

Doncaster Play Parks Infrastructure Policy

City of Doncaster Council

2023



City of
Doncaster
Council



GET
DONCASTER
MOVING

Introduction

The City of Doncaster Council recognises the importance of play to the health, well-being and development of our children and young people. Our green spaces and play parks are a crucial part of the fabric of play, providing facilities that offer the opportunity for children and young people to be active through play. Therefore, the City of Doncaster Council has established a policy to guide the approach to the provision of play parks within Doncaster. It has been informed by extensive consultation with communities across Doncaster, including young people, residents, elected members and council officers.

This policy for the first time sets out a positive vision to foster healthy communities through good quality play parks that provide opportunities for informal play and enable our children and young people to live healthy active lives, helping us achieve our overarching Mission of 'Thriving People, Places and Planet'.

This document summarises a full technical policy document (available as a separate volume) This Policy:

- Identifies the quantity and type of play parks within Doncaster.
- Proposes an approach to assessing the quality and value of play parks.
- Identifies issues and opportunities relating to play parks management and highlights the 'need' for play parks in Doncaster.
- Sets out an overarching Vision, Aims and a recommended Action Plan.
- Provides a set of Design and Delivery Principles to guide the approach for future enhancement schemes.

Defining Play

'Play is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities.'

Play provision can take many forms and may be undertaken in a variety of settings, including play parks. Play can be broadly grouped into three main activities and behaviours. The design of play parks should help to facilitate, foster and promote all three types of play.



Imaginative play

Healthy brain development.



Physical play

Co-ordination, physical strength, fitness, confidence in the body, fine motor skills.

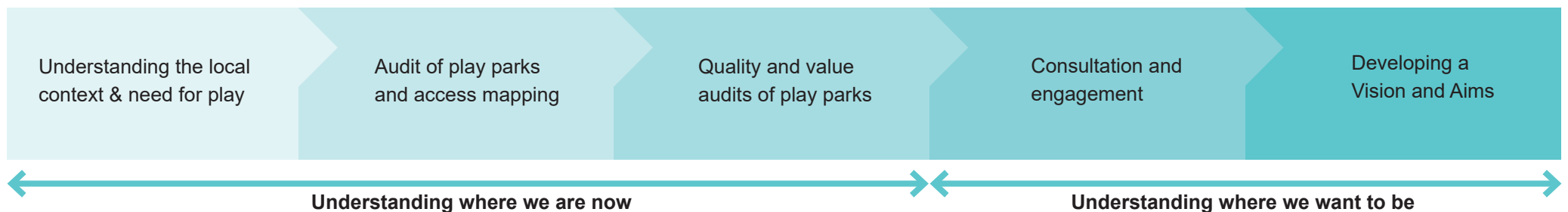


Social play

Relationships, compassion, turn taking, looking after others, delayed gratification and other skills in social awareness, understanding and interaction.

Approach

The development of the policy comprised the following key steps.



Benefits of Play

A wide range of research has demonstrated the importance of high quality play opportunities for the health and wellbeing of local communities.



Play encourages physical activity



Play supports healthy physical development



Play supports cognitive development



Play is beneficial for children's mental health & emotional wellbeing



Play is beneficial for children's social development



Outdoor play can enable contact with nature

Doncaster Delivering Together 2020-30

Launched in September 2021, DDT forms the central vision for growth within Doncaster. The approach is centred around the fulfilment of six key Wellbeing Goals - 'The Wellbeing Wheel'. Together the Goals contribute to one overall Mission - **Thriving People, Places and Planet**.



The Play Policy can help to achieve Doncaster's Wellbeing Goals through a variety of means, including through: providing improved access to the natural environment among young people, creating accessible play opportunities for all, encouraging active travel, creating safe and welcoming playable spaces, and highlighting the importance of play as part of healthy lifestyles and cognitive development.

Vision and Aims

The policy document aims to summarise the existing situation and define the approach to providing play parks in the future. An overarching Vision and set of Strategic Aims will help sustain an agreed approach over time and guide future programmes of work and investment decisions.

Vision

Choice & variety

All children in Doncaster will have a variety of play spaces to visit, providing choice, with a range of different play types and activities on offer. In addition to formal play parks, open spaces will provide opportunities for informal play through ensuring spaces are 'playable'. Play parks will inspire children to play, exercise, socialise, learn, and value nature.

Welcoming, accessible & inclusive

Play parks will cater for a wide range of needs and abilities, be accessible and welcoming for all users. All children should be within reasonable walking distance of a safe play facility of good quality and value.



Quality over quantity

The play offer in Doncaster will focus on good design and quality over the quantity of play parks. Where possible, the delivery of destination play parks with a wider range of facilities within a local area will be prioritised over maintaining multiple play parks with lower play value.

Well recognised, planned & managed

Play parks will be recognised as a key component of promoting health, wellbeing and active lifestyles in Doncaster. Play in open spaces will be planned and managed as part of a co-ordinated open space offer, ensuring resources provide maximum benefit.



Aims

1. Plan strategically

Ensure the effective, strategic planning and management of play parks that deliver value for money. Ensure all relevant council service areas understand the importance and need to delivery high quality play in Doncaster.

2. Engage the community

Ensure children, young people and the wider community are engaged to inform play improvements.

3. Adopt appropriate design principles

Ensure all new play parks or enhancements are informed by good practice for design, layout and integration into the surrounding area.

4. Data and insights

Collect and review data to inform decisions and measure progress.

