WATLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
Project Business Case / Approval

PROJECT Y4 – Pump Track (To be renamed "Watlington Flow Park"
Outline: This document outlines the proposal to extend the current skate facilities in the Watlington Recreation Ground to a larger Pump Track and Flow Park facility, that will provide more scope and capacity for wheeled sports enthusiasts of all abilities, across many disciplines, whilst complementing the uniqueness of the existing bowl and the community that use it. The proposal is to build the new facility using sprayed concrete.
Proposed by: Matt Reid on behalf of the 'Watlington Pump Track Committee'.
Date / Version: Full proposal - February 2022
Links to NP or other strategy: This project is specifically identified in the WPC Strategy: *CO4.e - Make good provision for new and existing residents by providing a good mix of facilities for sport and recreation. Sports & Recreation: Contributions to the cost of providing new and improved facilities for sports and recreation.* *Item 5. Provision of pump track.* The plan to expand the facilities for wheeled sports was confirmed in the Sports and Recreation Strategy adopted on 8th February 2022. Item 6.A "Increase variety and quality of provision at the current site"
Current Status: Seeking approval to implement the project subject to: 1. Carrying out the surveys required 2. Finalise design. This will be completed free of charge by Maverick Industries (see below) 3. Planning permission (if required) 4. Obtaining 3x competitive tenders once the design and scope have been fully specified and completed, to establish the final budget required. 5. Finalise what funding will be provided by WPC, SODC and any other local authority. 6. Grant application and fund raising for the balance of the cost.

COSTS
Cost: The initial estimate for the Flow Park is £500k (+ VAT). (Based on initial estimate from Maverick Industries (attached). This is considered a top end estimate and will be finalised once design and scope has been completed. As it stands, this price assumes the new facility will go over the area of the current septic tank linked to the pavilion. We have assumed it will be removed but the above cost does not include the associated costs. We have identified a supplier (Maverick Industries - the leading park builder in the country) that is willing to develop the design to the point where it could be competitively tendered by other companies, as well as them. This will be free of charge with no obligation to award the build contract to Maverick. (NB: Henley-on-Thames used the same approach for their new facility in 2019 and we are seeking advice from them on how this operated in practice). A sum of approximately £3k will be required up front to carry out topographical and drainage survey for use in the design and to cover the costs associated with planning or permitted development approval.
Contingency: We will be looking for a turn-key solution from our chosen contractor after the bidding phase of the project. Once the order is placed, then the cost risk will sit with the contractor and not the project, and there will be no need for a contingency fund beyond this point. This approach will require some surveys to be carried out prior to going to tender, see later in the document for more detail.
Annual Running Cost: The facility will need sweeping / jet washing potentially after very bad weather. Our intention as a committee is to set up a group of volunteers from the local users of the facility to keep on top of this, and other simple maintenance needs of the facility.
Sinking Fund: The new facility will be extremely low maintenance, and typically constructions of this type last tens of years before any significant maintenance is required, if properly looked after. Fundamentally such facilities are built to last a lifetime. Depending on which contractor we end up choosing, some offer free aftercare for routine maintenance work, but this is not a guaranteed option at this stage. Consequently, as an assumption to hold at this point, we estimate annual maintenance costs would be approximately £1k per year. We will look to ways to contribute towards this through fund raising events. There may need for some more intensive maintenance every ten years or so, but this would not be expected to cost more than £5k at today's prices.

SCOPE & BENEFITS

Initial plans were canvassed as one of the many options for improving the sports and recreation facilities for the town, in the Parish Council survey of August 2021. The plan to expand and upgrade the Skate Bowl area was among the most popular proposals in the survey, and as such the Watlington Flow Park Group were approached by the Parish Council to take the plans forward.

The main benefits of this proposal as we see them are laid out below:

User Friendliness –

The team's objective is to design a facility that will suit all ages from infant up to 'should know better' pensioners, and all abilities. It will have progressive features incorporated into the design to accommodate complete beginners and more experienced users alike.

