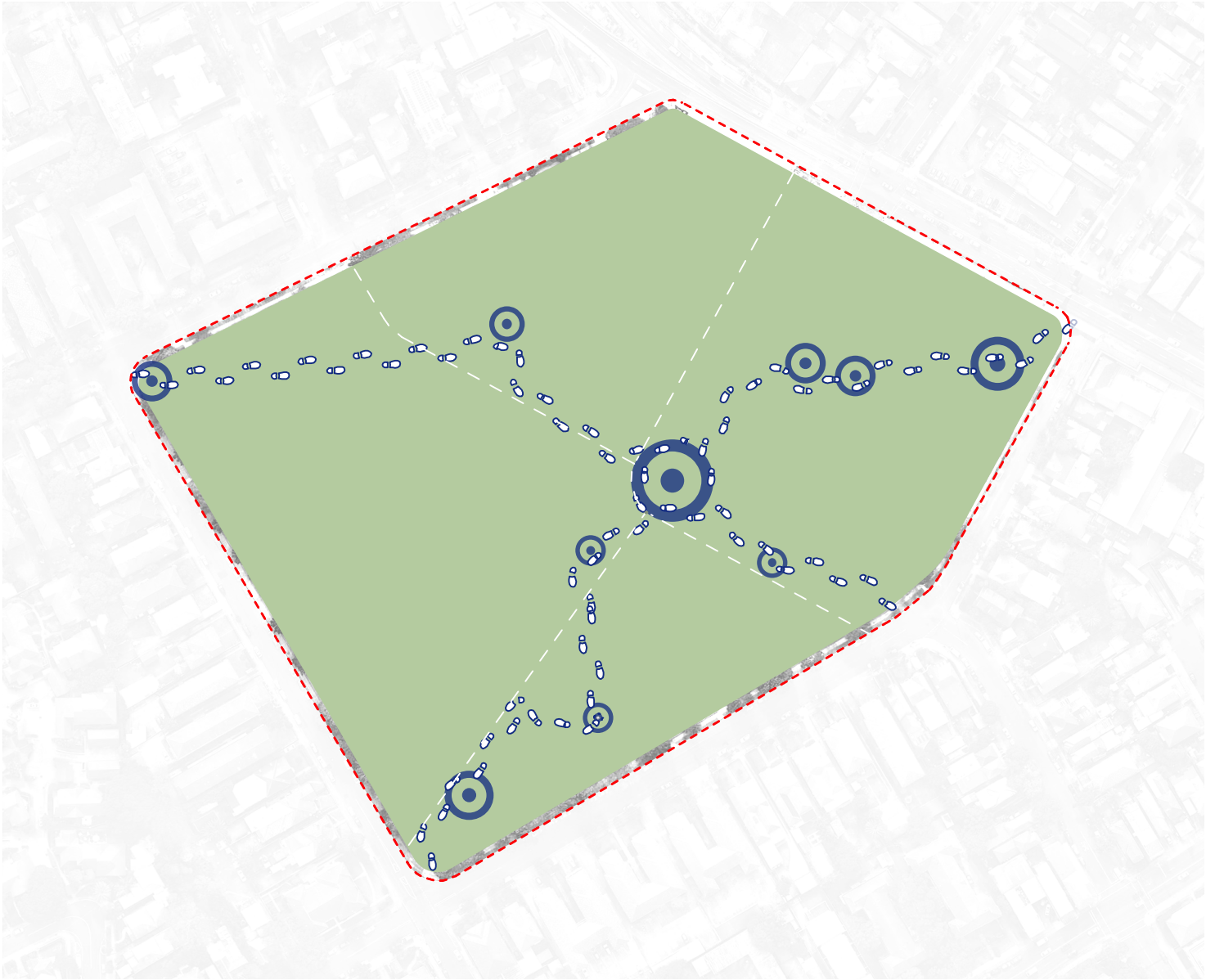
SENSE OF PLACE

An example of an interpretive screen communicating site specific aspects of the local environment [3]



COMMUNITY

Key Objectives:

1. *Support existing community facilities such as the bowling club and community garden, and their role within the wider community.*
2. *Provide high quality furniture and facilities.*
3. *Improve or maintain the quality and amenity of existing facilities and park assets.*
4. *Ensure that the park remains as a flexible green open space for the community into the future.*

Key Strategies to achieve this in Master Plan:

- Provide an on-site composting area. Establish a small shed that includes tool lock-up, seed-bank and water storage.
- Create additional shady seating areas and picnic tables.
- Increase maintenance to existing toilets. Continue to maintain the park as a high quality civic space.
- Protect the park generally from being exclusively used by any single user group and maintain the park's existing flexibility.

