

BRENTWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
**Play Area Strategy**

2019 - 2024

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# 1. Forward

The Council needs to ensure that it has a clear strategic vision for the future of its play areas, so that resources are applied effectively. This will ensure that children and young people enjoy high quality, safe accessible and sustainable play areas that maintain and improve the quality of their lives. The five-year Play Area Strategy sits under the Council's overarching Leisure Strategy as a separate workstream.



There will be some challenges facing Brentwood in respect of its play areas. It will require significant capital investment to ensure that the play areas are inclusive and exciting for all users; that they are easily accessible for all users; that they comply with more robust health and safety requirements; and that the equipment can be used to increase physical activity in our young people.

The Council also recognises that together with the existing provision of play areas there will be a need for additional play areas that will need to be developed alongside any housing growth in the Borough.

The Council will also work with partner organisations in the design and development of the play areas so that they offer a wide variety of inclusive equipment that supports the needs of all children and young people.

***Cllr Louise McKinlay, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council***

## 2. The Strategy

The Government and Sport England recognise the importance that physical activity has on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. This Play Area Strategy is one of the six workstreams which sits under the Council's overarching Leisure Strategy 2018-28 which was agreed by members in September 2018. The vision for the Council is that strategically the Council needs to ensure that its leisure facilities will be of high quality, sustainable in the future, and that they broaden their impact on improving community health.

The Borough of Brentwood has 38 play areas, and these are managed and maintained in the following way. **15** of these are on Council housing estates and managed directly by the Council's Housing Department, **12** managed directly by Brentwood Borough Council in the Parks and Open Space department and **11** are managed directly by the Parish Councils.

This Strategy will ensure that all residents will have good access to high-quality play areas, in key locations across the Borough. Some costs for some recent improvements have been met by developer contribution (S106), and it is assumed with any future developments in the Borough that there will be some developer contribution (S106 or CIL). The Council will also identify any other external funding opportunities that can support future play area development. The Council will also need to look at where there will be new housing growth within the Borough to ensure that adequate play facilities are considered as part of the planning.

As the nature of play is changing, the Council will need to ensure that it is inclusive and that it can be part of an inter-generational space. It is also key that children and young people and relevant partners are involved in the development of these facilities to ensure that they provide exciting play opportunities.

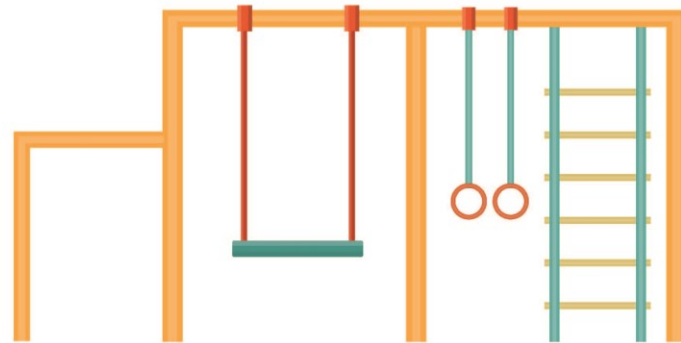
In order to achieve that the Council will need to identify the future improvement and development requirements for play areas and ensure that it has a portfolio of well-designed, well-planned high-quality equipment, and that it is fit for current and future needs and demands.

As part of the Council's capital strategy/programme being developed across the Council, the Strategy will identify the future investment requirements.



# 3. What we need to achieve

The Council needs to ensure that it provides strategic sites across the Borough which provide a broad range of play opportunities that suit the needs of all children and young people. This means that they are inclusive for those with physical or sensory impairment and it also that these play areas are easily accessible, have good signage in place and that they provide imaginative, individual and social play. Play areas also need to provide areas for rest and re-charging and that residents and visitors know where they are located. To ensure that the equipment supports physical and sensory impairment the Council will work with relevant partner organisations that provide expertise on design and equipment.



# 4. Local and national context

The Council has looked at the key priorities from a local and national context in relation to play areas.

One of the [Sport England](#) priorities is to tackle inactivity and investing more in children and young people from the age of 5, which the Strategy can support with improved play areas offering a wide range of equipment.

[National Planning Policy Framework](#) identifies sport and activity as a fundamental part of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities. The planning objectives also look at the protecting existing facilities, enhancing the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities and providing new facilities to meet demand.

The Council agreed the [Leisure Strategy 2018-2028](#) which sets out the Council's vision to provide sustainable leisure facilities for residents and visitors.

