

Local Development Plan 2030

Preferred Options Paper

Discussion Paper 7: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

CONTENTS	Page
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Provision of Recreation Facilities	4
3.0 Government Strategies	4
a. Play and Leisure Policy Statement and Implementation Plan	4
b. Sport Matters – The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019	4
c. Active Places Research Report (Bridging the Gap) 2009	6
d. Active Places Research Report 2014 Update, Bridging the Gap	6
e. Community Use of Schools	7
4.0 Regional Planning Context	
a. Regional Development Strategy 2035	7
b. Planning Policy Statements	
PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation	8
Definition of Open Space	8
PSS 7: Quality Residential Environments	9
Strategic Planning Statement	9
5.0 Council Strategy – Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy	12
Strategy Objectives	12
6.0 Existing Provision	13
Information Source and Extent of Report	13
National Playing Fields Six Acre Standard	14
Theoretical Minimum Open Space Standard Using	
NPFA Six Acre Standard	15
a. Playing Pitches	16
b. Children’s Equipped Play Areas	18
7.0 Distribution of Existing Equipped Children’s Play Areas, MUGAs and Playing Pitches,	19
a. Equipped Children’s Play Areas	19
b. MUGAs	20
c. Playing Pitches	21
8.0 Conclusion	21

Tables

1. Active Places Report 2009 – Demand for New Facilities	6
2. Active Places Report 2014 Update – Sports Pitches and Halls	7
3. Council’s Sport and Leisure Facility Implementation Action Plan – Summary of Need 2015/2016	13

4. Borough Council Census Population at 2011	15
5. Levels of Outdoor Provision Using the NPFA Minimum Standard	15
6. Existing Playing Pitches in Borough Council Area	16
7. Ownership of Existing Pitches in Borough Council Area	16
8. Location and Type of Synthetic Pitches	17
9. Equipped Children's Play Areas Using the NPFA Minimum Standard	18
10. MUGAs Using the Fields in Trust Benchmark Guideline	21

Graphs

1. Shortfall in Existing Equipped Play Area Provision Compared To NPFA Minimum Standard (0.2 ha)	18
2. Existing Provision of Equipped Children's Play Areas in Towns Compared to the NPFA Minimum Standard at 2001 Census Population	20

Maps

1. Distribution of Equipped Play Areas in the Borough
 - 1a. Notional Accessibility to Children's Play Areas at 400m & 800 m: Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady, Ballycastle
 - 1b. Notional Accessibility to Children's Play Areas at 400m & 800 m: Garvagh, Kilrea, Portrush, Portstewart
 - 1c. Notional Accessibility to Children's Play Areas at 400m & 800 m: Ballykelly, Dungiven, Bushmills, Cushendall
2. Distribution and Ownership of Playing Pitches in the Borough

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide Members with information on:
- a. Government strategies in relation to open space, sport and recreation;
 - b. the regional planning context pertaining to open space, sport and outdoor recreation;
 - c. information on the recognised planning recommended guidelines for the provision of outdoor space; and
 - d. the existing provision in the Borough within the context of the planning policy framework outlined above.
- 1.2 Reference is also made to the Council's Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy. This strategy sets out a framework against which the Council may make decisions about resources, how best to maximise those resources and the desire to ensure equality of access and parity in service provision across the Council area. This work is ongoing, and will be relevant in the development of the Open Space Strategy that informs the Local Development Plan.
- 1.3 This paper provides a background to help provide a greater understanding of the planning framework of open space protection and provision, and to help identify issues that may need to be given further consideration in the production of the LDP with particular regard to open space land use implications in association with lands zoned for new housing developments.

2.0 Provision of Recreation Facilities

- 2.1 As Members are aware, the Recreation and Youth Service Order 1986 obliges councils to make provision for its area, of adequate recreational facilities, social, physical and cultural activities.
- 2.2 Other bodies also provide recreational facilities, for example the Housing Executive, and private clubs can play a significant role in such provision.

3.0 Government Strategies

- 3.1 There are a number of Government Departments, agencies and other bodies involved in the development of sport and leisure, either directly or indirectly.

a. Play and Leisure Policy Statement and Implementation Plan

- 3.2 This was produced by the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFMDFM) in 2011, with the implementation plan programmed for completion in 2015. The plan demonstrates the Executive's commitment towards ensuring a happier and healthier future for children and aims to see a high value placed on play and improved play and leisure facilities for all children and young people up to 18 years old. The Plan recognises that play is not the responsibility of a single agency or provider, and that, through the plan, in the context of a finite public purse and competing agendas, the crucial role of play and leisure in children's lives is understood and afforded the appropriate protection.

b. Sport Matters – The NI Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019

- 3.3 Sport NI is the public body responsible for sports development in Northern Ireland. Sport NI, in partnership with Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), has produced a strategy: Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 - <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/SportMatters.pdf> . The strategy sets out a new shared vision of 'a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport', as well as the key strategic priorities for sport and physical recreation, and informs the direction of future investment, underpinning three areas of:
- participation,
 - performance, and
 - places.
- 3.4 The strategy sets out the case for ongoing and increased investment in sport and physical recreation to deliver a range of sporting outcomes and support the wider social agenda in areas such as education, health, the economy and the development of communities in the period 2009-2019. It explains how sport in Northern Ireland will be developed over this ten year period and affirms the Government's commitment to put in place effective structures and mechanisms in support of its vision.
- 3.4 The strategy seeks to:
- increase children's and adults' participation in high quality sporting opportunities;
 - increase the number of the most talented athletes achieving at the highest level; and
 - ensure everyone has access to a range of new, improved and shared world-class and locally available sports facilities.
- 3.5 It highlights there is significant investment in sport and physical recreation, but a shortfall remains between the amount required to deliver the vision and that which is already in the system. It highlights the benefits of sport in delivering wider social agenda issues in terms of public health, education and skills, economy and community cohesion.
- 3.6 The 'Places' targets are most relevant to the planning system, in that they may result in a need for the development of new facilities, for example the provision of new sports facilities; the promotion of access to publicly owned land for sport and physical recreation; and that the public have access to quality accredited, multi sports facilities that have the capacity to meet demand within 20 minutes travel time. It also seeks to ensure that (by 2019) all planning decisions follow PPS 8 in relation to the provision of spaces for sport and physical recreation.
- 3.7 Sport NI is presently working in partnership with the councils in the production of a Sports Facility Strategy for Northern Ireland. This strategy will identify facilities across Northern Ireland, and will prioritise need in each Council area. The strategy is to be undertaken in two parts:
- Phase 1: to identify overall need for strategic facilities in Northern Ireland;
- Phase 2: to reflect the local sports facility need by each Council.

- 3.8 The information provided by the Council to Sport NI as part of this strategy has been used, with amendment, as the basis of the information contained in this report.

c. Active Places Research Report (Bridging the Gap) 2009

- 3.9 This report examined unmet demand and shortfalls for sports facilities such as sports halls, swimming pools, tennis courts, athletic facilities and pitches. Sport NI undertook an audit of the current stock of sports facilities in NI and then applied two methodologies to analyse this information – The Facilities Planning Model produced by Sport Scotland, and the Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association): Six Acre Standard. Key issues contained in the report relate to:

Quantity – the report identified a significant under provision in key sports facilities;

Accessibility – as a consequence of the significant under provision, many user groups do not have access to some sports facilities at appropriate times;

Universal access – facilities are often unable to accommodate the needs of many sports people with disabilities, particularly in relation to team sports;

Specification – many sports facilities do not comply with the minimum standards at club or representative level set by the governing bodies for the sport;

Condition – many facilities are over 25 years old and require significant refurbishment.

- 3.10 The position in the Borough in relation to playing pitches and tennis courts was:

Table 1: Active Places Report 2009 – Demand for New Facilities

	Number of New Facilities Required to Meet Demand	
	Playing Pitches	Tennis Courts
Council Area		
CC&G	47	39
Ballymoney	16	11
Coleraine	37	12
Limavady	-4	13
Moyle	-1	4

d. Active Places Research Report 2014 Update, Bridging the Gap

- 3.11 Sports NI updated its 2009 report in 2014 in respect of shortfalls for pitches (and sports halls) only. It did not present information on athletic tracks or swimming pools as the perceived shortfalls in these had either been met or was considered to be so minimal that it cannot be attributed to one Council area. The report also recognised the potential value of school sports facilities in addressing facility shortfalls, and presented information on pitches – one that included the education facilities of synthetic turf pitches but not grass pitches, and one that included both synthetic turf pitches and grass pitches.

