

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT_ SUMMARY REPORT

Dulwich Hill Parks_ Laxton Reserve, Arlington Reserve, Johnson
Park and Hoskins Park

Plan of Management + Master Plan



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View along the pedestrian footpath towards the children's playground, Hoskins park. Photography by Inner West Council.

01_ Executive summary

During November and December 2016, Inner West Council undertook extensive community engagement to ascertain community feedback on the current and future condition and use of Dulwich Hills Parks - Laxton Reserve, Arlington Reserve, Johnson Park and Hoskins Park. The engagement included a series of interactive sessions, field surveys and an online survey at the 'Your Say Inner West' website. The engagement received over 230 individual responses to survey questions as well as others who asked questions, viewed the material and discussed issues with Council staff.

The feedback received was mostly from Dulwich Hill residents, although a high number of responses were also received from Lewisham residents specifically about Hoskins Park. The feedback was mostly from female respondents (68%) who were aged between 35 and 49.

The feedback highlighted those that visit Laxton Reserve generally stay for 11-30 minutes, while Arlington tended to be less at 1-10 minutes, and Johnson and Hoskins more at 31-60 minutes. Most park visitors walk to all the parks.

Most respondents use the play facilities in each of Hoskins, Laxton and Johnson Parks. Other popular activities include: walking, walking the dog, cutting through the park, kicking a ball or throwing a frisbee and having a picnic. These uses also translated into what people most wanted improved in the parks:

Laxton Reserve

- > Improve and diversify the children's play equipment;
- > Improve the shade and shelter facilities; and
- > Improve the park furniture and picnic / barbecue facilities.

Arlington Reserve

- > Improve the park seating;
- > Provide additional shade / tree planting; and
- > Improve the toilet facilities.

Johnson Park

- > Upgrade the children's playground, include diversity of ages including adult play;
- > Improve the picnic and barbecue facilities; and
- > Retain and improve the open space opportunities.

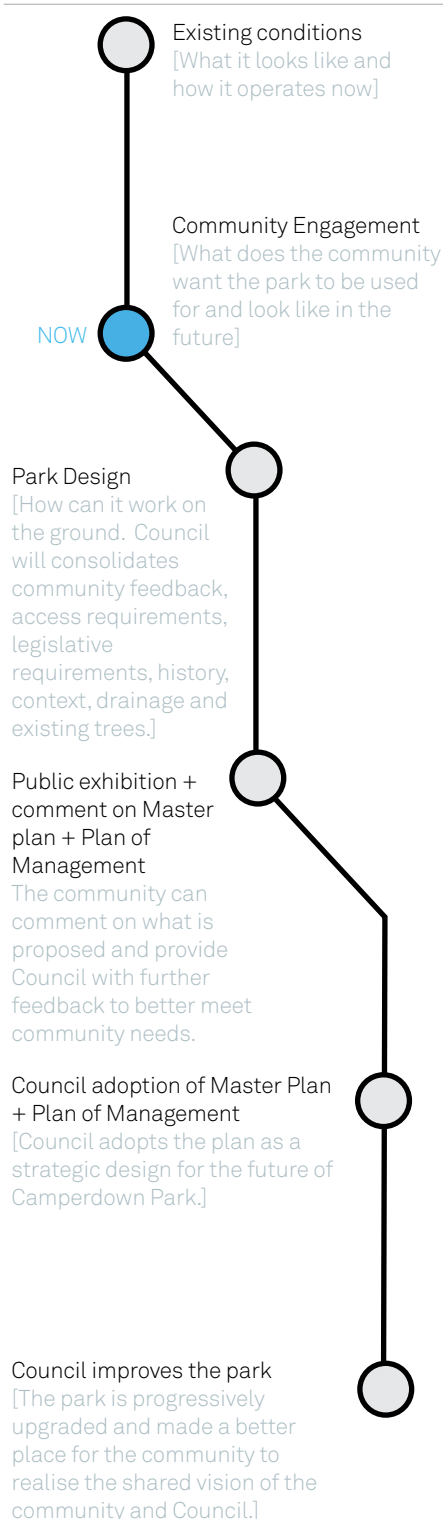
Hoskins Park

- > Improve the children's playground with shade tree provided;
- > Upgrade picnic facilities and provide barbecue facilities within the park; and
- > Provide WSUD with recreation functions within the park, while retaining the existing character.

The information contained within this report will form the bases of the decision making through the next phases of the master planning and plan of management process. A draft of the plans will be placed on public exhibition later in 2017 to ensure Council has interpreted the feedback correctly and met community expectations.

