Jock Brown Sportsfield

Masterplan Report

Adopted by Council August 2025

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Executive summary

This masterplan for Jock Brown Sportsfield has been prepared in accordance with the Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Needs Study and Strategy and the Masterplan Priority list for Active Open Spaces.

The masterplan provides a long-term vision and action plan for Jock Brown Sportsfield in Barrack Heights. It gives a visual layout to guide development on the site for the next 10 years (approximately).

Jock Brown Sportsfield is located on Gipps Crescent in Barrack Heights. It has one sports field which has accommodated cricket and AFL as well as a training venue for rugby league. The site also currently accommodates an off-leash dog area and has an aging amenity building and cricket nets. There is a recently constructed (completed October 2024) playspace on the site which provides a renewed local play opportunity.

The masterplan identifies opportunities to activate, enhance and future proof Jock Brown Sportsfield through the provision of new facilities, the repurposing of the existing sportsground area and consideration of sustainable inclusions. This in turn will create a sportsground that is flexible to accommodate different sporting codes (rugby league and football (soccer)) as demand arises. Creating open spaces that can meet the recreational needs of the broader community and implementing sustainable elements ensures that Shellharbour's open spaces such as Jock Brown Sportsfield will be future proofed.

A number of groups and people were consulted as part of the preparation of this masterplan including; relevant council staff members and committees, user groups of the site, adjoining owners and the wider community. The masterplan will come into effect after it has been on public exhibition and adopted by Council.

Acknowledgement of Country

Shellharbour City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Dharawal Country and recognise their continued connection to the land. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and the contribution they make to the life of this city.

Introduction

Jock Brown Sportsfield is an important district park of approximately 6.86 hectares, located on Gipps Crescent in Barrack Heights. The site is within walking distance of Barrack Heights Public School and Shellharbour Private Hospital.

The masterplan outlines a long-term vision and action plan for Jock Brown Sportsfield, in order to make it a usable and distinctive recreational facility for the local area. The vision is to develop a vibrant and engaging area that takes advantage of the attributes of the site, as well as providing a range of social and recreational possibilities for all user groups. There is an opportunity to enhance this area through a new sports amenities building, redesign of the sportsground and associated drainage, formalised carparking, a shared pathway, additional lighting, recently renewed local play space, landscaping and tree planting.

Background

Open Space and Recreation Needs (OSRN) Study and Strategy

Council's Open Space and Recreation Needs Study provides a clear understanding of the current situation regarding the city's open space, recreation, and aquatic facilities. It examines the amount and variety of open space and recreation facilities, current usage, participation rates, issues, and trends. The study informs the strategy which provides direction for Council and the community regarding the future management of active and passive recreation areas, parks and reserves, sports fields and aquatic facilities managed by Council.

Relevant Actions from the Strategy for this masterplan are:

1.5 Continue to initiate, resource and implement master plans for key open spaces informed by the OSR Needs Study.

2.4 Continue to instigate a master planning program for new or upgraded sports facilities, giving careful consideration to the findings in the OSR Needs Study, including in respect to whole-of-life costing and sustainable field surfaces.

5.3 Develop and promote more multi-purpose parks, reserves and sporting grounds, including by adding facilities and features (such as accessible toilets, inclusive playgrounds, youth-focused sports equipment, barbeques and water elements) designed to attract a wide cross-section of the community.

Activation and updated sporting facilities aligns with the OSRN study and growth of football (soccer) within the area.

Masterplan Priority List for Active Open Spaces

A Masterplan priority list for active open spaces was adopted in November 2021, in accordance with the findings of the Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Needs Study and Strategy.

The list revealed that generally the top high scoring priority sites had multiple user groups, a number of poor asset condition items and a higher level of risk both to the community and environment than other sites.

The Masterplan Priority list is a guide and therefore not static, so when needs or opportunities arise that require a less prioritised site to be master planned, this can occur. While at the time of the masterplan priority project, Jock Brown Sportsfield was not identified as a top priority for master planning, an opportunity to repurpose the site to meet the growing demand of football has been recognised.

Community Land Plan of Management – Jock Brown Sportsfield

The site is Council owned and managed, classified as Community Land in accordance with the NSW Local Government Act 1993. The Act requires that all community land must have a community land plan of management. This masterplan aligns with the Core Objectives and the following categories in the Plan of Management for Jock Brown Sportsfield:

- Sportsground
- Park

Shellharbour City Council's Community Facilities Strategy 2021-2031

The Community Facilities Strategy is framed by six Guiding Principles that are used to inform decision making at all levels of Council. It is then built around five Priorities that outline the key directions Council will focus on over the next ten years

The masterplan has been prepared in accordance with the guiding principles of Council's Community Facilities Action Plan.

