

Project Scope - Blackwattle Playground, Glebe

File No: X038080

Summary

This report outlines the proposed improvements for Blackwattle Playground at Leichhardt Street, Glebe. Blackwattle Playground has been identified as part of the small parks and playgrounds improvement program.

The objective of the proposal is to provide an improved park and playground which supports the needs for the range of local users including individuals, informal and formal community groups as well as wildlife.

The project brief is to refurbish the play area including; replace end of life equipment and soft fall as required, provide a range of play experiences, improve the entries and access into the park; increase the open turf grass area, provide additional seatings and associated landscape improvements.

The Draft Concept Plan was on public exhibition from 29 March 2021 to 26 April 2021. A letter was distributed in the local area and the proposal was exhibited on the City's website. The proposed works are supported by the community and the response highlighted that an upgrade of this park would increase the current use of the park.

Community feedback was broadly in support of the proposal. Community suggestions will be incorporated as part of the detailed design phase where possible and additional information has been provided as requested.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the scope of improvement works to Blackwattle Playground as described in the subject report and shown in the Draft Concept Plan at Attachment B to the subject report for progression to relevant approvals, preparation of construction documentation, tender and construction; and
- (B) note the estimated project forecast as outlined in Confidential Attachment D to the subject report.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Location Plan
- Attachment B.** Draft Concept Plan
- Attachment C.** Engagement Report
- Attachment D.** Financial Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. The City has an ongoing small parks and playgrounds improvement program. The program is for parks which need upgrade or enhancement works, the replacement of end-of-life equipment, and to provide appropriate facilities for local-residents.
2. Blackwattle Playground is a local park located at 47 Leichhardt Street, Glebe on corner of Leichhardt and Oxley Streets; refer Attachment A Location Plan. The park is generally level near the street with a steep slope on the northern side. The Blackwattle Bay foreshore is located on the northern boundary of the park.
3. The 1570sqm park is surrounded by historic residential houses on both sides and 2-3 storey brick apartment buildings. The area is a Heritage Conservation Area C28 - Glebe Point.
4. The land is owned by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and is in the process of being transferred to the City of Sydney. This park has historically been under the care, control and management of the City. Council at its meeting of 18 May 2020 endorsed the transfer of land listed as Blackwattle Playground, Glebe being Lot 2 Deposited Plan 597314 from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to the City of Sydney for nil or nominal consideration.
5. The area that includes Blackwattle Playground is within the traditional homelands of the Gadigal and Wangal people, two of the 29 clan groups of the Sydney metropolitan area that are collectively referred to as the Eora Nation.
6. In 1983 Blackwattle Playground was created from the former industrial land to provide public park and access to the foreshore. The park and playground are located on the former Sylvester Stride's ship-breaking yards. A crane is preserved on the northern boundary to commemorate the maritime industrial history of the area.
7. Blackwattle Playground is within the heritage listed Blackwattle Bay Park including landscaping. The park was designed by Stuart Pittendrigh and Associates in consultation with The Glebe Society and Leichhardt Municipal Council. A heritage impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the planning approvals to ensure the upgrade is consistent and protects the heritage significance.
8. The existing park has two main park areas with a mix of mature native trees which creates an informal park character that reflects the neighbourhood. The northern native habitat area slopes towards the harbour and includes a series of raised timber deck and stairs which provides access to the Glebe foreshore walk. The existing playground, bench seats and some small turf grass areas are located near the street.
9. The park has a mix of 41 mature native and exotic trees including, eucalyptus, angophora, wattle and bottlebrush species. The predominant tree types are River She-oak or Casuarinas. As a result, the garden areas are bare and covered with a fine leaf needle thicket and the park is significantly over-shadowed. Due to the poor sun (solar) access, small areas and shallow soils, the turf grass quality is poor.
10. Blackwattle Playground was identified for an upgrade due to the overall condition of the reserve including the condition of the existing playground. The path layout and central playground location create small unusable grass areas. Currently about half of the open space is fenced-off which greatly reduces the usable areas and enjoyment of the park.

11. Consideration has been given to the provision of play equipment in surrounding parks within a 500 metre radius, to ensure a coordinated network of facilities that caters for a broad range of park users

