Provision for children

Definition

7.1 PPG17 defines provision for children and young people as one of its eight green space typologies and states that the broad objective of provision for children and young people is to ensure that they have opportunities to interact with their peers and learn social and movement skills within their home environment. At the same time, they must not create nuisance for other residents or appear threatening to passers-by.

7.2 The importance of appropriate provision for children and young people is gaining an increasingly high profile on the national agenda. The importance of ensuring appropriate provision for children is reinforced in the Bexley children and young people’s plan, which places an emphasis on positive involvement and partnership working with children and young people.

7.3 The Supplementary Planning Document to the London Plan states, “all children and young people should be able to play within local neighbourhoods and have safe and attractive play spaces within walking distance of their homes. For older children and young people, having opportunities to enjoy and develop their own cultural and recreational pursuits is equally important”. Localised provision for both children and young people is perceived to be particularly important in the context of the dense, highly urbanised London environment.

7.4 Play and informal recreation is also addressed in a number of the Mayor’s crosscutting strategies. The overarching strategy is set out in Making London Better for All Children and Young People, but a number of other strategies are relevant, including the Mayor’s Transport, Culture and Childcare Strategies and Walking Plan for London. Making Space for Londoners is an initiative of the GLA’s Architecture and Urbanism Unit aiming to create or upgrade 100 public spaces in London. These strategies promote the wide ranging benefits of open space and set out the need to make London a more child-friendly city, including opportunities to make streets safer for children, the creation of new and diverse opportunities for play and the promotion of open space as a cultural resource for London.

7.5 Although it is recognised that provision for children extends far beyond specialist equipped facilities and play areas, PPG17 highlights the importance of the consideration of equipped play facilities in the context of other open spaces.

7.6 This typology therefore encompasses a vast range of provision from small areas of green space with a single piece of equipment (similar to the typology of amenity green space) to large multi purpose play areas. This typology also includes adventure playgrounds.

7.7 PPG17 notes that using these sub-types of provision for children and young people often ignores the needs of older children. Each site and range of equipment has a different purpose and often serves a different age group and catchment. For the purposes of this study, provision for children (up to 12) and facilities for young people (over 12) have been considered separately. Unlike other typologies, the Borough wide population has not been used to develop the local quantity standards for the provision of children and young people. A separate calculation for the population of children (up to 12) in the Borough has been used and is broken down by cluster for current and future scenarios.
7.8 This section discusses the provision of facilities for children across the Borough. Facilities for young people are evaluated in Section eight.

7.9 It is essential that the findings of this analysis and interpretation are considered in the context of the wider provision for children. Increased opportunities for children may include maximising the role of schools and the provision of alternative opportunities as well as ensuring that all residents have appropriate access to specialised facilities. This is a key feature of the Bexley children and young people’s plan and the Bexley Children and Youth Play Strategy, which will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

7.10 This section of the report sets out the background, strategic context, consultation and current provision for children in London Borough of Bexley. Local standards have been derived from the local consultation undertaken as part of this study and are therefore directly representative of local needs. The application of standards provides a guide as to the future priorities for the provision of equipped play facilities across the Borough.

