

Ordinary Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, 13 March, 2023
Location: Council Chambers, City Administrative Building, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 5.30pm

Membership (Quorum - 7)
All Councillors

Addendum Agenda

Reports

City Futures

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CL23.87 Addendum Report - Emergency Management Centre, 92 Albatross Road, Nowra - Requested Use of Helipad – Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project

HPERM Ref: D23/88340

Department: Strategic Planning
Approver: Carey McIntyre, Director - City Futures

Attachments: 1. Letter - Local Health District - Request Use - Existing EMC Helipad [↓](#)
2. Background - Previous Council Report Sept 22 - Temporary Hospital Helipad [↓](#)

Reason for Report

This matter is submitted as an addendum given the urgent need to find a temporary helipad for the hospital to use during the period of the major redevelopment work which is expected to commence shortly.

Council staff met with NSW Government representatives on 8 March 2023 and the attached written request (**Attachment 1**) was then received from the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) after the close of the Business Paper requesting urgent assistance from Council regarding the possible use of the helipad at the Emergency Management Centre (EMC), 92 Albatross Road, Nowra.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Support 'in principle', the requested temporary use of the helipad at the Emergency Management Centre, 92 Albatross Road, Nowra associated with the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project, subject to.
 - a. Appropriate operational procedures being put in place to manage access and use.
 - b. Clarification and conformation of the planning pathway.
 - c. Engagement with adjoining residents and establishment of a process to manage any future feedback received from neighbours, so that complaints or similar do not fall to Council or the Rural Fire Service to respond to.

Options

1. As recommended.

Implications: This will enable the requested use to proceed subject to required considerations being resolved.

2. Alternate recommendation, not agreeing to the use of this site and requesting an alternate site be found.

Implications: An option of this nature may be problematic from both a time perspective and also the difficult that has already been encountered in attempting to find a temporary site.

CL23.87

Background

Council previously considered a report on a possible temporary Helicopter Landing Site that is needed as part of the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project and resolved on 26 September 2022 to give 'in principle' support to the possible use of part of West Street Oval, Nowra, noting the need for a development application and its outcome could not be predetermined. The attached Council report related to this resolution (**Attachment 2**) contains background information on the need for a temporary location during the hospital redevelopment project.

NSW Health Infrastructure (HI) has now advised that the identified site at West Street Oval has contamination issues and stability constraints. As a result, the attached letter requests (**Attachment 1**) the use of the EMC helipad and seeks Council's urgent 'in principle' agreement in this regard.

EMC Helipad

The EMC at 92 Albatross Road, Nowra is owned by Council and is zoned SP2 Infrastructure (Emergency Services) under Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014. The EMC helipad was constructed as part of the overall masterplan for the facility and is currently predominantly used by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) during periods of emergency. The helipad that is the subject of this request is located with the site, see the following aerial photograph:



H = Helipad

HI have assessed the EMC helipad for use and advised as follows:

- Slab capacity – can accommodate the aeromedical helicopters based on a consultants assessment provided.
- Rotor Wash – there will not be any appreciable difference in downwash characteristics compared to the helicopters that already use the site. Local procedures will be needed to ensure no people are within the FATO (Final Approach and Take-off area) when a helicopter arrives.

- Noise – the aeromedical helicopters are quieter than the helicopters that already use the helipad.
- Senior Clinicians and the Executive of the Hospital have endorsed its possible use from a clinical perspective. NSW Ambulance Aeromedical Operations have also indicated they would endorse the site, noting it will be a temporary location and not a permanent arrangement.

Discussion

Given that the proposed hospital redevelopment is proceeding and work will commence on site in earnest shortly, there is now a critical need to find a temporary helicopter landing site for a 3 to 4 year period. Considering the overriding community outcome being the need for patient safety, this needs to be as close to the existing hospital as practical.

Council staff have been working with HI on various reasonable options in this regard and the short term use of the EMC helipad has now been requested. When the new hospital is complete the use will cease as there will be a new permanent helipad on the roof of the new hospital building. The following are relevant considerations.

Operational considerations

As the primary current user of the helipad, HI and its consultants have been engaging with the RFS who have advised they have no issue 'in principle' with the requested use.

However, some operational matters will need to be clarified, such as 24 hour access and HI covering costs of any infrastructure work to access points and similar that is agreed between HI, Council and EMC occupants.