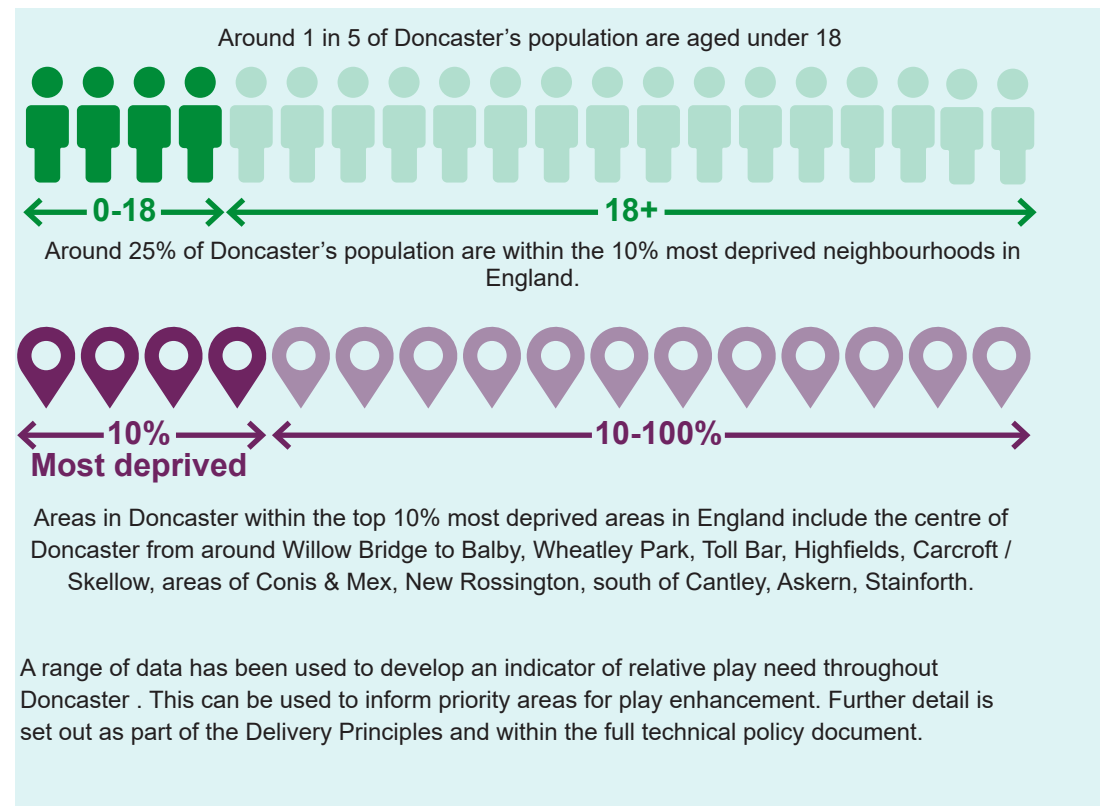
5. Maintenance, care and safety

Ensure all decisions relating to play take account of play safety and likely future maintenance requirements.

Understanding the need for play in Doncaster

It is well recognised that good access to high quality open space and play opportunities provides a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits. Play is an integral part of the healthy growth and development of children. Within Doncaster there are a range of health and wellbeing measures that demonstrate that quality of life, health and the living environment is not equal across Doncaster. An assessment of local health and well being measures indicates that:

- In year 6, 20.6% of primary age children are classified as obese, which is not significantly different to the England average (20.2%).
- Quality of life varies significantly across the area. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average. Variation in life expectancy from the least to most deprived areas in Doncaster is 10 years (male) and 8.2 years (female).
- Many other health measures for adults are significantly worse than the England average including under 75 mortality rate from all causes, mortality rate from all cardiovascular diseases, mortality rate from cancer and suicide.
- There is an uneven geographical pattern of inactivity across Doncaster. Levels of inactivity are generally higher in areas that have higher levels of deprivation and face greater health and social inequalities.
- The percentage of physically active children and young people is around 44.2% which is slightly lower than the average for the region (45.7%) and England as a whole (47.2%).



20.6% of children in Year 6 are classified as obese (not significantly dissimilar to the England average of 20.2%)

22.6% of children in Doncaster live in low-income families



Percentage of children and young people considered to be active

47.2%

45.7%

44.2%



Percentage of adults considered to be 'inactive'

23.4%

24.2%

28.9%



Community Insight

Development of the policy has been informed by consultation and engagement with a wide range of user groups and stakeholders who use and manage open space and play parks within Doncaster. This work included a review of other relevant community insight gathered within Doncaster and the wider region. A detailed review of findings from the consultation is included within the full play infrastructure technical policy document. Community insight has informed the policy in several ways and is reflected within the Vision, Aims, Action Plan and Delivery & Design Principles set out within this report.

The principle of engaging with local communities as part of future play enhancement schemes should be adopted. Future engagement should recognise and address that some groups are under-represented within green space (such as young women and girls), and ensure that the youth voice is included in the conversation.

Several consultation exercises have been undertaken to support the development of the policy including:

- An online survey for children and young people.
- Contacting approximately 50 schools within Doncaster. This included a teacher led exercise to gather pupils' preferences and perceptions of using parks and open spaces for play.
- Review of research information from a project undertaken by Doncaster College Art students (aged 16-18), focussed on parks and open spaces in Doncaster.
- Telephone interviews with Councillors, service area Directors and Council Officers.
- Online consultation distributed to Parish Councils.
- Site specific engagement to test the application of design principles.

Barriers to feeling safe and happy, including within outdoor environments, are more significant for young carers, LGBTQ and SEN groups for secondary school aged pupils

82% of primary school aged children had a positive attitude towards sports compared to 68% of secondary school aged children

Whilst 87% of people felt it was important to have parks and gardens nearby, less than half of people felt like parks offered sufficient activities to encourage regular use

Enhancements suggested by students include more challenging equipment for over-16s, focus on imaginative play within equipment, sensory features, social seating areas, incorporating natural vegetation and involving children and young people within decisions

Key features which make parks attractive for young people are being easy to get to, including play equipment (notably swings, climbing apparatus, offering a range of opportunities), being free from litter and feeling safe

Issues around safety, including particularly risks at night and the behaviour of others were key factors which discouraged use of parks

In addition to fixed play, primary school children liked access to natural areas, places to run or ride bikes and areas to play ball games

Girls are more likely to use parks for walking, socialising and play, whereas boys are more likely to spend time riding bikes, running and playing organised sport



Summary of existing play provision in Doncaster

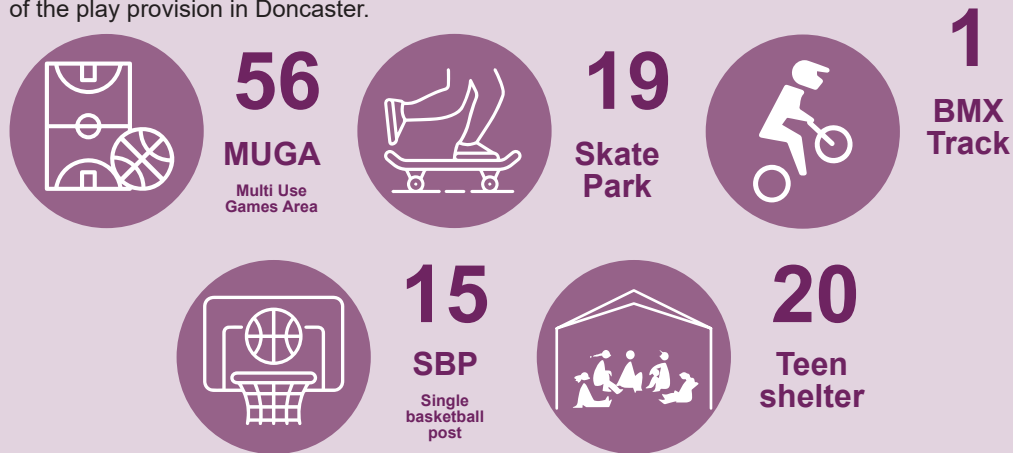
Quantity and play type

286 individual play parks have been identified across Doncaster.

Play parks aimed at a range of ages: LAPs are primarily aimed at very young children (under 5 years); LEAPs at children who can play more independently (5 - 11 years); and NEAPs at older children (older than 11).



Additional features aimed at older children (over 11) and teenagers have been recorded as part of the play provision in Doncaster.



Other recreational features which support physical activity and play have been recorded.



