

To whom it may concern,

As lead youth worker at The Red Balloon Learning Centre, I am writing in support of the proposed skate park redevelopment on Donkey's Common.

While Cambridge does offer a number of recreational spaces, not all are equally accessible or suitable for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), particularly those with autism and related social, emotional, and mental health needs. Factors such as layout, busyness, lack of inclusive design, or limited opportunities for progression can make some environments difficult for these youth people to engage with consistently or confidently. The proposed location at Donkey's Common, situated in the heart of Cambridge, would provide a far more accessible and central space for many young people and families, making regular use more realistic and sustainable.

Skateboarding offers a uniquely adaptable and inclusive environment. It allows young people to engage at their own pace, develop skills incrementally, and experience success without the pressure of competition or rigid structure. This autonomy is particularly valuable for students with autism, who often thrive in environments where they can self-regulate and explore independently.

Over the past year I have been taking my students on regular sessions to the Cam Skate indoor skate park, I have seen first-hand the transformative impact that skating can have on SEND students. Young people who previously struggled to engage with education or attend school consistently have found a genuine sense of purpose and motivation through skating. It has supported improvements in attendance, confidence, resilience, and social interaction. Importantly, it has also provided a safe space where they feel accepted and able to express themselves without judgement.

A new, purpose-built outdoor skate park on Donkey's Common would significantly expand access to these benefits. It would provide an inclusive, low-cost, and community-based resource that is accessible beyond school hours, supporting both physical activity and mental wellbeing. For SEND students, having a consistent and welcoming space within their local community can be instrumental in reducing isolation and fostering a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, such a facility encourages informal social interaction, which is often more manageable and meaningful for neurodivergent young people than structured group settings. The shared activity creates natural opportunities for communication and connection, helping to develop social skills in an organic and supportive way.

I strongly believe that this skate park would be a valuable addition to the community, offering meaningful and lasting benefits for SEND young people and their families. It represents not just a recreational space, but an opportunity for growth, inclusion, and positive engagement.

Thank you for considering this letter of support.

Thomas Keady
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