

ITEM COMM - 14/05/12 - ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND INVESTIGATION

REPORT BY: MANAGER COMMUNITY AND CULTURE – MATTHEW JOHNSON

REFERENCE

Minute 11-470 of the Ordinary Meeting of Council held 21 November 2011

SUMMARY

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council held 21 November 2011 (Minute 11-470), Council resolved:

THAT Council:

1. Notes the above report on the adventure playground investigations
2. Notes that a further report will be brought to Council in early 2012 recommending a preferred site for an adventure playground;
3. Notes that following adoption of a site by Council, a detailed design with costings will be developed; and
4. Seeks community input into the proposal for a possible location for the adventure playground.

This report details the further investigations that have been undertaken and recommends a shortlist of sites for Council's consideration.

COMMENTARY

Further assessment has been undertaken of potential sites that allow for development of an adventure playground of sufficient scale that offers a range of play and recreation experiences for different age groups and which could become a premier recreation facility for both the local community and visitors to Lithgow. Consideration has also been given to identifying a site that is linked to other recreational facilities and which encourages adventure playground users to experience other recreational and cultural facilities within the town.

Assessment criteria used include:

- Population catchment, including proximity to child and youth populations and areas of potential population growth
- Ability to attract external visitation
- Availability of sufficient land – note that Bathurst adventure playground is about 1.2 hectares in size and Blayney adventure playground is slightly larger
- Good linkage to other recreational facilities
- Positive economic benefits for the whole town
- Safe location and low risk of vandalism
- Availability of existing facilities including toilets and power
- Good parking and no traffic constraints
- Adequate shade
- Sufficient but not excessive site slope to facilitate play features
- Site readiness

Of the five potential sites that were included in the initial assessment, three have been subsequently excluded as follows:

Blast Furnace Park

This site offers great potential for linking the adventure playground with the iconic heritage features of the site, with the Lake Pillans wetland and with nearby heritage facilities including Eskbank house and would form part of the Lithgow History Avenue heritage trail. There are safety issues associated with the site however and potential for conflict between the site's heritage values and the playground. Further, there are no utilities nor toilet facilities on the site.

Hermitage Flat

This site, although close to the Farmers Creek corridor and nearby sporting fields, was excluded due to its relative distance from population catchments and the lack of utilities and toilet facilities. The 2010 Open Space and Recreation Needs Study undertaken for Council by Ross Planning recommended that the Hermitage site be protected for potential use as a sports park to meet future need.

Queen Elizabeth Park

Queen Elizabeth Park offers a great deal of potential in relation to proximity to population catchments, proximity to the aquatic centre/showground precinct and to commercial areas and the availability of services and toilets. Limited available land, limited parking and the potential for conflict with the heritage values of the park are significant constraints however.

The remaining two sites are proposed for Council's consideration:

Endeavour Park



Endeavour Park has considerable advantages due to its prominent location, available land, proximity to population catchments, visibility for visitors and tourists, availability of parking and toilets (although toilets require considerable upgrade) and the slope offers opportunities for creative playground design. Negatives include that it is not well connected to other recreational facilities, is potentially at greater risk of vandalism and does not draw

visitors into the centre of town. Connection to other recreational facilities and to the CBD could be addressed to some extent through signage, a noticeboard and development of a cycleway connected with the CBD and Farmers Creek corridor.

The 2010 Open Space and Recreation Needs Study recommended that both Endeavour Park and Queen Elizabeth Park be upgraded to district level standard including the significant installation of play and picnic opportunities. A district level standard is a large size park (generally 5ha-10 ha in size) that provides a range of facilities and activity spaces to cater for large groups and a range of users. They may service several suburbs or a whole town and are well known destinations for people within their catchment.

Aquatic Centre/Showground/Sporting Fields Precinct



The Aquatic Centre/Showground/Sporting Fields precinct is centrally located and an adventure playground would contribute to creating a recreation hub that includes the aquatic centre, showground, sporting fields and skate park. This precinct is well linked to the Farmers Creek corridor and to the Lithgow CBD. This site also offers the opportunity for sharing of amenities including toilets, seating and parking between facilities.

