Alexandra Park

Towards a new vision



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Alexandra Park: *Towards a new vision*

Foreword

Alexandra Park is a 196 acre landscape that was designed in 1863 by Alexander McKenzie. The Park is well maintained and enjoying its eighth year with a prestigious Green Flag Award. It's currently estimated that over three million people visit the Park each year (excluding event visitors, ice rink users and visitors in cars).

This regional park has an exciting history often linked to success of its owners which varied over the years from private companies and urban district councils, to the Greater London Council and London Borough of Haringey. Alexandra Park is comparable to some well-known parks in London including Mile End Park, Battersea Park and Crystal Palace Park. It could one day be as prestigious as a Corporation of London or Royal Park with the right investment. Alexandra Park is also inexorably linked to the fortunes of the Palace itself.

As the largest open space in Haringey, the Park provides huge opportunities and benefits for health, wellbeing and ecosystem services to the borough and beyond.

Over £3 million was invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Haringey Council in a Landscape Development Project between 2002 and 2007. The Landscape Development project was shaped by a historical review and gives us the Park we see today. Its overall theme was "to reinforce the original 1863 layout through repair, removal of unwanted accretions and changes in management practice".

Sadly, current budgetary constraints only allow basic maintenance of the site with a few, small *ad hoc* projects as funding becomes available. The existing Park Management Plan contains a *strategy* section but only focuses on a high level overview for managing and developing each compartment.

The need for a detailed review of the Park in order to produce a new *Vision* S*tatement* and *Master Plan* is clear. It's worth setting our aspirations high to match the success of the Events Business and the Regeneration Programme to complete a triangle of success! This project will put the Park in contention for a future funding bids including an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, who have over £30 million available over the next two years.

The following paper sets out two aims and a number of objectives to move the Park forward over the next ten years.

Mark Evison
Park Manager
Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust

Aims of the Park Vision

I have set two simple aims for the Park Vision process; these capture the essence of the requirements to drive the Park forward.

1. To adopt a clear *vision statement* for the Park following the initial consultation undertaken in 2014-15

2. To review the Park as a whole and to identify opportunities for future funding, changes in management and suitable developments.

Objectives of the Park Vision

To achieve the aims, five objectives have been identified:

1. Draft a new *Vision Statement* for consideration by stakeholders to be approved by the APP Board

2. Undertake a review of nine key aspects of the Park:
   2.1. Area Management Strategies
   2.2. Ecology and Natural Habitats
   2.3. Trees and Woodlands
   2.4. Design and Style (Park furniture)
   2.5. Physical Assets
   2.6. Visitor Numbers and Park Usage
   2.7. Paths, Roads, Traffic and Parking Layouts
   2.8. Tenants and the public 'facilities'
   2.9. Outdoor events and fundraising opportunities

3. Review other linked strategies at Local, Regional and National levels

4. Use objectives 1-3 to draw up a new Master Plan for the Park

5. Prioritise the projects identified (quick wins, funding options, 'oven-ready' projects for the future)

1. Introduction

I started this process in 2014 by engaging the members of the Friends of Alexandra Park at their AGM to understand their feelings for the future of the Park. I then commissioned *Exterior Architecture* to produce a discussion document (Appendix A) which incorporated this feedback, my ideas and many of the ideas submitted by staff, Park users and others over the last few years.

There is more information on the how the discussion document was received in the Consultation section of this report and Appendix B. I will consider the feedback from these sessions to form the draft *vision statement*.

The feedback also helped me to confirm the nine areas required for detailed review. Where these reviews are undertaken by consultants the feedback will form part of their briefing. The rationale behind the nine areas is detailed in Appendix C

Concurrently, relevant local, regional and national strategies will be reviewed. These will include Haringey's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Open Spaces Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy along with relevant London and National Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and Planning Policies.

The outcomes of these reviews will be used to create a new Master Plan for a ten year period. I propose that the projects identified will be prioritised with the following in mind:

- To look for opportunities for quick-wins
- To identify projects that have accessible grant funding
- To create 'over-ready' projects by undertaking preliminary designs and costing to enable quick responses to future opportunities

2. Regeneration and other factors

The construction phase of the Regeneration of the East Wing of the Palace is about to begin. This exciting time is an ideal moment to use the groundswell of support and interest for the Palace to consider the strategic future of the whole Park.

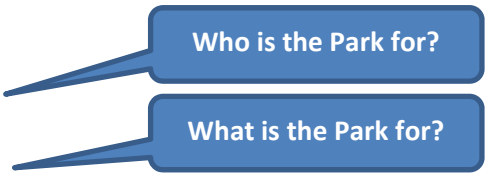
The Events business, the existing road, the Park tenants and our neighbours also influence the management of the Park, these aspects must all be carefully considered as part of the this project.

