

The Balsall Heathan

No. 285

May 2009

FREE

Your Community Newspaper

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Local News & Features



Not Just Cricket

Warwickshire County Cricket Club moved a step closer to beginning work on their redevelopment of the cricket ground following approval from Birmingham planners recently.

The £32 million redevelopment proposal would see 14 houses demolished to make way for conference suites, a hotel, offices, housing and the redevelopment of the south pavillion and five permanent flood lights.

The proposed floodlights would stand between 15 and 20 storeys high with the width of the lights being approximately the size of a house. Concern over the environmental issues regarding light spillage at night and the detrimental impact these structures would have upon the lives of local residents during daylight are for some local residents and their associations cause for major concern.

A further issue that has been raised over the proposed development is the possible increase in traffic that could result from the extra capacity that the new pavillion might create. As well as a possible increase in traffic through the additional 4000 extra spectators attending the cricket matches many fear that the mixed usage aspect of the proposal will cause further problems. With the original proposal suggesting around 250 flats a hotel and new conference facilities, the new development coupled with the already existing facilities in a neighbouring development could lead, many fear to traffic chaos.

Birmingham Councillors on the committee were given a second opportunity to discuss the application following a deferral due to the many possible issues effecting the highways and transportation as a result of the proposed development.

In a report back to the members, Council assistant transportation director David Bull insisted that some recent "...robust changes" meant

that the redevelopment would once completed have very limited effects upon the surroundings subject to conditions. On this basis Mr Bull said of the proposal, "I am confident there is no reason for refusal".

Following the additional reports made to the committee and in light of the concerns of the local residents the committee voted 9-4 in favour of the plan. The final decision on the application will rest with Communities Secretary Hazel Blears.

Of major concern to one of the four who opposed the planning application, councillor Ernie Hendricks was the lack of proper consultation with the local community. When quizzed by the councillor into the level of consultation that had taken place councillor officers were unable to give an answer. In the run up to the first committee meeting to decide the application the Club had held two public exhibitions and had attended three local Ward meetings.

Local resident Vijay Sarathy said of the decision, "People seem to have missed the significance of the report. I am really annoyed and upset by how blind some of the committee are. The rights of the citizens have been trampled on again".



Child Emigrants

by Chris Sutton

The Society receives many family history enquiries about former Heathans, and this recent request was sparked by growing awareness and released information about child emigrants from Birmingham.

Between 1873 and 1936 over 5,000 children, aged 2 to 18, mainly from Birmingham, were sent to start a new life in Canada under a scheme originated by John Middlemore. All came from a poor background but were not necessarily orphans. Many were taken from workhouses and were usually there because their parents were deceased or unable to support them. Some children were there with their parents and were still sent away. Others were removed from the streets where they were often in trouble with the courts. Whatever the circumstances the choice came down to the workhouse or a potentially better life in Canada.



Refreshments for the Workers. National Archives of Canada, C-86484

Some had already been saved from the workhouse and were placed in homes run by philanthropists such as Middlemore. He had opened a home for boys on St Luke's Road, Birmingham in 1872 and later a home for girls on nearby Spring Street. These were known as the Children's Emigration Homes. The next year, in May, he took the first of many groups of children for new lives in Canada. The Canadian and British governments both supported this program. For Britain it reduced the costs on the public purse, and for Canada it provided workers-in-

training (usually aged 12 and older) or young children (usually 10 and under) for adoption by interested suitable families.

Until recently it was hard to track down the names of the children who were sent due to data protection issues. Many Canadian family historians have hitherto unknown Brummie roots and many here have twigs on their tree that simply seemed to have vanished. The British Isles Family History Society of Ottawa has re-dressed this to some degree by placing online (www.bifhsgo.ca/home_children_index.htm) a free searchable index of the 5,000 plus names.

These names include Heathans Charles and George Toomer; twins whose father was deceased, followed by their mother shortly after birth. The Toomers were taken into the care of Middlemore Homes and then on 12th May 1923 were sent to Canada on the Scythia. The two, still not yet a year old, were sent to different families, not even in the same area. Charles to Nova Scotia and George to New Brunswick. What subsequently happened to them is so far unknown to the lady who is researching her family.

The scheme was criticised as the years went on. Not everyone had a wonderful new life and there were reports of cruelty and abuse to some unfortunate children. Similar schemes existed which sent children away to America, Australia and New Zealand and these continued up into the 1960's in some cases. Apart from the Ottawa site, Home Children Canada (http://www3.telus.net/Home_Children_Canada/) aims to help descendants and relatives find details of a home child or to find his British family.

Although the intentions of these emigrant schemes were undoubtedly well intentioned it is impossible not to feel for those sent away. Young, and often split from any siblings once in Canada - most never returned.

My thanks to Val Hart of the Society for her initial research and background information on the Middlemore Homes.

Kay Brazier

Kay passed away on May 8th. She will be sadly missed by her many friends and admirers.

Kay was associated with the BHA (Balsall Heath Association) for 20 plus years and helped it to make a major contribution to the early renewal of Balsall Heath. Very many individuals and groups have cause to be grateful to her.

One feat of Kay's courage and determination stands out. For decades, the BHA in Court Road stood opposite the old Cannon Hill pub which, in those days, acted as the indoor office for criminal and pimping activities. It was a feared place which lowered the moral of the whole neighbourhood.

