



# LAP, LEAP, and NEAP.

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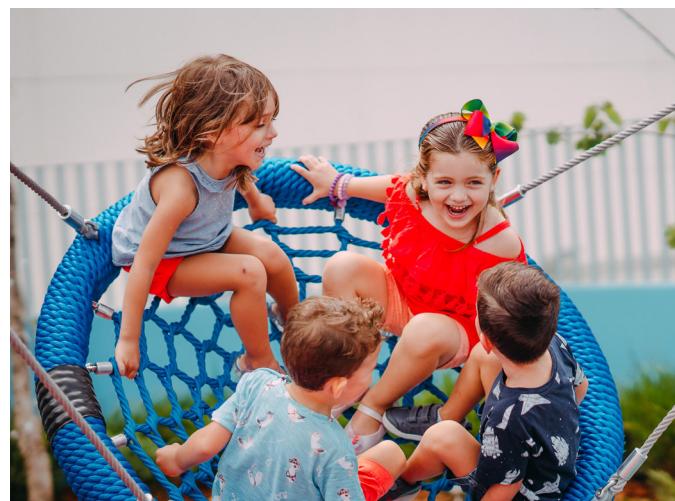
LAP, LEAP, and NEAP.



## What are they?

LAP's (Local Area for Play), LEAP's (Local Equipped Area for Play) and NEAP's (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) are acronyms used to define different levels of outdoor space. They were originally devised by the NPFA (National Playing Fields Association) as part of their 'Six Acre Standard', which sought to set out the amount and types of outdoor play space that should be available to most children and their carers. The original Six Acre Standard was created in the 1930's and was so called because it worked on the principle that there should be 6 acres of recreational space for every 1000 people. Since then, the NPFA has become known as FIT (Fields in Trust) and the Six Acre Standard has been updated to take account of current thinking. The new guidelines from 2008 are titled 'Planning and Design for

Outdoor Sport and Play' or PDOSP. PDOSP is a one-stop shop for those involved in providing facilities for outdoor sport and play, directed at both formal and informal use by all sections of the community. This includes developers, planners, leisure, sport and play professionals, lawyers, surveyors and land agents, manufacturers and suppliers of sports and play equipment and facilities, landscape architects and, finally, the public at large. The publication concentrates on planning, particularly on standards and policy, and design principles and practice.



## LAP, LEAP, and NEAP.

LAP's, LEAP's and NEAP's have an important role to play and provide planning authorities with a guide as to the level of recreational space that should be accommodated within new housing developments etc. Approximately 70% of planning authorities have adopted the concept. However, they should always be considered in light of current thinking and local factors. The model does have its detractors. Some feel the concept has led to somewhat bland and formulaic provision which is too prescriptive and gives too much weight to the importance of equipment. All to the detriment of design and landscape. It has been claimed that play can end up being allocated to the more unbuildable parts of housing sites. That the needs of older children are often ignored and that it hands over design to playground manufacturers which may have vested interests in terms of sales of their own products. It is claimed that elsewhere in Europe more natural play environments are created using timber and other natural materials. Most people with a passion would agree that play provision needs to be high on the agenda, well thought through, well designed and well-funded. Its importance should never be undervalued if we are to strike the right balance between sedentary and physical behaviour. The selection of sites for children's play environments must be an integral part of the design process for all new housing developments. The provision of environments on the basis of walking times and distance requires such a design-led approach.



Children's play areas should be:

- Appropriate to the needs of the local community
- Accessible for every child within the appropriate walking time for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs
- Accessible without having to cross main roads, railways or waterways
- Sited in open, welcoming locations
- Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes
- Sited on land of natural topography or on land capable of being landscaped for the type of play experiences intended
- Designed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- Designed so that any high climbing structures are as far as possible from nearby dwellings and any potential visual intrusion is minimised
- Integrated, as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting to provide separation from nearby dwellings
- Visible from nearby dwellings or well used pedestrian routes
- Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface
- Surfaced in a manner fitting to the intensity of use
- Provided with seating for accompanying adults, carers and siblings
- 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 or other activities.
- Designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in accordance with European Standards EN1176 and EN1177 in respect of any play equipment provided.
- All equipped play areas should be subject to an independent post-installation inspection; details of certificated inspectors can be obtained from the Register of Playground Inspectors International (RPII)
- Designed with appropriate physical features on the perimeter to enable recognition as a play area. The Play England 'Quality Assessment Tool' provides further helpful advice and recommendations. This tool takes a different approach to provision (based on Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Areas for Play but though the words used are different there are many common features).



