

Kent Street Weir

Precinct Plan

Community Engagement
Summary Report - 2021

Curtin University was initially known as The West Australian Institute of Technology. When I worked there during the 60's and 70's, at lunchtime a group of fellow workers and I would pile into a car and head for the Kent Street Weir.

There was nothing much there then, but the peaceful surroundings of the river, dappled sunlight and a cool breeze were refreshing after sitting all morning in a hot, unairconditioned building. We would find a quiet spot on a log, nothing much was said, and then we would return to work.

Now, many years later I frequently visit this beautiful place with my grandchildren, exploring the walks, watching the wildlife, and enjoying their wonder at all the new experiences the river, bushland and animals offer. We are blessed with this lovely place, it is indeed a favourite, with many happy memories.

Story by Bethy

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Purpose

This report will summarise the community consultation process for the final stages of the Kent Street Weir Precinct Plan which include feedback on the:

- district level play space
- pump track for youth activation
- expanded parking areas – including e-bike facilities
- general feedback.

This feedback, together with the outcomes of our ongoing engagement with stakeholders (including business, government and academia); and best practice and expert analysis; will inform the content and direction of the project.

Project Background

Kent Street Weir Reserve is the gateway to the Canning River Regional Park and one of the City of Canning's most important public open spaces.

In 2015, Council endorsed the Kent Street Weir Local Area Management Plan - Review 2015 (the Plan) as the precinct plan and its vision for the area. Council also authorised further refinement of the Plan regarding the staging of the project, the proposed provision of a youth activities area and additional parking areas. Since 2015, the first two stages of the upgrade to parkland have been completed; Kent Street Weir has been refurbished and Wilson Park has become a dog exercise area.

The objectives of the Plan remain to provide a complex, multi-faceted, well-integrated and environmentally-responsive outdoor recreation space. The refined 2015 Plan, which was endorsed by Council in 2020, is now known as the Kent Street Weir Precinct Plan (KSWPP). The timeframe for the delivery of stages 3 and 4 of the KSWPP works has been compressed, in order to minimise ongoing disruption to the site for visitors, stakeholders and surrounding residents.

The Kent Street Weir Precinct Plan will see the reserve benefit from approximately \$8.5 million in investment over the next few years. The plan includes:

- Creation of a district level play space and junior play space;
- Expanded and upgraded pump track and cycle facilities;
- Additional picnic shelters and park infrastructure ;
- Expanded parking areas;
- Changes to the dog exercise area;
- Expanded and flexible events space with dedicated pavilion;
- New toilet block and sewerage and drainage upgrades;
- Enhanced buffer to Wilson Wetland area with increased vegetation;
- Native display gardens; and
- Further recognition of heritage and culture, acknowledging the importance of the site to the Wadjuk Noongar people.

Recommendations and Design Response

Play Space

Respondents have given preference to the following areas:

- Natural shade areas and shade structures.
- Include nature-based play activities that reflect and respond to the natural environment.
- Use a mix of natural materials and textures and colourful non-natural materials.
- Range of equipment including rocks and logs to climb on, swings, and climbing nets.
- A mix of themes including environmental, indigenous, water and local native animals

There were 32 comments received, with 21% of survey participants commenting on amenities in the play space, which ranged from a double flying fox to monkey bars. Requests for an increase of activities (18%) such as a water playground and for consideration given to inclusive play demonstrated a broad range of viewpoints for this area.

This feedback supports the all abilities play space that is planned to be delivered. The size and area of the play space will remain closely to that shown in the concept plan, however the two separate spaces based on age groups will be further integrated. A separate yet integrated area will be included within the play space to cater for people with disabilities as per the decision made by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting of December 2020.

Nature-based play was strongly supported and the play space will be designed with a mix of natural materials and textures and colourful non-natural materials, with a preference for the former, given the lack of support for colourful plastics and other non-natural materials such as metal and rubber surfacing.

The most popular equipment and play experiences chosen on the surveys were as follows:

- rocks and logs to climb
- climbing nets
- flying fox
- swings
- water play
- play forts
- slide

The play space design will look to as many of the above elements as possible, as well as include amenities such as drinking fountains and seating. Shade will be provided within the majority of the play space, both through natural shade from trees and shade sails. Community responses regarding the need for a fence were closely split and the City will take a number of elements such as safety, cost, aesthetics and maintenance in regards to a decision on this element.

There was strong support for the theme of the play space recognising the context of the area and being a combination of water, local native animals, Indigenous culture and the environment.

Parking Areas

Preference was given to the following areas by survey participants:

- Use of materials that enhance and reflect the natural environment;
- A well-shaded area surrounded by natural planting;
- Angled parking;
- Permeable surface materials to allow for water infiltration; and
- Single one-way flow traffic management system.

