

22 November 2021

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Re: General Crown Reserves Draft Plan of Management, Wentworth Park Draft Plan of Management and Johnstons Creek Parklands Draft Plan of Management

Dear Ms Martin,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed plans of management for crown lands in Glebe.

Glebe has one of the most distinguished and interesting networks of crown land reserves in the city. Council's work, notably in the foreshore walk and the current Johnstons Creek naturalisation project, has been exemplary. Over the last few decades extraordinary things have been achieved.

The Glebe Society has had a long involvement with these reserves including campaigning for their rehabilitation, helping Council to manage their ecology and researching their cultural history. They are truly embedded in our organisation's DNA.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and encourage Council to aspire to achieving high standards in rehabilitating Wentworth Park. Let Council and the community be united in the vision of Glebe surrounded by a network of interconnected parks like no other.

Our comments on the plans are set out below. They include a number of practical recommendations which we believe will enhance the plans and lead to improved outcomes for the people of Sydney.

Yours sincerely



Ian Stephenson
President

Comments on the General Crown Reserves Draft Plan of Management, Wentworth Park Draft Plan of Management and Johnstons Creek Parklands Draft Plan of Management

1. General comment concerning the Indigenous people's historic habitation of Glebe's Crown Lands

There is general acceptance that Glebe/Forest Lodge is situated on the traditional lands of the Gadigal and Wangal people. In the above three Draft Plans of Management, only the Gadigal people are acknowledged in relation to Glebe/Forest lodge.

Recommendation: All Draft Plans of Management which relate to Glebe/Forest Lodge should be amended to include both the Gadigal *and* Wangal people.

2. General Crown Reserves Draft Plan of Management including Glebe Foreshore Walk East

The Draft Plan of Management for Glebe Foreshore East has been listed separately under General Crown Reserves. However, the report notes that Glebe Foreshore Walk East 'is integrated with Community land to form larger open space and connected to foreshore path network'. (p84)

Recommendation: It is recommended that Glebe Foreshore Walk East be included in the broader Plan of Management for Johnstons Creek Parklands, as it is an integrated extension of it.

We note that that The Walk has been extensively planted with native flora and is well maintained with the recent installation of metal loop fencing helping to protect the flora. The plan of management for the Walk should include a diversity of flora which includes species appropriate for the bay foreshore. From the perspective of establishing and maintaining a biodiversity of flora and fauna it is important to maintain the connectivity and link between the Foreshore Walk East and the other sections of the Bays foreshore plantings. A "native meadow" should be considered as a replacement for some of the grassland in front of the Walter Burley Griffin incinerator.

3. Johnstons Creek Parklands Draft Plan of Management

(a) The proposed Uses and Development activities include 'Community gardening' (p70).

Recommendation: It is recommended that Landcare/Bushcare activities should also be included under Uses and Development activities; we do not support the inclusion of gated community gardens on crown land.

The report notes that the parklands habitat corridor is predominantly found in small pockets of native vegetation and the established tree canopy (p23). By including 'Landcare/Bushcare' activities in addition to 'Community gardening', opportunities to increase biodiversity and the habitat corridor will be enhanced.

(b) The values and roles under *5.0 Environment and Sustainability* concerning vegetation management and urban ecology encapsulate many of the issues of concern to the Glebe and Forest Lodge community. However, the strategies and particularly the performance measures should be strengthened.

Recommendation:

The current plantings just completed along Johnstons Creek are inadequate to achieve good habitat outcomes. Creekside plantings should be enhanced with a dense shrub layer and small native trees planted to replace what has been removed in the creek naturalisation process. More estuarine species are also needed. Such strategies would help meet the stated role of *5.2 Landscaping and planting that reflects the original natural environment*.

Environmental weed management also continues to be poor and is not compliant with best practice bush regeneration. Unless the outcrops of *Celtis sinensis* are managed with urgency this invasive species will continue to dominate. The presence of so many fleshy fruited trees in the parklands is leading to an increase in species such as the aggressive Pied Currawong and reducing fauna diversity, as demonstrated in results of The Glebe Society annual spring bird surveys. The saltmarsh wetland, recognised in the POM as having unique biodiversity values was highly degraded during the naturalisation works and also needs urgent attention.