Community Facilities

Ashfield Bowling Club

Ashfield Bowling Club is one of Sydney's oldest, with the first clubhouse being built in 1893.

The clubhouse and greens are essentially fenced off from the park overall, operating essentially as an independent operation separate to the park itself. A bistro operates from the clubhouse, and is open to the general public. The community garden area sits adjacent, immediately to the south of the greens.

The master plan makes a number of recommendations to support the clubs ongoing use. These are generally small-scale interventions, that will improve the overall operability and amenity of the Park as a cohesive public asset.

Improving the connectivity of the clubhouse to the park would allow the bistro operation to better serve park users. Consideration to open up a more direct link to the clubhouse should be made in the future should any other improvements to the bowling greens be made (see *Sports and Recreation* in this Section).

Small-scale interventions are generally lower cost recommendations that would assist the club with it's current program, increase its value and desirability as a place to visit and host events. This would include additions such as an external all-weather awning for outdoor events and alfresco dining, a storage structure to screen bins and general storage, and a community garden on the western green.

Significant alterations include the redevelopment of the club into a two-storey structure and the removal of the eastern storage structure. The first floor extension would face the sporting ground and open onto the park, improving this interface, which is currently poor. The purpose of the new structure would be to maintain allow the club to maintain its current uses, but also provide additional community spaces and areas for sporting groups.

Community Garden

The existing community garden is currently thriving under the care of a devoted group of local garden enthusiasts. Whilst clearly viable in it's current form, it could be easily improved through the provision of an on-site composting area along with a small building that could be utilised as a tool lock-up, seed-bank and water storage facility.

The provision of additional shady seating areas and picnic tables could also enhance the existing facility and encourage more people to enjoy this rewarding community asset.

Open Green Spaces

The open grassed areas of Ashfield Park are highly valued by the community for unstructured recreation and relaxation, particularly on the weekends. These areas should be protected and maintained into the future. Development within the park should be limited to existing building upgrades or to areas or which are currently under-utilised by the community (eg: the community garden and bowling club).

New Furniture

As mentioned above, current facilities within the park are very well used by both small and large groups, particularly on weekends. It is recommended that new seating is provided to various areas within the park. The majority of seating should be shaded by new and existing trees where possible. New seating should be considered to serve a number of areas including:

- Chairs / benches and tables directly associated with the playground
- Low wall / bench seating close to the sporting ground for spectators
- Bench seating serving the community garden
- Creative mixed seating with tables, integrated into the landscape across all four park zones.

Public Events

Council should investigate supporting community events, including the potential for hosting movie nights on the sporting ground when not in use for sporting events.

Example of a community park movie night.[1]

Example of vegetable garden on a disused bowling green.[2]

Example of an awning which could be designed to accommodate outdoor dining, events or act as a stage.[3]

Example of seating integrated into a raised planter or garden area.[4]

New furniture of varying types can encourage informal gatherings and improved social interactions.[5]

Small, well sited service buildings can enhance public parkland's .[6]

[1]Movies Night (c) University City district / Phillyvoice
[2]Curl Curl Community Garden Open Day (c) koshka media
[3]Acre Eatery Camperdown Commons (c) Pony Design
[4]Campus Uni Trier (c) @T. Folkerts
[5]Parco Chairs designed by Broberg & Ridderstråle
[6] New Orleans Botanical Garden Duplantier Volunteer Pavilion designed by Mike McKay

SUSTAINABILITY

Key Objectives:

1. *Support local ecology and biodiversity.*
2. *Protect existing vegetation within the park.*
3. *Prioritise the environment in decision making.*

Key Strategies to achieve this in Master Plan:

- Establish a biodiversity zone within the park, planting local species and understorey planting.
- Utilise understorey planting to protect significant trees. Educate park visitors about remnant vegetation and it's significance.
- Plant new trees where possible to increase shade cover.

