

EXTENT



FOOTSCRAY PARK

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Prepared for Maribyrnong City Council

August 2023 — Final



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1. INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for Maribyrnong City Council and forms part of a permit application for critical landscaping works required to the Thomson Water Gardens located within Footscray Park ('the subject site'). Footscray Park is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (H1220) and is recognised for its historic, aesthetic, scientific (horticultural) and social significance to the State of Victoria. The proposed landscaping works are required to address serious safety concerns in response to two recent incidents which resulted in drowning fatalities associated with the Thomson Water Garden ponds. The area has been fenced off and public access has been restricted since the incidents occurred.

The proposed works are minor in nature and directly respond to recommendations provided by Life Saving Victoria. Broadly, the works include the following: infill planting and expansion of existing garden beds where they interface with the ponds, installation of fencing, hazard, instructional and depth marker signage, rock benching to reduce the depth of the ponds in some locations and the rotation of some existing park benches to face inwards towards the ponds rather than outwards. Other associated works include installation of water aeration devices, sub surface electrical supply to power the aeration devices and improvements to the irrigation system. A scope of conservation works to the Platypus Fountain, which is currently in a poor state of repair, is also proposed. While the works will result in some minor physical and visual interventions, they are required to address immediate safety concerns and to allow for access to the Thomson Water Gardens to be re-established.

1.1. Location

Footscray Park is located at 4-68 Ballarat Road, Footscray and is situated on the south bank of the Maribyrnong River, between the Maribyrnong River Trail and Ballarat Road. Ballarat Road is a major thoroughfare, carrying the majority of traffic to and from the western suburbs towards Melbourne, or in transit to other major thoroughfares like Hopkins Road and Geelong. The fifteen-hectare park can also be accessed via Maribyrnong Boulevard from the northwest. The northern portion of the park is demarcated by lawns sweeping down to the Maribyrnong River. The gardens are planted with a mix of European and native plantings, in formal ornamental beds with interspersed internal paths and stairs, providing access down the terraced gardens towards both the eastern and western lawns, and the Maribyrnong River.

The proposed works will affect the Thomson Water Gardens which are located to the north of Footscray Park, bordering the Maribyrnong River. The Gardens are bisected by the T. B. Drew Memorial Walk which runs on a north-south axis and is surrounded by ornamental lily ponds, a Wisteria pergola, stone seats, bridges and arbours, timber seat shelters, garden beds and landscaping, and associated garden furniture and infrastructure.

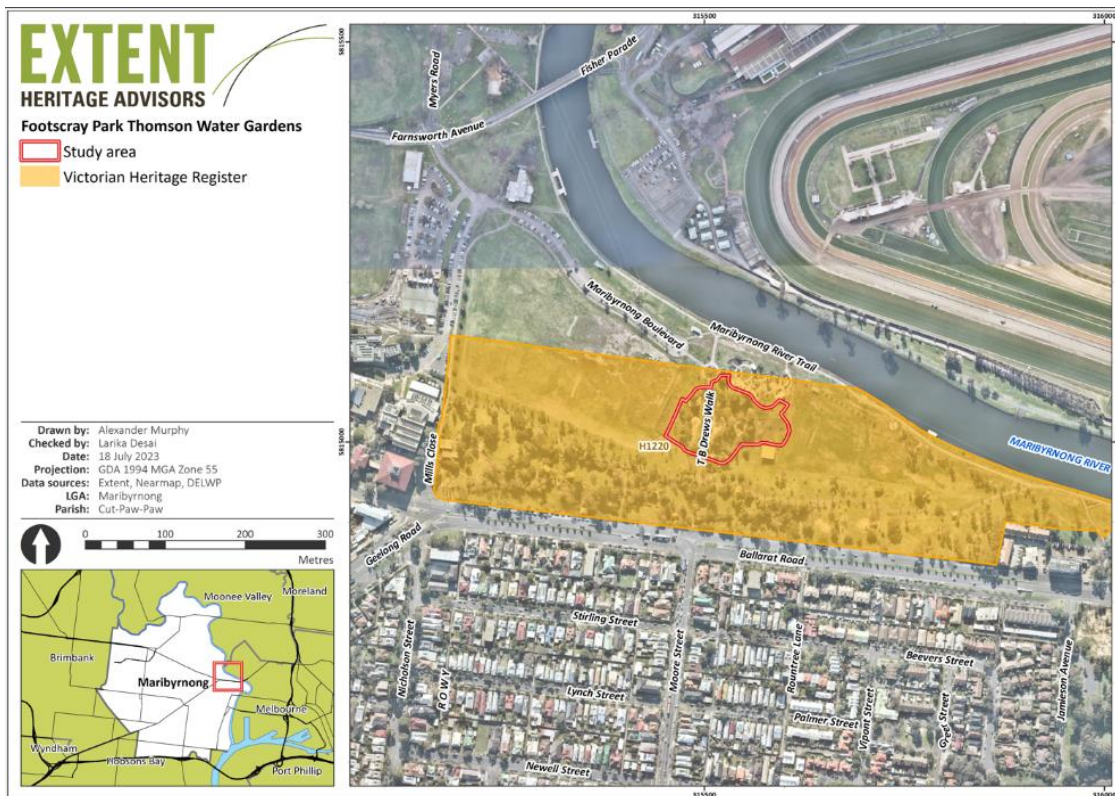


Figure 1. Footscray Park VHR extent of registration and proposed works area.

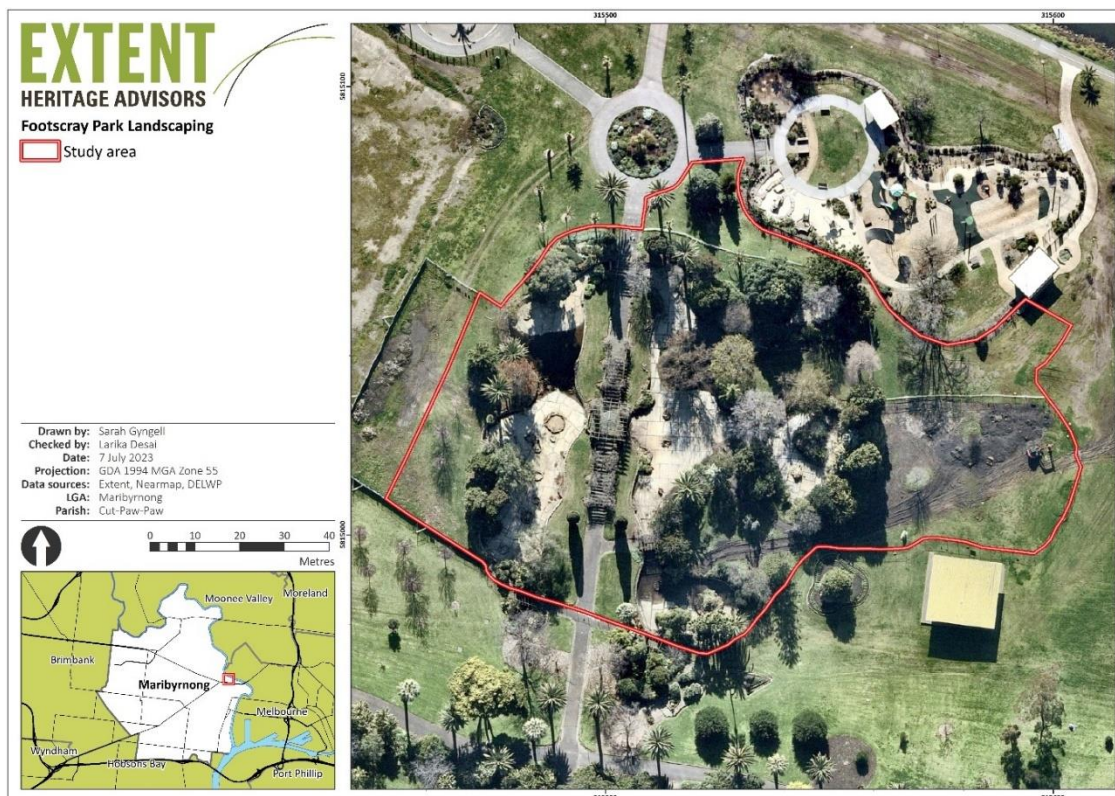


Figure 2. Close up view of the proposed works area within Footscray Park. Note the red demarcation line indicates the location of existing security fencing which is restricting public access due to safety concerns.

1.2. Statutory heritage listings

The site is identified on the following statutory registers:

- Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), as 'Footscray Park' (H1220);
- City of Maribyrnong Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay (HO), as 'Footscray Park, 4-68 Ballarat Road, Footscray' (HO20); and

The site is not identified on the following statutory register:

- Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI).

1.2.1. Heritage Act 2017 (Victoria)

Noted above, the subject site is listed as a heritage place on the VHR as 'Footscray Park' (H1220). Therefore, the proposal is subject to statutory controls under the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic).

1.2.2. Planning and Environment Act (1987)

The subject site is included within the City of Maribyrnong Schedule to the Heritage Overlay as 'Footscray Park', graded individually significance. As per Clause 43.01, a planning permit is not required under the Heritage Overlay to develop places included in the VHR, with the exception for applications for subdivision.

1.2.3. National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Heritage Register

The site is included in the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Heritage Register, which is a non-statutory listing.

2. SIGNIFICANCE

2.1. Statement of significance

The statement of significance for Footscray Park, as identified in the citation for the place is outlined below.

What is significant?

Footscray Park of 15 hectares (37 acres) was permanently reserved in 1911 as a site for a Public Park and Recreation purposes. The park's creation was largely due to the efforts of the citizens of Footscray who successfully lobbied the State Government and the Victorian Racing Club for the reservation of the park, and then contributed to its development through donations of labour and plants, with the local technical school building the lookout shelter. The park was designed by noted

architect Rodney Alsop who won a competition for its design 1911. The plan was largely implemented by David Mathews, Superintendent of Parks and Gardens from 1916 until 1964, with the assistance of noted orchidologist, William Nicholls. The park features characteristic structures in an Edwardian style, in particular, rustic stone structures, lookout shelter, drinking fountains, arbours, bridges, ponds, and clover-shaped flower beds. The park also has an unusual and finely carved Platypus Fountain as well as a war memorial and a memorial to Henry Lawson. The design of Footscray Park fully exploits the northerly sloping site, providing external vistas to the Maribyrnong River, Flemington Racecourse and the city. The park is planted with many fine evergreen and deciduous trees, conifers, palms and Australian natives, including rare and uncommon species. Footscray Park is an important community recreation facility and hosts two of Melbourne's largest annual events, the Saltwater Festival and the Vietnamese Festival.

How is it significant?

Footscray Park is of historic, aesthetic, scientific (horticultural) and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Footscray Park is historically important as an important Edwardian styled garden from the early twentieth century in Victoria. Designed in 1911 by the prominent architect Rodney Alsop, the majority of the layout and landscape features occurred under the direction of David Mathews from 1916 until about 1940. Mathews continued to develop and care for the Park until his retirement in 1964. The Park is important for its fine collection of garden structures, ornamental ponds, formal and informal path layout, and a rich plant collection.

Footscray Park is aesthetically significant for its design excellence. The informal perimeter pathway, formal central path and steps and terraced garden layout constitute a particularly fine aesthetic response to the steep topography. An important facet of the design is the formal pathway whose axis leads to the river and the racecourse beyond. This park vista is among the finest in Victoria and incorporates a large circular bed with a rare Blue Hesper Palm and a long Wisteria pergola with a central dome of sophisticated design. The outstanding landscape character of the park is complemented by the planting themes of a deciduous tree avenue, palm collection, conifer plantation, water garden, Australian natives and arboretum.

Footscray Park is important for its scientific (horticultural) achievement in the form of its outstanding plant collection of palms, trees and shrubs set amongst shrubberies and lawns. Significant plants due to their outstanding form, rarity and landscape value include: *Brahea armata* (Blue Hesper Palm), *Angophora hispida* (Dwarf Apple) [died 2005], *Vitex agnus-castus* (Chaste Tree), *Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii* (Hill's Fig), *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Hodginsii' [died Jan 2016], *Ulmus glabra* 'Exoniensis' (Exeter Elm), *Melaleuca halmaturorum* (Salt Paperbark), *Quercus* aff. *stellata* and the only two known *Clerodendrum glabrum* (Natal Glorybower) trees in Victoria.

Footscray Park is socially important because of its long, close and continuing relationship with the citizens of Footscray who campaigned for its creation, contributed significantly to its development,

and continue to use the park as an important community asset. Because the western suburbs of Melbourne lacked the public parks and gardens established during the 19th century in other parts of Melbourne, the establishment of Footscray Park represents a great achievement by the community.

2.2. Extent of Registration

The extent of registration for Footscray Park is as follows:

1. All of the land known as Crown Reserve RS 810 permanently reserved for Public Park and Recreation Purposes within the dotted line marked L1 shown on Diagram Number 600968 held by the Executive Director of the Heritage Council being part Crown Allotment 5, Section 15, Parish of Cut-Paw-Paw.

