

ITEM 4. ARGYLE STREET IMPROVEMENTS – KENT STREET TO LOWER FORT STREET, MILLERS POINT – CONCEPT DESIGN**FILE NO: S110346****SUMMARY**

This report describes the concept design and public consultation undertaken for the Argyle Street Improvement Project and outlines a recommended scope for delivery.

The project will deliver an improved link between The Rocks and new park at Barangaroo, giving pedestrians greater priority, amenity and legibility.

The improvements propose to reclaim the current bus layover area as a new park area for pedestrians, regrade and resurface the main footpath, provide new street trees and street furniture and provide a new community playground in front of the Abraham Mott and Harry Jensen Centre.

The proposals have been developed in response to community consultation and feedback and recognise the unique heritage importance of Argyle Street and Millers Point.

In response to the public consultation and further design investigations, a staging strategy has been proposed for the project, and several design refinements have been incorporated.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) subject to any direction made by the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee in relation to the proposed works, Council approve the refined concept design for Argyle Street as outlined in the subject report and shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for progression to design development, construction documentation and tender;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer continue negotiations with the State Transit Authority to dedicate the existing bus layover to City of Sydney ownership, and a further report to Council on this matter be provided prior to the commencement of Stage two works;
- (C) Council note the project cost estimate detailed in confidential Attachment D to the subject report; and
- (D) Financial Implications, Attachment D to the subject report, remain confidential in accordance with section 10A(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 1993, as it contains information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Argyle Street refined concept design

Attachment B: Argyle Street Improvements – Lower Fort Street to Kent Street – Consultation Panels

Attachment C: Consultation Summary Report – November 2013

Attachment D: Financial Implications (Confidential)

(As Attachment D is confidential, it will be circulated separately from the agenda paper and to Councillors and relevant senior staff only.)

BACKGROUND

1. The Argyle Street Improvement works from Lower Fort Street to Kent Street was identified as one of the priority projects within the Harbour Village North Public Domain Study (the Study). The Study set ideas for improving the public domain of this City precinct.
2. The City undertook a series of three community workshops in 2011 to inform the development of the Study. Feedback from these workshops and submissions received from the exhibition were used to prioritise a number of projects.
3. The revised Study was exhibited in February 2012 and endorsed by Council in May 2012.
4. The proposal for Argyle Street Improvement works has developed from a number of objectives outlined in the Study, including:
 - (a) improve pedestrian priority, amenity and legibility along Argyle Street, which forms the main route between The Rocks and Barangaroo;
 - (b) create more local open space in an area of reclaimed road space;
 - (c) improve access and the community playground for the Abraham Mott Community Hall and Harry Jensen Centre; and
 - (d) removal of the bus layover to allow for a new pedestrian place.
5. Key components of the design exhibited for public comment (refer Attachment B) are described below.

Improved Pedestrian Amenity

6. Accessibility is improved with footpath regrading along Argyle Street. Levels will be modified to remove excessive cross falls that are not currently compliant.
7. A more direct and legible connection between The Rocks and Millers Point is established, with the realignment of the footpath on Argyle Street, removing the bus turning circle.
8. Pedestrian and cyclist safety will be improved at the intersection of Watson Road and Argyle Street. A footpath continuation is proposed at this intersection to give pedestrian priority, subject to Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) approval.
9. Pedestrian safety is improved at the intersection of Lower Fort Street and Argyle Street. Footpaths will be widened to reduce crossing distances and a new pedestrian crossing proposed, subject to RMS approval.

New Pedestrian Place

10. A new landscape pedestrian place is created in the reclaimed bus layover. It strengthens the 'green' landscape character of the street.

11. Simple design and materials respect the historic setting, such as:
 - (a) extension of the asphalt footpath and sandstone kerb along the new kerb alignment will reflect the existing footpath treatment;
 - (b) a new asphalt path connects the footpath to the entrance of the Abraham Mott Hall;
 - (c) new heritage seating located along Argyle Street to improve pedestrian amenity;
 - (d) a central fig tree, which provides shade to the new parkland space; and
 - (e) new grass areas, tree planting and seating to increase the green landscape setting of Argyle Place.

Harry Jensen and Abraham Mott Community Centres

12. The old and non-compliant playground within the grounds of the Abraham Mott Hall will be replaced with a high quality play area, open to the public and with a focus on play for young children from one to 10 years. It will include a slide, a 'merry go round' and exploratory play.
13. A more generous forecourt to both community facilities improves the connection with the new park space and creates a stronger public address for these buildings.
14. New accessible ramped access to both buildings will be provided off Watson Road.

Street Trees

15. New street trees, London Planes *Platanus hybrid*, will be planted along Argyle Street (south) in line with the City's Street Tree Master Plan, to provide shade to the footpath.

Tram Shelter

16. The heritage shelter is relocated to the new kerb alignment and bus stop location on Argyle Street to ensure its continued use and significance.

