

Flinders Island Sports & RSL Club
Project Redevelopment Brief
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Introduction

This is the brief for the proposed redevelopment of the existing Sports Club site on Flinders Island, Tasmania. It has been prepared and adopted jointly by the Sports and RSL Club, who are the current owners of this substantial freehold property, and the Flinders Council who, on behalf of the local community, recognize the potential of this important Tasmanian site and the benefits that any redevelopment could bring to the local community.

Geographically, Flinders Island lies in Bass Strait approximately midway between southern Victoria and the north-eastern coastline of Tasmania. The nearest main city center is Launceston about half an hour's flight away. The Island, which is approximately 90 kilometers in length, is the largest in The Furneaux Group of Islands. The local permanent population of approximately 800 people is, amongst other things, involved in supporting the traditional industries of farming, fishing and tourism. The Island is recognized for its high quality farm produce, the natural beauty of its beaches, national parks, coastline, impressive

mountain peaks and the warmth and friendliness of its local community. All this combined with its easy lifestyle has increasingly attracted those from the nearby city centers and overseas.

The Sports Club is based in Whitemark, which is the largest township on the Island. The Club also provides a home for members of our local RSL who regularly use its facilities which include a stunningly beautiful and lovingly tended golf course, comfortable clubrooms, bar, extensive function facilities and recently upgraded and well patronized bowling greens. The whole site of approximately 80 acres lies in a natural bush land setting on the shores of Parry's Bay on the eastern side of the Island just below one of the highest mountain ranges in Tasmania

Traditionally the facilities of the Club have been managed, serviced and maintained by teams of volunteers from a dedicated local community. Consequently it is one of the largest of the Islands organizations but with, an extremely low financial base, the pressures have finally reached a critical point for its hard working committee. In simple terms, the Club is asset rich, cash poor and relying far too heavily on its voluntary support base. The Club has been considering its options for some time and with the Council has now resolved a pathway for the future.

This Project Brief describes the requirements for the proposed future redevelopment of the site and presents the vision evolved jointly between the Club and the Flinders Council.

Part 1: The Flinders Island Sports Club

The Flinders Island Sports & RSL Club is a not for profit incorporated body that originally came into being over 50 years ago. It began thanks to the considerable efforts, hard work and foresight of a small group of dedicated sporting enthusiasts who were intent at that time on creating a new home for golf on Flinders Island.

1.1 Background

The enthusiastic Furneaux community has always been heavily involved in, and committed to, a broad range of sporting and recreational pursuits. Facilities are spread throughout the various population centers on the Island. In addition to the Sports Club with its excellent golf course and all-weather bowling green there are other well patronized sporting venues to cater for football, cricket, swimming, surfing, yachting, boating, basketball, netball, equestrian, athletics, cross-country running, mountaineering, bushwalking, trekking, rock climbing, yoga and professionally managed health and fitness classes. Flinders Island is also one of the three venues for the famous Three Peaks Race at Easter and a fast-growing and popular running festival in September. A high standard equestrian competition continues to be held at the well-attended annual Show in October. The gun club has their own range and members regularly compete competitively at State and Federal level. Our High School has a first class indoor gymnasium suitable for a wide range of indoor sports and functions.

The Sports and RSL Club continues to play a pivotal role in the sporting and recreational life of Flinders Island. The Club has a proud and successful history and its facilities including the bar, function rooms, fully serviced commercial kitchen, and highly regarded and picturesque 9 hole links course plus all-weather bowls green, all combine to provide an extremely high standard sports and recreation venue.

