

Appendix 2 - Options in relation to Brenchley Gardens

1.0 Securing the park at night and/or improving the lighting

- 1.1 Restricting access at the three pedestrian access points could reduce ASB but put public at risk.



- 1.2 Restricting access would not have prevented the most serious of incidents, nor will it prevent ASB and criminality alleged to happen throughout the day.

Detail

Parks officers have obtained quotes for the installation of gates on Station Road after it was indicated by the police it could help them on occasions to corral groups if a policing operation was underway. This would not secure the park from visitors accessing nor exiting the park via the open aspect towards St Faith Street nor perhaps through the residential area of McKenzie Court. The police Designing Out Crime officer has reported that closing these gates would likely divert people away from the park when arriving from the North (Maidstone East etc.) and East (Week Street). This could reduce ease of access to the park, but not restrict access. There are risks of disadvantaging and potentially putting members of the public at increased risk who inadvertently find their route blocked when trying to cross or leave the park. This would potentially increase risks relating to stalking and rape should someone be unwittingly brought into the park.

There have been a number of high-profile incidents in Brenchley Gardens that have received media attention over the last 12 months. There have been other incidents that have received less media attention but are no less serious. CCTV has captured images that have been used to support police investigations in the vast majority of incidents. Whilst some incidents, including the attempted murder in August, occurred in the early evening, many incidents, such as this one occurred in daylight. More recent incidents happened mid-afternoon. In the case of the attempted murder, it is not possible to surmise whether the incident would have been prevented had the park been closed, although it would be reasonable to assume the attack could have been less sustained. But the incident itself started in Week Street and escalated as those involved moved into the park. Incidents of alleged drug dealing, including examples raised at committee, are described as occurring around lunchtime. The proposed upgrade to the CCTV will provide better coverage and enable triggers to be set that warn Control Room staff of unusual activity at night.

Estimated Cost

£4500

N/A

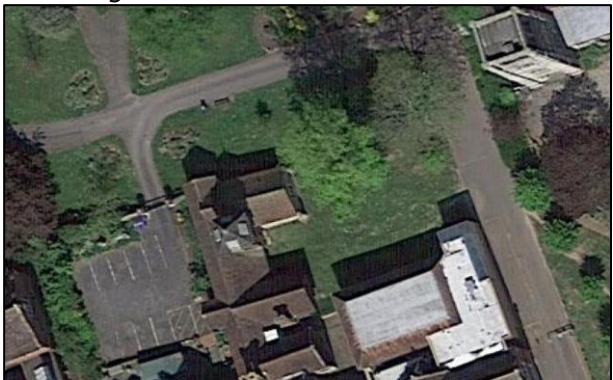
Consideration also needs to be given to our responsibility to safeguard young people. Introducing restrictions on the park is likely to divert young people into other locations where there is less natural surveillance and no CCTV. Our work to address Violence Against Women and Girls, particularly in the wake of the murders of Sarah Everard and PCSO Julia James has reinforced the SMP's need to look at the behaviour of our young people, particularly boys and young men and to ensure we provide safe places for them. This is addressed in part in 4.0, but in this context, we need to ensure we don't create a more serious problem by diverting young people into more dangerous environments/locations where there is no surveillance, such as Trinity Gardens, Brewer Street cemetery etc.

- 1.3 Restricting access will directly impact the residents of 88 apartments and undermine the original planning permission for the development and place residents at risk.



There are three points of access/egress directly between the park and McKenzie Court; residents of 88 apartments have utilised this feature since 2007/8 as was approved by planning. The relevant planning permission ([05/0212](#)) has been checked where the accessibility statement references the design and build work to create access points into McKenzie Court from Brenchley Gardens to provide unimpeded level access for residents. This is key for residents with mobility issues or prams. Such points of access/egress are also essential for the evacuation of the building in an emergency such as a fire. Officers are investigating the possibility that residents have a right to cross at these points although there is likely to be an established use from the 14 years of use without challenge. Securing the park may unwittingly expose residents to increased risk from park users who gain access or are locked in the park after it is closed.

- 1.4 Enhancing the vehicular access point to also prevent pedestrian access is likely to be extremely costly, particularly if utilised to allow access to residents of McKenzie Court with long term administrative costs.



- 1.5 Securing the park provides a logistical challenge if there are already users in the park and may not ultimately prevent access from those who climb the existing fences.

