

# DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2032



### EVIDENCE BASE EVB 12

#### Open Space and Recreation

(Updated May 2017)

This Document is one in a series, which builds up to form the 'evidence base' that informs the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP).

It comprises initial Workshop Paper(s) on this Planning topic that were presented to Council Members during 2016 / 2017, which have been subject to Member discussion and input, before further discussion at the Planning Committee (LDP) and in turn feeding into the LDP Preferred Options Paper (POP) and then the Plan Strategy (PS) and eventually the Local Policies Plan (LPP) which together forms the LDP.

The afore-mentioned evidence base will be continually updated, to additionally include the latest information, input from public engagement, statutory consultees, stakeholder groups, Sustainability Appraisal and from other Departments within the Council, including Community Planning.

The Evidence Base is published as a 'supporting document' in accordance with Article 10(a) and 15(a) of the Planning (LDP) Regulations (NI) 2015.

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**Paper 1:** Open Space and Recreation

**Purpose of Workshop:** To review Derry City and Strabane District's Open Space and Recreation, to identify existing provision and need up to 2032 and to consider appropriate strategic policy options.

**Content:** This paper provides information on:

- (i) An overview of relevant Planning Policy and other Strategies;
- (ii) A review of existing open space and recreation provision;
- (iii) A consideration of whether there is need for additional open space and recreation facilities up to 2032.

**Conclusion:** That councillors note the contents of this paper in relation to our open space and recreation provision; and use the Workshop to raise any relevant strategic planning issues in relation to the role of the LDP in terms of planning our open space and recreation.

## 1.0 Introduction to Paper

- 1.1 This paper provides information on Open Space and Outdoor Recreation, mainly within the settlements of the District. The baseline information will assist Members and Officials in considering how the LDP can strategically meet the open space and recreation needs of the District. This will enable Members to:
- Have an understanding of the open space and recreation situation in the District, in terms of existing provision and any future requirements;
  - Consider future options for open space and recreation provision in line with current regional policy; and
  - Begin to formulate strategic planning policies for open space and recreation.
- 1.2 Consideration will also be given to any additional relevant open space and recreation work and information available from previous reports and strategies including the One Plan, Ebrington Development Framework and Strabane Town Centre Masterplan.
- 1.3 The information presented in this paper will be essential in providing the evidence base for the Preferred Options Paper. It will assist the Council in developing an informed and innovative approach to open space and recreation within Derry City and Strabane District. In reviewing all available information, this will enable us to identify any additional open space and recreation studies needed.

### Types of Sport, Recreation & Open Space

- 1.4 The Council of Europe's European Sports Charter defines sport as "*all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aims at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels.*" There is wide recognition of the contribution that sport makes to a sense of local and national identity, to personal, moral and physical development, and individual enjoyment. Additionally, recognition needs to be given to the wider socio-economic and health benefits of sport and recreation – including job creation, physical fitness and cross-community relationship building. This paper primarily relates to active, physical and mainly outdoor recreation.
- 1.5 Open space is generally defined as *all open space of public value*. It can be privately or publicly owned and maintained, combining green space and leisure areas to improve and enhance the amenity of the area. Open space can serve many different needs of the population depending on size, location and accessibility. In urban areas, open space may fulfil many functions – facilitating sport and organised recreation, children's play, passive recreation, informal amenity, 'green lungs' providing wildlife corridors and urban breaks which help to define different neighbourhoods.
- 1.6 Derry City and Strabane District Council is one of a number of bodies with statutory responsibility for the provision of adequate recreational facilities

within the Plan area. Other bodies who contribute to the provision and development of sport, recreation and open space facilities also play an important role. These include local sports clubs, educational establishments, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Forest Service, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Waterways Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland (in association with Department for Communities and the National Lottery).

- 1.7 As well as having responsibility for sport and recreation provision, the Council is leading the Community Planning process for the District, working in partnership with statutory agencies and the community, voluntary and business sectors to plan for and improve services that matter to local people, including sports and recreation facilities.
- 1.8 There are a range of parks and children's play facilities across Derry City and Strabane District. The area is presently well served by a wide range of formal private recreational clubs including soccer, rugby, cricket, Gaelic games and golf. The widespread provision of school playing fields throughout the area also offers future potential for community use. The Council is also actively involved in community partnerships for the development and operation of recreational sites.