1. Responsive to Community and Place
2. Accessible Inclusive and Adaptive
3. Nurturing Cohesion and Creating Connections
4. Affordable and Equitable
5. Informed by Evidence and Best Practice
6. Sustainable and Future Orientated.

What is a Masterplan?

A masterplan is a blueprint for the future. It is a long-term plan, providing a visual layout to guide growth and development for Council, user groups and the wider community. The information and concepts presented in the masterplan are intended to guide local decisions on uses of public land, as well as the provision of public facilities.

The masterplan guides the proposed development and ongoing management of the area, to provide planning that meets community expectations, as well as enhancing recreational, scenic and ecological values of the active open space.

The purpose of a masterplan is:

- To enhance and encourage the use of the area in accordance with its character and adaptability for multiple user groups.
- To strategically assess and plan out active open spaces.
- Conserve natural resources and energy.
- Meet the needs for recreational and community events, and other uses of land.
- Ensure that uses of the land and the facilities be situated in appropriate locations.
- Avoid duplication and conflicting uses of facilities.
- To inform the delivery program and operational plan.
- To assist with grant funding applications.
- To address needs of our active open space users but also to set realistic expectations for the Community, Councillors, Customers and Council

Project Methodology and Consultation

The process for preparing this masterplan has involved:

- Information gathering, identifying issues and opportunities
- Engaging consultant to design detention basin
- Drafting a masterplan with specific regard to the detention basin design
- Internal Staff Consultation
- Contacting and meeting user groups for input
- Drop-in sessions and online survey of wider community
- Reporting draft to Council
- Public exhibition
- Consideration of submissions
- Reporting back to council for final adoption

Consultant to design detention basin and masterplan

A consultant has been engaged by Council to provide a Jock Brown Masterplan package, inclusive of a Concept Design, Civil Engineering detailed design and Landscape Plans. As part of this package, a detention basin has been incorporated in design as aligning with the Elliott Lake - Little Lake Floodplain Risk Management Plan as to improve flood mitigation within the catchment. As part of the package, the consultant will also provide a Flooding Assessment Report which demonstrates the outcome of the design, reviewing flood mechanisms and characteristics specific to the site, evaluating the changed conditions, and providing updated flood mapping to demonstrate outcomes.

Internal Staff Consultation

Internal Council staff from multiple departments were consulted to gather advice on the proposed design. These comments were taken on board and have influenced the final design.

External User Groups

Existing and future major user groups of the site were contacted for input into this masterplan. User groups will be able to provide further feedback as part of the public exhibition process.

Wider Community

Consultation with the wider community is an important part of information gathering and shaping this masterplan. The wider community uses the unfenced dog off-leash area at the southern end of the site and the recently renewed playground at the northern end. The opinions of these community members are important in developing the masterplan.

This consultation was through Council's "Let's Chat" webpage involving a survey of questions and reaching out to nearby landowners within a 500m radius (approximately 300 houses). Consultation also included on-site drop-in sessions with Council Staff.

The Let's Chat page received 163 contributions submitted by the community and 4,408 views on the site page demonstrating a high level of public interested.

The morning on-site drop-in session had 23 community members attending, a high number of which stated that they lived in nearby or adjacent properties to Jock Brown Sportsfield. The afternoon drop-in session had an attendance of 12 community members.

Major concerns raised across the two sessions included matters of safety and crime prevention, public and private access, provision of shade, improved accessibility and amenity to the site, the retention of the existing natural areas and equitable use and allocation of sporting code use and representation across the wider local government area. Feedback regarding the development of the Masterplan was largely positive.

The Site

Local and Regional context

Jock Brown Sportsfield is an important district park of approximately 6.86 hectares, located on Gipps Crescent in the suburb of Barrack Heights. It is within walking distance of Shellharbour Private Hospital and Barrack Heights Public School. The site has two additional pedestrian accesses from Captain Cook Drive and Messenger Road.

The site is serviced by a bus which stops in both directions on Lake Entrance Road, approximately 10-minute walk to the oval.

