



**Submission by Civic Trust Auckland on:**

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Civic Trust Auckland (CTA) is a non-profit public interest group formed in 1968 with activities and interests throughout the greater Auckland region. The aims of the Trust include:

- Protection of natural landforms
- Preservation of heritage, in all its aspects
- Encouragement of good planning, for the city and region.

As a regional stakeholder, CTA has worked alongside Auckland Council since its inception to provide submissions on both Council and Local Board plans.

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**Submission on Heard Park Concept Plan**

1. Although the Concept Development Phase is supposedly informed through public consultation it appears that the plan has already been effectively resolved from a design perspective, with any opportunity for public input limited to providing consent for the proposed design and making some choice about play facility preferences.
2. Notwithstanding the presumption in the Concept Plan that the Local board will formally adopt the concept plan, CTA's submission is that the Waitemata Local Board should not proceed with the Heard Park Concept Plan.

There are several reasons for this:

- The Heard Park Concept Plan relies to an extent on the project's inclusion in the Parnell Plan. Its inclusion in the Parnell Plan was partly funded to the extent of works to renovate the community facility rooms at the southern end of Heard Park, and relocation of the public toilet, with more funding apparently available for the provision of an additional play facility for the park. Any further development of the park to give effect to the Parnell Plan would, we presume, be a step towards the most detailed vision contained in that document as shown overleaf.



Heard Park

(pp.14-15 of the Parnell Plan)

We do not see that the Proposed Concept Plan (shown below) would give effect to or integrate with the vision (shown above) in the Parnell Plan, and so we assume that the driver for this project arises from a perceived need for a 'design refresh'.

Proposed Concept Plan



- While we agree that an additional play facility may be warranted, we doubt the proposed re-landscaping would deliver worthwhile marginal utility for what, although undisclosed, must be a considerable sum. Especially at a time when the Council coffers are under considerable pressure, we trust decision makers will resist spending on projects that are simply 'nice-to-haves' rather than anything for which there has been a demonstrable demand.
- With the new National Policy Statement on Urban Development recently introduced, it will become clearer over the next two years how the urban form might develop along Parnell Road, and it may therefore be prudent to wait and see how that evolves before committing scarce resources to this project.

3. Notwithstanding our submission that the Local Board should not proceed with this project, if it does decide to proceed, we provide the following comments and feedback on some of the:

### **Opportunities and Constraints identified in the concept plan**

#### **Paving:**

- With general park activity located from the centre of the park out to its perimeter, and the children's play activity positioned as far as possible back from the road by the community building, CTA thinks the general layout makes sense and there appears no good reason to change that.
- CTA agrees that the current ratio of paving to grass generally works although there is no compelling reason why this ratio could not sustain some level of adjustment, such as might arise from changing the provision of facilities for play in the park.
- The paving is largely comprised of simple rectangular concrete pavers. We do not agree that is dated and think the designers should work with the grey paving already there. If there is any need for any new paving, that can be achieved by the repositioning of existing paving.
- The inset brick-coloured paving shown below bears no apparent relationship to other elements in the park, but tonally it is compatible with both the community building and art work in the southern corner of the park by the swings, and could be re-used in any re-design of the paving layout to delineate the area set aside for play equipment.



- As identified, some of the paving is uneven (like that shown below). That may present a hazard. Rather than replace all the tiles, a more prudent solution would be to lift the offending tiles and reset them in a level position.



**Vegetation:**

- CTA agree that the trees should be retained.
- We consider vegetation is perhaps wrongly identified as a 'constraint' to the extent that it is considered "the existing hedges and garden beds are dated and need to be modernised and refreshed." With regard to the hedges, we disagree and consider they work well, providing useful partitioning of the area according to function while also providing a measure of privacy and shelter from any breeze, while continuing to provide desirable safety through maintaining clear sightlines around the park. Safe but private enclosure while sitting on the grass, and some measure of wind break are desirable attributes apparently lost in the redesign.
- If there is a requirement for additional space, the northernmost corner of the park appears underutilised. A low square garden bed (of roses) that could be changed with planting limited to the perimeter, and the extra area gained could be further grassed, or the existing paving extended to provide for envisaged market days.

**Materials:**

- We agree that enduring elements lift the aesthetic of the park and Parnell. The existing rectangular concrete pavers are simple, elegant enough and perhaps just in need of some maintenance, and perhaps some signage to discourage park users from feeding the pigeons, as this appears to be a problem.

**Play:**

- CTA agrees that the park should continue to provide a play environment given the intention of the legacy of the bequest that led to the formation of the park. Given the prevalence of tooth decay amongst children, it may be best not to promote that part of the history of the site. We do however think, based on conversations with park users, that an additional substantial play element could be designed to be integrated with the swings. We think a good choice would be a slide, positioned adjacent to the artwork so that as users climb the steps, they might also better appreciate the artwork

**Activation:**

- We consider it should be fairly easy to install any necessary cabling or conduits beneath the existing paving in order to better enable events and markets

**Circulation:**

- We do not support the development of any bike parking in Heard Park beyond that required by park users

**Steps accessing building on eastern boundary:**

- It is proposed to redesign the stairs so they can be used for seating. There is no detail as to how that might look but they are not shown in the plan or any other visuals presented. Considering the fall in the site along Ruskin Street, we think some kind of wall is the logical design response and we think there is ample access both visually and physically already provided along the Ruskin Street edge of the park. We suggest therefore that the existing wall and adjacent steps be retained, and that perhaps more space might if necessary be available above the wall by reducing the planting and limiting it to just around the perimeter.

