



BCP Council
Plan for Play

Design Guide

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of the Design Guide

This guidance sets out Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council's expectations for the design of play spaces and wheeled activities located within green spaces and the wider public realm.

As well as informing the design of new housing development, this guidance is intended as a source of support to help positively shape existing facilities delivered through planning contributions and regeneration projects.

The Council wants new development to create great places to play for everyone who lives in the area. To do this, we need to achieve the highest quality of design that integrates successfully with the urban fabric and addresses the needs and aspirations of both existing and new communities.

BCP Council is committed to providing inclusive and accessible play environments that align with its Equality and Diversity Policy, ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive.^{1,2}

The design guide will embed child-friendly design principles and maximise opportunities for high-quality, accessible, safe and inclusive play and wheeled activities in the planning process.

¹ [Equality Act 2010](#)

² [BCP – Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

1.2 How to use this Document

The guide should be used as a point of reference and will be of material consideration in assessing planning applications. It aims to:

- guide how to comply with the policies in the local plan
- establish how much and what type of play space/wheeled activity provision is required
- explain the key principles which need to be considered during the design process
- establish expectations for materials and construction methods; and
- set out the requirements for the adoption process by BCP Council.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the **BCP Council Plan for Play: A Green Space Play and Wheeled Activity Strategy** and other planning guidance depending on the type and location of the development.

OUR VISION FOR PLAY IS

'To provide high quality, accessible, safe and inclusive play spaces, where everyone of all abilities, across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, can learn, have fun and be active through play.

All ages and abilities should feel safe, confident, and excited to use our play spaces as part of leading fulfilled lives with brighter futures.'

1.3 What is play and why does it matter?

Play is the way children interact with (and make sense of) the world: it is an innate desire to explore, socialise and have fun and involves a process of observing, testing, imitating, and enjoying the environment they are in and the people they are with. Play encompasses children's behaviour which is self-directed with the freedom to choose how and when they play, without agenda, set goals, or reward.

Play is fundamental to a child's healthy development. It supports their health and well-being and their social, physical, intellectual, cognitive, creative, and emotional growth.

Children have a right to play - Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), creates a specific right for all children to have rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.¹

In 2013 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published General Comment 17. This document clarifies the responsibilities of national governments with respect to Article 31 rights (including children's right to play).²

The General Comment states children should have:

- accessible space and time of play, free from adult control and management.
- space and opportunities to play outdoors unaccompanied in a diverse and challenging physical environment, with easy access to supportive adults when necessary.
- opportunities to experience and interact with play in natural environments
- opportunities to invest in their own space and time to create and transform their world, using their imagination and languages.²

Play happens everywhere

Play is not limited to designated play sites. It should be a natural part of our urban environment, including town centres, neighbourhoods, streets, roads, and green spaces. To support this, safe walking and cycling routes should allow children and young people to move freely without barriers. Developments should seek to create a child-friendly, accessible public realm overall.

The UN Convention defines a child as someone under 18 years. The Design Guide refers to "children and young people" without specific age ranges, recognizing that age does not solely influence how children play. It also includes anyone aged 18 and older who can benefit from playful activities.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

² [Microsoft Word - CRC-C-GC-17_en.doc \(cypcs.org.uk\)](https://www.cypcs.org.uk/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20CRC-C-GC-17_en.doc)



Above: Broadstone Recreation Ground, a community project in 2024 added new challenging play equipment for older children to the existing play space | © Dorsetmums

2 Policy and Play Provision

This chapter sets out play standards for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to assist in quantifying and qualifying new play space provision and improvements to existing facilities. The objective is to provide attractive, safe and inclusive play spaces for all children and young people accessible from their homes.

Proposals should be tailored to local characteristics, taking a comprehensive approach to understanding the specific needs, aspirations, and opportunities within BCP.

Typologies of play spaces and recommended standards are provided below.

2.1 BCP Local Plan Policy

The Local Plan states that new development must contribute to positive health outcomes by 'ensuring access to high-quality, inclusive open spaces and green infrastructure, including spaces for play and recreation that meet the needs of our communities' (Strategic Policy S3: Healthy Communities).

Relevant to this, new development is required to:

- support sustainable neighbourhoods where basic facilities and services can be easily accessed by walking and cycling.
- create welcoming and pleasant places with streets and buildings that help people of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and abilities, and
- ensure good-quality community facilities are provided to encourage

social connections and meet the needs of the local communities.

External space standards for flatted development require the provision of suitable-sized communal space that is designed and managed to enable children to play outside (Strategic Policy H4: Housing Internal and External Space Standards, 1.c.i).

2.2 Determining Requirements

Developers will be expected to consult with the planning department at an early stage for pre-application advice to ensure that development proposals meet specific local requirements for play and that play is well integrated into the new development and the surrounding area.

Local Plan Policy NE7 Open Space sets out a general requirement for 0.2ha/1000 population for play for children and young people, with an accessibility requirement of 400-600m (5-8 mins) walking distance.

Detailed requirements for play will be considered on a site-by-site basis in relation to local need and the recommendations and guidelines detailed in Table 2.1. This includes the type of play and recommended walking distances and quality standards.

Proposals are to be developed with reference to:

- a. the Green Space Play and Wheeled Activity Strategy
- b. a detailed needs assessment, should it be required by BCP Council

Table 2.1 Benchmark Standards

Typology	Benchmark Standards			
	Target User Group	Defined activity play space (minimum)	Buffer zone (minimum)	Guidelines for walking distance
<p>Doorstep Play Space / Play-on-the-Way feature As part of the on-site amenity space, a combined play facility or walking route aimed at young children within view of known adults.</p>	Up to 6 years old	100m ²	5m separation between activity zone and nearest property containing a dwelling	100m (2-3 minutes) walk for Doorstep Play
<p>Local Play Space A larger space that can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults; and for young children that can walk with ease with an adult.</p>	Up to 12 years old	400m ²	20m separation between activity sone and the habitable room façade of dwellings	400m (5 minutes) walk
<p>Neighbourhood Play Space A larger space or facility which children and young people used to travelling longer distances, can reach independently. A wider range of play experiences; including ball, skateboarding or performance space. Often located in a recreation ground with other facilities.</p>	All ages, but with a focus on older children	1000m ² of which 500m ² is hard standing	30m separation between activity sone and the habitable room façade of dwellings	1200m (15 minutes) walk
<p>Multi-play or Wheeled Activity Space A designed area suitable for a variety of recreational uses; often with ball games provision and wheeled play, such as skateboarding. Ideally, with performance space, fitness equipment, and social space. No formal supervision.</p>	All ages, but with a focus on older children.	200m ² +	30m separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling	1500m (20 minutes) walk
<p>*Destination Play Space A play offer located in a key site and or destination setting, often with a wider leisure and recreational experience. Attracts families and larger groups.</p>	All users but may have a particular focus group. Attracts visitors from further away.	Various	30m separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling	6km walk or 20 minutes bike ride

Based on and developed from The Fields in Trust Guidance 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the Size Acre Standard', Fields in Trust

! KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- a. BCP Council aims to provide larger high-quality play spaces and access to doorstep play instead of many small facilities which are typically underused and difficult to maintain.
- b. Innovative and imaginative approaches to play provision are encouraged and we welcome bespoke design as well as schemes that focus on natural play, where deemed appropriate.
- c. Off-site provision and CIL contributions for enhancing existing play are expected to be a suitable options for small developments. Improvement to existing play facilities and any necessary access improvements may be an alternative to the creation of new on/off-site provision and to accommodate the needs of both new and existing residents.
- d. Larger development proposals/urban extensions will be expected to make suitable on-site play provisions as set out in the allocation policy. Strategic opportunities to provide play spaces to serve more than one development, particularly in areas of major new development and regeneration, should be sought.
- e. The possibility of creating multifunctional spaces by integrating imaginatively amenities and play space into high-density housing and mixed-use development should be explored as part of creating more child-friendly neighbourhoods. This involves making different types of public realm more generally safe and 'playable', welcoming and enjoyable for children, their parents and carers as well as for young people. This approach is most suitable for doorstep play.
- f. Initiatives to encourage the multiple use of on-site or nearby social infrastructure, e.g., school facilities, should be sought.