Planting Selection

Three categories of new planting are identified. These include:

- *Native grasses / Groundcovers. [Can add to this]*

A mix of lower level planting, such as native grasses, groundcovers [others], can assist with creating a soft transition between open spaces where there is no planting and areas where there is dense understorey planting. Beyond this, they contribute to the biodiversity of the area, improve soil quality and replace a significant missing layer.

- *Native & Ornamental Understorey Species*

Ashfield Park has a strong Victorian character, which best exemplified by the north-eastern zone of the park. This character is established by the ordered rows of palms and defined garden beds of ornamental flowers. As a result, any planting within this zone should aim to contribute to this existing heritage flavour, through a selection of ornamental species and defined planted areas.

- *Native STIF Understorey Species*

Like many areas of Sydney, Ashfield Park would have once been covered by species typical of the Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest. Less than 95% of this vegetation type now exists in Sydney and as a result it has become critically endangered. Parts of Ashfield Park exhibit remnant vegetation of the STIF, namely in the form of the significant Turpentine trees within the park. While it is unlikely that these trees were present on the site prior to 1788, photographic evidence indicates that they were well established decades after the park was formed in 1885, indicating that they could be descendants of the original STIF, from a time where the area was pastoral.

This master plan recommends protecting the remnant Turpentine trees and reinstating surrounding understorey planting using species that typically would be present within the STIF.

Key Areas for Planting

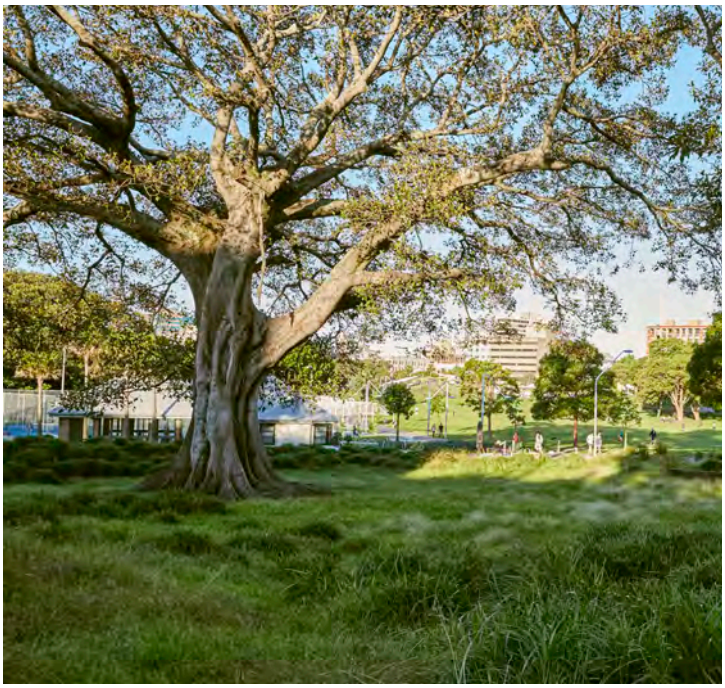
New planting is recommended to be focussed in four key areas as identified on the map opposite.

01 Planting in this area should reinforce the existing green buffer between the park and Parramatta Road through the north-western zone. It is recommended that the existing planting is supplemented and extended to increase the density of planting along this edge. Low level native grasses and ground covers can extend along the embankment between the footpath and the park, as well as around the north-west corner to maintain views through to the bowling club.

02 Planting within this area should look to establishing a green buffer between the park and Parramatta Road. Currently this is the least utilised area of the park, largely due to the impact of Parramatta Road. Dense planting would assist in boosting the amenity of this area of the park, by improving the outlook and filtering the noise and pollution coming from Parramatta road. Planting in this area should focus on ornamental species with a well-kept appearance that can integrate with the existing Victorian character.

03 Planting within this area should support the ecology of the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark forest and establish a biodiversity zone within the park, around the location of existing remnant trees. Planting in this area should eliminate the need for mowing or works that can damage existing trees. Planting in this area should be looked after but allowed to grow wild. Planting should be dense enough to prevent people from freely moving though the area.

