

Artarmon Progress Association Inc.
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Mr Gynt Drinan
Project Management Team Leader
Willoughby City Council
Level 4, 31 Victor Street
Chatswood NSW 2067

Dear Mr Drinan

Willoughby City Council – Draft Wilkes Ave Public Domain Upgrade Concept Design

The Artarmon Progress Association welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the Council's draft Wilkes Ave public domain upgrade concept design.

The Artarmon Progress Association advised members of the Have Your Say survey on the Willoughby City Council website. Members were also invited to send their views to the Artarmon Progress Association to inform its submission.

Overview: The Artarmon Progress Association requests further consultation with Willoughby City Council on the concept design to ensure the \$500,000 funding allocated to Wilkes Ave achieves optimal outcomes for the Artarmon community and visitors to the area.

Feedback on proposed improvements

Issue 1: The gradient of the walkway from Artarmon train station to Wilkes Ave is not compliant for wheelchair access. The Willoughby Inclusion Disability Plan indicates Willoughby City Council is committed to the principles of developing communities where everyone has fair and equal access to services and facilities. The Artarmon community has expressed concern that this popular thoroughfare is not accessible to everyone.

- **Response:** Create a wheelchair compliant pedestrian walkway from Artarmon Station to the Wilkes Ave precinct.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** APA is disappointed that WCC has not endeavoured to resolve this issue with Sydney Trains. APA to consider writing to the Disability Commissioner seeking action regarding this.

Issue 2: The Wilkes Ave concept design does not integrate planning for the development of the old library site and surrounding area. Integrated community facilities are a vital component of healthy communities, supporting social cohesion and enhancing the wellbeing of local residents.

- **Response:** An integrated concept design that incorporates Wilkes Ave and the old library site and surrounds, with an eye to the broader Local Centres Strategy, creates a vision for the community precinct. A staged approach to development can then be adopted based on need and available funding. For example, the concept design proposes re-aligning the

boundary fence, subject to approval by Transport – Sydney Trains. Instead of creating a low retaining wall and new terraced planting beds, there is an opportunity to create a walkway that is compliant for wheelchair access to both Wilkes Ave and the old library site.

- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** APA and WCC agreed to discuss the development of an integrated concept design (vision) for Artarmon incorporating Wilkes Ave, the old library site, Artarmon bowling club/parklands as well as the Local Centres Strategy etc. Noted that the walkway behind the old library will be maintained.

Issue 3: The uneven and sloping level of the plaza creates difficulties keeping food and drinks on tables. The levels also create flooding and drainage issues when it rains.

- **Response:** Create a level surface that incorporates drainage requirements.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC advised that this was not a major issue for shop keepers and repaving would be beyond the project budget. APA requests that the existing maintenance issues with the existing paving be addressed.

Issue 4: The new glazed bricks appear inconsistent with the existing paving artwork. The existing artwork told a story and should be respected.

- **Response:** Remove the new glazed bricks from the concept design and repair existing tile artwork.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** Michael Dawes agreed to provide WCC with any information he could find about the existing artwork (references were sent to WCC on 8/1/2020). WCC agreed to consider replacing the proposed new glazed bricks with designs/concepts that are sympathetic to the existing artwork.

Issue 5: The brickwork around the existing raised garden beds has recently been rebuilt. It seems wasteful to alter these to include some coloured tiles.

- **Response:** Retain the existing brickwork. Colour could come from some improved plantings in these garden beds with drip irrigation.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** Not discussed at meeting. APA maintains its position.

Issue 6: There has been mixed feedback about the new bench seats. Concerns have been raised that: the new bench seats on the brickwork will clutter the look of the gardens behind them; and, the new curved seats around the trees may restrict the pedestrian access given the limited space between the seats and the shop tables. Others like the look and feel of the benches.

- **Response:** Review proposed seating plan to minimize above concerns.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC appears committed to the new seating as proposed. APA still has concerns, especially as seats around trees will obscure the existing artwork.

Issue 7: The additional light posts clutter the area and in some cases are a pedestrian hazard. It is important to note that some people who walk through this area are blind. The wires with festoon style lamps are unattractive, especially when they start to blow and are not replaced. Members are also keen to minimise light pollution.

- **Response:** Retain the existing lighting with adjustments to provide safe access and minimise light pollution. Otherwise replace with something similar to existing but where light is only shed downwards (not up).
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC agreed to review proposed lighting, agreeing that what was proposed is not ideal. APA suggests up-lights, possibly solar powered, set in tree surrounds might provide the additional lighting and highlighting required but note the importance of minimising light pollution.

Issue 8: The banners/flags cheapen the look of the area.

- **Response:** Remove the banners/flags from the concept design.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC agreed to review this idea.

Issue 9: The concept design proposes a raised pedestrian crossing which impacts the existing drop-off/pick-up area and mail zone/box. There is significant community concern that parking spaces for drop-off/pick-up may be reduced as these spaces are already at a premium. It is difficult to determine from the signage plan whether any reduction to drop-off/pick-up spaces is proposed.

- **Response:** Change the proposed raised pedestrian crossing to a level zebra crossing that meets accessibility requirements (e.g. prams, wheelchairs). A level zebra crossing enforces pedestrians' right of way and allows for the retention of the existing drop off/pick up zones and mail zone/box.

This matter prompted feedback from members relating to Artarmon Road near the Artarmon Library:

- A zebra crossing is also urgently needed outside the Artarmon Library on Artarmon Road. The pedestrian refuge outside the Artarmon Library is identical to the pedestrian refuge on Elizabeth Street/Wilkes Ave. The same safety concerns exist when crossing the road outside the Artarmon Library as when crossing on Elizabeth Street; pedestrians are uncertain whether cars or pedestrians are required to give way.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC advised that: (1) a wombat crossing has been approved and will have less impact on car parking spaces than a zebra crossing; (2) the mail zone/box will be retained; (3) the existing drop off/pick up zone will not be impacted/reduced; and (4) funding for the new crossing will not be drawn from the Wilkes Ave Upgrade budget.

Issue 10: A site for a public toilet is proposed for Hampden Road (as per Local Centres Strategy 2036) however the Hampden Road/Wilkes area is in desperate need of a facility now. As Wilkes Ave is a public "eats" area any development should include a public toilet.

- **Response:** Develop an integrated staged concept design addressing immediate community needs.
- **Update following 7/1/20 meeting:** WCC advised that a public toilet for Hampden Rd is imminent and this allays APA's concerns. However, this makes it even more important to address Issue 1.

Additional feedback:

- The proposed tree planting along Elizabeth Street and the rain garden are welcome additions however members expressed concern regarding ongoing maintenance, preservation of plantings and losing parking space.
- Porous paving to Crepe Myrtles is supported.

Yours faithfully



Georgina Roussac
President

Who we are

The Artarmon Progress Association, Inc. (APA) was founded in 1906 as a not-for-profit group and our objectives are to promote the welfare, physical and intellectual advancement of the suburb of Artarmon and the City of Willoughby, to protect the interests of the residents, and to encourage a keener spirit of citizenship and mutual help amongst residents.

Our newsletter, the Artarmon Gazette, is distributed quarterly to over 5,000 homes and businesses in Artarmon. We regularly communicate with residents and act as a conduit between local residents and elected representatives on matters concerning our local community.