



Greenwich Sports Club Inc.

ABN 38 294 089 039 Registration No Y0005130

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secretary@greenwichsportsclub.com.au

19 Oct 2020

The Councillors
Lane Cove Council
Lane Cove NSW 2066

Re : Greenwich Sports Club submission regarding the draft Bob Campbell Oval Master Plan

Greenwich Sports Clubs (GSC) purpose is to provide opportunities for current, past or future Greenwich and nearby residents of Lane Cove to engage in competitive team sport regardless of age, gender or skill.

Regular participation in team sports generates community cohesion and accordingly GSC has very much been an institution within the Greenwich community since formation in **1936** and has members from ages younger than six to older than seventy!

In respect of the youngest persons in our community becoming a member and playing in team with friends has been a rite of passage for many generations. This is very clearly evidenced by the frequent appearance of children in the local streets still wearing their team shirt long after a game has been played.

Older club members also benefit from expanded social networks which provide potential links back to Greenwich for those who venture further afield in later periods of their lives. These connections benefit the wider community in many other contexts such as the **Greenwich Village Games**, the **Greenwich Primary School** community and have provided support for other worthy community initiatives.

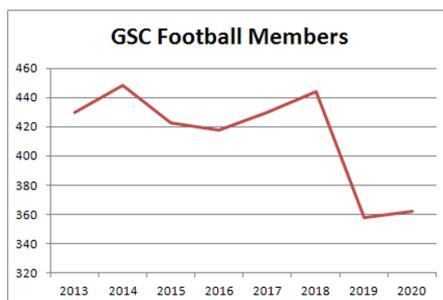
In respect of the **Northern Suburbs Football Association** with which **GSC** is affiliated with for competition football, and **Northern Suburbs Netball Association** for netball, Greenwich Sports Club is one of the smaller and very much community oriented clubs. Regardless **GSC** was the **NSFA Champion Club** in **2016** & **2017** which is an award that recognises that Greenwich teams had achieved exceptional performances across all ages and genders that competed in both those seasons.

However this long and illustrious history of a Greenwich institution may eventually come to an end if the proposed redevelopment of BCO does not proceed!

Councillors may be aware there are four much larger clubs located quite nearby Greenwich. These are North Sydney, Lane Cove, Northbridge and Chatswood each of which has access to all weather facilities similar to that proposed for **BCO**. These clubs regularly attract some younger Greenwich players who wish to further improve their personal skills by accessing resources that are simply not available at BCO today.

GSC is very much a grassroots local club that seeks to provide both fraternity and the opportunity to develop individual skills in a friendly and familiar environment. During 2020 the club enrolled 426 competitive members of which **362** played junior or adult Football while **64** played junior Netball or NetSetGo.

This is significantly reduced from a peak of **448** Football members (in 2014) due to the departure at the end of 2018 of three long standing Mixed All Age (MAA) teams who indicated the sub-standard presentation of BCO in the previous three seasons was the singular cause. These teams subsequently joined a nearby club that has access to an all weather synthetic surface for training and weekend matches. The red chart shows the decline which the club has not yet been able to recover from despite increasing NSFA membership.



The **GSC Committee** believes that the proposed BCO development, in particular the provision of a high quality all weather synthetic surface, will allow the club to offer a substantially improved playing and training experience for all current and future members which will in turn assure Greenwich Sports Clubs future.



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Greenwich Sports Club is particularly committed to increasing the participation rate of females in football where girls and women are frequently under-represented in clubs across Australia.

GSC is fortunate today having expanded from having no senior female teams just 13 years ago to now fielding all female teams from junior ages of 7 and having a 70 year old still playing in a W35 competition.

Greenwich is proud to have achieved a parity position with **53%** of all Football players in 2020 being female in a sport that traditionally been dominated by males. Importantly the senior women act as mentors and role models for younger girls encouraging them by example to continue involvement in the club and sport after finishing schooling or undertaking higher education.

This is a critical social function for the community as teenage girls are significantly more likely than boys to drop out and are subsequently less likely to rejoin sport for a prolonged time afterwards.

There exists an exciting opportunity with the announced hosting of the **Womens World Cup** in Australia and New Zealand during 2023. The club anticipates this event will generate a significant increase in interest for girls wanting to commence playing football. The proposed redevelopment of BCO would ensure the club can deliver without compromise a positive and compelling experience for all new participants.

Furthermore if additional residents in Greenwich and the surrounding Lane Cove suburbs can be accommodated without causing degradation of **BCO** this will help the club expand the number of teams and ages fielded each year. This would provide new opportunities for younger Greenwich residents who are sometimes unable to play for Greenwich because there is insufficient numbers in their age group to form a team. This issue in particular impacts the opportunities that the club can provide for teenage girls.

The final concern that the **GSC** Committee anticipates Lane Cove Councillors will consider most carefully is the medium and longer term implications if **BCO** remains a substandard field that does not deliver the reasonable expectation of players in future years where our peer clubs have much better arrangements.

As mentioned above the **Greenwich Sports Club** is affiliated with the **NSFA** which in turn organizes and administers the competition for all lower North Shore clubs. An important aspect of the NSFA Boards responsibilities is stewardship of The Game and supports all affiliated clubs and their members by ensuring an adequate standard of playing facilities are provided for both safe and exciting play.

If Greenwich Sport Club were unable to provide facilities that meet the standards of the day, then at best the club will not be able to participate in some competitions, and at worst may need to amalgamate with a better endowed club in order to provide members with opportunities to participate in sport in the future.