Kay campaigned against it and eventually persuaded the brewery to close it, thus paving the way for South Birmingham College to buy it and to house in it the impressive group of Saheli Women. From being the centre for so many bad things, it has become the focal point for hope and aspiration.

Thank you Kay. The new centre stands as a monument to your vision for a Better Balsall Heath. You can't be replaced. But, perhaps the Saheli group will ensure that your torch is taken up by a new generation of formidable women.

The Balsall Heathan

Your Community Newspaper

Outstanding

The recent Ofsted report for Clifton Primary school began with the statement "Clifton Primary is an outstanding school," and went on to state that "pupil's achievement is outstanding." The whole school community are very proud of their report and the picture that Ofsted gained of the school during their inspection on 29th and 30th April.

All staff were glowing with praise received especially the teaching staff, who were told that the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding and pupil's level of enjoyment and motivation are high because there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils and praise is extensively used to motivate the pupils.

The letter that has been written to the pupils thanked the children for the lovely two days the team had had in school and told the children that "their behaviour was excellent and they look after each other so well, even helping classmates when they find things difficult."

The Governing body didn't escape praise as the report commented on the exemplary way in which the Governors have involved members of the very diverse local community groups as well as national and international visits and visitors, in their drive to promote very real community cohesion.

Christine Mitchell, Headteacher of Clifton Primary school would like to say a huge thank you to the whole school community as a report like this can only be achieved with a high level of team work.

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Email balsall.heathan@stpaulstrust.org.uk

Read the Balsall Heathan online at

www.stpaulstrust.org.uk

Balsall Heath Children's Centre Small Grants

Balsall Heath Children's Centre is a government funded initiative, which aims to work with and support local parents, carers and families with children under 5 and pregnant women to ensure that they receive a better start in life. The Children's Centre works in partnership with local agencies, parents and services to meet the needs of families within the community.

The small grants scheme is an excellent opportunity for local organisations to apply for funding to develop or expand existing services that aim to enhance or improve the lives of local families. You need to be a registered company or constituted group to apply. Grants of £200 to £5000 will be available to successful applicants with a possibility of larger grants if suitable.

For further details or to request an application pack please contact Fuazia Azad, Early Years Manager on 0121 464 6349.



Application For Premises License Saturday July 4th 2009

Balsall Heath Carnival Committee give notice of their application for a Premises Licence under section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003, in relation to Balsall Heath Carnival 2009.

Licensable activities (Live music, Dance performances) will take place at the carnival on Saturday July 4th 2009 between the hours of 12:00 – 17:00 in Pickwick Park, Oldfield Rd Balsall Heath B12 8LU.

Details of the application can be viewed at the offices of Birmingham City Council Licensing Service, Crystal Court, Aston Cross Business Village, 50 Rocky Lane, Aston, B5 5BL. licensing@birmingham.go.uk

Representations should be made in writing by 18/06/2009.

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application, subject to the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence.

General enquiries relating to Balsall Carnival can be made to

Ian Edwards or Mark Houldcroft c/o St Pauls Community Development Trust. 73 Hertford St Balsall Heath. B12 8NJ. Telephone 0121 464 4376

balsall heath gardening competition!

This year we are re-introducing the gardening competition, which is open to everybody who lives in Balsall Heath, and that includes adults, children and the local businesses and schools can join in too!

Judging will be in the following categories;

- Front garden
- Hanging Basket
- Window box
- Tallest Sunflower
- Best Vegetable produce grown by a resident
- Best vegetable grown in a school

Certificates will be awarded to all entrants in the competition and the winners will each receive a special prize.

Judging will take place through the summer and there will be a presentation evening at the end of September at which time we will also know how we got on in Britain In Bloom.

For an application form ring the Balsall Heath Forum on 446 6182



Working together can really make a difference

Much of the neighbourhood is blighted by graffiti and this is really an eyesore for everybody. We know that young people are now territorial and have a tendency to tag their 'area'. The police will prosecute when they identify the tags, but they need evidence to achieve this. A group of service providers, representing the Housing Associations, Balsall Heath Forum, Police, Fire, Environmental Health and other Council departments have been meeting recently to see if by working more together they can tackle some of the problems in the neighbourhood.

Two of the issues the group have looked at are litter and graffiti. All the shopkeepers

and restaurant owners on Ladypool Road have now been visited by the Environmental Wardens and know exactly what their responsibilities are regarding litter and waste. Hopefully this will lead to less litter being thrown onto the streets. It is the intention of the group to now visit all shops in the neighbourhood with a similar message.

The group have also begun to tackle the graffiti sites. The Forum will be out every Monday clearing graffiti. There are though certain sites, which are continually covered with graffiti, regardless of how many times it is cleaned. One such site is the five a side pitch in Nelson Mandela Park. This has



been cleaned and re painted on numerous occasions only to be covered once more in graffiti. Hopefully this will not happen again because the walls have now been re painted and covered with an anti defacement coating. This work was funded through the City Council Anti Graffiti Strategy. The simple removal of graffiti is not a sustainable solution and the strategy has been developed in a partnership environment to provide a more holistic solution to the problem. In essence the strategy revolves around four elements; Intelligence – who does graffiti, why, where, when and what can be done about it? Enforcement – operations combining criminal and civil legislation to target taggers. Removal – efficient joint work between agencies to remove graffiti and Prevention – physical situational crime prevention through to engagement with young people via schools and clubs utilising educational resources.

