CM13.8. Draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan - Public Exhibition Results

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Purpose of Report

To provide Council with comments received through the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan public exhibition period, and to present to Council the final version of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan for endorsement.

Background

Ernest Grant Park is located on the corner of Thurgoona Drive and Bogong Street in Thurgoona. The area is a popular open space that is well utilised by 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 and Cricket Albury Wodonga);
- 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 has been secured 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 Your 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.

At the Council meeting held on 28 October 2019, Council resolved to:

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.

Community Engagement

Extensive community engagement occurred during the development of the Ernest Grant Master Plan with consultation undertaken with both internal and external stakeholders, as well as the general community through 'Have Your Say'.

In summary, the 'Have Your 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.

This information was then used by Playce Pty Ltd to inform the development of the draft Ernest Grant Master Plan.

Following endorsement of the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan at the 28 October 2019 Council meeting, the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan was placed on public exhibition which concluded on 6 December 2019. Copies of the draft plan were made available at the Library Museum, Lavington Library, Council Offices and on the AlburyCity website. In addition, a copy of the draft Master Plan was displayed at the Thurgoona Public School, Thurgoona Plaza and Ernest Grant Park.

There were nine submissions received through the public exhibition period. The following table summarises the comments received with an officer's response. All comments received are included in attachment 1.

Name: *Teisha Carroll*
Comment: *Keeping the play equipment for children away from the houses is a fantastic idea, include an off-leash dog area and make area more dog friendly.*
Officers Response: The play equipment comment is noted with thanks. An off-leash area at Ernest Grant Park was considered as part of the Albury Dog Friendly City Strategy, however not supported by the community at that time. A review of the Albury Dog Friendly City Strategy is scheduled to be undertaken in 2020 where other sites will be investigated and proposed as part of the strategy review. There is funding in the four-year delivery program to establish a new off-leash area in Thurgoona (site yet to be determined).

Name: *Natasha Russell*
Comment: 1. *Proposed car parking is too far away from the skate park.* 2. *Bottlebrush Street is too busy to access the car park. Have a carpark off Thurgoona Drive to access the new skate park?*
Officers Response: 1. Existing car park will be retained and can be used to access whole park as an alternative to Bottlebrush Street. Having two separate car parks provides greater flexibility in choice for users. 2. Advice from the AlburyCity Traffic and Transport regarding access from Thurgoona Drive: o Thurgoona Drive is an arterial road and access should be limited to collector roads only. Access to car parks should be encouraged via local streets. o Potential overflow of a car park could impact Thurgoona Drive, particularly during school times and sporting events.

Name: *Michelle Unsworth*
Comment: *Cater for older and younger children and improve the play space to encourage adventure and "safe risks". Consider adequate seating located nearby so parents can supervise. Improve skate park for younger children. The addition of a fitness area will also be a great improvement.*
Officers Response: Detailed design of the play space will be completed once the Master Plan is endorsed. This will include elements to cater for a variety of age groups and abilities. Seating for parents and carers will be distributed throughout the site and will be identified through the detailed design process.

Name: *Shirley Dobson*
Comment: *Include dog park*
Officers Response: An off-leash area at Ernest Grant Park was proposed as part of the Albury Dog Friendly City Strategy however not supported by the community at that time. A review of the Albury Dog Friendly City Strategy is scheduled to be undertaken in 2020 where other sites will be investigated and proposed as part of the strategy review. There is funding in the four-year delivery program to establish a new off-leash area in Thurgoona (site yet to be determined).

Name: *Michael Chapman*
Comment: *As a resident of Dunne Crescent, Thurgoona my family and I think the plans for Ernest Grant Park look great and are excited to see it be constructed.*
Officers Response: Thanks and noted.

