

2020

DRAFT

OFF-LEASH DOG PARK STRATEGY



Council would like to recognise the Traditional Owners of the lands of Hornsby Shire, the Darug and Guringai Aboriginal Peoples, the original and ongoing custodians of this place. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and to their heritage.

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Glossary of terms

Bushland - Land on which there is vegetation which is either a remainder of the natural vegetation of the land, or, if altered, is still representative of the structure and floristics of the natural vegetation.¹

Council managed land – Lands for which Council has responsibility for its care, control and management.

Dog owner – the person who appears (from the best endeavours of the person in charge of a council pound or approved premises to establish who the owner is) to be the owner of the animal.²

Dog carer – The person responsible for the actions and care of the dog whilst in a public area.

Off-leash dog park – An area where dogs are permitted to run free provided they are under the effective control of a competent person.

Natural area – Areas of land identified as a 'Natural Area' under Councils Land Register Usage categorisation.³

Park – Areas of land identified as a 'Park' under Councils Land Register Usage categorisation.⁴

Registered owner - the person shown in the registration information entered on the Register of Companion Animals as the registered owner of the animal (and in the case of joint registered owners means each of those joint registered owners).⁵

Shared sportsground – Areas where Council have declared that dogs are permitted off-leash when organised sport, training or maintenance are not taking place.

Wildlife Protection Area - The NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 enables Council to prohibit dogs and / or cats from public places, or part thereof, where they have been set aside by the Council for the protection of wildlife. Hornsby Shire Council has declared Wildlife Protection Areas in some bushland to conserve the unique biodiversity of the region. Dogs must be kept on a leash in Wildlife Protection Areas.⁶

¹NSW Local Government Act 1993, Dictionary

²NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 7.

³NSW Local Government Act 1993, 36 (4)

⁴NSW Local Government Act 1993, 36 (4)

⁵NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, Part 1, Definitions

⁶NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, 14(h)



Executive summary

The Hornsby Shire Council Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy provides guidance on the development and operation of off-leash dog parks within Hornsby Shire. The Strategy aims to find an appropriate balance between the recreational needs of dog owners and other open space users while protecting Hornsby's open space assets, natural habitats and wildlife.

Council believes it is appropriate to support responsible pet ownership and provide off-leash dog parks in suitable locations across Hornsby Shire. Its vision for off-leash dog parks is to ensure that residents have access to safe, enjoyable and sustainable off-leash dog parks that encourage activity and social interaction while respecting the needs of all park users.

Existing off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire

The first off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire were opened in the early 2000s with several new sites being added over the years. Council currently provides nine sites where dogs can play, socialise and exercise off-leash. Facilities include a mix of dedicated and unfenced sites and shared sportsgrounds with restricted time access. Council also provides more than thirty (30) bushland trails where dogs can be walked on-leash.

Key issues

In recent years Council has received various letters and petitions from the community raising concerns in relation to off-leash dog parks. Council staff have also provided feedback on some of the key issues. These are summarised below:

Distribution

Hornsby Shire has a growing population and service gaps have been identified in the provision of off-leash dog parks for the areas around:

- Mount Colah / Mount Kuring-gai;
- Hornsby / Thornleigh;
- Cherrybrook / Pennant Hills;
- Brooklyn and Wisemans Ferry; and
- the rural lands in the west of Hornsby Shire.

Capacity

Council's existing dog parks are popular with the community and some are showing evidence of being used beyond their carrying capacity. Most notably affected are Greenway Park and Rofo Park. Overcrowding can be a deterrent for some park users and additional space is required.

Hierarchy

In order to provide a range of experiences in Hornsby Shire two levels of hierarchy for off-leash dog parks are proposed.

Shared sportsgrounds

Shared sportsgrounds would appear to offer a mutually beneficial outcome for all users where space for a dedicated dog park is limited. In practice Council has found these shared sites to be challenging due to conflicts with sportsground users and dog owners.

Separation of small and large dogs

Some members of the community have expressed a desire for separate fenced areas within Council's dog parks to accommodate small and elderly dogs and puppies due to concerns for the safety of their pet when exercising around larger dogs.

Conflicts with other park users

Conflicts between dogs and other park users can arise in shared public spaces where dogs are allowed to run free. Dedicated off-leash recreation areas are considered to offer better outcomes for both dog owners and the community.

Wear and tear of turf surfaces

Wear and tear of turf surfaces is an ongoing issue at many of Council's popular off-leash dog parks. Most notably affected are Crossroads Park, Greenway Park, Asquith Park and Westleigh Park.

Equitable access

Research highlights the importance of companion animals in the lives of people with disabilities and those who may be at risk of being socially and physically isolated. The presence of a pet dog can encourage people to exercise and break down barriers between people with a disability and the able bodied person.

Impacts on close neighbours

Impacts on neighbours such as noise, odour and parking complaints can be an issue and off-leash dog parks are more likely to be successful if there is broad community support for their establishment and users are educated on park rules and etiquette.

Access to water for recreation

Council recognises that many dogs enjoy playing and swimming in water however no water play opportunities are provided in Hornsby Shire due to a lack of suitable sites.

Recommendation Summary

Ten (10) recommendations are proposed.

1. Address the under supply of off-leash dog parks where service gaps have been identified in the Mount Colah / Mount Kuring-gai, Hornsby / Thornleigh, Cherrybrook / Pennant Hills, Brooklyn and Wisemans Ferry areas and the rural lands in the west of Hornsby shire.
2. Increase the total amount of dog recreation space by expanding the area of the Shire's most popular and heavily used off-leash dog park facilities.
3. Classify off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire according to a two tiered hierarchy system.
4. Maintain existing access for dogs at Ron Payne Oval and Epping Oval but do not create any new dog parks on sportsgrounds.
5. Investigate providing a separate area for puppies, small, frail and elderly dogs at selected off-leash dog parks.
6. New off-leash dog parks to prioritise dedicated facilities or sites that minimise conflicts with other park users.
7. Provide synthetic grass in high wear areas at off-leash dog parks suffering heavy turf damage.
8. The design of off-leash dog parks reflects Hornsby Shire's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and universal design principles are applied to support users with a range of abilities.
9. Assess potential new sites for possible impacts on neighbours and provide mitigation measures to minimise negative impacts.
10. Access to water for dog recreation will not be provided in Hornsby Shire due to a lack of suitable sites.

Design principles

The design of an off-leash dog park needs to be well considered and requires an understanding of dogs' needs and their behaviour. The design and layout of the space has an important influence on the effectiveness of the space as an off-leash dog park. Design principles are offered as a guide to the planning and design of new off-leash dog parks.

Selection criteria for new off-leash dog parks

Potential new sites are to be assessed for suitability according to the selection criteria identified in Section 5.

Management guidelines

This Strategy outlines rules and enforcement for the use of off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire.

Owner education is an important part of peoples experience with off-leash dog parks. Council is committed to the management of dogs through community education and awareness.

Ongoing maintenance is regularly carried out at Council's off-leash dog parks and includes activities such as mowing and replacing turf, aeration of compacted ground, weed spraying and fencing repairs.



Introduction

The Hornsby Shire Council Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed by Council to provide guidance on the development and operation of off-leash dog parks within Hornsby Shire.

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world⁷ and companion animals play an important role in the lives of many Hornsby Shire residents⁸. It is estimated that approximately 43.7%⁹ of Hornsby households own at least one dog as a pet and many people wish to enjoy recreating with their dogs in public places.

Off-leash dog parks offer an excellent opportunity for community members to come together over the shared interest of their pets. Dogs are particularly popular in families with young children and are important companions for older people and people living alone as they provide companionship and create opportunities for people to form connections with others in the community.

While off-leash dog parks may enhance human health and connectedness, Council needs to ensure that the natural environment is not negatively impacted by off-leash dog park activities. The recreational needs of dog owners and other open space users must be balanced with protection of natural habitats, wildlife and water quality.

There are many benefits to dogs in the community however, Council is also aware that some people do not want to encounter dogs when they use public parks. The provision of dedicated off-leash dog parks enables dog owners to safely play and socialise with their dogs in these locations.

Council believes it is appropriate to support responsible pet ownership in our community and this Strategy outlines Council's commitment to providing off-leash dog recreation facilities in suitable locations across Hornsby Shire.

This Strategy is divided into **seven (7)** parts.

Part 1: About this Strategy

Part 2: Policy framework

Part 3: Existing facilities and participation

Part 4: Discussion and recommendations

Part 5: Design and selection criteria

Part 6: Management guidelines

Part 7: Conclusion

⁷Australian Companion Animal Council (2020)

⁸Hornsby Shire Council (2016)

⁹Hornsby Shire Council (2020). Figures based on 2016 census data for Hornsby households and registered dogs with a date of birth from Jan 2005.

Part 1: About this Strategy

1.1 Purpose of this Strategy

The Hornsby Shire Council Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed to help Council plan for the needs of Hornsby Shire residents who want to enjoy recreating with their dogs off-leash on Council managed land. It provides strategic direction for the establishment and operation of off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire.

The Strategy aims to find an appropriate balance between the recreational needs of dog owners and other open space users while protecting Hornsby's open space assets, natural habitats and wildlife.

1.2 Council's vision for off-leash dog parks

Hornsby Shire residents have access to safe, enjoyable and sustainable off-leash dog parks that encourage activity and social interaction while also respecting the needs of all park users.

1.3 Position statement

Council recognises the importance of companion animals to many of the residents of Hornsby Shire including the physical, social and economic benefits that dog ownership brings to individuals and the community.

Council will encourage responsible exercising of dogs and provide off-leash dog recreation areas where appropriate, while also providing opportunities for community members to have access to open space for other purposes.





Part 2: Policy framework

2.1 Relevant legislation

NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 and the Companion Animals Regulation 2008

The *NSW Companion Animals Act 1998*¹⁰ (The Act) and the *Companion Animals Regulation 2008*¹¹ provides for the identification and registration of dogs and cats, how they are managed and the duties and responsibilities of their owners.

The principal objective of The Act is to provide for the effective and responsible care and management of companion animals. Local Councils administer and enforce this legislation. Of particular relevance to this Strategy is the scope the Act gives to Council in relation to animals in public places.

By law, a dog that is in a public place must be under the effective control of some competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by (or secured to) the person. Dogs are also prohibited from some public places including within 10m of a children's playground, other recreation, public bathing and wildlife protection areas where these have been declared by public authorities. Due to these restrictions, the need emerged for public authorities to provide areas where dogs are permitted to legally be off-leash.

Local Councils are authorised under the Act to declare a public place to be an off-leash area and all Councils are required to provide at least one off-leash area where dogs can be exercised. The requirement for dogs to be under the effective control of a competent person when in public places, still applies to areas declared off-leash.

State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP Infrastructure) 2007

Under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP Infrastructure) 2007*¹², minor infrastructure works carried out by public authorities such as fencing around dog recreation areas are considered 'exempt development' and are therefore not subject to Development Approval.

¹⁰*NSW Companion Animals Act 1998*

¹¹*Companion Animals Regulation 2008*

¹²*State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007*

2.2 Relationship to other strategic documents

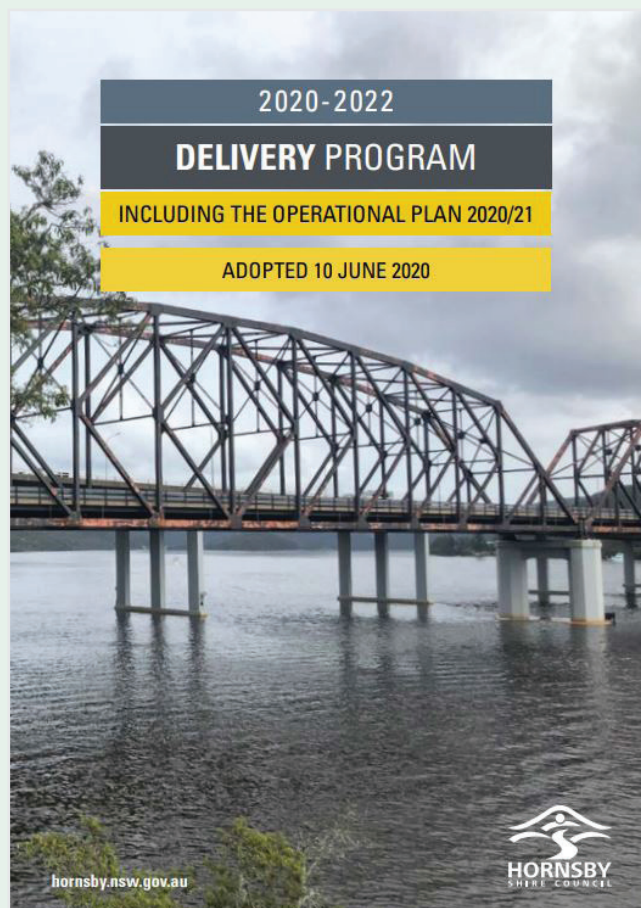
Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028



The Community Strategic Plan sets Council's vision for Hornsby Shire over a 10 year period. It is closely aligned with Council's Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement and identifies the key priority of creating liveable communities for Hornsby residents.

