

Revised Project Scope - Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal

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Summary

This report outlines the proposed updated scope of works for the Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal.

The Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct contains substantial remains of the brickmaking industry which once dominated the area. There were previously four separate brick manufacturing facilities operational on different sites within Sydney Park throughout the twentieth century. The structures that remain on this site constitute a striking landmark and a powerful example of this brickmaking history that contributes to the streetscape of the Princes Highway and act as a significant gateway into Sydney Park.

The objectives of the current project are to deliver the stabilisation and preservation of the Sydney Park Brick Kilns structures, to renew the surrounding landscape of the precinct and to celebrate and interpret the significant industrial and cultural history of the site.

The project scope for the Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal works was endorsed by Council on 22 August 2022, forming the basis for the development application and future tender for the renewal works.

On 18 September 2023, Council resolved to investigate the potential feasibility and financial implications of activation of one or more of the brick kiln structures, including making them accessible and available for community and cultural uses. Further refinements have been made during the design development phase including accessibility, structural works, services and waterproofing to the Down Draught Kilns. This report details the results of the investigation and recommends a revised project scope that includes additional works carried out to Down Draught Kiln 2 to make it suitable for use as a bookable community and events space.

Construction prices have also increased significantly over the past years, particularly for landscape works and structural components.

A pre-tender estimate of costs has recently been prepared for the updated scope of works which indicates additional funding is required for the project. This, together with the above project scope changes require Council approval.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the revised scope of works to Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal as described in the subject report and shown in Attachment A to the subject report, for progression of tendering and construction; and
- (B) note the financial implications as outlined in Confidential Attachment B to the subject report.

Attachments

Attachment A. Revised Project Scope Summary

Attachment B. Financial Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. The Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct is situated just south of King Street, Newtown, on the corner of the Princes Highway and Sydney Park Road, St Peters.
2. The precinct contains substantial remains of the brickmaking industry which once dominated the area. There were previously four separate brick manufacturing facilities operational on different sites within Sydney Park throughout the twentieth century. The structures that remain on this site constitute a striking landmark and a powerful example of this brickmaking history that contributes to the streetscape of the Princes Highway and act as a significant gateway into Sydney Park.
3. The Sydney Park brick kilns and chimneys are locally listed heritage items of cultural and historical importance. The kilns precinct serves as the primary pedestrian entry to Sydney Park, providing access from King Street Newtown and St Peters Station, and is identified as an area of 'Cultural Significance' in the Sydney Park Plan of Management (2014).
4. The brickwork remains that have been preserved as a feature of Sydney Park were originally built by brick manufacturer Josiah Gentle, who traded under the name Bedford Bricks. After it purchased Bedford Bricks in 1936, the Austral Brick Company further developed the works and continued to operate it until 1973 and, in 1980, the St Peters site was sold to the New South Wales Government. The site was subsequently developed into Sydney Park with ownership transferred to South Sydney Council in 1991, and to the City of Sydney after the two councils merged in 2004.
5. The Sydney Park Brick Kilns are subject to an ongoing maintenance program which, in the past, has included archway repairs, installation of roof membranes (to the Downdraught and Hoffman Patent Kilns), bracing and repointing of brick work and chimney remediation works. In 2020, temporary bracing to the southern face of Down Draught Kiln 1 and installation of temporary palisade fencing around all Down Draught Kilns was completed to ensure public safety and restrict access to the structures.
6. The latest condition assessment has identified a schedule of further works that are required to be undertaken and funds have been allocated to proceed with the renewal of the Brick Kilns Precinct and adjoining landscape areas.

Design Development

7. Tonkin Zulaikha Greer were engaged as Head Design Consultant to develop the design for the project.
8. The project scope for the Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal works was endorsed by Council on 22 August 2022. The approved scope included the stabilisation and preservation of the brick kilns, reinstating the roof structures, upgraded landscaping, signage, lighting, stormwater and improvements to the precinct as the entryway to Sydney Park.

