



Ku-ring-gai Council

Gordon Recreation Ground
Draft Landscape Masterplan



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Introduction

Ku-ring-gai Council has developed a draft Landscape Masterplan for Gordon Recreation Ground which will prioritise works over the next 10 years.

Gordon Recreation Ground is classified as a District Park because of its size, location and large areas of public recreation space, and its unique landscape character and heritage.

The draft Landscape Masterplan aims to conserve, protect and enhance the landscape character of Gordon Recreation Ground while improving the amenity and aesthetics of the park.

The draft Landscape Masterplan is to give consideration to:

- upholding good stewardship of the parkland;
- improving access to the park for all users and community groups;
- improving opportunities for community recreation, leisure and enjoyment;
- preserving and retaining the distinctive landscape character that acknowledges heritage, history and the remnant vegetation community;
- maintaining, improving and embellishing existing park facilities and buildings whilst balancing the demands on the facilities;
- integrating sustainable and environmental principals into park design;
- risk assessment and crime prevention through environmental design;
- on-going maintenance of the park and long-term viability;
- an implementation program for the development of the park including resource implications, estimated costs and priorities;
- focussing Council resources to the areas that will deliver the greatest benefit to our residents, and;
- providing a holistic approach to design that allows for improvements to occur in stages as funding becomes available.

The draft Landscape Masterplan is a long-range document identifying priorities for improvements over the next 10 years. It will be monitored on an annual basis and reviewed as required.

What is a Landscape Masterplan?

A Landscape Masterplan is a plan that is developed after analysing existing site elements and features, considering community and stakeholder consultation and determining the functions of a site. Opportunities, conflicts and constraints are identified in the development of an overall plan to guide the long term management of the park. The Landscape Masterplan is a strategic document that enables Council to work in stages as funds become available to revitalise the parkland and make the most of the established landscape character and the area's rich history.

Council's Landscape Architects have prepared this plan in consultation with residents and stakeholders to determine the need for upgrade works and allocation of priorities for funding future staging of works.

The Vision for Gordon Recreation Ground

Gordon Recreation ground will be a generously treed District Park with a range of active and passive recreation opportunities and have a landscape character that respects and maintains the area's rich cultural heritage and ecology.

History and Heritage

The suburb of Gordon was developed adhering to the ideals of the 'Garden City' urban design movement of the early 20th century which promoted suburban housing situated close to rail lines with access for residents to nearby parkland and bushland.

The land for Gordon Recreation Ground was acquired by Council and opened in 1922 with three tennis courts and a selection of children's play equipment. The layout, landscape and architectural style of Gordon Recreation Ground is an example of a 1920s semi-formal public park with a mixture of large remnant trees, feature trees fashionable for the era and gardens of exotic flowering plants.

An architectural competition was held to design entry gates, a children's summerhouse and a tennis and bowling pavilion for a proposed bowling green within the Recreation Ground. A local architect from Gordon, John Berry of Wilson, Neave and Berry architects won the competition. In 1923, the western gateway to Werona Avenue was the first structure to be completed and the remaining buildings and bowling green were to follow. With the onset of the Great Depression, these proposals were never constructed.

The Recreation Ground became a popular place for gatherings and public recreation. A series of landscape embellishments were carried out in 1935 to accommodate the park's increased patronage. These works included the construction of gravel paths in the layout of the current path network, the planting of flowering garden beds, the formalising of a children's playground area, and the construction of low fencing to the Werona Avenue frontage.

The need for an amenities block for the users of the tennis court was acknowledged by the Council and designs were drawn up for toilets, change rooms and a kitchen. The current Tennis Pavilion structure was completed in 1936.

Architectural heritage consultants were commissioned by Council in September 2016 to review the heritage significance of the Tennis and Gateway Pavilions and prepare a Conservation Management Plan to guide the ongoing management of the structures. It is considered that the Gateway and Tennis Pavilion structures are of Local Heritage Significance.

