

Gore Hill Park
Landscape and Recreation Masterplan

ISSUES REPORT

for Willoughby City Council

Volume 1



BioDesign & Associates Pty Ltd
May, 2006

See also:

Volume 2: FIGURES, MAPS, PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Volume 3: ARBORICULTURAL REPORT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Gore Hill Park is a Crown Land Reserve under the care and control of Willoughby City Council (WCC). It is an urban park located at the southern edge of the WCC local government area (LGA) adjoining the North Sydney and Lane Cove LGAs. The Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) borders the park to the north and northeast and the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, a “hidden jewel”, lies to the west. Beyond the cemetery are the educational facilities of TAFE and UTS. To the east of the park is St Leonards Station which has recently been redeveloped with residential and commercial tower blocks. Further redevelopment is proposed in St Leonards which will place increased recreational demands on the park in the future. The Pacific Highway and the suburb of Greenwich form the southern boundary.

An established framework of mature and young trees (including some remnants of the site’s original vegetation), a pleasant microclimate, central location, good public transport, easy access and plentiful parking make Gore Hill Park a highly desirable sports venue. Competition for the use of the oval is intense and is expected to increase in the future.

Key Issues

- Gore Hill Park is a 4.43 ha (approx.10 acres) remnant of the original 56.66 ha (140 acres) “Reserve for Recreation” which was first dedicated in 1869. The reserve once extended along the drainage line from the Pacific Highway to Artarmon Reserve. Encroachment on the park continues today with large areas of non-recreational carparking occupying prime recreational and environmentally sensitive areas. The RNSH is currently proposing roads and buildings which further encroach on the park boundaries.
- Remnants of the Blue Gum High Forest, an endangered vegetation community which is rare in the Willoughby area, exist in the northern and western parts of the park. A number of remnant trees in the northern carpark are at present under threat because of vehicular activities and poor ground conditions.
- Gore Hill Park is currently known as an AFL oval surrounded by carparks and some minor passive recreational spaces. There is little connectivity between the park, cemetery and the hospital despite all three being large public properties with much to offer each other.
- The park has no clear “heart” or passive recreational facilities which encourage people to stay in the park for any length of time.
- The park lacks clear entry points and an internal pedestrian path system.
- Bus stops, road crossings and entry points along the Pacific Highway are uncoordinated. Signage at entry points to the park is inadequate.
- Noise from the highway impinges on the quiet enjoyment of the park.

Opportunities

The opportunity exists to:

- Create and market Gore Hill Park as part of a much bigger parkland – the “Gore Hill Parklands” – by combining, in landscape terms, Gore Hill Park, Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery and the Royal North Shore Hospital. It would be possible to include the new Gore Hill Technology Park and the TAFE/UTS campus as part of such a parklands.

- Reclaim Gore Hill Park from development and cars and to return the land to public open space. As the hospital has surplus land, the upper carpark (106 spaces) off Reserve Road can be relocated within the hospital grounds as part of their proposed redevelopment works. The small carpark (31 spaces) behind the pavilion could also be removed and more use made of parking along the Pacific Highway to cater for peak demands of park users.
- Improve connectivity both inside and outside the park by:-
 - Constructing new entry points on all sides of the park which connect directly to bus stops, road crossings and pedestrian links to St Leonards. Reinforce entry points with signage and interpretative material.
 - Formalising existing tracks within the park to ensure that paths follow desire lines.
 - Connecting internal paths to pedestrian systems within the cemetery and the hospital.
 - Constructing a shared bicycle path along the edge of the Pacific Highway and connecting to the WCC bicycle path system.
 - Increasing the visual connection between the cemetery and the park by creating a low informal hedge along the boundary.
 - Creating a bridge between the hospital and the northern edge of the park using recreational facilities, gardens and water.
- Improve recreational facilities by:-
 - Constructing a new recreational centre and gardens where the northern carpark now exists to provide a range of facilities for children and youth such as indoor spaces for playgroups, after school care, craft, fitness and leisure activities, and outdoor spaces with a therapeutic or healing bush garden, water features and children's play area.
 - Constructing a new visitor centre, café and kiosk, gallery/function space and staff facilities on the boundary between the park and the cemetery supported by a children's water play area and upgraded picnic facilities nearby. This would create a "heart" in the park, encourage visitors to stay longer, improve surveillance and bring in much needed revenue.
 - Incorporating other passive facilities such as roller blading and skateboard jumps and bumps into the path system in several parts of the park for youth.
- Harvest stormwater from the UTS, TAFE, cemetery and hospital sites to irrigate the oval and provide water features within the park. Runoff from the oval and park could also be treated on site to ensure that all water released downstream is uncontaminated/unpolluted.
- Protect and revegetate the existing Blue Gum High Forest remnant trees and provide interpretation for educational purposes.
- Build on recent plantings of indigenous tree species to give a strong local character to the park.
- Underground electrical wires along the Pacific Highway, remove hazardous trees and widen the footpath to provide a shared bicycle and pedestrian path.
- Explore additional recreational uses of the oval for occasional/informal outdoor activities such as festivals, fetes and concerts. Explore joint fund raising activities between the park and the cemetery.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Purpose of the Report

This report was commissioned by Willoughby City Council (WCC) as part of the Landscape/Recreation Masterplan for Gore Hill Park, St. Leonards. BioDesign & Associates Pty Ltd (BioDesign) was commissioned to analyse the site, interpret the current and future management issues and to develop a masterplan for the park which will meet the current and future needs of both the public and stakeholders.

Refer to Volume 2 – Figures, Maps, Plans and Photographs for images referred to in the text.

Refer to Volume 3 – Arboricultural Report for details of the tree assessments.

2.2 Methodology

Refer to Appendix A.

2.3 Site Overview

2.3.1 Location

Gore Hill Park is located on the lower north shore of Sydney (figure 1) at the southern edge of the Willoughby City Council local government area (LGA). It adjoins the North Sydney and Lane Cove Council LGAs (figure 2).

The Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) lies to the north and northeast of the park. Beyond the hospital to the north is a very large industrial area. Reserve Road, which forms the eastern boundary of the park, is the main entrance to the hospital.

To the east of Gore Hill Park is the recently developed high rise commercial and residential centre around St Leonards Station including 207 Pacific Highway. New tower buildings line both sides of the railway line at this point.

To the south of the park is the busy Pacific Highway with low rise commercial development along its southern edge and flats and single storey dwellings downslope in Greenwich.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery lies to the west of the park. It is bounded on its western and southern sides by the Pacific Highway.

Along the Pacific Highway to the north are the Gore Hill campus of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) (it is understood that the University is in the process of vacating this campus), the North Sydney Institute of TAFE and the old ABC site which is currently being redeveloped as the Gore Hill Technology Park.

2.3.2 Site description

Gore Hill Park today is a 4.43 ha (approx. 10 acres) remnant of the original 56.66 ha (140 acres) “Reserve for Recreation” that once extended along the drainage line from the Pacific Highway to Artarmon Reserve (figures 3 and 4 and Section 2.2.1). Naremburn Park, Talus Reserve, Thompson Park and Cleland Park are also remnants of this original reserve.

The park has been described as having regional significance (Whitfield, 2005), district significance (WCC, 1996 p5, Manidis Roberts 1996, Appendix B) and local significance (WCC, 1996 p5).

The park currently contains an Australian Football League (AFL) sports oval, earthberm, pavilion, three carparks (including the large one on the northern boundary adjoining the hospital), a practice basketball court and ancillary spaces that are used for passive recreation.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, an area of 5.67ha (14 acres) which adjoins the park to the west, is a large, enclosed area which is visually isolated from the park and the surrounding streets. The cemetery is considered in the study because it is an under-utilised resource which has the potential to greatly increase the passive recreation space and biodiversity of Gore Hill Park. Conversely, the park acts as an extension of the cemetery.

RNSH is also considered in the study because it is a significant public facility immediately adjacent to the park and a source of many park users. The hospital is visible from many places in the park. While the park is a great asset to the hospital, the hospital grounds also have the potential to form an extension of the park's urban forest and green spaces. Currently a new masterplan is being prepared for the hospital which has significant impacts on Gore Hill Park (refer Section 2.2.4 Stakeholders and User Groups).

2.3.3 The Legislative Context

Gore Hill Park (DP93642) is a Crown Land Reserve (R29836) which was gazetted on 28 October, 1899. The park is administered by the Gore Hill Park (R29836) Reserve Trust for the NSW Department of Lands and is managed by Willoughby City Council for the purposes of public recreation (WCC 1996, p10).

Crown Lands Act 1989

The NSW Crown Lands Act 1989 governs the use and management of Public Reserves.

Section 11 of the Act lays out the principles and is particularly relevant to this site.

CROWN LANDS ACT 1989 - SECT 11

11 Principles of Crown Land Management

For the purposes of this Act, the principles of Crown Land management are:

- (a) that environmental protection principles be observed in relation to the management and administration of Crown land,
- (b) that the natural resources of Crown land (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) be conserved wherever possible,
- (c) that public use and enjoyment of appropriate Crown land be encouraged,
- (d) that, where appropriate, multiple use of Crown land be encouraged,
- (e) that, where appropriate, Crown land should be used and managed in such a way that both the land and its resources are sustained in perpetuity, and
- (f) that Crown land be occupied, used, sold, leased, licensed or otherwise dealt with in the best interests of the State consistent with the above principles.

The following comments were provided on 29-03-06 by Ian Ferguson, Planner with the Department of Lands, in response to BioDesign's request for clarification of the intent of sections of the Act with regards to Gore Hill Park:

Carparks in public reserves must serve and be ancillary and supportive of the public purpose. If the carpark is in a reserve for public recreation it should be for persons using the reserve for public recreation. The reserve trust must not unreasonably restrict public

access by setting aside specific area/s for say users of the adjacent shopping precinct or commercial centre. The issue is that the parking provided on the reserve is for the users of the reserve and must be in accordance with "public" purpose. It may of course be difficult to control who parks in the reserve. Please note that parking charges on reserves for public recreation should not be discriminatory e.g. free parking for local ratepayers.

Under s.106 of CLA 89, reserve proceeds must be spent by the reserve trust on the reserve. The DPOM [Draft Plan of Management] should emphasise this and include an abbreviated trust report for the last financial year to give the community information about activities on the reserve (refer cl.33 of CLA 89 Regs). The reserve trust report (Cl.33 CLA 89 Reg) should be prepared for each financial year to give a snap shot of income, expenditure, assets, leases and licences etc. It is important to explain that the reserve trust (not council) leases and licences uses in the park (s.102 CLA 89) and that any proceeds are to be applied (s.106 CLA 89) by the trust towards the care control and management of that park. Trust financial matters must be kept separate from Council's general revenue.

It should also be noted that the net amount received as proceeds by the reserve trust from leases/licences may be subject to a direction by the Minister under s.106 of CLA 89. In regard to subleases, it is desirable that part of the proceeds received by the lessee be directed to the reserve trust for management of reserve.

NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)

Any developments proposed for the site will have to comply with the requirements of this act and the legislation which is enabled by this act.

NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act (1995)

A flora and fauna survey was not conducted on this site. It contains vegetation that is classified as a remnant of a listed ecological community and therefore, prior to any development being approved, an eight part test under section 5(A) of this act would need to be completed to determine whether any adverse impacts on the listed community would arise from the development.

Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005

This SREP provides a set of clear planning principles for land within the Sydney Harbour Catchment that the masterplan and any future developments proposed for Gore Hill must consider.

Willoughby Local Environment Plan (LEP) 1995

Under the Willoughby LEP 1995 the majority of Gore Hill Park is zoned 6(a) Open Space – Existing Recreation (figure 5). The corner of Pacific Highway and Reserve Road is zoned 5 (c) - Special Uses "C" (Proposed County Road Reservation) (figure 5). According to the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) they have no plans to resume this land or widen the Pacific Highway next to the park (pers. comm. Russell Steele, RTA 6-04-06). Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, the Royal North Shore Hospital and the Sexton's Cottage site on the SW corner of the cemetery is zoned 5 (a) (Special Uses "A"). The Sexton's Cottage site is zoned for Community and Commercial Use and is currently leased until 31.12.2024 (Source: *GHMC Plan of Management* p.18).

2.3.4 Development Control Plans

A number of Willoughby Council development control plans (DCPs) were identified as being relevant to this site. The DCPs and the parts of them that were considered to be of specific relevance to the site are listed below. Development Control No. 19 – *Heritage and Conservation* was reviewed but was considered not to apply to this site, although it applies to the adjoining cemetery.

Development Control Plan No. 8 – *Development Control Plan for all Development in West Artarmon, Naremburn, St Leonards.*

(Note: this control was superceded by DCP No. 17 – St Leonards Station; see below.)

This control provided for on-site parking, undergrounding of electricity supply mains and services, new street lighting, landscaping, urban design features that would unify the style of the development (street furniture, streetscape elements and integration of landscaped areas to create a sense of place and identity), user-friendly pedestrian access, pedestrian links to the Royal North Shore Hospital and the footpath on the Pacific Highway, and for the application of Section 94 (of the EP&A Act 1979) contributions to improvements and facilities that include: long day care facilities; offstreet parking facilities; open space and pedestrian improvements; community and recreational facilities; and construction and improvement of roads, together with the carrying out of traffic management facilities.

Development Control Plan No. 14 – *Access, Mobility and Adaptability*

The Disability Act makes it unlawful for public places to be inaccessible to people with a disability. This control provides for minimum development standards based on the principle of “a continuous accessible path of travel” being a fundamental requirement in the provision of access for all people that enables people with disabilities to use the facilities independently, equitably and with dignity.

Development Control No. 17 - *St Leonards Station*

DCP 17 provided for streetscape, landscape, access, pedestrian links and signage treatments of Pacific Highway that would ensure a high quality, integrated style that identified the site of the station. It also provided for on-site parking and the likely requirement that a child care facility be provided.

Development Control No. 24 – *207 Pacific Highway St Leonards*

This site is on the eastern corner of Reserve Road and Pacific Highway, adjacent to the park. Aims in this control that were considered of particular relevance to Gore Hill Park, were to ensure:

- that urban design principles applied to the development of this site were complementary to adjacent sites;
- that pedestrian links were established through the site enabling access to Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards Station and Gore Hill Oval;
- the provision of an open space linkage through the site linking the Gore Hill Oval and the pocket of vegetation on the north east corner of the site;
- enhancement of the existing streetscape in the area; and
- the establishment of a vegetation corridor through the site connected to Gore Hill Oval.

The control provided for:

- the widening of Pacific Highway along the frontage of the site;
- the intersection of Pacific Highway and Reserve Road being reinforced by the incorporation of an element or feature which reinforces the corner;
- the streetscape along Pacific Highway;
- no widening of Reserve Road and building setbacks that would enable the preservation of significant vegetation;
- landscaping in support of public use of and access through the site;
- the preservation of significant trees, including remnant specimens;
- a landscape design for the site that related thematically to the hospital grounds and Gore Hill Oval and visually linked the public access way to the park; and
- plant selection that would provide habitat for birds and other fauna to enhance people’s enjoyment of the site.

Development Control No. 35 – Water Management

The objective of this control is to ensure that all development undertaken in the WCC area:

- applies Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles which minimize impacts on the natural water cycle;
- fosters ecological sustainability;
- provides a safe and effective framework for the control, re-use and disposal of rainwater and stormwater;
- reduces flooding risk in urban areas;
- maintains public health and safety;
- uses water resources efficiently;
- improves water quality within natural watercourses and receiving waters by:
 - protecting groundwater,
 - controlling soil erosion during and after construction of the development,
 - minimizing pollution, and
 - reducing the amount of pollution entering natural water bodies;
- protects and restores aquatic, riparian and estuarine ecosystems, vegetation and habitats;
- protects the scenic, landscape and recreational values of natural watercourses and receiving waters; and
- prevents, mitigates and controls land degradation.

