

**OFF LEASH
DOG EXERCISE
PLAN
2021**

PLANNING FOR OUR PEOPLE
OUR PLACE OUR FUTURE



Page of

Contents

Section 1.....	3	Community Requests for Improved Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's.....	23
Executive Summary	3	Section 12	24
Section 2.....	5	Design Principles for Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's	24
Introduction	5	Section 13	25
Section 3.....	6	Design Criteria for OLDEA	25
Strategic and Legislative Alignment	6	Section 14	26
Section 4.....	8	Future Directions for Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's	26
The Importance of Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's....	8	14.1 Existing OLDEA's to be Decommissioned.....	26
Section 5.....	9	14.2 OLDEA's Proposed to be Retained	26
Context.....	9	14.3 New off leash Dog Exercise Area's	32
Section 6.....	10	Section 15	37
Dogs Within the Cessnock LGA.....	10	Summary of Provision of Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's	37
Section 7.....	11	Section 16	38
Existing Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's.....	11	Implementation Action Plan	38
Section 8.....	16	Action Implementation Plan	39
Hunter Region Benchmarking Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas	16	Section 17	40
Section 9.....	17	Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Maintenance Activities	40
Site Audits of Council's Existing Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's.....	17	Section 18	40
Section 10.....	20	Implementation and Review.....	40
What Does our Community Think About Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's?	20		
Section 11.....	23		

Section 1

Executive Summary

The aim of the Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Plan is to guide the provision, improvement and management of Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas (OLDEA's) within the Cessnock LGA. For the purposes of this Plan, an OLDEA is a designated public area in which dog owners can exercise dogs without a leash.

In line with the *Companion Animals Act 2016*, Council has a legislative responsibility to provide a minimum of one off leash area and to provide effective and responsible care and management of dogs within the Cessnock LGA.

Council currently exceeds its legislative requirements and provides six OLDEA's. Whilst the number of OLDEA's meet the needs of the existing population, additional OLDEA's are required to meet demand and expected population growth throughout the LGA.

There are approximately 33,955 registered dogs in the LGA or 1.5 per household, making dog owners/carers a key user group of our open space areas and a segment of the community that needs to be planned for.

Following a thorough review of the existing supply and demand for OLDEA's, detailed analysis of each existing site, assessing community feedback, and actions from Council resolutions, one of council's existing OLDEA's is planned to be decommissioned:

- Hall Park, Cessnock.

New OLDEA's are proposed to be established at:

- Bellbird North Development Area, Bellbird;
- Bridges Hill, Cessnock;
- Chinaman's Hollow, Weston;
- Cliftleigh Meadows, Cliftleigh; and
- Ellalong Park, Ellalong.

Outlined below is a summary of the revised strategic direction for OLDEA's within the Cessnock LGA. Council aims to provide a mix of facilities, including fenced and unfenced and spread throughout each of Council's four Planning Areas (Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Greta-Branxton and Rural West).

Table 1: Summary of OLDEA's within the Cessnock LGA

Planning Area	Local	District
Cessnock	Manning Park*	
	Hall Park*	Bellbird North Development Area
	Bridges Hill	
Kurri Kurri		Chinaman's Hollow
	Stanford Merthyr*	
	Cliftleigh Meadows	
Greta-Branxton	Huntlee*	
	Miller Park*	Greta Central Oval*
Rural West		Ellalong Park

*Existing OLDEA's

An Action Implementation Plan has been developed for the Plan with the following four themes:

1. Creating safe welcoming spaces
2. New opportunities and meeting demand
3. Education and awareness
4. Maintenance and improvements

Key high priority actions within the Plan include:

- The southern end of Manning Park is fenced: 0.5Ha in size;
- A local fenced OLDEA is established at Bridges Hill: 0.5Ha in size;
- Engagement is undertaken with Crown Lands requesting Council be the Crown Land Manager for Stanford Merthyr OLDEA;
- Review and update the design of the current signage for OLDEA's;
- New signage is installed within OLDEA's at key points of entry;
- A fact sheet that provides dog owners with the locations and characteristics of OLDEA's within the Cessnock LGA is developed;
- An improved dedicated page is created on Council's website outlining the locations and characteristics of Council's OLDEA's;
- A Maintenance Operating Manual for OLDEA's is established; and
- Design specifications are developed for OLDEA park infrastructure – fencing, seating, water fountains, bins, turf etc.



Section 2

Introduction

Cessnock has a growing population with an estimated 80,000 people by 2036 and based on historical data, dog ownership is likely to increase.

There are currently 33,955 dogs in the LGA or 1.5 per household, making dog owners/carers a key user group of our open space areas and a segment of the community that needs to be planned for.

For the purpose of this Plan, an OLDEA is defined as a designated public area in which dog owners can exercise dogs without a leash.

Historically, Council's OLDEA's have been provided within drainage reserves, or open space areas not compatible with active formal recreation activities. Trends in dog ownership have changed significantly since existing OLDEA's were first established, and community engagement has demonstrated that existing OLDEA's are not fit for purpose.

Community engagement and OLDEA research has demonstrated that fit for purpose OLDEA's includes providing safe spaces for dogs and their owners, supporting park infrastructure, being free of bindii, and other constraints. There is also an expectation that the frequency and quality of maintenance in these spaces should be increased and that maintenance be on par with local parks.

There is not currently a strategic plan in place for how Council manages its OLDEA's. The purpose of this Plan is to review the existing landscape in regards to OLDEA's and provide direction in regards to how these spaces are maintained, managed and developed now and into the future.

The key objectives of the Plan are to:

- Balance the needs of dog owners with the needs of the general community;
- Determine the adequacy of existing OLDEA's, both in supply and condition;
- Identify gaps and ensure equitable distribution across Council's four Planning Areas; and
- Plan for OLDEA's in line with current needs, expected population growth and ownership trends.

Section 3

Strategic and Legislative Alignment

Community Strategic Plan Cessnock 2027

The development of this Plan is in line with Council's Community Strategic Plan. Specifically:

- Objective 1.2: Strengthening community culture – We have adequate multipurpose sporting and recreation facilities. The development of an OLDEA Plan will ensure we have adequate OLDEA's for dogs and their owners/carers.
- Objective 3.2: Better utilisation of existing open space - The Plan aligns with the following strategic directions:
 - Our open spaces are distributed where people live – The Plan addresses existing and future population growth to determine OLDEA needs.
 - Our open spaces have suitable amenities and plenty of shade – a significant outcome of the Plan is to ensure OLDEA's have suitable supporting park infrastructure.

Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement 2036

The OLDEA Plan aligns with Planning Priority 4: Our community is safe, healthy and active. Action 17 refers to implementing Council's adopted Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan 2019 (ROSSP). The development of an OLDEA Plan is a key action within the ROSSP.

Cessnock Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan 2019

The provision of OLDEA'S aligns with Strategic Direction 2 which is to provide a recreation and open space network that is well utilised and inclusive. A specific action is identified within the Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan (ROSSP) relating to this Plan:

Action 2.1.3 reads "Investigate provision and demand for off leash dog exercise areas within each of Council's Planning Areas".

The OLDEA Plan achieves the above action.

Draft Greener Places Design Guide 2020

This draft guide provides a framework for improved public open space planning. It outlines the delivery of better quality, easily accessible open space for recreation that keeps pace with expected population growth.

Off Leash areas are identified as a recreation type within the Design Guide and states consideration should be given to combining these within larger open space areas. This approach encourages diversity which is one of the six core criteria outlined within the guide. A number of performance criteria have been provided for OLDEA's which have been incorporated and considered within the Plan.

Unleashed – A Guide to Successful Dog Parks (2013)

This guide was developed by the Dog and Cat Management Board of South Australia. Whilst it has a South Australian focus, it aims to assist Council's in creating well-designed, well used and enjoyable dog parks. The planning and design sections of this document informed the Plan.

Companion Animals Act 1998

The Act aims to provide effective and responsible care and management of companion animals (including dogs). Key items from the Act relevant to this Plan include:

- Council has a legislative requirement to provide at least one designated off leash area within the LGA
- Sufficient rubbish receptacles must be provided in these areas; and
- Dogs are prohibited in the following places (reference has only been included to those places relevant to open space and recreation):
 - Within 10m of a playground;
 - Within 10m of preparation of food/consumption area;
 - Near playing of organised games; and
 - Swimming pools or public recreation.

Please note, the above prohibited areas does not apply to assistance animals (e.g. guide dogs).



Section 4

The Importance of Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

Formal research has identified that there are numerous benefits to providing OLDEA's. These include benefits to dogs, to people and the broader community (Dog & Cat Management Board 2017).

