

Item 4.

Project Scope - City Centre Playground

File No: X005861

Summary

This report describes the concept design for the new City Centre Playground at Cook and Phillip Park (City Centre Playground). The new playground will be located in the southern portion of Cook and Phillip Park, near William Street.

The new City Centre Playground will provide the City's first inclusive play space of this size in the heart of the City. It will serve as an important child-friendly recreational space for locals and visitors, addressing the current undersupply of such spaces in the city centre.

The design creates a distinctive play space and caters for the needs of users across varying ages and abilities. It will offer equitable access through the site; sufficient amenity for people to stay and enjoy the space, and play experiences that consider a variety of user needs, providing a play space that everyone can get to, move through and enjoy together.

City of Sydney's Social Sustainability Discussion Paper (March 2016) identifies that ensuring the CBD is welcoming and accessible for people of all ages and abilities is a critical focus for the City, particularly given the growing numbers of families with children living in the city. It aims to improve accessibility for children and families.

The Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan titled 'A City for All' was adopted in October 2018. The policy makes a commitment to delivering a new inclusive play space in the heart of our city, noting the popularity of the Darling Quarter family playground demonstrates the demand for more free play spaces for visitors and residents in the city centre

The project is also guided by the City's Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Study, adopted in 2016 and forms a key deliverable in the City's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan, 2017-2021.

This report provides a summary of responses received during consultation, an overview of the current concept design, and recommended scope of work.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the design scope for the new City Centre Playground at Cook and Phillip Park, as described in the subject report and shown in the drawings in Attachment B to the subject report, for progression to Design Development and preparation of construction documentation; and
- (B) note the estimated project forecast re-phasing as detailed in Confidential Attachment E to the subject report.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Location Plan
- Attachment B.** Concept Design Plan
- Attachment C.** Exhibition Panels - Concept Design
- Attachment D.** Community Feedback Summary Report (Concept Design)
- Attachment E.** Financial Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Study (2006; reviewed and adopted by Council in November 2016) identifies increasing children's play opportunities in the city centre as a key driver influencing the future planning of open space. It proposes to investigate the feasibility of providing a unique city centre play environment that caters for all abilities and is a destination venue for both local children and visitors to the city centre. It identifies Cook and Phillip Park as a possible location as it provides an opportunity to co-locate with existing pool / recreation facilities, café, and car parking.
2. City of Sydney's Social Sustainability Discussion Paper (March 2016) identifies that ensuring the CBD is welcoming and accessible for people of all ages and abilities is a critical focus for the City, particularly given the growing numbers of families with children living in the city. It aims to improve accessibility for children and families.
3. The Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan titled 'A City for All' was adopted in October 2018. The policy makes a commitment to delivering a new inclusive play space in the heart of our city, noting the popularity of the Darling Quarter family playground demonstrates the demand for more free play spaces for visitors and residents in the city centre
4. A review of city centre open space was carried out, which assessed a number of potential sites against the following criteria:
 - (a) central location;
 - (b) sufficient space available for a playground of significant size; and
 - (c) no conflicts (heritage, masterplan direction, current usage, events or other programming).

Potential Site	Review Comment
First Fleet Park (SHFA owned)	Site serves as a key event space. SHFA did not support the proposal for a playground in this location
Hyde Park	Heritage overlays Already heavily utilised Events programming conflicts Keep as open space as per masterplan direction
Belmore Park/Harmony Park	Lack of available space for a playground of significant size Consider more central location
Cook and Phillip Park	Substantial open space in close proximity to the city centre Space available to support significant playground without compromising overall public space offering Currently underutilised – opportunity for activation of the space Co-location and synergy with Pool, Museum, Bodhi restaurant and other amenity nearby Good catchment location for city centre and city east residents

5. On analysis of the open space options within the city centre, it was determined that Cook and Phillip Park provides the best opportunity to meet current and future community play needs, given that it is currently underutilised, its size and proximity to a number of major cultural and educational institutions.
6. The City engaged Cred Consulting (December 2016) to undertake extensive public consultation and market research to:
 - (a) gather and evaluate current visitation to the Cook and Phillip Park precinct, potential attractors to the playground, and target groups; and
 - (b) explore the park and site opportunities and constraints at Cook and Phillip Park with internal and external stakeholders including schools, organisations, and local residents.

