
REPORT 1
(1215/11/IM)

FRANK KITTS PARK REDEVELOPMENT

1. Purpose of Report

To provide Council with the background information to, and to seek approval to proceed with, the proposed re-development of Frank Kitts Park.

2. Executive Summary

The current design of Frank Kitts Park fails to adequately reflect its waterfront location and does not effectively integrate the harbour and city.

Wellington Waterfront Limited has sought to address these issues by investigating re-development of the park to respond to the perceived design flaws.

Wellington Waterfront Limited has undertaken a design competition and selected a design. It is this design that Wellington Waterfront Limited seeks Council's approval of.

The cost of the redevelopment of the Frank Kitts Park will be met by Wellington Waterfront Limited and the Wellington Chinese Garden Society.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended the Council:

- 1. Receive the information;*
- 2. Note that the Waterfront Development Subcommittee approved the design brief and process for the redevelopment of Frank Kitts Park;*
- 3. Note that the Strategy and Policy Committee on 6 September 2007 resolved that the Frank Kitts design would come to the incoming Council for approval;*
- 4. Approve Wellington Waterfront Limited commissioning the developed design for Frank Kitts Park;*
- 5. Approve Wellington Waterfront Limited commencing the construction of the project in accordance with the Wellington Waterfront Limited Development Plan in 2009/10, subject to funding from commercial proceeds, the Wellington Chinese Garden Society raising their share of the costs and obtaining resource consent.*

4. Background

4.1 *The Current Frank Kitts Park*

For largely historical reasons¹ the Park today faces the city and not the harbour. The Park has a 3 metre high concrete wall surrounding its water side and is raised up so there is no glimpse of water from the main body of the Park or from Jervois Quay. It provides poor pedestrian linkages between the city and the water and as the design presents a difficult events space. These problems were identified in Jan Gehl's *City to Waterfront*² - *Public Spaces* study completed in October 2004, where Frank Kitts Park is used to illustrate facades along the waterfront that are closed and uninteresting (P29).

Despite these negative design features, the park does have the potential to develop a number of positive qualities. It is a large green space in the middle of the city and a centre for outdoor activities both on and off the water. It has a popular children's playground, is used by office workers during lunchtimes, provides a facility for small to medium sized events complementing the larger Waitangi Park.

4.2 *Wellington Waterfront Framework*

The Wellington Waterfront Framework (April 2001) identified room for improvements to be made to Frank Kitts Park, although this was not seen to be a priority. The primary comment relating to Frank Kitts Park in the Wellington Waterfront Framework is:

"There is concern that the park faces the city and does not open out to the water's edge. However, with the exception of the need for improvements around both the quay edge and at the end of the Events Centre (now TSB Arena) work in this area is not seen as a priority" (P35).

Fifteen years after its original design and construction it is considered to be an appropriate time to significantly improve this important central city open space, and better assimilate with the other enhancements that have taken place on the waterfront.

4.3 *Chinese Garden*

The Wellington Chinese Garden Society (WCGS) first expressed an interest in developing a Chinese garden over ten years ago. After discussions with the

¹ The Nissan 500 motor race was a key consideration at the time that the current design was developed

² In February 2004 Wellington City Council commissioned Gehl Architects to review:

- how people use central Wellington's public spaces
- the quality of these public spaces
- how people access the waterfront from the city.

Wellington City Council and WWL, the Society entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2003, regarding a site in the Waitangi Park area.

The parties committed to the development of a 3,000 square metre site on the waterfront for a Chinese garden, on the understanding that Xiamen and now (it is hoped) Beijing, both sister cities to Wellington, would assist with the project. The WCGS was pleased that the project was to be recognised by being placed in Waitangi Park as this was regarded as a desirable location.

During a subsequent design competition for the development of Area 2 design competition of Waitangi Park, a Chinese garden was included in the competition brief for the Transition Building development.

The selection of the UN Studio design for the Transition Building raised issues regarding the suitability of the Chinese Garden being located in this area and atop a car park. In addition, the implementation of the UN Studio design was seen as likely to be a medium-to-long term development project.

In January 2006, WWL met with the WCGS to discuss the outcome of the design competition and the likelihood of delays in construction while funding is secured. The WCGS formally responded to WWL congratulating the company for selecting UN Studio's design and requested the Company to consider and explore alternative suitable sites on the waterfront for the Chinese garden.

WWL reviewed various waterfront park areas and determined that Frank Kitts Park was a suitable location for a Chinese garden.

