



Submission by Greenwich Community Association Inc to Lane Cove Council

**Sport and Recreation Precinct
Submissions close 16 August 2020**

The golf club and tennis court site is a large and cherished whole of community asset.

It is regrettable that stakeholder engagement in the development of the Sport and Recreation Precinct to date has been so limited.

The **2013** Montemare report that accompanies the precinct plan lists the stakeholders who were consulted to develop its report. This list is confined to sporting groups.

There is no mention of adjoining residents, community associations, bushcare management groups and others who enjoy the passive recreation opportunities that the site offers.

Even more concerning is that the stakeholder engagement to develop the actual concept plans was limited to three commercial operators.

The Lane Cove community is being brought into this process far too late.

The GCA requests Council to give serious consideration to cancelling the current plan and starting again in a collaborative process with all stakeholders.

This is appropriate for the planning of such a unique green open space.

The GCA Greenwich Community Association Inc (GCA) makes the following submission in respect of Council's proposed Sport and Recreation Precinct.

Executive Summary

1. The GCA objects to the plan.
2. The Sport and Recreation Precinct is not required by the community as a matter of urgency.
3. Council has not demonstrated that some of the sporting needs that the precinct is intended to meet (viz basketball, netball, gymnastics) cannot be addressed through the use of facilities in adjacent LGAs and/or through location of new facilities at alternative sites in the Lane Cove LGA.
4. it is inappropriate to require the community to make submissions as to the elements of the plan when:-
 - the reports that support the plan were compiled 7 years ago and they have not been updated to reflect sporting facility developments in Lane Cove and adjacent LGAs since then
 - Council has not specified if the facility will be operated as a commercial venture, whether by an external party or by Council itself
 - the quantum of available funding is unknown, having been described as between \$20 million and \$60 million
 - the exhibited material provides no details of costings of individual elements in the plan.
5. The proposal to appropriate a large area of accessible natural green open space for a driving range and putt putt course is contrary to Council's own LEP, will adversely impact the amenity of adjoining residents and will severely reduce the amount of green open space in an area where it is already demonstrably inadequate to meet the recreational and mental health needs of the East Ward community.
6. It is inappropriate to contemplate the expenditure of significant amounts of money, whether rate payer funds, loan funds or funds derived from sale of Council assets, at a time when the future needs of the community and the financial position of Council are uncertain in a COVID impacted economy.
7. In the event that Council elects to pursue its proposal, the concept development should start from the beginning and it should include all relevant stakeholders throughout the process in accordance with Council's own Community Engagement Policy.

Submission

1. There is no imperative to progress the Sport and Recreation Precinct project at this time.

It should be halted.

- Information available on Council's website does not indicate that there is any imperative for Council to make a decision about the precinct project at this stage.
- Given the uncertainty around the long term impacts of the COVID-19 health crisis, it is not appropriate to proceed with a "business as usual" approach to development proposals of this scale.
- A design concept developed in response to the current round of consultation may not be deliverable for many years due to funding constraints or competing priorities.
- The precinct project should be delayed and consultation commenced only when there is no likelihood of competing and urgent priorities and quantum of funding is clear.
- It will then be necessary to conduct a fresh assessment of the need for and feasibility of the project, noting that the Montemare feasibility report on Council's website is dated 2013 and that multi-sport facilities in the St Leonards and Crows Nest area may have been delivered since the report was compiled or will be delivered in the foreseeable future.

2. The information available to the community on Council's website is insufficient to allow the community to provide informed comment on Council's proposal for the Sport and Recreation Precinct.

We refer specifically to the following:-

- the information does not outline the basis on which Council will operate the facility ie will it be run by Council, will management of the operation be outsourced to commercial interests or will it be a combination of both

This information is critical as the elements to be incorporated in the project will be dictated by the operational mode intended by Council

- the absence of indicative costings of each element of the project makes it difficult for respondents to prioritise elements
- the lack of detail about available funds/funding sources also makes it hard to prioritise elements

- the information provided in support of the precinct project, namely the Montemare feasibility reports, is out of date
- the survey that is linked to the site is self-serving and should not be regarded as an accurate indicator of community views.

3. The Collaboration process in Council’s Community Engagement Policy should have been adopted in this case.

- There are many stakeholders with an interest in the Sport and Recreation Project including:-
 - golfers
 - tennis players
 - netball players
 - basketball players
 - musicians and dancers who use the current golf clubhouse
 - adjoining residents
 - bushcare management groups
 - local resident groups.
- Given the complexity of stakeholder interests, this project was an ideal one for the use of the collaborative approach to community engagement.