1.2 Historical Synopsis

- 1959 Golf first played in farmland paddocks.
- 1961 First game played at the current site and official opening.
- 1962 A one-room brick clubhouse constructed on the current clubhouse site.
- 1963 Course professionally redesigned
- 1965 Annual golfing competitions commenced
- 1968 New Clubhouse completed. Liquor license granted

- 1971 Connected to town water supply. First cleaner employed
- 1972 Golf and bowls clubs amalgamate
- 1974 Bowls greens completed and officially opened
- 1975 Major course upgrade. Greens converted to grass. Kikuyu fairways laid.
Watering system installed
- 1977 Further building extensions
- 1978 Course extended to 9 greens with 18 tees.
- 1980's Honor boards. First Club Manager. New commercial kitchen.
Bar turnover substantial. Total membership approaches 100.
- 1990's Pro-Am competitions. Course record set at 70 (one under par)
Total membership grows to 460. First female Club president
- 2002 Auto watering system installed to 6 greens
- 2004 All golf course maintenance reverts to voluntary labour
- 2005 RSL amalgamation
- 2008 Discussions begin for future redevelopment options.

1.3 Financial Overview

The following is a broad overview of the current financial position of the Club.

- Annual operating costs approximately \$100-120K with major trading relating to bar sales and the associated overhead costs of wages and superannuation.
- Primary assets of about \$670K generally relating to the Clubs property, plant and equipment
- Primary liabilities are total borrowings of approx. \$86K, which include a loan from Perpetual Trustees of \$68,700

Since 2004, maintenance of the entire site including buildings, grounds, golf course and bowling greens has almost entirely been provided by voluntary labour which fundamentally underpins the financial surety of the Club.

1.4 Future Planning

As a result of extensive discussions with club members, the Committee has concluded that its dependency on voluntary labour cannot be sustained if the Club's future is to be secure. A number of options have been explored and one redevelopment option has been pursued in some detail over the past 2-3 years. As a result of this review it has become clear that any future redevelopment of the site and any consequential changes to the Club could either directly or indirectly, have a considerable impact on the Flinders Island community. With this knowledge the Club has recently held preliminary discussions with the local Council and the conclusion now reached is that a joint venture for the proposed redevelopment of this site may have the potential to be beneficial to both parties and hence the local community in general.

1.5 The Club's Objectives

With the foregoing in mind the Committee on behalf of its members has now adopted the following objectives to begin planning for the future redevelopment of the site.

1. As a minimum requirement, the Club continues to provide the same services to the community as it currently provides relating to golf, bowls, a venue for community functions and a base for the Flinders Island RSL.
2. That the existing golf course is retained.
3. That in future the Club is not dependent on voluntary labour for its annual and ongoing asset maintenance and or any future capital works projects.

4. Redevelopment could present an opportunity for a 'state of the art' recreational, community facilities and housing hub that could position Flinders Island at the forefront of the provision of such facilities for isolated communities.

1.6 Redevelopment Options

With these objectives in mind the minimum redevelopment option will be one that produces sufficient additional income to cover the operational and ongoing asset maintenance costs of the club, its buildings and grounds. On the other hand the longevity of the Club may well depend on an increased and growing membership base, which is secured by redeveloping the site to its full potential. Redevelopment could present an opportunity for a 'state of the art' recreational, community facilities and housing hub that could position Flinders Island at the forefront of the provision of such facilities for isolated communities. Either way a clear vision for the future is required which is one that is also based on a strong and realistic business plan that meets the wider needs of the Flinders Island community and provides a pathway to the long term viability of the Sports Club.

Part 2: The Role of the Council

On 17 January 2013, Council met with representatives of the Club. In recent times, the Club had been considering some options for redeveloping the Sports Club site and had approached Council's officers on a number of occasions on matters generally related to planning and regulatory issues. In general terms, the January meeting with the Club's representatives was for the Club, at their request, to present its case as to why a potential redevelopment of the Sports Club site would best proceed as a joint venture between the two parties. As a result of this presentation Council, on behalf of the Flinders Island community, agreed in principle to participate in this project. At a further meeting between the parties on 15 May it was agreed that the first step would be to establish an agreed project brief and business plan. This following section of the Redevelopment Brief outlines the reasons for Council's involvement in the project.

2.1 Council's Participation

It is clear that any major redevelopment of this site could have a considerable impact on the community and it is well within Council's current guidelines to agree to the request from the Club to participate.

