



10.1 **GASWORKS ARTS PARK - SITE PLAN ENDORSEMENT**

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Councillor endorsement on the updated Concept Plan for the Gasworks Arts Park (the Project).
- 1.2 To seek a Councillor decision on the future of the wall which borders the new Arts Precinct which is being built by the VSBA (Victorian School Building Authority).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The City of Port Phillip is upgrading Gasworks Arts Park to improve the open space experience for all users of the park.
- 2.2 Council's [Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022-32](#) includes a short-term action to "*finalise the Park Plan in compliance with the Victorian Government's Contamination Management Action Plan (CMAP). Improve lawn areas, garden beds, paths, play equipment, lighting, seats, picnic tables, drinking fountains and bins*".
- 2.3 Council is partnering with the State Government who coordinate and manage the environmental consultants preparing the Contamination Management Framework (CMF), to manage the contamination at the Park, in conjunction with the upgrade works.
- 2.4 Council has allocated \$3.5M to design and deliver landscape renewal and upgrade works at Gasworks Arts Park.
- 2.5 The funding includes a new playground at the southern end of the park. The playground is due to commence construction in April 2024, and \$873k of this budget is allocated to that part of the project. A separate consultation has occurred for the playground.
- 2.6 Community consultation on the proposed draft Concept Plan was undertaken in September 2023 - [Council's Have Your Say Page](#). Some changes have been made to the design in response to the feedback, while overall there was support for the design.
- 2.7 Engagement also included a question as to whether to lower the brick wall dividing the brick wall which separates the Park and the proposed Victoria College of the Arts & Albert Park College's Arts Precinct. The wall falls on both the VSBA (Victorian School's Building Authority) and Council land at various points. The following responses have been received:
 - During engagement the community response supported retaining the height of the Council managed sections of the wall (25 submissions)



- Since the engagement over 315 submissions (at the time of writing this report) have been received from residents supporting the removal / lowering of the brick wall.
- 2.8 The VSBA have also sort to remove some of the Council managed wall completely for an emergency exit point through the plaza into the park.
- 2.9 It is recommended that Council supports the VSBA lowering sections of the Council managed parts of the wall to no lower than approximately 0.9m, at their cost as part of their Arts Precinct Project.
- 2.10 Construction of Gasworks Arts Park Plan is due to commence in June 2024, with an expected completion date in November 2024.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses the updated Concept Plan for the Gasworks Arts Park to progress to detailed design.
- 3.2 Supports the Victorian School's Building Authority implementing changes to the Council managed wall which forms the border between Gasworks Arts Park and the new School Arts Precinct as follows:
- Lowering some sections to a minimum of 0.9m
 - Retaining a high wall in some areas (above 1m)
 - Removing some of the wall completely for an emergency exit point through the plaza into the park.
- 3.3 Notes that all decisions regarding amendments to the wall will be subject to further design to be undertaken by the VSBA in conjunction with Council.
- 3.4 Notes that as the request for this project has come from the VSBA, the funding for the project will be part of their project costs and are not currently part of Council's budget.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Concept Plan Upgrade to Gasworks Arts Park

Background

- 4.1 Gasworks Arts Park is a walled park in Albert Park, bordered by Graham, Pickles, Richardson and Foote Streets in Albert Park.
- 4.2 The site operated as a gasworks foundry for 100 years from 1871, when the land was originally leased by the South Melbourne Gas Company, until its closure in 1971.
- 4.3 South Melbourne City Council purchased a portion of the site in 1971 while the rest of the land remained Crown Land. In 1982 South Melbourne City Council were appointed Committee of Management over the Crown Land portion of the park, and in 1984 preparations were commenced to transform the site into a park.
- 4.4 The open space at Gasworks Arts Park is well utilised by various groups in the community, particularly dog walkers and attendees of events. The park is also a popular location for general passive recreation. The Gasworks Market is held monthly at the park along with various other events.



- 4.5 The park also features an arts complex which includes two theatres, three gallery spaces, a café, function and workshop spaces. The artist studios support sixteen resident visual artists.
- 4.6 The park is known for its bushland setting and is a much loved and iconic community space. Through consultation with the community as part of the contamination management, and through correspondence sent to Council, members of the community have expressed they would like the natural native bushland setting to be maintained, protected and preserved.
- 4.7 The City of Port Phillip's [Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022-32](#) includes a short-term high priority action to “finalise the Park Plan in compliance with the Victorian Government’s Contamination Management Action Plan (CMAP). Improve lawn areas, garden beds, paths, play equipment, lighting, seats, picnic tables, drinking fountains and bins”.
- 4.8 Council has allocated \$3.5M to design and deliver landscape renewal and upgrade works at Gasworks Arts Park.
- 4.9 This includes a new playground at the southern end of the park, estimated to have a total project cost of \$873k. The playground is due to commence construction in April 2024.

