



OPEN SPACE PROVISION

The following code establishes a tiered system for open space provision that defines quantum, scale and hierarchy. Quantum is aligned with the Fields in Trust (FiT) Standards and the North Herts Developer Contributions SPD whilst the tiers set out the scale and hierarchy of open spaces that are aligned with play provision. The approach responds to the North Herts context by placing greater emphasis on more local, accessible spaces, providing a finer grain of provision than that set out in Natural England’s Accessible Greenspace Standards.

OS01.01 – Scale and Hierarchy

The following table sets out requirements for each tier of open space including distance from homes and area.

Tier	Walking Distance from Homes (m)	Area (Ha)
1	100	0.03-0.5
2	400	0.5-2
3	1000	2-5
4	1200	5-10

OS01.02 – Play Provision

As a minimum, LAPs must be provided in Tier 1 Open Spaces, LEAPs in Tier 2 Open Spaces and NEAPs in Tier 3 Open Spaces. Informal play provision can be accommodated in any tier of open space, along streets, in the public realm or in dry attenuation basins.

OS01.03 – Development Scale

The table below (taken from FiT 2024) sets out the level of play provision required based on the number of homes. It must also be used to determine which tiers of open space must be delivered per development.

Homes	Informal Play	Tier 1 spaces with LAPs	Tier 2 spaces with LEAPs	Tier 3 spaces with NEAPs	Tier 4 spaces
2-20	x	-	-	-	-
21-100	x	x	-	-	-
101-500	x	x	x	-	-
501-1000	x	x	x	x	-
1000+	x	x	x	x	x

OS01.04 – Access

Access to a higher tier of open space does not negate the need for access to a lower tier as all homes must be within the target distance of all tiers of open space.

OS01.05 – Quantum

The minimum quantum of open space delivered must be provided in accordance with the table below.

Category	Sub-Category	Quantum Required (sqm per person)
Open Space	Park and Gardens	8
	Amenity Green Space	6
	Natural/Semi-Natural	18
Play Space	Equipped Designated Play Areas	2.5
	Informal Play Provision	3
Other	Allotments	3
	Total Open Space and Play Quantum:	40.5

The following codes set out design requirements for each tier of open space. OS02 applies to all tiers and includes a menu of permitted options, while OS03–06 set out tier-specific requirements across access, nature, uses, materiality and facilities.

OSO2



OPEN SPACE DESIGN

OS02.01 – Accessibility

All open spaces must be DDA compliant with parity of access to all parts of the open space and gradients no steeper than 1/20 for access routes.

OS02.02 – FiT Sub-Categories

All tiers of open space should accommodate a mixture of FiT landscape categories (parks and gardens, amenity green space and natural/semi-natural) to create mixed and multi-functional open spaces.

OS02.03 – Soft Landscaping

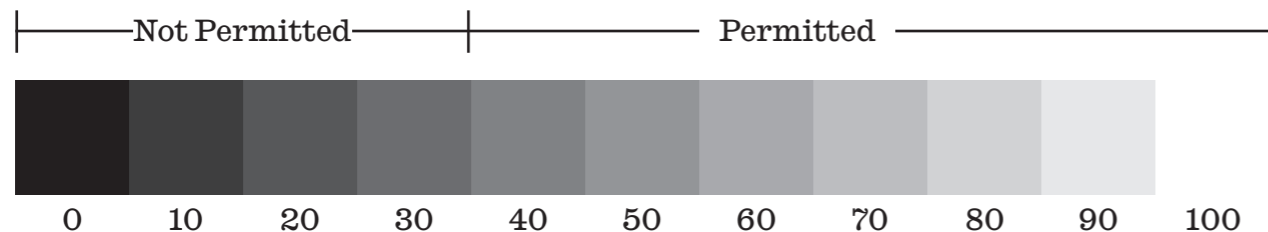
All soft landscaping within open spaces must contribute to ecological enhancements and climate resilience through the appropriate selection of planting species.

OS02.04 – Rest Spots

In open spaces where rest spots are required, they must be provided every 50m along both formal and leisure routes. Rest spots may be single benches and need not be social.

OS02.05 – Colour and Tone

All hard surfacing materials in open spaces must have a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of at least 30. Materials with an LRV below 30, including black, charcoal, graphite and similar dark tones will not be permitted.



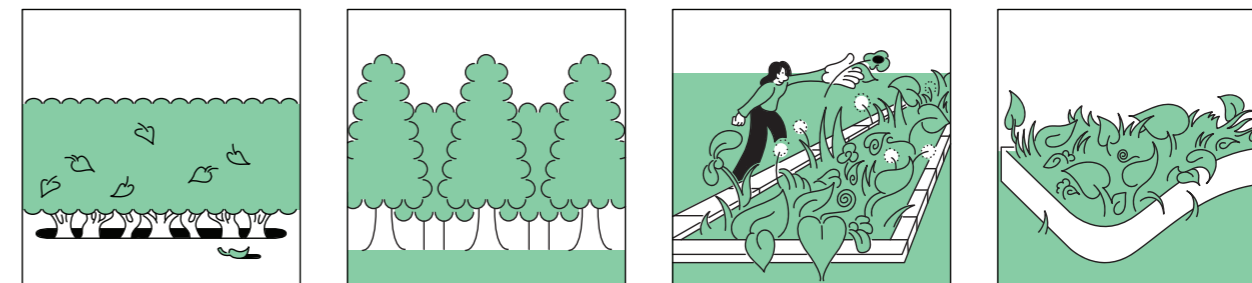
OS02.06 – Boundary Treatments

Landscaped, social and playable boundaries must be prioritised. Walls and fencing are only permitted adjacent to roads for safety or access control, with timber preferred. A mix of boundary treatments is encouraged.

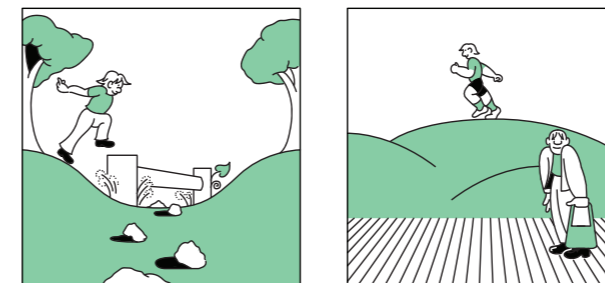
The following codes set out the permitted menu of open space features that are referenced in the tier-specific open space and play codes. They are organised around boundary treatments, ecological features, productive landscapes, features for teenagers and young adults, sociable seating and sport.

OS02.07 – Landscaped Boundaries

Hedges as boundary treatments must be kept within a range of between 1.2m - 1.5m tall to maintain passive surveillance over open spaces. Edge gradients on swales must not exceed 1/3.



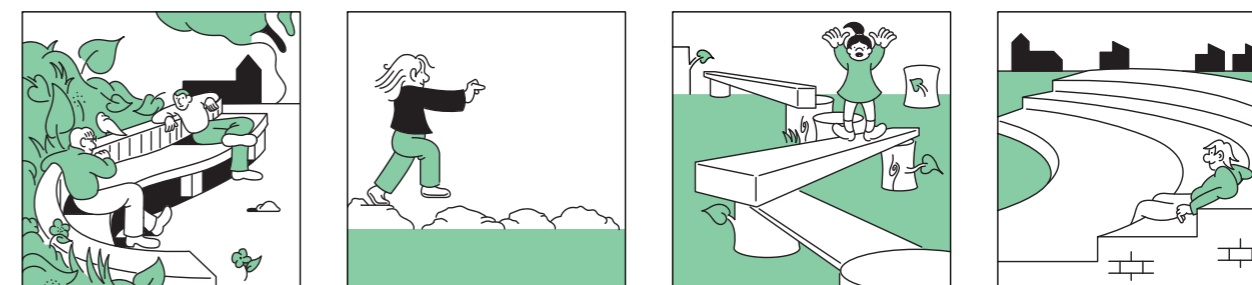
Hedge Row of trees Sensory planting Planters



Swale Ground modelling

OS02.08 – Social and Playable Boundaries

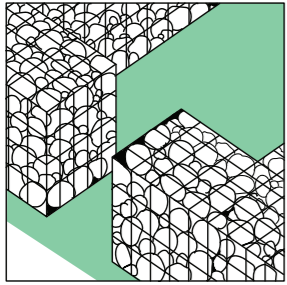
Sociable and playable boundaries may be used on edges with other open spaces or pedestrian zones. They are not appropriate on edges bordered by busy streets unless the footway acts as a buffer.