This Strategy will assist Council in meeting this vision by providing for the recreational needs of dog owners and their pets.

Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2020-2022



The Delivery Program / Operational Plan is where Council outlines what it intends to do towards achieving the community vision and what its priorities will be — the point at which the Strategic Goals, Community Outcomes and Focus Areas in the Community Strategic Plan are translated into service delivery and key initiatives.

This Strategy provides recommendations for the development and operation of new and expanded off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire.

Hornsby Local Strategic Planning Statement (adopted 2020)

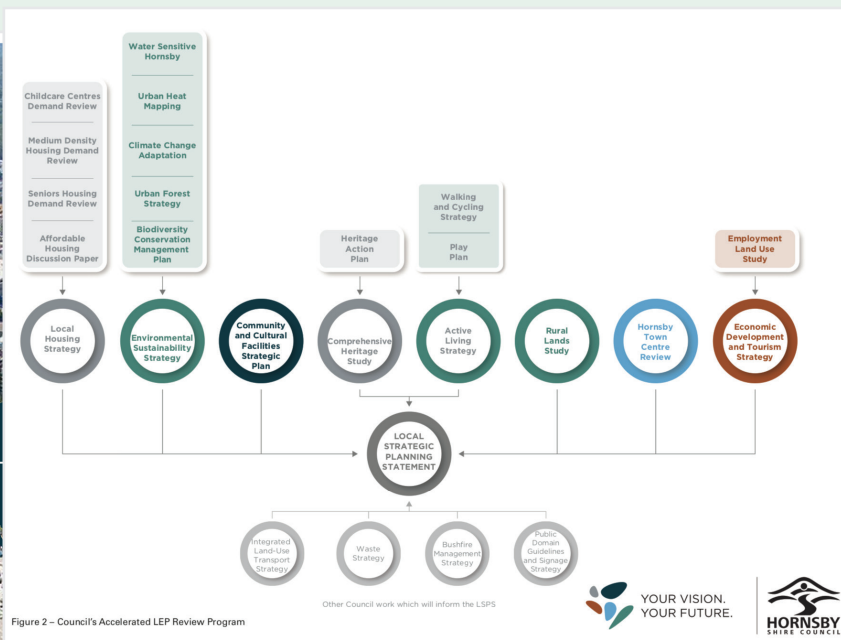


Figure 2 – Council's Accelerated LEP Review Program

Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) identifies Hornsby Shire's special characteristics and the values that are to be preserved. The LSPS covers the themes of Liveable, Sustainable, Productive and Collaborative.

Of relevance to the Strategy is the key theme of creating a liveable community for Hornsby Shire residents.

Key priorities of the Liveable Theme include:

1. Infrastructure meets the needs of the population
2. People have good opportunities to participate in community life
3. The area feels safe

This Strategy will assist Council in meeting these priorities by providing for the recreational needs of dog owners and their pets.

Active Living Hornsby Strategy (2014)

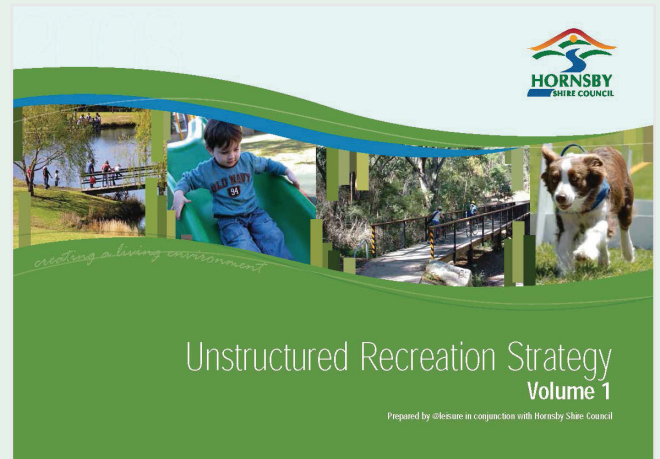


The Active Living Hornsby Strategy identifies the recreation and open space needs of the Hornsby community and provides a strategic framework from which to guide and manage future open space and recreation planning for Hornsby Shire.

A key objective is to ensure the policy framework enhances opportunities for active living.

This Strategy will assist Council in meeting the active living objective by providing for the recreational needs of dog owners and their pets.

Unstructured Recreation Strategy



Hornsby Council's Unstructured Recreation Strategy was developed in 2007 to provide a strategic direction for the management of unstructured recreation facilities in the Shire. Section 3 outlines a framework for managing and developing dog socialising and exercise areas which will be superseded by this Strategy.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2017-2020)



A key commitment of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan is to set out practical ways to create a more inclusive community and make sure that people have opportunities to connect with each other.¹³ Research indicates the importance of pets in the lives of people with disabilities and other people in the community who may be socially or physically isolated. This Strategy will assist Council in meeting the needs of all members of the community by providing equitable access to off-leash dog parks.

¹³Aruma, (2020), and Animal Medicines Australia, (2019)

Plans of Management



Council has developed generic Plans of Management for all community land and Crown Reserves under its care, control and management. Section 2.6A states that *Council will encourage responsible exercising of dogs within parks and sportsgrounds and provide leash free dog runs where appropriate.*

Draft Sustainable Hornsby Strategy (2020)



This draft strategy provides an overarching framework to achieve an innovative and environmentally sustainable Shire with resilient, diverse and thriving communities and ecosystems.

The draft strategy recognises our natural environment as one of the hallmarks of Hornsby Shire. When planning and managing off-leash dog exercise areas, Council needs to ensure that impacts on the natural environment are addressed as well as human health and safety.

Draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (2020)



The draft Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was developed to help Council and its community be more equipped to ensure biodiversity is well managed, resilient and adaptable to land-use change going forward. In developing the draft Strategy Council recognise that the connection and conservation of natural assets will contribute to the community's health and well-being, maintain a sense of place and enhance biodiversity values in the Shire. The Strategy highlights the importance of biodiversity conservation and seeks to reduce the impacts of increasing land-use pressures and population growth.

This Strategy will assist Council to ensure that biodiversity values are considered when reviewing sites for potential new off-leash dog parks.

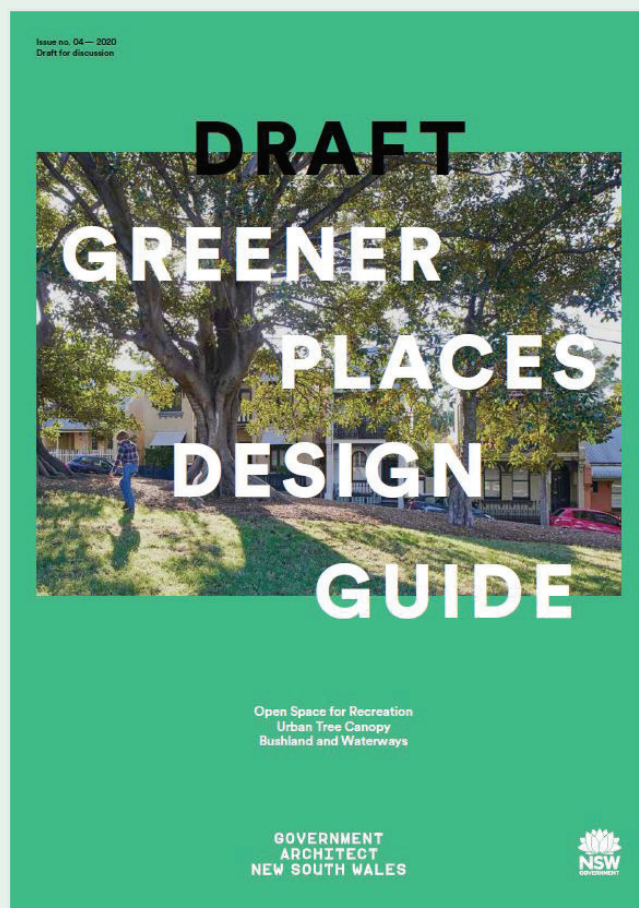
Draft Water Sensitive Hornsby Strategy (2020)



The draft Water Sensitive Hornsby Strategy defines a vision of a water sensitive future for Hornsby Shire, and outlines the broad steps for Council to take to transition towards this future. This Strategy provides a framework for orienting and coordinating strategic action across the many different stakeholders who will need to collaborate for Hornsby Shire's envisioned water future to be achieved. The strategy identifies actions designed to progress Hornsby Shire's transition towards a water sensitive city.

This Strategy will ensure that water sensitive management practices are considered at all off-leash dog parks.

Draft Greener Places Design Guide, Government Architect, NSW (2020)



The NSW Government's draft Greener Places Design Guide framework provides information on how to design, plan and implement green infrastructure in urban areas throughout NSW. Off-leash dog parks are one of a range of open space setting types that provide diversity of opportunity for communities. Section 11 of the Appendix offers guidance on the provision of neighbourhood level access to an off-leash exercise opportunity for dogs.

Part 3: Existing facilities and participation

3.1 Dog ownership in Hornsby Shire

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world with over two thirds of households owning pets.¹⁴ 40% of Australian households have at least one dog which equates to about 5 million pet dogs in Australia.¹⁵

Hornsby Council had a resident population of approximately 152,059 in 2019 and this is forecast to increase to 179,582 by 2036.¹⁶ It is anticipated the number of dog owners in the community will increase in line with the population forecast for the Shire over the next 16 years.

Dog ownership is popular among Hornsby Shire residents and as at 30 June 2020 there are approximately 21,000 dogs registered in the shire.¹⁷ This equates to approximately 44% of households who own a pet dog. These figures are slightly higher than the state average of around 40%.

“ Two in every three homes in Australia have at least one pet. When you consider that lot sizes are getting smaller and census data showing an increase in apartment living, pets need to be catered for in parks and other public spaces. ”

Planning Institute of Australia 2012, cited in Dog and Cat Management Board, 2013.

Dog ownership is not evenly distributed across Hornsby Shire. Higher rates of dog ownership are recorded in suburban areas such as Cherrybrook, Berowra/Berowra Heights and Mount Colah where low density housing types are most common.

Increased housing density in Hornsby's urban centres and the rise in apartment living mean that space available for exercising dogs in backyards is decreasing in some parts of the Shire. As private space is becoming smaller, the use of public space for dog socialisation and recreation is becoming increasingly important.

Ownership rates are generally lower in high density areas such as Waitara however, the NSW government introduced legislation in November 2016¹⁸ which makes pet ownership possible for many people living in strata buildings and there is an expectation that pet ownership may increase due to this legislative change. These factors combine to create an increased demand for public spaces in which to exercise pets.

Hornsby Shire covers a large geographical area that includes extensive areas of rural land and national park where the need for off-leash dog parks is less pressing. Demand for off-leash dog parks is greatest in urban and suburban areas where people rely heavily on public open space to exercise their dogs. Accordingly, the majority of Council's off-leash dog parks are located in the more heavily populated southern areas of the Shire where demand is greatest.

