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## Service and Operational Matters - 30 April 2019

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### ITEM 8.4                      Ewen Park Improvement Plan - Update

**AUTHOR**                      **City Future**

#### **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

In July 2018 Council considered a report which proposed several recommendations including:

- A revised design for a meeting space at Ewen Park;
- Retaining Hurlstone Memorial Reserve as open space which will provide a town centre park for the Hurlstone Park community;
- Confirming a design for Lang Road bridge which considers future connections modified built and natural form in the vicinity of the bridge; and
- That engagement with the broader community, local residents and specific stakeholders for Ewen Park and Lang Road Bridge be conducted before any final works are undertaken.

This report outlines the findings of the community engagement and public exhibition and proposes next steps.

#### **ISSUE**

Council have a number of active projects in the Hurlstone Park area that require a balanced and coordinated approach to the planning and delivery of critical community infrastructure. Responding to the recommendations of the Council report of 24 July 2018, the Ewen Park Improvement Plan (the Plan) was prepared for public exhibition and community consultation with the local residents and stakeholders. Council engaged consultants McGregor Coxall to help prepare the Plan.

The Plan outlined proposed upgrades to a range of community assets in Hurlstone Park with a specific focus on the Ewen Park site.

Overall there were high levels of engagement during the exhibition period with the community actively responding through the various engagement platforms. The findings from the engagement show a range of community support and concerns for the proposals in the Plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**    That -

1. Council proceed to detailed design for components of the plan including:
  - Lang Road bridge – including kayak launch area and foreshore treatment; and

- Younger Parade to Lang Road pathway.
2. Council proceed with detailed design for Option A, which includes the installation of an outdoor education meeting space in Ewen Park and a community meeting space at the Hurlstone Park Memorial Reserve for reasons detailed in this report.
  3. Remaining works of the Improvement Plan are placed in forward works program for future consideration.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Nil

## **POLICY IMPACT**

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The Plan and associated works schedule will guide the future works program for the site. The development of the Plan is consistent with the former Ewen Park Plan of Management, the former Canterbury Open Space Strategy and the Playground and Playspace Strategy.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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Council has funds committed in the 2018-19 operational budget for components of the Plan. Remaining works in the Plan will be considered as part of future Delivery Programs.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

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The final outcomes will have an impact on the local Hurlstone Park residents and the broader Canterbury Bankstown community. The recommendations include further consultation during the detailed design stage of components to help ensure a positive outcome can be reached balancing their varied views and vision for the site.

## DETAILED INFORMATION

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In July 2018 Council considered a report which proposed several recommendations including:

- A revised design for a meeting space at Ewen Park;
- Retaining Hurlstone Memorial Reserve as open space which will provide a town centre park for the Hurlstone Park community;
- Confirming a design for Lang Road bridge which considers future connections modified built and natural form in the vicinity of the bridge; and
- That engagement with the broader community, local residents and specific stakeholders for Ewen Park and Lang Road Bridge be conducted before any final works are undertaken.

Responding to the recommendations of the Council report of 24 July 2018, the Ewen Park Improvement Plan (the Plan) was prepared for public exhibition and community consultation. Council engaged consultants McGregor Coxall to help prepare the Plan.

The Plan outlined possible works and improvements to community assets in Hurlstone Park at the Ewen Park site including:

- The replacement of the Lang Road shared pedestrian/cycleway bridge;
- The design and installation of a destination playground equipment in Ewen Park;
- The future capacity of the sporting fields and buildings to support the Hurlstone Park Wanderers Football Club (HPWFC);
- The scale and type of future community meeting place/facility for the Ewen Park site and/or other Hurlstone Park sites;
- The re-organisation of the community zones/uses within the Ewen Park site;
- The current and future connections of the Cooks River and Greenway cycleways;
- The installation of a footpath connection between Lang Road and Foord Avenue; and
- The consideration of a new kayak/canoe launch facility.

### Consultation

The community consultation and exhibition commenced with the distribution of 3,500 project postcards to all properties in Hurlstone Park and nearby residential communities in Earlwood and Dulwich Hill. The exhibition, which was held from December 2018 – January 2019, included a variety of stakeholder engagement sessions at events, pop-ups and onsite sessions and resulted in 245 submissions, including 19 direct written submissions and 226 online responses.

