

MARLBOROUGH RESERVE

From: Open Space Planning, Waverley Council.

Subject: Marlborough Reserve Playground Upgrade

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Purpose

This consultation Report summarises feedback received from 2 rounds of community consultation for Marlborough Reserve Playground Upgrade, the first round occurred from 1 – 31 May 2019 and the second round from 26 September – 25 October. The report will detail the activities undertaken with the community during these periods, provide a summary of the outcomes of the consultation activities, and the next actions for the project.

Background

Marlborough Reserve is a small reserve in Bronte, characterised by its sloped topography, mature trees, open lawn and popular children's playground. 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 identifies Marlborough Reserve as a 'short term' priority, to be upgraded within 0–5 years after the adoption of the PSS in 2014. Furthermore, a recent play safety audit provides a condition assessment of the playground, the audit scored Marlborough Reserve Playground a low rating requiring major repairs or improvement. In taking the existing condition into consideration and ensuring Councils meets community expectation of quality play experience and good service standards it is recommended to replace the existing playground. In addition, Council has an ongoing commitment to universal access in all our parks and playgrounds, this upgrade will improve access into the play space to meet these requirements.

The PSS proposes the playground to remain as a neighbourhood play space for use by the within an 8–15-minute walk. The objectives and actions outlined in the PSS for Marlborough Reserve include:

- Provide a play experience 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.
- 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.

The concept design for the play space meets these objectives by providing:

- A range of play experiences such as swinging, bouncing, climbing, sliding and balancing appealing to a range of ages from babies to tweens.
- A range of equipment facilitating the following play types such as imaginative, active, quiet, social, and free and nature play.
- Support facilities such as seating, bubblers, bins and barrier to the road from the playground.

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- Improved access and wayfinding by provision of signs and continuous path too and through the play space with levels and surfaces to achieve universal access.
- Improved amenity to the reserve by increasing planting and using high quality materials and products with natural materials

Consultation Methodology

Council officers conducted two rounds of community consultation for this project, the first round was held from 1 – 31 May 2019 and the second from 26 September – 25 October 2019. This process allowed officers to gather feedback on a preliminary concept design, make design adjustment reflecting feedback and seek further feedback to ensure the design meets the community's expectations.

Council officers pursued different avenues to inform and gain feedback on the proposed design, including a letterbox drop of flyers, direct emails to interested community members, online via social media platforms, and physical signage at Marlborough Reserve, and an announcement at the Bronte Precinct meeting.

In facilitating feedback Council Officers held 2 in-person *Have Your Say Days* at the Park. During these times Council Officers provided assistance and direction on accessing the online Have Your Say webpage during the Have Your Say Days hosted at the park. Officers also had open discussions with community members, explained concept rationale, and took notes for consideration. In addition, Council received submissions by emails to the Open Space Planning Team, and online survey through the Council *Have Your Say* webpage.

The information provided to the community for comment included analysis diagrams of the existing conditions, illustrative plans for the proposed upgrade works, supporting imagery of precedent projects and designs from other built works in Sydney and abroad, graphic sections and sketch views. This information could have been viewed at the Have Your Say Days, online at the Have our Say webpage, on site on physical signage, and was emailed directly to interested community members.

Consultation Feedback Summary

Round One

The first round of community consultation was held from 1 May to 31 May 2019. The first *Have Your Say Day* at the park was held on Saturday 11 May, between the hours of 9 am and 12 pm. Council officers talked to seven people on the day.

The Waverley Have Your Say website received 41 visits, with 54 downloads of the draft plan during this time. A total of 31 responses were received from the community; 24 online survey response and 7 written responses via email.

The survey aimed to gather information on how people used 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 first survey 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.

Round Two

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The second round of community consultation was held from 26 September to 25 October 2019. The *Have Your Say Day* at the park was held on Tuesday 8 October, from 4 to 5pm. Council Officers talked to 20 people on the day.

The Waverley Have Your Say webpage received 114 visits, with 70 downloads of the updated documents during this time. A total of 27 responses were received from the community; 24 online survey responses and 3 written responses via email.

The consultation for round 2 was designed to ascertain if participants were satisfied or unsatisfied with the updated concept design and what aspects of the design were liked or disliked. The survey also allowed participants to provide additional comments.

Key findings from the second survey indicated that most respondents were satisfied with the updated concept plan 60.9%, 47.4% were neutral and 21.7% were dissatisfied.

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.

Theme - Expanding the playground footprint

Round One result

There was a strong view in round one 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 23% people responding were supportive of the additional play interest and 19% were neutral, 58% were opposed to expanding the playground footprint.

Design outcomes

As a result of feedback received in round one, the design was modified and the proposed playground footprint was reduced. The majority of new equipment was also moved closer to the footprint of the existing playground.

Round Two result

Of the engaged participants in round two, 25% people expressed that they were happy the playground footprint had been reduced in the updated design. 19% of people specifically said they preferred the original design with a larger playground footprint offering more equipment. 11% were of the opinion that the playground footprint was still too large and 41% were neutral in this discussion.

Recommendations

Maintain the size of the playground footprint shown in the updated playground design.

Theme - Fig Tree

Round One result

In the first round of consultation, 26% people expressed 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.

Design outcomes

As a result of this feedback, Council commissioned an arborist report and tree root mapping of the fig tree was undertaken by a Level 5 qualified arborist. The design was modified incorporating the arborist's recommendations to

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ensure the health of existing trees in particular the fig tree is maintained. The arborist then reviewed the amended design to ensure there were no significant impacts to the 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 or its root system.