Baseline measures and monitoring should begin now and will be essential to ensure habitat values are being enhanced. Performance measures should be quantifiable and include time frames

To increase community understanding and participation, activities such as a community 'Bioblitz', guided by expert ecologists, would also help meet management targets 5.4 and 5.5 and align with recommended Bushcare and Landcare activities.

(c) The Plan of Management refers to the area known locally as "The Hill" and while noting that 'The Hill could be considered to provide biodiversity in its current state' (p23), the report also states 'Where feasible, investigate ways to progress contamination recommendations for The Hill '(p67).

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Plan of Management include the potential for developing The Hill as a safe urban Wildlife Habitat Refuge.

Such a refuge would require only minimal decontamination expense, minor weeding and revegetation, and offer valuable opportunities for research and possible future relocation of threatened species. These latter activities could be supported by the installation of remote sensing cameras.

We note that The Hill is currently fenced off from the surrounding area and cannot be used as a park open space. Its position, fencing and vegetation can provide an environment for abundant wildlife including birds, lizards, bees and small mammals to shelter and flourish. Organisations such as the Australian Wildlife Conservancy have shown that through successful management practices, fenced land areas can offer optimal opportunities for feral animal and weed control, as well as providing a safe haven for native fauna. In the Society's bird surveys (conducted by its Blue Wren Subcommittee) raptors, crested pigeons, brush turkeys and other birds have been identified on this crown land site.

Such a wild habitat refuge would be unique in the local government area and could also provide a safe site for the translocation of bird species, including the blue wren, which are no longer found in Glebe. Other opportunities include ongoing urban habitat research and community engagement through the use of remote sensing cameras installed within the site (similar to the peregrine falcon project at 367 Collins St Melbourne).

(d) The wetlands in Forest Lodge are responsible for filtering storm water from Annandale prior to its release into Johnsons canal. Gross material is caught in a trap before the water enters the wetlands and it is important that the trap be regularly cleaned. The rate of water flow through the wetlands is critical as it must be slow enough to filter contaminants. Also, overtime mud and other debris build-up in the wetlands and obstruct the water channel, which then requires clearing using earth-moving equipment.

Recommendation: a regular maintenance program should be established for the Forest Lodge wetland to ensure that entry trap is regularly cleaned and the water channel is not obstructed.

4. Wentworth Park Draft Plan of Management

Background

Wentworth Park is a distinguished place with a rich history including:

1. Pre-colonisation: a pristine bay fed by a freshwater creek



Illustration 1 Joseph Lycett, Blackwattle Bay from Grose's Farm, detail from [Sydney from the Parramatta Road] 1819, SLNSW ML55

2. By 1882 the bay had been reclaimed and developed as a park for active and passive recreation with playing fields set in picturesque walks



Illustration 2 The Glebe, Parish of Petersham, Higginbotham and Robertson, SLNSW Maps/1192a

Above: the park had a landscape plan which integrated active recreation, a football ground and a cricket ground, and passive recreation with picturesque walks and lawns.

Left and above: Originally most of the park was reclaimed land only small sections, principally at the corner of Wattle and William Henry Street had been land pre colonisation, everything else was under water

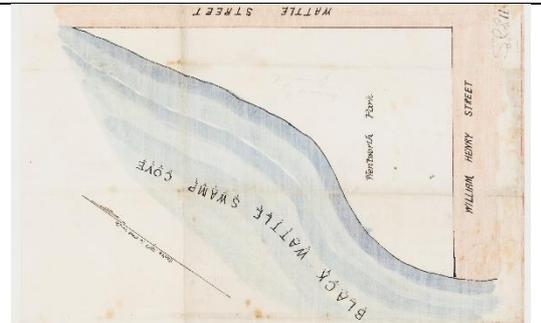


Illustration 3 Ultimo Block 32 John Harris Shanes Park, SLNSW, Z/SP/811.1735/59

3. **In the 20th century the original design has been lost. It became a degraded and compromised landscape**

For ease of maintenance the gardens were sacrificed, the greyhound track, on the site of the cricket oval, consumed the centre of the park splitting it in two. An enormous grandstand which blocks vistas of Glebe was erected in 1985.



