

Agenda Item 06

Supplementary Information Planning Committee on 13 January, 2016

Case No.

15/3572

Location	ROUNDWOOD PARK, Harlesden Road, London
Description	Proposed concrete skatepark within the grounds of Roundwood Park (to the north of Roundwood Youth Centre) with associated seating areas and soft landscaping

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Members visited the site on Saturday 9th January and viewed the site from within Roundwood Park. A number of local residents and three Ward Councillors (Cllrs Jones, Kelcher and Chan) were in attendance.

A number of queries were made to further enable members and local residents to understand the proposal in relation to the existing context and with reference to other sports facilities of skateparks in Brent.

1. Noise

Officers have received a noise report which was undertaken on behalf of the applicant. The report assesses and compares the existing noise levels at the closest noise sensitive properties and compares the level of noise known to be produced by skateparks. The points monitored were on Longstone Avenue, Harlesden Road and on the cul-de-sac leading to Roundwood youth centre. Noise measurements were carried out between 10am and 2pm on Sunday the 3rd August and between 7pm and 11pm on Monday the 4th August 2014 selected as the times of quietest background noise.

Controlled noise measurements of concrete skateparks have been taken by the consultant for other studies and based on the distance to the closest neighbouring properties they were able to identify the expected external and internal noise levels produced by the use of the skatepark. The results fall well within the levels set by the World Health Organisation, the noise level at the three points would range from slightly above to slightly below the average background noise level but would in all cases be below the average ambient noise level. The consultants recommendation is that the proposal would not result in a significant impact at nearby dwellings, they noted that if lighting was proposed, for evening of winter time, it should be turned off at 9pm to reduce night time noise impact.

Concrete is established in the industry as the most appropriate material in terms of noise and usability. A material with bumps or joining sections results in additional noise whilst a smooth surface limits this. The perimeter of the park is already tree lined, a query was raised regarding possible further tree planting as a noise buffer however the noise attenuation value of trees is quite limited. Additional tree planting to screen the area would impact on passive surveillance which is a positive part of the proposal and the report already finds noise levels to be acceptable.

2. Other skateparks and their relationship with residential properties

Attention was drawn to an existing skatepark in Stonebridge and its proximity to residential neighbours was queried. The skatepark in Stonebridge is located at the southern end of Tokyngton Recreation Ground. It is approximately 90m from the closest properties on Monks Park Gardens and a similar distance from the closest neighbours on the North Circular Road, separated by the road. This is a metal skatepark and covers an area of approximately 600sqm.

Chalkhill open space has also been recently developed to incorporate a BMX track and a mountain bike trail. The BMX track is located at around 90m from the closest properties.

These facilities are all located in open spaces which are not closed in the evening and the relationship between these facilities and residential properties are comparable with this proposal.

3. Scale and appearance of proposal

The proposed skatepark is 488sqm in area. In the northern area of Roundwood Park there are two multi use sports areas which each measure 446sqm so the proposed area of concrete is similar to one of those sports areas. Sloped grass banks around the raised areas will address the ground level and changes and contribute to the drainage strategy, including this softlandscaped area the total area is 815sqm, less than the two sports areas combined. For further comparison, a 5-a-side football pitch is usually about 500sqm.

From the point of the proposed skatepark closest to the path (approximately 30m from the path) to the rear (approximately 11m from the youth club boundary) the natural ground level increases by about 1.2m and the design makes use of this. By utilising the natural gradient the projection above existing ground level at any given point does not exceed about 1.2m. To minimise the visual impact of this, particularly at a distance, grass bunds are proposed around the edges.

The possibility of green concrete was suggested at the site visit as an attempt to blend the skatepark in with the surroundings. Officers are minded that this could unintentionally make it more prominent as the concrete would be a fairly similar colour to the existing path through the site whilst green hard standing may attract attention.

4. Roundwood youth centre

The proximity to the youth club potentially enables future connection between the uses, the applicant has discussed the possibility of creating a gate in the youth centre boundary treatment however this does not form part of the current proposal.