Table 1: Benefits of OLDEA's

Benefits for Dogs	Benefits for People	Benefits for the Community
Physical and mental exercise – OLDEA's can provide an outlet for natural dog behaviours such as running, chasing, playing and barking with the result that the dog is less likely to engage in nuisance behaviour at home.	Outlet for dog owners to socialise – OLDEA's can provide a public space where dog owners can interact with each other and form community bonds.	Responsible dog ownership – OLDEA's can reduce the likelihood of dog owners letting their dog's off leash in other recreational areas.
Socialisation – Dogs that are well socialised and exercised are healthier and happier as well as less likely to be aggressive.	Social wellbeing and mental health – OLDEA's can provide a space where dog owners can feel connected with other human beings improving their mental and emotional health.	Affordable recreation option – A free outdoor activity where the family can take their children and their pet.
Safe environment for dogs to play.		Resting place for travelling community – OLDEA's can provide a safe resting spot for those owners travelling with their pets.

These benefits demonstrate the need to continue to provide OLDEA's, particularly when considering dog ownership rates within the Cessnock LGA and the need to plan for carers and their dogs effectively.

Section 5

Context

Provided below is a snapshot of the Cessnock LGA, and briefly highlights who we are planning for in regards to the OLDEA Plan.



Figure 1: Demographic Snapshot of the Cessnock Local Government Area

Section 6

Dogs Within the Cessnock LGA

There are approximately 33,955 registered dogs within the LGA (sourced from the NSW Companion Animal Register 2020). It is important to note that this figure has been utilised as a guide only. Accurate data is reliant upon responsible pet ownership (microchipping) and reporting the death of an animal to Council (the latter of which is often not completed).

Based on there being 21,185 households in 2016 (Department Planning Infrastructure and Environment), this equates to 1.5 dogs per household within the Cessnock LGA. This figure is significant making dog owners/carers a key user group of our open space areas and a segment of the community that needs to be planned for.

To provide a better understanding of OLDEA needs at a district level, for the purposes of this Plan the Cessnock LGA has been divided into four Planning Areas being Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Branxton Greta and Rural West. These Planning Areas have been defined in consideration of public transport routes, access to services and facilities and proximity to commercial districts.

As illustrated in Figure 2, there has been a steady increase in dog ownership over the last 15 years across all four Planning Areas.

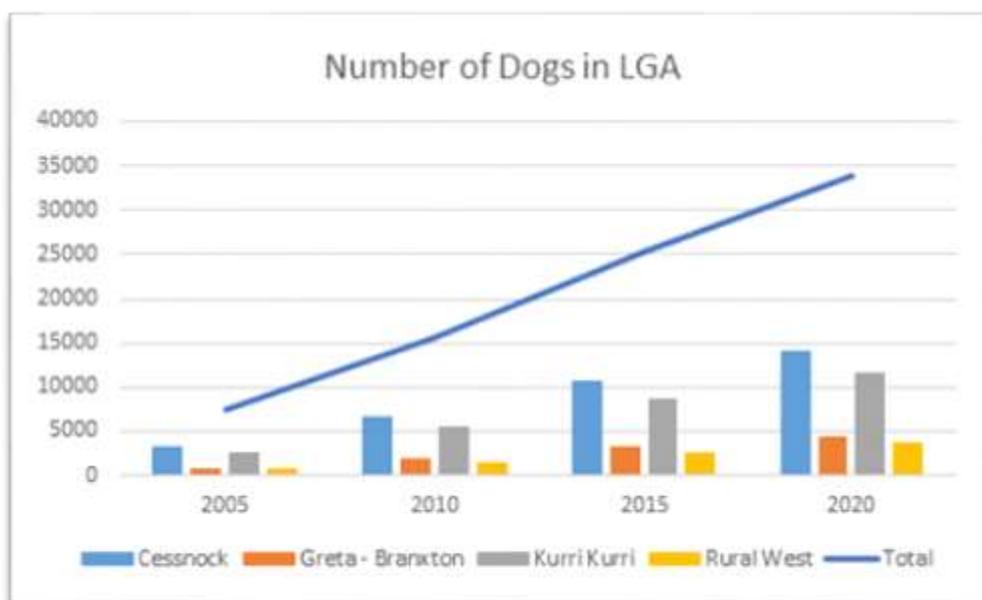


Figure 2: Number of Dogs within the Cessnock LGA

Table 2 further breaks down the number of dogs per Planning Area and whilst significant growth in dog ownership is demonstrated across all Planning Areas the highest growth has occurred in the Greta Branxton (increase by 430%) and Rural West Planning Areas (400%). Aside from population growth generally and increasing trends in dog ownership, high figures in these Planning Areas can also be attributed to new residential development areas.

Table 2: Number of Dogs Per Planning Area

Planning Area	2005	2010	2015	2020	Change %
Cessnock	3343	6605	10661	14197	+ 324%
Greta - Branxton	827	1909	3258	4389	+ 430%
Kurri Kurri	2635	5503	8810	11728	+ 345%
Rural West	728	1556	2621	3641	+ 400%
Total	7,533	15,573	25,350	33,955	+ 300%

Section 7

Existing Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

There are currently six Council owned local OLDEA's located within the LGA. Figure 3 illustrates existing OLDEA's on a citywide map.

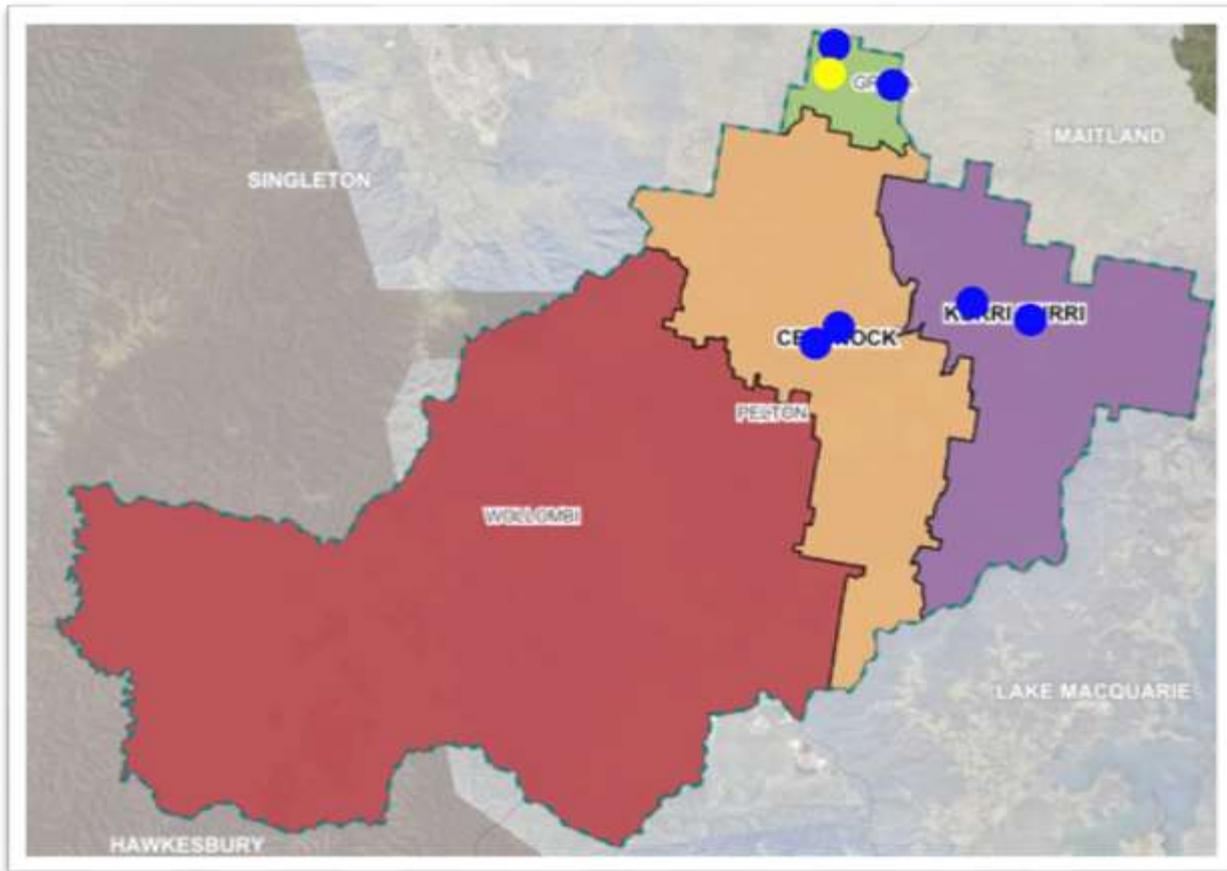


Figure 3: Location of Existing OLDEA's

Blue Circles denotes Council owned OLDEA locations, yellow circle denotes the OLDEA within Huntlee.

In regards to Council owned OLDEA's, there are two OLDEA's within the Greta Branxton Planning Area, Kurri Kurri Planning Area and Cessnock Planning Area. There are currently no OLDEA's within the Rural West Planning Area.

