



# Play Space Design Guide

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# 01

## Why is Play important?

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) understand and value the role of outdoor play space to enliven, inspire and educate our children and young people.

Research has shown that play and physical activity are a strong determinant in the early development of the brain, that is not just limited to motor control but includes the development of the primary circuits needed for learning. In addition, play brings many therapeutic benefits enabling children to engage and interact with the world around them whilst developing their imagination, creativity and emotional strength.

Children and young people have a right to play recognised by Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ratified by the UK government in 1991. The government has a duty of care under this convention to promote play opportunities for all children and young people.

We strongly support this right and the vital role play has providing children with opportunity to express themselves and make their own choices free from adult direction. "Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons." (Play Wales 2005 and endorsed by SkillsActive May 2005)

Children play in a number of different ways - approximately 16 types of play have been identified. Understanding the way children play helps to create more effective play environments through a range of elements and opportunities. See Further Information (on pages 50 - 60) for more detail.

Good quality play space can be delivered through well thought out design and this is explored in the following sections of this design guide.

Abbey Green - FHA

## Glossary

### Playable Space

A playable space is one where children's active play is a legitimate use of the space.

### Dedicated Play Space

A defined area of playable space specifically designed and equipped for play and informal recreation.

### Play Value

The range and quality of play opportunities and experiences offered by a play environment.

### Children and Young People

Users of different ages have differing needs and the space where they play or socialise will have different characteristics.

### Inclusive

Accessible to users with different abilities including disabled children and young people.

### Multifunctional Space

'Shared' public space or communal space, which offers a range of recreation opportunities for all ages.

### Hazard

A hazard is anything that may cause harm to users.

### Risk

Risk is the likelihood of users being harmed by a hazard and the severity of the harm.

### Risk-Benefit Assessment

This is the process of evaluating the risks and benefits of design elements, equipment or activities and adopting an appropriate strategy.

### Sustainable Development

Play spaces need to be of high quality, good design and located carefully. The NPPF (2012) notes that good quality design is an integral part of sustainable development.



“Play is essential to the healthy development of children and young people - not just their physical development, but their social and cognitive development too”

Play England (2008)

Marylebone Green Playground - FHA

## What do we want to achieve?

This document aims to raise the quality of playable space delivered as part of new developments. It provides both clients, developers and designers with guidance and specific requirements for the design of play spaces within the Borough.

The standards set out in this design guide provide a benchmark that may be used by planning officers when determining planning applications, making recommendations to Committee and drawing up Section 106 and/or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) obligations that include contributions for play provision.

The play space design guide is supplementary to the requirements of the WBC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy and the WBC Borough Design Guide. It is consistent with the policies found in the Adopted Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan.

### This design guide aspires to:

- Set out the Council's ethos, principles and benchmarks for play facilities.
- Raise the profile of playable space to ensure it is considered as an integral part of the planning and design of new development from the outset.
- Promote the type and range of play opportunities that support the development of children and young people by improving the range and quality of playable space within new development.
- Promote safe, accessible, quality play environments that respond to their surroundings and setting, to create attractive and locally distinctive places.
- Raise awareness of the importance of play and design quality.
- Ensure sustainable development is achieved through good design, aftercare and the provision of flexible play space that will meet the needs of growing and evolving local communities.
- Ensure an adequate standard of design information for proposed play facilities is submitted for planning.
- Provide guidance on the handover process for play facilities to be adopted.
- Support the refurbishment of existing play spaces within the Borough.



## Aim:

This guidance supports the Council's commitment to ensure high quality design for play spaces within new development to meet the needs of future communities.

## Objectives:

The key objectives below identify the Council's vision for play with the Borough. These objectives are underpinned by the principles set out in the WBC Borough Design Guide, the WBC Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy, Play England best practice guidance and 'Charter for Children's Play', Fields in Trust 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' and the WBC Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- To embed the concept of playable space within new development, to ensure adequate play facilities for all age groups are delivered via the planning process.
- To deliver dynamic, multifaceted and high quality play environments that inspire and engage children and adults alike to play, socialise and learn.
- To deliver safe, well designed play environments that are accessible, inclusive and respond appropriately to their context creating distinct, attractive places.
- To support physical health and well-being of children and young people through the provision of playable space.
- To support and enrich the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people, vital for learning and development through the provision of playable space.
- To contribute to making the Borough a great place to live with a good quality of life for all residents.
- To deliver play facilities that are sustainable and successful long term, through high quality design and the appropriate level of maintenance requirement.



## Purpose:

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, good design is key to sustainable development and planning should aim to ensure development “will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development” and is “visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

The purpose of this guidance is to support good design by

- making developers and their design teams aware of the importance of play space design and the play space design requirements for new development.
- ensuring all the essential information is submitted and clearly presented to avoid unnecessary delays in the planning process.
- improving the quality of play provision within new development.



MUGA, Finchampstead

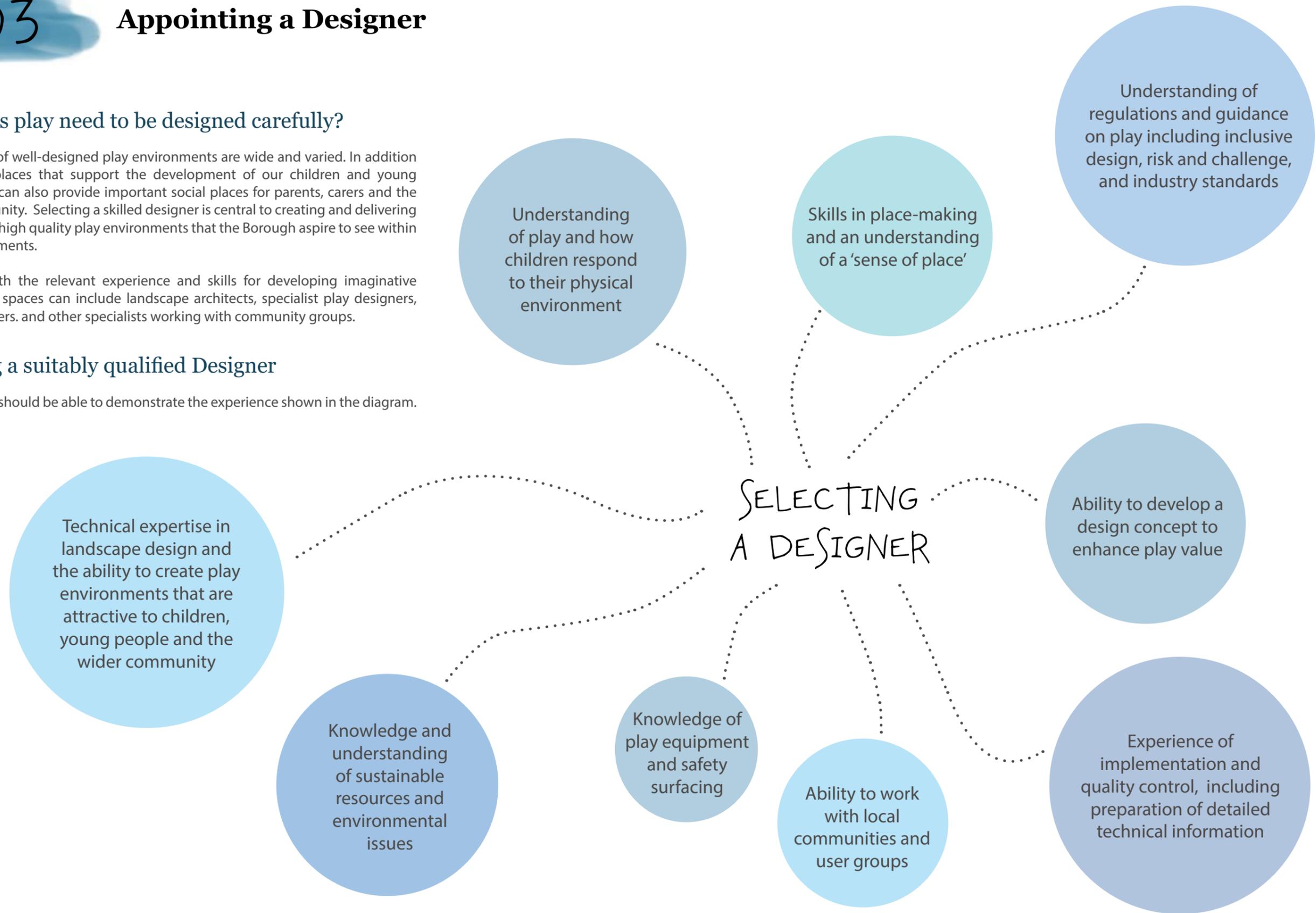
### Why does play need to be designed carefully?

The benefits of well-designed play environments are wide and varied. In addition to creating places that support the development of our children and young people, they can also provide important social places for parents, carers and the wider community. Selecting a skilled designer is central to creating and delivering the dynamic, high quality play environments that the Borough aspire to see within new developments.

Designers with the relevant experience and skills for developing imaginative outdoor play spaces can include landscape architects, specialist play designers, urban designers, and other specialists working with community groups.

### Selecting a suitably qualified Designer

The designer should be able to demonstrate the experience shown in the diagram.





“Successful play spaces are not simply ordered from a catalogue, put in the ground and left. They require careful thought and planning, continuing care and maintenance.”

# 04

## Determining Play Provision

### Play Provision for New Development

The flow chart on this page illustrates the process and includes the relevant Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) policy and guidance for determining the amount and type of play provision required for a new housing development.

The key documents and policies are:

- WBC Core Strategy CP3: General Principles for Development
- WBC Core Strategy Appendix 4 - Guidelines for the Provision of Public Open Space associated with Residential Development.
- WBC MDD DPD Policy TB08: Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standard for Residential Development
- WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update
- WBC Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Strategy
- WBC Play Space Design Guide

In the event that a new residential development is of insufficient scale to be required to meet the standards set out in Policy TB08, off site provisions and/or contributions will be sought as outlined in the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Facilities Strategy. To support this process, the Borough offer a pre-application service, details of which are available on the Council website.

The minimum sizes of each of the different typologies of open space are set out in the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Facilities Strategy. Open space requirements for children and young people are broadly based on the Fields In Trust (FIT) guidelines, see Play Space Standards (pages 12-13) for a summary of these standards and more detailed information on how they are applied within the Borough. Further detail and guidance on the specific requirements for the different types of play provision are outlined in the Typologies and Design Codes sections of this design guide.