¹⁴Australian Companion Animal Council (2020)

¹⁵Animal Medicines Australia (2019)

¹⁶Id. Community, (2020)

¹⁷NSW Pet Registry (2020)

¹⁸NSW Government Fair Trading (2020)

Dog Ownership in Hornsby Shire by Suburb

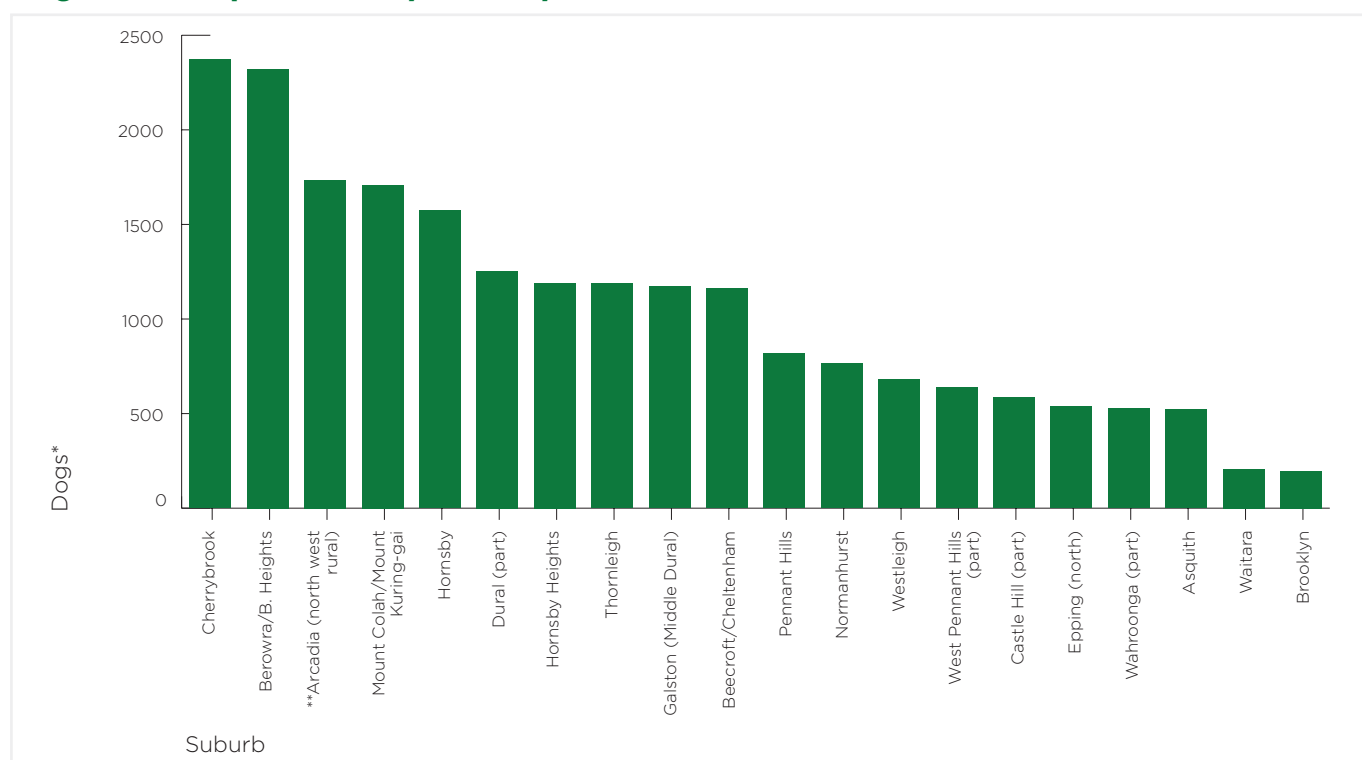


Table 1: Dog Ownership in Hornsby Shire by Suburb

*Dogs registered on NSW Pet Registry with a date of birth from 2005

**Includes Glenorie and Wisemans Ferry

3.2 Benefits of off-leash dog parks

Council recognises the importance of companion animals to our community and understands that off-leash areas provide many benefits for dogs, dog owners, their carers and the community.

Benefits for dogs

- Provide opportunities for physical exercise and stimulation.
- Provide a safe environment for play and socialisation.

Benefits for dog owners and carers

- Bring people together to socialise and form friendships around the common interest of their pets.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle and promote well-being.
- Provide an opportunity for people to participate regardless of their age or mobility.
- Offer an affordable recreation option.

Benefits for the community

- Provide a meeting place for people and help build social networks within the community.
- Encourage responsible pet ownership.
- Allow dogs and their carers to be separate from other park users who don't want to encounter a dog while visiting the park.
- Keep dogs out of sensitive environments such as bushland and waterways.
- Provide rest areas for people travelling with their dog.



3.3 History of off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire

Increasing dog related conflicts in public spaces and associated community concerns during the 1990s prompted the NSW state government to implement laws requiring dogs to be on a leash at all times when in public areas. Since the adoption and implementation of the requirements of the NSW Companion Animals Act, community demand for off-leash dog recreation areas prompted local Councils to provide areas where dogs could legally be exercised off-leash.

The first off-leash dog parks were established in Berowra Heights, Asquith, Cherrybrook, Hornsby Heights and Westleigh in the early 2000s. They were shortly followed by two sportsground sites that were made available on a time share basis at Epping and North Epping in 2003.

New sites were opened in Thornleigh in 2009 and Beecroft in 2013 to meet increasing community demand.

3.4 Existing off-leash dog park provision in Hornsby Shire

Hornsby Council currently provides nine (9) off-leash dog parks where dogs can play, socialise and exercise with their owners and/or competent person.

Designated off-leash areas

Designated off-leash areas are fully fenced with double gate entrances and have waste bins, dog waste bags and water provided. There are six designated off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire.

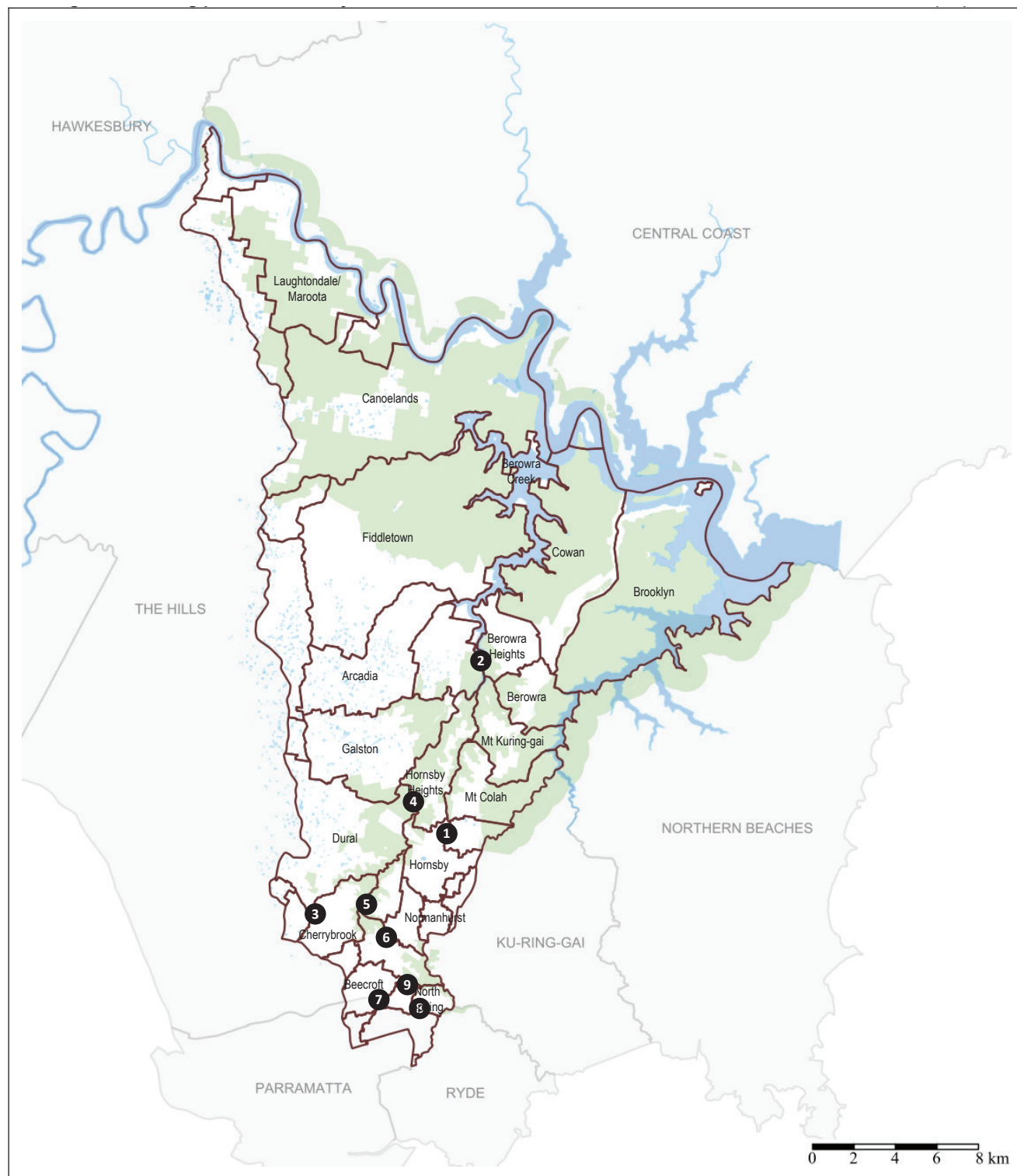
Unfenced off-leash areas

Unfenced off leash dog parks are shared with other members of the community. Water, waste bags and a bin are provided. There is one unfenced off-leash area in Hornsby Shire.

Shared sportsgrounds

Certain sportsgrounds are declared permissible off-leash areas when not in use for organised sports or maintenance activities. There are two shared sportsground sites in Hornsby Shire.

Existing off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire



Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
1.	Asquith Oval	Asquith	Dedicated off-leash	2,400m ²
2.	Crossroads Reserve	Berowra Heights	Dedicated off-leash	1,400m ²
3.	Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
4.	Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	4,500m ²
5.	Eucalyptus Drive	Westleigh	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
6.	Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue)	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
7.	Lyne Road	Beecroft	Unfenced off-leash	3,500m ²
8.	Epping Oval	Epping	Shared sportsground	13,500m ²
9.	Ron Payne Oval	North Epping	Shared sportsground	10,500m ²
		TOTAL		45,000m²

Figure 1: Existing off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire

Asquith Park, Asquith



Address:	Rotherwood Street, Asquith		
Area:	2,400m ²	Date established:	2003
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	A
Description:	Asquith Oval off-leash dog park is located on a gently sloped lawn at the rear of Asquith Oval. Shade trees and seating are provided. On-street car parking is available on Rotherwood Avenue. There is an accessible concrete pathway provided into the dog park. The park experiences significant wear and tear of the turf surface due to shading along the northern boundary.		

Crossroads Reserve, Berowra Heights



Address:	Corner Turner and Berowra Waters Roads, Berowra Heights		
Area:	1,400m ²	Date established:	2001
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	A
Description:	Crossroads off-leash dog park is a smaller dog park, located within a linear parkland next to Berowra Heights shopping centre. The site is very popular with the community. A small area of synthetic turf has been provided to mitigate wear and tear on the grass surface however the lawn shows signs of compaction and heavy use.		

Greenway Park, Cherrybrook



Address:	Shepherds Drive, Cherrybrook		
Area:	3,200m ²	Date established:	Trial period commenced in 2002. Officially established in 2003.
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	C
Description:	Greenway off-leash dog park is located within the grounds of Greenway Park which also contains sports fields, an aquatic centre, a child care centre and playground. The off-leash dog park is a relatively large open lawn area with sloped topography. The park experiences significant wear and turf to the turf surface, particularly in the northern part of the park where four small shelters have been provided near the park entry. Tree establishment programs have been unsuccessful in the past due to frequent dog urination.		

Rofe Park, Hornsby Heights



Address:	Galston Road, Hornsby Heights		
Area:	4,500m ²	Date established:	2003
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	A
Description:	Rofe Park off-leash dog park is a flat lawn adjacent to Rofe Park Oval. Off-street car parking is available directly next to the dog park. A small clubhouse building is provided within the fenced area. Hornsby Dog Training Club has exclusive use of the park every Sunday between 12.30pm and 4.30pm. This popular dog park is well used and can be over crowded in peak times.		

