



SHAPING NEIGHBOURHOODS: PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

SEPTEMBER 2012

LONDON PLAN 2011
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

MAYOR OF LONDON

SHAPING NEIGHBOURHOODS: PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

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The Mayor would like to thank those who contributed to this document by sharing case studies, photographs and responding to the consultation.

This guidance will form part of the over-arching Shaping Neighbourhoods Portfolio. It is currently envisaged that it will have 4 parts:

- A. Understanding Place
 - B. Lifetime Neighbourhoods and Neighbourhood Planning
 - C. Play and Informal Recreation
 - D. Accessible London
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CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY BORIS JOHNSON, MAYOR OF LONDON	v
GLOSSARY	vi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 POLICY CONTEXT	7
National	8
London Plan Policies	8
Supplementary Planning Guidance	12
Review of local play strategies	13
Developing local benchmark standards	15
3 WHAT MAKES A GOOD QUALITY PLACE FOR PLAY	17
Space	18
Location and accessibility	20
An environment that encourages healthy lifestyles	21
Inclusion	23
Diversity in lifetime neighbourhoods	26
Playable space in a child-friendly city	30
School facilities	32
Access to nature	34
Safety and security	38
Management and maintenance	42
4 APPLYING THE BENCHMARKS	47
A - Identifying, Mapping and Auditing current provision	48
B - New Development: Determining the play space requirements	55
Design principles	68
5 MAKING IT HAPPEN	73
Implementation	74
Engagement	74
Community involvement	76
New developments	78
Calculation of Community Infrastructure Levy and the developer contributions	79
Monitoring and review	81
APPENDIX 1 BENCHMARK	84
APPENDIX 2 CHILD OCCUPANCY OF NEW HOUSING METHODOLOGY	85
APPENDIX 3 INCLUSION	91
APPENDIX 4 USEFUL CONTACTS	93

FOREWORD

Amid the bustle of living and working in a fast-moving, densely developed world city, it is all too easy to overlook the needs of London's children and young people and the importance of our urban environment as somewhere to grow up and learn.

Play is a vital part of growing up. It helps children learn about their environment, to relate to others and to burn off energy. It helps start the process of becoming a citizen, and improves their health. On top of these important and worthy aims, it helps them have fun and, perhaps, lift the spirits of their parents and carers.

That is why it is so important to find and protect space in our city for children to play, and for young people to meet. We need a mixture of more formal play spaces such as playgrounds, and of "playable" places where the most important play equipment is children's imaginations.

These spaces have to be safe and fit for purpose, well-located in relation to where children live and readily accessible. Many of them will be significant as part of London's green infrastructure of parks and open spaces, delivering on my wider environmental priorities as well as providing a stimulating place for children to enjoy themselves.

Finding these spaces is obviously easier in the countryside or in smaller towns than it is in a densely built-up city like London where space is often at a premium. The planning system is one of the key mechanisms for making sure that play spaces are secured and protected from encroachment.



This guidance gives practical advice about how this should be done, in particular by negotiating for enough playspace to be set aside in new development to meet the needs of the children and young people likely to live in them. This is a policy we have been applying in London since 2008, and is a way of making a real improvement in Londoners' quality of life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Boris Johnson".

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London

GLOSSARY

Play

“Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.” *From Play Wales (2005) and endorsed by SkillsActive (May 2005)*

Children (0-11) and young people (12+)

The age ranges in the document are indicative. They do not mean that users of different ages should be excluded from the play space. This recognises that children and young people have differing needs and that the space where they play or socialise will have different characteristics, space and location requirements. A playable space typology (table 4.6) addresses the potential for multifunctional spaces.

Playable space

A playable space is one where children’s active play is a legitimate use of the space. Playable space typically includes some design elements that have ‘play value’: they act as a sign or signal to children and young people that the space is intended for their play. Playability is not just a matter of the physical characteristics of a space. It can also be influenced by social and cultural characteristics. For instance a space that is dominated by people hostile to children’s presence is not playable, whatever its physical characteristics.

Multifunctional space

A Multifunctional space is a ‘shared’ public space or communal space, which offers a range of leisure and recreation opportunities for users of all ages. Multifunctional spaces for all ages should be the optimum.

‘Incidental’ playable space

It is a public space where recreational features such as landscaping or high quality public art make it playable.

