

Planning for the future of Highett Gasworks

Phase One Engagement Report

Prepared by Capire Consulting Group on behalf of Development Victoria

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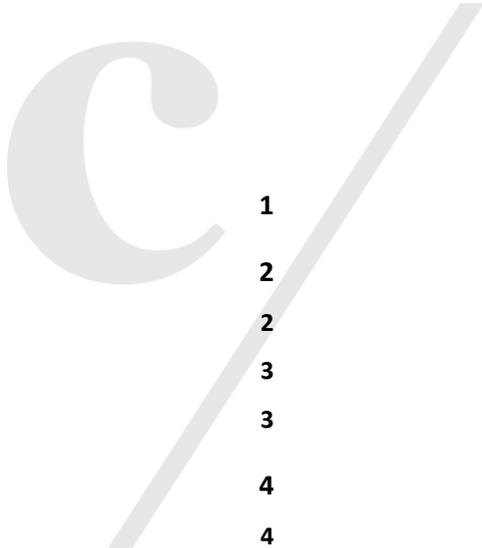
Capire staff and associates take great care while transcribing participant feedback. Unfortunately, they cannot guarantee the accuracy of all notes. We are, however, confident that we capture the full range of ideas, concerns and views expressed during our consultation activities.

Unless otherwise noted, the views expressed in our work represent those of the participants and not necessarily those of our consultants or our clients.

Limitations

Outlined below are the limitations of the engagement process:

- This report represents the key points of discussion and includes a broad range of feedback received from participants. It provides an overview of participant sentiment but does not report on the sentiment of individual participants.
- Participants may have participated in engagement activities through more than one channel, on more than one occasion.
- In some instances, participants did not answer all questions, this meant that some questions received fewer responses than others.



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Executive summary

Development Victoria is responsible for undertaking urban renewal, property development and major projects on behalf of the Victorian Government and has commenced planning for the future of the Highett Gasworks site at 1136-1138 Nepean Highway, Highett.

The site is 6.63ha in size. Its location, coupled with its proximity to public transport and centres of economic activity make it an ideal location for regeneration.

The planning controls, including the Development Plan Overlay (DPO), that apply to the land provide a guiding framework for the future use and development. This includes building heights, retention of the heritage chimney, provision of affordable housing and the types of open space and connections through and beyond the site.

Development Victoria is required to prepare and submit a Development Plan to the City of Kingston for consideration. In August and September 2020, Development Victoria sought community feedback in relation to different concepts and themes to help guide them in the preparation of the draft Development Plan.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, engagement opportunities were held online with a total of 126 people participating in online sessions or an online survey. Most participants were Highett residents and near neighbours of the site.

Themes that received particularly high levels of support included:

- providing for a diverse community through a range of housing options, the design of apartments and the design of public spaces
- planning for an active ground floor that invited people into the site and created opportunities for people to connect
- improving active transport connectivity within and through the site to improve links to William Fry Reserve and Highett shops.

Themes that received mixed responses included:

- Planning for future commercial uses. There is support for some commercial activity to help activate the public spaces. However, there is concern that there isn't necessarily the demand for more commercial spaces in the area. There was also concern that having businesses on-site would exacerbate the existing parking issues in the area.
- Transport and parking. Particularly for near neighbours of the site. Participants feel that current parking and travel patterns along Nepean Highway and in the slip lane will only be made worse with the amount of development planned for the site. They want to see all parking needs met on-site and careful consideration of entry and exit points that prioritise safety and reduce congestion.

These community insights will help refine the preferred options for the draft Development Plan. Development Victoria will test the draft Development Plan with the community before submitting to Council for approval.

1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

Development Victoria has commenced planning the regeneration of the Highett Gasworks site at 1136-1138 Nepean Highway, Highett. Since the closure of the Highett Gasworks, the 6.3-hectare site has been safely decontaminated and is ready for reuse. This site is mostly vacant, with a brick chimney being the only remaining part of the old gasworks.

The site is ceased operations in 1969 and was determined surplus to government requirements in the early 1990s. Since then its been rezoned to residential and remediated. Its common ownership, its size (6.63ha), its proximity to public transport and centres of economic activity make it an ideal location for mixed-use development and the fact that significant public investment to been made to it development-ready presents exciting opportunities and obligations.

In April 2019, an amendment to the Kingston Planning Scheme (C159) came into effect amending the existing residential zone and providing further guidance on how to develop the site. These changes included the application of a Residential Growth Zone (RGZ2) and a Development Plan Overlay (DPO7) to the site.

The DPO7 requires the preparation and approval of a Development Plan for the site, which Development Victoria is preparing. The DPO7 sets specific requirements for how the site can be used and some built form requirements, such as building heights, affordable housing requirements and minimum open space requirements. The Development Plan will provide increased clarity around future uses and development that can be expected on the site. All future planning permits for the site will need to comply with the Development Plan. The Development Plan, however, does not determine specifics such as detailed architectural design or construction details.

Figure 1: Project timeline with inclusion of an additional engagement phase

- **Phase 1: Key concept testing (17 August – 18 September 2020)** - To introduce the project and scope; outline engagement and planning process; to undertake broad community consultation and gather stakeholder insights, issues and project ideas using a variety of tools and techniques.
- **Phase 2: What we heard (November to December 2020)** – To present back to the community what we heard during phase one and how the team is responding.
- **Phase 3: Refinement of the preferred option (Mid 2021)** - To seek feedback on the Development Plan preferred option and to share how the engagement has informed the preferred option.
- **Phase 4: Report back and presentation of final Development Plan (Late 2021)** - To present the proposed Development Plan and share how engagement has contributed to it.
- **Development Plan submitted to Kingston City Council for consideration (Late 2021)**
- **Construction commences subject to a range of approvals (2023).**

1.2 Commitment to community engagement

Development Victoria values community involvement in its projects and is committed to working closely with the community to ensure future development of the site carefully balances project needs with what is important to the local community.

