Heritage Impact Assessment

Access Path, Tree Top Trek

Heaton Park

Manchester City Council

Capital Programmes & Property

Growth & Neighbourhoods

PO Box 532, Town Hall Manchester

Manchester

M60 2LA

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Report Produced By Jade Wright

Tel: 0161 219 2236

Email: j.wright4@manchester.gov.uk

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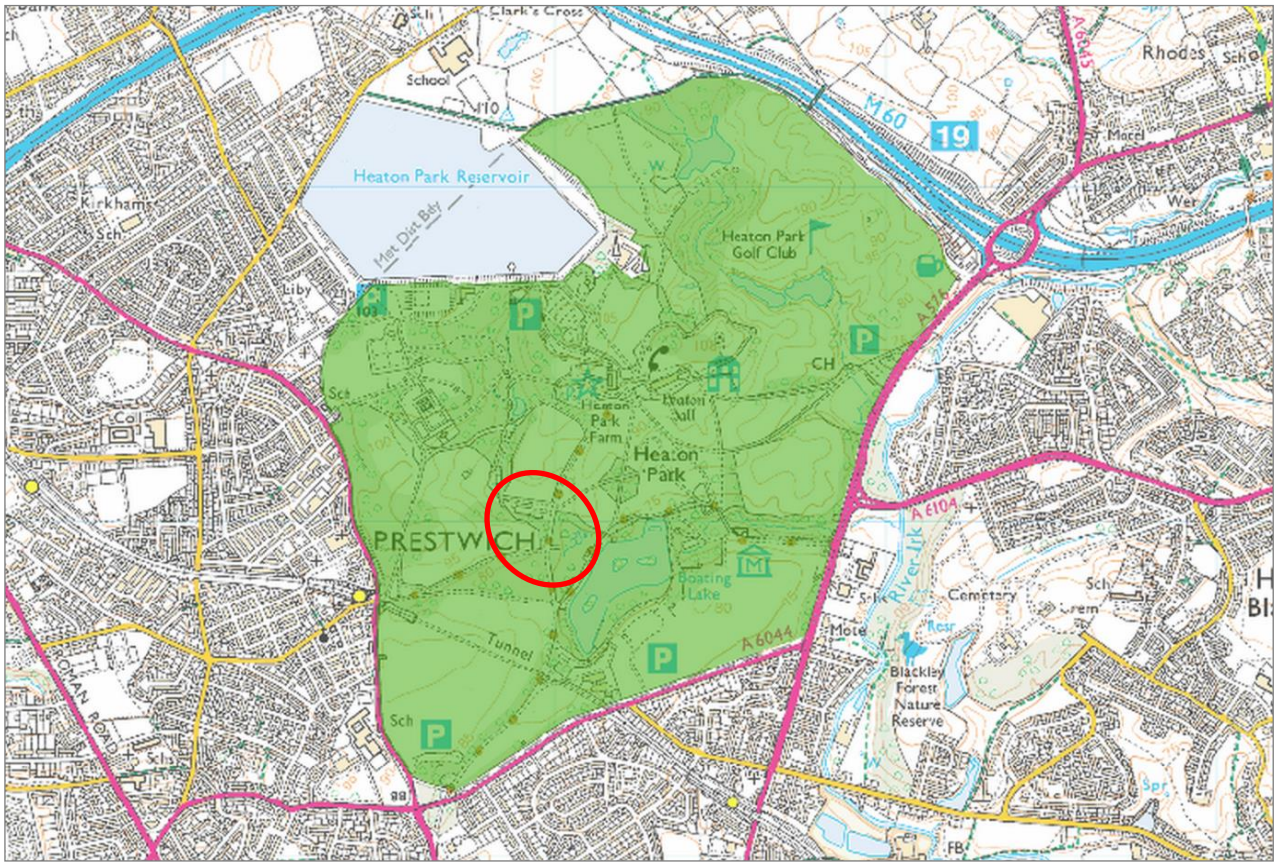
Introduction

Heaton Park and Hall sits within 640 acres of parkland and gardens approximately three miles north of Manchester City Centre (Grid reference: SD 83018 04566) in the Higher Blackley ward, bounded by Sheepfoot Lane to the south, Bury Old Road to the west, St Margaret's Road and the M60 motorway to the north and Middleton Road to the east. There has been some encroachment in the parkland for the M60 motorway network and Heaton Park Reservoir.

Heaton Park is registered as a Grade II landscape under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest. Within the landscape, there is a total of nine listed structures of Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II.



Heaton Park Boundary – Image Source: English Heritage – http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1000854

Background

With an estimated two million visits per year, Heaton Park is a much used resource that consistently contributes to Manchester City Council's ***Community Strategy*** and the ***Neighbourhood Focus Strategy***. Yet it still has potential to increase its contribution and become one of the City Region's leading visitor attractions offering a broad range of recreational and cultural experiences.