A fenced OLDEA is also located within the Huntlee. This site is currently in developer ownership however will be dedicated to Council in line with the Huntlee Voluntary Planning Agreement.

Outlined on the following pages are site aerials for each existing OLDEA.



Figure 4: Hall Park – 37 Stephen Street Cessnock



Figure 5: Manning Park – 10 Newton Avenue Cessnock



Figure 6: Varty Park – 85 Swanson Street Weston



Figure 7: Stanford Merthyr – Colliery Street



Figure 10: Huntlee OLDEA, 1864 Wine Country Drive, Branxton

Section 8

Hunter Region Benchmarking – Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

The supply of OLDEA's in the Cessnock LGA has been compared across the Hunter Council's. This exercise has not been utilised as a sole measure in determining OLDEA provision rates in this Plan, as this has been demand driven, but more of an indicator as to how Council is performing in this area compared to their neighbours.

As there are no formal state or federal strategies in regards to provision rates for OLDEA's this exercise also serves as a guide as to acceptable levels of provision within the Hunter Region.

Table 3: Benchmarking Exercise with Hunter Council's OLDEA's

Council	Population	No. of OLDEA	People per one Off Leash Dog Exercise Area
Cessnock City Council	59,985	7	8,569
Dungog Shire Council	8,975	1	8,975
Lake Macquarie City Council	205,000	29	7,068
Maitland City Council	83,203	7	11,743
MidCoast Council	93,836	17	5,519
Muswellbrook Shire Council	17,209	2	8,604
Newcastle City Council	165,571	17	9,739
Port Stephens City Council	72,695	16	4,543
Singleton Council	23,422	1	23,422
Upper Hunter Shire Council	14,220	4	3,555

The table above demonstrates that when comparing the current population of the Cessnock LGA across the Hunter Council's, Cessnock's provision of OLDEA's is relatively on par with other Council's.

When reviewing the overall average provision of OLDEA's in the Hunter (one OLDEA per 9,173 people) compared to Council's (one OLDEA per 8,569) Council's provision rate on a per population basis is fairly sound.

Expected population growth within the LGA (80,000) will result in the need for additional OLDEA's which is addressed within the Plan.

Section 9

Site Audits of Council's Existing Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

Site audits were completed for Council's existing OLDEA's as part of the development of this Plan. A summary of key findings is below.

Table 4: Summary of Existing OLDEA's Site and Condition Audits

Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area	Key Points
<p>Hall Park 0.75 Ha</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located adjacent to a children's playground (current fencing not in line with the <i>Companion Animals Act</i>). • Located adjacent to a large concrete stormwater channel which poses safety concerns for dogs and their carers. • The OLDEA is isolated and not strategically placed. Limited passive surveillance, which in part is due to a building located at the front of the reserve. • Poor ground conditions – over 30% bindii and numerous weeds. • Incorrect ordinance signage currently on display – illustrating dogs can only be on the site with a lead. • Limited natural shade, no seating, access to water or bins.
General Comments	<p>There was evidence of anti-social activities during the site inspection (remnants of a fire pit near the stormwater drain). The park is isolated and not strategically placed. Although delineation for the OLDEA is provided through koppers logs, this is not sufficient when being located adjacent to a playground. Consideration should be given to an alternate use for this site.</p>
<p>Manning Park 2.2Ha</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is linear and contains a large open space area. • The southern end of the site is an inviting OLDEA, well landscaped with numerous mature trees. The northern end of the site is quite barren with no tree plantings or shade. • The northern end of the grounds is utilised for firefighting training. With no clear delineation between these areas, there is potential conflict with use of the site as an OLDEA. The access gate at the northern end of the site is continually left open and needs to be addressed. • There are two pedestrian access points off Blackwood Avenue and Newton Avenue. At the time of inspection, vehicular access was able to be obtained straight on to the reserve with koppers logs being removed. This creates a conflict with the OLDEA and cars and encourages vehicular use on the reserve. • Large patches of bindii were evident and 50% mixed weed (capeweed, lambs tongue, clover). This is particularly the case in the northern end of the reserve. • OLDEA ordinance signage is dated and worn. • Minimal off road parking is available at Blackwood Avenue. It is difficult to park at Newton Avenue without being on the road. • The area is much larger than what is required for a standard OLDEA.
General Comments	<p>The southern end of the OLDEA is a well-established inviting area however is lacking in support park infrastructure such as access to water, seating and bins.</p> <p>The installation of a cycleway along the stormwater channel is identified within Council's adopted Cycling Strategy 2016.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to providing a fenced off leash area at the southern end of the site.</p>

Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area	Key Points
<p>Varty Park 0.91 Ha</p> <p>General Comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not a formal boundary for the OLDEA. This is a concern based on the active sports played at the site and potential for conflicts between dogs and participants. • Grass coverage is relatively poor and full of mixed weed (Capeweed, Lambs Tongue, Clover, Cats Ear, Catshead) • The OLDEA is adjacent to Endangered Ecological Communities (the eastern border contains Kurri Sand Swamp Woodland and the southern side is bordered by Riparian Apple – Grey Gum Dune Forest). • The site is relatively flat however there are quite a few gravel patches as well as remnants from previous infrastructure in the form of concrete pads. <p>Outcomes from community engagement associated with the development of the adopted Masterplan for Maybury Peace Park/Chinaman’s Hollow resulted in a fenced OLDEA being identified at Chinaman’s Hollow. Based on the proximity to Chinaman’s Hollow and inherent site constraints, consideration should be given to an alternate use for this OLDEA.</p>
<p>Stanford Merthyr 17.1Ha</p> <p>General Comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a large site, much larger than the requirements of an OLDEA. • Ordinance signage is located at the entry to the site. • Grass coverage is relatively poor with 50% bindii and numerous weeds (capeweed, cats ears, purple top, clover, and bindii). There are also a number of hidden undulations that can be unsafe for users (both dogs and their carers). • There is minimal park infrastructure, a tap and makeshift dog drinking bowl is provided but not a suitable water point for dog companions. • There are a number of mature trees scattered throughout the site creating an inviting OLDEA. • There is no visual delineation on site outlining where the OLDEA starts and ends. <p>The site is currently owned and managed by Crown Lands. Discussions will need to be held with Crown Lands regarding Council becoming a Crown Land Manager.</p> <p>Fencing should be considered at the site to define the OLDEA.</p>
<p>Greta Central Oval 5.9Ha</p> <p>General Comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass coverage is extremely poor over the site with 50% bindii and a number of weeds (capeweed, fireweed, pearlwort). There are large areas within the OLDEA that do not contain any grass and are very dry and dusty. • Off leash ordinance signage is located at the Nelson Street entry. The sign is worn and is difficult to determine the boundaries of the OLDEA as there is no fencing in place. There is no ordinance signage at the New England Highway entry. • There are a number of mature trees located throughout the site. • No formalised carparking is provided however the OLDEA is within a broader open space area with ample parking opportunities. <p>The OLDEA in its current state is relatively poor with a general lack of park infrastructure and poor surface conditions. An enclosed OLDEA is proposed at this location in line with the adopted Masterplan for Greta Central Park and will see improvements made to the OLDEA once the proposed works are implemented.</p>
<p>Miller Park 9.7Ha</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass coverage is relatively poor and patchy full of mixed weeds (capeweed, lambs tongue, clover, oxalis, catshead, thistles). bindii is mixed throughout the OLDEA. • Off leash ordinance signage is located at the entry to the OLDEA but there is no signage upon entering Miller Park. • A tap is located at the entrance and a dog water drinking tray has been fabricated and placed beneath the tap. Existing drinking infrastructure needs to be improved for dogs and their carers. • There is one timber table located within the OLDEA. • There are numerous mature trees located throughout the OLDEA (magpies were also nesting at the time of inspection). • The creek is identified as having biodiversity values and is Protected Riparian Land. The creek contains Central Hunter Swamp Oak Forest (EEC).

Off-Leash Dog Exercise Area	Key Points
General Comments	<p>An OLDEA is currently provided within the Huntlee development Area. Based on the proximity to Miller Park, there will be a duplication in OLDEA's when the site is formally handed over to Council.</p> <p>An OLDEA is identified within the Masterplan for Miller Park which was adopted prior to the development of the OLDEA Plan.</p> <p>Based on inherent site constraints including proximity to a creek and active sports, consideration should be given to an alternate use for this OLDEA.</p>



What Does our Community Think About Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's?

To ensure the OLDEA Plan is reflective of user needs and relevant to our LGA, a community survey was undertaken in September 2020. The survey was made available through Council's Have Your Say Page and was also distributed directly to key stakeholders including sporting and community groups and organisations within the Cessnock canine industry.

177 survey responses were received providing constructive and valuable information that has informed the Plan.