PROCESS

### Determine whether the development generates a demand for play provision

Supporting Information:  
WBC Core Strategy CP3: General Principles for Development  
WBC Core Strategy Appendix 4 - Guidelines for the Provision of Public Open Space associated with Residential Development.

### Calculate how much space is required

Supporting Information:  
WBC MDD DPD Policy TB08: Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards for Residential Development

### Establish accessibility to existing play provision

Supporting Information:  
WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update  
Desktop study  
Pre-application advice

### Establish requirement for on site or off site provision

Supporting Information:  
WBC Open Space, Sport & Recreation Facilities Strategy  
Pre-application advice

### Type of on site provision required

Supporting Information:  
WBC Play Space Design Guide  
(typologies, standards and design codes)

“...time and space for play and outdoor learning is as important as formal teaching.”

Play England (2008)



# 05

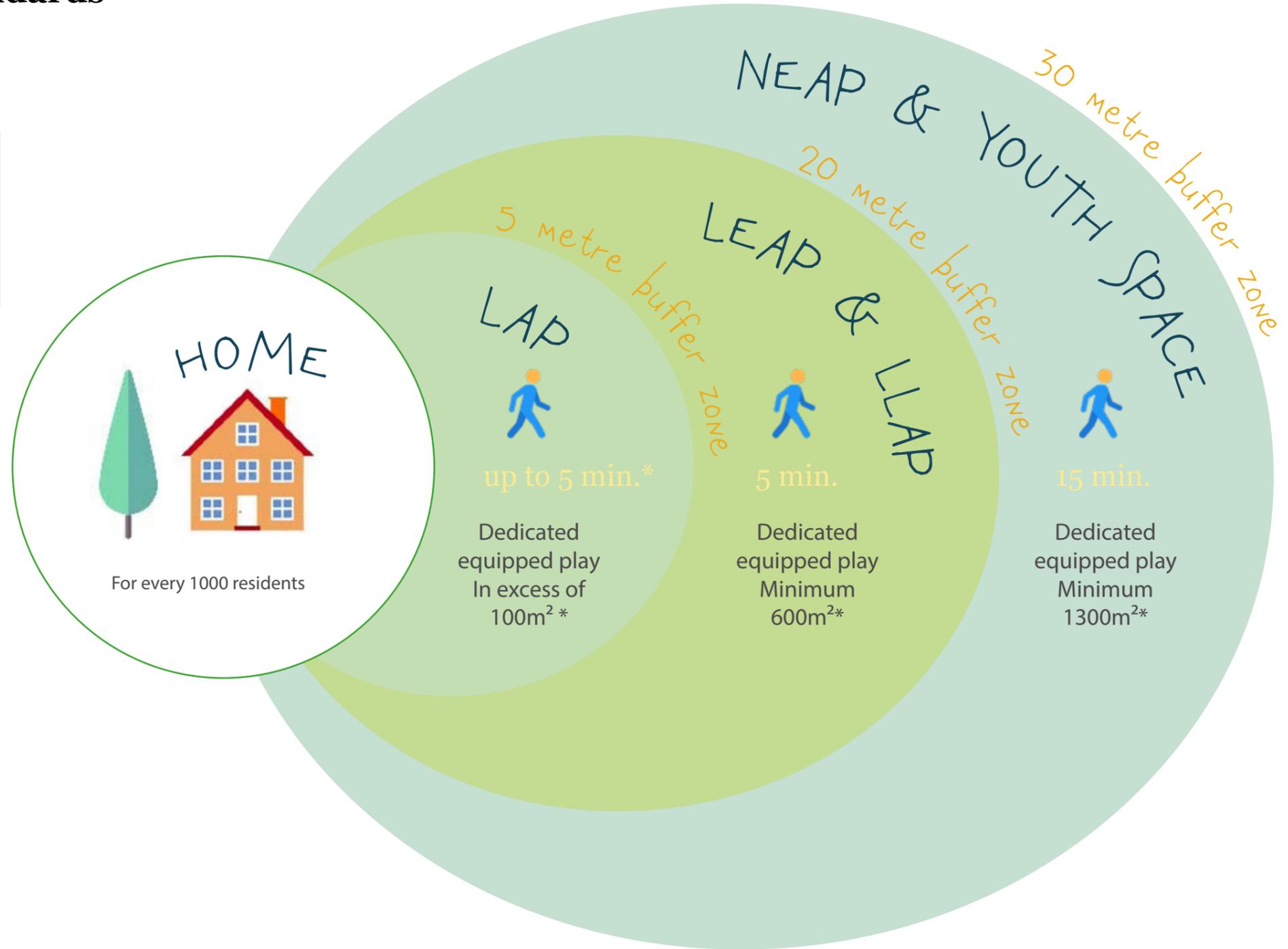
## Play Space Standards

### Open Space Requirements for Play

Dedicated Play Space	0.25 ha/1000 person
Informal Playable Space	0.55 ha/1000 person
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.80 ha/1000 person</b>

### Destination Playground

A large 'destination' play area within a key site, such as a park. These facilities are aimed at attracting families and larger groups for longer visits; and tend to have car parking with access to other facilities such as a cafe and toilets.



### LAP

Local Areas for Play are typically for young children up to 6 years and have equipment that is designed for younger children. To be provided as part of a combined facility to meet WBC minimum sizes for play areas. i.e. alongside a LEAP or a NEAP

### LEAP

Local Equipped Areas for Play are typically for children aged 0 to 11 who are beginning to play independently and will include play equipment that is more challenging.

### LLAP

Local Landscaped Areas for Play are typically for children aged 0 to 11 who are beginning to play independently; with play equipment that is natural in style and a mix of physical challenges and features designed for imaginative play, calm relaxation and social interaction.

### NEAP

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play are typically for children aged 0 to 11 plus young people aged 12+ and will include a range of challenging play equipment, with a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sq.m designed for ball games or wheeled sports.

### Youth Space

Youth Space is typically for young people aged 12+ and has equipment designed for either physical activity or calm relaxation, and social interaction.

## \*Applying the Standards

The Council is committed to the provision of a wide range of play space that is fully inclusive and suitable for a wide range of users of different ages, gender and ability.

We are keen to encourage innovative and imaginative approaches to play provision and welcome bespoke design as well as schemes that focus on natural play, such as Local Landscaped Areas of Play (LLAP), where deemed appropriate.

The WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update (2012) identified that the Borough lacks facilities aimed at teenagers and young people. It is essential that adequate provision of skate parks, BMX tracks, parkour, ball courts such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), sheltered seating and interactive equipment are considered in the context of new residential development.

Policy TB08 sets out the standard requirement for outdoor equipped play of 0.25ha/1000 population for residential development, in accordance with the Fields In Trust (FIT) guidelines 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, 2001'.

However, as set out in the WBC Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Strategy (2013), the Borough does not wish to be tied rigidly to the FIT catchment model relating to Local Areas of Play (LAP) as this has a tendency to drive the development of a large number of small low value facilities. The WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update (2012) identified that the Borough already contains a large number of these type of play facilities which only cater for a limited age group, and are typically underused and difficult to maintain.

Surveys undertaken as part of the WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update (2012) support this, with the majority of residents indicating they were happy to walk up to 5 minutes to facilities for younger children.

Similarly, as set out in the WBC Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Strategy (2013), the Council does not wish to be tied rigidly to the FIT minimum size model. As mentioned above, the WBC PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit Update (2012) highlighted that the Borough already contains a large number of small low value play facilities.

We prefer Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP) of at least 1300 sqm and Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) of at least 600 sqm (other than in exceptional circumstances) to encourage the provision of larger high value play spaces that will appeal to a wider range of users.

For the same reasons, the Council does not want to see the provision of standalone Local Areas of Play (LAP) as a minimum size facility of 100 sqm. We prefer to have a smaller number of larger LAPs or LAPs that are attached to other typologies of play space (other than in exceptional circumstances).

The Council is also willing to apply a 5% discount to the standard requirement for on site provision in return for a financial contribution towards its own network of destination play areas within the Borough.

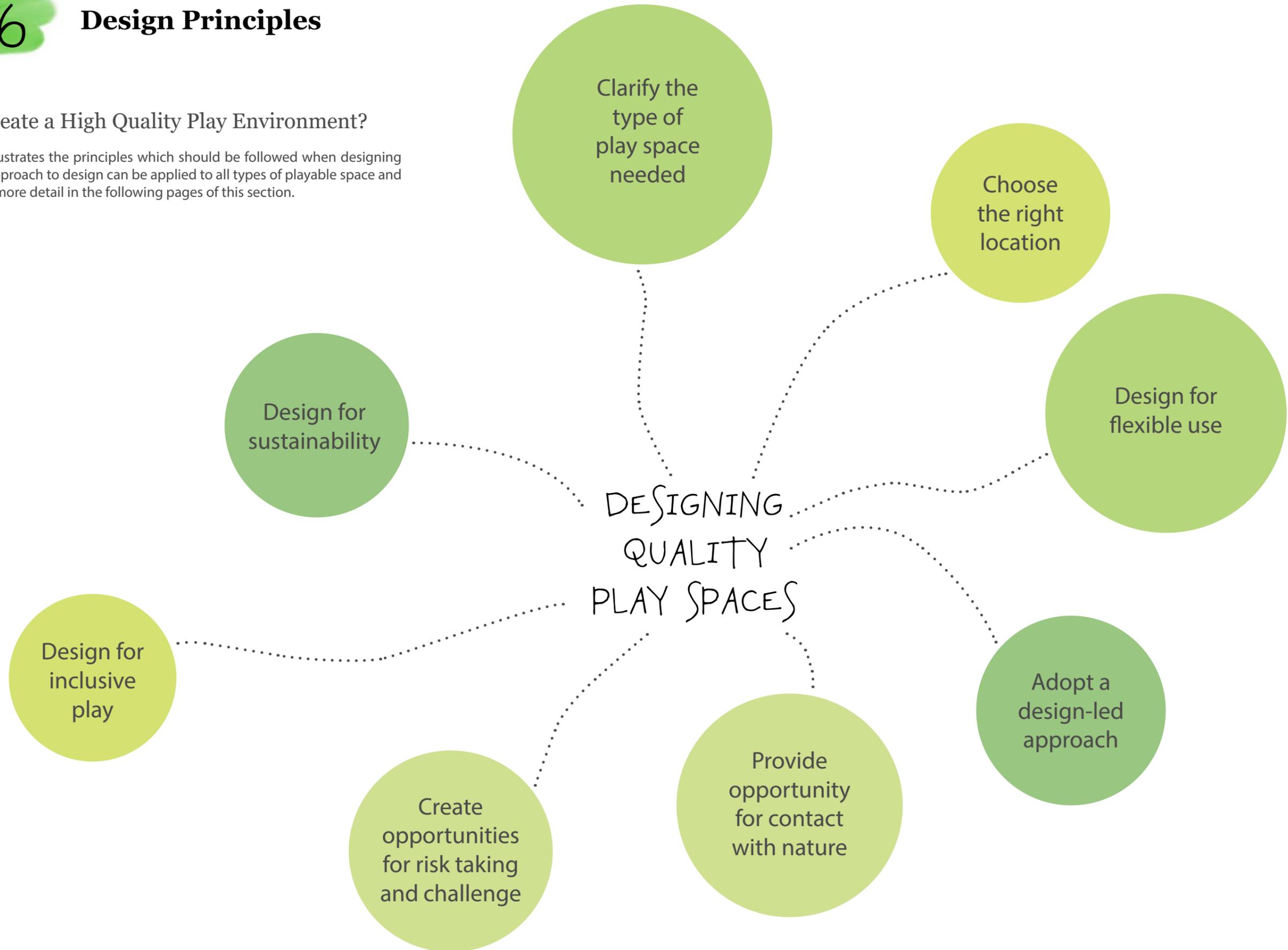


# 06

## Design Principles

### How to Create a High Quality Play Environment?

The diagram illustrates the principles which should be followed when designing for play. This approach to design can be applied to all types of playable space and is described in more detail in the following pages of this section.



