

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Sandy Point Caravan and Camping Ground Site Investigation



*Undertake an investigation of caravan parks and camping grounds
at Sandy Point*

Council Plan 2018/19

Updated April 2020



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*



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Introduction

The Victorian coast continues to remain an attraction for intrastate, interstate and overseas visitors. A key characteristic of tourism in coastal Victoria is the huge influx of visitors and beach users over the summer period. Most of our coastal towns more than double in size each summer and Sandy Point is no exception.

Traditional short stay caravan and camping grounds provide tourism and economic benefits to towns such as Sandy Point and the region as a whole. They offer low cost holiday accommodation options for families in a tradition that remains highly valued by many Australians and Council would like to see this continue in Sandy Point.

This project '*Undertaking investigations to support the future of caravan and camp grounds at Sandy Point*' was identified as a strategy in the South Gippsland Shire Council Plan 2017-2021. The aim of this project was to explore different options to establish a new caravan and camping ground that would concentrate on the large volume short stay tourism market.





Background

Sandy Point is located 201km south east of Melbourne, 56km south of Leongatha, five minutes from Shallow Inlet with Wilsons Promontory National Park to the east. It was developed as a small holiday coastal hamlet in the 1950s and has remained a popular destination for surfing, fishing and boating.

Sandy Point as a small coastal hamlet has three main roles:

- Primarily it is a holiday destination for people from Melbourne and the surrounding district;
- It is also a settlement for a small permanent year round population; and
- It is a destination for tourists to Shallow Inlet and the surrounding coastal parks.

The heart of Sandy Point is the coastal foreshore and commercial area. The shops and stores are all located along Beach Parade and consist of nine narrow lots which are generally accessible by foot for most of the local residents. Directly behind this small group of shops is the community hall and tennis courts. Across the road from the commercial area is Sandy Point beach and Surf Life Saving Club. Sandy Point beach is patrolled by volunteer life savers throughout summer on weekends and public holidays.

The estimated population of Sandy Point is 209 with 658 private dwellings, 73 of which are occupied and 571 are non-resident owners. A large proportion of the non-resident owners use their properties as holiday rentals either through real estate agents or websites such as Air BnB or Stayz.

The Sandy Point Caravan Park is also located on Beach Parade immediately west of the shops. The Sandy Point Holiday Park, or Telopea Caravan Park as it was previously known, has been in operation since before 1964 and is currently registered with Council for 74 short term sites (or annuals) and 10 camping sites (Caravan parks are required to be registered with the local Council under the Residential Tenancies (Caravan Parks and Movable Dwellings Registration and Standards) Regulations 2010). While the sites are technically defined as 'short term', these sites are where you own the structure on the site i.e. the cabin or caravan/annex and pay an annual fee to occupy the site for holiday use. The caravan park has always been privately owned.

Over the past 15 years the caravan park has undergone a number of changes. Planning approval was issued in May 2011 for the construction of seven dwellings in the north east corner of the caravan park site, only three of which have been constructed. Another planning approval was issued for a five lot subdivision in May 2018. This area is currently being used for camping. Once the subdivision proceeds this will effectively leave the caravan park with no camping or caravan sites available, only the annual sites will remain.



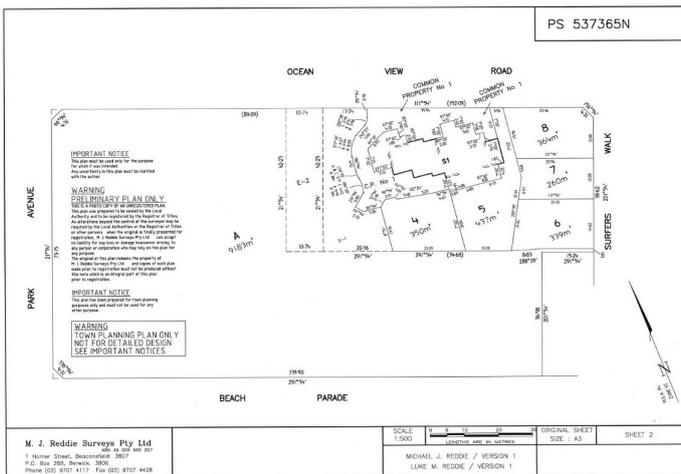
Current site plan for Sandy Point Caravan Park

Further application has been made to Council to subdivide the remaining caravan park. If approved the caravan park would be subdivided into an additional 14 lots.

