



City of Westminster

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy & Action Plan

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ACTIVE
WESTMINSTER



City of Westminster

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

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Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table of Contents

PART 1: INTRODUCTION	5
1.1: INTRODUCTION	5
1.2 WHY THE STRATEGY IS BEING DEVELOPED	6
PART 2: CONTEXT	7
2.1: NATIONAL CONTEXT	7
2.2 LOCAL CONTEXT.....	12
PART 3: METHODOLOGY	20
3.1 AUDITING LOCAL FACILITIES (SUPPLY).....	20
3.2 QUALITY AND VALUE	21
3.3 QUALITY AND VALUE THRESHOLDS.....	22
3.4 AUDIT OVERVIEW.....	23
PART 4: PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.....	24
4.1 INTRODUCTION	24
4.2 CURRENT FACILITIES	24
4.3 ACCESSIBILITY	28
4.4 QUALITY AND VALUE	34
4.5 MANAGEMENT	35
4.6 SUMMARY.....	36
PART 5: PARKS AND OPEN SPACES	37
5.1 INTRODUCTION	37
5.2 CURRENT PROVISION	37
5.3 QUALITY AND VALUE	39
5.4 SUMMARY.....	41
PART 6: MANAGEMENT OF PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES.....	42
PART 7: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS.....	44

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

ABBREVIATIONS

FIT	Fields in Trust
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh, and Page
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MUGA	Multi-Use Games Area (an enclosed area with a hard surface for variety of informal play)
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
SOA	Super Output Areas
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
WCC	Westminster City Council

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Introduction

This is the Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) for the City of Westminster, which has been specifically developed as an extension of the council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). The strategy recommendations are drawn from research, prepared initially between Summer 2019 and Spring 2021 by specialist sport and leisure consultancy, Knight Kavanagh and Page Ltd (KKP).

The consultant team is grateful to the project management and leadership of Westminster City Council and the contributions made by all other stakeholders to the development of this strategy.

Westminster has characteristics almost unique amongst English local authority areas. In terms of its historic built environment, in addition to numerous civic buildings of national importance such as Lords Cricket Ground, Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament it contains over 11,000 listed buildings including the world heritage sites of the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey. It has areas of heavy resident population density, while the quadrupling in its daytime population due to people commuting into the City to work creates significant additional demand for physical activity, leisure and/or sport provision. Westminster's economic output at £53.6 billion GVA (Gross Value Added) (source) is the largest of any English local authority.

The Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) provides the strategic context that will be used to:

- Aid decision making by elected members and officers.
- Support external/internal funding bids and applications.
- Support developer allocation of CIL and S106.
- Support potential work with neighbouring authorities.
- Provide an appropriate evidence base for the Council's City Plan.

This strategy provides the necessary robustness and direction to inform decisions on future strategic planning and any investment priorities for play and informal recreational facilities across the City.

It provides detail regarding what informal recreational facilities exist, condition, distribution, and overall quality. This document sets out the findings of the research, site assessments, data analysis and GIS mapping undertaken as part of the audit.

The audit focused mainly on play and recreation, but also recognises the wider role of parks and open spaces containing informal recreational facilities and the potential for some park and open spaces sites to further contribute to play and recreation.

For the purposes of this strategy, 'informal recreational facilities' are considered as areas that are generally 'free-to-use' and designed primarily for play, informal activities, communal recreation and/or social interaction including, but not limited to; playgrounds, other equipped play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGAs), outdoor gyms/calisthenics training areas, skateboard/roller-sports areas, parkour parks, outdoor table tennis tables and slacklining.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

1.2 Why the strategy is being developed

The Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) will form part of the evidence base for the council's City Plan (2020-2040). It will provide a strategic framework to ensure that the provision of informal recreational facilities meets the needs of those who visit, live (both existing and future residents), work and/or study in Westminster. It will also support those organisations, including the council, involved in the provision of any informal recreational facilities across the City. The PFS will provide robust and objective justification for any future informal recreational facilities across the City.

The PFS will also provide evidence to support funding bids from National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Sport England (where appropriate) and/or any other bodies/agencies. Furthermore, it will also support requests for developer contributions through new developments and will help focus internal revenue and capital spending over the City Plan period.

The PFS will ensure that a planned approach to informal recreational play, physical activity, leisure and/or sport facilities takes place in Westminster, ensuring that the community has access to high quality facilities as well as helping communities improve their health and wellbeing along with remaining cohesive. It is imperative that where the council provides informal recreational facilities, they are as efficient and effective as possible due to continuing financial pressures.

Developing a strategic approach to the analysis of informal recreational facilities supply and demand is necessary to:

- Protect informal recreational facilities against development pressures on land in, and around, the City.
- Identify informal recreational facilities supply and demand issues in relation to predicted population changes.
- Improve strategic management, delivery, and maintenance of informal recreational facilities under the Council's ownership and/or management.

The PFS will provide an evidence base for planning decisions and funding bids along with background evidence to further support the City Plan. It will ensure that this evidence is sound, robust, and capable of being scrutinised through examination and meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹.

One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Section 8 of the NPPF deals specifically with the topic of healthy communities; Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

¹<https://www.sportengland.org/media/14043/planning-for-sport-guidance.pdf>

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

PART 2: CONTEXT

The right to play and informal recreation for all children and young people up to 18 years of age is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in 1991. The Government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

[Article 31](#)² states that countries must “*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.*”

[General Comment 17](#)³ further clarifies that governments are expected to ‘*respect, protect and fulfil*’ this right.

2.1: National context

Why are we failing Our Children? Report (2018), The Sport and Recreation Alliance

In Summer 2018, the Alliance launched a [call for government](#)⁴ to give every child the fundamental **#RightToBeActive** by:

- Establishing a new law requiring councils to provide all children with the opportunity to be active and to coordinate and promote physical activity across everything they do.
- Creating a long-term, properly funded and child-focussed strategy to transform the physical and mental wellbeing of our children.
- Introducing new legislation to make it a requirement for government ministers and public bodies to put the United Nations Rights of the Child, the right to play and lead a healthy life, at the heart of decision making.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) (NPPF) sets out the planning policies for England. It details how these are expected to be applied to the planning system and provides a framework to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It establishes that the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

² <http://ipaworld.org/chilods-right-to-play/uncrc-article-31/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child-1/>

³ <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/generalcomment>

⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-inactivity-is-killing-our-children-give-every-child-the-fundamental-righttobeactive-ca51e9b7-2d2c-4e5e-a80d-fa99b99e889c?platform=hootsuite>

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Under paragraph 96, it states planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports, and recreation sites, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown the site to be surplus to requirements; *or*
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; *or*
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The aim therefore is to provide a framework for play provision in Westminster which can help guide the long-term provision of play facilities to sufficiently meet the needs of local communities.

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2020), Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust (FiT) is the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and has been protecting outdoor space for sport and recreation since 1925. Its mission is to safeguard and improve protected space for future generations.

As part of its protection work, FiT offers guidance on open space and play provision. This is to ensure the provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; is in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings; and of a quality to maintain longevity and to encourage its continued use.

Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2020)⁵ sets out a range of benchmark guidelines on quantity, quality and accessibility for open space and equipped play. It also offers some recommendations to minimum site sizes. These are considered as part of the study.

Guidance on walking distance and times is published by FiT in its document *Beyond the Six Acre Standard*. Appropriate accessibility distances for children's play provision vary depending on the type of play facility (and its intended age range).

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs) = aimed at very young people
- Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) = aimed at children who can go out to play independently
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs) = aimed at older children
- Other = facilities including MUGAs and skateboard parks.

⁵ [Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play | Fields in Trust](#)

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

The FiT guidelines for accessibility are set out in Table 2.1.1.

Table 2.1.1: FiT accessibility guidelines

Play type	FiT guideline	Time equivalent
LAPs	100m	1-minute walk time
LEAPs	400m	5-minute walk time
NEAPs	1,000m	12.5-minute walk time
Other	700m	9-minute walk time

FiT also sets out quantity guidelines for play provision:

Table 2.1.2: FiT quantity guidelines

Play type	FiT quantity guideline (hectares per 1,000 population)
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25
Other (MUGAs, skateboard parks)	0.30

Charter for Children’s Play (2009), Play England

The right to play and informal recreation for all children and young people up to 18 years of age is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in 1991. The Government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

Play is not only a right for all children but is also an essential aspect of their development, culture and quality of life. It is an accessible initiation into their wider cultural and leisure experiences.

Providing services for children should therefore recognise that play is an essential aspect of any child’s culture and quality of life. The role and value it has in a child’s life is important.

Play England’s *Charter for Children’s Play* recognises that play is fundamental to the way children enjoy their childhood and is essential to their quality of life. It highlights that through playing children are developing their abilities, exploring creativity, and learning about themselves and the world around them. Some of the key roles of play include:

- Promoting children’s development, learning, imagination, creativity, and independence
- Helps to keep children healthy and active.
- Allows children to experience and encounter boundaries, learning to assess and manage risk; both physical and social.
- Helps children to understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community.
- Allows children to discover themselves, their abilities, interests, and the contribution they can make.
- Being therapeutic; helping children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances
- A way of building and maintaining important relationships with friends, carers, and family members.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Children are entitled to special consideration in strategic planning because they rely on the advocacy of adults in the social, economic and political spheres. It is the responsibility of adults to ensure that children are taken into account.

This strategy is designed to ensure that children's play needs and aspirations are met. It aims to ensure that children and adults are given opportunities, independently and together, to enjoy play and leisure activities and to benefit from the physical, emotional, cultural and social benefits these can bring.

Making it possible to do Play Sufficiency (2020), Play Wales

The research builds on previous studies to focus on what conditions support local authorities to act in support of children's opportunities to play. Whilst the policy context is different in Wales, the principles of play sufficiency are still relevant. The study points to five headline conditions that can support local authorities to secure sufficient play opportunities for children:

- **Policy** alignment with, and promotion nationally and locally of, the Play Sufficiency Duty
- The right **people** in the right place at the right time with sufficient authority, capacity, capability, and consistency
- A consistent and dedicated source of **funding** for Play Sufficiency
- Existing and new **information**, including research and ways to share information
- **Openness to possibilities** (organisational cultures that allow for being able to respond to opportunities that arise)

State of the Nation: Understanding public attitudes to the early years (2020), Royal Foundation

A comprehensive study to address a gap in knowledge of public attitudes towards bringing up children from conception to 5 years in the UK. Of relevance are the findings to one of the questions within the study. When asked to name the places in their local area in which they felt most welcome or comfortable with their child, a variety of places were mentioned. The most frequently mentioned places included:

- Playgrounds (48%)
- Public/green spaces (37%)
- Soft play areas (37%)

This highlights the critical role such type of spaces provide, not only to children but also for the mental wellbeing and benefit of parents/carers/grandparents etc.