## 2.0 Regional Policy Context

- 2.1 **Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021:** The Northern Ireland Executive's public consultation on the draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21 closed on 22 July 2016. Work is now being taken forward to develop the final Programme for Government and a further consultation will be launched later in the autumn. There are several relevant references to open space and recreation in the draft document. Under Outcome 2: We live and work sustainably - protecting the environment, the Executive will make their contribution to valuing the place we live in by: Helping to improve the quality of the places in which people live, work and play and increasing access to clean, high quality, green spaces. Under Outcome 10: We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society, the Executive will attract and support international cultural and sporting events. Under Outcome 14: We give our children and young people the best start in life, the Executive will support opportunities for play, recreation and creativity.
- 2.2 **Regional Development Strategy 2035 (RDS):** The RDS 2035 aims to protect and enhance the network of open spaces in the North West. The network consists of open countryside, country parks, urban parks, forests and community greenways. They are important recreational facilities which help to define a sense of place and character for urban communities. They provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles. Opportunities should be taken for connections to an enhanced network of pedestrian paths, cycle-ways and ecological corridors. These have the potential to support biodiversity by linking existing ecological areas creating a network of green spaces throughout the North West. The management of parks and open spaces will encourage the regeneration of the city.
- 2.3 **Strategic Planning Policy Statement 2015 (SPPS):** The recent SPPS is the single most important document guiding the requirements/context of the LDP. It states that government recognises that open space, sport and outdoor recreation is important to society now and in the future. It supports many cultural, social, economic, health and environmental benefits. Everyone, particularly children, older people and those with disabilities should have easy access to open space and the opportunity to participate in sport and outdoor recreational activity or simply enjoy and have contact with nature. This is recognised in the RDS which highlights the need to provide adequate provision for green and blue infrastructure in cities, towns and neighbourhoods, and new developments.
- 2.4 Open space, whether or not there is public access to it, is important for its contribution to the quality of urban life by providing important green lungs, visual breaks and wildlife habitats in built-up areas. Open space can enhance the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism and thereby contribute to the process of urban and rural regeneration.

2.5 The regional strategic objectives for open space, sport and outdoor recreation are to:

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

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

2.7 In preparing LDPs, councils should assess existing provision of open space in the plan area against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of ‘outdoor playing space’ per 1,000 population (commonly referred to as the ‘6 acre standard’). These assessments should consider both the level of ‘outdoor playing space’ provision in the plan area, and the distribution and accessibility of such land use.

2.8 Zonings for future needs should take into account the following:

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

- Identifying and designating areas of open space which perform a strategic function, such as landscape wedges in urban areas.

2.9 **Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS 7): Quality Residential Environments** set out the planning policies of the Department regarding residential development. PPS 7 requires development proposals to integrate areas of public open space, including children’s play spaces, as an intrinsic element of any new residential development, to meet the needs generated by that development.

2.10 **Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS 8) Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation:** set out the planning policies of the Department for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation. PPS 8 embodies the commitment of the Government to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthy lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity. The role of Development Plans are to carry out an assessment of existing open space provision, zone for future open space development, identify existing open space and contain key site requirements for zoned residential land, detailing guidance on the provision of areas of public open space.

2.11 **PPS 3: Planning Policy Statement 3: Access, Movement & Parking** PPS 3 sets out the Department’s planning policies for vehicular and pedestrian access, transport assessment, the protection of transport routes and parking. The main objectives of the statement relevant to open space and recreation are to:

- promote road safety, in particular, for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users;
- make efficient use of road space within the context of promoting modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport;
- ensure that new development offers a realistic choice of access by walking, cycling and public transport, recognising that this may be less achievable in some rural areas;
- promote the provision of adequate facilities for cyclists in new development.

2.12 **Derry Area Plan (DAP) 2011:** The DAP 2011 zoned lands for recreation and open space use in Derry City and the villages of Culmore, Eglinton, Newbuildings, Park and Strathfoyle. Chapter 10 deals with ‘Recreation and Open Space’ and there are 4 Proposals/Policies:

- **Proposal R1 Recreation and Open Space Provision** – The Department zones sufficient land to meet the recreational and open space needs of the District.
- **Policy R1 Protection of Zoned Recreation and Open Spaces Areas** - The Department will not permit proposals for built development in areas zoned as Recreation and Open Space on Maps 2, 3 and the Village Maps except where:
  - the development is related to the existing use,
  - the development provides leisure facilities, or



- any replacement buildings do not exceed the site coverage of the existing development.
- *Policy R2 Recreational use of the River Foyle* – The Department will encourage both private and public bodies to provide appropriate recreational facilities along the River Foyle, particularly between Craigavon Bridge and Foyle Bridge.
  - *Policy R3 Open Space Provision in New Housing Areas* - The Department will require as necessary the provision of manageable areas of incidental open space suitable for informal amenity and play use within new housing developments.
- 2.13 **Strabane Area Plan (SAP) 2001:** The SAP stated that by using the NPFA standard, the Department had established that a shortfall in terms of provision and distribution existed in Strabane, Castlederg and Sion Mills. Within Strabane and Castlederg, there was a need for additional land suitable for recreation and open space more widely distributed throughout the urban areas, while in Sion Mills there were proposals to provide for passive recreational facilities. At the time of publication, it was felt that sufficient land was available in Newtownstewart to meet the needs of the plan period.
- 2.14 **The Community Plan:** The new style of LDP provides a unique opportunity for the Council to genuinely shape the District for local communities and will enable them to adopt a joined up approach, incorporating linkages to other functions such as regeneration, local economic development and community planning. The Local Government Act introduces a statutory link between the Community Plan (CP) and the LDP, in that the preparation of the LDP must ‘take account’ of the CP. It is intended that the LDP will be the spatial reflection of the CP and that the two should work in tandem towards the same vision for the Council area and our communities and set the long term social, economic and environmental objectives for the District.
- 2.15 The District’s Community Plan is expected in June 2017, with higher level strategic policies, as well as incorporating existing strategies/proposals for the District. Latest findings from the CP emphasise the importance of greenways. ‘Actions’ identified relevant to open space and recreation include:
- Progress with the implementation of the Northwest Greenways (2015) to provide improved access and connectivity to our communities, public realm and economic centres. Deliver 1km of greenway provision per annum by working towards the delivery of:
    - Strathfoyle Greenway
    - Mourne/Strabane Sion Mills Greenway
    - Clooney Greenway
    - Strabane 2nd pedestrian bridge
    - Bay Road Greenway and Pennyburn Bridge
    - Creggan Country Park Greenway
    - Foyle Valley Greenway Derry/Strabane/Lifford

