



PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

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General Manager
Hunters Hill Council
22 Alexandra Street
Hunters Hill NSW 2110

1 June 2024

Via email: customerservice@huntershill.nsw.gov.au

cc: Councillors, Director Town Planning

Dear General Manager

RE: Submission for Draft Henley Precinct Masterplan

The draft Henley Precinct Plan is comprehensive and has been well-developed by the consultant team. Members of the Hunters Hill Trust attended the consultation sessions and believe the draft Precinct Plan has been responsive to interactions with the local community. The needs of specific community groups well established at Henley, including the Bridge Club, The Happy Hens community garden and Bushcare, have been considered, and the need for greater accessibility for a range of user groups, including walkers, cyclists and those with a mobility issue, addressed.

Section 02 Precinct Plan

Positive aspects of the draft Precinct Plan that are supported include:

- The emphasis placed on retaining and conserving existing bushland, and on bush regeneration (p. 53). Generally, the extension of planted areas and tree canopy throughout the C2 zone, while allowing for view lines where appropriate, is supported.
- The pathway linking the four main activity areas (p. 21), with the primary path incorporating stairs that connect the basketball court and skate park to the Community Centre. It is hoped this path avoids damage to existing trees by being directed around trees and their roots.
- Total refurbishment of both levels of the Henley Community Centre to achieve accessibility, improve the entry experience, achieve greater connections to the water and bowling green, and to generally upgrade the building to ensure it is fit-for-purpose for a greater range of community events. The alterations and additions to the building will also create a more attractive venue for revenue generating activities.
- The general low-scale and limited footprint of the proposed Multi-Sport Community Facility, and its connectivity to Victoria Road.
- Retention of the much-loved community garden, with scope for further development.
- Sensitive, well designed and signed pathways through the bush.
- Additional storage areas.
- Relocation of the "Return and Earn" (p. 52) to enable the car park extension.

Aspects of the Precinct Plan that are supported in principle, but require further consideration:

- While the Learn to Ride path around the recreational lawn area is a good initiative (p. 10), it is situated close to Victoria Road and a 70 km/h speed zone. From a safety aspect the location and/or design of this element may need to be reassessed while a fenced-in “enclosure” should also be avoided.
- We note P.13 (61) is the location of a natural shelter and amenity block on the walkway from the nearby ferry wharf and pathway to lookout. While convenient for commuters and day trippers, we are mindful that this location is within a ‘replanting zone’, so the amenity needs to be relocated to another area, perhaps Foreshore Park P.13 (55)?
- The Wild Play area is supported, subject to any impact on trees being avoided. It is noted that this play area could include a “flying fox” experience which may incorporate existing trees, rather than require removal, similar to the very popular one at the Buffalo Creek Reserve playground.
- Bollard lighting (p. 20) at key junctions to assist wayfinding and safety should consider night sky darkness and the rhythms of nocturnal creatures. This requires the input of expert consultants to advise and oversee this initiative.
- Suitable seating/public domain furniture within the reserve is supported, but this should not lead to clutter or opportunities to leave rubbish. It has been observed that outdoor exercise equipment is often under-utilised, and may be a source of clutter rather than useful amenity.

Elements of the Precinct Plan requiring significant revision or improvement:

- Bushland and regrowth vegetation within the C2 zone is in great need of intensive weed management and ecological regeneration, particularly where unchecked mountain biking has over the years resulted in very severe erosion and soil loss. A strategy to deal with this is urgently required and restoration of the native vegetation should be a priority in this location.
- Sensitive indigenous sites and threatened species, such as the saltmarsh EEC (Endangered Ecological Community) must be taken more fully into account when footpaths along the foreshore are planned, and ideally avoided.
- A tree removal diagram has not been included. It is therefore difficult to assess the impact of the Plan on tree canopy.
- Additional parking should not result in loss of trees. Parking layout strategies that leave significant trees in situ, work around them for the purpose of providing start up shade, and incorporate trees within the car parks (rather than simply bordering them) should be investigated. The cantilevered extension to parking above the community garden should be more fully screened with trees. Deciduous trees may be considered to ensure solar access to the gardens in winter.
- We question the feasibility of how large trucks, catering vans, garbage or soil delivery trucks will manage to enter entry/exit laneway beside Childhood Centre, **P3 and P4 on Page 51**. Photo 1, single entry/exit lane is very narrow. We would recommend further investigation of all access roads to parking areas and assess safety issues with current use of ramp to access bottom carpark P4.
- While sustainability is embedded into the Plan through a light-touch approach to new structures and work, initiatives such as rain water harvesting, retention, storage and uses, and a commitment to Water Sensitive Urban Design should be incorporated. Similarly, a strategy to incorporate solar PVs should be set out in the Plan as part of a more holistic sustainability strategy.

Section 03 Implementation

- The Implementation Plan (p. 27) indicates a proposed timing of initiatives. Ensuring safe access to the Henley Community Centre should be a top priority, and completed before embarking on any buildings works related to the Henley Multi-Sport Community facility.
- A grant from the NSW Office of Sport will fund a children's playground as a first stage in the realisation of the Precinct Plan. It is imperative that Council prioritise restoration of the natural environment, seeking grants and support for this as a matter of priority.
- Some guarantee should be given that the building footprint, height and general massing of the proposed Multi-Sport Community Facility will remain as indicated in the draft Precinct Plan—that is, a building that fits quietly within this location. There is concern that the \$1.9 million NSW State Government funding granted to All Saints Soccer Club will drive an expansion of the footprint, scale and impact of this building, involve a push for more car parking and removal of more vegetation, and a “gold plating” of what should be a simple, low-key, low-scale, functional and minimal structure. In addition, assurance that this funding will be handled prudently by Council should be provided to the community, with mechanisms determining due diligence, adequate contingency funds, full accountability, site preparation and sustainability features put in place. A repeat of the Boronia Park Rugby Club process, involving the contentious siting and design of this building, its high environmental and financial cost to ratepayers, and its nature as an ongoing drain on Council's resources should be avoided.

As previously stated, it is pleasing to see the community and council come together to create a Draft Henley Precinct Masterplan, an area with enormous appeal for all demographics, centrally located with natural beauty of both waterways and bushland for the overall enjoyment of generations to come.

Kind regards



Karyn Raisin
President
Hunters Hill Trust