

CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR EQUIPPED PLAY PROVISION

Provision for Children and Young People

The primary purpose of these areas, as defined by PPG17, is to provide areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.

PPG17 states that the broad objective of these areas is to ensure that children and young people have opportunities to interact with their peers and learn social and movement skills within their home environment, whilst not creating a nuisance for other residents or appear threatening to passers-by. It advocates a mix of carefully located facilities such as equipped play areas with passive supervision from nearby houses, teenage shelters, located slightly out of the way, and more natural areas in which children and young people can take part in energetic activities.

The provision of these areas within South Somerset is guided by the Council's following strategies and policies:

- Play Policy
- Play Strategy (2007 – 12) which aims to increase the quality and quantity of play opportunities in South Somerset
- Young People Strategy (2006 – 12) which aims to bring real improvements to the leisure opportunities available to young people
- Saved Local Plan Policies CR2 and 3
- Open Spaces Strategy

Due to the importance of these areas within South Somerset, the Council has prepared two separate sub sections of this typology:

- Provision for children
- Provision for young people.

Provision for Children

Whilst it is recognized that children play in a variety of open spaces, this section is only concerned with outdoor equipped play areas. Many of the other areas that children play are included within the Open Spaces Strategy and Playing Pitch section.

Within South Somerset, these equipped play areas are either found: as stand alone sites in housing developments; as part of a larger area of informal recreational greenspace; or as part of a larger site with a range of formal sports facilities. The type of equipped play areas follow the Fields in Trust hierarchy of Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).¹ The council has also developed a destination, or flagship play area at Yeovil Recreation Centre.

The key issues arising from the review of the Council's Play Policy, which seeks to increase the quantity, and enhance the quality, of children's play opportunities, are:

- To create and support play opportunities that allow children and young people to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment within challenging

¹ Fields in Trust – Planning and Design for Open Space and Play, 2008 – LAP – Local Area for Play; LEAP – Local Equipped Area for Play; NEAP – Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play.

settings, free from unacceptable levels of risk, regardless of race, economic and social circumstances, gender or range of abilities

- That every child needs opportunities to play
- That South Somerset's play provision will be based on the principle of empowering the child and increasing their choices
- That children are entitled to play safely in a wide range of public spaces, including those in proximity to their homes
- The council recognises that play environments must be properly maintained
- The council intends that all play provision shall meet the needs of disabled children within inclusive provision
- The council has developed seven play provision objectives which form the basis against which play provision can be evaluated
- That the criteria for an enriched play environment are taken into account when planning, designing and maintaining play places. This will require a new emphasis on the natural environment, materials and play friendly art works and structures
- That children and young people's views shall be sought and taken into account when making decisions about their play opportunities where appropriate
- The council wants to ensure that all children and young people have reasonable access to range of play opportunities within a practical journey from their home taking account of their different needs

The key issues arising from the review of the Council's Play Strategy are:

- The Council has adopted the following definition of play: "Play is freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child... Play can be fun or serious. Through play, children explore social, material and imaginary worlds and their relationship with them, elaborating all the while, a flexible range of responses to the challenges they encounter."²
- To ensure that the Council's Best Play Objectives and Enriched Play Environment Criteria form and integral part of the design brief when assessing, developing or improving play environments
- To ensure that resources are targeted to the areas of greatest need for play improvements
- To ensure that adequate resources are made available for maintenance
- To create a Flagship Play Space
- To ensure that the Play Policy and associated guidelines are fully incorporated and adopted into other council policies

The council has a long history of support for equipped play areas, primarily through working in partnership with local town and parish councils. It has a long running grants programme and has also provided extra capital funding and obtained lottery funding to develop new, and enhance existing areas throughout the district. The council's Play and Youth Facilities team provide advice on play and youth facility development and management, organise training, and carry out risk assessments and inspections. The council has also been successful in obtaining funding towards equipped play areas from Section 106 agreements.

In 2009, the council opened its first flagship, or destination, playground at Yeovil Recreation Ground with the intention of creating an area that would be a model of good play space design.

² Source – Best Play (2001)

Identifying Local Needs and Opportunities

The **Open Spaces User Survey** used to support the development of this PPG17 assessment and strategy identified the following needs:

- Parks and public gardens were the most popular type of open space visited by residents
- Only 5% of respondents stated using a playground as their reason for visiting an open space.
- In relation to the open space that respondents used the most, 39% rated facilities for children and young people as excellent or good
- Formal parks and public gardens were the 5th most popular type of open space that residents would like to see more of
- The overall impression of quality for the features that are provided within open spaces is good with an average satisfaction rating of 72.4%.

