

## **Belper Skatepark - Park Road**

The purpose of this document is to support the proposal to build a new Concrete Skate Park on the site next to Park Road, situated on the Parks Estate in Belper,

### **Culture of Respect, Togetherness and Sharing**

Skateparks are social spaces that nurture certain types of Behaviour; they are not 'unregulated', 'lawless' or 'chaotic.' There are always models of Behaviour – waiting in line, or applauding skill – that bring users together; skateparks are places that both require and teach mutual respect, discipline and togetherness, through a shared appreciation of mutually beneficial norms..

*“The skate park has an almost ‘peaceful’, genial, non competitive atmosphere. Whenever a trick is successfully executed, skateboards are drummed on the ground as a kind of alternative applause.”* - Karsten & Pel, Skateboarders exploring urban public space, Journal of Housing and the Built Environment, p. 335.

*“Although lacking adult-imposed mechanisms for control, these activities and leisure contexts provide forms of control that are internal either to individual participants and/or their group, and thereby help to develop capacities for self-regulation, cooperation, and negotiation with peers.”* - Graham L. Bradley, Skateparks as a context for Adolescent Development, Journal of Adolescent Development, 2010, 292.

*“Skatepark users share common values: the game, waiting in turn to “roll in”, respect for the skate park users’ rules, and they are all attracted by a place which favors their sporting practices.”*- Jean Griffet, The Experience of Teenagers at Marseilles’ Skate Park, ‘Cities’, 2001, p.417.

*“Skateboarding is about seeing and being seen. It is a social culture which requires social space. Often, if you see a group of eight to ten people skateboarding, only two of them will be on a board at any one time. The others are sitting, talking and hanging out.”*- Anthony Bracali, chief architect of the Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art and skatepark advocate.

*“Urban managers should view skateparks as a means by which to reward and encourage specific character traits in young people, principally personal responsibility, self-sufficiency and entrepreneurialism.”*- Ocean Howell, Skatepark as Neo-liberal Playground, 2008,

## Health Benefits and the Negligible Risk of Injury

Skateboarding has a reputation as being more dangerous than more established team sports, although the emerging statistical data shows that this myth is just that. It should also be recognised that a great many people are not getting nearly enough exercise, and that skateparks are places that teach people from a young age that exercise is not only necessary for good health, but a good thing in itself. The public provision of free-to-use sporting areas is part of a council's responsibility to promote the good health and general well being of its citizens. Skateparks are good for public health!

*"Perhaps the most damaging prejudice is the notion that skateboarding is an unsafe sport. When compared to other recreational activities, skateboarding has a smaller percentage of reported injuries per participant (.49%) than other activities, including soccer (.93%), baseball (2.25%) and basketball (1.49%)."*- Worth W. Everett MD, Skatepark Injuries and the influence of Skatepark design, The Journal of Emergency Medicine, 6

*"If present trends continue it is estimated that half of the UK's children could be obese by 2020."*- Economic and Social Research Centre, 2006, [www.esrc.ac.uk](http://www.esrc.ac.uk)

*"According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, skateboarding has a smaller percentage of reported injuries per participant than soccer, baseball, basketball...Granted, many skateboarding accidents are simply not reported – but this speaks well of skateboarders, who apparently feel that safety is their responsibility, as are injuries when they happen."*- Thompson, A good Thrashing, Landscape Architecture magazine, 1998, p81.

*"Children and young people should achieve a total of at least 60 minutes of at least moderate physical activity each day."*- Issy Hamilton, Children's Play Council, Play and Health Fact sheet (2006.)

*"Potential safety advantages of a skatepark are numerous: good lighting, regularly maintained skating surfaces, routine structural inspection and upkeep, enclosed (or semi-enclosed) areas that effectively eliminate external factors such as cars, buses, sidewalk cracks, street pot-holes, and pedestrian traffic."*- Worth W. Everett MD, Skatepark Injuries and the influence of Skatepark design, The Journal of Emergency Medicine, 7.

