

Shrewsbury Town Council



Play Strategy

June 2025

1. Vision Statement

Every child in Shrewsbury should grow up in a town that protects their right to play, supports their creativity and wellbeing, and includes them in shaping the spaces they use. Play is essential to the healthy development and happiness of children and young people and is a key component of a vibrant and inclusive community.

2. Strategic Alignment

Play aligns with a number of local, county and national documents:

2.1 Shrewsbury Town Council Visioning

The Shrewsbury Town Council Visioning emphasises placemaking, wellbeing, and inclusivity. Play spaces contribute directly to these aims.

2.2 Shropshire Corporate Plan

The Shropshire Council Corporate Plan focuses on healthy people, a healthy environment, and sustainable communities. Play provision supports all three.

2.3 Shrewsbury Big Town Plan

The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan encourages sustainable development and better use of public space. Play areas must be central to this vision.

2.4 Play England's Strategy

The Play England Strategy calls for a national Play Sufficiency Duty and embeds children's rights to time, space, and freedom to play.

2.5 Parks for Girls Campaign

The Makes Space For Girls Parks for Girls' Campaign highlights gender inequality in public space design. Recommends inclusive, welcoming, and sociable park features designed with input from teenage girls.

3. Strategic Objectives

In developing its play provision Shrewsbury Town Council sets out a number of key objectives:

Aim 1: Universal Access and Equity in Play

Shrewsbury Town Council shall:

- 1.1 Ensure all children live within a 15-minute walk of an inclusive and stimulating play area

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

Source: Russell Play

- 1.2 Prioritise underserved neighbourhoods in play investment. Priority areas include Sundorne Grove and Herongate Estates.
- 1.3 Adopt the Fields In Trust/NPFA Play Space classifications to inform provision and upgrades:
- **LAP (Local Area for Play):** These are unsupervised small open spaces specifically designed for young children for play activities close to where they live. Although without play equipment, LAPs have characteristics that make the area conducive to children's play. Such characteristics include ease of access, a relatively level site, informal surveillance and modest provision of landscaping so that play is not inhibited. The NPFA consider that LAPs should be within 1 minute walking time of home.
 - **LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play):** These are unsupervised play areas that are equipped for children of early school age. While sharing similar characteristics to LAPs, LEAPs feature a range of different types of play equipment. The NPFA consider these should be located within 5 minutes walking time of home. Most of our play areas fit into this category, although maximum age limits vary from 8 years – 12 years, dependant on size and location.

- **NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play):** These are also unsupervised but they are intended to service a substantial residential area. While sharing similar characteristics to LEAPs, NEAPs feature a significant range of different types of play equipment. It is equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children. The NPFA recommend these should be located within 15 minutes walking time of home.

Aim 2: Inclusive and Engaging Play Spaces

Shrewsbury Town Council shall:

- 2.1 Design spaces using co-creation methods with children and young people.
- 2.2 Ensure inclusive access for children of all abilities, backgrounds, and genders.
- 2.3 Apply "Parks for Girls" principles in every new project.
- 2.4 Expand opportunities for informal and natural play.
- 2.5 Improve physical access to play spaces through pathways, surfacing, and accessible gates.

Aim 3: Safe, High-Quality, and Sustainable Play Provision

Shrewsbury Town Council shall:

- 3.1 Implement a routine and operational inspections and maintenance schedules for all play equipment and surfacing. Routine Inspections are quick visual inspections and are recorded whilst visiting to empty bins, cut grass, raking woodchip surface, litter picking, weedkilling, etc,. Operational Inspections take 15 mins for average site – looking for wear and tear, repairs needed, more detailed inspection records – with photos would be good.
- 3.2 Ensure all new and refurbished play spaces comply with EN 1176/77 safety standards.
- 3.3 Improve safety and reduce anti-social behaviour through thoughtful design, visibility, and community presence.
- 3.4 Plan for sustainable, climate-resilient infrastructure (e.g. shade, natural drainage, non-toxic materials).

- 3.5 Implement a robust financial plan for long-term maintenance and replacement. This be informed by the annual safety inspection reports. Safety surfacing is costly and usually needs replacement before equipment has come to the end of its life.

