

# VR Michael Reserve

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**DRAFT MASTER PLAN REPORT**

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# Introduction.

VR Michael Reserve was identified as one of the most popular open spaces in Lalor and Epping in the community survey undertaken in 2018 for the Whittlesea Open Space Strategy.

The reserve has an area of approx. 7.4 hectares which is generally characterised by open grass area comprising several facilities including playspace, Lalor United Bocce Social Club, basketball court, picnic facilities, public toilet and car parking. The Playground equipment was upgraded in 2018.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

VR Michael Reserve is situated in Lalor which extends from Merri Creek in the west to Darebin Creek in the east and is relatively central in the established areas.

Lalor adjoins Thomastown to the south and Epping to the north. The Hume Freeway, Edgars Road, High Street, Dalton Road and Mernda Railway corridor present barriers to safe walking access to open space within the suburb.

The forecasted residential population change in Lalor is a 9 percent increase of approximately 3,861 people by 2026.

67 percent of the forecasted additional dwellings will be located in the Carlingford and Mosaic Living Development Plan area west of Edgars Road.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data 2021 provided information on the demographics, cultural and language diversity of Lalor.



### POPULATION

**23,587 residents in 2021**

**Population density**  
**3,143 persons per square km**

**+ 4000 more residents by 2041**

**23.4% of population**  
**are 60+ years of age**

**30.2% of population are**  
**less than 25 years of age**

**Median age is 37**

*(The Australian Bureau of  
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



### CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**53% were born overseas**

**70% speak a language other than**  
**English at home**

**Italian and Indian are the**  
**dominant cultures/groups in Lalor**  
**after Australians**

*(The Australian Bureau of  
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



### URBAN HEAT

**5-10°C hotter above the**  
**non-urban baseline**

*(Cooling and greening  
Melbourne, Urban Heat  
Data 2018)*



### FAMILIES

**46.5% of households are couples**  
**with children**

**32% of households are couples**  
**without children**

**19.3% are one parent family**

*(The Australian Bureau of  
Statistics census data (ABS) 2021)*



### OPEN SPACE AND TREES

**24 square meters**  
**provision of usable**  
**(unencumbered) open space per**  
**resident (Open Space Plan, 2016)**

**19 square meters projected**  
**provision of usable open space**  
**per resident (2041)**

**Recommended minimum open**  
**space provision is 20-25 sqm per**  
**resident**

**6.51% canopy cover**

*(Greening Whittlesea City Forest  
Strategy 2020-2040)*



VR MICHAEL RESERVE

VR Michael Reserve is one of the City of Whittlesea’s open space reserves in Lalor, an established area of the municipality.

The Reserve was developed in the 1950s and is a predominantly non-sporting reserve, located on the south east corner of Deveny Road & High Street in Lalor. It has an extensive connected path system, open grassed areas and play facilities and occupies an area of 7.07 hectares.

The Open Space Strategy 2016 identifies the reserve as a municipal open space which is characterised as a larger predominantly non-sporting reserve which has an extensive connected path system, open grassed areas and play facilities.

The Reserve was identified as one of the most popular in Lalor and Epping in the community survey undertaken in 2018 for the Whittlesea Open Space Strategy. In terms of hierarchy, it is identified as a municipal open space with 500m walking catchment. The open Space strategy recommends maintaining the park and providing exercise equipment, more seating and shelters with BBQs.

Additionally, VR Michael Reserve is proposed as future dog off-leash area in the Dog off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan. it is outlined as ‘open unstructured’ dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

HISTORY OF VR MICHAEL RESERVE

Vic Michael was a past councillor, Shire President, and Mayor.

- Shire of Whittlesea Councillor from: 1954-1988
- Shire President 1958-1960, 1971-72, 1979-80, 1987-1988
- First Mayor as the City of Whittlesea 1988.

Mr Michael was an early resident of Lalor moving in 1951. He represented the growing urban areas of the municipality at a time when the Council was dominated by rural interests.

He received an MBE (Member of the British Empire) for services to the Lalor Community. The Great Hall, City of Whittlesea is also named after Vic Michael.

1.2 Purpose of Master Plan

As per the Open Space Strategy, Master Plans are recommended to be prepared when major works are required for State, Regional and Neighbourhood open spaces which have a broader catchment of users and frequently a range of community stakeholder groups such as community organisations and sporting clubs.

This project is raised as a council resolution in relation to matters raised in a petition requesting an increase to the number of parking spaces and accessible parking at VR Michael Reserve in Lalor.

The petition was tabled at the Council meeting on 19 September 2022; Council resolved to note the petition from 99 signatories (60 residents and 39 non-residents) requesting Council increase the parking spaces and accessible parking spaces for elderly citizens at VR Michael Reserve. The Council resolution was to “Undertake a park master plan in the 2023/24 Financial Year for a more comprehensive approach to park planning for existing and future uses”.

The purpose of this Landscape Master Plan is to guide the future development and management of VR Michael Reserve.

The master plan endeavours to:

- Create a safe and inclusive, highly accessible reserve that supports and encourages use by people of all ages and abilities;
- Promote environmental sustainability through ecological conservation and improvement, increased tree canopy cover and water sensitive urban design;
- Improve community safety through a well-considered functional layout as well as adherence to CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Urban Design) principles and applying gender-sensitive lens;
- Inform future capital works, as stand-alone projects, or staged with a logically cumulative sequencing;
- Recommend necessary improvements to the reserve to achieve a high-quality landscape setting while protecting and enhancing its existing character.

The Australian Urban Observatory (AUO) in 2021 provided information on the liveability criteria for Lalor, as follows:



LIVEABILITY 98.6

The Liveability Index is a composite indicator was calculated based 13 domains: Community Centres, Culture and Leisure, Early Years, Education, Health and Social Services, Sport and Recreation, Food, Convenience, Walkability, Public Transport, Public Open Space, Housing Affordability, and Local Employment.

(100 is average)



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRESS 28.1

The Liveability Index is a composite indicator was calculated percentage of households in the bottom 40% of incomes spending more than 30% of income on housing costs.

(%)



REGULAR PUBLIC ACCESS 48.9

Percentage of dwellings within 400m of public transport with regular 30 minute weekday service (7am-7pm).

(%)



SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE 98.6

Social infrastructure refers to community and individual support services and resources such as health, education, early childhood, community support, community development, culture, sport and recreation, parks and emergency services.

(/15)



LIVEABILITY 39.8

Percentage of dwellings within 400 m of public open space larger than 1.5 hectares.

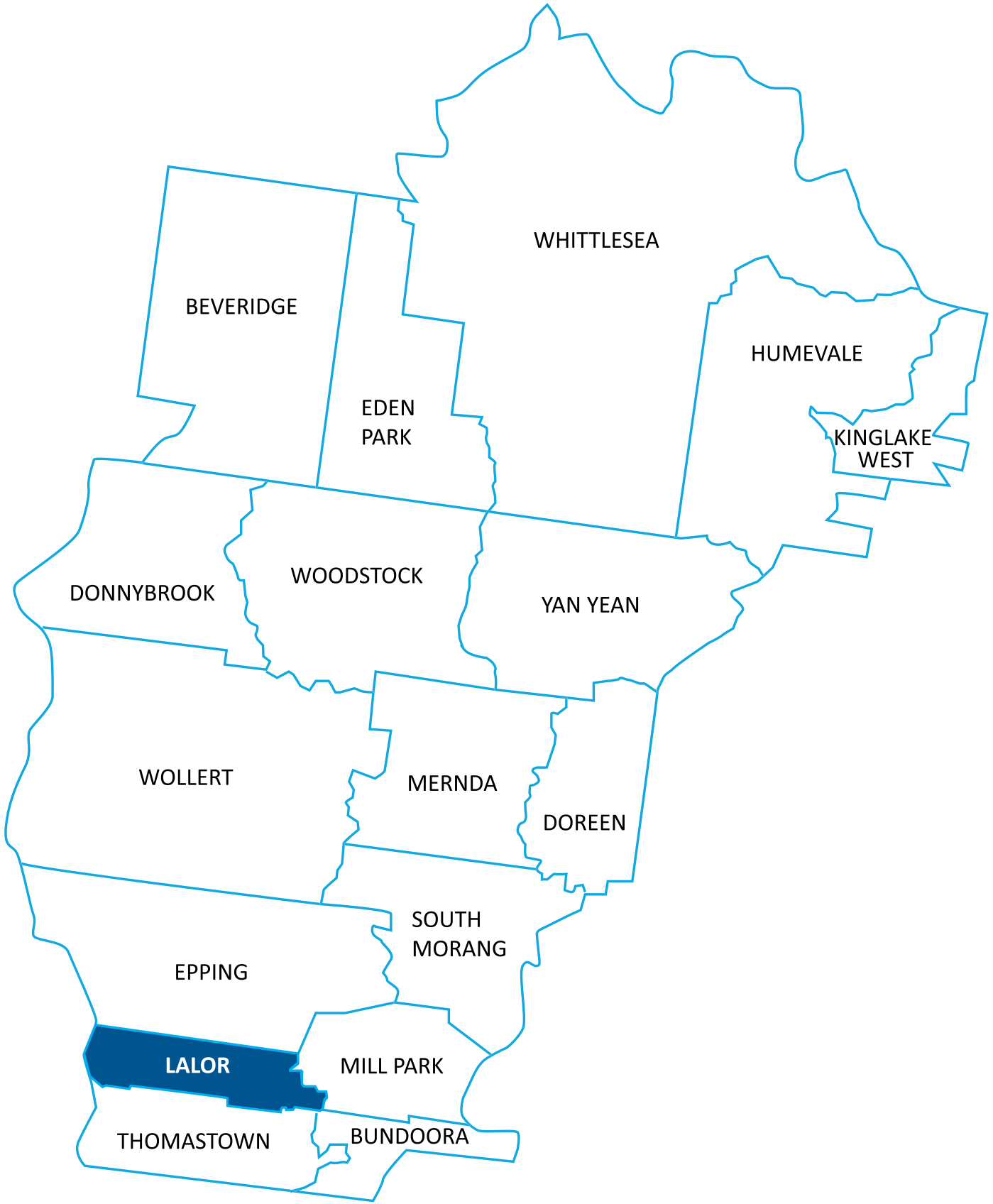
(400m (%))