Uniting the Movement; A ten-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity (2021), Sport England

Sport and physical activity has a big role to play in improving the physical and mental health of the nation, supporting the economy, reconnecting communities and rebuilding a stronger society for all. From this notion, Sport England has recently released its new strategy, Uniting the Movement, its 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

It seeks to tackle the inequalities long seen in sport and physical activity. Providing opportunities to people and communities that have traditionally been left behind, and helping to remove the barriers to activity, has never been more important.

There are three key objectives to the Strategy:

- Advocating for movement, sport, and physical activity.
- Joining forces on five big issues
- Creating the catalyst for change

In particular, the five big issues are identified where the greatest potential is seen for preventing and tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. Each one is a building block that, on its own, would make a difference, but together, could change things profoundly:

Recover and reinvent: Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant, and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.

Connecting communities: Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.

Positive experiences for children and young people: Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.

Connecting with health and wellbeing: Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health, and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.

Active environments: Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

The specific impact of the strategy will be captured through programmes funded, interventions made, and partnerships forged. For each specific area of action, a set of key performance indicators will be developed. This hybrid approach will help evidence the overall progress being made by all those involved in supporting sport and physical activity.

Invest in Public Play (2021), Association of Play Industries

The press release⁶ highlights the essentialness of public playgrounds considering the various lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It stresses the impact of such closures on all children but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The article identifies the five big issues from Sport England's 10-year vision but with a focus on play:

- **Recover and reinvent:** Place children at the heart of recovery by building a sustainable network of public play space.
- **Connecting communities:** Playgrounds are often the heart of the community, where parents, grandparents, neighbours, and children from all walks of life go to meet.

⁶ <https://www.api-play.org/posts/playmuststay-invest-in-public-play-spaces-or-children-face-perpetual-lockdown/>

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

- **Positive experiences for children and young people:** Safe, challenging and stimulating play spaces give children the freedom to play, socialise and have fun in a space dedicated to them.
- **Connecting with health and wellbeing:** Active children become active adults, giving them the lifelong joys and benefits of an active life.
- **Active environments:** Local and accessible 'doorstep' playgrounds make it easier for all children to get active.

2.2 Local context

The London Plan (2016), Greater London Authority

Policy 3.6 (children and young people play and informal recreation facilities) sets out Local Authorities should undertake audits of existing play and informal recreation provision and assessment in their areas, considering the qualitative, quantitative and accessibility elements of play and informal recreation facilities.

It further highlights the essential role safe and stimulating play facilities have in a child's welfare and future development, as well as preventing health problems such as obesity.

As part of Play England's - [submission to Draft London Plan Consultation](#), March 2019 it stated:

"We would also propose an additional policy line, that challenges the use of 'negative signage for recreation' – specifically 'No Ball Games' signs and associated signage. The social and cultural implications of such signage can lead to a substantial, negative impact on engagement with play, physical activity and sport."

Making London Child-Friendly (2020), Greater London Authority

The document aims to ensure young people's needs are considered and that they can access the city's social and physical infrastructure.

It highlights that this is important for supporting the health and wellbeing of young people. Nearly 40% of all young Londoners are overweight or obese, which can lead to serious health consequences. How places are built and designed is critical to creating more active and playful public streets and spaces.

The 'golden thread' of the document is independent mobility; the freedom children and young people have to occupy and move around the public realm without adult supervision. Safe outdoor environments that facilitate independent mobility can be considered integral to promoting and encouraging this right. Best practice recommendations for local authorities and policy teams include:

- The quality of spaces and routes for children and young people should be assessed, alongside the quantum of space.
- Widened pavements and shared surfaces should be key considerations in street design to allow for the non-linear, meandering movement patterns of children.
- Safe routes should connect children and young people's amenities through well-marked and playfully designed streets and public transport provision, including suitable lighting.
- Streets should be designed to reduce the speed of drivers in residential areas where possible.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

- Multi-modal journeys should be encouraged through closely positioned transport hubs, for example cycle racks near bus stops.
- Where possible and appropriate, cycle lanes should be segregated from the road with a significant buffer between the two carriageways.
- Thinking ‘beyond the redline’ should be a routine consideration in housing redevelopments and refurbishments. Improvements to public realm and infrastructure beyond the boundary of the project should always be sought, for example improving connectivity of social or children’s infrastructure in a neighbourhood.

Good Parks for London 2020 (2020), Parks for London

The annual report assesses each of the London borough’s parks service (from April 2019-March 2020) against ten criteria to allow for comparison and help in improving performance and practices. The report also provides examples of good practice and case studies. It recognises that London’s green spaces have never been more visible given the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are two of the criteria which Westminster appears to rate particularly lower for compared to other criteria. These are Health, Fitness and Well-being and Community Involvement. Informal recreational facilities can be at the core of both topics and have an important role to help improve both factors.

The report highlights some of the enhancements and initiatives other local authorities are doing and which may be of use to consider. These include greater outdoor gyms, workout programmes, improvement schemes and app-based rewards for physical activity to cite a few examples.

London Sport

London Sport is the active partnership for London. It is led by a central team of people whose job is to provide leadership and co-ordination of the network at a sub-regional level. Implementation is achieved via the building of collaborative partnerships with the numerous organisations involved in physical activity and sport to help make London happier, healthier and stronger through sport. Its stated strategy vision is to make London the world’s physically active city. The key tenets of the strategy apply across five priority areas – to:

- Make it easier for Londoners to find the right activity for them, remain in it, and achieve their potential
- Get more resource by making best use of current investment and securing more
- Support grassroots organisations by making structures simpler and more effective
- Create a bigger and better workforce to support activity
- Harness the power of elite sport to create sustained grassroots activity and inspire the next generation of talent.

Growing up in Hackney (2021): child-friendly places supplementary planning document (SPD)

The child friendly places SPD⁷ provides design guidelines to help shape a better environment for existing and future residents. It advocates that child-friendly design and urban planning goes beyond designing

⁷ [Growing up in Hackney: child-friendly places supplementary planning document \(SPD\) | Hackney Council](#)

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

playground provision but towards shaping the physical features around and in between buildings in neighbourhoods, as a whole, to become multifunctional, inclusive and welcoming for everyone.

A child friendly urban built environment is defined as one that supports children and provides young people with equal opportunities to access and connect with nature, play, and move around independently in safe, healthy, and unpolluted streets and spaces.

It sets out a series of child-friendly principles for the built environment to provide a vision for Hackney’s built environment that accommodates children and young people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

- **Shaping my borough:** to ensure children and young people in Hackney have the power to influence change in their borough
- **Doorstep play:** to provide the opportunity for play and social interactions immediately outside the front door
- **Play on the way:** to provide opportunities for informal play, things to do and see around the neighbourhood beyond designated parks and playgrounds.
- **People before cars:** to ensure that children, young people, and their carers can move through Hackney safely by walking, cycling or public transport.
- **Contact with nature:** to build in opportunities for everyday access to and connections with nature
- **Places for all:** to design socially inclusive and culturally sensitive places that are accessible and safe for all children and young people to enjoy together.
- **Making spaces children and young people want to be in:** to ensure open spaces are designed to be vibrant, active and safe environments where children and young people want to spend time.
- **Health & wellbeing:** to ensure design of outdoor environments contribute towards healthier foodscapes, reduced exposure to pollution and improved physical and mental wellbeing.

City Plan 2040

The City Plan 2040 is the Council’s statutory development plan, setting out the vision and strategy for the development of the City first and foremost, it is a plan for people. The stated vision is to deliver an ambitious strategy to make Westminster ‘one of the best places to live, work and play. Not just in London or the UK, but globally’. Core values in the plan are geared to Westminster being:

- A city where people choose to live or work because it is enriching.
- A city that focuses on the needs of our community and beyond.
- A city that will be sustainable for generations to come.

Table 2.2.1: City Plan objectives

Objective	Description
1	Increase the stock of high-quality housing and provide variety in terms of size, type and tenure to meet need and promote mixed and inclusive communities, with a clear focus on affordability and family homes.
2	Enable job growth across a range of sectors vital to the UK economy, and ensure those from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from the opportunities this presents.
3	Enhance the West End as London’s primary retail, leisure and visitor destination, and ensure that town centres and high streets can adapt to the challenges they face.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 2.2.1: City Plan objectives

Objective	Description
4	Broaden the city’s cultural offer, while managing the impacts of clusters of uses, and of the evening and night-time economies on existing residential communities.
5	Improve quality of life, climate resilience and tackle environmental challenges by protecting, enhancing, expanding the valuable network of parks and open spaces.
6	Enhance connections by improving options for cycling and walking, prioritising pedestrians, improve interchange between transport modes and incorporate innovative solutions to manage the highway network.
7	Improve air quality, minimise noise and other polluting impacts, and reduce carbon and water demands by minimising detrimental impacts from development.
8	Promote quality in the design of buildings and public spaces, ensuring that Westminster is attractive and welcoming.
9	Making sure our neighbourhoods continue to thrive.
10	Make the most of our unique heritage and historic environment, while encouraging innovations in building technology and improving sense of place.

New schools

The forecasted population growth in Westminster over the next ten years, will further place increased demand on the infrastructure and land usage. Westminster has the fifth lowest London Plan housing target⁸. As such, the Council identifies a need to increase school capacity including the expansion of existing and development of new schools.

The Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Draft 2019) highlights that there have been several projects for primary schools in the last decade to address the shortage of places that were projected from 2010 and came to fruition for a period of 3-4 years until demand dropped significantly. In addition, the Marylebone Boys School, providing 600 places, opened its new building (opened in 2018) in Paddington. The new Sir Simon Milton UTC opened in 2017 in Victoria and provides an additional 200 places in Years 10 & 11.

Further to the above, The Councils Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport (PALS) team have created a standardised ‘Westminster’ Community Use Agreement (CUA) template (based on Sport England’s CUA template). CUA’s are usually put in place for the community use of all new sports/recreational facilities at Schools/Colleges etc., however this will now apply to all sports/recreational facilities across the City.

CUA’s provide certainty and clarity about the intentions concerning community access. CUA’s cover such matters as hours of availability, management arrangements, pricing policy etc. The use of a CUA secures well-managed and safe community access to sports facilities.

CUA’s are usually imposed as a planning condition. Sport England have [a model planning condition](#), which the Council will look to adopt via a supplementary planning document (SPD) as part of the adoption of the City Plan.

⁸ Source: London Plan: Policy H1 Increasing housing supply

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

This will also ensure the Councils delivers against its ActiveWestminster strategy commitments on securing genuine community use of all sports/recreational facilities, not just in their schools and colleges, but more broadly across the City.

Current pupil projections (GLA, 2018) indicate a decline in demand for primary school places, and a growing demand for secondary school places in Westminster. There are also significant cross border movements, with Westminster being a net importer of school places. Westminster’s “School Organisation and Investment Strategy” (SOIS) concludes that there are sufficient primary school places in Westminster to cope with future changes in demand. The focus will therefore be around on the provision of sufficient secondary school places through a secondary school expansion programme. The Council will continue to review the capacity of school buildings and sites to create scope for temporary and permanent solutions.

Further to the significant daily population increase in Westminster from workers (c.1m people). Additional research shows that c.50% of secondary school pupils also travel into the City to access schools.

