



# PLAY SPACE STRATEGY

2025-2030

March 2025





***“The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right”***

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of play and recreation in the life of every child has long been acknowledged by the international community, as evidenced by the proclamation in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child:

“The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation [...]; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right” (article 7).

This proclamation was further strengthened in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) of 1989 which explicitly states in article 31 that:

“States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.” *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (17 April 2013)

Evidence is also available that outlines the wider benefits of play provision for families and communities, suggesting that:



parents can feel more secure knowing that their children are happy, safe and enjoying themselves

families benefit from healthier, happier children





buildings and facilities used by play services are frequently seen as a focal point for communities

public outside spaces have an important role in the everyday lives of children and young people, especially as a place for meeting friends



it offers opportunities for social interaction for the wider community and supports the development of a greater sense of community spirit, promoting social cohesion

parks and other green spaces are popular with adults taking young children out to play and for older children and young people to spend time together.



[playengland.org.uk/charter-for-play](http://playengland.org.uk/charter-for-play)

These philosophies have driven the development of high-quality play provision across the district of Three Rivers - play in Three Rivers is more about the swings and the slides, together with the wider benefits it has for children, families and local communities.

Over the years, Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) has invested heavily in play provision, making it a priority for the local community.

This is also reflected in Planning Policy and the requirement for play spaces as part of housing development.

This strategy will set out the priorities for play space provision over the next five years, including where, what and how resources will be effectively allocated to ensure children and their families in Three Rivers continue to receive access to high quality provision.

Three Rivers District Council will work in partnership with other organisations who are responsible for play areas and encourage them to follow the principles outlined in this strategy.

For the purpose of clarity, this strategy will focus on play spaces owned and maintained by Three Rivers District Council, although other play spaces will be considered when mapping key sites, along with how the council can work in partnership to support other organisations.





**“Parks, playgrounds and playing fields play a vital role in building healthy neighbourhoods contributing to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of local people. Without access to these spaces the quality of life and wellbeing of residents is reduced.”**

## **VISION AND POLICIES**

“Parks, playgrounds and playing fields play a vital role in building healthy neighbourhoods contributing to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of local people. Without access to these spaces the quality of life and wellbeing of residents is reduced.”

*The Rt Hon The Lord Coe CH KBE (Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Fields in Trust*

### **Three Rivers District Council Vision and Objectives**

Three Rivers District Council's vision is:

***“Three Rivers a great place to live, work and visit”***

The vision of this Play Space Strategy is that:

***“Three Rivers is a great place to play”***



In order to realise the vision, there are four objectives, which this strategy will support in the following ways:

**Provide responsive and responsible local leadership:**



Manage our resources to deliver high quality play space provision that is carefully managed to ensure that the local community receive value for money and benefit from a variety of opportunities to take part in play

Working in partnership with other organisations including local parish councils and community housing providers to ensure quality and varied play spaces across our district



Working collaboratively with our local communities ensuring that views, priorities and needs are a driving factor in all our decisions

**Expand our position as a great place to do business:**



Utilising the council's procurement strategy, the council will look to support local businesses to deliver play spaces within the community

Providing high quality play spaces will support the local leisure and tourism industry by encouraging visitors to the area



**Support and enable sustainable communities:**

**We will:**



Provide quality local and destination play spaces where families and community groups can meet and come together to interact socially, creating community cohesion and resilience

Ensure our play spaces are clean, green and safe



Maintain freely accessible play spaces such that financial barriers do not prevent families' ability to access areas which can support their physical and mental health and wellbeing



