

CHAPTER 13 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION LAND USE

STRATEGIC PLANNING DIRECTIONS

The planning principles to be used to guide the development of this Strategy and to inform the future management and development of open space lands in Lithgow LGA are as follows:

- Effective Planning - ensure that provision of recreation and open space opportunities accurately reflect current and predicted future community needs
- Encourage effective and efficient identification and use of recreation, sport and open space infrastructure
- Recognise different economic, cultural and social values of particular communities across the LGA and provide open space accordingly
- Ensure that all new and where possible existing recreation and open space facilities, are accessible to the majority of residents in a safe and equitable manner and area equitably distributed across the LGA
- Ensure that recreation and open space facilities and activities have minimal impacts on surrounding land uses and the environment

PLANNING CONTEXT

Lithgow City Council has a considerable open space network that combined with surrounding National Parks, State Forests and private recreational facilities provides a diverse range of recreational opportunities for both the local population and wider community.

The key issue to be considered by this strategy is the overall strategic management and direction for the procurement, development, management, maintenance and function of open space within the Lithgow LGA.

PAST STUDIES AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Council commissioned consultants Ross Planning to complete an Open Space and Recreational Needs Study(OSRNS) in July 2010.

The Draft Study was presented to Council for consideration March 2011. The key findings and recommendations of the study, together with the results of consultation will be utilised to inform this Land Use Strategy as it relates to Open Space and Recreation.

It is intended to publicly exhibit the OSRNS with the Land Use Strategy with the adopted recommendations and actions used to inform the new Local Environmental Plan for the LGA and the supporting development control plan(DCP).

The aim of the consultation process undertaken for the OSRNS, was to gain an understanding of the wants, needs and desires for open space in the community. Broadly, consultation included:

- Councillors and Council Officers
- General community through community surveys, workshops and through general discussions at key locations(retail centres and in parks), additional consultation occurred with key target groups such as young people and active adults
- Sport and recreation providers – sport club specific survey, sports forum and interviews/discussions

The findings from the community consultation included the following responses:

- Good range of sporting opportunities
- Need for an indoor heated pool was highest priority amongst required facilities
- High satisfaction rating in relation to number of parks, their maintenance and cleanliness
- Need to further promote and develop walking and cycling opportunities
- Need for equity in management, maintenance and upgrade of facilities'
- Limited play opportunities in smaller communities
- Limited play opportunities for young people

PLANNING AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The two main areas of legislation that form the management framework for Council in terms of open space are:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1993

Clause 36 of the Local Government Act, 1993 sets out the need and requirements for the preparation of Plans of Management for each parcel of community classified open space within the LGA.

Broadly, Council is required to:

- Classify all public lands as either community land or operational land. Operational land generally has a more commercial focus or minimal direct community access.
- Maintain a register of all public lands.
- Prepare Plans of Management that cover all community classified land.

Although there are a number of categorisations of community land, Section 36 (4) of the Act states that the core objectives for management of community land categorised as General Community Use are:

- (a) To promote, encourage and provide for the use of the land, and to provide facilities on the land, to meet the current and future needs of the local community and of the wider public:
 - (i) In relation to public recreation and the physical, cultural, social and intellectual welfare or development of individual members of the public; and
 - (ii) In relation to purposes for which a lease, licence or other estate may be granted in respect of the land.

LITHGOW CITY LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (LEP) 1994 & RYLSTONE LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 1996

Essentially, both LEP's contain one open space zoning - Zone No 6 Open Space, that by its nature has a number of limitations. These limitation devolve from:

- The lack of differentiation of public and private open space;
- Allocation of different land uses within the zone which allows non specific recreational land uses to be zoned open space (eg flood prone areas, utility installations); and
- the broadness of the role and functionality of open space (eg conservation versus active sporting venues).
- Its application only to the urban areas of Lithgow

The objectives of this zone are:

- (a) to identify land which is owned, controlled or managed by the Council, is proposed for open space or public recreation purposes or is privately owned and used for recreational purposes,
- (b) to maximise the value of community land and promote its multiple use to satisfy the diverse recreational needs of the community,

- (c) to enable development, including clubs, only if associated with, ancillary to, or supportive of recreational uses,
- (d) to offer opportunities for recreational pursuits within residential neighbourhoods,
- (e) to provide opportunities to enhance the total environment of Lithgow,
- (f) to retain significant features and ensure that the visual impact is not necessarily reduced,
- (g) to ensure that water quality is maintained in watercourses and wetlands, and
- (h) to maintain or enhance the ecological biodiversity of watercourses and wetlands.

