



**10.1 ST KILDA TRIANGLE - LIVE MUSIC VENUE DESIGN  
FEASIBILITY REPORT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

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**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 For Council to note the work done to date on the assessment of feasibility for a new live music/performance venue on the Triangle.
- 1.2 To request authorisation to seek feedback from the community and key stakeholders on the St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue, and particularly the indicative site layout (design option 2) as shown in Attachment 2, which operates as a 'proof of concept' for a live music/performance venue, considerable parking, complementary uses and public realm on the Triangle site.

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The St Kilda Triangle site is currently a large aging carpark adjacent to the recently rejuvenated Palais Theatre. As one of Melbourne's last bayside renewal sites, it presents a once-in-a-generation development opportunity to create something unique and special to Melbourne.
- 2.2 The site has a long history of being a hub of entertainment since 1908, with the first permanent structure on the site being Robson's Figure Eight rollercoaster. The Palais de Danse was historically located next to the Palais Theatre until 1969 when it was destroyed by fire. The Palace Nightclub was built in its place in 1971. Unfortunately this building was also impacted by fire and was closed in 2007 and demolished.
- 2.3 The 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan, reflecting Council and the community's agreed future vision for the development of the site at that time, is yet to be delivered. A new cultural facility was at the heart of the 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan. At the time, the Victorian State Government was looking for a new home for the NGV Contemporary and the St Kilda Triangle was proposed as one of the options. Unfortunately, the St Kilda Triangle was not selected as the preferred option for the NGV and an alternative cultural facility has not been found to anchor the project. This presented a key challenge for implementation of the 2016 Masterplan.
- 2.4 To revitalise the Triangle project, Council, on the 18 August 2021, requested Officers provide a report to Council on the costs, high level approach, staging and broad timeframes required to undertake planning and initial market sounding for the key commercial elements of the site as described in the 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan.
- 2.5 A report was provided to Council on 7 September 2022 which included three options, two centred on a live music venue and the third proposed deferring any work for the Triangle site. Council elected to progress with Option 2 of the Stage 1 works – Proceed with the feasibility work for the St Kilda Triangle to assess the viability of a live music led / performance venue development, inform Council decision making about investment, and support subsequent stages should Council decide to progress.
- 2.6 In late 2022, after a period of project planning, a set of project objectives were developed with input from Councillors to translate this direction to an outcome that



facilitates Council decision-making about the future of the St Kilda Triangle Project. The objectives are provided in the body of the report.

- 2.7 A series of deliverables were also defined for the approved Stage 1 works, including, a Market Sounding Report detailing outcomes of a live music venue demand assessment including the suitability of the location, and a Design Feasibility Report detailing options for how a venue, parking, access, connections, and open space can be arranged and operate on the site, using the masterplan as a key reference.
- 2.8 Undertaking market sounding to investigate the demand for and viability of a live music/performance development on the St Kilda Triangle site was critical to informing further work, particularly the design process, and features in the agreed Project Objectives.
- 2.9 A market sounding report summarising the process and presenting the findings is provided in Attachment 1. In brief, the outcomes are as follows:
  - The live performance market, particularly live music is extremely strong.
  - The key gap in Melbourne is a purpose-built indoor venue of between 3,000 and 5,000 standing capacity with a 5,000 standing capacity venue noted as the 'sweet spot'.
  - St Kilda is supported by the majority of promoters surveyed as a live music location for various reasons including its central location with good access to public transport, proximity to the city, its vibrant arts and music-based culture and character and complimentary surrounding entertainment and hospitality options.
- 2.10 An architectural firm was engaged to support officers in undertaking a Design Feasibility exercise to identify a 'proof of concept' layout that is able to accommodate a live music and performance venue at the scale required to fill the gap in the market, provide adequate carparking to support a range of users and some public realm and ancillary uses, as well as responding to key priorities identified in the 2016 Masterplan and other principles, including but not limited to creating a cultural precinct, protecting key views, connections to the foreshore, concentrating built form near the Palais and integrating effectively in the wider precinct.
- 2.11 Various design options were developed from a detailed review of the market sounding report and from an in depth understanding of the site and the context. A number of workshops were held with Councillors this year at key stages of the project (end of March, early April, mid-June, early July) to present packages of work and obtain feedback and inform subsequent works.
- 2.12 The design evolution and outcomes of this work are presented in the *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* report provided in Attachment 2. This report identifies a recommended option, Option 2 as the indicative site layout that best meets the project objectives using assessment criteria that are detailed in the report.
- 2.13 A summary of the key elements of the indicative site layout shown as the recommended option - Option 2 - in Attachment 2 is provided below.
  - **New live music and performance venue:** Option 2 venue - a flexible 5000 standing capacity venue including a mezzanine or balcony (accommodating 1000 of the 5000 capacity) designed to accommodate a range of types and sizes of shows to maximise utilisation at different times of the day and year. The site of



the new venue has been chosen as the most appropriate location based on historical use of the site, such as the former Palais de Danse, and to respect key views from The Esplanade to the north and west. The indicative building envelope's north-west corner has been shaped to respect views from The Esplanade to the bay.