Dedicated play space

Spaces where play is identified as one of the prime functions. These include playgrounds, playing fields, skate parks and other recreation areas. Dedicated play spaces can be publically owned, open to public access or private (e.g. play areas in shopping centres, private gardens). They can be supervised (such as some adventure playgrounds) or unsupervised. They can be with formal equipment or non-equipped areas, such as landscaped areas and playing fields that can be used for a variety of recreational activities. All dedicated play spaces should be genuinely playable and attractive to count as play provision. It is also essential that they are accessible (see chapter 3 on location and accessibility). Dedicated play space can therefore be formal and informal but informal provision should not replace formal provision entirely.

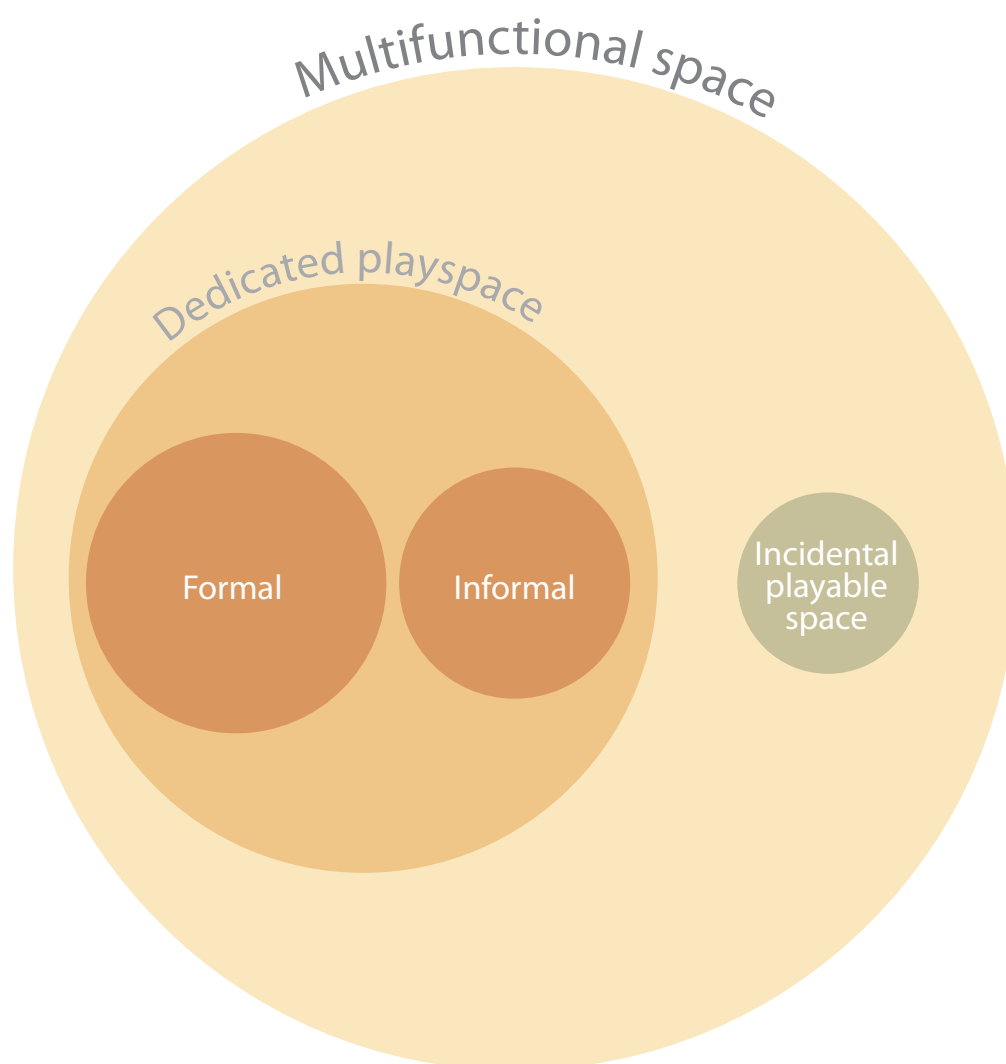
Dedicated play space can fall under the following typology:

Doorstep playable space: a landscaped space including engaging play features for young children under 5 that are close to their homes, and places for carers to sit and talk.

Local playable space: a landscaped space with landscaping and equipment so that children aged 0 to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk

Neighbourhood playable space: A varied natural space with secluded and open areas, landscaping and equipment so that children aged 0 to 11 can play and be physically active and they and their carers can sit and talk, with some youth facilities for young people over 11.

