



Ipswich Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Provision and Maintenance of Children's Play Space



IPSWICH

**BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council aims to ensure that an adequate provision of play areas distributed across the town exists in such a way as to satisfy the needs of local communities. This aim will be achieved through the retention and improvement of existing play areas, the provision of new play areas through Local Plan proposals and the requirements of self contained housing proposals. This Guidance sets out the standards that play areas proposed as part of housing developments will be expected to meet.

1.2 This Guidance has been produced to illustrate the Council's specifications for the provision and maintenance of children's play areas. They are applicable to all existing play areas and new play areas to be provided as part of new developments by the Council, housing associations and private developers.

1.3 The Guidance sets out the operation of the Council's Play Strategy which is embodied in the adopted Ipswich Local Plan (November 1997). It provides supplementary planning guidance (SPG) to policies RL12 and RL13 of the Plan which deal with the provision and maintenance of children's play areas in new developments of 15 or more dwellings (see Appendix 1).

1.4 This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Council's adopted SPG on Public Open Space (August 1998), which includes requirements for informal and amenity open space as part of new residential developments. Areas set aside as Children's Play Areas will be included as meeting part of the overall informal / amenity open space requirements of residential schemes.

1.5 In exceptional circumstances, developers may be given the option of making a financial contribution (commuted payment) towards the provision and maintenance of necessary play areas or facilities off-site.

1.6 Proposals for play areas (either on-site or through commuted payments) will normally be required for renewal of planning permission including permissions granted prior to the introduction of this Guidance.

1.7 In order to attract maximum use of play areas with the minimum disturbance to nearby residents the Council will, where possible, help identify sites that can be used, improved or acquired to serve each Neighbourhood within the Town.

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2.1 Play is essential to the development of each and every child. It provides the mechanism for children to explore the world around them and the medium through which skills are developed and practised.

2.2 According to the 1991 Census of Population, there are 24,410 children aged between 0 and 15 living in the Borough - over one fifth of the total population. It is important that there are appropriate play areas within the Town to meet their needs.

2.3 There are 46 play areas throughout Ipswich situated in various locations; inside public parks, on housing estates and other land. These play areas cater primarily for the needs of children up to 10 years of age. Existing play areas include formal areas with swings, slides and other equipment and informal space either on open land or set amongst trees. Although there is an even distribution of play areas throughout the Town, accessibility to existing facilities is poor. The Council is committed to maintaining and improving all types of play areas which is reflected in recent decisions to invest in play equipment provision catering for older children.

2.4 Standards of provision have been based on an assessment of local needs. Surveys of Neighbourhoods have been carried out to establish the existing quality and amount of play provision, i.e. space and equipment. Details of this assessment is outlined in the Council's Play Strategy (March 1994).

2.5 This methodology has provided invaluable information to determine which Neighbourhoods should take priority for future play area provision and which existing play facilities need to be improved.

2. THE ASSESSMENT

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3. THE METHODOLOGY

3.1 The key element in judging the adequacy of play provision is the time a child takes to reach it. This Guidance sets out the minimum amount of children's play space which should be provided within a certain walking time of a child's home. The methodology is based upon the estimated time it takes children to walk to a play area without having to cross barriers to access it such as main roads (Local Distributor Roads and Major Access Roads), rivers or railway lines. The Council's aim is to provide sufficient play areas for children of all ages in locations which reduce the need to cross busy roads.

3.2 The Guidance requires the provision of different types of play areas for a range of age groups which are appropriate for their needs. Most frequent and therefore closest to home are small areas for young children. Less frequent and more likely to be further away are larger well equipped play areas for older children.

3.3 All houses should be within the safe prescribed walking time of each type of play area. Three categories of play area are outlined in this Guidance which is derived from the NPFA's 'Six Acre Standard - Minimum Standards For Outdoor Playing Space' (1993). These are:-

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

3.4 A summary table is included at the end of the document for convenience highlighting the requirements for children's play space from new housing developments.

4. THE STANDARDS

Local Areas For Play (LAPs)

4.1 These are small areas of open space specifically designated for young children for play activities close to where they live. LAPs should normally be provided within developments of 15 or more homes (see Section 7 for exceptions to this requirement). Due to the supervised nature of play that LAPs are intended to provide, they should be located in visually prominent locations such as being overlooked by adjacent properties. Backland locations should be avoided.