Quality and value

An approach to assessing play sites based on their **Quality** and **Value** has been developed as part of this policy. This will complement the existing rolling programme of condition and safety assessments.

'Quality' covers aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities.



'Value' relates to the presence of various features and facilities, value to the community, location and standard design.



The detailed audit form has been based on Play England's criteria, split into five key themes:

A: Location and Design

B: Added play value

C: Specific play affordances / activities

D: Care and maintenance

E: Other play and sports provision on site

Assessed for quality

Assessed for value



Summary of existing play provision in Doncaster

Quality and value

The proposed quality and value assessment was piloted on 18 sites across Doncaster. Average quality scores ranged between 25% and 93% of the total potential score and average value scores ranged between 17% and 71%. It is recommended that all play parks are subject to quality and value audits to provide a strategic overview of the play offer in Doncaster and to help identify priority areas for enhancement.



Summary of existing play provision in Doncaster

Accessibility

Accessibility catchments have been set for each type of play provision identified in Doncaster, based on guidance from Fields in Trust. Areas that fall outside of the proposed catchments are considered to be deficient in good, local access to equipped play facilities. The proposed access catchments are detailed below. These have been mapped to guide future management; identifying areas that are deficient in access to play facilities and areas with good access to multiple play parks providing a similar offer.



Equipped Play Parks

There is generally good access to equipped play parks, although there are some key areas which do not have good access to play parks, including Southwest Intake, Southwest Balby and East Sprotbrough, as well as several rural villages and hamlets.

There are cases where multiple play parks are offering a similar function and providing access to the same neighbourhood area. Areas with good access to multiple play parks could act as priority areas for rationalising play provision. This should include providing enhancements to ensure communities have access to a high quality and value neighbourhood play park, whilst also identifying low quality or low value play parks that could be removed to allow enhancements to be consolidated on fewer 'destination sites'; providing maximum benefit for the level of investment.

Teenage Provision

Provision of facilities for teenagers is generally less accessible, with over three-quarters of land within residential areas being outside of the access buffers to either a teen shelter, BMX track or skate park.

Summary of existing management

City of Doncaster Council managed play parks

Many play parks in Doncaster are located within parks or wider open spaces. It should therefore be recognised that play parks are managed as part of a wider network of public spaces, green space assets and facilities provided for community use.

Day to day management of play parks is the responsibility of the Street Scene Team which sits within the Economy and Environment Directorate.

The management of CDC play parks is focussed around a rolling programme of play safety and condition surveys and independent assessors are engaged to undertake safety inspections as part of the annual cycle of management. The associated maintenance operations carried out on play parks ensures equipment and surfacing complies with EN1176 and EN1177.

Other services that are managed as part of the wider Street Scene and Environment Service include arboriculture and horticulture, street cleaning, parks, biodiversity and climate change. City of Doncaster Council also has a Sustainability Unit which includes Woodland Rangers.



City of Doncaster Council also facilitates and supports Doncaster Green Space Network which is a collaborative network of community groups, volunteers and organisations with an interest in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and supporting others to do the same.

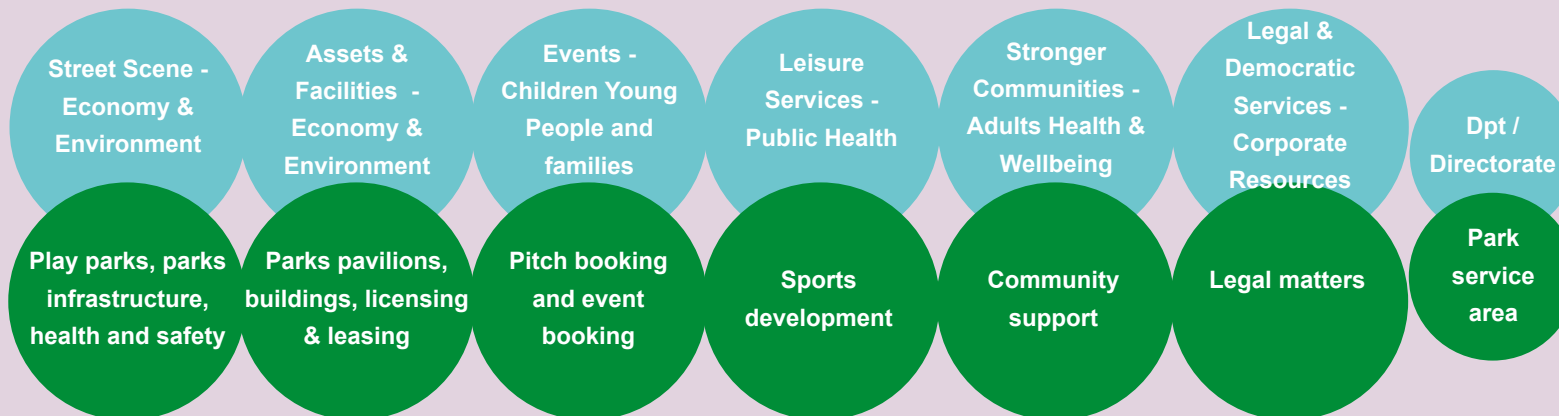
Whilst this network does not necessarily have direct involvement with the management of play parks, the associated groups wider aims, interests and activities may need to be considered as part of future planning and management of play park enhancements in the future.

Play parks managed by others

Whilst the primary focus of the policy is on play parks managed by CDC, analysis of the quantity of play parks and access to play includes play parks managed by others. Most play parks in Doncaster are managed by CDC (189), Parish Councils manage around 75 play parks. Around 22 other play parks in Doncaster are managed by other organisations.

These include:

- St Leger (Housing provider for CDC owned housing stock).
- Doncaster Culture & Leisure Trust.
- South Yorkshire Housing Association.
- Bawtry Action for Recreation & Sports.
- Play parks on private developments.



Delivery of services associated with wider parks management.

Responsibilities are currently spread across CDC's five directorates.

Consultation has highlighted this may present challenges to providing a co-ordinated and strategically planned parks service.

Considerations for future management

Issues

Consultation undertaken as part of the development of the policy has highlighted several issues and opportunities related to effective planning and management of play park provision:

- The current management of parks is at times fragmented. Improved co-ordination of the planning and management of all assets within parks (including play parks) would help to ensure investment and management regimes provide maximum benefit, are cost effective and provide a better experience to communities.
- Management of play parks by the Street Scene Team is often reactive and generally focuses on essential safety work, with little proactive planning for enhancement work due to lack of time and resources.
- Opportunities to involve young people in 'active planning' rather than repeated consultation exercises (which could add to 'consultation fatigue') should be considered. There are existing forums (such as the Youth Council), which may provide future opportunities for better long term engagement.
- There may be opportunities for parks management to be more entrepreneurial. This may also support the development of 'destination sites' which provide a wider offer for communities and families with young children. This could include ice cream kiosks, coffee vans or other facilities that can add to the value of a play park. Money from such activities such as car parking at parks should be ring fenced to spent on park management.
- Management and future enhancements to play parks should consider sustainability and consider recycled features within parks and including recycling bins.
- There is a general consensus of ensuring the quality of play parks over the quantity and number of play parks that are provided. Future maintenance requirements are also a key factor in determining the number of play parks that can be maintained to the highest standard within current resource and management arrangements.
- Inclusivity and ensuring play parks provide for the needs of a wide range of ages and abilities (both physical and mental ability) should be a priority for the future. This includes creating suitable spaces for teenagers and teenage girls.
- Creating fun spaces does not need to involve lots of expensive equipment. There is also room for incorporating QR codes, public art, sensory play, water play.