## Achieve net carbon zero and be climate resilient

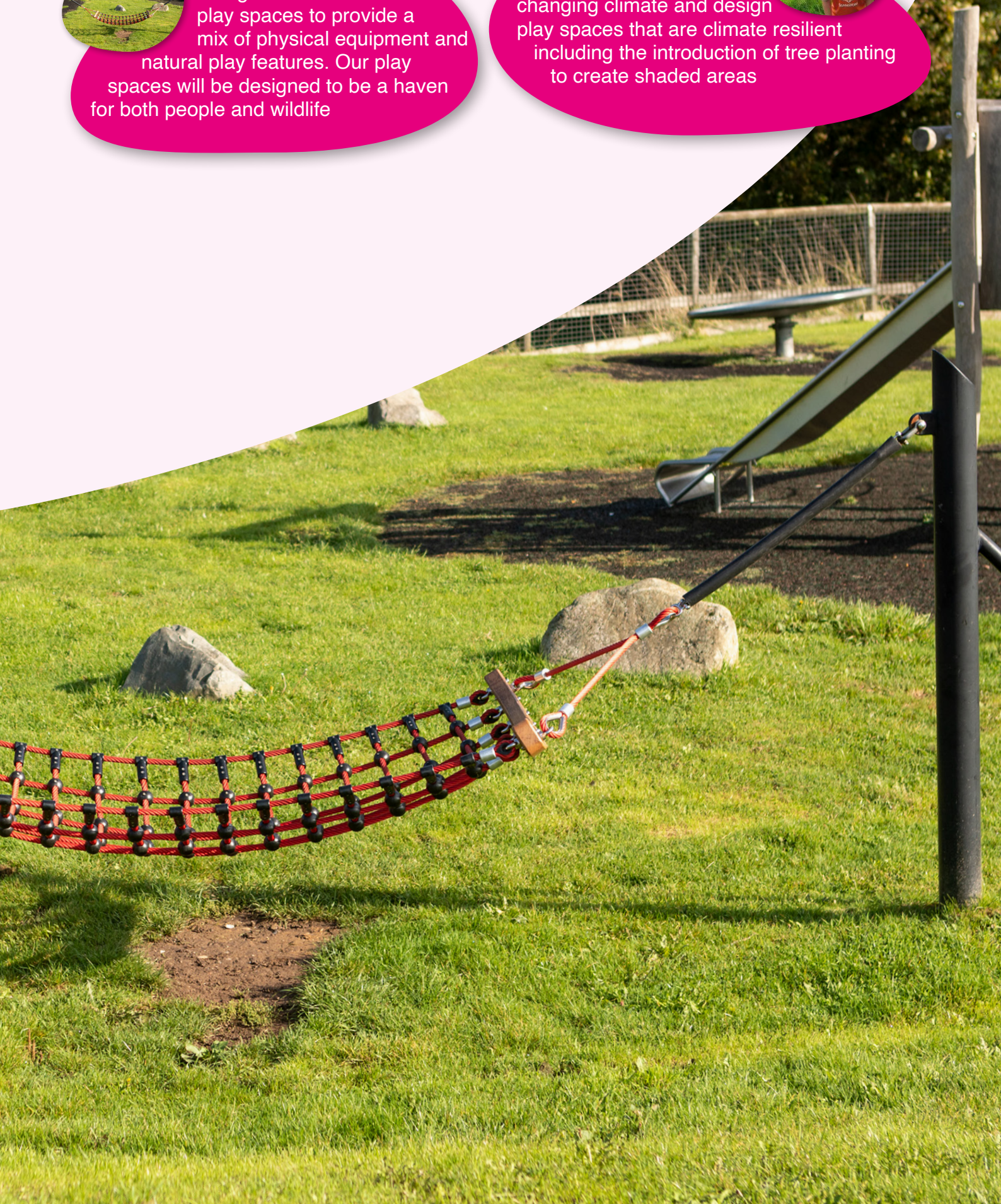
### We will:



Design and maintain our play spaces to provide a mix of physical equipment and natural play features. Our play spaces will be designed to be a haven for both people and wildlife



Actively consider the changing climate and design play spaces that are climate resilient including the introduction of tree planting to create shaded areas







**Play is...**  
**“what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons.”**

*(Play England, Charter for Play)*

## **PLANNING POLICY - THE PLAN**

The Local Plan sets out how play space provision will be managed as part of any new development in the district. This is set out in Section 13 of the Development Management Policies Local Development Document and within Planning Policy DM11.

The Council will continue to seek to secure S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions as part of developments within the district, which can be used towards play space development.

The following principals will underpin this strategy to ensure effective delivery and that children and their families remain at the heart of decision making:



**Access  
to Play**



**Community  
co-design**



**High  
quality,  
playful  
spaces**



**Financially  
sustainable**

## Access to Play

Children and young people should have easy access to high quality play spaces within their local community.

