



Gateway to Woodgate Valley Country Park & Quinton Meadows

THE FUTURE OF HIGHFIELD FARM RECREATION GROUND

After such a long and difficult journey to develop Highfield with the provision of the largest MUGA, a large Climbing Frame, 6 pieces of gym equipment, the banners, the Quinton Meadows signpost, litter bins and now the seating and picnic tables it is time for us to step aside and pass the baton to others.

So the following needs consideration :

- 1) There is clear evidence that the mental and physical health of people is much improved by the green space, physical activity and social interaction provided by Highfield Farm Recreation Ground. Our missing youngsters, under-represented and ignored, are part of a lost generation recognised as facing significant problems since Covid. A healthy community should provide a free, safe and interactional space for all such as evolving at Highfield.
- 2) Two surveys of over 200 people (2018 & 2021) clearly indicated that Adult Swings are essential and that the very poor path link to Woodgate CP, unpassable in wet weather, needs resolution. The Quinton Conversation, active in 2021, discussed a concept for a shipping container to be converted into a community storage hub at the MUGA. Other provision was also requested.
- 3) Problems with BCC Parks Department that frustrated progress include their own funding and staffing issues. The provision of £246,000 of S106 funding from the loss of amenity by the development of the Martineau Centre20 (2014/2016) was eventually released in 2018 but was then delayed by disagreement between the Quinton Ward Forum and Parks over recommendations seen as lacking value and failing to meet community need. Constant slow process (>5 years) led to the erosion of funding and consequential removal of provision. The BCC policy of preferred suppliers is limiting and the serious sustainability issues in the Future Parks Accelerator policy document to cover Parks expenses effectively means a tax on any funding raised by the Community. Six swings supplied and installed by a preferred supplier was quoted at £17,000 but, with various mark ups by Parks, became £45,000

- 4) There is a need for our councillors to now significantly raise these issues at Council level, to enable the changes necessary for the Parks Department to be more effective and supportive of community provision.
- 5) A constituted Friends of Highfield Group needs to be set up to work within the Birmingham Open Spaces Forum and the requirements of funding provision.
- 6) Given the apathy recognised as a problem in Quinton (and elsewhere) the various funded large Agencies and the BCC Neighbourhood Development Support Unit need to change their limited provision of research, communication, meetings, visits and training to actually create, provide and maintain provision.
- 7) A coherent overview of what is needed in Quinton by bringing together green space provision (Highfield, Allotments, Pitts Wood, Quinton Meadows, Woodgate Valley Country Park and "gardening provision) to avoid waste, funding competition, fragmentation and improve efficiency and use skills more effectively. This should aid larger funding applications. The needs of nature are a balance with the needs of people not a separate topic. The Ward Plan is the place to pull all this together.
- 8) The maintenance of equipment for 15 years was included in the cost of the Highfield developments and this must happen to avoid further deterioration and the risk of vandalism. Despite the provision, this is not happening. The Entrance Banner now needs replacement/removal ; it is damaged and served its purpose.

Our particular thanks to Councillors Caroline Baddley and Matthew Gregson and the Martineau Steering Group for their active support in the campaign to save the Martineau Centre from development which ultimately led to the provision of the original S106 funding. Thanks to the Quinton Ward Forums and residents for their support for Highfield Development and to Deb Ufton and Katherine Hewitt (Gateway/ENNS) who provided a micro grant and sponsored our successful application for Celebrating Communities Funding. A special mention to Richard Harris and the Quinton Barnardo's team for their excellent & memorable Sports and Fun Day held at Highfield Farm Recreation Ground in July 2022.