Better Places to Play Through Planning
Play England aims for all children and young people in England to have regular access and opportunity for free, inclusive, local play provision and play space.

Play England provides advice and support to promote good practice, and works to ensure that the importance of play is recognised by policy-makers, planners and the public.

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NCB’s vision is a society in which all children and young people are valued and their rights are respected.

By advancing the well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives, NCB aims to:

- reduce inequalities in childhood
- ensure children and young people have a strong voice in all matters that affect their lives
- promote positive images of children and young people
- enhance the health and well-being of all children and young people
- encourage positive and supportive family, and other environments.

NCB has adopted and works within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Definition of terms used in this guide

**Play** What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons (DCMS 2004).

**Informal recreation** What teenagers do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons: reflecting the fact that as young people get older they no longer identify with the term ‘playing’ but use other terms for their freely chosen, personally directed activities. In this guide, the term ‘play’ is used to include both play and informal recreation.

**Playable space** Any public space or facility that children and young people might legitimately use for play and informal recreation.

**Designated play space** A playable space specifically designed for play and informal recreation.

**Non-designated play space** A public space used by different groups of people for varying reasons, which might also be used for play and informal recreation.

**Play area** Designated play space in a defined area.

**Play provision** The provision of different types of playable space.

**Children’s Trust** Children’s Trusts (sometimes called Children and Young People’s Partnerships) bring together all services for children and young people in an area. Underpinned by the Children Act 2004 duty to cooperate, to focus on the well-being of all children and young people. Well-being is defined as the Every Child Matters Outcomes.

**Playbuilder** One of 122 unitary or county authorities receiving capital and revenue funding from central government between 2008–2011 to develop a minimum of 22 new or refurbished play areas for 8–13 year olds. Decisions on where and on what this funding is spent on need to have been based on a thorough consultation with children, young people and wider communities across the whole of the authority’s area.

**Play pathfinder** One of 30 selected unitary or county authorities receiving capital and revenue funding from central government between 2008–2011 to develop a minimum of 28 new or refurbished play areas for 8–13 year olds. In addition these authorities will build a new adventure playground and test
innovative ways that they can work with partners to ensure children and young people can access more and better play opportunities now and in the future, embedding play provision into wider strategic policy and practice. Decisions on where and on what this funding is spent need to have been based on a thorough consultation with children, young people and wider communities across the whole of the authority’s area.

**Play Shaper** is a national training programme that helps the professionals who plan, design, build and manage our communities to understand the importance of play and their role in creating child-friendly public spaces.

**Adventure playground** An adventure playground can be described as a space dedicated solely to children’s play, where skilled playworkers enable and facilitate the ownership, development and design of that space – physically, socially and culturally – by the children playing there. It usually offers both indoor and outdoor play experiences.
Better Places to Play Through Planning aims to support local planning and transport authorities to develop and implement planning policy that ensures children and young people have access to high quality playable spaces close to where they live and spend their time. It will also be of use to Local Strategic Partnerships, Children’s Trusts and play partnerships seeking to work with planning authorities to improve the delivery of better places to play, in accordance with statutory guidance to Children’s Trusts (DCSF 2008d), and in line with government policy on World Class Places (CLG 2009).

Play is an essential part of every child’s life – vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. As the agencies responsible for spatial planning the creation of suitable spaces for play falls primarily to local planning and transport authorities. Local planning policies and practice have a major impact on the provision of accessible spaces where children and young people can play in safety in their neighbourhoods.

This guide builds on the policies covered in Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) (CLG 2006c); Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) (ODPM 2002); and the Manual for Streets (DfT and CLG 2007). It offers recommendations for improving the quality, quantity and access to local playable spaces through planning policy and development control. It also clarifies ways in which play partnerships and Children’s Trusts can work with planning and transport authorities to support this work and therefore support the well-being of children and young people. This complements the draft guidance to Children’s Trusts and Local Strategic Partnerships, Embedding the Play Strategy, published by Play England (Play England 2009)

Better Places to Play Through Planning describes how the local planning system can, through means of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and development control, be used to improve the experience and enjoyment of children and young people and involve them in shaping their own neighbourhoods. It will also help planning and highways’ authorities seeking to work more closely with their local Children’s Trust, in line with the recent statutory guidance, which acknowledges that the delivery of excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children requires close liaison within the Local Strategic Partnership on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space (DCSF 2008d).
By March 2011 every top-tier local authority will have the opportunity to deliver the government funded *Play Shaper* initiative to those professionals who plan, design, build and manage public space so that they have a greater understanding of the importance of play and their role in creating child-friendly public spaces. *Better Places to Play Through Planning* and the guidance it contains has been critical in shaping the training on offer through this programme.

**Policy context**

The government’s Play Strategy (DCSF 2008b), actively supported by all the government departments with a stake in the built environment, in transport, in communities, and in health and education, emphasises that strong, vibrant and economically sustainable communities should offer a variety of places for children to play. To demonstrate this commitment, £235m has been allocated to provide and sustain more and better places to play.

Local authorities and their strategic partners in Children’s Trusts are responsible for working with others to support the well-being of all children and young people in their locality. This includes planning spaces that support and encourage children and young people to play and engage in informal recreation. Most local authorities now have a local area play strategy that includes planning for building, refurbishing and maintaining playable spaces as well as delivering support for play provision.

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) (CLG 2006c) and Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) (ODPM 2002) taken together require planning authorities to consider children’s needs in the provision of well-designed and stimulating recreational areas, play areas and informal play space with safe pedestrian access.

In addition to PPS3 and PPG17, a number of other documents also support authorities in meeting the need for playable spaces and setting local standards. These include Department for Transport’s *Manual for Streets* (DfT and CLG 2007) and *Making Residential Travel Plans Work: Guidelines for new development* (DfT 2005).

Priorities agreed between central government and a Local Strategic Partnership are set out in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). These priorities are defined by a local authority identifying up to 35 targets drawn from the National Indicator Set (NIS). A specific play indicator – NI199: Children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas – became part of the NIS in April 2009.

Road traffic is a major barrier to children’s play for a number of reasons. It prevents access to play space because of real and perceived fears of road accidents; prevents journeys on foot or by bicycle; reduces quality play space due to noise and air pollution from...
Summary

nearby roads; and busy roads means fewer informal opportunities to meet others. Guidance from both Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport (DfT 2005) emphasises the importance of taking account of the needs of children and young people in master-planning for large developments and in the placement of access routes to play spaces.

For many local planning and transport authorities, routinely considering the play needs of children and young people will require working with other agencies, especially in gathering relevant information about need for playable space and how this can be best addressed. The partnership approach is important in planning for play.

Developing local standards

Section 2 of Better Places to Play Through Planning looks at ways in which planners and transport authorities can clarify the local need for and supply of playable space. It describes how planners can ensure the PPG17 process includes full consideration of play, offering guidance on standards for access, quality and quantity; and suggests how these can be adapted to meet local circumstances. It also describes how policy on playable space can best be incorporated into the planning system. Although under review as part of the current government discussion on planning guidance, the approach described in PPG17 will help planning authorities ensure that the needs of children and young people are addressed in spatial planning.

Developing informed and robust policy for play requires a clear understanding of local issues. A thorough baseline study of the supply of and need for playable space is a pre-requisite to this. This might include:

- Identifying the specific needs of those living in the area as well as those working in or visiting.
- Identifying the potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.
- Establishing an effective strategy for open space, including play areas.

As part of the assessment of local need there should be a review of national, regional and local plans and strategies with the potential to influence children and young people’s access to play. These will be contained in many different strategies and plans, and not just local planning documents.

Knowing about the people: Understanding the local population of children and young people; where they live; and how they move around the locality, is necessary if play needs are to be properly addressed by the planning system. Much data exists, held by the local authority children’s services department, the local family information service, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), local schools and children’s centres. The vast majority of public space is used by all sectors of the community.
and so must be designed with sufficient flexibility to meet the individual and combined needs of many groups.

**Listening to local people:** It is essential to consult with local children and young people, parents and carers and residents’ and community associations to determine their views on the quantity of current provision; its quality; and its accessibility to potential users.

**Mapping playable space:** Mapping should provide details of the quantity, quality and access to play opportunities of all kinds. This requires understanding what spaces and facilities are available within an area, where they are, an objective assessment of their quality and how accessible they are to users. The information provided by a thorough mapping exercise helps to inform the analysis of gaps in provision that need to be filled; where quality needs to be improved; and where improvements to access are required. Much information required for mapping will already exist in local planning departments and other local authority sections. However, when existing information has been collated it may be necessary to conduct original site investigations to check existing information and fill in gaps in information.

Playable spaces to be mapped should:

- pass the ‘three frees’ test – be free of charge, where children and young people are free to come and go and free to choose what they do whilst there
- be accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and interests
- allow for the differing needs of children and young people from birth to 19 years and with different play interests and expectations.

**Assessing quality:** Sound knowledge of the quality of playable space is essential for successful mapping. The Play England *Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool* is designed to help planners and play providers with these assessments. ([Appendix A](#))

The tool focuses on three major aspects of playable space: the location, the play value and the care and maintenance. *Inclusion by Design*, published by KIDS, a voluntary organisation promoting better inclusive play opportunities for those who are disabled or have specific needs, proposes six principles of inclusive design and the key features of the process which underpins their implementation. These are: ease of use, freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities, diversity and difference, legibility and predictability, quality and safety (Goodridge and Douch, 2008). Additional guidance, *The Inclusivity Assessment Tool*, looking specifically at access and inclusion for disabled children, can be found on the KIDS website ([www.kids.org.uk](http://www.kids.org.uk)).

**Mapping barriers:** There are many barriers to outdoor play, some obvious others less so. These physical, environmental or social barriers should be identified and mapped alongside playable space and travel
routes to show the actual spaces and facilities where children and young people feel free, safe and welcome to play.

**Setting provision standards:** Standards for play provision should be developed locally. Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and supply of existing playable spaces forms the basis for redressing quantitative, qualitative and access deficiencies. Local Development Plans should include locally determined playable space standards. Standards embedded in Development Plan Documents will also help to protect existing play space. Supplementary Planning Documents can provide detailed advice and guidance to developers and local people on what is expected in terms of the quantity, quality and accessibility of new play space provision, and any required maintenance contributions.

Standards should be a guide: there may be circumstances where communities, in discussion with the local authority, partners and developers, agree provision at variance with the standard – imaginative and popular play solutions may arise from such involvement at this very local, project specific, level.

However, there are some basic principles for the provision of playable space to underpin the development of local standards for access, quality and quantity.

**Access:** All children and young people aged birth to 16 years old should have access to at least three types of good quality playable space all within easy, safe walking or cycling distance of where they live. This should include:

- a doorstep playable space: a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults – normally within straight line distance of 60m of home
- a local playable space: a larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults and for adults with young children to walk to with ease – normally within straight line distance of 240m of home
- a neighbourhood playable space – a larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences – normally within straight line distance of 600m of home.

**Quality:** Using the *Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool*, and working with the play service and other local providers, local standards for location, play value and care and maintenance can be developed. (see Appendix A)

**Quantity:** Each local authority will need to develop its own local spatial standards for playable space, informed by the characteristics of the area
and the identified needs of the population. This should be based on the assumption that every child and young person, wherever they live, should be able and happy to play outside, in good quality playable space, in the local neighbourhood. Benchmark standards are described in Appendix A.

Delivering change

The Town and Country Planning system is designed to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. If the needs of children and young people for playable space are to be met, national policy on play and other general guidance need to be translated into specific provision through local planning documents. This can be done by ensuring that policy on access, quality and quantity of playable space is defined in relevant Local Development Framework documents. Explicit consideration of the needs of children and young people in public open space could be addressed in different stages of the planning process and development control including:

- Development Plan Documents: the core strategy and other DPDs in use in the authority, including for example relevant generic development control policies, site specific allocations of land and Area Action Plans.
- Other Local Development Framework documents including: Supplementary Planning Documents, planning obligations’ policy and the annual monitoring report.
- Development control procedures including: the pre-application stage, the planning application stage, consultation and further negotiation, formulating conditions and planning obligations, the planning decision and monitoring and review.

Section 3 of Better Places to Play Through Planning describes in detail how this might be considered.

Incorporating playable space standards into other local plans and strategies

Planners do not work in isolation from other public services. The development of new planning policy and strategies requires liaising with other departments including highways and transport, children’s services, leisure, environmental health and play services. Local planning authorities are also required to consult with relevant public services prior to determining planning applications.

Children’s play is an example of where local planning authorities need to seek cross-agency dialogue and cooperation in helping to secure appropriate play opportunities. This includes liaising with those involved in developing and implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreements, Local Transport Plans, Children and Young People’s Plans, play strategies and open space strategies. Section 4 of Better Places to Play Through Planning discusses how this might work in practice.
Introduction

*Better Places to Play Through Planning* aims to support local planning and transport authorities to develop and implement planning policy that ensures children and young people have access to high quality playable spaces close to where they live and spend their time. It will also be of use to Children’s Trusts and play partnerships seeking to work with planning authorities to improve the delivery of better places to play.

This guide builds on the policies covered in *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)* (CLG 2006c); *Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17)* (ODPM 2002); and the *Manual for Streets* (DfT and CLG 2007). It offers recommendations for improving the quality, quantity and access to local playable spaces through planning policy and development control. It also clarifies ways in which play partnerships and Children’s Trusts can work with planning and transport authorities to support this work and therefore support the well-being of children and young people.

As well as offering guidance to planning and transport authorities in unitary and two-tier local authorities, *Better Places to Play Through Planning* is particularly relevant for local authorities across England as they embed change and sustain improvements in playable spaces from The Play Strategy capital programme in authority-wide policy and practice.

Government made a commitment in the Planning White Paper (CLG 2007b) to streamline the planning policy framework. A number of streamlined planning policy statements are in preparation and PPG17 is being reviewed. Later in 2009, CLG will be publishing web-based guidance relating to the audit and provision of playable space and referring to the standards and approach described in this guide.

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**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.

*Charter for Children’s Play* (Play England 2007a)
Introduction

Strong, safe, prosperous communities

*Better Places to Play Through Planning* considers the statutory duties of local authorities and their partners to create strong, safe and prosperous communities (CLG 2008a). It suggests ways in which the approach that planning and transport authorities take to the development and design of playable spaces can demonstrate:

- a recognition that every place is different, with distinctive strengths and needs
- an acknowledgement that there are distinctive local priorities and local innovation
- a commitment to wider, deeper involvement of local communities in shaping their own future
- a focus on coordinated action that is tailored to the distinctive needs and opportunities of each place and its people
- a combining of the resources of planning and transport authorities with those of local partners to address, to best effect, the risks and challenges facing the area
- the involvement of local people, especially children and young people, and thereby the empowerment of communities.

*Better Places to Play Through Planning* describes how the local planning system can, through means of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and development control, be used to improve the experience and enjoyment of children and young people and involve them in shaping their own neighbourhoods, and supports the government’s approach to improving the quality of public spaces as described in *World Class Places* (CLG 2009).

Statutory guidance to Children’s Trusts

Recent statutory guidance to Children’s Trusts, published by the Department for Children Schools and Families, states that ‘Delivering excellent outdoor play opportunities for all children will require working closely with the broader Local Strategic Partnership on issues such as town and highways planning and the management and maintenance of public space, in order to promote communities that are more child-friendly’ (DCSF 2008d: 19). The guidance also highlights the importance to Children’s Trust partners of considering the contribution of other factors including access to decent housing, transport and the quality of the local amenities (DCSF 2008d).
Introduction

The importance of playable space

Playing is integral to children’s enjoyment of their lives, their health and their development. Children and young people – disabled and non-disabled – whatever their age, culture, ethnicity or social and economic background, need and want to play, indoors and out, in whatever way they can. Through playing, children are creating their own culture, developing their abilities, exploring their creativity and learning about themselves, other people and the world around them.

*Charter for Children’s Play [Play England 2007a]*

Play is an essential part of every child’s life – vital for the enjoyment of childhood as well as social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Given time, space, opportunity and permission, children and young people play wherever they are. Outdoor play takes place in many different types of playable space including local streets, green and open spaces, and in designated play spaces. Access to nature is also important and time spent playing in natural environments has been shown to enhance children’s emotional health and well-being (Lester and Maudsley 2007).

As the agencies responsible for spatial planning – shaping the environments where children and young people spend much of their childhoods – the creation of suitable spaces for play falls primarily to local planning and transport authorities. Local planning policies and practice have a major impact on the provision of accessible spaces where children and young people can play in safety in their neighbourhoods. This requires the provision of a variety of playable spaces on children’s doorsteps, and within easy walking and cycling distance of children’s homes and schools. These spaces, and safe routes to them, should be explicitly planned into residential areas and town centres.

The provision of high-quality playable space, by increasing access to outdoor play opportunities, contributes to the realisation of other government and local authority policy and service objectives. Here are some examples.
Healthy children and young people: Play is crucial to health and development throughout childhood, contributing to social, physical, intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological development. The physical activity involved in energetic play provides children and young people with a significant amount of their regular exercise. Good play opportunities give children and young people the chance to try out and experience a range of emotions in a ‘safe’ way, allowing them to learn and develop emotionally, promoting resilience and fostering self-esteem.

Children and young people who feel safe: Fear of strangers, traffic and bullying often combine to prevent children playing outdoors. High-quality, accessible playable space protects children through reducing unacceptable levels of danger, while allowing them the opportunity to challenge themselves and use their initiative. At the same time, play enables children to take risks, to think through decisions and gain increased self-confidence and greater resilience.

Children and young people enjoying themselves and achieving their potential: The essence of play is enjoyment. When playing, children define their own goals and interests, decide what is success or failure and pursue those goals in their own way. Children’s enjoyment through play is linked to the control and choice they are able to exercise. Giving children the chance for free, uninhibited play allows them a psychologically safe space in which to try out new roles and experiences and enhances their enjoyment of life. The many developmental and experiential advantages associated with play also offer children opportunities for achievement, contributing to the achievement of their potential.

Children and young people making a positive contribution: Children’s involvement in the development of their own play is fundamental. Children learn – from the way others and the environment react to their play – the effects of their actions and the value that others place on them. Respecting and incorporating children and young people’s views into the planning of playable space helps develop motivation and, potentially, participation in society.