Well done to the joint team in Balsall Heath. This is making a difference.

If you have any information on the taggers please contact the police or one of the community wardens.

In Gandhi's footsteps

by Chris Sutton

The most intriguing family story I have been asked to investigate was that Mahatma Gandhi visited Lee Crescent in the Lee Bank/ Edgbaston area whilst on a tour of Britain in 1931. Gandhi was here talking to trade unionists and pacifist groups such as the Quakers. It was the Quakers, at the Woodbrooke Centre on the Bristol Road, just outside Selly Oak, who invited him to speak in Birmingham as part of his tour. The story goes that while Gandhi was in Birmingham he paid a visit to Lee Crescent, but other than that there was nothing more known. Chatting to other Birmingham historians got the same response, they had heard he came to Selly Oak but knew nothing more.

First job was to check the local papers and see what Gandhi's itinerary was while he was in Birmingham. He arrived here on Saturday 17th October after speaking in Nottingham. He arrived by train at New Street Station and from there left by car directly for Woodbrooke, accompanied by a police escort. According to the newspapers he did not leave Woodbrooke for the remainder of that day. On the morning of Sunday 18th he had a private audience at Woodbrooke with the Bishop of Birmingham and then left to speak to a meeting of local Indians in Selly Oak, returning after that to Woodbrooke in the afternoon to speak about India's decision to attain independence from British rule via peaceful means. The next report has him leaving for London, via New Street Station again, on Monday 19th October.

So no mention of him anywhere else but encouragingly he WAS out in Selly Oak

speaking to the Indian meeting so maybe he went elsewhere. Next job was to see if there was any possible link with Gandhi in Lee Crescent. A look through the Electoral Roll and Trade Directory for 1931 produced names but cross-checking them gave no links to Gandhi whatsoever. A walk up Lee Crescent did provide a link though, a small one, one of the houses had a plaque on the wall saying "Peace House". Going back to the library and searching wider yielded the exciting information that the Quakers had published their newspaper, "No More War", from the "Peace House" from 1934 onwards. This made a positive link between Woodbrooke and Lee Crescent, although it still didn't prove Gandhi had been there, and in any case there was a three year gap.

Calling at the "Peace House" added more information. The owners had been there for many years and knew the house's history. They felt sure Gandhi had visited the house and indeed had known two sisters, Joan and Ena Ireland, who saw him. Tantalisingly they added that Gandhi had popped around the corner to borrow £2 for the train fare back to London! The man he had visited was said to be George Corbyn Barrow, who later became Lord Mayor in 1965. They didn't know which house, or indeed road, he had gone to so yet again it was back to the library to see where he could have gone. Barrow was listed in 1931 as living in St James Road, across the road in fact from the Quaker Friends Meeting House, at the junction with George Road. So there was that Quaker link again! Amazingly it turned out that Barrow's widow was still alive and in fact living next door to their former house. She had been much younger than Barrow and so her account of events was second hand from Barrow himself. The gist though was that she thought it was representatives of Gandhi who had called to see Barrow. She confirmed they had called to borrow money

for the train fare and Barrow had taken them to his workplace at Wragge and Company (city centre solicitors) to obtain the money. This she felt had been on a Saturday morning. Barrow was a senior in the company at the time, which she felt would have been in 1934 or after! And that was where the story again got stuck; Gandhi came here in 1931 and could in theory have gone out to Lee Crescent, and second hand eye witness testimony (the Ireland sisters) says he did. Mrs Barrow says it must have been 1934 or later and this ties in with the "Peace House". Gandhi's only listed visit to Britain post World War One was in 1931 so the facts had to fit around that, but clearly did not.

The breakthrough came in a surprising way. A former resident of the area was surprised at the alleged Gandhi visit and mentioned it to an elderly former neighbour, Dorothy White. Dorothy shocked him, and me, by saying it was true! She lived at 24 Lee Crescent and recalled seeing Gandhi walking barefoot from Five Ways Railway Station down to Lee Crescent. She and other children followed him along the road but on the opposite side. Dorothy says that Gandhi visited "four or five times" in all. On at least one occasion he was diverted to Five Ways railway station from New Street due to the size of the crowd awaiting him there. As to when Gandhi came the most specific she could be was before the Second World War. Her certainty was absolute

The last word must go to Gandhi himself who when asked at Birmingham if he believed in the personal immortality of the soul replied: "I would like to give you the analogy of the ocean. The ocean is composed of drops of water, each drop is an entity and yet it is part of the whole, 'the one and the many'. In this ocean of life we are all little drops".

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN SPARKBROOK

By **Mohammad Mahboob**

All successful communities and societies exhibit key elements for their success: a truly democratic governance structure, rule of law and educated citizens. These key success factors ensure society's stability, economic and social wellbeing.

In this article, I shall examine one of these key elements – education, particularly the primary education sector in the context of Sparkbrook and its residents.

