
Item:	11.1	Ref: AINT/2020/33921
Title:	Creeklands Master Plan - Adoption of Plan and stage 1 implementation	Container: ARC17/2184
Author:	Richard Morsley, Coordinator Public and Town Spaces	
Attachments:	1. Combined Community submissions Creeklands Master Plan 2. Dumaresq Creek Master Plan Implementation – Stage 1 – Proposed Works & options Indicative Costs	

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- a) **Receive and note the submissions contained in the report.**
- b) **Adopt the Creeklands Master Plan with the following amendments:**
 - i. **The option to retain the Civic Park pond.**
 - ii. **The option to retain the labyrinth in its current location.**
- c) **At a quarterly budget review, consider the engagement of appropriately qualified consultant to review Council's 2004, ERM Australia, 'Armidale Creeklands Environmental Management Plan', and to:**
 - i. **Undertake soil testing within the area covered by the Creeklands Master Plan**
 - ii. **Provide an updated management plan to ensure compliance with current EPA legislation.**
 - iii. **Provide an updated management plan that provides WHS compliant procedures to ensure environmental and human health safeguards can be effectively implemented and managed for any works that disturb these soils.**
- d) **Endorse the proposed stage 1 Implementation Plan.**

Context

Following endorsement at the Ordinary meeting of Council 19 August 2020 the Armidale Creeklands Master Plan was placed on public exhibition for 28 days to gather community feedback.

The Armidale Creeklands Master Plan aligns with Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027.

Council staff noted and considered the submissions and determined if any changes are required to be made, or can reasonably be made with available resources. All 23 of the community submissions are attached to this report.

Most respondents congratulated Council and the consultants MacGregor Coxall on the ideas presented in the Creeklands Master Plan and offered support for the implementation of the plan.

Many submissions proposed refinements and/or extensions to the ideas presented in the master plan that can be accommodated in the implementation phases. Several submissions identified the retention of the Civic Park pond that is a well accepted feature of the creeklands landscape.

Soil contamination throughout the creeklands was raised as an area of concern in several submissions. The Creeklands Master Plan acknowledges the soil contamination derived from the former Armidale Gas Works facility and states that it is not an insurmountable barrier to landscape works. Previous works undertaken on the creeklands have revealed soil contamination that exceeds the general waste classification and therefore disposal can add significantly to the cost of works.

A review of the 2004 ERM Armidale Parklands Environmental Management Plan (EMP) is advisable in the light of this and to incorporate developments with regard to health effects that may have occurred since the EMP was drafted. The review should include testing current levels of contamination in the areas of proposed earthworks and landscaping identified in the plan in order to ensure more accurate costings.

Purpose

To present the submissions received following public exhibition of the Creeklands Master Plan and to seek the adoption of the Creeklands Master Plan with two minor amendments supported by the community.

It is also recommended that Council endorse the revision of the ERM Parklands EMP to update the potentially outdated document and to ensure that all environmental and human health safeguards are effectively implemented, and that sustainable procedures are adopted for any works identified in the Creeklands Master Plan that disturb these soils.

Proposal, Research and Analysis

An extensive community engagement process was undertaken during the development of the Creeklands Master Plan in early 2018. The objective was to ensure that the voice of the Armidale community was reflected within the plan. Key features were:

- A Community Advisory Group made up of key stakeholders and representatives was established to work with the consultants (MacGregor Coxall).
- A staff advisory group was also set up to assist in monitoring progress and reviewing drafts.
- Council's Your Say section of the website was used as the primary on-line forum for engagement.
- Council staff and the consultants co-hosted a booth at two Farmers Markets and the 2018 Armidale Autumn Festival.
- A mapping exercise and an ideas generator were presented for feedback and to fuel discussion.
- An open ended survey available on the Your Say section of the website was also used to illicit candid feedback on how the community currently use the creeklands and what they would like to see improved.
- Council's Community Engagement Centre located in the Central Mall was open throughout the engagement period and this venue was also used for the Design options open house participative workshop attended by over 50 people.
- Three Site Walk Listening tours were initiated for the advisory group and open to the public with Councillors also invited to attend. Attendance and participation at all events was high.

At the conclusion of the project, Council management in 2018 withheld the Creeklands Master Plan in order to ensure its alignment with other master planning exercises either underway or planned.

At the Ordinary meeting of Council 19 August 2020, Council resolved to immediately commence Community engagement on the 2018 Creeklands Master Plan and place the plan on public exhibition for 28 days to gather community feedback.

There were 23 formal submissions made by community members. These are submissions that were addressed to the Interim General Manager and/or to the Interim Administrator and were sent to the Council email address or postal address. All submitters were provided with a short response of acknowledgment of receipt.

Council staff noted and considered the submissions and determined if any changes are required to be made to the Dumaresq Creek Master Plan, or can reasonably be made with available resources. All the written submissions have been compiled and are attached to this report.

The table below lists the submissions and staff recommendations in response.

