

ROYAL PARK LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN

Second Stage competition entry by
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Introduction

ROYAL PARK, except for the Zoo, and some sports facilities, has a low usage. It is, though, a special place — a place with a unique landscape character. In its centre, walled off from the Park, is Melbourne's No. 1 Tourist attraction, the Melbourne Zoological Gardens. The Park has scattered throughout, active sport facilities and potential areas for passive recreation. Its major physical problems are traffic conflicts, lack of safe connections to local neighbourhoods, lack of pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian circulation and its major planning problems come from lack of identity and focus.

To unify Royal Park, we propose to develop a theme taken from the 'Victoriana Style' surrounding the Park especially Gatehouse Street and Park Street, also some parts of the Avenue and Flemington Road. Within Royal Park the only architectural element contributing to this theme is the Zoo wall of herringbone brickwork. What makes it a special place and completely different to the other large Melbourne Parks established in the English style is that predominantly Australian native trees have been used in an open woodland approach. Some trees are remnants from the existing vegetation. Most new planting has been placed in the median and along curvilinear road alignments achieving a non-axial space relationship between elements in the Park.

It is our proposal to reinforce the existing character in the development of the 'Victoriana' theme, starting at park entries with signs, lighting and landscaping and culminate in the new Visitor Centre/Tourist precinct. New traffic access roads and pedestrian/bicycle/equestrian circulation systems are curvilinear, linking all the functions of the Park. Linking public transport, carparks and the Zoo entry to new elements we propose to reintroduce the horse-drawn trams which once carried Zoo visitors from the Sydney Road cable car. The new elements would be: a sculpture depicting the Burke and Wills departure to be the first explorers to cross the continent south-north; a maze with refreshment kiosk at its centre; and the Royal Park Tower, a restaurant and observation tower set on the highest point with a magnificent panorama of Melbourne. This structure will provide an identity and focus for Royal Park, both internally and externally.

Royal Park is also a special place for its adjoining residents, whether for walking the dog, kicking a football, riding a bike, reading a book, or the other host of activities that are carried out within its boundaries. Currently, access into the Park is tortuous. Four new Neighbourhood Parks are proposed, all with simple access into the Park, linked into the circulation system which links all facilities, historic areas, picnic areas, playground, etc.

Royal Park has the capacity to absorb all these multitudes of functions and give Melbourne an integrated parkland with one consistent theme — a theme partially existing.

Conceptual Master Plan

Traffic

- Major arterial east-west traffic along Macarthur Road/Elliot Avenue taken underground through a four lane tunnel.
- Through traffic discouraged in Gatehouse Street, The Avenue and Elliot Avenue.
- Downgrade Elliot Avenue and close its northern end. Extend Leonard Street to Macarthur Street to serve as access to Zoo, sports grounds and southern park areas.
- Close Poplar Road as a through route.
- New access roads will open up areas of the park previously relatively inaccessible to the general public.

Car parking

Increase the car parking supply, suitably scaled and delineated, in the vicinity of the Zoo, the main entrance, the north new entrance to the restaurant area and to the south of the Zoo (to be used also as commuter parking).

