

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**14 MAY 2014****3****WHITFIELD HILL RECREATION FEASIBILITY STUDY - PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

Joan Crawford: JC: 8/26/27: #3958540v7

RECOMMENDATION:**It is recommended that Council:**

- a) Adopts the Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study;**
- b) Endorses the implementation of the proposed works as outlined in Attachment 2 and:**
- c) Endorses the development of all walking tracks within the Mount Whitfield Park and links to surrounding suburbs.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report details the Public Consultation results and makes recommendations to progress the implementation of the Draft Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study.

The Draft Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study was released for public comment in February 2013. This Study evaluated opportunities to value-add to the recently purchased Bel-Air land in Whitfield by the incremental upgrade of low key facilities. It also identifies that formal commercial activities at this location are not recommended.

Council received 21 submissions from the public and many of these supported elements of the project. Eleven submissions were in support of the proposal with seven of these suggesting some alterations. Ten submissions were against the proposal citing a lack of suitable parking and increased traffic as the main issues for opposition.

To progress this project it is recommended to construct the proposed walking track from the existing Blue Arrow walking track to the Bel-Air site in Whitfield which was originally scheduled as Stage 2 of the project. This track can be accessed from the existing trail head in Collins Ave for the Red and Blue Arrow walking tracks. It is also recommended to develop all the identified walking tracks and linking these to access points in the surrounding suburbs.

BACKGROUND:

In 2012, Council engaged Planz Town Planning to undertake a feasibility study to determine the best use and management of Bel-Air, a recently purchased parcel of land on Whitfield Hill. At the 13 February 2013 Community Services Committee meeting, Council resolved that the Draft Whitfield Hill Feasibility Study be released for public comment.

The Whitfield Hill land is one of the few publicly accessible recreational locations close to the Cairns CBD which could be suitable for the mobility impaired and be pet friendly. The land is also able to be linked to Mount Whitfield and the Blue Arrow walking track for the serious hikers.

The Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study presents opportunities to value-add to the currently under-utilised land by the incremental upgrade of low key facilities. The study also recommended that formal commercial activities on the site were not suitable. A concept plan showing the current and proposed future tracks is contained in Attachment 1.

COMMENT:

The Draft Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study was open for public comment from 21 February to 15 March 2013. Letters requesting input into the Draft Study were sent to residential properties in the areas of Bel-Air and The Peak. Detailed information and maps were available on Council's website.

Council received 21 submissions from the local community and many of these supported elements of the project. The main issues raised include:

- Car Park at top of Bel-Air Drive – location of car park, ability for garbage truck to turn and capacity for overflow of traffic during peak periods.
- Increasing traffic volumes in the area.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Impact on the natural landscape.

Attachment 3 lists the issues raised and associated Council recommended actions.

To progress this project it is recommended that Council proceed with the construction of a walking track link from the Blue Arrow to the Bel-Air land in Whitfield. This will allow the current track head at Collins Ave for the Red and Blue Arrows tracks to be used for this additional walking track. The construction phase of this will be undertaken via a tender process in the 2014/15 financial year. Further detailed investigation of potential walking track links from Mt Whitfield to Brinsmead, Aeroglen and Stratford is also recommended.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended):

That Council:

- a) Adopts the Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study;
- b) Endorses the implementation of the proposed works as outlined in Attachment 2; and
- c) Endorses the implementation plan to develop walking tracks within the Mount Whitfield Park that will link to surrounding suburbs.

Or

Option 2:

That Council does not proceed with the project at this time.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Minimal risks are identified with the adoption of the Whitfield Hill Recreation Feasibility Study and the Tender documents will outline all risks associated with the construction phase of this project.

Financials:

Parks & Leisure have identified a suitable budget to undertake the link from the Blue Arrow to the Bel-Air land in the Draft 2014/15 Capital Works Budget.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018, strategic action 1.1.

Statutory:

Nil.

Policy:

Nil.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Concept plan – Whitfield Hill outlining current and future tracks with the link to the Blue and Red Arrow Walking Tracks