The data for **NI 199 for Somerset for 2009/10** shows that 52% of children and young people were satisfied with parks and play areas. This represented an improvement from 2008/09 of 6%.

Respondents to the Council's Sport and Recreation Needs survey in 2004, identified local parks and recreation grounds as the most visited type of facility in the last 12 months, out of 46 different facilities.

Consultation with children and young people³ identified that 61% of respondents were happy or very happy with local outdoor recreation facilities.

Audit of Local Provision

This section identifies the baseline of provision for children. There are 144 sites with children's play provision within South Somerset, provided via the public sectors and local management committees.

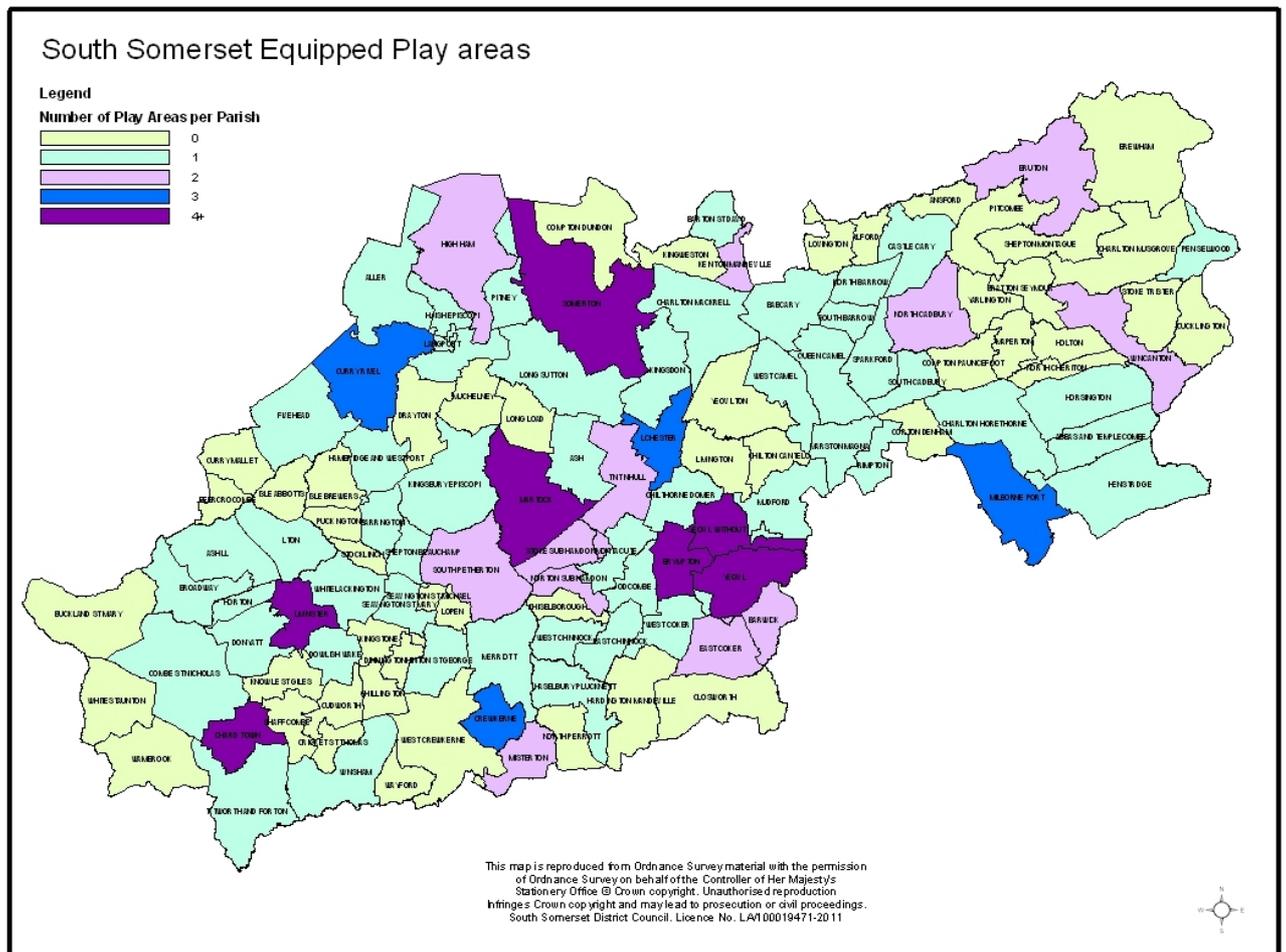
In conducting the audit of children's play provision, the Authority has used the following supply parameters/definition:

- Sites must include an outdoor equipped area for play
- The equipped play area must be free and fully accessible at all appropriate times i.e. equipped play areas on privately owned sites such as pubs or tourist attractions are excluded
- Equipped play areas should be a minimum size of 100 m2.