- Kilfennan Valley Greenway
  - St Columb's Park Public Realm (phase 2)
  - Waterside Greenway (Phase 4) - Gransha Estate
  - Castlederg Greenway
- Develop a Green Infrastructure Plan to establish the future vision for the management, maintenance and development of Council owned green space.
  - Complete the regeneration of Brooke Park.
  - Develop a District Park for Strabane Town.
  - Regeneration of Ballyarnett Country Park.
  - Open a District park at Culmore.
  - Development of a Play Plan and establish a new Play Partnership for the future management, maintenance and development of play provision district-wide.
  - To complete existing play parks including:
    - Irish Street
    - Rose Court
    - Fountain
    - Brooke Park
    - Ballyarnett
    - Drumahoe
    - Kilfennan
    - Ballymagroarty
    - Brandywell
    - Magheramason
    - Newtownstewart
  - Develop and deliver two new regionally significant sport and leisure facilities, one on the west bank of Derry and another in Strabane Town;
  - Deliver the Brandywell stadium, dog track, sports centre and pitches;
  - Council in partnership with Donegal County Council are hoping to drive forward plans on the '*Riverine Project*', which seeks to create a significant new cross-border community asset for Strabane and Lifford. This is an ambitious which could potentially provide an entire new community infrastructure which can be shared by all those living in close proximity to the border. The project offers the opportunity to completely transform the area and enhance its profile as an attractive visitor destination. The project comprises of 47 acres covering two currently unused open natural spaces, including a partially covered outdoor public events space, community building and a world class play experience, radiating out into shared parkland featuring walkways, river access and parking. If taken to the next stage the area will also benefit from greatly enhanced infrastructure with a new cross-border greenway network connecting Lifford and Strabane as well as a cross border pedestrian bridge linking the towns. The space will span either side of the banks of the River Foyle in Lifford and Strabane which will be interconnected by a community footbridge. Both local Councils have now jointly submitted a Stage I

application under the Peace IV Shared Space and Services Programme following a jointly managed community consultation which helped shape the ambitious new vision for the area.

- Improve blueways and waterways access for the improvement of marine-based activity and angling within the Foyle Catchment with the initial redevelopment of Prehen Boathouse and the slipway at Bay Road;
- Build the capacity of our local sporting and recreational clubs to develop business cases and funding plans for delivery of third party sporting and recreational facilities;
- Develop a multi provision approach to addressing deficiencies in sport pitch provision, develop and implement a plan to address this and develop our Clondermott and Melvin sites in phase 1.

2.16 **The One Plan**, published by Ilex in 2010, states that a second-city requires a number of elements to provide the ‘critical mass’ to ensure that it achieves the foundations for a sustainable City Region. These elements include a good quality of life in terms of recreational and leisure provision. In Derry City, the south of the west bank is identified as an area in which a range of water based activities might be located and within which tourism and recreational activities could be developed. At present there is no access from the west bank to the river anywhere above Craigavon Bridge for boating or other water based recreational activities. The essence of the proposal for the river is to develop access from the road to the river and a public slipway to provide access onto the river. The potential exists to develop a major waterside recreational amenity at Daisyfield, such as an all-city schools boathouse or National Centre for Excellence in Water-sports. The Plan recognises that the quality of rural areas is vital to the development of the region in terms of the food economy, tourism and recreation & leisure.

2.17 **Strabane Town Centre Masterplan (September 2010):** In February 2009, the Department for Social Development (DSD), and Strabane District Council (SDC), with DoE Planning Service acting as a statutory partner, commissioned a Regeneration Masterplan for Strabane Town Centre. This non-statutory document provided the basis, and justification for decision making on the promotion, implementation and timing of urban regeneration initiatives in the town centre for the period up to 2020. The Masterplan states that Open Space provision in the town centre is critical to encourage a stop and shop culture and to develop a town centre living strategy which will give residents a quality of life comparable with suburban living. All new developments should build in as much green space as possible to foster the image of the town centre as a place to reside and not to shop and leave.

2.18 *‘Place Quality’* encompasses a number of different elements of the physical structure and fabric of the Town Centre. These are the physical elements of the place: what it looks like (and the historic elements that shape its character), how it is arranged, the relationship between the buildings and the open space and how it fits into its landscape.