The final master plans and plans of management will guide park improvements over the coming 10 years.

02_ Context



Introduction

In September 2016, the Inner West Council initiated the process to develop Master Plans for Dulwich Hill Parks – Laxton Reserve, Arlington Reserve, Johnson Park and Hoskins Park.

The engagement and its findings will inform the future planning and design of the parks. A draft plan will be reported to Council for endorsement for public exhibition. The public exhibition period allows for a second period of input by the community to ensure what was requested has been delivered adequately in the draft master plan and plan of management.

Scope

The scope of the master plans and plans of management includes each of the parklands areas that comprise Dulwich Hill Parks – Arlington Reserve, Laxton Reserve, Johnson Park and Hoskins Park. The design scope also includes the pedestrian connections between parks and to nearby residential areas including the light rail and GreenWay corridors.

Tomorrow's Dulwich Hill

Tomorrow's Dulwich Hill was a place based planning project that was initiated in 2014. The project included extensive community engagement where input was sought on renewal projects within the suburb of Dulwich Hill. Actions from this project included the need to master plan the Dulwich Hill parks and integrate the associated street network as a series of pedestrian oriented connections. Other items raised by the community that interface with the Dulwich Hill parks, will be included within the park master plans and plans of management.

The GreenWay – Missing Links

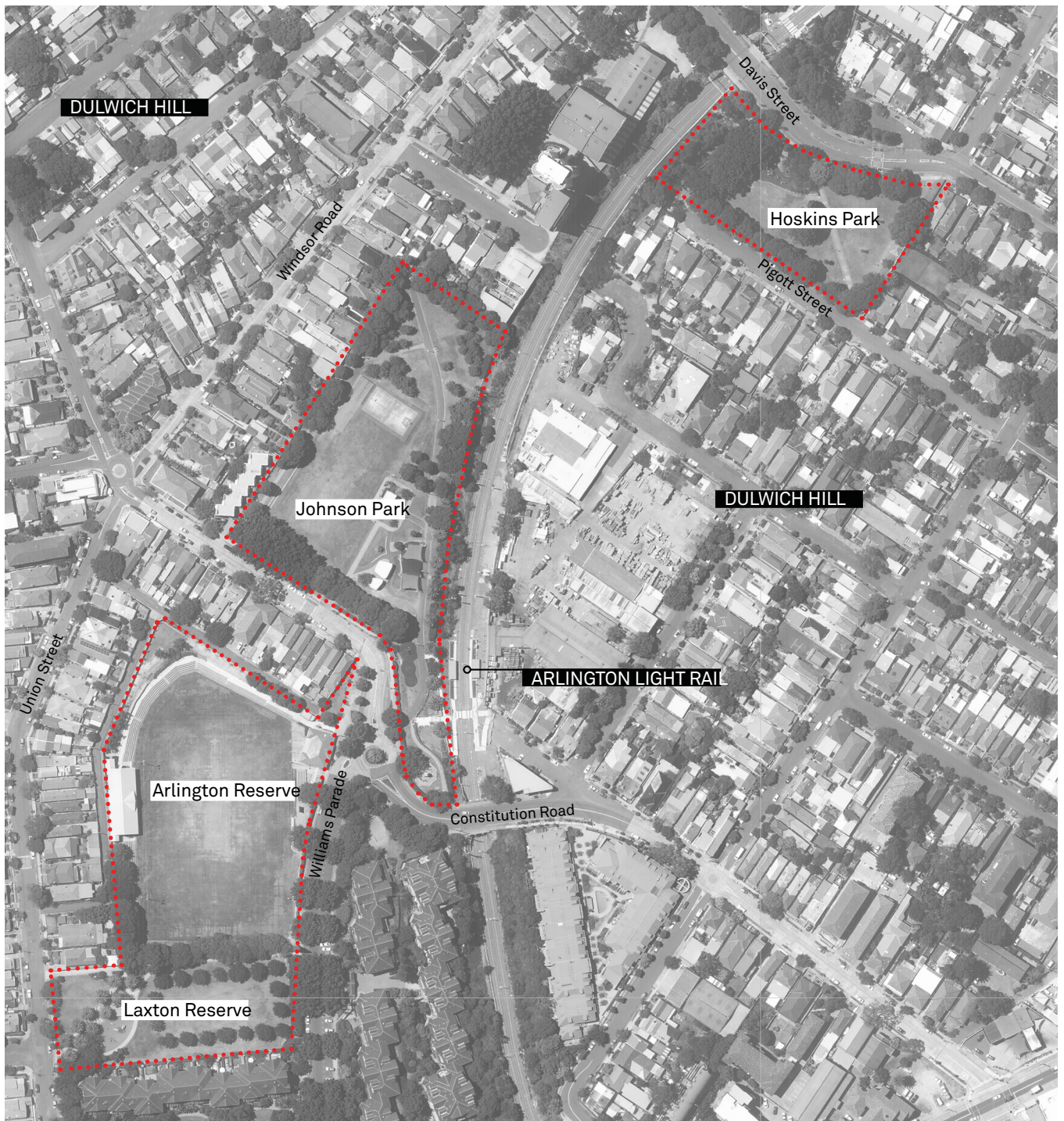
Interfacing with the Dulwich Hill Park is the GreenWay project. The Inner West community and local councils have been campaigning for over 10 years to complete the GreenWay. In July 2016 the New South Wales State Government and the Inner West Council announced a joint commitment of \$14.5 million towards the cost of completing the GreenWay Missing Links. Detailed designs for the central and southern missing links are now being prepared. The timing of construction of individual links will depend on further detailed studies, planning approvals and development timetables. It is expected that most of the GreenWay Missing Links will be completed by 2020.