Wider financial context

City of Doncaster's revenue budget 2023/24 – 2025/26 report sets out that the Council has identified a funding gap of £10.2m for 2023/24, rising to £22.3m over the next three years (at time of publication). The Council has seen its core Government funding reduce by 27% in real terms since 2010 compared to an average of 20% for England. This equates to a £340 reduction per resident. Local spending is becoming more narrowly focused on Children and Adult's Services, including Public Health, with over 67% being spent in these areas in 2023/24.

Opportunities for future management

A future effective policy for play parks would likely benefit from a strategic review of the delivery of services associated with parks which are currently spread across all directorates. This could include the development of a strategic group to ensure co-ordination in the application of the policy. This would help to develop a co-ordinated approach to:

- Identify potential cross benefits across different services and being opportunistic when allocating resources for open space and play park investment.
- Develop open spaces within local areas that act as destinations and offer a range of facilities for different types of users.
- Maximise any income generating opportunities and deciding where income is best re-invested.
- Build a case for site enhancement plans and rationalisation of play parks, ensuring benefits from investment are maximised in locations of most need and not spread too thinly. For example, a neighbourhood will likely derive more benefits from one high quality, high value open space than multiple low value sites that cannot feasibly be maintained to a high standard.
- Provide a more user-friendly service to customers and residents, who would benefit from a co-ordinated approach when interacting and engaging with different service areas associated with parks and open spaces – including play parks.

Strategic Action Plan

The following section sets out a Strategic Action Plan for the next stage of delivering the play parks policy. The actions set out below will support the council in working towards the policy Vision and Aims. The action plan should be considered a working document and the actions will need to be updated on an ongoing basis.

Ref	Action	Relevant aims				
		Plan strategically	Engage the community	Appropriate design principles	Data and insights	Maintenance, safety, care
SA1	Adopt and promote the Play Parks Infrastructure Policy Design and Delivery Principles. Promote awareness and adoption of the principles amongst key partners such as Parish Councils and housing providers.					
SA2	Develop and deliver pilot projects to demonstrate and test the Design and Delivery Principles.					
SA3	Review the delivery and management of play parks as part of the strategic management of parks and open spaces to ensure cross benefits / effective working between services (This is currently fragmented and not fully effective). It is recommended that a review of the current division of responsibilities for park and open space management between different council departments and directorates is undertaken.					
SA4	Establish a working group as part of the delivery of SA3. The group could review, develop and support the delivery of play park enhancement plans, ensuring key officers and stakeholders are engaged. The group will need to help determine how plans may be best delivered and ensure information is appropriately considered as part of budget planning.					
SA5	Implement a rolling programme of quality and value assessments for parks / open spaces and play parks, utilising the approach to site assessment developed as part of the play parks infrastructure policy.					

Strategic Action Plan

Ref	Action	Relevant aims				
		Plan strategically	Engage the community	Appropriate design principles	Data and insights	Maintenance, safety, care
SA6	Consider the rationalisation of play parks as part of a rolling programme of investment. This will likely require decommissioning some play parks to allow more effective investment in sites that have the capacity to deliver the highest value and benefit in areas of most need. This should take account of access to play parks and only decommission sites where good local access is provided by other play parks in the surrounding area. Ensure practical or financial implications for future maintenance are considered as part of enhancement plans or decommissioning of sites.					
SA7	Review how the play parks infrastructure policy can inform future planning decisions. This could include adopting the principles as supplementary guidance to support existing policy. Ideally this should inform assessments to determine whether new play parks should be required as part of a new development, or if enhancements to existing play facilities in the local area would be more appropriate.					
SA8	Ensure local play needs are fully considered as part of future Community Investment Masterplans and revisions.					
SA9	Strengthen mechanisms to engage Parish Councils as part of planning decisions that affect play park provision in their area. This engagement could include reviewing options for the type of play park that could be provided, or options for future adoption and management.					
SA10	Ensure play provision / satisfaction with play parks is considered as part of any future residents surveys.					

Strategic Action Plan

Ref	Action	Relevant aims				
		Plan strategically	Engage the community	Appropriate design principles	Data and insights	Maintenance, safety, care
SA11	As a means of engagement, consider establishing a children and teenager design review panel process to help inform future enhancements at specific sites. This could be trialled as part of future Youth Council events.					
SA12	Ensure the importance of play is promoted and 'mainstreamed' as part of wider health, well-being and physical activity programmes. Identify opportunities where play enhancement (either equipped or more informal opportunities for play) can be incorporated into other initiatives / local development. Key opportunities may include green space enhancements, active travel schemes town centre regeneration schemes and new housing or commercial developments. Ensure any future active travel schemes consider the location of existing play parks and opportunities to provide safer streets and access routes for children to access opportunities for play.					
SA13	Ensure any programmes to enhance signage or wayfinding associated with parks or active travel consider incorporating signage for play.					
SA14	Plan for a periodic review of the play parks infrastructure policy, providing updates where required. This should include updates to play park mapping and accessibility mapping, taking account of sites that have been decommissioned or new play park facilities. Consider maintaining an aspirational five year / annual investment plan, utilising the data set out in this report and future data collected as part of site audits. This should take account of likely costs, to inform budgets and facilitate opportunities to secure funding.					

Delivery & Design Principles

The principles provide the basis of a set of design requirements and standards that could help to shape requirements as part of future policy for new developments (where new play parks or enhancements are required).