- 3.12 The updated position in relation to the Council area is as follows:

Table 2: Active Places Report 2014 Update –Sports Pitches

Council Area	Perceived Shortfall*	Pitches Required	Perceived Shortfall**	Pitches Required
CC&G	46 acres	19	-135 acres	-54
Ballymoney	23 acres	9	-3	-1
Coleraine	85 acres	34	-8	-3
Limavady	-53 acres	-21	-96	-38
Moyle	-9 acres	-3	-30	-12

*All Sites (including Education Synthetic Turf Pitches but excluding Education Grass)

** All Sites (including Education Synthetic Turf Pitches and including Education Grass)

- Figure equates to an oversupply

Average size pitch is 2.5 acres = 1.0 hectares

Tennis court shortfalls remain unaltered from 2009

- 3.13 The update clearly demonstrates the potential impact that the incorporation of school sports pitches would have in meeting the identified shortfall in existing pitch provision based on the NPFA minimum standard, which is discussed later in the report.

e. Community Use of Schools

- 3.14 The Department of Education produced a guidance toolkit for schools in January 2014 on the community use of schools, in recognition of the potential value of school sports facilities in addressing facility shortfalls, and to encourage schools to become greater hubs for their local communities by opening up premises outside of school time for community use. The toolkit provides practical information on, for example the ownership and control of school premises, operational management, health and safety, child protection and finance.

4.0 Regional Planning Context

a. Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035

- 4.1 Rather than refer directly and only to open space, sport and recreation, the RDS recognises the inter-relationship between these and the regional guidance's three themes of:
- Economy
 - Society
 - Environment
- 4.2 The RDS also recognises that some activities that make use of the area's natural assets, such as golf, walking, cycling and surfing, provide an important contribution to the tourism offer. It acknowledges that the promotion of shared facilities and experiences can improve integration and respect for our diversity. The following regional guidance policies are particularly relevant:
- 4.3 **RG 6: Strengthen community cohesion.** The RDS considers this may be achieved through the development of integrated services and facilities, to allow people to meet

and take part in shared activities whilst ensuring there are no barriers, perceived or physical, to access these places.

- 4.4 **RG 7: Support urban and rural renaissance.** Regeneration of city and town centres is considered necessary to create more accessible, vibrant centres which offer people more local choice for shopping, social activity and recreation. The RDS states it is important to promote recreational space within towns and neighbourhoods, and new developments or plans should make provision for adequate green and blue infrastructure, which is particularly important near designated nature conservation sites as it will help reduce recreational pressure on them.

- 4.5 The RDS does not define green or blue infrastructure. The following definitions are taken from the Glossary to the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015:

*Green infrastructure includes parks, green spaces and street trees.
Blue infrastructure includes ponds, streams and lakes.*

b. Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)

PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

- 4.6 The main policy objectives of PPS 8 are:

- to safeguard existing open space and sites identified for future such provision;
- to 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;
- to facilitate appropriate outdoor recreational activities in the countryside;
- to ensure that new open space areas and sporting facilities are convenient and accessible for all sections of society, particularly children, the elderly and those with disabilities;
- to achieve high standards of siting, design and landscaping for all new open space areas and sporting facilities; and
- to 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.

Definition of Open Space

- 4.7 PPS 8 defines Open Space as:

all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and outdoor recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

- 4.8 The PPS provides the following typology to illustrate the broad range of open spaces that are of public value:

- (i) parks and gardens – including urban parks, country parks, forest parks and formal gardens;

- (ii) 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;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, kickabout areas, skateboard parks and outdoor basketball hoops;
- (v) green corridors – including river and canal banks, amenity footpaths and cycleways;
- (vi) 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);
- (vii) allotments and community gardens;
- (viii) cemeteries and churchyards; and
- (ix) civic spaces, including civic and market squares and other hard surface areas designed for pedestrians.

4.9 The PPS also requires an assessment of existing open space provision, both public and private, using the National Planning Fields Association's (NPFA) Six Acre Standard, which recommends a minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1000 population, and considered the distribution and accessibility of facilities also. PPS 8 includes policies protecting existing open space, public open space provision in new residential development, outdoor recreation in the countryside, intensive sports facilities and noise generating sports and outdoor recreational activities.

PPS 7: Quality Residential Environments

4.10 The value of public open space is recognised in PPS 7. Policy QD 1: Quality in New Residential Development, criterion (c) of PPS 7 states:

“adequate provision is made for public and private open space and landscaped areas as an integral part of the development.”

4.11 The retention and provision of public open space can also assist in meeting other objectives, such as the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, as contained in PPS 2: Natural Heritage.

Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)

4.12 The SPPS recognises the benefits that open space, sport and outdoor recreation can provide for society in terms of its cultural, social, economic, environmental and health aspects. It sets out six Regional Strategic Objectives (paragraph 6.201, page 86),

which relate to the RDS and the inter-relationship that open space, sport and outdoor recreation has on society's well-being, and seeks 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.

- 4.13 In line with paragraph 6.202 of the SPPS, when preparing their LDPs, councils must take the following Strategic Policy into account; An Open Space Strategy (OSS) should be brought forward that reflects 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, and this should include both public and private open space, and identify the different needs they serve. Whilst the general focus should be on open spaces within or adjoining urban areas, the outdoor recreational facilities in the countryside should also be considered. Councils should liaise with other interested bodies, such as the Sports Council, as part of the process. The provision and role of other forms of open space, such as play areas, and the availability of indoor sports facilities, should be taken into account. Important considerations will include the distribution and accessibility of spaces and facilities, together with the amenity value, environmental assets and linkages. This work will inform the Council's preparation and allow it to bring forward appropriate local policies and proposals in its LDP.
- 4.14 Similar to PPS 8, the SPPS states there will be a policy presumption against the loss of open space to competing land uses in the LDP, irrespective of its physical condition and appearance. Any exception to this general rule should only be considered appropriate where redevelopment would bring forward a substantial community benefit that outweighs the loss of the open space, or where it is demonstrated the loss of the open space would have no significant detrimental impact.
- 4.15 The SPPS states that councils must bring forward policy that requires new residential development of an appropriate scale (generally 25 or more units or on sites of 1 hectare or more) to provide adequate and well-designed open space integral to the development. Councils should also ensure that a suitable mechanism is in place to secure future management and maintenance of this open space.

- 4.16 The SPPS also provides policy guidance in relation to intensive sports facilities and in relation to sports and activities that generate a high level of noise. It recognises that the location of intensive sports facilities can be contentious, but states that such facilities shall be located within settlements to maximise the use of existing infrastructure. As an exception a stadium may be allowed outside a settlement but only where clear criteria are established which can justify a departure from this approach. Sports and activities that generate high levels of noise can be disruptive to humans, farm animals and wildlife, and may have a detrimental effect on the natural environment, as well as local character. The SPPS states that these developments must only be permitted where there is no unacceptable level of disturbance.
- 4.17 Councils are to assess the existing level of open space provision against the National Planning Fields Association's (NPFA) recommended minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1000 population (known as the 6 acre standard). This should consider both the level of provision and also the distribution and accessibility of facilities.
- 4.18 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.
- 4.19 LDPs should, where appropriate, set out key site requirements for zoned residential land to include guidance on the provision of public open space as an integral part of the development, including the need for linkages to existing or zoned open space.
- 4.20 The SPPS also states that LDPs should contain policy for the consideration of development proposals for outdoor recreation in the countryside, and should have regard to a range of issues including:
- visual and residential amenity;
 - public safety, including road safety;
 - any impact on nature conservation, landscape character, archaeology or built heritage; and
 - accessibility.

5.0 Council Strategy – Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy

- 5.1 As Members will recall, the Leisure and Development Committee approved the Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy in September 2015. This strategy is more wide-ranging than the purpose of this report as, for example it provides information on the unmet demand for facilities across the Council area and considers investment criteria. The strategy also refers to the findings of the Sport NI Bridging the Gap 2009 report.

Strategy Objectives

- 5.2 The Strategy Objectives of the Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy are:

- *Use evidence base to secure funding from SNI / DCAL and others.*
- *Develop an affordable Facilities Capital Investment Plan for CC&G – over a ten year term (incorporating a Priority Investment Plan with Outline Business Case for first phase investments).*
- *“Sweat the assets” – get the most from existing facilities.*
- *Open up access to school, club and other facilities for wider community use.*
- *Work in partnership with external groups to develop projects which;*
 - *provide an opportunity for servicing acknowledged community need,*
 - *can be judged against Council’s own investment criteria and*
 - *provide a method for optimising return on investment by council in conjunction with other funding options.*

It is recognised in the draft Strategy that some need is best met by Council’s own facilities while other need can best be met by working in partnership with external partners such as schools, the community and private sectors and clubs.