- **Carparking under the venue:** A balanced approach to carparking with 200 spaces included (considerable parking but not matching existing). This number has been chosen within the context of acknowledging that there is no way to provide parking for the majority of people attending a performance at either the Palais Theatre or the new venue, Luna Park or adjacent restaurants, on a performance night for one or both venues, but that it is still important to make some provision on the site. There are a further 1,600 publicly available paid car parks within 500 metres of the St Kilda Triangle and a nominal amount of unpaid parking and the site has good transport connections to the rest of the city, being serviced directly by several trams (numbers 3, 16 and 96) and connected to both walking and cycling trails (the Bay Trail).
  - **Supplementary carpark:** Use of the site on the corner of Jacka Boulevard and Cavell St for on-grade parking (approximately 40 spaces) as supplementary parking for the preferred design option.
  - **Complementary Uses and Public Realm:** complementary use zones are shown indicating the minimum required for the successful functioning of the venue and activation of the site, while the remainder of the site is used for public realm including circulation spaces, an area of lawn or a park, terraced steps to the level of the lawn creating an amphitheatre opportunity, possibilities for a pavilion for public use, and native landscape zones. The public realm ties in with the historic landscape feature known as the slopes.
- 2.14 St Kilda Triangle carpark usage assessments were also undertaken to inform the development of options. They are provided as an appendix to the design feasibility report in Attachment 2.
- 2.15 A community engagement program has been developed to align with the release of the market sounding report and the design work as shown in *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* provided in Attachment 2.
- 2.16 The purpose of the engagement is to support Council to understand community sentiment regarding the modified direction for the site, as demonstrated in the design feasibility report and in particular, the indicative site layout.
- 2.17 The feedback will inform the development of design guidelines and/or a site plan that would form the basis of possible future procurement and strategic planning activities if Council decide to proceed with the project.
- 2.18 The **engagement period** is programmed to occur over 6 weeks from 7 September 23 to 19 October 23 (accommodating 2 weeks of school holidays commencing 16 September).
- 2.19 The **outcomes of the engagement** will be presented to Council as part of the final Council meeting for the year and for Stage 1 of this project in December 2023 along with a proposal for the next stage of the project if Council choose to proceed.



- 2.20 A wide cross section of community members (residents and visitors) and key stakeholders (government, traders and other special interest groups) will be engaged via various mechanisms including two advertised drop-in sessions, focus groups sessions with people or groups having particular interests, five 'pop ups' across the municipality, and HYS. The activities are detailed in the body of the report.
- 2.21 The activities will be advertised by various forms of media, including postcards, a social media campaign, e-mail blasts to the St Kilda Triangle data base, Council's web-page and newsletters where possible.
- 2.22 Given the civic nature and the scale of the idea of a new live music/performance venue being explored by Council, as well as the site being designated as Crown Land, progressing the project from this stage of exploring an idea, to implementation, will rely heavily on strong engagement and buy in from State Government.
- 2.23 As the feasibility work progresses, Council continues to explore every opportunity to engage with key government agencies on the idea of a new live music/performance venue to fill a key gap that has been identified by the industry and bring the St Kilda Triangle to life.
- 2.24 A formal approach will be made to the State Government via a letter to the Premier – outlining the proposal, the benefits and the request for a State Government partnership and support.
- 2.25 In addition, through the Mayor, advocacy will include engagement with all major political parties.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Notes the release of the *St Kilda Triangle Potential Live Performance Venue Market Sounding Report* and the *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* with the publication of this report on Council's web-page on 1 September 2023. Reports are provided in Attachment 1 and 2 respectively.
- 3.2 Notes the key outcomes of the market sounding report (Attachment 1), which are:
  - 3.2.1 The live performance market, particularly live music is extremely strong.
  - 3.2.2 The key gap in Melbourne is a purpose-built indoor venue of between 3,000 and 5,000 standing capacity with a 5,000 standing capacity venue noted as the 'sweet spot'.
  - 3.2.3 St Kilda is supported by the majority of promoters surveyed as a live music location for various reasons.
- 3.3 Notes the indicative site layout (Option 2) recommended in the attached design feasibility report (Attachment 2) provides a proof of concept intended to demonstrate how a live music venue that responds to market demand can be accommodated on the site while allowing for a significant, but not matching, level of carparking, ancillary uses and some public realm. It also addresses key priorities identified in the 2016 Masterplan and other design principles such as the creation of a cultural precinct, protecting key views, connections to the foreshore, concentrating built form near the Palais and integrating effectively in the wider precinct.



- 3.4 Notes that the indicative site layout for the St Kilda Triangle (Option 2 in Attachment 2) broadly comprises of:
- **Venue and Carpark:** Option 2 venue - a 5000-standing capacity venue including a mezzanine or balcony (accommodating 1000 of the 5000 capacity), and a 200 space carparking option.
  - **Supplementary carpark:** Use of the site on the corner of Jacka Boulevard and Cavell St for on-grade parking (approximately 40 spaces) as supplementary parking for the preferred design option.
  - **Complementary Uses and Public Realm:** complementary use zones indicating the minimum required for the successful functioning of the venue and activation of the site, while the remainder of the site is used for public realm.
- 3.5 Notes that if Council was to elect to progress this project, the indicative site layout (proof of concept) presented in the attached design feasibility report (Attachment 1) could be translated into design guidelines and/or a site plan that would form the basis of procurement and strategic planning activities. This is work for subsequent stages which is still to be defined and presented to Council later in 2023, and will be informed by the outcomes of the planned community engagement.
- 3.6 Endorses the commencement of community engagement to seek feedback on the findings in the *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* report on the day following this Council report, 7 September 2023 for a period of 6 weeks in line with the activities detailed in the body of this report.
- 3.7 Approves additional project budget of \$80,000 for additional scope items, including: market sounding and consultancy support to complete the commercial analysis, resources to support the community engagement program and additional design consultancy to review and consider feedback and its implications on the design feasibility work.

#### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The St Kilda Triangle site is currently a large aging carpark adjacent to the recently rejuvenated Palais Theatre. As one of Melbourne's last bayside renewal sites, it presents a once-in-a-generation development opportunity to create something unique and special to Melbourne.
- 4.2 The site has a long history of being a hub of entertainment, with the Palais de Danse historically located next to the Palais Theatre until 1969 when it was destroyed by fire. The Palace Nightclub was built in its place in 1971. Unfortunately this building was also impacted by fire and was closed in 2007 and demolished.
- 4.3 The 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan, reflecting Council and the community's agreed future vision for the development of the site at that time, is yet to be delivered. A new cultural facility was at the heart of the 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan. At the time, the Victorian State Government was looking for a new home for the NGV Contemporary and the St Kilda Triangle was proposed as one of the options. Unfortunately, the St Kilda Triangle was not selected as the preferred option for the NGV and an alternative cultural facility has not been found to anchor the project. This presented a key challenge for implementation of the 2016 Masterplan.



- 4.4 To revitalise the project, Council, on the 18 August 2021, requested Officers to provide a report to Council on the costs, high level approach, staging and broad timeframes required to undertake planning and initial market sounding for the key commercial elements of the site as described in the 2016 St Kilda Triangle Masterplan, including carparking, a cultural institution that could include an anchor venue such as a gallery, live music or performance space, and other elements of the masterplan, to test the level of interest in the market and inform the design of a future procurement process and a project delivery approach.
- 4.5 Following investigations by project officers and in alignment with the evolution of the Live Music Precinct Policy, a report was provided to Council on 7 September 2022 which included three options, two centred on a live music venue and the third proposed deferring any work for the Triangle site. Council elected to progress with Option 2 of the Stage 1 works – Proceed with the feasibility work for the St Kilda Triangle to assess the viability of including a live music led / performance venue on the St Kilda Triangle and inform Council decision making about subsequent stages should Council decide to progress.

#### **Project Objectives**

- 4.6 In late 2022, a set of project objectives were developed in consultation with Councillors to translate this direction to an outcome that facilitates Council decision-making about the future of the St Kilda Triangle Project.
- 4.7 The objectives are as follows:
- 4.8 **Objective 1.** Investigate how a new live music and/or flexible performance venue could be delivered within the spirit and intent of the masterplan, considering the specific requirements of a such a venue, probable costs and delivery models by:
- Undertaking a robust creative industries (live music, performance and events) market testing exercise using commercial and specialist creative industry expertise to assess demand, complementary uses and operational requirements.
  - Using the research from the market sounding to inform a design process that produces options for a performance venue and complementary uses that are iteratively assessed for commercial viability in terms of attractiveness to and capacity of the market, development costs, government funding opportunities and various financial models.
  - Defining the area and scale of development including building footprint, heights, open space and public realm elements; and area and extent of carparking.
  - Testing temporary music led or alternative opportunities/venues in addition to permanent options.
- 4.9 **Objective 2.** Present deliverable and feasible options for the site by:
- Engaging design & planning, commercial advisory, and music/creative industry specialists to support the investigations and the iterative determination of options and associated detailed analyses.
  - Determining the most suitable planning pathway to enable the desired outcome and give Council and the market certainty.
  - Undertaking early detailed planning to understand the path/s for realistic outcomes by producing a development and contracting strategy that outlines how



the outcomes of the design process may be realised and continue to be sustainable, supported by a preliminary procurement plan.

4.10 **Objective 3.** Implement a process for the initial stage of the project (Stage 1) with an effective level of governance and foresight that considers the success of possible future stages and instils confidence in decision-makers and the community by:

- Partnering with government agencies and aligning with Victorian Government objectives for the creative industries to obtain support to progress a development that offers local and state-wide benefits.
- Developing a tailored approach to project governance and probity that supports Council's needs to communicate while maintaining ethical practice and values of fairness and transparency.
- Informing the community as the key project steps progress and outcomes are achieved.
- Considering engagement approaches that offers genuine opportunities for community feedback as part of possible future stages.
- Presenting options for the development of the site supported with detailed rationale, evidence from the research and recommendations for endorsement by Council in their consideration of subsequent project stages.

#### **Project Deliverables**

4.11 A series of deliverables were also defined for the approved Stage 1 works, including, amongst a range of deliverables, a *Market Sounding Report* detailing outcomes of a live music venue demand assessment including the suitability of the location, and a *Design Feasibility Report* detailing options for how a venue, parking, access, connections, and open space can be arranged and operate on the site, using the masterplan as a key reference key reference document.

#### **Market Sounding Outcomes**

4.12 Undertaking market sounding to investigate the demand for and viability of a live music/performance development was a key component of the scope approved by Council and features in the Project Objectives.

4.13 A market sounding report summarising the process and presenting the findings is provided in Attachment 1.

4.14 The purpose of the market sounding exercise is summarised under the points below:

- to engage the live performance industry (primarily a wide range of promoters) to obtain their views about the demand for various types of live music / performance venues that is not currently met by the range of venues available in Melbourne.
- to understand the requirements of a venue on the St Kilda Triangle site in terms of size (site area), capacity (patron numbers), format (i.e., seated and/or standing or flexible), any critical infrastructure or design features, and the need or desire for related and complementary uses or facilities.
- to obtain feedback from the industry on issues that are important to assuring a high level of industry acceptance or support, or, conversely, would undermine the success of the venue.