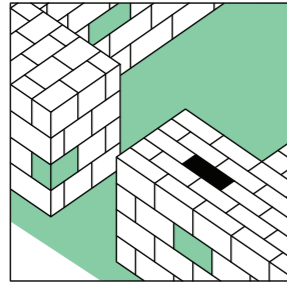
Raised planters with seating Low playable boulders Sculptural play elements Amphitheatre style seating

OS02.09 – Walls

Walls as boundary treatments must not exceed 1.5m in height to maintain passive surveillance over open spaces. They may be designed at varying heights to incorporate seating and play.

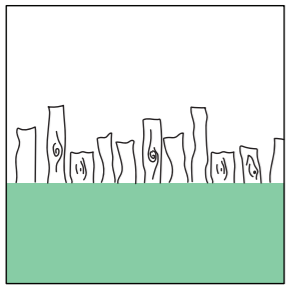


Gabion walls

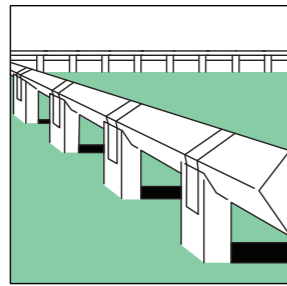


Brick walls

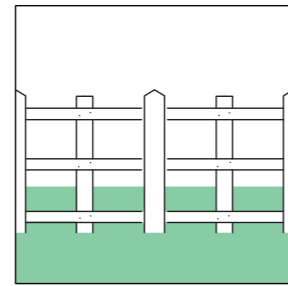
OS02.10 – Timber Fencing



Low timber posts



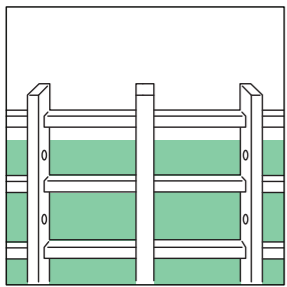
Timber knee rail



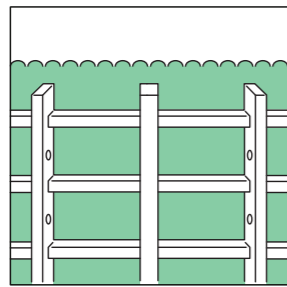
Post and rail

OS02.11 – Metal Fencing

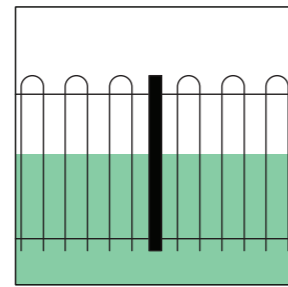
Bowtop fencing is only permitted around play spaces.



Estate fencing



Estate fencing with hedge



Bowtop fencing



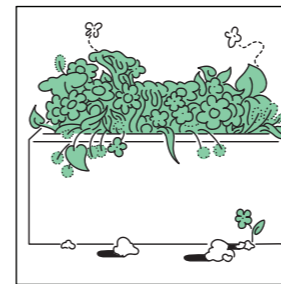
Hartham Play Park, Hertford, Groundwork East (2021) [Map Location](#) →



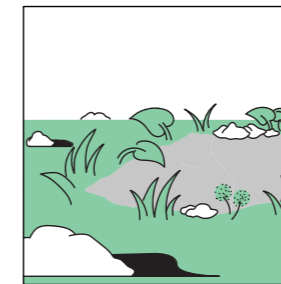
Folly Island Community Garden, Hertford [Map Location](#) →

OSO2.12 – Ecological Features

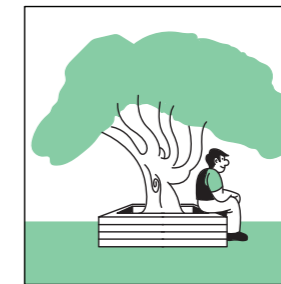
When selecting ecological features for Tier 1 Open Spaces, features must be selected from the first row. All other open spaces must select features from the second row. All focal trees must be delivered in Heavy Standard Size.



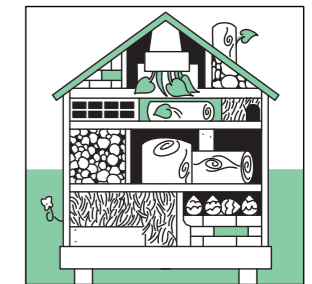
Nectar-rich planting



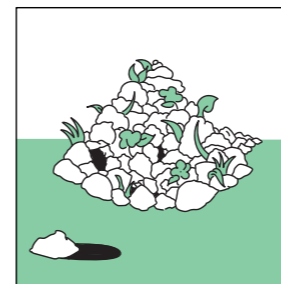
Permanent water body



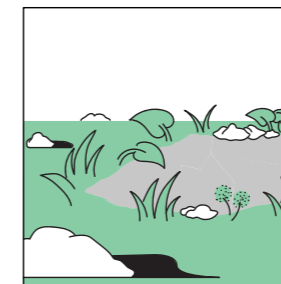
Focal tree



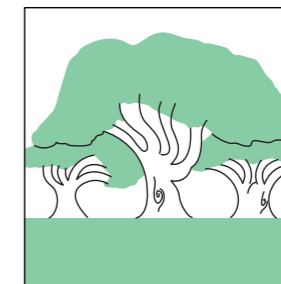
Bug hotel



Hibernacula



Permanent water body



Cluster of three focal trees



Trail of three bug hotels

OSO2.13 – Productive Landscapes

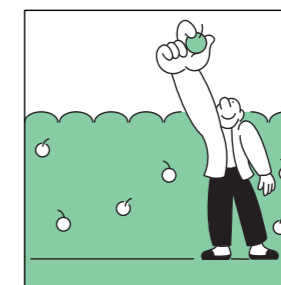
Community gardens in Tier 3 Open Spaces must also include composting facilities.



Orchard



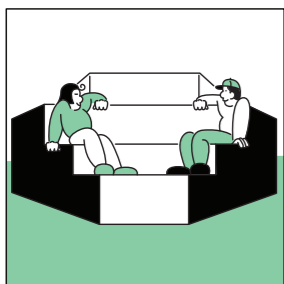
Community garden



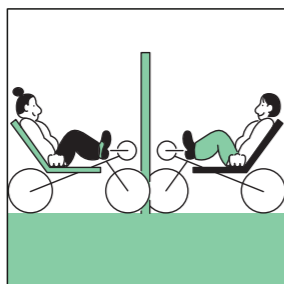
Edible trail

OSO2.14 – Features for Teenagers and Young Adults

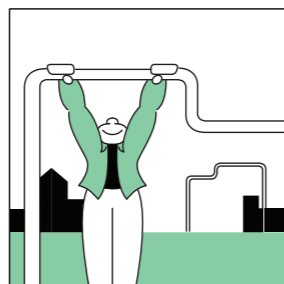
Features must be located along a key route, be independent of any formalised play and be well-overlooked to discourage anti-social behaviour. Refer to Make Space for Girls ‘What does better look like?’ for further information on below features.



