

Item: COM031-19 Georges River Council Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy 2019-2036

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Directorate: Community and Culture

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COM031-19

Recommendation

- (a) That Council endorses the Georges River Council Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy 2019 subject to the amendments outlined in point (b) below.
- (b) That, having regard to the updated recommendations provided by Elton Consulting and Otium Planning Group in response to the recent closure of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool, the following amendments be made to the Strategy:
- (i) It is identified that three aquatic facilities are required to meet the needs of the Georges River local government area until 2036. Due to the indefinite closure of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool there are presently two functional aquatic facilities;
 - (i) That the facilities and services required for the future third aquatic facility within the Georges River local government area should be determined having regard to the provisions of the Carss Bush Park Sport and Recreation Precinct Masterplan and Plan of Management and the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy;
 - (ii) That the option of a contemporary aquatic facility which may include an indoor/outdoor 50 metre pool, 15/25 metre heated program pool and associated uses (for example, cafe, crèche, gymnasium, health and wellbeing centre, water splash play area, car parking) be determined having regard to the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy; and
 - (iii) That the study consider suitable locations across the city for a third aquatic facility including (but not limited to) Carss Park and Netstrata Jubilee Stadium.
- (c) That Council reviews and implements an updated Georges River Development Contributions Plan to enable funding for projects identified in the Strategy to be levied from development proposals in the local government area.

Executive Summary

1. The Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy provides high-level direction for the provision of community centres, libraries, open space, sport and recreation facilities, athletics and aquatic facilities in the Georges River local government area.
2. The purpose of the Strategy is to examine existing services and current demand, and determine the infrastructure needed based on projected future population and demographic estimates for the local government area until 2036.
3. The draft Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy was submitted to Council on 26 November 2018 (COM050-18) and placed on public exhibition from 3 December 2018 to 1 March 2019. The public exhibition period was further extended to 7 April 2019 following requests to allow the community further opportunity for feedback.

4. A summary of submissions received as part of the public exhibition of the draft Strategy is included in this report for consideration as part of the adoption of the Strategy.

Background

5. To address the future needs of the Georges River Council local government area, Council undertook to review the existing strategies of the former Kogarah City and Hurstville City Councils, to plan and deliver a consolidated Georges River Council Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy.
6. The formation of Georges River Council has meant that the assets and infrastructure from the former Kogarah and Hurstville Councils are now being planned and managed by the new entity. Council has responded to this opportunity by commissioning this integrated Strategy for key Council social infrastructure including open space, recreation facilities, community centres and libraries.
7. Council recognises that open space, recreation and community facilities are critical social infrastructures that play a variety of important roles for the community. These facilities and spaces are major contributors to the amenity and appearance of the area, the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the community.
8. The overarching purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that the community within the Georges River local government area has adequate access to facilities and spaces to enhance the liveability of the city. These are places and spaces to meet and make connections, to keep fit and play sport, to connect with and enjoy the natural environment, to learn and celebrate the unique Georges River culture and lifestyle.
9. The Strategy considers the following types of facilities:
 - community centres
 - libraries
 - parks and open spaces
 - sports fields and courts
 - aquatic and athletics facilities
 - other recreation activities, such as skate parks
10. Facilities not provided by Georges River Council are also considered as important contributors to the provision of social infrastructure for use of the community. This includes facilities provided by schools, non-government organisations and neighbouring councils.

Methodology

11. A review of relevant existing strategies, studies and policies was conducted to understand key directions for the Georges River area, the wider strategic context, and specific facility types. Council facilities were analysed to assess their quality and services, against spaces and facilities provided by other organisations, their facility usage and demand modelling of sportsgrounds and sporting facilities.
12. For the purpose of the study, the local government area was segmented into six catchments for planning and demographic analysis, to understand the current Georges River community and likely characteristics of the future population of the area. The six catchments are generally proportionate in their total land mass. Each catchment has its own distinct geographic characteristics with varying degrees of access to public transport, open space and other recreational and community facilities.
13. Further analysis of contemporary trends in community facilities, open space and recreation facilities was undertaken to inform the future planning principles and hierarchy. The development of principles for future facilities and spaces, based on Georges River trends, identified gaps and needs, incorporating community consultation results and leading

practice trends. Benchmarking of Georges River facility provision was made against neighbouring councils, to understand how Georges River compares to its proximate neighbouring council areas, and to inform the development of standards for future provision, including costing.

14. The development and prioritisation of recommendations, based on the analysis described above proposed provision of capital works including developing new facilities or embellishing open space.
15. A key finding from the draft Strategy was the need for community hubs: clusters of facilities that act as focal points for community activity. These community hubs should be considered across three tiers – at a local, district and regional level. The hubs should engage the community to define a vision and identity and provide a range of opportunities for community members to participate in both active and passive recreation.

