

JOHN RABSON REC SKATEPARK

DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT



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1. Introduction

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1.1 Opening Summary

This design and access statement is provided in support of an application for full planning permission, for the proposed new concrete skatepark in John Rabson Recreation Ground, Reading.

The information following within this document explains how the proposed design will significantly enhance the offering of recreation and leisure facilities within the Borough of Reading.

Furthermore, the rationale behind the proposed design will be explained and evidenced, through the pre-planning process undertaken with Reading Borough Council and the local community.

1.2 Opening Statement

The proposed skatepark for John Rabson Recreation Ground will provide the community with a contemporary and progressive venue in which practice all levels and disciplines of wheeled sports.

The design of the facility has been considered both from the viewpoint of skatepark users and the spectators or pedestrians who will be using the adjacent spaces within John Rabson Recreation Ground.

The layout of the facility maximises the usable areas in a functional and creative way.

The skatepark will be constructed of in-situ reinforced concrete, allowing for organic and natural shapes to be created. All areas within the skatepark link seamlessly into one another, maximising flow, and functionality.

Positive and open sightlines have been prioritised within the layout of the facility, providing a safe and inclusive place for users to recreate.



3D Visualisations of the proposed facility.

2. Assessment

2.1 Contextual Setting

Located in the South of the borough, John Rabson Recreation Ground is an area of diverse leisure and sporting facilities, for Reading and the surrounding areas.

The main open recreation space, including full size football pitches, is situated directly behind South Reading Leisure Centre. Also close by are smaller 5-A-Side football pitches, tennis courts and a children's play area, amongst other facilities.

The elected site for the proposed skatepark is currently laid to grass and sloping in a west-east orientation.

John Rabson Recreation Ground is some 8.4 hectares in area (seen illustrated in the image opposite), bordered to the north and south by residential housing, to the west by Northumberland Avenue and the east by Cowsey Wood nature reserve.



Aerial map view showing the ownership boundary line of John Rabson Recreation Ground, Reading.

2.3 The Existing Site

The elected site for the proposed skatepark is currently laid to grass and sloping in a west-east orientation, towards the children's play area. A steeper embankment is found adjacent to the boundary fencing to the all-weather 3G football pitch.

The red line boundary shown opposite represents the proposed development construction site boundary; and area of 1790m².

Within this space the proposed skatepark occupies an area of 418m², not including the proposed tarmac link path or any soft landscaping.



Aerial map view showing the red line boundary of the development site | 1790m².

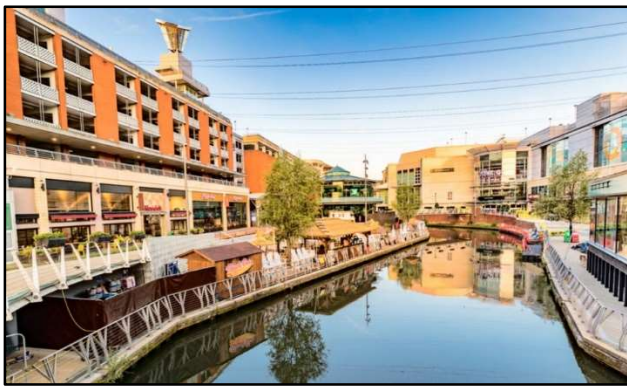
2.4 Architectural Heritage

The town of Reading is situated with the Borough of Reading; a diverse urban area located approximately 40 miles to the West of Central London.

The main urban area of the town lies on the south bank of the river Thames. The streetscape of the town centre is a mixture of multistorey commercial buildings and low-rise red brick facades; of which a good number indicate the rich history of the original market town, dating back as far as the 8th century.

To the East of the town centre is the confluence of the River Kennet and the River Thames. In this area, on the South bank of the river Kennet, larger residential terraces of Victorian era properties are found.

Moving in a southerly direction the University of Reading campus is found, eventually linking the area of John Rabson Recreation Ground to the wider urban areas of the borough.



Reading town centre, alongside the river Kennet.

2.5 Social Impact

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Well documented evidence from Police forces across the UK attests to wheeled sports facilities being a positive contributing factor for developing social inclusion and reducing crime numbers, especially among youths.

Individuals and groups of people from all ages and backgrounds, who are often less engaged in more conventional or popular sports and activities, gravitate toward free to use spaces such as skateparks, to develop physical skills and social interaction.

The provision of such a facility is aligned with the Government's wider strategy of providing younger people with creative and contemporary outdoor facilities that will promote a more active, healthy, and physical lifestyle.

