

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES REPORT

Improving connectivity with new walking and cycling tracks within the Abbotsbury and Bringelly of Precincts of the Western Sydney Parklands

Report

November 2015



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Document

Community engagement outcomes report - Improving connectivity with new walking and cycling tracks within the Abbotsbury and Bringelly of Precincts of the Western Sydney Parklands

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western Sydney Parklands Trust (WSPT) proposes to upgrade pedestrian and cycling track facilities within the Abbotsbury and Bringelly Precincts. Straight Talk was engaged to design, implement and report on a community engagement process to determine community attitudes towards the proposed track facilities. Approximately one hundred and fifty people participated in the engagement project; the majority of these participants were both local residents and infrequent Parkland users.

The key findings of the community engagement relating directly to the proposed tracks were:

- 👉 There is strong community support for the planned track development and for future track development within the Parklands
- 👉 The community believed that the development of the pedestrian and cycling tracks would benefit a broad spectrum of park users; including dog walkers, active families with young children and cyclists
- 👉 The community favours the development of tracks which create linked or looped track networks within the Parkland and tracks which increase entry points into the Parklands from residential areas
- 👉 Sealed tracks (concrete) are preferred to unsealed tracks (gravel) by the community
- 👉 The majority of the community prefer signage to be provided on tracks in the Parklands. The community believed track signage should both educate visitors about the Parklands and provide directions
- 👉 Residents in the Darling Street area, adjacent to the proposed track development through Calmsley Hill City Farm in Abbotsbury, expressed concern about the proposed track's proximity to their properties. These residents expressed concern about noise, a loss of security and a loss of amenity.

More broadly community engagement found that:

- 👉 The community wished to have more information on the Parklands tracks and on the Parklands in general
- 👉 Parkland users have a very positive experience of the Parklands and are very satisfied with the facilities and experiences on offer
- 👉 The planned track development was seen by the community as supporting the Parklands aim to be a nature-based recreation destination for the people of Western Sydney
- 👉 The community had diverse suggestions for future development in the Parklands
- 👉 No key gap in the current Parklands provisions was identified.

The findings of the community engagement activities demonstrate support for the implementation of the proposed tracks, with the exception of the community living closest to the proposed tracks around Darling Street near Calmsley Hill City Farm. These residents generally support the idea of a track connection from the Farm to Plough and Harrow, but expressed dissatisfaction with elements of the proposed design and alignment at this location. It is recommended that further design work including reviewing the alignment, fencing and screen planting be considered prior to finalisation of the design, and that additional communication with these residents is undertaken.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Consultation objectives

WSPT proposes to upgrade pedestrian and cycling track facilities within the Abbotsbury and Bringelly Precincts.

To inform the development of the proposals, community consultation on the proposed developments was undertaken to inform Parkland neighbours, users, private operators and the wider local community of the proposal.

Working closely with WSPT, Straight Talk undertook community engagement to understand community views on the proposal in the Abbotsbury and Bringelly Precincts. The objectives of the project were to:

- 👉 Inform the community and stakeholders on the proposed location of the tracks, the timescales for track construction work and other key details
- 👉 Understand the community needs and interests in terms of the proposed track developments
- 👉 Obtain feedback from Parklands tenants on the proposed location of new track links in the Abbotsbury Precinct
- 👉 Identify ways for the track design to be improved
- 👉 Provide 'best practice' development in line with the WSPT values
- 👉 Provide the community with a general update on development in the Parklands
- 👉 Understand general community attitudes towards pedestrian and cycling track development in the Parklands
- 👉 Promote the Parklands as a nature-based recreation destination within the local community
- 👉 Strengthen relationships between the community and WSPT.

2.2. Report structure

This community engagement outcomes report provides information on:

- 👉 The background to the engagement project
- 👉 The consultation activities undertaken
- 👉 The outcome of each consultation activity
- 👉 An analysis of the engagement outcomes
- 👉 Recommendations.

WSPT is planning to construct two tracks in the Abbotsbury Precinct of the Parklands (Figure 2) in accordance with the Western Sydney Parklands Plan of Management 2020. The proposed tracks will increase the accessibility and usability of the Parklands.

