

INNER WEST



Engagement outcomes report *Making Whites Creek Valley Park accessible for all*

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Summary

Community feedback was sought between 21 May and 18 June 2021 regarding a proposal to reclassify the off-leash area of Whites Creek Valley Park.

The following community input was received over a four week period:

- Online by filling in the feedback form - 187
- Emailing the Coordinator Parks Planning – 1
- Emailing the Engagement Coordinator - 1
- Mailing the Coordinator Parks Planning – 0
- Telephoning the Coordinator Parks Planning including free interpreter or National Relay Services – 0

The project page on YSIW received 504 visits, 281 people performed a further action on the page such as downloaded a document and 187 submissions were received.

Of those who submitted online, 159 were in support of reinstating the open space section of the park between Piper Street to Brenan Street to off-leash, 22 were against the proposal and 6 were not sure/neutral.

One email received was in support of maintaining the area as on-leash rather than reverting part of the park back to off-leash.

Emails were sent from one resident to Council's Engagement coordinator with 'concerns the community's preference is not being acknowledged' and concerns about the engagement process throughout the timeline of the issue.

Background

In October 2020 Council resolved in a confidential session to revoke the existing declaration in respect of the public off-leash walkway (in Whites Creek Valley Park) which runs the length of Piper Street to Brenan Street and reinstate this area as an on-leash walkway.

Concerns were originally raised about the impacts of walkway of the park being used as an off-leash area including that it may discriminate against a resident with dogs whose property adjoins the off-leash area. Additional details of the complaint were provided in a Confidential Attachment to the original report in October 2020.

Subsequently Council received a petition of 988 signatories requesting that Council reconsider this issue and revert the entire area back to an off-leash area for companion animal exercise and socialisation.

Compromise Option

Council officers carefully reviewed the companion animal restrictions in this area of the park and recommended that a compromise resolution to this issue is adopted whereby the adjoining open space which runs adjacent to the path area is designated as off-leash up to the point where the pathway joins the open space and this area is retained as on-leash.

This compromise position addresses in part the issues highlighted by the petition signatories while ensuring that Council is complying with its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act as the area immediately adjacent to the housing zone is maintained as on lease.

Council officers discussed the proposed reclassification with the resident who raised the concerns and have been advised that they are supportive of the proposed changes and recognises that a compromise is required to address community concerns.

On 9 March 2021 Council resolved to engage the community on the compromise solution.

Engagement Methods

The community was invited to provide feedback via:

- Your Say Inner West through an online feedback form
- Email
- Phone (including via the National Relay Service for Translating and Interpreting Service)
- Mail


The community was provided access to a Report to Council – 9 March 2021 and map of the Proposed Companion Animal Zones Whites Creek Valley Park. The community was also notified they could obtain a hardcopy of the proposed map and provide feedback by contacting a named officer.

Promotion

The engagement was promoted through:

- Council website
- Onsite posters
- Resident letterbox drop
- Council e-newsletter
- Inner West Pets Facebook group (run by Council's Companion Animal Services team).

Making Whites Creek Valley Park accessible for all



We want our parks to be safe and welcoming places for everyone. With this mind, Council is looking for your input on the latest way to achieve this for Whites Creek Valley Park.

We've been listening

Recent changes to the dog off-leash areas to improve accessibility have prompted people to get in touch. You've told us the way the park is used is important to you, and we've had varying perspectives on this.

After careful review of the companion animal restrictions in this area of the park and the feedback given to us by many local residents, Council has suggested a compromise be adopted.

The new dog off-leash area proposal

To balance the needs of all park users, Council is suggesting re-instating the large open space section of Whites Creek Valley Park between Piper Street to Sarsfield Street as off-leash for dog walkers. Within this pathway, adjacent to this area (which runs north to Sarsfield Street) remains an on-leash walkway.

Have your say

Do you support this proposal? Let us know:

- Online by filling in the feedback form:
- Emailing Mandy Smith, Customer Service Planning, msmith@waverley.nsw.gov.au or calling on 02 9362 5020.
- By mail, addressed to: Waverley Council, PO Box 11, Roseman 2058, attention to Mandy Smith, Customer Service Planning.
- Call a 24/7 Council helpline or the National Relay Service, Monday to Friday between 9am-5pm and provide our phone number: 02 9362 5020.
- Free Interpreter call 1800 National on 131 453.
- Voice relay call 1300 555 737.
- SMS relay call 0422 677 707.