Play spaces are categorised in the following ways:



### **LAP (Local Area for Play)**

#### **Walking Distance within 100m**

A small area of open space specifically designated and primarily laid out for very young children to play close to where they live i.e. within one minute's walking time. LAPs are designed to allow for ease of informal observation and supervision and primarily function to encourage informal play and social interaction for toddlers. The LAP requires no play equipment as such, relying more on demonstrative or natural features indicating that play is positively encouraged.



### **LEAP (Locally Equipped Area for Play):**

#### **Walking Distance within 400m**

An area of open space specifically designed and laid out with features including equipment for children who are beginning to play independently. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local decision, though provision for a minimum number of six play experiences is recommended.

Play features including equipment are an integral part of the LEAP and the attractiveness of such spaces, though it is also important that the space can be used for physical activity and games. LEAPs can also include landscaped areas of play; containing little formal equipment but imaginatively designed and contoured, using as far as is possible natural materials such as logs or boulders which create an attractive setting for play.



### **NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play)**

#### **Walking Distance within 1000m**

This is an area of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children but potentially with play opportunities for younger children as well. It can provide play equipment and a hard surface area for ball games or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling. It may provide other facilities such as a ramp for skateboarding, a rebound wall, and a shelter for meeting and socialising. NEAPs can often be combined with LEAP provision.



As noted previously, this play strategy focuses on play spaces managed and maintained by Three Rivers District Council. It excludes play areas managed by other organisations including:



The commitment to play spaces owned and managed by Three Rivers District Council is shown below – categorised by NEAP, LEAP and LAP and by geographical area:

Geographical Area	Settlement	NEAP	LEAP	NAP	TOTAL PLAY SPACES
North	Abbots Langley and Leavesden	Langley Lane	Abbotswood Park	Tannerswood Swings	7
		Leavesden Country Park	Dowding Way	LCP Teepee	
			Gade View Gardens		
East	Carpenders Park		Oulton Way		10
	South Oxhey	Hayling Road	Ann Shaw Gardens	Moortown Road	
			Ashburnham	Bramshot Way Climbing Unit	
			Ashridge	Lincoln Drive	
	Oxhey Hall		Oaklands Avenue		
	Eastbury		Eastbury		
South	Rickmansworth	Ebury (Aquadrome)	Scotsbridge	Skidmore Way	7
				Aquadrome	
	Croxley Green	Barton Way	Cassiobridge		
West	Mill End	KGV		Mead Place Boulder	7
	Maple Cross	Denham Way	Hornhill	Beechen Wood	
	Chorleywood	The Swillett			
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>31</b>

Guidance from the Fields in Trust states that local communities should be able to access a NEAP within a 1000m, a LEAP within 400m and a LAP within 100m.

Appendix A show the plotted 31 play spaces and their associated walking distances. This mapping ensures local communities across Three Rivers are able to access a Three Rivers District Council owned and maintained play space within 1000m of their home.



**Play is...**  
**“what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons.”**  
*(Play England, Charter for Play)*

## COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN

Successful play spaces are those co-designed by children, their families and the community groups who work with them.

Three Rivers District Council is committed to ensuring that local communities have opportunities to share their ideas and express their opinions on their play space and any proposals to change them.

Engagement on proposals will be through a variety of formats and will vary depending on where, what and the size of the project as a minimum this will include:

Visits to local schools

Online consultations

Drop-in sessions either at the play space or at a local community venue

Feedback from public engagement and consultation will be used to develop final design for play spaces in the district with final designs shared with the local community prior to works commencing.

Consultation will include the opportunity to comment on designs but also to share views as to which types of equipment children would like to see in their local play spaces. Young people will be encouraged to consider natural play features, sustainability and how they may interact and play with others.

Three Rivers District Council will also at times assess the wider benefits play provision has on local communities. For example, does having high quality play provision add to whether or not people consider their local area as a great place to live? In addition, some consultations will consider how local communities use play spaces and whether or not a play space is a conduit for using other facilities in the local area, e.g. cafes, restaurants and the wider impact on the local economy.





**Three Rivers District Council  
has a high number of quality  
play spaces, focused on  
design and inclusivity.**

## HIGH QUALITY, PLAYFUL SPACES

Three Rivers District Council has a high number of quality play spaces, focused on design and inclusivity.