The park was renovated as part of a millennium project partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund and Manchester City Council at a cost of over £10 million. It contains an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, a boating lake, an animal farm, a pitch and putt course, a golf driving range, woodlands, ornamental gardens, an observatory, an adventure playground, a Papal Monument and a volunteer-run tram system and museum, and is listed Grade II by Historic England.



A more modern look on how the Park looks in the 21st century.

The business plan for the Park has identified ways in which the Park can begin to realise its full potential. One such proposal is for providing space for an exciting programme of events, and making the parkland more accessible for this purpose. Much needed improvements to this area will support the Major Event Strategy for Heaton Park, whilst improving general accessibility to this area, with events providing income to support the upkeep and enhancement of the historic parkland.

A Tree Top Trek facility is due to open in the park in late spring 2017. This will be a high level adventure feature bringing more visitors to the park. The Tree Top Trek will be in the woodland near to the north of the park. The most convenient access if arriving by car, will be the existing north (Hall) car park, accessed off St Margaret's Road. The activity will attract a charge and those arriving by car that have pre-booked are likely to arrive at the north car park and then walk to the facility. Those that buy a ticket for the Tree Top Trek on the day will do so in the Stables Hub and walk back up to the facility.

Proposals

It is proposed to develop a new foot path that connects the north car park and children's play area to the Dutch barn. This will provide a much needed access route to the new Tree Top Trek which will be located at the Dutch barn. Please refer to drawing *209623H/700/001 – Construction Layout.*

The routes have been chosen carefully to avoid impacting existing trees. An inclusive, accessible route, with slack gradients and passing / resting areas is proposed providing a suitable route from the wider park, through the woodland fringe, alongside the play area, to give a woodland environment on the approach to the Tree Top Trek and set the introduction to the Trek experience.

There will also be a direct route from the car park through the woodland, recognising that pre-booked arrivals would want the shortest route to the attraction. Although an inclusive gradient cannot be achieved on this direct route, to avoid the provision of a direct route would be naive, as this is a natural pedestrian desire line and would be used, causing erosion.

