

10.6 Planning and Environment Directorate

10.6.1 Adoption of the Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan

To the Chief Executive Officer

Directorate: Planning and Environment

Business Unit: Strategic Planning and Environment

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to respond to a Council resolution dated 28 November 2024, where it was resolved that:

- 1. Council endorse the draft Master Plan for Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct to be placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.*
- 2. If no submissions are received as a result of public exhibition that require further consideration, that Council adopt the draft Master Plan for Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct as attached to this report.*

Attachment 1 the draft Master Plan for Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct (the master plan) was placed on public exhibition and submissions were invited from 30 November 2023 through to 20 January 2024. Typically, public exhibitions run for 28 days, however, this timeframe was extended to 51 days to allow for greater engagement opportunities over the Christmas and New Year period. Notification of the public exhibition was administered through letters to adjoining land owners, social media, Council's website, e-newsletter, emails to relevant stakeholders and a total of five face-to-face consultations with key users at the Albion Park Library and with local young people attending the Albion Park Community Centre.

Following the public exhibition period minor changes were made to the draft master plan. These included identifying fixed elements within the proposal and additional elements that are provided when funding is available that assists with activating the space and contributing to the uses of the space. This report outlines the key topics that were raised in the submissions and face-to-face consultations during the public exhibition period and seeks Council's adoption of the master plan.

Recommendation

That Council

- 1. Note the summary of the public exhibition outcomes of the draft Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan identified in this report; and**
- 2. Adopt the Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan, as per Attachment 1 to this report.**

Background

Shellharbour City Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy (OSR Strategy) identifies that Council will continue to initiate, resource and implement master plans for key open spaces.

Council appointed Group GSA consultants to assist with the preparation of the master plan. The master plan has been informed by community and key stakeholder consultation, input from Council staff, and analysis of the existing area and its usage. The master plan guides how the area may develop into the future and ensures that any future upgrades are undertaken strategically, taking into consideration all potential uses and opportunities.

The areas subject to this master plan include Con O’Keefe Oval, Di Gorman Oval, Melaleuca Park, community facility buildings including Albion Park Pool, Community Centre and Library, the Former Tongarra Museum and other areas including Albion Park Pioneer Cemetery, community garden, skate park and carpark. These areas are collectively referred to as the ‘Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct’ throughout the master plan.

The Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct is bounded by residential and commercial uses, with Albion Park Shopping Centre and Albion Park High School in close proximity. The area provides key open space opportunities for the communities of Albion Park and surrounds.

The master plan identifies the following key areas and opportunities:

- Improved connectivity and accessibility
- Improved sporting, recreation and leisure opportunities
- The potential relocation and development of the community garden
- Highlight the historical, ecological and social values of the Albion Park Pioneer Cemetery and Melaleuca Park

- Improved amenity between the Albion Park Library and Community buildings through the creation of a central Plaza
- Extension of the Albion Park Library

The Albion Park Library, Albion Park Community Centre, and the Albion Park Pool are fixed elements and as such, the master plan has been designed around this fixed infrastructure. The former Tongarra Museum building, however, is not proposed to remain. This is due to the condition of the building, lack of appropriate use and the opportunities created for the overall site through its removal. This was considered against a number of factors during the development of the master plan, including, the current remaining useful life of the buildings, financial implications, Council's existing strategies such as the Shellharbour Community Facilities Study and Strategy and also the final design outcome for the entire site.

Outcomes of the public exhibition

During the public exhibition period, two face to face sessions were held in the afternoon at the Albion Park Community Centre. This engagement resulted in 69 young people sharing their ideas and comments about the Master Plan.

Three face-to-face sessions were also held at the Albion Park Library where staff engaged with members of the Parents and Babies Group, a local knitting group and members of the community. This engagement resulted in conversations with 48 individuals.

A total of 22 written submissions were received on the draft master plan from individual members of the community, Albion Park Community Centre, Illawarra Local Health District and the Lake Illawarra Police District.

The feedback from the face-to-face consultations and submissions were generally very supportive of the draft master plan with many comments to be considered through the detailed design phase on specific elements of the master plan which will also include ongoing opportunities for community engagement.

Table 1 outlines the key topics that were raised in submissions and face-to-face consultations during the public exhibition period.

