



Outcomes Report

Community Consultation on the Planning Proposal for the former Oatley Bowling Club site (November 2016 – February 2017)

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Georges River Council

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1 Summary

This report provides a summary of community consultation outcomes on a Planning Proposal for the former Oatley Bowling Club site at Oatley.

The public consultation program was delivered from November 2016 to February 2017.

Three Community Information and Feedback Sessions (CIFs), a community survey and a phone survey were delivered as part of the community consultation. This represented the next steps in an ongoing dialogue with the community about the potential redevelopment options for this site.

Submissions were invited from the community from 23rd November 2016 until 5th February 2017.

The report finds varying support for the proposed development. Generally, those people who participated in the phone survey, both within the suburb of Oatley and those in surrounding suburbs, were supportive of the proposal. Those who attended the CIFs or complete the community survey generally expressed more concerns about the proposal.

The results from each method of consultation are summarised in the following chapters. The key themes from consultation are then summarised and recommended next steps are provided.

2 Context of the project

History of the site

The Oatley Bowling Club was located on several parcels of land purchased by Hurstville City Council in 1945, and adjacent lots resumed by Council in 1960 to 'improve and embellish the area'.

The site is adjacent to, but not part of, the Myles Dunphy Reserve.

The Oatley Bowling Club, formed in 1959, raised community money to build the clubhouse and greens on the site. Council leased the land to the Bowling Club until 2006 when the Club was closed.

After standing vacant for five years, Council demolished the building in 2011 due to public health and safety concerns.

Following closure of the former Oatley Bowling Club site in 2006, Council has been investigating options for its re-development to meet the current and future needs of the community. Since 2009 a series of proposals have been canvassed with the community. Several feasibility studies have also been conducted to assess the opportunities and constraints relating to development of the site.

Having been built on and developed, the site does not qualify as 'natural area' which is why it was not included in the Myles Dunphy Reserve and Wetland Plan of Management (2013).

The site is classified for 'Community Uses' under s36 (4) of the Local Government Act 1993.

Previous Planning Proposal

In 2010 the former Hurstville Council resolved to submit a Planning Proposal to rezone and reclassify the site for seniors and community uses. Funds from the lease were to be used to repay the loan for upgrades of Jubilee Park, Mortdale and the construction of Mortdale Community Centre.

Current situation

On Monday 7 November 2016, Georges River Council resolved not to proceed with the former Hurstville City Councils proposal for a seven-to-nine-storey mixed residential and seniors housing to be built on the former Oatley Bowling Club site. (*Note: On 12 May 2016 the Minister for Local Government, Paul Toole, announced the newly formed Georges River Council, a merging of the former Hurstville and Kogarah Councils*).

Council has instead decided to undertake community consultation on a Planning Proposal for only half of the site to be rezoned, and to limit any development to a smaller-scale, three-to-five-storey, aged care facility.

The other half of the former Bowling Club site will be converted to usable public recreation space, complimentary to the adjacent Myles Dunphy Reserve. This community space may include enhanced facilities including recreational areas, barbeque amenities, community gardens, and walking and bicycle tracks.

The Planning Proposal seeks to amend the 2012 Hurstville Local Environmental Plan (LEP) to:

- > Reclassify approximately 51% of the site from *community land* to *operational land*
- > Rezone the site from *RE1 Public Recreation* to *SP2 Infrastructure*
- > The site will have a designated land use of seniors housing and community facilities


Council is committed to ongoing community consultation on the Planning Proposal for the site.

An independent review of the outcomes of consultation and the Planning Proposal will be undertaken before the proposal is finalised.

The final decision about the Planning Proposal will be made by the new Georges River Council after it is elected in September 2017.

3 Methods


CONSULTATION AT A GLANCE




CIFS

3 community information and feedback sessions (CIFS) were held at Mortdale Community Centre and the Oatley Community Hall.

LETTER DROP




Letters inviting people to join in consultation activities were delivered to residents in streets located close to the former Oatley Bowling Club site.



