

Meeting date: 17th December 2020
Note to: HS2 Implementation Advisory Group



Note title: Heath Park Update
Note from: Jonathan Lord – HS2 Senior Engagement Manager
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Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
- Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
- Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
- Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Note: Public

1. Purpose of Update Note

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the current use of Heath Park, and the support which could be provided to the local community moving forwards.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 To note the steps taken to support Heath Park
- 2.2 To support the proposed future engagement with the local community
- 2.3 Members are asked to identify key community members that would like to support the project and the establishment of a Friends of Group for Bluebell Park which can be directed to lovesolihull@solihull.gov.uk

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 Latest HS2 Mitigation Proposals for Heath Park

- 3.1.1 HS2's main works contractor Balfour Beatty Vinci (BBV) provided an initial proposal about its works affecting Heath Park early in 2019. Since then BBV continue to develop it design and construction in greater detail. This has provided a better picture of the scale of the build.

- 3.1.2 The increasing scale of the build has driven increased requirements for mitigations to ensure the Health, Safety Wellbeing and Welfare of the public and operatives working on the site.
- 3.1.3 In order to satisfy the requirements of the structures crossing the motorway very significant piles are required - 2.1 metres diameter concrete piles that are 20 metres deep require very large crawler cranes with extensive safety zones around them.
- 3.1.4 The materials required for the build will need to be delivered and stored on the site and be kept secure. There will be circa 34,000 tons of imported aggregate to fill between the retaining walls.
- 3.1.5 There will be large concrete pours taking more than a day to complete and space is required for lorries to be able to manoeuvre safely into and out of the site.
- 3.1.6 The pitch location currently identified by BBV would involve relocating the current pitch to the north west but this would impact on the canopy of the trees, although not with the trunks. Further work is ongoing by BBV who consider there are opportunities to optimise the topsoil bund to move the pitch few metres to the east and avoid the clash with the canopy and, at the same time, to relocate it more to the centre of the area.
- 3.1.7 BBV do not support relocating the spoil heaps to the other side of the road as suggested by SMBC Officers because they will be used as a visual screen and there is insufficient space to move them on the embankment and finally it would create programme implications. However, BBV are working on their methodology to reduce the footprint of the topsoil bunds in order to give more space for the football pitch.
- 3.2 In terms of the final landscaping design, it is likely that the final design will require a landscape area in front of the future retaining wall. Currently, the shape of this area is to be defined and discussions will continue with SMBC Officers.



Figure 1: HS2: Work in Progress

3.3 Community Investment opportunities

3.3.1 BBV has confirmed that they will carry out any of the work in re-positioning of the pitch and investigate any drainage issue of the field including land drainage or a cut off drain.

3.4 Details of the HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) Processes

3.4.1 Members should note that if a CEF bid is made by the Council then there needs to be a minimum 25% requirement for match contribution. Match funding can be both cash and in-kind contribution and it does not have to be the local authority that provide the match funding if they are the applicant. There just needs to be a 25% contribution from other sources towards the total cost.

3.4.2 For CEF (Local) grants up to £75,000; projects led by community or voluntary sector organisations (rather than the Council) there is no requirement for match contributions. In this specific example, the applicant would need to have some form of security of tenure - either freehold or a lease to be eligible to apply and negate the requirement for match funding requirements. Further guidance on CEF and BLEF can be found at: <https://hs2funds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Community-Environment-Fund-Guidance-Document.pdf>

3.4.3 As context, over the past 3 years, Members will be interested to know that 7 projects have been successfully funded by CEF within North Solihull, with a combined commitment of over £360,000. This amounts to a higher level of investment in this area than the national average for awards made from the CEF. These are outlined in Appendix A.

3.5 Playing Pitches

3.5.1 There have been few enquiries about use of the pitches in the north when compared to the south. (In the south there have been 27 bookings this season and have been unable to place some teams due to the pitch requested already been booked and them not wishing to play at an alternative site)

3.5.2 Pitch conditions, while on the whole are acceptable, would benefit from further maintenance in terms of drainage and ground levelling. Throughout the season it is difficult to carry out reparations as the pitches are getting played on, while out of season it is too warm to carry out certain tasks such as soil and seeding. The Council has also kept the goals up in recent years over the summer for a number of reasons however informal summer use is adding to pitch wear and making it more difficult to carry out lasting reparations.

3.5.3 The playing pitch strategy reflects this position. All of the Council's natural turf pitches are 'standard' grade and spare capacity was noted although investment was recognised as being necessary.

3.6 Sites near the Heath Park area:

- (a) Bluebell Recreation Ground - There are 3 adult pitches in use and a total of 3 bookings for Bluebell all for Sunday mornings. There is also space for 2 junior pitches however there has been no interest for these. There may be potential to turn these into 1 adult pitch and then move a junior pitch to Heath Park. In terms

of pitch condition at Bluebell Recreation Ground, it is recognised that the goal posts require replacement and investment in the playing pitch quality. Goal post replacements are due later in the season when ground conditions improve for works.