Soil contamination

- 4.10 The City of Port Phillip is committed to the ongoing management and response to the known contamination of the Gasworks Arts Park.
- 4.11 At its Ordinary Council meeting on 9 December 2014, Council considered the next steps for Gasworks Art Park and resolved to formally request that the State of Victoria, as the original polluter of the former South Melbourne Gasworks (Albert Park), project manage the soil remediation of the site. This included finalising a Remediation Action Plan (RAP) to be agreed by Council’s Chief Executive Officer in accordance with Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria’s expectations, and subject to Council’s CEO being satisfied with the Victorian Government’s process to:
- keep as many mature trees on the site as possible
 - ensure a transparent process with open communication with Council and the community throughout the remediation process
 - maintain a commitment to retaining the land as an off-leash dog park in a native bush setting.
- 4.12 The Victorian Government is managing the contamination investigations and associated works at Gasworks Arts Park. The EPA Victoria has deemed the site safe for ongoing use as a public park, and it will remain open to the community whilst further investigations and any works required to manage the contamination occur.
- 4.13 The draft Site Plan has been developed in conjunction with the findings of the draft Contamination Management Framework (revision 2).
- 4.14 Environmental consultants engaged by the Victorian Government are assessing the need for groundwater remediation action works. All parties support insitu removals of contaminants to reduce disturbance and disruption to park use.



Updated Concept Plan

4.15 The design seeks to:

- Retain the existing character unique to Gasworks Arts Park.
- Celebrate the cultural and historic setting of the park.
- Retain the bushland character of the park, provide biodiversity and relief from the surrounding urban settings.
- Respond to the Contamination Management Framework by ensuring adequate surface cover to contaminated soils, preventing access to these soils by park users and accommodating ongoing uses of the park.
- Improve how the park functions across its multiple commercial and recreational uses.
- Ensure the park caters for all ages and abilities.
- Celebrate the influence of art and the artist community by retaining existing artwork and providing opportunities for additional local art contributions.

4.16 Key features of the draft Concept Plan include:

- Adjustments to pathways to improve access for all users and maintain the bushland experience.
- Revised plaza layout to activate the space for market and non-market days.
- 3,800m² of new garden bed and 300 new trees proposed.
- Removal of tree and shrubs that have been identified to be in decline.
- Upgrades to furniture, lighting, signage and drainage.
- Establishing a planted buffer to the new school site.

4.17 The updated Concept Plan is found within **Attachment 1 – Gasworks Arts Park - Updated Concept Plan**, and also pictured below:

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 6 DECEMBER 2023



Gasworks Arts Park Upgrade



Image 1: Gasworks Arts Park Upgrade - Overall Park Plan

Gasworks Arts Park Upgrade



Image 2: Gasworks Arts Park Upgrade - Market Plaza and The Glade Area

4.18 Feedback was provided from Friends Gasworks Park regarding trees proposed for removal. Tree removals shown may change subject to review from Council arborists and sustainability team.

4.19 Renders are shown below:



Image 3: Market Plaza Render



Image 4: Angel Stage Render



Image 5: Eastern Path Render



- 4.20 Community engagement showed support for the plan. Changes made in response to the feedback included:
- Plaza raised planters reduced in number and amended to a stacked stone design to suit the existing park character
 - Retention of the path alignment to the art studios
 - Additional picnic settings to the art studios
 - Increase in seating
 - Retention of maze area
 - Adjustments to artwork locations
 - Child and toddler swing added to the grass area.

Brick Wall – between Arts Precinct and Park

Background

- 4.21 The VSBA (Victorian School Building Authority) are building a Youth Arts Precinct on the old Multiplex Depot adjacent to Gasworks Arts park. This venue will be a state-of-the-art performance and rehearsal spaces for students from the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School and [Albert Park College](#).
- 4.22 At this time, the VSBA's full plans for the Arts Precinct project have not been released. Their construction timeline has been delayed due to procurement issues therefore this will likely be early 2024.
- 4.23 There is currently a 1.8m brick wall dividing the sites, the footings for the wall are heritage listed (this means that any wall above ground level can be removed without impacting heritage requirements).
- 4.24 Investigations have also shown that some sections of the wall are a Council asset while others are owned by the Education Department.
- 4.25 The VSBA had requested that Council moved the wall boundaries so the wall can fully be managed by the VSBA. This has not been agreed by Council.
- 4.26 Original VSBA designs incorporated changes to the dividing brick wall. This included lowering some sections to improve the interface with the park and removing other sections to create emergency exits. Any changes to the wall located on VSBA land can be made without Council approval.
- 4.27 VSBA requested Council consider reducing sections of the wall that they manage. Council committed engaging with the community to include their feedback in any decision to amend the wall.
- 4.28 This question was asked through Councils engagement on the full park design.
- 4.29 At the point of writing this report, the Arts Precinct project construction contract is still out for tender, recent discussion with the VSBA indicated that it is uncertain whether lowering the wall is still within the final design, however the emergency exits will be required.
- 4.30 The new Gasworks Arts Park design includes a planting buffer between the wall and park and integration of emergency exit points will be considered once the VSBA plans are finalised.