The first track will connect Calmsley Hill City Farm with the popular picnic area and playground at Plough and Harrow East. The second track will connect Plough and Harrow West with the existing connection to the Westlink M7 Shared path on Elizabeth Drive. The two proposed tracks will be linked by an existing path at Plough and Harrow.

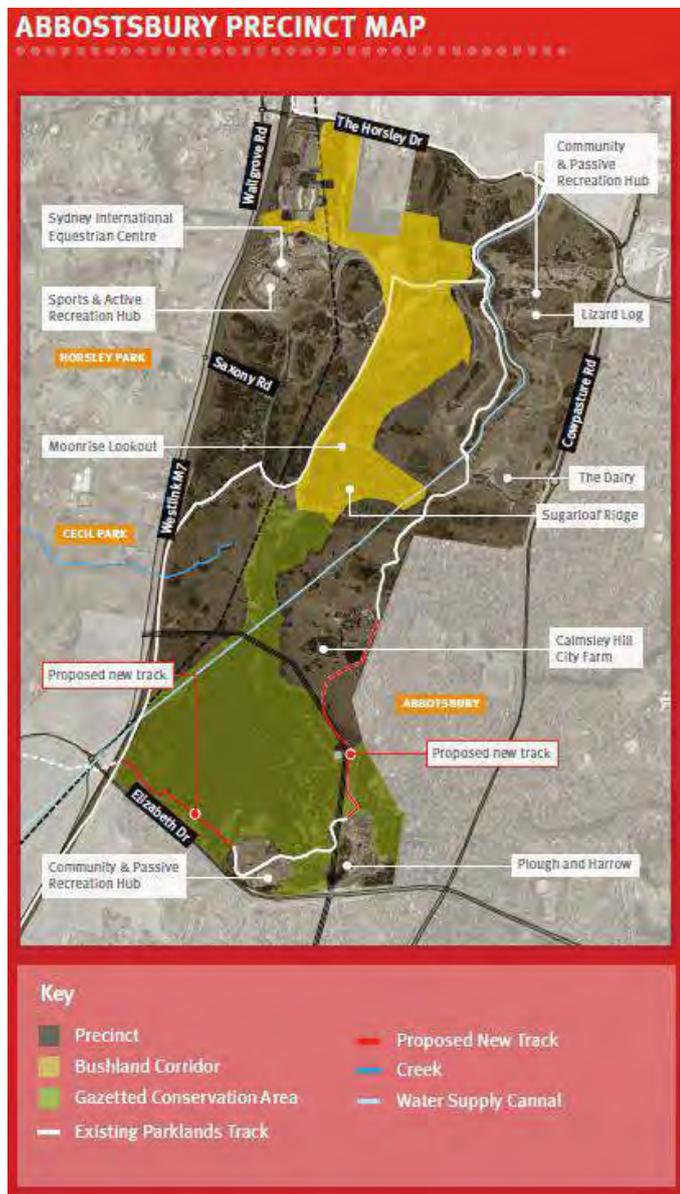


Figure 2 Map of proposed track development in the Abbotsbury Precinct at the time community engagement commenced

2.5. The proposed Bringelly Precinct tracks

WSPT is also planning to improve tracks in the Bringelly Precinct of the Parklands (Figure 3) in accordance with the Western Sydney Parklands Plan of Management 2020.

These tracks aim to provide nearby residents with better access to the Parklands from local streets. Proposed work includes:

- 📍 Reviewing the alignment and surface of the existing mown Parklands track from Thirtysecond Avenue to Stuart Road
- 📍 A new track connection from Bibb Place/Lycett Avenue in West Hoxton to the existing Parklands track.



Figure 3 Map of proposed track development in the Bringelly Precinct

3. CONSULTATION APPROACH

The following community engagement activities were undertaken.

3.1. Stakeholder meetings with Parklands tenants

Two stakeholder meetings with existing Parklands tenants were held on Friday 3 July 2015. Representatives from Amoretti's Café and Sydney TreeTop Safari attended a first meeting at Plough and Harrow and representatives from Calmsley Hill City Farm attended a meeting at the Farm. Both meetings included a visit to the site of the proposed tracks.