Alexandra Park in Poole, a neighbourhood play area, with opportunities for play along the main path through the park.

2.3 BCP Play Typologies

2.3.1 Doorstep Playable Spaces and Play on the Way

Typical User Group: Up to 6 years

Doorstep Playable Space

The aim is to create accessible and inclusive play spaces for young children close to their homes for informal play. These areas are essential for encouraging independent mobility, building confidence, and fostering a sense of community by bringing neighbours together. Ultimately, these spaces should serve as inter-generational communal hubs.

Where: Spaces should be small green areas or surfaced areas part of the site amenity or nearby local green space, easily reachable without road crossings, ensuring natural supervision from nearby homes. In urban settings, these spaces can be integrated into shared streets, designed for temporary closures for organized play, creating 'Play Streets'.

Key Requirements:

- Located on a level access route
- Near homes for ease of informal observation and supervision
- Consist of a relatively level grass area or hard surfacing
- Contains features that allow children to identify and claim the space as theirs, such as stepping stones, play-sculpture, reading/storytelling chair, landform, planting, shared growing spaces
- Hard surfacing with markings that encourage games, such as snakes and ladders and hopscotch
- Comfortable seating for caregivers.

Additional Resources:

The charity 'Playing Out' provides useful information on organising play sessions in residential streets playingout.net/

[Trends in children's Street Play](#), Play England



Above left: South Gardens, Elephant Park, London, play on the way.

Above right: Goldsmith Street, Doorstep play within an accessible communal space that is well-overlooked | © Tim Crocker



Above: Play Streets or 'playing out' sessions are informal neighbour-led short road closures, creating a safe space for children to play freely together on their doorstep. | © Playing Out

Play on the Way

Public spaces, including streets, pavements, and various forms of communal open areas, have great potential to serve as spaces for play. With good design, these spaces can be multifunctional, offering a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for users of all ages while also being engaging and playful. They can provide quiet spots for relaxation as well as family-friendly, sociable environments for meeting and being active.

Active travel routes provide great opportunities to integrate feature that can transform the journey into a playful experience.

Incidental and natural play features, along with "playful routes" in our semi-natural and natural greenspaces—such as woodlands, meadows, and river corridors—encourages young visitors to interact with the natural world around them.



Originally a busy street, the area has been redesigned as a child-friendly space that prioritizes pedestrians and cyclists while providing plenty of seating, planting, and a play trail. (Alfred Place Gardens, London)



Story telling chair and a sculpture trail help children to connect with nature (Stanpit Marsh Nature Reserve, Christchurch)



Sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) features can integrate stepping stones and playable landforms (Hunger Hill, Poole)



Communal food growing areas – watering, digging and planting all helps to discover and learn about the life cycle of plants and soils playfully.



A pond dipping platform provides great opportunities to explore nature in a playful way (Kingfisher Barn Nature Reserve, Bournemouth)

2.3.2 Local Play Space

Typical User Group: Up to 12 years

The aim is to provide a diverse range of play opportunities that cater to younger children, accompanied by adults, and older children who are gaining independence. This will be achieved by combining fixed equipment and natural play features.

Where: Local play spaces should be easily accessible, ideally along walking routes to schools or within recreational green spaces. Additionally, these areas should have some natural surveillance from nearby homes for safety.

Key Requirements:

- The play space must accommodate various children's abilities, offering appropriate challenges for each age group.
- The Council expects equipped play areas to be well-integrated with broader

play opportunities linking to the natural environment.

- The equipped area should be at least 400m² and include a sufficient variety of equipment to provide diverse activities. Its design should encourage all forms of play.
- Careful consideration must be given to how different equipment is grouped to minimize conflicts among users of varying abilities. A zoning approach is recommended, as it decreases potential conflicts, introduces varying levels of challenge, fosters peer learning, and allows for supervision across different ability levels.
- Multifunctional equipment and a range of physical, multi-sensory recreation opportunities.
- A permeable layout that facilitates easy entry and circulation throughout the space.



Above: Riverway play area, Christchurch

2.3.3 Neighbourhood Play Space

Typical user Group: All ages, but focus on older children

A larger space or facility to which children and young people used to travel longer distances independently can get to safely, spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers, and have a wider range of play experiences.

Where: This type of provision is most likely shared with other facilities, such as formal sports provision, public toilets, and a café, and located in larger parks and green spaces.

Key Requirements:

- As a minimum, Neighbourhood Play Spaces should be 1000m² of which 500m² (20x25m) should be available for ball games or hard surfaced for wheeled activities such as roller skating or learning a bike.
- It should also provide other facilities for teenagers, such as a ramp for skateboarding, a rebound wall or climbing structures, places for meeting and socialising, spaces for girls, and equipment for all abilities.



Above: Harbourside Park, Poole, Whitecliff play area

2.3.4 Multi-activity and Wheeled Activity Hub

Typical user Group: All ages, with a focus on older children and teenagers

A designed area suitable for a variety of recreational uses but focusing on ball games and wheeled activities such as skateboarding, rollerblading, and BMX riding. Provision should be balanced with opportunities for a broad audience, including performance spaces and places for girls to meet and socialise.

Where: As with Neighbourhood Play Spaces, this type of provision is most likely shared with other facilities, such as formal sports, public toilets and a cafe. Careful consideration should be given to the location and interaction of different facilities and consultation is a key part for successful design and community acceptance.

Key Requirements:

Traditionally, youth provision focused on Multi-use games areas (MUGA's). BCP Council encourages the combination of a range of facilities to ensure an inclusive provision. This could include:

- Sports and recreation space that is open access, such as a ball court, basketball court, multi-use games area
- Skatepark, bike park, or other wheeled facility
- Fitness trails or other age-appropriate equipped areas
- Parkour and climbing walls
- Outdoor stage
- Social seating areas
- Performance spaces



Above: Bourne Valley Skatepark, Poole

3.5 Destination Play Space

Typical User Group: All ages

A destination play space, such as a themed playground or a skate and wheeled play hub, is a large, bespoke-designed area to attract visitors from a wider region. These play spaces encourage family visits and larger groups by offering a variety of interactive elements suitable for people of all ages and abilities. Destination play areas provide several benefits to communities. They serve as gathering places for families and community members, fostering a sense of pride in the community. Additionally, these play areas motivate people to explore their local area and discover what makes it unique.

Where: Destination play spaces are typically situated in significant regional parks with convenient travel and accessible public transport connections. They can also be found at key sites with unique settings,

near attractions such as historic houses and waterfronts, or on sites with various complementary recreational offers.

Key Requirements:

- A strong design theme inspired by local heritage or context, reinforcing a sense of place.
- Large play spaces featuring themed adventure equipment that accommodates multiple generations and sensory needs, fostering community connections.
- Inviting outdoor areas that encourage social interaction, relaxation, and longer stays.
- Amenities such as cafes, accessible toilets, and changing facilities for disabled people to support longer dwell times.