Existing Views where paths are proposed



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



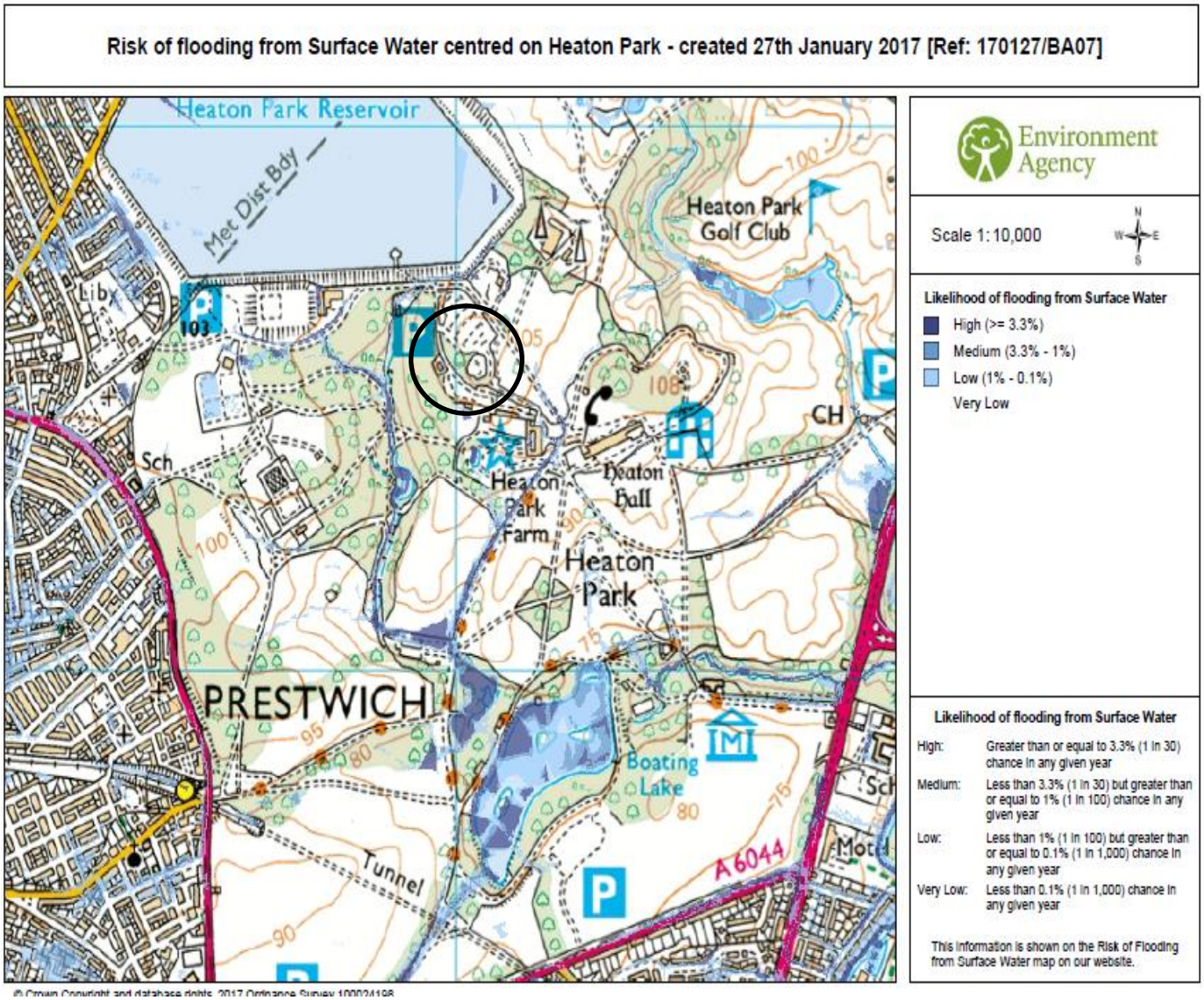
Figure 7



Figure 8

Flood Risk / Drainage

There is very low risk to surface water in the proposed working area. Less than 0.1% (1 in 1,000) chance in any given year.



Drainage

The majority of the path is in woodland and will be a 'no dig' construction of MoT type 3 bedding with a filled tray system and topping of self-binding gravel. This is intended to be free draining to allow the roots underneath to breathe and receive rainwater. The surfacing will be laid at 1:40 cross fall and 1:20 long fall.

There will be some path adjacent to the north play area that is taken out of the extents of the play area to avoid loss of trees, this will connect to existing paths that continue into the park. This will be traditional excavated path with resin bound gravel surfacing. This path will be 2.0m wide and have a 1:40 cross fall and long fall to suit existing gradients. The path will fall away from the playground and towards the adjacent shrubs and woodland where possible. Where tying into existing paths, the runoff will be to the adjacent grass. The path is being introduced in this area to provide a continuous path

through and protect adjacent grass as there is erosion taking place because of a lack of path on this pedestrian desire line.

It is envisaged that the run-off from this minor amount of impermeable area will naturally drain away in this area via the adjacent landscaping and free draining soils. The published British Geological Survey drift map for this area (sheet 85, Manchester) shows the park to be underlain by sand and gravels which was proven in a recent ground investigation undertaken in the south of the park for the City Council.

Tree and Ecological survey conclusion

A tree and ecology survey has been undertaken and the report is attached.

The design requires the removal of two saplings, the route has been carefully chosen to limit the impact on mature trees.

There are no records of great crested newts recorded within 1km of the site.
It can be concluded with a high degree of probability that this species is absent from the study area.

Some bats have been been recorded and feeding in the nearby woodland. Three trees within the ecological assessment could potentially provide roosting opportunities for bats

Badgers have been recorded locally, and in other parts of the park but this site has no potential to be used by Badgers.

Bluebells are locally frequent in the adjacent woodland and the site has some potential to support Bluebells
(**Please refer to Tree and Ecological survey for more details.**)

Figure 9 shows one of the two trees that would need to be removed; an unidentified sapling which could be relocated to a different area of the woodland.

This particular route has been chosen as it doesn't interfere with the more mature tress already in the location which if removed would have a much bigger impact on the immediate environment.

The design has also been changed to incorporate a permeable no dig material for the pathway in the woodland. This will help with surface water as rain will be able to pass through. The use of no dig gravel means that the no heavy machinery will be needed for this area of works under the woodland and help preserve the landscape and trees as much as possible.

A boundary fence will be permitted during the works to protect the landscape and woodland as much as possible providing minimal intrusion to the existing area. Please refer to drawing *209623H/000/002 – Enabling Works and 209623H/200/001 – Site Clearance.*



Figure 9 – Unidentified sapling to be removed

Materials

The area of path adjacent to the children's play area will be in golden resin bound gravel to match existing paths that it ties in to. Timber edgings will be used to be consistent with adjacent existing paths.

The same surface will be used with metal edgings, running alongside the play area to link to proposed woodland path which will have a 'no dig' construction which has been advised by MCC arbor culture team as suitable for a path within woodland, under the tree canopy.

The path will have metal edgings and buff sandstone 10-0mm sized self-binding gravel from an approved local source to match with the resin bound gravel on the rest of the route.

