

REPORT OF **Head of Communities & Place**
To: **Communities & Resources Committee**
Subject: **Bideford Skate Park Acoustic Screen Update**
Date: **30th October 2022** **Reference: SK/amr**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update Members on the design, construction options and budget available for the installation of the acoustic screen to the perimeter of the skate park concrete plaza to obtain a decision on the most appropriate solution for the delivery of the screen.

1. INTRODUCTION

Members have previously allocated a capital budget for the installation of an acoustic screen to the western side of the concrete plaza of the Bideford Skate Park.

Original design options were developed in 2021 and orders were placed for the provision of a clear acrylic screen system in March 2022. The original system proposed is no longer available and the alternative systems identified are no longer deliverable within the original budget.

This report sets out the current status of the project, the options available and budget costs to enable a decision to be made on the most appropriate way forward for the installation.

2. REPORT

Bideford Skate Park was opened in July 2019 and is one of the Council’s most valued and popular recreational facilities.

Following a series of complaints from property owners in the vicinity, associated with the noise from the use of the Bideford Skate Park, and a subsequent Ombudsman review of the case an acoustic consultant was appointed to independently assess the noise transfer and significance for the neighbouring properties to the west of the concrete plaza. Recommendations for mitigation measures were provided and were developed into a design solution comprising the formation of a clear acoustic screen to wrap around the western end of the plaza.

The noise monitoring undertaken by the Environmental Health Officer as part of the response to the Ombudsman review concluded that the noise levels at the neighbouring properties does not surpass the threshold for statutory nuisance. However, it was agreed by Members to construct an acoustic barrier to mitigate the noise complaints from neighbouring properties.



The original acoustic screen was designed to be 3m high to the entire western end of the plaza with returns to the north and south sides to reduce the breakout of noise from the plaza and enhance the overall structural integrity of the screen system. Following further negotiations between the acoustic consultant, RoSPA and the acoustic specialist appointed by the neighbouring property owners, the height of the screen was increased to 4m to further limit the transmission of noise to the upper parts of the neighbouring properties.

The design of the system solution comprises a series of metal posts with clear acoustically rated acrylic panels between the posts. An order was placed with a framework contractor for the supply and installation of the system in March 2022. Unfortunately, due to material shortages and supply challenges in Europe, the procurement of the specialist rated acrylic prevented the work from progressing within the original timeframes expected. As the supply difficulties continued prices increased with no certainty of a delivery to the UK to the point where the original system solution could no longer be delivered.

Alternative systems were considered to achieve the acoustic properties required without the use of acrylic sheets. An acoustically rated timber fencing system was identified as a suitable alternative, but the foundation design and installation costs for the timber system were not deliverable within the remaining budget available.

Further options have been considered comprising free standing pre-cast concrete wall panels, but the cost of these items can only be considered for a partial installation for the most significant western elevation of the concrete plaza to keep within the original budget.

We have also considered a hybrid option of a 2m high acoustic earth bund with a 2m acoustic timber fence on the top. This is to design out the ground conditions which have affected the overall budget. This option would provide a compromise in original design and subject to slope calculations and acoustic review a potential reduction in acoustic performance.

Attached are some images of the original proposals and more recent options for ease of identification.

The original budget for this project was allocated in 2020. The budget of £60,000 was based on a system and expected installation costs available at that time. It is now clear that this budget, with the subsequent increase in height and scope change was insufficient for the original proposals. Significant changes in the market availability and substantial material price increases have also put further pressure on the budget available. Consideration also needs to be taken on the additional costs being proposed due to the poor ground conditions for the 4m high fence. The effect of wind loading, longevity and public safety have all added to the cost implications.

Wider pressure on the Council finances prevents us from progressing with this project if the final solution cannot be delivered within the remaining budget available.

The table overleaf details the remaining budget available and installation costs for the options available for the project. We are faced with a budget overspend or a compromised solution to deliver a partial installation within the remaining budget available.



	Costs (£)	Comments
Original Budget	60,000	Original Allocation
Capital Programme Uplift	66,000	10 % addition from Members
Costs to date	5,859	External Specialists
Balance of Budget available	60,141	As of October 2022.
Acrylic Acoustic Screen		No longer available
Acoustic Timber system with Helical Foundation & Posts	188,250	Potential vandalism and fire risk. Costs dependant on depth of foundations required.
Pre-cast Concrete Walling	75,000	Potential cost to full length.
Earth Bund & Timber Fence	70,000	Potential reduction in acoustic performance. Lower visual impact than concrete wall option.

Continuing with the full installation will significantly exceed the budget available.

As an alternative, delivery of a pre-cast concrete walling system to the western side of the plaza would achieve a partial solution within the balance of the budget available.