Children and young people’s economic well-being: Through playing, children build the creative and social skills which help them to develop the lateral thinking and emotional intelligence that are becoming increasingly important in our globalised economy.

Community cohesion: Good playable space promotes community well-being and security, and parents can feel confident that their children are occupied and enjoying themselves. Good play provision, which offers those seeking it genuine challenge and excitement, can help prevent bored children and young people from behaving in ways that are socially unacceptable. The development of playable space can have a measurable impact on local interaction, promoting new friendships, community cohesion and community safety. Where there are well-used playable spaces local children, families and neighbours get to know each other, creating safer and more positive neighbourhoods.
Introduction

Over the next two years every local authority will have the opportunity to deliver the government funded *Play Shaper* initiative to those professionals who plan, design, build and manage public space so that they have a greater understanding of the importance of play and their role in creating child-friendly public spaces.

Underpinning principles

The recommendations for policy and practice described in *Better Places to Play Through Planning* are underpinned by three principles, namely that:

- the skills and knowledge of planners and those responsible for spatial planning are critical to achieving our aim of developing more and better places to play
- children and young people should be involved in planning the places being designed for their use
- play should be encouraged – it supports community cohesion, helps children and young people be healthy and happy, and helps them build a solid foundation on which to develop.
SECTION 1: Policy context

Our aim, shared with children, young people and parents, is for all children to be able to enjoy a range of safe and exciting places to play close to where they live. Through children and communities’ involvement in the design and planning of these spaces, play areas will be valued locally and continue to reflect the distinct needs of each community.

(DCSF 2008b)

In many residential areas today, children and young people do not have the same opportunities for play and informal recreation that were taken for granted by their parents and grandparents. A combination of physical and social factors have led to this situation. Busy roads, parents’ fears for their children’s safety, the poor design and location of play spaces and children’s own perceptions of their local neighbourhoods all combine to reduce the amount of time children and young people walk and cycle to school and play freely, with their friends.

In the 2007 Children’s Plan, the government acknowledged the vital role of enjoyment and play in children’s lives and recognised the need for wide-ranging public policy initiatives to promote more and better play opportunities for children and young people.

1.1 The Play Strategy

The government’s Play Strategy (DCSF 2008b) – actively supported by all the government departments with a stake in the built environment, in transport, in communities, and in health and education – emphasises that strong, vibrant and economically sustainable communities should offer a variety of places for children to play.

To demonstrate this commitment, £235m has been allocated to provide more and better places to play. This includes direct support to local authorities across England through the play pathfinder and playbuilder programmes, which are designed to develop and upgrade local play areas and playable space. It also includes a commitment to publish guidance documents for local authorities, including web-based guidance to local authority planning departments to be developed by Communities and Local Government.

A survey in 2007 found that:

70 per cent of parents said they had played outside everyday when they were children but only 21 per cent of today’s children said they play outside everyday

(Play England 2007b)
Section 1: Policy context

The extent to which children and young people use public space for play and informal recreation is influenced by the quality, quantity and accessibility of the playable spaces near where they live, where their friends and family live and where they go to school.

Play England has recently published *Embedding the Play Strategy* (Play England 2009), which details guidance to Children’s Trusts and Local Strategic Partnerships on how to bring together the agencies and teams needed to deliver more child friendly communities, building on existing good practice.

Government policy, addressed at those responsible for the planning, design and maintenance of public space, therefore aims to ensure that:

- in every residential area there are a variety of places to play, free of charge, supervised and unsupervised
- local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play
- routes to children’s play spaces are safe and accessible for all children and young people
- parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used
- children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by the neighbours
- children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property while playing
- children, young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces
- play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, including disabled children, children of both genders, and children from minority groups in the community.

(DCSF 2008b)

1.2 Play in local authority planning

Local authorities and their strategic partners in Children’s Trusts are responsible for working with others to support the well-being of all children and young people in their locality. This includes planning spaces that support and encourage children and young people to play and engage in informal recreation.

The provision of services to support these responsibilities is described within each authority’s Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP). This plan supports and shapes the full range of strategies produced by local authorities and the wider Local Strategic Partnerships.
Nearly all local authorities now have a play strategy that includes planning for building, refurbishing and maintaining playable spaces as well as delivering support for play provision. Figure 1 indicates which local authority planning frameworks can promote better opportunities for play and informal recreation. The officers responsible for leading in the development and implementation of the play strategy will be based in different local authority departments, depending on the type of authority. They may also be working with different partners, especially if they are in two tier or rural authorities. (See Appendix B)

1.2.1 Spatial planning and play

Current government policy on the planning and development of housing and public open spaces is clear that the needs of children and young people are an important consideration for all local planning authorities. Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) (CLG 2006c) requires planning authorities to consider, where family housing is to be developed, the needs of children for good provision of recreational areas, including private gardens, play areas and informal play space. These spaces should be well-designed, safe, secure and stimulating areas with safe pedestrian access. To achieve this, planning authorities should engage, early in the planning process, with local communities, stakeholders and infrastructure providers. They should aim to create places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, feel safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.
Section 1: Policy context

These elements of the planning process all impact on children and young people’s use of public space and influence their access to quality spaces for play and informal recreation. Section 3 of this guide illustrates how the comprehensive local planning process, required for the implementation of PPS3 and described in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local spatial planning (CLG 2008b), can ensure that the need for playable space is fully met.

In addition, Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation PPG17 (ODPM 2002) brings together recommendations that underpin the design and build of playable spaces. The guidance suggests that all councils:

- prepare an assessment of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities, including provision for play
- set local standards for open space which respond to demographic indicators and the existing built environment
- maintain and enhance open space, sports and recreational facilities, including playable spaces
- plan for new open space, sports and recreational facilities, including playable spaces, based on the assessment of needs.

PPG17 recommends that ‘Planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quality or quantity of open space, sports and recreational provision’. Section 2 of this guide offers detailed advice on implementing PPG17 in relation to children’s need for good quality playable space.

In addition to PPS3 and PPG17, a number of other documents also support authorities in assessing the need for playable spaces and setting local standards. These include Department for Transport’s Manual for Streets (DfT and CLG 2007) and Making Residential Travel Plans Work: Guidelines for new development (DfT 2005).

When assessing design quality for housing development, planning authorities should take account, amongst other considerations, the extent to which the proposed development:

- is easily accessible and well-connected to community facilities and services, and is laid out to ensure that all the space is used efficiently, is safe, accessible and user-friendly
- either provides, or enables good access to, community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play space)
- takes a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space that is well-integrated with a high-quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.

When planning for new spaces the PPG17 includes a number of recommendations for councils. They should, for example, be:

- seeking to promote accessibility for those with disabilities or those at risk of exclusion
- encouraging walking and cycling routes
- seeking to improve the quality of the public realm through good design
- considering security and personal safety, especially for children
- recognising the actual and potential recreational value of natural features.
1.2.2 Local Area Agreements and planning playable spaces

It is becoming increasingly accepted that play and informal recreation are important activities in their own right – and that the primary objective of play provision is to provide opportunities for play. However, ensuring quality playable space can also contribute to achieving many other government and local authority objectives relating to health, education, community cohesion and urban renaissance.

Priorities agreed between central government and a Local Strategic Partnership are set out in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). These priorities are defined by a local authority identifying up to 35 targets drawn from the National Indicator Set (NIS). A specific play indicator – NI199: Children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas – became part of the NIS from April 2009. In addition, good provision for children’s play can contribute to the achievement of up to 43 of the national indicators including those relating to stronger and safer communities; children’s health, safety, enjoyment and contribution to society; and environmental sustainability (Play England 2009b).

The national indicators collectively contribute to the Public Service Agreements (PSA) that were identified in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

1.2.3 Play and transport planning

Road traffic is a major barrier to children’s play for a number of reasons. It prevents access to playable space because of real and perceived fears of road accidents; prevents journeys on foot or by bicycle; reduces the quality of the playable space due to noise and air pollution from nearby roads; and busy roads means fewer informal opportunities to meet others.

Guidance from both Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport (DfT 2005) emphasises the importance of taking account of the needs of children and young people in master-planning for large developments and in the placement of access routes to play spaces. Adventure playgrounds, play parks and other play destinations may require travel plans to ensure sustainable access routes are planned in from the start.

NIS 199: Children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas

This indicator is designed to ensure that local authorities invest in safe and stimulating play facilities, leading to an increase in satisfaction amongst children. Data will be collected from the annual Tellus survey of children and young people. (Tellus annual)

It is particularly important, under the Sustainable Community Strategy, that:

- new and refurbished play spaces are accessible via safe walking and cycling routes
- play spaces are placed away from busy roads where practicable
- playable routes are developed within and between neighbourhoods.
Guidance and standards, arising from PPG17 assessments, should include play spaces that have safe access routes to them which encourage independent travel, and are located in places free from noise and pollution from road traffic.

Full implementation of guidance in the Manual for Streets and Quiet Lanes will support planners in designing playable space into local neighbourhoods. The Manual for Streets (DfT and CLG 2007) provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and modifications to existing ones. Quiet Lanes is a Countryside Agency (now Natural England) initiative, covered in Quiet Lanes Technical Guidance, which has the support of the DfT. ‘Quiet lanes’ are minor rural roads that are appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorised users.

Additional information to assist planners in considering the needs of children and young people can also be found in DfT guidance Making Residential Travel Plans Work: Guidelines for new development (2005). This guidance seeks to bridge the gap between existing advice on the physical layout and location of development (eg planning and design guidance) and that on managing the resulting travel patterns (eg through Local Transport Plans).

1.2.4 Play in plans for new housing and regeneration

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires that consideration is given to the needs of children and young people and other residents in the early stages of planning (CLG 2006c). In addition, government housing and regeneration initiatives have supported improvements to the built environment alongside economic measures, with a growing focus on improving public spaces. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006) found that a focus on play and public space was a key factor in making new and regenerated communities attractive to families. The Commission for Architecture in the Built Environment (CABE), drew similar conclusions from its research into the views of residents of new housing. These findings are especially relevant to the growth areas in South East England which were set up under the government’s Sustainable Communities Plan; and to Housing Renewal Areas (CABE 2005).

The proposals in Section 2 of this guide, which cover planning and developing the spatial plans for housing or neighbourhoods, complement Building for Life, the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. In particular, these proposals support developers in achieving Part 1 of the standard ‘Does the development provide community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas…?’ (www.buildingforlife.org).

A play area here is needed for all the children. We do need more communal green spaces to sit and relax in, especially as there are a lot of flats here and we don’t have our own gardens like the houses.

Resident quoted in: What it’s like to live there (CABE 2005)
1.2.5 Planning for play in rural areas

Local authorities in rural areas may encounter different issues from those of metropolitan and borough authorities. The relative low density population, dispersed settlement patterns and poor transport in rural areas can leave some children and young people very isolated. Linear villages, heavy through and commuter traffic, lack of pavements and edge-of-village playing fields can all be barriers to children playing. Parental restrictions on children’s freedom of movement can have a more limiting effect on rural children, while public play provision tends to be very limited. Intensive farming practices can leave little access for informal play.

1.2.6 Working with play partnerships

For many local planning and transport authorities, routinely considering the play needs of children and young people will require working with other local agencies, especially in gathering relevant information about local need for playable space and how this can be best addressed. The partnership approach is important in planning for play. The structure of every authority in England is slightly different, reflecting local history and needs. The play agenda – both in terms of spaces and delivering play services – cuts across the agendas of a number of departments within local authorities and, critically, needs to involve other key local service providers both in the public sector (such as health) and the voluntary and community sector.

In many areas play partnerships bring together all those with a stake in developing play opportunities. These partnerships – whether regional, subregional or local – should include representatives from spatial planning, housing, transport and others with a critical stake in the built environment. In 2008, over 98 per cent of unitary and district councils had adopted a play strategy, most having been produced through a local play partnership.

The make-up of play partnerships will vary, but should include the local authority departments, other statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector (with links, where appropriate, to the private sector) whose activities affect opportunities for children’s play.
Section 1: Policy context

Table 1: Agencies and organisations frequently represented in play partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement and commissioning department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood management and regeneration teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways and transport departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and open spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools and childcare provision (early years and extended services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s workforce development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services for disabled children and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services provided for children in exceptional circumstances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The local authority’s lead role in the play partnership should also seek to secure commitments on children’s play and child-friendly environments within the spatial planning framework, including housing, and in local transport plans.
Case study 1: Planning guidance and links to play development

The North Somerset Play Strategy was unanimously adopted by the executive members and North Somerset Play Partnership in the spring of 2007, securing it at a strategic level with elected members and key lead officers. It had been based and developed on the expectation that all children and young people should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential within their leisure time.

An early task for the partnership was to identify and network of lead officers in organisations and local authority departments with responsibility for:

- planning
- streets and open spaces
- parish and town councils
- voluntary sector organisations
- built facilities and playing pitches
- transport.

This was partly achieved through the development of the play partnership, where key partners either attend or are on the circulation list for the minutes (agenda items prompt attendance from those on the list).

Building trust between departments and strongly recognising professional skills is key to this development. From this the team are able to pool their knowledge, experience and expertise to meet the Every Child Matters outcomes and influence the future planning of S106 proposals in North Somerset. The needs of local children, young people, parents and communities are seen as central to the planning and provision of services.

The play service is based within the Childcare Learning and Play Team, within the Children and Young People’s Services Directorate, and reports to the Childcare and Children Centres Development Manager. It also has strong links with the Early years and the youth services. This further strengthens the partnership.

For further information contact: North Somerset Play Service or visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/)
Section 1: Policy context

1.2.7 The Play Shaper programme

Over the next two years every local authority will have the opportunity to deliver a professional development seminar as part of the Play Shaper programme, a play partnership that will target the key people in charge of planning, designing, building and managing spaces where children play. It will enable participants to develop an increased understanding of play and why it is valuable to address children’s play in their roles. In addition, from the spring of 2010 there will be a series of dedicated seminars developed by specialists in planning, transport and the regeneration of open spaces, building on the elements within this guidance.

Enlightened authorities will seek to build on this training to ensure a wide range of professionals from all parts of the local authority and key partners have an awareness of the value of investing in children’s play for the whole community.

1.2.8 Supporting other policy agendas

As part of their statutory duties under the Children Act 2004, local authorities in England have a duty to cooperate with partners to provide, amongst other priorities, for children’s enjoyment of play and recreation. In addition, the need to improve the provision of playable space is acknowledged in a range of national policy agendas: from planning, open spaces and transport to health, education and childcare.

Key strategies include:

- World Class Places: The government’s strategy for improving quality of place (CLG 2009)
- Healthy lives, brighter futures – The strategy for children and young people’s health (DH and DCSF 2009)
- Guidance on Children’s Physical Activity (NICE 2009)
- The Play Strategy (DCSF 2008b)
- Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives (DH 2008a)
- Extended Schools Initiative (DCSF and ContinYou 2008)
- Physical Activity and the Environment (NICE 2008)
- Manual for Streets (DfT and CLG 2007)
- Aiming High for Young People: A ten year strategy for positive activities (DCSF 2007a)
- Living Places: Cleaner, safer, greener (CLG 2006b)
- Building Schools for the Future (Partnerships for Schools 2004–2008)
- Every Child Matters: Change for children (DFES 2004a)
SECTION 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

2.1 Implementing planning guidance

This section of the guide looks at ways in which planners can clarify the local need for, and supply of, playable space as part of their open space assessments. It describes how planners can ensure the PPG17 process includes full consideration of playable space, offering guidance on standards for access, quality and quantity, and suggests how these can be adapted to meet local circumstances.

Although under review as part of the current government discussion on planning guidance, the approach described in Planning Policy Guidance note 17: PPG17 (ODPM 2002) will help planning authorities ensure that the needs of children and young people are addressed in spatial planning. As referred to earlier in this document, focused training developed by planners and transport professionals, building on the guidance in this document, will be available from the autumn of 2009. Further information on the Play Shaper programme can be found online at: www.playshaper.org.uk or through the Play England regional offices.

Developing informed and robust policy for play requires a clear understanding of local issues. A thorough baseline study of the supply of, and need for, playable space is a prerequisite to this. PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities, which includes provisions for play. Its companion guide, Assessing Needs and Opportunities (ODPM 2002), sets out one way that local authorities can undertake assessments and audits of open space, sports and recreational facilities in order to:

- identify the specific needs of those living in the area as well as those working in or visiting it
- identify the potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance
- establish an effective strategy for open space, including play areas, at the local level.

The approach recommended in the companion guide to PPG17 is summarised below.

The findings of the playable space audit could contribute to the evidence used by the local authority to make decisions on planning applications and the longer-term strategy described in the Local Development Framework.
2.2 Identifying local need: Step 1

2.2.1 Understanding the existing policy framework

2.2.2 Knowing about the people

2.2.3 Listening to local people

2.2.1 Understanding the existing policy framework

The companion guide to PPG17 (ODPM 2002) identifies the importance of understanding the implications of existing national, regional and local policies and strategies when undertaking a baseline study. As part of the assessment of local need, there should be a review of national policies and of regional and local plans and strategies.

National and local authority policy with the potential to influence children and young people’s access to play will be contained in many different strategies and plans, and not just local planning documents. For example, almost every district and unitary authority now has a children’s play strategy, which may link to the Children and Young People’s Plan.

Relevant policies and strategies are summarised in Section 4 of this publication. Only by examining these will those responsible for
conducting a baseline PPG17 study gain a clear understanding of the local authority’s overall approach to play.

The local authority play strategy will describe the authority’s aims and objectives and the desired outcomes for all types of provision for play, including designated play spaces and other types of playable space. It should also clarify the authority’s position on managing risk in play provision and offering opportunities for challenging, and sometimes risky, play opportunities whilst protecting children and young people from unnecessary harm or unexpected hazards (Ball, Gill and Spiegal 2008).

Section 3.3.4 provides suggestions for ways in which existing local policies might be monitored and reviewed to establish their effectiveness with regards to potential future change.

