REPORT OF: Director of Environment

TO: North Area Committee 1/8/2013

WARDS: Arbury, East Chesterton, King's Hedges and West

Chesterton

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEVOLVED DECISION-MAKING FIRST ROUND PRIORITY-SETTING FOR PLAY AREA IMPROVEMENT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Area Committees have devolved decision-making powers over how some types of developer contributions are used. More information about the process and projects funded from developer contributions can be found on the Council's web page (see section 5 of this report).
- 1.2 Local residents and community groups were consulted in October 2012 on ideas for new/improved local facilities to help address the impact of development. In the first priority-setting round, the North Area Committee set three local priorities last November. It was not able, at that stage, to identify a fourth priority (as had been envisaged under devolved decision-making) given a lack of available developer contributions funding, not least for play area improvements.
- 1.3 Supplementary ('provision for children and teenagers') developer contributions were made available to the North Area from the citywide fund in January 2013. The Area Committee in May then considered its options for improving a local play (from the eight suggested for improvement via last autumn's area consultation), but deferred making a decision. Members asked for more information about the possible sites, as well as more demographic and mapping data. These issues are addressed in the appendices to this report:
 - A. 'Virtual tour' of the 8 play area options in the North Area
 - B. Examples of new play equipment that could be provided
 - C. Maps of the catchment areas for each of the eight play areas
 - D. Analysis of children/young people statistics from the 2011 Census.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To identify which play area to improve using developer contributions, as a fourth priority from the first round of devolved decision-making.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 A summary of the eight play area options is set out on the next page. The suggested improvements are illustrations of what may be possible (Appendix C shows what some of the equipment can look like). Once the Area Committee has chosen which play area to prioritise, more specific proposals will be developed in consultation with play area users, neighbours, local councillors and others.
- 3.2 In the first priority-setting round, each area has been invited to identify as many priority projects as there are wards in their area. As the North Area Committee (with four wards) has already set three first round priorities, it is asked to identify one play area for improvement at this stage. This is necessary to ensure that the overall delivery programme of developer contribution-funded projects is fair and consistent across all areas. The second priority-setting round will take place this autumn so there will be a further opportunity for the North Area Committee to consider whether to prioritise further play area improvements, provided that the levels of developer contributions funding allow.
- 3.3 **Available funding:** Adding the (city-wide) supplementary funding (around £47,500) to the existing devolved contributions (around £10,000), the North Area Committee has about £57,500 of 'provision for children and teenagers' contributions for new play equipment. It may also be possible to make this go further by combining it with repairs and renewals funds (eg, where swings need to be replaced).
- 3.4 That said, there are some important constraints that Members will need to take into account in priority-setting. Many play area improvements involve new fencing and landscaping, which has to be funded from 'informal open space' (IOS) contributions: the North Area Committee currently only has around £5,000 available in this contribution type after the allocation of £95,000 to two of its other first round priorities (improving Nun's Way skate park and the BMX track by Brown's Field Community Centre).
- 3.5 Whilst the current constraints on the availability of 'informal open space' funding seem to cut across some of the suggested improvements, there could be some room for manoeuvre.
 - a. Officers are reviewing whether any further 'informal open space' contributions are available to the North Area (eg, where projects have been delivered for less than previously allocated).
 - b. If more 'informal open space' funding cannot be found, however, it may be possible to reduce the scope of landscaping and surfacing work for the core play area improvement to be able to go ahead.

Play area (ward)	Pages	Current Equipment	Suggested improvements (examples on report page 25)		
Alexandra Gardens (Arbury)	6-7, 26, 34	LEAP. Play value C/D. Swing; multi-use activity unit, 2 springies, slide, rocker, swing, climbing frame, bench, fence	Additional multi-activity climbing frame for older children, rotator, plus safety surfacing. Landscaping or reshaping of fenced area. Estimate: £50k (incl. £7.5k IOS)		
Beale's Way (King's Hedges)	8-9 27, 34	LAP. Play value D. 2 swings, pedal roundabout, springy, bench, fence	More for young children: replace swings; new mini-spinning carousel (in addition to existing roundabout); slide; role-play based frame (eg, train or tractor); new surfacing & fence. Estimate: £50k (incl. £15k IOS)		
Blanford Walk (Arbury)	10-11, 28, 34	LAP. Play value was rated D but now seems to be E. 2 springies in large open space	Not to add new equipment at this stage. Review in future in the context of new play areas at the NIAB development		
Chestnut Grove (West Chesterton)	12-13, 29, 34	LEAP. Play value C/D. 2 swings, climbing frame & slide, springy seesaw, fence.	More for young children: replace swings; new roundabout, new mini carousel; fencing and landscaping. Estimate: £50k (incl £15k IOS)		
Discovery Way (East Chesterton)	14-17 30, 34	currently seems to be D. Large modular climbing frame (with	Community proposal for updated/tougher equipment for young children, tree-planting and/or remove the mound (possibly for car-parking). Estimate: £80k (incl 30k IOS)		
		play boards for younger children) and a spinner	Officers suggest more for up to 12s: new swing; role-play based frame; springy; safety surface, fence. Estimate: £55k (incl. £5k IOS for mature trees) and ideally £25k more IOS		
Hawkins Road (King's Hedges)	18-19 31, 34	LAP: Play value D: 3 (should be 4) swings	New swings, role play-based frame (eg, train/tractor), surfacing & seating. Estimate: £25k (incl. £1.5k IOS)		
Lawrence Way (King's Hedges)	20-21, 32, 34	LAP. Play value D: 4 swings & a climbing frame on green	More for older children: new rotator, new spinning net and safety surfacing. Estimate: £30k		
Woodhead Drive (King's Hedges)	22-23, 33, 34	De-commissioned. Equipment removed.	Not to reinstate this play areas: its catchment area is now covered by the new play area at George Nuttall Close		

- 3.6 In addition to the summary table on the previous page, Members will also want to take account of the information provided in the appendices and the considerations that these raise, for example....
 - a. Proximity to 'neighbourhood equipped areas of play' (NEAP) for children and teenagers within 800 metres (eg, those at King's Hedges, Nun's Way, Green End Road & Jesus Green). Examples of those NEAPs in the North Area can be found on report page 24.
 - b. Whether to invest in a larger 'local equipped areas of play' (LEAP) for children within 400 metres (which already have more to offer) or smaller 'local areas of play' (LAP) serving children within 100 metres, some of which (eg, Beales Way, Lawrence Way) could be upgraded to a LEAP as a result.