The WCGS provided its support for a Chinese garden to be located within Frank Kitts Park for the following reasons:

- The location next to water is positive and there would be an interaction between moving water (the sea) and still water (in the garden)
- Frank Kitts Park lies between central and local government areas of the city
- Enjoys all day sun
- The Dragon Boat Festival and Chinese New Year activities have long been associated with this area
- A Chinese garden would provide a tranquil setting for central business district office workers to enjoy during lunchtime
- Developing the Chinese garden as part of the Frank Kitts Park redevelopment project would not be as expensive or as technically difficult as the Waitangi Park option

As a consequence of the level of support WWL received from the WCGS for a Frank Kitts Park location, a Chinese garden was included in the Frank Kitts Park design brief.

The WCGS has been fully consulted throughout the entire competition process and fully endorses the selection of the preferred scheme.

A Chinese Garden in Wellington will be a statement about Chinese culture and what it is to be Chinese in New Zealand. It will recognise the history of the Chinese presence in Wellington since the mid 1800s and the cultural contribution of the Chinese community to contemporary society.

The Chinese community in Wellington represented by the WCGS is presenting the Chinese Garden as a gift to the city of Wellington in recognition of the Chinese contribution and experience in NZ of the past 140 years.

4.4 Design Competition

WWL elected to conduct and manage a design competition. Competitors were asked to respond to eight briefing considerations:

- Creative and strategic thinking to improve the park
- Design the park to meet the needs of a diverse range of people
- Include a Chinese garden
- Sense of place
- Safety
- Servicing and parking
- Edges, connections and views; and
- Coordination with adjoining projects

At its meeting of 4 September 2006 the WDSC approved the draft design brief and asked that Council officers seek public feedback on the brief over a six week period. During the public participation section of the meeting Esther Fung, representing the WCGS, voiced the Society's support for the inclusion of a Chinese Garden in the redevelopment of the park.

At the WDSC meeting on 11 December 2006, the committee received a summary of written submissions on the proposed design brief for Frank Kitts Park and listened to oral submissions. Of the sixty-nine written submissions, fifteen opposed either a redevelopment of the park or the inclusion of a Chinese garden. WDSC approved the draft design brief with no changes.

Registrations of Interest in the design competition were called for during June /July 2007. Nine were received; 5 companies were short-listed and invited to submit designs, these being:

- Boffa Miskell
- Chow Hill
- HBO + EMTB
- Isthmus Group
- Wraight and Associates Ltd

The competition ran over a period of 8 weeks from 10 August to 5 October 2007. For the purposes of public feedback, all 5 designs were exhibited in the Waterfront Project Information Centre in Shed 6, Queens Wharf, from 15 October to 5 November 2007. Of the one hundred & twenty eight members of the public who provided written feedback, only nineteen stated they did not want Frank Kitts Park altered in any way.

During this time reports were also commissioned from TAG and the WCGS(WCGS). These were provided to the jury, along with the public feedback, to assist the jury in making its recommendation after their meeting on 20 November 2007.

The jury selected the Garden of Beneficence as the winning design. This scheme was the preferred design of both TAG and WCGS. Their reports and recommendations are attached (Appendix A).

The jury members were:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Dr Catherin Bull (Chair) | - | Professor of Landscape Architecture, Melbourne University |
| Oi Choong | - | Chinese Garden expert and liaison person for WCGS |
| Morten Gjerde | - | Urban design expert |
| Robin Simpson | - | TAG representative |
| Rosamund Averton | - | Community representative |
| Ian Pike | - | CEO Wellington Waterfront Ltd |

4.5 *The Garden of Beneficence – the winning scheme*

While all of the competition entries were of a high standard, the Garden of Beneficence was a stand out entry. None of the other schemes presented a complete design solution. Some designs had the main entrance to the Park away from existing pedestrian flows, the Chinese Garden element was variously highly unresolved, indistinguishable or pervasive throughout the entire Park. In two instances the Chinese Garden was atop the car park, presenting similar issues to the Waitangi Park location. Several of the schemes were unsuccessful in creating a useful space for events. Open space deemed suitable for events was either too small, not usefully shaped or cluttered. The children's playground re-sited above the car park presented security, isolation, access and exposure issues. Other designs were simply cost prohibitive with one design exceeding the budget by approximately 50%.

This winning scheme was submitted by Wraight & Associates Ltd, a Wellington-based company with an established reputation in landscape and urban design.

