

Synthetic Sportfields Program

File No: X006324

Summary

The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Study 2016 forecast a need for an additional 16,000 playable hours by 2030. In response, Council resolved to adopt the Sports field Development Program in 2019 that included the creation of six synthetic sportsfields to deliver the required additional hours. Subsequent to this program being endorsed the City acquired additional land at Mandible Street, Alexandria.

To date the synthetic sportsfield at Gunyama Park has been completed and a sportsfield at Alexandra Park Community School is under construction. Construction of synthetic sportsfields will be completed at The Crescent Park and Perry Park in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

Designs for Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval are at concept phase. Concept plans for a synthetic surface at Turruwul Park were presented to the community for comment in April and May 2021.

Community feedback, however, was strongly opposed to the Turruwul Park proposal and this report therefore recommends to Council that that synthetic surfaces are only provided on new sportsfields where appropriate, and that existing natural turf fields are not converted to synthetic surfaces.

This report recommends synthetic sportsfields not be installed at the existing natural turf fields of Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval. The additional 2030 playable hours target can now be achieved through the development of synthetic sportsfields on the recently acquired properties in Mandible Street, Alexandria, when the current property leasebacks expire in 2027.

Accordingly, it is also proposed to redistribute funds that were allocated to the development of Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval synthetic sportsfields to related projects, including the Synthetic Sportsfields Development Program.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the progress of the Synthetic Sportsfields Program; and
- (B) does not proceed with the proposal for synthetic sportsfields at Turruwul Park or at Waterloo Oval;
- (C) approve the transfer of funds to related projects, including the Sportsfield Development Program as set out in Confidential Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (D) approve the development of concept designs for multi-purpose synthetic sportsfields at Mandible Street, Alexandria.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Engagement Report – Proposed Synthetic Sports Surface at Turruwul Park, Rosebery
- Attachment B.** Financial Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. There are 32 sporting fields in the City of Sydney local government area. Of these, 13 are directly managed by the City. This portfolio provides a range of field sizes and surfaces which relate to the type of sports that can be accommodated (e.g. compact soccer, FIFA soccer, cricket, rugby etc.).
2. The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Study 2016, forecast a need for an additional 16,000 playable hours by 2030.
3. In response, Council resolved to approve the Sportsfield Development Program to achieve the additional playable hours target.
4. The Program identified three locations to build new synthetic sportsfields; namely Gunyama Park (Zetland), Alexandria Community High School, and Perry Park (Alexandria). The program also identified three existing parks - Crescent Park (Annandale), Turruwul Park (Rosebery) and Waterloo Oval (Waterloo) - that could be converted to synthetic sportsfields.
5. Natural turf surfaces are subject to significant impacts from the level of use and weather conditions. These factors constrain the level of use compared to surfaces such as synthetics. Typically, natural turf fields have approximately one third the playing capacity of a synthetic sportsfield and require frequent renovation and reurfing leading to field closures.
6. To date, a synthetic sportsfield at Gunyama Park has been completed and a sportsfield at Alexandra Community High School is under construction. Synthetic sportsfields at both The Crescent and Perry Park have Council scope approval and are currently being designed. Construction completion is expected in mid-2023 for The Crescent and mid 2024 for Perry Park.
7. A concept design for a synthetic sportsfield at Turruwul Park has been completed, and preliminary designs for a synthetic sportsfield at Waterloo Oval have been developed.
8. The concept plans for Turruwul Park were presented to the community for comment in April and May 2021.
9. While support was received from football clubs, 89 per cent of respondents did not support the Turruwul Park proposal. Feedback included concerns that a synthetic surface would change the park's character from that of local park to a dedicated sportsfield, and that community use for dog walking, playing with children, picnics, would be restricted in favour of organised sports. Feedback also included concern for heat generation making the field more hazardous to play on, negative potential impacts on biodiversity and concerns that micro-plastics may enter waterways.
10. The feedback confirms the community is less likely to accept the conversion of an existing turf field to a synthetic playing surface.
11. In response to the largely negative community feedback received on Turruwul Park, a review of the synthetic sportsfield program was undertaken. It is proposed that synthetic surfaces are only provided on new fields where appropriate, and that existing natural turf fields are not converted to synthetic surfaces. This would align with anticipated community expectations while allowing the City to reach its 2030 playable hours targets.

12. Accordingly, it is also proposed that Waterloo Oval as an existing natural turf field is not converted to a synthetic surface.
13. In 2020 Council purchased property adjacent an existing owned site at 41 Mandible Street, Alexandria. These sites now provide an opportunity to develop a Recreational Precinct which will enable Council to achieve its 2030 target of 16,000 playable hours without converting Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval to synthetic surfaces, as shown in the table below.

Location	Additional Playable Hours (pa)	Completion
Gunyama Park	2,920	Complete
Alexandra Community High School	2,500	2022
The Crescent, Annandale	2,920	2023
Perry Park, Alexandria	2,920	2024
Waterloo Oval	n/a	n/a
Turruwul Park, Roseberry	n/a	n/a
Mandible Street, Green Square	5,420 (two fields)	No earlier than 2028
Total playable hours (per annum):	16,680	

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

14. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 - A Globally Competitive and Innovative City - the new sportsfields will support the needs of the growing community through good amenity and design excellence.
 - (b) Direction 6 - Vibrant Local Communities and Economies - this project will provide an improved open space infrastructure which meets the needs of a wide variety of user groups and provides a hub for gathering, socialising and recreation activities.