The Lithgow LEP, also contains a zoning for National Parks and Nature Reserves which obviously have an open space and recreational benefit to the community of Lithgow. The objectives of the zone are:

- (a) to identify land managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and
- (b) to preserve existing natural areas, aboriginal sites and historic sites, while allowing compatible development.

There is no formal legislative requirement for the amount and scope of open space within an LGA. This is further considered in the next section.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Table 1. Summary Key Open Space and Recreation Lands Planning Issues

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL ISSUES	WHY IS IT AN ISSUE?
Managing supply and demand of open space and recreational lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LGA currently has an abundance of land within the open space network with reasonable distribution in the existing urban centres. Council does not have the ability to embellish and bring all this land into functional to meet desired service levels. • A rationalisation of the supply and demand of open space is necessary as quality of land is more important than quantity. • There is need to plan for the provision of new open space land in newly developing areas to ensure that it integrates and improves the open space network. • The lack of a development contributions plan that adequately identifies the need and type of open space required for new developments has led to the provision of inappropriate lands with little functional use.
Identifying and meeting changing community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space planning needs to keep pace with and respond to the changing needs and of the community as a result of aging and other demographic indicators such as household size and income. • Trends for recreational activity also change over time and many structured sporting and recreational activities are experiencing a decline in participation rates in favour of adventure play and walking.
Managing accessibility and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space planning needs to consider accessibility and ensure a reasonable spatial distribution within urban centres whilst providing for community meeting places in the outlying rural village and localities.
Providing a management framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council relies heavily on the community to partner in the provision and maintenance of the open space network. • The lack of formal guidance in this area may lead to inequitable access to areas and facilities and disadvantage certain groups in the community.

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

MANAGING SUPPLY AND DEMAND

The findings of the OSRNS in relation to supply and demand of open space are summarised below. The full analysis can be reviewed in Appendix 1.

The gap analysis for supply and demand for open space is based on the following assumptions:

- a standard of 4 ha per 1,000 people, comprising 2.5ha for Sports Parks and 1.5ha for Recreation Parks
- population data from Lithgow City Council
- the analysis focuses only on those park types which form part of the established open space network. Other urban open space areas such as waterways, environmental parks, roadside stops, land primarily used for utility purposes and vacant or undeveloped parks have not been included
- analysis excludes specialised sports parks (although these have been considered at a broad level)
- no account has been taken of private sport and recreation facilities (although these have been considered at a community level).

Table 2. Open Space – Supply and Demand

Planning Precinct	Recreation - Local	Recreation - District	Sport	Total
Lithgow	-4.78	5.18	12.58	12.98
Portland	3.25	-1.07	1.42	3.61
Wallerawang	0.03	39.52	0.56	40.1
Rural North	-1.54	-1.24	-5.83	-8.6
Rural South	-1.5	-1	-4.66	-7.16
Total	-4.54	41.39	4.07	40.92

Based on the desired standards of service (DSS) for quantity of land, Council generally has an oversupply of open space. However, this is an elementary analysis as it does not consider the range, access or quality of the existing supply, nor more importantly, the location of land.

Overall, Council has many more parks than it requires from a catchment perspective. This is often the case as land comes into Council's possession and is developed as parkland without the land meeting the desired standards.

The assessment is solely based on functioning open space; that is, it has excluded all other land in Council's open space layer that is not yet developed into a park, or land that has a dual utility function (detention basins, telecommunication easements etc).

