

WA Smith & Sycamore

Recreation Reserve Master plan Engagement Summary December 2023



Introduction

Council is planning to upgrade WA Smith & Sycamore Recreation Reserves with features that help our community get active, socialise, and enjoy the outdoors. We have developed a draft master plan that creates a vision and direction for the reserve's future. The master plan includes short and long term improvements to be delivered over the next ten years.

The WA Smith & Sycamore Recreation Reserve Master plan is a high-level document providing a broad vision for the reserve. The master plan looks at the reserve's features, equipment, and users. The master plan aims to find a balance for the needs of all the user groups and the facilities required by the different types of activities. It will outline the improvements required to achieve this balance in a staged action plan. In addition, the plan will need to meet the current and future needs of community users.

When developing the draft master plan, the project team looked at issues such as:

- Out of date sports and park equipment (including the playground)
- Public access and connections to pathways
- Visibility and safety (including lighting).

During phase 1 consultation we heard that recreation for all users and abilities as well as facilities and safety were important to the community. Council considered the ideas shared by the community and have explored opportunities to increase active and passive activities in the reserve. These included:

- Circuit walking paths

- Picnic shelters and seating
- Informal multi-sport courts (for example, half-court basketball, table tennis, volleyball, or bocce)
- Fitness stations.

How we engaged you

Phase 1: gathering ideas – June to August 2022

Ideas were captured online through the project Engage page and at community-based pop-ups at the WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve and Mill Park Library. Residents within 400m of the reserve were letterbox dropped to inform them of the consultation and invite them to share their ideas. The ideas captured in this phase helped shape the draft master plan that we shared with the community in phase 2. Find out more about what we heard in this phase in [the Engagement Summary Report](#).

Phase 2: sharing the draft master plan for community feedback: 20 September to 27 October 2023

During this phase we shared the draft master plan with key stakeholders previously consulted in phase 1, as well as the wider community to understand if the proposed draft master plan meets community expectations and the current and future needs of sporting groups.

The community was able to view the draft master plan and have their say via the project Engage page or in person at two community-based pop-ups.



The project Engage page presented a summary of opportunities captured from the community through the phase 1 consultation period and offered visitors an opportunity to learn more about the key actions of the plan on an interactive map. Visitors to the page were also encouraged to complete a short survey to let us know if they like what was being proposed and their top four priorities for the WA Smith and Sycamore Reserves.

Above: Interactive map from WA Smith & Sycamore Recreation Reserve Master plan page on Whittlesea Engage platform

During the phase 2 consultation period, the project team hosted a staffed community pop-up at WA Smith and Sycamore Reserve on Thursday 28 September from 10am to 12pm and Monday 9 October from 9.30am to 11.30am at Mill Park Library. Both locations were central and easily accessible to nearby residents.



Above: in person consultation at WA Smith and Sycamore reserves and Mill Park Library

Let's talk

City of Whittlesea

WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve Draft Master Concept Plan

CHOOSE YOUR TOP 4 PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTEGRATED COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PAVILION AT DAREBIN DRIVE (2A)	2. NEW BRIDGE, LIGHTING AND IMPROVED SHARED PATH FROM DAREBIN DRIVE TO HAWKES DRIVE (3A, 3B)	3. IMPROVED WALKING PATHS THROUGHOUT THE RESERVE (4A, 4B)
4. NEW DAREBIN CREEK POINTS OF INTEREST AND SHELTERS (5A, 5B)	5. NEW CENTRAL PLAY SPACE AND NATURE PLAY (6A, 6B)	6. WA SMITH SPORT FIELD IMPROVEMENTS
7. OPEN UNSTRUCTURED DOG OFF LEASH AREA	ANY OTHER COMMENTS?	

Participants of in-person engagement activities were invited to view the draft master plan and participate in a dot board activity that asked them to choose their top four (out of seven) recommendations for the upgrade and offer any additional comments about the project.

