



**Upgrading Sol Green Reserve, South Melbourne**

# **Engagement Report (Phase 2)**

March 2024





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Please consider  
the environment  
before printing.



# Introduction

## Project background

As part of our Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022–2032, upgrading Sol Green Reserve was identified as a priority action. It was also highlighted by a safety audit that the play equipment needs to be upgraded, due to nearing the end of its functional life. The reserve upgrade also created the opportunity to review and upgrade other aspects of the park.

We identified possible improvements for Sol Green Reserve, including:

- A new playground, with accessible equipment
- An upgraded netball and basketball area
- Improved access and footpath connections throughout the park
- Additional greening and tree planting
- Updated lighting

### **Community engagement (May – June 2023)**

We asked community members in May–June 2023 about how Sol Green Reserve could be improved, including the park and playground. We collected feedback via an online survey on Council’s ‘Have Your Say’ webpage, two Pop-Up sessions at Sol Green Reserve, and via email.

86% of those who gave us feedback at that time were regular visitors to the reserve. Here is a summary of community feedback:

- Most community members we spoke to gave feedback about the playground. This included improving safety, and wanting to see a range of equipment to accommodate all age groups
- Many community members enjoy the basketball court as a preference over netball



- Path networks and park lighting were highlighted as needing improvements for accessibility and safety
- The grassed area and green space (including trees) are highly valued by the community

For more detail about our May/June 2023 community engagement process, read the report on Port Phillip's Have Your Say page [here](#).

### **Concept Plan development (August–October 2023)**

We used community feedback from May–June 2023 to develop a draft Concept Plan for the upgrade of Sol Green Reserve. As a result of feedback, the draft concept plan included details like:

- Moving the playground away from a busy city road, for safety
- Joining the two playground areas into one area, to allow for better pathway access
- Making the playground area larger to include more equipment
- Making the basketball court larger to include two basketball hoops (replacing the netball hoop) and providing soccer facilities
- Adding additional trees (where possible), and keeping open grass areas
- Improving accessibility of pathways throughout site (including surface material and moving the main access path so it no longer runs through basketball court area)

Improved lighting will be incorporated in the next phase of works.

## **What we set out to achieve**



## Community Engagement (November – December 2023)

We asked for community feedback about the draft Concept Plan in November/December 2023. In doing so, we set out to:

- Inform community members about the draft Concept Plan
- Inform community members about how previous feedback (from May/June 2023) has informed the draft Concept Plan
- Seek feedback from community members about what changes should be made to the draft Concept Plan, including what community members did and did not like about the draft plan
- Inform community members about the process moving forward, including how their feedback will be used, and the timeline for construction.

## About this report

We have developed this report to provide community members with:

- An overview of the November–December 2023 community engagement process for the upgrade of Sol Green Reserve, including how it relates to previous community engagement
- An overview of what we heard from community members during the November–December 2023 community engagement process
- Information about how community feedback will be used to inform the final design and construction at Sol Green Reserve
- Information about the next stages of this project



## Before reading this report

Please consider the following while reading this report:

- The information in this report is based on the views of some community members and does not reflect the views of a statistically representative sample of the community.
- Participants who participated in this engagement process were self-selecting. Because of this, outcomes reflect only a limited proportion of local communities.
- Some community members are likely to have experienced barriers to participation in the engagement activities outlined in this report, including (but not limited to) those who have limited access to internet and/or a computer, or who are unable to attend events in person. Council's Advisory Committees were offered the opportunity to comment on this project, however at this stage the project was not selected for review by the committees.
- The information and views presented in this report are a summary of the opinions, perceptions and feedback heard from across all the engagement activities. The feedback has not been independently validated. As such, some information may be factually incorrect, unfeasible, or outside of the scope of this project.
- This report summarises key feedback from participants and does not preclude the project team from considering community feedback in its original format.
- The report summarises the feedback from engagement activities. While every effort is made to include the full breadth of feedback provided, not all comments, views or advice is shown in the findings of this report. Where appropriate, a mix of quotes, comments, themes and metrics are used to convey community feedback.



- We acknowledge that, while efforts are taken to manage duplication, there is potential for double counting where participants have attended multiple events, and/or completed online activities via the Have Your Say website.
- This report focuses on the communication and engagement activities delivered by Council. It does not necessarily include events, meetings, surveys, or communications organised by the community or third parties.

# What we did

## Communications activities

We delivered a range of activities between Friday 17 November and Sunday 17 December 2023 to let community members know about the proposed improvements to Sol Green reserve, and how they could provide feedback.



**Project posters  
in the park (5)**

We placed posters promoting the engagement process at strategic locations around the reserve on Thursday 23 November.



**Postcards to  
community  
(750)**

We printed and delivered postcards to the local area surrounding Sol Green Reserve on Thursday 23 November.



**'Have Your Say' website & e-newsletter**

We had a webpage on Council's dedicated online engagement portal, 'Have Your Say' called 'Upgrading Sol Green Park and Play space', with information about the project, the draft concept plan, timelines, details of previous engagement activities, and contact details. The page was live from 17 November to 17 December.

We also sent an online 'Have Your Say' e-newsletter on 30 November to those registered.



**Direct emails**

We sent an email alert to thirteen (13) people who previously participated in the Sol Green Reserve upgrade on Tuesday 21 November 2023.

