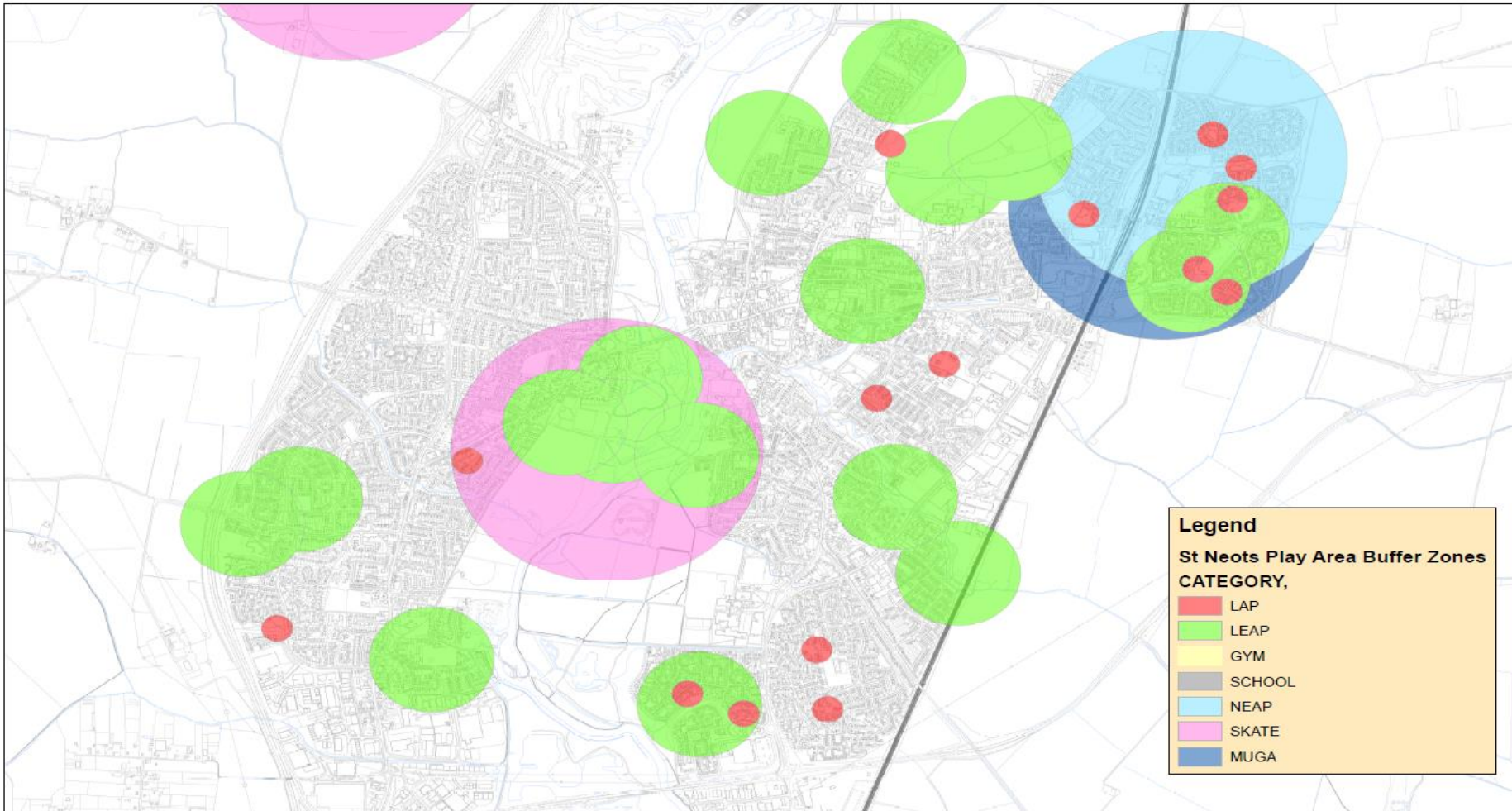
3.4 **St Neots** is a charming riverside town south of Huntingdon and comprises of four wards, Priory Park, Eaton Ford, Eaton Socon and Eynesbury. The total population for the town is almost 30,000 and is considered to be the fastest growing town in Cambridgeshire. The town has a variety of green space that provides numerous benefits to the local community. Detailed overleaf is the outcome of the needs analysis work that confirms the current levels of deficiency of provision in green space against planning policy benchmarks for such provision.