Youth space: A social space for young people aged 12 + to congregate together, socialise and participate in informal recreation or physical activity.



Components of playable/multifunctional space



Wild Kingdom - Three Mills Playspace (Newham, London)
Project - The Legacy List and London Legacy Development Corporation with Lee Valley Regional Park
Photo - Dan Childs Films

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In a densely developed, highly urbanised city like London, safe and stimulating play facilities are essential for a child's well-being, health and future development. Ensuring this is taken into account in planning and development through the London Plan has been a significant achievement of the London planning system, and will become of increasing importance with the emphasis in the new London Plan on encouraging lifetime neighbourhoods meeting the needs of all Londoners, at every stage of their lives.
 - 1.2 London is home to 1.94 million children and young people under the age of 18. London's 0 – 18 population is projected to increase by over 266,000 over the next ten years. Increased provision of play and informal recreation will be required to meet their needs.
 - 1.3 Children and young people need free, inclusive and accessible spaces offering high-quality play and informal recreation opportunities in child-friendly neighbourhood environments. Policy 3.6 of the London Plan seeks to ensure that all children and young people have access to such provision. The challenge facing boroughs and their partners in play provision will be to find opportunities to retain and increase the provision of play and informal recreation, particularly in housing developments, and to make planning for play and young people's informal recreation more responsive to needs, improving the quality, range and accessibility of provision.
 - 1.4 In London, where space is increasingly at a premium, planners, developers and designers must take account of the ways that adults, children and young people will actually use places, whether together or separately, at different times of the day. It will usually be best to allow for flexible and multifunctional use of spaces so that many different user groups can enjoy them. Planners, developers, designers and architects should promote approaches accommodating the presence of children in the built environment (such as shared public and communal space), and encouraging playable spaces where appropriate. In this way, London can be made a child friendly city. This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared in response to these challenges.
 - 1.5 This Supplementary Planning Guidance relates to the implementation of London Plan Policy 3.6, but also a range of policies on shaping neighbourhoods (see Chapter 7 of the London Plan). It provides the opportunity for more detailed guidance that cannot be covered in the Plan. It proposes benchmark standards that were developed for the Mayor's SPG on Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation in 2008, and in the light of consultation with London boroughs, play specialists and designers, builds on the experience of implementing that earlier guidance. The benchmark standards provided in this guidance are flexible enough to meet the varying needs of children and young people across London and should be used as a reference to guide boroughs in the development of
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their own local standards. The proposed methodology for calculating play space requirements is indicative and boroughs may want to supplement them or use their own, based on locally-derived evidence and data.

POLICY 3.6: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

Strategic

- A The Mayor and appropriate organisations should ensure that all children and young people have safe access to good quality, well-designed, secure and stimulating play and informal recreation provision, incorporating trees and greenery wherever possible.

Planning decisions

- B Development proposals that include housing should make provision for play and informal recreation, based on the expected child population generated by the scheme and an assessment of future needs. The Mayor's Supplementary Planning Guidance *Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation* sets out guidance to assist in this process.

LDF preparation

- C Boroughs should:
- a undertake audits of existing play and informal recreation provision

and assessments of need in their areas, considering the qualitative, quantitative and accessibility elements of play and informal recreation facilities.

- b produce strategies on play and informal recreation supported by LDF policies to improve access, safety and opportunity for all children and young people in their area.

- 1.6 The requirements for play and informal recreation space provision for children and young people given in the SPG are intended to:

- apply the concept of lifetime neighbourhoods and the role playable spaces have in creating these neighbourhoods;
- assist in identifying existing and future needs for play provision and how these could be accommodated;
- provide guidance and a tool to calculate the requirement for play which can be easily applied to housing proposals and a framework to ensure adequate on- and off-site provision is made to meet the demand created by the development;
- address issues of accessibility to new and existing facilities and the critical issue of site location;
- take into account public spaces such as parks, open spaces but also social housing estates that offer good play opportunities and transform them into multifunctional spaces that offer a range of leisure and recreation

- opportunities for users of all ages;
- encourage more innovative approaches to play provision in terms of facilities, location, accessibility, design (including use of natural features) and management;
- encourage schools to open their facilities such as playgrounds and sports facilities to the public;
- provide best practice guidance on how to use resources cost-effectively and secure adequate revenue streams for maintenance and upkeep including developer contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- encourage the review of local play strategies; and
- provide inspiring design examples of sustainable play spaces in dense urban environments.

