

9.6 WIMMERA REGIONAL MULTI-SPORT FEASIBILITY STUDY

Author's Name:	Mandy Kirsopp	Director:	Kevin O'Brien
Author's Title:	Coordinator, Recreation and Open Space	Directorate:	Communities and Place
Department:	Arts, Culture and Recreation	File Number:	F06/A13/000001

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Yes No

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Yes No

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Appendix

Wimmera Regional Multi-sport Feasibility Study Final Report (**Appendix 9.6A**)

Wimmera Regional Multi-sport Feasibility Study Phase 2 Engagement Report (**Appendix 9.6B**)

Purpose

To present the Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct Feasibility Study.

Summary

- The Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct Feasibility Study (The Study) commenced in August 2021 as a result of a Council resolution to undertake an independent feasibility study to consider the preferred location for the Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct.
- The Study investigated the demand and potential locations for regional level facilities being located in a single multi-sport precinct.
- Following consultation with State Sporting Associations (SSAs) and examination of local population and participation trends it became clear that a single precinct of regional facilities was neither financially viable nor possible due to land availability.
- A distributed model of new and upgraded facilities was proposed and tested, with sporting infrastructure being classified as regional, municipal or local.
- Recommended locations and concept plans have been reviewed by the SSAs and by local sporting clubs located at the identified sites and have been strongly supported.
- High level costings have been obtained and the Feasibility Study has been completed.
- The concept plans allow for future proofing if demand for sports or their status as a regional facility changes for example grass to synthetic for Hockey and Athletics.
- A decision on future regional sports provision is critical now rather than delaying this further.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorse the Wimmera Regional Multi-Sport Precinct Feasibility Study (**Appendix 9.6A**).
2. Prioritise the development of an indoor sporting stadium and precinct at College Oval (Dimboola Road) as presented in the Study.
3. Advance the development of schematic plans for the three precincts (Dimboola Road, Haven Recreation Reserve and Dudley W Cornell Park).

REPORT

Background

Council's endorsement of the City to River Masterplan, 25 November 2019 included the requirement to undertake an independent feasibility study to identify a preferred location, the functional requirements of a multi-sport precinct, the viability, economic and social impacts of such a precinct, and possible operational models of the facility.

In 2021, funding for a Feasibility Study was jointly provided by Sport and Recreation Victoria and Horsham Rural City Council. The purpose of the Study was to:

- Identify the functional requirements of a regional multi-sport precinct consistent with State Sporting Association planning.
- Determine the feasibility of a multi-sports precinct that can meet the needs of the users and provide a facility that can cater for regional sporting activities and events.
- Determine the most suitable location for a multi-sports precinct, referencing previous work undertaken by Horsham Rural City Council and considering all other factors including new information.

Otium Planning Group was engaged to assist with the study. Otium Planning Group has more than 28 years' experience and has completed in excess of 1,700 projects in the Sport, Recreation and Leisure industry. Many of the projects relate to facility feasibility studies, development of masterplans, recreational strategies and business and operational plans.

Stage One of the Study involved an investigation into sporting participation trends and local demographics, and facility requirements including required land mass if playing areas, ovals and pavilions were upgraded to a regional level. State Sporting Associations were consulted and provided strategic advice regarding facility requirements and the likelihood of regional facilities being fully utilized. Six sites were identified and assessed.

Stage One analysis revealed that:

- The land required for a precinct of regional facilities (15ha) is not available and would involve significant expense to purchase
- A mix of regional, municipal, local level facilities is required to meet current and projected usage.

Stage Two of the Study explored options for a distributed model of facility improvements using a combination of council owned and other land, and a mix of facility upgrades reflecting current and projected participation requirements. Stage Two analysis revealed that:

- Land is available to provide both upgraded and new sporting facilities
- Existing infrastructure (ovals and courts) can be upgraded
- Projects can be staged when funding becomes available
- The mix of regional, municipal and local facility upgrades is consistent with SSA expectations for the growth of the different sports.

State Sporting Associations have endorsed the distributed model of strategic facility upgrades. Concept plans and high level costings have been prepared. Local sporting clubs have been consulted.

Discussion

The Feasibility study is underpinned by an extensive engagement process with State Sports Associations, local sporting user groups and other key stakeholders in determining the current and future demand for new sporting facilities. The Study identifies the development priorities Council needs to consider over the next 10-20 years based the current sports participation trends, population demographic shifts and aging infrastructure across the Horsham community.

The Study examined recommendations from previous, recent strategies and plans and considered a range of additional elements to effectively respond to Council's request to resolve the preferred location of a regional sporting precinct.

Analysis revealed that a single precinct of regional level facilities for multiple sports is not economically feasible for our municipality. The required land mass is not available, construction costs would be prohibitive and local participation numbers (current and projected over a 10 year period) would result in facilities not being fully utilized.

The Study examined alternate options to provide upgraded sporting facilities and an indoor sporting stadium. The investigation identified that a mix of regional, municipal and local facilities is required to cater for the current and emerging sporting needs of our community and that a distributed model of sporting precincts provides affordable options of upgrades that can be implemented as funding becomes available.