RFS have also requested an assurance that the use of the facility does not impede on their operations, particularly the need for alternate landing locations or their good relationship with their neighbours. RFS believes these matters should not be difficult to overcome and will translate into a letter of agreement and a clear process of implementation should Council be ok with the matter proceeding further.

Amenity considerations

At present the EMC helipad is generally only used during periods of emergency and outside these times there is largely no use. As such adjacent residents have become accustomed to an intermittent level of use. As such any increase in use on a weekly basis could have an impact on these residents, particularly given the potential for night-time use in a medical emergency.

The previous report noted that the current landing site at the hospital receives approximately 7 helicopters per month and this has been reasonably consistent in recent years, however planning for approximately 10 helicopters per months would allow for an increase in future demand.

As part of their initial feedback to HI the RFS as the main occupant of the EMC have requested that a community engagement process be undertaken with neighbours and a workable solution developed for HI to handle future queries, issues etc. regarding its use and not to RFS personnel on site. Council should also not be required to handle any queries/issues the use generates.

Should Council support the request, potential amenity impacts will need to be fully considered as part of the proposed use. HI should thus ensure that the broader community and adjoining landowners/residents are aware of what is being proposed and that any concerns around noise, level of use etc. are considered and if possible managed.

Planning considerations

The requested use of the helipad needs to also follow an appropriate planning approval pathway and these could generally include:

- Relying on the existing development consents that apply to the site.
- New development application for the requested use.
- Other pathways, for example through the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP.

Discussions are continuing to resolve which pathway the requested use will follow.

Conclusion

Given the overriding need to ensure patient safety and assist with the identification of a temporary helipad that is close to the hospital, it is recommended that Council provide its 'in principle' support for the use of the identified site at the EMC, subject to the satisfaction resolution of the operational, amenity and planning considerations noted in the report.

Community Engagement

HI have been requested to carry out neighbour notification and engagement regarding the proposed use. They will also need to establish a process to manage any ongoing feedback that is received from neighbours should the use commence, so that any complaints or similar do not fall to Council or the RFS to respond to.

Policy Implications

The requested use will need to follow an appropriate planning approval pathway and dialogue is still continuing in this regard.

Financial Implications

There should be no direct financial impacts on Council associated with the requested use.

CL23.87



Mr Gordan Clark
Shoalhaven City Council
[Redacted]

Dear Mr Clark

We write seeking urgent assistance from Shoalhaven City Council in supporting NSW Health to provide continuity of the aeromedical helicopter services at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. This service is of critical importance to the life and wellbeing of Shoalhaven residents requiring urgent medical care. Operation of aeromedical helicopters from the current helipad adjacent to the hospital must cease on 31 March. This is due to preparation work for the vitally needed next stage of the hospital redevelopment project, which will obstruct the helipad. Upon completion in 2026 the expanded hospital will include a rooftop helipad.

The need for an alternative helipad during the construction period has been discussed with the Council over the last 12+ months, and NSW Health appreciates the work undertaken by Council officers and Councillors themselves in support of finding a solution.

HMAS Albatross was initially proposed by the redevelopment project team, however, expert advice from emergency doctors and the ambulance service directed that the helipad location must be closer to the hospital.

West Street Oval was identified as a possible solution and was supported by Council, however, boreholes drilled by NSW Health for helipad construction planning revealed that this site is atop highly contaminated, uncontrolled fill. This soil condition is unsuitable for the construction of a temporary helipad for aeromedical helicopters.

In December 2022 the recently redeveloped RFS helipad on Albatross Road was identified as a viable option, and consultation was initiated with the RFS, Council, Ambulance, and hospital doctors.

The RFS and all other parties except Council have provided in-principle agreement for NSW Health to progress with this option. NSW Health has responded to several technical queries from Council regarding the helipad infrastructure on this site, the specifications of the aeromedical helicopters, and the proposed planning consent arrangement.

We are urgently seeking in-principal agreement from Shoalhaven City Council for NSW Health to progress with the RFS helipad option, including the commencement by Health of a planning consent REF or DA process if this is required. This agreement from Council will also allow us to commence the important community engagement processes.

Please contact me or the redevelopment project team at any time, we are committed to working with all stakeholders to address any remaining concerns as soon as they are brought to our attention, and we urge that this matter please be progressed with the highest possible priority.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CH'.

Craig Hamer
General Manager
Shoalhaven Hospital Group

8 March 2023
[Redacted]

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CL23.87 - Attachment 1

CL22.462 Temporary Helicopter Landing Site - Part of West Street Oval - Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project

HPERM Ref: D22/365816

Department: Strategic Planning
Approver: Carey McIntyre, Director - City Futures

Reason for Report

The reason for this report is to seek in principle Council support for a requested temporary use (3-4 year period) of part of West Street Oval for a Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) to assist the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project.

The support sought is only in principle as a separate Development Application process is still required for the use. In principle support does not imply that consent will be granted through this process.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Support in principle, the requested temporary use of part of the West Street Oval for a Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) associated with the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project, noting that a separate Development Application process is still required for the use and the outcome of this cannot be predetermined.
2. Request NSW Health Infrastructure to:
 - a. Fund any costs associated with the requested use, including the required temporary/permanent relocation of the existing cricket nets to a suitable site in dialogue with Council staff and the Nowra Cricket Club and/or their reinstatement if needed.
 - b. Continue to liaise on an ongoing basis with the sports clubs that use West Street Oval in regard to the realisation of the proposed HLS and its actual future operation.
 - c. Engage early with the adjacent and directly affected owners/residents regarding the proposed use so that any concerns can be given appropriate consideration.

Options

1. As recommended.

Implications: This will enable the requested use that supports the realisation of the hospital redevelopment to proceed further, noting Councils requests and that a development application will still be required.

2. Not support the use of part of West Street Oval for a Helicopter Landing Site (HLS) to assist the Shoalhaven Hospital Redevelopment Project.

Implications: This would potentially impact on the timely delivery of the hospital redevelopment and other options would need to be considered. It could also have an impact on patient safety if the other options involve sites that are further away from the existing hospital than the preferred one.

3. Further option to be determined.

Implications: This would depend on the options recommended by Council and may require closer consideration.

Background

Council considered a report in April 2022 that provided an update on the Shoalhaven Hospital Masterplan and related early actions/outcomes. It was noted in that report regarding the HLS issue that:

The existing ground level hospital helipad is located in the northern part of Lot 104, adjacent to the existing hospital buildings (between current Pre-school and multi-level car park). This will be removed as part of the hospital redevelopment that will include a new roof top helipad on the main new building.

Given this, there will be a need to identify a temporary location that can be used as a helipad to support the continued operation of the hospital during the construction phase (possibly late 2022 through till approximately 2026).

Council staff have been involved in discussions with NSW Health Infrastructure (NSW HI) regarding suitable locations for a temporary helipad close to the hospital and this is currently focussing on the possible use of the West Street Oval area.

This aspect will be the subject of a separate report to Council shortly. It is also noted that the temporary (4-5 years) helipad will require a development approval.

This report provides separate detail on the requested use of part of what is West Street Oval, Nowra that is required for the duration of the construction phase of the hospital redevelopment.

Overview - Temporary Use Request – Part of West Street Oval, Nowra

The current HLS at the hospital receives approximately 7 helicopters per month. This figure has been reasonably consistent in recent years, however planning for approximately 10 helicopters per months would allow for an increase in future demand.

Prior to making this request, various options were reviewed by NSW Health Infrastructure (HI), with the assistance of an aviation consultant looking at patient safety (proximity to hospital is important), operational procedures and also suitability from a clinical and aerospace perspective. The sites/locations that were considered included:

- West Street Oval
- Artie Smith Oval
- Nowra Showground
- HMAS Albatross
- Hospital multi-level car park
- Council land adjacent to Stockland Nowra

From this review West Street Oval was identified as the preferred location for the temporary hospital HLS to best ensure patient safety as it is only 1.5 kms by road from the hospital. The other sites were deemed to be unsuitable due to conflicting use, distance or operational concerns.

Council has now received a formal request from HI to temporarily use part of the West Street Oval complex as an HLS for the duration (3-4 years) of the hospital construction. It is anticipated that the main works at the hospital may commence in early 2023 and progress on the HLS is needed in advance of this.

The request confirms why the site is preferred, suggested operational procedures for use and the key risks, the proposed landing areas and associated works including:

