

## Skatepark issues – April Update

V0.1 19/4/21

### 1 Background

The school has been complaining over the last year about users of the skatepark. The key issues are:

- Noise and foul language audible in the school playground
- Overlooking of the playground by users at the top of the skatepark
- Cannabis smoke can be smelt in the playground.

There have been a number of discussions between the school, the parish council, HCC and BDBC to try to resolve the issues. The problems stem from the proximity of the skatepark to the playground. It should be noted that the site for the skatepark was approved before the plans were approved for the school extension, which was built in the knowledge that the skatepark would be there.

The park is owned and managed by BDBC. Rooksdown Parish Council (RPC) has no formal responsibility but believes it has a moral responsibility to help resolve the issues.

RPC has earmarked a budget of £3K as a contribution to costs in 2021-22. It is believed that the school has some money available. HCC have said that no money is available in their budget.

### 2 Solutions

RPC has investigated the following potential solutions:

- Move the skatepark
- Remove the grind box from the top
- Move the teen shelter
- Increase the height/thickness of the existing school fence
- Erect a 3.5x30m acoustic fence on the school boundary
- Erect a 3.5x15m fence between the school fence and the skatepark
- Plant vegetation between the park and the school fence
- Add a 3.5x35m bund between the fence and the park, surrounded by a 1.8m fence and planted with eg holly.

However, experts that RPC has consulted do not think any of these are viable, and there is also an issue of funding. In summary, comments received lead to the following conclusions:

#### **Move the skatepark**

This would involve destroying the current park and creating a new one. Cost ~£200K. No other site is available within Rooksdown Park.

#### **Remove the grind box from the top**

Would cost about £3K but might prejudice the integrity of the structure. Not clear it would provide any significant benefit.

#### **Move the teen shelter**

Would cost about £3K, but shelter might be damaged and need replacing at extra cost. Not clear it would provide any significant benefit.

### **Increase the height/thickness of the existing school fence**

We understand from HCC that this is not possible.

### **Erect a 3.5x30m acoustic fence on the school boundary**

Cost about £20K. The foundations required would almost certainly damage the roots of nearby trees. Loss of visual amenity would mean that planning permission may be a problem.

### **Erect a 3.5x15m fence between the school fence and the skatepark**

Cost about £12K. Would provide a hidden area for youths to congregate. Likely to damage tree roots, and be rejected because of loss of visual amenity.

### **Plant vegetation between the park and the school fence**

Cost unclear. Expert advice is that this would take many years to grow so that overlooking was prevented, and would not prevent the noise problems.

### **Add a 3.5x35m bund between the fence and the park, surrounded by a 1.8m fence and planted with eg holly**

Cost £15-20K. Would probably be effective, but BDBC planners think the site is not big enough to support a structure of this size. There is also the issue of maintenance costs which BDBC may not be willing to take on. The fence round the bottom may not be sufficient to prevent access: youths may start to use the bund as a hidden area, and for looking into the school from a much higher vantage point than before.

## **3 Conclusion**

RPC has spent considerable time trying to find a solution to these issues without, it appears, identifying any solution with a reasonable chance of success. It seems that we have neither the expertise nor the resources to make any further progress. Nor do we know who to turn to take the matter further.

## **4 Recommendation**

That the council:

- Does no further proactive work on resolving these issues
- Remain willing to offer whatever practical support it can to viable solutions identified by others
- Retains the £3K budget for the work in reserves for the foreseeable future, to contribute to a viable solution as and when one can be found.

**Cllr Jon Payne**

**Martin Whittaker**

Clerk and RFO