2. All of the buildings and structures marked as follows on Diagram Number 600968 held by the Executive Director of the Heritage Council:

B-1 Entrance gate

B-2 Technical school shelter and stone wall

B-3 Henry Lawson memorial

B-4 War memorial

B-5, B-6, B-7 and B-8 Launder urns and stone pedestals

B-8, B-9, B-10 and B-11 Stone drinking fountains

B-12 Wisteria pergola

B-13, B-14, B-15 and B-16 Bridges and arbours

B-17, B-18 and B-19 Seat shelters

B-20 Platypus fountain

3. All of the paths, stone steps, garden edges and walls marked as follows on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director of the Heritage Council:

P-1 Jamieson Walk

P-2 Drew Walk

P-3 and P-4 Clover-shaped flower beds

4. The trees marked as follows on Diagram 600968 held by the Executive Director:

T-1 *Brahea armata* (Blue Hesper Palm)

T-2 *Angophora hispida* (Dwarf apple)

T-3 *Vitex agnus-castus* (Chaste Tree)

T-4 *Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii* (Hill's Fig)

T-5 *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Hodginsii'

T-6 *Clerodendrum glabrum* (Natal Glorybower) x2

T-7 *Ulmus glabra* 'Exoniensis' (Exeter Elm).

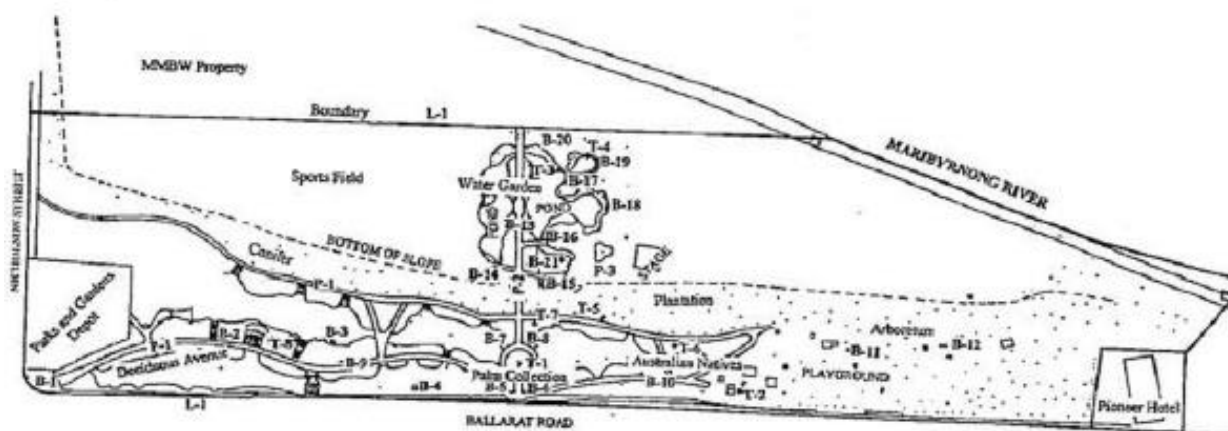


Figure 3. Extent of Registration Diagram H1220.

2.3. Conservation Management Plan

The Footscray Park Conservation Study was prepared by Georgina Whitehead in May 1998. The study addresses the whole of the Park but is mainly focused on the area incorporating the ornamental gardens, where most of the paths, plants and decorative features are concentrated, which form the cultural centre of the Park. Modern features have no significance in this study. Although the 1911 Footscray Park design plans have not survived, David Mathew's c.1948-49 plan and the City of Footscray's 1987 plan have been included. The Footscray Historical Society was a major archival source for the study. Michael Looker carried out a survey to identify significant plantings, and their location and other major features are shown on a plan by Chris Dance Land Design Pty Ltd.

3. CONTEXT HISTORY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

3.1. Contextual History

The following contextual history draws on the 'History of Place' associated with the VHR citation for Footscray Park and the Footscray Park Conservation Study (1998) and is supplemented with research undertaken by Extent Heritage.

The area now known as Footscray Park was originally owned by the Victoria Racing Club. It was purchased by the Footscray Council and State Government to be used as a public park around 1908-09. In 1910-11, the Council held a competition for park designs, judged by the City Surveyor and William Guilfoyle, former director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. The winning entry was by architect and landscape designer Rodney H. Alsop. By 1912, the responsibility of Footscray Park was

placed with a citizens' Footscray Park Beautification Committee due to a shortage of funds. The Council resumed control of the park by 1916 and appointed David Mathews, who had trained under Hugh Linaker at Ararat, as a 'working landscape gardener'. The Park's subsequent development and character can be mainly attributed to the work of Mathews who served as Footscray's curator of parks and gardens for forty-eight years.

