

To: City Executive Board

Date: 1 September 2010

Item No: 20

Report of: Head of City Leisure & Parks

Title of Report: Meadow Lane Skate Park

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To update members on the progress of the community led initiative to redevelop Meadow Lane Skate Park.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Mark Lygo

Report approved by:

Finance: Gillian Chandler

Legal: Lindsay Cane

Environmental Development: Paul Kirkley

Corporate Assets: Steve Sprason

Policy Framework:

- Stronger & more inclusive communities
- Improve the local environment, economy & quality of life
- Reduce crime & anti-social behaviour
- Sport and Physical Activity Review (Nov 2009)

Recommendation(s):

1. That members note the progress on the redevelopment of Meadow Lane Skate Park and authorise officers to continue supporting the Oxford Wheels Project with this development.
2. That the council's £50,000 contribution towards the scheme is only released upon the conditions of the grant being met, that is; the full amount of funding making up the cost of the scheme being in place, the grant is tied to a development at Meadow Lane and the scheme must be assessed by the council as being viable with planning consent in place.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 The existing skate park at Meadow Lane was created in 1997 and approved for five years while a more permanent location could be found.
- 1.2 The wooden ramps on the site are now in a poor condition and although temporary repairs have been made, permanent improvement is needed.
- 1.3 The site is extremely well managed by the Oxford Wheels Project (OWP), a well organised voluntary group registered with the Charity Commission. The OWP actively promote usage of the skate park and ensure the facility offers a friendly environment and positive activities for all ages, but in particular teenagers.

2. Update

- 2.1 Since 1997 significant energies have been expended into finding a suitable alternative site in the belief that the current site could only be a short-term option due to its location on a flood plain.
- 2.2 Through talks with the Environment Agency (EA) and research gained from the OWP, who themselves visited other skate parks on flood plains in the UK and other countries, it became clear that new design technologies meant that a high quality permanent skate park could be built at Meadow Lane.
- 2.3 Extensive city wide site searches found that there was very little available land that was far enough away from residential dwellings but accessible to young people to be viable for a skate park to be developed.
- 2.4 As part of the discussions with the Environment Agency, council officers and the OWP worked through a sequential test of the potential sites in 2009. The test ranks sites on a number of key criteria such as the size of the site, access to the public, other amenities and flood risk. The results show that the most viable, high scoring option is the current site at Meadow Lane. Further supporting this site is the fact that the OWP have also built a very good relationship with the local residents.
- 2.5 The OWP commissioned ground surveys at Meadow Lane which have given positive results in terms of the ability to construct a permanent skate park upon the same footprint of the current site. The Environment Agency have confirmed in writing that in principle there would be no objection to these aspects of the build (appendix one). OWP have also commissioned designs for the proposed skate park. These designs have been further tested with the Environment Agency and in June 2010 the OWP received further confirmation that they were in principle comfortable with the plans for improving the skate park (appendix two).
- 2.6 OWP have involved children, young people and users of the current skate park to help develop the designs. The designs have now been initially

approved by the OWP. The projected cost of the design has reduced from initial estimates of £350k to £280k. The City Council in its 2010/11 budget has made provision for a £50k contribution to the scheme; this means that other funders are far more likely to contribute following the council's financial commitment to supporting the OWP to successfully deliver this scheme.

- 2.7 The next step is for the OWP to further consult with the Environment Agency and the planning office to discuss the proposed plans and to then develop a full planning application, which is taking place in July 2010.
- 2.8 The OWP are currently conducting a public consultation on the proposed plans and location of the skate park. This is due to be completed by August 2010 and pending the consultation and attaining the remaining funding the development is targeted to open by late summer 2011, with work starting early spring 2011.
- 2.9 The OWP would be fully responsible for all elements of the project including procurement of suppliers, the commissioning and management of the construction and the delivery and operation of a community accessible skate park.
- 2.10 Additional work will need to be undertaken by Council officers to look at developing the necessary lease and any necessary disposal of the site and to also ensure that any risk to the Council is mitigated through development obligations, warranties and an effective management agreement. This would need to be completed before work starts on site in spring 2011.