04 Similarly to area 03, this area should utilise understorey planting to protect the existing cluster significant trees from damage. Low level grasses and ground covers can transition between this planting and the more open surrounding areas.



Example of native meadow of shade tolerant understorey planting.[1]

[1]Prince Alfred Park. Photo © Sue Stubbs.
[2]Prince Alfred Park. Photo © Brett Boardman.

SUSTAINABILITY

Example of low level grasses being utilised as transition planting between zones.[2]

Planting Focus Area

Existing Native Understorey Planting

Continue Native Understorey Planting

New Planting: Native Grasses / Ground Covers

New Planting: Native & Ornamental Understorey Species

New Planting: Native STIF Understorey Species

Outside of Site Boundary

N

0 5 10 20m

SCALE 1:1000 @ A4

SAFETY

Key Objectives:

1. *Support safer interactions between vehicles and people.*
2. *Reduce trips and falls within the park.*

Key Strategies to achieve this in Master Plan:

- Investigate lower vehicle speeds in suburban streets around the park.
- Improve pathways within playground to reduce trip hazards.

Safer Interactions

Vehicles & Pedestrians within Ashfield Park

The interaction between vehicles and pedestrians within the park (ie: around the bowling club) could be improved to increase safety for pedestrians. The master plan looks to address this through a number of strategies, some of which are discussed in *Access* including:

- Establishing limits to car parking on the grass around the vehicle access driveway through the use of physical barriers as opposed to obtrusive signage.
- Discreet bollards, such as those made from timber or plastic lumber, could be installed along the length of the driveway to restrict vehicles from accessing the grass. Bollards should be spaced to ensure that pedestrian access is not restricted.
- With these new controls in place, existing signage can be removed.

Reducing traffic speeds around public parks

Traffic calming measures in and around the council owned streets that surround Ashfield Park could greatly improve the safety of park users as well as improving connectivity between the Park and its' immediate neighbourhood.
Widening footpaths and planting beds, narrowing streets and traffic lanes, creating raised crossing platforms and appropriate signage are all measures that could be considered to achieve this objective.

Traffic calming ion surrounding council owned streets could improve safety in to and around Ashfield Park.[1]

Improving pathway surfaces

The state of some of the pathways within the park. Particularly within the children's playground area, could be improved with replacement, repair and a regular maintenance program.

Introducing raised pathways in and around areas with larger trees, constructed from a variety of robust, slip resistant materials can create an additional layer of play to these areas, whilst also protecting the health of the existing tree stocks.

Materials such as steel and timber, decomposed granite and softfall material, as well as concrete could all be utilised in imaginative ways to improve the safety and amenity of the park

Safer pathway surfaces can be achieved with a variety of different materials.[2]

[1]Traffic calming with colour changes and planting beds. Image: Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org)
[2]The Paddocks, Parramatta Park. Design: McGregor Coxall. Image: Co-ordinated Landscapes

SPORTS + RECREATION

Key Objectives:

1. *Continue a balance of sports and general community use of Ashfield park.*
2. *Maintain existing sports and recreation facilities and repair existing exercise stations.*
3. *Improve the utility, flexibility and ease of maintenance of the bowling club.*

Key Strategies to achieve this in Master Plan:

- Maintain the sporting ground for both sports use and general community use. Remove existing sideline lighting and install new sideline lighting.
- Repair and maintain existing exercise stations.
- Undertake general maintenance works to park assets.
- Permit a synthetic bowling green to replace one existing grass green within the bowling club.

Supporting Healthy Lifestyles

Casual Recreation spaces

Providing spaces for both formal and informal sports and games helps to support the community in leading an active lifestyle outside of organised sports. Generally Ashfield Park provides a good level of sporting amenity, however the general upkeep of these assets needs to be maintained to ensure they maintain their usefulness and remain accessible and available to as many user groups as possible.

The sporting ground and some of the park's other open spaces are utilised by a variety of formal and casually organised sporting groups (see: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-30/social-sports-casual-afterwork-society-cohesion/9710892). Care should be taken in the management of the park to allow as many different groups as possible to utilise the open spaces of Ashfield Park to encourage public health and wellbeing as well as community cohesion by providing opportunities for various cultural groups to come together and interact through exercise and sport.