“Play is about more than just letting off steam; it can be quiet and contemplative, as well as active and boisterous. All children and young people, including those who are disabled or have specific needs, should have opportunities to experience challenge and take risks while playing.”

Play England (2009)



## Type of Play Space

- New play spaces need to be provided in the context of existing play provision available to children and young people locally.
- To understand what type of play space is required, an audit of existing provision and consultation with the local community may need to be carried out to identify any gaps in provision.
- The success of the play space will depend on how well it meets the needs of the future community.

## Right Location

- The most important factor when designing a play space is its location.
- Suitable locations for play spaces are where children want to play, where they are safe and able to travel safely to and from, and where they can play freely.
- Locations alongside busy roads, residential car parking and electricity substations are unsuitable – as are secluded areas.
- Play space should be located away from heavy traffic, pollution, overhead cables and other hazards. Play spaces in hidden and inaccessible places will not be well used and are most likely to be vandalised.
- The degree to which play facilities need to be overlooked will vary according to the nature of the setting and individual site but some level of informal oversight is always needed.
- Play space is often best placed close to other facilities (such as schools, community centres and shops) or as part of multifunctional greenspace where other people are about, allowing children to play in the knowledge that adults are close by and where young people can ‘see and be seen’.
- Play space should be well connected to other areas of open space and the wider footpath network. It is essential that the location can be safely reached by foot and bicycle.
- Areas subject to flooding should not normally be used for siting play facilities. In the majority of cases, such areas are unlikely to meet expected standards for quality or accessibility.
- Play space should be designed as an integral part of new development – in open, accessible and pleasant locations – rather than squeezed into the unwanted leftover areas of the site.

## Flexible Use

- Good play spaces are multifunctional spaces laid out so that the equipment and facilities can be used by a wide range of children and young people, often allowing for different types of usage at different times of the day, week or year.
- A play space aimed at teenagers can be suitable for pre-schoolers when they are not around and vice versa. However, spaces need to be carefully arranged if they are to be used by a range of ages together as younger children can feel intimidated by the play and social interaction of older age groups.
- It is important to include enough ‘slack space’ around and between equipment which has no defined purpose other than to enable free movement and allow ‘chase’ type games or imaginative play.
- Play spaces should allow social interaction between parents and carers, as well as children and young people. Seating areas should be comfortable and attractive social spaces.
- Studies have shown that children are most active when moving around and between equipment than when they are actually using it, so adequate space for running and informal play is vital.



## Design-Led Approach

- There is growing awareness that the design of successful play spaces involves more than simply locating a collection of equipment within a fenced site. It is important that play spaces are created with input from a professional landscape designer or landscape architect with an understanding of play.
- New play spaces should have a 'sense of place' with a design that responds to landscape setting imaginatively and reflects the character of the location.
- Community involvement and engagement with users groups is encouraged as part of the design process.
- The spatial arrangement of equipment and surfaces needs to be carefully considered. Wetpour and loose fill surfacing should be laid out uniformly, in regular geometric shapes or patterns, or as flowing curvilinear areas, and not as oddly shaped offsets around equipment or at awkward angles to boundaries.
- Furniture needs to be of good quality and design, selected to enhance the play space and contribute positively to the surrounding environment.
- By following a design led approach that considers play value, landscaping, equipment, features, furniture and layout as cohesive elements from the outset, it is more likely that designers will create a distinctive high quality space that will be well used and valued.

## Design In Nature

- Children and young people need freedom to explore the natural environment to support their development and wellbeing. Playable space should provide opportunity for contact with natural elements – such as trees and other types of planting, areas of open grass, boulders, timber, logs, gravel, sand and water – appropriate to the setting and maintenance resource available.
- Semi natural and amenity open space can be made playable by incorporating strategically placed natural play features that complement the space for children to discover and use informally; and by locating unfenced dedicated equipped play space sensitively and safely around or within wider open areas of multifunctional greenspace.
- Interpretive signage and sculpture can offer added play value and promote learning and exploration particularly for younger children.
- Natural play features need to be of robust design and built to last, with an expected life span that is comparable to the durability of standard equipment.

## Design In Risk

- Play equipment that requires physical challenge can support muscle development, balance and agility and promote activity for healthier children and young people.
- The play environment and well designed equipment should challenge children in all sorts of ways from climbing, swinging, sliding, rocking, rotating, balancing, crawling, jumping and overhead activity to ball games, wheeled sports and other activities.
- Any type of physical activity comes with an inherent risk. A risk benefit assessment (see page 52) is the best means of getting the balance right between an appropriate level of challenge and safety.
- Children and young people gain skills from using challenging play equipment and then will go on to apply the skills learnt to many other aspects of their lives.



## Inclusive Design

- A study of access to and use of unsupervised play facilities by disabled children undertaken in 2004 on behalf of Fields in Trust (FIT) found that disabled children want to use their local play spaces for everyday play – just like any other child.
- The two important factors to consider when designing inclusive play space are the selection of suitable equipment and accessibility. Equipment that can be used in different ways by a wide range of ages and physical ability is a good choice. Path widths and gradients, surfacing and gates should not exclude anyone with a mobility or sensory impairment including accompanying adults.
- Well defined pedestrian access and safe crossing points, with drop kerbs and blister paving where appropriate, that provide direct routes up to the entrance of the play space are essential for all users.
- Seating should include a range of provision with benches and layouts that accommodate disabled users as well as those with pushchairs and buggies.
- The inclusion of some quiet areas for relaxation will benefit anyone who may need ‘time out’ from high tempo activity and noise.
- Play facilities designed for a particular age group cater for a typical range of ability and do not mean that users of different ages should be excluded from these spaces.
- Play spaces can form important community hubs. Designers should aim to create a well integrated multifunctional space that is welcoming and accessible to all, not isolated areas of fenced off equipment.
- See Inclusive Design (on pages 44 - 45) for more detailed guidance.

## Sustainability

- Play spaces need to be of high quality and good design. Poor quality, unimaginative space will not attract children and families, will not be valued by the community, and will be more likely to fall into disuse and disrepair.
- Ease of maintenance and clear instruction for ongoing management of new play space (see page 53) are essential to its success long term.
- The guaranteed lifespan and routine upkeep of equipment, surfaces and furniture is an important consideration. The cost of repair or replacement of damage due to regular use and expected wear should be factored in. Any moving parts and fixings on equipment should be readily available with details of supplier, manufacturer, product name and model number provided. Modular furniture designed with individually replaceable components, such as timber slatted seats on steel bases, may extend the life of the product by enabling partial refurbishment.
- Sustainably sourced materials or production processes that can be continued indefinitely without adverse impact or damage to the environment should be used where possible.

“To begin with equipment is to start in the wrong place... The first questions should be: what should your place look and feel like, what sort of place do you want it to be, and what do you want to do in it? It is the job of a designer to pose these questions...”

Melville (2004)

Dinton Pastures



KEY

-  Trees adding value
-  Hedge
-  Planting
-  Explore & learn
-  Musical & sensory
-  Large static & sculptural elements
-  'Stocking fillers' & surface marking for younger children
-  Water play
-  Inclusive equipment for a range of ability
-  Challenge and risk
-  'Slack' space for chase type games
-  Imaginative play
-  'Zoned' to reflect age range of users
-  Ball courts with surface marking and goals
-  Wheel sports (tracks & ramps)
-  Parkour, table tennis, outdoor gym & trim trail
-  Interactive equipment
-  Informal seating with play value
-  Seats for socialising & picnic benches
-  Sheltered seating
-  Theme or bespoke

TYPOLGY	TYPICAL USER GROUP	TYPICAL DESIGN ELEMENTS
LAP	Young children up to 6 years old, with 5 or more different play equipment for a minimum size facility in excess of 100m <sup>2</sup>	        
LEAP	Children aged 0 to 11 years old, with 6 or more different play equipment for a minimum size 600m <sup>2</sup> facility	         
LLAP	Children aged 0 to 11 years old, with 6 or more different play equipment for a minimum size 600m <sup>2</sup> facility	         
NEAP	Children aged 0 to 11 years old plus older children and young people aged 12 years and over, with 9 or more different play equipment and hard surfaced area of 465m <sup>2</sup> per 1000m <sup>2</sup> for a minimum size 1300m <sup>2</sup> facility	               
YOUTH SPACE	Older children and young people aged 12 years and over	     
DESTINATION PLAYGROUND	Families and larger groups	Site specific, typically of bespoke design



## Design Code: Enclosure

The use of a fence around a play space should depend on the setting and context of the individual site. A fenced boundary will segregate play facilities from their surroundings which is not always desirable.

While there is no legal requirement or recommendation for fencing to meet normal play standards, a barrier may often be required to keep children safe from straying onto adjacent roads and to keep dogs off leashes out.

In some situations, 'fuzzy edges' such as hedges, trees and wide grass verges with bollards can form an effective barrier appropriate to the setting and level of risk.

Fences do not compensate for poorly chosen locations adjacent to hazards.



Rotherhithe Play Area - FHA





Unfenced play areas must be located within a wider public open space, away from traffic and parked cars; and where access by dogs can be controlled.

