

PLAY ANYWAY:

A Design Blueprint for Playful Landscapes

Exploring how to weave play
seamlessly into landscapes,
creating spaces that invite
movement, imagination
and connection.

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WHY THIS MATTERS

Research is telling us that an off the shelf approach to play introduced without social and environmental context can be limiting

Benefits of a more holistic approach to playful and active landscapes:

- More inclusive, encouraging movement at any age and ability
- Encouraging all community use improves efficiency of space
- Loved and appreciated = better surveilled, less prone to vandalism
- Active and socially connected community

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH

PhD play study

- Placemaking is integral to how spaces are used
- Girls want to climb!
- Multi-user pieces need multiple gateways
- There are gaps in the FMS offer particularly around throwing and catching

CONSULTATION AND CO DESIGN

The Patchwork Programme, Make Your Mark, Make Space for Girls

- Want variety, freedom to explore
- Social infrastructure
- Safety
- Nature rich

NEURODIVERGENCE

Inclusivity, building lifelong movement habits

- Importance of legibility, sensory zoning, refuge spaces

Physical literacy is a lifelong relationship with movement, influenced by how we move, how we connect, how we think and feel, and the spaces we inhabit.

Sport England physical literacy consensus



THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The broader design of spaces – landscape, amenity, circulation and social spaces – is just as important as the equipment itself.



THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The **THRIVE** for Active Environments developed by Positive Experiences in partnership with Sport England sets out a series of action orientated principles to provide a practical way to embed physical literacy.



THRIVE

THRIVE for Active Environments Overview



Tailored

I want my movement experiences to be right for me – designed around what I enjoy, what matters to me, and my strengths, needs, and circumstances.



Holistic

I want my experiences to support how I move (physical), connect (social), think (cognitive) and feel (affective) in and through sport, physical activity and movement.



Reflective

I want to think about how I'm developing, what I enjoy, what feels important to me, and what I want to do next – so I can make choices that help me be and stay active.



Inclusive

I want to feel welcome, supported, safe and included – and have the chance to join in, with opportunities that are open to everyone, no matter our age, gender, ethnicity, ability, health, where we live, or how much money



Varied

I want to explore different ways to move – trying out all kinds of activities, places and spaces, and levels of challenge – so I can enjoy myself, keep learning, and stay interested.



Empowering

I want to have choice, voice and ownership of my movement experiences so they are positive and help to foster a lifelong love of movement and physical activity.

THE SPACES BLUEPRINT

Design SPACES to help people THRIVE.

Six principles to form a flexible design framework.

SPACES starts to describe the design principles that make those experiences possible. Together, they form a shared blueprint for planners, designers, and communities.

- S** Social & Sustainable
- P** Place
- A** Activity & Agency
- C** Clarity & Connection
- E** Empowerment
- S** Selection & Variety



