THE FUTURE OF NORBURY PARK

Preliminary assessment

Area of proposed BMX track shown at community event 20 February 2016

Design Response

The proposals seek to improve the value of the park both for wildlife and for the people who use the park on a regular basis. In the first phase wildflower meadows will be created around the perimeter of the park supporting a variety of birds and insects. Also in the first phase a space will be dedicated to community food growing centred around the existing pavilion subject to viability testing. In the long-term it is hoped that this building will have a community use. The first phase will also see improvements to the play area by Green Lane, the formation of a space for a café close by and new trees, benches, bins and bulb planting throughout the park.

Extract from Norbury Parks to be Proud of Proposals (Croydon Council May 2011)

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21 February 2016
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This assessment of Norbury Park has been written as a result of a growing debate among residents about its future, particularly as a result of the Council’s proposal to install a BMX track, and agreeing to lease the long closed pavilion to the Croydon Amateur Boxing Club.

1.2 These two developments have helped to mobilise residents who have been concerned about the state of the Park to begin to develop their vision for it and come up with a list of ideas for improvements. This in turn has galvanised the Norbury Residents Associations into taking a more proactive role on the Park, especially the newly formed Norbury Avenue & Thornton Heath Residents Association (NATHRA), which is initiating a Friends sub-group, with the support of the other four associations.

1.3 Residents living round the Park are concerned that the BMX track proposal in particular is not appropriate and will not contribute to the creation of a multi-activity park attracting a diverse range of users.

1.4 This assessment looks at all the information known to the author in his capacity as a member of Love Norbury Residents Associations Joint Planning Committee (JPC) up to 20 February when a community event was held by the Council about the two proposals. It examines the history and character of the Park today, visions for the future, the relevance of the Council’s Local Plan consultation, the details of the BMX track proposal, the planning justification, the objections, the proposed use of the pavilion by the Boxing Club, and the problems involved in the Council’s public consultations.

Some key facts

1.5 The following are key facts about the Park and the track proposal.

- The Park has been neglected in terms of having an incremental programme to provide extra facilities and improvements.
- The last tranche of improvements was in 2011-12.
- The Council has changed its approach to improvements to the Park since 2012, in respect for whose benefit improvements are for, and a change from BMX trail to track.
- The Park is valued by the residents who live around and want to see further improvements that make it more attractive to a diversity of users regardless of age, gender, disability or race.
- The newly formed NATHRA is forming a Friends of the Park group, with the support of the other four Norbury Residents Associations.
- If approved the track will only be operating for supervised training on Saturdays.
- It will be unsupervised for six days a week.
- Its size will be 70m (n230ft) x 40m (n131ft), with a maximum height of 3m (n.10ft).
- It will cost £99,995, plus maintenance and running costs.

Recommendations

1.6 Arising out of this assessment are the following series of recommendations.

(1) That there be a round-the-table meeting involving the Residents Associations, the emerging Friends of Norbury Park, the local Councillors and representatives of the objectors and supporters to evaluate the outcomes of the community event on 20 February.
(2) That the officers explain why they have changed the aims for improvements for the Parks without apparently seeking agreement to this by a relevant Council Committee.

(3) That the officers clarify why the 2012 planning permission for the community garden and hardstanding for a mobile kiosk was not implemented.

(4) That the officers make public the report prepared by the Sports Development Officer recommending Norbury Park as the site for the track.

(5) That the Police be asked to clarify what their view is on the BMX track proposal.

(6) That the detailed budget for the creation of the BMX track and its maintenance and running costs be provided.

(7) That an explanation be provided of why the idea was changed from a BMX trail to a track.

(8) That the officers consider aborting the BMX track scheme and seek approval to safeguard the £99,995 Section 106 money for spending on other improvements in the Park.

(9) That the officers work with the NATHRA’ Friends of Norbury Park group on the development and implementation of the ideas for improvements.

(10) That there be discussions with the Boxing Club about developing a wide range of activities in the pavilion as a community centre of which the Club may be a part of, and on the possibility of going into partnership with Love Norbury to open up the upper hall in Norbury Library and not using the pavilion.

(11) That the officers make public the feasibility study on the proposed de-culverting of the Brook through the Park for consultation with the Friends of Norbury Park.

(11) That the officers discuss with the Friends of Norbury Park how to improve drainage.

(12) That the Residents Associations and the local Councillors establish a Norbury Neighbourhood Forum to enable the regular discussion of the range of issues that affect the area, and to invite other groups in the area to become members, like the emerging Friends of the Parks, the allotment society, the Norbury (Hall) Park tennis club, Norbury Mums, and faith groups, as a step towards implementing devolution of decision making to neighbourhood level as recommended by the Croydon Opportunity & Fairness Commission.

1.7 This assessment is a personal one. Its status is ‘preliminary’ because the Council has organised a community event about the BMX track on Saturday 20 February, and it is hoped that a meeting will be held between it and interested parties to evaluate the outcomes of the day. This may require this assessment to amended to form a background document for use in discussions on the future of the Park in the coming months.

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2. SOME HISTORY OF THE PARK

2.1 The area in which the Park lies was fields well into the earlier 20thC owned by Pembroke College. In 1882 a circular cattle trough was donated by Dr. H. Pratter after the closure of the Croydon Cattle Market, and is still in the Park. In 1920 the College leased the land to the North Surrey Golf Course until 25 December 1934. It was purchased by a builder who then sold it to the Corporation of Croydon.

2.2 The area along Norbury Brook has been used for allotments since before 1954.

The Allotments

2.3 Part of the land was used to build Norbury Manor Girls High School which opened in 1958. This is now Norbury Park Business & Enterprise College of Girls.

2.4 The Park was officially named in 1956. It covers 11.5 acres. Key developments in the Park since have been:

- the building of the pavilion at a cost of £5,152 in 1956.
- the laying out of a children’s play area in 1969/70.
- the culverting of the Brook in concrete running under the Park after the allotment area concrete.
- the installation of two large soakaways with covers as aids to drainage.
- the ending of organised football because of the waterlogged nature of the park and the Council putting up the charges.
- the taking away of the goal posts.
- the closure of the pavilion about 8 years ago.
- the provision of the multi-games court (MUGA) area at the London Rd car park end of the Park in 2001 with a maximum fence height of 3m.
Improvements 2010-12

2.5 Between 2010 and 2012 the Council had a Parks to be Proud project of £1.5m to improve parks and green spaces.

2.6 In the lead up to the project the public were asked to vote in November/December 2009 for which of 15 parks and open spaces should have works carried out. Nine were chosen by the public. Further consultation up to 30 May 2010 was carried out on what improvements people would like. Norbury Park received 283 votes with a list of short and long term and long term improvements.