This is evidenced in **Sport England: Towards an Active Nation Strategy 2016 - 2021** as well as the **Reading Borough Local Plan 2019**.

It is this latter document (see page 227) which highlights that within 'Green Infrastructure' the area of John Rabson Recreation Ground and the Cowsey will aim to "Extend the range of sports facilities and support more intensified use; landscaping and additional facilities as resources become available."

2.6 Economic Benefits

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The provision of a high-quality wheeled sports facility will be beneficial to many local businesses within the borough.

It is known from experience that skateparks will attract 'Skate Tourists', from surrounding and wider areas, often from across the region and occasionally, if the design and scale of the skatepark are of outstanding merit, from much further afield.

It is commonly found that families travelling from other areas to access skateparks will arrive in a location, having dropped off the skatepark user, and go on to spend a significant lengths of time sightseeing, shopping, and dining in the vicinity. The larger the facility the more positive the correlation between the length and frequency of visits by users is, boosting the local economy.

Given the consistent increase in the popularity and accessibility of wheeled sports in recent years, there is now a positive correlation between skatepark provision and investment in the tourism economy.

We have witnessed this first hand over the past decade, with flagship projects such as 'Concrete Waves' in Newquay, Cornwall, 'Llwynderw Skatepark' in the Mumbles, Swansea and 'F51' in Folkstone, Kent, all now playing vital roles in supporting their local economy.

We have found that even in regions where fantastic tourism is on offer, the local economic benefits of providing free-to-use wheeled sports facilities have seen huge investment levels, as demand from residents and tourists alike has increased.

Benefits to the local economy will begin upon commencement of construction the skatepark.

Materials are sourced as locally to each construction site as possible, as is overnight accommodation for site operatives, who themselves use local restaurants, shops, and leisure facilities throughout the build process.



Image of Concrete Waves in Newquay, Cornwall.

Photo by Maverick Ind.

2.7 Relevant Planning History & Policy

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Reviewing the above document, the following elements were deemed especially pertinent to support this application.

2. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

2.2.2 The objectives for the Local Plan are as follows:

3. Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough, creating inclusive, sustainable communities with good access to employment, open space and waterspace, transport, education, services and facilities (such as sustainable water supplies and wastewater treatment, healthcare services, social and community facilities, sport and recreation, etc.) to meet identified needs;

8. Offer outstanding cultural opportunities, which are based on multiculturalism, local heritage and high quality, modern arts, leisure and visitor facilities;

9. Ensure that Reading is a healthy, clean, safe and socially-inclusive community where the needs of all its citizens are met by high quality, cost effective services and outstanding levels of community involvement.

4. GENERAL POLICIES—CROSS-CUTTING POLICIES

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CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE

Other measures, as follows, should also be considered where a specific need is identified and justified:

Community facilities;

Leisure and cultural infrastructure;

4.2.28 Access to high quality open spaces, sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Open space policies contribute towards many of the goals of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2020) by supporting residents to make healthy lifestyle choices and reducing social isolation through public open space. Additionally, these policies contribute to the delivery of many other Council objectives in terms of supporting an urban renaissance, defining the character of a town and place, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well-being, climate change adaptation, and the promotion of sustainable development.

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.6.2 Strategy for South Reading

6.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:

b. Development will contribute to revitalising and regenerating the wider South Reading area, by integrating, in a physical sense and in terms of community infrastructure provision, with established residential areas, and by providing new employment opportunities to meet the needs of the local population;

The table opposite, taken from page 227 of Reading Borough Local Plan, outlines desired improvements to South Reading and John Rabson Recreation Ground in particular.

Borough-Wide	Biodiversity Plan	To protect, enhance and increase biodiversity in parks, open spaces, allotments, cemeteries, woodland, watercourses, riparian corridors and wetland areas	Reading's Biodiversity Plan identifies a number of actions including: enhancing and increasing habitats for plants and wildlife; creating links between existing habitats; increasing plant diversity across grassland open spaces; improvement and additional planting of hedgerows; improving diversity of tree species in woodlands; improving and enhancing the Borough's watercourses and riparian corridors.	£375,000	2017 - 2027	RBC
	Allotment Creation & Enhancement	Ongoing development pressure on existing private allotments. Very long waiting lists for allotments, which will be exacerbated by additional growth	To improve allotment provision within the Borough (especially in the North and West)	Dependent on funds becoming available or on a development opportunity making land available	Ongoing requirement	RBC
South	John Rabson Recreation Ground and the Cowsey	Public open space improvements within a deprived area; This is the only park in South Reading which has been identified as being a sufficient size to develop as a Neighbourhood Park with varied facilities and providing a range of experiences. Grass pitches suffer from waterlogging reducing availability and effectiveness.	Extend range of sports facilities and support more intensified use; landscaping and additional facilities as resources become available	£500,000 Further phases dependent on receipt of additional grant funding or S.106 contributions	2017 onwards	RBC

920064 - South Reading Leisure Centre Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 8DF.