The available options were:

1. Integrated community building and pavilion at Darebin Drive.
2. New bridge, lighting, and improved shared path from Darebin Drive to Hawkes Drive
3. Improved walking paths throughout the reserve
4. New Darebin creek points of interest and shelters
5. New central play space and nature play
6. WA Smith sport field improvements
7. Open unstructured dog off leash area

Above: Dot Board Activity for in person consultation for WA Smith & Sycamore Recreation Reserve

Flyers with a QR code directing community to the project Engage page were available at all in-person activities and participants were encouraged to share the opportunity to

participate in the engagement with neighbours, family, and friends.

Residents within 400m of the reserve, were again letterbox dropped to update them on the project status and invite them to view the draft master plan and share their feedback through the project Engage page or at one of the community-based pop-ups.

Visitors to the reserve were alerted to the consultation through large corflute signage installed at the main entry point. The signage featured the QR code directing them to the project Engage page.

The opportunity to participate in the community engagement and community-based pop-up details were shared on Council's social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Subscribers to the Engage Whittlesea platform that had previously indicated an interest in parks and/or the Mill Park area were sent a project update by email.

The Engage Whittlesea platform utilises an accessibility add-on which enables users to easily switch to screen reader mode or easily adjust settings such as font size, contrast, dyslexia friendly options to improve the overall accessibility of the site. The platform also has an in-built translation tool to reduce language barriers to participation, allowing the page to be translated into the top ten languages spoken within the municipality.

Participation

During phase 2 consultation a total of 79 contributions were received, 41 of which were captured at community-based pop-ups and the remaining 38 through the project Engage page. Nine people requested to follow the page to receive project updates.

Below is a snapshot of consultation activities and community participation.

Community participation



Organic posts reached 7,000 people and saw over 400 people engaged, either reacting, sharing, or clicking through from Facebook to the Engage Whittlesea platform.



Two community-based pop-ups were held and saw 41 people share their feedback. The first pop-up was held at the reserve and the other at Mill Park Library.



The project Engage project page was viewed 440 times during the consultation period. 36 of the 38 participants who completed a survey online reside in the Lalor and Mill Park areas.

Of the 78 community members who participated in a consultation, 27% advised they speak a language other than English at home. Arabic, Italian, Punjabi, Greek, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi Malayalam, Persian and Tamil were the most spoken by participants.

WA Smith and Sycamore Reserves | Community Participation Demographics

Gender Participation

Female | **62%**

Male | **37%**



Age Range

Ranged from under 15 years to 75+ years. The top 3 ages for participation:

35 - 44 years | **20%**

45 - 54 years | **14%**

55 - 64 years | **14%**



Suburb Participation

The top 3 suburbs that participated are:

Mernda | **34%**

Lalor | **30%**

Mill Park | **28%**

Language

27% Speak a language other than English at home



Source: Engage Whittlesea WA Smith and Sycamore Reserves Master Plan project page; Project pop-up demographics 2023.

Above: A snapshot of community who participated at a consultation for WA Smith and Sycamore reserve