Exercise Equipment

An exercise circuit with exercise machines was installed in 2015. While generally in good condition, some minor maintenance is required to ensure the equipment is safe and workable. It is recommended that a regular maintenance program be put in place to ensure they remain this way.

Synthetic bowling greens offer advantages such as reduced maintenance and reduced water consumption.[1]

Organised Sports

Organised sports at Ashfield Park are a key aspect of the parks history. The use of the park by various sporting clubs shall continue to be supported. The master plan includes a number of recommendations to improve the ability of the park to host sports events, including:

- Maintaining the sporting ground as a natural turf surface.
- Ensuring the sporting ground flood lighting is a suitable level for different sports codes.
- Future upgrades to replace one of the existing bowling greens with a synthetic surface
- Future minor upgrades to the amenities building, including the reinstatement of the toilet facilities (currently used as storage)

Lighting Upgrades

Whilst the existing lighting to the sporting ground itself is generally appropriate for use, lighting to the 'sideline' areas of the ground should be upgraded to allow safe and amenable light levels to these areas.

Exercise equipment installed in 2015 is generally in good condition, however some maintenance is required.[2]

[1]Synthetic bowling green. Image: Evergreen Synthetic Bowling Grass
[2]Exercise equipment in action, Ashfield Park, Image: Play by Design

View through axis of pheonix palms. Photography by Welsh + Major Architects.

McDonald's

6.0 Draft Master Plan

- Natural Grass
- Synthetic Bowling Green
- Existing Exercise Station
- Existing Understorey Planting
- New STIF Planting
- New Decking
- Existing Ornamental Garden
- Native Grasses / Ground Cover
- New Native / Ornamental Understorey Planting
- Softfall Groundcover
- Existing buildings
- Existing buildings
- New / Relocated Furniture
- Existing Furniture
- Community Garden Area
- Community Garden New & Relocated Beds
- New Nature Play Equipment
- New Low Fence
- New Bollards
- Interpretation Strategy Feature
- Existing Tree
- New Tree

ZONE 1

01 *Develop an interpretation strategy to highlight significant historic aspects and monuments of the park. This should have two components: a map component to guide park visitors to significant sites in the park, located at key points such as close to park entry points, and low impact interpretation strategies close to significant sites, which could include elements such as inscriptions or imprints in footpaths and small informative plaques close by. The interpretation strategy should be engaging for engaging for both children and adults and highlight the history of the park.*

- *Elements which should be highlighted in zone 1 include the historic sandstone gates (1a) and the location of the historic bandstand (1b), since removed.*

02 *Minor upgrades to dressing sheds:*

- *Prepare a Conservation Management Plan for the dressing sheds to guide future works and maintenance.*
- *Upgrade the internal areas of the dressing sheds and undertake general maintenance works as required.*
- *Provide concrete slab at base of stairs to mange wear of turf.*

03 *Remove telegraph pole lamps adjacent the sporting ground. Replace with underground electrical connection. Replace sideline lighting to be consistent with new lighting within the park.*

04 *Install table and chair park furniture in selected shaded locations.*

05 *Maintain and repair exercise stations as required and extend exercise stations in the future to include higher level fitness equipment to engage additional users.*

- *Install timed low lumen lighting at exercise stations to facilitate use after dark during the winter months. Designed wildlife friendly and to reduce spill into the adjacent biodiversity area.*
- *Provide accessible path to equipment.*
- *Provide 2 bike racks*
- *Provide equipment to encourage older participants in one station*
- *Provide body weighted static structures in another station.*

06 *Establish a biodiversity area to the southern corner of the park. Plant dense understorey planting in selected areas to improve biodiversity within the park. Understorey planting within Zone 1 should respond to the natural heritage of the area, utilising native plants typical of the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest.*

07 *Investigate hosting additional community events at the park throughout the year.*

08 *Design and install new signage to identify Ashfield Park. Remove existing signage. New signage should communicate the civic and historic character of the park. Remove existing haphazard and outdated signage defining what is permitted within the park. Replace with a clear, concise and attractive signpost at key locations and at park entry points. New signposts should:*

- *Include any important information about the park, such as what is permitted. Critical information should be also provided in languages other than English and in Braille format. Include a small map to identify the location of key park features, such as public toilets, removing the need for confusing signage elsewhere. The map could feature a Braille key and haptic elements.*