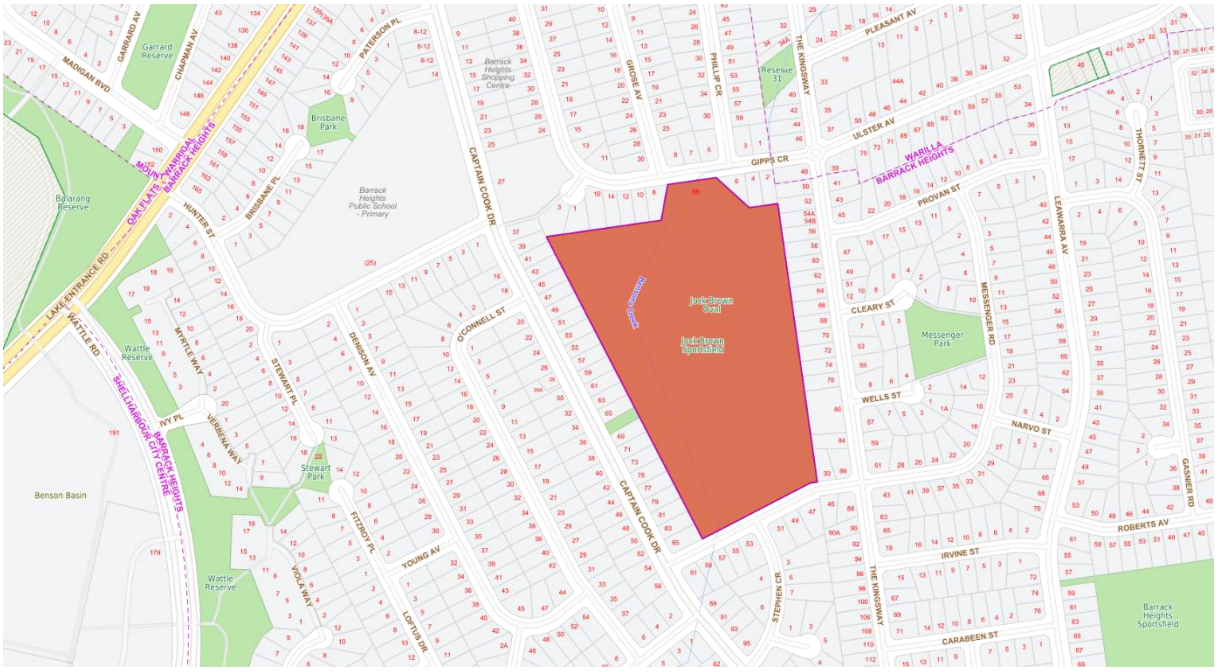

Figure 1 - Map of area

Existing Site conditions

Jock Brown Sportsfield current facilities include; sports fields configured for cricket and AFL, cricket nets, a small amenities block, off leash dog area, play space and informal carpark.

Use of the field is generally limited to daylight hours with current lighting inadequate. The poor lighting, poor field conditions and the low utilisation of the site has increased the ongoing vandalism to the existing amenities. There is currently no access to public toilets at this facility for general park users.

Figure 2 – Existing site

Sport Club Facilities

The sport club building is in poor condition and is due for renewal. It would not meet the needs of future user groups or provide them with an appropriate level of amenity. It does not meet today's standards for accessibility and food sale.

Figure 3 – Existing sport club house

Open Space

The sportsfield is currently configured for cricket and AFL and is underutilised. Drainage is poor and the fields often closed after heavy rain.

Figure 4 – Existing sportsfield

Play Space

At the time this masterplan was written, the new playspace had recently been constructed. The playspace provides a renewed local play opportunity.

Figure 5 – New Playspace

Off-Leash Dog Area

There is a current space identified for the exercising of dogs off the leash, which is situated at the southern end of the sportsfield adjacent to Messenger Road.

Figure 6 – Existing dog off-leash area

Carparking/ Landscaping/Lighting

The site currently has an informal carpark, minimal landscaping and lighting that requires renewal.

Figure 7 – Existing carpark

Habitat and Ecological Values

Council's records do not indicate the existence of any significant habitat or ecological values on this property.

There are a number of mature trees in the north-west corner of the site. The Plant Community Type (PCT) 3327 Illawarra Lowland Red Gun Grassy Forest is present, scattered on the western boundary of the oval. This will be protected as part of the masterplan design.

Services and Easements

Electricity and Water are available on the site. There is a Council Stormwater asset traversing the site, along with Sydney Water Sewer onsite.