Development Control Plan No. 2 – Transport Requirements for Development.

The intent of the DCP list standards and guidelines that are all relevant to Gore Hill Park. They are:

- Minimise the adverse environmental effects of car use within the City.
- Manage the existing and future on and off road car parking in a manner that sustains and enhances the economic and environmental qualities of Willoughby.
- Encourage the use of public transport in areas close to transport nodes.
- Encourage alternative modes of transport.
- Ensure that appropriate facilities are provided for bicycles.
- Provide for the safe, convenient, and efficient movement and accommodation of vehicles within the City.
- Ensure that provision is made for a reasonable number of parking spaces for vehicles generated by a development including visitor, employee, service and commercial vehicles.
- Ensure that vehicular movements and parking do not impede pedestrian traffic safety and efficiency.
- Ensure that the design of parking servicing areas and their access is safe and compatible with the best practice standards.
- Manage demand for car use by employing the principle of travel demand management. Travel Demand Management is intervention (excluding provision of major infrastructure) to modify travel decisions so that more desirable transport, social, economic and/or environmental objectives can be achieved, and the adverse impacts of travel can be reduced. The purpose of travel demand management is to reduce the total amount of travel, minimise the need to expand road systems, reduce the incidents of vehicle crashes, prevent further congestion, reduce air pollution, conserve scarce resources and increase the share of non-car based transport. Increasing the supply of parking can induce a greater number of vehicular trips which increases congestion, impacting negatively on the city environment. The travel demand management approach is consistent with State Government policy including Action for Air, Action for Transport, and State Environmental Planning Policy 66 – Integrating Transport and Land Use.

2.3.5 Willoughby Council Policies and Plans

Willoughby City Council has prepared or commissioned a number of reports and plans which are of relevance to the preparation of a masterplan for Gore Hill Park. They are:

- *Summary of 1993 Recreation Plan* (Willoughby City Council, 1995)
- *Plan of Management Sportsfields: Rotary Athletic Field and Gore Hill Park* (Willoughby City Council, 1996)
- *Open Space Plan* (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1996)
- *Urban Bushland Plan Volume 1: Policy* (Willoughby City Council, 1997)
- *Environmental Management Plan for the City of Willoughby* (R. Blackburn, 2000)
- *Revised Stormwater Management Plan 2003-2006* (Willoughby City Council, October 2003)
- *Draft Willoughby City Strategy* (Willoughby City Council, December 2005)
- *Draft St Leonards Strategy* (David Lock Associates 2006)

Key issues identified in these reports are summarised below:

Summary of Willoughby Recreation Plan 1993

The Recreation Plan was based on the 1991 census. Since that time the high density residential and commercial development at St Leonards has been built. The summary included the findings that:

“Improvements and upgrading of existing facilities are rated highly in community consultations”;

“Protection of the environment is identified as a major concern to the Willoughby community” and

“The need for Council to meet recreation needs can sometimes cause conflicting interests between residents and user groups.”

Target user groups identified needs for facilities in parks and open space and many of them have been provided for in the intervening years. Gore Hill Park has the potential to build on the parks’ improvement works that have occurred since the report was prepared.

Open Space Plan 1996

This report identified that Gore Hill Park and the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery are the main areas of open space in St Leonards¹ and, importantly, whilst bushland is the most common open space setting in Willoughby, St Leonards does not have any. The three key issues identified in the report (p.ii) are:

- Walking for pleasure is the most popular recreational activity in Willoughby.
- Young people are the largest user group of open space and their needs are not well catered for.
- Developed urban parks, with a combination of recreational opportunities are the most popular unstructured recreation and should be better catered for.

¹ A new pocket park on the corner of Christie and Chandos Streets has recently been constructed.

The report (p 23) recommends that, "In view of the general shortage of accessible open space in the City, and the need to conserve the existing areas for both present and future use, a policy on alienation of open space, similar to that adopted by North Sydney Council in 1980, is supported". It then goes on to specify such a policy - "there will be no further alienation of parkland and foreshores" and to define what constitutes alienation, including:

"... Construction of any road other than a road serving the primary use of the land itself for general recreation"; and

"... Use of the land for parking, including temporary parking (eg during transport strikes). Surface parking serving users of the land for its primary general recreational function is to be provided additional to, not in place of, parkland and foreshores."

Plan of Management "Sportsfields: Rotary Athletic Field and Gore Hill Park", 1996

This Plan of Management (P of M) relates specifically to Gore Hill Park and contains important objectives and supporting actions.

The P of M states that, "As a general principle for all Council owned land, long term licences will only be considered where capital improvements are proposed for the licence and the proposed capital improvements".

The P of M cites the Willoughby Recreation Plan (WCC, 1993) and lists a number of general recreation needs from that plan that were considered relevant. The list below was considered to be of continuing relevance in Gore Hill Park. It is considered that the masterplan for Gore Hill Park could specifically address those shown in bold. Those with asterisks appear to have been constructed in the park since the report was published. The general intent of those not shown in bold is considered to still be relevant to this park.

- **Provide walking trails**
- Provide bushland walking trails
- **Improve and provide safer playgrounds with a variety of creative play opportunities**
- **Provide, improve and extend off-road bicycle paths**
- **Provide outdoor basketball courts***
- **Improve picnic grounds and provide undercover picnic areas***
- **Ensure that recreation facilities and services, and public sport and recreation places are accessible for all**
- **Provide more amenities and park furniture***
- Develop a corporate image program to include a comprehensive signage system with interpretive information and location signs
- **Protection of the environment**
- Development of an improvement program to upgrade facilities and amenities in Open Space
- Support sports development programs in conjunction with the Department of Sport, Recreation and Racing
- **Promote, improve, and extend transport services to recreation activities**

- **Investigate pricing policy to encourage residents to use recreation facilities**
- Develop a marketing plan to improve the dissemination of recreation information.

The specific management objectives identified in the P o M for Gore Hill Park were:

- To continue its role as a local, regional and district park.
- To continue its role as a turf field for competition sports.
- To provide facilities and open space for unstructured recreation.
- To maintain and improve existing attractions and facilities where necessary, but these to remain 'low key' in scale.
- To reinstate some bushland planting to recreate the blue gum high forest.
- To maintain the conifer garden area.
- To provide public walking linkages.
- To avoid negative impact of noise, and lights on nearby land users, through good management practice.
- To manage the field in an environmentally sensitive manner, in respect to the control of stormwater, water use, and pesticide and fertilizer use.
- To co-ordinate the fair use of the field through regular and casual hire and through good management practice.

Site assessments for the draft masterplan identified that many of the recommended actions have been implemented. The masterplanning process did not include an assessment of the implementation of the actions, but it did inherently test whether the policies and the means of implementing them are still appropriate. The draft masterplan generally supports most of the recommended actions but does includes options that propose alternatives to several of them.

Urban Bushland Plan. Volume 1: Policy, 1997

The Urban Bushland Plan of Management aims include:

- Management bushland for its aesthetic, recreational, education and scientific values to the community;
- Manage bushland to maximise its value as part of the natural heritage of Willoughby; and
- Manage bushland in such a way as to maintain biodiversity of locally indigenous species and communities in the long term.

The site has remnant vegetation and opportunities exist to support these aims.

Environmental Management Plan for the City of Willoughby, 2000

Preparation of the plan included findings from community consultation. The plan sets a number of goals aimed at improving the environment and moving towards sustainability in resource use. The activities and development at Gore Hill Park sit within the framework of the plan.

Revised Stormwater Management Plan 2003-2006

The plan identifies as a key project the development and adoption of “a new Stormwater focused Development Control Plan that uses the principles of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)”. Development in the park would be subject to such a control and the site offers some opportunities to provide models of WSUD to help with community education.

Draft Willoughby City Strategy 2005

The community consultation for this strategy identified, with regard to places like Gore Hill Park, that people value:

- Access and links via public and private transport
- Quality of life / life balance
- Diversity of environment (urban vs natural)
- Ecology protection / conservation areas
- Open space that
 - is family oriented
 - provides balance with high density housing
 - supports lifestyle (eg recreation, pets, exercise, picnics etc)
 - pedestrian safety
 - safety from crime
 - perceptions of safety are a key value.

In terms of the sort of place the community identified they would like Willoughby to be, it is considered that Gore Hill Park can contribute to all top six of the most frequently identified options, namely:

- well serviced by public transport
- a family friendly place
- an environmentally friendly, ecologically minded place
- an area with a range of services and facilities
- a well planned and pleasant urban area
- an area with entertainment, restaurants and cafes.

In terms of the vision and overarching principles of the City Strategy, it is considered that Gore Hill Park can contribute substantially to all those identified for the categories of:

- Natural Environment;
- Community and Cultural Life; and
- Access and Infrastructure.

The park can contribute to some of those identified for:

- Our Homes (eg Neighbourhood Character); and
- Economic Activity, Creativity and Learning (eg Jobs and People, and Creativity and Learning).

Draft St Leonards Strategy 2006

St Leonards has been identified in the NSW Government's *Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney* as one of the 27 centres for employment growth within the 'global arc', the corridor of globally significant economic activity which stretches from Sydney Airport to Macquarie Park. It sets a target of 8,000 new jobs and 2000-5000 new dwellings in St Leonards by 2031. As St Leonards spans three Councils – Lane Cove, North Sydney and Willoughby – the *Draft St Leonards Strategy* aims to provide a coordinated approach to the planning, design and management of the centre between the three councils (David Lock Associates, 2006 p4).

In general we support the *Draft St Leonards Strategy* policies with regards to identity, sustainability and public transport/bicycle paths. However with regards to open space opportunities, streetscape improvements and biodiversity we make the following comments:

- No opportunities are identified within the strategy which would connect existing open space, create new open space or develop a network of pedestrian precincts within the St Leonards area – for example, opportunities to unite or link existing areas of open space, such as Gore Hill Park, the cemetery and the hospital; opportunities for road closures and pocket parks which then connect to the larger areas of open space; or opportunities to link open space along the ridge line at Gore Hill with parks in the gullies of Lane Cove (Lane Cove Bushland Park, Newlands Park and Smoothery Park - see figure 1) so as to gain pedestrian access to the harbour. The strategy does not identify the park and pedestrian way behind 207 Pacific Hwy which is used by students and staff of the TAFE/UTS complex to access St Leonards Station.
- The strategy proposes that the streetscape character established by North Sydney be extended to the rest of St Leonards. It does not identify the original vegetation community of the St Leonards area - the Blue Gum High Forest, now endangered - which could provide the basis for a distinctive local character. By protecting and revegetating areas of remnant Blue Gum High Forest (as found in the carpark north of the Gore Hill oval), and planting local species in streets, pocket parks and leftover spaces such as along the railway line, not only would local character be reinforced but biodiversity and habitat would be greatly increased.

Further discussions are therefore needed with David Lock and Associates to develop these ideas.

3 SITE ANALYSIS

3.1 Ecology

3.1.1 Climate

Gore Hill Park is located within the Sydney Basin which has a temperate climate with significant variations in climatic elements (Bureau of Meteorology, 1991). The Willoughby Municipality experiences a subtropical coastal climate with hot humid summers and mild winters (Willoughby Fact Sheet No.21, 2003). Analysis of the climate data (see below) shows that, in Willoughby:

1. Spring and autumn are the wettest seasons.
2. Hot days in spring, summer and autumn are usually ameliorated by pleasant afternoon sea breezes or southerlies.
3. The coldest winds in autumn, winter and spring come from the NW, W and SW
4. Winter is the driest time of year and the season when all winds are unpleasant.

Refer to Appendix B for a detailed description of the climate for Willoughby.

Microclimate of Gore Hill Park

Although Gore Hill Park is located on top of a plateau its microclimate is sheltered and sunny (figure 6). The extensive soft landscaping and good tree cover play a major role in the quality of the microclimate. No complaints were made by any of the sporting groups who use the oval about problems of wind and only one group (Andersons Events) thought that more shade was needed on the eastern side (see Section 2.2.6).

The park is protected on the W and NW sides from hot winds in summer and from cold winds in winter, spring and autumn by:

- the numerous large trees in the landscape
- the topography of Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery
- plantings within Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery and along its boundary with the park.

The tall buildings which encircle the park (TAFE, UTS, RNSH, St Leonard's and along the Pacific Highway) also contribute to wind protection as does the earthberm.

The low lying area to the west of the oval next to the cemetery is very sheltered, shady and moist but has areas open to good solar access.

The steep bank and carpark to the north of the oval is the area that is most exposed to sun and wind. Heat loadings in summer are greatly increased by the extensive areas of bitumen paving within both the perimeter of the park and the adjoining hospital grounds and roadways (figure 6).

Microclimate of Adjoining Sites

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery is much more enclosed than the park. The gravestones and paths absorb heat and the dense perimeter plantings and overgrown vegetation hinder breezes so the air can become uncomfortably warm and still in summer. However, being a heat trap makes the cemetery pleasant in winter.

RNSH is covered in asphalt, concrete and masonry that acts a large heat trap. The many high rise buildings along roads create wind tunnels. This generally results in unpleasant conditions in summer but pleasant conditions on sunny, calm winter days.

3.1.2 Geology

The geology underlying Gore Hill Park is Ashfield Shale of the Wianamatta Group (Rwa), a black to dark-grey shale and laminite which overlays Hawkesbury Sandstone in the higher areas of Sydney (Geological Survey of NSW, 1983) (figure 7). Wianamatta Shale landscapes are characterised by gently rolling topography and more fertile clay soils than those produced by Hawkesbury Sandstone.

3.1.3 Topography

Elevation

Gore Hill Park is located between 80 and 89 m above mean sea level approximately 1km from Sydney Harbour. No views of the harbour are possible from the park.

Aspect

Both the park and the cemetery have a south easterly aspect and are protected from the west and northwest.

Slopes

Gore Hill Park is sited on what was once the head of a gully. Cutting and filling in the 1930s created a predominantly flat site with a steep section of land to the north where the bank was excavated to form the oval (figure 8). It is not known when the artificial earthberm around the perimeter of the oval was constructed. The earthberm has slopes between 1 in 4 and 1 in 8 (figure 9).

The land to the W, NW and N of the park rises gently up to the ridge line where the TAFE College, UTS and RNSH buildings now stand. These buildings create a backdrop to the park. The land across Reserve Road to the east falls away to the gully and a drainage pit near Herbert Street and St. Leonard's Station. To the south below the Pacific Highway the geology changes to Hawkesbury Sandstone and the topography becomes steeper and more rugged (figure 9).

3.1.4 Hydrology

Willoughby LGA is located within the Sydney Harbour Catchment portion of the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment (figure 10) and contains several small sub-catchments. Gore Hill Park is situated on the southern edge of the Long Bay sub-catchment (figure 11). The park drains east under Reserve Road towards St. Leonards Station, then north-east to Flat Rock Creek, Long Bay and finally Middle Harbour (figures 11 and 12), the northern arm of Sydney Harbour.

Stormwater and Sewerage

In 1990 Boyden and Partners established that the existing oval and earthberms function as a detention basin in a 1 in 100 year flood (pers.comm. Mike Boyden 9/03/06). In such an event water would enter the lower floor of the pavilion. At the time the oval was poorly drained, but the installation of agricultural drains since that time has improved matters significantly (pers.comm. Adam Cole, WCC, 27/03/06)

According to the various sporting groups (see Section 2.2.6), the oval is now a free draining playing surface with no areas of ponding or bogginess.

The present stormwater and sewerage system for the park and surrounds is shown in figure 13. Stormwater from UTS, the hospital and the cemetery combines with stormwater collected in roadside gutters from the Pacific Highway and Westbourne Street in a system of pipes that meet in a single point in front of the pavilion. It then passes through a pipe under the oval and picks up inflows from pipes collecting water from the eastern and southern perimeters of the park. This

connects to a very large pit and a 3m diameter pipe which was installed at the intersection of Herbert Street in the early 1990s (pers.comm. Mike Boyden 9/03/06).

