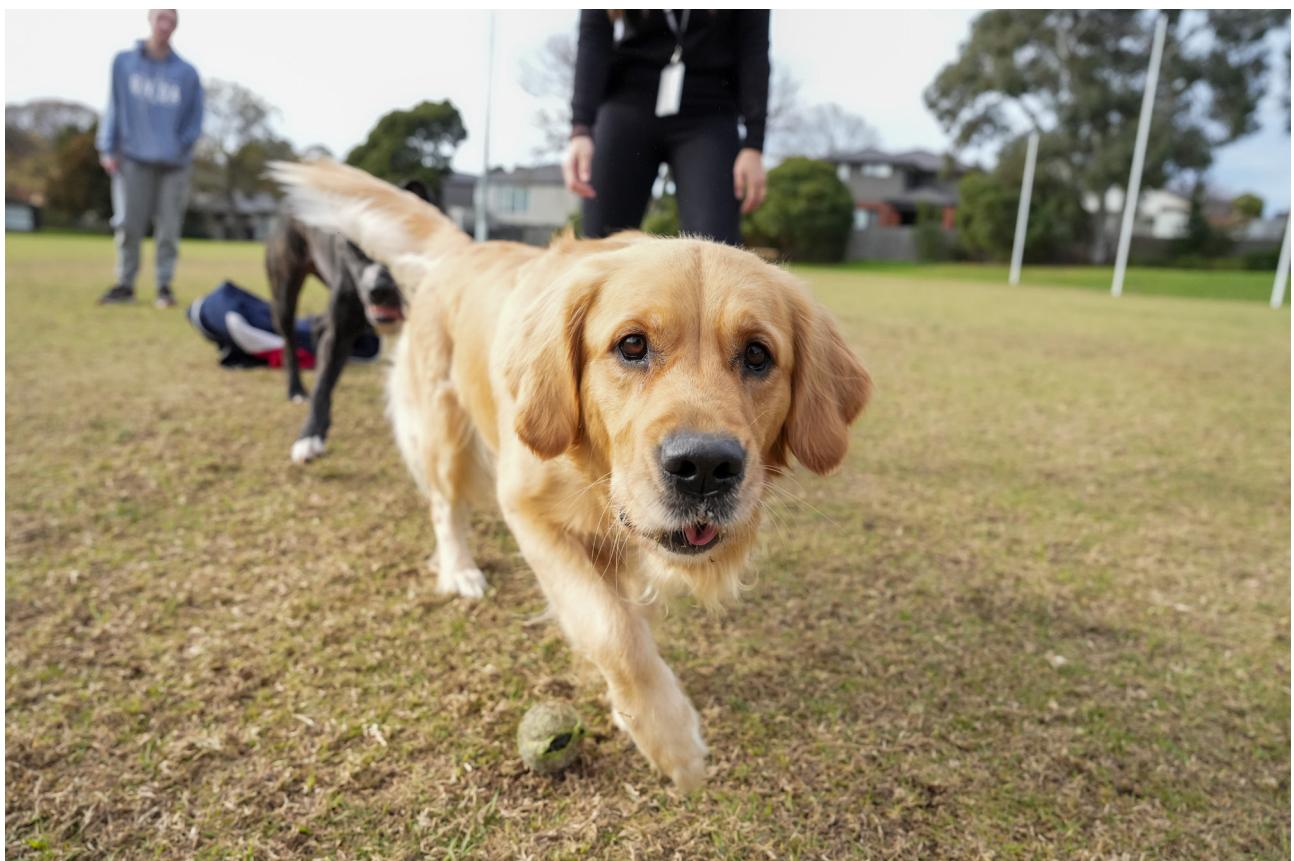


7. Site Selection Guidelines

7.1 Site Selection

The process for selecting sites for dog parks should follow several key steps. The first step is to identify a range of potential sites for consideration, then refine this list to develop a shortlist. The second step involves assessing each shortlisted site to understand its existing and potential features, qualities, and constraints. Finally, community consultation should be undertaken to ensure the preferred locations align with local needs and preferences. This process is outlined in detail on the following pages.





Process



Key considerations

1. IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SITES

Develop a list of suitable locations for further investigation

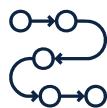
Existing dog park locations: Undertake mapping of existing fenced dog parks to assess current provision and avoid locating new sites too close to existing facilities, which could create issues of equity. Consider potential sites that could help relieve pressure on sports fields currently being used for dog off-lead activities. While there are currently no permanent fenced dog parks in Whitehorse, this is expected to change with the development of a temporary facility associated with the SRL works. This site should be viewed as a trial opportunity to test and monitor community use, management needs, and design outcomes, rather than as part of the long-term provision of dog parks.

