

Advice and Guidance in relation to Playframes and Planning

When building a playframe the last thing a person probably thinks about is whether it requires planning permission; however, the Council's Planning Enforcement Section has to investigate numerous cases each year in response to complaints about the erection of these structures.

One of the main reasons these complaints are reported to the Council is as a result of concerns in relation to overlooking or loss of privacy, primarily in relation to neighbouring properties.

The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out particulars of development which is permitted without the need for planning permission, subject to relevant exceptions, limitations or conditions as specified – often referred to as 'PD rights' or 'Permitted Development'.

The Planning Enforcement Section will normally assess such structures against the above legislation, and generally playframes do not benefit from PD rights. In these cases and consistent with the Council's Planning Enforcement Strategy the Council must assess the impact that a playframe is having, how many people are affected and whether there is unacceptable adverse harm being caused. In some cases there may not be enough harm to justify taking further action. It should be noted that it is the Council's discretion whether or not to pursue enforcement action.



Such issues as referred to above can be easily remedied/mitigated if you are considering erecting a playframe by ensuring that you consider any adjoining properties and any impact that these structures may have on them. Generally this can be achieved by placing the playframe in the most appropriate location, in most cases away from any adjoining

boundary/property where possible in order to mitigate against any possible issues of overlooking/impact on privacy or overdominance etc.

In some instances it may not be possible to identify a suitable location. In such cases it is important to design the playframes so that any windows or platforms do not overlook your neighbours' property or, alternatively, appropriate screening can be incorporated into the design of the playframe to limit any loss of privacy/overlooking.



General rules to follow which mean you don't need to apply for planning permission:

- *The playframe must not be sited between the principal elevation or side elevation of the dwelling and a road*
- *The height does not exceed 4 metres*
- *The structure must be less than 2.5 metres high if within 2 metres of a boundary*
- *Any raised platform must not exceed 30cm above ground level*

If a playframe incorporates a deck or other raised platform which is over 30cm it cannot benefit from permitted development rights and technically would require planning permission; however, as long as any deck/platform is not impacting on the residential amenity of another property (i.e. it does not create overlooking or loss of privacy to a neighbouring property) it is unlikely that the Council would consider it expedient to pursue enforcement action.

It is prudent that homeowners exercise good neighbourliness and common sense in respect of the location and erection of playframes, so as not to adversely impact on neighbouring properties.

There may be other restrictions if your dwelling is listed or situated within a designated Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character. If you have any queries the Council's Planning Department can provide further advice/guidance.