1.7 This SPG does not cover sports facilities in detail. These will be dealt with in the portfolio of guidance on Shaping Neighbourhoods (see Figure 1.1).

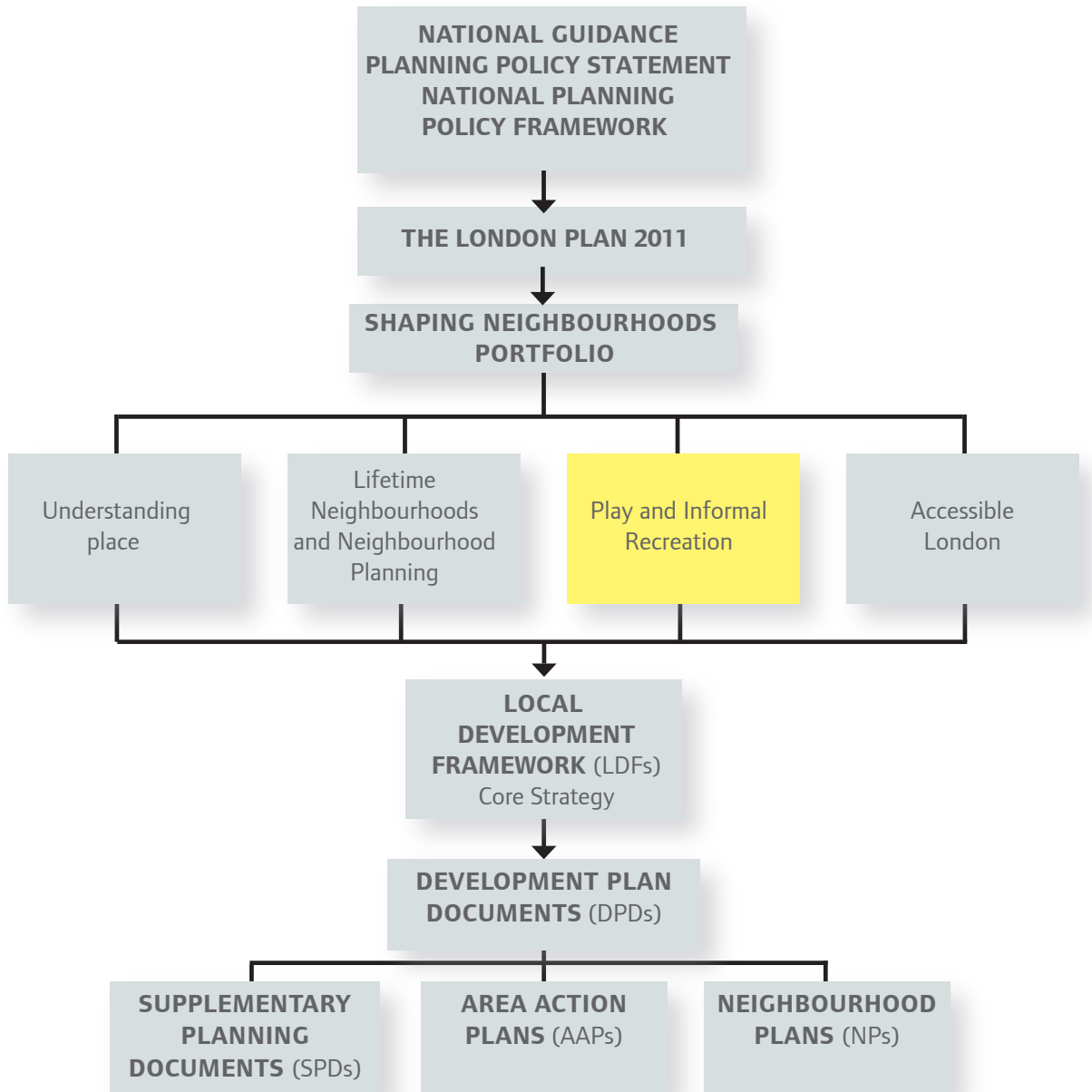
1.8 This document contains guidance supplementary to London Plan policies. While it does not have the same formal development plan status as these policies, it has been formally adopted by the Mayor as supplementary guidance under his powers under the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (as amended). Adoption followed a period of public consultation, and a summary of the comments received and the responses of the Mayor to those comments is available on the Greater London Authority website. It will therefore be a material consideration in drawing up development

plan documents and in taking planning decisions.