Eucalyptus Drive, Westleigh



Address:	Eucalyptus Drive, Westleigh		
Area:	2,800m ²	Date established:	2004
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	B
Description:	Westleigh off-leash dog park is a gently sloped land parcel next to Ruddock Park which contains sportgrounds, playground and picnic areas. The park features an open lawn area, seating and shade trees. The lower portion of the park, close to the entry gates, experiences heavy wear and tear on the turf surface.		

Jane Starkey Park (Dawson Avenue), Thornleigh



Address:	Dawson Avenue, Thornleigh		
Area:	3,200m ²	Date established:	2009
Facility type:	Designated off-leash	Council Ward:	B
Description:	Jane Starkey Park (Dawson Avenue) off-leash dog park is a linear park with shade trees and seating. There is a large area of artificial turf in the centre of the park.		

Lyne Road Reserve, Cheltenham



Address:	Lyne Road, Cheltenham		
Area:	Approx. 3,500m ²	Date established:	2013
Facility type:	Unfenced off-leash	Council Ward:	C
Description:	This unfenced off-leash area is set within a largely level parkland. There is a fenced children's playground adjacent to the off-leash area.		

Epping Oval, Epping



Address:	Norfolk Road, Epping		
Area:	13,500m ² (within the fenced oval area)	Date established:	2003
Facility type:	Shared sportsground	Council Ward:	C
Description:	Epping Oval is used for cricket and soccer. Dogs are permitted to use the fenced oval area when organised sport and games or maintenance activities are not taking place. Toilet facilities, a children's playground and off-street car parking are available within the grounds.		

Ron Payne Park, North Epping



Address:	Woods Street, North Epping		
Area:	10,500m ² (within the fenced off area)	Date established:	2003
Facility type:	Shared sportsground	Council Ward:	C
Description:	Ron Payne Park is used for cricket and soccer. Dogs are not permitted during organised sport and games or maintenance activities. Toilets, a children’s playground and off-street car parking area available.		



3.5 On-leash walking trails

Within Hornsby Shire, dogs are permitted in bushland and natural areas, including areas identified as Wildlife Protection Areas, provided they are kept on a leash.

Council provides more than thirty (30) trails where dogs can be walked on-leash. Refer to Appendix D for a list of trails where dogs are permitted.

Dogs are not permitted in National Parks.

3.6 Benchmarking with neighbouring Local Government Areas

Benchmarking against neighbouring Councils offers insight into performance being achieved in the local area. The number and type of Hornsby Shire's off-leash dog parks have been benchmarked against adjoining Local Government Areas (LGAs) to identify areas where gaps exist in service provision when compared to close neighbours.

A review of service provision in neighbouring LGAs indicates that Hornsby Shire provides a reasonable number of off-leash dog parks per capita of population. Kuring-gai, City of Ryde and Northern Beaches Council's have a higher ratio of parks per population while City of Parramatta and The Hills Council provide considerably less. Although population is only one (1) factor to consider in determining provision levels, it still serves as a useful tool when examining the number of off-leash dog parks currently provided.

Hornsby Council does not offer any off-leash dog parks on beaches due to a lack of suitable sites. Neighbouring Councils offer this facility where suitable sites are available.

Neighbouring Council's will sometimes make shared sportsgrounds available for off-leash dog parks where other suitable sites are limited. Issues associated with this practice are discussed further in Part 4.

Provision of off-leash dog areas by Local Government Area

LGA	Dedicated fully fenced facility	Unfenced or partially fenced facility (including beaches)	Shared sportsground (with restricted times)	Parks (with restricted times)	TOTAL	People per off-leash dog park*
Kuring-gai Council	9	3	9	0	21	5,621.58
City of Ryde	5	3	4	1	13	8,946.30
Northern Beaches Council	2	17	7	2	28	9,031.36
Hornsby Shire Council	6	1	2	0	9	15,851.89
The Hills Council	4	2	0	1	7	22,463.28
City of Parramatta	6	3	0	0	9	25,127.67

Table 2: Provision of off-leash dog areas by Local Government Area

*Based on 2016 census population data



Part 4:

Discussion and recommendations

In recent years Council has received various letters and petitions from the community concerning off-leash dog parks. The key issues identified are discussed below and recommendations are provided. Feedback from Council staff including Rangers, Companion Animal Officers and Asset Management staff has also been considered.

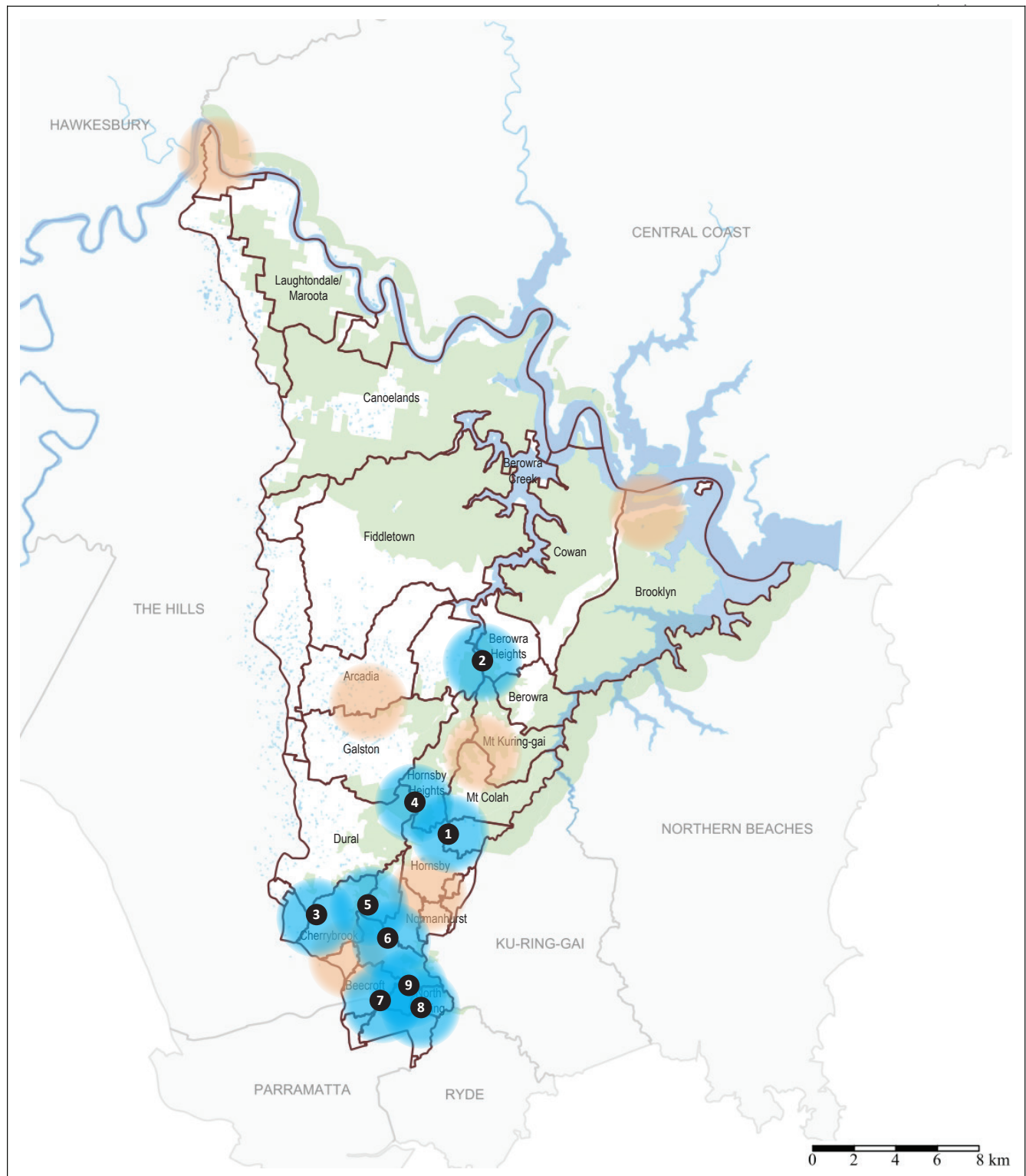
4.1 Distribution

Best practice planning requires a sufficient number of appropriately distributed facilities to avoid congestion and conflicts between dogs.

When selecting new dog parks Council will consider the need for provision across the Shire and areas with projected population growth. A spread of off-leash dog parks will be provided generally across the Local Government Area with priority given to suburbs with high dog populations and identified areas of low provision.

The location of off-leash dog parks is driven by the availability of suitable sites. There is no widely recognised population standard for dog park provision however a 'walkability' metric of 1.5-2km (approx. 20 min walk) is commonly applied. Identified areas with service gaps include the Mount Colah / Mount Kuring-gai, Hornsby / Thornleigh, Cherrybrook / Pennant Hills, Brooklyn and Wisemans Ferry areas and the rural lands in the west of Hornsby shire.

Identified service gaps



Key

1. Asquith Oval, Asquith
2. Crossroads Reserve, Berowra Heights
3. Greenway Park, Cherrybrook
4. Rofe Park, Hornsby Heights
5. Eucalyptus Drive, Westleigh
6. Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue), Thornleigh
7. Lyne Road, Beecroft
8. Epping Oval, Epping
9. Ron Payne Oval, North Epping

- 2km radius from off-leash dog park
- Identified service gap

Figure 2: Identified service gaps



Recommendation

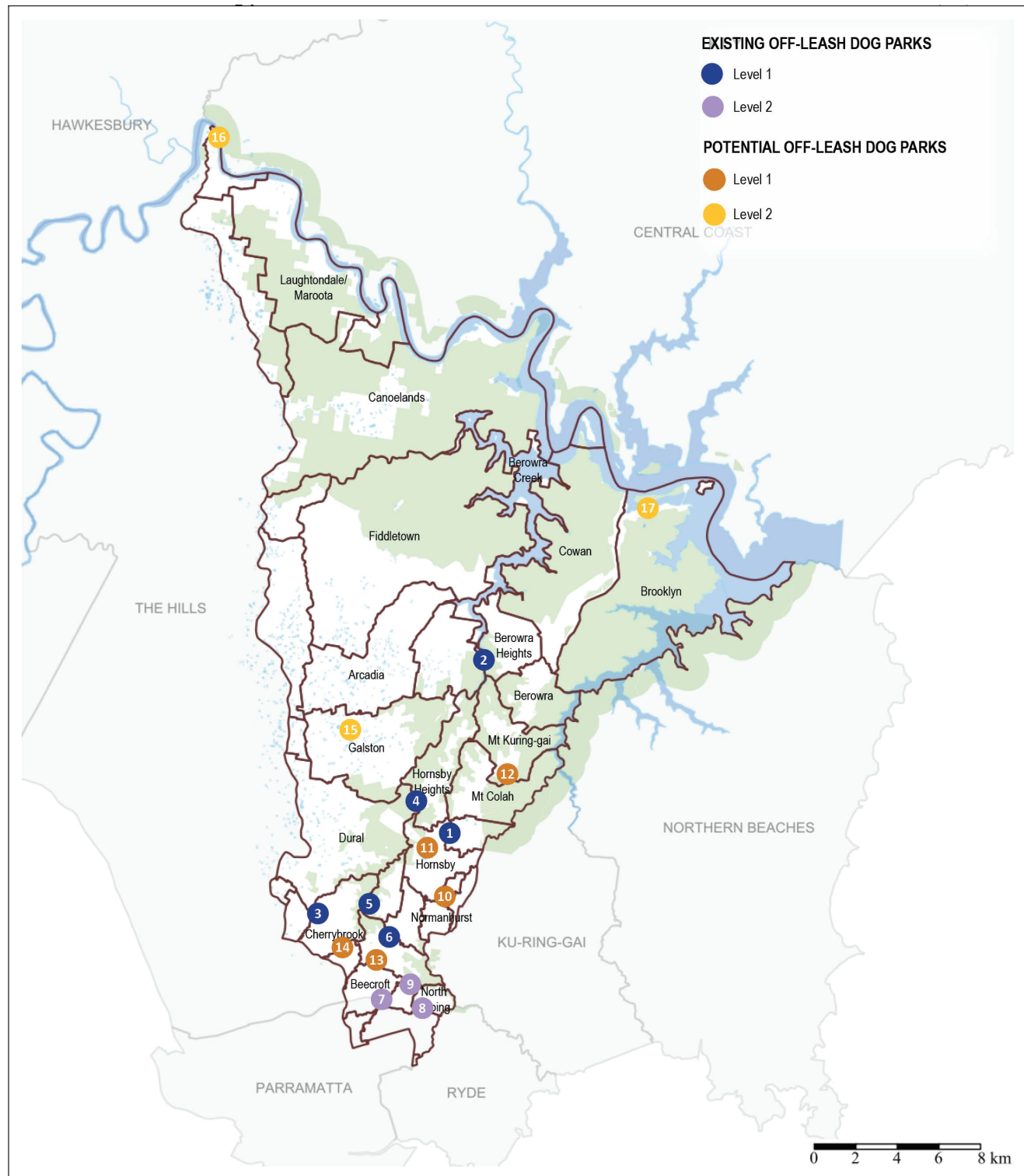
Address the under supply of off-leash dog parks where service gaps have been identified in the Mount Colah / Mount Kuring-gai, Hornsby / Thornleigh, Cherrybrook / Pennant Hills, Brooklyn and Wisemans Ferry areas and the rural lands in the west of Hornsby Shire.

