

Report for:
ACTION

Item Number:

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO
Title	Delivering 10 new parks: Future of Perivale Park Golf Course
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Portfolio(s)	Cllr Deirdre Costigan, Cabinet Member for Climate Action Cllr Polly Knewstub, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities
For Consideration By	Peter George, Strategic Director Economy and Sustainability
Date to be Considered	15 March 2024
Implementation Date if Not Called In	25 March 2024
Affected Wards	Perivale
Keywords/Index	Perivale Park Golf Course, Golf, Regional Park

Purpose of Report:

The Cabinet report of 13 September 2023, attached at Appendix 5, included a recommendation to permanently close Perivale Park Golf Course, subject to consideration of the responses to the public consultation on the proposed closure. The closure would enable the transformation of the course into a new publicly accessible park that will ultimately form part of the regional park. The cabinet report said that 'transforming the golf course will support the council plan objective to create ten new parks, increase tree canopy and respond to the council's key priorities'.

1. Recommendations for DECISION

- 1.1. Following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to close Perivale Park Golf Course in June 2024;
- 1.2. Following the closure, to open the land to the public as a new park;
- 1.3. To re-purpose the land as a park adding benches, wildflower meadows, signage and grass paths during the summer and autumn;
- 1.4. To keep the café and toilets open pending a decision in the Autumn as to their future;

2. Recommendations for NOTING

- 2.1. To note that a report considering meanwhile and long-term proposals for the site will be presented to Cabinet in the summer; and
- 2.2. To note that the sports facilities at the north of the site will not be impacted and that there will be an improvement in the access arrangements for dog walkers and walkers.

3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

- 3.1. The main reason for the closure of Perivale Park Golf Course (PPGC) in favour of making it a publicly accessible park is that it will address an overall inequality in access to green open space. The borough's population is expected to grow by over 38,000 from 360,000 to 398,000 in the ten years from 2021 to 2031 with an associated increase in demand for different less formal outdoor spaces for people to be active. Using 2021 census data¹ it has been determined that the current average provision of public open space across the borough is 1.66 hectares per 1,000 head of population.² Over the next 15 years, as a result of projected population growth, this is expected to decrease to 1.54 ha per 1000 head population. Creating 10 new parks will help to offset this reduction and repurposing Perivale Park Golf Course as a publicly accessible park can make a significant contribution towards this objective.
- 3.2. When compared to the current average provision of public open space across the borough at 1.66 hectares per 1,000 head of population, access for golf at Perivale Park Golf Course equates to 51.5 hectares per 1,000 unique golfers, over 25 times higher. The existing golf course can only be used by a relatively small group of residents with a specific interest in golf. If opened as a park, all residents will be able to enjoy the green space for a variety of purposes. COVID-19 re-focused attention on the role that parks play in society and today continue to serve their primary historical purpose; to provide urban residents, particularly those with little private green space, a shared site for recreation in a natural environment. The establishment of a new park in place of PPGC will further this aim.
- 3.3. Ealing's Health and Wellbeing Board has developed 'Together in Ealing', the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2023-2028 focussed on tackling inequality through work on the building blocks of health. Theme 3 in the strategy, 'Connecting the building blocks of health and wellbeing', includes commitments to work on these building blocks, including the equitable provision of good quality green space, through the lens of health equity.
- 3.4. Ealing is a diverse and vibrant borough, but it also faces significant health inequalities. Access to functional and good quality green space, that would be created with the proposed new park, will bring many health and wellbeing benefits for all Ealing residents.

¹ [How life has changed in Ealing: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

² [Biodiversity Action Plan | Biodiversity Action Plan | Ealing Council](#)

3.5. Within Ealing, there are currently several locations dedicated to Golf which includes:

- four 18-hole courses (Brent Valley, Ealing, Sudbury, West Middlesex)
- two 9-hole courses, (Perivale and West London Golf Centre)
- one pitch and putt course (at Horsenden Hill Activity Centre)
- three mini-golf courses (at the West London Golf Centre, Acton Park and a new course in Gunnersbury Park on the border with Hounslow); and
- one 26-bay floodlit driving range (at the West London Golf Centre).