COLLABORATE
Public Participation Goal:
To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Promise to the Public:
We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

- It is regrettable that Council chose, instead, engagement with just a selected group of stakeholders (the Recreation Precinct Liaison Advisory Committee) and then subsequently elected to engage with commercial operators only.
- We are now left with a concept that was developed through engagement with commercial operators only and will force stakeholders to make choices that will adversely impact other stakeholders.
- This approach is regrettable.
- The golf course site offers unique opportunities to meet the needs of so many stakeholders. These needs could have been addressed if they had been brought into the process earlier and participated together in the development of a concept for the precinct.

4. In the light of 1, 2 and 3 above, Council should cancel the current round of community consultation and commence a new engagement process that includes all stakeholders to develop alternatives and identify a preferred solution.

Council should cancel the current Concept Plan and commence a new engagement process by convening a Community Advisory group that includes all key stakeholders to work collaboratively towards an optimal plan for the site.

This should happen only after:-

- Council has satisfied itself that the economic climate is appropriate to engage in a project of the scale of the Sport and Recreation Precinct
- Council has secured up to date reports to assist the Advisory Group, including feasibility reports that have been updated to reflect the information outlined in 8 below
- Council is clear as to the quantum of funding that can be made available for the project.

5. The proposed development of a golf driving range and a putt putt course represents alienation of valuable accessible natural green open space.

They should be deleted from the plan.

- East Ward lacks expanses of large, unstructured and accessible natural green spaces. The golf course is a precious resource that offers shared access to golfers, dogwalkers, joggers and others enjoying the physical and mental health benefits of green open space.

- Given Council's active participation in planning proposals that will lead to massive demands on green space in the future, it is extraordinary that Council should even float the idea of taking so much green space from the public for a driving range and a putt putt course.
- It can only be assumed that a driving range and a putt putt course have been suggested as they will offer Council or a private operator an income stream.
- Developing a facility to create an income stream should not take precedence over ensuring that Council provides to its community green open space sufficient to ensure its physical and mental well-being.
- The driving range and the putt putt course should be deleted from the plan.

6. The use of the golf course land for a driving range and putt putt course is incompatible with the objectives of the zoning of the land.

- The golf course land is zoned for Public Recreation under the Lane Cove LEP. One of the objectives of this zoning is to *protect and enhance the natural environment for recreational purposes*.
- Use of the land for outdoor recreational purposes is permitted only with consent.
- Given that the driving range and putt putt course will destroy the natural environment, the proposed use of the land should be refused for incompatibility with an objective of the zoning.

7. The driving range and putt putt course will erode the amenity of those adjacent to it.

- The driving range site is surrounded by residential areas – the site is quite unlike the location of other driving ranges in the Sydney metropolitan area.
- The lighting and noise from the driving range will erode the amenity of adjoining residents.

8. Many of the sporting and entertainment options offered in the multi-sport complex are already offered in the current golf club and tennis centre.

Council should explore alternative locations for basketball, netball and the other sports proposed for the multi sport complex.

- It is acknowledged that there may be a need for additional facilities for basketball, netball and sports other than tennis or golf in the LGA.
- There is no detail in the exhibited material to demonstrate if Council has:-
 - fully explored alternative sites for the sports facility (including Blackman Park as suggested in the 2013 Montemare report) and
 - conducted a revised assessment of the capacity of other facilities in adjacent LGAs.

Council should not progress such an expensive proposal for the multi-sport complex at the golf course until these steps are completed.

- The plan proposes a reduction in the number of tennis courts from the current 5 courts to 4 courts and these must be shared with other codes.

Given the recent resurgence of tennis as a recreational activity for females, the proposal to decrease the number of purpose-built tennis courts is at odds with Council's stated objective of addressing the need for facilities that cater for women's sports.

- If alternative locations for basketball, netball and gymnastics facilities could be found in the LGA and/or demand met by facilities in adjacent LGAs, there will be no need to undertake the Sports and Recreation Precinct Project at all, as the current facilities meet all other needs nominated by Council, namely golf, tennis and hospitality/events.
- As they do now, the current car parking arrangements would meet the requirements of tennis players, golfers and those who may access the site or clubhouse for other recreational/entertainment activities.
- Council could work with the community to increase the use of the current clubhouse.

The current facility offers a range of flexible spaces that are well suited to a mix of dining, entertainment and community use. This is particularly the case for the Greenwich and Northwood communities that have no alternative accessible community spaces.

Conclusion

The GCA objects to the Concept Plan for the Sport and Recreation Precinct for the reasons outlined above.

The fact that a proposal has been on the drawing board since 2010 should not be a factor in Council's decision making with respect to the future of the site.

Council should not be contemplating a proposal of such scale at a time of economic uncertainty.

And, most important of all, Council should not contemplate the loss of a significant parcel of accessible natural green open space in an area that is already demonstrably under resourced.

The GCA hopes for an opportunity to discuss this submission with Council officers and Councillors.

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