Type of space	Walking distance (metres)	Straight line distance (metres)
Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces – for play and informal recreation (LAPs)	100	60
Local equipped, or local 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

## LAP - Local area for play.

The LAP is a small area of open space specifically designated and primarily laid out for very young children to play close to where they live i.e. within 1 minute walking time. The LAP is a doorstep play area by any other name. LAPs are designed to allow for ease of informal observation and supervision and primarily function to encourage informal play and social interaction. The LAP requires no play equipment as such, relying more on demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged.

The main characteristics of a LAP are:

- It is intended primarily for children up to the age of 6, though it will be used by older children at different times of the day or evening
- It is within 1 minute walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well-drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface
- The recommended minimum activity zone is 100 m<sup>2</sup>
- A buffer zone of 5 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the forward-most part of the nearest dwelling that faces the LAP. Gable end or other exposed walls can be protected from use for ball games by, for example, providing a dense strip of planting of 1 metre minimum depth. The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- It may contain demonstrative features that allow young children to identify and claim the space as theirs
- Depending on location it may have a 600mm guard rail, low fence or planting to indicate the perimeter. Similarly, depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the LAP
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome
- The activity zone of the local area for play counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

# LEAP - Local equipped area for play.

The LEAP is an area of open space specifically designated and laid out with features including equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently close to where they live, usually within 5 minutes walking time. Experience has indicated that to provide equipped LEAPs within 5 minutes walk of all houses in a new development can on occasion be impractical and difficult to achieve. An alternative to the LEAP is therefore to provide a Local Landscaped Area for Play.

Play features including equipment are an integral part of the LEAP and the attractiveness of such spaces, though it is also important that the space can be used for physical activity and games. LEAPs can be the place for boisterous activity and therefore it is important to give careful consideration to siting. In summary, if a LEAP is properly sited, equipped, overseen and maintained it can meet the needs of children without being a source of nuisance to other residents.

The main characteristics of a LEAP are:

- It is intended primarily for children who are beginning to go out and play independently
  - It is within 5 minutes walking time of the child's home
  - It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
  - It occupies a well-drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and around play equipment or structures as appropriate
  - The recommended minimum activity zone is 400 m<sup>2</sup>
  - A buffer zone of 10 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A minimum of 20 metres should normally be provided between the activity zone and the habitable room facade of the nearest dwelling. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
    1. The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
    2. The siting of features including equipment within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens or dwellings, potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance. For high density developments – particularly on brownfield sites – the buffer zone may have to be reduced in order to provide play facilities for the children. Design is again of key importance:
  - The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
  - It is designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, and play with natural materials such as sand and water, or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision though provision for a minimum number of six play experiences is recommended
  - There is adequate space within the area of the LEAP to allow children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
  - Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads.
- If the LEAP is enclosed there should be two, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the LEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested.
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
  - There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the operator should be provided with an invitation to report any incident or damage to the LEAP or the play equipment. The location of the nearest telephone should also be indicated There may be occasions when it is appropriate to design the LAP and the LEAP adjacent to each other. In these circumstances the buffer zone between the two should be reduced or removed, but the buffer zone around the LAP part of the provision should be that which is appropriate for a LEAP.





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## Landscaped area for play.

