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19th August 2024

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Via email section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk (copied planning@uttlesford.gov.uk)
Section 62A Applications Team, The Planning Inspectorate, S62A/2024/0051

To whom it may concern:

Please accept the following as Saffron Walden Skate Group's response to application: S62A/2024/0051 Land West of Thaxted Road Saffron Walden, Application for Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Approval, Erection of 168 dwellings with associated landscaping and parking, as considered at its Planning and Transport Committee meeting held on Thursday 8th August 2024.

A copy of this response will also be provided to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) for the consultation, reference: UTT/24/1732/PINS.

The Skate Group formed just after the turn of the century, a group of adults and young people, determined to build a concrete skatepark in the American style for all ages to use for exercise and fun. There wasn't a place for young people, in particular, to gather, exercise for free, and not be moved on.

We worked for some years, raising a large amount of cash and overcoming all sorts of obstacles to get a world-beating skatepark, which has raised the bar for skateparks that followed. We then chased our dream of getting the American skatepark builders over here to actually build the park, people said it couldn't be done, but we managed it through hard work and perseverance. They came, they built within budget and well within the time frame envisaged !

It has been immensely popular and people visit from all over the country, and indeed the world, to ride the park. The young people we started with now bring their children and we have many who have found a career through the skating, BMXing and blading, especially in the film, photographic and creative industries. It is truly a hugely successful community project !

Skating and BMXing have come of age and they are amongst the most popular new sports in the Olympics. You will remember that the skating had to be postponed because of the rain this year and this is one of our worries about the new development and the idea of a sound bund, either fence, earth or hedge and tree cover. The skatepark has three deep bowls, one over-vert, and the whole skatepark surface needs to be dry to be skate-able, it is extremely dangerous to skate a wet surface.

When we built, we made sure that the surface, especially in the winter months, was able to make full use of the sun to dry the park. The adjoining hedge was kept short to take full advantage of the sun's drying rays. Any "bund" between the skatepark and the development, which stops this happening will seriously affect safety and limit the use of the park, especially in the winter months.

Skateparks can be noisy, there is no denying that, the users are an enthusiastic crowd who want to show their appreciation of a good run or trick but it will also act as a great attraction for those who will live adjacent to it. The hours that it is used are reasonable and the lights are on a motion sensor and automatically turn off at the end of the evening.

People move into houses next to pubs, church bells, children's play areas and football grounds, I presume they take into account that will be some noise. If you move into a house or flat near a skatepark, I think the residents will expect some noise but I would ask that the idea of a noise bund blocking out the sun's drying rays is abandoned.

Kind regards,

Jane Gray
Secretary to Saffron Walden Skate Group