Figure 7.1 – Example of a children’s play area

7.11 The regional and local strategic context is discussed further in Table 7.1 overleaf.
### Table 7.1 – Regional and Local Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Reviewed</th>
<th>Summary of key strategic drivers</th>
<th>Links to Open Space Strategy and PPG17 Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Policy 3D.11i states that The Mayor, Boroughs and other partners will ensure that children have safe access to good quality, well-designed, secure and stimulating play and informal recreation provision.  
Policy 3.254i states that in densely developed areas, safe and stimulating play facilities are essential for a child’s welfare and future development. | The application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards will ensure children have access to safe, high quality and stimulating play and informal recreation provision. |
| Children and Youth Play Policy and Strategy                                        | The vision of the strategy is “every child has an equal right to play in a safe and stimulating environment through a range of good quality formal and informal play opportunities”.  
The key priorities for the Borough are to:  
• challenge current provision  
• raise the profile of play  
• increase funding opportunities  
• reduce duplication of services  
• promote a more co-ordinated approach to the provision of services  
• enable a more strategic approach to the provision of play in the Borough contribute to enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors associated with social exclusion.  
• foster the child’s well being, healthy growth and development.  
The play strategy supports the development of play for all children and young people.  
Recommendations for action of the strategy are:  
• strategic development of service  
• children and young people’s participation  
• access to quality play  
• freedom to play and play for its own sake | The study will support the development of young people by targeting the correct provision of high quality, accessible facilities.  
The findings of the study are based on an assessment of local need, which included specific consultation with young people and children. The study will therefore ensure that a service is provided that is inclusive and responsible to local need.  
The local quantity standard will challenge current play provision and the audit will provide an overview to promote a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to provision for young people. Good quality play facilities will be promoted through the local quality standard.  
The provision of open space provides opportunities for social interaction, therefore reducing social exclusion. |
**SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Reviewed</th>
<th>Summary of key strategic drivers</th>
<th>Links to Open Space Strategy and PPG17 Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bexley Unitary Development Plan (2004)</strong></td>
<td>Policy TAL7 states all new developments will need to provide sufficient recreational open space including informal open space and children’s play space to a nationally accepted design</td>
<td>The study will provide the Council with information on all open spaces in the Borough. This, along with the recommended local standards, will allow the Council to make informed decisions when seeking developer contributions for open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bexley Sustainable Design and Construction Guide (SPD) (Draft 2007)</strong></td>
<td>Guidance five of the SPD states the design of new developments should ensure residential developments make a contribution for open space, amenity space and children’s play space</td>
<td>The study will provide information to guide the calculation of developer contributions to open space within all new residential developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bexley Local Area Agreement 2007 – 2010</strong></td>
<td>The Local Area Agreement identifies children and young people as a priority for improvement.</td>
<td>Local consultation will identify the key areas for improvement regarding open space in the Borough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bexley Parks Survey (1998)</strong></td>
<td>30% of respondents to the survey indicated they visit parks and open spaces for children’s play facilities.</td>
<td>The household survey will identify current and potential user patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bexley Talk Back Survey 2006 – Parks and Open Spaces</strong></td>
<td>36% of respondents to the survey stated they do not visit play areas for children and teenagers. Only 9% of residents indicated they visit once a week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

Assessing local needs - consultation

7.12 Consultation was undertaken with local residents in order to establish need for provision for children. Children were also consulted directly through the IT young people survey in order to ensure that their viewpoint was heard. In addition, consideration was given to the key findings of consultations undertaken through the development of the Bexley Children and Young People’s plan.

7.13 Local standards have been derived directly from the findings of consultation, ensuring that they are representative of the needs of young people in Bexley. Provision for children was one of the overriding themes throughout consultation. Key findings included:

- residents at drop in sessions were generally positive about the quality of facilities for children, with several sites being singled out as examples of good practice (Danson Park, The Green). Several recent improvements had been noted and many alluded to the increase in the numbers using playgrounds throughout the year
- despite generally positive comments, there were some concerns over the quality of some facilities, believed to be caused by a combination of a lack of supervision and older children causing damage and vandalism. It was felt that this scenario might be a consequence of a lack of facilities for young people
- 76% of current users walk to access this typology. Responses from the household survey regarding preferred methods of travel to this type of open space highlighted that 91% of residents expected to walk. Expectations in terms of travel time show a clearer pattern than for those of regular users, with 82% of people expecting the journey to take 5-10 minutes.

Current position

7.14 In total, there are 49 play areas located across the London Borough of Bexley. Whilst the majority are in Council ownership, others are managed by Housing Associations.

Quantity of provision

7.15 The provision of children’s provision in London Borough of Bexley is summarised in Table 7.2 overleaf.

Table 7.2 – Provision of children’s play areas across London Borough of Bexley

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Number of facilities</th>
<th>Provision per 1000 of the current population</th>
<th>Scenario 1 Provision per 1000</th>
<th>Scenario 2a Provision per 1000</th>
<th>Scenario 2b Provision per 1000</th>
<th>Scenario 3a Provision per 1000</th>
<th>Scenario 3b Provision per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexleyheath</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayford</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erith</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidcup</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamesmead</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

7.16 The key issues emerging from Table 7.2 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of children’s provision across the Borough include:

- findings from the household survey reveal a split in opinion regarding the provision of children’s play areas in Bexley. 37% of respondents indicate provision is about right. In contrast, 25% suggest that there is not enough, and 18% indicate that provision is almost satisfactory, suggesting that there is a perception of a slight deficiency in provision

- similar results are evident in all of the individual areas, however a slightly greater level of satisfaction is portrayed in the Welling cluster, where 48% of residents state provision is about right

- when considering the number of facilities for children in each area of the Borough it can be seen that there is an uneven distribution with the number of facilities ranging from four in the Bexleyheath cluster to 14 in the Erith cluster

- given that the highest numbers of facilities are located in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters, it is perhaps surprising that it is in these areas where the greatest levels of dissatisfaction were evident during consultation. Further analysis of the rationale behind these findings indicates that while some residents relate quality and quantity, others indicated that there were no facilities close to their homes, suggesting that there may be locational deficiencies

- the overall current provision per 1000 children is 1.43 facilities per 1000 population. Future population projections based on scenario 1 shows this is set to remain at a similar level by 2026. However, scenarios 2b, 3a and 3b projections indicate this is expected to decrease to 1.38 and 1.33 facilities 1000 population, respectively

- the greatest current and future provision within the individual areas is in the Thamesmead cluster. Despite not having the lowest current provision per 1000 the Bexleyheath cluster will have the least facilities per 1000 children by 2026 based on all five scenarios.

