



Venue Development Strategy

4 MAY 2018



“ The refreshed strategy recognises Auckland’s rapidly growing population, its burgeoning profile of being a major world city of increasingly diverse cultures, and the wider range of sport and entertainment options that Aucklanders may wish to participate in and experience. ”





Overview

The future needs of Auckland and Aucklanders have been a major focus of civic planning in recent years and that has extended to the city's sport, entertainment and cultural venues.

Under its responsibilities to support Auckland's arts, culture, heritage, leisure, sport and entertainment sectors Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA) undertook a major consultation process in 2012 on the strategic direction of Auckland's major outdoor stadiums. Feedback was received from a number of stakeholder organisations including national and regional sporting organisations, stadium users, local boards, neighbourhood groups and the Eden Park Trust Board. The organisations involved in this engagement process represented in excess of 500,000 individuals. From this feedback the RFA formed a view that the Auckland Stadiums network was not ideally placed to meet current and future needs, and was unnecessarily costly to users, had high compliance costs for owners and in many cases delivered sub-optimal facilities and services to spectators. From this came the first iteration of the stadiums strategy.

In 2015, RFA was instructed by Council to re-engage with key stakeholders on the Stadiums Strategy as an outcome of the 2015-24 Long Term Plan process which approved the Stadiums Strategy and funding. That consultation highlighted the need to consider long term needs of Auckland and New Zealand including options for the location of major international stadiums catering for football codes and cricket.

This refreshed strategy covering the next 20 years is based on further extensive stakeholder feedback, research and engagement undertaken subsequently which expanded upon the need for specialisation and fit-for-purpose venues; high performance facilities to meet the growing training and development needs of sports codes; and new venues to cater for changing user and fan expectations and to accommodate major events, concerts and sporting code needs. This generates an opportunity to attract third party investment into High Performance and other facilities along with other new commercial opportunities.

The over-arching objectives of the strategy remain to provide an integrated management model for Auckland's major stadia infrastructure, enhance fan experience, increase revenue, minimise operating costs across all stadia, significantly increase venue utilisation, and remove duplication in capital investment, to the benefit of Auckland ratepayers. In terms of scope, this *Venue Development Strategy* is focused on Auckland's major outdoor stadiums. Further research and consultation will need to occur regarding Auckland's indoor venues (such as Trusts Arena, the North Shore Events Centre and Spark Arena) to align around Auckland's future needs and aspirations.





Major drivers

The major drivers shaping the refreshed *Venue Development Strategy* are:

Auckland as a great global city

One of the drivers of RFA's considerations and represented in input from stakeholders has been the aspiration to make Auckland one of the world's most well regarded and global cities. As a component of that, our major sport, entertainment and cultural organisations have an aspiration to create, attract and stage events in venues that inspire pride. These venues would showcase Auckland and New Zealand to national and international audiences, media and to local and international television viewers watching events staged in our venues.

Fit-for-purpose facilities

Moving from an era of regional facilities which were multi-purpose and competed against those of neighbouring cities, Auckland today needs venues which are fit-for-purpose. Such venues can still support multiple users but must offer layouts, locations and facilities specific to each code or user. This would include a dedicated venue or venues for football codes such as rugby, rugby league and soccer (rectangular stadium) and an oval sport facility for cricket (with ability to host AFL).

Venues in the right location

Many of Auckland's major stadia facilities are not appropriately located to attract or service fans or maximise the opportunities for tourism, hospitality or commercial development. They suffer from poor public transport and access for patrons. Location issues spill over into planning rule limitations such as the Unitary Plan rules for Eden Park that significantly limit potential utilisation levels due to neighbourhood concerns and, similarly, the Unitary Plan rules that severely limit motorsport at Western Springs. These discussions on future venue needs have considered and will continue to address location and in particular the best location with respect to permitted activities under the Unitary Plan and access to public transport and entertainment facilities.

Changing requirements of existing and new stadium hirers

New Zealand's major sport organisations and each of the city's major football franchises share a strong desire for contemporary stadium facilities. These need to provide a better fan experience, vastly improved comfort, safety and security for the public, enhanced facilities for their athletes and officials; and environments in which they showcase their sport, deepen their engagement with their fans and build new revenue. New sporting codes looking to build their audience need to be able to utilise venues that can support their aspirations. Concert and event promoters as well as community users need to meet consumer expectations for better and more modern facilities.

Fan Experience is paramount

Competition for patrons and the constantly rising expectations of fans means sports and entertainment providers are having to raise the bar in the facilities, services and environments they offer at their events. This includes everything from proximity to the playing arena, technology offerings to augment the on-field action, covered and premium seating, food and beverage facilities and merchandise offerings, through to transport and accommodation connections.

An urgent need for a renewal strategy

While previous iterations of this strategy focused on minimising cost and maximising the use of existing venues, their timeframes did not allow for consideration of long term venue renewal and development. However, the cost of maintaining existing venues will, over time, become prohibitive while the lack of a long-term strategy will force the city to make decisions based on urgent need and under time pressures to accommodate events or specific codes requirements. A planned approach now will ensure a more effective long-term solution.