2.7 The improvements listed in a Council paper Norbury Parks to be Proud of Proposals (May 2011; http://planning.croydon.gov.uk/DocOnline/89664_6.pdf) as a result are set out on the page 7.

2.8 The design concept explained in the report was as follows:

Design Response
The proposals seek to improve the value of the park both for wildlife and for the people who use the park on a regular basis. In the first phase wildflower meadows will be created around the perimeter of the park supporting a variety of birds and insects. Also in the first phase a space will be dedicated to community food growing centred around the existing pavilion subject to viability testing. In the long-term it is hoped that this building will have a community use. The first phase will also see improvements to the play area by Green Lane, the formation of a space for a café close by and new trees, benches, bins and bulb planting throughout the park.

2.8 The Council then implemented the following:

- play area improvements
- enhancing the park entrances
- creation of a wild flower meadow
- seats and benches
- spring bulb and tree planting.
List of Improvements

Following the public vote the following short term improvements are proposed: For which there is funding available

- Improvements to the play facilities to include a modest café kiosk and seating area;
- Creation of a wildflower meadow;
- Provision of a space to develop a community garden as part of the Mayor's Capital Growth programme; and
- Miscellaneous improvements including seats, and benches, spring bulb and tree planting.

Following the public vote the following long term improvements are proposed: For which there is no current funding available

- Creation of robust floor lighting along the footpaths;
- Improvements to the pathway network (major);
- Restoration of the Norbury Brook;
- Improvements to the entrances and the park boundary;
- Fitness activity trail for children;
- WiFi access point;
- Tree planting;
- BMX trail; and
- Direction and information signage
2.9 Proposed longer term improvements included:

- a fitness activity trail for children
- park boundary
- BMX trail

2.10 The Council then implemented the following:

- play area improvements
- enhancing the park entrances
- creation of a wild flower meadow
- seats and benches
- spring bulb and tree planting.

2.11 Proposed longer term improvements included:

- a fitness activity trail for children
- park boundary
- BMX trail

Community Garden and Mobile Catering Unit

2.12 Planning permission for a community garden and hardstanding to park a mobile catering unit to be used for take-away purposes was granted on 18 November 2011, but not implemented. It would have been sited around the access road from Harefield Rd, the car park and the pavilion.
The officers report to the Planning Committee on 17 November 2011 stated:

- ‘The community garden area would be located to the north of the park, and would incorporate the existing hardstanding area and pavilion which are accessed from Harefield Road.
- Due to the location of access controls, the existing public toilets to the south west of the pavilion building would remain open to all users of the park and not just those of the community garden.
- Various horticultural uses are proposed for the space. Communal and individual growing areas would be provided, alongside fruit cages, an orchard, an area of grape vines and an area with bee hives.
- It is anticipated that the garden would support a ‘garden club’ of 30 to 40 members.
- Amended plans have been received during the consideration of the application. The north eastern corner of the proposed community garden is now proposed to be retained as an area which is not cultivated, in order to retain the existing trees.
- The boundary would be formed of a type of mesh fencing which would then have plants trained up it to become a ‘living wall’.
- The hardstanding for a catering unit is proposed to be sited level with the entrance to the park between 213 and 215 Green Lane, adjacent to the existing playground area.’

There were five objections and 4 supporting from 32 neighbouring residents.

- The provision of a hardstanding would reduce greenery within the park
- A catering unit would produce noise, smells and litter.
- People should not park on Harefield Road or use it for accessing the community garden, which would present health and safety issues.
- Events in the community garden would create noise and disruption.
- The area proposed for use as a community garden was used as a dump in the 1970s, and the land may still be contaminated.
- The community garden should be relocated.
- The catering unit may encourage anti-social behaviour and congregations of young people.

The community garden and the hardstanding for the mobile kiosk were not implemented.

**Norbury Avenue entrance improvements**

In December 2012 the planning officers agreed under delegated powers to an application to carry out improvement works as follows:

- Norbury Avenue entrance proposal comprises of installation of metal railings and brick pillars
- replacement signage
- widening of existing tarmac area
- installation of metal bollards

These works were implemented.
Sources

History:
http://www.londongardensonline.org.uk/gardens-online-record.asp?ID=CRO048

Mrs M. A. Winterman, 'Croydon's parks: an illustrated history' (LB Croydon, 1988).

Multi Games Area planning application 2001: 01/00618/P: no documents on planning register.

Norbury Parks to be Proud of Proposals (May 2011)

Norbury Park Community Garden:
Report to Planning Committee 17 November 2011:
Decision Letter 18 November 2011:

Norbury Park Norbury Avenue entrance planning application 12/02653/P:

BMX Track 2015:
Revised Design and Access Statement:
Planning Committee 17 December 2015 report.
3. **THE PARK TODAY**

Norbury Park 15 February 2016

‘It is like Hyde Park in the summer with footballers, cricketers, bicycles, commuters and young families. We have very little space in the north of the Borough and multiple occupation of premises without gardens.’

(Description of the Park at the Joint Planning Committee public meeting held on 14 December 2015)

3.1 The Park is mainly a large grass area.

3.2 The entrance from Norbury Avenue/London Rd is just past the boundary wall of the former Police Station. In the paved area before the entrance is a mechanised toilet facility. On the right just after entering the park is a stone commemorating the creation of the modern Borough of Croydon, laid there in 2015.

Croydon Stone illustrating litter problem

3.3 The back of the former Police station boundary is parallel with the park with a triangular piece of the car park and metal fencing running along the park. Visitors can also walk straight into the Park from the car park. The path runs between the fence and a row of trees.

3.4 There are two entrances off Green Lane. The first is at the end of Harefield Road, which also is vehicle access to a path down to a small car park area next to and servicing the pavilion. The second entrance is opposite the end of Norbury Hill near the boundary with the Business School.
3.5 There is a narrow pedestrian entrance from Heatherset Gdns from which people can walk across to the pavilion. This path divides in two; a short stretch going to the Harefield Road entrance, and the long stretch running down to the boundary with the allotments, and continues with them on its right into an alley between the Girls College.

3.6 A long path from Harefield Road runs across the Heatherset Gdns path to join the path from Norbury Avenue/London Rd. This path goes through the Park past the play area to the second Green Lane entrance.

3.7 Together the Park, the allotment area and the playing field of the College are a substantial lung of open space and greenery in an area which is being increasingly developed with more homes and rising population.

3.8 A major problem with the Park when there are heavy periods of rain especially in winter is it becomes very waterlogged making its use very difficult, especially for informal games activities. The stretch of Norbury Brook which runs through the Park after the allotments is culverted in concrete.

