

avoiding the creation of honey pots for teenagers, the City Council now requires that all developments of 10 or more family dwellings provide casual play on site.

7 Where should I locate the play areas in my estate design ?

Distance

- 7.1 A significant deterrent to children using play areas is often the distance they have to travel to such facilities. This is particularly the case with younger children who for reasons of safety and convenience are unable to travel long distances from home.
- 7.2 The following standards have been devised for new residential development to ensure that children of all ages in new development live within an acceptable distance of a play area appropriate to their needs. These distance standards will also be used, with a degree of reasonable flexibility, to gauge whether or not a proposed location for off-site provision is acceptable in meeting the needs of the development:

Facility	Distance from home along a safe walking route
Local Areas for Play	100 m
Locally Equipped Areas for Play	400 m
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play	1,000 m

Site Characteristics

- 7.3 When deciding upon the exact location of play areas the following advice should be adhered to:
1. For reasons of safety, play areas should be overlooked by homes or well used pedestrian routes. However, they should not be so close to homes that they cause disturbance to residents (see details on buffer zones in the additional information sheets in section 11). Landscaping should be used to help achieve separation of the play area from property boundaries, which will also green the environment in the development meeting amenity open space needs. The landscaping should however, be designed to avoid hiding the play areas from view of either peoples homes or public areas, so that activity on the play area can be informally monitored.
 2. Play areas should be separated from areas of major vehicle movements and be accessible directly from pedestrian routes. Children should not need to cross isolated areas or major hazards such as main roads, railways or waterways. Traffic calming measures should be provided on roads adjacent to play areas.
 3. Routes to play areas should be accessible to people with prams.
 4. Children's play areas should be sited in welcoming locations not on back land.
 5. Land where play areas are sited should be an appropriate terrain for the play opportunity intended.

7.4 *'Content of Applications for Planning Permission'*

The City Council expects the proposed locations of any children's play space to be clearly shown on the drawings submitted with applications for full or detailed planning permission. Exceptions to this will only occur where off-site provision is being made. However, where appropriate any known location for the provision of off-site play facilities should be included in the supporting information submitted with the application. When considering outline applications, any indicative site layout drawings should indicate the potential location of play space and any supporting information should describe how the site will accord with the requirements of this guidance note.

The details shown on drawings of the locations of play space should differentiate between space that will be equipped and space which is otherwise casual, and which also may perform other roles in the housing layout. On the grant of any planning consent, the agreed location of any play space will therefore be clearly demonstrated to any interested party.

8 What factors should I take into account in designing equipped play areas ?

8.1 This guidance note does not attempt to prescribe the specific play apparatus which should be provided at each type of play area, or set out rigid rules on layout and landscaping. There is little benefit from encouraging the development of identical play areas across the City which fail to take advantage of the benefits that can come from the existing terrain and landscaping. Moreover, when proposing and designing a play area local needs must be examined, particularly in relation to existing play facilities in an area.

8.2 However, despite the need for this flexibility there are certain issues which will need to be addressed when considering all play areas. These include:

Safety

8.3 This is a very important area with a number of issues needing to be considered. Clearly all play equipment should comply with relevant safety standards and where appropriate safe surfacing should be provided. Other factors which will need to be considered include preventing dogs from entering defined play areas (LAP's, LEAPs and NEAPs), the potential harm from vegetation and any conflicts with traffic. The biggest threat to children being able to play safely outside designated play areas is the potential conflict with motor vehicles. The road layout in new residential areas should therefore be such that at least some areas by their design ensure that vehicles travel at very slow speeds and have clear visibility of approaches to play areas. The possibilities for using different types of paving materials should be examined to enhance awareness amongst drivers that they are entering a residential environment, where children maybe playing in the street.

