

2.2 ASHWOOD RESERVE SECOND HOCKEY FIELD FEASIBILITY STUDY

Responsible Director: Julie Salomon

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1) *Notes the Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study has been completed and detailed findings are reported in Appendix 1 (attached)*
- 2) *Notes that the proposal to redevelop Ashwood Reserve North to provide a second synthetic field and larger carpark is feasible from a site suitability, demand and usage perspective*
- 3) *Notes that the development of the second field can only be further considered if significant external funding was secured*
- 4) *Authorises officers to commence detailed site planning for a second hockey field at Ashwood Reserve and undertake preliminary community consultation to inform future development of the site with costings*
- 5) *Notes that a development plan for Ashwood Reserve incorporating a second hockey field be presented to Council before September 2020.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to note the findings of the *Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study* and confirm the requirement to complete a detailed site plan for the reserve before Council can consider the development of a second hockey field.

BACKGROUND

Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy (MERSRS) supports and guides councils and stakeholders in the Eastern Metropolitan Region in the planning and delivery of regional level sport and recreation facilities and shared recreation trails.

In accordance with MERSRS principles and regional planning priorities, a subset of Melbourne Councils including Monash, Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges, agreed to partner on a project titled the *Melbourne Outer East Hockey Feasibility Study* to understand the current and future needs for hockey in the Eastern Region more broadly.

At its Meeting held 11 December 2018, Council noted the findings detailed in the *Melbourne Eastern Region Hockey Feasibility Study*, and agreed to undertake a feasibility study with the view to developing a sustainable management model (capital and

operational) for a potential second competition level synthetic hockey field at Ashwood Reserve.

The key objectives of the *Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study* were to validate:

- Need/demand for the second field
- Projected capital and operational costs
- Future management and operational implications
- Implications for current operation of the Reserve
- The attitudes of the Reserve users and relevant Council services to the provision of a second field
- Proposed cost of constructing and maintaining the field
- Potential funding sources for a second competition field

DISCUSSION

Hockey Participation and Demand for Second Hockey Field

Dual field hockey venues are not common. Of the 43 competition hockey venues in Victoria, only eight have two fields.

The broader Melbourne East Region provides a strong market for hockey with over 3,000 registered participants contributing approximately 15% of the total number of players across the state. High participation rates combined with gaps in facility provision and an additional 100,000 people expected in Melbourne's East over the next 10 years, suggests that additional capacity will be required to address the future needs of hockey.

The *Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study* (the Study) primarily focused on the needs of the Waverley Hockey Club, which confirmed that the club:

- Is one of the largest hockey clubs in Melbourne and one of the biggest sporting clubs in Monash. In 2018, the club fielded 18 senior teams and 15 junior teams. The club also currently runs a sub-junior program for 67 children.
- Is one of Monash's more inclusive clubs with 310 male playing members and 262 female playing members.
- Serves a sub-regional area, with players coming from more than 60 suburbs across Melbourne.
- Importantly, cannot accommodate all competition games at Ashwood Reserve, and struggles with the programming of training. All things being equal, the club estimates it could program an additional 28 hours per week on a second field if developed immediately.

Management & Financial Viability

The key conclusions that can be drawn from the Study findings include:

- The estimated capital cost of constructing a second hockey field at Ashwood Reserve is \$2.227M. This figure includes provision for the synthetic hockey field, perimeter fencing and gates and floodlighting (500 lux) and excludes any costs associated with car parking, pavilion upgrades, landscaping and other improvements to the site. Without a detailed traffic and parking study, it is speculative to estimate the costs associated with these works.
- The synthetic surface on this second field will require resurfacing after 10-15 years and will cost approximately \$400,000 (or \$40,000 per annum over 10 years). Lighting and other maintenance costs will require another \$15,000 annually, meaning \$55,000 per annum will need to be generated to meet these costs.
- Based on the information provided, it appears the club has capacity to fund the ongoing maintenance and renewal of a second field on the basis its contribution to the initial construction of the project is limited to \$250,000. Thus considerable external funding is required in the first instance to fund the construction of the second field.