Following a review of available sites, eight (8) sites have been identified as potential off-leash dog parks. These include:

- Brickpit Park, Thornleigh
- Hopeville Park, Hornsby heights
- Hunt Reserve, Mount Colah
- Wearne Avenue, Pennant Hills
- Edward Bennett Oval, Cherrybrook
- Fagan Park, Galston
- Wisemans Ferry Recreation Area
- Salt Pan Reserve, Brooklyn

Analysis of each potential site is included in Appendix B.

Potential new off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire



EXISTING OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
1.	Asquith Oval	Asquith	Dedicated off-leash	2,400m ²
2.	Crossroads Reserve	Berowra Heights	Dedicated off-leash	1,400m ²
3.	Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
4.	Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	4,500m ²
5.	Eucalyptus Drive	Westleigh	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
6.	Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue)	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
7.	Lyne Road	Beecroft	Unfenced off-leash	3,500m ²
8.	Epping Oval	Epping	Shared sportsground	13,500m ²
9.	Ron Payne Oval	North Epping	Shared sportsground	10,500m ²
TOTAL				45,000m²

POTENTIAL OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
10.	Brickpit Park	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
11.	Hopeville Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
12.	Hunt Reserve	Mount Colah	Dedicated off-leash	2,000m ²
13.	Wearne Avenue	Pennant Hills	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
14.	Edward Bennett Oval	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	2,500m ²
15.	Fagan Park	Galston	Unfenced off-leash	11,600m ²
16.	Wisemans Ferry Recreation Area	Wisemans Ferry	Unfenced off-leash	16,000m ²
17.	Salt Pan Reserve	Brooklyn	Unfenced off-leash	6,000m ²
TOTAL				51,500m²

Figure 3: Potential new off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire

4.2 Capacity

Council's existing off-leash dog parks are well used by residents and demand has been steadily increasing as the population rises. In A Snapshot of Hornsby Shire in 2016, 10% of Hornsby Shire residents surveyed said they visit the local dog park once a week or more. Also, of the 79% of respondents who walk once a week or more, 24% nominated walking the dog as one of their two main reasons for doing so.

Several of Council's most popular dog parks show evidence of use beyond their carrying capacity. Most notably affected are Greenway Park and Rofe Park. These popular parks can be over-crowded during peak use times and Council is aware that some park users are reluctant to use parks when they are busy. Where space permits, providing additional space can alleviate pressure on the park by dispersing users across a larger area.

Recommendation

Increase the total amount of dog recreation space by expanding the area of the Shire's most popular and heavily used off-leash dog park facilities.

Two sites have been identified as potential areas of expansion.

Greenway Park

Due to the popularity of the site and current wear and tear on the existing grounds it is proposed that Greenway Park at Cherrybrook be extended to include an additional 1,150m².

Rofe Park

Rofe Park is one of the most popular off-leash parks in Hornsby Shire and is subject to over-crowding and worn surfaces. There is currently an identified service gap in the Hornsby /Thornleigh area and it is proposed to extend the existing site by an additional 1,500m², bringing the total area to approximately 6,000m².

Analysis of the proposed expansion sites is included in Appendix B.

4.3 Hierarchy

Council recognises the need for a variety of different off-leash opportunities including fully fenced parks and unenclosed free running areas.

A hierarchy is a tool used to guide the level of provision at each site and ensure that a range of complementary facilities and experiences are available across Hornsby Shire. This Strategy proposes two levels of hierarchy in Hornsby Shire.

Level 1: Dedicated off-leash area
Feature include:
A dedicated off-leash area.
Fully fenced to enable dogs to roam freely
Available at all times
Double access gates with an interim holding pen to keep dogs from escaping whilst entering and exiting the facility.
Prominent and accessible location with parking nearby.
May be co-located with other facilities such as BBQ's, public toilets, play areas or cafes (outside of the fenced area)
Drinking water for dogs and owners
Seating and shade
Signage
Dog waste bags
Garbage bins

Level 2: Unfenced areas and land that may be shared with other users
Feature include:
Area may be unfenced or partially fenced
Area may be shared with other users
Access times may be restricted
Drinking water for dogs and owners
Seating and shade
Signage
Dog waste bags
Garbage bins

Recommendation

Classify off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire according to a two tiered hierarchy system.

Refer to Appendix A for proposed hierarchy of existing off-leash dog parks.



4.4 Shared sportsgrounds

Shared sportsgrounds would appear to offer a mutually beneficial outcome for all users where space for a dedicated dog park is limited. In practice Council has found these shared sites to be challenging due to conflicts with sportsground users and dog owners.

Council must be able to protect the primary purpose of the sportsground for sports and games however maintenance staff report additional wear and tear on the playing surface and damage to cricket wickets where off-leash dogs are permitted. Maintenance staff and sportsground users also commonly report complaints over dog waste on the oval where owners have failed to pick up after their pet.

When not used for active sports, sportsgrounds provide a valuable amenity for the community to enjoy recreational activities. Some members of the community do not wish to encounter off-leash dogs when enjoying sportsgrounds for passive recreation and anecdotal feedback to Council suggests that the presence of off-leash dogs on sportsgrounds can deter casual use by children and families.

Council currently permits dogs to use Ron Payne and Epping Ovals when they are not in use for organised sport or games or when maintenance activities are not taking place. This access has been permitted due to a lack of sites suitable for a dedicated off-leash facility in the North Epping area however dedicated off-leash facilities are considered to offer better outcomes for both dog owners and the community.

Recommendation

Due to a lack of suitable alternative sites in the Epping area, maintain existing access for dogs at Ron Payne Oval and Epping Oval but do not create any new dog parks on sportsgrounds.

4.5 Separation of small and large dogs

A survey conducted by Animal Medicines Australia²⁰ found that 74% of dogs are taken for walks in their neighbourhoods while 52% are taken to 'parks and other public places'. Small dogs (under 4kg) vary in these statistics with only 38% taken to 'parks and other public places'. One reason for this variation may be that owners of very small dogs are concerned for the safety of their pet when exercising around larger dogs.

Some members of the community have expressed a desire for separate fenced areas within Council's dog parks to accommodate small, frail and elderly dogs and puppies. Providing separate areas for dogs with different needs is an emerging trend in dog recreation facilities. In principal, an area would be set aside for small, frail and elderly dogs and puppies, away from the main off-leash area. Surrounding Local Government Areas who provide this type of facility view it as a way to improve safety for smaller pets who may feel intimidated in the larger dog area. Separated dog areas are provided in the neighbouring LGAs of Parramatta and the Northern Beaches and feedback from these Council's suggests the separated areas are popular with the community.

Separating areas requires additional land to be found close to existing facilities or the division of existing dog parks into smaller areas. Signage that clearly defines who is permitted to use each area is required to ensure all park users understand the access rules.

Recommendation

Investigate providing a separate area for puppies, small, frail and elderly dogs at selected off-leash dog parks.

It is recommended that Council undertake a six (6) month trial period of separated areas for puppies (under 12 months), small (under 6kg), frail and elderly dogs (10+ years). A review is required after six months to assess the success of the trial period.

Prospective sites identified as suitable for the trial include the extended areas of Greenway Park, Cherrybrook and Rofe Park, Hornsby Heights.

New signage is required at the trial site(s) to explain who is permitted to use the separated area.

²⁰Animal Medicines Australia, (2016)



4.6 Conflicts with other park users

Council is committed to providing parks which are safe and enjoyable for both people and dogs. While dog owners need to exercise their dogs there needs to be balanced consideration of the rights and safety of others using the space. Conflicts between dogs and other park users can arise in sparsely used public spaces where dogs are allowed to run free. Dedicated off-leash recreation areas are considered to offer better outcomes for both dog owners and the community.

Recommendation

New off-leash dog parks to prioritise dedicated facilities or sites that minimise conflicts with other park users.

4.7 Wear and tear of turf areas

Wear and tear of turf surfaces is an ongoing issue at many of Council's popular off-leash dog parks. Most notably affected are Crossroads Reserve, Greenway Park, Asquith Park and Westleigh.

High activity areas suffer from soil compaction while plants can suffer from frequent dog urination. Providing multiple entry and exit points and spreading out facilities to encourage people to spread across the park are options to reduce pressure on heavily used activity zones. Synthetic grass can also be used to reduce wear and tear in heavily used, or shaded areas. Where Synthetic grass is installed, shade trees are recommended to reduce surface heat.

Recommendation

Provide synthetic grass in high wear areas at off-leash dog parks suffering heavy turf damage.

Off-leash dog park	Synthetic grass to wear areas	Approximate area	Location
Asquith Park, Asquith	New	400m ²	Near entry and in shaded areas
Crossroads, Berowra Heights	Extend existing	200m ²	Centre of park, adjoining existing
Greenway Park	New	250m ²	Near entry and in front of shelters
Westleigh	New	400m ²	Near entry and centre of park



4.8 Equitable access

Research highlights the importance of companion animals in the lives of people with disabilities and those who may be at risk of being socially and physically isolated. The presence of a pet dog can encourage people to exercise and break down barriers between people with a disability and the able bodied person.

Recommendation

The design of off-leash dog parks reflects Hornsby Shire's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and universal design principles are applied to support users with a range of abilities.

4.9 Impacts on neighbours

Impacts on neighbours such as noise, odour and parking complaints can be an issue in poorly located or designed dog parks. Appropriate site selection and considered design are required to ensure that impacts on neighbours are minimal. An off-leash dog park is more likely to be successful if there is broad community support for its establishment and users are educated on park rules and etiquette.

Recommendation

Assess potential new sites for possible impacts on neighbours and provide mitigation measures to minimise negative impacts.

4.10 Access to water for recreation

Council recognises that many dogs enjoy playing and swimming in water however no water play opportunities are provided in Hornsby Shire.

The following potential water play sites have been considered.

Brooklyn

McKell Point offers direct access to the Hawkesbury River, however this site is popular with people for recreation and is not considered suitable due to potential conflicts with leisure swimmers.

Wisemans Ferry

Access to the Hawkesbury River is available from Wisemans Ferry and the area is used as a boat launch point. This area is not considered suitable for dog water play due to potential conflicts with boats and other craft.

Fagan Park

A large dam at the base of George Hall creek on the eastern side of Fagan Park has been considered as a possible water play site. This site is considered unsuitable due to potential impacts on shorebird habitat.

Recommendation

Access to water for dog recreation will not be provided in Hornsby Shire due to a lack of suitable sites.

4.11 Summary of Recommendations and Action plan

The actions below provide the framework for the management and development of future off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire. The actions of the Strategy are framed around three priority timeframes.