A total of 13 State Sporting Associations were consulted throughout the development of this project. Nine State Sporting Associations were consulted on the projects' final concept designs and the distributed model recommendations. Letters of support have been received from the nine SSAs; these include:

- Athletics Victoria
- Badminton Victoria
- Basketball Victoria
- Cricket Victoria
- Football Victoria
- Hockey Victoria
- Netball Victoria
- Tennis Victoria
- Volleyball Victoria

Four other State Sporting Associations were informed that due to cost constraints their sport was not included in the final design recommendations for the three sporting precincts.

These sports are: AFL Victoria, Gymnastics Victoria, Squash Victoria and Table Tennis Victoria.

Local sporting clubs and community groups currently located on sites identified in the study have been consulted and will continue to be engaged as the project is further developed. A summary of feedback from local clubs is provided in both the Feasibility report and in the Phase 2 Engagement report. **(Appendix 9.6A and Appendix 9.6B).**

Site analysis

The study investigated a total of 10 sites, involving 14 landowners and land managers.

Initially, six sites were assessed. The sites were:

- Jenkinson Avenue
- Remlaw & Natimuk Road
- Racecourse Reserve
- South of Police Paddock
- South of the River
- Showgrounds

An additional four sites were also considered:

- Horsham Velodrome
- Dudley W Cornell Park
- Haven Recreation Reserve
- Dimboola Road Oval (Horsham College)

Details of the sites, the assessment criteria and landowner feedback is provided in the Feasibility report **(Appendix 9.6A)**.

Based on the component schedules identified by the SSAs, high level concept designs have been developed for the three preferred sites. This distributed delivery model proposes the strategic geographical positioning of smaller sports precincts across the north, south and west of Horsham.

Dimboola Rd site – Regional indoor stadium (including four high ball courts) and outdoor netball courts, plus municipal hockey pitch

Haven Recreation Reserve site – Regional tennis, two municipal soccer pitches, local cricket oval, community Hub and open space

Dudley W Cornell Park site – Municipal athletics facility and two local cricket ovals with additional car parking and expanded main oval

Concept plans for the three sites are provided on pp 76-79 in the Feasibility Report **(Appendix 9.6A)**.

The concept plans allow for future proofing if there is change in status to a regional level sport. For instance, a synthetic surface for athletics and hockey. At this stage a synthetic surface is not recommended due to the current status of the sport being classified *Municipal*, also due to current participation numbers and the cost difference between grass and synthetic impacting on overall feasibility, however this has not been ruled out and therefore has been allowed for in the concept plans.

Options to Consider

1. Endorse the findings of the Feasibility Study.
2. Receive the Feasibility Study and request further information.
3. Receive the Feasibility Study and undertake no further action.

Recommendation:

Because of the high level of detail in the Study, extended consultation with State Sporting Associations, alignment with facility requirements, consideration of local financial constraints and opportunities, and the strategic distribution of upgraded sporting and active recreation opportunities throughout Horsham, Option 1 is recommended.

Sustainability Implications

The Otium Analytics Benefits Assessment Model analyses the economic benefits of a proposed project and converts social and health benefits to an economic value. Otium's Social and Economic Benefits Model provides an assessment of projects to identify:

- Direct economic benefits in terms of capital, revenue and jobs created
- Indirect economic (flow-on) benefits in terms of additional economic activity and jobs, and social and health benefits in terms of criminal and social justice benefit, human capital and personal health benefit.

The Feasibility Study identifies and quantifies improvements to both our economy and our community through the provision of up-graded and new, fit-for-purpose sporting facilities that are distributed across our community and that provide a combination of formalised sporting infrastructure and community accessible, active recreation opportunities.

Community Engagement

The Feasibility Study has involved extensive consultation with both internal and external individuals and groups that include:

- Sport and Recreation, Victoria
- Thirteen State Sporting Associations
- Fourteen land owners/land managers
- Surveys distributed to 40 sporting organisations and 23 schools
- Consultation with 16 local sporting groups
- Consultation with members of the local community
- Meetings with HRCC officers

Details of consultation is provided in the Feasibility report (**Appendix 9.6A**) and the Phase 2 Engagement report (**Appendix 9.6B**). Further consultation is occurring with local groups and on-going, detailed consultation will occur with both the SSAs and specific sporting groups during the detailed design stage of project delivery.

There is strong support from the SSAs and local community groups for the sites as proposed. These sports are keen for Council to make a decision to move forward after a long history of past delays and lack of decision making, leaving the future infrastructure provision for a number of regional sports unresolved.

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

The findings of the Feasibility Study identify the importance of aligning local development with state level strategic plans, of exploring options and testing assumptions. The Dimboola Rd site (indoor stadium, indoor-outdoor netball courts and dedicated hockey oval) is an example of a partnership between two agencies (Department of Education and Local Government) to achieve maximum community benefit.

Feedback from SSAs has identified emerging technologies that will increase usage of the stadium and provide additional training opportunities for sporting codes. This includes: opportunities for hockey to train indoors, alternate floor surfaces that minimise maintenance and opportunities for volleyball to be played both indoors and on outdoor surfaces.