30 comments received related to parking which ranged from location (21%) to traffic management (14%) and being mindful of impact of changes to the car park on local residents (14%).

The locations of the two proposed parking areas will remain as shown on the plan with some minor alignment changes. While other placements and or alignments for parking areas have been investigated, they are not able to be undertaken due to a number of factors:

- The area is unable to be located under the canopies of the large mature Sugar gum trees (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) due to the impact this may have on the trees' root systems and the suitability of locating infrastructure around these trees.
- The parking area is unable to be located closer to Wilson Wetland as it will encroach onto the wetland buffer area.
- Other car parking alignments will not facilitate one-way traffic flow without major impacts on other proposed parks infrastructure.

The parking areas surrounds will be planted with trees and shrubs to screen and soften the impact of the area on surrounding residents, while maintaining safety through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. Additionally, the placement of bollards to prevent after-hours access to some parking areas will be investigated. Further tree planting will be undertaken throughout all parking areas to provide future shade across the majority of the areas.

The parking areas surface type will be either wholly or predominately a permeable surface, allowing for water to drain through the area to prevent runoff in most rainfall events. Other materials used in the parking areas design will be selected for their sustainability and suitability to enhance and reflect the natural environment.

The entrance/exit point on to Queens Park Road will be removed from the plan due to residents' concerns and the extent of this area may be expanded to the south east. A turning area will be included in the design in place of this point. This will remove another interface point with the existing bicycle path. The proposed bicycle path along Kent Street will be realigned to travel behind the proposed parking area to remove risks associated with crossing points originally shown. Where possible, the traffic flow within the parking areas will be designed to be a single, one-way flow with angled parking.

Pump Track

Respondents have given preference to the following areas:

- Catering for all user skill levels;
- A combination of surfaces to meet a variety of needs; and
- Partially shade the pump track and create shaded rest areas.

There were 42 comments with 33% relating to requests for more diverse amenities; 22% wanting further activities; and 11% focusing on surface types.

A decision on the material/s to be used for the surfacing of the pump track will be made considering the feedback received along with a range of factors such as useability to meet a variety of different users such as skateboard and scooter riders. Other factors such as surface life expectancy, maintenance requirements and the City's policy regarding urban heat and sustainability will be taken into consideration in the design of this element. The track will be designed to cater for a range of abilities, from beginners through to experienced users.

Shade will be provided though shade sails in strategic locations; tree planting for future shade provision and a shade shelter with seating. Some seating options, such as a small grandstand or viewing area will be investigated by the project team, and if possible, will be included within the project budget. The design will ensure that there is drinking water access adjacent to the area.

Additional cycle facilities such as bike parking infrastructure will be increased and the provision of onsite repair equipment will be further investigated.

Dog exercise area

A large amount of feedback was received regarding the two proposed dog exercise areas and changes to the existing area. As a result of this feedback, the two proposed spaces will now be changed to become one larger space, of approximately 5445m² in area. It is proposed that this area will feature two shelters with benches (no tables); water fountains with tippable bowls for dogs; and two entry points with air lock gates. Trees will be planted throughout the area for shade. No dog agility equipment will be provided within this area to allow for the maximum use of the space by all users.

Further expansion of the dog exercise area is not possible without impacting on either the environmentally-important wetland buffer, the district play space or the spaces to be created for events and the many other users of the reserve which is expected to increase following the infrastructure upgrades.

Canning River Canoe Club, Canning River Café and Canning River Eco Education Centre pedestrian interface

The carpark and entrance to the CREEC building will be realigned to ensure that access to all facilities is maintained with limited impacts on the movement of people between these areas.

After further consultation with the Canning River Canoe Club, the Canning River Canoe Club set-down area will be redesigned slightly, to allow for a larger area for the safe movement of canoes into the proposed storage area.

General

Overall, there was a strong message received from the community on the importance the project should place on protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

A number of suggestions regarding universal access were already being acted upon by the project team with additional parking bays to be provided; an access audit for the final design; and the possibility of the new toilet block having a changing places facility within.

Additional barbecue facilities around the play space will be considered, as will a wash down area located next to the new toilet block for park and river users.

Lighting will be included within the park's electrical upgrade to increase community safety and CCTV to protect assets within the area. Due to the area's location adjacent to natural riverine and wetland habitats, lighting of the park and the management of the lights (i.e. the times they will be lit) will, where possible, take into account the natural circadian rhythms of the wildlife.

There were many other suggestions for improvements to the park's infrastructure and surrounds that will be considered by the project team in the final design.

Thank you and next steps

These recommendations are a result of responses gathered through a variety of engagement platforms; talking to a range of stakeholders; individuals and communities who have helped shape the direction of the precinct plan. The City deeply thanks all participants who have engaged with the consultation and shared their candid views about the future development of Kent Street Weir.