Generally the education provision is divided in to distinct stages: early years and foundation stage, primary, secondary, further and higher education. In Sparkbrook, it seems that whilst the early years education is far from perfect, it is however beginning to show some progress. Nevertheless, I would still argue that not all early provision is delivered consistently within the principles of inclusion and equal opportunities framework. However, it is the primary and the secondary education that is seriously problematic in Sparkbrook.

All levels of education provision are important but it is the primary education where basic skills and knowledge such as literacy, numeracy, basic science and information and communication technology are developed and consolidated. If we get these skills and knowledge right then this lays the foundation for the secondary and higher education to be effectively imparted.

There are, according to my information, ten primary schools situated in the Sparkbrook ward. There are many more just outside of the ward with significant intake of pupils from Sparkbrook. Between all the primary schools located in

Sparkbrook they spend over twenty million pounds of our money. More worryingly, eight out of the ten schools are experiencing difficulties in delivering effective educational outcomes to our children. A large proportion of primary school leavers remain functionally illiterate even after six years of schooling. About 60% of the children from the Pakistani heritage remain two years behind the national standards set by the government. This situation stays with them through out their secondary education. This is seriously compromising their uptake of further and higher education and their prospects in the highly competitive job market.

It would be unhelpful to name any particular school. But there are at least five primary schools that are regarded as “failing” schools and have Ofsted's intervention following school inspections. There are only two primary schools that I would describe as adequate to good. The remaining eight schools are failing to deliver nationally set educational standards to our children.

So what are causes for this educational failure? I would list them as very poor leadership both amongst the governors, the schools' senior staff, poor teaching and discipline, racism, lack of accountability, lack of effective supervision by the Local Education Authority, very few local ethnic minority staff and poor parental involvement in the education of their children. I would argue that this leads to lack of control and disempowerment of local communities in educating their children and young people.

What can we do to address this scandalous situation that contributes to perpetual disadvantage of our communities? The simple answer is to take the ownership of the education of your children in to your own hands, get on to the governing bodies, hold senior staff to account and train more local people in managing their schools. We may not have all the skills but we can not do any worse than what the “professionals” are doing to our children and their future.

I hope that our councillors and community leaders will look in to this scandal and work together to bring about much needed change to how our children are educated. Please do realise its importance; it's your future and my future too. We must not ignore it any longer, it is time for the community to hold those responsible to account.

Balsall Heath In Bloom update

The planning committee continues to meet with increasing enthusiasm! We are all convinced that we can challenge Moseley in this competition, but the one thing we lack is sponsorship! This year we are starting out with a better grade of compost, a better quality of plants and secret ingredients to ensure that the plants keep their quality for longer. We also want to put up hanging baskets around the proposed route, but if we are to do that we really do need to get some

money in to pay for the display. If anybody would like to contribute to our entry into this competition then please contact either Pat or Bob at Balsall Heath Forum.

This year we have involvement with all the local primary schools, who are growing vegetables, which they will then turn into a cultural dish on the day the judges visit. The theme this year is 'roots' and the schools will concentrate on growing vegetables which reflect the culture of the school. The local Housing Associations are also getting involved and providing sponsorship too. Thank you so far to Friendship Housing and Moseley and District Housing for your financial contribution.

Getting Results

by Anita Halliday

Sparkbrook is an area in which schools 'experience difficulties in delivering effective educational outcomes'. Mohammad Mahboob rightly says this is a matter which calls for attention – but he is unfair in some other respects. In educational achievements, as in many other ways, Sparkbrook needs to catch up with other areas of the City. What will help enormously with the process of 'catching up' is if the Council and the Government carry out their promise. This promise is to bring more jobs, more businesses and higher incomes, to the residents of Sparkbrook, and to do this in the next two years.

Our Ward has more unemployment and lower incomes than any of the City's Wards, except for Aston which is worse. Throughout the City and the country as a whole, the fact which affects exam results most is whether a child comes from a better-off family and area, or a poorer one. Quite simply, families who are well-off can give their children all sorts of advantages others can't afford – computers, visits to interesting places, books, rooms to study in, club memberships and extra lessons. Considering that for 85% of their lives children are not in school, learning outside school with the family and others is very important to success.

In case this sounds like airy fairy theory, look at the results for schools in Aston. They have the same number of schools as us. Their results are not as good as those in Sparkbrook.

Our schools contend with other difficulties as well, in reaching the Birmingham average level of results. They have more statemented children and children with other special needs, than schools elsewhere. They have more children who have not received an early years education. They have more children who are not yet fluent English speakers and are recently-arrived here. Despite the disadvantages our children face in competing with those from the wealthier suburbs, the schools have achieved year on year increases in results. The gap between our schools and the City average has been much reduced over the past 4-5 years.

The schools have worked hard to get the results and it is fair to recognise this and encourage everyone who has helped to bring this about to carry on and get higher levels still. There are other points in M. Mahboob's article which we can argue about on another day – the significance of ethnicity, for example. In the meantime, we can finish on a note of agreement. The more parents, residents, and community leaders interest themselves actively in education the better it will become. The better it becomes, the better the future will be.