ActiveWestminster: ‘Activate Your City, Lives and Neighbourhoods’ (2018-2022)

The council’s Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport (PALS) strategy; ActiveWestminster - ‘Activate Your City, Lives and Neighbourhoods’ recognises the progress that has been made over the previous decade in developing Westminster as a ‘City of Sport’.

4 Our Vision is to: Activate Your City, Lives and Neighbourhoods

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CITY NEIGHBOURHOODS LIVES

This vision will be at the very heart of all we do and will be achieved by working together and applying our PACE principles of Promote, Activate, Collaborate and Enable. We enable people to be physically active, where, when and how they choose and we will actively promote the fundamental contribution that physical activity, leisure and sport makes in individual physical and mental wellbeing, our economy, our community and the development of our city.

17 Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport Strategy 2018 - 2022 - Activate Your City, Lives and Neighbourhoods

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

This includes investment in the new £28m Moberly Leisure Centre. It, nevertheless, recognises that levels of childhood obesity in the City are high, with nearly one in four Westminster children entering primary school being overweight or obese. Levels of inactivity amongst adults meanwhile is at 20.6%. Three key strategic themes are presented in the strategy as identified in Table 2.2.2.

Table 2.2.2: Key strategic themes of the ActiveWestminster strategy

Theme	Aim
ActiveCity	Activating the city through Planning, Places, Spaces and Events that encourage people to be physically active, where, when and how they choose, and ensure the whole of Westminster can benefit from an attractive, supportive and healthier environment.
ActiveLives,	Activating lives by promoting and facilitating relevant, meaningful opportunities at a personal level, recognising individual motivations, and challenges, by taking a considered life-cycle approach, underpinned by behaviour change models.
ActiveNeighbourhoods	Activating neighbourhoods by enabling connections in our neighbourhoods to ensure opportunities are visible and accessible to all and relevant to local needs

It is recognised that decisions made through the planning system can often provide the opportunity to create the right, supportive and permissive environment to help people get and stay active. High quality streets, parks and spaces can encourage, facilitate, and enable physical activity by default. It can also help focus attention towards less traditional spaces often used by those not participating in physical activity, leisure, and sport.

Specifically, related to the PFS the council's Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport (PALS) service and Planning Department will produce a Planning Obligations SPD and an Active Design SPD. This will now include Sport England's [Active Design guidance](#)⁹, which will ensure that this is used in the day to day work of the Council's planners, urban designers and health professionals and also ensure that the ten Active Design Principles are grounded in the promotion of a healthy community, as expressed within the National Planning Policy Framework from the Department for Communities and Local Government and as set out in the ActiveWestminster strategy.

Some of the key aims of the strategy relating to the PFS include:

- Introducing proactive, engaging and smart signage (e.g. smart activator screens) that encourages, facilitates and guides play, physical activity, leisure and/or sport
- Maximise the use of Parks and Open Spaces for play, physical activity, leisure and/or sport
- Adopt, advocate, and embed the risk-benefit approach¹⁰ to play, physical activity, leisure and/or sport

⁹ <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

¹⁰ [PSF Risk Benefit Assessment Form Worked Example \(ENG\)](#)

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Westminster Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2017-22)

The council's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 represents the shared vision of health and care organisations, voluntary and community groups, and businesses in the City that *'all people are enabled to be well, stay well and live well, supported by a collaborative and cohesive health and care system'*.

Four objectives are presented, the first of which (Improving outcomes for children and young people) includes the commitment to *'ensure that opportunities for physical activity and volunteering are available and communicated to children and young people and enable front line workers to provide advice (where appropriate) and effectively signpost them to local services and opportunities'*.

Table 2.2.3: Westminster Health and Wellbeing Strategy objectives

Objective	Description
1	Improving outcomes for children and young people
2	Reducing the risk factors for, and improving the management of, long term conditions such as dementia
3	Improving mental health through prevention and self-management
4	Creating and leading a sustainable and effective local health and care system.

A Partnership Approach to Open Spaces and Biodiversity in Westminster (2019)

The document recognises an overall lack of play facility provision in Westminster, with a shortage of facilities geared towards older children / young people. It is highlighted that there are some areas of the City which have a deficiency in play and informal recreational facilities and a higher concentration of children (i.e., Church Street, Pimlico, Little Venice, East Marylebone, and Soho).

The Council is consequently keen to take opportunities to add play and informal recreational facilities in such areas, whenever and however they arise (including opportunities such as 'Play Street' initiatives, as part of the council's overall ActiveStreets programme).

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Population projections to 2041

The ONS projections indicate a rise of 14.1% in Westminster’s population (+34,176) over the 25 years from 2016 to 2041. Over this extended timeframe fluctuations are seen in rise and fall at different points across most age groups.

Table 2.2.4: Westminster - ONS projected population (2016 to 2041)

Age (years)	Number			Age structure %			Change 2016 – 2040		
	2016	2028	2040	2016	2028	2040	2016	2028	2040
0-15	39,834	40,396	38,257	16.5%	15.3%	13.9%	100.0%	101.4%	96.0%
16-24	26,014	30,246	30,107	10.8%	11.5%	10.9%	100.0%	116.3%	115.7%
25-34	51,385	44,046	48,695	21.2%	16.7%	17.6%	100.0%	85.7%	94.8%
35-44	42,305	41,208	36,844	17.5%	15.6%	13.3%	100.0%	97.4%	87.1%
45-54	31,236	36,625	35,151	12.9%	13.9%	12.7%	100.0%	117.3%	112.5%
55-64	22,151	30,650	33,544	9.2%	11.6%	12.1%	100.0%	138.4%	151.4%
65+	29,049	40,191	53,551	12.0%	15.3%	19.4%	100.0%	138.4%	184.3%
Total	241,974	263,362	276,150	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.8%	114.1%

Several key points for Westminster are outlined below:

- One of the most notable points is the progressive rise in the number of 16-24-year-olds, rising by +4,232 (+16.3%) over the first half of the projection (to 2028).
- In contrast, there is predicted to be decline in the number of 25-34-year-olds, -14.3% in the first period (-7,339) followed by growth back to -5.2% (-2,690) in the second period.
- There is a continuous increase in the numbers of persons aged 65+. This represents an increase of +384% (+11,142) in the first period continuing to rise to +84.3% (+24,502) between 2016 and 2040. While the age group represented 12.0% of Westminster’s population in 2016 it is projected to be 19.4% of the total by 2040

PART 3: METHODOLOGY

This section details the methodology undertaken as part of the report. The key stages are:

- 3.1: Auditing local provision
- 3.2: Quality and value
- 3.3: Quality and value thresholds

3.1 Auditing local facilities (supply)

The KKP Field Research Team undertook the site audit scoring for this study initially in Autumn 2019 and updated in Summer 2020 and Spring 2021. All known play and informal recreational facilities provision are identified, mapped and assessed to evaluate site quality and value.

Parks and open spaces that contain play and informal recreational facilities provision have been identified, mapped, and assessed. Other parks and open spaces have been included but not assessed for the purposes of this study. A total of 152 sites have been identified for inclusion.

Database development

All information relating to sites is collated in the project database¹¹. All sites identified and assessed as part of the audit are recorded within the database. The database details for each site are as follows:

Data held on open spaces database (summary)

- KKP reference number (used for mapping)
- Site name
- Ownership (if known)
- Management (if known)
- Typology
- Size (hectares)
- Site audit data

Sites are primarily identified by KKP in the audit using official site names, where possible, and/or secondly using road names and locations.

¹¹ Supplied as an Excel electronic file

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3.2 Quality and value

Each assessed site receives separate quality and value scores. This also allows for application of a high and low quality/value matrix to further help determine prioritisation of investment.

Quality and value are fundamentally different and can be unrelated. For example, a site of high quality may be inaccessible and, thus, be of little value, whereas a lower quality site may be the only one in an area and thus be immensely valuable. As a result, quality and value are also treated separately in terms of scoring.

Analysis of quality

Data collated from site visits is initially based upon those derived from the Green Flag Award scheme (a national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales, operated by Keep Britain Tidy). This is utilised to calculate a quality score for each site visited. Scores in the database are presented as percentage figures. The quality criteria used for the open space assessments carried out for all open space typologies are summarised in the following table.

Quality criteria for site visit (score)

- Physical access, e.g., public transport links, directional signposts
- Personal security, e.g. site is overlooked, natural surveillance
- Access-social, e.g., appropriate minimum entrance widths
- Parking, e.g., availability, specific, disabled parking
- Information signage, e.g., presence of site information, notice boards
- Equipment and facilities, e.g., adequacy and maintenance of provision such as seating, bins, toilets, etc
- Site problems, e.g., presence of vandalism, graffiti
- Healthy, safe, and secure, e.g., fencing, gates, staff on site
- Maintenance and cleanliness, e.g., condition of general site & features

For the provision for children, young people and families, a non-technical visual assessment of the whole site is used. This includes assessing general equipment and surface quality/appearance plus ancillary facilities such as seating, signage, and bins. This differs, for example, from an independent Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) review, which is a more technical assessment of equipment in terms of play and risk assessment grade.

Analysis of value

Site visit data plus desk-based research is calculated to provide value scores for each site identified. Value is defined in best practice guidance in relation to the following three issues:

- Context of the site i.e., its accessibility, scarcity value and historic value.
- Level and type of use.
- The wider benefits it generates for people, biodiversity, and the wider environment.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

The value criteria set for audit assessment is derived as:

Value criteria for open space site visits (score)

- Level of use (observations only), e.g., evidence of different user types throughout day, located near school and/or community facility
- Context of site in relation to other similar provision
- Structural and landscape benefits, e.g., well located, high quality defining the identity/ area
- Ecological benefits, e.g., supports/promotes biodiversity and wildlife habitats
- Educational benefits, e.g., provides learning opportunities
- Social inclusion and health benefits, e.g., promotes civic pride, community ownership and a sense of belonging; helping to promote physical and mental well-being
- Amenity benefits and a sense of place, e.g., attractive places that are safe and well maintained; helping to create specific neighbourhoods and landmarks
- Economic benefits, e.g., enhances property values, promotes economic activity and attracts people from near and far

Children’s and young people play, and informal recreational facilities provision is scored for value as part of the audit assessment. Value in particular, is recognised in terms of size of sites and the range of equipment it hosts. For instance, a small site with only one or two items is likely to be of a lower value than a site with a variety of equipment catering for wider age ranges.

3.3 Quality and value thresholds

To determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the results of the site assessments are colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The primary aim of applying a threshold is to identify sites where investment and/or improvements may be required. It can also be used to set an aspirational quality standard to be achieved in the future and to inform decisions around the need to further protect sites from future development (particularly when applied with its respective value score in a matrix format).

In effect, there is a maximum score a site can potentially receive. A sites quality percentage is its actual score divided by the potential maximum score it could achieve for that type of provision (e.g. if a site scores 80 and the maximum it could achieve is 100; it will have a quality percentage of 80%).

Quality thresholds are therefore adjusted to better reflect average scores for each typology. Consequently, the baseline threshold is amended to better reflect this.