Maps of the catchment areas for each play area (Appendix C) reflect accessible routes and public rights of way. As Woodhead Drive (LAP) play area has been decommissioned, the map for George Nuttall Close LEAP is shown instead.

- c. How much weight to give to specific ideas recently put forward by local communities. Suggestions made on behalf of Discovery Way play area can be found on report page 16. Whilst proposals to turn open space into more car parking raise questions about how this sits alongside planning policy and would require planning permission, the local engagement is to be welcomed.
- d. At the same time, whether vandalism of play areas should be met with further investment to improve them or whether the funding would be better spent on play areas less prone to damage.
- 3.7 Members also asked for demographic data from the 2011 Census about the numbers of children locally. The most detailed level of information that is available relates to what are known as 'lower super output areas' (SOAs). These are shown on the catchment area maps in Appendix C, while Appendix D sets out the data for all the SOAs which come within the catchment areas for any of the eight play areas under consideration. That said, it is questionable how useful these details will be in identifying a play area for improvement given that the catchment areas for most play areas tend to be made up of a number of SOAs and the SOAs tend to be much larger than the catchment areas for play areas (particularly LAPs).
- 3.8 Even so, it is hoped that the 'virtual tour' in Appendix A and the other analysis, combined with Members' knowledge of their local wards, will enable the Area to decide which play area to prioritise for improvement.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The specific implications of the particular play area that is prioritised will be addressed at the project appraisal stage, including local consultation on specific proposals, assessment of equality and environmental impacts and consideration of any running and maintenance costs for the city council. It is anticipated that the project would be completed by the end of 2014.
- 4.2 Recent tendering exercises for the supply of play area equipment have asked potential suppliers to explain how their products incorporate difference and inclusivity into play area design. This includes aiming to ensure that children with a disability can have the same quality and extent of play experience. These factors have been incorporated into the scoring of tender documents and selection of successful contractors. The same approach will be taken forward and developed for future tendering exercises.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following papers on devolved decision-making and developer contributions were used in the preparation of this report.

- Report to North Area Committee, 16/5/2013
- Report to North Area Committee, 22/11/2012
- Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee, 11/6/2013

These can be found on the 'Committee meeting minutes & agendas' web page (http://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx).

Information on devolved decision-making can be found on the Developer Contributions web page at www.cambridge.gov.uk/S106. There is also a web page with a parks and playgrounds map at www.cambridge.gov.uk/map-of-parks-and-playgrounds.

2011 Census data is available on Cambridgeshire County Council's Cambridgeshire Atlas web pages at (www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/research/researchmaps.htm)

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report, please contact:

Author's name: Tim Wetherfield, Urban Growth Project Manager

Author's phone number: 01223 – 457313

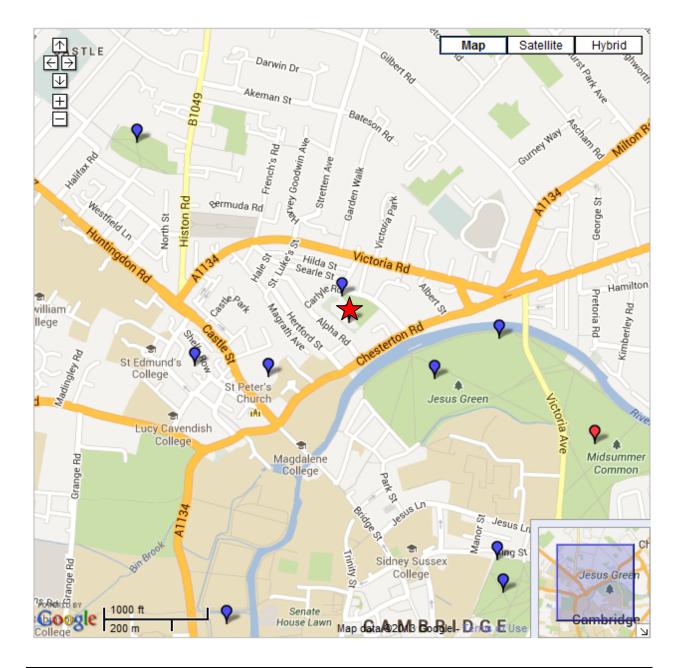
Author's email: tim.wetherfield@cambridge.gov.uk

Virtual tour of the play area options in North Area

- In this appendix, the play area being considered is shown on the maps by a . The blue/red pins denote other parks and playgrounds.
- The photographs were taken at the end of June 2013.
- Play area ratings, from several years ago, relate to Play England criteria for the amount and sophistication of equipment (where A is the highest).

ALEXANDRA GARDENS (Arbury ward) [LEAP]

Location: Whilst Jesus Green play area (itself in the process of being improved) is within 200 metres (the other side of Chesterton Road via a zebra crossing), Alexandra Gardens is the main play area for north of the river and serves both the Arbury and West Chesterton wards.



Current equipment (Play Value rating C/D)

This large, fenced-off play area is intended for infants and juniors, accompanied by an adult. It includes two sit-on 'springies'; a slide; a rocker, a climbing frame and a modular multi-activity play equipment (at the time the photo was taken this was broken and taped off, but the repair has since been made). The play area is located within a large fenced-off area, often used for picnics.









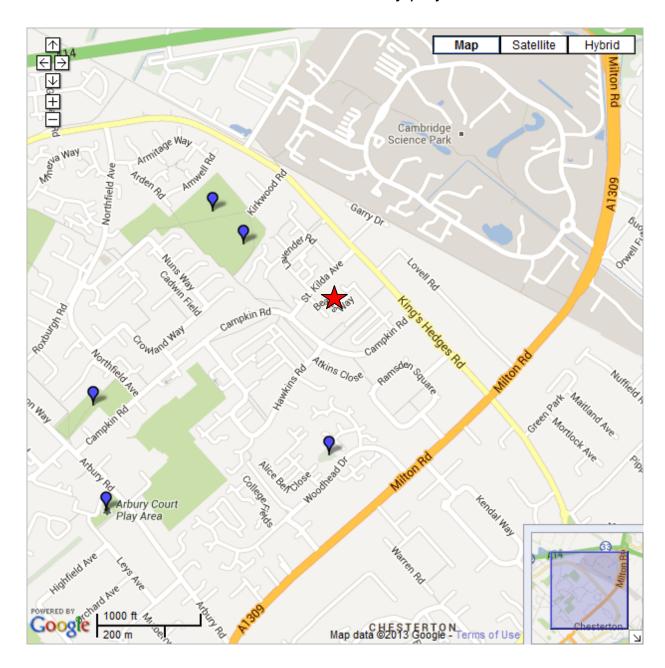
Officers' suggested improvements (Estimate: £50k, including £7.5k IOS)

There is considerable scope for improvement here and for making provision for older children and teenagers. This could include a multi-activity climbing frame and a rotator (see report page 25).