This strategy will ensure that new and upgraded play spaces continue to be of a high quality and this will be a key determinant of the procurement process.

Play value of all Three Rivers District Council owned and managed play spaces will be assessed every three years.

The play value assessment factors in:



Equipment features e.g.  
slide, swing, monkey bars etc



Play co-operation (imaginative/  
creative play) - features allowing  
children the opportunity to  
complete a task together e.g.  
play panels along with themed play or  
tactile materials (e.g. sand)



Inclusive play e.g.  
basket swing, natural flow  
of the site, stimuli and private  
play - factoring in the PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play  
Areas - <https://www.pipa-play.org/play-area-design>) themes and the six senses of the PiPA  
wheel e site, stimuli and private play - factoring  
in the PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas - <https://www.pipa-play.org/play-area-design>) themes  
and the six senses of the PiPA wheel



Natural play e.g. grassy mounds,  
trees, wildflower areas, bug hotels etc.



**Equipment features:** play spaces support the development of both gross and fine motor skills within children. These skills are essential for child development and aid learning through writing stamina, development of bones and muscles and enhanced flexibility. All TRDC play spaces will have a variety of play equipment for children to use, ranging from sites with lots of play equipment (NEAPs) to those focused more on natural play, encompassing climbing and jumping (LAPs).



**Play Cooperation:** play spaces provide opportunities for children to interact and play with others leading to improved social wellbeing. Cooperative play encourages collaboration, teaches trust and conflict resolution and boosts communication skills – all essential to childhood development. Play spaces within Three Rivers will provide a platform for play cooperation for example through the inclusion of equipment where children can create something together or informal spaces which enable free play.

Play spaces will also include areas for informal and formal physical activity, including, but not limited to: space to play football and/or other types of games.



**Inclusivity:** play spaces within Three Rivers will be inclusive, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to play in a fun and safe environment. This could be through the use of inclusive equipment or tactile materials, along with a play space that is easy and safe to navigate.





**Natural Play:** play spaces within Three Rivers will bring children and their families closer to nature. Through the inclusion of natural play features, children will have opportunities to learn first-hand about the wildlife around them. Encouraging children to be inquisitive about nature will support their learning and give them an appreciation and respect for the world around them.



**Boundaries:** NEAP and LEAP play spaces will have boundaries in place to allow children to play safely away from dogs and vehicles. In some locations, a natural boundary, such as hedging may be considered. This will be looked at on a site-by-site basis and traditional fencing only removed once it reaches the end of life and when the natural boundary is fully established. Careful consideration will be given to the type of natural boundary to ensure planting isn't sharp, do not contain harmful fruits and is maintained at a level to ensure the boundary



The council is committed to ensuring that its play spaces remain at a high standard. We will achieve this by:



Following the quality standards for play spaces – play spaces within Three Rivers will adhere to the BN 1176 and BN 1177 standards for play. Where natural features for play are used, an individual risk assessment will be used and monitoring methods implemented.



Monitoring incidents and patterns of anti-social behaviour (ASB), risk factors and life expectancy - trends in

ASB will be monitored and tracked in partnership with the local police, we will seek to prevent and where possible 'design out' ASB issues. Play inspections will continually review the risk and annual inspections will provide regular reassessment of the life expectancy of play spaces and individual items of equipment.



Ensuring that Play Spaces are monitored following the RPII (Register for Play Inspectors International) inspection regime – play spaces will undertake a routine inspection, operational inspection and an annual inspection under the RPII guidelines. This will be carried out by trained and qualified staff and monitored digitally.

Extreme incidents of damage, ongoing ASB issues and health and safety concerns may result in a closure or relocation of play spaces, and/or the removal of equipment. In such circumstances, this will be carried out in consultation with the Lead Member for Leisure and relevant Ward Councillors.







Three Rivers District Council's play vision is 'Three Rivers is a great place to play'.

## FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE

In order to achieve this vision and to ensure play areas are safe for use, Three Rivers District Council must allocate available resources in a responsible and resourceful manner.

There is currently an annual capital budget of £120,000 to upgrade play spaces allocated in the medium financial plan. This budget is currently set to increase by £5,000 every 3 years, to account for inflation and increases in material costs.

