

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: LEISURE COMMITTEE - 21ST SEPTEMBER 1999

SUBJECT: SKATEBOARD RAMP - CASTLE FARM, KENILWORTH

FROM: HEAD OF LEISURE AND AMENITIES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following resolution has been received from the Kenilworth Town Council:-

“RESOLVED that in light of the noise and general nuisance suffered by residents of Brookside Avenue and Fishponds Road, Kenilworth, due to siting the skateboard ramp on Castle Farm, this Council requests the District Council to reconsider the resiting of the ramp or other measures to alleviate the nuisance suffered by local residents.”

Members' instructions are sought.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Members may find the resolution from Kenilworth Town Council slightly surprising in view of the following information.

2.2 This Committee resisted the siting of skateboard ramps for some years, on the advice of your officers, because of the potential problems associated with skateboard facilities. The main mover in getting skateboard facilities was in fact Kenilworth Town Council, who held a public meeting at the Council House, chaired by the Mayor, where the almost unanimous verdict of the meeting was that skateboard facilities were required in Kenilworth. I attended that meeting, on behalf of this Committee, and made the point that whilst no-one would disagree with the desirability of a skateboarding facility, the problem in Kenilworth and indeed other parts of the district, was the actual site. It was pointed out that there are only three sites in Kenilworth controlled by this Authority, discounting Crackley Woods and Kenilworth Common and these are Bates' Memorial Field, Abbey Fields and Castle Farm. Bates' Memorial Field is totally surrounded by houses and therefore unsuitable and Abbey Fields would clearly not find favour with the majority of people who lived in the town. That left Castle Farm, and it was pointed out that there were problems here with the houses in Brookside Avenue and Fishponds Road. It was however felt that Castle Farm was the most acceptable of the options, and a ramp was sited, after a public consultation morning, on the advice and with the full agreement of a number of Kenilworth Town Councillors. There are only limited places that can be used at Castle Farm, because in the interests of safety, it has to be relatively near the recreation hall, in case a serious accident occurs and an ambulance has to be called, and also in the interests of ensuring that the children using it are not in danger of being abducted or assaulted because of the isolation of the site. Ideally, the ramp would be situated further away from the houses, but this is not possible for the reasons just explained.

2.3 The actual site chosen, which was viewed by Members of this Committee on the recent tour of leisure facilities, is approximately 200m. from the nearest house and hidden by two bands of trees, one a particularly thick band. The skateboard ramp did create some problems initially with the users of the ramp taking a shortcut through an area which is used predominantly by the scouts and guides, but it has been repositioned and that problem has been alleviated.

2.4 Since the ramp was installed, there have been few direct complaints to this Council as a result of the users, and the problems that have occurred have normally been through young people gathering in the early hours of the morning. However, Castle Farm and other open spaces have attracted this kind of behaviour long before the skateboard ramps were installed and it is not possible to directly relate any incidents to the siting of the ramp. By and large, the ramp has been well used, and has clearly resolved some of the problems that had been occurring in the town centre with skateboarders prior to its installation. It is particularly heavily used during the school holidays and seems to have settled down in its pattern of usage quite nicely. The ramp has always received good support from the local police, who do not consider its installation has created undue problems.

3. THE PROBLEM

3.1 Irrespective of your officers' views of the success or otherwise of the facility, it is nevertheless the case that certain residents of Brookside Avenue and Fishponds Road have had the quality of their lives affected by this installation. Whether this is by perception or actuality is difficult to judge, but there can be no argument that it has had a marked effect on the lifestyle of at least one or two families. The resolution talks about "other measures to alleviate the nuisance suffered by local residents" but your officers believe that nothing short of the ramp being removed will meet the requirements of some residents in the area. In view of this, the Committee has a simple choice to make, namely to leave the facility as it is or to have it removed.

3.2 The facility is a wooden structure, which has only a limited lifespan, and it has been relatively costly to maintain since its installation. It is suggested that the ramp has only another one or two years useful life left anyway, and it may be that Members make a decision not to remove it instantly, but not to replace it or repair it further. There is little doubt that skateboarding is not as popular as it was, but there are still some aficionados in the district, and there is nothing to say that the pastime will not become more popular again in the near future.

3.3 For the sake of completeness, it will be possible to increase the number of visits by the Mayfair Park Patrols, but it is simply unreasonable to expect these patrols to resolve every problem incurred on our parks and open spaces.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 There are no direct key issues affected, other than community usage.

5. ACTION REQUIRED

5.1 Members are asked what action, if any, they wish to take as a result of the resolution.

Dale G. Best
Head of Leisure and Amenities

Background Papers: Letter from Kenilworth Town Clerk Assistant dated 24th August 1999

Contact Officer: Dale G. Best
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Areas in District affected: Kenilworth Abbey

31 Aug 1999
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