There are many ways Council could assist in such a project. For example:

- As the responsible statutory authority, Council would continue to provide advice in regard to planning matters and development options
- Council has considerable resources and expertise, which could potentially be utilized in the planning and implementation of infrastructure and building works.
- Council can assist during the early planning stages to ensure that any targeted outcomes of the project do not conflict, and in fact enhance, the current and future needs of the Island in other areas such as housing, tourism and recreation.
- Council has extensive skills and resources in the financial planning, funding and management of major projects.
- The Council can, where necessary, ensure appropriate coordination with other Island organizations throughout all stages of the project.

In short, throughout the project Council will be able to represent the community and is the most appropriate body to fulfill this role.

2.2 Private Public Partnerships

At this stage the full scale and nature of the redevelopment has yet to be defined and it is therefore premature to propose the most appropriate management structure for the project. However it is most likely that the management will require the involvement of the following three parties:

1. The Sports Club as owners of the land and with specific needs.
2. The Council with their professional expertise and as representatives of the community, and
3. A professional investor/ developer yet to be selected to oversee the financial planning and cost management of the project

Representatives from these organizations would then form the Client body engaging the necessary services of professional consultants and contractors appropriate for the project. This method of project delivery is commonly known as a “PPP” management structure and is currently in favor with governments and major funding authorities. Consequently Council could fulfill a further vital role in achieving a successful outcome to the project and to the benefit of the Club and wider Flinders Island community.

2.3 Economic and Community Development.

Flinders Council involvement in the assessment of development options and exploration of operational models aligns positively with the Council’s strategic objectives. In recent times the development of the Museum, the Airport and the Arts and Entertainment Centre have highlighted that infrastructure projects have the potential to deliver significant economic and social benefits to the community. Flinders Council in more recent times have embraced a greater focus on asset-based community and economic development principles and the Sports Club and its associated land and asset holding are a key existing asset for the community. Council support in assisting to maintain and/or enhance the viability of the Club and its use by the community is a considered approach to the goal of asset based community and economic development principles.

Furthermore, from an economic perspective, golf course development has delivered substantial benefits to other regional communities such as Bridport in Tasmania’s northeast and will soon be a key component of the tourism offering on King Island. A genuine opportunity exists to harness the growing market for such a product offering in the Furneaux islands and the Sports Club is well placed in partnership with Council to explore these opportunities as part of the proposed project.

Part 3: Opportunity Analysis

In summary the basic objective of any redevelopment is to generate sufficient funds to cover the annual and ongoing asset maintenance costs of the Club and associated infrastructure and seek to position their Sports Club in a manner whereby the ongoing viability of the site and the Club itself is secured. However the Club and Council also recognize that any redevelopment should be undertaken with the needs of the wider community in mind and with an understanding of what the full development potential of the site might be. Consequently the project brief identifies the following issues as a basis for developing the business plan for this redevelopment.

3.1 Golf and Bowls

The well-established links course is nine holes but with additional tees arranged so that the nine greens can also provide for a round of eighteen holes. The course is challenging, picturesque, well managed and maintained to a high standard. It is admired and appreciated by both visitors and locals. The bar-b-q area and synthetic bowls greens are also well utilized and the comfortable facilities at the clubhouse including, bar, professional kitchen and function rooms are regularly booked for community functions.

The site is generous in size and has adjoining cleared farmland to the south and east with some remaining undeveloped areas and bush within its boundaries. Over the years there have been discussions about extending the boundaries and creating a conventional 18-hole course but the scale of such a venture is beyond the Sports Clubs current capacity. It would be an extremely challenging project for the Club and generally considered well beyond the means of its membership. However it is recognized that the course would almost certainly attract considerably higher recognition and interest if this could be achieved. That said, the brief acknowledges that the expansion of the existing site to an 18-hole course may be a possibility to securing investment from private enterprise or a third party.

