



REPORT TITLE:	Installation of Skateparks
REPORT OF:	Cllr J Gooding, Executive Lead Member for Leisure, Tourism & Wellbeing

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the details for recommending that the Council continues to deliver upon its Play Space Improvement Programme, approved at Executive on 5 June 2018. Part of the programme is to deliver new skateparks at Clements Hall Recreation Ground and Rayleigh Leisure Centre.

Although installation of a skate park at Hullbridge Recreation Ground was not part of the original programme, an opportunity has arisen through the use of Section 106 monies.

It is noted that Clements Hall Skatepark requires further work and research relating to its location, noise levels and proximity to residential properties. Therefore, the recommendation to award the Clements Hall contract has been removed from this report and will be submitted at a later date.

All existing skateparks within this project are considered end of life and are scheduled for removal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 -** To award Rayleigh Leisure Centre Skatepark contract to Beton Park, at a cost of £138,034.49.
- R2 -** To award Pooles Lane, Hullbridge Skatepark contract to Beton Park at a cost of £153,576.54.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION**1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 The capital programme was previously approved for the installation of the Clements Hall and Rayleigh Leisure skateparks. Funding of £300,000 is still available and assigned to this project.
- 1.2 Provision for a skatepark to the value of £150,000, to be provided in Hullbridge, is available through s.106 monies specifically earmarked for such a project.
- 1.3 The award of the tender is in compliance with the Contract Procedural Rules of the Council.
- 1.4 The existing skateparks at Clements Hall and Rayleigh Leisure Centre are both considered end-of-life and require replacement as highlighted by the annual RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspections. Therefore, a replacement scheme is imperative, if provision is to continue at these sites in the future.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The tender process was undertaken by Officers, whereby each submission was scored independently and marked out of 5. The final scores were aggregated to provide an overall score for each section of the evaluation process.
- 2.2 The following weightings and criteria were applied to each tender:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Weighting %</u>
Price	25%
Design	25%
Project Timeline	15%
Example of previous projects	15%
Health and Safety	10%
Public Consultation	10%

- 2.3 The Tender received three submissions, of which Beton Park, scored an overall score of 86.75, at a stated cost of £449,991. The lowest bidder scored 73.17. All bids received were within the total stated budget of £450,000.

2.4 The cost of the two proposed skateparks are as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Rayleigh Leisure Centre	£138,034.49
Pooles Lane, Hullbridge	<u>£153,567.54</u>
Total	<u>£291,602.03</u>

2.5 The decision to award to Beton park was significantly influenced by the design principal, setting out each design as a ‘destination’ facility. Consideration was also given to the locality of other skateparks within the district, to ensure the Council would not be providing duplicate facilities to neighbouring skateparks.

2.6 The inclusion of Hullbridge skatepark in the tendering process has allowed for greater “economy of scale” to achieve value for money and better facilities during the tender process.

2.7 Each Skatepark represents an allocated Lot in the tender process, allowing the Council to choose to award each skatepark upon an individual basis without financial penalty. Detail of the costings can be found in Appendix 4.

2.8 The section 106 agreement for Lower Road, Windermere Avenue and Malyons Land, Hullbridge (14/00813/OUT) development set out a provision of £150,000 for the construction of a multiuse games area or skate park.

2.9 All new skateparks will be constructed using a concrete design. This will limit vandalism at each site as the design does not allow for easy dismantling or destruction of items without the use of heavy machinery. The details of the skatepark design, and location, is set out in Appendix 3.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 To not award the tender for the skateparks and reallocate the capital programme to other alternative projects.

3.2 Should the decision to remove funding from this project be taken, it should be noted that each skatepark will be taken out of use as and when items fail to meet standards for acceptable use. This is likely to take place over the next two years.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 There is an inherent Health and Safety risk during the construction phase of the skateparks. All contractors have been vetted and scored on their approach to health and safety.

4.2 The contractors have provided all Risk Assessments, Method Statements and insurances to carry out their construction phase. These have been vetted and scored by officers and will be monitored for compliance throughout the construction phase.

4.3 Skateparks in their nature, are considered high risk activities. All new skateparks will be installed with relevant signage meeting RoSPA standards to ensure the rules and regulations are followed. Further information can be found here of the standards and expectations to managing the safety of users at our skateparks: <https://www.rospace.com/play-safety/advice/skateboarding>

4.4 All skateparks undergo several inspections by accredited Rpii (Register of Play Inspectors International) officers. These are weekly routine visual, quarterly operational inspections and annual full safety inspections undertaken by a third party Rpii accredited inspector.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

5.1 An initial public consultation for Clements Hall and Rayleigh Leisure Centre (Appendix 1) was undertaken in April 2021 to gather interest from user groups and to steer the design element of the tender. This was to ensure that users were targeted, including schools, youth groups and the parish councils and that their input would influence the design.

5.2 The consultation for Rayleigh Leisure Centre initially looked at the feasibility of relocation of the Skatepark to the adjacent Swayne Park, however this option was not considered viable by ward members. This aspect does not affect the general outcome of the consultation.

5.3 A further public consultation (Appendix 2) was completed in February 2023 for Hullbridge recreation ground for consideration of the new skatepark. The criteria for this consultation mirrored that of the previous.

5.4 A final consultation has been completed to engage the users to “have their say” in the final decision of award, with additional site meetings also held with ward members to discuss the siting of the skateparks.

5.5 It is noted that concerns were raised regarding Clements Hall Skatepark, suggesting further work and research relating to its location, noise levels and proximity to residential properties is required. Therefore, the recommendation to award the Clements Hall contract has been removed from this report and will be submitted at a later date.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Funding has already been allocated through capital programme for the installation of Clements Hall.

6.2 Funding is also secured for Hullbridge through Section 106 agreement and cannot be transferred for another use.

7.0 LEGAL/GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The tendering process has included the provision for planning applications to be submitted by the suppliers prior to contract award, if required outside of permitted development.

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Appendix 1 – Consultation report on Rayleigh Leisure Centre and Clements Hall Skatepark

Exempt Appendix 3 – Beton Park Design Report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.5



Consultation report on Rawreth Skatepark, Rayleigh Leisure Centre and Hawkwell Skatepark, Clements Hall Leisure Centre



April 2021

Prepared by Bendcrete Leisure Ltd for Rochford District Council for their sole and specific use.

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Introduction

Rochford District Council is seeking to improve its provision of skatepark facilities across the borough and recognises that two of its popular skateparks at Rayleigh Leisure Centre and Clements Hall Leisure Centre have reached the end of their life and are no longer economically viable to repair.

The design and construction of a concrete skatepark is usually a once in a life-time opportunity for a community to be involved in. It is therefore vital that the community is consulted with in order to ascertain what type of facility the skateparks should be replaced with. Rochford District Council has commissioned Bendcrete Skateparks to seek the views of the local community to ensure that the community has been involved in developing the planning and designs for the new skateparks to ensure that they will meet the needs of the community now and for future generations.

This report will explore how the local skate community use the existing facilities and the problems with the existing skateparks. It will also explain what the community expectations are for the new parks and the benefits they will bring to the local communities.

The proposal is to replace the Rawreth Skatepark at Rayleigh Leisure Centre with a new concrete skatepark in an adjacent park, Sweyne Park. Consideration has been given to the location of the new skatepark so it does not encroach on the main open area of the park, is closer to other recreational facilities and will be away from schools and residential housing. The new skatepark will be sympathetically landscaped with grass bunds, which will help to reduce the visual impact of the skatepark and create a more inclusive and welcoming facility. The Hawkwell skatepark at Clements Hall Leisure Centre will be replaced with a concrete skatepark on the same site and will offer a well-designed, modern skatepark for the local community to take pride in.



Social impact of skateparks

Wheeled sports facilities are proving a valuable environment for young people to develop in a higher risk, but controlled environment. Psychologists and educational thinkers agree that young people need risk to fully develop their potential – a factor denied through risk adverse design and standard playground equipment. The sport encompasses risks where confidence, skill and hazard are calculated before commitment to a move. In towns without skateparks, these skills are often practised in the street where the consequences of a mistake can be life changing. Participation in community sports encourages and develops activity and fitness. The physical exertion involved in wheeled sports is often under-estimated by observers and does generate a high level of physical fitness.

The installation of a well designed and constructed skatepark will offer an inclusive facility to a multi-generational community. Mental health and physical wellbeing in children and young adults has become a serious issue. A skatepark offers a safe environment for users to learn not only physical skills, but an opportunity to develop life-long friendships and develop and improve communication and social skills. Traditional and competitive team sports do not suit all people and many give up being physically active as they cannot find an alternative place where their interests are accepted.

There is an inclusive culture and etiquette at skateparks that inspires young and old to develop skills. No other sport will see such a wide range of ages simultaneously engaged in the same sport at the same time. Users develop great resilience – getting up again after a fall and trying again, and again and again, until the trick is perfected. Skaters want to share their love of skating and mutual sense of belonging with others in shaping the community. Whilst skating is an individual sport, skaters share their experience and skills with others and inspire others to participate.

Communities sometimes believe that the construction of a skatepark will bring a rapid increase in anti-social behaviour from young people. In fact, many studies have shown that well-designed skateparks deter anti-social behaviour and skatepark users are usually not associated with anti-social behaviour. Issues relating to anti-social behaviour often stem from an existing problem. The skatepark provides an environment where users can develop social and physical skills and where respect of the facility and other users is very apparent. A skatepark offers an environment for both young children to adults to learn from each other in a way that few other sporting facilities do. A visit to a well adopted skatepark with a good user group shows the best environment for youth development. Skateboarding has been proved to offer young people an alternative to gang culture and teaches respect, social, physical and communication skills.

Community involvement and community adoption of the project is vital to the success of the skatepark. This process ensures that the group are involved in the whole process, from design consultation, throughout the construction phase, and to ongoing maintenance and improvements. If consistently consulted and involved, users will take pride in the park that they have helped create. This also helps to ensure that the park is looked after by this group and that anti-social behaviour is not tolerated at the park.

The design of the skatepark and the surrounding landscape is critical in helping to deter anti-social behaviour. Provision of a seating area with a variety of benches and bins is also important in creating the right social and community culture.

Benefits of skateparks to the local community

The construction of the skatepark will benefit the local community, local shops and other amenities. It will also ensure that the whole park is well used and will become a focal point for a diverse, multi-generational and vibrant local community. This will have a positive impact on not only the local community, but also on real estate, as the area will offer a varied multi-sport/play area that will appeal to a wide cross section of the community.

The new skatepark will also give another option for people to access a new leisure facility, which will improve both physical and mental health. All facilities that give the opportunity to increase time spent outdoors and to improve the physical activity of children and adults has to be welcomed. Obesity and inactivity in children is currently a crisis we are facing. The current Covid19 pandemic has shown the importance of being physically fit and active, as well as the benefits to mental health and the effects of isolation.