The majority of the respondents were from the surrounding area with 58% living in Hurlstone Park, 20% in Earlwood and 15% in Dulwich Hill. Additionally 49% of respondents identified as members of local associations such as Cooks River Valley Association and HPWFC.

The online survey had some targeted questions on key components of the Plan, those being the Lang Road pedestrian bridge, Younger Avenue – Lang Road pathway link, scale and type of future community meeting place/facility for the Ewen Park site and the overarching Ewen Park landscape.

Findings from the survey (and direct submissions) are shown below.

### Direct submissions

19 written submissions were received three of which were accepted after the closing date of the exhibition period. The majority of these submissions supported the overall plan but also expressed a level of concern regarding particular components of the plan. The direct submissions were considered as part of the above table, of these concerns:

- Five respondents raised the issue of cyclist and pedestrian conflict on existing and proposed paths in particularly the formalisation of the path between Younger Parade and Lang Road, consistent with the online feedback;
- Three respondents requested the retention of the earth mounds near the playground area, consistent with the online feedback; and
- One respondent submitted a detailed response and community petition regarding the location and scale of the proposed community meeting place.

The petition was supported by 73 local residents, the majority of which were residents of Tennent Parade and adjacent streets. The petition premised on seven statements regarding the concept design / scale and type of future community meeting place / facility for the Ewen Park site. Examples of these statements include the design *“does not promote pedestrian permeability and visual connection with the golf course and the design does not address crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)”*.

### Engagement results

Plan component	Support	Do not support	Key themes
Lang Road pedestrian bridge	89%	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedestrian safety concern regarding high speed cyclists</li> </ul>
Younger-Lang footpath link	67%	33%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerned for loss of pedestrian/dogwalking peace/pleasure if cycling amenity is increased</li> <li>• Preference for natural pathway</li> <li>• Pedestrian safety concern regarding cyclists</li> </ul>
Scale and type of future community meeting place/facility for the Ewen Park site	62%	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submissions prioritised upgrades to existing buildings/sports facilities</li> <li>• Support for some meeting space adjacent to the river</li> <li>• Support for a community building in Town Centre</li> </ul>
Ewen Park open space	71%	29%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve mounds to reduce use for ball sports and protect usage for picnics</li> </ul>

## **Summary of engagement**

The Plan was prepared to convey a coordinated, holistic vision for the various works that have been proposed for the site over a number of years. Previous plans for individual components had been prepared in isolation from each other without consideration of the impact or opportunity presented by each project. In addition, a number of new opportunities had also become available that must be considered in the future planning for this area.

It is clear that there is community support for principles in the new Plan however there were varied responses in relation to some of the individual components that form the plan. It is also evident that a percentage of the community still have concerns about some elements of the Plan.

Since the community consultation, Council has undertaken further investigations and feasibility assessments regarding the proposed community meeting space in Ewen Park. This work has revealed that there are some significant constraints associated with the proposed construction of a community meeting space at the site, namely flood risk and access and egress requirements. A summary of these can be found below.

## **Site constraints**

The former tennis court areas at Ewen Park are the highest locations within the park with levels varying approximately by one metre, from the southern end of the courts to the northern extremity of the courts. The McGregor Coxall concept design proposes a bridge landing at Ewen Park on the former tennis court area.

Early investigations for a community facility within Ewen Park indicated that the finished floor level would have been below the established Flood Planning Level (FPL) for Ewen Park, but would require substantial and costly design interventions to weather proof it.

This means that the building could be expected to be flood impacted in certain flood events. In order to satisfy flood mitigation requirements substantial ramping and/or stairs would be required for the building to be accessible and would require elevating the building. Whilst this is manageable from a design perspective, it is considered that this would add considerable cost to the project and not represent value for money given that other options exist.

It is considered that a review of the proposal is warranted and the provision of a more flood resilient facility which can be constructed and be capable of inundation without effect, would represent a better solution. Such a facility would not be constricted by the more stringent flood inundation compliance requirements yet could still provide a functional space suited to a wide range of uses. As a weather protected space, these uses could include an ecological learning space, informal meeting space and/or shelter for larger groups to name a few.