Table 3.3.1: Quality and value thresholds by typology

Typology	Quality threshold	Value threshold
Parks and open spaces	60%	20%
Provision for children, young people and families	60%	20%

For value, there is no national guidance on the setting of thresholds. The 20% threshold applied is derived from our experience and knowledge in assessing the perceived value of sites. Whilst 20% may initially seem low it is a relative score - designed to reflect those sites that meet more than one aspect of the criteria used for assessing value.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

3.4 Audit overview

Within Westminster there is a total of 153 sites, equating to over 442 hectares of play and informal recreational facilities and parks and open spaces. The largest contributors to provision are parks and open spaces.

Table 3.4.1: Overview of audit

Typology	Number of sites	Total amount (hectares) ¹²
Play and informal recreational facilities	96	6
Park and open spaces	57	436
Total	153	442

The number of sites for each typology may not be fully reflected in the number of sites to receive a quality and value score. This could be due to a variety of reasons. The typology specific sections detail why any sites may not have received a quality and value score.

¹² Rounded to the nearest whole number

PART 4: PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

4.1 Introduction

This includes areas that are generally ‘free-to-use’ and designed primarily for play, informal activities, communal recreation and/or social interaction including, but not limited to; playgrounds, other equipped play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGAs), outdoor gyms/calisthenics training areas, skateboard/roller-sports areas, parkour parks and outdoor table tennis tables.

4.2 Current facilities

A total of 96 unique sites in Westminster are identified as informal recreational facilities. This combines to create a total of over five hectares. No site size threshold has been applied and as such all known provision is identified and included within the audit. For scoring purposes, some sites are assessed collectively as provision is adjacent.

Table 4.2.1: Distribution of play facilities

Analysis	Play provision		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)
Westminster	96	5.70	0.02

The current resident population in Westminster is c.255,000¹³. The population figure is used to help determine the current provision level. Westminster has a current provision level of 0.02 hectares per 1,000 population.

Key in Westminster is the increase in the daily population figures which suggests that the City population quadruples each day from its base of c.255,000 to over a million. This creates additional demand for informal recreational facilities. By 2040, ONS projections indicate a population increase to 276,150.

Fields in Trust (FiT) suggests 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population as a guideline quantity standard. Overall, the current provision level of 0.02 hectares per 1,000 population in Westminster is below the FiT recommended standard.

The range of play and informal recreational facilities provision in Westminster has been recognised as containing one of seven types of facility. This has been audited to help analyse potential gaps in age-appropriate forms of play and informal recreational facilities across the City.

Table 4.2.2: Types of play and informal recreational facilities

Play provision							
Toddler	Junior	MUGA	Basketball	Fitness	Table Tennis ¹⁴	Skateboard/ Roller-Sports	Parkour
46	45	27	2	9	35	1	2

¹³ ONS 2018 Mid-Year Estimates

¹⁴ Only audited if forming part of wider play/park provision and present (seasonal variations)

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Toddler provision consists of typically equipped play facilities typically associated with playgrounds. This is usually perceived to be for children of a younger age, typically under 8-years old. Junior provision can include equipped sites providing more robust equipment catering to older age ranges, typically 8 years and over. This can also incorporate facilities such as skate/roller-sports parks, basketball courts and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs). Often sites are observed as featuring more than one type of play and informal recreational facility.

Westminster also has some unique play and informal recreational provision and related facilities and aspirations worth highlighting:

Parkour

Westminster is home to the first purpose built outdoor managed Parkour Park (L.E.A.P Parkour Park) in the UK. It was built in 2011 and designed to be a safe environment for people to practice the sport. It mimics an urban landscape with walls, rails, and stairs for individuals to vault and scale. There are free training programmes offered by WCC for children ages 8-19 years old.

The council, through its Physical Activity, Leisure and Sport strategy (Active Westminster 2018-2022¹⁵) has identified a need to support the development of Parkour in the City as a new flexible format of getting and keeping people active.

This stance is reiterated through work at Paddington Recreation Ground to enhance several sporting aspects of the site including the creation of a new Parkour park¹⁶ next to the artificial pitches.

Although there are currently no dedicated Parkour “clubs” within Westminster the provision is well used by individuals and surrounding organisations such as UCL Parkour and Esprit Concrete, both of which, are based in Camden.

Table tennis

‘Ping’ London has been running since 2010 and to date 35 tables have been placed within sites in Westminster. This is comprised of six permanent, 15 semi-permanent and 14 temporary tables located across a range of sites as detailed below.

Table 4.2.3a: Outdoor table tennis - current supply

Site name	Table type	No. of tables
Beethoven Estate (Beethoven Centre)	Outdoor Temporary Table	1
The Avenues Youth Project	Outdoor Temporary Table	1
Broadcasting House	Unknown	1
Cavendish Square	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Chinatown (The Horse & Dolphin Yard)	Outdoor Temporary Table	2
Churchill Gardens Hall	Outdoor Temporary Table	2
Golden Square	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	2
Hallfield Estate	Outdoor Temporary Table	1
Lydford Tenant & Residents Hall	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Maida Hill Market	Outdoor Temporary Table	2

¹⁵https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ev_env_017_active_westminster_strategy_2018_2022_wcc_2019.pdf

¹⁶ Installed April 2021

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 4.2.3a: *Outdoor table tennis - current supply*

Site name	Table type	No. of tables
Marble Arch	Unknown	2
Paddington Street Gardens	Outdoor Permanent Table	2
Pimlico Estate	Outdoor Temporary Table	1
Queens Park Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Soho Square	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	2
St John's Wood Church Ground Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
St. Anne's Churchyard Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
St. George's Square	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Temple Roof Terrace	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Victoria Embankment Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	2
Whitehall Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Regents Park	Outdoor Permanent Table	1
Paddington Central (Outside Beany Café)	Outdoor Permanent Table	4
Total		35

Table Tennis England is also to fund the following new tables:

Table 4.2.3b: *Outdoor table tennis supply - new installations*

Site name	Table type	No. of tables
Lisson Grove	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	2
Edbrooke Road Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Lillington and Longmoore Garden Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Ebury Bridge Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Crompton Street Shelter (Homeless)	Indoor Table	1
Marylebone Project (Homeless)	Indoor Table	1
Caxton Youth Club (Disabled youth)	Indoor Table	1
Brunel Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Peabody Avenue	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Tachbrook Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Westbourne Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Pimlico Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Ebury Square	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Avenues Youth Club (Deprived Community)	Indoor Table	1
MBS Youth Club (BAME Community)	Indoor Table	1
North Padd Youth Club (Youth Crime)	Indoor Table	1
Churchill Gardens Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Valley Royal House	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Abbotts Manor Estate	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Grosvenor Gardens	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Paddington Recreation Ground	Outdoor Semi- Permanent Table	1
Total		22

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Outdoor Gyms / Callisthenics

There are nine sites in Westminster identified with outdoor gym / callisthenics apparatus.

Table 4.2.4: *Outdoor gyms / Callisthenics supply*

Site name	Outdoor gym	Callisthenics
Paddington Recreation Ground	✓	✓
St John's Wood Church Ground	✓	
Millbank Gardens	✓	
Queens Park Gardens	✓	
Westbourne Green Open Space	✓	✓
Hallfield	✓	
Hyde Park (Seniors Playground)	✓	
Victoria Embankment Gardens	✓	
Edbrooke Gardens	✓	✓

Provision at Westbourne Green includes specific callisthenics facilities. New provision has also been provided at Paddington Recreation Ground. As part of the play provision refurbishment at Wessex Gardens, new outdoor gym equipment is also being proposed.

CycloPlay facility

There are no purpose-built 'learn-to-ride' and/or BMX/Pump Track facilities within Westminster with the closest cycling facilities at Lee Valley Velopark (London Borough of Newham) or Herne Hill Velodrome (LB Southwark).

High demand for cycling is identified within Westminster; and as such the Council had developed proposals to develop an area of Paddington Recreation Ground to form a CycloPlay, facility like those developed by British Cycling in Nottingham and Gravesham. Consultation with British Cycling suggests support for such a scheme and that it would be keen to identify potential for linking with their 'Ready, Set, Ride' learn to ride scheme. It confirms that there are currently no dedicated learn to ride facilities in London, or safe traffic free areas in general for young people or older people to access despite cycling participation levels being high in the capital. Such a facility would rely on a close network of primary schools and ideally the presence of a tarmac / playground area to allow for progression and skills development.

In addition, if this development took place, it would provide a facility for the wider public to use which in turn could actualise the substantial levels of latent cycling demand within Westminster.

Slacklining

Slacklining is the use of webbing tensioned between two fixed anchor points to balance, walk and perform tricks. It is currently permitted in designated locations within Paddington Recreation ground (identified via signage).

It is not permitted in any other locations as each park and fixture points (typically trees) need to be assessed, in consultation with WCC Tree Officers, for suitability first.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

4.3 Accessibility

Figure 4.3.1 shows the distribution of play and informal recreational facilities. It demonstrates that facility provision is concentrated in areas with a greater population density of people under 18 years of age.

Mapping identifies there is a generally good distribution of play and informal recreation facilities provision across Westminster.

(Figure 4.3.1). The larger gaps to the centre of Westminster (with lower population densities) reflect the location of significant open space such as Hyde Park, Green Park and St James’s Park.

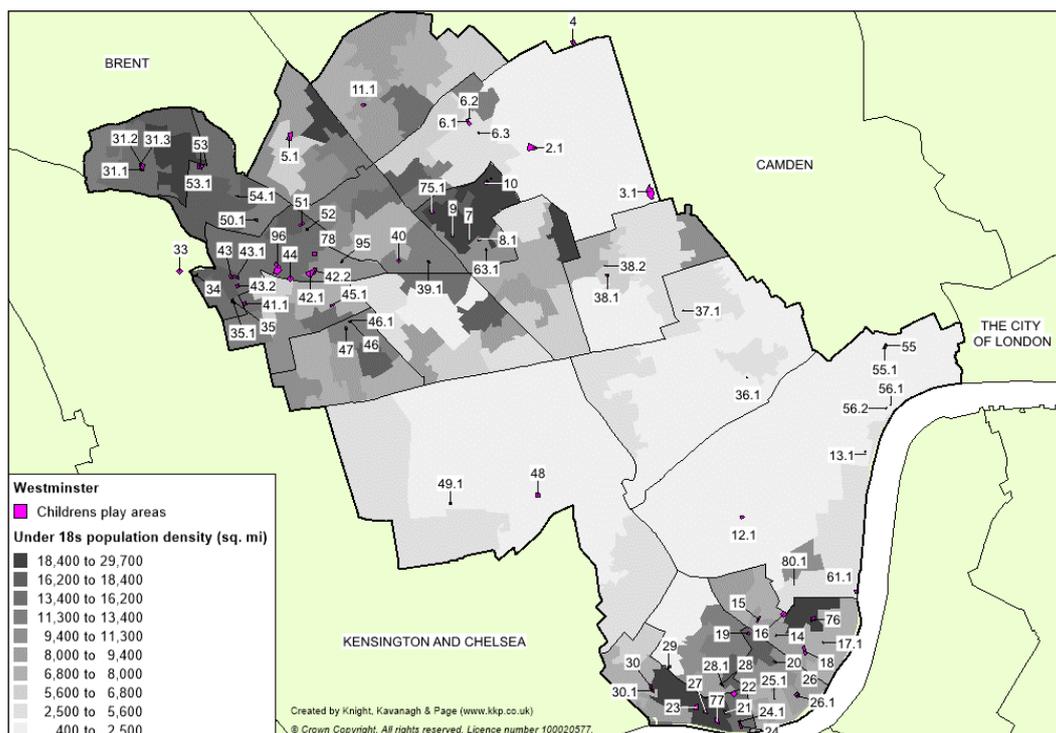


Figure 4.3.1: All play facilities sites mapped against density of people aged under 18

A 400m catchment buffer (in line with FiT guidance) is applied to all play sites catering for toddler and junior ages. This results in some gaps to catchment mapping being observed to the Marylebone, Soho, Little Venice, and Maida Vale areas (Figure 4.3.2).