We have not obtained full costs and programme details for the alternatives but would expect that delivery could be achieved before the spring of 2023. The costs for all the options are currently subject to change due to the volatility of the construction and supply markets.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

No input expected from the legal team at this time.

The potential for further input will increase if additional complaints are received from the neighbouring property owners and the matter is escalated. There is an associated reputational impact for the authority in not progressing with the previous commitment to provide an acoustic screen. Equally there is reputational risk if the public perceive that the Council has paid for something that they are not obliged to deliver.

Financial Implications

The original budget has been uplifted to accommodate the construction inflation as directed by Members across all capital projects. The budget available remains inadequate to deliver the original concept as detailed in the report. The allocation of further funding for this project will impact on the Councils overall financial position.

Human Resources Implications

Delivery will be handled by our in-house team with design and engineering support from external consultancies.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

As part of any future development, due consideration will be given to the environmental and sustainability implications of the development aligned with the strategic objectives of the Council. Opportunities for such initiatives are limited for a structure of this nature.



Equality/Diversity

Every opportunity will be considered for compliance with Council policy throughout the delivery and handover process.

Risk Management

A risk log has been developed and any significant risks will be routinely monitored and brought to the attention of Senior Management and Members where appropriate through the relevant working groups.

Installation risks will be managed by the delivery team taking due account of the use of the facility and wider environment.

The ongoing risk of material price increases remain. Notice has already been received from the timber fencing contractor that the material prices will no longer be held at the previous price quoted.

Over the past twelve months the communications team have been managing the complaints from the neighbouring property owners. The risk of further complaints are likely to continue in the absence of any installation.

The original proposal for a clear acoustic acrylic screen was developed in consultation with the Planning Team and Police Crime Liaison Officer. The clear screen was intended to maintain visibility across the site. Providing a timber screen, pre-cast concrete walling or earth bund/fence solution will prevent visibility across the site. We may therefore need to consider the installation of an additional CCTV camera installation to the western end of the site, looking back towards Kingsley Road to provide coverage behind the acoustic walling.

The cost for this additional security coverage have not been factored into the costs above but will typically be in the order of £8,000 for the trenching, cabling, mast, and connectivity to the network for off-site surveillance.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022

Theme: Our Council.

Deliver quality services to business and residents; understand what matters to our customers.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None anticipated at this stage.

Climate Change

The scheme will be developed in line with the Council objective that climate change and biodiversity is at the heart of governance and process.

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation – 12th October 2022.



Councillor R. Hicks Lead Member for Property & Economy.

*The lack of progress is disappointing, but understandable given the lack of available materials and subsequent price increases affecting the capital programme.
Given the financial pressures facing the Council at this time, the level of expenditure required for this project requires careful consideration.*

Project Working Group – Updated September 2022.

Leader, Ward Members – Various input throughout the design process.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Problems with the supply and availability of materials for the original acoustic screen have prevented this project from being deliverable. The delays involved and the options for alternatives are no longer possible within the original budget available. Officers therefore seek direction from Members on whether they are prepared to increase the budget to proceed with the alternative solution options or deliver a reduced scheme within the remaining budget available.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members consider and approve one of the following options for this project and recommend to full Council that:

- a. Increase the budget available for this project to circa £188,250 to deliver the scale of acoustic barrier originally proposed utilising the most cost-effective alternative. This would enable the desired acoustic outcome. However, this would come at a significant cost implication to the Authority, to reduce the noise impact of something not deemed a 'statutory nuisance' by the Environmental Protection Team following detailed monitoring of the noise on site.
- b. Provide a precast concrete solution to achieve the same requirements as a more cost-effective solution in the order of £75,000. This would create a significant visual impact and may be subject to complaints. Maintenance costs are likely to be low for this solution.
- c. Provide a 2m high earth bund with a 2m high timber acoustic fence on top, to create a 4m high barrier at an approximate total cost of circa £70,000. This would provide a softer appearance to the acoustic barrier and allow for planting of the bund on both sides of the acoustic fence. This helps mitigate the poor ground conditions we are facing. However, this will form a terrace for visibility across the adjacent football ground. Acoustic performance may be reduced, subject to slope profiling and stability calculations required, as the fence may need to be further back than the recommended 2m distance from the Skate Park by Acoustic report.

Or resolve to:

- d. Reduce the extent of the work proposed for a timber acoustic fence to remain within the budget of £60,000, accepting that this will be a compromised scheme. This would not meet the recommendations of the Acoustic reports and as such the benefit would be reduced for the affected properties.