Round Two result

The community was satisfied that the new design and additional Arborist involvement in the design process would ensure existing trees were protected. In the second round of consultation, one person expressed concern for the health of existing trees and one person specifically mentioned they were happy Council was taking measures to protect the health of existing trees.

Recommendations

- Continue to work with a level 5 qualified arborist in the design documentation and construction stages of the project.
- Use construction methods to avoid damage to the existing trees.

Theme - Play Equipment

Round One result

In the first round of consultation 74% 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.

The in-ground slide was a particular point of interest in the community. A number of responses 36% were opposed to the in-ground slide and expressed concern that it would be visually unappealing, while 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.

Design outcomes

As a result of this feedback the design was modified and the in-ground slide was removed from the design (a traditional slide was included as part of the multi-play unit). A traditional swing set was also included instead of the proposed basket swing. And a larger multi-play unit that caters to a wide range of ages in particular older children was also included in the design.

Round Two results

Respondents were generally satisfied 52% with the proposed play equipment in the updated design. 33% requested more variety of equipment with a focus on 'nature play' and climbing. 15% people were pleased the in-ground slide was removed from the design however, 15% people were also disappointed it had been removed from the design.

Recommendations

- Ensure the multi-play unit installed has a good variety of play interest catering to a range of ages and abilities especially older children.
- Explore additional nature play elements to be located within the proposed playground footprint.

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- Ensure play equipment is in neutral colours and natural materials are used where possible to blend into the natural setting.

Theme - Footpaths

Round One result

Walking is the preferred mode of transport to Marlborough Reserve (95.8%). This suggests the engaged users are local residents. The PSS identified the importance of the walking catchment area, with an ideal catchment of 8–15 minutes' walk or an estimate 400 m distance. The upgrade of the reserve aims to provide better walking connectivity in the form of footpaths and pram ramps along Blandford Avenue and Brown Street as well as an access path to the playground.

Although 13% respondents in round one were in support of the proposed footpaths and 45% were neutral, 42% 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.

Design outcomes

The design was modified in light of this feedback and the extent of the proposed footpaths were reduced. To ensure equitable access to the playground a perimeter footpath, kerb ramps and access paths were provided only to the playground. The access path to the playground was also modified to be a neutral coloured material to reduce the visual impact.

Round Two results

In the second round of consultation people generally seemed satisfied that council had reduced the extent of the proposed footpaths. Only 15% listed the proposed footpaths and access paths as an element they disliked about the updated plans. 7% people especially identified the inclusion of access to the playground as something they liked about the plans. One person requested a path at the bottom of the park and some people requested more frequent mowing of grass at the park to improve walking conditions.

Recommendations

Retain the extent of the current footpaths and access path to provide access to the playground.

Theme - Park Furniture

Round One Result

In the first round of consultation there was some concern from the community about relocating the picnic table and park seats 16%. 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.

Design outcomes

As a result of this feedback, the design was modified to retain the location of the existing picnic table and seats.

Round Two results

Participants were generally pleased the existing location of furniture was retained. Some people requested additional furniture in the reserve; in particular, there were three requests for an additional bin with dog bag dispensers at the bottom Southern end of the reserve and two people requested an additional picnic table within the reserve.

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Recommendations

Provide an additional bin with dog bag dispenser at the bottom southern end of the reserve.

Theme - Playground Surface

Round One result

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 Standards 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, particularly high wear areas such as under swings and slides.

Design outcomes

The design was modified and the extent of the soft-fall was reduced. The colours selected was also specified to be neutral colours to ensure the surface would blend into the natural setting.

Round Two result

In the round two consultation, 7% specifically listed soft-fall as an element of the design they disliked, 4% person listed this was something they liked about the upgraded design and 89% people were neutral in this discussion. Some people did however request the soft-fall to be a neutral colour.

Recommendations

- Retain the proposed extent of the soft-fall.
- Ensure the soft-fall installed is a neutral colour.

Theme - Fencing

Round One result

A low fence was proposed adjoining street frontages closest to the play space to protect children from running onto the road, the play space was left open towards the reserve to allow for free play between these two spaces. Some people expressed concern regarding the low hoop fence in the garden bed between the playground and Brown Street and Blandford Avenue. 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% were concerned it would take away from the openness of the reserve, the remaining 55% were neutral towards the garden fence.

Design outcomes

The design was modified and the extent of the low garden hoop fence was reduced, limiting the fence to interfaces closest to the playground and roadways.

Round Two result

Participants were generally satisfied with the amended extent of fencing. 7% specifically said they supported the loop hoop fencing, only 4% was opposed to the inclusion of fencing, 4% requested higher fencing for better visibility and 4% requested a fence between the playground and open lawn area, the remaining respondents were neutral in this discussion.

Recommendations

Maintain the proposed barrier to the road, in the form of planting and garden hoop fence, particularly where play equipment is located less than 30 metres from the road frontage to ensure adequate safety.

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Concept Design Development

The design concept has been further developed in consideration of the above discussion; in particular:

- Officers will continue to work with a level 5 qualified arborist during the design documentation and construction stages of the project to ensure the health of existing trees within the reserve is maintained.
- Construction methods that are sensitive to existing trees will be used.
- Inclusion of additional nature play elements have been located within the proposed playground footprint.
- Inclusion of an additional bin with dog bag dispenser at the bottom Southern end of the reserve.

Next Steps

- The concept will be developed in preparation for construction.
- Construction is planned to commence Spring/Summer 2020.
- The community will be notified of any updates at 3-6 monthly intervals to the construction program as works progress.