

28 August 2013

# Heritage Impact Statement (HIS)

## Fernhill Mulgoa

### Proposed use of the site for *Tough Mudder* outdoor event (integrated development DA)

#### Background

This HIS accompanies an application for the use of the Fernhill property for the *Tough Mudder* outdoor event on the weekend of November 23, 24 2013. This is a one-off event application and has been lodged in the context of a broader, master development application that is presently with Penrith Council and is referred to as the "Master DA". The Master DA addresses the long-term use of the property, along with conservation, maintenance, and a range of other issues, and includes documentation such as the revised Fernhill Estate Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and the Master DA HIS.

This HIS needs to be read in conjunction with the other application documents, which set out the intended location for the *Tough Mudder* event on the property, parking arrangements, and the consideration of environmental and other planning matters that fall outside the issues covered by this Heritage Impact Statement.

As the application is for use with temporary structures and temporary arrangements on the property, much of the assessment requires an understanding of the whole event and how it operates to understand the basis of the HIS and potential heritage impacts.

This application does not pre-empt the various considerations that need to be undertaken in relation to the broad future use of the site, however the opportunity has arisen to run the *Tough Mudder* event on the property again in 2013 (note it was run in early 2013 at Fernhill). This event is also an opportunity to test out the capability of the site to run such large events smoothly.

It is not anticipated or expected that any approval of this application will infer that future events of this scale or nature will necessarily be approved. That consideration forms part of the "Master DA" submitted for the site. It may, however, inform the process of consideration of the Master DA, and one of the recommendations of this HIS is careful monitoring and assessment of the set-up, operation and pack-down of the event, so that information can be provided to the consent authorities to assist in the over-arching DA assessment.

It is also important to point out that Fernhill contains a landscape that is suitable for the holding of this event.

## Fernhill property description

Fernhill is a large area of land (an estate) which contains the original Fernhill house and gardens, surrounding land, with added areas of land to the north, south and west of the original holding, with the largest area of additional land to the west of the house and garden. This event is to take place in the central rural area of the core estate lands, the western precinct and a small area of the added northern lands.

The site, on the western side of Mulgoa Road, rises from Mulgoa Road with a long sweeping landscape with the house set on a small knoll overlooking the surrounding land, a watercourse separating the house land from a wooded hill behind (to the west) that forms the highest part of the estate lands. The far (west) side of the wooded hill is a large lightly wooded and once grazed area of relatively flat land that forms a small plateau.

Both the original (2005) and recently revised Fernhill CMPs prepared by Paul Davies Pty Ltd set out the heritage significance of the various components of the Fernhill estate, and identify which areas of the estate are capable of some form of use or development. The CMP also identifies a variety of uses and event types that have minimal heritage impact and therefore are suitable for parts of the Fernhill estate. The original 1000 acres of the Fernhill estate has State heritage significance. The landscape of Fernhill is a modified landscape in that it was originally a 19<sup>th</sup> century open park-like, partially cleared landscape setting for house. That setting largely remained until the 1970s when the landscape was altered in the following ways:

- Filling around the house to create a series of platforms with landscape
- The addition of the race track and stables complex
- The addition of dams across the site and within the race track area
- The introduction of timber fencing that changed the pattern of the landscape
- New plantings and regrowth of Cumberland Plain woodland
- The addition of long stone walls lining the driveway
- The addition of a range of new buildings around the site.

Elements that remain from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape setting are:

- The still largely open form of much of the landscape
- The second entry driveway (service road)
- The original entry drive (except for the actual entry point which was relocated due to the realignment of Mulgoa Road)
- The mature eucalypt plantings along the entry drive
- The reflection pond beyond the stables
- The stone road bridges beyond the pond.

## Proposal/Event Description

The proposal is to hold the Tough Mudder event at Fernhill over two days on the weekend of November 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013. The details of the proposal, including the course of the event over the Fernhill property, are outlined in Attachment A to this HIS.

*Tough Mudder* events are challenging, team-based, "20km long obstacle courses" to test stamina and strength. The April event involved 25 obstacles, with 600 people (maximum) starting the course every 15 minutes from 8am and 3pm (7 hours) on each day of the event. Understandably the total number of people are allocated across the day to stagger

arrival, start and completion times and the total number of participants determines the numbers that race at each time.

When this event was held at Fernhill in April 2013, it attracted around 12,000 participants and 3,000 spectators over the two days.

This event is designed for this and a small potential increase of up to 20,000 attendees (participants and spectators) over the two days.

