

## MARLBOROUGH RESERVE PLAYGROUND UPGRADE

**From:** Open Space Planning, Waverley Council.

**Subject:** Marlborough Reserve Playground Upgrade

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### Purpose

This consultation Report summarises feedback received from the Marlborough Reserve community consultation undertaken in May 2019. The findings of the consultation will help guide the proposed improvements to the reserve and playground.

### Background

Marlborough Playground Upgrade project has been developed to improve the play experience within the park as identified in *Waverley Council's Play Space Strategy* (PSS), and to bring all play equipment and surfaces up to date with the latest Australian standards for safety.

The PSS proposes the playground to remain as a neighbourhood play space catering to the community in the immediate area, within an 8 – 15 minute walk. The play experience will be tailored to suit a range of ages, in particular the playground will fill a gap in play provision for older children between the ages of 5 to 14 in the neighbourhood.

The following actions from the PSS have been incorporated into the project scope:

- Provide a range of play experiences and cater for a range of age groups through active, imaginative, creative, social, quiet and free play
- Create play spaces that encourage play in natural environments to promote an understanding of environmental processes

### Consultation Methodology

The community were engaged through online survey, social media and a Have Your Say public consultation event.

Community consultation was conducted from 1 May – 28 May 2019 Council's consultation and engagement website, Have Your Say Waverley was updated on 29 April 2019 with key information on the project, draft plans, concept imagery and a direct link to the survey.

The Have Your Say public consultation event was advertised via a letter box drop inviting residents within a 400m catchment of the reserve to view the draft plans at Marlborough Reserve on Saturday Morning, 11 May between 9am to 12pm. Council staff were available during this time to present the proposed plans, answer questions and take feedback. In addition to the letter box drop, Council notified the community about the event via Council's official website, Have Your Say Waverley, social media, signs at the park, and an announcement at the Bronte Precinct Meeting.

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During the public consultation day attendees were invited to peruse the material provided and Council officers were available to talk through and present the content. The online survey was available to complete on the day using Council's portable tablets. A total of 7 people engaged with the Council officers on the day.

The Have Your Say Waverley website received 41 visits, with 54 downloads of the draft plan. A total of 31 responses were received from the community; 24 online survey response, 7 written responses via email and 1 series of imaginative drawings received at the public consultation from children.

The survey aimed to gather information on how people use the reserve and what they would like to see improved or addressed. The survey also asked what aspects of the draft design were supported or opposed.

Key findings from the surveys include:

- Most respondents visit the reserve daily (66.7%)
- Most respondents visit for a short period, 30mins (50%) to 1 hour (33.3%)
- Most respondents access the reserve by walking (95.8%)
- Respondents were generally satisfied with the existing reserve and playground (47.8%) or felt neutral (30.4%)
- The most common activity undertaken in the reserve includes playing, relaxing and walking
- Majority of respondents visited the park with children under the age of 7

### Discussion

In this section both written and verbal feedback is summarised into common themes. Each theme is accompanied by recommendations on how to incorporate the feedback into the upgrade works.

#### Expanding the playground footprint

There was a strong view that expanding the playgrounds footprint would have a negative impact on the reserves quiet ambience that is treasured by local residents. The draft design proposed to use the current footprint of the playground for new upgraded play equipment, and introduce additional play elements in new locations including an in-ground slide, quiet play tee-pee/ cubby area and nature play elements such as stepping stones and balancing beams. Although 22.5% of respondents were supportive of the additional play interest and 19% were neutral, 58% of respondents were opposed to expanding the playground footprint.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the size of the proposed playground footprint.
- Locate majority of new equipment close to the footprint of the existing playground.

#### Fig Tree

Some people expressed their concern that the location of certain elements of play equipment and paths and increased use of the reserve as a result of the upgrades would have negative impacts on the health of the fig tree.

Council recognises the significant value the existing fig tree has to residents and the design intends to protect and retain the tree by strategically locating equipment and footings in places that are not harmful to the tree. Council commissioned an arborist report and tree root mapping of the fig tree undertaken by a Level 5 qualified arborist. The Arborist report and mapping will feed into the design and help shape the design to ensure the health of the fig is protected.

Recommendations:

- Modify the design as required to ensure the health of existing trees in particular the fig tree is maintained.
- Seek arborist review of updated design to ensure the tree is not adversely impacted.
- Use construction methods that are sensitive to existing trees.

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### Play Equipment

74% of respondents were in support of upgrading the existing play equipment, 23% were opposed and 3% were neutral. There was a strong view that the upgrades should cater to a range of ages and include more equipment suitable for an older age group. The community also recognised the need to retain open space for free play.