Circulation System

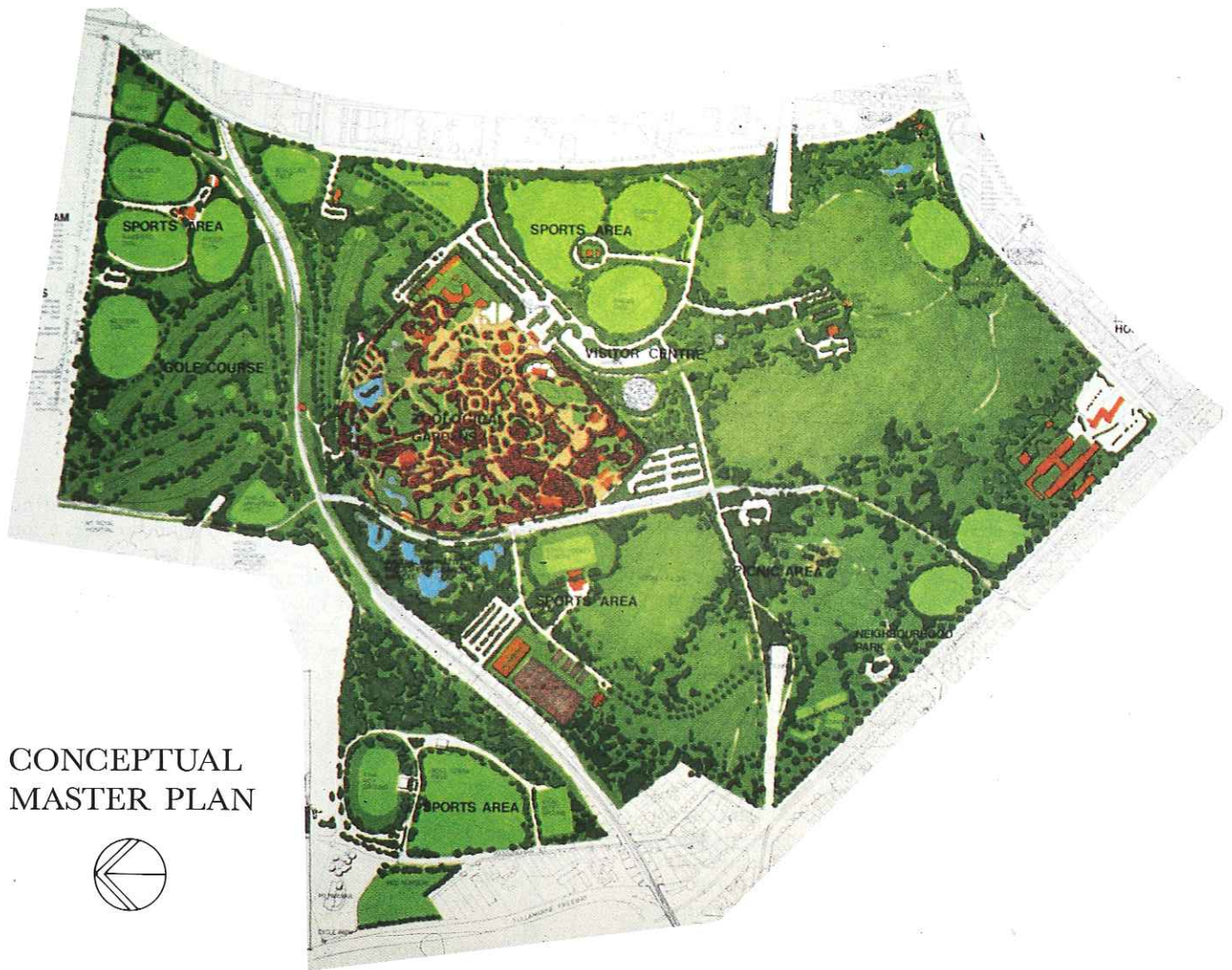
A combined cycle/pedestrian/equestrian network provides access to major facilities and points of interest, and provides good access into the whole park for the local neighbourhoods.

Visitor Centre

A themed Visitor Centre is proposed to extend the time visitors spend in the Park. The Centre will utilise parking provided for the Zoo. The elements of the Centre are linked by horse drawn tram and a formal promenade, 'the walk', which connects public transport and the extended Zoo car park with the maze, the Burke and Wills sculpture and continues to the Royal Park Tower. The theme of this area is 'Victoriana' because the whole setting for the park, the streetscape surrounding it and the existing landscaping is in this style. Modern intrusions should be reduced in impact, by screen planting.

Zoo Extensions

The Melbourne Zoological Gardens are Victoria's best attended tourist attraction, nestled like a fortress behind its high walls in the centre of the Park. As part of the revitalisation, and the greater use of the Park, car parking to the south and north around the Zoo will be improved. On the west, in the area occupied by the MCC Nursery and depot, an Australian Native Wildlife Research Annexe is proposed. This will be sandwiched between the tram and train lines but effectively extends the Zoo westwards. Lakes are proposed to attract water fowl and a free range park developed to extend the area inside the Zoo walls. The main function of this area would be to provide a contact point



CONCEPTUAL
MASTER PLAN



Burke and Wills expedition party memorial sculpture.

for the public in saving rare species from extinction and a conservation of habitat.

Golf Course

The proposal is to modify the layout of the golf course, relocate the tram line to the western park boundary, reduce pedestrian and vehicular conflicts by closing off Poplar Road and to provide a driving range. Generally, the landscaping of the area would also be improved by provision of more windbreak planting.

Neighbourhood Parks

Four neighbourhood parks are envisaged, with new connections into adjoining residential areas. The Parks are adjoining Flemington Road, Manningham Street, Gatehouse Street and Park Street. Access is gained to the greater park area through the pedestrian/bicycle path system.

Picnic Areas

A number of picnic areas are proposed throughout the park specifically designed for visitors. They are at the sports areas, near the maze, and located among the existing parking facilities along Elliot Avenue.

Landscaping

Old sugar gums should be replaced with more hardy species with similar light interesting trunks.

Remnant existing scrubland on the west of the railway cutting should be reinforced with suitable endemic species and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories screen planted. This area would be of interest to botany students if a full list of endemic species were developed.

Elsewhere plant selection should be Australian natives but not limited to endemic species. Windbreak planting is required to the Macarthur Pavilion Hill, with lower storey planting to the golf course and other sporting facilities.

Open woodland (trees and grass) would remain the major landscape theme around picnic areas and in Neighbourhood Parks, and should be consistent with the established Australian Native garden, near Gatehouse Street.

Street furniture and lighting should be of 'Victoriana' style consistent throughout the park.

The first step in achieving this project is unanimous commitment to the Conceptual Master Plan by the Melbourne City Council.

No radical uses are proposed that will detract from the park as a whole. Positive traffic measures will reduce pedestrian vehicular conflicts. New access roads will open up areas of the park previously relatively inaccessible to the general public.



Horse drawn tram ride to shot tower.