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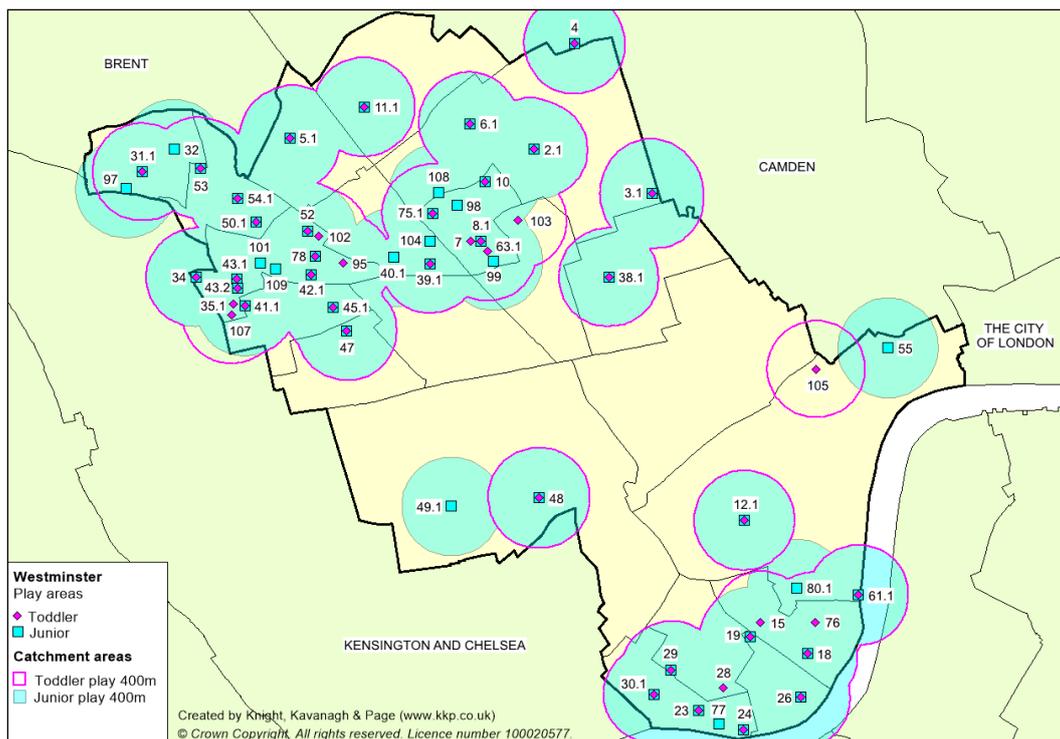


Figure 4.3.2: Play sites mapped with 400m catchment

These gaps are further underlined when considering the obesity levels for children (in reception years 4-5). Figure 4.3.3 highlights these gaps in provision as having greater children obesity levels. This reiterates the importance of access to play in relation to the potential for tackling health challenges.

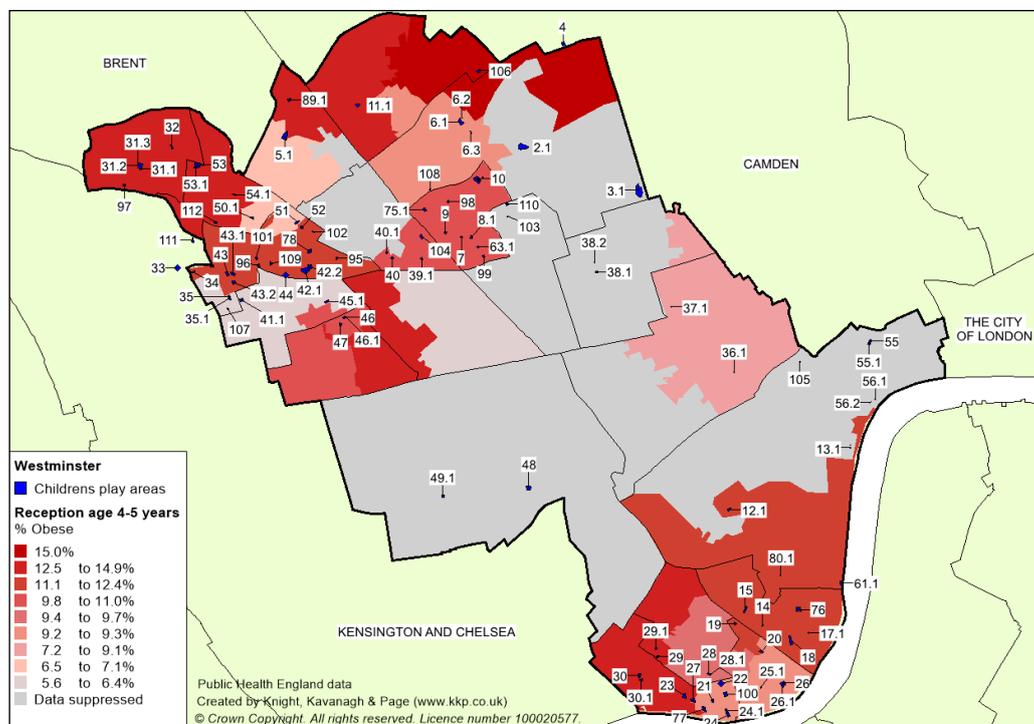


Figure 4.3.3: Play sites mapped with child obesity levels

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Sites containing outdoor gym / callisthenics equipment also demonstrates the distribution of such provision across Westminster (Figure 4.3.4). Gaps to the south are noted.

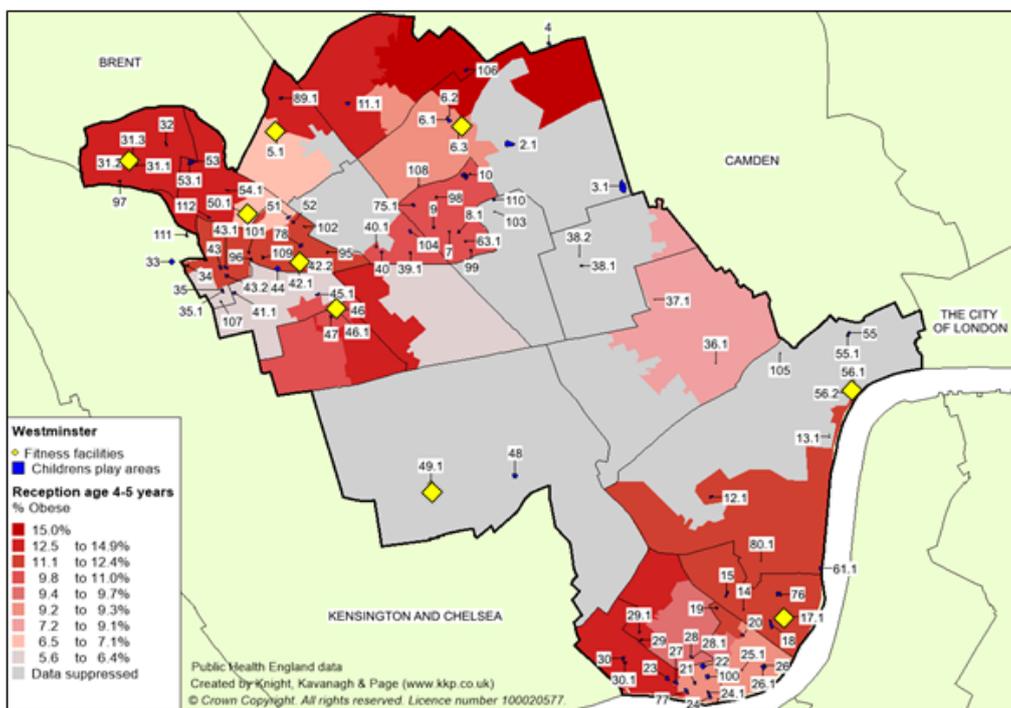


Figure 4.3.4: Location of outdoor gym / callisthenics

For provision such as MUGAs, basketball courts and skateboard/roller-sports parks a greater catchment buffer (equivalent to 1,000m) is applied. This is intended to reflect the likelihood that individuals, of an older age with greater independence, will travel further to access such forms of facilities.

Figure 4.3.5 shows the location of MUGAs, basketball courts, Parkour Parks, and skateboard/roller-sports parks. Gaps in catchment mapping for such forms of provision are again observed to the Marylebone and Soho areas. The Little Venice area is covered by the catchment areas of such forms of provision. However, it is to some extent at the periphery of catchment buffers from more than one site.

The skateboard/roller-sports park at Royal Oak Skatepark (KKP 44) and Baysixty6 Skate Park (KKP 33), located outside of Westminster, as well as the Parkour Park (KKP 96) are identified by a different boundary. This is to demonstrate that these sites are unique to Westminster.

Most of the Westminster area is therefore not covered by a catchment buffer of skatepark or Parkour provision. Most noticeably in denser population areas (also with greater levels of child obesity) such as Church Street, Marylebone, Soho, and Pimlico.