3.9 During the dry periods when the water table is lower lots of people use the Park for picnics, cricket, hockey, and informal football.

3.10 There are many concerns about the way the Park is currently being used especially:

- the water logging periods of heavy rain and the inadequacies of the drainage system;
- the likelihood that the concrete used to culvert Norbury Brook through the Park is not porous so that no water is drained into it;
- the serious litter problem, not helped by lack of bins and poor collection by the Council’s contractors;
- drinking in the park leading to cans being left and not put in the bins or taken home;
- people defecating on the grass;
- noise problems from the use of MUGA;
- conflict on existing paths between walkers and cyclists.

3.11 While some people think the lack of lighting is a disincentive to people to walk through the park when it is dark, others consider that light along the paths can create dark areas which can give a false impression of safety.

3.12 Litter and overfull bins are a problem.
4. VISIONS FOR THE PARK

“We should preserve our London parks and green spaces as it is critical for the personal development of our children to have contact with nature.” - David Attenborough (quoted by objectors to the BMX track).

4.1 The residents around the Park who are opposed to the BMX track have set out their constructive ideas for the future of the Park. The wish to see improvements to the Park (and Norbury Hall Park) is shared by residents in the wider area on both sides of London Rd. This was evident at the public meeting organised by the JPC on 14 December 2015, which supported the idea of establishing Friends Groups, and the launch meeting of NATHRA on 28 January 2016. There was a clear wish for proper maintenance of the parks, with landscaping parks and a broader range of activities to be provided. Constructive ideas and support for a Friends Group were also given by the those attending the meeting on 15 February 2016 convened by the JPC.

4.2 The growing list of ideas is as follows:

- Improve drainage/reopen the river, through the park so that all areas of the park, as opposed to just the footpaths, are usable all year round.
- Increase the size of the litter bins. We have been informed that having more bins will cost more money. Larger bins should obviate this cost and reduce littering.
- Provide two large bins and appropriate signage adjacent to the school entrance on Kensington Avenue and the pathway leading onto Norbury Avenue, where most littering occurs. This might be supplemented with “environmental awareness talks” in the school population.
- Provide the allotment society with a large compost bin to reduce littering of footpaths with overripe pumpkins etc.
- Multilingual signposts advising against littering and using the park as a toilet.
- Upgrade and increase the number of benches.
- Lighting, along the pathways.
- CCTV surveillance.
- Water and wildlife feature.
- Picnic area.
- Outdoor gym.
- Lawn tennis facility.
- Dedicated cycle pathway along the perimeter of the park.
- Need for wider footpaths.
- Organised community events including sports days.
- The pavilion should be a community centre with activities that meet the needs of a wide range of local residents from children to the elderly.
- If the Boxing Club goes ahead it should call itself a sports activities club offering other activities including martial arts
- Paddling pools
- Play areas
- Adult fitness zones
• Landscaping
• Making the Brook a feature
• Walled gardens
• Variety of sports areas and pitches
• A nature reserve with pond
• Adult gym facilities like on Mitcham Common
• Proper track surface for jogging and running with marker posts to indicate distance
• A café
• A temporary van offering refreshments
• Improvements to children’s play area
• Outdoor table tennis tables
• Picnic tables with chess and draughts
• A garden club (which is of interest to pupils at the College)
• Basketball, cricket, football, table tennis.

4.3 NATHRA is applying for a £2,000 grant from the special Conservation Volunteers project covering the area between St Helen’s Rd/Craignish Crescent/Dalmeny Rd, and Green Lane for the embryonic Friends group to undertake planting flower beds, including at the Norbury Avenue entrance. The strategy is to build up a track record which will make it easier to obtain funding for large projects in the future. Many funders want to be sure that organisations have a track record of delivering. It has been suggested that at some stage European funding should be explored.

4.4 The key vision is for a Park that caters for all age groups, ethnicities, and the disabled. At the moment a significant number of users are teenagers and young men. The development of the park needs to ensure that there is a balance. The more activities attracting a diverse range of users will make the Park safer and more people will feel comfortable using it.

Note:
Conservation Volunteers. www.tcv.org.uk. Project Officer. lppnun@tcv.org.uk.
5. THE COUNCIL’S LOCAL PLAN

5.1 In November and December 2015 the Council consulted on changes to its Local Plan policy and proposals framework (Croydon Local Plan Partial Review) which will influence planning policy through to 2036. The JPC submitted comments and recommendations on it.

Norbury Brook

5.2 The Council states: ‘Where possible, the Norbury Brook should be de-culverted’. (Strategic Policies. para 7.54).

It explains that this will be carried out by Croydon Council, developers, the Environment Agency, GLA, Thames Water and neighbouring local authorities. ‘A pre-feasibility assessment has been carried out for sections of the Norbury Brook within Norbury Park, with further assessment required of the initial options. Capital funding, CIL, planning obligations and enabling development required.’ (CIL = Community Infrastructure Levy)

5.3 The JPC understood that de-culverting would allow parts of Norbury Brook to flow onto open land e.g. through the parks. It would be concerned if de-culverting involved flooding of back gardens that run down to the Brook. It regretted the fact that the RAs have not be presented with the pre-feasibility assessment.

5.4 In its comments the JPC recommended that the Local Plan be amended to make it clear what de-culverting will involve and where it is likely to take place.

Quality and Access to Local Open Spaces

5.5 The JPC welcomed the following: ‘Emphasis will be placed on improving quality and access to local open spaces. New and existing Green Grid links to Biggin Wood (a remnant of the Great North Wood), Norbury Park and other open space in Norbury, will be focussed on, with way finding to encourage use.’ (Strategies para 7.55 - Green Grid and Open Space)

Local Green Spaces

5.6 The JPC also welcomed the proposed designation as Local Green Spaces of Biggin Wood, Green Lane Sports Group, Norbury Hall, Norbury Park, Northwood Rd Recreation Group and Pollards Hill. It has recommended the following addition to the Local Plan:

- ‘The Council will work with partners including the Residents Associations to improve the visual, recreational and biodiversity of Local Green Spaces…’
- ‘It will support the formation of Friends groups for the parks and larger open spaces.’

Implementation

5.7 Revisions to the Local Plan are expected to be considered by the Council’s Cabinet in April. There will be a public inquiry. The adoption of the final Local Plan will be in 2017. However, given the Council’s planning approach to Norbury the Residents Associations and the emerging Friends of the Parks groups can use the above quotes in their attempts to discuss detail with the Council.
By early 2015 the idea of a BMX trail mentioned in the 2010 consultation (see para 2.8 above) had been turned into a BMX track. There has been no explanation given for this change.

