

ITEM 1 PUBLIC EXHIBITION - BULLI SHOWGROUND MASTER PLAN

In accordance with the Delivery Program 2022-2026, Operational Plan 2022-23, a draft Master Plan has been developed to provide Council with a vision to inform the future enhancement of Bulli Showground.

The draft Bulli Showground Master Plan (draft Master Plan) focuses on enhancing and improving community access to the Showground as greyhound racing consolidates operations to a new home on private land holdings in Dapto. This plan is envisaged to help shape the direction of the showground over the next 10-15 years.

Key features of the draft Master Plan include a multi-purpose open space that can be utilised by the community for a range of events and community sporting opportunities, that will also include a range of improved spaces to allow for flexible uses by the community.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Council endorse the draft Bulli Showground Master Plan for public exhibition from 15 May to 12 June 2023.
- 2 Following exhibition, Council receives a further report with an updated Master Plan incorporating the community engagement findings.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Lucielle Power, Manager Property + Recreation

Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Bulli Showground Draft Master Plan

BACKGROUND

Bulli Showground is one of the most significant parcels of open space and recreation areas in Wollongong's northern suburbs. The land is owned by Council and is currently licenced with the predominate use of greyhound racing.

Bulli Showground is formally identified as lot 33 DO 1182831 and is classified as community land and categorised as general community use. The site is zoned RE1 Public Recreation.

The site was acquired by the former Bulli Shire Council in 1939 and has been managed as a controlled space since its inception. The first harness race was held in 1946 and first greyhound race in 1950. The site is currently leased on a month-to-month arrangement to the Greyhound Breeders Owners Trainers and Association (GBOTA) for greyhound racing purposes.

The site currently consists of:

- A gravel trotting track (17m wide, 750m in length) - no longer used for harness racing but occasionally used for parking during events
- A loam greyhound racing track (7m wide, approximately 650m in length)
- A major building (approx. 2500sqm) consisting of:
 - Ground floor - covered betting ring (with sloping floor), small bar area, small kitchen, office space, older style amenities, storage.
 - First floor – Grandstand, tiered restaurant with commercial kitchen, control tower for greyhound racing, and storage.
- Old Horse stables – steel, brick, and tin roof
- Air-conditioned Kennels
- Old Show Pavilion & Shed – currently occupied by the Woonona Bulli Men's Shed and a pigeon club
- Brick public toilets and storage area

- Palisade perimeter fencing of main showground area
- Informal gravel areas used for parking
- LED Pylon sign on Highway

PROPOSAL

A draft Master Plan has been developed to guide future activities and enhancements that support the longer-term future uses of the site including:

- Removal of greyhound racing infrastructure enabling a reconfigured multi-use space.
- Removal of the main building & grandstand.
- Reconstructed grass arena with a rectangular configuration with sub-surface drainage and irrigation works enabling multiple sized sports playing areas.
- A northern hardstand area for major stage and event infrastructure set up.
- New floodlighting to enable night-time use.
- New amenities & storage that are suitable for accommodating multiple users.
- New large, covered area suitable for events and markets.
- New building suitable with multi-use areas catering for events, commercial activities, indoor training, amenities.
- Consolidated carparking areas.
- Investigation to incorporate a dump point within the Showground.
- A small park located on the southern area of the showground that could be utilised for active recreation opportunities that may include, skate, bike, basketball court etc.

Whilst Grevillia Park will not be impacted by the development of the Bulli Showground Master Plan, it is noted that further investigations will take place in regard to any potential future impact of a road by-pass. Elements may potentially be incorporated into the future Bulli Showground site.

These improvements and changes to Bulli Showground would see activity at the site diversified with anticipated uses that could include:

- Concerts and festivals with space for over 10,000 patrons – the large, grassed arena of approximately 25,000 sqm supported by dedicated hardstand area and supporting infrastructure for stage set up.
- Markets, retail shows, family entertainment, social events, and civic/community activities.
- Sports training (outdoor and indoor).
- Space for extreme or emerging sports and activities.
- Opportunities for community and commercial uses such as food and beverage.
- Flexible community space for a range of activities and events.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The findings of the Stage 1 Needs Assessment Study (2021) have directly informed the development of the draft Master Plan. A range of stakeholders have provided the following information.

Markets

Foragers markets operate most Sundays utilising the betting ring area and adjacent lawn for operations.