- (b) Heath Park – This site is marked as not available this season due to HS2 – there was an enquiry about use of the pitch they were relocated to an alternative site.
- (c) Babbs Mill – The Council's records show 3 adult pitches which are not available for hire this season due to Wildlife Ways works – ordinarily one pitch gets booked but in terms of demand there is very little interest for the other two pitches. Due to this there may now not be room available for 3 pitches as the ground may have been used for other projects such as Wildlife Ways
- (d) Lanchester Park - 1 adult pitch and 1 booking on Sunday morning – no room for additional pitch

3.6.2 The current status is that the Council is still open to bookings unless:

- (a) Locations are already booked up or at max capacity for example Elmdon Heath Recreation Ground, where there have been complaints regarding car parking, which has meant there no plans to increase bookings.
- (b) The pitches are not prepared for play. Over the last couple of years we have only installed goal posts at those pitches booked out, therefore some pitches do not have goal posts and are not ready for a team to hire out half way through a season.

3.7 **Playing Pitch Strategy**

3.7.1 The Playing Pitch Strategy recognises a wider playing pitch set of needs in the wider northern area of the Borough, which is as follows:

- (a) North Solihull Sports Centre (Solihull Council): investment in a full size 3G facility and other outdoor sport and physical activity offers for wider community use.
- (b) Castle Bromwich Playing Fields (Parish Council): requires investment in its playing pitches and changing rooms.
- (c) The Pavilions Club- Kingshurst: natural turf pitch quality improvements and improvements to changing accommodation.
- (d) Chelmsley Town FC: natural turf pitch improvements
- (e) Secondary school sites opportunities: Grace Academy and Smith's Wood Academy – 3G small sided pitch

3.8 **Opportunities Available**

3.8.1 There are a wider range of opportunities where the HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) could contribute to the development of playing pitch infrastructure

immediately associated with this area with pitch improvements or investment in the wider playing pitch infrastructure.

3.8.2 The maximum funding from HS2 of schemes is £250,000 unless an exceptional award is made.

3.9 **Proposed Approach**

3.9.1 Solihull Council

- (a) Identify the match funding potential within the Council and other funders to improve the pitch quality of Council pitches with the priority being Bluebell Recreation Ground.
- (b) Set out a plan for the development of a feasibility for the development of the outdoor facilities at North Solihull Sports Centre.

3.9.2 Other providers

- (a) Raise awareness of the other pitch providers in the area effected by the wider HS2 project of the opportunity to draw in additional funding in to assets the local community.

3.10 **Update on Public Engagement**

3.10.1 The Council's Public Realm team have provided an update on actions they have undertaken to engage with the public on future plans.

3.10.2 A local community lead who had previously expressed an interest in forming a Friends of Bluebell Park Group would be contacted to determine if this was still an objective for them. There has been no discussion regarding a Friends of group for Heath Park, likely due to the nature of the park

3.10.3 There are three potential outcomes from this:

- (a) If it is still their aim then the Public Realm team will work with them to discuss the project and identify if they would be happy to lead on the community consultation aspect with support through Love Solihull and would then agree timescales.
- (b) If the individual is no longer interested, the Public Realm team will enquire if the community lead was aware of any other local resident / community lead that would be interested in leading on the project then work with them as above.
- (c) If no interest is expressed by the community lead and they are not aware of anybody else that can support – then other potential avenues would need to be identified. This may be something that the Community Development Team can assist with.

3.10.4 Members are asked to identify key community members that would like to support the project and the establishment of a Friends Group for the park which can be directed to lovesolihull@solihull.gov.uk.

3.10.5 With regards to Bluebell Park improvements the Public Realm Team have been building relations with the local community who have expressed an interest in forming a Friends of Bluebell Park group. In order to build these relations we have worked with them to undertake a number of improvement works within Bluebell Park, in order to tackle priority issues they have identified. This included:

- (a) Site meeting with community lead
- (b) Installing a new car park gate and height barrier
- (c) Working with both our contractors and the local police team to address the issue of evening anti- social behaviour in the car park
- (d) New football posts ordered – to be installed when ground conditions allow
- (e) Clearing of vegetation
- (f) Installation of litter related signage
- (g) Edging of pathways

3.10.6 The support that a potential Friends of group could provide in terms of the long term management of the park is invaluable and their support and input will be key in constructing any HS2 funding bids.

3.11 Conclusion

3.11.1 HS2 and Solihull Council Officers therefore consider that proactive steps have been taken over the last year to address the issues at Heath Park and will continue to progress other initiatives. They will report back to the Board on any future updates for Members to consider.

4. Implications and Considerations

4.1 State how the proposals in this note contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Public Spaces team hope to revitalise pitches/sites within the Borough 2. Will maximise the opportunities of HS2 for local residents
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull’s natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull’s air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull’s net carbon emissions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The Public Realms team will engage with the local community to improve their open spaces.
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Will enable local residents to improve their community through access to CEF

8. Enable communities to thrive. 9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs.	
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4.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

4.2.1 Consultation will take place with local residents to determine if there would be a desire for any of the proposed ideas.

5. List of appendices referred to

5.1 Appendix A – North Solihull Projects Funded by CEF