- 4.15 There were two key parts to the market sounding exercise that were carried out in parallel in February 2023 to engage a range of industry participants and obtain focussed feedback that is relevant and useful in the context of the project objectives to inform Council's decision-making:
- Face-to-face meetings were conducted by Council's appointed strategic commercial advisory, M21 Advisory (who assisted Council to develop the market sounding strategy) and live music/performance industry consultant, Patrick Donovan Creative Consulting (PDCC) with four major live music and entertainment promoters representing a range of live performance genres. The interviewees were selected because, through their array of experiences in the performance industry providing a balanced industry viewpoint, they have a sound understanding of current and future needs and are particularly interested in providing advice to best support live music and performance generally. Specific details are provided in Attachment 1.
  - The second process involved collaborating with live performance industry representative bodies to broaden the reach of the market sounding. Live Performance Australia (LPA), the Live Music Business Council of Australia (LMBCA) and Music Victoria (MV) were each invited via the live music consultant to survey their membership to obtain a wider range of views about a possible venue on the site. Over 30 parties with an interest in a possible new venue were invited. 15 responded anonymously.
- 4.16 The key findings from the Market Sounding exercise include but are not limited to:
- The live performance market, particularly live music is extremely strong. Most believe the demand is sustainable.
  - While Melbourne can lay claim to a smorgasbord of small venues, pubs and clubs and large seated theatres, there is a shortage of standing or flexible venues that can accommodate large numbers on a dance floor.
  - Promoters consistently indicated that the key gap in Melbourne is a purpose-built indoor venue of between 3,000 and 5,000 standing capacity would be optimum; and in response to industry growth and certain elements of feedback, a 6,000 capacity venue should also be tested on the site. There will need to be some seating capacity, however, the extent to which the venue is flexible in its provision of seating is to be explored.
  - The overwhelming majority of respondents preferred an indoor venue and said they would look to stage (in priority of order) contemporary live music, comedy and classical music or theatre.
  - The Hordern Pavilion in Sydney (with 5,500 standing capacity, flexible stage, ability to easily change venue size without loss of atmosphere, in-situ removable bleachers and high quality sound and lighting) and the Fortitude Valley Music Hall in Brisbane (purpose built for live entertainment, 3,000 standing capacity, 1,100 seated) were both consistently highly rated as ideal comparable venues.
  - St Kilda is supported by the majority of promoters as a live music location for various reasons including its central location with good access to public transport, proximity to the city, its vibrant arts and music-based culture and character and complimentary surrounding entertainment and hospitality options.



- Despite this there has been, in recent years, a distinct growth in popularity of live music shows in the northern suburbs near CBD locations, which correlates with a growth in venues. At the same time the live music scene in St Kilda has dissipated to an extent.
- In terms of other features or complementary uses on the site, 86 per cent of respondents to the survey favoured cafes, bars and restaurants, 67% supported public/green space, 60 per cent said other entertainment venues and 13% noted a desire for other retail and accommodation.
- In terms of parking, there was a range of views as detailed further in the report. On balance, the feedback from the market sounding was that onsite parking was not an absolute requirement. However, all agreed on the importance of space and parking for production vehicles and crew.
- Local venues and musicians generally supported the development of a new significant venue because it would “help put St Kilda on the map”, and “all ships rise with the tide”. “It’s dead if there’s no music on, but there’s people everywhere when we have a popular band on. It’s crying out for a destination venue like this.” “It will bring more music fans to the area, and like when the Espy re-opened, crowds flowed onto other venues, restaurants and bars,” said a local musician.

#### **Design Feasibility for the St Kilda Triangle Live Music/Performance Venue**

- 4.17 An architectural firm was engaged to support officers in undertaking a Design Feasibility exercise to identify a ‘proof of concept’ layout that is able to accommodate a live music/performance venue at the scale required to fill the gap in the market, provide adequate carparking to support a range of users and some public realm and ancillary uses, as well as responding to key priorities identified in the 2016 Masterplan and other principles including but not limited to creating a cultural precinct, protecting key views, connections to the foreshore, concentrating built form near the Palais and integrating effectively in the wider precinct.
- 4.18 Various design options were developed from a detailed review of the market sounding report and from an in depth understanding of the site and the context.
- 4.19 A number of workshops were held with Councillors this year at key stages of the project (end of March, early April, mid-June, early July) to present packages of work as summarised below and obtain feedback to inform the evolution of the subsequent works:
- Market sounding outcomes.
  - Carpark usage analyses.
  - Design principles and key moves that provide the framework within which to progress and assess design work.
  - Design options for the site for the venue, carparking, public realm and ancillary uses.
  - Early commercial analysis works (which continues to progress).
- 4.20 Councillors were asked a series of questions related to the work presented at each workshop as a vehicle for obtaining important feedback that would inform the subsequent works and particularly the determination and evolution of design options for



the site for venue capacity and general configuration, parking, public realm and ancillary uses.

- 4.21 The design evolution and outcomes of this work are presented in the *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* report provided in Attachment 2.