The sewer main runs down the side of the hospital, past the pavilion and around the southern side of the oval (figure 13). The single toilet in the cemetery is connected to the sewer.

Flooding

Since the sub-surface drainage works were constructed on the oval there have been no problems with flooding there (pers. comm. Sue Stanford, WCC, 9-03-06). Some localised flooding does still occur in places in the area immediately west of the oval (figure 14) where the original water course existed and which is now slightly depressed (pers. comm. Ron Heather, Gore Hill Cemetery Trust, 8-03-06).

Flooding is, however, a problem further down the catchment near St Leonards Station, so stormwater works were carried out as part of the new residential tower development on the western side of the railway. This work has not been tested because the last large storm event was in 1998 (pers. comm. Sue Stanford, WCC, 20-02-06).

Groundwater

No groundwater maps were available from Willoughby City Council.

3.1.5 Soils

Gore Hill Park is mapped under the Glenorie (gn) soil landscape (figure 15) which once supported tall open forest (wet sclerophyll forest) with dominant trees species that included Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) and Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) (Chapman and Murphy, 1989). The Glenorie soil landscape consists of Wianamatta Shale occurring in a 'developed terrain' and this is the case at this site. The original soils at Gore Hill Park have been significantly altered by:

- agricultural practices up until the early 20th century;
- rubbish dumping practices up until the early 20th century,;
- the cutting and filling of the oval from the late 1920s;
- the construction of the curved retaining wall to the north of the oval;
- the intense urban development surrounding the park; and
- the construction of the earth berms and retention basin in the early 1990s.

Any nutrient rich runoff from the adjoining cemetery could also have altered the original soil landscape.

Salinity

Urban salinity is a serious problem in western Sydney on the Wianamatta shale soils, which are inherently saline. Mapping of western Sydney salinity has been conducted (Nicholson, 2003) but it does not include the Wianamatta shale-derived soils of the north shore. Urban salinity may be a potential problem not yet identified in this area.

Potential Acid Sulfate Soils (PASS)

PASS typically occur in low-lying areas where estuarine environments exist or previously existed. PASS is not indicated on this site and the reference maps were therefore not obtained to confirm this expectation.

Contamination

No contamination tests were carried out as part of this study and as far as could be determined none have been done in the past. As the area where the oval now exists was a rubbish dump until the late 1920s it is likely that contamination is present in the subgrade. Contamination testing is therefore recommended if any excavations or changes of the existing ground levels in the park are proposed.

The last burial in the cemetery was in 1974 so it is unlikely that the cemetery would still be a source of pollution.

Erosion

Gore Hill Park is generally well covered with grass and trees. Minor, but on-going erosion occurs in four areas: (1) on the steep northern bank/cutting between the carpark and the oval where the soil is bare and hard; (2) between the end of the footpath on Reserve Road and the entrance to the upper carpark and (3 and 4) on each side of the pavilion where no footpaths exist and people take shortcuts up the grassed banks. It was also observed that the cleaners of the pavilion drive their vehicle up the earthberm and park next to the building.

3.1.6 Vegetation and Trees

Remnant Vegetation

The higher parts of Artarmon, including Gore Hill Park, were once covered by Blue Gum High Forest, with tall trees of Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) as the dominant species and Sydney Blue Gum (*E. saligna*) as co-dominant species (Benson and Howell, 1990). These were cut down by the early timber getters and settlers (Benson and Howell, 1995, p134). A photo dated 1910 shows Blackbutt stands near St Leonard's Station in what appears to be Gore Hill Park (figure 16). Some original trees remain in the park, including Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*), Blackbutt (*E. pilularis*), White Stringybark (*E. globoidea*²), Red Mahogany (*E. resinifera*), Ironbark (*E. paniculata*) and Sydney Red Gum (*Angophora costata*) (see Volume 3, Arboricultural Report, Map 2: Tree Provenance). A few Turpentines still stand on the eastern side of Reserve Road near the Pacific Highway.

Blue Gum High Forest vegetation is listed under the NSW Threatened Species Act (1995) as an endangered ecological community. (NPWS, 1997). About 1% of the original area of the community currently exists in the form of a number of remnants and the Scientific Committee considers it likely to become extinct unless threats to its survival are eliminated. Threats include "fragmentation, developments, increased nutrient status, inappropriate fire regimes, invasion by exotic plants, mowing and clearing". On this site, these threats are all present.

The remnant vegetation of Gore Hill Park is not, however, mapped as a significant vegetation community in the Willoughby Council area (figure 17). Gore Hill Park is not mapped as either an existing or a potential vegetation corridor on the Sydney Green Web (figure 18).

Noel Ruting of Landarc, who is currently compiling a Significant Tree Register for WCC, was asked to evaluate the remnant trees in Gore Hill Park. His comments are as follows:-

This site has been highly modified but these few canopy species and some groundcovers are believed to be very significant particularly in terms of their rarity value, genetic integrity and opportunities for future recruitment/ propagation purposes.

² Noel Ruting, of Landarc, advised (11/4/06) that the tree identified as *E. globoidea* may be a hybrid of *E. pilularis*. However, during the site assessments for the arboricultural report fruit was found beneath the tree that was consistent with its identification as *E. globoidea*.

They provide the last remaining record of the type of ecological community in this location and provide some indication of the former diversity of canopy species within only a relatively small area.

There are very few remaining examples of former Blue Gum High Forest/ Turpentine Ironbark Forest along this lower part of Pacific Hwy (Willoughby LGA). As previously discussed, the best example of this community can be found at Chatswood High School/ TAFE College Centennial Avenue - particularly Eddy Rd/ De Villiers Ave portion.

At an individual level, the *Euc. resinifera* is the largest specimen I've encountered in the LGA. The *Euc. pilularis* (near gate upper Reserve Rd) appears to be an interesting hybrid form.

The future viability of these remnant species at Gore Hill Oval is a big issue due to existing negative impacts (car park hardstand, herbicides, mowing, planting of generics, etc). They are certainly worthy of better protection and improved management practices (Pers. comm.18/04/06).

Maintenance of the Oval

Grass on the oval is maintained by a contractor under the supervision of WCC. On average mowing occurs twice a week in summer, and once every two weeks in winter. Irrigation is determined by Sydney Water's restrictions – Mondays only, 1-4am and 6-9am³. Fertilisers are slow release applied on average 3 times per year. The oval is closed for renovation to team sports (not the general public) in March and September each year. Other maintenance works required include top dressing, returfing, weed control, drainage and irrigation repairs (pers. comm. Adam Cole, WCC, 24/04/06).

Findings of the Arboricultural Report

The findings of the arboricultural assessment (see Volume 3: Arboricultural Report and accompanying maps) are summarised below.

- Gore Hill Park has excellent tree assets.
- There is excellent gradation of age classes, from juvenile to senescent.
- It is not clear that planting of trees since the park was established followed any formal plan prior to the adoption of the Plan of Management (WCC, 1996).
- Trees in the park are:
 - Remnant (locally indigenous) or
 - Planted (source of stock not determined) or self-sown, including:
 - species from the Blue Gum High Forest community
 - species from the Sydney bioregion
 - other Australian species (natives)
 - exotic species
 - weeds

³ Note that about 90,000 litres of water are needed to water an oval each time (pers. comm.. Sue Stanford, WCC).

- The remnant trees on this site are all of a similar age-class, no seedlings or young self-sown trees were noted and only a few understorey species associated with this community were present in the park.
- More recent plantings are of species from the site's pre-European vegetation community (Blue Gum High Forest) and these plantings will contribute excellent values to the park.
- The usefulness of trees in contributing to circulation and creation of functional spaces in the park's perimeter has not always been well-exploited.
- Selective culling of some of the plantings would not reduce their overall amenity.
- Trees occur in a variety of situations including:
 - Islands in asphalt carparks
 - Garden beds
 - Grassed areas
 - Embankments created by cutting
 - Grassed earthberms created by fill from cuts or other sources
 - In the public footpath under wires
- Risk management issues are associated either with (i) poor arboricultural management practices related to utilities; (ii) aging large trees; (iii) carpark plantings; or (iv) dead trees.
- Future problems are likely to arise as tree plantings mature in carparks.
- At present, carparks, paths and built structures are located amongst trees. Seating is provided under many trees and is well-used.
- A few dead trees are scattered throughout the park.
- Some of the figs along Reserve Road are senescent and some exotic species have dead or severely stressed crowns.
- The conifer plantings at the corner of Reserve Road and Pacific Highway are in very poor condition and detract from the appeal of the park.
- Herbaceous and woody weeds are present in parts of the landscape, in particular, along the interface with the cemetery.
- No signs of problems with pests or diseases were noted.
- Many of the remnant trees contain hollows and provide perching sites and food resources for fauna.

3.1.7 Fauna

No fauna surveys were carried out as part of this research.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery provides habitat for a number of insects, reptiles, mammals and large birds which are found in the inner part of Sydney (MUSEcape and Beaver, 1996 p32). Species include skinks, Blue Tongue Lizards, Brush Tailed Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecular*), Grey Headed Flying Fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*) and birds such as Australian King Parrot (*Alisterus*

scapularis), Eastern Rosella (*Platycerus eximius*). Currawongs, Magpies, Kookaburras and Koels. Feral animals (foxes and cats) and stray cats and dogs have been sighted in the cemetery.

3.1.8 Bushfire

The park is not mapped as bushfire prone land (figure 19). The adjoining land immediately to the south, west and east of the park – within Lane Cove Council and North Sydney Council⁴ areas – is also not classified as bushfire prone land although fingers of bushfire prone land extend up the gullies in Lane Cove Bushland Park and Newlands Park, Lane Cove. The park's location in a highly urbanised part of the city unconnected to any classified bushfire prone land means that there are no bushfire restrictions on building in Gore Hill Park nor any need to clear understorey for hazard reduction.

3.2 Community

3.2.1 Cultural History

Aboriginal History

The North Shore of Sydney, including the Willoughby area, was inhabited by two main sub-tribes of the Eora people, the Cammeraygal and Wallumedegal. The Cammeraygals were recorded by the first Europeans as being the most numerous and powerful. There is evidence that the Cammeraygals were living in the area until 1820 but disease, displacement and massacres meant that by the 1860's Aborigines were only occasional visitors to the North Shore area (Willoughby City Library, 2002).

Allan Madden of the Metropolitan Land Council has verbally advised⁵ that Gore Hill Park and its immediate surrounds do not contain any registered aboriginal sites of significance. As there are no rock outcrops on the site nor would there have been any permanent water bodies, Allan believes that aborigines would have only passed through the site.

European History

Gore Hill Park, at the edge of the municipality of Willoughby, has had a rather chequered history. Originally part of William Gore's estate, it has been farmland, a cricket field since the early 1900s and a rubbish tip until the 1930s. Plans to develop the park in the 1950s as a major sporting venue did not eventuate and a pavilion was not opened there until the early 1990s. Today the park is a very popular venue supporting a range of sporting activities.

Table 1 gives a detailed history of Gore Hill Park and its neighbours since the time of first settlement in Sydney.

⁴ North Sydney Council does not currently have a map of bushfire prone land as the areas of bushland in that municipality are so small and dispersed.

⁵ Awaiting written statement from Allen Madden and advice from NPWS.

Table 1: GORE HILL PARK TIMELINE

1794	Early land grants first made in the Artarmon area
1800s	
1810	William Gore (1765-1845) granted 150 acres by Governor Macquarie which he named <i>Artarmon</i> after his home in Ireland. Gore then buys up surrounding land grants.
1810s	Farms first established in the area
1815	Gore owns most of the land between St Leonards and Mowbray Rd, and occupies <i>Artarmon House</i> where the North Sydney College of TAFE now stands.
1828	First making of bricks from shale in the Gore Hill area
1845	William Gore dies.
1850s	Large areas of Crown land auctioned and orchards and market gardens established.
1868	14 acres dedicated for Gore Hill Cemetery
1869	<i>Reserve for Recreation</i> , 140 acres between Gore Hill and east Artarmon Reserve, first dedicated (Gore Hill Park in SW corner of this reserve)
1877	First burial at Gore Hill Cemetery
1879	Trespassing on reserve occurs and ownership is contested which leads to case being put to the Minister for Lands. Fencing of the land by Council ineffectual.
1890	Railway line from Hornsby to St Leonards opened
1899	Contested land is resumed and sold at auction as home sites.
1900s	
1900	Area of the park is listed as 17 acres 2 roods 10 perches (includes land north of Gore Hill Park up to Westbourne St. now owned by RNSH).
1902	Entrance gates to Gore Hill Cemetery built by W.E. Parry at the Pacific Hwy. entrance
1903	Royal North Shore Hospital opened
1908	Further land dedicated to Gore Hill Cemetery
1924	North Sydney Cricket Association applies to Council to build a second oval on the top or northern portion of the park now occupied by the RNSH.
1925	Plan submitted to build underground reservoir by MWS&DB at corner of Reserve Rd and Westbourne St. where the RNSH now stands (not constructed). Plan to spread excavated material in the park. Horses agisted in park to keep grass down and prevent snakes
1926	Council constructs a "playing field" in park adjacent to St Leonards Station which is leased to the Naremburn Cricket Club.
1927	Daily Telegraph News Pictorial, 23/8/1927, describes Gore Hill Park as "an ugly machinery dump" and "a dilapidated area, which is used as a dump for spoil, and where cricket matches are occasionally played on a very rough ground". Mention is made of a proposal to build a "roomy pavilion and a "good wicket".
1927	A "large amount of spoil is available from the main road" (Lane Cove Road, now Pacific Hwy) for park use - the park is used as a depot during road construction. A sewer pipe is proposed under Gore Hill oval at the time of building reservoir.
1931-2	Depression years - report to council of people chopping down green trees in the park for firewood and unemployed homeless men using the existing shelter/toilet and erecting huts without permission. The shed and toilet are removed and the unsewered toilet in the cemetery becomes overloaded.
1932	Tipping of rubbish in the park prohibited but "placing of clean filling over the existing bank will be permitted". Blackberries are a pest in the NW corner of the park near the cemetery.
1933	Tennis courts are proposed but no master plan for the park has yet been prepared.
1934	Photos showing the oval being constructed (including cutting the northern bank) as part of the "Emergency Relief Scheme" for unemployed men.
1935	A children's playground proposed but not built.

1947	RNSH seeks to acquire the upper portion of the park (6a. 1r. 20p.) and the land is transferred 1948. Gore Hill Park now down to its existing size of 4.4307 ha. Sketch plans showing new buildings on the site are prepared by Stephenson and Turner, architects (not constructed).
1953	Council considers developing Gore Hill Park as a major sporting ground incl. fencing, gates, turnstiles, shelters, dressing shed and pavilion. RNSH objects because of potential noise and traffic congestion and the Minister for Lands states that oval must be open to the public. Competition for use of the ground by various sporting bodies is won by Australian National Football League (AFL) who agree to share oval with other user groups.
1954	Still no master plan for the park and no facilities yet built except a galvanized iron shed 12x12 feet with an earthen floor. Eric Nicholls is engaged to design a new pavilion and change rooms.
1955	Nicholls submits first set of sketch plans for a pavilion – later in the year he resubmits an alternative, cheaper scheme.
1956	ABC TV Gore Hill opened
1956	Still no facilities built in the park – the earth closet in the NW corner is frequented by “undesirables” and there is a brick men’s toilet in the SW corner but no women’s toilet.
1959	NSW Rugby Union applies to Council to take out a 30 year lease over the oval. RNSH again objects. Council replies:- “The area is Crown Land vested in Council for control and management and any arrangement involving a lease on the whole or portion of the site will require Ministerial consent.” The grounds must be available to junior sporting bodies and schools.
1960	Dept. of Lands rejects use of park as a “major playing area”.
1974	Last burials in Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery.
1980	North Sydney Rugby League Club makes a bid for the park (to move from North Sydney oval) which is rejected once again by RNSH.
1984	The Sexton’s Cottage site is rezoned and leased out for 40 years to Edwards Madigan Torzillo & Briggs, architects (until 31.12.2024). David Briggs designs the existing single storey office building.
1985	Floodlights are installed at the oval and architects Russell & Byrne prepare sketch plans for a new community sporting facility.
1986	AFL pledges \$150, 000 on top of Council’s \$200,000 for the clubhouse.
1989	Works starts on clubhouse but dispute prolongs opening until 1992.
1990	Article in North Shore Times 26/12/1990 about the proposed reconstruction of the Stationmaster’s Cottage (1889) in the park as a restaurant. The cottage was dismantled when the land adjoining St Leonard’s Station was redeveloped for commercial use but was never rebuilt. It is unknown where the remains of the cottage are.
1992	Gore Hill Freeway opened
2000	900mm high powder coated picket fence constructed around oval – the AFL contribute \$40,000 towards costs.

