

ATTACHMENT D

CONSULTATION REPORT – 2015



Consultation Report - November 2015

Wimbo Park Design Community Consultation (Stage 1)

Introduction:

The NSW Government's CBD and South East Light Rail route along Devonshire Street in Surry Hills provides an opportunity for the City of Sydney to create an expanded Wimbo Park on the previous Olivia Gardens site. The new park will extend from the Devonshire Street and Bourke Street intersection to South Dowling Street, with light rail running through it.

Prior to the start of any design work, the City sought early input from local residents and businesses to understand how they would like to use the new open space.

Two hundred and nine (209) pieces of feedback were received. The majority of comments (52%) suggested keeping the park simple and focused on nature - with lots of green open space, flowers, and native trees for shade and to reduce noise from the light rail passing through.

Feedback will be used to help develop a concept design for the park that will be subject to further community consultation.

Consultation activities:

Community feedback was sought during the consultation period, from 7 - 30 November 2015.

Activities included:

- Four stakeholder meetings with surrounding businesses and local business chamber - Surry Hills Creative Precinct;
- A community consultation event, hosted by Lord Mayor Clover Moore, on Saturday, 7 November 2015, where people were encouraged to give their feedback via written submissions;
- A letter distributed to 3,800 residents and businesses in Surry Hills announcing the consultation and invitation to the consultation event;
- The letter was provided to Transport for NSW to be distributed to the Surry Hills Light Rail Community and Business Forum members;
- Stakeholder emails sent to local business and community groups including PUSH, Surry Hills Neighbourhood Advisory Board and Surry Hills Public Tenant Association, Bourke St Public School, Langton Centre, The Book Kitchen, Bourke St Bakery, Surry Hills Creative Precinct, Surry Hills Business Alliance, Bike Sydney, Bike East, and Bike NSW, and Surry Hills Library and Neighbourhood Service Centre to advise of the consultation;
- Press Ads placed in Central and Wentworth Courier to advertise the consultation;
- A number of social media posts via Sydney Your Say online channels; and
- A project page on sydneyoursay.com.au, including an online survey for people to have their say electronically.

Outcomes:

Two hundred and nine (209) pieces of feedback were received. Comments were submitted via online survey (57 submissions), via hard copy surveys (75 submissions) and post-it notes (68 comments) at the consultation event, and via nine email correspondence.

Additional comments were received during four stakeholder meetings.

Summary of comments:

The majority of comments (52%) suggested keeping the park simple and focused on nature - with lots of green open space, flowers, and native trees for shade and to reduce noise from the light rail passing through.

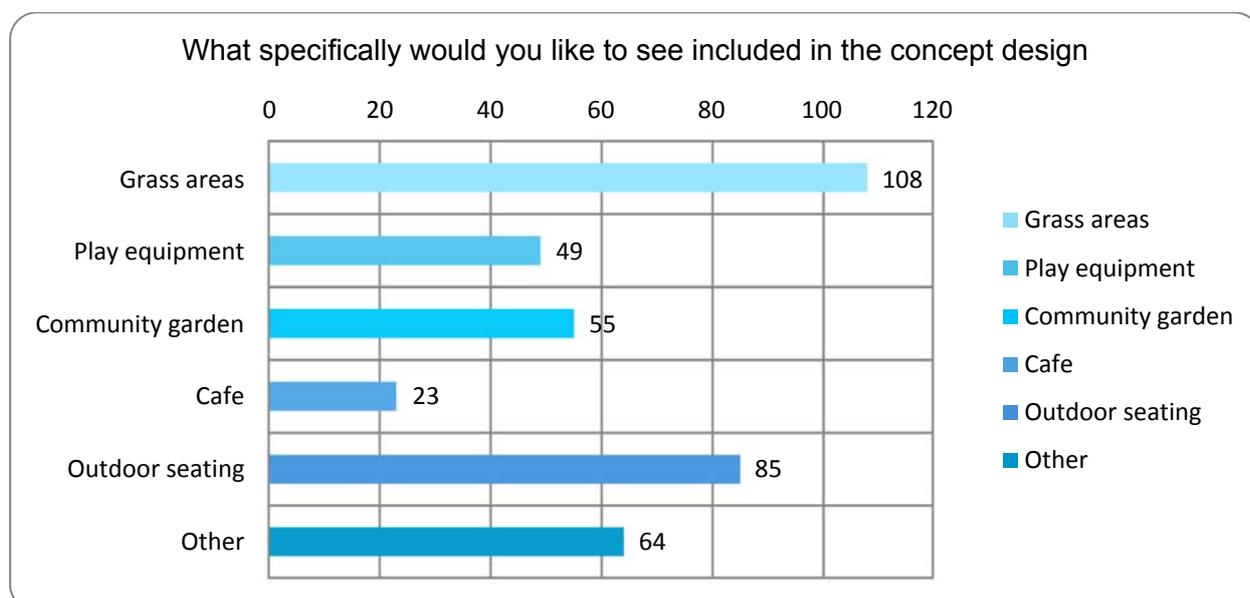
Outdoor seating was the second most popular suggestion from the community, to provide a place for workers and residents to sit, relax, work, and enjoy lunch or takeaway coffee. This was reiterated by the local café owners and business community.