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- Location:** Within 1 minutes walking time of home taking into account barriers to access (this equates to approximately 100 metres pedestrian distance or 60 metres straight line distance). LAPs should be located in visually prominent positions.
- Target Users:** LAPs should cater mainly for 4-6 year olds, although they would also attract other children in slightly older and younger age groups. LAPs should also be suitable for children with disabilities.
- Content:** LAPs should be appropriate for low-key games such as tag and hopscotch and should be signposted with eye-catching visual devices. At least three items of play equipment should be provided. The following range sets out examples of suitable equipment for inclusion within a LAP :-
- Kompan Capricorn
 - Kompan Taurus
 - Kompan Daffodil
 - Kompan Crazy Daisy
 - Kompan Buttons and Bows
 - Kompan Round Table
 - Kompan Ticktock
 - Kompan Push Me, Pull Me
- LAPs should have seating for carers and be fenced (see later section on fencing). In addition, a sign should be installed stating that the play area is intended for use by children of six years of age and under.
- Site:** Such areas need to be reasonably flat and be well drained with surface treatment to be agreed with the Local Authority.
- Safety:** 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 water courses and electricity cables. They should be located to allow informal supervision, for example, by being overlooked by nearby houses or from well used pedestrian routes.

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Size: To minimise disturbance to neighbours, LAPs need to be made up of two zones- an Activity Zone and a Buffer Zone.

Activity Zone - 100 sq. metres

Buffer Zone - This should be sufficient to minimise audible and visual intrusion to adjacent residents. A minimum of 5 metres should exist between the edge of the Activity Zone and ground floor windows in full view of the Activity Zone. The Buffer Zone may include footpaths, planted areas and private gardens.

Local Equipped Areas For Play (LEAPs)

4.2 A LEAP is an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age. Housing developments of 50 or more units not within the appropriate walking distance of an existing equipped play area will normally require a LEAP.

Location: LEAPs should be close enough to be within 5 minutes walking time of home taking into account barriers to access (400 metres pedestrian distance or 240 metres straight line distance).

Target Users: LEAPs should cater mainly for accompanied children aged between 4 and 8 years, although consideration should also be given to the needs of supervised children up to 4 years of age and unaccompanied children slightly older than 8. LEAPs should also be suitable for children with disabilities.

Content: LEAPs should offer at least 5 types of play equipment. They should also have a litter bin, seating for accompanying adults, be well located and have secure parking for children's bicycles.

Play equipment could include :- swings, slide, balance beam, sandbox (where loose fill surfacing is used), multi-seesaw, playhouse, and climbing frame.

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- Site:** Areas need to be well drained with surfacing to be agreed with the Local Authority.
- Safety:** Play equipment and surfacing should comply with the relevant British Standards. Adequate safety measures should be provided to minimise the risk of road-related accidents and potential dangers from nearby water courses, electricity cables and railway lines. They should be located to allow informal supervision, for example, by being overlooked by nearby houses or from well used pedestrian routes.
- Size:**
- Activity Zone - 400 sq. metres
 - Buffer Zone - This should be sufficient to allow a minimum distance of 20 metres between the edge of the Activity Zone and the ground floor windows of properties in full view of the Activity Zone, to take into account possible disturbance to nearby residents. The Buffer Zone can include footpaths, planted areas and private gardens. If housing surrounds the LEAP on all sides, the total area including Buffer Zone amounts to 3600 sq. metres (0.9 acres).

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs)

4.3 A NEAP is an unsupervised site serving a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children, but with opportunities for play for younger children. NEAPs will normally be required for developments of 500 or more dwellings. A NEAP should be provided by the developer, another body responsible for the overall community area, or associated with an area of major open space which has been established as part of a comprehensive development, and provided as part of that development.

- Location:** Within 15 minutes walking time of home taking into account barriers to access (1000 metres pedestrian distance or 600 metres straight line distance).

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- Target Users:** NEAPs should mainly cater for unaccompanied and unsupervised children between 8 and 14, with consideration for slightly younger supervised or accompanied children, older children and children with disabilities.
- Content:** NEAPs should offer a minimum of 8 types of play equipment appropriate for the age group. Within the NEAP there should also be a kickabout area, facilities for skateboarding, roller skating or bicycles, and seating for accompanying adults and for teenagers to use as a meeting place.
- Play equipment could include :- hexagonal swings, maypole, cross scales, swaying bridge, small cableway, embankment slide, modular items of equipment, a climbing net; hip hopper, spironette and 5 star circus for ages 10 and above, and other more adventurous items of equipment.
- Site:** Such areas need to be well landscaped and planted and provide secure cycle parking facilities.
- Safety:** Play equipment and surfacing should comply with the relevant British Standards. Adequate safety measures such as pedestrian barriers should be provided to minimise the risk of road related accidents. Consideration should be given to any potential dangers from nearby electricity cables or railway lines, and the possible attraction and dangers of water courses.
- Size:** Activity Zone - 1000 sq. metres.
- Buffer Zone - This should be sufficient to allow a minimum distance of 30 metres between the edge of the Activity Zone and the ground floor windows of properties in full view of the Activity Zone in order to take account of possible disturbances to adjacent residents. If housing surrounds the NEAP on all sides, the total area will amount to 8400 sq. metres (approx. 2 acres).