#### **Design Feasibility Work – Design Analysis, Principles and Key Moves**

- 4.22 The design analysis work included a review of the 2016 masterplan in the context of Council's direction to assess the viability of a live music/performance. This review identified the aspects of the masterplan that are important and should be retained versus those that may need to be adjusted or changed to allow for a live music and performance venue on the site. The elements to be retained were distilled into a set of principles that embody the spirit and intent of the masterplan and these have guided the design options for the venue and the wider Triangle precinct.
- 4.23 As early design options were developed for the site, a set of key design moves were established that rationalised these principles into ideas that directed the design.
- 4.24 While the principles and key moves are articulated in the design feasibility report in Attachment 2, the key moves are highlighted as follows:
- **Connecting to the foreshore** – A high quality pedestrian connection that builds on public realm upgrades and improves connections to the foreshore.
  - **Engagement with culture and community** – A gathering place that celebrates First Nations cultures and connection to Country.
  - **A connected landscape** – A connected and activated landscape that responds to its coastal location.
  - **A balcony to the bay** – A series of elevated terraces, balconies and rooftops that celebrates the foreshore setting.
  - **Views and sightlines** – A precinct that respects views towards the bay, foreshore and horizon, alongside the key heritage fabric of the Palais Theatre and Luna Park.
  - **Access and parking** – A pedestrian priority precinct, connected to public transport, with consolidated and screened car parking, loading, and servicing.
  - **Sustainability** – A precinct that enables sustainability and liveability outcomes which benefit local residents, visitors and the natural environment.

#### **Design Feasibility Work - Site Context Analysis and Opportunities Report and Benchmarking**

- 4.25 A site context and opportunities analysis was undertaken as part of the early design work and is included in the design feasibility report. The purpose of this work was to inform the determination of design options by providing an in depth understanding of the various facets of context in which the site operates, its historical context and its evolution over time to the present-day context. In doing so it presented some changes in context since the 2016 masterplan and sets out key drivers and opportunities for the project.



- 4.26 The report also provides some benchmarking through a more comprehensive analysis of a range of venues and precedents that are connected to the project scope and Triangle site through the themes of music venues (indoor and outdoor spaces) of relevant standing capacity, identifying key design considerations; cultural and public spaces; public realm and other amenities; and related facilities to support the music and performance industry and other users of the space.
- 4.27 In terms of context, the report analyses the site features, looks at the local and cultural context, landscape and surrounding built form context, transport and access, parking, the planning context and sets out key relevant documents and policies (including the market sounding report). From this it then identifies the opportunities for a development on the site across the various areas.
- 4.28 The key takeaways from the analysis that inform the design options are set out in the following categories.
- 4.29 **Site Context** - a summary of the environmental, social and cultural context in which the site operates is as follows:
- The site has a relationship to Traditional Owners that stretches back approximately 45,000 years.
  - Since 1908 the site has had an association with entertainment and recreation, with the first permanent structure on the site being Robson's Figure Eight rollercoaster.
  - The site is close to the geographic and cultural heart of St Kilda, a key destination, and in proximity to many other venues that together make up the third most active municipality for live music performance in greater Melbourne.
  - The site is bounded by a diversity of land uses including residential, events (Catani Gardens), recreation (the Foreshore and gardens) and retail (Acland St).
  - The site is within a diverse landscape context, incorporating both Mediterranean style planting in the manner of Catani, significant recreational infrastructure such as the St Kilda Promenade, and remnant indigenous planting such as the West Beach Reserve.
  - The site has good transport connections to the rest of the city, being serviced directly by several trams (numbers 3, 16 and 96) and connected to both walking and cycling trails (the Bay Trail).
  - The site is zoned SUZ23 (Special Use Zone 23), which permits public, entertainment and cultural uses of the site. Whilst there is no heritage overlay on the site, a heritage overlay does apply to significant parts of the surrounding context including the Palais Theatre.
- 4.30 **Key changes** to the wider context since the 2016 masterplan include:
- The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted how people move around the city, socialise and use public space. Businesses have been affected by this, and a range of measures have been necessary to promote the economic recovery of the city.
  - Council has implemented the Live Music Action Plan 2021-24 and the Draft St Kilda Live Music Precinct Policy 2023, to recognise and safeguard the importance of live music within the St Kilda area.



- Council has implemented the Act and Adapt Strategy 2018-28, which details how we can respond to climate change and develop a more sustainable and resilient city.
- Festival Hall is no longer functioning as a live music venue, creating a gap in the market for a live music venue of approximately 5,000 standing capacity.
- Upgrades to the forecourt of the Palais Theatre and Luna Park have commenced.
- The St Kilda Triangle site is being used more for live music events, necessitating the partial or complete closure of the car park more frequently.

4.31 **Opportunities** - The St Kilda Triangle presents the following opportunities:

- The possibility to accommodate a live music venue that addresses a gap in the market, responds to local demand and builds on the history of St Kilda as a live music destination, and is a purpose built and high-quality facility.
- The creation of a place that has the fabric and physical context (for example, the bay backdrop, the Slopes, the Palais, the historical context as an entertainment destination) that celebrates what is unique about St Kilda, that is related to the surrounding creative precinct, and enhances the vitality of the area.
- The creation of a place that responds to the built and social environment where the community feels safe and welcome, is accessible to all and is activated during the night and day and throughout the year.
- The creation of a place that can connect to and enhance existing features to improve the experience for pedestrians, through the provision of new open spaces, shade and shelter and the minimisation of visible servicing and parking on the site.
- The creation of a place that builds on Council policies and leads in the development of a more resilient and sustainable city through the minimisation of carbon emissions, water usage and waste generation.
- The creation of a place that is responsive to the local context in terms of scale, view corridors and access into and movement through the site.