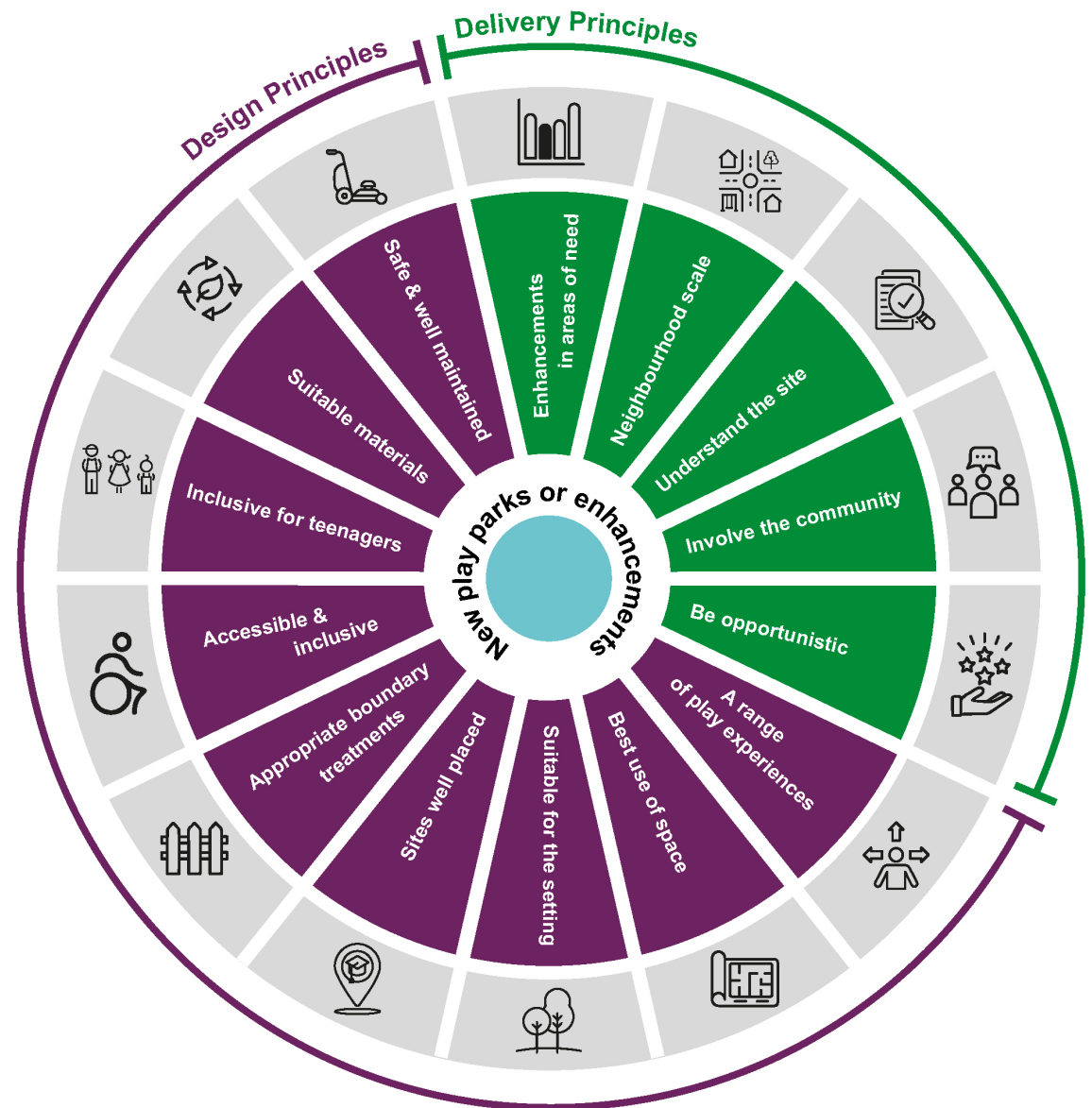
The **delivery** principles focus on the key factors and steps that will likely need to be considered when bringing a project forward through to completion. A high level process plan for delivery is also provided.

The **design** principles provide an outline of the key characteristics and standards that should be achieved for play park design within Doncaster wherever possible:

- The design principles are aspirational and are intended to act as a framework and guide during the project planning process.
- They are intended to encourage consideration of a range of options for creating more rich, varied and inclusive play environments that encourage physical activity.
- The application and relevance of each principle will vary from site to site and may be of greater or less relevance depending on the situation. In applying the principles, decision makers will need to take account of the surrounding local area, existing and potential users of the site and available budgets.
- The design principles – or elements of the design principles - could be shared with suppliers or designers to provide the basis of, or a component of, a brief.

'Children and Young People need to be made more welcome in the public domain, but with so many factors now restricting their access to the outdoors, it is becoming all the more essential that their play spaces provide a far wider range of play activities and environments than they have in the past.' (Play England, Design for Play).

The following pages set out the key **delivery** and **design** principles that should be considered when developing enhancement plans for play parks or designing new play parks. It is recommended that all parties, organisations and partners that manage or help to plan for play parks in Doncaster (such as Parish councils) adopt the principles to help develop a consistent approach to play parks across Doncaster.



Delivery Principles

Prioritise enhancements in areas of most need



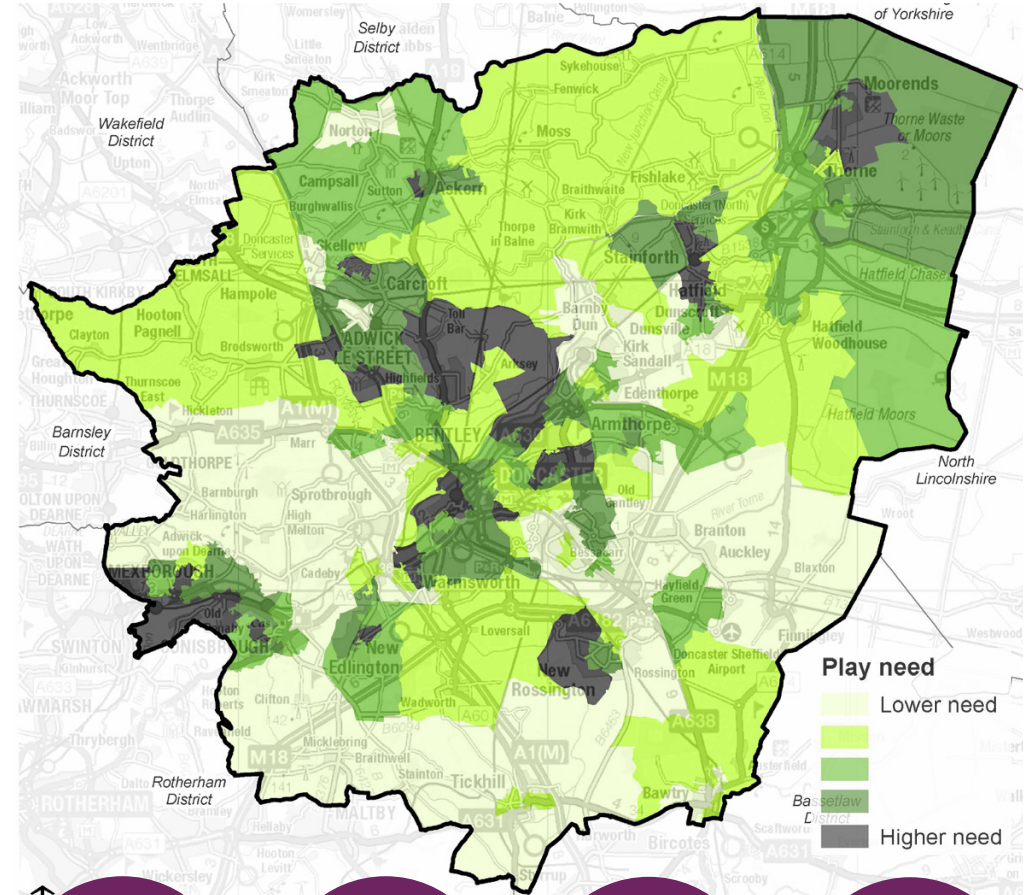
Enhancements to existing play parks and provision of new play parks should be located in areas of most need. City-wide data should be used to highlight areas where investment may be best placed. A range of key data should be used and cross referenced to identify areas with the greatest play needs.

