



## Exploring Howard Road Play Park and Kings Heath Long Park

Briefing Note – 20 November 2013 in advance of public event  
Saturday 7 December, 12:00 – 3:00 at Howard Road Park

**Project:** Kings Heath Long Park is a mile of green areas along Howard Road, Howard Road East and Wheelers Lane. Apart from Howard Road Play Park, these green areas are unused, except as places that people pass through. We see huge potential in this as a transport route, a floral and edible growing trail, a play space, an inspiring space and a community asset. Kings Heath Space Explorers are bringing together people and organisations interested in consulting on and actioning improvements to the Long Park, starting with Howard Road Play Park.



Kings Heath Long Park sits across three wards: Kings Heath, Brandwood and Billesley

**Aims:** To engage the local community in exploring and improving their local area through events and interventions that aim to surprise, intrigue and inspire. These consultations will initially focus on Howard Road Play Park and the planned Youth Gym installation there, and will spread out over the wider area of Kings Heath Long Park. Through this, we will encourage and support the formation of friends' groups along the Long Park to begin using and populating these spaces.

**Funding and Action:** £26K has been allocated to install a 'Youth Gym' in the Howard Road Play Park area.

ASDA in Kings Heath have indicated that their community fund may be able to match the £26K for improvement works such as landscaping and planting.

Space Explorers Co-ordinator John Hill Daniel has been funded by Near Neighbours.

Councillor Lisa Trickett has indicated that Community Chest Funding may be available for community consultation.

Sustrans' Jenny Barlow is supporting the Long Park project with school and community engagement activities through the DIY Streets Kings Heath project, which also has funding for capital works.

Local resident, Marcus Belben has already begun a project to plant an orchard around the Swanshurst Roundabout, and we are actively encouraging others to suggest and action similar schemes.

Also involved are Sue Smith of Birmingham City Council Challenge Unit, Liz Wright of Kings Heath Transition Initiative and Highbury Orchard, Jon Jaffa and Sam Cornwell of Kings Heath Residents Forum, Lucia Hogg: Theatre Producer and MA Landscape Architecture Student.

In addition, two MA Architecture students from Birmingham City University are assigned to the Howard Road Play Park consultation and MSc geography students from University of Birmingham, working with Sustrans after Christmas, will be supporting the Long Park consultation.

The open event in Howard Road Play Park on Saturday 7 December is an opportunity to bring people into the park to play and plan, and kick off the public consultation.

We are open to any individual or organisation interested in feeding into, supporting or getting involved in the consultation and development process.

**Consultation Start Point:** The consultation will be as open ended as possible, but as a baseline will consider **Howard Road Play Park** and **Kings Heath Long Park** as:

- A meeting and playing space for people of all ages
- A growing space for food, biodiversity, and aesthetic appeal
- An holistic and playful space, offering exercise, relaxation and inspiration

And specifically for **Kings Heath Long Park**

- A park for walking and cycling, a space to be enjoyed as a journey, as well as statically.

**Consulting Who?:** Our events and interventions will be designed to gather rich data on the emotional response and practical needs of people including:

- Passing trade: people passing through and using the **Howard Road Play Park** area.
- Residents living around this area. Particularly:
  - Residents of Highbury Court Retirement Apartments and Middleton Road Sheltered Housing scheme.
  - Residents of properties overlooking the area
  - Residents campaigning for a solution to inconsiderate parking outside Howard Road Postal Collection Office
- Nearby Schools, businesses and other organisations including:
  - All Saints Centre
  - All Saints Youth Project

And in the wider area:

- Passing trade: people passing through and using the **Kings Heath Long Park** area.
- Residents living on the Long Park (around 400 addresses).
- Schools and businesses on the Long Park, and those accessing them:
  - Wheelers Lane Primary School and Technology College
  - Colmore Junior, Infant and Nursery School
  - Kings Heath Boys School
  - Swanshurst School
  - Billesley Indoor Tennis Centre
  - The Stadium Club: Entertainment, Sports and Conference Centre
  - Peepo Day Nursery
  - The New Billesley Tavern and Red Lion Pub
  - Wheelers Lane Allotments
  - Howard Road Postal Collection Office
  - Highbury Telephone Exchange
- Residents unhappy about traffic congestion due to parent parking around the entrance to Wheelers Lane Primary School and Wheelers Lane Technology College

## Howard Road Play Park



The play park, variously known as Albert Road Park, Howard Road Park, Corner Park and, most accurately, Cage Park, is mainly grassed, with four small wood-chipped areas containing the play equipment, and a larger, paved area of around 16x16meters. This is enclosed with a wire-fence on three sides to a height of around three meters, (onto Howard Road East, Alcester Road South and Albert Road) and on the fourth side by a wood-fenced garden boundary. There are three access points, two onto the pavement of Albert Road, designed to restrict entry to pedestrians, and one onto the Howard Road East side, which is more open.

Currently, the area is frequented by parents and children using the play equipment during daytime in the summer months, and used as an unpaved cut-through from Alcester Road South to Howard Road East. A lack of seating and shelter means that it is much less visited when the weather is cold or wet, and a lack of lighting, together with the fencing that cuts it off from the road, makes it feel unsafe in the dark. The consultation should aim to answer the following questions:

### **'Where should the youth gym be sited, and what equipment will be most used?'**

As funding has been secured to install outdoor gym equipment, we will consult on the type of equipment to install, and the most advantageous location for the installation.

### **'How can the play park and surrounding green space best benefit those who live, work, play and pass through this area'**

What changes would have the biggest positive impact on this space? Paving, planting, seating, lighting, landscaping and building all have the potential to revolutionise the way that this space is used, just as the Kings Heath Village Square revolutionised central Kings Heath. Bringing people together to consider, develop and maintain this area will also build its sense of community.

### **'Could this development seed a development plan for the Long Park?'**

We will also consult on a development plan for the Long Park, to give this underutilised space a coherent identity in order to link and unite neighbourhoods, and create attractive walking and cycling options along this one-mile stretch of the A4040.