The type of event proposed is transient. While the proposal requires careful consideration to determine if there are any adverse heritage impacts, it is clear that the core area of the site, that contains the house and garden and associated structures, are excluded and will not be accessible during the event. Consequently there is no consideration of the parts of the site outside the area of activity proposed for this event, in this HIS.

While the event is being run, there will be temporary structures and temporary arrangements, including temporary parking arrangements, on the property. These temporary elements will change the nature of the landscape for the period of the event, but the ability of the place to be reinstated to its rural form following the event without undue heritage impacts, is the primary heritage impact consideration for this proposal.

This event occupies the area of the property shown in the Figures in Attachment A to this HIS. The course involves 20 obstacles – some involving trenching, some involving erection of temporary timber or plywood structures (some of these structures also utilising metal pipe or metal mesh fencing), a hay bale mountain, use of logs or plastic culverts, plastic liners - 5 water stations, a temporary car parking area, and spectator paths. The start/finish "Base area" is located within the existing race track on the property.

Of the 20 separate obstacles involved in the Tough Mudder event:

- ♦ obstacles, 9, 10 and 11 – located west of the core area of Fernhill estate - are outside the SHR-listed area, west of the forested area west of the house and garden
- ♦ 17 obstacles are located within the SHR-listed site
- ♦ 10 obstacles involve excavation.

Where obstacles involve excavation, this excavation - in terms of both location and extent – will be in the same locations previous excavations for Tough Mudder. No new excavations will be involved in this event.

Access to the site during the event is addressed in the following manner:

- 1) Competitors and observers will use the main entry gate and be directed around the site to parking locations.
- 2) Temporary event parking will be located in the central paddocks adjacent to the racecourse area.

Refer to the traffic management and access plans for full details of vehicle management on and around the site.

### **Potential Heritage Impacts of the Event**

Potential heritage impacts fall into two categories:

- 1) Potential physical impacts on the site and site features

## 2) Impacts from the use of the site for the event.

The physical impacts will be:

- largely those of wear and tear or minor accidental damage to the landscape during the event from contestants traversing the site,
- the event does not require any new excavation or ground disturbance – that is, excavation involved at the ten sites will be undertaken in areas previously excavated – however, there is likely to be some minor disturbance to surrounding areas to the obstacles where machinery is required to access for digging etc. ,
- there will be some areas of wear, particularly wearing of the paddock surface in the designated parking area, however the short duration of the event and the nature of the soil in the paddocks allows quick recovery of grassed areas,
- minor short-term deterioration of the paddocks where tents or facilities are located for the 2 days.

Temporary services are above ground, with temporary obstacles placed on the ground and not set into it.

The specific elements that may be affected are:

### *Main entry drive*

The main entry drive is a sealed road that follows the early road alignment. It is intended to bring set-up vehicles along this drive prior to the event, and for access for such vehicles following the conclusion of the event. This is a low-volume use similar to current use. There is no parking on this drive and no access to grass verges or areas of trees. There is no access to the former entry drive area on the east end of the current drive. The entry and road will be managed by staff during the event to control the number of vehicles moving through the site and speed limits will be imposed and enforced. Temporary barriers and signs will be in place to direct vehicles.

Visitors to the site will also access along this driveway and be directed around the site to the parking areas. This will be a gradual use during the two days as contestants arrive for their staggered start times.

The mature stand of trees along the drive are a particularly significant remnant early landscape element, and there will be no activity or vehicle movement in close proximity to these trees.

### *Service Drive*

The service drive will operate in the same manner as the main driveway with access for service vehicles and contestants to parking areas. Egress from the site will be through the service gate to Mulgoa Road.

This is also a sealed single lane road that can accommodate the traffic. All traffic movements are directed around the site.

### *Paddocks and Bushland*

A number of paddock areas are to be used for parts of the event and for parking, as shown in Attachment A to this report.

The event is designed to avoid areas of sensitive landscape or bushland and at the same time experience the range of landscapes that are found at Fernhill.

The obstacle sites are located to take advantage of natural features, to be spread out and to be located in areas where activities such as excavation have minimal impacts on the location or site overall.

Environmental issues are dealt with in other reports.

Based on the review of the earlier Tough Mudder event, the landscaper around tracks and obstacle locations was recovered within a few days and there was little evidence of the use shortly after the event. There will inevitably be impacts simply through use of the site such as wearing of foot tracks, but the grassed paddocks recover quickly and variations in routes ensures that the same areas are not traversed again.

Similarly parking is rotated across the paddocks from the earlier event to ensure that the same areas are not used over several events.

The excavation of pits and trenches clearly has some impact on the place as not only is material removed but it needs to be stored for the duration of the event and then replaced. Some reinstatement of surface areas is required as part of the remediation of the event.