REFERENCES

Musccape Pty Ltd and Beaver, David, 1996, Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery Plan of Management
Warner, Grace, 1988, Artarmon: Past, Present and Future
Willoughby City Library, 2002, Willoughby Fact Sheet No.3 – Artarmon
Willoughby City Library, 2002, Willoughby Fact Sheet No.9 – Timeline
Willoughby City Library, 2002, Willoughby Fact Sheet No.16 – Cemeteries
Willoughby City Library, 2002, Willoughby Fact Sheet No.20 – Aborigines
Willoughby City Library, Local History files of Council Minutes, correspondence and photographs

Heritage

There are no heritage items of state, regional or local significance listed for Gore Hill Park (refer NSW State Heritage Register and Willoughby Council's LEP 1995, Schedules 6 and 7). The Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery however is "regarded as a rare and outstanding Edwardian cemetery landscape that has considerable heritage significance to the State" (Musecape and Beaver, 1996 p.7). The Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery Act 1986 No.116 dedicated the land as an historic cemetery and made provision for its management (Musecape and Beaver, 1996 p.7).

3.2.2 Pedestrian and Vehicular Access

Public Transport

Gore Hill Park is situated on one of Sydney's major highways which is well serviced by buses, and within easy walking distance of one of Sydney's major train stations on the direct line north to the central coast (figure 20). The park is therefore readily accessible from all parts of Sydney as well as the major population centres on the central coast.

Bus services along the Pacific Highway include the 252-254 and the 286/290 from the Sydney central business district (CBD). The 143-144 Chatswood to Manly services drop and pick up passengers at the hospital along Reserve Road. A bus stop for buses travelling north is located by the park on Pacific Highway near the corner of Reserve Road. The present locations of bus stops and road crossings along the Pacific Highway, however, are not well coordinated with entry points to the park thus the highway represents a significant barrier to pedestrians from the southern side of the road. Currently there is one crossing at the intersection of Berry Road and the Highway (near Reserve Road) and two crossings some distance away at Greenwich Road and Westbourne Street.

St Leonards Station, on the North Shore Line, is located less than 300m east of Gore Hill Park. It connects directly to Hornsby and Newcastle in the north and to North Sydney and the city of Sydney in the south. Pedestrian access to the park from the train station is either via the footpath along the Pacific Highway or via an overhead bridge in Herbert Street and a path behind two office blocks along the drainage line (figure 20).

Gore Hill Park and the avenue in the Cemetery is used by staff and students as a short cut between the train station and the UTS/TAFE campuses (figure 20). This use is encouraged by the Cemetery Trust (pers comm., Ron Heather, Garden Co-ordinator Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, 8/03/06).

Car Access

Car access to Gore Hill Park is possible via two carparks off the Pacific Highway and a large carpark off Reserve Road (Figure 21). Note that access from the Pacific Highway, which is from the south bound lane only, is made difficult because the entrance is located on a bend in the road and is obscured by plantings along the cemetery fence.

Currently these carparks provide a total of 186 spaces as follows:

- First carpark off the Pacific Highway - 49 marked spaces (plus 4 unofficial spaces), 6am-6pm Mon-Fri \$6.50 flat fee, Sat-Sun no fee. This carpark is heavily used during weekdays for all day parking by staff and students of UTS and TAFE as well as office workers, including approximately 10 staff at the Advertising Agency in the old Sexton's Cottage site. The AFL use this carpark in the evenings for training and during home matches on Saturdays and Sundays, with overflow onto the Pacific Highway. The Flying Disc Association also use this carpark for league nights with overflow onto the Pacific Highway. The carpark is not locked at night.

- Second carpark off the Pacific Highway, behind the pavilion - 31 spaces, 2 hr limit 6am-6pm Mon-Fri, no fee. This carpark is used not only by sports groups and informal park users but also a variety of people not connected with the park such as office workers at the Advertising Agency in the old Sexton's Cottage site (who can't get all day spaces) and their visitors, hospital visitors and people with business in St Leonards.
- Upper carpark adjoining the hospital, off Reserve Road -106 (approximately, spaces are not all marked), fees range from \$4.50 for the first hour to \$30 for 10-24 hours. This carpark is used almost exclusively by hospital staff and visitors. Visually this carpark appears to belong to the hospital and not the park.
- Parking along the Pacific Highway is restricted as follows:

Northbound traffic - Transit Lane 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 1hr ticket 8-3pm Mon-Fri and 8-6pm Sat.
 Southbound traffic - Transit Lane 6-10am Mon-Fri, 4hr meter, 10-6pm Mon-Fri and 8.30-12.30 Sat. Parking fees are \$2.20 per hour including Saturdays.

Revenue from parking meters along the northern side of the Highway (southbound traffic) is collected by Willoughby Council (pers. comm., Jeff Organ 10/03/06).

- Carparking for 11 staff is currently provided under the building now occupied by the Advertising Agency on the Sexton's Cottage site. This capacity is insufficient for the agency's staff. Access to this carpark is via a driveway off the first carpark near the Pacific Highway.

Bicycle Access

At present no dedicated cycleways link directly to Gore Hill Park. The RTAs Bicycle Route Map shows on-road bicycle routes (in purple) to the south-west of the park through Northwood, north to Lane Cove, and south through Greenwich (figure 22). Another on-road cycle route connects to St Leonards Station from Cammeray, North Sydney and Wollstonecroft. All these routes are rated moderately difficult for cyclists. Willoughby Council is currently finalising its bicycle plan (figure 22) and has prepared a draft proposal for bicycles which can be incorporated into the masterplan.

"One of the key routes that is being looked at is a route linking the ABC site, the TAFE and the Royal North Shore Hospital with St.Leonards station. It is hoped that this route will pass through the Hospital Site however this is dependent on the outcome of their Masterplan (currently in its early stages). We were also looking at using the cemetery as a bike route however the Cemetery Trust would rather it not be signposted as bike route so that won't be happening. If it were a bike route there is a good chance it may have continued through the Gore Hill Park to St.Leonards. Another route under consideration is a Shared Path along the Pacific Highway frontage of Gore Hill Park. It could be that consideration may be given to this route passing through the park however no firm proposal has been developed" (pers.comm., James Brocklebank, WCC, 24/03/06).

Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access is possible from all sides of the park. As there are no clear entry points nor any internal paths within the park, pedestrians have made their own tracks across the grass and through the undergrowth (figure 20). An existing well-worn shortcut from a break in the fence near Greenwich Road leads directly across the cemetery to two places in the NW corner of the park and then on to St Leonards. This route obviously provides an important link for residents of Greenwich.

Disabled Access

Wheelchair access to the centre of the park is only possible via the footpath along the Pacific Highway and the carpark access road near the cemetery gates. The latter does not meet Australian Standards or Willoughby Council's DCP 14 – *Access, Mobility and Adaptability*.

3.2.3 Recreational Facilities in the Gore Hill Area

Dedicated open space and recreational opportunities near Gore Hill Park are limited both in size and the facilities they offer for recreation. Talus Reserve to the NE contains a tennis club with four courts and parking. Further north, Naremburn Park has two soccer fields, change rooms, toilets, a scouts' hall and a new playground for toddlers which appears to be very popular. It has large shade trees, open grass areas and appears to be well used by locals.

Within the St Leonards Station development a newly constructed pocket park on the corner of Christie and Chandos Streets provides a welcome sitting area in the sun. The Forum Plaza provides a lively urban focus for the development with a strong identity and easy access to the train. The Forum Tower and Forum West buildings in this development each have a private swimming pool, spa and gym on the mezzanine level overlooking the plaza. Further north, along Herbert Street, the four residential tower blocks– 7-13 Herbert Street – share a private pool, gym and small set of play equipment. The three tower buildings have a BBQ area on the roof and No.11, the smallest building, has a convenience store and café at ground level.

To the west and south of Gore Hill Park, in the Lane Cove LGA, are two long linear parks which are located in gullies. Lane Cove Bushland Park is an extensive bushland reserve with a walking trail that follows Gore Creek down to the harbour. Berry Creek, which begins in Newlands Park just below the Pacific Highway, passes through Smoothery Park and also ends in the harbour. These parks are visually disconnected from the Gore Hill ridge line and physically disconnected by the Pacific Highway and buildings.

3.2.4 Child Care Facilities in the Gore Hill Area

A brief study of the child care facilities in the Gore Hill area was undertaken to determine whether there is a need for additional facilities in Gore Hill Park. More research is necessary to fully understand this option.

The existing RNSH Child Care Centre off Herbert Street (behind 207 Pacific Highway) caters for 60 children aged 0-5 years. Priority is given to the children of hospital staff – at present no outside children attend the centre. It has a large, shady garden. The existing site is shown on the draft hospital masterplan (dated 30-03-06) to be redeveloped for commercial purposes and the centre relocated to the corner of Herbert Street and Westbourne Street.

A new child care centre, “Gumnut at Forum”, has recently relocated from North Sydney (March 2006) to the mezzanine level of Forum West on Herbert Street just across from the RNSH Child Care Centre. This long day care centre caters for 45 children aged 0-5 years. It has an outdoor roof space of 294 square metres for play.

Two other child care centres are located in Herbert Street, with another in Christie Street (across from the Forum) and another in Frederick Street, St Leonards.

3.2.5 Existing Site Facilities

The existing facilities in Gore Hill Park are as follows:

- Turf sportsfield with concrete cricket and synthetic cover
- White aluminium picket fence
- AFL posts
- 4 no. floodlights (for night training)
- One basketball court (bitumen surface) with backboards and rings each end plus practice ring

- Pavilion with function/ meeting room, canteen and verandah upstairs. Downstairs are two connecting change rooms each with 7 showers, 1 urinal, 1 toilet and hand basin; male toilets with 1 urinal, 1 toilet and 3 hand basins; female toilets with 2 toilets and 2 hand basins; unisex/disabled toilet with 1 toilet and 1 hand basin; and a covered area.
- 8 no. picnic tables & benches
- 1 no. new double electric barbecue (BBQ)
- 18 no. park seats
- Outdoor exercise area with static equipment
- Signage

The basketball court appears to be used infrequently – out of 17 visits to the site it was in use only three times and then by solitary users.

The pavilion is currently unmanned and unsupervised. At present it is used only by the sporting groups for sport and occasional functions in the evenings. Alcohol is not permitted at the pavilion without a special license. Theoretically the pavilion is available for hire to the public for functions but no bookings have been made by other groups in the last 9 months (pers. comm., Liz Patterson and Tracy Lee, WCC, 23/02/06).

The toilets on the lower level of the pavilion are locked when the pavilion is not being used by sporting groups and there are no public toilets in the cemetery. The nearest public toilet is in the Emergency section of the hospital to the north of the carpark. One informal visitor to the park was observed using the bush behind the basketball court when he could not gain access to a toilet.

An old toilet block/umpire's change room next to the clubhouse has recently been demolished but the concrete slab has been retained. During the season the AFL place two hired demountables on the slab to provide a toilet and change room for the umpires. At the end of the season the demountables are taken away. (pers. comm., Julie Whitfield, WCC, 22/02/06). The siting of these temporary facilities at the main entrance to the pavilion is poor.

The picnic tables and BBQ to the west of the pavilion do not appear to be used a great deal – during site visits it was observed that a few people sat at the tables to eat lunch and to read, but no one used the BBQ and no groups of people had picnics.

The exercise equipment is in very poor condition and is nearing the end of its useful life.

Generally signage is uncoordinated and inadequate. There are two signs near the corner of Reserve Road and the Pacific Highway – one near the bus stop which has been vandalised and another on the corner which has some interpretative information. These signs are overpowered by the signage for the hospital. Another sign is located next to the picnic area behind the pavilion, again with interpretative information. Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery currently has signage at either end of the avenue and on the corner of Westbourne Street and the Pacific Highway. Some informative interpretative signage about the history and layout of the cemetery has been placed on the boundary of the cemetery and the NW corner of the park.

3.2.6 Stakeholders and User Groups

Stakeholders

Gore Hill Park is Crown Land under the ownership of the NSW Department of Lands. Willoughby City Council has care and control of the park.

Other key land manager stakeholders are the NSW Department of Health (Royal North Shore Hospital), the Gore Hill Cemetery Trust, Lane Cove Council (adjoining LGA to the south) and North Sydney Council (adjoining LGA to the southeast).

The seven sporting groups that currently hire the oval at Gore Hill Park for sport on a regular basis were identified as key stakeholders. They are:

- North Shore Australian Football Club (Seniors)⁶
- Willoughby Junior AFL Club⁷
- Northern Suburbs Cricket Association
- NSW Flying Disc Association (Ultimate Frisbee)
- North Sydney Leagues Baseball (seniors)
- Anderson Events (corporate sports)
- RNSH Resident Medical Officers Association (touch football)

No other key stakeholders were identified by WCC. However, the park has a considerable population of informal users and observations were made of their usage of the park. In some cases, informal consultation was conducted to gain improved understanding of the needs of this type of stakeholder.

Council documentation contained opinions expressed by community members and representatives that directly related to Gore Hill Park and this was considered during the assessment (Whitfield, 2005 et al).

Royal North Shore Hospital

The RNSH has commissioned Cox Richardson Architects and Planners to prepare a masterplan for the hospital site. A revised draft plan was issued 30-03-06 (figure 23).

The plan proposes three significant changes within the Gore Hill Park boundaries:

1. Redevelopment of the existing carpark between the hospital and the northern end of the oval to form two large "Community Development" buildings, a straight access road and a carparking area. (Note that the park boundary is shown with a dashed brown line).
2. A new curved road linking Reserve Road, Westbourne Street and the Pacific Highway which wraps around the oval and the back of the clubhouse.
3. The connection of the existing laneway between the cemetery and the hospital to the above new road.

The plan also makes five proposals within the hospital's boundaries that will impact on Gore Hill Park:

1. Reinforcement of Reserve Road as the main entrance to the hospital.
2. Expansion of the Emergency building southwards
3. The construction of a new cross road from Herbert Street near the existing footbridge to Reserve Road (called "Yellow Road" on the masterplan).

⁶ Note that AFL (NSW/ACT) is associated with the two AFL groups listed above and their input is included.

⁷ See footnote 6, above.

4. The creation of a number of pedestrian precincts and paths which will open up the hospital to the new commercial and residential development to the east and northeast.
5. The relocation of the RNSH Child Care Centre now located near the footbridge in Herbert Street.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery

Two visitor surveys were conducted by the Gore Hill Cemetery Trust in February 1992 – March 1992 and December 1995 – February 1996 (Muscape and Beaver, 1996, pp39-41). The second survey found that there was an even age spread across all age groups from age 20 upwards, with a concentration of visitors older than 50 years and a large number of teenage students who use the cemetery as a thoroughfare. Most of the visitors surveyed were alone although organised groups, such as the Friends of Gore Hill Cemetery and students visit the cemetery on a regular basis. Approximately 50% of the visitors came from the North Shore of Sydney. The vast majority of visitors stayed in the cemetery for one hour or less. Most visitors reached the cemetery by a combination of train and foot or car and foot; and were there to relax in the peaceful surroundings, have lunch, walk the dog or pass through on the way to work or transport.