## **The Effects of a Skatepark on Crime and Youth/Police Relations**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the provision of public skateparks can dramatically improve the sometimes antagonistic relationship between police forces and young people; far from places of lawlessness, skateparks are places where people work within codes of behavior, and are spaces where sometimes aggressive energies are focused on positive sporting goals. It is important to realise that the public provision of sports facilities – from tennis courts to skateparks – is part of the responsibility of the local and central government. These places offer the chance to relax, to exercise, and allow young people a place to enjoy activities together; they are important places for the well being of society.

*“We haven’t had yet one call from a resident of Dawlish complaining about skateboarding [since the skatepark opening], this means the workload over any given weekend has been cut by 30%.”*- Gary Cairns, Police Community Support Officer, Dawlish

*“The skatepark is important to the local community because it gives the children somewhere to go, it gives them a focus – a hobby, if you will – which keeps them off the streets and out of trouble; it’s fantastic, really”*- Steve Randall, Police Community Support Officer, Macclesfield.

*Parks will be largely self-supervised, self-maintained, and self-policed.* - Ocean Howell, Skatepark as Neo-liberal Playground, 2008, 490.

Bill Fowler (superintendent of Recreation and Human Services for the City of Huntington Beach – CA) describes the end result as a win/win situation in what was before thought to be a zero-sum game.

*“Soon after the park was built, police were expending less time and resources chasing skateboarders. “They were working with the kids, and in turn, the kids were feeling less antagonized by the authority figures. The presence of skateboarders can deter vandalism, drug use, prostitution, and homeless encampments.”* - Ocean Howell, Skatepark as Neo-liberal Playground, 2008, 485

*“A marked drop of 34.9% in levels of youth disorder was recorded in Beat 6, where the skatepark is located, since 2002-2006. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a*

*code of honour among those who attend the skatepark. This encourages youths to behave appropriately for fear of spoiling it for others.” - Strathclyde Police Report.*

## **Why Sprayed Concrete?**

Unlike fitting together pre-cast moulds, free-form construction allows architects the freedom to create progressive designs, especially where one transition merges into another - allowing us to design the park that perfectly meets the requirements of the site, user-group and the local community. “With pre-cast, every piece has to be cast in a mould, it’s heavily engineered and it’s a lot more concrete, so in that way it’s less environmentally friendly because you use about three times the amount of concrete. So that’s cost, an environmental impact and you’re having a limited design.”- Jeremy Donaldson, Professional Skatepark Designer and Architect.

Concrete has many advantages over other materials:

- It’s an ideal hardwearing riding surface and skaters’ and riders’ first choice.
- It’s vandal-proof, even under the most severe conditions.
- It will not rust, rot, decay, burn, break, or bend, and doesn’t contain loose fixings.
- It’s much quieter than steel or wood.
- It gives good traction and the least slippery when wet, it also dries the quickest.
- Concrete is far more durable and low maintenance than any other skatepark material.

## **Are Concrete Skateparks That Noisy?**

Unlike wood or metal, skating on high quality smooth concrete produces little noise, which is one of the reasons why this material is preferred. Other skate noise comes from ‘popping’ the board and landing during tricks as well as the typical ambient sound of young people at play.

The Skate Park Association of the USA (SPAUSA) have tested the noise of different skateparks made using different materials - the results are that concrete is quieter than all other wooden and metal ramps.

According to SPAUSA - "Studies show that a skatepark has no more noise than the ambient surrounding noises that exist in other parks and is not nearly as noisy as a baseball park." Measurements were taken from a concrete in-ground park:

Test park Santa Monica Skatepark approx 18,000 sq feet with 50 participants at the time of measuring.

Location	dB Low Reading	dB High Reading
Ambient Noise	64	72
30 Feet From Entrance	65	70
Entrance	66	74
Inside Park	63	76
At the Bowl	64	78

To put this in perspective the following table shows the decibel levels of other sounds:

Decibel Comparison Chart	
Whisper Quiet Library	30dB
Normal Conversation	60 - 70dB
Normal Piano Practise	60 - 70dB
Skatepark Ambience 30 ft	63 - 78dB
Telephone	80dB
City Traffic Inside Car	85dB
Chainsaw	100dB
Loud Rock Concert	115dB

*“The stock arguments made by people against the installation of skateparks usually rely upon anecdotal evidence, unrelated issues, or just their unsubstantiated opinions about skateboarders and skateboarding. Most opponents will take reasonable concerns and inflate them into seemingly titanic issues: noise, crowds, increased traffic, parking problems, illicit activity, and so on. They will not usually ask how much noise a*

*skatepark generates, for example, but tell the audience that skateparks are noisy.”-*  
[www.skatepark.org](http://www.skatepark.org)

Some projects have had local residents protest against the idea of a skatepark mostly because of their preconceived ideas of what a skateboarder, BMX rider or inline skater is. It is up to you to prove to them that these stereotypical judgements are false and in fact these sports are a great form of self-expression and physical activity. Skateparks are an encouraging place for young and old people to gather.