Setting provision standards - quantity

7.17 The Mayor’s Guide to Preparing Play Strategies highlights the need to develop standards for play provision locally with an emphasis on quality and accessibility as opposed to overly prescriptive measures of mere quantity. This reflects Government policy guidance on recreation and open space (PPG17) which recognises that it is important to modify standards to reflect local need, identifying that consultation on children’s play needs and consideration of the socio-economic context of an area will enable Boroughs to adapt measures accordingly.

7.18 The recommended local quantity standard for facilities for children has been summarised below. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix E. This standard is reflective of the findings of consultation.

7.19 The recommended standard of provision is set based on the existing population. Multiplication of this standard for each of the growth scenarios will enable identification of areas of potential surplus and deficiency generated by population growth and will also inform the amount of new provision for children that should be provided in each scenario.

7.20 The London SPG for provision for children and young people highlights the benefits of setting standards, specifically to:
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

- give clarity to developers, local authorities, housing bodies and other play providers
- be flexible and responsive to needs and circumstances by taking into account local population characteristics, existing play provision and the needs of different age groups
- assist in identifying needs for play provision and how this could be accommodated
- provide guidance on how to calculate the requirement for play and open space for any development and a framework which can be easily applied to housing proposals to ensure adequate on and off-site provision is made to meet the demand created by the development
- take into account parks and open spaces that offer good play opportunities and potential for multi-functional use even if they do not at present include formal play provision
- encourage and make the case for more innovative approaches to play provision in terms of facilities, location, accessibility, design and management
- address issues of accessibility to new and existing facilities and the critical issue of site location
- provide best practice guidance on how to use resources cost effectively and secure adequate revenue streams for maintenance and upkeep including developer contributions.

7.21 In line with the SPG on recreational provision for children, local standards take into account the number of children in the area and the age profile of these children. In order to produce an overall Borough wide standard, analysis has been undertaken at a Borough wide level and full details are provided in Appendix E. Specific analysis should be undertaken in the instances of new development or creation of new facilities to determine the exact requirements for the children in the area and to ensure that facilities are tailored accordingly.

7.22 The recommended local quantity standards for children’s provision have been summarised below. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix E. The standard is set at the existing level of provision. While this places a focus on improving the quality of provision, it will still enable the identification of areas where new provision is required. This is particularly important in light of the key priorities of the Bexley Play Strategy, which aims to challenge existing provision and increase the quantity of facilities where required. The London SPG for children’s play indicates that there should be 10m² of provision per child within any new development. While this may extend wider than equipped facilities for children, this should be considered when determining the exact size of facility provided.
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Quantity Standard (see appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing level of provision</th>
<th>Recommended standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.43 facilities per 1000 children</td>
<td>1.43 facilities per 1000 children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justification**

A split in opinion regarding the provision of children’s play areas was identified throughout consultation. However, there was an emphasis on the quality of play areas, with a number of residents at drop in sessions stating that although there was sufficient provision it was not of a high quality. This is supported by findings of the household survey that reveal the majority of respondents to the household survey perceive the quality of play areas to be average.

In light of the perception that the quality of provision for children in Bexley should be improved, it is recommended the local standard is set at the existing level of provision. This will allow for a focus on the enhancement of play areas across the Borough but still enable the identification of areas where new provision is required, through the application of the accessibility standard.

**Quality of provision**

7.23 The quality of existing provision for children in the Borough was assessed through site visits and is set out in Table 7.3 overleaf. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.