All changes and recommendations to the Kent Street Weir Precinct Plan will be subject to the approval of the relevant authorities and budgetary considerations. The City of Canning Your Say Kent Street Weir Precinct Plan online engagement portal will continue to update the community on reports going to Council and decisions made against recommendations.

Supporting Information

Engagement Background

Between 2011 and 2015, the City undertook extensive community engagement and consultation with local residents, park users and other stakeholders in the development of the Kent Street Weir Local Area Management Plan.

Works completed to date:

- dipping deck for environmental education
- DWER and DBCA refurbished the weir and bridge
- seating and shelter upgrades below Canning River Café
- increased shelters, picnic settings, BBQ's, DBCA River Park Interpretation node – all of which are accessible to all
- garden bed renewal adjacent to Castledare railway station, as part of the City's involvement in the Australia wide 'woody meadows' project.

Upcoming works

The focus of the current engagement activity is the final stages of the KSWPP with a particular focus on:

- district level play space
- pump track for youth activation
- expanded parking areas
- general comments, including the dog park area.

Community Engagement Current Approach

Methodology

City of Canning has committed to using the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) *Code of Ethics* for community engagement practitioners, which provides an engagement spectrum: *Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate* and *Empower*.

IAP2 is a framework that explains the different levels of engagement which organisations can engage their stakeholders/communities. The further to the right on the spectrum, the greater the community has to influence decision-making. Each level requires a different type of interaction.

Engagement for this specific part of the project took a three-step approach, with a consultation picnic intended for face-to-face discussion, followed by a series of online surveys through City of Canning's *Your Say* webpage and a series of consultation display boards at CREEC.

Consultation Period

- Sunday 6 December, 2020 – Friday 22 January 2021.

Methodology and Sampling

KSWPP utilised IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) *Inform, Consult, Involve* using qualitative and quantitative methods to gather large amounts of data that could be tested through more in-depth discussions.

All methods adopted a random or unbiased sample, which means every member of the wider population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, and so the sample reflects the characteristics of the wider population.

Engagement Activity

- *consultation picnic*: Held on Sunday 6 December, 10am-12pm
- *consultation display boards at CREEC* (7 December, 2020 – 8 January, 2021)
- *Your Say online engagement*: 6 December 2020 – 22 January 2021.

Engagement Reach

Community engagement is measured by splitting the level of interaction into three groups; aware, informed and consult

Aware

Total number of participants aware of the project, which means there was at least one touch point with community about the project and inviting engagement were:

Direct

- 68 resident letters to properties in close proximity to Kent Street Weir; and
- 62,000 subscribers to various City e-newsletters.

Online

- 500 Your Say online engagement and 211 surveys completed; and
- 1431 Facebook followers activated 86 responses, of which 76 expressed interest in attending consultation picnic and 13 responded as 'going' to the event.

Media

- 5,000 (estimate) saw variable message signage installed on Kent Street to advise visitors of the upcoming consultation picnic.
- 20,000 (estimate) saw City's digital TV screens, which are displayed throughout the City's facilities.
- 300 business cards promoting the Your Say page were issued to attendees at the event, and distributed to other stakeholders, communities and visitors to CREEC
- 651 readers of 'Enviro News' published by WALGA encouraged participation in the survey; and
- Media coverage reached over 32,000 (January 2021) encouraging readers to participate in the survey.

Informed

Those who are 'aware' translates into a smaller group who were 'informed' about the project. This can be measured in the number of deeper interactions on the Facebook, Your Say page and website (e.g. viewing a video, downloading documents, visiting multiple pages). These participants numbered 1,674.

Engaged

The number who contributed or engaged by attending the consultation picnic, completing the online surveys or by writing/emailing their thoughts about the project was 440 respondents. The survey asked the community to share their thoughts on various aspects of four areas in Kent Street Weir:

- district level play space
- pump track for youth activation
- expanded parking areas – including e-bike facilities
- general comments.

There were a total of 500 comments:

- survey: 231
- consultation picnic: 269
- email submissions: 7

Stakeholder Engagement

The City of Canning met with a number of the organisations associated with, or who had an interest in the park. This included:

- Canning River Canoe Club
- Canning River Regional Park Advisory Group
- Castledare Railway representatives
- Dog Exercise Area Action Group
- Wilson Ratepayers' Association.

Representatives from the following departments at the Department of Biodiversity Conservations and Attractions (DBCA):

- River Park Planning
- Drainage and Nutrient Intervention Program
- Statutory Assessments
- Regional Parks.

What did we learn?

