

4.62 DOG ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS AT FRANK MITCHELL PARK & WOODVILLE WEST RESERVE - COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

TO Asset Management Committee

FROM: Open Space Planner - John Wilkinson

DATE: 18 September 2023

Brief

A request has been received from FK Beograd Soccer Club (formerly known as White City) for Council to investigate options to change the current dog access arrangements at Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve, to manage interactions between soccer players and dogs to enable these activities to occur concurrently into the future.

This report outlines the existing dog access arrangements and the request from the soccer club, and presents options for potential changes to dog access arrangements, for Council's consideration. The report also seeks Council's approval to undertake community consultation on the matter, the results of which will be presented back to Council to inform a further decision.

Recommendation

1. That the report be received and noted.
2. That the proposed changes to dog access arrangements at Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve in Appendix 2 be endorsed for the purposes of community engagement.
3. That the City of Charles Sturt Chief Executive Officer be authorised to approve a Community Engagement Approach, outlining the methodology for community engagement on the proposed changes to dog access arrangements at Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve.
4. That a further report be brought back to the Asset Management Committee outlining the results of the community engagement and to seek Council's direction on the next steps of the proposal.

Status

This report relates to or impacts upon the following Community Plan Objectives 2020-2027.

Our Community - A strong and connected community

People embrace healthy living, physical activity and ageing well.

Our Liveability - A liveable City of great places

A well-designed urban environment that is adaptive to a diverse and growing City. City assets and infrastructure are developed and enhanced on a strategic and equitable basis in collaboration with local communities and other relevant parties, including industry and government.

Enhance the diversity of open spaces to create innovative, accessible and flexible community spaces.

Our Leadership - A leading & progressive Local Government organisation

Open and accountable governance.

Relevant Council policies are:

- Public Consultation Policy
- Dog and Cat Management Policy

Relevant statutory provisions are:

- Local Government Act 1999
- Dog and Cat Management Act 1995

Background

Located at Todville Street, Woodville West Reserve (incorporating Frank Mitchell Park) is a highly used open space with a diverse range of uses occurring at any one time. These uses include soccer matches and training at the soccer facility (known as Frank Mitchell Park), community gardening, a playground and BBQ area, small dog park, dog exercise and general passive and active recreation. A map, including images of the site and the various uses is provided in **Appendix 1**.

FK Beograd Soccer Club (the Club) was established in 1949 and has had a presence at Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park for over 70 years. The club currently has a licence in place for the use of the clubrooms and two soccer pitches. The terms of the licence arrangement are such that general community use is permitted on the green space outside of the times this is used for soccer.

Whilst it is not known when the current dog access arrangements were established, the current arrangements enable dogs to be exercised off lead at Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park, however dogs must be on lead when soccer training and matches are in progress. It should be noted that Frank Mitchell Park is fully fenced, making it an attractive location for dog exercise, whilst Woodville West Reserve includes mostly post and rail perimeter fencing.

The Club advises that conflicts are often experienced with dogs off lead and soccer training activities, and Council has installed signs on all gates to the soccer area, asking that people have their dog on a lead at times when soccer is in play, however this has not rectified the situation.

The Club has now requested that council look at options to better manage dog exercise and soccer to ensure there is no conflict and both activities can occur concurrently into the future.

Report

Open Space Provision

Council recognises Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park are important areas of open space for this community, in an area that has low open space provision and relatively high-density residential development. The diversity of use within the reserve should be both encouraged and monitored, to ensure potential conflicts do not occur.

In addition, Council's Open Space Strategy sets the direction for the provision and improvement of open space and recreation assets in the City, and Woodville West is located in Precinct D (central area), which also includes the suburbs of Royal Park, Hendon, Albert Park, Seaton, Findon, Woodville South and Beverley. Precinct D has considerably less open space than the other Precincts with only 1.67 hectares per 1,000 people (2011 analysis), and the average provision for each precinct being approximately 4 hectares per 1,000 people.

Whilst the Open Space Strategy does not provide specific directions for future upgrades at the site, it outlines the importance of quality open space provision for the Woodville West and Seaton communities.

Current Dog Ownership & Dog Park Provision

Dog ownership across the council area is increasing, as shown below by the total dog registration numbers for the City of Charles Sturt for the last 5 years:

- 2018/19 - 15,762
- 2019/20 - 16,053
- 2020/21 - 16,475
- 2021/22 - 16,960
- 2022/23 - 16,338

Dog ownership in Woodville West has experienced no significant change in the past 5 years, with 512 dogs currently registered in this suburb.

An internal review of purpose-built fenced dog parks and their provision across metropolitan Adelaide found the City of Charles Sturt has the second highest provision (behind City of Salisbury) on a per capita basis, with 8 dog parks.

In 2019, community engagement was undertaken on a proposed new dog park at Woodville West Reserve, just north of Frank Mitchell Park. Of the 91 responses, 70 (76%) supported the proposal, resulting in the dog park being constructed in 2020 (refer AM 18/11/2019, Item 3.113). It is acknowledged that this dog park is suitable for only a small number of dogs at any one time. Those who responded to the community engagement also raised concerns with changes to dog access arrangements at Frank Mitchell Park as a result of the new dog park.

In addition, the closest dog parks to Frank Mitchell Park are Woodville Oval Dog Club (1.4km) and St Clair (2.5km) as the crow flies.

Proposed Dog Access Changes at Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve

The Club advises that conflicts are often experienced with dogs off lead and soccer training activities, including clashes with players and owners not picking up dog waste, leading to difficult conversations between the Club and community. It is noted that this is based on anecdotal evidence only and council has no records of complaints or reports from council's Community Safety team.

An option (**Option 1**) to improve the current situation has been considered and outlined in **Appendix 2**.

This option involves:

- making the 'on lead only' area for dogs within the main pitch of the licenced area (area A in **Appendix 2**).
- defining the soccer pitch to the west of the main playing field for 'off lead' dog area outside of soccer use times (area B in **Appendix 2**).
- creating a new fenced area to the north of the main playing field for off lead dog exercise (area C in **Appendix 2**).

Advantages:

- The new area (C) would provide a large space for dogs, close to the existing dog park and be accessible all year round.
- Off lead dogs are able to use the reserve during times of soccer use.
- Behaviour of dogs and people likely to improve when dogs are on lead.
- Reduces the conflict between sport and dog exercise.
- 'On lead' area would also create an area for passive/ mixed use recreation (ie. small children in a safe space with all dogs on leads).
- An 'on lead' area would require a change to the by-laws including council reporting, support and community consultation.

Disadvantages:

- Potentially alienates an area of land that is currently used for general community use (C).
- Different times of use for the different on / off lead areas may be confusing.
- Adjacent residents and existing dog owners may not be supportive.
- Will potentially require a 24/25 budget bid and not be implemented until late 2024, unless savings can be found to undertake it sooner.
- Previous consultation on the Woodville West Dog Park identified concerns with changes to dog access at Frank Mitchell Park and dogs being close to the community garden, where chickens had been impacted.
- Will require education and behavioural change and compliance for dog users.
- Would require additional monitoring from community safety if implemented.

It is also proposed that a further option (**Option 2**) is presented to the community for consideration, which proposes that no changes are made to the existing access arrangements at either Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve.

Community engagement will be an important step in understanding the level of support for changing the current dog access arrangements at this site. Should Council endorse community engagement to occur on the options, it is noted that further community engagement may be required to change the By-law regarding dog off lead areas at this site, depending on Council's decision following the outcomes of this community engagement, with further details regarding this engagement to be included in a further report to Council.

Financial and Resource Implications

The cost of undertaking community consultation is approximately \$2,000, with costs including staff time, printing letters and signs and undertaking a mail drop to properties within approximately 300 metres of the site.

Subject to the results of community consultation and Council approval, the approximate cost of implementing the changes to dog access at Woodville West Reserve is as follows:

- Option 1 - \$70,000
 - Chain wire fencing 1.2m high, including a new fenced area within Woodville West Reserve and fenced area on the west side of Frank Mitchell Park.
- Option 2 - No cost.

The provision of funding to implement Option 1 would need to be considered as part of Council's 2024/25 budget preparations and, if endorsed, works would be undertaken in approximately late 2024.

Customer Service and Community Implications

Changes to the existing dog access arrangements at Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park will have implications for the community, as outlined above. Community engagement will be an important step in understanding the views of the community and informing further decisions of Council.

Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications.

Community Engagement/Consultation (including with community, Council members and staff)

Community engagement on changes to existing dog access arrangements at Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park will be an important step in understanding the views of the community and will be undertaken in accordance with Part 3 of Council's Public Consultation Policy,

The objectives of the Community Engagement Approach are to ensure:

- Information is provided to the Charles Sturt community regarding the proposal and why it's being considered.
- The community has easy access to the appropriate project information and equal opportunity to share their opinions on the project.
- That the process builds positive relationships between Council and the community, and positions Charles Sturt as an organisation that is providing sound management decisions.

It is proposed that letters outlining the proposal and options, as well as a hard copy feedback form be provided to residents within 300 metres of Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park. Signs will also be placed around the site to promote the engagement. The information and feedback form will also be made available via Council's Your Say website, which will include a requirement for respondents to provide their postcode to understand their proximity to the reserves.

Should Council endorse community engagement to occur on the options, it is noted that further community engagement may be required to change the By-law regarding dog off lead areas at this site, depending on Council's decision following the outcomes of this community engagement, with further details regarding this engagement to be included in a further report to Council.

Risk Management/Legislative Implications

The proposal is consistent with the Community Land Management Plan (CLMP) for Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park, however changes to the relevant By-law and the Club's licence may be required, depending on the outcome of community engagement and future Council's decision(s), to be outlined in a further report to Council.

Whilst community engagement on the changes to dog access arrangements will provide Council with an understanding of community sentiment regarding this matter, it may cause negative reactions, including between the community and the Club, and/or media attention. Should Council endorse changes to dog access arrangements at the site, a detailed risk management plan will be undertaken.

Conclusion

A request has been received from FK Beograd Soccer Club (formerly known as White City) for Council to investigate options to change the current dog access arrangements at Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve. Whilst the current dog access arrangements have been in place for some time and a new dog park has recently been established at the site, the Club would like to investigate changes in order to manage interactions between soccer players and dogs to enable these activities to occur concurrently into the future. This report seeks Council's approval to undertake community consultation on the matter, the results of which will be presented back to Council to inform a further decision.

Appendices

#	Attachment
1	Appendix 1 - Map and images of Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park
2	Appendix 2 - Proposed dog access changes options 1 and 2

APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1 – Woodville West Reserve and Frank Mitchell Park layout



View of Frank Mitchell Park, looking north from Todville Street:



View of Woodville West Reserve, looking west from Todville Street:



View of Woodville West Reserve, looking south from corner Todville and Elizabeth Streets:



Source: Google maps, April 2023

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2 – Proposed Changes to Dog Access Arrangements

Option 1

Make 'on lead only' area for dogs within the main pitch of the licenced areas (A), define the soccer pitch to the west of the main playing field for 'off lead' dog area outside of soccer use times (B) and create a new fenced area to the north of the main playing field for off lead dog exercise (C).



Option 2

No changes to current dog access arrangements at both Frank Mitchell Park and Woodville West Reserve.

