



7.1 Petition Response – Stop Current Plans to Redevelop Lagoon Reserve

A Petition containing 674 signatures, was received from local residents and presented to the 7 June 2023 Council meeting.

The Petition states the following:-

- *The City of Port Phillip currently plans to spend 15 million dollars to redevelop Lagoon Reserve with a predominate focus of Sporting Grounds.*
- *The Reserve will be closed for a year during construction period, (commencing 30th November 2023) displacing the local community who uses Lagoon Reserve daily.*
- *Noise pollution, parking availability, lack of safe alternative to dog owners, repurposing of common green space while alternative Sports Facilities exist in the City of Port Phillip.*

For more information – <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/projects-and-works/lagoon-reserve-pavilions-and-sports-field-redevelopment>

OFFICER COMMENT

Background

Council has committed close to \$15 million to the upgrade of Lagoon Reserve sportsground, park infrastructure and pavilion. Lagoon Reserve was identified for renewal in the 2013 Lagoon Reserve Park Plan.

The site was historically a former lagoon, which was filled with poor-quality material and non-engineered fill. Due to the types of materials used, and the way the sports field was constructed (with no base layers, no drainage and minimal compaction), the reserve is subject to surface undulation, bare patches of grass and muddy conditions, which at times makes it unsuitable for sport and passive recreation activities of the community.

Lagoon Reserve is currently home to three sports clubs of both soccer and cricket, which hold training and games year-round. Other clubs have relocated to other sites due to the condition of the field.

The ground is also a very popular dog park and recreational/gathering space for the local community. During COVID the use of the ground as a community hub increased, and there are many local residents who use the ground for this purpose.

A local environmental group (Earthcare) has been holding annual planting/management days in the reserve for a number of years. The resulting native and indigenous vegetation is highly valued by the community and adds to the character of the reserve.

Project Details

Project Deliverables

The Lagoon Reserve Upgrade includes:

- Redevelopment of the sportsground to include irrigation and drainage.
- Modular, two storey pavilion with change rooms, canteen, community room and main kitchen.
- Integration of the pavilion into the surrounding landscape and connections to the path network.
- 3 lane fully enclosed cricket nets
- Circular walking path around the oval

- Renewed BBQ and picnic facilities
- Safety lighting for existing and new path networks
- Sports ground lighting suitable for sports training and competition
- Consideration of a fenced dog off leash area (requiring further investigation/consultation)
- Demolition of current pavilion (pre demolition planning is underway now due to the rapid deterioration of building posing risk to the community).

Recent feedback from the community informed changes to the original designs and updates are currently being undertaken to include more 'non-sporting' infrastructure (lighting, water for dogs and pathways). The redevelopment will provide a fit for purpose sports ground and improvements to the full park for all community users.

The existing pavilion is no longer fit for purpose having reached the end of its useful life and will be demolished in the coming months. As the pavilion includes public toilets within it, temporary portable toilets have been installed in the Reserve until the pavilion has been built.

The new pavilion will be accessible and include spaces for both sports club and community use.

Construction

The project will be constructed in two stages as follows:

Stage 1: Oval and surrounds (Nov 2023 to April 2024)

It is anticipated the entire reserve would be closed to the public for a period of approximately six months. The six-month closure is required to achieve a safe work zone, with vehicles and heavy machinery regularly accessing the site during the works.

Stage 2: Pavilion Redevelopment (Nov 2023 – May 2024)

The installation of the new pavilion will require the northern end of reserve closed off to public. This area will be closed from the initial closure in November 2023, to ensure a safe work zone for oval and surround works. It is expected to be closed for a period of approximately 18 months in total.



Image 1: Construction zones at Lagoon Reserve



A noise and vibration impact assessment and management plan has been prepared for this project; this will enable the project team to mitigate potential impacts during construction. Part of this plan includes active monitoring and regular reviews during construction to reduce impact on amenity to the immediate community. Further information will be provided to the community once the contractors are appointed and a timeframe for works is scheduled.

Traffic and Parking

An independent traffic study was undertaken in November 2022 of the area around Lagoon Reserve. The study concluded:

“Future parking demand associated with Cricket or Soccer training is not expected to cause a deterioration of parking conditions in the overall study area – even under an unrealistic and conservative scenario featuring a 50% increase in parking demand.

Future parking demand associated with Cricket or Soccer games is not expected to change (as the number of games will be confined to one at a time – as there is no room to hold concurrent games). Current and future parking demand during games can be easily accommodated on the ‘park perimeter’ without impacting residential front”.

Community Engagement

The concept design for the redevelopment went to community consultation in November/December 2022.