Play Opportunities

8.4 Equipment should be appropriate to the user group(s) for which the play area is intended. In order to create a sense of ownership by children for the equipment they will be using, it is recommended that where appropriate the user group is consulted at the play space design stage, concerning the type of equipment that might be installed. This will help to establish a sense of stewardship in the user group and in attempt to reduce vandalism. Equipment should provide for as wide a range of play activities as possible and encourage the physical and mental development of children. Play areas should be designed so that they can be enjoyed by people with disabilities. When considering the design and location of equipped play areas, account must be taken of the needs of disabled people. This includes matters such as the accessibility of the play area to wheel chair users (and child carers with push chairs). Additional accessibility considerations include access route and gate widths, path surface, slopes, and avoiding the use of steps. Equipped play areas should include at least one piece of equipment which is suitable for use by children who have special mobility needs. The surface material should be such to enable year round use. If grass is used it should be located in an area which has good drainage.

Ancillary facilities

8.5 It will be expected that all equipped play areas will provide seating and litter bins.

Vandalism

8.6 All play areas and equipment will need to be robust to prevent it from being damaged.

Visual Appearance

- 8.7 Play areas should be visually attractive and appropriate to their surroundings. Factors that will need to be considered include landscaping, fencing, surfacing materials and play equipment.
- 8.8 The Council's Parks and Amenities section of the Direct Services Department can provide expert and detailed advice on any matters relating to design and location of play areas, (Tel:- 307031/2).

9 What about long term maintenance of the play areas ?

- 9.1 If full consideration is given to the location, layout and design of play areas the cost of their future maintenance will be reduced. However, a vigorously used play area will always receive wear and tear and will need to be regularly checked (and if appropriate repaired) to ensure that it is safe for use.
- 9.2 Where it is your intention to request the Council to adopt a play space provided in association with a new development, the Council will require not only the play space and equipment to meet it's standards but also the provision of a commuted sum to cover a ten year period for the maintenance of the facility. The actual amount of commuted money required for maintenance will vary as it is dependant on the nature of the play area provided.
- 9.3 As a guide the commuted sum required for the equipped area of a standard LEAP is approximately £24,000 for a ten year period, at 1999 prices. No generalised sum can be given as an indicator of maintenance costs for the buffers zones or casual play areas as the circumstances for each site will vary so much.
- 9.4 It may be the case that the play space/ equipment requirement for a new development is provided for on site and the developer does not intend to request the adoption of it by the Council. The Council will, nevertheless, require that the an appropriate mechanism is put in place to ensure the future maintenance of the play space/ equipment, so that the play space continues to fulfil its function. This requirement will be enforced through the most appropriate control method, which is likely to be either a planning condition or S106 agreement.
- 9.5 Some types of space which can be considered to meet casual play space requirements will be maintained as part of the highway. For instance, where play opportunities are integrated into the front street through traffic calming.



10. What are the adoption procedures ?

- 10.1 The Council is willing to adopt play and open space from developers. Such play facilities and open space would therefore be available and open for all of the community in the area to use and enjoy. However, you must decide if you want the Council to adopt the land. Your views on adoption should be made known to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

10.2 Before adopting any play or open space, the Council will be concerned that:

The play/open space satisfies the requirements set out in this document.

The play/open space is capable of easy maintenance.

The site has been well maintained for a period of twelve months.

The appropriate commuted sum has been paid.

10.3 In order to ensure that these criteria are met, the Council requires that the following procedure is followed:-

(i) You must inform the Council as soon as the play area is practically complete, to allow the Council to carry out an initial inspection of the facility.

(ii) After the retention period (usually 12 months) a meeting will take place between the Council and yourself at which the site will be visited and adoption agreed if it has been satisfactorily maintained. A legal agreement concerning the adoption and maintenance procedure is then drawn up and signed by the relevant parties.

(iii) The commuted sum must be paid to the Council before the site is fully adopted. This is based on the costs for the first 10 years of maintenance. The commuted sum will depend on the design of the area, percentage of coverage with landscaping etc. The figure is worked out when detailed design, which must be agreed with Heritage & Leisure Services and Planning Services, has been produced.