Straight Talk facilitated the meetings and the WSPT project manager presented the proposed Abbotsbury Precinct track development. The stakeholder meetings gave the Parklands tenants the opportunity to raise issues about the development, suggest ideas to improve the proposals and indicate their level of support or opposition for the proposed track links. The stakeholder meeting also supported the WSPT commitment to nurturing relationships with private operators.

3.2. Pop-up activities (information stalls)

A total of four pop-up activities were held, two for each Precinct development. The pop-up activities were designed as temporary information stalls to give community members the opportunity to learn about the project and provide feedback on the proposed tracks in an approachable and non-confrontational way. The stalls allowed community members to discuss their individual concerns and interests on a one-to-one basis. The WSPT project manager was on hand at each event, to answer questions and deliver accurate and tailored information. The information stalls also allowed Straight Talk to gather qualitative feedback from the community on the track development and on the Parklands, more broadly. The stalls each featured three A0 sized display boards with key maps and details on the track development.

A copy of the Abbotsbury Precinct and Bringelly Precinct display boards is at **Appendix A**.

The pop-up activities were advertised by:

- 📦 A letterbox drop to properties shown on the distribution maps in **Appendix B** with
 - Approximately 4,100 properties receiving information about the Abbotsbury Precinct tracks between 4 July 2015 to 6 July 2015
 - Approximately 2,800 properties receiving information about the Bringelly Precinct tracks between 17 July 2015 to 21 July 2015
- 📰 Newspaper advertisements in the following newspapers:

- Fairfield Advance for the Abbotsbury Precinct tracks on 8 July 2015
- Fairfield Champion, for the Abbotsbury Precinct tracks on 8 July 2015
- Fairfield Advance for the Bringelly Precinct tracks on 15 July 2015
- Fairfield Champion for the Bringelly Precinct tracks on 15 July 2015

📄 Placement of informative posters, including at the following locations:

- Calmsley Hill City Farm
- Amoretti's Café
- Sydney TreeTop Safari

📄 Online using the WSPT website, Facebook page and Twitter account.

A copy of the primary community engagement promotional material is in **Appendix B**.

A copy of the additional community engagement promotional material is in **Appendix C**.



Figure 4 Community members talking with WSPT staff at an Abbotsbury pop-up information stall

3.2.1. Feedback mechanisms available

Each stall also featured a visible space to capture feedback. Feedback headings were printed and affixed to a display board. Respondents were asked to write comments on Post-it notes and place them underneath the relevant section, creating a display of community ideas. Staff members transcribed community responses where people preferred to give verbal feedback.

The feedback headings used to encourage feedback were:

- 📄 What do you like about the proposed track?
- 📄 What do you dislike about the proposed track?
- 📄 Signage on the proposed track
- 📄 Seating and resting points on the proposed track
- 📄 What future facilities would you like to see in this area of the Parklands?
- 📄 Any other feedback.

The information stalls in the Abbotsbury Precinct also invited participants to complete a paper version of the online community survey (Section 3.3).

At Plough and Harrow a 'chocolate wheel' was also used to involve children in the engagement project and allow them to provide feedback on the park in a fun and accessible way.

The activity invited children to spin a colourful wheel and respond to a question corresponding to the colour that the wheel landed on. Children then placed their answers on the colourful chocolate wheel feedback board. Children were rewarded with chocolate 'prizes' for participating.



Figure 5 The chocolate wheel at Plough and Harrow

Details regarding community participation at the information stalls are detailed tables **1** and **2**:

Table 1 Participation at the pop-up activities in the Abbotsbury Precinct

Location	Time of day	Date	Number of participants	Staff
Calmsley Hill City Farm	1pm-3pm	Saturday 18 July 2015	8	Straight Talk Kester Boardman Alyce Taylor WSPT Joshua French
Plough and Harrow	10am-12pm	Sunday 19 July 2015	18	Straight Talk Kester Boardman Alyce Taylor WSPT Joshua French

Table 2 Participation at the pop-up activities in the Bringelly Precinct

Location	Time of day	Date	Number of participants	Staff
Council Park	10am-12pm	Saturday 25 July 2015	7	Straight Talk Kester Boardman Rachelle Alchin WSPT Joshua French
Greenway Park Community Centre	4pm-6pm	Wednesday 29 July 2015	3	Straight Talk