There is currently an annual budget of £49,270 to maintain play areas and a further £13,760 for vandalism, giving a total revenue maintenance budget of £60,030.

In simple terms, with 31 play areas to maintain to the required standard, this equates to £1,936 per play area per annum.

As an example, to replace the seat on a zip wire, this currently costs £500, to replace a basket swing seat costs £400, to repair a zip wire is £1,400 and to replace a rope bridge costs £1,600.

There will be some play spaces requiring more maintenance than others due to their size and usage.



This strategy therefore sets out how to effectively manage current resources moving forwards:



The 10 LAPs identified will have a focus on natural play. These areas will include aspects of planting, bug hotels and natural materials for play including felled trees, with a reduction in traditional play equipment as it reaches end of life.



Officers will consider ongoing revenue costs to keep the play spaces at the quality they should be and any additional growth in budgets will be presented for consideration as part of the Medium-Term Financial planning process.



50% of the revenue maintenance budgets will be focused on the eight NEAPs identified and the remaining 50% focused on the 13 LEAPs and 10 LAPs.







**Play England  
campaigns for all children and  
young people to have freedom  
and space to play throughout  
childhood.**

*Play England 2024*

## **CAPITAL UPGRADING PROGRAMME**

An updated Capital Programme for the period of this strategy and beyond (2025/26 – 2044/45) is detailed below. This will be reviewed by officers annually in consultation with the Lead Member for Leisure with any significant amends presented to committee for approval.

The capital programme has been developed taking into account a number of factors: analysis of the external annual play area inspections, current life expectancy, overall usage and when the sites were last refurbished.

The capital programme will be updated and planned to ensure NEAPs are prioritised for upgrading.



Of the eight NEAPs, four will be prioritised for upgrading every 10 years, based on usage (anecdotal evidence), catchment area and the availability of any external funding. **These NEAPs include:**



