

Subject:	The Level - Heritage Lottery Bid and Masterplan		
Date of Meeting:	5 July 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Jan Jonker	Tel: 29-4722
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: ENVCMM22254	
Ward(s) affected:	Hanover & Elm Grove; St Peters & North Laine		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Level is an important historical park in the city centre which is well used by residents. It includes a children's play area, a skate park, an area used for ball games and expanses of green space used for recreation. However parts of the park are in a state of disrepair, the skate park will need to be removed or replaced in the next few years and some of the children's play facilities also need upgrading. Many of the general and historic features of the park including buildings, walls, and walk-ways are also in a poor condition and the park has a reputation for anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 In the Parks & Green Spaces Strategy Plan 2006 The Level received a quality index score of -40; it was the only major park in the city with a negative rating. In March 2011 the park was judged against the Green Flag judging criteria. Out of 26 categories, only 3 received a good rating with the remaining 8 a fair and 11 a poor rating. None were very good or excellent.
- 1.3 The Level has a wide and diverse catchment which includes a Super Output Area in the top 10% most deprived areas in England. It provides much needed recreation and outdoor space in a very densely populated area. It is important to the heritage of the city and is a gateway close to the city centre.
- 1.4 Proposals to improve The Level and redevelop the skatepark have been discussed for some time, and various consultations have taken place prior to 2009, however funding was never secured to progress plans any further.
- 1.5 Wide scale consultation since 2009 has shown that The Level is very popular with residents and there is consensus that it suffers from a range of issues relating to community safety and maintenance. Over 50% of people surveyed feel The Level is unsafe, with half of those considering it very unsafe. Concerns relate to high numbers of street drinkers, drug dealing and taking, vandalism and other crime. There is widespread support for its improvement.
- 1.6 For these reasons it is considered to be a priority for redevelopment.

- 1.7 Funding sources for projects of this scale are very limited, but in 2009 the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund 'Parks for People' grant was identified as a potential source. A pre-application enquiry and initial meetings with them confirmed that The Level did meet its minimum criteria.
- 1.8 The skatepark on The Level falls outside of the HLF funding bid. Therefore in parallel with the development of the bid, options and funding to replace the existing skatepark have been explored.
- 1.9 In July 2009 the Cabinet Member for Environment endorsed the preparation of a 'Parks for People' funding bid which has been progressed successfully. The application process consists of two stages. Our application was successful at Stage 1 and the council was awarded £106,000 to prepare detailed plans including a Masterplan for its redevelopment. This work has now nearly been completed and will be ready for final submission by the 31st August 2011.
- 1.10 The value of the bid is £2.8 million which will fund a complete transformation of the park including a new café, new toilets, a new water feature as well as significant improvements to the park's fabric including planting, footpaths, seating and lighting and improved accessibility for a wider range of users. A new playground will be built with funding received via agreements made under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This has already been secured. A decision on whether the bid has been successful is expected by the 1st January 2012. If the bid is unsuccessful the improvements that can be carried out with existing resources will be very limited. The park will continue to decline, suffer from anti-social behaviour and many people will be put off from going to it.
- 1.11 Development of the skatepark to its maximum size as set out in the Masterplan requires capital investment of up to £400,000. £97,000 s106 money has been allocated to the skatepark, and this report recommends a further £53,000 from existing budgets is allocated to the project. Further grant funding and sponsorship is being pursued and the actual size of the skatepark will depend on the amount of additional funding secured.
- 1.12 The proposals for The Level are based on extensive and thorough consultation the details of which are presented in this report.
- 1.13 An overview of the proposed Masterplan is attached as Appendix 1, and set out in more detail in this report and the appendices.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability endorses the Masterplan for The Level and notes the extensive consultation undertaken.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability endorses the match funding requirements for the HLF bid from existing budgets to a maximum value of £200,000.
- 2.3 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability endorses the allocation of funding for the skatepark from existing budgets to a maximum of £53,000.