Key points arising from the survey are outlined below:

- 60% of respondents were under 50 years of age, 40% over 50 years;
- 70% of respondents do not utilise Council's existing OLDEA's. For those that do utilise OLDEA's, 58% visit at least once per week;
- 90% get to the OLDEA by car; and
- 32% of respondents walk their dog off leash in other areas within the LGA.

Provided below is a review of key questions within the community survey which highlight concerns and improvements for Council's OLDEA's.

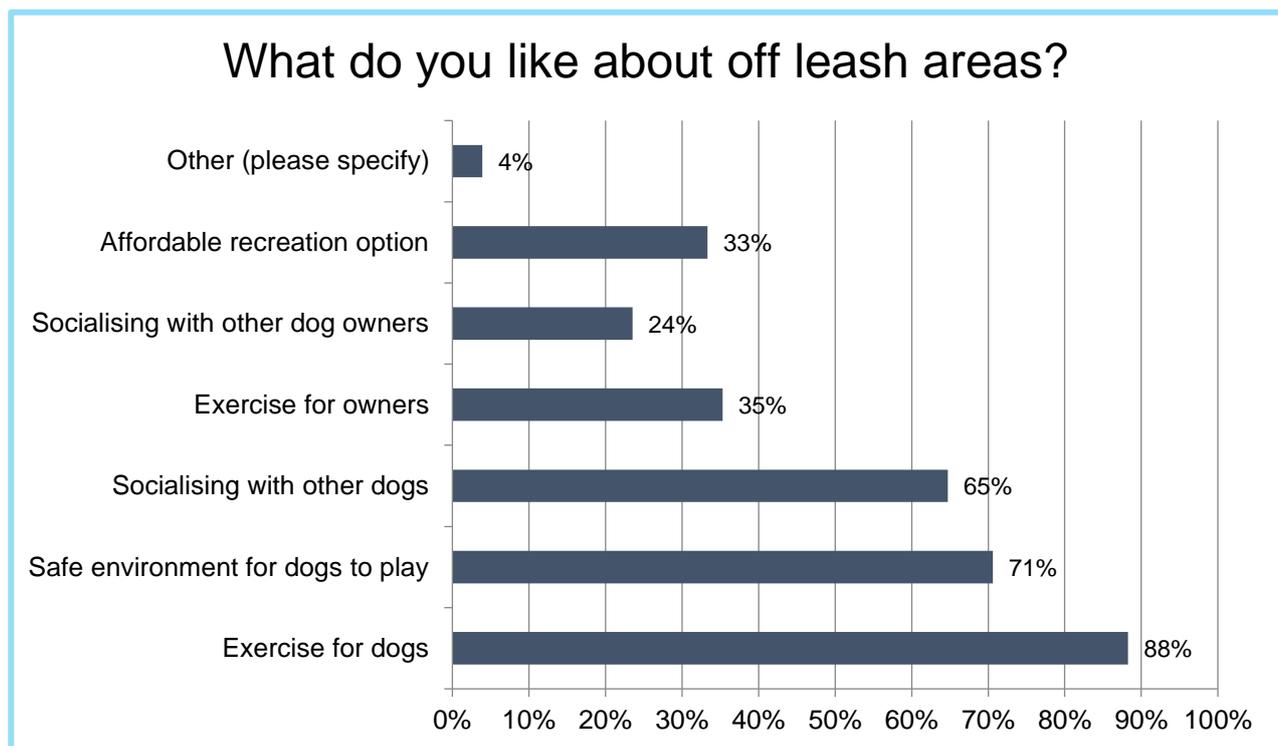


Figure 11: What do you like about OLDEA'S (Combined Planning Areas)?

The top three answers when combining responses from all four Planning Areas were exercise for dogs (88%), safe environment for dogs to play (71%) and socialising with other dogs (65%). This is relatively consistent with data in the Guide to Successful Dog Parks (2013) with the top two responses in this guide being exercise for dogs (92%) and socialisation for dogs (83%). Safety is also considered a priority within the Cessnock LGA which is likely to be reflective of the current condition of Council's OLDEA's.

In regards to why residents do not utilise Council's existing OLDEA's the top three responses for the LGA were lack of fenced areas (60%), locations are not convenient (48%) and animal safety (32%).

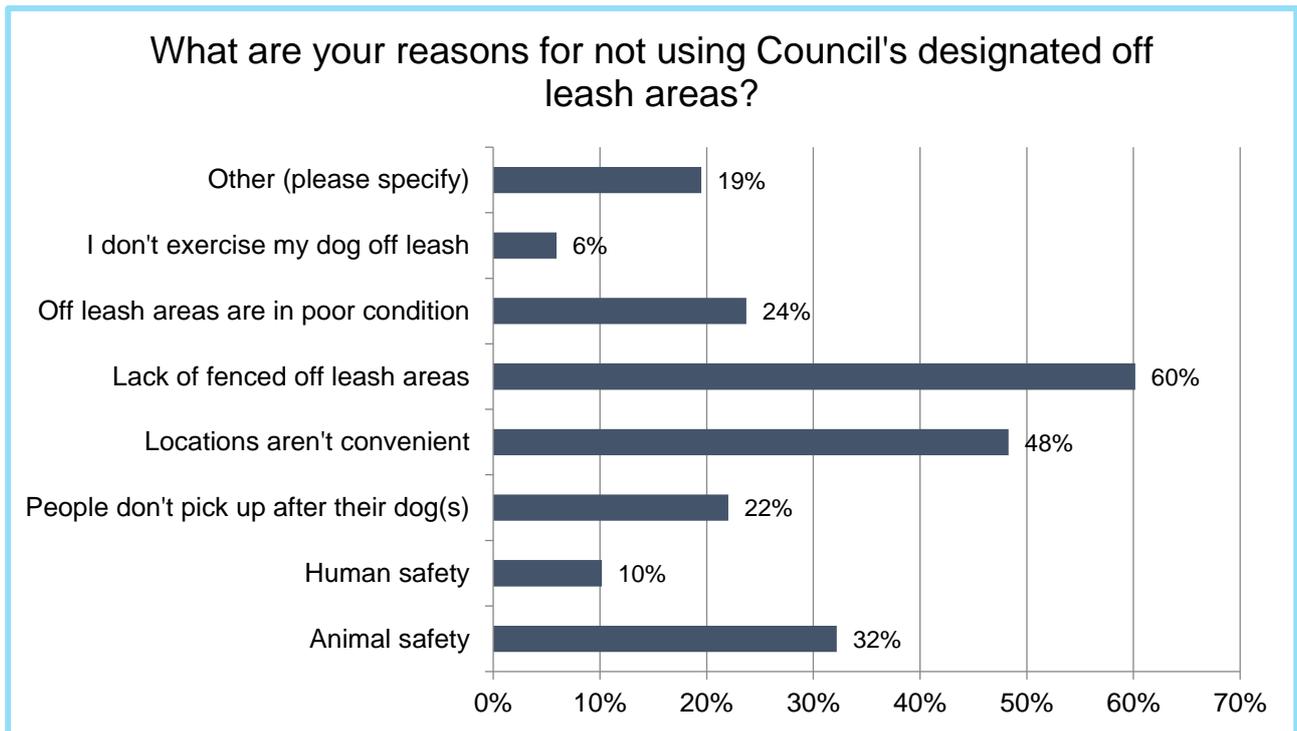


Figure 12: Reasons for not utilising existing OLDEA's (Combined Planning Areas)

When reviewing responses for the same survey question per Planning Area, it can be demonstrated that a lack of fenced areas, inconvenient locations and animal safety consistently arise as reasons why Council's existing OLDEA's are not utilised. This illustrates a clear need to address these matters to ensure adequate OLDEA's are provided that service the needs of the local community.

In order to inform design criteria and planning principles for Council's OLDEA's (provided in section 12 and 13) the survey also sought feedback from the community regarding items that are important within an OLDEA.

The theme of fenced OLDEA's again arose in what residents deem important within an OLDEA and listed of highest importance across Cessnock, Kurri Kurri and the Rural West Planning Areas. Access to water, bins and shade were considered equally important within the Greta Branxton Planning Area with each of these items receiving the same response rate.

Residents were also asked as part of the survey whether there were any locations in which they would like to see an OLDEA provided. Figure 13, illustrates there was a high response rate for an OLDEA to be located within the Cliftleigh area (38%) with residents also wanting to see OLDEA's within Bellbird (7%), Kitchener (7%), Aberdare (6%), Tafe Park, Cessnock (5%), Kurri Kurri (5%), Baddeley Park (5%) and a small response rate for a number of other locations throughout the LGA. Opportunities for new OLDEA are addressed further in section 14.