Above: Mudeford Quay, Christchurch

3 Design Principles

The following principles set out the expected approach for creating successful and inspiring play spaces. The design recommendations are relevant across all scales of play and provide overarching principles only. The response for each site will depend on the size, location, context and local needs.

The principles are based on and developed from guidance provided in *Design for Play: a guide to creating successful play spaces*, published by Play England, Department for Children, Schools and Families and DCMS.

3.1 Place specific

Well-designed play spaces are based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, meaning that:

- baseline studies form a starting point for design.

- proposals are integrated into their surroundings, so they relate well to them.
- schemes are influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- proposals are responsive to local history, culture, and heritage.

BCP has several distinct landscape character areas, such as woodlands, rivers, and coastal areas—these should be utilised wherever possible to create play environments that are distinctive to where we live.

Play opportunities and seating should be in places that capture views from high points, added to our natural spaces, such as woodlands, through creative interventions, or created as destinations in key civic locations within our urban centres. Play can be a way of knowing our town.

Being place-specific also extends to recognising and responding to the local community and their cultural values and traditions.



The Jungle Adventure Play Area, Poole Park, is inspired by the explorations of the Victorian plant hunters that travelled the world brought back plants we see in our parks today.

3.2 The Right Location

Play spaces should be situated where children and young people naturally like to play. These locations must be easily accessible and welcome, safe to travel to and from. Children should feel safe and able to play freely without interruptions or criticism from adults.

Ideal sites are near homes and along well-travelled routes for walking, cycling, and public transport. They should also be near well-used buildings, such as shops and schools, to enhance accessibility and provide informal community supervision, contributing to safety and security.

Existing routes to a play space should be subject to an *Access Audit* to identify barriers for disabled people.

Improvements shall be implemented as part of the scheme to ensure equal access for everyone.

Play spaces should not be located:

- isolated by large areas of open space
- severed from the neighbourhood by physical barriers like busy roads or railway lines
- near heavy traffic, pollution, overhead cables, or other hazards; and
- in secluded or difficult-to-access places.

Play spaces should be designed as an integral part of new developments, set in open, accessible, and pleasant environments – importantly, they should feel safe to visit through plenty of indirect surveillance and lighting where required.

Additional Resources

Contact Dorset's Design-Out Crime Officer for further guidance on locating a play space within developments.



3.3 Inclusive – A Space for All

When developing a play space, it is important to think about the rights of all children, young people, and their caregivers in the community who will use it now or in the future.

Designers should follow the Social Model of Disability, which includes several types of impairment:

- Visual Impairment
- Hearing Impairment
- D/deafness
- Learning Difficulties
- Neurodivergence
- Mental Wellbeing
- Long-term Health Conditions
- Physical Impairment

This model states that barriers in society, not a person's impairment or differences, cause disability. Barriers can be physical, like a lack of accessible toilets, or come from people's attitudes, like assuming disabled people cannot do certain things. Barriers can also relate to communication, information, or how organisations operate.

Removing these barriers helps create equality, giving disabled people more independence, choice, and control. Many disabled people have multiple identities and face extra challenges accessing play.

Designers should understand how different types of discrimination can mix together (intersectional discrimination) and work to remove and mitigate these issues.

Designers shall employ an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) tool to effectively identify and remove or mitigate barriers.



Inclusive play doesn't mean that every element is accessible to everyone, but it does mean that the combination of experiences adds something equally great for each child. In a well-designed play space, children with different abilities can play together. Likewise, disabled parents and carers should be able to gain access to and enjoy the play spaces if they are to accompany their children.

Though many play providers focus on wheelchair-accessible equipment, it is important to recognise that this may only meet the needs of a specific group of children. Non-prescriptive equipment, such as a 'nest' swing, which can be used flexibly, might be interesting to large numbers of children with different needs and abilities.



Above: A nest swings provide additional support for children with varying abilities.



Above: A play area should allow children with different abilities play together.

Additional Resources

Creating Accessible Play Spaces, A toolkit,
Play Wales
[Creating-accessible-play-spaces.pdf](#)



Inclusive Design Guidance

Proposals should be developed using the PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Area) design methodology and checklist or a similar structured approach. Inclusive Play created this method in partnership with KIDS, a charity dedicated to disabled children. It is endorsed by the Government's Accessible Britain Challenge, the British Design Council, and London Play. [PiPA Play | PiPA Accreditation | United Kingdom](#)



PiPA – Sensory Wheel (6 senses)

! KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility

- Consider the whole journey to get to the play area, not just the space itself.
- Use surfacing with good impact absorption but relatively firm, avoiding deep loose materials.
- Consider the width, height, and reach of different children, as well as wheelchair-adapted play.
- Ensure that gates are wide enough for wheelchair and buggies and that there are no obstacles, such as kerbs or gates placed out of reach.
- Provide accessible information and signage including symbols or pictorial images as appropriate.
- Use different textures and contrasting colour placed strategically in the surfacing. This will help users with vision impairments and users with sensory disabilities navigate the play space.
- Ensure there is accessible seating and shelter nearby for parents, grandparents, and carers.
- Ensure transparent sightlines for ease of supervision.
- Make sure to provide ample space and ease access to the equipment, including accessible surfacing and space for caregivers assisting their children.

A Variety of Play Activities

Physical: Provide open spaces for running or wheeling, trees or logs for climbing and balancing, walls for ball games, and play equipment for different physical challenges

Creative: Design quiet spaces with natural materials for making things, such as dens, story-telling spaces, and trees and sensory plantings to support activities

Social: Include areas for chatting and reading, tables and chairs for card and board games, and open spaces for group activities

Engage the Senses

- Choose materials and activities to explore through all senses such as interesting textures, shapes, solidity, weight, pattern, colour, and temperature.
- Provide a variety of physically challenging and sensory stimulating play opportunities, such as rocking, spinning, rotating, swaying, and bouncing, to accommodate children of different sizes and abilities, whether they play in groups or individually
- Provide sensory experiences at different heights, such as textured ground surfacing and accessible sound/visual experiences from seating or standing.

A Choice of Spaces

- Create spaces with a choice of busier, more active areas and quieter areas.
- Provide quiet spaces to serve as time-out areas for children who need it or to allow transition time when entering the play space.
- Include shelter from harsh weather and strong sun, as well as seating
- Zone for different types of use and avoid segregation.
- Consider boundaries to prevent wandering and address safety around hazards like car parks, busy roads, deep water or steep slopes

Other Facilities

- Provide accessible parking spaces nearby.
- Easy access to accessible public transport.
- Provision of Accessible Toilets and Changing Places/Toilets.



Above: Play Area in Islington, wildlife wheelspin, flush to floor roundabout | © Jupiter Play

Equipment

- Consider providing roundabouts that are flush to the floor with seats and space for wheelchairs or buggies.
- Install a double-width slide that can accommodate two people, such as a parent or caregiver with a child.
- Include nest swings and/or carer/child swing seats
- When planning climbing structures, incorporate low-level experiences, not just height-driven ones. This should include multi-level experiences, with platforms accessible for users with mobility issues, such as providing a ramp structure.
- Include play equipment and activities that encourage social interactions, such as parallel play options that can accommodate two users. For example, placing side-by-side swings, springers, or spinning devices.
- Themed equipment may help users connect and relate to the play space
- It is important to consider specialist disability equipment in consultation with the target group.