- 2.19 The Masterplan aims to provide a safe, attractive and animated public realm, this includes open spaces. The Strabane Masterplan refers to the SCORE site, adjacent to the Alley Arts Centre, a large hard landscaped area of public open space, 0.38 hectares in size and offers 2 options for its regeneration. There is also a site at Butcher/Market Street which has the potential to become the principal public space in Strabane.
- 2.20 **Ebrington Development Framework (EDF):** In January 2016, the DOE Minister, Mark H Durkan granted outline planning approval for the regeneration of the former Ministry of Defence (MoD) site at Ebrington in Derry. The proposal is for a range of uses including museum and heritage, creative industries, education, research and development and hotel and leisure. It is the largest single regeneration site in Derry.
- 2.21 Healthy green spaces bring many positive attributes to the cities we live in and the people who live there. They can improve air quality, soil quality and water quality and can mitigate against climate change. They can also promote healthy lifestyles, and can be calming and restorative for the mind and body, increasing social interaction and reducing anti-social behaviour. In the Derry context, city-wide, green space is interspersed, with few spaces having a recognised function or intrinsic value, underutilising this potential green asset and its potential benefits. The city centre core is almost bereft of green space making the access to the green spaces that do exist even more important.
- 2.22 The largest open green space within walking distance of the city centre is St. Columb's Park, North of Ebrington. Previously the park had a poor physical relationship with the Cityside and Waterside. The Peace Bridge has had a very positive impact with a footfall of 1m per annum, but is still poorly connected on the important North-South axis. Ebrington will act as a 'bridge' to this green space, enhancing access for all parts of the community. The linear green corridor that extends along the eastern bank of the Foyle and proposed Clooney Greenway provides a further opportunity to associate green space with health and well-being.

### **DCSDC Corporate Plan 2016-2017**

- 2.23 The Corporate Plan was was agreed by Council on 23rd June 2016. Improvement Objective 2 is relevant to open space and recreation and is 'to help people to develop and adopt healthy lifestyles through increasing participation in high quality leisure, sport and healthy living activity'. Actions for 2016-17 include:
- Lead the business case review and design development process for Leisure facility at Templemore, Leisure facility in Strabane, Community Centres at Top of the Hill, Shantallow, Glen, Lincoln Court, Irish Street, Galliagh and Culmore, Daisyfield site and Brandywell Sports Centre, Prehen Boathouse, Moorlough.

- Completion of year 2 capital construction programme: Brandywell stadium and dog track, Leafair and Corrody Road Pitches, Melvin 3G Pitch
- Identify business case options and preliminary proposals for Brooke Park Leisure Centre and City Baths; Drumahoe Playing Fields; Artigarvan pitch; Mageramason MUGA;
- Partnership engagement with the Loughs Agency, PHA and other partners to develop a Foyle blueway access and animation programme
- Deliver health improvement initiatives to support World Health Organisation themes, including an age friendly city
- Regional awareness and education initiatives
- Develop a marketing and communication campaign to promote awareness of Leisure, Sport and Healthy Living activity
- Implement customer satisfaction user survey at leisure centres
- Participation in monitoring and evaluation models for Spirit of 2012 Get Out Get Active disability programme and Active Communities 2020
- Undertake surveys with coaches and partner organisations
- Undertake a schools survey re swimming participation.

2.24 Performance will be measured through:

- management information systems including leisure centre access data – no's participating; no of visits per 1,000 population
- membership databases for key facilities – numbers participating/age/gender/behaviour patterns
- customer satisfaction surveys – quality of activity, behaviour patterns, areas for improvement, frequency of activity
- participation in monitoring and evaluation processes to include entry and exit surveys for key target groups participating in
- programmes; case studies; coach surveys; and partner organisation surveys.

2.25 A *North West Greenway Plan* was published by DCSDC in September 2015. This document aims to provide the basis of a strategic and co-ordinated plan for the development of a network of Greenways throughout the North West. It provides a potential greenways map (overleaf), which identifies a series of recommended Greenway routes for further investigation, as a result of information gathered and initial consultations. The Plan focuses on a study area comprising of County Donegal and Derry City and Strabane District Council. The vision is to develop a cross border network of greenways that link people with places locally, regionally and nationally - bringing social, economic and environmental well-being to all. The aim is to establish the region as a place where people want to live and work and where businesses want to locate, by making sustainability and active travel key elements in the planning and development policy of the region.

2.26 Other relevant council plans include the Play Plan, published in 2010 and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 2014.



### Other relevant Government Strategies

2.27 The Northern Ireland Government has launched several important policy documents in recent years which promote the delivery of enhanced facilities for open space, sport and recreation. These strategies re-affirm the importance of sport and recreation and are expected to be delivered by a combination of central government departments together with Council and the community/voluntary sectors.