1.9 Where the London Plan and this guidance refer to LDFs it is advice to boroughs in preparing their Local Development Frameworks (what the Government's National Planning Framework terms 'local plans') and to those preparing neighbourhood plans.

1.10 This Supplementary Planning Guidance is directed at local authority planners, developers, community groups and a range of consultants (including landscape architects and urban designers) who all have roles in ensuring the implementation of the objectives set out in this Guidance. Local authorities have the responsibility of ensuring robust play strategies and establishing the overall context for implementation of the Supplementary Planning Guidance, as well as detailed roles in determining requirements for specific sites. Developers and consultants are largely responsible for the delivery of child-friendly developments and public spaces, and they must ensure adequate size, design and access to new and improved play and informal recreation areas. The SPG will also provide guidance for neighbourhood forums and local communities in shaping their neighbourhood plans.

Figure 1.1 Planning Policy Framework





Kilburn Grange Park Adventure Play-ground (Camden, London)
Project and photo - erect architecture

CHAPTER TWO

POLICY CONTEXT

NATIONAL

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets the government's objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by creating a high quality built environments, with accessible local services that reflect a community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being. It recognises the important role of the planning system in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities and it acknowledges that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. The NPPF protects existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields. The NPPF also encourages local planning authorities to ensure viability and deliverability in plan-making and decision-taking (see para 2.21 below).

LONDON PLAN POLICIES

2.2 The London Plan includes a specific policy on the provision of play and informal recreation facilities (Policy 3.6). A range of other policies, such as Policy 3.16 on the protection and enhancement of social infrastructure, Policy 7.1 on the creation of lifetime neighbourhoods and Policy 7.18 on the protection of local open space also deal with play. The range of London Plan policies related to play is introduced below.

Policy 3.6: Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation Facilities

- 2.3 Policy 3.6 identifies the requirement for the provision of play and informal recreation within London as well as the need for London boroughs to undertake audits of existing play and informal recreation provision and assessment of needs in their areas. The policy also encourages boroughs to produce strategies on play and informal recreation to improve access, safety and opportunity for all children and young people in their area. This Supplementary Planning Guidance provides more detailed advice to assist implementation of this policy.
- 2.4 The Plan raises the importance of providing for safe and stimulating play facilities for children's well-being and future development, as well as for preventing health problems such as obesity. This should be addressed in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) (local plans and appropriate neighbourhood plans) by providing policies on play provision, including the need for high quality design. Through the development of play strategies, boroughs should ensure the integration of play provision into overall open space strategies.
- 2.5 The Plan states that new development including housing should make provision for play space. This should normally be made on-site, and be in accordance with LDF play policies for the area. Where development is to be phased, there should be early implementation of the play space. Off-site provision, including the creation
-

of new facilities, improvements to existing provision, and/or an appropriate financial contribution towards this provision may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it fully satisfies the needs of the development whilst continuing to meet the needs of existing residents.

Policy 3.16: Protection and Enhancement of Social Infrastructure

2.6 Play is covered in Policy 3.16 as an integral part of social infrastructure. The policy supports the provision of social infrastructure and encourages boroughs to regularly assess the need for social infrastructure at local and strategic levels to ensure that adequate social infrastructure provision is made or enhanced. Development proposals which provide for this infrastructure will be supported in light of these assessments; and those causing their loss will be resisted. Facilities should be accessible to all sections of the community and be located within easy reach by walking, cycling and public transport. Wherever possible, the multiple use of premises should be encouraged. Further guidance on social infrastructure will be given in future supplementary guidance on Shaping Neighbourhoods.

Policy 7.1: Building London's neighbourhoods and communities

2.7 Play also has a role in contributing to creating lifetime neighbourhoods which are dealt with in Policy 7.1. Lifetime neighbourhoods are places where people can, at all stages of their lives enjoy a

good quality environment, in an active and supportive community, with the best possible access to services, infrastructure and public transport. Their neighbourhoods should provide a character that is easy to understand and relate to.

