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City councillors in dramatic U-turn

**Silver Strand site
to be rezoned
for hardstand**

—By Kevin O'Sullivan—

City Councillors, meeting behind closed doors, agreed in a dramatic turn-around last night to re-zone land near Silver Strand for the highly controversial traveller hardstand due to be installed in the South Ward.

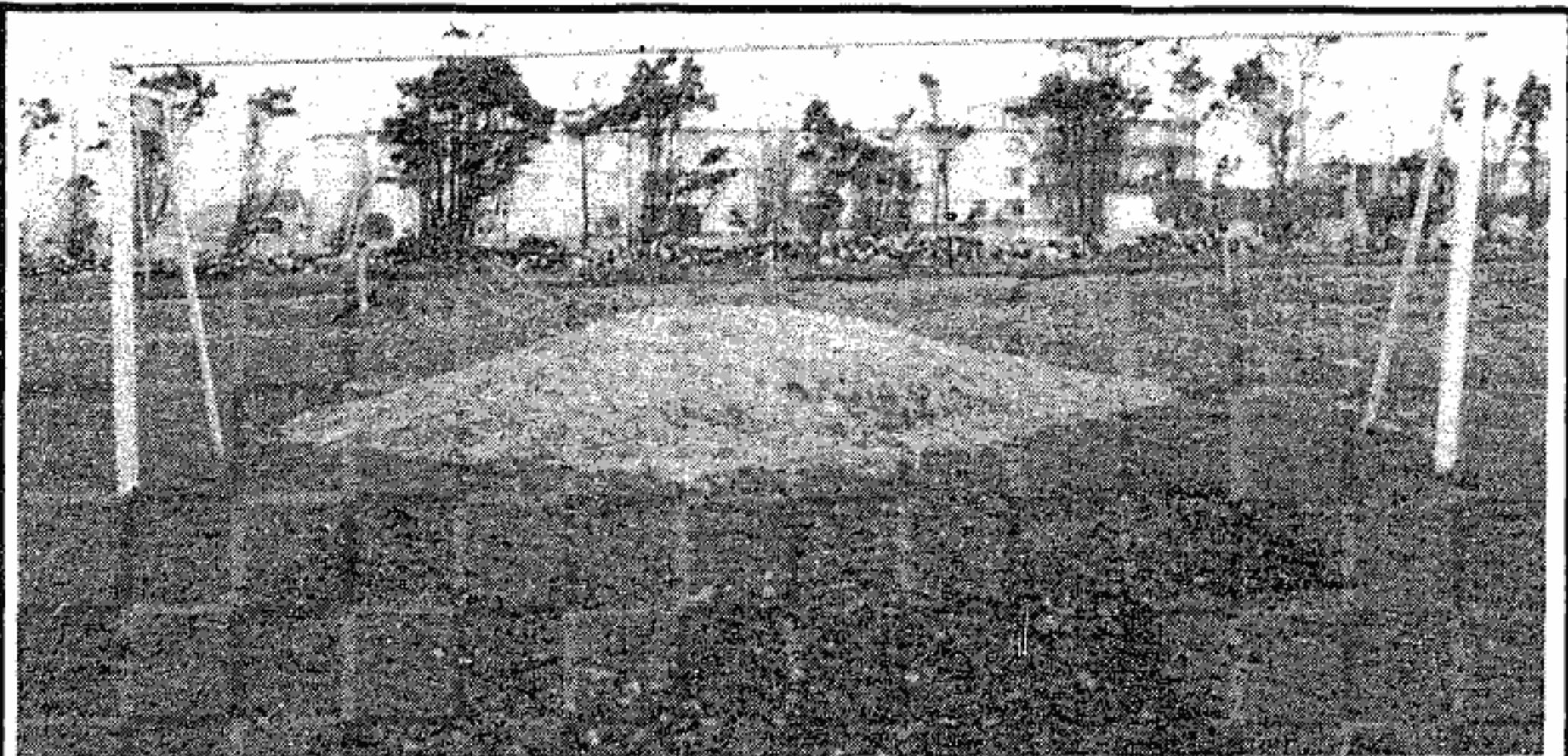
The site chosen for the facility is located to the left of the road leading down to the beach at Silver Strand. It was the original choice for hardstand over two years ago but deemed unsuitable at the time by the Corporation — a detailed agreement was thrashed out then between City Councillors who decided that hardstands would be spread evenly throughout the city in each ward.

The controversy escalated as hardstands came into service in all wards except the South Ward, and the choice of potential sites in the Salthill-Knocknacarra-Taylor's Hill areas became increasingly difficult. City Councillors from outside the South Ward insisted that the agreement had to be honoured, while it was claimed that the facility would damage tourism in the area.

Before Christmas, most attention centred on a site at Knocknacarra Cross owned by the Church, and a site closer to the main road up from Silver Strand known as Jackson's Field. Residents Associations in areas adjoining Knocknacarra Cross mounted a huge campaign against the site in their locality and threatened court action against its installation there, forcing Councillors, in effect, to back away.

