

### 10.3 WILSON RECREATION RESERVE - BRIGHTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL PROPOSAL UPDATE

Environment, Recreation and Infrastructure - Open Space, Recreation & Wellbeing  
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#### Executive summary

##### **Purpose and background**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcome of further discussions with Brighton Grammar School (BGS) concerning the School's proposal to redevelop Wilson Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) and seek endorsement of an amended BGS proposal (set out in Attachment 1).

BGS has previously proposed to construct a sports pavilion and reconstruct the sportsground at the Reserve, while seeking a 21 year licence agreement that reflects the School's current use of the Reserve for winter school rugby, lunch break overflow and physical education/sports lessons.

At its 28 April 2020 Ordinary Meeting it was resolved that Council:

- 1. provides in-principle support for Brighton Grammar School to commence the Statutory Planning process to construct a sports pavilion at Wilson Recreation Reserve, Brighton*
- 2. commences discussions to develop a 21 year licence agreement with Brighton Grammar School for use of upgraded sportsground and pavilion facilities at Wilson Recreation Reserve, Brighton that reflects Brighton Grammar School's current usage for winter School rugby, lunch break overflow and physical education/sports lessons*
- 3. consults with Bayley House to ensure that the existing cooperative arrangement with Brighton Grammar School regarding shared passive use of Wilson Reserve as a weekday break out space for students and clients continues unchanged and that construction and location of the proposed sports pavilion not unreasonably impede or restrict direct access from the Bayley House site*
- 4. ensures that local Bayside community cricket clubs, including Brighton Cricket Club are consulted during the construction design process and provided priority to apply for summer sporting allocation for the months of October to March*
- 5. develops a Memorandum of Understanding that details Brighton Grammar School's financial commitment to upgrade the sportsground and construct a sports pavilion at Wilson Recreation Reserve, Brighton*
- 6. receives a report at a future Council meeting detailing the outcome of the Statutory Planning and license agreement negotiation processes.*

## Key issues

### Community response to BGS proposal

Council has received some strong, localised objection to the proposed pavilion development, particularly by residents abutting the Reserve. This has culminated in residents forming a 'Save Wilson Recreation Reserve' group (the Group) and making numerous representations and enquiries to Councillors and Council officers.

The Group have also met with the BGS Principal to discuss the proposal and their concerns with the proposed pavilion. The Mayor and Deputy, along with officers have also met with the Group to understand their concerns.

### Further discussions with Brighton Grammar School

Following this meeting with the Group, officers met with BGS Principal, Mr Ross Featherston to discuss the status of the BGS proposal, community reaction and BGS priorities for Wilson Recreation Reserve.

At this meeting and in subsequent correspondence Mr Featherston advised that BGS's priority for the Reserve was to improve and maintain the sportsground to provide a safe and suitable playing surface for the School's Rugby team and for students using the Reserve for physical education/sports lessons and lunch break overflow. Further to this BGS is seeking a guarantee of tenure longer than the current annual seasonal allocation provided by Council.

BGS has formally advised Council that they wish to withdraw the request to construct a pavilion and a 21 year licence agreement and instead focus on a proposal to reconstruct the sportsground with new drainage, irrigation and turf, maintain this reconstructed sportsground to BGS standards and seek a nine year licence that reflects the School's current use of the Reserve.

### Wilson Recreation Reserve Master Plan

As part of the community consultation process in 2018, respondents said the Reserve is an important open space where they can be in a natural environment, socialise and be active. Almost all respondents acknowledged that the Reserve requires upgrading and the site will not meet the needs of the community in the future. The community members particularly mentioned the need for an improved surface.

### Community impact

The BGS proposal will provide a direct benefit to the Bayside community and visitors to the Reserve through the provision of a reconstructed sportsground that will be safer and more accessible for users. The BGS proposal to maintain the sportsground to a high standard will result in an open space that can be used by active community members all year round.

The BGS proposal ensures the sportsground remains accessible for passive or active use when not allocated for community or school sports activities. The proposal does not result in any changes to the existing (or historical) use of the Reserve.

