



Moreland
City Council

Balfe Park

Play and park infrastructure upgrade

Consultation summary report

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The playground at Balfe Reserve is due for upgrade in the 2020-21 financial year as Council continues to implement the Moreland Play Strategy. Funds have also been allocated for additional park improvements throughout Balfe Park.

1. Background

A draft concept with proposed park and playground upgrade was developed by Council's Open Space Design and Development Unit. The proposal focused on replacement of the aging play equipment, with a medieval themed playspace including a castle play unit, Viking swing, sculptural dragon, a pebble moat and other elements to increase play value and encourage physical, cognitive, creative and social play opportunities for families to enjoy. The proposal also included a BBQ picnic area, tree planting and new furniture. Outdoor fitness equipment is also being proposed, however is currently unfunded. Funding opportunities are currently being explored through applications for external grants.

Council called for feedback on the draft concept plan during July 2020. Postcards were distributed to households in the neighbourhood around Balfe Park, advising residents of the draft concept plan available for viewing on Council's website, www.moreland.vic.gov.au/balfe-park. Residents were given 2 weeks to respond before close of consultation on 15 July 2020. There was an error on stating that consultation was also open until 24 July. Feedback received between 15 and 24 July was also accepted.

2. Feedback Findings

Council received 72 feedback responses to the draft concept plan.

Responses from the community were generally in favour of the draft concept plan, and supportive of the proposed improvements to Balfe Park in general.

Some residents objected to the medieval theme, voicing concerns that this theme may prompt outdated gender roles or themes that do not align with modern day values.

There were many requests for additional items or improvements, beyond the proposals in the draft concept plan including:

- A community garden
- A shelter over the BBQ/picnic settings
- Shade sails over the playspace
- More furniture (seating, picnic settings)
- More shade trees across the reserve
- Fencing around the playspace
- More native and indigenous trees
- A gardening /friends group (for native non-edible plants) to plant in garden beds
- Addressing grading/drainage and surfacing in the adjacent accessway and northern corner of the reserve
- Addressing the bluestone retaining wall north of the soccer field
- Improving the lighting in the reserve
- Improvements to the soccer pitch and sports infrastructure

- Upgrading the existing flat top speed hump on John St near Balfe Park entry to be a zebra crossing
- Requests for additional waste bins
- Nest boxes attached to established trees
- Angled car parking along John Street
- Requests for campfires, a private driveway and flagpole.

There were contrasting views between feedback submissions such as:

- Various views on the BBQ, singles plate, double plate or no BBQ at all
- Support and objections to the medieval theme proposed for the playspace
- Requests for more or less play equipment
- Requests for dogs to be on or off leash in the reserve.

3. Response to Feedback

Council officers appreciate the time, energy and interest received from the community in response to the draft concept plan for improvements at Balfe Park.

The feedback has been reviewed and revisions have been made to the draft concept plan, balancing feedback, project scope and available budget.

The changes have been summarised into key themes and responses below:

- **Playground theme**

Given the feedback on the proposed medieval theme, the design has been modified to a more neutral theme. For instance, the playground combination unit will resemble a tree house rather than a castle. The Viking rope swing has been replaced with a double swing including one toddler seat, in addition to the nest swing.

- **Additional seating**

An additional platform seat has been added near the playspace to allow for multiple users to sit near the playspace.

- **Sand pit / more toddler play**

A sand play area has been introduced in place of the pebble moat and the horse rockers have been replaced with smaller rocker units suitable for younger children.

- **Planting**

More native and indigenous planting has been included and additional shade trees will be included around the playspace to provide more natural shade.

- **Exercise equipment**

Two additional upper body strength elements have been added to the proposed exercise area. The outdoor fitness equipment is still outside the scope of this project, funding opportunities are currently being explored.

Other Elements

Drinking fountain - relocated closer to the BBQ area.

Lighting improvements – referred to Public Lighting Officer for investigation.

Bins - Council's Street Cleansing Unit have recently upgraded all 120 litre bins to 240 litre bins to assist with overflow issues.

Elements outside of scope / not included in revised concept plan

Shade structures – are currently outside the budget limit, however could be considered in the future if budget allows. Additional trees will be planted to create additional shade.

Fencing around playspace – The playspace is set back >30m from the road, therefore does not meet safety requirement for a fence.

Community Garden - referred to Food System Officer for investigation.

Nesting boxes - referred to Natural Resource Management Officer for investigation.

Bocce court – with limited space at Balfe Reserve, this will not be explored however residents are encouraged to visit the bocce court at Allard Park, Donald Street Brunswick East.

Sports field improvements – request for improvements to the soccer field area including re-surfacing and addressing drainage issues, fixing the nets, replacing the shelters and improved access have been referred to Council's Recreation and Open Space Maintenance Unit for investigation.

Drainage – referred to Council's Open Space Maintenance Unit.

Access and car parking - Request for a zebra crossing and other access considerations have been sent to the Transport Unit for investigation. Requests for changes / increased parking John St cannot be accommodated due to insufficient road widths.

4. Next Steps

The community feedback to the proposed open space and playspace upgrade has been considered, resulting in revisions included in the final concept plan.

Detailed design and procurement will commence late July, with an aim for construction to commence in October and completion planned by the end of 2020.

5. Further information

Any questions can be directed to Council's Open Space Design & Development Unit via email openspace@moreland.vic.gov.au or by phoning 9240 111.