2.2.2 Knowing about the people

Children and young people

Local authorities have a duty to involve children and young people in decisions that affect them. From April 2009 councils have a statutory duty to involve. The duty requires authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve representatives of local persons in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so. The statutory guidance Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities sets out the principles of this duty, stating that the term ‘representatives of local persons’ covers children and young people, as well as adults (CLG 2008a).

Understanding the local population of children and young people, where they live, and how they move around the locality is necessary if play needs are to be properly addressed by the planning system. Much data exists, held by the local authority children’s services department, the local family information service, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), local schools and children’s centres. This can be collected and collated to provide an overview to inform planning.

Table 2: An example of age categories to use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible categories*</th>
<th>For example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babies and young children, always overseen or accompanied by an adult or responsible young person whilst travelling and playing</td>
<td>Under 8 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children beginning to travel independently, near their homes, with their friends</td>
<td>8–10 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and young people used to travelling longer distances independently</td>
<td>Over 10 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the specific age bands allocated to these categories should be locally determined
Knowing about children and young people in the local population:
Whether assessing existing localities or the potential for new development, planners must understand the population of children and young people whose needs they will be addressing. This might include identifying the population distribution and age profile; the relative proportions of children and young people in different age groups; and the social, economic, cultural and housing circumstances of children in different areas and types of family.

Mapping where children and young people live: The residential location of the population of children and young people can be mapped onto a GIS mapping system. Although not essential, it can also be helpful to identify the populations of children and young people of different ages, bearing in mind that the age characteristics of a given area will change over time as communities go through cycles of maturing and regenerating. See Table 2 for the list of categories.

Understanding the population of disabled children and those with specific needs: In every local authority area there are significant numbers of children and young people who are disabled or have specific needs. Inclusive planning ensures that these diverse needs are met. An understanding of the wide-ranging needs of local children and young people is essential for both planning and monitoring successful developments and, if not already held by the planning department, information about the local population of children who are disabled, where they live and where they go to school, will be available from children’s services departments, PCTs, special and inclusive schools, and children’s centres.

Understanding the religious, cultural and social diversity of local children and young people: For many children and young people, opportunities for play and informal recreation may, in part, be determined by the religion, cultural beliefs, gender and social circumstances of themselves and their families. These factors should be understood by local authority planners so as to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in playable space, enabling all children and young people to make the best use of it. The needs of transient populations, such as Gypsy and other Traveller communities, must also be considered.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Adults
The vast majority of public space is used by all sectors of the local community and so must be designed with sufficient flexibility to meet the individual and combined needs of many groups. These include:

- parents and carers with young children or disabled children
- elderly people
- families living in poor or overcrowded housing conditions
- the general adult population
- those with an interest in sport and informal physical activity
- dog owners
- working adults
- disabled adults
- car drivers.

2.2.3 Listening to local people
Before undertaking fresh initiatives, existing local consultation findings should be identified and examined for relevance and quality (e.g. local authority performance management, child and youth consultation exercises, completed community consultation exercises, and school-based consultations). This information should be reviewed, with note taken of relevant findings and key issues. However, the limitations of consultation must be understood, children’s knowledge and understanding may be restricted or unrealistic, and some types of consultation may only give superficial or predictable results. Consultation that results in formulaic play areas with little play value cannot be said to have succeeded. Planned consultation and findings from ‘Citizens panels’ can be a valuable source of information.

Consulting children and young people
Whilst many groups of children and young people enjoy and readily take part in local consultations there are some who do not automatically come forward. These may be the people who are most frequently out in their local neighbourhoods and for whom informal facilities and good quality play environments may be most needed and beneficial.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Children who have difficulty expressing themselves, or whose involvement might be affected by social or cultural factors, are also often excluded, so consultation processes must seek ways of ensuring that the views of all groups of local children are heard. Children’s services departments may help find routes for consultation with children in such situations. Equally helpful will be partnerships with youth or play organisations (statutory or voluntary) that support children in specific circumstances. Successful consultation can also be undertaken by children themselves amongst their own peer groups.

Some organisations may be involved in detached youth work and provision of play ranger services, working with children and young people where they congregate in public spaces. Detached, or outreach, workers often welcome working in partnership to consult with children and young people regarding play and youth facilities, and their contribution can be extremely helpful in gathering views that would not otherwise be heard.

Methods of consultation can include:

- appropriately designed and worded questionnaire surveys (which might, for example, be distributed through play settings, schools and youth clubs)
- direct, face-to-face consultation (including facilitated group discussions; youth councils; workshops; and special stands at festivals and exhibitions)
- other techniques (including web-based bulletin boards; SMS texting; activity-based events; and photography and video making).

More information on involving children and young people, including disabled children and young people, can be found in guidance documents from Participation Works and KIDS (Bryson 2009 and KIDS 2009).

Consulting with children and young people is extremely valuable in determining important general strategic considerations such as:

- Where do children and young people currently play?
- How long do they spend there?
- What sort of things do they do when they are there?
- What do they think of current provision?
- What kind of provision is most popular for differing age groups?
- What barriers prevent them from using existing playable space?
- How far do they travel to access different kinds of play opportunity?
- What kind of playable spaces would they like to see in the future?
- How do they want to be involved in planning local playable space?

If this information does not currently exist then planners may be able to work with local play services, schools and community groups to establish the views of children and young people.
The views of parents and carers of older children are also crucial as they will decide whether or not the children can play outdoors. They can be contacted through schools and, where their children are registered, via playschemes and out-of-school clubs. Views can be sought on similar issues as those for children; as well as gaining feedback on more strategic issues such as prioritisation, quality assessments of playable spaces and location of playable space in relation to housing.

Consulting with residents’ and community associations

The siting of playable space is often a contentious issue at the local level, with the needs and wishes of children and young people sometimes at odds with those of nearby residents. However, residents’ and community associations can often be vociferous supporters of provision for local children and young people. It is therefore important to involve residents’ and community associations in the consultation process.

They can be involved at the outset by helping to explore general principles about the location of playable space in relation to housing, for example by advising on reasonable buffer zones for different kinds of provision and in the principles of designing playable space so that it feels safe.

Residents’ and community associations can be a good source of information on specific local issues such as problems with the number, location, and accessibility of local playable spaces and ideas of where provision needs to be improved. They can be consulted via survey methods and through involvement at meetings. Many council areas have a ‘federation’ of residents’ associations that can provide an excellent vehicle for consultation.

Site-specific consultations

Consultations over specific schemes or sites should engage with local stakeholders and partners, for example through:

- community trusts and foundations
- residents’ associations and groups
- local schools and travel plans
- residents’ surveys.

Bespoke consultation with local people and groups on specific projects can produce innovative and imaginative results.

Ensuring that consultation is undertaken jointly with young people and community groups can go a long way towards minimising conflict when playable space is being planned. Planners can act to bring together different groups through the consultation process to involve them in identifying and resolving issues.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

2.3 Auditing local provision: Step 2

2.3.1 Mapping playable space

2.3.2 Assessing the quality of playable space

2.3.3 Mapping barriers to outdoor play and informal recreation

2.3.1 Mapping playable space

Mapping playable space should provide details of the quantity, quality and access to play opportunities of all kinds. This will require:

- understanding what spaces and facilities are available within an area
- knowing where they are
- objectively assessing their quality
- checking how accessible they are to users.

The information provided by a thorough mapping exercise will also help in developing robust local standards for playable space (see Section 2.4). This can then inform an analysis to determine where gaps need to be filled; where quality needs to be improved; and where improvements to access are required (see Sections 2.5 and 2.6).

Given the opportunity, children and young people will play or hang out in almost all publicly accessible spaces including local streets, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields and amenity grassed areas as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, bike and skateboard parks, ball courts and multi-use games areas. They do not, and should not, be expected to use only play areas. The whole environment should be as child friendly as possible.

To a child, the whole world is a potential playground: where an adult sees a low wall, a railing, kerb or street bench a child might see a mini adventure playground or a challenging skateboard obstacle.

(Carrick District Council 2007)

This ‘wider picture’ should not be lost in the study. A good study will present policy implications for overall urban design, and transport planning, and not just focus on the location, number and quality of formally defined play spaces.
Much of the information required for the mapping exercise will already exist in local planning departments and other local authority sections. It may have been collected to inform local authority policies and strategies including Children and Young People’s Plans; play strategies; PPG17 studies; open space strategies; transport plans; childcare planning; youth service planning; community safety strategies; sports partnerships; and the Sustainable Community Strategy. The publications *Planning for Play* (CPC 2006) and *Embedding the Play Strategy* (Play England 2009) provide detailed guidance on the various stakeholders who have information on local play opportunities, which will vary depending on the local authority structure in a given area. However, when existing information has been collated it will probably be necessary to conduct original site investigations to check existing information and fill in any gaps, as appropriate.

Where children and young people play

Table 3, showing The play place grid, gives examples of the types of spaces where children and young people play.

If children and young people are to use and enjoy these spaces and facilities they must be able to travel to them easily and safely by foot and cycle.

Paid-for childcare and children’s activity programmes should and do encompass many valuable play opportunities, but they are primarily a service for parents and carers, and cannot replace the play facilities and spaces that allow children to play freely and free of charge in their own neighbourhoods.

The different types of playable space are considered again later in this section, when considering the development of local provision standards for play. A key requirement is that all basic provision should feel safe and be easy to get to by foot by the intended user. There will be examples of play spaces in larger venues aimed at attracting families and similar groups for a longer visit. Whilst valuable additions to any area, these ‘destination sites’ should only be counted as part of local provision if they are easily accessed by local communities.

The best play places are where spaces:

- pass the ‘3 frees’ test – they are free of charge; children and young people are free to come and go; and free to choose what they do whilst there
- are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and interests
- allow for the differing needs of children and young people from birth to 19 years and with different play interests and expectations.
Table 3: The play place grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Supervised and semi-supervised (examples)</th>
<th>No formal supervision (examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Designated places for play and informal recreation</strong></td>
<td>Adventure playgrounds</td>
<td>Playgrounds/play areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-access play centres</td>
<td>Bike, skate and skateboard facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play ranger and outreach play projects</td>
<td>Ball courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobile play facilities</td>
<td>Multi-use games areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School playgrounds (out of school hours)</td>
<td>Hangout/youth shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-designated places for play and informal recreation</strong></td>
<td>Parks with rangers and gardeners</td>
<td>Residential streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Streets with wardens</td>
<td>Neighbourhood open spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parks and green spaces</td>
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<td>Routes to school and play areas</td>
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These different types of spaces provide opportunities to address needs at a ‘doorstep’, ‘local’ or ‘neighbourhood’ level. The category they fall into will depend on their character, size, the play experience on offer and their distance from potential users.

2.3.2 Assessing the quality of playable space

Sound knowledge of the quality of playable space is essential for successful mapping. The Play England *Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool* is designed to help planners and play providers with these assessments (see Appendix A).

The tool focuses on three major aspects of playable space: the location, the play value and the care and maintenance. It offers guidelines for the assessment of the three different types of space and facility to which all children and young people should have access in their local neighbourhood:

- doorstep playable space
- local playable space
- neighbourhood playable space.

*Design For Play* (Shackell and others 2008) provides guidance on designing successful play spaces. Published by DCSF and Play England, it highlights ten key principles of successful play spaces. These should be considered alongside the quality assessment.
Design for Play

The golden rule: A successful play space is a place in its own right, specially designed for its location, in such a way as to provide as much play value as possible.

Ten principles for designing successful play spaces. Successful play spaces:

- are ‘bespoke’ – designed to enhance their setting
- are well located – in the best possible place for children
- make use of natural elements – close to nature
- provide a wide range of play experiences – where children can play in different ways
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children – where they can play together
- meet community needs and are loved by the community
- allow children and young people of different ages to play together
- build-in opportunities to experience risk and challenge – where children can stretch and challenge themselves in every way
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained – maintained for play value and environmental sustainability
- allow for change and evolution – evolving as the children grow

(Shackell and others 2008)

Access for children who are disabled

It is essential that a full access audit is undertaken in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). As well as including a detailed analysis of the playground itself, the audit should include access to the site in relation to, for example, car parks, bus routes, and paths to the playground. Local authorities have a duty under the Disability Equality Duty to ensure that all their play provision is accessible to disabled children and to plan for providing support to disabled children so that they have the same opportunity to play with other children as their non-disabled peers. This was introduced in an amendment to the DDA in 2005. Additional guidance, looking specifically at access and inclusion for disabled children can be found in the KIDS Inclusivity Assessment Tool (www.kids.org.uk).

This information should be readily to hand for most if not all sites as part of other local authority and local council responsibilities. It should not be necessary to duplicate this work for a PPG17 study, if the existing information can be made available.
Considering the location of playable space

Research shows that location is perhaps the single most important factor in how much children use playable spaces. In general, children like to play locally where they can be seen, see others and meet others. Young people are able to roam further although they, too, like to feel safe wherever they are with their friends. In addition, disabled children and parents or carers with buggies should be able to access play areas as much as non-disabled children. Often children will play with younger siblings who may need to be taken to the area in a buggy or pushchair.

Inclusion by Design, published by KIDS, a voluntary organisation promoting better inclusive play opportunities for those who are disabled or have specific needs, proposes six principles of inclusive design. These are:

- ease of use
- freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities
- diversity and difference
- legibility and predictability
- quality
- safety.

The guide offers practical guidance on how these principles translate into improved play spaces accessible to and inclusive of all children (Goodridge and Douch 2008).

Quality assessment of the location of playable space should consider:

- opportunities for informal oversight by passers-by or nearby properties such as houses or community centres
- the extent to which the space or facility is used by children
- how easy it is for children and young people to get there
- issues of personal safety, security and lighting
- how those with impairments or with buggies and pushchairs will get there
- the opportunities for meeting other children
- how well the space is designed to complement the site.

Considering the play value of playable space

Quality assessment should consider a range of different, innovative and challenging ways in which children can experience different environments. The natural environment offers many opportunities for this and consideration can be given to the varied and interesting ways in which children can play. Quiet, contemplative play is as important as boisterous and physical play. Although children will play in their own way in any given area, their activity can be enriched through creating appropriate and stimulating play environments.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Children need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities. Risk does not mean creating hazardous environments, but it does mean ensuring that opportunities for challenging and extending children’s abilities are available through design (Ball and others 2008).

Quality assessment of the play value should consider whether the site:

- entices children to play
- offers play opportunities for disabled children
- meets the play needs of different children and young people of differing ages
- provides opportunities for
  - different types of movement
  - imaginative play
  - ball games
  - changing the environment or space
- includes access to natural environments and materials
- has places for children to sit
- offers added play value – that is, not just a basic experience of sensation but also possibilities for children to take risks without undue hazard
- encourages social interaction between children and between accompanying parents and carers.

Considering care and maintenance of playable space

Whilst playable space should offer children and young people challenging and absorbing play experiences it must also be checked regularly for unexpected hazards, subjected to rigorous risk–benefit assessment and be well cared for.

Quality assessment of the care and maintenance should consider:

- how well the space is maintained
- health and safety
- seating for adults
- litter bins
- dog-free zones
- the presence of supervisory adults (eg park keepers, street wardens, play rangers, community support officers)
- the presence of toilets and changing facilities, where appropriate.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Other facilities and features to be mapped
For the mapping to be fully comprehensive it would be desirable to audit supervised play provision as well as unsupervised playable spaces. This might include: supervised adventure playgrounds; playschemes; children’s centres and out-of-school clubs; children’s resource centres; toy libraries; play rangers; and mobile play facilities. Planning for Play (CPC 2006) offers further guidance in this respect.

Other spatial initiatives that will influence the potential for outdoor play include:

- *Safer streets*, which covers home zones, residential speed limits and traffic calming measures
- *Walking and cycling routes*, which covers designated routes where children and young people might be expected to walk and cycle independently including safe routes to school and play areas.

2.3.3 Mapping barriers to outdoor play and informal recreation

There are many barriers to outdoor play, some obvious others less so. These physical, environmental or social barriers should be identified and mapped alongside playable space and travel routes to show the actual spaces and facilities where children and young people feel free, safe and welcome to play.

**Physical barriers**

When detailed analysis is undertaken, real physical barriers to access such as busy roads, railway lines and waterways should be mapped. Other barriers might include fencing and boundaries, private land, gated communities, and gates to parks locked at times children might want to play.

Traffic is a genuine constraint on play and access to play opportunities. The identification of physical barriers will cover this issue in part. The transport authority and police will be able to advise on accident hot spots where play by children and young people should be discouraged unless the environment can be made safer.

**Non-physical barriers**

Children will not necessarily want to use the nearest play space, possibly for social reasons. For example, children on one housing estate may use a playground on their own estate that is further away than one on a neighbouring estate. A nearby play area that can only be accessed along a narrow isolated unlit path may be avoided rather than one further away that is more safely accessed. Signage and the legibility of safe routes to play could be mapped and considered in the development of new and existing areas for play.
Playable spaces in areas where there is fear of other people, crime, gang culture or territorialism, are unlikely to be well used. Consultation with local community safety teams and the local community in general will help avoid poor or inappropriate locations in this regard. Displacement of problem behaviour, such as street drinking, may usefully be coordinated with play improvements in some areas.

In some areas play is actively discouraged. The location of prohibitive signs (no ball games, no wheeled games, no children under 14, keep off the grass) can be mapped, together with spaces where residents have complained and stopped children playing. Information can be obtained from parks and open space managers and complaints departments.

Some design features automatically restrict children and young people’s play opportunities and can be identified to ensure these spaces are not mapped as playable space. This might include, for example, flower gardens, broken-up spaces, inappropriate surfacing, allotments, single-use spaces not designated for play, and dedicated sports areas.

Mapping non-physical barriers through an audit can be time consuming and may be more difficult than mapping physical barriers. However it should be possible to ‘tag’ sites and spaces with known problems so that any barriers are taken into account in planning.

Whilst the location and quality of spaces and facilities are the core requirement, the recording of other features will be desirable and information on these can be obtained from other sections of the local authority. Planning for Play (CPC 2006) and Tools for Evaluating Local Play Provision (Play England 2009a) explain the value of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in mapping and analysing play spaces and facilities. The more relevant information that can be held on GIS the better, as the collation of such information in one place is likely to have wider benefit to the local authority in terms of creating synergy and cooperation with various social and environmental initiatives. This will ensure all data about play is readily available and is taken into consideration when addressing other related topics. This mapped information can be made available on council websites to enable the public to find where their nearest playable spaces are, routes to them and what the sites offer.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

2.4 Setting local provision standards: Step 3

2.4.1 Underpinning principles

Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and supply of existing playable spaces forms the basis for redressing quantitative, qualitative and access deficiencies.