Table 1: Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan - Outcomes of public exhibition

Topic	Summary of feedback	Assessment of feedback
Library extension works	<p>Overall, the Albion Park Library extension works were welcomed by community and suggested it take priority as the first stage of work.</p> <p>Suggestions were made to include meeting rooms, comfortable socialising spaces, study areas, and cafe or kitchenette space.</p>	<p>Detailed design of Albion Park Library extension will consider inclusion of meeting rooms, socialising spaces, study areas, and opportunities for activation.</p> <p>Stage 1 of the master plan is the library extension and associated works. Council has been collecting developer contribution funds towards this specific project. It is anticipated that preliminary works on the library concept will commence following adoption of the master plan.</p> <p>No change required to master plan.</p>
Public amenities		
Skateable elements	<p>Comments received on skateable elements within the plaza area were mixed in sentiment, from general support to concern for safety and conflict with other uses.</p>	<p>Detailed design of the plaza will consider the raised safety concerns and incorporate CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles.</p> <p>No change required to master plan.</p>
Crime prevention	<p>Anti-social activities were noted as a current issue within the Precinct, and concerns raised over how the master plan will address this matter.</p>	<p>The design of the draft master plan concept has considered the issue of anti-social behaviour in the precinct. Many of the elements that were identified as being of concern in regards to anti-social behaviour contribute to the use and activity of the site, rather than being fixed elements of the master plan. In order to reflect that further consideration of the location of these</p>

		<p>elements and how they relate to safety, the master plan has been amended to reflect that these will be future considerations and are not a fixed element within the master plan.</p> <p>Detailed design phase of individual elements within the master plan will consider CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles and future engagement opportunities with relevant stakeholders such as Lake Illawarra Police.</p>
Timeframe of delivery	The expected timeframe for individual projects, as well as the overall timeframe for completion of the master plan was raised.	<p>It is anticipated that all elements identified in the master plan will be implemented over a period of 10 to 15 years from the year of adoption.</p> <p>Delivery of individual elements will be subject to funding availability including grant funding opportunities and in accordance with the Staging Plan identified in the master plan.</p> <p>Stage 1 of the master plan is the library extension and associated works. Council has been collecting developer contribution funds towards this specific project. It is anticipated that preliminary works on the library concept will commence following adoption of the master plan.</p> <p>Stage 2 of the plan is the carpark and removal of the skatepark.</p> <p>Stage 3 will be the remainder of the master plan.</p> <p>There will be a level of flexibility to deviate from the staging in the event where funding opportunities arise for certain works and / or priorities change.</p> <p>No change required to master plan.</p>
Car parking	Support for proposed increase	<p>Noted.</p> <p>No change required to master plan.</p>

	in numbers of parking spaces.	
Recreation offerings	Support shared for the proposed recreation spaces including a playspace and passive open green space. Suggestion for the inclusion of a wet weather shelter.	Inclusion of wet weather shelter will be considered at detailed design of playspace. No change required to master plan.
Cafe	Support shared for the proposed inclusion of a cafe within the Precinct area – preference to be located nearby/within the library.	The financial viability of having a cafe within the Precinct will be explored during detailed design. No change required to master plan.
Pedestrian crossings	Comments received on the proposed pedestrian crossings were mixed in sentiment with support for new raised pedestrian crossings and proposed reduced speed limit, however, there were concerns of proposed crossings reducing visibility and safety.	Detailed design of any proposed pedestrian crossings will, among other things, consider improvement of visibility and safety. No change required to master plan.
Dog Park offering	Two suggestions were received for the inclusion of an off-leash dog park.	A dog park has not been included in the master plan due to the proximity of an upcoming fenced dog park in Croom. Dogs will, however, be permitted on-leash within the Precinct.

		No change required to master plan.
Albion Park Pool	Suggestions to change the operating hours and season of Albion Park Pool.	This comment is outside the scope of the master plan, however, comments have been forwarded to relevant Council officers.

Consideration to include a pump track

During the face-to-face engagement sessions with young people, there were a total of five comments relating to providing supporting infrastructure for bikes, such as bike racks and a bike track around Con O’Keefe Oval. Three of these five comments suggested a BMX or pump track opportunity. While a pump track opportunity has not been identified in the draft master plan, Council has recently commenced a Bike Facilities Feasibility and Location Study (the Study). The Study will consider potential sites for bike facilities, such as pump tracks and mountain bike trails. The Study will consider the Con O’Keefe and Russell Street Precinct as a potential location for a bike facility.

Council Implications

FINANCIAL / RESOURCES

The master plan has been prepared with staff resourcing and the assistance of consultants, Group GSA. Council entered into a contract with Group GSA funded through Council’s Consultancy budget.

Council’s Local Infrastructure Contribution Plan has already collected over \$2.7M for the Albion Park Library Extensions. The Calderwood Planning Agreement has allocated approximately \$550,000 for the Albion Park Library Extension. Council has an obligation to the community and developers that this money will be spent on the library upgrade.