Officers also suggest that the fenced-off area could be landscaped (including planting) or reshaped to make the fence-line less imposing, but the constraints on the availability of informal open space contributions mean that the scope of this work might need to be reduced.

BEALES WAY (King's Hedges ward) [LAP]

Location: Around 200 metres from Nuns Way play area



Current equipment (Play Value rating D)

This is a play area for younger children. The current equipment is OK, if a little dated, but there is not much for the children to play on. There are: two swings (1 junior and 1 infrant); an old-fashioned pedal roundabout (which is a real feature, worth preserving); a sit-on springy (currently with graffiti) and a bench.

The fence around the play area is rickety and broken in places and the path is cracked in places and has seen better days.

Beales Way (continued)









Officers' suggested improvements (Estimate: £50k, incl. £15k IOS))

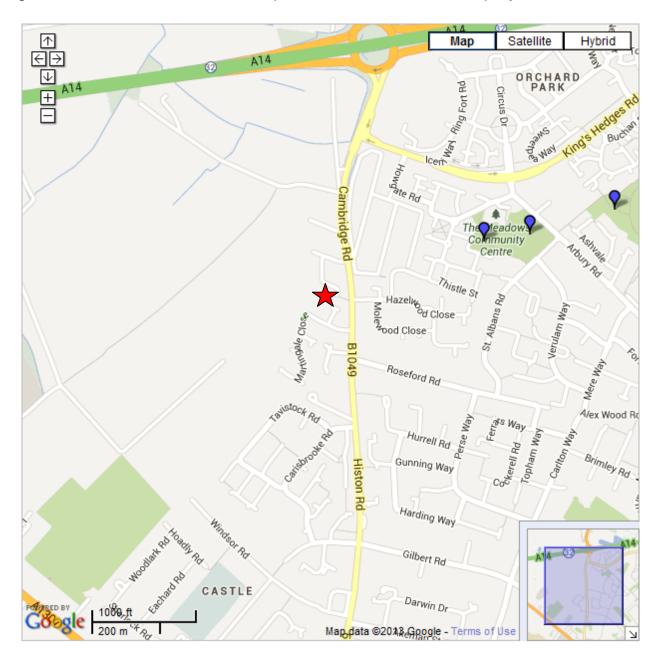
There is plenty of space for development and scope for resdesign here, and it could be possible to provide more equipment for the lower age range.

The swings could do with replacing with ones in line with the latest play standards. Alongside the existing roundabout and springy, there could be room for a slide, a new mini-spinning carousel and a role-play based frame (eg, in the shape of a train or tractor – see report page 25), as well as new safety surfacing.

The fence and gate needs replacing and a new path would be good. However, this may not all be possible unless further informal open space contributions can be found.

BLANFORD WALK (Arbury ward) [LAP]

Location: St Alban's Recreation Ground play area is within 400 metres, albeit that it is on the other side of the B1049 Cambridge Road/Histon Road (via a pelican crossing). It is also worth noting that the land between Histon Road and Huntingdon Road is set to be developed for the major growth site on the NIAB development, which will include play areas.



Current equipment (Play Value rating was D but now probably E)

This large open space just has two sit-on 'springies' for young children. Without anything else to play on, it is questionable how much time children and their carers spend here. Officers would now be minded to give this site the lowest play value rating.

Blanford Walk (continued)







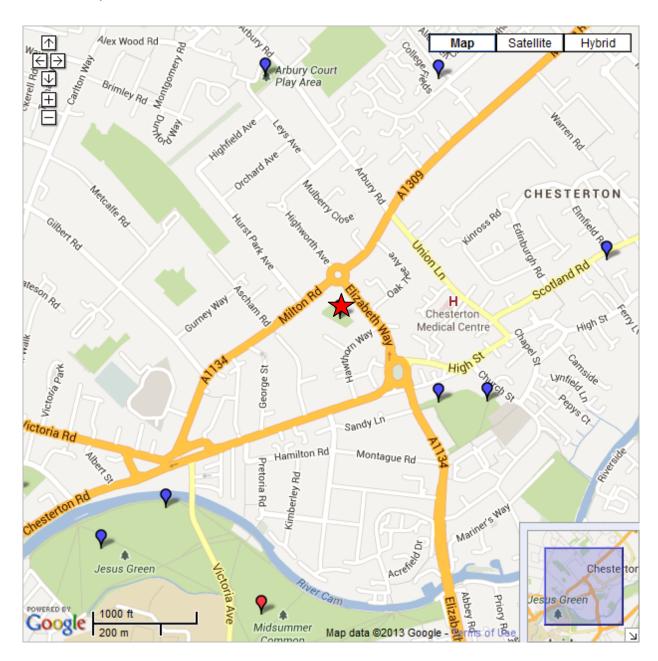
Officers' suggested improvements:

Anecdotal evidence would question the local appetite for more equipment. It remains to be seen whether this play area has a long-term future.

In this context, officers would not recommend additional equipment on this site at this stage. If, however, a clear demand for this play area emerges, alongside existing and emerging play area provision in the vicinity, then this could be reviewed in a future round of devolved decision-making (assuming that funding is available for play area improvements).

CHESTNUT GROVE (West Chesterton ward) [LEAP]

Location: This play area is behind Chestnut Grove. Feedback from the North Area workshop seemed to suggest that awareness of this site (and how to access it) as well as the levels of equipment, needs improving. Chestnut Grove is also in the catchment area for Jesus Green, including the skate park.



Current equipment (Play Value rating C/D)

This is play area for younger children is in good condition but there is not much to play on. There are: two swings, a modular climbing frame with a slide, and a springy see-saw. The area is fenced off and has a bark chip surface. The grassed area provides space for picnics. The path around the play area is uneven, presenting potential tripping hazards and difficulties for access for buggies or wheelchairs.