The Have Your Say page for this project received 1395 views, with 254 viewers contributing 327 comments made on the Have Your Say (HYS) page. 34% of the comments were concerning dogs. Of the 112 comments concerning dogs, 79 respondents requested to leave the area as a dog off leash space.

In summary, we heard that:

- Elements that people valued most about Lagoon Reserve were the easy access to green space for local residents for dog walking, passive recreation, and sport. Following that, people expressed appreciation for the strong sense of community in the area through dog walking and sports communities.
- When asked what residents wanted to hold onto, people were clear that they did not want the use of the park to change, particularly that the reserve should remain a dog off-leash area. There was some support to leave the park in its current state and not undertake any upgrades.
- Increasing amenities was the most prominent area that people felt needed change, there was strong support to have a fenced area for dogs, and many respondents called for an upgrade to various aspects of the park such as lighting and drinking fountains, respondents also had concerns around safety and security

The full engagement report is available on HYS - [Lagoon Reserve Upgrade](#)

Use of Lagoon Reserve

Sporting Facilities

Lagoon Reserve is one of 15 sportsgrounds within the municipality; and one of only 13 that is large enough to provide for both senior and junior sport. It forms part of the highly valued sportsground network that supports the operation and participation of our community sports clubs.



The current condition of the sportsground provides a low performing surface on which to play sport. Especially during the winter season. This has meant that only one sports club continues to use the site, and only for a total of six hours per week.

The poor condition of the pavilion has also restricted the usage of the ground, particularly impacting the use of the site by women and girl's teams, as the building is not fit for purpose.

When the ground and pavilion were fit-for-purpose, the site was home to:

- one senior soccer club during the winter sporting season;
- three juniors and senior cricket clubs during the summer sporting season;
- sports clubs that are displaced from Albert Park during the Grand Prix.

Once redeveloped, the sportsground will be suitable for community level cricket, soccer and AFL to be played for both junior and senior teams.

A Sport Service Review is currently underway, this review will inform Council's approach to ensuring that current and future sporting needs of the community can be met. Early findings have shown that based on current demand, Port Phillip currently does not have enough AFL and cricket ovals or soccer pitches across the municipality. The upgrade to Lagoon Reserve is required to help carry the load of these sports in the north-western section of the municipality.

From a sporting context, the scheduled redevelopment of the sportsground will see an increase of at least 25 hours of usage per week. This will:

- accommodate training and competition for the existing tenant soccer club;
- manage increased participation and usage achieved through the proposed introduction of women and girls teams;
- respond to the current requests we are receiving from clubs for additional grounds for new teams, in-season and pre-season;
- enable Lagoon Reserve to accommodate use by other sports clubs in the upcoming redevelopment of other sportsgrounds such as Peanut Farm and J L Murphy; and
- allow Council to continue to support other sporting clubs that serve the community at Albert Park Reserve during the Grand Prix.

Joint Use of Public Space

As a dense, inner city municipality, open space is limited and difficult to extend. Our open space and recreation facilities need to work harder to cater for a range of user groups.

The City of Port Phillip is one of the most active municipalities in the state, with residents participating in a wide range of sport and recreation activities. Many of Council's sporting facilities are at or near capacity, due to a significant amount of use from sports clubs, events, general public and schools.

The overall population across the municipality is increasing, along with the participation rates of sport and recreation, this is expected to continue particularly for juniors and females. It is a continual challenge to provide opportunities for all participation requests, without compromising the standard of facilities or the opportunity to participate. Female participation is increasing in traditionally male dominated sports, places further strain on the facilities and infrastructure.



The City of Port Phillip *Places for People Public Space Strategy 2022 – 2032 (PSS) Volume 2* (page 16 of 21) states several relevant key moves:

- Design and manage spaces for more than one use to increase appeal and level of use (e.g. sporting facilities, dog off-leash areas, events, casual and unplanned activities and play etc).
- Prepare an overarching framework to support Council in managing the shared use of public open space. This includes, but is not limited to, formal and informal sport and recreation, commercial uses, festivals, events and activations, dogs, community gardens and public space infrastructure.

The PSS supporting document, PSS Technical Report November 2020, also uses an overarching principle of sharing public space. The recommendation for Council (5.5-23) was “*The principle of sharing open space will underpin the design of all future upgrades to existing public open space and guide the design of new public open space*”.

Scheduling Sport and Community Use

Once redeveloped, there will be a heavy demand on this site from both sports clubs and community users. Council will work with clubs and community to ensure use of the space by all, while recognising its importance and priority as a sports ground.

It is proposed that this work is undertaken while the ground is closed, at this point Council will have a better understanding of formal sport usage requests and requirements.