Name: *Jess Leonard*
Comment: *Thurgoona resident with primary school children, member of the Thurgoona Public School P & C, works at Thurgoona Pre-school.* *The following comments for consideration on the Master Plan:* 1. *Disappointment at the lack of a through-road from Bottlebrush Street connecting to Thurgoona Drive.* 2. *The plan is lacking a splash park.*

3. Play space - more detail requested on the plan. Include a large fenced play space with flying fox, swings, sandpit, slides, water park and BBQ. *4. Active recreation zone - skate park too small. The current skate park is popular.* *5. Outdoor fitness zones - too far away from the children's play space. Parents cannot supervise children from gym equipment.* *6. Western car park- refer back to my main point more car parking could be included on through road.* *7. Existing car parking - improve parking. Include bike racks and electric car charging point.* *8. External path connection - move crossing to a less dangerous position.* *9. Path network - path improvements would be great.* *10. Thurgoona Drive pedestrian connection - pedestrian overpass over Thurgoona Drive.* *11. Bogong Street pedestrian crossing - Improve safety.* *12. Sports pavilion/toilet - include parents/family room.* *13. Proposed spectator seating - add more shade, plants or shade sail.* *14. Interpretative signage - relocate current rock sign.* *Complimentary of other elements on the Master Plan.*
Officers Response: 1. Council staff will continue discussions with the Department of Education and the Thurgoona Public School on how to best improve traffic issues in this area. 2. Splash Park – the AlburyCity Play Space Strategy will consider splash parks in the city. This strategy is due to be completed by the end of 2020. 3. Flying fox, swings, sandpits, slides and barbecues are included in the Master Plan. 4. Two skate areas are indicated in the plan that will cater for a range of abilities. 5. The intention was to create a fitness loop where users could run or walk between the stations. At least one fitness station will be located in close proximity to the children's play space. 6. A linear car park in this area is unfavourable due to potential conflict between reversing vehicles and pedestrians using existing walking trail. The proposed car park design in the Master Plan will provide better traffic flow. 7. Car park improvements have been included in the Master Plan. Bike racks included in the gym equipment project. Electric car charging point not suitable for this location at this stage, however could be considered in future. 8. This pathway is generally providing potential pedestrian linkages. Further design work is required to meet current standards. 9. Noted. 10. The plan identities that improved connections are required across Thurgoona Drive. Further investigation and options should be considered as a separate project. 11. This will be investigated as part of improving pedestrian connections. 12. Parenting facilities will be incorporated into the sports pavilion. 13. Shade will be considered as part of the design process. 14. Included in Master Plan.

Name: *Thurgoona Public school P & C*
Comment: *We have some safety concerns after our parent meeting to ask for feedback on this plan.* *We have a few questions/considerations:*

1. *Has a Case Study been undertaken, and futureproofing been considered when Thurgoona Drive becomes 4 lanes, as per a Thurgoona proposal already presented?*
2. *Thurgoona School has been shown a bus bay that is on your planning books already. This has not been shown on your Ernest Grant Draft.*
3. *Consider pedestrian bridge over Thurgoona Drive on the Master Plan, and then removal of the current Thurgoona Drive school crossing.*
4. *The carpark is good, but it could create more congestion at the Bogong Street entry and exit one way.*
5. *Cricket nets seem a long way from carparks.*
6. *Consider basketball court.*
7. *Consider inclusion of water play.*
8. *Rear access to the school.*
9. *Include speed limited road placed behind the school, connecting carpark (4) to Bogong St allowing alternate access for first response vehicles in the event of an emergency. This would reduce traffic congestion during peak times.*
10. *Fence be placed between the park and Thurgoona Drive*

Officers Response:

1. Any future roadwork duplication of Thurgoona is not expected to encroach on the park, given the extensive width of the Thurgoona Drive road reserve.
2. The bus bay for the school is outside the scope of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan. However Council staff will continue discussions with the Department of Education and the Thurgoona Public School on how to best improve traffic issues in this area.
3. The plan identities that improved pedestrian connections are required across both Thurgoona Drive and Bogong Street. Further investigation and options will be considered as a separate project.
4. Final car park configuration will be considered in detail design. However, an additional exit point is likely to result in significant impact on mature trees.
5. Cricket nets need to be orientated north south, and therefore this was considered the most suitable location.
6. Outdoor Basketball facilities can be reviewed during the detailed design phase and considered as a possible future stage.
7. Water play has not been included in this Master Plan. The AlburyCity Play Space Strategy will consider splash parks in the City. The strategy is due to be completed in 2020.
8. The access to the school will be retained.
9. This is included in the Master Plan.
10. This will be considered through the detailed design process.