## **Other considerations**

Recently Sydney Metro advised they will no longer undertake compulsory acquisition of the former Canterbury Bowling Club site. As a result there is an opportunity to repurpose the

site for community space to better service the whole catchment. This approach is in accordance with the former Canterbury Community and Cultural Facilities Strategy (2016) which identified the need for a community meeting room and community centre for the Canterbury, Earlwood, Hurlstone Park and Ashbury catchment.

The Canterbury Bowling Club site represents a viable option as a community site given its close proximity to Ewen Park (1.5 kilometres, which would take 5 minutes by bicycle or 15 minutes on foot). The redevelopment of this community building would mean no additional building footprint on existing public open spaces, while the building is well positioned to serve the wider community and catchment area.

### **Previous commitments**

As part of this project Council acknowledges that former plans and commitments had been made to various community groups located in this area. This Council reports has taken into account these commitments and provides direction for a balanced approach towards the development of community infrastructure for the broader community that responds to the community aspirations and needs.

### **Options**

Option A – Provision of two community amenities:

- The first is an architecturally-designed and purpose-built outdoor education / meeting space in Ewen Park adjacent to the river. This type of amenity can be designed and constructed in a way that considers the site constraints associated with built form in flood risk areas whilst balancing Council's financial obligations for sound asset management. An outdoor meeting space that will provide greater flexibility for the community to gather for outdoor learning, community engagement etc in a weather protected environment whilst also being in close proximity to the Cooks River. There is also the opportunity of incorporating environmental sustainable design elements into the facility such as display spaces to demonstrate environmental projects and the inclusion of solar panels incorporated into the roof design. See following exemplar images.



- The second is a small dedicated community building in Hurlstone Park Memorial Reserve. The proposed building in the town centre, provides greater access to transport options and will activate town centre activity. In addition, initial assessment demonstrated greater flexibility and opportunities with this site. The proposed meeting space would be a small dedicated community building that could be used / hired by the local community. An additional benefit of this option is that a community facility in the town centre could benefit from the legacy site and

associated proceeds from the sale (this being a condition of sale of that site) of a nearby property that was dedicated for the purpose of community facility in Hurlstone Park.

- The Plan identifies a longer term project to upgrade to the sports amenities building on the northern side of Ewen Park (HPWFC) which would include the provision of multipurpose meeting space and accessible toilets. Whilst the focus of such a facility would be about bringing the soccer amenities up to an appropriate standard, enhancement and inclusion of amenities for a multipurpose community meeting space and accessible toilet should be considered.

#### Option B – Provision of one community amenity and park upgrade:

- The provision of one community meeting space as planned on the river. The proposed meeting space would be dedicated community building that could be used or hired by the local community. As outlined above initial investigations have indicated there will significant engineering, compliance and financial constraints in designing and constructing this type of facility in this location.
- The embellishment of the Hurlstone Park Memorial Reserve with additional open space amenities including shade, paths and landscape works to activate the town centre park.
- The Plan identifies a longer term project to upgrade to the sports amenities building on the north-western side of Ewen Park (HPWFC) which would include the provision of multipurpose meeting space and accessible toilets. The focus would only be about bringing the soccer amenities up to an appropriate standard.

#### Conclusion

Having reviewed all of the submissions, the current constraints at Ewen Park, the future of other facilities in the area, it is recommended that Council proceed with Option A.

Option A provides the multipurpose facilities which cater to a variety of users, while also allowing for appropriately located amenities in accessible locations. On the whole, it represents sound financial management principles and takes a place-based whole-of-community approach.

It is noted that a significant number of submissions were from Cooks River Valley Association who were after a meeting space. The provision of a covered meeting space can still meet the needs of the community, provide an opportunity to display and demonstrate environmental projects, while still addressing the significant flood constraints on the site. They would also have access to the new community meeting space at Hurlstone Park (only 850 metres away) as well as other spaces including the future room associated with the sporting amenity upgrade as well as at Canterbury. Further engagement with users will be undertaken as part of the detailed design process.