

Headland Road Play Area at risk of closure

Dear Parishioners,

The Parish Council feel that it is time to explain our position in relation to playing field access and the children's play equipment on Headland Road.

In the late 1950s a Village Playing Field Trust was set up to find a community playing field for local children to use. Following discussion with the Trust, Warwickshire County Council (WCC) bought a parcel of land as a playing field extension to Welford Primary School. The two parties agreed that the land would also be used for local children outside of school hours. This dual purpose has existed since 1962 when a formal licence was agreed between the County Council, as freeholder, and the Parish Council, on behalf of the village community.

The land was purchased from the Bidston Stonehouse Allotment Trust, who sold the land on the understanding that the land would have this dual purpose. The Parish Council have a copy of a letter from the County Council on the 17th October 1957 confirming this arrangement.

Since this time the Parish Council has invested, with your money, in children's play equipment on the field and wish to continue to do so. To the benefit of the village, access during this period was given freely except at times when the field was in use by the school.

However, a new security gate was installed in the spring of 2022 and has been locked on many occasions since, preventing access. In July of 2023, the Parish Council received a new proposal from WCC; a new licence with restrictive terms that excluded access to the majority of the playing field, even out of school hours and during the holidays. This offer had not been negotiated with the Parish Council, who rejected it as too restrictive and wanted further discussion. On 19th January 2024, a letter from the Governors of Welford Primary School threatened permanent exclusion from the playing field if the new licence was not accepted. The letter went on to insist that the Parish Council would have to spend community funds (again your money!) removing the play equipment and closing down the only village facility.

As you all know the village has nowhere else to put the equipment if we had to remove it!

The Parish Council are really surprised that the County Council and Governors, as a provider of children's education, are even suggesting the closing

down the only children's play area in the village. This has become an important general amenity facility, which has been used historically for the benefit of the wider community eg: other children's groups like the scouts, as well as the school.

The Parish Council fully understands and supports the school's need to meet their statutory duties to safeguard children in their custody when they are using the field. However, outside these hours the field should be available for community use. We also understand the immense value that outdoor recreational space offers our children and young people, and strive to carry on the legacy of The Village Playing Field Trust established over 60 years ago. To that end, we support and pursue any opportunity to improve or extend those facilities in our village. The Parish Council believe strongly that there must be a compromise that works for all parties!

We are being offered, without negotiation, a fenced off area around the play equipment on an easily terminated licence (6 months notice to close it). The Parish Council feel this does not reflect the historic position or the needs of the community. A more permanent solution is what we consider to be a more reasonable outcome.

The Parish Council have always made themselves available to WCC, the school and their governors for discussion on this and any other topic. We strive at all times to be objective, courteous and to seek mutually beneficial solutions. Our hope and expectation is to achieve something that works better for everyone.

Depending on how further negotiations progress, the Parish Council may call a village meeting to engage with you, our village community, get your feedback and understand your appetite to take this further.

Yours faithfully

Welford on Avon Parish Council



Warwickshire
POLICE

Crime Prevention Handbook

Please find below a link to Warwickshire Police's crime prevention handbook:

www.warwickshire.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/warwickshire/campaign-documents/crime-prevention-handbook/crime-prevention-handbook---warwickshire-police.pdf