This is alternative provision to the LEAP. It might be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where a developer and the planning authority decide that they would prefer to consult with residents – including children – once a new estate has been populated. In such circumstances, the developer may enter an obligation setting aside funds for possible equipment and other features for an agreed period.
- Where there is significant doubt about the practicality of providing more than one LEAP, in which case the Local Landscaped Area for Play can be provided
- If there is provision for only one LEAP then the equipped play area should be provided i.e. the landscaped option is to be disregarded in these circumstances. The main characteristics of the Local Landscaped Area for Play are:

- It is intended, in the context of play, for use by children and young people alike
- It is within 5 minutes walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well-drained, imaginatively landscaped site suitable and used for play
- The area may have little or no equipment but is imaginatively designed and contoured, using as far as is possible natural materials such as logs or boulders which create an attractive setting for play. Planting should be varied to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- The recommended minimum area is 900 m<sup>2</sup>.



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- It is designed to provide a suitable mix of areas for physical activity and areas for relatively calm relaxation and social interaction. Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the site is enclosed there should be two self-closing gates on opposite sides of the site. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the site
- Seating is desirable
- The site should be recognisably available for use by children, though the local landscaped area for play is an open space for shared use and enjoyment by all sections of the community
- The area of the Local Landscaped Area for Play counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards. The landscape characteristics of such sites should, wherever possible, be incorporated into the LEAP.



# NEAP - Neighbourhood equipped area for play.

## Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

The NEAP is an area of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children but with play opportunities for younger children as well. Located within 15 minutes walk from home, the NEAP is sufficiently large to enable provision for play opportunities that cannot be provided within a LAP or LEAP. Play equipment is a particularly appropriate form of provision for younger children. As children grow older, towards the latter stages of primary school age, they are looking for different challenges and stimuli. They engage more in wheeled activities and informal ball games, sometimes taken up as formal sport. As they move towards their teenage years, young people increasingly seek out opportunities to meet friends away from home, looking for places to meet socially.

The NEAP can provide a greater variety of opportunity for both active and passive play. It can provide play equipment, and a hard surface area for ball games, or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling. It may provide other facilities such as a ramp for skateboarding, a rebound wall, and a shelter for meeting and socialising. The facilities are linked in the one site because children of different ages and abilities like to take part in a range of activities, as do their siblings. Careful consideration should be given to the location and interaction of the different facilities provided both on site and in relation to the local environment. Consultation is a key ingredient of successful design and community acceptance.

The main characteristics of a NEAP are:

- It is intended primarily for use by older children of relative independence, who have the freedom to range further from home
- It is within 15 minutes' walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well-drained site, with both grass and hard surfaced areas, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and around play equipment or structures as appropriate
- The recommended minimum activity zone is 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, comprising an area for play equipment and structures, and a hard-surfaced area of at least 465 m<sup>2</sup> (the minimum needed to play 5-a-side football)
- A buffer zone of 30 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A greater distance may be needed where purpose-built skateboarding facilities are required. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
  1. The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
  2. The siting of equipment and features within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens and dwellings and potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance
- The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- It is 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 or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision, though provision for a minimum number of nine play experiences is recommended
- There is adequate space within the area of the NEAP to allow for children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
- Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the NEAP is enclosed there should be two self-closing gates on opposite sides of the NEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the NEAP
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the operator should be provided with an invitation to report any incident or damage to the NEAP and the play equipment. The location of the nearest telephone should also be indicated
- Convenient and secure parking facilities for bicycles should be provided
- The activity zone of the NEAP counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

# Combined LEAPs and NEAPs.

Where the distances and walking times of LEAPs and NEAPs overlap, there may be opportunities to provide combined facilities. The provision of LEAPs and NEAPs in the same locality has several advantages including the following:

- The ability to provide for a greater age range of children and increase 'family involvement'
- Opportunities to make savings on land-take – the basis of this is that savings are marginal for activity zones but may be significant for buffer zones
- Opportunities to make savings on the capital costs of equipment and consequential savings on maintenance, inspection and replacement costs.