There was some concern from the community that improvements to the playground and additional equipment would attract more people to the reserve; increasing noise, putting further stress on street parking and increase rubbish generation in the park and the park bin.

The in-ground slide was a particular point of interest in the community. A number of responses (35%) were opposed to the in-ground slide and expressed concern that it would be visually unpleasing, while others (23%) were in support of the slide and 42% were neutral.

There were also requests from the community to have a traditional swing set instead of the proposed basket swing and suggestions for climbing nets for older children.

#### Recommendations:

- Include equipment that caters to a range of ages in particular older children such as climbing elements.
- Remove the in-ground slide from the design, ensure the multi-play equipment includes a traditional slide.
- Include a traditional swing set instead of the basket swing.

### Footpaths

Majority of respondents walk to the park and there is currently no footpath or kerb ramps around the park perimeter nor any access paths into the reserve. Although 13% of respondents were in support of proposed footpaths and 45% were neutral, 42% of respondents were opposed to the new paths, expressing a view that the paths would diminish valued green space. Some respondents did however, recognise the benefit of providing access to the playground.

#### Recommendations:

- Modify the design by reducing the extent of the proposed footpaths and provide footpaths only to the playground and kerb ramps from the street to access these paths.
- Explore material options that reduce the visual impact of the access paths into the reserve and review against the budget and universal access requirements.

### Park Furniture

There was some concern from the community about relocating the picnic table and park seats. A number of respondents described the benefit of the current location of the picnic table; taking advantage of the sun and shade during the year. There was also some concern that moving the table to the proposed location towards Brown Street would increase noise to nearby residents.

Overall, the community supported replacing the existing run-down furniture including the picnic table, bin and water fountain. There were also requests for additional picnic tables and seats in the reserve to cater for parties and multiple groups using the reserve at the same time.

#### Recommendations:

- Amend the design to retain the location of the existing picnic table and seats.
- Upgrade the picnic table, bin and water fountain as planned.

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### Playground Surface

The draft design proposed to use a combination of rubber soft-fall surface material and playground mulch to improve safety and bring the playground surface to meet Australian standard for playground design. There was some concern from respondents that the use and extent of the rubber soft-fall surface material in the design would be detrimental to the natural aesthetic of the reserve. However, there was also support for rubber soft-fall from respondents who recognised that the new surface would improve safety and play quality of the playground.

Council also needs to balance the use of synthetic surfaces against the increased maintenance requirements of providing organic playground mulch under equipment, particularly swings and slides where there tend to be high wear areas.

#### Recommendations:

- Review the extent of rubber soft-fall proposed and minimise the extent of the soft-fall proposed.
- Ensure the rubber soft-fall is a neutral colour to blend into the natural setting.

### Fencing

There was some concern around the low hoop fence in the garden bed between the playground and Brown Street and Blandford Avenue. The low fence in the design is located along street frontages closest to the play space, the play space is open towards the reserve to allow for free play between these two spaces. While some respondents (16%) were supportive of the low garden fence and identified it as a good way of managing conflict between children and roadways, others were opposed to the fence (29% opposed) concerned it would take away from the openness of the reserve, the remaining 55% of respondents were neutral towards the garden fence.

#### Recommendations:

- Modify the plans to reduce the extent of the low garden hoop fence, limiting the fence to interfaces closest to the playground and roadways.
- Maintain a barrier to the road, in the form of planting or garden hoop fence, particularly where play equipment is located less than 30 metres from the road frontage to ensure adequate safety.

### Next Steps

The upgrade design has been modified, in light of the feedback received. Council will hold another public meeting at the park to present the amended plans to ensure the community is well informed of the planned changes. The modified design will also be displayed for information on the Waverley Council website, along with this report.

Based on the recommendations outlined above the Marlborough Reserve upgrade plans have been modified to:

- Reduce the size of the proposed playground footprint;
- Locate majority of new equipment close to the footprint of the existing playground;
- Locate equipment and paths to ensure the health of existing trees is protected;
- Select equipment to cater for a range of ages in particular older children;
- Remove the in-ground slide from the design;
- Include a traditional swing set instead of the basket swing;
- Modify the design to provide footpaths only to the playground and pram ramps from the street to access these paths;
- Retain the location of the existing picnic table and seats;
- Reduce the extent of rubber soft-fall in the design;
- Ensure the rubber soft-fall is a neutral colour and
- Reduce the extent of the low garden hoop fence.