

STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
1 JUNE 2009 **POLICY AND PLANNING**

A12	ST KILDA SKATE PARK SITE SELECTION PROCESS
LOCATION/ADDRESS:	ST KILDA AND ENVIRONS
RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:	GEOFF OULTON
AUTHOR:	ANITA LANGE
FILE NO.:	76/04/35-04
ATTACHMENTS:	ATTACHMENT 1 - ASSESSEMENT OF COMPLIANCE OF COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP (CRG) PROCESS WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION ATTACHMENT 2. - REPORT OF INDEPENDENT ASSESSOR ATTACHMENT 3 - MINUTES OF THE CRG

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report summarises the process of reviewing a number of sites as to their suitability for the St Kilda Skate Park in accordance with the Council resolution of the 18 December 2008 and 23 February 2009 and recommends a preferred site of Marina Reserve.
- 1.2. It includes a description and assessment of the process undertaken by the Council appointed CRG and the independent assessor in considering the 8 sites initially referred by Council, an expanded list of 23 sites and then a short list of 9 sites.
- 1.3. The report also proposes to commence community engagement with residents adjacent to the preferred location and seek relevant approvals for the preferred site.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Strategy and Policy Review Committee recommend that Council resolve to:

- 2.1. Note that the St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group, was established and conducted in accordance with Council resolutions of 18 December 2008 and the 23 February 2009, and came to a consensus view that the Marina Reserve site was the preferred site for a skate park.
 - 2.2. Note that the Independent Assessor, Mr. Richard Simon concluded that the preferred site for the proposed St Kilda skate park is the Marina Reserve – Parkland Area.
 - 2.3. Adopt the Marina Reserve site as the preferred site for a skate park in St. Kilda.
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- 2.4. Thank the community members of the CRG for the considerable effort and time they put into the process.
- 2.5. Formally commence a process to facilitate development of a skate park on the Marina reserve site by writing to the relevant Minister(s) and requesting the cooperation of the relevant government Department or Authorities to gain approval for this site.
- 2.6. Commence a process of engagement with the local community to identify issues to be addressed in the design of the skate park.
- 2.7. Request a further report be presented to Council, following a response to the request for relevant approvals for the Marina reserve site and feedback from the community, to inform the design of the skate park...

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The search for a suitable site for a skate park in St Kilda has been underway since 1998. Choosing a site that best complies with all the relevant criteria and is acceptable to all members of the community has been impossible to achieve to date. Whilst there is general consensus about the need and desirability of having a skate park in St Kilda, as well as the benefits for the mainly local youth that would visit such a facility, the poor image of skate parks and the groups and associated activities that they are alleged to attract has made most sections of the community keen to support a skate park as long as it is not located within proximity to their place of residence, work, business, schooling or regular attendance. The sometimes poor perception of skate parks is often not supported by evidence or examples of inappropriate behaviour.
- 3.2 Because of the various processes that the selection of a site has gone through since 1998 and more recently, as a result of the deliberations of the St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group, it is clear that there is no one site that will please everyone. It will therefore be up to the Council to select a site or sites that best meets relevant community objectives and will be available and approved by the relevant stakeholders that control the access to these sites.
- 3.3 This report sets out the current process of skate park site selection that has been embarked on since December 2008 with a number of recommendations to the council if it wishes to pursue the preferred site.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the pursuit of a skate park is a council policy in the new draft Council Plan under Strategy 4.4.1 - Strive to ensure that major projects enhance liveability and Actions - Build a new skate park

Current Process

- 3.5 Council at its meeting of the 18th December 2008, decided to withdraw the planning application for the St. Kilda Skate Park proposed on Fitzroy Street at Lakeside Drive in Albert Park Reserve and commence a new process to select a suitable site for the St Kilda Skate Park.

- 3.6 Specifically the Council resolved to:
1. Withdraw the current planning application for the St. Kilda Skate Park proposed in Albert Park reserve.
 2. Commit to retain current funding to enable development of a skate park in the near future.
 3. Engage a suitably skilled and qualified recreation or Open Space planner to undertake an independent assessment of the 8 sites previously assessed and considered by Council, and any new sites that may be identified.
 4. Establish a community reference group of key stakeholders and local skater representatives (including young people and 2 Councillors) to assist and provide input into the assessment process. The broad terms of reference for the community reference group being to:
 - Provide advice to the independent assessor.
 - Consider the criteria and weightings that the reference group agrees appropriate to the assessment process.
 - Consider any additional sites that the reference group agrees appropriate to the assessment process for approval by Council.
 - Consider and provide comment to any draft recommendations of the independent assessor prior to a final report being presented to Council by the assessor.
 5. Apply the approved criteria as the basis for an assessment of the sites indicated in recommendation 3 above, and in addition establish the following Council objectives for the St Kilda Skate Park:
 - To provide a local skate park for use by all ages and skill levels in the shortest possible time.
 - To provide a safe facility.
 - To minimise any impact on other community based facilities and stakeholders.
 - Be consistent with the principles outlined in Council's Open Space Strategy 2006.
 6. Receive the report of the independent assessor to be presented to Council at the earliest practicable date.
- 3.7 To implement the above resolution further reports were considered by the council on 23 February 2009.
- 3.8 Specifically the Council resolved at that time to:
1. Appoint Simon Leisure Consulting to the role of Independent Assessor to assist the process of site selection for the St Kilda Skate Park
 2. Agree to establish the St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group and adopt the following terms of reference:

Purpose - To provide input and advice as part of a process for assessing 8 sites previously identified for the development for a St Kilda Skate Park, as well as any new sites that may be identified.

