



Brown Hill Progress Association formal response to the “Brown Hill Recreation Reserve, Brown Hill Master Plan Report” (draft)

25 March 2023

The BHPA welcomes the release of the Masterplan and offers its support for the overall direction and actions outlined in a staged process over the next 1 to 4 years.

We are aware that time does not allow for any major changes to the draft, as indicated at the user group meeting held on the 16 March, but we feel that the following feedback and comments could be adequately addressed in future discussions around specific implementation processes.

As the **Progress Association’s role in the community is to represent Brown Hill residents**, especially those that are not involved with the more formal areas of the Reserve, the following comments and feedback relate specifically to the pool precinct and the eastern area of the reserve. i.e. as outlined in the BHPA survey conducted through July 2021.

1. Page 3: Methodology: Out of the 8 stages listed we noted: “*This report covers 1-6. Stages 7-8 are still to be covered.*” It is our understanding that these stages will now not be undertaken. We wish to express our disappointment that time has not allowed for greater input from the wider Brown Hill community that these stages would have provided.

2. Page 7: Occupancy and current usage: There is no acknowledgement of the informal and unstructured usage of the large eastern section of the reserve by individuals, family groups and other community groups utilising the open space facilities. The BHPA has also managed the pool for many decades and should be seen as a stakeholder in the future of the pool precinct.

3. Page 12: There is reference to the “**public toilets**” that are “*ageing and in decline*”. Please note that the referred to toilet block, positioned at the cricket club precinct has NEVER serviced the eastern reserve as its situation is impractical, especially for young families and mum’s using the playground at the other end of the reserve. Very few visitors to the reserve, other than oval users, would even know of their existence. For many years the BHPA have canvassed for the pool toilets to be modified for public access but this never happened. i.e. there are no public toilets servicing the reserve proper.

4. Page 40 & 41 – Table 10 Action Plan:

(comments only relate to actions re pool precinct & eastern reserve area)

No. 5: Replace pool with splash park: AGREE; but, as noted above, the toilets at the pavilion (Action no. 4) do not and cannot service the eastern area of the reserve. As Council does not recommend external access to the Hall toilet block then the best compromise is to ensure the **toilets at the splash park are accessible and adequate as a public toilet**. This is not clear in the report.

Such a toilet block would require at a minimum 2 disabled sized cubicles with fold-down changing tables that could accommodate a pram and space to move.

As the splash park will **only be used through the summer months** it needs to be so designed and with other permanent elements, as indicated – half court; rebound wall; climbing structures – rope and rock elements (similar to Creswick splash park) and that the splash park elements could be removed out of season for a flat area for other users.

The graphic for the splash park does not indicate any **fencing**. We are taking it that the park would have a similar safety fence as the Midlands park. Please confirm.

The size of the splash park: The report does not indicate the size of the splash area itself. It is felt that the **splash park need not be overly big** or with masses of bells and whistles but be a functional and flexible area similar in size to the Creswick splash park near the IGA. The provision of shade will be addressed separately.

There may be an **issue with the proposed mound** as this would restrict the vision of parents/carers overseeing toddlers and small children.

Would it be possible to **keep the small kiosk?** With a new façade it would be an excellent functional area that could be used by community groups, such as BHPA for community events.

No. 11: Terrace embankment at southern end of playing field: **AGREE.** This is a safety issue. It would be hoped that the building of the terrace would have minimal impact on the mature trees in this area.

No. 13: Upgrade the existing granite sand path network: **AGREE.** Ensure that there is a suitable hard border (at ground height) for the path to minimise washout in heavy rain. As stated in the report: "*The widths of path sections vary but are all comfortably over 1.2m, the minimum for one-way wheel chair access*". This is seen to be adequate for the usage of the reserve.