## Seating:

- We do not consider the existing seating unattractive nor particularly uncomfortable. The wooden seating surfaces are certainly warmer to sit on than the concrete and they have aged and blend well with the concrete aesthetic. We also note the success of temporary seating put out during summertime.

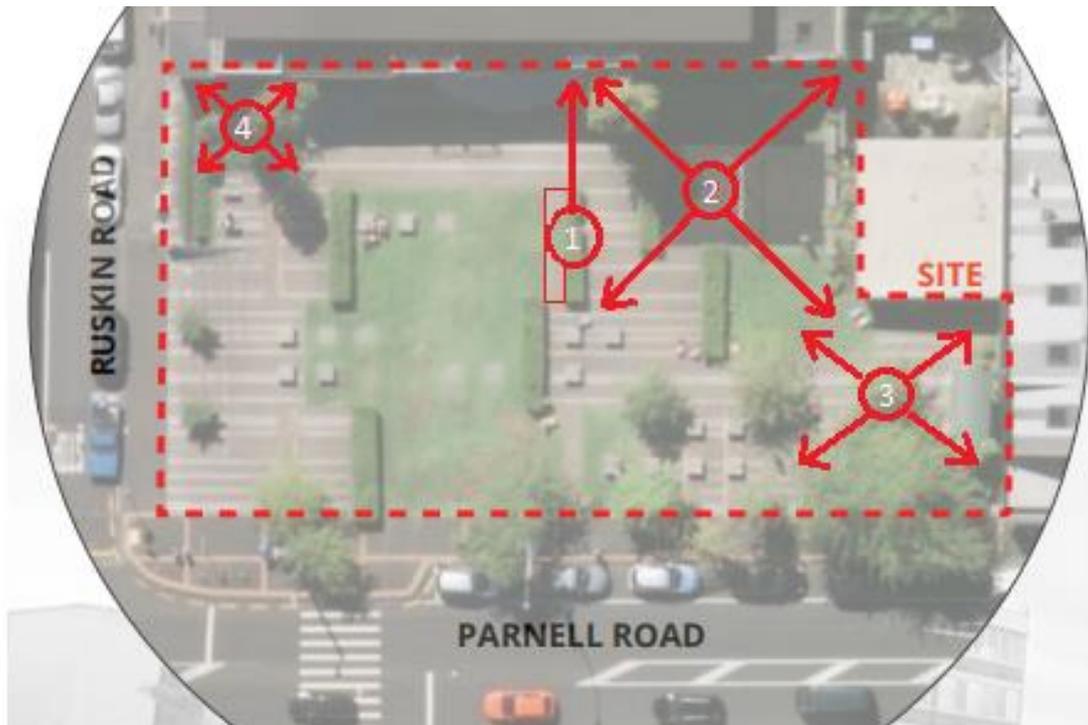


4. We also provide some feedback on the :

### Elements of the current layout that don't work

- The retaining wall is a logical design response to the fall in Ruskin Street.
  - Access to the park from Ruskin Street is adequate and the stairs work fine.
  - The boundary between the park and road appear to be integrated by means of transitional passage from footpath to paving, with steps designed to take account of the contours, and it appears to work fine.
  - The hedges do dissect the park, or put another way, they 'define spaces for different uses' which we consider a positive attribute.
  - The stairs that lead from the park to the building at 1-3 Ruskin Street are in fact used by occupants of that building. We are nonetheless of the view that those stairs could in future be modified.
  - We agree that the façade of the building at 1-3 Ruskin Street could be softened and we think this could be achieved by planting up to a level just above the horizontal line created by the bottom of the sills along the main ground floor windows facing onto the park.
  - The paving that is lifting, causing hazards, should be lifted and repositioned level.
  - The area identified as a 'utility area' (where the toilets previously were) could usefully be made available for use by the general public.
5. If a decision is made to proceed with some changes to Heard Park, we think they should build on what is already there, including the adaptive re-use of existing materials, like reconfiguration of existing paving and hedging. As per the modified concept plan diagram (overleaf), the hedge denoted as (1) could be extended towards the building at 1-3 Ruskin Street to expand the play area to the extent of the arrows emanating from the point denoted as (2). The small lined area to the left of the hedge denoted (1) could have an extra line of paving to provide a line of access from 1-3 Ruskin Street directly to Parnell Road without having to pass through the play area.

As the play area might be expanded, so too the areas available to the general public could be expanded to the extents shown by arrows emanating from points (3) and (4).



## 6. Summary

We consider that changes to Heard Park should not proceed as proposed in the publicised Concept Plan. Our understanding is that many people are satisfied with the park as it is, perhaps with a few minor improvements and/or maintenance issues being addressed. While on the site, we have talked to several families with children, and they have expressed their wish that Heard Park remains as it is currently, with perhaps the need for perhaps an additional play feature besides the swing.

We do not object to the new design as such, but we do object to ratepayers' money being spent unnecessarily, especially at a time when Auckland Council has a huge debt and there remain needs in the Waitemātā Local Board area that money could be better spent on than a redesign of Heard Park.

CTA think that rather than spending money on a park that does not really need a makeover, the Waitemātā Local Board could and should be proud of redirecting funds elsewhere in their local area to things in more urgent need of local board funding,

Date of submission: 18 July 2021

Signature:

Audrey van Ryn  
Secretary, Civic Trust Auckland