Attachment 2: Identified Upgrade Works by Priority

Attachment 3: Issues Raised and Recommended Actions

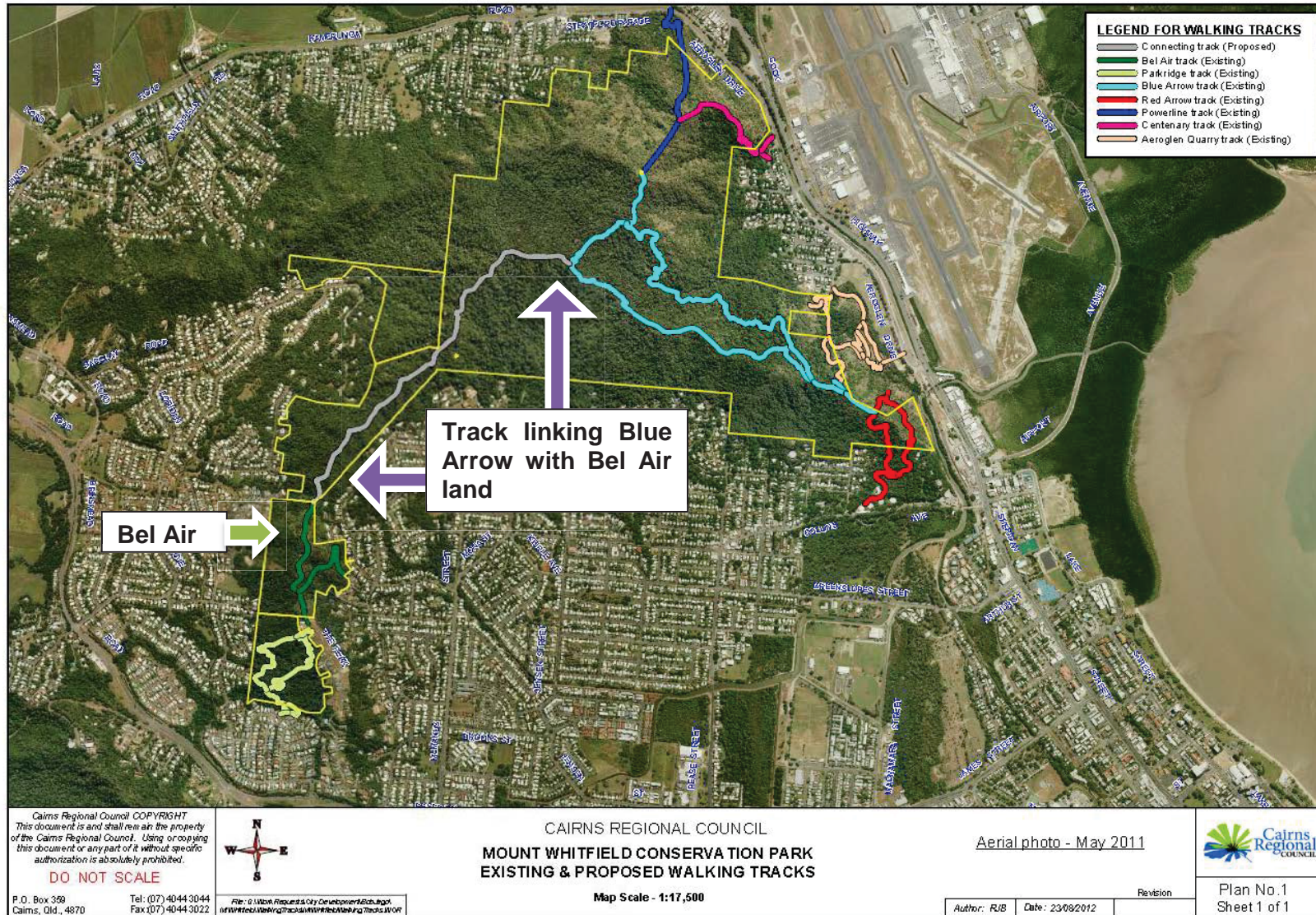
Joan Crawford
Active Travel & Local Parks Coordinator

Brett Spencer
Manager Parks & Leisure



Kerrie Still
Acting General Manager Community Sport & Cultural Services

Attachment 1: Concept Plan: Whitfield Hill outlining current and future tracks with the link to Blue Arrow walking track



Attachment 2: Table 1 Identified Upgrade Works (by priority)

Walking Track Link from Blue Arrow Track to Bel-Air	Short Term 1 Year –	Medium Term 2-5 years	Long Term 5-10 yrs
Assess, confirm and mark out best alignment for walking track from the Bel Air land to join to the existing Blue Arrow Track.	✓		
Construct walking track as per the alignment identified and marked.	✓		
Installation of advisory and interpretive signage.	✓		
Monitor use and wear of the track for erosion problems and undertake any necessary works to minimise such problems.	✓	✓	✓
Prepare Walking Track Masterplan for Mt Whitfield			
Undertake detailed investigation tracks to connect with various entry points around Whitfield Hill such as Brinsmead, Aeroglen and Stratford	✓	✓	
Map and provide brochure of new walking tracks		✓	✓
Bel-Air Track Location and Features			
Upgrade Bel-Air Walking Track to Category 3 standard		✓	
Signage – directional signs at track heads		✓	
Water point – Bel Air – extend water connection 20m, put in tap.		✓	
Water point – Park Ridge – put in tap at cul-de-sac head		✓	
Bike and car parking at Bel-Air track head 20m x 20m seal over existing gravel base.		✓	
Provide all abilities access for pedestrians and maintenance vehicles (with lockable barrier gate) from Park Ridge cul-de-sac to identified picnic node 40m approx.		✓	
Signage – interpretive			
Mark and promote the Loop Walking track - 4.5km from The Peak through the site to Bel-Air Drive. Requires markers at 500m and 1km intervals (can be painted decals or more formal).		✓	✓
Provide all abilities access for pedestrians from Park Ridge cul-de-sac to Park Ridge track 3.5m wide path x 200m (D-D1)		✓	✓
Provide all abilities access for pedestrians to identified lookout 3.5m wide path x 200m (may include ramp)		✓	✓
Lookout		✓	✓
Parking at Park Ridge track head near picnic node 20m x 20m (Mobility impaired parking)		✓	✓
Revegetation *may also be funded through grants		✓	✓

Attachment 3: Issues Raised and Recommended Actions

Issue	Council Recommendation
Traffic	
Increased traffic – risk of accidents at all the entrances, increased safety risk to families who live in the area, will require traffic calming especially in Hodel St.	No formal parking to be provided in Bel-Air at this stage. This should limit any increase in traffic volumes.
Possibility of attracting more Commercial uses (eg early morning bootcamps) - increased traffic and noise at extremely early and late hours.	
Speed bumps should be factored into the equation - high speed driving in Hodel St. A walking track with car access on the hill will exacerbate this and make life less pleasant for those living close by.	The issue of speed bumps will be investigated and evaluated.
Antisocial Behaviour	
Will attract criminals trying to rob and sexually assault exercisers. Not wanted near Hodel St.	Noted
Impact on the Natural Landscape	
Little regard given to the protection of the natural environment and in particular the birdlife and fauna which will be impacted by the increased number of dogs in the area.	Dogs will only be allowed on the Bel-Air site as the walking track which will join to the Blue Arrow will be on State land and is subject to legislation which prohibits dogs.
Path connecting to Red Arrow should be for nature walkers only, as joggers badly erode the path and spoil the enjoyment of nature walkers, likewise cycling and dogs would spoil the amenity and wildlife.	
Loss of amenity and property values	
The property valuations will decrease if the site is accessed via access street/place.	Noted.
Access should be from the Red and Blue Arrow walk.	This will be viable and practicable.
Parking	
Request for installation of traffic calming devices on Hodel St due to additional traffic.	Council will evaluate this request.
Kids are dropped off by parents and having out of control parties on Whitfield Hill - by providing parking will make it more convenient for them.	No formal parking at the top of Bel-Air Drive is to be provided at this stage.
The building of a car park at the top of Bel-Air Drive, will result in a raised security risk by increasing loiterers at night, additional traffic and increased rubbish.	
Provision of a car park at the top of Bel-Air will encourage people to sleep in their cars, parties and generally disturb the quiet neighbourhood.	
Sealing the end of Bel-Air Drive will decrease the amenity of the local area.	
Not supportive of the car parking in Bel Air Drive I suggest end of Bolton St a play area that has many attributes that make it a more suitable location. This street was, with or without future subdivision, always going to be a limited access, therefore limited use road.	
No benefit	
This initiative represents an additional cost to the council - there has been no study undertaken that states the Red and Blue Arrows are insufficient.	Funding is being sought from the State Government to partially fund this project.

Dogs	
Need policing to ensure dogs do not go into Whitfield Conservation Park	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
Ongoing issue with dog faeces and a request for a roll of dog bags at the entrance.	
Maintenance	
Need to provide a water supply for successful revegetation.	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
Scenic Amenity	
Against the redevelopment purely on scenic amenity purposes.	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
Supportive Responses	
I think it's a great idea overall. My main points would definitely require the minimal least impact to the natural environment, keeping natural native vegetation intact for the habitat of wildlife and the ecosystem. The suggestion for involving Landcare, CAFNEC and other organisations to map the vegetation, remove weeds, and do plantings over time is excellent. Yes there may be room for some low impact structure at both ends of the track entrances, and maybe a few seats along the way. The information signs, maps and interpretative signs explaining the natural environment, wildlife and Indigenous culture would be great to have at various points along the way. I don't think having playgrounds, cafes, or other big structures are necessary, and would take away from the natural features. As suggested the main thing is to lure people for the walking, and sense of being in the environment, getting some great views and scenic exercise. So, yes I support the plan with the main focus and care being for the environment in mind please.	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
What fantastic news that there will be a walking track where people can exercise and enjoy the outdoors along with their dog. Also having a dog along with you will deter some of the undesirables who from time to time are present on the Red Arrow walk.	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
The concept is terrific; however it is essential that it be dog free and, most importantly, there be no conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Joint user tracks/paths are a nightmare!	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.
This area would be a great to add a number of running and even basic mountain bike tracks that are close to town. As the Red and Blue arrows are not supposed to support runners, this area would alleviate that issue as there would now be a designated area for runners to run. It allows clubs such as the Cairns Road Runners, Cairns Crocs, Orienteering and Rogaining groups to utilise these areas for racing and training. But it also allows young families to be able to walk or ride though the bush without driving for hours.	Noted and will be evaluated to achieve the best result.