7. The market research confirmed that Cook and Phillip Park is currently underutilised and that a playground located there would attract a range of users, including local children, city visitors and educational groups. It also identified opportunities and ideas to re-imagine the park as a city playground.
8. Several potential layouts and locations for the playground within Cook and Phillip Park were tested, based on projects of comparable size and cost, to inform the project scope and consultancy brief. The endorsed project scope includes the design and construction of a unique, inclusive City play environment in Cook and Phillip Park. The playground is to be inclusive and cater for all abilities and ages, providing a vibrant destination for both local children and visitors to the City, and is to include a new amenities block.
9. The City engaged Aspect Studios in August 2018 as the Head Design Consultant on the project. The proposed concept design for the City Centre Playground is the culmination of research, testing of the brief, incorporation of consultation feedback and design refinement.
10. The concept phase included consultation with local primary schools, KU childcare, the Australian Museum and the community to gain an understanding of what potential users of the playground and adjacent spaces would like to see included in the design.
11. The concept design has incorporated the consultation feedback, comments from key stakeholders and feedback from the Design Advisory Panel, and the Inclusion Advisory Panel.
12. The City engaged an Indigenous Cultural Consultant in April 2019 to work with the Head Design Consultant during the design phase to celebrate the site's Indigenous narrative. This consultant will lead a presentation to the City's Indigenous Advisory Panel mid-late 2019.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

13. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling

The project will expand recreation and access opportunity for the residents and visitors to the city centre. It will serve as a destination on a multi-stop itinerary, while also providing sufficient amenity for a longer stay.
 - (b) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre

The Playground will activate the currently underutilised parklands at Cook and Phillip Park, providing amenity and inclusive recreational opportunities for locals and visitors. It will also provide opportunities for outdoor education for small groups, and offer outdoor picnic and play space to groups of visitors to nearby sporting, cultural and educational institutions.

(c) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies

The proposal will address an undersupply of child-friendly spaces in the city. It will provide greater and improved public use and enjoyment of the currently underutilised parkland, through the provision of a playground and supporting amenity, for children and their carers.

(d) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City

Cook and Phillip Park is located in close proximity to some of Sydney's major cultural and educational institutions. The site possesses a rich heritage, and the proposal includes opportunities to interpret past uses through the design of the new playground. The City Centre Playground design will draw upon this narrative, providing opportunities for education and celebration of Sydney's Indigenous and Colonial history and culture.

(e) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design

This project incorporates new areas for ecology and opportunities for habitat, and highlights water that historically ran through the site. The concept integrates water sensitive urban design principles into the playground design to improve the sites stormwater quality and offer play value.

Organisational Impact

14. Cook and Phillip Park is classified as an 'Iconic' park due to its historical significance and location in the CBD with good links to public transport. The potential for high visitor numbers means that any new playground will need to be serviced to the highest levels.
15. The development of the playground will require a commitment to potentially expand the current Cook and Phillip Park management regime to respond to the maintenance needs of the new playground, furniture, amenities, and more complex landscape to foster the successful growth and establishment of new planting.

Risks

16. Early geotechnical studies have identified some heavy metal contamination in various locations in Cook and Phillip Park, including the site of the proposed playground. An environmental consultant has been engaged to provide advice for the environmental management of the park, and will be responsible for the preparation of a Remediation Action Plan which will guide the design development, construction and ongoing management of the playground.

Social / Cultural / Community

17. The new playground and adjacent spaces will be a setting for informal social activity. It will provide a much-needed outdoor recreational space for local children living nearby, as well as visitors to the city centre.
18. The proposal will provide an inclusive place that caters to many different ages and abilities, so that both children and their carers can stay and enjoy the playground.
19. The concept design features step-free access across the core play offering, new access paths linking the different play zones, improved access to key entry points, hardstand areas, and accessible and ambulant toilet cubicles.

20. Inclusive play experiences include a partially raised sand play area, elevated boardwalks of sufficient width for children using a wheelchair to enjoy the nature-based play zone at the bottom of the site. Custom slides are also of sufficient width to accommodate multiple users at once, and the height allows for the easy lifting of children onto the slides. Two basket swings allow children to be lifted in, and supported in the swing, and the raised 'treehouse' play structures incorporate various play elements and experiences at ground level.
21. Approximately 1,600 children who live in the area will have access to a playground within 800 metres from their home. Over 500,000 children per year who visit cultural institutions in the area will have a location and amenities available for stops, including lunchtime.
22. The proposal includes opportunities to interpret the rich heritage and past uses through the design of the new playground.
23. The proposal will achieve the positive activation of Cook and Phillip Park, increasing safety for school groups and other users.

Environmental

24. The proposal increases the habitat value of the parklands, through new areas of planting, extended canopies and introduction of a dry creek bed. In particular, areas of native under storey planting and grasses will provide habitat for small birds and increase biodiversity.
25. The proposal improves water quality in the park through the dry creek bed swale system and passive irrigation to the planting within this area.
26. The design supports public transport usage by considering the location of its key entry points in the broader context of public transport connections.