OPEN SPACE DEMAND & SUPPLY SUMMARY

- Council generally has an abundance of land used for, or capable of being used for, open space.
- Council has more parks than it requires on a catchment basis. The opportunity exists to consider disposal of open space land that is surplus to requirements.

- The LGA has a significant amount of land that is currently being considered as open space, however the priority recommendations of the Draft OSRNS should be adopted to ensure the available supply is suitable to meet demand in both function and form.
- The quantity of land available for recreational needs is likely to be sufficient for the foreseeable future.
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SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN SPACE IN URBAN CENTRES

The figures below demonstrate that there is a reasonable distribution of open space within the three major urban centres of the LGA.

Figure 1. Open space in Lithgow with 500m radius around recreation parks

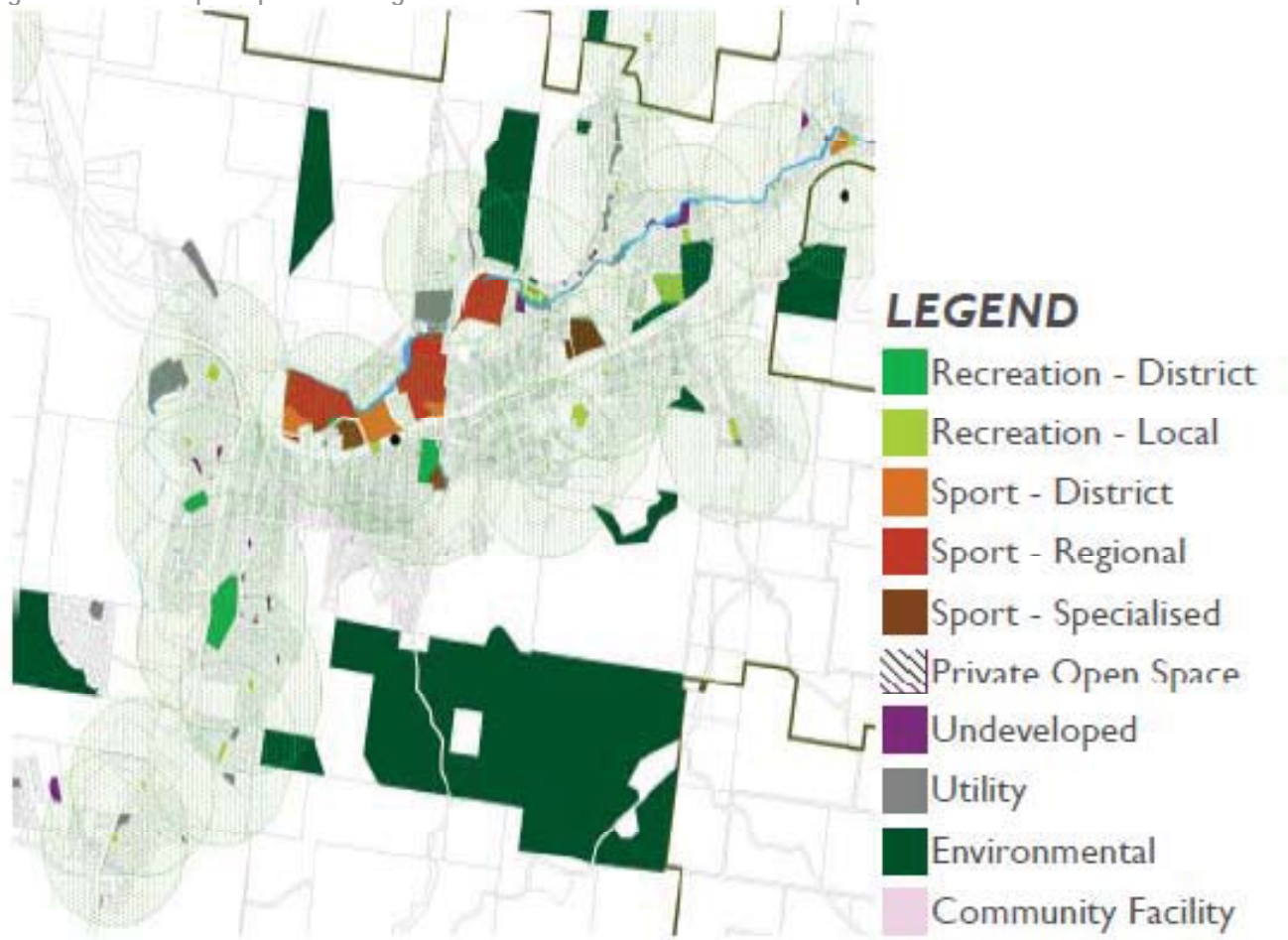


