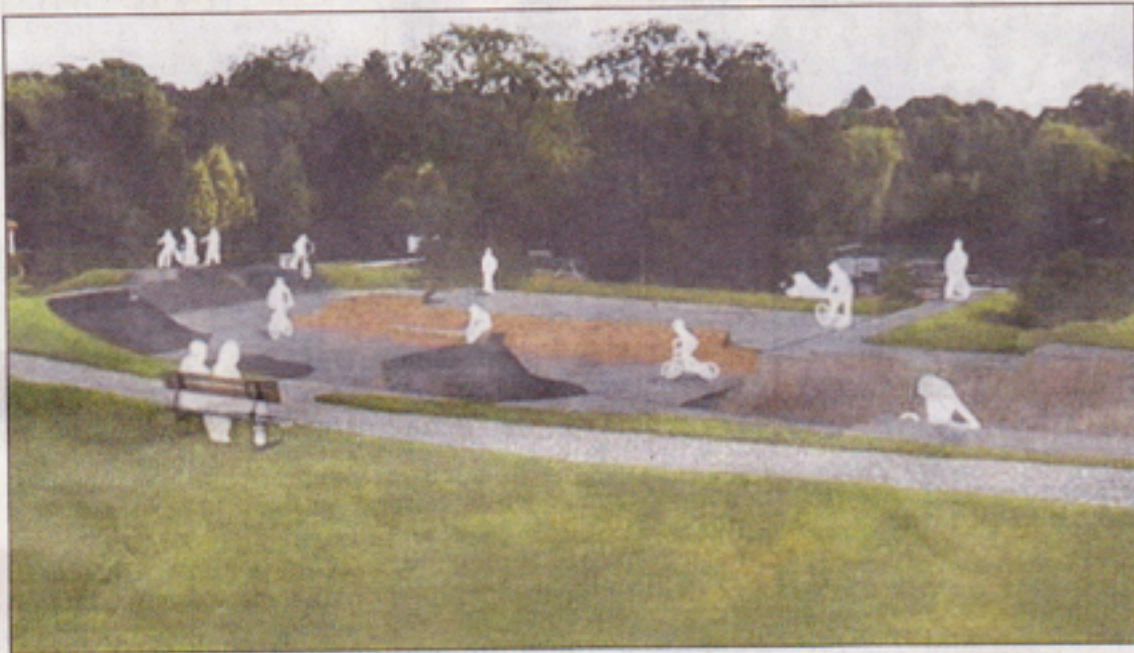


Gardens will get skate park



An artist's impression of how the skate park will look. (S)

by Vicky Carr
Chief Reporter

A SKATE park will be built in Harrogate after planners approved proposals for a site in the Valley Gardens.

The structure will be set into the hillside above the existing tennis courts, with new paths to be created leading to the site.

When the proposals were put forward, some local residents expressed concern about the suitability of the site and the potential for

noise and anti-social behaviour.

Supporting the application last week, Coun Anthony Alton, cabinet member for cultural services, told the planning meeting: "You could only be impressed with the enthusiasm of the young people involved. It's not in their interests to abuse the park in any way."

The park will be covered by live CCTV, monitored along with the area's other feeds at a central point in Harrogate International Centre, and

there will be signs reminding users of rules including noise levels and opening hours.

Among those speaking at the meeting was 26-year-old David Logan, who grew up in Harrogate and has been campaigning for a facility for BMX, skateboard and rollerblade users for many years.

He said: "As many users as want to can use it. When kids have a good park they learn good etiquette and take turns."

The plans included pieces of equipment suitable for all ages and abilities and the materials used in construction would minimise the noise produced.

Councillors on the planning committee raised concerns about the toilet facilities in the Valley Gardens, which they said were already in poor condition. Coun Alton said plans had been drawn up for a new toilet block, but had been dropped shortly before coming to the planning department because of the economic situation. Patrick Kilburn, head of parks and gardens, said the toilets were part of a programme of repairs along with others in the district, but councillors agreed to make a recommendation the toilets were upgraded or replaced as soon as funding allowed.

They passed the application for the skate park, congratulating Mr Logan and other young supporters on their dedication to the campaign.

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Logan said: "It has been a long time coming to go through and I think there will be a lot of happy youngsters now."

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