Location	Time of day	Date	Number of participants	Staff
				Kester Boardman Rachelle Alchin WSPT Joshua French

3.3. Online community survey (Abbotsbury Precinct only)

An online survey was created to gain quantitative feedback on the proposed Abbotsbury Precinct track development from the wider community. The survey was open for four weeks from 2 July to 31 July 2015. Community members also had the opportunity to complete a hard copy version of the survey at the two Abbotsbury Precinct information stalls (Section 3.2).

The survey consisted of 14 questions and was designed to give insight into the communities' reaction to key details of the proposed Abbotsbury Precinct track development and understand existing use of the Parklands. The survey also invited respondents to sign up to receive ongoing updates from WSPT.

A copy of the online community survey is in **Appendix D**.

The survey was advertised by a letterbox drop, newspaper advertisements and placement of informative posters. The survey was also promoted by the WSPT website, Facebook page and Twitter account.

A copy of the primary community engagement promotional material is in **Appendix B**.

A copy of the additional community engagement promotional material is in **Appendix C**.

4. ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

4.1. Abbotsbury Precinct

4.1.1. Parklands tenants stakeholder meeting outcomes

Feedback from the two stakeholder meetings indicated that overall Parklands tenants supported the proposed track development. A total of five representatives attended the meetings, representing Calmsley Hill City Farm, Amoretti's Café and Sydney TreeTop Safari.

At both meetings, a visit was made to the proposed location of the track to clearly illustrate the proposed track locations relative to existing land use. It is noted that all the Parklands tenants agreed to display informational project posters advertising the consultation program at their venues.

Summary of responses

A number of themes emerged in the issues and concerns raised including:

Security

Representatives from Calmsley Hill City Farm and Sydney TreeTop Safari raised concerns about the security risk of increasing public access near their sites. This concern was noted, and the WSPT project manager stated that this would be managed by maintaining separation between their operations and the track, using a suitable fence and gate system, while maintaining access to existing operational areas.

Parking

Representatives from Amoretti's café and Sydney TreeTop Safari raised parking as a concern at Plough and Harrow. They noted that this was an existing issue affecting their business and were concerned that the track would increase demand for parking. The WSPT project manager agreed to follow up with the Parklands tenants on parking and the WSPT leasing and property section are managing the resolution of this matter.

Track alignment

Parklands tenants made minor suggestions about the track alignment at both Calmsley Hill City Farm and in the vicinity of Sydney TreeTop Safari to improve the overall experience for Parkland users. These suggestions were recorded by the WSPT project manager and a commitment was made to meet again with Parklands tenants and present more detailed designs of the track plans. Following the meeting the suggested changes were confirmed as being feasible, and the following changes to the route alignment were made:

- 📍 At Sydney Tree Top Safari the track was moved west of the existing office to allow a more obvious and clearer connection into Plough and Harrow East, and to avoid potential conflicts with the existing operations of the office and children's course

- 👉 At Calmsley Hill City Farm, the track was moved away from residents and closer to the existing fence lines to ensure that the resulting smaller paddocks for grazing, located at the rear of houses, were of sufficient size to maintain their existing use.

4.1.2. Pop-up activity outcomes

Feedback from the two Abbotsbury Precinct pop-up activities is summarised below:

- 👉 In general the proposed tracks in the Abbotsbury Precinct were supported by the community members who attended the pop-up activities
- 👉 The majority of attendees stated that they would use the tracks
- 👉 All attendees supported the proposed concrete track finish, which was clearly preferred by the community to a soft or gravel surface.
- 👉 Some attendees expressed a preference for circular or connected tracks

A minority of people attending the pop up event at Calmsley Hill City Farm did not support the track alignment as it was displayed in the Darling Street vicinity. Their objections to the alignment related to the proximity of the track to their property boundaries in the vicinity of Darling Street. The concerns related to potential issues of security, noise and the loss of privacy at their premises. These concerns were also reflected in subsequent feedback described in sections 4.1.4 and 4.1.5.

