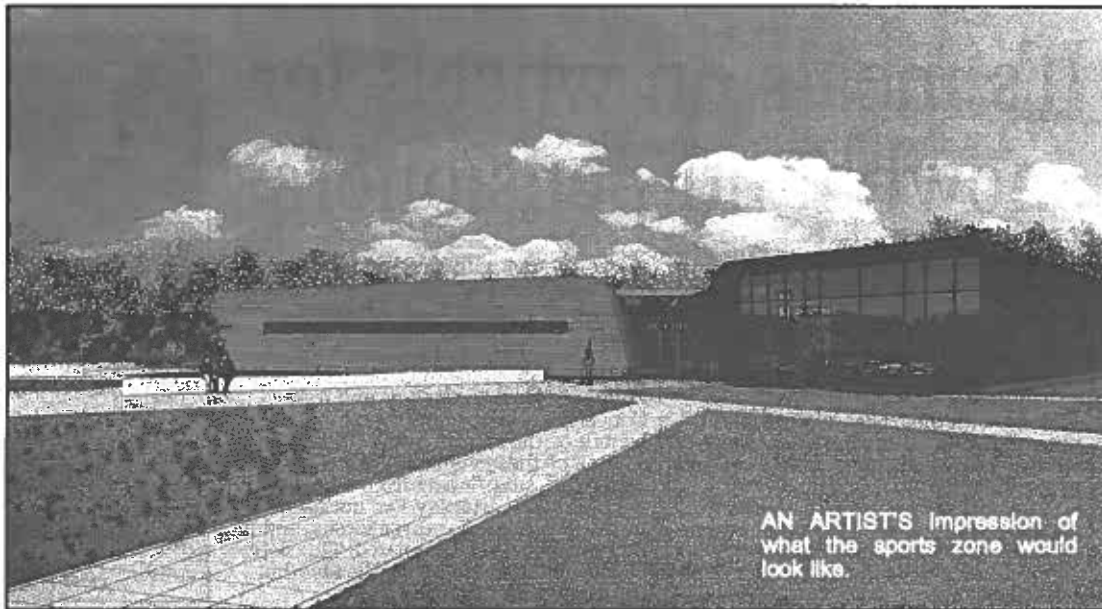


Park's new sports plan is revealed



AN ARTIST'S impression of what the sports zone would look like.

MANCHESTER City Council has released a detailed outline of the proposed Sports Zone in one of its most popular parks.

Plans for Heaton Park have been posted on its website so that residents can be fully informed about the plans.

Goals Soccer Centres are submitting plans to create a new sports facility in the north west corner of the park, which will soon be considered by the council's planning committee.

The plans have been met with opposition from surrounding residents and visitors to the park who are keen to keep the family park as it is and feel a sports facility would ruin its current appeal.

Councillor Mike Amesbury, Manchester City Council's executive member for culture and leisure said: "There has been a great deal of scaremongering and misinformation lately and it is this we want to address.

"We need to be very clear that this multi-award winning park is not under threat in any way. The Heaton Park Trust has been calling for these facilities since the mid 1990s and the park will be improved as a result.

by Denise Evans

"The area in question is a very small part of the park that has always been used for sports facilities. It is away from the historic core of the park and the plans are totally compatible with the ethos of the park as the lungs of the city."

Information on the website for the 3.4 hectare site within the 260 hectare park includes:

□ The facility will not intrude on the historic core of the park so activities around Heaton Hall, the Farm Centre, the playground and other areas of the park will continue as normal.

□ The plans are part of the Restoration Masterplan for Heaton Park agreed by English Heritage and The Heritage Lottery Fund, which saw the removal of tennis courts and bowling greens from the historic core of the park to maintain the natural landscape.

□ Tennis courts will now be reintroduced as part of the Sport Zone, in the area traditionally utilised for sports.

□ The much improved bowls facilities have been up and running in this area since 2002, with a great deal of success.

□ The multi-sport offer will provide a range of activities for both young and old including tennis, netball, small-sided football and climbing.

□ Changing facilities will also be used in conjunction with the existing full size grass pitches.

□ The park has a range of habitats that support a variety of wildlife and two sites have been recognised to be of Special Biological Importance. The proposed location of the sports facilities would not affect this.

□ A comprehensive community sports programme will provide free access to schools and local groups.

□ The plans would ensure delivery of the park's Restoration Masterplan through regular investment into improved facilities, and continued improvement to the park such as tree planting and environmental projects.

Comments to be received for Application No 090370/FO/2009/N1 should be sent by 9 February to: PO Box 463, Town Hall Extension, Manchester, M60 3NY

Comments can also be left on the Planning website at www.manchester.gov.uk/planning/publicaccess

More information can be found at: www.heatonpark.org.uk

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