



FAGAN PARK OFF-LEASH DOG PARK

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT



March 2024

Parks, Trees & Recreation Branch

Hornsby Shire Council

296 Peats Ferry Road

Hornsby NSW 2077

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Consultation with the Hornsby Shire community was undertaken to seek feedback on a proposed new off-leash dog park at Fagan Park, Galston. Council has previously prepared an Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy which identifies Fagan Park as a suitable site for a new dog park facility.

The purpose of this report is to outline the methods of engagement undertaken and report on the results and outcomes of the consultation.

2.0 SITE LOCATION

Fagan Park is a large regional park located at 50X Arcadia Road, Galston. The proposed off-leash dog park is located roughly in the centre of the park and is bounded by a dam to the east, vegetation to the north and west and a large open field to the south.



Image 1 – Proposed site of off-leash dog park at Fagan Park

3.0 BACKGROUND

Fagan Park covers 55 hectares of parkland and provides a variety of features and attractions including play grounds, picnic areas, themed gardens, a heritage conservation area, bushland trails, an eco garden and unstructured open space. The Park is Crown Land under the care, control and management of Hornsby Shire Council. Fagan Park attracts visitors from across Sydney to enjoy the landscaped parklands, historic buildings and bushland areas.

In 2021 Council adopted an off-leash Dog Park Strategy that provides guidance on the development and operation of off-leash dog parks within Hornsby Shire. Extensive community consultation was undertaken

during development of the Strategy and the results of the consultation were used to guide the recommendations in the final Strategy.

A large grassy area was identified in the centre of Fagan Park as suitable for a new off-leash dog park facility. The site slopes to the east and consists of a large open lawn area. The remains of old timber fence posts are located along the south-eastern edge of the proposed site.

4.0 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGIES

A Concept Plan was prepared for the proposed off-leash dog park and a community engagement program was undertaken between 21 November and 12 December 2023. Community engagement is important to the success of the new facility and Council engaged with the community through the following channels:

- Advertisement on Council's website – YourSay Hornsby
- Online feedback form
- Social Media
- Council's eNewsletter
- Direct mailout to adjoining neighbours
- Notices placed on site
- Notification to stakeholders including:
 - Friends of Fagan Park
 - Hornsby Electric Model Flying Club
- Site meeting with representatives of Hornsby Electric Model Flying Club

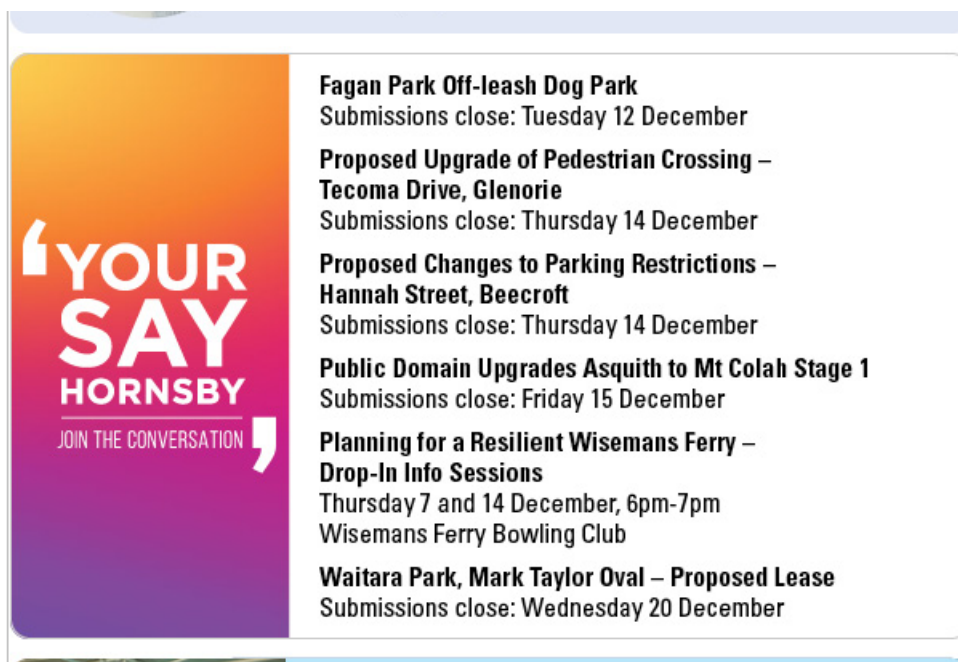


Image 2: Screen shot of Council's eNewsletter

Online Feedback form

The community were asked to provide comments on the proposal via an online feedback form on Council's YourSay Hornsby website. A screenshot of the webpage and feedback form is shown below.