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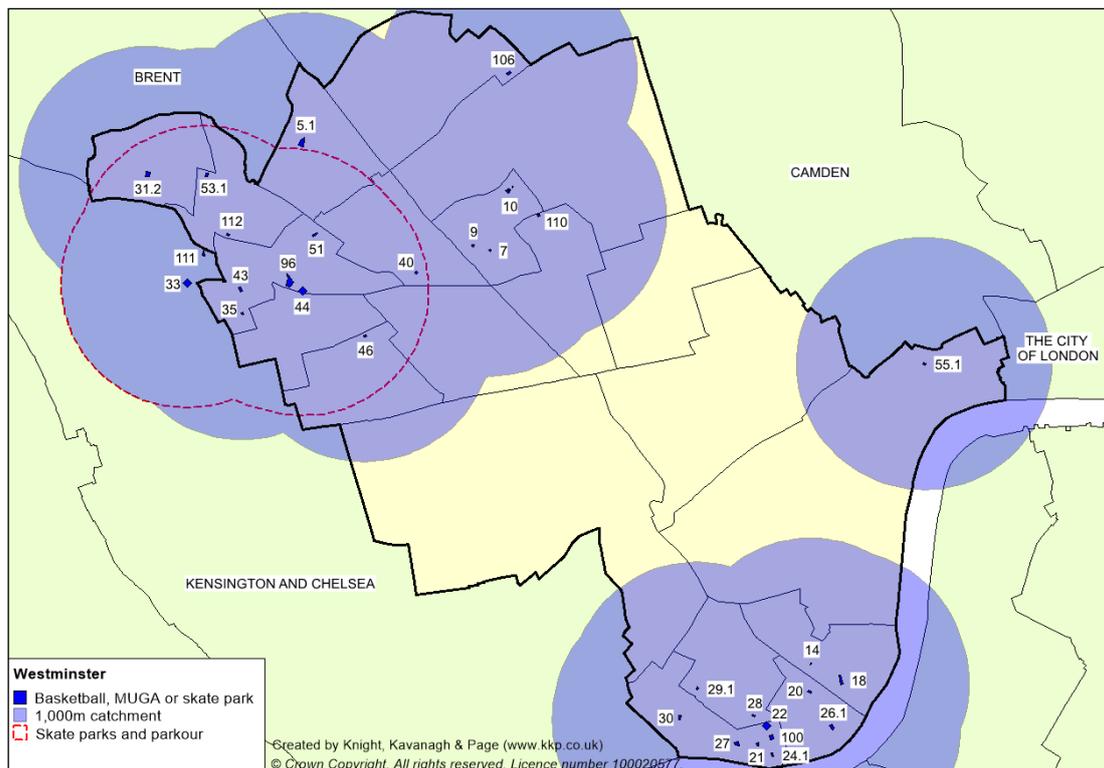


Figure 4.3.5: Youth provision mapped with 1,000m catchment

Table 4.3.1: Key to sites mapped

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
2.1	Regents Park (Hanover Gate) play area – Royal Park	0.2845	77.3%	54.5%
3.1	Regents Park (Marylebone Green) play area – Royal Park	0.4285	84.5%	54.5%
4	Regents Park (Primrose Hill) – Royal Park	0.0832	79.4%	45.5%
5.1	Paddington Recreation Ground play area	0.3500	85.2%	54.5%
6.1	St John's Wood Church Grounds play area	0.1148	79.4%	54.5%
6.2	St John's Wood Church Grounds table tennis	0.0021		
6.3	St John's Wood Church Grounds outdoor gym	0.0068		
7	Medway House Pitch (<i>locked at time of visit</i>)	0.0170	42.3%	20.0%
8.1	Broadley Street Gardens play area	0.0380	75.6%	45.5%
9	Kennet House Pitch	0.0308	40.2%	29.1%
10	Lisson Green Football and Basketball Pitches	0.1797	80.4%	45.5%
11.1	Violet Hill Gardens play area	0.0610	86.6%	54.5%
12.1	St James Park (Wellington Barracks Playground) – Royal Park	0.0605	60.1%	54.5%
13.1	Whitehall Gardens table tennis	0.0057		
14	Grosvenor Pitch	0.0800	55.7%	41.8%
15	Page Street Playground	0.0667	44.0%	29.1%
17.1	Millbank Gardens outdoor gym	0.0089		
18	Causton Street Playground	0.1252	76.3%	54.5%
19	Longmore Gardens Playground	0.0449	80.8%	45.5%
20	Lilington Pitch	0.0614	60.8%	38.2%
21	Bramwell Pitch (Churchill Gardens Road)	0.0418	57.7%	32.7%
23	Paxton Terrace North Playground	0.1080	78.7%	41.8%

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 4.3.1: Key to sites mapped

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
24	Churchill Gardens Playground	0.0754	83.2%	54.5%
24.1	Churchill Gardens MUGA	0.0399		
25.1	St Georges Square Gardens table tennis	0.0034		
26	New Trinity Mews Gardens	0.0274	78.4%	50.9%
26.1	New Trinity Mews Gardens MUGA	0.0816		
27	Lutyens/Chippendale MUGA	0.1011	56.4%	45.5%
28	Russell House MUGA	0.0206	60.8%	32.7%
28.1	Russell House play area	0.0123		
29	Abbots Manor Playground	0.0348	81.4%	54.5%
29.1	Abbots Manor MUGA	0.0273		
30	Ebury Bridge MUGA	0.0672	79.4%	45.5%
30.1	Ebury Bridge play area	0.0393		
31.1	Queens Park Gardens play area	0.0212	78.0%	54.5%
31.2	Queens Park Gardens MUGA	0.1300		
31.3	Queens Park Gardens outdoor gym	0.0212		
32	Mozart Lawes Playground (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0374		
33	Baysixty6 Skate Park ¹⁷ (<i>not in Westminster</i>)	-		
34	St Luke's Road Playground	0.0400	73.2%	41.8%
35	Wessex Gardens MUGA	0.0228	77.3%	41.8%
35.1	Wessex Gardens play area	0.0450		
36.1	Golden Square Garden table tennis	0.0022		
38.1	Paddington Street Gardens play area	0.0406	75.3%	54.5%
38.2	Paddington Street Gardens table tennis	0.0037		
39.1	St Mary's Churchyard play area	0.0253	83.5%	45.5%
40	John Aird Court MUGA	0.0451	67.0%	38.2%
40.1	John Aird Court Playground	0.0311		
41.1	St Stephens Gardens play area	0.0689	79.4%	54.5%
42.1	Westbourne Green play area	0.2695	80.1%	54.5%
42.2	Westbourne Green outdoor gym	0.0657		
43	Brunel MUGA	0.0738	70.4%	41.8%
43.1	Brunel play area 1	0.0782		
43.2	Brunel play area 2	0.0577		
44	Royal Oak Skatepark	0.0400	46.0%	45.5%
45.1	Porchester Square Gardens play area	0.0616	80.1%	54.5%
46	Hallfield MUGA	0.0246	67.4%	41.8%
46.1	Hallfield Pitch table tennis	0.0018		
47	Hallfield Playground	0.0404	73.2%	54.5%
48	Hyde Park (South Carriage Drive Playground) – <i>Royal Park</i>	0.1237	61.2%	54.5%
49.1	Hyde Park (Seniors Playground) – <i>Royal Park</i>	0.0410	45.4%	38.2%
50.1	Edbrooke Road play area	0.0378	71.1%	54.5%
51	Amberley Pitch (Downfield Close)	0.0689	66.0%	45.5%
52	Aldsworth Close Playground	0.0316	79.0%	45.5%
53	Ashmore Road Playground	0.1273	83.5%	54.5%
53.1	Ashmore Road MUGA	0.0565		
54.1	Tamplin Mews Gardens play area	0.0201	79.0%	54.5%
55	Drury Lane Gardens	0.0636	82.1%	45.5%

¹⁷ Located outside of Westminster

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 4.3.1: Key to sites mapped

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
55.1	Drury Lane Gardens MUGA	0.0275		
56.1	Victoria Embankment Gardens table tennis	0.0018		
56.2	Victoria Embankment Gardens outdoor gym	0.0096		
61.1	Horse Ferry Playground	0.0621	45.7%	41.8%
63.1	Lisson Street play area	0.0215	47.1%	23.6%
75.1	Orange Park play area	0.0625	60.8%	41.8%
76	Grosvenor Playground, Vincent St	0.1032	58.4%	38.2%
77	Churchill Gardens Junior Playground	0.0990	79.4%	41.8%
78	Senior Street play area	0.0789	63.9%	41.8%
80.1	Channel 4 Gardens play area (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0111		
89.1	Forty Tree Green (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0524		
95	Lapworth Court (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0228		
96	Parkour Park	0.0415	72.2%	50.9%
97	Avenue Gardens Playground	0.0410	58.4%	41.8%
98	Church Street Fisherton (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0361		
99	Church Street Sheringham Playground (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0229		
100	Churchill Gardens Lenthall Sports Pitch (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0898		
101	Little Venice Brindley Playground	0.0361	64.9%	38.2%
102	Little Venice Barnwood Under 5 (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0188		
103	Marylebone Lascelles House (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0072		
104	Paddington Green Adpar St Playground	0.0712	69.8%	41.8%
105	Soho Vale Royal Playground (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0041		
106	St John Wood Ramsey Sports Pitch	0.0739	42.6%	29.1%
107	Wessex Estate Anglebury Gardens (<i>late inclusion</i>)	0.0111		
108	Wharncliffe Gardens Play Area	0.0062	32.0%	12.7%
109	Alfred Road Playground	0.0269	51.5%	41.8%
110	Four Feathers MUGA	0.0354	69.1%	45.5%
111	Gardens skatepark ¹⁸	-		
112	WECH court/pitch ¹⁹	0.0350	44.7%	41.8%
113	Elmsfield MUGA	0.0400		

Some scoring for sites is completed under one assessment where multiple forms of informal recreational facilities provision exists. Standalone outdoor table tennis and outdoor gym / callisthenics equipment do not receive an assessment score as assessing such provision against the criteria is not appropriate.

Several sites do not receive a quality or value score due to late inclusion and/or being unable to be accessed at time of visit.

¹⁸ Located outside of Westminster

¹⁹ New play and informal recreation facilities being provided at time of writing

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

4.4 Quality and value

To determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). Table 4.4.1 summarises the results of the quality assessment for play provision for children and young people in Westminster. A threshold of 60% is applied to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of the quality scoring and thresholds can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 4.4.1: Quality ratings for play facilities provision in Westminster

Scores (%)			Spread	No. of sites	
Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		<60%	>60%
32%	67%	87%	55%	17	48

Quality of provision is generally good across Westminster with 74% of assessed sites rating above the threshold.

There are 17 sites rating below the threshold. No significant concerns are observed at any of the sites. The lower scoring sites are generally attributed to sites lacking ancillary features such as signage, bins and benches.

Higher scoring sites such as Violet Hill Gardens play area (87%), Paddington Recreation Ground play area (85%) and Regents Park (Marylebone Green) play area (85%) are observed as being safe and secure with sufficient litter bins (contributing to the sites cleanliness), seating, signage, and good quality play equipment. The sites generally offer a variety of equipment to a good condition/quality.

Uniquely, the Brunel Play Area²⁰ (70.4%) has been awarded Grade II listed status due to its architectural and design interests. It is a near-complete example of a typical early 1970's urban housing estate having been designed by one of the leading landscape architects of the time, Michael Brown.

It is highlighted that play provision at Wessex Gardens is in the process of being refurbished. New outdoor gym equipment is also being proposed. There are also plans to enhance the WECH informal recreational facilities as part of a wider redevelopment project.

To determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by the Companion Guidance) site assessment scores are colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). Table 4.4.2 summarises the results of the value assessment in Westminster. A threshold of 20% is applied to identify high and low value. Further explanation of the value scoring and thresholds can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 4.4.2: Value ratings for play provision in Westminster

Scores (%)			Spread	No. of sites	
Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		<20%	>20%
13%	46%	55%	42%	1	64

²⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1468979>

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Nearly all play and informal recreational facilities sites in Westminster are rated as being above the threshold for value. Only one site, Wharncliffe Gardens Play Area (13%), rates below the value threshold. The site is identified as containing only one piece of dated static play equipment.

All other sites rating above the threshold demonstrates the role play provision provides in allowing children and young people to play but also the contribution sites make in terms of giving children and young people safe places to learn, for physical and mental activity, to socialise with others and in creating aesthetically pleasing local environments.

Sites scoring particularly high for value tend to reflect a range of quality equipment available. There are 18 sites to rate joint highest for value with 55% including Regents Park (Hanover Gate) play area (Royal Parks), Paddington Recreation Ground play area and Causton Street Playground.

The sites are observed as being well maintained with a good to reasonable variety of equipment, as well as having sufficient access. The sites are also perceived to be well used given their range and quality of equipment, particularly for the highest scoring sites.

Diverse equipment to cater for a range of ages and abilities is important and can significantly impact on value. Provision such as MUGAs, outdoor gym / callisthenics facilities are often highly valued forms of informal recreational. For example, Queens Park Gardens caters for a wide age range of children, young people, families as it contains play equipment and a MUGA. Paddington Recreation Ground contains play equipment and a MUGA which includes a basketball court.

It is also important to recognise the benefits of play and informal recreational in terms of healthy, active lifestyles, social inclusion and interaction between children and young people, plus its developmental and educational value. The importance of play and of children's rights to play in their local communities is essential.

4.5 Management

It needs to be highlighted that the current management arrangements for the various play and informal recreational facilities across Westminster is unnecessarily complex.

There is no single strategic oversight of play and informal recreation facilities across the City. Currently management of provision is spread across a range of departments and/or services of the council including PALS, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, and externally via the Royal Parks.

Consequently, there is a lack of appropriate strategic and operational delivery and management for play and informal recreational facilities. This also creates inconsistent branding and signage.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

4.6 Summary

- There are 96 unique play provision sites; a total of 5.70 hectares.
- FiT suggests 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population as a guideline quantity standard. Overall, there is a current provision level of 0.02 hectares per 1,000 population.
- The mapping highlights generally a good distribution of provision. However, gaps are noted to areas such as Marylebone, Soho, Little Venice, and Maida Vale.
- These areas also have the greater levels of obesity in children in Westminster.
- Exploring opportunities to expand / provide new forms of physical active play in areas to the south is recommended as gaps in provision are noted, particularly provision such as outdoor gyms/calisthenics, smart activator screens, skateparks, parkour and CycloPlay (for the latter, Pimlico Gardens has been identified as an ideal potential location)
- Quality of provision is generally good with 74% of sites assessed as above the threshold. There are 17 sites rating below the threshold although no specific quality issues are highlighted.
- Except for one site, all play areas rate above the threshold for value; reflecting the social, healthy, and developmental benefits provision can provide.

PART 5: PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

5.1 Introduction

This typology often covers urban parks and open spaces (including designed landscapes), which provide accessible high-quality opportunities for informal and/or communal recreation and community events.

5.2 Current provision

There are 57 sites classified as parks and open spaces in Westminster, the equivalent of over 435 hectares. No site size threshold has been applied and, as such, all known sites are included within the typology.

Table 5.2.1: Distribution of parks (including Royal Parks)

Analysis area	Parks and gardens		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)
Westminster	57	435.77	1.71

Westminster has a current provision level of 1.71 hectares per 1,000 head of population. The largest contributor to provision is Hyde Park (231 hectares). Followed by Regents Park (122 hectares), St James Park (24 hectares) and Green Park (20 hectares).

All these sites are Royal Parks which are heavily used by many people including visitors and tourists. If the Royal Parks are omitted from the figures, then Westminster has a total of 35.87 hectares. An equivalent to 0.14 hectares per 1,000 head of population.

Table 5.2.2: Distribution of parks (omitting Royal Parks)

Analysis area	Parks and gardens		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)
Westminster	51	35.81	0.14

FiT suggests 0.80 hectares per 1,000 population as a guideline quantity standard. Table 5.1 and 5.2 shows that overall, Westminster is above this suggested standard if the Royal Parks are included within the figures. If they are omitted, the current provision level drops significantly. This highlights the important role of the Royal Parks to the area.

Table 5.2.3 sets out the list of park sites identified within Westminster. Sites containing play and/or informal recreational facilities have been given a quality and value rating. Sites without a rating do not have any play and/or informal recreational facilities receive as the focus of this study is on play and informal recreation facilities. The Royal Parks do not receive a rating as it can be assumed (given the size, quality/range of facilities and management) that such sites are of a high quality and value.

Table 5.2.3: List of park sites

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
1	Temple Gardens	0.29	No play provision	
2/3	Regents Park (Hanover Gate) – Royal Park	109.62	No play provision	
	Regents Park (Marylebone Green) – Royal Park	12.87	No play provision	
5	Paddington Recreation Ground	6.58	82.2%	63.6%

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 5.2.3: List of park sites

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
6	St John's Wood Church Grounds	1.87	71.7%	50.0%
8	Broadley Street Gardens	0.24	56.0%	54.5%
11	Violet Hill Gardens	0.16	62.8%	40.9%
12	St James Park	24.31	No play provision	
13	Whitehall Gardens	1.64	71.2%	59.1%
17	Millbank Gardens	0.36	No play provision	
25	St Georges Square Gardens	1.31	No play provision	
31	Queens Park Gardens	1.20	75.1%	59.1%
36	Golden Square Garden	0.21	No play provision	
37	Cavendish Square Gardens	0.65	62.0%	40.9%
38	Paddington Street Gardens	0.89	No play provision	
39	St Mary's Churchyard	1.37	61.3%	45.5%
41	St Stephens Gardens	0.20	66.5%	45.5%
42	Westbourne Green Open Space	0.27	60.7%	50.0%
45	Porchester Square Gardens	0.29	63.5%	50.0%
49	Hyde Park – Royal Park	231.02	No play provision	
50	Edbrooke Road	0.26	60.5%	50.0%
54	Tamplin Mews Gardens	0.43	65.8%	40.9%
56	Victoria Embankment Gardens	2.08	73.9%	63.6%
57	Green Park – Royal Park	20.08	No play provision	
58	St James Square	0.83	No play provision	
59	St James Park – Royal Park	0.51	No play provision	
60	Bessborough Gardens	2.05	No play provision	
61	Victoria Tower Gardens – Royal Park	0.30	66.1%	41.8%
62	Abingdon Street Gardens	0.15	No play provision	
63	Lisson Street Community Gardens	0.98	39.4%	23.6%
64	Marble Arch	0.33	No play provision	
65	Ebury Square Gardens	0.41	No play provision	
66	Leicester Square Gardens	1.75	No play provision	
67	Grosvenor Square	0.56	No play provision	
68	Mount Street Gardens	0.31	No play provision	
69	Norfolk Square Garden	0.29	61.1%	41.8%
70	Rembrandt Gardens Little Venice	0.58	No play provision	
71	Soho Square Gardens	0.42	No play provision	
72	Pimlico Gardens	0.55	No play provision	
73	St John's Gardens	0.10	No play provision	
74	Talbot Square Gardens	0.11	No play provision	
75	Orange Park	0.65	No play provision	
79	Berkeley Square	1.03	No play provision	
80	Channel 4 Community Gardens	0.14	No play provision	
81	Christchurch Gardens	0.22	No play provision	
82	Hanover Square	0.27	No play provision	
83	Lower Grosvenor Gardens	0.27	No play provision	
84	Paddington Street Gardens (North)	0.22	No play provision	

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Table 5.2.3: List of park sites

Site ID	Site name	Size (ha)	Quality score	Value score
85	Orange Square	0.09	No play provision	
86	Paddington Green	0.53	No play provision	
87	Parliament Square	0.56	No play provision	
88	Princes Gardens	1.11	No play provision	
89	Randolph Gardens	0.55	No play provision	
90	Riverside Walk Gardens	0.13	No play provision	
91	Shrewsbury Gardens	0.23	No play provision	
93	Sussex Gardens	0.12	No play provision	
94	Upper Grosvenor Gardens	0.28	No play provision	

5.3 Quality and value

To determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by best practice); scores from site assessments are colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). Table 5.3.1 summarises the results of the quality assessment for parks in Westminster. A threshold of 60% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores and thresholds are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 5.3.1: Quality ratings for assessed parks in Westminster

Scores (%)			Spread	No. of sites	
Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		<60%	>60%
39%	65%	82%	43%	2	15

Most assessed parks (88%) rate above the 60% quality threshold. The highest scoring site is Paddington Recreation Ground with an overall score of 82%.

The site is observed through site assessment as having good parking (including disabled parking), informative signage, well maintained pathways, ample seating, and litter bins. It also benefits from having a café, toilets, outdoor gym, tennis courts, table tennis and an athletics track attracting many visitors. Furthermore, the site is identified as having good personal security and an attractive landscape.

Green Flag

The Green Flag Award scheme is licensed and managed by Keep Britain Tidy. It provides national standards for parks and greenspaces across England and Wales. Public service agreements identified by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) highlight the importance placed on Green Flag status as an indicator of high quality. This in turn impacts upon the way parks and gardens are managed and maintained.

A survey conducted by improvement charity GreenSpace highlights that parks with a Green Flag Award provide more satisfaction to members of the public compared to those sites without it. The survey of 16,000 park users found that more than 90% of Green Flag Award park visitors were very satisfied or satisfied with their chosen site, compared to 65% of visitors to non-Green Flag parks.

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

At present, there are 25 Green Flag sites in Westminster (including three cemeteries).

Table 5.3.2: Green Flag sites in Westminster

Site name	
Broadley Street Gardens	
East Finchley Cemetery	
Ebury Square Gardens	
Rembrandt Gardens	
Leicester Square Garden	
Hanwell Cemetery	
Soho Square	
Marble Arch	
Millbank Gardens	
Mill Hill Cemetery	
Mount Street Gardens	
Norfolk Square Gardens	
Paddington Street Gardens	
Paddington Recreation Ground	
Porchester Square Gardens	
Queens Park Gardens	
St. Anne's Churchyard	
St George's Square	
St. John's Gardens (Horseferry Road)	
St. John's Wood Church Grounds	
Talbot Square	
Victoria Embankment Gardens	
Violet Hill Gardens	
Westbourne Green Open Space	
Whitehall Gardens	

There are also further green flag award sites managed by The Royal Parks:

Table 5.3.3: Green Flag Royal Parks in Westminster

Site name	
Brompton Cemetery	
Hyde Park	
St James's Park and The Green Park	
The Regent's Park	

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

Value

To determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by the Companion Guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). Table 5.3.4 summarises the results of the value assessment for parks in Westminster. A threshold of 20% is applied to identify high and low value. Further explanation of how the value scores are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 5.3.4: Value ratings for assessed parks in Westminster

Scores (%)			Spread	No. of sites	
Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		<20%	>20%
24%	47%	64%	40%	0	17

All assessed parks score above the threshold for value.