9. The developed design was presented to the Design Advisory Panel and its sub-committee on 24 March 2023 with a site visit on 28 March 2023. The following comments were noted in the minutes of the Design Advisory Panel meeting:
 - (a) The panel highlighted "Stabilisation, repair and long-term protection of the brick kilns is critically important - the solutions proposed to date are commended"; and
 - (b) Given their dramatic interior spaces, the panel noted support for the future activation of one or more of the Brick Kiln structures for community use.
10. On 18 September 2023, Council resolved to investigate the potential feasibility and financial implications of activation of one or more of the brick kiln structures, including making them accessible and available for community and cultural uses.
11. A review of the brick kilns structures has been undertaken and identified the potential for Down Draught Kiln 2 to be used as a bookable community and events space.
12. Additional works recommended to allow for community and events use of Down Draught Kiln 2 include:
 - (a) Accessibility: floating floor (webforge or similar) is required to provide accessible entry / ground plane within the kiln;
 - (b) Structural Works: additional structural stabilisation works are required via a bonded slab to the external side of the arch to allow the space to be occupied by more than 10 people;
 - (c) Services: conduits for connection to power recommended to be located at the entry to the down draught kiln - to allow for connection of services to Down Draught Kiln 2 and use for precinct activations; and
 - (d) Waterproofing: additional waterproofing works is required to the concrete roof and walls.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

13. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This project is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 3 - Public places for all - this project will provide an improved open space through the landscape renewal component of the works. The space will meet the needs of a wide variety of user groups and provides a hub for gathering, socialising and recreation activities. It will also provide an improved connection and transition from Newtown and St Peters station through to the rest of Sydney Park; and

- (b) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - the City of Sydney's submission to the NSW Arts, Culture and Creative Industries Policy identifies a crisis in the availability of affordable spaces for creative and cultural activities. Activating the brick kilns would make a small contribution to addressing this shortage while providing unique spaces for our creatives to use and could lead to more cultural and community events taking place in the Precinct.

Organisational Impact

14. The precinct will continue to be maintained by the City. The revised scope for the use and activation of Down Draught Kiln 2 is recommended to form part of a broader precinct wide activation by the City's major events team which may include City sponsored exhibitions e.g. Art and About or small music events/markets.

Risks

15. Structural and geotechnical risks - are the subject of continued investigation by the project consultancy team who have developed strategies to ensure the design provides a suitable long term structural solution for the Kilns.
16. Site contamination risks - due to the site's industrial history and use as a landfill, there is known contamination across the site. The Environmental Consultant and the Sydney Park Site Auditor have been engaged to understand and implement strategies for the management of risks associated with contamination within the Brick Kilns Precinct.

Social / Cultural / Community

17. The proposed stabilisation and renewal of the Sydney Park Brick Kilns will provide improved access for all members of the community within and through the precinct and provide a renewed landscape that can better cater for a wider range of activities including small outdoor gatherings.
18. The heritage preservation and interpretation of the former brickworks site contributes to the cultural richness of Sydney Park and helps to highlight the important role brickmaking played in the history of the area.
19. The activation of Down Draught Kiln 2 will contribute to the cultural richness of the precinct and allow for a new bookable venue for community and cultural events.

Environmental

20. The project will include enhancement of planting within the precinct consistent with the Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan.
21. All lighting within the precinct will be provided by efficient LED in alignment with the City's LED replacement lighting renewal program.
22. The project will use locally sourced and low embodied materials where possible.

Financial Implications

23. There are funds within the 2023/24 capital works budget and the Long Term Financial Plan for the Sydney Park Brick Kilns Precinct Renewal however additional funding will need to be provided in the 2024/25 Long Term Financial Plan to deliver this project. A summary of the financial implications is included in Confidential Attachment B.

Relevant Legislation

24. Local Government Act 1993 - Section 10A provides that a Council may close to the public so much of its meeting as comprises information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
25. Attachment B to the subject report contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
26. 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 outcomes for its rate payers.
27. Contaminated Land Management Act 1997.
28. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
29. Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

30. The project anticipated time frames are:
 - (a) Development Application determination March/April 2024
 - (b) Tender and Contract Award mid 2024
 - (c) Commence Construction on site late 2024

Options

31. Stabilisation, renewal, and activation works to be undertaken in accordance with the recommendation in this subject report. This option is recommended.
32. Option to only undertake the previously approved scope and any essential compliance upgrade works. This option is not recommended as it does not address the activation of the Brick Kilns Precinct providing unique spaces for our creatives to use and could lead to more cultural and community events taking place in the Precinct.
33. Expanded activation works carried out to additional kiln structures. In addition to structural/safety concerns with the other structures, spaces inside the kilns cannot achieve National Construction Code compliance without significant alterations/additions to the heritage structures. This option is not recommended.

Public Consultation

34. Following earlier public consultation, as set out in the previous report to Council, on 14 March 2022 and 1 July 2022, all surrounding properties were sent a project update which also advised of the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the Development Application notification process.
35. Detailed refurbishment plans are included as part of the ongoing Development Application notification and statutory consultation process.

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