Versatility & Uniqueness –

The design being proposed will be well-suited to multiple wheeled sports disciplines (for example Inline Skates, Skate/Long Boards, Scooters, BMX, MTB), making it a facility covering a broader base than a more conventional 'Street Park'.

Consequently, this facility will appeal to a wider group of users when compared to the more common style of park, like the one recently built as part of the new development in Benson.

The proposed design will be unique amongst its peers in the surrounding area – the nearest equivalent would be in Watford and there are only a handful of similar facilities in the country.

Capacity (building on a strong foundation) –

There is already a strong base of local users of the existing skate bowl, as well as groups of keen riders from the surrounding area. The annual 'BowlFest' held in the late summer grows in popularity each year and has gone a long way to introduce the wheeled sports to new users in the town, young and old.

The base of local users is already increasing before factoring in the planned expansion of the town. The 400 new houses are likely to be occupied by younger families increasing demand for youth facilities. The location of the skate bowl on the main foot and cycle route to town for the north and west is ideal to cater for this new demand.

As mentioned, the expanded Flow Park will appeal to a broader range of riding disciplines that will only serve to encourage more people to use the new facility and the surrounding recreational provisions. The rising popularity of skateboarding, BMX and MTB off the back recent British Olympic success, for instance, makes these growing sports with increasing appeal.

In summary, the current facilities are inadequate for the future from a capacity perspective and breadth of appeal in this context.

Community benefit -

Beyond the benefits inherent in the design mentioned above, the improved facility will also benefit the local community.

Well designed and managed recreational facilities are a hub for community life. The proposed new construction will be a catalyst for healthier lifestyles, bringing together different groups, young and old, to develop new skills, have fun, socialise, make new friendships and more.

It is also important and relevant to also consider that the Flow Park will be as much about those who enjoy watching the skills on show as it is will be the riders themselves. The facility proposed, if the vision is achieved, will be one of national significance and will draw enthusiasts from around the country to pay a visit. This will bring additional trade to the town, as well as creating a facility and legacy that local users and community will be proud of.

Financial:

No direct income will come from the new facility. It will attract people from around the area, and indeed the wider country so local businesses will benefit from the increased footfall in the town.

There has been some discussion of opening a café facility in the Pavilion, were this to go ahead, the café would benefit greatly from increased users of the new Wheeled Sports facility.

Other:

The Project Board will carry out a survey of current and estimated usage in parallel with the design process. This survey will seek additional input on user need to influence the design.

RISKS

The main risks associated with this proposal are listed below (see appendix for detail):

- Resistance from local residents
- Environmental impact – Noise
- Environmental impact - Concerns over the use of concrete
- Environmental impact – Drainage
- User Safety
- Security
- Parking
- Cost.

FUNDING STREAMS

We are seeking £100k from WPC CIL funding for the project and will look to secure further funding through applications to the following bodies:

South Oxfordshire District Council

National Lottery Funding Sport England British Olympic Committee Skate UK British Cycling Nicky Smallbone has joined the Project Board to lead on fundraising.
Community Infrastructure Levy: SODC (Silke O'Ferrall) has confirmed that the project would be suitable for CIL funding.
Existing Budget Allocation: (e.g. draw down of existing commitment) None
Other: Fundraising events Match funding through local companies
ALTERNATIVES
Do nothing. The current skate bowl limits the range of Wheeled Sports activities and means enthusiasts must travel to facilities in Oxford and further afield. ***Develop a smaller scheme.*** More limited schemes would provide additional facilities but would be a significant compromise of the vision we have for this scheme, with a narrower appeal and would not have the capacity for the future expansion plans of the town. ***Develop a larger scheme*** – The current proposal utilises all the space available between the pavilion, the MUGA and the boundary. Space will be provided around the perimeter and the boundary of the rec' and the playground for people to access all around the Flow Park. A larger scheme would impact too much on other users of the Rec, and restrict space and compromise plans for the MUGA, for example.