Figure 1 - Map showing distribution of Golf Courses in Ealing and neighbouring boroughs.

3.6. Furthermore, there is a good distribution of golf facilities that are accessible for Ealing residents within a short journey time outside of the borough, as shown on the map below. These courses are easily accessible by public transport and car. There is less provision to the east of the borough, which is to be expected due to the lack of availability of land towards central London. However, the 9-hole course, driving range and indoor golf facilities in Chiswick at Duke's Meadow are within 12 minutes' drive time of Gunnersbury Park. To the north of the borough there are accessible golf facilities in Kenton Road, Harrow (Playgolf London with a 56-bay floodlit driving range and a 9-hole course) and at the Harrow School Sports Complex (9 holes). To the northwest there are facilities in reach at the Hillingdon Golf Club (9 holes). All three of these golf facilities in neighbouring boroughs are well within a 15-minute drive time of Ealing's Horsenden Hill and Sudbury golf sites. To the south of the borough there are golf facilities available at Wyke Green Golf Club (18 holes) in Isleworth and in Chiswick at Dukes Meadow Golf & Tennis Centre (9-hole par 3, driving range and indoor centre). The Wyke Green course is just 8 minutes' drive time from the West Middlesex Golf Course in Ealing borough and the council's Brent Valley golf course is only 11 minutes away. The Airlinks Golf Centre in Southall Lane, Hounslow reopened

in 2023 with a new 18-hole golf course, new 24-bay floodlit driving range and a bar and eatery; the facility is located within a 9-minute drive time of the West London Golf Centre in Ealing borough.

- 3.7. The remaining golf provision in and near the borough is therefore considered varied and extensive and the loss of a single 9-hole golf course in this context will have a minor impact on overall golf provision and access to golf facilities in the area.
- 3.8. In addition, at the time of making this decision, the council has become aware that an additional 18-hole golf course is expected to open in Northolt on 1st June 2024. (Golf - The Inspiration Club)
- 3.9. It should be noted that there will be further work undertaken to assess the overall golfing needs in the Borough and this could involve a review of other golf courses. However, it is clear that there is currently significant over-provision of golf courses in Ealing, and this would remain the case following the closure of PPGC. This is demonstrated by the Assessment of Golf Demand in Ealing report as produced by Prior and Partners in February 2024 (Appendix 3) which contains the following key findings:
- Based on a per capita assessment of the number of people served by 1 golf course, the provision of golf courses in LB Ealing is much higher than the London average
 - Based on a theoretical assessment of London adjusted supply / demand for golf courses, 3-4 golf courses in LB Ealing would satisfy demand for golf. There are currently 6 available, indicating there is an estimated theoretical surplus of 2.5 golf courses in the borough
 - Upon closure of Perivale Park Golf Course, there would remain a surplus of golf courses, and provision of golf facilities in LB Ealing would still be much higher than the London average
 - The provision of golf courses in LB Ealing is much higher than that in LB Brent, a neighbouring borough to LB Ealing with a similar population demographic.
- 3.10. Golf courses have poor sustainability credentials due to the extensive use of fertilisers and high levels of grass cutting required to maintain the greens. By allowing the area to return to nature it is anticipated there will be Biodiversity Net Gains which will further complement and align with council policy.
- 3.11. Due to the low membership level the council pays a subsidy to its leisure operator Everyone Active to run Perivale Park Golf Course. The current subsidy is £5,099 per month. This money will be saved and used to fund the management and maintenance of the new park.

- 3.12. Perivale Park Golf Course is highly susceptible to flooding which renders it unplayable for, on average, 10 days per year.
- 3.13. The loss of the golf course will have a negative impact on current users of the facility and this is assessed in the equalities analysis assessment. It must be taken into account in reaching a decision. Alongside the loss of the facility itself as a place to play golf, the golf club has a strong sense of community, however, has a relatively limited membership of 123. The current green fees to play at Perivale Park are the most competitive in the borough which may have an adverse impact upon current members. However, the council is committed to ensure that cost doesn't become a barrier to participation where it has the ability to influence green fees.
- 3.14. It is also noted that membership/usage is increasing, however the membership levels remain low.
- 3.15. The majority of people participating in the council's survey agreed to the principle of closure.
- 3.16. The Council Plan 2022-26 includes for the establishment of 10 new parks and the creation of a new park in this location will further this objective. Cabinet has additionally approved the establishment of a Regional Park and the decision to close PPGC in favour of establishing one of the 10 new parks will also establish further space which could be integrated into the Regional Park in due course.

Timing

- 3.17. The decision is recommended to be taken at this time for a number of reasons:
- The cabinet paper required consideration of the representations received as part of the consultation before taking this decision. The consultation closed on 19 December 2023 and all representations have now been fully considered.
 - The sale of annual golf memberships take place from April to July. Taking a decision in March gives members of the golf course clarity over its future before committing to the cost of renewals.
 - The cabinet paper indicated closure, subject to consultation, in the financial year 23/24.
 - As set out above, it is clear that there is an overprovision of golf facilities in the Borough and therefore given the compelling case to improve the equity of green space provision, the Council should not wait for the wider review of golfing provision before closing Perivale Golf Course.
 - The end of the intensive maintenance of the course will enable the re-wilding, as detailed in the September cabinet paper, process to start during the remainder of the growing season.

Key Implications

- 3.18. Ealing Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019, committing to treat the climate and ecological emergency as a crisis requiring immediate and vital action. The aim is to become carbon neutral as a borough and an organisation by 2030.
- 3.19. Ealing Council's council plan set the vision and strategy for the next four years (2022-2026) and contained a focus on the priorities of our residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. It is a high-level strategic response to the opportunities and challenges being faced now and in the future.
- 3.20. Climate action is one of three cross cutting strategic objectives over the next four years to realise the vision for the borough by greening and keeping Ealing clean, achieving net zero carbon, and ensuring parks, open spaces and nature are protected and enhanced.
- 3.21. The council plan commits to create 10 new parks and open spaces, giving back to nature through re-wilding and re-introducing wildlife, and pioneering 10 new community growing spaces. Furthermore, it pledges to make streets and open spaces beautiful and resilient through planting another 50,000 trees, work towards increasing the proportion of the borough covered by tree canopies to 25% by doubling the number of trees planted each year, ensuring every town has access to wild fruit. In support of these council plan objectives and to respond to the council's key priorities of tackling the climate crisis, fighting inequality, and creating good jobs.
- 3.22. The Council Plan also sets out the ambition to have best in class parks and open spaces which make Ealing a green and family friendly borough, whilst improving biodiversity and air quality. We have seen during the pandemic that access to green space is critical for residents' health and wellbeing and want to increase access to open and green space.
- 3.23. Significant progress has been achieved on the commitment to create 10 new parks with the council celebrating the opening of the first new park in October 2023 at the Central Plaza, South Acton. Additionally, Central Gardens in the Green Quarter, Southall is scheduled to open this summer, providing 4,500m² of new accessible open space.
- 3.24. Work is well underway to create an exciting new park scape at Glade Lane Canalside, a space which is currently inaccessible to the public, will see the creation of two large mounds, similar to those at Northala Fields, at the heart of this new park. The council has taken the decision on revised plans for the future of Warren Farm with the site becoming a local nature reserve, with a new sports ground to be built on additional land next to it.

3.25. Plans to create additional new parks continue to be developed with partners, with further announcements to follow.

3.26. On 13 September 2023, Cabinet approved a number of recommendations including:

- Agreeing in principle to the closure of Perivale Park Golf Course in financial year 2023/24 subject to the outcome of the proposed consultation.
- Delegating authority to the Strategic Director of Economy & Sustainability following consultation with the relevant cabinet portfolio holders, to make any final decision to close Perivale Park Golf Course following consideration of the representations received as part of the consultation.
- The Cabinet decision was called in and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which met on 5 October 2023; the decision was upheld.