Low timber bollards and/or hedging can provide more robustly defined edge where needed.



Low level durable hardwood square timber bollards with four-way weathered top and soft chamfered vertical edges. Minimum size 200mm x 200mm. 500-600mm above ground height.



Beech/Hornbeam hedging or Ornamental flowering hedges. No hazardous species or vigorous cultivars that will need to be cut more than once a year. To be maintained as a clipped hedge approximately 1.2m high.

Where play area is not enclosed by railings, temporary fencing will need to be installed and maintained until a well-knit hedge of sufficient height is established.



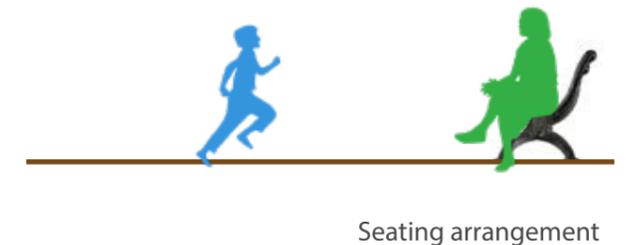
Black anti-trap bow top 1m or 1.2m high metal railings. A hedge should be planted outside playground railings unless there is a specific reason not to.



A minimum of two gated access points are required for all fenced play spaces, typically: a single leaf flat top hydraulic self-closing pedestrian gate; and a double leaf, combined flat top hydraulic self-closing pedestrian gate and maintenance gate. All gates to be finished in a high contrast colour, such as red or yellow.



CREATING ENCLOSURE WITHIN A WIDER OPEN SPACE



## Design Code: Surfaces

Choosing the best surface for an area is dependant on many variables and should be carefully considered based on the activities planned and ease of maintenance.

Robust finishes and high quality detailing are essential to create an attractive hardwearing play facility that will be suitably long lasting and fit for purpose.

The opportunity for surfaces to add play value or to be a play feature in their own right, designed for a traditional games or imaginative play should be considered.

The diagram sets out the typical design considerations when selecting a surface.

### Managing Risk

Identify any areas of the play space that require impact absorbing surfacing. Consider the depth and type of surfacing to address the critical fall height.

### Understanding Function

Understand the expected levels of use and type of activities before choosing the best surfacing for the intended purpose.

### Enhancing Play Value

Aim to add play value through a variety of surfaces that cater for different types of use including interactive and quiet, creative play.

### Ensuring Quality

Play spaces need to be hardwearing, easy to maintain, and should be designed to remain in good useable condition all year round.



## Safety Surfacing: Bound Surfaces vs Loose Fill

A variety of surfacing is important to allow different kinds of play experience.

Acceptable types of bound surface include wetpour, grass matting and carpet system artificial grass. Loose fill material such as bark nuggets, play safe pea gravel, and play sand may be considered.

Each surface has its own advantages and disadvantages. By selecting the right type of surface for the site and application, a balance can be found between maintenance and play value.

Bound surfaces with low ongoing maintenance requirements should be used primarily but carefully planned areas of loose fill are acceptable. Loose fill surfaces offer more creative and interactive play value which needs to be balanced against routine maintenance requirements.

Play mounds must normally be covered with bound surfacing - either wetpour or carpet system artificial turf. Large naturalistic grass mounds designed as landscaped features as part of a LLAP are the only exception likely to be considered.

Loose fill will require topping up and regular inspection. Consequently a single reasonably sized area of well contained, and edged, loose material is normally easier to maintain than several small ill-defined areas.

On damp sites, loose fill should be spread on top of a geotextile membrane that is securely pegged in place with a layer of clean gravel (or similar) installed below to ensure free drainage.

In most cases, furniture and seating elements should be root fixed below surfacing to provide a neat finish and good appearance.

Inspection chambers for underground service runs should be located outside of play areas, wherever possible.

The position of new trees adjacent to surfacing should be adequately considered, with careful detailing around existing trees, to allow for future growth and a healthy root zone - as well as avoiding unnecessary damage to the surface.

All safety surfacing must conform to the relevant British Standards relating to the type of play equipment and the level of impact attenuation required, in addition to the quality of the product used.



- Brightly coloured, patterned or themed to delineate space and add play value.
- Install in accordance with manufacturer's guidance; and to a suitable depth over the recommended sub-base construction, to cover critical fall height of any play equipment.
- Laid out as regular shapes or smooth flowing areas, rather than as adhoc odd shaped offsets from equipment.
- Edged with concrete, steel or timber depending on adjacent surface.



- Install in accordance with manufacturer's guidance, to cover critical fall height of any play equipment.
- Rubber mats need to be cable tied together, with the perimeter of the matting dug into surrounding ground and pegged securely. Use extra fixings around the edges as required.
- Ensure all newly seeded areas of grass are watered and protected until the sward is fully established, typically a full growing season.



- Durable, slip resistant, carpet system artificial turf laid on a sand base such as Notts Sport Childs Play System.
- Ensure carpet is installed by an authorised installer in accordance with manufacturer's guidance, to cover critical fall height of any play equipment. Use continuous pieces, with cuts and joins kept to a minimum, ensuring all outer edges are secure and buried below adjacent ground.
- Details of maintenance requirements such as sweeping and top-dressing to be provided.

## Safety Surfacing (continued)



- Additionally screened play grade bark 'nuggets' with 99% white wood removed and minimal dust and fines to BS EN 1176, such as Deluxe Pine Play Area Bark or similar approved.
- Lower grade bark products or wood chippings will not be acceptable.
- Install to a suitable depth to cover critical fall height of any play equipment and in accordance with manufacturer's guidance.
- Play bark surfaces need to be free draining, installed with a geotextile membrane underneath and the loose material contained by a retaining edge.
- Edging to be either rubber border edging with a rounded top (Playbark rubber border edging or similar approved) or timber depending on adjacent surfacing, ground conditions and location.



- The use of gravel needs to be carefully considered in relation to ongoing maintenance, resources and location.
- Clean, well rounded pebbles with no broken or sharp elements to BS EN 1176 for intended use as an impact absorbing safety surface, such as CED Gravelsafe® or similar approved.
- Install to a suitable depth to cover critical fall height of any play equipment and in accordance with manufacturer's guidance.
- Install with a raised edge to contain the loose material, whilst allowing the surface to move and flow. Do not allow surface to become rigid as this will impede the level of impact absorption.
- Check depth of gravel routinely, topping up as needed, and rake to smooth the surface ready for use.



- The use of play sand needs to be carefully considered in terms of ongoing maintenance, resources and location.
- Play grade sand to comply with British Standards BS EN 1176 and BS EN 71-3.
- Install sand to a suitable depth to cover critical fall height of any play equipment and in accordance with manufacturer's guidance.
- Ensure a geotextile membrane is installed below sand and over a layer of clean gravel to ensure free drainage.
- Install with a raised edge to contain the loose material, whilst allowing the surface to move and flow.
- Check depth of sand routinely, topping up as needed, and rake to smooth the surface ready for use.

## Hard Surfaced Areas for NEAPs and Youth Space

As set out in The Fields in Trust (FIT) guidelines a NEAP should include a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sqm designed for ball games or wheeled sports. Suitable surfacing for other activities such as outdoor fitness and parkour can also be required for Youth space.

Skate parks require specialist design to BS EN 1497 and are typically bespoke. Ramps are normally concrete but street style facilities may incorporate a variety of finishes, including paved surfaces, brick walls and metal bars.

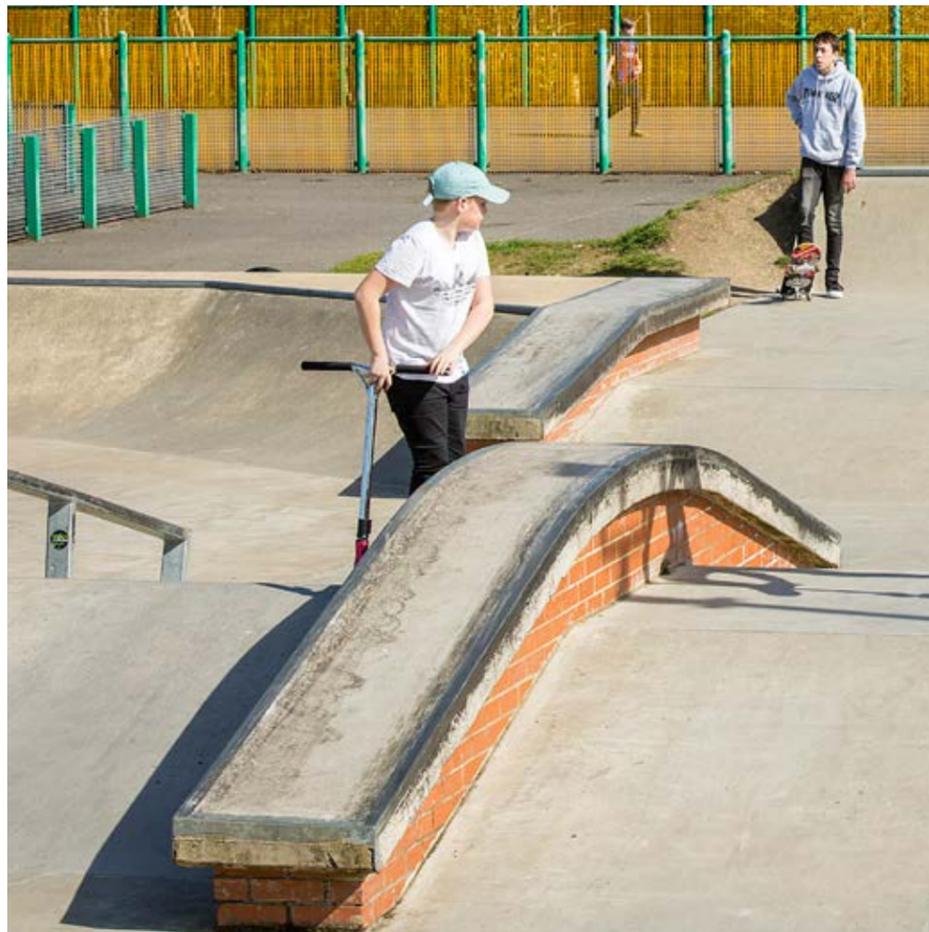
Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) provide facilities for formal and informal games. They should be marked out for a range of activity. Detailed guidance on the design, specification, construction, dimensions and layouts of MUGAs is available from Sports England and the Sports and Play Construction Association.



