

Report

Report subject: BMX Bike Track Facility

Report to: City Area Committee (Community)

Date: 25th March 2008

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. Members may recall that a group of local youngsters approached the Committee in late 2006 seeking support to provide a bmx / freeride area somewhere in Salisbury.
- 1.2. The originally suggested location bordering Bishopdown Farm / Bishopdown was rejected after significant objections from local residents.
- 1.3. Officers were tasked with seeking an alternative location and reporting back when the situation had been progressed sufficiently.

2. Background:

- 2.1. The Parks Manager has met with the original group on a number of occasions now. It is clear that they are extremely knowledgeable and well motivated with a keen desire to see Salisbury provide a top quality facility to match any others in the area. They have presented their thoughts and ideas in a very professional, well thought through manner.
- 2.2. A working group was formed, facilitated by Officers, and comprising the youngsters driving the scheme (led by Allan Wighton), the WCC Alternative Youth Sports Officer Nick Thrower and Mark Adams (British cycling regional manager) amongst several others.
- 2.3. A copy of their latest report to Officers is attached as *appendix A*. It should be noted that the report has not been altered in any way, it is as the group have submitted and does therefore contain suggestions / comments which may not prove to be achievable in the fullness of time.
- 2.4. During the course of 2007 a site has been identified, a degree of public consultation has taken place with those residents closest by, and with Officer assistance the group have formed themselves into a properly constituted, structured, formal club with a website - www.shiftsalisbury.com. The appendix referred to at 2.3 above gives more detail as to the Club make up etc.
- 2.5. The provision of such a facility was also identified in the Bemerton ward plan recently completed.
- 2.6. Interestingly, bmx racing will, for the first time, become a medal sport at the forthcoming Beijing Olympic games and then of course the London Olympics in 2012.
- 2.7. The discussions are now at a stage whereby Members views are needed as to the principle of moving the scheme forwards



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3. Other Information:

- 3.1. The site which has been identified as being extremely attractive for this provision is an area of land which SDC leases from the Wilton Estate adjoining the Salisbury High School at Bemerton Heath. The area is certainly large enough, is fairly rough ground and has an interesting topography which lends itself to this type of facility.
- 3.2. The land is known locally as the Field of Fun and was very originally the subject of Sparkplug funding about 4 years ago. This scheme was initiated by some local residents to provide outdoor recreation facilities for youngsters on the estate and funded some football posts and other equipment. A location plan of the site is attached as *Appendix B*.
- 3.3. Currently the land is leased to SDC on an annual licence with a rent, however the Wilton estate have intimated that they would consider a more secure arrangement (subject to conditions) should a scheme proceed.

4. The Project:

- 4.1. The project involves the creation of a bmx track using soil and stone dust to create a track, jumps, berms etc.
- 4.2. Some of this can be created using soil on site, though the stone dust will have to be imported along with an amount of sub-soil or equivalent.
- 4.3. In addition a container will be required to create the elevation to act as a start area as well as storage for the club / users. This will however be "buried" under soil apart from the doors so ought not stand out in the landscape.
- 4.4. There are 3 nationally recognised companies in Southern England who actively design facilities like this - all owned and set up by professional riders. Two have been invited to the site and are drawing up designs currently. There is a known science to the designs to maximise the challenge of riding for experienced riders but minimising the potential for accidents, especially amongst novices. It is important that the track is designed by an approved company therefore.

5. Planning Issues:

- 5.1. The project will require planning consent, the application for which may be expensive as fees are based upon area for a project such as this.
- 5.2. On a wider scale, the land earmarked does potentially form part of the land which the Wilton estate has proposed for inclusion in the LDF for development post 2011 (in effect the Fugglestone extension). This could conceivably have an effect on the project and must therefore be discussed with both the landowner and the relevant Planning officers once more details are known.
- 5.3. It is quite conceivable that even if the Fugglestone extension proceeds (and utilises the proposed bmx area), development on site may well be unlikely to commence much before 2015, thereby giving the bmx project a life of at least 7 years.

6. Finance:

- 6.1. Informal views from those members of the group who have assisted with providing facilities such as this elsewhere, and from the two companies approached suggest a total budget of around £35,000 will be required to bring this project to fruition as the group aspire to. Whilst this is a large sum of money, it is significantly less than would be required for an equivalent sized skatepark or playarea.
- 6.2. The group themselves are highly confident of attracting sponsorship from companies in the bmx market toward the construction along with grant money from a range of sources they are pursuing. They have also been in contact with a range of national magazines who specialise in this market and they too have shown an interest in running editorial etc in support of any project.
- 6.3. The group are requesting that SDC consider funding up to £20,000 of this total with the balance coming from a mix of sponsors and grants which they will pursue.
- 6.4. The Committee could, if it so wishes, fund this either via its reserves or via the planning policy R2 fund.
- 6.5. The group have suggested that they would in effect take responsibility for the facility and undertake the day to day management etc. However the facility will remain Council owned and open to the public, and as such it would be prudent for there to be a revenue budget available to Officers to ensure safety is maintained etc and to supplement the work of the group. Provisionally therefore it is suggested that a figure of around £2,500 p/a recurring is budgeted for pending more details.

7. Summary:

- 7.1. The Shift Salisbury club, along with a number of other key people have undertaken a great deal of work and investigations in trying to achieve a bmx track for Salisbury.
- 7.2. Now that a site has been identified it appears that, subject to the Committee's support, the project could conceivably reach fruition
- 7.3. However it mustn't be underestimated the potential problems around obtaining planning consent, reaching a satisfactory agreement with the Wilton estate and of course the issues around the LDF allocation.

8. Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to determine:

- 8.1. whether or not in principle to approve the request to provide a bmx track on land adjoining the Salisbury High school, Bemerton Heath, subject to a more detailed design report being submitted and if so:
- 8.2. whether or not to support the project financially to a maximum of £20,000 subject to the balance of funds being raised by the group and if so,
- 8.3. that Officers report back when further details are known regarding where funding could come from

9. Implications:

- 9.1. Financial: Contained in the report
- 9.2. Legal: None at this stage, though discussions with the Wilton estate will be on-going regarding security of tenure
- 9.3. Personnel: Contained in the report
- 9.4. Community Safety: The area would create a focus for bmx riders rather than them be potentially causing a nuisance and danger to pedestrians etc elsewhere
- 9.5. Environmental: None at this stage
- 9.6. Human Rights: If approved there may potentially be a judgement to be made between the youngsters seeking to provide a facility and those of the immediate neighbours.

10. Ward(s) Affected: Bemerton Heath (provisionally)