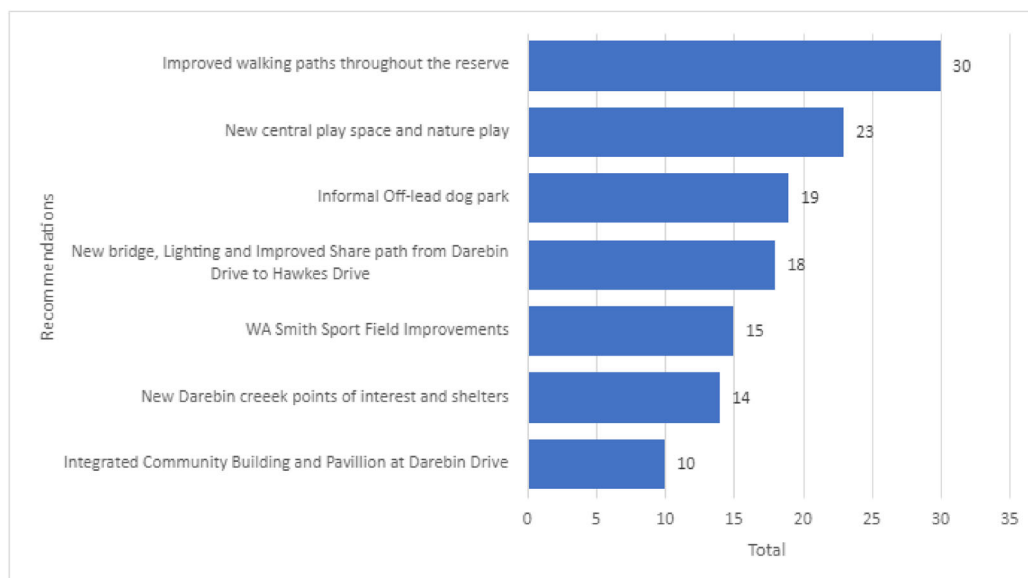
What we heard

In-person Engagement

The in-person engagement opportunities attracted 41 participants, with the majority residing in Mill Park. The residents of Mill Park and surrounding suburbs told us that their top three recommendations for the upgrade are:

1. Improved walking paths throughout the reserve
2. New central play space and nature play
3. Informal off lead dog park

The below graph shows the upgrade priorities for community at in person community-based pop-ups.



Online Engagement

We heard from 38 community members through the online survey, 45% of which live in a two-parent family with one or more children.

A total of 38 online participants responded to the question *How do you feel about the proposed draft master plan for WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve* with 63% providing a positive response to the proposed draft master plan. Full results below:



63% Like it/Like it a lot



21% I can live with it

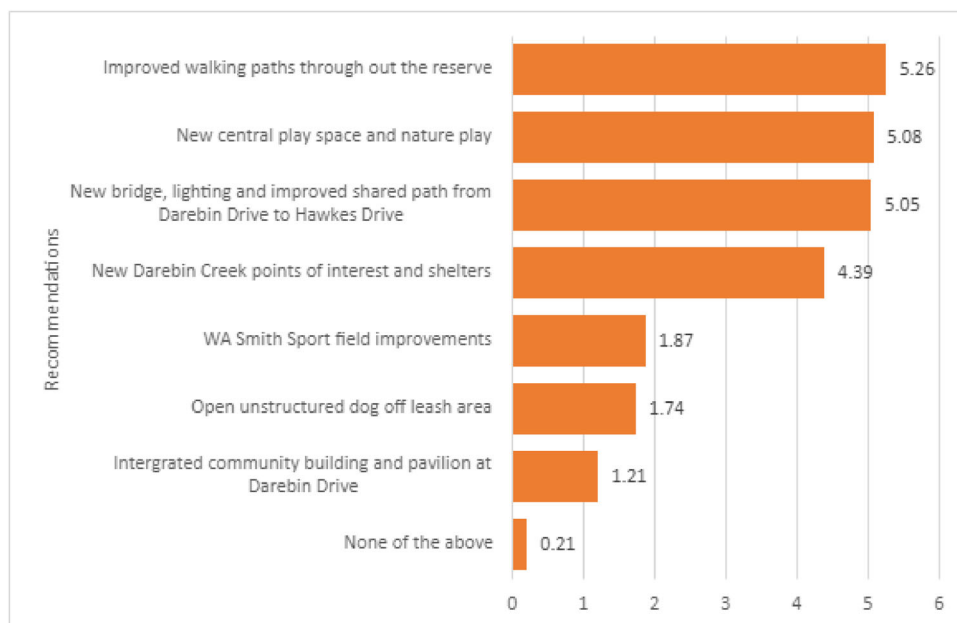


16% Don't like them/don't like them at all

Online participants were asked to select four recommendations (from the seven available) that they would like to see upgraded as a priority at the reserve. The top three priorities for our online participants are:

1. *improved walking paths throughout the reserve*
2. *New central play space and nature play and half court and fitness equipment*
3. *New bridge, lighting, and improved shared path from Darebin Drive to Hawkes Drive*

The full breakdown of community priorities from online participants is as below:



When online participants were asked *what they do when using WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve*, 76% use the reserve for daily walks or runs, followed by just under half (42%) taking their children to the playground and catching up with family and friends at the reserve (39%). Others indicated that they use the reserve to play competitive sports (24%) and for informal sports with family and friends.

Opportunities

Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the draft master plan and offered potential future opportunities for WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve, some of which may be out of scope of this project. Below are the themed comments received through both online and in-person engagement activities.



Playground– upgrading the existing playground with a play space for all ages and abilities was a priority for respondents. Some suggestions included introducing sensory play equipment and additional shelter to gather with family and friends.

“Accessible play space”

“Sensory play”

“The play areas should have more shelter”



Sports and Fitness - Facilities to play a variety of sports is a priority for participants and suggestions included a table tennis, basketball, and a volleyball court. An upgrade to the current cricket oval is also a priority.

"Multisport field, table tennis and basketball"

"The cricket oval is too small, and the ground is uneven"

"Need to add a basketball court and gym equipment"

"If it would be possible, please set up a community volleyball court in the sports area. It is one of the few sports that are not supported communally. While there exists football, soccer, basketball, tennis, cricket and even a public golf course in Bundoora. There is a lack of open volleyball spaces, despite being one of the five most played sports in the world"

"It's good, but needs better personal training and walking/cycling connections to allow for younger members of society to access the park"

"A walking path to the cricket nets"



Facilities – To increase the use of both reserves, participants suggested that facilities such as a public toilet, water taps, bins and shelter is needed.

"Water stations to fill up bottles and dog water"

"An accessible public toilet. The BMX track toilets are often locked"

"Please add bins, why are there no rubbish bins anywhere?"

"A toilet option near the BBQ area would make the area much more usable for things like kids birthday parties"

"Wheelchair friendly"

"Some weather shelters around the ovals would support community sports"

"The central shelter and BBQ is too far from the carpark so will likely not be used"



Dog park – A secure off-leash dog park was a priority for resident dog owners with taps and bins.

"I am so happy to see a space allocated to dogs and dog owners. Brilliant and needed in the area"

"Off-leash dog area would be a fantastic and contemporary addition"

“My only issue with the plan is about the unfenced dog play area. To me that is already what exists so isn't fulfilling one of the asked for items for a lot of residents in this area. Currently, myself and a lot of others use the soccer field as a makeshift dog park area, so the dogs have a fenced area to play. A fenced dog park would be an amazing feature for this reserve”.

“I think the off-leash dog park is important. Drinking fountains and rubbish bins should also be a priority”

“Overall brilliant, but I think this is a real missed opportunity for a dog off leash area. A huge amount of dog owners uses this park and there is the space to accommodate it. This area is a dead zone for dog parks - there are none within walking distance. I'm concerned the new Local Laws will see dogs banned from more sports fields which will only further marginalize responsible dog owners”



Safety - introducing additional lighting to make users feel safe and deter anti-social behaviours. As well as upgrade walking paths to increase usage in all weather conditions.

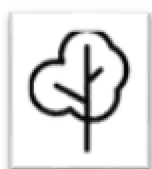
“Extra lighting and CTV for security”

“The bridge to construct is to cater for 1/100-year flood which conservatively will cost up to \$1million in design, geo and of the existing bridge with lighting and pathway would be more advantageous”

“Anything that makes the area more walkable and increases safety is what I want”

“Safer carpark, with lighting bin cage not obstructing view from the street that people can hide behind and dump rubbish”

“Resurfacing walkway to make safer”



Natural Environment – Regular maintenance and the planting of more trees was a priority for respondents.

“Natural beauty”

“Wetland's creation and native landscaping, as highest priority. Masterplan is good (use Alphington parklands as a blueprint)”

“Some areas flood and are muddy almost all year round. It would be nice to have a small lake opposite sycamore reserve and on the right of WA Smith Reserve. As it is always muddy anyway and kids' shoes get stuck might as well have a small pond or lake or something. Expand the creek”

“More trees”

“More regular maintenance. As the creek attracts snakes. Grass needs to be maintained”

Next Steps

Thank you to everyone that visited the project Engage page and contributed through the online survey or at in-person community engagement opportunities.

Feedback captured from the community in Phase 2 is being used to develop the final WA Smith and Sycamore Recreation Reserve Master plan. While we are not able to accommodate everyone’s comments, the project team will provide solutions to the issues raised and balance them with the requirements of Council.

The final master plan design will be presented to Council for endorsement in early 2024. The community will be kept updated on further developments via the [WA Smith and Sycamore project Engage page](#).