3. Consultation Exercise

To help set the parameters for the exercise, a number of user groups and other stakeholders were consulted during 2015:

- Friends of the Park Committee
- Friends of the Park membership
- Alexandra Palace Staff
- Grounds Maintenance Staff
- Advisory and Consultative Committee members
- In addition The Park Manager spoke to the AGM of the Warner Estate Resident's Association, the Ally Pally (Facebook) dog group and provided a brief for the Palace View Resident's Association AGM

The consultees were first asked a couple of introductory questions:



The responses can be summarised with two lines:



Other responses to the questions can be grouped as follows:

Strolling	Natural environment
Children Mixed Users	London and Wider
Quiet and peace	Wood Green
Freedom from restriction and access	It's London's Park
Formal and Informal space	Memories
Space for picnics	View of London skyline

The groups were then presented with the discussion document and were asked to identify which areas they supported and which ideas were missing from the document.

Feedback from Consultations

The most in-depth consultation took place with the Friends of the Park committee, a group of highly motivated volunteers who manage a programme of successful events and co-ordinate opening of the Park Information Centre every week of the year.

The discussion was very positive and this list of responses demonstrates the level of support for the ideas raised:

- improving the play area by the lake and play options elsewhere
- review of the Grove car park entrance
- activity zone in the north east corner
- formal review of the Rose Garden planting and design
- Bedford Road and 'Paddock junction' reviews
- drainage review and resurfacing of the lower road
- formal review of the South slopes to incorporate trees, views, formal beds
- formal landscape review of the Grove

The group also identified that there were a number of "missing" landscape items which should be considered as the project develops:

- Review soft vs hard paths & connectivity and consider new paths at Newland field/Race Course and across Redston field & race course
- **Toilet provision especially in the Grove**
- Increase interest and variety of tree and shrub planting
- Survey and create a habitat map and landscape review
- Consider naming of the roads/paths, possibly with sponsorship

The result of consultations with all of the other groups is that all the items in the discussion document were generally supported. The most notable exception was a comment from the Grounds Maintenance Team that the Rose Garden is currently looking attractive so improvements should be concentrated in other areas of greater need such as damaged pathways. Participants identified many individual ideas during the discussions which have been grouped under six themes

- **Paths, Roads Traffic and Parking**
- **Play Area**
- **Wildlife and Natural Landscape**
- **Infrastructure Projects**
- **Funding and Commercial**
- **Security and Safety**

There were also a number of direct suggestions for activities and events in the Park. More details of the responses are set out in the table in Appendix B. These ideas will be all considered in the review of the nine key aspects of the Park.

Park Manager's ideas

I have been in post for over eight years. During this time the Lottery Funded Project has been completed, the Grounds Maintenance Contract re-tendered, the Green Flag, and Green Heritage Awards have been achieved and retained. As a judge in the Green Flag Award scheme and Chair of the *London Parks Benchmarking Group* I have visited many other sites in London and beyond and frequently meet fellow Parks Professionals. I have undertaken this exercise using my experience together with valuable feedback from Park users, and neighbours, the Friends of the Park and the Vision Consultations.

Responses to park questionnaires

The Friends of the Park and local school children have undertaken Park Visitor questionnaires over the last year. When asked why they visit the Park, respondents gave broadly similar answers to those given above:



I was also pleased to note that almost all respondents said they felt safe in the Park and almost 100% felt the current quality of the Park was **good** or **excellent**.

Tenant Review

The Grounds Maintenance Team, AP Staff and Friends of the Park committee each undertook a SWOT (Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat) exercise for the Park tenants. Each tenant's operation had a number or strengths and weaknesses, but there were no strong arguments for or against any in particular.

The financial arrangements of the tenants was not considered at this time.