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance note amplifies the Council's Adopted Local Plan policies and standards in respect of children's play areas. It is specifically aimed at developers who are intending to apply for planning permission to construct ten or more family dwellings on one site.
- 1.2 The Council puts great emphasis on the importance of play and recognises its crucial role in the physical, social and emotional development of children. In the past, inadequate consideration has sometimes been given to children's needs in the residential environment. This is of harm, not only to children, but also the population as a whole. Clearly, if children have inadequate opportunities for play it can lead to frustrations and potentially disruptive behaviour. A residential development which is designed from the outset taking full consideration of the needs of children is likely to function better and prove more attractive and pleasurable to all residents.
- 1.3 This guidance note looks at traditional forms of children's play areas and at play in relation to the residential environment as a whole. This is necessary as routes to and from a play area and its inter relationship with surrounding properties is important. It will never be the case that all children's play takes place on designated play areas. Play by its very nature is often spontaneous and will involve adaptation of the surrounding environment. Children should be given the opportunity to safely enjoy the residential environment close to home.
- 1.4 There are, however, always going to be people in the community who will be more sensitive to the potential impacts of living close to a designated play area. It is therefore essential that house builders fulfil their responsibility to potential house buyers/ occupiers, by advertising the locations of designated play areas in a development with clear site notices and in any sales literature, so that potential buyers can make informed choices.
- 1.5 This guidance note sets out what the Council expect in respect of the size, type and location of play areas and at how opportunities for children's play can be integrated into the fabric of a new estate. In addition, advice is given in respect to their design, maintenance and adoption.

20 What are the Council's Key Principles ?

- 2.1 The Council's key principles in relation to provision for children's play in new residential development are:



- 1 To recognise that children's play is a significant issue and that making appropriate and accessible provision for the physical, emotional and social growth for children with different abilities, through play, on a new estate is a basic infrastructure requirement and not an additional benefit to be 'fitted in' as an afterthought.

- 2 To integrate opportunities for children's play into the public realm fabric throughout an estate's design where safe informal play can take place close to home.

- 3 To make appropriate provision for more formal structured play on equipped play areas.

So, how much play space will the Council require ?

- 3.3 By way of example, the following calculation shows the range of childrens play space that would be sought from a hypothetical development of 25 houses consisting of; 10 x 2 bed dwellings and 15 x 3 bed dwellings.

Estimated number of occupants according to the occupancy standard:

10 x 2 bedroomed dwellings	or	10 x 2.2 = 22 residents
15 x 3 bedroomed dwellings	or	15 x 3 = 45 residents
		Total = 67 residents

Total play space per resident = 6m² to 8m², therefore the range of play space sought from this development, by category, is:-

2m² to 3m² x 67 = 134m² to 201m² of equipped play space
4m² to 5m² x 67 = 268m² to 335m² of casual play space
6m² to 8m² x 67 = 402m² to 536m² of total play space

But I'm not building family housing !

- 3.4 Some specialist types of development, such as sheltered housing, and single bedroom accommodation will not create a significant demand for children's play space. In such circumstances the requirement to provide childrens play facilities would be inappropriate. However, the residents of such schemes will benefit from the provision of amenity space and the Council will expect the provision of a satisfactory amount of such space to meet the needs of residents.
- 3.5 In cases where a proposal involves the conversion of an existing building into residential accommodation, the same method of calculating the amount of play space will be used where the conversion comprises of 10 or more units of family accommodation, i.e. 2 bedrooms or more. However, it is recognised that many conversions are more likely to have constrained sites and will be very limited in their ability to make on site provision in any capacity. Therefore, conversion will normally be expected to make financial contributions towards off-site provision for play in reasonable proximity to the site. The closest open spaces or parks will often present the best opportunity for off-site provision.

