



PLAY ZONES

Technical Design Guidance
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Introduction

PlayZones are safe, inclusive, and accessible outdoor facilities that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports and physical activities. We aim to focus our investment and resource into communities with the greatest need to deliver new or refurbished spaces that enable our priority groups to be more active.

Whilst our investment is football-led, we want other sports and activities to benefit from our facilities. Through engagement with other sport's National Governing Bodies, we have developed a series of PlayZones designs setting out how football can be best accommodated with one other sport from a surface type, line marking, sports furniture, fencing and floodlighting perspective. All design sheets can be found at the end of this document.

Community engagement should be the process by which each PlayZones location, design and activation plan are developed and agreed. The PlayZone design most applicable to the needs of the community should be adopted in accordance with the guidance set out in this document. If the community engagement finds that additional activities are prominent in a certain area, designs can be developed to accommodate additional line markings and sports furniture, but with the justification for doing so coming from the needs of the community.

Once your initial community engagement has been undertaken and learnings discussed and agreed with Football Foundation officers, you should engage with a specialist design consultant to develop all technical and design requirements for your project. Please discuss the process for appointing a consultant with Foundation officers.

This guidance is designed to help you understand what to expect from the process.

Pitch Location & Access

The design and cost of a new PlayZone will be greatly influenced by the site on which it is to be built and it should be recognised that some sites are not cost effective to develop. Ideally a PlayZone should be located:

- Close to changing accommodation or other support facilities e.g. Toilets, Cafes.
- On relatively flat ground in order to reduce construction complexity and costs
- In a sheltered location away from exposed terrain.
- Where the installation of services (electricity and drainage) will not be prohibitively expensive.
- Where easy access for maintenance and emergency vehicles is available.
- Away from trees, as roots and leaf litter can cause on-going structural and maintenance issues.
- Where players, spectators and maintenance equipment do not have to cross natural turf areas, as mud, debris and other contaminants will all contribute to the deterioration of the playing surface.

Managed Access Systems

Our research tells us that PlayZones must be bookable if we are to reach our priority groups. Whilst some groups will feel comfortable and able to turn up and play, others need to know that the space can be booked on a day and time that best meets their needs. There can be an element of open access, but a combination is required. The research also found that activation of the space is as important as the facility itself. Each PlayZone therefore requires a site Activation Plan that includes programmed delivery of activities on a weekly basis.

To ensure PlayZones are developed with an access arrangement that delivers on what the research tells us, we are currently exploring smart access technology solutions that would support with booking, access, and the management of PlayZones. Further detail will be shared with

applicants when available. If such a solution is decided upon by the Foundation, all PlayZones will be expected to adopt this funding requirement.

Inspiring, welcoming, and innovative

PlayZones provide an inspiring and inclusive space for the community to gather, play sport and be active.

The spaces need to be inspiring, accessible, engaging and welcoming for all priority groups. As such PlayZones have been designed to be attractive, modern, and safe spaces that communities want to use, with branding and colour schemes to support that. The design below has been produced for illustrative purposes only, and further detail on site branding, signage etc. will be shared with applicants:



Facilities that are well lit, close to transport links and have access to good quality toilet facilities are essential to encourage and ensure priority groups utilise PlayZones. That should be considered when engaging communities and making decisions on site locations. The wider site surroundings should also be carefully considered to ensure the PlayZone is being developed in a safe space that sets a friendly and nonintimidating atmosphere. PlayZones need to be welcoming and appealing to users and not areas which create or encourage anti-social behaviour.

Pitch Dimensions

All PlayZones have been designed with 30m x 20m pitch dimensions and are based on a new build facility. If a PlayZone is being developed as a refurbishment of an existing space or if the space available for a new build PlayZone doesn't allow for a 30m x 20m pitch dimensions, the design consultants should try to create a design that is as close to the new build dimensions, pitch markings etc. as possible.

Line markings, storage, waiting area, seating and waste bins should be developed alongside each PlayZone as set out in the design sheets.

Surface Type

Providing spaces that can accommodate a range of sports and physical activities will encourage engagement with our priority groups. Broadening the number of sports played on a facility will increase the usage, especially if designed to provide the best playing experience for the sports and activities that the space will be primarily utilised for.

Community Engagement is critical to the identification of the right location and design, ensuring that surface type works for the sports and activities identified by the local community.

