

A New Garden and Playground in the heart of Park ward....

A proposal to Halifax Rotary Club from Jenny Lynn, vice chair of Park ward
Neighbourhood Forum 6th October 2020

Park ward where I live is a really great neighbourhood, vibrant, multicultural, with lots of small businesses, corner shops, tightly packed terraced housing.

A few years ago, some of us started to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Park ward, and held lots of workshops and meetings with community groups, to try to see how they would like the area to develop in the future.

One of the key issues brought up especially by women who lived in the Northern part of the ward (between Gibbet Street and Pellon Lane) is that they would love to have somewhere they could walk to, take the children to play, and just meet up and socialise. People's Park, which gives the ward its name, is great if you live fairly near it, but for some people, it is just too far away to push a push chair, or feel that it is local to you.

This set us thinking – right at the very centre of Park ward, where Queen's Road crosses Gibbet Street, is a Council owned building called the Queens Road Neighbourhood Centre. Built around 1905 as an art school, it's quite an impressive building in its own right, and may well have had gardens in front of it when it was first built. Now however, the Centre is just fronted by a large tarmacked car park. What if we could create a special garden in part of the car park, beside the crossroads, somewhere with benches to sit, some play equipment for little ones, maybe some raised beds in which we could grow fruit and vegetables and flowers, maybe planting a few trees too. It could become a real focus for the neighbourhood – a reason to go for a walk and get some exercise, and enjoy the garden.

So we included this idea in our Neighbourhood Plan – and then the pandemic came along and put paid to a lot of what we had hoped to achieve.

There are some good examples of local people getting involved in environmental projects of different kinds. Steve Blacksmith is a volunteer at St. Augustine's Centre, who works with asylum seekers on growing vegetables in the garden there. The Outback is a wonderful garden on Lightowler Road created by Halifax Opportunities Trust Jubilee Children's Centre. The Halifax

Central Initiative, led by Shebana Sadiq, have helped create an environmental group involving local women in clean-up campaigns etc. The Chair of our Park ward Neighbourhood Forum, Doctor Fiaz Farooq, lives just over the road, and would I am sure take an interest in the project.

The Centre and the site on which it sits is managed by the Council's Community Assets & Facilities Management Section (CAFM). I spoke to Steve Hoyle from CAFM some time ago about our ambitions to create a garden and playground in the car park, and he was able to confirm that they would not object to such a proposal, although clearly there would be plenty to do to work up the details of such a project.

Key contacts:

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