

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Chippenham Area Board</b>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> January 2012</b>
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Skatepark Task Group Report</b>

## **Purpose of Report**

To ask Councillors to support the following recommendation from the Chippenham Skatepark Task Group:

- Chippenham Skatepark Task group to formally ask Chippenham Town Council to consider whether they have any objections to a public consultation exercise to install a concrete construction Skatepark in Monkton Park
- Consultation is to include a public meeting specifically for residents adjacent to the proposed site and consultation with the wider community area
- Acoustic guidance from the Public Protection team will be followed and a comprehensive noise impact assessment will be commissioned. *See Appendix A*

## 1. Background

- 1.1. Chippenham currently has one Skatepark facility, "The Skate Shed" at the Bridge Centre which is available 2 days a week for young people over the age of 11.
- 1.2. The Bridge Centre is due to close as part of the redevelopment of Bath Road site. An agreement between Wiltshire Council and the developers ING was signed in December 2011, a planning application for the site is anticipated in 2012. The Bridge Centre will be demolished and alternative locations are therefore being sought for the range of facilities and services currently being delivered from the Bridge Centre. The majority of the costs will be borne by the developer; this includes the Skatepark facility.
- 1.3. The nearest facility is in Corsham and local skaters also travel to Trowbridge, Swindon, Bath & Newport, illustrating their enthusiasm for the sport.
- 1.4. The installation of a Skatepark has the support of CAYPIG (Chippenham Area Young Peoples Issues Group), Chippenham Vision Board; ChAP (Chippenham & Villages Area Partnership) Chippenham Children's Parliament and the Youth Forum.
- 1.5. The Chippenham Vision draft Strategy Document in 2008 identified the installation of a Skatepark for the town as one of its key objectives.
- 1.6. The installation of a Skatepark was identified as a priority for Chippenham Area Board at the Area Board meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010.
- 1.7. Chippenham Area Board agreed to establish a Skatepark Task Group at their meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010. Terms of Reference for the group were also agreed:
  - i. To install a Skatepark facility in Chippenham
  - ii. Identify sites
  - iii. Negotiate with landowners
  - iv. Consult with members of the public
  - v. Consult and work with young people
  - vi. Invite experts/professionals as required
- 1.8. Councillors Desna Allen, Paul Darby, Nina Phillips and Peter Hutton were appointed as Area Board representatives on the Skatepark Task Group. Other members of the task group are:
  - Tracy Broadhurst Volunteer
  - Colin Brown Play & Leisure Strategy Officer, Wiltshire Council
  - Brett Conway Volunteer
  - Mark Hunnybun Strategic Projects & Development Manager, Wiltshire Council
  - Adrian Jones Head of Service Delivery, Chippenham Town Council
  - Tim Martienssen Chippenham Vision Board Director
  - Julia Stacey ChAP Project Coordinator
  - Victoria Welsh Community Area Manager, Wiltshire Council
  - Richard Williams Youth Development Coordinator, Wiltshire Council

1.9. The Task group researched the previous Skatepark facility that was installed by North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC) in 2001.

1.10. In 2001 an Environmental Health Officer recommended that advice should be sought from a noise consultant. Planning consent was granted by the Development Control Committee conditional upon details of landscaping and noise mitigation measures being submitted and approved by the planning authority. NWDC required that the equipment had to include “effective sound deadening, the effects of which can be demonstrated”. There was however, no definition of an acceptable noise level in the specification.

1.11. Following the installation of the Skatepark, NWDC received complaints about the noise levels from several local residents.

1.12. An independent noise consultant found that noise levels were unacceptably high and that a substantial degree of noise mitigation was necessary. The Executive Committee of NWDC resolved that NWDC officers and noise consultant should cost, identify and implement immediate short term measures to reduce the noise and draw up a programme for longer term measures. A report to the Executive Committee September 2001 concluded that there was no feasible option of reducing noise levels sufficiently so in its current location the Skatepark was not sustainable and should be closed as soon as practicable.

1.13. The NWDC Executive Committee resolved that the Skatepark be closed when another site had been identified and preferred. A further report was submitted to the Executive Committee on in December 2001 giving a number of options. The Committee resolved to retain the Skatepark in its current location and install concrete equipment.