A GOOD READ

On 24th April, the Carnegie Greenaway awards shortlist was published, winners will be announced on 25th June. The Carnegie is given to a work for children which is considered to be outstanding, the Greenaway is given for distinguished illustration. In practice the Carnegie entries usually have to be innovative, imaginative and superbly written, the Greenaway illustrations must really support the text or story for which they are created. This award usually causes a lot of excitement in the library world. It has quite a history and here's a task for those interested: find out why Carnegie was an important person for libraries. If you are also interested in the Greenaway award, you might like to track its origins as well. Here goes for the Carnegie list.

COSMIC by Frank Cottrell Boyce 8+

A laugh out loud story about a boy who is tall enough to pass for a grown up – a child in an adult world, what would you get up to?

BLACK RABBIT SUMMER by Kevin Brooks 14+

Tensions, secrets, jealousies. Menacing from start to finish, a dark tale of one young man on the cusp of adulthood.

AIRMAN by Eoin Colfer 9+

Conor is a born flier, it is the love of his life, but soon he has to use his skill to save his family and right a wrong.

BOG CHILD by Siobhan Dowd 12+

Set in 1980s Ireland, Fergus and his uncle find the body of a child in a bog. Old body? Recent death?

OSTRICH BOYS by Keith Gray 12+

When your best friend dies and you don't think the funeral service does him justice, what do you do? Try to give him the send off he deserved of course! Not as dark as it sounds.

THE KNIFE OF NEVER LETTING GO by Patrick Ness 14+

Imagine being able to hear what everyone was thinking, all of the time 24/7, no respite. That's what it's like in Prentisstown. This is a tale of new world settlement where old world resentments and petty jealousies have not been left behind. Is there hope?

CREATURE OF THE NIGHT by Kate Thompson 14+

Bobby moves into a cottage with his mother, but can't wait to get back to Dublin to pick up his old life. A neighbour tells of a child murder in the cottage. At first Bobby is not concerned, but the longer he stays there, the more he feels something is not right...

If you are keen to explore this award, or to look at the Greenaway shortlist, there is a good website at www.carnegiegreenaway.co.uk.

Happy Reading
J.READER

Balsall Heath Forum Focus

Edgbaston Cricket Club and Residents

Abdullah lives in Raglan Road. He has been concerned for some time that the Club's expansion plans, especially the floodlights, would reduce the quality of his and his neighbours environment. So, he went to Trent Bridge in Nottingham. For, they already have permanent lights.

The photographs of them in this Heathan show what they are like. But, Abdullah also talked to residents who live around the ground. This is what they said to him:



Mr Garside, 36 Millient Road said:

- "It brings in terrible parking. It blocks you in or out and the noise goes on until 1 o'clock in the morning on 20:20 days.
- There's extra rubbish and aggravation.
- The lights are terrible."

Patricia Walker, 2 Kirkland Yard said:

- "The lights are a monstrosity. If yours would be higher it would be even worse. They are very ugly. I feel so sorry for you."

Mr Khan of Loughborough Road declined to give his house number. He said:

- "The ground should move to out in the countryside. This shouldn't be in a residential area. It's got to be too much."

John Johnson of the Methodist Church said:

- "Parking on match days is bad. Its worse on Test Match days. On 20:20 games its even worse. Members of my church can't get in or out. It disturbs the peace and worship."

Helen Davis, of 25 Patrick Road said:

- "The car parking is horrendous, really bad, especially in the evenings of 20:20 games."

Mr Hunter, works in a shop opposite the ground but wouldn't give his address. He said:

- "The worse thing about the lights is that they are now permanent and you kind of get used to seeing them. They lower the tone and your expectations. They've just become part of a bad landscape. Why do we have to live with lower standards? That's the worse bit."

Miss Smith, who was visiting the Methodist Church, said:

- "People round here could have done with one or two people like you. Maybe then we could have stopped this happening. These lights ruin the skyline. This is the bridge over the river Trent. It used to be beautiful. People have begun to forget that. That's terrible, don't you think?"

Abdullah says that "the main message I bring back to Birmingham is this: The parking, congestion, noise, litter and bad behaviour

are all distressing, especially on Test and 20:20 days. But, the permanent lights lower the quality of life every day. They don't just affect residents as individuals and families. They lower the quality of life for a whole community. I hope these quotes and the photos show the reality of those aspects of the Club's proposal to which we most object.



When my dad bought my house, he had no idea that this could be our fate. But, we are sure that there is a better way forward. For example, the lights could be temporary or retractable. Please ensure that our area is not blighted by the Club's inability to see that we who live here every day care for our neighbourhoods in a way which it does not yet do. If only we can sit down with it and discuss our differences, we are sure we can agree a way forward which benefits us all."

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund

A fair number of Voluntary Organisations in Balsall Heath and Sparkbrook were funded over the last few years by a Government Grant called NRF (the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund). This ended a year ago. Since then, some organisations have struggled to survive. A few have closed.

The Government replaced NRF with WNF (the Working Neighbourhoods Fund). This was given to Birmingham

Council a year ago. But, the Council has been slow to put it in place and it is not expected to be operational until August/September, nearly one and a half years since it was supposed to start.

However, on the bright side, the amount due to come to Sparkbrook is around £2m. More important, most of the Voluntary Organisations who could access it have decided not to compete for it, but to form a partnership and access it collectively. This means that some might not get as much as they would like because they wish to support other agencies whose needs and abilities may be greater. This is a significant advance on the past approach of 'me, mine, I want it now.'