High: 0-3 years

Medium: 3-5 years

Low: 6-10 years

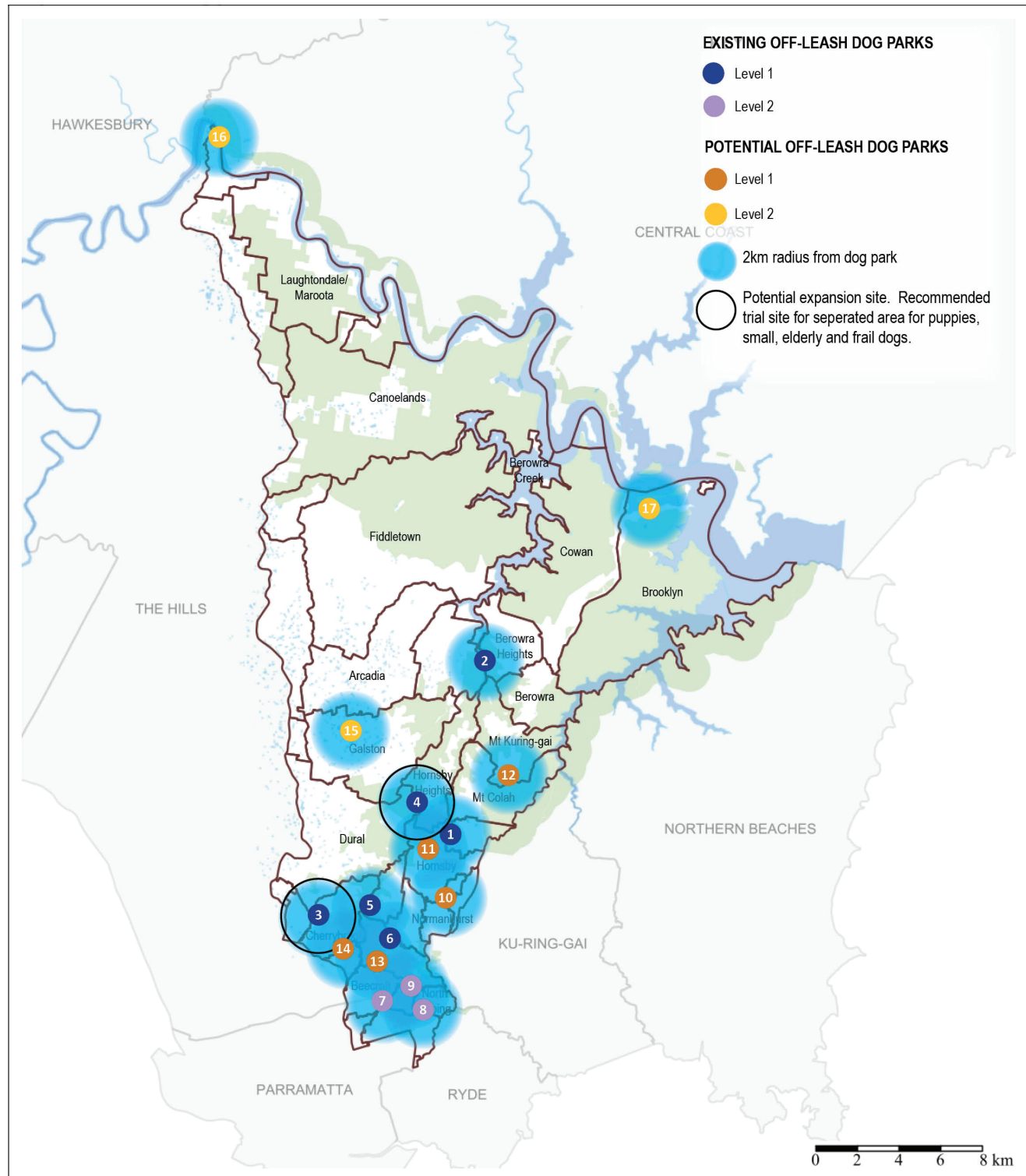
Implementation is subject to the availability of resources.

Item	Recommendation	Action	Priority
1	Address the under supply of off-leash dog parks where service gaps have been identified in the Mount Colah / Mount Kuring-gai, Hornsby / Thornleigh, Cherrybrook / Pennant Hills areas and the rural lands in the west of Hornsby shire.	Identify potential sites for new off-leash dog parks in areas with a deficiency.	Medium
2	Increase the total amount of dog recreation space by expanding the area of the Shire's most popular and heavily used off-leash dog parks.	Investigate expansion of Greenway and Rofo off-leash dog parks.	High
3	Classify off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire according to a hierarchy system.	Assign a hierarchy to all off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire.	High
4	Due to a lack of suitable alternative sites in the Epping area, maintain existing access for dogs at Ron Payne Oval and Epping Oval but do not create any new dog parks on sportsgrounds.	No new off-leash dog parks to be located on sportsgrounds.	N/A
5	Investigate providing a separate area for puppies, small, frail and elderly dogs at selected off-leash dog parks.	Conduct a six month trial of separate areas for small, frail and elderly dogs at Greenway Park and Rofo Park.	Medium
6	New off-leash dog parks to prioritise dedicated facilities or sites that minimise conflicts with other park users.	Undertake an analysis of potential new sites in accordance with the selection criteria in Part 5	High
7	Provide synthetic grass in high wear areas at off-leash dog parks suffering heavy turf damage.	Provide sections of synthetic grass at Asquith, Crossroads, Greenway and Westleigh off-leash dog parks	Low
8	The design of off-leash dog parks reflects Hornsby Shire's Disability Inclusion Action Plan and universal design principles are applied to support users with a range of abilities.	Apply universal design principles to the design of new off-leash dog parks.	High
9	Assess potential new sites for possible impacts on neighbours and provide mitigation measures to minimise negative impacts.	Assess potential new sites in accordance with the selection criteria in Part 5.	High
10	Access to water for dog recreation will not be provided in Hornsby Shire due to a lack of suitable sites.	No action required	N/A

4.12 Proposed off-leash dog park network

Based on the recommendations of this Strategy a proposed network of off-leash dog parks is illustrated in Figure 4

Proposed off-leash dog park network



EXISTING OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
1.	Asquith Oval	Asquith	Dedicated off-leash	2,400m ²
2.	Crossroads Reserve	Berowra Heights	Dedicated off-leash	1,400m ²
3.	Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
4.	Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	4,500m ²
5.	Eucalyptus Drive	Westleigh	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
6.	Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue)	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
7.	Lyne Road	Beecroft	Unfenced off-leash	3,500m ²
8.	Epping Oval	Epping	Shared sportsground	13,500m ²
9.	Ron Payne Oval	North Epping	Shared sportsground	10,500m ²
TOTAL				45,000m²

POTENTIAL OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
10.	Brickpit Park	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
11.	Hopeville Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
12.	Hunt Reserve	Mount Colah	Dedicated off-leash	2,000m ²
13.	Wearne Avenue	Pennant Hills	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
14.	Edward Bennett Oval	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	2,500m ²
15.	Fagan Park	Galston	Unfenced off-leash	11,600m ²
16.	Wisemans Ferry Recreation Area	Wisemans Ferry	Unfenced off-leash	16,000m ²
17.	Salt Pan Reserve	Brooklyn	Unfenced off-leash	6,000m ²
TOTAL				51,500m²

Figure 4: Proposed off-leash dog park network

Part 5: Design and selection criteria

The design of an off-leash dog park needs to be well considered and requires an understanding of dogs' needs and their behaviour. The design and layout of the space has an important influence on the effectiveness of the space as an off-leash dog park. The following principles offer a guide to the planning and design of new dog parks.

5.1 Design principles for off-leash dog parks

Park size

While there are no established formulas for the minimum size for a dog park, generally larger parks have advantages over smaller areas. Reduced overcrowding, less wear and tear on surfaces and capacity to cater for more park users all need to be considered. Where space is limited, smaller areas can provide a community focus and encourage social interaction between park users.

Council is guided by the amount of land available and must balance the needs of dog owners with other park users. While larger sites are preferred, Council will seek to provide a range of different sized dog parks across the Shire.

Where space exists and current usage levels are high, the extension of an existing off-leash area may be considered.

Layout

While the layout of an off-leash dog park is often guided by the site's characteristics there are some things to consider that can influence how dogs and people interact in the space.

Creating a variety of activity zones can offer dogs a range of opportunities to play, explore and socialise and help disperse dog and human movement through the park. Internal paths encourage people to explore the whole park and spread usage across a wider area.

Clear sight lines within the park allow dog owners to maintain a visual connection with their pet at all times. Unobstructed views across the site assist people to control their pet and manage their dogs behaviour.

Fencing and gates

Fenced parks provide a secure space for dogs to run freely off-leash. They are particularly important for older and less mobile people as they provide a contained area to exercise their pets.

Where fencing is provided, it must be safe for dogs and consistent with current industry principles for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), allowing for natural surveillance and visual permeability.

A secure perimeter fence with double gates that create an interim holding pen will prevent dogs from escaping the park. Multiple entry points are desirable where possible, including an accessway for maintenance purposes. Fence height and design should complement the site character.

Surface Materials

A variety of surface materials make the dog park interesting and enjoyable for all visitors. Materials need to be durable and able to withstand the wear and tear of running dogs.

Some materials to consider include grass, mulch, concrete, sand and gravel. Sections of synthetic grass may be the most appropriate for heavily used zones. Asphalt is not considered appropriate as it can get too hot in summer and potentially burn the pads of a dog's feet.

Landscaping

Planting and landscaping add to the amenity of a park and can enrich the experience of people and their dogs.

Landscaping such as vegetation and low mounding can be used to create visual barriers within the park for rest areas and quiet refuge zones away from other dogs. Selected plants should have a variety of textures but must be non toxic to dogs.

Equipment

Providing play and agility equipment such as tunnels, jumps, boulders and other elements can enrich a dogs experience at the park when used correctly. However, research suggests that agility equipment often falls into rapid decay from non or misuse and is actually used by very few people for their dogs.²²

Councils preference is to provide challenge and interest through natural elements such as fallen logs, trees, rocks, mounds and planted areas. If specialised dog equipment is considered it should be located away from entry and exit points and busy activity zones.

Amenities

Council will provide amenity at off-leash dog parks in accordance with the hierarchy proposed in Part 4. Basic amenities including shade, water, bins and signage are required at all dog parks.

Council will supply a minimum of one dispenser stocked with biodegradable waste bags at each off-leash dog park.

Picnic tables should not be located within the dog park as they can encourage food within the park. These facilities are best provided outside the dog park, a good distance away from the entry gates.

Where possible, Council will seek to co-locate off-leash dog parks with other infrastructure such as toilets and parking.

Signage and Information

Clear, simple signage is required at all Council off-leash dog parks.

Directional signs are used to direct park users to the dog park facility and should be located in areas of high visibility.

Information signs contain messages for park users about appropriate park behaviour including rules for using the facility. They should include clear messaging that relates to responsible action to minimise water pollution and protect human health. These should be clearly located close to entry points.

All signs should be presented in a clear, easy to read and positive manner using appropriate graphics, icons and diagrams to convey key messages.

Council will continue to maintain online information about off-leash dog parks for park users.

²²*Dog and Cat Management Board (2013).*



5.3 Selection criteria for new off-leash dog parks

Potential new sites are to be assessed for suitability according to the criteria in Table 3.

Selection criteria for new off-leash dog parks

Essential Criteria	
Land classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land is classified as Community Land or Crown Land where Council is the designated Land Manager.
Excluded land uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sportsground (except where off-leash dogs are currently allowed) Culturally significant land Environmentally sensitive land Wildlife Protection Areas Areas where dogs are prohibited from using the land.
Equitable distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Off-leash dog parks are spread across the Shire and are accessible to most residents.
Impacts on neighbours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts on neighbours must be minimal.
Impacts on other park users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts on other park users must be minimal.
Impacts on the natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts on the natural environment must be minimal.

Desirable Criteria	
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land includes a relatively large open space where dogs can run.
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land includes a variation of landscape settings such as lawn, vegetated and 'rough' areas and flat and sloped areas.
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The land has a water supply available. The land has natural shade available. The land is co-located with other parkland activities such as toilets and footpaths. •The land is away from vehicle traffic if not fenced.
Equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some relatively flat space can be reached by an 'accessible path of travel'. On or off-street car parking is available close to the proposed dog park.



Part 6: Management Guidelines

6.1 Rules for use and enforcement

Parks and Reserves in Hornsby Shire cater to a diverse range of recreation needs. Many families value being able to share recreation time with their dog in Council's parks but there are also people in the community who do not want to encounter dogs when they visit parks. Council must consider all residents when managing Hornsby's public open space.