7.24 Full details of the scores achieved can be found in Appendix G.

**Table 7.3 – Quality of provision for children open space across London Borough of Bexley**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Number of sites</th>
<th>Range of quality scores (%)</th>
<th>Average quality scores (%)</th>
<th>Lowest quality sites</th>
<th>Highest quality sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexleyheath</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64% - 94%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Old Manor Way Play Area</td>
<td>Russell Park Play Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayford</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>57% - 93%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Riverside Walk Play Area</td>
<td>Thistlefield Close Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erith</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46% - 94%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Cumbrian Avenue Play Area</td>
<td>Byron Drive/Park Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidcup</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>67% - 83%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Parish Woods Play Area</td>
<td>King Georges Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamesmead</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76% - 85%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Belvedere Playground</td>
<td>Picardy Street Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welling</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>61% - 94%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Hook Lane Play Area</td>
<td>Danson Park Play Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46% - 94%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Cumbrian Avenue Play Area</td>
<td>Danson Park Play Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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7.25 The key issues emerging from Table 7.3, the detailed site assessments and the consultation relating to the quality of young people are:

- consultation indicated that the quality of children’s play areas in the Borough is rated average by 33% of household respondents. A higher percentage of people stated that they were good (32%) as opposed to being poor (15%)
- residents in the Bexleyheath cluster expressed the highest satisfaction of all areas with 41% of respondents rating the quality of play areas good. Residents in the Erith cluster were the least satisfied with 19% rating the quality of play areas poor. However, 46% of residents felt that play areas were either good or very good in this area
- the average quality score of sites within the Borough is 79%. This highlights the good quality provision of children’s play areas in London Borough of Bexley, despite public perceptions
- there is a variation in the quality scores of play areas across the Borough, with scores ranging from 46% to 94%. It is likely that this has contributed to the public perception of the quality of facilities for children
- the average quality score within each cluster is similar, indicating a similar quality standard of provision across London Borough of Bexley.

Setting provision standards – quality

7.26 The recommended local quality vision in terms of provision for children has been summarised below. Full justification is provided in Appendix G.

7.27 Quality is an essential component of provision for children. Both the London Plan SPG for children and recreation and the Bexley Plan for Children and Young People emphasise the importance of the provision of a variety of quality play opportunities stating that facilities at each site should be varied, challenging and stimulating.

Quality Standard (Appendix G)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on the calculated quality scores from detailed site assessments all children’s play areas should aspire to achieve a quality score of 87%.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean/Litter Free</td>
<td>Well kept grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play equipment</td>
<td>Litter Bins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good access</td>
<td>Well laid out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting provision standards – accessibility

7.28 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing opportunities for people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
7.29 Local access to provision for children is particularly important in order to promote use of the site. The SPG to the London Plan suggests that provision for children should be provided locally, specifically:
- 100m – provision for children under the age of 5
- 400m – provision for children between 5 and 11.

7.30 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the programme of site visits where information and signage, transport and general issues were assessed.

7.31 Consultation and analysis highlights that the key issues with regards accessibility of provision for children include:
- 76% of those currently using provision for children walk, highlighting the importance of localised provision. This expectation was consistent across all clusters, and residents in all areas expected to find a play area within a maximum of 10 minutes walk from their home
- the main factors inhibiting access to play areas emerged as misuse of facilities intended for children by older children and young people. Some residents felt intimidated and did not use facilities as a result
- site assessments found accessibility to play areas is good. Pathways and boundaries/gates in particular received high scores, however car parking at a number of sites was an issue.

7.32 The recommended local accessibility standard for children is summarised overleaf. Provision is expected in close proximity to the home. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

**Accessibility Standard (see Appendix H)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended standard – provision for children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes walk (480 metres)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justification**

The majority of respondents to the household questionnaire indicate that they would expect to walk to a children’s play facility (91%). Furthermore, the distances parents are willing to let their children travel unaccompanied from their homes to play facilities has reduced as concerns over safety have grown, facilities should therefore be in close proximity to the home. However, PPG17 suggests that distance thresholds should be reflective of the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel. The 75% threshold level for children using the responses from the household survey was a 10 minute (480 metre) walk time across the Borough. This figure was consistent across all clusters, indicating an overall consensus of opinion. Furthermore the modal response was also a 10 minute walk time (consistent across all of the geographical areas).

Setting the standard in accordance with the 75% threshold level is advocated in PPG17. Moreover, a larger accessibility catchment provides greater flexibility in terms of striking a balance between qualitative and quantitative improvements in provision. Where a 5 minute catchment would place a greater requirement on new provision, local consultation also revealed the importance of high quality sites and not just new facilities. The Council should continually seek to promote measures designed to improve accessibility, such as better public transport or cycling routes.

A standard of 10 minutes (480 metre) walk time therefore meets user expectations and provides a realistic target for implementation. Furthermore, this local standard
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encompasses all types of provision for children, including the larger, more strategic sites that people could be expected to travel further to visit. The provision of local facilities meets with the aspirations of children and ensures that the use of these play facilities is maximized. It will be important to consider the provision of play facilities in the context of amenity open spaces and other typologies providing more informal play opportunities for children.

