
6 SPORTS FIELDS ACTION PLAN - TOWARDS 2036: PUBLIC EXHIBITION OUTCOMES

Report prepared by: Open Space Planner
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REPORT SUMMARY

Council considered the Draft *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* at its meeting of 26 July 2022 and resolved to place the draft on public exhibition. This exhibition occurred between 15 September and 13 October 2022. Council requested that a report on the exhibition be prepared should there be any submissions.

A total of 99 Have Your Say page comments and 11 written submissions, including some objections, were received during the Public Exhibition. This report summarises the comments and responses, their implications and recommends the way forward.

Generally, the comments and submissions were highly supportive of the *Draft Plan*, with 86% of comments endorsing the Plan and the priorities identified, 10% flagging additional issues and only 4% objecting to elements of the Plan.

The majority of respondents appreciate that the proposed projects hold the promise of substantial sporting community, environmental and economic benefits for the City (and as detailed in the 26 July report to Council).

However, some community responses raised concerns regarding the potential for negative environmental impacts of sports lighting and sports synthetic surfaces. These matters are being and will continue to be addressed by Council at the detailed planning and investigation stage for each project.

A significant number of submissions were also received in relation to the expansion of the capacity of Waterloo Park for active recreation (with 53% of HYS comments and 27% of written submissions endorsing the plans for Waterloo Park). Whilst this is already identified as a priority by Council in its Strategic Plans, this report recommends bringing forward detailed feasibility investigations for the project to commence in 2023. Should these investigations identify that expansion of the capacity for active recreation at the park is feasible, Council could then consider undertaking the master planning process for Waterloo Park.

Following the feedback received from the community on the plan, some minor changes to the Draft Plan are proposed, as detailed in the body of the report below. This report recommends the adoption of the amended *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* (**ATTACHMENT 1 – CIRCULATED UNDER SEPARATE COVER**).

ITEM 6 (continued)**RECOMMENDATION:**

- (a) That Council adopt the amended *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* (**ATTACHMENT 1**).
- (b) That future projects detailed within the *Plan*, when implemented, be subject to the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed works.
- (c) That the feasibility investigations for increasing the active recreation capacity of Waterloo Park be prioritised and undertaken this calendar year.
- (d) That staff write to thank all residents who participated in the *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* public exhibition and inform them of Council's resolution.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Sports Field Action Plan - Towards 2036 - For Adoption – CIRCULATED UNDER SEPARATE COVER
- 2 Sports Field Action Plan - Towards 2036 - Public Exhibition Submissions Summary

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Background

The projects recommended in the *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* (the Plan) are required to cost effectively meet the forecast demand for organised sporting facilities to 2036 – particularly to address the forecast shortfall of 13 full size sports fields/ovals by 2036.

As detailed in the 26 July 2022 report to Council, the projects include a mix of infrastructure upgrades, as follows:

- Sports field lighting,
- Sport field layout optimisations,
- Synthetic conversions,
- Gaining access to school fields,
- Rezoning opportunities to create new fields and synthetic surfaces.

The projects were prioritised according to their cost effectiveness (i.e. capital investment cost / per additional carrying capacity) and weighted according to their contribution to increasing sports field capacity.

The recommended priorities comprise 28 projects at 16 parks, including 4 synthetic conversions, 16 lighting upgrades/installations, 5 field layout reconfigurations (generating 5 new natural turf and one new synthetic fields), 2 rezoning opportunities and 1 new shared use opportunity.

These projects have the potential to reduce the forecast 2036 shortfall of 13 full-size fields to zero, as follows:

Project	Full size field/equivalent
Synthetic conversions x 4 = 80 hours	2.5
Rezoning opportunities x 2	4.0
Shared use opportunity x 1	2.0
Field reconfigurations x new synthetic x 1	1.0
Field reconfigurations x natural turf x 3	5.0
Total	14.5

Additionally, implementation of the 16 sports lighting projects will significantly address the current shortfall in mid-week evening sports training carrying capacity (as demonstrated by the most recent winter allocation of sports fields).

Public Exhibition

In accordance with part (a) of Council's July 2022 resolution, the Plan was placed on public exhibition on 15 September and remained on display for a total of 28 days until 13 October 2022.

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Interested residents and others were invited to Have Your Say (HYS) on the Strategy by providing comments or submissions via an on-line submission form, e-mail or post. Additionally, an ENewsletter was distributed to all sports clubs and associations that use Council's sports grounds, alerting them to the HYS page and inviting feedback.

A total of 99 HYS page comments and 11 written submissions, including some objections, were received during the Public Exhibition. This report summarises the comments and responses, their implications and recommends the way forward.