3.2 Tourism

Any redevelopment of the site will most likely be aimed at attracting more golfers and visitors to come the Island and meeting their wider needs, in terms of accommodation, meals, excursions, entertainment, shopping and the like. Therefore further research and coordination with the Tourism Association, traders and other existing, involved and interested parties on the Island will be required. The central location of the site is ideally suited to future expansion and growth in the Island's tourism industry.

Increased visitation to the island is a key driver of economic growth and would enhance the ongoing viability of many in the business/ tourism sector while also assisting Council in its efforts to make the Flinders island Airport a long-term sustainable operation. Visitor numbers would suggest that tourism and overall travelling numbers to the islands are slowing increasing at a time when many regional and isolated parts of Australia are suffering significant downturns. With this in mind it is critical that the islands continue to seek to expand its product offerings to attract more visitors. While nature based tourism is seen as the key growth sector for the years ahead, leisure and recreational based tourism is also a genuine opportunity for future growth. The success of Barnbougle and the developments currently in the construction phase on King island and Musselroe Bay add further weight to this assessment and a coordinated approach to fostering recreational and leisure opportunities at the Sports Club has a high level of merit.

It is noted however that a tourism-operating model comes with some well-known and well-refined existing models that may not in part be aligned with the development of traditional residential/ golf course housing models. In most cases the two are not mutually compatible with developers usually focusing on one or the other. While housing supply may well be low on Flinders so is the provision of quality accommodation options and conference facilities. Modeling would suggest that the growth in traditional residential housing will be very modest over the coming years but event based tourism has great potential for future growth.

The Sports Club believes that this Island could be further developed as an ideal destination for corporate functions. Excellent accommodation and catering facilities for individual holidaymakers, smaller groups and tours currently exist but the facilities for larger scale events are limited. The ability to attract and provide facilities for corporate functions and associated group accommodation has significant potential. The operational model for these sorts of developments are usually based upon the provision of conference facilities and accommodation being in close proximity to each other and the existing site has the capacity to support such a development without impacting on the functionality or visual amenity of the golf course itself.

3.3 Housing

The Council has recently undertaken extensive studies in to the anticipated future land use and associated housing needs of the Island. The results of these studies reveal that there is a current shortage in available land for traditional residential use and a key opportunity exists to develop affordable housing options. With an ageing and declining population the provision of the appropriate housing stock for the islands future needs is a key opportunity to explore as part of this project. Providing modern housing for the aged, ideally located with close proximity to health services and town facilities is an option worthy of further exploration. However it should be noted that the provision of housing on the land owned by the Sports Club under the existing legislative mechanism that exist and direct building and planning has the potential to impact on the use and layout of the golf course itself. Changes to the bushfire regulations and coastal inundation mapping all but preclude housing development in many parts of the existing site and those not precluded would require extensive vegetation clearance to support residential development or utilize costly fire proof building material and practices to mitigate risk and comply with the regulations in place. The brief notes that the costs associated with such construction may well be a non-viable option for developers or may significantly impact on the visual and functional amenity of the site itself. Therefore any housing development options require considerable exploration and consideration before viability or otherwise can be ascertained.

3.4 Community Recreational, Health and Social Hub

As outlined earlier in this brief, one option to secure the ongoing viability of the Sports Club is to increase its membership base and service provision. An option worthy of consideration in relation to this

goal is the provision of a broader range of community based recreational services and facilities and primary health care facilities at the existing site, potentially in partnership with the local Council.

Flinders Island has an aged collection of community recreational assets of which many are in a poor state of disrepair. These assets were predominately developed when the island had a much larger population base of a greatly different demographic profile. The current recreational facility needs of the community are largely unknown at this time but anecdotal evidence (and the current use of the FAEC) would suggest that opportunities exist for a gymnasium, a site for exercise and health related classes such as yoga and possibly a community pool and new tennis courts to name but a few. These facilities would be a key component to support increased primary health care outcomes within the community.