Consultation on the BMX track idea was held in February and March 2015. A public event was held on 24 February (5 -7pm at the College). 500 local residents were leafleted and posters displayed at the College and Kensington Avenue Primary School. A survey was run which had 12 responses mainly about noise and parking concerns, the small size of the park, and anti-social behaviour, intimidation and cycling nuisance.

Councillor Maggie Mansell consulted representatives of the four Norbury Residents Associations during a meeting on 28 March 2015 reviewing a range of Norbury issues. They were broadly in favour of exploring the principle of setting up of a BMX track in Norbury Park, providing purposeful youth activity under youth workers supervision. The following specific points were made.

- Can there be cycling proficiency courses?
- Can we have a Norbury branding e.g. “London BMX - Norbury” or “Access sport -Norbury” or “Norbury Access Sport”?
- Can there be club competitions between BMX clubs?
- Would there be skateboarders wanting to use the track and would that generate conflict?
- We want purposeful youth activity and it should be with youth workers supervision.
- Can it be linked with the café?
- It would be better north of the pavilion so as to allow other sports e.g. football and cricket.
- We support the pavilion being brought back in use.
- How much will it cost and how much from the council?
- There should be fencing to protect from unauthorised usage.
- There will be no floodlighting so use in the dark will be limited.
- Concern was expressed about the dangers of gangs, drugs and security.
- No after dark usage; but that will reduce winter usage.
- There should be noise screening e.g. trees along the eastern fence; but other BMX bikes are usually concentrating too hard to be making a noise.
- The charity could offer cycling training, have a Norbury BMX team, and that a partnership be explored with De Ver cycles.

They expressed concerns about:

- the dangers of gangs, drugs and security
- the possibility that skateboarders wanting to use the track could generate conflict
- the need for fencing to protect from unauthorised usage
- the need for noise screening e.g. trees along the eastern fence

Opinion was divided over the question of floodlighting. The lack of it will limit use when it is dark, but it would allow increased winter time use into the early evening, and show up any unacceptable activity.

The planning application was open to public consultation. At the time application was placed on the agenda of the Council’s Planning Committee 132 comments had been recorded on the Council’s. the majority objecting and 31 people indicating support. The JPC considered the officers’ report to the Committee. It was aware that Cllr Mansell has met some of the residents who have expressed concern and had requested that steps be taken that mitigate these.

- Re-location to the other side of the pavilion away from the gardens of houses along Green Lane.
- Anti-noise planting.
6.7 In its submission on the consultation stage the JPC supported these suggestions. It also made the following points:

- Although they may not be planning matters the BMX club should be responsible for the litter generated by users and for controlling behaviour. It should also have a complaints policy that responds quickly to any neighbour complaints.
- As BMX training concentrates on skills and that little noise is generated. It is therefore unlikely to attract the allegedly ‘wrong sort’ of young users.
- The concerns needed to be addressed either through planning conditions or lease/contract provisions.

6.8 It hoped that the above issues would be considered by the Planning and Parks Officers. If the application was to be considered by the Planning Committee the detailed comments by residents should be adequately discussed in the report so that residents can see that their concerns have been treated properly.

6.9 The application was considered by the Planning Committee on 17 December 2017. In their report the planning officers summarised elements of the design as follows:

* The area covered would be 70 x 40m, including grassed banks and a 3m grassed border.
* Each ramp for the track will comprise will be between 1m to 3m high.

6.10 The report does not state what this means in feet, but

\[
\begin{align*}
70\text{m} & = 229\text{ft 7.9050 inches} \\
40\text{m} & = 131\text{ft 2.8032 inches} \\
1\text{m} & = 3\text{ft 3.3701 inches} \\
3\text{m} & = 9\text{ft 10.110 inches}
\end{align*}
\]

6.11 3m height is the same as the maximum allowable height for the fence of the Park’s multi-games area. The difference is that the 3m metre high banks are solid whereas the MUGA fence is see through. This could represent a major visual intrusion across from the Gdns entrance across the Park.
7. THE PLANNING JUSTIFICATION

7.1 The Design and Access Statement which formed part of the planning application documents made the following observations with regard to the concerns that were raised.

- Noise

7.2 The track had been relocated to the west of the pavilion enabling improved screening from the rear of Green Lane properties but also by the area of trees and scrub between the car park access road and the track.

- ‘The area will not be floodlit so activity will not be likely after dark.’
- BMX bikes do not make noise against the track surface.’ Experience elsewhere suggests that ‘ there is no evidence to suggest excessive noise would be created by this facility.’
- ‘Noise is not incompatible with use of a public open space, for example football and other ball sports generate a significant level of noise, there are no existing sports bookings at this site.’

Anti-social behaviour

7.3 It argued that there would not be an anti-social behaviour problem.

- The BMX track in Greenwich’s Hornfair Park has helped to rejuvinate it from anti-social behaviour into a healthy, active park.
- The incidences of anti-social behaviour known to the police during 2015 was seven.

Parking

7.4 It argued that car parking would not be a problem.

- ‘There are not anticipated to be any additional vehicles coming to the park as a result of the BMX track.’
- ‘There will not be a car park for the BMX track.’
- ‘Track users will cycle to the park and may use public transport.’
- ‘Authorised vehicles will have access via the existing track from Green Lane.
- There is good public transport through Norbury.

The Design

7.5 It explained the design of the track.

- The track ‘will be a porous limestone dust track with tarmac berm edges and starting point.
- The working area of the track is 70 x 40m, ‘smaller than a standard senior football pitch 92 x 60m.’
- ‘The Track has been designed to fit in with the existing area as much as possible; the banks of the track are grassed in keeping with the surrounding open space.’
- ‘A 3m grassed border will be maintained as a minimum between the track line and the site as recommended by ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents).’
- The track is un-fenced; ‘it is not located near a footpath where conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists could arise’.
- ‘It is unlikely that pedestrians and other cyclists will see any need to cross the track in such a large park.’
‘The track has been sited well away from the main playing field area to ensure that a cricket outfield and football pitches can be accommodated without any user conflict between the sports.’

Management and Maintenance

7.6 The training at the track on Saturdays will be organised by Access for Sport, a charity and company limited by guarantee, which began 10 years ago in North London. Its main aims are:

1. to provide training, support and volunteer opportunities for local people enabling them to become involved in sports coaching,
2. to organise a range of accessible and progressive sports activities for young people, and
3. to provide support and assistance to local organisations interested in delivering sports.

7.7 It seeks to improving health, reduce crime, increasing social inclusion, develop people, build communities by promoting social cohesion through volunteering and shared activity, and increase employment.