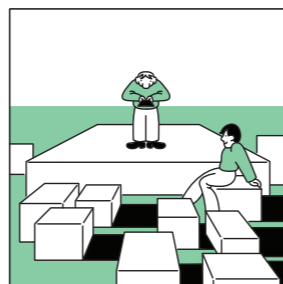
Multi-level seating unit



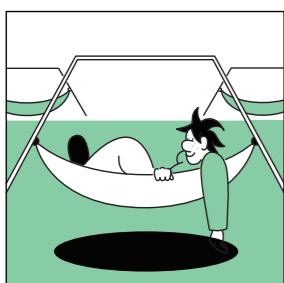
Social exercise space



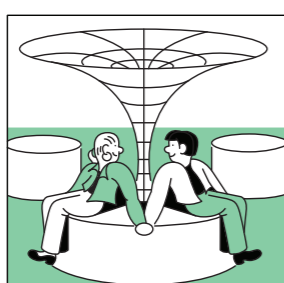
Hanging bar installation



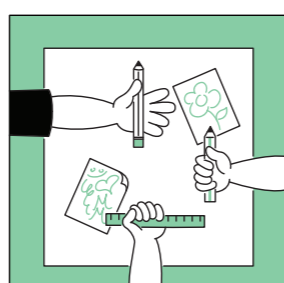
Stage with informal seating



Social swings and hammock area



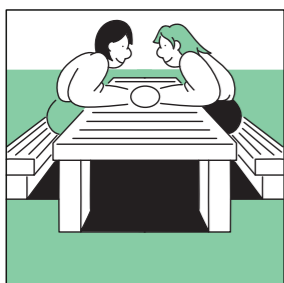
Sheltered seating area



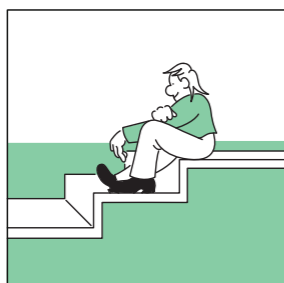
Co-designed feature

OSO2.15 – Sociable Seating

Defined as seating that encourages social interaction, conversation or shared activity through its use.



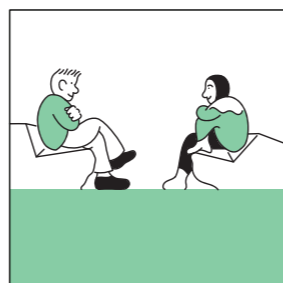
Picnic bench(es)



Raked audience seating



Seating booth



Natural seating cluster



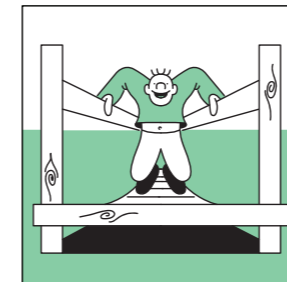
Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) [Map Location](#) →



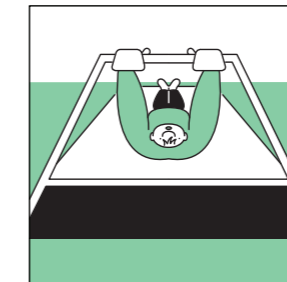
Merrion Cricket Pavilion, Dublin, TAKA Architects (2014) [Map Location](#) →

OSO2.16 – Sport and Fitness

Trim trails must incorporate a minimum of 3 stations. Outdoor gym areas must incorporate a minimum of 6 pieces of equipment.



Trim trail with distance markers



Outdoor gym area

OSO2.17 – Sports and Sports Pavilions

Sports provision in open spaces must be determined through community engagement, the North Herts Playing Pitch Strategy and consultation with Sport England. Sports facilities must be placed along key routes and co-located with other uses to create clear destinations and focal points.

Sports facilities must minimise light and noise pollution to neighbouring homes and sensitive ecological assets through careful placement and sensitive design. Sports buildings must maximise active frontages with a clear back that accommodates servicing and plant if required. Entrances to buildings must be open and welcoming in design whilst incorporating an external canopy.

Fencing around formalised sport must be minimised and rationalised - double fencing with narrow strips of leftover land in between will not be permitted.

TIER I OPEN SPACES

Tier 1 Open Spaces are small greens located close to homes, offering easy access to nature as part of daily life. They provide informal places for neighbours to meet, safe play opportunities for very young children and simple spots for quiet rest. These spaces help create a welcoming, community-focused residential environment.

OSO3.01– Key Parameters

OSO3.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Tier 1 Open Space.
OSO3.01B – Size	Must be between 0.03-0.5 hectares in size.
OSO3.01C – Critical Dimensions	Must not be less than 10m in width at any point for linear spaces.
OSO3.01D – Offset	No minimum offset.
OSO3.01E – Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 50% of their edges. Directly surrounding streets must not be classified as M3 or above (as per HCC PMPDG).
OSO3.01F – Community Co-design	Only required if the open space is delivered as part of a wider engagement strategy on larger sites.
OSO3.01G – Public Art	No coded requirements.



Greyhound Opening, Goldsmith Street, Norwich, Mikhail Riches Architects (2019)
[Map Location →](#)

OS03.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS03.02A – Access	Must be open for public use at all times of the day with no gates or lockable barriers.
OS03.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08) or walled (OS02.09) boundaries.
OS03.02C – Routes	No coded requirements.

OS03.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS03.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.
OS03.03B – Priority Planting	No coded requirements.
OS03.03C – Ecological Features	Must incorporate at least one ecological feature selected from OS02.12.
OS03.03D – Productive Landscape	No coded requirements.

OS03.04 – Use(s)

OS03.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Local Area for Play (LAP).
OS03.04B – Sport	Must not incorporate any formal sporting provision due to the proximity to homes.
OS03.04C – Community and Social	Sociable seating is the main form of encouraging community interaction.

OS03.05 – Materiality

OS03.05A – Surfacing	Hardstanding must not exceed 50% of the total area.
OS03.05B – Materials	Hard surfacing must be selected from one or more of the following options; permeable block paving, cobblestones, large format pavers and/or resin-bound gravel. Softer surfacing materials must be used around play. Permitted materials include wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip.

OS03.06 – Facilities

OS03.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide at least one sociable seating area per 0.3Ha of open space selected from OS02.15.
OS03.06B – Rest Spots	Not required.
OS03.06C – Cycle Parking	May be accommodated near or in Tier 1 Open Spaces.
OS03.06D – Vehicular Parking	May be co-located with parking (see PA02).
OS03.06E – Waste Bins	Not required.
OS03.06F – Public Toilets	Not required.
OS03.06G – Drinking Fountains	Not required.
OS03.06H – Medical Equipment	Not required.

TIER 2 OPEN SPACES

Tier 2 Open Spaces are larger local greens that provide a convenient mix of nature, recreation and play within a short walk of homes. They support a variety of activities, from play to relaxed leisure and casual use of open grassed areas. These spaces also include features that create welcoming opportunities for older children.

OSO4.01– Key Parameters

OSO4.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Tier 2 Open Space.
OSO4.01B – Size	Must be between 0.5-2 hectares in size.
OSO4.01C – Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
OSO4.01D – Offset	No minimum offset.
OSO4.01E – Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 75% of their edges. Directly surrounding streets must not be classified as M3 or above (as per HCC PMPDG).
OSO4.01F – Community Co-design	Required if the Tier 2 Open Space is the highest tier of open space being delivered. A minimum of one collaborative, focussed workshop with the community is required as part of the design process.
OSO4.01G – Public Art	No coded requirements.



Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) [Map Location](#) →

OS04.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS04.02A – Access	Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the open space boundary.
	All areas must be accessible to the public. Managed access via defined routes are not permitted to count towards the total area at this tier.
OS04.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08), walled (OS02.09) or fenced (OS02.10/OS02.11) boundaries.
OS04.02C – Routes	Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the open space.
	Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.