Strategic play need mapping has been undertaken, utilising a bespoke 'play needs index' developed for Doncaster. This combines several nationally available data sets to identify higher and lower relative play need across Doncaster at the scale of small neighbourhood areas. The following data has been incorporated as part of this assessment:

- Proportion of the population under 18
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (health domain)
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Income deprivation affecting children)

The principle should therefore be to prioritise investment and enhancement in areas of highest play need where possible. Although this does not mean play enhancement elsewhere should not be sought and pursued where the opportunity arises. Other local data should be used to complement local assessments of play need and to identify where enhancement projects may be best located, including:

- Access to open space including areas with poor access to open space and where multiple play parks provide access to the same neighbourhood area.
- Play park quality and value data, which should be gathered for all play parks across the .



**Population
under 18 years
of age**



**Deprivation
Indices**



**Access to open
space**



**Site quality
& value**

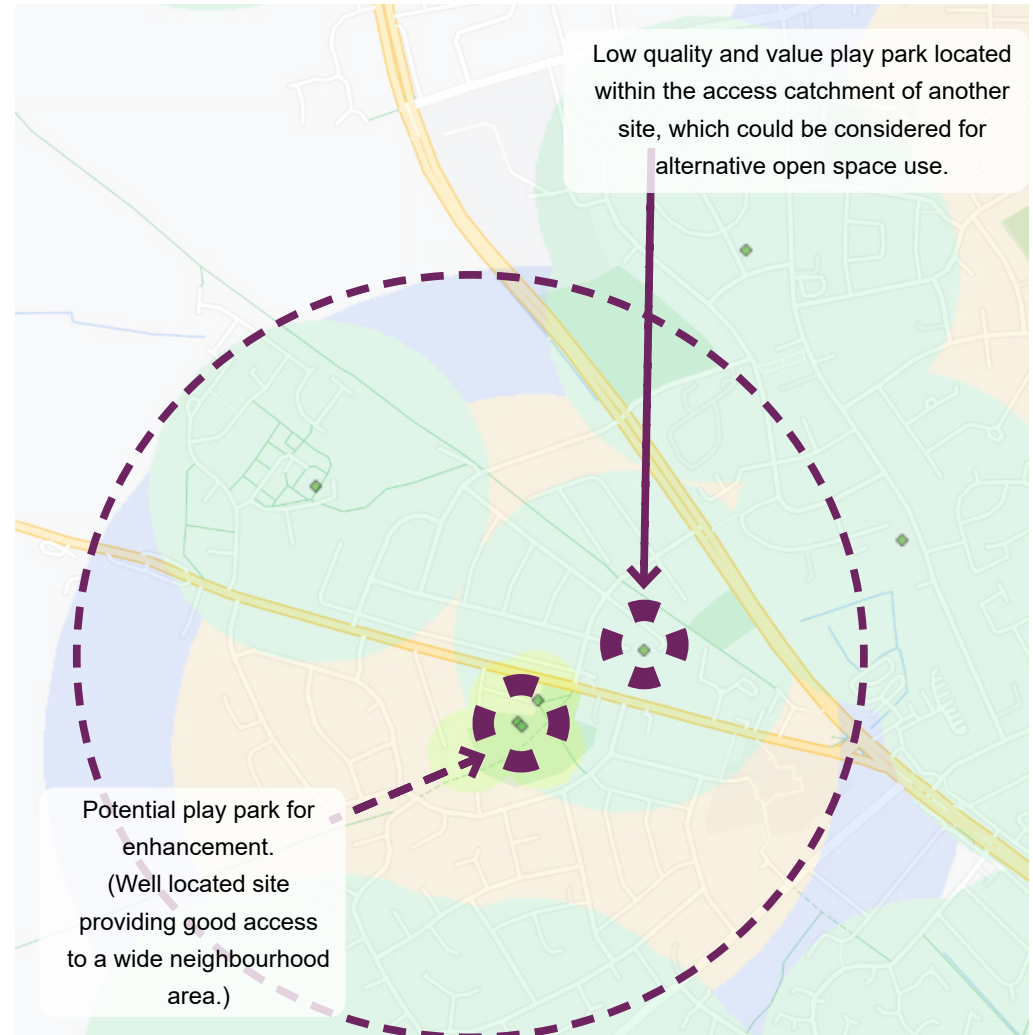
Delivery Principles

Work at a neighbourhood scale



Future enhancement programmes should work towards providing a high quality play park that services each neighbourhood or ward. Following the identification of broad priority areas, work will need to be undertaken to ensure investment in play parks will provide maximum benefits for local communities.

- In some circumstances it may be appropriate to consolidate provision within a local area, decommissioning and removing lower value play parks, and focussing investment on a smaller number of sites to maximise play value; providing a more varied offer on a single site.
- Accessibility mapping has been used to identify areas where multiple equipped play parks are serving similar catchments. Smaller, lower quality and value play parks that are within the catchments of larger sites (that may be better placed to provide a destination play offer) could be considered for removal. In general, play area removal should only be considered alongside enhancement of a play park nearby. Site assessments should be used to ensure a net gain in the overall play value provided in the local area.
- If it is deemed appropriate to decommission any play areas in the future, these areas will be re-instated to some form of informal recreation use (such as grassland for recreation, or a seating area) or an area of accessible nature.



Neighbourhood scale assessments should be undertaken to identify where play park enhancement would be best placed. This should take account of other facilities and sports provision in wider open spaces, with a view to creating destination spaces that cater for a wide range of users and provide a high value offer over a wide neighbourhood area.

Delivery Principles

Understand the site



The following two delivery principles recognise the importance of developing an understanding of a site and its users, or potential users, as part of a design process. This should ideally be undertaken as an early stage in the process.

- Quality and value assessments should be used to guide enhancements and prioritise investment where play provision is currently poor quality (i.e. poor condition equipment and facilities) or low value (i.e. a limited play offer, few facilities, or significant barriers for users and potential users to make best use of the site).
- Sites that are identified for enhancement should be subject to site appraisal to inform the design of the play park. This should take account of the wider site and any other facilities.
- Site appraisals should be guided by the proposed audit approach and take account of the design principles to help identify opportunities to achieve the aspirations set out in the policy.

Involve the community effectively



Communities should be engaged to understand the types of activities and equipment which would most likely meet local needs.