PHONE SURVEY

501 residents from across the Georges River local government area were recruited to participate in a phone survey.

SURVEY



A community survey was also made available at the CIFS and on Council's website.

November 2016 to February 2017

3.1 Community Information and Feedback Sessions

Three Community Information and Feedback sessions (CIFS) were held on Wednesday 23rd November and Saturday 26th November 2016. The sessions were designed to provide residents with an opportunity to find out more

about the Planning Proposal, ask questions of technical experts and Council staff and to provide immediate feedback to the independent facilitators. Information boards (Appendix B) were designed to highlight key aspects of the project and copies of the Planning Proposal, fact sheets and community survey were also available at the sessions.

Sessions were advertised on Council's website and in the St George Leader and adjacent residents received a letter of invitation in their mailbox.

3.2 Community Survey

A community survey was available on Council's website and in hard copy at the CIFS. The survey was designed to explore respondents' preferences for the types of seniors housing proposed at the former Oatley Bowling Club site, the nature of any community facilities proposed for the site, suggestions for improving access to the adjacent Myles Dunphy Reserve, as well as how Council can stay in touch about the proposed development in the future. Participants were encouraged to provide their contact details though this was not mandatory. There is a small possibility of duplicate surveys being received.

3.3 Phone Survey

A telephone survey replicating the online and hard copy versions was rolled out to 501 residents from across the Georges River Local Government Area. The survey was conducted in two tranches (304 in December 2016 and 197 in January 2017). Participants were randomly recruited and sent an information pack prior to a one-on-one interview taking place. Information packs consisted of copies of the information boards used at CIFS and a short introductory letter.

4 Key Insights

There was a significant difference in the level of support for the Planning Proposal between the results from the phone survey and the feedback received at Community Information Sessions and from the Community Survey.

There was strong support for the current proposal from the phone survey respondents.

Those who attended the CIFs and/or filled out the community survey were significantly more likely to oppose the proposed Planning Proposal.

Of those who were **concerned about the Planning Proposal, the following issues were raised:**

- » The scale of the development and setting a precedent for the area
- » Visual impact of the development
- » Preserving the character of Oatley's built environment
- » Privatisation of public land
- » Desire for the site to be preserved for open space, passive recreation and environmental value
- » Road access to the site, including clearing to widen the road and the turn off into the site
- » Risk of bushfire to residents, the Myles Dunphy Reserve and the proposed development site
- » Parking for the site.

Broader **concerns about Councils decision making processes** and timeline for delivery included:

- » The impact of Council amalgamations on the timeline for decision making
- » Previous Council decisions on this site likely contributing to low levels of public support and trust.

Other key insights from community consultation include:

- » General agreement that there is a need for seniors housing in the area and support for self-contained dwellings as the preferred type of accommodation
- » Community gardens and walkways were the most popular facilities for inclusion at the site
- » Support for improved access and signage for the Myles Dunphy Reserve as well as some localised support for the return of the whole site to bushland
- » There is strong support for the proposed retention of part of the site for public open space.

5 Detailed Feedback

Community Information and Feedback Sessions

The following is an account of the feedback received during three CIFs held on the 23 and 26 of November, 2016. Many participants took the opportunity to share their views, ask questions and provide comments to staff and facilitators.

By the numbers

- » 42 participants at Mortdale Community Centre (23 November 2016)
- » 68 participants at Oatley Community Hall (morning session, 26 November 2016)
- » 39 participants at Oatley Community Hall (afternoon session, 26 November, 2016)

Key Themes

Scale and impacts of development

Many participants feel the Planning Proposal to incorporate a three to five story building is inconsistent with the other buildings in Oatley and approval would establish a precedent for the suburb. Some noted also that the bulk of the building is located at the highest point of the site, exacerbating the impact of the scale.

Many participants expressed strong views about protecting the existing amenity and character of Oatley and sited recent development examples including the new train station and Coles supermarket as evidence of poor development approvals.

Many participants suggested that sensitive landscaping and design will be important for the development and the view from the village with respect to visual impact should be reduced through good design, green walls and appropriate colours etc. to maintain the Oatley character and suburb amenity.