Sports surfaces can be defined into two main groups, these are shock absorptive ('soft') and non-shock absorptive surfaces ('hard'). The type of sports being played on a PlayZone will determine the type of sports surface you will install. Set out in the table below are our agreed surface types for each design combination:

Design	Surface Type
Football only	3G non infill synthetic turf
Football & Rugby	3G non infill synthetic turf
Football & Cricket	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Hockey	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Netball	2G sand dressed synthetic turf
Football & Basketball	Type 4 polymeric surface

PlayZones purposefully haven't been designed to meet FIFA or FA performance standards or to meet equivalent standards of other NGBs e.g., World Rugby Regulation 22, therefore they will not be suitable for affiliated match play and should be used for recreational activities only. However, we do want the facilities to be constructed to meet BS EN 15330-1:2013 Surfaces for sports areas - synthetic turf and needle-punched surfaces primarily designed for outdoor use. Specification for synthetic turf surfaces for football, hockey, rugby union training, tennis and multi-sports use

Fencing

For both site security and ball flight / retention purposes, all PlayZones should be fenced in high quality, robust steel fencing that will last long into the future. The fence height requirements are set out in each design and differ between 3 – 4 metres dependent upon the sports being played, and the positioning behind goals, hoops etc.

The fencing is normally constructed from twin bar super-rebound panels or rolls that are supported by box section posts. Twin bar super-rebound panels are used, as it is better suited to the repeated impacts of balls hitting the fence and complies with the Repeated Impact Resistance to Footballs and Kicks requirements of BS EN 153121. Steelwork should be galvanised to minimise to premature corrosion and may be plastic coated to improve its appearance. Where certain sports have a requirement for smaller fence wire gaps e.g., cricket, that is noted on the design sheet.

Access

Access gates should open outwards away from the playing area to ensure the safety of players.

The access pathway to the PlayZones must be a minimum of 1.8m in width unless there are unavoidable pinch points where the width can be reduced to 1.2m for no greater than 6m in length. Ensure a minimum clear height of 2.1m is maintained under trees, canopies etc.

Access routes should be level or have the shallowest gradients possible. Where the route is steeper than 1:60, but not as steep as 1:20, it must have a level landing for each 0.5m rise along the route. For more details, please refer to Sport England Design Guidance Note - Accessible Sports Facilities (available from www.sportengland.org).

Floodlights

Good quality lightning is essential to making PlayZones safe, allowing a variety of sports to be played and encouraging access in the evenings, all year round. The Football Foundation won't support PlayZone projects where floodlights are not provided. Long life and energy efficiency underpin our recommendations and we strongly encourage the use of LED lighting.

Set out in the table below are our agreed floodlighting Lux levels for each design combination:

Design	Lux level
Football only	120
Football & Rugby	120
Football & Cricket	200
Football & Hockey	200
Football & Netball	120
Football & Basketball	120

New build PlayZones should use a two-floodlight column system with an aim of achieving 0.65 uniformity. Refurbishment projects should look to utilise existing floodlight systems in the first instance, with an aim of achieving the same uniformity.

It should be noted that fenced and floodlit facilities will require planning approval from your local authority. This should be discussed with your design consultants.

Goalposts, other sports fixtures, and storage

Where possible, designs have accounted for sports fixtures being built into the fencing e.g., goalposts, basketball & netball hoops, and fixed fence cricket wickets. Where that isn't possible e.g., the cricket wickets needed to activate the centre strip, or more ad-hoc loose equipment, each PlayZone has been designed with a built-in storage solution where such equipment can be held securely.

Storage

Each PlayZone has been designed with a designated storage area within the pitch fence line. Design consultants should plan to build in the most appropriate storage solution for the planned site activation.

Sustainable solutions

We want to look after the environment as much as possible therefore incorporating recycled, sustainable materials in the design and build of our PlayZones is a priority. If we can extend the life of lighting and fencing systems, this also is a sustainable policy.

Ultimately, we want to work toward 'net zero' PlayZones and aim to achieve the best results for the planet when we invest in these facilities.

Maintenance

It's essential you keep your PlayZone well maintained because this will prolong the life and keep it in a safe condition for users. When developing our PlayZone designs, we have tried to ensure that operational costs are kept as low as possible. The type and frequency of maintenance you will need to carry out depends on the type of surface installed and how much it is used. The maintenance requirements for your PlayZone will be based on your site management, usage, surface type, and planned for within your site business plan.

Polymeric surfaces

Rubber type surfaces require regular cleaning, occasional non residual chemical treatment to remove algae, lichen, and moss. Polymeric surfaces can wear so the surfacing and line markings can require repairs in high wear areas early in their life (2-3 years).

Synthetic Turf

The surface will require grooming and brushing regularly, with an annual clean and decompaction. Further interventions will be required as the turf system ages such as seam/line marking repairs, patching to high wear areas and the replacement of penalty spots.

Sport Installation Warranty

You should expect a written warranty in respect to the installation and performance of the various aspects of infrastructure supplied to you. Client warranties should also include the base works and synthetic turf/surfacing system.

In the case of synthetic carpet, the manufacturer of the synthetic turf will provide the warranty, which is assignable to you the Client in addition to the warranty offered by the Contractor. If the surfacing is polymeric the warranties will differ from artificial turf warranties because these surfaces are normally installed by the Contractor.

In the case of base works, the warranty should cover a period of 10 years, the fencing, footpaths, kerbs, and other performance related issues are covered.

For further information, please email:
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or visit our website: footballfoundation.org.uk

