



28/01/2026

Submission to the Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan Consultation Indoor Skateboard Facility as Critical Social Infrastructure

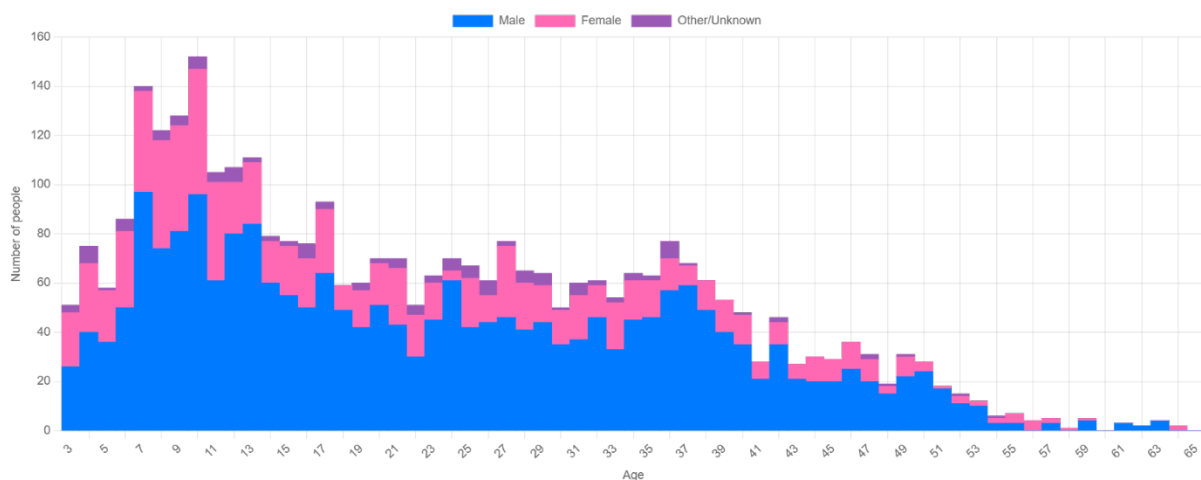
Dear Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Team,

I am responding as a Director of Cam Skate CIC (non-profit), a representative of the Cambridge skateboarding community, and on behalf of local skaters, families, and youth groups who consistently raise the need for a permanent accessible, high-quality indoor skate space in the city.

Cambridge is an active, growing city, which has hugely benefited from the recent addition of The Warehouse indoor skatepark which was first opened in September 2024 on Coldham's Lane, CB1 3EP.

<https://cam-skate.co.uk/about/>

Our community of skatepark users spans children, teenagers, adults, women and girls, neurodivergent people, and beginners who rely on supportive, safe environments to participate safely and confidently year-round. The current lease is a short-term meanwhile (at the time of writing lease period ends July 2026) and only made possible through the constructive and community supporting outlook from Railpen, the site landlord. At Cam Skate we know that land values in Cambridge are high and we are not expecting to be gifted a building, but there is significant growth within the Cambridge and development opportunity must be identified within the city through new site allocations for a permanent indoor skatepark. The last year and half has demonstrated the huge demand for an indoor skatepark in central Cambridge, and a new permanent facility is fundamental to meeting that on-going demand and delivering the mix of social infrastructure that addresses the needs of current and future residents on the city and greater Cambridgeshire area.



The above graph shows the mix of users we have coming to The Warehouse skatepark currently.

Below a simple summary of our impact and the demonstrated demand.

- **Open 7 days a week and 11,331 visits** since October 2024
- **658+ hours** of free skateboard coaching delivered
- **2800+ hours** total skateboard coaching delivered so far!

When Cam Skate's current meanwhile use lease is finished at 3-5 Coldham's Lane, this will result in a major gap in year-round youth provision, physical activity access, and inclusive recreation. Evidence from national government, academic research, and community development studies strongly supports the role of skateboarding spaces as vital social infrastructure, enhancing wellbeing, social cohesion, safety, and community belonging.