Applying provision standards

7.33 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of open space sport and recreation facilities and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.

7.34 The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a much more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately. A geographical analysis taking into account the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing facilities is summarised later in this section.

7.35 The findings of the application of these standards should complement the principles set out in the play strategy and inform future decision-making on the adequacy of existing provision.

Quantity

7.36 Application of the quantity standards against both the existing level of provision and also for the five potential growth scenarios up to 2026 is set out in Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4 – Application of quantity standard children’s play areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Current provision balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Scenario 1 Future balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Scenario 2a Future balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Scenario 2b Future balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Scenario 3a Future balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
<th>Scenario 3b Future balanced against local standard (1.43 facilities per 1000 population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bexleyheath</td>
<td>-2.08</td>
<td>-2.80</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
<td>-2.97</td>
<td>-2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crayford</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.45</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erith</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidcup</td>
<td>-3.27</td>
<td>-3.62</td>
<td>-3.49</td>
<td>-3.21</td>
<td>-3.91</td>
<td>-3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamesmead</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welling</td>
<td>-3.24</td>
<td>-3.09</td>
<td>-3.03</td>
<td>-2.85</td>
<td>-3.45</td>
<td>-2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
<td>-1.63</td>
<td>-3.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green = above the minimum standard; Red = below the minimum standard
7.37 The application of the recommended quantity standard highlights that:

- the overall provision against the local standard shows there is currently sufficient provision, however, within the individual clusters there are shortfalls of over three facilities in the Sidcup and Welling clusters and a need for two additional facilities in the Bexleyheath cluster to meet the minimum standard
- in contrast, provision in the Crayford, Erith and Thamesmead clusters exceeds the minimum standards in relation to the current population of the area
- future population projections for 2026 reveal the overall current supply will be sufficient in relation to scenario 1 and 2a, however scenario 2b, 3a and 3b will generate overall deficiencies in provision
- although the Crayford cluster currently has sufficient provision and will do so based on scenario 1 population projection, Crayford will require additional provision in all other scenarios by 2026
- only the Erith and Thamesmead clusters have sufficient provision to meet future demand based on all five population scenarios. This suggests that even in the event of a focus on growth in the Thames Gateway, there will be sufficient provision to meet local needs in quantitative terms. Analysis of access to sites will therefore be of particular importance in these areas.

7.38 In light of the local nature of facilities for children, consideration has been given to the application of the quantity standard at a ward level. This further highlights shortfalls and surpluses at the current time.

Table 7.5 – Provision of facilities for children by ward – current population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Provision for children (facilities)</th>
<th>Local Standard (fa/1000)</th>
<th>Per 1000 population current</th>
<th>TOTAL Requirement</th>
<th>Surplus / Deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>1438</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.0563</td>
<td>-2.05634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longlands</td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.7789</td>
<td>-1.77892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blendon and Penhill</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.6301197</td>
<td>2.2694</td>
<td>-1.26941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackfen and Lamorbey</td>
<td>1561</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.640615</td>
<td>2.2322</td>
<td>-1.23223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danson Park</td>
<td>1481</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.6752194</td>
<td>2.1178</td>
<td>-1.11783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cray Meadows</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.6896552</td>
<td>2.0735</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Wickham</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.7002801</td>
<td>2.042</td>
<td>-1.04204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Michael’s</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.0723861</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>-0.66695</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crayford</td>
<td>1762</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.1350738</td>
<td>2.5197</td>
<td>-0.51966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falconwood &amp; Welling</td>
<td>1689</td>
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<td>1.1841326</td>
<td>2.4153</td>
<td>-0.41527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnehurst</td>
<td>1416</td>
<td>2.000</td>
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<td>1.4124294</td>
<td>2.0249</td>
<td>-0.02488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.4306152</td>
<td>1.9991</td>
<td>0.00086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland Heath</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.6611296</td>
<td>2.5826</td>
<td>0.41742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colyers</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.7026107</td>
<td>2.5197</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erith</td>
<td>1738</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.726122</td>
<td>2.4853</td>
<td>0.51466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Provision for children (facilities)</th>
<th>Local Standard (fa/1000)</th>
<th>Per 1000 population current</th>
<th>TOTAL Requirement</th>
<th>Surplus / Deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s</td>
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<td>3.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.269289</td>
<td>2.6569</td>
<td>1.10954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belvedere</td>
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<td>4.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.1528625</td>
<td>1.34306</td>
<td>1.34306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesnes Abbey</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.1798365</td>
<td>2.6241</td>
<td>1.37595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North End</td>
<td>2165</td>
<td>5.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.3094688</td>
<td>3.096</td>
<td>1.90405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidcup</td>
<td>1341</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.9828486</td>
<td>1.9176</td>
<td>2.08237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thamesmead East</td>
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<td>5.000</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>2.4691358</td>
<td>2.8958</td>
<td>2.10425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.39 Table 7.5 indicates that 10 wards have sufficient provision to meet the needs of their local population. Thamesmead East, Sidcup and Lesnes Abbey are particularly well provided for in terms of equipped play provision for children.

