



Horsham
District
Council

Guide to inclusive spaces for young people



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Introduction

The objective of this guide is to ensure that the needs of young people, including girls and young women under 18, are reflected in the creation of play and leisure spaces across the District.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Horsham District Council Open Space, Sports & Recreation Review (OSSR). The OSSR is an assessment of open space typologies within the District. In 2021, it identified that provision for young people (12-18 years old) had the largest deficit of all typologies.

To address this deficit, it is a requirement for all new development within the minimum threshold to provide Play and Leisure opportunities for young people. Developments of 46+ dwellings in large settlements must deliver 0.4m² per person. For small settlements, this is 60+ dwellings, delivering 0.2m² per person. Refer to Policy 3 of the Horsham District Planning Framework for the settlement list.

The OSSR identifies that current play provision for young people includes facilities such as skate parks, BMX tracks and MUGAs. However, a wide body of international research suggests that these facilities are male coded and dominated by boys, thus leaving young girls without play and leisure provision. In addition, the biggest concern for girls, teens and young women regarding open spaces is their safety, which is further substantiated by the findings of the Horsham District Council Task & Finish Group Report.

These findings demonstrate that it is essential for open space provision to respond to the needs of all members of the local community, particularly young women and teens who are not well represented or catered for. As a result, while open space provision within the District must be compliant with the OSSR, moving forward, designs must aim to adhere to the following design criteria and hierarchy to ensure play and leisure provision is of a high quality, feels safe, and is well used.

Design hierarchy

There are five steps to make outdoor spaces popular and feel safe:

1

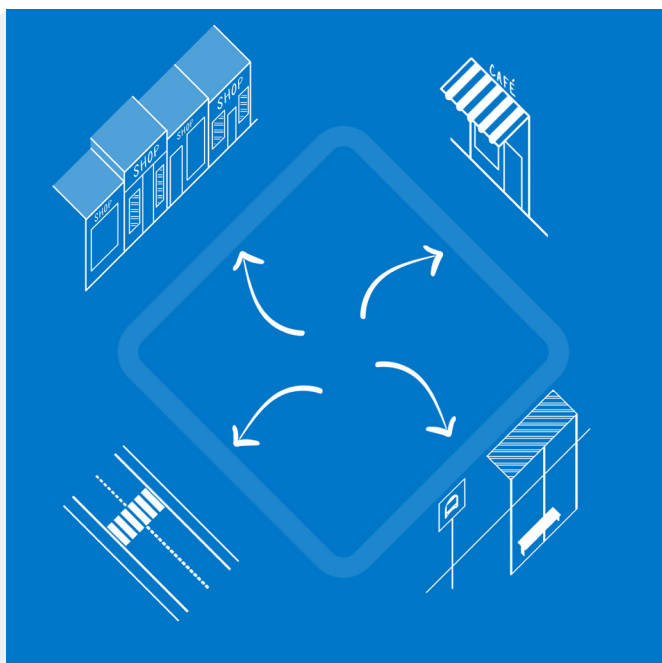
Location and access

Whether a standalone feature or as part of a wider park, **a well used space is a safe space**. Where it's located makes all the difference to its adoption and as a result, foot traffic should be the first consideration when designing play and leisure spaces.

The ideal location is in a position with clear lines of sight to local **amenities** such as shops, cafés, libraries or police stations. Another important factor is links to **public transport** such as bus stops and schools, so that play and leisure can be combined with regular journeys. At minimum,

play and leisure provision should be located near to the **local community**.

To ensure the space is **inclusive** to all, it should be accessible for people with disabilities (openings of minimum 1.5m and a maximum gradient of 1:20).



Design hierarchy

continued

2

Lighting and layout

Lines of sight are a common theme found in focus groups and wider research – clear visibility across a space and the wider context of the location should be factored into designs to ensure people can see and be seen.

There should be **clear signage** so it's easily found, with multiple entry and exit points so that users feel reassured that they're safe.



Ambient lighting and social seating in Frizon, Umeå

Trees and planting contribute to overall wellbeing, however dense vegetation should be avoided to limit dark spots where visibility is reduced. **Ambient lighting** during dark hours also contributes to feelings of safety, minimising bright lights and therefore contrasting areas of darkness. This should be wildlife friendly and ensure no upward light spill.



Space division in Roffey Numuga

Young people can sometimes feel intimidated by a large group taking over a space. **Dividing areas** into separate zones can deter this from happening by encouraging more than one group of people to use the space at any one time. This can be done in many creative ways, such as changes in level, water features, planting and stages.

Design hierarchy

continued

3

Equipment

Girls and young women like to socialise while playing and exercising, so equipment should reflect this.

Seating areas should **allow people to face each other**, whether it be through curved or modular benches, scramble nets or stepping stones/logs. Outdoor gym and exercise equipment should be arranged to **encourage conversation**, rather than in a line.



See-saw swings at the Anna C. Verna Playground, Philadelphia

More **challenging**, age appropriate equipment should also be provided. Accessibility must also be factored in, with the addition of inclusive equipment. To make sure that the space can be used in all weather conditions throughout the year, **shelter** should be provided, particularly in conjunction with seating.