Two management options were considered as part of the Study for the second hockey field:

- 1) Extending the current Waverley Hockey Club lease agreement to include the second hockey field. Under this arrangement, the club would have sole responsibility for maintenance and have the capacity to generate at least \$55,000 annually to maintain the second field. This would be in addition to their current commitments to fund the renewal of the existing hockey field synthetic surface.
- 2) Council manage the use of the second field directly through its booking system. Under this arrangement, Council would have full maintenance and renewal responsibilities similar to that at its two synthetic football pitches at Jack Edwards and Gardiners Reserves.

Option one is more likely to generate more income and improve the financial viability of the field. Option two provides greater control to Council to manage its use and potential impact on community.

Implications

Existing Users

The Victorian Sikh Association (VSA) currently has a licence with Council for the use of the grass field (proposed location of the second hockey pitch) and the adjoining pavilion. Their activities are generally contained to the pavilion however do include informal soccer

and other sporting activities on the field from time to time. Consultation with the VSA found that the group confirmed it wants to remain a tenant of Ashwood Reserve with similar occupancy rights to what it has now.

The group has indicated however, that if similar access to a comparable site were offered, they would consider relocating. Any VSA relocation costs would then need to be considered as part of the overall project budget if required.

It is possible for VSA to use the pavilion under licence from Council and hire the pitch from the hockey club if the second pitch were leased to the hockey club. It is more feasible for shared use to occur under a scenario where Council manages the allocation through a seasonal tenancy arrangement/club licence agreement.

Residential Amenity

In general, if a second hockey field was to be constructed, the reserve will become less accessible for passive recreation. The grassed area is currently unfenced and is available for use by local residents for informal play and casual use including dog walking as a leash free area. This would no longer be possible under the proposal and the area would be fenced to protect the synthetic surface and prevent balls leaving the playing field.

Under the proposal, the second pitch would be used seven days a week and until at least 9pm during weeknights. It is also likely that the second pitch would attract large hockey tournaments, increased school activity, regional events and finals, thus generating a significant increase in patronage to the reserve. The scale and parameters of which would need to be considered before being finalised.

Additional Facilities

The scope of the Study to date has been limited to the financial viability and capacity of the site to accommodate a second field and additional car parking. Further detailed planning is required to consider:

- Traffic and parking;
- Condition and capacity of the existing facilities (pavilions) to accommodate the projected additional use;
- Other requirements of the club including a small warm up pitch and tournament infrastructure;
- Flood mitigation and drainage considerations; and,
- Approval to build on Crown land.

Whilst none of the above are seen as reasons to deem the project non-viable, they must be considered in their full context to avoid any undesirable and unintended consequences.

Key Findings of the Study

The key findings from the Study include:

- The proposal to redevelop Ashwood Reserve North to provide a second synthetic hockey field and larger car park is feasible from a site suitability, demand, and usage perspective, however, the development of the field can only be further considered if significant external funding is secured.
- A detailed consultation process between Council and local residents is recommended. This process needs to clearly explain the development proposal and its impacts and the steps taken to mitigate these impacts. Endorsement of this report by Council will authorise officers to commence community consultation and preliminary design work in 2019/20.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to Council endorsement of this report, officers can:

- commence community consultation
- commence detailed site planning of the reserve
- prepare a further report for Council with integrated site planning and consultation findings.

This work is budgeted for in 2019/20 and can then be used to inform future decisions by Council and as reference material for future funding applications to support the initial capital investment.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Council notes the overall findings detailed in the *Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study* including the proposal to redevelop Ashwood Reserve North to provide a second synthetic hockey field and larger car park is feasible from a site suitability, demand, and usage perspective. The development of the field however, can only be further considered if significant external funding is secured.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Ashwood Reserve Second Hockey Field Feasibility Study