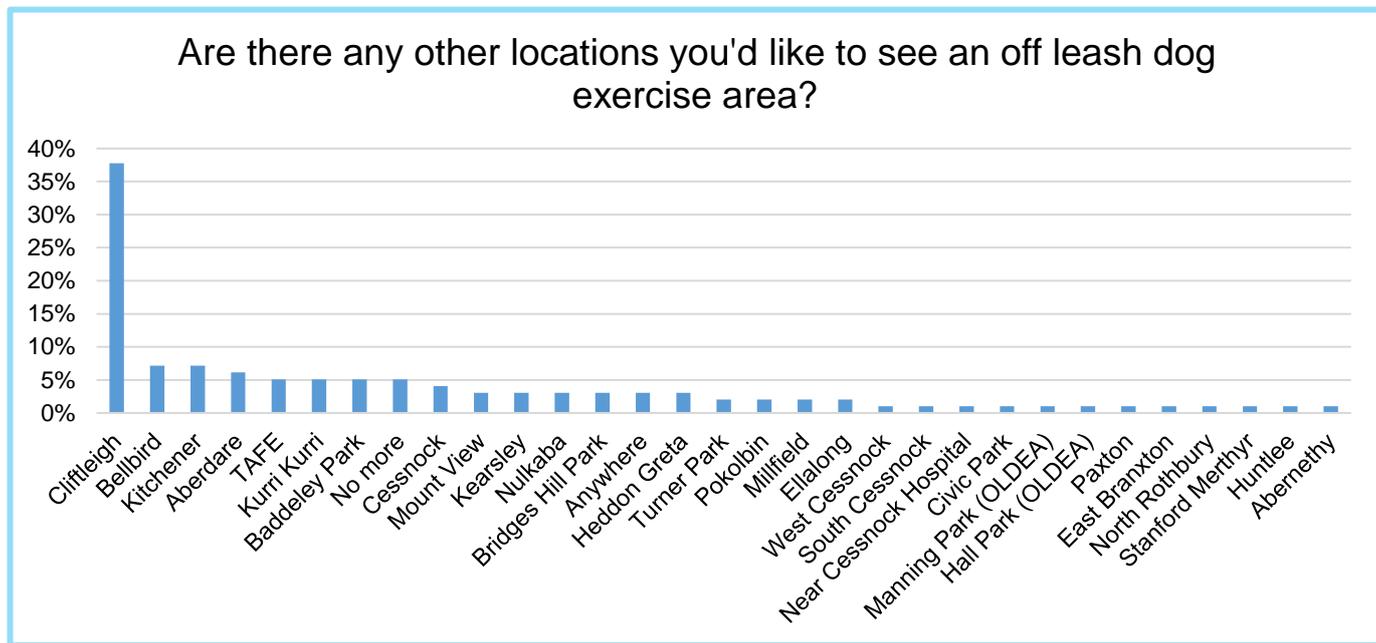


Figure 13: Additional Locations you would like to see an OLDEA



Section 11

Community Requests for Improved Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

In addition to the community survey, demand for additional as well as upgraded OLDEA's is also evidenced when reviewing community requests (Table 5). In the last 10 years, Council has received 19 requests in regards to OLDEA's. The majority of these have been in relation to the Cessnock Planning Area with 73%.

These requests were seeking additional OLDEA's but also included matters such as fencing, lack of maintenance, queries as to where OLDEA's were in the LGA, poor signage at facilities, and no information available on Council's website.

This supports data collected through the 2020 community survey that the community are seeking additional OLDEA's as well as upgrades to Council's existing OLDEA's.

Table 5: Community Requests for Additional or Improved OLDEA by Planning Area

Planning Area	Year	No of Requests
Cessnock	2020	2
	2019	2
	2018	2
	2017	1
	2016	2
	2015	1
	2014	1
	2013	1
	2011	1
	2010	1
Greta - Branxton	2020	1
	2016	1
Kurri Kurri	2019	1
Rural West	2016	1
	2014	1
Total		19

Section 12

Design Principles for Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

In drafting the Plan, key design principles have been developed to inform Council's existing OLDEA's as well as to guide the future development of new sites.

- Local OLDEA's to be a minimum 0.5Ha in size;
- District OLDEA's to be 0.5Ha to 1Ha in size;
- OLDEA's to be well defined, clearly mapped and sign posted;
- Where practical OLDEA are to be located within larger open space areas (sporting precincts and parks). OLDEA's are not to be located on playing fields;
- OLDEA's are to contain adequate park infrastructure that contributes to a safe and inviting environment including bins, drinking water, double gates (where fenced), shelter, seating and landscape/natural features that support an OLDEA;
- In regards to natural shade, the OLDEA should have perimeter shade to 50% of the boundary;
- A mix of leash free experiences will be provided in the Cessnock LGA Including enclosed and open OLDEA's;
- Designated OLDEA's will be maintained to the same level as parks within Council's open space network to ensure these facilities are fit for purpose. OLDEA's should also contain high quality turf and be free of bindii and weeds;
- Each of the four Planning Areas (Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Greta-Branxton & Rural West) will have a minimum of one OLDEA;
- Community awareness and education regarding off leash areas will be ongoing to encourage responsible pet ownership; and
- OLDEA will not be located within a *Companion Animal Act* prohibited area (as relevant to open space):
 - Within 10 metres of children's playground equipment;
 - Within 10 metres of food preparation areas such as public barbeques and kiosks;
 - Active recreation areas such as sports fields, ovals and courts (during the playing of organised sport); and
 - Wildlife protection areas.



Section 13

Design Criteria for OLDEA

Whilst the below considerations will guide the development of OLDEA's, improvements will be influenced by availability of funding.

Table 6: Design Criteria for OLDEA

Attribute	Local	District
Size	0.5	0.5 - 1ha
Catchment Area	2km	Planning Area
Surfaces	Grass	Grass
Delineation*	- Bollards - Purpose built fence 1200m high – top and bottom rails, double gated entry/exit, self-closing/latching gates	- Bollards - Purpose built fence 1200m high – top and bottom rails, double gated entry/exit, self-closing/latching gates
Access to water (including drinking fountain with dog bowl).	✓	✓
Access to natural shade	✓	✓
Access to built shade (e.g. shade structure)		✓
Access to bench seating	✓	✓
Access to picnic shelter & seating		✓
Contain signage – outlining OLDEA and conditions of use	✓	✓
Access to Agility equipment**		✓
Provision of bins (note bag dispensers not provided)	✓	✓
Provision of carparking**		✓
Accessible pathway within the OLDEA**		✓
Separate area for small dogs***	✓	✓

*Delineation/fencing type to be determined based on recommendations made within this Plan.

**Denotes a potential embellishment and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

***Community engagement as well as a review of Council records did not demonstrate demand for provision of separate areas for small dogs within Council's OLDEA's. This design criteria will be considered on a case by case basis following clear demand for this infrastructure.

Section 14

Future Directions for Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

This section consolidates the findings from the Plan and outlines a way forward in regards to the provision of OLDEA's in the Cessnock LGA. OLDEA's are examined in regards to those proposed to be decommissioned, retained and developed.

14.1 Existing OLDEA's to be Decommissioned

Varty Park, Weston

Based on inherent site constraints, including the presence of Endangered Ecological Communities and the proximity of a fenced OLDEA to be established at Chinaman's Hollow, Weston, it is recommended Varty Park be decommissioned.

Action:

- Varty Park OLDEA is decommissioned.

14.2 OLDEA's Proposed to be Retained

The following existing OLDEA's are to be retained:

- Manning Park, Cessnock;
- Hall Park, Cessnock;
- Stanford Merthyr;
- Miller Park, Branxton;
- Greta Central Oval, Greta; and
- Huntlee, North Rothbury.

Justification for retaining each of these OLDEA locations is outlined below.

Cessnock Planning Area

Manning Park, Cessnock

This local OLDEA services the needs of the immediate catchment area and is well utilised. Existing features at the southern end of the reserve including well established landscaping lend itself to continue to be an OLDEA. To mitigate safety concerns from the stormwater channel, proposed cycleway and conflicting activities to the north of the reserve, the southern end of the reserve is to be fenced. Fencing the southern end will also assist in reducing the size of the existing OLDEA as it is currently significantly larger than what is required for a leash free area.

Action:

1. The southern end of Manning Park be retained as a local OLDEA: 0.5Ha in size.
2. The OLDEA is to be fenced (refer to Figure 14).
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.
5. The northern end of the reserve be decommissioned as an OLDEA and retained for firefighting purposes, passive recreation and the proposed cycleway which traverses the site (adjacent to the stormwater channel).



Figure 14: Manning Park Fenced OLDEA

The revised OLDEA for Manning Park (Figure 14) is 0.5Ha. The aerial is indicative of proposed fencing and may alter in shape (not size) when specifications are developed.

Hall Park, Cessnock

In line with Council report WI39/2021 Resolution Item 3, Hall Park is to be retained.