Detailed feedback from the pop-up activities is at **Appendix E**.



Figure 6 Community members discuss the proposed Abbotsbury tracks development with WSPT staff

4.1.3. Online community survey

A total of 93 surveys were completed, including seven surveys filled out at the Abbotsbury Precinct information stalls.

From the results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 👉 The survey was completed by community members who visit the Parklands with a wide range of frequency, from daily, to never
- 👉 When asked how often they visited the prominent Parklands locations within the Abbotsbury Precinct, the most popular response overall was 'rarely (once or twice a year)'. The least popular response was 'daily'

- 👉 The majority (76 percent) of respondents expect to use the new track between Calmsley Hill City Farm and Plough and Harrow East
- 👉 The majority (76 percent) of respondents expect to use the new ' track between Plough and Harrow West and the existing connection to the Westlink M7 shared path on Elizabeth Drive
- 👉 The majority of respondents (41 percent) indicated that they 'like' the proposed surface finish of the tracks, followed by 37 percent of respondents stating that they 'loved it' (Figure 7)
- 👉 The majority of respondents (78 percent) indicated that they 'loved' or 'liked' the proposed route of the tracks, with a minority (15 percent) stating that they 'dislike' or 'strongly dislike it' (Figure 8)
- 👉 The majority of respondents (56 percent) would like seating and resting points to be provided along the track
- 👉 The majority of respondents (64 percent) support both directional signage and signage which provides information about key features of the area. Only 9 percent of respondents did not want any kind of signage
- 👉 Respondents represented a balanced mix of ages and genders
- 👉 27 different postcodes were represented in the survey, with the majority of respondents identifying their location as being in close proximity to the Abbotsbury Precinct
- 👉 About half of all respondents wished to receive a regular electronic newsletter from the WSPT. Their contact details were delivered to the WSPT.

Detailed results from the online community survey are at **Appendix C**.