01 Diagram of the Master Plan and Plan of Management process.

02_Context

LEGEND

..... Site Boundary



The scope includes the following parks:

- > Laxton Reserve;
- > Arlington Reserve;
- > Johnson Park; and
- > Hoskins Park

The streets around each park will also be considered within the design and engagement process. The streets and pedestrian connections will specifically be considered following the Tomorrow's Dulwich Hill project.

03_ Methodology

Method statement

The community engagement methodology aimed to be as inclusive as possible with a variety of forums for feedback. The process included two interactive workshops for each park; one in the Seaview Street Hall at night and a second Saturday day event in each park. An online survey at 'Your Say Inner West' was also available during the entire engagement period. The Arlington Reserve Working Group was notified of the project and also asked to input any requests during this period.

Advertising

The community engagement events and online survey were advertised with a letter distributed to 1000 households within a 300m radius of the parks. Signage was displayed in each of the parks and information was available at 'Your Say Inner West' on the Inner West Council website. Council Officers walked through the parks during various evenings and distributing business cards to park users outlining the online survey location and Council contact should more information be required.

Engagement afternoon – Saturday 19 November 2016

A community engagement event was held in Laxton Reserve from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. The event included three interactive stations and a short two page paper survey and was focused on the use of Arlington and Laxton Reserves. The engagement stations were set up to allow respondents to engage with the boards for as long as they had available. Approximately 25 respondents attended the event and completed the activities. Two Council Officers were available and had detailed discussions explaining the engagement and master planning / plan of management processes.

Engagement evening – Tuesday 22 November 2016

The community engagement evening was held in Seaview Street Hall from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The event was focused on Arlington and Laxton Reserves and was attended by two respondents. The two Council Officers present facilitated the activities and had detailed discussions about the planning processes.

Engagement evening – Wednesday 30 November 2016

A community engagement event was held in Seaview Street Hall from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The event had a focus on the future of Johnson Park. The event was attended by approximately five respondents. Council Officers had detailed discussions with the attendees, who had many questions about the planning process.

Engagement day in the park – 3 December 2016

The day in the park event in Johnson Park was highly successful. The event was attended by over 40 attendees, who were eager to participate and have their say. The event included three interactive stations and a paper survey. The two Council Officers present were able to answer questions and provide feedback on the Council planning process.

Engagement evening – Tuesday 6 December 2016

The engagement evening focused on the future planning of Hoskins Park. The event was attended by approximately six attendees and one Council Officer. The event included a series of interactive stations, allowing respondents to spend as little or as much time answering questions as they had available. Like all previous events, the Council Officer present was able to answer questions and provide information on the planning process.

Engagement day in the park – 10 December 2016

The final engagement day in the park was attended by approximately 25 people. The event included three interactive stations and a two page paper survey. Attendees were very eager to discuss park upgrade requests and the planning processes with the one Council Officer present.

Online survey

An online survey was launched on 01 November 2016 and ran for 6 weeks until 16 December 2016. During the survey period there were 500 visits to the site with 127 surveys completed. Each of the parks had individual survey questions, with Johnson Park receiving the highest number of responses. Throughout the survey period activity visiting the site was steady, through there were visitation spikes on 10 November 2016 and on 6 December 2016.