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5.1 Location/ Siting

5. DESIGN CRITERIA

5.1.1 The following general principles should be taken into consideration when designing play areas. Play areas must be:-

- Within easy walking distance of home, as set out above;
- An integral part of a footpath system which is of adoptable standard;
- In full view and integrated into a development so as to acknowledge that play is an important aspect of community life;
- Away from situations where it may cause undue nuisance; e.g. to neighbouring properties;
- Easily accessible for maintenance purposes (access to grassed areas under 300 square metres should be at least 1200 mm wide; above 300 square metres at least 1800 mm wide.

5.2 Layout

5.2.1 An accurate plan of the proposed play area should be drawn to a scale of 1:200 or greater (to be determined by the Council). The layout should provide for:-

- A sense of enclosure for the users without isolating the play space or hiding it from view. This can be achieved through earth mounding, planting or low fencing;
- Sensitive landscape treatment will provide a rich environment conducive towards the child's physical, social and psychological development. Effort should be made to preserve existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and changes in ground level;

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- The play environment should be designed to take into account the safety of children. This includes points of entry into the play area and the circulation of children around items of play equipment (where applicable). Particular attention should be paid to the recommendations made in BS.5696;
- Access for people with disabilities.

5.3 Equipment

5.3.1 All play equipment should be manufactured and installed to either British Standard BS.5696 or the German DIN.7926. Paint must have the lowest lead content possible and not exceed 0.25% in the dry film.

5.3.2 The type and siting of play equipment must be to the Council's approval. The following recommendations offer guidance for developers:-

- Each LEAP/ NEAP should contain at least one item of play equipment for every 80 square metres of play space.
- The selected equipment should cater for a range of physical experiences including climbing, rocking, sliding, swinging and balancing. Play areas intended for older children may also include play equipment of a more adventurous type.
- Consideration should be given to the use of equipment by disabled children.
- Seating and litter bins should be provided in appropriate locations.
- Cycle racks should normally be provided within LEAPs and NEAPs.

5.4 Surfacing

- A variety of materials are acceptable within play areas according to their intended use.

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- An impact absorbing surface (IAS) is the preferred surface to be used for the minimum use zone of any play equipment from which a fall is possible. The Council will offer advice on the choice of appropriate surfaces within the activity zone of play areas.
- A smooth firm surface should be provided at all access points and leading to and around seating.

5.5 Fencing

- All play areas should be fenced to exclude dogs.
- Fencing should be robustly designed and normally constructed to a minimum height of 1200 mm, but not so high as to prevent supervision. This is particularly important when considering the design of LAPs.
- Particular attention should be given to the means of access in order to exclude dogs, yet facilitate entry by children, buggies, wheelchairs and bicycles (where appropriate) e.g. through using some form of self-closing gate.
- If the entry gate is to be positioned near to a roadway, a highway specification barrier will need to be installed in front of the gateway to prevent children running out from the play area directly onto the road.

5.6 Planting

- Tree and shrub planting should be used in association with ground modelling and fencing to provide a strong framework to the play area.
- All planting should be of a robust nature to withstand heavy use and be planted in bold groups. Poisonous species must be avoided.
- Careful choice of plants will not only give year round aesthetic appeal to stimulate the senses of sight, hearing and smell, but can also attract wildlife to the area which is an added benefit for children.

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- Shrub planting in LAPs should not normally exceed a general height of 1200 mm.
- Soft landscaping will be required to the interior boundaries of LAPs of at least 1 metre in width (dependant on the proximity to houses).
- A grass area or play lawn should normally be incorporated in each LEAP and NEAP of sufficient size to allow casual ball games.

5.7 Safety and Legislation

5.7.1 The British Standard BS.5696 comprises of 3 parts:-

- Part 1 is concerned with the methods of testing for items of equipment.
- Part 2 covers the specification for construction and performance and relates to the manufacturer.
- Part 3 relates to installation and maintenance.

5.7.2 All aspects of the British Standard will be applied.

6. LARGER HOUSING SCHEMES

6.1 The main consideration in the location and number of play areas required by new developments is their accessibility to existing and proposed facilities. For example, by rigidly interpreting the guidelines numerically, a development of 150 dwellings could be required to provide 10 LAPs and 3 LEAPS. However, if the play needs of the children living within the new estate are taken into account in the early stages of design, the number of play facilities can be radically reduced without compromising accessibility standards.