	Priory Park		Eaton Ford		Eaton Socon		Eynesbury		Total	
Population	6,330		6,834		5,768		10,638		29,570	
Green Space Provision (ha)	Policy	Actual (ha)*	Policy	Actual (ha)*	Policy	Actual (ha)*	Policy	Actual (ha)*	Policy	Actual (ha)*
Parks & Gardens	3.04	32.96	3.28	25.04	2.77	0.33	5.11	0.19	9.09	58.33
Green Corridors	0.00	5.95	0.00	3.95	0.00	6.14	0.00	0.14	0.00	16.04
Natural & Semi Natural	1.46	5.57	1.57	0.76	1.33	14.95	2.45	16.99	4.35	21.28
Allotments & Community Gardens	2.03	5.05	2.19	0.44	1.85	0.00	3.40	0.93	6.06	5.49
Amenity Green Space	6.90	19.60	7.45	12.00	6.29	11.28	11.60	23.70	20.64	42.88
Total Green Space	13.42	69.13	14.49	42.19	12.23	32.70	22.55	41.95	40.14	144.02
Play Provision (ha)										
Total	1.58	0.54	1.71	0.23	1.44	0.13	2.66	0.22	7.39	0.90
* HDC, TC & PC and 3rd party ownership all included										

3.5 Detailed below are the recommendations arising from the needs analysis work:

- a) **Parks and Gardens:** The green space provision for parks and gardens is only showing as deficient in the Eaton Socon and Eynesbury wards. However, the total green space in both of these wards is considerably above the policy requirements so no action is recommended.
- b) **Natural and Semi Natural Green Space (N&SN):** All the wards in St Neots are well provided for as far as natural and semi natural green space is concerned so again no action is recommended.
- c) **Allotments and Community Gardens (A&CG):** There are no allotments or community gardens in Eaton Socon, and Eaton Ford and Eynesbury are showing as deficient in this provision. Although the policy requirement for St Neots as a whole is on a par with what is currently being provided, when the private sites are included, there are many residents who would not be able to access a site close to their home. With amenity green space being above the policy requirement in each ward it is recommended that consideration should be given to converting some of the amenity green space to allotment sites or a community garden, for example the green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford or the western side of Regatta Meadows.
- d) **Amenity Green Space and Green Corridors:** Amenity green space is in abundance in all of the St Neots wards, well above the policy requirements and it is quite well distributed with a good number of green corridors to connect the green spaces, so no action recommended.

- 3.6 **Play Provision:** there is a deficient in the town, although the existing play areas are well distributed throughout the wards, with the exception of Eaton Ford where it is distinctly lacking. Therefore it is recommended if funding becomes available there is amenity green space between the A1 and the west of Eaton Ford that could be considered for play provision following consultation or part of Regatta Meadows could also be an option.



St Neots Play Area Buffer Zones

N
Scale = 1:10,000
Date Created: 11/02/2016

- 3.7 St Neots is also subject to two large Outline Planning applications located at its' eastern boundary. Each development will provide at the least the required amount of Green Space and play coverage as per the Developer Contributions SPD. The new green space will both serve the developments and in turn alleviate any deficiency identified in St Neots as a whole.
- 3.8 The Panel are invited to scrutinise the needs analysis work conducted and draft recommendations and propose any amendments for consideration by the Portfolio Holder.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

- 4.1 Comments of the Panel will be included in future reports to the Cabinet concerning the needs analysis work and recommendations submitted for approval.

5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS AND HOW THESE WILL BE ADDRESSED

- 5.1 The structured approach (involving full consultation with Town and Parish Councils) being adopted for the needs analysis work is to ensure priorities are being identified through robust assessment to then ensure capital and revenue resources to be more accurately targeted to the priorities. This is critical at a time of diminishing resources. It will also help to ensure the maintenance costs of the provision are sustainable in the medium term.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The findings of all the needs analysis work completed and programmed will be consolidated into a new Open Spaces and Play Strategy for the Cabinet to consider in early 2016/17.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The outputs and outcomes from these projects will fundamentally contribute to the Corporate Plan as follows:
- a) Enhancing fundamentally the built and green environment of the District.
 - b) Empowering local communities to become involved in the design of services.
 - c) Operations becoming much more business-like and efficient in the way it delivers services.
 - d) Ensuring that service improvement planning (priority setting) and service delivery in Operations is driven by customer engagement, strategy formulation and robust business planning.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The detail of individual projects to meet the priorities identified by the needs analysis work will be the subject of local consultation to finalise the detail of each project.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no immediate legal implications concerning the needs analysis work and recommendations submitted for scrutiny.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no immediate resource implications concerning the needs analysis and findings submitted for scrutiny. The work has been done within existing resources. The purpose of the needs analysis work for green spaces and play facilities is to better target future S106 monies to priorities that have been clearly quantified. The Council will not be directly funding any of the identified deficiencies from mainstream funding but the detail in the report does provide the opportunity for communities to develop their own plans to meet the identified need.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The needs analysis work seeks to ensure an appropriate and equitable balance in the provision of green space and play facilities across the District to militate against under provision so that no residents are unreasonably excluded from such provision.
- 11.2 For reference the analysis future sports pitch provision has been dealt with as part of the development of the Council's sports Strategy.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 The scrutinising of the needs analysis work and findings give the Panel the opportunity to influence the final decision making regarding the future provision of green spaces and play provision in Earith, Sawtry and Stilton.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- 13.1 None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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