4. Action Plan

In order to achieve the aims and objectives, I have drawn up an Action Plan to show individual actions with responsibilities, estimated costs and timescales:

	Action	Cost	Date
1.	**Draft a new *Vision Statement* for consideration by stakeholders to be approved by the APP Board**		
1.1	Draft statement for internal approval	Time	**November 2015**
1.2	Statement presented to Advisory and Consultative Committees	Time	**February 2016**
1.3	Statement approved by APP Board	Time	**February 2016**

2.	**Undertake a review of nine key aspects of the Park**		
2.1	Area Management Strategies	Time	December 2015
2.2	Ecology and Natural Habitats	£2,200	December 2015
2.3	Trees and Woodlands	£2,500?	December 2015
2.4	Design and Style (Park furniture)	£2,500?	February 2016
2.5	Physical Assets	£2,500?	February 2016
2.6	Visitor Numbers and Park Usage	Time	April 2016
2.7	Paths, Roads, Traffic and Parking Layouts	Time/£?	April 2016
2.8	Tenants and the public 'facilities'	Time	April 2016
2.9	Outdoor events and fundraising opportunities	Time	April 2016

3.	**Review other linked strategies at Local, Regional and National levels**		
3.1	Identify relevant strategies and policies	Time	December 2015
3.2	Review relevant strategies and policies	Time	February 2016

4.	**Use objectives 1-3 to create a new Master Plan for the Park**		
4.1	Create a prioritised action plan	Time	April 2016
4.2	Engage landscape architects to draft a suitable Master Plan Drawing(s)	£5,000?	May 2016

5.	**Prioritise the projects identified & create new Vision Action Plan**	Time	**July 2016**

5. Costings & Funding

Of course budgets are limited, estimated costs for the elements of this exercise are listed in the table above. Much of the work can be undertaken directly by the Park Manager.

Defining and designing priority projects will also move the Trust onto the front-foot when it comes to grant funding opportunities. The Fundraising Manager is already providing advice and we'll be in a strong position to take full advantage of opportunities once the new Action Plan is in place.

Direct income from Park Events beyond damage repair is needed to prevent erosion of the quality of the site by wear and tear and 'invisible damage' (such as ground compaction reducing tree health).

The current revenue budget is limited and has decreased over the past ten years. The new Grounds Maintenance Contract commencing 2016 will include some efficiency savings but the capital development spending is very limited for a Park of this stature.

Investigation into ways to increase income from leases, licences and outdoor events is essential and the Park Manager and the Events team continually discuss opportunities.

6. Conclusion

Alexandra Park is well used, well-loved and deserves to maintained and developed to high standards. The aims and objectives identified break down the huge task of managing the site into manageable pieces.

I believe that having fresh look at the Park with a holistic view will reduce the need for fire-fighting and set the Park on a stronger footing for a successful future.

It will also help keep the Green Flag Flying!





Much of the work can be carried out within existing budgets and staff resources, the exercise will also help increase opportunities to obtain grant funding in future and to maximise the income from the Park.

7. List of Appendices

Appendix A: Exterior Architecture's discussion document
Appendix B: Feedback from Consultations
Appendix C: Rationale for nine areas to be reviewed
Appendix D: Links to Other Strategies

Exterior Architecture Ltd.

Alexandra Palace

Landscape Vision

27/11/2014

Studio 1S
Hewlett House
Havelock Terrace
LONDON SW8 4AS
+44 207 978 2101

Contents

01-02	Vision Masterplan
03	Enhanced Play
04	Activity Zone
05	Rose Garden
06	Junction One
07	Junction Two
08	Central Route
09	The Grove
10	Formal Planting

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1 ENHANCED PLAY
-Key Destination
-Out of Date
-Bleak