The highest scoring sites for value (64%) are Paddington Recreation Ground and Victoria Embankment Gardens.

Victoria Embankment Gardens is a green flag award site. The site is observed as a magnificent park with good planting and many features. It has a memorial and monuments, enhancing cultural value.

Moreover, it has the additional benefit of a café, adding economic value to the site. The good network of pathways and outdoor table tennis tables further provide high social and amenity value.

As highlighted earlier, Paddington Recreation Ground is noted as having numerous sporting and recreational features which contribute to the site’s amenity, social and health benefits.

One of the key aspects of the value placed on parks provision is their ability to function as a multi-purpose form of open space provision. Parks provide opportunities for local communities and individuals to socialise and undertake a range of different activities, such as physical activity, dog walking and taking children to the playground. Taking all this into account, parks and gardens are recognised as being heavily integrated into people’s everyday lives.

5.4 Summary

- There are 57 sites classified as parks and gardens: equivalent to nearly 436 hectares.
- Fields in Trust (FiT) suggests 0.80 hectares per 1,000 population as a guideline quantity standard. Overall, Westminster has 1.71 hectares per 1,000 population if all provision is included. If the Royal Parks are omitted, Westminster has 0.14 hectares per 1,000 population.
- The largest contributors to provision are Hyde Park (231 ha) and Regents Park (122 ha)
- Most assessed parks (88%) rate above the quality threshold. This is reflective of the overall standard of provision demonstrated by the high number of sites with a Green Flag Award.
- All assessed parks rate above the threshold for value reflecting the high social, health and ecological benefits such sites provide.

PART 6: MANAGEMENT OF PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

6.1 Introduction

The following section provides an overview to the management of play and informal recreation facilities and a summary to the findings of the study.

6.2 Current arrangements

The current management arrangements for play and informal recreation facilities across Westminster is unnecessarily complex. There is currently no single strategic approach to play and informal recreation facilities across the City. Management of sites is spread across a range of council departments and/or services including Community Services (which includes PALS and Parks and Open Spaces), Housing, and externally with the Royal Parks.

Consequently, there is a lack of appropriate strategic and operational delivery and management for play and informal recreation facilities. This also creates inconsistent branding and signage across the City.

6.3 Quality and value

Overall quality and value of play and informal recreation provision is very good. Three quarters of play and informal recreation sites rate above the quality threshold and all (except for one site) rate above the value threshold.

This demonstrates the role provision provides in allowing children and young people to play and to get and stay active, but also the contribution sites make in terms of giving children and young people safe places to learn, for physical and mental activity, to socialise with others and in creating aesthetically pleasing local environments.

Whilst quality is overall very good, there are a several sites (16) rating below the quality threshold. Generally, no significant concerns are observed at any of the sites. However, lower scoring sites are often attributed to a lack of ancillary features such as signage, bins, and benches. This is likely a reflection to the inconsistency in branding and signage due to differences in site management cited above.

6.4 Monitoring and updating

It is important that there is regular annual monitoring and review against the actions identified in the strategy by a steering group. This should be led by the council's Community Services team and include the various departments/services within the council and also external stakeholders. Understanding and learning lessons from how the PFS has been applied should be a key component of monitoring its delivery and be an on-going role of the steering group.

As a guide, if no review and subsequent update has been carried out within three years of the PFS being signed off by the steering group, the council shall consider the PFS and the information on which it is based to be out of date.

The nature of the supply for play and informal recreation facilities will likely to have changed over the three years. Therefore, without any form of review and update within this time period it would be

Westminster City Council - Play Facilities Strategy (PFS) Strategy and Action Plan

difficult to make the case that the supply and demand information and assessment work is sufficiently robust.

The PFS should be reviewed on an annual basis from the date it is formally signed off by the Steering Group. A review will help to maintain the momentum and commitment built up during its development and, considering the time to develop the PFS, will ensure that the original supply and demand information is no more than two years old without being reviewed.

A review should not be regarded as a particular resource intensive task. However, it should highlight:

- How delivery of the strategy has progressed, and any changes required (e.g. the priority of some outcomes may increase or reduce following the delivery of others).
- How the PFS has been applied and the lessons learnt.
- Any changes to particularly important play and informal recreation facilities and other supply and demand information, what this may mean for the overall assessment work and the key findings and issues.
- Any development of a specific play type.
- Any new or emerging issues and opportunities.

6.5 Summary

- There 153 sites equating to 442 hectares of play and informal recreation facility provision and parks; 96 unique play provision sites (a total of 5.70 hectares) and 57 parks and gardens (a total of 436 hectares).
- Mapping generally highlights a good distribution of play and informal recreation. However, gaps are noted to areas with greater levels of obesity in children such as Marylebone, Soho, Little Venice, and Maida Vale.
- Exploring opportunities to expand / provide new forms of physical active play in areas to the south is recommended as gaps in provision are noted, particularly provision such as outdoor gyms/callisthenics, smart activator screens, skateparks, parkour and CycloPlay (for the latter, Pimlico Gardens has been identified as an ideal potential location)
- Quality of provision is generally good with 75% of sites assessed as above the threshold. However, lower scoring sites are often attributed to a lack of ancillary features such as signage, bins and benches. This is likely a reflection to the inconsistency in branding and signage due to sites being managed by a variety of organisations.
- Value is very high; reflecting the social, health and developmental benefits provision provides.

PART 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

The strategic recommendations for the PFS have been developed via the combination of information gathered during site visits and analysis. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across play and informal recreation facilities and may not be specific to just one type of facility.

Recommendation 1

To **protect** the existing supply of play and informal recreation facilities where it is needed for meeting current and future needs.

Actions:

- a. Ensure, through use of the PFS, play and informal recreational facilities are protected through the implementation of the City Plan 2040
- b. Keep data up to date to reflect changes over time

Action a) Ensure, through use of the PFS, play and informal recreational facilities are protected through the implementation of the City Plan 2040

All existing play and informal recreational facilities should initially be protected and therefore no provision can be deemed surplus to requirements. The City Plan 2040 as the local planning policy should echo this situation. Furthermore, the NPPF paragraph 97 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings, or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits for which clearly outweigh the loss.

The PFS should be used to help inform Development Management decisions that affect existing or new play and informal recreational facilities provision. All applications are assessed by the Local Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis, considering site specific factors.

Action b) Keep data up to date to reflect changes over time

The PFS provides a snapshot in time. Whilst significant changes are not common, inevitably over time changes in provision occur through creation of new provision, possible loss of existing provision and/or alterations to site boundaries and management. Population change and housing growth are also another consideration to review when undertaking any form of update as this may impact on quantity provision levels and standards. It is therefore important for the Council to undertake regular reviews of the data (i.e., every 2-3 years) to ensure decisions are being based on evidence which is as accurate as possible.

Recommendation 2

To **enhance** play and informal recreation facilities and ancillary facilities through improving quality and management of sites.

Actions:

- a. Explore opportunities to enhance lower quality scoring sites
- b. Work with partners to establish consistency of branding/signage
- c. Secure developer contributions

Action a) Explore opportunities to enhance lower quality scoring sites

The approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality to the applied standards (i.e., high quality) where possible. This is especially the case if the site is deemed to be of high value to the local area. Therefore, they should initially be protected, if they are not already so, for their quality to be improved. Section 4.4 provides a summary of low quality/value sites which should be given consideration for enhancement if possible.

Action b) Work with partners to establish consistency of branding/signage

There is no single strategic oversight of play and informal recreation facilities across the City. Currently management of provision is spread across a range of departments and/or services of the council including Community Services (which includes PALS and Parks and Open Space), Housing, and externally via the Royal Parks.

Consequently, there is a lack of appropriate strategic and operational delivery and management for play and informal recreational facilities. This also creates inconsistent branding and signage.

To address this and community need, target priority areas and reduce provision duplication, a coordinated approach to strategic investment is required. In delivering this recommendation, the Council should maintain a regular dialogue with local partners.

Although some investment in new provision will not be made by the Council directly, it is important that a co-ordinated approach to facility development occurs. This is to ensure that the extent to which it addresses community need is optimised and duplication is avoided.

Action c) Secure developer contributions

This strategy should help inform policies and supplementary planning documents in setting out the approach to securing contributions through new housing development, which is especially pertinent to Westminster given the level of identified housing growth.

If new provision cannot be sufficiently provided on-site it may be possible to seek to enhance the quality of existing provision and/or improve access and linkages to existing sites. In some instances, a development may be located within proximity to an existing site. In such cases, it may be more beneficial for an off-site contribution to avoid creation of small incremental spaces so close to existing sites.

Costs required for the enhancement of existing and new provision should be clearly identified and revised on a regular basis.

Recommendation 3

To **provide** new play and informal recreation facilities where there is current or future demand to do so.

Actions:

- a. Encourage new and additional provision to meet gaps in accessibility.
- b. Continue exploring opportunities in provision for older ages to help meet future demand.

Action a) Encourage new and additional provision to meet gaps in accessibility

The accessibility catchment mapping (Section 4.3) identifies that some gaps in provision are observed to the Marylebone, Soho, Little Venice, and Maida Vale areas. These gaps are further underlined when considering the obesity levels for children (in reception years 4-5). This reiterates the importance of access to play in relation to the potential for tackling health challenges.

Gaps in catchment mapping for provision of MUGAs, basketball courts, Parkour Parks and skateboard/roller-sports parks are again observed to the Marylebone and Soho areas. The Little Venice area is covered by the catchment areas of such forms of provision. However, it is to some extent at the periphery of catchment buffers from more than one site.

Most of the Westminster area is not covered by a catchment buffer of skatepark or Parkour Park provision. Most noticeably in denser population areas (also with greater levels of child obesity) such as Church Street, Marylebone, Soho, and Pimlico.

Gaps in sites containing outdoor gym / callisthenics equipment are also noted to the south.

Action b) Continue exploring opportunities in provision for older ages to help meet future demand

As highlighted above, gaps in provision generally catering for older children (i.e. MUGAs, basketball courts, Parkour Parks and skateboard/roller-sports) are noted in some areas. Furthermore, gaps in sites with outdoor gym / callisthenics equipment are also noted to the south.

ONS projected populations indicate a rise of 14.1% in Westminster's population (+34,176) between 2016 to 2041. This includes some noticeable trends which may impact on play and informal recreation provision.

The number of 16–24-year-olds rises by +4,232 (+16.3%) over the first half of the projection (to 2028). There is also a continuous increase in the numbers of persons aged 65+. This represents an increase of +384% (+11,142) in the first period continuing to rise to +84.3% (+24,502) between 2016 and 2040. While the age group represented 12.0% of Westminster's population in 2016 it is projected to be 19.4% of the total by 2040.

Both age groups are likely to benefit to increase provision and access to equipment catering for their needs. This will help to meet many of the aims and objectives of the City Plan and wider national agendas for health, activity, and well-being.



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