

Mole Valley Cycling Forum (MVCF) second response to Ranmore BMX/MTB bike track consultation
21 May 2021

This second response follows on from the first response sent through by MVCF to MVDC on 22nd March 2021 which is attached for information.

As of 21st May 2021, the Forum feels that the consultation on the proposed plan has been rushed without sufficient time for other options to be fully explored and developed.

It is unclear quite how MVDC has taken into account Social Value during this particular procurement process - as defined by the Local Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which requires councils to consider the social, economic and environmental impact of contracts and how they can best benefit the local community. In MVDC's vision, one of the three stated priorities is *Community Well Being – active communities and support for those who need it*. We would seek reassurance that the constitutional requirements of MVDC and best practice been followed, for example it may be in the community's best interest to seek more than one proposal before settling on the final option.

The Forum is concerned that the brevity of the consultation has limited its ability to reach an appropriate number of local relevant groups and will not provide a proper and fair reflection of the local public views. From our local contacts, we understand the consultation doesn't appear to have reached the students at Ashcombe or Priory schools. Nor does the on-line consultation form have a question relating to the residency of respondents - there appears to be no way of determining whether respondents live in or outside Mole Valley.

The 50% reduction in physical activity rate of children between 10 – 14 years* is a ticking time bomb for our communities and authorities must do all within their power to promote continued physical activity amongst the young. It is therefore vital that local children are not priced out of this public amenity – the current proposal has the potential to price-out many of our local families. It is more than likely that children from those families will look elsewhere to build their own 'free' informal cycle tracks which will ultimately take MVDC resources to remove and remediate.

As no physical work can be carried out on site until at least October 2021, due to bird nesting season, the Forum sees no reason to rush any decision on the location's future. The Forum therefore proposes the council reassess the location and provide residents with a full and adequate consultation to include the following options:

- kept as is, maintained by volunteers;
- upgraded (with the use of council CIL money) with a low maintenance surface;
- leased as a commercial facility, whereby the site upgrade, management and upkeep is put out to tender, ideally with more than one proposal being considered and 5 year business plans reviewed and assessed.

The following should be considered and preserved as part of any development:

- free or near free access to local children;
- any upgrade must respect the natural habitat that has developed (including the nightingale and roman snail populations)
- must not erect a fence around the area
- must retain vehicle access to the community orchard

**Sebastian Coe, Radio 4 Today programme 20th May 2021*

Mole Valley Cycling Forum (MVCF) first response to Ranmore BMX/MTB bike track consultation
22nd March 2021

Mole Valley Cycling Forum (MVCF) is extremely concerned to recently learn about the potential loss of the Ranmore BMX/MTB park as free-to-use community asset for local youngsters. We would have appreciated earlier consultation about this initiative which we understand has been under consideration by MVDC for some time.

We understand that the proposal for the development of the BMX/MTB track at Ranmore by Trail Academy will be considered at the Cabinet meeting tomorrow. We feel that potentially removing open access on community-owned land needs particular and careful consultation with existing users and other key stakeholders who may be impacted by change of ownership of the facility.

This place is an important local facility for children, allowing them to interact and develop social skills, get exercise and have a place to gather to focus on bike riding and handling skills. We believe it is vitally important to maintain this ethos. In a conversation that I had yesterday with a mother and her young son, who is a user of the facility, it was emphasised by the mother that the knowledge of knowing where to find her son and to keep him safe from cycling on local roads (which she considered to be dangerous) were particularly important benefits of the facility. The space and freedom this place gives is a priceless community asset.

We are in full agreement with the concern expressed in a MVDC briefing document which states that: ***"...a key risk is around accessibility to the site. It is currently free to use and available to all....."*** and that ***"The proposal will make it a paid for service, and therefore there is a risk that it becomes inaccessible to some people, as well as being a potential reputational risk."***

Loss of open access to the track would be a loss of public amenity at a time where we need to encourage people to cycle more. This is not likely to happen if they are priced out of local facilities. We understand the Trail Academy is proposing an annual membership of £90/year, an 'after school' pass of £3.50 or a full day pass to be £10/day. This may well prove to be a deterrent for some and we fully concur and support the point expressed in the MVDC document that- ***"We would not want the cost to restrict usage and it is vital that the site remains accessible e.g. through providing discounted rates for families on low income."***

Development of the site will encourage riders from more distant locations which in turn will lead to increased traffic with subsequent impact on the limited parking available to the walkers and allotment holders. In the summer, the car park can be completely full. Other stakeholder concerns will also need to be addressed eg: How will access to the Community Orchard be maintained?

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