The design team will be a collaboration between Wraight & Associates Ltd (lead consultant, landscape architect), Athfield Architects Ltd (architects, urban design), Duncan Campbell (Chinese garden historian) Dunning Thornton Consultants Ltd (structural, civil and services engineers) and Sinclair Knight Merz Ltd (lighting and electrical engineering).

The collaboration between Wraight & Associates and Athfield Architects is well founded and experienced, and is demonstrated on a number of projects including the Wellington waterfront.

The chosen scheme will include shelter, twisting ground planes, a folding pavilion roof plane, veiled spaces, still and cascading water, filtered stormwater, rich and varied planting, play areas and much improved pedestrian access.

It was the jury's view that:

'the clear structure of this design, which makes it at once an integral whole, simple to understand spatially, robust in terms of further refinement and interesting to experience. While apparently simple, its skillful organisation of form and space works - resolving interface issues, successfully organizing usable spaces and integrating the site with its surroundings. It also creates more exciting and useable spaces throughout.

The jury is of the view that the design's strong and simple structure can maintain its integrity during subsequent design development phases. Its integral structure and the confined nature of the site require development as a whole'.

The key positive features of the winning scheme noted by the jury were:

- Activity is concentrated to the south of the park and is associated with existing buildings;
- The levels of the main lawn are reduced to open up the Willeston Street vista and to provide a clear relationship between the lawn, promenade and water;
- A buffer is provided between the main lawn and Jervois Quay;
- A main lawn is inviting to general use and suitable for events;
- Clear north-south pedestrian links;
- An activated upper level area is linked to its context (stairs, pavilions, teahouse, ramp);
- A Chinese Garden (Garden of Beneficence) is located to activate the Willeston Street axis and provide a destination at the waterfront;
- A Chinese Garden is sited and designed to integrate and improve the link between the lawn and level above the underground car park;
- A compelling, comprehensible and contemporary Chinese Garden is embedded in its park setting;
- A playground is retained in its popular northern location with the lighthouse slide used as a component feature visible from Jervois Quay, framing the view from Hunter Street;
- A south east view to the water from Jervois Quay and Hunter Street is opened up;
- Important sculptures and memorials are located to take best advantage of the new site organisation.

5. Discussion

In redeveloping the Park WWL believes there is an opportunity to:

1. Provide much improved **city to water connections**
2. Design the Park in way that reflects modern **urban design** thinking
3. Enhance the manner in which Frank Kitts Park **complements the harbour** surrounding waterfront features

4. Deliver to the city's long standing sister city obligations by the inclusion of a **Chinese garden**
5. Improve **events space** for small to medium sized activities
6. Enhance **safety** with particular focus on the children's playground and Jervois Quay edge

The achievement of these improvements will enhance the value of Frank Kitts Park as a community asset, providing better or new opportunities to utilise the Park for recreational purposes.

How the winning design achieves each of these opportunities will be considered in turn.

5.1 Improved city to water connections

The scheme recognises the opportunities of Frank Kitts Park as a predominantly large green space easily accessed from the city centre.

The proposal refocuses the Park's relationship with the city. It builds upon the city's street grid and will provide highly visible connections between the park and city, park and sea and city and sea. The large lower level Harbour Lawn will have expansive views both from and to the park. Views from within the city along Willeston Street and Hunter Street will be directed out to the harbour and Wellington region beyond. In the case of Willeston Street the view shaft will be framed on one side by the sequencing of walls and folded roof structures of the Garden of Beneficence (the Chinese garden) creating a direct visual link with St Gerard's Monastery.

Access into, around and out of the park will be greatly improved with the simplification of links to the city and the evolving harbour promenade. The harbour side promenade that skirts the eastern and southern periphery of the park is designed as a generously wide pedestrian route from which access into the various spaces within the park may be easily gained. Barriers to access are a particular disadvantage of the current design.

In addition the transformation of the park's green spaces will provide greater visible and physical access to the harbour. The removal of wall and stair structures around the park's harbour's edge and tilting of the Harbour Lawn redirects the focus of the park toward the harbour. The upper terrace or City Lawn, will take full advantage of the harbour views from its pergola covered edge and will offer visual connection back to the city.

5.2 Modern day urban design thinking / Complement the surrounding waterfront features

The Park has been designed to incorporate contemporary landscape elements and practices that will tie the park to its city-sea setting and integrate it into the wider network of Wellington Waterfront spaces such as the new Kumutoto development, Taranaki Street Wharf and Waitangi Park.