It is important for owners and carers to understand that off-leash dog parks are not supervised by Council staff and there is no screening process to determine which dogs may enter.

Dog parks are provided on the understanding that users will be self managed and not subject to continual law enforcement. Dog owners are subject to the regulations outlined in the Companion Animals Act and if required Council's Rangers have the authority to issue fines if the rules are not adhered to.

General rules associated with dogs in public open space include:

- Unless sign posted otherwise, all areas are on-leash.
- Dogs are not permitted, whether restrained or otherwise, in National Parks or within 10 meters of children's playground, public BBQs and skate/BMX parks.
- Dog waste is to be picked up and disposed of correctly.

Rules that apply to all off-leash dog parks include:

- All dogs within a designated off-leash area must be supervised by a competent person.
- Dogs must be under the effective voice control of their owner or carer.
- All dogs must be registered and fully vaccinated.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead until inside the fenced area and when leaving the dog park.
- Dog waste is to be picked up and disposed of correctly.
- Owners and carers must have no more than 4 dogs under their control.
- Dogs must not rush at or harass other dogs or people.
- Restricted breeds or dogs declared as dangerous are not permitted.
- Dog owners are liable under legislation if their dog attacks a person or animal.

For Epping and Ron Payne Ovals, that are also sportsgrounds, dogs are required to be:

- Outside playing surfaces when sporting training or games are in progress
- Outside all synthetic playing surfaces and turf wickets at all times.

6.2 Dog waste

Owners failure to remove their dogs waste is a regular source of complaint received by Council. Owners and carers are required to collect and dispose of their dog's waste in the waste bins provided. Council also provides biodegradable plastic bags and dispensers at all off-leash dog parks with signage advising park users of their responsibilities.

6.3 Owner education

Council is committed to the management of dogs through community education and awareness. Enhancing owners' awareness of their responsibilities in relation to their pets' behaviour requires a united approach with Council, dog training clubs and the community.

Dog training clubs offer excellent opportunities for dog owners to learn about animal behaviour and how to deal with inappropriate behaviour in their pets. Council supports the valuable work that clubs do in educating the community about their pets behaviour and will continue to provide opportunities for them to use the sites for this purpose.

Council will provide signage at all off-leash dog parks and ensure that rules are displayed in a prominent location close to main entry points and presented in a friendly, easy to read format.

Information is provided on Council's website about how to ensure off-leash areas are safe and enjoyable for everyone.

6.4 Commercial operators

Exclusive use of off-leash dog parks by commercial organisations is prohibited by Council. If commercial operators use Council dog parks they must be limited to four (4) dogs under their control as required by Law.

6.5 Maintenance

Council's staff carry out regular maintenance including;

- mowing and replacing degraded turf;
- aeration of compacted ground;
- weed spraying;
- inspection and repair of fencing;
- maintenance of seating and shade structures;
- waste management; and
- general landscape maintenance.



Part 7: Conclusion

Companion animals play an important role in the lives of many Hornsby Shire residents and many people enjoy recreating with their dogs in public places. Off-leash dog parks offer significant benefits to dog owners and the community and Council believes it is appropriate to support responsible pet ownership by providing off-leash dog parks in suitable sites within Hornsby Shire.

While there are many benefits to dogs in the community Council seeks an appropriate balance between the recreational needs of dog owners and other open space users while protecting Hornsby's open space assets, natural habitats and wildlife.

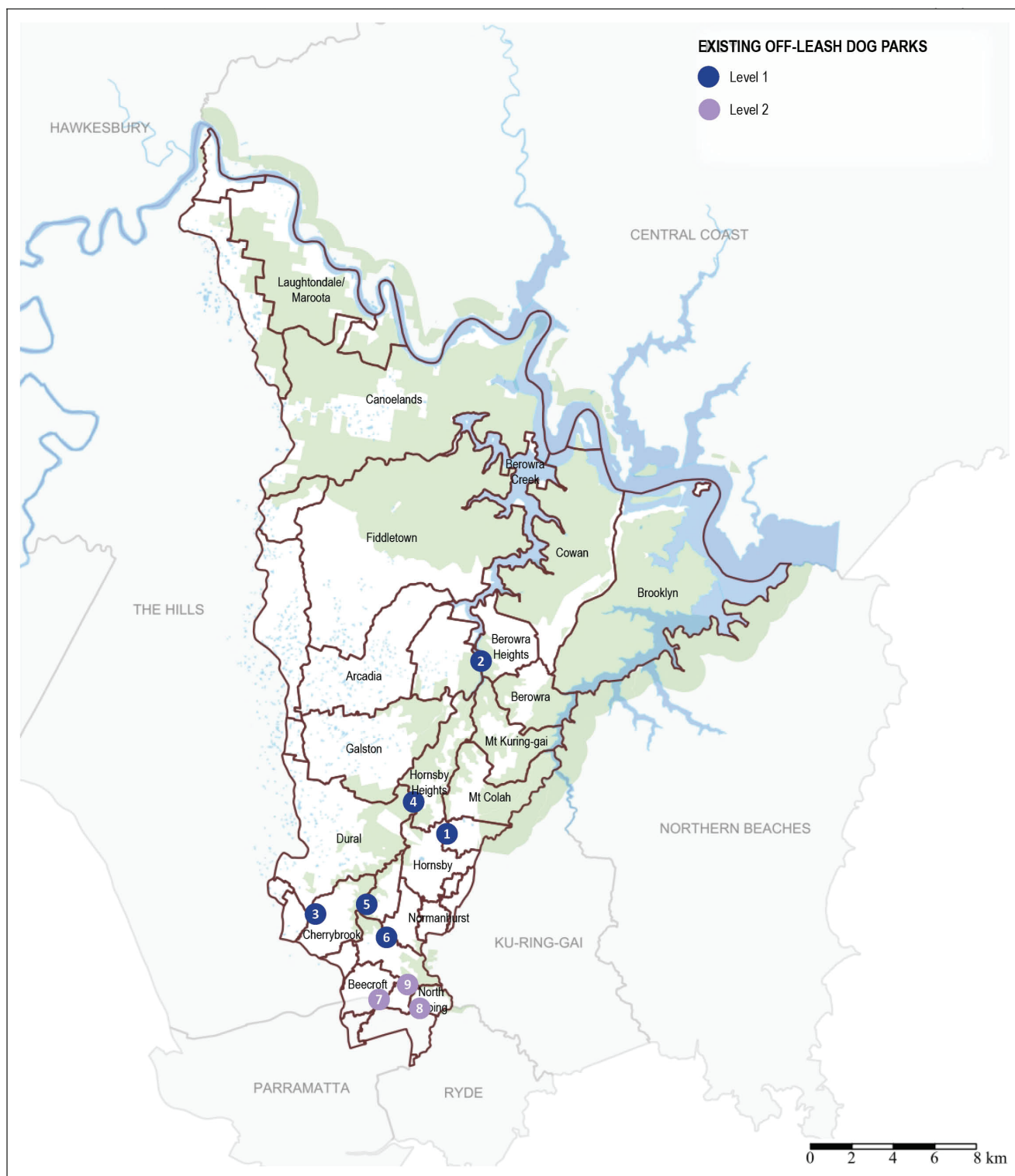
This Strategy was developed to help Council plan for the needs of Hornsby Shire residents who want to exercise their dogs off-leash on Council managed land. Key issues have been identified and discussed and ten recommendations are proposed for the management and operation of Hornsby Shire's off-leash dog parks. These include items for improving existing off-leash areas, planning for new sites and managing Council's off-leash dog park assets.

Design principles and selection criteria have been provided to guide the development of new sites and management guidelines provide guidance on site rules and maintenance.



Appendix A: Proposed hierarchy of existing off-leash dog parks

Proposed hierarchy of existing off-leash dog parks



EXISTING OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Hierarchy
1.	Asquith Oval	Asquith	Level 1
2.	Crossroads Reserve	Berowra Heights	Level 1
3.	Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Level 1
4.	Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Level 1
5.	Eucalyptus Drive	Westleigh	Level 1
6.	Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue)	Thornleigh	Level 1
7.	Lyne Road	Beecroft	Level 2
8.	Epping Oval	Epping	Level 2
9.	Ron Payne Oval	North Epping	Level 2

Figure 5: Proposed hierarchy of existing off-leash dog parks

Appendix B: Potential expansion of off-leash dog parks

Expansion of two existing off-leash dog parks is proposed.

Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Hierarchy	Facility type	Area
Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Level 1	Expansion	1,150m ²
Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Level 1	Expansion	1,500m ²
TOTAL				2,650m ²

Greenway Park expansion

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Shepherds Drive, Cherrybrook	Level 1	C



Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the space	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Responds to capacity issue in Cherrybrook area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Adjoining neighbours	Somewhat suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ Approx. 1,150m ²	Suitable for small dogs and puppies
Character	■ Sloping land ■ Turf areas	Shade trees required
Amenity	■ Co-located with existing off-leash dog park ■ Parking close by	Suitable
Equitable access	■ New footpaths required ■ Sloping land will make compliance with disability access challenging	Unsuitable

Rofe Park expansion

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Galston Road, Hornsby Heights	Level 1	A



Assessment:

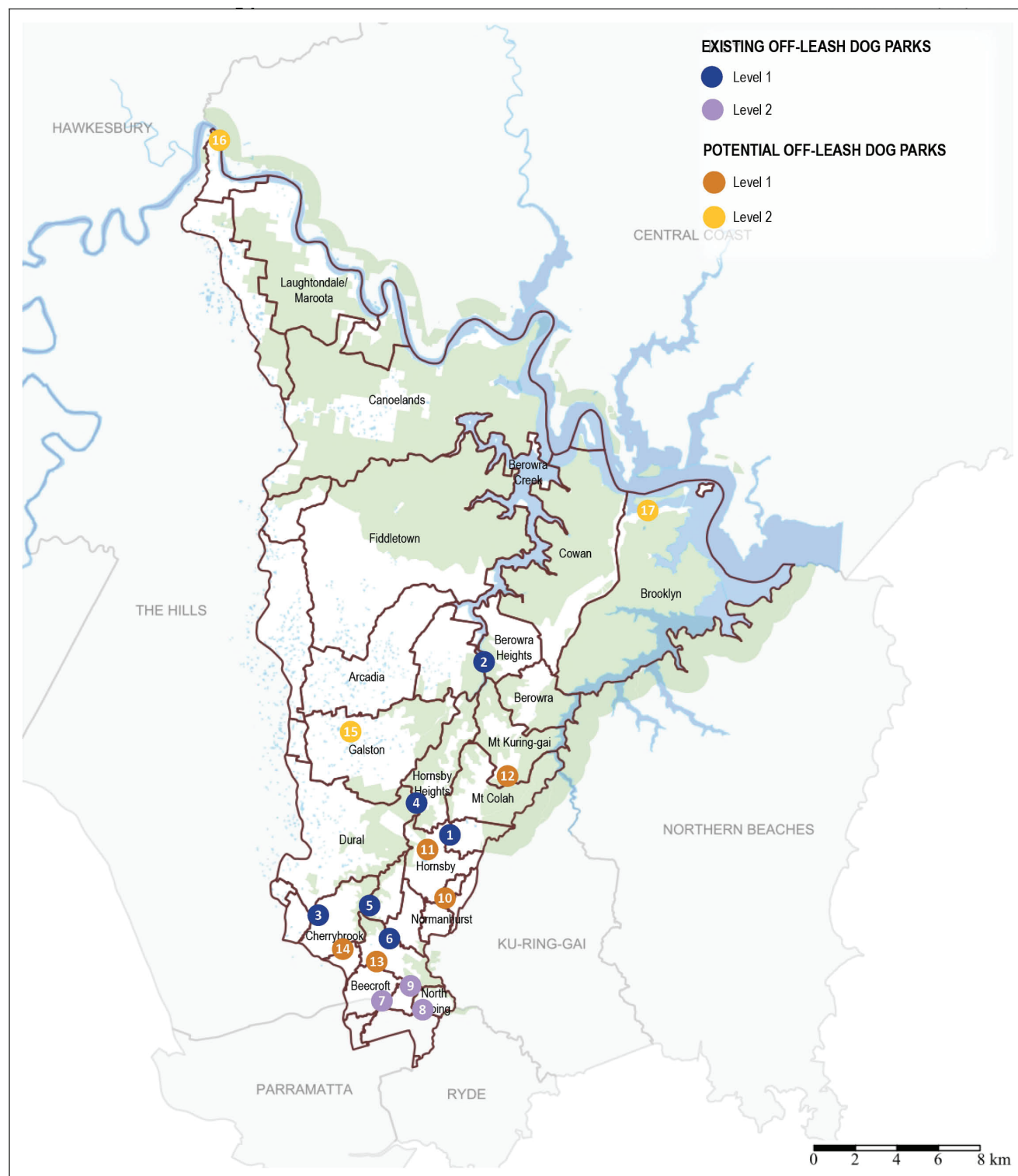
Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the space	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Responds to capacity issue in Hornsby area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Adjoining neighbours	Somewhat suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ Approx. 1,500m ²	Suitable for small dogs and puppies
Character	■ Level land ■ Shade trees	Suitable
Amenity	■ Co-located with existing off-leash dog park ■ Parking close by	Suitable
Equitable access	■ Level site	Suitable



Appendix C: Potential new off-leash dog park sites

Council proposes the addition of eight new off-leash dog parks. This equates to an additional 51,500m² of dog recreation space.