Flooding

Jock Brown Sportsfield is situated along the Bensons Creek Tributary, within the Elliott Lake – Little Lake Catchment. The site currently consists of a single oval with adjacent open space to the west and south, surrounded by established residential development. The sportsfield is known to experience inundation during both minor and major flood events, as identified in the *Elliott Lake – Little Lake Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan* (Rhelm, 2024). Frequent flooding, particularly from higher probability events, has impacted the regular use and functionality of the site. These flood risks, both on-site and downstream—affecting residential properties in Warilla and critical infrastructure such as Lake Entrance Road—prompted the initiation of a master planning process. The study recommended a combined Northern Basins flood mitigation strategy (FM7), nominating Jock Brown Sportsfield as one of three potential sites for detention basin implementation. This strategy presents an opportunity to reduce downstream flood impacts while also improving flood resilience at the site itself.

Park Users

Kookas Cricket Club hold some junior competition games here during the summer months; however, it is not their home ground.

Other clubs that have used the site over the last year include Shellharbour Stingrays Junior RLFC, South Coast Group 7 Rugby League and Shellharbour City Cricket Club.

Warilla Public School, Warilla High School and Barrack Heights public School use the site for term sport and their Cross-Country Carnivals.

Dog owners use the site as there is currently a designated dog off-leash area at the southern end.

The wider community use the site in association with the playspace or other recreational activities.

The opportunity to repurpose the site to meet the growing demand of football has been recognised.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

This Masterplan provides an opportunity to significantly improve the site for the community. Potential opportunities include:

- Improve drainage on the site to allow more use
- Provide for a safer more usable play space
- Improved accessibility and accessible amenities
- Amenities open to the public during daylight hours
- Improvement of safety through new lighting
- Improvement of safety through building design and passive surveillance,
- Formalise carparking for vehicular ease of use and provide pedestrian safety.
- Create connection though out the park between facilities
- Enhance the identity and use of the park through new facilities and create a sense of ownership for the community.
- Use landscaping to enhance character of the site.
- Activate the open space area

The existing sportsfield is currently configured for cricket and AFL. There are currently no home teams at Jock Brown oval, it is used for some junior cricket games.

Winter use is limited due to the field having no lighting and no drainage. The field is susceptible to closure during wet weather. There is opportunity to upgrade the lighting and improve the drainage through this masterplan process.

The repurposing of the facility for football (soccer) will support the growth of the sport in the area now and into the future.

The site will also be future proofed in that there will be the space and options to change field layout if required in the future for rugby league.

Constraints

Constraints on the site include:

- Flooding/drainage
- Adjoining residential areas
- Existing dog off-leash area
- On site utility assets
- Existing vegetation

The Masterplan

Jock Brown Sportsfield provides an important area of open space. The site provides organised sport and informal recreation. These uses are enhanced in the masterplan which provides a framework for the future development of the park with upgraded facilities.

The masterplan has been developed from:

- A response to the changing needs of the community
- Existing site conditions/ constraints
- Establishing a design that is realistic, achievable, flexible and can be implemented over time
- Creating an attractive, useable space

New facilities, with additional fields and ancillary infrastructure will attract additional use, improve the field's resilience to weather events and allow the local community to engage in sport more consistently irrespective of conditions. It will also support local clubs that are outgrowing other facilities in the LGA. Facilities will be accessible, inclusive and safe by providing formalised carparking, accessible paths of travel and maximising the visibility of the structures and its approaches.

Sustainable Design

The Jock Brown masterplan has been developed with consideration of Council's Zero Emissions Shellharbour Strategy to address the impacts of climate change on this facility. It incorporates mitigative measures through the use of sustainable materials, systems and initiatives that improve the resilience of the infrastructure to the hazards and risks of a changing climate.

Key sustainable design initiatives which could be considered for Jock Brown Sportsfield include:

1. Energy Efficiency
    - Solar systems with smart monitors on building roofs and other structures (where feasible)
    - LED Lighting, with motion/occupancy sensors
2. Transport
    - Publicly available electric vehicle charging infrastructure in accordance with Council's EV Charging Infrastructure Guidelines
    - Accessibility or close proximity via active transport connected pathways in accordance with Council's Active Transport Strategy
3. Sustainable Materials
    - Use of low-carbon, recycled, and locally sourced building materials such as timber, steel, and concrete alternatives (where appropriate)
4. Water Efficiency
    - Rainwater harvesting for irrigation
    - Appliances and fixtures are optimised to suitable flow levels
5. Heat management
    - Passive ventilation and thermal performance
    - Natural and built shade provisions
    - Drought tolerant landscaping

6. Waste management
    - Suitable community facility waste management systems and processes

Jock Brown Sportsfield Masterplan

Figure 8 - Masterplan overview

Figure 9 - Landscape Masterplan sheet 1

Figure 10 - Landscape Masterplan sheet 2

Sport Club Building

Council's standard design will be utilised (with a slight variation to accommodate both junior and senior games) for this new facility and will be located within the footprint on the masterplan.