- Open-textured porous, level macadam sports surfacing to ensure well drained surface, that is useable all year round.
- Surface to meet the slip resistance requirements of intended sports.
- Typically, a 25mm wearing course made up of 6mm aggregates over a 50mm base layer of 20mm aggregates.
- Finished with a suitable paint coating to give the surfacing colour and the required anti slip rating.
- Layout and line markings in accordance with Sports England guidance.

- Bonded and coloured, free draining recycled rubber mulch to BS 1176 which can be used as an impact absorbing surface for outdoor gyms, parkour equipment etc and as an alternative to gravel for BMX tracks, particularly for high intensity use or on damp sites.
- Install to a suitable depth to cover critical fall height of any play equipment and in accordance with manufacturer's guidance.
- Ensure installed by an approved installer for consistent product quality.
- Inspect annually, to check overall condition and performance.

- Typical surface finish for BMX tracks, such as Breedon Gravel or similar approved.
- Limestone or granite crushed stone surface laid to typical depth of 100mm, over a suitable depth of subbase.
- Material can range from 100mm to dust or 6mm to dust, top layer compacted to form a sealed hard surface
- Incorporate cambers and falls to ensure a well drained useable surface.
- Include a filter drain along the edge of track, where required, to avoid areas of flooding from surface water run-off.
- Inspect annually as a minimum, to check overall condition and performance. More frequent visits may be required dependant on local weather conditions, and intensity of use.



## Design Code: Equipment

The type and range of play equipment should be accessible for users with a range of abilities, and appropriate to the type of play space and its setting.

Equipment should be laid out to maximise the play value and provide the best use of the space available. Special attention needs to be given to new or existing tree planting, orientation (particularly for metal slides) and fall areas – with plenty of ‘slack space’ included around and between equipment to allow free movement and to facilitate different types of informal play.

Equipment should be arranged to ensure that younger children do not feel intimidated by older children and teenagers.

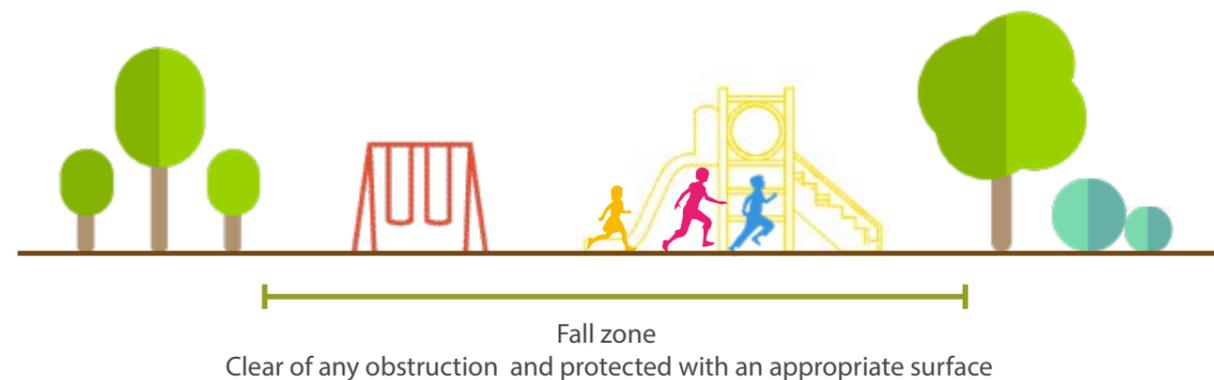
Galvanised or stainless steel finishes are preferred for metal equipment.

Timber elements deteriorate most when buried in, or in contact with, the ground. All manufactured timber equipment must be supplied with a minimum 15-20 year guarantee. Bespoke, natural timber equipment needs to be treated correctly with a safe, long-lasting, non-reactive preservative to ensure a minimum 10 year life.

Rope equipment and netting must be sufficiently heavy duty and durable.

Large, oversized and distinctive equipment is welcomed.

Exciting, innovative and bespoke equipment, that will appeal to a wide range of user groups and provides a significantly high level of play value i.e. well above normal expectations, may be deemed to offer a level of play experience equivalent to more than one piece of standard equipment.



## Choosing Equipment for Different Types of Play Space

As children and young people become more independent they will want more challenging experiences.

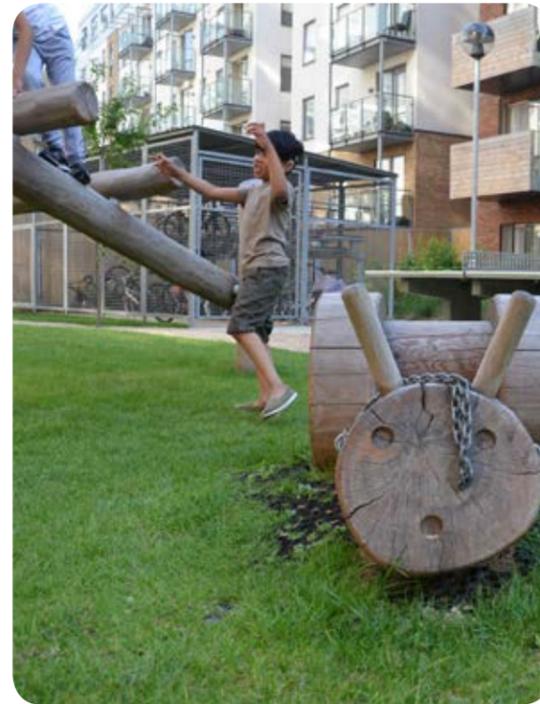
LAP



LEAP



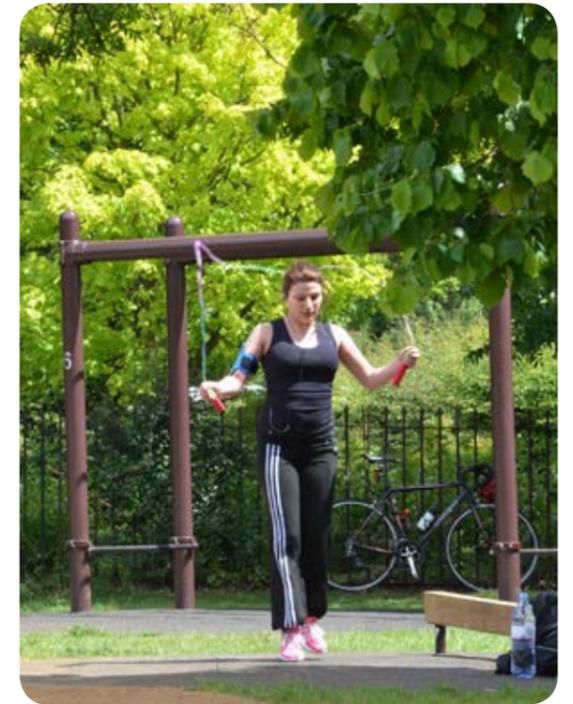
LLAP



NEAP



YOUTH SPACE



It is important to select the appropriate type of equipment for different age groups which will:

- promote agility, balance and coordination
- present a suitable level of physical challenge
- encourage the development of positive social skills

08

## Design Code: Natural Play Features for LLAPs

Natural elements – including trees and other types of planting, areas of open grass, boulders, timber, logs, gravel, sand and water – should be creatively and safely integrated with landscape features such as mounds, slopes, woodland, meadows and wetland areas as part of a dedicated Local Landscaped Area for Play.

### Creative Play and Learning

When well designed, these sort of natural elements can offer children as much play value as standard play equipment with greater possibilities for creative play than other types of play space. The non-standard nature and variability of natural play features encourages imagination and supports the develop of the child's ability to assess risk.

### Maintenance

Natural play features need to be durable and made safe for play. Regular inspection and routine maintenance is important to ensure play features continue to remain usable while in place.

Natural elements will age faster and less predictably than standard equipment. Regular risk assessment is required to ensure users stay safe and renewal of these features needs to be considered as part of the design.

### Specification

Boulders should be naturally smooth or have slightly rough surface and have no sharp edges. The stone must not be too porous or slippery when wet. They should be sustainably sourced. Local stone can enhance or complement the wider setting and can often have greater play value than an off-the-shelf play boulder product.

Any boulders should be arranged in naturalistic, irregular groupings either as a cluster or within 'stepping' distance of each other. They should be suitably large and flattish on top for children to climb and sit upon.

Installed meaningfully around wetlands, at the base of mounds, or within sand or gravel, boulders can offer a genuine and unique opportunity for imaginative games in a way that 'token' boulders in an area of wetpour do not. An isolated boulder, in any surface, offers limited play value.

Boulders must be installed at safe distances away from equipment where falls from any height are possible. They should not form hard objects within the falling space.

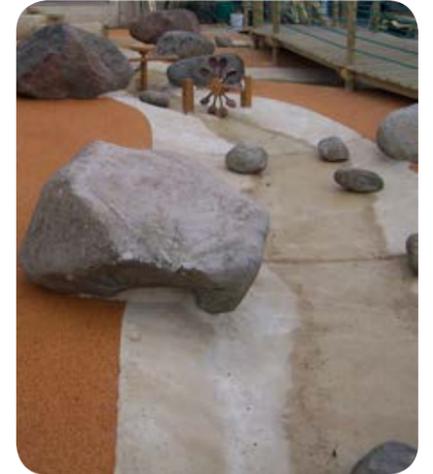
Fallen or cut down tree trunks offer great play value and offer an informal place to sit. However, timber elements and logs will be required to have a guaranteed life of 10 years minimum. Any sharp edges and splinters must be sanded down and rotten timber cut out.

Preservatives used to treat natural timber must be safe, long-lasting, and non-reactive.

Oversized, robust naturalistic features are preferred such as play trees and logs supplied by Ruskin Trees.



## What is Natural Play?



## Design Code: Seating

The right choice of seating and appropriate method of installation is key to creating a cohesive, uncluttered, attractive, hard-wearing, quality space.

Items of furniture should complement each other in terms of style and material, and their design should be sympathetic to the character and type of play area and its setting.

Seats should be provided within play areas for supervision and social interaction.

Seating not just a place for guardians and caregivers to wait while children play. It can provide the opportunity for people to bring lunch or meet up with friends.

Furniture can add play value to the scheme by including interactive features and artwork. Seats may also have a sculptural quality or function as a physical play feature some of the time.

Seats need to include provision for visitors with mobility issues and be accessible for a range of users, including small children and those with buggies and prams. Poorly located furniture may create a barrier to access and can even present a physical obstacle in the worst cases.