Economic

27. The proposal will positively impact nearby business and institutions, such as the Australian Museum, by providing a new city centre destination and supporting amenity for users of the space to stay longer. Longer duration of stays (made possible by provision of amenities) and higher occurrence of repeat visitors will increase economic activity in the area.
28. The location of playground and amenities in close proximity to cultural institutions will increase visitation by school and family groups to the institutions. Co-location with the aquatic centre may also increase visitation to the pool.

Budget Implications

29. Remediation of the site is required to ensure that the site is fit for purpose as a playground.
30. The project budget implications are outlined in full in Confidential Attachment E to the subject report.

Relevant Legislation

31. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
32. A Review of Environmental Factors will be completed in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 for the park.. The amenities block will be subject to a Part 5 Planning Assessment.
33. Local Government Act 1993.
34. Attachment E contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would: confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
35. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.
36. Procurement of consultants and contractors for this project will be in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

37. The proposed program for the project is:
 - Scoping Report to Council June 2019
 - Design Development Mid-late 2019
 - Tender March 2020
 - Commence construction (12+ months) Late 2020

Options

38. The implications of not proceeding with the proposal are as follows:
 - (a) Does not address current or future community need for increased children's play opportunities in the city centre.
 - (b) Fails to deliver on the City's social sustainability and recreation objectives to improve liveability and play opportunities in the city centre.
 - (c) Fails to deliver on the City's SS2030 Strategies to build a lively and engaging city centre, vibrant communities and economies, and to create a cultural and creative city.
 - (d) Fails to deliver specific action item in the City's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2017-2021.

Public Consultation

- 39. The Community Consultation report is included in Attachment D. It contains feedback, concerns and suggestions raised by the community during consultation. The consultation feedback and resultant concept design will be incorporated into a Review of Environmental Factors for the project, and addressed in the design moving forward.
- 40. From 5 February to 1 March 2019, community feedback was sought on the concept design. The consultation was an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to provide feedback on the proposed design.
- 41. Consultation activities included online engagement, a letter to residents, on site project signage in the park, and face to face engagement at a pop-up session in the park. The Sydney Your Say webpage received 19 responses.
- 42. Specific suggestions included a safety fence around the playground (4 responses), requests to consider sensory and physical accessibility (2 responses). The refined concept provides a fenced playground and a key objective for the project is to deliver an inclusive play space that caters to different ages and abilities, allowing people to partake in play together. Physical access to and within the playground are a primary consideration for the concept, and will continue to inform the design.
- 43. A summary table of public consultation feedback, and how the proposal will respond, is included below:

Comment	Response/Action
Don't include cubby houses (and other covered spaces like tunnels) as they will be used by homeless, for drug use/drinking (6 responses)	We will continue to address these concerns through rigorous testing of sight lines, materiality, lighting and other Crime Prevention through Design measures. The proposal will activate the park, drawing more visitors to the park and increasing passive surveillance of the site.
Not an ideal place for a playground (homelessness, anti-social behaviour and crime in the area) (2 responses)	Cook and Phillip Park is well-utilised as a thoroughfare. The proposal will further activate the park, drawing more visitors to the park and increasing passive surveillance of the site.
Sandpit - risk of syringes, broken glass etc. (2 responses)	The playground will be subject to a daily sweep for needles, broken glass and other dangerous items. The City will look at additional measures to prevent littering or misuse at night.

Comment	Response/Action
Bottom of Cook and Phillip Park is damp, wet after rain (2 responses)	The proposal seeks to capitalise on the topography and natural systems of the site by providing appropriate play opportunities. The proposal includes a dry creek bed, elevated board walks and balance logs in this location.
Manage dog poo (3 responses)	The playground will be fenced, triggering a 'no dogs' regulation.
Don't take what's left of the general public's space (1 response)	The playground is restricted to the southern side of Cook and Phillip Park. There is a good supply of adjacent public open space, including Hyde Park and the Domain. By comparison, Cook and Phillip Park offers little amenity to its visitors and is currently underutilised.
Need to have vision of children in city playgrounds (2 responses)	The playground will offer improved sight lines and access throughout, and the materiality of play elements will be tested against this.
Don't want trees removed for playground (2 responses)	The proposal will seek to avoid the removal of mature trees in Cook and Phillip Park. Several additional shade trees are proposed for planting throughout the play space.

44. Further updates on the project will be given via the following channels:

- (a) Updates on the sydneyoursay.com.au and City of Sydney web pages;
- (b) Notifications sent to local residents, business owners and people who have made submissions on the concept design; and
- (c) During construction, the selected contractor will be required to provide a community liaison officer on-site to assist all stakeholders with day to day operational construction related issues.

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