“If at first you don’t succeed, try again”

The many residents, their association and Forum’s who have been concerned by Edgbaston Cricket Clubs plans for expansion were disappointed, but not surprised that the Council’s Planning Committee approved these plans. For, if unamended, they will blight the lives of thousands of residents, not just who live near the ground, but for all those who live up to a mile away. In particular, the permanent lights will lower the quality of the environment for 365 days a year.

So, residents, their representatives, Councillors and M.P.s resolved to live and fight another day. They aim to appeal both to the regional office of government in the Midlands and to Central Government and say: ‘Act as our referee. Call in this decision and set up an independent enquiry’.

Residents were surprised that Birmingham’s Planning Committee gave in so easily to the Club’s threats to take cricket away from Birmingham and give it to Coventry. They say that they have many grounds for appeal and still hope that the club will eventually be told: “Either come to terms with residents concerns or, if you can’t, move to a place where you can expand without blighting an overwhelming residential area.”

Inspiring Communities

A new government initiative could help Balsall Heath to inspire more young people (aged 11-15) to aspire to perform better at school, gain qualifications and access or, even, create jobs. It is called ‘Inspiring Communities’ and is aimed at neighbourhoods like ours. It is based on the old African saying that: “It takes a whole village to educate and support a child.”

So, local schools, the St Paul’s Project, Faith groups and the Forum are getting together to put in a neighbourhood-wide bid to pilot this new initiative. Some say that it is as if the initiative had been specially written for Balsall Heath. But, a note of caution is needed. For, only 15 neighbourhoods in the whole country will be chosen by the government to benefit from this initiative. So, while we hope that Balsall Heath’s bid succeeds, the odds are stacked against it.



Please send your letters to: The Editor, The Balsall Heathan, c/o St. Paul’s Community Development Trust, Hertford Street, Balsall Heath, B12 8NU

Dear Editor,

Edgbaston Cricket Club says I knew what I’d have to put up with when I bought my house. But, my dad bought it 35 years ago when the club was fine, no problem. Now, however, with 20:20 games and floodlights, the noise and interference is impossible. If we have to put up with floodlights high in the sky for 365 days a year, then this is the last thing we imagined all these years ago.

Can the club please play fair and not bowl no-ball bouncers at our heads? We stare at a horrible future unless you can help us. Please do so.

Mr P Chanhan
Beaconsfield Road

Dear Editor,

I live in Eastwood Road. Test Matches at Edgbaston are bad enough. But, this new form of 20:20 cricket is intolerable. The noise at night is like an express train during the match. But, after it is over at around 11:00pm it is intolerable, especially when some 20,000 fans spill out into my and other roads and behave like a Saturday afternoon football mob.

This is, or was, a residential road. But, its become like we are next to New Street Station. Now that the Planning Committee has approved permanent light for 365 days a year it will be even worse. Can I sue the Planning Committee because my house is now worth half of what it was just a few years ago.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Caruthers.
Eastwood Road

Dear Editor

As you possibly know there are huge waiting lists for allotment space all over the country and there is an awful lot of garden space not being used by the occupiers of the property. I was recently taken seriously ill and thought an allotment might be a good way to help build my strength again and give me something to do between hospital appointments. However I found that there are over 100,000 people on allotment waiting list all over the country and in my area the waiting time is about 2 years. Although I am not able to work full time I am able to devote some of my time at home to organising. I decided to try to organise a national garden sharing scheme. I would like to bring, as many would be gardeners together with as many garden owners as possible. Thousands of properties have gardens but many are too large for the home occupiers to maintain themselves or they are simply not able or motivated to.

As payment for use of the garden the gardener will provide a range of fruit and vegetables free of charge to the occupiers throughout the year. In the community favour many unsightly and overgrown gardens will be given a new lease of life and much needed garden space will be made available for people who are not fortunate enough to have gardens of their own.

The scheme would closely vet all gardeners, provide a written agreement between the gardener and the occupier, provide free vegetables to the occupier throughout the year and as a community scheme would increase land usage, community involvement, local education and much, much more.

The surplus produce could be donated to and used by local community and church organisation for distribution to groups they feel in need and some could be sold to schools, colleges and nurseries for use in their kitchens.

I know the idea is not particularly new but as no one seems to be organising a national campaign with much vigour I decided to try, however starting one is not easy. The benefits are enormous and I wondered if you would consider promoting my contact information for me along with a short explanation of what I am trying to achieve.

I have a web site www.homegrownuk.org and can be contacted by email at homegrownuk@yahoo.co.uk
Kind regards
Steve Garratt

Dear Editor,

Ouch! Please don't let the Edgbaston Club implement its plans. Please print on your front page a photograph of what the permanent floodlights would look like. Then, ask any resident or visitor if they would want to stare out at this.

We need your help. Please give it.

Mrs S Webster
Sharron Gardens

Dear Editor,

Our famous neighbour is at it again - desperate in its ambition to over-develop at the expense of the amenity and living conditions of the many.

In the late 90's, Warwickshire county cricket-club submitted plans for the installation of 4 permanent floodlight columns to be used for day/night cricket, pop-concerts etc.