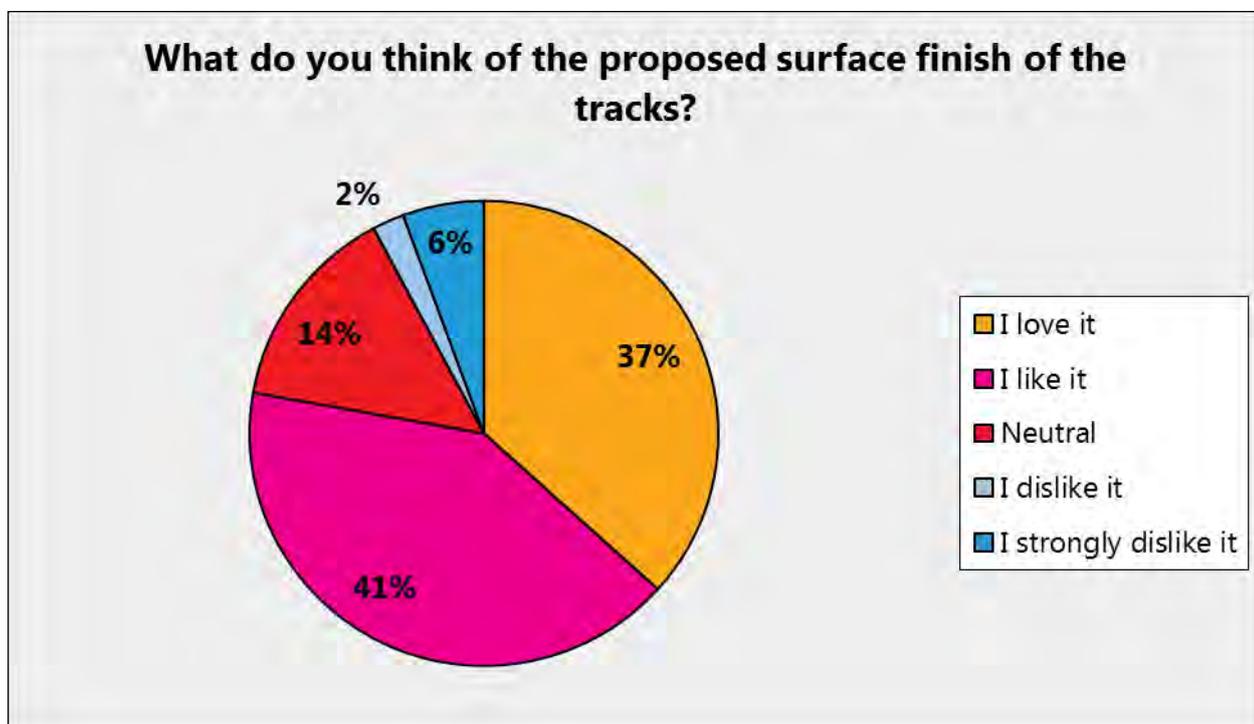


Figure 7 Response to 'What do you think of the proposed surface finish of the tracks illustrated by the accompanying photograph of an existing track in the Parklands?'

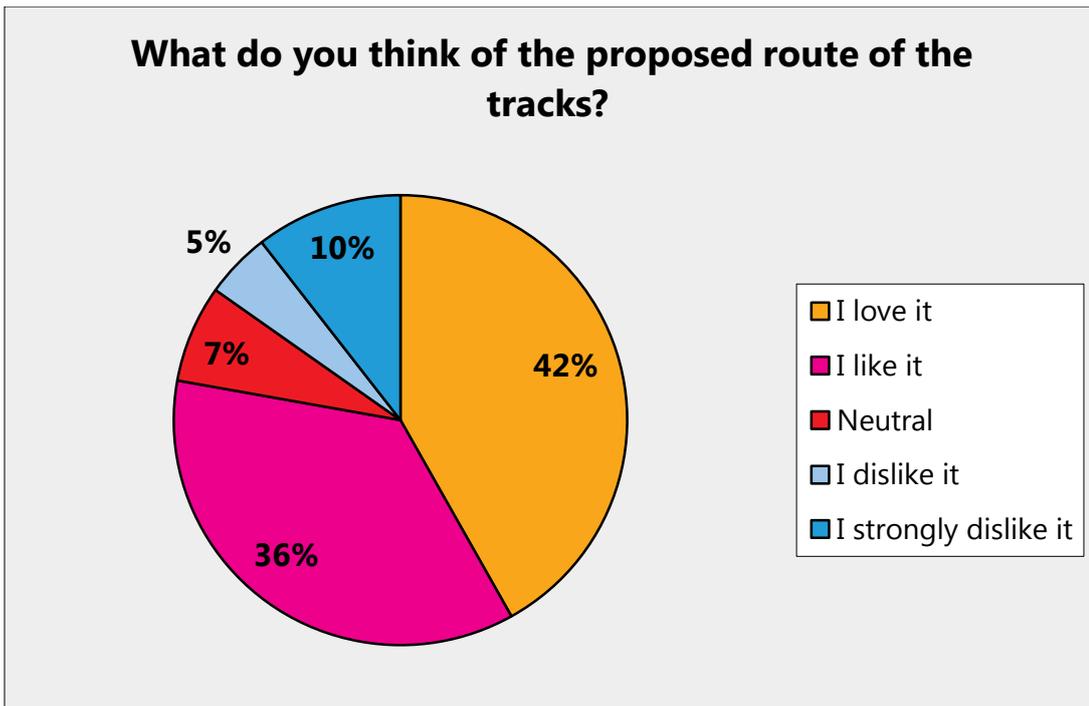


Figure 8 Response to 'What do you think of the proposed route of the tracks (shown by the red lines on the accompanying map)?'

4.1.4. Written responses from the community

Eight residents living adjacent to the proposed Calmsley Hill City Farm to Plough and Harrow East track development in Abbotsbury, emailed WSPT after the conclusion of the online survey and pop-up activities. These residents believed they did not receive the A5 flyer advertising the event which was hand delivered to neighbouring properties. In their emails, residents stated that the occupants of houses neighbouring the proposed track upgrade at Calmsley Hill City Farm had received little, to no, information on the track development or community engagement activities. These residents also outlined their concerns with the proposal which can be summarised as the loss of security, privacy and ambience as a result of the proximity of the proposed track to residential property boundaries. The emails were received between August 1 and August 11 2015. Each email received a personalised response from WSPT.