A summary of the Conservation Management Plan's conclusions is outlined in the following recommendations:

- There is an opportunity to restore the Gateway Pavilion to its original 1923 appearance which will enhance its cultural significance.
- Large trees close to the Gateway Pavilion are causing damage to the structure and tree removal works are required.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the cultural significance of the Tennis Pavilion whilst being sympathetic to adaptive re-use of the internal spaces.
- Universally accessible toilet and amenity facilities should be provided.

The Gateway Pavilion and the Tennis Pavilion together help define Gordon Recreation Ground as a heritage setting and their conservation, restoration and adaptive re-use will enhance that setting and contribute to the enjoyment of the park for many years to come.¹



Figure 01 - Site photo c. 1930²

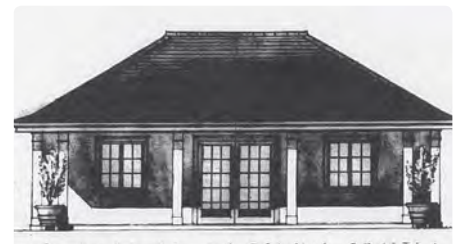


Figure 02 - Tennis Pavilion architectural drawing³



Figure 03: Newspaper article about park opening⁴

1. Phillips Marler (2017) *Gateway Pavilion and Tennis Pavilion at Gordon Recreation Ground Conservation Management Plan*

2. NSW Planning and Environment Commission (1975) *Sydney Region Open Space Survey*

3. Wilson, Neave & Berry architects (1922) *Elevation to Tennis Courts*, Collection of architectural plans of Wilson, Neave & Berry 1909-1937, State Library of NSW

4. Unknown (1922) Gordon Recreation Ground, *Sydney Morning Herald*, p.11. Available at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article16027386>

Landscape Character

Landscape character is defined as the distinct elements and features of a landscape. Landscapes evolve over time as a result of both natural and cultural processes and the Gordon Recreation Ground contains a number of distinct remnant ecological features and exotic plantings that help establish a unique sense of place.

The tennis courts and adjacent children's playground provide the main areas of activity in the Recreation Ground. A large area of the park is comprised of grass and large remnant trees which provide generous shaded areas for informal recreational activities. Garden bed areas with colourful, flowering plants such as camellias and gardenias provide a distinctive aesthetic to the park and reinforces the park's heritage as a typical example of an early 20th century formal park layout. Generally the turf and garden areas are well defined by paths and sandstone edging but there are some areas around the perimeter where the areas are less clearly defined due to a lack of garden edging.

Arboricultural consultants were commissioned by Council in October 2016 to review the condition and significance of the 113 trees within or adjacent to Gordon Recreation Ground. Many of the large trees within the park are remnants of the original vegetation community that existed prior to the development of the area. These trees are characteristic of the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest which is identified as an endangered ecological community, and is listed as a critically endangered community in the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)*. Generally the trees were found to be in good condition and of high landscape significance. A large tree adjacent to the Gateway Pavilion was considered to be structurally unstable and this tree was removed in April 2017.

A variety of seating is located throughout the park, adjacent activity areas and scattered throughout the grass areas under shade trees. The furniture is a mixture of styles and many are inaccessible for user's with limited mobility.

Paving treatments in the park are a mix of sandstone flagging around the Gateway and Tennis Pavilion structures and at entry points to the park, and coloured concrete with raised edging along the main pathways. The paving is generally in adequate condition and provides access to most areas in the park, but there are areas of sandstone paving and concrete which are cracking and becoming uneven. Kerbing to both edges of the pathways limits accessibility for prams, wheelchairs and patrons with limited mobility to broader areas of the park. An upgrade of the paving network and increased seating along these paths would improve recreation opportunities and accessibility for the park's users.



Figure 04 - Existing central path adjacent playground



Figure 05 - Existing Tennis Pavilion



Figure 06 - Existing central path



Figure 07 - Existing Gateway Pavilion



Figure 08 - Existing Tennis Courts

Lighting and Safety

Lighting is provided in the park along the pathways but due to the large distances between the poles and the existing mercury vapour light fittings, lighting levels are inadequate to provide a safe pedestrian environment at night.

Lighting design consultants were commissioned by Council in October 2016 to evaluate the existing lighting levels and formulate a lighting plan to improve amenity and security. The design proposes an increased number of poles along the main pathways. The installation of LED light fittings would also provide an improved illumination performance while reducing energy consumption.

The paved area with existing shelters and seating adjacent the tennis courts has poor visibility due to its enclosed landscape setting. Complaints of anti-social behaviour at night and excessive noise have been reported at this location.

The tennis courts are not currently lit in the evening. There is opportunity to provide lighting to the courts to allow for greater recreational use and encourage passive surveillance of the nearby shelter and seating area.

User Groups

While the majority of visitors to the park are informal, casual visits, the existing tennis courts attract a number of regular user groups.

Since 1980, Gordon Men's Tennis Club has been playing tennis on the two artificial grass courts on Saturday afternoons. The tennis pavilion has historically been used by the Club for many years with no formal agreement in place. Ravenswood School for Girls hire the tennis courts via the school allocation process and book for training on Mondays in term 3 and book for competition on Saturdays in term 4.

The current Ku-ring-gai Council Plan of Management for tennis courts does not permit the lease or license of courts within Ku-ring-gai Council. The majority of hirers book once a week from 1 to 4 hours and they are on a permanent / annual hire agreement. All other hirers make casual bookings. Of the total hours the courts are available, they are booked for approximately 10% of the time. There is a significant percentage that utilise the courts without a booking as the tennis courts are unlocked at all times. There is opportunity to provide greater active recreational opportunities in the park by providing multi-purpose line marking and basketball hoops to the existing tennis courts.

Gordon Recreation Ground is the venue for one recurring annual event. The park is the starting point for a 'Ride2Work Day' event held in October which attracts a large number of cyclists and recreational riders.

Gordon Recreation Ground is designated as a District Park due to its size and central location adjacent the transport node at Gordon Station. Currently the park's playground does not meet the desired requirements of a District Playground due to the limited play equipment and the lack of complementary facilities immediately adjacent the playground such as shelters, drink fountains and seating. An upgrade of the playground is required to diversify play opportunities and promote the park as an important recreational spot for the local community.



Figure 09 - Existing light pole



Figure 10 - Existing shelter area setting



Figure 11 - Existing playground

Community Consultation

In May 2016, a survey was undertaken of local residents, surrounding property owners and park user groups in order to determine how they currently use Gordon Recreation Ground and what facilities they would like to see in the park in the future. A total of 1298 surveys were distributed. 58 submissions were returned, representing 5% of those surveyed.

The purpose of the survey was to identify:

- who visits the park, and when and how often user groups visit the park;
- the mode of transport used to visit the park;
- the time usually spent at the park and the main activities undertaken;
- what they most value and least like about the park, and;
- what additional activities or facilities they would like to see in the park.

Respondents were also provided the opportunity to make any other general comments with regards to Gordon Recreation Ground. An analysis of the returned surveys revealed the following statistics:

- 77% of respondents travel to the park by foot.
- 53% of respondents stay an average of one hour or less.
- 40% of respondents visit the park with family, 46% by themselves.
- 46% of respondents walk through the park only, 33% of respondents visit the park for reading and relaxation, 30% of respondents use the park for exercise.
- 75% of respondents most value the trees and large open spaces, 33% of respondents like that the park is close to shops and the train station.
- 44% of respondents least like vandalism and rubbish, with 25% of respondents identifying the condition of the existing toilets and lack of lighting as issues.

The following common themes emerged from the consultation process:

- As well as being frequented for its recreational opportunities, the park is also commonly used by walkers passing through the area and people commuting to the train station. Concerns about the current lighting levels in the park while walking at night were raised by numerous users.
- To many of the respondents, the existing trees and open space are seen as valuable elements which should be retained and enhanced. Patrons also value the garden bed areas, flowering plants and existing landscape character.
- Many respondents expressed concern at anti-social behaviour and noise levels in the park in the evenings (concentrated around the seating and shelter area adjacent the tennis courts), occurrences of vandalism and the condition of the existing toilet block building.

The responses to the user survey have been reviewed and analysed and have helped inform the preparation of Part 2: Opportunities and Constraints of the draft Landscape Masterplan.

...more sitting benches...
...don't cut down
too many trees...
...maintain existing character...
...it is the peace I most cherish...
...the lighting is dismal...
...love the trees...
...the park has lots of character...
...looks tired and uninviting...
...maintain tall trees...
...more lights would ensure the safety
of people walking through the park...
...additional play equipment
would be beneficial...
...feels dangerous at night...
...more seating...
...upgrade the bubblers and toilets...

Circulation and Views



- (A)** Provide park name and information signage at key access points to the park in a style complementary to the existing Tennis and Gateway Pavilions.
- (B)** Maintain view corridors to Tennis and Gateway Pavilions to reinforce unique landscape character and heritage.
- (C)** Open up views and improve access to existing seating area to increase safety and security.
- (D)** Review and rationalise existing vegetation along boundaries to neighbouring properties to provide improved aesthetic backdrop to park.
- (E)** Upgrade path system and remove kerb to improve accessibility. Retain sandstone paving and replace any uneven pavements.
- (F)** Investigate additional pathway link to tennis courts and playground to create a continuous accessible path network.
- (G)** Review and rationalise existing informal path connections with adjacent properties.
- (H)** Review maintenance and service vehicle access points to minimise damage to grass areas and gardens.
- (I)** Realign existing entry paths away from existing large trees to minimise future damage from tree roots and to increase playground area.



Figure 12 - Maintain views to heritage structures

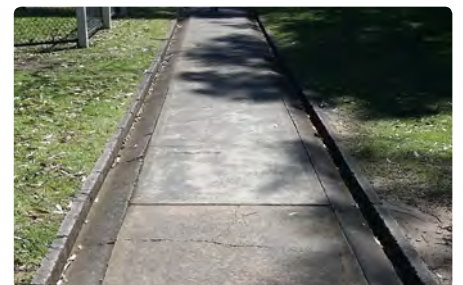


Figure 13 - Upgrade path network

Structures and Furniture



- (A)** Undertake restoration works to Tennis Pavilion to conserve existing built heritage. Investigate opportunities to integrate accessible toilet facilities.
- (B)** Undertake restoration works to Gateway Pavilion to conserve existing built heritage, repair damage and provide heritage interpretation opportunities.
- (C)** Investigate fencing opportunities to street frontages in keeping with existing heritage and landscape character.
- (D)** Review and rationalise the location and style of existing seats, tables and bins to maximise passive recreation opportunities and improve accessibility.
- (E)** Remove existing shelters and review seating, improve access to the area and open up sightlines to increase safety and security.
- (F)** Upgrade existing playground to provide an inclusive space with a greater variety of play opportunities sited within a fenced area.
- (G)** Investigate opportunities to provide accessible toilet facilities adjacent to the playground area if retrofitting of Tennis Pavilion is not feasible.
- (H)** Investigate opportunities for the installation of netball / basketball hoops and additional line marking to create multi-purpose courts for increased usage.
- (I)** Refurbish timber pergola structure as required and embellish its surrounds with flowering vegetation.



Figure 14 - Review furniture locations and styles



Figure 15 - Upgrade playground

Services



- A** Install new light poles and LED light fittings to increase safety and security, and improve energy efficiency and visual aesthetics.
- B** Remove existing overhead power supply cable to Tennis Pavilion and place underground to improve views to heritage structure.
- C** Investigate opportunities to upgrade stormwater drainage system and improve pedestrian safety and aesthetics.
- D** Remove the existing bubbler from seating area and relocate along main pathway. Provide a bubbler to playground area.
- E** Investigate opportunities for lighting to sports courts to encourage greater usage and to increase safety and security.



Figure 16 - Upgrade and provide more lighting

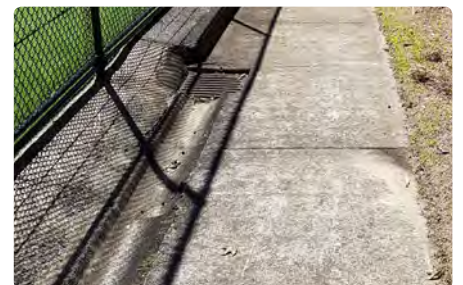


Figure 17 - Upgrade drainage system and trip hazards

Trees and Vegetation



- (A)** Remove trees and stumps identified by arborist as causing damage to Gateway Pavilion. Provide replacement planting in appropriate locations.
- (B)** Remove existing large shrub vegetation to rear of shelter and seating area to improve sight lines and security.
- (C)** Review and rationalise existing planting bed and replenish with appropriate flowering species in keeping with landscape heritage.
- (D)** Review and rationalise existing vegetation along boundaries to neighbouring properties to provide improved aesthetic backdrop to park.
- (E)** Upgrade edge treatments between grass areas and garden beds to aid in maintenance and weed control.
- (F)** Remove existing street tree plantings under power lines on Rosedale Rd. Provide replacement plantings setback from frontage to avoid overhead lines.
- (G)** Review and embellish vegetation to existing arbour to highlight park entry.



Figure 18 - Retain unique landscape character



Figure 19 - Improve sightlines to seating area

Part 3: The Masterplan

LEGEND

- SN** Provide park information signage at key access points in a style complementary to existing Tennis and Gateway Pavilions.
- L** Install new light poles and LED light fittings to increase safety and security, improve energy efficiency and visual aesthetics.
- FL** Investigate lighting opportunities to sports courts to allow evening use maximise recreational opportunities.
- D** Install new accessible drinking fountains at key locations adjacent activity areas.
- ST** Review seat locations and relocated as required to maximise passive recreation and accessible seating opportunities.
- T** Install new picnic tables and seating near activity areas and adjacent accessible paths.
- B** Install new bin enclosures in key locations adjacent activity areas and park entry points.
- F** Investigate fencing opportunities to street frontages in keeping with existing heritage and landscape character.
- Retain sandstone paving to improve accessibility and repair as required.
- Upgrade concrete path system to improve accessibility and repair as required.
- Review and rationalise existing planting beds and edging and replenish with heritage appropriate flowering species.
- Retain existing open grass areas.
- Existing tree to be removed.
- Proposed replacement tree planting.

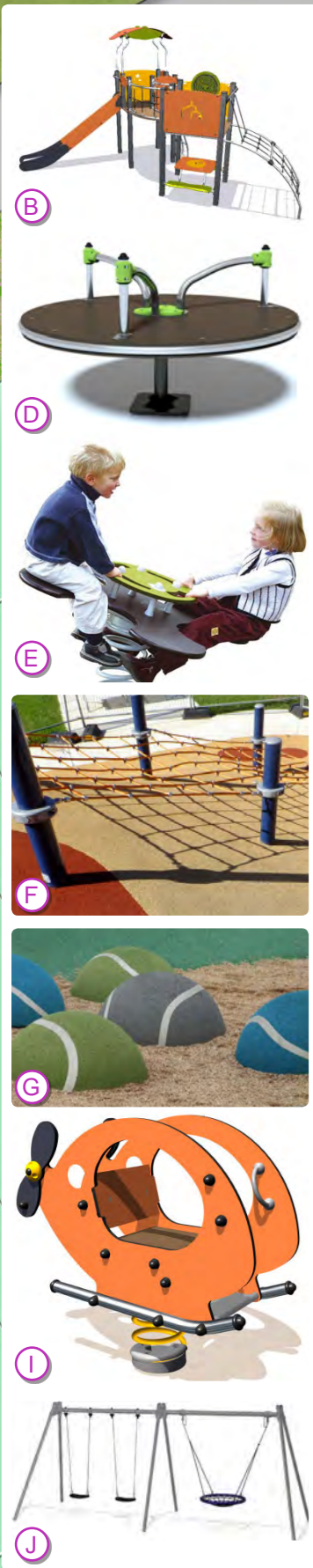


REFER MASTERPLAN SHEET 2

KEY

- (A)** Undertake restoration works to Gateway Pavilion to conserve existing heritage and remove existing trees and stumps causing damage.
- (B)** Remove existing large shrub vegetation to rear of seating area to improve sight lines and security. Remove existing shelters, review seating and improve access to increase safety. Provide accessible ramp to seating area and tennis courts
- (C)** Provide lighting to courts and multi-purpose court linemarking and basketball / netball poles to maximise active recreation opportunities
- (D)** Undertake restoration works to Tennis Pavilion to conserve existing built heritage. Investigate opportunities to integrate accessible toilet facilities.
- (E)** Review and rationalise existing garden beds, edging and access to adjacent properties.
- (F)** Upgrade existing playground to provide an inclusive space with a greater variety of play opportunities sited within a fenced area.
- (G)** Investigate opportunities to provide accessible toilet facilities adjacent to the playground area if retrofitting of Tennis Pavilion is not feasible
- (H)** Remove existing street trees constrained by powerlines and provide replacement tree plantings away from wires.
- (I)** Formalise service vehicle entry points to reduce grass wear and erosion.
- (J)** Provide an accesible car space adjacent to the park and playgroud entry.





- KEY**
- (A) Un-prescribed nature play area / gathering space.
 - (B) Combination unit offering climbing, hanging, sliding and socialising opportunities.
 - (C) Toddler swing specifically designed for younger children with an enclosed seat.
 - (D) Rotating gyro spinner able to accomodate multiple users.
 - (E) Four-way springer encouraging multiple users to interact and play at once.
 - (F) Hill climbing net encouraging movement both below and above.
 - (G) Enlarged tennis ball themed hill climb play items / supports.
 - (H) Hill embankment slide constructed into modified existing slope on site.
 - (I) Helicopter themed springer providing back and side support.
 - (J) Two-bay swing which includes a birds nest swing and two standard swing seats for multiple users.
 - (K) Investigate opportunities to provide accessible toilet facilities adjacent to the playground area if retrofitting of Tennis Pavilion is not feasible.



Financial Considerations

Adopted District Park Landscape Masterplans are used in the preparation of the Parks Development Program in Council's Delivery Program and annual Operation Plan. Each Masterplan is expected to be implemented over a 10 year period, subject to funding.

The Landscape Masterplan provides Council with a long term guide for management of the Recreation Ground. It will enable staged works as funding becomes available, with the knowledge that all projects are in keeping with, and will contribute to, a long term vision for the park. Some works are of an operational nature and can be completed within existing recurrent budgets. Other works would be subject to current Council Contributions Plans, future capital works and/or grant proposals.

The actual financial commitment resulting from this Landscape Masterplan is dependent on competing priorities and funding availability, including recurrent budget, contributions plans, external grants, and partnerships with stakeholders, service clubs and local businesses.

Ten Year Item Funding Priority

Higher Priority	Indicative Costs
• Lighting Upgrade	\$ 250,000
• Pathways and Drainage Upgrade	\$ 300,000
Medium Priority	
• Tennis Pavilion Refurbishment / Accessible Toilet	\$ 575,000
• Gateway Pavilion Refurbishment	\$ 75,000
Lower Priority	
• Playground Refurbishment	\$ 375,000
• Tennis / Multi-purpose Court Resurfacing	\$ 75,000
• Seating and Furniture Refurbishment	\$ 60,000
• Fencing and Signage Works	\$ 50,000
• Edging, Tree Management, Planting Refurbishment	\$ 50,000
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INDICATIVE TOTAL COST	\$ 1,810,000

What are Contributions Plans?

Ku-ring-gai Council's Contributions Plan 2010 and s94A Contributions Plan 2015 takes a consolidated approach to providing infrastructure as a result of new development, authorising proportional contributions from new development towards the provision of infrastructure for that development.

The plans also identify situations where Council must provide a contribution on behalf of the existing population where new infrastructure will meet demand arising from the community as a whole.



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