The Cemetery Trust would like to encourage more visitors to the cemetery and would prefer to see staff and students using the avenue rather than the footpath alongside the Pacific Highway (meeting with Cemetery Trust, 8-03-06).

Sporting Groups

Information was obtained from all of the sporting groups except the RNSH Resident Medical Officers Touch Football group, both in responses to a questionnaire and during meetings. The responses to the questionnaire are summarised in Table 3 (see Appendix C for full set of responses to the questionnaire).

At present the AFL clubs only use the grounds from April to September while the Northern Suburbs Cricket Association uses the oval only in summer. The other groups use the oval all year round. Of the seven groups, the Northern Suburbs Cricket Association has had the longest association with the oval – Council records indicate they have played cricket at Gore Hill Park since the club was first established in 1903. The AFL have been using the oval second longest – since 1954 (see Table 3). The AFL contributed approximately \$200,000 towards the construction of the clubhouse in the late 1980s - early 1990s and \$40,000 towards the white picket fence in 2000.

The questionnaire revealed that the oval is on the whole highly regarded for its size, central location, facilities, night lighting, ease of access by car and public transport and the grass banks for spectator viewing. The main criticisms of the facilities were the standard of night lighting (not up to Australian Standards) and the need to replace the existing concrete cricket wicket with a turf wicket more centrally located. The lack of maintenance of the clubhouse and the need for more lockable storage was also identified. Some conflicts between the various user groups of the oval do occur (particularly between the AFL and the Flying Disc Association), primarily to do with wear and tear of the grass surface and the safety issues that arise from this for players. Competition for use of the oval is keen – most groups would like to have more time on the oval and there is a problem of unauthorised users on the oval at times. All current users wish to keep using the grounds into the future; some groups, such as the AFL and the NSW Flying Disc Association have expanding memberships and therefore would like to use the oval more.

TABLE 2: GORE HILL PARK - SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES 1/4

USER GROUP								
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	Northern Suburbs Cricket Association	North Shore AFL Club (North Shore Bombers)	Willoughby Junior AFL Club (Willoughby Wildcats)	AFL (NSW/ACT) - see previous two columns for other information.	NSW Flying Disc Association	RNSH Resident Medical Officers Touch Football	North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)	Anderson Events
Sport played	Cricket (Seniors)	Football (Seniors) - Premier level	Football (Juniors)	Football - state level	Ulimate Frisbee	Touch Football	Baseball	Corporate soccer and touch football
Space Requirements	Full oval	Full oval	Full oval		Full oval (in 3 sections)		Full oval (multiple drills)	Full oval (30m x 50m each, max.3 fields)
Activities	Matches	Matches & training	Matches & training		Matches, training, tournaments	Informal games	Training only	Informal games, occasional competitions
Current Use of Oval SUMMER	Sat 1-6pm (Oct-Mar)				Mon 8-10pm, Tues 6-10pm, Weds 7-10pm		Thurs 7-9pm	Weds 6-7pm, Thurs 12-2pm
WINTER Apr 1 - Sept 15		Training Tues & Thurs 6.00-8.30pm Matches alternate Sat 8.30am-5.30pm. Sunday use growing.	Training pm Tues- Thurs (mid Feb to Sept.) Matches alternate Sat 8.30am-5pm		Mon 6-10pm, Tues 8-10pm, Weds 7-10pm		Thurs 8-10pm (prefer 7pm start)	Weds 6-7pm, Thurs 12-2pm
Current Use of Facilities	Oval only	Oval and clubhouse Home games 9 times/year	300 children (ages 5-16) plus parents on a Sat. home game use oval, change rooms, toilets, clubhouse and canteen		Oval, change rooms, clubhouse		Oval, change rooms, storage area	Oval, change rooms, toilets, covered area and sometimes clubhouse for sports afternoons
History of Oval Use	1903?	1954 (club started in Willoughby area in 1903)	Willoughby Widcats re-formed in 1975		1986		1995	2001

GORE HILL PARK - SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES Page 2/4

USER GROUP							
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	Northern Suburbs Cricket Association	North Shore AFL Club (North Shore Bombers)	Willoughby Junior AFL Club (Willoughby Wildcats)	AFL (NSW/ACT) - see previous two columns for other information.	NSW Flying Disc Association	RNSH Resident Medical Officers Touch Football	North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)
Parking Requirements	22 max /most players come in cars	Training - 64 spaces and 80 spaces on match days	Training - 80 spaces. Home game - 80+ overflow onto Pacific Hwy		80 + overflow to Pacific Hwy on league nights		30-40 spaces. 20 catch train
Future Needs	Relocate current wicket in centre of oval; onstruct new turf wicket		Expansion of junior AFL for school children; support financially the development of oval as first class sporting facility	Upgrade facility to allow expansion of sport to use oval throughout year for weekly school programs, school carnivals (2-3 per yr), recreational football (1 night a week) & women's matches	Would like to build leagues but no more space in Willoughby		Would like to continue usage if lighting and grass surface improves (safety issues); would like to use clubhouse after training
Likes	Good size, great viewing and lots of shade. One of the best of 30 ovals used for cricket on lower North Shore	Great location and clubhouse is suitable for needs	Only custom built AFL oval on North Shore; central for ratepayers of Willoughby and Chatwood area; good train & road access; has all basic AFL facilities; banked grass area safe & comfortable for spectators.		Good public transport, good facilities, central, close to hospital for injuries, great Council		Easily accessible (good public transport from eastern and northern suburbs); easy parking, night lighting and oval is large enough for multiple drills

GORE HILL PARK - SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES Page 3/4								
USER GROUP								
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	Northern Suburbs Cricket Association	North Shore AFL Club (North Shore Bombers)	Willoughby Junior AFL Club (Willoughby Wildcats)	AFL (NSW/ACT) - see previous two columns for other information.	NSW Flying Disc Association	RNSH Touch Football	North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)	Anderson Events
Dislikes	Wicket poorly located	Playing surface inferior to other venues, lighting does not meet minimum standards, no change rooms for umpires	Playing surface over used; clubhouse has deteriorated through lack of maintenance & funding for furniture or fittings (and therefore not able to attract outside users).		Not able to get enough use of ground, wear and tear of grass.		Too many unauthorized users (informal cricket); occasional clash with Touch Football & Soccer when they have a washout; lights do not meet min. standards for Baseball training; poor surface particularly in winter when AFL play	No response
Problems or Conflicts	None	Other sporting groups are damaging grass surface - eg. Ultimate Frisbee wears out three patches & grass is worn out unevenly	Over-use of playing surface means safety & insurance problems for players		AFL want grounds to themselves, Anderson Events overstay their bookings		Shared usage with AFL in winter affects ground conditions & safety, usage pushed to a later timeslot; constant use by unauthorized users	Would like more time in the evening (6-8pm)

Table 2: GORE HILL PARK - SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES 4/4

USER GROUP								
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS	Northern Suburbs Cricket Association	North Shore AFL Club (North Shore Bombers)	Willoughby Junior AFL Club (Willoughby Wildcats)	AFL (NSW/ACT) - see previous two columns for other	NSW Flying Disc Association	RNSH Touch Football	North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)	Anderson Events
Possible Improvements	2 cricket practice nets	Work with AFL and Cricket NSW to invest in facility and improve playing surface; improve lighting to meet minimum standards for training and night games; reduce access by other groups such as Ultimate Frisbee & lunchtime sports to reduce wear on grass	Determine compatible users so that grass playing surface is maintained; renovate clubhouse in order to attract external sporting and non-sporting users (source of revenue); increase storage for long-term users; make more use of basketball court; improve access to clubhouse up bank from Pacific Hwy. side	Upgrade playing surface, lighting, amenities, officilas rooms. Install scoreboard, sight screens and turf wicket.	Alternative watering system/supply, more ovals!, better grass for wear and tear		Increased lighting; construction of baseball backstop for hitting practice in one of the corners under light	More shade on the eastern side; better grass surface otherwise a great facility
Future Use of Park	10 years or more		10 years or more - want to develop oval as a premier sporting venue for AFL and cricket	10 years or more	10 years or more		10 years if ground conditions improve	10 years or more
Other issues	Most members don't train		Club contributed approx. \$200,000 towards clubhouse				Use Willoughby Park for training when grounds are being repaired 4-5 months/yr	

Informal Use of the Park

Gore Hill Park is primarily used by sporting groups and spectators for active uses. Passive use by comparison is informal and occasional. Observations made during 17 site visits at various times of the day and days of the week during the summer of 2005 and autumn of 2006 revealed that the park is used informally by the following people:

- Hospital visitors and patients, sometimes in wheelchairs or on crutches
- Office workers and students having lunch, reading the paper or lying on the grass
- Personal trainers and their clients
- Joggers
- Small groups of people having picnics at the tables provided
- Youths roller blading⁸
- Mothers with children
- Dog walkers (mainly morning and late afternoons)

3.2.7 Safety

No reports of problems with regards to safety in the park were raised by any of the people consulted. Vandalism does not appear to be a problem.

Within the cemetery grounds, however, one feels a sense of unease because of its isolation and the overgrown graves which restrict views. A few assaults occurred in and around the cemetery 8-10 years ago but no similar incidents have occurred since then. It has also been used at times for the dumping of snatched bags. The cemetery was declared an alcohol-free zone three years ago and since that time problems with graffiti and people gathering in the cemetery to drink have stopped. The police monitor the area during the day time – at night the cemetery is not considered safe and visitors to the cemetery are discouraged (pers. comm. Ron Heather, Garden Co-ordinator Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, 6/04/06)

Lighting

The site was visited at night to determine the level of lighting in the park and cemetery. Currently lighting is provided in the park in the following areas:

- Pavilion
- Floodlights (4 no.) to the oval for night training
- Floodlights to the upper carpark adjacent to the hospital which service staff and visitors.

The two carparks off the Pacific Highway are unlit. Some light spills into the oval area from the upper carpark, the offices in the Sexton's Cottage site and the Pacific Highway, but in general the park is relatively dark.

The cemetery has no lighting and no electricity supply. It is very dark at night. It is not considered safe at night. The Cemetery Trust had considered installing lighting in the past but decided that it might encourage people to loiter in the cemetery at night (pers. comm., Ron Heather, Garden Co-ordinator Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, 6/04/06).

⁸ A group of approximately 10 young males was observed on two visits to the park roller blading on the ramp and railings leading to the clubhouse. A short conversation with them revealed that they were local school aged youths who were regular users of both Gore Hill Park and the skateboard park at Chatswood.

3.3 Delight

3.3.1 Spatial Qualities

Spatial Units

At present Gore Hill Park, the cemetery and the hospital landscapes function independently and read as totally unrelated spaces.

The largest spatial unit in Gore Hill Park is the oval, an open, well-defined, sunny, inviting and active space which is encircled by a white picket fence, embankment, trees and tall buildings (figure 24). The peripheral spaces around the oval, by comparison, read as an assortment of leftover spaces. The upper carpark reads as an extension of the hospital rather than part of the park.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery is a sunny, sheltered, introverted place. Its perimeter is defined by a mesh fence, dense trees and shrubs making it visually separate from the park and the surrounding streets. The cemetery is filled with a maze of narrow paths and overgrown graves which create many small spatial units and restrict views. The wide avenue through the middle of the cemetery forms an axis which gives order and meaning to the rest of the cemetery.

The existing RNSH landscape, which straddles the ridge top and the eastern side of the park, is a maze of roads through a fragmented series of spaces. It is dominated by bitumen, cars and tall buildings.

Views

Gore Hill Park is overlooked by tall buildings on all sides. At ground level, all views focus on the oval. Views into the park from the surrounding roads are constrained by the grassed earth berm and tree planting that surrounds it. As one moves north up Reserve Road and west along the Pacific Highway views into the oval and pavilion begin to open up (figure 25).

The main vantage points within the park are along the top of the earth berm (which look in to the oval and out to the Pacific Highway and Reserve Roads) and from the northern carpark which has dress circle views over the oval. From inside the park the constant stream of traffic along the Pacific Highway provides a restless and visually distracting backdrop to the south side of the oval.

Views both into and out of the cemetery are restricted by the perimeter fence and dense screen planting that surround it. The vista up and down the avenue is terminated by buildings which reinforces the closed-in feeling of the cemetery.

3.3.2 Experiential Qualities

Character

Gore Hill Park is a very pleasant park with a strong structure of established trees in grass and a cared-for appearance. It provides a welcome oasis within a busy urban environment.

The cemetery is “hidden jewel” – an expansive wild place in the centre of the city of Sydney where time seems to stand still.

Sensual Qualities

Traffic along the Pacific Highway is a constant source of background noise along the southern side of both Gore Hill Park and the cemetery. The traffic noise decreases as one moves northwards.

The tranquil view over the bright and spacious oval from the grassy tree-lined banks could be compared to a Zen garden – visitors to the park invariably sit with their backs to the outside world gazing over the oval.

The cool, damp, quiet and shady areas between the oval and the cemetery provide a pleasant contrast to the more active and open oval. The soft pink bark of the large remnant trees *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum) is particularly appealing.

The grand old remnant trees provide a sense of connection to the past and the continuity of life.

The cemetery, with its sense of history, quiet grandness and overgrown wildness, hidden in the heart of a city, is very memorable.

4 DISCUSSION

The overall findings of the study in relation to Gore Hill Park are that it is a well-cared-for public green space with good sporting facilities that are well-used and appreciated by its users. The park is centrally located, easily accessible by both public and private transport, is sheltered and has good tree assets. If considered in conjunction with its neighbours, the hospital and the cemetery, the park has great potential to become a major urban park in Sydney. However a number of key issues were identified that need to be addressed if the park is to reach its full potential.

4.1 Key Issues

1. Its limited and poorly articulated identity
2. Impacts arising from its urban context
3. Incremental encroachment
4. Vegetation management
5. Lack of facilities for passive recreation
6. Competition for use of the oval

4.1.1 Identity

The key factors that contribute to the lack of identity of the park are:

- Usage - development is focussed on sporting activities
- Access - major entry points and clear access points are lacking
- Connectivity - Gore Hill Cemetery and RNSH are not connected to the park
- Internal circulation - paths are lacking and barriers are present
- Signage and interpretation – is poor or non-existent
- Inconsistencies in plantings

Usage

Gore Hill Park is known mainly as an oval, although it is clearly also known to some as (i) a carparking opportunity; or (ii) a green space for eating lunch or smoking or sitting and reading or contemplating; or (iii) a short-cut for access to other places.

The oval itself occupies 1.6 ha (approximately 36% of the site) although the banks around the oval increase the area to 2.44 ha (approximately 55 % of the site). Thus the oval is the dominant visual element in the park but is unavailable for general use. The perimeter areas (45% of the park) do not contribute to the identity of the park due to their exploitation as carparks, lack of definition and poor connections. They contain no well-defined and developed space to serve as a central gathering space.

Access

The park has no clear or well-defined entry points from any direction. The conifer beds at the corner of Reserve Road and Pacific Highway make the entry to the park from St Leonards obscure and uninviting.

Connectivity

As the park, hospital and cemetery are adjoining sites on public land offering mutual benefits to each other, good connectivity between them is essential. Creating a broader and stronger identity for the park is very important. At present the three properties are poorly connected, both visually and physically. Gore Hill Park is the common link between all three but its connection with the cemetery is hampered by fencing and dense undergrowth along the boundary and by the lack of connecting paths within the park. Connection with the hospital is hampered by the large area of bitumen and cars in the upper carpark and the barriers and level changes at the edge of the carpark. At present the hospital appears to turn its back on the park.