- 2.4 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability delegates authority to the Strategic Director, Place to oversee the completion of the final details of the bid ready for submission by 31st August 2011.
- 2.5 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability agrees that, in the event of the bid being unsuccessful, the Masterplan be used to inform the long term development of the park, and notes that delivery would be dependent on funding.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The funding awarded as part of our successful Stage 1 bid has been used to progress the Masterplan and the final Stage 2 bid.
- 3.2 An extensive robust evidence base has been produced including:
- Consultation reports
 - A Masterplan prepared to RIBA (Royal Institute for Built Architecture) Stage D level (Summary presented in Appendix 1)
 - A ten year fully costed Management & Maintenance Plan
 - A Conservation Management Plan setting out how conservation issues will be addressed in the park.
 - An Activity Plan which sets out detailed proposals to increase the range and number of people using the park
 - A Community Safety Plan developed with partners with clear actions to address community safety issues
 - Background information including noise, environmental and geophysical surveys
- 3.3 The main documents are in the process of being finalised in preparation for the 31st August deadline. Draft copies of key reports listed at the end of this report are available in Members' Rooms and will be available on-line as and when they are finalised.
- 3.4 The design work has been led by Land Use Consultants, landscape architects with a good track record in restoring heritage parks and working with local authorities to submit successful 'Parks for People' bids.
- 3.5 The plans have been subject to extensive consultation and engagement. The approach to the consultation and engagement is set out below; the remainder of the report gives an indication as to how the consultation and engagement informed the development of the plans. The various consultation reports are available in Member's Rooms and on line.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultation for the 'Parks for People' bid commenced in 2009, and the main elements of the consultation are summarised below:

2009 Consultation (October & November)
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand people's wishes and requirements for The Level. • To understand people's concerns and aspirations. • Gain views on two concept designs, one with the skatepark in the existing location and one with it in the north end of the park. • Gain views on whether there was support for the restoration of the 1920's design.
<p>Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data was gathered from consultees through questionnaires. • Six consultation events were held in October/November 2009 where members of the public could meet with members of the project team to talk through the proposals. • The events were advertised by a mail drop to 13,456 households within a half mile radius of The Level and through 300 posters, the council web site, City News and The Argus. • Information and questionnaires were also sent out to residents in response phone and email requests. • Workshops were held with stakeholders with an interest in The Level (e.g. police, conservation officers, rangers, community safety workers, etc.).
<p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 378 questionnaires were completed and the data analysed by the council's Research Team. • Valuable data was gathered on peoples views of The Level and what they would like to see changed. • The response indicated there was an overall preference to move the skatepark out of the southern half. • Under represented people and groups were identified who were targeted in the next stage of consultation.

4.2 Based on the consultation designs were amended and a period of targeted, detailed information sharing, consultation and engagement took place between January 2010 and January 2011.

2010 Targeted Engagement, Consultation & Information Sharing
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain more detailed views from specific stakeholders, in particular underrepresented groups to help develop the proposals regarding access, activities, design, conservation, safety, history and education. • To further explore options surrounding the location of the skatepark.
<p>Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the development funding received from the Stage 1 application an officer was recruited on a temporary basis to lead this work and to develop a clear plan of activities and ways in which the park could be more accessible. • Five focus groups were held between June 2010 and January 2011 looking at design options. The focus groups were mainly attended by local residents, representatives of community groups including the Friends of The Level and skate representatives. • Over 75 meetings were held with community groups, schools and

minority groups. These included older people, people with disabilities and their carers, children, parents, residents associations and representatives from black and minority ethnic groups. A full list of groups consulted is detailed in the Consultation Report. At each meeting people were given the opportunity to discuss how they felt about the park, any key barriers to using the park and what people felt would make it better. Groups were then shown the proposals for the new plans and given an opportunity to discuss and comment. Some of the meetings took place on site so that specific issues could be looked at on the ground. An Access Audit was completed with the Federation of Disabled People.

- Numerous meetings were held with stakeholders including conservation groups (The Brighton Society and The Regency Society), the Play Service, the Police, the Substance Misuse Service.

Results

- A significant evidence base was produced which has had a strong influence on the design of the park, the proposed activities and the volunteer, learning and education plans. The evidence of the extent by which this work informed the plans is evident from reading them.
- Two final design options were produced for the final consultation carried out in March 2011.

2011 Consultation (March)

Objectives:

- Identify which of two designs (with the skatepark location being the main difference) people prefer and why.
- To find out which aspects of the proposals people will appreciate.
- To inform the final proposals for the Masterplan.

Methodology

- In December 2010 information leaflets were sent to 28,000 households within a 15 minute walk of The Level summarising the proposals and informing residents of the forthcoming consultation and other ways they could become involved. This distance is based on the council's adopted accessibility standards for parks and open space in the city's Local Development Framework, which was informed by the findings of a public consultation carried out for the Citywide Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study in 2008/9. This study determined that 15 minutes was the maximum time people were willing to walk to their local park. It is also the standard adopted by the Department for Children Schools and Families (now Department of Education) Design for Play Guidance where 15 minutes walk is the catchment for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- In March 2011 the same households were sent details of public consultation exhibitions, detailed plans of the two draft designs and a questionnaire.
- The consultation was advertised on the council's website and residents could complete the consultation on line if they wished.
- The consultation was advertised in The Argus, with posters and with signs on The Level.
- Eight public exhibitions were held to give people the opportunity to come and find out more about the plans.