Appropriateness of the site for development

Some participants feel the bushfire risk has not been adequately addressed in the Planning Proposal and one individual suggested that the District Bushfire Management Committee (the local determining authority) has not conducted a risk assessment of the site for some time and it may now meet the criteria for 'Category 1' assessment which would affect the prescribed set-backs for development.

Many considered the narrow access road to the site unsuitable for emergency access, ambulance, trucks and other service vehicles. Additionally, concerns were expressed about use of the site for overflow commuter parking or parking in nearby streets by potential future staff and visitors.

Opponents of the development suggested the site be added to the Myles Dunphy Reserve or retained as public open space dedicated to passive uses. There was considerable opposition to the proposal to transfer 'public land' into 'private ownership' and some participants expressed a view that this was in direct contradiction to the original establishment of the site.

Support for seniors housing

Though the need for seniors housing was acknowledged as important for the community, some people questioned if Council was also considering other locations in the portfolio.

Some people expressed a view that high-rise accommodation was less social and not a best-practice model for aged care. Several local examples of good design were given including; Casa Mia in Padstow and the Wareena Centre in Bangor. One participant was especially concerned about the multi-story design with respect to emergency evacuation.

Community facilities

Opinions on the development of community facilities at the site were mixed amongst participants. Some felt that the site should be preserved as open space and for passive recreation. Some suggested it be revegetated to natural bushland. Other participants were broadly supportive of the provision of outdoor

recreation facilities like BBQs, walking tracks and amenity blocks. There was little support for children's play equipment as it was suggested that there are adequate facilities of this nature at other locations.

Some participants also supported the development of a community nursery, artist space or men's shed at the site.

Environmental concerns

There is some concern that vegetation included in the Myles Dunphy Reserve will be removed to widen the road access to the site.

There are concerns about the impact of the development on the environmental values of the adjacent Myles Dunphy Reserve including on a known population of a listed Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) of Acacia Prominens (Gosford Wattle) and on other fauna including the Powerful Owl.

Process of consultation and engagement

Many participants were concerned that the project is progressing despite what they believe to be overwhelming opposition to the proposal in previous consultation rounds.

Others were concerned that the notice period of consultation and invitation to participate was too short or that there has been insufficient communication from Council about the project. There are low levels of trust amongst some stakeholder groups in Council consultation process and a perception that Council doesn't listen when the answer from community is 'no'.

Neighbours directly adjacent to the site have requested more opportunities to hear about the proposal from Council and seek opportunities for further meetings.

Feedback about the structure of the CIFs was generally positive. Feedback noted improvements in promotion of future events and more regular contact and updates would be welcomed.

Community Survey

A community survey was developed during the consultation period. The survey focussed on exploring participants' attitudes and support for development of the former Oatley Bowling Club site as well as preferences for community facilities and future consultation activities.

The context of the survey questions was limited to the current Planning Proposal being presented. Several participants felt the survey did not provide adequate opportunities for expressing views or opinions that related to alternative uses of the site.

The following is an analysis of 146 surveys collected during consultation up to 5th February 2017.

Two surveys returned by post included significant extra commentary and feedback and will be considered as submissions to the project.

By the numbers

- » 24 surveys collected at CIFs
- » 18 surveys received by post
- » 104 surveys completed online

Key Themes

Aged care services in the LGA

- » Sixty two percent of Respondents agree that provision of aged care facilities is an important issue for Council. Forty eight percent believe the LGA already has enough aged care options.
- » A number of respondents would be interested in accommodation at the former Oatley Bowling Club site either for themselves (30%) or a family member (35%).
- » If an aged care facility is to be built at the site respondents were broadly even in their preference for type of accommodation; 58% for Self-contained Dwellings, 53% for Nursing Home and 32% for Hostel accommodation.

- » Thirty seven percent of respondents answered that they would prefer no development at this site rather than stating a preference for a type of seniors housing.