1.14. However a formal complaint was brought before the Local Government Ombudsman in June 2002. The Ombudsman came to the following conclusions:

- i. NWDCs reliance on the minimum statutory publicity for the planning application fell short of good practice.
- ii. It was a serious error for NWDC not to act on the advice of its own in-house advisors (to involve a noise consultant before granting planning permission and advice on noise mitigation as part of the approval conditions) on this important aspect of the development and that was maladministration. Had a noise consultant been involved at that early stage it is likely that the new Skatepark would not have been designed or built in its original form and that detailed noise attenuation conditions would have been attached to the planning permission.
- iii. NWDC should have addressed the issue that the noise levels were unacceptably high and should have classified the noise as a statutory nuisance.
- iv. NWDC had no justification for permitting a statutory nuisance to continue when it was perfectly practicable for it to cause its immediate abatement.

- v. The Ombudsman found that NWDC was responsible for maladministration causing injustice and was instructed to pay £1,000 and £750 respectively to each of the complainants and told to: "Take urgent steps to ensure that the Skatepark does not give rise to a statutory noise nuisance; either through its closure, or through an effective redesign which makes the operation of the Skatepark nuisance-free."
- 1.15. NWDC chose to close the Skatepark. The option to redesign the Skatepark which the Council had originally approved and had allocated funds to from its 2002/3 capital investment programme was not pursued. Some of the existing equipment was moved to the Bridge Centre where the facility has remained.
- 1.16. The Skatepark Task group has taken the previous issues into account and resolved to follow acoustics guidance and to commission a comprehensive noise impact assessment. *See Appendix A*
- 1.17. In addition to the noise impact assessment, consideration will need to be given to the usable event space to mitigate against restricting future usage, mature trees will need to be protected and a flood risk assessment carried out.
- 1.18. The Task Group considered various solutions and found the following to be unsuitable for the reasons stated below:
- i. **Provide temporary facility – i.e. mobile skate ramps.** Not suitable: High ongoing costs, greater insurance risk, still need to secure suitable sites, very labour intensive, harder to attenuate noise issues. Skateboarding tends to be a casual, spontaneous recreational activity as opposed to a structured sport like football. Complying with specific times for participation is antithetic to the nature of the activity.
  - ii. **Provide regular transport service to nearby towns** Not suitable: High ongoing costs, difficult to sustain, difficult to secure regular use, no sense of local community, does not respond to needs of young people. Skateboarding tends to be a casual, spontaneous recreational activity as opposed to a structured sport like football. Complying with specific times for participation is antithetic to the nature of the activity.
  - iii. **Promote alternative activities where facilities are available** Not suitable: Skateboarding (and skating, scooter etc) are activities that have very strong (and global) cultural and social identities and associations. It is extremely difficult to displace these with substitute activities. To some degree activities like mountain biking and parkour can act as replacements but in many cases it is through skateboarding and bmx that young people come to access these other sports.
- 1.18 The Task group has consulted other relevant parties to seek their advice and comments. These include Wiltshire Police Officers, Community Safety Manager, senior Public Protection Officer, Project Manager Corsham Skatepark Task Group and independent contractors.

1.19 The Skatepark Task Group has provided regular updates to each Area Board meeting.

1.20 The Task Group has considered sites on land owned by Wiltshire Council, land owned by Chippenham Town Council and land in private ownership.

1.21 Chippenham Town Council advised the Task Group that it does not presently have any suitable sites for a Skatepark.

1.22 The Task Group found the following sites to be unsuitable for the reasons given below:

- i. **Abbeyfield/Hardens Farm** This site is named in the Core Strategy for houses, business start up and employment
- ii. **Bristol Road** This area has a known flooding problem. It is narrow and secluded, which may pose security issues. The Police did not feel it was a good option.
- iii. **Bumpers Farm** This land in the ownership of a private developer and it is understood that there is a covenant on the land which would not allow it to be used for a Skatepark.
- iv. **Charter Road (1)** This is a flood plain and conservation area. Not felt to be a suitable option by the police due to anti-social behaviour in the area. Territorial issues anticipated.
- v. **Charter Road (2)** This is a flood plain and conservation area. Not felt to be a suitable option by the police due to anti-social behaviour in the area. Territorial issues anticipated. An existing play area owned by Chippenham Town Council would need to be moved. Redevelopment costs would be prohibitive.
- vi. **Derriads Barn** This location has a listed building on it and is also adjacent to a pond and wildlife area/nature reserve. It is also very close to residential properties.
- vii. **Forest Gate** This site was felt to be too far out of town to be suitable.
- viii. **Hygrade** This site would need considerable redevelopment. Redevelopment costs would be prohibitive. It is understood that there are plans for residential/retirement flats. The area is on a flood plain.
- ix. **John Coles Park** This is a formal park which does not lend itself to any additional facilities as it already has a MUGA.
- x. **Ivyfields** This area is prone to flooding and has underground pipes. The conservation area would need to be taken into account.
- xi. **Kingsley Road** Not very central and some territorial issues anticipated. Not felt to be the best option by the Police.