2.8 Development should be designed so that the layout, tenure and mix of uses interface with surrounding land and improve people's access to social and community infrastructure, the Blue Ribbon Network, local shops, employment opportunities, commercial services and public transport. Development should enable people to live healthy and active lives; should maximise the opportunity for community diversity, inclusion and cohesion; and should contribute to people's sense of place, safety and security. Places of work, leisure, streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces should be designed to meet the needs of the community at all stages of people's lives, and should meet the principles of lifetime neighbourhoods. The design of spaces should help reinforce or enhance the character, legibility, permeability and accessibility of the neighbourhood.

2.9 Boroughs should prepare plans to ensure infrastructure and services will be delivered to meet the needs of existing and new development. They should work with their local communities to set goals for their neighbourhoods and strategies for achieving them. Cross-borough working is encouraged where appropriate. The Mayor will be preparing guidance to assist the implementation of the lifetime neighbourhoods policies later in 2012.

Policy 7.18: Protecting local open space and addressing local deficiency

2.10 Policy 7.18 supports the creation of new open space in London and includes a public open space categorisation table (Table 2.1) that provides a benchmark for boroughs to assess their own provision for

the different categories of multifunctional open space found throughout London. The table categorises spaces according to their size and sets out a maximum desirable distance that Londoners should travel in order to access each category of open space. The standards can be used to highlight areas of open space deficiency

Table 2.1 London's public open space categorisation

Open space categorisation	Size guideline	Distances from homes
Regional Parks Large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. Offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within London, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.	400 hectares	3.2 to 8 kilometres
Metropolitan Parks Large areas of open space that provide a similar range of benefits to Regional Parks and offer a combination of facilities and features at the sub-regional level, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.	60 hectares	3.2 kilometres
District Parks Large areas of open space that provide a landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits.	20 hectares	1.2 kilometres
Local Parks and Open Spaces Providing for court games, children's play, sitting-out areas and nature conservation areas	2 hectares	400 metres
Small Open Spaces Gardens, sitting-out areas, children's play spaces or other areas of a specialist nature, including nature conservation areas.	Under 2 hectares	Less than 400 metres
Pocket Parks Small areas of open space that provide natural surfaces and shaded areas for informal play and passive recreation that sometimes have seating and play equipment.	Under 0.4ha	Less than 400 metres
Linear Open Spaces Open spaces and towpaths alongside the Thames, canals and other waterways; paths; disused railways; nature conservation areas; and other routes that provide opportunities for informal recreation. Often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.	Variable	Wherever feasible

Source: GLA, London Plan 2011

and facilitate cross-borough planning and management of open space. The public open space hierarchy does not specify play provision for children and young people but play and informal recreation opportunities are identified for each category of open space according to its size and characteristics.

Other London Plan Policies

2.11 Other relevant London Plan policies and SPGs which should be considered in the development of policy and consideration of proposals in the provision of play and informal recreation include:

- Policy 2.13 Opportunity and intensification areas and Policy 2.14 Areas for regeneration: Play is likely to be among the policy areas that boroughs and their partners are likely to address in devising strategies to tackle deprivation and exclusion.
- Policy 2.18 Green Infrastructure: The Policy aims to protect, promote, expand and manage the extent and quality of, and access to, London's network of open and green spaces.
- Policy 3.1 Ensuring Equal Life Chances for All: The Policy promotes London's diversity. It encourages boroughs to engage with local groups and communities to identify their needs and make appropriate provision for them.
- Policy 3.2 Addressing health and reducing health inequalities: supports the role of play and specific interventions to improve health.
- Policy 3.5 Quality and Design of housing development: The Policy introduces a presumption against development on back gardens or other private residential gardens. This may expand opportunities for play.
- Policy 3.7 Large residential developments: Sites over 5 hectares or capable of accommodating more than 500 dwellings should be progressed through an appropriate plan-led process to coordinate provision of play and other social infrastructure.
- Policy 3.8 Housing Choice requires developments to provide a range of housing sizes and types, including family housing. This will offer greater choice for families.
- Policy 3.19 Sports Facilities seeks to support developments which increase provision of sports and recreation facilities and increase healthy lifestyles.
- Policy 6.9 Cycling seeks to encourage cycling and safe and convenient direct routes to key uses such as schools or play areas.
- Policy 6.10 Walking seeks to encourage walking in a high quality pedestrian and street environment and accessible, safe and convenient direct routes to key uses such as play areas.
- Policy 7.2 An Inclusive environment requires that all development in London achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design.
- Policy 7.4 Local Character: Policy supports the development of places that improve or build on the local character of the area.
- Policy 7.5 Public Realm supports the development of high quality public spaces in London by ensuring that landscape treatment, street furniture and infrastructure in the public realm are of the highest quality and have a clear purpose.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

