

## **Plans for Highbury Hall need new vision (Mar 3 2009 Birmingham Post)**

Dear Editor,

As Joseph Chamberlain's great-granddaughter, I am taking a keen interest in the current situation regarding the Highbury Hall estate, Highbury Trust and Birmingham City Council.

Although I now live in Devon, I was born in Birmingham and visit Highbury as frequently as I can. I always enjoy my trips to this forward-thinking, cosmopolitan and vibrant city and am moved by the high regard in which the Chamberlain family is still held by different generations. The spirit of Joseph's legacy lives on in so many ways. Recent media coverage of the City Council's controversial proposals for Highbury and its role as sole Trustee has highlighted just how deeply the citizens of Birmingham care about what happens to the estate. Such publicity has also shone a spotlight on the community's wish to become involved in any decision-making process and contribute to a new vision for Highbury.

Now that the City Council plans to meet with the Charity Commission to review Highbury Trust, I feel there is an opportunity to think again about its governance. I have written to Councillor John Alden, chairman of the Council's Trusts and Charities Sub-Committee, expressing my concern about the lack of diverse community representation on the Trust. I have also offered my services as a new Trustee to help ensure that my great-grandfather's bequest reaches those for whom it was originally intended.

I would hope that any future changes could be aligned with Joseph's desire to help and inspire people & perhaps focusing on educational, recreational, environmental and social health projects.

With the City Council, the Chamberlain family and the people of Birmingham working together on this issue, I would like to think that things can move forward in a way that benefits all concerned.

Mary de Vere Taylor  
Ashburton  
Devon