Results

- Approximately 3300 questionnaires were returned (>11%) of which 2735 responses came from within the 15 minute walk catchment (people from outside the catchment could also respond). This response is significantly better than the response to the 2009 consultation.
- The response to the main question in relation to the skatepark location was that there was an overall preference to move the skatepark out of the southern half. The percentages were very similar to the 2009 consultation.

4.3 The response to the consultation demonstrates The Level's popularity and value to the local community and citywide residents. The consultation results are discussed in the sections below. Copies of the consultation reports are available.

5. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS

5.1 The aims of the 'Parks for People' grant and its required funding outcomes are very well suited to The Level. Restoring heritage is essential to the bid, but of equal importance is increasing the number and range of park users, having a robust and funded management and maintenance plan and providing activities, volunteering and learning opportunities, particularly relating to the history of the park. All these criteria have to be met if the bid is to be successful.

5.2 The five essential project outcomes and their applicability to The Level are summarised below as well as other improvements the proposals will deliver.

HLF Outcome 1: Increasing the range of park users

5.3 One of the main focuses of the consultation has been to gain people's views of The Level, what they like about it, what they don't and it has involved both people who use The Level and those who avoid it in order to find out what will make more people use the park.

5.4 Feedback has been obtained from a very wide range of groups including:

- six schools;
- eight community groups; and
- nine minority groups (including groups representing the elderly, people with disabilities and black and minority ethnic groups).

5.5 Feedback has also been obtained from specialist stakeholders, local residents and park users as well as from the two consultation exercises from which a total of 3600 response were received.

5.6 An Access Audit has been carried out with the Federation of Disabled People and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposals.

5.7 The results show that while The Level is well used by certain groups (eg young people and families. students, office workers and dog walkers) many people feel:

- It is unsafe;
- They are not welcome;
- It is not accessible for them; and

- There is nothing for them to do or nowhere for them to sit.
- 5.8 These points are particularly relevant to older people and people with disabilities.
- 5.9 Based on the feedback the proposals seek to make The Level more welcoming by restoring and improving facilities making it very welcoming and accessible for visitors year round. Increasing park users, surveillance by on site staff and improved lighting will help reduce anti social behaviour.
- 5.10 A detailed Community Safety Plan for The Level has been produced with community safety partners. It will be submitted as part of the bid and implemented with our partners. It will partly be resourced by the funding bid (eg providing dog free areas, opening the park up and improving its general condition) and partly through existing resources (eg better partnership working between key organisations).
- 5.11 New features which will draw in a wide range of audiences (and reduce anti social behaviour) include:
- A new interactive water feature on the former foot print of the boating pond;
 - A new accessible café which will be open all year and in the evenings;
 - A sensory garden and grassed areas and seating;
 - Facilities for community groups, residents and schools to use; and
 - Events, volunteer and learning opportunities detailed below;
 - New DDA accessible toilets
 - Provision has also been made for a ‘Changing Places’ toilet which provides facilities for severely disabled people and their carers. Funding for a toilet attendant has yet to be secured.
- 5.12 The Level is already used for a range of events including the travelling fair and various festivals. The Masterplan will ensure that the existing events can continue to take place and opportunities for additional events requested by respondents to the consultation (e.g. markets, music, etc) will also be created attracting a wider range of people to the park.
- 5.13 Details of the types of activities which will be organised to attract more visitors to The Level are set out in the Activity Plan.

HLF Outcome 2: Conserving and improving the heritage value

- 5.14 The current layout and design of The Level dates back to the 1800’s. Important features include:
- The shape of the park, the stone wall along the northern boundary and the alignment of the main pathways dating back to 1877. The stone wall is in a state of disrepair as are the pathways, lighting and seating.
 - The avenue of elms planted along the outer walkway planted in 1845.
 - The layout of the southern part of The Level which was designed in the 1920’s with the aim of opening up vistas and creating a boulevard style park for central Brighton. The design, which was symmetrical, included shelters, pergolas, an ornamental boating pond and bridges which were all intended to disguise play equipment and create a garden setting for other users.