4. Do I need to provide play areas on the same site as my development ?

- 4.1 In some cases, it may not be appropriate to provide equipped childrens play facilities on the actual development site. This may be because of site constraints and/ or the close proximity of the site to an existing public open space or school grounds which have a reasonable degree of public access (where equipped childrens play facilities would be better located) or where an equipped space is likely to cause disturbance to occupiers of nearby dwellings. Where the provision of play facilities off-site is most appropriate, the Council will require the developer to contribute financially to the provision/ improvement of nearby play areas. The sum sought by the Council will be based on the amount of play area, by category, which would have other wise been provided for on-site.
- 4.2 The standard in section 3 will be used to determine how much play space should be provided on site. For each square metre of play space, by category, that is not provided on-site the Council will require the developer to contribute £99.50p/sq meter for equipped play space and £45.00/sq meter for casual play space. This contribution will then be put towards the improvement / provision of nearby play areas.

Equipped Play Areas

5.7 Equipped play areas are areas set aside for children's play which contain equipment specifically for that purpose. The nature of play equipment will be dependent on the area's size and the age group which it intends to serve.

5.8 There are two main types of equipped play area which the Council promotes:

(i) *Locally Equipped Areas for Play*

Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are unsupervised play areas which cater for children in the 4 - 8 years age range. They should provide a minimum of 5 types of play equipment and be surrounded by a dog proof barrier. They should normally be in the region of 400 sq metres in size and be surrounded by a buffer zone of 20 metres to the nearest dwelling.

(ii) *Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play*

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are unsupervised play areas which cater for children in the 8 - 14 age range. A minimum of 8 types of play equipment should be provided and as with Locally Equipped Areas for Play a dog proof barrier should be installed around the whole area. Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play should normally be in the region of 1,000 sq metres in size and have a buffer zone of at least 30 metres in distance to any surrounding properties. Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play should also where possible provide some play equipment for younger children. This can help deter children from using equipment beyond their capacity and enable families to play together.

5.9 Important further information which should be adhered to when designing and locating both Locally Equipped Areas for Play and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play can be found in the additional information sheets, see section 12.

Amenity Open Space

5.10 There is no standard for the provision of amenity open space. Each site shall be treated on its merits, in relation to site circumstances and urban design considerations. Amenity open space will always be provided on the development site.

5.11 Amenity open space is space which allows occupiers of housing developments to enjoy visual and physical open space in the development by way of relief from enclosed space and bricks and mortar. It can be private or public, more often than not a combination of both. The provision of amenity open space is additional to the requirement to provide for childrens play space.

5.12 Amenity open space will often be provided for by elements of the following;

Private gardens.

Communal gardens or court yards.

Incidental green breaks (open space); between houses, around protected trees or around protected nature conservation features.

Soft landscaping.

Grass verges, edging roads and footpaths.

Recreational or public open space (formal or informal).

Hard landscaping with seating and planters.

Trees.

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

5.13 Purpose designed childrens play space can contribute towards amenity open space provision, but it will not provide for all the amenity open space necessary in a development.

5.14 In the main, it would be expected that amenity open space, particularly at the 'lower level' e.g. grass verges, private/ communal gardens, will not contribute towards the childrens play space

avoiding the creation of honey pots for teenagers, the City Council now requires that all developments of 10 or more family dwellings provide casual play on site.

7 Where should I locate the play areas in my estate design ?

Distance

- 7.1 A significant deterrent to children using play areas is often the distance they have to travel to such facilities. This is particularly the case with younger children who for reasons of safety and convenience are unable to travel long distances from home.
- 7.2 The following standards have been devised for new residential development to ensure that children of all ages in new development live within an acceptable distance of a play area appropriate to their needs. These distance standards will also be used, with a degree of reasonable flexibility, to gauge whether or not a proposed location for off-site provision is acceptable in meeting the needs of the development:

Facility	Distance from home along a safe walking route
Local Areas for Play	100 m
Locally Equipped Areas for Play	400 m
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play	1,000 m