Chestnut Grove (continued)









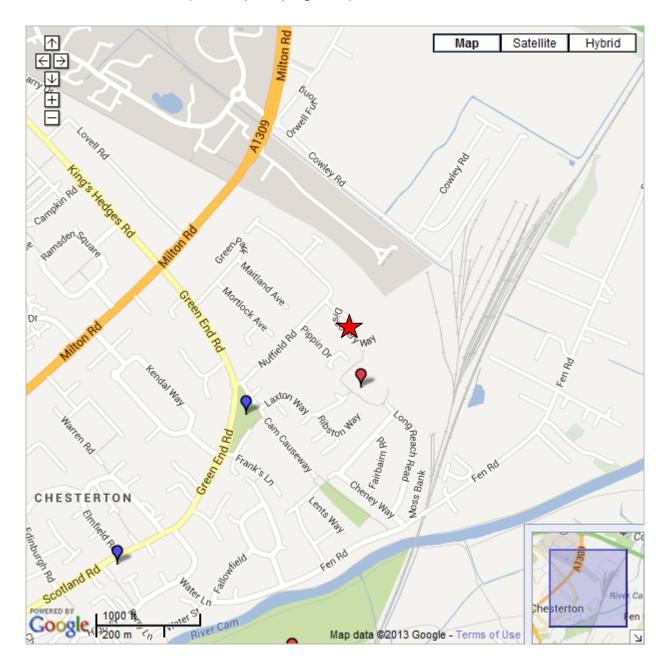
Officers' suggestions for improvement (Estimate: £50k, incl £15k IOS)

There is scope for additional equipment for younger children, such as a new roundabout as a new mini carousel. The swings could do with replacing with ones in line with the latest play standards.

In addition to new play equipment, the fenceline could be repositioned and the access path could be improved. New trees could be added. The scope of these improvements may need to be reduced, however, if constraints on the availability of informal open space contributions remain.

DISCOVERY WAY (East Chesterton ward) [LAP]

Location: It is worth noting that this site is within 200 metres of the larger NEAP (neighbourhood equipped area of play) at Green End Road Recreation Ground (see report page 24).



Current equipment (Play Value rating was C but now probably D)

This is a fenced play area for children on a green surrounded by houses. There is a large modular climbing frame and slide (including play boards for young children) and a spinner. There is also an empty square of safety surfacing where a damaged 'springy' has been removed. In this context the play rating has probably slipped to a D.

This site suffers from extensive vandalism: the gate was stolen in June and a large hole has been made in the safety surfacing not long after earlier damage had been repaired. (See the comments in paragraph 3.6d).

Discovery Way (continued)













Suggested improvements

Two sets of suggested improvements have been put forward: (1) from County Councillor Manning in liaison with (Metropolitan) housing association contacts, who have consulted local residents; (2) from Streets & Open Spaces officers.

Discovery Way (continued)

1. *Community proposal* (£80k, including £30k IOS)

The ideas forwarded by Cllr Manning is based on residents' feedback from a meeting and a door-knocking exercise and also takes account of anti-social behaviour and parking issues on the estate. This has prompted three options which have been presented as follows.

a. "Update the play equipment, level off the 'mound', and add a number of trees: these would have to be quite large as saplings will be destroyed. This would add privacy." (Right: historic photo of the mound behind the play area & the springy which has since been removed).



- b. "Just update the play equipment and add some trees adds privacy."
- c. "Update play equipment and create some parking spaces from the other end by using some of the existing green area. Level off remaining green area."

"Feedback from residents is that the play equipment is used often and should remain targeted for the younger age group (basically who it is currently aimed at) but desperately needs to be updated as it is falling apart and is easy to destroy. Residents don't want equipment that will target the older age group as there is a concern that it would encourage anti-social behaviour. There still needs to be a small fence there (no higher than the currently one to prevent cars from parking on the grass."

Below are some pictures of some equipment (from Green Road play area) that Cllr Manning's housing association contacts feel would fit in.







"Feedback was that there is not enough parking and there is an issue with residents parking on the (already narrow) road, which makes it difficult for people to access their driveways."

Officer comments: The community proposals in relation to the play equipment and tree-planting are welcomed and are reflected in officers' suggested improvements. The ideas for removing the mound and creating extra car-parking are more problematic, however. Even if the

Discovery Way (continued)

necessary informal open space funding constraints could be overcome, reducing open space on Discovery Way to create more car parking raises questions about how this sits alongside planning policy and would require planning permission.

2. Officers' suggestions (Estimate: £55k, including £5k IOS)

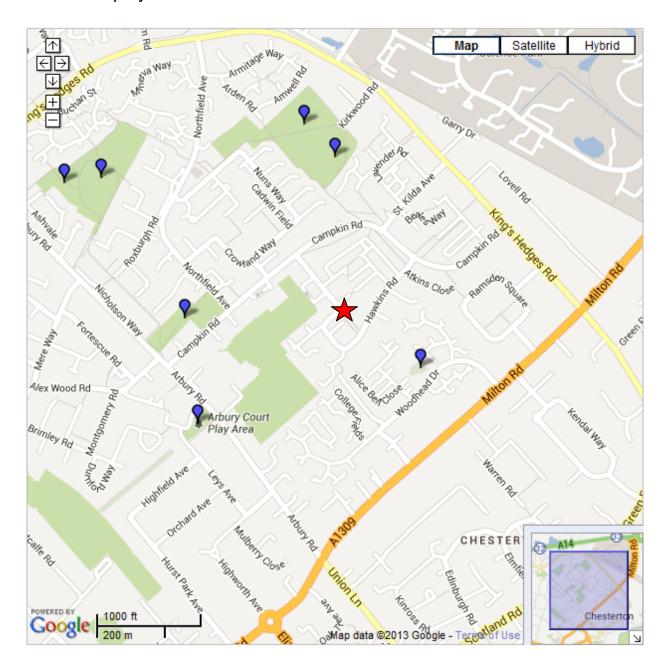
One of the notable absences from the current play area is a swing, which is one of the most popular pieces of play equipment, so one of these would be suggested. Keeping the play area for children up to 12 years of age, it could also be possible to provide a (robust) role-play based frame (for example, in the shape of a tractor or train – see report page 25) and a springy as well as safety surfacing and a new gate and fencing. It is also suggested that around four (more mature and, therefore, a little more expensive) trees could be planted for around £5,000 of informal open space funding.