Map 1 identifies the number of play areas across the district by parish.

³ South Somerset Sport and Recreation Built Facilities Assessment Report consultation – KKP, 2006

Map 1: District wide Existing Equipped Play Area Sites



Quantitative Audit

The following tables list the number of play areas and their total size⁴ for each village, town or parish by area. If the equipped play area is part of a larger area of informal recreational space and is not defined by a fence, or other boundaries e.g. a hedge, then an appropriate play zone (or useful area of play space⁵) has been determined for each area.

The Fields in Trust definition of a Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area (NEAP)⁶, includes provision for hard surfaced areas for ball play and wheeled activities. Within South Somerset, although youth facilities are often on the same site as a play area, they are usually in a separate area. This enables the equipped play areas and their useful area of play space, and the individual youth facilities to be measured and audited separately. Small kickabout walls within NEAP play areas have been included within this section and not audited as youth facilities.

⁴ Measurements have been taken using the Council's Webmap package – 2010.

⁵ Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, Fields in Trust, 2008

⁶ Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, Fields in Trust, 2008

Table 1: Audit Summary for Area North

Parish / town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)		Parish / town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)
Aller	1	1490		Langport	1	1095
Ash	1	1830		Long Load	0	0
Barrington	1	1055		Long Sutton	1	930
Beercrocombe	0	0		Lopen	0	0
Chilthorne Domer	1	920		Martock	4	6545
Compton Dundon	0	0		Montacute	1	2300
Curry Mallet	0	0		Muchelney	0	0
Curry Rivel	3	2760		Norton sub Hamdon	2	1100
Drayton	0	0		Pitney	1	780
Fivehead	1	485		Puckington	0	0
Hambridge and Westport	1	1494		Seavington St Mary	1	1380
High Ham	2	2664		Seavington St Michael	0	0
Huish Episcopi	1	850		Shepton Beauchamp	1	760
Ilton	1	510		Somerton	4	3575
Isle Abbots	0	0		South Petherton	2	2045
Isle Brewers	0	0		Stocklinch	0	0
Kingsbury Episcopi	1	1640		Stoke sub Hamdon	2	1720
				Tintinhull	2	4147
				Total	36 sites	42,075 m2

Table 2: Audit Summary for Area East

Parish /town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)		Parish	No of play areas	Total size (m2)
Abbas and Templecombe	1	2750		Lovington	0	0
Alford	0	0		Maperton	0	0
Ansford / Castle Cary	1	2290		Marston Magna	1	870
Babcary	1	615		Milborne Port	3	2633
Barton St David	1	770		Mudford	1	770
Bratton Seymour	0	0		North Barrow	1	450
Brewham	0	0		North Cadbury	1	1210
Bruton	2	2085		North Cheriton	0	0
Charlton Horethorne	1	125		Penselwood	1	785
Charlton Mackrell	1	1080		Pitcombe	0	0
Charlton Musgrove	0	0		Queen Camel	1	1710
Chilton Cantelo	0	0		Rimpton	1	1313
Compton Pauncefoot	0	0		Shepton Montague	0	0
Corton Denham	0	0		South Barrow	1	1215
Cucklington	0	0		South Cadbury	1	840
Galhampton (North Cadbury Parish)	1	815		Sparkford	1	1280
Henstridge	1	805		Stoke Trister	0	0
Holton	0	0		West Camel	1	1370
Horsington	1	1020		Wincanton	2	5000
Ilchester	3	1910		Yarlington	0	0
Keinton Mandeville	2	1340		Yeovilton	0	0
Kingsdon	1	540		Total	33 sites	35,596 m2
Kingweston	0	0				
Limington	0	0				

Table 3: Audit Summary for Area West

Parish / town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)		Parish / town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)
Ashill	1	665		Hinton St George	1	930
Broadway	1	1165		Horton	1	1476
Buckland St Mary	0	0		Ilminster	4	4380
Chaffcombe	0	0		Kingstone	0	0
Chard	10	10536		Knowle St Giles	0	0
Chillington	0	0		Merriott	1	2813
Chiselborough	0	0		Misterton	2	300
Combe St Nicholas	1	1906		North Perrott	0	0
Crewkerne	3	1841		Tatworth	1	1695
Cricket St Thomas	0	0		Wambrook	0	0
Cudworth	0	0		Wayford	0	0
Dinington	0	0		West Chinnock	1	100
Donyatt	1	780		Whitelackington	1	520
Dowlish Wake	1	2415		Whitestaunton	0	0
East Chinnock	1	1120		Winsham	1	1560
Haselbury Plucknett	1	2790				
				Total	33 sites	37,927 m2

Table 4: Audit Summary for Area South

Parish / town	No of play areas	Total size (m2)
Barwick	2	1960
East Coker	2	1410
Odcombe	1	1460
West Coker	1	715
Yeovil	36	42,160
Total	42 sites	47,705 m2

Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 show that there is a total of **144** outdoor equipped play areas in South Somerset covering a total area of **163,303 m2** in 2010.