- 5.15 The Masterplan design has been led by Land Use Consultants who have considerable expertise in restoring heritage parks and in developing successful 'Parks for People' funding bids. Other specialists who have been consulted as part of the design process include the council's Conservation and Planning Officer and Virginia Hinze who has completed a dissertation on the history of The Level. Feedback has also been obtained from two conservation groups, The Regency Society and The Brighton Society.
- 5.16 Feedback from the consultation has also strongly influenced the proposals for conserving and enhancing the heritage on site (for example in relation to the uses of the two pavilions).
- 5.17 As a result the Masterplan includes maintaining, enhancing and restoring key heritage features such as:
- The original semicircular shelters, pergolas, columns, bridges and paved areas
 - Rose Walk and its flower beds
 - The southern entrance and dolphin lights
 - The original layout of pathways
- 5.18 Signage and interpretation boards will be installed to help explain the importance of the heritage of The Level.
- 5.19 The boating pond, which was very prominent in the 1920's layout will be replaced with the water feature which will be the same shape as the original pond.

HLF Outcome 3: Increasing the range of volunteers involved

- 5.20 Volunteer opportunities provide a mechanism for local residents to play an active role in their park and provide learning and social opportunities. Volunteers can also be of significant support to the council, a good local example being the Pavilion Gardens Volunteer Gardeners.
- 5.21 The consultation and engagement work has shown that there is a strong desire from parts of the community for opportunities on The Level. For example SCOPE (a charity for people who suffer from cerebral palsy) is interested in organising accessible garden sessions.
- 5.22 We will work with and support residents and community groups keen to get involved in The Level.
- 5.23 Volunteer opportunities will include:
- A gardening club to help maintain bedding displays to a high standard, a similar scheme operates successfully in Pavilion Gardens;
 - Delivering heritage and nature guided walks talks and exhibitions;
 - Volunteer play and activity workers; and
 - Health Walks training which would attract volunteers who are interested in promoting the Healthy Living agenda.
- 5.24 Volunteer activities will be coordinated and supported by a dedicated officer funded through the bid for a period of three years. Funding has also been included in the bid to help establish volunteering opportunities and for training.

5.25 Details of volunteering proposals are set out in the Activity Plan.

HLF Outcome 4: Improving skills and knowledge through learning & training

5.26 The consultation has identified that a range of organisations are keen to explore learning opportunities on The Level. Schools are keen to have opportunities for learning outside of the class room, Rangers will provide a range of activities year round and Brighton Technical College would like to work in partnership, for example to provide students with volunteering opportunities to repair and maintain the perimeter stone wall.

5.27 Learning and training activities are set out in the Activities Plan.

5.28 There will be learning and training activities in areas such as:

- Horticulture
- Wildlife and biodiversity monitoring
- Coaching and play worker skills
- Legislative requirements for volunteers

5.29 The training will be targeted at a wide range of people including minority groups, children and young people and people looking for work experience. It will play a key part in making The Level welcoming for a wider range of people.

HLF Outcome 5: Improving management & maintenance

5.30 The current poor state of the park is the result of lack of any significant investment since the 1970's which makes maintaining the infrastructure to the right standard on the existing revenue budget impossible. The improvements to the park will mean key infrastructure will need less maintenance for years to come (e.g. paths, lighting, benches and planting will be replaced and key buildings restored) and the park will be maintained to the highest standard within existing budgets. (HLF require successful bids to achieve and maintain Green Flag status for at least seven years).

5.31 A Garden Manager will be based on The Level, working closely with the Rangers and other service providers and community groups.

5.32 A ten year fully costed management and maintenance plan will be submitted as part of the bid.

Environmental Improvements

5.33 The council's ecologist has fed in to the development of the Master Plan, and the site has been subject to an ecological appraisal. The proposals provide opportunities for improving the environment including:

- Increasing biodiversity, for example as a result of improving and extending planting with native species;
- Preserving the habitat of the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly which depends on the elm trees for its survival;
- Reducing hard surfacing and therefore improving flood capacity

- 5.34 There will also be opportunities to help people learn more about the environment and how to protect it.
- 5.35 The café building will have a low carbon footprint; it will be energy efficient and include a ground source heat system.