Potential sites: Develop an initial list of potential sites for fenced dog parks. Consider underutilised or decommissioned spaces and locations within regional or municipal parks. Explore areas which have been identified as having gaps within the current network of off-lead areas, as noted in section 2.3 of the report 'Key Findings'. Add new sites to the list as they arise, such as through community feedback or formal requests.

Suitability review : Each potential site should be assessed to determine its level of suitability for development as a dog park. Sites can generally be categorised as:

1. Already Suitable - The site meets most or all criteria with minimal modification required.
2. Not Ideal and/or May Need Further Work to Make Suitable - The site has potential but may require design adjustments, additional infrastructure, or minor mitigation works. These sites may have financial implications that should be considered in future budgeting.
3. Not Suitable and Unlikely to Be Feasible - The site contains significant constraints that are not practical or cost-effective to address. Such sites should be eliminated from further consideration.

Sites with unresolvable constraints, such as contamination that cannot be remediated, land within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ), or land affected by Environmental Significance (ESO) or Vegetation Protection (VPO) overlays should be excluded immediately. These overlays typically indicate areas of high environmental value or ecological sensitivity where the development of a dog park would not be appropriate or permissible.



Process



Key considerations

2. ANALYSE

SHORTLISTED SITES

Following selection of a preferred site (or sites), assess the existing characteristics and potential of the site to deliver the desired functions and qualities.

Existing uses and values: What is the current use of the site, what impacts would a dog park have on this use, and are these impacts able to be managed by design and management responses? Past experience has shown the kinds of concerns the community has regarding the change of use. Anticipating these early allows for effective design and management responses. Consider the following potential impacts:

1. Primary use / activity conflict - Potential displacement or reduced availability for organised activities, and possible impacts on overall park amenity.
2. Noise and amenity for nearby users - Risk of reduced enjoyment for adjacent park users and neighbours, potentially leading to complaints.
3. Ecological impact - Potential ecological degradation and loss of nature-based experiences for other users, such as birdwatchers and walkers.
4. Circulation and shared path use - Possible conflicts between user groups (e.g. walkers and cyclists)
5. Infrastructure and amenity conflicts - Existing infrastructure capacity may be impacted, with increased demand on facilities such as parking, pathways, and water fountains from dog park users.
6. Cultural and heritage values - Potential damage to heritage values; community opposition.

Accessibility: Is the site easily accessible, or are there barriers that could limit access (e.g. entrance located on a narrow or dead-end street)? Are there existing pedestrian paths, or is there capacity to provide them? Park access should be clearly defined and safe to access (avoiding major road crossings where possible) to encourage use and ensure equitable, inclusive access for all visitors.

Visibility: Is the site visible from surrounding areas?

Sites should be visible to make them easy to locate and access.

Opportunities for passive surveillance should also be considered.

Shade: Does the site have existing shade, or is there potential to provide it? Shade is a key design consideration and should be provided at all dog parks to benefit both dogs and their guardians. Existing trees or structures can offer immediate relief and reduce the need for additional shade structures.

Electricity connection: Is there existing electricity infrastructure available, or can it be easily provided?

Using existing infrastructure helps avoid the cost and complexity of new electrical installations. Most parks in Whitehorse use solar power which can also be considered in place of electrical connections.

Water connection: Is there an existing water connection, or can one be easily provided? Water is an essential provision in a dog park. As installing new or difficult connections can be costly, existing water infrastructure should be considered where possible.

2. ANALYSE SHORTLISTED SITES continued

Adjacent activities: Assess whether nearby activities are compatible with a dog park and identify where design or management measures (such as fencing, landscaping, or buffers) can be used to minimise potential conflicts. Some open space uses (such as cycling trails, BBQ/picnic areas, or playgrounds) may require higher fencing, separation or screening.

Amenities: Consider whether existing facilities such as seating, shade, drinking fountains, or toilets are available to support the dog park. Toilets are not a requirement for dog parks but may be beneficial where an existing toilet block can be conveniently shared. It is acceptable if amenities are not yet in place, provided there is capacity to incorporate them as part of the development. Amenities enhance user comfort and contribute to the overall park experience.

Topography, drainage, and flood risk: Assess whether the site is relatively flat (some variation acceptable) and drains well. Sites with poor drainage, low-lying areas, or prone to occasional flooding can become muddy and unusable; minor issues may be mitigated with raised or well-drained paths, reinforced surfaces, swales, or retention basins. Sites with frequent or severe flooding should generally be avoided, as mitigation may be costly or impractical.

Environmental buffers: Assess whether there is sufficient space to provide appropriate buffers and/or fencing to protect environmentally significant areas. Buffers from biodiversity corridors, fauna habitats, areas with endangered species, significant wetlands, and other high-value habitats may be required to minimise potential impacts from dogs. Buffer distances should be treated as indicative, with each site assessed on its specific environmental features, values, and constraints. Consider the existing circumstances - for example, if an environmentally sensitive area is already used for off-lead activity, introducing a designated fenced area may improve management and reduce impacts compared with current conditions.

1. Low-value habitats: 10–50 m buffer, where a smaller setback may adequately protect fringe vegetation and function.
2. High-value habitats: 50–100 m (or larger) buffer recommended. These sites should be treated as high priority to avoid siting a dog park unless impacts can be avoided or very carefully mitigated.

Residential buffers: Assess the need for buffers to nearby residences on a site-specific basis, recognising that buffer distances may vary depending on context and constraints. Prioritise sites that do not directly border residential properties. Where adequate separation is not possible, mitigation measures should be implemented to minimise potential negative impacts (actual or perceived) on neighbouring residents.

Parking: Is there existing off-street parking, or can it be accommodated if required? Larger or district-level dog parks are likely to attract visitors who drive and should provide adequate parking. Smaller, locally focused dog parks that primarily serve nearby residents may not require dedicated parking, provided there is safe pedestrian access.



Process



Key considerations

3. CONSULT THE COMMUNITY
Undertake community engagement activities on the preferred sites.

Consult with the community on the preferred site(s). Community consultation is a key step in building support for potential dog parks and ensuring the design meets user needs.

7.2 Alternative Approaches

Given the limited availability of open space and the challenges associated with acquiring new land, Council may consider alternative approaches to the delivery of dog parks. Traditional models that rely solely on re-purposing public open space may not always be feasible, particularly in areas or locations where open space is already highly utilised and has established uses and values. By exploring non-traditional solutions, there is potential to provide high-quality facilities to complement existing off-lead facilities in the municipality. Some examples of different approaches to dog parks is included in Appendix E.

Partnering with the private sector

One potential approach is partnering with the private sector, including collaborations with developers, businesses, and community organisations, to deliver dog parks in spaces that might not traditionally house them.

This could involve advocating for developers to incorporate dog parks within new residential complexes and commercial developments, providing convenient, accessible amenities for residents, employees, and visitors, and supporting the wellbeing of both dogs and their guardians. It could also include working with businesses to establish member-based dog clubs, private dog playgrounds, or fenced dog parks associated with commercial ventures, such as cafes and other public-facing establishments.

This approach enables Council to leverage private development opportunities to deliver additional fenced dog facility.

Transforming underused council facilities into dog parks

There is the potential to transform underused facilities or unconventional spaces into dog parks, making efficient use of existing assets. Sites that are generally underutilised and not considered for traditional open space uses, such as the rooftops of public car parks or spaces beneath bridges, can be adapted to dog parks. For example, the City of Yarra's Curtain Square Street Dog Park demonstrates how urban spaces, in this case an underutilised corner of a park, can be successfully repurposed to a small scale dog park to service the local community.



Figure 7.1: The Curtain Square Dog Park in Carlton North illustrates how an underutilised space in an existing reserve can be transformed into a dog park.

By reimagining these spaces, Council can deliver additional dog parks without re-purposing open space that has existing uses and values assigned to it. This approach creates opportunities to deliver dog parks while promoting the efficient use of open space.

Collaborating across government and agencies

There is potential for Council to explore opportunities to collaborate with other levels of government and government agencies to provide dog parks on land that is not under its direct management. By partnering with the State Government, Melbourne Water, transport authorities, or utility providers for example, Council may be able to identify underutilised or surplus land suitable for dog parks. In addition, there is an opportunity to secure external funding from state or federal government programs, such as the Victorian Government's New and Upgraded Dog Parks Program, to support the delivery of new facilities. These collaborations could enable the development of dog parks in locations that might otherwise remain inaccessible to the community, while potentially sharing responsibilities for planning, delivery, management and maintenance. This approach creates opportunities to deliver dog parks without relying solely on Council's finite public open space network.

There is also an opportunity to deliver a temporary dog park as a community benefit, or 'sweetener,' associated with large and potentially disruptive projects. For example, during the construction of the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL), part of Box Hill Gardens is being used for project works, and in response, the SRL is creating new temporary open space on another site for the duration of the project. Similar approaches could be explored to offset the impacts of major infrastructure projects while providing new open spaces and facilities.