Qualitative and Accessibility Audit

The Council carried out a comprehensive audit of all the equipped play areas within the district in 2010. The audit assessed sites under 5 main areas: location and access; the council's play objectives; the council's enriched play environment criteria; condition and infrastructure. This has provided valuable information on the current quality, accessibility and play value of each equipped play area, and enabled each site to be given an overall score, as well as separate scores for access and quality.

Setting Provision Standards

In determining standards of provision, PPG 17 states that local standards of open space provision should include:

- A **quantitative** component (how much new provision may be needed). This is generally expressed in terms of the number of people served by each facility type (e.g. number of ha or m² / 1,000 people).
- A **qualitative** component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing sites). The development of objective, measurable quality standards is important in determining where improvements are most needed. Quality standards can obviously vary according to the primary and secondary purposes of different forms of provision and their level within any adopted hierarchy of provision.
- An **accessibility** component (principally concerned with distance thresholds to a site). For local authorities serving both urban and rural areas, both urban and rural distance thresholds may be used.

Setting a Quantity Standard

Saved Policy CR2 from the Local Plan identifies a quantity standard for outdoor equipped children's play provision of 0.2ha per 1,000 population, based on the NPFA Six Acre Standard. In calculating the standard for equipped play space and youth facilities, the Council apportioned the 0.3 hectares / 1000 standard provided for under LP CR 2 to provide:

- 0.2 hectares / 1000 for equipped play space for young children.
- 0.1 hectares / 1000 for youth facilities for older children.

Saved Policy CR2 also states that sheltered housing schemes, rest homes, special needs housing and developments of one bedroom dwellings will be exempt from this standard but will be expected to provide informal open space. Provision should be made for future maintenance to ensure its continued availability as outdoor playing space.

In order to update the quantity standard of square metres/hectares of equipped play space per 1,000 population, the authority has assessed 3 different methodologies using a population of 161,033 (ONS, 2009), unless otherwise stated:

- Comparing the quantity of equipped play space in the District, as outlined in Tables 1, 2,3 and 4 with the current population.
- Comparing the current level of provision with the current standard
- Comparing the current level of provision of equipped play space with National Standards.

The current Fields in Trust (previously NPFA) standard for designated playing space, including equipped play space and facilities for young people is 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population.⁷

Table 5 shows the results emerging from each methodology.

⁷ Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play, Fields in Trust, 2008

Table 5: Quantity Standard Comparisons

Methodology		Equivalent Standards		
		Size (sq m / ha)	Sq m / ha per 1,000	Sq m per person
1	Current Supply to Current Population	163,303sq m 15.961 ha	1014 sq m 0.1014 ha	1.014 sq m 0.0001 ha
2	Saved Local Plan Standard		2000 sq m 0.2 ha	2 sq m 0.0002 ha
3	National Benchmarks – Fields in Trust		2500 sq m 0.25ha	2.5 sq m 0.00025 ha

These results are then assessed against the local community views as to the adequacy and details of levels and types of use. Table 5 shows that the current supply is approximately half the current standard. Based on the outcomes of all these results, it is recommended that the basis for the standard is maintained at 2000 sq m per 1,000. Apportioning the new Fields in Trust Standard, would then give a standard of 500 sq m per 1,000 for youth facilities.

Proposed quantity standard: 2,000 sq m of equipped play space per 1,000 population

Setting a Quality Standard

The Quality Standard is derived from the factors assessed in the 2010 Play Audit, and also reflects the views and aspirations of the local community. Improvements to the quality of some of the existing sites were highlighted in the consultation for this report.

The current National Standards that apply to the quality of outdoor equipped areas for play are:

- BS EN 1176 and 1177, (2008)
- Fields in Trust guidance

It is therefore recommended that the following quality factors should apply.

