

Agenda Item No: 8 **Report No:** 142/12
Report Title: Walmer Road Skate park Petition
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 6 September 2012
Ward(s) Affected: Seaford Wards
Report By: Director of Planning and Environmental Services
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Purpose of Report:

To enable Scrutiny Committee to consider the petition relating to a proposed skate park at Walmer Road Recreation Ground, Seaford, which was presented to Council.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To make recommendations to Cabinet on whether or not to support the petitioners in their request for a new skate park facility.
- 2 To consider whether Walmer Road Recreation Ground is a suitable site for a skate park.
- 3 To consider, given the issues raised in this report, whether officers should look at other possible sites for a skate park to serve this part of Seaford and whether to carry out further public consultation and investigations into possible sources of finance.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 To enable Scrutiny Committee to consider the matter following the receipt of a public petition in support of a skate park.

Information

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- 2.1 A petition has been received by council which reads “ We are asking for a skate park at Walmer Road Recreation Ground Seaford that is suitable for skate boarders, scooters and BMX”
- 2.2 A total of 886 signatures were received of which 48 were “spoils” (that is 838) and 140 were from people residing outside of Seaford. The lead petitioner was Samuel Chumbley.

- 2.3** Although termed “skate parks”, these sites can actually be used by skaters, bikers and by people on scooters. For the purpose of this report the term “skaters” will include all of the above users.

Walmer Road Recreation Ground

- 2.4** Walmer Road Recreation Ground, which is the petitioners preferred location for a skate park, is located on the Chyngton Estate in Seaford (see Appendix 1).
- 2.5** The site currently provides two football pitches with associated changing rooms, a basket ball area, a grass 5-a side football area, and a large, well used play area.
- 2.6** The site is surrounded on all sides by residential properties and a sheltered housing scheme.
- 2.7** There is a busy residential road, Walmer Road, running along one length of the recreation ground.

Assessment of the potential of Walmer Road Recreation ground for a skate park:

2.8 Advantages

- Skate Parks are very popular, with all age groups. Other skate parks in our district have been used for many years, showing that the sport is not a passing “fad”. Skate parks are good for fitness, provide a place for youth to meet up and learn social skills and can reduce the problems of skaters using other areas that are not suitable such as the front of buildings / steps etc.
- The Walmer Road Recreation Ground already has children’s / youth facilities on it; therefore a new skate park would make the site an excellent local “hub” for recreation.
- Skaters like the idea of being able to use a skate facility easily, and whenever they want to. Other skate parks are further a field making this difficult. This site would give local skaters a site of their own that is easily accessible. The nearest existing skate parks are at The Salts Recreation Ground , more than 2 KM away , across the busy A259 road., with a smaller facility at Chalvington Field less than 1 KM away

2.9 Disadvantages

- Skate parks can create a lot of noise, both through the noise of the skates on the surface of the ramps, the noise of the users and noise created by groups of children and young adults. Skate Park sites are also used as youth meeting areas, sometimes late at night and into the early morning hours. This may well lead to significant complaints from local residents about noise or anti-social behaviour

- The recreation ground is surrounded by residential properties and a sheltered housing scheme which are likely to make the site particularly vulnerable to such complaints.
- The Walmer Road recreation ground is already a well used site. With the existing facilities of play area, basket ball, two football pitches and 5 a side, there is little room for a skate park. There would potentially be room for a skate park in the middle of the site, if the existing football pitches are moved slightly. However, this would lead to the loss of the 5 a side kick-about area and basketball area. There may be an adverse reaction from current users if these facilities are replaced by a skate park .
- Although it may be possible to have some screening between the skate park and local residents, in the form of shrub / tree planting, or ground moulding, this may be difficult and take time to establish, will add to the cost significantly and could lead to health and safety / anti social behaviour concerns if the skate park is not easily overseen.
- Although any new skate park would be intended as a local facility, it would invariably attract skaters from a wide area, as skaters travel long distances to experience different skate parks. This could lead to heavy usage of the skate park.
- Officer's overall opinion is that, although potentially a very worthwhile facility, this site is not suitable to accommodate a skate park.