OS04.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS04.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 30% of the total area at maturity.
OS04.03B – Priority Planting	Must have a minimum of 5% of the total area dedicated to meadow planting.
OS04.03C – Ecological Features	Must include at least two ecological features selected from OS02.12.
OS04.03D – Productive Landscape	Must include at least one productive landscape feature selected from OS02.13.



Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin (refurbished 2014) [Map Location](#) →

OS04.04 – Use(s)

OS04.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). May also incorporate LAPs and Informal Play.
OS04.04B – Sport	Refer to OS02.17 for sports requirements.
OS04.04C – Community and Social	Must include a kickabout area (part-shaded on the periphery) for picnic and leisure use that is proportional to the size of the open space.
	Must include at least one feature for teenagers and young adults selected from OS02.14.

OS04.05 – Materiality

OS04.05A – Surfacing	No coded requirements.
OS04.05B – Materials	Formalised paths must be surfaced in an unbounded resin material.
	Leisure paths may be surfaced with one the following options; mown path, self-binding gravel or crushed gravel.

OS04.06 – Facilities

OS04.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide a minimum of two sociable seating types selected from OS02.15. In smaller Tier 2 Open Spaces (<1Ha), sociable seating requirements may be combined with requirements for teenagers and young adults.
OS04.06B – Rest Spots	Required (see OS02.04).
OS04.06C – Cycle Parking	Must be provided at entrances and near destinations (such as play spaces and sporting facilities). Sheffield stands must be a minimum of 1m apart.
OS04.06D – Vehicular Parking	Parking provision must be carefully integrated into the design of the open space through tree planting, permeable surfacing and sensitive placement (ideally on the periphery near access streets). If more than 20 parking spaces are being provided, the parking area must be designed as a dual purpose space that can be used flexibly for community events (such as markets).
OS04.06E – Waste Bins	Must be provided at entrances.
OS04.06F – Public Toilets	If sports pavilions or buildings are being provided within the open space, then a publicly accessible toilet must be incorporated into the built form.
OS04.06G – Drinking Fountains	No coded requirements.
OS04.06H – Medical Equipment	No coded requirements.

TIER 3 OPEN SPACES

Tier 3 Open Spaces are large neighbourhood spaces that act as destinations, offering a broad mix of recreation, play and leisure for all ages. Designed to support community life, these spaces also accommodate events and gatherings through focal structures and supporting infrastructure. They are significant community assets that help shape neighbourhood identity.

OSO5.01 – Key Parameters

OSO5.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Tier 3 Open Space.
OSO5.01B – Size	Must be between 2-5 hectares in size.
OSO5.01C – Critical Dimensions	No coded requirements.
OSO5.01D – Offset	No minimum offset.
OSO5.01E – Setting	Must not be defined by streets for more than 75% of their edges.
OSO5.01F – Community Co-design	Community engagement with a range of age groups and users must be undertaken as part of the design process through focussed co-design workshops allowing the community to shape the character, design, function and uses within the open space.
OSO5.01G – Public Art	Must incorporate a public art commission.



Norton Common, Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City [Map Location](#) →

OS05.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS05.02A – Access	<p>Must have a minimum of four entrance points which are well-signed and well-placed to align with connections beyond the open space boundary.</p> <p>All areas of the open space must be accessible to the public. Managed access via defined routes are not permitted to count towards the total area at this tier.</p>
OS05.02B – Boundary Treatments	Must be selected from landscaped (OS02.07), social and playable (OS02.08), walled (OS02.09) or fenced (OS02.10/OS02.11) boundaries.
OS05.02C – Routes	<p>Must incorporate surfaced routes that are direct and align with entrance points to provide access to key destinations within the open space.</p> <p>Must incorporate a circular/peripheral leisure route (unsurfaced) to accommodate dog walkers and recreational users.</p>

OS05.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS05.03A – Canopy Cover	Must have a minimum canopy cover of 20% of the total area at maturity.
OS05.03B – Priority Planting	Must have a minimum of 5% of the total area dedicated to meadow planting.
OS05.03C – Ecological Features	Must include at least three ecological features selected from OS02.12.
OS05.03D – Productive Landscape	Must include at least two productive landscape features selected from OS02.13.

OS05.04 – Use(s)

OS05.04A – Play	Must incorporate a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). May also incorporate LAPs, LEAPs and Informal Play.
OS05.04B – Sport	Refer to OS02.17 for sports requirements.
	Must incorporate a minimum of one fitness feature selected from OS02.16 to encourage active lifestyles.
OS05.04C – Community and Social	<p>Must include at least two features for teenagers and young adults selected from OS02.14.</p> <p>Must facilitate community events and large gatherings by provision of a sheltered focal feature (such as a bandstand or covered stage) with water and an electricity supply.</p>

OS05.05 – Materiality

OS05.05A – Surfacing	No coded requirements.
OS05.05B – Materials	Formalised paths must be surfaced in an unbounded resin material.
	Leisure paths may be surfaced with one the following options; mown path, self-binding gravel or crushed gravel.

OS05.06 – Facilities

OS05.06A – Sociable Seating	Must provide a minimum of two sociable seating types selected from OS02.15.
OS05.06B – Rest Spots	Required (see OS02.04).
OS05.06C – Cycle Parking	Must be provided at entrances and near destinations (such as play spaces and sporting facilities). Sheffield stands must be a minimum of 1m apart.
OS05.06D – Vehicular Parking	Parking provision must be carefully integrated into the design of the open space through tree planting, permeable surfacing and sensitive placement (ideally on the periphery near access streets). If more than 20 parking spaces are being provided, the parking area must be designed as a dual purpose space that can be used flexibly for community events (such as markets).
OS05.06E – Waste Bins	Must be provided at entrances.
OS05.06F – Public Toilets	Must provide a publicly accessible toilet as a standalone facility or as part of another building.
OS05.06G – Drinking Fountains	Must provided a minimum of 2no. drinking fountains to support use in hot weather.
OS05.06H – Medical Equipment	Must provide access to a defibrillation case in case of medical emergencies.

OS06



TIER 4 OPEN SPACES

Tier 4 Open Spaces are strategic open spaces that serve whole communities, often delivered across large developments and in partnership with multiple landowners. As key destinations within North Herts, they play a vital role in defining the character and identity of the district, providing inclusive, long-term assets for residents and visitors alike.

Their design and character will vary greatly depending on the context and setting with some more focussed on wild and natural landscapes and others with a stronger sport and leisure focus. As such, code requirements have been kept to a minimum on the expectation that designs for these strategic open spaces will be developed collaboratively with the LPA and local community.



Therfield Heath, Royston [Map Location](#) →

OSO6.01 – Key Parameters

OSO6.01A Distance	All homes must be within 1200m of a Tier 4 Open Space.
OSO6.01B Size	Must be between 5-10 hectares in size.
OSO6.01C Community Co-design	Community engagement with a range of age groups and users must be undertaken as part of the design process through focussed co-design workshops allowing the community to shape the character, design, function and uses within the open space.
OSO6.01D Public Art	Must incorporate at least one public art commission.
OSO6.01E Accessibility	All areas of the open space must be accessible to the public. Ecologically sensitive areas such as woodlands are permitted to count towards the total area at this tier provided they allow for managed access via a network of defined routes, allowing users to experience the landscape.
OSO6.01F Strategic Function	Must function as key nodes in the wider green infrastructure network, connecting to Public Rights of Way, active travel routes and ecological corridors.
OSO6.01G Informal Play	Must incorporate an element of informal play that is appropriate to the context and informed by community co-design.
OSO6.01H Sport	Refer to OSO2.17 for sports requirements.
OSO6.01I Facilities	Same as Tier 3 Open Space requirements (see OSO5.06)

PLAY SPACE DESIGN

OSO7.01 – Play Equipment

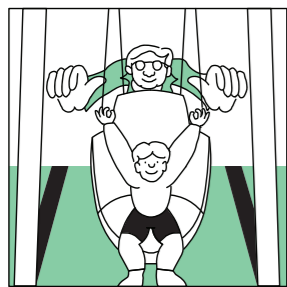
All play equipment must maximise natural materials with excessive plastic equipment not permitted. In addition, colourways within the play spaces must be coordinated to ensure a holistic identity within the space.

