

27 July 2020

General Manager at Woollahra Council
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SC5284 Submissions COOPER PARK

Friends of Cooper Park was formed with the goal of representing the engaged local community in the activities and decisions that affect Cooper Park- in order to effect positive changes that contribute to and enhance this unique and important asset. We are a volunteer organisation and we want Cooper Park to be cared for and enhanced so that reflect its heritage and its natural importance.

Our submission on the proposal to include Cooper Park as a Heritage Listing in the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014 details the following four key recommendations and feedback:

1. Support for the proposal to include Cooper Park as a Heritage Listing in the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014;
2. Request Woollahra Council to nominate Cooper Park as a State-significant item.
3. Require Woollahra Council to develop a strategic Vision for Cooper Park and surrounding areas to enhance Sydney's Green Grid.
4. Offer to assist Woollahra Council to co-create an Updated Plan of Management for Cooper Park.

1. LIST COOPER PARK AS A HERITAGE ITEM

Cooper Park is one of the most unique parcels of bushland, water habitat and connected open space in the Municipality of Woollahra. Cooper Park also constitutes a distinctive built environment which was designed and constructed during the depression - along the lines of the English midsummer's night dream pleasure garden theme. Attributes include grottoes, bridges, scenic and secluded bushland walks, ponds, meandering streams and waterfalls. Cooper Park's aquatic ecosystems co-exist with the built environment and provides biodiversity and natural cooling. The sensitive aquatic ecosystem forms one of the largest waterways - 'Cooper Park Creek' in the Woollahra catchment. The Cooper Park bushland is a beautiful amenity that supports the habitats of native plants and animals while providing quiet enjoyment of nature. The protection of Cooper Parks' ecosystem elements and habitat types also includes the built features of wooded sandstone slopes and gullies.

Friends of Cooper Park urge Woollahra Council to protect and manage its unique places and items - particularly Cooper Park, and therefore support the proposal to list Cooper Park as a Heritage Item, and in doing so amend the Woollahra Local Environment Plan 2014.

2. NOMINATE COOPER PARK AS A STATE-SIGNIFICANT ITEM

Woollahra Council has recognised the distinctiveness of Cooper Park by proposing its listing as a Heritage Item in the Local Environment Plan 2014. Friends of Cooper Park encourage Woollahra Council to also seek State Heritage listing to acknowledge its uniqueness and safeguard its future. Friends of Cooper Park therefore request that Woollahra Council nominate Cooper Park as a State-significant item and petition the Heritage Council to understand its significance and therefore include Cooper Park in the NSW State Heritage listing.

3. DEVELOP A STRATEGIC VISION FOR COOPER PARK

Friends of Cooper Park require Woollahra Council to develop a Strategic Vision for Cooper Park and the surrounding areas to enhance the local Green Grid. The Strategic Vision for Cooper Park should reflect the overarching Green Grid

for the Municipality of Woollahra and should detail Cooper Park, adjacent parks and green spaces as well as the key surrounding streets which link the Green Grid together.

Friends of Cooper Park request that Woollahra Council prepare a Strategic Vision for Cooper Park that incorporates activities specific to Cooper Park and priorities identified in the 'Woollahra – 2030 Plan of A healthy Environment' and 'Protecting our environment'.

Friends of Cooper Park would like to see what positive impact measures and targets Woollahra Council proposes for the area. A Strategic Vision is needed to clearly identify and enable measures and targets and include approaches for the connectivity of Cooper Park with adjacent habitat, and detail plans for adding to habitat and amenity.

Friends of Cooper Park request Woollahra Council detail why Cooper Park North has been excluded from the proposal to list Cooper Park as a Heritage Item. We would like to know if there are any plans to sell off or develop any part of North Cooper Park.

The NSW Government's Eastern City District Plan informs local strategic planning statements and Local Environmental Plans, the assessment of planning proposals as well as community strategic plans and policies. The connection to and enhancement of The Greater Sydney Green Grid is a key responsibility of Woollahra Council.

Friends of Cooper Park would like Woollahra Council to clearly identify the priorities in giving effect to the Green Grid Planning Priorities to create opportunities to enhance our biodiversity and urban green cover as this relates to Cooper Park.