- Ideally this should not just focus on items of fixed play equipment, but the wider play experience, opportunities for exploration and access to nature that can be provided on a site.
- Where possible any consultation should include innovative methods of actively engaging people, particularly young people, with the design. The principle of projects being done with communities not to communities should apply.
- Efforts should be made to involve a wide cross section of the community, including those that are hard to reach – for instance those with limited digital access. Use traffic light, green / red grading or ‘smiley face’ scoring to make evaluative or ‘voting’ processes simple for children to understand.
- Engagement should be cost effective by co-ordinating insight gathering with other community events or activities which will provide a draw for families and young people. Where possible, task adults, agencies, play workers or teachers with experience in working with children to lead on engagement activities.
- Where possible, utilise several engagement methods to add depth and variety to the type of information that can be drawn upon.

Delivery Principles

Be opportunistic



Through ongoing dialogue and cross team communications within CDC and partner organisations, opportunities should be sought to improve the overall play value and offer of play parks in Doncaster. Examples include:

- **Highways works:** highways works on busy roads near parks could include traffic calming measures and/or road crossings to improve safe access to play parks.
- **Active travel:** active travel schemes such as new bike lanes may improve access links to existing parks and present opportunities to create destination play parks as part of a wider active network.
- **Parking:** works to parking areas should aim to incorporate additional disabled parking bays near play spaces and provide appropriate buffers and boundaries between parks and parking areas.
- **Tree felling:** essential tree works nearby play areas may provide material for natural play features (e.g. tree trunks to climb on), or open up areas that can be used for natural play areas as an extension to equipped play facilities.
- **Habitat creation and tree planting:** play park enhancement and re-design may provide the opportunity to provide habitat areas and incorporate tree planting to improve the setting of the site and help meet any tree planting aspirations Doncaster may have in the future.
- **Community hubs and facilities:** the development of new community hubs, children's facilities, schools or retail areas within a local area may provide a new 'audience' that would benefit from an existing play park and help to identify sites where investment would provide significant benefit to a wide range of users.

Wider opportunities to add value & develop playable neighbourhoods



Re-use of felled trees & use of natural materials



Enhancement and access to habitat areas



Tree planting & woodland management

Natural environment



Improving road safety



Enhance & promote active travel options



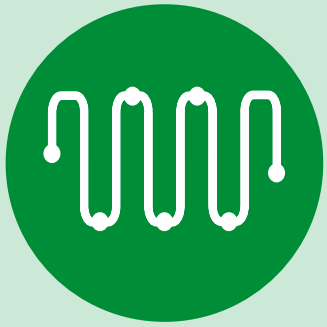
Control parking & provide disabled parking spaces



Community hubs & facilities

Built environment

Delivery Process Plan



The development of a new play park, or enhancements to an existing play park will involve drawing on expert advice (from a landscape architect or reputable play supplier) and the views of the community.

An outline process plan for developing and implementing enhancement plans for play is set out below.

The details, sequence and timing of the delivery process will need to be adapted for individual scenarios, such as any specific requirements associated with external funding or CDC processes. The process plan can be used as a basis for project planning and public communications for play enhancement schemes, and act as a useful starting point when working in co-ordination with project partners.

1. Undertake a site appraisal or engage and landscape architect or designer to do so.

2. Engage the community or youth panel to feed into a brief and to identify issues to be addressed.

3. Obtain designs and proposals from companies (Tender stage) – utilise the play design principles as part of the brief.

4. Appraise designs and proposals against the play parks infrastructure policy requirements and with regards to cost.

5. Appoint contractor. CDC procurement requirements will apply.

6. Minor adjustments to the design and opportunities for other interventions identified as part of community engagement.

7. Temporary signage installed and communications about works undertaken; providing updates to residents during the implementation stage as required.



Design Principles

Provide choice and a range of play experiences



This principle recognises the value in providing a wide choice of play opportunities on a single site, and to provide opportunities for different types of play (imaginative, physical and social play). A wider range of play affordances within a play park will meet the needs of a wider range of users, encourage children to play for longer and engage in a wider range of physical activities.

- Provide opportunities for a range of physical activities, including running, hopping, jumping, rocking, swinging, sliding, climbing, balancing, stretching and reaching, rotating, hanging, rolling, hiding and crawling. Play areas should also provide opportunities for resting.
- Include opportunities for risk taking and challenge such as balancing features / assault courses.
- Choose equipment which provides excitement and a sense of achievement.
- Ensure play equipment and the overall layout of the site is engaging and promotes imaginative and social play. This may include the use of 'themed' play areas or equipment.
- Ensure other engaging and sensory items are integrated into play features such as sound making, counting, touching & viewing.
- Avoid overly prescriptive equipment and choose pieces which can be used in different ways by different ages and abilities.
- Provide a range of opportunities for social play, imaginative play and physical play for all ages and abilities.

Key tools

Review the type and range of play affordances offered by individual pieces of equipment during the design process to assess multifunctionality and the types of play (imaginative, physical, social) that would be offered.

Prioritise quality over quantity, for example, choosing one large, multifunctional piece of equipment will likely provide a higher cost-value ratio as opposed to a few single use pieces of equipment.

Identify opportunities to encourage informal and natural play in the surrounding area to add to the range of physical activities children can undertake such as trails through woodland areas, slopes and felled tree trunks for climbing.

Provide social seating for children, teenagers and adults that is well placed to provide informal oversight. Where possible include quiet areas for children to retreat to and where they can observe activity.

Design Principles

Make best use of space



Ensure the best use of space is delivered in more confined sites or enclosed play parks where spacing and orientation of equipment will need to adhere to fall space and safety standards (BS EN 1176).

Key tools

Maximise floor space by using playful markings on wet pour and safety surfacing. Marking could suggest routes through the sites, numbered markings, hop-scotch or jumping pads.

Utilise boundary fences or awkward left-over space for narrow features such as play panels or noise makers.



Jumping mounds incorporated into safety surfacing, making best use of space.

Suitable for the setting / integrated into the site

- Choose a scale of equipment which is appropriate to the scale of the site.
- Ensure the play area contributes to and does not detract from the site's character. Play park design should be functional but attractive and appropriate to the context of the site.
- Incorporate and utilise natural elements as playful features.

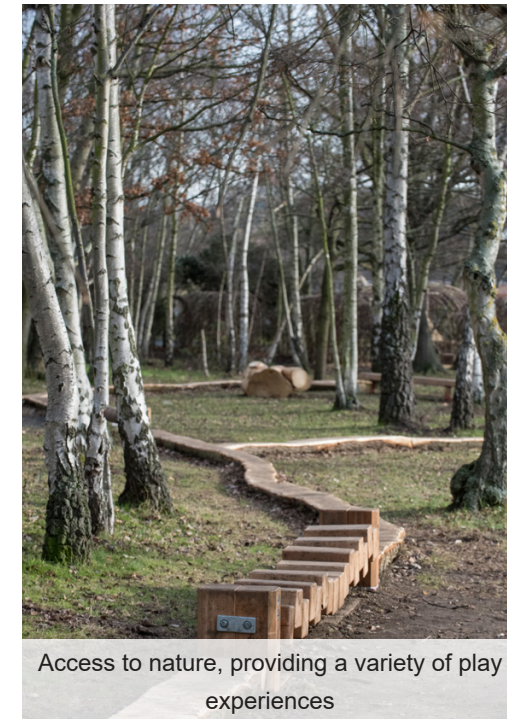


Key tools

Make use of natural elements, such as felled trees, and integrate with surrounding natural features, for example woodland and copses.