The caravan park is located in the Township Zone and the owner is acting within their rights to propose changing the use of the land. The purpose of the Township Zone is to ensure future development is of a scale and design that is consistent with the township role and function and maintains its unique character. Being in the Township Zone does not safeguard the existing caravan park site for the future.

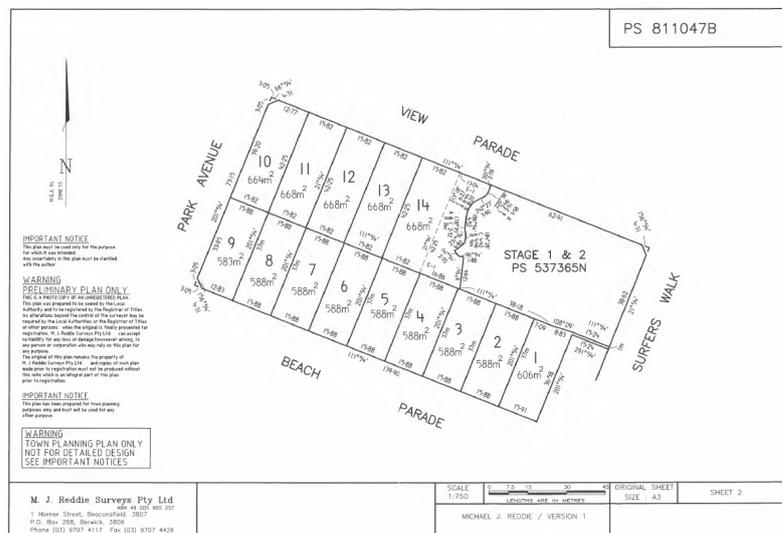


The location of the current caravan park provides no scope for expansion. The surrounding land is already developed and therefore cannot expand in any direction. It also lacks shade or protection from the elements by way of trees and landscaping. The size of the camping area is prohibitive to large vans entering the park as there is not enough room to manoeuvre the vans into the sites. This also restricts group booking sizes.



Planning Permit 2017/76
Endorsed Plans

Proposed further subdivision of
Sandy Point Caravan Park





Caravan and Camping Grounds

Sandy Point is well positioned to provide accommodation for a significant market of people looking for a more isolated caravan and camping experience; away from main population areas and close to coastal water and natural areas.

The caravan and camping industry is constantly evolving. There are a growing number of options in regard to caravan and camping parks. Large holiday parks that cater for the ever increasing van sizes and include facilities such as jumping pillows and indoor heated pools to the free-camping sites that only provide basic ablutions such as Parks Vic managed camp grounds like Bear Gully.

Statistics - Caravan and Camping Australia.

The following statistics were taken from the Caravan Industry Association of Australia:

- Total nights generated by domestic caravan and camping visitors for the year ending June 2017 reached 49.97 million, a marginal decrease of 1.1 per cent.
- Visitors aged 55 years and over retained the largest market share in terms of nights, accounting for 44 per cent of all nights (21.9 million). The 30 to 54-year market segment represents 41 per cent of all nights created (20.3 million). (Year ending March 2017)
- There are more people aged 30 to 54 years undertaking caravan and camping trips, however, the 55 years and over demographic spend more time on their holidays. (Year ending March 2017)
- Travelling for a holiday remains the most popular reason for consumers to undertake a caravan and camping trip, representing 77 per cent of the market. (Year ending March 2017)
- 377,000 international visitors chose to take a caravan and camping holiday in the year ending June 2017, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year.
- International caravan and camping nights increased by 2 per cent to reach 5.1 million nights.

Caravan and Camping State of Industry 2017 report states that key findings for 2016 include:

- There were 21,841 Recreational Vehicles manufactured in Australia, the second largest year for manufacturing in the last 37 years.
- An estimated \$1.8 billion of revenue was generated by Cabins, Powered sites and unpowered sites.

Local Area Caravan Park Review

A review was completed by SGL Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd on caravan and camping parks in the likely catchment region (approx. 100km either side of the South Gippsland area).