Site Characteristics

- 7.3 When deciding upon the exact location of play areas the following advice should be adhered to:
1. For reasons of safety, play areas should be overlooked by homes or well used pedestrian routes. However, they should not be so close to homes that they cause disturbance to residents (see details on buffer zones in the additional information sheets in section 11). Landscaping should be used to help achieve separation of the play area from property boundaries, which will also green the environment in the development meeting amenity open space needs. The landscaping should however, be designed to avoid hiding the play areas from view of either peoples homes or public areas, so that activity on the play area can be informally monitored.
 2. Play areas should be separated from areas of major vehicle movements and be accessible directly from pedestrian routes. Children should not need to cross isolated areas or major hazards such as main roads, railways or waterways. Traffic calming measures should be provided on roads adjacent to play areas.
 3. Routes to play areas should be accessible to people with prams.
 4. Children's play areas should be sited in welcoming locations not on back land.
 5. Land where play areas are sited should be an appropriate terrain for the play opportunity intended.

7.4 'Content of Applications for Planning Permission'

The City Council expects the proposed locations of any children's play space to be clearly shown on the drawings submitted with applications for full or detailed planning permission. Exceptions to this will only occur where off-site provision is being made. However, where appropriate any known location for the provision of off-site play facilities should be included in the supporting information submitted with the application. When considering outline applications, any indicative site layout drawings should indicate the potential location of play space and any supporting information should describe how the site will accord with the requirements of this guidance note.

Visual Appearance

- 8.7 Play areas should be visually attractive and appropriate to their surroundings. Factors that will need to be considered include landscaping, fencing, surfacing materials and play equipment.
- 8.8 The Council's Parks and Amenities section of the Direct Services Department can provide expert and detailed advice on any matters relating to design and location of play areas, (Tel:- 307031/2).

9 What about long term maintenance of the play areas ?

- 9.1 If full consideration is given to the location, layout and design of play areas the cost of their future maintenance will be reduced. However, a vigorously used play area will always receive wear and tear and will need to be regularly checked (and if appropriate repaired) to ensure that it is safe for use.
- 9.2 Where it is your intention to request the Council to adopt a play space provided in association with a new development, the Council will require not only the play space and equipment to meet it's standards but also the provision of a commuted sum to cover a ten year period for the maintenance of the facility. The actual amount of commuted money required for maintenance will vary as it is dependant on the nature of the play area provided.
- 9.3 As a guide the commuted sum required for the equipped area of a standard LEAP is approximately £24,000 for a ten year period, at 1999 prices. No generalised sum can be given as an indicator of maintenance costs for the buffers zones or casual play areas as the circumstances for each site will vary so much.
- 9.4 It may be the case that the play space/ equipment requirement for a new development is provided for on site and the developer does not intend to request the adoption of it by the Council. The Council will, nevertheless, require that the an appropriate mechanism is put in place to ensure the future maintenance of the play space/ equipment, so that the play space continues to fulfil its function. This requirement will be enforced through the most appropriate control method, which is likely to be either a planning condition or S106 agreement.
- 9.5 Some types of space which can be considered to meet casual play space requirements will be maintained as part of the highway. For instance, where play opportunities are integrated into the front street through traffic calming.



10. What are the adoption procedures ?

- 10.1 The Council is willing to adopt play and open space from developers. Such play facilities and open space would therefore be available and open for all of the community in the area to use and enjoy. However, you must decide if you want the Council to adopt the land. Your views on adoption should be made known to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION

<http://www.pearsoned.com/uk>

11 Local Plan Policies

The City of Plymouth Local Plan First Alteration, Adopted 1996, contains the following policies directly related to children's play areas:

Policy ARL8

All new and replacement children's playgrounds should be of a safe design and appropriately located.

Policy ARL9

Except in special cases, such as sheltered housing, appropriate provision should be made in new residential developments for amenity open space and children's play space. Children's play space should be of the order of 0.6 - 0.8 hectares per 1,000 population.