3. Why Meadow Lane?

Key Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Potential Rectification
The current skate park has been in existence at Meadow Lane since 1997 and proved to be a good community facility, receiving minimal complaints.	It is on a flood plain.	Compensation measures can be made to the landscape to mitigate against flooding.
It is a central location with good City wide access	The current ramps are poor quality	Funding bids are being made to develop a modern facility
The OWP are happy at the current site and it is well established with users		
The site is central to the other smaller skate parks in the City enabling a well coordinated skating offer		
The site has lent itself to a high quality new design		
Site is effectively run by OWP minimising ASB, noise and disturbance. The site is open until 9.30pm, after which it is locked and secured.		

- 3.1 The key advantages that Meadow Lane has over other sites that have been investigated such as Cowley Marsh and Court Place farm is that Meadow Lane is central to the other three smaller skate parks across the City as illustrated in appendix three, and as such enables a coherent skate park offer

across the City. It also offers excellent access from within the City and the OWP have already developed a good reputation with their local neighbours. In a survey carried out by the OWP in 2007 79% of residents said they would not want the skate park to move away from Meadow Lane. The proposed skate park has also been designed in a way to also complement the new play area.

- 3.2 The OWP are working to secure the final funding for the project. Officers are supporting them in applications and signposting new funding streams where applicable.
- 3.3 The skate park would continue to be entirely managed by the OWP; OCC would promote this site as part of a City wide skating offer.
- 3.4 Due to the central location there is excellent access from the park and ride, several major bus routes and also walking and cycle paths, as such there does not need to be any parking provision. The majority of park users are local and travel by board, bike or on foot. OWP encourage people to use the council car park on Meadow Lane (next to Donnington bridge) and will be further promoting this to reduce the traffic to the site.
- 3.5 We are involving colleagues in Environmental Development to ensure that noise issues are properly addressed. The new structure is designed in a way where the current noise is projected upwards reducing any noise pollution, the noise is further reduced by landscaping measures. The concrete structure will also make less skating noise than the current wooden ramps. The new draft design is included as appendix four.
- 3.6 The OWP have proven to be a responsible community group and neighbour and as such there is no reason to believe that there will be increased noise from the participants.
- 3.7 The existing successful management structure of the facility would remain in place. The park will remain a locked facility with elected keyholders responsible for the daily checking and overseeing of the site.

4. Level of risk

- 4.1 That the OWP are not successful in attaining the remaining funding, this will be mitigated by looking for new sources of funding
- 4.2 That the OWP cease to operate, the City Council would then encourage the creation of a new community group to manage the skate park.
- 4.3 That planning permission is not granted, if this was the case then the process of trying to locate a future site would recommence, this would be likely to be outside of the City.
- 4.4 A risk register is included as appendix five.

5. Climate change / environmental impact

- 5.1 The design has been developed to incorporate compensation measures so there is not a negative impact on the water table, or water flow.
- 5.2 Local bus routes and the park and ride will continue to be promoted to prevent increased traffic.
- 5.3 As stated in 3.4 no additional parking will be provided, which encourages the use of public transport.

6. Equalities impact

- 6.1 By nature, skate parks are inclusive facilities, offering the opportunity for a wide range of community usage.
- 6.2 Following the increased clarity from the Environment Agency, the OWP commenced consultation in mid July 2010, they have also remained in regular dialogue with local elected members.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The City Council in its 2010/11 budget has made provision for a £50k contribution to the scheme. The City Council has no additional financial obligations for the scheme. The conditions of this grant are; that it is dependant upon the full amount of funding making up the cost of the scheme being in place, the grant is tied to a development at Meadow Lane and the scheme must be assessed by the council as being viable with planning consent in place.
- 7.2 Including the councils' contribution the OWP have raised £120,000 to date, which includes a £50,000 WREN award, towards their target of £280,000. They have several bids progressing and are very confident they will surpass their £280,000 target.
- 7.3 The Oxford Wheels Project have successfully managed the site for 13 years which illustrates their ability to operate the site within their resources.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 A pre planning application was submitted in September 2009 and showed that the project would require the following for full planning permission;
 - Confirmation on flood risk from the Environment Agency - As shown in appendix two.
 - A full sequential test - complete
 - Full cross-sectional designs – completed as part of the designs supplied by Gravity Engineering.
 - Noise assessment report – Gravity have confirmed that using concrete for the skate park will reduce noise resonance by up to

50%, this will be further improved through mounding and landscaping.

