

Wiltshire Council

Chippenham Area Board

10 September 2013

Item 8 – Chippenham Skate Park Task Group Report

Ian Keasey, Chippenham Resident and Town Councillor

Question 2

Can the Board clarify why the report makes no attempt to address the visual impact of the proposed location in Monkton Park?

It is not enough to say that this will be considered in the planning process as the visual impact (as well as cost implications) are a necessary part of the decision making process alongside the factors already taken into consideration. How can it be possible to make a decision on a location unless all the implications are considered and factored into a cost-benefit analysis of all available locations, existing and potential?

As mentioned in the noise assessment reports, though noting that these were estimates and not a confirmed design, the installation may be quite sizeable and could run from the MUGA area to the footpath bordering the riverfront and lie adjacent to the young children's play area. This would split the park and could well form a visual barrier to those approaching from the Town Bridge direction. It could equally prove a deterrent to those needing to access the broader grassed area of the park through the visual impact but also limiting transit which would be confined to the footpath only. The noise assessment reports (despite being 'tweaked' excessively and adjusted to fit what may be considered a pre-determined decision) mention the need for significant mitigation, even suggesting a 14' tall barrier. As the Board is no doubt aware sound energy obeys the laws of physics and to counteract the potential for disturbance will require particular solutions which may well be costly to provide the most effective mitigation. Taking into account the Environment Agency requirements for an installation on a flood plain this mitigation is likely to be even more costly and significant in its visual impact.

That these considerations are not included in the report might suggest that the Skate Park Task Group has failed in its task by delivering an inadequate, contradictory and biased report. If the Board were to proceed with a decision without thoroughly considering the visual impact then it should only consider those sites where the implications (including visual and cost) can be minimised.