4.32 **Benchmarking** - The benchmarking examples in Attachment 1 illustrate the following design notions that apply to the St Kilda Triangle site:

- That a venue of up to approximately 5,000 standing capacity can fit effectively on the site, as can be seen in the example of Festival Hall.
- That other cities in Australia have venues of this size that provide a high-quality experience for patrons, such as Fortitude Music Hall in Brisbane and the Hordern Pavilion in Sydney.
- That the design and configuration of a live music venue can be varied, as can be seen in all the examples.
- That the provision of car parking is not essential to the success of the venue, as can be seen in the Hordern Pavilion, Fortitude Music Hall and Festival Hall examples.
- That live music venues typically require a degree of acoustic separation and that single-purpose venues such as Festival Hall and the Hordern Pavilion can have a poor relationship to their surrounding context.
- That there are a variety of uses that compliment a live music venue and can increase the activation of a site, community participation and economic return.



These include open space (e.g., Place des Arts, Montreal), food and drink facilities, and recording studios (e.g., Music Maker Hub, Sydney).

#### **Design Feasibility Work – Carpark Usage Assessments**

- 4.33 Carpark usage was assessed via two means, intercept surveys conducted by an engagement firm across various times during the peak usage months of January and February 2023, and via an assessment of the daily revenue for the years preceding the pandemic lockdowns, and the 22/23 financial year. The intercept surveys were designed to understand the behaviours of those parking on the Triangle site: what was the purpose for their visit, how long would they stay, how much money would they spend and what would they do if parking was not available on the site.
- 4.34 The design feasibility report in Attachment 2 includes the findings from these assessments.
- 4.35 It can be concluded from the carpark usage survey and subsequent revenue-based analyses that usage of the site varied throughout the survey times during peak summer months, and across the year, ranging from virtually empty to almost at capacity. Occasions where it was busy or close to capacity coincided with either external events (such as the Esplanade Market or 2XU triathlon) or events in the Palais Theatre. The non-summer months typically saw a considerable decline in carpark usage across the board.
- 4.36 The intercept survey work also indicated that most participants surveyed were attending Luna Park (19.8%), the Palais Theatre (17.2%), visiting the beach (16.6%) or visiting the Stokehouse (12.8%); however, there was not one single reason that overwhelmingly dominated the use the carpark.

#### **Design Feasibility Work - Evolution of Design Options for the Venue, Carparking, Ancillary Uses and Public Realm**

- 4.37 Various design options were developed from a detailed review of the market sounding report and from an in depth understanding of the site and the context and feedback from Councillors.
- 4.38 The purpose of this work was to identify a 'proof of concept' layout that was able to accommodate a live music/performance venue at the scale required to fill the gap in the market, provide adequate carparking to support a range of users and some public realm and ancillary uses, as well as responding to key priorities identified in the 2016 Masterplan and other principles including but not limited to creating a cultural precinct, protecting key views, connections to the foreshore, concentrating built form near the Palais and integrating effectively in the wider precinct.
- 4.39 The design options revolved around live music venues with a range of capacities (4000 capacity, 5000 capacity and 6000 capacity) that respond to the market sounding feedback.
- 4.40 Car parking options were also developed that included minimum (approximately 25 spaces), moderate (approximately 200 spaces) and maximum (ranging from 300 to 400 spaces) levels of parking with corresponding cost estimates. A cost estimate informed the work which showed that costs rise exponentially in line with the level of parking to be provided.
- 4.41 The design options evolved with Councillor input provided in the various workshops. The 6000-capacity venue was removed from further refinement, while the last round of



options presented included a logical combination of venue and carparking capacity as follows.

- **Option 1.** A minimum or base option comprising a 4000 standing capacity venue and approximately 20-30 car spaces, combining the smallest capacities for both venue size and car parking.
- **Option 2.** A moderate option comprising a 5000 standing capacity venue (with 1000 of this capacity included in a balcony/mezzanine) and approximately 200 car spaces. This option balances costs and deliverability by proposing a moderate level of car parking and a venue capacity that meets the 'sweet spot' identified in the market sounding report. The inclusion of a mezzanine/balcony provides an opportunity to scale the venue capacity to accommodate varying audience numbers.
- **Option 3.** A maximum option comprising a 5000 standing capacity venue (without a balcony/mezzanine) and approximately 300 car spaces.
- **On-grade parking option.** It should be noted that an additional on-grade parking (approximately 40 spaces) located on the corner of Jacka Boulevard and Cavell St was presented and is independent of the other parking options and can supplement parking for each option.

4.42 The approach to complementary uses and extent of public realm evolved with input from Councillors across the workshops. Zones for complementary uses as opposed to defining actual uses have been incorporated in the plans indicating the minimum amount required for the successful functioning of the venue and activation of the site. Examples of such uses include hospitality spaces (bar, restaurant, cafes), community spaces (recording studios or spaces for hire). Most of the on-grade space outside the venue is allocated to public realm. The locations of potential additional ancillary uses have also been shown, noting these spaces would otherwise form part of the public realm. The public realm design approach also includes an extension of the circulation spine through the site and relocating the pedestrian crossing over Jacka Boulevard to align with the recent plaza works on the foreshore side.