Design Principles for the site include:

- Ensure any new infrastructure is integrated into the landscape character so that visual effects are minimised
- Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principals into the design that encourage passive surveillance, safe access and clear lines of sight where possible
- Ensure there is minimal impact on existing natural features on site through coordinated design and placement of the sporting uses and amenities
- Financially sustainable
- Accessibility and sustainability

Sportsfields/Open space

The existing oval no longer effectively activates the space on this site. Alternate sporting code configurations to support other sports such as Football (Soccer) and Rugby League have been investigated. Data collated within the Open Space and Recreation Needs Study (2019) has indicated that Football (Soccer) participation within the community is high and expected to rise over the next 10 years. Similarly, Rugby League is popular in the community, and potential improvements in community facilities will help with the capacity to accommodate participation in this sport.

Further, a rectangular sports code reconfiguration allows for the more effective incorporation of a designated flood detention basin area, which does not reduce playing field space availability onsite. As included within the Landscape Masterplan (Figures 8-10), a regulation full sized playing field and reduced size juniors' playing field can be positioned within the basin, increasing useability of the site.

The combined Northern Basins flood modification option, addressed within the Elliot Lake – Little Lake Floodplain Risk Management Plan (2024), although currently considered a long-term and low-priority action, the inclusion of the detention basin in the masterplan allows Council to pursue future funding and design refinement, thereby integrating flood mitigation with upgraded recreational infrastructure.

Dog off-leash area

As the space will be shared by many users, Council aims to keep as many of the facilities available as possible. This includes dog-friendly areas. How to best integrate all user groups is an aim of the masterplan process. Council aims to align with the objectives of the Shellharbour Dog-Friendly Strategy and legislative requirements. However, the current conditions of this site may change.

There is potential to create a permanent, fenced off-leash dog agility space in the south-east corner of the site to replace the existing allocated off-leash area. The existing off leash area will most likely be required for junior field allocation or training at certain times of the week.

Play space

There is a recently constructed playspace on the site which has provided a renewed local play opportunity. This will be retained as part of the masterplan.

Access and Car Parking

A sealed, formal carpark will enhance the site and improve safety. The increased carparking spaces will be required with the new use of the site. There is potential for formal carparking at the northern and southern ends of the site.

Pedestrian and vehicular connectivity will be enhanced across and through the site, enabling links and connectivity of uses and facilities. The design will provide access to the site for pedestrians and vehicles from external areas, highlighting clear entry points and legibility. The masterplan will ensure adequate access for emergency and service vehicles for all internal uses.

A shared pathway connecting facilities and carparking will be incorporated into the masterplan design.

Park Signage

Create a welcoming entrance to the park as well as clear information and directional signage where required. Historic signage acknowledging the life and achievements of Jock Brown are being investigated and may be incorporated into the design.

Lighting

Sports Lighting
Lighting proposed to all sports fields to an appropriate standard.

Pedestrian Lighting
Lighting to ensure safe use after dark with consideration of adjoining residential properties.

Carpark Lighting
Lighting is to be provided to all car parking to improve safety and enable use of sports facilities and other park amenities at night. Minimise light spill into adjoining residential properties.

Planting Strategy

Future landscaping could accommodate shade trees associated with the play space.
Appropriate landscaping around the carparking area to maintain lines of sight.

Staging and Implementation

It is proposed to develop Jock Brown Sportsfield in four main stages to allow continued use of the site where possible. These stages will be:

1. Play space (completed October 2024)
2. Existing Amenities and Sportsfield Infrastructure Removal
3. Detention Basin Earthworks and Drainage Structures
4. New Sportsfield and Public Amenities Building
5. New Sportsfield Infrastructure Delivery (fencing, storage, goals, player benches, seating, drainage, irrigation, lighting etc)
6. Northern Carpark
7. Southern Carpark
8. Fenced dog off leash area

Note: the above is dependent on funding.

Potential funding sources:
NSW Government Infrastructure Grants – Sport and Rec
NSW Government Infrastructure grants – community Infrastructure
Relevant local club grants

Conclusion

This masterplan has been prepared with the aim of providing a plan that activates, enhances and future proofs Jock Brown Sportsfield. The document is intended to guide future decisions on planning and development including facility replacement, upgrades and remediation strategies.

The priority of the actions proposed in the staging and implementation strategy need to be reviewed and developed over time as the needs of the community change.