Lighting

17. Existing lighting will be upgraded with City standard energy efficient LED luminaires in accordance with the City's Streetscape Design Codes, to achieve lighting standards compliance.
18. Existing heritage gas lamps are retained.

Buses

19. Two bus stops within the precinct are retained, with a slightly adjusted location for the Argyle Street bus stop reflecting the kerb realignments.

Car Parking

20. Two additional 2-hour parking spaces will be added to Argyle Street/ Argyle Place. Two new on street loading zone spaces will be provided behind the current mail zone on Argyle Street.
21. Bicycle parking will be integrated into the design with new bicycle rings on the existing posts along Argyle Street, and within the park space.

Bus Layover and Relocation of Buses

22. The new landscape place relies on the relocation of the bus layover. Currently, a maximum of eight buses layover in Argyle Street and Argyle Place at peak periods. Relocation of the buses is a product of the Central Sydney Access Strategy and the Light Rail in George Street. The Buses currently using the layover are George Street services.
23. The original concept plan had an interim layover in Argyle Place. This is no longer proposed.
24. In response to the community concern for the interim bus layover in Argyle Place proposed in the concept design, the construction of the works will be implemented in two stages. The staging will ensure the implementation of a new layover location on Hickson Road is achieved prior to the removal of the current layover.
25. The indicative staging (shown in Attachment A) will be as follows:
 - (a) Stage one would include footpath improvements to Argyle Street, street tree planting together with works constructed within the grounds of the Abraham Mott Community Hall and the Harry Jensen Building. This would be in early 2015; and
 - (b) Stage two would involve implementation of the raised threshold at Watson Road, pedestrian crossing at Lower Fort Street and the realignment of the kerb and works to the Pedestrian Place in the former tram turning circle. Stage 2 works will be dependent on the timing of the bus layover relocation out of the project area. This will ensure that there is no interim bus storing requirement. Negotiations between the City of Sydney, State Transit Authority (STA) and Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) on the preferred location of the bus layover are being carried out. Hickson Road, Walsh Bay, is being investigated as a preferred site for a bus route extension and possible layover site. This location is in line with the newly released City Centre Access Strategy, and may be implemented by approximately April 2015.

Other amendments in response to Consultation

26. Other suggestions raised in consultation now incorporated into the refined design include:
 - (a) a pedestrian crossing for the intersection of Lower Fort Street and Argyle Street, subject to approval by the RMS. This was in response to community concern about vehicular speeds from Argyle Street into Lower Fort Street; and

- (b) bicycle parking will be integrated with the existing posts along Argyle Street and within the park space.
27. Further design investigations have resulted in the following additional refinements to the recommended design:
- (a) demolition of the existing 1950's style brick bin store at the front of the building opens up the entrance and façade to the Abraham Mott Hall, allowing a single ramp to access both buildings. A new bin store is located discretely down the side of the Hall;
 - (b) a footpath continuation is proposed at the end of Watson Road at the intersection of Argyle Street to improve pedestrian amenity; and
 - (c) new fencing at the side of the Abraham Mott Hall to improve security.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

28. Community consultation for the concept plan was carried out between 9 November and 23 November 2013. The following consultation activities were conducted:
- (a) a letter was sent to 3,200 residents and business owners within Harbour Village North announcing the consultation and the ways in which people could have their say;
 - (b) a drop in session was held on 23 November at Abraham Mott Hall. Community members were able to view the designs, discuss the project with the design team and fill out feedback forms;
 - (c) key stakeholders in the area, including the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, Observatory Hill stakeholders, the Older Women's Network and local community groups were notified of the consultation via email. An offer was made for the project team to visit these groups and/or anyone who was unable to attend the drop in session on 23 November;
 - (d) a webpage dedicated to the consultation was created on sydneyoursay.com.au displaying the consultation material and a feedback form for those wishing to make a submission;
 - (e) the consultation material was available on the City's website, along with instructions on the ways in which people could have their say;
 - (f) the concept design was displayed at the One Stop Shop in Town Hall House; and
 - (g) the project team presented the concept design to the Millers Point Residents Action Group on 12 November 2013.
29. 30 submissions were received, including a submission from the Millers Point Residents Action Group, The Walsh Bay Precinct Association and the Millers Point Leaseholders Group. A comprehensive report on the outcomes of consultation is at Attachment C.

30. Three submissions did not want the project to proceed. Of the remaining submissions, some issues and suggestions were made.
31. Key issues raised and responses are summarised below.

Key Issues

32. **Bus Layover** – more feedback was received on the proposed relocation of the bus layover than any other aspect of the design. 11 people were opposed to relocation of the layover to Argyle Place, citing reasons such as public safety, heritage impacts, reduction of amenity and resident parking spaces.