Friends of Cooper Park want to understand the priorities of Woollahra Council in connecting the Green Grid to create a network of high-quality green spaces which contribute to the health, diversity and expansion of our green infrastructure and natural landscape setting.

Friends of Cooper Park would like to see the Strategic Vision respond to the NSW Eastern District Plan - Planning Priorities are detailed in Appendix A.

4. CO-CREATE UPDATED PLAN OF MANAGEMENT FOR COOPER PARK

The proposed Heritage Item listing does not address the unique elements, and therefore the Plan of Management for Cooper Park should document unique, rare, threatened and locally significant species, heritage elements and attributes. The Plan of Management should include the overarching strategic objectives to enable the protection of and enhancement to the value Cooper Park has as an important ecosystem, and detail restoration priorities that balance nature-based recreation with appropriate use and commercial activity.

The current Plan of Management for Cooper Park was prepared in 2001 and little investigation and documentation of the natural heritage and built attributes of the bushland and parkland has been carried out since. Friends of Cooper Park encourage Woollahra Council to develop specific strategies to monitor, protect and manage the unique natural heritage of Cooper Park and produce a new Plan of Management Plan to protect, preserve, restore and add to this unique piece of Sydney. Over recent years, remediation work, additions and even maintenance to certain elements has strayed from the original aesthetic, and in some cases altered the function.

The updated Plan of Management should identify items of natural heritage and promote their protection, sustainable improvements and management. We ask Council to mandate a set of standards from which decisions and choice of materials for works can be made that contribute to, rather than detract from, the distinctiveness of Cooper Park.

Friends of Cooper Park encourage Woollahra Council to engage with the community in the preparation of an updated Plan of Management for Cooper Park and we offer our group to aid Woollahra Council in the groundwork of a new draft Plan of Management before it is exhibited – effectively co-creating the key elements.

Friends of Cooper Park believe that the updated Plan of Management must include guiding principles to help decision making and direct activity within Cooper Park to preserve conservation and biodiversity values, nature-based recreation and support appropriate commercial activities. The updated Plan of Management should support outdoor recreation

and nature-based activities like quiet bushland enjoyment and fauna and flora watching and include the overarching vision, goals and objectives to enhance connectivity with adjacent habitat with strategies for adding to habitat and landscaping amenity in the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods. The updated Plan of Management must also include design criteria that contribute to and maintain the original fabric of the built elements in the park. As such the updated Plan of Management should guide the design, installation and maintenance of landscape treatments and supporting infrastructure arising from building work and use. It must include a schedule of finishes to ensure any works contribute to the attributes and improves Cooper Park. By preservation we mean to minimise and or eliminate any future incompatible built elements, maintaining the pristine bushland experience for visitors, and original stone bridges, creek waterfalls, paths and grottos in their most original state. Where new built elements are required for safety and access such as paths, stairs, railings, retaining and creek walls, should in all cases use natural compatible materials, designed to entirely integrate with existing and where necessarily touch the landscape lightly and be removable (timber stairs, boardwalks and the like).

Friends of Cooper Park believe this can be achieved by guaranteeing the inclusion of a qualified sustainability landscape designer with experience in period and heritage environments, and by the use of a standard palette of materials and design criteria to guide activities. This ambition is not only visual - it applies to the mechanics of water movements and stream management to ensure that the water flow is adequate, clean and that the water is able to pool, meander and fall as it was originally designed.

Friends of Cooper Park want to support Woollahra Council and contribute to this important new Plan of Management for Cooper Park by aiding the identification of items of natural and built heritage and offer suggestions to contribute to sustainable improvements and management. Friends of Cooper Park support more creative use of existing facilities and in relation of the usage of the tennis court café encourage the new Plan of Management to allow limited licence (to serve alcohol) to registered groups for short periods of time and enable community interest activities such as art exhibitions, small events, fund-raisers for the park etc. to be permitted and for visual amenity of the structures and possibilities of sensitive caring use of buildings to be allowed. We also raise the question of the occupancy of the apartment over the tennis court café, suggesting that its original allocation to a resident park ranger be revisited.