GOVERNANCE		
Customer: The beneficiaries are the skaters and other wheeled sports enthusiasts of Watlington and the surrounding area. A group of adult skaters have come together to form the Project Board and will engage with the wider community as plans are developed to ensure all ages and abilities are catered for. A survey of current and potential users will be carried out during the design stage		
Project Manager: Steve Bolingbroke (for approval and design phase)		
Project Board: 'Watlington Pump Track Committee' a group of active skaters in the community supported by Matt Read, Steve Bolingbroke and Nicky Smallbone.		
Next Review / Approval: We are looking for approval in principle for the project with a WPC contribution of £100k to be confirmed once design is completed. At this stage we are seeking £3k to cover the costs of surveys and planning approval for the scheme.		
APPROVAL	Approved by & date	Budget approved
For feasibility		
For Phase (or full project)		

APPENDICIES

Included in the subsequent pages of this document:

- More detail around risks and mitigations.
- Initial draft designs highlighting the features planned, as well as examples of similar facilities and their construction.
- Initial cost estimate and supporting comments from Maverick Industries.

Attached as a separate supporting document

- 9671 – Guidance document, May 2020 : *A document by Skate UK about the benefits of skate parks, with comments on design, procurement etc.. Note this document is focussed towards the discipline of Skate Boarding, we are proposing a facility with more progressive features, to appeal to a wider group of uses.*

MORE DETAIL AROUND RISKS AND MITIGATIONS.

Resistance from local residents.

It is clear from the survey carried out by the Parish Council that this project has a lot of support and goodwill behind it from the local community. However, there will always be residents concerned about the development and the impact it may have on them, for example residents of Love Lane who back onto the area.

Our intention is to actively engage with the people of Watlington, once we have designs near finalised, to get them excited about the proposals and the positive impact we believe it will bring to the community. This will also be an opportunity for the project team to connect with those who have misgivings about the plans, hear any concerns that we either need to take into consideration before finalising the design, or that we are able to allay during the conversations.

These connections will be across a number of platforms, for example Social Media, an 'Open Day' style event in the recreation ground, setting up a display in the town to share the designs and plans, article(s) in the local paper, information leaflets etc. etc..

Some of these events may also give rise to fundraising opportunities.

We are not clear if planning permission is required, but of course will fully align with any legislation requirements necessary to bring this project to life. If planning is required, this will also provide a route for any concerns to be raised by locals, and for them to be answered.

Environmental impact – Noise

The new facility will be >30m from the boundary of residential properties on Love Lane, and as such will comply with the 'Fields In Trust' guidelines.

There is a commonly held misconception that skateparks are very noisy. Studies have shown that a skatepark creates no more noise than the ambient surrounding noises that exist in other parks. This is an important insight especially as we will be modifying an area that is already used for this purpose.

The new concrete skatepark design will serve to minimise noise levels generated at the park, due to the density of the material. If anything, the new facility will be significantly quieter than the current skate facilities when factoring in the noise generated by users of the existing skate ramp.

Environmental concerns over the use of concrete

Concrete does have its detractors in terms of Environmental impact. It is certainly not the most environmentally friendly material, in part off the back of it being such an abundantly used material in the construction industry.

We acknowledge this concern, and while we do not think it is practical to fully mitigate this, the following points bear consideration:

Construction methods have moved on significantly. The proposed spray technique uses far less material (approximately a third), when compared to the previous convention of cast concrete for skate parks.

There has been progress made in recent years in terms of the carbon impact of the production processes behind the manufacture of concrete. We are researching this area and will work with potential contractors to see if it is possible to source material from those suppliers proven to have optimised production processes.

We cannot completely mitigate the environmental impact of the production of any concrete used in the construction of the Flow Park (e.g. carbon offset schemes seldom work so we are not proposing this), but parks such as this are designed to last a lifetime so across its design life we would argue the environmental impact would be negligible.