OSO7.02 – Metal Fencing around Play

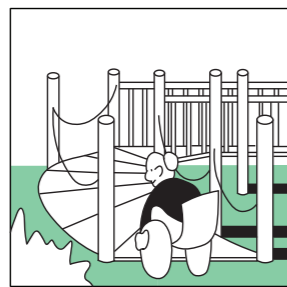
If metal fencing is proposed around play, a minimum of 0.5m strip of sensory planting or a hedge must be incorporated on both sides of the fence to soften the boundary.

OSO7.03 – Inclusive Play Experiences

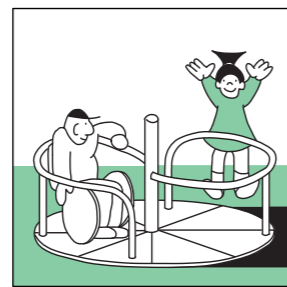
Equipped play spaces must include accessible equipment suitable for a wide range of abilities, recognising that some play activities may be inherently restrictive.



Cradle Swings



Inclusive Play Towers



Accessible Roundabouts

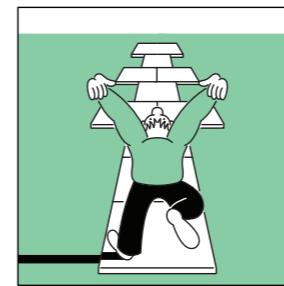


Wide Slides

The following codes OSO7.04-08 set out a series of play experiences and features required by the different tiers of play space.

OSO7.04 – Floor-based Play Experiences

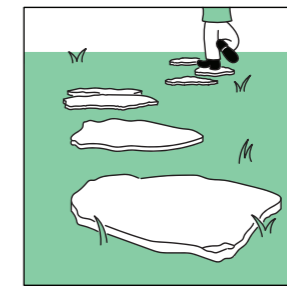
Stepping stones and boulders must include a minimum of 7 points along a route. Barefoot trails must incorporate a minimum of 5 textures.



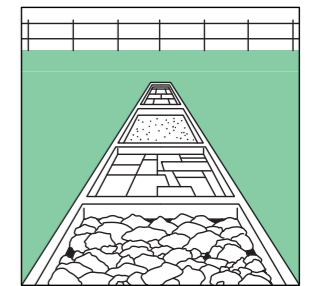
Hopscotch stones



Ground modelling



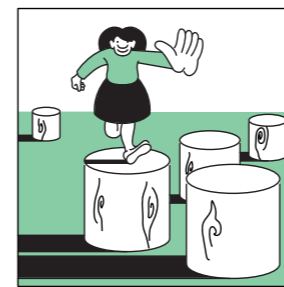
Stepping stones and boulders



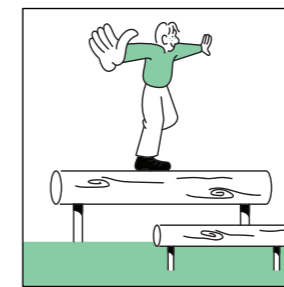
Barefoot trail

OSO7.05 – Low Level Climbing and Balancing

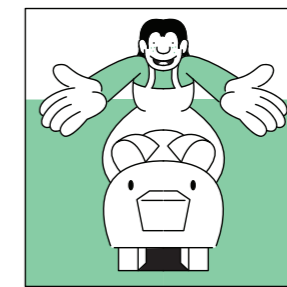
Timber animal seating sculptures and log pile clusters must include a minimum of three features. Tree stump trails must be a minimum of 5m in length. Log balancing beams must incorporate a minimum of two levels for children of different ages and abilities.



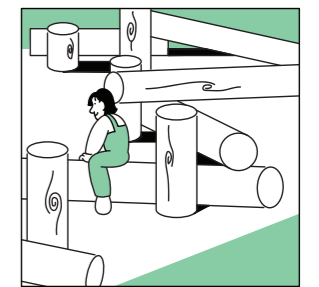
Tree stump trail



Log balancing beams



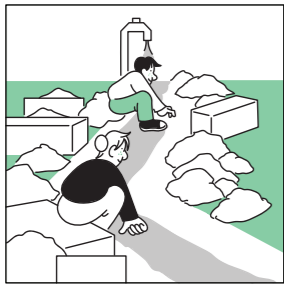
Timber animal seating sculptures



Log pile(s)

OS07.06 – Water Play

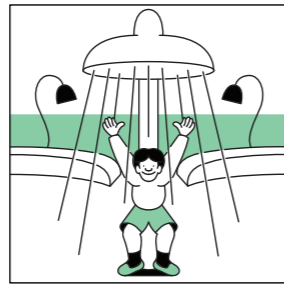
Taps with troughs must incorporate a minimum of two levels to cater to different age ranges and abilities. Splash jets and fountains must incorporate a minimum of three features.



Tap with natural trickle trail

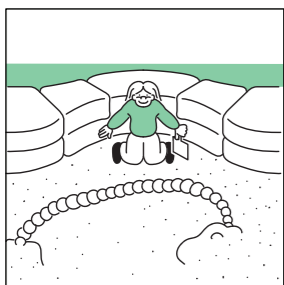


Tap with trough



Splash jets and fountains

OS07.07 – Sand Play



Fossil discovery

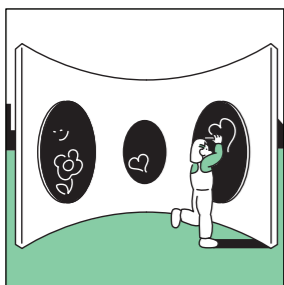


Sand pit

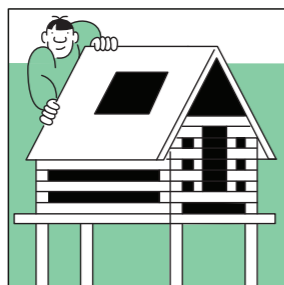


Raised sand box

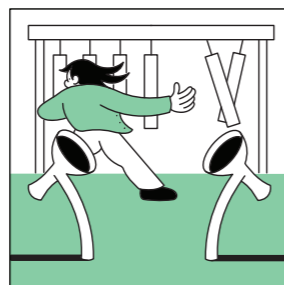
OS07.08 – Social and Creative Play



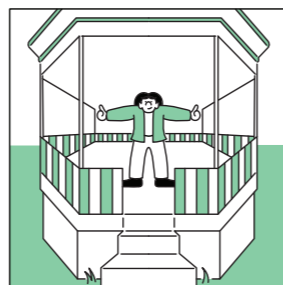
Chalkboard



Playhouse or shelter



Cluster of three instruments



Stage, plinth or bandstand



INFORMAL PLAY

Informal play is required on developments of all scales to ensure development is child-friendly and caters to a range of users. There are three main categories of informal play as described in the Fields In Trust Standards 2024; natural play on the way, social areas for teenagers and active play.

In developments of 2-20 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as natural play on the way. In developments of 21-100 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as a combination of natural play on the way and social areas for teenagers. In developments of more than 100 homes, informal play provision is likely to be delivered as a combination of all three types.

Any provision that does not comply with the below requirements will not be counted towards a site's informal play provision.