- A Tree Survey – Pending
- Neighbour consultation – underway with support from OCC.

- 8.2 The full planning application is due to be submitted in August 2010 and based upon the above work has a strong possibility of being granted.
- 8.3 The current seven year lease expires on 19th July 2012. The OWP are planning to submit a new lease application for a 25 year term for which work is now underway. The current lease means the OWP pay £240 per annum.
- 8.4 The City Council are offering the opportunity to the Oxford Wheels Project on a sole basis as there are no other known bodies interested in this opportunity and the Oxford Wheels Project have been successfully operating a skate park at nil cost to the council at Meadow Lane for over 10 years.

9. Recommendations

1. That members note the progress on the redevelopment of Meadow Lane Skate Park and authorise officers to continue supporting the Oxford Wheels Project with this development.
2. That the council's £50,000 contribution towards the scheme is only released upon the conditions of the grant being met, that is; the full amount of funding making up the cost of the scheme being in place, the grant is tied to a development at Meadow Lane and the scheme must be assessed by the council as being viable with planning consent in place.

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List of background papers:

Version number: 4

Appendix one – initial letter from the Environment Agency

Mr Philip Jones
City Leisure Services
Bury Knowle House, North Place
Headington
Oxford
OX3 9HY

Our ref: WA/2009/107059/02-L01
Your ref: -
Date: 01 February 2010

Dear Mr Jones

PROPOSED SKATE PARK AT MEADOW LANE, OXFORD

We have reviewed the site investigation report produced by Humberside Materials Laboratory (No 207/2522/P) dated December 2009. The enclosed report does not provide any evidence of significant levels of contamination from the adjacent scrap yard, although only limited soils sampling was undertaken.

Groundwater was encountered at a shallow level which may pose problems for drainage via a soakaway. However given that the drainage water is unlikely to be impacted by contamination, we do not have any concerns from the perspective of groundwater quality with respect to this site.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Cathy Harrison
Planning Liaison Officer

Direct dial 01491 828515
Direct e-mail catherine.harrison@environment-agency.gov.uk

Appendix two – EA Follow up letter

Mr Jack Richens
Oxford Wheels Project

Our ref: WA/2009/107059/03-L01
Your ref: -

Date: 10 June 2010

Dear Mr Richens

PROPOSED SKATE PARK MEADOW LANE, OXFORD

Thank you for your e-mail dated 28 May 2010.

We have reviewed the Site Investigation Report, prepared by Humberside Materials Laboratory Limited and dated December 2009. We can confirm we have no issues with respect to groundwater quality.

With regard to the Flood Risk Sequential Test, I have read the Introduction to the assessment of potential locations and find this to be an acceptable approach to take. As this is not considered to be a major application in flood risk terms, we will not be reviewing the Sequential Test. However I would suggest that within the flooding category, the exact Environment Agency Flood Zone is shown, which will help quantify the risk of flooding to each area.

I hope this is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Cathy Harrison
Planning Liaison Officer

Direct dial 01491 828515

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Appendix 3 – Map of Skate Parks