A suitably robust construction and specification is required. High quality products typically last longer and provide a good user experience. Self-burnishing hard wearing finishes such as stainless steel, durable hardwood timber and high quality concrete are preferred. Different types of seat should be selected from the same product range where practicable.

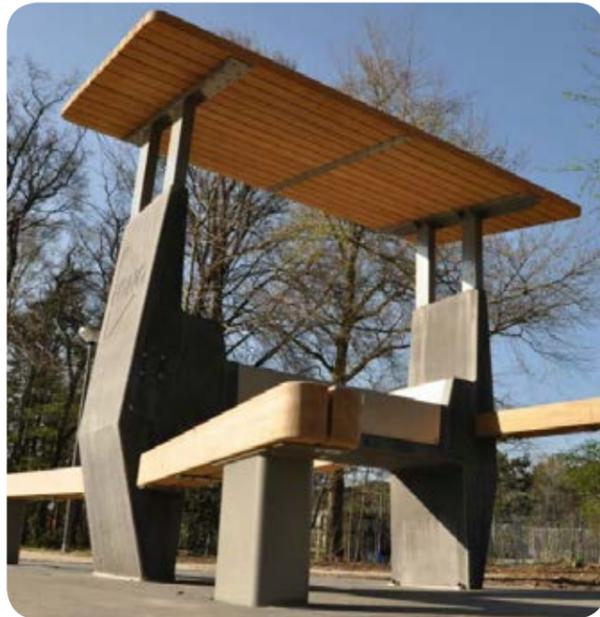
Furniture and seating elements should be root fixed below surfacing if needed to ensure a neat finish and good appearance. Ad hoc rectangles of concrete hardstanding or paving slabs below seating, installed within another type of surfacing should be avoided.

Picnic benches, durable bespoke seating and seating that offers additional play value or which can be used flexibly in different ways are welcomed.

Seating should be well-located in relation to microclimate and shade, integrated within the space (rather than simply located around the edge of the play area) and curved or arranged to allow accompanying adults, children and young people to socialise with each other.



## Different Types of Seating for Play Spaces



## Design Code: Visitor Information

### Why Use Signage?

A playground sign is normally required to indicate that the space is intended for children's play. Visitor information can encourage users to maintain a clean and safe play space through clearly visible signage that tells people what type of behaviour expected as well as what is and is not allowed.

### Standard Requirement

WBC standard design for playground signs is illustrated opposite.

The minimum specification is a 500mm x 400mm powder-coated aluminium signboard, mounted on a stainless steel frame and attached securely using stainless steel fixings to the gates or fence at the entrance to the play space (rather than on a sign post) to avoid clutter. Preferred supplier is Fitzpatrick Woolmer.

Playground signage should include infographics to discourage dogs, litter, smoking and alcohol within the place space. Additional infographics may be required to prohibit cycling and skateboarding at facilities designed for younger children or to discourage other types of antisocial behaviour.

Durable, child friendly and imaginative signage of bespoke design is also welcomed.

### Other Types of Sign

Additional signage may be required for individual facilities such as:

- Interpretation boards for nature trails.
- Instructions for outdoor fitness equipment and Parkour apparatus.
- Safety information for wheeled sports.
- 'No cycling' or 'Cyclist dismount' signs along paths through dedicated play space.



## Design Code: Bins

Litter bins provided for play facilities must be readily accessible for waste collection. The exact location of the bin will need to be agreed, but typically this will be outside any railings, near the entrance to the play space adjacent to the public highway.

WBC standard design for litter bins for play facilities is illustrated opposite.

The minimum specification is a Broxap Derby Double Slimline Recycling Bin, Product no: BX45 2596-DDS-RC with restricted aperture for recycling, laser cut lettering and anti-graffiti coating. The respective openings should be labelled 'Litter' and 'Plastic Bottles and Cans Only', in large lettering with Tidyman and Recycling infographics. Bin Colour (Black) RAL 9005.

Alternative standard Broxap colours for this product such as: RAL 4010 (Pink), RAL 5015 (Blue), RAL 1023 (Yellow) may also be acceptable.

Durable, child friendly and imaginatively designed or themed bins are welcomed.



OR





## Design Code: Planting

Any type of planting within or adjacent to play spaces needs to be selected with care and well designed. Specialist horticultural knowledge is likely to be required.

Planting should offer visual amenity, seasonal and sensory interest, opportunities for learning and development, shade, shelter, delineation of space, a degree of enclosure and filtered views – but not screening in the majority of locations.

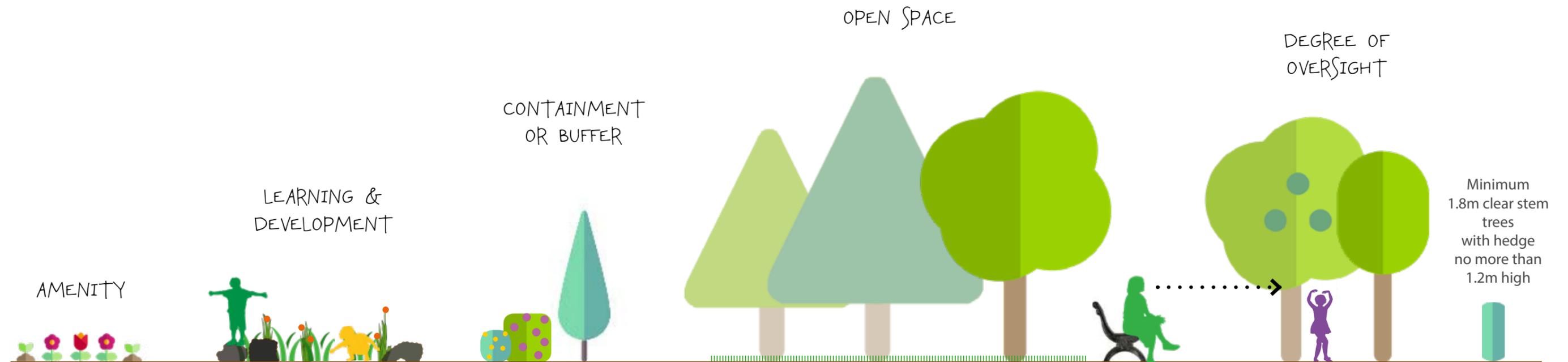
Suitable types of planting for play spaces can include trees, clipped hedges, bulbs, wildflower areas, 'prairie' planting and herbaceous perennials if designed well.

Successful planting design means thinking ahead. A suitably qualified designer will need to consider location, micro-climate, ground conditions, soil and rooting zones in addition to horticultural features and size of planting at maturity. Planting failures can take a great deal of time and effort to address successfully.

Selecting robust, varied, readily available species that are relatively low maintenance is also of key importance.

Special care must be taken in relation to leaf fall, berries and moss as well as toxicity.

### Planting Strategy and Design Objectives



Planting will need to tolerate trampling by children and provide interest all year with plenty of seasonal variation.

Avoid mulches adjacent to safety surfaces.

Planting can be used to create natural play features that allow children to explore different textures, movement and smells.

Planting can help define spaces by creating a level of physical barrier.

However, planting should not obstruct views or visually screen the space.

Areas of semi-natural open space or parkland are important for free play and contact with nature.

Open space can form an effective natural buffer from surrounding roads and houses.

Planting should offer a degree of enclosure or filtered views but not screening.

Trees can provide shelter around seating areas but should be positioned carefully to avoid obstructed views.

To maintain sightlines, fast growing species or cultivars that will grow tall and dense should be avoided.

## Types of Planting suitable for Play Spaces



- Small ornamental or larger parkland type trees and native species, if carefully selected, can make a valuable contribution to play spaces.
- Species with vivid autumn colour, blossom in spring or summer, distinctive leaf shapes, catkins or ornamental bark will offer greater play value.
- Large specimen shrubs with open branches and multistems are welcomed.



- Either native beech or hornbeam or ornamental flowering varieties.
- Only species suited to low hedging and requiring a single cut, once a year to be maintained as a 1.2m high hedge.
- In most cases, hedges should be planted around the outside of any playground railings to allow the hedge to shroud the fence once fully established.
- No trees should be planted within the line of the hedge.



- Native scrub, woodland or hedgerow planting will only be acceptable where it forms part of an adjacent associated semi-natural greenspace.
- Should not fully enclose the play facility and mature planting must allow an appropriate degree of oversight without the need for routine cutting back.
- Careful selection of species is required. Avoid planting potentially harmful plants within or surrounding play facilities designed for young children.



- Pictorial wildflower meadows.
- High quality, amenity style planting, including a mixture of native and more ornamental species or cultivars.
- Pre-seeded mats or soils preferred to ensure a successful, reliable result with minimal management requirements (for small areas of wildflowers in particular).
- Long native wildflora grass will generally only be acceptable around natural play features and LLAPs.



- Low to medium height varieties of cornus and salix species (with ornamental stems, flowers and non-toxic berries) suitable for coppicing.
- To be stooled annually or biannually.
- Underplanted with winter or spring flowering bulbs to add interest.



- A low maintenance mixture of perennial species, which may include low groundcover shrubs and summer flowering bulbs.
- Plenty of seasonal and sensory interest.
- Cut back once a year.



- Self seeding annuals and perennials in an ornamental grass matrix.
- Include ornamental seedheads and late flowering species to provide interest in autumn and winter.
- Cut back once a year.



- Naturalised in mown grass.
- Planted in swathes below deciduous trees and shrubs.
- Layer planting with early bulbs and autumn flowering varieties to extend seasonal interest.
- Include native bulb species to enhance biodiversity.

## Ensuring Long Term Success

Understanding the site conditions and specifying the right plant for the right place is central to the success of a soft landscape scheme. Testing the ground conditions will help ensure drainage and irrigation requirements are designed to ensure long term viability of what is planted. Good quality, well thought out design detailing for soft landscape will help create a robust scheme – this may include drainage, irrigation, soil specification, edging to planted areas.

## What to Avoid

Planting should be designed to provide a safe, fun and low maintenance scheme with plants that are suitable for a play environment.

Do not select invasive or fast-growing species or cultivars, or plants that will grow tall and dense such as screening plants and evergreen 'amenity' type shrubs.

## Hazardous Plants

Some plants can potentially be harmful to people. Certain types of plant may irritate the skin if handled, or cause discomfort and even severe poisoning if digested. Other plants may present physical hazards such as sharp edges, pointed spikes and prickly stems. As a general rule, hazardous planting should not be used where it is likely to be touched or eaten by children, or where it may eventually form a physical obstacle within falling spaces.

A suitably qualified designer should be aware of which plants to avoid.