Consultation

16. The draft Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy was placed on public exhibition from 3 December 2018 to 1 March 2019. The exhibition period was then extended to 7 April 2019 following requests to allow the community further opportunity for feedback.
17. Further community consultation was conducted by way of nine (9) pop-up stalls throughout the Georges River community between January and March 2019:
 - 26 January – Carss Bush Park
 - 3 February – Netstrata Jubilee Stadium
 - 7 February – Hurstville Interchange
 - 9 February – Steamroller Park Playground, Oatley
 - 21 February – Hurstville Library
 - 2 March – Olds Park, Penshurst
 - 16 March – Marana Auditorium, Hurstville
 - 23 March – Woodville Park, Hurstville
 - 30 March – Kogarah Park

Summary of feedback received from public exhibition

18. 346 respondents made a total of 418 written submissions on the draft Strategy. 15% of respondents, or 62 in total, made 'pro-forma' submissions. Pro-forma submissions contained identical text, likely shared between individuals and groups to simplify the process of responding. There were four different types of pro-forma submissions received.
19. Written submissions came in a number of formats and methods including emails, responses received through the Your Say portal on the Georges River Council website and written letters.
20. Based on feedback received during community consultation and a review of industry best practice, a series of amendments have been made to the draft Strategy.
21. Facility descriptions throughout the Strategy have been reviewed and updated to reflect all facilities and services currently available.
22. Additional commentary and prioritisation has been provided within the Strategy regarding the following:

Active Recreation facilities:

23. Use of synthetic turf on sports fields was referenced by 19 respondents (5%). While there were mixed views, submissions were mostly against the use of synthetic turf. Whilst this

has been noted, the use of synthetic turf, unlike natural turf fields, does not deteriorate with high levels of use. No changes were made to the Strategy.

24. The dominant issue raised in the submissions (356 unique and 62 pro-forma) was concern for the closure of Kogarah War Memorial Pool at Carss Park for the development of a car park. 78% of those who submitted were requesting that it be retained and/or refurbished. Four petitions were received in the form of written and online petitions supporting the repair/refurbishment of Kogarah War Memorial Pool. The petitions included approximately 6,000 signatures in written form and 5,500 signatures in an online petition.
25. At the February 2019 (QWN002-19) and March 2019 (NM023-19) Council meetings, Council indicated a commitment to continue to subsidise the \$650,000 annual operating loss at the pool in the 2019-20 financial year, pending the findings of the independent engineering investigation into the structural condition of the Pool.
26. It is noted that since then, the Kogarah War Memorial Pool has been closed due to urgent requirements for environmental remediation under direction from the NSW Environment Protection Authority. Full details of the closure are contained in a separate report on the Assets and Infrastructure Committee agenda.
27. A community information session was held on Monday 29 July 2019 regarding the pool's closure and was attended by 178 people.
28. Further to these events, additional recommendations were provided by Elton Consulting and Otium Planning Group (refer to Attachment 2) including:
 - (iv) It is identified that three aquatic facilities are required to meet the needs of the Georges River local government area until 2036. Due to the indefinite closure of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool there are presently two functional aquatic facilities;
 - (v) That the facilities and services required for the future third aquatic facility within the Georges River local government area should be determined having regard to the provisions of the Carss Bush Park Sport and Recreation Precinct Masterplan and Plan of Management and the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy;
 - (vi) That the option of a contemporary aquatic facility which may include an indoor/outdoor 50 metre pool, 15/25 metre heated program pool and associated uses (for example, cafe, crèche, gymnasium, health and wellbeing centre, water splash play area, car parking) be determined having regard to the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy; and
 - (vii) That the study consider suitable locations across the city for a third aquatic facility including (but not limited to) Carss Park and Netstrata Jubilee Stadium.
29. Carss Bush Park, including the adjacent Todd Park, is a high quality open space precinct offering a range of recreation opportunities including passive open space, sports fields, an adventure playground, a tidal bath and bushland. The Carss Bush Park Plan of Management 2004 ensures the utilisation of the precinct for community purposes including, for example, the provision of community facilities, community events, cafes, and indoor and outdoor recreation areas.
30. Golf, which was highlighted by 18 respondents (5%), included 14 with concerns about any potential reduction of the Beverley Park Golf Course from 18 holes to nine. Many of these responses included pro-forma text.
31. Further exploration is recommended for a range of alternative community uses for golf courses in the area to ensure the ongoing viability and amenity of the facilities, and to review lease agreements to ensure that the facilities do not run at a loss and create a future financial burden on Council and rate payers.

32. Indoor courts were referenced by 5 respondents (1%). Some noted demand for basketball, netball and futsal courts as growing year-round competitions. One noted the difficulty of booking basketball courts in the Georges River LGA.
33. Basketball NSW has not identified a current or projected shortfall for the Metro South region. However, this region encompasses other LGAs. Netball NSW has not identified an indoor sports facility need for the LGA.
34. It is recommended that when the additional courts at Johnny Warren Indoor Sports Stadium reach peak time capacity (within 12-24 months of opening), Council undertake a feasibility study for an additional multi-court indoor facility at another location, with a minimum of three courts.
35. 18 respondents (5%) referenced BMX, road and track cycling. These were mentioned as sporting and recreational activities as well as active means of transport. Recommendations within the Strategy are to explore opportunities to provide a BMX track or pump track as part of the Master Plan for the former Oatley Bowling Club site, or at lower Gannons Park.