The screenshot shows the 'YourSay Hornsby' website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Projects', 'Log In / Join', and a search icon. The main header features the Hornsby Council logo and a large image of dogs. Below the image, the title 'Fagan Park – Off-leash Dog Park' is displayed, along with a 'Follow' button. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'What's happening' with a green 'Open' button, 'Document Library' with a PDF document 'Fagan Park – Consultation Plan', and 'For enquiries' with contact information for the Project Manager. The 'Feedback Form - closed' section is the primary focus, containing a text input field for comments, and fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', and 'Email', followed by a blue 'Submit' button.

Image 3 – Screenshot of YourSay Hornsby webpage

5.0 RESULTS

The community's interest in the Fagan Park off-leash dog park was evident with a total of 242 submissions received.

As indicated in Table 1 below, 64% of respondents indicated their support for the use of the area as an off-leash dog park and believe it will be a valued asset for the community. 15% were opposed to the proposal, 19% suggested alternative locations and 2% provided questions or comments of a general nature and did not indicate support or opposition to the proposal.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	% OF SUBMISSIONS
Support for proposal	Respondents were generally supportive of the proposal	155	64%
Alternative location proposed	Respondents requested that alternative locations be considered	45	19%
Opposed to proposal	Did not support the proposal for an off-leash dog park	37	15%
General comments	Comments were of a general nature and did not indicate support or opposition to the proposal	5	2%
	TOTAL	242	100%

6.0 KEY THEMES AND ISSUES

Key themes and issues raised by the community are addressed below. They have been grouped in the following themes:

- Table 2 – Amenity for visitors
- Table 3 – Amenity for dogs
- Table 4 – Parking and transport
- Table 5 – Accessibility
- Table 6 – Environment
- Table 7 – Conflicts with other park users
- Table 8 – Heritage
- Table 9 – Other issues

TABLE 2. AMENITY FOR VISITORS

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Shade/shelter	Request for the provision of shade, shelters and trees.	17	Council will provide trees for shade within the dog park.
Seating	Request for additional seating	11	Three seats were proposed on the Concept Plan. An additional seat will be added in response to community feedback.
Drinking water	Request for drinking fountains including dog water bowls at both entrances	11	One drinking fountain with a dog bowl will be provided at the top entry to the dog park. Due to the distance to a water source a drinking fountain is not proposed at the lower entry.
Garbage bins	Request for garbage bins and dog waste bags	5	Council will provide garbage bins with dog waste disposal bags at each entry to the dog park.
Public toilet access	Request for access to toilet facilities	4	There are three public toilet facilities provided at Fagan Park: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arcadia Road entry • Carrs Bush entry • Close to the North American garden (closest option to the dog park)

Signage	Request for directional and educational signage	4	Directional and educational signage will be provided.
Maintenance	Request for regular maintenance	2	Fagan Park is a staffed facility and regular maintenance will be undertaken as required.
Security	Request for security cameras and QR code check in at the dog park	1	Council staff are available at Fagan Park to assist with any safety concerns. Security cameras and check in points are not typically considered necessary at Council's dog parks.
Café	Request for a café close to the dog park	1	A small kiosk is located near the Arcadia Road entry for visitors' convenience.

TABLE 3. AMENITY FOR DOGS

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Separate areas for small and large dogs	Request for separate areas for large and small dogs	29	Council is about to commence a trial of separate areas for small and large dogs at its off-leash dog park site at Greenway Park, Cherrybrook. The trial period will run for six months and if successful may be introduced at other sites.
Agility equipment	Request for agility equipment at the dog park	8	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, in Council's experience agility equipment often falls into rapid decay from non or misuse and is actually used by very few people for their dogs.
Access to water play	Request for access to water for play	3	The dam at the base of George Hall creek on the eastern side of Fagan Park is considered unsuitable for water play due to potential impacts on bird habitat. In accordance with Council's Off-leash Dog park Strategy, no additional water play opportunities are proposed at the Fagan Park off-leash dog park.

TABLE 4. PARKING AND TRANSPORT

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Paid parking	Concern that paid car parking is prohibitive to regular users.	23	Income generated from the use of car parking facilities is an important source of funding for Fagan Park. Funds raised contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the 55 hectare Regional Park. For residents of Hornsby Shire who wish to use the park on a regular basis an annual parking permit option is available which is less than \$1 per week.
Distance from car park facilities	Concern that the location of the dog park is not easily accessible from existing car parking areas.	9	There are two car parks available at Fagan Park. The Arcadia Road car park provides the most direct route to the off-leash dog park.
Distance from Galston town centre	The community noted that the proposed off-leash dog park was some distance from the Galston town centre and that many people using the facility would be required to drive there.	7	Fagan Park is located in a rural area and it is common for residents to drive to access facilities. Fagan Park is less than 1.5km from the town centre. The site was selected as the most suitable option available in the Galston area.
Increased parking demand	Potential increased demand for car parking	4	The supportive response received from the community indicates there is demand for a dog park facility and it is possible that visitation to Fagan Park may increase. As Fagan Park is Hornsby Council's premier regional parkland, visitation is encouraged. A large overflow car parking area is available onsite if required.