There are practical reasons why concrete is the material of choice and has advantages over other materials:

- - It's an ideal hardwearing and very smooth riding surface, the 'first choice' of riders.
- - 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, the least slippery when wet and is quick drying.
- - Concrete is far more durable and low maintenance than any other material in this application.

Environmental impact - Drainage

At this stage it is proposed that drainage from the facility will be managed through soakaways.

We have considered as a concept whether it might be possible to capture rain water and somehow pump and store as water or the users of the nearby allotments, however this has not been costed of worked through to any level in terms of feasibility / viability at this stage.

User Safety

Spray concrete facilities are known to attract riders of all ages and disciplines, and older users will provide an element of 'self-policing' to look after the site and help prevent any anti-social behaviour.

There is evidence that well-built facilities, as we propose, actually reduce anti-social behaviour (see link to a video from a case study in Dorchester where this was proven to be the case, in the initial estimate document attached in the Appendix). Sadly, this is not always the case with conventional skate parks.

Wheeled sports such as skateboarding, cycling come with a risk of injury which is clear to all protagonists. It will be the responsibility of users to ensure they wear the correct protective equipment to help mitigate the risk of injuring themselves.

We propose to include signs at the facility to point out the risks and highlight recommended safety equipment for users. This will also be used to ensure users aware that they use the area at their own risk and there is no liability to the council in case of any injury. These risks exist with the existing recreation area.

Security

It may be necessary to modify CCTV in the area to ensure the whole of the new area will be covered / protected by it. This needs further investigation and costing.

Parking

There will be an increase in vehicles coming to the Town, as some users will travel from the local area to use the new facility. Parking will need to be considered in this context, as while there is a sizeable car park by the pavilion, there is a chance of users having to find alternative places to park if, for instance, there is football/cricket on. To avoid this, any events planned that might attract a higher concentration of riders will be planned around these fixtures.

Therefore, some users may choose to use the parking in the centre of the town, or may look to park down Love Lane, for example.

An option we believe worth pursuing in this context, is to see whether parking in the nearest corner of the new housing development (on the field adjacent to the cricket pitch) could be incorporated into the design of the new housing estate.

Cost

As mentioned previously, our intention is to go for a turn-key solution. Once an order has been placed, the risk of cost creep will sit with the supplier and not the project.

There will need to be some surveys carried out prior to going to tender in order to enable bidding companies to feel comfortable entering into such an agreement. These will need to be funded separately and in advance of the tender process:

Underground services / conditions

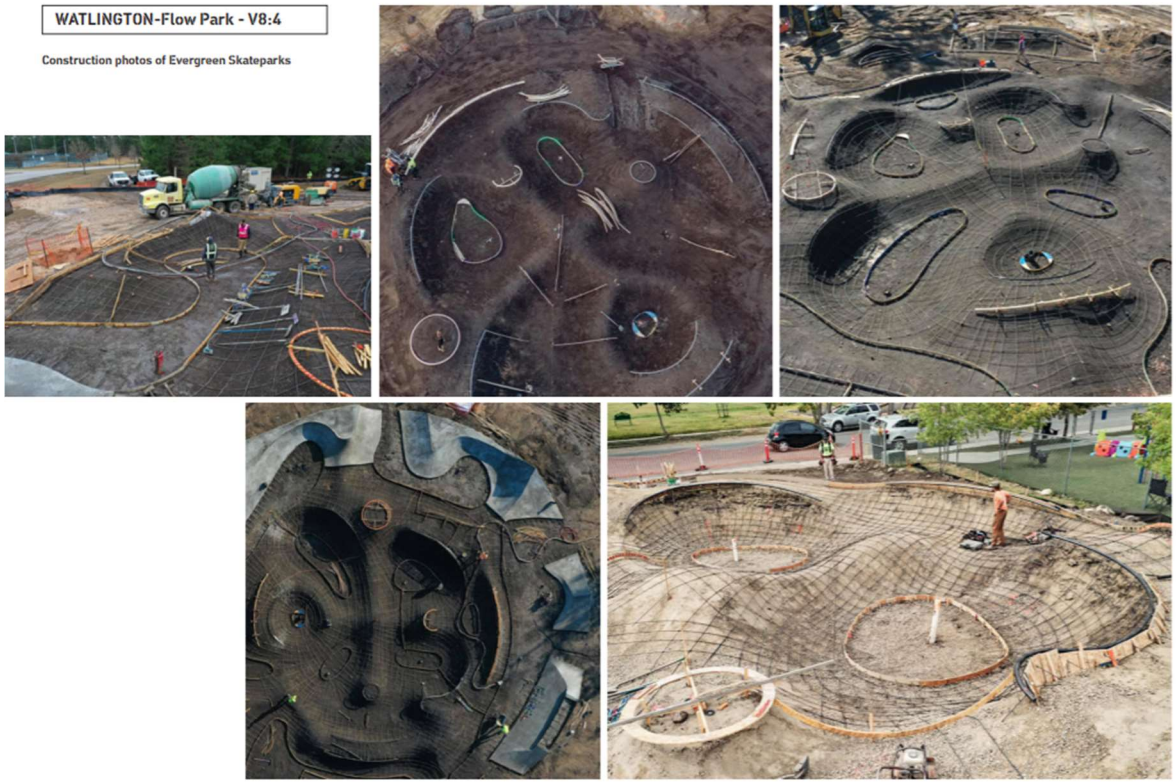
The assumption is there are no underground services in the area being proposed for the new development. However, to mitigate this risk (to project costs) we can consult with service providers to see if they are aware of any services in the area, or if there is no information to hand a ground survey could be carried out for relatively low cost.

Topographical survey

This will be required to ascertain the gradient of the land, and the different levels of the area as it stands to accurately calculate groundwork needs, and to be able to design effective drainage for the site, to be able to fix the costs.
The land drops from one end to the other, so for the new design to work it's important to understand out how much levelling out is required, for example, to enable the various sections to work correctly and not fight the topography.

INITIAL DESIGN SCHEME


WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:3
ALL MEASUREMENTS ARE APPROXIMATE AND IN METRES/FEET
WATLINGTON FLOW SKATEPARK
22M/72.1'
37M/121.4'
45.5M/149.2'
26M/19.6'
5M/16.4'
39.5M/129.6'
4M/13.1'


WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:4
Construction photos of Evergreen Skateparks

WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:5

WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:6

WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:7 LEARNERS' SECTION BASED ON OXHEY, WITH A PUMP TRACK AROUND THE OUTSIDE

WATLINGTON-Flow Park - V8:8 LEARNERS' SECTION BASED ON THIS

INITIAL COST ESTIMATE AND SUPPORTING COMMENTS FROM MAVERICK INDUSTRIES.

Hi Martin, Ian,

It was great to meet up with you this week. Thanks for the update on the project and showing me your plans for the space. I think you have a great opportunity to create an incredible wheeled sports facility for Watlington and I feel confident that Maverick can help you achieve this.

As promised, below are my initial thoughts on the site, following our meeting,

The Proposed Location - Watlington Recreation Ground
The conceptual idea is that Watlington Skatepark (Phase 2) will wrap around the existing bowl, providing a progressive, Flow Park and street facility. The current bowl will ideally be connected to the new space but be left as is, apart from some repairwork. The old bowl is a super popular hangout for the local carvers and Phase 2 will turn Watlington into a skatepark of national significance.

There are a number of factors to consider with this site. I have detailed these below,

Services
As I understand it, there are no known services in the ground at the proposed location. To be sure, this can be checked with utilities companies, moving forward. It is important to understand the position and type of any services as these can affect the planning permission process and the design of the facility. I did notice that there is a septic tank to the North of the site, this may to be factored into the design of a new facility.