The draft masterplan for the RNSH proposes a number of changes that we believe will increase the permeability of the hospital boundaries and improve connectivity with the park. These are:

1. The construction of a new cross road from Herbert Street (near the existing footbridge) to Reserve Road.
2. The creation of pedestrian precincts and paths which will open up the hospital to the new commercial and residential development to the east.
3. The construction of a major pedestrian link from the Emergency entrance of the hospital to the centre of the northern edge of the park.

Internal Circulation

In the absence of a path system users have made their own connections and tracks throughout the park and into adjoining public sites.

Signage and Interpretation

Existing signage in the park is inadequate. Signage and interpretation needs to be developed in coordination with the adopted masterplan to support the park's identity.

Inconsistencies in plantings

The Arboricultural Report (Volume 3) highlights the lack of any planned planting scheme which supports functional needs.

4.1.2 Urban Impacts

Urban Development

Gore Hill Park is located in a highly urbanised area close to the large-scale high-density residential and commercial development around St Leonards Station. Further increases in population are predicted by the *St Leonards Strategy – Draft for Consultation* (2006). The RNSH also proposes to redevelop its site with additional hospital, residential and commercial buildings. It is therefore critical that all existing open space in the area be retained and wherever possible new open space be found in order to support these increasing needs. This approach is supported by the policies proposed in two workshops by Willoughby community representatives conducted in 2004 (Whitfield, 2005) and Council documents such as the *Willoughby Recreation Plan* (1993), *Open Space Plan* (1996), *Plan of Management: Sportsfields: Rotary Athletic Field and Gore Hill Park* (1996); *Urban Bushland Plan Volume 1: Policy* (1997), *Environmental Plan of Management for the City of Willoughby* (2000) and the *Draft Willoughby City Strategy* (2005).

Noise

The constant noise of traffic and the sight of cars driving along the Pacific Highway impinge on the tranquility of the park, particularly in the southern section.

4.1.3 Encroachment

Gore Hill Park is now approximately 7% of the size of the original recreation reserve (140 acres) which over the years has been whittled away by encroaching development. The RNSH Draft Masterplan proposes a road and building layout (figure 23) that would further reduce the size of the park, introduce more cars and have an unacceptably detrimental effect on its amenity, safety and tranquility. This area contains most of the remnant trees of the Blue Gum High Forest, an endangered vegetation community which is rare in Willoughby LGA, and which are very valuable assets to the park. Other adverse environmental impacts include increased runoff, heat loadings and further loss of permeable ground surface. These impacts would also be felt on the adjoining cemetery. In view of the fact that the Department of Health has identified surplus land and buildings within the RNSH site, it is both unnecessary and short sighted to encroach on the open space of Gore Hill Park.

As urbanisation has increased so have demands for increased parking. Its situation on a main highway in the vicinity of RNSH, major educational institutions, a large commercial centre and a train station make Gore Hill Park a prime location for parking. Over the years this has led to the formalisation of parking areas and revenue collection in the northern section of the park (adjacent to the hospital) and off the Pacific Highway. Gore Hill Park is a Crown Lands Reserve and is therefore governed by the Crown Lands Act 1989. Under the Act car parks are not permitted for uses other than recreational uses (see Section 1.3.3). At present there are approximately 186 car spaces in the park, most of which service needs outside the park. This study has identified that the first carpark off the Pacific Highway (with 49-54 spaces) is sufficient for current recreational needs in the park with overflow parking provided during peak times along the Pacific Highway.

The excess parking areas have excellent potential to be transformed into high-quality recreational spaces that would considerably broaden the attractions and uses of the park. The upper carpark adjacent to the hospital (with 106 spaces) occupies the highest section of the park with excellent vantage points. It is a key landscape unit in relation to the RNSH and contributes uniquely to the diversity of spaces in the park. The adverse impacts from parking on the remnant Blue Gum High Forest trees are severe. The carpark behind the pavilion (31 cars) occupies a sheltered, sunny and peaceful space in the park close to both the oval and the adjoining cemetery. This situation and character make it another unique landscape unit of high potential.

4.1.4 Vegetation Management

(See Arboricultural Report, Volume 3)

WCC's current planting strategy is considered excellent in terms of species selection and horticultural management, but the location of future plantings should be in accordance with the adopted masterplan for the site.

The following issues with regard to tree and vegetation management were identified:

- Remnant and very old trees are not being suitably managed. Special site design is needed to retain them.
- Risk management of many trees, particularly the old ones, is required because of their structural condition and/or the presence of large dead branches⁹.
- Street trees along Pacific Highway are hazardous, having been badly lopped.
- There are a few dead trees that need to be removed.
- Culling of plantings may be beneficial in some locations.
- Weed problems occur in places.

⁹ This does not necessarily mean pruning or removal of dead wood – a listed threatening process under the Threatened Species Act. The establishment of dedicated tree zones is also a sound option.

- The conifer garden suffered badly during the recent summer heatwave and is in very poor condition.
- Improved horticultural/arboricultural practices are indicated in some places.
- Many exotic trees are not thriving and detract from the park's amenity.

Planting based on local species and strengthening the amenity and circulation within the park would contribute to its identity and the functioning of its landscape.

4.1.5 Facilities

While sporting groups are generally well catered for, the space and facilities for passive recreation within the park are limited. There is little to encourage visitors to stay in the park longer than an hour or so. Both the park and the cemetery lack a “heart” – that is, a focal point which provides basic facilities for food, information and comfort and helps visitors to orientate themselves. There are no facilities for young children, youth (other than sport) or dog walkers in the park. Water, for children's play, as habitat or as a visual element, is missing.

While the existing pavilion is well sited and in relatively good condition it is under-utilised. More storage space is needed and the existing site for the umpires' change room is unsuitable because it blocks the entrance to the pavilion and oval and also detracts from the aesthetics of this key location. The existing toilets under the pavilion are not available for public use.

4.1.6 Use of the Oval

There is strong competition for the use of the oval between the various sporting groups. All current users of the park would like to use the oval 10 years or more into the future (see Appendix C and Table 3). Both the AFL and the Flying Disc Association are expanding and both want greater use of the oval. The AFL would like to hold women's matches at the oval and to expand programs for school children and recreational AFL, which would require access to the oval all year round.

At present Council appears to be balancing the demands between competing groups very well but pressure to expand by some groups will aggravate existing problems. Over-use of the grass and a perception that use of the oval is dominated by AFL are potential problems.

4.2 Opportunities

Many opportunities are available to address these key issues and to build on the outcomes achieved through specific DCPs that applied to the neighbouring developments at St Leonards.

Willoughby Council has identified Gore Hill as a regional park and opportunities exist to support this scale of use more broadly and to attract increased use of the park at this level. The potential to establish some forms of income-generating facilities in the park has also been identified.

The following key opportunities were identified:

- Create a new identity
- Reclaim the park
- Improve connectivity
- Provide new facilities
- Explore alternative uses of the oval
- Harvest and recycle water
- Improve vegetation management

4.2.1 Creating a New Identity

The opportunity exists to create the “Gore Hill Parklands” by uniting Gore Hill Park, an open, lively space, with the cemetery, a closed reflective space, and the hospital, a busy, urban place. It would be also be possible to include the new Gore Hill Technology Park and the TAFE/UTS campus within the same framework. Marketing and interpreting Gore Hill Park in this way would greatly strengthen its identity, and that of its neighbours, within the St Leonards, North Sydney and Lane Cove areas. “Gore Hill Parklands” could become a major urban park on a par with Hyde Park in Sydney or Central Park in New York, attracting a range of people from both the local area and other parts of Sydney because of its central urban location, easy access by private and public transport and close proximity to commercial, residential, educational and institutional facilities.

4.2.2 Reclaiming the Park

The opportunity exists to reclaim Gore Hill Park from development and cars and to return the land to much needed public open space. It is critical that the upper carpark off Reserve Road be relocated within the hospital grounds as part of their proposed redevelopment works. As the hospital have stated that they have surplus land this is a reasonable plan that would benefit both the users of the park and the hospital. The work could be staged so that revenue from the carpark could be used to fund new works in the park.

Similarly it is feasible that the carpark (31 spaces) behind the pavilion be removed and more use made of parking along the Pacific Highway to cater for peak demands of park users on winter weekends during home games and training nights in the evenings (see Table 3). Monies from parking meters along the northern side of the highway are collected by Willoughby Council so diverting users to these car spaces would not mean a loss of revenue. However, meter parking fees on Saturday mornings would need to be revoked to encourage parking along the highway.

Other sources of revenue in the park and cemetery would be possible from the lease of new facilities such as a café and exhibition/function space which supported a visitor centre for the cemetery.

4.2.3 Improving Connectivity

The opportunity exists to improve public transport, pedestrian and bicycle connections by coordinating bus stops, road crossings and entry points to the park and cemetery. This would build on the outcomes intended and delivered by DCPs 8 (All Development in West Artarmon, Naremburn, St Leonards), 17 (St Leonards Station) and 24 (207 Pacific Highway St Leonards). For example, constructing a road crossing and new entry to the park on Reserve Road directly opposite the open space link behind 207 Pacific Highway, and creating a new entrance in the cemetery fence on the Pacific Highway near Greenwich Road (where a shortcut currently exists) and relocating the existing road crossing, would greatly improve connectivity.

With careful planning, coordination between councils, street tree planting and signage, it would be possible to connect Gore Hill Park, Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery, the TAFE site and Gore Hill Technology Park to the harbour by providing pedestrian and cycle access to the tops of the Lane Cove Bushland Park and Newlands Park and from there to Sydney Harbour.

Constructing a new path system within the park which connected to the existing paths within the cemetery and the proposed new paths through the hospital, would allow pedestrians to move freely between all three places.

Encouraging more pedestrians to use the avenue through the cemetery rather than the footpath along the Pacific Highway would improve surveillance, allow more people to experience the cemetery and also give them a safer and more pleasant journey. Constructing a shared bicycle and pedestrian path along the Pacific Highway (adjacent to both the park and the cemetery) would enable one section of the bike path, as proposed by WCC, to be implemented. This option would require the existing street trees along the highway (now recommended for removal) to be removed and the footpath widened.

Selective removal or pruning of the understorey along the boundary between the park and the cemetery would increase visual permeability, help air circulation and reduce weeds.

The opportunity exists to create a bridge between the hospital to the park through careful siting of buildings, exploiting level changes and revegetating the remnant bushland. Street tree plantings within the hospital grounds could strengthen this connection.

4.2.4 New Facilities

Two key areas in the park have been identified as suitable for the establishment of new facilities:

The Northern Carpark

The land adjoining the hospital, now occupied by the upper carpark, is an ideal location for a new recreational centre and gardens providing a range of facilities for children and youth – such as indoor spaces for playgroups, after school care, craft, fitness and leisure activities, and outdoor spaces such as a therapeutic or healing bush garden, water features and children's play. Such facilities would service both local residents and patients and visitors from the hospital. Any new structures would need to be of lightweight construction and carefully sited to ensure that the remnant trees were not damaged or the oval visually dominated. Two 2-storey buildings, which take advantage of the level changes between the park and the hospital, would be possible here, with wide verandahs looking onto tree canopy and an enclosed central court centred on a large remnant Blackbutt.

An informal amphitheatre in the centre of the steep bank on the northern side of the oval would make an attractive sitting/viewing area and help integrate the upper and lower sections of the park.

The South-western Interface with Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery

Visitor experience at the cemetery and park would be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of a visitor centre, café and kiosk, gallery/function space with toilets for the staff and users of these buildings. Such a facility would not only provide a “heart” to the park and cemetery, encourage visitors to stay longer and improve surveillance but would bring in much needed revenue. An ideal site is the area between the avenue in the cemetery and the close to the existing carpark and entrance gates. The existing carpark and basketball court behind the pavilion could be removed to provide a more generous picnic and BBQ area, and a new water play area near the proposed visitor centre/café. The water play area would service local residents, families attending sporting events and visitors with children from the hospital.

Roller blading and skateboard jumps and bumps, which are designed as part of the landscape rather than a separate facility, could be incorporated into the path system in several parts of the park so that youth are provided with an alternative to sporting activities.

The existing pavilion could be extended on the northern façade to provide a new umpires’ change room and toilet. The unisex toilet under the pavilion could become a public toilet for informal park users.

4.2.5 Use of the Oval

It should be possible to utilise the oval for occasional festivals, fetes and gatherings on week days and Sundays between October and March (summer) when the oval is not closed for maintenance, and providing the playing surface is not damaged by the activities. Outdoor concerts and movies are also a possibility on summer nights during the weekend.

Conflict between the AFL and Flying Disc Association could be reduced if the latter could be encouraged to rotate the areas they use on the oval so that the grass is worn more evenly.

4.2.6 Water Harvesting and Recycling

While only one sporting group mentioned that water restrictions impinged on their use of the oval, the harvesting and storage of stormwater to water the grass is the most sustainable and environmentally responsible option for Council. A significant amount of water is now available for harvesting and reuse in the park from underground stormwater pipes from the UTS, TAFE, cemetery and hospital sites (figure 13) although some treatment will be necessary to remove pollutants from street runoff. A cleaner source of water, the roof water from the proposed hospital redevelopment, and new park buildings could also be harvested.

Harvested water could be used in many ways to enliven the park and reinforce its “heart” – reed beds and pools could be incorporated into the revegetated Blue Gum High Forest; water jets and shallow pools could enliven children’s play and reflective pools or reed beds could add coolness and reflections to an outdoor café and visitor centre. Rainwater tanks could be installed to harvest water from the pavilion roof and any new buildings to supply toilets for flushing.

Runoff from the oval, polluted by fertilizers and pesticides, could be harvested and treated in filtration ponds and pools on the southeast corner of the site prior to being released downstream.

4.2.7 Vegetation Management

(See Arboricultural Report, Volume 3 and Map 4: Tree Action Plan.)

A number of opportunities were identified in the arboricultural study:

Remnant Vegetation and Habitat

- Remnants of the Blue Gum High Forest community, if retained and enhanced, would become a valuable component in the park. They would also help to give the park a stronger and more distinctive identity.
- Seed could be collected from the remnant trees for propagation of seedlings for future plantings within the park.
- Understorey plantings of species from the Blue Gum High Forest community could be implemented amongst the remnant trees. This would improve the biodiversity values of the site and contribute to the on-going health and viability of the trees. It would also add an additional dimension to the plantings in the park.
- The remnant Blue Gum High Forest could be interpreted and developed as small educational resource.
- The ecological values of vegetation along the interface between the park and the cemetery could be exploited and integrated.

Ages of Trees

- The abundance of trees in all age classes in the perimeter areas of the park makes removals possible to accommodate new facilities and improvements.
- The approach of continued tree plantings that supports a range of age classes through time should be maintained.

Provenance of Trees

- The opportunity exists to retain all the remnant trees. If properly managed, they would contribute significantly to the amenity of the park.
- The opportunity exists to remove most, if not all of the exotic trees. Some of the mature specimens could be retained for their amenity values until replacements of local species are sufficiently established.

Risk Management

- The opportunity exists to put the overhead wires along Pacific Highway underground and to establish large locally indigenous trees along the boundary to the park.
- The opportunity exists to retain the old trees that are considered hazardous by establishing exclusion zones around the roots and beneath overhanging branches to minimize risks to persons and property.

Carpark Plantings

- The opportunity exists to eliminate some of the carparks and establish soft landscapes that build on the existing tree plantings. Some of the trees planted along the borders of carparks could be culled. This would allow the trees that are performing better to have improved conditions for their on-going establishment.

Extending Habitat

- Coordinated indigenous plantings in the park, along streets, throughout the cemetery and hospital and along the railway line would significantly increase the area of habitat for fauna in the area.

