

Isle of Wight Council

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Open Space Provision in Residential Developments



August 2004

This is one of a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents. The Isle of Wight Council adopted this guide August 2004, following public consultation. It is published by the Isle of Wight Council, Directorate of Environment Services.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance is to set out and explain the Council's requirement for public outdoor playing space in new residential development as detailed in Policy L10 of the Unitary Development Plan. It gives detailed advice on the type and level of outdoor playing space required, its design and location, as well as how the outdoor playing space provision and maintenance will be financed.
- 1.2 However the guidance has been prepared in consultation with the public and is the subject of a Council resolution, which means that weight can be attached to them in the development control process.

UDP Policy

L10

2 National Planning Policy

- 2.1 The Government attaches great importance to sport and recreation by encouraging the provision of a wide range of opportunities for recreation. Planning Policy Guidance 3: Housing and Planning Policy Guidance 17: Sport and Recreation, give support to the provision of adequate open space and play areas to serve new housing developments.

3 Other Advice

- 3.1 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) in its Guidelines entitled 'The Six Acre Standard' recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.4ha. (6 acres) per 1,000 population. This recommended minimum standard broadly equates to:

Outdoor Sport

1.6ha - 1.8ha. (4 acres - 4.5 acres) per 1000 population

Children's Playing Space

0.6ha - 0.8ha. (1.5 acres - 2 acres) per 1000 population.

- 3.2 These figures have been widely recognised by local authorities as an acceptable standard for open space provision to serve new developments.
- 3.3 The Council's requirement follows the NPFA Standard and uses the average household size of 2.24 (Census 2001) persons, which equates to a requirement of 50 square metres per dwelling. That is 35 square metres of informal play area and 15 square metres of children's play area (to be fully equipped).

4 Unitary Development Plan Policy

L10 - Housing developments will be permitted if they contribute towards the provision of:

*a open space in the area to the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standards;
b general amenity space as part of the scheme.*

- 4.1 A distinction needs to be drawn between public open space for outdoor play and landscaped amenity areas. Policy L10 of the UDP deals only with public outdoor playing space in residential development. There is, however, an additional need to provide amenity space within residential estates as supported by Planning Policy Guidance 1: General Policy and Principles, where layout and landscaping are listed as being material considerations, and PPG17, which deals specifically with recreation.
- 4.2 Also of great importance is the appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings. Developers will therefore, where relevant, be expected to integrate both play and amenity space within housing schemes all linked by attractive and safe footways and cycleways. Natural surveillance is an important issue for any area of open space, and can be achieved by careful design (e.g. ensuring that at least two boundaries of the open space are fronted by dwellings).

5 Outdoor Play Space within Residential Areas

- 5.1 Preliminary discussions between Council officers and owners and/or developers are likely to reveal whether a particular site will require the inclusion of outdoor playing space and/or equipped play space. These discussions will be based on evidence provided by the Open Space Audit. It should be noted that not all planning applications for residential development would require the provision of

¹ The Open Space Audit is currently being produced.

or a contribution towards children's play facilities. For instance, it would be unreasonable to request such facilities in connection with a sheltered housing scheme when landscaped amenity areas would be more appropriate.

6 Type of Outdoor Play Space Required

- 6.1 The NPFA standards set for sport and recreation are an absolute minimum and are to be regarded as the very basic level of provision. This being the case developers will be expected to provide open space at a level above the minimum standard of 50 square metres per dwelling. Whilst outdoor play has been a long time favourite for children of all ages research has established that children tend to spend relatively short periods of time at individual play areas and prefer to have a diversity of places to play close to home.
- 6.2 Within new residential estates, depending on the size of the development, the areas set aside for outdoor play should provide for general play spaces and/or equipped areas for play.
- 6.3 General play space is defined as a small area of unsupervised open space within 1 minute walking distance of home specifically designated for young children for play activities. They would cater mainly for 4-6

year olds, although they would attract other children in slightly older or younger age groups.

