

ITEM 4. VICTORIA PARK IMPROVEMENTS, CAMPERDOWN – PROJECT SCOPE**FILE NO: S117291****SUMMARY**

This report describes the concept design and community consultation undertaken for the improvements to Victoria Park, Camperdown.

Victoria Park at Camperdown is a 9.2 hectare locally listed heritage park, which was first dedicated in 1870 and acts as western green gateway to the City Centre and an important green open space for nearby communities in Newtown, Darlington, Camperdown, Chippendale, Glebe and Redfern. The park is a setting for passive and unstructured recreation, and includes a children's playground, a swimming pool and café. The park is used as a key walking route particularly to the University of Sydney, and as a venue for a range of large and small cultural events.

Following review of past master plans, plans of management and the tree management plan for the park, a concept plan has been developed to guide improvement works at Victoria Park.

Recent works have been undertaken including the return of the historic entry gates to the park, the new children's playground and the adaptive reuse of Gardener's Lodge as a café. The proposed works will address remaining issues for improvement, such as the incomplete and dilapidated path network, the water quality of Lake Northam and the need to increase recreation opportunity.

The concept design for the improvement works was exhibited in December 2014. 361 individuals engaged with the design online, 13 left comments on the site's guest book and one emailed the City directly. In addition, meetings were held with key stakeholders including the University of Sydney, Crown Lands Division, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and current operators of the Gardener's Lodge Café. Where possible, appropriate suggestions will be incorporated into the next stage of the design.

This report recommends a scope of work to be implemented in two stages, aligned with the funding identified in the Long Term Financial Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council endorse the scope of works for Victoria Park as described in the subject report, together with the considerations outlined in paragraph 29, for progression to design development and preparation of tender documentation.

ATTACHMENTS**Attachment A:** Location Plan**Attachment B:** Existing Site Plan

Attachment C: The Concept Design

Attachment D: Consultation Notification Plan – Concept Design

Attachment E: Consultation Report

Attachment F: Financial Implications (Confidential)

(As Attachment F is confidential, it will be circulated separately from the Agenda Paper and to Councillors and relevant senior staff only).

BACKGROUND

1. As part of Council's vision to green the city and increase the amount and amenity of public open spaces, Victoria Park, Camperdown has been included in the capital works program.
2. Victoria Park lies about 1.5 kilometres southwest of the Sydney CBD, and is bounded by City Road, Parramatta Road and The University of Sydney. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of 2 to 3 storey residential terraces, multi-storey commercial buildings and university institutional buildings. The park is well served by bus routes, and Central and Redfern train stations are about 1km or 15 minutes' walk away (see Attachment A).
3. The park forms a green gateway to the City Centre and is important green open space for local residents in Darlington, Camperdown, Chippendale Glebe, Redfern, university students and staff. At approximately 9.2 hectares, it is the largest park in the area.
4. Traditional owners, the Eora people, originally inhabited the Sydney area pre-settlement. Victoria Park falls within the western boundary of the Gadigal clan's areas. In the lead-up to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, an Aboriginal Tent Embassy and sacred fire was set up in the park to raise awareness of political issues of Indigenous Australia. The small memorial and Eucalyptus plantings that commemorate the site will be retained.
5. In 1870, Victoria Park was named and gazetted. In 1912, a bowling club (now demolished) and children's playground were established. In 1955, the Victoria Park swimming pool was built in the centre of the park. Around the same time, the Horse Lake (Lake Northam) was reduced in size.
6. Victoria Park is a listed heritage item of local significance. Heritage items in the park, including the Gardener's Lodge, entry gates, piers, sandstone hob and palisade boundary fence, University Walk, park layout paths and plantings, will be retained and protected.
7. Victoria Park is characterised by a mixture of mature exotic and native tree plantings, asphalt paths and open grass areas (see Attachment B). Existing park facilities and features include:
 - (a) Victoria Park Pool, fitness centre, function room, crèche and café;
 - (b) Gardener's Lodge Café;
 - (c) Victoria Park Gates and University Walk;
 - (d) Lake Northam and wooden bridge;
 - (e) an adventure playground area and basketball hoop;
 - (f) a 22-space dedicated car park with provision for people with disabilities;
 - (g) parking and loading bays near the pool;
 - (h) a Canadian Totem Pole artwork;
 - (i) barbeques and picnic tables; and