Key issues/priorities to improve the showground for market operations include:

- Improved entrance and fencing
- Improved toilet facilities

- Area to expand markets
- Inadequate bump in times
- Impacts to operations from hosting of events

Local Sporting Clubs

Sporting Clubs representing Cricket, Football/Soccer, Rugby League, and Bulli PCYC were consulted in 2018/19 as part of developing the Needs Assessment Study. Clubs indicated that their participation rates were either stable or growing with strong growth in female participation. Clubs noted that there was strong demand for additional training venues to assist in alleviating pressure of their main home grounds.

Clubs noted significant improvements at the facility to accommodate and support sport:

- Contemporary amenities
- Improved maintenance of grass surface on arena
- New sports field lighting to arena
- Formalising parking areas

Bulli PCYC noted that their current facility, whilst in a good position, was constrained and ageing. Moving operations to Bulli Showground could provide contemporary facilities with more space for programs and improved centre supervision.

Community

Considerable community engagement took place for this project that included:

- Council's Have Your Say (HYS) page.
- A communications strategy was established to promote visitation to the HYS page and encourage participation in the survey. Social media advertising was used to promote the engagement.
- Surveys were conducted at an adjacent shopping centre, and with users during events over one weekend.
- An online survey.
- Interviews were conducted with all user groups, potential hirers, local community, cultural recreation and sporting groups and other stakeholders.
- Meetings were held with user groups.
- A detailed site inspection with the architect and the facility management.
- Facebook and email submissions.

Event Organisers

Consultation occurred with Destination Wollongong and commercial event organisers, who have run previous events at Bulli Showground and more broadly across the Local Government Area. Issues identified as part of this consultation that will need to be addressed as part of the broader use of the space will include:

- Noise impact to residents and ensuring that events are able to be run outdoors with minimal impact to residents.
- Access and Parking – ensuring there is appropriate parking on-site and public transport links are identified and incorporated into the development of the site (Bus layover/ turning area etc).
- Power – ensuring there is sufficient power within the site, and available at various points within the Showground to ensure event flexibility.
- Drainage – to be considered as part of any development to ensure maximum use of the space.
- Capacity of the space for Major events, reasonable capacity should be a minimum of 10,000 to ensure viability of events.

Greyhound Industry

Council Officers have met with Greyhound NSW and NSW Greyhound Breeders Owners and Trainers Association (GBOTA) in relation to the future use of Bulli Showground and their intended use of the site into the future.

Greyhound NSW and GBOTA has been clear in their direction that they will be consolidating all Greyhound racing to their new site in Dapto that was purchased in 2023 once it has been constructed. Council Officers will continue to meet with GBOTA as part of the current agreement in place for Bulli Showground as GBOTA and Greyhound NSW transition to their new site into the future.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2032 Goal 5 'We have a healthy community in a liveable city'. It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan 2032		Delivery Program 2022-2026	Operational Plan 2022-23
Strategy		Service	Operational Plan Actions
5	We have a healthy community in a liveable city	Parks and Sportsfields	Finalise the Bulli Showground Masterplan

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

This draft Master Plan has carefully considered the natural values of the site. All proposed initiatives utilise the existing site layout, avoiding extensive cut and fill exercises and wherever possible maintaining current landscape form. Existing native vegetation will be maintained where possible with only minor adjustments to vegetation potentially required. Opportunities for future improvements to increase natural shade and noise abatement will be included as part of detailed planning.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The draft Master Plan has carefully considered the existing site values and proposes a future plan to improve community engagement and participation within this prominent recreational asset. Additional information including high-level cost estimates will be provided to Council following community feedback and development of the revised draft Master Plan and associated Implementation Plan. It is anticipated that once adopted, the Bulli Showground Master Plan will help to inform future decisions on the site, and support applications for external funding opportunities to realise the Master Plan.

It is noted that implementation is not currently funded within the current Infrastructure Delivery Program.

CONCLUSION

The draft Master Plan has been developed to stimulate community input to guide the future direction of the Bulli Showground. The draft Master Plan focuses on providing a multi-purpose space that enables a range of cultural, sporting and community activities with a focus on providing an event space.

Endorsement of the draft Master Plan for exhibition will allow community feedback and input, to assist in refining the Master Plan for implementation and further detailed design and development in future years.