Potential new off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire



EXISTING OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
1.	Asquith Oval	Asquith	Dedicated off-leash	2,400m ²
2.	Crossroads Reserve	Berowra Heights	Dedicated off-leash	1,400m ²
3.	Greenway Park	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
4.	Rofe Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	4,500m ²
5.	Eucalyptus Drive	Westleigh	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
6.	Jane Starkey (Dawson Avenue)	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	3,200m ²
7.	Lyne Road	Beecroft	Unfenced off-leash	3,500m ²
8.	Epping Oval	Epping	Shared sportsground	13,500m ²
9.	Ron Payne Oval	North Epping	Shared sportsground	10,500m ²
TOTAL				45,000m²

POTENTIAL OFF-LEASH DOG PARKS

Key	Off-leash dog park	Suburb	Facility type	Area
10.	Brickpit Park	Thornleigh	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
11.	Hopeville Park	Hornsby Heights	Dedicated off-leash	2,800m ²
12.	Hunt Reserve	Mount Colah	Dedicated off-leash	2,000m ²
13.	Wearne Avenue	Pennant Hills	Dedicated off-leash	5,300m ²
14.	Edward Bennett Oval	Cherrybrook	Dedicated off-leash	2,500m ²
15.	Fagan Park	Galston	Unfenced off-leash	11,600m ²
16.	Wisemans Ferry Recreation Area	Wisemans Ferry	Unfenced off-leash	16,000m ²
17.	Salt Pan Reserve	Brooklyn	Unfenced off-leash	6,000m ²
TOTAL				51,500m²

Figure 6: Potential new off-leash dog parks in Hornsby Shire

Potential sites for new off-leash dog parks are assessed below.

Brickpit Park

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Dartford Road, Thornleigh	Level 1	C



Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in Hornsby/Thornleigh area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ Approx. 5,300m ²	Suitable
Character	■ Sloped and level areas ■ Lawn and vegetated areas	Suitable
Amenity	■ Natural shade available ■ Water available close by ■ Co-located with other active and passive recreation opportunities including a golf driving range, playground, stadium and skate park	Suitable
Equitable access	■ Responds to service gap in the Thornleigh area ■ Car parking available close by ■ Accessible path of travel is possible from car park	Suitable

Hopeville Park

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Marine Crescent, Hornsby Heights	Level 1	A

LEGEND

1. Proposed new off-leash dog park. Approx. 2,600m²
2. Entry to off-leash dog park
3. Proposed new footpath
4. Existing playground to be upgraded. Playground to be located minimum 10m away from dog park.

SITE PHOTOS

a) View looking north to subject site

b) View looking north-east to subject site

c) View looking west to subject site

Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Crown Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in Hornsby area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 2,800m ²	Suitable
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sloped and level areas ■ A mix of lawn and vegetated areas 	Suitable
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural shade available ■ Water connection possible ■ Co-located with other active and passive recreation opportunities including kick about space, playground and BMX track 	Suitable
Equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Responds to service gap in the Hornsby area ■ On street car parking available ■ Accessible path of travel is possible from Meredith Avenue 	Suitable

Hunt Reserve

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Beryl Avenue, Mount Colah	Level 1	A

LEGEND

1. Proposed new off-leash dog park. Approx. 2000m²
2. Entry to off-leash dog park
3. Existing playground and picnic area
4. Existing toilet block
5. Car parking

SITE PHOTOS

a) View north across park

b) View of existing amenities block

c) View south across park

Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Crown Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in Mount Colah /Mt Kuring-gai area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 2,000m ²	Suitable
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lawn and vegetated areas ■ Relatively flat area 	Suitable
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural shade available ■ Toilets available ■ Water source close by ■ Co-located with children's playground 	Suitable
Equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Responds to service gap in the Mount Colah area ■ Car parking available ■ Accessible path of travel is possible from car park 	Suitable

Wearne Avenue

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Wearne Avenue, Pennant Hills	Level 1	C



5300m²

1

2

b

c

LEGEND

- Proposed new off-leash dog park. Approx. 5300m²
- Entry to dog park

SITE PHOTOS



a) Subject site, looking south



b) Existing creek crossing



c) Subject site, looking north

Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in Pennant Hills area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Surrounding neighbours	Somewhat suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 5,300m ²	Suitable
Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open lawn area with creek crossing and shade trees ■ A mix of level and sloping areas 	Suitable
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural shade ■ Away from vehicle traffic 	Suitable
Equitable access	■ Sloping terrain into park would make compliant universal access challenging	Somewhat suitable

Edward Bennett Oval

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Edward Bennett Drive, Cherrybrook	Level 1	C



LEGEND

- Proposed new off-leash dog park. Approx. 2500m²
- Entry to off-leash dog park
- Proposed footpath connection to join existing path near playground
- Future circuit path connecting Bowerman Place to Edward Bennett Drive
- Edward Bennett Oval
- Existing playground and picnic area

SITE PHOTOS

a) View south from Bowerman Place

b) View east from Bowerman Place

c) View north-west from the proposed site



Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community Land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Responds to service gap in the Cherrybrook Pennant Hills area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 2,500m ²	Suitable
Character	■ Lawn and vegetated areas ■ Flat and sloping areas	Suitable
Amenity	■ Natural shade available ■ Toilets available nearby ■ Water source close by ■ Co-located with children's playground	Suitable
Equitable access	■ On-street car parking available ■ Accessible path of travel is achievable	Suitable

Fagan Park

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Arcadia Road, Galston	Level 2	A



Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Crown land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in western districts rural lands	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 11,600m ²	Suitable
Character	■ Large open lawn with established trees at the periphery	Suitable
Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural shade available ■ No water source close by ■ Co-located with other park facilities including walking trails, playground, toilets and passive recreation space 	Suitable
Equitable access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Off-street car parking available ■ Access is via a combination of sealed pathways and lawn areas 	Somewhat suitable

Wisemans Ferry Recreation Area

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Old Northern Road, Wisemans Ferry	Level 2	A



Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Community land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in rural western lands	
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 16,000m ²	Suitable
Character	■ Flat turfed area	Suitable
Amenity	■ Shade trees at periphery ■ Toilets nearby	Suitable
Equitable access	■ On site parking ■ Level access to site possible	Suitable

Salt Pan Reserve

Address:	Hierarchy:	Council Ward:
Brooklyn Road, Brooklyn	Level 2	A



LEGEND

1. Proposed new off-leash dog park. Approx. 6,000m²

Assessment:

Essential Criteria	Comments	Suitability
Land classification	■ Crown land	Suitable
Excluded land uses	■ Dogs are permitted to use the land	Suitable
Equitable distribution	■ Addresses service gap in Brooklyn area	Suitable
Impacts on neighbours	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on other park users	■ Minimal	Suitable
Impacts on the natural environment	■ Minimal	Suitable
Desirable Criteria		
Size	■ 6,000m ²	■ Suitable
Character	■ Flat turfed area	■ Suitable
Amenity	■ Shade trees at periphery	■ Suitable
Equitable access	■ On-street parking ■ Level access to site	■ Suitable



Appendix D: On-leash walking trails in Hornsby Shire

Suburb	Area	Access point
Arcadia	Arcadia Park Bushland Reserve	Arcadia Road, next to Rural Fire Service
Arcadia	Carrs Bush Conservation Area	Carrs Road. Designated walking tracks
Cherrybrook	Callicoma Conservation Reserve	Jct. of Macquarie Dr and Francis Greenway Dr. End of Lambe Pl.
Cherrybrook	Cherrybrook Lakes Conservation Reserve	Kenburn Dr. walking track Macquarie Dr. walking track
Cherrybrook	McKinley Place Conservation Reserve	Fire trail at the end of McKinley Pl. Fire trail at Shepherds Dr. (Rear of fire station) Fire trail at the end of Blackwattle Pl. Macquarie Dr. (opp. Lakes of Cherrybrook)
Cherrybrook/Castle Hill	Upper Pyes Creek Conservation Reserve	Limited walking track access. Rear of Erlestoke Park, Castle Hill - Access way to Childrey Pl
Cherrybrook/Dural	Lower Pyes Creek Bushland Reserve	End of Keighran Pl.
Galston	Galston Bushland Reserve	Rear of Hayes Park oval, Galston Rd. Access via fire trail
Dural	James Henty Park Bushland Reserve	Rear of oval, James Hentry Dr. End of Murrell Pl. End of Thomas Wilkinson Ave.
Berowra Heights	Berowra Park Conservation Reserve	Firetrail at end of Turner Rd
Brooklyn	Brooklyn Park Conservation Reserve	Brooklyn Rd. Designated walking tracks
Brooklyn	McKell Park Bushland Reserve	Dangar Rd. Designated walking tracks
Mt Kuring-gai	Mt Kuring-gai Park Bushland Reserve	Rear of oval. Flanders Ave., Mt Kuring-gai
Hornsby	Hornsby Park Conservation Reserve	Quarry Rd. trackheads, off Dural St. Walking track at end of Rosemead Rd.
Hornsby	Florence Cotton Bushland Reserve	Walking track from Frederick St. Pretoria Pde. trackhead
Hornsby Heights	Rofe Park Bushland Reserve	Rear of oval. Galston Rd. Cnr Bundanoon and Binnari Rds Cnr. Of Yannina Ave and Binnari Rds

Suburb	Area	Access point
Hornsby/Westleigh	Dog Pound Creek Conservation Reserve	End of Valley Rd. Warrigal Dr. walking track adjacent to fire station Fire trail adjacent to Ginger Meggs Park
Normanhurst	Waitara Creek Conservation Reserve	End of Bryan Ave. End of Harris Rd.
Pennant Hills	Azalea Grove Conservation Reserve	End of Azalea Gr
Pennant Hills	Britannia Street Conservation Reserve	Britannia St. firetrail End of Hampden Rd
Pennant Hills	Pennant Hills Park Conservation Reserve	Mambara Track on Britannia St. Opp. Council nursery
West Pennant Hills	New Farm Road Conservation Reserve	Cnr. John Savage Cr.and New Farm Rd. Lee Rd. walking track
Thornleigh	Larool Creek Bushland Reserve	Rear of park adjacent to pre-school on Wareemba Ave. Cnr of Wareemba Ave and Derribong Pl.
Beecroft	Chilworth Conservation Reserve	York St. End of Austral Ave. End of Kenwick Lane
Beecroft	Beecroft Conservation Reserve	End of Welham St. Kirkham Rd. fire trail
Beecroft	Castle Howard Conservation Reserve	Cheltenham oval - behind Netball courts Castle Howard Rd walking track Kirkham Rd walking track
Berowra Heights		End of Cliff View, Wide View and Lonsdale Rds.
Berowra Heights		Emma Place and end of Warrina St.
Cherrybrook		Fire trail access from end of Timothy Pl. through to Keighran Pl.
Westleigh		Fire trail access via Warrigal Dr
Thornleigh		Fire trail access via Wareemba Ave., near cnr Vale Rd.

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