- 6.4 An equipped play area is an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age. These play areas should be close enough to be within 5 minutes walking time of home and should cater mainly for accompanied children aged 4 – 8 although consideration should also be given to the needs of supervised children from birth to 4 years and unaccompanied children slightly older than 8. They may also be suitable for children with special needs.
- 6.5 On larger developments the open space provision will therefore be required to cater for a mix of uses to include equipment and casual playgrounds for children (to include kickabout areas). It is unlikely that formal facilities for youths and adults will be provided within housing developments. The outdoor play areas will, however normally be accommodated within the new residential estates, the intention being to create a housing area where children living there can find opportunities to play, socialise and develop their physical skills in a safe environment. It is more likely that facilities for youths and adults will be provided for within an existing or proposed local authority sports ground in the local area.
- 6.6 Even where limited play space has been provided on site there may still be a requirement to provide facilities for youths and adults off site.
- 6.7 The amenity and landscaped areas within a development site, buffer zones adjacent to play areas, highway verges and private landscaping and planting are not counted as part of the outdoor playing space.

7 Play Equipment Required

- 7.1 The number of play areas required will vary according to the number of dwellings.
- 7.2 The following table should therefore be used only as a guide to assess the number likely to be required:

Number of dwellings	Minimum amount of outdoor playing space required (sq.m)	Proportionate figure for children's play (sq.m)
10-20	500-1000	150-300
21-40	1050-2000	315-600
41-80	2050-4000	615-1200
81-100	4050-5000	1215-1500
Over 101	5050+	1515+

8 Outdoor Play Space within the Site

- 8.1 In creating an estate suitable for children, developers must consider the pattern of streets, paths and open spaces from the child's viewpoint. An essential discipline is to consider any proposals from a child's viewpoint – the step size, handrail height, and possible visual obstructions are good examples. Additionally, if a site contains a major landscape feature (e.g. prominent tree or group of trees), they could be an area around which open space can be formed. Where possible, new areas of public open space should be chosen and managed to achieve their wildlife potential as well as their recreation potential. Thought should be given to siting open space areas so that the best wildlife habitats on the development site can be retained within and alongside the new open space.
- 8.2 Traffic and other safety hazards should also be identified, and potential problems, especially on routes used by children, should be considered. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of social safety, accessibility, play value, the setting, and good neighbourliness. It is important the selection of play area site/s is integrated into the whole design process and is not merely an afterthought. Sites should be accessible within the specified walking distance on practicable, not notional, routes. Children should not need to cross major hazards such as main roads, railways or waterways.
- 8.3 Play areas should be:
- sited in open, welcoming locations, not on backland with accesses along high-fenced narrow alleyways;
 - separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes;
 - sited on land suitable for the type of play opportunity intended. For example, slopes too steep for building may not be suitable for all types of play equipment. Conversely, a flat kickabout area can be too bland a setting for other types of equipment;
 - normally overlooked by houses or from well used pedestrian routes;
 - far enough away from houses to reduce the likelihood of general disturbance, noise and other nuisances – particularly to households without children;
 - be linked, as far as possible, with other open spaces, footpath systems, amenity planting areas and other devices to provide the maximum separation from nearby residences;
 - accessible by wide hard-surfaced footpaths.
 - Landscaped in such a way that growth habit will not interfere with natural surveillance.
 - Well-served by services such as dog bins.
 - Porous surfaces should be used to minimise run off to watercourses and groundwater from hard surfaces.
- 8.4 Detailed recommendations on play area design are given in NPFA publications, but it is worth stressing that:
- a wide range of play opportunities should be provided if possible. Playgrounds are for children, and not all need to be neatly “manicured”. There should be unobstructed open space to kick or throw a ball as well and natural opportunities for play in such areas as spinneys and wasteland where there is more opportunity for creative development;

- appropriate species of shrubs should be planted next to house and garden walls while high climbing equipment or equipment on mounds should be sited sensitively, well away from nearby windows. Very popular items of equipment should be sited as far away as possible from houses to help make play areas more acceptable to neighbours;
- Play areas should be designed in a way, which is attractive and safe for children, and meets their needs and of those living nearby.