4. Financial

4.1. Cabinet authorised the expenditure of £0.075m over the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support the closure of Perivale Golf Course and for the rewilding and transformation of the golf course to park land which would be funded from the existing parks capital programme budget, s106 and grant funding. The existing approved tree planting capital budget will support any plan to increase tree canopy.

4.2. A scheme has been designed for the re-purposing of the golf course as a publicly accessible park with associated costs as follows:

Year 1

- Meadow creation - £20,000 (seeding about 25% of area and letting rest rewild)
- Filling bunkers - £10,000
- Total Year 1 - £30,000

Year 2

- Removing golf course watering infrastructure etc - £10,000

Total capital for both years - £40,000

4.3. As set out above at 3.11, as the Council will no longer pay a subsidy to GLL for managing the golf course, there will be a saving of £61,188 per annum on the contract cost. These funds will be re-directed to the future management and maintenance of the park. This will include expected costs of £5,000 per annum

for maintenance of grass paths and one-off costs of temporary signage £1,000 and the introduction of 5 seats £3,000.

4.4. Keeping the café and toilet open, without the golf course, is expected to cost £9000 between July and September. Redundancies of workforce employed by Everyone Active are expected to cost £13,700.

4.5. Both the cost of the redundancies, and cost of keeping the café and toilet open will be covered by GLL subsidy savings.

5. Legal

5.1. In reaching a decision, the Strategic Director must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

5.2. Local authorities are subject to this general duty to have regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups and foster good relations between different groups (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)

5.3. The duty requires local authorities to give real thought to the PSED and its requirements. This requires an analysis of all the relevant material. It should be integrated into the decision-making process. The duty is a continuing one which should be exercised with rigour and an open mind. The duty should be reconsidered if new information comes to light and adequate records should be kept of the consideration and decision-making processes undertaken to demonstrate that the equality duties have been undertaken conscientiously.

6. Value For Money

6.1. The council currently subsidises the golf course. Given the low number of users it does not provide value for money.

7. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

7.1. This proposal will contribute positively to the Council's sustainability objectives as outlined in section 3.

8. Risk Management

8.1. There is a risk that the decision will have a detrimental impact on the current users. This risk is detailed in the equalities analysis assessment. The decision will therefore not have the support of all residents.

9. Community Safety

9.1. It is considered unlikely that there will be a negative impact upon community safety with increased park users providing a greater level of natural surveillance.

The council has the ability to increase park patrols based upon intelligence highlighting any concern that may arise from a decision to open the park. Consideration will need to be applied to the ongoing security of the pavilion should it cease to being occupied at any point.

10. Links to the 3 Key Priorities for the Borough

10.1. This proposal will link to all 3 of the key priorities for the borough:

- fighting inequality
- tackling the climate crisis
- creating good jobs.

10.2. As outlined in the reason for the decision, the decision to close PPGC will address an overall inequality in access to green open space for residents and the general public.

10.3. As also outlined in the reason for the decision, this decision will have a positive impact on the Council's approach to tackling climate change.

11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

11.1. An equalities analysis assessment (EAA) has been carried out following the consultation and is attached at Appendix 3.

11.2. In summary:

- The course has a high percentage of older users due to the flatness and size of the course. The closure will have a negative impact on those people. There are alternative facilities but they will not be used by all of the current older golfers. Some will stop playing as a result of the closure which will have a negative impact on their health and well-being.
- PPGC attracts less mobile users for the same reasons (size and topography). Again, some may not use another course and the closure will negatively affect them.
- The Age UK Ealing letter says that 50% of the golfers who signed a survey carried out by Perivale Park Golf Club were over 50. It emphasises the role the course plays in fostering social connections which contributes to the well-being of our older population.

The impact of the closure on people with protected characteristics are set out in full in the EAA and must be carefully considered in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

- 12.1. There are implications for the workforce employed by Everyone Active. There are 4 employees, two or three will be redeployed elsewhere. The remaining employee (s) will be made redundant.
- 12.2. There are however no direct staffing/workforce implications for Council employees.