Name: *Thurgoona Community Action Group*

Comment: *The following points suggest areas for improvement related to car park design, park layout and stakeholder consultation.*

1. *Carpark Placement - We propose a linear car park with angled parking between the Hume and Hovell track and the eastern perimeter of the school. Further parallel parking alongside the Hume and Hovell Track in front of Mercy Care with a one-way exit into Dunne Crescent.*
2. *Stakeholder engagement - children, teenagers and young people with disabilities have not been actively engaged. Have A Say is ineffective in gathering the ideas of younger people and whether teenagers, in particular, support the proposed co-location of the all-ages facilities.*

3. *Design - separate the play areas designed for different age groups. Mixing toddlers and teenager interests seems unsafe. Replace existing skate bowl area with picnic facilities.* 4. *Trees and shade - Item 14 Habitat Trees describes "mulching under the canopy". This tree is a dead stag tree with no canopy. Replacement Plantings for the 40-year-old trees to be removed will take a long time to generate natural shade and the "tree canopy" in areas 13.*
Officers Response: 1. Inclusion of a linear car park would likely reduce the amount of available space for the play area, and also have a larger impact on more mature trees located within the school grounds. A linear car park in this area would also create a potential conflict between reversing vehicles and pedestrians using the existing walking trail. The proposed car park design in the Master Plan will provide better traffic flow. 2. The draft Master Plan was circulated throughout the school and 'Have Your Say' promoted via social media. Comments were received from children and by parents on behalf of their children. Play space elements will be designed for different age groups but be placed within the same location to encourage families to stay together and parents can actively supervise children of different age groups. This is a recommendation through the NSW Government *Everyone Can Play* guidelines. Consultants had previously held consultation sessions at the School regarding another similar project. 3. The final detailed design will be based on NSW Government *Everyone Can Play* guidelines for designing new play spaces. The guideline follows the three principles of Can I Get There, Can I Play and Can I Stay and cater for everyone – young and old, families and carers, and people of all abilities and backgrounds. 4. Mulching under canopy would be for the benefit of the proposed understory planting. Protection is still required to preserve the tree. No mature trees in area 13 are proposed to be removed. These plantings are additional planting to provide a buffer between the residential areas and recreational areas.

The nine submissions received generally supported the draft Ernest Grant Master Plan. Many of the suggestions were already included in the plan or can be included in the detailed design phase of each element. As a result of the above feedback, the following minor amendments have been incorporated into the draft plan (attachment 2). They are:

- Inclusion of an Outdoor Basketball facility in the most appropriate location in the site to be determined through the detailed design stage;
- Relocate two of the proposed outdoor fitness stations closer to the play space. The new location allows for supervision of the play space, whilst maintaining the intention to create a fitness loop where users could run or walk between the stations. It also increases the available space for the potential inclusion of basketball facilities when the existing skate park is demolished; and
- Additional notes added to plan to provide safe pedestrian access across Thurgoona Drive and Bogong Street.

The public exhibition period did highlight that there are still concerns around traffic associated with the increasing student numbers of the school and drop off and pick up times. This issue is outside the scope of this Master Plan. However, Council staff are working with key stakeholders to address these concerns. This includes liaison with the NSW Department of Education with regard to the provision of

school facilities in Thurgoona, and opportunities for new school sites in Thurgoona to release the pressure on the current Thurgoona Public School site and cater for the future growth of Thurgoona. Work is also underway on the Thurgoona Education Precinct project (in conjunction with Charles Sturt University [CSU] and TAFE NSW) where a Master Plan is being prepared for the sites owned by CSU and TAFE NSW, which will consider future development opportunities for the site. The upcoming review of the Thurgoona Wirlinga Precinct Structure Plan (scheduled for 2020/21) will also consider the demand and provisioning for future school sites in Thurgoona, which will involve further detailed discussions with the Department of Education.

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 Your 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.

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 and contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

Financial Impact – the probable cost estimate to complete the works outlined in the Master Plan is in the order of $4-5M, and will be implemented in a number of stages, including:

Preliminary works

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.