The sportsground will be allocated by Council for summer use by local Bayside cricket clubs, including Brighton Cricket Club that will directly benefit from the development of an upgraded sportsground.

Staff have been unable to identify any alternative winter use and consider the historical allocation of Brighton Grammar School winter rugby as appropriate use of this community asset. Staff have been able to locate Council records that show Brighton Grammar School rugby at the site since 2004; however, indications are usage may predate this record.

### Officers' opinion

Officers believe the revised BGS proposal to reconstruct the sportsground and not construct a pavilion is good outcome for the local community and BGS as one of the primary users of the Reserve. Officers want to recognise the compromises made by BGS and in particular the way they have listened and responded to local residents' concerns.

An improved sportsground will provide a significant improvement in local resident amenity. Council will also benefit financially as BGS propose to take on maintenance of the reconstructed sportsground, reducing Council's open space maintenance costs.

Officers also believe that a nine-year licence agreement is reasonable and reflects the investment to be made by BGS in reconstructing the sportsground.

### **Recommendation**

That Council:

1. commences discussions to develop a 9 year licence agreement with Brighton Grammar School, in accordance with Council's Lease and Licence Policy, for use of the upgraded sportsground at Wilson Recreation Reserve, Brighton that reflects Brighton Grammar School's current usage for winter School rugby, lunch break overflow and physical education/sports lessons
2. consults with Bayley House to ensure that the existing cooperative arrangement with Brighton Grammar School regarding shared passive use of Wilson Reserve as a weekday break out space for students and clients continues unchanged
3. ensures that local Bayside community cricket clubs, including Brighton Cricket Club are provided priority to apply for summer sporting allocation for the months of October to March
4. develops a Memorandum of Understanding that details Brighton Grammar School's financial commitment to upgrade the sportsground at Wilson Recreation Reserve, Brighton
5. works with Brighton Grammar School to undertake indigenous understorey planting in appropriate areas of Wilson Recreation Reserve
6. notifies nearby residents including representatives of the local resident action group 'Save Wilson Recreation Reserve' of the outcomes of this report.

### **Support Attachments**

1. Attachment 1 - Wilson Rec Proposal August 2020 - Brighton Grammar

## **Considerations and implications of recommendation**

### **Liveable community**

#### **Social**

The development of improved community sportsgrounds provides positive benefits at the Reserve for people, particularly through their participation and engagement in sport and recreational activities.

#### **Natural Environment**

The inclusion of sub-surface drainage, irrigation and new turf at the Reserve will enhance the natural environment as the sportsground currently wears quite badly in winter and becomes somewhat barren and dusty during the warmer summer months.

#### **Climate Emergency**

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

#### **Built Environment**

The BGS proposal to not proceed with the previously proposed pavilion results in no built environment implications and ensures the integrity of the Reserve's open space.

#### **Customer Service and Community Engagement**

Council officers have met with leaders of a concerned resident's group to discuss their concerns regarding the BGS proposal.

Council officers have maintained an open dialogue with BGS regarding the proposal and have met on multiple occasions to discuss adaptations that will result in favourable community outcomes.

Sports club stakeholder Brighton Cricket Club, Bayley House and adjacent resident's group have been informed by officers of the intention to present this report, when it will be publicly available and how they can make a submission.

#### **Human Rights**

The implications of this report have been assessed and are not considered likely to breach or infringe upon the human rights contained in the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

#### **Governance**

Officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest.

#### **Legal**

Council would negotiate the terms of a nine-year licence agreement with BGS in line with Council's Leasing Policy.

#### **Finance**

Council will derive minor income through the seasonal allocation of the sportsground to community sports clubs, schools and commercial fitness providers. Council will have reduced

maintenance costs as BGS have proposed to undertake sportsground maintenance for the life of the licence period.

**Links to Council policy and strategy**

Improvement to sport and recreation facilities is supported by a number of key strategy and policy documents including the Council Plan 2017–21, Bayside 2020 Community Plan, Recreation Strategy 2013, and Wellbeing for All Ages and Abilities Strategy 2013–17.