Residents made reference to floodlighting from Roundwood Youth Centre. The site includes a MUGA with floodlighting however this was approved with a condition that lighting be turned off after 9pm on weekdays and 5pm on weekends, as such the floodlights won't enable the use of the skatepark at night.

As set out in the main report while CCTV has been discussed it does not form part of the current application. The applicant has further clarified that where evidence demonstrates a definite need the council has the ability to deploy mobile CCTV cameras.

5. Management and maintenance

Officers have been advised that Brent's parks warden service is operated by Veolia and on a shift basis they cover all open spaces. As the proposed park would be constructed of concrete with no moving parts it should not require regular maintenance to keep it in working order. Wardens would be expected to report issues when they visit the park as they currently do. Graffiti that is offensive can be reported and removed as a priority as per Brent's normal approach. Maintenance will be provided through the existing maintenance contract.

A sign is proposed at the front of the skatepark and it would be expected to include contact details if users wanted to report maintenance issues.

Regarding criminal activity, as with all public spaces if a criminal activity is witnessed this should be reported to

the police. Brent also have a Community Safety team who work closely with the police and other agencies, when a crime or particular issue is reported these agencies can work together to address it. Enquiries have been made with the police in the area's safer neighbourhoods team and there are no existing recurring issues which have been reported to them.

Lighting is not proposed to enable the use of the space after dark, whilst it proposes two benches it does not provide cover and therefore its potential attractiveness as an area for people to gather or sleep is very limited. Officers are not aware of an issue of anti social behaviour having arisen at the other two Brent facilities described above and the experiences of other boroughs, as described in the committee report, have generally been positive.

6. Other uses of the space

Following the production of the main report a comment has been received from a representative of Maple Walk School advising that they use the annexe for PE lessons and other local schools are known to utilise the space on an informal basis which is welcomed, no objections or further comments have been received.

As discussed the skatepark, including the concrete areas and grass bund landscaping, is smaller in size than two sports courts in Roundwood Park and will measure 815sqm in total. The annexe is approximately 35000sqm so the skatepark will take up less than 1/40 of the total area. While the perimeter of the site is tree lined the annexe will retain extensive open grass spaces as existing.

A full size football pitch could be accommodated in the space between the proposed skatepark and the eastern boundary of the park and the proposal does not affect the northern side of the annexe. There is no shortage of space in the annexe and the proposed development will not prohibit any existing uses.

7. Location

Whilst the main part of Roundwood Park to the north has facilities which would be beneficial to users of the skatepark, they would still be easily accessible, as they are for those taking part in any sports or activities within the annexe on a daily basis. The current application has to assess the proposal on its merits rather than compare the proposed location to alternatives. Other significant merits of the proposed site are that it does not impact on the Grade II registered park and does not necessitate the loss of any trees.

8. Funding

While funding is not a material consideration for the application officers are able to provide some background information. The project has a total budget of £135k of which £35k is from s106 contributions. The contributions are from two developments in the Kensal Green area and it is noted that one (of £19k) has expired so if the skatepark were not to go ahead and use this allocated money it would need to be returned to the developer.

Condition

Amendments to Condition 1 are recommended to require the bunds up to the highest parts of the skatepark and to ensure that their construction contributes to drainage. It is recommended this condition be amended to read:

No development shall take place until details of the sustainable drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details. Details shall also include:

- *the grass bunds matching the height of the skatepark*
- *imported material to be sandy loam topsoil over sandy/stony subsoil*

Reason: To ensure surface water run-off can infiltrate minimising potential for flooding.

Conclusion

The proposal would create a new sporting facility to increase sports opportunities for young people and is part of a programme of improvements being made to parks including outdoor gyms. The proposal seeks to address the borough objective of building a strong community through excellent sports and leisure facilities. This would be Brent's first concrete skatepark and is a proposal which received significant support from future users during its initial consultation, with 36 of 48 responders to the questionnaire stating that they would like to visit on at least a weekly basis.

Recommendation: Remains approval subject to amended condition