Engagement

- 4.31 There have been two Council petitions raising concerns about any removal of the wall, on 6 July and 7 December 2022.
- 4.32 During the consultation the community were asked whether they supported changes to the wall including total removal or reduction of height (low wall).
- 4.33 Through consultation the community expressed preference for the section of wall on Council land to be maintained at full height. With 66% of the 38 respondents in support of this option.
- 4.34 Since the consultation closed over 315 submissions (at the time of writing this report) have been received from the community requesting that the wall be removed for the following reasons:
- it was built in the 1950s and has no heritage value
 - it attracts graffiti, is topped with razor wire, and is an obvious eyesore that has no place in a public park or community facility
 - by blocking the public's view of the new facility it constitutes a serious security and safety risk in contravention of council planning guidelines
 - it will prevent the new facility from being truly open to the community and from adding extra land to the park's open space.

Funding

- 4.35 Changes to the wall have been at the request of Albert Park Collage and the VSBA.
- 4.36 Therefore, subject to further discussions, any costs associated with amendments to the wall are not part of a Council project budgets and would need to be sort from the VSBA.

Options Assessment

- 4.37 When considering amendments to the wall a number of options have been considered:
- **Option 1:** Leave the wall at current height and not allow VSBA requested emergency exit point (through their plaza into the park).
 - **Option 2:** Support removal of the wall for a VSBA emergency exit through their plaza into the park only.
 - **Option 3:** Lower all sections of the council managed wall (to approximately 0.9m) and allow VSBA requested emergency exit point (through their plaza into the park)
 - **Option 4:** Lower various sections of council owned wall (to a minimum of 0.9m), retaining a high wall in some areas (above 1 m) and support the VSBA requested emergency exit point (through their plaza into the park) .
- 4.38 These options have been considered through a safety, amenity and affordability lens. With different options providing a range of impacts and benefits including:
- Retaining current look and feel, opportunity to use the wall creatively to create new spaces/attractions within the Arts Park and planting in a creative way.
 - Consideration of passive surveillance opportunities.



- Opportunities, benefits and impacts of integration with the Arts Precinct and Park – including improved interface, creation of new public space, increased view lines into the park and impacts new access points (potential for new ‘goat tracks’ across parkland)
- Safety was also considered with people having more access to the Arts Precinct site increasing the need for passive surveillance and clear sightlines. Also potential for dogs and children to stray into new areas and have easier access to Graham Street.
- Ongoing graffiti of the wall and other maintenance requirements was also considered.
- All options would include the removal of the barbed wire on top of the fence.

Recommendation

4.39 Having reviewed the options and feedback from Councillors and community officers are recommending:

- **Option 4:** Lower various sections of our wall (to a minimum of 0.9m), retaining a high wall in some areas (above 1 m) and support the VSBA requested for an emergency exit point (through their plaza into the park).

4.40 This is recommended as this will:

- Provide the best safety outcome for users of the park and the Arts Precinct. Increasing the opportunity for passive surveillance and reduction in areas which could become used for anti-social behaviour.
- Allow emergency access to and from the park
- Most aesthetic option and fit best with the artistic nature of the park.
- A wall at a minimum of 0.9m would provide an effective barrier for dogs and children, particularly when partnered with vegetation.

4.41 Would allow a gate from the plaza emergency exit (park side) to reduce the risk of children/dogs leaving the park unsupervised.

4.42 Implementation of this option will require an agreement with the school to reduce the likelihood of new ‘goat tracks’ developing in the park as children cut across to access the arts precinct.

4.43 Final design and cost allocations would need to be developed in consultation with the VSBA if there are any modifications to the wall. Council will seek costs to be covered by the VSBA

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 Community consultation on the draft Concept Plan was conducted from 31st August – 24th September 2023.

5.2 Consultation included:

- A survey via Councils online [Have Your Say page](#), asking for feedback on the draft Concept Plan along with questions regarding community likes and dislikes with design.