6. SKATEPARK

Consultation on Skatepark Location

- 6.1 The existing skatepark is in a state of disrepair and will have to be replaced in the short to medium term.
- 6.2 Throughout the consultation a number of different designs have been developed and considered, the main difference between them being the location of the skatepark.
- 6.3 The 2009 consultation, which had 387 responses showed that 57% of respondents preferred moving the skatepark north of Rose Walk to a new location along the northern boundary, 31% preferred it in its current location and 12% didn't have a particular preference.
- 6.4 However some nearby residents, including representatives from Friends of The Level, were very strongly against the proposals as a result of which further engagement and design work was undertaken to try and come up with a design that would better meet the criteria of the different groups.
- 6.5 Five focus groups were held as well as numerous meetings with Friends of The Level and Park Crescent residents, primarily to look at options surrounding the skatepark. The meetings were attended by between eight and 28 residents and park users. Most, but not all people who attended these meetings were against having a skatepark located in the northern part of The Level. Representatives of Park Crescent residents have stated they would prefer the bid to be unsuccessful rather than having the skatepark moved, and in their consultation response Friends of The Level have stated they will only support a bid with the skatepark south of Rose Walk. They have started a campaign to keep the skatepark in the southern part of The Level.
- 6.6 The final designs were amended as a result of this. However given the response to the initial consultation in favour of moving the skatepark it was not appropriate to rule it out at the request of The Friends of The Level and Park Crescent representatives without testing these views through further consultation with the wider community. Prior to the consultation feedback was obtained from the Friends of The Level and Park Crescent regarding the consultation documents and where possible their suggestions were addressed in the final version of the document.
- 6.7 The March 2011 consultation asked respondents which of two designs they preferred, one with the skatepark in the existing location, the other with it located just north of Rose Walk. 3,330 people responded to the consultation:
- 55% preferred moving the skatepark north of Rose Walk,

- 33% preferred it in its current location and
- 12% had no particular preference.

The two designs are set out in the consultation document (Appendix 2).

6.8 The above results include all consultation responses, The table below breaks it down into three catchments:

- All responses including those from outside the 15 minute catchment
- Only responses from within the 15 minute catchment
- Only responses from roads immediately adjacent to The Level.

6.9 The results show that the response is similar whether all results are analysed, or whether only those in the 15 minute catchment are assessed. Of the 138 residents closest to The Level (most of which were from Park Crescent and Hanover Crescent) most prefer to keep the skatepark in the existing location.

Summary of Consultation Responses

Option	All responses (within 15 minute walk and beyond)	Results from within 15 minute walk catchment only	Results from streets immediately surrounding The Level
Number of responses	3,330	2,735	138
Option 1- Skatepark in existing location	34	33%	61%
Option 2 - Skatepark north of Rose Walk	55	54%	35%
No preference / don't know	11%	13%	4%

6.10 The overall results are very similar to the 2009 consultation. The most recurring six comments for both options are summarised with comments below. All the comments are available in the Consultation Report.

Most Frequent Comments Supporting Option 1: Keep Skatepark in Existing Location
<p><i>Want to keep the area north of Rose Walk green/ open (309 respondents)</i> Moving the skatepark to the north will change the look and feel of the area, and whether this is preferred to keeping it in its existing location is subjective.</p> <p>Moving the skatepark will not result in a net loss of green space. The hard surfaced area will be restored to grass, and is larger than the area given over to the proposed skate park.</p> <p>The aim is to still keep the area to the north open, with the skatepark being sunken. Appropriate barrier planting will be introduced to separate the skatepark and the grassed area.</p>
<p><i>Concerns about noise from the skatepark (47 respondents)</i></p>

Concerns about noise were raised by respondents both for and against moving the skatepark.

The skatepark will generate some noise as it does at present.

There have been no recorded noise complaints from the skatepark in the existing location and there is no evidence to suggest moving it will change this.

The new skatepark will be of concrete construction which will be less noisy than the current timber construction.

The north area should be kept free for events (34 respondents)

Maintaining existing events and establishing new ones is one of the objectives of the bid.

The open area that will be retained in the north will provide sufficient space for events including the Fun Fair. This has been confirmed both by the council's Events Manager and the Manager of the Fun Fair.

The changes to the south of the park provide new opportunities for events. The flower garden area will be dog free and suitable for fitness sessions, art classes and tai-chi. The water fountains can be switched off providing a space which can be used for music and other performances.

Easier to supervise children if all activities in one area (33 respondents)

Keeping the skatepark where it is will mean it is in closer proximity to the play areas. Whether this is an advantage or disadvantage is subjective, 95 respondents want bikers and skaters to be separated from small children's play areas (see below).

Concerned about alcohol use in the park (33 respondents)

Alcohol abuse has been raised as a concern by respondents in relation to both options. There is no evidence to suggest the location of the skatepark will have any effect on alcohol use.

Addressing alcohol use is a priority, together with addressing anti-social behaviour irrespective of skatepark location.

Anti social behaviour would increase if skatepark in north area (24 respondents)

The majority of anti-social behaviour happens in the south end of the park and is rarely associated with skate park or skatepark users. The data suggests the main perpetrators are drug users, underage drinkers and young people gathering before a night out.

The Brighton & Hove Skateparks Association would like the skatepark to be graffiti free and will be promoting this amongst their members.

Addressing anti-social behaviour and safety throughout the park has been identified as the priority through the consultation. The Masterplan and Community Safety Plan seek to address this through a range of measures and there is no evidence to suggest that skatepark location will have a significant impact on antisocial behaviour.