In August and September 2020, Development Victoria undertook its first phase of public consultation to seek feedback on some of the ideas and themes being explored for the draft Development Plan. These insights will be used to help inform the preparation of the draft Development Plan, which is intended to be presented back to the community for consideration in 2021.

1.3 Purpose of this report

This report provides an overview of the community engagement undertaken as part of the phase one consultation. It includes a summary of the approach, the engagement process and the key insights and messages received through the engagement that will be used to inform the preparation of the draft Development Plan.

2 Engagement process

2.1 How the engagement opportunities were communicated

Engagement opportunities were communicated through a range of channels with the main aim to encourage visitation to the online engagement page to learn more about the project. For those that do not have internet access, a project hotline was promoted.



9
people called the
project hotline



146,624
people reached with two social media
advertisements (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter)



2200
project updates were delivered to residents and businesses within a 500m radius of the
site



2445
people viewed the Highett Gasworks EngageVic webpage



164
People registretred for project updates

2.2 How people engaged

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, engagement activities were held online. A range of engagement methods were available and used by the community. A total of 126 people participated in engagement activities.



28
people attended one of the two
online community sessions,
designed for the broader
community to learn about the
project and provide feedback



15
people attended one of the three
small group discussions, designed for
near neighbours to discuss the direct
impacts and opportunities of the
development



71
people completed the
online survey



12
people shared their feedback via email submission

2.3 Who participated

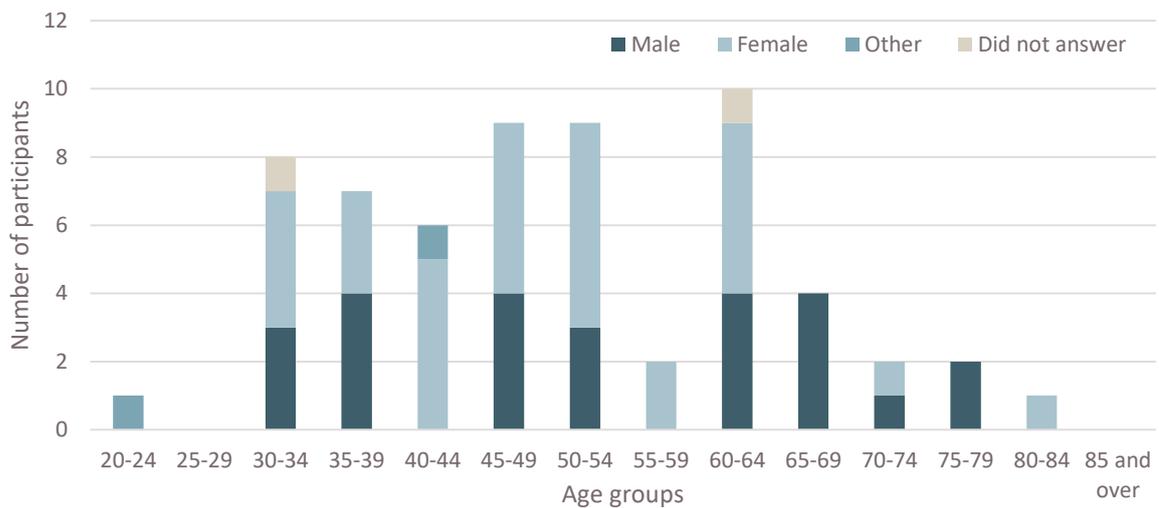
Providing demographic information was optional, and not all participants chose to share this information. The following section provides a snapshot of participant demographics.

Participants were asked to identify their gender, age, suburb and relationship to the site. The following graphs (Figure 2 to As shown in Figure 4, most participants identified as local residents or direct neighbours when asked to describe their relationship to the site. Of the participants who identified 'other', there was a mix of reasons why they are interested in the project. Some of the reasons include:

- previous employees of the Highett Gasworks
- interested in living in the future development
- work in the housing sector
- education.

Figure 4) display an overview of the participant demographics.

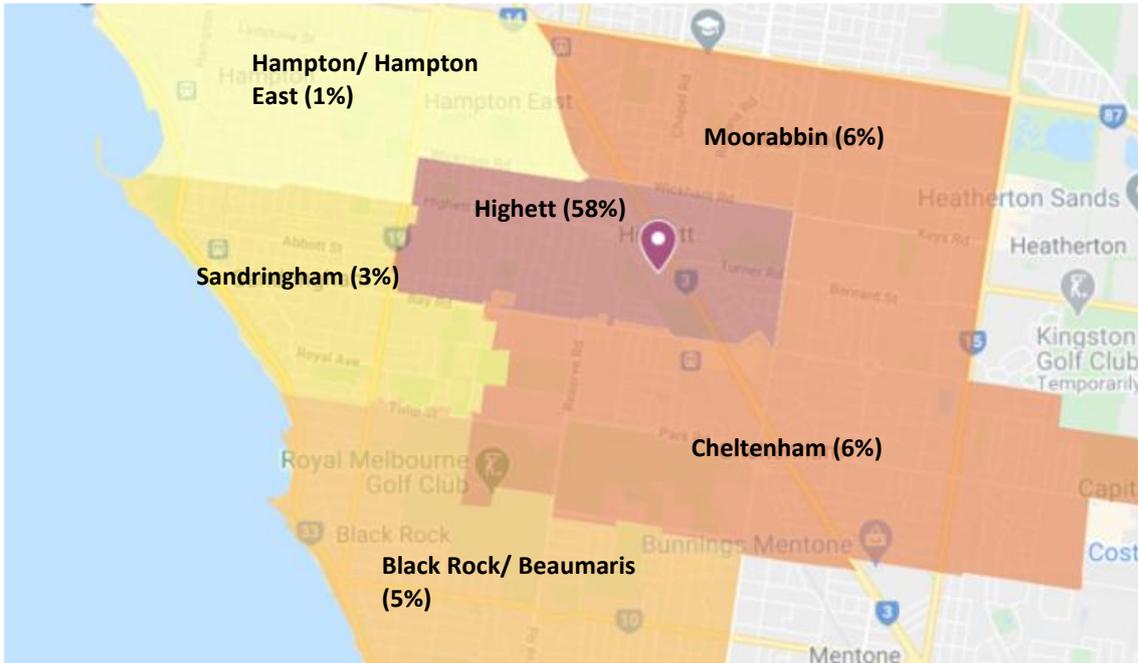
Figure 2: Age and gender of participants, n¹= 61