- (j) seating, lighting and signage.
8. The park is used for a range of small and large events from 100 to 10,000 people held throughout the year, such as the Mardi Gras Fair Day, Yabun Festival, Picnic in the Park and Soulfest – a Neo-Soul Music Festival. Mobile food trucks service the park periodically in the evening.
9. In the past, basic maintenance has occurred as required. However, pathway and lighting infrastructure are in generally poor condition, requiring significant ongoing costs to maintain them in a safe and serviceable condition.
10. Major upgrades that have occurred to Victoria Park include the following:
- (a) in the 1990s, the lake was enlarged to the original form and the bridge reinstated as part of the restoration of the university entrance approach avenue;
 - (b) in 1998, the bowling club house and greens were removed due to the decline of participation in lawn bowls;
 - (c) in 2007, the original Victoria Park entrance gates, which had been moved to the Eastern Avenue near the Carslaw Building, were reinstated at the City Road end of the university entrance approach avenue;
 - (d) the upgrade to the children’s playground in 2008; and
 - (e) the refurbishment of the Gardener’s Lodge Café in 2012.
11. The key issues that remain to be addressed are:
- (a) An incomplete path network in poor condition

Worn turf areas, ‘goat tracks’, and a mixed palette of aging materials are symptomatic of this condition. Improving the path network, including associated lighting, signage and park furniture, is key to addressing issues of accessibility, wayfinding and safety within the park.

The park entries are poorly defined and currently do not provide an equitable access route from City Road into the park.

The night time safety of park users in the southern area requires improvement through lighting and greater passive surveillance so the park is a safer place for meeting, play and leisure.
 - (b) The poor water quality of Lake Northam

Untreated run-off from surrounding roads, The University of Sydney and possibly damaged sewer pipe infrastructure leaking into the lake have resulted in low environmental amenity to this key historic feature within the park’s landscape.
 - (c) The need to increase recreation opportunity in the park

With the increasing demands on open spaces in the city’s urban areas, growing the range of recreation experiences within the park, compatible with the park’s role and character, is required.

Concept Design

12. A concept design has been prepared to guide the investment of funding identified for the park's improvement over the next 10 year period. It addresses the key issues noted above in accordance with the following design principles:
 - (a) retain and enhance the existing character of the park;
 - (b) improve accessibility (park entries, pedestrian paths and paved areas);
 - (c) maintain large open grass areas;
 - (d) activate and increase park usability;
 - (e) rationalise vehicular and service access and reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles;
 - (f) improve lighting and night time safety; and
 - (g) improve the park's environmental quality and sustainability.

13. The proposed improvement works include:
 - (a) Lake Northam: sediment removal, new wetland reed plants and the installation of a pump to filter and clean the water;
 - (b) Park Entries: enhancing entries with new planting, paving and information signage along City Road;
 - (c) Path Networks: upgrading the path network with high quality pathways including:
 - (i) a new north / south path on the alignment of the existing desire line and removal of the underutilised / redundant path;
 - (ii) a new east/ west path and entry point to re-establish a link between the university and the Cleveland Street entry; and
 - (iii) a new perimeter loop path to provide a recreational amenity and improve accessibility, activating more of the parkland;
 - (d) Lighting and Park Furniture: upgrade to path lighting to improve night time safety, and refurbishment of park furniture such as seating, bubblers and park signs; and
 - (e) Leisure activities: a new active space and netball hoop in the southern area.