There were three main themes arising from the engagement process:

Sustaining and managing the natural environment

Participants were proud of, and have a strong sense of ownership of Kent Street Weir. Comments ranged from their pride in the natural habitat; the way in which the park is managed; openness of space; ability to spend time and making lifetime memories that centre on:

- Natural environment and ability to walk through the spaces and observe the natural beauty;
- Waterways and the ability to spend time observing and being on the water
- The natural and social history of the area, which still retains its connection to the world's oldest living culture
- Flora and fauna, which represents and creates special and unique environments that make Kent Street Weir special
- Open spaces that create opportunity for family gatherings, creative activities, events and so on.

Diversity of activities

Participants utilise the space for many different reasons which range from:

- the large dog exercise area
- recreation activities – water sports, cycling, walking, running etc.
- play area and activities for families to enjoy together
- variety of events and programs that bring people together.

Competing interests

Whilst the diversity of use is seen as a strength, it is also seen as a challenge, depending on the participant's main interest and values, which ranged from closing the play space to expanding it.

Concerns were raised about safety, with cyclists riding too fast in certain areas of the park where pedestrians walk. Some participants were indicating they do not want more parking, while others expressed the need for more parking. A key issue raised was the perception that the dog park will be greatly reduced to meet the competing needs of other activities within the space.

These competing views are expected, especially in an area that is widely used by residents and visitors, and all with a variety of values and motivations for visiting the space. It is important to remind the community of the engagement that has already taken place to date and what has been achieved as a result. The design response to the park seeks to manage these competing interests.

Specific Feedback on Key Consultation Areas

Alongside the main themes, the following highlights specific feedback on each area:

General Feedback

In general, participants were in favour of the development of the district level play space and the pump track. Participants' main concerns included the parking areas extension and ensuring the most appropriate materials are used for each site - reflective of the values expressed in the City's Public Open Space Strategy, which aims to deliver *'accessible, pleasing urban spaces that are fit for purpose'*.

District Level Play Space

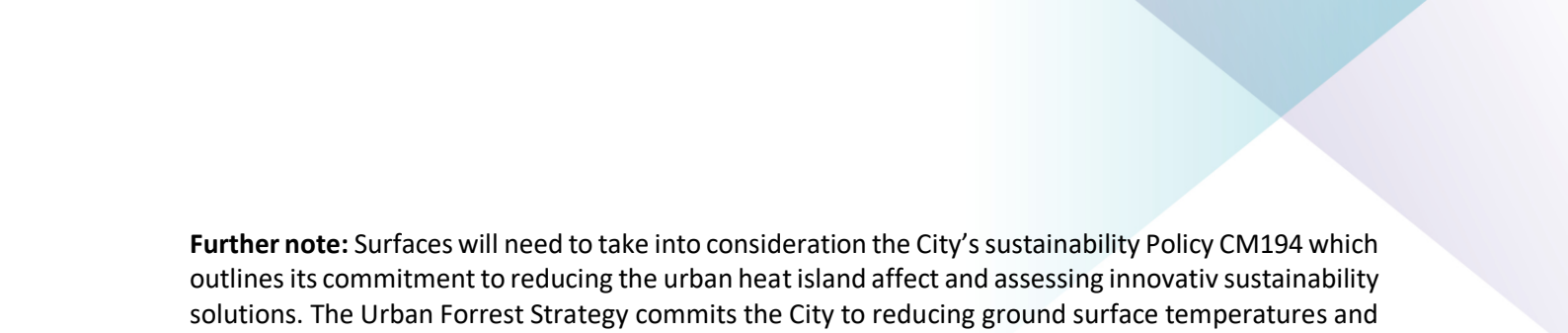
- Natural and structure shade areas to protect children from the harsh rays
- Include nature based play activities that reflect and respond to the natural environment, water and native animals
- Consider expanding the play space to accommodate play equipment such as flying fox/zipline, challenging climbing structures, rocks and logs to climb, swings, climbing nets and water play.

Pump Track and Cycle Facilities

- Catering for all skill levels
- Consider creating other amenities such as a pathway from pump track to Castledare train line
- Consider seating for the area and larger space for events
- Partially shade the pump track and create shaded rest areas
- Ensure an assessment of most appropriate surface materials that offer a long life span, is safe, cost effective and caters to a wide range of uses, e.g. BMX, skating.

Parking Areas

- Angled parking permeable surface materials to allow for water infiltration;
- Single one-way flow of traffic management system; and
- Use of materials that enhance the natural environment that reflects the park environment, creates shade, enhances the environment rather than detracts and consider safety issues for the area.



Further note: Surfaces will need to take into consideration the City’s sustainability Policy CM194 which outlines its commitment to reducing the urban heat island affect and assessing innovativ sustainability solutions. The Urban Forrest Strategy commits the City to reducing ground surface temperatures and urban heat island affect which will also inform this precinct plan.

End Report