Illustration 4 Aerial view 2020

Recommendations

i. The Greyhound Track

The Glebe Society believes that the licence on the greyhound track must not be renewed when it expires in 2027.

Pleasingly, the State Government's 2020 Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy includes the strategy to *facilitate the return of the Wentworth Park greyhound track land and the temporary pop-up school once their terms expire as newly activated, publicly accessible open space as part of a larger and enhanced parkland* (p. 63).

Recommendation: The Wentworth Park Plan of Management must include strategies for a larger and enhanced parkland based on removal of the Greyhound Track

ii. Strategies in the Draft Plan of Management for rehabilitating the park.

The 1991 plan of management included clear desired outcomes for rehabilitating the park:

Landscape Character: *An identifiable character and design for the whole park with a clearly defined boundary, using components of the formal nineteenth century parkland within the constraints imposed by the more recent developments within the park.*

A comparison of Illustrations 2 and 4 above makes it clear why this conclusion was reached. The 1880s scheme tied together the active and passive recreation needs in a pleasing way. There might be other ways of doing this but a previous scheme which was at the vanguard of park design in Sydney in the 1880s is much richer in terms of place making.

The 2021 draft plan has a defined goal which is to improve the park for both active and passive recreation and it identifies that the objectives of recovering pre-colonial significance (*a meaning of the place that resonates with country* [Section 9.1.1]), post-colonial significance (*a place which celebrates local, natural and cultural history* [Section 9.1.2]) and conserving heritage listed items, are important in shaping how this should be done.

However, the management targets and strategies and the performance measures to do this need to be better focussed in order to deliver better outcomes.

Some of the principles in the POM appear to have been adopted from other plans and are not easily applicable to Wentworth Park.

For example Section 5.2 Environment and Sustainability requires *landscaping and planting that reflects the original natural environment*.

Except for a small area at the corner of William Henry and Wattle streets, the park was originally under water. It had no landscaping and planting.

Does this mean the goal is to have pre-colonial *landscaping and plantings* only in the South-East corner of the park where they originally existed or is it the more generalised objective of having more indigenous plantings, that is intended?

If the latter applies will the plantings be confined to species known to have grown in the area such as *Callicoma serratifolia* (Blackwattle, the plant after which the bay was named) or will plants which are indigenous to other parts of Sydney be used?.

Recommendation: the Plan of Management needs to make it clear what is meant by *landscaping and planting that reflects the original natural environment*.

iii. Management Targets and Strategies

Good work was done in the 1991 plan in developing a clear overall vision for the park. Two things have happened in the last thirty years.

Firstly, recognition of the need to consult and reflect First Nation's communities in management strategies and secondly to take account of the likelihood, and opportunities arising from, the greyhound track's licence not being renewed after 2027.

Instead of building on the work of the 1991 plan the 2021 draft plan of management seems to be starting again. The result is performance standards and performance measures which are set too low. In short, the plan of management lacks vision. Good *targets and strategies* (something the plan is designed to embrace) cannot be established without an overall goal.

The sections of the plan which need review are:

9. Management targets and strategies

1.1 A meaning of the place that resonates with country

- 1.2 A place which signposts and celebrates local, natural and cultural heritage
- 5.2 Landscaping and planting that reflects the original natural environment
- 6.2 A place which is a conservatory of natural and cultural heritage

The table below sets out the pertinent *Values/Roles*, *Management Targets/Means* and *Performance Measures* as set out in the plan. The text in red highlights the inadequacies of the targets and strategies.