- xii. **Lovers Walk** Next to a very busy road with several large over hanging trees. RoSPA recommends that Skateparks are built away from tree canopy due to leaf fall. Roots of the trees and water culvert would impact upon construction. Above ground construction would be required due to underground culvert. On culvert means potential weight issues/restrictions.
- xiii. **Lowden Yard** Redevelopment would be required as there was previously a garage on this site. The cost to redevelop would be prohibitive. Very close to residential properties.
- xiv. **Network Rail** Network Rail submitted a planning application for the site in August 2011 to extend the current Station Car Park and to have the land designated operational land for the railway.
- xv. **Rugby Club** Chippenham Rugby Club was approached but declined to make any of their land available as they have other plans for the area.
- xvi. **Rugby Club (Disused Road)** Narrow site adjacent to footbridge with overhead cables. Energy companies require space for maintenance. Isolated and not central.
- xvii. **Stanley Park** Chippenham Town Council formally considered making land at Stanley Park available for a Skatepark facility at their meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The decision was: *Chippenham Town Council rejects the request made by the Chippenham Skatepark Task Group that land at Stanley Park Sports Ground be made available for the provision of a future Skatepark.*
- xviii. **Westcroft** Redevelopment would be needed as this was previously a rubbish tip, the ground is therefore contaminated and the cost of making this good would be prohibitive.
- xix. **Wood Lane** Currently a car park. It is felt that the loss of car parking spaces would not be appropriate. Adjacent to residential properties.

<b>Background documents used in the preparation of this Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes of Chippenham Area Board meeting 10<sup>th</sup> May 2010</li> <li>• Minutes of Chippenham Area Board meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2010</li> <li>• Chippenham &amp; Villages Community Area Plan</li> <li>• NWDC Executive Committee meeting September 2001</li> <li>• Ombudsman report 20<sup>th</sup> June 2002</li> </ul>
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## 2. Main Considerations

- 2.1. Young people in the community area have been actively campaigning for a new Skatepark since the removal of the previous facility.
- 2.2. Chippenham Community Area has the largest population of the 18 Community Areas within Wiltshire Council but despite this is one of the few towns without a Skatepark.

- 2.3. The Chippenham Youth Strategy (led by Wiltshire Council Development Service for Young People) sets out an approach to the decentralised provision for young people in and around Chippenham. The strategy has been shaped through the involvement of young people currently participating in a range of activities and seeks to provide these activities (music, sport, skate boarding, etc) across a spread of locations to meet the diverse needs of young people in terms of interest, ease of access and location. The Youth Strategy received the support of Chippenham Area Board.
- 2.4. A Skatepark is a purpose-built recreational environment made for skateboarding, BMX, inline skating and scooters. A Skatepark may contain half-pipes, quarter pipes, spine transfers, handrails, fun boxes, vert ramps, pyramids, banked ramps, full pipes, pools, bowls, snake runs stair sets, and any number of other objects.
- 2.5. An assessment of range of Skateparks across the UK shows that the average park size is about 45m by 25m, plus some additional space, grassed or otherwise around the edge, access in and out and some 'observational' space for non-users, people waiting to drop in, as well as 'social space' which would in part be dependent on the setting.
- 2.6. There is no single body representing the interests of these activities and no definitive national statistical data available to identify the number of participants. There are clearly peaks and troughs in the popularity of each individual form of this type of activity however across the total mix there are millions of participants.
- 2.7. A recent Wiltshire "Tomorrow's Voice" survey (surveying 1695 young people in Wiltshire) showed that 43% of young people would like engage in alternative sports with 56% wanting these activities in locations other than school.
- 2.8. Not all Skateparks built over the past few years and have been successful due to a wide range of circumstances, for example: lack of preparation and research, political will, inaccurate consultation, financial support and, although Olympic inclusion and decades of history are changing this - an underlying attitude that wheeled action sports are a fad or trend.
- 2.9. To date wheeled sports facilities have largely developed to 'quick fix' local issues. Skate parks for example have much more to offer the community if treated as ongoing projects. There is great potential for council, charity and voluntary sector workers to engage deprived and disaffected youth. This can benefit the community and more important life skills and life chances of young people.
- 2.10. The Task Group is of the opinion that a Skatepark facility in Chippenham would offer the following benefits:
- i. A Skatepark would provide a key facility for a large number of young people.
  - ii. Skateboarding and associated activities encourages physical activity thereby improving health.
  - iii. It would help to move skaters (skaters, scooters etc) away from public car parks and other public sites thereby reducing conflict with other members of the public.