If you'd like to obtain a hardcopy of the proposal map, contact **Sophisticated** on 02 9362 2777.

Final day for comments is Friday 10 June 2021.

What happens next?

Feedback will be reviewed and considered before Council makes its decision. An engagement outcomes report will be published to this page. Everyone who provides feedback will receive an update when this goes to Council for a decision.

FEEDBACK CLOSED

Proposal to change dog off-leash areas at Whites Creek Valley Park

This form should take 2-minutes to complete.

CLOSED This engagement is closed. Thank you to all who provided feedback.

Key dates

Community feedback opens
21 May 2021

Community feedback closes
10 June 2021

Proposal - click to enlarge

Map of Proposed Changes to Dog Off-Leash Areas at Whites Creek Valley Park

Reports Council - 4 March 2021

Whites Creek Valley Park Off-Leash Proposal to Council - 17 March 2021 11:00 AM

Project stages

Open for feedback
This engagement is open for comments.

Under Review
Contributions to this engagement are closed for evaluation and review.

Adopted by Council
Council makes a decision.

Your questions answered

Why is Council making changes to the dog off-leash areas?

Why is Council not providing an option to leave dogs off-leash in the valley area to the west?

What will happen with my feedback?

Contact person

Mandy Smith
Customer Service Planning
Waverley Council

Phone 02 9362 5020

Email mandy.smith@waverley.nsw.gov.au

More to know

Do you want to have more opportunities to have your say? Go you want to stay up to date with local and Council wide projects that impact you and the community?

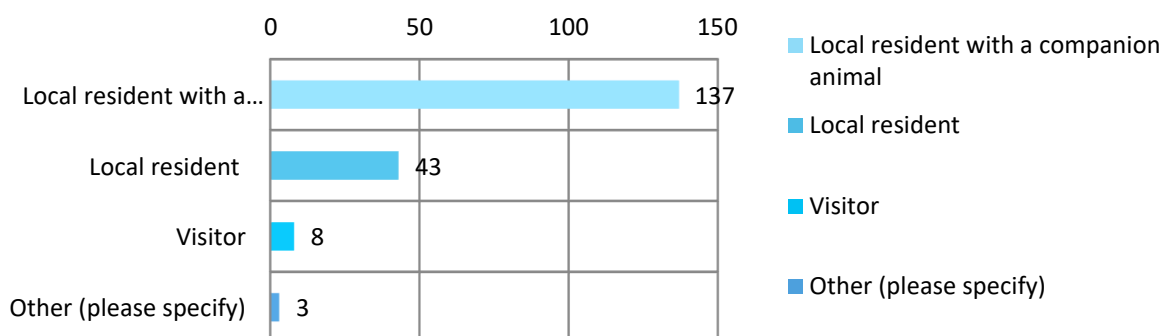
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Engagement outcomes

Who did we hear from?

Of those who contributed to the survey, 137 were residents with a companion animal, 43 residents, 8 visitors to the park and 3 did not specify their relationship to the area.

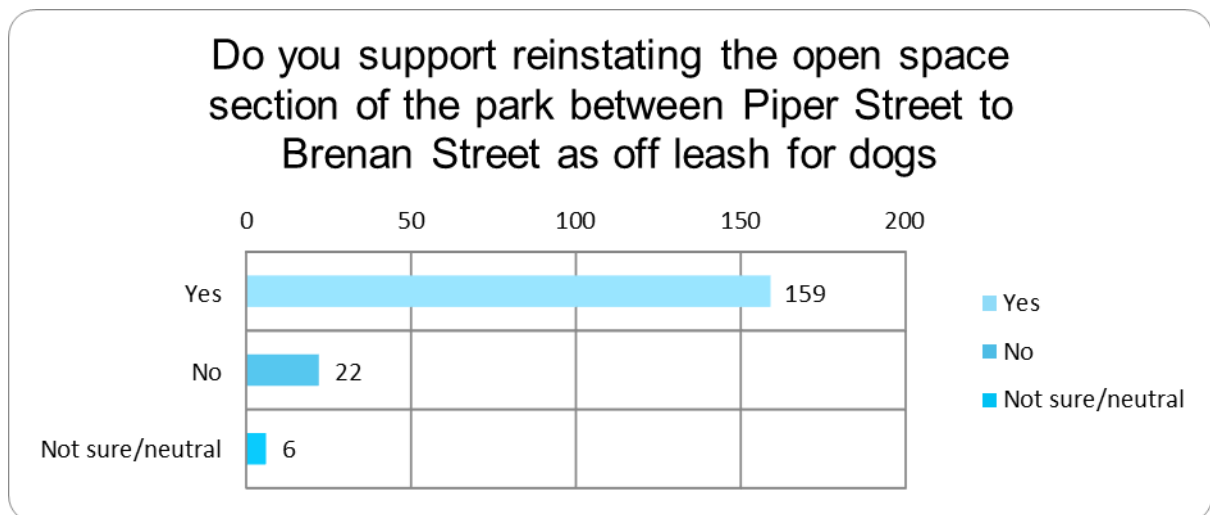
Which of the below describes your relationship to Whites Creek Valley Park?