Of the 95 participants who identified their residential postcode, 58% live in Highett where the site is located. A further 21% live in the nearby suburbs of Moorabbin, Cheltenham, Sandringham and Black Rock/Beaumaris.

¹ 'n' refers to the total number of participants who answered this question

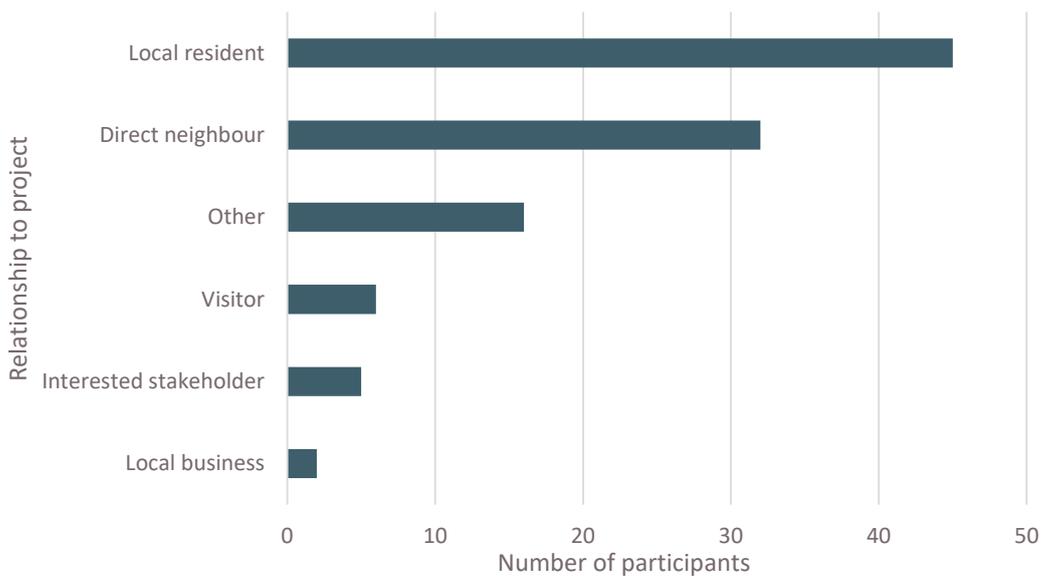
Figure 3: Heatmap of where participants live



As shown in Figure 4, most participants identified as local residents or direct neighbours when asked to describe their relationship to the site. Of the participants who identified 'other', there was a mix of reasons why they are interested in the project. Some of the reasons include:

- previous employees of the Highett Gasworks
- interested in living in the future development
- work in the housing sector
- education.

Figure 4: Relationships participants have to the site, n=106



3 Engagement findings

Through the engagement activities, information on key themes and concepts being explored for the Development Plan were presented. Participants were invited to share their overall thoughts on the project and provide feedback and local insights. The following themes were used to guide the conversation:

- urban design and land use
- public open space and landscaping
- transport and connectivity
- sustainability
- historical and cultural values
- place activation and identity.

The following section summarises the feedback received in response to each theme.

3.1 Urban design and land use

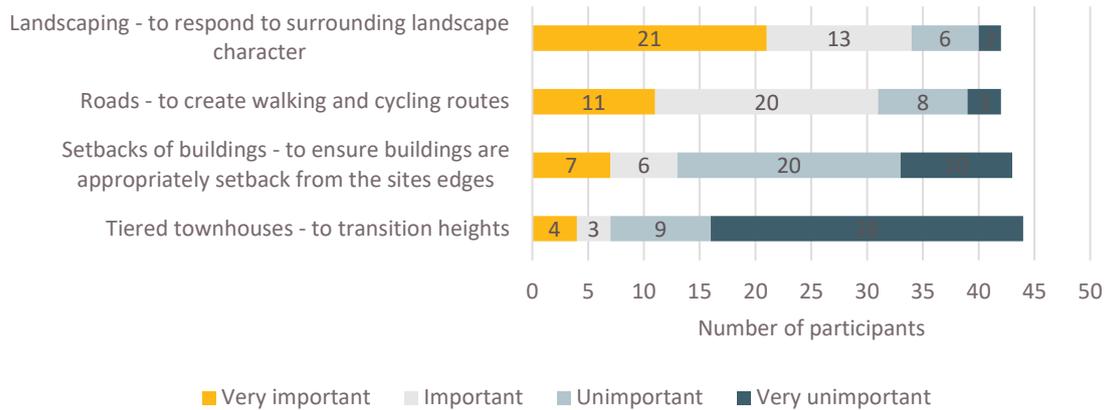
This theme explores:

- the best type of ground floor uses and activities
- ways for site boundaries to integrate and blend into the surrounding neighbourhood
- how to increase the useability of the streets and paths.