Materials common to the Wellington Waterfront environment will be employed to facilitate the reconfigured park's integration including the waterfront suite of furniture (seating, lighting, bollards, rubbish bins, signage), asphalt, concrete, weathered timber, painted steel, stone and planting appropriate to the park's coastal location. The Chinese Garden and Playground will contribute to differentiating Frank Kitt's Park from other spaces within the waterfront network.

Water sensitive urban design principles will be employed in the form of bio-retention planting beds along the adjacent Jervois Quay. These elements will filter road stormwater run-off removing pollutants before surface waters are discharged into the harbour.

Planting and landscape elements will be used to offer structure, shelter and visual amenity. Relocation of existing pohutukawas is proposed.

The use of materials and modern day urban design principles will be employed to ensure that Frank Kitts Park sits more appropriately in the environment that is being created across the waterfront.

A Park that is, and looks, fifteen years old, in terms of both its infrastructure and design programming, will be modernised.

5.3 Chinese Garden

The chosen scheme will be an iconic, contemporary design expression of a traditional Chinese garden incorporating key elements of traditional Chinese garden design such as pathways, a water element, large rocks, topographic variations, pavilion and screen walls. It will emphatically not be a walled garden in the traditional sense.

It will comprise an area of approximately 3,000 square metres within a park of some 20,000 square metres, and will provide a transitional area between the elevated portion of Frank Kitts Park and the lower level green space.

The garden will provide a range of spaces including spaces for passive enjoyment, meeting places, areas for performances and celebrations such as Chinese festivals.

Although compact, the Garden's composition of rooms and galleries will offer a range of experiences from the intimate to the expansive. Walls, screens, planting and landscape elements will be arranged to define views into, out of and around the garden rooms. Each room within the garden will have a distinct character that is driven by the garden's expression of traditional and contemporary themes.

Borrowed views of the harbour and park will add to the experiences of the various rooms within the Chinese Garden. Conversely, intentional openings and gaps are designed through the careful consideration of walls, columns and balustrades to allow views into the Chinese Garden from the broader environment.

Levels within the garden have been designed to allow accessible routes through the garden and to the teahouse at the upper level.

5.4 Events

During the design process, WWL consulted with a wide range of Events Managers who have used Frank Kitts Park for various functions in the past. Their general observations are noted as follows:

- Frank Kitts Park is considered to be critical on the events landscape – particularly given the resource consent noise and timing restrictions that apply to Waitangi Park
- Positioning of the children’s playground and the link between the park and the southern end of the TSB Bank Arena provide a number of events management limitations
- Shelter from wind and sun is important
- The amphitheatre (while providing some shelter) limits site layout options – generally, large flat spaces provide for better sight lines and flexibility of use
- The upper level is not regarded as suitable for many events – it is isolated and suffers from accessibility and weight loading issues
- A barrier between the Park and Jervois Quay is needed to address Occupational Safety & Health concerns, particularly for events aimed at children

The selected scheme offers a range of event spaces from the intimate to crowd gatherings. It will readily accommodate a range of event types from gatherings to processions. The proposed Chinese Garden will mediate between the two levels: the roof park and the street level park. Two newly defined and focused open spaces evolve, hinged by the distinctive spine of the Chinese Garden.

The upper level City Lawn provides a protected space above the activity of the promenades. The focus of the space will be lawn. Around the periphery will be a framework of shelters, flexible enough to accommodate small events like weddings and gatherings. The proposed entries to this upper space are numerous, allowing access from all sides. Kiosks of either a temporary or permanent nature can be accommodated within this flexible sheltered zone while complementary activities are focused on the open lawn area.

The northern Harbour Lawn, is designed to return the park’s focus to the harbour. The planted western fringe of this space offers a level of protection and separation from the traffic on Jervois Quay. The Harbour Lawn is designed to tilt towards the harbours edge providing much improved interaction with harbour and promenade activities. The lawn is designed as a highly permeable space that is easily accessed. During large events it is anticipated that the harbour promenade could be used to further augment space required for events. The generous width of the promenade means that it could increase the capacity of the useable event space while still providing circulation.

WWL will continue to consult with Events Managers during the detailed design phase of the redevelopment of the Park to ensure the optimal outcome is achieved.