- *Play and Leisure Policy Statement* for Northern Ireland was produced by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2009. The aim of this policy framework is to improve existing play and leisure provision for all children and young people from 0 - 18 years. As a result, the *Play and Leisure Implementation Plan* was produced in 2011. This specifies high level outcomes with emphasis on the value placed on play, and improved play and leisure facilities for all children and young people in order to support their development, enjoyment and growth.
- *Sport Matters: The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019* outlines a broader Government commitment to sport and physical recreation. Its vision is for “...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport...” It sets key strategic priorities for sports and physical recreation over the 10 year period and informing future investment by all stakeholders across the public, private and community/voluntary sectors underpinning three areas: Participation, Performance and Places. The successful delivery of the

Strategy requires stakeholders to reflect the Strategy in their business and development plans.

- *Active Places Research Report 2009 Bridging the Gap & 2014 update* provides an evidence base to inform the strategic development of sports facilities in Northern Ireland. The 2009 report identified unmet demand and shortfalls for sports facilities such as sports halls, swimming pools, tennis courts, athletic facilities and pitches in Northern Ireland. The 2014 update presents facility shortfall tables for Pitches and Sports halls only. The facility shortfall tables presented in the 2009 Report excluded school sports facilities due to their limited availability for community use. However, in light of recent Community Use of Schools guidance published by Sport NI and the Department of Education, it is important to recognise the potential value of school sports facilities in addressing the facility shortfalls throughout Northern Ireland.
- *Community Use of School Premises – A Guidance Toolkit (January 2014)* The Department of Education produced this document to provide practical guidance to achieving community use of school sports facilities. There is a range of educational, recreational and sporting facilities which can be used to meet a variety of needs not only for pupils, but for their parents, families and local communities.
- *Mountain Bike Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014 –2024:* This strategy was prepared by Outdoor Recreation NI in May 2014. The vision of this strategy is to make Northern Ireland a world class mountain bike destination.

## 2.28 Emerging Strategies

Sport NI, in partnership with the District Councils, is developing a Sports Facilities Strategy for Northern Ireland and 11 District Council Area Reports. The Sports Facilities Strategy will provide a framework for the prioritisation and development of facilities and the prioritisation of investment by a range of investors in sports facility provision. These documents have not been completed yet and are still in draft format. Publication is expected in early 2017.

### 3.0 Current Open Space and Recreation Provision

3.1 For the purposes of this paper, the focus has been on the two main settlements, Derry City and Strabane Town, as well as the 3 local towns, since recreation and open space zonings generally only occur at this level. During LDP preparation, Council will undertake a full assessment of open space and recreation land availability across the settlement hierarchy of the District.

3.2 **Derry Area Plan (DAP) 2011:** The DAP 2011 zoned 5 separate areas for recreation and open space use in Derry City, totalling 27.31ha. The status of these areas at October 2016 is:

- Lands south of White Chapel, Galliagh – undeveloped, passive open space
- Lands at Bloomfield Park/Glengalliagh Road – undeveloped, passive open space
- Lands west of Rossmore/Rossdale, Kilfennan Park – developed
- Top of the Hill Park – developed
- Lands west of Aileach Road – undeveloped, passive open space

Approximately 13.38ha (49.0%) of the zoned land was developed, while approximately 13.93ha (51%) remained undeveloped. The DAP also identified 52 areas of existing recreation and open space, totalling 477.70ha.

3.3 **Strabane Area Plan (SAP) 2001:** The Strabane Area Plan 2001 zoned four separate areas for recreation purposes in Strabane town. As shown in Table 1, a total of 32.98ha was zoned. Only 6.31ha (19.1%) of the zoned land was developed with a further 1.73ha (5.3%) developed for uses other than recreation. The SAP also zoned 11ha of land in Castlederg and 2ha of land in Sion Mills.

*Table 1: Uptake of Recreation Zonings in Derry City/Strabane Town (Derry City figures are at 2016; Strabane Town figures are at 2005)*

Settlement	Area Zoned (ha)	Area Developed for Recreation (ha)	Area Developed for Other Uses (ha)	Area Undeveloped (ha)
Derry City	27.31	13.38	0	13.93
Strabane Town*	32.98	6.31	1.73	24.94

*Table 2: Uptake of Recreation Zonings in Strabane Local Towns at 2005*

Settlement	Area Zoned (ha)	Area Developed (ha)	Area Remaining (ha)
Castlederg	11.22	2.67 (23.8%)	8.55 (76.2%)
Newtownstewart	0	-	-
Sion Mills	2.32	1.15 (49.6%)	1.17 (50.4%)



- 3.4 In Derry City, around half of the land zoned for recreation has been developed for recreation at Kilfennan Park and Corrody Road Park, Gobnascale. In Strabane Town, the uptake of land zoned for recreation has been particularly low. This trend has been established further by the development of land zoned for recreation for alternative uses including retailing and housing.
- 3.5 During the LDP process, Council will complete an open space audit to evaluate both the quantity and quality of existing open space provision and as part of an assessment of additional local needs for formal recreation and open space.