A series of ideas about how the site can integrate with the surrounding area was presented for feedback. Participants showed strong support for the use of landscaping, such as trees and greenery, to blend the site into the surrounding neighbourhood. Participants also discussed public access through the site as an essential feature and having attractive ground floor uses that helps detract from the building heights.

Figure 5 illustrates how online survey participants rated the different ideas presented.

Figure 5: Level of importance for how the site can integrate with the surrounding area, n=44



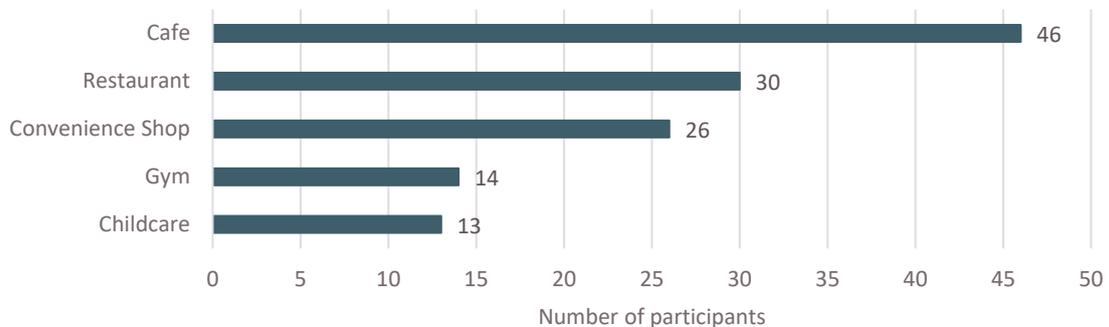
The Development Plan Overlay provides some opportunity for commercial spaces to be accommodated on the ground floor of buildings. Participants were asked to consider which ground floor uses would help activate the public spaces and encourage people to visit.

Respondents to the online survey showed strong support for a café and also support for a restaurant and convenience shop. There was interest in having flexible workspaces to support people being able to work from home. Participants discussed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ability to support more people to work remotely is likely to continue to be necessary. There was some concern about commercial uses. Some participants were concerned about spaces ending up vacant because there may not be the demand. Others were concerned about attracting the right level of activity and minimising impacts on the area's existing amenity.

Participants raised concern around how the additional population will impact existing community facilities and services. Some participants suggested the need for a flexible community space; suggestions included a room for hire by residents or community groups and a place residents can learn about what is going on in the community.

Figure 6 illustrates levels of support for different ground floor uses collected through the online survey.

Figure 6: The ground floor uses that participants consider would activate the public space and encourage people to visit the Highett Gasworks site, n= 48



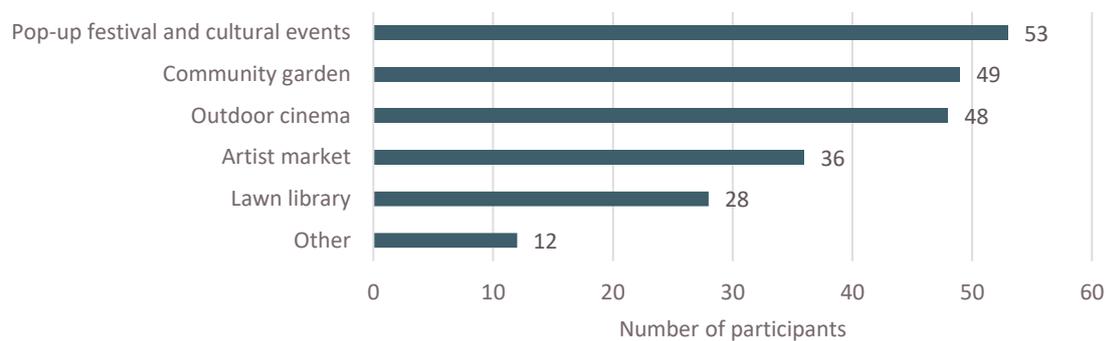
Participants were also asked to consider what different activities would draw them to the site. They were encouraged to think about what might be missing in the local area and what activities might help fill a gap or provide a point of difference for the site. The online survey results and the discussion at the online sessions were relatively consistent. There was strong support for pop-up events such as markets,

festivals and an outdoor cinema. Participants in the online session also talked about a desire for interesting public spaces as well as natural spaces children can explore safely.

Figure 7 illustrates levels of support for different activities collected through the online survey.

"I love the idea of a community being able to get outside and learn from each other and support local business and hear about what everyone is doing."
 – online session participant.

Figure 7: Activities that would attract participants to the Highbett Gasworks site, n= 69



3.2 Public open space and landscaping

This theme explores:

- how the use of public spaces and landscaping could be designed
- the preferred landscape themes and styles.

Participants were asked to share their ideas around the future use and design of the planned public open space. Feedback showed a strong correlation between what respondents identified as missing in the local area and what they would like to see at the site. Many participants also reflected on the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the increased value of local open space.

Participants in the online sessions commented on the amount of open space planned and whether it could adequately provide for the open space needs of the development. This concern was also linked to the Suburban Rail Loop project and whether the rail project could result in further loss of open space at Sir William Fry Reserve.