Furthermore, in recent years matters relating to health and fitness for the Island community have been subject to far greater focus. As with all remote communities there is an ongoing need to try and reduce the extent of specialist medical dependency for the community, enhance post treatment care facilities when patients return home to the island and in general encourage a more active and healthy lifestyle. A number of projects have recently been completed or are currently underway that support such a focus:

- The multimillion-dollar redevelopment of our community hospital and medical facilities.
- The highly successful 3 year Healthy Island Project (HIP)
- Acquisition of sufficient fitness equipment for a commercial scale gymnasium
- Regular structured yoga and fitness classes by qualified trainers with high attendance figures from a broad cross-section of the community. (The redeveloped FAEC has little capacity to support any expansion of these programs and as such an opportunity exists to develop a dedicated facility)
- The introduction and success of an annual running festival each September.

Extending the current facilities to benefit the health and fitness of this community as part of this redevelopment is a genuine opportunity and has great potential if based on a membership or fee for service model to support the operational and asset maintenance costs associated with the site now and into the future. Council is also well positioned to secure funding to support the development of such facilities but the ownership and operational model required to facilitate such an approach would need careful consideration.

Opportunities also exist to increase engagement and participation of youth to utilize the existing assets that the Flinders Island Sports & RSL Club currently provides. School groups regularly visit the Sports Club during the summer months particularly for a game of golf and in the past members of the Bowls Club have volunteered to provide lawn bowl lessons to Youth Club.

Ultimately the expansion of community based services and assets would also add to the operational costs and ongoing asset management expenses of the Sports Club if an ownership and operational model revision was not put in place to mitigate such. While increased membership has a role to play in the ongoing viability of the site and the Club itself, under the current operational model and with the population numbers available on the island it is questioned if such a direction could ever take the Club onto a sustainable financial footing. An expansion of the recreational and community facilities at the site would most likely require a genuine partnership between Council and the Club which could well require consideration of co ownership of the site itself in order for Council to be able to invest and assist in the operation and ongoing maintenance. While this is noted in the brief no consultation between Council and the Club in relation to such an approach has taken place to allow for an informed position to be reached at this time.

Part 4: Concept Design Plan

This section of the report establishes the basic concept for developing the site. This will assist in the preparation of the Business Plan for the project and the final Master Plan for the redevelopment

4.1 The Existing Site

The existing site of approximately 80 acres is located on the southern edge of the township of Whitemark. The western boundary runs along the crown land boundary of Whitemark Beach at Parry's Bay. To the south and east is the grazing farmland of the adjoining rural properties and to the north are residential streets and houses of Whitemark. The Council depot and SES headquarters adjoin the site at the northeastern corner boundary.

The single site access road from the north leads along the beach frontage towards the central clubhouse, car park and bowling greens. The clubhouse is served by town water and mains power. The water supply for the golf course is a combination of town and bore water. There is a small creek along the southern boundary. The site is fenced on the southern and eastern boundaries with some fencing to the north. The general character of the site is gently sloping grass fairways, separated by dense stands of coastal bush all in keeping with the undulating profile and existing vegetation of the adjoining sand dunes and coastline. Manicured greens and strategically planned bunkers indicate a well maintained and loved golf course. Impressive features of the site are the spectacular peaks of the Strezlecki Range and National Park to the southeast and beautiful Parry's Bay and the Whitemark Beach reserve along the western boundary.

The current regulatory zoning of the site in accordance with the current Flinders Island Planning Scheme is.... (to be confirmed).....and additional mandatory requirements apply to preserve the coastal frontage of the property. New regulations relating to planning for bushfire controls are now in place and proposed statewide amendments to the overall Planning Scheme are currently under review. Amendments to the current building regulations are also being introduced in Tasmania, which will require new Class I buildings (Residential) to have a mandatory certification for a 6 star energy rating. The site is believed to be unencumbered freehold land, but further scrutiny of the title is yet to be undertaken.

4.2 Functional Requirements

In planning terms, the functional requirements for this redevelopment can be summarized and grouped into the following zones.