Most Frequent Comments Supporting Option 2: Move Skatepark North of Rose Walk

The southern area will be more restful (397 respondents)

Moving the skatepark will free up more space in the southern area. It will still accommodate the playground, water fountain and café which are all likely to be popular and busy.

The total number of people using the area may increase as a result, but it is likely to be a more diverse range of people and there will be an increase green space for relaxation.

If the skatepark is not moved the southern area will be more crowded and there will be no significant additional green space for relaxation.

Concerns about noise from the skatepark, north is best position for skatepark (111 respondents)

Concerns about noise were raised by respondents both for and against moving the skatepark.

The skatepark will generate some noise as it does at present.

There have been no recorded noise complaints from the skatepark in the existing location and there is no evidence to suggest moving it will change this.

The new skatepark will be of concrete construction which will be less noisy than the current timber construction.

Want skaters and bikes to be separated from small children's areas (95 respondents)

Moving the skatepark will separate the children's play area from the skatepark. In contrast 33 respondents wanted to keep the skatepark closer to the play area to be able to supervise children in both areas.

Antisocial behaviour would decrease if skatepark in the north area (79 respondents)

The majority of anti-social behaviour happens in the south end of the park but is rarely associated with skate park or skatepark users. The data suggests the main perpetrators are drug users, underage drinkers and young people gathering before a night out.

The Brighton & Hove Skateparks Association would like the skatepark to be graffiti free and will be promoting this amongst their members.

Addressing anti-social behaviour and safety throughout the park has been identified as the priority through the consultation. The Masterplan and Community Safety Plan seek to address this through a range of measures and there is no evidence to suggest that skatepark location will have a significant impact on antisocial behaviour.

Concerns about alcohol consumption in the park (69)

Alcohol abuse has been raised as a concern by respondents in relation to both options. There is no evidence to suggest the location of the skatepark will have any effect on alcohol use.

Addressing alcohol use is a priority, together with addressing anti-social behaviour irrespective of skatepark location.

- 6.11 Based on the outcome of all the consultation and engagement work, it is recommended that the skatepark is relocated as set in Option 2, just to the north of Rose Walk.
- 6.12 A new skate-park will require planning permission and pre-application advice has been sought on both options. Based on the information available, officer advice at this stage is that no in principle objection would be raised. A copy of the pre-application advice letter will be submitted as part of the 'Parks for People HLF bid.
- 6.13 The HLF as well as council's Design and Conservation Manager have also confirmed they have no objections to the skatepark moving to the north of Rose Walk.

Skatepark Design & Development

- 6.14 The skatepark is very well used and is generally considered to be an integral part of The Level. The HLF fully support a Masterplan which includes the skatepark. It has not been included in the bid and therefore separate funding is being pursued.
- 6.15 In the Masterplan, a maximum area of 1600 m² (including approximately 200m² of buffer space) has been allocated for a new, sunken concrete skatepark immediately to the north of Rose Walk. The concrete sunken construction will be lower maintenance than the current wooden structure, it will provide a better skate surface and by being sunken it will have a lower visual impact. It will also be less noisy than the current timber structure.
- 6.16 The cost of a new skatepark as set out in the Masterplan is anticipated to be approximately £400,000, which will be confirmed when a detailed design has been completed.
- 6.17 The current funding available is:
- £97,000 s106 funding
 - £53,000 proposed funding from existing parks budget.
- 6.18 This is £250,000 short of the amount required to build the maximum size skatepark.
- 6.19 Other sources of funding being pursued include:
- Viridor grant funding (£30,000 - £50,000)
 - Veolia grant funding (£40,000 - £100,000)
 - Sponsorship £100,000
- 6.20 These avenues will be pursued further in partnership with the Brighton & Hove Skateparks Association who will also be closely involved in the detailed design once a decision on skatepark location has been finalised. It is anticipated that all existing viable external funding routes will have been exhausted by January

2012. At this stage the available budget will determine the maximum size and complexity of the skatepark, and it may be smaller than shown on the Masterplan.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY

- 7.1 The bid will provide great benefits to the local community; it will also provide benefits to the city as a whole. It will create a high quality green space in an area of high deprivation where outdoor recreational space is very limited.
- 7.2 If successful it will bring in around £2.1 million worth of extra funding in to the city and create a park which will also be a destination for other residents in the city and visitors. It is easily accessible from the city centre and the North Laine area which is very popular with tourists. It will also complement the plans to transform the London Road area, including the Open Market.
- 7.3 The Level is situated between two main routes in to the city centre and its redevelopment will improve the gateway into the city.
- 7.4 It is located at the north end of Valley Gardens and completion of the bid will be a significant first step towards improving all the green spaces that make up this area.