A study by the British Heart Foundation in 2019 has shown that by age 11, children are doing more than an hour less of physical activity a week than at age 6. This study found that 61% of children in Year 1 did at least an hour of vigorous activity per day, but by Year 6, only 41% achieved the target. The drop was particularly steep for girls, who fell from 54 to 28% by the time they finished primary school. The report went on to recommend that these numbers prove that more needs to be done to ensure children keep active as they approach adolescence. Developing early intervention strategies that help children retain activity levels could include after school physical activity opportunities, focusing on participation and enjoyment in sports – and a greater emphasis on promoting weekend activities. The 2019/20 National Child Measurement Programme shows that 10% of 4-5 year olds in England were obese – doubling to 23.6% for boys 10-11 year olds. While 90% of children who are obese at age 3 remain overweight or obese in adolescence.

An interesting and positive outcome during the Covid19 pandemic has been in the growth in skateboarding. Whether this is as a result of skateboarding being included in the forthcoming Tokyo Olympics, being the perfect social distancing activity or the result of less formal team sports being available is unclear. Interestingly though it isn't in the typical young-male skateboarder which is causing the spike, but the biggest increases (24% over the past 12 months) have been in female participation in skateboarding. Furthermore, couples skateboarding has become an activity they can do together and older generations who used to skate in their youth and are now re-engaging with skateboarding, either alone or with their children. Participation isn't limited by age or gender.

Equipment has been selling out across the country with complete skateboards being the biggest seller, some skate stores have had to wait up to 2 months for stock of certain skateboards. MySkate, an app which provides skateboarders with the locations of all the skateparks in the UK has seen an increase of 180,000 uses of the app each month, with new and experienced skaters logging on to find their local place to skate. Female only skate groups have also sprung up all over the country with social media apps being used to link up riders.

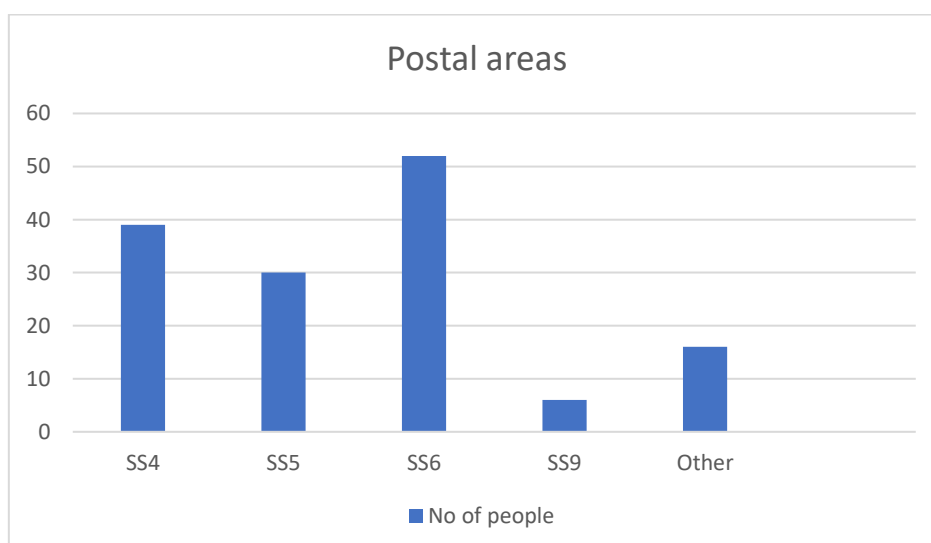
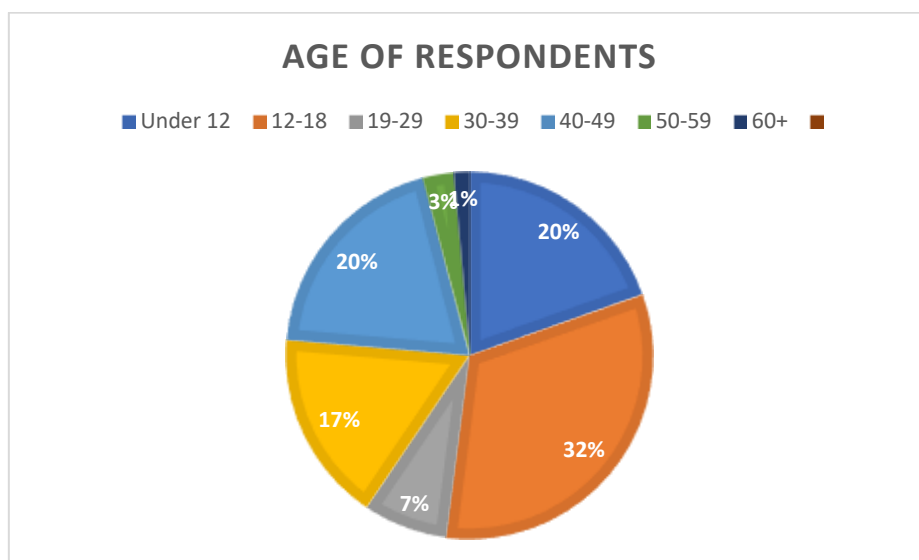
The skatepark consultation

A consultation, via SurveyMonkey, was carried out by Bendcrete Skateparks in March 2021. The survey was promoted to potential users via:

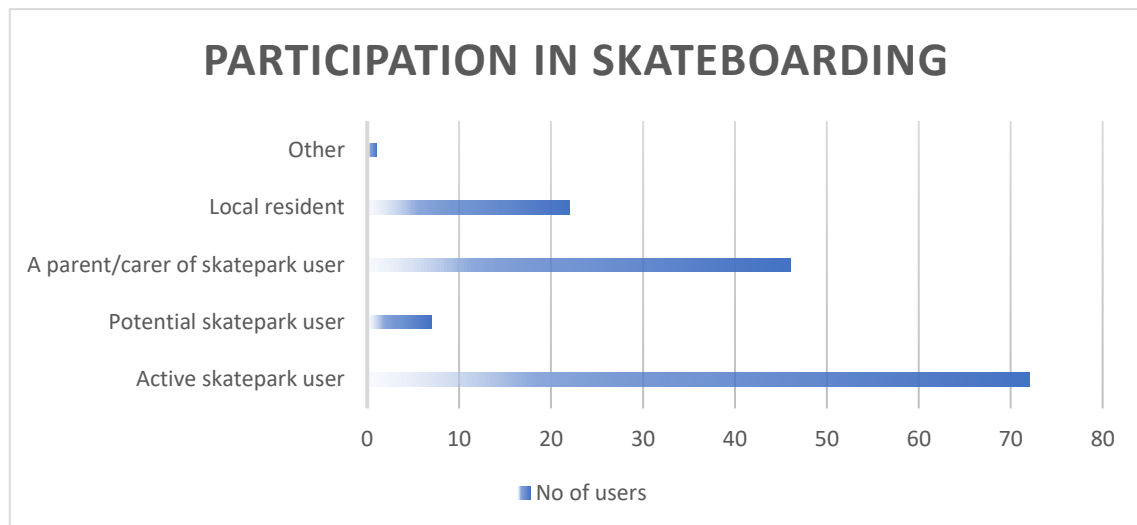
- Rochford District Council's social media platforms
- Bendcrete's social media platforms
- Local Youth Community Group
- All primary and secondary schools in the borough
- 3 skate specialist shops in the area
- The Skatepark Project

Due to the national lockdown and Covid19 government measures in place closing skateparks, schools, sports centres and clubs, we were unable to carry out an in-person consultation. The consultation was therefore carried out online and 148 returns were received. A copy of the full results is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

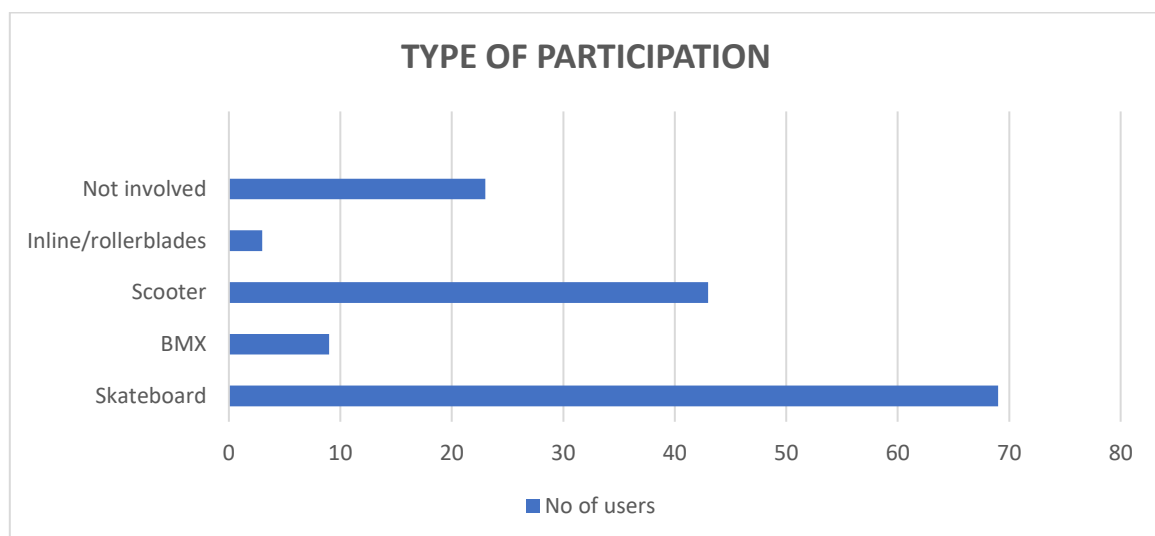
The survey reached a broad range of the community with the largest returns from 12-18 year olds (32%) and with most people living in the SS6 postcode.



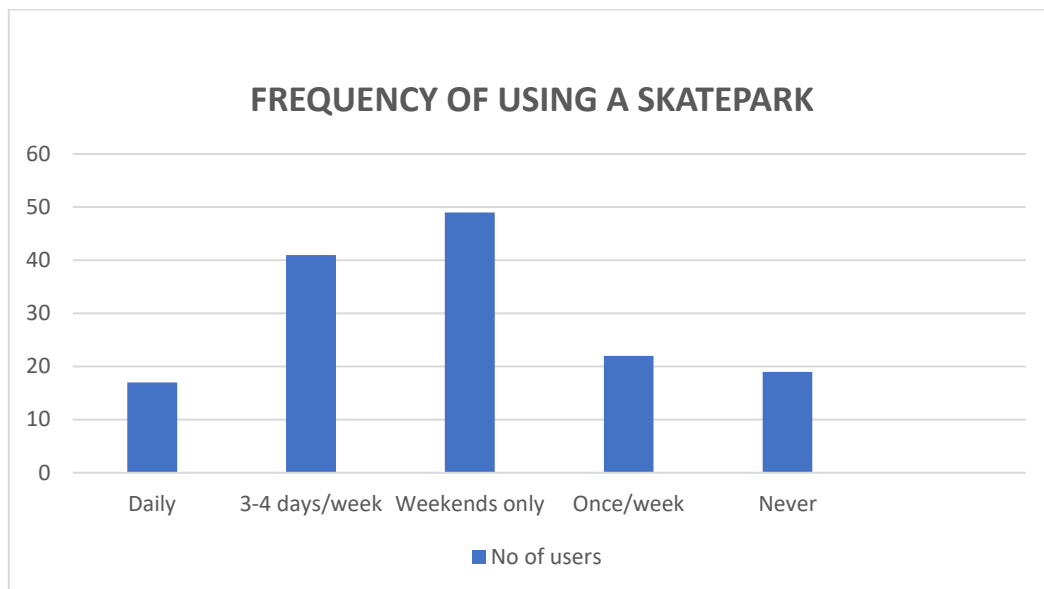
Of those that responded, over 48% were actively engaged in the sport and an additional 31% were responding on behalf of an active user.



