

Quality Standards for Outdoor Play Design Procedure Note

1 General Design Principles

All new play areas should accord with the principles of *Design for Play* and specifically the following:

1. **Local Features** Identify site features that can be built into the design - use knowledge of local area and its history
2. **Locate** where children would play naturally, where they feel safe - *a place to see and to be seen in*
- 3 Make use of **natural elements**: mounds and hollows, planting, rocks, logs trees
- 4 Create as much **play value** as possible for all ages and abilities – in a non prescriptive manner, stimulating all five senses
- 5 Ensure **community engagement** in design and management. Allow the community to help it develop and have an input into management operations
- 6 Offer children **challenge** and opportunities to stretch themselves

2 Design Procedure

New projects should accord with this **Play Space Design Cycle**.

1 Preparation

Before a design brief is prepared

- Evaluate local context
 - How does the proposal fit in with existing provision and use? - strengths and weaknesses
 - How accessible is the site?
- Engage everyone with an interest and plan their involvement throughout
- Priorities - what is main aim, what sort of space is proposed
- The design team - decide what skills you need - involve a designer and the recreation manager see *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit* (<http://www.playengland.org.uk>)

2 Design

Good project management is critical:

- Develop a clear **design brief** - a statement about what the design is to achieve - see Appendix 1

- The involvement of a suitably experienced designer is integral to creating good quality play spaces and is something to which all schemes should aspire - see Appendix 2
- Aim to find ways to help people involved to go beyond the limits of their experience
- Consider environmental and sustainability issues.
- Ensure that one suitable person directs the project and has the role of commissioner
- The role of community members is to advise and inform the design process, by developing the design brief. They are temporary custodians of the play space and represent users both today and of the future

3 Construction

- Keep local people informed of progress on site, especially the completion dates and any delays

4 Use

- Celebrate the opening of the play space by involving well-known local people to help raise the profile of the project
- After completion ensure that any vandalism is dealt with promptly
- Animating the play space with organised events and activities to help maintain contact with the local community and users

5 Maintain

- A good standard of maintenance is essential to long-term sustainability of play areas. The City Council has a well established system in place for this which will ensure that options and costs are analysed at the outset and that sufficient resources will be available for maintenance. This will include litter collection, regular inspections for hazards and the need for replacement as well as general ground operations.

6 Review

- After six or nine months when the novelty has diminished - carry out a review to provide intelligence about the process and to allow for the possibility of re-configuring elements of the design.

In Stirling a team of 'roving reporters', including children of various ages, is led by the play designer. The team usually works in family groups and adopts an experiential approach to the site – based on using the site. Observation of the team at play is combined with their written reports to develop a detailed understanding of users' needs. This methodology could be reproduced in Peterborough

Appendix 1: Design Brief template from Design for Play 2008

A template for a design brief is set out below showing the sort of information it might contain. Not everything in the template will be appropriate to all projects and careful thought and planning are essential before the brief is drawn up. A design brief as comprehensive as the full template is more likely to be appropriate for larger-scale projects or even destination play spaces; smaller-scale projects may only require a smaller amount of key information.

1. Project data

Site location

Site history

Landowner

Client

Site plan should show the aspect, and contain information on services present on site (such as electricity, gas, CCTV)

2. Site usage

Age groups

Are there particular age groups which predominate in the area? Or a particular age group that is a high priority as they may not currently be catered for? Remember that the best play spaces are not prescriptive about age.

Social issues

For example: might the site be prone to vandalism, or is it next to a children's centre.

Consultation

Include details of consultation undertaken to date or information on events still to be held.

3. Site features of particular note to be aware of, for example:

Opportunities: topography; vegetation; natural water bodies.

Constraints: traffic; site access; adjacent railway line; busy roads.

4. Design principles

Specific design principles for the project should refer to the 10 design principles in this guide, but may also expand on the key aims and aspirations for the play space, including for example, layout, use of materials, surfacing, equipment, and topography.

5. Sketch layout and photos

Include a sketch plan drawn to scale showing initial ideas for the layout of the space, if this

has been prepared. The plan should indicate the site boundary, key features and access on the

site. Photos should be included to illustrate these from all sides.

6. Submission requirements

Set out the process for selecting the contractor/designer/manufacture. Smaller schemes will be likely to require a single stage process whereas more complex, larger-budget schemes may need a two stage selection process.

Outline what should form part of the submission.

7. Selection criteria

Outline the selection criteria. Include the ability of the proposal to meet the key aims for the space, the 10 design principles, and play values and quality of setting as key considerations.

8. Budget

State what the budget is for design, consultation, construction and follow-up.

9. Timetable

Indicate the intended timetable for the selection process.

Appendix 2 Role of Designer from Design for Play 2008

The role of the designer is to lead the design process, working in partnership with the client, community and other stakeholders. Their range of tasks will vary, but could include some or all of the following:

- helping the community realise their aspirations;
- identifying the ‘sense of place’ for the particular location;
- opening people’s eyes to opportunities beyond their everyday experience;
- acting as a source of specialist knowledge on technical issues;
- preparing contract documentation;
- looking after the implementation of the contract on site.