The methodology for this project is likely to include surveys of user groups (current and future) and contact with sports associations to best understand the expected usage.

Dog Off Leash Guidelines

The PSS also has a short-term action to develop the Dog Off-Leash Guidelines. This project is currently underway.

The Dog Off-Leash Guidelines will help to provide clear directions on the provision, distribution, design and management of dog facilities in public open spaces municipal wide. Through this process, officers will also be reviewing our current restrictions and off-leash areas to ensure they reflect the needs of all our community and will consider provision for new sites across the municipality.

Dog Off Leash Areas

Lagoon Reserve is a popular dog off-leash space. The community has discussed potential pop-up sites which could be created during the period of construction when the ‘green space’ is not available e.g. temporary fencing part of Edwards Reserve.

Due to the following reasons a pop-up dog park is not seen as a viable option:

- Edwards Park is not classified as a dog off leash area and therefore it would require a change to the local law in order to progress.
- While other suitable sites may be found, overall to establish a temporary dog off leash space would take 12-18 months to deliver due to:
- Identification of a suitable location – including proximity to Lagoon Reserve, proximity to adjoining residents, current usage etc.
- Community engagement.

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

19 JULY 2023



- Time to follow the required procurement, tender, design and project management processes.
- Reprioritisation of other projects for resources and budget.

The Dog Off-Leash Guidelines are currently being developed and will inform the creation of all off-leash dog parks moving forward. Creation of a temporary park might not align with the direction, principles or actions of this guideline, which is due for adoption in early 2024 (the same time as a temporary dog park would be put in place for this project).

There are also six alternate dog off-leash areas available within 1.25kms of Lagoon Reserve including:

- Gasworks Arts Park - 250-metres
- Port Melbourne Beach - 450-metres
- Port Melbourne Light Rail Linear Reserve - 600-metres
- Garden City Reserve – 900-metres
- R.F. Julier Reserves - 900-metres
- J.L. Murphy Reserve - 1.25kms

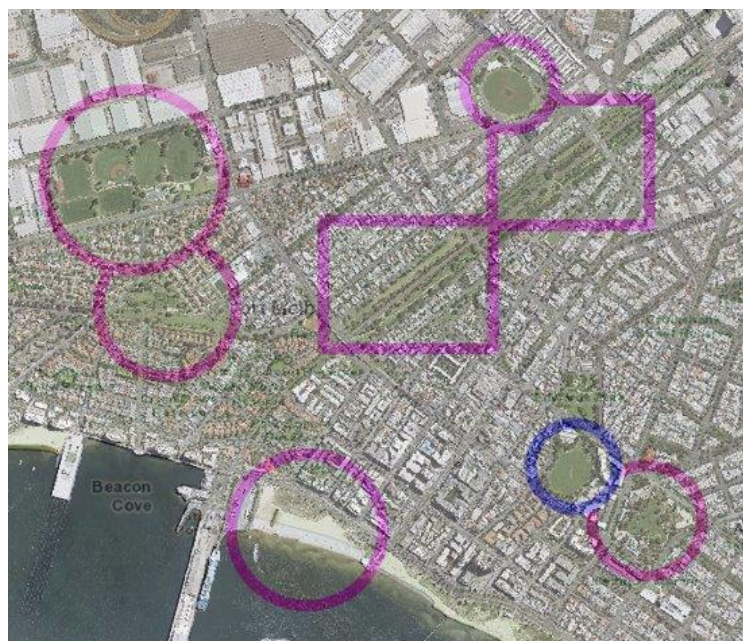


Image 2: Proximity of alternative off-leash dog areas (purple) to Lagoon Reserve (blue)

Alternate green spaces for non-dog activities can also be found at:

- Edwards Park – 50-metres
- St Vincent's Gardens – 700- meters



RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Petition.
2. Thanks the petitioners for their Petition.
3. Notes the increasing pressure public space is under from multiple users, and recognises the importance of public open spaces being shared by all community users.
4. Recognises that Lagoon Reserve is one of only 13 full sized ovals within the municipality and therefore plays an important role in our sports ground network.
5. Recognises that Lagoon Reserve is a popular space for many in the community, particularly dog walkers.
6. Continues with the current project delivery for the Lagoon Reserve Upgrade.
7. Notes that the Dog Off Leash Guidelines are currently being developed and provision for new sites across the municipality will be made in line with this Guideline once adopted in 2024.
8. Notes that no short-term pop-up dog park opportunities will be delivered as part of this project, given the proximity to alternative off leash spaces.
9. Requests Council officers to investigate options for shared use of the park post construction, recognising that its primary purpose is as a sports ground.

OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this briefing have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil