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CCL 08/12/2020 – ADOPTION OF STRATEGIC SPORTS PLAN

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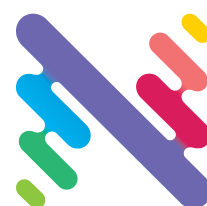
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CCL 08/12/2020 – ADOPTION OF STRATEGIC SPORTS PLAN

ITEM-110 **Attachment A:** Strategic Sports Plan

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Strategic Sports Plan



Acknowledgment

City of Newcastle acknowledges that we operate on the grounds of the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land and waters, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession.

City of Newcastle reiterates its commitment to address disadvantages and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community.

This Strategic Sports Plan has been prepared for City of Newcastle by:



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Executive Summary

The objective of the Strategic Sports Plan (the Plan) is to:

"...address future demand, and inform the ongoing supply, maintenance and upgrade of sporting infrastructure with consideration to current and future needs of the community, other adopted strategies and City of Newcastle's financial capacity and sustainability."

The Plan provides strategic guidance and facility direction for 13 outdoor sports¹ to 2031, by which time the population of the City of Newcastle is projected to be 188,000 (an increase of over 27,000 from the 2016 Census).

The study was undertaken in the context of broader planning for the city and region already completed by the City of Newcastle (CN) and government agencies, including the yet to be finalised concept plan for the Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct in the Broadmeadow Catalyst Area being developed by Venues NSW.

Extensive background research and a comprehensive consultation process was undertaken including surveys, meetings and workshops with clubs/ associations, State Sporting Organisations, neighbouring councils, government agencies and other stakeholders.

From data supplied by regional and state associations, CN had approximately 41,790 active members of sports within the study scope in 2018 (some of these could participate in more than one sport). Football (soccer) accounts for, by far, the highest number of these participants (27.5%), followed by touch/ Oztag (21.1%), cricket (13.1%) and rugby league (10.7%). CN has 63 sportsground venues across the city providing for the 13 sports in the study scope. Many of these have only a single oval/ field.

The main facility concerns raised by sporting organisations related to the condition of **playing surfaces** (e.g. lack of drainage/ irrigation), condition of **amenities** blocks (e.g. old, poor condition, lack of female-friendly change rooms, inadequate storage), **lighting** (e.g. not available or insufficient standard) or **support infrastructure** (e.g. parking, shade, fencing). Council **communication** with sport was seen by many as poor (e.g. lack of input into priorities for sportsground improvements or timing of works, inadequate Council notification of works to be undertaken). **Administration** issues were also raised by some sports (e.g. processes, fees and charges being high and/ or cumbersome).

Just over a quarter (27%) of all playing fields are utilised at, or in excess of, their notional carrying capacity (in some cases well in excess). However, just over half of all playing fields (54%) are utilised below their carrying capacity (in many cases well below, some fewer than 10hrs per week). Demand analysis modelling indicates that the total quantum of land is adequate to meet sportsground needs for winter sports (when demand is at its peak) to 2031. While the overall supply of land is adequate, provision of land for sportsgrounds should take into account the distribution of facilities as well as the quantum. With this in mind, as the western growth corridor suburbs are populated, additional land/ facilities in proximity to these new residents will be required. The supply of tennis courts to 2031 is assessed as adequate but an additional 7 netball courts will be required.

A Preliminary Directions Discussion Paper was presented to sports in October 2019 and all clubs/ associations were invited to provide feedback over the ensuing nine (9) weeks. Feedback, both positive and negative, was extensive and was taken into consideration in formulating the recommendations in the Strategic Sports Plan.

The Strategic Sports Plan comprises this document (which includes recommendations) plus three Supporting Resources Documents. Section 6.3 and 6.4 provide overarching and venue specific recommendations.

The research, consultation, analysis and recommendations in this Plan were significantly completed prior to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is understood that the sporting community will function differently post COVID-19 restrictions, but as these are largely unknown the plan has not been amended to take account of these.

Prior to CN's consideration of the finalised draft plan, it was announced that Australia and New Zealand will co-host the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. Newcastle has been identified as the location of games and base of a number of international teams. Events such as this provide a legacy boost to host communities in terms of facility provision/ upgrades and increased participation/ registration in sport. The timing of the announcement has meant that the plan does not specifically reference the opportunities but will provide a base for further detailed planning and discussion with funding agencies, including impetus for the Broadmeadow Precinct.

The draft Plan was approved by Council for a period of public exhibition from 26 August to 7 October 2020, 172 submissions were received during this period with the feedback informing amendments to the Plan.



¹ Athletics, Australian Rules Football, Baseball, Cricket, Croquet, Equestrian, Football (soccer), Netball, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Softball, Tennis, Touch/ Oztag

1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and Outcomes

The objective of this project is to...

"...address future demand, and inform the ongoing supply, maintenance and upgrade of sporting infrastructure with consideration to current and future needs of the community, other adopted strategies and City of Newcastle's financial capacity and sustainability."

The Plan is to provide specific sports facility direction for the following outdoor sports:

Athletics

Australian Rules Football

Baseball

Cricket

Croquet

Equestrian

Football (soccer)

Netball

Rugby League

Rugby Union

Softball

Tennis

Touch/ Oztag

Key outcomes of the project include (but are not limited to) the following:

Analysis of sports trends

Demand vs supply for outdoor sports grounds/ courts

Forecast local and regional sports facility needs

Review classification hierarchy

Guide planning for the western growth corridor

Opportunities for multi-purpose and major non-sport events²

Identify preferred management models

Guide developer contributions, Asset Plans, Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

Indoor sports are not included in the scope of this study. Where the City of Newcastle (CN) is not a direct facility provider in some outdoor sports³, the Plan should inform CN's role in supporting them.

² During the course of the study, it became evident that major non-sport events would be addressed within the scope of concept plans developed by Venues NSW for the Broadmeadow Precinct (refer section 2)

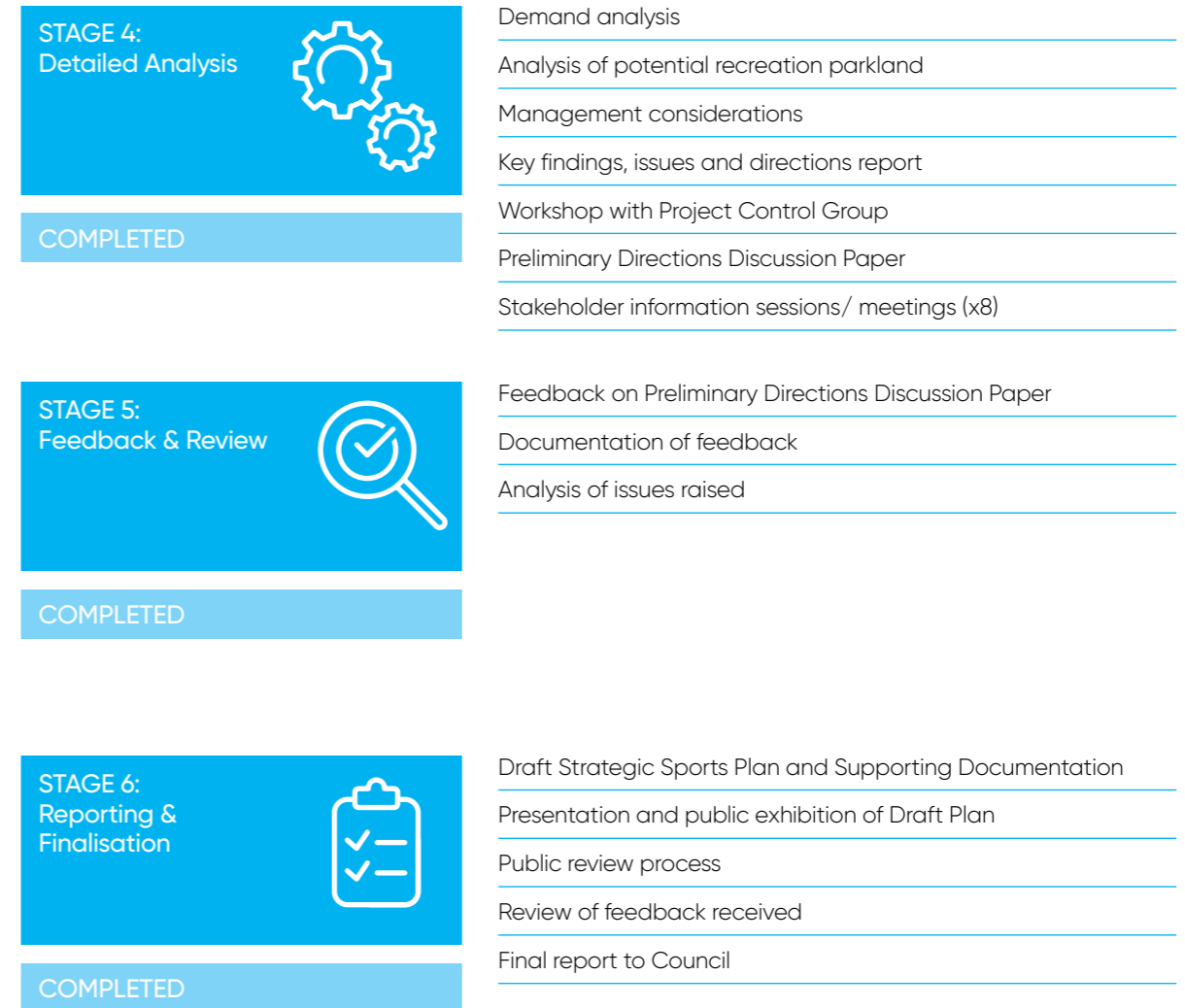
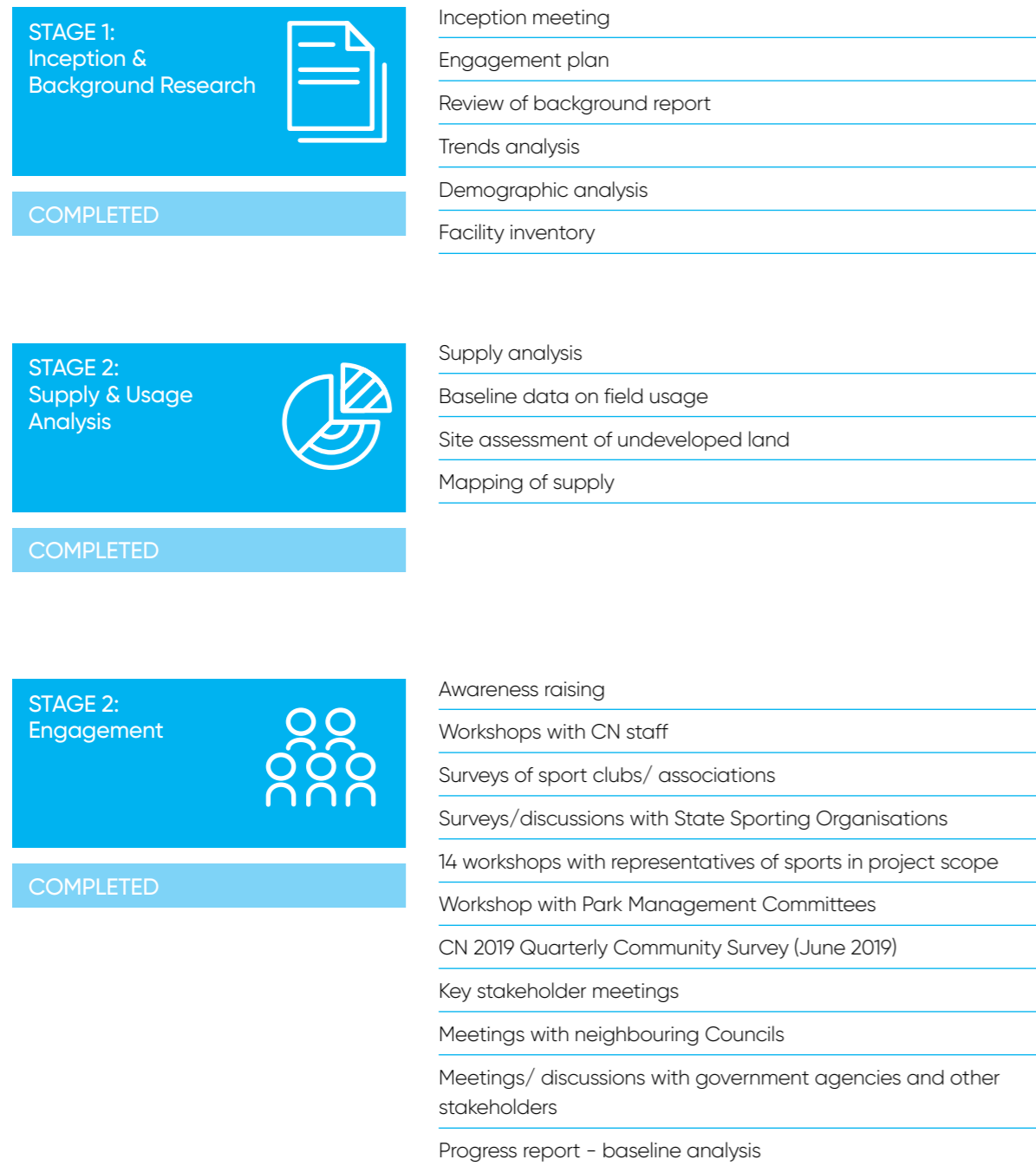
³ These sports include archery, cycling, hockey

1.2 Study Approach

A comprehensive 6-stage methodology was implemented to guide development of the Plan. Some stages occurred concurrently. CN officers assisted the study process through the collection of facility utilisation data, provision of background information, organisation of workshops, and generation of recommendations.

The study approach is illustrated at Figure 1

Figure 1: Study Approach



The Strategic Sports Plan comprises the following:

- The Strategic Sports Plan report incorporating individual sport summaries (this document)
- Supporting Resources Document Vol 1 – Background Research and Analysis
- Supporting Resources Document Vol 2 – Sports Facilities Hierarchy
- Supporting Resources Document Vol 3 – Capital Works Prioritisation Guide

2. Background Research

2.1 Population

As at the 2016 Census the estimated resident population of the Newcastle local government area (LGA) was 160,919. By 2031 this is projected to grow by an additional 27,081 persons to 188,000. The areas projected to experience the highest growth are Fletcher/ Minmi and Newcastle/ Newcastle East/ Newcastle West, accounting for over a third (36%) of the projected growth in the LGA.

2.2 Strategic Context

Extensive strategic planning has been undertaken by CN at a regional and city level. The context of the Strategic Sports Plan in relation to other CN planning is illustrated at Figure 2. Some of the key issues in recent regional and CN planning and consultation include:

The **Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036** sets out strategies and actions that will drive sustainable growth across CN, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland City and Port Stephens Councils. The Plan identifies several Catalyst Areas, which are described as places of metropolitan significance.

The Broadmeadow Catalyst Area contains the **Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct**. The Metropolitan Plan notes that Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation (HCCDC) will adopt and implement a Concept Plan to be developed by Venues NSW which sets a vision for the precinct as... 'A first choice sporting, leisure and entertainment destination that is diverse, vibrant, sustainable and commercially viable.' HCCDC will work with Venues NSW to... 'develop an elite sports area and provide a variety of places for organised and casual sports and recreation activities in accordance with the Concept Plan.' At the time of writing this plan remains in draft form.

The **Draft Hunter Sport and Recreation Plan (2018- 2023)** prepared by the Office of Sport contains strategies relevant to CN's Strategic Sports Plan. These include:

- Establish a Regional Sporting Hub at the Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct at Broadmeadow and explore locations for sub-hubs
- Establish National Park No 1 Sports Ground as a Regionally Significant Sports Facility (RSSF) and explore locations for other RSSFs
- Explore upgrades to existing facilities (making existing facilities multi-purpose and upgrading auxiliary infrastructure)
- Plan for female friendly sporting facilities
- CN has prepared Plans of Management and several masterplans for sportsgrounds throughout the city which provide guidance.

The CN **Quarterly Community Survey (Winter 2019)** included a question on priorities for improving sport and recreation parks. More shade and improved amenity blocks were nominated by the highest proportion of participants (61% each) as things that could improve the city's sportsgrounds.

The **Community Strategic Plan (2018-2028) Newcastle 2030** notes CN's intent to "...provide quality parkland and recreation facilities that are diverse, accessible and responsive to changing needs (SD3) and.... ensure people of all abilities can enjoy our public places and spaces (SD4)".

Numerous other documents, reports and strategies have been reviewed. These are included in the Supporting Resources Document Vol 1.

Figure 2: Strategic document map



2.3 Current Supply of Sportsgrounds

CN has 63 sport venues/ sites across the city with a total land area of approximately 370.5Ha. These are illustrated at Appendix 1 and are made up of:

- 5 x Athletics (one synthetic track)
- 61 x Netball courts (30 competition courts; 31 training courts)
- 3 x Australian Rules Football fields
- 22 x Rugby League fields (excluding McDonald Jones Stadium)
- 2 x Baseball diamonds
- 10 x Rugby Union fields
- 77 x Cricket pitches
- 9 x Softball diamonds
- 4 x Croquet lawns (single location)
- 61 x Tennis courts
- 72 x Football (soccer) fields
- 7 x Touch Football/ Oztag venues

Sportsground Observations

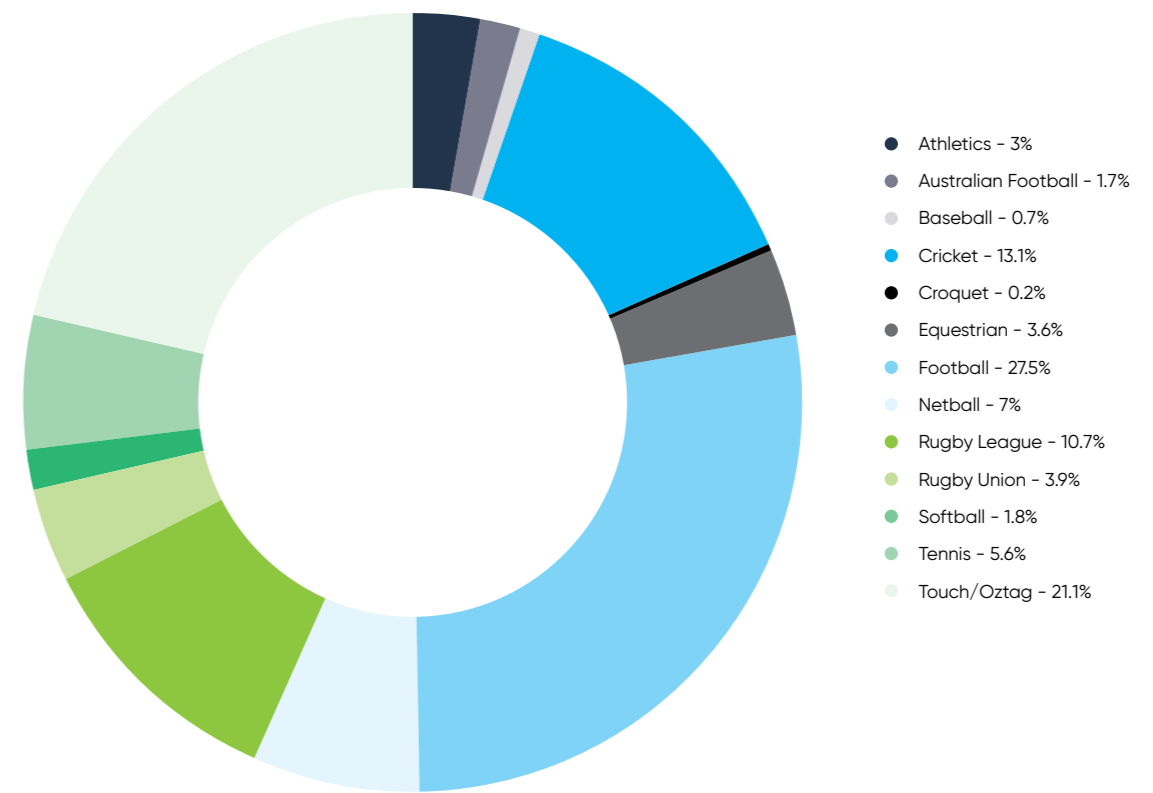
A number of factors impact on the functionality of sportsgrounds in the Newcastle LGA. These include:

- Distribution of grounds is fragmented with many located close to residents
- High level of single oval/ field playing areas
- Most grounds have no expansion capacity and smaller areas are suitable only for junior sport
- While lighting is installed on approximately half of the grounds (46%), the level and/ or coverage of lighting is limited in some cases with only 7% described as having competition standard lighting
- Many fields have poor or no drainage
- The condition of supporting amenities at many grounds is poor
- Like most councils, many facilities do not meet the current infrastructure guidelines of sports codes

2.4 Sports Participation

From data supplied by regional and state associations, football (soccer) accounts for, by far, the highest proportion of participation in the Newcastle LGA (27.5%) (in sports within the scope of this study). This is followed by touch/ Oztag (21.1%), cricket (13.1%) and rugby league (10.7%).

Figure 3: Proportion of Participants in Sports within Study Scope in Newcastle LGA



3. Consultation Outcomes

3.1 Issues and Needs Expressed by Sports

Extensive consultation was undertaken with sporting representatives during Stage 3 of the Plan development. A number of sports-specific issues and demands were raised, however the most common themes to emerge can be summarised under the headings of “communication” and “facilities”.

Communication

While some sports have a good relationship with CN, many felt that communication with CN is poor

Sports feel they lack input into priorities for sportsground improvements and timing of works

Poor notification from CN about works to be undertaken

Works undertaken by CN are often seen as high cost and poor value for money

Some sports are reluctant to invest in improvements to facilities as they have no security of tenure and feel CN's approval process is cumbersome and time consuming

Fees and charges are considered by many to be high and/ or cumbersome

Facilities

A need was expressed for upgrading of grounds, primarily in respect of:

- Playing surfaces - drainage/ irrigation
- Amenities blocks – old, poor condition, lack of female-friendly change rooms, inadequate storage
- Lighting – not available or insufficient standard; 54% of fields are unlit which limits functionality
- Ground infrastructure – lack of parking, shade, fencing

Some sports (e.g. football (soccer), Australian Rules, touch, netball, baseball, cycling) find it difficult to access sufficient playing areas

For some sports, facilities for high level competition are either seen as lacking or not at the desired standard (football (soccer), Australian Rules, cricket, tennis, netball)

Some sports with incumbency over grounds get priority and they preserve their main fields for competition use

Some sports “work the system” by booking and paying for longer hours at certain grounds to preclude other users

In an increasing number of sports, seasons are extending and overlapping with use requirements of opposite season sports

Shared use causes conflicts in some instances. Master planning/ reconfiguration of some venues would help to resolve this

The need to develop facilities to service the western growth corridor

Cycling has experienced strong participation growth in multiple age cohorts and across the various disciplines, expressing the need for safe and accessible venues and riding opportunities.

3.2 Park Committees

Representatives of Parks Committees were consulted. During the course of the study, CN determined to dissolve the remaining six (6) s355 Park Committees with CN assuming management of these areas consistent with other CN sportsgrounds.

3.3 Neighbouring LGA's

Neighbouring LGA's have a number of existing or proposed facilities which cater for the broader Hunter region or are capable of staging regional/ state events. Key issues to emerge in discussions included:

Councils are actively seeking sports tourism opportunities in a range of sports

There is recognition that the Broadmeadow precinct will be the pinnacle for a number of sports. A whole of Hunter region approach to sports development should be applied

Lake Macquarie has regional scale facilities for netball, athletics, gymnastics, football (soccer), and croquet

Maitland Council has secured \$10m funding to develop a synthetic athletics track and other improvements at Maitland No 1 Sportsground

Lake Macquarie have recently decided to prepare a 10-year sport strategy (to 2030)

Planned upgrades of netball and croquet facilities in Maitland will enable staging of state championships

Cessnock Council is seeking funding for the development of a regional scale 18-court tennis facility

Development of indoor sport facility at Hillsborough

There are multiple demands from sports for new/ upgraded facilities however the strategic planning within sports is often lacking. There is also increasing pressure on the maintenance of facilities to desired standards

3.4 Other External Stakeholders

Consultation was undertaken with Venues NSW, NSW Office of Sport, University of Newcastle, NSW Education and Hunter Academy of Sport. A number of elements of the draft Hunter Sport and Entertainment Precinct plan (not released at this stage) will be relevant to the CN Strategic Sports Plan. The Department of Education is open to entering into a partnership with CN in jointly developing facilities in schools. There are no plans for expansion or redevelopment of sporting facilities at the University of Newcastle at this stage. The Hunter Academy of Sport is seeking access to a multi-sport facility for testing and education programs.

3.5 Sport Feedback on Preliminary Directions Discussion Paper

Further extensive consultation with sports was undertaken in Stage 5 when a Preliminary Directions Discussion Paper was presented and released for feedback in October 2019 (refer section 6.1).



4. Assessment of Future Supply and Demand

The assessment of future sports infrastructure needs within the scope of the study was informed by current utilisation data, capacity of facility types, consultation with local, regional and state sporting bodies, current/ projected population, other strategic plans and studies, and application of Otium Planning Group demand assessment models.

4.1 Playing Fields

Capacity of sport fields, in winter⁴, was determined by comparing typical weekly utilisation (average hours) with a benchmark of 25hrs per week (notional carrying capacity). Just over a quarter (27%) are utilised at, or in excess of, their capacity (in some cases well in excess). Just over half of all playing fields (54%) are utilised below their carrying capacity (in many cases well below). At the time of analysis, data was not available for the remaining 19% of playing fields, noting that usage data on 81% of playing fields is a favourable result for studies of this type. The map at Appendix 1 illustrates utilisation of playing fields.

Otium Planning Group developed and applied two models for projecting land area needs. These are described as the 'Utilisation Model' and 'Demand Assessment Model'. In essence, the 'Utilisation Model' assesses the current utilisation of sportsgrounds against capacity benchmarks and population projections to estimate current and future playing areas required (expressed in hectares, excluding ancillary space). The 'Demand Assessment Model' is assumption based and takes into account a range of factors such as participation data, lit/ unlit playing areas, sportsground capacity and current/ projected population in order to estimate actual playing area required. The mid-point of the outputs of both models was adopted to determine the future demand for supply of sports fields in Newcastle.

Figure 4: Playing Field Utilisation as a % of Notional Capacity



- Over capacity - 18%
- At or approaching capacity - 9%
- Below capacity - 54%
- Data not available - 19%

⁴ The utilisation assessment refers to winter months when demand is at its peak and supply is at its most tenuous due to growing conditions for natural turf. 25hrs per week is a benchmark figure that a number of turf specialists have indicated as a threshold before significant deterioration of surface quality occurs and more rigorous maintenance is required

Table 1: Modelling results - Playing Fields - Total supply

Model Output	Current Supply ⁵ (Playing Areas Only)	Current Supply ⁶ (Playing Areas + Ancillary Space)	Modelling of Supply Needs (Ha)			
			2016	2021	2026	2031
Utilisation Model	133.3	226.7	96.0	102.2	107.7	112.1
Demand Assessment Model	133.3	226.7	113.6	120.1	126.1	132.6

Table 2: Modelling results - Playing Fields - Surplus or Deficit

Model Output	Modelling of Surplus/ Deficit (Ha)			
	2016	2021	2026	2031
Playing Area Only⁵ [Mid-point output utilisation and demand assessment model]	28.5	22.2	16.4	11.0
Playing area + Ancillary Space⁷ [Mid-point output utilisation and demand assessment model]	48.5	37.7	27.9	18.7

The modelling demonstrates that the total quantum of land is assessed as adequate to meet sportsground demand for winter sports (when demand is at its peak) to 2031, refer Table 1. Modelling suggests that an overall adequate supply of shared use winter playing fields would meet demands for summer sport. When Newcastle's overall supply of playing field land is benchmarked with councils in the north of Sydney it is evident that Newcastle has a much higher level of provision of playing fields (refer Table 3). This could be attributed to lack of available land in growing LGAs in the north of Sydney and/ or Newcastle's reputation as a 'sports city'.

⁵ Playing area/ current supply refers to actual playing area and run-off areas only, not ancillary facilities such as car parks, amenities, landscaping, pathways and informal open space

⁶ Includes all land area -playing and ancillary space

⁷ Includes playing areas plus 70% allowance (based on OPG experience) for ancillary facilities such as car parks, amenities, landscaping, pathways and informal open space

Table 3: Supply of Playing Field Land by LGA⁸

Area	Population (2016)	Playing Field Count	Playing Space (Ha)	Average Site Area (Ha)	Pop/Ha	Ha/ 1,000 Pop
Newcastle	160,919	134	133.3	0.99	1,207	0.83
Hornsby	149,650	44	59.5	1.35	2,516	0.40
Hunters Hill	14,500	10	6.5	0.65	2,238	0.45
Ku-ring-gai	123,500	63	63.6	1.01	1,943	0.51
Lane Cove	37,350	7	9.3	1.33	4,016	0.25
North Sydney	72,150	13	10.1	0.77	7,179	0.14
Northern Beaches	248,564	62	116.5	1.88	2,134	0.47
Ryde	119,950	73	61.9	0.85	1,936	0.52
Willoughby	75,450	19	28.5	1.50	2,651	0.38

While the overall supply of land is assessed as adequate, provision of land for sportsgrounds should take into account the distribution of facilities as well as the quantum. Mapping the distribution of facilities as part of this study (refer Appendix 1) shows that there is a greater concentration of supply within the eastern and central part of the LGA. As the western growth corridor suburbs are populated, additional land/ facilities in proximity to these new residents will be required.

4.2 Netball and Tennis Courts

The mid-point outputs of a range of benchmarks and demand analysis modelling developed by Otium Planning Group were applied to calculate future demand for tennis⁹ courts and competition netball¹⁰ courts. For netball this indicates a deficit of 7 competition courts by 2031. For tennis the modelling indicates the total number of courts to 2031 is adequate (refer Table 4).

Table 4: Results of modelling supply and demand for courts (median of benchmarks)

Court Supply Assessment	Provision Rate ¹¹	2018	2016	2021	2026	2031
		Current Supply ¹²	Required number of Courts			
Tennis courts	1:3,438	61	47	50	53	55
Netball courts	1:5,191	30	31	33	35	37

As noted above (refer 4.1) as the western growth corridor suburbs are populated, additional land/ facilities in proximity to these new residents will be required.

⁸ Playing area/ current supply refers to actual playing area and run-off areas only, not ancillary facilities such as car parks, amenities, landscaping, pathways and informal open space. Data sourced from NSROC's Regional Sportsground Strategy Review Report.

⁹ Tennis Australia benchmark of 1 court per 5,000 people. City of Newcastle as a whole has an average of 1 court per 2,647. Guidelines produced in 2012 by Parks and Leisure Western Australia suggest a ratio of between 1:1,875 and 1:3,750. Demand Analysis Modelling undertaken by Otium Planning Group for City of Newcastle as a whole calculates a ratio of 1:3,173.

¹⁰ Netball NSW suggest a benchmark of 1 court per 3,500 people. City of Newcastle as a whole has an average of 1 court per 5,364. Demand Analysis Modelling undertaken by Otium Planning Group for City of Newcastle as a whole suggests a ratio of 1:10,057.

¹¹ Median rate from all modelling scenarios

¹² Number of courts available for public or club use

4.3 Planning Framework

Performance outcomes in relation to land quantum and quality are necessary to be able to identify the space or land needed to meet needs, and to assess capacity of existing assets to accommodate increased demand. This minimum level of supply would be further informed by performance criteria relating to the suitability of land to accommodate recreation and sporting use. To that end, standards of service should be designed to ensure that sufficient/ functional land is provided for sporting areas and can be maintained effectively.

Indicative standards of service and classification hierarchy have been proposed for CN to guide future provision (see Supporting Resources Vol 2). They should be further informed by park planning and design guidelines. At the present time, all fields and courts within the network are assigned an individual hierarchy. This report proposes that, for playing fields, each park as a whole is assigned an overall hierarchy. Where an individual field within the classification has a higher level of use, that field is classified separately (refer Table in Supporting Resources Vol 2). Tennis courts, netball courts and croquet greens have been assigned a separate hierarchy, even when they are located within a larger sport park.





5. Vision and Guiding Principles

The recommendations in section 6 are based on the following Vision and Guiding Principles.

Vision

Support the health and wellbeing of the community through the provision and management of land, facilities and/ or services for sport

5.1 Guiding Principles



Alignment

CN will ensure that planning for sport aligns with other high-level strategic planning to ensure consistency, avoid duplication and maximise community value from investment in sport.



Regional Framework

CN acknowledges the importance of considering the broader Hunter region in planning for sporting infrastructure.



Strategic Planning

In planning and managing its sporting resources CN will be mindful of population growth, residential amenity, equity principles, and evidence-based decision making.



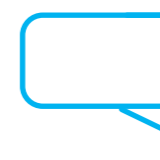
Sustainability and Functionality

CN will adopt planning and management practices that endeavour to maximise the sustainability and functionality of its sporting resources.



Partnerships

CN will encourage partnerships with sporting organisations and other stakeholders in upgrading and maintaining its assets and in the management of sport.



Communication

CN recognises the importance of transparent communication with sporting organisations and the community in the planning and management of sporting facilities and services.

6. Strategic Directions and Recommendations

6.1 Preliminary Directions Discussion Paper

A Preliminary Directions Discussion Paper was presented to sports at a series of information sessions and meetings in October 2019. Sports were encouraged to provide written feedback over the ensuing 9 weeks to indicate what they 'liked' and 'disliked' about preliminary recommendations and any elements they felt were 'missing'. Feedback was extensive. Sports generally appreciated the openness of the process and the opportunity to provide feedback. There was support for a number of preliminary recommendations, strong opposition to others, and some alternative proposals put forward. The feedback was analysed in detail, discussed with CN, and taken into consideration in formulating the recommendations in the Draft Strategic Sports Plan.

6.2 Draft Strategic Sports Plan

The Draft Strategic Sports Plan was placed on public exhibition from 26 August to 7 October 2020. 172 submissions were received from sporting club members/ participants and sporting organisations. Key themes arising from the submission included:

Agreement with many recommendations	Some questioning of accuracy of participation data, data sources, insufficient attention paid to individual sports. (Note: Membership data was sourced from state or regional associations)
Several concerns about specific facility recommendations (e.g. to redevelop or not redevelop certain areas)	Associations seeking further discussion on their submissions before the Plan is finalised
Questions raised about implications for individual clubs if some facility-related recommendations are adopted	Some feedback raised issues that are beyond the study scope
Disagreement with repurposing some areas for recreation or limiting their future development	

The analysis of submissions resulted in amendments to some recommendations and supporting documentation in discussion with CN. It should be reinforced that implementation of the Plan should involve extensive engagement with sports. Masterplans should incorporate thorough community engagement and consultation with relevant sports.

6.3 Overarching Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

Description	Recommendation
Sportsground Allocation Process	Review the process for allocating sportsgrounds to achieve a more even distribution of usage, optimise usage of existing areas, and reduce over-use of some grounds. This may require a review of current internal resourcing arrangements.
Western Growth Corridor	<p>The overall land supply across the city as a whole is considered adequate, however there is a need to secure up to 20ha of land in the western growth corridor to service that catchment to 2031. S7.11/ s7.12 plans should assist in securing land for development. Develop masterplans for sport and recreation development at Creek Road and future Minmi sports facilities to cater for population growth, ensuring provision for netball, tennis, and shared use layouts catering for touch/ Oztag, rugby union, rugby league, football (soccer), and Australian Rules/ cricket.</p> <p>Where recommendations have been made to repurpose some sites for recreation use or not intensify existing use, work with individual sports to identify suitable alternative locations.</p> <p>Consider the possible provision of a multi-use synthetic playing surface.</p>
Upgrading of Existing Facilities	<p>Implement a rolling capital works program to progressively renew and upgrade existing sportsgrounds to improve their functionality, noting that this program is dependent on CN's financial capacity. A response to the coronavirus pandemic is likely to be higher building and public health standards for public amenities and change-rooms; CN could liaise with health agencies and peak sporting bodies to develop designs for change rooms/ amenities that address universal access and raised hygiene standards. In particular, improvements should be focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage/ irrigation • Lighting upgrades • Supporting amenities (change rooms/ toilets, canteens), with universal access and raised hygiene standards • Shade <p>S7.11/ s7.12 plans for areas other than the western growth corridor should be directed toward upgrading existing facilities. Priorities for upgrading should generally consider the capital works prioritisation guide (Supporting Resources – Vol 3).</p> <p>CN may need to review its capital works budgets for sports fields.</p>

Description	Recommendation
Opportunities for Additional Recreation Space	Consider redesignating areas to recreation space due to their low use/ low functionality for sport and more appropriate functionality as recreation parkland. Suggested parks for reclassification to recreation use include Harold Myers Oval, Lindsay Memorial Oval, Litchfield Park, Pasedena Crescent Reserve and Regent Park.
Synthetic Surfaces	The consultation process did not indicate a consensus view on the provision of synthetic surfaces. Synthetic playing surfaces are appropriate in areas where there are limited grass playing field opportunities, high use of existing facilities, and/ or an inability to adequately maintain grass fields to suitable standards. Where intensity of use exceeds the capacity of a playing field(s), alternative solutions should be explored before developing a synthetic surface(s) e.g. upgrading irrigation/ drainage, increasing maintenance, exploring the availability of other fields in the network.
Further Research	<p>Review Tennis Court Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the proliferation of tennis facilities with few courts, their aging condition, and likely demands for funding of upgrades as these assets reach the end of their useful life, undertake a review of usage and distribution of courts (including future of District Park courts within the Broadmeadow Precinct Plan being undertaken by Venues NSW) to inform decision-making on retention, expansion or removal of existing courts. Engage with tennis clubs/ associations as part of this review. <p>Indoor Facility Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor sports and indoor facilities are out-of-scope for this project. Demand was expressed by netball, as the elite pathway for netball requires access to indoor courts. Review demand and future provision of multi-use indoor sport facilities. <p>Cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In light of the growth in participation in cycling, develop a long term plan in conjunction with other stakeholders (e.g. Hunter region Councils, state government agencies) to examine issues and needs of competitive on-road and off-road cycling disciplines (e.g. mountain-biking, road racing, BMX, track racing) in the lower Hunter region. Council has recently completed a Cycling Strategy which would address recreational and commuter cycling.
Designation of NPL/ WPL Venues	<p>To avoid duplication of facilities, and/ or upgrading grounds beyond their designated hierarchy, and/ or displacing sports from existing venues, designate the following grounds as suitable for the staging of NPL/ WPL games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adamstown No 1 Darling St Oval Arthur Edden Oval National Park No 2 (Where competitions/ events are of equal status, prioritise rugby union due to its long-standing connection with and contribution to the venue) Wanderers Park No 1 (Magic Park) or possible new field/s as part of Broadmeadow Precinct Plan (Venues NSW) <p>Ensure the infrastructure at these grounds complies with NPL standards.</p>
Prioritisation of Capital Works	Adopt the guide outlined (Supporting Resources Vol 3) to assess priorities for future capital works.

Description	Recommendation
Management and Communication	<p>Fees and Charges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplify the fees and charges regime by reducing the number of sub-categories and review the basis on which fees are calculated. <p>User Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current practice to better enable user groups to undertake minor improvements and maintenance of facilities (e.g. introduce seasonal inductions and regular review of accredited providers). <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve communication with clubs/ user groups e.g. conduct workshops/ forums with user groups at the beginning of each season to explain allocation process, responsibilities, fees and charges; briefing on grant programs; better notification of timing and implications (for sport) of maintenance projects. As part of the early implementation phase of the Strategic Sports Plan, conduct a forum with sport associations to collaborate on reforms and early priorities. CN should actively engage with affected sports in implementing masterplans; facility improvements/ changes; and identifying suitable alternative locations where sites have been recommended for re-purposing to recreation or not intensifying their use. <p>Tenure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current practice of not granting leasehold tenure should be maintained other than for single purpose, specialised facilities that are not suitable for shared use. <p>Resourcing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In order to implement the recommendations of the Strategic Sports Plan, CN may need to better resource sportsground allocation and management.
Integrated Planning	Ensure that the Strategic Sports Plan takes into account the outcomes of the final masterplan for Broadmeadow Precinct (especially in relation to high level competition and non-sport events).

6.4 Venue Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations relate to specific venues and/ or facilities.

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Adamstown		
Adamstown Park	Adamstown No 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground designated for staging of NPL/ WPL games Ensure infrastructure complies with NPL standards
	Adamstown No 1 Oval Training Ground Adamstown No 2 - 5	Masterplan for Adamstown 2-5, Training, Mandalong Oval and Myer Park to:
	Mandalong Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve field layout, drainage, irrigation and lighting layout
	Mandalong Oval Training Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve playing surfaces Upgrade amenities for football and cricket
	Myer Park No 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review/ consider future of cycle criterium and velodrome
	Adamstown Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts.
	Adamstown Netball Court (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm utilisation, and if required to be retained, improve court surface and provide access to amenities/ storage within Park for netball club/s
Adamstown		
Hudson Park	Hudson Park No 1 - 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masterplan to explore potential for alternative uses, include upgrades as required, including re-aligning orientation of fields
Bar Beach		
Empire Park	Empire Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain as is
	Empire and Reid Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts. If retained, address tree root invasion impact on court surface quality
Beresfield		
Beresfield Bowling Club	Beresfield Bowling Club tennis court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court in disrepair – Interdependency with adjacent bowls Club; Bowls club masterplan for site including consideration of conversion to alternative active recreation space, with CN support for continued/ redeveloped tennis use included in overall tennis provision review
Lindsay Memorial Oval	Lindsay Memorial Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single field, high use cricket practice nets, no further sport infrastructure intensification, consider recreation park development

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Pasedena Crescent Reserve	Pasedena Crescent Reserve No 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major upgrades recommended. Retain use in short term, preference over longer term to relocate uses to nearby Tarro Reserve Once uses are relocated, redevelop for recreation parkland
Birmingham Gardens		
Harold Myers Oval	Harold Myers Oval Harold Myers Park Netball Courts (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and configuration of park unsuitable for field sport; remove sport infrastructure and redevelop as recreation park
Broadmeadow		
District Park (Broadmeadow Precinct)	Recommendations for District Park are interim pending decisions from Venues NSW on finalisation of Broadmeadow Precinct concept planning	
	Newcastle Tennis Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Newcastle Tennis Centre (District Park) requires redevelopment, either in its current location or at an alternative site (not a CN responsibility)
	Wanderers Park No1 (alias = Magic Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grounds designated for staging of NPL/ WPL games Ensure infrastructure complies with NPL standards
	Wanderers Park No 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide for current uses
Carrington		
Connolly Park	Connolly Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and upgrade grounds and amenities to support development of this venue (in conjunction with Pat Jordan Oval) as Newcastle base for junior Australian Rules football Remove football infrastructure and relocate football to alternative location
	Carrington Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the finalisation of the green space masterplan for Carrington, review location of courts.
Pat Jordan Oval	Pat Jordan Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and upgrade grounds and amenities to support development of this venue (in conjunction with Connolly Park) as Newcastle base for junior Australian Rules football Remove football infrastructure and relocate football to alternative location
Cooks Hills		
Centennial Park	Centennial Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution determine retention, expansion or removal of tennis court facility

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Elmore Vale		
Elmore Vale Reserve	Elmore Vale Reserve No 1 – 4 (alias = Walker Fields)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain as is
Fletcher		
Kurraka Oval	Kurraka Oval field 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing uses Work with local club/s to prioritise and implement existing (club-developed) masterplan and capital works program to improve field layout, functioning and utilisation for football, touch and cricket.
	Kurraka Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts. Potential to convert tennis court to netball court to improve supply for western corridor (for training) in line with western corridor facility planning.
	Kurraka Netball Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support provision of, or access to amenities and storage improvements to support training
Hamilton		
Gregson Park	Hamilton Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masterplan underway for the park. Consider need for retention of tennis courts
Hamilton North		
Richardson Park	Richardson Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain use for junior cricket, with no major upgrades
Smith Park	Smith Park No 1 – 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a masterplan for Smith Park to optimise field layout and improve provision for cricket, football and touch/ Oztag Masterplan should incorporate upgrading of fields and amenities, and installation of lighting.
Hamilton South		
Darling St Oval	Darling St Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grounds designated for staging of NPL/ WPL games Ensure infrastructure complies with NPL standards Improve diversity of use outside competition times
Learmonth Park	Learmonth Park field 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain current uses
	Learmonth Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts.
Hamilton South		
Hexham Park	Hexham Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small park with low use. No major upgrade.
Jesmond		
Heaton Park	Heaton Park No 1 – 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review use and prepare masterplan. Potential as designated touch venue
Jesmond Park	Jesmond Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade lighting

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Kotara		
Kotara Park	Kotara Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small, constrained site for field sport, no further development Review potential for increased school use
	Kotara Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts.
Lugar Park	Lugar Park No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade amenities/ change rooms
Nesbitt Park	Nesbitt Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain current uses – little athletics, cricket and football
	Nesbitt Park Netball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade court, amenities and storage to support training
Lambton		
Johnson Park	Johnson Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and configuration of park unsuitable for field sport. Consider retaining for low intensity training use only or removing sport infrastructure (cricket wicket) and redeveloping as recreation park.
Lambton Park	Harry Edwards Oval Lambton Park & Junior Lambton Park Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and upgrade amenities. Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts.
	Lambton Park Outer Grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not suitable for sport due to size and configuration.
Lewis Oval	Lewis Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single field. Review utilisation and consider removing sport infrastructure and repurposing for community recreation use. If sport is retained, no major improvements and use for training purposes.
Maryland		
Bill Elliot Oval	Bill Elliot Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain Bill Elliot and Shortland Close Reserve for Australian Rules football and cricket Upgrade drainage
Fletcher Park	Wallsend Pony Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocate Pony Club or merge with other club/s in neighbouring LGA prior to proceeding with development of sports fields on land at Creek Road, Maryland
Grange Oval	Grange Oval No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain for rugby league training and junior rugby league competition. Upgrade amenities.
	Grange Ave Netball (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade amenities and storage to support training
Mayfield		
Dangar Park	Dangar Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing use Develop masterplan with focus on overall park and amenity
Islington Park	Islington Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain current uses
Litchfield Park	Litchfield Park No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and configuration of park unsuitable for field sport. Remove sport infrastructure and redevelop as recreation park

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Mayfield Hillcrest Tennis court	Mayfield Hillcrest Tennis court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis courts.
Mayfield Park	Mayfield Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove cricket wicket and establish as year-round training and pre-season venue for football (soccer).
Mayfield West		
Stevenson Park	Stevenson Park Softball No 1 – 2, Baseball, Soccer 1 – 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise diamond and field layout (No 1 & 2) to ensure compliance with Softball Australia standards. Upgrade lighting and fencing. Increase maintenance in line with budget and suggested revised hierarchy designation (regional) and accounting for year-round shared use with baseball and football (soccer) Increase use of softball diamonds for junior baseball in softball off-season Demolish existing football/ baseball amenities and develop new/ replacement amenities (single building) that are appropriate for both uses. Install a multiuse batting cage/ tunnel; softball and baseball shared.
Merewether		
Gibbs Bros Oval	Gibbs Bros Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major development not proposed due to lack of parking
Mitchell Park	Townson Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain as is
Myambalah Crescent	Myambalah Crescent Oval No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No intensification of use, due to site constraints (parking, access, and nearby residential)
Minmi		
Minmi Sports Ground	Minmi Sports Ground No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept plan developed by CN to expand or upgrade existing facilities (potential for field expansion and netball court provision) to cater for population growth in western corridor.
Minmi Tennis Courts	Minmi Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider potential for expansion to 6–10 court centre
New Lambton		
Alder Park	Alder Park No 1 – 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain Little Athletics Centre to preserve distribution of athletics grounds across the city Retain cricket use Alder Park is considered unsuitable for further development to accommodate NPL games due to facility size, proximity of adjacent residents and displacement of other sport users

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
New Lambton Park	Ford Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrally located venue with potential to increase utilisation.
	Harker Memorial Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a precinct plan incorporating the adjacent Wallarah Oval/ Arthur Edden/ Blackley Oval
	Kentish Oval No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The facility has capacity to provide higher levels of use. Field realignment could provide more fields for multiple use and improve options for usage/ allocation. Over longer term review transport and parking options to reduce impact on surrounding residential streets
	Kentish Netball (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenities, storage improvements to support training
Novocastrian Park	Novocastrian Park No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain current uses
Regent Park	Regent Park	<p>Size, location and configuration of park is generally unsuitable for field sport due to small size and site limitations and would have greater functionality as recreation park servicing the local community. Options for consideration are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce sport infrastructure and redevelop as recreation park, but retain capacity for limited sport training Remove sport infrastructure and redevelop as recreation park
Walarah Park		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centrally located venue with potential to increase utilisation. Include in precinct plan for adjacent New Lambton Park, Wallarah Oval/ Arthur Edden/ Blackley Oval
	Arthur Edden Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a masterplan to guide redevelopment of this facility as a football centre of excellence (CoE) and to host National Premier League (NPL) competition games. Include possible synthetic surface to sustain expected high levels of use. Ensure infrastructure complies with NPL standards
	Blackley Oval, Wallarah Oval No 1 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit the provision of cricket at this facility, in consideration of the planning for the Football CoE and non-compliance with CA standards. Relocate cricket to an alternative venue if pitch removed.
Newcastle West		
National Park		<p>Review the National Park Plan of Management and develop a corresponding masterplan considering the following elements and ensuring thorough community engagement and consultation with relevant sports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the north west corner of the site as a recreation park, to address deficiencies in inner city parkland catering for range of active and passive activities Provide additional and upgraded amenities/ storage to service user groups Upgrade netball court lighting Expand hard courts to 32, subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) a review of the 1984 agreement restricting further hard court development b) the review of the Plan of Management c) Investigation of potential impacts on flooding of additional hard surfaces; and d) consultation with all stakeholders and the broader community. The masterplan should identify all options for improving the functionality of National Park 3 – 6 Ensure adequate car-parking

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
	National Park No 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the highest level of competition/ event use for oval sports when allocating usage of National Park No 1 Sportsground • Proceed with planned redevelopment of National Park No 1 Sportsground including amenity upgrades, improving the facility for female participants and spectators
	National Park No 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the highest level of competition/ event use in all rectangular field sports when allocating usage of National Park No 2 Sportsground • Where competitions/ events are of equal status, prioritise rugby union due to its long-standing connection with and contribution to the venue • Ensure infrastructure complies with code requirements for various rectangular field sports • Reconstruct field to improve sustainability of surface condition. Determine the most appropriate design and maintenance regime to enable use by different codes.
	National Park Athletics Track (synthetic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the National Park Athletics facility as a 6-lane track • Disability access across the venue should be reviewed/ upgraded, given its role in wheelchair and para sports training and competition. Replace track surface when it reaches the end of its useful life.
	Newcastle National Park Croquet Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain Newcastle National Park Croquet Club in its current location and do not expand number of lawns • Consider upgrading the clubhouse (within heritage considerations) and installation of lighting for existing lawns to enable evening competitions and corporate programs
Shortland		
Cook Park	Cook Park No 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain as is. No major redevelopment. Potential training level lighting upgrade
Tuxford Park	Tuxford Park Upper, Lower No 1 - 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for greater utilisation. Possible venue for touch/ Oztag.
	Tuxford Park Netball (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of or access to amenities, storage improvements to support training

Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Stockton		
Ballast Ground	Ballast Oval No 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing use
Corroba Oval	Corroba Oval No 1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain Little Athletics Centre to preserve distribution of athletics venues across the city. • Upgrade amenities • In the event that coastal erosion or mitigation measures render the netball courts (Mitchell St) unviable, relocate club to Corroba Oval with development of additional court, and resurface existing netball court • Investigate the potential to expand into adjacent land • Ensure partnership with neighbouring Port Stephens Council in further development of the site
Griffith Park	Griffith Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain existing use
Lynn Oval	Lynn Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding allocated to relocate and refurbish cricket practice nets
Stockton Netball Courts	Stockton Netball Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of this facility to be informed by CN Coastal Management Plan direction regarding erosion control/ mitigation • In the event that coastal erosion or mitigation measures render the courts unviable, relocate club to Corroba Oval with development of additional court and resurface existing netball court
Stockton Tennis Courts	Stockton Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis court facility.
Tarro		
Tarro Reserve	Tarro Reserve No 1 - 6 and Netball	<p>Masterplan and upgrade works in conjunction with local clubs to improve layout, functionality and utilisation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and upgrade grounds (No 3 & 4) and amenities • Relocate uses from Pasedena Crescent Reserve • Liaise with Maitland City regarding the potential for shared funding of improvements to service Maitland residents
The Hill		
King Edward Park	Newcastle Hill Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to review of city-wide tennis court provision and distribution, determine the retention, expansion or removal of tennis court facility

7. Warranties and Disclaimers

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their own experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence' and as such these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

There will be differences between projected and actual results, because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite or guarantee the achievability of the projections as it is not possible to substantiate assumptions which are based on future events.

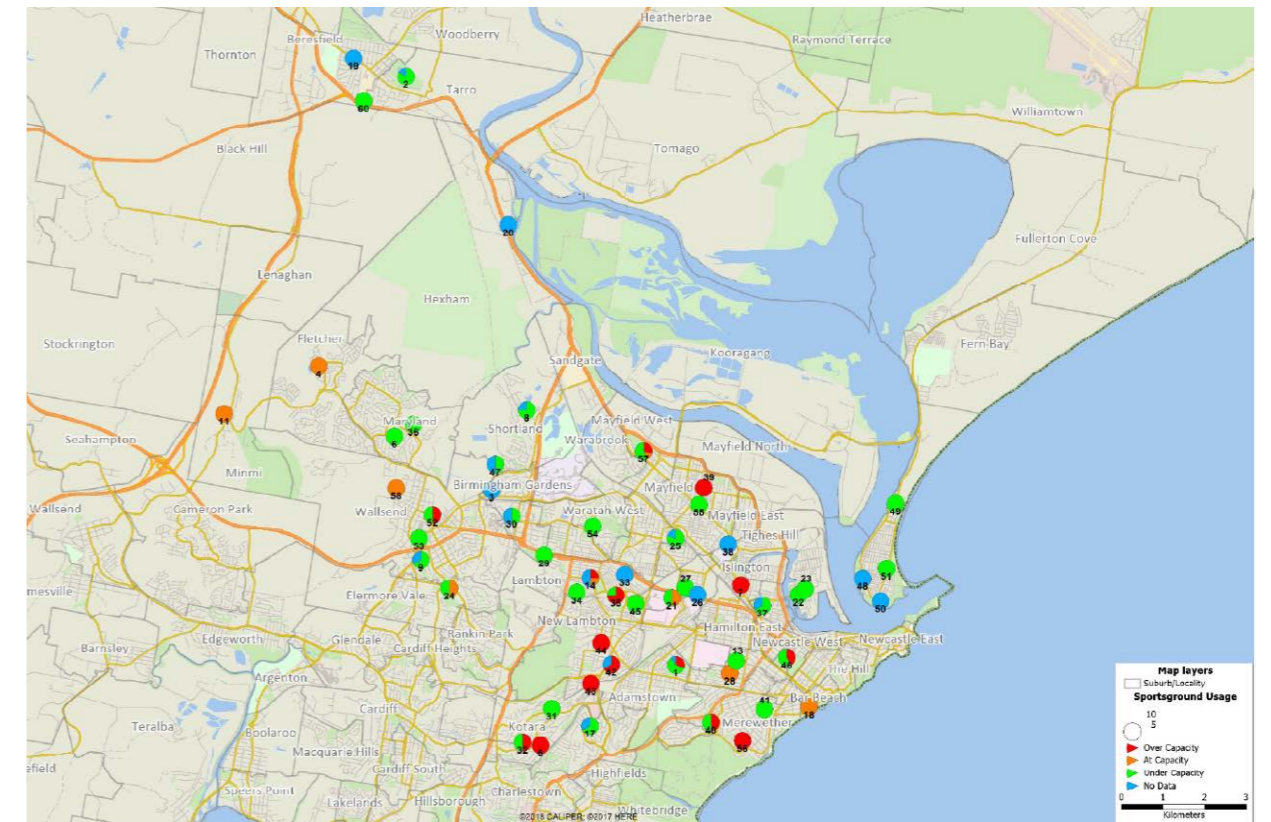
Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.



Venue arranged by Suburb	Name of facility	Recommendation
Wallsend		
Federal Park	Federal Park No 1 - 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain Little Athletics to preserve distribution of athletics facilities across the city
Hope Street Reserve	Col Curran/Plattsburg No 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade lighting and amenities Install batting cage/ tunnel for training Review diamond layout at Plattsburg Park to accommodate further junior use or emerging clubs
Upper Reserve	Upper Reserve No 1 - 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain current uses
	Upper Reserve Netball Courts (training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review utilisation. If low or no usage, consider conversion to recreational basketball courts or repurposing for car-parking/ ancillary facilities
Wallsend Park	Wallsend Park No 1 (George Farley Oval) & No 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve amenities with development of one building that services both fields to replace existing facility
Waratah		
Waratah Park	Waratah Park No 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review field layout through masterplan development to improve year-round utilisation of the facility for cricket, rectangular football codes and Australian Rules football. Include consideration of location of cricket pitches and positioning of new/ upgraded lighting.
Waratah West		
Thomas Percy Oval	Thomas Percy Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No upgrade of infrastructure. Retain existing uses. Potential training lighting upgrade
Wickham		
Wickham Park	Hawkins Oval, Passmore Oval, Thomas Armstrong Oval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop masterplan (design) for Wickham Park (arising from Wickham Masterplan) incorporating improved amenity, connectivity/ surveillance, landscape, community, recreation and sport outcomes recognising heritage considerations Retain existing uses - rugby league, rugby union, cricket

Appendix 1: CN Sports Facilities and Capacity

Map 1: Distribution of CN Sports Facilities and their current capacity (winter)



ID	Facility
1	Adamstown Park
42	Alder Park
48	Ballast Ground
36	Bill Elliot Oval
22	Connolly Park
47	Cook Park
49	Corroba Oval
55	Dangar Park
28	Darling Street Oval
21	District Park
24	Elernmore Vale Reserve
18	Empire Park
52	Federal Park
56	Gibbs Brothers Oval
6	Grange Oval
50	Griffith Park
3	Harold Myers Oval
30	Heaton Park
20	Hexham Park

ID	Facility
58	Hope Street Reserve
17	Hudson Park
7	Islington Park
29	Jesmond Park
33	Johnson Park
31	Kotara Park
4	Kurraka Oval
14	Lambton Park
13	Learmonth Park
34	Lewis Oval
19	Lindsay Memorial Oval
38	Litchfield Park
32	Lugar Park
51	Lynn Oval
39	Mayfield Park
11	Minmi Sportsground
41	Mitchell Park
40	Myamblah Crescent Oval
46	National Park

ID	Facility
5	Nesbitt Park
35	New Lambton Park
43	Novocastrian Park
60	Pasedena Crescent Reserve
23	Pat Jordan Oval
44	Regent Park
26	Richardson Park
27	Smith Park
57	Stevenson Park
2	Tarro Reserve
54	Thomas Percy Oval
8	Tuxford Park
9	Upper Reserve
45	Wallarah Park
53	Wallsend Park
25	Waratah Park
37	Wickham Park

Appendix 2: Sports Summaries

1. Athletics

1.1 Participation and Trends

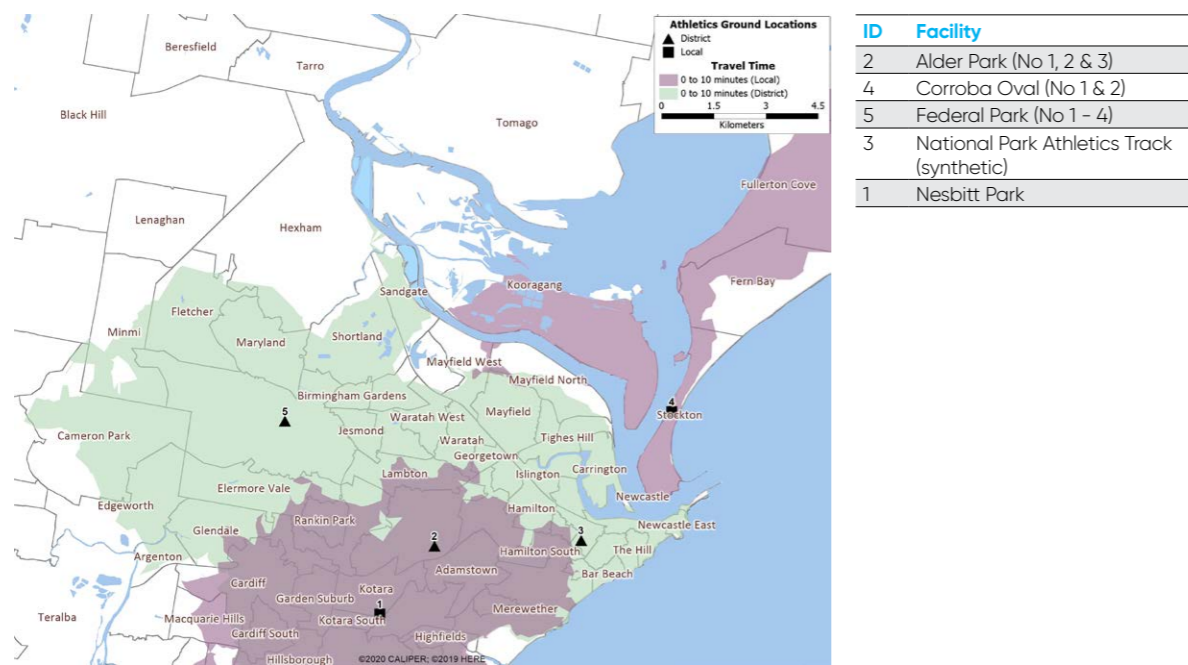
Athletics had 1,269 active members of clubs in Newcastle in 2018. Growth in participation has been evident in non-stadium related disciplines/ events (i.e. recreational running, parkrun, cross country and trail running).

1.2 Facilities

Athletics utilises 5 venues across the Newcastle LGA. The main facility in Newcastle is the synthetic track at National Park which, with 6 lanes, is too small for major events. The premier facility for athletics in the Hunter region is situated at Hunter Sports Centre Stadium (Lake Macquarie Council).

The existing little athletics centres in Newcastle should be retained to maintain the geographic spread of facilities across the city. National Park Athletics Centre should be retained as a centre for training, development and competitions with a review of disability access and replacement of track surface when it reaches the end of its useful life. The Hunter Sports Centre Stadium in Lake Macquarie Council should remain as the regional facility for the Hunter. In recognition of 'non-stadium' related growth in athletics participation, the provision of safe and challenging running trails should be considered in future masterplans as well as support for programs such as parkrun. Athletics should be considered in the planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth.

Map 2: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



2. Australian Rules Football

2.1 Participation and Trends

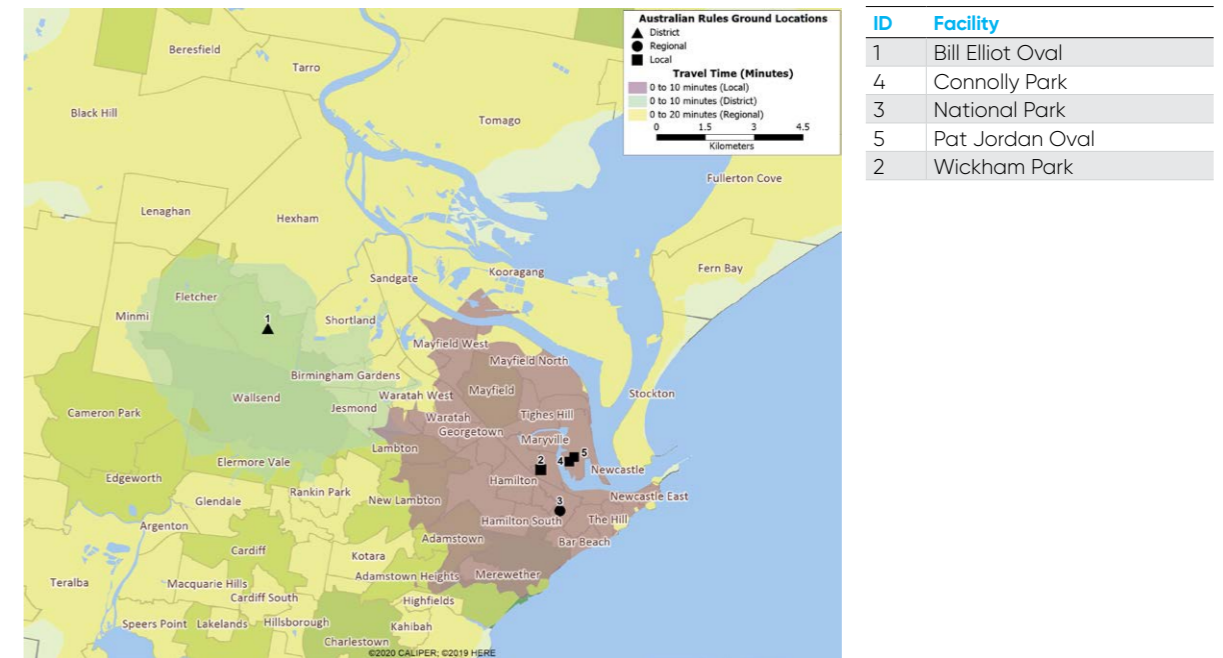
Australian Rules football had 718 registered members of clubs in Newcastle in 2018, with growth occurring in juniors and exponential growth in women. Masters and social competitions are growing in popularity.

2.2 Facilities

Australian Rules football utilises 3 venues across Newcastle. The main facility is National Park No 1 Sportsground which has a planned redevelopment to improve capacity for high-level sport. Infrastructure upgrades within the Broadmeadow Precinct could potentially achieve higher standard facilities for Australian Rules.

The existing facilities in Newcastle should be retained. The adjacent grounds of Pat Jordan Oval and Connolly Park (Carrington) should be upgraded with appropriate amenities to develop as Newcastle base for junior Australian Rules football, and Australian Football included in master planning of Waratah Park. Planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth should include Australian Rules.

Map 3: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



3. Baseball

3.1 Participation and Trends

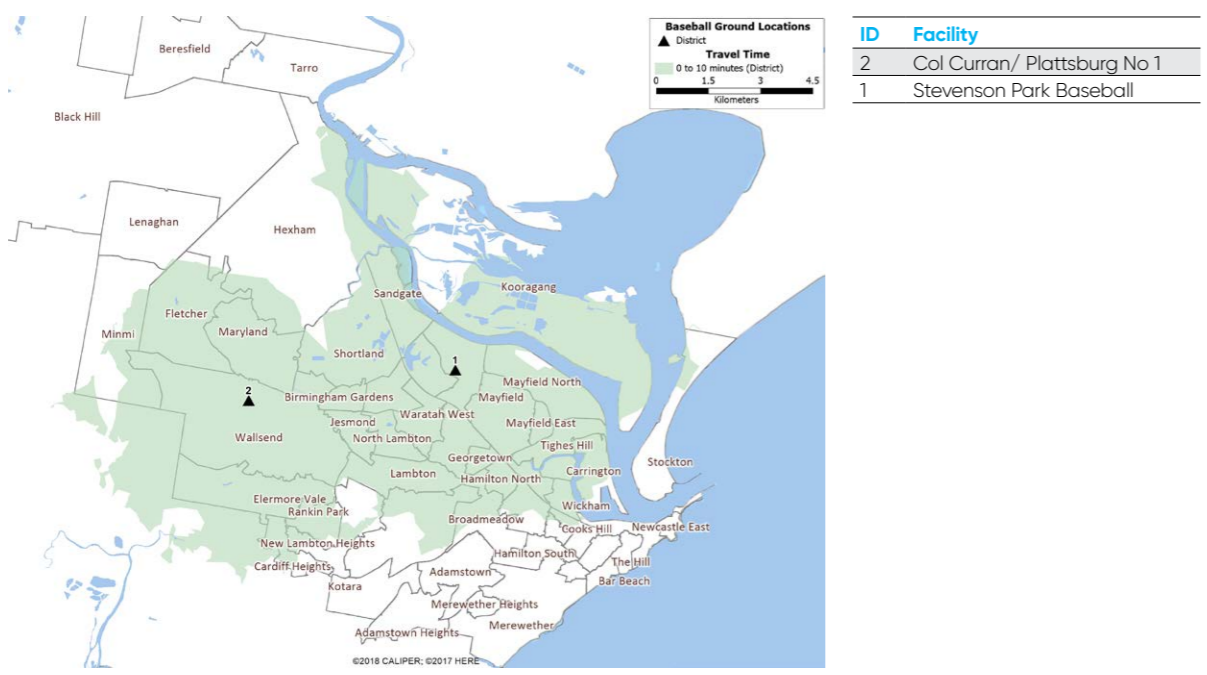
Baseball had 309 active members across three clubs in Newcastle in 2018, with the clubs reporting growth each season. While membership is small when compared with other sports, the retention and further development of existing facilities will continue to support the growth of the sport.

3.2 Facilities

The two baseball facilities in Newcastle are part of a broader network that serves the broader Hunter region. Plattsburg Park has emerged as a significant facility, hosting finals.

The recommendations focus on the two existing facilities with upgrades to lighting, amenities, improvements to grounds maintenance and the development of batting cage/ tunnel for training. Increased maintenance at Stevenson Park will support year-round shared use with softball.

Map 4: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



4. Cricket

4.1 Participation and Trends

Cricket had 8,092 registered members in 2018, with growth being experienced in female participation. Modified formats of the game are attracting new/ returning players.

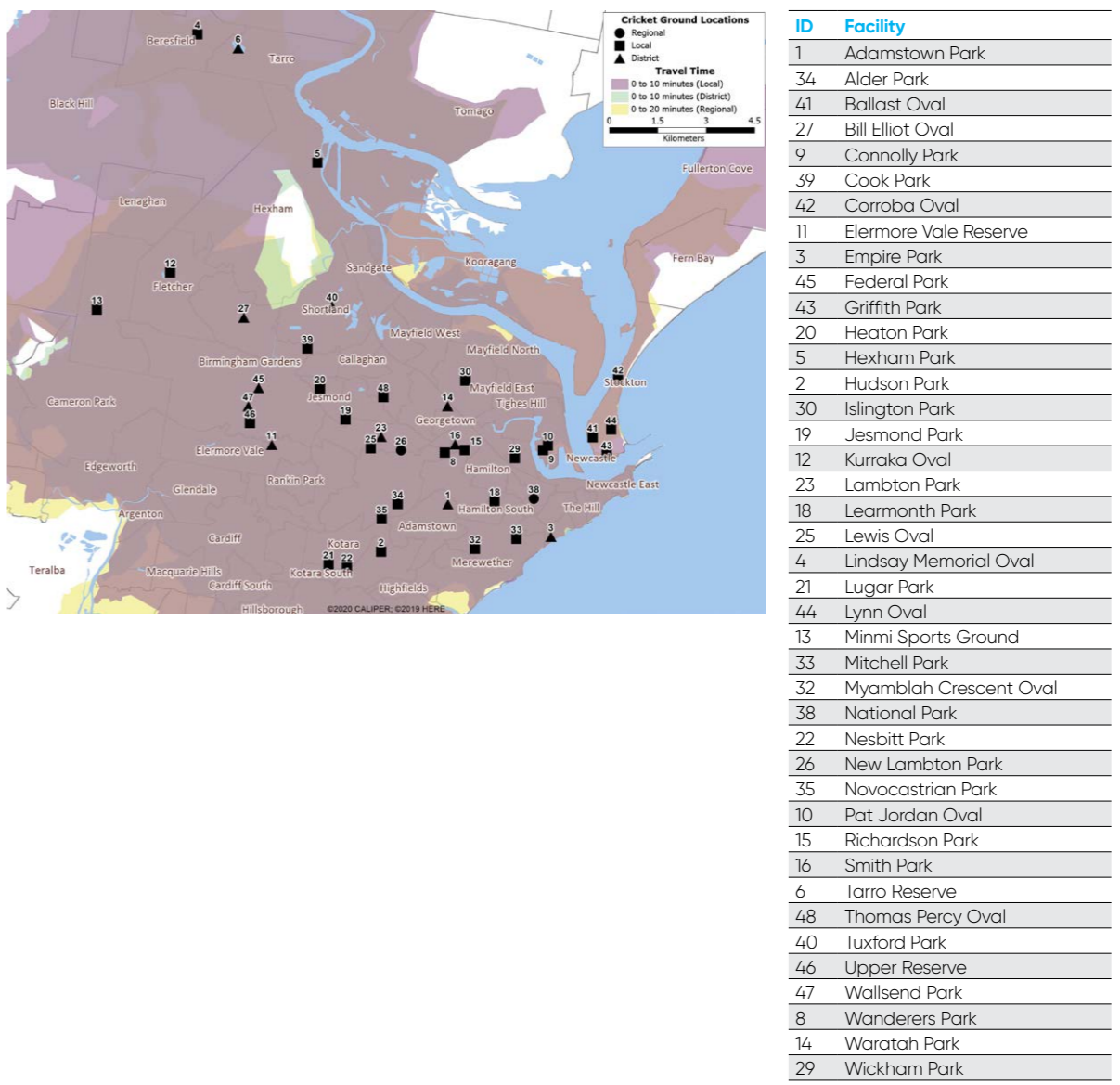
4.2 Facilities

Cricket is played on 77 pitches across 48 venues in Newcastle. Facility provision is adequate for the current and projected population, however planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth should include cricket.

The poor alignment of rectangular fields to cricket wickets at some grounds impacts on the functionality of playing areas for all users. Re-design and re-alignment of these fields will reduce any pressure to remove wickets. Field upgrades and universal access amenities upgrades at several grounds will aid all user groups, including cricket.

There are some small or linear sites with concrete or synthetic pitches that have low use/ functionality for cricket or other sports and should be removed.

Map 5: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



5. Croquet

5.1 Participation and Trends

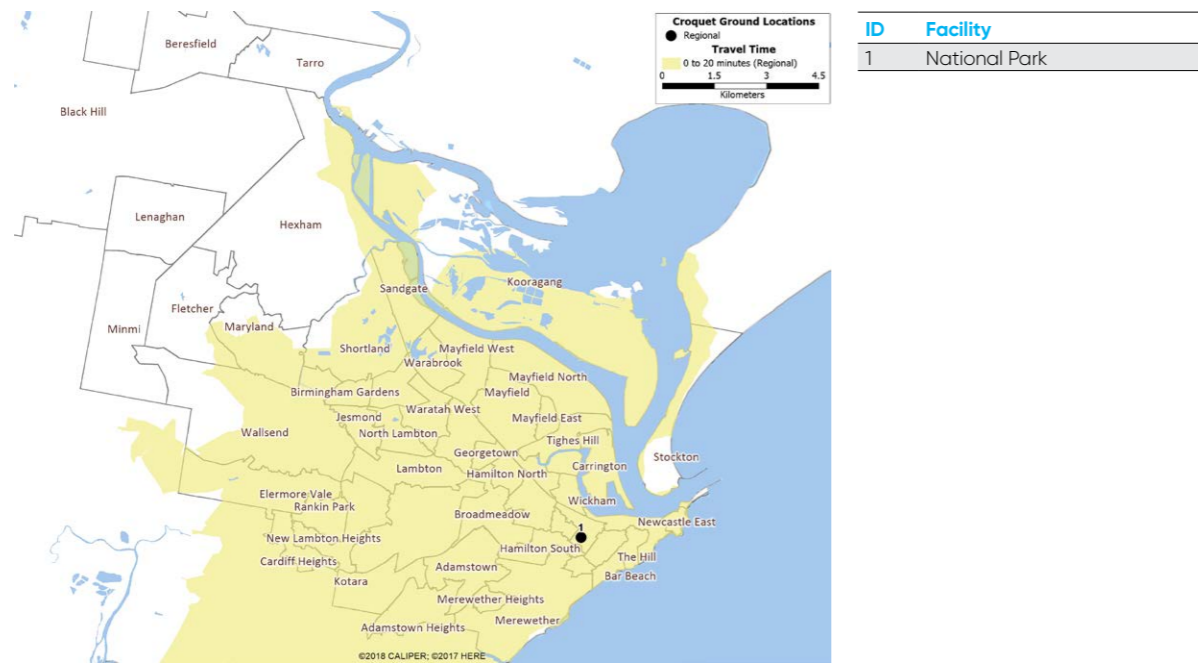
Newcastle National Park Croquet Club has a relatively static membership of 88 players.

5.2 Facilities

The Newcastle National Park Croquet Club is the sole facility in CN. It has four (4) lawns and reported high levels of weekly use. It should be retained at its current location and scale. State level croquet facilities are proposed in Lake Macquarie and Maitland Councils. Upgrading of the clubhouse (within heritage consideration) and installation of sport lighting to expand opportunities for evening competition and corporate programs should be assessed in accordance with guide for determining capital works priorities.

Parking is likely to continue to be an issue for all user groups at National Park and should be factored into any future masterplan.

Map 6: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



6. Equestrian

Equestrian options for Newcastle residents primarily exist beyond the city boundaries, although one pony club operates at Fletcher Park. This park is part of the broader Creek Road site that has been identified for redevelopment of a range of sport facilities to service western growth corridor.

Additional facilities are not recommended as equestrian centres in surrounding LGAs and in Sydney cater adequately for higher level events. Relocation of the pony club to an existing facility in an adjoining LGA is proposed.

7. Football (soccer)

7.1 Participation and Trends

Football (soccer) reported 11,511 playing members in 2018 in Newcastle clubs, with growth experienced at junior levels and among girls and women. Football (soccer) has, by far, the highest level of participation of the sports in the study scope.

7.2 Facilities

Football (soccer) is played on 72 fields across 32 venues in Newcastle. In order to continue to provide options for the growth of football as well as provide pathways to elite football, the recommendations broadly cover:

Planning and development of a Football Centre of Excellence, with options for synthetic surface at Arthur Edden Oval

Field upgrades including improved alignment (removing conflict with cricket wickets) and amenities to support universal access.

Designation of specific facilities for NPL/ WPL competition, with games at this level being scheduled at these facilities only:

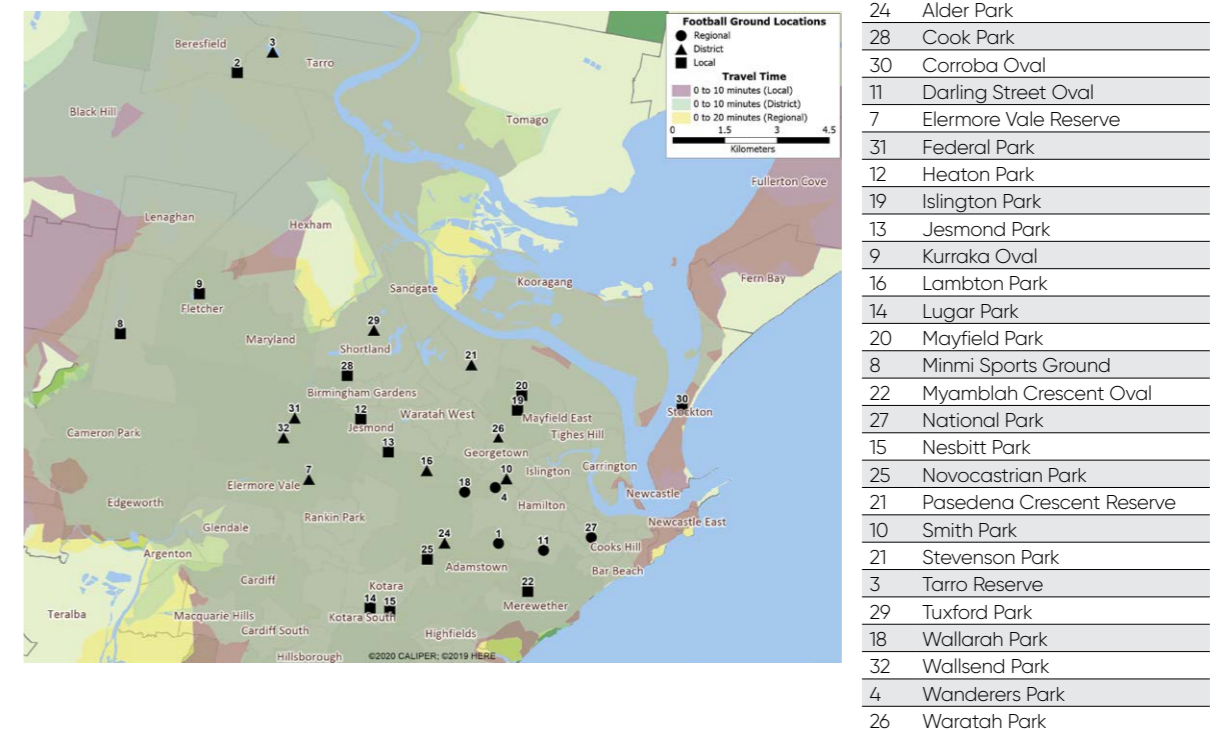
Inclusion of football in planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth (including possible provision of a multi-use surface).

- Adamstown No 1
- Darling St Oval
- Arthur Edden Oval (and appropriate future Football Centre of Excellence facilities)
- National Park No 213
- Wanderers Park No 1 (Magic Park) or possible new field/s as part of Broadmeadow Precinct Plan (Venues NSW)

Allocation of fields by CN to be revised to better match needs of clubs, improving utilisation of fields across the City.

The recommendation to expand (by 2) netball courts at National Park will have implications for Football. If these impacts can not be resolved the Plan recommends identifying options to improve the functionality of National Parks 3 – 6.

Map 7: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



¹³ If rugby union usage is of equal or higher level, rugby union to have priority, given contribution and role in development of facility

8. Netball

8.1 Participation and Trends

Newcastle Netball Association had 2,939 active registered players in 2018 with 71% aged under 21 years of age. Demand is increasing for night-time competitions as well as the traditional Saturday competition. Overall growth is steady.

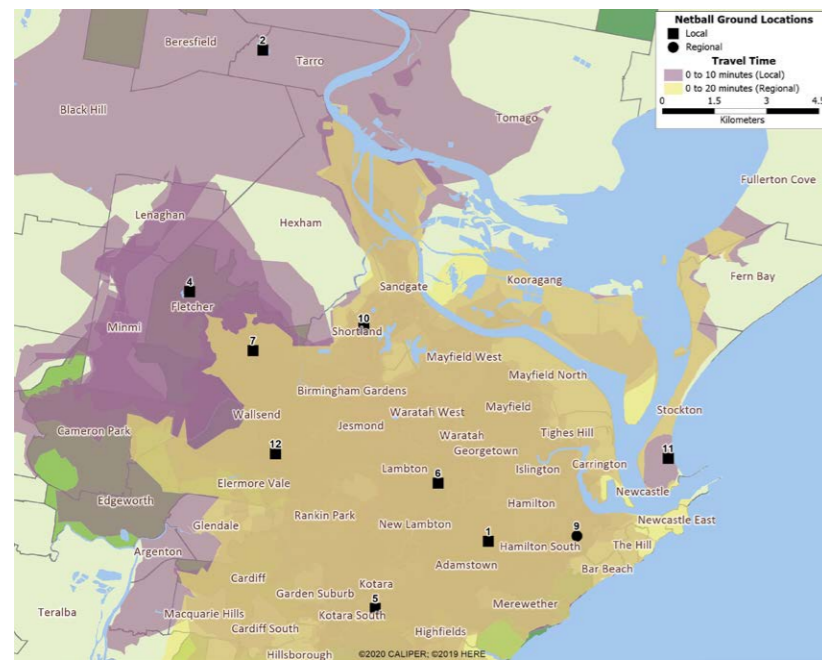
8.2 Facilities

The main competition venue is at National Park which has a total of 30 hard courts. An increase in the number of courts at National Park to at least 32 will enable NNA to host state competitions. A future masterplan for National Park should consider expanding number of netball courts, upgrading court lighting, providing additional amenities/ storage, and resolve implications for other sports/ users. If impacts on other sports can not be resolved the masterplan should identify options for improving the functionality of National Park 3 - 6.

There are ten 1 - 2 court outdoor training courts located across the City. In general, the condition and provision of (or access to) amenities/ storage at these courts is poor. The utilisation of these training courts needs to be confirmed in order to inform priorities for upgrade, although there are some small or linear sites that have low use/ functionality for sports and infrastructure should be removed. Planning/ development of new facilities catering for western corridor population growth should include netball courts for training.

The provision and planning of indoor facilities catering for netball (and other indoor sports) should be addressed; the elite pathway for netball requires access to indoor courts.

Map 8: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



ID	Facility
1	Adamstown Park
7	Grange Avenue Reserve
6	Kentish Netball
4	Kurraka Reserve
9	National Park Netball
5	Nesbitt Park
11	Stockton Netball Courts
2	Tarro Reserve
10	Tuxford Park Netball
12	Upper Reserve Netball Courts
11	Upper Reserve Netball Courts

9. Rugby League

9.1 Participation and Trends

Rugby league reported 4,463 registered members in 2018, with very high growth over recent years especially in juniors and senior females.

9.2 Facilities

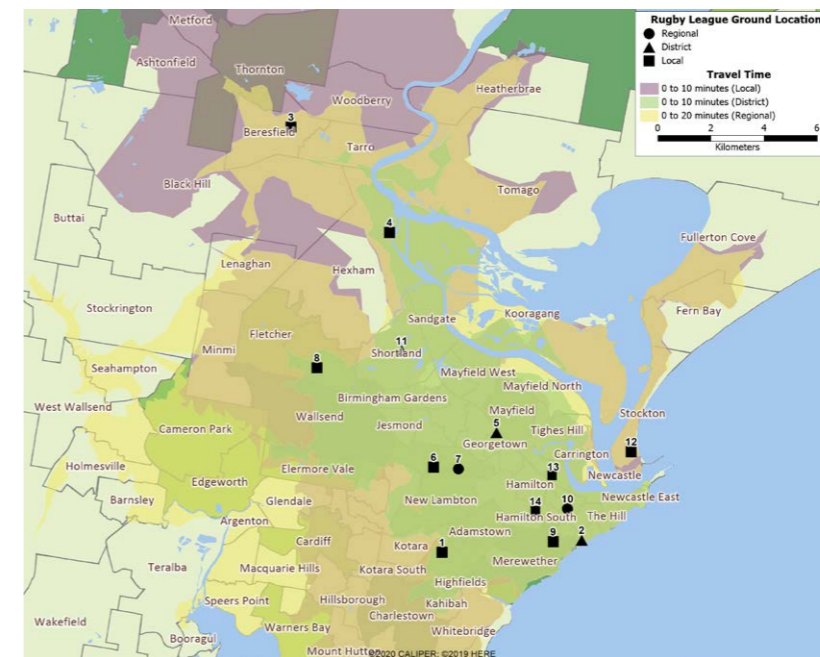
Rugby league is played on 22 fields across 12 venues in Newcastle (excluding McDonald Jones Stadium). The recommendations impacting rugby league generally focus on these existing shared use fields, including:

Redesign/ realignment to improve field quality and remove conflict with cricket wickets.

Upgrading of ground surfaces, amenities and lighting

Planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth should include rugby league.

Map 9: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



ID	Facility
2	Empire Park
8	Grange Oval
4	Hexham Park
1	Hudson Park
14	Learmonth Park
6	Lewis Oval
3	Lindsay Memorial Oval
12	Lynn Oval
9	Mitchell Park
10	National Park
7	New Lambton Park
11	Tuxford Park
5	Waratah Park
13	Wickham Park

10. Rugby Union

10.1 Participation and Trends

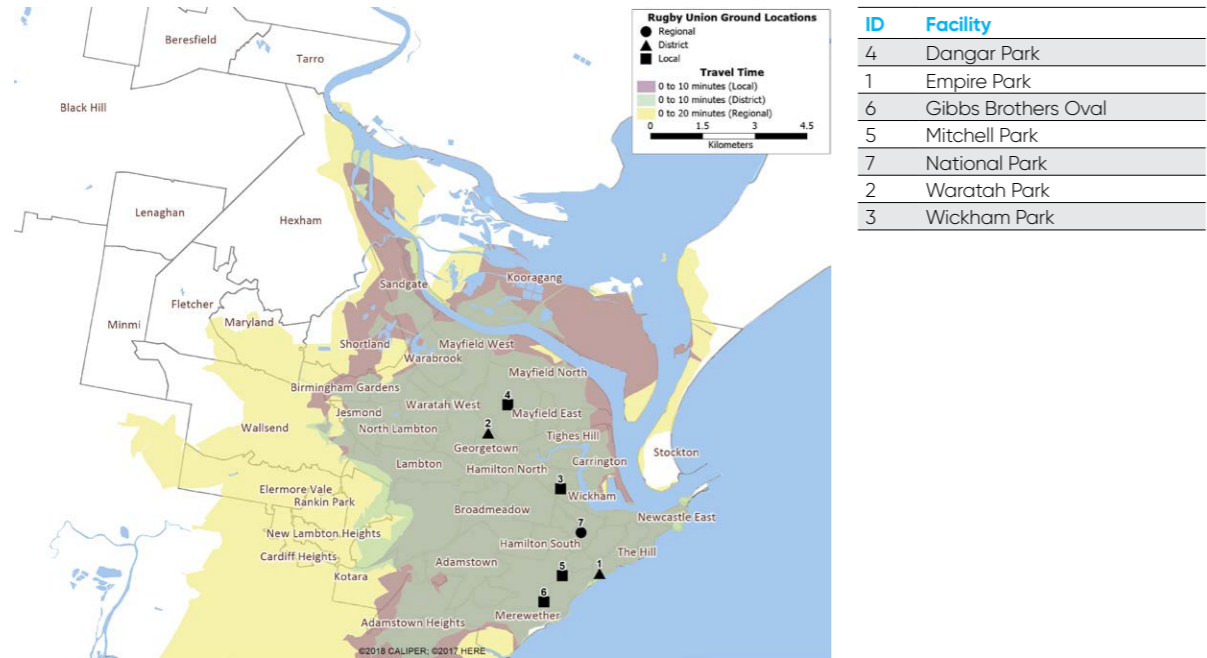
Rugby union reported 1,638 registered members in 2018, with growth being experienced among girls and women. Cost to play and quality of facilities were reported as impediments to the retention of players.

10.2 Facilities

Rugby union is played on 10 fields across 6 venues in Newcastle. The recommendations impacting rugby union generally focus on existing shared use fields, including:

- Redesign/ realignment to improve field quality and remove conflict with cricket wickets.
- Upgrade ground surfaces and amenities
- Planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth should include rugby union
- Upgrade the playing surface at National Park No 2 Sportsground in order to increase its sustainability

Map 10: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



11. Softball

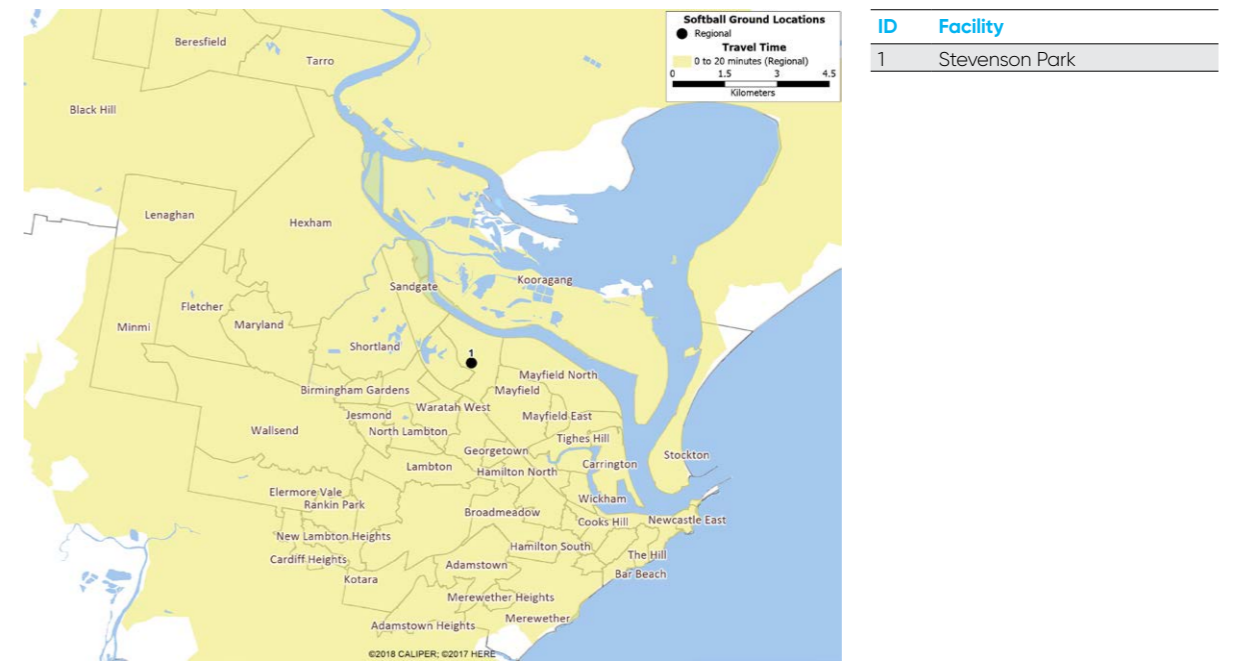
11.1 Participation and Trends

Newcastle Softball Association reported 742 registered members across 9 clubs in 2018, which was a significant increase on previous years.

11.2 Facilities

Stevenson Park comprises 9 softball diamonds and is the principal facility for Newcastle and the broader Hunter region. In order to maintain compliance with standards, diamonds 1 & 2 require revision with upgraded lighting and fencing. Increased maintenance in line with proposed revised hierarchy will better support the year-round use of the park and shared use with baseball and football (soccer).

Map 11: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



12. Tennis

12.1 Participation and Trends

Tennis had 2,803 registered players in 2018, with in excess of 85% of these being members of the Newcastle & District Tennis Association. Membership of tennis clubs and associations is not a true picture of participation in the sport, due to the high level of social and casual play and absence of systems to track and report this use. Overall, membership is static and court hire is declining.

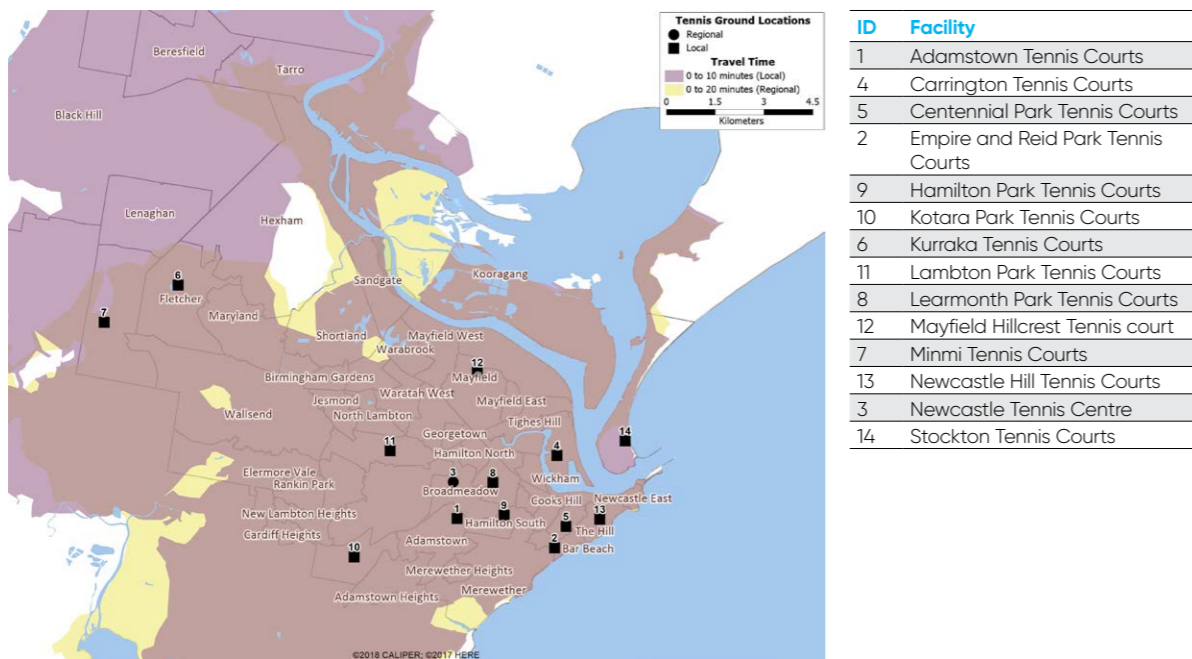
12.2 Facilities

There are 61 tennis courts across CN contained within 14 centres. Eleven of these centres have 3 or fewer courts; 3 centres have 4-7 courts; and the centre at District Park (outside CN jurisdiction) has 24 courts. The majority of these centres are located within the well-established eastern third of the LGA, with two facilities (3 courts) serving the western communities of the City. Utilisation of courts is unknown. Given the proliferation of tennis centres with few courts, their aging condition, and likely demands for funding of upgrades as these assets reach the end of their useful life, it is recommended that a review be undertaken of usage and distribution of courts (including the future of District Park courts within the Broadmeadow Precinct Plan being undertaken by Venues NSW) to inform decision-making on retention, expansion or removal of existing courts. Tennis clubs/ associations will be engaged as part of this review.

Introducing the Tennis Australia system of electronic booking and court access (Book-A-Court¹⁴) which would remove the need to staff centres at all times and provide improved data would also assist with the future review of tennis provision.

Planning/ development of new facilities catering for western corridor population growth should include consideration of a 6-10 court tennis centre.

Map 12: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



13. Touch/ Oztag

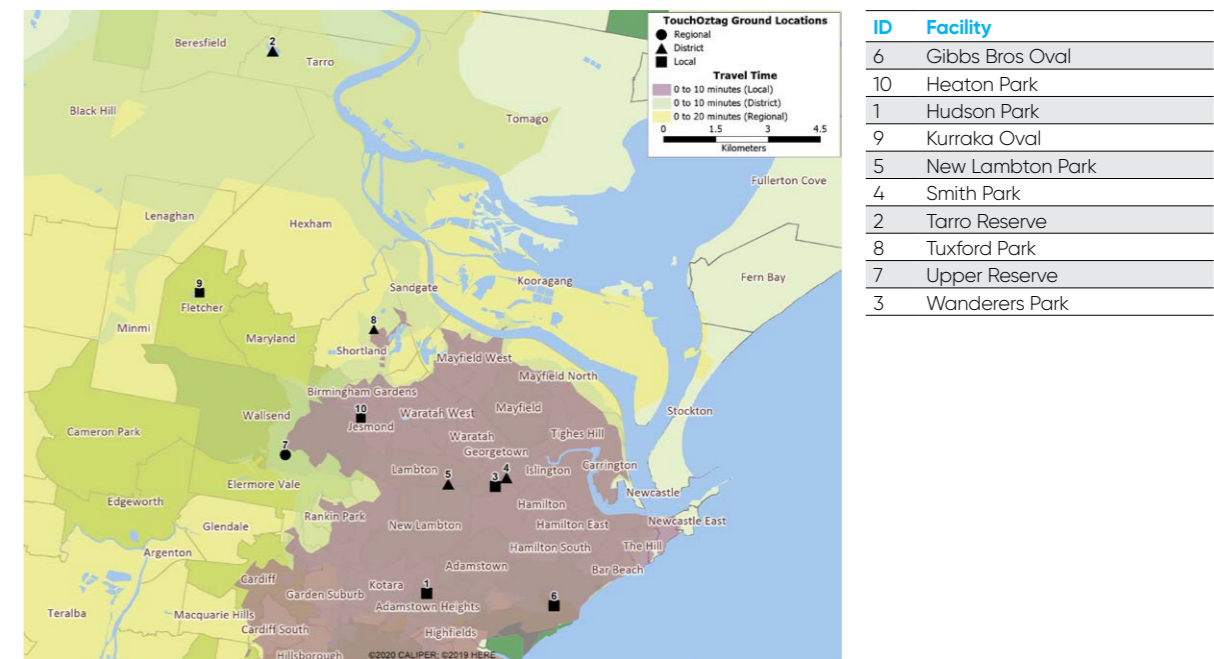
13.1 Participation and Trends

Combined membership of touch and Oztag in 2018 was 8,810. Operating all year there are seasonal fluctuations in membership. The operating model of touch and Oztag makes it attractive as a sport for people who wish to play in social competitions, and the growing number of people who are attracted to 'pay and play' forms of participation in sport.

13.2 Facilities

Touch or Oztag is played on 22 fields across 7 venues in Newcastle. Additional venues are recommended for investigation at Heaton Park and Tuxford Park, upgrades of fields and amenities in general will enhance use options for touch and Oztag at other venues. Planning/ development of new shared use fields catering for western corridor population growth should include provision for touch and/ or Oztag.

Map 13: Revised hierarchy of facilities and travel times/ catchment



¹⁴ <https://play.tennis.com.au/court-hire>

newcastle.nsw.gov.au

ATTACHMENTS DISTRIBUTED UNDER SEPARATE COVER

CCL 08/12/2020 – ADOPTION OF STRATEGIC SPORTS PLAN

ITEM-110 **Attachment B:** Strategic Sports Plan Summary of Key Issues Report

DISTRIBUTED UNDER SEPARATE COVER

STRATEGIC SPORT PLAN

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC EXHIBITION
OF DRAFT REPORT AND CHANGES MADE TO FINAL REPORT



STRATEGIC SPORTS PLAN

NOVEMBER 2020

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Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and Outcomes

The objective of this project is to...

“address future demand, and inform the ongoing supply, maintenance and upgrade of sporting infrastructure with consideration to current and future needs of the community, other adopted strategies and City of Newcastle’s financial capacity and sustainability.”

The Plan provides strategic guidance and facility direction for 13 outdoor sports¹ to 2031, by which time the population of the City of Newcastle is projected to be 188,000 (an increase of over 27,000 from the 2016 Census).

The study was undertaken in the context of broader planning for the city and region already completed by the City of Newcastle (CN) and government agencies, including the yet to be finalised concept plan for the Hunter Sports & Entertainment Precinct in the Broadmeadow Catalyst Area being developed by Venues NSW.

Key outcomes of the project include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Analysis of sports trends
- Demand vs supply for outdoor sports grounds/ courts
- Forecast local and regional sports facility needs
- Review classification hierarchy
- Guide planning for the western growth corridor
- Opportunities for multi-purpose and major non-sport events
- Identify preferred management models
- Guide developer contributions, Asset Plans, Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP).

Indoor sports are not included in the scope of this study. Where the City of Newcastle (CN) is not a direct facility provider in some outdoor sports², the Plan should inform CN's role in supporting them.

1.2 Study Approach

A comprehensive 6-stage methodology was implemented to guide development of the Plan. CN officers assisted the study process through the collection of facility utilisation data, provision of background information, organisation of workshops, and generation of recommendations.

This summary document responds to community and organisation feedback received on the Draft Strategic Sports Plan which was approved by Council for public exhibition over the period 26 August to 7 October 2020. The final Plan is scheduled to be considered for adoption by Council in December 2020.

¹ Athletics, Australian Rules Football, Baseball, Cricket, Croquet, Equestrian, Football (soccer), Netball, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Softball, Tennis, Touch/ Oztag

² These sports include archery, cycling, hockey

2. Feedback Summary

172 submissions were received:

- 28 from organisations
- 142 from individuals
- Two are blank (no comments or feedback)

The public exhibition was conducted via CN's 'Have your Say' page on the CN website³.

Respondents were asked to indicate their overall support for the draft Plan and to provide comments. These comments have been reviewed with common themes and key issues determined. The analysis of feedback has been arranged predominantly by sport, however where submissions covered issues that were not specific to a particular sport or were related to the study process, these are summarised separately.

It should be noted that this summary document does not purport to incorporate every single matter raised in the 172 submissions received (some of which were very detailed). It endeavours, in good faith, to capture the key issues arising out of the public exhibition process.

Responses to the issues raised have been discussed with CN officers and amendments made to the final Plan. A summary of the key issues raised and changes made is outlined in the following sections.

2.1 Overall Observations & Themes

Responses were predominantly from sport club members/ participants or sporting organisations. Themes that were observed include:

- Agreement with many recommendations
- Several concerns about specific facility recommendations (e.g. to redevelop or not redevelop certain areas)
- Questions raised about implications for individual clubs if some facility-related recommendations are adopted
- Disagreement with repurposing some areas for recreation use, or limiting their future development
- Some questioning of accuracy of participation data, data sources, insufficient attention paid to individual sports (Note: Participation data was supplied by State and/ or Regional sporting bodies)
- Some feedback misinterpreted the wording of recommendations or raised issues that are beyond the study scope
- Some sports seeking further discussion on their submissions, plans and/ or issues before the Plan is finalised.

Of the thirteen primary sports, no comments were received that impact croquet, touch, and equestrian. Of the other outdoor sports included, there were no comments that impact archery and hockey.

³ <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/sports-facilities-plan>

2.2 Athletics

Two submissions from athletics were received, one of which was from its field management body. They refer to the National Park Athletics facility, supporting its important role in local, school and para-athletic training and competition. Issues relating to the condition of the track and grandstand at National Park Athletics were raised.

RESPONSE:

1. Added the following additional recommendation to section 6.4 of the final report under the existing sub-heading 'National Park Athletics Track (synthetic)':

“Disability access across the venue should be reviewed/ upgraded, given its role in wheelchair and para sports training and competition. Replace track surface when it reaches the end of its useful life.”

2.3 Australian Rules Football

Five submissions were received from regional bodies and clubs covering a number of themes/ issues:

- Reinforcing strong growth (recent and projected) in membership requiring additional training venues and competition venues
- Seeking confirmation of Australian Rules use/ facility development at Waratah and Wickham Park
- Supporting recommendations for Bill Elliot Oval, Pat Jordan Oval and Connolly Park (but noting that the latter two are suitable for up to under-11 juniors only)
- Supporting additional ground development in the western growth corridor
- Supporting changes/ improvements to ground booking and scheduling process
- Seeking certainty over use of/ access to National Park No 1 Sportsground for local competition as well as for elite games.

RESPONSE:

Recommendation for master planning of Waratah Park to improve field layout and year-round utilisation amended to include rectangular football codes and Australian Rules Football. Other recommendations unchanged.

2.4 Baseball

Seven submissions supporting upgrade of facilities and amenities at Stevenson Park for baseball, with some seeking further development to provide more baseball diamonds at this venue.

RESPONSE:

Recommendations for provision of baseball diamonds, amenities and batting cages at both Stevenson Park and Plattsburg Park are considered adequate based on current participation and modelling of future demand for Baseball.

2.5 Cricket

Five submissions received including a detailed submission from Cricket NSW. There is general support for most recommendations contained in the Draft Plan, but some specific issues were raised including:

- Desire for no net loss of cricket pitches
- Preference for retention of turf wickets at Mayfield Park and Blackley Oval
- Need for upgrading of facilities/ amenities to comply with Cricket Australia facility guidelines
- Need for provision/ realignment of cricket practice nets
- Proposals for upgrading/ redevelopment of specific grounds (e.g. practice nets, storage, realignment of pitches/ nets, lighting, sightscreens)
- Request for Council to consult with cricket on any changes to field layouts or fees and charges resulting from revised classification of ground hierarchy
- Responsibility for allocation of cricket facilities to users (training and competition) be transferred to Cricket NSW to manage.

RESPONSE:

1. Council should engage with Cricket in relation to any changes to field provision/ layout and the number/ location of practice nets. This may include relocation of pitches if it is evident that existing supply does not meet future demands.
2. The following addition to the recommendation sub-headed 'Communication' in section 6.3 of the final report under the existing sub-heading 'Management & Communication' has been made:

“CN should actively engage with affected sports in implementing masterplans, facility improvements/ changes; and identifying suitable alternative locations where sites have been recommended for re-purposing to recreation or not intensifying their use.”

2.6 Football (soccer)

32 responses received including a detailed submission from Northern NSW Football (NNSWF) and several club submissions. Submissions reinforced the high level of football participation and focussed on facility provision/ utilisation, distribution, quality and access to ancillary facilities. In general, there was agreement with recommendations for:

- Preparation of master plans for several sites
- Improving facility quality (e.g. amenities, shade, lighting, irrigation/ drainage)
- Development/ designation of NPL venues
- Creation of centre of excellence at Arthur Edden Oval.

Specific concerns were raised in relation to the following:

- Strong objection to redevelopment of National Park 3-6 to enable consolidation and expansion of netball courts due to impact on existing club (net loss of playing fields even if synthetic surface is included and consequent displacement of players to other areas or reduced membership; wasting of recent club and state government investment in playing field upgrade; exacerbation of parking congestion, dislocation of clubhouse from playing fields; inconsistent with Guiding Principles outlined in the Plan)
- Concern about reducing or removing sport infrastructure at some venues and repurposing for recreational use (e.g. Regent Park, Pasadena Oval, Johnson Park)
- Disagreement with recommendations to not permit more intensified use and/ or further development of some areas (e.g. Alder Park, Myamblah Crescent, Cook Park)
- Questions about impact on individual clubs if not permitted to upgrade sites they would like to redevelop (e.g. accommodation of elite teams, training fields, loss of previous club investment, location of special needs programs)
- Concern about potential net loss of playing area to accommodate other sports (e.g. if netball courts relocated to Corroba Oval due to coastal erosion)
- Not enough additional synthetic surfaces recommended
- Need for improved quality/ provision of facilities in western corridor for premier standard and community football
- Desire for separate amenities blocks rather than single new shared amenities block (Stevenson Park)
- Some questioning of sportsground usage data contained in the report (Note: This data was supplied by Council)
- Suggested amendments to weighting of criteria (Supporting Resources Vol 3: Capital Works Prioritisation Guide) to help determine future capital works priorities
- Suggestion to include officials' rooms as part of designation of district facilities in hierarchy definitions (Supporting Resources Vol 2: Sports Facilities Hierarchy)
- Football is seeking further discussions with CN in relation to recommendations for Alder Park prior to the finalisation of the Strategic Plan

RESPONSE:

1. While it is acknowledged that some individual clubs want to upgrade or redevelop their facilities, the Plan seeks to maximise the usage and functionality of all Council sportsgrounds for all sports and assigns an indicative hierarchy and embellishment level to each ground to guide future development. In doing so, the Plan takes a Council-wide facility planning approach not an individual club planning approach. Some sportsgrounds are over-utilised but many more have spare capacity and recommended changes to the ground allocation process and

development of master plans for some sites have been made to address this. In some cases, this may require upgrading of playing fields or support infrastructure which should be considered as part of master plans, and/ or as part of the recommended rolling capital works program. Where recommendations have been made to reclassify some parks to recreation use (due to their size, location or configuration) or not permit intensification of use (due to proximity to residences, small size, configuration, access constraints) impacts on individual clubs will need to be addressed through the ground allocation process by identifying suitable alternative locations.

2. The following amendments to recommendations have been made:
 - Due to CN consideration of the likely cost/ benefit, in a tight budget context, of consolidating the netball courts at National Park, the recommendation in the Draft Report to consolidate the netball courts at National Park (No 3 – 4) has been **deleted**. Accordingly, the recommendation in the Draft Report to address the impacts of consolidation of netball courts on National Park (No 5 – 6) has also been **deleted**.
 - *Section 6.3: Western Growth Corridor. Addition of the following wording. “Consider the possible provision of a multi-use synthetic playing surface.”*
 - *Section 6.4. Johnson Park. Recommendation amended as follows. “Size and configuration of park unsuitable for field sport. Consider retaining for low intensity training use only or removing sport infrastructure (cricket wicket) and redeveloping as recreation park.”*
 - *Section 6.4. Corroba Oval. In response to submissions from a number of sports relating to Corroba Oval, the wording of this recommendation has been amended (refer section 2.14.2).*
 - *Supporting Resources Vol 2: Sports Facilities Hierarchy – district facilities. Amended to include “Officials’ Room”.*

2.7 Netball

Nine submissions mentioned netball, including from Newcastle Netball Association. Key issues raised were as follows:

- Strong support for recommendation to consolidate association competition courts and develop an additional 2 courts at National Park
- Support for master planning of Kurraka Reserve and specific suggestions for netball improvements (lighting, female friendly amenities/ change rooms, storage, canteen, additional grass courts (2), long term court resurfacing)
- Requests for retention of existing training courts and suggestions that some single training courts could be converted for multiple outdoor court uses e.g. basketball
- Need for a multi-court, multi-use indoor sport centre in Newcastle.

RESPONSE:

1. There are significant changes to the recommendations for netball:
 - Due to CN consideration of the likely cost/ benefit, in a tight budget context, of consolidating the netball courts at National Park the recommendation in the Draft Report to consolidate the netball courts at National Park (No 3 – 4) has been **deleted**.
 - The recommendation to extend by 2 courts the number of hard courts has been retained subject to review of the (previously unknown) 1984 Agreement entered into between CN, Netball and a community member to not extend hard courts at National Park.

2.8 Rugby League

Four submissions mention rugby league primarily in relation to support for amenities upgrading generally and at specific venues (e.g. Learmonth Park).

RESPONSE:

No change to recommendations affecting Rugby League.

2.9 Rugby Union

Four submissions mentioning rugby union were received, including a detailed joint submission from Newcastle Hunter Rugby Union and Wanderers Rugby Union Club. Key issues raised are summarised as follows:

- Strong disagreement with recommendations for National Park No 2 due to:
 - The challenges and issues regarding the No 2 playing surface
 - Given current training and competition use by Rugby Union it is not possible to prepare No 2 for Football use within the Rugby season without significant preparation and turnaround time.
 - This would result in significant displacement of Rugby from its premier venue in a normal season
 - The capacity benchmark of 25hrs per week contained in the report does not take into account the difference in pitch wear between codes. The current 12hrs/ week use of No 2 by Rugby Union is already utilising the field to its capacity given the higher wear and tear that Rugby exerts on the field
 - Breach of Faith in relation to 100-year-old partnership between CN and Rugby Union if other uses displace Rugby Union
 - Rugby efforts were successful in gaining \$2M Federal Government funding for the redevelopment of the ground in 2012.
 - Rugby has spent in excess of \$750k in improvements to the ground and is considering financing a further \$400k in improvements (concourse shade structure, bbq deck, disabled toilet) with a pre-DA meeting having been held with Council
- Current wording of recommendation for National Park implies that No 5 - 6 are used by football (soccer) only. This is incorrect as No 5 is used for rugby union.
- Assertion that membership numbers are incorrect and exclude juniors (Note: Participation data was supplied by NSW Rugby Union and included juniors)
- Submission extrapolates data in the draft report to compare average number of participants per field for Rugby Union with Football
- Support for use, master planning and upgrade of Waratah Park
- Lack of consultation with Rugby and response to their previous submission on the Preliminary Directions Report
- Rugby is seeking further discussions regarding their objections prior to the Strategic Plan being finalised

RESPONSE:

1. Acknowledge and agree with playing surface issues relating to National Park No 2. To that end the Plan already recommends that it be reconstructed.
2. The rationale for the recommendation to prioritise the highest level of event/ competition use at National Park No 2 is to optimise the ground's suitability for high level events and avoid duplicating infrastructure. Given Rugby's long-standing connection to the ground and previously expressed objections in relation to recommendations for No 2 contained in the Preliminary Directions Report, an additional recommendation was inserted in the Draft Report that, where competitions/ events are of equal status rugby union is to be given priority. It is understood that Rugby matches played at No 2 are of the same status as NPL Football. In relation to wear and tear concerns, advice should be sought from playing field development experts prior to the recommended reconstruction of the field to determine the most appropriate design and maintenance regime to enable use by different codes. To that end, the following amended recommendation is made.

Section 6.4. National Park No 2. Final dot point amended to read... "Reconstruct field to improve sustainability of surface condition. Determine the most appropriate design and maintenance regime to enable use by different codes."
3. Due to CN consideration of the likely cost/ benefit, in a tight budget context, of consolidating the netball courts at National Park, the recommendation at Section 6.3 of the Draft Report to consolidate the netball courts at National Park (No 3 – 4) has been **deleted**. Accordingly, the recommendation in the Draft Report to address the impacts of consolidation of netball courts on National Park (No 5 – 6) has also been **deleted**.
4. The demand modelling is explained in the Strategic Plan and Supporting Resources Vol 1. It demonstrates an overall adequacy of playing fields, but an allocation process that does not optimise the utilisation of playing fields.
5. It is acknowledged that there may be differences in wear and tear on individual playing fields – this could be caused by factors such as the types of play, construction methods, maintenance regimes, age groups of users, or extreme weather events. As outlined in the report, the **notional** carrying capacity benchmark of 25hrs/ week is a figure that a number of turf specialists have indicated as a general threshold before significant deterioration of surface quality occurs and more rigorous maintenance is required. For strategic planning purposes the benchmark

figure is used to assist in modelling the overall adequacy of current and future playing field supply. The scope of the Strategic Sports Plan did not incorporate an assessment of turf condition and capacity of individual playing fields throughout Newcastle. This would need to be undertaken by appropriately qualified turf specialists.

6. There were several unsuccessful attempts to engage with regional or state level Rugby during the initial consultation phase of the study. Individual replies to the multiple responses/ submissions from organisations and community members to the Preliminary Directions Report and subsequent Draft Strategic Sports Plan Report were not made as this is beyond the scope of the study. It should be noted that submissions to both the Preliminary Directions Report and Draft Report were analysed in detail and proposed amendments arising from those submissions discussed with CN officers.

2.10 Softball

Two submissions noting the growth in Softball and Baseball and supporting the recommended upgrade of facilities and amenities at Stevenson Park.

RESPONSE:

No change to recommendations affecting Softball.

2.11 Tennis

52 submissions received with the following themes:

- Objections to potential reduction in tennis courts, in particular any possible closure of Learmonth Park courts
- Small community tennis courts are frequently run by local clubs and volunteers. High cost of maintaining these courts at clubs' expense.
- The community benefits of these smaller clubs should be considered in the recommended review of tennis courts, in partnership with CN
- Questioning of tennis participation numbers and under-estimation of numbers participating in the sport
- Assertion that the number of tennis courts identified in the report (61) is flawed as these represent only 50% of those listed on CN website and therefore participation is under-reported
- Objection to converting tennis courts to multi-use, multi-marked courts as they are confusing and unsatisfactory to play on for tennis.

RESPONSE:

1. The draft Strategic Sports Plan acknowledged that membership of tennis clubs and associations is not a true picture of participation in the sport, due to the high level of social and casual play and absence of systems to track and report usage. It was reported during the initial consultation that club membership is generally static and court hire is declining. Modelling of future court needs was based on a range of benchmarks and supply is assessed as adequate for the life of this study. There are several small tennis centres with few courts. Many are aging and there is likely to be demands on Council to fund (or assist in funding) their upgrading as they reach the end of their useful life. To that end the Plan recommends that a review of the usage and distribution of tennis courts be undertaken to inform decision-making on their retention, expansion or removal. Tennis clubs/ associations should be consulted as part of this review and this is made more explicit by the following amendment.

*Section 6.3: Further Research. Review Tennis Court Provision. **Add the following dot point: "Engage with tennis clubs/ associations as part of this review."***

2. The second dot point in the recommendation for Learmonth Park has been **deleted** so that the recommendation for Learmonth Park is consistent with recommendations for tennis courts at other locations.
3. The statement that the number of tennis courts identified in the report (61) is only 50% of those identified on Council's website is incorrect. A total of 61 tennis courts in CN (including District Park courts) were identified.

2.12 Touch/ OzTag

Support for facility and amenity upgrades at Smith Park to support OzTag competitions conducted in summer.

RESPONSE:

No change to recommendations relating to Touch or OzTag.

2.13 Cycling

19 submissions raised the issue of cycling, noting that planning for cycling facilities having been omitted from the recommendations of the draft Plan. Submitters were seeking:

- Consideration of infrastructure needs for all forms of cycling - road, criterium, track, mountain bike and BMX – most comments related to competitive cycling, but recreational and commuter cycling were also raised.
- Several comments on mountain biking given the growing popularity of the sport and distance travelled to suitable locations
- Need for safe on-road racing location
- Some comments on velodrome standard and future provision

RESPONSE:

1. Observations about cycling contained in section 4.3 of 'Supporting Resources Vol 1 – Background Research and Analysis' have been added to the body of the final plan (section 3.1)
2. An additional recommendation to section 6.3 of the final plan under the existing heading 'Further Research':
"In light of the growth in participation in cycling, develop a long term plan in conjunction with other stakeholders (e.g. Hunter region Councils, state government agencies) to examine issues and needs of competitive on-road and off-road cycling disciplines (e.g. mountain-biking, road racing, BMX, track racing) in the lower Hunter region. Council has recently completed a Cycling Strategy which would address recreational and commuter cycling."

2.14 Non-Sport-Specific Community Submissions

Some residents who were not necessarily advocating for a particular sport raised issues about site-specific recommendations. Of particular note are submissions relating to National Park and Corroba Oval.

2.14.1 National Park

A submission in response to the recommendations for National Park raised the following issues:

- Lack of consultation with local residents and a view that substantial weighting should be given to opinions of nearby residents. Council should also give substantial weight to the terms under which it holds National Park
- Substantial intrusion by non-public park development at National Park and general lack of open parkland south of the harbour
- View that the Plan is netball-centric
- Objection to proposed increase in netball courts due to the fact that:
 - A previous NSW Land & Environment Court action and subsequent 1984 agreement between the claimant, CN and Newcastle Netball Association that CN would not construct any further hard surfaced netball courts in the Park. Further, the agreement stated that all netball posts west of the stormwater canal be removed from November to February.
 - There are already 32 courts (2 of which are grass)
 - Netball NSW State Competition Rules provide that 2 or more venues can be used for State Titles and therefore the need for additional hard courts is unwarranted
- Objection to the consolidation of netball courts as they will cause a detriment to other sports which have far higher participation levels in Newcastle
- Objection to further hardening of the park (through additional netball courts and/ or synthetic playing field) and potential impact on local flooding
- Objection to converting parkland at National Park to more car parking (in the proposed revised master plan). Existing parking not considered effective due to charging regime.

RESPONSE:

1. The recommendation to consolidate netball courts as part of a master planning process at National Park has been deleted, following Council consideration of the cost/ benefit in a tight budget context.
2. Section 6.2 of the revised Final Report includes a general recommendation that Masterplans should incorporate thorough community engagement and consultation with relevant sports. This is made doubly explicit in the proposed masterplan recommended for National Park by the addition of the following dot points.

Section 6.4. National Park. Additional dot points added to masterplan recommendation:

- ***“Ensure thorough community engagement and consultation with relevant sports”***
 - ***“Investigate potential impacts on flooding of additional hard surfaces”***
3. From Netball NSW advice, a minimum of 32 hard courts is required to conduct State Junior and Senior Titles.
 4. CN should investigate the legal issues raised in relation to the cited 1984 Agreement about additional hard courts and the terms of National Park trusteeship.

2.14.2 Corroba Oval

Six community submissions (not sport-specific) commented on Corroba Oval. The main issues raised were:

- The oval services Port Stephens residents and future growth in the region across both Councils
- Concern about insufficient space if other sporting facilities are relocated there
- Beach erosion
- Inadequate parking and safety of crossing road to parked cars
- Inadequate amenities

RESPONSE:

1. In recognition of the fact that this facility services residents in the adjoining Port Stephens Council the following amended recommendations are proposed for Corroba Oval.

Supporting Resources Vol 2: Sports Facilities Hierarchy. “Amend the hierarchy of Corroba Oval from Local to District”

Strategic Plan - Section 6.4. Corroba Oval. Additional recommendations:

- ***“Investigate the potential to expand into adjacent land”***
- ***“Ensure partnership with neighbouring Port Stephens Council in further development of the site”***

2.15 Criticism of Study Approach

A number of submissions questioned the accuracy of participation data or disagreed with conclusions reached and resultant recommendations.

RESPONSE:

1. It should be restated that participation data was supplied by State or Regional Sporting Organisations. The study approach, data analysis, consultation findings and recommendations are set out in the Strategic Plan and Supporting Resources Volumes 1 – 3. There has been extensive consultation with sport and further feedback opportunities after the Preliminary Directions Report and Draft Strategic Sports Plan Report.

One detailed submission contained wide-ranging criticisms of the study methodology, approach and conclusions. A summary of the key issues raised and response in brackets is as follows:

RESPONSE:

1. Participation in Newcastle Hunter Rugby excludes junior participants (*numbers were supplied by NSW Rugby Union and include juniors*)
2. Over-estimation of Softball and Australian Rules Football participation (*participation data supplied by Newcastle Softball Association and AFL NSW/ACT*)
3. Lack of investigation of participation trends beyond population growth (*trends impacting on planning for sports facilities are outlined in Supporting Resources Vol 1: Background Research & Analysis; population growth is one of many elements taken into account in the modelling of land/ facility needs*)

4. Non-inclusion of Skateboarding (*out of scope*)
5. Lack of consideration of relative load on Council resources of different sports (*out of scope*)
6. Absence of a strategy for increasing recreation space across existing residential areas (*the study scope did not include city-wide planning for recreational open space, however a number of recommendations for redesignating areas that have low use/ low functionality for sport to recreation parkland have been made*)
7. Absence of a time frame for the Creek Road Complex (*Supporting Resources Vol 3: Capital Works Prioritisation contains weighted criteria to guide capital works priorities*)
8. Lack of investigation into optimising land use in larger District Parks (*the study makes recommendations for all sports parks, including District Parks*)
9. Lack of investigation into cost and location of a 10,000 - 12,500 seat stadium (*out of scope*).

Another submission raised a number of predominantly turf management related issues. The key issues and responses in brackets are as follows.

RESPONSE:

1. The submission noted an inconsistency between the Strategic Plan Report and Supporting Resources Vol 2 in the classification of playing fields at Empire Park (*This has been corrected. The hierarchy of the playing field at Empire Park is now classified as "Local" in both documents*)
2. The submission asserts that the Plan fails to:
 - Incorporate turf management principles, account for drought and impacts of climate change, and link to the Climate Action Plan (*The scope of the Strategic Sports Plan did not incorporate turf management and impacts of climate change.*)
 - Utilise information previously provided to Council on wear and tear and carrying capacity (*an overview of playing field assessment studies was undertaken*)
 - Include irrigation in the facility hierarchy (*Supporting Resources Vol 2 has been amended as follows. "Table 1: Indicative Hierarchy and levels of embellishment for Sport Parks" has been amended to include a category for "Irrigation"*)

2.16 Other

Some submissions referred to sports or facilities that are beyond the scope of the study, namely pickleball, basketball, volleyball, indoor sports courts, and helicopter rescue base in District Park, Broadmeadow.

RESPONSE:

1. While acknowledging that indoor sports facilities are beyond the scope of the study, the Strategic Sports Plan recommends at Section 6.3 (Further Research) that a review of demand and future provision of indoor sport facilities be undertaken.

One submission proposed an amendment to the weighting of criteria for determining capital works priorities at Supporting Resources Vol 3.

RESPONSE:

1. The criteria and weighting are a guide only. No amendment to the criteria has been made but CN should continue to review and update the criteria and/ or weighting if deemed necessary.