4.43 The criteria used to assess the options and identify a recommendation for an indicative site layout is detailed in the design feasibility report in Attachment 2.

#### **Design Approach - Indicative Site Layout**

4.44 As previously stated, the purpose of the design work was to test the physical feasibility locating a live music/performance venue that responds to market demand on the Triangle site. The design options have helped to test ideas and trade-offs with other uses to determine a 'proof of concept' that accommodates a venue of the size required by the market (as per the market sounding outcomes), allows for a significant, but not matching, level of carparking, ancillary uses and some public realm. It also addresses key priorities identified in the 2016 Masterplan and other design principles such as the creation of a cultural precinct, protecting key views, connections to the foreshore, concentrating built form near the Palais and integrating effectively in the wider precinct.

4.45 If Council was to progress this project, this indicative site layout (proof of concept) would be translated into design guidelines and/or a site plan (informed by feedback from the community) that would form the basis of procurement and strategic planning activities. This is work for subsequent stages which is still to be defined and presented



to Council later in 2023, will be informed by the outcomes of the planned community engagement.

4.46 A summary of the key elements of the indicative site layout shown as the recommended option - Option 2 - in Attachment 2 is provided below.

- **New live music and performance venue:** Option 2 venue - a flexible 5000 standing capacity venue including a mezzanine or balcony (accommodating 1000 of the 5000 capacity) designed to accommodate a range of types and sizes of shows to maximise utilisation at different times of the day and year. The site of the new venue has been chosen as the most appropriate location based on historical use of the site, such as the former Palais de Danse, and to respect key views from The Esplanade to the north and west. The indicative building envelope's north-west corner has been shaped to respect views from The Esplanade to the bay.
- **Carparking under the venue:** A balanced approach to carparking with 200 spaces included (considerable parking but not matching existing). This number has been chosen within the context of acknowledging that there is no way to provide parking for the majority of people attending a performance at either the Palais Theatre or the new venue, Luna Park or adjacent restaurants, on a performance night for one or both venues, but that it is still important to make some provision on the site. There are a further 1,600 publicly available paid car parks within 500 metres of the St Kilda Triangle and a nominal amount of unpaid parking and the site has good transport connections to the rest of the city, being serviced directly by several trams (numbers 3, 16 and 96) and connected to both walking and cycling trails (the Bay Trail).
- **Supplementary carpark:** Use of the site on the corner of Jacka Boulevard and Cavell St for on-grade parking (approximately 40 spaces) as supplementary parking for the preferred design option.
- **Complementary Uses and Public Realm:** complementary use zones are shown indicating the minimum required for the successful functioning of the venue and activation of the site, while the remainder of the site is used for public realm including circulation spaces, an area of lawn or a park, terraced steps to the level of the lawn creating an amphitheatre opportunity, possibilities for a pavilion for public use, and native landscape zones. The public realm ties in with the historic landscape feature known as the slopes.

### Community and Stakeholder Engagement

4.47 A community engagement program has been developed to align with the release of the market sounding report and the design work as shown in *St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue* provided in Attachment 2.

4.48 The purpose of the engagement is to support Council to understand community sentiment regarding the modified direction for the site, as demonstrated in the design feasibility report and in particular, the indicative site layout.



- 4.49 The feedback will inform the development of design guidelines and/or a site plan that would form the basis of possible future procurement and strategic planning activities if Council elects to proceed with the project.
- 4.50 The engagement process will:
- Introduce to the local community, visitors and other key stakeholders to Council's revised direction for the St Kilda Triangle site, including the outcomes of an industry market sounding process, and explain why Council has elected to investigate a live music venue.
  - Demonstrate the design options explored that centre on a live music venue, the rationale for the options, and the criteria used to assess the various options that consider different scales of built form, and carparking provision.
  - Propose an indicative site layout for feedback that provides a 'proof of concept' for a live music/performance venue, significant parking, ancillary uses and public realm.
  - Explain the alignment with and the need for evolution of aspects of the masterplan considering the changes in context since 2016 and to support inclusion of a live music/performance venue on the site.
- 4.51 The engagement program is planned to officially commence the day immediately following this meeting when Council will be presented with two key project deliverables.
- 4.52 The **engagement period** is programmed to occur over 6 weeks from 7 September 23 to 19 October 23 (accommodating 2 weeks of school holidays commencing 16 September).
- 4.53 The **outcomes of the engagement** will be presented to Council as part of the final Council meeting for the year and for Stage 1 of this project in December 2023 along with a proposal for the next stage of the project if Council choose to proceed.

### Engagement Activities

- 4.54 The various activities proposed to engage the broad spectrum of stakeholders include:
- **HYS survey** advertised through various channels and open to any stakeholder and community member for the length of the engagement program (7 September to 19 October 23).
  - Two 2-hour **drop-in sessions**, advertised through various channels, will be arranged for a Thursday evening in the first week of engagement (14 September) and on a Sunday in the second last week of engagement (8 October). The first will be held at St Kilda Town Hall and the second at the St Kilda Life Saving Club. These sessions are open to all to drop in at a time within the 2 hours to hear more about the project and provide direct feedback.
  - **Five pop up events** will occur at various locations across the municipality. These locations and specific timing of these events are in the planning phase. Broad locations are as follows:
    - Albert Park / Middle Park (Lake ward)
    - Port Melbourne (Gateway ward)
    - Elwood (Canal ward)



- St Kilda (Lake) – likely location is Veg Out Farmers Market
- Pop Up at the St Kilda Esplanade Market – One 2-hour pop up stall at the market to capture visitors and tourists to St Kilda (in addition to locals).
- **Focus Groups** – one to two targeted sessions are proposed to be held in St Kilda Town Hall Council Chambers with key stakeholders. The session/s will be invitation only.

