

## APPENDIX 3

7th Oct. 2009

Dear Councillor Harrington,

I am writing to you on behalf of local residents of Hyde Park and surrounding areas to request that the Health Scrutiny Board look at the Health Aspects of Playing Field Provision in the inner-city areas of Leeds, especially with reference to the Leeds Girls High School's planning application to "develop" the sites in Hyde Park.

We would like the Health Scrutiny Board to advise the Planning Committee about the implications of the present situation.

I enclose a copy of the speech which was given to the Council last year, which gives some figures about Playing Field Provision.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Fuckle (Ms.)

## Speech to Leeds City Council 10.9.08

Presented by Hyde Park Residents concerned about the lack of sports pitches for local schools and community.

Members of delegation: Sue Buckle, Rachel Harkess, Rukhsana Hussain, Christine McQuillan, apologies from Yasmin Ajib. (all parents of past and present pupils of local schools)

Lord Mayor, members of the Council, over the last few years there has been increasing concern about obesity and lack of exercise, especially among children and young people, with ominous implications for their future health.

With so much focus recently on the Olympics, the issue of sport is in all our minds. The Secretary of State for Sport wrote to local authorities about 'A new vision for sport' to 'increase opportunities for all people to participate'. Leeds City Council has announced that it will spend millions of pounds refurbishing sports centres.

Yet our inner city area is woefully short of sports fields where future Olympic medallists could be developing their talents and all children could be keeping healthy and happy, both in and out of school hours. Some figures show the seriousness of the situation.

Within a 1.5 mile radius of Hyde Park Corner are five primary schools and one high school, with many pupils from homes without gardens, from families who, for reasons such as economic hardship, or lack of transport, find it difficult to take their children to sports activities.

The Education (School Premises) Regulations of 1999 lay down minimum requirements for school playing pitch provision. You will be shocked to hear how far short of these requirements our local schools fall.

- City of Leeds High School should have 35,000 square metres. It has 13,113 square metres.
- Spring Bank and Shire Oak Primary Schools should have 5,000 square metres each. Spring Bank has 1,574 square metres, Shire Oak has 1,967.

(I should point out that the space which these schools have is grassy play areas, not actual sports pitches.)

But the most shocking figures are for the three primary schools where the majority of pupils qualify for free school meals, generally an indicator of social and economic deprivation.

- Brudenell, Rosebank and Quarry Mount have no playing field space, nought square metres, although Brudenell and Rosebank should

each have 5,000 square metres and Quarry Mount should have 2,500 square metres.

Instead, all sports activities have to take place on hard surface playgrounds next to roads and traffic.

**To summarise, these six schools need 40,846 square metres more playing field space, according to legal requirements.**

Primary school headteachers wrote to the Executive Board some time ago explaining the problems they face trying to provide adequate sports activities for their pupils.

At Shire Oak and Spring Bank, rugby and cricket coaching take place on space which has to accommodate PE classes as well. Track and field athletic activities cannot be developed.

At Quarry Mount all sports activities have to take place in the school hall or on the sloping tarmac playground – not conditions likely to produce marathon runners or high jump champions.

Similarly, at Brudenell and Rosebank the range of sports activities is severely limited. Rugby tackling cannot be taught and running is not feasible, to give but two examples. Incidentally, at Rosebank, the only grass area close to the school is generally unsafe for children to use, due to dog faeces and used syringes.

And yet the teachers of these schools desperately want their pupils to have the best chances for health and sporting success.

Our area is the second worst in Leeds for open green space provisions. We are lucky to have Woodhouse Moor which we value as a natural green area for all. But it is the most intensively used park in Leeds, especially when the universities, with more than 50,000 students, are in session, and can in no way be regarded as part of the sports provision for schools. Because of Headingley and Hyde Park's lack of playing fields, the Council's UDP in 2001 gave N6 protected status to the remaining playing fields, although since then development has actually happened at the former Leeds Boys' Grammar School site and at the former Spring Bank Teachers' Centre.

We ask therefore that you, the Council, do all in your power to bring the playing pitch provision for local schools up to the standards laid down by the Education (School Premises) Regulations for the sake of our children's health and future.