The surfacing sits within a tray system that is pinned into the ground. Undulations in the existing ground under the tray system are overcome by providing a bed of MoT type 3 stone which is relatively permeable.

This, together with the self-binding gravel surface laid to a 1:20 cross fall, allows the path to drain off and drain through surface water and to flex with the natural seasonal heave associated with woodland soils.

Tree health is supported by allowing water and gases through the path in an unsealed system. The self-binding gravel can be maintained as required when seasonal ground movements occur, rather than resin bound gravel which would crack.

The route passes over a Tarmac service road where operational vehicles could be moving at low speeds, this is close to the Tree Top Trek facility. It is proposed to provide an indicative crossing point with conservation bull nosed kerbs set into the existing road surface to highlight this as a crossing point.

Please refer to the following cross section drawings which show materials above:

- *209623H/SD/01 – No dig footpath*
- *209623H/SD/02 – Resin bound footpath*
- *209623H/SD/03 – Playground entrance to existing park footpath*
- *209623H/SD/04 – Tree Top Trek entrance*
- *209623H/SD/05 – Footpath tie in existing estate road*

A section of existing fence will be removed where the crossing point of the existing service road is situated close to the Tree Top Trek facility.

Adjacent to the children’s play area, where the new path will be situated, dark green painted metal estate fencing will be provided to match the existing. The fencing is known as Traditional Estate and Parkland Fencing. The fence will be painted in dark green Hammerite paint.

A maintenance gate will be introduced across the existing service road, shown on drawing 209623H/700/001 Construction Layout. The gate will be 1200mm high by 3500mm wide of metal construction to match other gates in this location. The metalwork will be painted in dark green Hammerite paint.

An estate / parkland fencing & gate specification is attached.

Heritage Assessment

Between the mid-17th and the beginning of the 20th century just two families owned the Heaton estate. It passed down through the Holland family until Elizabeth Holland, the last member of the family line, married Sir John Egerton in 1684.

In 1772 Sir Thomas Egerton built Heaton Hall as a new home for himself designed by James Wyatt. Wyatt also designed some of the other buildings around the park. Sir Thomas also employed William Eames, to create a landscape to show off his new mansion. This was reworked in the early 19th century by John Webb.



A late 19th century view of Heaton Park just before it was sold to Manchester Corporation for £230,000. (Approx. £20 million in 2017)

Heaton Park remained in the Egerton family until 1902 when the 5th Earl of Wilton sold it to the Manchester Corporation for £230,000. The Corporation provided many public facilities in including the boating lake. The Park was an important part of life as it allowed access to green space and fresh air for children from the inner city slums during the war years. In the late 1940s the park became a more permanent home for some for almost 20 years when two prefab estates were built on the southern edge, in 1982 Pope John 2nd celebrated Mass for over 100,000 people. It has the only flat green bowling greens in Manchester, built for the 2002 Commonwealth Games Bowls competition which was held in the park.

In its current condition and configuration, the existing dirt path imposes a negative impact on the quality of the listed landscape (**see figures 1 & 2**). This deterioration will only accelerate with the introduction of the tree top trek which will see more foot traffic through parts of the area.

The mature and semi-mature trees give the site some limited local nature conservation value but the plant, mammal and bird species communities present are not exceptional and the site is not designated at any level for its nature conservation value. The site, and the adjacent woodland, is already subject to significant public pressure.

The proposed works will see natural looking path ways set out to protect the surrounding greenery from degrading any further

In adopting the upgrade work as detailed in the supporting documentation, the footpath function will allow the existing landscape to grow and be unchanged by heavy foot traffic

going to the car park or tree top trek. The actual landscape essentially will remain unchanged as there is already a bit of a dirt path for part of the area, under the trees will mostly be surface change but will match in with the landscape and heritage, however, improvements will foster a more positive, efficient use of land.

In summary the proposed will deliver a positive enhancement of current conditions across this area of Heaton Park, whilst delivering a much needed safe route to and from the new tree top trek.

Appendices – Supporting Plans & Documents

List of Drawings and Documents:

- *209623H/0700/001 – Construction Layout*
- *209623H/0200/001 – Site Clearance*
- *209623H/0000/001 – Site Location Plan*
- *209623H/0000/002 – Enabling Works*
- *209623H/SD/01 – No dig footpath*
- *209623H/SD/02 –Resin bound footpath*
- *209623H/SD/03 – Playground entrance to existing park footpath*
- *209623H/SD/04 – Tree Top Trek Entrance*
- *209623H/SD/05 – Footpath tie in to existing estate road*

- *Area of Heaton Park Tree Survey March 2017*
- *Ecological Assessment of an Area of Parkland at Heaton Park*
- *Estate Fencing Specification*