The employment schemes enabled the construction of the T. B. Drew Memorial Walk, the Thomson Water Garden with lily ponds, stone seats, bridges and arbours, timber seat shelters and the impressive Wisteria pergola. Alsop's winning entry as well as the subsequent design by the City Surveyor included a lake feature. Mathews most likely interpreted these plans to suit his tastes and ideas. The 1931-32 City of Footscray Annual Report noted these new works and commented on the features surrounding the lily ponds as being superior to other parks in the Commonwealth.

William Nicholls, Footscray Park's propagator and plant classifier, was likely to have also contributed to the design of the new works. In 1935, Mrs J Green unveiled the Alfred Green Memorial Fountain (the Platypus Fountain) which was placed in the lily pond.



Figure 4. c.1925-40 aerial image of Footscray Park showing the southern end of the of Drew Walk (outlined in red), towards Ballarat Road. Source: State Library of Victoria.



Figure 5. 1945 aerial image showing Drew Walk and Thomson Water Gardens (outlined in red). Source: Maribyrnong Library Service.

3.2 Physical Description

Extent Heritage carried out a physical assessment of the areas proposed to be impacted by the proposed works, including Drew Walk and Thomson Water Gardens in June 2023. Existing built form and broader landscape setting were considered as part of this assessment.

To summarise, it is evident that the park was designed to utilise the sloping topography of the site down towards the Maribyrnong River. The Park design includes both formal and informal landscape themes and incorporates Edwardian style elements along with influences of the Arts and Crafts movement. The garden design includes main axial pathways, circular beds, urns, and pergolas which were often constructed from dressed stone with large timber beams. Rustic elements and Australiana themes were also incorporated into the design.

The T. B. Drew Memorial Walk, which extends the original north-south axial path from the foot of the slope towards the river's edge, divides the lily ponds into two. This area is today referred to as the 'Thomson Water Garden'. The Drew Walk continues the axis of Moore Street and can be accessed from the Ballarat Road entrance to the south as well as the Maribyrnong Boulevard entrance to the north. Drew Walk is spanned by a series of pergolas which were once covered by wisteria, clematis and an ornamental grape vine, although only the wisteria now remains (refer Figure 6). The surrounding lily ponds are currently drained until all safety concerns have been addressed (refer Figure 7, Figure 8 & Figure 9). The existing condition of the Thomson Water Gardens is fair, noting that the area was completely inundated with flood waters during the recent flooding event.

As well as Drew Walk and the associated impressive Wisteria pergola, the Thomson Water Gardens includes an array of stone seats, bridges and arbours, timber seat shelters, garden furniture and areas of garden beds and landscaping (refer Figure 7 & Figure 8). A granite Platypus Fountain is located in the pond to the east of Drew Walk and is currently in poor condition with signs of degradation. It comprises a basin top pedestal with a large size platypus on each side (refer Figure 10). Conservation works are currently underway to improve the condition of the existing timber arbours and bridges (refer Figure 11), and landscaping works to improve the condition of the garden beds and plantings will occur in line with plans to reopen the area following the undertaking of required safety works (subject to this permit application).



Figure 6. View of Drew Walk and the lily pond to the west (background) (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



Figure 7. View of the partially drained lily pond to the east (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



Figure 8. View of a stone seat and the drained lily pond to the rear (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



Figure 9. View of drained western lily pond (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



Figure 10. View of the Platypus Fountain (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).



Figure 11. View of the timber arbor and bridge structure, currently under conservation works (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2023).

4. PROPOSAL

4.1. Proposed Works

The proposed landscaping works are illustrated in the Landscape Masterplan (refer Figure 12) and include as follows:

- Infill planting and expansion of existing garden beds where they interface with the ponds;
- Removal/trimming of vegetation which obscures important sightlines across the ponds;
- Installation of new rock edging detailing in specific areas along the pond banks;
- Installation of fencing including reo hoop garden edge and timber batten fencing and maintenance access gate. The specification for the two fence types is as follows:
 - Reo hoop fencing: 16mm rolled deformed reinforcing bar. Bar rolled to 500mm inside radius. Bars set into concrete strip footings with lugs welded to base of bars, bars to be welded together at joints for additional support. Plain steel allowed to weather to achieve a rusted finish.
 - Timber batten fencing: 50x50 hardwood timber rail, 45x45 hardwood battens fixed to rails, 100x100 hardwood timber posts with concrete footing.
- Installation of hazard and instructional signage. Product TBC by Surf Lifesaving Victoria;
- Installation of a depth marker (bolt fixed to pond base);
- Reinstatement of park benches and rotating of existing park benches;
- Resurfacing of some areas of pathway in asphalt with a bluestone picher edge;
- Works to resurface the basin of the ponds and installation of rock benching in specific areas to reduce the water depth (to be guided by the Footscray Park Master Plan Review);
- Installation of aeration devices tethered to fixings on the pond perimeter. Product: Aquatic technologies Evolution ½ HP Aeration Fountain or similar approved; and
- Sub-surface electrical supply to power aeration devise and irrigation system. Irrigation system upgrade includes new irrigation cabinet, master valve, backflow device and new irrigation cables to garden beds.