Staging

14. The proposed improvement works will be carried out in two stages as follows (see Attachment C):
 - (a) Stage 1 works include:
 - (i) installation of wetland reed beds and planting, a new pump and reticulation system in Lake Northam;
 - (ii) existing paths rationalised and new paths constructed;

- (iii) upgrade to path lighting;
 - (iv) upgrade to park entries along City Road;
 - (v) refurbished park furniture; and
 - (vi) an active recreation node with installation of a netball hoop; and
- (b) Stage 2 works include installation of a new perimeter loop path and associated path lighting.

Accessibility

15. The City of Sydney's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2014-2017 outlines Council's commitment to making its services and amenities accessible and 'barrier-free' to all residents, workers and visitors.
16. Some existing paths and park entries limit mobility due to existing grades. The proposed improvement works will regrade park entries to improve access and mobility around the park and meet requirements of AS1428. Paths will also include level rest points. The proposed seating areas include sufficient room for wheelchair and mobility aids.

Heritage Assessment

17. A heritage overview study was prepared to provide an understanding of the site's history and inform the concept design.
18. A heritage and archaeological assessment will be undertaken to mitigate any impacts as part of the design development and approvals process.

Tree Management

19. The retention of mature trees and the park's character is an important principle for the project. An independent assessment of all trees in Victoria Park was undertaken to inform the design. All existing mature trees will be retained.
20. New paths will be aligned to avoid existing trees. Two existing palms will be transplanted. New native habitat plantings using local indigenous plant species and Fig trees will edge the park.
21. Raised boardwalks will be installed under some trees to bridge surface roots and minimise impacts to the trees. Additional investigation will be undertaken during the detailed design and documentation phase to ensure trees are protected.

Ecology

22. The original pre-settlement vegetation was characterised by an open woodland turpentine forest. The land was modified for farming and then as a Victorian era park. The project will enhance the original habitat values with the addition of understory native planting areas and increase the biodiversity in the park.
23. An ecological assessment will be undertaken as part of the design development and documentation phase to identify and maximise habitat opportunities.

Concept Design Public Consultation

24. The concept design was placed on public exhibition and community feedback was sought from 5 to 11 December 2014. A notification letter was distributed to residents in a 250 metre radius surrounding the park, announcing the consultation and the ways in which people could have their say. Approximately 2,400 letters were distributed (see Attachment D).
25. The plans and project information were made available on the City's online consultation hub Sydneyoursay.com.au.
26. During the exhibition period, 361 community members engaged with the designs online, with 13 leaving comments on the site's guestbook and one emailing the City directly.
27. Stakeholder meetings were also held with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, Manager of Gardener's Lodge, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and The University of Sydney.
28. The Consultation Plan and information were available at a City of Sydney stand at the Yabun Festival held on 26 January 2015.
29. Feedback from the consultation period has provided overall support for the proposal. A Consultation Report provides a detailed summary of community feedback (see Attachment E). In summary, the key issues and suggestions raised by the community are responded to below:
 - (a) General feedback and suggestions included:
 - (i) Avoid over-development and retain the natural feel of the paths

In response, the next stage of design will develop the loop-path as a generous, but low-key gravel track (similar to the Tan Track in Melbourne's Botanic Gardens and the existing curtilage to the historic gates at Victoria Park).
 - (ii) Fitness stations like those at Wentworth Park and netball facilities

In response, it is noted a new active space and netball hoop in the southern parkland is included within the concept design. Larger ball courts would significantly impact the park's undulating grassed landscape character.
 - (iii) Request for shared paths

In response, it is noted cycling is already permissible on the park's paths. The project will improve the path network to better accommodate shared use, addressing key cross-park routes for pedestrians and bike riders.

(iv) Additional public toilets

A public toilet is currently available in the Gardener's Lodge Café. Improved signage will be included. The adopted Public Toilet Strategy identifies the need to locate additional public toilets in the park in the longer term, however this is not part of the scope for this project. This may be better incorporated as part of a future pool building improvement.