### **Use of the Fields in Trust standard**

- 3.6 Fields in Trust is the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), which was first established in 1925. To measure open space provision in each settlement, the Fields in Trust (FIT) standard, formerly known as the NPFA standard, was used as a yardstick. This is a minimum standard for outdoor recreational space of 2.4 hectares per 1000 people, comprising of 1.6 hectares for outdoor sports and 0.8 hectares for children's play. There is some debate within Council over the use of this standard and it is noted that English councils use PPG 17 to devise their own standard specific to their area. As noted previously the SPPS states that councils should assess existing provision of open space in the plan area against the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1,000 population (commonly referred to as the '6 acre standard').
- 3.7 Within this definition the FIT recognises there is a distinction between sports/active recreation and children's play, and recommends a minimum standard for each of these broad headings. The 2.4 hectares per 1,000 Population is for a "Total Playing Space" interpretation, but for outdoor sport, 1.6 hectares per 1000 population is recommended and for children's playing spaces, between 0.6 and 0.8 hectares per 1000 population is recommended.

## 4.0 Outdoor Sports Provision

- 4.1 Council offers a full range of outdoor facilities ranging from sports pitches to more leisurely activities. The use of the FIT standard for calculation of need for land for outdoor sport is primarily for urban areas with populations in excess of 1,000 (Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, Fields in Trust, 2006). As stated above, the standard for outdoor sport is 1.6 hectares per 1000 population.
- 4.2 Care needs to be taken when applying the FIT Standard to rural parts of Derry and Strabane. For example, a rural area with relatively few settlements may have relatively few sports facilities. On the other hand, a community or village with a population of 1,000 for example may still need a range of facilities, yet applying the standard to a single football pitch could suggest over-provision. Additionally, an area with a high dependence on passive recreation or on water-based outdoor sport would be expected to score poorly against the FIT standard. Nevertheless, this standard does provide a useful starting point in assessing the overall level of provision in the District currently.
- 4.3 **Assessment of Existing Outdoor Sport Provision in Derry City based on Available Information:**

**Population** of 83,125 (Census 2011)

**FIT Target**  $(83,125/1,000) \times 1.6=133\text{ha}$

**Actual Provision:** At 2015 the former Derry City Council maintained circa 404ha of open space. The Parks Section advised that this comprised 43 Play Areas, 42 Pitches and 9 MUGA, totalling 94 sites over 404ha. No detailed breakdown is currently available and these areas are not mapped on GIS. This is a significant gap in the information which will have to be addressed. It is unclear whether this represents a surplus or deficit compared to the FIT standard. The former Derry City Council has previously mapped the location of these facilities as part of the Play Plan audit. A new mapping exercise needs to be undertaken for the entire District to have a comprehensive picture of what is in existence to inform future need and demands. It is understood that council intends to commission a Leisure Facility Needs Analysis Strategy.

- 4.4 **Assessment of Existing Outdoor Sport Provision in Strabane Town based on the information available:**

**Population** of 13,147 (Census 2011)

**FIT target**  $(13,147/1,000) \times 1.6=21.04\text{ha}$

**Actual Provision:** The former Strabane District Council have 13 playing fields and 9 MUGA across Strabane District at 2016. No detailed breakdown is currently available and these areas are not mapped on GIS. This is a significant gap in the information which will have to be addressed. As none of these areas are mapped, it is unclear whether this represents a surplus or deficit compared to the FIT standard.

#### 4.5 Projection of Future Need

Basic calculations indicate that additional population growth is projected to be 2,978 between 2011 and 2030 and therefore an additional 4.76ha of outdoor sport provision will be required using the 1.6 standard.

Projected 2030 population (A) = 151,169  
 2011 Census Population (B) = 148,191  
 Additional population growth (A - B) = 2,978  
 (2,978 ÷ 1000) x 1.6(ha) = 4.76ha

#### 4.6 Playing Pitches

The FIT standard for playing pitches is 1.2 hectares per 1,000 population. Sport NI's Active Places 2014 update audited the grass pitch provision of the Derry & Strabane council area, excluding education grass pitches, to be 83 ha. The synthetic pitch provision in the council is indicated to be 4.6 ha, but Sport NI determine a synthetic pitch to have 4 times the value of a grass pitch, therefore this becomes equivalent to 18.4 ha. Thus, DCSDC has a combined area of 101.4 ha of grass and synthetic pitches, excluding education grass pitches.

*Table 3: 2014 Quantity of playing pitches in District Council Areas (including education synthetic pitches but excluding grass pitches)*

			EXISTING PROVISION				SHORTFALLS	
			Grass	Synthetic		Total Acres SNI	SNI Standard	
District Council	2011 Population Projection	Acres Recommended by SAS	Total Grass Acres	Existing Acres	SNI by 4			Perceived Acres Shortfall
Ards/North Down	155882	468	141	17	69	209	258	103
Lisburn City/Castlereagh	178544	535.632	168.97	19.03	76.12	245.09	290.54	116
Antrim/Newtownabbey	132389	397.167	121.05	15.44	61.76	182.81	214.36	86
Mid and East Antrim	132378	397.134	162.1	10.83	43.32	205.42	191.71	77
Derry City/Strabane	150592	451.776	206.22	11.41	45.64	251.86	199.92	80
Belfast	263313	789.939	377.41	49.07	196.3	573.69	216.25	86
Armagh/Banbridge/Craigavon	190559	571.677	331.79	23.38	93.52	425.31	146.37	59
Causeway Coast & Glens	140436	421.308	316.46	14.6	58.4	374.86	46.448	19
Newry, Mourne and Down	164514	492.542	270.5	15.15	60.6	421.1	62.442	25

\*Six Acre Standard (SAS) calculates the value of a synthetic surface to be twice that of a grass surface.