We sent further direct emails to:

- 'Friends of Sol Green' community group (Friday 17 November 2023)
- Polish School (age group adults) who utilises community centre (Friday 24 November)
- Sol Green Community Centre and its other users (Monday 11 December)
- Albert Park Primary School, South Melbourne Primary School, Galilee Primary, South Melbourne Only About Children, Port Melbourne Busy Bees (Monday 11 December)

## Engagement activities



### Online survey & poll

We undertook an online survey on our online 'Have



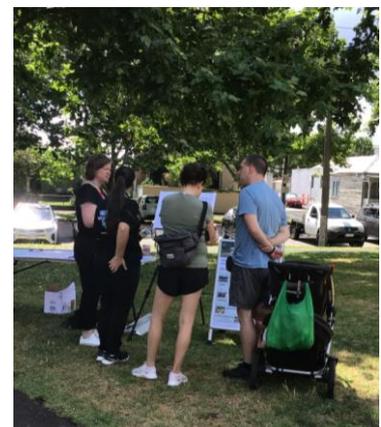
Your Say' webpage from Friday 17 November to Sunday 17 December 2023, asking for community feedback on the draft concept plan for Sol Green Reserve. This included asking what people liked, what they didn't like, and for other feedback. The survey also collected demographic details.

We also had an online poll, which asked people to vote on their favourite playground element from the draft concept plan. This was intended to provide a simple way to gather feedback from visitors to the website who may not want to undertake a full survey.



### 'Pop-Up' sessions at the park (2)

Our staff attended Sol Green Reserve on Saturday 25 November (10am-12noon) and Monday 27 November (3-5pm) to provide community members with information, answer questions about the concept plan, and listen to feedback. We had a variety of activities to collect feedback from community members, including children. Hard copy surveys and reply-paid





envelopes were available on the day for those who were interested.



**Meeting with community member**

We had an online meeting on Thursday 23 November 2023 between a representative of the ‘Friends of Sol Green’ community group, and our staff.

## Reach and participation

### Reach of communication activities

<b>‘Have Your Say’ website</b>	330 views 261 visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most visitors (68.6%) came to the website directly or through a search engine (20.3%).</li> <li>• Thirty-four (34) downloads of the July 2023 Engagement Report and sixteen (16) downloads of the draft concept plan</li> </ul>
<b>‘Have Your Say’ e-newsletter</b>	2931 recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-newsletter sent on 30 November 2023</li> </ul>



## Total participation

Between Friday 17 November and Sunday 17 December 2023, we collected forty-three (43) responses<sup>1</sup> from community members and groups via the methods listed on page 9 and 10 of this report. This included:

- Fourteen (14) people via an online survey
- Twenty-six (26) people at in-person 'Pop-Up' sessions at Sol Green Reserve<sup>2</sup>
- Three (3) people via an online poll

In addition, we received two (2) submissions from community members/groups:

- Friends of Sol Green community group
- Polish school (age group adults)

# Who we heard from

## Demographics

We asked a range of demographic questions to help us understand who we were hearing from. Overall, we collected demographic data from forty (40)

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<sup>1</sup> People/groups were able to participate in more than one of the feedback methods. Because of this, the number of total people who responded is likely to be less than the number of responses recorded.

<sup>2</sup> Council staff recorded demographic details for twenty-six (26) people at the Pop-Up sessions however anecdotally we spoke to more people than were recorded at these events.

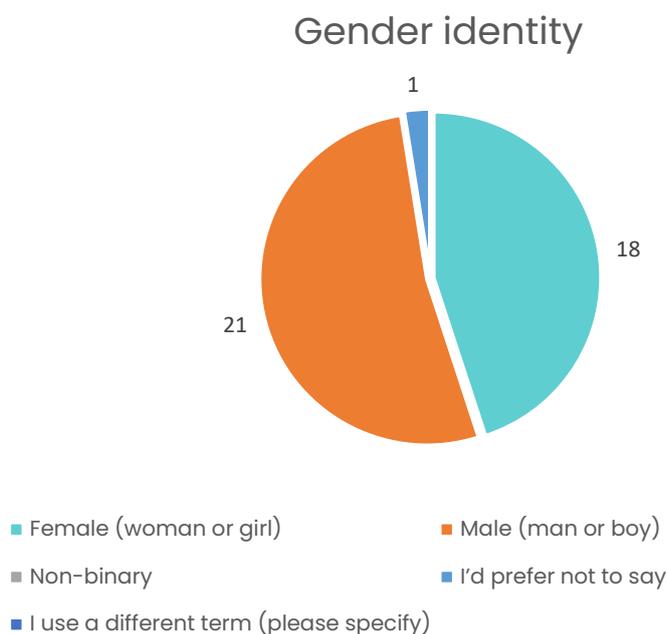
people, including fourteen (14) via the online survey, and twenty-six (26) who attended the Pop-Up sessions in the park via a survey.

### Frequency of visits

We asked how often people visit Sol Green Reserve. Of the fourteen (14) people who completed the online survey, all said they visit ‘regularly, at least once a month’.<sup>3</sup>

### Gender identity

We asked people the gender by which they identify. Of the forty (40) people who answered this question, twenty-one (21) people identified as ‘male (man or boy)’, eighteen (18) as ‘female (woman or girl)’. See graph below.