# Destination playgrounds.

The 'destination' playground is a play space within a key site, such as a park. It is aimed at attracting family and similar groups for longer visits. It tends to be larger than neighbourhood sites, have car parking facilities, a greater variety of fixed equipment, and access to facilities such as cafes and public toilets. Disabled children should be made to feel welcome, with suitable access arrangements in place and adaptations being made to equipment where appropriate.

A 'destination' playground is an important family facility and it will be highly valued. However, most children will be accompanied by an adult and their activities are limited to those occasions when the adult is able to take them. Many users may require public or private transport so clearly users are not all free to come and go. Access, as for local and neighbourhood provision, should be free of charge. A 'destination' playground can provide a very stimulating experience but however excellent and enjoyable that experience is it should not become a replacement for the opportunity to play within walking distance from the home, in play areas or elsewhere. Too great a reliance on such provision, however popular, may tempt authorities to ignore the need for a generous distribution of smaller local spaces in the urban matrix. It is therefore no substitute for local provision. Local and neighbourhood playgrounds must not be subject to a closure programme in order to justify investment in destination provision, however attractive this may seem operationally and financially in terms of capital investment, management and maintenance. The 'destination' playground should appeal to children and young people of all ages and will normally be located within 20 minutes drive time. However, provision varies significantly from authority to authority and 20 minute accessibility will not always be possible, particularly in rural areas.



# Other facilities.

As children and young people become more independent, they will look for more challenging experiences, different forms of activity based provision and opportunities and environments for meeting with each other. Popular facilities include meeting areas and youth shelters within local open space, floodlit multi-games areas, skateboard parks and BMX tracks. It is important that potential user groups are established before searching for a suitable site for these facilities. Young people know what they want and what facilities are likely to work best. They should be consulted throughout the design process on layout, design and/or surfaces. Residents also need to be consulted to establish understanding and harmony with potential users. Consultation will remain an important tool throughout the lifetime of any facility, particularly in relation to decisions on refurbishment or replacement.

# Multi use games areas.

Guidance for the design, specification and construction, dimensions and layouts of MUGAs has been produced by Sport England and the Sports and Play Construction Association. EN15312 'Free access multi-sports equipment requirements, including safety and test methods also provides a good benchmark for this type of equipment and a tool for suppliers to have products independently certified should this be desired or required.

Key questions at the outset when considering a MUGA concern:

- The predominant sporting uses
- The degree of intensity of use
- The sports performance and playability characteristics
- The intended lifespan.

It is important to recognise that MUGAs serving as play facilities for children are used both formally and informally – often with an emphasis on the latter. They should be marked out for a range of activities, robustly made with ease of maintenance in mind and be free to use. All of the above will have a bearing on the type of facility to be provided and the surface to be used. The site selected should avoid steep gradients and slopes, unstable ground and very exposed Terrain. Location in a natural amphitheatre, on a flat surface within a sheltered area would be ideal, though difficult to find. Alternatively, viewing terracing and banking can be used to provide shelter. Trees should be well clear of a MUGA to avoid root damage and the effects of sap and leaf fall. A location near to car parks and support facilities can be helpful and good access for people with disabilities is essential. Access for emergency vehicles is vitally important and amenity lighting on approach pathways is helpful. Floodlighting is recommended to maximise the potential use of the MUGA but it may need to be tempered to an acceptable level in dense urban areas.

It is important that disruption of neighbours is kept to a minimum and a distance of 30 metres from dwellings is recommended. The surface should be a single material, porous, engineered structure that will drain easily to prevent surface flooding. If bitumen macadam is used it should be of a carefully graded open textured type. Robust fencing providing excellent visibility and durability, such as weld mesh or bar fencing, is recommended. Two gates, each a minimum of 1.2 metres wide, should be provided to reduce the potential for bullying problems and all gates should open outwards from the court, being careful to design them in such a way as to avoid clashes with pedestrians or cyclists etc. circulating around the court MUGAs are best designed with 'gaps' instead of gates. This allows for access without payment and helps the possibility of quick and easy escape.