Generally, the HYS comments were highly supportive of the Plan, with 89% of response comments endorsing the Plan, 8% flagging additional issues and only 3% objecting to elements of the Plan, as summarised below:

Response	Facility	Percent comments
Support for Plan	General support	26.9
	Waterloo Park - synthetic conversion	36.2
	Waterloo Park – lighting upgrade	0.8
	Waterloo Park – upgrade general	16.2
	North Ryde Oval – synthetic conversion	2.3
	No specific facility – synthetic conversion	1.5
	Pioneer Park - lighting upgrade	5.4
Objections to Plan	Against synthetic conversions	1.6
	Health concerns re synthetic conversions	0.8
	Cost-benefit concerns re synthetic conversions	0.8
Additional issues to consider	Marsfield Park upgrade	0.8
	Access school sports facilities (Epping Boys HS)	0.8
	Retain land for sports facilities - TG Millner	4.6
	Secure land for sports facilities - CSIRO site Marsfield	0.8
	Climate change – need for more lighting for twilight/evening sport No specific facility	0.8
TOTAL		100.0

Nearly 50% of the written submissions (5) are also very supportive of specific proposals in the Plan. The other 6 proposals express concerns about the environmental impacts of synthetic conversions and sports lighting (2), the need for additional hockey facilities (3) and the loss of lawn bowls facilities (1).

A detailed summary of the comments and submissions received is provided as **ATTACHMENT 2**.

ITEM 6 (continued)

Discussion and Recommended Amendments to Proposed Report

Based on the extensive, mainly positive, feedback from the community, as well as matters that have arisen after preparation of the Plan, the following items have been revisited and some amendments to the Plan are proposed.

Waterloo Park

While the synthetic conversion and expansion of Waterloo Oval are already priority projects identified in the Plan, it is deemed appropriate, due to the very strong community support for the project (with 53% of HYS comments and 27% of written submissions endorsing the plans for Waterloo Park), to bring forward detailed feasibility investigations for the project to commence in 2023. Should these investigations identify that the project is feasible, Council may then undertake the master planning process for Waterloo Park.

Pioneer Park

There was strong support for the sports lighting proposal for Pioneer Park in the community engagement – with more than 5% of total responses supporting sports lighting. While the project was in the Plan placed on public exhibition, it had been given a ‘low’ priority.

The low priority has been reviewed against the other sports lighting projects and it is now recommended that Pioneer Park be upgraded to ‘medium’ priority with Bill Mitchell Park dropping to ‘low’ priority. The installation of sports lighting at Pioneer Park will likely assist in managing any additional baseball demand from natural population growth without the need for providing additional baseball facilities.

TG Millner Field

Following the preparation of the Draft Sports Field Action Plan, a Planning Proposal for the TG Millner site was lodged with Council. This ‘market driven’ matter impacts the priority of the project and has elevated the priority of the project.

Specifically, it is proposed that the current ‘2 fields’ opportunity in the Draft Plan be changed to ‘a minimum of 2 fields’ to reflect the actual potential of the site.

A higher prioritisation for this project is also consistent with the strong community support for retention of the TG Millner site for sports fields.

CSIRO Marsfield site

Similar to the TG Millner site, the Marsfield CSIRO site is a ‘market driven’ opportunity which will remain latent until such time as a Planning Proposal is lodged. Should this occur, the project’s prioritisation (currently ‘low’ priority) will be reviewed subject to the details of the proposal.

ITEM 6 (continued)**Hockey**

The *City of Ryde Open Space Future Provision Strategy* (May 2021) identified a hockey pitch demand in the City of Ryde of 67 hours/week in 2019 growing to 92 hours by 2036. This translates to a requirement for 1 synthetic (capacity 50 hours) and one unlit grass field (capacity 18 hours) in 2019 and 2 synthetic pitches (capacity 100 hours) by 2036.

Based on planning benchmarks, the current supply of hockey pitches in the City – the synthetic, NSW Government owned Keith Thompson Hockey Centre (18 Waterloo Rd Macquarie Park) and the grass pitch at Meadowbank Park was just sufficient to meet the 2019 demand.

However, as indicated by Hockey NSW (in consultations undertaken in preparation of the *City of Ryde Sport and Recreation Strategy 2016-26*), membership statistics demonstrate that larger memberships tend to be where facility supply is relatively plentiful (as in the City of Ryde where circa 50% of the 1,800 members of the North-West Sydney Hockey Association live).

Accordingly, Hockey NSW indicated its support for an additional hockey field in the City of Ryde.

This additional demand was echoed in the recent community engagement undertaken on the Draft *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* – with 3 of the 11 written submissions expressing the need for additional hockey facilities.

Given these expressed issues together with the modelling, discussed above, identifying the need for two synthetic hockey pitches by 2036, it is imperative that any potential future relocation of the Keith Thompson Hockey Centre commences operations with 2 synthetic fields suitable for hockey and associated infrastructure such as amenities, car parking and lighting.

A new brief section has been added to the Draft Plan to emphasise and quantify this need.

Environmental concerns

As noted above, 2 of the 11 written submissions and 4 of the 99 HYS comments received during the public exhibition, expressed concerns about impacts associated with the proposed lighting and synthetic conversion projects e.g. with lighting projects causing light spill on surrounding residences and impacts on bird populations and the potential heat island and material breakdown impacts of synthetic surfaces

With respect to these concerns, it is noted that there are options for mitigating the potential impacts. Council is already implementing mitigation measures e.g. use of organic infill materials in synthetic playing surfaces (as a substantial additional cost to Council) and LED lighting (to limit spill).