In summary, Friends of Cooper Park would like to see the updated Plan of Management include the following:

- Strategic Vision for Cooper Park
- Guidance (to aid decision making) for each Character Area Design and Operation Principals (that respond to sustainability and heritage including for:
 - Conservation
 - Biodiversity
 - Significant Trees
 - Water Management
 - Sandstone, Soil and Earthworks
 - Landscape and Planting
 - Use
- Standard Materials Palette – including for:
 - Footpaths
 - Steps
 - Railing / Fencing
 - Lighting
 - Recycling
 - Seat Furniture
 - Play Equipment
 - Public Art
 - Sandstone features

Friends of Cooper Park see the updated Plan of Management as an opportunity to engage and contribute.

Yours Sincerely

Kate Maclaren Chair and Founder of Friends of Cooper Park

CC. Roderick Simpson (Greater Sydney Environment Commissioner)
CC. Susan Wynne (Mayor Woollahra Council)

APPENDIX A
RELEVANT DIRECTIONS TO WOOLLAHRA COUNCIL IN THE EASTERN CITY DISTRICT PLAN

A city in its landscape A healthy natural environment will be important to improve liveability, create healthy places, and mitigate the effects of climate change. A city in its landscape will be measured against the outcomes achieved by protected, restored and enhanced landscapes, waterways, coastline, natural areas, tree canopy and open spaces. Potential indicators: Increased urban tree canopy; Expanded Greater Sydney Green Grid.

In giving effect to A Metropolis of Three Cities, this Planning Priority delivers on the following objectives and the corresponding strategies:

Valuing green spaces and landscape Potential indicators: Increased urban tree canopy Expanded Greater Sydney Green Grid
Planning Priority E14

Protecting and improving the health and enjoyment of Sydney Harbour and the District's waterways Planning Priority E15

Protecting and enhancing bushland and biodiversity Planning Priority E16

Protecting and enhancing scenic and cultural landscapes Planning Priority E17

Delivering high quality open space. The Green Grid links parks, open spaces, bushland and walking and cycling paths. Increasing urban tree canopy cover and delivering Green Grid connections Planning Priority E18

Delivering high quality open space. In giving effect to A Metropolis of Three Cities, this Planning Priority delivers on the following objective and the corresponding strategy: Objective 31 Public open space is accessible, protected and enhanced.

The Eastern City District's network of open spaces includes unique and iconic landscapes, harbours, beaches, wetlands, coastal walks, waterfront promenades, rivers, parks and playgrounds. Combined, they provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles and create significant economic benefit. Nature-based recreation also helps connect communities to the natural landscape.

Demand for nature-based recreation will need to be managed to minimise impacts on biodiversity.

Maximise the use of existing open space and protect, enhance and expand public open space by: a. providing opportunities to expand a network of diverse, accessible, high quality open spaces that respond to the needs and values of communities as populations grow. b. investigating opportunities to provide new open space so that all residential areas are within 400 metres of open space and all high-density residential areas (over 60 dwellings per hectare) are within 200 metres of open space. c. requiring large urban renewal initiatives to demonstrate how the quantity of, or access to, high quality and diverse local open space is maintained or improved. d. planning new neighbourhoods with a sufficient quantity and quality of new open space. e. delivering shared and co-located sports and recreational facilities including shared school grounds and repurposed golf courses. f. delivering or complementing the Greater Sydney Green Grid by providing walking and cycling links for transport as well as leisure and recreational trips.

The NSW Government has set a target to increase tree canopy cover across Greater Sydney to 40 per cent.

Councils will lead delivery of the Greater Sydney Green Grid through land use planning and infrastructure investment mechanisms such as development and land use controls, agreements for dual use of open space and recreational facilities, direct investment in open space, and other funding mechanisms such as local development contributions and Voluntary Planning Agreements. State regional and district parklands and reserves form a principal element of the Greater Sydney Green Grid for both biodiversity and recreation purposes. The NSW Government supports the delivery of regional open space and Green Grid connections through the Metropolitan Greenspace Program. The NSW Government also supports delivery of regional open space using Special Infrastructure Contributions.

Eastern Beaches Walk Building on the success of the Great Coastal Walk by providing improved east-west connections, primarily through street conversion projects and improved pedestrian and cycle links, from both Bondi and Bronte beaches, to Bondi Junction, Centennial Park, Moore Park, Oxford Street and the Harbour CBD.