

## Lowalde Recreation Reserve Master plan Phase 2 Engagement Summary December 2023



### Introduction

Council is planning to upgrade Lowalde Recreation Reserve with features that help residents to 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 Lowalde Recreation Reserve Master plan is a high level-document providing a broad vision for the entire reserve. The master plan does not focus on one specific item or user group, but instead looks at all the reserve's features, equipment, and users. The master plan aims to balance the needs of all user groups and the facilities required for the different activities undertaken in the reserve. It will outline any improvements required to achieve this balance in a staged action plan. The plan will also be developed in such a way that it meets the needs of both the current and future users.

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

- Out of date sports and park equipment
- Public access and connections to pathways
- Visibility and safety.

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-sports courts (i.e.: half-court basketball, table tennis, volleyball, or bocce)
- Fitness stations.

## How we engaged you?

### Phase 1: gathering ideas – June to August 2022

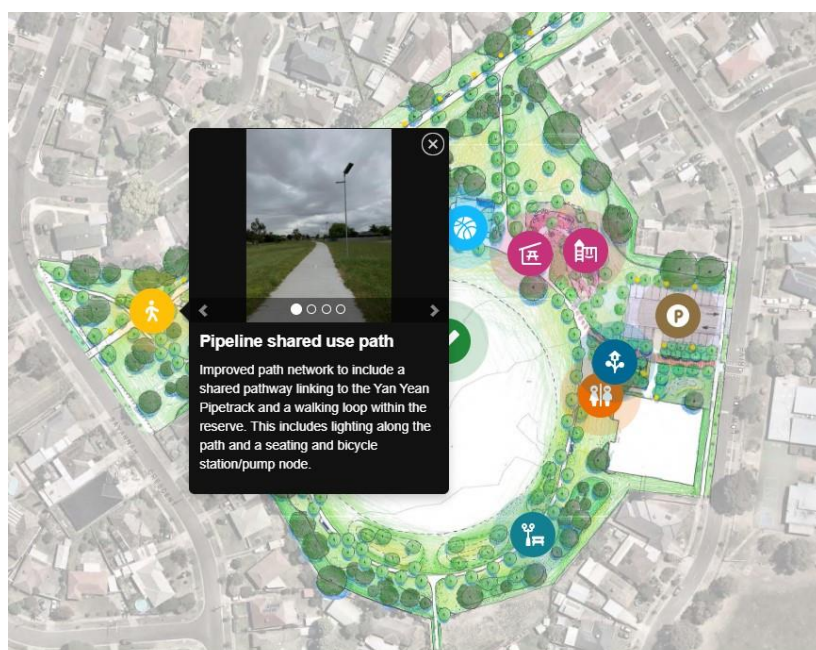
Ideas were captured online through the project Engage page and at community-based pop-ups at the Lowalde Recreation Reserve. Residents within 400m of the reserve were letterbox dropped to inform them of the consultation and invite them to share their ideas. The ideas captured in this phase helped shape the draft master plan 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 were also encouraged to complete a short survey to let us know if they liked what is being proposed and their top four priorities for the Lowalde Recreation Reserve (this activity mirrored the in-person engagement activity).



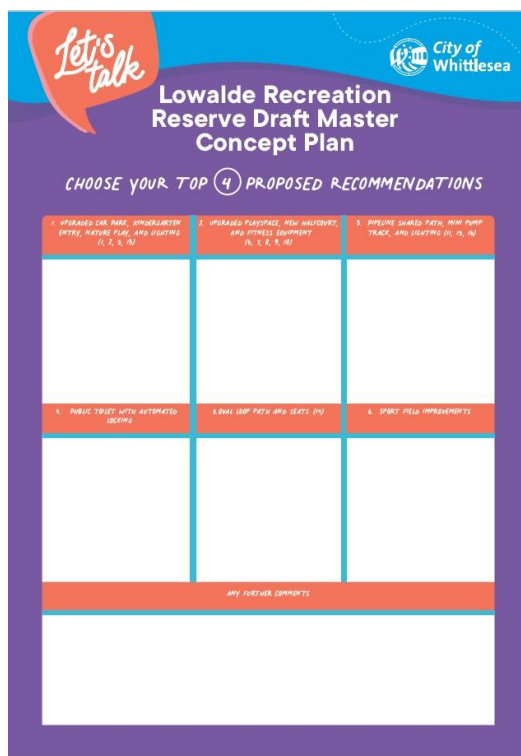
*Above: Interactive map from Lowalde Recreation Reserve project page*

During the phase 2 consultation period, the project team hosted two staffed community pop-ups on Wednesday 27 September from 10.00am to 12.00pm (during the school holidays) and on

Wednesday 11 October from 2.30pm to 4.30pm (during the school term), both held at the Lowalde Recreation Reserve, located opposite the Greenbrook Kindergarten and Epping Primary School. These dates and times enabled us to capture both school and kindergarten attendees and residents who visit the reserve for exercise, to walk their dogs or take children to the playground. It also gave residents who live directly surrounding the reserve, an opportunity to speak to the project team in person and share any concerns or opportunities.



*Above: Community pop-ups at Lowalde Recreation Reserve*



**Let's talk**

**Lowalde Recreation Reserve Draft Master Concept Plan**

**CHOOSE YOUR TOP 4 PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. UPGRADED CAR PARK, KINDERGARTEN ENTRY, NATURE PLAY, AND LIGHTING (1, 2, 3, 4)	2. UPGRADED PLAYSPACE, NEW HALF-COURT AND FITNESS EQUIPMENT (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	3. PIPELINE SHARED PATH, MINI PUMP TRACK, AND LIGHTING (1, 3, 4, 5)
4. PUBLIC TOILET WITH AUTOMATED LOCKING	5. OVAL LOOP PATH AND SEATING (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	6. SPORT FIELD IMPROVEMENTS
ANY FURTHER COMMENTS		

Participants of in-person pop-ups 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 six recommendations) for the upgrade and offer any additional comments about the project.

The available six options were:

1. Upgraded carpark, Kindergarten entry, nature play and lighting
2. Upgraded play space, new half court and fitness equipment
3. Pipeline shared path, mini pump track and lighting
4. Public toilet with automated locking
5. Oval loop path and seating
6. Sport field improvement

*Above: Dot Board Activity for in- person consultation for Lowalde Recreation Reserve.*



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 pop-ups were shared on Council's social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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.

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

## Participation

In phase 2 there was a total of 71 contributions received, 34 of which were captured at community-based pop-ups and 37 contributions made on the Whittlesea Engage platform.

A total of 236 people visited the project Engage page, eleven of which opted to follow the page to receive project updates.

Below is a snapshot of community participation in the community consultation.



Seven social posts reached more than 12,000 accounts and saw over 400 people engaged with over 200 people clicking through to the Project Engage page.



We hosted two community-based pop-ups held at the reserve and saw 34 people share their feedback. The first pop-up was held during the school holidays and the second pop-up during the school term.



The online Whittlesea Engage project page was viewed 393 times during the five-week engagement period with 236 unique visitors. A total of 37 participants completed the online survey, of which 89% indicated that they reside in the Epping area.

The targeted promotion of the community consultation successfully attracted participation from local residents, with 96% of participants living locally in Epping. We heard from a range of age groups and backgrounds as depicted in the snapshot below.

### Lowalde Recreation Reserve | Community Participation Demographics (online and in-person)

#### Gender Participation

Female | **49%**

Male | **49%**



#### Age Range

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

25 - 34 years | **21%**

Under 15 years | **21%**

35- 44 years | **20%**



#### Suburb Participation

The top suburb participation was:

Epping | **96%**

#### Language

**23%** Speak a language other than English at home



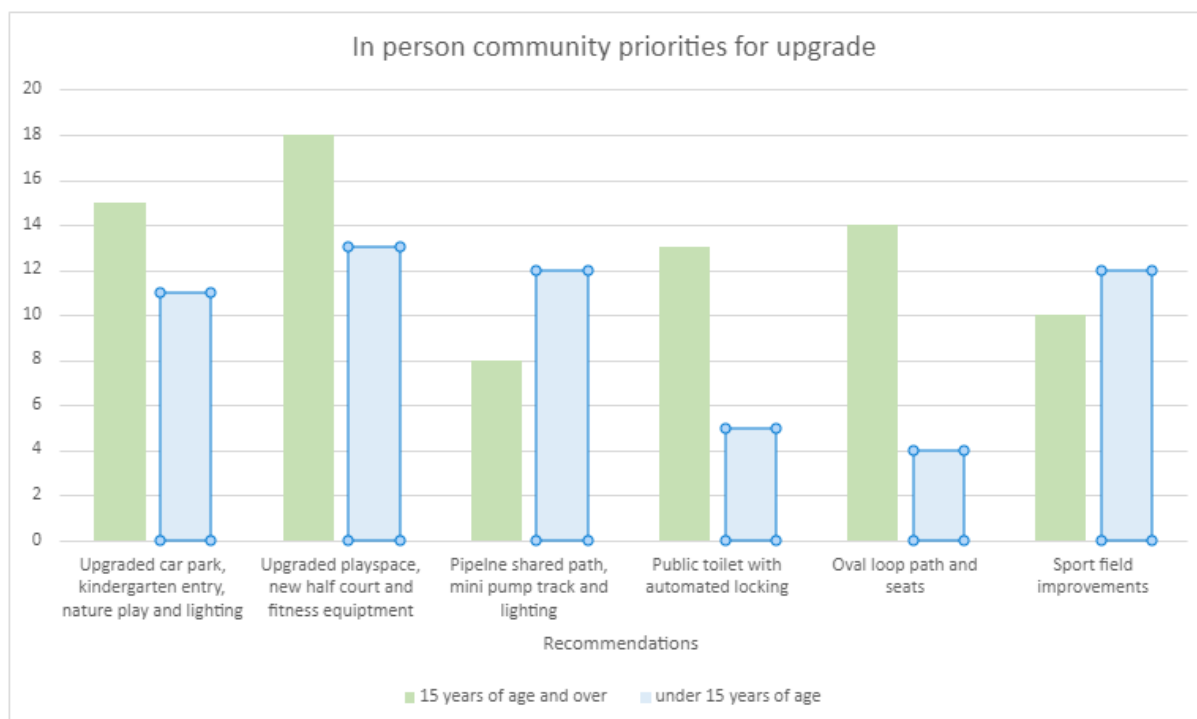
Source: Engage Whittlesea Lowalde Recreation Reserve Master Plan project page; Project pop-up demographics 2023.

Above: A snapshot of community who participated in the Lowalde Recreation Reserve Consultation

## What we heard

### In-person Engagement

The in-person engagement opportunities attracted 34 participants, with the majority living nearby to the reserve and use the reserve to take their children to the playground, walk their dog, daily exercise or walk through the reserve to school or kindergarten drop off and pick up. The youth (fifteen years and under) made up 21% of participants. The youth living nearby to the reserve told us that an upgraded play space, new half court and fitness equipment was a priority for them. This was also the top priority for participants over the age of fifteen years of age. An upgrade to the carpark, kindergarten entry and lighting was also a priority for this group, whereas for the under fifteen participants, facilities that encouraged movement and fun was more important, such as a shared walking path, pump track and sports field improvements. Full results of the top priorities can be seen in the graph below.



### Online Engagement

We heard from 37 community through the online survey, 46% of which live in a two-parent family with one or more children.

A total of 37 online participants answered the question *How do you feel about the proposed draft master plan for Lowalde Recreation Reserve* with the majority (89%) providing a positive response to the proposed draft master plan. Full results below:



89% Like it/Like it a lot

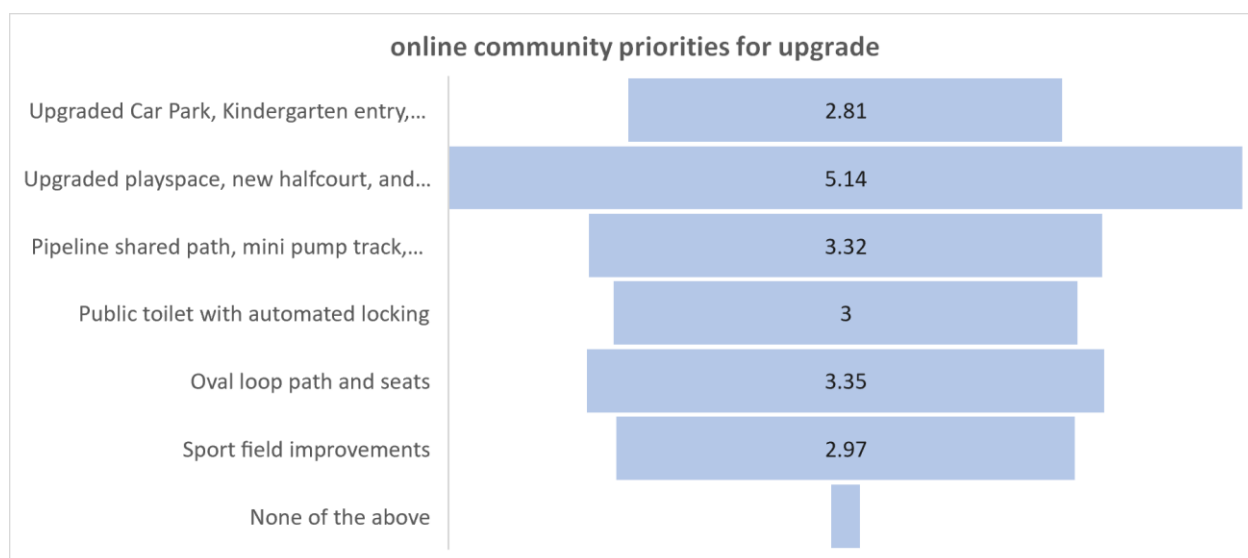


3% I can live with it



8% Don't like them/don't like them at all

Online participants were asked to select four recommendations (from the six available) that they would like to see upgraded as a priority at the reserve. As illustrated below, the priority for our online participants is an upgraded play space, new half court and fitness equipment. The full breakdown of priorities from online participants is below:



When asked *what they do when using Lowalde Recreation Reserve*, 81% of online participants advised they use the reserve for daily walks or runs, followed by close to a third taking their children to the playground (35%). Others indicated that they use the reserve to catch up with family and friends (30%) and play informal sports such as cricket (27%).

## Opportunities

Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the draft master plan and offered potential future opportunities for Lowalde Recreation, 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** – replacing the existing playground with a play space for all ages and abilities was a priority for respondents. Some suggestions included a bike/scooter track around the park, accessible playground, and equipment for all ages.

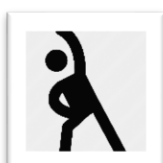
*“My kids bike ride/scooter/roller blade in the carpark there. It would be great to have a smooth concreted area (flats and slopes) for these activities. Would also be great to see the gravel paths concreted. A better playground (for older kids as well) with shade”.*

*“Having a fence around an entire park is always great for parents with multiple kids, also toilets and a bike scooter track around the park or to the side for bigger kids, while the little ones play on the equipment, shade, BBQs and drinking taps”.*



**Walking, running, and cycling** – community members suggested a running/walking track around the oval and upgrade paths to concrete to negate flooding.

*“Can the Play area/ walking path be situated at a good distance from houses that back onto the oval?”.*



**Sports and Fitness** – multiple community members highlighted improvements needed to the existing oval such as the installation of goal posts and offered suggestions for suitable additions to be considered, including basketball half court, football/soccer goals and senior fitness equipment.

*“Basketball court is a very good idea. please make sure it happens”*

*“Sport field goals (AFL, soccer)”*

*“Exercise equipment for Senior”s*

*“Basketball court, footy goal posts, paved bike track, upgraded playground, pump track”*



**Facilities** - replacing or introducing new facilities including toilets, seating, picnic areas, BBQ and bins. Many residents would like to see a gated dog park on the reserve and a fence surrounding the playground.

*“Picnic tables/BBQ and drink tap”*

*“Fenced dog area for fetch and training”*

*“BBQ area and extra bins”*



**Safety** - introducing additional lighting, new fencing, and car park improvements to make users feel safe and help with areas prone to flooding.

*“Safety CTV and extra lighting”*

*“Gravel path, not concrete”*



**Natural Environment** – community members suggested incorporating a community garden in the plan. Others would like the existing trees retained.

*“Maintenance of existing trees – current trees not great for people who suffer from asthma and other allergies”*

*“Regular Park maintenance”*



*“Don't cut down all the established trees (including fruiting olive trees and approx. 20 Ficus trees) and turn them into landfill like you did in Rochdale Square Lalor and then plant seedlings”*

## 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 Lowalde 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 [Lowalde Recreation Reserve project page](#).