Erection of two non-illuminated boards at entrance and one on leisure centre.

The above planning application relates the adjacent leisure centre and dates back to a permission in April of 1992.

980328 - South Reading Leisure Centre Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 8DF.

Alterations to existing reception area, including construction of porch enclosure to main entrance, including new sliding doors.

The above planning application relates the adjacent leisure centre and dates back to a permission in March of 1998.

991021 - South Reading Leisure Centre Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 8DF.

Development of an all-weather sports centre comprising a pavilion, 12 all-weather floodlit synthetic grass playing courts, an all-weather training pitch, carparking and a new car park entrance.

The above planning application relates the adjacent leisure centre and dates back to a permission in January of 2003.

021291 - South Reading Leisure Centre Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 8DF.

Improvement of levels and drainage of sports ground (excluding playground)

The above planning application relates the adjacent leisure centre and dates back to a permission in September of 2002.

030546 - South Reading Leisure Centre Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 8DF.

Improvements of levels and drainage of part of sports ground. Installation of 4-metre high chain link fence on northern boundary.

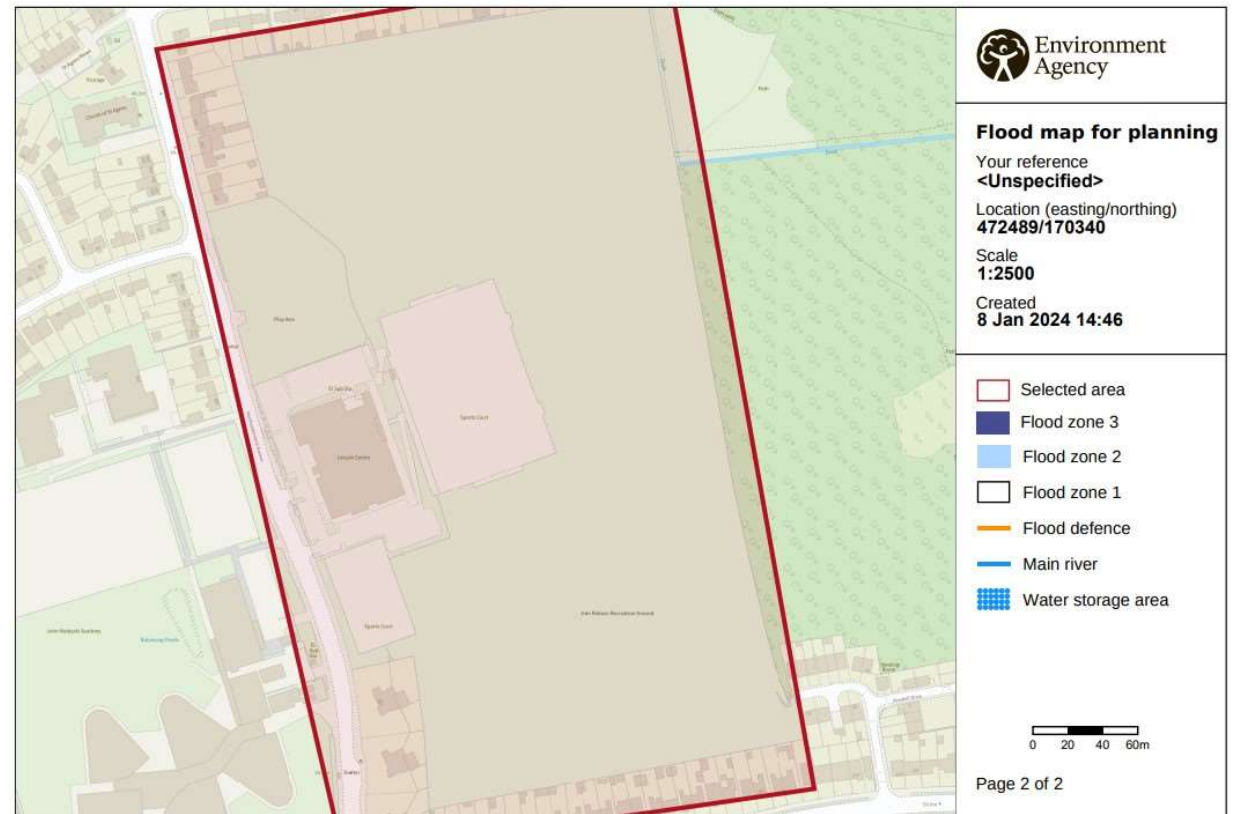
The above planning application relates the adjacent leisure centre and dates back to a permission in May of 2003.