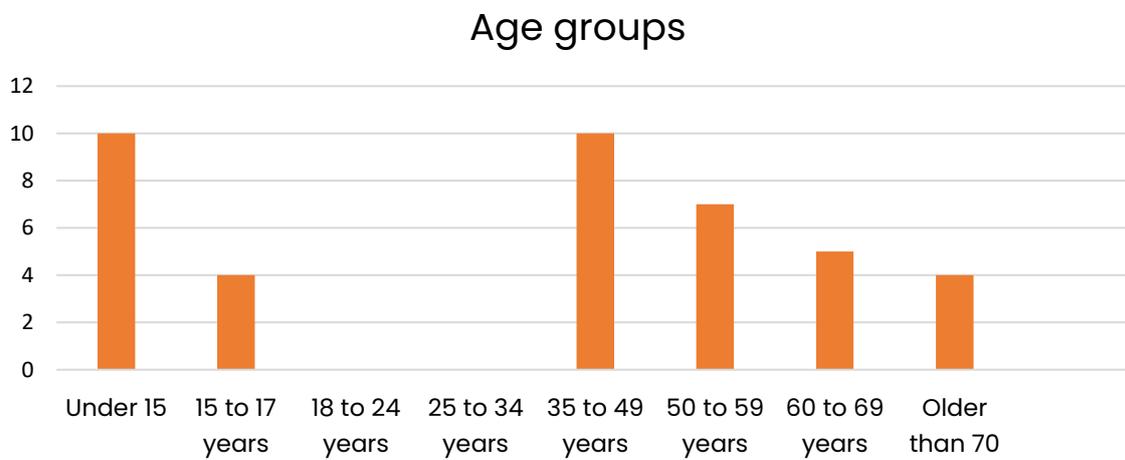


<sup>3</sup> This question was not asked at in-person ‘Pop-Up’ sessions at the Reserve.



## Age groups

We asked people their age group. Of the forty (40) people who answered this question, ten (10) were aged 15 and under, ten (10) people were aged between 35 and 49, seven (7) were aged between 50 and 59. See graph below.



## Residential suburb

We asked people their residential suburb. Of the forty (40) people who answered this question, thirty-five (35) said they lived in South Melbourne, two (2) said they lived in Albert Park and two (2) said they lived in Southbank. One (1) person said they lived in Port Melbourne. See graph below.

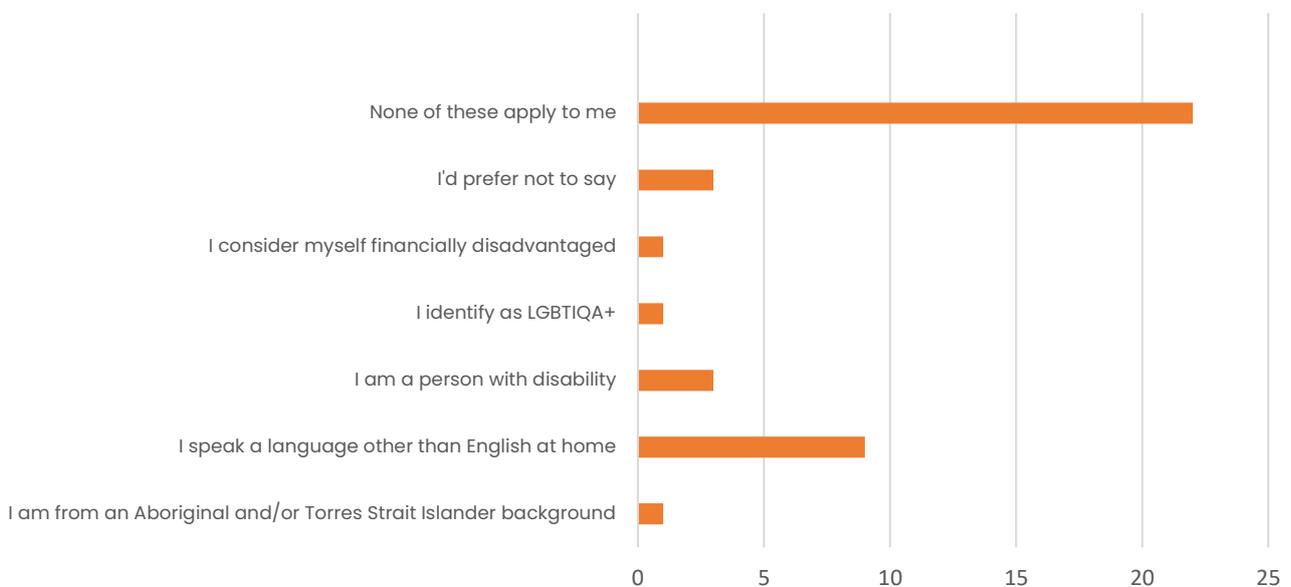




## Personal statements

We showed/asked people a range of personal statements and asked which they thought related to them. Of the forty (40) people who answered this question, nine (9) spoke a language other than English at home, and three (3) identified as a person with a disability. See graph below.