TABLE 5. ACCESSIBILITY

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Accessible route to dog park	Request for an accessible path to the off-leash dog park	11	Council will undertake improvements to the existing path between the Arcadia Road car park and the dog park entry.
Restricted access hours	The restricted opening hours at Fagan Park were viewed by some respondents as a constraint on users.	3	The Fagan Park off-leash facility is intended for use during daylight hours. At the time of writing Fagan Park opening hours are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7am – 5.30pm daily (except Christmas Day) • 7am – 6.30pm during eastern daylight saving time Outside of these hours, dogs may be exercised on leash outside of Fagan Park.

TABLE 6. ENVIRONMENT

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Impacts on wildlife	<p>Community members raised concerns over the potential impact on wildlife due the presence of dogs in the area. There was concern that the presence, scent and noise from dogs may deter native fauna from visiting the site.</p> <p>Concern was also raised over impacts on animals using the vegetation corridor to the north west of the dog park site and the potential loss of foraging ground for water birds who use the surrounding lawn areas.</p>	27	<p>Fagan Park covers 55 hectares including several water bodies and large grassy areas. The dog park will be fully contained within the lawn area only. The lawn area is subject to regular mowing.</p> <p>The off-leash dog park will cover less than 2% of the site and large areas of open grass remain available for birds and other animals.</p> <p>Dogs are currently permitted in Fagan Park when on a lead. Council will provide a fully fenced off leash facility with double gates at each entry. In response to community concerns and to provide a buffer to the dam and adjacent vegetation, the fence will be set back 20 meters from the edge of the dam and two meters from the edge of the adjacent vegetation corridor.</p>
Impacts on water quality	<p>Concern was raised over the potential for nutrient runoff to enter the dam and effect water quality.</p>	11	<p>The large size of the dog park will enable dog urine to be dispersed over a large area.</p> <p>The dog park fence will be set back a minimum 20 meters from the edge of the dam.</p> <p>Visitors to the park are required to pick up after their dog and Council will provide educational signage, dog waste disposal bags and garbage bins at entry gates for visitors' convenience.</p>

TABLE 7. CONFLICTS WITH OTHER PARK USERS

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Hornsby Electric Model Flying Club	Conflicts with lease boundary of Hornsby Electric Model Flying Club	10	A modification will be made to the lease agreement with the Hornsby Electric Model Flying Club to adjust the designated flight zone boundaries away from the off-leash dog park. The model aircraft space is reduced by approximately 5%. The community benefit of an off-leash dog park area outweighs any impact to the Electric Model Flying Club.
Use limited to one specific user group	Concern was raised over the use of the dog park area for a specific purpose to the exclusion of others.	6	The off-leash dog park site will be available to all park users. The Fagan Park Plan of Management allows for canine activities in this location.
Public safety	Some members of the community were concerned that the off-leash dog park would increase the number of dogs in Fagan Park. Of particular concern was the possibility that dogs may be allowed to run off leash outside of the fenced area and may walk close to a children's playground to access the off-leash facility.	6	All dogs visiting Fagan Park must be under the effective control of a responsible person and are required to be leashed until they are inside the off-leash facility. Dogs are not permitted within 10 meters of a children's playground. If there are concerns about the aggressive behaviour of a particular dog at Fagan Park, visitors can report this to Council's Customer Service Centre and an Animal Control Officer will make contact to discuss the matter further.
Increased crowds	Concern over increased visitor numbers at Fagan Park	5	Fagan Park is Council's premier regional parkland and visitation is encouraged.
Impacts on neighbours	Potential disturbance to neighbours from dogs entering and exiting the park.	1	Fagan Park is located in a rural area with few direct neighbours. Visitors are required to be respectful of neighbours when entering and exiting the park as would be expected at any of Council's public parks. Dogs are required to be on a leash until they are fully inside the off-leash dog park.