5.5 Safety

The selected scheme optimises safety on the site. The children's playground has been located to sit adjacent to the active lawn area and within the highly visible and protected northeast corner of the site against the promenade. The playground is highly permeable along its lawn and promenade edges. A more controlled entry is designed for the western boundary with a narrower opening leading into the Hunter Street Plaza seating area and a more open access further west onto the city side promenade. The playground is separated from traffic on its northern edge by a slightly sunken garden that is densely planted with low to medium height reeds and grasses. It is anticipated that the high visibility into and out of the playground augmented by the placement of planting and landscape elements will make for a safe experience.

All spaces are designed to ensure that they have multiple entry/exit points and all have natural surveillance being viewed from either above and from adjacent spaces.

Improved permeability, lighting and better overall design will result in the Park being a much safer environment during both daylight and night time.

The Chinese garden is a particular challenge where the design allows lush planted space and the use of walls for a feeling of seclusion. Again the spaces have been created with natural surveillance in mind and multiple option of access and movement to prevent any feeling of entrapment but also still create opportunities for a feeling of seclusion and contemplation.

5.6 Budget

WWL commissioned Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB - quantity surveyors) to estimate the construction cost of all five submissions. Total costs ranged between \$7.9 million and \$12.4million.

For the winning scheme RLB's report estimates a total cost of \$8.5m, of which the Chinese garden component is in the order of \$3.5-4.0m, leaving \$4.5-5.0m as the cost to be met by WWL.

WWL has \$4.0m budgeted for this project and is confident that this budgetary limit will be met through value engineering during the design development process.

The cost of the redevelopment will be met by commercial proceeds from the Waterfront Project and has been included in the WWL Development Plan previously approved by Council.

The proposal includes a small commercial tenancy that will generate an income which could be applied to ongoing maintenance of the Park.

Approval of this proposal by Council in December 2007, will allow the WCGS to commence its fund raising at the Chinese New Year celebrations on 10 February 2008.

The scheme builds upon the structure that already exists in Frank Kitts Park. It recognises that wholesale intervention is unaffordable. What is achieved is an improved space that is achievable within budget and, over time, allows further additive improvements to be made.

6. Conclusion

Frank Kitts Park is in need of redevelopment in order to address and implement the improvements recommended in the Framework. It is today not comparing well with more recent development works completed on the waterfront. It was originally designed in an entirely different context and environment and was subject to constraints that are no longer relevant or appropriate. WWL believes the time for its redevelopment has arrived.

WWL believes that the Garden of Beneficence will deliver on the objectives for the redevelopment. It will become a wonderful new and modern open space consistent with other more recent enhancements on the waterfront and one that will better serve the needs of Wellingtonians.

WWL has conducted a robust design competition that has resulted in the selection of an exemplary concept design for a much improved park.

The outcome has received the acclamation of the Chinese community and will allow Wellington to deliver on its sister city obligations.

WWL Management and Board unanimously support the Garden of Beneficence and seek Council's approval for its timely implementation.

Report prepared by: Ian Pike, Chief Executive, Wellington Waterfront Limited

Supporting Information

1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome

The Frank Kitts Park redevelopment would contribute to the following Council outcomes:

More Liveable – Wellington will be a great place to be, offering a variety of places to live, work and play within a high quality environment.

Stronger sense of place – Wellington will have a strong local identity that celebrates and protects its sense of place, capital-city status, distinctive landform and landmarks, defining features, history, heritage buildings, places and spaces.

More Eventful – Wellington will maximise the economic value from promoting and hosting high-profile events.

More Prosperous – Wellington’s urban form, and flexible approach to land use planning in the central city, will contribute to economic growth and prosperity.

2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

C378 Wellington Waterfront Project

A312 Wellington Waterfront Operations

CX131 Wellington Waterfront Development.

In accord with the 2006/07 LTCCP.

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

Maori have had a long connection with the harbour and waterfront that continues today. There are several sites of significance for iwi around the waterfront including Waitangi Lagoon and Te Aro Pa.

4) Decision-Making

This is not a significant decision. The report deals with a strategic asset, but does not propose any changes to the development plan.

5) Consultation

a) General Consultation

Consultation has been undertaken on the design brief. All affected parties were included.

b) Consultation with Maori

Representatives from Council’s mana whenua Treaty partners – Wellington Tenth Trust and Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira were involved in the development of the Wellington Waterfront Framework that underpins the Waterfront Development Plan.

6) Legal Implications

There are no implications from this report.

7) Consistency with existing policy

This report is consistent with existing WCC policy on waterfront development.