Figure 15: Hall Park Fenced OLDEA

Action:

1. The OLDEA is to be fenced (refer to Figure 15).
2. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
3. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.

Kurri Kurri Planning Area

Stanford Merthyr, Colliery Street

The existing OLDEA is located on Crown Land. Whilst Council has been maintaining and managing the OLDEA for some time, Council is not the formal Land Manager.

The site currently has a low level of usage. Contributing factors to this include lack of park infrastructure, no delineation of the OLDEA compared to the wider Crown Reserve and condition of the surface (hollows, bindii etc.).

Based on planned population growth within the Kurri Kurri Planning Area it is proposed to retain this OLDEA.

In its current state the OLDEA is much larger than the required size for a local level facility. It is proposed to reduce the size of the OLDEA to 0.5Ha as demonstrated in Figure 15.

Action:

1. Engagement is undertaken with Crown lands requesting Council be the Crown Land Manager for the OLDEA.
2. Bollards are installed to delineate the OLDEA - 0.5Ha in size.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the installation of bollards to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.

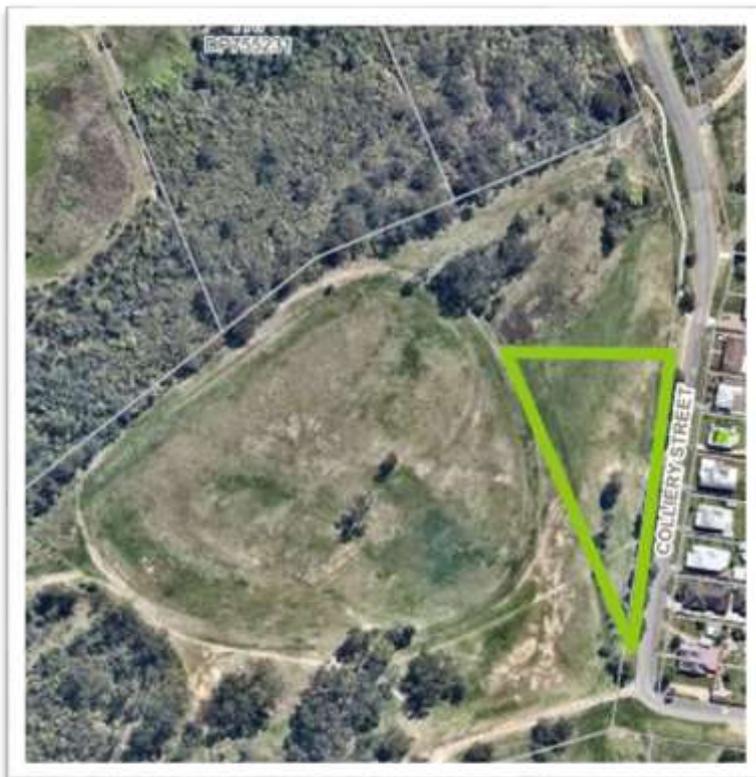


Figure 16: Stanford Merthyr OLDEA

The revised OLDEA for Stanford Merthyr (Figure 16) is 0.5Ha. The aerial is indicative of proposed fencing and may alter in shape (not size) when specifications are developed.

Miller Park, Branxton

In line with Council report WI39/2021 Resolution Item 3, Miller Park is to be retained.

Action:

1. The OLDEA is to be fenced (refer to Figure 15).
2. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
3. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.



Figure 17: Miller Park fenced OLDEA

Greta Central Oval, Greta

A fenced OLDEA is identified within the adopted Masterplan for Greta Central Oval 2019. This was determined through detailed community engagement and addresses the needs of current and future residents.

Action:

1. Greta Central Oval be a District sized OLDEA: 0.5ha – 1ha in size.
2. The OLDEA is fenced.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.



Figure 18: Insert from adopted Greta Central Oval Masterplan

Legend for the above insert:

- 16: Seating within the OLDEA
- 22: Fenced OLDEA
- 14: Picnic area adjacent to the OLDEA

Huntlee, Branxton

There is a fenced OLDEA within the Huntlee development area. The site contains unique agility equipment and is regularly utilised by the community.

Although currently in developer ownership, this OLDEA will ultimately form part of a broader District Park and dedicated to Council (in line with the Huntlee Voluntary Planning Agreement).

This OLDEA is well established, will meet the needs of the catchment area, and it is recommended to be retained.

Action:

- Upon dedication to Council the OLDEA is retained.



Figure 19: Huntlee OLDEA

14.3 New off leash Dog Exercise Area's

Cessnock Planning Area

Bellbird North District Sports Facility

In development of the Masterplan for Carmichael Park Bellbird, engagement with the community identified demand for a fenced OLDEA. It was determined through the Masterplanning exercise that an OLDEA could not be achieved at Carmichael Park.

Community engagement and anticipated population growth within the Bellbird North Urban Release Area have determined an OLDEA is required. The Plan recommends a district size OLDEA be located within the proposed district sporting precinct within Bellbird North.

Action:

1. A district sized OLDEA is established within the proposed district sports facility at Bellbird North: 0.5ha to 1Ha in size.
2. A fenced district OLDEA is provided within the proposed district sports facility.
3. The OLDEA to include park infrastructure items as discussed with Council Officers at the detailed design stage.



Figure 20: Proposed OLDEA within Bellbird North Urban Release Area

Bridges Hill, Cessnock

Community survey results from the off leash survey, documented community requests and a review of demographic data identified there is demand for an OLDEA within the Cessnock CBD.

A new local OLDEA is proposed at Bridges hill (Figure 20). The establishment of an OLDEA in this location will further diversify off leash offerings in that the site is sloped, rocky in parts and contains a number of large shade trees.

The OLDEA will be delineated via bollards and will form part of the broader East End Oval, Convent Hill, Bridges Hill Precinct.

Action:

1. A local OLDEA is established at Bridges Hill, Cessnock.
2. Bollards are installed to delineate the OLDEA - creating a space of 0.5Ha.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the installation of bollards to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.
5. The Masterplan for Convent Hill, Bridges Hill and East End Oval be updated to reflect the OLDEA upon future reviews of the Masterplan.



Figure 21: Proposed OLDEA at Bridges Hill, Cessnock

The proposed OLDEA for Bridges Hill (Figure 14) is 0.5Ha. The aerial is indicative of proposed bollards and may alter in shape (not size) when specifications are developed.

Kurri Kurri Planning Area

Cliftleigh Meadows - 64 William Tester Drive

Cliftleigh Meadows is a large open space precinct that caters for both passive and active sports. Following substantial population growth in the Kurri Kurri to Maitland corridor and results from the community survey, there is identified demand for an OLDEA within this area.

Action:

1. A Local OLDEA is established within Cliftleigh Meadows.
2. The OLDEA is fenced.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.



Figure 22: Proposed OLDEA at Cliftleigh Meadows

The proposed OLDEA for Cliftleigh is 0.5Ha. The aerial is indicative of proposed fencing and may alter in shape (not size) when specifications are developed.

Chinaman's Hollow – 137 Cessnock Road, Weston

Chinaman's Hollow forms part of a regional park and is currently underutilised. Engagement undertaken as part of the development of the Maybury Peace Park/Chinaman's Hollow Masterplan identified demand for a fenced OLDEA within this reserve.

The provision of an OLDEA in Weston will also assist in servicing anticipated population growth in the Kurri Kurri Planning Area.

Action:

1. Establish a District OLDEA within Chinaman's Hollow.
2. The OLDEA is fenced: 0.5 - 1Ha in size.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.