7.40 Wards exhibiting large deficiencies in provision (over 1 facility) include:

- Brampton
- Longlands
- Blendon and Penhill
- Blackfen and Lamorbey
- Danson Park
- Cray Meadows
- East Wickham.

7.41 The application of the local accessibility standard in relation to provision for children is set out in Map 7.1 overleaf.

7.42 Initial analysis of the distribution of facilities reconfirms the findings of the quantity standards to an extent, as it can be seen that there are clusters of facilities to the north of the Borough in the Thamemead and Erith clusters. Distribution is sparser in the southern areas.

7.43 Despite this, it is clear that while there are many overlapping catchments in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters, facilities are more evenly distributed in other areas of the Borough.

7.44 While consideration of equipped provision for children provides essential understanding of specialist facilities available, it is also important to consider opportunities for informal play that small amenity areas provide and the interrelationship that these sites have with the need for formal provision for children. The existing distribution of amenity spaces in relation to facilities for children is illustrated in Map 7.2 overleaf.
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

Map 7.1 – Provision for children in London Borough of Bexley
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

Map 7.2 – Interrelationship between children’s play areas and amenity green space in London Borough of Bexley
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards

7.45 Map 7.1 highlights a good distribution of children’s play areas across the Borough, with a high proportion of residents within the recommended catchment of at least one play area. However, despite this Map 7.1 illustrates a number of areas of deficiency. The key deficiency is located in Brampton with the majority of residents in this ward unable to access a children’s play area (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 – Deficiencies in Brampton ward

7.46 Consultations revealed a variety of perceptions regarding provision for children with divisions in opinion regarding both the quantity and quality of facilities. Analysis highlights that there is a correlation between perceptions that facilities are poor quality and the feeling that there are insufficient facilities. This highlights the importance of tailoring facilities to the appropriate age group and providing a high quality and varied play experience as well as ensuring that all residents are within close proximity to at least one site.

7.47 Challenging existing play opportunities is a key theme of the Children and Young People’s plan and there is a trend towards more innovative and exciting play, rather than uniform swings and slides. The London plan SPG reinforces the key challenge of providing innovative facilities and ensuring that local systems facilitate the delivery of varying play facilities.
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

C1 Facilitate the delivery of high quality, challenging and stimulating facilities across the Borough. Facilities should be targeted to meet the needs of the age group for which they are intended, offer a diverse range of equipment and opportunities and should meet the identified quality standard. Safety is of paramount importance. Partnership working will be essential if opportunities for play are to be maximised.

7.48 It is essential to ensure that any new facilities meet the needs of local residents and meet the local standards the Council and its partners are striving to achieve. Guidance on the expected quality standards should be set out within a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

C2 Any new facilities should meet the recommended quality standard and ensure that all children can access the facilities. Provision of a range of facilities and effective maintenance were perceived to be of particular importance.

7.49 The site assessments provide an indication of the quality of existing facilities and it is clear that there is significant variation across the Borough. The quality standard and related site assessments should inform a programme of improvements, highlighting sites in need of upgrading.

C3 Use the findings of the quality assessment to inform a programme of improvements for children.

7.50 The quality of facilities can be seen on Map 7.3 overleaf. This highlights that there are clusters of high quality and poorer quality facilities throughout the Borough. There is a good distribution of high quality facilities.

7.51 While analysis in this section to date has highlighted issues relating to quality, quantity and accessibility in isolation, in order to effectively identify priorities and opportunities for improvement it is essential to consider quality, quantity and accessibility issues in the context of each other.

7.52 In light of the localised nature of play provision, consideration has been given to priorities within each cluster. Calculations regarding the level of provision at a ward level further inform priorities. In addition to the identification of current issues, the potential implication of the five key growth scenarios is also discussed.

7.53 In light of the varying levels of facilities across the Borough, and the resulting shortfalls in provision illustrated in Table 7.5, new facilities will be a key element of the future delivery of facilities for children in some areas of the Borough. In terms of locating priority areas for new facilities, new provision should be targeted at those areas outside the distance threshold where there are sufficient people to justify new provision.