The new stadium option

The suggestion from football codes that a fully-covered international stadium and precinct be developed in Auckland's city centre is one that RFA considers has strong merit as a means of achieving the objectives of a fit-for-purpose stadium in an appropriate location that caters for multiple users. The benefits of a covered stadium would remove weather elements from event considerations. It would also offer multiple configurations to cater for small or large crowd events. This facility would replace ageing venues in other parts of the city. A city centre stadium precinct would have the potential to energise and invigorate the central city as has been demonstrated in similar developments in other countries. It would harness the accommodation, hospitality and transport infrastructure already in place in central Auckland. Subject to design considerations, it could also be an iconic building for central Auckland and be a catalyst for investment, into residential and commercial regeneration.

The alternative of a refreshed Eden Park

Whilst acknowledging the calls for a new international stadium in the central city are very strong, Eden Park needs to be considered in this context. RFA does not have responsibility for Eden Park, however, its presence has a major influence on any stadium analysis. An alternative is to invest further in Eden Park and redevelop it as a rectangular stadium for all football codes. Like investment in a new central city stadium, this would also be at significant cost.

Maximising value and utility of stadium network

The development of a new international stadium would be a long-term project and one that could likely be advanced by Auckland hosting a major international event. It would support alternate uses and new opportunities for regional stadia such as an international cricket ground at Western Springs, the High Performance Facilities and Community Stadia proposed for QBE Stadium and Mt Smart Stadium; and the possible consolidation of all speedway racing classes at a regional motorsport facility.

Any investment would also be required to obtain resource consent and zoning approvals for stadium use. In any central city location consideration could be given to designating the stadium precinct as a project of national significance which would assist in planning and zoning requirements. The relative benefits of any proposal would need to be investigated thoroughly through a full business case analysis and consideration of funding requirements and options.

Future-proofing Auckland

A new stadium precinct development in central Auckland could ensure the city's anchor sport and entertainment franchises and events are on a level footing with those in other cities, domestically and internationally. It could provide up-to-date facilities for regular sporting competitions and events including rugby, rugby league and football as well as concerts, festivals and cultural events. A new facility could also allow Auckland – and by extension New Zealand – to offer the capacity, modern facilities and a marquee venue to attract major international events including the Commonwealth Games, World Cup events and State of Origin fixtures. The establishment of a new international stadium or a refreshment of Eden Park would require a new approach to the use of other stadia such as QBE and Mt Smart. Their role would change given the activity that would move to an international stadium. However, a revised stadium network would also offer the potential for up to three stadium concert venues (International Stadium, Western Springs and QBE Stadium) in time ensuring three outdoor venues remain available to concert and event promoters. Some elements have already been implemented as part of this Strategy including the new all-weather training fields and work towards the high performance training centre at QBE Stadium.



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Venue Development Strategy

Based on the feedback from stakeholders, RFA has developed the following *Venue Development Strategy* for Auckland's outdoor stadium venues, designed to be applicable for the next 20 years.



International Stadium and Precinct

The proposal for a purpose-built International Stadium could be designed to be flexible and scalable with the ability to host regular football and major events in rectangular sport mode, concerts and community events and future hosting of major events such as the Commonwealth Games.

The upper tier could be designed so it can be “cloaked” to create the effect of a smaller “club” venue for those events with smaller audiences. The proposed stadium could host up to 50,000 in major event mode and up to 25,000 in club mode and could cater for up to 65,000 patrons for concerts. The co-location of multiple sports codes and its attractiveness to other hirers will increase utilisation and maximise the revenue and cost/benefit returns of the venue. The stadium location is not yet determined however it would ideally be located in proximity to the City Rail Link, bus and ferry transport hubs, other public transport networks and supplementary car parking. A central city location could also provide access for patrons to a wide range of food, beverage, entertainment, accommodation and car parking options. It is envisaged that a new stadium could be developed as part of a stadium precinct, providing opportunities for commercial development, private sector investment, co-location of relevant entertainment and hospitality facilities and other services. Third party investment may provide leverage opportunities and assist in meeting the capital cost requirements of any new international stadium. This approach, based on highly successful stadium and precinct developments overseas, would offer the potential for the regeneration and expanded development of its location in Auckland’s central city. A detailed Pre-Feasibility Study exploring locations and options for a central city stadium has been completed and has identified that there are locations in the city which could be developed as an International Stadium and Precinct. Funding options for the proposed international stadium and the overall *Venue Development Strategy* are under review. RFA considers that any consideration of the International Stadium and Precinct must include consideration of Eden Park’s suitability to meet these criteria and fulfil the role of Auckland’s International Stadium for football codes. This would be achieved through a full business case process. The Eden Park Trust Board has indicated it is willing to participate in the next stage of this process.



ABOVE: BC Place Stadium, Vancouver, Canada



“It is envisaged that a new stadium could be developed as part of a stadium precinct, providing opportunities for commercial development, private sector investment, co-location of relevant entertainment and hospitality facilities and other services.”