The Council refused planning permission on grounds that the columns would have adversely affected the amenity of dwellings in the vicinity of the ground. The club appealed and a 4 day public inquiry was held.

A government appointed inspector upheld the council's decision and dismissed the appeal on exactly the same grounds.

9 years later, we are faced with an even bigger challenge. The club has submitted plans for 5 permanent floodlight columns, optimum height of 188 feet Each, 250 flats, hotels, pubs, club, the list goes on.

This will inevitably result in a substantial increase in frequency of day/night cricket and other non-cricketing events, every year, day and night, rain or shine, summer and winter.

A public meeting was held on 2nd April to gauge public concern. Planning department members attended to hear the concerns and the meeting was well attended, thanks to Wardens from the Balsall Heath Forum who helped to deliver nearly 4,000 leaflets. On the 8th April, the planning committee referred the application and insisted on a transport study being commissioned and that the club de-scale its proposal.

In particular, the club was encouraged to include residents in its revised, de-scaled proposal. Will this materialise? The Club has a history of ignoring its neighbours. But, the plan will impact thousands of people in terms of light pollution, visual impact of permanent columns, increase in noise, traffic and parking problems. If the current proposal is given planning permission, then quite simply, Balsall Heath will change forever.

We must stand united and say: "NO".

Ultimately, our children are the ones who will suffer by way of disruption to sleep and study.

As responsible parents, can we allow this to happen?

Mohammed Ajajib
Willows Crescent

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the publishers. Letters may be edited for publication. Letters will only be considered for publication if accompanied by a name and address. These can be withheld if requested. The Balsall Heathan will not publish anything it deems to be unlawful, libellous, defamatory or obscene.

Council Services

Housing Department

Repairs 24 hours	0800 0733 333
Applications/Transfers	303 4005
Council House Purchases	303 7926
Private Tenancy Officers	303 5070
Rent Arrears	303 3324
Empty Properties	303 5070
Unkempt Gardens	303 5070

Environmental Services

Environmental Health	303 6007
Pest Control (Rats)	303 9900
Antisocial behaviour	303 1111
Noise & Nuisance Team	303 6007
Refuse Collection & Street Cleaning	303 1112
Pothole Reports	303 6644
Street Lighting	303 6000

Social Services

Social Services Department	303 7070
Social Security (Poplar Rd. & Coventry Rd.)	722 7000
Social Security (Moseley Rd. & Northfield)	766 4300
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit	464 7000
Council Tax (Billing & Account enquiries)	303 1113

Education and Employment

Education Department (General enquiries)	303 2590 / 2872
Student Grants	303 3648 / 3647
Sparkhill Job Centre (Stoney Lane)	480 3500
T.U.C. Centre for the Unemployed	771 0871

Gas, Water, Electricity

British Gas (Transco)	0845 609 1122
Gas Escapes	0800 111 999
Gas Repairs (Council Tenants only)	333 7433
npower Electricity Emergency	0800 328 1111
Severn Trent Water	0800 783 4444

Police

Main Switchboard	0845 113 5000
Edward Road	626 4467

Health

Balsall Heath Health Centre, Edward Road	446 2300
Mobarak Health Centre, Cannon Hill Road	440 4666

Community and Advice Services

Access for All Disability Resource Centre, Bierton Rd, Yardley	789 7365
Apna Ghar Asian Elders Centre, 21 Clevedon Rd.	440 2266
Assemblies of the First Born Heritage Community Project	753 0068
C.A.S.A Project	440 5022
Cats, 110 Edward Road	440 1007
Balsall Heath Church Centre Elderly Care	440 1138
Balsall Heath Forum, St Pauls Road	446 6183
Balsall Heath Children's Centre	464 6349
Balsall Heath Library	464 1962
Birmingham Asian Business Association, 249 Ladypool Rd.	693 3101
Birmingham Drugline	632 6363
Birmingham Enterprise, 249 Ladypool Road	446 4444
Birmingham Ethnic Education and Advisory Service	359 3339
Birmingham Independent Living Project, 249 Ladypool Rd.	693 9050
Calthorpe Park Playcentre, Edward Rd./Cheddar Rd.	446 4047
Friends Institute, 220 Moseley Rd.	440 4873
Empty Homes Project (to report empty houses)	303 5341
Good Neighbour Centre, George St.	440 7548
Highgate Family Support Centre, Conybere St.	440 6788
Islamic Resource Centre	440 3500
Jericho Community Project, Edward Road	446 4258
Jericho Foundation, Edward Road	440 7919
Kings Christian Centre	440 4447
Pathways For People	446 5122
Pride of Jephthah, Unity House St Pauls Road	440 3000
Run A Muck	449 1991
South East Birmingham Credit Union	444 4114
Sparkhill Centre, 447 Stratford Road	772 2427
St. Paul's Venture & Malvern Street City Farm	464 1888
Wayahead	464 8739
Yemeni Advice & Cultural Centre, Joseph Chamberlain College	446 6621
Yemeni Day Centre, 15 George Street	440 1044
Yemeni Centre, 244 Edward Road	249 3945
Yemeni Welfare & Training Centre, 147 Kyrwicks Lane, Sparkbrook	773 7664

Neighbourhood Offices

Sparkbrook, Greencoat House, 261 Stratford Road,	303 9110
Sparkhill, 641 Stratford Road,	303 0722

Sports & Leisure

Moseley Road Baths, Moseley Road	464 0150
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Family Event April Ladypool School

Balsall Heath Children's Centre and the Parent Support Adviser from Balsall Heath Extended Schools launched a combined event in April. The day was held during the Easter holidays so that the whole family could take part. Activities were fun, practical and therapeutic for the whole family's well being, and included arts and crafts, musical babies, baby massage, hand massage, Mendhi and face painting.