Proposed quality standard:	<p>Outdoor play equipment will comply with BS EN 1176 and 1177</p> <p>Outdoor equipped play areas should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be in at least 'good' condition • fulfil the Council's Seven Play Provision Objectives • fulfil the Council's criteria for an Enriched Play Environment. <p>Good condition is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well maintained, with no signs of neglect • Having appropriate infrastructure
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Setting a Catchment and Accessibility Standard

Catchment Standard

Catchment areas provide a means of identifying the extent to which there is adequate geographical coverage of the District. Because propensity to travel varies between individuals, recreation planners normally apply the concept of 'effective catchment' defined as the travel time / distance 75%-80% of facility users are prepared to travel. Mode of transport is also important, and both of these aspects may differ between users living in rural and urban areas of the district.

Provision for children and young people should be located where they will be accessible on foot or by bicycle. It is particularly important to consider any barriers to access (or severance factors) such as busy roads, or railways.

The Open Spaces User Survey yielded valuable information on the travel time travelled to use open spaces, and the mode of transport used. **Table 6** shows that 73.4 % of respondents travelled less than 10 minutes to open spaces, whilst **Table 7** shows that the preferred mode of travel is by foot, with 55.4% of respondents walking to open spaces.

Table 6: Resident Access Findings – Travel Time

How long does it take you to travel to the open space you use most?	% response
Less than 5 minutes	52.2
6 – 10 minutes	21.2
11 – 20 minutes	15.2
21 – 30 minutes	8
31 – 60 minutes	3.4

Table 7: Resident Access Findings – Travel Mode

When visiting an open space, how do you get there?	% response
Walk	55.4
Drive	35.8
Bus	2.6
Cycle	5
Other	1.2

The Sport and Recreation Community Needs Survey yielded valuable information on the typical travel distances travelled to use outdoor sport and recreation facilities. **Table 8** shows that only 3.8% of respondents were prepared to travel more than 10 miles to outdoor recreation facilities.

Table 8: Resident Access Findings – Travel Distance

How close to home do you think recreation facilities should be provided?	Outdoor Facilities % response
Less than 1 mile	13.6
1 - 5 miles	29.6
5 - 10 miles	9.5
More than 10 miles	3.8

Table 9 identifies the distance thresholds for catchment areas for different types of play areas proposed by the Fields in Trust, and these are currently used by the council. Catchment areas for Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are not shown as the Council is no longer promoting these as areas for equipped play, as these are primarily unequipped areas for informal play

within 1 minute walking distance, and the provision for these areas is covered in the council's Open Spaces Strategy.

Table 9: Fields in Trust Distance Thresholds for Catchment Areas

Type of Space	Distance Criteria (metres)	
	Walking distance	Straight line distance
Local equipped, or landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs)	400	240
Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people (NEAPs)	1000	600

Based on these outcomes, and the aim in the Council's Young People Strategy that all children and young people have reasonable access to a range of leisure opportunities within a practical journey from their home taking account of their different needs, it is recommended that the Fields in Trust catchment standards in **Table 9** are adopted.

Accessibility Standard

In terms of accessibility, the 2010 Play Area Audits incorporated several elements which measured the location and access of the play areas, and all play areas were given a rating. It is therefore recommended that the following accessibility standard be adopted:

<p>Proposed catchment and accessibility standards:</p>	<p>Catchment areas (straight line distances):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAPs – 240m • NEAPs – 600m <p>Outdoor equipped areas for play should have at least 'good' access.</p> <p>Good access is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having required buffer zones between its boundaries and neighbouring dwellings • having good informal oversight by adults • being appropriately located to safely serve children and young people • accessible by foot and/or bicycle • providing play opportunities that are equally accessible for all • having no barriers that unduly inhibit the reasonable access of the play area by the general public and the play area operator
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Setting a Minimum Acceptable Size Standard and Buffer Zones

Minimum activity and buffer zones are recommended by the Fields in Trust. Using these as a basis and studying the character and size of existing equipped play areas in South Somerset, it is recommended that the following minimum acceptable size standards and buffer zones be adopted. Minimum acceptable size standards for Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are not shown as the Council is no longer promoting these as areas for equipped play, as these are primarily unequipped areas for informal play within 1 minute walking distance, and the provision for these areas is covered in the council's Open Spaces Strategy.

Type of Space	Minimum acceptable size (activity zone):	Minimum buffer zones (from activity zone to boundary of nearest dwelling)	Minimum buffer zones (from activity zone to habitable room facade of nearest dwelling)
LEAP	500 square metres*	20m	30m
NEAP	1200 square metres*	30m	40m

*It is also crucial to consider the actual **dimensions** of the equipped play area, for example a dimension of a 25m x 25m LEAP would be more acceptable than a 5m x 100m layout. The shape of the equipped play area should be in context with the setting, for example, an irregular shape in an informal setting.