Submitter	Council staff recommendation in response to submission
<i>Submission 1</i> Susie Dunn	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 2</i> Maryann Krug	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 3</i> Cathy Clare, Armidale Neighbourhood Watch	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 4</i> Think Tank Team New England Visions 2030 Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil contamination concerns need to be addressed urgently • Stage implementation proposed • Active family precinct priority
<i>Submission 5</i> John Lemon	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 6</i> David Carr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The retention of the Civic Park pond to be considered. • Re-development of the Family Precinct priority to be considered during implementation planning
<i>Submission 7</i> Barbara Finch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation priorities to be drafted and made public
<i>Submission 8</i> Angus Adair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Error in report 'Armidale Creeklands Committee' referenced in the report is in fact Visions for Armidale Creeklands to be rectified • Prioritise Family Precinct redevelopment
<i>Submission 9</i> John and Wendy Wearne	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 10</i> Joy Bowles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditative precinct and labyrinth to stay at current location rather than SE portion of Civic Park. Minor alteration can be made
<i>Submission 11</i> Jim Scott, Visions for Armidale Creeklands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise soil contamination investigation
<i>Submission 12</i> Neil Pullar	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 13</i> Dr Andrew Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • labyrinth to stay at current location rather than SE portion of Civic Park. Minor alteration can be made
<i>Submission 14</i> Ben Vincent and Deborah Bower	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 15</i>	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan.

Pat Schultz	Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 16</i> Lynne Hosking	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 17</i> Margaret O'Connor	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 18</i> Frances Grindlay	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan.
<i>Submission 19</i> Dorothy Robinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The retention of the Civic Park pond to be considered. Soil contamination to be addressed
<i>Submission 20</i> Helen Webb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The retention of the Civic Park pond to be considered. Soil contamination issues to be addressed
<i>Submission 21</i> Russell Evans	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.
<i>Submission 22</i> Wildlife Habitat Group (Liz O'Hara and Dr Sue Elliot, UNE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The retention of the Civic Park pond to be considered. The development of nature play areas
<i>Submission 23</i> Sustainable Living Armidale Transport Group – Tom Fisher	Staff recommends no changes to Master Plan. Comments noted and passed on to officers for information and future planning and consideration.

A key theme in the submissions was that the Master Plan proposals be implemented in stages. Of those that identified specific areas for implementation the preference was for the redevelopment of the Family Precinct. Several submissions identified exercise stations and the Skate Park as preferences. The Skate Park is located within the Family Precinct, while exercise stations are proposed for selected areas along the John Failes Cycleway that passes through all 4 precincts.

The Family Precinct is located up stream of the gas works with the exception of the south- east bank of the creek on the 'Armidale Central' shopping Centre side. Works proposed in the Family Precinct will not be undertaken in areas of potential soil contamination.

The development of nature play areas was identified in the Creeklands Master Plan and echoed in at least two submissions. The Implementation Plan proposes an accessible nature play area to be developed as part of the almost completed 'Super Playground' proposed in the master plan for Curtis Park.

It is estimated that the implementation of the entire Creeklands Master Plan will cost approximately \$15 million. It is unlikely that funding of that magnitude would be available at one time, therefore a staged approach is not only practical but reflects community desires expressed in the submissions. An implementation plan has been proposed that outlines a range of works within the Family Precinct with some additional optional works relating to other areas of interest expressed within the submissions. Refer to Stage 1 Proposed Works and Options with Indicative Costs, attached.

Impact

The Stage 1 Priorities of the Implementation Plan will cost an estimated \$1,080,000. Several additional Stage 1 Options are proposed for an additional estimated \$288,000. Total cost estimate of stage 1 implementation is \$1,368,000.

A review of the Creeklands Environmental Management Plan addressing soil contamination is estimated at \$85,000. The works proposed in the Family Precinct will not be undertaken on contaminated soil from the former gasworks, therefore Stage 1 of the Implementation Plan is not predicated on the completion of the EMP review.

Soil testing will be required for the installation of the Exercise stations along the John Failes Cycleway; however the costs will be minor due to the small volumes of potentially contaminated soil encountered.

The implementation of the Creeklands Master Plan addresses the Community Strategic Plan by 'maintaining and improving local waterways, lagoons and creek lands in partnership with community groups and other agencies.' Volunteer groups such as the Urban Rivercare Group and Labyrinth Group are likely to contribute to the project. Expert advice will be sought from Dr Sue Elliot Senior lecturer in early Childhood Education, UNE and others with regard to the development of the accessible nature play extension to the new Curtis Playground.

In-stream works within the Family Precinct will require compliance with the Water Management Act 2000 administered by the NSW Office of Water and would also require compliance with the NSW Protection of the Environment Operations Act. 1997.

Summary

The Armidale Creeklands Master Plan has been positively accepted by the Armidale community. For the most part this was due to broad based and effective community engagement undertaken during the development of the project in 2018.

The submissions received as a result of the 2020 public exhibition period support the Creeklands Master Plan and urge Council to commence a staged implementation of the plan. Two changes to the plan have been proposed that reflect community desire and concerns raised about soil contamination is proposed for further investigation.