A scope of restoration works to the Platypus Fountain, which is currently in a poor state of repair, is also proposed as part of the broader scope of works. To summarise, works will include the following:

- Replacing existing pump at the base of cascade waterfall to service water fountains;
- Electrical works to service the new pump, if required; and
- Replacing fountain heads with matching products.

It is proposed that conditional support is provided for works to the fountain on the basis that a suitably qualified conservator is engaged to scope and undertake the works, subject to Heritage Victoria endorsement.

The permit application documents are as follows:

- Landscape Masterplan, Thomson Water Gardens, Footscray Park, issued 19 April 2023.
- Landscape Rectification Works, Thomson Water Gardens, Footscray Park, prepared by Maribyrnong City Council, dated August 2023, drawings:
 - Drawing no. 23/002-LD00: Cover Sheet & Drawing Index
 - Drawing no. 23/002-DM01: Demolition Plan
 - Drawing no. 23/002-LD01: General Setout Plan 1
 - Drawing no. 23/002-LD02: General Setout Plan 2
 - Drawing no. 23/002-LD03: General Setout Plan 3
 - Drawing no. 23/002-PL00: Planting Schedule
 - Drawing no. 23/002-PL01: Landscape Planting Plan 1
 - Drawing no. 23/002-PL02: Landscape Planting Plan 2
 - Drawing no. 23/002-PL03: Landscape Planting Plan 3
 - Drawing no. 23/002-DD01: Landscape Details Sheet 1
 - Drawing no. 23/002-DD02: Landscape Details Sheet 2
 - Drawing no. 23/002-DD03: Landscape Details Sheet 3

Please note that background documents prepared by Life Saving Victoria (Inland Water Way Risk Assessment, 2021) and Safety Now Consulting (Footscray Park Playscape Risk Assessment, 2021) that have informed the proposed scope of works were not provided to Extent Heritage for review as part of the preparation of this Heritage Impact Statement due to privacy and security reasons. Relevant information has been summarised by Council verbally and via email and reproduced in this report as relevant.

Other options considered

It is noted that no other options have been considered to address safety considerations associated with the Thomson Water Gardens, noting that the scope of works has been directly informed by key recommendations prepared by Life Saving Victoria. All efforts have been made on behalf of Council to balance safety and heritage requirements and to reduce the permanent impact on original fabric and significant view lines.



Landscape Masterplan - DRAFT
 Thomson Water Gardens, Footscray Park
 Footscray

1:250 @A1

Legend

- Existing trees to be retained
- Existing playground fences
- Lawn area
- Existing garden bed
- Existing water body (>500mm Deep)
- Existing water body (<500mm Deep)
- Existing water depth

Proposed measures
 Refer page 2 for details

- Existing garden bed. Changes include:
 - soil planting
 - irrigation system
- Area of garden bed expansion (Where existing garden bed <5m wide)
- Fence type 1 - Race loop garden edge
- Fence type 2 - Timber bottom fence
- Maintenance gate (to match fence type 2)
- Water sanitation device

Rock berthing

- Hazard and instructional signage
- Depth marker signage
- Existing furniture to be retained
- Existing playpits fountain to be retained and made operational
- Proposed asphalt pavement with stainless ptycher edge
- Proposed sub surface electrical supply to power sanitation device and irrigation system

Note:
 1) Where existing vegetation obscures stability of water body planting and/or removal of vegetation may be required.

Figure 12. Landscape Masterplan, including key works proposed as part of this permit application.

5. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

5.1. s101(2)(a) Impact on cultural heritage significance

The following section of the report will consider the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place, as per s101(2)(a) of the Act.

Physical Impacts

Works impacting the existing garden beds will result in a minor physical impact only. The following is noted:

- Care will be taken to maintain significant plantings and original edging elements and works to remove/trim existing vegetation will be restricted to areas where important sight lines across the ponds are directly obstructed.
- Expansion of gardens beds in proposed areas will cause slight disturbance of the top soil. The works, which will involve planting of terrestrial plant species, will have a short-term physical impact on the topography.
- An area of the garden bed is proposed to be replaced by bluestone edging and asphalt paving. This is currently an unsafe region of the park, and the works are a safety requirement. The proposed area of work is small in the context of the wider park and the loss of fabric will have a minor impact overall as a result.
- The installation of new fencing is proposed in multiple areas located along the edge of garden beds. This will have a physical impact on the landscape, but the impact will be minor and localised to the areas identified for installation.