7.54 While in some areas new provision may be a priority, in other areas where there is an abundance of facilities investment in the quality of sites may achieve greater short term benefit. The different challenges in the effective provision of facilities in each area are highlighted.
Map 7.3 - Quality of existing provision for children in Bexley
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Sidcup Cluster

7.55 As discussed, analysis of the quantitative standards indicates that the Sidcup cluster has the greatest deficiency in existing provision for children, equivalent to over four play areas when measured against the existing population in the area. Application of the accessibility standard reinforces this as numerous residents are outside of the recommended catchment area for facilities for children across the Sidcup cluster. Despite this, existing facilities in the area are evenly distributed and serve predominantly unique catchments.

7.56 Accessibility issues are exacerbated further by the presence of the railway line that bisects the Sidcup cluster. Young children are unlikely to cross the railway line to access facilities and this therefore represents a natural barrier. Facilities will be required either side of this barrier to maximise access to local residents. Areas of deficiency include the northwestern area of Blackfen and Lamorbey (this area is also deficient in local amenity space, meaning that provision of some type takes on greater priority), Blendon and Penhill and the Sidcup Town area. These areas are illustrated in Figures 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 overleaf.

Figure 7.3 – Area deficient of specific provision for children in Sidcup

The railway line bisects the catchment area for some facilities for children

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SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

Figure 7.4 – Area deficient of specific provision for children in Blendon and Penhill

Figure 7.5 – Area deficient of specific provision for children in Blackfen and Lamorbey
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7.57 While access to amenity areas and parks is beneficial to the development of children, particularly those reaching the higher ages of the spectrum, specialised facilities remain important.

7.58 Alongside the current accessibility issues, analysis of the growth scenarios indicates an increased deficiency in provision for Sidcup cluster, with the current deficiency of −3.27 increasing to −3.62 (scenario 1) and −3.91 (scenario 3a).

7.59 Although there are currently accessibility issues and quantitative deficiencies in the Sidcup cluster, the quality of children’s play areas is good, with the average score of a site being 75%. However, the average quality score in the Sidcup cluster is the lowest of all areas in the Borough.

### C4

In light of the identified shortfalls in provision in the Sidcup cluster, identify opportunities for new provision for children; focusing on the areas identified as deficient in figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6. Existing provision should be protected.

**Welling cluster**

7.60 Like the Sidcup cluster, application of the quantity standard highlights deficiencies of over three facilities in the Welling cluster at the current time. Analysis of the growth scenarios indicates that this deficit of three facilities will remain, with the largest shortfall relating to scenario 3a (-3.45 facilities). Interpretation of the accessibility standard indicates that while facilities are well distributed (with three to the north of the area and three to the south) there is a dense urban area in the centre where access to current facilities is limited.

7.61 Residents in the Welling cluster are well served in terms of parks, with both East Wickham open space and Danson Park falling into this area. Consequently, two of the highest quality sites for young people are also located within the Welling cluster. PPG17 indicates that while informal or formal open space can offset the need for specific provision for children to an extent, this provision should be found locally, and within the 10 minute walk time expected to reach children’s facilities.

7.62 Further interpretation therefore suggests that despite the high quality of some facilities in the area, there is demand for localised facilities within the central belt of the Welling cluster. This area is illustrated in Figure 7.6 below.

### C5

Investigate opportunities to meet the identified deficiencies in provision in the Welling cluster. Protect existing facilities and continue to maintain the high standards in the area.

7.63 The quality of existing sites in the Welling cluster is good. The average quality score of a site in this area is 79% and Danson Park Play Area, located in Welling, is one of the highest quality sites in the Borough, achieving a score of 94%.
7.64 Shortfalls of provision in the Bexleyheath cluster exceed two facilities in quantitative terms, based on the existing levels of provision. Based on the future growth scenarios, this shortfall is set to rise across the board, with the largest shortfall relating to scenario 3a (-2.97 facilities).

7.65 Application of the accessibility standard illustrates key areas where residents are deficient in access to facilities, highlighting that these should be the focus for any new provision. This is emphasised by the application of the quantity standards at ward level, where it can be seen that deficiencies in Brampton ward are -2.05 facilities, the highest of all wards.

Provide two new facilities in the Bexleyheath cluster to meet identified deficiencies in the Brampton ward.

7.66 The average quality score for a play area in the Bexleyheath cluster is 77%, indicating a good quality standard of provision in this area. The quality of sites in the area is varied with scores ranging from 64% to 94%, however Russell Park Play Area is a site of particularly high quality, achieving a quality score ranked among the best play area's in the Borough (94%).
**Thamesmead and Erith clusters**

7.67 In contrast to the shortfalls of provision discussed above, provision in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters falls significantly above the minimum standard. Localised provision in these areas is essential in light of the high levels of deprivation in comparison to some other areas of the Borough.