Where possible, use low maintenance planting and trees to add interest, create a welcoming feel and help define areas used for play.

Integrate features into the topography of the site for example placing slides on natural slopes or to banks to mark the perimeter of the site. Adding land forming such mounds where possible to provide additional play opportunities (i.e. for rolling, crawling, running, hiding etc.).



Access to nature, providing a variety of play experiences

Applying Design Principles in Practice



Vertical features such as sound makers increase choice & variety and make best use of available space.



Access to natural areas and opportunities for exploration, providing a wider range of play experiences.



Play features well integrated into a wider open space & designed for the site. Including the use of appropriate materials, incorporating natural slopes and existing planting.



Themed play equipment promotes imaginative play.

Design Principles

Sites are well placed



- New play areas or play area upgrades should seek to meet a local need. The location of existing play facilities should be one of many factors that influence identification of priority sites for enhancement.
- New play parks should be placed where people are most likely to use them frequently and be convenient to use. A well-used play park is likely to increase sense of safety and security overall.
- Sites should be located near the entrances of sites they are within and be well connected to any walking and cycling routes, bus stops and routes to disabled parking bays.
- New play areas should be placed to make the most of any natural surveillance.
- Where possible, new play parks should be placed within easy walking distance of other community hubs and areas of activity. This may include routes to and from schools, nearby existing community facilities (such as community centres, shops, cafés etc.).
- Sites should ideally include spaces with sun and shade or be near areas that provide shade.

Appropriate boundary treatments



- Where possible, avoid fixed boundaries around play parks, particularly for older children. This provides a flexible layout and will allow for easy expansion or replacement of equipment in the future. It will also promote the spill out of playful activities beyond the equipped area, encouraging increased run around space, interactions with nature and imaginative play.
- Where fenced boundaries are installed and retained, make the most of these as additional playful features through the introduction of cognitive, sensory and tactile play panels.
- Explore alternative ways of demarcating formal play areas, for example through mounds, stepped and vegetated edges. These in themselves can be playful features or act as areas for resting.
- Play parks should maintain a suitable minimum separation distance between the main activity area and any residential dwellings. This is to promote informal oversight but also create space where children are free to play and do not feel they are encroaching on private space, reducing the possibility of conflict.
- Appropriate boundaries should be provided between play areas, roads, car parks and other features which present a safety concern or a detracting feature. The type of boundary will depend on the location but will likely include fences and bollards. Where possible planting (such as tree planting and hedging) should be used to soften boundaries whilst also maintaining good visibility and sight lines.

Design Principles

Accessible and inclusive for all



- All new play parks and enhancements to play parks should include provision that is accessible and meets the needs of people with disabilities.
- Developing proposals for play parks should be based on the social model of disability which identifies that disability is a result of the barriers faced by individuals with varying needs (which may be physical, sensory, learning or medical considerations). This definition of disability recognises that it is not the individuals needs that create the disability but the way in which society responds to those needs.
- Play parks should offer opportunities for children of multiple ages and abilities to play together, not to feel segregated into different zones or on different pieces of equipment. Accessible play parks should incorporate fully accessible equipment which is fun and engaging to all abilities, allowing an intersection of children to play all at once. This will provide opportunities for those with disabilities to play alongside siblings, friends and carers.
- Play parks should offer opportunities for motor, sensory and mental inclusion within the play area for those who are less able.
- Access routes within open spaces, including from key entrances and car parks, should meet recognised standards for wheelchair access. Surfacing and sloped access should be designed to be even and low maintenance.
- Disabled parking bays should ideally be provided nearby to play parks, whether these are designated in adjoining car parks or nearby street parking.
- The design of play parks should incorporate features that provide for and accommodate children with additional needs, including learning needs and autism. This can include providing quiet and cosy spaces for when senses are overwhelmed, as well as observation points to allow children to observe others playing until they feel comfortable joining in. By creating zones for different energy levels, it provides those who find it difficult to socialise opportunities to join in when feeling confident but to recede when needed.
- Key equipment and characteristics that should be considered include bucket swings, spaces to feel cocooned, opportunities to develop spatial awareness, wheelchair accessible seating areas, roundabouts at floor level, and climbing equipment that incorporates wide ramps.

Applying Design Principles in Practice



Fully accessible equipment, providing an inclusive play experience where children can play together.



Play provision located near where people live with good oversight. Multifunctional seating for children and adults providing a boundary for the site and an additional climbing feature.



Boulders provide a boundary feature, whilst also providing additional opportunities for play and physical activity.



Play provision located nearby other community facilities.



Accessible and inclusive provision

Design Principles

Inclusive teenage provision



- Play parks and wider zones for play and sport within open spaces should design out features which may exclude older children and teenagers from using the site for play.
- Site design and layout should consider the needs of girls and young women and aim to reduce features that may exclude them from open space and parks. Clear sight lines, and opportunities to move from being active and performative, to observing and being social should be incorporated into enhancement plans.
- Site designs and choice of equipment should recognise that older children and teenagers should be provided with a choice of challenging fixed and moving equipment. Ball games areas should not always be the default provision for teenage provision as this is unlikely to provide for the needs of all users.

Key tools

Generous social space with a range of seating options that allows teenagers to hang out in smaller groups adjacent to areas with an activity focus.

Activity areas could include robust structures for exercise or hanging off, adventurous structures, wheeled sports areas and performance spaces.

Focus enhancements for teenage provision on sites which already have street lighting and safety features.

Multi Use Games Areas should maintain sense of safety and sight lines, being partially fenced (i.e. not a full 'cage') or with low fencing with observation areas / seating around the edges, creating a multifunctional space for a wider range of users.



Design Principles

Suitable materials



- Timber equipment has proved to be a maintenance issue and has been shown to be a draw for vandalism. Therefore, it is essential that the materials which are chosen are durable and robust.
- Where possible, equipment should be recycled and / or use recyclable materials.
- Aim to work with play suppliers who calculate sustainability data / carbon footprint assessments for their products.



Easily replaced timber elements that are combined with more robust metal elements.



Robust materials offering high play value.

Safe and well maintained



- Avoid the installation of dog grids which trap litter and can become a maintenance issue. Where existing play parks are being enhanced, consider the removal and infill of grids.
- Where fenced play areas are used, avoid short mown grass at the boundary edge which may require additional maintenance operations e.g. strimming or spraying off grass edges. Instead, consider hard surfacing lips / paths around the edge of the play area, or create meadow edges to the play area both encouraging wildlife and interactions with nature.
- Any landscaping or planting should be robust, low maintenance and designed to withstand wear and tear from play activities.
- Litter bins should be provided within, or within easy reach of, the play park. Include information about recycling and litter control as part of signage.