Aim 4: Promote a Play-Friendly Culture

Shrewsbury Town Council shall:

- 4.1 Develop communication channels (e.g., website, social media, noticeboards) to inform residents & schools of play opportunities.
- 4.2 Partner with schools, youth services, and community groups to support organised play.
- 4.3 Advocate for the importance of play in community health and education.
- 4.4 Enable informal play through pop-up events, mobile play, and creative interventions.

Aim 5: Secure Sustainable Funding and Partnerships

Shrewsbury Town Council shall:

- 5.1 Explore diverse funding streams: council budgets, grants, developer contributions (Section 106/CIL).
- 5.2 Develop local partnerships with businesses, developers, volunteers, and Friends groups.
- 5.3 Strengthen strategic alignment with planning policy to ensure developer contributions reflect local play needs.

Aim 6: Good Play Space Design Guidance

Shrewsbury Town Council works closely with developers to ensure there is a space designated and prepared (including fencing) for the installation of agreed play equipment as part of on-site design. Play equipment and its future maintenance shall be funded through the Community Element of the Community Infrastructure Levy retained by the Planning Authority. The Town Council is happy to consider design and build.

Play should meet the following requirements:

Number of properties	Play Area Type	Size	Age Range
100 properties	Local Area of Play (LAP)	250m ²	Under 6
150 properties	Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	375m ²	4-12
250 properties	LAP & LEAP	625m ²	0-12
350 properties	Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)	875m ²	0-14

- a. Play provision needs to be appropriate to the needs of the community and should be accessible for every child within appropriate walking and cycling distance without having to cross main roads, railways or watercourses in line with the Big Town Plan Movement & Public Space Strategy;
- b. The location of play should be influenced by the site, shape and contours of the development site and its relationship to surrounding developments and communities;
- c. Play areas should be accessible enough that parents should feel confident about where their children are playing; within visibility of neighbouring properties and along well used pedestrian routes. They should be sited close enough to housing that encourages informal parental supervision, but is not disruptive to residents enjoyment of their properties. Any new proposed LEAPs should be 25 metres away from the nearest residential building wall, whilst NEAPs should be 50 metres away
- d. Play areas should be accessible from paths to enable enjoyable during inclement weather. Surfaces within the play area and the access to them from nearby paths must be free draining so they do not become water-logged or boggy after heavy rain and/or flooding. Where appropriate tarmac paths should be used to avoid future maintenance;
- e. Any gradients should be compliant with the Equality Act and should not cause an unnecessary maintenance burden;
- f. Consideration should be given to the use of materials that would provide a long-term, robust (steel construction) solution to play. Materials should stimulate the senses in terms of colour, sound and touch. Any construction should allow for spare parts to be easily accessible;

- g. Play equipment should be inclusive and accessible to all;
- h. Surfacing should be limited to either wet pour or specialist safety matting to ensure children's safety, resistant to vandalism and an unnecessary maintenance burden
- i. All play areas should be fenced off with dog-proof 1.2metre bow top fencing with two self-closing, self-clamping/anti-slam gates, one of which should be 2 metres wide to facilitate maintenance. Gates should be of a different colour to fencing; Maintenance gates are installed for grass cutting in the larger play areas.
- j. Seating and litter bins should be provided within the play area. Bins should be enclosed, lockable and of steel construction preferably sited by entrances to play areas and approved by the Town Council for maintenance and emptying purposes. Seating should also be of construction to reduce future maintenance;
- k. It is envisaged that all Play Areas shall be sited close enough to lit paths so that additional lighting would not be required;
- l. Where on-site provision is not feasible, Shrewsbury Town Council will use the commuted sum to upgrade existing play facilities in the area.
- m. No planting should be provided within or around) the fenced play area. Appropriate screening is acceptable to reduce noise pollution, but this should not cause the play facility to become isolated and out of view;
- n. The Town Council has a defined format for signage to all of its play areas, which details contact information and any rules for the facility;
- o. The number and type of equipment shall be in accordance with the NPFA's 6-acre standard (See Appendix A) providing robust equipment that ensures no unnecessary maintenance burden;
- p. A post-construction inspection by ROSPA must be undertaken prior to adoption.
- q. Should there be a delay between the construction of the play area/ROSPA Inspection and the land adoption, the Developer shall carry out weekly inspection in the same way the Town Council would carry out weekly inspections

4. Implementation Plan

Phased Approach:

- *Year 1: Audit & Community Engagement*

- Years 2–3: Priority Upgrades, Inclusive Pilots
- Years 4–5: New Developments & Strategy Review

Inspection & Maintenance:

- Conduct monthly visual checks, quarterly operational inspections, and annual independent inspections
- Regular, sometimes weekly/fortnightly visits are made to empty bins/cut grass, particularly in the growing/busy season– a quick routine visual inspection shall be undertaken

Prioritised Action Plan:

- For each objective, assign responsible teams, timelines, and success measures

Partnerships & Collaboration:

- Schools, housing developers, youth organisations, health services, and voluntary sector

Funding Strategy:

- Include project-by-project costings and potential income sources

Communication Plan:

- Publish annual reports, interactive maps, consultation outcomes, and project updates

5. Monitoring, Evaluation & Review

Performance Indicators:

- Play space proximity coverage
- Number of upgraded/new sites
- User satisfaction and usage statistics
- Reduction in vandalism or anti-social incidents

Reporting:

- Annual progress reports to Council

Review Mechanism:

- Formal review every 3–5 years

Feedback Loop:

- Ongoing digital feedback portal and annual engagement sessions

6. Appendices

Appendix A: The NPFA Six Acre Standard

The National Playing Fields Association's recommendations for outdoor playing space, (i.e. for sport, recreation and children's play) are a global statement of the amount of land required per 1,000 head of population and should be regarded as a minimum standard. The NPFA recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.4 hectares per 1000 head of population, made up as follows:

Play Facilities: 0.6 - 0.8 hectares per 1000 population.

- Outdoor equipped playgrounds for children of whatever age;
- Other designated play facilities for children which offer specific opportunity for outdoor play, such as adventure playgrounds;
- Casual or informal playing space within housing areas

Outdoor Sports: 1.6 - 1.8 hectares per 1000 population.

- Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks and miscellaneous sites such as croquet lawns and training areas owned by local authorities, whether at county, district or parish level;
- Facilities described above within the educational sector and which, as a matter of practice and policy, are available for public use;
- Facilities described above which are within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, and serve the leisure needs for outdoor recreation of their members, or the public.
- NB: Included within the broad 2.4 hectares standard is a specific allocation of 1.2 hectares (3.0 acres) per 1000 population for pitch sports
- Overall Minimum Standard for Outdoor Playing Space: 2.4 hectares per 1000 population.

NPFA Characteristics of Play Areas

LAP – Local Area for Play

- Has a minimum activity zone area of 100 m².
- Caters for children up to 6 years of age.
- Is within 1 minute's walking time from home.

- Has a buffer zone of 5 m minimum depth between the activity zone and the nearest dwelling that faces the LAP. This should include planting to enable children to experience natural scent, colour and texture.
- Is overlooked by nearby houses.
- Gable ends or other exposed walls should be protected from use for ball games by, for example, providing a strip of dense planting of 1 m minimum depth.
- Is positioned beside a pedestrian pathway on a well-used route.
- Occupies a reasonably flat, well-drained site with grass or a hard surface.
- Contains features that enable children to identify the space as their own domain, e.g. low key games such as hopscotch, a footprint trail, mushroom style seating etc.
- Any playground equipment provided must conform to EN 1176.
- Contains seating for parents and/or carers.
- Has fencing of at least 600mm in height around the perimeter, with a selfclosing pedestrian gate to prevent access by dogs.
- Has a barrier to limit the speed of a child entering or leaving the facility.
- Has a sign indicating: -
 - The area is solely for use by children;
 - Adults are not allowed unless accompanied by children;
 - Dogs are excluded.

LEAP – Local Equipped Area for Play

- Has a minimum activity zone area of 400 m².
- Caters for children from 4 to 8 years of age.
- Is within 5 minutes' walking time from home.
- Has a buffer zone not less than 10 m in depth between the activity zone and the habitable room façade of the dwelling. This zone should include planting to enable children to experience natural scent, colour and texture.
- Should not have play equipment overlooking nearby gardens.
- Is positioned by a pedestrian pathway on a well-used route.