(b) Specific suggestions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholder discussions include:

(i) Path upgrades and new paths be located to avoid crossing significant sites

In response, preliminary investigations suggest the paths proposed are not in conflict with these sites. Additional investigation will be undertaken to confirm locations of these sites during the design development phase.

(ii) New plantings to include a palette of endemic species with potential for use by the café and as a new educational resource

In response, the detailed planting design will be developed to include this palette of planting.

(iii) Consider dual naming and expanded interpretation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community's associations with the park.

In response, research will be undertaken to identify potential for appropriate dual naming of the park, as well as additional content to update the park's interpretive signage, in consultation with stakeholders.

30. Landowner consultation was undertaken with the Crown Lands Division in January 2015.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

31. *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. The concept plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:

- (a) Direction 5 – A Lively and Engaging City Centre;
- (b) Objective 5.1 – Strengthen the City's public domain identity and create more places for meeting, rest and leisure;
- (c) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design – actions under this direction aim to better capture the potential of streets, parks and squares in public life and improve design excellence in our buildings;

- (d) Objective 9.1 – Define and improve the City’s streets, squares, parks and open space, and enhancing their role for pedestrians and in public life; and
- (e) Objective 9.3 – Plan for a beautiful City and promote design excellence.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 32. The Victoria Park improvement works will improve the access, circulation and amenity of the park to meets the needs of the local community.

Environmental

- 33. The Victoria Park improvement works include a range of environmentally sustainable elements, which will improve the environmental performance of the park. The key elements include:
 - (a) refurbishment and reuse of park furniture;
 - (b) new wetland reed plants in Lake Northam to filter and polish water and provide habitat;
 - (c) removal of redundant paths and increase water infiltration to the lake;
 - (d) installation of new low energy lights to reduce energy use and light spill; and
 - (e) additional native planting areas to provide habitat for small birds and increase biodiversity in the park.

Economic

- 34. The upgrade works proposed will improve park amenity and may contribute to increased patronage of the Victoria Park Pool, Gardener’s Lodge Café and local businesses adjacent to the park.
- 35. The park upgrade will maintain existing vehicle driveways and loading zones for Victoria Park Pool and Gardeners Lodge Café, who have been consulted and support the proposal.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

- 36. An estimate of cost has been prepared based on the concept plan. There is sufficient funding in the 2014/15 capital works budget and future years forward estimate to complete the design and construction of the project (refer confidential Attachment F).
- 33. The project is currently funded in two stages, with Stage 1 construction funding in 2015/16 and Stage 2 Loop Path 2020/21 in the Long Term Financial Plan.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

- 37. Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979 (Part 4 and 5). After design development is completed, the scope of works will be reviewed by a statutory planner to determine requirements for the project under the EP&A Act. Some of the proposed works may not require planning approval and may be exempt development.

38. Crown Lands Act 1989. Victoria Park is a Crown Reserve which is being held on trust under Div.5 Part 5 of the Crown Lands Act 1989 (NSW). Council is the reserve trust manager.
39. Procurement of consultants and contractors for this project will be in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993.
40. Attachment F contains confidential information which, if disclosed, would confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

41. The program for the project is:

Design Development and Documentation	February to July 2015
Tender Phase (Stage 1)	August to November 2015
Construction Commencement for Stage 1	December 2015
Tender Phase (Stage 2)	May 2020 to August 2020
Construction Commencement for Stage 2	September 2020

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

42. Once the concept design is adopted and construction plans are completed, the community will be notified by emails to survey participants, a monthly newsletter from Sydneyyoursay.com.au and community noticeboard updates.
43. Statutory notification periods and exhibition will be undertaken as part of any required planning approvals process.
44. During the construction phase, the following activities will take place to keep the community updated:
- (a) letters to residents informing them of the commencement of works and details of construction;
 - (b) updated webpage;
 - (c) hoarding signs placed on-site; and
 - (d) appointment of a community liaison officer.

KIM WOODBURY

Acting Director City Projects and Property

Stephen Merchant, Senior Design Manager
Kate Yates, Design Manager