7.8 In February 2011 it launched its Access Sport’s BMX Legacy Project as part of the follow-up to the London Olympics. It has set up ‘BMX clubs and tracks, engaged over 4,800 young people, has over 800 new regular participants, undertakes outreach in 52 schools, has trained 34 new cycling coaches, and has engaged 160 new volunteers. BMX is now a sport within the London Youth Games. It runs inclusive BMX sessions for deaf young people, Pupil Referral Units, youth clubs and Special Schools.

7.9 The Council’s Design and Access Statement states that the ‘design ensures the track is highly durable and long-lasting, with very little maintenance required.’

7.10 The track will be open throughout the year and will be used for training by the BMX club ‘initially’ from 9am -4pm on Saturdays. ‘Local school children will use the track for training offered by the cycle club during the week.’

Why Norbury Park?

7.11 The Council states:

- ‘It is ideal for this facility as the open space has the capacity to accommodate a new facility since there are no existing sports pitches in the park.’
- ‘Norbury has good transport links.’
- ‘It is a well-populated area with a number of local schools and community groups.’
• ‘A BMX track would be unique to this part of the borough; there is a need for this type of facility in Croydon.’

The View of the Police

7.12 The Statement quotes the Norbury Police Sergeant: “We’re certainly seeing lower levels of youth violence on Faraday ward and I’m sure that facilities such as the BMX track play their part in helping reduce offending.’

7.13 The planners report to the Planning Committee on 17 December states that the Norbury Safer Neighbourhood Team commented:

‘5.4 The proposed provision of a BMX track in my opinion is considered to be a suitable development for a public park, and would provide enhanced facilities for young people, however careful consideration should be given to safety and security within. Local Police & Emergency Services need the ability to access the track with ease. [Officer comment: Authorised vehicles will have direct access via the existing track on Harefield Gardens off Green Lane, there is a polegate at the entrance to the park secured with a Fire brigade padlock.]

5.5 Activity: an appropriate level of human activity creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety. It is imperative that additional building security is factored in to the Pavilion.’
[Officer comment: The applicant has confirmed that additional security measures will be taken to secure the Pavilion.]

5.6 Management and Maintenance: this application must be designed with management and maintenance in mind, this will discourage crime in the present and the future. There should be a complete shutdown in relation to lighting at the track itself to prevent unauthorised use during the hours of darkness.
[Officer comment: It is proposed that the BMX club take on management and maintenance. There will be no lighting at the scheme.’

Planning Considerations

7.14 The planning application for the track was referred to the Planning Committee on 17 December 2015. The officers’ report set out the planning grounds that the Committee had to consider.

1. The acceptability of the redevelopment of the site/principle of use
2. Impact on the character and appearance of surrounding area
3. Impact on adjacent residential occupiers
4. Parking and highways
5. Landscaping
6. Accessibility
7. Safety and Security

7.15 The report also listed the grounds of objection which are not planning issues:

• Litter
• Car parking in surrounding unadopted roads
• Adverse effect on surrounding property prices
• Lack of toilet facilities in the park

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The Planning Committee considered the application on December 17. The minute states:

‘Ms Jenni Rogers spoke in objection on behalf of local residents

Mrs Alison Plant, Development and Technical Officer, Parks, spoke in support on behalf of the applicant

Councillor Shafi Khan, ward Member for Norbury, spoke in objection, on behalf of local residents. He also mentioned that his ward colleague, Councillor Maggie Mansell, supports the application but was unable to attend this meeting.

After consideration of the officer’s report and the addendum, Councillor Jamie Audsley moved and Councillor Paul Scott seconded the officer’s recommendation to APPROVE planning permission and the Committee voted 4 in favour and 5 against, so this motion fell.

The Committee then voted on a second motion for DEFERRAL for consultation with park users and residents and for the applicant (the Council) to look again at the proposed siting of the BMX track and the whether the facility should be appropriately fenced. This resulted in a vote of 5 in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions, so the application was DEFERRED.’

Notes:

Access Sport: [http://www.accesstosports.org.uk](http://www.accesstosports.org.uk)

Access Sport. Developing BMX with Access Sport’s BMX Legacy Project. (nd.)

Planning Committee minutes 17 December 2015:
Accessible on the Council website via [https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/minutes/committees](https://www.croydon.gov.uk/democracy/dande/minutes/committees) - go to Meeting dates for December 2015 and click on Planning Committee minutes 17 December).
8. QUESTIONS ARISING

8.1 A number of questions and issues arise from the information provided above.

Alternative Sites

8.2 The JPC has been told that ‘Norbury Park was the recommendation of a report which was produced by our Sports Development Officer in conjunction with Access Sport in June 2014.’ (Alison Plant, Services Development Officer, Parks & Leisure, 12 February 2016). Despite requests this report has not been provided.

8.3 An undated briefing note sent by Mary Ann Winterman, Senior Service Development and Policy Officer on 19 February 2016 to the JPC sets out the following re-other potential sites.

‘The Decathlon site (Purley Way) and South Norwood (Croydon Arena) sites for a track build were discussed but are currently looking unlikely due to the slow progress of the large shop/school developments.

The most suitable and likely sites to locate the BMX track are currently:

1. Wandle Park
2. Duppas Hill Park
3. Lloyd Park
4. Rylands Fields

We have been liaising with Green Spaces around suitable parks and to identify which of these locations are feasible and if so the available space / site within them.’

‘There is also a proposal to have the track at the new Quest Academy.’

Demand for BMX Track

8.4 Asked whether any analysis was undertaken on the number of young people in the target age group in each ward, Alison Plant replied to the JPC: ‘The track will be accessible for all. Statistics are available showing the number of young people in all wards, however it is important to note that not all wards have suitable parks.’

8.5 Asked for evidence for a demand for a track from young people and which part of the Borough these live in, she replied: ‘There is a section on BMX/Cycling demand in the London Sport section of the appendix of the Design & Access Statement.’

Location and Wind

8.6 Given the height of whether the site for the track it can be very windy, as was shown during the community event on 20 February 2016. The young BMX coaches present told the writer that while the wind that day was not strong, it was not enough to push people over on their bikes. If it did become strong enough the session would either be cancelled or users would be encouraged to ride on the grass.

Funding

8.7 Alison Plant also supplied the following information on funding.

‘£99,995 has been allocated for the BMX track from Section 106 contributions from developers. ‘The funding must be spent by October 2016 at which point we can apply for a 1 year extension.’

8.8 This appears to be the cost of just laying the track. No sum is given for the spending on funding the club, training and track maintenance?

