CM13.4. Draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan

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Purpose of Report

To present Council with the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan for consideration prior to placing the draft plan on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days.

Background

Ernest Grant Park is located on the corner of Thurgoona Drive and Bogong Street in Thurgoona. The area is a key open space area for the surrounding residential community and adjacent Thurgoona Public School. At present, the primary winter user group is Thurgoona Auskick with other sporting clubs using the area as a training facility. Cricket Albury Wodonga is the primary summer user group with junior and senior cricket.

Existing infrastructure on the site includes:

- Sports oval (AFL);
- Small skate park;
- Small gravel car park;
- Gravel pathways;
- Seating (x 4);
- Public toilets;
- Local play space (which is past its useful life); and
- Temporary shipping container storage (Thurgoona Auskick).

Grant funding is available through the Stronger Country Communities Fund (Round 2) for fitness equipment at the site. Prior to installation of the equipment it was determined that a master plan for the site was required. The aim of the master plan is to provide a long-term plan that meets the current and future needs of the key stakeholders and the wider community.

Playce Pty Ltd was engaged to undertake the master planning process. Through a 'Have A Say' process and consultation with key user groups/stakeholders, Council staff, as well as wider community engagement, the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan has been developed (Attachment 1).

There is a shift in the location of the main activity area of the park from the east side of the park (Bogong Street) to the west side (adjacent to the school). The key items in the master plan are outlined below:

Recreational facilities – upgrade play space to a district level play space. The play space has been relocated to a larger area within the park (western side). The master plan proposes to include skate elements into the play space similar to recent projects such as National Foresters Grove and South Albury Active Space. It is proposed to remove the existing skate bowl when the new play space with skate elements has been constructed. Suitable locations for the outdoor gym equipment have also been included in the master plan.

Sporting infrastructure – primary sports are AFL and Cricket. At present, there are no change rooms at the ground. The provision of change rooms overlooking the ground (western side) with associated viewing area is proposed in the plan. The change rooms should align with AFL standard (local standard) change rooms with improved storage space and public toilet facilities. Provision of sports field lighting and cricket practice facility to Cricket Australia standards are also included in the master plan. No playing surface upgrades are included in the plan due to the works which were undertaken in 2013 (sub-surfaces drainage and establishment of a new kikuyu surface). The cricket wicket was also replaced in 2016.

Car parking – expand/improve existing car parking at the site by sealing and formalising car spaces. The plan also includes a new sealed car parking area adjacent to the pre-school to service the new change rooms and recreational facilities. This new car park will also assist in addressing some of the traffic issues associated with the Thurgoona Public School.

Connectivity - improve connectivity throughout the park with a focus on the connection to the schools, residential areas and shopping precinct. Strengthen and expand on the existing path networks.

Other considerations - maintaining access to natural areas, increase vegetation planting to provide buffer to residential areas. Inclusion of picnic facilities, park signage and shading for the recreational facilities.

Issues

Albury 2030 Plan

Theme One – A Growing Sustainable Economy

1.8 Albury's infrastructure and assets are well managed and maintained

1.8.1 Determine infrastructure and service levels through balancing community needs, future growth, sustainability and heritage values.

Theme Three – A Caring Community

3.2 Albury's key community safety indicators continuously improve

3.2.1 Develop and implement strategies to improve community safety and amenity.

3.3 The health and wellbeing of the Albury community improves

3.3.4 Ensure appropriate infrastructure including accessible path networks/encourage active lifestyles.

3.4 Albury offers a diverse and accessible range of facilities and activities for all ages

3.4.1 Improve access for all – in relation to systems and processes, transportation, civic buildings, community facilities and parks.

3.4.3 Promote and encourage healthy lifestyles through development and efficient use of sporting, recreational, educational and cultural facilities and infrastructure.

3.4.5 Increase and promote activities and infrastructure available for children and young people.

Strategies – the Albury Skate and BMX Strategy identifies demolishing the existing skate parks once new facilities have been established. Integrating skate elements into the play space will assist in meeting the skate demand. The Albury Skate and BMX Strategy also identifies a Regional Skate Facility at Thurgoona. This is not the preferred location for the regional facility. A more suitable location for the Thurgoona Regional Skate Park should be considered through the review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Structure Plan.

The 'Have a Say' process identified some interest in the establishment of an off leash dog park at this site, however this is in contrast to community feedback during the public exhibition period for the 'Albury Dog Friendly City Strategy', which was opposed to an off leash area at Ernest Grant Park. Consequently, an alternative off leash area for Thurgoona will be investigated in 2020, with $85K identified in the 2020/21 budget for establishment of a new off leash area in Thurgoona or West Albury.

Community Impact - the site is open to the public and there are no plans to restrict public access. Ernest Grant Park also has significant school use. The draft master plan will provide the community more opportunities to be active which will assist in a healthy community.

Financial Impact - upon Council endorsement of the final version of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan, Council Officers, in conjunction with key stakeholders, will prioritise projects in stages for inclusion of future budget processes for Council's consideration. There is funding allocated to the installation of outdoor fitness equipment at Ernest Grant Park ($251,724.00 including GST) through the Stronger Country Communities Fund Program Round Two. Installation is due to be completed by October 2020.

Environmental Impact – the master plan identifies the retention and protection of a large number of mature trees. Some trees may need to be removed on the western side of the park to accommodate the proposed improvements. This will be confirmed in the detailed design phase. It is expected that there will be a net gain in tree numbers with the areas identified for revegetation.

Two Cities One Community Strategic Plan - the Two Cities One Community Action Plan 2017 – 2021 outlines (under Section 3 Our Community) the goal 3.3. 'Our community is healthy and has a strong sense of wellbeing'. Action 3.3.2, 'Investigate a consolidated Sports and Recreation Strategy' (timeframe 2019/20) is relevant to this master plan in that, in conjunction with City of Wodonga, this facility will be identified and mapped as part of the Albury Wodonga Strategy. It is not considered that this plan is at odds with other facility development proposed for Wodonga.

Risk

- *Business Risk* – a detailed funding strategy which identifies funding opportunities will be developed on Council endorsement of the Master Plan. As there is no home club for the facility it is likely that Council will need to fully fund any improvements. Elements of the master plan would likely attract grant funding. This will be investigated further as elements are included in the budget process.

- *Corporate Risk* – developing master plans for sites provides a strategic direction for all key stakeholders and Council. It is also critical to achieving grant funding and this creates a positive image for Council. There will be community expectations that works associated with the master plan will occur quickly. These expectations will require careful management.

- *WHS and Public Risk* – WHS and risk management have been considered at a high level for the master plan. Further risk management consideration will be undertaken during the detailed design phase and during construction when they occur.

- *Delivery Program Risk* - the adoption of the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan will allow Council to take a considered approach to enhancing the amenity at the site. Following adoption of the draft master plan, consideration can be given to programming and prioritising works through Council's delivery program.

Community Engagement

Extensive community engagement occurred during the development of the Ernest Grant Master Plan. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed for the project (Attachment 2). As outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, consultation has occurred for both internal and external stakeholders including:

- Thurgoona Auskick;
- Thurgoona Football Club;
- North Albury Cricket Club;
- Cricket Albury Wodonga;
- Thurgoona Public School;
- Department of Education;
- Thurgoona Pre School;
- Thurgoona Community Action Group; and
- Charles Sturt University.

The wider community consultation occurred via our have a say process which involved providing background information and issues addressed and an online survey. The ‘Have A Say’ results are included in Attachment 3.

In summary, the ‘Have A Say’ process was productive with 209 submissions received. The key results of the process are outlined below:

- Over 90% of respondents were from the Thurgoona area;
- 56% of respondents visit Ernest Grant Park weekly, primarily with children aged 5-10 years old;
- The two main purposes for visiting the park are for recreation/general exercise and to visit the playground;
- Most people walk to the site, however, a large number drive;
- Over 75% identified a new play space as their top priority for improvements to the park; and
- A range of other suggestions were provided and reviewed as part of the master planning process.

To ensure that the wider community has an opportunity to comment on the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan, upon Council endorsement the draft master plan should be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days.

During the public exhibition period, the following key stakeholders will be contacted seeking feedback. Thurgoona Auskick, Thurgoona Football Club, North Albury Cricket Club, Cricket Albury Wodonga, Thurgoona Public School, Department of Education, Thurgoona Pre School, Thurgoona Community Action Group and Charles Sturt University.

At the conclusion of the public exhibition process the comments received will be reviewed, considered and where appropriate the draft plan will be updated. A report outlining the comments received with the final version of the plan will be presented to Council for consideration. If no submissions are received through the public exhibition period, then the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan should be endorsed as the final version of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan.

Options

1. Endorse the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan and place the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days. **This is the preferred option** as it will enable the wider community to have input into the draft master plan and suggest changes for consideration; or
2. Do not endorse the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan and request amendments. **This is not the preferred option** as the wider community is likely to provide comments that could lead to amendments to the plan. Placing the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan on public exhibition will provide this opportunity.

Conclusion

The draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan has been developed by Playce Pty Ltd in conjunction with Council staff. Key stakeholders and the wider community have also been consulted in the preparation of the draft master plan. The draft master plan addresses the identified issues as well as providing a strategy for future improvements.

Endorsing the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan will enable the plan to be placed on public exhibition and it will provide the opportunity for the wider community to have further input into the draft Master Plan

Recommendation

That Council:

a. Receive and endorse the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan;
b. Place the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days; and
c. If no submissions are received through the public exhibition process then the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan be adopted.

Attachments

1. Draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan (DOC19/145979)
2. Stakeholder Engagement Plan (DOC18/183028)
3. Have a Say results (DOC19/94790)