- (c) Direction 9 - Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design - parks are fundamental in maintaining and growing Sydney's global city status and relies on the commensurate provision of quality infrastructure and services. Additional open space for active recreational uses is provided where the opportunity arises.

Organisational Impact

- 15. Not proceeding with synthetic playing surfaces at Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval will maintain the status quo for the Organisation.

Risks

- 16. Key risks include:
 - (a) Community Expectation and Demands - Not implementing synthetic sportsfields at Turruwul park and Waterloo Oval could result in failure to meet the anticipated demand for sporting facilities, as identified in the City's Sports Facilities Demand Study. However, this can be mitigated by the development of two synthetic sportsfields at the proposed Mandible Street Recreational Precinct. In the interim the existing turf fields will be maintained to ensure ongoing utility.
 - (b) Demand on Other City Facilities - Not implementing synthetic sportsfields at Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval could result in increased wear on other sporting facilities adjacent to meet demand, resulting in deterioration of field performance and increased maintenance and renovation costs.

Social / Cultural / Community

- 17. Waterloo Oval and Turruwul Park are both important open space for local residents. The sites provide a place for people to meet, exercise, walk their dogs, eat their lunch, play with their children or a game of sport. Alternative solutions can be sought to make-up the additional playable hours forgone by retaining the natural turf amenity in response to community concerns.

Economic

- 18. Not proceeding with the synthetic playing surfaces at Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval will allow for the funds to be allocated to other projects within the Sports Field Development Program to increase playing hours across the City in order to meet the growing demands of the community by 2030.

Financial implications

- 19. The financial implications of the programme are outlined in Confidential Attachment B.
- 20. It is proposed to redistribute funds that were allocated to the development of Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval synthetic sportsfields to related projects, including the Synthetic Development Program as set out in Confidential Attachment B.

Relevant Legislation

21. Local Government Act 1993 - Section 10A provides that a council may close to the public so much of its meeting as comprises the discussion of information that would, if disclosed, confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom the council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business.
22. Attachment B to the subject report contains confidential commercial information which, if disclosed, would:
 - (a) confer a commercial advantage on a person with whom Council is conducting (or proposes to conduct) business; and
 - (b) prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it.
23. Discussion of the matter in an open meeting would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest because it would compromise Council's ability to negotiate fairly and commercially to achieve the best outcome for its ratepayers.
24. Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) - under the Act, a council's charter is to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively.
25. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.
26. State Environmental Planning Policy Infrastructure 2007.
27. Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

28. Current program dates are shown in the table in the Background section above.

Options

29. The City has the option of proceeding with the synthetic surfaces at Turruwul Park and Waterloo Oval as originally proposed, however this is not recommended based on the results of the public consultation at Turruwul Park.

Public Consultation

30. For a detailed description of the public consultation process and findings, refer to Attachment A.
31. The concept design for Turruwul Park was on public exhibition from 20 April to 14 May 2021. Over 380 pieces of feedback were received during consultation. 89% of respondents did not support the proposal for a synthetic playing surface at the park.

32. The public consultation / exhibition involved:
 - (a) A stakeholder email sent to 46 key stakeholders (listed individually in the attached engagement report), inviting them to give feedback on the proposal.
 - (b) A stakeholder meeting held with the Redfern Raiders Soccer Club during the consultation period.
 - (c) A Sydney Your Say webpage was created. The page included an electronic copy of the concept design, survey and other key information about the consultation. The webpage was viewed 719 times during the consultation period.
 - (d) The community and stakeholders were able to give feedback using an online feedback form. A link to the feedback form was provided on the Sydney Your Say website.
 - (e) The consultation was included in the Sydney Your Say May 2020 e-newsletter (4,070 subscribers).
 - (f) A Consultation letter was posted to residents, inviting them to give feedback on the proposal. 5,700 letters were distributed.
 - (g) On Saturday 1 May between 9:00 am and 11:30 am, the project team were available to discuss the project on-site. Approximately 40 people attended the session.
 - (h) Four 'Have your Say' Consultation Panels were installed at Turruwul Oval, notifying park users of the proposed works, providing contact details of the Project Manager and a web address to the Sydney Your Say webpage.
33. Feedback received included 359 surveys, 29 email submissions, approximately 40 people attending the pop-up in the park, and a petition was received, signed by 87 people, requesting that the park not have a synthetic surface installed.
34. 88 respondents said that the installation of a synthetic sportsfield would change the character of the park from that of a local park to a dedicated sporting field, which would impact the way the community use the site. There was concern that a large proportion of the park would become unavailable for dog walking, playing with children, picnics etc, and that this impact would be more keenly felt with the population increases in the area.
35. 126 respondents referred to environmental concerns. Concerns included synthetic turf would create more heat than natural turf and this could lead to a 'heat island' effect in the local area; heat being hazardous for children and players to play on; negative biodiversity impacts in the surrounding area; and the potential for micro plastics to enter waterways.
36. Submissions were also received from the Redfern Raiders United Soccer Club, Dunbar Rovers Football Club, and Lokomotiv Cove Football Club.

37. In response to the community consultation feedback regarding the Turruwul Park proposal, it is proposed that synthetic surfaces not be installed at either Turruwul Park or Waterloo Oval.
38. Community support is stronger for the installation of synthetic playing surfaces at new sportsfields rather than existing parks.

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