2 ACTIVITY ZONE
-Ideal location
-Mixed use potential
-Increase usage

3 ROSE GARDEN
-Tidy up e.g. Benches, Hedges, and Fountain
-Key Feature
-Potential for open views of London

4 JUNCTION ONE
-Difficult Junction
-'Main' Entrance
-In need of pedestrian friendly connection

5 CENTRAL ROUTE
-Central Path
-Views of the palce
-Collection of rainwater

6 JUNCTION TWO
-Uneven ground
-Not wheelchair/pushchair friendly
-Woodland Management

7 FORMAL PLANTING
-Framing the building
-Key path
-Entrance space

8 THE GROVE
-Key avenue
-Orchard opportunity
-Entrance space

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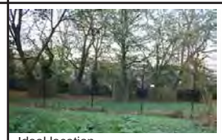
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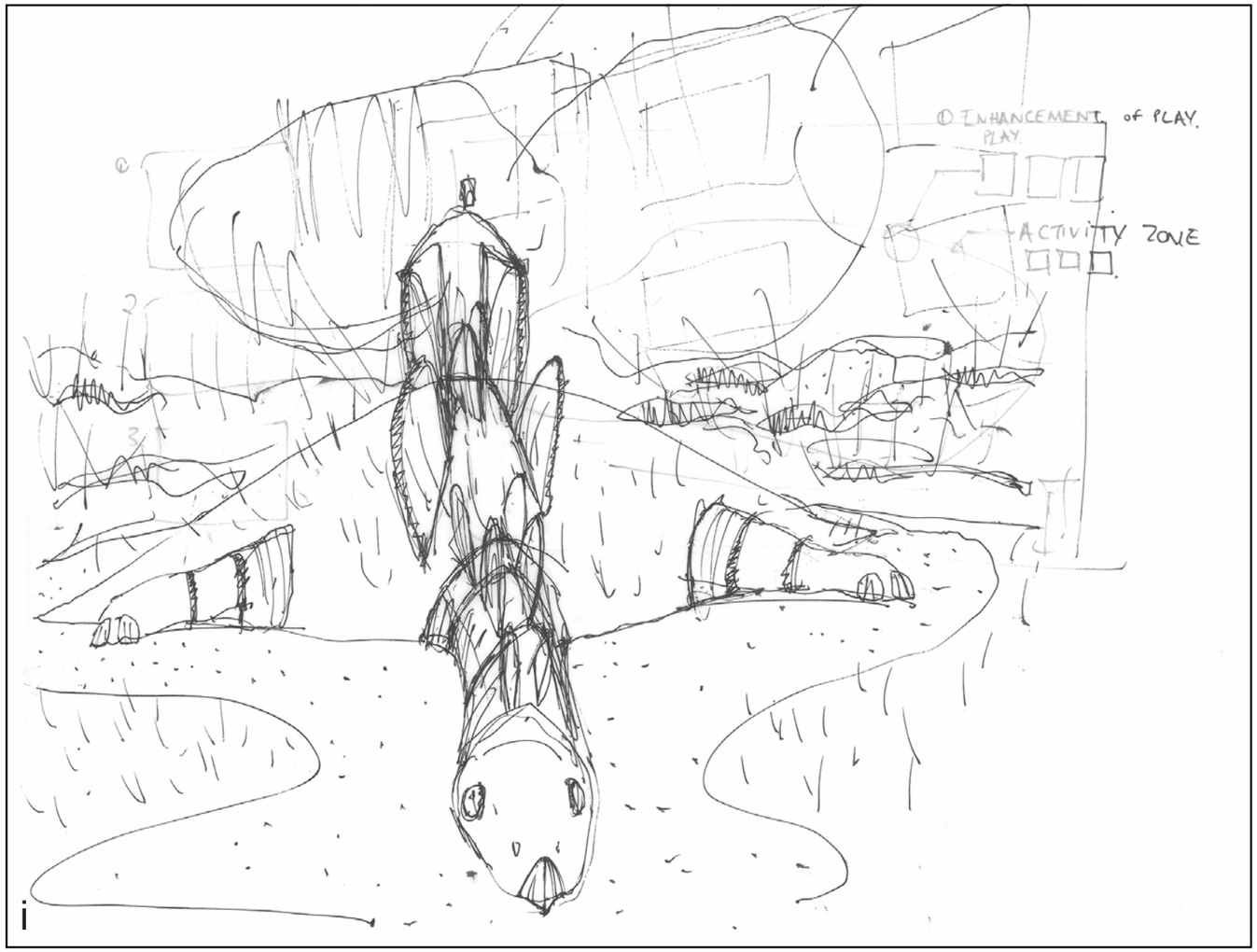

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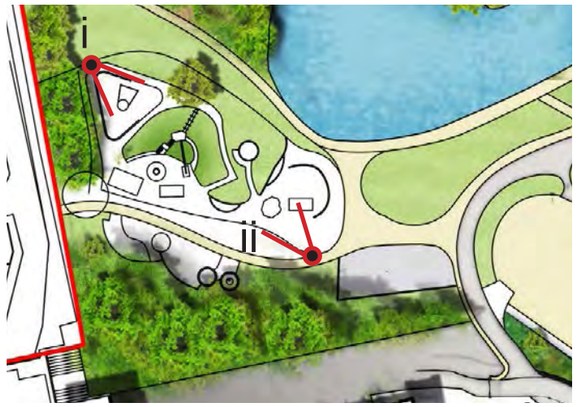
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1 ENHANCED PLAY















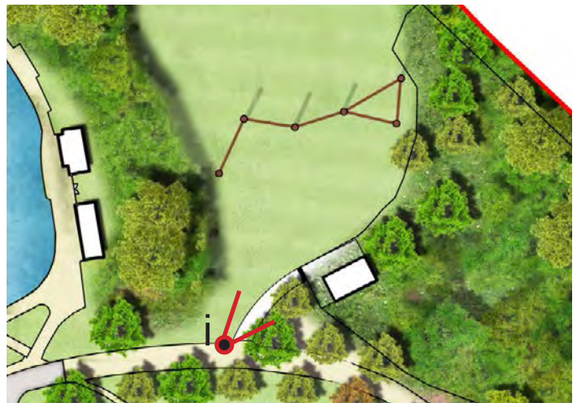
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2 ACTIVITY ZONE