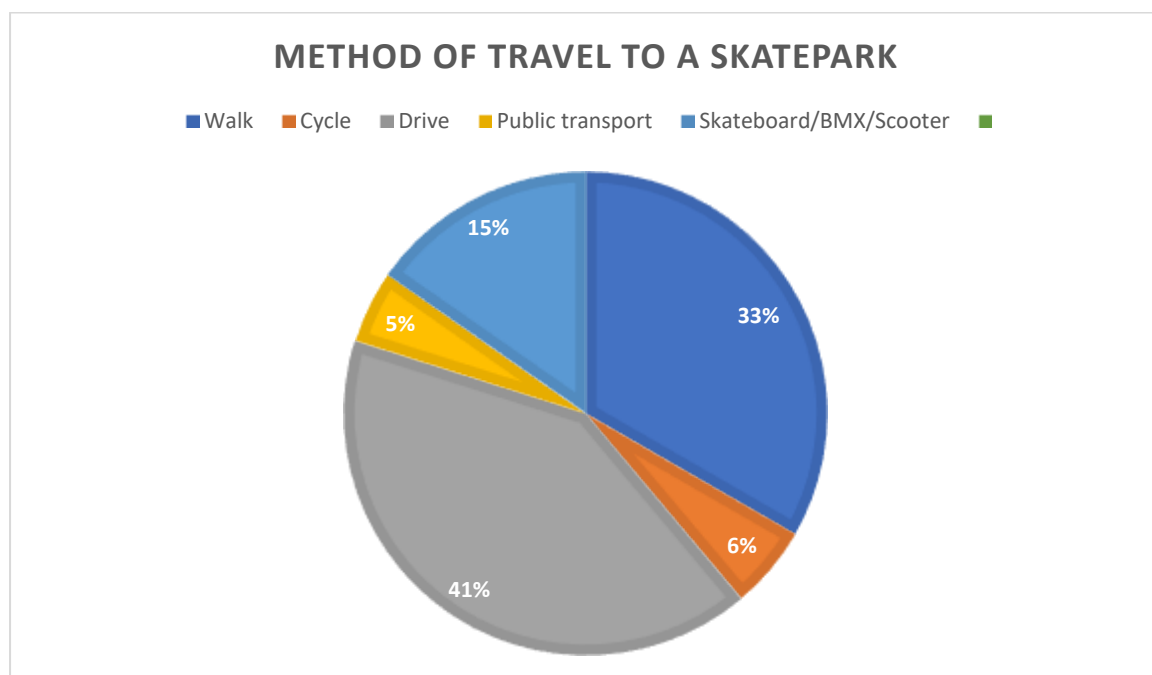
Almost 47% of all users were skateboarders with over 29% of respondents being BMX riders



We next looked at people's habits in using skateparks. The majority of users (33%) only used the skatepark at the weekends and over 27% of users going 3-4 days per week. This could reflect the parks are not lit at night or the time taken to travel to the parks restricts users only going at weekends. Only 15% of users only used a skatepark once a week. It clearly demonstrates a passion for the sport and regular commitment to participation.



We've already noted that most users spend no more than 20 minutes travelling to their chosen park and just over 40% of users go by car with over 33% of users walking.



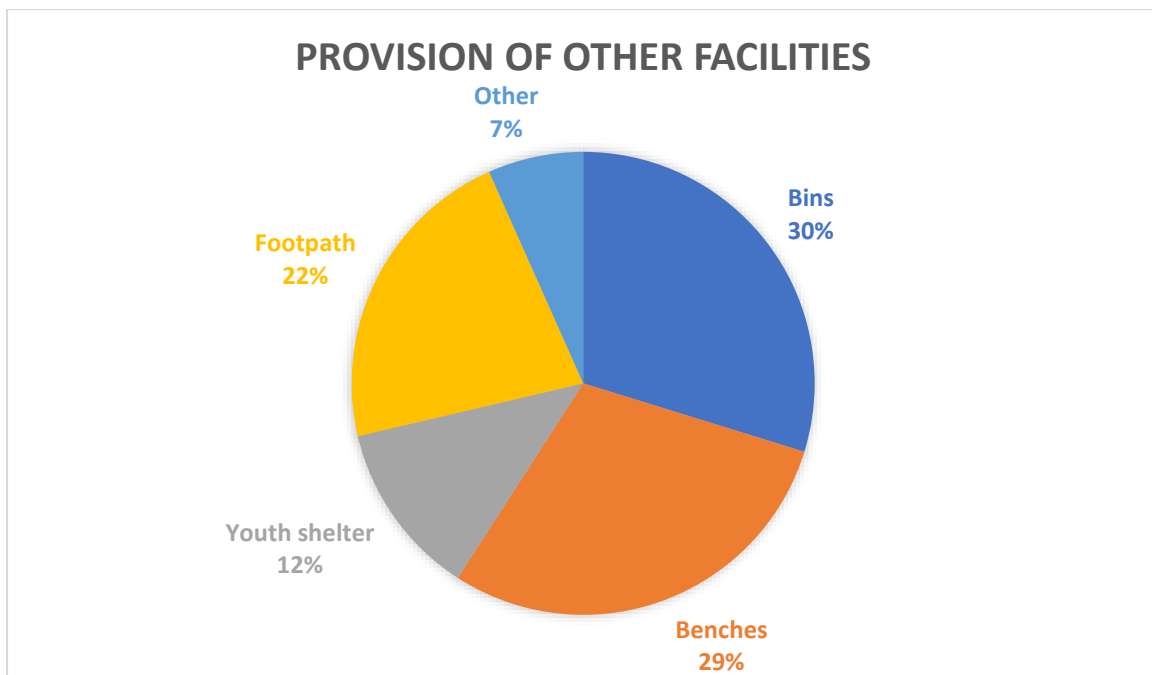
The survey looked at what parks are being used by the local community and not surprisingly the most popular park was Rayleigh Skatepark in King George's Field (57.33%), which is a relatively new concrete skatepark. The next popular was Hawkwell Skatepark by Clements Hall Leisure Centre at 43.84% and 35.6% users go to Rawreth Skatepark behind Rayleigh Leisure Centre. This reflects the negative feedback received on the location and condition of Rawreth Skatepark. Almost 40% of users also travelled further to other skateparks and these included:

- Canewdon
- Benfleet
- Leigh on Sea
- Canvey
- Southend on Sea

- Shoebury
- Hullbridge Park
- Charlton Park, London
- Crystal Palace, London
- Gloucester Park, Basildon

When designing a new skatepark it is important to consider the whole environment to make the park appeal to the local community and visitors, encourage the development of a skating community and help create the right environment to foster the unique skatepark etiquette that exists at skateparks. The survey looked at what other facilities should be at the new skateparks. Bins and benches were the top request and this helps to stop the skateparks becoming dirty, covered in glass and litter. If there are no benches, users also tend to sit on the ramps which prevents people from skating them.

Interestingly in the comments area, several users requested that a youth shelter is not installed as non-skaters use them and create problems for the area. This is evidenced at a number of skateparks across the country where youth shelters are regularly removed from skateparks for this reason.



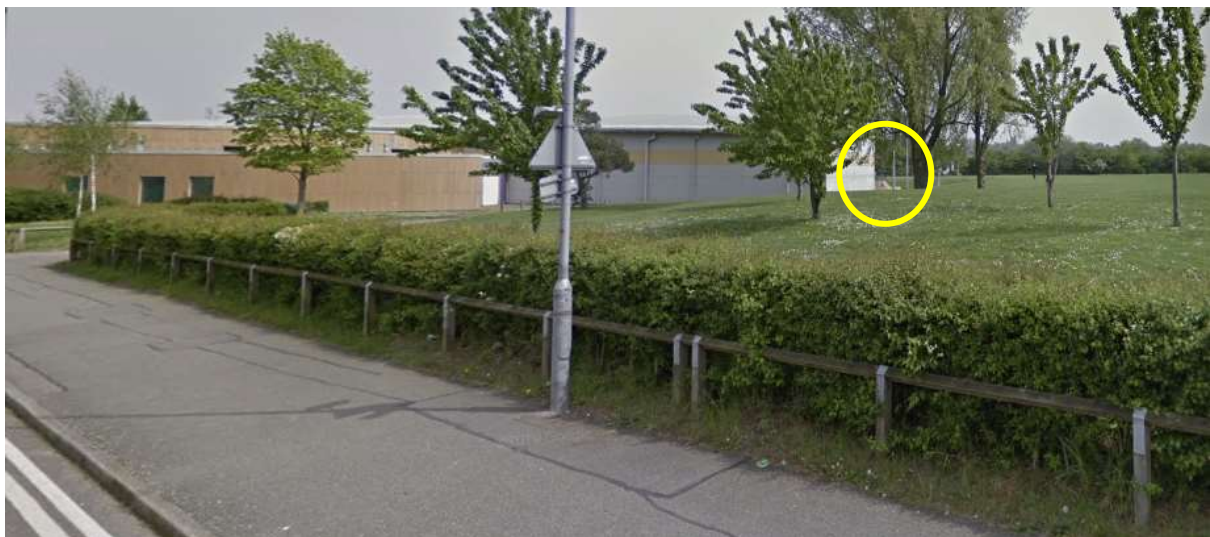
Other requested facilities included:

- Racks for bikes and skateboards
- Lighting
- CCTV
- Fencing
- Basketball court and football goals
- Graffiti area
- Footpath with skateable features
- Regular maintenance to empty bins and sweep up glass

The existing skateparks

Rawreth Skatepark, Rayleigh Leisure Centre, SS6 9NF

The existing skatepark was built **in?** and is of metal and wood construction with a footprint of approximately 355m². The site is in a very secluded area behind Rayleigh Leisure Centre and has many problems associated with it due to its location and the condition of the ramps.



The existing skatepark is almost invisible from the road.