Local Development Framework documents should include locally determined playable space standards. These can be the basis for assessing appropriate contributions from developers towards the provision and maintenance of playable space. Supplementary Planning Documents (see Section 3.3.2) can provide detailed advice and guidance to developers and local people on what is expected in terms of the quantity, quality and accessibility of new play space provision, and any required maintenance contributions.

Government guidance (PPG17 and its companion guide) stresses that locally developed standards should be founded on three core components:

- a quantitative element (how much new provision may be needed)
- a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
- an accessibility element (including distance thresholds).

2.4.2 Basic requirements for access, quality and quantity of playable space

Access standard for playable space

It will be up to the local planning authority to determine an appropriate ‘access’ component to its local play standard. However, the following offers a guide for access to playable space and is derived from Play England’s Tools for Evaluating Local Play Provision (2009a).
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Access standard for playable space

All children and young people aged birth to 16 years old should have access to at least three types of good quality playable space all within easy, safe walking or cycling distance of where they live. This should include:

- a doorstep playable space – normally within straight-line distance of 60m of home
- a local playable space – normally within straight-line distance of 240m of home
- a neighbourhood playable space – normally within straight line distance of 600m of home.

At least one of the above should be a designated place for play and informal recreation.

Types of space and facility

Children and young people should have easy access, from their homes and schools, to three different types of playable space and facility. This includes places they can play within sight of their home (doorstep spaces); spaces which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends (local spaces); and larger spaces and facilities for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely (neighbourhood spaces). These spaces and facilities might be designated or non-designated, staffed, semi-staffed or un-staffed (see Section 2.3.1).

Coordination of types of playable space will help ensure that objections to new play areas on the grounds that they may be misused by some groups can be minimised. However, it is not generally necessary to specify rules restricting access or usage to particular age groups.
**Doorstep playable spaces**

A small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults: normally within straight-line distance of 60m from home

For example, this could be a grassed area, open space, residential street in a home zone or small designed play area, which is large enough to enable young children to play within sight of known adults.

**Characteristics**

The space could incorporate some interesting and attractive landscape features and/or a small number of items of play equipment and create an environment which will stimulate young children’s play by providing opportunities for a variety of play experiences, bearing in mind that older children and young people may also use the space from time to time.

It would be sufficiently close to home for the children who use it to feel safe and be able to interact with individuals and groups of other children.

It should also be capable of catering to the needs of children with a range of impairments.

Seating may be available for carers to be able to sit, watch and meet other people.
Local playable spaces

A larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults, and for adults with young children to walk to with ease: normally within 240m straight-line distance of home.

For example, this could be a grassed area, small park, local open space, designed space for play or informal recreation or school playground open out of school hours, which is attractive to children as they begin to move around their neighbourhoods without being accompanied by adults.

Characteristics

These spaces and facilities provide a varied and interesting physical environment including, for example, natural features, sand and water, and incorporate some interesting and attractive landscape features with varying levels and contours, which test children’s capabilities.

There might also be features designed for specific activities such as ball games, wheeled sports or meeting places and/or several of items of play equipment offering a variety of play experiences.

Play facilities might also include local staffed play provision such as play centres, play schemes, play ranger projects and adventure playgrounds.

These spaces and facilities should also be capable of catering to the needs of children with a range of impairments.

The children who use these spaces and facilities should feel safe and be able to interact with individuals and groups of other children of different ages.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Neighbourhood playable spaces

A larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences: normally within 600m straight-line distance of home.

For example, this might be a park, playing field, recreation ground or natural open space such as woodland, moorland or a beach, accessible and attractive to older children and young people as well as others.

Characteristics

The space or facility provides for a variety of age appropriate play and informal recreational experiences. It might provide a varied and interesting physical environment incorporating some interesting and attractive landscape features with varying levels and contours.

There are likely to be more challenging items of equipment and features that meet the needs of older children and young people.

Larger facilities specifically designed for informal recreation could be present such as a ball court, multi-use games area or skateboard area which can provide the opportunity for a variety of experiences to young people with differing skills levels.

These spaces and facilities should also be capable of catering to the needs of children and young people with a range of impairments.

There is likely to be sufficient space to play large group ball games and seating and shelter to enable young people to socialise with their friends.

Quality standards for playable space

Using the Play England Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool, and working with the play service and other local providers, local standards for location, play value and care and maintenance can be developed (see Section 2.3.2 and Appendix A).

Quality standards should also include an assessment of access for groups of children who might normally be disadvantaged in their use of spaces for play and informal recreation. KIDS Inclusivity Assessment Tool (www.kids.org.uk) will help in assessing the space’s value for disabled children.
Quantity standards for playable space

Each local authority will need to develop its own local spatial standards for playable space, informed by the characteristics of the area and the identified needs of the population. This should be based on the assumption that every child and young person, wherever they live, should be able and happy to play outside, in good quality playable space, in the local neighbourhood (see Section 2.4.3).

2.4.3 Developing local standards

Standards should, on the one hand, be a guide: there may well be circumstances where communities, in discussion with the local authority, partners and (where provision results from new housing) developers, agree provision at variance with the standard. Imaginative and popular play solutions may arise from such involvement at this very local, project specific, level.

On the other hand, local standards can provide the general parameters of expectation amongst residents and developers. House builders will be able to gauge what they might reasonably be expected to contribute to the costs of providing for play. Through applying local standards, the community and the local authority will be able to establish where improvements need to be made to bring the existing play provision in a given area up to a suitable level; and estimate the level of new provision required as a direct result of new housing development.

In some areas it may be appropriate to adopt different or modified standards across the authority to reflect the particular circumstances of different parts of a local authority. For example, local authorities which cover both urban and rural areas may need different solutions to meet the play needs of young residents of villages, in contrast to those in larger settlements. Similarly, some urban neighbourhoods may include a relatively high proportion of children, whilst neighbouring areas may not. These varied characteristics need to be embraced by sensitive local standards; with the interpretation and implementation of national standards being informed by local needs and aspirations, with children and young people’s own views being paramount.

Adventure playgrounds are a particular case, as an essential element of them is that play structures and other features in the outdoor area continuously evolve and change. Local planning policy should take this into account in policy relating to planning consents (Play England 2008).
Case study 2: Audit/Play area map/
Play space standards

All of the outdoor equipped play areas in Newcastle have been mapped and audited according to their condition, play value (quality grade) and accessibility – this has included a DDA audit of all the sites. In addition, new play area quantity standards are being developed as part of the LDF. This would provide a ‘Destination Play Area’ 1km from home and a Local Play Area for under 13s, 600m from home. In addition, Newcastle would like to fill gaps in its park provision and, using standards adopted as part of the Green Space Strategy, a series of ‘Potential Parks’ have been identified. The Newcastle Playability Scores Model was devised from NPFA guidance and adapted for Newcastle, incorporating children’s views on what they wanted and liked to do in play spaces.

At present, play areas are requested within any new development. Developers usually approach play equipment manufacturers who produce an identikit play area. Newcastle are working with children, families and the wider community to prepare a Play Area Design Code to guide developers in their provision to include features such as adventure, natural features, interesting topography and planting. Consultation with young people was done both formally through schools and more informally. Over 300 young people took part in consultation; the groups were mixed gender, ability and ethnic background. Young people from 10 to 17 years of age were involved.

For further information contact Newcastle Play Service or visit: www.newcastle.gov.uk
Referring to existing benchmark standards

Further information to inform the setting and justification of local standards can be obtained from a variety of sources. For example, neighbouring or ‘families’ of similar local authorities might wish to exchange views and ideas. In addition, there is published guidance from a variety of sources including the following.

The Fields in Trust publication Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (FiT 2008), known as PAD, which continues to uphold the original NPFA recommendation that six acres of recreational space is required for every 1,000 people. It also covers a wide range of issues relating to quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor facilities for sport and play (Fields in Trust, or FiT, was previously known as the National Playing Fields Association or NPFA).

The Greater London Authority playable space standards Supplementary Planning Guidance: Providing for children and young people’s play and informal recreation (Mayor of London 2008), is particularly relevant for inner-city and some suburban areas.

Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard is relevant to some aspects of play provision, especially where natural environments suitable for play are not easily found (see Appendix A for further details).

Play England Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool (see Appendix A for further details).

If the general approach and detail of the community consultation (see Section 2.2.3) is designed appropriately, the results will provide evidence to inform and support local standards for:

- **Quantity**: What sort of play opportunity would the community like to see more, less, or ‘no change’ of in general terms?
- **Quality**: For different types of play opportunity, what would be a community’s expectation in terms of what should be provided in various types of playable space?
- **Accessibility**: How far (time/distance) would potential users be prepared to travel (generally by foot) to use various types of playable space and what other factors might either help or hinder access to and use of the destination?
Diversity in local standards

PPS3 states that local planning authorities should develop housing density policies that take into account the current and future level and capacity of infrastructure, services and facilities such as public and private amenity space, in particular green and open space, which would include playable space (CLG 2006c: para 46). Although standards in different local authorities may share certain general features, they must reflect the individual characteristics of an area. Standards, and the way they are applied, should address the constraints and opportunities presented by the physical environment if they are to be realistic. For example, different settlement patterns might suggest the following:

**Urban (central) ‘high density/little space’**

- Focus on making best use of space available, as there will be few new opportunities to provide new space.
- Perhaps ensure that existing designated play space comprise robust and high-capacity features.
- Liaise with local highway planners to adapt the layout of residential streets to allow as much doorstep playable space as possible.
- In adventure playgrounds, have multi-level play structures and features to make best use of the space.
- As appropriate, seek developer contributions on improving and sustaining existing accessible facilities.
- Pay particular attention to making public places and spaces of all kinds enjoyable environments for a range of play experiences, through ‘thinking play’ in the planning, and design for multi-functionality.
- Ensure high quality play facilities at schools; and expect and encourage schools to allow use of play areas and playing fields outside of school hours. In this case, revenue costs for supervision and maintenance may need to be found.
- Ensure play opportunities for younger children are integral to high-density redevelopment schemes wherever possible and appropriate.
- Consider the siting of safe routes to play and school that offer opportunities for play on the way.

**Urban (general) ‘high density/limited space’**

- Generally do as above but additionally focus on improving access to potential and new play opportunities on existing areas of public open space and appropriate school grounds.

**Suburban ‘medium to high density/more space’/Market Town ‘low to medium density/significant space’**

- As above but also plan for a range of new spaces and opportunities to meet identified needs, given the extra space.
- Seek to ensure that provision is sustainable in terms of its longer-term maintenance.
Villages ‘low density/most space (in theory)’

- Do as for suburban and market town above, but with an additional focus on self-help/creation schemes (small villages have difficulty providing and maintaining ‘expensive’ conventional play equipment, and other solutions may sometimes need to be explored).
- Consider village schools opening their playgrounds for out-of-hours use. In this case, revenue costs for supervision and maintenance may need to be found.
- Look at the possibility of creating safe walking and cycling routes between villages and smaller settlements.

2.5 Applying the locally determined standards: Step 4

At this stage in the process the standards that have been developed can be applied to the local community to determine the adequacy of existing provision relative to the three components of the standard: quantity, quality and access.

The way in which this exercise is undertaken will vary in detail between local authorities depending on the form and content of the standards themselves, but the overall process should be similar.

The principal considerations are as follows:

- **The need to fully exploit the data** which has been provided through Steps 1 and 2 of this process: the assessment of ‘need’ (especially data collated about relevant sections of the population); and ‘supply’ (the data recorded through the mapping process).
- **The role of GIS technology**, which will make the process less time-consuming, and will produce information adaptable to different forms of presentation.
- **The importance of physical barriers** to the accessing of spaces. There is no point in overlaying a walk-time catchment circle around a play space without taking into account important physical barriers to access, such as busy roads, embankments, social barriers and other constraints which make travel by foot or bike either time consuming, unpleasant or dangerous.
- **Changes in local populations**, in terms of character and size over time. Although in some areas anticipated changes may be predicted to be small or difficult to gauge, in other areas planned change may be large – such as in areas of planned urban regeneration or significant ‘greenfield’ extensions. In some areas it may therefore be necessary to conduct secondary analysis to assess the impact of such change.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

- **Whether to break down the overall analysis** into a series of local areas. The use of access catchments immediately provides an essential local dimension to assessment. However, in most circumstances, information on findings will be most useful if it is based on recognised geographical or administrative areas. Readers and users of the findings will probably prefer information to be presented on, for example, some form of ‘neighbourhood’ basis. However, two key points must be taken into account:
  - Users do not confine themselves to political or administrative boundaries and they will instead use places of their choice and which are easy to reach. The breaking down of analysis and presentation should not therefore treat selected areas in isolation and must take into account the proximity of provision in adjacent areas.
  - Whilst it is important to gain commitment from local elected members to the play provision in their area, planning for playable space should not be a political process, and the use of political boundaries such as electoral wards may run the danger of focussing politicians’ minds on the implications for their own future rather than the wider equity of distribution.

- **The importance of clearly integrating issues of ‘quality’** with those of ‘quantity’ and ‘accessibility’. For example, when examining an area there may appear to be a lot of defined play space, but if it is of poor quality or difficult to get to then it will be useless in the eyes of many residents and potential users.

2.6 Drafting policies and recommendations:
Step 5

- 2.6.1 Policies consistent with PPG17
- 2.6.2 Evaluating options
- 2.6.3 Drafting policies and other guidance

2.6.1 Policies consistent with PPG17

In practice there will be many different ways to meet the local needs identified by the previous four steps of the study, and it will be necessary to consider the various options before evaluating them in the context not only of PPG17 but also of other policy guidance and local priorities.
Section 2: Standards for play in spatial planning

Identifying existing provision to be protected
Existing spaces which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system are those which either:

- are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in accessibility, quality or quantity and which scored highly in the value assessment
- or
- have some other value – conservation, historical or cultural value – which is outside the scope of this document.

Identifying existing provision to be enhanced
It will almost certainly be desirable to enhance some play spaces to increase their quality. These will be those spaces or facilities which:

- are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in diversity, accessibility or quantity
- but
- scored poorly in the quality assessment.

Enhancement does not necessarily mean radical or expensive remodelling. For example, a bland bit of local amenity space might immediately be enhanced visually and its play value improved by planting a few trees (perhaps fruit trees) and adding some mounding to produce an environment that is both attractive to children, and parents and carers.

Identifying provision that could be relocated
In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating a play space, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users; or use land which is not suitable for another purpose. Basic land swaps can occasionally achieve the objectives of providing an alternative, better and more accessible play space in a neighbourhood, whilst releasing the original site for a new and more appropriate use.

Policies and recommendations, if they are to be consistent with PPG17 and its companion guide, should identify:

- existing provision to be protected
- existing provision to be enhanced
- existing provision to be relocated in order to meet local needs more effectively or make better overall use of land
- proposals for new provision.

Occasionally, it might be appropriate to have a fifth component – provision which is surplus to requirements and therefore no longer needed.
Identifying areas in which new provision is required

The main opportunities for new provision are likely to include areas:

- where comprehensive redevelopment may be proposed such as educational sites, where the school or other educational institution has existing facilities that are not made available for community use, or spare land – in some instances, basic facilities may already exist, but require relatively minor alterations before it is acceptable to open them up for public use
- which require novel local solutions, for example where outdoor play is not restricted to defined and equipped play sites. In some cases, there may be scope to provide unconventional and exciting local solutions to providing new opportunities, whilst at the same time making use of land that is of little use for other functions. On derelict land or brownfield land that is unsuitable for development, play space may be a cost-effective new use, depending on location and local needs. Disused railway lines, spaces beneath viaducts and underpasses, back alleys behind old terraces too small to accommodate off-street parking, can help to provide playable space where the supply of conventional space is tight, and yet these could be highly attractive to children who often welcome opportunities to experience the ‘out-of-the-ordinary’.

New play spaces may also be required where there will be a planned increase in population. They will be required either:

- in areas outside the distance thresholds used in the provision standards but that contain sufficient people to justify new provision
- where the level of existing provision fails to accord with the quantity standard.

In these areas, using the adopted provision standards to determine the need for new provision will identify any need there may be:

- to promote new provision and make allocations where the audit identified realistic opportunities to do so
- and/or
- to require developers to provide or contribute to new provision.

Identifying surplus provision

Adopted provision standards can also be used to identify existing play spaces which it may be acceptable to class as ‘surplus to requirements’ and use for some other purpose. However, PPG17 makes it clear that the first priority should always be to use at least part of any local surplus of one type of provision to reduce any local deficiencies there may be in others. There will nearly always also be other factors to take into account, such as the contribution which open spaces make to the character of an area and, not least, the opinions of local residents.
2.6.2 Evaluating options

It is unlikely that there will be a need to pursue all the identified options and therefore it is important to assess which will be the most effective. This evaluation should relate directly to the planning objectives set out in PPG17, and other relevant planning policy statements and guidance as well as local strategies. The criteria which might be used for evaluating strategic options include, for example: the priorities set by Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreements, Local Development Framework core policies, identified target populations and areas of identified need.

The guidance provided under Step 1 (Identifying local need) will be helpful in this respect (see Section 2.2).

2.6.3 Drafting policies and other guidance

To ensure that local standards for playable space are implemented they should be included in the Development Plan. They will, therefore, form part of the statutory process of consultation, potential challenge, and inquiry before they can be fully adopted. However, they will be all the more credible and robust as a result of this process, and evidence-based policies resulting from a thorough ‘PPG17-compliant study’ of playable space will stand the best chance of surviving intact.

Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS 12) [CLG 2008b] states that Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) may cover a range of issues, both thematic and site specific, which may expand policy or provide further detail to policies in Development Plan Documents (DPD). SPDs may take the form of design guides, area development briefs, master plans or issue-based documents, which supplement policies in a DPD. In the context of play, they might be used to help improve the planning and design of play opportunities within a large development, probably in the context of a wider design brief prepared by the local planning authority. They can also help to clarify and interpret provision standards for decisions about Planning Obligations. This is discussed in detail in Section 3.
Case study 3: Play pathfinder and planning in Hackney

The London Borough of Hackney was announced as a play pathfinder in April 2008. The first step was to establish the formal steering group. Some members had originally met to develop and approve the pathfinder application, and some were also members of the Play Strategy Group set up in September 2006. The next step was to widen the membership to key stakeholders for the implementation phases of the pathfinder. The important partners from the planning authority were officers working in strategic and policy areas as well as in development control.

The head of policy for planning was invited to sit on the steering group. This immediately created a senior officer link with the department. A presentation was made to the management team for planning and regeneration, which discussed the potential role of planners in developing new and improved play areas. Also, a designated development control officer, who could be briefed about play spaces and comment on planning at a pre-application stage, was invited onto the group. A senior development control planning officer has since been involved at steering-group level; and has been able to comment on issues that have been raised in Phase 1 of the play pathfinder including, for example, the enclosure of open spaces, change of land uses and conflicts with residents over parking spaces.

At the same time, the play service ran a series of training workshops for different officers whose activities influenced the pathfinder’s approach to play, open spaces, and new and improved play areas. A lunchtime seminar was organised for the planning and regeneration department, with discussions covering the role of planners, quality and the importance of play areas. Following on from this session, informal contacts were made with officers working on large scale master plans in the borough, who then sought further guidance from the play service on play areas and potential play elements in public areas.

There is now an informal understanding that the play service in the Learning Trust, which is running the play pathfinder for Hackney, can be approached for any comments on applications relating to major housing developments and master plans. They have been advised to refer to Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (Shackell and others 2008) and also been given assistance with implementing the supplementary planning guidance PPG17.
A twofold link has been created between the planning and regeneration department and play service: both formal and informal. Formal links were made with planning officers at both policy and development control levels. They have been involved in pathfinder through the steering group and have been able to learn about the specifics of the pathfinder. Informal links have been made with planning and regeneration officers working both within housing teams on estate asset improvement projects, and in planning on town centre master plans and new housing developments. These informal links may be formalised as a result of Phase 1 of the pathfinder.

For more information contact: Hackney Play Service or visit www.learningtrust.co.uk/childcare/play_service/
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Children benefit both from outdoor play and from everyday interaction with nature. The built environment has a major impact on children and young people’s quality of life and life chances. [CLG 2009]

The Town and Country Planning system is designed to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest. To ensure that planning for playable space is designed into local areas it can be explicitly addressed in local authority planning policy through:

- the Local Development Framework
- development control.

In all local planning authorities, the statutory development plan is the starting point when considering planning applications for the development or use of land. It provides the essential framework for planning decisions. If the need for playable space is to be addressed then it should be referred to in this plan. Other material considerations may include, for example, an open space audit or the local play strategy.

The statutory development plan consists of:

- the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) or, in London, the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)
- Development Plan Documents (DPDs) prepared by district councils, unitary authorities, Broads Authority and National Park authorities.

The government’s policy on local spatial planning is set out in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS 12). This statement plays a central role in the overall task of place shaping and in the delivery of land use and associated activities (CLG 2008b).
3.1 Regional spatial strategies (RSS)

The eight English regions (excluding London) use RSSs as their strategic framework for land use and planning development. As described in Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS11), an RSS may include subregional strategies for areas of intense change or regeneration thus providing an integrated, strategic approach to the development of, for example, housing, transport and other infrastructure (ODPM 2004). These subregional elements cover functional local economic areas that do not necessarily coincide with local authority boundaries. It is at the preparation stage of the subregional elements of the RSS that input is gathered from county councils as well as other local planning authorities. Policies within the RSS are, by definition, strategic, but it is important that they also provide a clear framework for the development of effective policies to support play provision at the local level.

The RSS covers spatial planning on a 15–20-year timescale and provides a spatial framework within which Local Development Frameworks (see Section 3.2) and Local Transport Plans can be prepared.

The RSS and LDFs make up the development plan for an area (note: that this will be changing soon with the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill 2008 and the transition to Regional Strategies, and provision for Economic Prosperity Boards, Local Economic Assessments and Multi Area Agreements).

Case study 4: Leading on a changing agenda for play

In North Somerset, a county-wide play partnership has been established. It coordinates consultation, shares good practice, and contributes to regionally significant spatial planning and strategic policy documents. With very broad representation from the third sector, local government, NHS and charities, the partnership has raised the profile of play in the county and is leading on a changing agenda for play.

For more information contact North Somerset Play Service or visit: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/
3.2 Promoting play in Local Development Frameworks

Local Development Frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development and delivering change. Local Development Frameworks provide planning authorities with an opportunity to take a fresh look at their areas, developing strategic approaches to spatial planning that deliver sustainable development and reflect the aspirations of local communities. (ODPM 2003)

If the needs of children and young people for playable space are to be met through the planning system national policy on play and other general guidance needs to be translated into specific provision, through local planning documents. To do this, the local authority policy on access, quality and quantity of playable space can be defined in relevant Local Development Framework documents (see Figure 3).

The way to test whether to include the provision of playable space in an LDF document is to check by asking:

- Is it justified? Is it based on sound evidence?
- Is it effective? Will it meet the objectives set and can it be delivered?
- Does it accord with the policy on children’s play in national planning policy, the RSS and the local authority’s Sustainable Community Strategy (see Section 4)?
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**Statement of community involvement**
A statement which explains to local communities and organisations how they can be involved in the preparation and review of local development documents and consideration of planning applications.

**Local development scheme**
A public statement identifying which documents will be produced, in what order and when, over a three-year rolling programme.

**Annual monitoring report**
Assesses the implementation of the local development scheme.

**Supplementary planning documents**
Policy guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in the development plan.

**Core strategy and other possible Development Plan Documents**

- **Development control policies**
  A set of criteria-based policies which are required to ensure that all development within the area meets the vision and strategy set out in the core strategy.

- **Proposals map**
  Illustrates the policies and proposals in the Development Plan Documents, and any ‘saved’ policies that are included in the Local Development Framework.

- **Core strategy**
  Sets out the long term spatial vision for the local planning authority area, and the strategic policies and proposals to deliver that vision.

- **Site specific allocations**
  Allocations of sites for development. Policies will identify any specific requirement for individual sites.

- **Area action plans**
  Provide a detailed planning framework for an area of change or conservation.

* Potential to include discussion of playable space

**Figure 3: Local Development Framework documents**
Each local planning authority will decide on the most appropriate ways of ensuring the provision of high quality playable space through their Local Development Framework.
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The policies on playable space in the LDF must be evidence based and address issues identified locally, including those identified by the PPG17 audit and the local authority’s approach to standards for quality, quantity and access (see Section 2). Other data might be collected through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which will reflect children’s health needs and may indicate the need for more physical activity and more provision in certain areas.

Local authorities are required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of all the DPDs. This allows them to assess the significant effects that their policies are likely to have on the wider environment and help in the preparation of a plan which will promote sustainable forms of development. SAs compare the objectives of planning documents against good sustainable practice.

The Plan Making Manual accompanying the revised Planning Policy Statement 12 brings together council experience, useful advice and guidance in producing Local Development Frameworks and can help inform an authority’s policies on the provision of playable space (PAS 2009).

3.3 Promoting play through planning policy and Development Plan Documents

3.3.1 Promoting play through the Development Plan Documents

3.3.2 Play in other LDF documents

3.3.3 Planning obligations and playable space

3.3.4 Annual Monitoring Reports

3.3.5 Planning for equity in play opportunities

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1 Since 1 April 2008, local authorities and PCTs have been under a statutory duty to produce a JSNA. The JSNA will inform Local Area Agreements and the Sustainable Community Strategy.
3.3.1 Promoting play through the Development Plan Documents

The documents within the development plan that could refer to playable space include:

- Core Strategy
- Other Development Plan Documents in use by the local authority, for example:
  - generic development control policies
  - site specific allocations of land
  - Area Action Plans.

The components of the development plan must go through a statutory process of preparation before they can be formally adopted. Draft policies and proposals are open to challenge by representation. Once components of the development plan are statutorily adopted, they carry great weight in influencing future development in an area – hence the need for the role of play to be fully recognised in the plan. Each local planning authority will differ in the choice of planning documents they use.

Play could be promoted through Development Plan Documents by:

- considering it fully within all elements of the LDF process and structures
- including policies and locally developed standards on playable space access, quality and quantity, developed as a result of the playable space audit (see Section 2.4).

In addition to influencing the content of the development plan, additional guidance should be included within Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) (see Section 3.3.2).

A summary of how to ensure that play is included within the development plan process is provided in Table 4.
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Table 4: Including play in the development plan process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning process</th>
<th>Ways of promoting play in the local authority’s chosen plans and documents</th>
<th>Sources of information and advice (see References section for details)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The development plan</td>
<td>Ensure local Play Strategy is explicitly recognised in the plan.</td>
<td>Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (together with the companion guide) (ODPM 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure playable space is fully considered in the PPG17 assessment.</td>
<td>PPS3 (Housing) (CLG 2006c). Manual for Streets (DfT and CLG 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure playable space is fully considered in relation to PPS3 guidance.</td>
<td>Planning for Play (CPC 2006). Better Places to Play Through Planning (this guide).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure local standards for playable provision are developed and adopted.</td>
<td>Design for Play (Shackell and others 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure transport planning considers the need for doorstep playable space and safe routes to play and school.</td>
<td>Preparing a Design Code: A practice manual (CLG 2006d).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure playable space is included in a playable space document and other relevant SPDs including, for example, for open space, sport and leisure (including advice on play space design).</td>
<td>Planning Policy Statement 12: Local spatial planning (CLG 2008b).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the area and so should include statements about the provision of playable space. The development of the Core Strategy starts with the Issues and Options paper, which is the subject of public consultation. Including references to play is relevant at this stage because there is a need to protect existing, and provide new, spaces for play.

The nature of these references should reflect the evidence on the need for, and provision of, playable space across the plan area. It should take account of the assessments carried out under PPG17 (see Section 2.3).

Development control policies

Development control policies are a limited suite of policies which, in accordance with the Core Strategy and national policy, set out the criteria against which planning applications will be considered and could refer to playable space.
Site specific allocations of land

Site specific allocations of land include allocations for specific uses on specific sites within the local authority area. They include designations for major types of use, and should take account of assessments carried out under PPG17. The designations will include space in which play will nearly always be well catered for, such as recreation spaces, but will also include areas to be maintained as natural sites. Where need has been identified, it is important that some of these other designations – such as natural and semi-natural areas – have in their descriptions a requirement for natural play opportunities. These should be supported by the Core Strategy and other more detailed policies. If they are not, then those responsible for providing and maintaining these spaces can argue against any specific proposal for introducing play opportunities in the design and subsequent development.

Area Action Plans

An Area Action Plan focuses on a specific location or an area subject to conservation or significant change. Area action planning presents an important opportunity for community engagement through practical and community-based planning techniques. It also presents scope for greater joining-up with other economic, social and environmental initiatives.

Play professionals can usefully be involved in area action planning exercises if they are aware that something needs to be done about local provision for play in that area. This is because all these site-specific area actions, designed to carry weight in taking decisions in the planning system, are statutory DPDs. On the one hand, they are powerful documents for including proposals for future provision. On the other, they can exclude future possibilities.

Area Action Plans allow very specific proposals for play to be included as part of the infrastructure for an area, with the backing of the local community; and a chance for play professionals to work with planners on the introduction of best practice in provision of playable space.

Proposals maps

Although not a DPD, the proposals map illustrates policies and proposals in a development plan and is usually held on a geographic information system (GIS) on the local authority’s website. These might include provision of significant play developments where need has been identified.
### Table 5: Potential for including playable space in DPDs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning document</th>
<th>Including playable space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Strategy</td>
<td>Highlight the need for play provision in planning and set clear objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site specific land allocations</td>
<td>Check that play is not excluded from land allocation descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic development control policies</td>
<td>Ensure that play needs are overtly recognised and that other design requirements reflect the need for playable space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals maps</td>
<td>Check that significant proposals for playable space are included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Action Plans</td>
<td>Ensure that play provision is treated in the same way as other significant community infrastructure needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.3.2 Play in other LDF documents

In addition to the DPD, policy on providing playable space should also be highlighted in other LDF documents including the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

**Supplementary Planning Documents**

Although provision for playable space could feature in DPDs, the primary focus is likely to be through SPDs. These amplify and support the DPD, expanding and adding detail to the policy on planning for playable space. These are potentially the most significant documents for play provision. The SPDs developed by planning authorities will differ according to local priorities.

SPDs are adopted by shorter, simpler procedures than DPDs, do not undergo independent testing and are afforded less weight than the DPD. Nevertheless they can be influential in promoting improved planning for playable space. They might include the following types of SPD where provision for playable space could be highlighted:

- **Playable space SPD** – this provides supplementary guidance on policies contained in a DPD in relation to access, quantity and quality of playable space for children and young people of differing ages and interests. In London, the Greater London Authority has published an SPD on the provision for children and young people’s play and informal recreation (Mayor of London 2008).
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- A Planning Brief for any major new development – this could include any major planned playable spaces.
- Designing out Crime SPD – this should include a section on design to allow children to play in safety, and sufficient provision for young people to provide engaging opportunities for informal recreation.
- Urban Design Strategy SPD – this will include standards of design for public spaces, which could include playable space and design of public art for play.
- Access Design Guidance SPD – this will include access for people who are disabled and also the design of greenways and sustainable transport routes, including safe routes to school and play.
- Green or Open Space Strategy SPD – this may be the main vehicle for ensuring the collection of evidence on current playable space and how future needs for play will be met. This should include information on access, quality and quantity of playable space as well as policies for play in open spaces and natural and semi-natural areas.
- Recreation/Sport Strategy SDP – this could include play as one aspect of the suite of built facilities in a recreation strategy. It could include policy on quality, quantity and access to playable space as well as policies for play in open spaces and natural and semi-natural areas.
- Planning Obligations SPD – this provides further detail on the implementation of Section 106 planning obligations policies and often include sums for payable space. This will be subject to regular reviews to ensure that the contributions being sought are the most appropriate.

No one SPD is likely to deliver all that is needed for play. Any SPD that influences the layout and design of buildings or public spaces has the potential to improve, or to restrict, opportunities for play and informal recreation for young people. Planners can work with play professionals to get advice and support in the development of SPDs that might have an impact on play opportunities.

When referring to playable space, the content of an SPD should be drafted to provide practical guidance to developers and others on the design and siting the space. It can offer examples of good practice, and therefore help make clear the local authority’s expectations.

In addition, SPDs can provide guidance to augment DPD policies in respect of:

If provision of playable space is to be included in any SPD, the following principles still apply:

- It must be consistent with national and regional planning policies as well as the policies set out in the DPDs contained in the LDF.
- It must be clearly cross-referenced to the relevant DPD or national or regional policy which it supplements (or, if it occurs before a relevant DPD has been adopted, a saved policy). The SPD cannot be a means of introducing important policy ‘through the back door’, that is, without it having been tested through statutory planning processes.
- It must be reviewed on a regular basis alongside reviews of the DPD policies to which it relates.
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- the interpretation and application of standards for play and informal recreation
- securing capital and maintenance contributions for play provision through planning obligations.

Case study 5: Planning department involvement in play partnership

Newcastle City Council’s planning department has been instrumental in the development of play across Newcastle and has shown a thorough understanding of how all aspects of urban design need to be considered to ensure children and communities have accessible and interesting play spaces.

Prior to the current national initiatives around play, Newcastle had developed a core group of partners to look at developing a play strategy, Supplementary Planning Guidelines and a ‘design code’ for play spaces, for inclusion in the Local Development Framework. This will give Newcastle a blueprint for how its play opportunities would evolve in the future. This embryonic ‘play partnership’ was instigated and initially driven by the planning department, with additional members being invited as the group progressed.

The Newcastle Play Partnership has grown to encompass a wider range of partners and stakeholders, but the planning department has remained a member and continues to have a high level of input into strategic planning of play. The partnership values the input of the planners, as all partners recognise the importance of placing play space development within the context of the strategic urban and social development of the city. As stated in their play strategy:

> Quality play provision has the potential to significantly improve social inclusion and promote social and community development.

For further information contact Newcastle Play Service or visit: www.newcastle.gov.uk

3.3.3 Planning obligations and playable space

Section 106 Planning obligations

Planning obligations are legal agreements negotiated under the provisions of Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. There are two types of planning obligation: a Planning Agreement (between the Local Planning Authority (LPA), applicant, and perhaps others); and, where no agreement can be reached with the LPA, a
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Unilateral Undertaking where the applicant offers a commitment on its own terms.

These contributions from developers, towards the development of local infrastructure are, where possible, negotiated between the applicant and the planning authority. Planning obligations under Section 106 and through the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL, which runs alongside the S106 system) are a good source of funding for investment in playable space where needs for play are known and playable space standards have been developed.

Generally speaking, planning obligations can be used to offset the impacts of new development where these cannot be satisfactorily addressed by conditions attached to the planning consent. Many local planning authorities and the courts have taken a wide view of what topics may be included within planning obligations. Play provision is frequently accepted as qualifying infrastructure in this regard.

Planning obligations, including those relating to playable space, may take a number of forms. Government Circular 05/05 states that planning obligations should meet the ‘five tests’, that is, of being:

- necessary
- relevant to planning
- directly related to the proposed development
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development
- reasonable in all other respects.

Circular 05/05 identifies the importance of setting a planning policy framework for planning obligations as a means of justifying the range of requests made. The circular suggests that where the combined impact of a number of developments creates the need for infrastructure, it may be reasonable for the associated developers’ contributions to be pooled, in order to allow infrastructure to be secured in a fair and equitable way. Pooling can take place both between developments and between local authorities. Also, where individual developments will have some impact but not sufficient to justify the need for a discrete piece of infrastructure, the local authority may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to seek contributions towards future provision (ODPM 2005a).
This is important when considering contributions to the provision of playable space as, whilst a small development proposal that provides just a few dwellings might not generate the need for new playable space, taken in conjunction with other housing proposed nearby, the cumulative additional demand could be sufficient to require new or improved provision. The PPG17 local needs assessments and audit of playable space will identify priority areas for new or improved provision (see Section 2.3).

