

Highbury Fields Association



AGM

Annual General Meeting

8.15 Tuesday 15th May Highbury Roundhouse 71 Ronalds Road

Committee Meeting

8.30 Tuesday 10th April Highbury Roundhouse 71 Ronalds Road



Swings and Roundabouts

For

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Against



You may have read the broadsheet put through letter-boxes by 'Save Highbury Fields' campaigners. Understandably you may have been alarmed at the idea of encroachment on the Fields. Here are the facts.

- The GLC gave the Council £300,000 for landscaping the swimming pool area and improvement to the play area and, as reported in last April's newsletter 'The vent shaft will be incorporated as an attendant's hut.'

- Local parents wanted to persuade the Council to provide, in the process, a better, safer play area. Not just new equipment but a safe landscaped play area with a coherent design that would appeal to toddlers, older children and have an area for wheeled play. We wanted a play area that would harmonise with the Fields. So a working party was set up.

- Claims that half the bottom field will be used are wrong. The play area will extend round the vent and some yards beyond into a badly-drained area used very little except by dogs.

- The loss of Fields area is compensated for by the return to grassland of the old paddling pool.

- Extra space was needed, the Council felt, for landscaping with banks and mounds and to allow separate areas for different groups.

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We agree that the present playground should be modernised but a scheme, to build a new playground covering a tenth of the remaining open area of the Fields should only be carried out after full consultation with all those who will be affected. This has not been done. Did you know that there was a display at the Library? Did you know that there was a public meeting? Did you know that the letters of objection were not mentioned at the Recreation Committee meeting? Were you misled, like many people, about how extensive the scheme was?

We believe the following points should be considered: The Fields were acquired in the last century to protect them from speculative builders who had already built over a large part of them. Since 1928 when the swimming pool was built more and more of the Fields have been taken up by activity areas. We believe the new swimming pool will be of great benefit as are the tennis courts and football pitches. We also believe there is some merit in the proposed playground and cricket pitch. If, however, all these schemes go ahead there will be no open space left.

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for

against

- The play area will be fenced in to keep out dogs.
 - The length of the fence will be planted with shrubs and trees but much less densely than the Council wanted.
 - Equipment inside is no higher than ten feet and will hardly be visible from outside. The Council has suggested a Space Net but it is by no means certain that people will want it - all that is being agreed now is the boundary.
 - Most of the interior ground will, for safety reasons, be made of natural surfaces such as sand, grass and peat/bark.
 - We emphasised there should be consultation at every stage with resident and local user-groups. Apart from approaches to schools, there were talks at the Roundhouse and the Two o'clock Club; residents were invited to come to the Fields on 26th October and discuss the plans at Islington Play Lorry, there was an exhibition in Central Library 5th December to 4th January and an Open Meeting on 14th February.
 - The plans were amended after representation from the HFA, who had asked for the furthest limit to be staked. The amended plans reducing the size of the play area (and which can still be revised) are a result of the consultation mentioned.
- There are many children in Islington and the space devoted to play is small. We badly need a well-designed well-supervised comprehensive play area, central to the Borough and with easy access. This site is ideal and the small area of Fields it is proposed be given to the new play area will not inhibit the activities that take place on the Fields nor will the character of the Fields be changed.

Isabel Boucher

Working Party/HFA sub-committee

There are many flats near the Fields with no gardens. The Fields are the only place for the residents to sit outside. The Fields are used by people from all over Islington for informal games. The opening of the swimming pool will increase the demand for an area for sunbathing. Highbury Fields is a Conservation Area. The erection of mounds, castles and climbing frames is not in keeping with the nature of the Fields.

The cost of the playground will be very high, not only for the initial capital cost but also the annual running costs for staff, equipment and repairs. This part of Highbury is privileged being well served with recreational facilities. We suggest this money would be better spent in those areas designated underprivileged in the Islington Development Plan.

The playground is to be surrounded by shrubs and trees. It is feared that these may be used by muggers who already terrify people walking through the Fields at night. When the new swimming pool is opened in May it will bring a lot more traffic into the area. The parking problem will be made considerably worse if there is a playground as well.

Turning the lower field into a playground is going to limit the areas used for fairs, fetes and religious meetings, making the remaining parts very crowded. It was evident from questions asked at the public meeting that the scheme had not been fully thought out. For example, drainage and the type of trees to be planted had not been considered. There was only a very hazy idea of the cost.

Diana Matthews

Save Highbury Fields!

Traffic Jam



That hardy perennial. The scheme which has finally been agreed has in fact been started (with the narrowing of Hornsey Road). But the rest cannot be implemented until the GLC installs signals at the junction of Hornsey Road and Holloway Road. This work is, apparently, in hand but the pressure needs to be kept up. Write to your GLC Councillor Simon Turney at County Hall London SE1.

Publicity could have been better. A request from HFA for a month longer for consultation was turned down at the Recreation meeting on 19th March. It would seem that some people still do not know about the plans or are confused. There will be a committee meeting on Tuesday 10th April, 8.30 at Highbury Roundhouse. Anyone may come. Plans of the play area will be available. We have written to the Recreation Department to see if they can send a representative.

Sticky Wicket?