### **Why Do We Need a New Skatepark in Belper?**

The current Skatepark in Belper is situated behind B&M Bargains. During Youth Engagement with Extreme Wheels, young people who use the current Skatepark have raised a number of issues with the current skatepark. These include:

- Poor location means younger users are reluctant to use the park due to safety/safeguarding concerns - a new more open location will be far more inclusive.
- Current “hidden” location is likely to attract anti-social behaviour - There have been a number of incidents over the last few years including arsene and graffiti.
- Current equipment is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be replaced.
- The size of the current skatepark is not appropriate for the number of users (see evidence from Extreme Wheels.)
- There is a risk that the lease on the land where the skatepark is currently located will not be renewed, and the land sold.

Amber Valley Borough Council have recently made some improvements to the current Skatepark. However, these are short-term.

### **Extreme Wheels**

Extreme Wheels were commissioned by the Community Safety Partnership to carry out Youth Engagement at the current skatepark. Here are their findings.

Total Number of Engagements - 213

- Gender Split - Male 166, Female 47
- Age range - 12 to 21, average age 13 to 16

Day of the week and times – Day rotated each week from Tues through to Friday, times of visits ranged from 13:00 to 19:50. However, the older young people tended to go out late afternoon to early evening.

#### Points to note

- During the July to Oct, Extreme Outreach did not advertise its services as we couldn't promote mass gatherings due to government restrictions, so the young people that the team engaged with were there on their own accord. Whilst interacting with the young people they advised, if Extreme Wheels could have advertised and run normal events/sessions. They said there would have been a great number of young people attending.
- Belper has a massive skateboard community, with the skate park being well used by young people from the town and surrounding communities
- The young people said that no organisation works with them on the skate park and Extreme Wheels was the first to engage with them, they kind of felt 'left out' as they see holiday programmes, after schools clubs and sports clubs being catered for, but nothing on the skatepark
- They want to raise the profile on the benefits of Skateboarding and BMXing in the community especially as both disciplines are both in the next Olympics.
- They want to show the positive nature of the venue to young people and parents who don't come to the skatepark, who maybe perceive it as an area of ASB.
- Want an organisation like Extreme Wheels to put on weekly events, organise competitions and work with the skateboard community in providing further opportunities to the wider community as well as organise local competitions.
- Young people want to put on a showcase event to provide the wider community of Belper the talent within the town, as there is nothing organised at a grassroots level for skateboarding or BMX
- The young people want the non-skateboarding community to understand their sport/lifestyle without conforming to other organisation agendas when considering future development of a skatepark and events.
- An overwhelming support from young people who we met in the summer said that they would welcome Extreme Wheels sessions if it focuses on them and the Extreme Sports it offers.

**The data provided by Extreme Wheels and communications from users of the current skate park demonstrate the need and desire for a new, more sustainable skatepark that can cater for the Town's needs.**

#### **Why Park Road?**

A number of different locations were looked at throughout the Town with members of the Skateboard Community. These included:

- Whitemoor Recreation Ground
- Bargate Road
- The Fleet
- Park Road Recreation Ground

**Park Road was agreed as the best location. The land will be leased of Amber Valley Borough Council at Peppercorn Rent.**

Bargate Road was deemed too far out of Town, and is placed on an incline, making it inappropriate for a Skatepark.

The Fleet is also on a steep incline, also making it inappropriate to use.

Whitemoor was deemed that it may be too close to housing, and there are also already recreational facilities in the area.

The Parks Estate is located in the Belper South, Milford and Makeney Ward of Belper. The estate has a larger proportion of Social Housing than the rest of Belper combined, along with some newer developments.