To determine the priorities for the Play Strategy, the Council has considered the relevant advice and guidance of the [Fields in Trust Policy Framework](#) and [Plan Inclusive Play Area \(PiPA\)](#), which has been created to help local authorities, landscape architects, planners as well as families with disabled children to create inclusive outdoor play areas as well as assessing installed play areas.

One of the [Brentwood's Health and Wellbeing Board](#) key priority areas is tackling obesity and improving physical health. The play areas in conjunction with the installation of outdoor gyms can encourage residents to be more physically active.

# 5. The Fields in Trust Framework

The framework sets out the required provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space to ensure that it is:

- Of sufficient size to enable effective use
- Located in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings
- Of a quality to maintain longevity and to encourage its continued use.
- The provision of Equipped or Designated Play Spaces is as follows:
- Local Areas for Play (**LAPs**) and informal play; aimed at very young children
- Locally Equipped Areas of Play (**LEAPs**) and informal recreation; aimed at children who can go out to play independently; and
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (**NEAPs**) and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people

These can be complemented by other facilities including Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and skateboard parks etc.

Fields in Trust provides guidance for open space and equipped play areas. These are subject to local circumstances and planning consideration.

**Table 1: Quantity requirements per 1,000 population, the indicative walking distances and the quality guideline.**

Open Space typology	Quantity Guideline	Walking Guideline	Quality Guideline
Playing Pitches	1.20	1,200m (15 min. walk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards</li> <li>• Located where they are of most value to the community to be served</li> <li>• Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community</li> <li>• Appropriately landscaped</li> <li>• Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance</li> <li>• Positively managed taking account of the need to repair and replacement over time as necessary</li> <li>• Provision of ancillary facilities and equipment</li> <li>• Provision of footpaths</li> <li>• Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime</li> </ul>
All outdoor sports	1.60	1,200m (15min. walk)	
Equipped/ designated play areas	0.25	LAPs - 100m (1-2min. walk) LEAPs- 400m ( 5 min. walk) NEAPS - 1,000m (10-15 min. walk)	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m (10 min. walk)	



Table 2 - General design principles for children's play areas

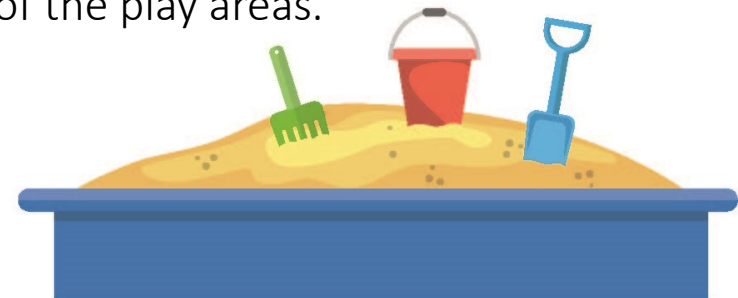
Children's Play Council's Quality Assessment Tool	
Appropriate to the needs of the local community	Visible from nearby dwellings or well used pedestrian routes
Accessible for every child within the appropriate walking time for LAP, LEAP and NEAP	Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface
Sited in open, welcoming locations	Surfaced in a manner fitting the intensity of use
Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes	Provided with seating for accompanying adults, carers and siblings
Sited on land of natural topography or on land capable of being landscaped for the type of play experiences intended	Designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment and other features providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, play with natural materials such as sand and water, ball games, wheeled areas of other activities
Designed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 *	Designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in accordance with European Standards EN1176 and EN1177 in respect of any play equipment provided; if any equipment is non-compliant to those standards then it should be audited and approved on a risk assessment basis by a competent third party.
Designed so that any high climbing structures are as far away as possible for nearby dwellings and any potential visual intrusion is minimised	All equipped play areas should be subject to an independent post-installation inspection
Integrated , as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting, to provide separation from nearby dwellings	Accessible without having to cross main roads, railways or waterways

# 6. Plan Inclusive Play Area (PiPA)

PiPA sets out guidance for inclusive design to consider more than just access into a space as providing play activities that engage all is vital. The PiPA assessment tool not only helps the Council to design play areas but also to assess existing play areas. The assessment tool helps Councils to understand a wide range of disabilities without being an expert, so that the public are offered the best inclusive provision.

Some children find it easier to engage with play areas more than others. Consider a wheelchair user when faced with a traditional play park – or think about how a busy, brightly coloured and noisy space must feel for a child with Autism.

The Council will try to apply the PiPA community standards across all of the play areas.