Officers have researched the cost for replacing the current control measures that restrict vehicular access from St Faith's Street, adjacent to the Museum. Vehicular access is required to allow vehicles to access the car park for museum staff and other businesses to park and is controlled by a vehicular barrier. This however would need to be replaced by a sizeable gate to prevent pedestrian access through the same point. As well as the expense of this significantly larger gate, consideration will also be needed to allow residents of McKenzie Court access and the potential risk to them and staff leaving the museum after dark who could potentially find themselves within a locked park and have personal safety concerns as they leave and find themselves responsible for securing the gate or not. As the closest access to the apartments, this gate would need to offer keycode or electronic access to those who are afforded it. This will generate an ongoing administrative burden as access rights will change with changes in staff, tenancies and homeowners. From a practical point of view, unsupervised gates with electronic access points in other parts of the town have had limited success. One such gate in the High Street has done little to prevent access from non-residents owing to system failures and residents failing to secure the gate properly.

c£50,000

Gates, fences and barriers act as deterrents or encourage compliance amongst those in society inclined to follow the rules or socially acceptable standards of behaviour. We have seen elsewhere in the borough groups who refuse to leave when staff attend to lock gates as they know we will not lock them in as we must extend a duty of care to all people; especially where we know there is an increased risk of vulnerability or substance misuse. It should be noted that parks like Mote Park and Cobtree Manor are only closed to vehicles. Equally, as often seen in public parks, groups will continue to gather in locked parks after climbing gates or railings to meet free of intrusion/interference from police or other agencies. Locking the park, without a human security presence is as likely to present a challenge to young people as much as a deterrent.

TBC

1.6	Lighting in the park may create a safer environment but could also attract users at a time when we want to discourage them	Lighting has been investigated and partial costs have been obtained for the supply of 24 vandal resistant low-level bollard style lights at £23000, however this does not include any groundworks/trenching and reinstatement work which is estimated at a further £12000 -£15000. Works to undertake this level of lighting would also be subject to planning permission. If consideration was given to introducing more lamp columns the costs are likely to be significant if not double that estimated. Lighting would increase the visibility and natural surveillance of the park, thus improving the guardianship of the park. This will also support police and outreach officers working in the park, particularly around the bandstand. There is also a counter concern in that lighting would only increase the attraction of the park at a time when we want to divert young people into other activities as outlined in 4.0. Increasing the lighting in the park will also be subject to planning permission and consideration will need to be given to the ecological impact of the lights as part of that process. There is no identified budget for this work but an application for section 106 money could be considered if deemed appropriate, reasonable and cost effective to do so.	c£35,000- £37,000
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2.0	<u>Reinstating the bandstand frill panels.</u>	Detail	Estimated Cost
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2.1	Reinstating the frill will provide a visual and physical deterrent to those who perch on the bandstand but remedial works are needed before the frill can be reinstated as appropriate.	The bandstand is a focal point in the park and is sometimes referenced as a hotspot for anti-social behaviour as it provides sheltered space for sitting/perching on the platform edge. The bandstand was originally designed with panels between the pillars – this metal was removed in the 1940s for the war effort. Parks officers have started assessing designs and options to re-instate the panels and in doing so also commissioned a structural assessment of the bandstand as it is displaying signs of movement from the vertical. The assessment has revealed that remedial works will be required and until the extent of this work is understood any work on the design of infill panels is on hold. The structural integrity of the bandstand could be improved with a range of works that could require the panels to be structural support as well as a decorative and a safety feature. MBC Property services have been asked to expedite this matter and their work with parks and heritage conservation officers to provide a suitable solution as part of the ongoing management of the asset.	TBC
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Improve the lighting within the park

3.0 Upgrade the existing CCTV in the Park

3.1 Upgrade the existing Pan, Tilt Zoom (PTZ) camera to a more advanced version with

Detail

The upgraded PTZ camera will improve on the existing camera's resolution and will offer both a covert Infra-Red mode and an active White Light option. The latter option, controlled by a CCTV controller, will light up the

Estimated Cost

c£19,000

improved resolution and a controllable “white light” to deter people after dark.



- 3.2 Instal an array of bullet cameras to increase passive monitoring over a considerably wider field of vision. Analytics behind these cameras can be used to actively monitor for activity after a specific time, triggering an alarm in the control room to draw the controller’s attention.

area that is being actively monitored ensuring those that are being watched are acutely aware of the active surveillance. This will be an active deterrent to people in the park particularly after dark.

