



23rd May 2023

Master Plan Stage 1 REF for Hornsby Park

The aim of Friends of Berowra Valley is to protect the natural landscape, heritage and biodiversity of Berowra Valley while making the valley more accessible to the community.

This is a huge and complex project, and we congratulate Council on their attempts to minimise the environmental impacts. We have the following main concerns:

1. The tracks on the northern and western mounds are too close to the Powerful Owls.
2. The EIS report methodology is insufficient to determine the fauna on site.
3. The Noise and Vibration Report methodology did not consider fauna.
4. More information on the construction materials for the skywalk are required.
5. The possible use of synthetic turf on the sporting fields.

Protection of Powerful Owls

Powerful Owls are listed as a vulnerable species. They have been assigned to the 'Landscape species management stream' under the *Saving our Species (SoS)* program. This SoS strategy aims to ensure that the species is secure in the wild in NSW and that its NSW geographic range is extended or maintained and maintain its conservation status under the Biodiversity Conservation Act. (Office of the Environment and Heritage, Nd)

Numerous factors in this master plan may make the life of the resident pair of endangered Powerful Owls intolerable, thus making yet another pair of owls not 'secure in the wild'. These features include:

- Night lights on the sports fields at Old Mans Valley as they will disturb the prey and the Powerful Owls. This may reduce feeding opportunities for the owls.
- Noise from the sports fields, particularly at night.
- Lookouts on the northern mound are far too close to the breeding tree. Breeding owls will be disturbed, and people may be attacked (it has happened elsewhere).
- The number of trails across the northern mound. This includes an accessible lift, paths and trails as well as a new mountain bike link trail. As the Powerful Owls breed near the north mound, this is too much disturbance.
- The high ratio of mountain bike trails to bush area on the eastern side – this greatly reduces shelter and foraging opportunities for the owls.

- Canopy activities/disturbance – a lengthy skywalk from the Aquatic Centre to Old Mans Valley is proposed with a branch to the Crusher Plant. Gravity-based adventure recreation links (presumably zip lines in the canopy) are proposed from the Crusher Plant to the south-west precinct and from the north to the south-west precinct. This is too much canopy disturbance for all canopy fauna, including the prey of the Powerful Owls.
- Weed removal and replanting strategies may enable mountain bikers and walkers to take shortcuts through open areas.
- The proposed mountain bike link to Rosemead Road and the Fishponds Trail as it will clear habitat.
- Vegetation along parts of the proposed connection to Westleigh provides ideal resting and foraging sites and its reopening would damage important creek side habitat.

These actions must be altered to ensure their survival.

- Removal of the proposed sporting fields would eliminate most night light and night noise.
- Lookouts on the northern and western mounds should be relocated.
- Reduction of the number of trails on the Northern Mound.
- Reduction of mountain bike trails through out, especially in dense understory.
- No canopy activities/disturbance from zip lines.
- No link trail from the Northern Mound around through Rosemead to Westleigh, the Rosemead trail link.

Ecological Impact Assessment by Anderson Environmental

The EIS report carries a lot of weight on the impact of the project on fauna. We consider three walks through the site during daylight hours is not sufficient to judge the impact to fauna. Why were wildlife cams not used or song meters? Why are non-threatened fauna not considered? The current methodology fails to give us the full picture of the impacts to wildlife. Our wildlife is in serious danger throughout NSW due to this type of poor surveying and reporting.

Noise and Vibration Report by GHD

This report fails to consider the noise impacts to fauna on the site.

Construction Materials

We are interested in the construction materials of the skywalk.

Synthetic Turf

FBV do not favour the use of synthetic turf. Synthetic turf is basically a product of the fossil fuel industry and is hence not sustainable, particularly as it cannot be recycled. Cleaning chemicals and micro plastics can be shed into the environment, and it deprives fauna of feeding sites.

The sporting fields are unsuitable for synthetic turf. The site is exposed to the full sun and bushfires. Synthetic turf can get extremely hot and be unsafe for players. Synthetic turf can also burn in a bushfire and produce toxic fumes – not something we want to contemplate.

Lighting

We congratulate Council in ensuring that lighting is designed in a manner, or by restriction of location, that sensitive nocturnal fauna are not disturbed, or as advised by a project ecologist (sensitive internal lighting plan to avoid throwing excessive light onto adjacent bushland areas [Anderson, 2023]).

Yours sincerely,

Friends of Berowra Valley