Draft Concept Plan

12. A concept plan was developed for the works and community consultation was undertaken (refer Attachment B).
13. The concept plan sets the overall layout. The key principles are:
 - (a) provide an accessible, welcoming, and safe park for the community and visitors;
 - (b) sensitively respond to the heritage park character, unique harbour foreshore setting and views and enhance habitat planting areas;
 - (c) provide a local scale play space which improves the play opportunities for local children with a range structured equipment, imaginative and nature play elements;
 - (d) increase the usable area and improve usability by consolidating and better arranging park elements;
 - (e) provide a range of seating opportunities which encourage social interaction; and
 - (f) use simple, robust, high quality materials which reflect the local neighbourhood character.
14. The proposal includes the following works:
 - (a) repairs to the existing timber access stairs and decks;
 - (b) a new low park entry wall and clear entries from the street;
 - (c) relocate the playground and to increase the open turf grass area for passive recreation and improve sun access to the turf grass;
 - (d) a new play structure with slides decks and platforms, swings, inclusive boat and nature play with a maritime theme;
 - (e) the playground will provide inclusive access to the play structure cubby house and servery, and boat imaginary play element;
 - (f) more seats in shade and sun and tables;
 - (g) a new water bubbler with dog bowl; and
 - (h) new groundcover, low shrub and native habitat plantings.

15. The engagement process also identified community interest in exploring ways to provide Indigenous language activity the park. As part of the next stage of the upgrade, an Indigenous Cultural Consultant will be engaged to identify appropriate objects and the Gadigal language activities should be implemented into the project design and delivery.
16. In response to community consultation, the following will be investigated and incorporated where possible in the detailed design as noted on Attachment C.
 - (a) Bike racks will be provided in the footpath.
 - (b) Additional signage will be installed to remind people that dogs are not permitted in the playground and must be on-leash in the Blackwattle Park. A poo bag dispenser will also be provided on the garbage bin.
 - (c) Provide mounds in the playground soft fall and rock scrambling area.
 - (d) Retain the park light near the playground which increased the hours of use and park usability during winter (short daylight hours).
17. The following tree management and planting is proposed as part of the park works:
 - (a) retain and protect all existing trees and planting within the existing bush restoration area;
 - (b) preparation of an Aborigicultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan to inform the detailed design and ensure appropriate construction methodology.
18. A Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will be lodged for the works in accordance with the Environmental Planning Assessment Act 1979 and the State Environmental Planning Policy Infrastructure 2007.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

19. 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 report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies - this project will provide an improved open space infrastructure which meets the needs of a wide variety of user groups and provides opportunities for social interaction.
 - (b) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design - this project is part of wider program of ongoing renewal of small parks across the local government area; it will provide improved quality of open space infrastructure.

20. The draft Green Sydney Strategy establishes targets to increase greening and tree canopy in the City. It includes strategic directions to ensure we distribute quality greening fairly across the city so that everyone shares the benefits provided by greening. This project aligns with the following directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 3 – Cool and calm spaces. Two key issues facing most of the city’s residents relate to high urban heat and impacts on physical and mental health.

Greening for All

- (b) Action 4 – Distribute greening equitably. The strategy target is to establish 30 per cent canopy cover, within an area of around 1.6 kilometres to provide key heat and health benefits. The existing tree canopy cover in the park is about 70 per cent which exceeds this target.
- (c) Action 5 – Provide fair access to quality green space. This project will improve access in the park and provides an improved open space infrastructure to meets the needs of a wide variety of users.
- (d) Action 6 – Adapt for climate. This project will provide additional landscape planting and reduces the hard surface areas to reduce heat and increase water infiltration. Furniture and materials will be refurbished or recycled where possible.

Cool Calm Spaces

- (e) Action 8 – Cool the hot spots. Cool streets improve the walkability and liveability of our city. The project will enhance and improve the amenity and usability of an important and well used small park. The tree canopy and planting has been maintained or increased.
- (f) Action 9 – Calm green spaces. The proposed refurbishment provides a range of spaces including an open turf grass area for passive recreation, bench seats and social gatherings.

Organisational Impact

21. This renewal will provide an improved park amenity and play experience for children, their carers and other community members visiting the park. The replacement of non-compliant assets represents a removal/mitigation of risk to the City. The assets will require ongoing maintenance.

Risks

22. Risk of contamination. The park is located on a former industrial site and an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) or Remediation Action Plan (RAP) has not been identified. Soil testing is being undertaken to check the existing soil conditions and inform remediation as part of the works.
23. Risks of not implementing the scope of these works include potential failure of play infrastructure and risk to the community. Daily inspections are carried out by the City as per standard parks and playground maintenance operations.
24. Risks of not implementing this scope of works could result in failure to meet community expectations

Social / Cultural / Community

25. Blackwattle Playground is part of a significant network of well-loved pocket parks and larger Glebe foreshore parklands. Improving the amenity and play offering within the park represents an investment in this community, providing opportunities for people of different ages and abilities to use the park alongside each other.
26. An Indigenous Cultural Consultant will be engaged as part of this upgrade process, to ensure that the project contributes to recognising the City's Indigenous heritage, celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the public domain, and enriching local knowledge about the cultural landscape.