New development proposals, partnership opportunities and potential funding sources are arising regularly and Council Strategy needs to be flexible enough to ensure that these opportunities can be evaluated and maximised for the good of the area.

To this end, an annually updated Council Sport and Leisure Facility Implementation Action Plan can be brought to Council to take account of such new and emerging opportunities.

Additionally, as recognised in the draft Sport and Leisure Facilities Strategy, Council investment in non-Council facilities can provide a cost effective way to meet local need. This requires that any such investment is properly conditioned with the necessary legally binding public access agreements to ensure that any part-publically funded facilities continue to meet the need for the life of the public investment.

Accordingly, Council can initiate an annual Sport and Leisure Facility Capital Grant Scheme incorporating the necessary evaluation and controls to compliment the annual Council Sport and Leisure Facility Implementation Action Plan and best ensure delivery of Council’s strategic objectives.

- 5.3 The first Implementation Action Plan 2015/6 was presented in October 2015 and covers the period until March 2016. The Summary of Need, as approved by Council in September, is:

Table 3: Implementation Action Plan – Summary of Need 2015/2016

West (Limavady)	Central (Coleraine/Ballymoney)	East (Moyle)	General
Marginal unmet demand for gym stations.	Significant unmet demand for pool and gym visits indicating that existing facilities are undersized. There are also condition issues in the Portrush and Coleraine facilities.	Unmet demand for all services indicating lack of facilities and, while the scale of demand may be relatively low, there are also seasonal population, tourism and economic development considerations.	There are over 100 grass pitches in the area for which detailed condition/playability data is required.
Other demand is mainly met but there are need issues in terms of facility condition and artificial grass pitch accessibility in the Dungiven vicinity.	A similar situation exists in the Ballymoney area in relation to unmet demand for pool and gym facilities.		

- 5.4 The Strategy will also consider matters such as the condition of pitches and equipped play areas and population densities in areas. This information will be crucial in developing a robust Open Space Strategy that addresses planning policy issues and the Council's future programmes in terms of open space provision and maintenance.

6.0 Existing Provision

Information Source and Extent of Report

- 6.1 The information relating to the location of equipped children's play areas and pitches contained in this report has largely originated from the Council's Leisure and Development Services Directorate.
- 6.2 As the information provided by the Leisure and Development Directorate relates only to sports pitch and equipped children's play area provision (in relation to the NPFA Six Acre Standard), Members should be aware that not all aspects of the NPFA minimum standard are considered in this report, and this will require further work. Other outdoor, non-pitch sports include athletic tracks, tennis courts and bowling greens. As an example, this report does not include the tennis courts at the Rose

Gardens in Coleraine, or at St Mary's Street in Ballycastle, or the bowling greens at Coleraine or Portrush. Also, informal areas for children's outdoor play such as kick about play areas are not considered in this report. Therefore, further work is required to provide a comprehensive picture on all aspects of the NPFA standard. Further, this report does not consider matters such as the quality of provision, or accessibility to facilities, which is raised in the SPPS and highlighted in the Sports and Leisure Facility Implementation Plan as requiring further investigation.

National Playing Fields Six Acre Standard

- 6.3 As mentioned in Section 4 of this report, the NPFA: Six Acre Standard is a minimum standard for outdoor recreational space of 6 acres or 2.4 hectares per 1000 population, and planning authorities are required to carry out an assessment of the existing open space provision, both public and private, using this standard, and also to consider the distribution and accessibility of facilities. The Six Acre Standard is broken down into the following components:

- **1.6 hectares of outdoor sports, of which 1.2 hectares should be pitches; and**
- **0.8 hectares for children's play, of which 0.2-0.3 hectares should be for equipped play areas.**

- 6.4 Members should be aware that the NPFA is now known as Fields in Trust, and it has moved from prescribing a minimum standard and produced new guidance in 2015: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Six Acre Standard, which recommends the following benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor space:

Open space typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ¹ (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards. * Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation². * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Children's Play Council's Quality Assessment Tool.
All outdoor sports	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25 <small>See table 4 for recommended minimum sizes</small>	LAPs – 100m LEAPs – 400m NEAPs – 1,000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

Source: *Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Six Acre Standard*, page 6

Definitions:

LAPs – local area for play,

LEAPs – Locally equipped area for play

NEAPs – neighbourhood equipped area for play,

MUGA – multi-use games area

- 6.5 Fields in Trust also provides guidance on the recommended benchmarks for informal outdoor space:

Open Space Typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ² (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Parks and Gardens	0.80	710m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Parks to be of Green Flag status. * Appropriately landscaped. * Positive management. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime.
Amenity Green Space	0.60	480m	
Natural and Semi-Natural	1.80	720m	

Source: *Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Six Acre Standard*, page 7

- 6.6 However, as the SPPS refers to the NPFA standard, this paper examines the Council's present position relating to outdoor recreational provision for equipped play areas and sports pitches using this minimum standard.

Theoretical Minimum Open Space Standard Using NPFA Six Acre Standard

- 6.7 As Members are aware, the Borough's population at the 2011 census was as follows:

Table 4: Borough Council Census Population at 2011

	CC & G	Ballymoney	Coleraine	Limavady	Moyle
Resident Population at 2011 Census	140,877	31,224 (22%)	59,067 (42%)	33,536 (24%)	17,050 (12%)

Source: NISRA Census 2011 Table KS101NI

- 6.8 Based on the NPFA standards set out in paragraph 6.3 above, the following level of outdoor recreational space should be provided to meet the NPFA minimum standard:

Table 5: Levels of Outdoor Provision Using the NPFA Minimum Standard

	CC & G	Ballymoney	Coleraine	Limavady	Moyle
Resident Population at 2011 Census	140,877	31,224 (22%)	59,067 (42%)	33,536 (24%)	17,050 (12%)
1.6 ha/1000 population of which 1.2 ha are pitches	225.4 ha total; 169 ha for pitches	50 ha total; 37.5 ha for pitches	94.5 ha total; 70.9 ha for pitches	53.6 ha total; 40.2 ha for pitches	27.3 ha total; 20.5 ha for pitches
0.8 ha/1000 population of which 0.2-0.3 ha are equipped play areas	112.7 ha total; 28.2-42.3 ha for equipped play areas	25 ha total; 6.2-9.4 ha for equipped play areas	47.2 ha total; 11.8-17.7ha for equipped play areas	26.8 ha total; 6.7–10.1 ha for equipped play areas	13.6 ha total; 3.4-5.1ha for equipped play areas

a. Playing Pitches

- 6.9 Information passed to Sport NI from the Council indicates there is a total of 251 pitches in the Borough. The ownership of these is as follows:

Table 6: Existing Playing Pitches in Borough Council Area

Organisation	Number of Pitches Owned	Commentary
Borough Council	72	In 35 locations, the vast majority are used for football, with hockey at Rugby Avenue & Quay Road
Club	64	In 32 locations, owned by 32 clubs, of which 7 clubs relate to football, rugby, & cricket (17 pitches), 24 relate to GAA (46 pitches), & 1 to model flying club (1 pitch)
Community	1	In 1 location, used for football
Education	107	In 51 locations. Includes primary and secondary schools, and 14 pitches at University. Most of these are used solely by schools.
Private	7	In 3 locations, 4 football pitches, 2 GAA pitches, 1 hockey pitch

- 6.10 As the NPFA minimum standard relates to the area per 1000 population, the following table provides a breakdown of the areas for pitches overall and by organisation.

Table 7: Ownership of Existing Pitches in Borough Council Area (Hectares Rounded Up to Nearest Whole Number)

Total Area of All Publicly and Privately Owned Pitches	157 hectares
NPFA Minimum Pitch Standard	169 hectares
Shortfall in Existing Pitch Provision	- 12 hectares
Breakdown by Pitch Provider	
Organisation	
Borough Council	43 ha
Club	60 ha
Community	1 ha
Education	(48 ha)
Private	5 ha
Total Excluding Education Provision	109 ha
Shortfall in Existing Pitch Provision (Excluding Education Provision)	- 60ha

- 6.11 The figures above demonstrate the Borough does not meet the recommended minimum standard to be used by planning authorities in assessing the area's existing playing pitch provision. The total existing figure of 157 hectares includes the pitches

owned by the Education sector. However, as there is very limited public usage of these presently, the situation has also been assessed without the Education sector's provision and presents a much starker picture.