In some instances it may be that the benefit required, for example playable space, is close to, but not in, the proposed development. In this case, developers may be required to make a financial contribution towards it. In other words, there needs to be a planning benefit to the local authority as well as the developer under Section 106 Agreements. PPG17 assessments will be crucial here to provide evidence of need (see Section 2.3).

Provision of play facilities should link in with wider sustainable transport policies; and in particular link in with the existing or proposed walking and cycling infrastructure and the production of residential travel plans mandated through Section 106 Agreements or secured through planning conditions.

Further guidance on the use of planning obligations: particularly in relation to developer contributions and their role in helping to achieve adopted standards of play provision is probably best offered within an SPD.

**Section 106 and maintenance costs**

In providing sustainable play opportunities, the cost of maintaining facilities over the longer term is a major factor and it is therefore important to consider the appropriateness of securing developer contributions (via planning obligations) for helping to maintain such facilities.

The future maintenance of playable spaces is clearly an important consideration in their planning and design. Investing in high quality and robust provision from the outset can result in lower maintenance costs in the future. Seeking a good specification under the ‘quality’ component of local standards can help achieve this goal. Good guidance within an SPD can highlight the benefits of such an approach.

It is important that the total cost of providing for play (including future maintenance) is calculated in a way that can then be expressed as a cost per head for every additional person generated by the new development, or as a

Government guidance (contained in Circular 05/05) states that, where contributions are made towards the provision of facilities which are predominantly for the benefit of the users of the associated development, it may be appropriate for the developer to make provision for the subsequent maintenance (ie physical upkeep) of those facilities. Such provision may be required in perpetuity (paragraph B18). This could relate to the provision of playable space.
cost per square metre. There is a requirement, not only to prove the need for play provision and show how this relates to cost, but also to have systems in place that allow for recording how the money was spent, and how it has been used to meet the need generated by the development.

Case study 6: Developer contribution creates challenge for children

The village of Stillington in Stockton-on-Tees has recently gained an impressive climbing feature thanks to a developer contribution secured through a Section 106 Agreement.

When the new housing development was approved, Stockton Borough Council requested an ‘off site’ contribution be made towards improved play provision in the village. The eventual negotiated agreement provided £25,000 to extend and improve an existing play area, with the developer also agreeing to carry out improvements at the village’s community centre to create an outdoor area for informal sports.

The play area and facilities are owned and managed by Stillington and Whitton Parish Council and the Residents Association. The local community were keen to see improved play provision for older children, and working closely with local children and young people the decision was taken to use the developer contribution to introduce a large climbing boulder. This has proved a huge success with children of all ages – introducing a real element of challenge into play.

For more information contact Stockton Borough Council’s Countryside and Greenspace Team:
www.stockton.gov.uk/countrysideandgreenspace

The Community Infrastructure Levy

The government is proposing to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which will be a new charge that local authorities in England and Wales will be empowered, but not required, to charge on most types of new development in their area. CIL charges will be based on simple formulae that relate the size of the charge to the size and character of the development paying it. The proceeds of the levy will be spent on local and subregional infrastructure to support the development of the area.

The government proposes that the definition of infrastructure for CIL purposes should be wide enough to enable local authorities to decide what infrastructure is appropriate for their local areas. Development
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can be unlocked and made sustainable by the provision of very different types of infrastructure, such as transport, schools and health centres, flood defences, play areas, parks and other green spaces, many of which are already funded in part by the existing system of planning obligations.

Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 enables the Secretary of State, with the consent of HM Treasury, to lay regulations before Parliament establishing CIL. Draft CIL regulations will be consulted on in 2009; and the final CIL regulations will not be made before April 2010.

It is important that local authorities are able to implement CIL to support delivery of the development strategy for their area without having unreasonable burdens placed upon them. The government is minded to propose that a prerequisite for being able to levy CIL will be that there is an up-to-date adopted development strategy for the area in which they propose to charge – whether it be in a saved local plan or UDP; Core Strategy DPD; local development plan (in Wales); or Spatial Development Strategy (in London).

Any authority wishing to charge CIL, which does not have an up-to-date development strategy for the area, would therefore need to prepare a new development plan (alongside which they can prepare their CIL charging schedule) before they can take advantage of CIL. This will allow them to prepare their evidence base on infrastructure to underpin CIL. Proposals on the future of CIL were published for consultation in summer 2009.

Monitoring gains from planning obligations

Once planning obligations have been agreed, it is important that they are implemented or enforced in an efficient and transparent way, in order to ensure that contributions are spent on their intended purpose and that the associated development contributes to the sustainability of the area. This will require monitoring by local planning authorities, which in turn may involve joint-working by different parts of the authority. The use of standardised systems is recommended, for example, IT databases, in order to ensure that information on the implementation of planning obligations is readily available to the local authority, developer and members of the public.

Paragraph B50 of the government’s circular on Planning Obligations (ODPM 2005a)
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In relation to on-site play spaces, it will be important to ensure that the commitment is met in full, in line with adopted standards, and that the quality of such is in line with the recommended design guidelines. This will require planning officers to work in partnership with other council departments including play, leisure and transport.

It is also important to monitor the build-up and use of contributions for off-site provision (primarily arising from small developments or where, for specific local reasons, on-site provision is not possible). Such funds should be used as soon as they become sufficient to meet the local needs that cumulative development creates, in line with the findings of the local play strategy and PPG17 assessment. The play officer, parks manager and transport officer could be involved in monitoring the implementation in terms of adherence to local standards and design guidelines for playable space.

3.3.4 Annual Monitoring Reports

Monitoring and review

All local planning authorities must produce Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), which are submitted to the regional Government Office. This is the vehicle in which progress on the key indicators in the LDF is reported and so, where they are used, they should include the provision of playable space.

Play policy in DPD and SPD should be monitored to check how it is being used, and how developers and planning applicants are responding to it. As a result, local policy and guidance itself may need to be reviewed.

The impact of policy and guidance should be assessed by looking at completed playable spaces within developments and not just at the quality of planning applications. This can involve members of the planning committee, as well as council officers.

Meetings with local developers, residents, children and young people, and interest groups can help to establish how guidance is being received. The play partnership should also be involved. Where they exist, parish and town councils, who are major providers of playable space, may also help in this process.

Government policy on the use of planning obligations, as set out in the Planning Obligations circular (ODPM 2005a), remains in force for the time being. It will be reviewed once CIL is introduced, whilst bearing in mind the government’s Planning White Paper commitment to streamline planning policy. The government will also consider whether planning obligations should be scaled back, how this should be done and over what timescale this should take place.

This requirement from government for monitoring S106 agreements has led to a number of local authorities using an element of the S106 contributions to fund a monitoring officer\(^2\). This is sound practice, particularly in those areas where there is significant local development occurring.

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\(^2\) Examples include Sheffield, Bristol, and Cambridge City Councils and West Berkshire Council.
One of the primary aims of the local authority play policy and strategy is to encourage children and young people to play outside more, with access to good quality playable spaces where they and their parents and carers feel they are safe. The ultimate success of planning policy and decisions relating to play can therefore also be measured by the extent to which it leads to an increase in the number of children regularly playing out. If local authority play or leisure services are using the local play indicators recommended by Play England, they may be collecting such information as part of their own monitoring arrangements Tools for Evaluating Local Play Provision [Play England 2009a].

Quality audits
The impact of design policy and guidance needs to be constantly monitored so that it can be reviewed and revised as necessary. Local authorities conduct audits of their management of the design and planning process in order to:

- assess the impact of the council’s actions at every stage in the planning process
- ensure that the council’s design policies are being applied effectively and that SPDs are being followed
- contribute to the review of design policy and guidance
- learn from planning appeal decisions.

Other methods of assessing the impact of play space design policy and guidance include:

- visits by council members and officers and others to completed schemes
- views expressed by local children, parents and carers, and residents groups on the success of new play provision
- internal workshops
- comments by a design advisory panel
- design awards.

In considering mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing progress towards improving playable space provision through the planning process, it is important to look at three particular aspects:

- Planning policy
- Development control
- Planning obligations (S106).

In addition, methods should be developed to measure the impact of the planning process in terms of wider social agendas and, in particular, the extent to which the implementation of planning policy has resulted in more children regularly playing safely outside. The impact of play space design policy and guidance may also be monitored through a local authority’s quality audit and awards schemes.

The quality of playable spaces should be included in the authority’s quality audit checklist. Play England have developed a playable space quality assessment tool which will help provide the relevant information for the quality audit [see Appendix A].
Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

Given the wider policy rationale for provision of playable space within the planning system, it is also important to monitor to what extent the implementation of policy contributes to these wider social agendas. Key queries include:

- Has the implementation resulted in an increase in the **quantity** of playable space?
- Has the implementation resulted in an increase in the **quality** of playable space?
- Has the implementation resulted in an increase in children’s **satisfaction** with play provision?
- Has the implementation improved **safe access** to local playable spaces?
- Has the implementation of policy resulted in an increase in children’s **participation** in play?
- Has the implementation succeeded in **reducing barriers** to play for all children (including those who are disabled)?

As it is beyond the role of local planners to take sole responsibility for such monitoring, appropriate council departments can work together in order to complete this task. If the authority is using the Play England recommended local play indicators much of this information may already be being collected (Play England 2009a).

Table 6 indicates how this arrangement could work in practice.
### Table 6: Potential for council departments to work together to monitor play facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Council arrangements to monitor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in quantity of playable space</td>
<td>Planning department takes lead in relation to updating its general audit of open spaces. Support provided by play/parks department and housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in quality of playable space</td>
<td>Planning department regularly updates its quality audit, eg utilising Play England’s Quality Assessment Tool with support from play/parks department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in satisfaction with play areas</td>
<td>Local authority monitoring or play/parks department takes lead through annual analysis of new national play indicator [NI 199] to be based upon children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas (to be collected through the TellUs survey) and Play England local satisfaction indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safer access to playable spaces</td>
<td>Highways department takes lead through development of local play access indicator based on the percentage of children who feel safe walking or cycling independently from their homes to their nearest playable space (measured through surveys of local schools). Play/parks department assist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in participation in outdoor play</td>
<td>Play/parks department takes lead through developing a local play indicator based on the percentage of children who play out for at least four hours a week (school or household survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing barriers to play</td>
<td>Children’s services take lead in developing a local play indicator based on the percentage of children who are disabled or disadvantaged who play outside for more than four hours a week. And who are satisfied with the local play spaces and routes to them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 7: Summary of potential for including playable space in other LDF documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LDF document</th>
<th>Including playable space</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)</td>
<td>The main way in which detailed provision for play will be made and where local standards</td>
<td>Provides the facts and figures that determine how play will be provided on any future development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for access, quality and quantity will be articulated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning obligations: Section 106 developer</td>
<td>Ensure that evidence is available so that funding can be secured from developers to meet</td>
<td>Important if funding is to be secured to deliver play opportunities associated with new developments through this means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributions</td>
<td>play needs generated by the development, if appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Monitoring Report</td>
<td>Report against progress in meeting access, quality and quantity standards for playable</td>
<td>Identifies what other improvements or approaches may be necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>space and the impact of this on children and young people’s play and informal recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.3.5 Planning for equity in play opportunities

Equality legislation now covers six strands – race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age – and recognises the role and responsibility of public sector organisations as being at the heart of improving the life chances of children who experience disadvantage. The legal framework is based on both the positive duties for public bodies to promote equality and on anti-discriminatory practice.

Most local authorities will use The *Equality Standard for Local Government* ([I6DeA and LGA 2007](#)) as it provides a way of working in local authorities which makes the mainstreaming of equality into play delivery and employment of play professionals an issue for planning. By working through the Standard, local authorities will be able to set targets and achieve outcomes appropriate to local need. There are five levels of the standard which cover all aspects of policy-making, including: commitment to a comprehensive equality policy; leadership and corporate commitment; community engagement and accountability; service delivery and customer care and employment and training. When an authority reaches Level 5, it will have developed the capacity to engage continuously in the management and improvement
of equality and will be able to demonstrate significant outcomes for equality improvement.

Carrying out an equality impact assessment allows consideration of the changes required in the policy and practice relating to the provision of playable space. Although impact assessments are normally done after the event, equality issues should be considered during all stages of the planning process; and as the policies that make up the strategy are developed.

### 3.4 Promoting play through development control

3.4.1 The pre-application stage

3.4.2 Planning application stage

3.4.3 Consultation and further negotiation

3.4.4 Formulating conditions and planning obligations

3.4.5 The planning decision

3.4.6 Monitoring and review

The development control process is an essential part of the planning toolkit. How it is used determines whether the policies in Development Plan Documents, together with other guidance in Supplementary Planning Documents, are respected and applied.

It is the statutory responsibility of council members and officers to see that development proposals are determined in accordance with the objectives and principles expressed in the Local Development Framework, including those relating to play provision. To achieve this requires a proper understanding of these principles, and the skill to assess the design quality of playable spaces and negotiate improvements where necessary.

On-site and even occasionally some off-site provisions for play should be achieved through applying appropriate planning conditions to the application being considered. Sometimes it is necessary to secure developer contributions through other means such as planning obligations (S106) (see Section 3.3.3).
Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

Through the LDF and other local policy, potential applicants for planning permission should be in a position to understand what development is likely to be acceptable to the local authority and how the provision of high-quality playable spaces is required as part of this. An understanding and helpful approach from development control officers should help applicants resolve conflicts and meet the requirements of the statutory procedures, ensuring that the development control process proceeds effectively and efficiently.

There is a Model Condition (no 24) in Appendix A to the Annex to DoE Circular 11/95 ‘The use of conditions in planning permissions’ referring to play areas. This reads:

**Play Areas**

24. The building shall not be occupied until the area shown . . . on the plan attached hereto has been laid out in accordance with [specify relevant plan or drawing], and that area shall not thereafter be used for any purpose other that a play area.

Table 8 provides a simplified view of the development control process along with advice as to how to ensure consideration of play is included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning process</th>
<th>Including play</th>
<th>Sources of information and advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| i. The pre-application stage | **The negotiation process**  
Ensure play is discussed with the applicant in relation to the infrastructure needs generated by the proposal. Make it evident from the outset that the local authority is committed to a high standard of play space provision through its LDF and associated policies, SPDs, etc.  
**Offering advice**  
Ensure any play space design guidance offered during a negotiation is given by a play specialist or landscape architect with experience of play space provision.  
**Pre-application design and access statements**  
Ensure developers consider play space provision within this process. | PPG17, companion guide and this guide  
PPS3 and companion guide  
PPS1  
DfT and CLG *Manual for Streets*  
*Design for Play*  
Play England briefing on adventure playground development  
CABE Open Space Strategy guidance  
KIDS (inclusion)  
ODPM (inclusion)  
Statement of local play standards  
Open Space SPD  
FIT PAD |

continues
### Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning process</th>
<th>Including play</th>
<th>Sources of information and advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ii. Planning application stage | Ensure that play space location and design is addressed at an early stage.  
**Planning application design and access statements**  
Ensure the developer includes considerations of play space provision within the statement. | *Design for Play*  
KIDS (inclusion)  
ODPM (inclusion)  
FIT PAD  
Play England briefing on adventure playground development |
| iii. Consultation and further negotiation | Ensure consultees’ views as regards play provision are addressed and assimilated within the proposals.  
**Consider objections**  
Consider the needs of children and young people alongside the objections of adults.  
**Play Partnership**  
Ensure that the local Play Partnership is consulted on proposals including play space  
**Seeking qualified advice**  
Ensure that a play specialist or landscape architect with play space experience joins the council’s development control officer in any discussions about play space design.  
Include consideration of play space provision in any checklists used to ensure that relevant design issues are considered.  
**Design advisory panels**  
Ensure that issues concerning play space provision are included and that someone with knowledge of children and play is on the panel. | *Embedding the Play Strategy*  
Design for Play  
KIDS (inclusion)  
ODPM (inclusion)  
FIT PAD |
## Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning process</th>
<th>Including play</th>
<th>Sources of information and advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iv. Formulating conditions and planning obligations</td>
<td>Ensure that the application fully meets the requirement to provide for playable space in accordance with adopted local standards for play. Ensure that planning conditions and any S106 agreement or future community infrastructure levy explicitly covers provision (including the requirements for quality of design).</td>
<td>Circular 05/05: Planning Obligations ‘Planning Obligations: Practice Guidance’ CLG 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. The planning decision</td>
<td><strong>The planning decision and committee process</strong></td>
<td>Design for Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that the officer’s report considers and evaluates play space design issues. Ensure that members of the planning committee see proper and full evidence of the design quality of proposals which they are being recommended to approve. Ensure that someone with play space design experience is at the committee to explain and discuss design issues. Ensure that committee members receive training in play space design issues</td>
<td>Play England briefing on adventure playground development KIDS (inclusion) ODPM (inclusion) FIT PAD PPS1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Monitoring and review</td>
<td>Organise visits to completed projects where play space has been provided to help members reflect on decisions and on the impact made by officers or members in negotiating changes to schemes. Ensure this experience is analysed and taken into account in reviewing policies and procedures. This should ultimately lead to improved provision of play space through the planning process.</td>
<td>Embedding the Play Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Better Places to Play Through Planning
3.4.1 The pre-application stage

Approvals are most likely to be given when the applicant brings forward a high-quality proposal which addresses relevant policies. It is important that satisfactory consideration of play provision is included in the proposal. This is more likely to happen if the applicant has discussed the proposal with planning officers before submitting the application.

The negotiation process and planning obligations

The basis for discussions on play provision will have been set by the policies in the DPD and additional guidance in SPD (see Section 3.3.2). It is important at the beginning of the negotiation process to ensure the requirements for high-quality playable space are understood by the applicant.

It is at this stage that potential planning obligations and conditions should be discussed in relation to the infrastructure needs generated by the proposal (including playable space) in accordance with local standards. Depending on the circumstances, these may subsequently form part of a formal S106 agreement related to the approval of the scheme.

Offering advice

The planning officer may be asked to provide a design suggestion for playable spaces, particularly where the applicant has not appointed a landscape architect.