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APPENDIX A

Methodology

The report and accompanying plans are based on an understanding of integrated catchment management (ICM) and ecologically sustainable development (ESD) principles. Community consultation has been integral throughout the assessment and design process.

The site analysis and design development utilise the “Ecology, Community and Delight” model put forward by Ian Thompson (Thompson, 2000). This is a holistic approach to landscape architecture which ensures that the ecology of a site has equal footing with its cultural and aesthetic values.

The assessment was conducted at three levels - regional, local and site-specific– to ensure that the site is seen in its entire context. The work was overseen by Barbara Buchanan, BioDesign’s senior landscape architect who has over 20 years experience in masterplanning. The assessment process involved:

- site visits by all team members to undertake general and specific assessments and ground-truth data
- reviewing of reports and records of information held by Willoughby Council
- reviewing of literature and written information held by other groups and organisations
- consultation with relevant Willoughby Council staff
- consultation with key stakeholders
- consultation with other key people identified during the information gathering process
- informal consultation with some park users
- following up on leads obtained during the research process

In all, 17 site visits were undertaken individually or in groups by BioDesign staff to:

- collect data;
- record observations about the site and its users;
- take photos;
- ground-truth data sourced from maps and reports; and
- meet representatives of the user groups.

Visits were conducted:

- during summer and autumn;
- during school/university holidays and in-term periods;
- in the mornings, middle of the day, afternoons and at night;
- in sunny, cloudy, and rainy weather; and

in the middle of the week and on week-ends.

Johan Tenhoedt of WCC prepared a detailed survey of the site which was used as a basis for the site analysis and design drawings. He also provided the base plan for the various site analysis studies.

Plans and images were prepared by BioDesign to summarise and combine data. (Note: they are unreferenced whereas all drawings or images by others are referenced.)

Ecology

The ecological assessment was overseen by Sue Hopley, BioDesign's environmental scientist and catchment management consultant who has over 9 years experience in urban environmental planning, design and management. It is based on a study of maps, reports, books and legislation available in BioDesign's library, from WCC and on the internet. Information obtained through this study was ground-truthed on-site and cross-checked with Council officers wherever possible.

All trees and other vegetation on the site were assessed by or under the supervision of Sue Hopley. Data collection for tree assessments was obtained during three specific site visits. Other general observations relating to trees and ground-truthing of some of the findings of the tree assessments were made during site visits for other purposes.

Except for some of the conifers, all trees were identified to genus and, in most cases, species level. Identification was determined on the basis of the plant's physical and reproductive features (flowers, fruits, bark, time of flowering and/or fruiting, size and form). References used were:

- Brooker and Kleinig (1999)
- Carolin *et al* (1993)
- Fairley and Moore (1989)
- Leonard (1993)
- Robinson (1994)
- TAFE course notes for Horticulture

The basis of data collection relating to hazards and retention worthiness of trees was the visual tree assessment (VTA) approach adopted by the arboricultural industry in Australia based on the work of overseas authors. (Matheny & Clarke, 1994; Barrell, 2001; Mattheck & Breloer, 1993; Pokorny, 2003). This involves a visual assessment of the tree from ground level. No probing or mechanical investigations were conducted.

A comprehensive risk assessment of each individual tree was not conducted, rather a "walk-by" approach in which observations of readily identifiable structural and health indicators in the trees were made without further investigations being conducted. The intent was to develop an overview of the current level of risk from trees in the park and provide an understanding of the constraints and opportunities associated with them that would help with the development of the masterplan.

The existing trees were mapped according to the following three categories:-

1. Age Class
2. Tree Provenance
3. Tree Risk

A fourth map, a Tree Action Plan, was prepared to make recommendations for the management of the existing trees on the site based on the findings shown on the other maps.

Recommendations for the retention or removal of trees were based on the range of values they contribute to the site. The values can be categorised under the themes of “ecology, community and delight” on the basis of their natural heritage and functioning (ecology), cultural heritage and role in the park (community) and special qualities and locations of trees that contribute to the amenity of the park (delight). The merits of older trees in terms of special qualities is identified by authors such as Mattheck (conference presentation, 2001) and Pakenham (2002).

Community

The assessment of the community issues and values was overseen by Barbara Buchanan.

The Aboriginal history of the site is to be provided by Allen Madden of the Metropolitan Land Council.

The European history of the site was compiled through research in the Local History section of Willoughby Council Library with the assistance of Rachel Fallowfield (librarian in charge of the local history section).

Representatives of the relevant stakeholder and sporting groups identified by Willoughby City Council (see Appendix D for details) were consulted to identify the current uses, future proposals and the possibilities and constraints of the site. Consultation was in the form of:

- Meetings
- Questionnaire (sporting groups)
- Telephone calls
- Emails

A questionnaire was prepared for the seven sporting groups to determine their current use and future needs for the oval – this was in the form of ten questions which representatives filled out and returned after individual interviews. The full responses to the questionnaire are attached in Appendix C and a summary is shown in Table 2.

No local resident groups took part in the consultation process as none were identified by Willoughby Council as being closely associated with the park.

Informal users of the park were identified:

- by observation during site visits;
- in two earlier surveys conducted by the Gore Hill Cemetery Trust; and
- through discussions with the stakeholders/sporting group representatives.

Informal consultations with passive users of the park occurred in some instances.

Delight

Gore Hill Park was analysed in terms of its aesthetic and experiential qualities which are inherently subjective, but nonetheless identifiable. The analysis was overseen by Barbara Buchanan. The qualities of the adjoining cemetery and RNSH were considered. This part of the assessment was conducted within the framework of the understanding provided by research on the “ecology” component.

Observations of the spaces visitors used and the qualities of those spaces were considered.

Information obtained during research provided clues to how the park is valued by some people.

Consultation with stakeholders provided opportunities for uncued input into this part of the assessment.

BioDesign's input was based on personal experiences during site visits in the light of the background research and consultation. Team members who provided input were:

- a young single male;
- a young mother;
- a mother of an active adolescent son; and
- a grandmother.

APPENDIX B

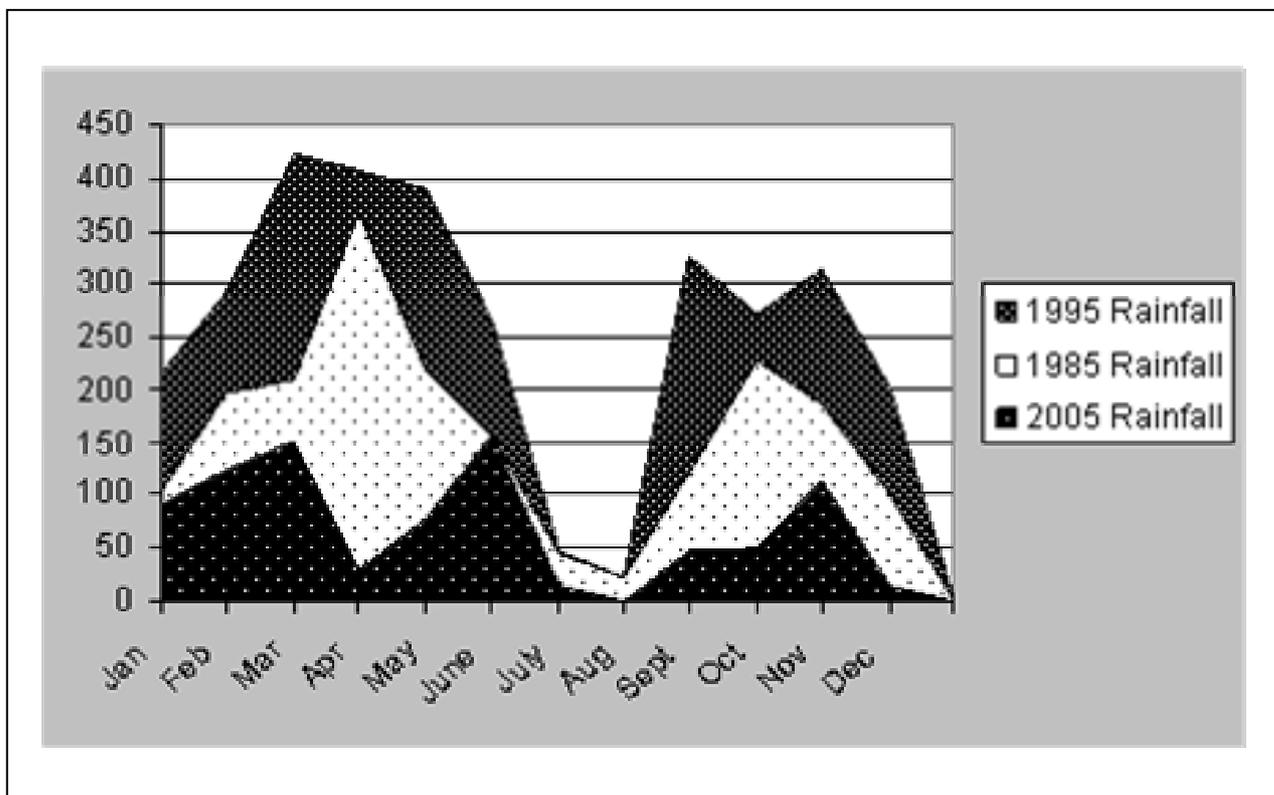
Climate of Willoughby

Temperature

Temperatures in Willoughby range from an average maximum of 26°C in January to 16°C in July. Average minima are 18°C and 8°C respectively. Highest temperature recorded is about 45°C and lowest 2°C. Approximately two days exceed 35°C in summer and two days below 5°C in winter. Frost occurs only in isolated pockets (Willoughby Fact Sheet No.21, 2003)

Rainfall

Total rainfall in Willoughby (data taken from Northbridge Rain Gauge) for 2005 was 873.5mm, a 30% decrease from the average annual rainfall of 1190mm taken over 20 years. Comparisons of rainfall in Northbridge in 1985, 1995 and 2005 show not only very variable rainfall in the last 20 years but a changing pattern (see chart below).



Comparative rainfall data for Northbridge from 1985-2005 (Source: chart prepared by Sue Stanford, Environmental Engineer, Willoughby City Council).

Wind

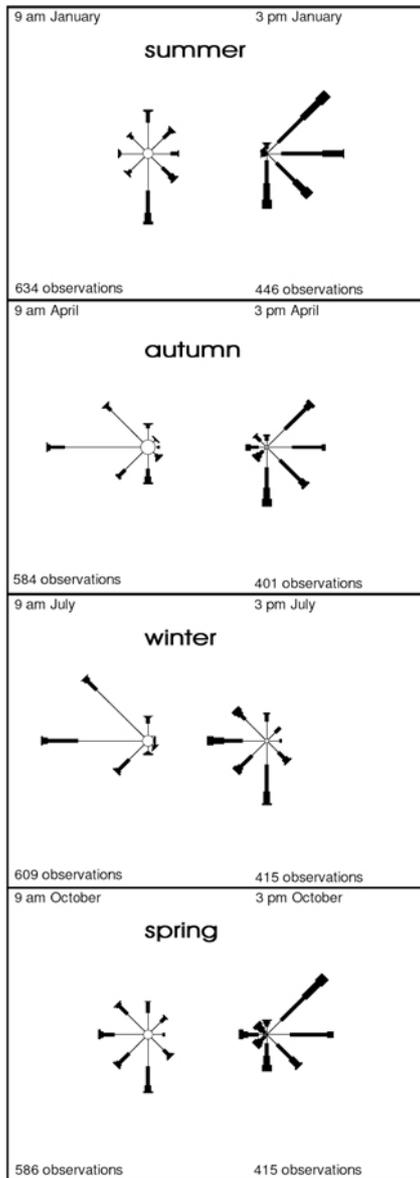
Willoughby is well ventilated with average wind velocities of 10-12km/hr, predominantly from east to northeast, except in winter when westerlies are more frequent. On most days, the winds are light at night with moderate sea breezes from the northeast in the afternoons (Willoughby Fact Sheet No.21, 2003).

The Bureau of Meteorology provides wind data from 1962 to 2005 for Riverview Observatory, the closest station to Gore Hill (see Table 3 for a summary of the data).

Summary of wind data relating to Gore Hill Park (Source: NSW Bureau of Meteorology)

Riverview Observatory
Wind Roses using available data
between 1962 and 2005

Latitude 33°49'33"S • Longitude 151°09'20"E • Elevation 40m



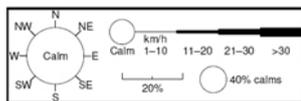
RIVERVIEW WINDS	Morning	Afternoon
Spring	NW, W, SW, S	NE to S (desirable)
Summer	N, NE, SE, S (desirable)	NE, E, SE, S (desirable)
Autumn	W and NW (undesirable)	NE, E, SE, S (desirable)
Winter	W and NW (undesirable)	NW, W, SW, S (undesirable)

Humidity

Summer in Willoughby is humid but is relieved by afternoon sea breezes (Willoughby Fact Sheet No.21, 2003).

Sunshine

Sunshine varies from an average of 7.5 hours/day from October to January to 5.3 hours/day in June (Willoughby Fact Sheet No.21, 2003)



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APPENDIX C

Responses to Questionnaires by Sporting Groups

GORE HILL PARK, St. Leonards

Stakeholder Questionnaire

4.2.8 1. Northern Suburbs Cricket Association

Contact Person: Craig Hambleton

Date: January 17, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

The NSCA uses the facility every Saturday afternoon from the beginning of October until the middle of March from 1pm to 6pm for adult competition cricket.

2. What facilities do you currently use?

We just use the playing field. We do not use the toilets, change rooms and clubhouse- typically most guys come to the ground dressed for cricket - they are used to many other grounds that have no facilities.

3. How long has your organization used the park?

We have past fixture lists that show we have been using the Park since at least 1935. Since the Association started in 1903, we have probably been using the Park from its opening.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

Maximum of 22 on any Saturday.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

With organized sport and definitely cricket rising in participation, we will definitely be continuing to use the facilities. Our future plans would ideally see extra wickets being created where space provides. However, there is not the space on Gore Hill Oval to create more wickets. We would like to see, though:

The current wicket re-configured to be more central, or

The creation of a turf cricket wicket on the ground.

6. What do you like about the park?

From a cricket playing perspective, the ground offers many benefits – good size, great viewing areas, plenty of shade.

7. What don't you like about the park?

From a cricket perspective, the current location of the wicket could be improved.

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

None.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

Realistically, from a cricket perspective, the park serves our needs well and is one of the best of the 30 ovals that we currently use on the lower North Shore.

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in

2 years? YES 5 years? YES 10 years? YES

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

11. How important is public transport to your members?

Varies - majority of players have their own transport.

12. How many members do you have? Teams? Their ages?

We are an Association and we have 66 teams affiliated, representing 1350 registered players. As it is an adult (open age) competition, about 90% of members are over 16 years of age.

13. Does the traffic noise from the Pacific Highway bother the players?

Never been an issue - I have played there regularly over the years and never noticed traffic noise.

14. Is wind across the field a problem?

No.

15. Where do your members train?

Most don't - the cricket we offer is for all skill levels and is based on encouraging participation with few barriers and there are not many cricket practice nets on the lower North Shore. Having said that, many clubs occasionally hire cricket nets for a practice. I am sure that if there were two synthetic cricket practice nets located in the park, not on the Oval, Council would generate hire revenue from these facilities.

4.2.9 2. AFL(NSW/ACT)

Contact Person: Clare Toia-Bailey

Date: Feb 3rd 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times and purposes?

Presently, our use of the Oval is restricted in order to help support Council reduce the wear and tear on the playing surface. Ideally, we would like to use it continuously throughout the year for Australian football community programs including:

- Weekly Schools Participation Programs – (Independent, Secondary and Primary School)
- School Carnivals – 2-3 throughout the year
- AFL Recreational Football – 12 weeks from October – March/April one night a week. Recreational Football is a social and recreational version of Australian Rules for Adults ie (16 years and over).