Further Resources:

Guide to Inclusive Play, Sensory Trust.
Let's Play Fair, Scope.

3.4 For the whole Community ~ 3.4.1 Intergenerational



A play space should be viewed as a community hub where people of all ages can come together. Bringing different generations into contact fosters awareness, understanding, and respect, which can help break down social barriers and reduce the isolation often felt by new parents and older adults.

Play areas are excellent venues for young and older individuals to engage with one another, share experiences, and learn together. The design and management of these spaces should encourage informal interactions between generations.

Incorporating equipment like a giant rope swing or a standing seesaw allows adults to participate in the fun. Additionally, seating areas should be comfortable and inviting, creating attractive social spaces.

Features such as a chess board can provide enjoyment for people of all ages. Well-maintained pedestrian paths are also typically regarded as one of the most important aspects of play areas.



Above: Children love being pushed on the swing ...higher and higher!



Poole Park, Jungle Play Area: A large zip wire is great fun for children and adults!

3.4.2 Engagement is key

Early engagement is essential for creating a play space that inspires, fulfils users' needs, and earns the community's appreciation.

The engagement process must be transparent and inclusive, inviting individuals who may not be immediately recognised as users or belong to minority groups. Rather than an exercise in communicating decisions already made, the engagement process is required to genuinely seek ideas and opinions from children and families and learn from lived experience.

Methods such as Co-design and Co-production, which seek to establish equal partnerships with end users in the design process, are particularly effective. Actively listening to and addressing user needs is fundamental to this journey. The design team must clearly demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, and empowerment in their practices,

through meaningful DET, a Social Model of Disability approach, and informed use of Equality Impact Assessments. The aim is to establish meaningful, sustained, and ongoing relationships with local user-led organisations and communities.

There are a number of methods that can be used as part of the process. Some examples include:

- Hosting public events
- Conducting feedback surveys
- Collaborating on open-source tools
- Posting on Google Docs for comments
- Hosting design workshops
- Gathering experts to comment
- User testing

Partnering with established organisations like DOTS Disability and Dorset Access can facilitate effective collaboration and offer valuable insights into best practices for inclusive engagement.

Further Resources:

[Guide to Co-Design](#), The Sunlight Foundation

[Voice- Opportunity- Power](#) , Toolkit for Youth Engagement



Opening event at Uppleby Road Play Area. The design process involved several stages of engagement. It also included community planting events which added plants for pollinators and shrubs for foraging in the future.

3.5 Designing for Teenagers

Teenagers particularly enjoy meeting in groups and socialising and should feel welcome to do so in shared public and communal areas. Opportunities for play and informal recreation should be balanced with providing social spaces where they can enjoy making friends.

Popular games are often found involving performing, competing, and challenging each other.

Design should consider:

- locating active spaces in a central, accessible, well-connected and visible location to allow for natural surveillance
- ball game equipment such as MUGAs should incorporate seating, including opportunities to lean and sit slightly away from the activity area, ideally in

a circular arrangement and multi-faceted. Space nets are particularly popular

- additional activity areas away from main play spaces should be considered in a series of interconnected zones
- incorporating agility and fitness equipment, such as gym bars
- design for spectator/performer interaction
- age appropriateness e.g. colour and decoration, physical size, and level of challenge (such as height)
- providing equipment where users can challenge each other, e.g. agility trail or double swings
- well-considered lighting can help extend use of a space into the early evenings.



Above: Fitness equipment can provide a destination for socialising and where to challenge each other through play | © Proludic

3.6 Designing for all Genders

Recent research has shown that many girls and women do not feel as though they belong in public parks and open spaces. The layout and equipment in traditional play areas, skate parks, and MUGAs can make them feel stared at, unsafe, and excluded, particularly where the activity space is dominated by groups of boys.

Make Space for Girls, a charity that raises awareness on this issue, recommends the following to make spaces feel safer and more welcoming:

- good sightlines for natural surveillance with facilities located next to areas of high footfall.
- generous entrances and gates, ideally kept open all the time
- facilities to remain unfenced where possible or gaps created in fences to open areas up
- smaller, connected activity areas
- age-appropriate opportunities for play other than sport, swings and gym bars
- good lighting
- age-appropriate swings and hammocks
- fitness equipment arranged in groups to allow for socialising
- good quality toilets
- social seating where girls can face each other
- wide, circular paths around the edge of the park; no dead ends
- creative elements, such as colour and art and a range of materials; and
- planting to soften spaces and contact with nature



Above: Teenage girls are often absent from community engagement processes. But they are a key audience if spaces are to work well for families and the wider community.



Above: Better design suggestions for parks | © Make Space for Girls

Further research, design guidance and case studies can be found in resources provided by *Make Space for Girls* –

[Make Space for Girls](#)

[Safer Parks for Women and Girls Guidance](#)



3.7 Risk and Challenge

There is intrinsic value in children experiencing uncertainty and personal challenges through their play. It hugely benefits their confidence, independence, resilience, and problem-solving skills.

Children learn from experience, and taking small risks develops this learning. By engaging intentionally in dangerous situations, they confront and learn to measure and understand the likely extent or quality of the danger, e.g., climbing a tree.

Design should manage risk so that whenever reasonably possible, the risk of injury a child is exposed to is proportional to the potential benefits that can be experienced from challenging play.

A Risk-benefit assessment (see 5) is recommended to develop the right balance between an appropriate level of challenge and safety.



Above: Monkey bars are great for challenging yourself.
Below: Loose materials are important for play as they encourage creativity and open-ended learning.

3.8 Play Value

Play spaces should be creatively designed to maximise play value by integrating equipment with landscaping, planting, natural features, and other sensory elements that complement each other and the site context.

Open-ended elements

Incorporating 'open-ended' activity elements allows children to engage in play in their own unique ways, fostering individuality and creativity. This approach will also extend the life of a play facility, as children can interact with the space in different ways as they grow. For instance, instead of providing a fixed pirate ship, a platform with a hut can become a versatile setting for various role-playing scenarios, such as a mountain hut, an artist's studio, a shop, or a hospital.

Sensory features

Sensory features, such as playing with sand and water, can be beneficial in many ways, including:

- strengthening muscles
- improving hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
- develop problem-solving skills by experimenting with the consistency of materials
- learn new words and develop language skills by talking to their friends
- learn to cooperate, share, and negotiate with each other while playing
- learn to acknowledge and respond to sensory changes by playing with different textures and temperatures
- use imagination and creativity to solve problems and make discoveries
- help children feel calmer and organise their thoughts and feelings

Free space

Having free space in play areas is essential because it allows children to discover and create their own games and rules. This promotes their creativity, imagination, and ability to collaborate, like taking turns in a game.

Slack space

Additionally, including 'slack space' in the layout can ensure the potential for change and evolution. Designing for flexibility acknowledges that the needs of local communities may change over time, so it is essential to consider how play spaces can adapt to meet different requirements in the future.

Multifunctional space

Good play spaces are multifunctional spaces laid out so that equipment and facilities can be used by a wide range of users. They often allow different types of usage at different times of the day, week, and year. A play space aimed at teenagers can be suitable for pre-schoolers when they are not around, and vice versa.

3.9 Design in Nature

Children and young people should be given the opportunity to explore the natural world to support their development and well-being.

The design and management of play spaces should enhance biodiversity by creating natural habitats through wildlife-friendly planting, grassy meadows, bird and bat boxes, and bug hotels, all of which attract wildlife to the area.