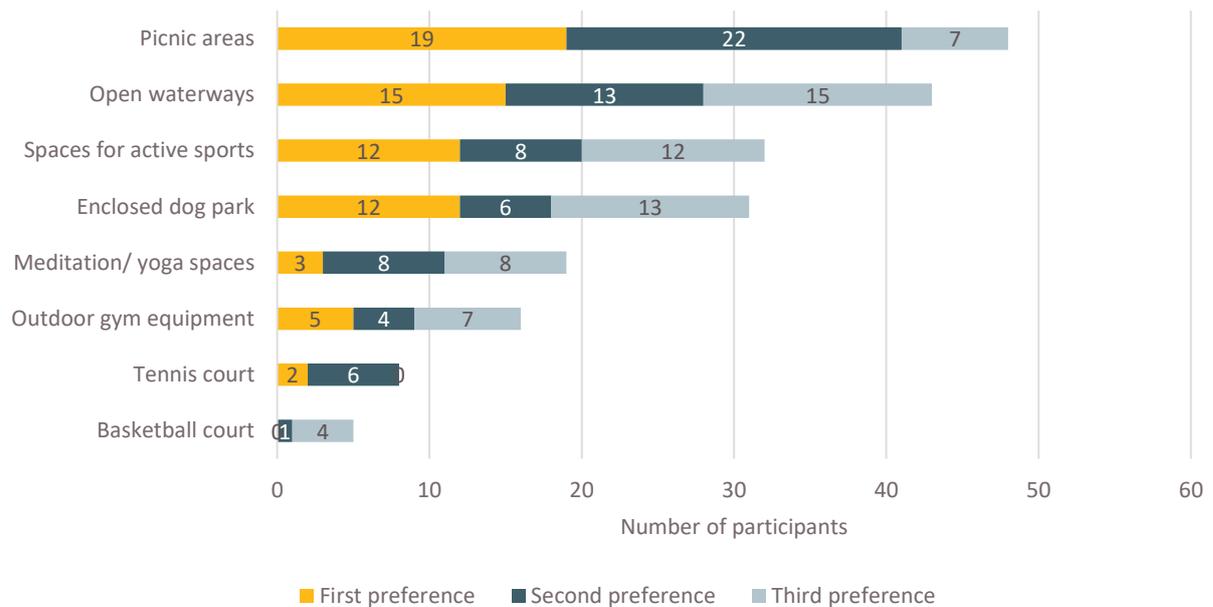
Survey participants were asked to select and rank their three favourite landscape features (or activities) from a list (shown in Figure 8) that they would like to see planned for as part of the development.

Participants indicated that picnic areas were most important to them with over half of the participants (48 participants) wanting to see it planned for. This was closely followed by open waterways.

Participants also showed support for spaces for active sports and an enclosed dog park.

There was some concern raised in the online sessions around the management model of the public open space. Participants discussed the risk that the public spaces would be poorly maintained.

Figure 8: Participants' preferences of landscape features/activities to be included in the development, n=68



Summarised below are the types of facilities and landscape features participants would like to see in the public spaces and as part of the development.

- Natural features:** Participants demonstrated a preference for natural spaces, prioritising native and drought-tolerant plants that provide shade, quiet spaces of refuge with seating, and wildlife corridors to attract native birds. Site boundary vegetation was discussed as a buffer for the noise on Nepean Highway and to integrate the site with the surrounding area. Some participants noted that the existing trees on the site should be maintained.
- Sporting facilities and tracks:** Several participants expressed the desire for public sporting facilities for both organised and casual sport (including ovals, netball courts and tennis walls), in addition to running tracks, bike paths (with bike racks), skateparks and outdoor gym equipment. Participants also emphasised that these all need lighting to provide safety at night.
- Flexible spaces public space:** There was strong support for spaces that encourage the community to gather together, such as an amphitheatre and spaces for markets and events with access to power.
- Well maintained, unique and inclusive play equipment:** Many participants expressed a need for well maintained and engaging play equipment for local families, and outdoor exercise equipment for young people and adults of all abilities. Specific suggestions included

water play, flying-foxes and ninja warrior activities to create a unique destination for play and exercise.

- **Informal spaces to meet:** Several participants commented on the need for informal meeting spaces with BBQ facilities, seating, bins, public toilets and drinking fountains.
- **Diversity of open space:** Some participants noted that a variety of open spaces should be provided for different uses such as relaxation, sport, play and events. Participants also expressed their interest in water features, including waterways and lakes and having a community garden where local residents can grow and share food.
- **Connectivity:** Participants want to see the public spaces linked to one another and linked to the existing open space at William Fry Reserve.

3.3 Transport and connectivity

This theme explores:

- ways to maximise active transport, movement and accessibility through and within the site
- how best to support a '20-minute neighbourhood' where reliance on cars is reduced, and a short walk, bicycle journey or public transport trip can support the majority of residents' daily needs.

This was a central theme for local residents and near neighbours of the site. Through the engagement, there were many local community insights into the existing travel trends and issues in the area. These insights have been summarised below.

- During peak times there is significant congestion on Nepean Highway, and it can be difficult and often dangerous crossing the highway to get in or out of the slip lane. The current u-turn required to enter the slip lane when travelling southbound is of great concern to the community.
- Existing parking issues in the area have been exacerbated since Southland started charging for parking and the lack of parking for people visiting the courts. As a result, the slip lane gets congested, driveways get blocked and cars drive dangerously looking for car parks.
- There is a cumulative impact associated with the number of significant developments occurring in the area that needs to be considered. Participants link the parking and congestion issues with high-density development. Many participants raised concerns about not enough on-site parking being planned for in large developments.
- There is an opportunity to improve walking and cycling connections in the area. The major arterials and train line make it hard for people to get around Highett. Car dominance affects peoples' experience of walking and cycling, and there is support for paths away from roads. Participants supported a path along the rail line to link the Sir William Fry Reserve and Highett shops. There was also some support for the potential option of building a pedestrian bridge over the rail line.

