

City Development Department  
Planning and Strategy

FAO David Shepherd

4<sup>th</sup> March 2005

**1. Application 04/02910/CEC (Recreational wheeled sports facility)**

**2. Application 04/03741/CEC (Demolition of pavilion and proposed new concrete-surfaced wheeled sports facility)**

This Department has reviewed the above 2 applications following request from the Development Quality Sub-Committee of 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005, the principal issues to be addressed being noise and littering. We have attempted to obtain as much information, including from other Local Authorities, to assist in our assessment and to provide committee with objective advice on these applications.

**1.0 Noise**

In general terms, noise associated with skatepark-type facilities can be divided into two main categories; that arising from the direct contact of wheeled equipment eg skateboards, rollerblades with the traction surfaces (direct noise) and that arising from users voices and personal equipment eg portable entertainment equipment (associated noise). In addition, noise from PA systems may also be an issue from time to time, for example during organised events such as displays and competitions.

**1.1 Direct Noise**

The Inverleith Park proposals utilise hard surface materials, such as cast concrete, paving-slabs, engineering brick and tiles. These have the advantage of being low-resonance, which reduce the amount of noise generated through equipment contact, compared with materials such as steel, wood and fibreglass, which have been utilised in skateparks elsewhere.

However, significant noise can be produced when wheeled-activity equipment, especially skateboards, are used for jumps etc and bang down when re-contacting hard surfaces - with and without their riders. Jumping and other acrobatic 'stunts' are popular features of skateboarding activity. The rumble of wheels over hard surfaces also creates a significant noise, more-so when the contact surfaces are not entirely smooth.

From experience elsewhere (see below), it is anticipated that the associated bangs and crashes in particular would be intrusive to residential occupiers where the separation distance is less than 100m (and still likely up to a distance of 200m where there exists a direct noise propagation pathway

between facility and recipient) and where pre-existing ambient noise levels are relatively low.

### **Pavilion proposal (04/03741/CEC)**

For the 'Pavilion' proposal (04/03741/CEC), the nearest residential property is located at 30 Arboretum Place, approx. 80m from the proposed skatepark. The next nearest residences are on Inverleith Place, at around 150m.

There is little in the way of pre-existing acoustic defences between the proposed skatepark and the nearest residential properties at both Arboretum Place and Inverleith Place. The development description does suggest that earth excavated from the site will be replaced around its perimeter to form a low-level bund, but it is unlikely to have a significant reduction

In terms of the pre-existing background noise levels, it has proved difficult to obtain representative readings at Arboretum Place, due to a 16-week diversion of North-bound traffic from Inverleith Row. Advice taken from Transportation's Network Services suggest that the diversion is creating up to a 10-fold increase in North-Bound traffic volumes along Arboretum Place. Even assuming an increased traffic flow of half that ie 5-fold, the measured ambient noise levels will be of the order of 7dB above the norm for that location. This would give a 'normal' daytime average LAeq for ambient noise of approximately 45 -50 dB, and around 40-45dB in the evening period. It must be stressed that these figures are necessarily **estimates**.

Taking measurements of noise from existing skateparks elsewhere in East of Scotland (eg Perth, Stirling, Livingston) was initially considered, but we believe that weather and seasonal issues would mean unpredictable, and probably limited, activity. Alternatively, we have sought information and advice from Local Authority Environmental Health Departments where noise measurements of skateparks have been taken at Oxford, St. Albans, Chippenham and Devizes.

Although it is impossible to be categoric, assessment of the information received suggests that the likely impact of skatepark noise will be sufficiently above the estimated 'normal' background level at Arboretum Place / Inverleith Place to be intrusive to residents. This is most likely in the evening period, when background levels are reduced, and it is anticipated that the skatepark activities will lead to complaints.

### **Pitch and Putt site (04/02910/CEC)**

The distance to the nearest residential properties for the proposal at the 'pitch and putt' site (04/02910/CEC) are somewhat greater at around 140m to the south, at North Park Terrace. The site topography slopes northwards from the path at its southern edge, offering a natural noise attenuation barrier to the residential properties to the south.

It would be safe to assume that background noise levels at North Park Terrace will be no less than the 'normal' levels at Arboretum Place / Inverleith Place, due to the traffic noise impact from the heavily trafficked Comely Bank Road. Using the same assessment process, the likelihood of residents at North Park Terrace being adversely affected by skatepark noise is minimal. The distances to other residential properties, to the north at Inverleith Place (360m) and to the south-east at Reid Terrace (420m), are sufficiently large to ensure that noise should not impact adversely on residential amenity, either in the daytime or evening.

## **1.2 Indirect Noise**

Noise from individuals – such as shouting, and the use of portable music equipment is also frequently associated with skatepark activity. Such noise, whilst potentially more likely with the presence of a skatepark, is however not the sole domain of skatepark users, and although a possible additional cause for concern for nearby residents, there is nothing to stop any other park users raising their voices or utilising personal music equipment. Therefore, this Department would find it difficult to qualify or quantify noise from such sources in isolation. It is likely that the only practical means of controlling such noise will be through park management rules and supervision.

## **1.3 Noise from PA systems.**

Discussions with the Culture and Leisure Department suggest that a permanent connection for a PA system is planned for the skatepark, for use during organised events such as competitions and displays. It is recommended that the output from this system be conditioned, such that

***“All amplified music and vocals be controlled to the satisfaction of the Director of City Development”***

## **Floodlighting**

It is recommended that conditions be applied to the control floodlighting as follows:

1. The floodlighting system shall be fitted with an automatic cut-out to ensure that the system cannot operate after 9pm.
2. The floodlighting system shall be controlled so that there is no direct illumination of neighbouring land, and such that any light spillage on to neighbouring land shall not exceed 25 lux.

**Littering / cont'd**

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Littering issues have been separately commented on by the Department's  
Open Space Maintenance Task Force

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