Personal statements



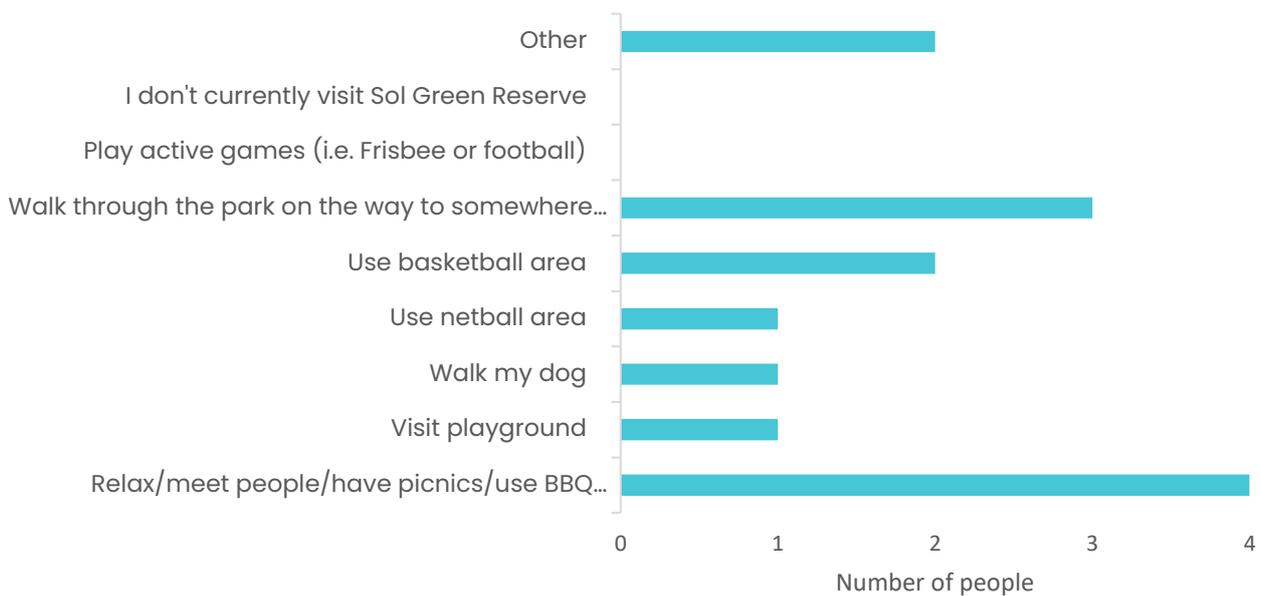
## Activities at Sol Green Reserve

We asked people what they do when they visit Sol Green Reserve. Of the fourteen (14) people who answered the online survey, four (4) said they



‘relax/meet people, have picnics/use BBQ’ and three (3) said they ‘walk through the park on the way to somewhere else’. See graph below.<sup>4</sup>

Activities at Sol Green Reserve



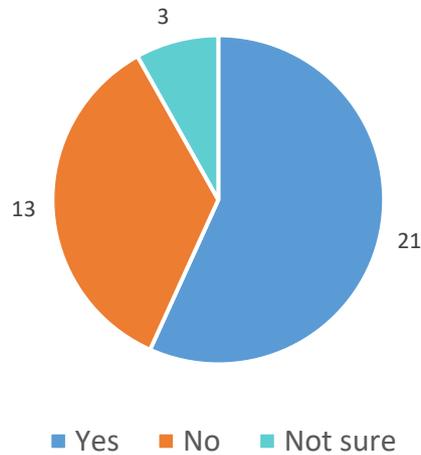
### Previous feedback

We asked whether people had provided feedback to the City of Port Phillip in the last 12 months. Of the thirty-seven (37) people who responded to this question, twenty-one (21) people said yes, thirteen (13) people said no, and three (3) were not sure. See graph on next page.

<sup>4</sup> This question was not asked at in-person ‘Pop-Up’ sessions at the Reserve, however anecdotally we spoke to at least two people who were playing basketball.



Previous feedback



# What we heard

## Feedback about the draft concept plan

We asked community members a series of questions via the online survey and at Pop-Up events, including:

- What do you **like** about the draft concept plan, and why?
- What **don't you like** about the draft concept plan, and why?
- Is there **anything else** you would like to tell us about the draft concept plan?

Answers to these questions are summarised in this section under the key themes of 'playground', 'basketball/soccer area', 'landscape', 'other topics', 'outside of scope' and 'general feedback'.

Community members' comments have been included to illustrate the feedback received. Please note:



- The ‘number of comments’ is included for each theme/topic, however as some people may have provided feedback in multiple ways (i.e. the survey and in person at Pop Ups ) this number is likely to include duplication.
- In some instances (such as Pop-Up events), we transcribed community members’ feedback. For this reason, some of the comments are paraphrased rather than what people told us word-for-word.
- Comments provided are only some of those received/transcribed and are not intended to represent all the feedback we received.

We have included further sections to provide a summary of submissions, as well as the results of online and in-person ‘voting’ activities.

## 1. Playground

Topic	Summary of feedback
Type of equipment and size of playground (26 comments)	22 of the 26 comments received relating to playground equipment and size were in support of the proposal. Some community members raised concerns around issues related to safety and rubbish.  <i>“I like that there will be an expansion of the play equipment for use for families with children”.</i>  <i>“Flying fox and trampoline might attract adults drinking. Leaving rubbish”</i>
Location of playground (10 comments)	6 of the 10 comments received were in support of the proposed relocation of the playground, largely for reasons relating to safety. However some indicated that moving the playground was unnecessary.  <i>“Relocation of the playground sounds good - move kids away from GB area and main road”</i>