If it was possible to ease the constraints on informal open space funding, officers would be keen to landscape the play area to make it more interesting and attractive, which might engender a greater sense of pride in, and care for, the play area.

HAWKINS ROAD (King's Hedges ward) [LAP]

Location

This play area is for children under 8 who live in the local vicinity. Its usefulness is as a play area 'on the doorstep', but there is very little for children to play on.



Current equipment (Play Value rating D)

There are two infant swings and 1 junior swing (with space for another, which has been removed). Play equipment (possibly sit-on 'springies') has also been removed from another, nearby piece of safety surafacing.

This play area is serviceable and would benefit from repair and maintenance (albeit that it not a current priority for refurbishment).

Hawkins Road (continued)







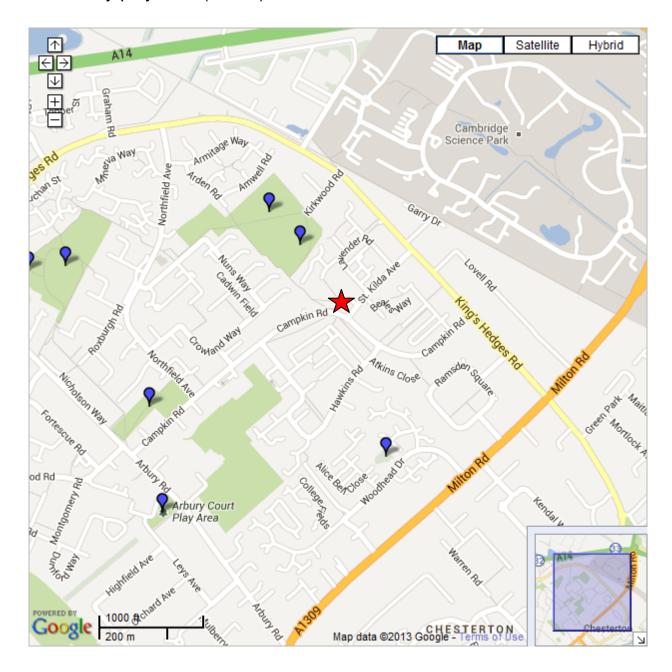


Officers' suggested improvements (Estimate: £25k, incl. £1.5k IOS)

The swings could do with replacing to bring them into line with the latest play standards. There is also potential for adding a role play-based frame (eg, in the shape of a train or tractor – see report page 25) as well as new safety surfacing and a new bench (using informal open space funding). It could also be possible to re-orientate the play area on the green space.

LAWRENCE WAY (King's Hedges ward) [LAP]

Location: The site is in situated on a green surrounded by houses, with close proximity to the local shops. This play area is in a popular location, serving a lot of children in the local catchment area. Whilst Campkin Road is busy, there is a pedestrian crossing. It is worth noting, however, that Nun's Way play area (NEAP) is within around 200 metres.



Current equipment (Play Value rating: D)

This site is intended for younger children accompanied by an adult. There is a climbing frame plus two junior swings and two infant swings, but not close together.

Lawrence Way (continued)









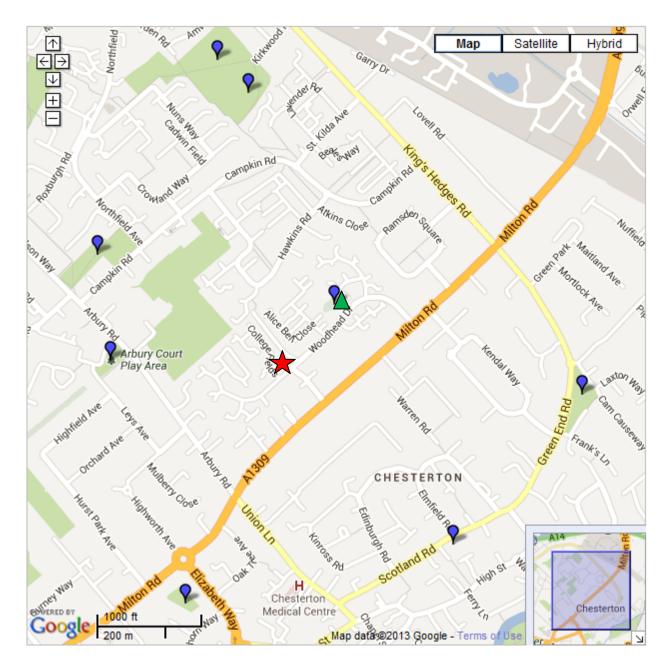
Officers' suggested improvements (Estimate: £30k)

The current equipment is in good condition (albeit that there is not much for children to play on) and could stay where it is.

There is the potential to add a new rotator and a new spinning net (see report page 25) as well as safety surfacing, on the space between the current pieces of equipment. These might be popular with older children and teenagers.

WOODHEAD DRIVE (West Chesterton ward)

Location: There is no longer a play area here as it was de-commissioned. Whilst officers have been asked whether it would be possible to reinstate this play area, it is important to note that this site is less than 200 metres from the new play area at George Nuttall Close (▲), which has 2 swings, a group swing, a roundabout, a climbing box / slide, 2 sit-on 'springies' and a walk-board. As a local equipped area of play (LEAP), George Nuttall Close play area serves children within 400 metres, covering the catchment area of the former Woodhead Drive LAP (see report page 33).



Current site (no play value rating)

None. The play equipment that used to be on this site has been removed because it was in a poor state of repair.

Woodhead Drive (continued)

This is where the Woodhead Drive play area used to be.





This is the George Nuttall Close play area, which is within 200 metres.





Officers' suggested improvements

Not to reinstate the Woodhead Drive play areas because its catchment area is now covered by the new play area at George Nuttall Close

Neighbourhood equipped play areas:

Green End Road







Nuns Way





King's Hedges (The Pulley)





Report Page No: 24 Agenda Page No:

Examples of some of the types of equipment suggested as play area improvements

These are illustrations of the equipment that officers have in mind. Local consultation and tendering exercises will take place on specific proposals.