Community facilities

- » Community gardens (79%) and walkways (73%) were the most favoured community facilities for the site.
- » Public toilets (56%), picnic shelters (56%), play equipment (46%), and BBQs (46%) were also of interest.
- » Least supported facilities were cycle paths (43%), a men's shed (42%), and kiosk (30%).
- » Other respondents indicated a preference for the site to be re-generated to natural bushland and many also expressed a desire for community facilities to be provided instead of aged care development.
- » Several examples of good-practice were sited including the Coal Loader at Waverton, the Camperdown Commons and Moores Reserve at Oatley.

The Myles Dunphy Reserve

- » Eighty percent of survey respondents have visited the Reserve within the last six months and less than 7% had never visited the Reserve.
- » The top three improvements supported by respondents include; landscape maintenance (61%), better access including cycle paths and walkways (54%), and improved signage (48%). Improvements to general amenity including; public toilets (33%), graffiti management (23%), lighting (23%) and additional parking (18%) were also supported. 14% of respondents didn't feel any improvements were required at the Reserve.
- » Several respondents made additional comments that indicated a preference that the Reserve's bushland and natural settings be preserved and that an intensification of use through development or more structured recreation would have undesirable consequences.

About the current Planning Proposal

- » Ninety three percent of survey respondents were familiar with the Planning Proposal for the site and 66% do not agree that the current Planning proposal represents an appropriate scale of development for the site.
- » Unstructured comments regarding the Planning Proposal were largely echoes of those heard during CIFs. The two most common themes were;
 - > Opposition to development of any kind at the site and a desire that the land be retained as public open space, and
 - > That the size of the building proposed is too large for the suburb and would establish a precedent for other 5 story developments.
- » Seventy percent of survey respondents do not support the proposed re-zoning of the site. Many commented that the site should not be rezoned from public land to land that which can be developed. Concerns about the scale and intensity of the development were reiterated including issues related to traffic, bushfire risk, need for open and green space and impacts on the adjacent Miles Dunphy Reserve.
- » A smaller number of respondents supported the rezoning for limited aged care accommodation with a lower building height. Some questioned whether this would be economically viable for a commercial operator.

Future consultation and engagement

- » There was strong support for ongoing consultation. Respondents desire communication and engagement opportunities about the site using a variety of channels and approaches including; community information sessions (70%), survey's (61%), open days (53%) newsletters (45%) and displays (40%).
- » Some respondents took the opportunity to suggest other activities including field trips and site tours, meetings with Council staff and to compliment Council on the CIFs.
- » Forty nine respondents elected to join a mailing list to receive updates about the project.

Phone Survey

A telephone survey was conducted in two tranches during December 2016 and January 2017. A total of 501 people were surveyed.

The telephone survey replicated the content and questions from the community survey. Participants were recruited from across the entire Local Government Area and were sent a copy of the display materials used at CIFs or a link to the Council's web pages about the former Oatley Bowling Club as background reading.

A total of 662 people were recruited to achieve the 501 interviews as part of this survey. Proportionately less young people were engaged in this process than live within the area according to ABS data. However given the topic of the survey and nature of phone surveys, which tends to attract an older demographic, this is unlikely to affect survey results.

Note: Some people did not answer all questions.

By the numbers

- » A total of 501 phone surveys
- » 194 males and 307 females surveyed
- » Of those surveyed:
 - > 53 people were between 18-39 years' old
 - > 199 were between 40-59
 - > 249 were 60 years or older
 - > 154 people were from the suburb of Oatley (postcode 2223)

- > 347 people were from surrounding suburbs, including:
 - 120 people from postcode 2222 (Penshurst)
 - 66 people from postcode 2221 (including Blakehurst, Kyle Bay, Connells Point, South Hurstville and Carss Park).
 - 161 participants from other postcodes in the LGA.