	<i>"I don't think it's necessary to relocate the playground. City Rd has never posed a problem."</i>
Accessible equipment (2 comments)	<p>1 person provided positive feedback about the inclusion of accessible equipment, while another person said they would like more information.</p> <p><i>"The inclusion of some accessible play equipment is also very nice"</i></p>
Shade (5 comments)	<p>Shade provided within the park and playground was seen as important, with some community members wanting more options. 1 community member questioned the need for a shade cloth.</p> <p><i>"Shade over the playground [is good]"</i></p> <p><i>"You have trees around the proposed playground, so why bother with a shade cloth?"</i></p>

## 2. Basketball/soccer area

Topic	Summary of feedback
Expanded court and removal of netball (13 comments)	<p>11 comments received were in support of the expansion of the basketball court, with 2 of comments indicating concerns about noise. 2 of the comments indicated disappointment about the loss of netball hoops.</p> <p><i>"I like the new larger basketball courts because the courts are always being used so larger new courts will be great."</i></p> <p><i>"Full size basketball and soccer pitch will increase the amount of noise due to increase number of users. What is proposed to mitigate the noise."</i></p>



	<i>"There are no other netball rings in local public parks in South Melbourne"</i>
Inclusion of soccer (15 comments)	<p>14 of the 15 comments received were in support of the proposed soccer facility, with half of those responses providing suggestions as to how the soccer facility could be improved.</p> <p><i>"Basketball, flying fox and soccer gives older kids something to do"</i></p> <p><i>"Turn soccer goal area into the grass"</i></p>
Location of Basketball (5 comments)	<p>All 5 comments were in support of the relocation of the basketball area, with 2 comments highlighting the need to mitigate basketballs going onto the road.</p> <p><i>"Like relocation of basketball"</i></p> <p><i>"Fencing to prevent balls from going on the road"</i></p>
Other (6 comments)	<p>Other comments related to the height of the hoops and sun glare.</p> <p><i>"[is the existing] basketball hoop too low?"</i></p> <p><i>"Sun through backboard is an issue"</i></p> <p><i>"I ride scooter on basketball court"</i></p>

### 3. Landscape

Topic	Summary of feedback
Grassed area (9 comments)	<p>6 of the 9 comments received highlighted the importance of open space. 2 of these comments expressed the importance of maintaining the existing 'grassed mound' at the reserve.</p> <p><i>"Grass area is enough" (no additional grass areas needed)</i></p>

	<p><i>"Not enough green space - get rid of all or some of the car parks and turn it into green space."</i></p> <p><i>"Like the retention of the mound - sound barrier"</i></p>
Trees and Garden Bed planting (7 comments)	<p>All 7 comments related to the expansion and protection of garden bed planting and trees.</p> <p><i>"[it's good] that you are keeping the trees"</i></p> <p><i>"New garden bed planting [is good]"</i></p> <p><i>"...it would be good to know what the council plans to do to protect new trees planted during the rejuvenation once works have been completed."</i></p>

#### 4. Other topics

Topic	Summary
Seating/ picnic tables (10 comments)	<p>Of the 10 comments received relating to seating and BBQs within the reserve, 9 highlighted the value of seating in 'quiet zones' and opportunities for resting throughout the reserve.</p> <p><i>"Would like seats - especially for playground"</i></p> <p><i>"Can you put some seating next to the basketball court for young people to watch while others play?"</i></p> <p><i>"Not enough casual seating on the perimeter"</i></p>
Path network (5 comments)	<p>4 of the 5 comments received were in support of the proposed path network throughout the reserve, while 1 was opposed. Some said they liked that the new path network is not through the basketball area but wanted to maintain the path connection through to Nelson Road.</p> <p><i>"Path separate from basketball [area is good]"</i></p>



	<p><i>“Path is no longer through the basketball area [is good]”</i></p> <p><i>“The path is used as a shortcut to City Road and is one of the most used areas. Pointless incorporating it into the playground space – leave it as it is.”</i></p>
Lighting (7 comments)	<p>Lighting came through as an issue of importance, with comments about around the type of lighting and hours the park will be lit.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> lighting details will be incorporated into the next phase of design.</p> <p><i>“Lighting [is] so important”</i></p> <p><i>“Show where the lights will go”</i></p> <p><i>“Lighting from 7-10pm?”</i></p>

We heard a range of other suggestions for improving Sol Green Reserve from community members, including:

- Dog poo bags
- Art instalments
- Provide a bicycle rack
- Maintain/ empty rubbish bins, (extra collection, glass/ FOGO)
- Tables in community centre cleaned and replaced regularly
- Water tank/ storage
- Additional drinking fountain
- BBQs fixed/upgraded
- Installation of security cameras

In addition, there was feedback about Council’s long-term vision/masterplan for the area, including the reserve.



- *“No vision, random polling might be useful to eliminate selection bias but a small population sample and a random poll of walk-throughs and people who hire the hall is not representative of a local population.”*
- *“No upgrades should happen before plan for everything – need a masterplan for the greater area”.*
- *“What is the master plan for Sol Green? How does this fit in with the master plan as you need to consider what the long-term aim is.”*

## 5. Outside of scope

Topic	Summary
Community Centre (7 comments)	<p>Although the Sol Green Community Centre does not form part of the scope of this project, there were comments relating to toilets, including suggestions to remove the fencing and expanding the park into the Community Centre area.</p> <p><i>“That there are no improvements planned for the Sol Green Community Centre. If anything, it would be good if they renovated the bathrooms. When community events with a lot of people attending are run, the toilets block easily.”</i></p> <p><i>“The project should be re-framed to address the entire area of Sol Green Reserve at a minimum, which includes the community centre.”</i></p>
Parking (7 comments)	<p>Although parking is outside of the scope of this project, there was some feedback including the need for increased parking facilities are needed, while others wanted less parking, or changes to parking restrictions.</p> <p><i>“Demand for parking in the vicinity is already an issue. Families travel by vehicle to use the park, community</i></p>