Once adopted, there would be a number of financial and resource implications arising from the implementation of the master plan. The options identified in the master plan will be subject to detailed design and funding, these works are also required to be incorporated into Council’s Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan and accordingly subject to future decisions of Council.

The master plan is proposed to be delivered in stages over a period of 10 years which will assist with the future programming of works. There will be a level of flexibility to deviate from the staging in the event where funding opportunities arise for certain works and/or priorities change.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY (INCLUDING ADVOCACY, STRATEGIC AND OTHER PLANS)

Shellharbour City Council's Open Space and Recreation Strategy (OSR Strategy) sets the policy direction for the future direction of open space, sporting facilities, aquatic facilities and a range of recreational needs and identifies how Council will continue to initiate, resource and implement master plans for key open spaces. The development of the master plan assists with the implementation of the OSR Strategy.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The preparation of this master plan has required technical advice and input from Council's Community and Culture Directorate, regarding principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and proposed social impacts. Additional social impact assessments will be required during implementation of the master plan.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Shellharbour City Council is committed to building resilience across Shellharbour City for current and future generations in the face of a changing climate. A range of sustainability considerations have been incorporated into the development of the master plan, this helps to ensure the master plan recommendations meet current and future community needs in alignment with Council's Climate & Sustainability Policy.

The master plan identifies the following sustainability initiatives: the provision of built and natural shade to enhance amenity; recognition of the ecological value of Melaleuca Park and proposed revegetation to enhance biodiversity at the park; inclusion of solar technology in lighting; support the inclusion of future EV charging stations; and provide renewable energy options to users of the precinct. The master plan also identifies any future upgrades to car parking should ensure capability to provide electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to assist in achieving Council's target of net zero community emissions by 2050.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

No legal considerations are associated with the preparation of this master plan, however when implementing this master plan, legal consideration of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* will be required.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

- Corporate Risk - Should the Council resolve not to adopt the master plan, this would impact on Council's ability to deliver services as identified in the master plan to stakeholders and have negative impacts on the Community, Customers and the Council.

Council must ensure risks are managed and provide assurance that Shellharbour City Council's strategic plans are achieved, lessen the potential for adverse outcomes to occur and maximise the likelihood of beneficial outcomes.

Link to Community Strategic Plan

This report supports the following objectives, strategies and actions of the Community Strategic Plan:

1.2 We are a liveable community

1.2.1 Inclusive, accessible and safe spaces for our entire community

1.2.1.06 Provide welcoming library spaces and experience that meet community needs

1.2.2 Promote healthy living and high-quality public spaces that are well maintained and activated

1.2.2.02 Implement the Shellharbour City Open Space and Recreation Needs Study and Strategy

1.2.3 Construct and upgrade buildings and infrastructure that meet current and future community needs

1.2.3.01 Provide best practice community facilities through the implementation of the Community Facilities Strategy and Action Plan

1.2.3.02 Maintain Council parks, open spaces, sportsfields and recreational facilities

Previous Council Resolutions

Council ordinary meeting [24 October 2023](#) and [28 November 2023](#).

Consultation

Internal

A key component of the master plan preparation was the establishment of a working group, consisting of relevant staff who are involved with open space and community facility provision. Staff from a number of directorates have provided advice and input throughout the development of the master plan through working group meetings and workshops.

Councillors were also consulted at briefings on the master plan project, which were held on 4 April 2023 and 21 November 2023.

As per the Council resolution of 24 October 2023, an on-site meeting was held with Councillors on 30 October 2023.

External

The Public exhibition of the master plan has built on previous community engagement activities that were undertaken early in the project and has enabled further opportunity for the community to provide input into the draft master plan.

Adjoining residents and key stakeholders were notified of the public exhibition and invited to make a submission. During the exhibition period, notices were placed on Council's website and social media and face-to-face engagement occurred.

There will be future opportunities to engage with the community, during detailed planning and implementation of each stage identified in the master plan.

Political Donations Disclosure

Not Applicable

Options

Option 1:

That Council receive and note the summary of the public exhibition outcomes of the draft Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan identified in this report; and adopt the Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan, **Attachment 1** to this report. This will allow for the finalisation and implementation of the master plan.

Option 2:

That Council receive and note the summary of the public exhibition outcomes of the draft Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan identified in this report; and resolve not to adopt the Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan, **Attachment 1** to this report. This will impact Council's ability to deliver services as identified in the master plan to stakeholders and have negative impacts on the Community, Customers and the Council.

Conclusion

It is recommended that Council resolve to adopt the Master Plan for Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct, **Attachment 1** to this report.

Attachments

1. Con O'Keefe and Russell Street Precinct Master Plan