8. WHAT IF THE BID IS UNSUCCESSFUL?

- 8.1 Because of its poor state of repair The Level requires significant funding to be brought up to standard.
- 8.2 The funding available if the bid is unsuccessful will only realise marginal improvements to certain aspects of the park:
 - S106 money will be used to improve the playground
 - The skatepark will be replaced as per the Master Plan (size being dependent on funding) and the foot print of the existing skatepark will have to be made good and grassed over.
- 8.3 The council would have the option of still allocating the match funding elements to The Level (£200,000) over two years for essential maintenance, but it would not have the added benefit of securing £2.1 million of external funding.
- 8.4 Improvements would have to be prioritised on the reduced budget but elements of the project which would definitely not be funded include:
 - The new café
 - New toilets
 - The water feature
 - New infrastructure (walkways, lighting)
- 8.5 The Level would not be transformed into the welcoming accessible park as set out in the Masterplan and the benefits associated with this (reducing anti-social behaviour, increasing the range and number of people using the park, volunteering and learning opportunities, a deliverable maintenance plan and obtaining a Green Flag Award) would not be realised.

8.6 An important first step in realising the vision of Valley Gardens will have been missed.

9. FUNDING

9.1 The overall value of the bid is summarised in tables below. The grant application is for 86% of the total project value, the remainder being made up by match funding. The total value finally submitted may vary slightly as details are finalised but the cost to the council, through its match funding will not increase above the figures detailed below.

9.2 The bid includes funding for a temporary Project Manager and Project Officer to oversee the delivery of the scheme.

Summary of Total Bid

Total Value of Bid	£2,810,000
HLF Grant Requested	£2,177,000
Match Funding Requirement	£633,000

Summary of Match Funding Elements

Source of Funding	Value	Notes
Existing Parks Budgets	£200,000	<p>Funding from existing budgets spread over two years.</p> <p>If bid were unsuccessful investment from existing budgets would be needed to carry out essential repairs. The bid has the advantage that this same money can be used to leverage in £2.1 million of external funding.</p> <p>The impact on the overall City Parks budget will be similar whether the bid is successful or not (because of some of the essential works that will need to be funded either way). Funding will still be available to deliver front line improvements in other parts of the city.</p>
Developers Contributions (s106)	£134,000	£288,000 of s106 funding has been secured with £71,000 expected to be allocated by the end of 2011. Of this £97,000 is earmarked for the skatepark and £128,000 for the playground. The remainder will be used to matchfund the bid.
Increased maintenance over a period of five years	£162,000	These costs reflect the cost of employing a full time Garden Manager for a period of five years. The Garden Manager will be employed by reorganising existing staff resources.

		<p>The financial value of this resource is included in the costs to demonstrate the council's commitment to maintaining the park to the high standards required for Green Flag and to satisfy the funding terms and conditions. However, it can also be used as part of our matched funding so overall balances out and does not impact our budgets.</p> <p>Under the terms of the grant this funding has to be ring fenced to the parks and will go towards off setting increased maintenance and any increases in utility costs.</p>
Volunteer Time	£137,000	Under the terms of the bid, volunteer time contributes to match funding. The volunteer contribution is made up of a range of activities including the gardening club.
Total	£633,000	

10. TIME-SCALES

HLF Bid

10.1 The main time-scales for the HLF bid are summarised below.

Approval of Masterplan at Cabinet Member Meeting	5 th July 2011
Completion of final details of bid	5 th July – 30 th August 2011
Submission of HLF Bid	31 st August 2011
Decision by HLF	1 st January 2012
Project planning, tendering	January 2012 Onwards
Start build	Winter 2012/13
Complete main aspects of build	Summer 2013

Skatepark

10.2 The main time-scales for the development of the skatepark are summarised below.

Approval of skatepark location Cabinet Member Meeting	5 th July 2011
Detailed design of skatepark to support external funding bids	July 2011 – September 2011
Submission of planning permission for skatepark	September 2011
Completion/ submission of funding applications	October 2011
Decision on funding bids	January 2012
Finalise design	March 2012
Start build	March 2012 onwards

11. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 11.1 The cost of producing the Masterplan has been met from existing Parks revenue budgets. The estimated value of The Level capital project is £2.810 million, of which £2.177 million is being sought via the Heritage Lottery Fund. In order to meet match funding requirements, there will need to be a future contribution from revenue budgets of £0.200 million and from Section106 capital receipts of £0.134 million. These are the only direct financial implications. In addition however, the Heritage Lottery Fund values the provision of an on site manager, created through a restructuring process, and maintenance costs as £0.162 million, and attaches a value of £0.137 million to volunteer staff.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 27/05/11

Legal Implications:

- 11.2 No legal implications arise directly from the Report. However, any infrastructure to be provided as a result of funding received will be subject to the relevant planning and procurement regulations. In addition any funding received will be subject to stringent terms and conditions to which the Council must adhere.

Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward Date: 02/06/11

Equalities Implications:

- 11.3 Many people, groups of people do not currently use The Level. Extensive consultation has taken place with underrepresented groups to address these issues. An Access Audit has been carried out with the Federation of Disabled People to inform the Masterplan, and it has also been subject to a full Equalities Impact Assessment. The EIA will be available on line.

Sustainability Implications:

- 11.4 Physical sustainability implications are summarised in paragraphs 5.38 – 5.41. The proposals will help to create a more sustainable community by providing opportunities for people to become involved with The Level, organise and attend events, learning and volunteering opportunities. A significant part of the proposals is to address anti social behaviour.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 11.5 Crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour have been identified as significant issues preventing people from using The Level or affecting their enjoyment of The Level. The Masterplan and the bid seek to transform the park to address these issues and make the park welcoming for everyone.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 11.6 The main risks associated with the next stages of the project are summarised below.

Description & Consequence (C)	Control measures
<p>All or part of match funding fails to materialise</p> <p>C: Unable to proceed forward with the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All matched funding is being secured through council revenue budget, s106 and value in kind from volunteer contributions increased management and maintenance costs. - Secured matched funding will be seen as strength in our bid.
<p>Unsuccessful HLF bid</p> <p>C: Limited improvements will be made with existing budget. Overall park will remain in poor condition and is likely to continue to deteriorate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bid preparation has been thorough to maximise chance of success. - Alternative sources of funding will be explored.
<p>Failure to obtain necessary planning permission for buildings and skatepark</p> <p>C: Delay and alternation to proposed buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worked with Planning from the start of the programme to ensure we address any planning issues. - Confirmed Planning do not have any issues with the proposals.
<p>Rising costs/inflation</p> <p>C: Reduction in works if extra funding is not sought</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - QS have prepared fully costed proposals and specialist work checked with relevant professionals. - Contingency and inflation costs built in to budgets. - Strong budget controls will be in place as part of Project Management
<p>Rising costs to maintenance activities/utilities/resource</p> <p>C: Unable to keep in budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Careful consideration has been given to quality of build - Careful consideration has been given to sustainable solutions during build - Income from Café will be ring-fenced for park - Management and Maintenance plan to be regularly reviewed
<p>Failure to upkeep standards and lose Green Flag award</p> <p>C: Quality of park deteriorates and council in breach of funding terms and conditions.</p> <p>C. Worse case scenario is that funding body requests repayment of funding bid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fully costed 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan has been prepared - Site based Garden Manager will be appointed - Regular review of training requirements to be carried out - Continual development for staff

	<p>already in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continual development for volunteers to be put in place
<p>Failure to manage anti-social behaviour</p> <p>C: People will feel unsafe at the park</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worked with various community safety partners including the police to identify issues and develop action plan to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour - Dedicated on-site Garden Manager and Ranger will provide natural surveillance

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

11.7 These are outlined in section 7.

12. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

12.1 Throughout the development of the Master Plan and the development of the bid various design options have been considered. Submission of the bid was delayed to allow alternative options to be explored in further detail. The final consultation considered two final design options, and the preferred option has been recommended in light of this consultation, previous consultation and engagement work.

13. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The reasons for the recommendations are set out throughout the report. The Level is in a very poor state of repair, suffers from antisocial behaviour and is not considered to be a safe place by many residents. It is in an area of high housing density where open space is limited. Without significant funding it will continue to deteriorate.

13.2 This funding bid provides a potential opportunity to transform The Level leveraging in £2.17 million worth of external funding. The requested match funding from existing budgets will strengthen the bid.

13.3 The skatepark redevelopment is not included in the bid. Current funding is not sufficient to build the skatepark to the size set out in the Masterplan and further funding is being pursued. The funding requested from existing budgets will help contribute to the funding shortfall.

13.4 The deadline for the submission of the bid is the 31st of August. Most of the evidence base for the bid has been completed, but some detail has yet to be finalised, and it is requested that the Director of Place has the authority to sign off the final bid. There will be no changes significant changes to the Master Plan and no increases to the council's proposed financial contribution through match funding.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Summary of Master Plan
2. March 2011 Consultation Document

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. 2009 Consultation Report
2. Activity Plan (Draft)
3. Community Safety Plan (Draft)
4. Management & Maintenance Plan (Draft)

Background Documents

None