- 6.12 As the Active Places report, prepared by Sport NI, refers to the contribution a synthetic pitch can make, equating a synthetic pitch as equivalent to that of four grass pitches, the synthetic pitches throughout the Borough may be considered. Members should be aware that the NPFA Six Acre Standard attributes the value of a synthetic surface to be twice that of a grass surface.

Table 8: Location and Type of Synthetic Pitches

Location	Ownership	No. of Pitches	Size sqm	Activity
Dalriada, Ballymoney	Education*	1	2800	football
Joey Dunlop Centre, Ballymoney	Council	1	7350	hockey
Dunloy GAA, Dunloy	Club	1	3200	GAA
Limavady Grammar School, Limavady	Education*	1	3600	hockey
Scroggy Road, Limavady	Council	1	10611	GAA
Vale Centre, Greysteel	Club	1	6014	football
Quay Road, Ballycastle	Council	1	3600	hockey
Rugby Avenue, Coleraine	Council	1	5005	hockey
Rugby Avenue, Coleraine	Council	1	6400	football
University of Ulster, Coleraine	Education*	1	4950	football
John Mitchel's GAA, Glenullin	Club	1	4896	GAA
Total			52,666sqm =5 ha	
Total Excluding Education* Provision			41316sqm = 4 ha	

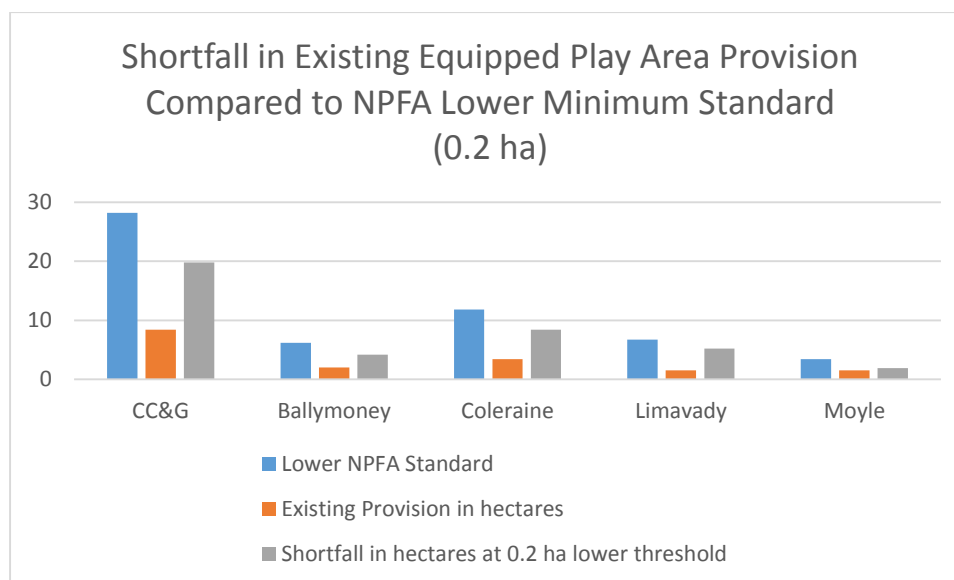
b. Children's Equipped Play Areas

- 6.14 As referred to above, the minimum NPFA standard for children's equipped play provision is 0.2-0.3 ha per thousand population. These figures do not include children's informal play areas, such as kickabout areas close to home. No account is taken of other informal play areas, such as parks, beaches or forests. These figures relate to the situation overall in each former council area.

Table 9: Equipped Children's Play Areas Using the NPFA Minimum Standard

	CC & G	Ballymoney	Coleraine	Limavady	Moyle
Resident Population at 2011 Census	140,877	31,224 (22%)	59,067 (42%)	33,536 (24%)	17,050 (12%)
NPFA standard 0.2-0.3 ha per 1000 population	28.2-42.3 ha	6.2-9.4 ha	11.8-17.7 ha	6.7-10.1 ha	3.4-5.1 ha
Existing Provision	8.9 ha	1.7 ha	3.3 ha	1.2 ha	2.6 ha
Shortfall	-19.3 to -33.4 ha	-4.5 to 7.7 ha-	-8.5 to -14.4 ha	-5.5 to 8.9 ha	-0.8 to -2.5 ha

Graph 1:



- 6.14 As can be seen from the table above, the extent of equipped children's play facilities across the whole of the Borough is significantly below the lower threshold of the minimum standard promoted by the NPFA and contained in regional planning policy. Graph 1 applies the lower NPFA standard of 0.2 hectares per 1000 population and

this demonstrates the level of existing provision is low compared to the minimum standard.

7.0 Distribution and Accessibility of Existing Equipped Children's Play Areas, MUGAs and Playing Pitches

- 7.1 The distribution of existing facilities is shown on the accompanying maps. Distribution and accessibility are highlighted as important considerations in the SPPS. The following accessibility standards were promoted by the NPFA and are carried forward by Fields in Trust, and these help to identify areas in settlements where accessibility to facilities may be an issue.

Accessibility

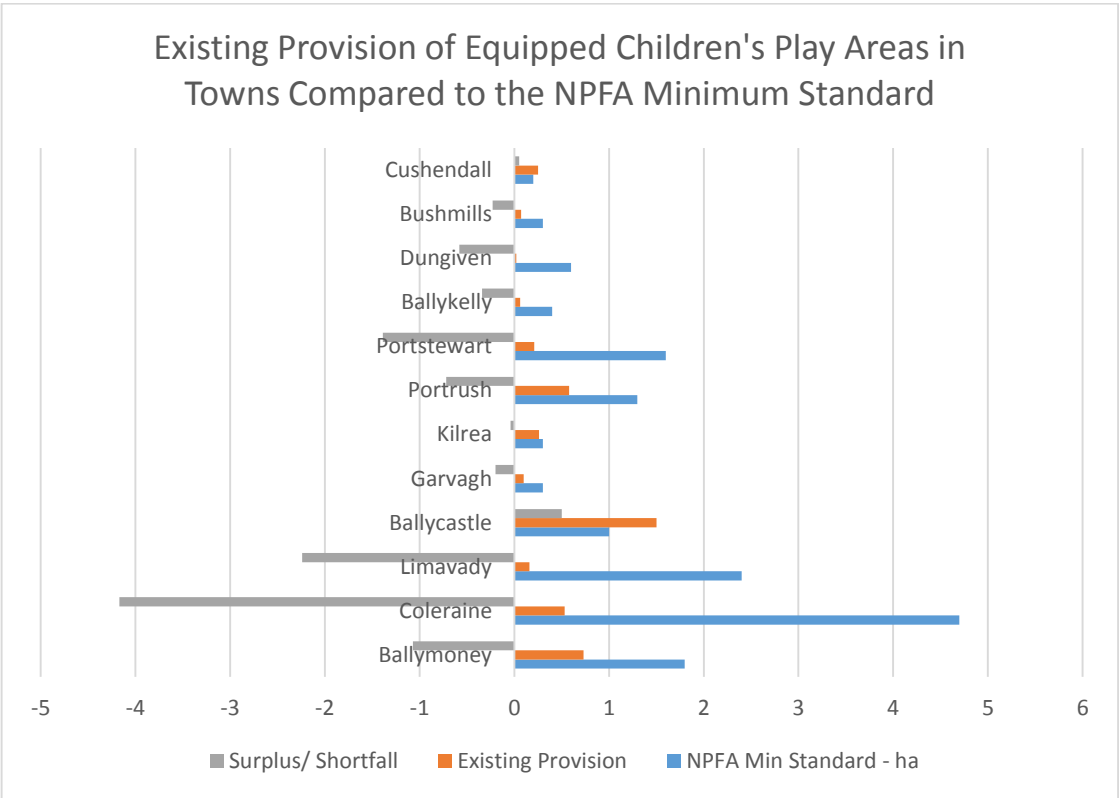
- 7.1 Fields in Trust advise the following indicative walking distances:

250 m =	2-3 minutes' walk
400 m =	5 minutes' walk
800 m =	10 minutes' walk
1,200 m =	15 minutes' walk
1,600 m =	20 minutes' walk

a. Equipped Children's Play Areas

- 7.2 Map 1 illustrates the distribution of children's equipped play areas across the Borough. The map illustrates that, of the seventy one settlements identified in the Adopted Northern Area Plan, twenty two settlements have no equipped play provision, of which all but two – Castleroe and Waterfoot – are classified as hamlets.
- 7.3 Maps 1a – 1c demonstrate the notional accessibility of existing equipped play facilities in the Council's twelve Towns, as classified by the Adopted Northern Area Plan. The maps illustrate the 400 metres or 5 minutes' and the 800 metres or 10 minutes' walking distance to facilities. These are the distances used by Fields in Trust to define local equipped areas of play (LEAPs) - that is those play areas that should be most accessible, and the next tier of provision - neighbourhood equipped areas of play (NEAPs) – which would tend to incorporate settlements. The walking distance radii are theoretical as no consideration has been given to the ease of movement between the facilities, for example in terms of main roads or railway lines within the radii. The purpose of these maps is to highlight areas of each town which appear not to be readily accessible to existing facilities. Map 1a – the main towns of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Ballycastle – illustrates that there are areas in each where accessibility to facilities may be an issue, as is the case in the smaller towns generally also (maps 1b and 1c). The Council's Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy will analyse accessibility in more detail, and this information will help inform the Open Space Strategy.
- 7.4 Further analysis of the existing provision, in area, based on the 2001 census population for each town shown in Maps 1a-1c, compared to the NPFA minimum standard demonstrates the following:

Graph 2:



7.5 Other than in Ballycastle and Cushendall, there is, generally, a shortfall in existing provision, with the situation most marked in the Borough's main towns. Members may note that the benchmark guideline promoted by Fields in Trust is slightly higher at 0.25 hectares per thousand population. The population figures and associated minimum standard will also require adjustment to the 2011 census information. However, this information is helpful in considering the strategic planning guidance contained in the SPPS in relation to the policy presumption against the loss of open space to competing land uses irrespective of their physical condition and appearance. The Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy will provide more context and consider matters such as demand, and the quality of the existing facilities, to inform the Open Space Strategy.

b. MUGAs

7.6 MUGAs provide a multi play area targeted at older children. They are a relatively new concept, therefore, it is reasonable to assume their provision is presently limited. The benchmark guideline promoted by Fields in Trust is 0.3 hectares per thousand population. Their distribution is also shown on Maps 1a-1c.

Table 10: MUGAs Using the Fields in Trust Benchmark Guideline

	CC & G	Ballymoney	Coleraine	Limavady	Moyle
Resident Population at 2011 Census	140,877	31,224 (22%)	59,067 (42%)	33,536 (24%)	17,050 (12%)
MUGA guideline 0.3ha/1000 population	42.26 ha	9.37	17.72	10.06	5.11
Existing Provision	1.37 ha	0.55	0.66	0.04	0.12

