

West End Green Bridges: connecting or dividing communities.

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The Westender has closely followed Council and community responses to the proposed green bridges program to West End from St Lucia and Toowong, and we provide here a timeline of the process from the announcement until now.

There have been several Council information sessions, and politicians and various community and interest groups have run forums and a range of online polls.

Following these efforts, it remains difficult to know whether the community is any closer to agreeing on either the number of bridges or their preferred landing points.

Bridges Announced

Lord Mayor **Adrian Schrinner** announced his \$550 million proposal for five new 'green bridges' for Brisbane by letter to residents on 27 May 2019.

He said the plan would tackle traffic congestion in the city.

Michael Berkman Greens MP for Maiwar, and Councillor **Jonathan Sri** welcomed the announcement.

“It’s fantastic that the LNP Council has adopted the Greens’ plan for new green bridges in Brisbane, but we need to see proper consultation, and ten years is too long to wait,” Michael Berkman said in November 2019.

Consultation Phase One

Council initiated a short, four-week period of public consultation from 11 November to 6 December 2020.

Community groups West End Community Association (WECA) and Kurilpa Futures, and local Councillor, Jonathan Sri, immediately expressed their disappointment about the consultation timeframe and the lack of meaningful data and proposed criteria for the next phase of the process.

In what appears to be a recurring complaint about Brisbane City Council consultation processes, community group Kurilpa Futures said it was concerned about the four-week timeframe for consultation, especially at such a busy time of year. The group asked for an extension of time which was not granted.

At this early stage of the process Council was proposing landing points for the West End bridges as follows:

- **Toowong to West End Bridge** (pedestrian/cycling/ potential public transport) – Near Archer Street in Toowong to Orleigh Park near Forbes Street in West End
- **St Lucia to West End Bridge** (pedestrian/cycling/potential public transport) – Keith Street in St Lucia to Boundary Street at West End.

| [Green bridges for West End – what we know](#)

Phase One Consultation Outcomes

Following the first phase of consultations, Council’s Green Bridges Team released an Initial Consultation outcomes document for its Five Green Bridges Program in May 2020, reporting that:

“From the consultation we know 72 per cent of respondents agreed green bridges would improve connections with existing walking and cycling networks.”

At the time there was some confusion about whether the bridges proposed for West End would be for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport, or whether they would exclude public transport. Council finally ruled out buses in its May 2020 report.

The consultation report indicated that the Toowong to West End Bridge was the most favoured of the two West End bridges, and that appears to have remained the case during the phase two consultation process.

Following the release of its interim report, the Green Bridges team advised that they would undertake technical investigations and studies, including planning preliminary business cases for the bridges.

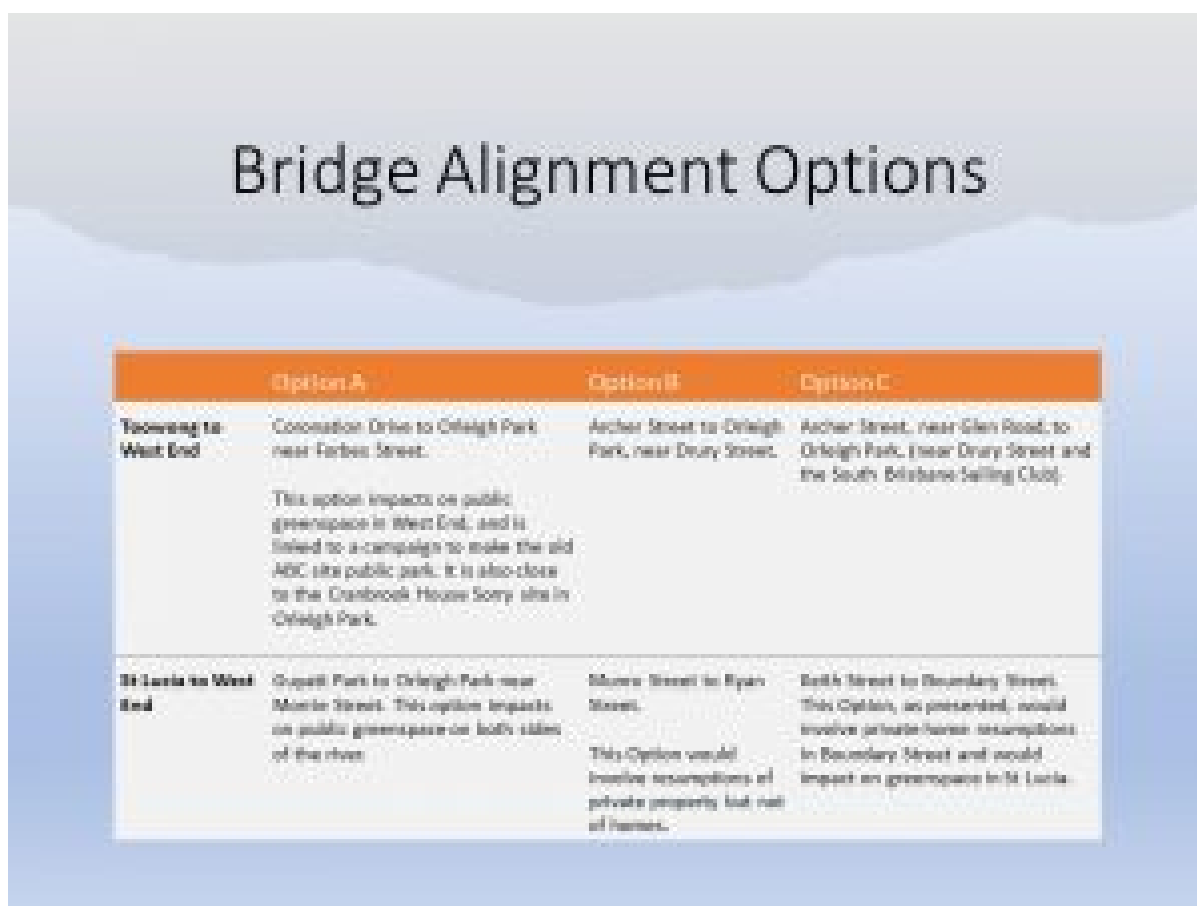
Consultation Phase Two

On Monday 23 November 2020, Council announced that it would engage in further consultation with residents on the proposed West End foot and cycle bridges.

The consultation period was to run from 28 November to 12 December.

Again, the consultation process was to be followed by the preparation of detailed business cases and bridge designs by Council.

The purpose of this phase of consultation was to elicit feedback from the community on proposed landing sites or alignments for the two bridges. This time three alignment options were proposed for each bridge. Council listed the Options as A, B and C and set out pros and cons for each, with estimated daily trips through to 2031 and 2041. Many considered that Council's preference is for the alignments designated Option A. See details [HERE](#).



The image shows a table titled "Bridge Alignment Options" with a light blue background. The table has three columns: Option A, Option B, and Option C. It is divided into two rows: "Footway to West End" and "Bicycle to West End".

	Option A	Option B	Option C
Footway to West End	Coronation Drive to Orleigh Park near Forbes Street. This option impacts on public greenspace in West End, and is linked to a campaign to make the old ABC site public park. It is also close to the Cranbrook House Sory site in Orleigh Park.	Archer Street to Orleigh Park, near Drury Street.	Archer Street, near Glen Road, to Orleigh Park, near Drury Street and the South Brisbane Sailing Club.
Bicycle to West End	Opport Park to Orleigh Park near Monte Street. This option impacts on public greenspace on both sides of the river.	Monte Street to Ryan Street. This Option would involve resumptions of private property but not of homes.	Both Street to Boundary Street. This Option, as presented, would involve private-lease resumptions in Boundary Street and would impact on greenspace in St Lucia.

Cycling advocacy groups support the construction of both bridges, as does pedestrian group [Queensland Walks](#). Community groups on either side of the river have mixed views.

Key Issues

Timeframe and Surveys

Community groups immediately reacted to the short consultation timeframe during Christmas and New Year and, again, raised concerns about the lack of supporting data.

The online survey was labelled ‘push polling’ by Kurilpa Futures because it required users to identify a preferred landing site and did not provide an option to select a preference for no bridge.

Kurilpa Futures said the approach adopted by Council divided communities on both sides of the river and encouraged NIMBY[1]ism rather than a “more productive consultation process, with representatives of all community groups, to establish collectively, first the need for the bridges and then the desired locations.”

Council rejected criticism of its online survey and advised The Westender it was designed to collect feedback specifically on the proposed bridge alignment options. It advised that other feedback could be provided in the comments section of the survey, or alternatively residents were advised to contact the project team directly.

Cr Sri and bicycle advocacy groups have been running their own online polls and surveys, presumably to add support when making their own submissions to Council.

Cr James Mackay also has his own [online poll](#) which in a true demonstration of push-polling, restricts bridge options to the Keith Street to Boundary Street alignment for the St Lucia Bridge and from Archer Street to Orleigh Park for the Toowong Bridge.

| [More time and more detail needed for Green Bridges consultation](#)

Lack of Transparency

Several community groups were also critical of the lack of data from Council supporting its assumptions.

Elizabeth Handley of the **ParkIt** group in Milton said residents needed more information from Council on the assumptions underlying its selection of landing sites.

“...what sort of assumptions have they made about how many people are going to use the bridge, where those people are going to come from, how they are going to get on and off the bridge, and where they are going?” Ms Handley asked.

In a letter to residents, Kurilpa Futures said, “supporting data and a business case should be made available before the community is expected to comment on options, rather than the other way around.”

President of WECA, Seleanah More agreed, saying the material provided by Council was light on detail with no costs provided for the loss of green assets in terms of parks and established trees, and no details on the costs for the additional infrastructure that would be required to ensure safe connections from the bridges into the neighbourhood.

“I’m calling on Council to provide full disclosure of information to all parties involved, because their track record of drip-feeding information to different groups creates division and unnecessary politicisation of the issues,” Ms More said.

Cr Sri encouraged residents to write to The Lord Mayor asking for both more information about the proposed bridges, and for more time for “detailed consultation and collaborative decision-making.”

On 14 December 2020 Council said it had agreed to extend the consultation timeframe to 31 March 2021. By that time, Council had already held a series of information sessions (at which individuals could talk with members of the Council Green Bridges team). It did not offer to hold additional sessions or facilitate any community meetings.

Anna Campbell, Executive Office of **Queensland Walks** says the organisation strongly supports investment in both green bridges and congratulates Council for extending the community consultation period.

| Council bows to community pressure to extend consultation period for Green Bridges

Additional data finally provided

It was not until **11 March 2021**, after submitting formal document requests, that Council provided Cr Sri’s office with the alignment studies that had informed Council’s alignment options for the West End bridges.

Cr Sri said the reports are detailed and open to misinterpretation.

“I see why Council was reluctant to publish them, but I think in the interests of transparency it’s important for residents to have access.”

Cr Sri noted further, as other groups have, that it is disappointing the reports were not provided by Council earlier.

“By not releasing these documents at the outset of the consultation, I think BCC inadvertently led some residents to believe that the bridge proposals were simplistic and rushed, but when you look at these reports you can see that a lot of work has gone into exploring various options.”

Cr Sri notes that Council considered around 18 alignment options, but only six went out to public consultation. He noted that the consultant’s alignment analysis placed a lot of emphasis on current public transport connections.

“Saying ‘we should put the bridge here because that’s near where the buses stop’ is a backwards approach. A better approach is to put pedestrian bridges in good locations for active transport connectivity, and then adjust bus routes to connect to them if necessary.”

The documents may raise more questions than answers for residents. For example, ARUP, the consultants engaged by Council, gave the Keith Street to Boundary Street alignment a poor score compared with several other options it considered, but Council listed it as the Option offering the “best city making opportunities”. Council subsequently listed it as their Option C in the 2020/21 consultation round.

At various forums held since December, residents have suggested different landing sites and alternatives to bridges such as a Riverwalk and/or additional CityCat terminals and more frequent services.

Now that Council has released its preliminary studies, we know that a Riverwalk option was considered in preliminary investigations. Council estimated a cost of \$230 million for a Riverwalk from Hoogley Street to the Eleanor Schonell Bridge. Council had also assessed changes to CityCat frequencies in West End and found that an upgrade to higher frequency services would require the purchase of five new vessels at a cost of \$23 million, and \$17 million per annum.

Importantly Council's consultants pointed out in the early studies, the need for sensitivity when engaging the community on particular sites, for example Orleigh and Guyatt Park, and the Aboriginal Sorry site at Cranbrook Place. It is not clear that Council heeded this advice.

Council's preliminary investigation documents are available from [Cr Sri's website](#).



Home and Property Resumptions

Within days of Council announcing the second phase of consultations, a new residents' group formed, raising objections to the proposed Option C for a Keith Street to Boundary Street bridge between West End and St Lucia.

The group planted bright yellow “Stop Mega Bridge” signs along Boundary Street, and these are now appearing in the shop fronts of some businesses in Boundary Street.

Aleko Paltoglou, media spokesperson for the group, said the alignment was the only Option that would result in the resumption of family homes, including his own. Mr Paltoglou and his family have been present at a range of forums on either side the river and they have put forward their case forcefully and with emotion.

While not ruling out resumptions, Kurilpa Futures said in its feedback to Council that as a principle, compulsory acquisitions of private property should be avoided unless no other acceptable option is available. In such cases, there should be respectful and accessible engagement with affected property owners and fair compensation for any residential properties acquired.

The prospect of resumptions and the anger it generated, prompted Cr Sri and Amy MacMahon, along with WECA, to host a public forum in Davies Park on 30 January to guide a set of principles that could be referred to when weighing up private concerns against community benefits.

President, Seleanah More said a key criterion for WECA is making sure the infrastructure will have long-term public benefit while addressing a clearly defined problem.

At the meeting Cr Sri expressed concerns about the future implications of opposing resumptions. He said objecting to a bridge alignment based solely on the fact it may involve taking people’s homes could hinder future developments.

Cr Sri noted it is difficult to quantifiably rank who should have more say.

“With almost every public infrastructure project, the negative impacts fall heavily on a small minority and the positive impacts are broadly dispersed across a really broad section of the population, so we need to correct for that imbalance a little bit.”

Option C for the St Lucia to Boundary Street Bridge is not supported by the West End Traders Association (WETA), but does have the support of both Bicycle Queensland and Queensland Walks.

Some have asked whether the Boundary Street Option could work without the need for home resumptions, and this remains an open question.

Others either reject a St Lucia Bridge outright, or are not currently convinced that the data supports this bridge.

| Let’s talk about property resumptions. Are they ever justifiable?

Greenspace

Option A for the St Lucia Bridge has been the most heavily criticised Option by those groups wanting to protect greenspace but has the support of two key cycling groups.

The Save Guyatt Park group on the other side of the river has been fighting a tenacious campaign against a bridge landing in the park.

At a February forum in Guyatt Park, David Pincus said that Option A for the St Lucia Bridge would result in loss of important greenspace on both sides of the river: at Guyatt Park and in Orleigh Park. He told the gathering that each of the four elected representatives whose electorates are involved in the proposed bridge locations have made assurances that they would not support the loss of greenspace in Guyatt Park.

Cr MacKay, who represents the Walter Taylor Ward for the Liberal National Party (LNP) said at the same forum that Council's consultation process has been pitting neighbours against one another.

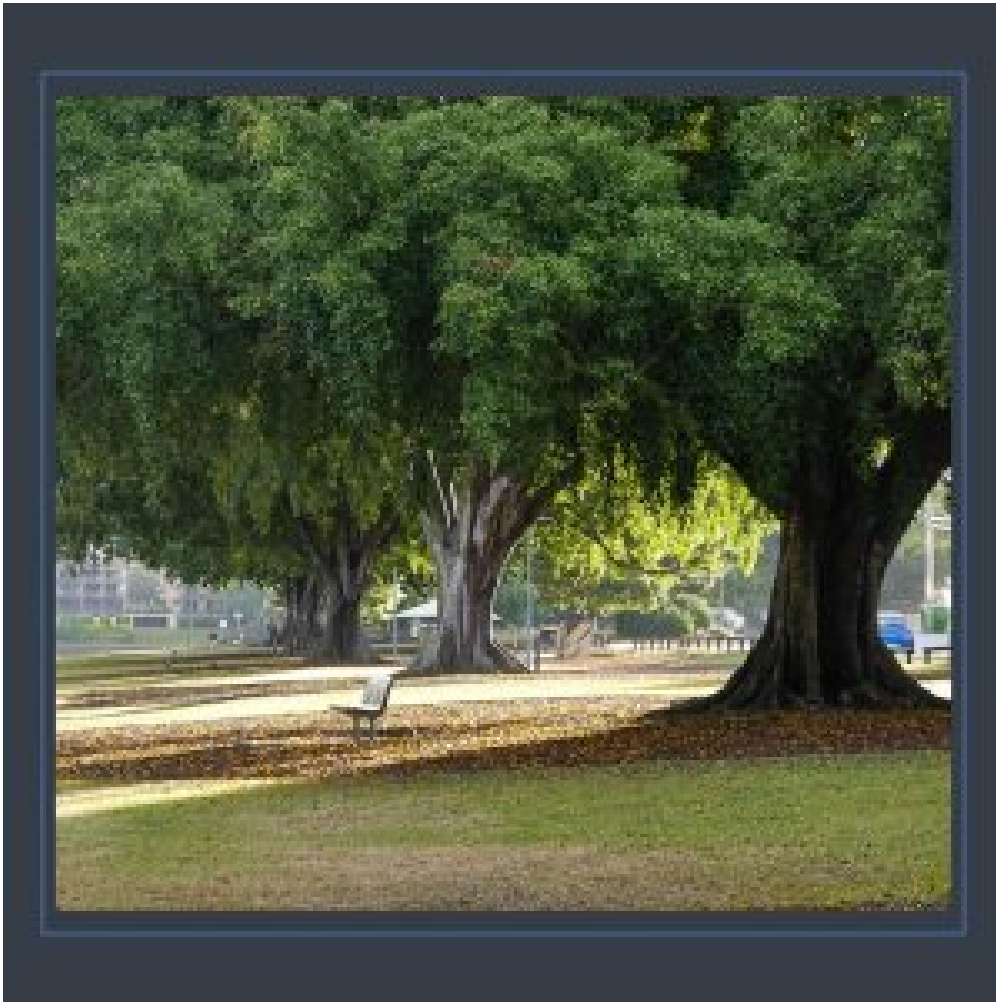
His position is at odds with the LNP Council in taking a strong position against a Guyatt Park landing for the St Lucia bridge.

"I haven't made any friends with the Lord Mayor or Ryan Murphy the Public and Active Transport chair, when I came out and said I don't support the bridge in Guyatt Park," Cr MacKay said.

The St Lucia Community Association is also arguing a case against the Guyatt Park to Orleigh Park alignment. Deborah Scott said at the Greens' members forum on 27 February that a new bridge from West End to Guyatt Park will be similar in scale, as it lands, to the southern end of Kurilpa Bridge.

"It needs to be 11.5m high at the bank to accommodate the CityCat approach and departure from the Park safely. The bridge itself will absorb a lot of Guyatt Park, and while it's being built will be a massive dis-amenity for the communities that enjoy it."

Sometimes we forget that the park amenities we enjoy now were hard fought for in their time. As local historian, Paul Granville reminds us, the idea for Orleigh Park originated with the Hill End Progress Association in 1914. It was opened in August 1917 and 24 weeping fig trees were planted creating the unbroken vista of trees we enjoy today.



A key concern for Kurilpa Future in West End is the impact of the landing sites on local green space, particularly Option A for the St Lucia to West End bridge, but also for some of the Toowong Bridge alignments landing in Orleigh Park.

More recently, Kurilpa Futures has taken its campaign to the parks, identifying trees at proposed landing sites that it thinks are at risk as a result of construction, and is hanging signs on the trees detailing the ecological services they provide.

WECA has told its members that it believes that any loss of public green space and green assets must be compensated within the suburb fairly.

In respect to the potential loss of trees and greenspace Chair of Council's Public & Active Transport Committee, **Councillor Ryan Murphy** advised The Westender, that:

“Protecting trees and greenspace is important, and investigations have indicated the design of the Orleigh Park landing option could accommodate the weeping figs”.

“That said, the idea the green bridge landing points take away greenspace in any substantial way is risible. Green bridges provide access to far more greenspace than they take away with their landing points. Bridge landings take up roughly the same amount of space as a block of public toilets. Do these also take away from greenspace? Where do we draw the line?”



In spite of the concerns by some groups about the loss of greenspace, Option A appears to be the preferred Option in an online poll being conducted by Greens representative, Jonathan Sri, but it was the least favoured Option on a straw poll he and his colleagues conducted at their forum on 27 February.

Differences in poll results may be an illustration of the tendency for objectors to more actively attend forums than those who favour change. Jonathan Sri has flagged concerns about the under-representation of young people in all forms of consultation on the bridges so far.

“The median age in 4101 is around 30, and the median age in St Lucia is just 23, but it seems like a lot of younger adults and teenagers haven’t engaged much with consultation on these bridge proposals, even though their demographics are the ones most likely to use active transport infrastructure,” Cr Sri said.

| [Logic of greenspace loss as part of green-bridges plan queried by residents](#)

Connectivity

All elected representatives, community groups and active transport advocacy groups have said a key principle for any new bridge is how it connects people safely to existing or new active transport networks.

Pam Bourke of Kurilpa Futures said:

“Another concern is access to safe travel from the bridge landings to destination points. For example, Montague Road is not safe for cyclists, as a recent RACQ study found, and so safety infrastructure needs to be addressed in tandem with bridge developments.”

Deborah Scott of St Lucia Community Association has queried whether the Council has got proposed landing points in St Lucia and Guyatt Park right.

“Let’s not build a hugely expensive piece of infrastructure that doesn’t go where people need and want to go, and that destroys a beautiful community space. If there is a need for a bridge between UQ and West End, let’s talk about that,” she said.

WECA wants the bridge design and path connections to both maximise safe active transport connections to West End and Toowong destinations and to minimise resident disruptions.

Amy MacMahon told attendees at the 27 February forum that there is a case to be made to locate the bridges in good locations, and to then, “push for more active transport to come around them, rather than the other way around.”

Cr Sri told the Westender:

“... we need to find ways to move tens of thousands of people in and out of the Kurilpa Peninsula... The reality is that in the near future, many more people are likely to be travelling in and out of Kurilpa each day. I don’t expect that new pedestrian and cycling bridges will carry *all* or even most of those people, but they would definitely play an important part in the transport network and take some of the load off existing corridors.”

| Green Bridges are great but fix Montague Road first, say Bailey and Trad

Anna Campbell of **Queensland Walks** said:

“We encourage Council to focus on the bridge alignment that will allow more people to choose to walk and wheel, and easily connect to public transport”.

“We want to make sure that Council firstly prioritises the functional importance of this bridge, and secondly the recreational benefit of a bridge over our beautiful Brisbane River. The bridges should focus on the most direct route to major attractors and destinations, i.e. to the University of Queensland and its many facilities, to Toowong Shopping Centre, library and train station and the Springfield line, and to the Bicentennial pathway.”

Queensland Walks has also recommended that current public transport options are evaluated, including bus and ferry routes, timetabling, and especially reviewing services after hours.

“We also would like to see that new ferry terminal locations such as West End, Montague Road terminal is considered.”

Queensland Walks notes the need for improvements to footpaths, kerb ramps, and crossings that need to be included in the green bridge project, especially surrounding the proposed locations.

“Due to heavy traffic flow, unsafe speeds and the lack of safety at many crossings in West End (e.g. Dornoch Terrace, Montague Road), the conditions for walking present enormous barriers for many children and families, older people walking, and people with a disability to be able to comfortably walk and wheel in West End, St Lucia and Toowong. We must focus and invest in walking infrastructure to fix these glaring barriers for people who walk and wheel, in conjunction with legacy projects like green bridges,” Ms Campbell said.

Toowong to West End Bridge

Of the two proposed bridges, a Toowong to West End Bridge appears to have the greatest community and political support.

Bicycle Queensland, supports the construction of this bridge, saying it believes it will have long-term strategic benefits for the permeability of West End and the Toowong-Milton-Indooroopilly area. The groups supports both Option A and Option B.

While community groups on the West End side of the river have been reluctant to be too definitive in their responses to the bridges overall, both WECA and Kurilpa Futures support the West End-Toowong Option A. However, Kurilpa Futures has offered more qualified support, saying:

“We have the least objection to the Toowong to West End (Option A) bridge, at this time, and until more detailed design work is released by Council. Our reasoning is that a bridge to Toowong may provide access to the Toowong railway station and would link to the Council’s cycle infrastructure on Riverside Drive. Option A also has fewer impacts on important trees than option B; however, we have ongoing concerns about the Council Sorry site [Cranbrook Place] and the mature trees to be removed as part of Option A. We are also aware that some residents are very opposed to any Toowong bridge.”

Space for Cycling considers that both Options B and C for the Toowong Bridge, feel like “strawman proposals” and considers Option A is the only realistic alignment proposed.

“It has the advantage of the lowest profile, and the best connection from the Bicentennial Bikeway – particularly if a connection is created through the old ABC site at 600 Coronation Drive as required under the Brisbane City Plan and the Local Government Infrastructure Plan.”

However, in line with similar calls from WECA and Kurilpa Futures, Space for Cycling wants Council to ensure any bridge plan would:

- “minimise (or preferably totally avoid) impact on established trees in Orleigh Park.
- preserve the important Sorry Site at Cranbrook place; and

- minimise the bridge landing footprint, and activate the space under the bridge to create quality public space.”

South Brisbane Sailing Club (SBSC) also prefers Option A for the Toowong Bridge, but for different reasons. They argue, this landing would have the least impact on the launching, use and retrieval of boats from SBSC. The club considers Option C has unacceptable impacts on SBSC during the construction phase and beyond. Their submission also discusses the heritage values of the club building, parking for sailors, and flood risks.

In its submission, SBSC has focused on bridge design. It is concerned about the potential impacts of proposed bridges on the safety of sailing, rowing and other watersports on the Milton and St Lucia reaches of the Brisbane River. They propose a design with a single span, or with piers within 5 meters of the bank.

In his March newsletter to residents, Cr Sri said that his online poll suggests “very strong” public support for the Option A alignment between Toowong and West End landing on the former ABC site at 600 Coronation Drive.



ABC Site and the Toowong Bridge

The ParkIt community group in Milton and local MP Michael Berkman, supported by his Green’s colleagues, have long campaigned for Council and State Government to purchase the old ABC site at 600 Coronation Drive for parkland and a landing site for a bridge from West End to Toowong [Council’s Option A].

“Council should make sure the Toowong to West End bridge lands at the former ABC site which should be transformed into a new riverside public park,” Mr Berkman said in November 2019.

The Sundland group’s three tower “champagne-flutes” development proposed for the 1.5ha site, was rejected by the Supreme Court in 2018.

In March 2021 it was announced that the site was purchased for \$43.5 million by a consortium backed by Brisbane developer Consolidated Properties Group.

The ABC reported on 18 March, that Council “has flagged part of the block, which has 135 metres of river frontage, could be resumed for a planned green bridge linking Toowong to West End,” and the developer has said, “the site would have parkland down to the river, and a planned cycleway in the previous Sunland scheme would also be incorporated.”

Seleanah More of WECA says the sale provides an opportunity.

“At least we know the market price and there won’t be long legal battles. Just pay them and take the site. Council also has compulsory acquisition powers. Use them.”

“Developers are financial deal-makers. They don’t mind how they make money. For them, resumption provides money without taking on the huge construction and market risks. They won’t take it personally.”

“A Green Bridge connecting to much needed park and recreational facilities increases employment and value of the project to the public.”

Gabba Ward’s Cr Sri also said it is not too late for Council to acquire the strategically significant site for public parkland.

“If the towers do go ahead, at a bare minimum it will be important that any development approval conditions protect 24-hr public access to the river.”

Elizabeth Handley of ParkIt says the site would provide green space that would offset any loss of greenspace in Orleigh Park and St Lucia.

“High density development is supposed to go along with certain infrastructure. They’ve done the high-density development; they have not done the infrastructure. The ABC site is the vital missing link.”

Ms Handley said that acquiring a portion of the site for a bridge landing would be expensive for Council, so they may as well purchase the whole site.

“It will be open green space for the people of Brisbane.”



St Lucia to West End Bridge

Responses are most mixed for a St Lucia to West End bridge and alignment options are more controversial than for the Toowong Bridge. Some reject this bridge outright, while there are strong and often conflicting views on the most suitable alignment, even among those who support the bridge.

A bridge from UQ to West End has been proposed since 1926, but with the construction of the Eleanor Schonell bridge in 2007, and existing CityCat services, some argue that there is now adequate connection across the river for people travelling to and from the University.

Nevertheless, calls for a second, more direct, green bridge from St Lucia to West End have continued.

Residents campaign to ‘Stop the Mega Bridge’ proposed for St Lucia to West End

BQ supports the construction of a St Lucia bridge, saying its strategic primary purpose will be to make a better active transport connection from South Brisbane to the University of Queensland’s St Lucia campus.

“... all other considerations are secondary with this bridge.”

Option C along Boundary Street is the preferred Option for BQ because, it says:

“This is the most direct and convenient route from St Lucia to the City, and building this bridge would have a transformative effect on Brisbane’s active transport network. Option C serves a broader catchment than the other two options, because of Boundary Street’s central position within West End / Highgate Hill.”

SFC says that while the case for a bridge connecting West End to St Lucia is not as obvious as a connection from West End to Toowong, the group thinks the real value is in delivering the two bridges together.



Both SFC and BQ see a St Lucia bridge working in tandem with a Toowong Bridge. As SFC sets out on its website:

“In combination, this pair of bridges could provide a car-free cycling (and walking/running) route with gentle gradients connecting the Bicentennial Bikeway along the river at Toowong to the University of Queensland. Currently, the options are either a slow, steep, and difficult route along the ‘back-streets including Jerdanefeld Rd and Hiron St, or braving motor vehicle traffic along hectic multi-lane Sir Fred Schonell Drive.”

They note however, that Council has strongly opposed improving Sir Fred Schonell Drive to make it safer and more attractive for walking and cycling.

The cycle groups differ on the choice of best alignment. SFC prefers Option A (Guyatt Park to Orleigh Park), with Option B “a poor second”. The group does not support Option C, which it considers does not provide a good location for a high-frequency bus turn-around, and because it would require resumption of multiple private properties.

In its submission to Council CBD BUG indicates its preference is Option A for both bridges based on topography and connectivity.



CBD BUG addresses in some detail the objections to Guyatt Park as a landing site by what it refers to as a ‘vocal minority’, and has proposed that some of the car parking space at Guyatt Park could be turned into greenspace.

SFC asks why a landing at Laurence Street had not been considered, to avoid impacting Guyatt Park.

We now know that Laurence Street was in fact given some consideration in a 2020 alignment study but was rejected with a score of 81 per cent (while Guyatt Park to Orleigh Park scored 94 per cent).

The West End Traders Association (WETA) does not support a Boundary Street alignment at all, nor is it supported by the St Lucia Community Association. The Save Guyatt Park group has only focused on the Guyatt Park to Orleigh Park alignment which it rejects, and

is agnostic on the other options proposed. Cr James Mackay however is pushing for Option C in order to protect Guyatt Park. There is some talk that his constituents are threatening to vote Green at the next Council election if he does not protect the park.

WECA has told members that it does not see a “compelling need” for the West End to St Lucia Green Bridge at this time, but says it will reassess this view after the completion of the West End to Toowong Bridge.

In the case of this bridge however, Kurilpa Futures has been more definitive in its response, saying:

“We do not support any option for the St Lucia to West End bridge. Kurilpa Futures appreciates that should feedback from the community suggest there is little support for a St Lucia to West End green bridge, Council may consider alternative locations for a green bridge in other parts of Brisbane.”

Jonathan Sri told attendees at a forum held on 27 February at King George Square that while he is interested in the concept of a St Lucia bridge, as the Councillor for the inner South, he has taken the view that a new CityCat terminal for the western side of West End is a higher priority than the bridge.

He said he is still open to a St Lucia bridge concept, but in terms of where funding should be directed first, he considers the Toowong bridge a higher priority.



Where is UQ?

In November 2019, the Brisbane Times reported that Council had indicated there were “opportunities” to work with the University of Queensland (UQ) on the proposed West End bridge, “as the university had already indicated its own plans to construct a pedestrian bridge.”

Residents are now asking why the University has not been engaging with the community on the Green Bridges program.

Kurilpa Futures says it is concerned that UQ, as the second largest trip generator in Brisbane, has not indicated its position on the bridge options, nor has it been available publicly to address the community.

“We are also concerned that the impact of the rapid transition to online education has not been factored into any modelling we have seen to date. Our submission respects the views of the St Lucia Residents Association that the needs of St Lucia residents are not the same as those of the UQ population.”

A staged approach

Both WECA and Kurilpa Futures have raised the possibility of a staged approach to the bridges that would see the Toowong Bridge built first.

“If Council is determined to proceed with the St Lucia to West End bridge, further work on a bridge for the already well serviced St Lucia to West End crossing should be suspended until lessons from the Toowong bridge including actual trip volumes are, in turn, properly assessed,” Kurilpa Futures said.

Who will pay?

When announcing the five new bridges Council put forward a figure of \$550 million, saying it would cover up to two thirds of the total cost and will request state or federal funding for the remaining third.

In September 2020, during the State Election campaign, the Queensland Greens called for the State Government and Brisbane City Council to jointly fund the proposed West End to Toowong pedestrian and cycle bridge on a 50/50 basis. The Kangaroo Point bridge is estimated to be costing \$190 million. The Greens said the West End to Toowong bridge is likely to cost between \$120 to \$180 million, depending on a range of factors including how much land needs to be acquired for the landing on the Toowong side.

Councillor Ryan Murphy, Chair of Council’s Public & Active Transport Committee said:

“We’ve always said that contributions from the State and Federal governments will be necessary to complete the balance of the Green Bridges Program.”

Cr Sri has said he is concerned the LNP Council administration does not have the funding to build the bridges.



If we reject this, we will not get another offer.

One argument put forward by Greens politicians against rejecting either of the bridges has been that if the community rejects the bridges now, Council will not spend the money somewhere else, but will be less likely to fund major infrastructure in this area in the future.

Cr Sri told attendees at his 27 February forum that the community's rejection of the Bellbowrie-Wacol bridge as part of the Green Bridges program is an indication that it is not always the best strategic response to offer an outright 'no' to Council on its proposals.

"... in taking the position of saying 'no' to a project that community ended up with no positive investment," Cr Sri said.

Concerns were raised in a similar vein at a February meeting in Guyatt Park, that Council's default position is to walk away from the community if it rejects its proposals, rather than working with them on solutions. This is something the West End community has seen in respect to the Dornoch Terrace safety study.

Asked what it would do if the community rejected the St Lucia bridge, Councillor Ryan Murphy told the Westender:

“Ultimately, the community plays an important part in planning for the St Lucia to West End Green Bridge and all community feedback will be carefully considered when determining the next steps.”

“Should feedback from the community suggest there is little support for a St Lucia to West End Green Bridge, Council will consider alternative locations for a green bridge in other parts of Brisbane.”

Cr Sr has said that he has been asked if it is possible to get the funding for one or both West End footbridges diverted to other more urgently needed local infrastructure or services.

“My analysis of the current political landscape is that this would be quite difficult. The LNP administration are emotionally invested in fulfilling their public commitment for ‘five new green bridges,’ and the Lord Mayor has already shown his reluctance to divert funding elsewhere,” Cr Sri wrote on his website.

Next Steps

When asked how it will work through the feedback it has received on the West End bridges, and how it will weigh feedback from advocacy groups, Councillors, individuals and community groups, Council said:

“When consultation concludes, we will undertake a detailed analysis of all feedback received. This includes Council’s online survey, community information sessions, our 1800 hotline, emails and submissions received from stakeholders including community groups and local elected representatives.”

“Following consideration of the submissions, the results will be publicly released.”

Council said that project costs will be subject to further technical investigations. Feasibility assessments and the proposed cost will be released in the business case, which Council expects to complete by late 2021.

Council said it will continue to keep the community updated on its progress.

If the driver for the planned bridges is to alleviate traffic congestion in the city, Council will need to provide a clear demonstration of how this will be achieved in its business case.

Submissions

Community and advocacy groups have made detailed submissions that have only been briefly mentioned here. To read full submissions from [WECA](#), [Kurilpa Futures](#), [South Brisbane Sailing Club](#), [Bicycle Queensland](#) and [Queensland Walks](#) check their websites and Facebook posts.

For Jonathan Sri’s position on the bridges see his [web page](#).

Michael Berkman had planned to host a [forum at UQ](#) on Monday, 29 March. The event was postponed due to the latest Covid-19 shutdown.

Council's online survey can be accessed [HERE](#) and remains open until 31 March 2021.

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