7.68 The high level of provision is evident through the application of the accessibility standards, with few identified deficiencies. Figure 7.8 highlights the key area of deficiency, falling on the boundary of these two areas between Northumberland Heath and Lesnes Abbey wards.

7.69 There are also deficiencies in Erith and Erith North East ward, and a small deficiency in Thameside East. Although provision of facilities in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters is higher than other areas, public satisfaction was lower.

C7  Prioritise enhancement of existing facilities in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters in order to improve the quality and perception of key sites. Seize opportunities to meet identified deficiencies in these areas. These issues could potentially be explored through the Area Action Plans.

7.70 Analysis of the distribution of existing facilities also reveals the opportunity to rationalise provision in these areas as existing provision is uneven and there are many facilities serving similar catchments. Examples of these sites are illustrated in Figures 7.9 and 7.10.
Figure 7.8 – Area of deficiency in Thamesmead and Erith clusters

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Figure 7.9 – Areas of overlapping catchments in Erith cluster

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7.71 Redesignation of these sites (focusing on those of poorer quality and which receive lower levels of use) would enable investment into other facilities and the provision of facilities in the areas of deficiency where there is greater need. This will be particularly important if the uneven growth scenarios occur as there will be particular growth in these areas.

C8 Consider a programme of rationalization of play areas in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters, focusing on play areas currently serving the same catchment. Any loss of facility should result in improvements to the nearby facility to ensure that the needs of residents are better met.

Crayford cluster

7.72 While provision in the Crayford cluster is sufficient to exceed the minimum quantity standard, facilities are located at opposing ends of the cluster and the overall quantitative surplus represents a misleading picture. While sites in the St Mary’s ward are well distributed, residents in the Coldblow area are outside of the appropriate catchment for new facilities. While the number of residents in this area is limited, and there are significant surrounding green spaces, opportunities for new provision in this area should be taken should demand arise in light of the distance of these residents from local open space.

C9 Monitor demand for specific facilities for children in the Coldblow area of Crayford.

7.73 There are only two dedicated facilities for children within Crayford town itself and these are located in close proximity to each other, as illustrated in Figure 7.11 below.
Redistribution of these facilities may better meet the needs of residents in the area as highlighted. Moreover, analysis of the growth scenarios indicates a shortfall in provision relating to scenarios 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b further emphasising the need for provision in this area to be addressed.

**Figure 7.11 – Opportunities for redesignation of provision in Crayford cluster**

7.74 The quality of sites in the Crayford cluster is good with the average quality score in the area in line with overall average score of 79%. Despite this, scores are varied, ranging from 57% - 93%. Riverside Walk Play Area is the lowest quality site in this area and in the Borough, however Thistlefield Close Playground is an excellent quality site, achieving a score of 93%. Focus should be placed on enhancing the quality of poorer sites and maintaining the high standard of excellent quality sites in the Crayford cluster.

**Summary and recommendations**

7.75 Provision for children was a recurring theme during consultations, and diverse opinions regarding the quantity, quality and access to existing facilities were expressed. Residents expressed concerns over the quantity of provision and quality was also perceived to be problematic. It is clear that the quality of provision has a significant influence on perceptions of the adequacy of the quantity of facilities in the Borough.

7.76 The Bexley Children and Young People’s plan highlights the importance of addressing qualitative issues and reinforces the need to provide a variety of opportunities and facilities. The London SPG highlights the challenges of providing diverse, challenging and stimulating play provision. The Play and Youth Policy indicates a desire to increase both the quantity and quality of play provision, focusing not just on equipped provision, but considering all opportunities available for young people in Bexley across the Borough.
SECTION 7 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

7.77 The recommended local standards address the issues raised through consultation, setting challenging criteria that can be used to identify priority areas. Analysis of existing facilities highlight that there is significant variation in the quality of sites and an uneven distribution across the Borough.

7.78 Application of standards highlights particular priorities in the Sidcup, Welling and Bexleyheath clusters and despite current quantitative surpluses in provision, with Crayford. While provision in the Thamesmead and Erith clusters significantly exceed minimum standards, facilities are unevenly distributed and there are several facilities serving similar catchments, providing opportunities for rationalisation and subsequent quality improvements.

7.79 Analysis of the growth scenarios shows the overall provision when measured against the local standard is sufficient for both scenario 1 and 2a, with scenarios 2b (-1.77 facilities) 3a (-1.63 facilities) and 3b (-3.40 facilities) all showing deficiencies.