During the consultation period, 89% of respondents gave some positive feedback about the skatepark that included:

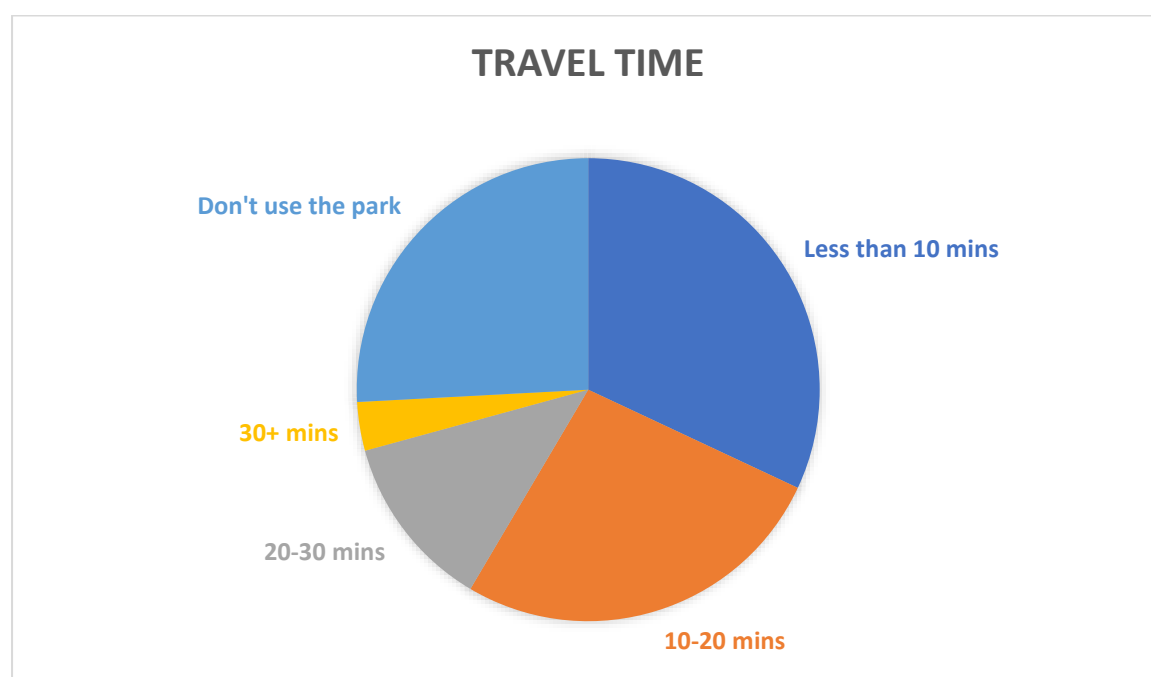
- Good space.
- Level.
- Good jumpbox.
- Somewhere to meet friends and enjoy riding.
- Nice halfpipe.
- It's local.
- Has lights.

Over 85% of respondents gave feedback on the negative aspects of the park and it is clear that the park is in the wrong location to provide a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment:

- Poor visibility from the road and leisure centre customers.
- Lack of surveillance has led to anti-social behavioural problems and a poor local reputation.
- Ramps are consistently vandalised and graffitied due to poor visibility and secondary supervision.
- Local users feel unsafe at the skatepark.
- Inaccessible and not DDA compliant.
- Many local residents were unaware it was there.
- No beginner's area.
- Ramps in poor condition and dangerous to use.
- The skatepark has been sunk down from the surrounding landscape and is often under water during heavy rainfall with no drainage. This has accelerated the decline in condition of the ramps.
- Poor skatepark design and ramps only suitable for BMX and scooter riders.
- Lack of inclusivity.
- Safety issue with toes of ramps not flush with tarmac base.
- No seating area, so users sit on the ramps.
- No bin provision, leading to rubbish and glass collecting on and around the skatepark.

Almost all of the problems associated with the skatepark is due to the location of the skatepark: the site is below the surrounding landscape levels and is often under water making it unfit to ride, slow to dry out and the ponding water damages the ramps, and it is also an intimidating place hidden away from secondary supervision that has become known more for drugs and anti-social behaviour than skateboarding.

The location does seem to be serving the local community well with the majority of users spending less than 10 minutes traveling to the park.



Hawkwell Skatepark, Clements Hall Leisure Centre

The skatepark was built in ?? and features metal ramps with an approximate 300m² tarmac base.



Whilst the community are generally happy with the location and there were no reports raised of ASB during the consultation period, the overwhelming response was regarding the state of the skatepark itself. Over 90% of those taking part in the survey had something positive to say about the skatepark and 88% had negative feedback about the skatepark.

The positive feedback regarding the skatepark included:

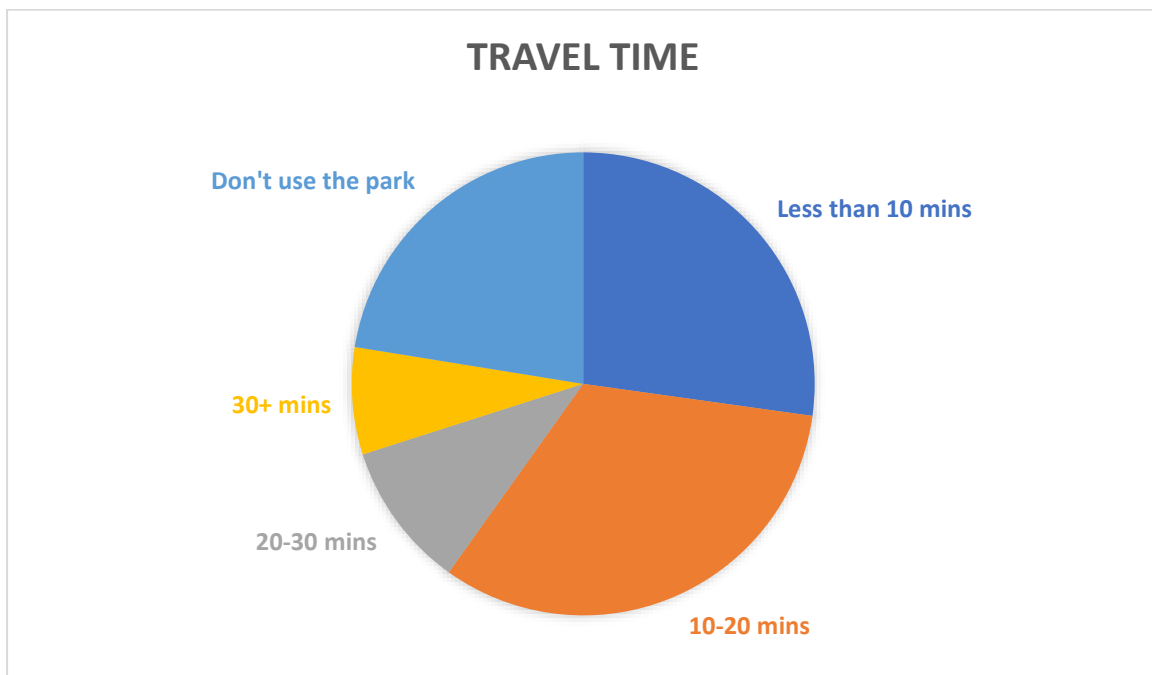
- Location.
- Good variety of ramps.
- Halfpipe.
- Good size.
- Local park for the community.
- Free to use.
- Easy to access.
- Somewhere to meet friends and enjoy being active.

- Lots of space.

Issues concerning the local community with the skatepark included:

- Ramps in poor condition.
- Ramps, rough, slippery and uneven.
- Mix of metal ramps and tarmac skate surface was dangerous.
- Height of ramps and layout make it difficult to ride safely.
- Tarmac base was in poor condition with gravel areas and potholes.
- Design was suitable for BMX and experienced scooter riders only.
- Very little street/plaza provision.
- No features for skateboarders.
- Poorly designed/layout.
- No lighting.
- Too small.
- Ramps too high.
- Not inclusive.
- No beginner's area.
- No seating or bin provision.

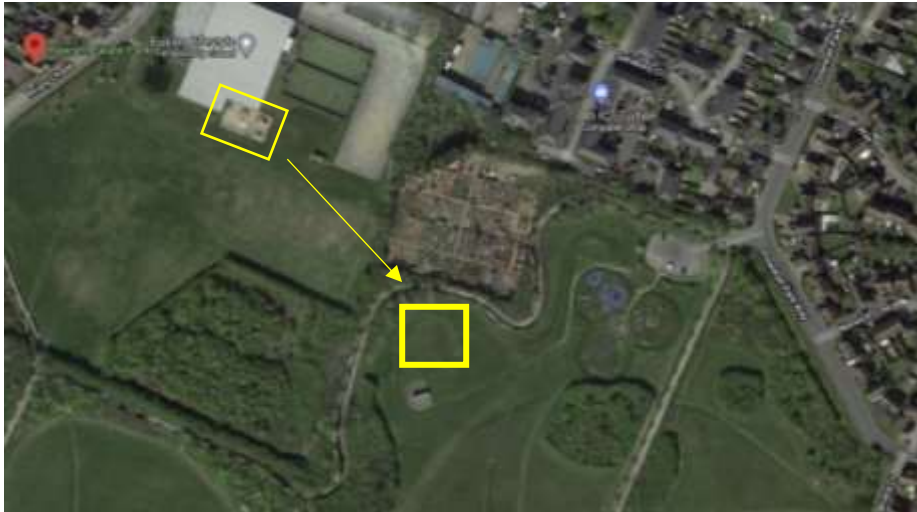
The majority of users spend up to 20 minutes traveling to the skatepark.



Proposals for the new skateparks

Sweyne Park Skatepark

It is proposed to move the Rawreth skatepark behind Rayleigh Leisure Centre to Sweyne Park to overcome many of the problems associated with the current location.



Old location and new location

36% of users said it would take approximately the same amount of time to get to the new skatepark location as to the old and 31% of users said it would be quicker. 33% of users will be slightly inconvenienced as it will take them longer to access the new skatepark.



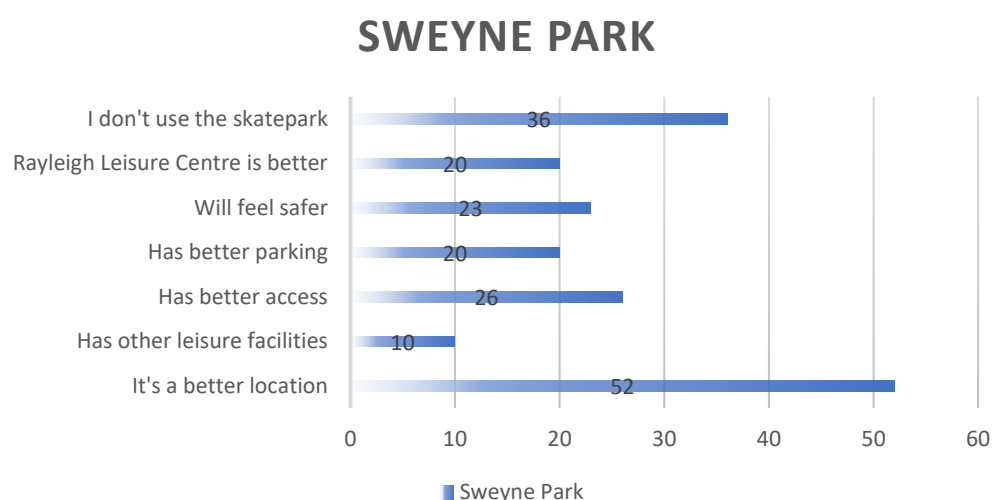
Proposed new location within Sweyne Park and approximate size of the new facility.

The location of the skatepark within Sweyne Park has been selected on the following criteria:

- There is better natural surveillance from other park users and dog walkers than the current location.
- The new location will be more visible from the road for better surveillance.
- The park is already established as a destination park for play and leisure and the play facilities have recently been upgraded.