\*\* Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) calculates the value of a synthetic surface to be four times that of a grass surface.

4.7 In Table 3, the suggested shortfall which excludes education grass pitches, is 199.92 acres or 80 pitches. When converted to hectares, the shortfall figure for playing pitches is 80.9 ha. Table 4 was also completed based on a projected 2011 population of 150,592. However, the 2011 Census population is actually 148,191, a difference of -2,401 which is 2.88 hectares less when the FIT standard of 1.2 hectares per 1000 population is applied. The existing 2011 shortfall would therefore be 78.02ha.

## Projection of Future Need for Playing Pitches until 2030

- 4.8 An assessment of the future needs of the council area up to 2030 can be calculated using the NISRA projected population of 151,169 and applying the FIT standard as follows:

Projected 2030 population (A) = 151,169

2011 Census Population (B) = 148,191

Additional population growth (A - B) = 2,978

$(2,978 \div 1000) \times 1.2(\text{ha}) = 3.57 \text{ ha} + 78.02 \text{ ha (existing 2011 shortfall)}$

= 81.59 ha

= 81.59 ha  $\div$  1.0 ha (average pitch size) = 82 pitches required.

The average pitch size is based on Sport NI parameters of Gaelic pitches at 3.29 acres (1.33ha), soccer pitches at 1.93 acres (0.78 ha) and Rugby pitches at 2.1acres (0.85ha). Therefore, Derry and Strabane requires approximately 82 hectares of outdoor space provision which equates to 82 pitches.

- 4.9 The range of pitch sizes from 3.29 acres for a GAA pitch to 1.93 acres for a soccer pitch considered alongside the number of GAA pitches within the Derry and Strabane District has the potential to have skewed the existing provision of pitches upwards, and, as a result, the final projection for pitches required downwards. Consideration should also be given to the significant number of cricket pitches in the District.

## 5.0 Children’s Play Provision

- 5.1 Children’s play contributes to the health, well-being and overall development of children. Outdoor children’s play facilities vary from formal equipped children’s playgrounds to kick-about areas.
- 5.2 At 2015 there were 43 children’s play areas in the former Derry District and 30 in the former Strabane District. As none of these areas are currently mapped to a GIS format by the responsible council section, it is unclear whether this represents a surplus or deficit compared to the FIT standard. During LDP preparation current figures will be checked for accuracy and updated.

### *Distribution of Children’s Playing Space*

- 5.3 In addition to the quantitative assessment, the FIT also address the distribution of open spaces. As a general guideline, it recommends that sports pitches should be within 20 minutes travelling time from all homes, using walking as the recommended mode of transport. Parts of Derry City and Strabane District are rural in character and many people use vehicular transport to travel to these facilities. It is therefore reasonable to argue that drive times are more appropriate. The same argument does apply to children’s playing space where distance needs to be calculated on the basis of walking time. In considering the distribution of Children’s play facilities, the FIT recommends different travel times, dependent upon the nature of the facilities and defines a three tier hierarchy:
- *Local Areas for play (LAP)* - These are unsupervised, small open spaces, without play equipment, specifically designed for young children for play activities close to where they live. LAPs should be within 1 minute walking time from home;
  - *A Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)* - These are unsupervised play areas that are equipped with different types of play equipment for children of early school age. These should be located within 5 minutes walking time from home;
  - *A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)* - These are also unsupervised but they are intended to service a substantial residential area. Featuring a significant range of different types of play equipment, these are equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children. These should be located within 15 minutes walking time from home.
- 5.4 *Former Derry City Council* - do not use the LAP, LEAP, NEAP hierarchy and instead refer to District, Local and Neighbourhood facilities. At present there is no up to date inventory of these. This is a gap in the information that will have to be addressed by Council.
- 5.5 *Former Strabane District Council* - No NEAPs were identified within Strabane. LEAPs serve residential areas mainly to the south of Strabane town centre on

both sides of the River Mourne. Four LEAPs are located in the Ballycolman area while others serve residential areas south of Urney Road and in the vicinity of Curly Hill and Townsend Street. Large residential areas to the north, east and south of the settlement are not served by equipped children’s playing spaces. While there are several LAPs within Strabane, there are none to the north of the town centre, none to the south of Ballycolman Road, and none west of the by-pass (Great Northern Link). Overall while the provision of children’s play areas is good within the residential area to the immediate south of the town centre, elsewhere in Strabane the provision is very poor.