LEFT: Etihad Stadium, Melbourne, Australia

Design concepts for an
International Stadium
and Precinct

Central city location



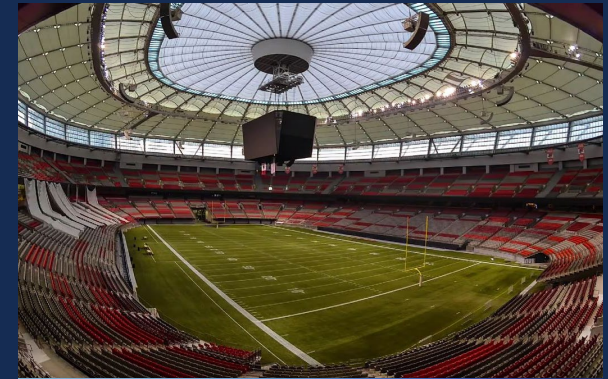
MILLENNIUM STADIUM, CARDIFF, WALES

Precinct opportunities



PRECINCT – LA LIVE, CALIFORNIA, USA

Different operating modes, scaling



BC PLACE STADIUM, VANCOUVER, CANADA

Retractable roof



AT&T STADIUM, DALLAS TEXAS, USA

Western Springs

Western Springs will soon be phased out as a motorsport venue, consistent with the Unitary Plan zoning for the venue and the limitations created by its inner city location. A future option is that it be developed as a world-class Cricket Ground for all forms of cricket. It could also host Australian Rules Football (AFL) premiership fixtures. New Zealand Cricket has indicated it would locate a satellite facility to complement their high performance activity in Christchurch and there is potential for them to have their administration base at Western Springs, providing RFA with a market-based rental stream. Funding for the redevelopment of Western Springs into a cricket ground was approved by Auckland Council in 2015 through the 2015-2024 Long Term Plan process. Western Springs will continue to be a venue for concerts and festivals and for Ponsonby Rugby Football Club, which already occupies part of the precinct. Any Western Springs development will form a key part of the Western Springs Precinct complementing Western Springs Park, Auckland Zoo and MOTAT.



QBE Stadium

The northern region of Auckland will experience continuing growth and sports related demand in the foreseeable future. QBE Stadium is being re-purposed as a high performance training facility and event venue, continuing to be utilised as a community stadium for the sporting codes it supports (North Harbour Rugby, New Zealand Football). A High Performance sports hub will support New Zealand Football, North Harbour Rugby and potentially New Zealand Rugby and AFL. This facility will be managed by the Massey University School of Sport. Baseball will also feature under proposals to utilise the main stadium in summer months for a new franchise in the Australian Baseball League. Under the *Venue Development Strategy*, RFA has already invested in new training fields to expand the training and community sport facilities available in the region. QBE Stadium will continue to be available as an additional venue for concerts and festivals.



Mt Smart Stadium

Mt Smart will remain as an event venue for the Vodafone Warriors and Auckland's major outdoor concert venue until such time as a new International Stadium is available. At that time, Mt Smart will be re-purposed as a high performance training facility for the Warriors and other teams and as a community event venue. It will maintain the critical role it plays in delivery of many sports and recreation services at school, club and community level, and continuing to provide facilities for athletics over the long term. With the removal and rationalisation of the major stands, Mt Smart will have additional training capacity to support the high-performance training needs of the likes of the Vodafone Warriors and New Zealand Kiwis and provide additional access for the community for local sporting needs.



Regional Motorsport Park

It is proposed that all speedway classes could be consolidated at a regional speedway facility, preferably in a location designated as a Motorsport Precinct, within the Unitary Plan. The aim would be for speedway to have a bespoke venue of an appropriate scale and on a site that is enabled for all classes. A customised specialist facility with a strong multi-class events programme is a solid foundation for speedway in Auckland, into the future.





Sequencing

The *Venue Development Strategy* is an aspirational approach to the future outdoor stadium provision over the next 20 years, but it cannot ignore the current demands on our stadium infrastructure. In order to progress towards delivering this strategy careful planning will be required to ensure that the appropriate levels of service to all users are maintained.

Currently the transition of QBE Stadium to a high performance training centre and community stadium is progressing with minimal disruption to the sports involved.

To achieve the key components of this strategy the first stage will require the relocation of speedway from Western Springs, possibly to a Regional Motorsport Park to ensure continuity and sustainability for the speedway classes. This has an estimated delivery time of one to two years.

An oval stadium at Western Springs could proceed once speedway ceases at the venue. The venue could be available for use within a one to two year timeframe from when the project is initiated.

The international football stadium project would be based on the option chosen as a result of the business case analysis, and is likely to be developed over a long design and construction timeframe, with estimates ranging from five to seven years from when the project is initiated.

In the interim appropriate provision levels need to be maintained for all current activities.





QBE Stadium

Stadium Drive,
Albany, Auckland 0632

Mt Smart Stadium

2 Beasley Ave,
Penrose, Auckland 1061

Western Springs Stadium

Stadium Road, Western Springs,
Auckland 1022