In summary, on a regular basis AFL (NSW/ACT) could use the Oval at least 1 – 2 days per week to offer local programs for the children and families of Willoughby. The programs above will generally involve up to 2000 children and families annually

2. What facilities do you currently use?

- Oval
- Clubhouse facilities
- Parking
- Lights
- Toilets

3. How long has your organization used the park?

1954 onwards.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

100%

5. What are the future needs/plans of your organization?

- To support the clubs working with Council so that Gore Hill Oval can be upgraded to meet the local needs of the North Shore Australian Football Club and Willoughby Junior Australian Football Club.
- This would require developing Gore Hill Oval into a premier sporting venue to support Australian Football and Cricket in Willoughby and the lower north shore.

- To have a greater access to support other AFL community programs as mentioned in question 1 above and women's matches at Gore Hill oval.
- These requirements need upgraded facilities including:
 - An upgraded playing surface & drainage (possibly reconstruction)
 - Upgraded lights to training and competition standards
 - Upgraded amenities – changerooms, toilets
 - Officials room
 - Scoreboard
 - Sight screens
 - Turf wicket
- Any investment by the codes to achieve these upgrades would require tenure (priority access for certain times but not exclusive access)

6. What do you like about the park?

- As the only AFL Oval in Willoughby, and the lower North Shore, its location provides excellent access for the members and players of our clubs, and the children, schools and families.
- Oval size and dimensions support Junior and Senior AFL requirements.

7. What don't you like about the park?

- Gore Hill Oval currently does not meet the needs of Australian Football – the junior, senior and AFL(NSW/ACT). Although Council in recent times had made effortsto increase its maintenance on the Oval - the facility still requires substantial upgrading as noted above. The amount of traffic needs to be reduced, and maintenance increased, and compatible user groups such as Cricket and AFL need to be co-located at the venue.

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

- As the only AFL venue in Willoughby we would like to consolidate our community and recreational activities at Gore Hill Oval but are unable to do so because of increasing the wear and tear on the playing surface therefore, we need to transfer these activities elsewhere – reducing the support and connection to our local clubs.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

- By ensuring the park meets the needs of the principal tenants and ensuring that the tenants and the use for the ground are compatible.
- When the primary tenants are not using the venue then making it available for public use for compatible activities.

4.2.10 3. North Shore Australian Football Club (Seniors)

Contact Person: Chris Dale (President)

Date: February 9, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

North Shore currently use the facility from the 1st of April to the 15th September each year coinciding with the Sydney AFL season.

Specific days, times and purposes are as follows: Training – Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6.00pm to 8.30pm. Home Games - approx 9 times each year. Ground used for matches from 8.30am until 5.30pm - 10am Under 18's, 12.00pm Reserve Grade and 2.00pm Seniors. Juniors play at similar times. The ground is in constant use from 10am-5pm these days.

2. What facilities do you currently use?

We use the ground and clubhouse facility at Gore Hill.

3. How long has your organization used the park?

North Shore have been playing home games at Gore Hill since the late 1980's. North Shore as a club has existed in the area since 1903. We are a foundation member of the Sydney Football League.

In addition, North Shore contributed approximately \$200,000 to assist in the building of the clubhouse at Gore Hill.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

We currently require 100% of the car parking facility (both car parks on the Pacific Hwy side of the clubrooms) on match days and approximately 80% during training sessions.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

Our goal is to work with council to develop Gore Hill Oval as a premier sporting venue for both AFL football and Cricket.

In the future, we require a venue that it up to standard in terms of ground surface for premier division football. Gore Hill is currently considered inferior in standard to other AFL grounds in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Ideally, we would also aim to improve the lighting at Gore Hill so that it meets minimum standards for training and night games.

6. What do you like about the park?

The venue is outstanding in terms of location. The clubhouse and rooms are suitable for our needs.

7. What don't you like about the park?

The playing surface is inferior as compared to other venues. This is mainly due to overuse of the ground and incompatible sports having access to the venue.

The lighting is inferior and does not meet the minimum standards for training and playing night games.

There are currently no umpires change rooms due to the demolition of the toilet block next to the clubrooms.

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

The additional sports that are given access to the ground are damaging the surface of the ground.

In particular, Ultimate Frisbee wears out three main areas of the grounds surface throughout the year. These areas receive constant foot traffic as Ultimate Frisbee is unable to shift their playing grid to wear the ground evenly and give the grass opportunity to recover.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

The park could be improved by councils working with sporting bodies such as NSW AFL and Cricket NSW to improve the surface.

Both sporting bodies are willing to work with council to invest in the facility and develop it for the community.

Council must also reduce the access of the additional sports such as Ultimate Frisbee and lunchtime sports to reduce the wear and tear on the surface.

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in 2 years? 5 years? 10 years?

North Shore Football Club aim to be at Gore Hill for more than 10 years. As stated previously, we have used the facility for over 15 years already and aim to continue this for the long term.

4.2.11 4. Willoughby Junior AFL Club

Contact Person: David Adams

Date: February 9, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

Willoughby JAFC use Gore Hill Oval every alternate Saturday in tandem with the senior North Shore Football Club for Competition Junior Football between early April and early Sept between 0830 and 1700 hrs. The Oval is also used for training purposes under lights every Tues/Wed/Thu between mid Feb until early Sep. On any given home game Saturday, upwards of 300 children between the ages of 5 and 16 years will use the playing oval, the change rooms, toilets, clubhouse and canteen facilities. A similar number of parents most of whom would be Willoughby residents would watch the games and use the Clubhouse and canteen facilities and toilets.

2. What facilities do you currently use?

All current facilities at Gore Hill are used. Apart from the Oval, the toilets and change rooms are opened at 0800 hours until the last game is over at 1700hrs. During this time, the Clubhouse and canteen facilities are in use to provide refreshments for players and parents. The change rooms and showers are particularly used as are the public access toilets for both players and spectators. The Clubrooms are also used intermittently during the season for meetings, presentations and hosting both during the day and evenings.

3. How long has your organization used the park?

The Willoughby Wildcats JAFC re-formed in 1975 after the original Junior AFL Club the Chatswood-Lane Cove disbanded. We have continuously used Gore Hill Oval since then and have been a feeder Club for the senior AFL team the North Shore Bombers. Current Sydney Swans AFL player Lewis Roberts-Thompson is a former Willoughby Junior.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

During the week for training purposes, we generally use all of the available space once emptied by local office workers from 5pm. On a home game Saturday, all of the available space is taken by about 1000hrs [10am] and the balance of vehicles are able to park on the Pacific Highway which is not subject to Clearway. The nature of the competition will see a flow of cars entering and exiting the car park all day. Parking is currently adequate for the Willoughby Juniors.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

The continued success of AFL in Sydney is seeing an expansion of schools and school children wanting to play junior AFL. The success of the Sydney Swans is seeing a heightened awareness of the code and the attraction of a sport that is generally not a body contact sport at the lower age groups. Willoughby JAFC sees the continued expansion of our junior program with more players and the addition of further teams in each age group. We would support both financially and actively the development of the Gore Hill sporting precinct to provide a first class sporting facility for both Football and other codes that can mutually co-exist with the satisfactory maintenance of the playing surface.

6. What do you like about the park?

It is the only custom built AFL oval on the North Shore and is central to the ratepayers and families of the Willoughby and Chatswood area. It is central for both train, rail and road access and has all the basic facilities for the Australian Rules code of football. It also attractive to the supporters of the code by having a banked grass area around the Oval where spectators can comfortable and safely enjoy the environs.

7. What don't you like about the park?

Over the past few years, the playing surface has suffered too much stress from over-use. Apart from the usual weekend activity it is also used nearly every lunch hour by various codes and most nights until 2200hrs by the Flying Disc Assoc. The Clubhouse has been allowed to deteriorate through a lack of general maintenance and no funds for furniture or fittings. This would contribute to not being able to attract external organizations using the Clubhouse for meetings or hostings.

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

Our major conflict is with over-use of the playing surface. As we are dealing with a body contact sport, the wellbeing of the players must be given priority and the playing surface last year deteriorated to an extent that it was unfit for general play. We need also be cognizant of our insurance responsibilities to our players and the Club and the AFL.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

As it is a designated AFL Oval, first priority in determining the use/hire of the playing surface must be to sports that have a compatability with the proper maintenance of the grass and surface. The Clubhouse needs some urgent renovation to bring it up to a standard that would attract external and non-sporting organizations to use the facility. There is extremely limited storage facilities at the Park for long term users and this needs to be addressed. The basketball court seems to be used very irregularly and is not subject to any hire or competition. The access to the clubrooms from the Pacific Highway end needs to be addressed as visitors must climb a steep grass embankment to access the rooms.

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in

2 years?

5 years?

10 years?

With the continued and growing support of the AFL in NSW both morally and financially, the code will continue to grow. The AFL are making strong inroads into Private Schools to offer AFL as an alternative sport to traditional Rugby and are meeting with some success. Whilst the availability of Ovals in Sydney will mean the code will continue to be restricted in terms of available space, the intelligent use of grounds and their facilities will ensure the opportunity to present this sporting code to the young people on the North Shore and also meet our Federal Governments desire to keep our young people physically active.

4.2.12 5. NSW Flying Disc Association

Contact Person: Simon Farrow

Date: February 9, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

Summer – Mon 8-10pm, Tues 6-10pm, Weds 7-10pm

Winter – Mon 6-10pm, Tues 8-10pm, Weds 7-10pm

(summer is different to winter because of water restrictions)

Additionally, use park on ad hoc basis for tournaments on weekends (1-2 per year) and training during a full week (9-5pm) for juniors (1-2 per year)

2. What facilities do you currently use?

Fields, change rooms, parking and club house (monthly meetings, food preparation and events).

3. How long has your organization used the park?

Approx. since 1986.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

We use all the parking on league nights (Mondays winter and Tuesdays Summer) – 80 spaces plus overflow onto street.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

Build leagues, develop players at all levels. Now forced to develop leagues outside Willoughby (eg Ryde, Manly).

6. What do you like about the park?

Convenient public transport, good facilities, central to majority of players, hospital location if injuries occur, Willoughby Council is great to work with.

7. What don't you like about the park?

Not able to acquire enough field time as need to continue growth.

Difficult to maintain quality of field (wear and tear).

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

Other sports / organisations want to keep fields for themselves (AFL).

Anderson Consulting overstay their bookings.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

Alternative watering systems/supply.

Stack new ovals one on top of each other.

Better grass for sturdier wear.

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in

2 years?

Yes

5 years? Yes

10 years? Yes

OTHER NOTES

Public transport – trains and buses are used a lot and is paramount in our decision to use Gore Hill.

NSW Flying Disc represents the state body. We have 5 leagues run in Sydney. The Northern Suburbs League (NSL) is the one that uses Gore hill, Naremburn Ovals 1 and 2, and 2 fields in Ryde.

In NSL there are 4 divisions, comprising approx. 46 teams and 500+ players. Ages range from 16-44 years; male/female ratio 4/3; includes university students, 2 teams from UTS and TAFE (12-15 players /team). NSL is the premier league across Australia/NSW.

We do not notice noise from Pacific Hwy.

Wind can be a hassle as it appears to channel across the field.

Lighting is of a high standard.

CONTACT DETAILS

www.afda.com

www.ufnsw.com.au

vp@ufnsw.com.au Simon Farrow

4.2.13 6. North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)

Contact Person: Michael Hagarty (Vice President)

Date: February 9, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

NSLBC utilises the Gore Hill ground on Thursday nights year round for training only (winter 8pm-10pm (prefer 7pm start), summer 7pm-9pm). Play games Sat/Sun at Flat Rock Creek.

150 regular players (90 winter, 60 summer).

2. What facilities do you currently use?

We use the ground and the change rooms/storage area.

3. How long has your organization used the park?

Over 10 years.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

Approx. 30-40 car spaces – the carpark is empty at those times.

20 people catch the train to St Leonards.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

We would like to continue usage at this ground as it is easily accessible to players, although if lighting and ground conditions continue to deteriorate then we will be unable for safety reasons. (Winter the ground is bare in the center from AFL and the lights are not up to standard for baseball and softball).

We would like usage of the clubhouse after training.

6. What do you like about the park?

Ease of access to ground (good public transport from eastern and northern suburbs). Easy parking. Lighting available for night training sessions. Large so that multiple drills can be done at the same time.

7. What don't you like about the park?

Too many unauthorized users constantly competing for ground space with people who turn up and play cricket in the middle of the park (Thursday night). Park ranger is unhelpful. Occasional problems with clash of Touch Football/Soccer Associations (when they have a washout) who impede into our time.

The lights are not adequate for the safety of Baseball Training as outlined in the Australian Standards. Poor surface for baseball training, particularly during winter when ground shared with AFL teams.

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

Shared usage with AFL during winter – ground condition affects safety and usage is pushed to a later timeslot.

Constant use by unauthorized users impedes ground usage.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

Increased lighting; construction of baseball backstop for hitting practice in one of the corners under the lights (see sketch below).

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in

2 years? Yes

5 years? If ground conditions improve.

10 years? If ground conditions improve.

Additional Notes

When grounds are being repaired 4-5 times per year (after AFL season) we use Willoughby Park.

Junior Baseball uses Hallstrom Park.

Ideally we would like lighting at Flat Rock Creek and are submitting a DA for that at present.

4.2.14 7. Anderson Events

Contact Person: Matt Anderson

Date: February 9, 2006

1. How does your organization use the park now – what days, times, purpose?

Weds evenings 6-7pm and Thurs lunchtimes 12-2pm. Randomly we put on corporate sports competitions – soccer and touch. They take up to a maximum of 3 fields (30x 50m).

2. What facilities do you currently use?

The oval and dressing sheds, including the toilets. We sometimes use the top part of the facilities for sports afternoons.

3. How long has your organization used the park?

4-5 years.

4. How much parking do you currently need?

Evenings about 10-15 cars, lunch about 10 cars.

5. What are the future needs /plans of your organization?

About the same as above.

6. What do you like about the park?

Accessible to commercial offices and train station. Our clients are all corporates.

7. What don't you like about the park?

No response

8. What problems or conflicts does your organization experience in using the existing park?

We would like more time in the evening. We only have 5.30 – 7pm, we really need 6-8pm.

9. How do you think the park could be improved?

More shade on the eastern side, better turfing. Other than that it is a great facility.

10. Do you think your organization will be still using the park in

2 years? Yes 5 years? Yes 10 years? Yes

APPENDIX D

Stakeholder and Sporting Group Contact List

GOVERNMENT BODIES

1. NSW Health

Contact: David Gate
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2. Department of Lands

Contact: Ian Ferguson
Planner
Land Management and Planning
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ADJOINING PROPERTIES

1. Royal North Shore Hospital Consultants for Master Plan

Principal Consultant:
Contact: Garry Silk
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Planners:

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2. Gore Hill Cemetery Trust

Contact: John Flint
3 Mitchell Street Greenwich 2065
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3. Lane Cove Council

Contact: Sue Butler
Manager Open Space
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4. North Sydney Council

Contact: Rob Emerson
Director Parks
Ph 9936 8100

5. St Leonards Strategy

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USER GROUPS (by seniority of use)

1. Northern Suburbs Cricket Association

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2. AFL (State Level)

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3. North Shore Australian Football Club (Seniors)

Contact: Chris Dale (President)
M 0425 221 860
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4. Willoughby Junior AFL Club

Contact: David Adams (President)
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kmain@bigpond.net.au

5. NSW Flying Disc Association

Contact: Simon Farrow (Vice President)
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2 Elizabeth Plaza, North Sydney
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6. RNSH Resident Medical Officers Association - Touch Football

Contact: John Kwan (President)
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7. North Sydney Leagues Baseball (Seniors)

Contact: Michael Hagarty
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8. Anderson Events (corporate sports)

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