Response

- (a) The project will now be implemented in stages to remove the need for interim bus layover space in Argyle Place.
33. **Design** – a number of suggestions were received for additions to the design. These included accessible vehicle access and parking for the community facilities, a link between the new place space and the public area at St Brigid's Church, a safer crossing of Lower Fort Street, and bike rings on Argyle Street.

Response

- (a) Accessible vehicle access and parking for the community facilities will be provided on Argyle Street for community centre and hall deliveries. There will be no vehicular access into the Abraham Mott Hall forecourt. A link between St Brigid's Church and the community facilities will not be part of this project. St Brigid's Church is private property.
 - (b) A safer crossing of Lower Fort Street will be included in the design. Bicycle rings will be included in the design
34. **Other comments** – a number of additional suggestions were received concerning other local issues, including pedestrianisation of Argyle Place, undergrounding of electricity wires and restoration of crossovers on Argyle Place with stone setts.

Response

- (a) Pedestrianisation of Argyle Place is not part of the Argyle Street improvements project. This suggestion will be recommended as a future project.
- (b) Undergrounding of electricity wires is not part of the Argyle Street improvements project.
- (c) Restoration of crossovers on Argyle Street with stone setts is not part of the Argyle Street improvements project. This suggestion will be recommended as a future project.

Design Advisory Panel

35. The Design Advisory Panel were consulted on the 11 February on the refined design. The main comments from the Panel were:
- (a) removal of the existing footpath adjacent the bus layover area to increase the landscape character; and
 - (b) history of tram turning circle can be defined by the existing sandstone wall.
36. The Design Advisory Panel comments have been incorporated.

KEY IMPLICATIONS**Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030**

37. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling outlines actions that will make walking and cycling an easy option for residents and visitors in our city. It recognises the importance of these modes to improve the health and environmental sustainability of our city.
 - (b) Objectives include developing a network of safe, linked pedestrian and cycle paths integrated with green spaces throughout both the city and inner Sydney; giving greater priority to cycle and pedestrian movements and amenity in the City Centre; promoting green travel for major workplaces and venues in the city.

Risks

38. The dedication of the land from the State Transit Authority to the City to facilitate the reclamation of the bus turning circle will need to be negotiated. The staging proposal will mitigate this risk by allowing additional time, if required, to secure this agreement. In any case, this report recommends a further report to Council on this negotiation be provided prior to the commencement of Stage 2 works.
39. Design Safety Assessments and Road Safety Audits will be carried out upon completion of the detailed design and substantial completion of construction works.

Social / Cultural / Community

40. The proposal will improve pedestrian connections for able and less abled persons throughout Millers Point.
41. The provision of a small community park and playground will create a gathering space for all ages and contribute to the character and amenity of the street.
42. Access to the Abraham Mott Community Hall and Harry Jensen Centre will be improved.

Heritage

43. The Consultancy team includes the heritage consultants City Plan Heritage. The consultants have been active in providing advice and guidance and have worked on the development of the concept design for the Argyle Street Improvements.
44. The City's Heritage Planners and the Heritage Council of NSW have also been consulted and have provided advice on the proposal.

Environmental

45. The project will improve pedestrian amenity providing a direct link between the Rocks and Millers Point/ Barangaroo.
46. The upgrade works will see the removal of two existing street trees (*Celtis australis*) adjacent to the turning circle. The two trees have suffered trunk damage and torn limbs, a result of continual contact with adjacent buses. Additional street tree planting is proposed along Argyle Street and in the new park.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

47. There are sufficient funds allocated to this project within the capital works budget 2013/14 and future years forward estimate.
48. The project budget and cost estimate for the upgrade is presented in detail in confidential Attachment D.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

49. Attachment D is to remain confidential in accordance with section 10A(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 1993, as it contains information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
50. NSW Roads Act 1993 and City of Sydney Act 1988 for road related approvals.
51. Local Government Act 1993 for construction procurement.
52. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 for environmental assessment (Part 4 and Part 5).

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

53. Proposed key dates are as follows:

Design Development	February 2014 – June 2014
Development Application Submission to Council	August 2014
Estimated Tender for Construction	October 2014
<u>Stage one</u> Estimated Construction commencement	April 2015
<u>Stage two</u> Estimated construction commencement (following the relocation of the buses from Argyle Street)	Anticipated start date June 2015

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

54. The Community Consultation report is at Attachment C. It includes a summary of issues and suggestions raised by the community.
55. Once the design has been refined, a Development Application will be lodged and community members will have a further opportunity to have their say. Further updates on the project, including construction notification, will be provided through the following channels:
- (a) updates on the sydneyoursay.com.au and City of Sydney webpages;
 - (b) notifications sent to local residents, business owners and people who have made submissions on the concept design; and
 - (c) during construction, the selected contractor will be required to provide a Community Liaison Officer on-site to assist all stakeholders with day to day operational construction related issues.

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