## PiPA provide some tips when designing inclusive play areas such as:

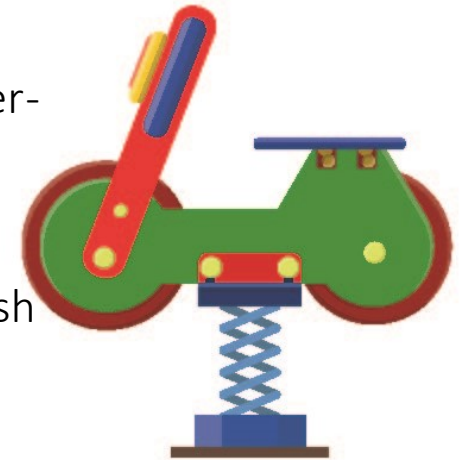
- Clear route through the playground. Ideally there should be 2 or more routes so there is interest in moving around the space.
- A variety of accessible high points, these can be landscaped mounds, decks and climbing units.
- Incorporating sensory play, this is the most accessible type of play for everyone and is often ignored in play space design. Think about offering visual, sound and tactile opportunities.
- Ensure at least one of your moving items is highly accessible, the most accessible and inclusive item available on the market is a ground flush roundabout
- Locating dynamic pieces in easy reach of entrance points and access routes.
- Where children may not be able to access a challenging climbing unit, ensure they can get close, ideally with a route that allows them to be in the heart of the action if they so choose.
- For a site to be truly inclusive it still needs to provide challenge to those children who require it!
- Water and Sand offer the most fantastic play experiences, where possible use! A hardstanding access point to a sand space increases inclusion
- Sensory experiences are vital. Children love sound, touch, smell and visual stimulation.
- Some quiet areas that have gentle sensory experiences benefit young children or children who need time out away from high tempo action

# 6. How we have identified the priorities

The Council's Play Areas were identified as one of the workstreams of the Council's Leisure Strategy 2018-28. This looked at the current provision across the borough but also looked at the future requirements, aligned to any new housing growth in the Borough.

The Fields in Trust guidance sets out the quantity of equipped/designated play required per 1,000 population. The Council has also looked at the Plan Inclusive Play Area (PiPA) which provides a useful checklist so that Local Authorities can ensure that their play areas are as inclusive as possible. The checklist is in the appendices at the back of the strategy. The Council has also consulted with the public, organisations that work with children with special needs and carers to ensure that their needs are considered and that any play areas are as inclusive as possible.

The nature of play is also changing, so the Council also needs to ensure that it can be part of an inter-generational space. Play also needs to be challenging and risky physically at a child's own level of development, but also needs to support sensory play. Play also needs to be safe, so the Council needs to ensure that all equipment is regularly inspected to ensure that it conforms to current British and European safety standards.



# 7. Our priorities

The key priority for the Council's play areas is to ensure that they are accessible to all, provide high quality imaginative, individual and social play for the community. In order to achieve this we will:

- Prioritise strategic capital spending on play area improvement
- Secure developer contribution (S106) or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) whenever possible
- Continuation of a robust inspection regime to ensure health and safety of the play areas is paramount
- Collaboration on the design of play with the relevant ward members and local communities
- Promotion of play areas to both residents and visitors
- All play areas are assessed using the PiPA checklist and that these are used when improving play areas facilities to ensure they are as inclusive as possible
- Where possible introduce outdoor gyms to be adjacent to play areas

The priority capital improvement programme has been developed from audits of the play areas, the age of the equipment and when the play area was last refurbished



Table 3 – Priority capital investment programme

Year	Site	Area of improvement
<b>2018-19</b>	Warley	Whole Play area (complete)
	Warley	Outdoor gym
	Courage's Playing Fields, Shenfield	Toddler play area
<b>2019-20</b>	River Road	Whole Play area
	Bishops Hall Park	New Slide
	King George's Playing Fields	Phase 1 - Toddler
	Courage's Playing Fields	Outdoor gym
<b>2020-21</b>	Hutton Recreation	Whole Play area
	King George's Playing Fields	Phase 2 - Junior
	King George's Playing Fields	Outdoor gym
<b>2021-22</b>	North Road	Whole Play Area
	North Road	Outdoor gym
	King George's Play Area	Phase 3 - Senior
<b>2022-23</b>	Crescent Road development of new play area site	Whole Play Area
	Ingrave Johnson	Whole Play Area
<b>2023-24</b>	Bishops Hall park	Infant and Junior play areas

# 8. Resources

Fields in Trust - Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Beyond the six-acre standard <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England-Apr18.pdf>

Plan Inclusive Play (PiPA) - <http://www.inclusiveplay.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Why-Partner-with-Inclusive-Play.pdf>