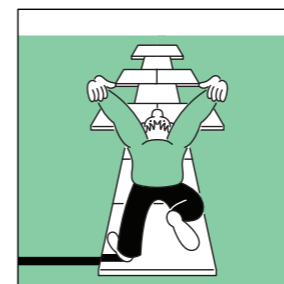
Royal Docks Corridor, Newham, 5th Studio (2024) [Map Location](#) →

OS08.01 – Natural Play on the Way

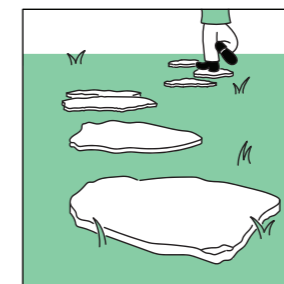
Natural play on the way must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates. They are also distinct from Local Areas for Play (OS09) and must not be double-counted.

Suitable locations for natural play on the way include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 open spaces, in social spaces on streets, in the central landscaped zone on Green Streets (see ST03) and in dry attenuation basins (see OS13).

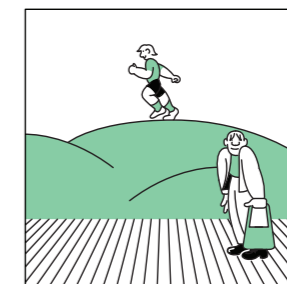
Suggested features for natural play on the way include the following elements.



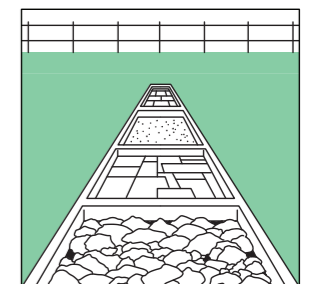
Hopscotch stones



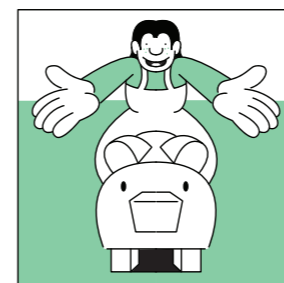
Stepping stones and boulders



Ground modelling



Barefoot trail



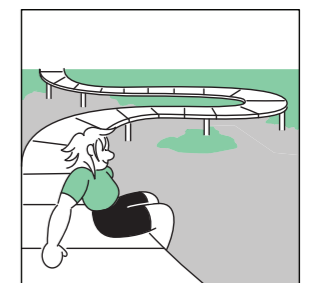
Wooden seating sculptures



Tree stump trail



Log piles and balancing beams



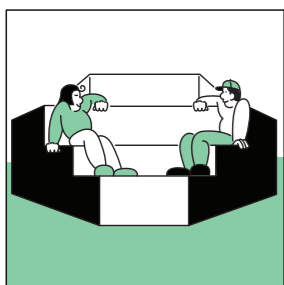
Boardwalks and timber crossings

OS08.02 – Social Spaces for Teenagers

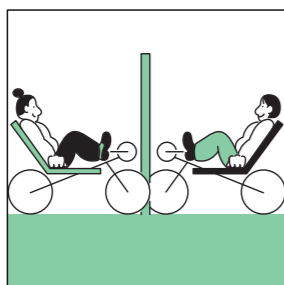
Social spaces for teenagers must not be enclosed by any formal barriers such as fencing or gates.

Suitable locations for social spaces for teenagers include along formal and leisure routes in Tier 2,3 and 4 open spaces that must be outside any formal play provision. They may also be incorporated in civic squares and plazas - especially encouraged in public realm areas outside secondary schools.

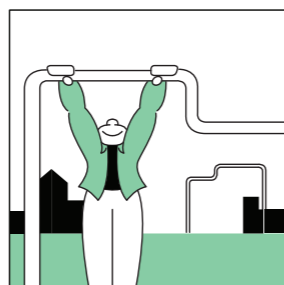
Social spaces for teenagers are required in Tier 2 and 3 open spaces (See OS04, OS05) and will count towards informal play provision. Features for teenagers and young adults must be selected from the below options.



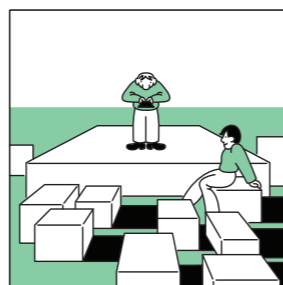
Multi-level seating unit



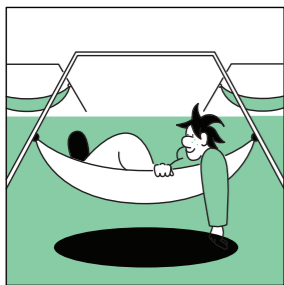
Social exercise space



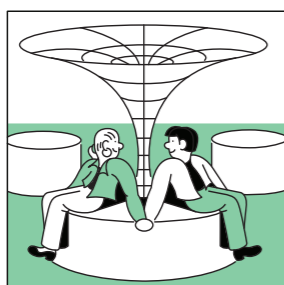
Hanging bar installation



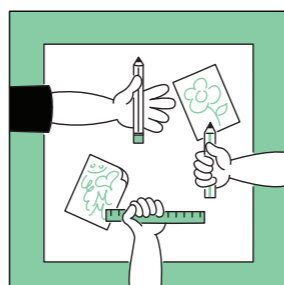
Stage with informal seating



Social swings or hammock area



Sheltered seating area



Co-designed feature



Frizon Arstidernas Park, Umea, Sweden, Tyrens Architects with Kerstin Bergendal (2016) [Map Location](#) →



Den Sorte Plads, Superkilen, Copenhagen, Bjarke Ingels Group with Topotek1 and Superflex (2012) [Map Location](#) →

OS08.03 – Active Play

MUGAs and Ball Courts must have entrances on two or more sides.

Pump tracks, skateparks, skate areas, bouldering walls and parkour elements must not be enclosed by fencing. If barriers are required, landscaped boundary treatments are permitted (see OS02.07).

All elements of active play must be co-located with a sociable space for teenagers feature (see OS08.02) to encourage a gender-inclusive public realm.

Pump tracks, skateparks and skate areas must provide progression routes that cater to beginner, intermediate and advanced levels to appeal to a wide range of users.

The following codes set out specific requirements for each tier of play space (LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs) organised around key parameters, access, movement and thresholds, nature and ecology, play experiences, materiality and facilities.

LOCAL AREAS FOR PLAY

Local Areas for Play (LAPs) are small, close-to-home spaces for the youngest children, providing safe, engaging environments with natural and sensory elements. Located within Tier 1 Open Spaces, they support early exploration and everyday outdoor play within sight of the home. LAPs are integral features within the public realm network, helping to link nearby homes with larger play destinations.

OS09.01 – Key Parameters

OS09.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 100m of a Local Area for Play (LAP)
OS09.01B – Size	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.01C – Location	LAPs must be incorporated into all Tier 1 Open Spaces.
OS09.01D – Typology	On developments where more than 1 LAP is being delivered, LAPs must demonstrate sufficient variation from each other to create a diversity of experiences.
OS09.01E – Offset	No minimum offset from nearby dwellings.
OS09.01F – Setting	The entirety of the Tier 1 Open Space must be designed and designated for play. A gated LAP within the open space will not be permitted.



Dujardin Mews, Enfield, Karakusevic Carson with Maccreanor Lavington Architects and East Architecture Landscape Urban Design (2017) [Map Location](#) →

OS09.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS09.02A – Access	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.02B – Boundary Treatment	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03). Boundary around LAP not permitted.

OS09.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS09.03A – Quantum of Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.03B – Focal Trees	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.03C – Sensory Planting	Refer to OS09.04B.