Internal Council stakeholder workshop

An internal stakeholder workshop was facilitated on Tuesday 13 December 2016. The workshop was to provide an overview of the project; key dates for staff input and obtain feedback from all disciplines within Council.

Arlington Reserve Working Group

A meeting was facilitated by Council on 14 December 2016 focusing on the operational use of Arlington Oval. Council staff discussed the planning process and requested input on the plans through the open discussion as well as the online survey.

Who did we hear from?

> The majority of responses were from Dulwich Hill residents, although there were also a high number of responses from Lewisham residents who specifically use Hoskins Park. Johnson Park was the most diversely visited park with respondents travelling from as far as Randwick, Roselands and Strathfield.
> There were more female (68%) respondents than male (29%) and not specified (3%).
> The majority of respondents were aged 35-49.
> English is the main language spoken at home by respondents, but Vietnamese, Mandarin, French, Portuguese (Brazil) and Gujarati are languages also spoken at home.

04_ What we found out about current park use

Understanding what park users do in each of the parks, how long they stay in the parks and how they get to the parks helps with planning the parks for its users. The following is a summary of the current uses, time spent in each park and mode of transport to the parks.

The main reasons why people visit the Dulwich Hill Parks include the following list. The numbers reference the number of respondents that answered the question with the same response.

Laxton Reserve

Use the children's playground

– 45

Walk a dog

– 22

Cut through the park

– 22

Walk / run

– 18

Relax under a tree

– 17

Picnic eat in the park

– 13

Throw a Frisbee or ball

– 9

Personal training

– 3

Access Arlington Reserve

– 2

Live adjacent the park

– 1

Bike ride

– 1

Arlington Reserve

Cut Through the Park

– 25

Walk or Run

– 24

Use the sporting field

– 15

Watch Sport

– 12

Access the public toilets

– 8

Personal train / other class

– 5

Live nearby

– 1

Bring kids to play

– 1

Take my son for a walk

– 1

Johnson Park

Use the children's playground

– 67

Walk a dog

– 34

Walk or run

– 25

Relax under a tree

– 19

Picnic in the park

– 14

Access the Light Rail Station

– 13

Use the dog off leash area

– 11

Visit and use the magic yellow bus

– 11

Use the exercise equipment

– 11

Use the basketball courts

– 8

Kick a ball / throw a Frisbee

– 7

Skate in the park

– 6

Personal training

– 6

Cut through the park

– 6

Use the park to skateboard

– 5

Use the cricket practice nets

– 5

Use the sporting field

– 5

Use the pathways to bike / scoot around

– 4

Have a BBQ in the park

– 3

Access bush care sites

– 1

Watch an organised movie in the park

– 1

Hoskins Park

Use the children's playground

– 56

Cut through the park

– 31

Kick a ball / throw a Frisbee

– 21

Relax under a tree

– 18

Walk a dog

– 17

Walk / run

– 16

Picnic / eat lunch in the park

– 15

Ride a bike

– 1

Birthday party

– 1

Play Pokémon Go

– 1

The length of time park users stay in the parks includes:

Laxton Reserve

1-10 mins 15%

11-30 mins 34%

31-60 mins 31%

1 – 2 hrs 16%

More than 2hrs 4%

Arlington Reserve

1-10 mins 39%

11-30 mins 35%

31-60 mins 9%

1 – 2 hrs 13%

More than 2hrs 4%

Johnson Park

1-10mins 1%

11-30mins 23%

31-60mins 42%

1-2hrs 28%

More than 2hrs 6%

Hoskins Park

1-10mins 21%

11-30mins 19%

31-60mins 38%

1-2 hours 17%

More than 2hrs 5%

04_ What we found out about current park use

The different forms of transport used by park users to visit each of the parks include the following:

Arlington Reserve

- Walk
 - 86%
- Car
 - 7%
- Bike
 - 3%
- Light Rail
 - 2%
- Roller skates / blades, skateboard, scooter
 - 2%

Laxton Reserve

- Walk
 - 84%
- Bike
 - 8%
- Car
 - 4%
- Roller-skates / blades, skateboard, scooter
 - 3%
- Light rail
 - 1%

Johnson Park

- Walk
 - 66%
- Bike
 - 10%
- Car
 - 9%
- Light Rail
 - 8%
- Roller-skates / blades, skateboard, scooter
 - 4%
- Bus
 - 2%
- Train
 - 1%

Hoskins Park

- Walk
 - 69%
- Bike
 - 16%
- Light Rail
 - 2%
- Roller-skates / blades, skateboard, scooter
 - 6%
- Car
 - 7%

05_ Common feedback themes

Each of the different engagement opportunities have provided input on the future of each of the Dulwich parks and provided clear feedback.

The common themes include:

Laxton Reserve

Character

Respondents like and wish to retain the existing character of Laxton Reserve.

Pathways

A large number of respondents believe the pathways are of good quality and meet their needs within Laxton Reserve.

Trees

Feedback from the community advocated an increase in the number of canopy shade trees.

Vehicle access and car parking

Comments around vehicle parking and access reflect the local nature of the parks use catchment. Generally the community is satisfied with the existing on street parking.

Pedestrian lighting

The overwhelming majority of users have requested that pedestrian lighting be improved for night use of Laxton Reserve.

Fencing

Fencing was not raised as a significant issue in Laxton Reserve.

Dog off leash area

There were a strong number of requests for the dog off leash area to be reinstated within Laxton Reserve.

Signage and way finding

The addition of signage and way finding was requested by some respondents. The reasonably low requests for additional signage may correlate with the high use by regular users who already know the local area.

Open space

The open space is well loved by the community.

Furniture

Park users have strongly requested additional seating within Laxton Reserve. The shade structure was noted as appearing a little worn by some respondents. Barbecue facility updates were well noted by many respondents as potentially improving their user experience in the park.

Bicycle facilities

Some respondents would like to see the installation of bicycle facilities (i.e., bike racks) in Laxton Reserve.

Entries and Street Edges

The park entries and interfaces with the road and adjacent properties were not raised as issues needing review.

Children's Play Equipment

Respondents strongly requested for the existing children's playground be upgrade, including diversifying the play experience with different age groups including older children and youth.

Water Sensitive urban design initiatives (WSUD)

A moderate number of respondents requested water quality improvements and water sensitive urban design initiatives be included within the design of the park.

Arlington Reserve

Character

Respondents noted the lovely grant nature of the park including grandstand, playing field and buildings. Respondents heavily noted the heritage character and love of the open space.

Pathways

The existing pathways generally meet the community needs. Some respondents requested pathway upgrades.

Trees

Many respondents noted a lack of shade trees around Arlington Reserve. It was requested by many to increase the shade tree canopy extents.

Bicycle facilities

Some respondents required improved bicycle facilities within Arlington Reserve.

Grandstand

Respondents noted the historic character of the grandstand and its quality of providing a shaded sitting space.

Public toilets

It is evident that the toilets are well used; however respondents noted that the entry steps do not provide equal access.

Vehicle access and car parking

Parking and vehicle access was not raised as a significant issue by the community. A few respondents noted that during training times and match play, residents need to compete with park users for parking.

Pedestrian lighting

The community provided some feedback for the review and improvement of pedestrian lighting at night within Arlington Reserve. Some respondents particularly noted the lack of street lighting and canopy trees obscuring the lighting along Williams Parade.

Sports lighting

The community is satisfied with the quality of the existing sports lighting. Only a few respondents noted they want the lighting improved.

Fencing

Fencing was not raised as a major park issue. Residents along Constitution Road requested the existing walls along Constitution Lane be retained.

Signage and way finding

The addition of signage and way finding was requested by some respondents. The reasonably low requests for additional signage may correlate with the high use by regular users who already know the local area.

Playing field

The playing field is a significant attractor for Arlington Reserve. Some respondents believe the field is for only sports use and requested that it be opened for general community use; others requested that dogs be allowed to use the field when not in use for organised sports or training.

05_ Common feedback themes

Furniture

Some respondents requested new or existing seating opportunities be improved, specifically the bench seating adjacent the playing field. Rubbish left following major events and not placed in bins was also noted by a few respondents.

Entries and edges

Entries and park edges were not raised as park issues by the community.

Johnson Park

Character

Residents like the existing character of Johnson Park, though noted that it is showing signs of wear and over-use.

Pathways

The existing pathways in Johnson Park are function quite well. Some respondents requested that the quality of the pathways could be improved.

Trees

There were clear requests from the community to increase shade and tree plantings within Johnson Park.

Vehicle access and car parking

Additional vehicle access and car parking was not raised as a request or as an issue by respondents within Johnson Park

Lighting

Except along the interface with the houses along Terry Road, where some respondents noted the park as being 'dark' and 'scary', lighting was not raised as a serious issue by respondents.

Fencing

Fencing was raised only as an issue in relation to children and dogs. Some respondents want to be able fence in either their dog or child and allow unsupervised play.

Signage and Way finding

Signage and way finding was not raised as a serious issue by the community for park users. Some respondents noted the benefits of interpretive signage within the park.

Open space

The open space area is well used and appreciated by the community. Many noted that space is an area of conflict due to the parks many uses. Feedback praised the fact there is a large area of open space available within Dulwich Hill.

Basketball courts

The basketball courts are used regularly. Some respondents requested for the courts to be upgraded.

Public Toilets

The public toilets are well used and appreciated. Several respondents requested the quality and cleanliness of the toilet facilities be improved.

Shade shelter

The shade shelters were noted as being in need of a face-lift. Responded noted the area as being tired and over used.

BBQ facilities

The existing barbecue facilities are used regularly in Johnson Park. Respondents requested upgrade of the existing facilities as well as additional barbecues to be provided.

Cricket practice nets

The cricket practice nets are used regularly and received some requests from respondents for their upgrade.

Dog off leash facilities

The dog off leash trial was raised as a contentious issue amongst respondents. There was a wide spread of views about the trial. Some of the different views noted include:

_Some respondents believe the trial is damaging the park as it is already an overused facility;

_There were requests for extending the hours of the off leash times;

_Some have requested fencing the off leash area;

_Many have strong statements of praise for providing an off leash area in Dulwich Hill.

Exercise equipment

The exercise equipment is well used, but only a few want the number of items increased.

Park furniture

Respondents strongly requested for new and updated seating within Johnson Park. There were several requested for the drinking fountain be relocated or designed so that it doesn't cause muddy conditions on the adjacent ground surfaces.

Playground

The playground is a heavily used part of Johnson Park. Respondents requested both an upgrade of the existing facilities as well as implementing the diversity of play equipment.

Bushcare

Some respondents described the importance of revegetation as habitat areas for native wildlife.

Hoskins Park

Character

The community like the unique heritage and local character of Hoskins Park.

Pathways

Pathway improvements and new pathway connections were raised as a medium to low priority to improve user experience.

Turf

A high number of respondents raised the poor quality of the existing turf in the park. Respondents requested the turf quality be improved.

Trees

Additional tree planting and shade within Hoskins Park were requested by respondents. This was particularly raised near picnic facilities and the children's playground.

Public Toilets

The existing public toilets have been closed for several years. The public toilet strategy has recommended their renovation to comply with standards and be reopen for use. This is strongly supported by the community, who would rate this is the highest priority. Several local residents did note that careful design needs to be applied to the facility to ensure they do not become places of focus for anti-social behaviour.

05_ Common feedback themes

Exercise Equipment

Exercise equipment was not raised as a priority requirement by the community. Only limited requests were made by respondents.

Vehicle access and car parking

Respondents believe parking near Hoskins Park meets user requirements. No additional requests for parking were made.

Lighting

Lighting was raised occasionally by respondents as something that would improve Hoskins Park. Some local residents worry that increased lighting will increase night use of the park

Fencing

Fencing was not raised as a request or as an issue by respondents within Hoskins Park.

Signage and way finding

Signage and way finding was rated as a medium or low priority for installation within Hoskins Park.

Open space

The open space is liked by the community. It was evident that Hoskins Park attracts many local residents to use the excellent parcel of open space in an otherwise dense inner city suburb.

Furniture

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed and requested additional park furniture, particularly BBQ facilities, seating and more shaded picnic tables.

Entries and street address

The park interfaces with neighbouring properties and the adjacent streets was generally not raised by the community as an issue, except for the northern boundary where additional vegetation was requested by some respondents. Otherwise interfaces meet the community needs.

Children's play equipment

The Children's playground is a major draw card of Hoskins Park. Most respondents requested increased shade and improved facilities. Respondents also requested increased diversity with the play facilities provided.

Bicycle facilities

A moderate number of respondents requested the addition of bicycle facilities within Hoskins Park.

Water sensitive urban design initiatives (WSUD)

WSUD initiatives were generally well received by the community. The community understands the benefits for the environment and increase visual amenity WSUD elements can bring to Hoskins Park.

Bushcare

Some respondents requested the removal of the weed species - Camphor laurel and improvements to revegetation areas.

06_ The next steps...

The information contained within this report will form the bases of the decision making through the next phases of the master planning and plan of management process. A draft of the plans will be placed on public exhibition later in 2017 to ensure Council has interpreted the feedback correctly and met community expectations.

The final master plans and plans of management will guide park improvements over the coming 10 years.