What did they say?

- **Online via yoursay.innerwest.nsw.gov.au**

Of the 187 participants on the online survey, 159 were in support of the open space section of Whites Creek Valley Park between Piper Street to Brennan Street be reinstated as off leash for dogs. 22 were opposed to the change and 6 were not sure or neutral in their response.



Support analysed by identifying category

Do you support the proposal?	Resident with companion animal	Resident	Visitor
Yes	125	26	7
No	11	10	1
Neutral/unsure	2	4	

Comments

In total, **104** people out of 187 provided comments in the survey.

Key themes:

Comments from those in support of proposal:

- Would like to revert to the original status of the whole of Whites Creek being off-leash (19 respondents).
- Believed the compromised proposal was a pragmatic solution (14 respondents).
- Think there should have been community consultation before the initial change (12 respondents).
- Are concerned that not all perspectives were heard before Council's decision was made (5 respondents).

Comments from those not in support of the proposal:

- Would like clear signage to indicate the change to off/on leash areas within the park (4 respondents).
- Worried about public safety particularly for young children, elderly or those with disabilities when dogs are allowed off-leash (4 respondents).
- Think the off-leash areas should be fenced off (3 respondents).
- Feel safer when walking or cycling along the pathway knowing dogs would be on-leash (3 respondents).
- Believe when dogs are allowed to roam freely owners are less likely to clean up the dogs' mess (3 respondents).
- Believe there are too many parks in the Inner West dominated by dogs and don't feel there is enough space for free exercise or other leisure activities (3 respondents).
- Worried about the threat to native wildlife posed by dogs roaming freely (3 respondents).
- Concerned about the safety of smaller/more timid dogs in off-leash areas (1 respondent).

In addition, comments were raised about the need for:

- Better lighting along the Whites Creek pathway to improve safety (2 respondents).
- Council enforcement of the on/off-leash areas (3 respondents).

Officer comments in response to public exhibition

A compromise position is recommended which addresses in part the issues highlighted by the majority of respondents while ensuring that Council is complying with its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. This being that the large area of adjoining open space remains off leash while the pathway that joins the open space is retained as on leash.

The overwhelming response of residents was that the open space section of Whites Creek Valley Park between Piper Street to Brenan Street should be reinstated as off leash for dogs.

In response to the specific points raised in the survey commentary:

You said	Council Officer Response
Community consultation Council should have consulted with the local community prior to making the recent decision to make the park on-leash	Council officers note that the original report submitted to Council contained advice which was confidential in nature and contained legal advice. Community consultation was undertaken at as part of the updated review process and the public were invited to have their say on the proposed changes to the parkland.
Fencing Would like the off-leash component of the park fenced off	This section of the park is highly valued by the community at large and has not been set aside as “dog park” The area is set aside for recreational use by the whole community and as such fencing is not advocated. Companion Animal owners have a legal responsibility to keep their dogs under effective control at all times.
Signage Expect clear signage of the designated on and off-leash areas of the park	Subject to any adopted changes in companion animal access, clear signage will be developed for this area of the parkland.
Lighting Would like more lighting to improve safety	Council has noted this request and lighting will be reviewed as part of any future path upgrade works.
Enforcement Would like to know how the off/on leash areas will be enforced by Council	Regular patrols on a weekly basis will be undertaken by Council compliance section.