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6.2 Appendix 4 illustrates good play area design and incorporates -

- distinctive estate identity;
- some play opportunity within private gardens;
- varied play opportunities within walking distance of homes for all age groups;
- safe access to play facilities;
- security features designed into access routes and play facilities;
- clear distinction between areas serving cars, and cars and pedestrians; and
- opportunities for incorporating landscaping within play areas.

7.1 Adjacent housing developments may already have community provision of facilities to help cater for the overall needs of the area (i.e. the proposed development lies within the appropriate time dimension of an existing play area), and the developer may not need to meet the full requirements of this SPG.

7.2 Likewise, there are categories of housing which may never accommodate children, and where no play provision is necessary. Examples include sheltered housing, nursing homes, or certain types of hostel accommodation where the occupancy is controlled.

7.3 It should not be assumed that children will never be housed in single-person accommodation as parents often do bring up children in this type of housing. Proposals for single person accommodation, including flats will normally be expected to meet the Standards.

Town Centre Housing and Brownfield Housing Sites

7.4 It is accepted that on occasions the demands for developer contributions will be greater than the development is able to bear, and for that development to go ahead, some degree of prioritisation will be necessary. For example, there may be an overriding objective to regenerate an area (such as key Town Centre sites and Ipswich Waterfront) where play area provision, on top of other costs may be unacceptable if a housing development is to proceed.

7.5 In these circumstances the Local Planning Authority will make the final decision on what standard of play facilities are required by the development. This mechanism will allow for a more objective assessment of the need for play area provision within a development against other competing requirements, such as education contributions, archaeological evaluation and remediation works.

7. EXCEPTIONS TO THE MINIMUM STANDARDS.

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8. FUNDING FOR PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE

8.1 Local Plan policy RL12 requires that provision for children's play should normally be made in residential developments of 15 or more dwellings (Appendix 1). Conditions may be attached to planning permissions regarding the provision of play areas. Renewals of planning permissions should also provide for play facilities where appropriate.

8.2 There may be circumstances where it is not possible to provide a play area within a proposed development (such as site topography). In these situations the Council will normally expect an alternative play area to be provided, or in the case of the development lying within the catchment of an existing play area, a contribution towards the upgrading of existing facilities may be considered appropriate.

8.3 In exceptional circumstances a developer can commute the responsibility of providing play areas and their future maintenance to the Council in the form of a capital payment, secured through a planning obligation agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in accordance with Circular 1/97. Further information for developers on planning obligations is contained in the draft Guidance Note 'Supplementary Planning Guidance Relating to Section 106 Agreements' (September 1998), which is intended to be adopted by all Suffolk Planning Authorities. Play areas initiated through the commuted payment scheme will normally be provided in the local area (usually within the same residential neighbourhood). Payments will always be used to benefit the new development.

8.4 The commuted payment option will be applied by the Council on a discretionary basis and will be dependant on the level of existing provision and priorities established by the Council.

8.5 General principles of the commuted payment scheme are:-

- Early consultation should be made with the Council to establish whether the commuted payment option will apply.
- Where developers make provision for play areas on site, this will still attract commuted payment for maintenance if the developer wishes the Council to adopt the play area.
- The size of the play area should meet the Council's Standards referred to above.

Appendix 1

Relevant Local Plan Policies

- The commuted payment will be based upon the potential requirement of play space generated by the development and its future maintenance.
- Provision will not normally be required for developments of less than 15 dwellings except where the site forms part of a larger development area or a phased development of over 15 homes in total.

8.6 The planning obligation agreement will be entered into before planning permission is granted and the payment will be made in full once the first dwelling in the scheme is occupied. The agreement will require the payment to be held by the Council to be used to provide or upgrade play facilities in Ipswich. The payment will be used in the same (or adjacent) Neighbourhood as the development, according to priorities identified by the Council.

8.7 The provision of facilities will be made within an agreed timescale between the developer and the Council. This timescale will form part of the Section 106 agreement. The agreement will include a clause that if the facilities are not provided within the agreed timescale, the commuted payment will be paid back with interest to the developer.

8.8 The calculation of the costs of provision, of laying out equipment and maintaining play areas will be updated annually to take account of inflation and to reflect fluctuations in land values.

Maintenance of Play Areas

8.9 The Council will need to ensure at planning application stage that proper provision is made for the on-going maintenance of play areas. The principles to be pursued are :-

- high standards of maintenance must be ensured, so that the facility remains attractive to its intended use and is not allowed to deteriorate over the years;
- replacement play equipment should be provided for as necessary;
- supervision/monitoring by a responsible body should be available;
- play areas should be managed so that they are available for all likely users, rather than the occupiers of specific dwellings.