2.8 Flood Risk Assessment

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Location (easting/northing) 472489/170340

Your selected location is in **flood zone 1**, an area with a low probability of flooding.



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Map taken from GOV.uk.

3. Involvement

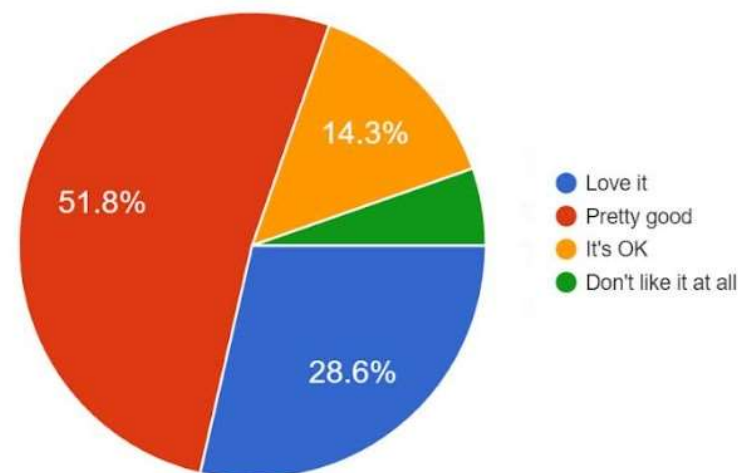
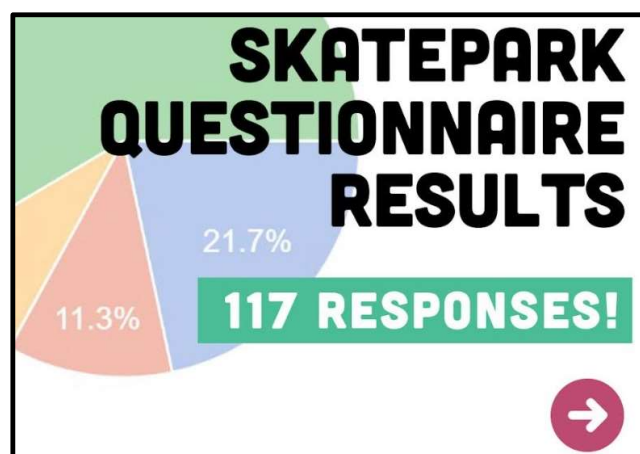
3.1 Project History

Reading Borough Council published a tender for the new facility in John Rabson Recreation Ground in May 2023. Upon Maverick's successful appointment to design and build the new wheeled sports facility, the tender winning design was presented to the user group via social media and local engagement with the council.

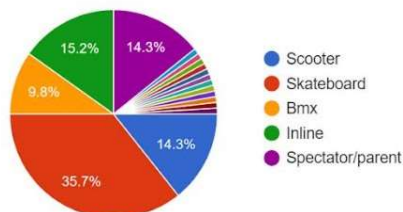
The results, shown in the infographics below and opposite concluded that most users questioned were happy with the design.

A comprehensive and detailed pre-planning design process has been undertaken, ensuring that the proposed design is suitable for both the user group and the elected site in John Rabson Recreation Ground.

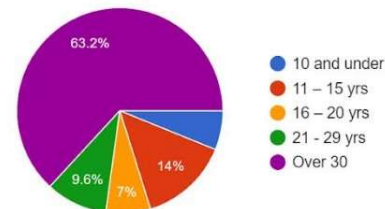
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE PROPOSED DESIGN?