Collaboration

Sport and Recreation Victoria has provided high level guidance re: the content and strategic output required of the Study.

The Wimmera Catchment Management Authority provided advice regarding flood modelling and water flow and catchment that was particularly relevant when the Velodrome and Showgrounds sites were being considered.

Financial Implications

High level Quantity Surveyor (QS) cost estimates for the three sites have been developed.

Cost Item	Dimboola Road Site	Haven Recreation Reserve Site	Dudley W Cornell Site	Total
	<i>Regional Indoor/Outdoor Stadium and Municipal Hockey</i>	<i>Regional Tennis, Municipal Soccer, Local Cricket, Community Hub and Flexible Open Space</i>	<i>Municipal Athletics Upgrades and Local Cricket</i>	
Total Building Works	\$16,745,000	\$4,928,000	-	\$21,673,000
Net Construction Cost*	\$28,886,000	\$10,161,000	\$6,469,000	\$45,516,000
Total Construction Cost**	\$32,649,535	\$11,451,190	\$7,320,280	\$51,421,005
Total Project Cost***	\$36,600,000	\$12,236,000	\$7,759,000	\$56,595,000

*Includes Building Works, Demolition, Road works, Car Parking, Landscaping, External Services & ESD Initiatives

**Includes* plus Infrastructure Upgrade Allowance, IT, Construction and Design Contingency,

***Includes * and ** plus Furniture Equipment & Fittings, Consultant Fees and Headworks and Authority Charges

Note: Current pricing has been used in the calculations and prices are subject to change.
The model provides the ability to stage the delivery of each site.

Council will be relying on significant amounts of external funding for the projects from a combination of external (State and Federal funding sources). There will be also internal, HRCC funding required.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

Active Victoria 2022-2026 – A strategic framework for sport

Connecting communities – All Victorians have access to high quality environments and appropriate participation opportunities

Key Direction – Deliver inclusive, multi-use and sustainable community sport and active recreation infrastructure.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

2021-2025 Council Plan: Theme 1 - Community

Initiative - Promote and support the municipality's key tourism, events and local and cultural offerings

Theme 2 – Liveability

Initiative - Encourage participation, diversity and growth in sports, events, arts and culture

Theme 4 – Accessibility

Strategy – An integrated, strategic and needs based approach to investing in our places and spaces.

The Study builds on a significant body of work that has already occurred within HRCC:

- Horsham Multi Use Indoor Sports Stadium – Phase 1 Feasibility Report, 2016
- Wimmera Sports Stadium Business Case and Concept Design Report, 2017
- Economic Development Strategy 2017-2021
- Open Space Strategy 2019
- Horsham Sport Facilities Demand Assessment Version 4, 2019
- Joint Sports Proposal Horsham Multipurpose Sports Precinct, 2019
- Horsham South Emerging Option Plan 2020
- The Social Infrastructure Framework 2020
- Horsham City to River Master Plan, 2020

Risk Implications

The Feasibility Study has investigated a variety of elements that contribute to risk. Contributing elements include:

- Municipal demographics including the age, socio-economic and health status of the population and the impacts on participation trends in organised sport
- Participation trends (locally and state wide) evident pre and post the Covid-19 pandemic
- State wide trends towards an increase in informal, social and active recreation opportunities with analysis that although there has been an increase in passive recreation, many of the organised activities that are currently being conducted in Horsham should remain stable if clubs and associations are well managed, sustainable and have access to fit for purpose sporting facilities and supporting infrastructure
- The QS cost estimates are based on 2023 figures and are subject to change
- Cost-benefit analysis of the economic returns from significant infrastructure investment.

The Feasibility Study presents development options that meet a variety of site criteria, have been costed, tested against state wide strategic plans and that provide significant community benefit. There is significant reputational risk if the findings of the Study are not endorsed and the Study is adopted without action.

The Horsham community, Horsham Rural City Council and State based funders have committed significant time, energy and resources to resolving the issue of facility improvement and regional level sporting infrastructure over many years. It is important the community and Council are able to confidently work to resolve and move forward with facility improvement across the municipality and region. Appetite to invest in additional exploration is very low, and it is now time to progress the recommendations and reap the benefits of improving the regions' liveability by attracting more visitation, increasing participation and improving health outcomes.

Any further delays in regards to development of regional sports facilities will continue to impact on the liveability and health and wellbeing of the community. A decision on future sports provision is critical now rather than delaying this further.

Conclusion

The Wimmera Regional Multi-sport Feasibility Study resolves a Council direction to identify a preferred location, the functional requirements of a multi-sport precinct, the viability, economic and social impacts of such a precinct, and possible operational models of the facility.

The 18 month investigation identified that a mix of regional, municipal and local facilities is required to cater for the current and emerging sporting needs of our community and that a distributed model of sporting precincts provides affordable options of upgrades that can be implemented as funding becomes available.

Three sites, each comprised of multiple sporting facilities have been identified and concept plans and high level costings have been developed. The distributed model and recommendations for varying facility upgrades is supported in writing by nine State Sporting Associations.