Figure 2. Open space in Portland with 500m radius around recreation parks

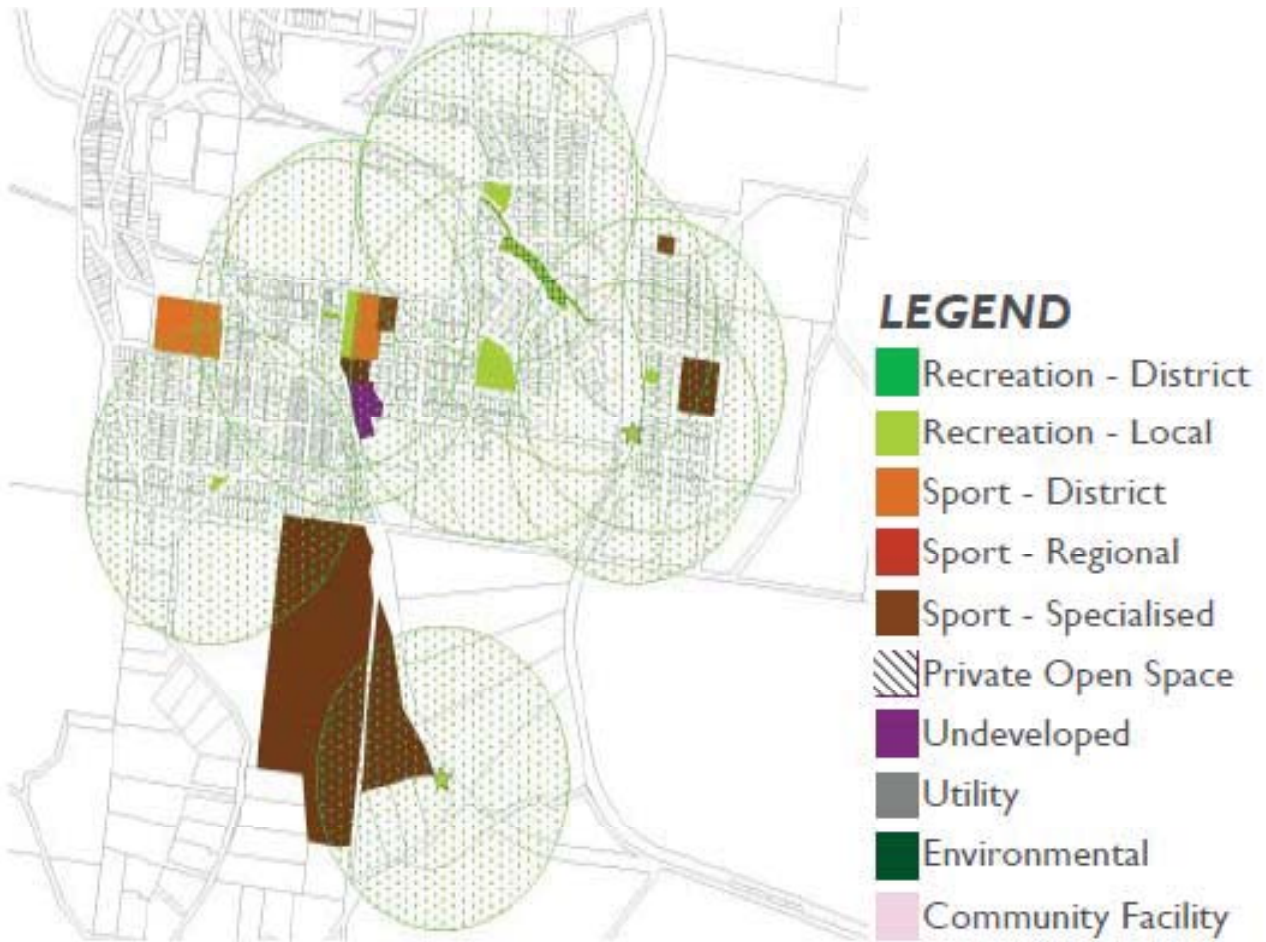
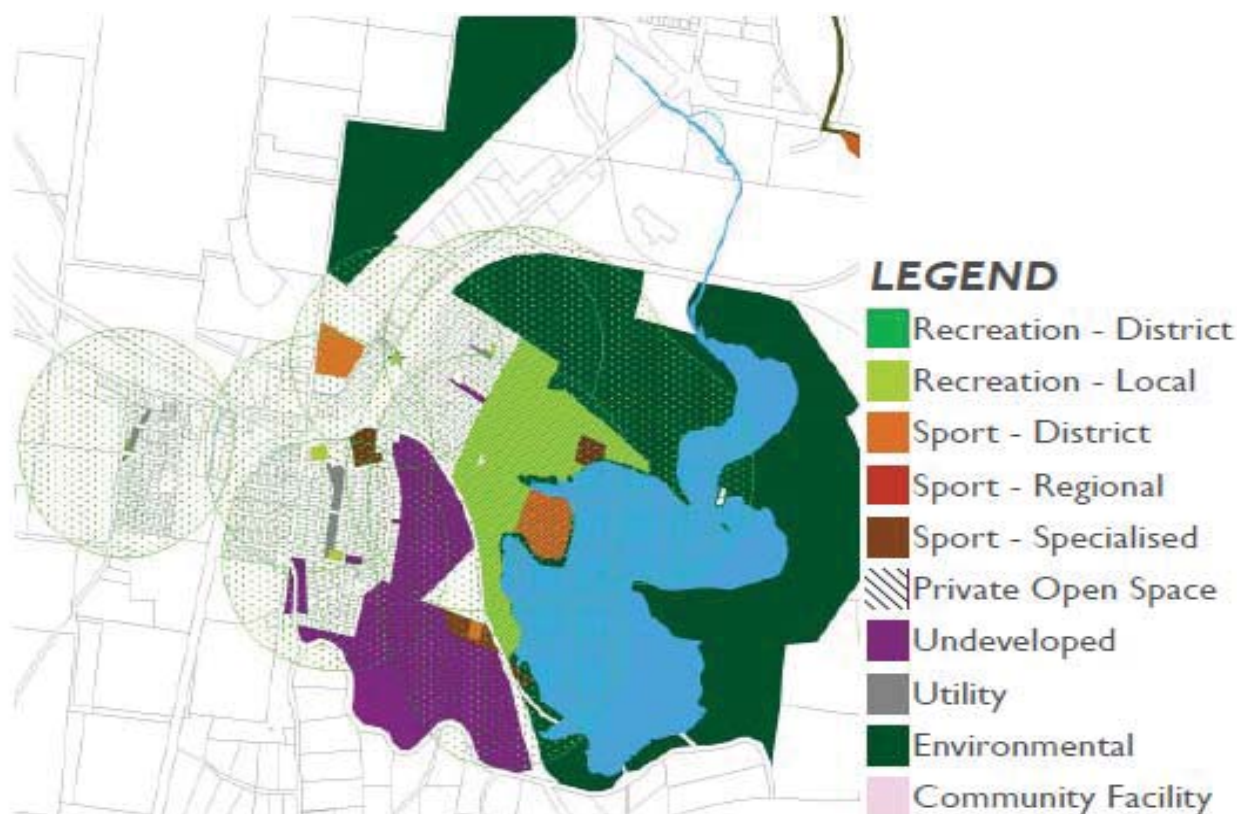


Figure 3. Open space in Wallerawang with 500 m radius around recreation parks



CHANGING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Understanding population size, growth and demographic characteristics is fundamental to responding to community needs and providing open space and recreational facilities and programs relevant to a community.