A community garden and play equipment were the third and fourth most popular suggestions. Although a smaller proportion of respondents thought a play area was not necessary as there are a number of playgrounds already in the area.

Of least importance to the community was the need for a café in the park as there are enough local cafes already.

Thirty one percent (31%) of respondents suggested other ideas for the park. The most popular of these included: a fenced dog play area, water feature/water play element, exercise area for adults, BBQ facilities, high quality bike connections, public toilet, and something to reflect the creative and cultural character of the suburb such as public art or an open air amphitheatre/performance space. Utilising recycled natural materials such as sandstone to reference the site's history as a previous stoneyard was also proposed.

Issues to be considered include safety due to light rail vehicles passing through the park, potential anti-social behaviour, and noise in the park, especially at night. The need for adequate lighting, good visibility, low light rail speeds, and a design to separate light rail from park users, particularly children and dogs, were raised.



Grass areas:

More than half of all comments (108 out of 209 submissions, or 52%) requested grass areas in Wimbo Park. The majority of people would like the focus of the park to be on nature, with lots of green open space, flowers, and plenty of shade from mature native trees (not plane trees, rye grass, or other allergy causing species). Ideas centred around keeping the design simple, not-overcomplicated or over-engineered, so the space is versatile and usable for everyone. Suggestions also included using sustainable initiatives such as collecting solar and water, and using mature native trees as a natural noise buffer from passing light rail vehicles.

“Don’t over-complicate it! Keep it simple. The simpler it is the more everyone can use and appreciate it. Grass and trees.”

Outdoor seating:

Outdoor seating was the second most popular suggestion. Eighty five people (41%) would like to see some sort of seating in Wimbo Park for people to relax, and enjoy lunch or a cup of coffee. There could be an extension of the existing café square at the Devonshire Street and Bourke Street intersection. Comments suggested seating should be provided in shaded areas, and the design should consider comfort (such as back rests for the elderly) and placement to discourage lingering and anti-social behaviour especially at night.

Community garden:

Fifty five submissions (26%) would like to see a community garden in Wimbo Park. A community garden would support a focus on nature and sustainability. A city farm or farmer’s market were other suggestions that could be educational for the local school children.

Play equipment:

Forty nine people (23%) requested play equipment be included in the park. Comments included providing a play space that is in shade, accessible, suitable for children of all ages, incorporates play and fitness or education, and ensures the safety of the children playing near the light rail alignment (eg. is enclosed/fenced). A simple, non-obtrusive play space that incorporates natural materials (no bright colours) was suggested.

“I think a fountain which children can run through would be fun in summer.”

Popular ideas for equipment type include: water play feature or splash park (such as Parc Saint-Michel in Le Plateau Mont-Royal, Steel Park in Marrickville Council, Prince Alfred Park or Pirrama Park), tree house, kids forest, and climbing equipment. Other suggestions include: curly whirly slide, straight slide, swings, basket swing, chalk wall, cubby house, flying-fox, see-saw, sand pit, stepping stones, giant chess, table tennis, miniature soccer goals, netball hoop, basketball court, hand ball, hopscotch, and tennis practice wall.

Some residents immediately next to the park do not support a basketball hoop/court or other noise generating sports near their homes.

“Please consider local residents and the noise that might be generated from some types of park amenities. It’s a park with a light rail line, so keep it simple.”

A group of people (10 submissions or 5%) do not want play equipment in the park, mainly due to concerns about children playing near the light rail, and the desire to have as much green open space as possible. This group is also concerned about potential noise associated with play equipment, and feel there are already a number of playgrounds in the area.

Café:

Twenty three people or 11% suggested a café in Wimbo Park, making it the least popular choice of the list of options provided in the online and hard copy survey. This is mainly because many people believe there are enough cafes nearby, and would rather see as much open green space in Wimbo Park as possible.