Access and Parking

Access/parking are almost ideal for both construction traffic and pedestrians post-build. There is approximately 35m of trackway needed from the access gate in the carpark to the proposed site, this is across grass.

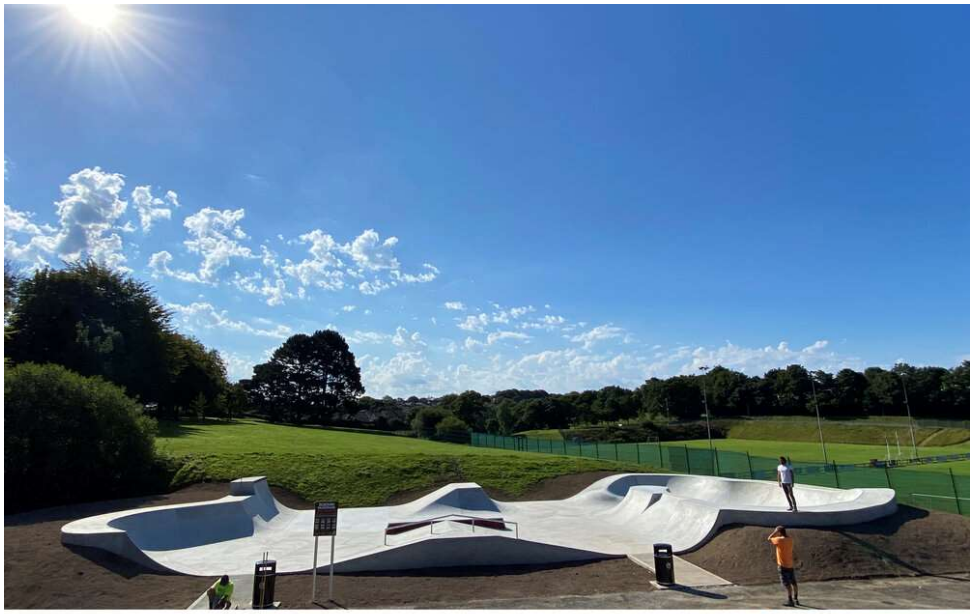
Surveys & Drainage

At an appropriate point, I would recommend undertaking a topographical survey to ascertain the gradient of the land, this is essential because it provides a scale plan of the proposed area along with levels information. This is so a future design can be tied into the landscape and drained effectively. We work with a trusted surveyor and can provides details further down the line. As discussed, the landscape appears to drop (approx) 1.5m across it's length. It is important that a new concept works within this level change to ensure that design and build of the new facility is cost effective and not fighting against the site conditions.

Security

As discussed, I would recommend looking into improving the existing lighting and CCTV. I would not recommend having fencing around the facility because I believe it would function better as a free-to-use public space.

In my opinion, a new spray concrete facility could work well in the existing site. The proposed location is surrounded by greenspace, so the facility can be tied into the landscape with grass bunding, removing the need for handrails. Handrails are a maintenance issue and can become bent out of shape and rusty over time. As you can see from the photo, modern style concrete facilities do not require boxing in, due to the style of construction.



Noise
As discussed, a new facility would need to be at least 30m from the boundary of residential properties in order to comply with the 'Fields In Trust' guidelines. The proposed Phase 2 facility will be approximately 45m from local residents and is located with a recreation ground that has a well-established skatepark. A new concrete skatepark will serve to minimise noise levels generated at the park due to the density of the material. The existing skatepark sets a great precedent! If there are any ongoing concerns regarding noise levels, it might make sense to conduct a noise survey on the site, if deemed necessary.

Permissions - *Do we need permission to build in the proposed location and is this achievable?*
As I understand it, the proposed space is owned by Watlington Town Council?
As discussed, there is a reasonable chance that you may only need Permitted Development for a new facility, this is because there is already a skatepark in existence.
Permitted Development is a much more straightforward process than Full Planning Permission and commonly takes a couple of weeks.
To get Permitted Development rights, the new facility will need to be under 200 cube in volume and under 4 metres in height. This can be checked with the Town Council and the Planning Department.