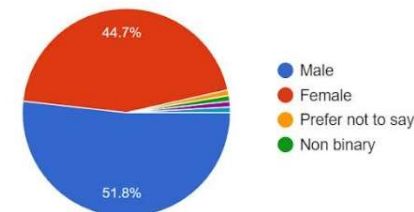
WHAT DO YOU RIDE:



WHAT IS YOUR AGE:



GENDER:



3.1 Project History Continued

This planning application proceeds a previous submission (PP-12765450) for planning consent, for the same skatepark design, in an alternative location within John Rabson Recreation Ground. The location of the previous submission was found to be too close, from an acoustic impact perspective, to the adjacent dwellings to the South of the leisure centre, and for that reason was withdrawn on the 9th of May 2024 prior to a decision being made.

Upon electing the new location for the facility a topographical survey was undertaken, establishing the levels and falls of the new site and confirming the previous (preferred) design for suitability. The new site is principally identical to the previous location; an existing open grass area of recreation with gentle slopes, however proximity to the closest dwelling is significantly increased from 30m to around 80m.

Pre-planning advice has been sought in reference to this application:

A meeting was held on 13.11.2024 at the proposed location, between Bridget Hickey (Project Officer, RBC), Steve Vigar (PA Teams Leader, RBC), Rebecca Moon (Environmental Health Officer, RBC) and Maverick Industries, the primary focus of which was to further the understanding around the use and performance of a facility of this nature.

Reading Borough Council's previous experience of skatepark facilities predominantly comprises projects constructed of hollow metal ramps. In one such instance a facility was removed after installation due to acoustic issues attributed to the choice of material and the location of the facility. It is crucial that this proposal is not viewed through the same lens as the aforementioned, as the difference in material performance is significant, both acoustically and from a durability standpoint.

With reference to the Noise Assessment for Planning, conducted 8th August 2024 by 'Inacoustic'; we find in the conclusion that there is a potential for a level of acoustic impact arising from the proposed facility. It is however stated that the proposal is within an existing area of recreational context and therefore may require more nuanced consideration and interpretation of national planning policy for a decision to be made.

Mitigation techniques often implemented in situations such as this are acoustic barriers or fencing. However, given the history of anti-social behaviour within John Rabson Recreation Ground and the increased requirement therefore of user safety through positive visual sight-lines, these options have been discounted initially as a nett benefit to the community. The marginal acoustic benefits provided to a very small number of local residents could be overshadowed by the potential for greater antisocial behaviour issues on the site, leading to a decreased desire for user participation for a range of ages, genders and associations at the skatepark.

Also discussed was the inclusion of an acoustic bund feature adjacent the facility, however significant infringement on playing fields space to the North would be likely. Should it be required, the provision of further natural (evergreen) screening adjacent to property boundaries impacted would be a simple solution to implement.

4. Evaluation

4.1 Design Considerations

Through a detailed pre-planning process, Maverick have designed a bespoke facility, maximised for the potential of the elected site whilst providing a much-needed, contemporary wheeled sports venue.

Topographical levels have been taken into consideration within the layout of the skatepark and the site in which it is located.

Integration with the adjacent spaces has been allowed for by way of suitable access points. Seating and amenities for recycling and litter have been included, alongside calming measures to ensure safe access into and out of the facility.

5. Maintenance

5.1 Performance

Riders are increasingly pushing their councils to provide new or replacement skatepark facilities in concrete, following global trends and the progression of both the construction industry and the standard of wheeled sports.

The maintenance of a properly detailed and finished concrete wheeled sports facility is minimal, and the lifespan extremely long, when compared to alternatives such as steel or timber.

Maverick have been designing and building concrete skateparks across Great Britain since 2007, continually refining the process and skills of construction personnel.

The finished concrete riding surface of a Maverick facility will be robust enough to endure decades of intended use, even under the diverse weathering actions of the British climate.

The skatepark for John Rabson Recreation Ground will be handed over to Reading Borough Council with a finished coat of water-based sealant applied to the concrete.

5.2 Graffiti

A zero-tolerance stance on Graffiti should be taken at John Rabson skatepark, to promote a visually appealing and high-performance facility. Graffiti can make the riding surface slippery and detracts from the aesthetically clean and beautiful, natural surface finish of concrete. Information regarding this will be provided on the site safety/entrance signage.

Graffiti can be easily removed from the skatepark surface with proprietary products readily available at stores such as 'Tool Station'. This should be carried out as quickly as possible after any such vandalism is evident.

The previously detailed application of sealer to the facility will further enable the removal of any graffiti if it occurs at all.

6.1 Area

This application seeks consent for a new concrete wheeled sports facility in the Borough of Reading, within John Rabson Recreation Ground, with a skateable area not including landscaping, of 418m².