WSPT considers the local residents to be an important stakeholder group, and decided to host another information session for local residents in light of the email advice received. The Trust also changed the original proposed alignment of the track further from residents to address the concerns raised by the community members in these emails, where feasibly possible.

4.1.5. Local residents meeting

In response to the emails described in section 4.1.6, a local residents meeting, for those living close to the track near Calmsley Hill City Farm was held at Calmsley Hill City Farm on 27 August 2015. The session was scheduled to run between 6.00pm-8.00pm.

Neighbours were invited to the session by a hand delivered letter invitation from WSPT. The invitation was extended by email to the eight residents who had emailed the project team, and was hand delivered to 28 households on 18 August 2015 by WSPT staff.

A copy of the letter invitation to the local residents meeting is in **Appendix F**.

The session gave residents the opportunity to discuss their concerns and meet with the WSPT project manager. Two staff members from Straight Talk were also present.

Maps and display boards were exhibited at the meeting to explain the walking and cycling tracks proposal and outline the revised proposed track alignment adjacent to Calmsley Hill City Farm. These maps and display boards were slightly changed from those exhibited at the previous consultation activities to show the movement of the original proposed track further from residential properties that was being proposed at that time.

Twenty five local residents attended the meeting. The majority of attendees resided in Darling Street with other living in Whitley Place, Usher Close and Balson Close. The meeting ran thirty minutes over time so that project staff could discuss the concerns of attendees with them individually.

10 written submissions were provided to the project team at the event. One telephone and four electronic feedback submissions were later provided to the project team.

The majority of feedback received at the neighbours' information session raised concerns about the track proposed for the Abbotsbury Precinct in the vicinity of the Calmsley Hill City Farm. Two positive comments were made about the track, which focussed on the increase in public use of the farm area and longer tracks for bike riders. All other comments raised concerns relating to the location of the proposed track in this area.

Summary of responses

A number of themes emerged in the issues and concerns raised including:

- 👉 **Security** - One of the predominant concerns was that the track would result in security risks for the neighbouring properties. Some residents expressed that fencing was an important mitigation measure while others felt the fencing was either an insufficient measure or would result in unnecessary loss of visual amenity
- 👉 **Anti-social behaviour** - There was concern that the presence of the track may result in anti-social behaviour occurring along the track and behind the properties. Community members suggested a 24/7 emergency contact and appropriate signage may help to manage this
- 👉 **Privacy** - Residents were concerned about users of the track being able to see into their property from the track
- 👉 **Track location** - Many comments related to whether the track could be again moved further from the properties to minimise perceived impacts to property owners at this location
- 👉 **Maintenance** - It was important to the residents that responsibility for management of the land adjacent to their property was well defined, and that the grass in this area was kept short to discourage snakes
- 👉 **Property value** - Some residents believed that the proposed track will have a detrimental impact on property prices
- 👉 **Ambience** - Several residents expressed that they would like farm animals to continue to have access to the land bordering their property
- 👉 **Noise** - Some residents were concerned that use of the track may result in noise

👉 **Positive impacts** - There was recognition by some of the respondents that the track would bring a number of positive benefits such as activation, increased use and the creation of extended walking and cycling loops within the Parklands.



Figure 9 Attendees discuss the proposed Abbotsbury Precinct tracks at the local residents meeting

Table 3 Local residents meeting feedback broken down by popularity of themes

Themes	Percentage of responses identifying this theme
Security/anti-social behaviour	27%
Privacy	17%
Track location	14%
Maintenance	12%
Property value	8%
Ambience	7%
Noise	5%
Positive impacts	4%
Other	5%

Detailed feedback from the local resident meeting is at **Appendix G**.

4.2. The Bringelly Precinct

4.2.1. Pop-up activity outcomes

Feedback from the two Bringelly pop up activities is summarised below:

- 👉 All community members who attended the information stalls supported the proposed track development in the Bringelly precinct.
- 👉 There was a belief amongst attendees that the concrete surfacing of the existing track from Thirtysecond Avenue to Stuart Road will increase the usage of the track by children with bicycles.
- 👉 A number of people identified directional signage and sealed tracks as being important track design features.