**Leavesden  
Country  
Park  
(Abbots  
Langley)**



**Hayling  
Road  
(South  
Oxhey)**



**Barton  
Way  
(Croxley  
Green)**



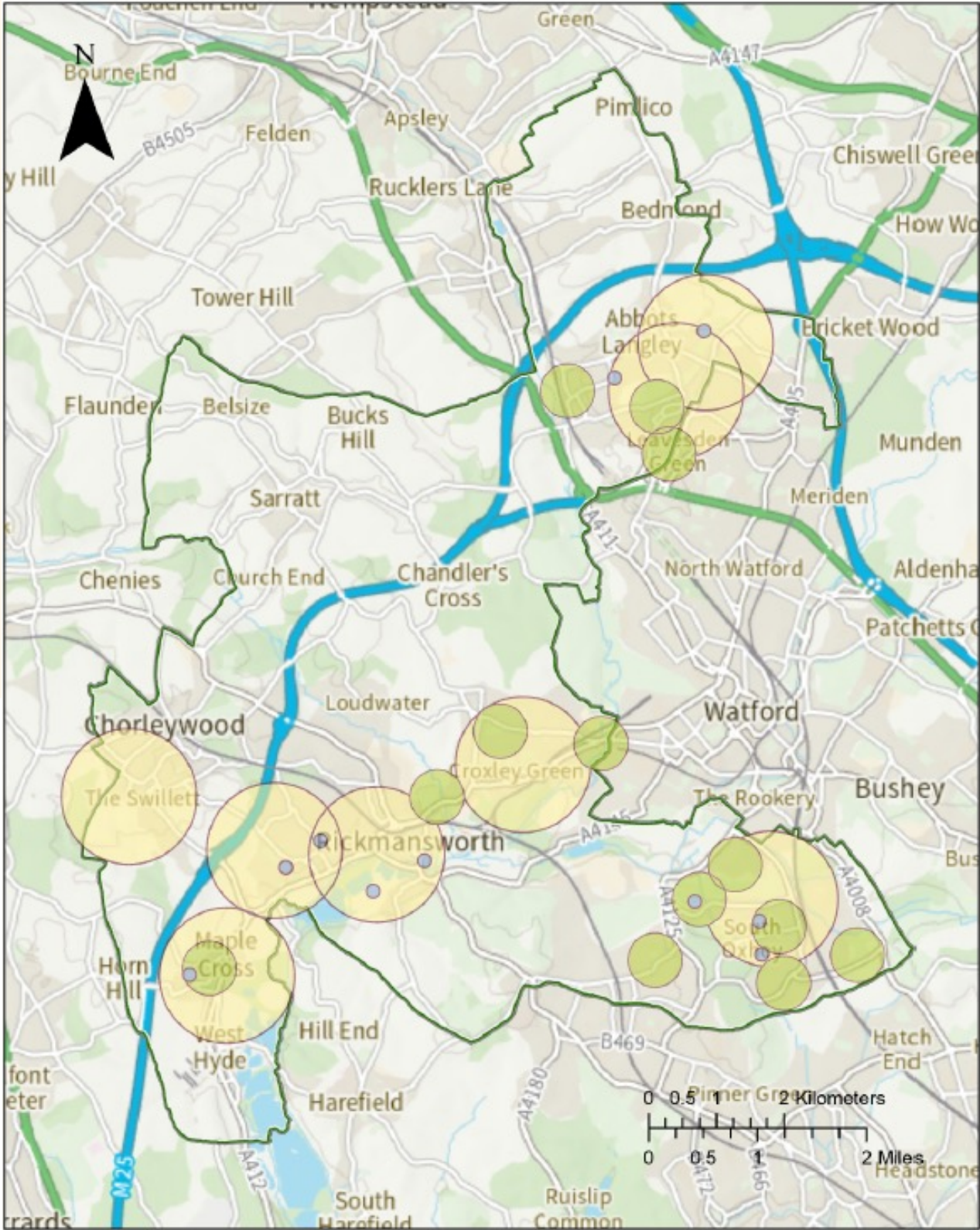
**Ebury  
(Aquadrome)**


Financial Year	Play Space	Budget	Category	Funding Source
2025/26	Barton Way	120,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2026/27	Hayling Road	120,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2027/28	Oulton Way	62,500	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Ann Shaw Gardens	62,500	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Leavesden CP	125,000	NEAP	S106
2028/29	Ashridge	95,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Moortown Road	30,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
2029/30	Scotsbridge	115,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Tannerswood	10,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
2030/31	Oaklands Avenue	65,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Cassiobridge	65,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
2031/32	KGV	130,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2032/33	Baldwins Lane	130,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
2033/34	Hornhill	105,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Aquadrome (Dog Free Picnic Area)	30,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
	Gade View Gardens	28,000	LEAP	S106
2034/35	Ebury	135,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2035/36	Barton Way	135,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2036/37	Hayling Road	140,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2037/38	The Swillett	140,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
	Langley Lane	140,000	NEAP	S106
	Leavesden CP	145,000	NEAP	S106
2038/39	Abbotswood Park	70,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Ashburnham	70,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
2039/40	Eastbury	110,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Beechen Wood	22,500	LAP	TRDC Capital
	Mead Place	12,500	LAP	TRDC Capital
2040/41	Dowding Way	75,000	LEAP	S106
	Denham Way	145,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital
2041/42	Oulton Way	100,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
	Lincoln Drive	22,500	LAP	TRDC Capital
	Fearney Mead	22,500	LAP	TRDC Capital
2042/43	Skidmore Way	50,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Ann Shaw Gardens	100,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
2043/44	Ashridge	110,000	LEAP	TRDC Capital
	Moortown Road	30,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
	Tannerswood	10,000	LAP	TRDC Capital
2044/45	Ebury	150,000	NEAP	TRDC Capital



# Appendix A – Play Space Mapping

Existing sites owned and maintained by Three Rivers District Council



<div>  <p>THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> </div> <div> <p>© Crown copyright and database rights 2024 OS AC0000849984. You are permitted to use this data solely to enable you to respond to, or interact with, the organisation that provided you with the data. You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.</p> </div>	<div> <div>District_Boundary</div> <div>Distance (m)</div> <div> <div>100</div> <div>400</div> <div>1000</div> <div>&lt;all other values&gt;</div> </div> </div>	<div> <div>Title: Walking distance of Three Rivers' play areas</div> <div>Drawing No.</div> </div>
	<div> <div>Date Drawn: 29/08/24</div> <div>Drawn by: APB</div> </div>	<div> <div>Scale: 1:80,000</div> <div>A4</div> </div>