- Compliments and is nearer to the existing play facilities, keeping all facilities closer together. This is particularly beneficial if a parent has one child at one space and can supervise another child at the skatepark.
- Will improve the leisure provision within the park and encourage more visitors to the park.
- Can be integrated into the existing landscape through the use of mounding and ground modelling making the skatepark more attractive to existing park users.
- Avoids impacting on the main play area.
- Is away from residential housing.
- Sufficiently located away from the trees to ensure no damage to the trees or root damage to the skatepark.
- Will be quieter in use as the ramps will be solid and bunded.
- Improved design and location will help to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Improved design and location will encourage children and adults to participate in the sport.
- Improved design will ensure that the skatepark will be suitable for all wheel types, skill levels and ages. There will be ramps for beginners as well as features for more experienced riders.
- Allows for any future development as access to other areas will not be restricted by the new development.

The consultation sought the views on whether the local community thought Sweyne Park would be a better location than behind Rayleigh Leisure Centre. Only 14% of respondents were in favour of keeping the skatepark behind Rayleigh Leisure Centre. Over 69% of users also said that they would be encouraged to use a new concrete skatepark in Sweyne Park.

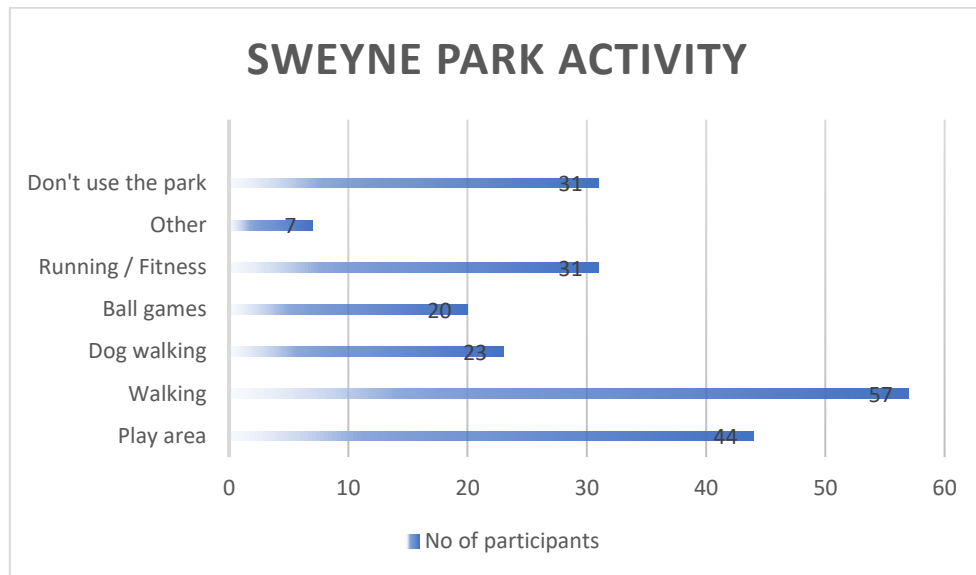


Users felt the new park would:

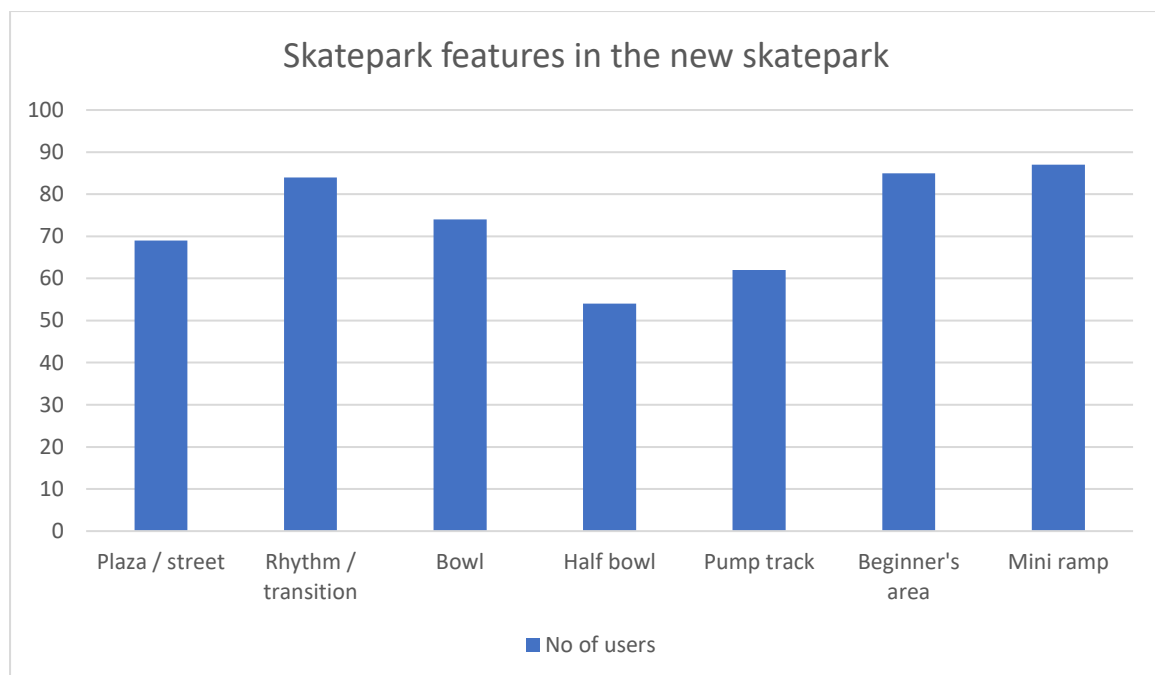
- Be safer with less ASB.
- Better supervision from the play area.
- Have a better design and wider variety of ramps and features.
- Have more space.
- Would bring the community together.
- Get kids more active.
- Encourage more people to take up skateboarding.
- Concrete is the best.
- Bring skateboarding alive again.
- Great place to relieve stress and meet friends.
- Give skaters more choice on where to go and skate.
- Encourage skaters to stay local within the community instead of having to travel to better skateparks.

- The area is more open and has better views.
- Will encourage visitors from outside of the area and will be good for other local businesses.
- Will help to get kids off the street skating.
- Needs to be designed well.

The consultation also looked at how Sweyne Park is currently used and predominately it was for general walking and to use the play area, with 27% of people never visiting the park. This is important in providing the new skatepark with secondary supervision by other users and helps to maintain a safe environment for users.



Users were asked about what type of park they would like in Sweyne Park. Mini ramp, beginner's area and transition ramps were the top features.



When asked to think about the top 3 features users would like, the most requested were:

- Bowl

- Pump track
- Jumpbox
- Separate area for beginners

Hawkwell Skatepark, Clements Hall Leisure Centre

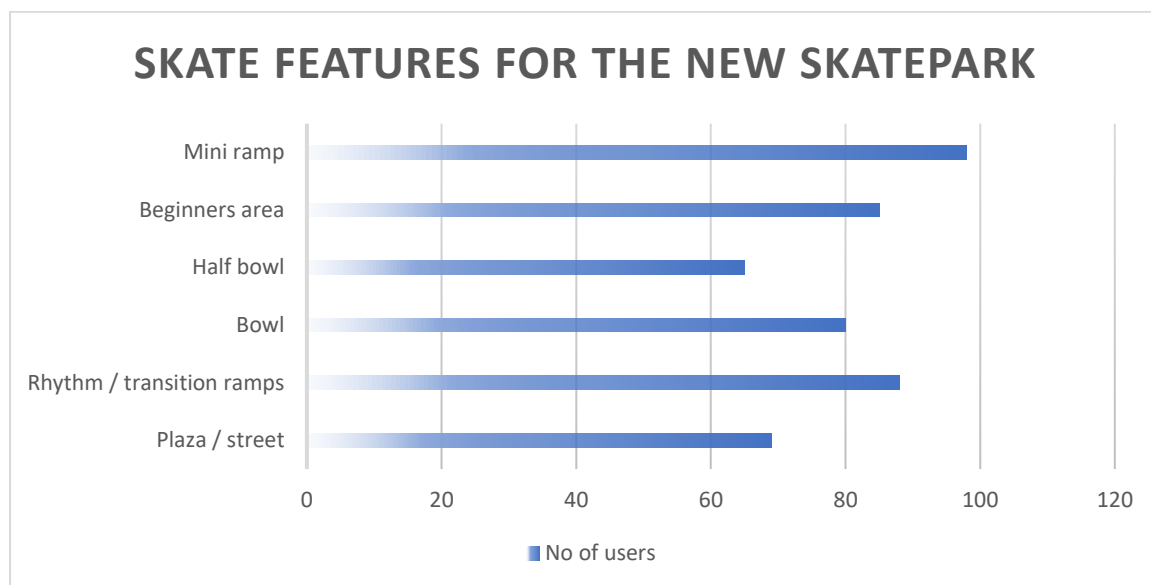
The upgraded skatepark in Hawkwell, by Clements Hall Leisure Centre will be built on the existing site and could potentially include the short tennis court adjacent to the existing skatepark. Below shows the type of facility that will be built. Over 67% of users would feel more encouraged to use a well-designed concrete skatepark than the existing facility. Nearly 12% felt it would make no difference to them skating at this site.



Users felt an improved concrete skatepark would:

- Encourage more visitors to the other local leisure facilities.
- Attract skaters from surrounding local villages.
- Fewer accidents on the ramps.
- Discourage ASB.
- Safer environment.
- Better ramps with more choice of features and styles.
- Encourage younger users to participate.
- Discourage crime.
- Save time and money having to travel to skateparks further away.
- Encourage more frequent visits.
- Safer.
- Safe space to exercise.
- Bring the local community together.
- Better environment to visit with friends and hang out.
- Will be easier and better to ride well and develop skills.
- Encourage people to get into the fresh air and off their screens.
- The skatepark will be more durable.
- More ramps will reduce waiting time to skate.
- Encourage a skate community where skills and experience can be shared and new tricks and skills learnt from other riders.
- Improve physical and mental health.
- Training park for Olympians of the future.

Looking to developing the design, users were asked what features they would like at the new skatepark. The Mini ramp was the most popular, followed by a rhythm section.



When asked to list 3 skate features that they would most like to see in the skatepark the following were all highly rated:

- Mini ramp
- Pump track
- Jumpbox
- Bowl
- Separate beginner's area
- Rails and ledges

45% of those who responded said they would like to be involved in the design for the new skatepark. This is really important to help ensure the community feel valued and that the new skatepark meets all of their aspirations for the future development of skateboarding in their local community.

Conclusion

The consultation has shown how passionate and engaged the local community is with skateboarding and a desire to improve the facilities to increase participation in the sport as well as addressing the safety issues of the current sites. The overwhelming response seems to show that the existing facilities are not providing a safe and inclusive environment for the users. Many are discouraged from using the facilities as they are afraid of either being injured on the damaged ramps or put off by the anti-social behaviour that now exists at the parks due to the poor condition they are in. Those that are able to are spending a considerable amount of time and money travelling to skateparks outside of the Rochford area. This is not only bad for the environment but also for the local skate scene which has become fragmented resulting in a poor skate community.

The local community is passionate about developing and designing the right types of parks to encourage greater participation in the sport as well as developing the skills of the existing users. An area for beginners to learn basic skills and skatepark etiquette, away from the main park features would be welcomed at both sites. A design that offered both a variety of transition ramps as well as street features would accommodate all the different wheel types, ages and skill levels.