9 Buffer Zones

- 9.1 A buffer zone is the area surrounding the activity zone (play area). It is provided to protect adjacent neighbourhoods from potential disturbance from the play facility.
- 9.2 To prevent problems with residents it is recommended for general play area that a minimum of 20 metres should exist between the edge of the activity zone and the ground floor windows of nearby houses. In respect of an equipped play area this is increased to a minimum distance of 30 metres.
- 9.3 A buffer zone can include footpaths and planted areas. Where the activity zone adjoins land where there is likely to be little impact on adjacent residents the buffer zone may be reduced or excluded altogether.

9.4 Design

- 9.5 Equipped play areas will be required to include a variety of items of play equipment together with safety surfacing. All must comply with the relevant European standards. At least one bench seat for accompanying adults together with a litterbin must be provided.
- 9.6 Fencing and a self-closing gate to prevent dogs from entering the area must enclose all equipped play areas.
- 9.7 The fencing will need to be to a minimum height of 750 mm but should not be so high as to prevent surveillance from outside the play area.

10 General Advice

- 10.1 As children over the age of 6 years may cause some disturbance to adjoining residents it is important to ensure that general play areas are designed so as to discourage their use by older children. Limiting their overall size, and reducing opportunities for activities for older children can achieve this. It is usually acknowledged that play areas are one of the last items to be laid out and installed on residential estates. Developers should therefore ensure that the location and type of play areas are clearly indicated on all public information site plans prior to display and/or distribution in order to avoid complaints from residents on first occupancy of the new dwellings. Developers should ensure that the proposed type of play area is established at an early stage in the design process and that it is clearly labeled on the drawings and clearly signed on site.

11 Calculation of Maintenance Finance and Commuted Payments

- 11.1 The calculation for land and equipment in terms of provision and finance will vary depending on the nature and size of the development concerned and on the following situations: -
- 11.2 In some cases Parish Councils may wish to enhance or extend an existing play area or may have a proposal in hand to create a play area. Under such circumstances it may be appropriate for developers to contribute towards an off site play area rather than create a play area within the development site.
- 11.3 For some of the larger villages and towns certain sites have been allocated for open space under Policy L4 of the Unitary Development Plan. As and when residential development is proposed in the vicinity of any such site contributions may be sought for the provision and maintenance of the allocated areas.
- 11.4 Developers will be expected to make provision for the future maintenance of outdoor playing space within or adjoining the proposed residential development over a limited period. It should be noted that there might additionally be a requirement to provide a commuted sum towards the maintenance of landscaped amenity areas. The cost of maintenance for landscaped amenity areas is based on the Council's current ground maintenance contract rate at the time of application.
- 11.5 Prior to the issue of a planning decision notice for residential development involving an approved open space scheme, a draft legal agreement (planning obligation) will be drawn up under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This draft agreement will be forwarded to the owner/developer or their nominated solicitor for comment/acceptance.
- 11.6 Details of the issues to be covered by the Section 106 Agreement are set out in the Council's guidance on Planning Gain.

12 Summary of Contacts

The Development Control Section is part of the Council's Planning Services Department, which is located at:

Seaclose Offices, Fairlee Road, Newport, Isle of Wight, and PO30 2QS Tel: (01983) 823552

The Planning Reception is open Monday – Thursday 08:30 – 17:00 and Friday 08:30 – 16:30. Planning Officers are available to give advice between the hours of 08:30-12:30 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

The Councils Building Control Section is also located at the address above.

The contract services team for the Parks and Beaches Section of the Council can be contacted at:

The Guildhall, High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1TY Tel: (01983) 823362

National Playing Fields Association

Head Office, Stanley House, St Chad's Place, London WC1X 9HH, Tel: 020 7833 5360, Fax: 020 7833 5365, Email: npfa@npfa.co.uk. <http://www.npfa.co.uk/>

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