TABLE 8. HERITAGE

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Use of Rural/Heritage zone	<p>Fagan Park Plan of Management (2004) identifies the proposed site as situated within the Rural/Heritage Zone comprising the Eco Garden, Netherby farm group and its rural landscape setting to the north. This zone is characterised by open grassland, farm dams and scattered tree vegetation. The dog park facility is located on what was once fruit orchards and farm paddocks. Remnants of old timber fence posts can be found along the south eastern boundary of the off-leash dog park site.</p> <p>Representation was made to retain the area as an open lawn to protect the existing landscape character of the site.</p>	4	<p>The Fagan Park Plan of Management 2004, p.60 states:</p> <p>Proposed development within the <i>Rural/Heritage Zone</i> shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Allocation of an Informal Activity Area for equestrian, canine, model aeroplane and other compatible uses;</i> • <i>Upgrading existing trails and trail development;</i> • <i>Development of visually unobtrusive shelters and viewing structures;</i> • <i>Visually unobtrusive event infrastructure and facilities; and</i> • <i>Directional and interpretive signage.</i> <p>The specified rural style fencing respects the historic and scenic values of the parkland. The new fenced off area would have a negligible impact on the setting, important vistas, views or heritage values of the open space.</p> <p>It is considered that heritage considerations do not prevent the use of the site for the purpose of an off-leash dog park.</p>
Existing fence posts	<p>Concern over the removal of existing timber fence posts along the southern site boundary</p>	1	<p>The existing fence posts are proposed to be retained however it is noted that many are quite aged/weathered and may be removed as part of regular maintenance if required.</p>

TABLE 9. OTHER ISSUES

ISSUE/THEME	DETAILS	NUMBER OF SUBMISSIONS	RESPONSE
Alternative Locations	<p>Council was requested to consider alternative locations for the dog park including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Johnson Road, Galston (also known as the old Pony Club site) • Fagan Park overflow car park area • Lawn area to the east of the proposed location • North east corner of Bayfield Road • South east corner of Bayfield Road 	45	<p>This consultation was undertaken for the proposed off-leash dog park site in Fagan Park as it was identified in Council's Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy. Other sites are not currently under consideration.</p>
Compatibility with original Deed of Gift	<p>Council were requested to consider if the provision of an off-leash dog park is compatible with Bruce Fagan's Deed of Gift to the community.</p>	8	<p>The Deed of Gift states:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"The Donor is desirous of the donation lands being preserved indefinitely after his lifetime and the lifetime of his sister for the cultural recreational educational and historical benefit and use of the public."</i></p> <p>The Fagan's have clearly stipulated that the land must be preserved indefinitely for the benefit and use of the public.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed use will provide recreational public benefit and is in line with the intention of the Deed of Gift to the community.</p>
Fencing	<p>Request to increase the fence height</p>	4	<p>The dog park is proposed to be fully enclosed with 1.2m high fencing and double entry gates. The rural style fencing has been designed to complement the sites character and respect the historic and scenic values of the parkland while providing a contained area for dogs to run freely.</p>

			<p>By law, a dog that is in a public place must be under the effective control of a competent person. This requirement also applies to areas declared off-leash.</p> <p>Users are encouraged to make their own decisions about whether the facility is suitable for their pet.</p>
	Request to utilise timber posts instead of star pickets	2	Timber posts are proposed around the dog park entries. Due to budget constraints a more economical fence style is proposed for the side boundaries.
Off-leash circuit path	Request for an off-leash circuit path around Fagan Park	1	<p>Extensive consultation undertaken when preparing Council's Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy indicated a strong community preference for a fenced enclosure. The proposed fenced facility is in accordance with community expectations.</p> <p>As is currently the case, dogs are permitted to use other parts of Fagan Park while on leash within the constraints of the NSW <i>Companion Animals Act 1998</i>.</p>
Dog park size	Dog park size considered to be too small	1	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 seeks to provide a range of different sized dog parks across the Shire.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on feedback received from the community it is recommended that the off-leash dog park facility proceed with the following modifications.

- Dog park fence to be set back 20 meters from the adjacent dam to protect wildlife habitat.
- Dog park fence to be set two meters away from the north-western vegetation corridor to protect wildlife habitat.
- Undertake improvements to the access path connecting the Arcadia Road car park to the off-leash dog park.
Shade trees to be provided within the off-leash dog park.
- One additional park seat to be provided within the off-leash dog park.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Council's adopted Off-Leash Dog Park Strategy 2021 identified the Fagan Park site as suitable for an off-leash dog park facility. Extensive consultation with the community was undertaken during the development of the Strategy document.

Additional consultation with the community was undertaken specifically for the proposed off-leash dog park at Fagan Park in November/December 2023. The results reflect significant interest in and support for the project contingent on the provision of necessary protections to the environment, the provision of suitable access and amenity and ensuring that the existing character of the site is respected.