OS09.04 – Play Experiences

OS09.04A – Physical Experiences	Must incorporate a minimum of one floor-based play experience selected from OS07.04.
	Must incorporate a minimum of one low-level climbing and balancing feature selected from OS07.05.
OS09.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one multi-sensory play feature selected from OS07.06 or sensory planting. Sand play is not permitted in Tier 1 Open Spaces and LAPs.
OS09.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	All features must be open-ended and ambiguous encouraging creative and imaginative play alongside physical and sensory experiences.
OS09.04D – Play Equipment	All features must be natural, low maintenance and durable, requiring inspection only once a year.

OS09.05 – Materiality

OS09.05A – Soft Landscaping	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.05B – Surfacing	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

OS09.06 – Facilities

OS09.06A – Sociable Seating	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.06B – Cycle Parking	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).
OS09.06C – Waste Bins	Refer to Tier 1 Open Space requirements (OS03).

LOCAL EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY

Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) are play spaces for young children, offering a clear and safe destination with age-appropriate equipment and places to sit and rest. They form an important mid-level play facility that encourages longer visits and varied types of exploration and sensory experiences.

OS10.01 – Key Parameters

OS10.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 400m of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
OS10.01B – Size	Must have a minimum area of 400sqm.
OS10.01C – Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 2 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
OS10.01D – Typology	May be configured as dispersed or nucleated spaces. Dispersed play spaces are arranged around clusters of experiences that are integrated within the host open space. Nucleated play spaces incorporate all the equipment into a single cluster that is a destination within the open space.
OS10.01E – Offset	Must not be closer than 10m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
OS10.01F – Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.



Howard Park and Gardens, Letchworth Garden City, Paul Bancroft Architects (2012) [Map Location](#) →

OS10.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS10.02A – Access	Nucleated LEAPs must incorporate a minimum of 2 entrances.
OS10.02B – Boundary Treatment	No boundary treatments are required for dispersed typologies. Nucleated typologies must select boundary treatments from landscape boundaries (OS02.07), social and playable boundaries (OS02.08), timber fencing (OS02.10) or metal fencing (OS02.11). Fencing should be minimised in favour of landscaped and social boundaries.

OS10.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS10.03A – Quantum of Trees	One non-fruiting tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
OS10.03B – Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least one Focal Tree in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS12 for suitable species).
OS10.03C – Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS10.04 – Play Experiences

OS10.04A – Physical Experiences	Must incorporate a minimum of 8 pieces of equipment that conform to EN1176. Equipment must facilitate each of the following physical experiences; balancing, rocking, climbing, agility, sliding, rotating, swinging, jumping and crawling. A minimum of 2 pieces of equipment must be selected from OS07.03 Inclusive Play.
OS10.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one multi-sensory play feature from either OS07.06/07 water and sand play.
OS10.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	Must incorporate at least one social and creative play experience selected from OS07.08.

OS10.05 – Materiality

OS10.05A – Soft Landscaping	In nucleated typologies, a minimum of 30% of the total area must be soft landscaping.
OS10.05B – Surfacing	Impact absorbing materials (such as wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip) that comply with EN1177 must be used around play equipment and features with a risk of falling. In nucleated typologies, a uniform material tone across the whole space is not permitted. One material and/or tone can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.

OS10.06 – Facilities

OS10.06A – Sociable Seating	Must include a minimum of one sociable seating feature selected from OS02.15.
OS10.06B – Cycle Parking	Must provide at least 4 sheffield stands at entrance points. Sheffield stands must be spaced 1m apart.
OS10.06C – Waste Bins	1no. waste bin must be provided.

NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREAS FOR PLAY

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are larger, destination play spaces that serve a wider area and cater for a broad age range. They combine equipped play for younger children with more challenging features for older children and teenagers, supported by surrounding informal play opportunities. They are key recreational anchors within neighbourhoods, offering space for extended visits, active play and gathering.

OS11.01 – Key Parameters

OS11.01A – Distance	All homes must be within 1000m of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)
OS11.01B – Size	Must have a minimum area of 1000sqm, incorporating a hard surface area of at least 465sqm for games and informal sport.
OS11.01C – Location	Must be incorporated into all Tier 3 Open Spaces. They may also be incorporated into other tiers.
OS11.01D – Typology	Must be configured as nucleated play spaces forming a key destination within the host open space.
OS11.01E – Offset	Must not be closer than 30m to the nearest habitable room facade of surrounding dwellings.
OS11.01F – Setting	Must be positioned along a formal route or near main entrances for passive surveillance.



Hartham Play Park, Hertford, Groundwork East (2021) [Map Location](#) →

OS11.02 – Access, Movement and Thresholds

OS11.02A – Access	Must incorporate a minimum of 2 entrances.
OS11.02B – Boundary Treatment	Must select boundary treatments from landscape boundaries (OS02.07), social and playable boundaries (OS02.08), timber fencing (OS02.10) or metal fencing (OS02.11). Fencing should be minimised in favour of landscaped and social boundaries.

OS11.03 – Nature and Ecology

OS11.03A – Quantum of Trees	One non-fruiting tree per piece of equipment must be incorporated to provide shading for users.
OS11.03B – Focal Trees	Must incorporate at least three Focal Trees in a Heavy Standard Size (see OS12 for suitable species).
OS11.03C – Sensory Planting	Must include an area of sensory planting.

OS11.04 – Play Experiences

OS11.04A – Physical Experiences	Must incorporate a minimum of 9 pieces of equipment comprising; at least 4 items to facilitate rocking, sliding, swinging or moderate climbing among younger children and at least 5 items to encourage more adventurous climbing, single point swinging, balancing, rotating or gliding. At least 3 of the items should be individual play items rather than part of a combination multi-play unit. At least 3 pieces of equipment must be selected from OS07.03 Inclusive Play.
OS11.04B – Sensory Experiences	Must incorporate at least one water play feature selected from OS07.06.
	Must incorporate at least one sand play feature selected from OS07.07.
OS11.04C – Social and Creative Experiences	Must incorporate at least one creative play experience selected from OS07.08.

OS11.05 – Materiality

OS11.05A – Soft Landscaping	A minimum of 30% of the total area must be soft landscaping. These areas must be interspersed among play equipment and used to subtly demarcate zones for different ages.
OS11.05B – Surfacing	Impact absorbing materials (such as wet pour rubber, rubber mulch and wood chip) that comply with EN1177 must be used around play equipment and features with a risk of falling.
	A uniform material tone across the whole space is not permitted. One material and/or tone can make up a maximum of 50% of the total area.

OS11.06 – Facilities

OS11.06A – Sociable Seating	Must include a minimum of one sociable seating feature selected from OS02.15.
OS11.06B – Cycle Parking	Must provide at least 6 sheffield stands at entrance points. Sheffield stands must be spaced 1m apart.
OS11.06C – Waste Bins	2no. waste bins must be provided.

PLANTING PALETTE

OS12.01 – Planting Species Selection

All planting proposals must demonstrate a context-responsive approach to species selection. Species must be chosen to ensure long-term resilience, ecological value and environmental sustainability. Particular consideration must be given to the attributes outlined below.

Drought tolerance and climate resilience where planting prioritises species known for their ability to withstand prolonged dry periods and increasing climate variability. Preference must be given to native or well-acclimatised species.

Support for biodiversity and wildlife where selected species enhance the local ecological networks by providing habitat, food sources and pollinator value. Planting strategies must be informed by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with particular reference to focus areas and priorities.

Low maintenance and longevity where selected species are robust, disease-resistant and capable of establishing with minimal ongoing intervention. Planting schemes must be designed to reduce long-term watering, use of fertilisers and pruning cycles.