12 Categories of play provision

The City Council identifies two main types of play space which together serve the needs of children aged between 4 - 14. These are Casual play space and Equipped play space. Casual play space comprises of Local Areas for Play and even more informal provision which can be included throughout the estate design. Equipped play space comprises of Locally Equipped Areas for Play and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play, which are larger in scale and cater for older children - as a result their catchment population is considerably greater.

Guidance is not given in respect to the specific layout of the play areas - the City Council adopts a flexible approach to such matters. The nature of the equipment will be decided upon following full consideration of the needs of an area and the unique opportunities available at a particular site.

CASUAL PLAY SPACE

LOCAL AREAS FOR PLAY

A Local Area for Play is a small area of unsupervised open space specifically designated for young children for play activities close to where they live.

Location

Within 1 minute walking time of home (100 m walking distance).

Target Users

They cater mainly for 4 - 6 year olds, although they can attract other children in slightly older and younger age groups. Local Areas for Play should also be suitable for children with disabilities such as mobility and sensory problems.

NOTE: Children over the age of 6 are likely to cause some disturbance to adjacent residents. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the Local Area for Play design should discourage their use by older age groups. This can be achieved by limiting their size, and reducing opportunities for activities for older children.

Content

Local Areas for Play should be appropriate for low key games such as tag, hopscotch, french cricket, or play with small toys, and should be sign-posted with eye catching visual devices. They should have seating for carers.

Site

Such areas need to be reasonably flat and have a surface of well drained with grass or an artificial material.

Safety

Play equipment and surfacing should comply with the relevant British standards. Adequate safety measures should be provided to minimise the risk of road related accidents and potential dangers from nearby water courses, electricity cables and railway lines. They should be located to allow informal supervision, for example by being overlooked by nearby houses or from well used pedestrian routes.

Activity Zone

400 m+ (480 sq yards).

Buffer Zone

This should be sufficient to allow a minimum distance of 20 metres between the edge of the Activity Zone and the boundary of the nearest residential property, and take into account possible disturbance to nearby residents. If housing surrounds the Locally Equipped Area for Play on all sides, the total areas needed, including the Activity Zone, will amount to 3,600 m+ (0.9 acre). This Buffer Zone could include footpaths and planted areas and will not normally be classified as land designated as a children's play area.

NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREA FOR PLAY

A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play is an unsupervised site servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children.

Location

Within 15 minutes walking time of home (1,000 m walking distance).

Target Users

They should cater mainly for unaccompanied and unsupervised children between 8 and 14. Consideration should also be given to slightly younger supervised or accompanied children, older children and those with special needs.

Content

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play should offer a minimum of 8 types of play equipment providing the opportunity for challenging and enjoyable activities appropriate to the age group. Within the Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play there should also be a kickabout area, wheeled play opportunities, such as facilities for skateboards, rollerblading or bicycles, and seating for accompanying adults and for teenagers to use as a meeting place.

Site

Such areas need to be well landscaped and planted.

Safety

Play equipment and surfacing should comply with relevant British standards and new European Standards for playground equipment and playground surfaces. References for these are as follows:

1. Playground Equipment BSEN 1176
2. Impact absorbing Playground Surfacing: Safety Requirements and Test Methods: BSEN1177

A detailed guide to these standards is available from the Royal Society for the Protection of Accidents (ROSPA), who are also able to offer advice with respect to playground inspections and design. Contact details for ROSPA are as follows:

ROSPA Playground Office
3 Earning Street
Godmanchester
Cambridge PE18 8DJ

Tel: 01480 411384

Fax: 01480 386510

Adequate safety measures, such as pedestrian barriers, should be provided to minimise the risk of road related accidents. Consideration should be given to any potential dangers from nearby electricity cables or railway lines, and the possible attraction and dangers of water courses.

were those estates with:

traffic calming, street closure, walls and driveways;

grassy areas set back from the roads, a footpath network (for pedestrians and cycles) around and through the estate linking into public open spaces; and

cul-de-sac layout with a spinal footpath network, and informal play areas.