- e. Cancel the current project and put the full proposals on hold until funding is available, utilising the capital allocation for other current projects with budget pressures. This would mean the Council would fail to deliver the proposed acoustic solution expected by the complainants. However, the continued rise in material and construction costs could have both significant financial and public perception implications on the Council by users who enjoy the open public amenity that has been provided.

Consultations: Date of Consultation – September 2022

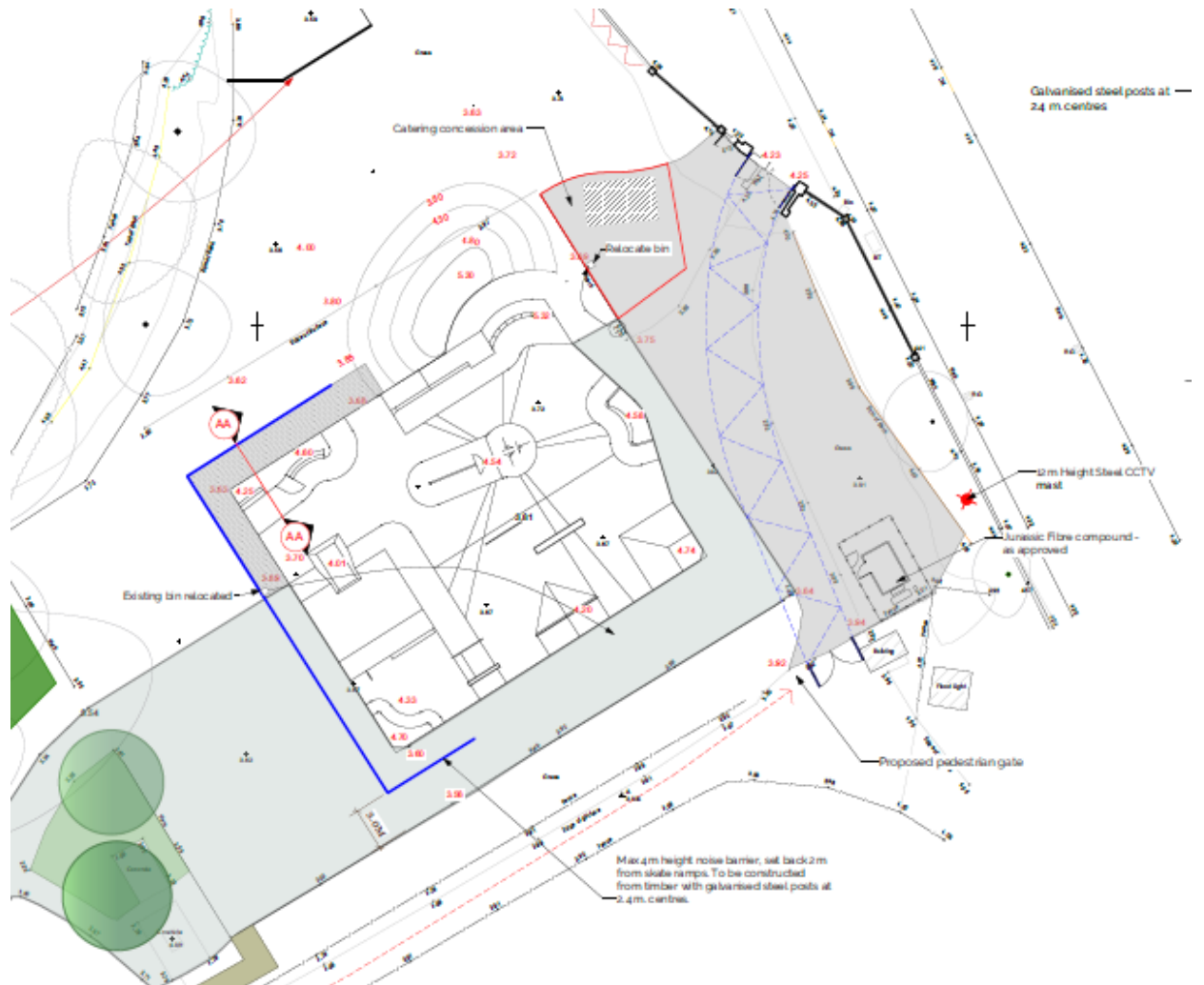
 Officers Consulted – SMT & Lead Member

Contact Officer: Adrian Redwood

Background Papers: None provided.



SUPPORTING INFORMATION



Plan showing the location of the acoustic barrier (blue line to the LHS).





Example of the original clear acrylic acoustic screen system. (Currently unavailable)



Example of an acoustic timber fencing system (substantially lower than proposed).





Example of a pre-cast concrete screen walling system.



Example of an earth acoustic bund with timber acoustic fence.