No. 14: Extend the path network: **PARTIAL AGREEMENT.**

- Pavilion to rear of community hall – **AGREE**, as long as there is no disturbance of the tree root base of the mature trees.
- Humffray St Nth to playground – **DISAGREE**. What BHPA has been told on many occasions is that there needs to be a path from the community hall carpark, where families park, especially with prams and they access the playground from there. The only other possible need would be for a short path along the boundary of the reserve to Humffray St.
- Around oval from rotunda to NE pocket: **DISAGREE**. BHPA does not see this as necessary as it goes no-where. It is a quiet part of the reserve and any path along the boundary of the oval would disturb the tree root base of the mature trees in that area which are healthy and a priority.
- From rotunda to relocated footbridge: **AGREE**

No. 15: Extend and add diversity to playground: **DISAGREE.** The **current playground equipment is adequate and well used**, when well maintained. **Maintenance is a high priority** and should be undertaken and maintained on a regular basis. i.e. swing seats fixed; better containment of soft fall material, sand pit regularly topped up, etc. What is needed is not an expensive extension but the addition of shade over the playground (and trees, especially newly planted are not going to provide the necessary sun shade that is needed now.) Also, the provision of picnic table and additional seating. Funding for any extension could be better used for other needs of the reserve.

No. 16: Relocate (new) and wider footbridge. Shelter south of footbridge: **AGREE**

No. 17: Install exercise stations at strategic locations along path network: **AGREE.** BHPA believe four would be sufficient and should be a **simple wooden frame, in keeping with the reserve's character** with no moving parts that could be damaged. Such stations could be a high priority for attracting business' sponsorship.

No. 18: Provide drinking fountains at suitable locations around the reserve: **AGREE.**

No. 19: Provide additional seats/tables: **AGREE.** The reuse of picnic tables and seating currently within the pool grounds, around the reserve would be both useful and frugal.

No. 20: Provide dog drinking taps, poo bags; litter facilities: **AGREE (NO off lead area)**

No. 21: Make an area of reserve suitable for events, etc: **NOT NECESSARY**, as the open space of the reserve already provides this. BHPA asks Council to **reconsider the building of a small and discrete raised area (stage – no sail)** close to the side of the community hall, which is underutilised as present. The reasons for it are the same as previously provided.

No. 22: Plant more native trees. **PARTIAL AGREEMENT.** Any tree planting should enhance the character of the reserve and not encroach on the open space that is used for community and family events. The current stand of fruit trees need to remain and made a feature.

No matter how many trees are planted now they will not replace the need for functional shading of key areas where children play now – splash park & playground - and where parents/carers supervise children in their care. Natural shade will not suffice over the new and old playground areas. Proper shade structures as appropriate for sun safety must be provided. In 10 years', time the mature trees will perform their function but not in the initial decade.

Missing element not listed in report: **SOLAR LIGHTING: HIGH PRIORITY.** BHPA believe that such strategic lighting is a safety & security issue, especially for women exercising pre and post work hours. Cost per pole is about \$500. BHPA sees this as a must and also a perfect opportunity to seek sponsorship from local community business or families to give some ownership of the project.

As noted above there are several opportunities to modify the actions proposed, without diminishing the objective, where savings on costs could then be used for other aspects of the Masterplan, or medium priorities can be brought forward. i.e. sun shading; small stage; drinking fountains, etc.

A high concern for BHPA is the assurance that whatever is undertaken within the Masterplan does not detract from the character of the reserve that has taken decades to acquire. Primarily within the setting of healthy mature trees. If any are removed or their health compromised it would strip the reserve of its natural beauty and the welcoming, low key atmosphere that is the space today.

There is also the issue of how Council will present the closure of the pool to the community. It is a highly contentious issue especially for older residents. BHPA suggests that a formal community occasion coincides with the formal announcement of the closure of the pool where the pool's heritage and legacy can be celebrated and individuals are able to express what the pool has been in their lives. Potential to have a permanent display, possibly in the community hall may also be useful.

As BHPA has been so closely involved with the pool, members would be happy to work with Council on an appropriate event.

BHPA will be represented at the Council Meeting on Wednesday April 26th. BHPA would welcome your consideration of the above.

Yours Sincerely,

Brendan Stevens
Secretary BHPA
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