On long summer days the thwack of leather on willow has echoed around the Fields. Or, to put it another way, informal games of cricket have been played on the lower top field for some time. The cricketers recently asked the Council to provide a proper pitch. The Recreation Department has asked for full consultation before any decision. The HFA Committee wrote to say the Fields are too small for proper cricket, pointed out the proximity of artificial pitches in the borough and registered their opposition to the scheme. The committee felt there was no objection to informal cricket but suggested that the present wicket be rolled and an insurance policy be taken out in case there is injury to persons or damage to property. More news at the AGM.



Those with long memories - or of a boozy disposition - will remember the efforts HFA made to get a Fuller's pub on the site of the old off-licence on the corner of Battledean and Ronald's Road (now transformed to a private home). Be of good cheer. There is a real ale pub within minutes of Highbury Fields - at Highbury Barn. Highbury Barn, the pub, has been done up. And the beer's not bad either.

The Hole In The Road

The apparently never-ending work near the pool in Highbury Place is not - as some may have suspected - a forerunner of the traffic scheme but is for improving drains. The closure of the road will continue until August.

S*P*L*A*S*H

The swimming pool, with toddler pool, paddling pool and sunbathing area, will be opened on May 19th. Bob Holmes, Borough Baths Manager came along to the January committee meeting to give more information.

TIMES - 7.30 to 9.30 in the week. 7.30 to 5pm at weekends. Last admission one hour before closing time.

PRICES - planned to be 50p for adults and 25p for children. We asked about family discount tickets and concessions for early morning swimmers.

A load of old...

It will not have escaped notice (especially by those whose homes in Framfield and Battledean Roads overlook it) that the pile of rubbish in Highbury Terrace Mews, the legacy of a resident's scheme, has become a permanent eyesore, with occasional sacks of builders' rubble and the odd chair being added. Various gentlemanly methods have been tried to get it removed. We are still trying.

He said these would be considered. Anyway, books of tickets are available with 10% discount.

USES - Parent and baby groups, disabled groups, will have the pool some mornings. In holidays children will be discouraged from pool at lunchtime to give adults a chance.

PARKING - no parking space provided for visitors to pool - it is expected that public transport will be used.

PS. Protests at last year's AGM about the asbestos cement roof tiles, resulted in safe tiles being used.

ROBIN'S GARDEN (22 Highbury Crescent)

Neglected for years after the war, the stillness of this oasis of wildlife was rudely disturbed by Murphy's who bought it for redevelopment. Plans were thwarted by the difficulties of the site - railway tunnels beneath - and it was offered to the Council who have decided the price is too high.

Highbury Roundhouse Summer Festival
on Saturday 21st July.

Murphy's has moved from its premises in Highbury Crescent to pastures new, leaving one or two legacies behind.

Highbury Fields Association was formed in Spring 1975 in response to two Council proposals - for a swimming pool and sports complex to be built on the Fields, and for the introduction of parking restrictions. **POOL COMPLEX** Dropped after great opposition, helped by lack of funds. **PARKING** Introduced in 1976 but modified after pressure from local residents - more residents' places, and a reduction in permit fee. Efforts to get Saturday morning restrictions lifted not so successful: The Council agreed but GLC didn't. **TREES** In 1975 the Council embarked on a plan of tree-felling (because of alleged instability of some trees) without consultation. After a petition of 1500, dawn confrontations with tree-fellers, and an HFA commissioned report from Southern Tree Surgeons, the Council restricted its plans. Unfortunately Dutch Elm Disease intervened and several more trees were felled. But the principle of consultation was set up and a scheme of replanting started which should ensure the future shadiness of the Fields. One of the most imaginative aspects was the tree planting by local schools, largely organised by committee member Dora Haward. The HFA planted a Norway Maple - south-west corner of the upper field, halfway along Highbury Terrace. **TRAFFIC** HFA took over from South Highbury Residents' Association the

work of getting a scheme to lessen through traffic, which can reach horrendous levels, particularly in Baalbec and Ronalds Road. Many will remember the numbers of meetings, petitions and letters on this issue. At last something is happening. But slowly. (See 'Traffic Jam').

Those are some of the main themes, but there have been many others like the long battle to get Highbury Home (1-3 Highbury Terrace) restored, to get self-closing gates on the upper fields, to do something about the dogs on the Fields. Anything, in fact, that people are concerned about

The objective of the HFA is - to stimulate effective community participation in all matters affecting the character, amenities, use, management and future development of Highbury Fields and its surrounding neighbourhood.

There is no formal membership. Officers and committee are elected at the AGM in Spring. Committee meetings are held every two months and are open to all. Anyone who wishes to come or to receive minutes of meetings regularly should contact one of the members on the back.


The AGM is on May 15th - please come along. HFA needs your interest, your enthusiasm and, occasionally (particularly when it comes to distributing minutes and newsletters), your time.

Shine On

The three fine iron lamp standards in Church Path are under threat. The Council thinks it may be necessary to replace them with a 'modern street lighting system'. HFA believes they should be preserved and asked the Planning Committee to list them as items of historical interest. HFA has asked the Borough Engineer to let us know the cost of painting and repair.

P.S.

Next year is the centenary of Highbury Fields. It was opened to the public on Christmas Eve 1885. Perhaps we ought to give the Fields a birthday party.

 7-10 Highbury Crescent

After chunks of masonry started falling off, Islington Council served a notice on the owners. But stalemate rules until the residents are offered suitable alternative accommodation.

Chairman
John Hardiman, 9 Highbury Terrace
Secretary
Mia Beaumont, 13 Highbury Terrace
Treasurer
Maryse Jones, 16 Highbury Place

Names of committee members available at AGM