13. Property and Assets

- 13.1. This decision relates to the repurposing of an existing Council asset.

14. Any other implications:

- 14.1. None

15. Consultation

- 15.1. Following approval by cabinet, a six-week consultation took place between 31 October 2023 and 19 December 2023 and the summary findings of this consultation are included at Appendix 2. The purpose of the consultation was to ask for views on the proposal to establish a regional park in the borough alongside inviting specific comment on the proposed closure of Perivale Park Golf Course. The consultation strategy for this survey is included at Appendix 1.
- 15.2. The consultation survey received 6,115 responses. A detailed report on the analysis is attached at Appendix 2 and in summary:
- 75% of respondents were supportive of the concept of a regional park, with 62% reacting very positively, and 13% reacting fairly positively to the council's ambition to create a new regional park.
 - 62.5% of respondents were supportive of the closure of PPGC.
- 15.3. The council has separately received a series of formal representations in the period since the cabinet decision was made. The representations which have been considered include:
- The 'Save Perivale Park Golf Course' Petition
 - Letter from Age UK (Ealing), 1 February 2024
 - Letters from the PPGC Club Captain/Secretary and the Club Vice Captain
 - Email from Sport England, 19 December 2023
- 15.4. The key themes expressed by those objecting to the proposals to close PPGC are:
- PPGC is the only 9-hole municipal golf course in the borough and is affordable relative to other courses in the borough.
 - Due to the course's topography (being relatively flat) and design (limited selection of hole types and limited hazards) PPGC is particularly suited to

older golfers and learners who would be disproportionately impacted by its closure.

- Timing of the decision and whether it should be implemented in the short term.
- PPGC is compatible with the regional park and should continue to operate within it or alternatively the course could be adapted to become an 'Eco' golf course which would allow golf to continue at this location.
- In addition to the opportunity to learn and play golf the club fulfils a community function in helping to address broader health and wellbeing issues such as loneliness and depression which would be lost if the course is to be closed.

15.5. The email from Sport England, dated 19 December 2023, made a number of comments and in particular observed:

- There should be an EAA which should reference impact older and less mobile golfers.
- The Council must be sure that other opportunities are available to support displaced users.
- The quantity, quality and accessibility of the wider provision available and what the future also holds for those facilities, which are outside local authority control, should be considered.
- The data used to show declining popularity of golf was for 20/21, a year impacted by the pandemic. The 21/22 data is available and this shows that activity is slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- To create and develop a secure financial future for a world class regional park will take time and further consultation. It is recommended that the golf course is kept open until further work is undertaken that demonstrates that the park can deliver the benefits set out in the consultation, that this is the right site for the creation of a regional park and that the impact of the loss of this golf course can be mitigated

15.6. An EAA has been prepared and is included with this decision.

15.7. A preliminary assessment of golf provision is also attached and is referred to in this decision. A full Golf Needs Assessment will be completed as part of the main regional park masterplan work due to be completed in May.

16. Timetable for Implementation

16.1. If the decision is taken to close PPGC, it will close in June. There will be a report taken to Cabinet in the summer which will make recommendations as to the future use of the parkland. The immediate actions to be taken following closure are set out in the recommendations.

17. Appendices

Appendix 1	Plan for 2023 public engagement and consultation
Appendix 2	Analysis of consultation feedback
Appendix 3	Updated equalities analysis assessment

18. Background Information

18.1. Please refer to the appendices

19. Consultation

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent to consultee	Date response received	Comments appear in paragraph:
Internal				
Peter George	Strategic Director Economy and Sustainability	06/03/24		
Helen Harris	Director, Legal and Democratic Services	06/03/24		
Emily Hill	Strategic Director Resources	06/03/24		
Alice Rowland	Head of Legal (commercial)	06/03/24		Throughout
Cllr Deirdre Costigan	Cabinet Member for Climate Action	06/03/24		
Cllr Polly Knewstubb	Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities	06/03/24		
External				

Report History

Decision type:	Urgency item?
Key decision	No
Report no.:	Report author and contact for queries: Adam Whalley, Assistant Director Major Projects