



Hosken Reserve

Master Plan Refresh

Project Frequently Asked Questions

Previous synthetic pitch project.

Please note this project is on hold whilst the Hosken Reserve Master Plan Refresh is completed.

What were the key design features of the previously proposed synthetic pitch project?

The oval proposed to be redeveloped is at the north-west of Hosken Reserve between Pallett Street and Shepard Street. Drawings and specifications for the proposed synthetic pitch included:

- Installation of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) - accredited cool grass synthetic surface with shock pad to reduce injuries
- 100-lux LED Sportsfield Lighting
- Low perimeter fence (approximately 1m high) to prevent soccer balls leaving the playing space and an option of a higher fence (approximately 6m high) behind the goal areas to prevent soccer balls entering neighbouring properties.
- Low-maintenance, drought-resistant and durable all year-round facility – able to withstand up to 10 years of wear and tear.
- The proposed synthetic pitch will be designed to capture water and harvest it into the existing wetland – reducing the amount of potable water required to irrigate the reserve.

Why was synthetic turf preferred and not natural grass?

The demand for sport and recreation facilities in Moreland is rapidly increasing, with club membership growing annually. Council is supporting this growth through inclusive participation policies and investment in new facilities. Participation rates in most outdoor recreation activities have increased by 2,929 players over the 10-year period 2009-2019. Soccer had the biggest increase in numbers (1,542 players). Well-designed and accessible sporting facilities encourage our community to stay active, healthy and connected.

With changing weather patterns, it has become more difficult for natural turf to cope with the demand of additional recreation, training and matches. It is increasingly common for natural turf fields to be deemed unplayable during the depths of Winter and require significant renovation periods (several weeks) of no use in order to undertake required maintenance works.

Synthetic sport fields can accommodate far more playing hours in areas where sports fields are in high demand. This applies to both active use, through sports training competition, and passive recreation by community outside of programmed training/competition.

What environmental considerations had been made?

Moreland currently has 2 soccer synthetic pitches based at Fawkner Secondary College, Fawkner and Clifton Park, Brunswick along with a synthetic hockey field at Brunswick College, Brunswick. These pitches have been in Moreland for approximately 15 years.

We have more than 30 synthetic cricket and cricket practice synthetic wickets, more than 30 synthetic tennis courts and 3 lawn bowls synthetic rinks. Many playgrounds at schools and council's parks also have synthetic grass components and play areas. To date, there have been no reports or claims to Council in relation to any health risks or illnesses in relation to the use of these facilities.

Research has continuously highlighted that the infill on a synthetic soccer pitch (tiny black rubber crumbs) that help support the blades, may be a health risk to users of the pitch. Although not substantiated, council would use 100% natural organic infills for the proposed project rather than the traditional rubber infill.

An environmental impact assessment hasn't been undertaken, however the original design of the previously proposed synthetic pitch project incorporated:

- installation of LED technology floodlights also help to reduce our carbon footprint. The lights are far more environmentally friendly and light spill control is far greater than existing lights.
- Shock pad made from recycled rubber - reduce infill between up to 50%.
- 100% recyclable grass with no latex, no polyurethane and no coatings for the carpet.
- Organic infills - 100% natural organic infill.
- Planting of more trees to offset any reduction of vegetation or increase in the built footprint.
- Construction using recycled concrete (green concrete).
- Installation of Cool Grass synthetic which uses patent pending technology to reflect UV rays and dissipate the heat into the atmosphere instead of into the surface. Reducing the turf temperatures by 15% and up to 10 degrees.

What would have happened to the stormwater harvesting project?

The stormwater harvesting infrastructure would remain. The stormwater harvesting system currently irrigates a total of 2.4 ha with 75% reliability. By adding synthetic grass, the irrigated area will be reduced to 1.6 ha. The southern rectangular grass soccer pitch, eastern half-sized rectangular grass pitch and surrounds of the proposed synthetic pitch would remain irrigated. By reducing the irrigated area from 2.4 to 1.6 ha, we would increase the reliability of the system to above 95%.

Our response to the proposed project in terms of the harvesting system:

- The proposed synthetic pitch had been designed to capture rainfall water and harvest it into the existing wetland at Hosken Reserve.
- We would keep all surrounding areas of the proposed synthetic grass irrigated with the stormwater
- With impact of climate change in future, and potential increase in drought period, higher reliability is welcomed.

We also would investigate to utilise any extra water available for Council's water trucks to fill up with and use for street tree watering.

What previous consultation had taken place and did endorsed plans change?

The Hosken Reserve Redevelopment Plan was launched in 2007 and consultation on the plan concluded in 2009. The plan was received and endorsed by Council in April 2009 containing a list of more than 18 recommended improvements including:

- Upgrade and redevelop the main oval as a full-size soccer field;
- Extend the rectangular field. Remove the damaged concrete cricket wicket and convert the grass surface to synthetic. Install training lights and perimeter fence; and
- Convert the cricket net area to a synthetic playing area. Retain the cricket nets and install basketball/netball play facilities and provide appropriate fencing.

A subsequent 'Hybrid Synthetic Sports Surface Needs Analysis' report was tabled and endorsed in April 2018 which recommended that a synthetic pitch be installed at 'Hosken Reserve North' and the existing, fenced southern soccer pitch be converted to hybrid.

It is believed this is where the resulting confusion as to the exact location of the proposed synthetic pitch has originated and been embedded over subsequent years.

The development of a full-size synthetic pitch was then further resolved through the following Council strategies (which were released for public consultation):

- Moreland Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2014-2018
- Moreland Sport and Active Recreation Strategy 2020
- Council annual budgets and Action Plans

The project was listed as part of Council's annual budget plans from 2018/19. All ratepayers and members of the community are invited to make submissions on annual budget plans each year.

Additionally, as common practice with sport and recreation projects in Moreland, it is our process to inform local residents and undertake further consultation with the feasible project design once identified. The feasible project design is commonly determined through the tender process (refer question below for more information).

We acknowledge that consultation on the Hosken Reserve proposed synthetic pitch has been indirect and is not in line with contemporary practice. Our community's feedback is important to us and we agree that a further clear, direct and robust community engagement process is required which is what we are currently aiming to achieve.

Why did a tender go out just before caretaker period?

Please note the tender process is now on hold.

- Council officers released a tender for construction on 19 September 2020. The tender closed on 20 October 2020. This was before the election period (caretaker period) which started on 22 September 2020. The State Government's Funding Agreement with Council required us to provide the preferred schematic plan and construction signage design for endorsement by the 31 January 2021.
- The tender was released in September to make sure that the project could be completed within the current financial year. If Council officers released the tender after the election (13 November), it would have been unlikely that the project would be delivered on time.
- Drawings and specifications for the proposed synthetic pitch included two different options for Council to consider. The tender would provide Council officers with the market cost of the two options to help determine which option is feasible and viable for the project to proceed.
- As with all sport and recreation projects undertaken in Moreland, it is our process to inform local residents and undertake further consultation with the feasible project design. The feasible project design is determined through the tender process and awarding of a successful tender is always a Council decision.

How was the previously proposed synthetic pitch project funded, who pays for it and why hasn't the 2009 master plan been implemented yet?

Funding for the implementation of master plans across Moreland are referred to the annual budget process and forward capital works program. All Council projects are assessed against each other on merit and funding approved or put on hold dependant on demand. As such, master plans may be implemented in various stages and over varying periods of time.

Council will often seek external funding, such as State or Federal Government funding, in order to implement projects that align to funding program objectives that may not otherwise be able to be fully funded by Council. Council may also request a funding contribution from organisations that directly benefit from projects.

Specifically, Moreland Council has committed \$900,000 to the previously proposed synthetic pitch development project. A \$500,000 grant application was originally approved through the Victorian Government's World Game Facilities Fund, along with a \$50,000 contribution from Pascoe Vale Football Club. The Victorian Government funding however has now been withdrawn.

How would the original project impact community access and use of the reserve?

The northern and eastern sport fields would continue to be accessible to sports clubs, schools, neighbouring residents and the broader community and retained as an off-leash dog park.

Under Football Victoria guidelines there must be a perimeter fence surrounding the entire field of play that is at least one metre in height and be constructed of substantial material (i.e. cyclone wire). In order to support

the tenant soccer club, this low perimeter fencing would be installed to formalise the field of play area, with an option of a higher fence (approximately 6m high) behind the goal areas to prevent soccer balls entering neighbouring properties.

The access gates will not be locked and public access to the synthetic pitch area will be retained, outside of Football Victoria's sanctioned games and club training as per the club's current Council approved annual tenancy allocation.

How much time and space does the Pascoe Vale Soccer Club occupy at Hosken and other reserves?

Council has 56 sports grounds available for use for sporting activities. These are very well utilised by a variety of user groups including sports clubs, sports associations, schools, community groups and residents. The demand on these facilities is ever increasing, with club membership growing annually, and Council supporting growth through inclusive participation policies.

From a supply perspective, most sporting grounds in Moreland can sustain a recommended maximum of 15 hours of usage per week. Unfortunately, due to the high demand being placed on grounds some are required to be used above and beyond this recommended usage. This is a moderate usage rate which leaves many clubs requesting to access multiple grounds across the municipality to satisfy their requests for participation, and Council is unable to allocate grounds to new or emerging sporting groups/needs.

The majority of Moreland's AFL, soccer and cricket clubs have high club memberships, and each has an allocation of a minimum of two and up to four grounds which include shared usage arrangements with other clubs and schools.

Pascoe Vale Soccer Club has over 400 playing members and are allocated the following:

Hosken Reserve (annual allocation)

- PVSC have an Annual allocation (1 April – 31 March) for the use of Hosken Reserve. The hours of use will often change during an annual allocation based on the club's fixtured season to accommodate preseason requirements, fixtured games, and finals. Currently the allocation on both fields includes Monday to Friday 4pm - 9pm and competition games scheduled between 8am - 6pm on Saturday and Sunday (pending home/ away competition fixtures scheduled by Football Victoria).

Other reserves (seasonal allocation)

- CB Smith Reserve (1 game day plus 1 training night 8 times a year). This pavilion and sportsfield are shared with two other clubs and a school - Fawkner SC, Moreland Zebras FC and Fawkner College. The sportsfield's recommended hours of usage is 15 hours per week only.
- Richards Reserve (4 days per week – training only). This pavilion is shared with the Coburg Cycling Club, and the sportsfield's recommended hours of usage is 15 hours only.
- Reddish Reserve (2 nights per week – training only). This pavilion and sportsfield is shared with Moreland Zebras FC, and the sportsfield's recommended hours of usage is 15 hours only.

PVSC have teams playing in the National Premier League Competition and the Community Competition both run by the governing body of soccer, Football Victoria. As these competition start dates draw closer, clubs modify training needs to suit the number and age group of teams as players sign up to play. This may include an increase or decrease of hours of use pending player numbers, coach availability and level of competition and training required for that level.

Council works with the club to monitor the hours of use and the impact on grounds to ensure standards are maintained, especially around high use (goal) areas. The reality is, we don't have enough grounds to cater for all sports in Moreland and it's not in the club's best interest to turn away players.

Pre season practice matches are part of many organised sport club activities. PVSC promotes their activities to the community via social media and other avenues. Council will continue to work with club officials to find a

solution to advising neighbours in the area of any changes to the usual training times such as these sanctioned games.

Until the fixtures are released which can include weeknights, clubs do their best to ensure the training needs meet the level of competition to be played and ensure they only use the hours they need. Football Victoria share with Council Officers the National Premier League fixture and Community Competition Football fixture when they are released.

During 2020, the Hosken Reserve hours of use changed multiple times to accommodate modified participation opportunities during COVID restrictions. This is consistent across all clubs and associations using Council sporting facilities during 2020.

How can council have conflicting policies?

Council has a considerable sphere of influence and is responsible for the support, development, and management of a range of societal issues. While every effort is made to ensure Council's strategies, plans and policies are consistent with each other, there inevitably will be occasions where there may be conflicting objectives or directions. This may in part be due to outdated policies that have yet to be reviewed or competing broader priorities that require consideration to a specific level of detail.

We acknowledge that the proposed synthetic pitch development project may have posed a number of conflicting objectives, such as increasing participation in sport as supported by Council's Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, against our commitment to reduce surface temperatures through our Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan. In these instances, Council may be required to assess a project on merit at a defined point in time, based on site-specific considerations and consistent with the views of the Council of the day.

New master plan refresh project

Is there scope to consider alternative solutions to where a synthetic field could go?

With further community and stakeholder engagement, we will be able to ascertain whether there is an alternate location that better serves community interests. Please note that all decisions will be resolved by Council at a future meeting after further consultation has been completed.

Does it have to be synthetic?