Design guidance offered during a negotiation should relate to the quality standard adopted by the authority (see Section 2.4) and is best given by a play specialist or landscape architect with experience of play space provision. The DCSF/Play England publication Design for Play is also a useful resource (Shackell and others 2008).

Pre-application design and access statements

A pre-application design and access statement can be made by a developer to explain the design principles on which a development proposal is based. It can explain how these principles were evolved from the relevant policy, site and area appraisal, and consultation. The statement enables the local authority to give an initial response to the main issues raised by the proposal. Developers should be encouraged to consider the provision of playable space within this process.

3.4.2 Planning application stage

A planning application takes the local planning authority through the thought processes that have gone into the proposal including consideration of spaces for play. It should be submitted in a form that demonstrates how the proposal responds to the site, the locality and the policy context.
Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

Planning application design and access statements
Applicants for planning permission should provide a written statement setting out the design and access principles they have adopted in relation to the site and its wider context. This helps in assessing the application against design and access policies, and it requires applicants to think about design and access in an analytical and positive way.

The developer should be encouraged to include considerations of playable space provision within the statement. When assessing the developer’s proposals, it might be useful to consider it in relation to quality standards in the local SPD or Play England’s Quality Assessment Tool. (see Section 2.4).

3.4.3 Consultation and further negotiation
As part of the development control process it is a requirement to consult with various parties. This generally can mean neighbouring properties; important and relevant community groups and neighbourhood, parish or town councils (where they exist); and key public services (including various local authority services). The local play partnership should also be consulted.

Planning objections
Planning objections against play provision may be based on concerns around undermining rights for peaceful enjoyment. This must be balanced against children’s rights for play and recreation.

Clearly any proposal should conform with good planning policies and practice before submission. Good design and location of playable space will minimise conflict. However, even if proposals meet community and planning objectives, conform with good practice and deliver community and personal benefits, planning objections can still be raised and these tend to become local political issues.

For all new developments it is essential that the siting of play provision is identified prior to the sale of the first houses, or at least those that will be near to play provision. Alternatively, since in practice developers often use sites which will be used for play for operational needs while a development is under construction, sales particulars for all houses must indicate where, and of what type, the intended play provision is.

In this way future residents can chose to live near a play area, or well away from it, and planning objections are less likely to arise. Developers may be prepared to do this, as a nearby play area is often an incentive for young families. This can be achieved through planning conditions and/or through the terms of Section 106 Agreements as appropriate (see Section 3.3.3).
Seeking qualified advice

All development control staff should understand the broad policies in the local development plan and SPD, be able to recognise the relevant issues as regards play provision and know when it is appropriate to seek specialist advice. Whenever possible, a designer or architect with experience in designing playable spaces or a council officer responsible for play improvements should join the council’s development control officer in any significant discussions with applicants about playable space design.

Consideration of play space provision should be included in any checklists that are used to ensure that all the relevant design issues have been considered. They can help to establish a routine within the planning control process that gives proper attention to play provision within proposals.

Design advisory panels

A number of local authorities use independent design advisory panels (also known as architectural advisory panels) to help them assess the design aspects of planning applications. Some panels meet frequently to consider relevant items on the planning committee agenda. Others become involved only where there is a dispute between an architect or designer and a planning officer, which cannot otherwise be resolved.

The skills and experience of a design advisory panel can be more fully used by involving it at an earlier stage in the planning process, such as in the preparation of design policies, development briefs and design guides. Ensuring that members of the design advisory panel understand children’s need for playable space will help promote consideration of children’s needs in this process. CABE offer a Design Review service which provides free expert advice on the design of schemes in England that will have a significant impact on their environment. In December 2006, the Chief Planner issued a letter to all Local Planning Authorities advising them when it is appropriate to consult CABE on the design of schemes (CLG 2006e).

3.4.4 Formulating conditions and planning obligations

The application may include reference to suggested conditions and planning obligations to ensure the required play provision is implemented in line with local standards. However, it will be the planning authority’s responsibility to ensure that relevant conditions and planning obligations are secured, irrespective of whether or not the applicant offers them.
The way in which play provision is subjected to planning conditions and planning obligations will depend on its character and whether or not it is likely to be provided on site or off. A progressive local authority will be able to achieve a successful outcome in this regard if robust local standards are interpreted through Supplementary Planning Documents.

3.4.5 The planning decision

In general terms, planning applications will be determined in accordance with the development plan and other material conditions. Having established that a development proposal is likely to be acceptable in relation to broad considerations of land-use and traffic generation, playable space location and design and access should be addressed at an early stage. Design and access issues need to be identified against the background of play policies and local derived standards in any specific site briefing.

The planning decision will include conditions specifically related to play provision and any agreed Section 106 arrangements included as a requirement of approval. Where provision is on-site the only reason for having a planning obligation may be to secure maintenance contributions. There might also be off-site contributions for play.

The planning decision and committee process

In the case of a detailed planning application, the officer’s report to committee should draw from the applicant’s design and access statement and, where appropriate, attach it or a summary of it as an appendix. The report should also consider and evaluate the main design and access issues, including playable space. The report will include detail of the proposed Section 106 arrangements as a requirement.

It is important that members of the planning committee can see proper and full evidence of the design quality of proposals for playable space which they are being recommended to approve. It is also helpful for someone with design and accessibility training and an understanding of play to be on hand at the committee to explain and discuss design and access issues, and respond to members’ questions and suggestions.

3.4.6 Monitoring and review

Local authorities need to review the outcome of their contribution to the development process. Visits to completed projects where playable space has been provided will help them reflect on the decisions they took and on the impact made by officers or members in negotiating changes to schemes.
Section 3: Delivering change through the planning system

This process will illustrate the successes and failures of development control in relation to improved play provision, and the adequacy of the policies on which it rests. If this experience is properly analysed and understood, it should lead to improved policies and procedures, and to an upward spiral of achieving better design for play space through the planning process.

Monitoring decisions arising from planning objections will also give an indication of the approach the authority is taking to the provision of playable space and the priority given to needs of children and young people in public space.

Case study 7: Planning authority role on a play pathfinder board

In Portsmouth the planning department sits on the play pathfinder project board and has been involved in all the decision making from the outset – the creation and implementation of the project. They can link together other funding opportunities, such as Section 106 funding and, when visiting prospective sites, can identify the opportunities and challenges from a planning perspective, eg knowledge of whether land is available for use, whether it is contaminated, who it is owned by, etc.

The planning department have also assisted in getting waivers for gateway procedures through asset management and procurement; and identified other groups and organisations to consult with on the prospective play sites.

In addition, when working on the Local Development Framework, which sets a blueprint for how the city will develop and change over the next 20 years, many other services such as housing and regeneration are involved in putting together the plans and commenting on the proposals.

The play and planning departments work together on specific projects, such as play pathfinder and Building Schools for the Future, to ensure that planning issues are addressed throughout the process, rather than waiting for applications to be submitted. They can therefore:

- give pre-application advice to asset management and housing on new schemes
- ensure that the city has the necessary infrastructure to support new housing so that the planning obligations SPD ensures that when new housing is built developers help pay for improvements to open spaces, transport infrastructure and education facilities.

For more information contact Portsmouth Planning Department: www.portsmouth.gov.uk
SECTION 4: Play in other local plans and strategies

4.1 Incorporating play standards into other local plans and strategies

Planners do not work in isolation from other public services. The development of new planning policy and strategies requires liaison with other departments including highways and transport, children’s services, leisure, environmental health and play services. Local planning authorities are also required to consult with relevant public services prior to determining planning applications. Children’s play is an example of where local planning authorities need to seek cross-agency dialogue and cooperation in helping to secure appropriate play opportunities. The publications *Planning for Play* and *Embedding the Play Strategy* (CPC 2006; Play England 2009) highlight the importance of this inclusive approach and provide invaluable information on the subject.

The extent to which the decisions and actions of different services can influence play opportunities is highlighted below in the discussion of other relevant local strategies. All these strategies are subject to periodic revision and improvement, so even when a particular plan has been agreed by relevant authorities, it may still be improved in the future and policy on play provision incorporated.

4.2 Local Strategic Partnerships and Sustainable Community Strategies

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a duty for local authorities to develop comprehensive Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK. This was updated in 2007 by the Sustainable Communities Act.
Section 4: Play in other local plans and strategies

The SCS forms the lead policy document for a local authority area. It is prepared by a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which is a collection of organisations and representatives coming together voluntarily to work in partnership. The SCS provides the context for the Local Development Framework (LDF), which should be the spatial expression of the SCS. It is a legal requirement that the LDF takes account of the SCS.

An SCS must have four key components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes to be achieved
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes
- a shared commitment to implementing the action plan and proposals for doing so
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing, and for reporting progress to local communities.

Such strategies focus on key themes such as health and older people, children and young people, housing and environment, transport, crime and disorder, employment and enterprise, and culture and leisure. Cross-cutting issues such as equalities and cohesion tend to feature under these themes.

4.3 Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements (LAA) comprise agreements between central government and local authorities and their partners to improve services and the quality of life for local people. As such, the LAA is also a shorter-term delivery mechanism for the Sustainable Community Strategy. The SCS provides the story of the local area and should therefore articulate the longer-term ambition, evidence and rationale beyond the focus of a three-year LAA. Responsible local authorities are required to have regard to their Sustainable Community Strategy when preparing their LAA.

LAA targets are based on local priorities chosen primarily from those identified in the National Indicators Set. There are a number of national indicators that can be promoted through the quality play provision, including NI 199: Children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas.

(Play England 2009)

LAA negotiations are structured around four key themes: children and young people, safer and stronger communities, health and older people, and economic development and environmental improvement.

Play is a cross-cutting policy issue across many LAA priorities represented in the national indicator set. Planning authorities should consider their role in relation to play and how it contributes to the work of the LAA.
4.4 Local Transport Plans

Legislation requires local transport authorities in county councils, unitary authorities, and partnerships in metropolitan areas in England (although not London) to produce and maintain a Local Transport Plan (LTP). Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) cover the English metropolitan areas and produce a plan in partnership with the local district councils. The mayor’s Transport Strategy in London requires a similar process.

LTPs set out the authority’s local transport strategies and policies, and an implementation programme. They provide an opportunity for local transport authorities to work with local stakeholders and strengthen their placemaking role. The approach they take to local traffic planning has a major impact on children’s play in local streets and neighbourhoods, their journeys around the neighbourhood and their access to other playable spaces.

Fear of road accidents is a key barrier to outdoor play cited by parents, carers and children. Children need play spaces which have safe access routes encouraging independent travel. Good quality playable spaces should also be free from noise and pollution from road traffic. Creating a built environment which encourages walking and cycling has benefits for levels of physical activity.

LTPs should have regard both to national transport goals, including the need to contribute to better safety, security and health and improved quality of life, and the local Sustainable Community Strategy. They should also be closely aligned with local spatial planning strategies (eg Local Development Frameworks) in order to help reduce the need to travel and to increase the opportunities for more active travel choices, thereby delivering related health, environmental and safety benefits.

A practical example of how the interests of play and transport planning can coincide might be seen in the promotion of ‘safe routes’ to school and to play areas. Much play activity (either accompanied or unaccompanied by parents and carers) takes place walking to and from school and between designated play areas. Where LTPs are promoting new or improved safe routes, opportunities should be explored to see how they can be integrated with appropriate play opportunities.
4.5 Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP)

This is the overarching document governing the work of children’s services or Children’s Trusts. Issues affecting children’s play may be addressed under each of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. There is scope to include direct reference to playable space within the CYPP and planners should aim to ensure that this is done locally. Equally, children’s service departments should try to ensure that play policy is fully recognised within the Local Development Framework.

4.6 Play strategies

Local authority play strategies are not statutory documents, but nearly all district and unitary councils have produced them, mostly as a prerequisite to seeking lottery funding for enhanced play provision in their area. However, enlightened local authorities see the value in producing play strategies to help generally improve the provision that is made for children to play; and as a means to help discharge their statutory responsibilities to cooperate in their provision for the enjoyment of play and recreation as part of the five key outcomes for all children. Many play strategies have been adopted as a sub-plan of the Children and Young People’s Plan.

Local authority play strategies tend to cover broad areas of provision, from free play outside in open spaces to play in provision staffed by play professionals. Parks and green spaces have a vital role in provision for outdoor play and informal recreation. Exploring the wider environment – particularly wilder spaces such as woodlands, streams and wildlife areas – provides the freedom to children and young people to choose what they do and where they go, stimulating the imagination and testing boundaries.

A significant part of the play strategy of interest to planning departments will be concerned with providing spaces where children and young people have the opportunity to play or meet safely.

Safety and risk

Children and young people want activities that present challenge and risk. Some councils have adopted policies that reflect the Play Safety Forum’s Position Statement on Managing Risk in Play Provision: children and young people should be encouraged to take acceptable risks in environments that are challenging and stimulating.
Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury. 

(Play Safety Forum 2002)

The adoption of the risk–benefit assessment process described in Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation guide will help local authorities and their planning authorities ensure they are offering children and young people exciting and challenging opportunities for play and recreation whilst protecting them from unacceptable levels of risk (Ball and others 2008).

Inclusion and participation

Inclusion underpins the whole approach to provision for children and young people and the following issues are of particular importance for children’s play:

- the involvement of children and young people in making decisions on how an area might be developed, including those who are frequently excluded
- a focus on providing resources for disabled children and disabled carers to ensure good access to play facilities such as suitable equipment and introducing groups to play facilities
- a focus on ensuring provision encourages and attracts children who might not normally play outside, to use the playable space.

4.7 Open space strategies

A large number of local authorities have produced (or are in the process of developing) open space strategies. Like play strategies these are not statutory documents, but their development is promoted by government as well as national organisations such as CABE Space. Their development has arisen from a heightened awareness of the importance of open space as a vital part of the public realm.

Attractive, safe and accessible parks and green spaces contribute positive social, economic and environmental benefits. They can improve community well-being and quality of life, and reduce obesity and mental health problems.

An open space strategy sets out an authority’s vision for using its open space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals.
CABE Space suggests that an open space strategy forms part of a suite of key council documents. It is a comprehensive, council-wide document, which should directly contribute to delivering the council’s corporate aims and objectives set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Other more detailed strategies (including play strategies) can feed into the open space strategy.

CABE Space has updated guidance, in collaboration with the Mayor of London, to provide a national *Open Space Strategies: Best practice guide*. The guide identifies six stages in the development of open space strategic planning, scoping, context, understanding supply, understanding demand, analysis of objectives and preparing the strategy and action plan. The guidance is free to download from the CABE website. (CABE and Mayor of London 2009)

At the scoping stage most Open Space Strategies will include playable space, as this forms an integral part of open spaces. Normally the strategy will focus on the delivery of wider community and Local Area Agreement objectives, will assemble existing evidence, and undertake further research and consultation as required. The aim is to provide a strong evidence base for any blueprint for investment in the public space of the area, and to inform future local provision standards. These will include current provision and future need for play, both in traditional play areas, but also in the design and maintenance of other open spaces to deliver play opportunities.

A strong evidence base for proposed public space and leisure facilities will need to be developed as part of this work, both in overall terms and for specific new developments and related proposals for public access to open space. A strategic approach, generating clear justification and direction, based on research evidence and national examples of best practice will be essential.

Whilst play strategies cover a broader area than the provision of playable space considered by open space strategies, and therefore do need to be stand-alone, tying standards of provision for playable space into an open space document that can be developed as an SPD, and which can be used to deliver community infrastructure contributions for play, may be an attractive proposition.
References


References


References


Glossary of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANGST</td>
<td>Accessible Natural Green Space Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSE</td>
<td>Association for Public Service Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Area Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABE</td>
<td>Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIL</td>
<td>Community Infrastructure Levy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLG</td>
<td>Department for Communities and Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Department for Culture, Media and Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>Disability Discrimination Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFT</td>
<td>Department for Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPD</td>
<td>Development Plan Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FiT</td>
<td>Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLA</td>
<td>Greater London Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I&amp;DeA</td>
<td>Improvement and Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAA</td>
<td>Local Area Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDD</td>
<td>Local Development Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDF</td>
<td>Local Development Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>Local Development Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPA</td>
<td>Local Planning Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPS</td>
<td>Local Provision Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSP</td>
<td>Local Strategic Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTP</td>
<td>Local Transport Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPFA</td>
<td>National Playing Fields Association (now FiT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICE</td>
<td>National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIS</td>
<td>National Indicator Set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODPM</td>
<td>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAD</td>
<td>Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (Published by FiT and replaces the Six Acre Standard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCT</td>
<td>Primary Care Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Performance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPG</td>
<td>Planning Policy Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPS</td>
<td>Planning Policy Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTE</td>
<td>Passenger Transport Executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS</td>
<td>Regional Spatial Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Glossary of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Sustainability Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>Statement of Community Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>Sustainable Community Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Spatial Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Strategic Environmental Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Supplementary Planning Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCPA</td>
<td>Town and Country Planning Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A: Benchmark standards for playable space

Summary of benchmark standards for outdoor sport and play – Fields in Trust (FiT), formerly National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)

In 2006, Fields in Trust commissioned independent research that comprised a survey of local planning authorities and consultation with key stakeholders around the United Kingdom. Based on the results of that survey, it was suggested that FiT recommend benchmark standards to planning authorities and others. The recommendations are very similar to the previous recommendations in the Six Acre Standard.