As at 24/3/16

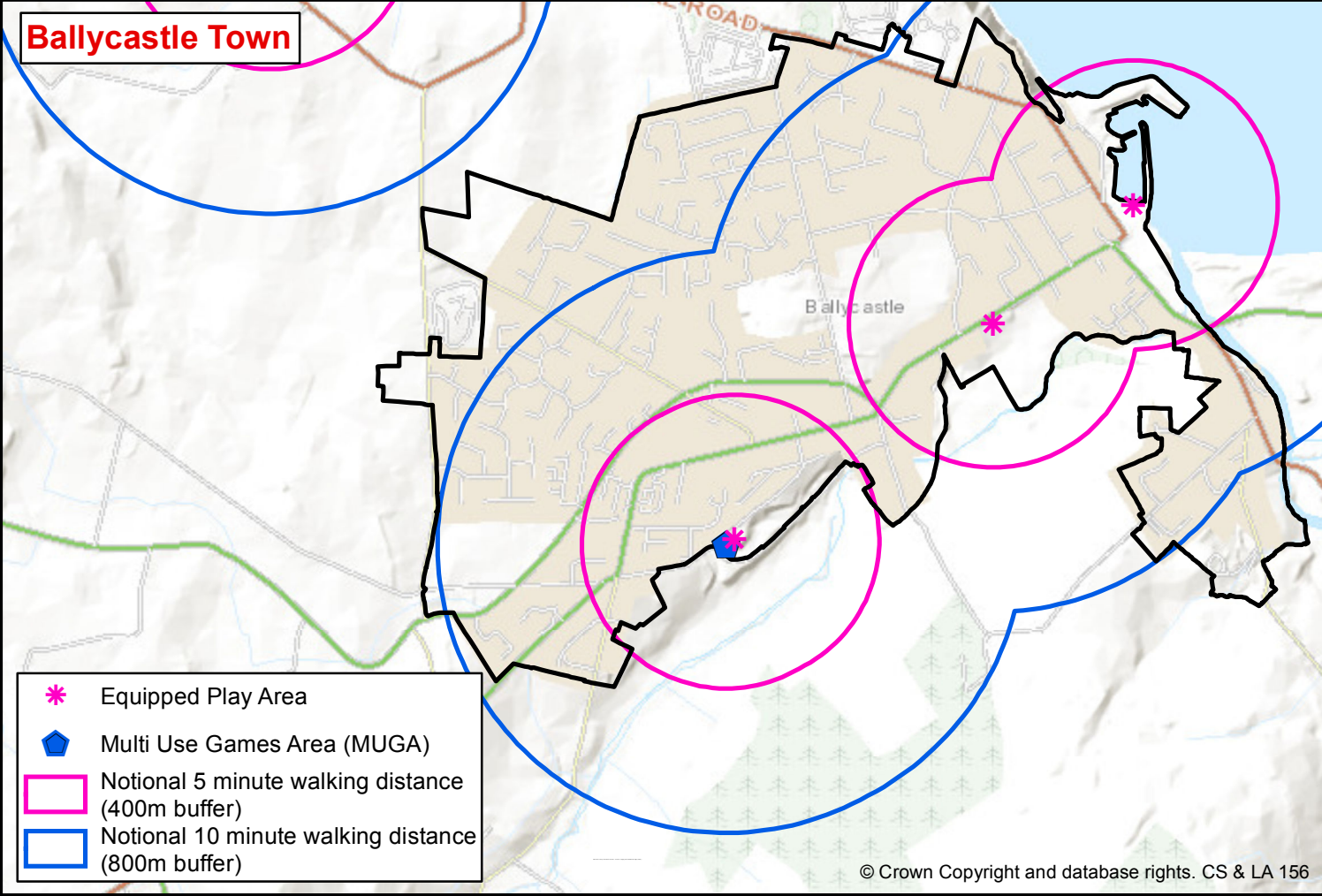
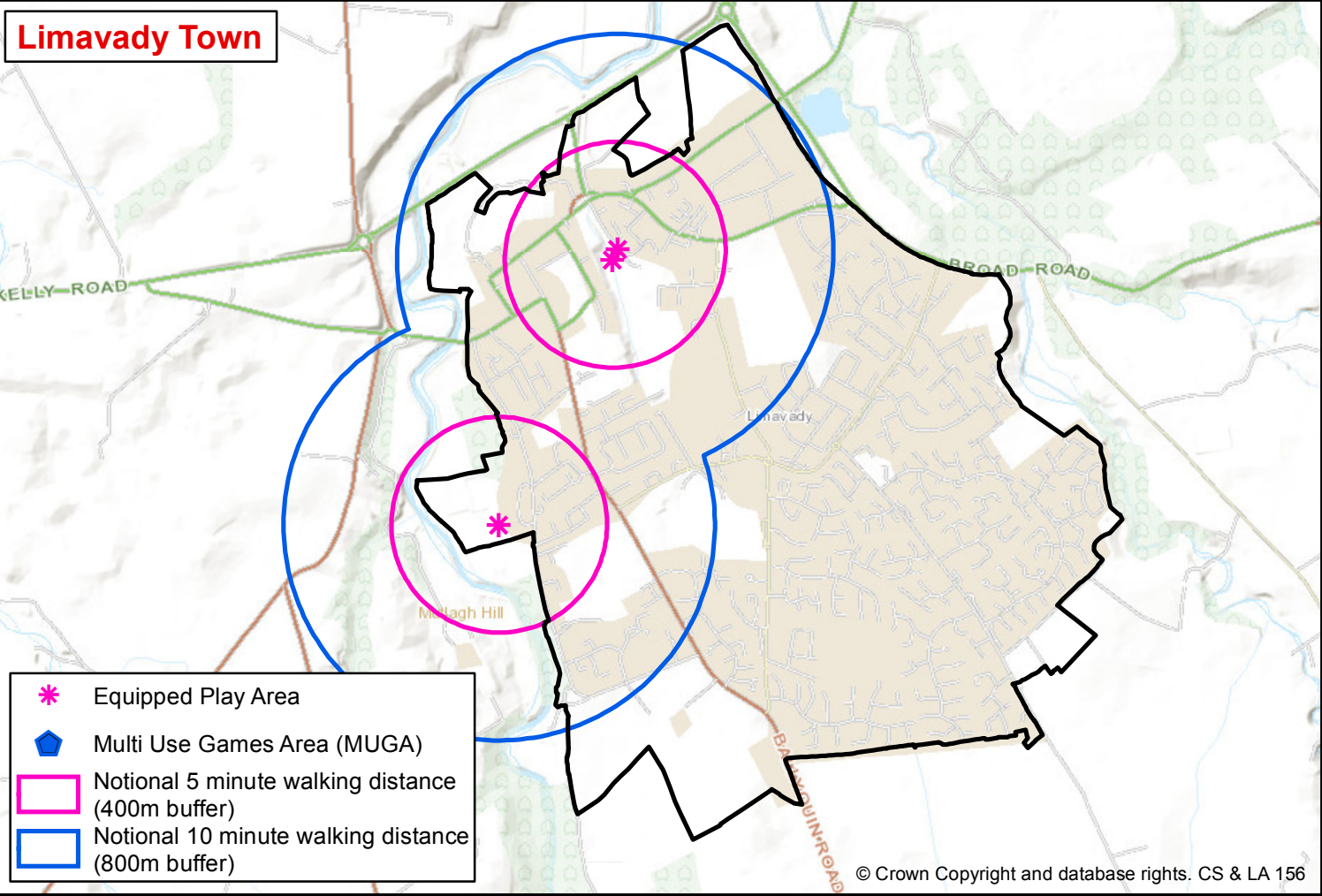
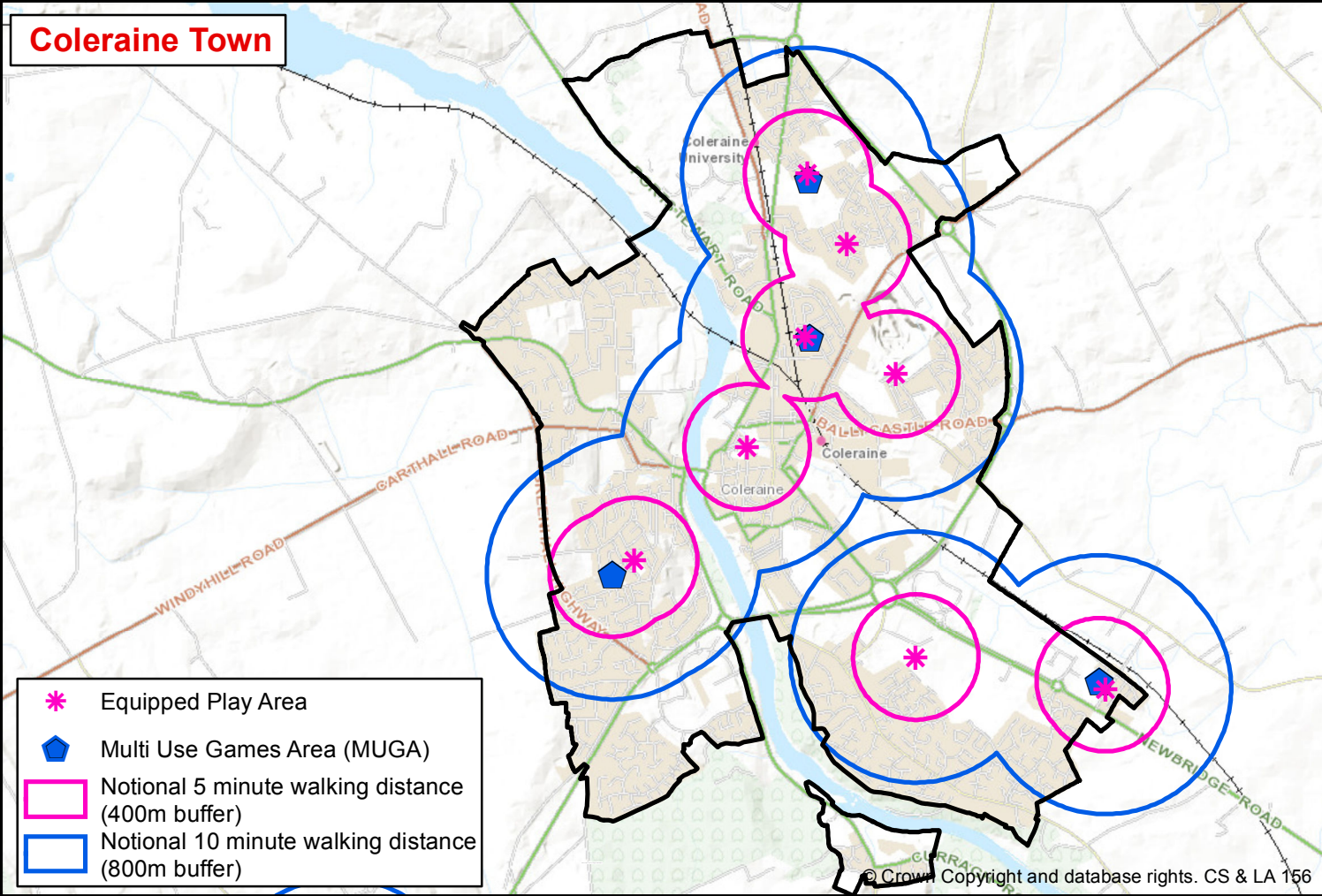
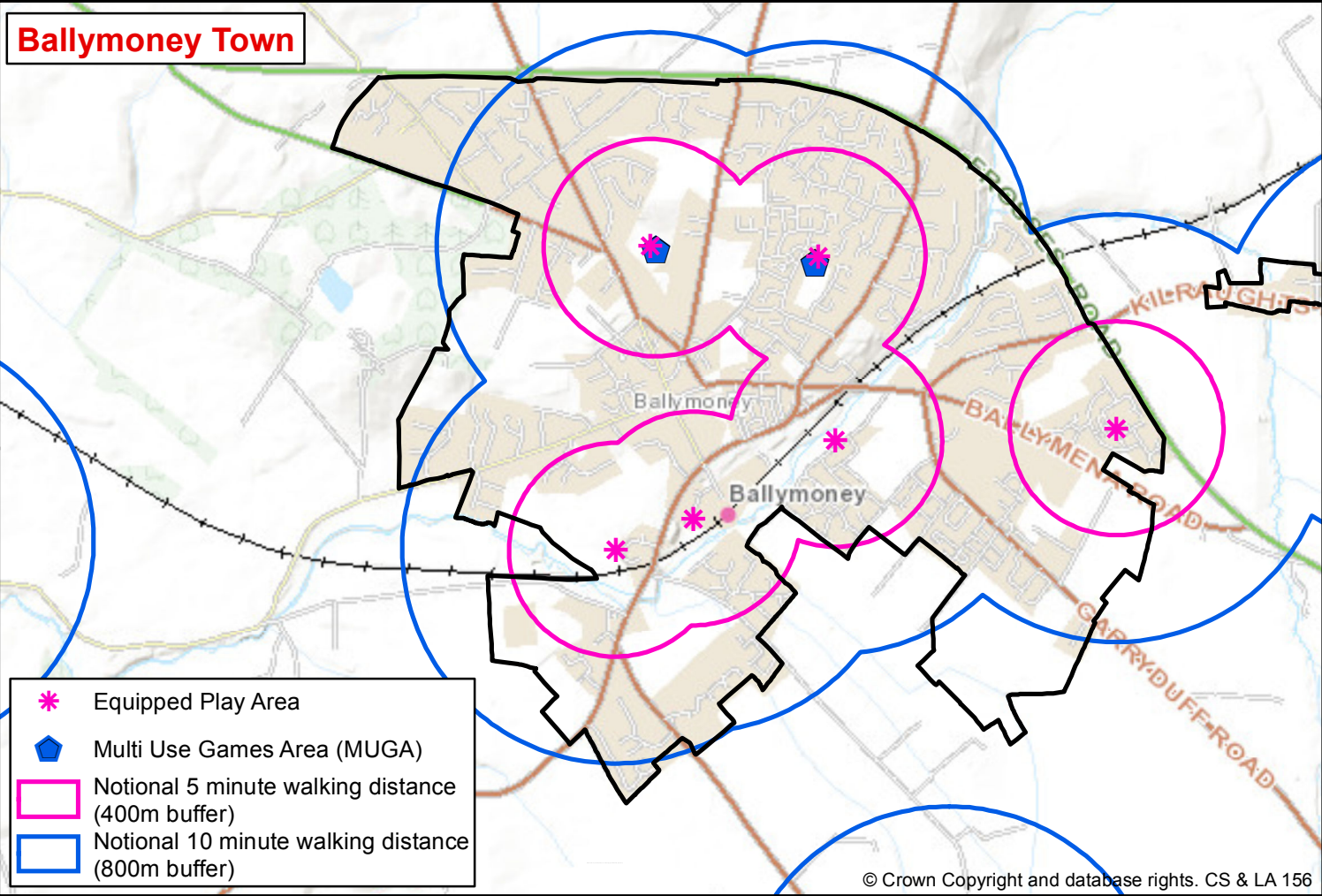
c. Playing Pitches

- 7.6 Map 2 provides information on the geographical spread of playing pitches and the ownership of these. It demonstrates that most of the Borough's settlements have some form of playing pitch within or near to them, with those settlements without any provision concentrated within the hamlet classification of the Adopted Plan as would be expected due to the lack of facilities and services in this lowest order of settlement.