Features such as trees, plants, meadows, logs, rocks, boulders, and varied landforms offer play opportunities that encourage interaction with nature.

Semi-natural and amenity spaces can be transformed into playful areas by incorporating strategically placed natural features, such as climbing trees, stepping stones, and balancing logs. These elements can complement the space and be discovered and used in an informal manner.

Interpretive signage and sculptures can add extra play value and promote learning and exploration, especially for young children.

Harwoods Adventurous Playground | ©Jupiter Play



3.10 Sustainability & Maintainability

Sustainable play areas can be designed in many ways, including:

- **Using recycled materials:** For playground equipment, mulch, and other structures, use recycled materials such as rubber, plastic, and wood.
- **Incorporating natural elements:** Blend natural materials like stone, sand, wood, and plants with artificial structures.
- **Reducing water usage:** Use drought-resistant plants, rainwater harvesting systems, or permeable surfacing materials.
- **Educating children:** Include signage or interactive displays that teach children about sustainability, recycling, and the environment.
- **Using eco-friendly products:** Use paints, stains, and finishes free of harmful chemicals.
- **Using solar power:** Install solar panels or solar-powered lights and equipment.
- **Engaging the community:** Involve the local community in the design and construction process.
- **Considering the life cycle:** Consider the entire life cycle of the playground, from manufacturing to disposal.
- **Using biodegradable materials:** Choose new equipment made from biodegradable materials that can be recycled.
- **Using sculpted play elements:** Use lightweight materials like Glass Fiber Reinforced Polymer for sculpted play elements like climbers and tunnels.
- **Using robust materials:** Ensure low maintenance and the availability of spare parts, which is key to the longevity of the space.

Top right: Autumn leaves - their shapes, colours and sounds are an endless source for spontaneous play

Top left and bottom left: Carved wayfinding posts and sculptures create a sensory trail in natural greenspaces.

Middle: A simple interpretation boards highlights the beautiful creatures to look out for at Selkirk Play Area

Bottom right: A bug hotel provides a home for wildlife and an opportunity to look out for bugs that come and visit.



4 Materials and Construction

This chapter sets out requirements for materials and the construction of common play space elements, including equipment, surfacing, enclosure, ground modelling and natural features, planting, and furniture.

The aim is to ensure that an acceptable level of quality, safety, robustness, and durability is provided and that the play space can be affordably maintained in the future.

Considered collectively and used creatively, the elements addressed in this section will enhance the overall play value on offer.

4.1 Play Equipment

The type and selection of play equipment should be accessible to users with a range of abilities, appropriate to the kind of play space, and respond to the character of its setting.

Equipment shall be selected to:

- promote agility, balance, and coordination
- present a suitable level of physical challenge and risk-taking; and
- encourage the development of positive social skills
- allow for multi-user play

Natural play features are covered in section 4.4.



Left: Playnets are excellent for young people's motor skills, muscle development, and especially for improving balancing skills.

Manufactured Play Equipment

The Council is not prescriptive about which manufacturer or supplier is used, provided that the equipment conforms to BS EN1176, and is suitable for its environment.

Suppliers will be required to offer a comprehensive warranty. An expectation of minimum warranties is listed below:

2 years' warranty – Any moveable plastic or metal part

5 years' warranty – Any resin-coated plywood, painted metal parts, spring and ball bearing assembly

10 years' warranty – Galvanised and aluminium metal parts with painted top layer, stainless steel parts. Solid plastic parts, non-painted metal parts, engineered timber, and Robinia wood.

The Council encourages the use of sustainably sourced play products such as equipment with a low carbon footprint e.g. made from material using recycled waste sources or wood from sustainable forestry (FSC-certified).

Layout

The Council expects any proposal for fixed, equipped play spaces to be appropriately laid out and recommends that an on-plan assessment by an API-registered play inspector is undertaken as part of the design process.

The layout of the equipment should maximise play value and make the best use of the space available.

Special consideration should be given to:

- existing and new tree planting
- orientation, in particular for metal slides and swings
- activity and fall zones, including plenty of 'free space' around and between equipment
- to allow movement and to facilitate informal play
- items of 'forced movement', such as swings and rotating equipment, should be carefully sited in relation to desire lines and entrances to avoid potential for conflict and collision with user users.

Materials and Fixings

It is a requirement that:

- all metal frameworks are to be fully galvanised and powder coated. Stainless steel is the preferred finish.
- any rope or rope fixing is to have a steel core and stainless-steel fixings throughout.
- rope play features are to enable single-strand replacement.
- timber equipment should comply with relevant British Standards: BS EN 636, part 3 and BS5268 (Timber), BS5589

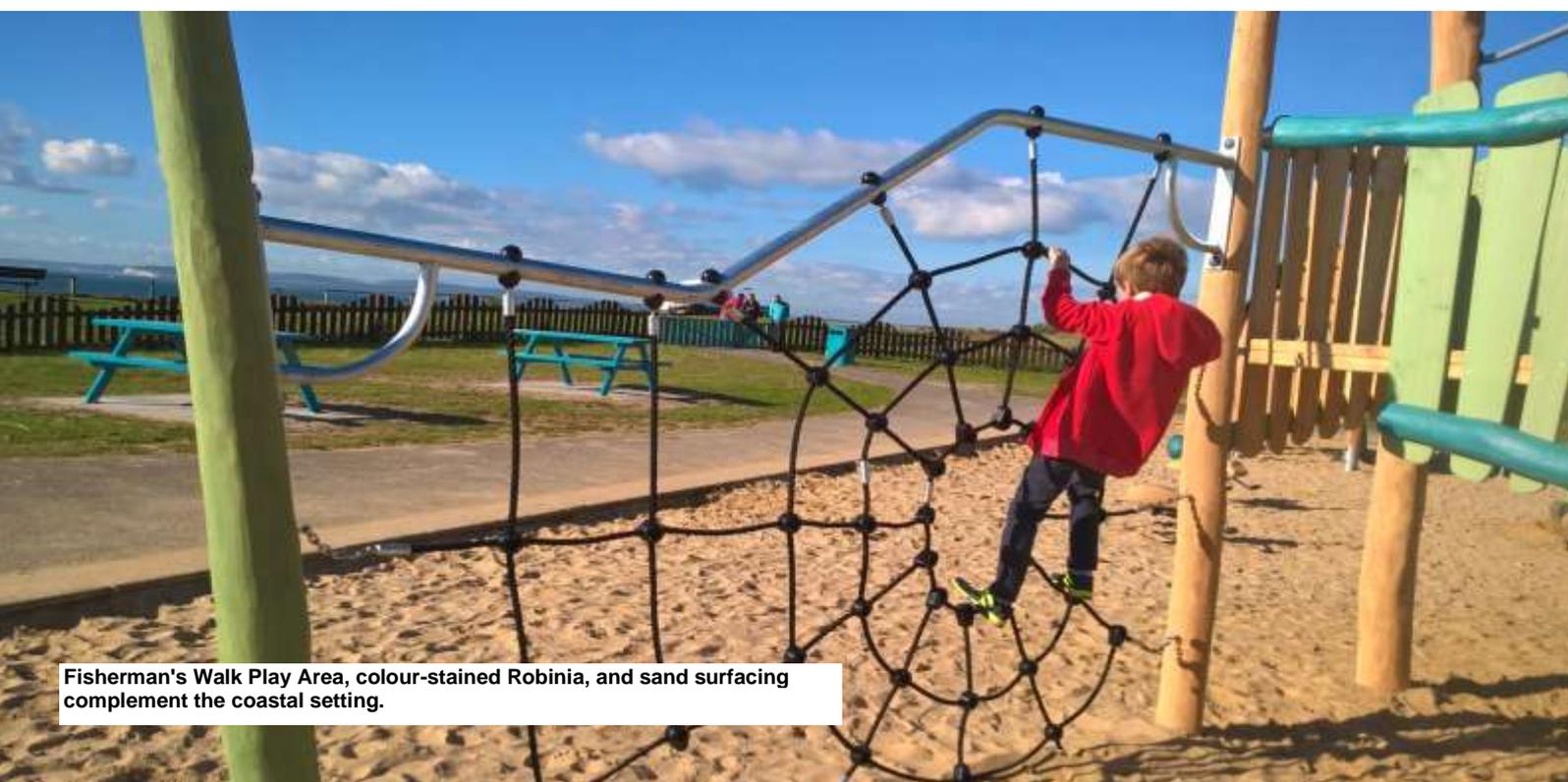
(Preservative), BS EN 1176 (Equipment Standards).