A variety of organisations like Community Enterprise, Bourneville College, Adult Education and Mind were present on the day offering advice, guidance and general information.



Food net and the under 5's team facilitated informative sessions to educate parents on healthy diet, hidden sugars in food types, oral health and gave examples of how to plan a healthy lunch box for children who take sandwiches to school.

Saheli Gym, a local gym for women only, were also present. They brought in bicycles for parents and children to try out, the older



children really enjoyed this activity. There was even a chance for parents to have a go for the very first time.

Two sports coaches from Sports 4 Life were present to encourage the children to play cricket, football and hockey with activities planned so all could have a taster of different sports.

The turn out for the event was fantastic, around 500 people turned up on the day. Grandmothers, Aunties, Fathers, older brothers and sisters all took part in some activity or other.

"The day was great, this was the first time I've been to an event where babies up to Grandma could take part" (Grandmother)

Special thanks were given to CASA Community Project, Mind (Mental Health Project) and Ashiana Community Project for their help.

For more information about the Extended Schools Cluster contact Alison Moore, Cluster Coordinator) or Saira Hussain (Parent Support Advisor) on 0121 464 6349.



St. Paul's Nursery

Malvern Street, Balsall Heath, 0121 464 1886

We provide a safe and nurturing environment and believe in the importance of your child's happiness, learning and development.

A professional and friendly staff team, who are dedicated and experienced in childcare and development, provide full and sessional care and learning for children aged 3 months to 5 years.

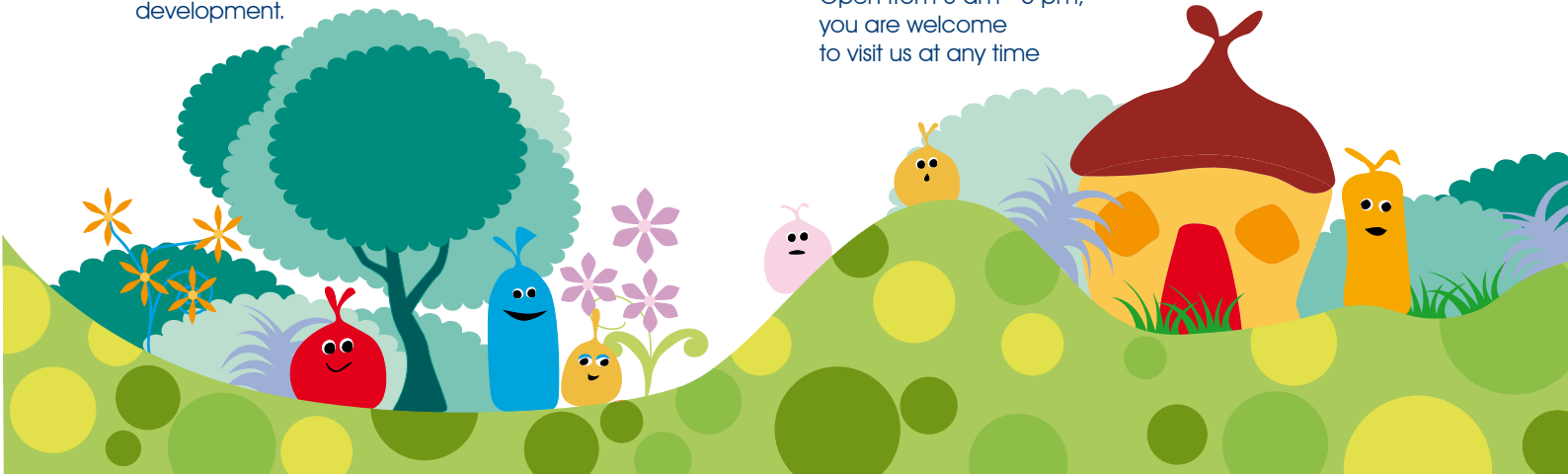
Planning within the birth to Early Years Foundation stage curriculum, we provide free play opportunities and focused activities to encourage each child's learning and development.

We are extremely fortunate to have weekly visits from a music teacher and gardener, who support the learning opportunities already provided.

Ofsted registered and eligible for the Nursery Education Fund, we have achieved the silver quality framework award and are currently working towards the 'Quality Together' scheme.

Our chef provides a balanced diet which meets the needs of all dietary requirements, with all meals and snacks prepared on site using fresh ingredients.

Open from 8 am - 6 pm,
you are welcome
to visit us at any time





JURASSIC BALSALL HEATH



**CARNIVAL
2009**

**Balsall Heath Carnival 2009 July 4th
at Pickwick Park**

If you are interested in volunteering, performing, having a stall, or taking part in the procession then contact the Carnival Co-ordinator on 0121 464 4376