Key Themes

Aged care services in the LGA

- » Ninety two percent of surveyed respondents considered that the provision of aged care facilities was an important issue for Council, and 47% felt that they or a family member would be interested in aged care accommodation at the Oatley Bowling Club site, or in the Kogarah/Hurstville area in the next five years.
- » Most people felt that self-contained dwellings would be most appropriate to the Oatley Bowling Club site. This option was preferred by those in the 40-59 age group (77%) and those aged 60 and over (76%).
- » Self-contained dwellings were the preferred type of aged care accommodation for both those within the suburb of Oatley (65%) and those in surrounding suburbs (79%).

Community facilities

- » Community gardens (88%) were the preferred use of public recreation space by survey respondents, followed by walkways (86%)
- » The next most popular options were public toilets (75%) and picnic shelters (71%).
- » Those living in surrounding suburbs expressed a stronger preference for picnic shelters (75%) and cafes (65%) than those living in the suburb of Oatley
- » The least popular uses of the space included cycle paths (51%) and a men's shed (56%).
- » Additional suggestions for facilities or services included a community centre/library/age-appropriate activities (7%) and open green space (7%).

Myles Dunphy Reserve

- » Most of the survey respondents had visited the Myles Dunphy Reserve over a year ago (41%) or had never visited (31%).
- » For those living in Oatley, most people had visited the Reserve more than a year ago (35%) or within the last month (24%).
- » Sixty five percent of survey respondents felt that better access, including walkways or cycle tracks would improve the reserve. 60% wanted better landscape maintenance and improved signage, while 58% suggested better public toilets.
- » Survey respondents across the wider LGA were generally more supportive of additional parking (60.3%) graffiti management (61.2%) and more public toilets (65.2%) at the Reserve.

About the current Planning Proposal

- » Fifty eight percent of survey respondents felt that a three to five storey aged care facility was appropriate for the site, with 61% of respondents from suburbs other than Oatley agreeing with this scale of development.
- » Seventy one percent of survey respondents felt that the proposed rezoning (51% of the site for aged care purposes) would result in an appropriate intensity of development for the site.
- » When asked to explain their response, 48% of people felt that they were happy with the proposal, 23% expressed anti-development sentiments or concerns about over-development, 10% expressed concerns about the suitability of a multi-story site for aged care, concerns about maintaining the character of the area or concerns about parking at the site.
- » Other comments included:
 - > suggestions that Council should consider other uses for the site such as community facilities or a child care
 - > concerns about development in the area
 - > concerns about the cost of a potential aged care facility
 - > support for the proposal.

Future consultation and engagement

- » When asked which community consultation activities people would like to participate in, 60% preferred newsletters, 52% email updates and 48% surveys.
- » Half of the people surveyed requested to join Council's stakeholder mailing list.

6 Next Steps

Georges River Council will review the outcomes of community consultation and the draft Planning Proposal prior to making a decision about the former Oatley Bowling Club site.

The final decision will be made following the election of a new Council in September 2017.

Community members have expressed a clear desire for ongoing consultation about the future of this site and eagerly seek opportunities to contribute to any future plans.

Council has committed to continue to work with the community regarding plans for the site.

Council is developing a renewed process for communications and engagement that will underpin all future consultation programs. This will ensure ongoing dialogue with interested residents and the broader community about this project. Detailed planning for the site will commence once a decision is made by Council following the September 2017 elections.

Feedback from respondents at the Community Information and Feedback sessions suggested there was a level of confusion about the steps in the planning process. It is recommended that until any decision is made by Council on the future of the site, communication with the community about the site should continue to be clear and concise. Communication should highlight the stages in any future detailed planning of the site and the opportunity for community participation.

Feedback from the consultation process also indicated an interest in the following mechanisms for engagement:

- » Newsletter updates
- » Email updates
- » Pop-ups and face to face events
- » Displays and models of the site and planning options.

It is important that ongoing consultation recognises and builds on the feedback outlined in this report, for the continuation and development of positive working relationships with the local community regarding the future of the former Oatley Bowling Club site.

Appendices

- A Community Survey
- B AO Community Information Boards
- C CIFs Feedback

A Community Survey

B AO Community Information Boards

C Community Information and Feedback Sessions