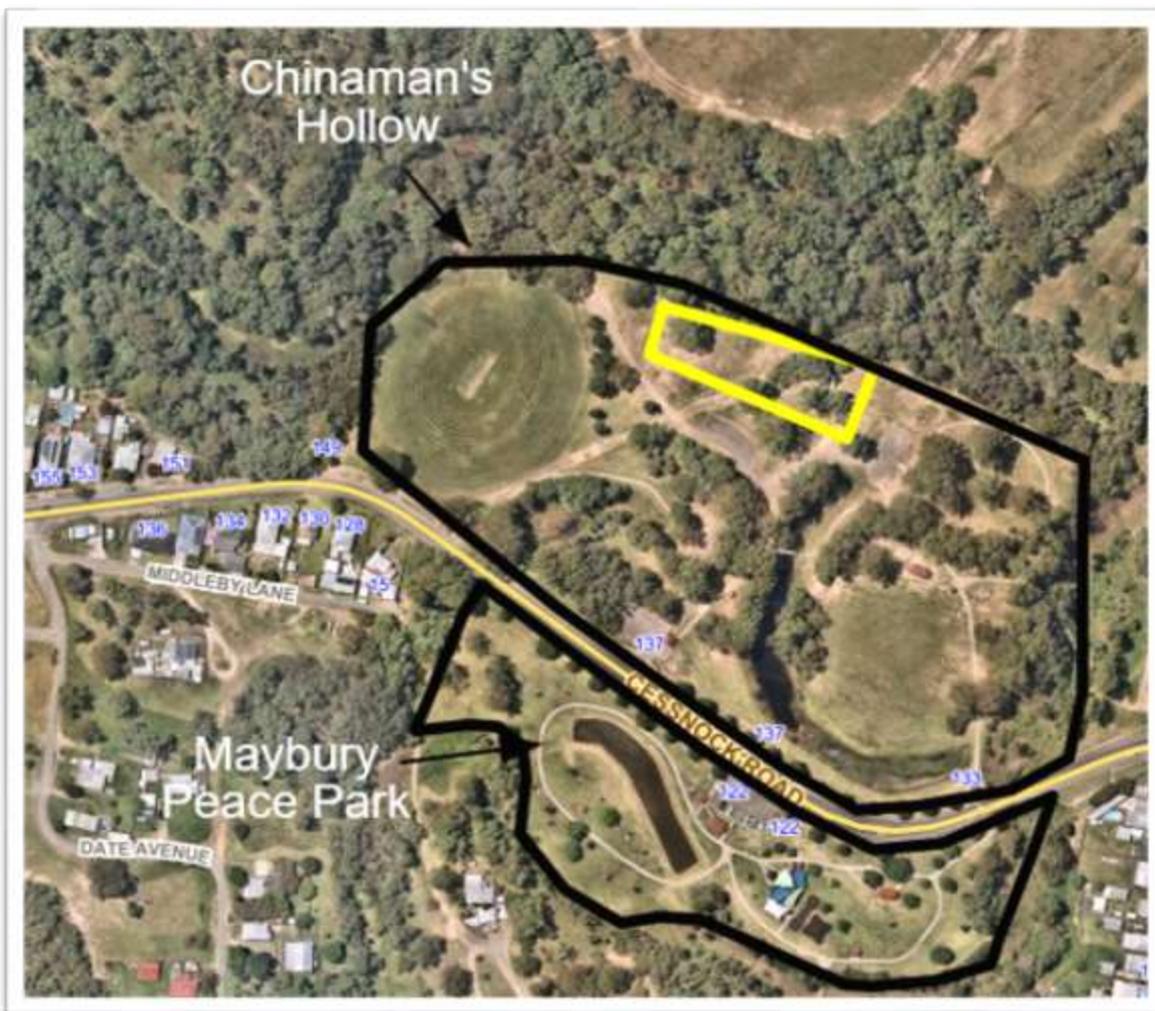


Figure 23: Proposed OLDEA within Chinaman's Hollow, Weston

The Proposed OLDEA for Chinaman's Hollow is 0.5Ha – 1Ha in size. The aerial is indicative of proposed fencing and may alter in shape when specifications are developed.

Rural West Planning Area

Ellalong Park – 22 Helena Street, Ellalong.

There are currently no OLDEA's within the Rural West Planning Area. Results from the community survey indicated that there is demand for an OLDEA. Continued population growth within the Millfield, Ellalong and Paxton villages further supports the provision of an OLDEA.

Ellalong Park is supported as a site for an OLDEA based on it being a part of a larger recreation precinct.

The exact site location will be confirmed through further community engagement however it is proposed the fenced OLDEA be located at the northern end of the reserve.

Action:

1. A District OLDEA is established at Ellalong Park, Cessnock.
2. Fencing is to be installed to delineate the OLDEA: 0.5Ha -1Ha in size.
3. A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.
4. Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.

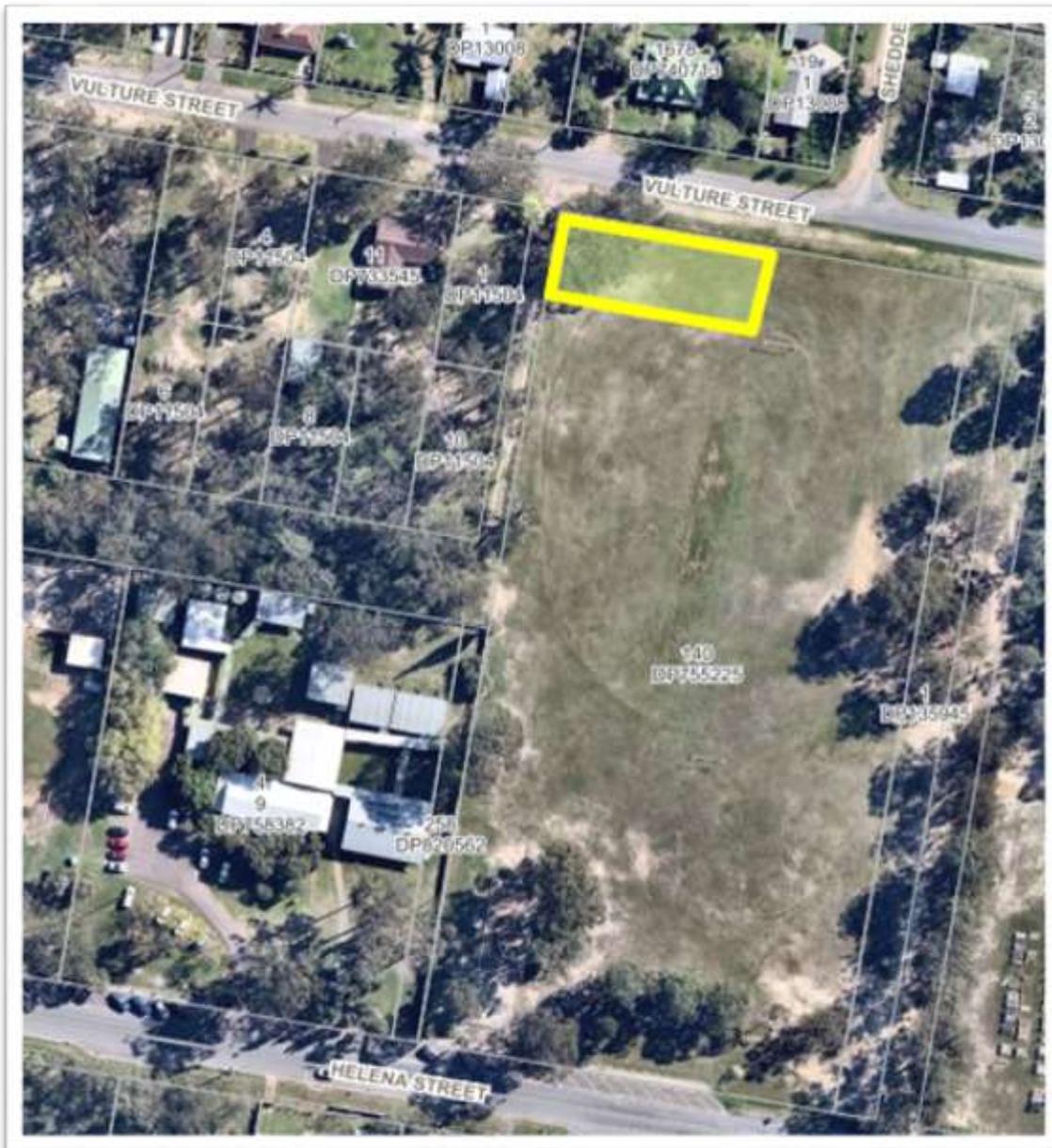


Figure 24: Proposed Off Leash Dog Exercise Area at Ellalong Park

Section 15

Summary of Provision of Off Leash Dog Exercise Area's

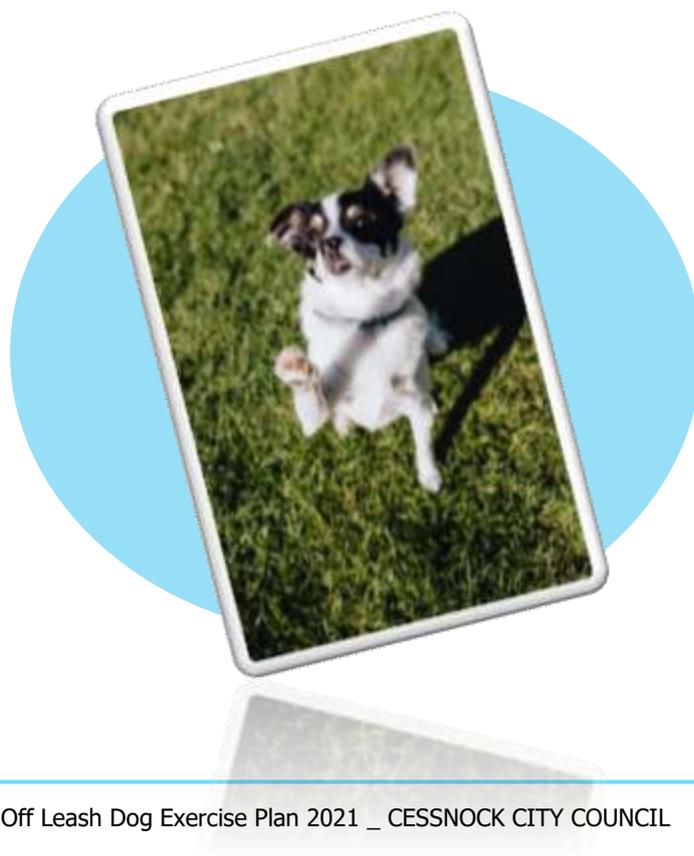
Based on anticipated population growth, demand and community engagement a revised strategic direction has been developed for Council's OLDEA.