Therefore it is critically important that if Greenwich Sports Club is to remain viable into the long term, whilst retaining its unique community characteristics, that the facilities available at BCO are improved so that both children and adults can enjoy team sports whilst retaining their Greenwich identity.

The **GSC Committee** notes with dismay that opposition to the draft Master Plan has very much framed in narrow and exclusivist terms without any significant acknowledgement given to Greenwich Sports Club members legitimate interests. There has been widespread promulgation of misinformation aiming to prevent the Greenwich community from participating a project that provides more reliable, inclusive and equitable access to this very important place within Greenwich. Attached to this submission are points that the GSC Committee considers some of the more commonly heard claims.

We trust the Councillors will consider this submission favourably and agree to commence this extraordinarily timely project to ensure Greenwich generally and BCO particularly remains a destination of choice for the entire community whether members of the club or not (just yet).

If there remain any unaddressed questions that will assist in deliberations - please contact myself at any time by mobile (work related zooms allowing) or alternatively by email.

Yours sincerely,

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Many claims have been made using anecdotal or incorrect information in order to justify stopping the Master Plan

Claim	Response	Comments
Football is a better experience when played on grass.	This is true only if the ground is prepared by a competent ground keeper and is not excessively used. In the case of BCO this would require training to be conducted at another location - many of which are already at capacity.	BCO has never been able to sustain adequate grass cover due to the low levels of sun light during winter. There are limits on the amount of council staff time to continuously repair the surface whilst there are increasing demands for training.
There is "plenty" of sun light all year to sustain grass. It just needs a competent program to ensure the grass is properly fertilized and maintained.	The club has been made aware of, and contributed funds in the past, to the many and varied attempts undertaken by council staff to sustain adequate grass cover for the winter season.	The initiatives have made some modest improvements immediately after being performed (when assessed against the very poor standard of the previous state). However the gains are not sustained and have been quickly undone by weather events that occur at times. This approach also decreases the reliability of access as players forego games to assist in preservation.
Players will suffer more injuries on an artificial surface including skin grazes.	Whilst it is always possible to sustain an injury whilst playing competitive sport on any surface, the more reliable and level synthetic surface will avoid the type of injuries caused by the currently unstable and uneven soil based surface.	A key risk for existing players arises from divots caused by dogs that dig holes in the playing area. Whilst these holes are sometimes repaired, the most common injuries presently experienced are ankle and knee injuries (with the serious fractures having occurred in the past).
Only adult players damage the surface causing it to become poor and undesirable for football and other community users as the winter season progresses.	Middle to late teenage players also cause noticeable wear and tear to the grass surface as they develop physically and play longer match times.	It would be discriminatory to disenfranchise players above a certain age simply because they are believed to generate more wear and tear whilst a solution exists that can allow all ages to participate without degrading the area used.
BCO is the only open space in Greenwich and should not be changed to an environmentally unfriendly synthetic surface solely to suit football (soccer) to the exclusion of the wider community.	Leemon Reserve was previously a grassed open space in Greenwich prior to the installation of two synthetic all weather tennis courts. These courts are an integral part of the Greenwich community today but would not be serviceable if a traditional grass surface was maintained.	As is the case at BCO today the field will be available for the any Greenwich resident to use whenever the ground is not hired from the council. GSC expects this will generate even more interest in football and would always encourage members and non-members to participate in casual play on the new surface.



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The synthetic surface will allow rubber infill to make its way into Sydney harbour.	There are multiple choices for infill material – some of which are natural in origin. The design of the field will avoid excessive loss of infill in high rainfall events.	Environmental considerations will always be a significant aspect given the proximity to Gore Creek and Sydney harbour. Ground rubber infill is not the only infill material available and GSC expects the LCC will proceed with proper regard for community expectations.
The synthetic materials can cause long term delayed health effects particularly for goal keepers.	On a limited survey of published papers there is apparently still no confirmed scientific findings of negative health effects after more than 50 years of using synthetic surfaces in the northern hemisphere. Studies indicate levels of substances of concern are below the limits of reliable detection techniques.	Reducing the opportunity of children and adults to exercise regularly is likely to generate greater harms than could occur from exposure to the trace levels of substances attributed to a synthetic surface or infill materials.
The synthetic field will be extraordinarily hot in summer and unsuitable for safe use.	Whilst matches could be played in summer these are usually scheduled to later times in the day using lights (if needed) to avoid the hottest part of the day. Football has very well documented protocols in place to make sure player welfare is considered at all times including during periods of extreme heat.	If needed the surface can be wet to provide pre-match cooling by way of transpiration. Wetting the surface further improves the player experience by making the ball to move in a fashion similar to a wet grass field.
Dog walkers will have insufficient space as the synthetic area will be out of bounds	Health considerations arising from dogs defecating on the surface preclude their access to the football pitch however the Master Plan provides quite substantial spaces that remain accessible for dog walkers.	Because the football area is fenced dogs will be able to remain off-leash (as appropriate) when matches are being played. This is not currently possible and therefore redevelopment plan will allow for <u>increased</u> dog walker use on weekends even when football matches are in progress.

References

- <https://footballnsw.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Field-Markings-and-Equipment.pdf>
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Paper surveying scientific research on synthetic fields published in 2017.
- <https://neograss.co.uk/7-benefits-3g-football-pitch/>
Synthetic field supplier promotional material