- the use of softwood is not permitted; high-quality Robinia, hardwoods, and engineered timbers are preferable.
- fixings should be tamperproof throughout and made of stainless-steel Grade 304 or galvanised as standard. Depending on the installation location and atmospheric corrosion rates, e.g., seafront, stainless steel Grade 316 may be needed.
- any moving parts and fixings on equipment should be readily available with details of supplier, manufacturer, and product name and model provided.

! KEY CONSIDERATIONS

✘ **Don't install timber play equipment straight into the ground.** Timber equipment often fails at the point of contact with wet ground. All structural timbers shall use steel (stainless or galvanised) sockets or feet. The exception is high-quality Robinia.

✘ **Provide positive drainage for in-ground features** like trampolines for year-round use.



Fisherman's Walk Play Area, colour-stained Robinia, and sand surfacing complement the coastal setting.

4.2 Surfacing

Impact Attenuating Surfacing (IAS or safer surfacing) is required under and around play equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications and BS EN1176 (extent of fall zone and height) and BS EN1177.

Preferred materials are:

- bonded rubber mulch ('Tiger mulch')
- wet pour rubber crumb
- grass mats, for low fall heights (less than 600mm) and as ground reinforcement

Loose fill materials, such as sand or bark mulch, are costly to maintain, although it is recognised that these materials offer high play value. If these materials are suggested, early discussion, including the method of adoption is necessary to determine how to maintain such surfaces in the future.

Due to its abrasive nature, sand surfacing is discouraged around timber equipment, (with the exception of Robinia), any activity ropes, and equipment with bearings.

The use of play carpet systems is discouraged as these can be difficult to repair and maintain.

High-friction areas, such as under swings and at the end of slides, will require durable wet-pour surfacing or similar to avoid scuffing and wear.

Porous tarmac provides a durable surface for ball games.

Paths, threshold spaces, and seating areas, particularly on wet sites and high-use areas, should be tarmac surfaced for all-year use and durability.

Concrete or steel are the preferred edging materials. Timber edging is not accepted except in Tree Protection Areas where the extent of excavation must be limited.

Skate parks require specialist design to BS EN1497 and are typically bespoke. Ramps are expected to be concrete, but street-style facilities may incorporate a variety of finishes, including paved surfaces, brick walls, and metal bars.



Highcliffe Play Area, Christchurch, pattern in the play surfacing provides a playful link between play elements and visually connects the space.

! KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- ❌ Avoid unnecessary changes in surfacing materials and unmanageable fragments of grass cover.
- ✅ Consider access requirements for wheelchairs and buggies, such as gradients and surface textures.
- ✅ Cover the surface of play mounds with bound surfacing, unless these are large landscape features, to protect them from excessive wear and erosion and for ease of maintenance.
- ✅ Locate inspection chambers for underground services outside of play areas where possible.
- ✅ Use permeable and non-dig surfacing within Tree Protection Areas.
- ✅ Don't use small fragments of different colour-bonded surfacing; however, large blocks of a limited colour palette can add play value and assist visually impaired users.
- ✅ Use a permeable sub-base under wet pour rubber crumb and bonded rubber mulch.
- ✅ Rubber mulch and wet pour surfaces need to be laid to the correct depth to avoid future maintenance pressure.
- ✅ The resin binder in bound surface types shall be UV resistant to avoid colour deterioration.
- ✅ Rubber mats need to be cable-tied together with the perimeter of matting dug into the surrounding ground and pegged securely.
- ✅ Where different materials join, such as wear pads in bonded rubber mulch, the adherence to materials needs to be carefully inspected to ensure there is no lifting or shrinkage.
- ✅ On damp sites, the ground shall be raised and/or an adequate drainage layer installed to ensure surfaces remain free draining.
- ✅ Ensure all surfaces are laid with adequate falls to ensure positive drainage.



Above: Broadstone Recreation ground, high quality rope and rope fixings, a wear pad installed under the new rope swing will ensure long-term durability of the surfacing in a high friction zone.

4.3 Boundaries and Fencing

Enclosing a play space

Whether to enclose a play space and the type of enclosure will depend on a number of factors, such as adjacent uses, the landscape setting, the location of potential hazards (like roads), or the need to steer movement.

Fenced boundaries around play spaces tend to make them feel segregated from their surroundings and environment, which can limit their play value for the present and their flexibility for future changes.

On the other hand, a fenced boundary can enhance a sense of security for parents, carers, and younger children, helping to keep children from straying outside the play space or preventing uncontrolled dogs from entering the site.

It's also important to consider the needs of disabled children and young people, such as those with autism, who can benefit from recognizable physical boundaries.

Barriers like fencing, railings, and hedges may not necessarily need to be located on the edge of the defined play space; they can be integrated as boundary features within the wider landscape setting and can be visually appealing on their own.

Type of Enclosure

Defining the play space can be achieved by combining several recognisable features, such as mounding and rocks, differences in mowing regime, seating placement, and planting.

Where fencing must be provided, typical fencing should be a black anti-trap bow top 1m or 1.2m high. A minimum of two gated access points is required for all fenced play spaces, using two single-leaf hydraulic

self-closing pedestrian gates and a double-leaf maintenance gate or a combined single pedestrian and maintenance gate (overall internal clearance of 3m). All gates are to be finished in a high-contrast colour, such as red and yellow.

Hedging and other planting may soften a fenced boundary. Where access permits, hedging should be planted outside the play space fencing.

! KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Tight fencing of fixed play equipment should be avoided.
- Consider the site as a whole to locate boundary features that provide sufficient safety effects, such as discouraging uncontrolled dogs from gaining access or deterring children from running into a road.
- Consider methods of using boundary features that also have play value: low walls for balancing and seating, mounds or ditches, planting, or level changes, for example.
- Consider accessibility including opening mechanisms for gates.
- Consider inter-visibility of boundaries: is a clear view over a boundary feature required?
- Boundary features must be visually appropriate to the character of the place.
- Where fencing is required to deflect access to hazards, use fencing outside the defined play space where possible. Where fencing is used to define the play space in whole or in part, it must conform to BS EN1177, together with matching gates.

4.4 Ground Modelling and ‘Natural Features’

Natural features and elements provide the ‘loose parts’ of play. They can be used in a variety of ways according to the abilities and interests of the child or young person. Such play is uniquely satisfying as there is no pressure to conform. It offers a different experience with every visit.

