

# ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE OUTCOMES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR THE STROMLO FOREST PARK MASTER PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government thanks the Canberra community for their response to the engagement program for the Stromlo Forest Park (SFP) Master Plan.

Community engagement for the master plan commenced in early December 2015 and concluded on 5 February 2016. Background information, the master plan map and an online survey were provided on the Environment and Planning Directorate's 'Have your say' website. The engagement was also promoted through social networks and a media release.

Seven written submissions and 744 online responses were received.

The Stromlo Forest Park master plan process began in 2009 and established a framework and key elements for a clear vision for SFP, as well as aspirations for the future. A major community engagement program was undertaken at the time. Sporting bodies, the wider community, local interest groups and other stakeholders all contributed to creating the long-term outlook for SFP. The resultant master plan released on-line in 2010 responded to the opportunities and challenges of the site.

In 2014 the ACT Government reconfirmed its commitment to SFP by commencing a review and update of the master plan. This was a timely opportunity to consider any new or emerging opportunities or impacts arising from further progressed design, planning and construction of the adjacent Molonglo residential precincts as well as broader recreational and regional trends.

Overall, the updated master plan does not provide major change from the original 2010 plan. In parallel with the master plan, significant environmental and engineering assessments were undertaken to plan and assess future requirements for service infrastructure and development within SFP.

The SFP master plan outlines the planning framework for SFP is an informed guide for consideration and reference. It does not commit this government, or any future government, to provide partial or full funding for any of the identified project within any specific timeframe. The ACT Government will further consider the issues identified through the community engagement program as part of the progression of any of the specific major projects identified in the Plan. Any future detailed design

processes will also include appropriate new stakeholder consultation.

A copy of the master plan consultation report is available on the Stromlo Forest Park website.

ACT Government responses to the main themes of the community and user submissions are provided below.

## MAIN CONSULTATION THEMES AND RESPONSES

### 1. Consultation offering lacked the written master plan report leading to speculation on developments (accommodation, cycling facilities, cycling circuit) and complaints that people weren't sufficiently informed to comment

**Response:** The aim of the engagement program was to provide a simplified format for comment, recognising there had been significant stakeholder and community involvement in the preparation of the 2010 Plan. However, the Government recognises feedback from some respondents wanting more background detail and information. The more detailed written master plan report has been released and is available on the Stromlo Forest Park website.

### 2. Lack of detail on mountain bike, running and equestrian trails

**Response:** The updated master plan primarily focused on those elements that differed from the original 2010 Plan. There has been no significant change in trail placement or provision since 2010. Any changes that have been made since that time, as well as any future changes have and will continue to be discussed with key stakeholders.

### 3. Strong support for key existing uses

**Response:** Cycling, equestrian, running and walking will continue to be key activities within Stromlo Forest Park. However, the park is also becoming an integral recreation resource for the residents of Molonglo. These needs are recognised through the master plan update that seeks to balance a range of recreation opportunity in a manner sympathetic to the traditional user groups.

#### 4. Ensure safety through physical separation of different user groups

**Response:** This is an important issue and consideration for managers of Stromlo Forest Park. The ACT Government will continue to work with the different stakeholder groups to ensure that safety through separation is managed appropriately. It is also important that all trail types are able to evolve and change over time to allow new user experiences or to address specific site constraints. There are significant demands from many user groups for new trails in the park and the geographic and spatial constraints make it difficult to accommodate the needs of all users. In some instances, this may necessitate the closure of some trail types at the expense of others. In these instances, the park managers will work with affected user groups to minimise overall impact and to provide alternative offerings where possible.

#### 5. Parking concerns, particularly relating to the District Playing Fields

**Response:** The proposed District Playing Fields will be constructed with car parks and amenities such as toilets. These car parks will be able to be used by people accessing the cross-country running track.

#### 6. Support for the pool

**Response:** Consistent with the Government's 2012 election commitment, the Stromlo Forest Park master plan includes the provision of a new pool to service Weston Creek and Molonglo. The proposed site within Stromlo Forest Park will create a unique sporting precinct.

#### 7. Some support for accommodation, although unsure as to scale or scope

**Response:** Canberra is currently under-resourced in respect of budget/value short-stay accommodation. This has exerted pressure on the availability of low cost accommodation for various groups that visit the ACT. The ACT Government recognises the need for additional budget/value accommodation options that support the following market segments:

- school groups;
- sporting groups; and
- non-sporting groups.

Stromlo Forest Park is considered as an ideal location for this accommodation type as it would be ideally suited to visiting school groups on weekdays during school-terms and the many interstate visitors that come to Canberra at other times (weekends and school holidays) to use the park, and other facilities in the ACT. It is envisaged that the accommodation would be low-rise and primarily consist of self-contained cabins or similar structures.

#### 8. Mixed support for playing fields

**Response:** The ACT Government has undertaken significant investigation into possible sites for District Playing Fields in the Molonglo Valley. Currently, similar playing fields in Weston Creek are at capacity. As Molonglo expands there will soon be a need for ovals as there is in other parts of the city. Given the undulating and hilly topography of the Molonglo Valley, this was considered the only site available for this development. The land where the playing fields are to be located is also the designated Outer Asset Bushfire Protection Zone for the suburb of Wright. Irrigated playing fields will greatly reduce bushfire risk in Wright. This designation has already required the selective removal of many of the Eucalyptus manniferas that were planted after the 2003 bushfires. It is recognised that the 'beginners' mountain bike track is popular with riders and alternative locations or experiences are being investigated.

#### 9. Concerns about shortening the criterium track

**Response:** The ACT Government recognises the importance in both the length and design of the criterium cycling circuit. Any modifications to the circuit that may be required as new infrastructure is developed at the Park will be made in consultation with stakeholders to ensure the circuit meets the needs of the cycling community.

#### 10. Equestrian event campground (Cotter road and Mount Stromlo summit road)

**Response:** The ACT Government will reinstate the proposed equestrian event campground in Block 514 Stromlo District that was first proposed in the 2010 Master Plan. The purpose of this campground is to provide basic camping facilities to support equestrian events in the park. The Government will also look to create better equestrian linkages between this site and other parts of Stromlo Forest Park.