Environmental

27. The original vegetation along the Glebe foreshore would have been Coastal Sandstone Foreshore Forest. The park is connected to the Blackwattle Bay Foreshore Parklands which is identified in the Urban Ecology Strategy Action Plan as a Bush Regeneration site. Protection and enhancement of the existing planting through this works is in line with the Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan.

Financial Implications

28. There are sufficient funds in the current year capital budget and future year forward estimate. Current cost estimates and financial implications are detailed in Confidential Attachment D.

Relevant Legislation

29. Local Government Act 1993 - Section 10A provides that a Council may close to the public so much of its meeting as comprises information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
30. Attachment D to the subject report 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.
31. 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 rate payers.
32. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
33. State Environmental Planning Policy Infrastructure 2007.
34. Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.
35. Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
36. Companion Animals Act 1998.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

37. Current Program Dates
- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| (a) Detailed Design | July - December 2021 |
| (b) Tender | February 2022 |
| (c) Construction Start | May 2022 |
| (d) Construction Completion | January 2023 |

Options

38. Proceed with progression of improvement works as outline in this subject report including relevant approvals, preparation of construction documentation, tender and construction.
39. Project does not proceed - this option is not recommended as the current condition of the playground has a number of associated risks and compliance issues.

Public Consultation

40. Community Consultation was undertaken as a two-part process: pre-consultation/early engagement and public consultation/exhibition. For a detailed description of the consultation process and findings - refer to Attachment C.
41. A pre-consultation notification letter/email was issued to residents. Three submissions were received during the pre-consultation period. The purpose of the early community consultation was to seek input from the community about how they use the playground and how the park could be improved
42. The public consultation/exhibition involved the following;
- (a) Letters advertising the online feedback portal were distributed to the Glebe area (within a 500 metre radius around the site). 432 invitations were distributed.
 - (b) A webpage on SydneyYourSay showing the plans for the consultation from 29 March 2021 to 26 April 2021. 120 individual users viewed the page.
 - (c) A pop-up consultation feedback session was held in the park from 5.00-6.00pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021. Council staff were available to answer questions and obtain feedback about the proposed concept plan. Respondents were also encouraged view the plans and provide feedback on the Have You Say website. Fourteen people attended the session which included nine adults and five children.

43. There were ten submissions received during the consultation period. This included submissions via email and the online feedback form.
44. The proposed works were well supported by the community and the responses highlighted that an upgrade to this park would increase the current use of this park. A summary and response to the key comments and suggestions are:
 - (a) Support the relocation of playground to increase the amount of usable grass area for passive recreation (picnics and play) but do not want to encourage active uses and ball sports. The grass area will increase however the slope, size and shape of the area will not be inviting for active sports, and group ball activities so this should not be an issue. Park use will be monitored to ensure disruptive uses are minimised and everyone can enjoy the space.
 - (b) Concerns about increased noise from the playground and the proximity of adjacent residential houses. The proposed playground is a local scale facility and remains about the same size as the existing playground. No increase in noise is anticipated as a result of the playground renewal. Council staff will liaise with the adjacent neighbours to review and adjust the design to minimise impacts.
 - (c) The park is currently overshadowed by mature trees which make the park cold in winter and provide habitat for mosquitos in summer. All trees are inspected annually and pruned as needed to improve amenity and reduce the likelihood of branch or tree failure.
 - (d) Request that gates be installed at the park entries. The proposal includes a new low boundary wall along the street frontage to improve the amenity and reduce access to the street. Seats for parents and carers are also located near the entries to help people supervise children. This will help control egress and significantly improve safety in the park. Fenced playgrounds are provided at HJ Foley Rest Park, Glebe and The Crescent Playground, Annandale, nearby.
 - (e) Concerns about dogs being allowed in the park as they urinate/ defecate in the park. The park is designated on-leash and dogs are not permitted in the playgrounds. The park provides a through link to the Glebe foreshore which is an off-leash area and as such it would be unfeasible to restrict dogs in the park. The park design consolidates the grass into a large area and provide clearly defined spaces manage potential conflicts. Additional signage will be installed to remind people that dogs are not permitted in the playground and must be on-leash in the Blackwattle Park. A poo bag dispenser will also be provided on the garbage bin.
 - (f) Request to include more swings (two seats and one toddler bucket). Swings are the most popular and requested piece of play equipment, but unfortunately, they have a large footprint. Due to space constraints the inclusion of another swing is not possible in this park

- (g) Concerns about path material will difficult for prams and reduce accessibility. The proposed path material is either sandstone or brick paving. The surface finish will even and smooth to ensure the park can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone.
- (h) Request that barbeques be installed on the timber decks. The provision of barbeque and picnic facilities are included in destinations parks with toilets to help accommodates large groups and longer stays. The installation of a barbeque is not supported in this park to help minimise impacts on local residents.

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