	<p><i>centre and bbq facilities. The majority are not nearby residents”.</i></p> <p><i>“Take away all day parking (even 4 hour). Stop free parking”</i></p> <p><i>“Provide for new developments. Parking will get worse”</i></p>
<p>Public toilets (6 comments)</p>	<p>Although toilets are outside of the scope of this project, there was feedback related to the lack of public toilets in the Reserve, which is outside of the scope of this project.</p> <p><i>“Toilets are always locked”</i></p> <p><i>“Needs a public toilet”</i></p>

## 6. General feedback

Overall, we heard a lot of positive feedback from community members about the proposed Concept Plan.

- *“I like everything about the new plan and it has been a long time coming.”*
- *“Great equipment, nice design”*
- *“I will come here more now”*
- *“Likes the adventure and challenges”*
- *“Looks beautifully placed out”*

Some feedback was not supportive of the proposed plan, such as:

- *“Nothing” (when asked what was ‘liked’)*
- *“Polish club not representative [of all community members]”*

## 7. Submissions

Themes from submissions are summarised below, including which feedback is outside of the scope of this project. Original versions of both submissions can be

viewed in the Appendices of this report (page 26). For privacy reasons names and addresses have been removed.

#### Submission 1 – Friends of Sol Green (See Appendix 1, page 26 of this report)

Recommendations from this submission include:

- The project should be re-framed to address all of Sol Green Reserve
- A new design should address all strategic issues pertaining to the park
- The playground renewal should not progress until these are resolved
- The open grassed area suitable for casual play should be enlarged
- Playground equipment should be of a modest scale and character
- Consultation should seek input on priorities for staged implementation.

The submission also provides feedback in relation to the proposed soccer facilities

The following recommendations are outside of the scope of this project:

- The park should be expanded into car parking areas in adjacent streets
- The new design should be integrated with streetscape treatments
- The design should allow for the mooted stormwater tank under the park

#### Submission 2 – Polish school for adults (See Appendix 2, page 33 of this report)

Suggestions in the submission include:

- Install publicly accessible toilets at the reserve

The following suggestion is outside of the scope of this project:

- Clean tables and surfaces at community centre

## **8. Voting**

As part of this engagement process, we asked community members to 'vote' on their favourite element of the draft Concept Plan. This took place via a 'quick poll' on the Have Your Say webpage, and a 'sticky dots' voting' activity at Pop-Up events.



In total, we received 44 votes (3 via the online HYS page, and 41 across the two Pop-Up sessions). The most popular items were trampolines and flying fox.<sup>5</sup>

## Next steps

Thank you to all the community members who provided input into this engagement process.

This report will be made available to the public in early 2024. It will be used to inform the final design for the Sol Green Reserve upgrade, which will be available for public to view via the Have Your Say website in mid-2024.

The report will also be shared with Council, including how this community engagement process impacted the final design for the Sol Green Reserve upgrade.

Interested community members are encouraged to go to [haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/sol-green](https://haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/sol-green) and click 'follow' to receive email notification when there are updates to this project, including when the final design is available to view.

Construction of the upgrade to Sol Green Reserve is planned to take place early-mid 2025.

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*<sup>5</sup> The intention of the voting activity was to provide a quick and easy way to get feedback from visitors to the online Have Your Say page, as well as at Pop-Up events (including involving children). It should be noted that because the online 'quick poll' had very limited participation, the resulting data is unlikely to be utilised for Council's planning purposes.*

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Submission from Friends of Sol Green community group

Open Space Project Delivery Team  
City of Port Phillip  
St Kilda Town Hall, 99a Carlisle Street, St Kilda, Victoria 3182

via email: [openspace@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:openspace@portphillip.vic.gov.au)

29 November 2023

### RE: SOL GREEN RESERVE CONCEPT PLAN

Thank you for your time and discussions to date about this project.

At the on-site consultation session on Saturday 25 November, it was made clear that Council intends to press on with implementation of the playground expansion and relocation along the lines shown in the draft concept design.

It was also clear that Council was satisfied with consultation inputs as recorded in the Community Engagement Summary Report.

Neither the plan nor the consultation is satisfactory.

The aim of the project should be to improve the whole park as a place for the whole community, not to jam it full of play structures. However, the project scope has been deliberately constrained to exclude a large part of the park as well as surrounding streetscapes. The draft plan addresses only a single agenda in a serious way—enhancement of play equipment—and even in addressing play spaces it ignores the poor-quality playground next to the community centre (which is part of the park).

As a result, the proposed plan and consultation process:

- Fails to support adopted council policy and strategies.
- Uses a piecemeal approach that precludes integrated public space design.
- Ignores the history of resident concerns that extend beyond the playground.
- Pre-empted community input into priorities for the park.
- Uses contrived boundaries as a rationale to reject many valid concerns.