Site options within this precinct include:

- Land at the top of the aquatic centre site where the current amenities block and carpark are situated which will be surplus once stage 1 of the Aquatic Centre upgrade is complete, although it is unclear if there will be sufficient residual land.
- Land on the edge of Watsford Oval adjoining George Coates Drive subject to consideration of conflicts with cricket and other users of the oval.

There may be parking and traffic constraints on these sites.

The 2010 Open Space and Recreation Needs Study recommended that an adventure park be established in this precinct following adoption of a masterplan for the site. Land availability, parking and traffic constraints and other matters could be further investigated through development of the masterplan which is scheduled for the 2012/13 year.

Conclusion

As detailed in the 21 November 2011 Council report, an adventure playground can have significant social, economic and recreational benefits for the local community and can be an attractor for visitors and tourists. This supports Council's goals of creating a vibrant and liveable community that encourages young people to stay and attracts new families to the area.

Support was given in Council's 2011 Community Satisfaction Survey for the establishment of an adventure playground with a few respondents asking that it be located in Wallerawang or Portland, thereby making greater use of existing facilities such as at Lake Wallace.

Lithgow Youth Council has also stated its support for an adventure playground.

Endeavour Park has sufficient available land as well as parking and amenities, although these will require upgrade. This site has high visibility for visitors to Lithgow and passing highway traffic however it is not well linked to other facilities and the CBD. The risk of vandalism at this site is a further matter for consideration.

The Aquatic Centre/Showground/sporting fields precinct offers a more central location than Endeavour Park, is better linked to other recreational facilities and to the CBD and provides the potential to share parking and toilet amenities with other facilities within the precinct. The Open Space and Recreation Needs Study, adopted by Council in 2010, recommended establishment of an adventure playground in this precinct following development of a masterplan. The Open Space Study also recommended that both Endeavour Park and Queen Elizabeth Park be upgraded to district level standard including installation of significant play and picnic opportunities to meet the demands from the broader range of users (large families, play for different age cohorts etc).

An adventure playground could be developed sooner at Endeavour Park than at the Aquatic Centre/Showground /sporting fields recreation precinct due to works in progress as part of the stage 1 aquatic centre upgrade, the need to determine the availability of sufficient land within this precinct and the scheduled development of a masterplan. Given however that no funds have been earmarked by Council for adventure playground construction until 2021/22, no decision on site is required in the near term. Council will be in a better position to determine a site once the recreation precinct masterplan is completed. Further, as a detailed design would need to be site specific, it is recommended that the \$50,000 allocated by Council in 2011/12 for adventure playground design be held over until a specific site is determined.

Council may also wish to give consideration in this process to planning for smaller upgrades to recreation facilities in Wallerawang and Portland as recommended in the Open Space Study:

- Development of a district park, preferably at Saville Park, to build on its existing assets and central location and including an adventure playground.
- Development of an adventure playground at Lake Wallace

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Council has previously adopted the 2010 Open Space and Recreation Needs Study which recommended that an adventure park be established in the Aquatic Centre /Showground/Sporting Fields precinct following adoption of a masterplan for the site. The Open Space Study also recommended that both Endeavour Park and Queen Elizabeth

Park be upgraded to district level standard including the significant installation of play and picnic opportunities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Council has allocated \$50,000 in the 2011/12 budget for the investigation and detailed design of an adventure playground.

Funds have been allocated in the draft 2012/13 budget for development of a masterplan for the sportsground/aquatic centre precinct.

Council's draft Section 94A Contributions Plan includes an allocation of \$350,000 Section 94A funds over a 3 year period from 2021/22 to 2023/24 with a matching amount of funding to be sourced elsewhere for construction of an adventure playground. No other funds have been allocated by Council before 2021/22 for this purpose.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Act NSW 1993, Section 356

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

1. Notes the above report on investigations into site options for an adventure playground.
2. Gives further consideration to the selection and funding of a preferred site for an adventure playground following completion of the Aquatic Centre / Showground/ Sporting Fields precinct masterplan in 2012/13.