Detailed feedback from the pop-up activities is at **Appendix E**.

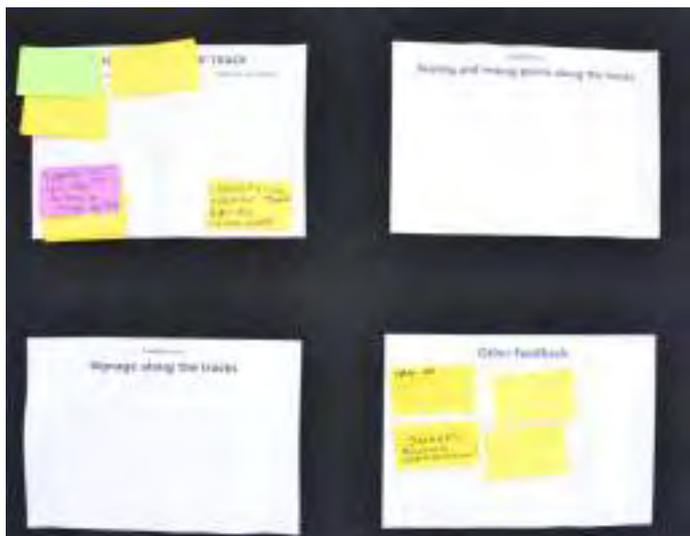


Figure 10 Feedback display board at a pop-up activity

5. FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST

Following the review of feedback from the local residents meeting for the proposed track in the Abbotsbury precinct which is close to Darling Street, WSPT agreed to two additional onsite meetings with residents to discuss specific issues.

Straight Talk were not involved in those meetings, however we understand:

- 👉 The purpose of the first meeting was to allow a resident who had attended the residents meeting on 27 August 2015 but felt unable to talk to WSPT staff at the meeting to discuss the project with the WSPT Project Manager.
- 👉 The purpose of the second meeting was to discuss suggestions made by a community member relating to additional access points to the track.

A summary of these meetings provided by WSPT is included in **Appendix H**.

6. OUTCOMES ANALYSIS

The key engagement findings are outlined below:

- 👉 There is strong widespread community support for the proposed track developments in both Precincts
- 👉 There is strong community support for the proposed locations of the track development with the noticeable exception that a number of residents in the vicinity of Darling Street indicated that they would prefer the section of the track in proximity of their houses to be constructed further away from property boundaries and / or additional mitigation measures to be provided. The residents key concerns are security, privacy and ambiance
- 👉 There is strong community support for the proposed track surfaces
- 👉 Providing amenities along the proposed tracks, such as resting points and seating, was generally supported by the community
- 👉 The majority of the community consider it important to have signage along the proposed tracks. There is a strong preference for a mixture of interpretive and directional signage
- 👉 The community support further track development in the Parklands, particularly track development that links isolated routes and allows more entry options into the Parklands
- 👉 Parkland users prefer professionally maintained tracks with loop designs and associated amenities
- 👉 Parkland users want more information on track closures and track development works
- 👉 The community had diverse suggestions for future development in the Parklands suggesting no key gap in the current Parklands provisions
- 👉 Existing Parklands tenants were chiefly concerned about the tracks' impact on the security of their venue and on parking
- 👉 The majority of the community who actively participated in the engagement activities were both existing Parklands users and local community members.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the community engagement activities undertaken, we recommend that:

- 👉 All respondents requesting inclusion on the electronic newsletter distribution list are added to the list
- 👉 The WSPT continues to update the community on the progress of track development
- 👉 The WSPT continues to engage in open communication with the existing Parklands tenants
- 👉 The efficiency of the online survey is noted and this method of engagement is considered in future planned engagement activities
- 👉 Wherever possible, the views of the residents in the Darling Street area should be considered, and consideration to modification of the design in this area should be considered where feasible
- 👉 Should development of the track proceed in the vicinity of Calmsley Hill City Farm, a planned program of engagement should be developed for residents in the Darling Street area
- 👉 The WSPT continue to look for opportunities to increase track connectivity, with a focus on creating access to the network from residential areas and looped tracks to create circular track opportunities.