Detailed concerns with the design also include:

- The playground is out of scale with the size and role of Sol Green Reserve as a Local Open Space (as defined in the Public Space Strategy).
- The proposed playground location disrupts the largest expanse of open ground in the park, reducing opportunities for casual play.
- The location of the playground away from existing trees leads to a need for shade structures, which would add to visual clutter and costs.
- Adding a soccer goal to the half-court is likely to displace current users of this well-used facility and would also add visual clutter and expense.
- The proposed path layout is very impractical in relation to real circulation patterns across the park.



Considering the entire site would have a significant impact on the location and design of the play facilities, so renewing the playground without an integrated plan for the entire park would be inappropriate.

Recommendations for the project to move forward are:

1. The project should be re-framed to address all of Sol Green Reserve.
2. A new design should address all strategic issues pertaining to the park.
3. The playground renewal should not progress until these are resolved.
4. The open grassed area suitable for casual play should be enlarged.
5. Playground equipment should be of a modest scale and character.
6. The park should be expanded into car parking areas in adjacent streets.
7. The new design should be integrated with streetscape treatments.
8. The design should allow for the mooted stormwater tank under the park.
9. Consultation should seek input on priorities for staged implementation.

A more detailed explanation of these issues and recommendations is attached.

Given Council's refusal to proactively consider options, also attached is a sketch plan illustrating the potential of an alternative approach, in particular showing how this could provide a good location for an improved playground with additional benefits, rather than detriment, to other park users.

Regards



cc: Councillors Marcus Pearl, Heather Cunsolo, and Peter Martin

# SOL GREEN RESERVE



29 NOV 2023



EXAMPLES OF LOW HEDGE TO PROVIDE BUFFER TO ROADWAY



EXAMPLE PLAYGROUNDS BUILT UNDER EXISTING TREE CANOPIES



#### COUNCIL'S APPROVED POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR SOL GREEN RESERVE

The draft plan does not align with the *Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022-2032*, which should have directed the project scope. That strategy's overarching recommendation for Sol Green Reserve is:

Undertake a major upgrade to improve the character and quality of facilities to strengthen its role as a local community space. The future upgrade will need to investigate opportunities to enlarge the reserve and address the potential increased levels of use from the Montague Precinct in Fishermans Bend.<sup>1</sup>

This does not suggest an exercise confined to enhancing the playground.

Some emphasis on play space is given later:

Upgrade the park and play space to improve the character and quality of facilities, strengthening its role as a local community space.

But, on equal standing with that, is the recommendation to:

Investigate opportunities to enlarge the reserve through reallocation of road space.<sup>2</sup>

Other actions in the strategy relevant to Sol Green Reserve include:

- Repurpose existing restricted public space, where appropriate, to consider a wider range of public uses.
- Investigate locations where roads can be repurposed to increase greening.
- Repurpose road space, where appropriate, to create more useable public spaces.
- Help cool our city by reducing impermeable surfaces.
- Integrate Water Sensitive City principles in the design and management of public spaces.<sup>3</sup>

The first point above clearly applies to the Sol Green community centre and fenced spaces around it. The others call for consideration of the park and streets around it in an integrated design approach. The current project should address these issues in an integrated way.

These considerations would have significant impacts on the location and design of play facilities in Sol Green Reserve.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. The project should be re-framed to address all of Sol Green Reserve.
2. A new design should address all strategic issues outlined above.
3. The playground renewal should not progress further until these wider issues are considered and reasonably resolved.

#### PLANNING SOL GREEN RESERVE AS A LOCAL PARK

The Public Space Strategy designates Sol Green Reserve as a Local Open Space. The area that Local Open Spaces are intended to serve is stated as:

Located within 300m safe and easy walking catchment of the community.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy: Technical Report, Nov 2020, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 17-19.

<sup>4</sup> City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy: Technical Report, Nov 2020, p. 74.

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The purpose of Local Open Space is stated as:

Located within easy safe walking distance of the local community and large enough to provide comfortably for two to three activities in the public open space - for example, a medium play area and open grassed area and picnic facility. Examples include Jim Duggan Reserve, St Kilda; and Sol Green Reserve, South Melbourne.<sup>5</sup>

There appears to have been no consideration of the role of the playground at Sol Green in relation to nearby playgrounds at the Lyell Iffla Reserve and at St Vincent Gardens. The Lyell Iffla playground was recently upgraded. Much of the catchments around Sol Green and Lyell Iffla reserves overlap. It is nonsensical to duplicate facilities in these two small parks. Given the better playground already established at Lyell Iffla, play equipment at Sol Green should be even more limited than would be otherwise be appropriate for a small Local Open Space.

There are also obvious contrasts between levels of use the playgrounds at Sol Green Reserve, the Lyell Iffla Street Reserve, and St Vincent Gardens. St Vincent Gardens is much more heavily used by groups of families than Sol Green, although the quality of playground equipment is not very different in the two. The play equipment at Lyell Iffla is better, but relatively little used. There seems little doubt that this results largely from the greater amenity offered at St Vincent Gardens. These playgrounds are all for young children who are brought there by their parents. Expenditure on flashy play equipment is pointless if parents don't want to spend time in the park with their children.

What Sol Green could offer as a complement to the Lyell Iffla playground is a larger open grass area for informal play.

Additionally, the toilets in the Sol Green community centre are only available to building users. The park is too small to reasonably provide separate toilets in it. Without public toilets, the park's facilities are only useful to people who live nearby and can access toilets at home. This makes it inappropriate to consider a major playground (or unusual playground elements) in Sol Green that would attract users from a wider area. Conversely, the St Vincent Gardens playground has public toilets, making it appropriate for a playground that attracts people from wider catchments.