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8.10 The Council is prepared to adopt play areas, providing they are designed and implemented to the standards set out in this Guidance note. An appropriate maintenance payment (normally for 15 years) will be sought from the developer and secured through a planning obligation agreement. Alternative arrangements for adoption of play areas will only be allowed where all of the above issues are adequately addressed. In the Council's experience, play areas which have not been adopted by the Council tend to fall into disuse through neglect, and become prone to vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

8.11 The current commuted sums for maintenance of play areas is as follows :-

Local Areas for Play (LAP)	£ 16,634
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	£ 29,112
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	£ 69,869

8.12 The current commuted sums for construction of play areas by the Council are :-

Local Areas for Play	£20,000
Local Equipped Areas for Play	£40,000
Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play	£135,000

8.13 The above figures will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Appendix 1

Relevant Local Plan Policies

The following is an extract from the Ipswich Local Plan (November 1997):-

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) in their document 'The Six Acre Standard Minimum Standards for Outdoor Playing Space (1993)' recommends that local authorities should aim for between 0.6 and 0.8 hectares (1.5 - 2.0 acres) of children's play space per 1,000 population. This ratio is based on the total population figure and not the number of children. The NPFA recommendations relate the location of areas for children's play to the walking time from a child's home. When new play areas are being made to serve new development or established residential areas the Council will wherever possible follow the NPFA guidelines as to the accessibility of play areas to children of different ages and the facilities the play areas should provide. Although the current level of provision in Ipswich is far below this target, the Council will continue to improve the overall level of provision when opportunities arise.

Proposals for residential developments of 15 homes or more will normally be expected to provide children's play areas in accordance with the Council's standards. Exceptions to this requirement may be made where it is apparent that there is already adequate play space accessible to children who will be living on the site or if the development is for dwellings unlikely ever to be occupied by families with children. Where provision of the necessary play space cannot be made on site, a commuted payment may be expected towards the provision of play space in the locality to serve the needs of the development. Such commuted payments could go towards the laying out of new or the improvement of existing open spaces. In appropriate circumstances the Council may seek to negotiate for commuted sums for the maintenance of play areas through planning obligation agreements. Further guidance on the provision of play areas is contained within the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance.

*Appendix 1***Relevant Local Plan Policies**

- RL12** **Proposals for residential development on sites of fifteen or more homes will normally be required to provide for a children's play area in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance. On sites where the provision of usable recreational open space is not practicable the developer may be expected to provide for a comparable recreational facility elsewhere secured as part of a planning obligation agreement.**
- RL13** **Where the Council agrees to adopt a play area, it must first be laid out in accordance with the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for play areas.**

Appendix 2

Bibliography

PPG 17 Sport and Recreation (September 1992)

The Six Acre Standard - Minimum Standards For Outdoor Playing Space,
(NPPA 1993)

Play Area Survey (Ipswich Borough Council, 1992)

Draft Guidelines For The Provision And Management Of Equipped Play Areas
(Ipswich Borough Council, 1993)

Play Area Analysis (Ipswich Borough Council, January 1994)

Towards A Play Strategy For Ipswich (Ipswich Borough Council, March 1994)

Play Policy For Ipswich (Draft) (Ipswich Borough Council, September 1994)

Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance Relating to Section 106 Agreements
(Suffolk Planning Authorities, September 1998)

Appendix 3

Summary of Children’s Playing Space Standards

Facility	Provision Required*	Walking distance/ Straight line distance	Time	Activity Zone	Total including Buffer Zone	Nearest Home (Property boundary)	Play Area Characteristics
LAP Local Area for Play	usually 1 per 15 dwellings	100 metres/ 60 metres	1 minute	100 sq. metres	400 sq. metres (0.04 hectares)	ground floor windows 5 metres from activity zone	low key games area with 3 types of play equipment
LEAP Locally Equipped Area for Play	usually 1 per 50 dwellings	400 metres/ 240 metres	5 minutes	400 sq. metres	3,600 sq. metres (0.36 hectares)	20 metres from activity zone	5 types of play equipment and small games area
NEAP Neighbourhood Equipped Area	usually 1 per 500 dwellings	1,000 metres/ 600 metres	15 minutes	1000 sq. metres	8,500 sq. metres (0.85 hectares)	30 metres from activity zone	8 types of play equipment kickabout area and cycle play opportunities

* It should be emphasised that the overriding factor in the location and number of play facilities required from a development is accessibility.

Appendix 4

