

## **APPENDIX 6: PLAYING SPACE STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1) It is a well-established and accepted principle that new residential development should include the provision of appropriate areas of open space. Pleasant, well laid-out areas for public enjoyment, recreation and children's play are essential elements in well designed residential layouts. These standards consider the playing space requirements for new residential developments and are quite separate from the landscaping, garden areas, roadside verges and other amenity spaces that form an equally important component in the design of residential areas.

2) The standards apply to all types of residential development of 15 or more dwellings in the Borough.

### **THE PROVISION OF PLAYING SPACE**

3) The Council has adopted the National Playing Field Association's standards for the provision of playing space for new residential developments. These are based upon the 1992 'Six Acre Standard', which sets out the minimum requirement for outdoor playing space per 1,000 population.

4) This document recommends that there should be a minimum of 2.4 ha of playing space for every 1,000 population of which between 1.6 ha and 1.8 ha should be for outdoor playing space for sport and between 0.6 ha and 0.8 ha for unsupervised children's playing space. The proportions of each type of playing space to be provided will vary according to the population structure.

5) The age profile of Melton's population is not dissimilar to the national profile and consequently, the Council considers that for every 1,000 population, 1.7 ha of outdoor playing space for sport and 0.7 ha of children's playing space should be provided.

### **OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE FOR SPORT**

**On developments of 35 dwellings or more, a minimum of 40 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor playing space for sport must be provided per dwelling.**

6) The estimated household occupancy rate for the year 2006 in Melton is 2.33 persons per dwelling. On this basis the Outdoor Playing Space for Sport requirement for each new dwelling is 40m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling.

7) It is considered that the minimum area needed to provide a usable playing space suitable for sport is 1,400 m<sup>2</sup>. Such a playing space would be large enough for a 'kick about' area or bowling green. Only sites containing 35 or more dwellings will generate sufficient need for this size of playing space.

8) All playing spaces on housing sites should be designed as an integral feature of the whole development, should have good footpath links and be within easy walking distance of every dwelling they are intended to serve. Ideally, playing spaces should be located away from parking areas and roads. They should also be situated so as to avoid creating a nuisance to nearby residents, but nevertheless remain overlooked for reasons of security. There should be easy

vehicular access for maintenance purposes.

9) Areas for sporting use should be of a size, and provided with facilities that reflect the needs of local residents. The sites should be grassed, levelled, drained, marked out and have seating and equipment provided as appropriate.

10) It is important that the design of playing spaces should make it unlikely that balls will be kicked or thrown against walls or surrounding dwellings. Therefore, there should be a Buffer Zone of around 30m surrounding the outdoor playing space. The materials and colours of all play equipment, seating, litter bins and means of enclosure should be in harmony with the surrounding development.

11) Landscaping should be used to add interest and form to the area. The planting should not be of a type that grows so large as to obscure views of the playing space from the surrounding dwellings, nor must it contain poisonous species. However it should be robust enough to withstand heavy use.

12) The type of space and equipment to be provided should reflect the likely population profile of the new residential development. For example, a bowling green may be an appropriate facility for a sheltered housing scheme and a tennis court or football pitch for a residential development of flats or 'starter' homes, likely to be occupied by younger people.

13) In some cases, the Council will be prepared to accept the provision of the outdoor playing space for sport on a site adjacent to the residential development. The Council may also be prepared to accept a commuted sum in lieu of provision on the site.

## **CHILDREN'S PLAYING SPACE**

14) The ease of access to children's playing space is vitally important and all playing space should be fully accessible to the populations they are intended to serve. The majority of children travel less than a quarter of a mile to play, although physical barriers, for example main roads, can hinder access to playgrounds.

15) The Council's playing space standards describe the minimum amount of space that should be provided for play within a certain walking time of a child's home. Walking times are based on the estimated time it takes children to walk without rushing or distraction, to a play facility, accompanied or on their own, and without having to cross barriers.

16) A wide range of play opportunities should be provided wherever possible. There should be unobstructed open space to kick or throw a ball as well as more natural areas for play. Well-established, well-treed corners and thick hedgerows offer potential for dens, tunnels and general explorations. However, consideration must be given to safety.

17) The design of a new housing development, including the pattern of roads, footpaths and open spaces should therefore consider the needs and viewpoints of children, for example, step size, handrail height and possible visual obstructions.

18) Different types of playing spaces should also be provided for different age groups, incorporating equipped play areas and areas for casual play and informal activities. The most frequent, and therefore closest to home should be the small areas for younger children. Less

frequent and more likely to be further away are larger areas for older children.

19) In addition to outdoor playing space for sport, two categories of children's playing space should therefore be provided. These are:-

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs)
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs)

20) Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are unsupervised playing spaces suitable for children between 9 and 16 years and are intended to serve substantial residential areas. Development Briefs for such large-scale residential developments will set out the required provision for NEAPs in accordance with NPFA guidelines.