Membership - The Reference Group will comprise 10 members including 8 members who are young people, skaters, community members and/or experts in open space and recreation planning and 2 Councillors.
The Project Manager and other relevant staff will attend as appropriate.

Role & Responsibility- The Reference Group will provide input into the assessment process. The broad terms of reference for the community reference group being to:

- Provide advice to the independent assessor.
- Consider the criteria and weightings that the reference group agrees appropriate to the assessment process.
- Consider any additional sites that the reference group agrees appropriate to the assessment process for approval by Council.
- Consider and provide comment to any draft recommendations of the independent assessor prior to a final report being presented to Council by the assessor.

Meetings & Resourcing - Meetings are as required. There is anticipated to be six (6) in total.

The Project Manager will ensure that agendas and supporting material will be circulated prior to meetings, and minutes are circulated after meetings.

Timelines - The Reference Group will begin meeting in March 2009 and will cease operation following the presentation of the final report to the Council.

Selection Criteria - Council will consider the following criteria when considering applicants:

- Knowledge and experience of skate or youth related issues
- Appreciation of issues related to open space and recreation planning
- Understanding and commitment to local community building
- An ability to work with complexity and conflict
- An open mind

3. Agree to the following members to the St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group:

- 8 community members- Hunter Tye, Michael Mulcahy, Lisa Rodwell, David Myer, Ingrid Baring, Ann Birrell, Michael Markham and Renton Millar.
- 2 Councillors - Cr Serge Thomann and Cr John Middleton.

3.9 An assessment of the process and its compliance with the above resolution is included in Attachment 1 and indicates that the process was compliant with the resolution.

3.10 It should be noted that a declaration of direct interest was made by Mr. Geoff Oulton, the Group's Facilitator in that his principal place of residence is located approximately 300m from the vicinity of the Elwood car park site.

St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group Process

3.11 The Group met on 7 occasions as outlined below and agreed in meeting 1:

Meeting No and Date	Agenda
1. Tuesday 17/3/09	Introductions Agreed operating protocol and principles Agreed process and timeline Agreed assumptions Agreed desired outcome Suggested other sites
2. Tuesday 24/3/09	Site visits Discussion of Independent Assessor Overview and response to questions
3. Tuesday 7/4/09 and 14/4/09	Briefing by DSE on the Coastal Management Strategy Briefing on Albert Park Reserve Management Framework Assessment criteria and weightings
4. Tuesday 21/4/09	Presented outcomes of assessment against criteria at meeting Agreed St Kilda's skate park summary briefing paper
5. Tuesday 5/5/09	Presented outcomes of assessment against criteria at meeting Endorsement of preferred and suitable sites
6. Wednesday 20/5/09	Reviewed summary of suitable sites, outstanding issues and preliminary advice from stakeholders Reviewed final report - review Richard Simon's draft study report
Thursday 21/5/09 onwards - preparation of final report for Council meeting of 1/6/09	Council Report with the Independent Assessor's included as an attachment tabled at the Strategy and Policy Review Committee on the 1/6/09 with the Committee's recommendation to the Ordinary Council meeting of the 22/6/09

3.12 It should be noted that there was not unanimity on all of the above topics by members of the CRG. The attached Minutes detail the various views of the Members of the Group.

3.13 In general, most of the group attended most of the meetings as indicated in the Minutes.

Independent Assessor

3.14 The Independent Assessor Mr. Richard Simon was appointed according to the Council resolution of the 23 February 2009.

3.15 Mr. Simon attended all meetings of the St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group and participated fully in all discussion as well as email discussions. Mr. Simon's report is included in Attachment 1

3.16 Whilst Mr. Simon considered in his deliberations the advice and discussion at St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group meetings, the Council should consider Mr. Simon's report as his own independent assessment.

3.17 Mr. Simon's final recommendation is as follows (Attachment 1 - page 10) :

Following the research and planning conducted during the St Kilda Skate Park Site Assessment Project, including the valuable input from the Community Reference Group, Richard Simon (in his capacity as the

Independent Assessor) has determined the following in relation to the nine short-listed sites:

1. That the preferred site for the proposed St Kilda skate park is the Marina Reserve – Parkland Area.
2. That the sites at Albert Park Reserve (north east of MSAC) and Albert Park Reserve (Vert Ramp) are less suitable sites when compared to other sites investigated, however, have the capacity to accommodate a skate park that would be well used and safe for skaters, despite some inherent constraints.
3. That the remaining six short-listed sites are considered either 'not suitable' or 'unlikely to be available' as a location for the proposed St Kilda skate park. These sites are the Sea Baths Car Park, Fitzroy Street (corner of Lakeside Drive), West Beach (south of the pavilion), Albert Park Reserve (Bob Jane Stadium car park), the Shakespeare Grove Car Park (northern site) and Elwood Park (southern car park).