Industry publications and lists such the Horticultural Trades Association (2000) Code of Practice for Potentially Harmful Plants and the Royal Horticultural Society (2004) Potentially Harmful Garden Plants are a good source of further information.



Sensory and Seasonal Interest

<p>LEAF SHAPES</p> 	<p>BARK COLOUR</p> 	<p>BERRIES (NON TOXIC)</p> 	<p>WINGED FRUIT</p> 	<p>SCENT</p> 	<p>SPRING FLOWERS</p> 
<p>LEAF COLOUR</p> 	<p>BARK TEXTURE</p> 	<p>BLOSSOM</p> 	<p>CONES</p> 	<p>SOUND</p> 	<p>SUMMER FLOWERS</p> 
<p>LEAF TEXTURE</p> 	<p>STEM COLOUR</p> 	<p>CATKINS</p> 	<p>CONKERS</p> 	<p>MOVEMENT</p> 	<p>AUTUMN FLOWERS</p> 
	<p>TWISTED STEMS</p> 		<p>DRY SEEDHEADS</p> 		<p>WINTER FLOWERS</p> 



### Child Development and Inclusive Play

Truly inclusive play space will allow children, young people and adults of all ages to interact together and with their environment – a place where a wide range of users can play in many different ways together and learn from each other.

It is not only children with disabilities who benefit from inclusive play. Children without disabilities learn about tolerance, the importance of diversity and acceptance. Through careful design and choice of equipment, play spaces can be accessible to all children while including varying degrees of challenge.

Play industry publication PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) offers a useful checklist of items for designers to consider throughout the design process.



#### ARE THERE CLEAR ROUTES THROUGH THE PLAYGROUND?

Ideally there should be two or more ways to move around the space to create interest. Ensure paths have smooth surfaces, at least 1.2m wide with gentle gradients.

#### WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE LEVEL OF THE EQUIPMENT?

Equipment should still provide a degree of challenge, with multi-use items designed for a range of ability.

#### IS THERE A VARIETY OF PLAY EXPERIENCE?

Consider the use of water and sand to add a high level of play value. Don't forget to provide level access to these features.

#### ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPACE?

'Time out' or quiet, complete areas benefit younger children and those who need time away from high tempo action. Safe, sheltered places to sit will allow all users to relax and socialise.

#### IS THE EQUIPMENT ACCESSIBLE?

Locate equipment within easy reach of entrances and access routes. Provide some fully inclusive moving items such as level access roundabouts and basket swings.

#### ARE THERE ARE VARIETY OF ACCESSIBLE HIGH POINTS?

Structures such as mounds, decks and climbing units should be considered.

#### HAS SENSORY PLAY BEEN INCLUDED?

All children will enjoy and benefit from features which stimulate:

- Sight e.g. patterns, shapes, colour and reflected light
- Sound e.g. water play, listening tubes and instruments
- Touch e.g. different textures/materials such as woodcarvings, water, sand
- Scent e.g. planting for fragrance and movement

## Accessibility

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.  
The planning, design and management of play facilities should not create barriers to access for users where practically avoidable.



- Safe, fully accessible pedestrian and cycle routes must be provided to play spaces. These access routes should be wide enough to accommodate children walking alongside adults with wheelchairs, prams or buggies.
- All footpaths leading to the play facility should be a minimum clear width of 1.2m with level access to the entrances.
- Surfaced paths should be provided to reach the entrance through large areas of surrounding grass.
- A safe, well defined crossing point that provides direct access to the play space will be required where children need to cross the highway to reach the entrance.
- Crossings need to be fully accessible with dropped kerbs and blister paving as required.



- Entry points should be free of obstacles, gullies, manholes, and other protrusions.
- Gates should have a minimum clearance width of 1m.
- Additional space to manoeuvre needs to be allowed to enable users of wheelchairs, walking frames, prams and buggies to keep out of the way of gates as they open.
- Gates should be hydraulic self-closing.
- Fenced play spaces should have at least two exit points, to avoid cul-de-sacs where children cannot escape bullies or other threats.



- Surfaces need to be even and stable.
- Slopes can create 'runaway' problems for buggies, prams and wheelchairs.
- Loose fill such as gravel, sand and bark may not be accessible by all users.



- Ball courts and wheeled sports facilities should be safely segregated from other types of play space and separate viewing areas provided where appropriate.
- Ballstop fencing should be used where needed but, outside of these features, courts should remain as open as possible rather than being 'fenced off'.
- Fully accessible multifunctional features such as fitness tracks and surface markings can be integrated very successfully with ball courts or outdoor gym equipment.
- Cycleways should not run across entrances or directly through an area of dedicated play space.

### How to Design for Flexible Use

Play provision needs to address the changing needs of new communities. Initially, new residents may be young families however over time this will change.

Flexible facilities and multifunctional open space, designed to be used in different ways simultaneously by a range of users, can strengthen local connections as well as meeting the needs of communities as they develop and their children grow up.

Consideration should be given to locating equipped play facilities within larger open spaces with surroundings that include mature trees, ornamental planting, seating areas and cycle parking. Different types of play spaces can often be located alongside each other and as part of other communities facilities very successfully.

Fully enclosed fenced ball courts can be intimidating to many children and young people and can sometimes facilitate bullying or anti-social behaviour. An 'unfenced' style of MUGA designed with minimal enclosure and located within a larger open space tends to be more welcoming and will attract a far wider range of users.

The inclusion of two or more table tennis or games tables within a multifunctional open space can facilitate positive social interaction between different user groups and the local community.

Features such as tracks and surface marking that can be used flexibly, in many different ways by all ages groups, are a good way to broaden the appeal of hard surfaced areas to the wider community.





# 11

## Provision for Young People

### Choosing Equipment for Older Children and Teenagers



Older children and teenagers enjoy different types of activity and play equipment from younger children – as well as facilities for fitness, ball games and wheel sports.

It is important to select the type of equipment that young people will value and that provides plenty of opportunity to socialise and interact with peer groups.

Popular items for this age group may include interactive equipment, wifi connectivity and sheltered seating.



## Designing Skate Parks

Skate parks are often best sited in central accessible, visible locations to minimise anti-social behaviour and ensure a well used facility that is valued by both users and the local community. Specialist design is normally required to create a exciting facility, for both beginners and champions, that meets the requirements the relevant British Standards. It is essential to consult potential user groups on the type of provision required, which may include street style skate parks as well as ramps and bowls or facilities for scooters and bikes.

## STREET STYLE



Sol Joel (Skate Park)



Sol Joel (Skate Park)

## RAMPS & BOWLS

## Other Types of Youth Space

### BMX TRACKS



Paddicks Drive

### PARKOUR



Sol Joel



“Children need and want to take risks when they play.”

Play England (2013)



### Challenge

Play space should challenge children physically in all sorts of ways from climbing up walls to crawling through tunnels. This type of activity comes with an inherent risk. Children learn skills by taking and managing risk and this is an important aspect of play. A risk benefit assessment works to find the right balance between keeping children safe and continually challenged.

### Benefit vs Risk

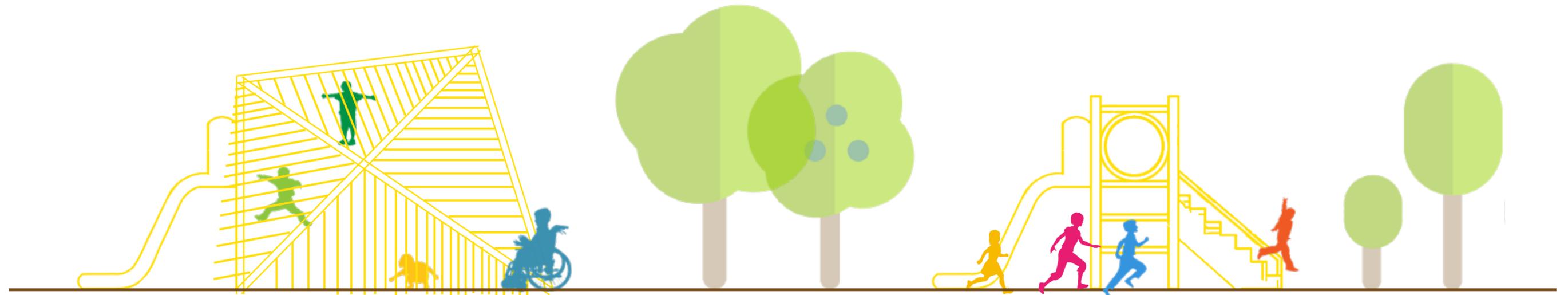
Play policy establishes a framework which enables designers to make judgements about reasonableness in risk management. It does this by recognising that risk is an inherent and necessary part of play. Risk-benefit assessment allows providers and designers to make sound judgements about risks and benefits relating to play provision which must be recorded and evidence-based.

Play providers are legally required to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessment of facilities and to act on the findings. The focus should be on hazards with the potential to cause real harm. It is not about creating a risk-free environment but rather ensuring that all reasonable precautions have been taken to avoid serious injury.

### RoSPA and Playground Safety

The Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents (RoSPA) recognises that play is about doing and it is inevitable that accidents will happen. RoSPA makes it clear that its function is to reduce the severity of injuries to children and young people – not to remove all possibility of harm.

A RoSPA post-installation inspection will be required to ensure that any new play facilities built meet current safety standards and that the equipment has been correctly installed. Regular inspection and documented checks will need to be carried out by a competent person throughout the maintenance period, to ensure the facility is maintained in good working order, and a further RoSPA annual safety audit will be required before handover.



Routine maintenance and the ongoing management of play facilities need to be considered as part of the design process from the outset, with adequate information provided on aftercare for all elements to:

- Ensure sufficient resources are made available for long term maintenance and management of new play spaces
- Ensure new play spaces remain fit for purpose and safe for the duration of their intended life span
- Ensure future maintenance operations are consistent with the design intent of the scheme.

This is particularly important for water features, sandpits and any non-standard play items that will require additional maintenance.

All information necessary to maintain the scheme should be clearly presented as a brief document, to be provided either as part of the planning submission or at handover of play spaces to be adopted by the Council.

### Maintenance Information

To ensure the long term success of the scheme, the following information will be required prior to transfer of completed facilities:

- Land ownership and boundary responsibility.
- As built drawing(s).
- Routine monitoring and inspection requirements for the scheme including trees.
- Maintenance schedule setting out the frequency and types of operation for the scheme including planting during establishment and once established.
- NBS Landscape specification for hard and soft landscaping maintenance operations where relevant.

## Landscape Design Proposals Generally

- All information must be clear, legible and accurate to an appropriate scale.
- The drawing scale and a north point should be clearly marked on each plan.
- Hard copies of all information should be provided in addition to digital submission.
- All site constraints and layout details (including root protection areas of existing trees, levels, services and sightlines) should be shown on the same plan as the play area proposals (showing detailed layout of equipment, play surfaces, fencing, furniture etc) or, where this is not possible, on an accurately referenced plan of the same scale.
- Unclear or ambiguous information is likely to result in delay while clarification is sought.

## Materials Sheets and Product Information

- Clearly labelled images of all play equipment and features, street furniture, and paving to be provided – with sizes, materials and colours specified.
- Detailed product information for play equipment such as age range, number of users, fall heights should be included.

## Detailed Planting Proposals

- Planting plans to be labelled with full Latin names rather than abbreviations where possible
- The following information should be provided, on the same plan where possible:
  - Plant densities, numbers, form, size and specification.
  - Details of mixes for seeded areas.
  - Topsoil depth and specification for all areas to be seeded or planted.
  - Outline specification for seeding/planting including ground preparation, amelioration, mulches, support, protection and maintenance during establishment.
- Tree pit details to be provided.

## Construction Details for Structures and Surfaces

- Standard or typical details for all structures and paving including safety surfacing to be provided.

## Evaluating the Quality of Play Space

To evaluate the quality of play space proposals, the following factors will be considered:

### LOCATION

- Opportunities for informal oversight by passers-by or nearby properties such as houses or community facilities.
- Ease of access for children and young people.
- Personal safety and well-being, particularly in relation to road traffic and pollution.
- Accessibility for those who are disabled or pushing buggies and prams.
- Opportunities for social interaction and meeting people.
- How well the space complements the wider setting.

### PLAY VALUE

- How attractive and welcoming is the space.
- Are the needs of children and young people of differing ages being met.
- Is the space playable for children and young people with disabilities.
- Opportunities for different types of movement, chase-type games, imaginative play, informal recreation, ball games and wheeled sports.
- Access to the natural environment and materials.
- Possibilities for children and young people to take risk without undue hazard.
- Places to sit and talk.

### CARE AND MAINTENANCE

- Lifespan and whole life costs of play features, equipment, furniture and surfaces.
- Type and frequency of maintenance operations to ensure the success of the scheme.
- Planting design and management regime.
- Proximity of equipment and safety surfacing to mature trees.
- Location of bins for litter and recycling.
- Is the playable space located within a dog-free zone or controlled area.
- Are materials sustainably sourced/manufactured.
- Visitor information.
- Health and safety.

# 16

## Handover

### Is the Scheme Built?

The flow chart illustrates the process of handing over a completed scheme to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).

The following information will be required before the scheme is legally transferred:

- Land transfer map as a PDF and a GIS Shapefile
- Maintenance information for the scheme including 'as built' drawings
- Confirmation of payment of agreed Commuted Sum figure

PROCESS

### Inspection

Notify WBC on completion of the scheme and arrange an inspection to confirm the scheme has been built in accordance with the approved details. We will need to agree that the scheme has been installed satisfactorily or to identify any defects and remedial work required.

### Safety Audit

We would strongly advise that an inspection is arranged and any outstanding works are agreed before a RoSPA post-installation inspection is undertaken, as a subsequent RoSPA inspection may be required if the scheme built has not been completed to WBC approval. Any items flagged by the report will need to be rectified.

### Maintenance Period

At this stage, we will need to agree the start date of the 12 months maintenance of the scheme. The maintenance period will normally begin once any outstanding or remedial works have been completed satisfactorily. WBC should be contacted 1 month before end of agreed maintenance period to arrange another inspection. On completion of the 12 month maintenance period, a further RoSPA inspection report must be provided and any items flagged by the report will need to be rectified.

### Transfer

Once all outstanding or remedial work is completed has been completed satisfactorily, the scheme is ready to be adopted. We will confirm the final Commuted Sum figure to be paid



## Play England's Charter for Children's Play

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 31 was ratified by the UK Government in 1991. As such the government has a duty under this convention to protect and promote play opportunities for all children and young people. The Charter for Children's Play sets out a vision for play and aims to be a catalyst for individuals and organisations to examine, review and improve their provision for children and young people's play and informal recreation. The charter is summarised below:

### **Children have the right to play**

All children and young people have the right to play and need to play: free to choose what they do – lively or relaxed, noisy or quiet – with the chance to stretch and challenge themselves, take risks and enjoy freedom. The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Every child needs time and space to play**

All children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need time and space to play freely and confidently with their peers, free of charge, indoors and outdoors, somewhere they feel safe. Play provision should actively include the widest range of children and seek to engage with those from minority groups.

### **Adults should let children play**

Parents, carers and other adults can support children and young people's play by respecting the value and importance of all types of play, playing with their children and by creating opportunities and allowing time for children to play independently with their friends, inside and outside the home.

### **Children should be able to play freely in their local areas**

Children have the same right to use and enjoy public space as others. Local streets, estates, green spaces, parks and town centres should be accessible for children and young people to move around in safety and offer places where they can play freely, experience nature, explore their environment and be with their friends.

### **Children value and benefit from staffed play provision**

Children should have access to a choice of staffed facilities where children's play rights and needs are the first priority, such as adventure playgrounds, play centres, holiday play schemes, after-school play clubs, breakfast play clubs, toy libraries, play buses and play ranger services.

### **Children's play is enriched by skilled playworkers**

Qualified, skilled playworkers are trained to put children's play needs at the centre of their work in a variety of settings, enhancing the range and quality of play experiences for all children. They are the best people to run staffed play provision for school-aged children. The role of the playworker is as important as that of any skilled professional working with children and should be respected and rewarded accordingly.

### **Children need time and space to play at school**

The school day should allow time for children to relax and play freely with their friends. Young children learn best through play and, as they get older, play supports and enriches their learning. Children learn best if teaching is creative and enjoyable. In school, time and space for play and outdoor learning is as important as formal teaching. School grounds should be good places to play.

### **Children sometimes need extra support to enjoy their right to play**

Children and young people living away from home or visiting unfamiliar or controlled environments such as hospital, prison, immigration centres, and residential homes and schools, sometimes experience fear, anxiety and discomfort. For these children it is especially important to ensure they have good play opportunities facilitated by trained staff and volunteers.

Play England provide further guidance on implementing the charter in another of their publications, 'Making It Happen'.

## Types of Play

These play types were identified by Bob Hughes in *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types* (2002), 2nd edition, London: PlayLink to describe some of the different ways children play. They can be used to help plan for play, recognise play preferences and possible gaps in provision being offered. This is not an exhaustive list of play types.

(Hughes, 2002, *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*, 2nd edition, London: PlayLink)

**Symbolic Play** – enables children to access experiences, play out scenarios enabling gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth. For example, using symbols to represent people, playing house.

**Rough and Tumble Play** – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength, discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. For example, play fighting, chasing, tumbling.

**Socio-Dramatic Play** – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. For example, playing mummy and daddy, going to the shops, having a conversation on the phone.

**Social Play** – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. For example, board games, conversations, team games.

**Creative Play** – play which allows children to be creative, to explore lots of different creative mediums and tools. For example, explore colour combinations, self-expression through any medium i.e. paints, materials, loose parts, textures.

**Communication Play** – play using words, nuances, dual meaning, languages, facial looks and gestures. For example, mime, jokes, play acting, mickey taking, singing, debate, poetry.

**Dramatic Play** – play which dramatises events, situations and ideas can be structured into a presentational form. For example, dramatization of a TV show, a funeral, a conversation.

**Deep Play** – play which allows children to access risky experiences, to engage in activities with a real element of fear or danger which can help to develop survival skills and experience the conquest of fear. For example, tree climbing, jumping over a stream.

**Exploratory Play** – play to support exploration of an object, an area or a concept. Supporting curiosity by using things in new and novel ways. For example, exploring objects, handling, throwing, building, exploring puddles, fire, water and earth.

**Fantasy Play** – play which rearranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur. Children engaged in situations that are products of their imagination. For example, making up things, being a dragon or a super hero, dressing up.

**Imaginative Play** – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply. For example, pretending to be something, patting a dog that isn't there, singing into a non-existent microphone.

**Locomotor Play** – movement in any or every direction for its own sake. For example, chase, hide and seek, climbing, running, jumping.

**Mastery Play** – play that supports the learning and mastery of how to do something. Enables children to experience control. For example, building dens, digging holes, blocking drains, growing things.

**Object Play** – playing with objects, repetitive and focused play that supports discovery of uses and functions. For example, playing with a ball, with a game boy, with a tool.

**Role Play** – provides opportunity to explore identity, roles, language and culture. For example, being mummy, daddy, doctor, police man, batman.

**Recapitulative Play** – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages. For example, being a Viking, using weapons, fighting in a war.

## The Play Space Environment

The play environment is any space in which children play and can contain a range of features both built and natural. An essential element of a play space is adaptability and flexibility. 'Best Play: What Play Provision Should do for Children' (2000) National Playing Fields Association offers a guide to providing and evaluating the quality of play spaces which should provide children and young people with the following opportunities:

### **A varied and interesting physical environment**

Examples: things at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide, trees and bushes, things that have been made, places to inspire mystery and imagination.

### **Challenge in relation to the physical environment**

Examples: activities which test the limits of capabilities, rough and tumble, sports and games, chase.

### **Playing with the natural elements - earth, water, fire, air**

Examples: digging, playing snowballs, flying kites, camp-fires.

### **Movement - running, jumping, rolling, climbing and balancing**

Examples: beams and ropes, soft mats, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space.

### **Manipulating natural and fabricated materials**

Examples: materials for art, cooking, making and mending of all kinds; building dens; making concoctions; using tools; access to bits and pieces of all kinds.

### **Stimulation of the five senses**

Examples: music making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places, different colours and shapes, dark and bright spaces, cooking on a camp-fire, rotting leaves, a range of food and drink, objects that are soft, prickly, flexible, large and small.

### **Experiencing change in the natural and built environment**

Examples: experiencing the seasons through access to the outdoor environment, opportunities to take part in building, demolishing, or transforming the environment.

### **Social interactions**

Examples: being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, gender, ethnicity and culture.

### **Playing with identity**

Examples: dressing up, role play, performing and taking on different kinds of responsibility.

### **Experiencing a range of emotions**

Examples: opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, likes/disliked, in/out of control, brave/cowardly.

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# Wokingham Borough Council

## Play Space Design Guide: Technical Note

### March 2018

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