Other possible sites for a new skate park:

- 2.9** Following initial consultation and an on-site meeting with the Lead Petitioner and Councillors (see item 2.14), Officers have looked to see if there are any other potential sites that would be suitable for a skate park and that would be close enough for residents local to Walmer Road to use.
- 2.10** The only site that has any potential is council owned land to the north of Alfriston Road (see Appendix 2). This land will potentially be used as an extension to Seaford Cemetery within the next 10-15 years. However, there is the possibility that a piece of this land could be used for a skate park for an interim period.
- 2.11** The sites biggest draw back is that locals from the Walmer Road area would need to cross the busy Alfriston Road to access the site.
- 2.12** The site does have housing nearby, however the skate park would be separated from the housing by the Alfriston Road and an existing band of trees.
- 2.13** If the remainder of the site is used as a cemetery in the future, it may not be suitable to have a potentially noisy skate park next to it. However, the site is already used unofficially by bikers, without causing any problems.

Consultation

- 2.14** An initial meeting has taken place to thank the Lead Petitioner, Sam Chumbley, for his hard work in pulling a petition together. The meeting was attended by Sam, his friends Rory and Luke, and Cllrs Sheppard and Nicholson, along with Council Officers.
- 2.15** Some of the conclusions from this meeting were:
- a) Local skaters wanted a local site to use. At the moment they have to travel to The Salts Rec in Seaford or to the skate park in Lewes.
 - b) That funding for skate parks will not be easy to find.
 - c) The problems of this particular site were discussed.
 - d) There were no other “unofficial” areas in Seaford that local skaters used.
 - e) That the site off Alfriston Road was a possibility, but that the busy road may be a problem
 - f) The meeting also discussed possible sites on the Walmer Road Recreation Ground where a skate park could go.
 - g) The meeting discussed whether as an alternative, we could look at provision of a regular transport service to nearby skate parks. However it was concluded that this was not suitable due to the high ongoing costs. It would be difficult to sustain, and there would be no sense of local community use. It would not respond to needs of young people as skateboarding tends to be a casual, spontaneous recreational activity as opposed to a structured sport like football. Complying with specific times for participation is contrary to the spontaneous nature of the activity and is unworkable
- 2.16** Should it be agreed that the project be progressed, a full consultation will take place with a door drop survey to local residents, along with discussions with the local Chyngton Residents Group, Seaford Youth Forum and Seaford Town Council.

Other Skate Park Provision Across the Lewes District

- 2.17** There are a number of other skate park facilities across the district that includes:
- a) Salts Rec in Seaford – A large skate ramp facility
 - b) Chalvington Field, Seaford – A small half pipe.
 - c) Fort Road Rec, Newhaven – An outdated skate park in need of replacement.

- d) Piddinghoe Sports park, Peacehaven
- e) Lewes Skate Park – Malling Recreation Ground. A large and popular site.
- f) Landport Skate Park – a smaller facility for beginners
- g) Newick Skate park – a small facility in the recreation ground
- h) Ringmer Skate Park – Anchor Field, Ringmer.

Financial Appraisal

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- 3.1)** There is no existing budget which could be used to finance a skate park at this time. A minimum requirement to install a simple skate park would be £80,000. However to provide an attractive facility, costs could rise to around £180,000.
- 3.2)** It may be possible to source external grant funding, although this is likely to prove difficult, particularly as a lot of sports funding has been diverted to the Olympics. Possible sources may include:
- a) Seaford Town Council
 - b) Sport England Inspired Facilities (although grants are only available for multi sports areas up to £150,000)
 - c) Sport England Sports Match (this will only match funding raised by commercial sponsorship)
 - d) Awards for All (up to £12,000)

Environmental Implications

- 4** I have completed the Environmental Implications Questionnaire and found the following significant effects which I propose to mitigate/enhance in the following ways:

Possible increase in noise levels should a new skate park be installed. It may be possible to mitigate against this, to some extent, by landscaping and in the design / layout of the skate park.

Risk Management Implications

- 5** *I have completed a risk assessment*

No new risks will arise if the recommendations are not implemented.

The following risks will arise if the recommendations are implemented, and I propose to mitigate these risks in the following ways:

Increased noise and anti social behaviour to be mitigated, as far as possible, by landscaping and by consulting with the community about the facility.

6 Equality Implications

An equalities impact assessment is not considered necessary as this report is looking at options following the recent petition from residents. An equalities impact assessment may be required once a decision has been reached on the whether to develop the project further.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Site Plan – Walmer Road Recreation Ground

Appendix 2: Site Plan – Land adjacent to Seaford Cemetery