

## Lord Mayor, Members of the Council

We are a group of residents from Hyde Park who are concerned about the lack of sports and recreational facilities in our area, especially for young people.

Hyde Park, Woodhouse and Burley are comprised mainly of streets of terraced houses, mainly without gardens, in some cases even yards for children to play in.

None of the three primary schools, Quarry Mount, Brudenell or Rosebank has a grassy area let alone a field for play and sports activities. Spring Bank and Shire Oak have some green space but no actual sports field.

To swim, children must travel to Kirkstall, Armley or further. A school swimming lesson lasts only 30 minutes to allow transport time. Each local school can afford to send only one or two classes a week due to transport costs. Every child has the right to be able to swim to save his or her life. For a parent, to take a child swimming involves transport by bus or car thus increasing traffic pollution.

Yet within walking distance of all these schools, in the heart of our area, is a purpose built swimming pool, sports hall, two grass playing fields and net ball and tennis courts.

For decades local children have seen the fee paying pupils of Leeds Girls High School using these facilities but have had virtually no access to them – unless their parents have been able to afford the fees for the Sport camps in School holidays.

It has been especially frustrating to see the green grass playing field between Ash Grove and Chestnut Avenue unused and empty most of the time. Before the sports Hall was built local families could at least access this field before the big metal fence went up, the only access gate controlled by Leeds Girls High School.

Now that the School is moving from our area, we feel that there is a unique, once in a lifetime opportunity to give our community the much needed sports and recreational facilities which, it could be argued, is a moral right.

The URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN identified Headingley as the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst area in Leeds for open space provision, hence policy N3 in the URBAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN to create more open space.

Recent medical research shows a lack of vigorous physical exercise is the major factor leading to obesity in children and adults with the increased risk of heart attacks, diabetes and the like.

Many families in our area are in the low-income bracket and thus more than average at risk. There is also a large SE Asian community a community that is particularly vulnerable to diabetes.

There is no sports centre in this densely populated area, in which the number of families is increasing.

At the Executive Board meeting where the LGHS draft plan was rejected (partly because of proposals such as the one to build on the Chestnut Avenue field) it was said, that increased recreational facilities for the community could come out of the High School moving site.

We have here a petition of more than a 1000 signatures collected outside local schools and on the streets of our area, asking you, the Council, to buy the sport facilities now owned by Leeds Girls High School for our local schools and community.

If the playing fields were bought at green space rate the cost could be met out of public funds, since not long ago the Kirkstall members bought the Archie Gordon field out of MICE and RATS money.

The sports hall and swimming pool would obviously cost a lot. But when we are talking about the health and well being of children - and adults - especially those in the deprived areas of society - surely the monies could be found.

If we are serious about narrowing the gap between rich and poor in our city this is a once in a lifetime chance to redress past inequalities in our community.

We ask you to accept our petition and accede to its request. Who knows how many potential Olympic Champions we may have in our midst, who without somewhere to practise or perform can only dream.

Please let the sale of the Leeds Girls High School have real and lasting benefits for our community.

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