A total of nine OLDEA's are proposed to be provided, with four of these being new facilities.

Table 7 – Summary of OLDEA's Within the Cessnock LGA

Planning Area	Local	District	Sites that will be fenced
Cessnock	Manning Park		✓
	Hall Park		✓
		Bellbird North Development Area*	✓
	Bridges Hill		✓
Kurri Kurri		Chinaman's Hollow*	✓
	Stanford Merthyr		
	Cliftleigh Meadows*		✓
Greta-Branxton	Huntlee		✓
	Miller Park		✓
		Greta Central Oval	✓
Rural West		Ellalong Park*	✓

*New OLDEA's



Section 16

Implementation Action Plan

The actions on the following page provide the framework for the provision, management and maintenance of OLDEA's across the city.

The implementation action plan has also been divided into four themes being:

1. Creating Safe Welcoming Spaces
2. New Opportunities and Meeting Demand
3. Education and Awareness
4. Maintenance and Improvements

Each action within the above themes has a priority rating and associated timeframe. Priorities have been determined based on need/demand, resource requirements, location and benefit:

- High (1-3 years);
- Medium (4-7 years); and
- Low (7 years +).

In most instances, the plan prioritises low cost actions as well as the provision of infrastructure in existing OLDEA's prior to the expansion of the OLDEA network and infrastructure within these new spaces.

An estimate of resources required to implement each action has been identified to inform budgeting processes. These are approximations and should be reviewed prior to implementation or as part of annual business and budget planning.

Action Implementation Plan

Action	Priority	Cost
1. Creating Safe Welcoming Spaces		
1.1 Manning Park, Cessnock		
The southern end of Manning Park is fenced: 0.5Ha in size	High	\$60,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	High	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC*
The northern end of the reserve be decommissioned as an OLDEA and retained for firefighting purposes, passive recreation and the proposed cycleway which traverses the site (adjacent to the stormwater channel).	Medium	<\$1,000
1.2 Hall Park, Cessnock		
The site is fenced: 0.5Ha in size	High	\$60,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	High	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC*
1.3 Stanford Merthyr		
Engagement is undertaken with Crown lands requesting Council be the Crown Land Manager for the OLDEA.	High	Nil**
Bollards are installed to delineate the OLDEA: 0.5Ha in size.	Medium	\$20,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the bollards to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	Medium	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC*
1.4 Greta Central Oval		

Action	Priority	Cost
A fenced District sized OLDEA is provided: 0.5ha – 1ha in size.	Medium	\$75,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	Medium	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC*
1.5 Huntlee		
Upon dedication of the OLDEA to Council, the OLDEA is retained.	Low	N/A
1.6 Miller Park, Branxton		
The site is fenced: 0.5Ha in size	High	\$60,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	High	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC*
1.5 Hall Park, Cessnock		
Hall Park is decommissioned as an OLDEA.	High	<\$1,000
1.6 Varty Park, Weston		
Varty Park is decommissioned as an OLDEA (following the establishment of an OLDEA at Chinaman’s Hollow).	Medium	<\$1,000
1.7 Miller Park, Branxton		
Miller Park is decommissioned as an OLDEA.	High	<\$1,000
2. New Opportunities & Meeting Demand		
2.1 Bellbird North		
A district fenced OLDEA is established within the proposed district sports facility at Bellbird North: 0.5ha to 1Ha in size.	Medium	\$75,000

Action	Priority	Cost
The OLDEA to include park infrastructure items as determined by Council Staff and the developer at the detailed design stage.	Medium	TBC**
2.2 Bridges Hill, Cessnock		
A local OLDEA is established. Bollards are installed to delineate the OLDEA: 0.5Ha in size.	High	\$20,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	High	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC**
2.3 Cliftleigh Meadows		
A local fenced OLDEA is established: 0.5Ha to 1Ha in size.	Medium	\$60,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of park infrastructure required as well as its location.	Medium	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC**
2.4 Chinaman's Hollow, Weston		
A district fenced OLDEA is established: 0.5Ha in size.	Medium	\$75,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of Park infrastructure required as well as its location.	Medium	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC**
2.5 Ellalong Park		
A district fenced OLDEA is established: 0.5Ha – 1Ha.	Medium	\$75,000
A site assessment and design is completed following the fencing to determine the level of Park infrastructure required as well as its location.	Medium	<\$10,000
Park infrastructure items to be factored into future recreation capital works programs.	Medium	TBC**
3. Education and Awareness		

Action	Priority	Cost
Review and update the design of the current signage for OLDEA's.	High	<\$1,000
New signage is installed within OLDEA's at key points of entry.	High	<\$15,000
A one-page fact sheet that provides dog owners with the locations and characteristics of OLDEA's within the Cessnock LGA is developed.	High	Nil*
A dedicated page is created on Council's website outlining the locations and characteristics of Council's OLDEA's.	High	Nil*
4. Maintenance & Improvements		
A Maintenance Operating Manual for OLDEA's is developed.	High	Nil*
Design specifications are developed for OLDEA park infrastructure – fencing, seating, water fountains, bins, turf etc.	High	Nil*
TOTAL		\$690,000

**Funding will be confirmed following the completion of individual park assessments*

***These tasks are able to be absorbed within existing Council Officer Roles*

It is important to note that items within the Action Implementation Plan will be incorporated within future reviews of the Cessnock Citywide Infrastructure Contributions Plan 2020. Following the successful inclusion of district wide OLDEA's including Greta Central Oval, Bellbird North, Chinaman's Hollow and Ellalong Park a portion of the costs for these facilities may be funded via developer contributions.

While the costs for community engagement, detailed design and procurement can be absorbed through existing operational budgets and Council Officers undertaking these tasks, funds will need to be identified to support the construction, asset renewal and maintenance costs of an OLDEA.

Future implementation and staging will be dependent on the inclusion of the Action Implementation Plan in Council's long-term financial plan. Further, the implementation of the Plan will be subject to the support of additional funding allocation requests as part of the budget process.

Accordingly, the implementation of this Plan is a staged process, subject to successful funding allocations and is set to occur over a number of years.

Section 17

Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Maintenance Activities

As part of the Plan, it is essential to consider the budget implications of increased maintenance and repairs including staff resources to maintain a OLDEA. Tasks such as mowing, tree maintenance and repair/replace park furniture is already undertaken in existing OLDEA's however additional maintenance tasks will not be able to be absorbed within current operational budgets and programs.

The key activities that are likely to require additional funding in OLDEA's are repairs to fencing, signage and ground surfaces. The increased ground surface repairs required are likely to be necessary because of greater activity in a confined space. The routine maintenance tasks that need to be considered are listed below:

- Additional mowing and weed management;
- Increased whipper-snipping required due to the increased amount of fencing;
- Filling holes dug by dogs (where hazardous);
- Pruning of plants/tree management, maintenance and planting as required;
- Maintaining and replacing surface materials, turf, mulch, sand etc.;
- Repairing perimeter fencing and gate locks;
- Repairing or replacing park furnishings, signage and agility equipment; and
- Emptying waste bins.

Approximate costs to undertake the above work on an annual basis are outlined below.

Table 8: OLDEA Maintenance Costs Per Annum*

Local	District
Manning Park	Bellbird North Development Area
Bridges Hill	Chinaman's Hollow
Stanford Merthyr	Greta Central Oval
Cliftleigh Meadows	Ellalong Park
<i>Sub-total</i> :\$30,400	<i>Sub-total</i> : \$47,120
Total - \$77,520	

**Maintenance costs have not been included for Huntlee as this site is currently in developer ownership with maintenance activities borne by the developer.*

An ongoing commitment of funds and resources will be required to achieve the maintenance objectives of the Plan.

Section 18

Implementation and Review

This Plan will need to be adequately resourced to deliver identified actions and ultimately deliver a revised framework for OLDEA's.

The implementation of the Action Plan should be continually monitored by Council staff. The overall progress should be evaluated after five years, with amendments to the actions and supporting information as required.



62-78 Vincent Street
Cessnock, NSW
Australia



Contact:
Tel: 02 49934300



Online help:
council@cessnock.nsw.gov.au
<http://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au>