Discussions regarding the '20-minute neighbourhood' concept demonstrated overall support (see Figure 9) but also concern around the practicability of the concept. Participants talked about the reality of a

car-dependent culture and the need to think about the reality of different user needs. For example, the single mother with young children using public transport to do the weekly shop is not feasible. While the online sessions highlighted the high car dependency in the area, the online survey identified walking as the preferred mode of transport (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: How important achieving a '20-minute neighbourhood' is for residents of the Highett Gasworks site is, n= 68

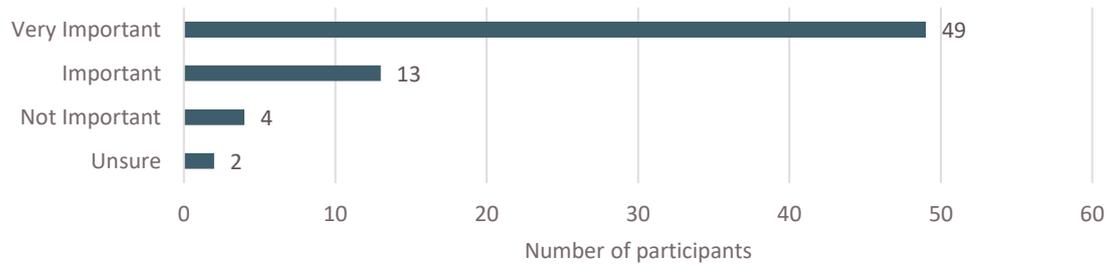
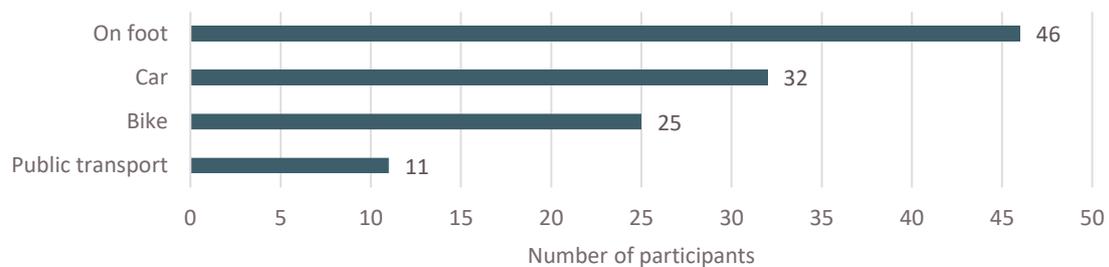


Figure 10: Participants' preferred mode of transport for travelling around the local area, n= 69²



Participants were asked to share ideas on how the development could reduce future car use (other than footpath and bike paths). While several participants were sceptical about reducing car use, there were some clear messages about how the development could help make it easier to walk and cycle. Below is a summary of the ideas shared:

- **Creating a safer environment for walkers and cyclists.** This included safer crossings over Nepean Highway, traffic calming to slow vehicles, wider footpaths to allow for more people, prams and mobility scooters, and shade and lighting along paths.
- **Encouraging residents to own fewer cars** by having a car and bike share program as part of the development.
- **Improving direct connections to key destinations.** Some ideas around this included a community shuttle bus and direct links to Southland, open spaces and Highett Activity Centre.
- **Provide for residents' needs on-site** with a convenience store and café, for example.
- **Time-limited or paid parking** to deter people from driving and also help with parking congestion.

"People won't go into your plan and think about walking 20-minutes everywhere. Most married people will have one car each. Where will these cars go? On the street? Not everyone is going to

² Participants were able to select more than one answer.

3.4 Sustainability

This theme explores:

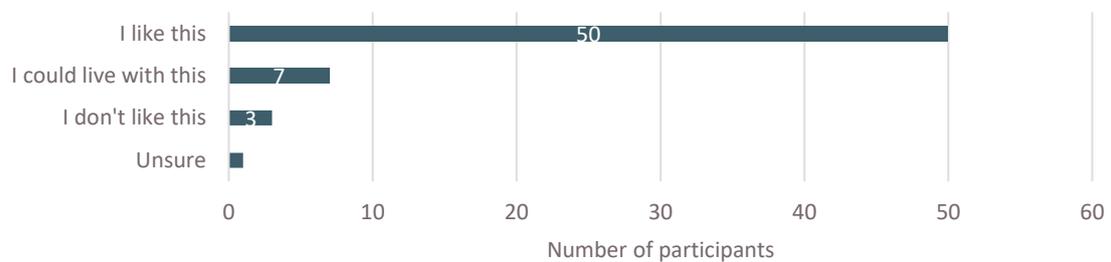
- how the development can deliver best practice sustainable design to improve the wellbeing of residents and visitors through outdoor experiences
- ways to incorporate adaptability within design so spaces and the way residents use them can change to meet the needs of future communities
- how a commitment to a Green Star Communities rating tool can add value to the community.

Participants shared ideas on how the development can support best practice sustainable design:

- Maximum use of solar energy in public, commercial and residential areas.
- Capture and reuse of water for maintaining green spaces and flushing toilets.
- Provide low maintenance green spaces and green walls that also provide wildlife corridors.
- Use recycled materials in construction.
- Design energy-efficient apartments.
- Include efficient ways to sort and dispose of household waste and share composting.
- Encourage sustainability projects that educate and bring residents together.
- Position buildings to make the most of the natural light.
- Provide shared spaces in apartments such as gardens and laundries.
- Plan for greener transport options, including adequate bicycle storage and electric charging stations for electric vehicles.

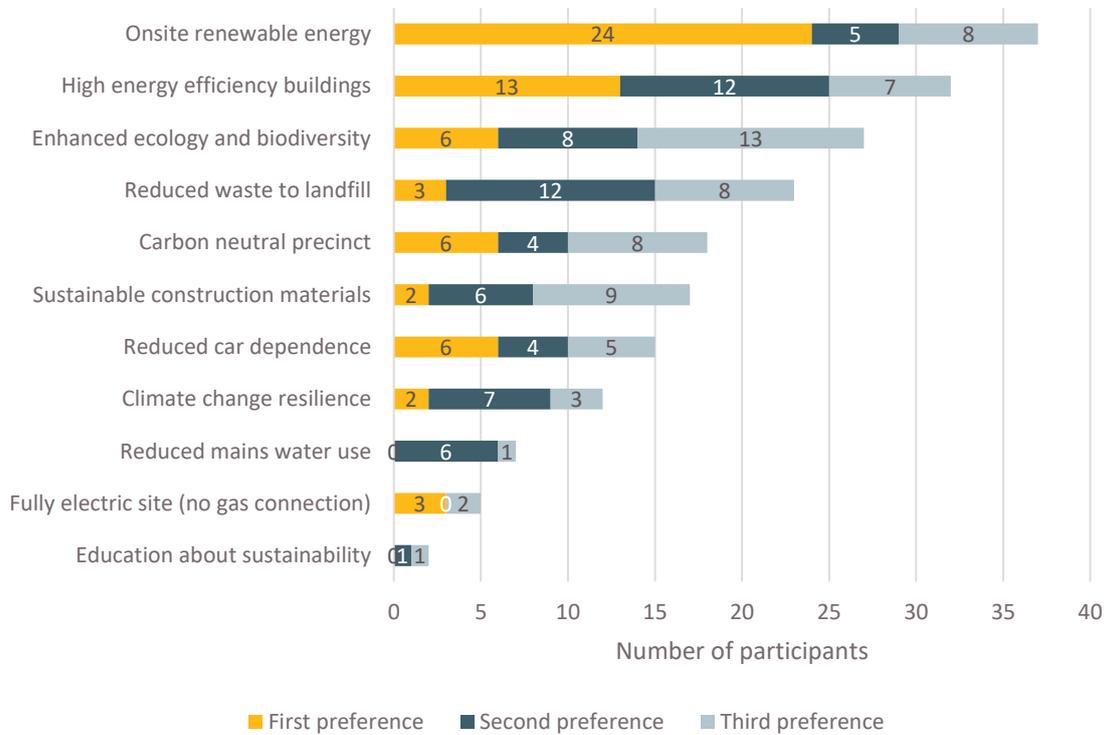
Through the online survey participants were asked how they felt about the use of the Green Stars Communities tool. Most participants supported the use of the tool (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Participants' sentiment about the Green Star Communities tool, n= 61



Online survey participants were also asked to rank their top three sustainability priorities for the project from a list, as shown in Figure 12. Onsite renewable energy was the most popular way to achieve sustainability outcomes. Over half of the online survey participants (37 participants) want to see it planned for, followed by high energy efficiency buildings.

Figure 12: Participants' preferences of sustainability priorities for the project, n= 65



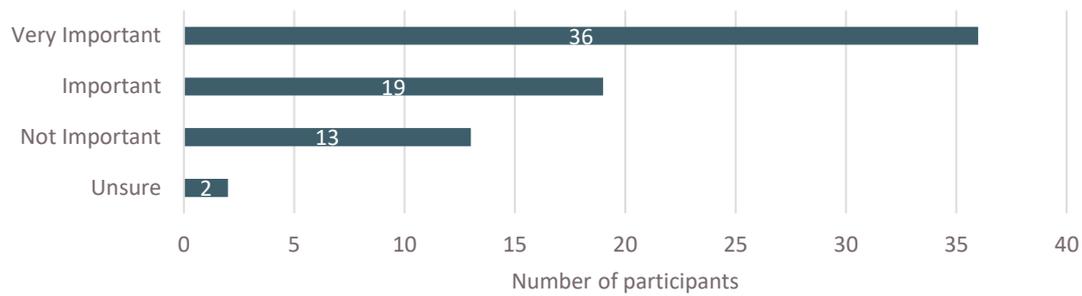
3.5 Historical and cultural values

This theme explores how the development can celebrate the Indigenous and early European uses as well as the 20th century industrial history of the site.

The site is mostly vacant, with a brick chimney being the only remaining part of the old gasworks. This chimney will remain on the site and Development Victoria want to identify other ways we can celebrate the site's history through the design.

When participants were asked how important it is that future development celebrates the history of the site, most participants felt it was important. A total of 55 online survey respondents identified it as either very important or important (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: How important participants felt the site's history should be celebrated, n=70



Participants were asked to share their ideas about how future development could recognise and celebrate the history of the site. It was clear participants wanted to see both the industrial and Traditional Owner history recognised in future development. Suggestions for how the history of the site could be recognised are summarised below.

- Telling the site's story through public art, wayfinding signage and information boards
- Protection of the chimney as the centrepiece of the development
- Engage Traditional Owner groups on the best way to incorporate Indigenous culture into the site
- Naming streets to create links to the history of the site
- Using materials and building designs to link to the old gasworks structures.

Some participants shared interesting historical stories and facts about the site, including about the science laboratories and training facilities, and shared ideas on how the site could capture other local industrial histories.

Those that did not see celebrating the site's history as important noted that the previous gasworks was not historically significant and that maintaining the chimney was enough.

“The Gas and Fuel Corporation moved the Science Laboratories and Training facilities to this site during the later part of the 1970s where both operated until nearly 2004.

The Scientific Service division of the Gas and Fuel provided appliance testing and approvals (via the Australian Gas Association), gas quality testing, metering standards and specialised research functions for the gas industry. These activities continued for 30 years past the introduction of natural gas into Victoria and long past the closure of the gas works at Highett. This part of the site's history should be acknowledged alongside the more well-known activities at Highett.”

- Online survey respondent.

Participants were also asked to share any specific ideas for how the chimney could be integrated with the landscape. Below is a summary of the ideas.

- Run a community art project, where the community and local artists decorate the chimney.
- Use light projections to demonstrate indigenous and industrial heritage and special events.
- Create a town square around it with natural landscaping, water play, quiet places to sit and café nearby.
- Use similar bricks around the site with other historical pieces to create a historic walking trail.
- Turn it into a clock tower or a sundial.

3.6 Place activation and identity

This theme explores:

- how the development can foster a sense of community and establish a village feel
- ways to ensure the development is safe and inclusive.

It is clear that local residents value Highett for its family-friendly and safe atmosphere. Participants also shared how they value the local shops and cafes; the architecture and heritage of the area; accessibility to the bay, CBD and Southland; the diverse community; and the leafy streets and greenery.

When the participants were asked what would make them want to live at the development, many of the answers reflected these families. Participants want a village-feel that promotes social activity and connection; that it is family-friendly feels safe and has access to shops and green spaces. Others commented on the quality of the construction, ensuring it is environmentally sustainable and has good pedestrian and cycling connections.

Some participants noted that the density of the building was a deterrent to them wanting to live at the development.

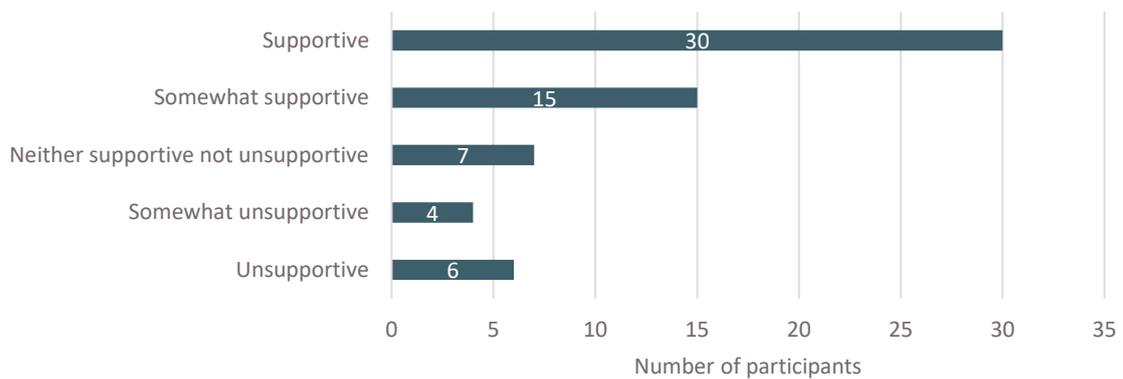
Participants were asked to share what they thought would make sure the development is a safe and inclusive place to live and visit. Many of the comments focused on making sure the development met the needs of a diverse community and all abilities.

- Ensure the development is safe with good lighting in public spaces and avoid dark areas people could hide. Consider surveillance to deter graffiti and providing secured parking for residents. Minimise car movement within the site.
- Design for all abilities by including appropriate amenities, catering for those with limited mobility and make apartments and public spaces dementia-friendly.
- Provide opportunities for the community to connect by creating outdoor living opportunities; encouraging more people outside to connect with each other.
- Have a diverse range of housing options to encourage a diverse community. This includes having different apartment sizes for families, couples, singles, and supports for ageing in place.

Online survey participants were asked to identify their level of support for the site consisting of a mix of different home sizes at different prices from affordable to more expensive. Most participants were supportive of this approach, as shown in Figure 14.

Through the online sessions, participants raised questions about the affordable housing planned for the site. There was some confusion around what is meant by affordable housing and the perception that it would be public housing. There were also assumptions made about how the apartments would be made affordable and that affordable meant low quality. Participants wanted to make sure there was no discernible difference in design between and that they are integrated throughout the development.

Figure 14: Participants' level of support for providing a mix of different home sizes at different prices from affordable to more expensive, n=62



Regarding the diversity of housing options, online survey participants were asked to reflect on the current demand and supply of housing in Victoria. They were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements:

- There is a shortage of housing for Victorians
- There is a need to develop more housing to accommodate Victoria's growing population
- The Victorian Government has a role to play in providing affordable housing options for Victorians
- Housing that is affordable for more Victorians helps the whole community
- There should be more affordable housing in locations close to jobs, schools etc.

Figure 15 illustrates the level of agreement for each of these statements. The majority of statements received high levels of agreement, excluding the statements around the need for more housing.

Figure 15: How participants feel about the current demand and supply of housing in Victoria, n=66-67



4 Next steps

Overarching timeline:

- **Phase 2: What we heard (November to December 2020)** – To present back to the community what we heard during phase one and how the team is responding.
- **Phase 3: Refinement of the preferred option (2021)** - To seek feedback on the Development Plan preferred option and to share how the engagement has informed the preferred option.
- **Phase 4: Report back and presentation of final Development Plan (2021)** - To present the proposed Development Plan and share how engagement has contributed to it.
- **Development Plan submitted to Kingston City Council for consideration (2021)**
- **Construction commences subject to a range of approvals (2023).**

As well as formulating a Development Plan, Development Victoria is also preparing the supporting documents which will be submitted alongside the Development Plan to Kingston City Council for consideration, these include:

- Subdivision and Staging of Development Plan
- Urban Context and Site Analysis Plan
- Urban Design Guidelines
- Conservation Management Plan
- Integrated Transport and Traffic Management Plan
- Circulation and Movement Plan
- Landscape Masterplan
- Environmentally Sustainable Development Report
- Housing Diversity and Adaptability Report
- Social Impact Assessment Report.

Once approved by Kingston City Council, these documents along with the Development Plan, will provide the key assessment document for any future Developers of the site to ensure community outcomes are met.

Through this first phase of engagement, Development Victoria has gained many valuable local insights and feedback that will be considered alongside the technical work in preparing the draft Development Plan.

Development Victoria will present on what was heard in November – December 2020. The draft Development Plan will be presented back to the community in 2021 for further feedback.

To be kept up to date on the project and the next stages, you can register for project updates at development.vic.gov.au/highett-gasworks.