

0.0 BT CONNOR RESERVE - LIGHTING SCOPE

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For Discussion

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

In June 2023, Council adopted the 2023-24 Budget which included '\$30K to scope out lighting projects at BT Connor, carpark, street and Merri Creek lighting'.

This report presents the outcomes of the scoping study with indicative costs.

KEY MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Four options were explored in relation to the BT Connor Reserve carpark lighting scope: maximal lighting outcome, minimal lighting outcome, do nothing and non-lighting outcomes.**
2. **Should Councillors wish to fund carpark lighting at BT Connor Reserve, an environmentally friendly solar solution is recommended to meet relevant Australian Standards while protecting the biodiversity of the area.**
3. **The cost to implement a solar lighting solution for the BT Connor Reserve community carpark is \$100K (+ \$15K for the internal carpark).**
4. **This project is not currently listed in Council's 2024-25, 4-year or 10-year Capital Works Program. To accommodate this project, other projects and works would need to be deprioritised or delayed.**
5. **Council would also need to consider the relative priority of this safety project with other safety projects in the municipality.**

ARE THERE ANY KEY SENSITIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS MATTER THAT COUNCILLORS / ELT MUST BE AWARE OF

None at this time.

BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

BT Connor Reserve is the home of the Preston Lions Football Club with visitation of up to 3,500+ people per week during the football season including players, spectators, and officials for training sessions and on match days.

In March 2022, Council completed construction of the redeveloped BT Connor Reserve Senior Pavilion for \$2.1M incl GST.

In February 2022, at the request of the Preston Lions FC, a community safety assessment was undertaken by Council's Community Safety Officer at BT Connor Reserve and immediate area. A safety assessment allows safety experiences to be recorded and is one source of data available for Council to consider prioritising funding and resource allocation.

An assessment can identify and implement short-term improvements (within BAU) and inform future budget bids (prioritised by Council against other asset management and community needs) or grant applications. The 2022 safety assessment concluded that lighting would be beneficial to improve perceptions of safety in the BT Connor Reserve carpark.

Following the 2022 safety assessment, short-term improvements were actioned including the removal of excess vegetation and seeking support from Victoria Police to regularly enforce speeding, hooning activity, and public indecency acts.

A budget bid for lighting at BT Connor Reserve was prepared in October 2022 but was not submitted for further consideration due to budget constraints and other projects being deemed a higher priority for funding.

In June 2023, Council received a petition from the Preston Lions FC signed by 480 people requesting Council consider allocating resources to scope the installation of street lighting in the BT Connor Reserve carpark due to safety concerns.

In June 2023, Council adopted the 2023-24 budget which included \$30,000 'to scope out lighting projects at BT Connor, carpark, street and Merri Creek lighting'.

Recorded incidents and crime statistics.

In 2023, Council recorded 11 Pathway reports for dumped rubbish at BT Connor Reserve in the carpark or at the end of Broadhurst Avenue. One safety complaint was recorded which related to illegal parking on game days, glass bottles smashed in the streets and cars doing burnouts. In 2024 (year-to-date), Council have recorded 15 Pathway reports for dumped rubbish and 1 report for graffiti.

Advice from Victoria Police indicates minimal recorded offences or incidents in this area in 2023. Officers have requested updated crime statistics from Victoria Police but due to current high demand across Victoria, this information is yet to be provided.

Concerns were raised through the Your Street Your Say engagement with Radford Road and Broadhurst Avenue having substantial numbers of reports of general speeding and hoon driving. Comments also noted concerns for pedestrians due to dangerous driving and abandoned vehicles.

The Community Safety Map, which was gathering feedback on safety across Darebin in the second half of 2023, did not receive any comments for this area.

Previous Council Resolution

At its meeting held on 26 June 2023, Council resolved, in part:

'That Council:

Include \$30k to scope out lighting projects at BT Connor carpark, street and Merri Creek lighting.'

ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.2 We will design and create public spaces where our people feel safe, welcome, and respected, including improving lighting and safety for people walking, wheeling, cycling and driving

DISCUSSION

Council does not currently have a schedule of carpark assets and prioritisation of need for infrastructure and safety improvements. The Community Safety Framework may be an opportunity to consider this work in collaboration with teams across Council to develop strategic guidelines on how and where these projects are prioritised, along with determination of the appropriate level of service across all carparks. While carpark lighting improvements were made to the Gillies St carpark in early 2024, this carpark services an activity centre and was prioritised for investment by Council given the high level of community use and need to address community perceptions of safety.

While the Australian Standards specifies performance and installation requirements for public lighting, the standards are recommendations and Councils must decide whether to light an area in the first place and which standards to apply in each instance.

The Australian Standard for exterior carparks with low activity requires a minimum average illuminance of 10 lux and a minimum illuminance of at least 4 lux. A 'preferred lighting profile' is based on lighting assessments of locations that have reported higher perceptions of safety and includes factors beyond the Australian standard including colour, contrast, materials (Arup/XYXLab standard).

There are a number of business premises in Broadhurst Ave facing BT Connor Reserve which currently have no natural surveillance to the street frontage. Without the opportunity for natural surveillance through windows, roller doors, etc. offenders may feel empowered to commit offences or antisocial acts. Businesses and stakeholders could consider ways to improve natural surveillance (e.g. open roller doors when occupied) which can contribute to crime prevention and improve perceptions of safety.

Four options were considered as part of the BT Connor Reserve Lighting Scope:

Option 1: Maximal lighting outcome

Officers considered the installation of carpark lighting connected to the onsite electrical supply; however, there is limited spare capacity of electrical supply at BT Connor Reserve. While electrical supply issues are being resolved at some sports pavilions, BT Connor Reserve is not on the current scope of works list.

With known issues and limitations with electricity supply and demand on site, this option was not explored further due to the significant costs and time required to implement, including being dependent on a Jemena supply offer to increase power capacity to the site.

Option 2: Minimal lighting outcome

Solar lighting solutions (like installations at Narrandjeri Stadium and HP Zwar Reserve) were explored based on full illumination for 5 hours with dimmed lighting for the remainder of the night until dawn. The proposed solar lights would be fully certified International Dark-sky Association (IDA) approved LED light fixtures which are environmentally responsible outdoor lighting to minimise the light pollution often caused by traditional street lighting present throughout our cities. These lights lessen the impact on nocturnal wildlife while providing some deterrence for criminal or anti-social activities.

To provide solar lighting to the community carpark, indicative project costs are \$100K including project management fees and contingencies. Lighting would be implemented as per Image 1 below.

A further \$15K would be required to provide lighting for the internal carpark in Image 2 in addition to the community carpark solution.

Image 1: BT Connor Reserve community carpark

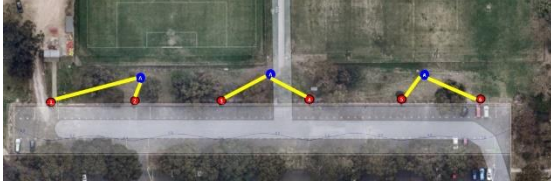


Image 2: BT Connor Reserve internal carpark



Option 3: Do nothing

Current perceptions of safety would remain. Council could direct \$100K to existing capital projects and/or other lighting improvement projects that it regards as higher priority.

Option 4: Non-lighting outcomes

The installation of carpark lighting is not the only way for Council to address perceptions of safety at BT Connor Reserve. Officers recommend consideration of other crime prevention activities to address concerns raised through the petition and community engagement activities instead of or in addition to a lighting solution.

Actions to improve perceptions of safety could include:

- Ensuring timely reporting of criminal and anti-social issues. Officers could undertake resident, business, and stakeholder engagement to provide them with referral pathways, ensuring they are aware of the importance and benefits of and how to report issues to the appropriate authority in a timely manner. Resourcing required: staff time.
- Victoria Police's Crime Prevention Officer could provide crime prevention advice to stakeholders, businesses and residents on security and crime prevention practices to reduce the likelihood or impact of theft and personal safety. Resourcing required: staff time.
- Regular vegetation maintenance as required. Removing excess vegetation, particularly bushes at eye-level, improves natural surveillance. This is not a current concern but is valuable to monitor and maintain as required. Resourcing required: staff time, although this is already part of Parks and Open Space operations.
- Activation of carpark and street through community activities. A series of supported community events inviting the broader community into the space could be effective to improve perceptions of safety and rebuild a sense of community ownership of the space. Resourcing required: unknown as dependent on activity and scale.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) interventions can also contribute to improving perceptions of safety. Environmental upgrades to improve activation of the site could include a shared path linking Radford Rd to the creek trail, a playspace, green gym, community garden or landscaping and vegetation improvements. Resourcing required: unknown as dependent on activation.

CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES

Financial Management

There is currently no capital budget allocation for carpark lighting at BT Connor Reserve in either the 2023-24, 4-year or 10-year Capital Works Program.

Council could consider committing budget to the design and construction of community (and internal) carpark lighting at BT Connor Reserve. However, other community or sporting infrastructure projects and priorities would need to be reassessed or delayed to accommodate this project in line with Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

Should Council wish to delay other projects to accommodate Council funding, the following projects are the next sports field lighting priorities currently included in the 10-year capital works program:

- Preston City Oval \$700K in 2029-30
- John Cain Memorial Park West Pitch \$750K in 2029-30
- General projects: \$400K in 2029-30 and \$600K in 2031-32

The Draft 4-year Capital Works Program lists the 'Street lighting safety renewal program' which is focused on High Street Preston and the Gillies St carpark in Fairfield with allocations of \$200K in 2024-25, \$100K in 2025-26, \$500K in 2026-27 and \$100K in 2027-28. These are a high priority due to designated lighting being assessed as end of life.

The LTFP has provided the overall budget envelopes that Council needs to meet to achieve financial sustainability. The affordable funding envelope for Council's total capital works program has been analysed through to 2033 and is set out in its LTFP.

As noted previously, this funding envelope needs to cover the renewal of all existing assets including roads, drainage, buildings, playgrounds, footpaths, as well as any adaptations or improvements needed for infrastructure to be able to deal with changing needs, risks, or preferences.

The long-term estimates in Council's 10-year capital program (from 2023-24 to 2032-33) include a total of \$20.29M of capital expenditure from years 5 to 10 that is not yet specifically assigned to a renewal program or project. Should Council wish to allocate some of this funding to the BT Connor Reserve Carpark Lighting project, it would reduce the amount of funding that can be provided to other projects including the Reservoir Leisure Centre (RLC) redevelopment.

Community Engagement

Community engagement was undertaken to identify and understand existing community safety concerns as part of the lighting scoping process. Engagement was targeted to understand the feedback and experiences of existing users of the space and place; this included businesses and traders, Preston Lions Football Club and Ahlulbait Mosque.

Most participants (approximately eight participants some were speaking on behalf of others) reported that the area felt unsafe at night and were able to provide specific examples of situations that triggered extra concern, either from a direct experience or observation or general worry.

Participants reported the area was very dark at night. When asked about specific locations, most participants described the carpark as the darkest area. With further prompting, participants were asked which sections were of highest concern within the carpark, and collectively answers included all sections of the carpark.

Activities of concern reported in the engagement included:

- People waiting in cars in the carpark in a way that made respondents uneasy
- Dumping of rubbish, particularly broken glass, and evidence of drug use
- Burglary – relating to a business on Broadhurst Ave, Reservoir
- Dangerous driving (such as speeding or drifting).

When the area is activated, through gatherings at the Mosque and games and training at BT Connor Reserve, the area is generally reported to feel safe, especially when light, of those that participated in the engagement.

The engagement asked respondents what actions they had taken in response to safety concerns. These included:

- Contacting Victoria Police
- Upgrading security including lighting and CCTV
- Hiring private security
- Changed locks on business premise
- Contacting Council.

Feedback provided through this engagement with eight participants highlighted that safety is a high concern, and that lighting is a high priority at this site.

While officers recommend lighting is improved, without a clear prioritisation framework it is not clear whether this site or other sites in the municipality should be the first priority for attention by Council in terms of the installation of new lights. It is also noted that lighting alone will not resolve all the safety issues raised by participants. Crime prevention activities should take place alongside infrastructure improvements to address the concerns raised. *Please see Option 4 in Discussion section above for an outline of these opportunities.*

It is clear that the 'Street lighting safety renewal program' which is focused on High Street Preston and the Gillies St carpark in Fairfield with allocations of \$200K in 2024-25, \$100K in 2025-26, \$500K in 2026-27 and \$100K in 2027-28 has been identified as a high priority due to designated lighting being assessed as end of life.

The Community Engagement Results Report: BT Connor Reserve Lighting can be found at **Appendix A**.

Other Principles for consideration

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

(b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.

Public Transparency Principles

(c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to members of the municipal community.

Strategic Planning Principles

(c) Strategic planning must take into account the resources needed for effective implementation.

Service Performance Principles

(c) quality and costs standards for services set by the Council should provide good value to the municipal community.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Council's Biodiversity team recommends that where possible, areas of high biodiversity value should not be lit; this includes the Merri Creek. Lighting can alter animal and insect behaviours such as foraging, reproduction, migration, communication, and hibernation, and can lead to fatal consequences and declining populations.

The proposed solar lights are fully certified International Dark-sky Association (IDA) approved LED light fixtures which are environmentally responsible outdoor lighting to minimise the light pollution often caused by traditional street lighting present throughout our cities. These lights lessen the impact on nocturnal wildlife while providing some deterrence for criminal or anti-social activities.

Further environmental and sustainable considerations will be considered should the BT Connor Reserve Carpark lights be funded for implementation.

Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:

Perceptions of safety, or fear of crime, have a real impact on how people can go about their lives. For people who feel unsafe, it may mean they don't go out after dark, won't catch public transport, and have difficulty in accessing work. The perception of safety may be general, or may also be associated with locations, particularly relating to past experiences or those shared by others or in media. Improving perceptions of safety is important to ensure that everyone in the community has full access to civic life.

An equity lens acknowledges that perceptions of safety often differ based on the identity of an individual, life experiences, and where people live. Therefore, when designing an open space or infrastructure, it is important to consider the following:

- People: Consider who may feel less safe due to gender, age, Aboriginality, ability, sexuality, cultural background, socio-economic status.
- Experiences: How do people's life experiences impact on their perception of safety and how can their specific needs be considered?

Economic Development and Cultural Considerations

None

Operational Impacts

Should the solar lighting option be funded, Council would need to fund ongoing maintenance and replacement. Solar lighting removes the need for operational funding; electricity costs at sports grounds are usually recovered from the sporting club tenant as part of the lease and/licensing agreement.

Legal and Risk Implications

BT Connor Reserve sits partly on a legacy landfill; the proposed project is not within the legacy landfill footprint and there is negligible subsurface methane risk.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Pending Council decision.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Nil

Attachments

- Community Engagement Results Report: BT Connor Reserve Lighting (2024) (Appendix A)



Community Engagement Results Report: BT Connor Reserve Lighting

Background

In June 2023, Council adopted the 2023-24 Council Budget which included ‘\$30K to scope out lighting projects at BT Connor, carpark, street and Merri Creek lighting’.

Council’s BT Connor Reserve is the home of the Preston Lions Football Club and has visitation of up to 3,500 people per week (approximately) during the football (soccer) season which includes players, spectators and officials at training sessions and match days.

As part of the lighting scoping process, community engagement was undertaken to identify and understand existing community safety concerns.

Participation Analysis

Engagement was targeted to understand the feedback and experiences of existing users of the space and place; this included businesses and traders, Preston Lions Football Club and Ahlulbait Mosque.

Engagement Activity	Number of participants/ people engaged	Targeted group	Demographic information
Direct engagement with businesses between 225 and 237 Broadhurst Ave, Reservoir	6 participants	People with a strong connection to the area through work	Engagement open to all. Participants were a range of ages, mostly men
Direct engagement with Preston Lions Football Club	One participant, who spoke on behalf of club members and leadership	Predominant user group of BT Connor Reserve and the carpark	Preston Lions Football Club represent a wide range of ages and genders among players, officials and spectators
Direct engagement with representative of Australian Shia Gathering Place, which operates Ahlulbait Mosque at 223 Broadhurst Ave, Reservoir	One participant, who spoke on behalf of Mosque attendees and community	Secondary user group of BT Connor Reserve carpark and street parking	Representing people with Muslim faith as attendees of the Mosque

Engagement Results

Most participants reported that the area felt unsafe at night and were able to provide specific examples of situations that triggered extra concern, either from a direct experience or observation or general worry.

Participants reported the area was very dark at night. When asked about specific locations, most participants described the carpark as the darkest area. With further prompting, participants were asked which sections were of highest concern within the carpark, and collectively answers included all sections of the carpark.

Activities of concern reported in the engagement included:

- People waiting in cars in the carpark in a way that made respondents uneasy
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- Dangerous driving (such as speeding or drifting).

When the area is activated, through gatherings at the Mosque and games and training at BT Connor Reserve, the area is generally reported to feel safe, especially when light.

The engagement asked respondents what actions they had taken in response to safety concerns. These included:

- Contacting Victoria Police
- Upgrading security including lighting and CCTV
- Hiring private security
- Changed locks on business premise
- Contacting Council.

Recommendations

The engagement activities reached a reasonable representation of the community of use around BT Connor Reserve, carpark and street.

A clear conclusion can be drawn that safety is a high concern for many users of this space, and that lighting is a high priority for many of those participants.

While officers recommend lighting is improved, it also noted that lighting alone will not resolve all the safety issues raised by participants. Crime prevention activities should take place alongside infrastructural improvements to address the concerns raised.