The field of vision for a PTZ camera is typically 90° in the direction the camera is pointing/facing. From the centre column in Brenchley Gardens this is typically in the direction of the bandstand due to our risk, threat and harm assessment. This means a further 270° of vision is unwatched until the controller actively moves the camera. Whilst 360° cameras are available, the advances in technology limit the quality of these cameras considerably and reduce their evidential quality. To provide a significantly wider field of vision it is proposed to install 4 new static cameras located on a 4-way camera bracket, replacing the now defunct speaker system on the column. These bullet cameras, with built in IR capability, will complement the upgraded CCTV to provide significantly increased field of vision. In addition, the bullet cameras offer an analytical function whereby unusual activity in the park, after a set time, will trigger an alarm in the control room. This will allow the controller to actively check the park through these cameras and the upgraded PTZ, notify the police as necessary or simply “light them up” with the white light feature.

Priced above

- 3.3 Move the existing PTZ camera to CCTV Column by North Entrance to give greater coverage of hotspot areas.



A visual assessment has also been undertaken to determine whether the park would benefit from further cameras. Consideration was given to the rear of the museum, but there is no "line of sight" connection to allow the camera to feed into the existing wireless network. However, an unused column from the previous system is still situated by the North pedestrian entrance from the high-level footbridge. The current PTZ camera from the central column will be relocated to this column to allow us to monitor activity along the high-level footbridge and some areas of the park which are known ASB and Crime hotspots due the lack of surveillance. Some removal or trimming of foliage will likely be necessary to enable this camera a useful view of the area.

Priced above

4.0 Additional One Maidstone Ambassadors

- 4.1 Additional One Maidstone Ambassadors will provide not only a deterrent to unwanted ASB in the vicinity of the park but will help to tackle ASB and criminality in the areas by acting as eyes and ears for partner agencies.



Detail

Whilst Brenchley Gardens has been the focus of a lot of negative attention recently, residents, businesses and Ward members of High Street Ward in particular will be aware that the North end of Week street, in the vicinity of the Earl Street junction has been an ASB/crime hotspot, particularly since lockdown. The natural honeypots of fast-food restaurants and suspected issues with young people obtaining alcohol from adults utilising nearby off licences has led to a number of steps being taken. This includes a new "bottle watch scheme" whereby off licenses mark their bottles discreetly so that officers can identify where the alcohol was purchased. We are also working with McDonalds to explore opportunities to train their floor staff in safeguarding techniques to protect young people.

We need to be mindful, in regard to both coercion into gangs and violence against women and girls that we take steps to address some of the underlying issues in young people's development and behaviour and give them opportunities to access advice and services.

Estimated Cost

Up to £60k
(2 x £30k)
per annum

MBC Community Protection will also shortly be opening a new youth provision, in a joint venture with KCC Youth Services, within the Mall. Funding sourced from the Kent Violence Reduction Unit will mean the facility will be open for a year, offering a convenient "safe space" for young people to spend time with trained youth professionals, getting advice or just hanging out in a safe space.

However, we will need to continue to challenge some of the unwanted behaviours and deter those who advocate it. This has to be done in the right way and care is needed in regard to the language used in relation to young people. Comments on a recent incident included many people calling for physical violence and vigilantism against groups of young people, who in this particular incident were only 12-14 years old themselves. This incident, like many others escalated over a period of time and there were opportunities for earlier intervention to prevent anyone getting hurt.

Recent discussions with One Maidstone have identified a possibility of increasing the guardianship in the area by increasing their existing team of ambassadors to provide a dedicated presence in the area. The presence, who will actively monitor the park and surrounding area at core times during the week, will support businesses, MBC CPT and the police to identify those responsible for criminality and ASB, thus enabling the agencies to take appropriate actions, such as formal warnings (CPWs), Acceptable Behaviour Agreements or criminal charges as necessary.

Ideally this would mean a pair of officers, or one if the budget cannot be found, to be utilised to actively work in the area not only as eyes and ears but as a barometer to any potential issues so they can be prevented from escalating. They will also be empowered, under their Community Safety Accreditation, to enforce the current PSPO and other powers deemed appropriate by the Chief Constable. This will build on the success of the current PCSO Task Force who have been active in the area but are not a sustainable resource for this area exclusively.