New signage has been proposed at multiple spots across the site. Similar to the fencing, this will have a physical impact on the park landscape, but the impact will be minor and localised to the points of installation. Areas affected by the installation of the upgraded irrigation system and sub-surface electrical supply will be reinstated and made-good following works. Proposed works to resurface the basin of the ponds will impact fabric which is currently in a poor state of repair and will improve the overall operation, presentation, and lifespan of this feature.

Visual Impacts

The proposed new fencing and maintenance gate will be visible in most views from Drew Walk and surrounding pathways. This is unavoidable due to the nature of the elements and their requirement to safeguard specific obscure and unsafe areas of the subject site. The reo hoop fencing will be low in height at 0.6M and will therefore not compete with the other design features of the park. The timber batten fencing and maintenance gate, taller in height at 1m and more visible, are recommended to be painted heritage green to match existing original arbour/pergola elements to ensure they are as visually recessive as possible.

The installation of hazard and instructional signage along Drew Walk and the Lily Ponds will also result in a minor visual change, however, this signage is essential for the continued safe use of the

park, is commonly found in comparable park settings and will not adversely impact upon any key views or settings. Efforts have been taken by Council to select locations with the greatest interface with the public, while also considering key view lines within the gardens. Similarly, the proposed asphalt paving and bluestone edging will cause a minor visual change. The area recommended for these works is small and will not dominate the surrounding landscape. More importantly the works are necessary in order to secure this area of the park, which is currently not safe as identified by Life Saving Victoria.

The proposed infill planting palette will draw on both European and native plant species commonly found during the early twentieth century to ensure a seamless integration with the garden setting of the existing plantings.

Proposed works to resurface the basin of the ponds and install rock benching will reduce the depth of the ponds but will not outwardly impact on their presentation from the public realm.

New fabric to be installed will read as discreet and utilitarian pieces of infrastructure that are now a relatively standard feature of public parks. The valued aspects of the subject site's presentation, including its design elements and form along with its siting within the larger setting of the park, remain unaffected.

Summary

To summarise, while the proposed works will result in some minor physical and visual impacts to the Thomson Water Gardens, on balance these impacts will not affect the outstanding landscape character of the park which directly contributes to the cultural heritage significance of the place more broadly. Key elements including the garden beds, stone and timber infrastructure and structures, and ornamental ponds will be maintained. New fabric proposed to be introduced into the landscape will clearly relate to the continued and safe operation of the place as a public park.

5.2. s101(2)(b) Reasonable and Economic Use

The following section of the report will consider the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place. The following Heritage Victoria policy has been consulted in preparing the following comments:

- Reasonable or economic use: relevant matters for the consideration of s101(2)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2017*.

Reasonable Use

When considering the circumstances of the permit application and the registered place, the Executive Director may consider: 1) the historic, recent and current uses of the registered place, 2) other compatible uses, and 4) other relevant matters.

The historic and recent use of the Thomas Water Garden is as a public park accessible for community leisure and recreation. Due to recent incidences which resulted in loss of life associated

with the ornamental ponds, the area has been fenced off and public access has been restricted. It is submitted that refusal of the proposed works will directly impact the reasonable use of this area of the park and prevent ongoing public access.

Economic Use

Footscray Park is a freely accessible public park managed by a municipal body, and as such economic use is not relevant.

5.3. s101(2)(f) Protection and Conservation

This section of the report will consider matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place.

It is noted that the current condition of the Thomson Water Gardens is fair, noting that this area of the gardens was inundated with flood waters during the 2022 flood event in Victoria. Conservation works are currently underway to improve the condition of the existing timber bridges and structures, and landscaping works to improve the condition of the garden beds and plantings will occur in line with plans to reopen the area following the undertaking of required safety works (subject to this permit application). The condition of key significant elements including the stone seats, bridges and arbours, and wisteria pergola is good.

As part of this permit application, it is proposed to undertake a scope of restoration works to the Platypus Fountain which is currently in a poor state of repair. There is some evidence of degradation, and the water function does not currently operate. It is proposed to engage a suitably qualified conservator to address the condition of the built fabric and to undertake the necessary steps to allow the fountain to operate. This will result in a positive heritage outcome that will directly contribute to the cultural heritage significance of the place.