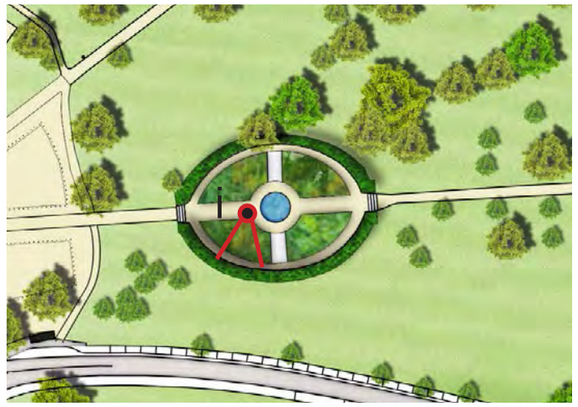
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3 ROSE GARDEN













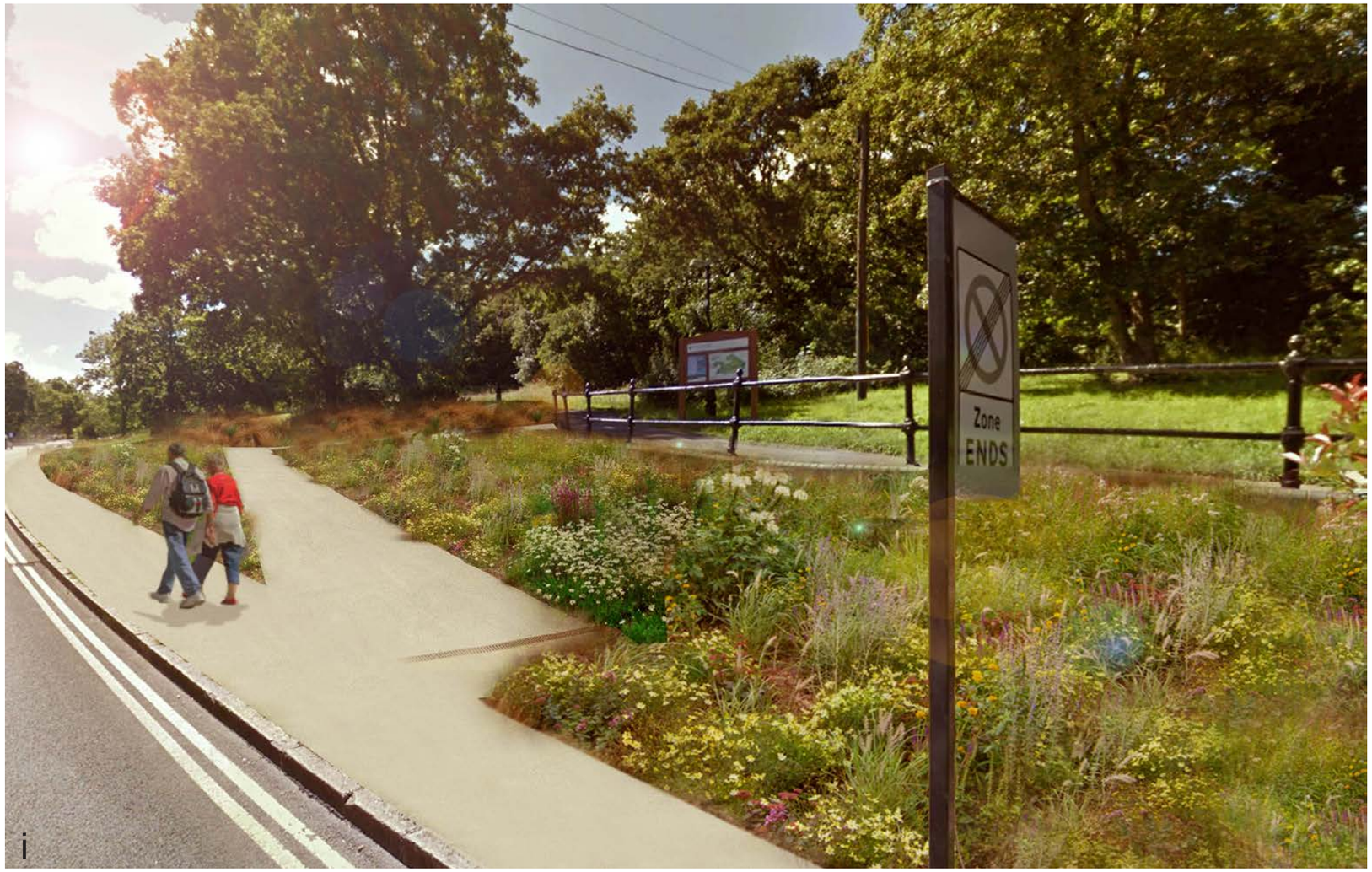


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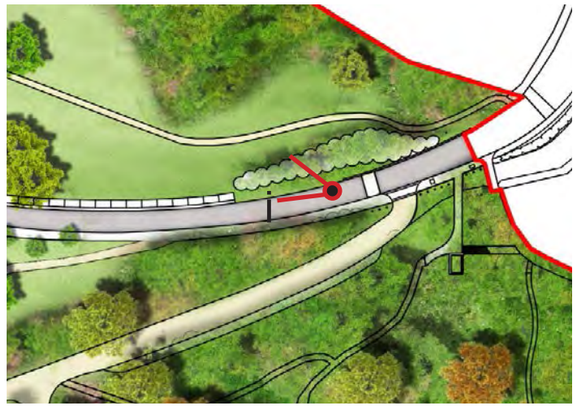
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4 JUNCTION ONE