09 *Reduce speed limit of Orpington St, Pembroke St and Ormond St to 40km/hr to improve safer pedestrian safety around the park.*

10 *Improve the quality and amenity of areas around underground water tanks. Assess water tank capacity and role in drought-proofing park into the future.*

6.0 Draft Master Plan

- Natural Grass
- Synthetic Bowling Green
- Existing Exercise Station
- Existing Understorey Planting
- New STIF Planting
- New Decking
- Existing Ornamental Garden
- Native Grasses / Ground Cover
- New Native / Ornamental Understorey Planting
- Softfall Groundcover
- Existing buildings
- Existing buildings
- New / Relocated Furniture
- Existing Furniture
- Community Garden Area
- Community Garden New & Relocated Beds
- New Nature Play Equipment
- New Low Fence
- New Bollards
- Interpretation Strategy Feature
- Existing Tree
- New Tree

ZONE 2

01 *Install rows of bollards along driveway to prevent vehicles from parking on the grass. Bollards should be visually unobtrusive and in keeping with the civic character of the park, using materials such as timber or plastic lumber. Space bollards to permit free pedestrian movement between. Remove associated 'no parking on grass' signage.*

02 *Install table and chair park furniture in selected shaded locations.*

03 *Continue and extend existing understorey native planting to the northern corner of the park to further develop a green buffer between the park and Parramatta Rd. Retain and maintain the topiary of the date '1871 - 2019' and name 'Ashfield Park' which create a strong identity for the park.*

04 *Extend the community garden to provide additional planter bed for community herb garden. Investigate including edible fruit trees into the area surrounding the garden.*

05 *Create an area for composting on site for the community garden's green waste, located adjacent the bowling green and access driveway. Develop a plan of management for composting on site to ensure that the compost is carefully managed. Investigate the potential for involving multiple stakeholders in the composting program, which could include the involving local neighbours and the bowling club bistro.*

06 *Construct a small enclosure to contain a designated compost area, seed bank and lockable tool shed. Capture rainwater from shed roof into a small tank for community garden use. Composting area should be constructed so that it is attractive, presentable, can be kept free of vermin. Signage associated with the compost area should educate the community in understanding the composting process and how to get involved.*

07 *Future upgrade of one of the current grass bowling greens to a synthetic green. One green to be retained as natural grass.*

08 *Support the bowling club in its engagement with community groups and it's ability to host a diverse range of events into the future.*

09 *Establish understorey planting in selected areas around the base of significant trees along the park perimeter. Understorey planting in this area should respond to the natural heritage of the area, utilising native plants typical of the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest. Understorey planting should assist in protecting the trees from damage from lawn mowing as well as assist in creating a green buffer between the street and the park.*

10 *Refer to Zone 1: 01 Interpretation Strategy.*

- *Elements which could be highlighted in zone 2 include the community garden (10a) and the water fountain (10b).*

11 *Reduce speed limit of Orpington St to 40km/hr to improve safer pedestrian safety around the park. Install street signage to inform vehicles of high pedestrian activity.*

12 *Upgrade lighting where needed. Install timed low lumen lighting designed wildlife friendly and to reduce spill into the adjacent biodiversity area.*

13 *Reconfigure entrance. Provide wider, more open accessible path.*

14 *Provide signage along brick wall for Bowling Club.*

15 *Provide potential for additional seating, informal nature play and 'spill out zones' for parties and functions on Synthetic green.*

16 *Provide outdoor deck seating here to support the cafe and terraced apmhitheater seating which not only provides access to the cafe, but a variety of seating options.*

17 *Install accessible path form park to entrance.*

18 *Install 2 table tennis tables with concrete pads, accesible path and spectator seating.*

19 *Design and install new signage to identify Ashfield Park. Remove existing signage. New signage should communicate the civic and historic character of the park. Remove existing haphazard and outdated signage defining what is permitted within the park. Replace with a clear, concise and attractive signpost at key locations and at park entry points. New signposts should:*

- *Include any important information about the park, such as what is permitted. Critical information should be also provided in languages other than English and in Braille format. Include a small map to identify the location of key park features, such as public toilets, removing the need for confusing signage elsewhere. The map could feature a Braille key and haptic elements.*