### **LOCAL AREA FOR PLAY (LAP)**

**On developments of 15 or more dwellings, every dwelling must be within a 1 minute walk (60m straight line distance) of a LAP.**

21) A LAP is a small area of unsupervised open space specifically designated for young children for play activities close to where they live. LAPs should be provided within new developments of 15 units or more. They should be within 1 minute's walking time of home. Such areas need to be reasonably flat, well-drained with a grass or hard surface. LAPs should be appropriate for low-key games such as tag, or play with small toys, and should be signposted with eye-catching visual devices. They should have seating for carers.

22) Adequate safety measures should be provided to minimise the risk of road-related accidents. Consideration should also be given to any potential danger from nearby electricity cables or watercourses.

23) LAPs cater mainly for 4 to 6 year olds, and should be suitable for children with disabilities such as mobility and sensory problems. It should be noted that children over the age of 6 years are likely to cause some disturbance to adjacent residents. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the LAP design discourages their use by older age groups. This can be achieved by limiting their size, and reducing opportunities for activities for older children.

24) To minimise disturbance to neighbours, LAPs need to be made up of two zones - an Activity Zone and a Buffer Zone. The Activity Zone should be 100m<sup>2</sup> and the Buffer Zone should be sufficient to minimise audible and visual intrusion to adjacent residents. A minimum distance of 5m should exist between the edge of the Activity Zone and ground-floor windows in full view of the Activity Zone. Gable end or other exposed house walls should be protected from use for ball games by, for example, providing a 1m minimum strip of dense planting.

### **LOCAL EQUIPPED AREA FOR PLAY (LEAP)**

**On developments of 50 or more dwellings, every dwelling must be within a 5 minute walk (240m straight line distance) of a LEAP.**

25) A LEAP is an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age. LEAPs should be provided within new developments of 50 units or more. They should be within 5 minutes' walking time of home and offer at least 5 types of play equipment with seating for accompanying adults. Such areas need to be well-drained with grass and/or hard surfaced playing

space.

26) Adequate safety measures should be provided to minimise the risk of road-related accidents and potential dangers from nearby watercourses, electricity cables and railway lines. They should be located to allow informal supervision, for example by being overlooked by nearby houses or from well-used pedestrian routes.

27) LEAPs cater mainly for accompanied children aged from 4 to 8 years and unaccompanied children slightly older than 8 years. They should also be suitable for children with special needs and consideration should also be given to the needs of supervised children from birth to 4 years.

28) The Activity Zone should be 400m<sup>2</sup>. The Buffer Zone should be sufficient to allow a minimum distance of 20m between the edge of the Activity Zone and the boundary of the nearest residential property. If housing surrounds the LEAP on all sides, the total area needed, including the Activity Zone, will amount to 3,600 m<sup>2</sup>. This Buffer Zone could include footpaths and planted areas.

29) LEAPs and LAPs may be provided in the same location, but there should remain a clear separation between the two to allow for the two separate functions. The Buffer Zone between the two may be reduced or removed, but the Buffer Zone on the LAP side should be appropriate for a LEAP, i.e. 20m wide.

Facility	Minimum Size of Housing Development	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance	Activity Zone Minimum Size	Total Minimum Size (including buffer zone)	Nearest House Property Boundary	Characteristics
<b>LAP</b> (Local area for Play)	15 units	100m	60m	100m <sup>2</sup>	400m <sup>2</sup>	5m from Activity Zone	Small, low-key games area (may include 'demonstrative' play features)
<b>LEAP</b> (Local Equipped Area for Play)	50 units	400m	240m	400m <sup>2</sup>	3,600m <sup>2</sup>	20m from activity Zone	About 5 types of play equipment with small games area

30) The recommended areas and walking distances for LAPs and LEAPs are summarised in the diagram above. A development large enough to require the provision of a LEAP will also need several LAPs.

31) All play equipment and surfacing should meet the relevant safety standards.

### Children With Special Needs

32) Children with special needs (physical disabilities and learning difficulties) may require specialised and supervised facilities for play. Any access suitable for wheelchairs should continue

to provide chicanes and other safety devices to prevent children from running into danger zones. A playground should have at least one item of play equipment suitable for children with special mobility needs. Within the overall provision for a neighbourhood, the items selected for each separate play area should vary. Wherever possible, play opportunities should also be provided for children with visual or hearing impairments.

33) In assessing the need for children's playing space in residential developments, it should be remembered that there are categories of housing which may never accommodate children, for example, sheltered housing. However, it should not be assumed that children will never be housed in single-person accommodation.

The diagrams on the following page illustrate the appropriate design and location of children's playing spaces.