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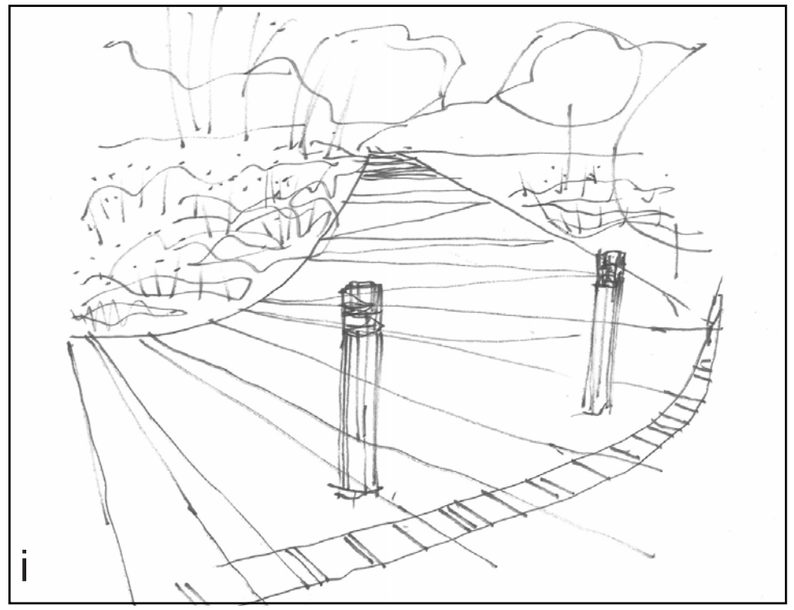
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5 JUNCTION TWO















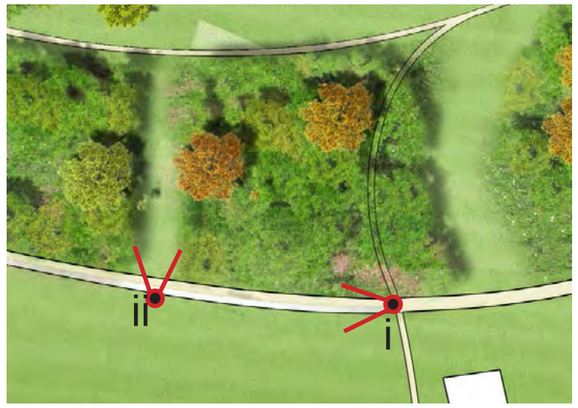
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6 CENTRAL ROUTE