Conflict of Activities - *Is the Wheeled Sports Area near to any other recreational facilities, such as football pitches or play areas etc?*
The existing play facility is surrounded by perimeter fencing and the proposed does not conflict with other activities going on in the area.
The basketball area is planned to be relocated, as I understand it.

Safety - *Is the proposed site a safe community space for local riders?*
The proposed Phase 2 development is in well used/safe recreation area with clear sight lines. A spray concrete skatepark would help to further reduce any anti-social behaviour because it will attract older riders (due to the style of construction). Spray concrete facilities tend to become community spaces for all age groups, riding disciplines and levels of ability. Working with the local community to design a purpose-built spray concrete skatepark will enable riders to have involvement in the process and take ownership of the project. Spray concrete skateparks will encourage a wide age group of riders into the space and the older users in particular will self-police the site and ensure the facility is looked after. This is not the same for more conventional ramp parks.

Below is a link to the Dorchester video created by the BBC. It shows how good quality skateparks can help to reduce anti-social behaviour.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZlkjWEtaU8

Ground Conditions/Drainage - *Does the site allow for suitable drainage and does the geotechnical makeup of the ground present any other issues?*
Geotech surveys can inform this question. It is generally safer to build up where possible to help to avoid any issues associated with adverse ground conditions.
As discussed, it may be sensible to disconnect the old drainage pipe and create a brand new drainage system for the entire space.

Floodrisk - *Does the proposed development sit on floodplain?*
The existing site is not located within a floodplain.

User and Community Support - *Does the community support this site?*
As I understand it, local riders and the Community/Council are very supportive of this site.

Existing Facilities/Infrastructure - *Does the proposed site have access to facilities such as shop/toilets or parking?*
The site is close to the centre of town with ample parking.

Next Steps:
As discussed, I think that this project is best suited to a company that is fully prepared to support the process moving forward and be a partner to the Community Group and Council. This situation can be resolved by an upfront tender process to choose a preferred contractor. A chosen partner should be prepared to help the Community

Group/Council draw up a site specific informed design, negotiate the planning process, work with all stakeholders to ensure a proper consultation process happens and help to identify funding opportunities/provide advice and support with applications.

Having a committed partner will mean the project can run more smoothly, efficiently and effectively; this can be achieved with us using our knowledge and experience to inform the process moving forward. Maverick gets involved on this basis to help Community Groups/Councils get from start to finish, whilst avoiding the numerous and common pitfalls, which can so easily stall the skate park projects.

Concrete skateparks are designed to last a lifetime and as such, decisions on choosing a preferred contractor should focus on the quality of construction. We are very proud of the facilities we have constructed and I would be more than happy to show you round one of our parks, if you would like.

Regarding a future tender/quotation, I think it is sensible to ask companies to provide a design idea for the space to illustrate how they might deal with the site conditions, drainage and access etc. As promised, I have attached a couple of examples of tenders so that you can create your own document.

I have included the Alton Town Council Tender as a more detailed example and the Midhurst one as a much more simple document. Both tenders are successful examples and are perfect for the Council and future funders.

I think you should aim high with an aspirational budget in mind, this could be up to **£500K + VAT.** There are a significant number of unknowns at this stage in the project and I feel this would be a sensible figure to work with moving forward. This can be revised up or down accordingly, depending on how successful you are with regards to funding and importantly as we understand more about the site and any enabling works that are needed. I am also very happy to come back over or chat online, should the Council wish to invite me to a meeting to discuss this in more detail. None of this is straightforward, so I am happy to help where I can. As discussed, I am also happy to attend a Zoom/Teams meeting, if that helps galvanise the project.

Hope that helps for now.
Speak soon
Kind Regards

Russ
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Russ Holbert | Director

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