OS12.02 – Context Appropriate Planting

Species selection must respond to the specific micro-climatic and spatial conditions of each location, including; orientation and sun-shade levels; soil type, depth and drainage characteristics; exposure to wind and urban heat effects; proximity to built form, streets, utilities and infrastructure; relationship to public realm and settlement edge conditions. Planting must reinforce local landscape character and contribute positively to the distinctiveness of place.

OS12.03 – Pest Resilience

To reduce the risk of catastrophic tree loss due to pests, developments must not plant more than 10% of any one species, 20% of any one genus or 30% of any one family.

The following tables include example species organised around important attributes that must be taken into consideration when selecting appropriate species. The information is organised into 5 categories; bulbs, herbaceous perennials, medium canopy trees, large canopy trees and shrubs.

Bulbs

	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife
Onion <i>Allium</i> spp.	x		x			x		x		x
Daffodil <i>Narcissus</i>	x		x			x		x		
Snow crocus <i>Crocus tommasinianus</i>	x		x		x		x	x		x
Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	x			x			x			x
Snake's-head fritillary <i>Fritillaria meleagris</i>	x		x	x	x		x			x
Ramsons (wild garlic) <i>Allium ursinum</i>		x		x			x		x	x
Native daffodil <i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i>		x	x	x			x	x		x
Wild hyacinth <i>Camassia leichtlinii</i>		x	x		x		x			x
Bearded iris <i>Iris germanica</i>		x	x					x		x
Drooping star of Bethlehem <i>Ornithogalum nutans</i>		x		x			x			x
Snowdrop <i>Galanthus nivalis</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x			x

Herbaceous Perennials

	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife
English lavender <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	x					x		x
Wild sage <i>Salvia nemorosa</i>	x					x		x
Garden sage <i>Salvia officinalis</i>	x					x	x	x
Catmint <i>Nepeta x faassenii</i>	x			x		x		x
Yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	x			x		x	x	x
Sedum <i>Hylotelephium</i> spp.	x			x		x		x
Coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	x			x		x	x	x
Purpletop vervain <i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	x		x	x		x		x
Cupid's dart <i>Catananche caerulea</i>	x					x		x
Wild marjoram <i>Origanum vulgare</i>	x			x		x	x	x
Feather grass <i>Stipa tenuissima</i>	x					x		
Golden oats <i>Stipa gigantea</i>	x					x		x

Medium Canopy Trees

	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Focal tree	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Ornamental pear <i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	x		x		x	x		x				x
Juneberry Amelanchier <i>lamarckii</i>	x		x		x		x		x	x	x	x
Cherry plum <i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	x		x		x	x			x	x	x	x
New Horizon Ulmus	x	x	x			x	x				x	x
Whitebeam <i>Sorbus aria</i>	x	x	x			x		x		x	x	x
Conference pear <i>Pyrus communis</i>	x	x	x				x	x	x	x	x	x
Common hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x			x	
Crab apple <i>Malus sylvestris</i>	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x
Field maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Rowan <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	x	x	x				x		x		x	x
Hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x
Hitchin pippin <i>Malus domestica</i>	x	x	x					x	x	x	x	x

Large Canopy Trees

	Formal and urban spaces	Natural and informal spaces	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Focal tree	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Holly oak <i>Quercus ilex</i>	x		x			x	x	x			x	x
Downy oak <i>Quercus pubescens</i>	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x
Pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	x	x	x		x		x	x	x		x	x
Field maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	x
Norway maple <i>Acer platanoides</i>	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x
Hornbeam <i>Carpinus betulus</i>	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Silver lime <i>Tilia tomentosa</i>	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x
Common lime <i>Tilia x europaea</i>	x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x

	Good in the sun	Good in the shade	Good in wet conditions	Suitable for streets	Complimentary to woodlands	Drought resistant	Productive	Good for wildlife	Good for providing shade
Rock rose Cistus spp.	x			x		x		x	
Californian lilac Ceanothus (compact varieties)	x					x		x	
Rosemary Rosmarinus officinalis	x					x	x	x	
Smoke tree Cotinus coggygria	x					x		x	x
Sea buckthorn Hippophae rhamnoides	x					x	x	x	
Japanese spirea Spiraea japonica	x			x		x		x	
Jerusalem sage Phlomis fruticosa	x					x		x	
Wayfaring tree Viburnum lantana	x			x	x	x		x	
Holly olive Osmanthus sp	x	x				x		x	



MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ATTENUATION BASINS

OS13.01 – Capacity

The area and capacity of attenuation basins must be minimised through prioritising source control features upstream.

OS13.02 – National Guidance

Attenuation basins must be designed in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Urban Drainage.

OS13.03 – Technical Design

Inlet and outlet features must be natural in their design to maintain the character of the open space. Designers must prioritise ways of avoiding the construction of headwalls. For example, by running a perforated pipe and french drain beneath attenuation basins and allowing water to surcharge from the pipe into the basin above as water backs up behind the flow control.

If this is not possible and headwalls are required, they must be designed to be as small as possible and integrated into the landscape design.

OS13.04 – Multi-functionality

Attenuation basins must be multi-functional and maximise amenity for local residents and nature. Basins designed to be dry for the majority of the time must incorporate informal play as a secondary use and accord with the requirements set out in OS13.05. Basins designed to permanently hold water, must provide ecological benefits and visual amenity for residents, in accordance with the requirements set out in OS13.06.

OS13.05 – Dry Attenuation Basins

Dry attenuation basins must incorporate a range of informal play features to encourage use by children and their carers. A minimum of one feature per 100sqm must be included and selected from OS08.01.

Informal play features must be arranged along a trail or route to encourage exploration and make best use of the topography.

Edge gradients must not exceed 1/3 to ensure basins are accessible and feel part of the open space. In addition, fencing or any barriers to access will not be permitted



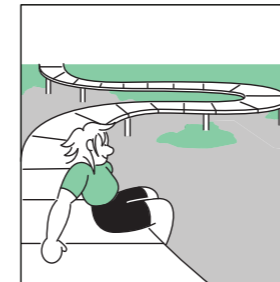
Cooks Lane Housing, Solihull, Birmingham, DSA Environment and Design (2019)
[Map Location →](#)



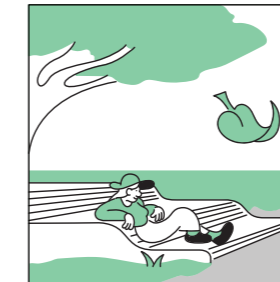
Derwenthorpe, York, Studio Partington with FIRA Landscape Architects and PRP Architects (2019) [Map Location](#) →

OS13.06 – Wet Attenuation Basins

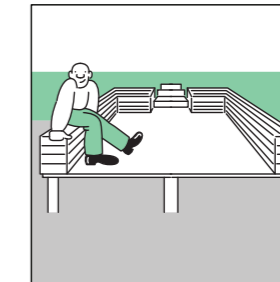
Wet attenuation basins must incorporate a minimum of one seating/viewing platform from the options below to allow residents to enjoy the visual amenity of the basin.



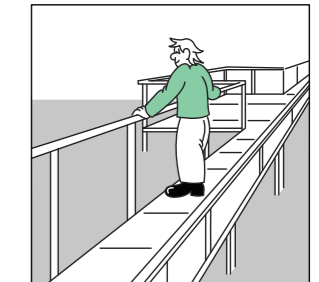
Timber bridges and boardwalks



Stepped water access



Seating platform



Pier

Wet attenuation basins must also incorporate a series of planted shelves that support a variety of planting and contribute to ecological enhancements and biodiversity net gain (see OS12). Mono-cultural grass banks will not be permitted.

Edge gradients steeper than 1/3 will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate this supports ecological function and visual containment thus requiring reduced access.

Fencing must be minimised to retain the natural character of the open space. Where fencing is required and landscaped boundaries (see OS02.07) are not feasible, timber fencing is permitted (see OS02.10).