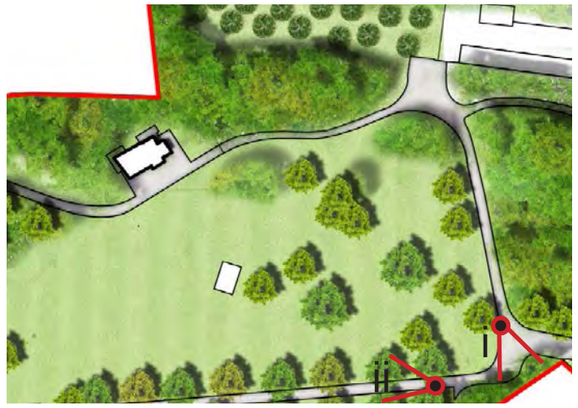


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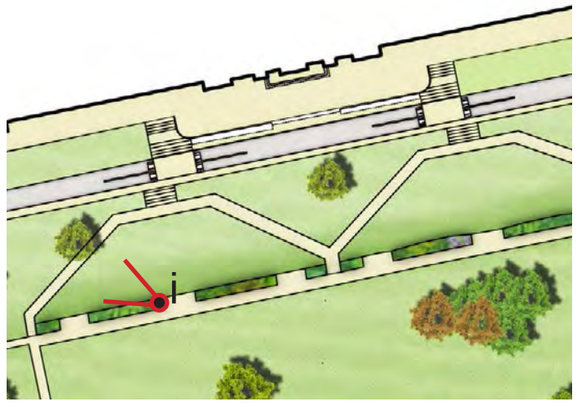
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8 FORMAL PLANTING











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Appendix B: Summary of Feedback from consultations

Infrastructure Projects Family friendly cycle trail & hire Off-road cycling course Remove old race course posts Toilets in Grove, Toilets Lower road drainage Drainage & ditches & black holes Focus on broken paths not rose garden floodlights on fairground car park Power and water (for events) Drinking Fountain Townscape Boards (to interpret the view from the Terrace) Flags on entry (totems) Signage (within and without the Park) Fitness Trail (wooden) Free climbing wall Install stone seal Entrance review Deal with muddy areas Bridge to Muswell Hill Preserve general layout improve quality increase footfall, improve relationship with Palace building	**Paths, Roads, Traffic and Parking** Paddock more spaces, traffic flow lighting Roundabout at paddock Pavement on roads at paddock Speeding cyclists on lower road – segregation AP way crossing point Car park and road traffic Zebra crossing at palm court Pavilion parking – bays/lines HLF travel plan Divert traffic 10am-1pm Better link to Palm Court entrance for events Accessible parking bays in Grove cp AP way parking bays (new path) hindrance to event egress
Play Area Phased improvement (HIGH) tube thru' hill Barefoot walk Other play equipment elsewhere	**Wildlife and Natural Landscape** Tree Management to remove barriers and weak trees Improve views (south front trees) Natural planting Ruts on grass install posts on corners Bee line Enfield to Croydon Improve tree belts North Yard and West slip Garden Centre wild area is a mess Paddock woodland Forestry Commission Box hedging around south front bedding Improve variety of planting (10 year plan) Manage arboreta Remove weed shrubs Improve the lake for fishing
Funding & Commercial Don't commercialise the Grove Deckchairs Street names of paths (sponsorship) Improve website Publicity Park vs Palace Improve cross-over between garden centre café and B&K pub Wayfinding Events= Park improvements What is proportion of Palace: Park event income	**Security & Safety** Scooter/ motor cycle problems Close the Park over night RAG & out of bounds areas (for events) Re-open the Lido Wheel chair users

Ideas and Feedback for activities and events (no particular order)

Terrible funfair
Team challenges events
Partnership with RSPB/LWT, LWT stand
Bungee jumping
Classic Car run
Le Grand Depart
AP Own events (half marathon)
Health leaflets – tracks and routes schools
Baseball Softball Pitch, volleyball
Football pitches
Vintage car boot sale (Paddock)
Xmas market & open air ice rink
Pop-up wedding venue
Artist in residence (elephant trail) sculptures
Bandstand programme
Free resources

Appendix C: Rationale for nine areas to be reviewed

Area Management Strategies
The current Area Management Strategies set out in the Park Management Plan were compiled around 2005 and have been updated for each Green Flag Award application since. They should now be reviewed to take into account feedback from the consultation exercise, new discoveries in the history and heritage of the Park and changes to public usage and facilities in each area. This review should also incorporate the recommendations from the reviews of the other eight key aspects, and the Phase 1 Habitat Survey in particular.

Ecology and Natural Habitats
There are many wildlife records for the Park collected over the years and the 2010 Bioblitz identified over 600 species in the Park in one day. The Park is certainly teeming with wildlife and a more holistic approach is needed to update management and maintenance strategies. A Phase 1 survey would provide a new baseline and will guide future maintenance and management.

Trees and Woodlands
The tree safety inspections have over the past few years reduced the number of hazardous trees on site. This work has taken priority over tree works for other reasons such as habitat management, aesthetic and heritage reasons. A full tree and woodland review will result in well management woodlands, interesting and magnificent specimen and veteran trees and well-framed vistas. This is especially important with the rise of new threats to our trees including Massaria disease of Planes and Oak Processionary Moth

Design and Style (Park furniture)
A very basic Park Furniture Design Guide was drawn up following the Landscape Development Project in 2008. The Park furniture still lacks continuity and cohesion of design. A new set of parameters for Park furniture, combined with a detailed asset survey will help deliver a more consistent and better quality infrastructure. Consideration will be given to event operations to help maximise flexibility of the Park for future use.