Landform on the edge of a play space can be used to define an area or provide boundaries, but also act as an amphitheatre at the same time. Within a play space, earth banks provide support for slides, enable tunnels and bridge crossings, or can create quiet or performance spaces.

Natural features can be used to expand the defined play space into the wider environment.

Using local materials, such as locally sourced Purbeck stone blocks to form stepping stones, can help make a wider landscape connection and provide a durable play feature.

Logs and tree stumps can provide obstacle courses with varying degrees of challenge. Bespoke in design, they can help strengthen the sense of identity.



Above: Alum Chine Play Area, a bank slide makes use of the existing landform

Right: The agility trail made from Robinia logs provides a playful route through a community orchard.

! KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ Natural features need to be designed in accordance with BS EN116; activity and fall zone and height principles apply.
- ✓ Natural materials like rocks and logs should be free of sharp edges.
- ✓ Logs should be cross cut to provide an anti-slip surface.
- ✓ Ensure climbing logs and boulders are secure from rolling or lifting.
- ✓ Where stepping features are used, ensure that they are within safer surfacing (to limit strimming) or part of an acceptably natural long grass sward.
- ✓ Bank and dip gradients should be mowable (e.g. gradient shallower than 1:3) to avoid relying on strimmer or spray operations.
- ✓ Ensure soil depths over tunnels are sufficient where they are covered with reinforced grass.



4.5 Planting

Planting within play spaces can add to play value by providing colour, texture, scent, sound, and a sense of enclosure. It creates seasonal interest and offers loose parts for play. Importantly, it also enhances the attractiveness for accompanying adults, carers, and siblings. Trees, in particular, provide important shade and shelter.

Plant material is also a key component for enabling experiencing nature. Unless there are very good reasons not to, defined play spaces should include planting and grassed areas as an extension of the wider vegetation strategy of the site.

Planting proposals and their management to maturity should ultimately create definition and loose, filtered views into and across play spaces, but not create screened and hidden places.

Hazardous Plants

Plants can be potentially harmful to people in a variety of ways:

- skin irritation through handling
- from discomfort to severe poisoning through ingestion
- physical injury from sharp-edged leaves, spikes, and thorns.

As a general rule, hazardous plants should not be used where they are likely to be picked or eaten by a child or where the planting would eventually create a hazard (by catching on clothing or skin) within a fall or activity zone.



Poole Park, Jungle Play Area, planting is used to add structure, to soften the space and create a sense of adventure.

! KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- ☑ Ensure planting is robust to withstand trampling
- ☑ Ensure hedges are maintained at a maximum height of 1.2m high to provide views over
- ☑ Ensure trees are clear stemmed to 2m to provide views under canopies
- ☑ Ensure the planting pallet reflects local landscape character, or is purposeful in creating a new character
- ☑ Consider scale: tall grasses can provide hidey-holes for small children while still being visible to carers, for example
- ☑ Consider mature size of plants and maintenance requirements



Above: Houlton New Housing, Ruby, sculpting of landform, log bridges, stone seats, and planting encourages informal play and provides opportunities to rest. A variety of trees have been chosen for structure, shade and foraging | ©Whiting Landscape & Bradley Murphy Design

Cycle Parking

The following minimum provision is required per play space:

Local play spaces - two cycle stands and facilities for scooters.

Neighbourhood play spaces and destination sites – six cycle stands and facilities for scooters.

BCP Council's preferred style is Sheffield hoop stands, suitably spaced or alternatively 'Camden' M-stands. Stands on high use sites should be installed in hard standing for ease of maintenance.

Parking should be provided at the entrances to the play space or in an alternative, well-overlooked location. Where space permits, cycle parking should be located within the fenced area of a play space.

Adapted bike parking for disabled people should be designed and provided:

- Close to accessible entrances and no further away than disabled car parking. Ideally, it should be placed as close to the final destination as possible.
- Versatile stands that can be used by most people, including those with larger or laden cycles. Stands should be securely installed and have designated disabled bays.
- Provide enough room for a disabled cyclist to enter, turn, and leave a parking bay without dismounting.

Further details on cycle parking provision can be found in the *BCP Council Cycle Parking Strategy and Parking SPD*.



Left: Sturdy scooter racks are the preferred option

Below: Sheffield cycle stands are also available to suit smaller-sized bikes



Lighting

Lighting in public play spaces contributes to creating a safer and more inviting atmosphere, allowing for extended playtime after dark.

It is important to consider the placement and intensity of the lighting carefully. In larger areas, focusing lighting on key pathways can concentrate activity and enhance safety, while maintaining lower lighting levels in other areas helps protect natural surroundings.

Locations like town centres, which already have street lighting and high foot traffic, are better suited for evening use by older children and can be illuminated more effectively.

Warm-toned up-lighting integrated into seating, bollards, and play features can create a welcoming environment, often preferred by girls. Custom lighting columns, such as those designed as part of public art projects, can make them feel much friendlier compared to standard street or floodlights. Additionally, any new lighting should be energy-efficient and low maintenance.

4.7 Wheeled Play

4.7.1 Skateboarding and Skateparks

Community engagement is essential for the success of a skatepark. Each skatepark is different, and local skate communities have unique needs. It's important to understand the local skate community's history, where they currently skate, and their future aspirations. This knowledge helps create a space that supports both current and future skaters.

Facilities must also be designed with the specific site in mind. This includes considering local factors like the surrounding area, access points, boundaries, land features, and drainage. It is important to explore opportunities related to capacity and the park's connection to other facilities.

A professional designer who has experience in skatepark and public space design can help define the project goals and key design needs. They should work closely with the local authority early in the process.

Designs should focus on two main areas: usability and functionality. Usability refers to how skaters use the park, which includes flow, speed, difficulty, free flow space and how visible the skating area is. Functionality looks at how the park serves skaters and the public when no one is skating. This includes capacity, seating areas, overall access, visibility throughout the park, safety, drainage, appearance, landscaping, and practical aspects like security and maintenance.

Key considerations should also include accommodating skaters waiting their turn (including space and shade), creating social areas, ensuring accessible amenities, and establishing effective boundary treatments.

Inclusive Facility

Facilities should be inviting and accessible for everyone. The council recommends partnering with organizations that specialise in disability design to ensure inclusivity and accessibility.

Key aspects to consider include:

- Access to park platforms and social areas
- Utilisation of contrasting colours and materials to define different spaces or zones
- Appropriate lighting
- Accessible parking and toilets
- Seating and shade for parents and caregivers
- Low-sensory areas where individuals can take a break from the noise and energy of the skatepark.

Women and Girls: To connect with the female skate community, ask them how they want to get involved. They might feel more comfortable attending “girls-only” workshops or feedback sessions that provide a space away from older male skaters.

Young People: Attend training on positive youth development to engage with young individuals effectively and support their well-being.

Disabled Community: Partner with organisations like DOTS Disability and Dorset Access, which are already working in this field.

Neurodiverse Community: Skateboarding has a notable representation of neurodiverse individuals. Organisations like DOTS Disability and Dorset Access can provide guidance on best practices for inclusive engagement.

Multi use

Types of facilities in skateboarding can vary significantly to cater to different age groups and skill levels. In addition, skateparks act as an excellent starting point for novice scooter riders, while smaller facilities such as micro pump tracks are great for younger small-wheeled riders.

Enhancing skate facilities by integrating other activities can transform them into multi-purpose destinations. Based on community feedback, additions like 3x3 basketball courts, social areas, play spaces, dance and performance spaces, parkour zones, pump tracks, bouldering, climbing structures, or adult exercise equipment can be considered.