Passive Recreation facilities:

36. Green space (including passive open space, active open space and bushland) was the second most popular topic discussed, raised by 86 respondents (25%). The majority of these expressed the need for additional passive and active open space in the area. Passive spaces requested included places for children to kick a ball around, fly a kite, throw a ball to the dog and have a picnic.
37. Recommendations are to review and consolidate existing former Hurstville City Council and Kogarah City Council Open Space Acquisition Plans to develop a Georges River Council Open Space Acquisition Plan to address the present and future needs for open green space.
38. 43 respondents (13%) made comments about residential development and population growth in the area, highlighting the need for more open space and improved amenities to meet growing demands. Recommendations are to investigate opportunities to provide additional passive open space in higher density areas as part of master planning for town centres.

Community Hubs and Facilities:

39. The Jubilee Stadium Hub was mentioned by 39 respondents (11%), generally expressing concern at the recommendation to locate a sports and recreation hub there. These submissions were often linked to support for retaining the Kogarah War Memorial Pool at Carss Park in its current location.
40. The draft Jubilee Stadium Precinct Master Plan is currently in development and will be available for public consideration in 2020.
41. Findings from the development of the draft Georges River Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) and associated community consultation have indicated that there is strong community demand for increased open space, inclusion of green corridors and cycleways, more community gardens and leash-free dog parks. There was strong support for both active and passive recreation, and additional features which were valued included public toilets in parks; increased seating; parks within walking distance from houses; more trees on nature strips; and the introduction of rooftop green space. There was generally a call for more parkland and open space, libraries, more activity space for younger residents and a desire for more community centres in Hurstville. There was also support for acquisition of land for open space in Hurstville and Kogarah, and that there should be no loss or reduction to current open space areas.

42. The Strategy recommends the development of an Open Space Expansion Plan to understand opportunities to expand existing green spaces, provide new open space and provide open space in innovative ways.
43. The Crown Lands Plans of Management, a 3 year program of plans of management for passive open space and bushland was endorsed at the March 2019 Council Meeting (ENV007-19).

Financial Implications

44. The total budget for the development of the Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy and associated extensive community consultation was \$236,751 sourced from the Stronger Communities merger funds provided by the NSW government and from the approved 2017-18 and 2018-19 financial year budgets.
45. The Strategy makes recommendations for a 16 year schedule of capital works identified to be carried out based on short, medium and long term priorities.
46. Ongoing financial implications for the implementation of the Strategy are outlined within the document, to be sourced from future operational budgets, capital grants and other external funding sources.

Risk Implications

47. Operational risk/s identified and management process applied.

Community Engagement

48. Community engagement was conducted as part of the methodology for the development of the Strategy including online surveys through Council's Your Say portal and targeted consultation with facility users, government bodies and other key stakeholders.
49. In addition to the public exhibition of the draft Strategy, consultation was held with Council officers from Georges River Council, as well as neighbouring Bayside, Canterbury-Bankstown and Sutherland Shire Councils, and Councillor workshop briefing sessions.
50. Findings from consultation used to inform Council's Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028 was analysed for the development of the Strategy. Feedback highlighted the high value the community places on community centres and social infrastructure more broadly. In particular, the community identified a need for additional aged care services, youth facilities, health facilities, sporting facilities, gathering places, library facilities, children's services, schools, services that support at-risk populations, and public art as vital social infrastructure that should be a focus for the future.

File Reference

D19/140036

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1  Attachment 1 - Georges River Council Open Space, Recreation and Community Facilities Strategy 2019 - 2036 - *published in separate document*

Attachment  Attachment 2 - Addendum - Elton Consulting

[↓ 2](#) 



Addendum

Since finalising this strategy, the Kogarah War Memorial Pool at Carss Park (Carss Park Pool) has been permanently closed. This decision follows the community information session held on 29 July 2019, and was made due to environmental remediation concerns, under direction from the NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

All reference within this strategy to the facility being active is no longer applicable and any funding allocation is no longer in effect. It is recommended that appropriate amendments be made to the Strategy having regard to the recent closure of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool.

Recommended amendments include:

- i. It is identified that three aquatic facilities are required to meet the needs of the Georges River local government area until 2036. Due to the indefinite closure of the Kogarah War Memorial Pool there are presently two functional aquatic facilities;
- ii. That the facilities and services required for the future third aquatic facility within the Georges River local government area should be determined having regard to the provisions of the Carss Bush Park Sport and Recreation Precinct Masterplan and Plan of Management and the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy;
- iii. That the option of a contemporary aquatic facility which may include an indoor/outdoor 50 metre pool, 15/25 metre heated program pool and associated uses (for example, cafe, crèche, gymnasium, health and wellbeing centre, water splash play area, car parking) be determined having regard to the findings of the Aquatic Site Suitability and Feasibility Study and associated Aquatic Facility Strategy; and
- iv. That the study considers suitable locations across the city for a third aquatic facility including (but not limited to) Carss Park and Netstrata Jubilee Stadium.