Multi-use activity / climbing frame for older children and teenagers



Role-play based frame



Mini-spinning carousel



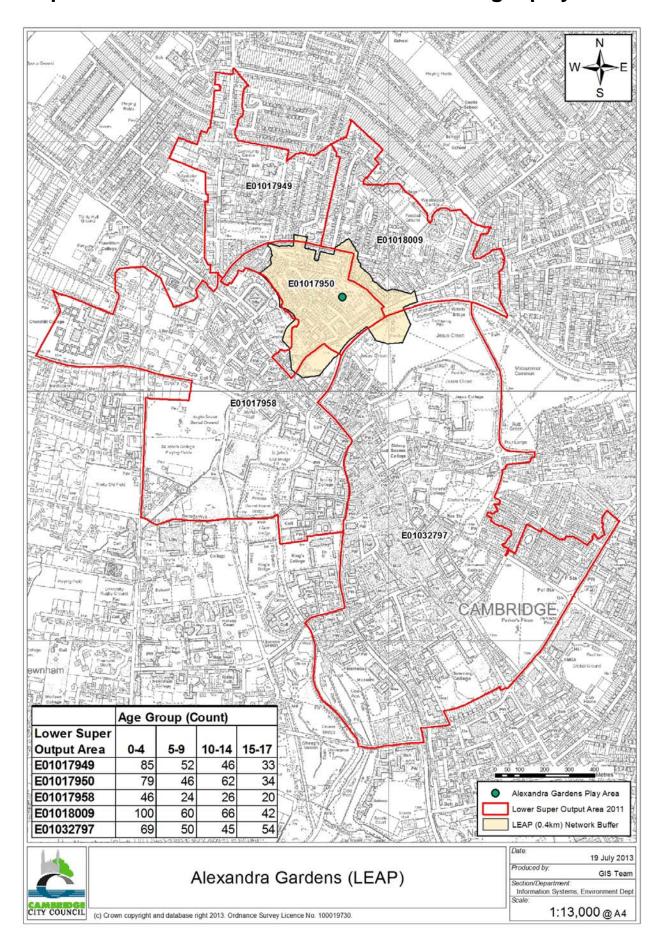
Rotator

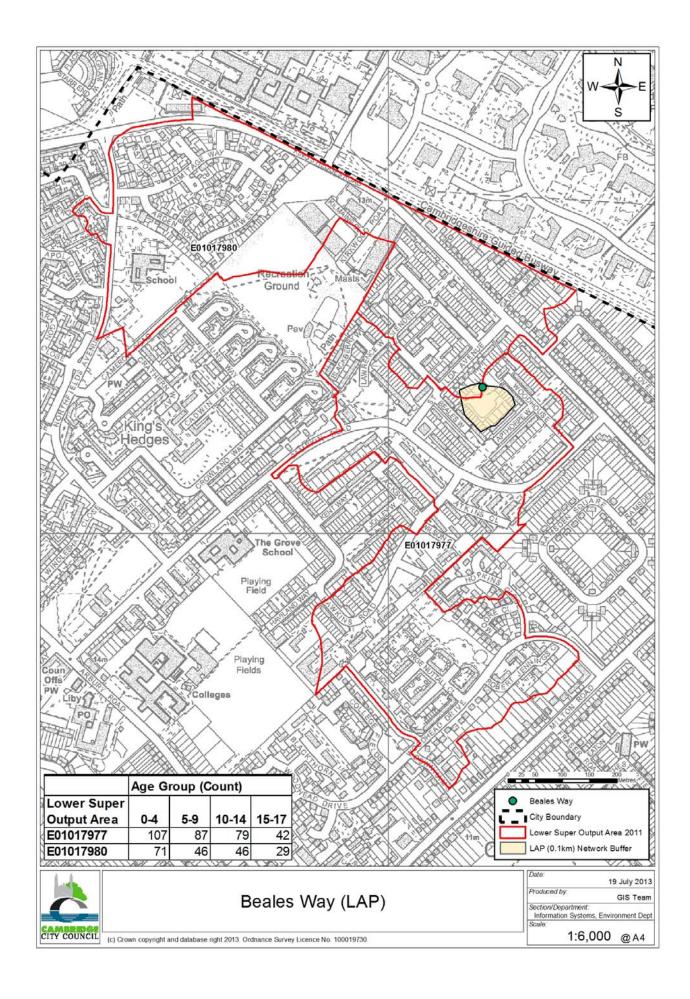


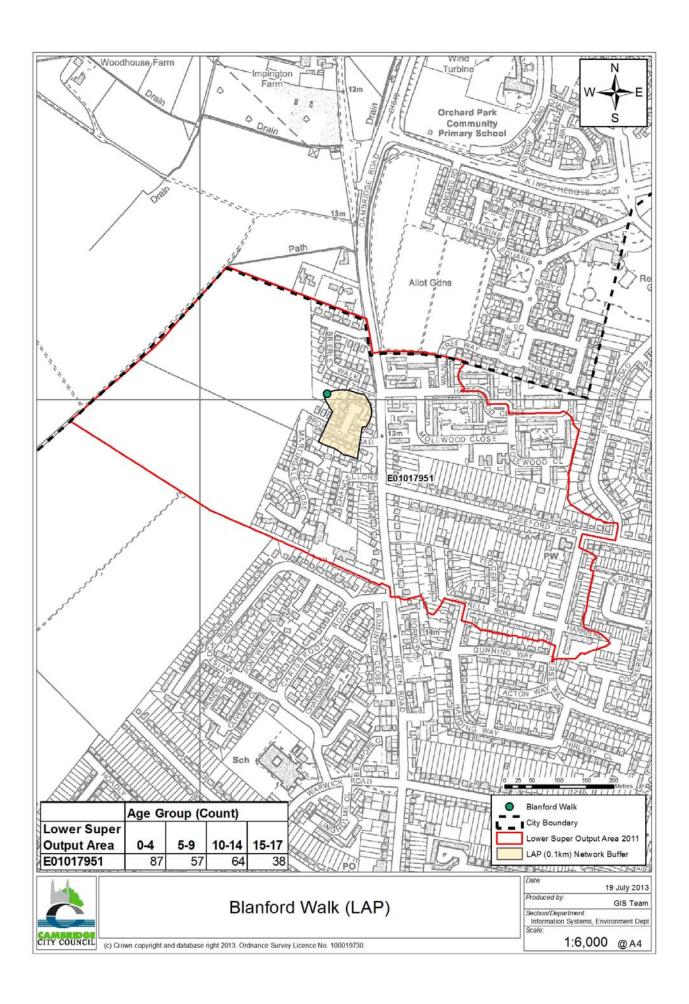
Spinning net

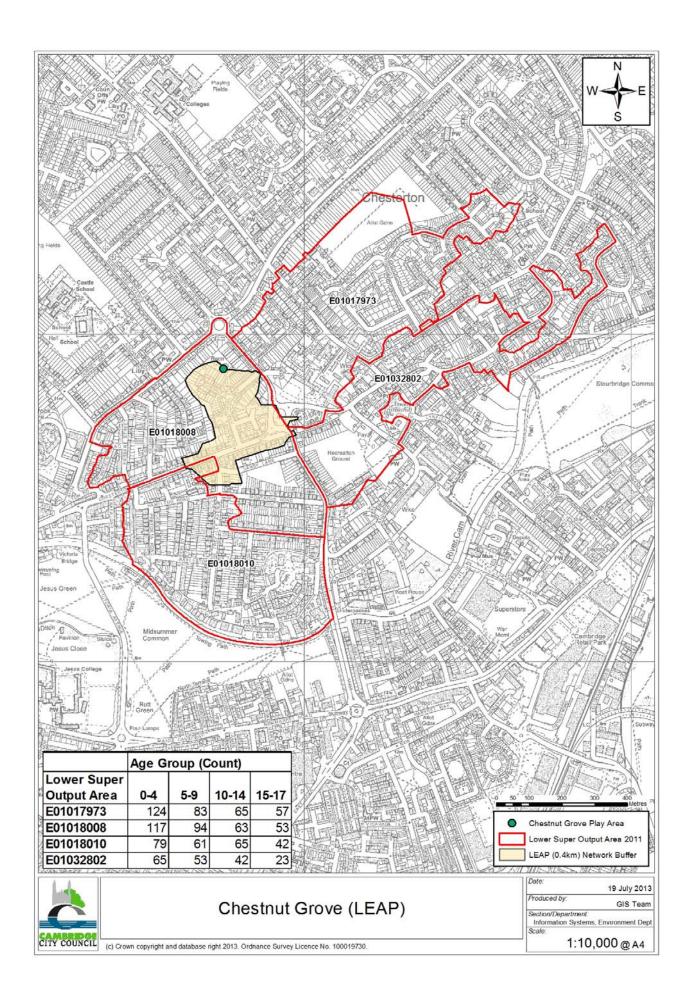


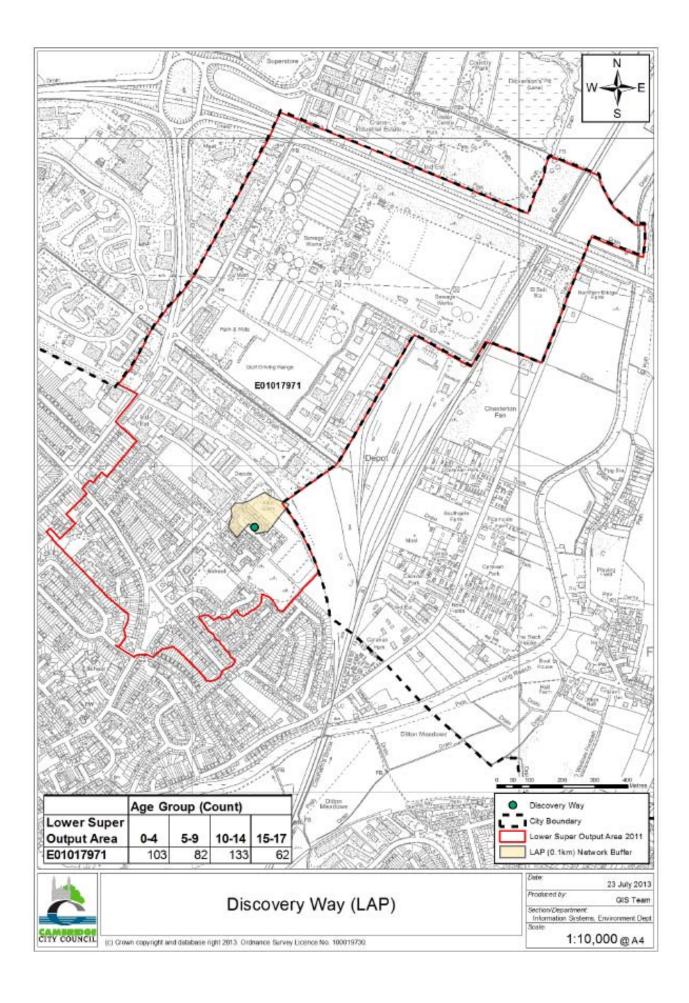
Appendix C Maps of the catchment areas for each of the eight play areas