6.2 Wheeled Sports

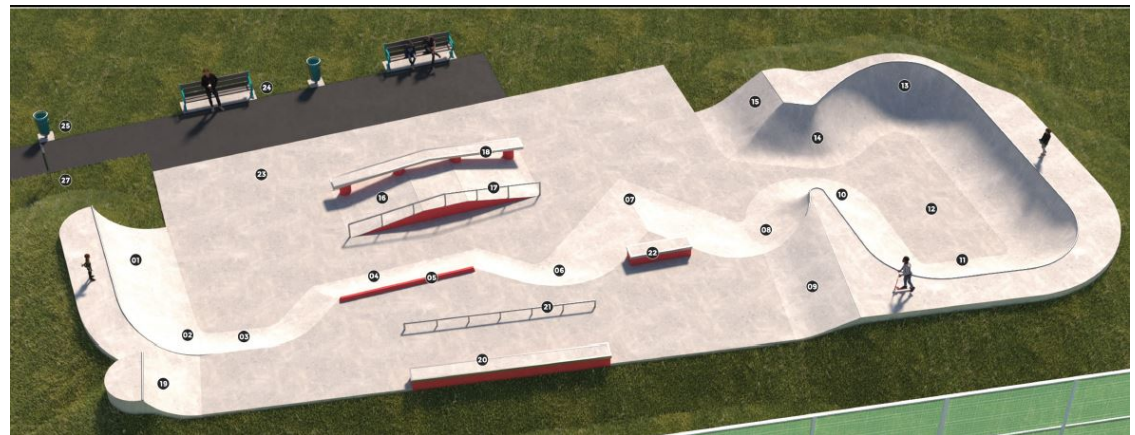
The skatepark is generally considered low-level, with the tallest feature in the design not exceeding +1.50m in height from the lowest areas of the skatepark floor.

The design caters for many disciplines and styles of wheeled sports, from street skating to transition and bowl riding.

Concrete is widely accepted by riders as the highest performing surface for wheeled sports, suitable as a robust finish to endure the British climate and providing a low acoustic response when compared to alternative materials.

The design of this facility is unique to Reading and will become synonymous with the Borough and the cultural identity of the local users of the skatepark.

3D Visualisation of the proposed facility | Maverick Skateparks.



7.1 General Access

Access to the proposed skatepark is good for pedestrians and users travelling by car. It is envisaged that users will predominately travel from across the borough, by bike or foot, to access the facility. If users are travelling by car safe set down and parking can be found adjacent the site in the leisure centre car park.

7.2 Pedestrian Access

Access from all areas of the borough along Northumberland Avenue, where wide pavements and reduced speed limits exist, by foot, cycle, or skate. John Rabson Recreation Ground is accessed at multiple points around it's perimeter, however best access for the facility is adjacent South Reading Leisure Centre.

7.3 Road Access

Users travelling by road, either bus or car, will access via Northumberland Avenue. The site is located close to local bus routes (5, 9 & 9a). The nearest bus stop to the site entrance is 'Hartland Road' along Northumberland Avenue (Stop ID: rdgatlwj) from which the skatepark is approximately 100 yards on foot. This is a vital transport link to enable access to users from further afield, who may not be able to access the skatepark themselves by car. If travelling by car safe set down and parking is found within the car park adjoining South Reading Leisure Centre.

7.4 Rail Access

If visitors are travelling from further afield, rail access can be found at multiple points within the borough.

The closest railway station Reading Green Park, a 2-mile journey, 45-minute walk, away from the skatepark.

7.5 Construction Access

As for general vehicular access to the site, construction access will be via Northumberland Avenue. The construction access route into John Rabson Recreation Ground will utilise the existing maintenance entrance to the Leisure Centre carpark, located just South of the main entrance. Access in this manner will limit disruption to the day-to-day workings of the leisure centre and ensure a higher level of safety to the public.

7.6 Inclusive Design

The access to the facility will be level or set to shallow falls with flush threshold and surface changes, allowing for unimpeded access for physically impaired users.

A new link pathway is provided to the existing maintenance access alongside the 3G football pitch with a ramped entrance point to the carpark allowing for flush access for wheelchair users.

8. Conclusion

As is demonstrated in this supporting document, the proposal will create an exciting, contemporary facility for residents and visitors alike.

The collaborative design approach provides an outcome to cater for numerous disciplines and abilities of wheeled sport user.

It is our belief that the design demonstrates our understanding of both the users of the facility and the context within which it is situated.



Aerial visualisation of the proposed facility in location | Maverick Skateparks.