*Table 4: NEAP, LEAP and LAP Children’s Playing Spaces within the Towns in Strabane District*

<b>Strabane</b>	Ballycolman A Ballycolman B Melvin Hall Beechmount Avenue Lisnafin Park Innisfree Gardens Springhill Park Courtai Park 16 Sites	LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP LEAP LAP
<b>Castledearg</b>	Hillview Millbrook Gardens Lower Strabane Road 9 Sites	LEAP LEAP LEAP LAP
<b>Sion Mills</b>	Sycamore Avenue 5 Sites	LEAP LAP
<b>Newtownstewart</b>	Douglas Road 4 Sites	LEAP LAP

Source: Former Strabane District Council, Planning Service Records, 2005

## 5.6 Projection of Future Need

In terms of projecting future children’s play provision need to 2030, none of these areas are mapped, and it is therefore unclear what existing provision is. Accordingly, it is difficult to project forward with any degree of accuracy. Basic calculations indicate that additional population growth is projected to be 2,978 between 2011 and 2030 and therefore an additional 1.79ha of children’s playing space will be required using the 0.6 standard and 2.38ha, using the 0.8 standard.

Projected 2030 population (A) = 151,169  
 2011 Census Population (B) = 148,191  
 Additional population growth (A - B) = 2,978  
 $(2,978 \div 1000) \times 0.6(\text{ha}) = 1.79\text{ha}$   
 $(2,978 \div 1000) \times 0.8(\text{ha}) = 2.38\text{ha}$

## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 At present there are 42 pitches and 9 MUGA across the former Derry District and 13 playing fields and 9 MUGA across the former Strabane District. There were 43 children's play areas in Derry District and circa 30 in Strabane District. It is unclear whether this represents a surplus or deficit compared to the FIT standard. The former Derry City Council has mapped the location of these facilities as part of the Play Plan audit. A new mapping exercise needs to be progressed as part of the Play Plan review for the District.
- 6.2 In terms of future projections, it is essential that a GIS approach is applied to the mapping of all open space and recreation provision across the District. As it is unclear what existing provision is, it is difficult to project forward. Sport NI estimate that an additional 82 pitches are required across the District to 2030.

### Next steps

- 6.3 Council is currently in the process of commissioning a Pitches Audit / Strategy that it will provide an audit of the existing pitch offer. The Audit will extend to Council / community / club-owned provision for a specified range of sporting / informal provision. The Audit is to cover such options as *'New Provision, Disposals, extensions and Rationalisations into Sports Hubs'*. On completion, any future planning actions will be considered in the preparation of the LDP Plan Strategy. Overall, it is considered that the Pitch Audit / Strategy will inform the Local Development Plan (LDP), in which will be analysed against the Fields in Trust (FIT) standards (formerly NPFA).
- 6.3.1 The Audit will extend to Council / community / club-owned provision for a specified range of sporting / informal provision. The Audit is to cover such options as *'New Provision, Disposals, extensions and Rationalisations into Sports Hubs'*. On completion, any future planning actions will be considered in the preparation of the LDP Plan Strategy.
- 6.4 In preparing the LDP, it needs to assess existing provision of open space across the District against the Fields in Trust (FIT, formerly National Playing Fields Association, NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1,000 population (commonly referred to as the 6-acre standard). This assessment should consider the level of outdoor playing space provision in the plan area and the distribution and accessibility of such land use. Such an assessment would need to cover from City down to Smaller settlements / Hamlets (49 settlements in total)
- 6.5 The LDP will also need to identify all significant / substantial areas of existing open space on LDP maps for information purposes. Within settlements, these may include parks, playing fields and other sports and outdoor recreation facilities, both public and private. In the countryside this will normally include facilities such as regional, country and forest parks.

6.6 Planning Policy Statement 8 (Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation, PPS 8) provides highlights the broad range of open spaces that are of public value:

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

6.7 To undertake a fully comprehensive review of open space and recreation provision in the District, both in terms of quantity and location, the LDP will require up-to-date information. The purpose of an Open Space and Recreation Study is to undertake an assessment of the potential need for additional open space provision over the period to 2032 within the Derry City and Strabane District. To inform decision making, we need to be confident of:

- the quantum of pitches, MUGA and children’s play areas;
- their location;

The LDP will formulate designations and policies to safeguard existing open space and sites identified for future such provision. It is understood that council intends to commission a Leisure Facility Needs Analysis Strategy.

6.8 In considering Members views from Workshop 7, the following points were raised:

- Audit required to determine current Council assets;
- Accessibility to school grounds / playing fields;
- Requirement for more OSR provision in smaller settlements;



- Greenway connectivity;
- Carricklee dumpsite restoration;
- Open Space versus social housing.

6.9 The research findings of this paper which includes Members views, as well as input from the relevant parties, have informed the following options which will be carried forward and subjected to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as part of the Preferred Options (POP) process.

6.10 In considering the options, **Option 1** proposes the protection of existing and zoned OSR provision as set out in the Derry Area Plan 2011 (DAP) and Strabane Area Plan 2001 (SAP), whereas **Options 2** identifies a need for a City and District wide audit / assessment of our current OSR provision in terms of role and function.

*Table 5: Preferred Options*

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>
<b>Open space, sports and recreation (OSR)</b>	Protect the existing and zoned OSR provision as set out in DAP and SAP	Re-evaluate our current OSR provision in terms of role and function and identify and protect any existing land and additional land required for open space, sport and recreation