Bicycle access:

A shared bike and pedestrian link connecting Moore Park to the Bourke Street cycleway through Wimbo Park is a requirement of the light rail project. This link will be designed and delivered by Transport for NSW. Comments received specifically on the design of the cycle link will be referred to Transport for NSW.

Comments regarding cycling include the provision of a safe, high quality, connected and easy to access path, bike pumps and bike parking/racks. Consideration of a children's bike track or learn-to-ride area was also mentioned.

Pedestrian/cyclist conflict at the Devonshire and Bourke Street intersection was raised as an issue and should be addressed in the design.

Other comments:

A significant number of people (64 out of 209 submissions, or 31%) suggested other ideas for Wimbo Park.

Of these, the most popular requests include:

- Dog friendly facilities - in particularly a fenced, off-leash dog play area as there are none nearby, poo bags, bins and water - requested in 23 submissions (11%)
- Water play, water feature / fountain for children to play in - requested in 20 submissions (10%)
- BBQ facilities (gas-powered, lockable to avoid vandalism) - requested in 16 submissions (8%)
- Adult fitness equipment / outdoor gym - requested in 11 submissions (5%)

Other ideas include:

- Amphitheatre / outdoor cinema
- Bins, bubblers, toilet and change facilities
- Public art eg. pavement art, sculptures, local artists, keep existing mural
- A sandstone feature
- Kid's bike track
- Farmers market / market space
- Evening uses, such as evening food trucks
- Swimming pool

“Creative design of a dog park could also provide opportunities for a small bicycle circuit around the outside for young children to learn to ride on.”

Stakeholder meetings:

Bourke Street Public School has a preference for green, open space, and shaded areas that accommodate passive and active play. The school would be interested in using the park during lunchtime and afterschool care, and requests play equipment caters for all students (years K-6). Suggestions include: climbing equipment, mounds, handball, basketball court, chessboard, hopscotch, outdoor stage or amphitheatre, veggie garden, public toilets, seats and bins, and running water.

The cafes adjacent to Wimbo Park would also like green space, with trees and shade that is not over-developed, and in-keeping with Surry Hills character (funky, relaxed, comfortable). Outdoor seats that are well integrated with the cafés is of particular importance, such as a continuation of the café plaza near the Bourke/Devonshire Street intersection. Other suggestions include play equipment for a range of age groups, public toilet and change table, bike pump, kids bike track, giant games, and picnic spots. A focus on food, lifestyle, art and culture, people, and music - perhaps a village market - was also raised.

The local business community would like the park to cater for the many workers who would use it during the day, as a place for work (such as outside meetings), relaxation, and exercise. Seamless pedestrian access from the local cafes, Wi-fi, access to power, and gym equipment are considered important. As is comfortable seats (eg. high backs or swivel seats) and round tables conducive for meetings that are placed in shade and shelter, and in a quiet space (such as away from any playground or distracting noisy activity).

Key issues:

Safety is a key issue for the community and stakeholders for various reasons. Light rail running through the park is a concern for residents who commented that vehicle speeds should be low and either plants/hedge, or some type of fence be used to separate the light rail from the rest of the park.

Better access from Bourke Street Public School to Wimbo Park from Parkham laneway, such as via a pedestrian crossing, was requested.

The potential for anti-social behaviour from people loitering in the park around the Langton Centre is another concern. Comments request the park design be open and highly visible, with good lighting, and aim to discourage anti-social behaviour.

Noise is another issue for the surrounding residents. Planting mature trees to act as a natural noise buffer against the light rail is suggested, as well as selecting play equipment/facilities that will not generate a lot of noise.

Parking availability and lack of loading zones were raised by a few residents and stakeholders. Some asked whether there could be car parking built under Wimbo Park.

Wimbo Park Light Rail stop:

A significant number of people commented on whether a second Surry Hills light rail stop located at Wimbo Park should be part of the light rail project. Fifty five (55) comments were received in favour of a second stop, and 25 comments received were against the stop.

Reasons in favour of a stop include servicing a wider catchment, increasing accessibility especially for elderly, less mobile residents who are unable to walk up the hill to the Ward Park stop, and for Bourke Street Public school children and parents. A second stop is also thought to support local businesses. A small number of people in favour of the stop requested it be located further east towards the Langton Centre.

Those who objected to the stop raised concerns around it taking up precious parkland space, noise impacts from the stop/start of vehicles, and from large groups congregating at the stop, and the potential to attract loitering and anti-social behaviour. The fact that Ward Park is only a few minutes walk away was also raised as a reason not to have a second stop.

A decision on the second Surry Hills stop is outside the scope of this consultation. Comments have been documented and will be referred to the appropriate channels for consideration.