- Occupies a well-drained site with a grass or hard surface and features an appropriate impact absorbing surface beneath and around the play equipment conforming to EN 1177.
- Contains at least 5 types of play equipment, of which at least two are individual pieces, rather than part of a combination multi-play unit. Each type of play equipment should be designed to stimulate one of the following activities:
 - Balancing
 - Rocking
 - Climbing/Agility
 - Sliding
 - Social play Additional items may focus upon rotating, swinging, jumping, crawling, viewing, counting or touching.
- The playground equipment must conform to EN 1176.
- Contains seating for parents and/or carers.
- Contains a litterbin.
- Has adequate space around the equipment to enable children to express their general exuberance and play games of 'tag' or 'chase'.
- Has fencing of at least 1 m in height around the perimeter of the activity zone, with two outward opening, self closing gates, on opposite sides of the play area, to deter entry by dogs and to restrict opportunities of bullying.
- Has a barrier to limit the speed of a child entering or leaving the facility.
- Has a sign indicating:
 - The area is solely for use by children;
 - Adults are not allowed unless accompanied by children;
 - Dogs are excluded;
 - Name and telephone number of the operator of the facility to report any incident or damage to the play equipment;
 - Location of nearest public telephone.

NEAP – Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area

- Has a minimum activity zone area of 1000 m² that is divided into two parts; one containing a range of playground equipment and the other having a hard surface of at least 465 m² (the minimum area needed to play five-a-side football).
- Caters predominantly for older children.
- Is within 15 minutes' walking time from home.
- Has a buffer zone of not less than 30 m in depth between the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest dwelling. A greater distance maybe needed where purpose built skateboarding facilities are provided. This zone should include planting to enable children to experience natural scent, colour and texture.
- Positioned beside a pedestrian pathway on a well-used route.
- Occupies a well drained site with both grass and hard surfaced areas and featuring an appropriate impact absorbing surface beneath and around the play equipment conforming to EN 1176.
- Contains at least 8 types of play equipment comprising:
 - At least 1 item to stimulate rocking, tough, social or development play among younger children;
 - At least 2 items to facilitate sliding, swinging or moderate climbing;
 - At least 5 items to encourage either more adventurous climbing, single point swinging, balancing, rotating or gliding (e.g. cableway). At least 3 of these items should be individual play items rather than part of a combination multi-play unit.
- The playground equipment must conform to EN 1176.
- Contains seating for parents and/or carers in the vicinity of the play equipment and other seating within the hard surfaced games area.
- Contains litterbins at each access point and in the proximity of each group of seats.
- Has a convenient and secure parking facility for bicycles.
- Has adequate space around the equipment to enable children to express their general exuberance and play and play games of 'tag' or 'chase'.
- Has fencing of at least 1 m in height around the perimeter of the activity zone, with two outward opening, self closing gates on opposite sides of the space, to deter entry by dogs and to restrict opportunities for bullying.

- Has a barrier to limit the speed of a child entering or leaving the facility.
- Has a sign to indicate:
 - The area is solely for use by children;
 - Adults are not allowed in the equipped space unless accompanied by children;
 - Dogs are excluded;
 - Name and telephone number of the operator of the facility to report any incident or damage to the play equipment;
 - Location of nearest public telephone

Appendix B: Play Value Assessment Scoring Matrix (for Tenders)

Criterion	Description	Max Score
Diversity of Play Opportunities	Range of physical, sensory, social, imaginative play	20
Age & Ability Inclusivity	Accessibility and suitability across age groups and abilities	15
Gender Inclusivity (Parks for Girls)	Features that support equitable use by girls and non-binary youth	15
Quality and Durability	Use of robust, low-maintenance materials	10
Environmental Sensitivity	Sustainable materials, biodiversity support, natural integration	10
Community Engagement	Evidence of local input or co-design	10
Alignment with Strategy Objectives	Supports this strategy's core goals and values	10
Cost Effectiveness	Value for money in relation to total score	10
Total		100

Appendix C: Risk and Safety Framework

- Summary of inspection protocols
- Compliance checklists for EN 1176/1177

Appendix D: Budget & Funding Forecasts

- 5-year estimated capital and maintenance costs
- Funding source plan by project

Appendix E: Play Space Audit Data

- GIS mapping of existing LAP, LEAP, NEAPs
- Accessibility gaps

References:

- Play England: <https://www.playengland.org.uk>
- Make Space for Girls: <https://www.makespaceforgirls.co.uk>
- Shrewsbury Big Town Plan: <https://shrewsburybigtownplan.org>
- Thame Play Strategy: <https://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Play-Area-Strategy-13.04.21-1.pdf>