The competitor caravan park review found there were 36 parks in this review zone. Key findings from this review included:

- The average park rating was 3.0 to 3.5 and one park was rated 4.5 (RACV Inverloch).
- A review of management models indicated a total of:
 - 20 parks were independently owned/managed.
 - 12 were managed by local councils/some contracted/some in-house.
 - Three were managed under a management franchise i.e. Big 4/Top Tourist etc.
 - One park was managed by Parks Victoria (Wilson's Prom National Park).
- A review of total sites indicated:
 - One park had more than 450 sites (484 sites).
 - One park had more than 200 sites (238 powered sites).
 - Seven parks had between 50 and 99 sites.
 - 18 parks had less than 50 sites.
 - Nine parks did not supply information on the number of sites they had.
- There were a total of 2,420 sites in the 27 parks that supplied information on their number of sites.
- The average minimum daily rental for a site was \$25 to \$40 for a double and maximum rental for a double was \$40 to \$80/night. Extra persons charges ranged from \$10 to \$20/person.
- A total of 20 out of the 26 parks supplied information on their cabins with:
 - Eight parks having less than 10 cabins,
 - Seven parks between 11 and 20 cabins,
 - Four parks between 21 and 30 cabins,
- The facility inventory review identified a total of 258 cabins in the 20 parks.



- The average minimum rental rate for cabins ranged from \$75/\$160 night for 2 people to \$100/\$220 night in peak season. Extra person charges ranged from \$8 to \$25/person.
- Only 14 out of the 258 cabins did not have ensuite or amenities connected to the cabins.
- A review of available information on extra customer features indicated:
 - 19 parks offered camp kitchen facilities,
 - No parks had ensuite facilities adjoining sites,
 - 11 parks provided public access internet.
 - 17 parks had a shop or café onsite.
- A review of recreation and sport facilities indicated:
 - 10 parks had swimming pools onsite,
 - 11 sites had hard courts (tennis etc.)
- A total of 23 parks had playgrounds.

Possible Site Options

The investigation initially looked at four sites in Sandy Point as possible locations for a future caravan and camping site. When identifying sites Council looked at the following :

- Size of the land
- Land zoning and applicable overlays (Land Subject to Inundation and Bushfire Management Overlays)
- Vehicular access to site
- Pedestrian access to beach and town centre
- Existing beach access
- Clearing of vegetation
- Acid sulfate soils

These four sites identified were:

1. Site One – West of Sandy Point
2. Site Two – Southeast of the Sandy Point Township
3. Site Three – North of Sandy Point Township
4. Site Four – Existing Caravan Park Site



Each of the sites identified have significant constraints however Council at its 26 June 2019 Ordinary meeting identified Site 1 as the preferred location. This site was used for the consultation process.

Site Two is subject to a reservation for the protection of the coastline. This reservation is of high significance and would require an Act of Parliament for it to be removed. This is only one of the many issues facing the use of this site and consequently it was removed from the siting options.



Consultation

Community consultation commenced on Monday 30 September 2019 for a four week period. Consultation was undertaken in the form of an Our Say survey on Council's webpage. Consultation information was placed in the local newspapers, Council's website and on Council's Facebook page.

A drop in session was held in Sandy Point and Council officers also attended a meeting organised by the Sandy Point Community Group. To give attendees time to make a submission or complete the Our Say survey after the Sandy Point Community Group meeting, the closing date for submissions was extended.



An artist's impression of what a caravan and camping ground could look like was used as part of the consultation to help provide a visual aid.

Through the consultation process 202 Our Say surveys were completed and 51 mail/email submissions were received. Whilst there was a large number of responses to the consultation with a number of different views presented, the overwhelming majority of the feedback received expressed the view that the caravan park should remain where it is and Council should take action to improve the current facility.

From the 202 responses to the Our Say survey, 160 said they did not support the preferred proposed location (Site 1) whilst 36 supported the location.

Key concerns

The key concerns raised were:

- Fire risk – the site is covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay and CFA have previously predicted that the greatest risk of fire to the township comes from the west.
- Flood risk – this land is covered by the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. Other developments have been prevented because of possible loss of access during flood events.
- There are already many accommodation options in the area specifically rental housing properties (approx. 300+) via Air BnB, Stayz and the local Real Estate Agents. The Caravan Park is not needed. Camp sites are rarely used out of peak season.
- Outside the township boundary - an outlying caravan park would lose connection with the community.
- Safety concerns relating to traffic and beach access – this section of beach is unpatrolled and access to town centre/patrolled beach would be via car or walking on road. This is unsafe and there isn't enough parking. It extends the township outside of the walkability footprint which is contrary to the township plan's Urban Design Framework.
- Loss of agricultural productivity to a site in the Farming Zone.
- It would ruin the outlook and amenity of the area. Increased noise. It would also reduce property values of houses nearby.
- Waste water disposal – no mention was made of how waste would be disposed of, need sewer, concerned though of costs to rate payers if sewer was to come.
- Potable water – drawing more water from the bores may cause them to be contaminated with salt water. Bio-security if wastewater disposal fails and the impact it would have on the bore water.
- Council's involvement and motives – Council is doing the work of the developer. It is a conflict of interest for Council to be involved.
- Existing caravan park needs to be retained, cleaned up and returned to original state. Council should compulsory acquire the caravan park.



Supporting comments

Comments supporting Site 1 included:

- Need to make sure we have accommodation for those that aren't lucky enough to own a holiday house or can't afford housing rentals such as Air BnB, Stayz etc. Beachside holiday accommodation is very expensive and affordable accommodation options are important.
- Not having available camping encourages free camping where appropriate facilities aren't provided. Developing Site 1 would avoid the growth in ad hoc camping.
- It would bring 'new' visitors to the area and not represent a loss to the general store. The owner of the general store is encouraged by an additional shop at a caravan park as they would be able to supply them with stock like they currently do for Waratah Bay Caravan Park.
- Caravan holidays are increasing in popularity and more options are needed.
- Need somewhere for travellers with their own vans to go.
- The current caravan park is not attractive nor a viable option. Most of the park is taken up with annuals (permanent caravans).

Potentially Suitable Future Caravan and Camping Sites

Through the consultation process a number of land owners approached Council about the prospect of developing a caravan and/or camping ground on their property - see below. These sites correspond to the sites identified originally in the project.



All sites identified above are located in the Farming Zone. A caravan and camping ground is a permitted use in the Farming Zone with a planning permit, however any application would need to also consider the following overlays and address them in their planning application:

- Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
If the development is in the BMO then consultation with the CFA would be required and the development would need to ensure bushfire protection measures are in place to manage risk.
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)
Any development that falls into the LSIO would need to ensure it address any drainage or flooding issues on the property. This maybe through requiring the raised of floor levels for any permanent structures on the land. Any proposed developments in the LSIO are required to be referred to the WGCMA.
- Environmental Significance Overlay (ES03 & ES05)
Whether the ES03 (Coastal Settlements) and ES05 (Erosion control) are triggered by the development will depend on what is being proposed. These overlays are in place to ensure that the development of the land does not affect identified environmental values and qualities of particular areas within the Shire in this case coastal areas.
- Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO3)
The purpose of the SLO3 is to conserve and enhance the character of significant landscapes. Again this overlay may need to be considered when developing any proposal.



These sites have also been identified as being in an area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity meaning a cultural heritage management plan may be required.

Other major considerations in the development of a caravan and camping ground at these sites would be the ability to supply potable water and the disposal of wastewater from the use. Depending on the proposed size and type of the use the EPA may need to be consulted in designing wastewater management system.

Conclusion

The Sandy Point Caravan Park is a private business and any new caravan and camping ground developed in the locality should also be run by the private sector. While Council supports the continuation of this use in the township, it is not the role of Council to actively work with one developer, at one preferred site, in order to secure a business that returns a profit to the private sector.

To avoid such market intervention, Council has identified sites as options on which the private sector may choose to pursue the future development of a caravan and camping ground and the key issues that will require consideration for development to occur. Moving forward, it is now the role of caravan and camping service providers to determine if the market demands and can support the establishment of a new facility at Sandy Point and if this can be achieved with consideration to the development constraints identified in this report. Council can provide advice to assist developers to establish a new use however Council will not have a direct role in maintaining the existing caravan park or securing or operating a new caravan or camping park.

References

1. Urban Design Framework Settlement Background Paper Sandy Point, Connell Wagner Pty Ltd 2006
2. Waratah Bay Caravan Park Business Assessment and Strategy Development Report, Final Report, May 2016 by SGL Consulting Group Australia Pty Ltd
3. www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/downloads/file/672/settlement_background_paperpdfUrb