Other requested opportunities for play and leisure include:



Social seating in Rowntree Park, York

- Bigger swings for teens, positioned away from younger, child swings
- In-ground trampolines
- Zip lines
- Climbing walls
- Obstacle courses
- Higher climbing frames
- Stages for music/dance
- Walking loops

Design hierarchy

continued

4

Facilities

Outside of the UK, **public toilets** are a common feature in many open spaces, encouraging girls, young women and disabled people to feel welcome and allow them to stay for any length of time. To encourage longer and more frequent use, it is strongly recommended to include toilets as well as **drinking water** facilities as part of play and leisure provision. Cycle parking also helps attract people, if not already provided elsewhere.

Refreshment Station in Horsham Park



Young people have requested phone charging points and pre-bookable lockers in addition. For reassurance, and to help girls and young women feel safe, spaces should also include **help points** with quick access to assistance as well as CCTV.

5

Management and maintenance

A clean, functioning space signifies that it is well used, valued and safe. As such, the maintenance is almost as important as the design itself. **Regular inspections** must be made as well as signage provided to invite **regular feedback** and report issues.

To increase feelings of safety in girls and young women, there should be presence of informal authority figures and **local patrols**, as well as organised group activities.



Feedback sign in Cherokee Park, Kentucky

Quality checklist

The number of dwellings to warrant social and play provision for young people are:

- 46+ for developments located in a large settlement
- 60+ for developments located in a small settlement

The minimum area required is 100m², however equipment and facilities do not necessarily need to be limited to one area and can be successfully assimilated within a wider open space.

Provision should be separate to LAPs and LEAPs, however if a NEAP is proposed, it can be located within or adjacent to an older children activity area. Where space allows, provision of inclusively designed MUGAs, pump tracks and skate parks are required and each have their own specific design criteria. Please refer to the OSSR for more information.

The checklist on the following pages outline the minimum requirements for young people provision, as well as good quality design features considered to reflect their needs. While developments should aim to incorporate as many good quality design features as possible, they should be context dependent and factor in other local provision.

Please visit [this link](#) to access this checklist as a table online.

Quality checklist

continued

1 Location and access

Minimum requirement

- Positioned within amenity greenspace in proximity to public transport
- Close to pedestrian routes to enable informal surveillance
- Sufficient buffer from local housing
- Linked directly to pedestrian and vehicular routes by hard surfaced paths with adequate drainage
- Accessible by foot or bicycle without the need to use private roads or cross busy roads
- Accessibility friendly over as much of the site as possible with min. width 1.5m and max. gradient 1:20 hard-surfaced paths

Good quality design

- Positioned near to local amenities (e.g. shops, cafes, libraries, schools, police station)

Quality checklist

continued

2 Lighting and layout

Minimum requirement

- Good lines of sight and openness
- Multiple entry/exit points
- Signage to: welcome the user; name the site; inform restrictions on use, provide contact details of the managing agent; provide emergency telephone numbers; and discourage dogs

Good quality design

- Wildlife friendly entry/exit lighting and ambient lighting, where appropriate
- Sub-division of spaces for multi-group usage
- Trees, planting and natural areas (without dense vegetation)

Quality checklist

continued

3

Equipment

Minimum requirement

- Sheltered seating to include: open sides for surveillance; access and space for wheelchairs; and 3m buffer of hard surface
- Seating areas that allow facing each other
- Accessibility friendly play

Good quality design

- ≥500m²** Skate park
- ≥900m²** BMX or pump track
- ≥1,000m²** Bespoke multi-gen area to include: multi-use zones, seating, areas for socialising, opportunities for play not limited to ball games and not surrounded by fencing
- ≥350m²** Open Access Ball Court/MUGA designed for inclusivity with multiple, wider access points
- ≥60m²** Outdoor gym equipment arranged for sociable exercise (minimum five, e.g. cross trainers, bikes, somersault bars and lat pull-downs)
- ≥30m²** Bigger swings away from child friendly swings. Can include a nest or hexagon swing (can be incorporated within a NEAP but must be delineated and unfenced)
- ≥60m²** Challenging and exciting play appropriate for ages 12+ (can be incorporated within a NEAP but must be delineated and unfenced)
- ≥30m²** Stages/music and dance spaces
- ≥1km** Walking loop with minimum five exercise or social components
- ≥14m²** In-ground/sunken trampolines (can be incorporated within a NEAP but must be delineated and unfenced)

Quality checklist

continued

4

Facilities

Minimum requirement

- Secure parking provided for bicycles
- Bins and recycling

Good quality design

- Toilets
- Drinking water point
- Phone charging points
- Pre-bookable lockers
- CCTV
- Help points with quick access to assistance

5

Management and maintenance

Minimum requirement

- Regular inspection and maintenance

Good quality design

- Signage to: include method to report issues and invite regular feedback
- Presence of informal authority figures and local patrols
- Organised group activities

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Resources

Dark Sky Approved products:

<https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/darksky-approved-luminaires-program/luminaires/#!/Residential/c/12499367>

The Green Flag Award guidance manual:

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/media/svqcr0pa/green-flag-award-guidelines.pdf>

Make Space for Girls:

<https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk/>



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