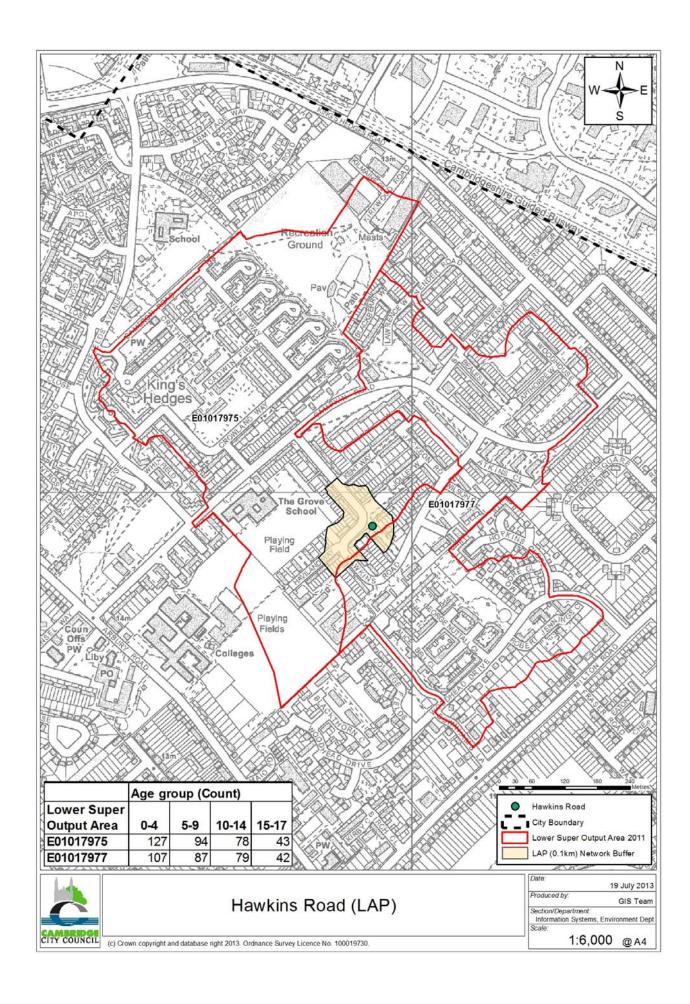


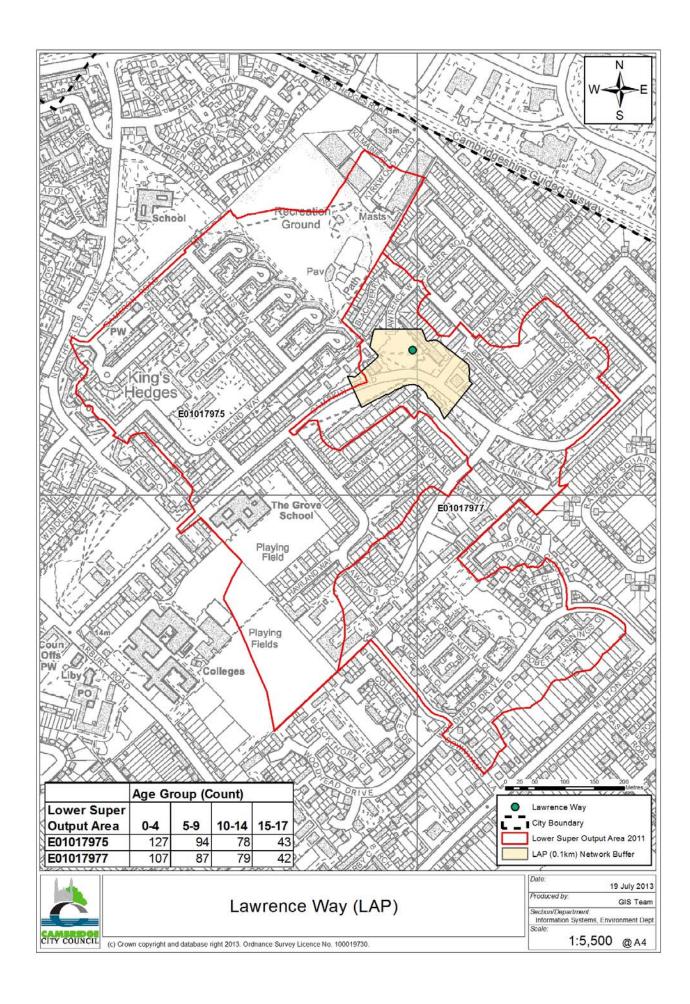


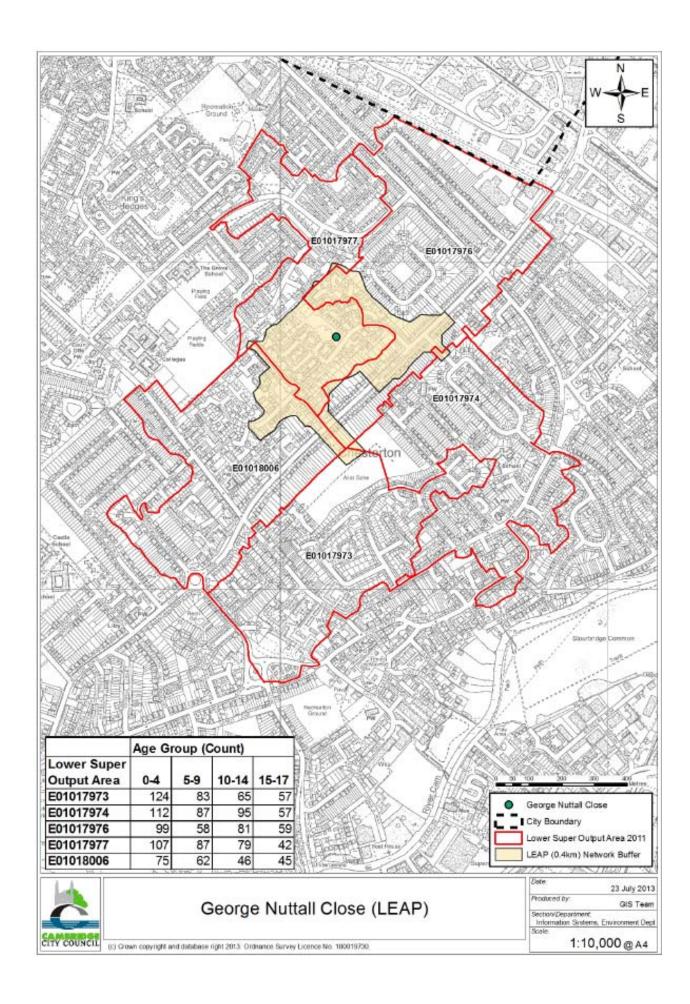












Appendix D

Detailed demographic data from the Census 2011 Numbers of children and young people by lowest level super output area (SOA)

SOA ref.	Part of catchment for	0-4 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-17 years
E01017949	Alexandra Gardens	85	52	46	33
E01017950	Alexandra Gardens	79	46	62	34
E01017958	Alexandra Gardens	46	24	26	20
E01018009	Alexandra Gardens	100	60	66	42
E01032797	Alexandra Gardens	69	50	45	54
E01017980	Beales Way	71	46	46	29
E01017977	Beales Way / Hawkins Road / George Nuttall Close / Lawrence Way	107	87	79	42
E01017951	Blanford Walk	87	57	64	38
E01018008	Chestnut Grove	117	94	63	53
E01018010	Chestnut Grove	79	61	65	42
E01032802	Chestnut Grove	65	53	42	23
E01017973	Chestnut Grove/ George Nuttall Close	124	83	65	57
E01017971	Discovery Way	103	82	133	62
E01017974	George Nuttall Close	112	87	95	57
E01017976	George Nuttall Close	99	58	81	59
E01018006	George Nuttall Close	75	62	46	45
E01017975	Hawkins Road / Lawrence Way	127	94	78	43