- iv. A well designed park of concrete construction can be a quiet facility. It would reduce noise in other parts of the town where skaters tend to congregate to make best use of the urban realm in order to practice.
- v. A well designed and sited Skatepark provides a safe place for young people to go, meet with others of a similar interest. It helps foster a sense of identity, culturally, geographically and personally.
- vi. Concrete Skateparks offer designers the opportunity of engineering the facility into the landscape. Bunding that flows with the contours of the facility can create an aesthetically pleasing public space and something that people can be proud of.
- vii. It helps to create a positive relationship with and between young people contributing to local social capital and social cohesion. It contributes to a sense of self worth by recognising and responding to the needs of young people.
- viii. It can have economic benefits by making the town centre more attractive to shoppers.
- ix. It contributes to a reduction in anti-social behaviour by focussing energy and attention into a more productive and rewarding outlet.
- x. Young people of Chippenham have actively campaigned for the facility. Responding to their request would encourage their engagement and participation in developing their community.
- xi. It would contribute to a reduction in travel to other towns to access appropriate facilities.
- xii. A Skatepark can widen access and the user age group.

2.11. Preliminary consultation has been carried out as follows:

- i. Young people who use the Bridge Centre. The majority expressed a preference for Monkton Park.
- ii. Members of the public attending The River Festival. Ages ranged from 9 -76 years. Approximately 50% suggested Monkton Park was the best location for a Skatepark.
- iii. Chippenham Children's' Parliament expressed a preference for Monkton Park but did also indicate parents may be able to transport them to a less central site.
- iv. Site visits were undertaken by 3 independent contractors. The contractors were asked to assess 4 different sites and all 3 selected Monkton Park as the most suitable location for a Skatepark facility.



### 3. Options

<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Monkton Park</b>
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3.1. Preferred option: The Task group took into consideration the previous negative history with steel construction facility installed by NWDC. The Task group agreed that Monkton Park is the most suitable site for a Skatepark for the following reasons:

- i. It is central
- ii. It is a safe widely used park environment
- iii. Informal supervision (i.e. people using the park) will limit opportunities for anti-social behaviour
- iv. It is situated adjacent to a leisure centre (The Olympiad) which is entirely appropriate for an outdoor sporting facility (access to toilets, refreshments, first aid etc)
- v. It is situated close to the town centre which may well bring economic benefits to local shops in the High Street
- vi. Monkton Park has frequent patrols by the Neighbourhood Police Team
- vii. The Police support this site
- viii. Local young people engaging with the Youth Development Service have expressed preference for Monkton Park
- ix. Chippenham Children's Parliament identified Monkton Park as the best site for a Skatepark
- x. It has been assessed as a suitable and preferred site by 3 independent contractors
- xi. Informal consultation at the River Festival identified Monkton Park as the preferred option with members of the public from a very wide age range
- xii. The Ombudsman report did not conclude that Monkton Park should not be the site for a future Skatepark. The Ombudsman stipulated that a redesign was required.
- xiii. A new redesigned Skatepark will be of concrete construction and will reduce noise levels significantly and mitigate against noise issues that were a problem with the previous steel construction Skatepark installed by NWDC
- xiv. There is good access to the site for emergency services and construction crew
- xv. Car parking and good access by public transport (bus and train), good, safe access by foot (easy to avoid busy roads and road crossings)

<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Long Close</b>
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3.2. May be suitable: This site is adjacent to an existing play area, is large enough to accommodate a Skatepark and is thought to be sufficient distance from residential property. A formal assessment would be required if this option was pursued. The Task Group has some reservations that this site is not central enough and may have territorial issues as a result of this. The Task Group was also mindful that a Skatepark may not be appropriate alongside other existing facilities & activities in the vicinity i.e. The Sailing & Canoeing Club.

**4. Task Group Recommendation**

- 4.1. Chippenham Skatepark Task group to formally ask Chippenham Town Council to consider whether they have any objections to a public consultation exercise to install a Skatepark in Monkton Park
- 4.2. Consultation is to include a public meeting specifically for residents adjacent to the proposed site and consultation with the wider community area
- 4.3. Acoustic guidance from the Public Protection team will be followed and a comprehensive noise impact assessment will be commissioned. *See Appendix A*

<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>Appendix A - Acoustic advice</b>
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No unpublished documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report.

<b>Report Author</b>	Chippenham Skatepark Task Group
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