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Additionally, potential impacts will be thoroughly investigated as part of the planning pathway requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* for each project.

Further, it is noted that a soon to be released NSW State Government review of synthetic sports surfaces, led by the NSW Chief Scientist, has explored the risks and opportunities associated with synthetic sports surfaces and, for any future City of Ryde project, the findings will be considered in conjunction with the above-mentioned site-specific environmental assessment of projects.

Following making these amendments to the document in response to community feedback and other considerations as detailed, the *City of Ryde Sports Fields Action Plan - Towards 2036* provided in **ATTACHMENT 1 - CIRCULATED UNDER SEPARATE COVER** is recommended for adoption.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for Council adopting the recommendations of this report. This report does not propose changes to the Operational or Delivery Plans. Should Council resolve to adopt this Plan, changes will be made to the Delivery Plan during Council's business planning processes and project implementation is subject to funding availability. Any addition of capital projects to this plan may require the reprioritisation of existing identified projects.

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ATTACHMENT 2

FUTURE SPORTS FACILITIES PUB EXHIB – SUBMISSIONS

1. HAVE YOUR SAY webpage submissions form (99 responses with a total of 130 separate comments)

The responses are heavily skewed to Waterloo Park with 53.2% of all responses supporting the upgrades at Waterloo Park.

Overall, 89.3% of responses are supportive of the Plan, with only 10.7% of responses being against recommendations or flagging additional issues of concern.

Issue	Facility	No. comments	% comments
Support for Plan & specific recommendations			
General support for Plan	No specific facility	35	26.9
Synthetic conversions	Waterloo Park	47	36.2
	North Ryde Oval	3	2.3
	No specific facility	2	1.5
Lighting upgrades	Waterloo Park	1	0.8
	Pioneer Park	7	5.4
Upgrades general	Waterloo Park	21	16.2
Issues/concerns			
Less/against synthetic conversions	No specific facility	1	0.8
	Waterloo Oval	1	0.8
Health concerns re synthetic conversions	No specific facility	1	0.8
Cost-benefit concerns re synthetic conversions	No specific facility	1	0.8
Other upgrade requirements	Marsfield Park	1	0.8
Access school sports facilities	Epping Boys HS	1	0.8
Retain/secure land for sports facilities	TG Millner	6	4.6
	CSIRO site Marsfield	1	0.8
Climate change – need for more lighting for twilight/evening sport	No specific facility	1	0.8
TOTAL		130	100.0

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ATTACHMENT 2

2. Email/written submissions (11 responses)

Nearly 50% of submissions (5) are very supportive of specific proposals in the Plan. The other 6 proposals express concerns about the environmental impacts of synthetic conversions and sports lighting (2), the need for additional hockey facilities (3) and the loss of lawn bowls facilities (1).

Submission	Purpose	Specific issues
Submissions of support		
Macquarie Dragons FC	Support for Waterloo Park proposals	Support of the Waterloo Park upgrades - additional field, lighting, amenities and shared use.
Macquarie Saints Baseball Club	Support for Waterloo and Pioneer Park proposals	Support lighting upgrade at Pioneer Park in conjunction with downsizing Waterloo senior baseball to junior - danger to users of walkway – with seniors moving to Pioneer Park.
Macquarie Saints Baseball Club	Support for Waterloo and Pioneer proposals	Support lighting upgrade at Pioneer Park. Support synthetic conversion at Waterloo Park.
North-West Sydney Football	Support for LH Waud Oval proposals	Support synthetic conversion at LH Waud. Support lighting upgrade at LH Waud.
Football NSW	Support for LH Waud Oval proposals	Support synthetic conversion at LH Waud. Support lighting upgrade at LH Waud.
Concerns/issues		
RHHFFPS	Environmental impacts/mitigation	Multiple concerns - urban heat; micro plastics pollution and carbon emissions; landfill; increased flood risk; toxic chemicals; natural turf important for biodiversity.
<Redacted – Persons Name>	Environmental impacts/mitigation	Need for mitigation of synthetic surfacing - reduce impact on birds foraging by replacing netball courts with grass fields at same time as synthetic surfacing of LH Waud; reduce heat impact; reduce runoff of microplastics; ensure end of life recycling. Need for mitigation of lighting impacts - reduce impacts of lighting on birds e.g. Raptor Sylvania lights have a Natuur Range which they claim minimises risks to wildlife.
<Redacted – Persons Name>	Need for more hockey facilities	Build LH Waud synthetic conversion to hockey standard.
<Redacted – Persons Name>	Need for more hockey facilities	Build LH Waud synthetic conversion to hockey standard.
<Redacted – Persons Name>	Need for more hockey facilities	Dire lack of quality hockey facilities in Sydney which City of Ryde can help to ameliorate.
<Redacted – Persons Name>	Concern re loss of Lawn Bowls	Concern re proposal that the existing Denistone bowling club site be used for a sports field/no consultation.