Urban Skateboarding

Skate dots

Skate dots are small, incidental spaces within the urban environment where skateboarders challenge themselves and practice on obstacles, such as kerbs, rails or a strip of smooth, flat ground. These spots already exist in our urban areas and may have caused issues with the skate community in the past. A network of these spots is where street skaters will do most of their skating. Opportunities should be explored to see where these spots can be enhanced and allow these spots to thrive. Public space and road upgrades, sustainable transport projects, and urban park redevelopment all offer opportunities that may seem small and insignificant but that can add opportunities for the skate community if done well. These areas can also provide entertainment for passersby and interested members of the public.

Plazas and Squares

Wide, open, urban spaces are used all over the world by skaters. They are recognised as important meeting areas, often have great passive surveillance and provide a fun and vibrant activity that many non-skaters enjoy watching.



Above: Bournemouth Town centre, Skate event with temporary pop-up ramps are popular by riders and visitors alike

Skateable sculptures

Many cities internationally have embraced skate in the city through skateable art sculptures. Depending on the area, opportunities might arise to influence, partner or advocate for skateable art in an urban area. These sculptures create iconic spaces that people travel from all over the world to visit.

Additional Resources

Skateboard GB Design and Development Guidance - [Facilities Guide](#) | [Skateparks & Spaces](#) | [Skateboard GB](#) | [Run by skateboarders. For skateboarders.](#)

[Sport New Zealand Skate Guidelines for Local Governments](#)

BS EN 14974 – for wheeled sports facilities such as skate parks and BMX tracks





Above: Riversmeet, Christchurch, Skate and Wheeled Play Park, Christchurch | © Maverick Industries

Longevity and renewal of a facility

BCP Council requires that skate facilities be constructed primarily from concrete. This material offers a superior riding surface, significant durability with minimal maintenance, reduced noise pollution, and greater design flexibility.

When designing skate facilities, it is essential to consider their life cycle. A clear methodology should be outlined for how the facility can be repaired and renewed as needed, ensuring this can be done at minimal cost.

4.7.2 BMX, cyclo-cross, and mountain bike track design

Tracks can vary greatly in size, complexity, and level of challenge. They can range from small-scale pump tracks and dirt tracks to MTB tracks and BMX supercross tracks built to a national standard. British Cycling guides in terms of design and risk management.

Additional Resources

British Cycling produces Design Guidance Notes (DGNs) contact the facilities team at facilities@britishcycling.uk



4.8 Climbing and Parkour

Public parkour parks provide ideal areas for communities to explore movement, improve health and have fun through exploration and play. Parkour parks come in many forms, from a sculptural concrete and steel aesthetic in an urban environment to an all-natural look and feel that sits in harmony with green spaces.

Space should be created to be fully inclusive, catering to everyone, and tailored to suit a range of abilities. Safety is always paramount in the designs and should comply with European Standard for Parkour Equipment – Safety requirements and test methods BS EN16899:2016.

Additional Resources

Parkouruk [Homepage - Parkour UK](#)
[European Standard for Parkour Equipment](#)



Above: Slade's Farm, Bournemouth, ramps are great fun for scooter riders to build their confidence | © Beth Barker-Stock

5 Planning Submission, Post Installation and Handover

5.1 Planning Submission

Where play spaces are to be adopted by BCP Council, developers will need to submit:

- Design and Access statement
- Access Audit and Equality Impact Assessment
- Play design and landscape and proposals shown on clear, legible and accurate drawings at an appropriate scale. North point and scale to be clearly marked on each plan.
- All site constraints and layout details including root protection areas of existing trees, levels (proposed and existing), services and sightlines. Detailed information to include layout of equipment, play surfaces, fencing, furniture etc.
- Material sheet to include clearly labelled images of all play equipment and features, street furniture, and surfaces.
- Detailed product information for play equipment such as age range, number of users, fall heights, and life cycle assessment
- Planting plans including plant density, numbers, form, size, and specification; details of seed mixes; topsoil depth for all areas; outline specification for seeding/planting including ground preparation, amelioration, mulches, support, and protection; tree pit details.

- Construction details for structures and surfaces, including standards or typical details and specifications.
- Maintenance schedule setting out frequency and type of operations.

5.2 Inspection and Handover

Where play spaces are to be adopted by BCP Council, developers will need to submit:

- An (on-plan) pre-construction review to identify any hazards that cannot be designed out.
- Post installation ROSPA standard inspection report, by an independent play inspector within 6 months prior to the date of handover with any identified issues rectified
- Agreed risk-benefit assessment for any aspect of the play space that is uncertified.
- Management plan detailing maintenance operations and 'as built' drawings
- Safety certificates, guarantees, and warranties of any fixed equipment and surfacing
- Kit of spare parts and tools
- Confirmation of payment of the agreed Commuted Sum figure
- Land transfer map as a pdf and a GIS shapefile
- Details of level of accessibility to be included in an Access Register.

Developers are responsible for inspecting and maintaining play spaces until they are formally adopted by the ongoing

management arrangement, including suitable Public Liability Insurance.

5.3 Risk-benefit Assessment

BCP Council supports the use of the **risk-benefit assessment tool** as a balanced approach to risk assessment in play environments. This tool was produced by The Play Safety Forum as a practical way to tackle risk-averse culture and makes a positive case for risk, adventure and challenge as vital ingredients in children's play. The initiative is supported by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the UK Government.

The tool builds on the guidance document **Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide**, published by the Play Safety Forum. This guide shows how play providers can develop an approach to risk management that takes into account the benefits to children of challenging play experiences, as well as risks. It provides detailed guidance on legal requirements and approaches to conducting risk assessments of play spaces. In particular, spaces that include playable features that do not have an agreed standard such as natural features.

5.4 Maintenance

Play spaces need a regular programme of maintenance and inspection. The frequency of inspections will vary based on the size of the space, the amount of equipment, and the location and resources available. Inspections can involve:

- Maintenance checks – daily or weekly visual checks along with the removal of litter and debris.
- Routine operational inspections – about every three months to test working parts and equipment.
- Annual technical inspections – recommended by both the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), these technical inspections are carried out once a year by a professionally competent independent playground inspector. Contact the Register of Play Inspectors International (RPII) for a list of inspectors.

Additional Resources:

Play Safety Forum - [Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide](#)

[ISO 4980:2023 Benefit-risk assessment for sports and recreational facilities, activities and equipment](#)



KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

A. Location

Opportunities for informal oversight by passers-by or nearby properties such as houses or community facilities.

Ease of access for children and young people.

Personal safety and well-being, particularly in relation to road traffic and pollution

Opportunity for social interactions and meeting people

How well the space complements and enhances the wider setting

B. Play Value

How attractive and welcoming is the space

Are the needs of children and young people of different ages met?

Is the space playable for children and young people with a range of abilities?

Opportunity for different types of movement, chase-type games, imaginative play, climbing, swinging, ball games and wheeled sports; space for performance and dance.

Access to the natural environment and materials

Possibility for children and young people to take risk without undue hazard.

Places to sit and talk

How well do proposals respond to community engagement?

C. Care and Maintenance

Lifespan and whole-life costs of play features, equipment, furniture, and surfaces

Type and frequency of maintenance operations to ensure the adequate upkeep of the scheme

Planting design and management regime

Proximity of equipment and safety surfacing to mature trees

Provision of a dog-free zone or controlled area

Are materials sustainably sourced and manufactured

Visitor information