Key policies in the draft Local Plan

Policy S/PRIA/CRP Cambridge Retail Park

No mention of community, sports, leisure, culture or creative hubs within the policy which we see as integral to supporting the vitality of this area given its city centre location.

Policy S/AMC/BC: Beehive Centre

No mention of community, sports, leisure, culture or creative hubs within the policy which we see as integral to supporting the vitality of this area given its city centre location.

Policy J/EP: Supporting a range of facilities in employment parks

Facilities in centrally located employment hubs like the Cambridge Retail Park and the Beehive Centre should meet the needs of the wider community through offering a diverse mix of community, sports, leisure, culture or creative hubs facilities.

Policy WS/CH: Cultural and creative hubs

An indoor skatepark offers a completely new piece of cultural infrastructure within Cambridge and through creative programming it provides a dynamic and varied offer within the city. From skate lessons to roller disco, to pop-up sauna and wellbeing events, an indoor skatepark can add enormous value to the mix of leisure and cultural facilities within the city.

Policy WS/CF: Community, sports, and leisure facilities

The Protection of Existing Facilities is particularly relevant to our current site and a new location within central Cambridge must be identified to avoid losing an invaluable community sports facility and social resource for young people. Due consideration should be given for the re-provision of an indoor skatepark facility within the Cambridge Urban Area.

Supporting evidence and documents in the Draft Local Plan

CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL AND SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY STRATEGY 2015-2031 JUNE 2016

In this document there is no reference to skateboarding or a skatepark. 'Informal spaces' is not sufficient as a reference and does not accurately capture the proven demand for an

indoor skatepark facility. In line with the document’s recommendations, when the strategy is next reviewed (this is due for a review now), an indoor skatepark should be included as a distinct facility type within the strategy.

‘ ISFS15 This Strategy and analysis is reviewed and updated every 5 years to ensure the needs analysis remains robust and relevant and properly informs decisions about sports facility provision beyond 2031.’

Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Topic Paper

We welcome the reference to skateboarding in the Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Topic Paper, but the table sets out a response that references open space policy which lacks a clear reference in regards to indoor skateboarding. Open space policy is not relevant to indoor skatepark provision and should instead be addressed through the Indoor Sports Facility Strategy.

A ‘restricted access skatepark’ would be offering an invaluable social resource for young people in the Cambridgeshire area.

Skateboarding	Provide indoor and outdoor skateboarding facilities.	Noted. The open space policy will require open space and recreation provision to be provided by new residential development including space for young people.
Skateboarding	Support a restricted access improved stake park facilities.	Noted. The proposal for a restricted access skatepark would in effect create a private facility and would not be eligible for developer contributions unless public access could be secured. The policy approach proposed in the Wellbeing and social inclusion theme explains how new sports facilities are considered as part of the planning process. The open space policy will require open space and recreation provision to be provided by new residential development including space for young people.

Table above taken from the Wellbeing and Social Inclusion Topic Paper.

Below outlines why a permanent site for an indoor skatepark should be recognised as a critical component of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan’s social and community infrastructure strategy.

1. Evidence: Skateparks Deliver Proven Social, Health & Community Benefits

National and academic research demonstrates that skateboarding facilities improve wellbeing, reduce antisocial behaviour, and build stronger communities.

- Written evidence submitted to the UK Parliament reports that skateboarding offers meaningful wellbeing and mental health benefits, supports active lifestyles, and plays a key role in inclusive place-building. Councils are advised to value skateboarding communities for their contribution to urban recovery and youth inclusion. [\[committees...liament.uk\]](#)
- Research by Iain Borden shows that skateparks produce clear social, cultural, health, and economic benefits, including significant reductions in antisocial behaviour—such as a reported 45% decrease following the opening of a centrally located skatepark in Dorchester. [\[discovery.ucl.ac.uk\]](#)
- A recent academic study on girls and non-binary young people found that skateparks act as “communities of care”, supporting mental-health recovery, social bonding, and resilience through embodied movement and inclusive environments. [\[tandfonline.com\]](#)
- Research from the Highlands shows skateparks contribute positively to identity formation, wellbeing, resilience, and community connection, highlighting their importance for youth and community health.