- Two on-site pop-up sessions were conducted on site on the 12th and 16th September 2023.
- 5.3 36 survey contributions were received via the Have your Say page.
- 5.4 122 contributions were received at the pop-up events.
- 5.5 Overall, the community was supportive of the draft Concept Plan.
- 5.6 Of the responses received, the following key themes were identified:
- Support for the design in preserving the bushland character of the park
 - A preference to retain or increase seating within the park
 - Concerns were raised relating to the relationship between the park and the neighbouring school campuses.
 - Concerns that some elements of the design detracted from the bushland character such as the new planters to the plaza.
- 5.7 Information received from the community during the consultation period was used to update the Concept Plan and progress to detailed design.
- 5.8 The full community engagement report will be made available following this briefing via Councils [Have Your Say page](#).
- 5.9 Officers have additionally met with the following stakeholders and the design was updated to address their feedback where possible:
- Friends of Gasworks Arts Park. Overall support for the design. Key requests include:
 - Reduction in proposed tree removal. Tree removals shown are under review by Council arborists and sustainability team, in response to this feedback.
 - Retaining the wall at its current height, alongside the VSBA development.
 - Reducing the concrete within the new plaza design.
 - Review of Albert Park College licence agreement and permitted areas of access.
 - Gasworks Arts Park Inc. Overall support for the design. Key requests include:
 - More market stalls within grassed area to accommodate changes to plaza design.
 - New BBQ location within plaza to be relocated.
 - Albert Park College (APC). Overall support received. Key requests include:
 - Additional seating.
 - Safety improvements to paths adjacent to art studios, central grass area and corners of the plaza.
 - Submission to remove the wall between the Park and Arts Precinct
- 5.10 Post engagement over 315 submissions have been received requesting the removal of the wall between the Park and Arts Precinct.



6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Standard contingencies and soil contamination allowances have been built into the project plans and budgets.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 There is \$3.5M allocated to this project as a whole (including the playground upgrade) which will be used to deliver the park plan and playground upgrade over FY2023/24 and FY2024/25.
- 7.2 Spend to date on the project is approx. \$150,000.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 The project aims to retain all trees which are in good health and current garden bed arrangement.
- 8.2 The new park will provide increased canopy cover, additional garden bed planting and tree planting.
- 8.3 The improvements to the native vegetation and bush trails will also improve biodiversity of insects and fauna.
- 8.4 Upgrades will provide better soil contamination management with improved pathway network, irrigation, drainage and designing for event vehicle movement through the park.
- 8.5 The RAP and CMF will manage contaminated soil on site to ensure it is safe for the community.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Where safe, areas of the park will be accessible during construction. Once the design is adopted, there will be an option to stage the project to retain access and to begin work on areas of the park.
- 9.2 Public space contributes to the liveability of our City and defines our unique sense of identity and place. It is open and accessible to people. It is where we meet our friends, exercise, play sport and relax and is essential to our physical and mental well-being.
- 9.3 The project will provide improved open space and align with Council's vision to create a well-connected network of public spaces for all people that nurture and support the health, wellbeing, social connection, creative expressions, economy and environment of our community.
- 9.4 The project will enhance the popular park providing improvements to access, greening, amenity and experience.
- 9.5 Gasworks Arts Park contributes towards achievement of outcomes in Council's Health and Well-being Plan
- 9.6 There will also be opportunities to increase the art experience in the park and improve the native bush trails, both of which are important to the Park's key stakeholder groups.
- 9.7 Upgrades to the park will mean that it continues to add amenity value to the area along with continuing to be used for revenue opportunities through the market, outdoor events and outdoor theatre.



10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 The Project aligns with Council Plan 2021-31 - Liveable Port Phillip, providing the community access to high quality public spaces.
- 10.2 The project will provide additional open space and align with Council's vision to create a well-connected network of public spaces for all people that nurture and support the health, wellbeing, social connection, creative expressions, economy and environment of our community.
- 10.3 The project aligns with the key moves of Council's [Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022-32](#) to "finalise the Park Plan in compliance with the Victorian Government's Contamination Management Action Plan (CMAP). Improve lawn areas, garden beds, paths, play equipment, lighting, seats, picnic tables, drinking fountains and bins".

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.1.1 **June 2024** - Construction of Gasworks Arts Park plan commences.
- 11.1.2 **November 2024** - Construction of Gasworks Arts Park plan complete.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 The updated Concept Plan and full community engagement report have been made available following this briefing via Councils [Have Your Say page](#).
- 11.2.2 The construction commencement date will be made available to the community once a construction contractor is engaged in early 2024 and they confirm their commencement date.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS 1. Gasworks Arts Park - Updated Concept Plan [↓](#)