A well-designed skatepark, designed with the local user groups, will bring the community together and help to develop an engaged skate community that will take pride in their local parks. It is important to acknowledge the growth in the sport, particularly over the past 12 months, with female participation in skateboarding being at its highest recorded level. With skateboarding taking place for the first time at the Olympics in Toyko, interest in the sport is going to continue to grow and develop. Providing grass roots facilities for all ages will give free, inclusive and easy access to a multi-generation community who can develop and aspire the next generation of skaters and perhaps Olympians.



Consultation report on Hullbridge Skatepark



April 2021

Prepared by Bendcrete Leisure Ltd for Rochford District Council for their sole and specific use.

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Introduction

Rochford District Council is seeking to improve its provision of skatepark facilities across the borough. Plans to develop two of its popular skateparks at Rayleigh Leisure Centre and Clements Hall Leisure Centre are ready to be tendered. This consultation has focused on the facilities at Hullbridge.

The design and construction of a concrete skatepark is usually a once in a life-time opportunity for a community to be involved in. It is therefore vital that the community is consulted in order to ascertain what type of facility the skateparks should be replaced with. Rochford District Council has commissioned Bendcrete Skateparks to seek the views of the local community to ensure that the community has been involved in developing the planning and designs for the new skateparks to ensure that they will meet the needs of the community now and for future generations.

This report will explore how the local skate community use the existing facilities at Hullbridge and the problems with the skatepark. It will also explain what the community expectations are for the new parks and the benefits they will bring to the local communities.

The proposal is to replace the Skatepark in Hullbridge with a new concrete skatepark in Hullbridge Recreation Ground. Consideration has been given to the location of the new skatepark so it does not encroach on the main open area of the park, is close to other recreational facilities, be away from the car park and some mature trees. It will also be away from residential housing. The new skatepark will be sympathetically landscaped with grass bunds, which will help to reduce the visual impact of the skatepark and create a more inclusive and welcoming facility.



Social impact of skateparks

Wheeled sports facilities are proving a valuable environment for young people to develop in a higher risk, but controlled environment. Psychologists and educational thinkers agree that young people need risk to fully develop their potential – a factor denied through risk adverse design and standard playground equipment. The sport encompasses risks where confidence, skill and hazard are calculated before commitment to a move. In towns without skateparks, these skills are often practised in the street where the consequences of a mistake can be life changing. Participation in community sports encourages and develops activity and fitness. The physical exertion involved in wheeled sports is often under-estimated by observers and does generate a high level of physical fitness.

The installation of a well designed and constructed skatepark will offer an inclusive facility to a multi-generational community. Mental health and physical wellbeing in children and young adults has become a serious issue. A skatepark offers a safe environment for users to learn not only physical skills, but an opportunity to develop life-long friendships and develop and improve communication and social skills. Traditional and competitive team sports do not suit all people and many give up being physically active as they cannot find an alternative place where their interests are accepted.

There is an inclusive culture and etiquette at skateparks that inspires young and old to develop skills. No other sport will see such a wide range of ages simultaneously engaged in the same sport at the same time. Users develop great resilience – getting up again after a fall and trying again, and again and again, until the trick is perfected. Skaters want to share their love of skating and mutual sense of belonging with others in shaping the community. Whilst skating is an individual sport, skaters share their experience and skills with others and inspire others to participate.

Communities sometimes believe that the construction of a skatepark will bring a rapid increase in anti-social behaviour from young people. In fact, many studies have shown that well-designed skateparks deter anti-social behaviour and skatepark users are usually not associated with anti-social behaviour. Issues relating to anti-social behaviour often stem from an existing problem. The skatepark provides an environment where users can develop social and physical skills and where respect of the facility and other users is very apparent. A skatepark offers an environment for both young children to adults to learn from each other in a way that few other sporting facilities do. A visit to a well adopted skatepark with a good user group shows the best environment for youth development. Skateboarding has been proved to offer young people an alternative to gang culture and teaches respect, social, physical and communication skills.

Community involvement and community adoption of the project is vital to the success of the skatepark. This process ensures that the group are involved in the whole process, from design consultation, throughout the construction phase, and to ongoing maintenance and improvements. If consistently consulted and involved, users will take pride in the park that they have helped create. This also helps to ensure that the park is looked after by this group and that anti-social behaviour is not tolerated at the park.

The design of the skatepark and the surrounding landscape is critical in helping to deter anti-social behaviour. Provision of a seating area with a variety of benches and bins is also important in creating the right social and community culture.

Benefits of skateparks to the local community

The construction of the skatepark will benefit the local community, local shops and other amenities. It will also ensure that the whole park is well used and will become a focal point for a diverse, multi-generational and vibrant local community. This will have a positive impact on not only the local community, but also on real estate, as the area will offer a varied multi-sport/play area that will appeal to a wide cross section of the community.

The new skatepark will also give another option for people to access a new leisure facility, which will improve both physical and mental health. All facilities that give the opportunity to increase time spent outdoors and to improve the physical activity of children and adults has to be welcomed. Obesity and inactivity in children is currently a crisis we are facing. The current Covid19 pandemic has shown the importance of being physically fit and active, as well as the benefits to mental health and the effects of isolation.

A study by the British Heart Foundation in 2019 has shown that by age 11, children are doing more than an hour less of physical activity a week than at age 6. This study found that 61% of children in Year 1 did at least an hour of vigorous activity per day, but by Year 6, only 41% achieved the target. The drop was particularly steep for girls, who fell from 54 to 28% by the time they finished primary school. The report went on to recommend that these numbers prove that more needs be done to ensure children keep active as they approach adolescence. Developing early intervention strategies that help children retain activity levels could include after school physical activity opportunities, focusing on participation and enjoyment in sports – and a greater emphasis on promoting weekend activities. The 2019/20 National Child Measurement Programme shows that 10% of 4-5 year olds in England were obese – doubling to 23.6% for boys 10-11 year olds. While 90% of children who are obese at age 3 remain overweight or obese in adolescence.

An interesting and positive outcome during the Covid19 pandemic has been in the growth in skateboarding. Whether this is as a result of skateboarding being included in the forthcoming Tokyo Olympics, being the perfect social distancing activity or the result of less formal team sports being available is unclear. Interestingly though it isn't in the typical young-male skateboarder which is causing the spike, but the biggest increases (24% over the past 12 months) have been in female participation in skateboarding. Furthermore, couples skateboarding has become an activity they can do together and older generations who used to skate in their youth and are now re-engaging with skateboarding, either alone or with their children. Participation isn't limited by age or gender.

Equipment has been selling out across the country with complete skateboards being the biggest seller, some skate stores have had to wait up to 2 months for stock of certain skateboards. MySkate, an app which provides skateboarders with the locations of all the skateparks in the UK has seen an increase of 180,000 uses of the app each month, with new and experienced skaters logging on to find their local place to skate. Female only skate groups have also sprung up all over the country with social media apps being used to link up riders.

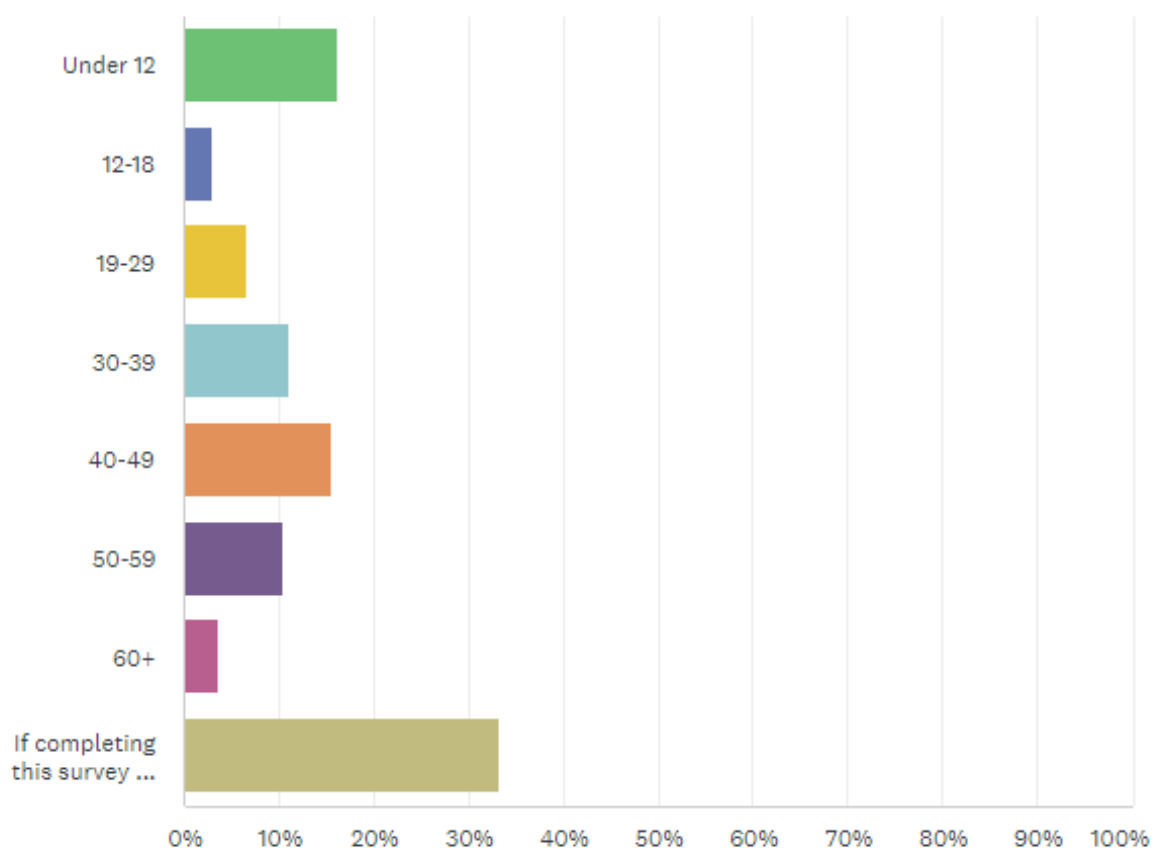
The skatepark consultation

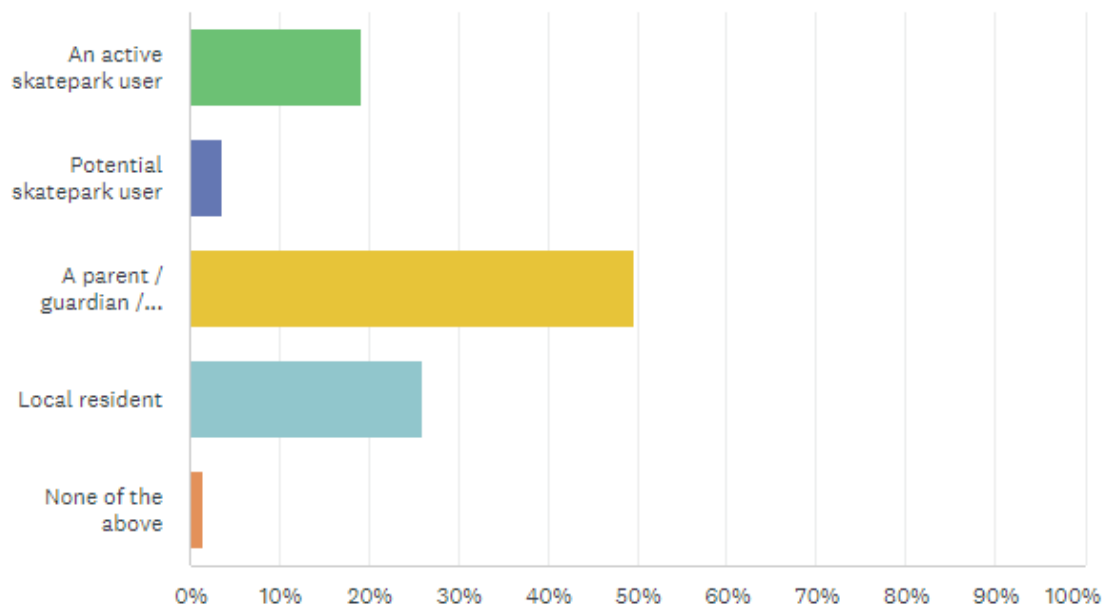
A consultation, via SurveyMonkey, was carried out by Bendcrete Skateparks during December 2022 to January 2023. The survey was promoted to potential users via:

- Rochford District Council's social media platforms
- Bendcrete's social media platforms
- Local Youth Community Group
- Schools in the area

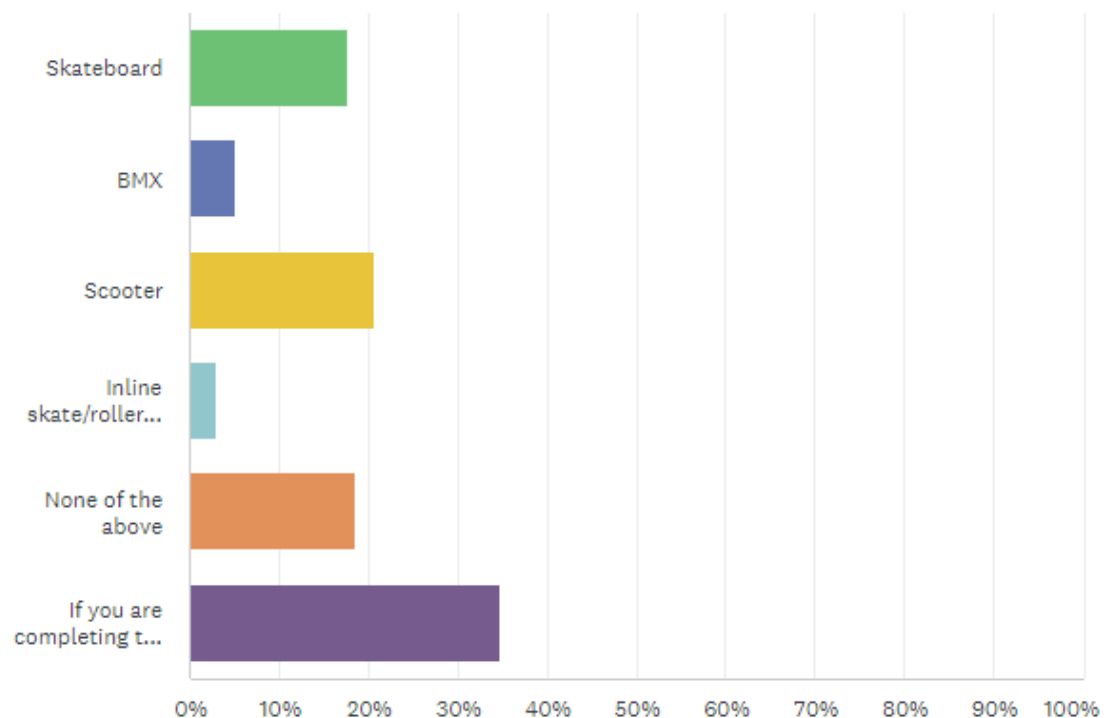
The consultation was carried out online after following the success of a similar exercise in 2021 and 135 returns were received. A copy of the full results is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The survey reached a broad range of the community with the largest returns from adults carrying the survey out on behalf of a minor (33%) who were almost all under 12. 80% of respondents live in the SS5 postcode. Of those that responded, over 88% were actively engaged in the sport.



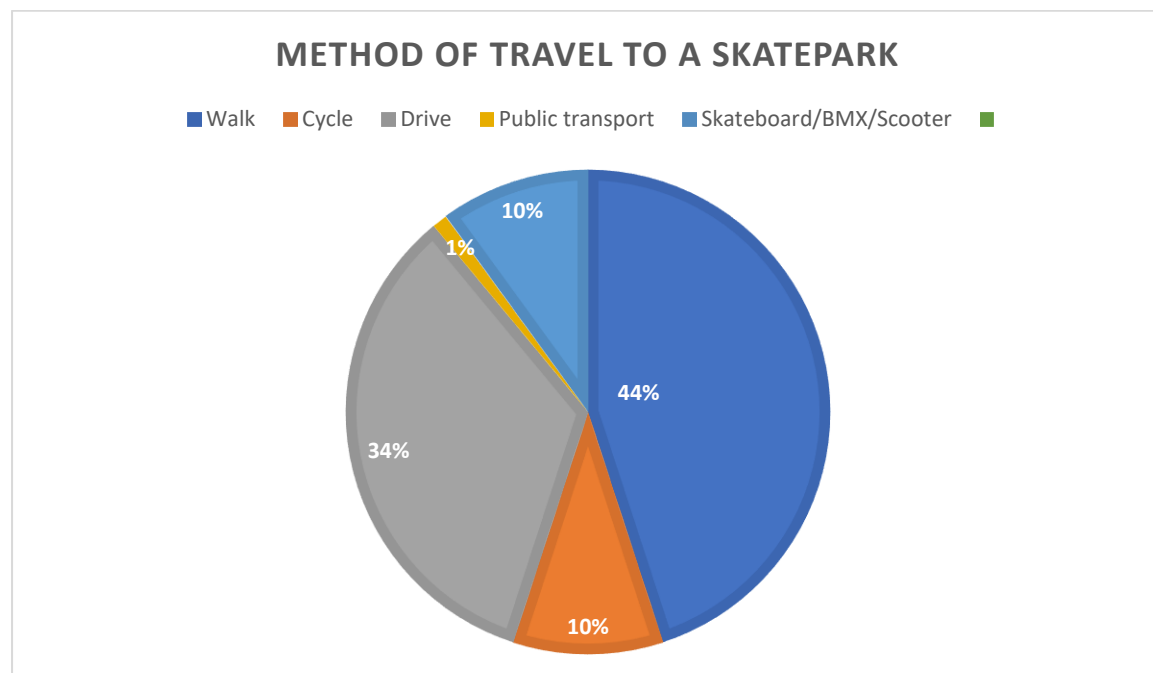


Predominately users were scooter or skateboarders and almost all responses from parents/carers were on behalf of a child under 12 riding a scooter.



We next looked at people's habits in using the skatepark. The majority of users (39%) only used the skatepark at the weekends and 20% of users going 3-4 days per week. This could reflect the park not being lit at night or that it is predominately used by younger children and this is the only free time they have with their parents/carers. Only 16% of users only used the skatepark once a week. It clearly demonstrates a passion for the sport and regular commitment to participation.

As you would expect with a local neighbourhood park, over 44% of users walked to the park. Encouragingly over 64% of users took an environmentally friendly way to visit the park with over half of all users taking less than 10 minutes to get to the skatepark in Hullbridge Recreation Ground.



The survey looked at what parks are being used by the local community and not surprisingly the most popular park was Hullbridge skatepark followed by Rayleigh Skatepark in King George's Field, which is a relatively new concrete skatepark. Almost 30% of users also travelled further to other skateparks and these included:

- Canewdon
- Jersey
- Leigh on Sea
- Canvey
- Southend on Sea
- Silverend
- South Woodham Ferrers
- Hullbridge Park
- Hemel Hempstead
- Crystal Palace, London
- Romford

When designing a new skatepark it is important to consider the whole environment to make the park appeal to the local community and visitors, encourage the development of a skating community and help create the right environment to foster the unique skatepark etiquette that exists at skateparks. The survey looked at what other facilities should be at the new skateparks. Bins and benches were at the top of the list and this helps to stop the skateparks becoming dirty, covered in glass and litter. If there are no benches, users also tend to sit on the ramps which prevents people from skating them. It also gives space for users to watch the action before participating. In research, we have found that this is very important with female skaters and younger users who feel nervous or intimidated to use the skatepark.

Interestingly whilst 42% of respondents requested a youth shelter, the comments area, several users requested that a youth shelter is not installed as non-skaters use them and create problems for the

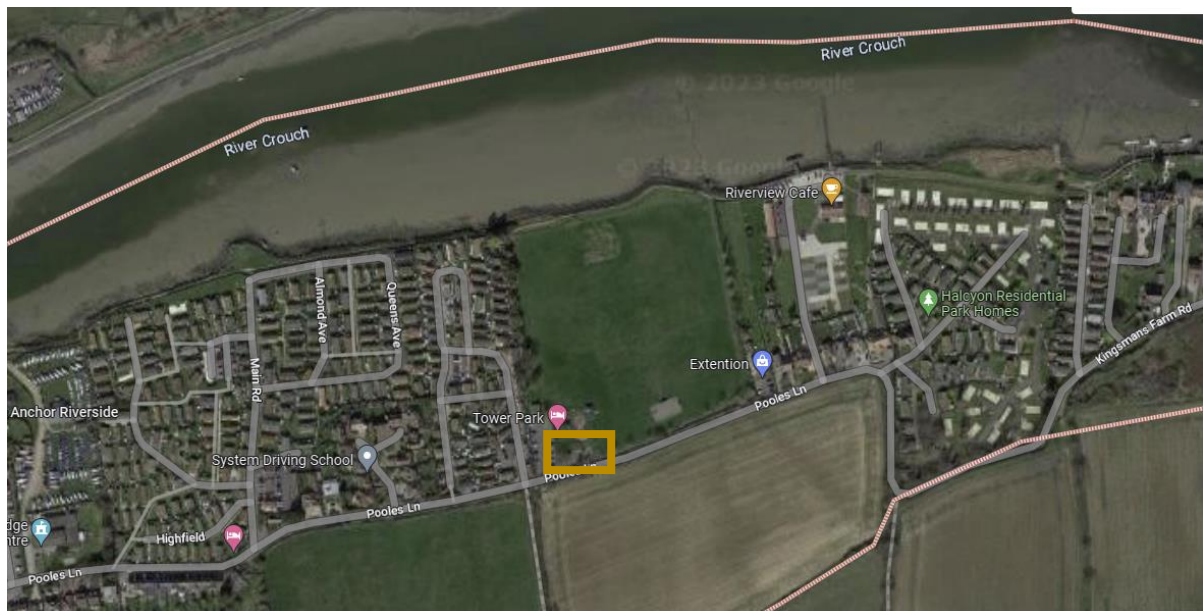
area. This is evidenced at a number of skateparks across the country where youth shelters are regularly removed from skateparks for this reason.

