

Harold Holt pool renovation to go ahead with design changes

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IT IS made of concrete and belongs to one of the least popular styles of modern architecture — Brutalism.

However, the tactlessly named Harold Holt Memorial Swim Centre in Glen Iris is a Melbourne landmark at the centre of a four-year community battle over its development. Work on an extensive renovation of the pool will finally begin next month, following a doubling of costs to \$13 million, several redesigns and a heritage listing.

City of Stonnington recently announced Kane Constructions, which redeveloped the Ascot Vale Leisure Centre two years ago, as the project builder.

Daryl Jackson, who designed the pool with the late Kevin Borland in 1966, was one of 27 leading architects who wrote to *The Age* two years ago to complain it was being “destroyed”.

Mr Jackson told *The Age* he now supported the renovation because of changes to Peddle Thorp Architects’ design since Stonnington hired him as a planning consultant to the project in 2007.

He said the proposed new structure had since been moved from the middle of the site to the western boundary, maintaining the view from the garden, through the pool hall onto the street.

“It’s not as obtrusive as it was earlier on and it keeps much of the garden landscape intact,” he said.

However, the Harold Holt Users Group, which had gathered a 600-person petition to oppose the development, said there was still



Harold Holt Swim Centre and (top) an artist's impression of the redesigned pool.

strong community opposition to the project. Spokeswoman Karen Skillington said the proposed changes were radical, would pillage the “magic” of the building and involved felling mature trees.

“To spend \$13 million is a lot of money unnecessarily when all they needed to do was maintain the property,” Ms Skillington said. “It was a very peaceful place to swim and they’ve turned it into a

McLeisure centre. It was the pool in the park and that will be lost.”

Peddle Thorp’s Peter Brook said the latest design kept more landscape and moved a planned indoor children’s play centre outside.

“The original design was prepared before the heritage listing and it became a very complicated process because of it,” he said. “There’s been a very careful analysis of heritage issues.”