WALKABILITY 0.1

Walkability for transport is calculated based on three key factors: land use mix and services of daily living (something to walk to); street connectivity (a way to get there); and dwelling density (higher population densities are associated with increased populations needed to supply services and different land uses).

(0 is average)



Source: The Australian Urban observatory (AUO), 2021









Open Space & Public Realm  
Opportunities Identified by  
Epping Central Structure Plan

-  New Public Open Space Opportunity
-  Urban Square/Public Realm Focal Point (New Opportunity)



LEGEND

CONTEXT PLAN

-  Site Boundary
-  Open Space (Recreation)
  - ① Lalor Recreation Reserve
  - ② Partridge Street Reserve
  - ③ Stockade Park
  - ④ Huskisson Recreation Reserve
  - ⑤ Ziebell's Farmhouse & Lutheran Church Land
  - ⑥ Supply Park
-  Education & Health
  - ① Lalor North Primary School
  - ② High Street early Learning & kinder
  - ③ Outer Northern trade Training Centre
  - ④ Merriang Special Development School
  - ⑤ Peter Lalor Secondary College
  - ⑥ Northern School for Autism
  - ⑦ St Catherine's Primary School
  - ⑧ Lalor Gardens Primary School
  - ⑨ St Lukes Primary School
  - ⑩ Vasey Park Preschool
  - ⑪ Lalor Primary School
  - ⑫ Lalor Secondary College
  - ⑬ Northern Hospital Epping
-  Community Facilities
  - ① Mill Park Soccer Club
  - ② Medical diagnostic imaging center
  - ③ Wedding venue
  - ④ Aged Care Service
  - ⑤ Bocce Social Club
  - ⑥ Rochdale Medical Centre
  - ⑦ Links Community Garden
  - ⑧ Lalor Community Garden
-  Commercial Facilities
  - ① Fast food restaurant
  - ② Costco Wholesale
  - ③ Pacific Shopping Mall
  - ④ Rochdale Square Shops
-  Industrial



LEGEND

OPEN SPACE HIERARCHY

-  State
  - ① Ziebell's farmhouse & Lutheran Church Land
-  Municipal
  - ② Lalor Recreation Reserve
  - ③ Partridge Street Reserve
  - ④ Huskisson Recreation Reserve
-  Neighbourhood
  - ⑤ Stockade Park
  - ⑥ Supply Park
-  Site Boundary





### 3.1 Project Method

The development of the Master Plan has involved a comprehensive review of background documents as well as extensive engagement with the community and consultation with key external and internal stakeholders.

Informed by consultation and site understanding, key recommendations were developed for the overall site.

In preparing this report, our team initially conducted background research and reviews of existing documents, as summarised below, as well as analysis of the study area, to build our understanding of the context. Our analysis focused on the study area's existing conditions, current issues and challenges and opportunities to improve the site.

Our background analysis and site understanding were expanded by a visit to the study area. The project process then focused on the Stakeholder/Community Engagement process, which sought inputs from nearby residents, traders of adjoining shops, Lalor United Bocce Social Club members, general users of the reserve and internal stakeholders.

The purpose of these engagement activities was to gain greater knowledge about the issues, opportunities and priorities for VR Michael Reserve, to form a more detailed 'brief' for the planning work going forward in the project, and to provide the foundations for developing a Vision for the VR Michael Reserve. The Stakeholder Engagement Findings Report can be found in Appendix 2.

In the next stage, the project process focuses on the development of the concept plan for the site. Then, the project process focuses on the second phase of the community engagement to have community feedback on the draft master plan.

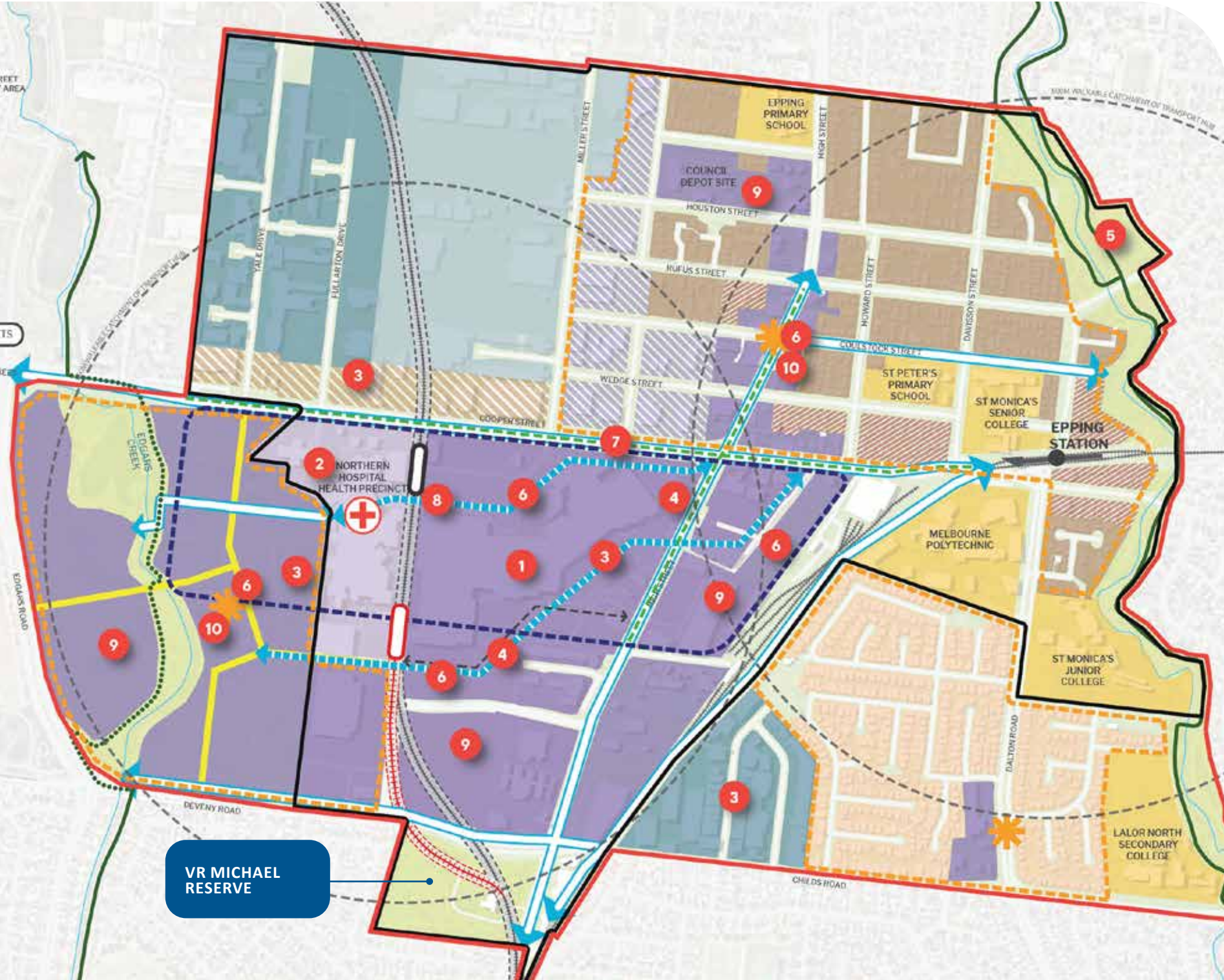
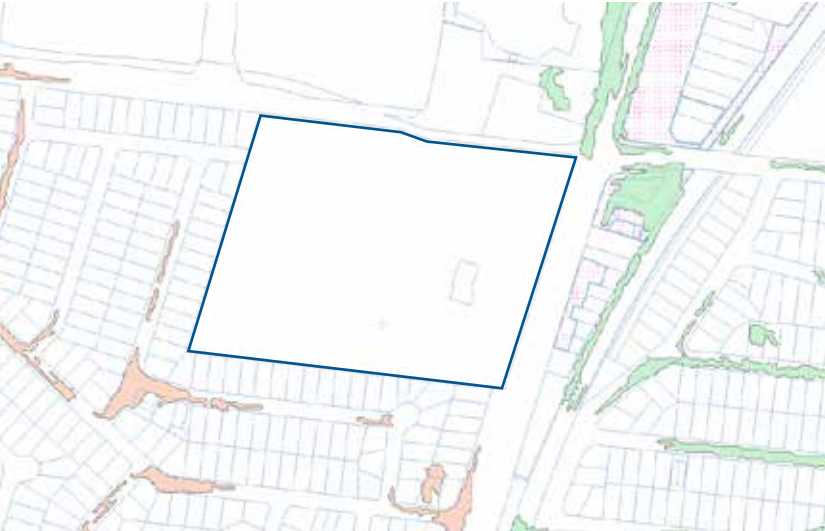
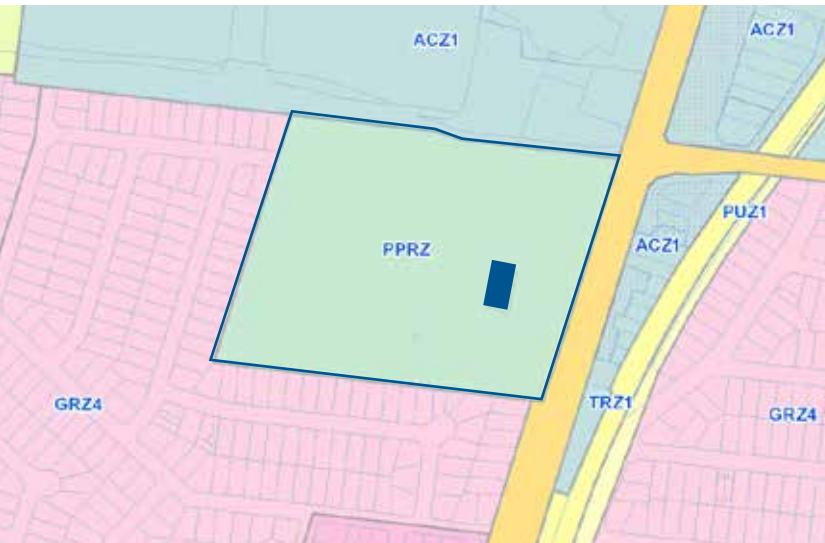
The diagram illustrates the steps for the project.



### 1.4 Planning Controls

VR Michael Reserve is located within Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ), next to Activity Centre Zone (ACZ1), State Transport Infrastructure Zone (TRZ1), General Residential Zone – Schedule 4 (GRZ4) and Public Use Zone – Service & Utility (PUZ1), as presented in **Figure 4**.

The Lalor Bocce Social Club within VR Michael Reserve (shown in blue) is a council owned land that has been leased out. According to the flood modelling, this area is not in a floodplain zone, as **Figure 05**.



#### LEGEND

#### EPPING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PLAN

- Potential Wollert Rail Corridor
- Proposed Alternative Rail Alignment
- Future Train Station Interchange
- Potential Alternate Train Station



# Background.

## **Whittlesea 2040 - A Place For All**

To be ready for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring, ensuring that the City of Whittlesea is a great place to live now and in the future.

## **Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy**

More than ever, our public spaces and infrastructure need to perform even more roles to meet the needs of all of our community. For example, our local parks need to cater to all ages and abilities – and even dogs!

## **Connected Community Strategy**

Improve safety and perceptions of safety for our community through activating public spaces and places, supporting community vibrancy, and helping people to feel safe and supported.

## **The Dog off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan 2106-2026**

Proposes VR Michael Reserve as future dog off-leash area. It is outlined as 'open unstructured' dog off-leash area with an allocation of 1.353 ha of 7.07ha reserve.

## **The Epping Central Structure Plan 2023**

Outlines a proposed off-road shared path and two options for the alignment of the future Wollert Rail Corridor that passes through VR Michael Reserve.

The Plan also identifies going through the reserve. Council Advocacy Prospectus 2023-25 suggests the construction of the rail corridor for 2030, as **Figure 06**.

## 2.0 Council Strategies and Plans

Several existing strategic planning documents, policies and strategies have influenced the VR Michael Reserve Master Plan. A review and summary of each including key directions relevant to the Reserve is included in Appendix 1.

The documents reviewed are as follows:

- ▶ Whittlesea 2040 – A place for all
- ▶ Whittlesea Open Space Strategy 2016
- ▶ Thomastown and Lalor Place Framework 2023
- ▶ Long-Term community Infrastructure Plan
- ▶ Epping Central Structure Plan 2023
- ▶ Dog Off-Leash Area Policy and Management Plan 2016–2026
- ▶ Walking and Cycling Plan 2022-2027
- ▶ Active Whittlesea Strategy 2019-2028
- ▶ Community Plan 2021-2025
- ▶ Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Plan 2021-2041 (Draft)
- ▶ Multiple Sports Strategy 2017-2026
- ▶ Play Space Planning Framework and Policy 2013-16
- ▶ Thriving Children, Young People and Families Strategy
- ▶ Spaces 8 to 12+: Creating Engaging Places for Young People 2013-2018
- ▶ Greening Whittlesea
- ▶ Equal and Safe Strategy 2019
- ▶ Your Ground Project 2021
- ▶ Signage Management Plan
- ▶ Disability Action Plan 2017-2021
- ▶ Natural and Built Shade Policy 2016
- ▶ Park Lighting Strategy 2006
- ▶ Lighting for Shared User Paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles, City of Whittlesea - Arup 2022





# Site Analysis.

The site has undergone geotechnical investigations, revealing a history that includes quarrying for basalt prior to 1960.

Subsequently, during the 1960s and 1970s, the area served as a municipal tip, likely operated by the City of Whittlesea. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has confirmed its recognition as a former municipal landfill, operational from 1974 to 1978, spanning 7.5 hectares and accumulating approximately 250,000m<sup>3</sup> of waste.

## 3.0 Site Existing Conditions & Analysis

### 3.1 Site Conditions

This section of the plan provides a summarised of existing conditions categorised into the following themes:

- Movement & Access
- Recreation and Park Infrastructure
- Environment & Landscape

VR Michael Reserve is identified in the City of Whittlesea Open Space Strategy as a Municipal Open Space Reserve with a 500m walking catchment in Lalor which is about 10-15 minute walk, however this catchment is limited by Deveny Road and High Street on the north and east side of the site. Refer to **Figures 07** and **08**.

The site exhibits varied topography, particularly noticeable on the eastern side, with an approximate elevation difference of 3-4 meters between High Street and some part of the site.