Ref	Values/Roles	Management Target	Means	Performance Measures
1.1	A meaning of the place that resonates with country	To implement a meaning and description that reflects connection to place	Work with the community to establish a meaning and description that captures the place's connection to country	Community consultation Adopted meaning and description
<p>The plan is trying to put pre-colonial values into a colonial box. That is <i>country</i> is being defined by the boundaries of Wentworth Park, a colonial construct. In pre-colonial times Blackwattle Bay was defined by the estuary which starts in Victoria Park (another City of Sydney Crown lands reserve) and of which Lake Northam is a remnant,. First Nations material culture has been found along the route of the creek (now in pipes), for example near Broadway in the vicinity of Mountain Street. This objective should encourage the connection and interpretation of related places in order to make the pre-colonial landscape more legible. The First Nation's people must also be consulted about the significance of topography. The physical connection to the modern Blackwattle Bay is about to be cut off by a wall of masonry (the new fish markets), the Pymont peninsula will be hidden by a mountain of masonry (if the NSW government has its way). Is it important to traditional owners that the hills of Glebe remain low rise so the original topography is legible and the park can be read as reclaimed land? First nations people need to be asked about the significance of topography to Country.</p>				
1.2	A place which signposts and celebrates local, natural and cultural history.	To contribute to the spaces identity and character	Investigate the inclusion of informative and interpretative elements that reflect the spaces' historical identity and natural character	Increased visibility of park identity
<p>It sounds as though the landscape plan from the 1880s which artfully combined active and passive recreation is not going to be used as a basis for the park but will just be <i>signs on sticks</i>, how boring! The strategies also fail to bring 1.1 and 1.2 together. There are pre-colonial and post-colonial values and the POM needs to establish a process as to the strategy for bringing them together to achieve an outstanding design</p>				

5.2	Landscaping and planting that reflects the original natural environment	To increase indigenous plantings within the park landscape	Where appropriate and site conditions allow, investigate the planting of indigenous species	Increasing indigenous species
See the comments on page 2 above. More clarity is needed. It may be that the gardenesque plan of the 1880s can be used to integrate the active and passive parts of the park but be planted with indigenous not introduced species and the previous shoreline on the corner of William Henry and Wattle Street be interpreted.				
6.2	A place which is a conservatory of natural and cultural heritage	To appropriately manage and conserve elements of heritage significance To guide management and design decision making to achieve optimum heritage management outcomes	Preparation and ongoing implementation of supporting documentation to guide the maintenance of sensitive and significant heritage assets and fabric	Completed supporting documentation
Wentworth Park is a place of remnant heritage (natural and built), much of the hard and soft landscape which connected those elements – paths, fences around playing fields and plantings has gone. An important goal is recreating in some form the missing elements in order to make the place coherent and improve its amenity. The current focus, which is only on the extant things and not how to put back the connections, rather misses the point				

Recommendation: Revised performance measures

Ref	Values/Roles	Management Target	Means	Performance Measures
1.1	A meaning of the place that resonates with country	To implement a meaning and description that reflects connection to place and to connect related sites along the Blackwattle Bay estuary	Work with the community to establish a meaning and description that captures the place's connection to country	Community consultation Adopted meaning, description and vision

1.2	A place which celebrates significant local, natural and cultural history.	To contribute to the spaces identity and character	Adapt components, of the formal nineteenth century parkland taking account of other uses and recognition of Country to give the park a coherent design	The design of the park draws from its distinguished pre-colonial and post-colonial history and is coherent, attractive and practical
5.2	Landscaping and planting which interprets the original natural environment	To increase indigenous plantings within the park landscape	Explore opportunities to use plants which are indigenous to Ultimo and Glebe to recreate the gardenesque layout	A unique park which marries indigenous and post indigenous landscape and plantings
6.2	A place which is a conservatory of natural and cultural heritage	To appropriately manage and conserve elements of heritage significance and to identify opportunities to recover missing details of the landscape they sit in in order to guide management and design decision making to achieve optimum heritage management outcomes	Preparation and ongoing implementation of supporting documentation to guide the design of the park and the maintenance of sensitive and significant heritage assets and fabric	Completed supporting documentation