Other stakeholder consultation

- 3.18 As part of the process, contact has been made with various stakeholders in the process (but not local residents). The key stakeholders are considered Government, DSE, Parks Vic and the Police (Crime Prevention Officer for the region).
- 3.19 The key issues raised by DSE officers in relation to the Marina Reserve site include consistency with Victorian Coastal Strategy, impact on coastal land, coastal dependency and a number of design related issues.
- 3.20 Key issues raised by Parks Victoria officers in relation to the two suitable sites in Albert Park include a comparison with the Lakeside Drive / Fitzroy Street site, the application of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles and the alternate uses of the sites.
- 3.21 The conclusion of this advice is that all 3 sites have issues for the stakeholders who will need to be convinced of:
 - the adequacy of the independent site assessment,
 - the appropriateness of the conclusion of the current St Kilda skate park site selection process, and
 - The case for giving relevant approval.

Next steps

- 3.22 It is proposed that despite initial feedback from stakeholders raising some issues to be addressed, that the Council resolve to formally commence a process to request approval for use of the preferred site by writing to the relevant Minister(s) and request the cooperation of the relevant government Department or Authorities.
- 3.23 It is also important to note that there has been a previous planning application for a site close to the proposed site and at that time and currently, concerns about the site have been raised by the local community.

- 3.24 As Council has not yet considered the advice of the CRG and Independent assessor, it has not been feasible to commence a process of engagement with the relevant community. However, now that both views (of CRG and Independent assessor are known, community engagement can commence.
- 3.25 It should be noted that some residents have already contacted Council expressing their concerns at the proposed preferred site. At the time of writing the report, a response was being finalized offering to meet with interested residents to understand their areas of concern.
- 3.26 It is then recommended that Council consider the result of stakeholder and community engagement prior to finalizing the site selection.

Post site confirmation

- 3.27 Once a site is selected, a design process is then required. The design brief will include any feedback from stakeholders and community engagement. It is proposed that the design brief is approved by Council, following community and stakeholder engagement.
- 3.28 A concept design can then be developed and subjected to further consultation before moving to construction processes
- 3.29 Recent change to all Planning Schemes across Victoria that removes the requirement to obtain a planning permit for works undertaken by a Council for works under \$1m, will apply to the skate park site. The overall time line envisaged is outlined below

June	Selection of preferred site by the Council
June-July	Discussion with government and stakeholders on the preferred site (with DSE and Parks Vic and community) Confirm final site in report to the Council
July - August	Development of design brief with assistance of designers Confirm site arrangements and final detail Report to the Council on the skate park brief Commence design of Skate Park
September /October	Commence 3 week consultation on skate park design
October / November	Finalise design and construction details of skate park
December	Call for tenders to commence construction of Skate Park
First half of 2010	Construction of Skate Park

- 3.30 The overall timing therefore assumes the timing for the completion of the design process and the commencement of calling for tenders for construction at the end of 2009 based on a 2 month period to finalise the site selection (anticipated by end July) and a 4 month period to undertake the design and design consultation process.
- 3.31 This timing will be important to secure the council's desire to deliver the skate park as quickly as possible as well as to secure the Sport & Recreation Victoria (SRV) funding for the skate park, which has been deferred but cannot be deferred indefinitely before it is allocated elsewhere.

Financial Implications

- 3.32 A budget of \$582k has been set aside for the St Kilda skate park in the Council's capital works program. This is made up of \$477k Council funds and a grant of \$105k from SRV (Sports and Recreation Victoria). A request to extend SRV funding of \$105 has been made based on a completion date of late 2010. At the time of writing this report, no response had been received.
- 3.33 The skate park will need to be designed and costed before the actual cost can be determined. It is understood that the Marina Reserve site is built on fill so construction costs may be high but this cannot be determined until a design is prepared and costed.

Conclusion

- 3.34 As advised in the section on the Background, the history of selecting a site for a skate park in St Kilda has been fraught with difficulty since 1998.
- 3.35 The current process has resulted in a 4-month process of deliberation by the Council appointed St Kilda Skate Park Community Reference Group and the Independent Assessor.
- 3.36 The process had yielded a preferred site at Marina Reserve – Parkland Area as well as 2 other sites at Albert Park Reserve (north east of MSAC) and Albert Park Reserve (Vert Ramp).
- 3.37 Given that initial feedback from both DSE and Parks Vic raises issues with each of the preferred and suitable sites, it is recommended that the Council resolve to adopt a preferred site for further consideration of approval by relevant stakeholders.
- 3.38 If none of these 3 sites is suitable and Council deems the other sites unsuitable, it is suggested that the pursuit of a skate park in St Kilda be abandoned.