Stage 1 (estimated at $985,789, and included in the draft 2020/21 and 2021/22 budgets):

Playground:
- Basket swing;
- Double swing set;
- Sand play area;
- Flying fox;
- Play tower with tube slides;
- Soft fall under surfacing; and
- Shade sails.

Paths and seating:
- Linking paths;
- Small shelters;
- Picnic settings; and
- Seating.

Carpark:
- Formalised car parking with access to the play space.

Stage 2 (estimated at $341,250, and be included in future budgets for consideration):

Skate elements:
- Mini scooter ramp;
- Scooter loop; and
- Pump track.

Active recreation zone:
- Parkour and climbing equipment.

Future stages

To complete the remaining works outlined in the Master Plan, significant additional investment will be required. Major components of future stages (with approximate cost based on OPC) would include:

- Sports pavilion – $2,000,000;
- Cricket nets – $130,000;
- Seal existing car park – $180,000;
- Outdoor basketball facilities – $100,000; and
- Sports field lighting – $240,000.

Projects associated with the Master Plan could attract grant funding, and it is now important to progress to detailed design to demonstrate that projects are shovel ready. An application for $200K has also recently been submitted to the NSW Government through the *Everyone Can Play* grant program for stage one of the play space. Other grant opportunities for projects will be investigated by the user groups and Council.

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 Albury/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 may be community expectations that works associated with the Master Plan will occur quickly, and 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 final version of the 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.

- *Environmental Risk* – 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, although tree removal will be kept to the minimum extent necessary. It is also expected that there will be a net gain in tree numbers within the areas identified for revegetation.

Options

a. Endorse the final version of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan (attachment 2) including minor amendments – **This is the preferred option** as an extensive amount of community consultation has occurred and been incorporated into the Master Plan concepts; or

b. Do not endorse the draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan (attachment 2) as the final version, and request changes. **This is not the preferred option** as a range of consultation has occurred with the community, who now have an expectation of improvements proceeding at Ernest Grant Park.

Conclusion

The draft Ernest Grant Park Master Plan has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and the community. The park and its location offer a key open space for the Thurgoona community, particularly given its proximity to the adjacent Thurgoona Public School, Thurgoona Preschool, Mercy Connect and the nearby Thurgoona Plaza Shopping Centre. The Hume and Hovell Walking Track also passes through the site along with other footpath connections highlighting the importance of the site as a local thoroughfare.

The initial draft of the Ernest Grant Master Plan was endorsed by Council at the Council meeting held on 28 October 2019. The draft Master Plan was placed on public exhibition which concluded on 6 December 2020. At the conclusion of the public exhibition period nine submissions were received. Generally, the comments were supportive of the draft plan and provided a range of suggestions. As a result of the comments received, there were some minor amendments made to the draft Master Plan (attachment 2), although no major changes are deemed necessary. These minor amendments will be incorporated as part of the detailed design phase of the relevant elements.

There were some comments received relating to the traffic around the Thurgoona Public School. The additional car parking should assist the school especially during drop off and pick up times; however, the traffic issues identified are outside the scope of the master planning process. Council staff will continue to work with the Department of Education and Thurgoona Public School to improve the traffic situation.

The long-term vision for the site will require significant financial investment to achieve the outcomes identified in the plan. The probable cost estimate to complete the works outlined in the Master Plan is in the order of $4-5M, and will be implemented in a number of stages, with Stage 1 and Stage 2 incorporated into the four-year delivery plan for Council's future consideration. Grant funding is (and

will continue to) be pursued to help offset these costs, and it is expected that the Master Plan will importantly add value to any grant application which seeks funds for the site.

Given the extensive amount of public consultation that has been undertaken as part of the 'Have Your Say' process and the more recent Public Exhibition, there is now a community expectation that the draft Master Plan will be endorsed, to allow the concepts to move into detailed design and construction phases.

Recommendation

That Council:

a. Receive and note the comments received through the public exhibition period for the draft Ernest Grant Master Plan; and
b. Endorse the final version of the Ernest Grant Park Master Plan including minor amendments (attachment 2).

Attachments

1. Submissions received through the draft Ernest Grant park Master Plan public exhibition period. (DOC20/34381)
2. Final version - Ernest Grant Park Master Plan. (DOC20/36517)