The benchmark standards cover both outdoor sport and play, and are summarised below.

a) Benchmark standard recommendations for outdoor play

Quantity – all playing space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children's playing space</th>
<th>Benchmark standard (hectares per ‘000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated equipped playing space</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal playing space</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's playing space</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Quality benchmark for children’s playing space

Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards using Play England’s Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool. This would not set an absolute measure, but a reasonable aspiration and benchmarks against which to measure the quality of any existing children’s play space. Another tool, recommended by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), is FiT’s own ‘Play value assessment for playgrounds’. 
Appendix A

c) Accessibility benchmark standards for children’s playing space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of space</th>
<th>Distance criteria (metres)</th>
<th>Walking distance</th>
<th>Straight-line distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local areas for play or ‘doorstep’ spaces for play and informal recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local equipped or landscaped areas for play and informal recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood equipped areas for play and informal recreation and provision for young people</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new standards provide similar guidance for the provision of outdoor sport, and the following tables summarise the quantity component (there are also access and quality components).

a) Quantity – playing pitches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of local authority</th>
<th>Benchmark standard (hectares per 1,000 population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Quantity – all outdoor sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of local authority</th>
<th>Benchmark standard (hectares per 1,000 population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information visit: http://www.fieldsintrust.org/

Copies available from:

email: publications@fieldsintrust.org
tel: 020 8735 3380
post: Fields in Trust, 2d Woodstock Studios, 36 Woodstock Grove, W12 8LE
**Summary of Greater London Authority (GLA) benchmark standards for play**

The Mayor of London’s *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* (2005) highlighted the need to develop minimum standards for play provision locally within the London boroughs with an emphasis on quality and accessibility. This reflects government guidance on recreation and open space (PPG17) which recognises that it is important to modify standards to reflect local need, identifying that consultation on children’s play needs and consideration of the socio-economic context of an area will enable boroughs to adapt measures accordingly.

The development of regional benchmark standards is intended to provide additional guidance to London boroughs and to assist in the benchmarking of local provision and development of local standards and strategies for the provision and improvement of play and informal recreation facilities. Further guidance on the development and applications of play standards in the London boroughs has also been provided in *Supplementary Planning Guidance: Providing for children and young people’s play and informal recreation* (Mayor of London 2008).

Traditionally, standards have been applied to the overall population (including both children and adults) in order to establish the need for play space. This is unlikely to reflect needs accurately. It is therefore recommended that benchmark standards be applied to the forecast child population of the area. **The benchmark standard of a minimum of 10 sq m per child, regardless of age, is recommended as a basis for assessing future requirements arising from an increase in the child population of the area.** In the light of consultation with London boroughs and research on the application of standards elsewhere, this is considered to be a realistic standard to aspire to and one which is capable of being achieved. It is intended to provide a basis for assessing existing provision within an area and to benchmark provision against other areas. The standard for play provision is **in addition to** other quantitative standards for open space provision applied in the preparation of the open space strategy.

Distance is a key barrier to children’s play. All children and young people should have access to play space within reasonable and safe walking distance of their homes. Distance can be a useful tool in helping to identify deficiencies in provision but it will also be necessary to identify any barriers to children accessing those areas (for example, roads) within the recommended distance and to make allowance for these in assessing access to existing facilities. Distance should be measured as actual walking distance, taking into account barriers to movement. The benchmark standards recommended in respect of different age bands are:
Appendix A

- Under 5s: 100 metres
- 5–11 year olds: 400 metres
- 12+: 800 metres

The Mayor of London’s *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies* (2005) sets out a methodology and approach to assessing the quality of play spaces. This should be done by assessing the ‘playability’ of spaces through a site visit, ideally at a time when children are more likely to be out of doors. The basis of this assessment will vary according to local practice, but should consider the:

- provision of a range of play activities and experiences for different age groups
- number and types of items of equipment
- fitness for use and condition of existing facilities and equipment
- popularity and levels of existing use
- social, cultural, economic and physical barriers to access
- equality and inclusiveness of the resources.

The benchmark standards may need to be modified to reflect local circumstances in the light of consultation on children’s play needs, priorities identified in the play strategy and the socio-economic context of the area. The objective of providing safe and attractive play spaces for all children and young people within walking distance of their homes is dependent on the application of these standards within the context of the overall play strategy and local characteristics and a comprehensive approach to understanding local needs, aspirations and opportunities.


Summary of Natural England’s Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt)

The ANGSt is included as a model in the companion guide to Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) (ODPM 2002) and, in 2005, a report on green infrastructure produced on behalf of a range of regional and national organisations considered that the standard should be regarded as having the best fit with Green Infrastructure Planning (Davies and others 2005).

The ANGSt model states that:

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of home
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of home.

Although this model was designed primarily for the urban context, its areas of search (up to 10 kilometres) will extend from towns and cities into rural areas. The ANGSt model can therefore be used to assess the role of natural greenspace at the local level, as well as enable an analysis of how natural greenspace in the wider countryside contributes to open space provision for both urban and rural populations.

It should be noted that although the ANGSt model was devised by a nature conservation organisation it has been reviewed within the wider context of the work of Natural England. The definition of ‘natural’ greenspace is:

places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate. Natural greenspace does not need to be rich in biodiversity or have a recognised landscape designation but will provide some opportunities to experience the variety of the natural environment (such as seasonal change), to enjoy contact with common wildlife and to appreciate local landscapes. It will have a high percentage of vegetation and will occur in both urban and rural areas.

The companion guide to PPG17 suggests that the following definitions might be used to embrace the full range of areas of accessible natural greenspace:

- natural and semi-natural greenspaces – including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downland, commons and meadows), and wetlands
- green corridors – including river and canal banks
- country parks.

For more details visit: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ (accessed March 2009)
Appendix A

Extract from Play England’s Quality Assessment Tool

Higher scoring requirements for doorstep, local and neighbourhood playable spaces.

**Doorstep spaces and facilities:** a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement of children</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were children involved in the development of the site?</td>
<td>A representative sample of local children were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal oversight by passers-by or nearby properties such as houses or community centres</td>
<td>Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example, views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through it, or in full view of local housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Well used by children (evidenced by site visits, replacement of worn parts using desk research and local knowledge) | Site is well used by children. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass, local knowledge and observations of children using the space or frequently replaced worn parts on equipment |

| Getting there | Young children and accompanying adults can get to the site easily, safely and independently from their homes. No significant hazards to accessing the play space safely |

| Personal safety, security and lighting | Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open. Site is located away from busy roads |

| Getting there for those with impairments or with buggies and pushchairs | Space is accessible to disabled children, including those with different sensory capabilities and other specific requirements. Site is accessible to buggies and pushchairs. Good pathways to the site offer an alternative to uneven ground and steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces easily identified |

<p>| Meeting other children | Site located where there is a very high likelihood of other children passing by and joining in play, eg on the way to and from school or local shops |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Doorstep spaces and facilities:</strong> a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for the site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enticing to children to play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play opportunities for disabled children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to change the environment/space (loose parts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places for children to sit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Doorstep spaces and facilities: a small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added play value: The site offers more than just a basic experience of sensation. It offers possibilities for children to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it</th>
<th>Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value, eg has loose parts; places to hide/for reverie; a good integration and use of natural environment; a range of textures, planting, use of contours; challenge; opportunities to take risks; areas where cooperation is needed; and attention is paid to all the senses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care and maintenance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well maintained</td>
<td>No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained where appropriate, planting is regularly cared for, maintained with play value in mind, no unacceptable graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; and meets agreed safety standards, regular risk–benefit assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating for adults</td>
<td>Adults can sit and observe children playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter bins</td>
<td>One or more bins in good condition and not full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog-free zones</td>
<td>Management of dog fouling in place through bins, clarification of dog-free areas, signs discouraging owners from bringing dogs to site, no evidence of fouling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Local spaces and facilities: a larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults, and for adults with young children to walk to easily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement of children</th>
<th>A representative sample of children were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through, or in view of local housing or community buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well used by children (evidenced by site visits, replacement of worn parts using desk search and local knowledge)</td>
<td>Site is well used by children. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass, local knowledge and observations of children using the space or frequently replaced worn parts on equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting there</td>
<td>Children can get to the site easily, safely and independently without facing significant hazards. There is safe access to the site using footpaths and cycle routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety, security and lighting</td>
<td>Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open. Site is located away from busy roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting there for those with impairments or with buggies and pushchairs</td>
<td>Space is accessible for children, including disabled children and those with sensory impairments and other requirements. Site is accessible to buggies and pushchairs. Good pathways to the site offer an alternative to uneven ground and steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces are easily identified. Accessible parking nearby to play space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting other children</td>
<td>Site located where there is a very high likelihood of other children passing by and joining in play, eg on the way to and from school or local shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed for the site</td>
<td>The play space is an attractive place in its own right, with a distinctive and welcoming character, and located with regard to its setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Local spaces and facilities: a larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults, and for adults with young children to walk to with ease

**Play value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enticing to children to play</td>
<td>Visible signs welcoming children to play – use of signage and other playful messages. Space is child-friendly and appealing. Children and adults feel relaxed (if observed) and at ease. Site open at times when children may wish to play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play opportunities for disabled children</td>
<td>Play features are designed for a range of abilities and impairments, including sensory and physical impairments and behaviours. Disabled and non-disabled children are able to play together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets play needs of different ages</td>
<td>Play features meet the play needs of all age groups up to and including teenagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Children can run, roll, tumble, do wheeled activity, rock, swing, balance, climb or move around freely using their whole bodies or on wheels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginative play</td>
<td>The site is deliberately designed to provoke and engage children’s imagination, encourage fantasy and role play, eg through changes in level and texture, loose parts, sculptures, natural features and imaginative signage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball games</td>
<td>Sufficient space for team ball games, football, etc; ball games area marked out and equipped for a range of ball games, for more than one group of children at one time, not too close to other play equipment or features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to change the environment/space (loose parts)</td>
<td>The site encourages children to alter the play space in different ways to enhance their play, eg den building, obstacle courses, bridges over streams, and creating shade using the natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to natural environment</td>
<td>Site provides a range of natural features such as trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wild flowers and long grass, sand, water, rocks, and a variety of levels; and a range of visual and sensory stimuli. There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local spaces and facilities: a larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults, and for adults with young children to walk to with ease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places for children to sit</td>
<td>Children can sit and play and talk together, places for children to sit are incorporated into the play space, and near to tables or other seated play surfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Added play value: the site offers more than just a basic experience of sensation. It offers possibilities for children to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it</td>
<td>Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value, eg has loose parts; places to hide/for reverie; a good integration and use of natural environment; a range of textures, planting, use of contours; challenge; opportunities to take risks; areas where cooperation is needed; and attention is paid to all the senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and maintenance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Well maintained</td>
<td>No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained where appropriate, planting is regularly maintained with play value in mind, no unacceptable graffiti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; and meets agreed safety standards, regular risk–benefit assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating for adults</td>
<td>Adults can sit and observe children playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter bins</td>
<td>Two or more bins in good condition and not full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog-free zones</td>
<td>Management of dog fouling in place through bins, clarification of dog-free areas, signs discouraging owners from bringing dogs to site, no evidence of fouling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of supervisory adults (eg park keepers, street wardens, play rangers, community support officers)</td>
<td>Supervisory adults always likely to be in the vicinity at times children when might want to be playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets/Changing facilities</td>
<td>Fully accessible, well-maintained toilets available for children and adults whilst at the site. Changing facilities for children of different ages including disabled children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Neighbourhood spaces and facilities:
A larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences.

### Involvement of children and young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were children and young people involved in the development of the site?</td>
<td>A representative sample of children and young people were consulted continuously and participated actively in the design and development process throughout.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Location

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal oversight by passers-by or nearby properties such as houses or community centres</td>
<td>Site has a good level of informal oversight by adults, for example views are unobstructed, site is in an area with people frequently passing by or through it, or in view of local housing or community buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well used by children and young people (evidenced by site visits, replacement of worn parts using desk search and local knowledge)</td>
<td>Site is well used by children and young people. There is evidence of wear and tear such as well-worn grass, local knowledge observations of children and young people using the space or frequently replaced worn parts on equipment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Getting there

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting there</td>
<td>Children can get to the site easily, safely and independently without facing significant hazards. There is safe access to the site using footpaths or cycle routes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting there for those with impairments or with buggies and pushchairs</td>
<td>Space is accessible for children and young people who are disabled, have sensory impairments or other specific requirements. Site is accessible to buggies and pushchairs. Good pathways to the site offer an alternative to uneven ground and steps. Entrances and sudden changes in surfaces are easily identifiable. Accessible parking nearby to play space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Personal safety, security and lighting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety, security and lighting</td>
<td>Site and access routes feel safe at all times and have good exit routes. Both are well lit after dark if open. Site is located away from busy roads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix A

Better Places to Play Through Planning
**Neighbourhood spaces and facilities:** a larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting other children and young people</th>
<th>Site is located where there is a very high likelihood of other children and young people passing by and joining in play, eg on the way to and from school or local shops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designed for the site</td>
<td>The play space is an attractive place in its own right, with a distinctive and welcoming character, and located with regard to its setting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Play value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enticing to children and young people to play</th>
<th>Visible signs welcoming children and young people to use the space, using signage and other messages. Space is child-friendly and appealing. Children and adults feel relaxed (if observed) and at ease. Site open at times when children and young people may wish to use it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for disabled children and young people</td>
<td>Features are designed for a range of abilities and impairments including sensory and physical impairments and behaviours. Disabled and non-disabled children and young people are able to use the space together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets needs of different age groups</td>
<td>Play features meet the play needs of all ages including teenagers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>Children and young people can move freely in different ways including, for example, running, tumbling, wheeled activity, rocking, swinging, balancing, climbing or moving around freely using their whole bodies or on wheels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching the imagination</td>
<td>The site is deliberately designed to provoke and engage children and young people’s imagination, encourage fantasy and role play, eg through changes in level and texture, loose parts, sculptures, natural features and imaginative signage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Neighbourhood spaces and facilities: a larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ball games</strong></td>
<td>Sufficient space for team ball games, football, etc. Ball games area marked out and equipped for a range of ball games, for more than one group of children and young people at one time, not too close to other play equipment or features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities to change the environment/space (loose parts)</strong></td>
<td>The site encourages children and young people to alter the space in different ways to enhance their enjoyment, eg den building, obstacle courses, bridges over streams, and creating shade using the natural environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to natural environment</strong></td>
<td>Site provides a range of natural features such as trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wild flowers and long grass, sand, water, rocks, and a variety of levels; and a range of visual and sensory stimuli. There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Places for children and young people to sit</strong></td>
<td>Children and young people can sit and play or talk together. Places for children and young people to sit are incorporated into the play space, and are near to tables or other seated play surfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Added play value: the site offers more than just a basic experience of sensation. It offers possibilities for children and young people to take risks without hazards, to intensify the experience or broaden it</strong></td>
<td>Features (including equipment, natural features and landscaping) are advanced in nature and add significantly to play value, eg has loose parts; places to hide/for reverie; a good integration and use of natural environment; a range of textures, planting, use of contours; challenge; opportunities to take risks; areas where cooperation is needed; and attention is paid to all the senses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Care and maintenance</strong></td>
<td>No evidence of litter or hazardous items, well drained where appropriate, planting is regularly maintained with play value in mind, no unacceptable graffiti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Neighbourhood spaces and facilities: a larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers and have a wider range of play experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and safety</td>
<td>Regular inspection for unexpected hazards; regular cleaning and general maintenance programmes; dog-free areas; traffic calming; and meets agreed safety standards, regular risk–benefit assessment, regular inspection regimes, regular maintenance programmes, as appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating for adults</td>
<td>Adults can sit and observe children and young people if appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litter bins</td>
<td>Two or more bins in good condition and not full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog-free zones</td>
<td>Management of dog fouling in place through bins, clarification of dog-free areas, signs discouraging owners from bringing dogs to site, no evidence of fouling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of supervisory adults</td>
<td>Supervisory adults always likely to be in the vicinity at times when children and young people might want to be using the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets/Changing facilities</td>
<td>Fully accessible, well-maintained toilets available for children and young people and adults whilst at the site. Changing facilities for children and young people of different ages including disabled children and young people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Local government structures and play provision

Different types of local authorities in England

There are five different types of local authority in England, divided into single-tier and two-tier authorities.

Single tier authorities are:

- Metropolitan Authorities
- London Boroughs
- Unitary Authorities

Two tier authorities are comprised of a:

- County Council, and
- District or Borough Council

Single tier and County Councils are also known as top tier authorities.

In addition there are around 10,000 parish and town councils. These are mostly, but not exclusively, in rural areas.

In London the Greater London Authority (GLA) led by the Mayor has responsibility for strategic issues over the area.

Play is delivered by every type of local authority. County councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan councils and London boroughs all have ‘top tier’ status. County councils deliver functions that district councils do not cover, including adult social care, children and young people’s services including education, highways strategic planning, and minerals and waste disposal. They may also undertake many of the functions of district councils, such as sport, leisure and the arts, and children’s play. Within the county council areas, district councils are responsible for environmental services (including refuse collection), planning, play, sport, leisure and the arts, and housing. Unitary councils, metropolitan councils and London boroughs do all the functions of a county council, plus all the functions of a district council, across a single area.

Town and parish councils have limited powers and functions; one of the main ones being parks and play. Thus it is possible, in any one area, for play spaces and facilities to be provided separately by a county council, a district or borough council, and a town or parish council. Even where there is a unitary council, it is often the case that play provision is developed by the unitary council and the town or parish council.
Provision for play opportunities may sit in more than one department of a local authority, often in leisure, sometimes in parks, sometimes in children’s services. Rarely is it given a high status; and play professionals often find it difficult to affect corporate policy. The new national play strategy now seeks to define the roles and responsibilities of senior public sector staff, including those from outside local government, in delivering play opportunities. These include recognising play as an element of the responsibilities of Children’s Trusts, directors of children’s services, and local authority chief executives and highlighting how local strategic partnerships can support play; investigating how Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) can contribute to the play agenda; and clarifying the role of regional government offices.

The government’s agenda – delivery of evidence of good performance – is shifting. At all levels in delivering play opportunities, national targets are giving way to the setting of standards; monitoring delivery and scrutiny; and meeting local and stakeholder interests. Central government controls will still be in place but will be focused more towards monitoring how well councils are responding to community needs and working with community partners, rather than on meeting national performance indicators.

The HM Treasury and CLG document, Securing Better Outcomes: Developing a new performance framework, drew on the experience of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to inform a new approach to delivering performance reporting at a local level (ODPM 2005). IT systems are now being developed that can be operated, accessed and managed by a range of partners and stakeholders. This means that local government officers may soon be reporting on performance direct to the local community itself.

Engaging partners as a means of improving services and provision as opposed to just complying with the requirement to consult, can be a challenge. Doing this takes staff time, and people need to be trained to do it effectively and to ensure that the process is undertaken in a way that delivers real benefits to the whole community.