8.9 A reply to the question ‘How much is in the AS budget for these for 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20? What assurance can be given that this funding will be guaranteed and not stop by 31 March 2020?’ is awaited. The Club’s application to the Mayor’s Legacy Fund has been successful and the Council is will match it with £12,0008. (see para. 18.19 below)
Value for Money

8.10 In response to the question ‘Has a value for money calculation been carried out?’ Alison Plant replied: ‘This is included in the Corporate procurement procedure when the project is tendered.’

8.11 Given the core age group will be 11-15 this means that over £100,000 is to be spent on a tiny proportion of the community.

- How can this be justified as value for money, when the same sum could be spent on facilities that will benefit a wider range of people?
- Procurement procedures are regarded in law as ‘commercially confidential’.
- Therefore it is unlikely that the public will see a ‘value for money calculation’ and therefore be unable to comment on it especially if they consider that £99,995 would be better spent on implementing many of the others ideas for improvements to the park.

8.12 Given the core age group envisaged by the Council as users for the track will be 11-15 this means that over £100,000 is to be spent on a tiny proportion of the community.

8.13 Asked about equalities assessment Alison Plant refers ‘to the Access Sport BMX legacy programme in the Design & Access Statement Appendix which was submitted as part of the Planning Application.’

Maintenance

8.14 On maintenance the following questions need to be answered:

- What drainage measures will be included to ensure that the track does not become water logged?
- How will the grassed areas of the track be protected so that they do not just become areas of mud?

Car Parking

8.15 Despite the officers hope that few track users will come by car it is possible that those of a younger age coming from other parts of the Borough will be brought to the Park by their parents.

- It will be impossible to insist that they park in the car park at the London Rd end of the Park walk up to the track. They are likely to seek to park in the streets closest to the part of the Park where the track will be located.
- The streets around this part of Norbury are densely populated with a continuous parking problem, and residents who live in the nearby un-adopted private roads will be in their rights to refuse entry for vehicles wanting to get near the park except for the emergency services.
- Extra parking aggravation could well encourage angry residents to call on the Council to close the track.
- Is the hardstanding by the pavilion big enough to enable coaches to turn round?

School Use

8.16 The majority of the pupils who go to the two nearest schools, the Girls College and Kensington Ave Primary, are girls. If on the figures cited by the Council the ratio of girls to boys involved in BMX is 30:70, then it is not likely that many girls at the College will want to take part.
8.17 The schools that are further away like Norbury Manor Primary School, or the schools just over the Norbury border in Lambeth and Merton, will face practical difficulties in taking up the offer, especially if they have a high percentage of girls.

- How will they come to the track?
- Given the main roads in the area will they prefer to bring the pupils in mini-buses or coaches which will require to be parked?
- If they have to park in the Council car park at the bottom of the park how much time will it take to walk them up the pupils up to the BMX and back?
- How much time would schools be prepared to devote to trips to the track given travel time and numbers taking part?
- What will the cost of using the BMX track be to schools in terms of transport, staff allocated to escort pupils?

The Proposed Club

8.18 The Council is putting a lot of hope in the BMX track club which will run the Saturday activities.

- How many adult volunteer club members will be needed to undertake the range of tasks outlined for them?
- How much will the course of having criminal records checked be and how will that cost be funded?
- The proposal depends on the proposed BMX club being able to attract and keep volunteers to supervise the training and undertake the management and maintenance. This will require revenue funding.
- Running a facility with volunteers can be difficult because if other life priorities demand their attention, they will not be able to turn up for their organised time slots.
- It is not clear what the maximum number of adults will be needed to supervise the Saturday club.
- How will the cost of criminal records checks be funded?

8.19 On 19 February Mary Ann Winterman, Senior Service Development and Policy Officer, emailed the Joint Planning Committee with an undated note which states:

‘Club development

The application to the Mayors Legacy fund has proved successful to support club development in the borough including all the necessary equipment and coach/volunteer education costs. We have agreed in principle to match fund approximately £12,000.’

The view of the Police

8.20 There appears to be a contradiction over the police views, as the Safer Neighbourhood Team has advised the objectors that it is against the proposal as there is nothing in place in terms of lighting or CCTV, there is a risk of it being a draw for criminality, the police themselves have no capacity to check the Park at night, they want a Public Space protection order on the Park to delay with the drinking of alcohol. They are also concerned about the human faeces problem. The question therefore arises as to whether the Team’s view were misrepresented in the Planning Officers report to the Planning Committee on 17 December, or whether the Team has changed its mind.
The Belittling of the Residents Associations

8.21 The Design and Access Statement stated ‘however it is important to note that views are indicative and not fully representative of the associations. What they forget is that those present were well aware of the range of concerns that their members have through their activities on planning issues, general and annual general meetings.’ It is to be noted that they did not say that the 12 responses to the survey were not representative. The inclusion of the comment about the Associations was clearly an attempt to lessen the importance given to the views of the Associations.
9. OBJECTIONS TO THE BMX TRACK

9.1 When the planning application was considered by the Planning Committee on 17 December 2015, the planners report stated that 98 individual objections and 36 messages of support had been submitted. Two petitions had also been presented with 325 signatures opposing the application. Since then the number of signatures has risen to c700 signatures of residents who consider the Park to be the wrong place for track, and who wish to see a much more diverse range of extra facilities for all age groups.

9.2 The objectors to the proposed BMX track are not opposed in principle to the need for a track in Croydon. They have specific concerns about its proposed location in Norbury Park within their wider vision for developing its facilities.

9.3 They state:

‘Our understanding is that parks are primarily for the recreational use of local residents. Facilities should reflect the local demographics and if they attract outside users this is an added bonus.

We have a play area and a basketball pitch which are oversubscribed.

The large grassy areas are used for cricket, football, kite flying and picnics.

The area by the pavilion is used by trainee cyclists.

Walkers (with and without dogs), joggers, pram pushers, cyclists and smaller children on tricycles work around these activities.

The park currently accommodates the requirements of all age groups with a good range of activities for the young of all ages.

Norbury Park is not the correct location for a BMX track:

- Will aggravate the current problems with water displacement and flooding.
- A BMX track will serve a very narrow and limited age and gender spectrum.
- Does not serve the local demographic and will in fact deny local residents facilities currently in use.’

9.4 The objectors further: ‘A recent survey of opinions from local residents living within the area of Norbury Park showed that though they were not against the idea in principle they were clearly NOT comfortable with this planning proposal and felt that the track would be in the wrong location.’

- ‘This track would be 50 yards from the Kuala Gardens sheltered housing community which also provides safe and secure accommodation for people with learning disabilities. When approached with this proposal they were shocked and upset saying that those who already suffer from severe anxiety would be afraid for their sanity and wellbeing. The older residents of this sheltered complex felt that they too were being let down by the council and the community feels they deserve better.’