Other requested facilities included:

- Lighting
- CCTV
- Footpath with skateable features
- Drinking fountains
- Shade canopies

The existing skatepark in Hullbridge

The existing skatepark is of metal construction with a footprint of approximately 270m². The site is located in Hullbridge Recreation Ground in the north of Hullbridge and is accessed off Pooles Lane. A pedestrian footpath almost reaches the recreation ground and there are plans to construct a formal crossing into the path by Rochford District Council.



The existing skatepark is partially visible from the road and leads off a car park by a children's play area. The Play Area is well used by over 75% of respondents with 63% using the skatepark. Walking (72%) and dog walking (41%) were also popular uses of the recreation ground and this offers a good level of secondary supervision for users of the park.

During the consultation period, 86% of respondents gave some positive feedback about the skatepark that included:

- Location and parking.
- Good space and variety of ramps
- Safe.
- Good for beginners.
- Somewhere to meet friends and enjoy riding.
- The skatepark ensured that some respondents stayed out of trouble.
- It's local.
- One scooter user learnt all his tricks at the park and in 2007 became the World Champion for scooter riding.

Over 95% of respondents gave feedback on the negative aspects of the park and it is clear that the park is in the wrong location to provide a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment:

- Dated and needs updating. No flow. Ramps are too steep. Basic and Boring.
- Too small.
- No lighting or CCTV.
- Ramps are in poor condition and the surface is uneven making it dangerous to use.
- Local users feel unsafe at the skatepark.
- Too close to the car park.
- No beginner's area.
- Poor skatepark design.
- Pump track should be maintained.
- No seating area.
- No bin provision, leading to rubbish and glass collecting on and around the skatepark.

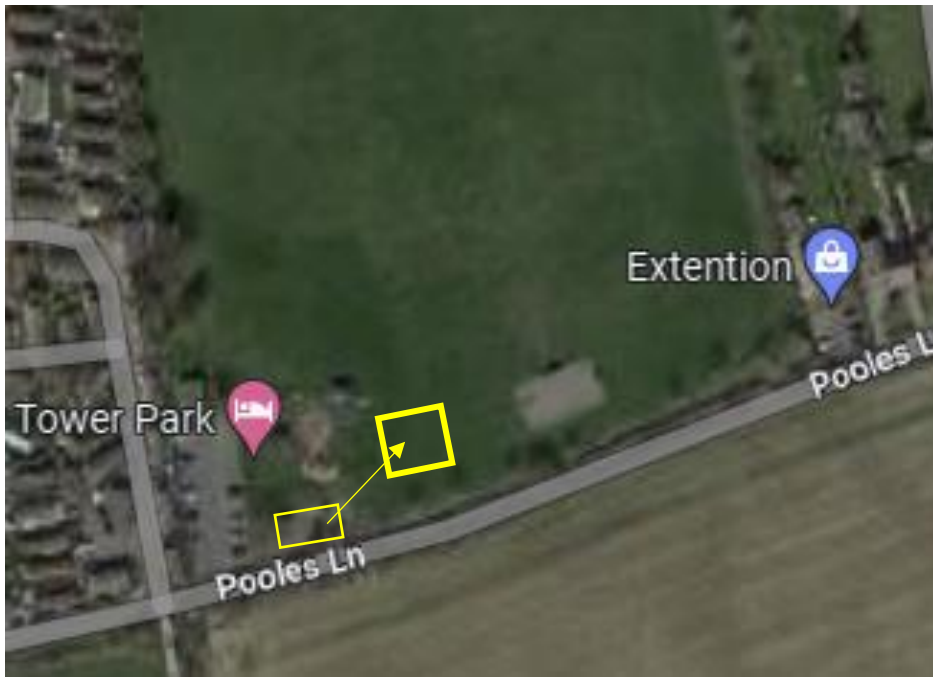
Almost all of the problems associated with the skatepark is due to condition of the ramps and the design of the skatepark. The metal ramps have fallen into a poor condition and get very hot during the summer. A number of respondents wanted the skatepark away from the car park.

The proposal for a new skatepark in Hullbridge

Over 77% of all respondents said that they would be encouraged to use a new skatepark in Hullbridge if it was constructed out of concrete and was a good design. The new park will be moved within the recreation ground away from the car park and towards the marble game and the MUGA. Consideration will need to be given to how users will access it – footpaths are essential to keep mud off the skatepark.

Respondents felt the new skatepark would help to reduce antisocial behaviour and encourage visitors to the park. It was also felt a new skatepark would encourage visitors to the area and this would have a positive impact on the local shops and businesses in Hullbridge. A better designed park with an area for younger or inexperienced children would help to encourage more children to be active and less dependent on phones and computers for entertainment.

Proposed new location for the new concrete skatepark.

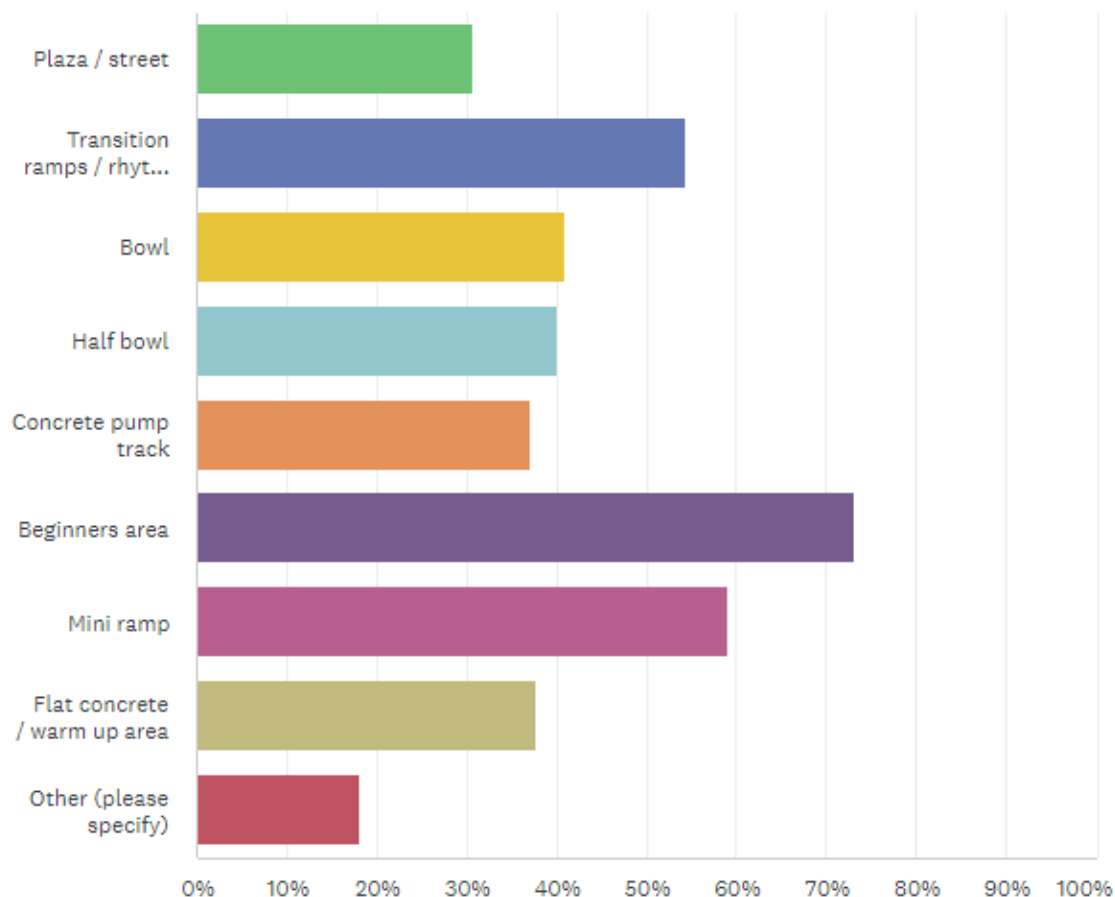


Proposals for the new skatepark

- There is excellent natural surveillance from other park users and dog walkers than the current location.
- The new location will be safe away from the car park.
- The park is already established as a destination park for play and leisure.
- Will improve the leisure provision within the park and encourage more visitors to the park.
- Can be integrated into the existing landscape through the use of mounding and ground modelling making the skatepark more attractive to existing park users.
- Avoids impacting on the main play area.
- Sufficiently located away from the trees to ensure no damage to the trees or root damage to the skatepark.
- Will be quieter in use as the ramps will be solid and banded.
- Improved design and location will help to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Improved design and location will encourage children and adults to get active and to participate in the sport.
- Beginners' area will give new users confidence to start and be able to progress to more challenging features.
- Improved design will ensure that the skatepark will be suitable for all wheel types, skill levels and ages. There will be ramps for beginners as well as features for more experienced riders.
- Allows for any future development as access to other areas will not be restricted by the new development.
- Strong desire for lighting.
- Will give people Olympic aspirations.
- There is also a strong desire for the BMX track to be improved.

Design criteria for the new skatepark

Users were asked about what type of park they would like in Hullbridge. A high number of respondents have requested that the park should be progressive with clearly defined beginner's area separated from the main park. Mini ramp, beginner's area and transition ramps were the top features. 31% of respondents would like to be involved in the design development stage of the project.



When asked to think about the top 3 features users would like, the most requested were:

- Beginners Area*
- Pump track
- Bowl
- Jumpbox
- Halfpipe
- Spine

The high request for a beginner's area probably reflects the number of parents responding for those under 12 years. Interestingly when asked to list the top 3 features, very few requested street features, eg stairs, blocks etc.

Conclusion

The consultation has shown how passionate and engaged the local community is with skateboarding and a desire to improve the facilities to increase participation in the sport as well as addressing the safety issues of the current site. The overwhelming response seems to show that the existing facilities

are not providing a safe and inclusive environment for the users. Many are discouraged from using the facilities as they are afraid of either being injured on the damaged ramps or put off by the anti-social behaviour that now exists at the parks due to the poor condition they are in. Those that are able to are spending a considerable amount of time and money travelling to skateparks outside of the Rochford area. This is not only bad for the environment but also for the local skate scene which has become fragmented resulting in a poor skate community.

The local community is passionate about developing and designing the right types of parks to encourage greater participation in the sport as well as developing the skills of the existing users. An area for beginners to learn basic skills and skatepark etiquette, away from the main park features would be welcomed. This could be reflected by the high number of parents/carers responding on behalf of a child under 12. A design that offered both a variety of transition ramps as well as street features would accommodate all the different wheel types, ages and skill levels.

A well-designed skatepark, designed with the local user groups, will bring the community together and help to develop an engaged skate community that will take pride in their local parks. It is important to acknowledge the growth in the sport, particularly over the past 12 months, with female participation in skateboarding being at its highest recorded level. Following the Tokyo Olympics there has been a huge surge in people taking up skateboarding as they have been inspired by the skill and community spirit amongst the skaters. Providing grass roots facilities for all ages will give free, inclusive and easy access to a multi-generation community who can develop and aspire the next generation of skaters and perhaps Olympians.