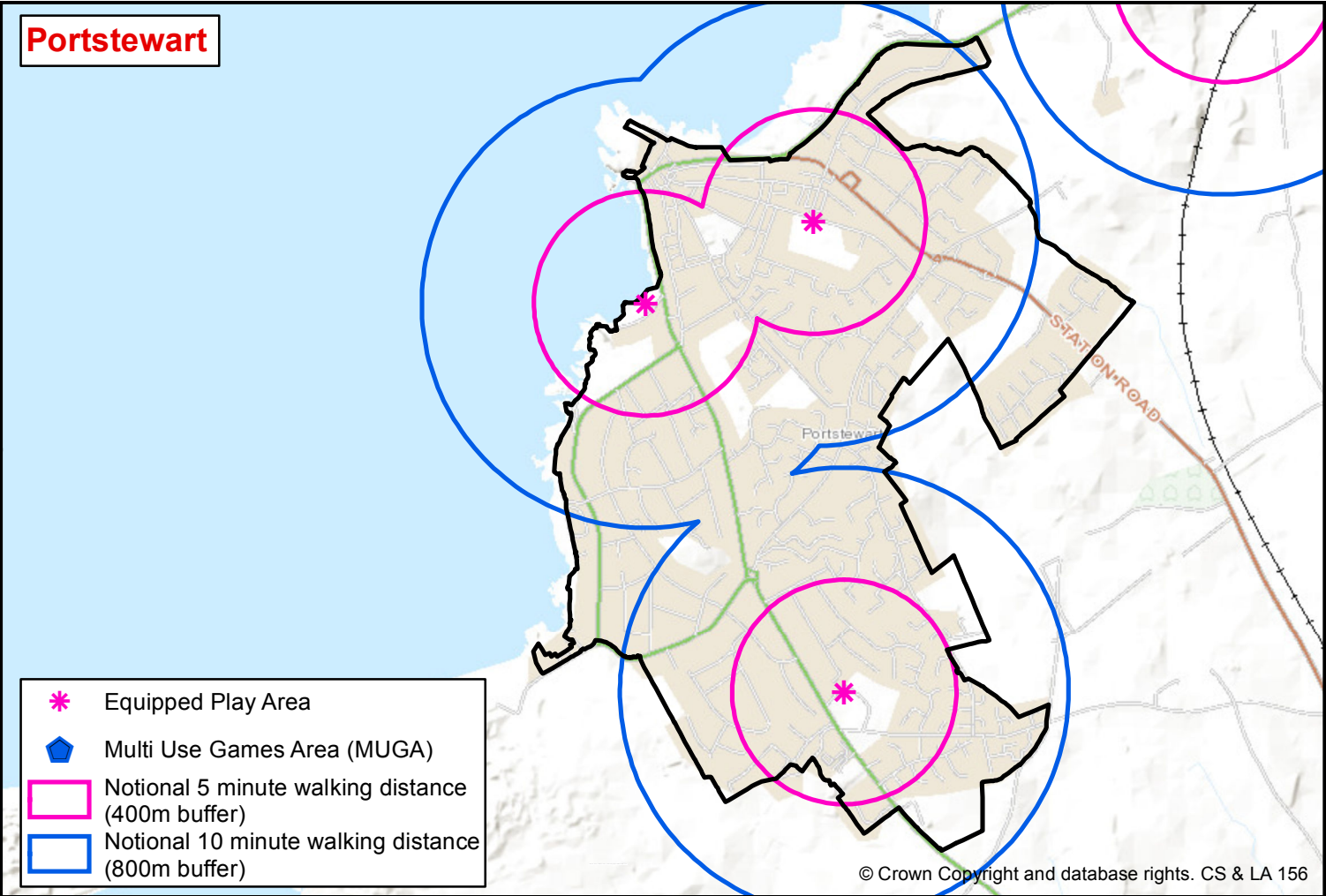
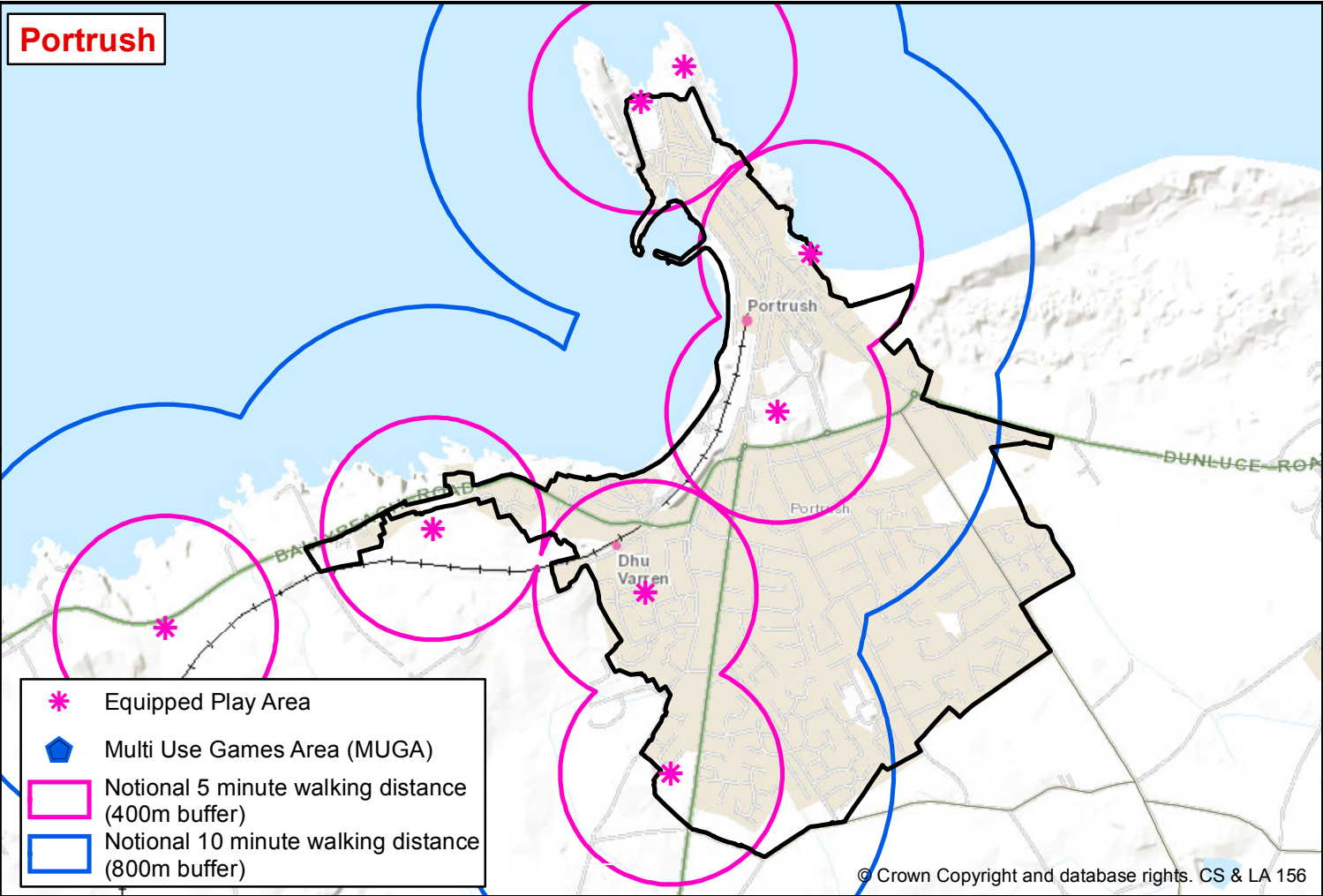
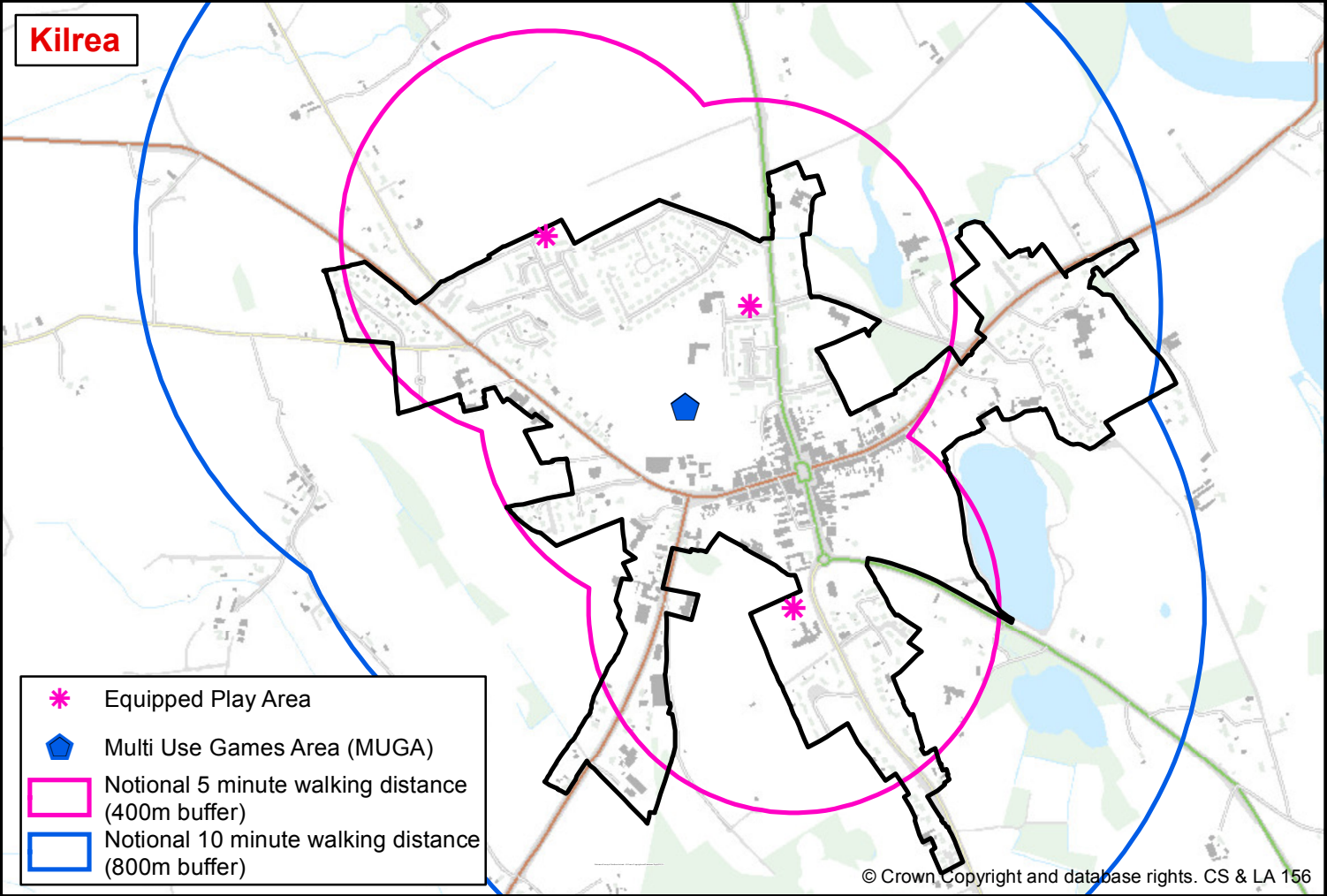
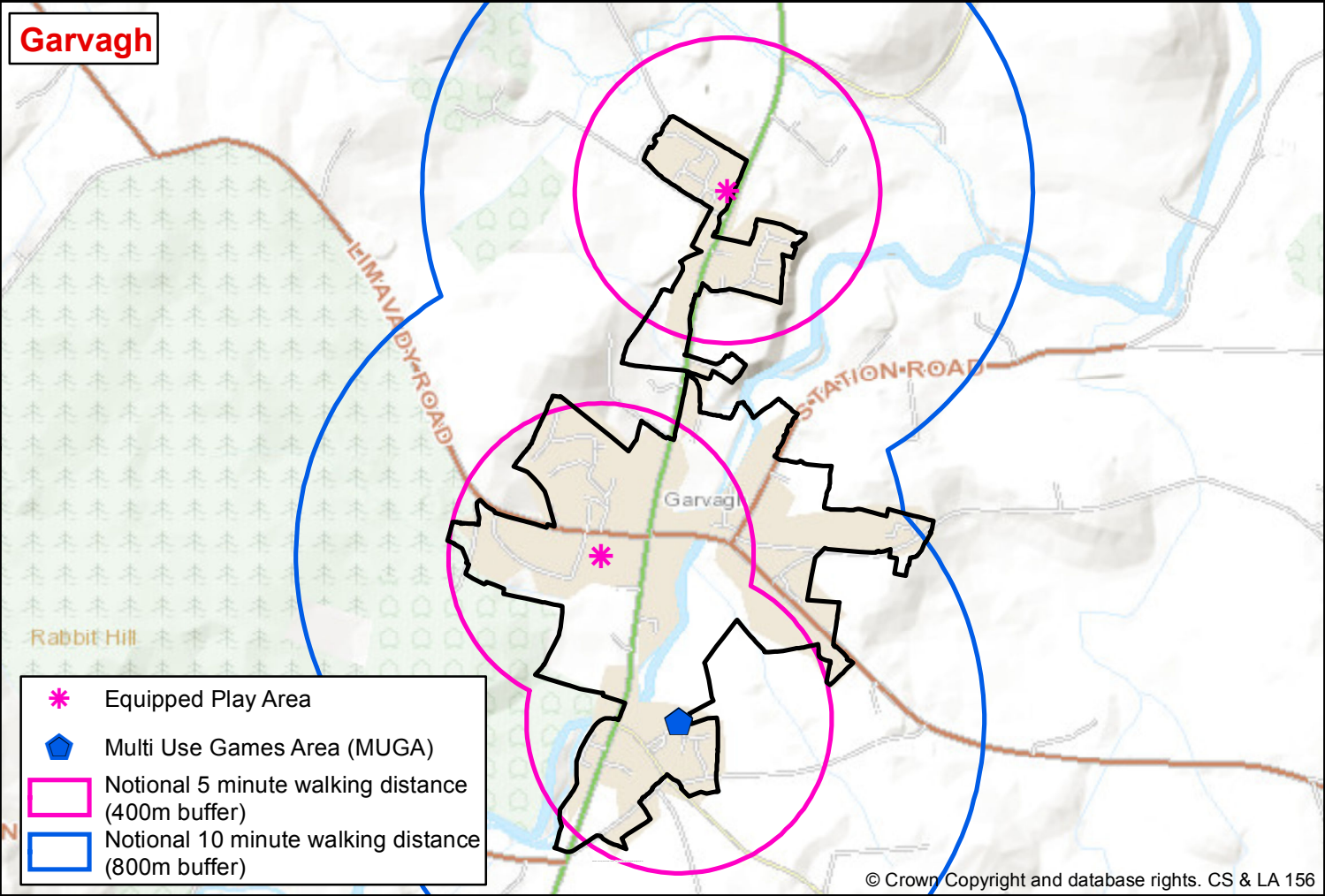
8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 This paper provides background information that will assist in bringing forward the Council's Open Space Strategy (OSS) that reflects the aim, objectives and policy approach of the SPPS, specific to the Council area and its particular circumstances. This report has focussed on the information presently readily available through the Council's input to the Sport NI Sports Facility Strategy. The report acknowledges that this information only relates to part of the NPFA standard and that further work is required to provide a complete overview of the Council's open space provision in this regard. This completed work (which will be subject to regular review), and the Council's Sport and Leisure Development Strategy and Implementation Plans, should inform the LPD process to bring forward appropriate local policies and proposals in line with the regional planning policy guidance, and particular to the Borough's local circumstances and its Sport and Leisure Facility Strategy.

Map No. 1a - Notional Accessibilty to Children's Play Areas



Map No. 1b - Notional Accessibilty to Children's Play Areas



Map No. 1c - Notional Accessibilty to Children's Play Areas