- ‘If the emphasis of this project is based on the fact that there is no other BMX cycle track in the whole of Croydon, then because Norbury Park is right on the border of Lambeth, this track would probably be used more by people who live in Streatham and Brixton rather than Croydon.’

9.5 The last objection is not one of hostility towards people in Streatham and Brixton. Many Norbury residents enjoy using Streatham Common and particularly the Rookery. If the BMX track is to service the Borough then it needs to be more centrally located and easier to get to by public transport from other parts of the Borough. Even within Norbury Ward the northern part from Green Lane up to Crown Point/Beulah Hill has access difficulties to the Park because there is no direct public transport link and the steepness of the hill makes cycling difficult.
9.6 The objectors note that one of Lambeth’s BMX tracks is currently having problems with their club volunteers and incurring costs of £50K in order to upgrade and maintain.

Conflicts between cyclists and Park walkers

9.7 They envision conflict between cyclists and walkers

- There are very narrow footpaths criss-crossing the Park and is currently classed as ‘pedestrian only’ with several ‘No Cycling’ notices put in place.
- There is a continual problem with random cyclists racing along these paths which has in the past caused a serious accident to the young son of a local resident.
- This risk is likely increase if as the officers envisage many users of the track will come on their cycles.

Safety

9.8 Safety is a key concern.

- The BMX track and the proposed boxing club will only cater for a narrow age and gender group.
- Parents of the girls who attend the nearby Girls College have stated that they are concerned about the potentially unwanted attentions of young males as these girls walk along the footpath that will run alongside the track on their way to and from school.

Size of Park

9.9 They consider that Park is far too small to build such a large permanent structure.

- There is no place in the park which would not have a serious negative impact on both the environment and the local population who live close by and/or walk through it.
- Lloyd Park is four times as big as Norbury Park and situated right in the centre of Croydon. A BMX track in this location would not only better serve the whole of the Borough but would have better access and transport links.

Drainage Problems

9.10 Because geographically Norbury Park is not far above sea level and has a high water table for many months of the year, they are concerned about its drainage problems.

- The natural springs in the centre of the park then surface above ground thus causing boggy conditions.
- Any permanent structure covering a large area of this small park will therefore cause water displacement and possible flooding.
- With this in mind and the current government’s concerns regarding climate change and clean air, the objectors feel that as a valuable green oasis should be a natural conservation resource in the future.
- This could include a water and wildlife feature, family picnic area, and outdoor fitness equipment thus providing many calm and social activities for all of the wider community whatever age or gender.
10.1 At the same time as the BMX track the Council was exploring how it could bring the pavilion back into use. The Croydon Amateur Boxing Club (CABC) needed to move premises and so discussions started for it to lease the pavilion.

10.2 In August 2015 the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) posed six questions to Councillor, which generate the following response to questions from Mary Ann Winterman.

(1) Is a boxing club being proposed?

(2) Which individual or organisation is promoting the idea of a boxing club?

(3) Would not a boxing club be better based in other premises?

‘Croydon Boxing Club have been negotiating with our Property Team for a lease for the pavilion building in Norbury Park. They are in the process of applying for grant funding from Sport England to refurbish the pavilion. We have also secured some S106 funding for works to the building to make it secure and carry out some internal works to support community use. The lease will stipulate that the club have to provide a certain number of free hours use to the community for events/activities and would be able to charge a reasonable fee for use at other times. If the BMX application is successful the club will have use of the former garage within the pavilion for a workshop and bike store.

The contact in our Property Team for the boxing club lease is Rob Lines and I have copied him into this e-mail’

(4) Who is promoting the idea of a community cafe?

‘I was unaware of a community café proposal but Rob has been in correspondence with somebody about community use so he may be able to provide more detail.’

(5) Why have both proposals not been discussed with the residents associations?

‘The reuse of the pavilion has been handled by the property team so Rob may be able to give more detail. But just for background we do have great problems leasing out our park buildings which are no longer required for their original use. For example a café in the park sound a great idea in the middle of the summer but the reality is that a business has to look at the cold winter months when footfall is low and custom is likely to drop unless they can develop secondary activities to complement the café. Any lease we offer is full repairing and any potential lessee has to cover refurbishment costs. Therefore if we are approached by a group there proposals are considered. We have previously had enquires from a cricket club but they didn’t follow up after initial discussions’
(6) Will planning applications have to be submitted to turn the Pavilion into either a boxing club or community café?

‘With regard to the boxing club they have been advised that they will have to seek any necessary permissions. The use of the building for the club falls within the previous use for sport but if they wanted to amend the exterior then permission may be required. They have been advised they should seek pre app advise before progressing……

With regard to a café permission would have to be sought for change of use to prepare, sell and serve food.’

10.3 With the help of Mary Winterman the JPC has been in discussion with Adam Ballard, the Head Coach & Secretary of the Croydon Amateur Boxing Club.

The Boxing Club and its Views

10.4 The CABC is a registered and affiliated Amateur Boxing Club with England Boxing based within London Amateur Boxing Association Region and South East Division of the Capital. It has been in existence for 85 years supporting the local Croydon community and ensuring that ‘the most marginalised young people (10-25 years of age on average) from excellent and challenging backgrounds, have been welcomed and supported in their development, in safe and inspirational environments supported by local Croydon Volunteers.’

10.5 It prides itself on changing the lives and opportunities of thousands of young people and adults in Croydon, ‘offering positive engaging interventions for both male and female participants giving them alternative activities to Anti Social Behaviour, Drug and Drink Abuse and Street and Gang culture, which we have negated and been recognised by the Met Police as having a positive impact.’

10.6 The Club is currently based in the Scout Hut at the rear of 103 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath. It is not ‘fit for the purpose of sport’, as it has no changing facilities and does not provide enough space.

10.7 The Club says that it meets all London ABA and National Governing Body criteria of child protection, coaching standards and qualifications, delivered under the scrutiny of Sport England and England Boxing Ltd (Olympic National Governing Body).

10.8 It creates and develops ‘external links through other agencies in partnership working and out-reach work’ through education and the Metropolitan Police, including delivering ‘No Barrier Sporting Opportunities for All Sectors of the Community’ focussing on Women and Girls, BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) groups and young people across the Borough.

10.9 In using the pavilion it envisages engaging ‘with other groups and users within the local community, …. to … gain the greatest benefit’ for local people and especially local young people from ‘access to a building which currently has no value’.