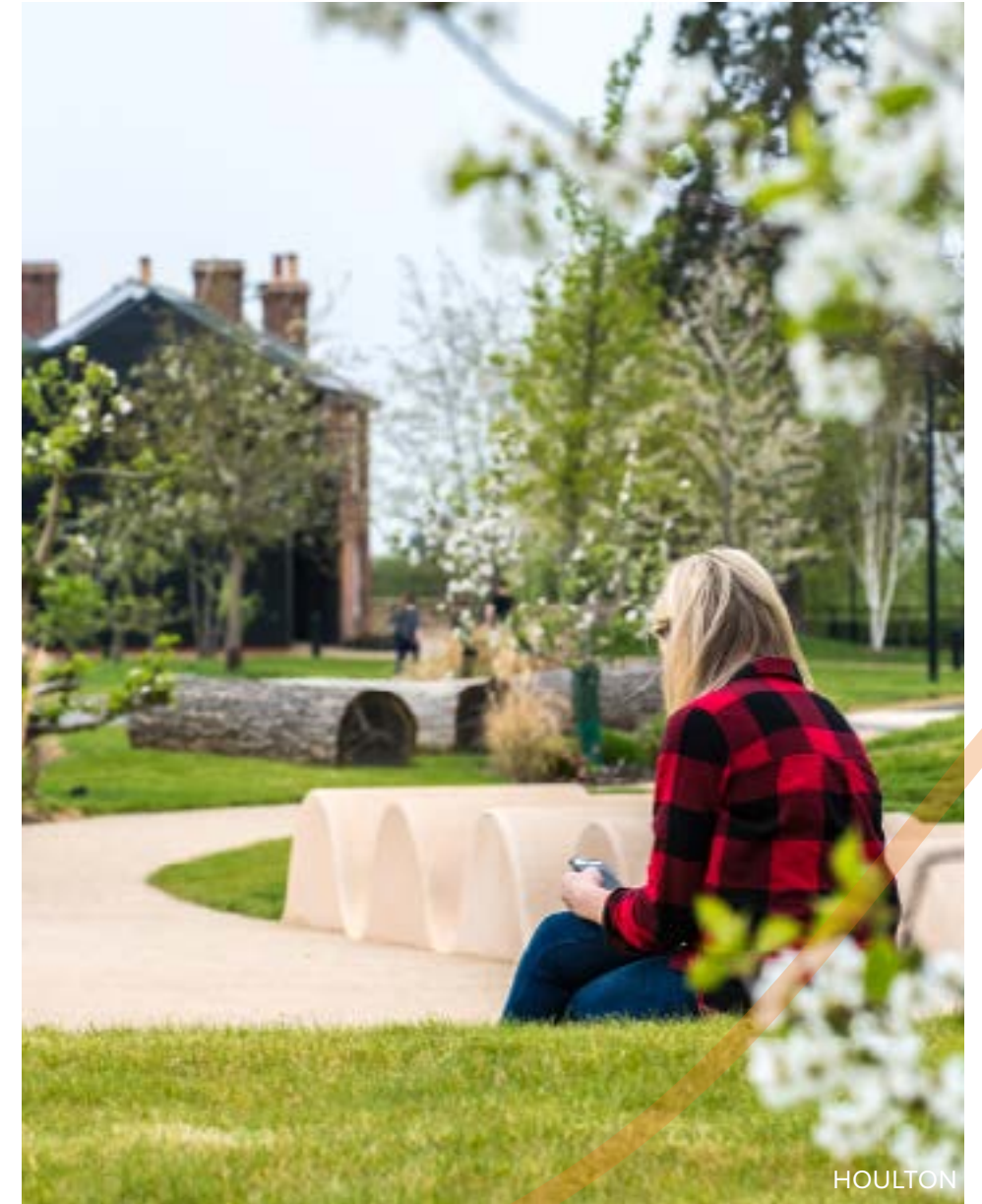


SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE



Principle: Design spaces that extend dwell time

- Toilets/ changing rooms
- Café
- Varied seating with visibility
- Shade and water, well lit
- Well maintained, cared for
- Nature rich
- Efficiently designed to maximise footfall and surveillance





PLACE



Principle: Root design in the character, landscape, ecology and identity of the site

Integrate with landscape

- Use existing trees
- Slopes
- Water and SuDS
- Mounds

Use planting to create different experiences

- Sensory planting
- Visually bright and stimulating
- Height and shape to create a variety of spaces to explore





ACTIVITY & AGENCY



A ACTIVITY & AGENCY

Principle: Provide opportunities for everyone to move, play, and develop skills in their own way.

- Ensure full FMS range is on offer: locomotor, stability, object control. Be innovative
- Blend formal + informal, structured + unstructured play + ‘have a go’ and ‘I mean business’





CLARITY & CONNECTION

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LINEAR PARK, ALCONBURY

C CLARITY & CONNECTION

Principle: Make spaces legible, connected, and easy to move through

- Clear routes, defined gateways, intuitive navigation
- Predictable layouts support confidence and reduce anxiety
- Safe, well lit routes connecting open space





EMPOWERMENT



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LOST GARDENS OF HELIGAN BLURRED

Principle: Enable communities to shape, adapt, and own their spaces

- Co-design with young people, adults, understand how they move and want to move
- Build in flexibility for spaces and places to evolve with a community
- Encourage sense of ownership early on in the design process



CO DESIGN AT ALCONBURY WEALD



SELECTION & VARIETY

S SELECTION & VARIETY

Principle: Ensure diversity, choice and adaptability.

- Allow for curation: movable seating, den building, pop up events, street takeovers, park runs, on the go games
- Aim to pique curiosity, build in quiriness, variety keeps play engaging and inclusive



LOST GARDENS OF HELIGAN

MAKING IT HAPPEN

A collaborative approach

- Designers and developers working pro actively with Local Authorities and Stakeholders to consult and help shape the design process

A change in outputs and deliverables

- A move towards assessment of an 'active movement strategy' rather than a site wide 'play strategy'

Co-opting wider populations

- Harnessing crowd sourced data on active spaces via App, encouraging engagement

Funding and Maintenance

- Consider benefits of playful landscapes to whole community
- S106 funding to set up community group, grant fund for approach not kit

DESIGNING FOR POSSIBILITY.

Research tells us we will benefit as communities from designing playful spaces that consider a more holistic approach to active movement.

The SPACES framework is part of the discussion around what playing any way looks like in practice.

Working collaboratively we can challenge each other to achieve better.



Play any way: weaving play seamlessly into landscapes, creating spaces that invite movement, imagination and connection.

THANK YOU.

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