### **State Government Advocacy**

- 4.55 Given the civic nature and the scale of the idea of a new live music/performance venue being explored by Council, as well as the site being designated as Crown Land, progressing the project from this stage of exploring an idea, to implementation, will rely heavily on strong engagement and buy in from State Government.
- 4.56 As the feasibility work progresses, Council continues to explore every opportunity to engage with key government agencies on the idea of a new live music/performance venue to fill a key gap that has been identified by the industry and bring the St Kilda Triangle to life.
- 4.57 A formal approach will be made to the State Government via a letter to the Premier – outlining the proposal, the benefits and the request for a State Government partnership and support.
- In addition, through the Mayor, advocacy will include engagement with all major political parties.

## **5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS**

- 5.1 Extensive community and stakeholder engagement informed the development of the St Kilda Triangle Masterplan 2016. There has also been community consultation over the years for pieces of work that preceded the 2016 Masterplan. As such there is likely to be significant interest and scrutiny of the project by the community, government, stakeholders and the market.
- 5.2 The live music and performance industry was consulted in terms of demand for a venue in the proposed location via a market sounding process.
- 5.3 It is proposed that community and key stakeholder consultation is now undertaken to understand the sentiment and feedback about the outcomes of the design feasibility work and new direction for the site as part of the process for releasing the report. This report is providing the details behind the engagement program.
- 5.4 The feedback will inform the development of design guidelines and/or a site plan that would form the basis of possible future procurement and strategic planning activities.

## **6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Procuring appropriate legal and probity advice and input to the procurement and planning process will be key to the success of the project.
- 6.2 Partnering as appropriate with State Government bodies throughout each stage of the project will be important to ensure suitable legislative processes are undertaken and risks related to State Government requirements are managed.



## 7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The work to deliver the Council elected Option Two of the Stage 1 works was estimated and approved at \$378,000. At a council meeting on 19 April an additional \$60,000 was endorsed to cover additional industry and strategic commercial input, the carparking usage intercept surveys and cost analysis works.
- 7.2 An additional \$80,000 is required to cover additional scope identified as required to complete the commercial analysis work which includes additional market sounding and consultancy support, resources to support the community engagement program which was not originally included in the scope of the project, and additional design consultancy to review and consider community feedback and its implications on the design feasibility work. This estimate includes: Inhouse resourcing for communications and design (\$20,000), community engagement collateral, advertising and reporting (\$20,000), additional market sounding (\$30,000), design work (\$10,000).
- 7.3 These costs do not factor in the cost of existing officer time, including project management, property, urban design, transport, sustainability, planning and commercial expertise, that are being utilised to support the project.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 A range of environmental considerations are incorporated in the design related planning for the site at a high level and will be considered in more detail should further stages progress.

## 9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The feasibility study is assessing options for the redevelopment of the high-profile St Kilda Triangle site that respond to a gap in the live music industry market and unlock local community benefits, including access to improved amenity and activation of the site while appropriately assessing impacts on the neighbourhood and municipality.

## 10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 While the St Kilda Triangle project has been specifically identified to align with **Liveable Port Phillip**, the work and intended outcomes align with all five strategic directions in the Council Plan:
  - **Inclusive Port Phillip** – A City that is a place for all members of our community where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities.
  - **Liveable Port Phillip** – A City that is a great place to live, where our community has access to high quality public spaces, development and growth are well-managed, and it is safer and easy to connect and travel within.
  - **Sustainable Port Phillip** – A City that has a sustainable future, where our environmentally aware and active community benefits from living in a bayside city that is greener, cooler, cleaner and climate resilient.
  - **Vibrant** - A City that has a flourishing economy, where our community and local businesses thrive, and we maintain and enhance our reputation as one of Melbourne’s cultural and creative hubs.

# MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 6 SEPTEMBER 2023



- **Well-Governed Port Phillip** – A city that is leading local government authority, where our community and our organisation are in a better place as a result of our collective efforts.

## 11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### 11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 Community Engagement – 7 September to 19 October.

11.1.2 Council Report to present the outcomes of the community engagement, the results of any further work completed and proposed next steps for the project if Council decide to proceed – December 2023.

### 11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 The Council website will be updated with Council's decision, approach and next steps.

11.2.2 The Triangle Project database of interested community members, key stakeholders and other interested parties is being used to provide updates at key points of the project such as when key reports are released or when the final recommendations regarding options for the St Kilda Triangle are to be considered by Council. This database will continue to be updated as people indicate their interest in the project.

11.2.3 The engagement program will be promoted via postcard letter box drops, on our webpage, via e-mail blasts to the interested parties database which has 883 parties, e-mails to specific groups, a social media campaign reaching general and specific groups, and newsletters where possible.

11.2.4 Initial discussions have commenced between Council and key government stakeholders.

## 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. **St Kilda Triangle Market Sounding Report**[↓](#)
2. **St Kilda Triangle Design Feasibility for a Live Music and Performance Venue**