10.10 Its volunteers and Management Committee members have a variety of jobs and high profile positions from Met Police Officers, local Businessmen and women and youth workers. The volunteers provide over £8,000 worth of time in monetary terms. With over 80 members the Club has an ethnic mix and a total inclusion policy ‘offering a controlled and inclusive friendly and supportive environment.’

10.11 It is ‘very keen’ to work with the Norbury Residents Associations ‘to increase access to the potential facilities, which will remain as the current footprint with internal and external improvements making the building more attractive to the park users and public.’

(Edited from letter to Joint Planning Committee from Adam Ballard, CABC Secretary, 14 August 2015)

10.12 Following his and the Club Chair’s attendance at the launch meeting of NATHRA on 28 January Adam Ballard emailed the JPC (2 February 2016), making the following points on concerns raised by residents.
Current Anti-social behaviour

10.13 The presence of the club in the park ‘will give us the opportunity to engage with people that may see there are other options than to use the park as a place to drink and drop litter.

- ‘As part of our gym we will act as an outreach group in order to try and get those that are misusing the park to join in our project and we have found in the past that boxing is a great way to accomplish this.’
- ‘In our lease we have agreed that we will dispose of litter within a 20 metre radius of the proposed boxing gym’.

Potential car parking problems

10.14 ‘Although I can not 100% per cent say the boxing club will not mean more cars parked in the streets surrounding the area, I do not think it will ... mass congestion’.

- ‘In our lease we have been given access to park in the park itself on the concrete surrounding the gym, however, after the reception on Thursday I have motioned to the rest of the committee that we do not use the park for parking at all and will have that taken out of the lease, I hope in some way this is seen as a good will gesture and that we are trying to compromise with the local residents.’

The demographic attraction of boxing

10.15 ‘Ever since the Olympics 2012 the sport of boxing has been on the rise’.

- ‘We have been given the opportunity by the Council to use a building that has been empty for 8 years to expand our membership in order to deliver the aforementioned voluntary service to more people within the borough.’
- ‘A lot of the resident’s that were opposed to the boxing club stated that it did not reach a wider demographic. I completely disagree, we have had children as young as five use our boxing gym and adults as old as 65 use our boxing gym.’
- ‘I fear that those opposed are dwelling too much on the “Blood & Gut” images of boxing that were rife on our television screens in the 80's/90's.
- ‘our boxing club is made up with an equal number of people that use the facility to keep-fit and exercise as well as those that wish to box competitively.’

Potential Additional Uses

10.16 ‘I know that people stated that they wanted a “Tea Room or somewhere to keep fit”. I didn’t get the opportunity to propose our schedule/time-table if you will and again explain further lease conditions.’

- ‘The boxing gym is proposed to be open to the “Boxing Club Members” Three Day’s a week in the mid week, Proposed - Monday, Wednesday, Friday. (It will more than likely be open from 4-9.30. The occasional weekend day will be used by the competitive boxers that will need extra training for upcoming bouts. Open to anyone and everyone welcome.’
- ‘The boxing gym is also proposing to hold "Keep Fit Nights" on Tuesday’s & Thursday’s (evenings) - Open to anyone and everyone welcome.’

10.17 A condition of the lease states:

‘It is agreed between the Landlord (Croydon Council) and Tenant (Croydon ABC) that the tenant will hire out the pavilion to Community Organisations, local residents and other groups, bodies or organisations that are located or based in the borough of Croydon and are primarily for the benefit of local residents.’
The Club is ‘completely open in making the pavilion available for weekly “Coffee Meetings” for those who wish to attend and I am sure we can facilitate this as well so that none of the local residents need to pay. It would be a gesture of good will from the boxing club. I will obviously have to speak to the council in terms of our lease that we are able to waiver hire charge but I don’t foresee it being a problem.’

‘All I want is a community park to be used for the best and I believe making an voluntary organisation that has been around for 85+ years and is in desperate need of a new venue move its base to Norbury Park is a positive. I can completely understand that there may be an initial disruption in terms of added vehicles in the surrounding areas however, as I resident of Thornton Heath/Norbury border, I am more concerned that as a community we do all we can to ensure the building doesn’t go on for another 8 years without being used.’

10.18 Adam Ballard is proposing to set up a meeting to discuss the Club project.

**The Pavilion and the BMX track**

10.19 If the BMX track and the boxing club’s use of the pavilion both go ahead then the pavilion will be used to store the BMX bikes.

**Pavilion Use by Boxing Club**

10.20 A planning application to enable use by the Club of the pavilion for sports and leisure use was submitted to the Council. A certificate of use was approved by the Planning Officers on 8 February. If it wants to make alterations to the inside of the building it will need to submit a further application.

**Alternative Venue**

10.21 A suggestion has been made to the JPC that the Boxing Club would be better housed in the upstairs hall of Norbury Library as part of the range of activities that will be developed if Love Norbury is successful in its request to take on the management of the hall.
11. THE PROBLEM OF CONSULTATION

11.1 In its letter of comment on the BMX track planning application the JPC suggested that the way that the BMX proposal was handled illustrated the problems facing local Councillors, Residents Associations and officers in engaging in consultation.

11.2 In an email dated 11 August 2015 to Councillor Maggie Mansell the Committee expressed its concern:

- that neither it nor the individual RAs had been consulted on the detail, despite the general support for the project at the meeting with her at the Library.
- that there had been no discussion with the Associations about ideas for a community café or a boxing club in the pavilion.

11.3 It proposed that the relevant Parks officers should meet with members of the RAs to discuss the future of both Norbury and Norbury Hall Parks, other ideas the officers have for them, the ideas bubbling up within the RAs and the need to set up Friends groups.

11.4 Cllr Mansell commented back ‘Cllr Councillors were not consulted either. I had to ask what had happened.’

11.5 In responding the Committee explained:

- that while the Committee appreciates that officers are working under pressure, aggravated by the increase in planning applications and the year on year effects of cuts forced on the Council by the Government
- that Councillors and senior managers need to re-think the way they approach new projects such as the BMX, so that right at the beginning there is consultation with Residents Associations and other neighbourhood groups.
- This can save time in the long run caused by the amount of email etc that can be generated in reaction of rumour and lack of detailed information.

11.6 It suggested that:

- the local Councillors should press the officers to make sure that they approach the RAs at an early stage when they are discussing new initiatives for the area, and to consider how they (the Councillors) deal with significant issues in the area, and take the initiative at an early stage to hold public meetings about them some of which may be in partnership with the Residents Associations.
- given the support of the Croydon Opportunity & Fairness Commission for more devolution down to neighbourhoods, it is time to discuss the establishment of a joint Committee of Councillors and the Residents Associations for Norbury, an idea put to the local Councillors on many occasions.

End.