Figure 13. Current condition of the Platypus Fountain. Source: Extent Heritage, June 2023.

5.4. s101(3)(b) Other relevant matters – safety considerations

In 2022, Council undertook a review of City of Maribyrnong's processes and systems in response to two incidents resulting in loss of life in the Thomson Water Garden ponds. Three reports were developed by external agencies, including Life Saving Victoria, with all actions consolidated into one action plan under the Asset Restoration Project. The actions are as follows:

- Install signage around the ponds to warn of the inherent dangers associated with nearby watercourses;
- Complete coordination and agreement of water safety messaging and strategy by key stakeholders;
- Undertake a Life Saving Victoria Aquatic Signage Assessment on water safety infrastructure and consider the recommendations for installation;
- Include integrated QR codes in information signage to provide linkage to public water safety information, education programs and campaigns, in multiple languages;
- Consider installation of low, non-intrusive barriers along pond banks, especially where grassed areas permit direct access to the water, and in areas identified with steep or crumbling banks.
- Consider maintenance and ongoing upkeep of garden beds which can act as barrier to the water and separate activities away from the water's edge;
- Ensure ongoing repair and maintenance work on existing barriers on bridges and pathways;
- Consider installation of recognised water safety signage at key locations such as the community playground, Thomsons water garden entry points, prior incident locations and carparks;
- Provide current and accurate contact information for emergency management organisations and relevant stakeholders;
- Consider the provision of formal emergency markers incorporated into safety signage, to assist emergency services locating an incident;
- Install of depth markers / signs;
- Reduce the depths and gradients of the ponds to reduce/eliminate sudden drop offs;
- Undertake activities to reduce rock batter, topological hazards and slippery surfaces close to the water edge;
- Actively manage planting and maintenance of vegetation (including duck weed) to maximise water clarity, reduce water edge occlusion and improve line of sight; and
- Include clear, consistent and standard parental supervision requirements in information and warning signage.

Within Council's 23/24 capital works program, \$500k has been allocated to complete a suite of works to improve infrastructure and landscaping including:

- Upgrades to the bridges and structures (Completed July 2023 via HV permit exemption);
- Improved landscaping in line with Life Saving Victoria recommendations and Heritage Victoria guidelines; and
- Increased signage in line with Life Saving Victoria recommendations.

The latter two dot points relate to works proposed as part of this permit application.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary of findings

The proposed landscape works will result in minor physical impacts and visual change within the park; however, these impacts are balanced against the reasonable ongoing use of the place, safety requirements and positive conservation works.

The proposal aims to minimise and isolate the physical impact of the works to specific regions of the park so that significant heritage fabric and plantings are not adversely impacted either physically or visually. With regard to visual impacts, it is recommended that the new proposed fencing and maintenance gate is painted a heritage green colour thereby matching the arbour/pergola elements, whilst proposed infill plantings will incorporate early twentieth century species to facilitate a seamless integration into the existing landscape setting. The remaining new fabric to be introduced (except for signage, a necessary safety feature) is proposed to be obscure in terms of location and recessive in terms of appearance, thereby maintaining the heritage integrity of the park setting.

6.2. Recommendations

If the Executive Director resolves to issue the permit for the proposed works, it is requested that the permit conditions are staged to allow immediate urgent works to commence in the short term (e.g., installation of signage, fencing and works to garden beds) while detailed design for the proposed scope of rock benching and basin resurfacing is finalised which is being guided by the Footscray Park Master Plan Review process (currently underway). Water will be temporarily removed from the ponds until the benching works have been specified which is likely to be late 2024. It is recommended that the proposed timber batten fencing and maintenance gate are painted heritage green to match the existing structures on site. Further, it is requested that a condition is specified to allow the restoration works to the Platypus Fountain to be completed within the life of the permit to allow Council adequate time to engage a suitably qualified conservator to scope the works subject to Heritage Victoria approval.

To ensure no unforeseen harm occurs to the heritage place during the undertaking of the works, it is further recommended that a Heritage Protection Plan be specified as a condition on the permit.

7. REFERENCES

Heritage Council Victoria. 2019. Assessing the Cultural Heritage Significance of Places and Objects for Possible State Heritage Listing: The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines. *Melbourne*: Heritage Council Victoria.

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Heritage Victoria. n.d. *Guidelines for Preparing Heritage Impact Statement*. Melbourne: Heritage Victoria.

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APPENDIX A. FULL SET OF DRAWINGS