2.12 Play and informal recreation is also addressed in a number of the Mayor's cross-cutting strategies and initiatives. The overarching strategy is set out in *Young Londoners - Successful Futures* but a number of other strategies are relevant, including the Mayor's Transport, Sport¹, Health Inequalities and Culture strategies. The Mayor's Great Outdoors initiative aims to upgrade public spaces in London, promoting the wide ranging benefits of open space and setting out the need to make London a more child-friendly city, including opportunities to make streets safer for children, the creation of new and diverse opportunities for play and places for young people, and the promotion of open space as a cultural resource for London. *The London Housing Design Guide*² (chapter 1.2), published by the Mayor in 2010, and the *Housing SPG*³ both reflect the needs of children and young people in setting out design of open spaces, internal space standards and environmental requirements for housing in London (including the protection of back gardens – London Plan Policy 3.5). The *All London Green Grid (ALGG) SPG*⁴ promotes the creation of a high quality multifunctional green infrastructure network that maximises the opportunities for improving quality of life. The network includes open spaces (including both publicly accessible and private land, such as parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, amenity space and children's play areas), corridors and the links in between, of

varying size and character. It promotes the provision, protection and improvement of sports facilities, including playing fields, as well as encouraging the use of parks, play facilities and other green spaces to encouraging more active lifestyles and improved mental well-being.

2.13 Other Supplementary Planning Guidance such as the forthcoming guidance on *Shaping Neighbourhoods* (which will pull together a number of existing revised SPGs, Best Practice Guides (BPG) and new documents), will provide advice and guidance on a number of play connected issues, in particular the implementation of Policy 7.1 Building London's Neighbourhoods and Communities (see Figure 1.1).

1 Mayor of London. *A Sporting Future for London*. GLA, April 2009

2 Mayor of London. *London Housing Design Guidance (LHDG)*. LDA, 2010

3 Mayor of London. *Housing SPG*. GLA, 2012

4 Mayor of London. *All London Green Grid SPG*. GLA, March 2012

REVIEW OF LOCAL PLAY STRATEGIES

2.14 The 33 London boroughs now all have their own play strategies. These inform each borough's play policies and provide comprehensive guidance on play provision including quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in provision relative to future need as well as mechanisms to address these. It is important that they are kept under review and are regularly updated to reflect the changing needs of the community and its children, in consultation with children and young people.

2.15 Play strategies should encompass all categories of play space and informal recreation areas within the public domain, including provision within residential areas where coordination with organisations such as housing providers, the tenant and residents associations and those who maintain the spaces is required. Play strategies should identify opportunities to improve and upgrade provision and access to it in accordance with this supplementary planning guidance. Deficiencies in provision should be addressed in the planning of new provision to meet the needs of existing and new communities. This will generally be associated with new residential development but account should also be taken of needs generated in other places with high child populations such as town centres.

2.16 The review of play strategies should be viewed in the context of sustainable community strategies, local development frameworks and other related corporate strategies covering areas such as

regeneration, health, culture, education and crime and disorder as well as open space. Local open space strategies for instance can have a complementary role in meeting the objectives of the play strategies, in the sense that they present an opportunity to embed play within open spaces and address some of the deficiencies in play provision. Play strategies may be useful in expanding further on certain types of open spaces or uses within open spaces. The Mayor's *Best Practice Guidance on Open Space Strategies*⁵ provides advice on how to prepare an open space strategy. It is intended that an updated version of this guidance will be issued for public consultation in winter 2012.

2.17 Figure 2.2 below shows the relationship between the different corporate strategies and assessments. Play strategies should make reference to a range of corporate strategies within a local authority.