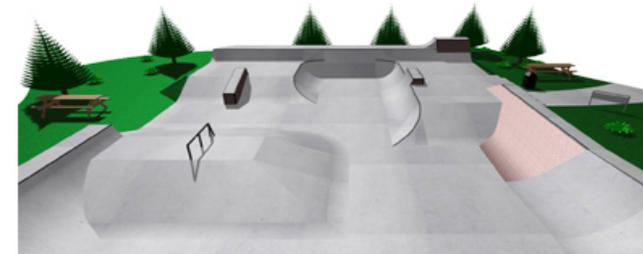
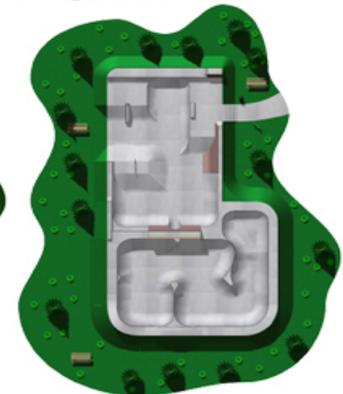
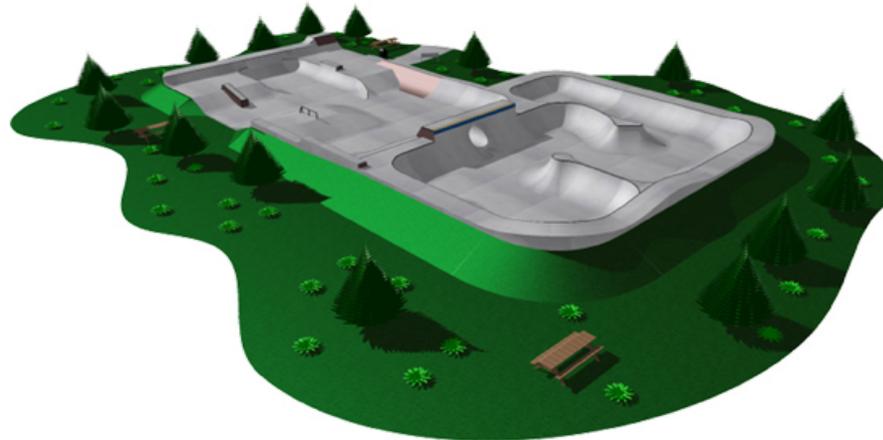
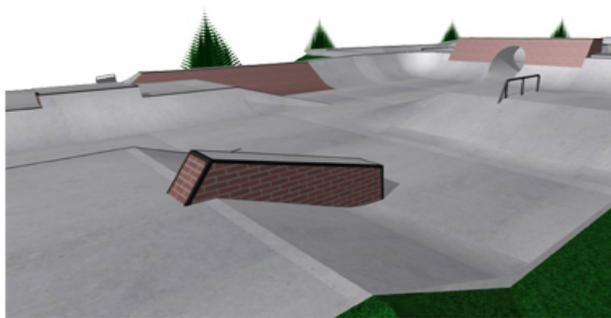
Appendix Four – Facility Proposal

gravity

Skate Facility at: Meadow Lane , Oxford

Approximate Square Metres: 944m²

Drawing No: GE9099



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Appendix Five – Risk Register

Risk ID	Risk						Corporate Objective	Gross Risk		Residual Risk		Current Risk		Owner
	Category-000-Service Area Code	Risk Title	Opportunity/Threat	Risk Description	Risk Cause	Consequence		Date raised	1 to 6	I	P	I	P	
PRR-001-CL	Funding not attained	Threat	That funding is not fully attained by the OWP.	Improper funding applications, lack of funding available	Project not fully funded. OCC to support in funding applications.	4-Aug-10	4	5	3	5	2	5	2	PJ
SRR-002-CL	Management of Skate Park	Threat	That the OWP cease to operate leaving the skate park with no management in place.	Improper financial management, lack of development, change of personnel.	OCC to support OWP with development plans. In the event of closure of OWP, OCC would encourage creation of new management organisation	4-Aug-10	4	3	2	3	1	3	1	PJ
PRR-002-CL	Planning Permission	Threat	That Planning permission is not given for development.	Planning permission is denied	Pre-planning response was favourable, as was response from the Environment Agency	4-Aug-10	4	4	3	4	2	4	2	PJ

Appendix Six – Gravity Noise comparison information

Noise and Skateparks

Concrete in-ground park – Similar to the proposed park at Meadow Lane

Test park Santa Monica Skatepark approx 18,000 sq feet (Meadow Lane would be 3,000 sq feet)

50 participants in the park at time of test

Location	dB Low Reading	dB High Reading
Ambient noise	64	72
30 feet from entrance	65	70
at the entrance	66	74
inside park	63	76
at the bowl	64	78
flatland slide near entrance		

Wood Frame Mini Ramp

skatelite (light wood) over 2 ¾ inch layers of plywood

Test Park SPA mini ramp 12 riders but only 1 person riding at a time

Ambient noise	75	78
On Ramp	77	85

Approximate Decibel Level

Examples

- 0 dB
the quietest sound you can hear.
- 30 dB
whisper, quiet library.
- 60 dB
normal conversation, sewing machine, typewriter.
- 90 dB
lawnmower, shop tools, truck traffic; 8 hours per day is the maximum exposure (protects 90% of people).
- 100 dB
chainsaw, pneumatic drill, snowmobile; 2 hours per day is the maximum exposure without protection.