

12 February 2013

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Dear Kate

Comments on Final Masterplan for Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the final Masterplan (version 6) received on 6 February 2013. As there is only a week for comments, we have not been able to consult widely with our members, but the comments below are consistent with those made in our submission on the draft Masterplan and as discussed in our meeting with you on 18 September 2012.

We note the changes made to the Masterplan such as the storage area, bicycle parking, retention of picnic tables, retention of stairs, informal paths, and Stage 4 boardwalk. But we repeat our central concerns about the removal of the water features, the closure of paths, the reduced capacity of the car park, and impact on the Sutherland Group garden area from the all-ability path and stormwater pond.

Specific comments are discussed below.

Design of the entry gathering area

The new entry area around the mature tree will be less useful for gatherings and events than the space proposed in the Draft Masterplan. We support the unpaved area around the tree but with the tree in the centre of the space, it will be very difficult to set out tables for display of information and sale of plants and allow circulation space for people. It is difficult to judge the size of the space, but relative to the size of a car parking space, the size and shape looks difficult to use for events. With a group seated around the edge of the space, it would be difficult for a guide or walk leader to talk to the group, as the natural place to stand is where the tree is. The paved area in the draft Masterplan could be retained, with the addition of the unpaved area around the tree.

Showing the location of the electricity pole in the entry area would help show the proposed location of the information sign.

We hope provision is made for access to power and water for events in this area.

Table on terrace

The draft Masterplan showed two tables on the terrace near the pond and one has been removed. To make the terrace space most useful for a range of functions, we repeat our comment that both tables should be removed from the terrace. This will be the largest level space in the Reserve and keeping it clear of tables maintains flexibility in its use. We suggested the table could be relocated slightly to the east, off the terrace, close to the location of the existing table.

Paths through central picnic area

We note the addition of a new all-ability access path between the terrace and the picnic area. This area now has a lot of space used for paths and paved surfaces in a very small area, and perhaps could be redesigned to include space for the table moved off the terrace as part of the non-all-ability path.

Informal pathways

We note the addition of 4 informal pathways of crushed sandstone. We support the paths in the natural area and in the southern sunny garden. But the proposed informal pathways in the APS Sutherland

garden and at the bottom of the slope below the information kiosk are probably not very useful due to their closeness to the existing paths.

As an alternative, a space for seating could be provided in these locations eg at the bottom of the steep slope where the existing path is, and in the Sutherland Group garden area near the existing seats.

The new path in the eastern shade tolerant area may work better with a “flipped orientation” to reflect the most common direction of walking around the Reserve (ie from the lowest path near Bates Drive in a south-west direction to connect with the upper western path).

Space for green waste in the new depot area

The new depot location is currently used for the stockpiling of green waste before removal. The green waste takes up a lot of space in this area. The proposed depot layout does not show a location for green waste, as the material storage bay is likely to be too small. The layout does not show any space for work tables/benches. The current depot has several wire mesh tables which are used for plant storage before planting out.

Extra seats

Although it is a minor detail, we would like more seats to be shown on the Masterplan in addition to the existing seats to be retained and the new seats on the all-ability path. Extra seats could be located at the stubs where paths are to be closed. This may require some hard surfacing to be retained as a pad for the seat. For instance, locations could include:

- On the loop in the northern rainforest area
- At the top of the pedestrian entry off Bates Drive
- In the fern garden near the water feature (existing seat)
- At the bottom of the steep slope below the information kiosk, overlooking the bridge and zig-zag path
- In the sunny garden where the southern-most pathway to the former boardwalk will be removed.

Staging

We note the brief indicative staging provided on the Final Masterplan. We are not sure what is included in pathways and park infrastructure. Perhaps the staging could be added to each of the comments marked on the Masterplan, with a number in brackets. We would like to see the opening hours extended as soon as possible, and amended on the Council website and Reserve brochure.

As noted in our comments on the Draft Masterplan, we support the new entry area and depot relocation as a priority. We would like to see the Bates Drive pedestrian entry as a priority. This could be provided relatively easily as there is already a vehicle access gate (from previous use as a green waste area) and path. It does not have to wait for the stairs to be installed.

We are also interested in the vegetation communities plan.

We are happy to meet with you to discuss our comments further.

Yours sincerely

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