Physical Assets
There is no detailed asset register for the Park, so we currently have very little idea of the number or value of the assets and no detailed information on their quality, lifespan or replacement cost. Gathering this information would help formulate a future maintenance plan and assist with budget setting. It would contribute greatly to understanding the value of the Park.

This is illustrated by the example of an 11.7 hectare park in an Inner London Borough. This park was registered on that Council's asset list at a value of £1. Once the assets including soft and hard landscape, play equipment, trees, buildings and top soil were actually considered and valued, the figure was a much more realistic £50,000,000.

Visitor Numbers and Park Usage
The value of Parks can be measured as the sum of the assets as described above, but this figure has more context when considered against the number of people who visit those parks. Current estimates put the number of Park visitors coming on foot at around

3 million per annum. Many more come by car or bus and many, many more come to visit the Palace for events.

As well as establishing more accurate numbers, this is also an opportunity to understand how the Park is used and to engage with users. Whilst the Park is happily used by most of our 3 million visitors per year there are a number of key concerns:

- Unfettered use of East Car Park and the Parking Bays on Alexandra Palace Way. This free-use attracts groups of youths in cars who bring in takeaway food, drugs and alcohol. They use the Park as a rubbish tip, smash bottles and have sex.
- Dumping by neighbours. Refuse and green waste is dumped in the Park by many of our neighbours.
- Graffiti, littering, fires, anti-social behaviour and low-level disrespect. Common issues for all Parks, well worth considering to help design out crime and increase usage

Paths, Roads, Traffic and Parking Layouts
The Paths and Roads are obviously very important for flow of Park Users (and customers) a number of 'missing' paths have been identified over the years by users, efficient traffic flow into, out of and around car parks is essential at peak times and efficient parking layouts are also keys to ensuring a good experience for customers.

Car Park Charging must also be mentioned as an potential management tool and revenue scheme.

Tenants and the public 'facilities'
The Park tenants offer public facilities ancillary to a good Park. They provide catering, sports activities and other community use. Their offer and use of the buildings and space in the Park should be considered together with other facilities such as toilets and the wider mix of activity across the site.

Undertaking this review as part of the wider scheme will allow a holistic approach, rather than the current reactive approach.

Outdoor events and fundraising opportunities
2015 has been a very successful year, with many outdoor events. The Park (including the Terrace) has hosted 20 event days (plus 50 drive-in cinema screenings) for 90,000 visitors and this has provided a very healthy profit for the Trading Company.

These 'medium and large' events are just part of the variety of activities that take place in the Park, there are plenty of other paid & free activities for, local or much wider audiences and families. Cross country running events are 'private' and bring a different audience to site than the Conservation Volunteer events.

The wide range of activities helps to bring new visitors to the Park and Palace and we hope that they become regular customers! The draft Outdoor Events Strategy (2012) will be revisited during this exercise.

Fundraising activity is not limited to events, other things to consider are sponsorship (public and commercial), grant funding and other private investments.

Appendix D: Links to Other Strategies

The following relevant strategies have been identified so far for follow up:

Haringey Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2015)
The Haringey Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) have adopted a strategy with nine ambitions for the future health and wellbeing of Haringey residents. A high quality Park can contribute to most of these ambitions. The HWB should be consulted on the potential for a partnership to assist in fulfilling their ambitions.

Haringey Open Space Strategy (2006)
Cllr Hillman's foreword describes the borough's desire for communities to be proud of their local Parks and I feel with the Green Flag Award, Green Heritage Award and London in Bloom accreditation that residents and visitors can be proud of Alexandra Park.

Haringey's Open Space Strategy has eight objectives and Alexandra Park can certainly help contribute to most of them.

Haringey's Biodiversity Action Plan (2010)
In developing the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), Haringey Council is seeking to protect and enhance biodiversity value across the borough for the benefit of all those that live and work within it, and in doing so support regional, national and global efforts to halt the decline in biodiversity. The plan recognises that to achieve this aim a wide range of partners from across the whole community will need to be involved in delivering actions and that integrating biodiversity into wider everyday thinking is necessary.

The aims and actions from this plan (and from priority habitat and species plans) will be reviewed and considered for Alexandra Park.

Haringey's Planning Policies
The relevant policies relating to open space and the Alexandra Park and Palace Conservation Area will be reviewed.