Zone 1. The Existing Golf Course

Generally the existing layout of the golf course is to remain apart from any minor improvements, which the Club may decide to introduce as a consequence of the proposed redevelopment works. It will also be beneficial to the Club if its members can still have access to the course while any site works are in progress.

Zone 2. Possible Golf Course Extensions

As previously referred to in this report, it may not be feasible to extend the course to a conventional 18 holes within the current Club title, but the Club would support and encourage any interested developer to explore the possibility of an 18 hole course utilizing adjoining freehold land. The physical beauty of the coastal strip with mountainous views may present many options for a developer

Zone 3. Foreshore Frontage

The regulatory implications relating to any proposed redevelopment of this site, particularly as a result of the foreshore frontage, will require further detailed investigation and will restrict any redevelopment in this area.

Zone 4. Independent Development

The redevelopment of this site is required as a minimum outcome to generate sufficient additional income to cover the annual running costs of maintenance for the Club. The Business Plan will investigate this aspect of the redevelopment in more detail. However this proposed new zone on the site must be identified and replanned to achieve the maximum financial benefit to the Club.

Zone 5. Improvements and Upgrades

The requirements for this redevelopment are also to investigate potential improvements to the existing facilities which would also contribute to the financial success of the project, respond to the identified current and future needs of the wider community and which could best be achieved if they were located within the general location of the existing club house. For example this may include the additional tennis courts, a health and fitness club and say accommodation for visiting golfing groups from interstate or overseas.

These zones are shown on the following Existing Site Plan drawing

4.3 Concept Design Plan

The Concept Design Plan on the next page has the following advantages:

Zone 1: The Existing Golf Course

In this plan the existing course remains in its entirety. The location of all fairways, bunkers and greens and associated services and facilities are unaffected by the redevelopment. Existing features of the course such as strategically located stands of trees, views to the mountain range and connection with the coastline are retained. Continuing use of the course would also be possible.

Zone 2: Possible Golf Course Extensions

As previously stated, the Club supports and encourages investigation into the possibilities of extending the course to an accredited 18 holes. The size, layout and associated implications have yet to be investigated in any detailed way but the adjoining property immediately to the south and east is generally cleared rural land on one title. The concept plan indicates the possibility of encompassing existing uncleared land currently owned by the Club and the cleared farmland to the southeast.

Zone 3: Foreshore Frontage

This proposal identifies and preserves the western boundary land and hence retains one of the primary features of the existing course and the character of the surrounding area. It also complies with the objectives of the Planning Scheme.

Zone 4: Independent Development Zone

If the existing golf course is to be retained on this site, then this relatively undeveloped corner area becomes prime land for commercial redevelopment due to the following:

- Generally the course would be unaffected by any redevelopment of this part of the site.
- There is maximum flexibility in the way this land could be used for redevelopment
- The possibilities for extending the size of this zone can be explored with adjoining property owners.
- The land can be readily and economically serviced in terms of access roads, power and water.
- The land could be subdivided or redeveloped in stages.
- Planning solutions could readily be introduced to provide any visual barrier that maybe required between the two zones or protection from misguided golf balls.

The Business Plan will reveal the full potential of this part of the site and whether or not, additional release of golf course land is required. The additional land for this purpose is likely to be the uncleared area at the southwestern corner of the site (See Zone 2). However this land will have higher infrastructure costs to redevelop and potentially a relatively low yield if the existing character of the golf course is to be retained and planning permit regulatory controls are fully implemented.

Zone 5: Improvements and Upgrades.

This part of the site is set aside for redevelopment of functions, which will be of benefit to the Club, either financially or otherwise and are therefore more appropriately sited within the central location of the existing Clubhouse. This in turn ensures more flexibility in the way the Zone 4 area is utilized.

Conclusion

This report is intended to form a framework to begin the preparation of a Business Plan for the proposed redevelopment of this site. It is therefore likely that this next stage in the process will reveal more detailed information to test and evaluate the foregoing information and enable the final Masterplan for the redevelopment to be prepared on a firm financial basis.