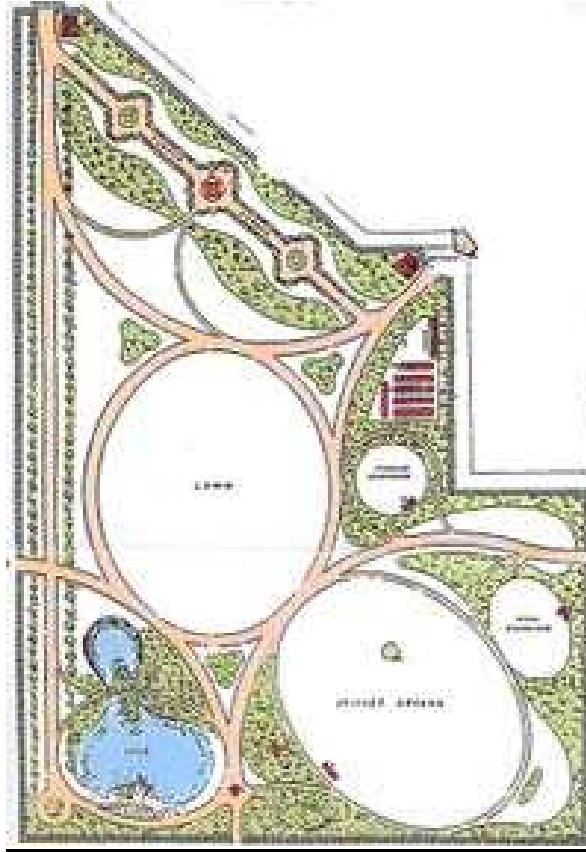


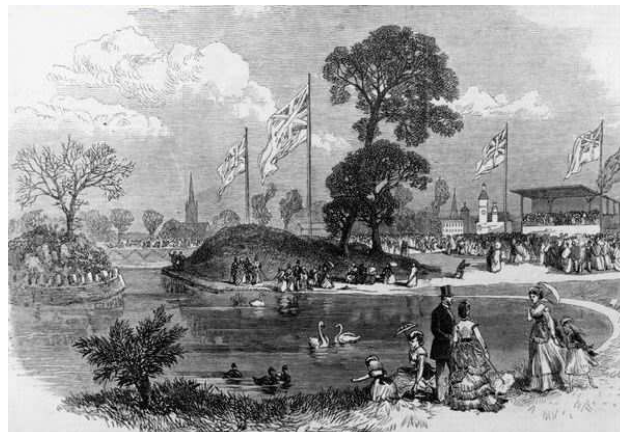
The Restoration of Alexandra Park



ORIGINAL PLAN

Alexandra Park was created in the 1870's as a promenading park, and was the first truly public park within the Manchester area. Over recent years, the park has suffered greatly from vandalism and lack of public funds, and is in dire need of a revival.

The 'Friends of Alexandra Park' group was set up in 2001 to help raise the profile of the park, to help change the image of the park and to help raise funds for the improvement of the park. It would appear that help is now at hand because the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is discussing plans which would reinstate the park to it's former Victorian splendour.



THE GRAND OPENING

In 2004, at a meeting of the 'Friends of Alexandra Park', Steve North from Manchester Leisure, reported that previous plans to renovate the park were shelved partly because HLF wanted to wait and see how Manchester coped with the work at Heaton Park, before giving Manchester the go ahead for any other park restoration. A new bid for HLF funding has now been prepared which is more detailed and complete than the previous, and the whole project would cost between £3 million and £4 million. The emphasis of HLF has changed since the previous bid, and Access and Use (Audience) are now considered very important to the bid, as is the local perception of the Park. It is an accepted fact that Alexandra Park is the best Victorian Park in Manchester.



ACTUAL LAYOUT IN 1894

The Bid itself is in two stages, the first stage was to apply for a Project Development Grant. The preparation for Stage 1 involved consultation; examination of the existing infrastructure: the history of the infrastructure; present uses; demographics and networks. A picture of the restoration plan gradually emerged, fulfilling the heritage requirements of HLF and finding 21st century uses for the Park.

Four North West based consultancies were invited to tender for the work in Stage 1. Three responded with good bids, and were all interviewed, and the consultants who prepared the previous bid, were appointed. They have a good track record of successful HLF bids. The consultants have drafted in specialists in assessing heritage buildings and finding new uses for them. They have also used other specialists to help prepare an Audience Development Plan. The Heritage Buildings Assessment and the Audience Development Plan carry equal weight in the HLF Bid.

The Stage 1 draft plan was submitted to HLF, and successfully secured funding of between £40-50,000.00 to cover Stage 2 of the bid. Stage 2 involves full architects reports on all structures, a ground topological survey, and a future staffing and management plan. Stage 2 could take 12 months, submitting the bid in June 2006, with a decision from HLF by October 2006.

A Client Steering Group was formed to give ideas and to make decisions on choices. The Group included the Chair of the Friends Group, Members of Staff, Local Police and representatives of Youth and Education Organisations. A wider Stakeholder Group was proposed to establish wants and requirements, to feed information and views to the Client Steering Group. There was also market research by questionnaires, leafleting and press coverage, to find out about reasons for use and non-use of the Park.



ARIAL VIEW 1924

At the end of 2005, to quote Steve North, ‘the work on the bid is progressing, the focus still being on the strategy for the buildings, and how they can contribute to the future use of the Park by the community. Another two elements of the bid, the draft Conservation Management Plan and the Audience Development Plan, are at an advanced stage, and now need only the outcome of the work on the buildings to fall into place so they all complement each other’.

Funding for the actual work on the Park would only be granted if the Stage 2 bid is successful. Tenders would have to go out for all the work, and it would be Spring 2007 at the earliest before any physical work could start.



THE CLOCK TOWER ON THE RAISED WALK 1924

The restoration of the park is going to be a long process which will take real commitment on the part of those involved. The Friends of Alexandra Park and staff of the park are extremely excited at the prospect of our park being turned back into a major focal point for Manchester and an asset once more to the local neighbourhood.



PARK LAYOUT 1935

Paul Hannam, (Chair) Friends of Alexandra Park, January 2006.