As noted there are 10 obstacles that involve excavation. In summary (please refer to detailed outline of works attached also) they are:

No	Location	Extent of excavation
1	Near service gate entry	Excavation: 7 trenches each 14.0 x 1.5 x 1.0 (deep) spaced apart by 1.5 metres
3	Area near vehicle track between camping area and dam	Excavation: An area 9.1 x 15.25 metres with a depth of 150mm
5	Area near vehicle track between camping area and dam	Excavation: An area 9.1 x 12.2 metres, lined with plastic with a depth of 4.6 metres.
10	Outside the SHI or heritage listed area	
11	Outside the SHI or heritage listed area	
13	Paddock south of the main entry drive	Excavation: 15.25 x 7.6 metres to a depth of 900mm
16	Paddock south of the main entry drive	Excavation: 9.1 x 1.5 metres to a depth of 900mm
17	Paddock south of the main entry drive	Excavation: 7 trenches each 12.2 x 1.2 metres to a depth of 900mm
18	Area within main race track	Excavation: 12.2 x 15.25 metres to a depth of 1.5 metres
20	Area within main race track	Excavation: 10.7 x 6.1 metres to a depth of 150mm

### *Camping*

On site camping is again proposed in the grove of Pecan trees on the northern side of the service driveway. The number of campsites is limited and they are set out around the trees to ensure no impacts on vegetation. An outline of management is attached.

Camping for two days has very low impacts and the rules of the site which do not allow open cooking etc assist in minimising any impact.

The activity is based around the existing hay shed. This will accommodate meals and food and located outside this are kitchen and toilet facilities. These are installed as long-term temporary structures. That is they are portable buildings connected to site services and clad with timber to provide a contextual fit.

Overall the camping has a light footprint on the site as it only operates with the event and is not a general camping area.

#### *Facilities*

A range of portable facilities are located on the site, particularly around the start/finish area. These provide amenities, outlets for food, marquees and tents for shelter etc. All of these facilities are modest in nature, are erected the few days before the event and removed immediately after. They have no adverse heritage impact.

#### *Scale of Use*

Physically the site can accommodate the proposed 20,000 participants each day of the proposed two-day event, as it is a very large site and the earlier event operated comfortably and without any pressure from the numbers involved. Interestingly, as the event is a staggered one most of the people on site at any time are spread around the course and there is only a congregation of people at the start and finish. While spectators will observe events, they are more static in that they are not running the course. Groups of spectators will also be spread around the course and at the start/finish location.

The greatest number of people will be in the central areas with the start/finish there are several obstacles in close proximity that will attract viewers.

### **Discussion**

The application is for an event which has previously (in April 2013) been successfully held on the property.

The proposal provides an opportunity to observe and monitor the impacts from set-up, the running of the event itself, and pack-down at the conclusion of the event. This enables identification of real impacts from such an event and the addressing of these in future.

The *Tough Mudder* event is considered suitable for the site as:

- The site is large and capable of accommodating the use without undue physical impacts;
- Apart from traffic management, the event has little or no impact on surrounding areas
- The event provides for community participation and some public access to the property
- The event provides income for the local area (as set out in other documents)
- There are few sites within the Sydney basin capable of accommodating an event such as this

- The event will generate income for the maintenance and conservation of the property (approximately \$2 million has been spent this year on maintenance and conservation of Fernhill)
- The event will be managed by an experienced event management company who have managed similar events and understand the management needs of such activities; and
- Part of the staff briefing for all staff involved in the event concerns the heritage significance of the Fernhill site and landscape.

There are also extensive examples of Tough Mudder (and other activities of a similar nature) being held on historic estates around the world with a high level of success and very manageable heritage impacts. Similar important heritage estates that host Tough Mudder (in late 2013) include in Great Britain:

Broughton Hall Estate Skipton Yorkshire

Cholmondeley Estate Cheshire

Glanusk Estate Wales

Oakengrove Cottage Henley on Thames

Each of these (and many other heritage properties) accommodate the event with no adverse impacts along with a range of other major events.

The proposal should be considered as an isolated event, not a precedent for future events. Any consent granted should specify that the consent be for the Tough Mudder event to take place as a stand alone activity. Broader consideration should form part of the Master DA.

## Conclusion

While the *Tough Mudder* event is a large and significant event, it is considered to be within the scope of activities suitable for the Fernhill site and also manageable in terms of its impacts. The event will be managed to ensure minimal site and heritage impact from the event, and the monitoring of the event will enable any issues of concern which do arise to be addressed as part of future considerations for the site.