Spatial and demographic variations in the population, such as concentrations of older residents or youths, may impact on sport and recreation facility provision or management arrangements. Estimated population projections and demographic changes, also assist in quantifying likely future demand and in prioritising land and facility development.

There is not expected to be significant population growth for the LGA over the life of this strategy. However, this lack of growth, and the aging of the existing population will impact demand for open space and recreational services and facilities. Council has undertaken significant planning in order to better understand and prepare for these impending changes in demand that will be generated by our aging community over the life of this strategy.

An older population is more likely to seek unstructured recreation and physical activity pursuits such as walking, swimming and social clubs. A significant proportion of this cohort (65+) will put pressure on Council to implement and continue to extend its footpaths and trails network particularly linking residential areas with parks and senior oriented venues

ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY

With an older population and higher proportion of low income earners, the provision of low cost and easily accessible recreation and physical activity opportunities is and will be imperative across the region.

The development and concentration of facilities within the main urban centres where population thresholds are higher and accessibility greater, will assist in meeting the demands of social equity. However, opportunities for the provision of a limited range of facilities within the more remote communities of the LGA still needs to be realised to provide clustered community open space opportunities.

DISCUSSION OF NEW PLANNING APPROACH

PROVIDING A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

In considering the current and future direction for the provision of open space, Council should strive to provide an open space network that:

- Provides opportunities for recreation and sporting parks in line with current and emerging community needs
- Provides a diverse range of activity opportunities and landscape settings to encourage healthy lifestyles and maximise opportunities for engagement in physical activity
- Provides safe, attractive places and equitable and convenient access to recreation, sport and open space infrastructure
- Ensures spaces and facilities support the ongoing viability of community user groups and have the capacity to adapt to changing needs over time.

The Open Space and Recreational Needs Study will be placed on exhibition with this Land Use Strategy and further recommendations will be built into the final Land Use Strategy.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIONS

Action 13.1

- Implement the adopted recommendations of the 2010 Open Space and Recreational Needs Study.

Action 13.2

- Prepare a list of public lands identified as surplus to the Open Space Network and include for reclassification in the Lithgow City 2012 LEP to enable consideration for future disposal or additional land use.

Action 13.3

- Develop a set of land use designations in the Lithgow City 2012 LEP to identify, protect and appropriately manage the LGA's open space network having regard to the identified classification/primary function of the land as informed by the 2010 Open Space and Recreational Needs Study.

Action 13.4

- Prepare an overarching Community Lands Plan of Management for all lands within the open space network and recreational parks.

Action 13.5

- Develop a concept master plan for all district level recreational parks and town parks.

Action 13.6

- Develop a management plan and concept master plan for major crown land reserves for which Council is Reserve Trust Manager to integrate their development into future planning and functioning of the open space network.

Action 13.7

- Develop provisions for open space planning in the 2012 DCP that address, but not limited to, the following:
 - Linking of the open space network to and from desired points of destination.
 - Accessibility for pedestrian and cycling traffic.
 - Passive surveillance of land within the open space networks.
 - Provision of land and facilities in a variety of open space settings capable of adapting to changing trends and community needs.
 - Provision of future open space at the desired standards of service identified in the 2010 Open Space and Recreational Needs Study.
 - Protection of natural resources and areas of high environmental or cultural value.
 - Planning of open space areas with dual functions such as drainage, utility provision and access to consider their primary role.

Action 13.8

- Develop Saville Park Portland as a district level recreation park.

Action 13.9

- Develop an Adventure Park in the town of Lithgow .

Action 13.10

- Provide for adventure play for older children in Lithgow (Endeavour Park), Portland (Saville Park) and Wallerawang (Charles Darwin Park).