*Recommendations:*

4. The open grassed area suitable for casual play should be increased as much as possible.
5. Playground equipment in Sol Green Reserve should be minimised, of a modest scale and character.

**EXPANSION OF THE PARK**

The Have Your Say page for Sol Green Reserve says that a feasibility study into extension of the park into surrounding streets concluded that

there would be a high impact to parking as the existing spaces are heavily used and their removal will create more disruption rather than added useable space.

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p. 73.



This study has not been made public. The claims are unsupported. The assertion that there would be little added useable space is absurd.

- The added space would easily accommodate a substantial playground and avoid compromising the open area north of the building.
- The current South Melbourne Market consultation canvasses narrowing roads to create play spaces; if feasible there, it is feasible at Sol Green.

There are many existing parking spaces in the precinct with no restrictions on use. Many more are unrestricted at night and on Sundays. Given parking costs in central city areas within walking distance, these are often used (although not consistently). Intensity of use therefore cannot demonstrate their importance to the neighbourhood or even to the wider City of Port Phillip. *If these parking spaces had significant value, they would be managed.*

About this unmanaged parking, Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy says:  
There will ultimately be only four ways to legally park in the City of Port Phillip: permit parking, time-restricted parking, paid parking and off-street parking.<sup>6</sup>

People who now enjoy free use of on-street parking may object to loss of that opportunity. Those objections should be ignored. Most Port Phillip residents pay for on-street parking permits. Fairness requires this to apply to all.

Much of the local parking is also inefficiently arranged. For example, if parking in Nelson Road between Coventry and Dorcas streets was line-marked at 90 degrees, up to 18 additional spaces could fit in the same area.

Further, Local Open Spaces are by definition easily accessible to their intended users by walking and do not require car parking.

So:

- A number of parking spaces next to the park equal to the number of unmanaged spaces in the precinct could be removed, with controls applied to manage now-unmanaged spaces nearby to replace the role of managed spaces around the park. That would account for approximately 56 out of the 61 spaces around the park.
- The remainder of parking spaces next to the park could be replaced by implementing more efficient parking bay layouts in nearby streets.

This would only require the cost of signs and line marking.

*Recommendations:*

6. Except for the existing two disabled bays and one flexicar bay, all parking at the perimeter of the reserve should be removed and the park expanded, with nearby parking controls adjusted to manage impacts.

#### COORDINATION WITH STREETScape WORKS AND OTHER PROGRAMS

The siloed thinking demonstrated by the draft concept plan is dismaying.

- The proposal to improve park lighting in isolation is problematic. Street lighting at the perimeter of a small park like this is the first thing to address, and if done well minimises the need for lights in the park.

<sup>6</sup> City of Port Phillip, Sustainable Transport Strategy, 2014, p.22, 24

- There is no provision for a storm water detention tank under the park, as mooted in residents' meetings with councillors.
- There is no consideration of WSUD or sustainability at all.
- It doesn't deal with community glass and FOGO bins now in the park.
- The Have Your Say page for Sol Green Reserve refers to unresolved plans for a bike lane in Montague Street as an excuse for not expanding the park. This is mystifying: why is a bike lane is being contemplated along a quiet dead-end street like Montague St between Coventry St and City Rd?

As the current budget is too small to implement a larger scale plan, a strategy for staged implementation should be developed. Funding through other programs (urban forest, de-paving, stormwater management) should be coordinated with a place-based design rather than implementing works on a piecemeal single-issue basis.

*Recommendations:*

7. The new design should be integrated with design for streetscapes around the park perimeter including issues such as accessibility, lighting, tree planting, and stormwater management.
8. If there is any likelihood of a stormwater detention tank being built under Sol Green Reserve, the plan should allow for it and keep the area clear of structures, light poles, underground conduits, etc.

**CONSULTATION**

The boundaries drawn around the project scope pre-empted and constrained the consultation process.

The consultation has also been skewed to support the narrow focus on playground equipment. It does not ask, "Are you happy to have a significantly reduced green space to get these play structures?", which is proposed.

On p. 2 of the Community Engagement Summary Report for the project, it says "open-ended questions from the online survey do not have responses due to an error in the system, where the skip-logic function was not working correctly, resulting in fewer responses from the community". This loss will have reinforced the bias of the other questions and the pre-emptive limitation of the project scope. It undermines the credibility of the consultation.

The material provided to inform the consultation process does not include professional analysis and research that might be expected to support a public space project, such as:

- Systematic observation of uses of the park.
- Contextual analysis, such as relationships with other nearby playgrounds.
- Tree condition assessments.
- Historical Heritage and Cultural Heritage assessments.

*Recommendations:*

9. Consultation should seek input on priorities for staged implementation.
10. Public discussion about public projects should be *informed*, rather than reduced to polls seeking predetermined answers to predetermined questions.



## Appendix 2. Submission from Polish School for adults

### Comments

Our Polish School kindly asks for consideration of the following:

- it would be greatly appreciated if external toilet facilities were installed in the park or surrounds as we often notice people coming into the community centre to utilise toilets, change babies etc. Having publicly accessible toilets in the park would enhance community comfort, safety, ~~and~~
- it would be appreciated if tables and surfaces that are used regularly in the community centre be cleaned or replaced to help with comfort and hygiene.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions.