

**ATTACHMENTS FOR: AGENDA NO. 4/20
WORKS AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING**



Meeting Date: Tuesday 12 May 2020
Location: Online Audio Visual Meeting
Time: 6.00pm

ATTACHMENTS FOR WORKS AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Item

- 3 DOG RECREATION NEEDS STUDY 2020**
Attachment 2 Dog Receptions Needs Study - Technical Report
May 2020



Dog Recreation Needs Study

Technical Report

May 2020

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1. Introduction

This Technical Report accompanies and supports the *Dog Recreation Needs Study May 2020 Report*. It details the research findings of the Study and provides the evidence base for the strategic directions, policy initiatives and actions recommended in the main report.

1.1. Background

In early 2010, Council officers undertook a *Study on the Provision of Recreation Areas for Dogs in the City of Ryde*. At the time, the City had two designated dog off-leash areas – at Blenheim and Meadowbank Parks.

The report on the study was completed in July 2010. It identified a shortfall in the provision of dog exercise facilities and recommended 20 additional locations (comprising 7 enclosed free running areas, 4 unenclosed free running areas, 6 shared sports field facilities, 2 dog walking trails and 1 dog water hole).

At its meeting of 20 July 2010, Council considered the report and resolved to undertake a trial of the recommended dog exercise areas. On the basis of the trial outcomes, Council resolved, at its meeting of 14 June 2011, to confirm 10 of the recommended facilities, as follows:

- A further three enclosed off-leash areas (ELS Hall Park, Denistone Park and Olympic Park)
- Three free running off-leash areas (North Ryde Common, Kotara Park and Santa Rosa Park)
- Four shared-use sportsgrounds (Peel Park, Brush Farm Park, Darvall Park, Pidding Park)

Council also resolved to prohibit any further off-leash access to seven of the trial parks due to low community support (Carara Reserve, Fontenoy Park), potential natural area impacts (Waterloo Park, Santa Rosa Park and Forrester Park), user conflicts (Putney Park) and low need due to nearby alternate off-leash area (Cudal Reserve).

In the 8 years since the additional off-leash areas were established, one additional off-leash area has been established (at Ryde Park).

Recognising these changes, Council resolved (12/18, 25 September 2018):

- a. *That Council acknowledges the increasing amount of dog owners in the Ryde LGA;*
- b. *That a review of the dog off-leash areas be undertaken by reviewing the City of Ryde Dog Recreation Needs Strategy in 2019-20 and the project be included in the draft 2019-23 Delivery Plan*
- c. *That as part of the review, community consultation to be undertaken in respect to all parks becoming a dog off-leash area when not used for organised sport, in particular Monash Park.*

Subsequently, at its 26 Feb 2019 Meeting, the following Motion was put to Council:

- a. *That the General Manager ask staff to include in the future Dog Recreation Needs Study, scheduled to be undertaken in 2019/2020, an analysis of the need and appropriate sites for a dog exercise area that has access to water.*
- b. *That Kissing Point Park and other City of Ryde Parks along the Parramatta River be considered as a possible site for this area during the preparation of the Study.*

The Motion was Amended with Council resolving (2/19, 26 February 2019) as follows:

That this Motion be deferred pending advice from NSW Health, Sydney Water, OEH, GSC and discussion by the PRCG on the health implications of a dog park being built metres from a potential swim site.

1.2. Purpose of the study

In accordance with Council's resolutions, the purpose of this project is to review and update the Study on the *Provision of Recreation Areas for Dogs in the City of Ryde* in accordance with current 'best practice' in the provision of dog exercise areas and the needs of a population that is now much larger than when the initial Study was undertaken 8 years ago.

1.3. Key Issues and challenges

The key issues and challenges addressed in this study are as follows:

- Identifying and ranking community views on whether or not off-leash dog recreation areas – enclosed and/or unenclosed are a legitimate use of public parks and green space
- Identifying and responding to specific demands for dog recreation areas – current and future (including increasing use by professional dog walkers)
- Identifying the optimal supply of dog recreation areas (i.e. type of facilities x number x hierarchy x distribution and catchment area)
- Managing dog recreation space and facilities (i.e. conflict management; dog owner education; enforcement of Companion Animals Act; facility maintenance)

1.4. Structure of the report

The key issues and challenges are addressed in Section 2 to 7, as follows:

- Dog ownership patterns and trends – nationally and locally
- Types and benefits of dog off-leash facilities
- Existing dog off-leash facilities in the City of Ryde
- Benchmarking against Sydney North District Councils
- Best practice in dog off-leash area planning, design and management
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Evaluation of Council's existing dog recreation area strategy (against current best practice and the outcomes of the community and stakeholder consultations)
- Identification of key issues and service gaps

Following the issues analysis, a new dog recreation areas plan is proposed in Sections 8 and 9, with recommendations provided in Section 10.

2. Study context – Dogs and dog recreation facilities

2.1. Dog ownership patterns and trends national

Dog ownership rates

Australia has one of the highest pet ownership rates in the world – with 62% of Australian households owning a pet, with more than half of these households (38.5%) owning at least one dog.

In November 2016, there was an estimated population of 4.8 million dogs in Australia (with an average of 1.3 dogs in 3.6 million households). This was up by 130,000 (or 2.8%) from 4.67 million in 2013 and represented an average of 20 dogs for every 100 people across the nation¹.

The dog population increase of 2.8% between 2013 and 2016 was higher than the human population increase of 2.1% in that period, but the ‘household penetration’ rate actually fell slightly from 39.2% of households to 38.5% (perhaps reflecting the higher proportion of single-person households and the lower dog ownership rates of those households).

Dog ownership rates are average in NSW, at 38% of households, compared to a low of 33% in Western Australia and highs of 45% in Tasmania, Northern Territory and South Australia.

Barriers to dog ownership

The 2016 Animal Medicines Australia national pet survey found that the main barriers to owning pets were lifestyle incompatibilities (21% of survey respondents), strata/body corporates not allowing them (17%), too much responsibility (14%), cost (13%) and other household members not wanting them (10%).

According to the survey report, the barriers are significant. For example, while more than half the survey respondents who don’t currently own a pet (59%) said they would like to acquire one, only one in four (15%) confirmed that they intended to buy a pet in the next 12 months.

Those wishing to acquire a pet dog, but being held back by one or more barriers were, according to the survey, more likely to be female, living alone, living in an apartment and/or renting.

Those intending to acquire in the next 12 months, and not as affected by barriers, were more likely to be Gen Y, university educated, from a NESB background and/or living with children at home.

The survey found a strong desire for dog ownership amongst renters and those living in apartments (39%) but barriers were particularly significant for these groups – particularly because of ‘unsuitable homes’ and/or ‘strata/body corporate regulations’.

Similarly, the survey also found a strong desire for pet ownership amongst single people and part-time workers but these cohorts experienced significant barriers with being able to provide adequate care and/or cost.

¹ Animal Medicines Australia, Pet Ownership in Australia report, 2013 and 2016

Impact of urban densification on dog ownership

The increase in higher-density housing in urban areas has been perceived as a threat to pet ownership in, because those living in units and apartments are less likely to own pets (with only 41% owning a pet compared to 68% of those living in a traditional house).

As indicated in Section 2.1, 38% of households in both NSW and Australia own a pet dog, but this is a much higher 45% for 'freestanding house' households and a much lower 29% and 18% for 'townhouse' and 'apartment' households, respectively.

The key reasons for the lower ownership rates at apartment blocks are lack of sufficient and/or suitable space as well as traditional strata/body corporate rules which often exclude pets from multi-dwelling developments.

However due to recognition of the health benefits of companion animals and the sheer number of people moving into higher density developments, the restrictive strata/body corporate rules are now being relaxed or removed across the Australia.

In 2018, for example, the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal held, in the *Yardy Case*², that a by-law (i.e. by-law 16) under the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 (NSW) imposing a blanket prohibition on pet ownership was invalid because it was 'harsh, unconscionable and oppressive' and out of step with knowledge of the health benefits of pet ownership and community views.

Specifically, the Tribunal concluded that there is contemporary acceptance that, within strata units, lot owners should have the right to keep pets provided there is a mechanism for assessment and regulation by the owner's corporation. The Tribunal consequently ordered that by-law 16 be revoked.

The principles and reasoning adopted in the *Yardy Case* are likely to be precedents in all future disputes over similar strata by-laws and may result in further relaxation of pet restrictions on strata titles.

Impact of changing family/household structures

Changing family and household structures (i.e. diminishing family and household sizes) are also perceived as a threat to pet, including dog, ownership because lower levels of pet ownership are associated with smaller households.

The Animal Medicines Australia survey, for example, found that households with 3 or more adults and households with children were more likely to own pets.

While 38% of household overall owned dogs, the ownership levels were significantly higher for larger households with 3+ adults and households with children (both 48%) and significantly lower for smaller households - that is, single-person households (29%) and households without children (35%).

With significant growth of smaller households in recent years (e.g. with lone-person households growing from 19% of all households in 1986 to 25% in 2016) and a converse decline in the proportion of larger households (e.g. with family' households declining from 77% to 71% in the same period), there has been an associated downward pressure on dog ownership levels.

² *Yardy v Owners Corporation SP 57237 [2018] NSWCATCD 19*

Impact of immigration and increasing cultural diversity

The proportion of the Australian population born overseas has been increasing in recent years - up from 22% in 2006 to 26.3% in 2016.

This has implications for pet, including dog, ownership because people born overseas in NESB countries are less likely to own pets - with 31% of NESB households owning a dog compared to 38% overall.

However, this may change in the future because people from NESB backgrounds are also more likely to want a pet in the future and more likely, than average, to act on that desire.

Impact of population ageing

The proportion of the Australian population aged 65 years+ is increasing at a rapid rate - up from 12.6% in 2001 to 14% in 2011 and 15.8% in 2016. The proportion is forecast to reach nearly 19% by 2031.

As with the increasing NESB population, this has implications for rates of dog ownership because the older age cohorts are less likely to own pets - with only 34% of 'Baby Boomer' (50-69 years) households and 28% of 'Silent Generation' (70+years) households owning dogs compared to the much higher 45% of Generation Y (18-29 years) households and 41% of Generation X (30-49 years) households.

This may change in the future due to the increasing evidence that pets can substantially improve the quality of life of the ageing population. But various programs of assistance will likely be required to facilitate such a turnaround.

Dog exercise and recreation

The Animal Medicines Australia survey found that 74% of dogs are taken on walks in their local neighbourhoods. Some of these are just walked on local streets but 52% are taken to 'parks and other public places'.

There is variation between large and small dogs - with only 38% of very small dogs (i.e. less than 4kgs) taken to 'parks and other public places'.

2.2. Dog ownership patterns and trends - City of Ryde

Dog ownership rates

Based on official (Pet Registry) records, the City of Ryde’s dog ownership trends have not followed the national trends. That is, growth in dog numbers has not tracked higher than human population numbers.

In 2011, when the six-month off-leash trials were undertaken, as recommended by the 2010 Study on the *Provision of Recreation Areas for Dogs in the City of Ryde*, there were 8,932 registered and/or identified dogs in the City¹.

Seven years later, in 2018, the registered/identified dog population had grown by less than 2% to 9,091 dogs despite a 23% population growth in the same period².

Between 2011 and 2018, there was no apparent change to the spread of the dog population between small and large dogs – with small dogs accounting for 56% of the registered dog population in both 2011 and 2018.

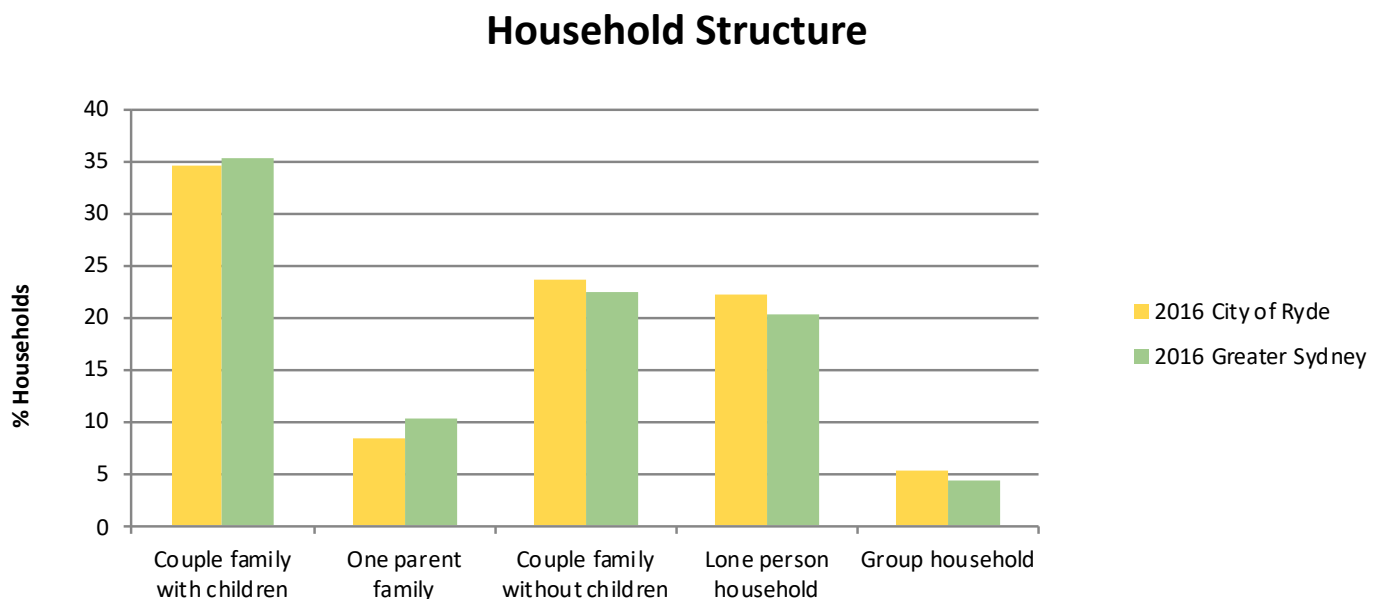
In addition to the registered dogs there is an unknown quantity of unregistered and unidentified dogs in the City.

Impacts of changing household/family structures

As indicated in Section 2.3, dog ownership levels are significantly higher for larger households with 3+ adults and households with children and significantly lower for lone-person households and households without children.

Accordingly, because the City of Ryde has a significantly higher than average lone-person household population and a lower than average proportion of families with children (as illustrated in *Figure 1*), dog ownership would be expected to be lower than average.

Figure 1 - Household Type - City of Ryde & Greater Sydney, 2016



1 Estimate based on dogs on the NSW Pet Register with a City of Ryde address and born between 1 Jan 1998 and 31 Dec 2010

2 Estimate based on dogs on the NSW Pet Register with a City of Ryde address and born between 1 Jan 2006 and 31 Dec 2018

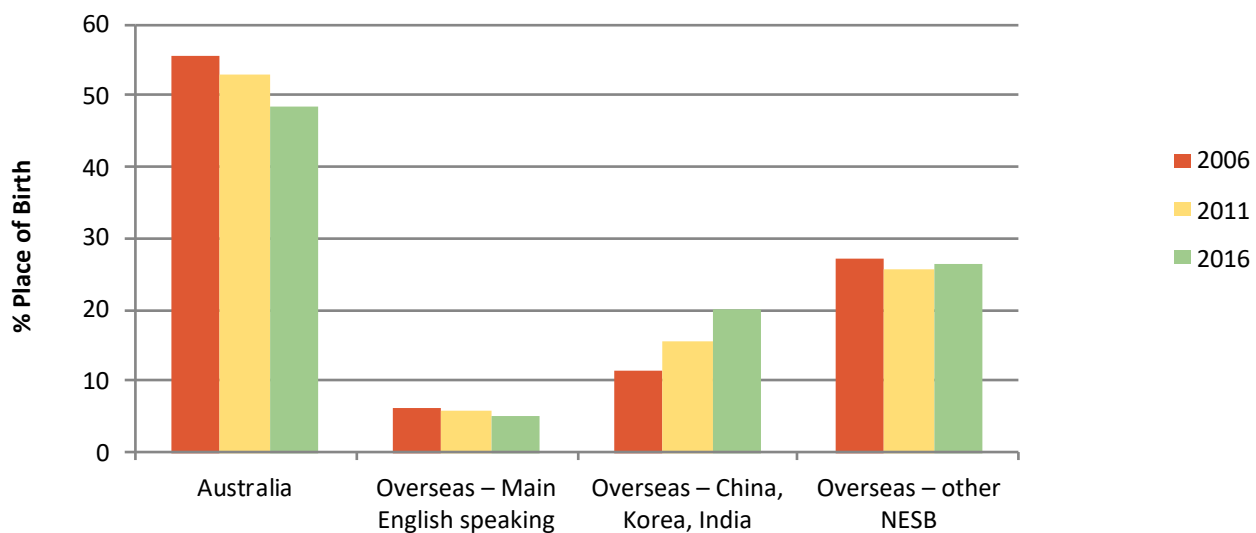
Impacts of increasing cultural diversity

As also indicated in Section 2.3, pet (including dog) ownership levels are significantly lower than average for people born overseas in NESB countries.

This is a relevant consideration for the City of Ryde due to the significant changes in the City's cultural diversity in recent years.

This is illustrated in *Figure 2* which shows the change in cultural diversity since 2006 - with a significant decline in the proportion born in Australia (down from 55.4% to 48.5%) and the marked increase in the proportion born in a NESB country - with those born in China, South Korea and India (up from 11.3% in 2006 to 20% in 2016).

Figure 2 - Country of Birth - City of Ryde 2006, 2011 & 2016



Impacts of population ageing

As indicated in Section 2.3, the older age cohorts are less likely to own pets - with only 34% of 'Baby Boomer' households and 28% of 'Silent Generation' households owning dogs compared to the much higher 45% of Generation Y households and 41% of Generation X households.

In the City of Ryde, the proportions of these population cohorts have remained almost steady between 2006 and 2016 (with 'Gen Y/Gen X' only increasing from 54.4% to 54.9% and 'Baby Boomer/Silent Generation' increasing from 25.7% to 26.0%, as illustrated in *Figure 4*.

Therefore, in the City of Ryde, the impact of population ageing on the rates of dog ownership has been close to neutral.

This is different to Greater Sydney, where a substantial increase in the 'Gen X' population between 2006 and 2016 (up from 22.3% to 27.8%, as shown in *Figure 3*) has lifted the overall rate of dog ownership due to the relatively high ownership rates of the Gen X age cohorts.

Figure 3 - Age Structure - Greater Sydney 2006, 2011 & 2016

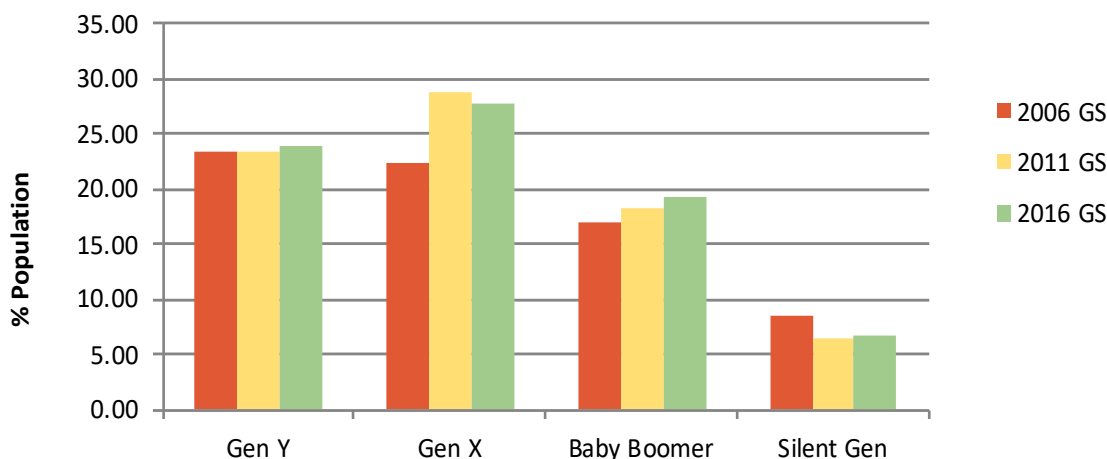
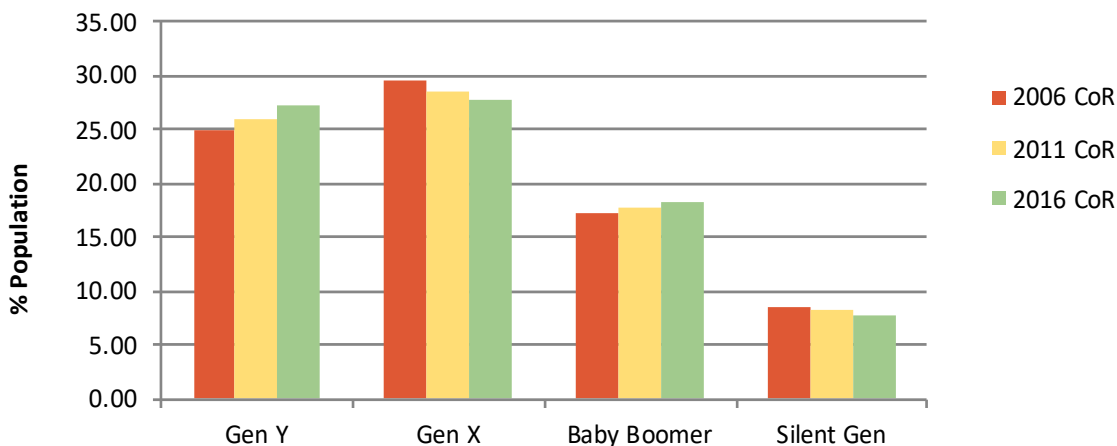


Figure 4 - Age Structure - City of Ryde 2006, 2011 & 2016



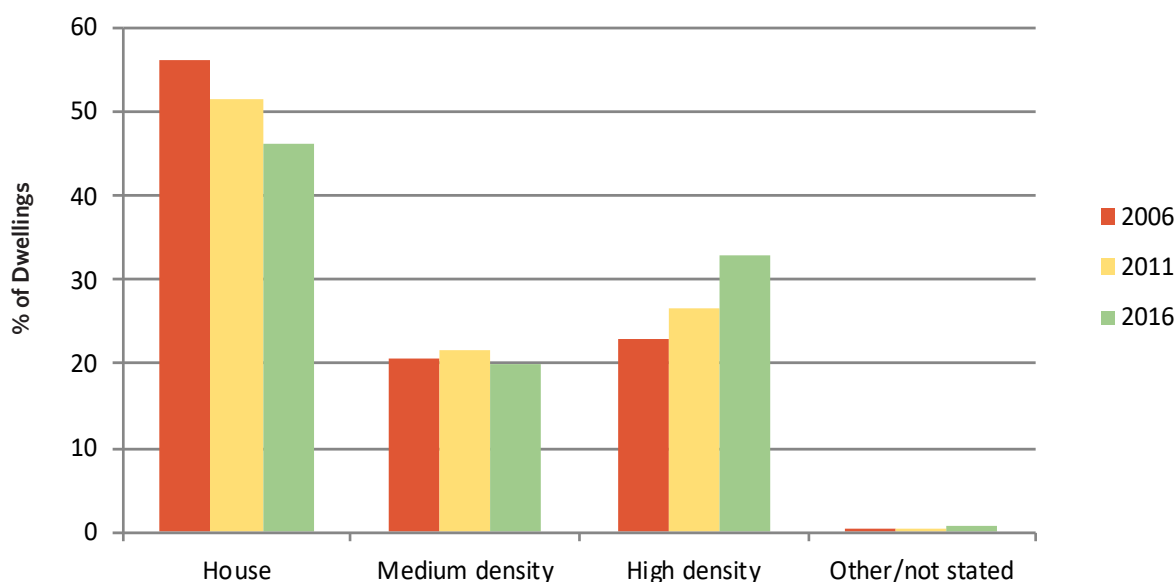
Impacts of increasing residential density on dog ownership

As indicated in Section 2.2, above, those living in units and apartments are less likely to own pets (with only 41% owning a pet compared to 68% of those living in a traditional house) due to lack of sufficient and/or suitable space and strata/body corporate rules which prohibit pets.

Figure 5 illustrates the significant change in dwelling types in the City of Ryde since 2006 - with a significant increase in high density housing and a parallel decrease in separate houses.

While the number of residential units in the City increased by 10,436 - or 29% between 2006 and 2016 (up from 35,664 in 2006 to 46,100 in 2016), the expected increase in dog numbers (resulting from this new household formation) would be around 2,300 dogs (an increase of only 18.8%) due to the lower ownership rates of medium/high density residents.

Figure 5 - Dwelling Type - City of Ryde 2006, 2011 & 2016



Distribution of dog ownership

Dog ownership is not distributed evenly across the City. Ownership is significantly higher in lower density areas - particularly Putney, East Ryde, North Ryde, Chatswood West and Denistone, where 'separate houses' account for at least 75% of all dwellings as illustrated in Fig 6.

Figure 6 also shows how ownership rates have declined between 2011 and 2018 - particularly in areas that have undergone significant densification (i.e. North Ryde, Top Ryde, West Ryde and Marsfield).

2.3. Types and benefits of dog recreation facilities

NSW Companion Animals Act 1998

During the 1980's and 90's, due to increasing dog-related conflicts in public places and associated community concerns, State Governments across Australia adopted and implemented laws requiring dogs to be on-leash at all times in public areas.

In NSW, for example, the *Companion Animals Act 1998* requires that all dogs must be on-leash and under the effective control of a competent person at all times in public areas, unless at a designated off-leash area (or exempt for another specified reason e.g. police dogs, dogs attending a dog obedience class).

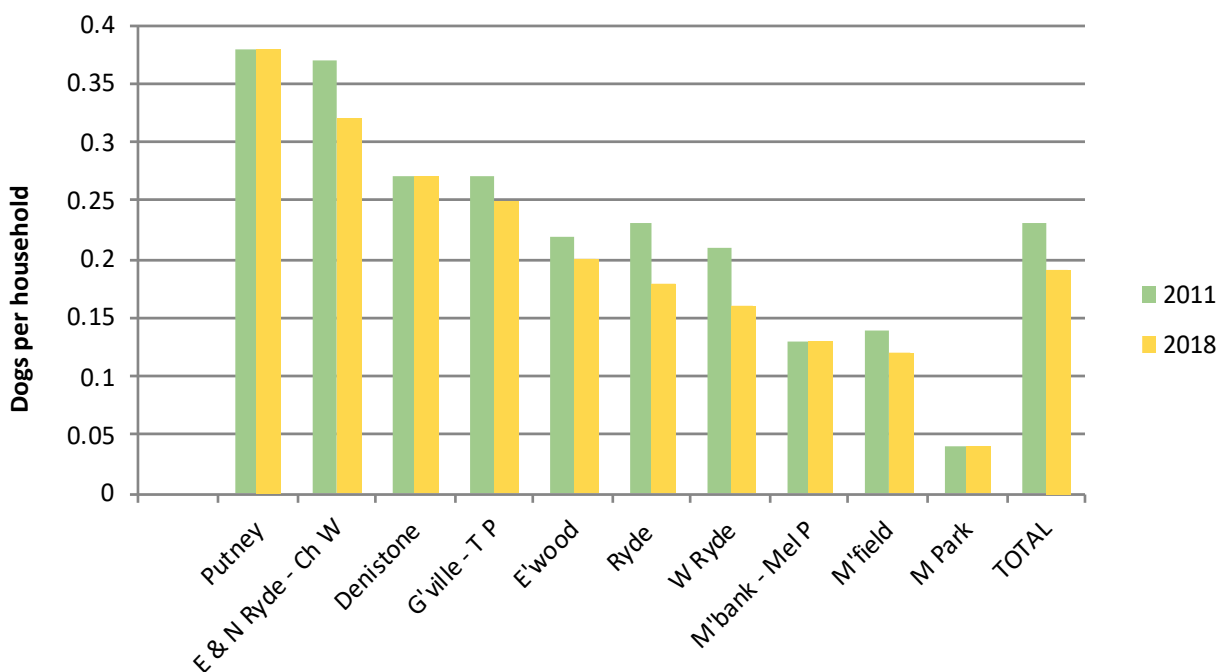
The Act also prohibits dogs (both on and off-leash) from certain specified areas - including:

- Within 10m of a playground or food preparation area
- Sportsgrounds, beaches and other recreation areas where a local authority has specifically prohibited dogs
- Areas set aside for the protection of wildlife and where a where a local authority has specifically prohibited dogs

As a consequence of these restrictions, a parallel demand for 'off-leash' (or 'free running') dog exercise areas emerged to facilitate the on-going need for off-leash exercise and recreation.

The *NSW Companion Animals Act* explicitly acknowledges this on-going demand for off-leash opportunity, as it requires all councils to provide at least one off-leash area where dogs can be exercised off-leash, at least during certain hours.

Figure 6 - Registered dog population distribution (dogs per household) - City of Ryde 2011 and 2018



Wildlife Protection Areas

Three Wildlife Protection Areas public places set aside for the protection of native wildlife have been established in the City of Ryde under the *Companion Animals Act*. The three sites (Field of Mars Reserve, Kittys Creek corridor and Terrys Creek corridor) came into effect on 25 November 2019.

There are two categories of Wildlife Protection Area. Field of Mars Reserve is a Category 1 Area, with 'no cats or dogs allowed at all times' and the two creek corridors are Category 2 Areas, with 'no cats allowed at all times and dogs permitted on leash along established tracks'.

Facility typologies

In the wake of the *NSW Companion Animals Act* adoption, and the adoption of similar legislation in other States, a wide variety of off-leash dog park or dog recreation area types have emerged, as summarised in *Table 1*.

In all other areas, other than those areas detailed in *Table 2*, dogs are either excluded (due to social and/or environmental impacts) or have to be on-leash at all times.

Table 1 - Off-leash facility types

| Facility type | Sub-type | Details |
|--|--|---|
| Free running dog park (enclosed) | Fully enclosed | Exclusive spaces designed just for dogs and their owners with a range of support facilities. Complete separation from other park activities. |
| | Part enclosed | Similar to 'fully enclosed' dog parks but not quite as 'exclusive', with some potential for multi-use. Near-complete separation from other park activities. |
| Free running shared space (unenclosed) | All or most parks - all times | All parks (except environmentally sensitive areas and spaces prohibited under the <i>Companion Animals Act</i>) are declared permissible off-leash areas. |
| | All or most parks - off-leash when not being used for organised sport | All parks (except environmentally sensitive areas and spaces prohibited under the <i>Companion Animals Act</i>) are declared permissible off-leash areas at certain specified hours of the day e.g. early morning, later evening. Access hours may vary from weekend to week days. |
| | Designated spaces all times | Suitable (in terms of size, terrain, compatible uses, passive surveillance etc.) parks or spaces within parks evenly spread over a local government area (or spread according to dog population locations) to enable easy and equitable access. |
| | Designated spaces time share - off-leash when not being used for organised sport | As for 'designated spaces - all times' but only for certain specified hours of the day/night |

Benefits of dog recreation facilities

The provision of dog off-leash facilities is justified by the demonstrated social and health benefits associated with well-designed and located facilities. The core benefits for dogs, dog owners and the general community, respectively – are summarised in *Table 2*.

Table 2 - Off-leash facility benefits

| Beneficiary | Type of benefit |
|-------------|--|
| Dogs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socialisation and exercise for dogs. Dogs that are well socialised and exercised are healthier and happier, less likely to be aggressive and less likely to behave in a destructive or annoying way such as excessive barking. - Safe environment for dogs to play off-leash and not encounter cars, bikes and other dangers |
| Dog owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity for dog owners to socialise, connect and share leisure time and information - thereby building community bonds and social capital and promoting mental and emotional health - Accessible option for seniors and dog owners with a disability to exercise their dogs |
| Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to educate dog owners about animal health and welfare and promote responsible dog ownership - Reduced conflict with other users of open space - Affordable recreation option for dog owners and their families - Rest opportunity for dog owners travelling with pets - Reduction in crime in some areas where parks are activated over extended hours - Community building |

3. Study context – Existing City of Ryde off-leash facilities

The City currently has 13 off-leash areas – including 4 fully enclosed areas and 9 unenclosed or part enclosed areas – as illustrated at *Figure 7*.

All of these off-leash areas were established following the off-leash trials except Blenheim Park and Meadowbank Park which were both established in 2006.

The 4 enclosed and 4 of the unenclosed/part enclosed off-leash areas are available at all times, while the other 5 are available on a time-share basis when grounds are not being used for organised sport – as detailed at *Table 3*.

Table 3 - Off-leash facilities in City of Ryde

| Facility type | Sub-type | Facilities | Suburb | Year established |
|--|--|-------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Enclosed free running dog park | Fully enclosed | Blenheim Park | North Ryde | 2006 |
| | | Denistone Park | Denistone | 2018 |
| | | ELS Hall Park | North Ryde | 2014 |
| | | Ryde Park | Ryde | 2017 |
| Unenclosed/part enclosed free running shared space | Part enclosed | Olympic Park | Gladesville | 2017 |
| | Designated parks all times | North Ryde Common | North Ryde | 2011 |
| | | Kotara Park | Marsfield | 2011 |
| | | Santa Rosa Park | Ryde | 2011 |
| | Designated parks - off-leash when not being used for organised sport | Peel Park | Gladesville | 2011 |
| | | Brush Farm Park | Eastwood | 2011 |
| | | Darvall Park | West Ryde | 2011 |
| | | Pidding Park | Ryde | 2011 |
| | | Meadowbank Park | Meadowbank | 2006 |

3.1. City of Ryde off-leash facility provision ratios

Table 4 shows the number of dogs and off-leash areas in each suburb and the key provision ratios, in terms of ‘households per dog’, ‘households per off-leash area’ and number of dogs per off-leash area.

The table indicates that Putney – a primarily low density neighbourhood has the highest concentration of dog ownership (with one dog per 2.6 households) while Macquarie Park has the lowest concentration (with one dog per 23.2 households).

With respect to dog park provision, Meadowbank-Melrose Park has the highest per capita provision – with just 375 dogs per off-leash area and Eastwood has the lowest – with 973 dogs per off-leash area. Despite having the highest concentration of dog ownership, Putney has no off-leash areas (although it is relatively close to the Ryde Olympic Park facility).

Figure 7 - Off-leash facilities in City of Ryde

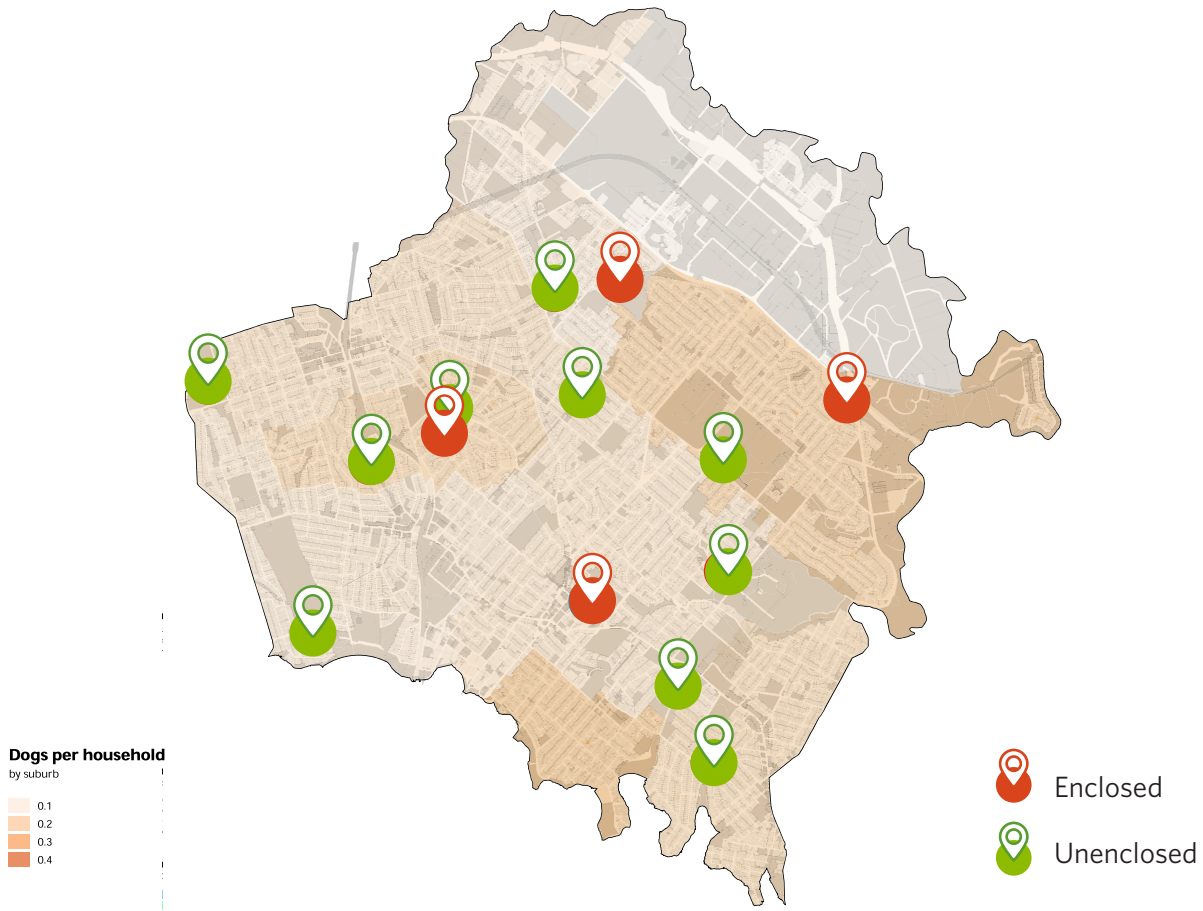


Table 4 - Off-leash facility provision ratios x suburb (2018)

| Suburb/precinct | Quantities | | | Provision ratios | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Households | Dogs | Off-leash areas | Dogs per households | Households per off-leash area | Dogs per off-leash area |
| Putney | 1,360 | 514 | 0 | 0.38 | 1,360 | n/a |
| East Ryde N Ryde Chatswood West | 4,827 | 1,536 | 3 | 0.32 | 1,609 | 512 |
| Denistone Denistone West and East | 2,300 | 624 | 1 | 0.27 | 2,300 | 624 |
| Gladesville Tennyson Point | 4,574 | 1,137 | 2 | 0.25 | 2,287 | 569 |
| Eastwood | 4,896 | 973 | 1 | 0.20 | 4,896 | 973 |
| Ryde | 11,634 | 2,150 | 3 | 0.18 | 3,878 | 717 |
| West Ryde | 5,550 | 877 | 1 | 0.16 | 5,550 | 877 |
| Meadowbank Melrose Park | 2,836 | 375 | 1 | 0.13 | 2,836 | 375 |
| Marsfield | 5,402 | 659 | 1 | 0.12 | 5,402 | 659 |
| Macquarie Park | 3,573 | 154 | 0 | 0.04 | 3,573 | n/a |
| Unknown | | 93 | | 0.19 | | |
| TOTAL | 47,202 | 9,092 | 13 | 0.38 | 3,631 | 699 |

3.2. Service provision benchmarks

The existing provision of dog off-leash facilities in the City of Ryde has been benchmarked against Northern District Councils – as detailed at *Table 5*.

Table 5 - Off-leash facility types and provision ratios: City of Ryde & Northern District Councils

| Council | All times | | | | Time limited | | | Total | Total per capita |
|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|------------------|
| | Enclosed/ fenced OLA | Free running OLA | Beach/ water | Cemetery | Free running OLA | Shared oval | Beach/ water | | |
| L Cove | - | 11 | | | | 5 | | 16 | 2,468 |
| H Hill | - | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | | 4 | 3,727 |
| Mosman | - | 3 | - | - | 5 | - | *3 | 8 | 3,860 |
| Kur-ring-gai | 4 | 5 | | | | 12 | | 21 | 6,002 |
| Willoughby | - | 5 | - | - | - | 8 | | 13 | 6,180 |
| Northern Beaches | 2 | 19 | 1 | 1 | - | 5 | | 28 | 9,688 |
| Ryde | 5 | 3 | - | - | 1 | 4 | | 13 | 9,804 |
| Hornsby | 6 | 1 | - | - | - | 2 | | 9 | 16,750 |
| Total | 13 | 54 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 35 | 3 | 112 | 8,172 |
| N Sydney | - | 158 | - | - | - | 13 | - | 171 | 434 |

*Included in free running OLA all times (1) and free running OLA time limited (2)

4. Study context: the existing Recreation Areas for Dogs Plan

Background and purpose of 2010 Plan

In early 2010, Council requested a review of dog recreation facilities in other local government areas and, based on this, further consideration of facilities to be provided in the City of Ryde. At the time, Council had two designated off-leash areas Meadowbank Park and Blenheim Park.

The Study on the Provision of Recreation Areas for Dogs in the City of Ryde was undertaken to meet this request and was completed in July 2010.

The aims of the Study were to:

- Identify the City's need for dog recreation areas
- Review provisions in surrounding LGA's
- Review trends in provision of dog recreation areas
- Conduct suitability assessment of Council's open space for additional dog recreation areas
- Recommend additional off-leash areas

The *Study* developed a methodology for the selection of dog recreation areas and applied the methodology to Council's 207 parks and identified 19 sites and 2 linear trail as suitable for off-leash facilities.

The following two sub-sections describe and evaluate the *Study's* site selection methodology.

Site suitability methodology

The methodology involved a 2-tier process of assessment for Council's 207 parks, with the first stage eliminating parks that were deemed to be unsuitable for off-leash dog recreation and, the second stage, identifying the most suitable of parks on the basis of various 'constraining' and 'complementary' factors.

In the first stage, 106 of Council's parks were assessed to be unsuitable for off-leash dog recreation - due to natural values, size, location and/or cultural/heritage values - as shown in *Table 6*:

Table 6 - Site suitability assessment 2010 - Stage 1

| Elimination factor | No. parks eliminated |
|---|----------------------|
| Significant natural values (i.e. National Park and land categorised as 'natural area') | 46 |
| Small size | 53 |
| Small size in commercial areas | 5 |
| Small size have cultural/heritage values | 2 |

The parks in *Table 6* were eliminated from any further consideration.

In the second stage, the remaining parks were given scores according to various suitability and constraining factors, as shown in *Table 7*:

Table 7 - Site suitability assessment 2010 - Stage 2

| Factor | Variable | High score | Low score |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Sports ground | Presence/levels of use | None/low use | High use |
| Sports ground - circumference fence | Provision | Provided | Not provided |
| Bushland | Presence/proximity/separation | None/fenced | High value |
| Playground | Presence/proximity/separation | None/enclosed | Playground unable to be fenced |
| Cafe | Presence/proximity/separation | None/enclosed | Café unable to be enclosed |
| Access road | Road hierarchy | Local road | Major road |
| Car park - off street | Availability | Yes | No |
| Car park - on street | Availability | Yes | No |
| Toilet facilities | Availability | Yes | No |
| Neighbouring residences | Impact | Low | High |
| Other park uses | Impact | Low | High |

Based on application of the 'suitability' and 'constraining' factors, a total of 23 parks were rated as suitable for dog off-leash recreation. These comprised 5 types of off-leash facility, spread evenly across the City, as summarised in *Table 8*:

Table 8 - Site suitability assessment 2010 - suitable sites

| Type of off-leash facility | Number | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------|
| | West Ward | Central Ward | East Ward | Total |
| Free running enclosed | 3 | 1 | 3 | 7 |
| Free running unenclosed | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Sports ground shared | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Trail | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Beach/water play | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 8 | 6 | 9 | 23 |

Evaluation of methodology/Best practice review

The site selection methodology used in the 2010 Study used a range of criteria including host park size, access, social impacts, potential for shared infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

In order to evaluate the robustness of the 2010 study, a best practice review of contemporary off-leash network planning and site selection methodologies was undertaken. The review findings are detailed at Attachments A and B, for 'off-leash network planning' and 'site evaluation and selection', respectively.

The review found that, while the 2010 study methodology was sound at the time, it did not incorporate a range of off-leash suitability criteria now regarded as best practice.

Best practice approaches also include host park natural features, shape and minimum size of off-leash areas, boundaries, connectivity with active transport networks, dog population distribution, co-location synergies and visual impacts.

Table 13 shows the criteria used in the 2010 Study (in bold print and marked with a ✓) together with key criteria identified in the best practice review but not used in the 2010 study (i.e. those criteria marked with a ✗).

A new off-leash network and site selection matrix has been developed in accordance with current best practice and the criteria listed in *Table 9*. The matrix is detailed in Section 7.1.

Table 9 - Criteria used in 2010 Study compared to current best practice

| Criteria | Best Practice | 2010 Study |
|--|---|------------|
| Host park size | Guidelines on size of host park are generally about having sufficient space to provide buffers from other activities and surrounding land uses. | ✓ |
| Host park natural features | Prefer sites with good drainage and some natural vegetation and mature trees (for amenity and shade). | ✗ |
| | Prefer sites with varied topography (to provide definition for different activity zones). | ✗ |
| Dog park size | Most guides and strategies recommend min area of 3,000m ² for dog parks. | ✗ |
| Shape & boundaries | Shape requirements are fairly flexible but some guides recommend irregular shapes to better disperse users through a site. | ✗ |
| | Linear shape is important for walking trail opportunities. | ✗ |
| | While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation or fencing) between off-leash areas and major roads. | ✗ |
| Access | Requirement for connectivity with active transport network and surrounding neighbourhoods to maximise walking access to dog parks. | ✗ |
| | Preference for highly visible sites on activated streets (e.g. routes with pedestrian traffic generators shops, community facilities). | ✗ |
| | Require existing on or off-street parking or capacity to provide it. Off-street preferred for higher hierarchy parks. | ✓ |
| Social impacts & sustainability | Prefer sites in district and regional scale parks with strong local community support/ requests for dog facilities. | ✓ |
| | Prefer sites in areas with high dog populations. | ✗ |
| | Prefer co-location with compatible uses/activities (e.g. multi-recreation opportunities for families). | ✗ |
| | Prefer sites with good surveillance from public areas. | ✗ |
| | Prefer sites with minimal impact on residents and other park users. | ✓ |
| | Prefer non-high profile sites with no or minimal conflict with incompatible uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sports grounds). | ✓ |
| | Prefer sites with minimal social impacts - sufficient buffer (i.e. distance, street, plantings etc.) between dog park and neighbouring houses/schools/shops. | ✗ |
| | Prefer safe sites - e.g. not adjacent to high traffic roads | ✓ |
| Economic impacts & sustainability | Prefer under-used sites with potential for 'activation' | ✓ |
| | Prefer sites with potential for shared infrastructure (lighting, parking, toilets, water, fencing, furniture). | ✓ |
| Environmental impacts & sustainability | Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on landscape. | ✗ |
| | Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on visual appeal of park. | ✗ |
| | Avoid impacts on sensitive environmental areas (wildlife habitat, biodiversity, steep slopes) via distance buffers, fencing and/or prohibition. | ✓ |
| | Avoid sites contaminated from previous land uses. | ✗ |

5. Issues and needs: community and stakeholder engagement

Community and stakeholder consultations, including a community on-line survey and targeted workshops, was undertaken to identify community and stakeholder perceptions on existing dog off-leash areas and perceived needs for additional dog off-leash areas.

The consultation methodology and the full consultation findings are detailed at Attachment C.

Those findings of relevance to the provision and location of existing and/or additional off-leash facilities are summarised in *Table 10*.

Table 10 - Stakeholder engagement outcomes and implications

| Consultation component | Key findings | Implications for off-leash strategy |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| On-line Community Survey | <p>There is strong support (84% of respondents) for additional off-leash areas</p> <p>There is strong support (77% of respondents) for off-leash areas with access to recreational water</p> <p>The most popular locations for additional off-leash areas are all Parramatta River foreshore parks – Meadowbank, Putney, Kissing Point and Morrison Bay</p> <p>There is moderately strong support (69% of respondents) for off-leash areas at natural grass sportsgrounds when not being used by sports groups</p> | <p>Council’s resolutions to investigate additional off-leash areas – including sports grounds when not being used for sports activities and sites with access to water – are supported by a clear majority of respondents to the on-line community survey</p> |
| Rangers workshop | <p>The Ranger team has on-going concerns with the number of user and dog conflicts that occur at off-leash areas, but they do recognise the community need and demand for such facilities. Therefore, any expansion should ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An improved distribution of off-leash areas – to take pressure off over-used parks and provide off-leash opportunities in under-provided areas (e.g. Gladesville/Tennyson Point) Large/small dog separation Improved signage – including pictorial signage that illustrates the boundaries of off-leash areas Improved education of dog owners (including brochures and electronic signs) <p>Monash Park is being used as an unofficial dog park and doesn’t seem to be causing any problems.</p> | <p>The Ranger experience generally supports the expansion of off-leash areas due to the potential to reduce conflict at congested sites. However, to ensure this benefit, the facilities need to be supported with appropriate design and management features (e.g. small/large dog separation, adequate signage and supportive education programs).</p> <p>Any additional sports grounds used for off-leash will require poo bag dispensers and other core support facilities.</p> |
| Park Operations workshop | <p>Need to avoid off-leash proximity to ‘sensitive’ attractors such as playgrounds. Some O-L areas are too close to children’s play areas (e.g. Pidding Park, Olympic Park)</p> | <p>Conflicts at Pidding Park could be reduced by moving the off-leash area away from the main field towards the mini-fields (relocate waste bins to facilitate this) and/or fencing the area</p> |

6. Planning new facilities: principles, criteria and approach

6.1. Introduction

Planning for new off-leash facilities requires a focus both on the network of facilities and the site selection process for individual components (i.e. specific sites) of that network. The process also needs to be guided by clear planning principles. These aspects are summarised in the following sub-sections.

6.2. Core planning principles

In accordance with current best practice, the planning of any new off-leash areas is to be guided by the principles detailed in *Table 11*.

Table 11 - Core planning principles for planning dog off-leash facilities

| Desired outcome | Principle |
|--|--|
| Recognising the legitimacy of dogs and their owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Off-leash areas are an essential part of the park system, and should be part of a broader open space planning process |
| Understanding needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Off-leash areas are to provide a variety of opportunities and experiences |
| Equitable access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Off-leash areas are to be strategically distributed across the city to enable easy access by foot or a short drive |
| Integration with other park and surrounding functions and values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Off-leash areas will be located so as to minimise impacts on other park uses – including playgrounds, sports grounds and picnic areas - Off-leash areas will comply with the NSW Companion Animal Act requirements, including ‘dogs prohibited’: - within 10 metres of playgrounds, play spaces and food preparation areas - at recreation and sport areas defined as prohibited by the local authority - at places used for bathing (including beaches) defined as prohibited by the local authority - at places set aside by the local authority for the protection of wildlife - Off-leash areas will not be located adjacent to collector (and above) roads, unless fenced - Off-leash areas will be sufficiently separated (by distance and/or screening) from residential buildings |
| Strategic, needs and land capability based approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The revised network and site selection criteria (Sections 6.3 and 6.4, below) will be used to review existing sites and determine the location of new off-leash areas |

6.3. Network planning and design

There are two required levels of assessment in off-leash network planning and design, as follows:

- The desired types and quantities of dog off-leash areas, and
- The optimal distribution of these facilities, in terms of hierarchy and equitable access for all dog owners

Current best practice in these 2 aspects of off-leash network planning is summarised in *Table 12*.

Table 12 - Best practice network planning of off-leash areas

| Issue/requirement | Best practice |
|-------------------|--|
| Facility types | Recognising the preference of dog owners for diversity of opportunity – different types of landscape and terrain and different types of dog exercise opportunity i.e. on-leash; off-leash enclosed, off-leash shared; linear walking trails; separate areas for small dogs (esp. in high density areas); regional facility suitable for events (e.g. Pet Fest); water recreation areas |
| Provision ratios | Newcastle 1:8,000 pop (cf. City of Ryde 1:9,800) but no widely recognised population standard. Most standards are based on ‘walkability’ (i.e. 1.5 to 2km/20min walking distance) |
| Hierarchy | Best practice requires a hierarchy of opportunity from local, on-leash opportunities to neighbourhood off-leash (mainly unenclosed and within a maximum 2km service catchment) to destination/regional facilities (mainly enclosed and with specialist equipment) for occasional visits and events/companion animal education |
| Distribution | Dispersal across a district or LGA to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure equitable distribution of opportunity - Provide access for all within easy walk or short drive - Minimise dog/owner conflicts and over-use damage to facilities - Spread the ‘community-building’ benefits of dog parks across the district/ Need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access barriers (busy roads, rail etc.) - Dog ownership ‘hot spots’ for prioritising locations |

6.4. Revised site selection criteria

The revised criteria are based on the assessments detailed in the previous chapters, including dog population ownership trends, off-leash facility supply benchmarking, the off-leash facility best practice review, the community and stakeholder engagement outcomes and evaluation of Council's existing 2010 dog recreation area strategy.

The revised criteria are detailed at Attachment D and summarised in *Table 13*.

Table 13 - Evaluation of existing off-leash areas

| Facilities | Current rating (%) | *Potential rating (%) | Facility type |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Blenheim Park | 100 | 100 | Enclosed |
| ELS Hall Park | 92 | 92 | Enclosed |
| Ryde Park | 79 | 79 | Enclosed |
| Meadowbank Park | 76 | 76 | Unenclosed/time share |
| Olympic Park | 75 | 83 | Part enclosed |
| North Ryde Common | 74 | 76 | Unenclosed |
| Peel Park | 72 | 72 | Unenclosed/time share |
| Brush Farm Park | 70 | 82 | Unenclosed/time share |
| Kotara Park | 70 | 72 | Unenclosed |
| Pidding Park | 70 | 78 | Unenclosed/time share |
| Santa Rosa Park | 67 | 67 | Unenclosed/time share |
| Darvall Park | 67 | 75 | Unenclosed |
| Denistone Park | 66 | 66 | Enclosed |
| *With full fencing enclosure | | | |

6.5. Application of revised site selection criteria to existing off-leash areas

Council's existing 13 off-leash areas have been evaluated according to the revised site selection criteria. The detailed assessments are summarised in *Table 14*.

Table 14 - Evaluation of existing off-leash areas

| Level | Criteria | Best Practice rationale |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Network | Travel distance | Design network to provide an off-leash facility within a 20 minutes (approx.1.5km) walk of all residences |
| | Dog population | Prioritise sites in suburbs/precincts with high dog populations |
| Specific sites | Location | Prefer sites in larger, high profile parks (Note: parks smaller than 0.5 Ha should be excluded from consideration due to their small size) |
| | | Prefer sites with good surveillance from public areas |
| | Accessibility | Prefer sites with high legibility and good connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods (Note: need GIS mapping for this criterion) |
| | | Require 'inclusive' access |
| | | Require existing and/or planned on or off-street parking. Off-street preferred for higher hierarchy parks |
| | Economic efficiency/sustainability | Prefer sites with potential for shared infrastructure (e.g. lighting, toilets, water, fencing, furniture) |
| | Community support | Prefer sites with strong local community support/ requests for off-leash facilities |
| | Social impacts | Prefer sites with minimal impact on surrounding residents (Note: sites less than 50 metres from residences are required to have vegetative screening sufficient to attenuate noise impacts) |
| | | Prefer sites with no or minimal conflict with other park uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sports grounds) (Note: sites less than 50 metres from incompatible uses are required to have fencing sufficient to effectively separate the uses) |
| | Dog park size | Most guides and strategies recommend min area of 3,000m ² for a dog parks (ELS Hall Park off-leash area is 3,300m ² ; Blenheim Park is 2,500m ²) |
| Park boundaries | While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation) or fencing between off-leash areas and major roads (Note: Sites less than 25m to U60km/hr roads must include safety fencing between the off-leash area and the road) | |
| Host park natural features | Prefer sites with some natural vegetation and mature trees (for amenity and shade) (Note: where there are 'no existing trees on site' tree planting must form part of the project should the site be adopted as an off-leash area) | |
| | Prefer sites with good drainage | |
| | Shape requirements are fairly flexible but some guides recommend irregular shapes to better disperse users through a site | |
| Environmental sustainability | Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on park landscape/ visual qualities or natural values. In particular, avoid impacts on sensitive environmental areas (habitat, biodiversity, steep slopes) | |

7. Planning new facilities: health and environmental impact considerations

7.1. Off-leash areas with access to water

Prior to identifying service gaps and applying the revised site selection criteria to potential new sites, it was necessary to address the potential health impacts of locating off-leash areas in proximity to swimming areas, in accordance with Council's resolution (2/19) of 26 February 2019.

While undertaking this assessment, it became apparent that there are potential environmental impacts of locating off-leash areas on foreshores – particularly the potential impacts on shorebird habitat which also need to be addressed.

These potential impacts are discussed in the following two sub-sections, respectively.

7.2. Health impact considerations

At the 26 February 2019 Meeting, the following Motion was put to Council:

- a. That the General Manager ask staff to include in the future Dog Recreation Needs Study, scheduled to be undertaken in 2019/2020, an analysis of the need and appropriate sites for a dog exercise area that has access to water.
- b. That Kissing Point Park and other City of Ryde Parks along the Parramatta River be considered as a possible site for this area during the preparation of the Study.

The Motion was Amended with Council resolving (2/19, 26 February 2019) as follows:

That this Motion be deferred pending advice from NSW Health, Sydney Water, OEH, GSC and discussion by the PRCG on the health implications of a dog park being built metres from a potential swim site.

In accordance with *Council's resolution*, Council officers sought the requested advice by writing to the relevant agencies. Advice has subsequently been received from NSW Health and Parramatta River Catchment Group/Sydney Water.

Council officers also sought advice from two Councils (Sydney's Inner West Council and Northern Beaches Council) with relevant experience in the planning, design and management of off-leash areas adjacent to recreational waterways.

The advice received is summarised in the following sub-sections.

NSW Health

The Environmental Health Manager (EHM), Northern Sydney Public Health Unit, has advised that, while domestic animal waste is a source of microbial pollution of Parramatta River, most of that pollution comes from residential properties (and not from streets and dog parks and as demonstrated in the Sydney Water (2018) Parramatta River Master Plan Water Quality Modelling document).

The EHM also advised that recreational water areas should be risk assessed and managed in accordance with the NHMRC (2008) Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water and that NSW Health recommends that people do not swim within 24 hours of heavy rain at ocean beaches and within 3 days in estuaries or rivers.

The EHM advised further that the impact of microbial pollution from dog exercise areas located near the foreshore can be reduced by appropriate planning and design, education and regulation.

Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG)/Sydney Water

The PRCG is undertaking a Swim Site Activation project along the Parramatta River, with Putney Park providing one of several new swimming beach sites. This is due to be built by October 2020, with water quality testing being undertaken through 2019-2021 to confirm 'swimability'.

With respect to this, the PRCG was informed of Council's dog off-leash study and, in particular, its consideration of one or more off-leash sites with access to water (including at Kissing Point Park), and requested to provide any evidence they have on the impacts of dog faecal matter on the water quality of the Parramatta River.

In response to Council's request for advice, the PRCG Co-ordinator sought input from the Masterplan Delivery Team at Sydney Water which is undertaking the water quality investigations for the Swim Site Activation project.

The advice from both Sydney Water's Masterplan Delivery Team and the PRCG is that "with the proper infrastructure and responsible dog waste collection there should be no conflict with providing a dog swimming area at Kissing Point"¹.

Alex Michie, a member of the Masterplan Delivery Team, provided the following case studies of water quality testing adjacent to dog recreation areas in support of the provision of dog exercise areas at Parramatta River foreshore parks:

¹ Quoted in email from PRCG Co-ordinator, Nell Graham, Wed 29 Jan 2020. The email also quoted advice from the Parramatta River Riverwatch Co-ordinator, Alex Michie, a member of the Masterplan Delivery Team, saying that there would not "be a problem making Kissing Point Park a designated dog beach if the appropriate dog waste disposal facilities are in place. We have 7 months of data now and the water quality at Putney Park is mostly impacted by wet weather".

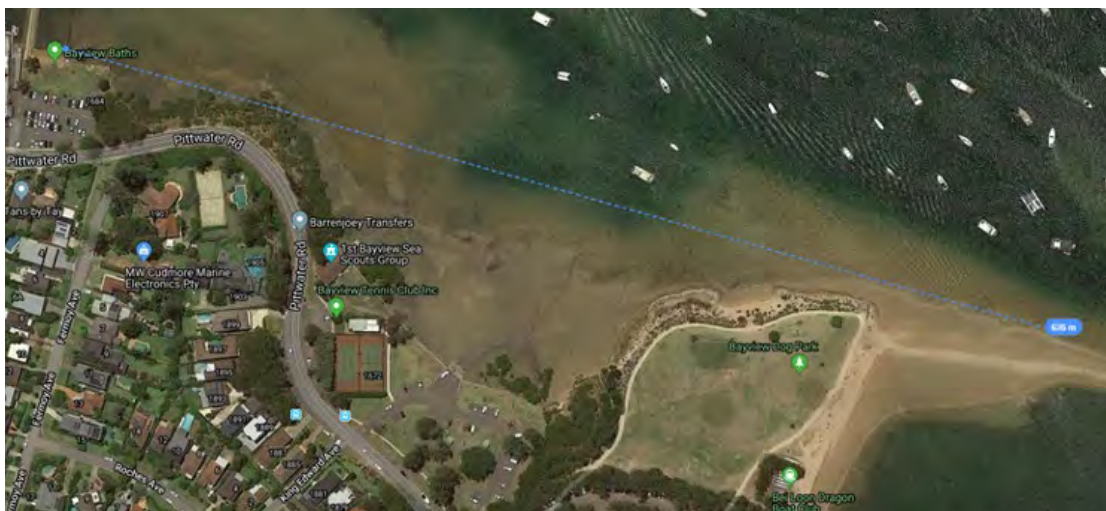
Rose Bay Beach

- The Rose Bay Foreshore Park is a dog beach and swimming beach.
- Recent water testing found dog faecal markers in 17% of the samples however these were mostly around stormwater outlets.
- Very low levels of dog faecal markers were identified at the Beachwatch sampling location.
- Human faecal markers were found in 97% of samples in Rose Bay.
- The authors speculate that the dog faeces signature was likely sourced from urban run-off in the catchment, rather than off the beach. However further investigations are required to confirm this.
- Rose bay has a Beachwatch grade of 'poor' but this is more likely due to the sewer infrastructure in the area and the potential impact from dry weather sewer overflows

Bayview Baths and Dog Beach

- Bayview Baths and the Rowland Bayview Dog Park/Beach on Pittwater (see *Figure 8*) is another example of a public swimming venue located near a dog off-leash beach.

Figure 8 - Bayview Dog Park/Beach on Pittwater



- The Bayview Baths and the Rowland Bayview Dog Park/Beach is similar to Putney/Kissing Point Parks (see *Figure 9*) in terms of physical proximity.

Figure 9 - Putney/Kissing Point Parks



- The Rowland Bayview Dog Park/Beach is extremely well used and has plenty of dog poo bins and bags available.
- Bayview Baths has an annual water quality rating of “good”, similar to Putney Park

Sydney Waters Study

- Recent Sydney Water testing in 4 catchments included Lake Parramatta, a popular dog walking area.
- Dog markers were found in the testing but were not associated with elevated enterococci counts.

Inner West Council

The Inner West Council has a dog exercise area at Elkington Park, adjacent to the Dawn Fraser Baths. Council has advised that, with respect to the Baths, faecal contamination from dogs has “never been raised as an issue as the pool is fully enclosed and the swimmable area for dogs is some distance away”².

The State Government’s Beachwatch monitoring program rates the Dawn Fraser Pool’s annual beach suitability grade as ‘good’ and states that “water quality is suitable for swimming for most of the time”. Like most areas of Sydney Harbour caution is required after heavy rains due to diffuse sources of faecal contamination. The Elkington Park off-leash area is not identified as a particular source of contamination³.

Northern Beaches Council

In 2019, the Northern Beaches Council commissioned a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) to assist its decision-making re a potential off-leash trial at Station Beach on the Palm Beach peninsula⁴.

The REF found that the proposed trial area had the potential to impact water quality via:

- eutrophication (from dog faeces) with resultant damage to marine flora and fauna
- sediment disturbance through the trampling of seagrass beds, increased turbidity and light penetration to seagrass beds

However, the REF also identified a range of potential mitigations – including installation of dog waste bins, signposting (educational and regulatory re removing dog waste and preventing access to seagrass bed zones), increased compliance patrols and water quality monitoring).

The REF concluded that “the proposed trial is unlikely to have any significant or long term negative environmental impacts providing the mitigation measures outlined in the REF are implemented and enforced during the trial”.

Summary and conclusions – health impact considerations

The advice provided by a range of agencies – NSW Health, the PRCG, Sydney Water, Northern Beaches Council, Inner West Council – all confirm that, while there is the potential for microbial pollution from dog exercise areas located near the foreshore, this potential can be substantially reduced or eliminated via good planning and design, education and regulation.

The evidence also supports the fact that the major sources of faecal contamination are diffuse, and after heavy rains, rather than from point sources such as dog off-leash areas.

2 Personal communication from Parks & Recreation Planning Manager, Inner West Council, Wed 5th Feb 2020

3 <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/beachapp/SydneyBulletin.aspx?NoMobile>

4 Cardno, May 2019, Review of Environmental Factors: Station Beach Off-Leash Dog Area – Proposed Trial, for Northern Beaches Council

7.3. Shorebird impact considerations

In addition to their potential water quality health impacts, off-leash areas also have the potential to negatively impact shorebird foraging and breeding habitats.

Shorebirds are prevalent in the Parramatta River Estuary. The Waterbird Refuge at Olympic Park, for example provides habitat for over 55 species of native birds, including internationally protected migratory shorebirds, including summer visitors such as godwits and sandpipers.

With respect to this, any proposal to provide off-leash areas adjacent to foreshore areas will need to be consistent with the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act (EPBC Act 1999), the Australian Government's *Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds and the Australian National Migratory Shorebird Conservation Action Plan*¹.

The Australian National Migratory Shorebird Conservation Action Plan (MS CAP) improves coordination and collaboration on research, conservation actions and management for 37 species of migratory shorebirds that regularly visit Australia². Many of these species are endangered and face threats from a range of sources including coastal development (at staging and non-breeding grounds), climate change, pollution, human disturbance, hunting and fisheries by-catch.

The human disturbance threats include impacts from recreational activities such as fishing, off-road driving on beaches, unleashed dogs and jet-skiing. These can have a high energetic cost to shorebirds and may compromise their capacity to build sufficient energy reserves to undertake migration. The birds are most susceptible to disturbance during daytime roosting and foraging periods.

Council officers sought advice from the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) and two Councils (Brisbane City Council and Northern Beaches Council) with relevant experience in the planning of shorebird protection in conjunction with dog off-leash area planning.

The advice received is summarised in the following sub-sections.

Parramatta River Catchment Group

The PRCG was approached for advice re the occurrence of migratory shorebird species on those sections of the Parramatta River foreshore within the City of Ryde and surrounding areas and the associated applicability of the MS CAP.

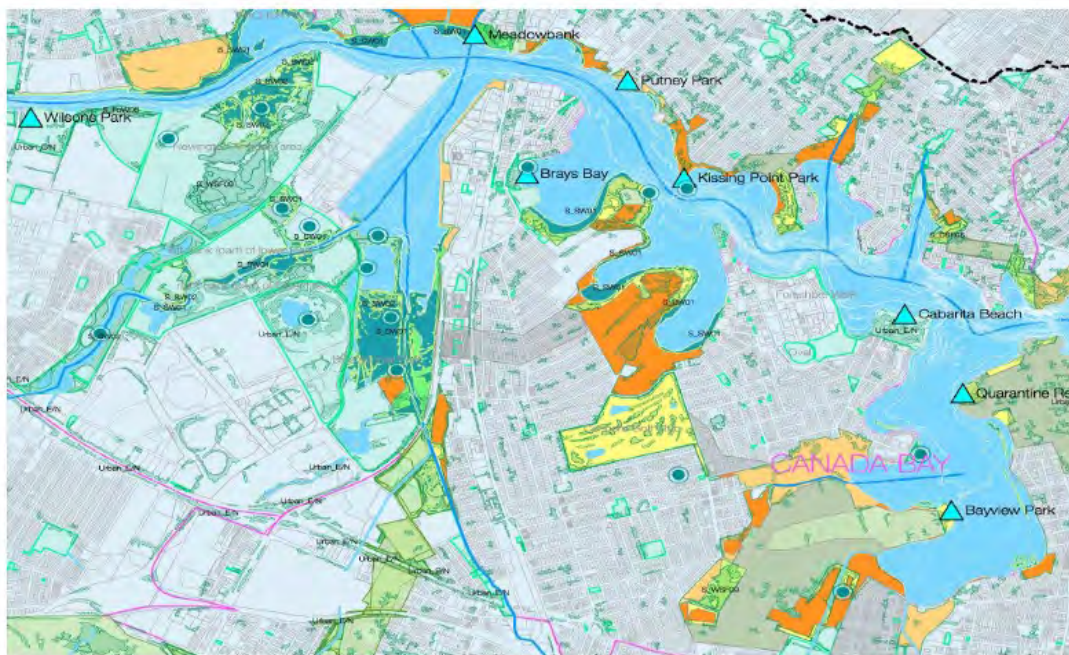
The PRCG advised that the main issue concerned the Bar-tailed Godwit, a critically endangered species 'with a distribution restricted to the Sydney Olympic Park and Homebush Bay area and areas in the immediate vicinity' – as illustrated in *Figure 10*³.

While most of the observations have been in the Olympic Park and Haslem's Creek area, there have been sightings elsewhere, including at Kissing Point Park.

A PRCG study, the *Parramatta River Ecological Health Project, 2016*, identified the habitat requirements, threats and protection requirements for the Bar-tailed Godwit.

- ¹ The MS CAP, October 2017, was developed by BirdLife Australia in conjunction with State and Commonwealth Government Departments and other stakeholders working in shorebird conservation across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF). Its purpose is to ensure that priority actions of the Australian Government's Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds are implemented across the four main objectives: 1. Protection of important habitats throughout the flyway; 2. Wetland habitats in Australia are protected and conserved; 3. Anthropogenic threats are minimised or eliminated; 4. Knowledge gaps in Australia are identified.
- ² Migratory shorebirds, or waders, are a group of birds that can be found feeding on swamps, tidal mudflats, beaches and open country. Most migratory shorebirds make an annual return journey of many thousands of kilometres between their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere and their non-breeding grounds in the southern hemisphere. Migratory flight paths are referred to as 'flyways'. Australia is part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), which extends from breeding grounds in the Russian tundra, Mongolia and Alaska southwards through east and south-east Asia, to non-breeding areas in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.
- ³ The Bar-tailed Godwit is an important migratory shorebird that roosts and feeds along the mudflats on the Parramatta River. It flies about 11,000 km from Russia and China to Australia to escape winter. When they arrive they need to feed a lot. It is at this time that they are most vulnerable as their energy levels are depleted and interruptions in feeding and the need to fly away from dogs and people can severely interfere with their recovery.

Figure 10 - Recorded observations of Bar-tailed Godwit



Recorded observations of Bar-tailed Godwit (teal circles) and other migratory waterbird species (grey circles) along the Olympic Park foreshore. Estuarine vegetation (teal) and terrestrial vegetation patches (lighter teal/green) along with potential corridors (yellow indicates fair condition, orange represents poor condition, both lack well-structured native vegetation or groundcovers): Godwit records include a 70-metre buffer indicating their preferred distance from humans when foraging.

The bird breeds in the Northern summer but requires Australian habitat for roosting rest and food for energy storage. These provide a vital role in their successful return to their northern hemisphere breeding grounds.

The required habitats are coastal sandflats, mudflats, inlets, harbours, estuaries, lagoons, lakes and bays – with feeding habitat generally along the edge of waterways or in the shallows of sandflats and mudflats for foraging at low tide. They prefer soft mud, often with beds of eelgrass *Zostera* or other seagrasses. But they have been observed foraging mangroves, rock platforms and insect larvae among the roots of *casuarina* species.

The major threats are habitat loss (especially foraging and roosting sites); habitat degradation (e.g. from changes to silt or sediment loads, water pollution, aquatic weed invasion, changes to flow and hydrological regimes); and disturbance from residential and recreational human activities, malnutrition, dogs, noise and shoreline lighting.

The project made several recommendations for protecting and managing the Bar-tailed Godwit habitat, including:

- Protect areas of intertidal mudflat, saltmarsh and mangrove, via weed control
- Manage Godwit feeding and roosting sites by developing detailed species population and habitat maps to better understand and support management and protection of these areas
- Create artificial oyster reefs to delineate ecological zones and protect mudflat habitats from boat wake, human foraging, dogs and erosion
- Create a dog beach at Canada Bay to draw dogs away from sensitive (feeding) areas at Hen and Chicken Bay. Delineate the off-leash area from Godwit areas to 'protect and activate'. These facilities help protect biodiversity values while providing human valued recreation opportunities. They can be developed as an interpretive/education and scientific resource with community engagement including before & after monitoring of bird activity.

Brisbane City Council

The Brisbane City Council has been trialling 3 dog off-leash areas (at Manly, Nudgee Beach and Sandgate) on Brisbane's foreshore.

The trials are the result of collaboration between Brisbane City, the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) and Queensland University (QU).

The QU undertook research at the Morton Bay Marine Park, Brisbane, to identify opportunities to accommodate human recreation, including dog off-leash activities, while protecting shorebirds. The Marine Park provides important feeding and resting grounds for 43 species of shorebirds, including 32 species of international migratory shorebirds.

The QU research was based on a belief that "keeping people and their dogs off beaches to protect nature is neither desirable nor effective. It sends totally the wrong message – successful conservation is about living alongside nature, not separating ourselves from it"⁴.

Currently, in Moreton Bay, dogs must be kept under close control, on leash, throughout the intertidal areas at all times.

However, the QU researchers believed, that with a scientific approach, it would be possible to accommodate dog off-leash access to the foreshore while still protecting nature. This was born out by the research which found that 97% of foraging migratory shorebirds could be protected from disturbance simply by designating just five areas as off-leash recreation zones.

With this zoning scheme, the most intense recreational activities such as off-leash dog exercise can be accommodated but located away from critical areas for nature.

The DES subsequently developed draft Queensland guidelines to support Queensland local governments to establish foreshore dog off-leash areas in Marine Parks, consistent with the UQ research and modelling.

The draft guidelines have been used by Brisbane City in its planning for the three foreshore off-leash areas.

The purpose of the project is twofold to improve environmental outcomes and shorebird protection (in areas comprising part of Moreton Bay Marine Park) while creating recreational opportunities for dog owners in popular foreshore areas.

It is based on the assumption that establishing dog off-leash areas on the foreshore may improve shorebird conservation (via reduced disturbance by off-leash dogs) by concentrating off-leash activities at the designated sites and requiring all other foreshore areas to be on-leash at all times.

⁴ M Stigner, R Fuller & K Dhanjal-Adams, Contested spaces: saving nature when our beaches have gone to the dogs, The Conversation, March 15 2017

Northern Beaches Council

The Station Beach Review of Environmental Factors (REF) commissioned by the Northern Beaches Council and discussed in Section 6.2.2 above, in relation to the potential impacts of off-leash areas on water quality, also addressed potential impacts on 'the bird community, including shorebirds and other water birds'⁵.

The review was undertaken by a specialist Ornithology consultant and involved on-site surveys and observations. A total of 6 species were observed during the surveys but no migratory shorebirds were observed. There have also been no recorded sightings of migratory shorebirds on Station Beach according to the Birdlife Australia data base.

It was concluded that, due to the lack of sightings together with the unsuitability of the beach for foraging (highly disturbed and steep topography) it was unlikely that the beach is used for foraging and roosting by threatened or migratory shorebirds.

Summary and conclusions - shorebird impact considerations

Based on the above analysis, it is apparent that the provision of dog off-leash areas along the Parramatta River foreshore has some, albeit minor, potential to impact the foraging grounds of rare and endangered shorebirds, especially the Bar-tailed Godwit.

However, as is being demonstrated in the Brisbane River Marine Park project, it is possible to combine off-leash dog access to waterways with the protection of shorebird habitats through appropriate planning (site selection and access zoning), regulation, education and compliance.

Accordingly, while the proposal for dog off-leash trial sites within Parramatta River foreshore parks is generally supported by the research undertaken for this report, any specific site proposals will need to be accompanied by an assessment of potential impacts on shorebird habitat by a qualified avifauna consultant.

5 Cardno, op. cit. page 25

8. Planning new facilities: potential sites

8.1. Improving service coverage & diversity

A 'walkability' assessment of Council's existing 13 off-leash areas was undertaken to identify areas of the City that are currently being serviced by the facilities and those areas that are not.

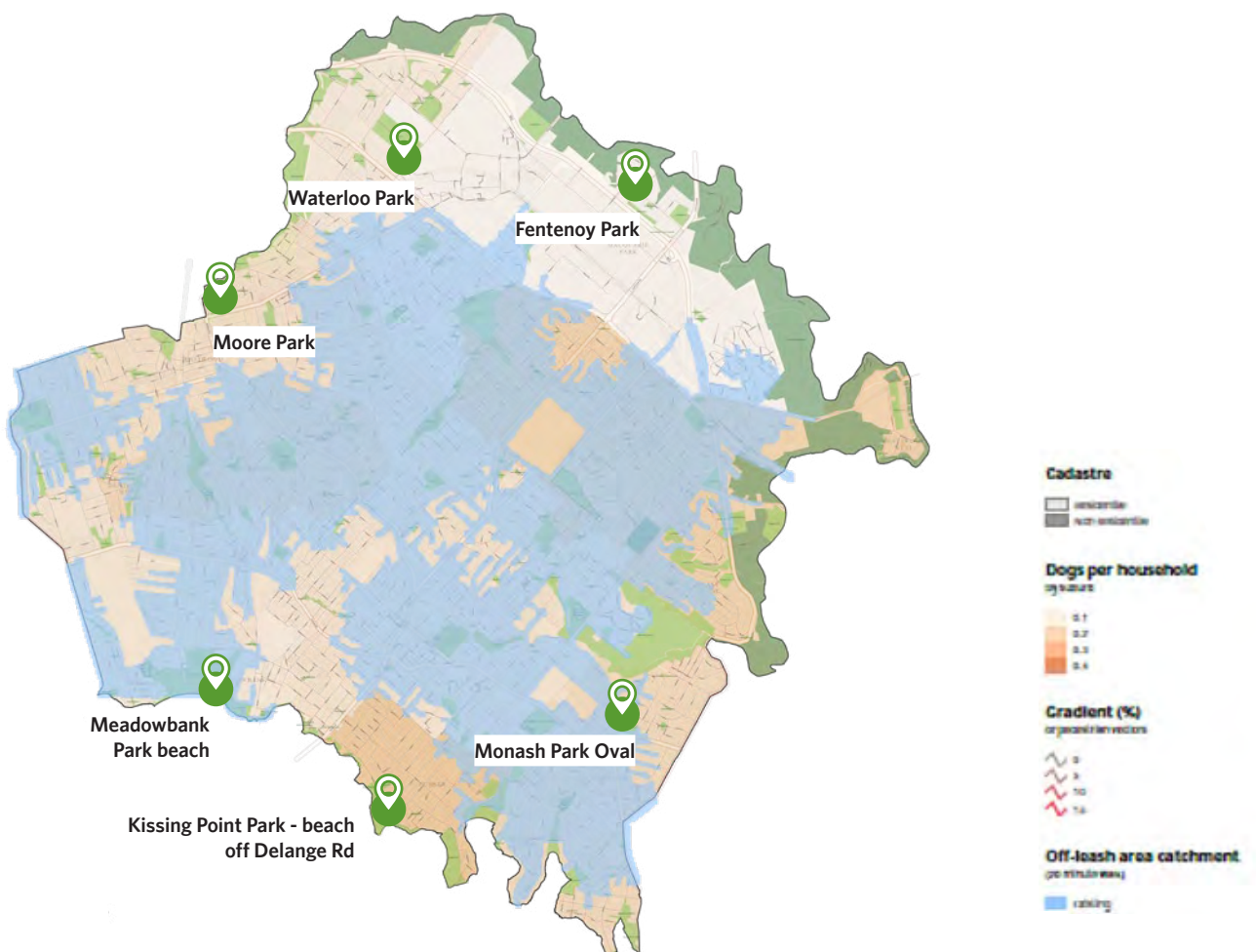
The assessment was based on the widely accepted provision standard of providing off-leash areas within a 20 minute walk (which translates to an approximate 1.5 kilometre travel distance).

The walkability software used in the analysis calibrates for major walking access barriers (i.e. rail, major road, drainage channel, industrial zone).

The collective 20 minute walking catchments for existing off-leash areas are illustrated (in blue) in *Figure 11*. The map shows that Council's 13 existing off-leash facilities service, in terms of 20 minute walkability, 56% of the land area of the LGA (i.e. 21.1kms² of a total 38kms²).

The majority of precincts within the LGA are well provided for, with the main service gaps being in Marsfield, Macquarie Park, Putney and parts of Eastwood, Meadowbank and East Ryde.

Figure 11 - 20 minute walk catchment - Existing off-leash areas



Based on the catchment area gaps illustrated in the above walkability map analysis, prospective sites with significant potential to provide 'walkable' off-leash facilities in areas not currently serviced, were identified for further mapping analysis. The sites are as follows¹:

Table 15 - Potential sites for additional off-leash facilities

| Service gap precinct | Site options | Potential facility type |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Eastwood | Eastwood Park - upper oval | Unenclosed/ time share |
| | Moore Park | Enclosed |
| Marsfield | Waterloo Park | Unenclosed/ time share |
| | Marsfield Park | Unenclosed/ time share |
| Macquarie Park | Tuckwell Park | Unenclosed/ time share |
| | Fontenoy Park | Unenclosed/ time share |
| Parramatta River foreshore (Putney and Meadowbank) | Kissing Point Park beach off Delange Rd | Unenclosed - water access |
| | Kissing Point Park beach opposite Douglas St | Unenclosed - water access |
| | Meadowbank Park beach (adjacent to Memorial Park) | Unenclosed - water access |
| East Ryde | Monash Park oval | Unenclosed/ time share |

The two options identified in each of Eastwood, Marsfield, Macquarie Park and Putney have significantly overlapping walkability catchments and, accordingly, only one of the sites in each of the precincts is required.

The mapping tools have been used to assess and compare the options for their potential to expand the effective coverage of the off-leash service in terms of size of the additional serviced area (m²) and the number of additional residences within the maximum 20 minute walking catchment.

The results of the assessments are summarised in the following sub-sections.

¹ The site options are consistent with the intent of the two Council resolutions (detailed in Section 1.1, above) to 'consider the need and appropriate sites for a dog exercise area that has access to water' and to 'Consider the costs and benefits of all parks becoming a dog off-leash area when not used for organised sport, in particular Monash Park'

Size of additional serviced area

Table 16 - Proposed off-leash areas: additional area (Ha)

| Precinct | Site options | Walking catchment - additional area (Ha) | Considerations |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Eastwood | Moore Park | 127.8 | - The Moore Park option has minor catchment overlaps with the existing Darvall Park, Kotara Park and Denistone West off-leash areas but contributes a net addition of 128 'walkable' Ha to the LGA or 24 Ha more than the Eastwood Park option |
| | Eastwood Park - upper | 103.9 | |
| Marsfield | Waterloo Park | 187.8 | - The Waterloo Park option has a very minor catchment overlap with the existing Kotara Park off-leash area but contributes a net addition of 188 'walkable' Ha to the LGA or 38 Ha more than the Marsfield Park option |
| | Marsfield Park | 150.5 | |
| Macquarie Park | Tuckwell Park | 95.3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Tuckwell Park option has a very minor catchment overlap with the existing Blenheim Park off-leash area and contributes a net addition of 95 'walkable' Ha to the LGA - Much of this additional 'walkable' area extends into commercial/business/road reserves and therefore has low utility - The Fontenoy Park option has no overlaps with existing off-leash areas. It adds 84 'walkable' Ha including significantly more existing and future residential areas than the Tuckwell Park option |
| | Fontenoy Park | 84.2 | |
| Parramatta River foreshore | Kissing P Park off Delange Rd | 87.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Delange Rd option has minor catchment overlaps with the existing Olympic Park and Peel Park off-leash areas and a 3 Ha overlap with the proposed Meadowbank Beach site. It contributes a net addition of 87 'walkable' Ha - The Douglas St option also has minor catchment overlaps with the existing Olympic Park and Peel Park off-leash areas and a larger 10 Ha overlap with the proposed Meadowbank Beach site. It contributes a net addition of 103 'walkable' Ha to the LGA - The Meadowbank Park option has a significant catchment overlap with the existing Meadowbank Park time-limited off-leash area but still contributes a net addition of 66 'walkable' Ha to the LGA |
| | & Kissing P Park Douglas St | 103.5 | |
| | Meadowbank Park beach | 65.9 | |
| East Ryde | Monash Park oval | 63.7 | - The Waterloo Park option has significant catchment overlaps with the existing Pidding Park, Peel Park and Olympic Park off-leash area but contributes a net addition of nearly 64 'walkable' Ha to the LGA |

Number of additional residences serviced

Table 17 - Proposed off-leash areas: additional residences (no.) serviced

| Precinct | Site options | Walking catchment - additional residences (no.) serviced | Considerations |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Eastwood | Eastwood Park - upper | 1,976 | - The Moore Park option would provide 'walkable' access to an additional 2,471 residences in the LGA which is 500 more than the Eastwood Park option |
| | Moore Park | 2,471 | |
| Marsfield | Waterloo Park | 2,420 | - The Waterloo Park option would provide 'walkable' access to an additional 2,420 residences in the LGA, slightly more (35) than the Marsfield Park option |
| | Marsfield Park | 2,385 | |
| Macquarie Park | Tuckwell Park | 1,724 | - The Tuckwell Park option would provide 'walkable' access to an additional 1,724 residences in the LGA, which is 200 more than the Fontenoy Park option - However, the nominal Tuckwell Park walking catchment includes 200 residences at the corner of Lane Cove and Epping Roads (1 Allengrove Cres) which are just within the 20 min catchment but which have low 'walkability' to Tuckwell Park due to traffic conditions |
| | Fontenoy Park | 1,525 | |
| Parramatta River foreshore | Kissing Point Park off Delange Rd | 1,027 | - The two Kissing Point Park options provide 'walkable' access to an additional 1,027 and 1,100 residences, respectively, net of overlaps with the proposed Meadowbank Beach site i.e. a modest overlap (295 residences) with the Delange Rd option and a substantial overlap with the Douglas St option (1,993 residences) |
| | Kissing Point Park opposite Douglas St | 1,110 | |
| | Meadowbank Park beach | 4,678 | |
| East Ryde | Monash Park oval | 620 | - The Monash Park option would provide 'walkable' access to an additional 620 residences in the LGA - This is a relatively low addition to the 'walkability' catchment but existing 'unofficial' off-leash use of the park is evidence of local demand |

8.2. Site suitability assessment

Section 7.1, above, detailed the best practice criteria for evaluating existing off-leash sites and selecting potential new facilities.

The criteria are based on the needs of dogs and their owners and were identified from a detailed review of off-leash facility best practice guidelines, benchmarking with other councils, and findings of the community and stakeholder engagements undertaken for this study.

The criteria include host park size, boundaries and natural features, the need for equitable distribution across the LGA, accessibility, potential for shared use of park assets, social impacts, and environmental sustainability.

The 10 potential sites were assessed for their suitability in accordance with these criteria but also with respect to the opportunities and constraints particular to specific off-leash facility types - as summarised in *Table 18*.

The site suitability ratings were undertaken in accordance with these varying constraints and opportunities. They are detailed at Attachment E and summarised in *Table 19*. The ratings range from 65 to 78 (out of a potential 100).

Table 18 - Off leash facility types: opportunities, constraints and development requirements

| Facility type | Availability | Considerations | Development requirements |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Unenclosed (not coastal or riverine) | All times | - Potential safety, social impact and/or environmental impact issues | Minimal signage (locational and regulatory), waste bins, waste bag dispensers and water/dog bowl |
| Unenclosed - with water/ beach access | All times (unless impacts on shorebird foraging/ breeding require seasonal exclusion) | - Potential safety, social impact and/or environmental impact issues - Enclosure not suitable as it would impede other foreshore uses and be aesthetically inappropriate | |
| Time share with sportsgrounds | When not being used for formal sport (by sports groups/schools) | - Improved use of facilities but with potential for facility over-use and social impacts - Enclosure not suitable apart from standard sportsground fencing (e.g. pickets or low chain fencing) | |
| Fully enclosed | All times | - Meets dog owner demand for safe facilities (e.g. dangerous traffic) - Protection of environmentally sensitive areas - Separation of incompatible park activities - Relatively high cost to build | Significant - minimal facilities plus 2m steel fencing, double gates, hard surfaces & a range of optional facilities (e.g. agility equipment, small-large dog separation, circulation pathways etc.) |

Table 19 - Proposed off-leash areas: site suitability assessment summary

| Precinct | Site options | Facility type | Required level of development | Site suitability | Considerations |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Eastwood | Eastwood Park - upper | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal | 74 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moore Park requires full enclosure due to proximity to a 60km road (and consequently has a low unenclosed rating of only 58). But if fully enclosed, it would have the higher rating (78 vs 76) of the 2 Eastwood options - Eastwood Park upper is high use sports ground (44 hrs week in winter and 20 hrs week summer) which constrains availability for off-leash activities |
| | Moore Park | Enclosed | Significant | 78 | |
| Marsfield | Waterloo Park | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal | 76 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waterloo and Marsfield Park have equal suitability ratings - Both parks are high use sports grounds but Marsfield is used 8 hrs week less in summer and 5 hrs less in winter and therefore has greater availability for off-leash activities - While Waterloo Park is not adjacent to a 60kph road, it has no significant containment barriers (i.e. fencing or landforms) - Marsfield Park is proximate to sensitive natural areas, but has suitable barrier fencing |
| | Marsfield Park | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal | 76 | |
| Macquarie Park | Tuckwell Park | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal | 69 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tuckwell Park and Fontenoy Park have equal 'minimal development' suitability ratings - Fontenoy Park has no significant containment barriers (fencing, landforms) - If suitable barriers are provided at Fontenoy, it will have the higher rating of the 2 options (75 vs 72) - While Tuckwell is a relatively low use sports ground, Fontenoy is much lower - with no formal use in summer and only 3 hrs/week in winter and therefore much more availability for off-leash activities |
| | Fontenoy Park | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal - with some boundary fencing | 72 | |
| Parramatta River foreshore | Kissing Point Park off Delange Rd | Unenclosed - with water/beach access | Minimal | 69 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delange Rd site is adjacent to the Riverwalk cycleway and would require education and compliance management to minimise conflicts between dogs and cycleway users - The Delange Rd site has the higher rating of the 2 sites (69 vs 67) due to its accessibility, higher passive surveillance and higher potential for shared use of infrastructure (car parking, toilets, water) - Meadowbank Park beach site is adjacent to the Riverwalk cycleway and would require education and compliance management to minimise conflicts between dogs and cycleway users |
| | Kissing Point Park opposite Douglas St | Unenclosed - with water/beach access | Minimal | 67 | |
| | Meadowbank Park beach | Unenclosed - with water/beach access | Minimal | 67 | |
| East Ryde | Monash Park oval | Time share with sports grounds | Minimal | 69 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monash Park has an average suitability rating - The Park is a very high use sports ground (over 50 hrs in winter and 36 hrs in summer) which constrains its availability for off-leash activities |

8.3. Preferred site options

Based on the core planning principles, the off-leash network planning criteria, the catchment mapping analysis and the site suitability analysis, the preferred sites, for each of the currently under-serviced precincts in the LGA, are detailed in *Table 20*.

These six sites offer higher net benefits in terms of their suitability and/or contribution to improving the distribution and accessibility of off-leash sites across the LGA.

If all the proposed sites are accepted, the City's per capita provision of off-leash areas will increase from 1:9,804 to 1:6,700, compared to the North District average of 1:8,170.

This compares to current provision levels in Ku-ring-gai (1:6,000) and Willoughby (1:6,180) LGA's but would still be well behind Lane Cove (1:2,468), Hunters Hill (1:3,727) and Mosman (1:3,860).

The selection rationale for each site, potential site layouts and accessibility maps (which illustrate the walkability catchment for each site) are detailed.

Table 20 - Proposed off-leash areas: site suitability assessment

| Precinct | Preferred option | Suitability rating | Facility type |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Eastwood | Moore Park | 78 | Enclosed |
| Marsfield | Waterloo Park | 76 | Time share with sports grounds |
| Macquarie Park | Fontenoy Park | 72 | Time share with sports grounds |
| Parramatta River foreshore | Meadowbank Park | 67 | Unenclosed - with water/ beach access |
| | Kissing Point Park off Delange Rd | 69 | Unenclosed - with water/ beach access |
| East Ryde | Monash Park oval | 69 | Time share with sports grounds |

Moore Park, Eastwood

Rationale for selection:

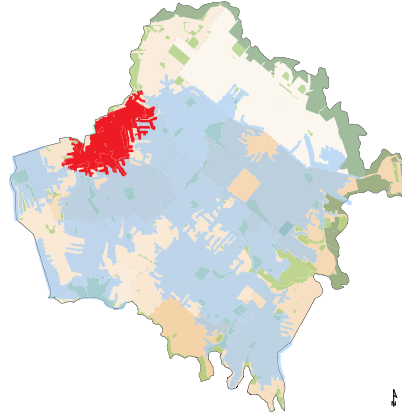
- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the Eastwood area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 128 Ha and 2,471 residences
- Provides a needed service to one of three (3) precincts (Putney, East Ryde and Eastwood) with the highest dog populations
- High availability with no competing sports use
- High establishment costs (due to fencing requirement) but above-average suitability

Note: Should this site progress, the existing BBQ facility in the Park would be removed due to potential user conflicts.

Location Map



Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2



Waterloo Park, Marsfield

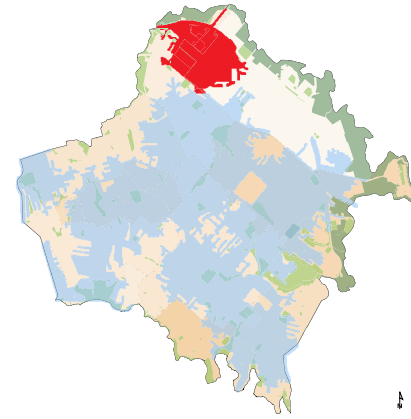
Rationale for selection:

- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the Marsfield area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 188 Ha and 2,420 residences
- Above-average suitability rating
- Relatively high formal sports use but no turf wicket impacts that the other Marsfield site option has (Marsfield Park)
- Minimal establishment costs

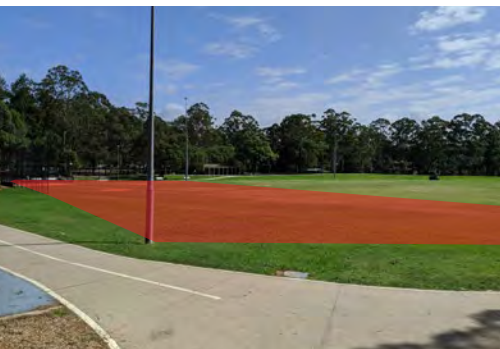
Location Map



Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2



Fontenoy Park, Macquarie Park

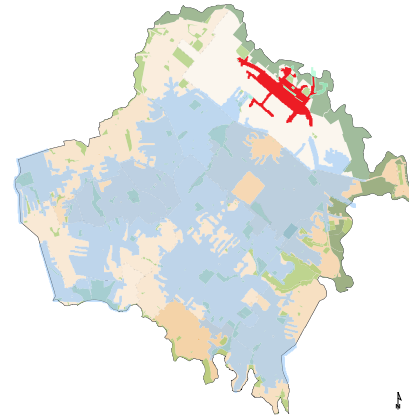
Rationale for selection:

- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the Macquarie Park area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 84 Ha and 1,525 residences
- High availability with low use for formal sport (nil in summer and light in winter)
- No. of residences in catchment to increase significantly with the residential densification of the Macquarie Park precinct
- Modest establishment costs

Location Map



Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2



Meadowbank Park, Meadowbank

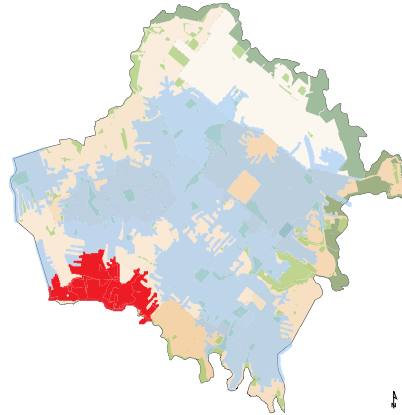
Rationale for selection:

- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the Meadowbank foreshore area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 66 Ha and 4,678 residences
- Contributes to diversity of opportunity, in accordance with best practice & meets a need identified in the community engagement
- Minimal establishment costs

Location Map



Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2



Kissing Point Park, Gladesville

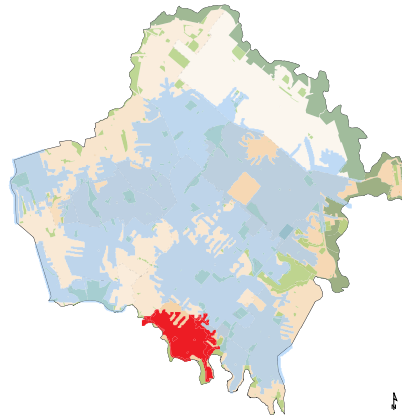
Rationale for selection:

- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the Putney area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 103 Ha and 1,110 residences
- Contributes to diversity of opportunity, in accordance with best practice & meets a need identified in the community engagements
- Minimal establishment costs

Location Map



Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2



Monash Park, Gladesville

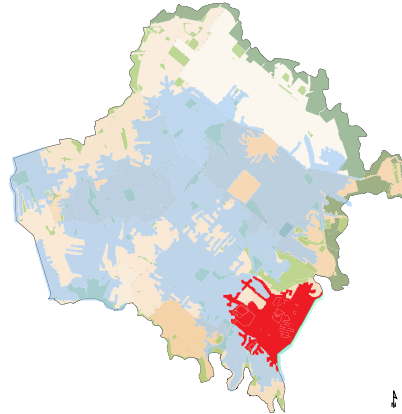
Rationale for selection:

- Effectively addresses a substantial service gap in the East Ryde area by increasing the 20 minute 'walkable' user catchment by 64 Ha and 620 residences
- Relatively low availability due to high formal sports use, but already being used as an 'unofficial' off-leash area, thereby demonstrating the existence of local demand
- Minimal establishment costs

Location Map



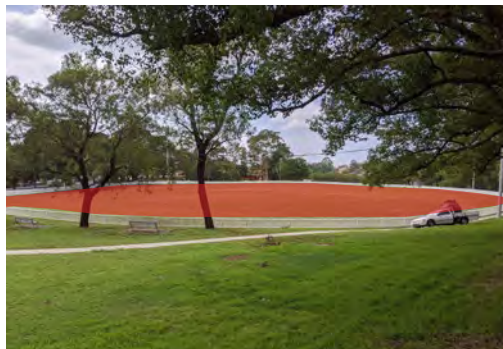
Accessibility Map



Site photo 1



Site photo 2

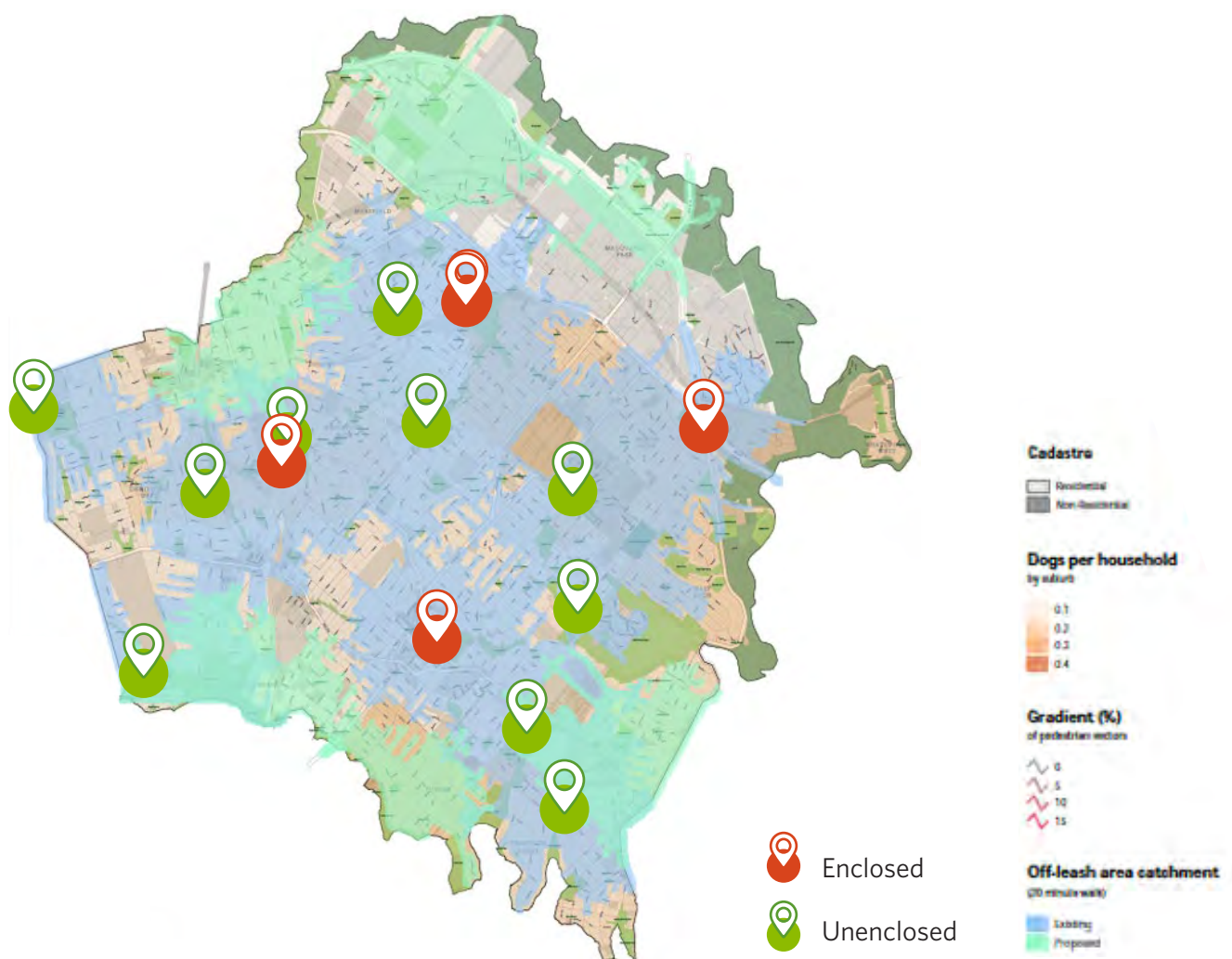


8.4. Summary of improved distribution and walkability

Figure 12 illustrates how the 20 minute walking catchments for the six (6) proposed facilities (in light green) cater to the existing under-served areas of the LGA and how they relate to the 20 minute walking catchments for the 13 existing off-leash areas (in blue).

With respect to accessibility, the 20 minute walking catchments have taken into account access barriers such as rail lines and busy sections of roads without safe crossings.

Figure 12 - 20 minute walk catchment - Existing and proposed off-leash areas



9. Improving existing facilities

9.1. Introduction

Council's existing 13 off-leash facilities were identified and briefly described in Section 3, above. They were also the subject of discussion and feedback in the community and stakeholder consultations, summarised in Section 5, above.

Based on issues and needs identified during the consultations and on the outcomes of the best practice review undertaken for this study, priority improvement works for some existing off-leash facilities have been identified. These relate to the addition of essential site infrastructure and a re-location, as summarised in the following sub-sections.

9.2. Infrastructure

Current best practice generally classifies dog park infrastructure as either 'standard/core' or 'desirable/optional' facilities. Standard/core facilities are generally regarded as essential and include information or regulatory signs, perimeter/boundary signs (where off-leash areas are not enclosed), waste bins, waste bag dispensers, drinking water (taps with water bowls), shade and seating (in most guides).

While some of the existing off-leash areas have all or most of these facilities, there are some provision gaps as follows in *Table 21*.

Table 21 - Existing off-leash areas: support infrastructure requirements

| Facility type | Parks requiring | No. units | Unit cost | Total cost |
|------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Information signs | Santa Rosa Park | 1 | \$500 | \$500 |
| Perimeter signs | North Ryde Common; Kotara Park; Peel Park, Olympic Park | 10 | \$500 | \$5,000 |
| Waste bins | Nil | | n/a | \$0 |
| Waste bag dispensers | Nil | | n/a | \$0 |
| Tap/dog bowl | Kotara Park; Santa Rosa Park (1 additional) | 2 | \$7,500 | \$15,000 |
| Seating (flat benches) | North Ryde Common; Kotara Park | 2 | \$2,500 | \$5,000 |
| Shade/shelter | North Ryde Common; Kotara Park; Pidding Park; Meadowbank Park | 4 | \$33,000 | \$132,000 |

Desirable/optional facilities include enclosure (fencing/gates), small/large dog separation, lighting, agility equipment, dog wash station, notice board/information kiosk, seating (some guides) and toilets (outside but outside off-leash area).

While the addition of these facilities is not currently recommended for any of Council's existing off-leash areas, the community engagement undertaken for this study did identify strong demand for several of these facilities, as summarised in *Table 22*.

Table 22 - Existing off-leash areas: expressed demand for optional infrastructure

| Facility type | Provided at | Expressed demand (on-line survey) |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Enclosure | Blenheim Park ELS Hall Park Denistone Park Ryde Park | When asked "what do you like most about exercising your dogs at Council's off-leash areas", 54% nominated 'fenced area' When asked "what are the main reasons that you do not use Council's off-leash areas", 49% nominated 'fenced area' |
| Small-large dog separation | Nil | When asked "are there any improvements or changes you would like to see at Council's off-leash areas", 25% nominated 'separation areas depending on dog size' When asked "what are the main reasons that you do not use Council's off-leash areas", 26% nominated 'lack of separation areas depending on dog size' |
| Agility equipment | Nil | When asked "are there any improvements or changes you would like to see at Council's off-leash areas", 33% nominated 'improved equipment' and 29% nominated 'improved support services' |
| Dog wash station | Nil | |
| Notice board/ information kiosk | Nil | |
| Toilets | Available within walking distance of all off-leash areas except North Ryde Common and Denistone, Kotara & Olympic Parks | When asked "what are the main reasons that you do not use Council's off-leash areas", 13% nominated 'not enough/poor services' and 11% nominated 'not enough/poor equipment' When asked "if additional off-leash areas were to be introduced, what features/facilities would you most like to see included", 38% nominated 'good support services' and 14% nominated 'good play equipment and spaces for dogs' |

Given the strength of these expressed needs, it is proposed that the costs and benefits of providing at least some non-core facilities be the subject of a supplementary review in as one part of a detailed evaluation of the design and operational management of Council's existing 13 off-leash areas.

9.3. Relocation

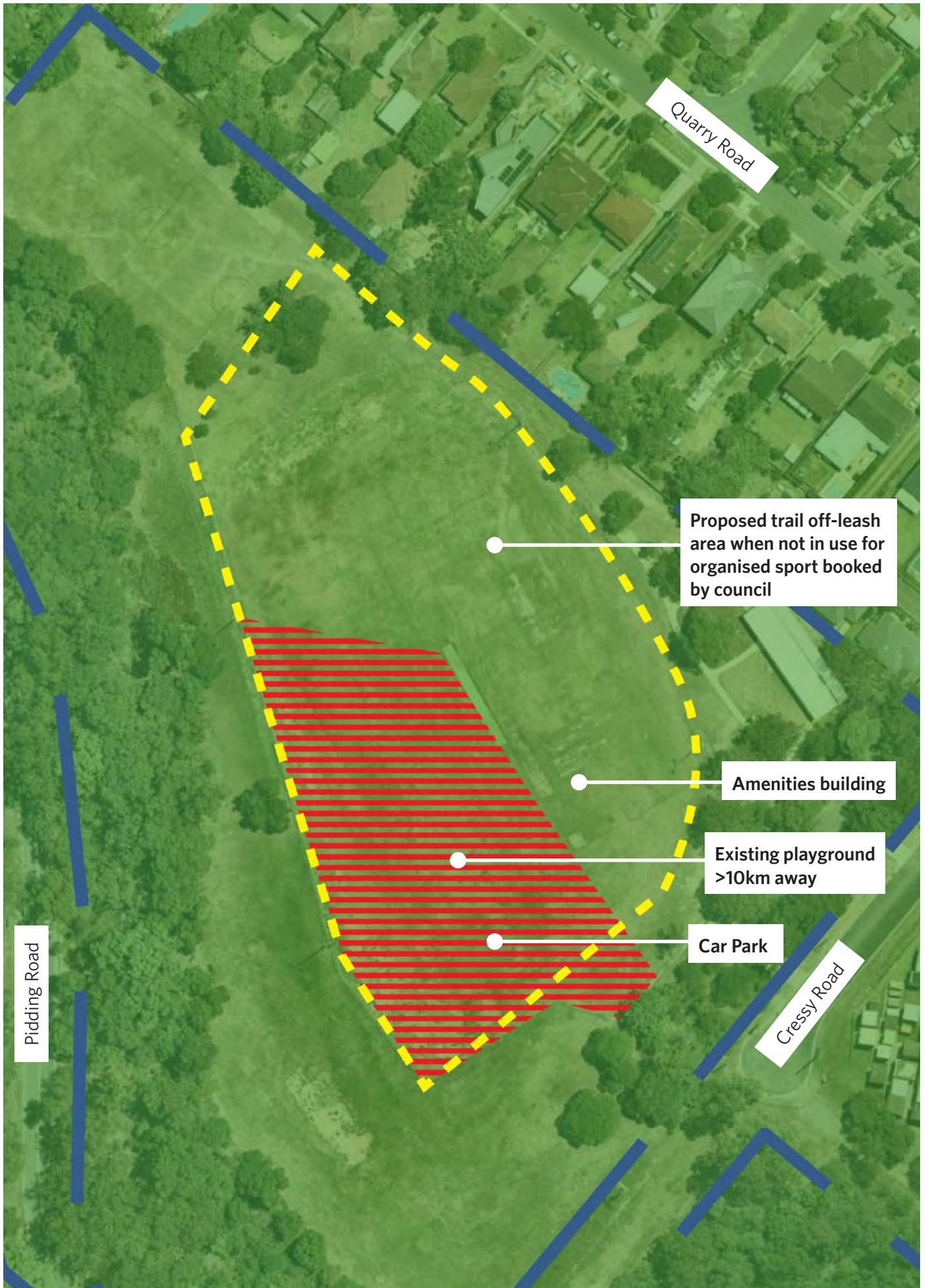
With all off-leash facilities, there is the requirement, under the Companion Animals Act, to avoid proximity to 'sensitive' park attractors such as playgrounds and food preparation areas (such as BBQ facilities).

In the stakeholder engagements undertaken for this study, it was identified that some off-leash areas (i.e. Pidding Park and Olympic Park) are too close to children's play areas.

At Olympic Park, potential conflicts can be reduced by improving boundary markers via clearer signage and/or bollards.

Potential conflicts at Pidding Park could be reduced by moving the off-leash area away from the main field towards the mini-fields. However, the facility would be too close to residential buildings. The preferred approach – to move the off-leash area to the west (as illustrated in *Figure 13*) would provide a sufficient distance buffer between the off-leash area and the playground and amenities building.

Figure 13 - Pidding Park preferred approach



10. Conclusions & recommended network and sites

Proposed off-leash facilities

This report concludes that there is a substantial case – based on service gaps and demonstrated need – in trialling an additional six (6) off-leash areas within the City, including two (2) with access to the Parramatta River foreshore. This conclusion is based on the following findings:

- Council's existing 13 off-leash areas are well received and supported by the community
- There is a growing number of dogs and dog owners in the LGA
- Significant areas of the LGA (comprising 33% of residences) are not adequately serviced by the City's existing 13 off-leash facilities i.e. they are not within a maximum 20-minute walk of at least one facility
- The community engagements undertaken for this study identified a strong community desire for additional off-leash areas – particularly off-leash areas with access to recreational water
- The addition of just 6 more off-leash areas will place just over 90% of residences in the City within a 20-minute walk of at least one facility (while noting that achieving 100% would not be cost-effective as it would result in the substantial overlap of user catchments for several of the facilities)
- For those residences outside the 20 minute walking catchment, the furthest required travel distance is around a 32 minute walk (from residences on Pittwater Road, East Ryde)¹
- While there is currently no off-leash water play access for dogs in the City, the research evidence demonstrates the popularity of water access for both dogs and their owners and the ability to manage any potential negative environmental impacts of such access
- The proposed 6 additional sites all rated well for suitability against a range of best practice criteria, as documented in this report, and are the most suitable sites in those parts of the LGA which are currently not within 'walkable' access to at least one off-leash facility

It is therefore recommended that a 6 month trial be undertaken for the addition of 6 new off-leash areas, illustrated in *Table 23*:

Table 23 - Proposed off-leash trial sites

| Trial site | Off-leash facility type |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Moore Park | Enclosed |
| Waterloo Park | Time share with sports grounds |
| Fontenoy Park | Time share with sports grounds |
| Monash Park oval | Time share with sports grounds |
| Meadowbank Park beach | Unenclosed – with water/ beach access |
| Kissing Point Park beach off Delange Rd | Unenclosed – with water/ beach access |

It is further recommended that, prior to the 6 month trial being undertaken:

1. Residents within a 200m distance of the proposed sites be informed of the trial program and provided with appropriate opportunities to have their say about the trial program, and
2. An avifauna expert be commissioned to investigate the potential impact of the proposed Parramatta River foreshore sites on feeding and foraging habitats of any endangered shorebirds

Existing off-leash facilities

This report, in investigating the need for additional off-leash areas in the City, also identified some infrastructure and locational issues at Council's existing off-leash areas, as detailed in Section 9, above. With respect to these issues, it is recommended that:

3. Funds be allocated to address the standard/core facility gaps identified in Section 9.2, above
4. The Pidding Park off-leash area be re-located, as detailed in Section 9.3, above, and
5. That the design and operational management of Council's existing 13 off-leash areas be reviewed in the light of the outcomes of the community and stakeholder engagements undertaken as part of the current study

***Attachment A:
Best Practice
Review - off-leash
network planning***

Introduction

This study reviewed 3 recent guidelines on the planning of dog recreation areas and 6 strategies/plans developed by local authorities in order to identify current best practice in dog off-leash planning and management at both the individual site and system levels.

The review found that, while there is considerable variation, there was also agreement on the key attributes required to ensure success in the provision of dog parks.

The common agreed planning criteria, of importance in selecting, prioritising and managing potential sites, can be grouped as follows:

| Dog facility network planning | Site evaluation/selection | Site design/management |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facility types - Provision ratios - Hierarchy and distribution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Park size - Park shape and boundaries - Access - Park context (i.e. locational) opportunities and constraints - Park character (i.e. built and natural features) opportunities and constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facility design features - Dog/dog owner management - Off-leash facility management |

This Attachment A summarises the findings of the review with respect to off-leash system (i.e. network of sites) planning. Attachments B to D, respectively, summarise the findings for 'site evaluation and selection', 'site design' and 'site and network management'.

Table A.1 - Best practice network planning of off-leash areas

| Issue/requirement | Best practice |
|--------------------------|---|
| Facility types | Recognising the preference of dog owners for diversity of opportunity – different types of landscape and terrain and different types of dog exercise opportunity (i.e. on-leash; off-leash enclosed, off-leash shared; linear walking trails; separate areas for small dogs (esp. in high density areas); regional facility suitable for events (e.g. Pet Fest) |
| Provision ratios | Newcastle 1:8,000 pop (cf. City of Ryde 1:9,800) but no widely recognised population standard. Most standards are based on 'walkability' (i.e. 2km/20min walking distance) |
| Hierarchy | Best practice requires a hierarchy of opportunity from local, on-leash opportunities to neighbourhood off-leash (mainly unenclosed and within 2km service catchment) to destination/ regional facilities (mainly enclosed and with specialist equipment) for occasional visits and events/companion animal education |
| Distribution | Dispersal across a district or LGA to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure equitable distribution of opportunity - Provide access for all within easy walk or short drive - Minimise dog/owner conflicts and over-use damage to facilities - Spread the 'community-building' benefits of dog parks across the district/ Need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access barriers (busy roads, rail etc.) - Dog ownership 'hot spots' for prioritising locations |

Best practice details

Facility types and provision ratios

The key facility type criteria relate to community preferences and priorities and the inherent benefits of diversity and flexibility. *Table A.2* summarises the facility types proposed in a range of guidelines and strategies and the recommended provision ratios, where these were provided.

Table A.2 - Facility type and provision ratios

| Guideline/Strategy | Facility type | Provision Ratio |
|---|--|---|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | |
| GAO - <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Diversity in provision of off-leash dog exercise areas can be achieved by combining linear walking trail opportunities with local fenced areas For higher density areas where space is limited, separate areas for small dogs vs. large dogs should be considered | n/a |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Guide for enclosed off-leash areas only | n/a |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Starting point - allow dogs in all parks, then consider potential conflicts and alternatives and adopt appropriate strategy for each park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on-leash, - off-leash/free running - park space zoning or time share - banning | n/a |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Focus on off-leash areas only | |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Focus on off-leash areas only - 3 types ('confined structured', 'confined unstructured', 'open unstructured', and) | 'confined structured' 1 per region 'confined unstructured' - 1 per suburb (or more where justified by dog pop and/or access barriers) 'open unstructured' - where 2km/ 20 min walk gaps exist |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | Focus on 'fenced dog parks' - one of 3 types of off-leash facility (other 2 - 'time-share off-leash'; 'full-time off-leash') | 1 per region (3) |
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Need for diversity - dog owners prefer a range of different settings and terrains. Therefore should be a diversity of off-leash types - enclosed and unenclosed | Not proposed - instead a focus on 'strategic distribution' to enable 'easy access by foot or a short drive' |
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on-leash - off-leash, unenclosed (all times or timed) - off-leash, fenced (including at least one with separate areas for small and large dogs) | Fenced 1:30,000 pop (incl one in each ward) All 1:8,000 pop |

| Guideline/Strategy | Facility type | Provision Ratio |
|---|--|---|
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices</i> , 2016 | Diversity preferred (no 'one fits all' due to different needs – dog size, level of training, interests of owners – swimming, trail running, socialising etc.): on-leash off-leash, unenclosed (time limited and all times) – no permit off-leash, unenclosed (time limited and all times) – permit required (with training) off-leash, fenced separate areas for small dogs | Not addressed |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan</i> , 2010 | Range of possibilities: off-leash enclosed (preferred model) shared use sites – part fenced shared use sites – time restricted | 1-mile (1.6km) service catchment in high density areas; 2-mile (3.2km) in other areas |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance</i> , 2014 | Report deals with fenced off-leash areas only | Not addressed |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy</i> , 2016 | Four categories of off-leash facility: Neighbourhood unfenced Neighbourhood fenced District (fenced or unfenced) River valley/ravine (i.e. trail) | Neighbourhood – based on population density + dog numbers District – one per City quadrant |

Network distribution

The key network distribution criteria are hierarchy (from 'local' to 'regional' catchments) and walkable access.

Table A.3 details the hierarchy and distributional performance criteria established in a range of relevant guidelines and strategies.

Table A.3 - Hierarchy & distribution

| Guideline/Strategy | Hierarchy | Distribution |
|---|--|--|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | |
| GAO – <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Across a larger urban area provision should aim for local opportunities and larger destination dog-walking locations | Access to an off-leash opportunity within 10 mins (800 m) walking distance from all houses |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Not addressed | Within walking distance of residential areas |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Requirement for a hierarchy of opportunity ('daily' – within 400m and mainly on-leash; 'regular' – within 30 min walk or short drive and mainly off-leash; 'occasional' – 1 or 2 specialist dog parks per municipality, mainly off-leash and used for events, companion animal education etc.) | Local parks (not necessarily an O-L area) within 400m walking distance of all households |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Use dog registration data to ensure high dog ownership areas are well served | Highly accessible locations; network approach to ensure equitable distribution; |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Regional – 'confined structured' (max 5 in City) At least one 'open unstructured' facility within a 20min walk/2km catchment of all owners | Prefer proximity to dog ownership hot spots; consideration of access barriers (e.g. major roads, rail, waterways) Max 20min/2km walk |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | 1 'fenced dog park' per region to service a group of suburbs – noting that only 15% of dog owners are prepared to travel more than 20mins | Regional fenced facility to complement other unfenced, local off-leash areas |
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Not addressed | Within 'easy access by foot or a short drive' |
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | Enclosed facility at district/regional level (1:30,000) Other facilities at n'hood/local level (1:8,000) | A 'spread of dog off-leash areas will be provided across the Newcastle LGA' |

| Guideline/Strategy | Hierarchy | Distribution |
|---|---|--|
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices</i> , 2016 | Fenced off-leash areas only (unfenced areas not recommended due to potential use conflicts) | Dispersal across a district - reduces traffic, builds local community, spreads use and minimises impacts and conflicts |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan</i> , 2010 | Not addressed | Equitable distribution city-wide; within walking distance |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance</i> , 2014 | Not addressed | Equitable distribution across the City |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy</i> , 2016 | Neighbourhood-District | Based on population density, dog numbers, demand, land availability. Generally within 20 min walk |

***Attachment B:
Best Practice
Review - off-leash
site evaluation
and selection***

Site characteristics

Site characteristics such as existing park use, surrounding land use, park features and assets, park size, shape and boundaries and general park amenity determine the suitability for different types of off-leash facility – as detailed in *Table B.1*.

Table B.1 - Best practice site evaluation/selection of off-leash areas

| Issue/requirement | Best practice |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Park size | GAO recommends min size host parks of 5,000m ² and min size for fenced dog park of 400m ² However most guides and strategies recommend min area of 3,000m ² for a dog parks Guidelines on size of host park are generally about having sufficient space to provide buffers from other activities and surrounding land uses |
| Park shape | Shape requirements are fairly flexible but some guides recommend irregular shapes to better disperse users through a site Linear shape is important for walking trail opportunities |
| Park boundaries | While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation or fencing) between off-leash areas and major roads |
| Active transport access | Requirement for connectivity with active transport network and surrounding n'hoods to maximise walking access to dog parks. Preference for highly visible sites on activated streets (e.g. routes with pedestrian traffic generators shops, community facilities) |
| Vehicular access | Require existing on or off-street parking or capacity to provide it. Off-street preferred for higher hierarchy parks |
| Site context opportunities | Priority for sites in regional/district scale parks with: strong local community support/requests for dog facilities and high dog populations co-location with compatible uses/activities (e.g. multi-recreation opportunities for families) good surveillance from public areas easy access minimal impact on residents and other park users |
| Site context constraints | Prefer non-high profile sites with: relatively low use and little conflict with incompatible uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sportsgrounds) sufficient buffer (i.e. distance, street, plantings etc.) between dog park and neighbouring houses/schools/shops not adjacent to high traffic roads |
| Site features opportunities | Prefer under-used sites with: potential for 'activation' Shared infrastructure (lighting, parking, toilets, water, fencing, furniture) Some natural vegetation and varied topography (to provide definition for different activity zones) Good drainage Plants for amenity and trees for shade (for dogs and owners) |
| Site features constraints | Need to avoid: Negative impacts on landscape and visual appeal of parks Sensitive environmental areas (wildlife habitat, biodiverse areas, steep slopes) via distance, fencing and/or prohibition. Sites contaminated from previous uses |

Park and surrounding land use context

Existing land use – on a potential site and adjacent to the site are major determinants of suitability for dog recreation as well as the specific type of dog recreation facility required. *Table B.2* details the relevant criteria established in a range of guidelines and strategies

Table B.2 - Site context

| Guideline/Strategy | Opportunities | Constraints/limitations |
|---|--|--|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | |
| GAO – <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Not addressed | Not addressed |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Prefer sites with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to compatible uses/ activities - multi-opportunities for families - with good surveillance from public areas, easily accessed | Avoid incompatible activities (BMX, ball play areas, unfenced playgrounds) |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Not addressed | Require distance buffers/screening between POS and adj. residences, schools, shops etc. (e.g. streets, topography, plantings) |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Prefer sites where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community support is strong; - where there is potential for ‘activation’ of under-used sites | Avoid well-used parks Ensure incompatible uses (sports fields, playgrounds, BBQ areas, bike trails) are not co-located with off-leash – unless fenced |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Preference for sites with limited potential for other uses due to size, shape, natural features | Avoid incompatible uses exclude from: sports fields and courts; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - area within 20m of playground - within 50m of collector roads |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | To be located within suitable <u>regional</u> or <u>district</u> -scale parks only. Prefer sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in suburbs with high number of dogs - areas not currently served - in areas with high number of community requests | Prefer sites where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is little conflict with other uses (i.e. playgrounds, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails) - appropriate buffer between dog park and neighbouring houses |
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Prefer sites: easily accessed from roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - co-location compatible uses/ activities - with good surveillance from public areas | Avoid proximity to incompatible activities (BBQ area, skate park, playgrounds); sites with encumbrances |

| Guideline/Strategy | Opportunities | Constraints/limitations |
|---|---|--|
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | <p>Prefer sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - central to the population - easy access for pedestrians and cars - easily seen - ensure minimal impacts on residents and other park users | <p>Avoid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - locations adjacent to high traffic roads - sportsgrounds – on-leash only due to use conflicts and ground damage - public places indicated by the NSW Companion Animals Act (i.e. 10m from playground and food prep areas, sport and bathing areas prohibited by Councils, areas set aside for wildlife) - high profile sites (may impact character) |
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices</i> , 2016 | <p>Prefer sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with safe, accessible location - where ‘minimal impacts upon the total visitor character of a park’ are likely - where potential for ‘spillover’ to other areas of park are minimal | <p>Avoid proximity to residences, children’s playgrounds</p> |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan</i> , 2010 | <p>Prefer sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with strong community support - no other facilities within 2-mile service catchment (or 1-mile for high density) - with attractive visual buffer to surrounding residents (i.e. fencing, vegetation) | <p>Require sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with clear separation from incompatible activities (e.g. picnic area, regional trails, sports grounds) via fence, vegetation or acceptable distance - 30m from playgrounds <p>Avoid sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within 60m of arterial road or provide fence |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance</i> , 2014 | <p>Prefer sites with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adequate buffers (vegetation/berms) to residential areas - compatible surrounding land uses | <p>Avoid sites with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inadequate buffering to residential and other incompatible land uses - conflicts with other park uses |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy</i> , 2016 | <p>Prefer sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - along walking, cycle and transit routes (for neighbourhood) or off collector/arterial roads (for district) - with compatible adjacent land uses (i.e. commercial, public facilities, employment) | <p>Avoid sites with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inadequate buffering to residential (i.e. 100m unless separated with berms, solid fencing etc.) arterial roads (50m), trails (25m) - conflicts with other park uses (i.e. 25m buffer and part/full fencing to schools, play areas, pools, sports fields, picnic areas) |

Site suitability

Park size and shape

Park size is a major determinant of suitability in general as well as the specific type of dog recreation area required. *Table B.3* details the relevant criteria established in a range of guidelines and strategies.

Table B.3 - Park size & shape

| Guideline/Strategy | Min park size | Min off-leash area size | Shape |
|---|--|--|---|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | | |
| GAO – <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Host space for off-leash opportunities must be a min 5,000 m ² , or if a linear open space corridor, a min of 1 km long | Minimum area required for a fenced off-leash area is 400 m ² | Flexible |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Not addressed | No simple formula – depends on expected number of users. Larger parks are generally better – big enough for dogs to run around and provide different activity zones. Need hierarchy – from local focus to destination park. Range in Adelaide: 100 to 17,000m ² | Linear and irregular shapes are preferred to better disperse people/dogs through the site and encourage walking |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Size is less important than location and suitability for dog use | | No ideal shape, though linear is ideal for walking |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Sufficient for free running areas | | Sufficient space for off-leash |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Not addressed | Min size for off-leash area – 3,000m ² | Not addressed |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | Not addressed | Min size 3,000m ² (If small/large dog separation, min 3,000m ² each) | Not addressed |
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Adequate space for off-street parking; ability to provide buffers between adj. activities and uses (e.g. residential areas) | Min size 2,500-3,000m ² – sufficient to allow for different activity zones (passive and active) and minimise overcrowding, dog conflict and ground surface damage | Diversity of landscape type settings desired – wide open spaces, linear/natural routes etc. |
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | At least double the dog park size | Min size 3,000m ² for unenclosed & 5,000m ² for enclosed | Not addressed |

| Guideline/Strategy | Min park size | Min off-leash area size | Shape |
|--|---|--|--|
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices, 2016</i> | Big enough to avoid disruption of other park uses | Min 1 acre (approx. 4,000m ²) | Diversity – to facilitate socialisation (at one location), trails, dog swimming) |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan, 2010</i> | Not addressed | Min 1 acre – prefer 2-3 acres | Non-linear layout to maximise usable space |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations & Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations & Maintenance, 2014</i> | Not addressed | Dependent on size of host park -larger is better – at least half acre (but smaller sizes considered if strong support) | Not addressed – but visibility to all dogs must be provided within all parts of enclosure |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy, 2016</i> | Adequate size to minimise conflict with incompatible uses | Neighbourhood – 0.2 to 2.0 Ha District – 2.0 to 5.0 Ha Ravine – from 0.5 Ha | Not addressed – but facilities should include variety of looped circuits to encourage owners to keep moving with their dogs – irregular shapes can facilitate this |

Built infrastructure and natural features

Park assets and landscape features are major determinants of suitability in general as well as the specific type of dog recreation area required. *Table B.4* details the relevant criteria established in a range of guidelines and strategies.

Table B.4 - Site infrastructure & natural features

| Guideline/Strategy | Opportunities | Constraints/limitations |
|---|--|---|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | |
| GAO – <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Should have perimeter shade to 50% of boundary | Not addressed |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Prefer POS with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared infrastructure (lighting, parking, toilets) - Some natural vegetation and varied topography - Plants for amenity and trees for shade (for dogs and owners) | Not addressed |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Prefer POS with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - potential for variety, stimulation, challenge, surprise – varying contours and slope, attractive plantings - Plantings to define different use zones in a park + screening + shade | Fencing of environmental protection zones near off-leash areas |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Prefer topography and natural features to provide definition to off-leash areas | Need to protect or minimise adverse impacts to conservation areas and creek corridors |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Prefer parks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - existing required assets – paths, drinking water, seating, tables, landscape features - shade (natural or constructed) | Minimising impact on natural areas; excluded from areas ‘of significant environmental value’ |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | Prefer parks that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are relatively flat, with good drainage and shade from mature trees - have required infrastructure (water, power, toilets) - park design is inclusive % CPTED-compliant | Avoid flood-prone sites; steep slopes; environmentally sensitive areas (wetlands, endangered species, biodiversity corridors) |

| Guideline/Strategy | Opportunities | Constraints/limitations |
|---|--|--|
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Prefer parks that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are relatively flat, with good drainage and shade trees - Existing infrastructure (fencing, power, toilets, water) | Avoid steep slopes and potential impacts on sensitive areas (wetlands, wildlife areas) |
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | Ensure minimal impact on visual appeal, landscape and function of parks | Avoid sites with 'high natural values' (endangered ecological communities; high biodiversity areas) - to be prohibited or on-leash only |
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices</i> , 2016 | Prefer parks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively flat land with good drainage - Ability to define dog areas with bollards or natural boundaries | Avoid 'sensitive environmental areas (wildlife habitats and steep slopes) |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan</i> , 2010 | Prefer parks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good drainage - shade trees or structures | Avoid: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - designated natural areas or wildlife habitat - toxic soil from previous uses |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance</i> , 2014 | Prefer parks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively flat land with permeable soils - Good mix of shade trees and open grassed areas | Avoid 'natural areas' (where flora and fauna could be disturbed) |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy</i> , 2016 | Prefer parks with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively flat land (to reduce soil erosion) with permeable soils (for adequate drainage) - Diversity of vegetation - durable, non-toxic, provision of both shade trees and open unmown grassed areas (scents to engage dogs) | Avoid 'areas of environmental sensitivity' or mitigate (e.g. via fencing, buffer zones, seasonal/time restrictions) |

Accessibility

Active transport and car connectivity and access are major determinants of suitability in general as well as the specific type of dog recreation area required. *Table B.5* details the relevant criteria established in a range of guidelines and strategies.

Table B.5 - Accessibility

| Guideline/Strategy | Connectivity | Vehicular access/parking |
|---|--|--|
| Australian off-leash guidelines | | |
| GAO – <i>Open Space for Recreation Guide</i> | Connected to active transport network and meets access standards | |
| Government of South Australia, <i>Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks</i> , 2014 | Connections to existing pedestrian paths/trails to maximise walking dog to park | Easily accessible by road Consider off-street parking if on-street parking is limited |
| Harlock Jackson P/L, <i>Public Open Space and Dogs</i> , 1995 | Prefer parks on streets that are already popular walking routes for dog owners. Minimise location near access barriers – e.g. major roads and railways. Preferred on routes to pedestrian traffic generators – local shops, community facilities | Off-street parking preferred for higher hierarchy parks or at least a park with multiple access points (to distribute on-street parking) |
| Australian off-leash strategies | | |
| City of Greater Dandenong, <i>Dog Off-Leash Strategy</i> , 2011 | Connection to path networks preferred | Car parking preferred |
| City of Whittlesea, Vic, <i>Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan</i> , 2016 | Not addressed | Car parking preferred |
| City of Greater Geelong, Vic, <i>Fenced Dog Parks</i> , 2019 | Prefer sites that are: well connected to path networks (to minimise car access) highly visible/easy to find | Existing car parking or potential to develop it preferred |
| City of Mitcham, SA, <i>Location Assessment: Dog Park Suitability Study</i> , 2017 | Connections to existing pedestrian paths/trails to maximise walking dog to park | Easily accessible by road On and off-street parking |
| City of Newcastle, <i>Dogs in Open Space Plan</i> , 2019 | Prefer sites that are 'accessible to vehicles and pedestrians and easily seen | Not addressed |
| Overseas off-leash strategies | | |
| Seattle Park District (Washington USA), <i>People, Dogs and Parks Plan, Appendix 5 Best Practices</i> , 2016 | Accessible location | Ample and close parking required |
| Denver Parks and Recreation (Colorado USA), <i>Dog Park Master Plan</i> , 2010 | Good connection to adjacent/ surrounding neighbourhoods via cycle/pedestrian trails | Require access to parking |
| City of Ann Arbor (Michigan, USA), <i>Recommendations and Guidelines for Dog Park Site Selection, Design, Operations and Maintenance</i> , 2014 | Not addressed | Sufficient parking – convenient to the site to avoid burden on surrounding neighbourhoods |
| City of Edmonton (Canada), <i>Dogs in Open Spaces Strategy</i> , 2016 | Prefer sites connected to walking, cycle and transit routes (for <u>neighbourhood</u>) or off collector/ arterial roads (for <u>district</u>) | Neighbourhood – on street parking and existing car parks District – off-street parking |

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***Attachment C:
Community and
stakeholder
engagement***

Overview

Community consultation was undertaken to identify community perceptions on existing dog off-leash areas and perceived needs for additional dog off-leash areas.

The consultation methodology encompassed:

- Promotion of the study on Council's Have Your Say web page, social media platforms and on-site notices (at existing and proposed off-leash sites) with invitation to complete an on-line survey and/or forward a submission
- Newspaper and Facebook ads
- Have Your Say eNewsletter, flyers and posters sent to local vets
- Your City News eNewsletter sent to eNewsletter subscribers
- Media article in Northern District Times
- Targeted planning workshops with internal Council business units

The surveys and workshops addressed the following issues:

- Performance of and issues (e.g. location, profile, size, amenity, conflicts) with existing off-leash areas
- Perceived need for improvements to existing off-leash areas
- Perceived need for additional off-leash areas x distribution vs expansions
- Issues/acceptability of shared use with sportsgrounds
- Perceived need for small dog/large dog separation
- Perceived need for dog agility equipment
- Assessing levels of support for all parks becoming a dog off-leash area when not used for organised sport, in particular Monash Park

The findings of the consultations are summarised in the following sub-sections.

On-line Community Survey

The on-line Community Survey was undertaken via Council's Have Your Say website between Wednesday 6 November and Sunday 1 December 2019, resulting in 389 survey responses.

The survey participants were mainly dog owners who live and exercise their dog(s) off-leash and on-leash within the City of Ryde¹. The majority (75%) own one dog, while there was an even distribution of those who own small, medium and large dogs.

Topics addressed in the survey included views on the idea of additional dog off-leash areas being introduced at sportsgrounds, when not in use for organised sport, and views on dog access to recreational water (such as Kissing Point Park and other parks along the Parramatta River).

Key findings were as follows:

What's working well?

Over three quarters of responding dog owners exercise their dog(s) at off-leash areas within the City of Ryde.

These visitors most commonly visited off-leash areas multiple times a week, staying for 15 to 90 minutes.

The most popular dog off-leash areas for respondents included fenced (ELS Hall, Ryde and Blenheim Parks) and unfenced (Santa Rosa, Meadowbank and Pidding Parks) and facilities.

The socialising experience, size of the area and the convenience of location were the most liked aspects of dog off-leash areas.

When asked, at the end of the survey, if they had any additional comments to make on off-leash facilities, some respondents identified the 'importance of off-leash areas' and expressed 'appreciation/thanks' to Council for providing them.

What needs fixing or adding?

Some respondents are not using off-leash areas within the City of Ryde because of:

- The perceived lack of fenced enclosure areas
- Conflicts between dogs, and
- Irresponsible dog ownership.

Other issues identified by survey respondents included:

- The need for better shade
- The need for improved equipment
- Many users of Council sportsgrounds are not cleaning up after their dogs
- Need for more information, signage and education regarding dog recreation areas
- Separate areas for small and larger dogs
- More fencing to assist with controlling animals, improving safety (for children and dogs) and not interfering with other park usage
- The need for more dog recreation areas

¹ It is noted that self-selection bias is likely within the sample. That is, the respondents' choice to participate in the survey is likely to be influenced by a strong interest in dog recreation with parks/reserves. This should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results and subsequent decision making.

Use of non-City of Ryde facilities

More than half of responding dog owners visit off-leash facilities outside of Ryde LGA (54%), with the most popular being Rowland Bayview Dog Park (Northern Beaches) and Tarban Creek Reserve (Hunters Hill). The main attractors of these facilities are the size of the area, the socialising experience and the responsible owners/dogs.

This finding demonstrates the large potential catchment for dog off-leash areas – particularly where unique experiences are offered, including attractive recreational swim opportunities.

Need for additional off-leash facilities

The majority of respondents (84%) were supportive of additional dog off-leash areas being introduced within the City of Ryde.

Existing dog owners were significantly more likely to support the addition of new off-leash areas compared to non-dog owner respondents.

The most common locations suggested for potential new dog off-leash areas included:

- Meadowbank Park
- Putney Park
- Kissing Point Park

Respondents perceive priority needs at new facilities to include fenced areas, good support services and drinking water for dogs.

Recreational water access

Of those who support (or who are not against) the provision of additional dog off-leash areas in the LGA, a very high 87% supported additional areas with access to recreational water.

Consistent with this, and as noted above, the three most popular locations for additional off-leash facilities, identified in the survey, are all within parks along the Parramatta River.

Sports field access

Of those who support (or who are not against) the provision of additional dog off-leash areas, a high 78% supported shared use at additional natural turf sports fields (when the fields are not being used for sports activities).

The small number (#6) of non-dog owning sports field users who responded to the survey were generally supportive of the use of sports fields for dog off-leash activities, but did note that dog owners are currently not cleaning up after their dogs.

Off-leash facility maintenance

To allow for maintenance of dog off-leash areas, the majority of the respondents preferred closures to be regular and scheduled (i.e. at the same time every week).

Summary and Implications for the Dog Recreation Strategy

While the on-line survey results cannot be construed as fully representative of community views, they do strongly suggest that there is substantial community support for Council's off-leash areas.

The results also indicate that there is scope for improving existing off-leash facilities and significant support for the provision of new off-leash areas.

The key learnings from the survey are summarised in *Table C.1*.

Table C.1 - Targeted workshop discussion and implications

| Item | On-line survey outcomes |
|--|--|
| Use and benefits of existing facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Most respondents are regular users and strong supporters of Council's off-leash areas- Users particularly enjoy the 'socialising experience', 'good size', 'convenient location' and 'good support services' at the off-leash parks |
| Key issues and concerns | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The 5 issues of most concern – owners cleaning up, fence enclosures, additional signage and education, separation of small and large dogs and more off leash area- Around 20% of survey respondents do not use the City's off-leash areas with the main reasons for this being 'lack of fence enclosure', 'dog conflicts and 'irresponsible owners' |
| Required improvements to existing facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Most requested improvements for existing off-leash areas were 'more shade', 'full fence enclosure', 'improved equipment' and 'additional seating' |
| New facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is strong support (84% of respondents) for additional off-leash areas- The most requested support facilities for any additional off-leash areas were 'fenced enclosure', water and good maintenance |
| New facilities – access to recreational water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is strong support (77% of respondents) for off-leash areas with access to recreational water- The most popular locations for additional off-leash areas are all Parramatta River foreshore parks – Meadowbank, Putney, Kissing Point and Morrison Bay |
| New facilities – access to natural grass sports fields | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- There is moderately strong support (69% of respondents) for off-leash areas at natural grass sportsgrounds when not being used by sports groups |

Targeted Workshops

Meetings were held with two internal business units – Park Operations and Rangers, in November 2019, to address and discuss the purpose of the Dog Recreation Strategy and provide an opportunity for input into the Strategy from those staff whose responsibilities are likely to be impacted by the Strategy.

The key issues raised are summarised in *Table C.2*.

By way of summary, it is noted that the main priority for Park Operations is the safety of staff during maintenance activities and the need for appropriate signage (and close-proximity alternative off-leash locations) to manage dog-owner expectations.

The Ranger team is generally not in favour of expanding the number of off-leash areas due to the user and dog conflicts that occur at them but they do recognise the community need and demand. Therefore, any expansion should ensure:

- An improved distribution of off-leash areas – to take pressure off over-used parks and provide off-leash opportunities in under-provided areas (e.g. Gladesville/Tennyson Point)
- Large/small dog separation
- Improved signage – including pictorial signage that illustrates the boundaries of off-leash areas
- Improved education of dog owners (including brochures and electronic signs)

Table C.2 - Targeted workshop discussion and implications

| Issue | Details | Implications for the Dog Recreation Strategy and/or off-leash facility management |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Design/size of O-L areas | Blenheim Park off-leash area is too small for the current level of use. However, ELS Hall Park off-leash area is a good size | Include off-leash park size in the revised site assessment/selection criteria matrix |
| | While not desirable to make every park an off-leash area, more off-leash area would have the potential to spread use, reduce overcrowding at specific off-leash areas, thereby reducing likelihood of attacks. | More off-leash areas could generate more supervision work for the Ranger team, with associated staffing level implications |
| Use of off-leash facilities | Professional dog walkers are the main users of dog parks during Mon-Fri working hours. | Need to monitor use and ensure compliance with payment of annual park use fees |
| | Park Operations staff receive little feedback on dog parks – no complaints or no thanks for improvements | Include off-leash areas in any future park use intercept surveys |
| | Lack of separation of big and small dogs is causing attacks at off-leash parks. Owners try their best to separate (i.e. small dog owners moving to far side of areas, but not always successful). | Consider trialling one or more small dog enclosures at an existing or future off-leash area |
| | Toy libraries and food cause attacks – need to remove toys/balls from Santa Rosa Park | Liaise with Santa Rosa Park off-leash group to discuss and resolve issue. Incorporate in rules and signage |
| | Around 70 recorded dog attacks per annum and around 20% of these occur in off-leash areas | Promote responsible dog ownership – consider new initiatives (e.g. mobile phones not to be used within off-leash areas due to distraction from dog supervision) |

| Issue | Details | Implications for the Dog Recreation Strategy and/or off-leash facility management |
|--|---|--|
| Maintenance – shared use sports grounds | <p>While there have been no injury claims against Council, there is an on-going Issue of dogs damaging sportsgrounds (e.g. recent Parks Operations visit to Peel Park evidence of digging and dog waste).</p> <p>It is not possible to completely remove risk with patching due to use of grounds before full establishment of the repairs. Potential injury liability.</p> <p>Trend for increasing use of grounds (e.g. soccer season creep) which was reducing ground’s capacity to recuperate and accommodate additional use e.g. from dog off-leash use.</p> <p>However, additional dog use not likely to be a problem at parks without training lights (e.g. Peel Park).</p> <p>Monash Park is being used as an unofficial dog park and doesn’t seem to be causing any problems.</p> | <p>Need to work with sports groups to mitigate risk by management interventions (e.g. sports users being required to inspect grounds for fitness for use prior to using; having sand onsite to fill any holes caused by dogs digging).</p> <p>Consideration of whether under-used sections of passive parks would be better sites for off-leash facilities</p> <p>Dog use is increasing operational costs for repairs to sports surfaces.</p> <p>Include sports field lighting in the off-leash site selection matrix as fields due to different carrying capacities of grounds with and without lights.</p> <p>Any additional sports grounds used for off-leash will require poo bag dispensers</p> |
| Maintenance – enclosed off-leash area | <p>Issue of inaccessible dog waste bins inside fenced off-leash areas at 3 locations (ELS Hall, Peel, Blenheim).</p> <p>Behaviour change and supportive signage required for programmed maintenance (to occur as much as possible according to a regular schedule).</p> | <p>Relocate waste bins to double gate airlock space to facilitate removal without dog bite risk. May require re-design so as not to impede access</p> <p>Dog parks to be temporarily closed so staff can mow/maintain them safely. Signage to indicate nearby dog parks that can be accessed during closure times.</p> |
| Signage | <p>Need for expanded and consistent signage in parks and need for clarity about off-leash area boundaries</p> | <p>Consider improved and expanded signage – to include that users ‘enter at own risk’; directions that place more onus on owner responsibility to control dogs (e.g. to stop dogs digging; no toys or food in the off-leash area) and to ensure that their dogs are microchipped and registered.</p> |
| Conflicts/ compliance/ safety incidents/ social impacts | <p>Need to avoid off-leash proximity to ‘sensitive’ attractors such as playgrounds some O-L areas are too close to children’s play areas (e.g. Pidding Park, Olympic Park)</p> <p>Staff dog bite incidents are currently reported in Safehold – but not referred to Rangers for follow-up with dog owners – therefore no triggers for accountability.</p> <p>Many dog owners are not complying with leash laws and allowing their dogs off-leash in on-leash areas and many appear to believe they have the right to do so</p> | <p>Conflicts at Pidding Park could be reduced by moving the off-leash area away from the main field towards the mini-fields (relocate waste bins to facilitate this) and/or fencing the area</p> <p>Park Operations to amend and improve the current process</p> <p>On-going review and implementation of leash law compliance activities.</p> |

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***Attachment D:
Revised off-leash
network and site
selection criteria***

Table D.1 - Revised off-leash network and site selection criteria

| Criteria | Best Practice | Attribute | Score |
|--------------|--|--|-------|
| Distribution | Prefer sites in areas with high dog populations | In suburb with >0.3 dogs/household | 4 |
| | | In suburb with 0.2-0.3 dogs/household | 3 |
| | | In suburb with <0.2 dogs/household | 2 |
| Location | Prefer sites in larger, high profile parks (Note: parks smaller than 0.5 Ha should be excluded from consideration due to their small size) | Within IOSP Level 1 park | 4 |
| | | Within IOSP Level 2 park | 3 |
| | | Within IOSP LEVEL 3 park | 2 |
| | | Within IOSP LEVEL 4 park | 0 |
| | Prefer sites with good passive surveillance from activated public areas | Excellent passive surveillance i.e. clear visibility from at least one collector (or higher) road and/or from a high use (>20hr/ week) active sports space and/or regional cycleway route and/or Level 1 park playground | 4 |
| | | Good passive surveillance i.e. partly obscured visibility from at least one collector (or higher) road and clear visibility from a medium use (15-20hr/week) active sports space or Level 2 park playground | 3 |
| | | Moderate passive surveillance i.e. partly obscured visibility from at least one collector (or higher) road and clear visibility from a low use (<15hr/week) active sports space or Level 3 park playground | 2 |
| | | Some passive surveillance i.e. partly obscured visibility from at least one collector (or higher) road or clear visibility from a low use (<15hr/week) active sports space or level 3 park playground | 1 |
| | | Poor passive surveillance (isolated/not visible from at least one collector (or higher road), an active sports space and/or a regional cycleway route) and/or a Level 1 to 3 playground | 0 |

| Criteria | Best Practice | Attribute | Score | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Accessibility | Prefer sites with high legibility and good connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods (Note: need GIS mapping for this criterion) | Potential to add >3,000 residential units to 20 minute walking catchment | 4 | |
| | | Potential to add 2,001-3,000 residential units to 20 minute walking catchment | 3 | |
| | | Potential to add 1,000-2,000 residential units to 20 minute walking catchment | 2 | |
| | | Potential to add <1,000 residential units to 20 minute walking catchment | 1 | |
| | Universal design compliance | | High potential for compliance with universal design principles (i.e. <50m from O-L site to carpark/surrounding streets; relatively flat terrain (< 1:20 gradient); space for wide pathways - min 1.5m) | 4 |
| | | | Medium potential for compliance with universal design principles (i.e. 50-100m from O-L site to parking/access streets; pathway gradient 1:15 to-1:20) | 2 |
| | | | Low potential for compliance with universal design (i.e. more than 100m from O-L site to parking/access streets; steep slopes with pathway gradient >1:15) | 1 |
| | Require existing on or off-street parking. Off-street preferred for higher hierarchy parks | | Existing off-street parking available | 4 |
| | | | Existing on-street parking available | 2 |
| | | | Limited or no on or off-street parking | 1 |
| Economic efficiency/sustain-ability | Prefer sites with potential for shared infrastructure (e.g. lighting, toilets, water, fencing, furniture) | 3+ items of existing infrastructure within 100 m of site | 4 | |
| | | 1 - 2 items of existing infrastructure within 100m of site | 2 | |
| | | No existing infrastructure within 100m of site | 0 | |
| Community support | Prefer sites with strong requests for off-leash facilities and strong community support (as evidenced by survey responses; submissions; letters; and/or petitions) | Very strong local community support (85-100%) | 4 | |
| | | Strong local community support (65-84%) | 3 | |
| | | Above-average local community support (55-64%) | 2 | |
| | | Average to below-average local community support (40-54%) | 1 | |
| | | Low local community support (0-39%) | 0 | |

| Criteria | Best Practice | Attribute | Score |
|--------------------------------|---|--|-------|
| Social impacts | Prefer sites with minimal impact on surrounding residents (Note: sites less than 50 metres from residences are required to have vegetative screening sufficient to attenuate noise impacts) | >50m to residences | 4 |
| | | 25-50m to residences | 2 |
| | | <25m to residences | 1 |
| | Prefer sites with no or minimal conflict with other park uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sports grounds) (Note: sites less than 50 metres from incompatible uses are required to have fencing sufficient to effectively separate the uses) | >50m to incompatible uses | 4 |
| | | 30-50m to incompatible uses | 2 |
| | | <30m to incompatible uses | 1 |
| | | <10m to food prep areas or playgrounds (prohibited under NSW Companion Animal Act) But if fully fenced and more than 10m from prescribed uses | 4 |
| Dog park size | Most guides and strategies recommend min area of 3,000m ² for a dog parks (ELS Hall Park off-leash area is 3,300m ² ; Blenheim Park is 2,500m ²) | Available space >3,000m ² | 4 |
| | | Available space 1,000-3,000m ² | 2 |
| | | Available space <1,000m ² | 1 |
| Park boundaries | While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation) or fencing between off-leash areas and major roads (Note: Sites less than 25m to U60km/hr roads must include safety fencing between the off-leash area and the road) | Distance (>50m) to U60km/hr roads or >20m to a 50km road | 4 |
| | | Distance (25-50m) to U60km/hr roads or <20m to a 50km road | 2 |
| | | distance (<25m) to U60km/hr roads | 1 |
| | | But if fully fenced | 4 |
| Host park natural features | Prefer sites with some natural vegetation and mature trees (for amenity and shade) (Note: where there are 'no existing trees on site' tree planting must form part of the project should the site be adopted as an off-leash area) | Mature trees - good mix of shade and open space | 4 |
| | | Some trees on site but need for more shade | 2 |
| | | No existing trees on site | 1 |
| | Prefer sites with good drainage | Good - well drained soils | 4 |
| | | Adequate | 2 |
| | | Poor - regularly water logged soil | 1 |
| | Shape requirements are fairly flexible but some guides recommend irregular shapes to better disperse users through a site | Irregular shape or rectilinear >2 Ha | 4 |
| Rectilinear < 2Ha | | 2 | |
| Environment-al sustain-ability | Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on park landscape/ visual qualities or natural values. In particular, avoid impacts on sensitive environmental areas (habitat, biodiversity, steep slopes) | >50m to Community and Crown land categorised as Natural Area | 4 |
| | | 25 50m to Community and Crown land categorised as Natural Area | 2 |
| | | <25m to Community and Crown land categorised as Natural Area | 1 |
| | | But if fully fenced | 4 |

***Attachment
E: Rating of
potential new
off-leash areas -
with revised site
selection criteria***

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| Best Practice | Weighting | Moore Park | | Eastwood Park | | Marsfield Park | | Waterloo Park | |
|--|-----------|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score |
| Basic score (i.e. without enclosure) | | | | | | | | | |
| Prefer sites in areas with high dog populations | 1.00 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites in larger, high profile parks | 0.50 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites with good passive surveillance from activated public areas | 0.50 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 3.0 | 1.5 |
| Prefer sites with high legibility and good connectivity with surrounding neighbourhoods | 0.50 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| Prefer sites with high potential for compliance with universal design principles | 0.50 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Require existing on or off-street parking. Off-street preferred for higher hierarchy parks | 0.50 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites with potential for shared infrastructure (e.g. lighting, toilets, water, fencing, furniture) | 0.50 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites with minimal impact on surrounding residents | 1.00 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites with no or minimal conflict with other park uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sports grounds) | 1.00 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Most guides and strategies recommend min area of 3,000m ² for a dog parks | 1.00 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation) or fencing between off-leash areas and major roads | 0.50 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Prefer sites with some natural vegetation and mature trees (for amenity and shade) | 0.50 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on park landscape/visual qualities or natural values. In particular, avoid impacts on sensitive environmental areas (habitat, biodiversity, steep slopes) | 1.00 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Total score (without enclosure) | | 34.0 | 23.5 | 39.0 | 26.5 | 42.0 | 27.5 | 42.0 | 27.5 |

| Tuckwell Park | | Fontenoy Park | | Monash Park | | Kissing Point Park Douglas | | Kissing Point Park Delange | | Meadowbank Park Beach | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score |
| 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 2.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 |
| 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.0 |
| 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| 38.0 | 25.0 | 38.0 | 25.0 | 36.0 | 25.0 | 40.0 | 27.5 | 36.0 | 23.0 | 39.0 | 24.0 |

| Best Practice | Weighting | Moore Park | | Eastwood Park | | Marsfield Park | | Waterloo Park | |
|--|-----------|-------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score |
| Potential score with full enclosure | | | | | | | | | |
| Prefer sites with no or minimal conflict with other park uses (i.e. playground, food prep areas, BBQ areas, skate parks, cycle trails, sports grounds) | 1.00 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| While boundary requirements are flexible, there must be sufficient buffer (space, vegetation) or fencing between off-leash areas and major roads | 0.50 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Avoid sites with high potential for negative impacts on park landscape/visual qualities or natural values. In particular, avoid impacts on sensitive environmental areas (habitat, biodiversity, steep slopes) | 1.00 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Total score (with full enclosure) | | 40.0 | 28.0 | 39.0 | 26.5 | 42.0 | 27.5 | 42.0 | 27.5 |

| Tuckwell Park | | Fontenoy Park | | Monash Park | | Kissing Point Park Douglas | | Kissing Point Park Delange | | Meadowbank Park Beach | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score | Score | Weighted score |
| 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 38.0 | 25.0 | 40.0 | 26.0 | 36.0 | 25.0 | 40.0 | 27.5 | 36.0 | 23.0 | 39.0 | 24.0 |

***Attachment F:
Infrastructure at
existing off-leash
areas***

Standard/core Facilities

The existing core facilities at Council's 13 off-leash areas are detailed in *Table F.1*.

Table F.1 - Standard/core infrastructure at Council's existing off-leash areas

| Dog off-leash area | Signs | | Waste | | Water | | Seating | Shade |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Inform-ation | Boundary | Bins | Bag dispenser | Tap/ bowl | Water station | | |
| Blenheim Park | 2 | n/a | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 alum +2 timber | Gazebo/trees |
| Denistone Park | 2 | n/a | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 bench | Trees |
| ELS Hall Park | 3 | n/a | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 x stainless | Gazebo/picnic setting |
| Ryde Park | 1 | n/a | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | Informal timbers around trees | Gazebo/picnic |
| Olympic Park | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 x alum | Gazebo at playground |
| North Ryde Common | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | N | Nil |
| Kotara Park | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | N | Nil |
| Santa Rosa Park | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 x alum | trees |
| Peel Park | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | Sports benches | Dugout shade |
| Brush Farm Park | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | Many benches | Gazebo/Trees |
| Darvall Park | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 x timber | Gazebos and trees |
| Pidding Park | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 x alum | Nil |
| Meadowbank Park | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 alum and 1 x timber | Nil |
| Total | 24 | 17 | 21 | 21 | 12 | 5 | | |

Desirable/optional Facilities

Existing *desirable/optional facilities* at or adjacent to Council's 13 off-leash areas include enclosure fences and gates, lighting, toilets and picnic/BBQ facilities, as summarised in *Table F.2*.

Table F.2 - Desirable/optional infrastructure at Council's existing off-leash areas

| Dog off-leash area | Within off-leash area | | Nearby | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| | Enclosure | Lighting | Toilets | Picnic/ BBQ settings |
| Blenheim Park | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Denistone Park | Y | N | N | N |
| ELS Hall Park | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Ryde Park | Y | ? | Y | Y |
| Olympic Park | N | N | N | Y |
| North Ryde Common | N | N | N | N |
| Kotara Park | N | N | N | N |
| Santa Rosa Park | N | N | Y | N |
| Peel Park | N | N | Y | N |
| Brush Farm Park | N | N | Y | Y |
| Darvall Park | N | N | Y | Y |
| Pidding Park | N | Y | Y | N |
| Meadowbank Park | N | N | Y | N |

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