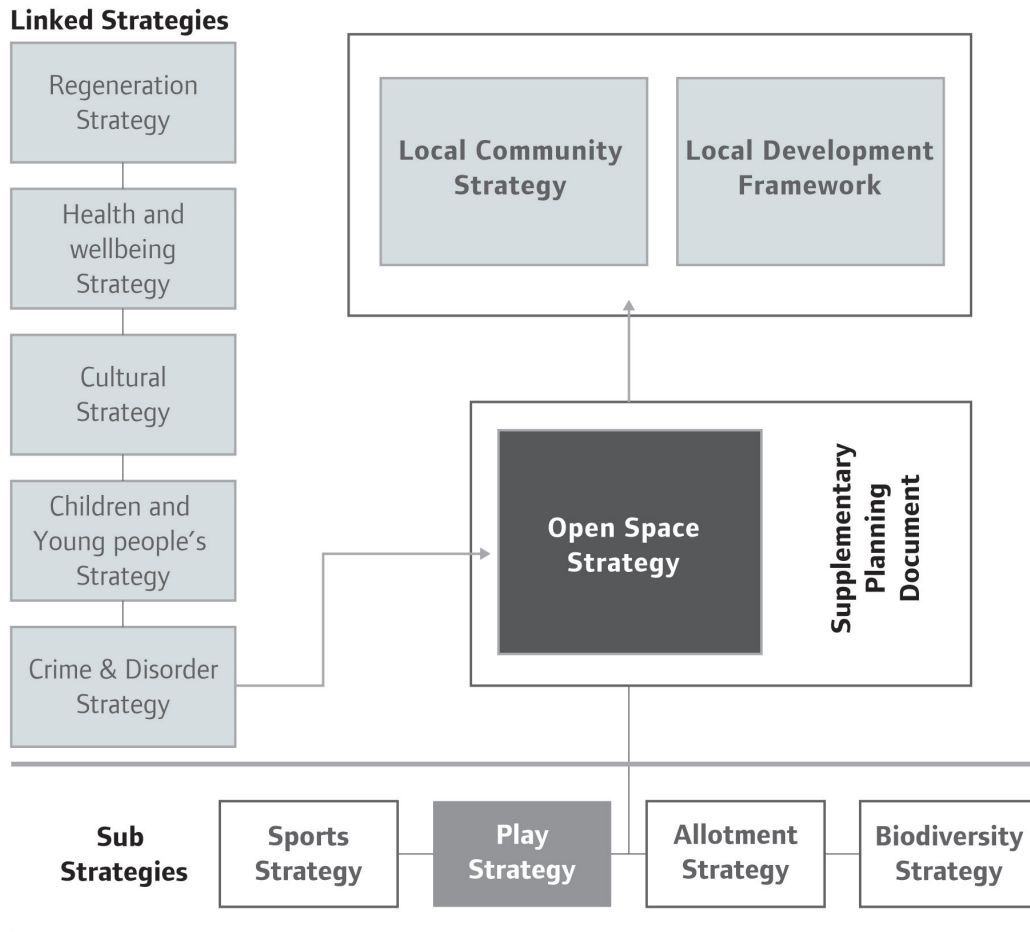
2.18 To assist London boroughs with the development of play strategies, the Mayor published in 2005 a *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies*.⁶ This guidance is still useful for methodologies and general advice but has now been superseded to some extent by *Planning for Play*⁷ from Play England. London boroughs may want to refer to these guidance when reviewing their play strategies.

⁵ Mayor of London and Cobe Space. *Best Practice Guidance Open Space Strategies*, 2009

⁶ Mayor of London. *Guide to Preparing Play Strategies*. GLA, April 2005

⁷ *Planning for Play*. Guidance on the development and Implementation of a local play strategy. Play England, March 2006

Figure 2.2 Relationship of play strategy to other local strategies



2.19 When reviewing their play strategies, boroughs should carry out an audit of current provision. A series of steps on how to identify, map and audit current provision is proposed in Chapter 4A.

DEVELOPING LOCAL BENCHMARK STANDARDS

- 2.20 It is recommended that boroughs develop benchmark standards in the context of their play and open space strategies, taking into account their local circumstances. The link between setting standards and local play strategies is essential, as the standards can be applied most effectively when boroughs have an understanding of the state of play and informal recreation provision in the area locally. Standards for local play provision should be adapted to reflect local needs, taking into account children's needs, the socio-economic context and the health status of the area. In some cases, it may be appropriate to adopt different thresholds for different sub-areas of a borough to reflect the needs of different neighbourhoods.
- 2.21 To ensure viability, the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to assess the likely cumulative impacts on development in their area of all existing and proposed local standards, supplementary planning documents and policies that support development plans, when added to nationally required standards. The cumulative impacts of these standards and policies should not put implementation of the plan at serious risk, and should facilitate development throughout the economic cycle.
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Caledonian Primary School
(Glasgow, Scotland)
Project - LTL
Photo - Malcolm Cochrane