Simply put, no. As part of the Hosken Reserve Master Plan Refresh process, it very well may be recommended that Council formalises a natural turf pitch, hybrid turf pitch or a synthetic turf pitch within the Northern Oval.

Will additional parking, traffic and access measures be considered?

Council will be looking to take proactive steps to ensure the safety of vehicles and pedestrians visiting the reserve. The original Hosken Reserve Masterplan included a re-configuration and extension of the carparking area to the east and south of the rectangular field and a range of path upgrades.

We have heard a number of suggestions about the poor 'sense of arrival' at the reserve, some restrictions to the way the reserve intersects with neighbouring residents, streets and industrial buildings and limitations to the existing path network to, from and within the reserve.

We will reassess the refreshed Master Plan and undertake a further access and traffic assessment to determine what additional transport management changes may be required.

How will accessibility and inclusion be considered?

We have received a number of suggestions relating to improving accessibility at the reserve and look forward to working with the community to identify further improvements that can be made. Council has a very active Disability working group who we will be actively seeking to involve in the community engagement process.

What other infrastructure can be provided to improve the use and experience of the reserve?

We have heard a range of ideas to improve the current use of the reserve including informal sport active recreation installations such as multi-use basketball, netball, and futsal courts, skate facilities, and improved public amenities such as shade, seating and tree canopy coverage.

We look forward to working with the community as part of the engagement process to identify even more great ideas to improve the communities experience and use of Hosken Reserve.

How will you make sure that the new engagement process is transparent, independent and includes everybody?

In December 2020, a report about Hosken Reserve was tabled at our Council meeting recommending a refresh through an in-depth community engagement process. The engagement objective will be community-led recommendations on future development options for the Hosken Reserve master plan, for consideration at a May Council Meeting. The May Council report will include an overview of all engagement activities undertaken and the various requests that are received from different groups.

As part of the upcoming community engagement process, Council will strive to provide equal opportunity and voice to all community members as part of its decision making on the future of Hosken Reserve. No single group and their views are provided additional weighting or consideration over another. We will be inviting equal representation from stakeholder groups through engagement and discussion facilitated by our independent consultants. All opinions will be heard and considered equally and will be ultimately reviewed by a refresh group. Councillors will not be directly involved in this process.

We will also be seeking to utilise a range of engagement methods including online Q and A forums and surveys, face to face pop-up consultation sessions, direct stakeholder interviews, resident mailouts, social media and other promotional/advertising activities. As common practice for Moreland, a translation service is available, and we will be promoting its use throughout the project. We will also be utilising our Council Advisory Committees throughout the project. Our intent is to engage with as many different members of our diverse community as possible.

How are you engaging Non-English speaking communities in the engagement program?

38.1% of Moreland residents speak a language other than English at home. 10,000 people in Moreland have poor or no spoken English. We know that true community engagement in Moreland must take into consideration our cultural and linguistic differences.

We are taking a number of steps to help all community members have their say about Moreland's future including using Language Link, a free telephone interpreting service, and the translation of content into other languages when requested.

How are you including people that aren't online in the engagement program?

Hosting on-site pop-ups, mailing out letters to all properties within 800m of Hosken Reserve, and providing hard copies of engagement materials when requested are just some of the steps we are taking to make the engagement process as inclusive as possible. Anybody can of course call 9240 1111 to speak to our Customer Service Team and receive further information about the project too.

What will happen at the pop-ups?

We'll explore a range of themes and questions with the community to help us understand how Hosken Reserve is currently used, the challenges and opportunities with this use, and desired use for the future. Some of our key questions include: What do you currently enjoy about your use of Hosken Reserve? What needs to be improved to increase this enjoyment?

How can we trust council, be confident that it is being impartial in its decision making and holds no conflicts of interest?

We appreciate that there is some mistrust in Council and our processes, in particular as a result of a lack of consultation about changes to Hosken Reserve last year. We are committed to rebuilding this relationship with our community and to addressing outstanding concerns as part of the community engagement.

Our process going forward has been to engage a team of independent consultants to refresh the master plan for Hosken Reserve so that any future improvements to the reserve meet the diverse needs and expectations of local residents, ratepayers, and other users of the space.

As with any projects that Council deliberates on, Councillors are required to declare any conflicts of interest as part of Council governance processes. No conflicts of interest were noted at the December 2020 Council meeting.