Now Councillors have come back to their original choice, despite the fact that Corporation officials pointed out that there could be drainage difficulties with the site. The Draft City Development is being amended to allow for the rezoning and in effect has been

finally agreed after months of discussion — it will go on public display for a month before it is fully adopted. However, the return to the original choice, *The Sentinel* understands, has been fully adopted. *Continued on Page 11*



Work in progress at Renmore soccer pitch. Photos: Stan Shields

Corpo work on pitches creates a fixtures crux

The Galway FA have called on the Corporation to ensure that alternative pitches be provided over the next month following the move by the local authority to carry out re-sodding work on four of the busiest soccer grounds in the city.

Re-sodding and pitch maintenance work have been carried out by Corporation workers on South pitch, West pitch, Renmore and at Fahy's Field — rendering the grounds unplayable for up to a month in some cases.

However a spokesman for the Galway FA said that the pitch work, coming as it does in the height of their playing season, will leave them in severe difficulties relating to the playing off of their matches.

"While we appreciate any work being done to improve the pitches where our matches are played the decision to carry out the work in the middle of our season leaves us in great difficulty.

"We are asking that the Corporation provide us with alternative grounds while these pitches are out of action — otherwise we will be left with a massive fixtures headache," said the spokesman.

Assistant City Manager Mr. Donal O'Donoghue said that the severe bad weather of

the past month had meant that far more damage than normal had been done.

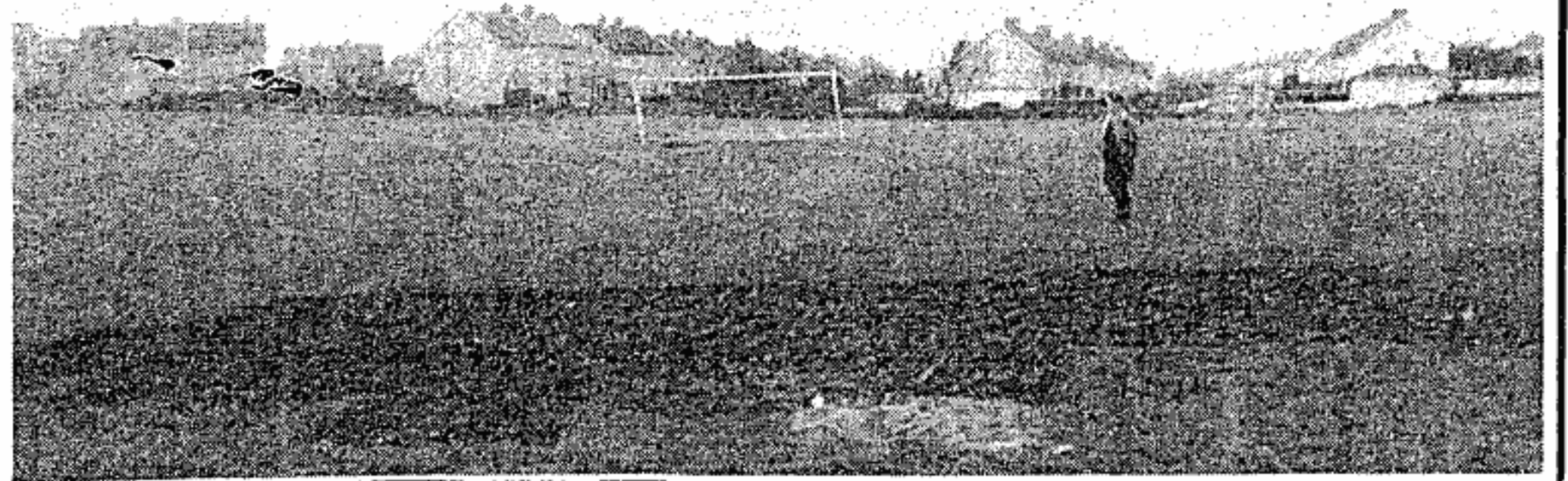
"These pitches need maintenance and care to keep them up to the highest possible standards — some of them will be back in usage in a couple of weeks," he added.

Mr. O'Donoghue said that every year the Corporation had to carry out essential maintenance work on pitches — it was part of their overall plan for sports grounds development in the city.

He said that work was also progressing well in the provision of pitches in Knocknacarra, Tirellan and in Castle park where a £70,000 all-weather 5-a-side pitch would be ready within the next two months.

In the immediate absence of the four soccer grounds under maintenance there will be additional pressure on the home grounds of Mervue, Crescent, UCG, Bohs and Hibs to absorb the extra fixtures.

It will also mean that more of the junior matches will have to be played in Terryland Park the home ground of Galway United, which has been largely spared by the Galway FA to preserve the playing surface for the League of Ireland matches.



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