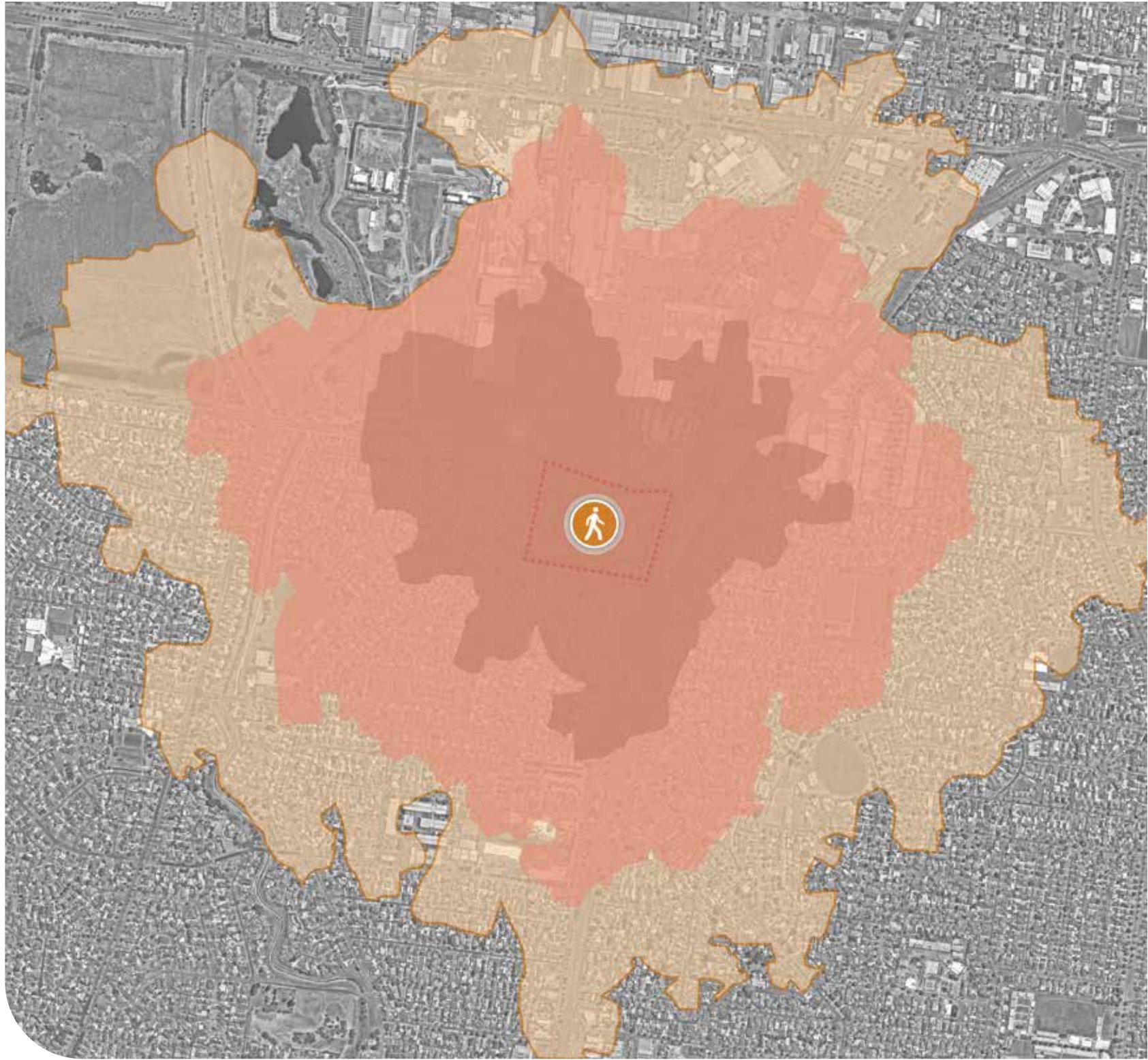


#### LEGEND

#### WALKING CATCHMENT

- |                        |                             |                                   |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Site Boundary          | 566 Bus Route and Bus Stops | 555 Bus Route and Bus Stops       |
| 500m Walking Catchment | 559 Bus Route and Bus Stops | 554 & 557 Bus Route and Bus Stops |





#### LEGEND

#### PEDESTRIAN SHADE



08. IMAGE Pedestrian Shed

#### 3.1.1 Movement & Access

Access to the study site is exceptionally versatile, offering the community a range of convenient methods. Public transport is a key player in accessibility, with two nearby bus stations situated at the High Street and Deveny Road intersection, providing efficient and well-connected services. The Lalor Station, serving the Mernda rail corridor, is within a 10-minute walk from the reserve, enhancing the public transportation options.

In terms of active transport, the community can utilise the on-road cycle lanes along High Street and Deveny Road. Simultaneously, pedestrians can enjoy clearly defined pathways to the reserve through shared-use paths along both High Street and Deveny Road, which will be connected to the VR Michael Reserve through the reserve master plan recommendations.

#### PATH NETWORK

The study area has relatively good walking facilities in place, with footpaths provided along Deveny Road and High Street.

There is a combination of formalised and unformalised footpaths in the Reserve which provides a loop walking path around the reserve from the reserve entrances in the surrounding streets.

A few locations in the study area have been identified to be lacking in pedestrian connection and footpaths. These are along the High Street near the lower car parking area, along the vehicle access

path to the reserve from High Street and the pedestrian-desired line from the bus stop on High Street to the reserve.

The main entrance from High Street requires an upgrade to its physical features (i.e. paving/planting) as well as reconfiguring to improve sight lines and highlight the entry.

#### CAR PARKING

Car parking for VR Michael Reserve is provided within the reserve in three areas, including the car park in front of existing Bocce Social Club with seven car spaces including one DDA compliant parking bay, the car park near the public toilets with eight car spaces, and the main car parking which has the highest capacity with up to 34 car parking spaces.

The three mentioned car parks are sealed with asphalt surfacing and include 49 spaces in total.

There is also lower car parking on the southeast side of the reserve with granitic sand surfacing which includes a 21 car space capacity.

The Council's Traffic and Transport Team undertook onsite investigation from 18 to 25 October 2022. The findings from the investigation indicate that the current parking demands in the reserve is high on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Refer to **Figure 09**.

There are 49 on-site parking spaces in total, which according to a recent traffic assessment, with 400 Bocce club members and a capacity of roughly 190 members, there are not enough car park

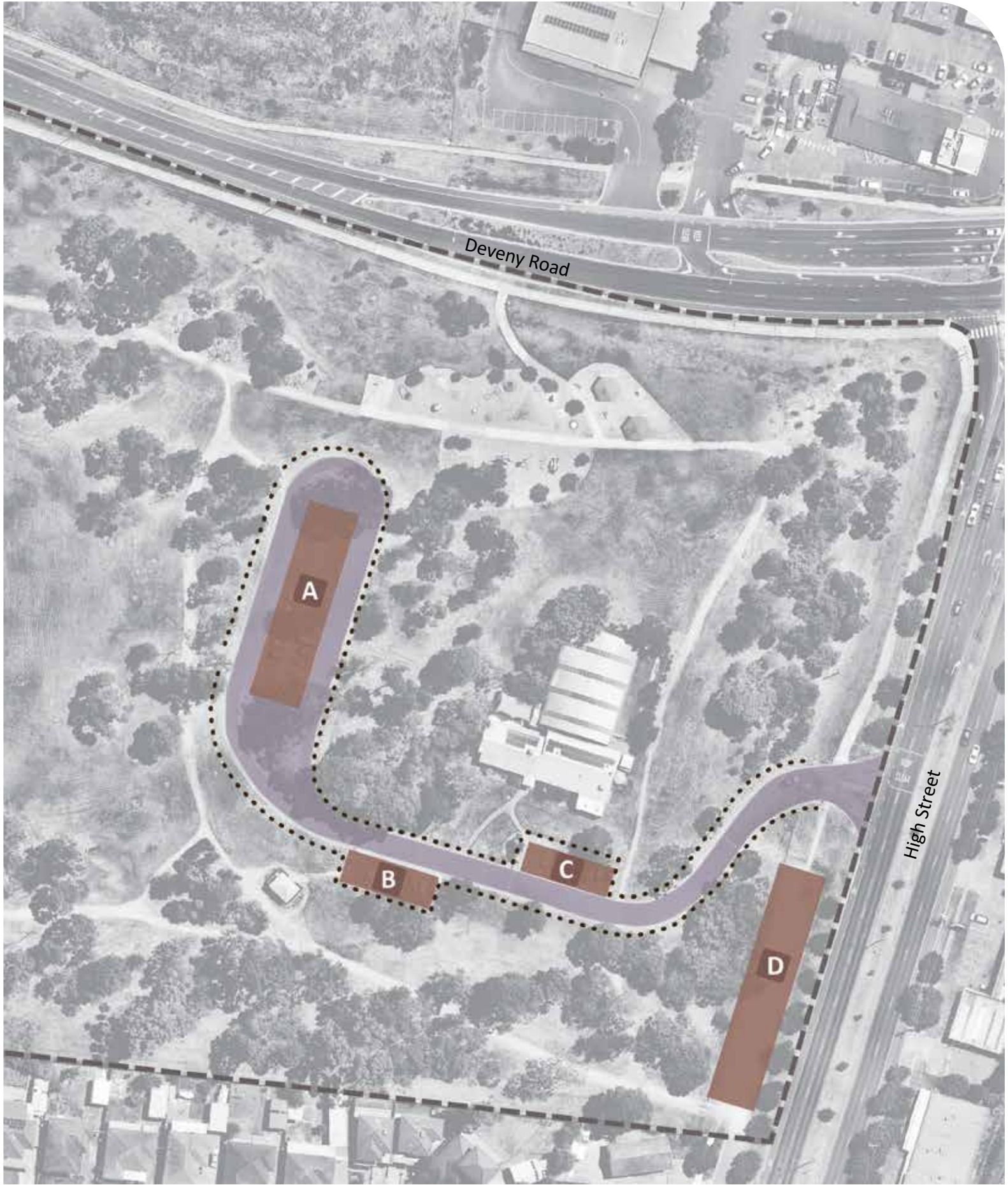
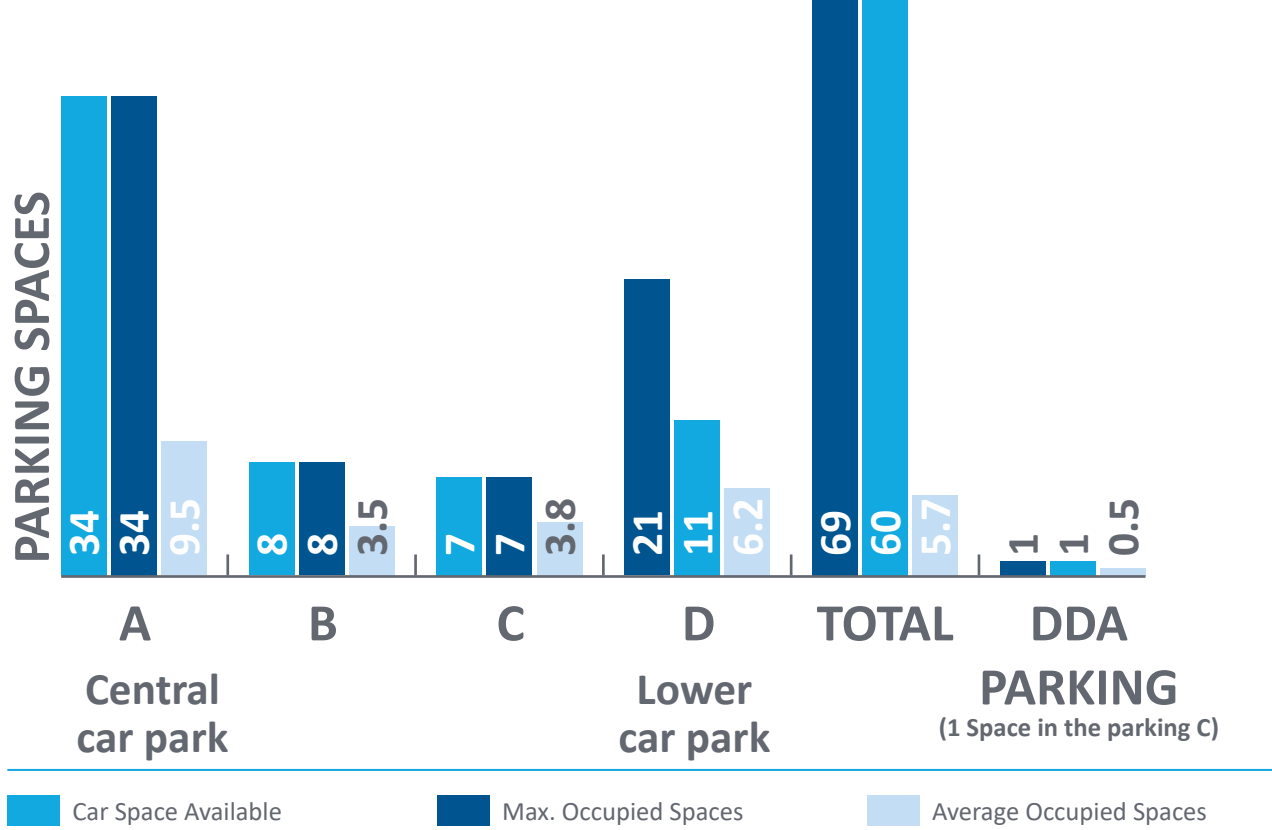
spaces to meet the demands of the club or park users.

Investigations indicate the parking area closest to the Lalor Bocce Club (parking area C) is the most accessible car park to the club and the most utilised. Whereas, the lower car park which is the least accessible due to the gradient, lack footpath, and informal surface, is the least occupied.

#### PARK ENTRANCES

The main entry to the Reserve is from High Street, with two pedestrian entries from Deveny Road and one from Bellarine Drive.

The Reserve is surrounded on two sides by residential properties, with back fences facing the Reserve.



09. IMAGE Car Park Survey





### 3.1.2 Informal Recreation and Park

#### INFRASTRUCTURE

The site currently contains the following facilities:

- ▶ Bocce social club
- ▶ Toilets
- ▶ Playground
- ▶ Picnic facilities
- ▶ Two shelters
- ▶ Basketball court
- ▶ Car parks
- ▶ Walking tracks

VR Michael Reserve currently includes a great deal of community infrastructure and social amenities, which are generally well used, however these facilities would benefit from rationalisation and upgrading where appropriate. In terms of park furniture, there is a need for more drink fountains, particularly one with a dog bowl.

#### PLAYSPACE

The playspace includes a slide, climbing ropes and a sliding pole. There are swings, wobble boards, trampolines and a rock climbing wall. Playground equipment was upgraded in 2018.

#### RECREATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The main sporting/recreation facility present at the reserve is the Bocce rink. Other provisions for sport in the reserve is basketball half court. Less formal provision includes the open grass area central to the reserve which currently has no goals.

The Lalor United Bocce and Social Club (the Club), established in 1996, is a non-profit organisation providing social, cultural, recreational, and welfare support to all members of the Maltese Community in the State of Victoria. Located in VR Michael Reserve, the Club provides activities and services such as Bocce and billiards competitions, line dancing, bingo, Maltese language classes, Maltese festivals and social events all year round.

The operating hours are Monday to Saturday, 9 am to 4 pm; the busiest days are Tuesdays and Saturdays. On busy days the club has recorded an attendance of 190 people. According to the Club president, the club has 400 members, and the majority of the members are senior citizens with mobility issues.

The toilet facility requires a complete upgrade or replacement to bring it up to today's standard.

### 3.1.3 Environment & Landscape

VR Michael Reserve's landscape character is fairly consistent throughout the reserve and is characterised by extensive and mature native vegetation. There are over 660 individual trees within VR Michael Reserve, a mixture of 273 Australian, 374 Victorian and 41 exotic species. Of those, thirty-five (35) Eucalyptus (Eucalyptus sp.) were at the end of their useful life expectancy

The canopy cover of trees with more than 3m height at VR Michael Reserve is 20025 sqm which is approx. 29.27% of the study area.

The following pages provide images of a summarised analysis of existing conditions. Refer to Figure 11.



#### LEGEND

#### CANOPY COVER

- Site Boundary
- Canopy cover (>3m height)





LEGEND

SITE FEATURE

- A** Bocce Court & Social Club
- B** Public Toilets
- C** Picnic Area with Shelter
- D** Playspace
- E** Basketball Half Court
- F** Lower Car Park
- Gravel Path
- Concrete Path
- Carriage ways/Asphalt path
- On-Road Cycle Lane
- On-Road Cycle Lane (shared with on street car park)
- Car Park Entry
- Pedestrian Entry
- Maintenance Gate
- P Car Parking
- Trees/Vegetation
- Fence
- Wooden Posts
- Light
- Drinking Fountain
- Bus Stop
- Litter Bin
- Bench/Seat
- Entrance Sign
- Shelter & Picnic Table
- Pedestrian Crossing
- Pedestrian Desire Line

11. IMAGE Site Feature



**A** Public Toilets



**L** Central Lawn



**K** Playspace



**J** Western Slide



**B** Basketball Half Court and Playspace



**C** Shelters and BBQ Facilities



**I** Circuit Path



**H** Lower Car Park



**D** Lalor United Bocce Social Club



**E** Bocce Court



**F** Main Car Park



**G** Car Park net to the Boccee Social Club

12. IMAGE Existing Facilities



### 3.2 Site Analysis

This section of the plan provides a summarised analysis of existing conditions. The purpose of the analysis is to provide commentary on issues and deficiencies identified by the project team ensuring recommendations to mitigate the issues can be constructed logically.

The analysis covers findings categorised into the following themes:

- Movement & Access
- Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure
- Environment & Landscape

#### 3.2.1 Movement and Access

##### KEY ISSUES

###### PATH

- Pathways within the reserve are predominantly compacted gravel around the open grassed area with varying widths. These informal footpaths meet minimum Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements, however, can be increasingly expensive to maintain and do not meet the needs of people with limited mobility
- Pathways within the reserve are inconsistent in surface treatment e.g. Concrete to gravel connection Pathway areas are subject to water logging in wet weather
- No DDA access path to the public toilet
- Lack of continuous footpath along High Street
- Lack of pedestrian access/entry from the bus station and traffic light on High street to the reserve
- Lack of connection/pedestrian path from the parking to the playspace and picnic area
- Lack of connection from the existing path to the second shelter
- No footpath connecting the main entrance from High Street to the reserve
- A narrow path from the central car park to the rear side of the club with no connection to the main entrance of the club
- Poor access path (no DDA compliance path) from the lower car parking to the Bocce Social Club

###### CAR PARKING

- Safety risk at the car park due to dead tree branches
- Lack of lighting in the central car park
- No Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives associated with car parks or buildings at the site
- Scattered car parks throughout the reserve
- Insufficient peak-hour car parking

###### ENTRANCE

- Poor entrance from Bellarine Drive
- Inconsistent and poor wayfinding signage at reserve entrances
- Lack of pedestrian safe crossing facilities, particularly from High Street to the main entrance of the reserve
- No vehicle access/entrance from Deveny Road to the reserve resulting in more distant and complicated access for visitors

##### KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Investigate formalising the main existing paths within reserve to concrete to create consistency within the reserve and minimise maintenance cost
- Investigate improved drainage systems such as permeable paver in pathway areas to mitigate flooding and ensure usability even during wet seasons
- Provide a shared path along the lower car park and connect it to the North-South footpath on High Street
- Provide Pedestrian access/entry to the northeast corner of the reserve from the bus stop on High Street, enhancing accessibility and encouraging more visitors to use public transportation to access the reserve
- Provide a path connecting the central car park to the playspace and picnic area
- Provide a path from the existing path to the second shelter
- Provide a shared path along the entrance path from High Street to the existing central car park
- Investigate alternative path connecting the the central car park to the entrance of the Bocce Social Club
- A DDA compliant and all weather path from the lower car park to the Bocce Social Club
- Additional (solar) lighting to to illuminate the the central car park at night
- Investigate relocation or integration of the car park areas
- Investigate increasing car park spaces next to the Bocce Social Club
- Improve the entrance from Bellarine Drive to create an attractive, welcoming gateway to the reserve
- Establish wayfinding signage for entrance nodes to direct people to existing facilities within the reserve and surrounding area
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street to improve safety and accessibility for visitors using the main entrance of the reserve
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street

##### KEY ISSUES



##### LEGEND

- |                                    |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| High maintenance gravel Path       | Poor entrances                          | Narrow footpath with no connection to the club entrance |
| Inconsistency in surface treatment | Lack of pedestrian crossing facilities  | Scattered & insufficient peak hour car parking          |
| Lack of footpath                   | Complicated vehicle access              | Proposed Wollert rail line                              |
| Poor & no DDA Compliant path       | Inconsistent & poor way finding signage | Proposed off-road shared path                           |
| Lack of pedestrian entry           | Areas subject to water logging          |   |



**A** Pathways are inconsistent in surface treatment



**B** Lack of pedestrian access to the reserve from High Street



**C** No DDA access path to the public toilet & subject to flooding



**D** Poor entrance from Bellarine Drive



**E** Pathway areas are subject water logging in wet weather



**F** Lack of connection from the central car park to the playspace





### 1.1.1 Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure

#### KEY ISSUES

##### PLAYSPACE

- Safety concern due to the close proximity of the playspace to Deveny Road
- Lack of play facilities for older kids /teenagers
- Lack of shade within the play space, limiting longer stays during sunny days.

##### INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

- The existing toilet is in poor condition (based on the toilet assessment report)
- The toilet is situated at a distance from the playground, but it is easily accessible from the main entrance.
- Lack of existing outdoor facility to support the bocce clubs's users
- Notable dog population in Lalor and deficiency of dog off leash are across the suburb (only Whittlesea Public Gardens includes dog off-leash area)
- No designated/flexible spaces for events such as regular markets, multicultural events and structured events during school holidays

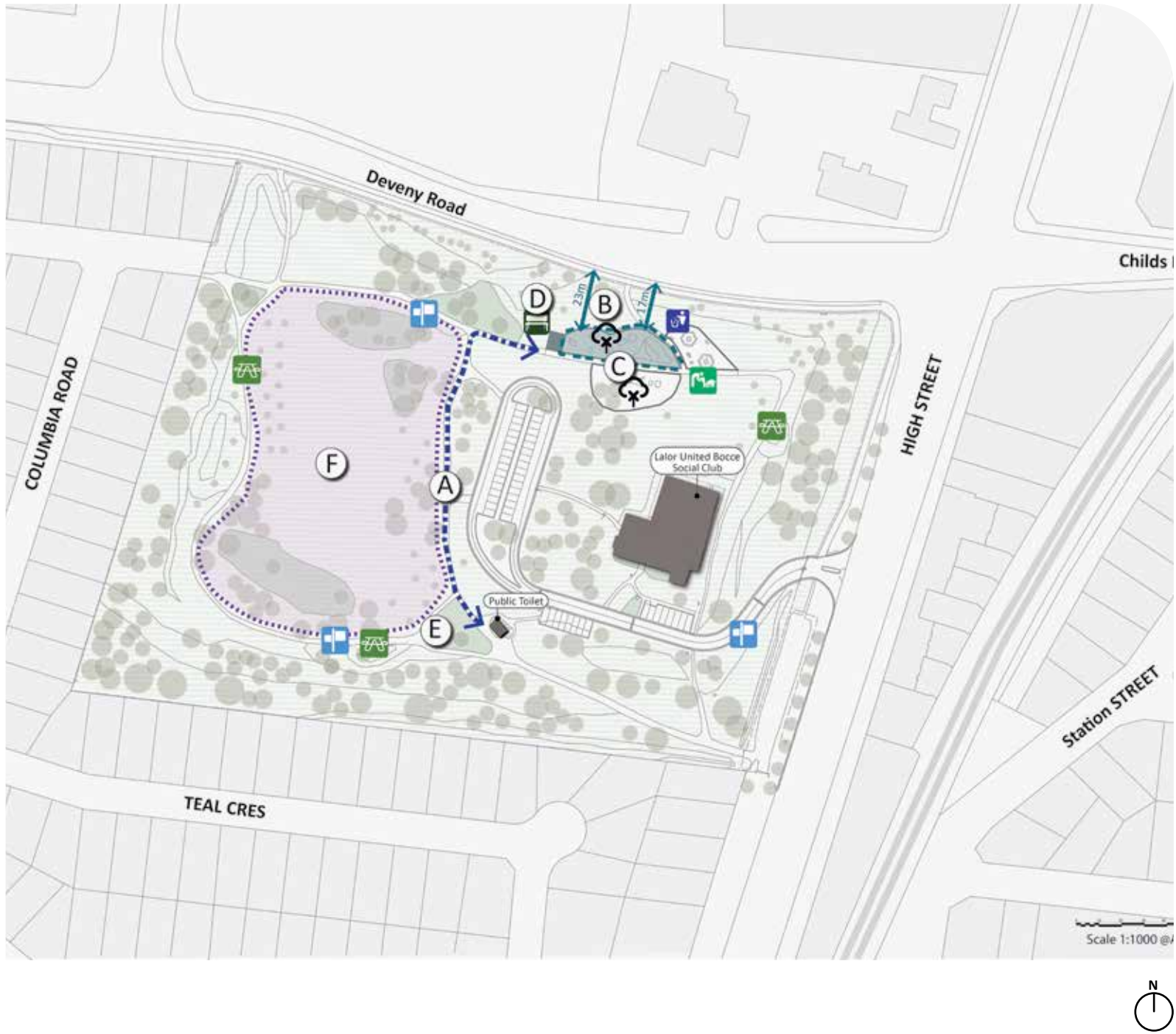
##### PARK SUPPORT FACILITIES

- Facilities are predominantly located on the east side of the reserve and not equally distributed throughout the reserve
- Shortage of rubbish bins
- A need for more drink fountains, particularly one with a dog bowl
- Lack of seating next to the existing half basketball court
- Lack of shade in seating areas
- Lack of grouped seating arrangements which foster face to face interaction and gathering
- Lack of historical/educational signage

#### KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Upgrade the toilet block to improve safety and amenity
- Investigate relocation of the toilet block closer to the playground area
- Utilise adjacent space to the Bocce Social Club for the club's supporting facilities and outdoor gathering area
- Investigate providing a dog off-lead area as per the Dog off-leash Area policy & Management plan, 20216-2026
  - Investigate the development of flexible spaces for community events, workshops, and performances to encourage social interactions, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen community ties
- Providing physical barriers around the playspace due to the nearby street
- Consider diversity in play comprising nature play elements and increase play space size in future playground upgrade
- Expand the play space comprising of more challenging features for older children and teenagers
- Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins, bike racks, seating areas and informal and structured coverage where required
- Provide outdoor gathering opportunities and install grouped seating arrangements to encourage face-to-face interaction and social gathering
- Install educational/informative signage along pedestrian paths

#### KEY ISSUES



#### LEGEND

- Complicated and far access
- Lack of shade within the playspace
- Safety concern due to the close proximity of the Playspace to Deveny Rd
- Insufficient rubbish bins
- Lack of grouped seating arrangements next to the basketball court
- No designated/flexible spaces for events
- Lack of cultural heritage/educational signage
- Lack of drinking fountain with a dog bowl



**A** The toilet is situated at a distance from the playground



**B** Close proximity of the Playspace to Deveny Rd



**C** Lack of shade within the play space



**D** Lack of seating next to the existing half basketball court



**E** Lack of grouped seating arrangements



**F** No designated/flexible spaces for events such as regular markets and multicultural events





### 3.2.3 Environment & Landscape

#### KEY ISSUES

##### LANDSCAPE & VEGETATION

- ▶ Hidden areas and visual barriers due to shrubs and bushes around the public toilet
- ▶ Lack of shade trees near the existing benches next to the playground
- ▶ Lots of trees at the end of their useful life expectancy (ULE)
- ▶ Some sections of the reserve near the neighbouring properties lack any planting and could benefit from additional buffer planting
- ▶ Some areas such as the area next to the shelters are subject to water logging in winter
- ▶ The landscape is disjointed due to the car park which segregates the open space landscapes
- ▶ No Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives associated with car parks or buildings at the site
- ▶ Limited ability for proposing activities on interfaces due to the topography and steepness of the site, particularly on the east side

##### LOOK & FEEL

- ▶ Lack of passive surveillance in the southwest corner of the park due lack of pathway
- ▶ Understory planting and thick bushes surrounding the toilet block limit visibility and passive surveillance into the public toilet
- ▶ No pathway lighting in the west side of the reserve
- ▶ Anti-social activity around the public toilet
- ▶ Approximately 50% of the frontages are inactive with residential properties backing onto the reserve

#### KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Improve visibility to the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting or replacing with more suitable greenery where required
- ▶ Potential additional buffer planting on the west side of the reserve maintaining an appropriate distance from neighbouring properties
- ▶ Additional tree planting
- ▶ Remove trees at the end of their useful life expectancy
- ▶ Investigate additional lighting with the Public Realm Lighting Plan
- ▶ Investigate activating the southwest corner of the reserve through more benches, path extension and or developing a dog park
- ▶ Establish wayfinding signage to support pedestrian navigation across the reserve

#### KEY ISSUES



#### LEGEND

- |                                |                              |  |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Hidden areas & visual barriers | Insufficient lighting        | Anti-social activity                           |
| Lack of shade trees            | Lack of passive surveillance | Inactive frontages and lack of buffer planting |
| Dead trees                     | Disjointed landscape         | Topography and steepness                       |



**A** Hidden areas and visual barriers due to bushes around the public toilet



**B** Dried-out branches within the reserve



**C** Disjointed landscape due to the car park



**D** Lack of trees in the west side of the reserve



**E** Lack of passive surveillance in the Southwest corner of the park



**F** Inactive frontages



# Consultation Summary.

## “ Quotes from our community

“ The public toilet is too far from the playground and has many bushy areas that are not visible. Put the toilets closer to the playground where they’re clearly visible.

“ The Reserve has a bit of a bad reputation in the area, it needs to be salvaged so families can feel safe to use the area (not just the playground).

“ The entrance to the reserve looks too uninviting and does not provide you with a sense of safety.

## 4.0 Consultation Summary

This section provides a summary of consultation activities.

The purpose of the community consultation was to gain an understanding of how the community use the reserve and how they would like to be using the reserve in the future. Two phases of consultation were undertaken with the results from both phases used to directly inform the key directions of the Master Plan.

### METHODOLOGY

The community were consulted on the VR Michael Reserve Master Plan in two phases:

**Phase 1** Capturing challenges and opportunities of the site, June and July 2023

**Phase 2** Presentation of the draft master plan, 22 April to 20 May 2024

A range of methods and tools were used to engage with the community and key stakeholders over the two phases of consultation. These included the following:

- ▶ Meeting with key Council internal stakeholders
- ▶ Meeting with key external stakeholders
- ▶ Direct mail outs
- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Social map
- ▶ Onsite pop-up sessions

### KEY INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Several key stakeholder meetings were held with Council staff from a range of departments and with various subject matter expertise.

### KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Meetings were held with representatives from various key external stakeholders including the following:

- ▶ Members of the Lalor United Bocce Social Club
- ▶ Reserve Users
- ▶ Local Businesses
- ▶ Residents

### 4.2.1 Consultation Phase 1

The purpose of this engagement was to assist Council to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities of the site and discover the key ideas for the park improvement. Refer to Appendix 1 for the full report.

### OUTCOME

Feedback was received from 172 participants including users of the Lalor Bocce Social Club, residents of the surrounding neighbourhoods and visitors to the VR Michael Reserve.

Overall, we heard that the area’s infrastructure is degrading and in need of repair, paths and carparking areas do not meet current standards of compliance and existing land uses in the precinct can be better connected. Residents and visitors perceive the area as ‘unsafe’, ‘uninviting’ and ‘dull’.

According to the total responses, the top six priorities for change are as follows:

- ▶ General safety
- ▶ Car park
- ▶ Public toilet
- ▶ Walking track/paths
- ▶ Pedestrian access to the reserve
- ▶ More greenery
- ▶ Central lawn

Our community engagement highlighted the main issues as follows:

- ▶ Poor perceptions of safety in the area such as lack of lighting at night-time, and poor passive surveillance
- ▶ Pedestrian safety and access
- ▶ Close proximity of the playspace to Deveny Road is a concern of the community
- ▶ Insufficient peak-hour car parking
- ▶ Lack of play facilities for teenagers

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

From the feedback received from the key stakeholders and the community, the following recommendations are made for inclusion in the Draft Master Plan:

- ▶ Provide passive surveillance opportunities and improve perception of safety
- ▶ Upgrade the existing paths and improve access to the reserve including access from Deveny Road to the playspace and DDA compliant access from the off-site car park to the Bocce Social Club
- ▶ Investigate the potential for providing a dog off-lead area as per the Council ‘Dog off-leash Area Policy and Management Plan’
- ▶ Consider the development of facilities/activities for different user groups to provide range of play experiences
- ▶ Investigate the development of flexible spaces for community events, workshops, and performances to encourage social interactions, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen community ties
- ▶ Investigate the development of spaces for exercise encouraging physical and mental well-being
- ▶ Investigate the potential for providing physical barriers around the playspace due to nearby street
- ▶ Investigate potential for upgrades/relocation of the existing toilet block
- ▶ Increase canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- ▶ Upgrade and additional solar lighting to car parking and main entrances to the reserve Incorporating warmer colours in the park entrances and light at varying levels to cover planting and pathways considering Shared User Paths (SUPs) Guiding Principles
- ▶ Improve entry node with feature landscaping and paving, access, educational/historical and wayfinding signage
- ▶ Explore the possibility of integrating a community herb garden and sensory garden within the reserve plan, enhancing its appeal and offering unique interactive experiences for visitors
- ▶ Improve maintenance of the central lawn
- ▶ Provide additional park furniture such as drinking fountains, bins and seating where required



# Master Plan.

## 5.0 Master Plan

The site analysis and consultation work undertaken has resulted in a vision to improve the functional layout of VR Michael Reserve as a Municipal Reserve upon the delivery of five key objectives:

### 5.1 Vision & Key Objectives

#### VISION

VR Michael Reserve is an accessible, inclusive and vibrant reserve that offers a variety of informal recreational opportunities for individuals and families, catering to the diverse interests of our community. This reserve is a hub of inclusivity and engagement, where residents can celebrate and share cultural identity and diversity.







## 5.2 Recommendations

The VR Michael Reserve Master Plan sets out recommendations which are articulated through the key themes of Movement & Access, Informal Recreation and Park Infrastructure, and Environment and Landscape.

### MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

#### PATH

- Realign and upgrade main paths within the reserve to concrete paths, comprised of two walking/jogging loops
- Relocate the toilet block in proximity to the proposed playspace and picnic area incorporating all-gender parent/carer rooms, a disabled toilet and labels indicating available facilities without specifying gender, as a mid to long term action
- Upgrade the surface material of the access path to the toilet block to provide a DDA-compliant access path as a short-term action
- Proposed 2.5m shared path along the lower carpark connecting the existing footpath on High Street
- Proposed an entrance and 2m path from the north-east corner of the reserve
- Proposed 2m path connecting the central car park to the existing playspace
- Proposed 1.5m path connecting the existing path to the second shelter (short-term solution)
- Proposed concrete shared path along the access road from High Street to the reserve with 2.5m width
- Upgrade and realign the existing path to connect the central carpark to the Bocce Social Club
- Realign and upgrade the 2.5m DDA compliant shared path accessing from the lower carpark to the reserve providing access to the Bocce Social Club

#### CAR PARKING

- Proposed lighting along the extended car park
- Proposed integrated and upgraded car park with a water-sensitive approach, comprising over 65 car parking spaces
- Upgraded lower car park comprising 24 car parking spaces
- Proposed vehicle drop-off area next to the Bocce Social Club
- Proposed entry/exit to the lower car park from the entrance road to the reserve providing safe access to the car park

#### ENTRANCE

- Upgrade the north entrances as well as the entrance from Bellarine Drive as more significant and welcoming entrances by providing wayfinding signage, feature paving, lighting, and landscaping

- Proposed wayfinding signage for entrance nodes to direct people to existing facilities within the reserve and surrounding area
- Investigate pedestrian crossing facilities on High Street to improve safety and accessibility for visitors crossing from the main entrance of the reserve
- Improve the forecourt of the Bocce Social Club including a vehicle drop off area and the direct access path

### INFORMAL RECREATION AND PARK INFRASTRUCTURE

#### INFORMAL RECREATION FACILITIES

- Proposed outdoor gathering space in proximity to the Bocce Social Club
- Proposed dog off-lead area (as per the Dog Off-leash Area Policy & Management Plan, 2016-2026) in the southwest corner of the reserve with seats, shelter and a fountain
- Proposed multi use space comprising smaller areas with social seating, drinking fountain and shade trees
- Proposed fitness and exercise station with equipment arranged in groups to allow for socialising

#### PLAYSPACE

- Proposed playspace with a safe distance from Deveny Road, with shorter-term provision of fence on the north side
- Proposed playground including a range of play experiences and nature-based area
- Plant additional trees throughout the reserve with raised tree canopies to strengthen ecological biodiversity
- Remove the existing trees in the playspace and increase shade through more canopy cover around the proposed play space and walking track where possible
- Proposed picnic area with picnic tables, BBQs and shelters
- Proposed bouldering wall beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor
- Investigate a community garden or a native pollinator garden beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor that use rainwater run-off to support the growth of species
- Proposed skate feature beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor
- Proposed half basketball court beneath the future Wollert Rail Corridor

#### PARK SUPPORT FACILITIES

- Proposed additional park furniture including drinking fountains, bins and social seating
- Proposed social seating such as picnic seating to provide a blend of private and public seating
- Establish interpretive signage along the proposed main paths that provide education on the history of VR Michael
- Establish dog park regulation signs indicating the designated dog park area

### ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

#### LANDSCAPE AND VEGETATION

- Thin and selectively remove the existing thick vegetation to improve sightlines and passive surveillance throughout the reserve
- Remove the existing trees next to the seating areas around the playspace and plant shade trees near the existing benches and the proposed play space and walking track where possible
- Continue regular assessment and maintenance of trees
- Additional buffer planting maintaining an appropriate distance from neighbouring properties

#### LOOK & FEEL

- Investigate lighting the reserve's internal paths and elements with the holistic Public Realm Lighting Plan
- Improve visibility into the reserve by thinning out overgrown understory planting and replace with low maintenance plants to eliminate visual barriers



5.3 Draft Master Plan

The VR Michael Reserve draft master plan guides and provides direction for future upgrades and improvements to VR Michael Reserve. The master plan responds to insufficient peak-hour car parking, safety issues, connectivity and community needs along with recommendations to improve the natural environment.