The estate like many across the UK suffers from a lack of investment, and the socio-economic issues that arise from this.

The Blue Box is a community based Charity, founded to help tackle these issues on the estate. They are currently in the process of fundraising to build a new community facility which will be located next to the proposed Skatepark site. They have identified that compared to the rest of Belper, the area lacks recreational and leisure facilities for young people. This has been made even clearer during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Building a concrete Skatepark will also ensure that it is used by people outside of Belper, meaning that shops and businesses on The Parks Estate will get an economic boost once the new facility is built.

**A new Skatepark will give some much needed investment to the area.**

## **Fundraising**

A new concrete Skatepark will cost around £150,000 depending on design. There are a number of ways to achieve this:

- **Public Works Loan**

The PWLB lending facility is operated by the UK Debt Management Office (DMO) on behalf of HM Treasury. The facility provides loans to local authorities, and other specified bodies, from the National Loans Fund, operating within a policy framework set by HM Treasury. This borrowing is mainly for capital projects. A Public Works Loan can be used to provide all or some of the funds to pay for the construction of a new facility.

Here is a breakdown of the repayments should a Public Works Loan be used to secure the full amount.

<b>Borrowing Period (Years)</b>	<b>Yearly Cost</b>
10 years	£15334.68
20 years	£9333.72
30 years	£7303.02
40 years	£6350.06

- **Section 106 Agreements**

Section 106 (S106) Agreements are legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and can also be known as planning obligations.

Section 106 agreements are drafted when it is considered that a development will have significant impacts on the local area that cannot be moderated by means of conditions attached to a planning decision.

There may be money from Section 106 Agreements that can be used to help fund the building of a new facility. Amber Valley Borough Council will need to be contacted to investigate whether this is the case.

- **Grant Funding**

Grant funding to help fund the building of the new facility is limited. Following is a short list of possible funders. **However, securing the funding is a highly competitive process and is not guaranteed.**

- The Gannet Foundation
- The Tony Hawks Foundation
- Ronald McDonald House Charity

- Sports England
- National Lottery

Each funder will have their own criteria which will need to be met.

### **Hereford Case Study**

The purpose of this case study is to give some concrete examples of the processes outlined above, and to show some of the typical stages that the skatepark goes through. Think of the following as an ideal to get a skatepark!

In July 2004, fifty young people arrived at a weekly county council meeting and gave some solid arguments for a skatepark in Hereford. The councillors were so impressed with the group that they agreed to set up a committee to plan for a skatepark in Hereford. This committee decided to form a charity named Wheeled Sports 4 Hereford (WS4H). Everyone involved worked on a voluntary basis.

Within a few weeks, over 300 young people had contacted WS4H, whether to simply give support, or to get involved with the design process. Several people wrote to local newspapers, and soon the effort to get a skatepark began to get the support of other organisations. The local police, for example, were then receiving on average a complaint every two days about skateboarding, and so were keen for skateboarders to get a place of their own.

Herefordshire City Council agreed to lease some land (see below) for 25 years for a 'peppercorn' fee. They also agreed to put £50,000 towards the building of the park. WS4H then contacted Wheelscape. Designers went and met the users, talked about what they wanted, and began to work on plans for the park together. WS4H then decided to build the park in three stages: stage 1 would be a plaza style, stage 2 would add a transition section, and stage 3 will see the existing park ringed with a new street section.

Through collaboration, a design for stage one emerged and, eight weeks after they started, the build team finished it. After the success of the first stage, a number of organisations agreed to give financial support to the park. The Big Lottery Play Fund donated £50,000; Crest Homes paid £55,000 through section 106 agreements; the Youth Opportunities fund donated another £55,000; the local police force gave £10,000. The park is now sponsored by six local businesses!

Stage 2 (see below) was designed collaboratively, was built in January and February 2010 and is probably being skated as you read this (!)

What should you take from the Hereford example? That a lot of collaborative work goes into getting a skatepark. That decent skateparks only get built if skatepark users are involved. That there is money out there, and that land is available. That councils will be on your side, especially if you can show that the wider community supports a skatepark. Hereford shows that getting a skatepark takes time, requires effort, but also that your project, in the end, will be more than worth it.