These findings show that skateboarding is not simply a recreational hobby—it is a reliable and evidence-backed tool for youth development, public health, and community cohesion.

2. Why Cambridge Needs a permanent Indoor Facility Specifically

While Cambridge has an indoor facility at present, the lease is short term and will end soon. Without long term security, the ability of the city to deliver excellent year-round benefit to young people is significantly compromised.

Community members consistently report:

- Outdoor parks become unusable in rain, cold, or damp conditions, greatly restricting participation for most of the year.
- Young people disperse into less safe or unsuitable public spaces when outdoor parks are closed or wet.
- Girls, beginners, and neurodivergent skaters need quieter, supportive, weather-proof environments to build confidence.
- A permanent indoor venue is essential to host coaching, events, youth sessions, or community programmes essential for inclusive development.

These concerns closely mirror national evidence showing that skateparks can offset negative stereotypes, foster pro-social behaviour, and create safe, empowering public spaces when they are well designed and well located.

A permanent year-round indoor facility in Cambridge would create continuity, safety, and inclusive access that outdoor spaces alone cannot deliver.

3. Local Need and Community Perspective

As someone embedded in the Cambridge skate community, I have seen firsthand:

- Young people turning up at outdoor parks only to find them unusable for days after rain.
- Parents and beginners seeking welcoming, structured spaces that will cease to exist at the end of Cam Skates meanwhile use lease period.
- Adults returning to skating for physical and mental health benefits—gaining immensely from the community that the current skatepark offers.
- A growing number of girls and non-binary skaters—echoing national trends—who need safe, supportive environments to progress.

Our community includes skaters of all ages, coaches, and volunteers ready to support structured programmes, but without a permanent indoor space, these cannot be delivered consistently.

A permanent indoor venue would become a positive, stable anchor for community engagement, helping young people build identity, resilience, and supportive peer networks. This reflects findings from both national research and local case studies across the UK.

4. Alignment with Greater Cambridge Local Plan Priorities

An indoor skatepark would advance key Local Plan objectives by:

- **Improving health and wellbeing**
Skateboarding provides accessible physical activity for diverse groups, including those underserved by traditional team sports.
- **Supporting inclusive and resilient communities**
Evidence shows skateparks foster belonging, reduce antisocial behaviour, and encourage cross-age and cross-cultural interaction.
- **Providing essential youth and social infrastructure**
Cambridge lacks affordable, accessible indoor recreation for young people—an indoor skatepark would fill a clear infrastructure gap.
- **Enhancing social value and urban vibrancy**
Skate spaces contribute to inclusive place-building, urban regeneration, and community engagement.

5. Recommendations

I strongly encourage the Greater Cambridge Local Plan to:

1. Recognise a permanent dedicated indoor skateboarding facility as a critical element of social and community infrastructure within Cambridge and highlight the value The Warehouse indoor skatepark has brought to Cambridgeshire.

2. Allocate or support land allocation for an indoor skatepark within Cambridge city, ensuring active travel accessibility.
3. Collaborate with community organisations, Skateboard GB, and youth groups to co-design a space that is inclusive, sustainable, and future-proof.
4. Integrate this project into wider strategies for youth provision, health, and community wellbeing.

Conclusion

An indoor skatepark is not a niche request—it is a proven successful concept with significant local demand, it is well-evidenced benefit to the city, community-backed, and strategically aligned investment in Cambridge's future. Backed by national research, academic studies, and lived community experience, such a facility would provide long-term social value, year-round active recreation, and a safe, inclusive environment for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Thank you for considering this submission. Cam Skate would warmly welcome continued involvement in any future consultation or co-design processes.

Yours faithfully,

Joe Lewis

Director

Cam Skate