The section in the following page illustrate the Future Wollert Rail Corridor which passes through the reserve and the proposed activities that proposed by the master plan to be located beneath the Wollert Rail. Refer to Figure 14.

- 1

Flexible central lawn for games, events and picnics
- 2

Proposed dog off-leash area
- 3

Proposed playspace including climbing elements and range of play experiences
- 4

Proposed nature play area
- 5

Proposed picnic area with shelters, picnic settings, drinking fountain and bins
- 6

Proposed fitness and exercise station
- 7

Proposed toilet block with shorter term improvement of the safety and amenity of the existing toilet
- 8

Proposed social seating and gathering area
- 9

Proposed outdoor gathering space
- 10

Relocate the Bocce Court
- 11

Remove the central car park and extend the car park to west as an integrated and sustainable car park including 65 car park spaces
- 12

Proposed vehicle drop-off area next to the social club
- 13

Potential site for a community garden or a native pollinator garden using rain water tank for irrigation (will be further investigated as per the Council's protocol)
- 14

Proposed multi use area with social seating
- 15

Proposed skate feature
- 16

Proposed sport court with half basketball court and table tennis
- 17

Proposed bouldering wall
- 18

Proposed entry/exit to the lower car park
- 19

Upgrade car park (24 car park bays)
- 20

Proposed shared path along the lower car park
- 21

Proposed DDA compliant path connecting the lower car park with the Bocce Social Club
- 22

Realign and upgrade circuit path (2-2.5m concrete path)
- 23

Proposed shelter with a drinking fountain, seats and a dog sign
- 24

Improve entry nodes with way finding signage
- 25

Proposed entry from the intersection of Deveny Road and High Street
- 26

Proposed shared path from Boronia Street to the reserve
- 27

Improve the forecourt of the Social club, including a path from a vehicle drop-off area
- 28

Increase shade through more canopy cover around the play space and walking track where possible
- 29

Remove the existing playspace, basketball hoop and picnic area
- 30

Upgrade the reserve internal vehicle exclusion fencing
- 31

Proposed lighting along the main car park and entry

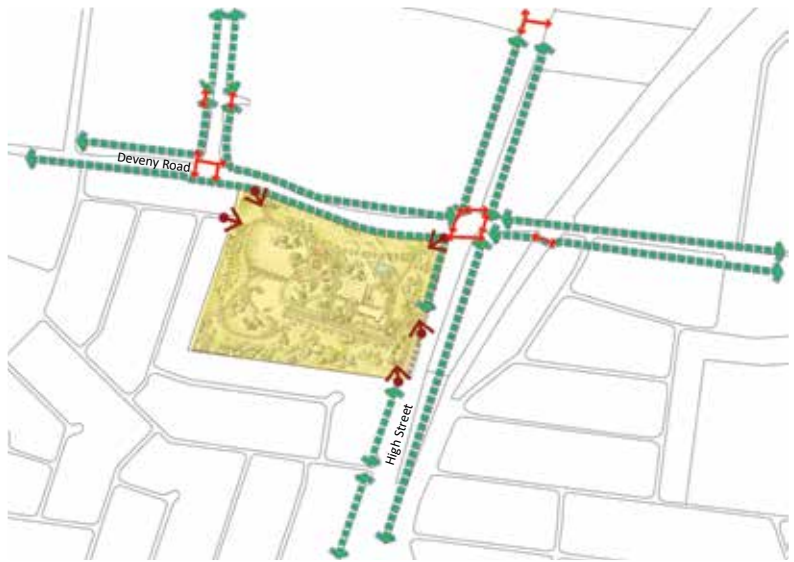
LEGEND

	Concrete Path (2-2.5m wide)		Proposed Lighting		Future Wollert Rail Corridor
	Granitic Sand Path (1.5m wide)		Proposed Shelter		Fence
	Proposed Drinking Fountain		Proposed Barbecue		Maintenance Gate
	Proposed Way Finding Signage		Existing Trees/Plants		Dog Off-lead Area Boundary
	Proposed Dog Signs		Proposed Trees		Site Boundary
	Proposed Bin		Trees To Be Removed/Relocated		
	Proposed Seating Area		Proposed Bicycle Rack		



13. IMAGE Draft Master Plan





PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC



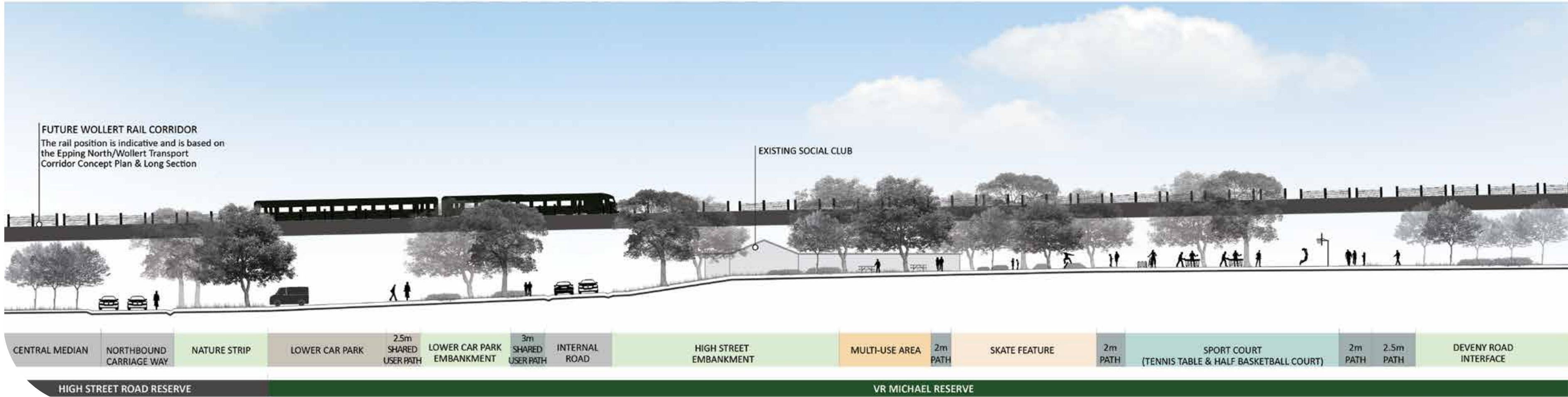
CYCLIST TRAFFIC



PUBLIC TRANSPORT



VEHICLE TRAFFIC



Refer to the draft master plan map for the section line.

14. IMAGE Section A-A From the Proposed Wollert Rail Corridor and Activities Beneath It



### LEGEND

### ACCESS & MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

- Vehicle Traffic
- Bus Routes
- Bus Stops
- Mernda Rail Corridor
- Pedestrian Traffic
- Cyclist Traffic
- Pedestrian Entry
- Vehicle Entry
- Main Entrance
- Pedestrian Crossing

15. IMAGE Site Access & Movement Analysis





## ACCESS & CIRCULATION



CONCRETE PATH



FEATURE PAVING



LEARN TO RIDE LOOP



PERMEABLE CAR PARK



## RECREATION



MULTI-AGE PLAY EQUIPMENT



RUBBER MOUNDS



NATURE PLAY



CLIMBING ELEMENTS



## FACILITIES



SHELTER AND SEATING



SOLAR & ELECTRIC PEDESTRIAN LIGHT



BIKE HOOPS AND VEHICLE EXCLUSION FENCE



PARK FURNITURE



## SPORT COURT (beneath future Wollert rail overpass)



SKATE FEATURE



HALF BASKETBALL COURT



TABLE TENNIS



BOULDERING WALL



## VEGETATION & SIGNAGE



FEATURE PLANTING



SHADE TREES



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE



ENTRY SIGNAGE



## GENDER INCLUSIVE & SAFE SPACES



SOCIAL SEATING



MULTI-USE AREA WITH SOCIAL SEATING



FITNESS & EXERCISE STATION



The images illustrated are only examples and the recommendations provided may vary in their actual result.

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